

## Stockton U.: You probably missed Trump's latest tweet

Updated on April 6, 2017 at 5:06 PM  
Posted on April 6, 2017 at 2:36 PM



When it comes to social media, less than 5 percent of all age groups, from 18 to 65 and over, plan to use it to get news about New Jersey elections. (J. David Ake | Associated Press)

BY STAR-LEDGER GUEST COLUMNIST

By Sharon Schulman

The next 10 months in New Jersey government and politics will set the state's direction for many years to come. With a budget to be passed by June 30, a governor to be elected and the entire Legislature up for election or re-election in November, it is imperative that we engage as many residents as possible in understanding the issues and voting for New Jersey's future in the next election.

Unfortunately, the presidential election campaign, fake news and charges of media bias are having a pervasive effect on New Jersey residents of all ages. The William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University delved into this issue to see just how serious it has become and whom it has affected.

Our Stockton Polling Institute conducted a telephone interview of 786 adult New Jersey residents during mid-February, and the results exemplify how muddled the media milieu is right now.

Most striking is a deep distrust that adults of all ages have for the news media, regardless of their format. For a country that is so invested -- through the First Amendment to the Constitution -- in the need for a free press as a primary means of disseminating information to the general public, this distrust harms the electorate.

According to poll respondents, the majority think most news sources do OK at keeping them informed, but they think all of them are biased. While 87 percent pay attention to the news, a whopping 85 percent are concerned about fake news. About two-thirds believe they can spot fake news at least some of the time. My personal opinion is that it is getting harder and harder to discern fake from real news.

To expand on an earlier point, approximately two-thirds of respondents say that print and online newspapers, radio and cable TV/broadcast network news do a good or excellent job of keeping them informed. There is one significant exception: social media. While politicians and the press are increasingly using social media, few people see it as a main news source. It is perceived as the least accurate and most biased. While 29 percent of our 18- to 29-year-old respondents use social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter as a main source of news, only 8 percent trust it as the most accurate.

It may come as no surprise that we found some age differences in the main source of news that people rely on. Overall, 34 percent of the respondents said they get their news from cable TV sources such as CNN, Fox News and MSNBC. About a fifth of the respondents rely most on either broadcast networks such as ABC, CBS and NBC or online newspapers or news websites. Print newspapers, radio and social media such as Facebook and Twitter lag behind. As you would expect, 18- to 29-year-olds prefer online media, social media and cable TV. As age increased, cable TV and broadcast news became more popular.

We then attempted to get more focused on New Jersey and questioned our respondents on where they expect to get their news on the 2017 state elections.

Here the results change a bit: 34 percent expect to learn about our political news on TV, 25 percent from newspapers and 21 percent from online news. Their trust of these sources was close to the same measures. Except for social media, the distribution of ages for all of these sources was far more evenly divided. When it comes to social media, less than 5 percent of all age groups, from 18 to 65 and over, plan to use it to get news about New Jersey elections.

We can only hope that candidates will take note of these numbers and understand that most of us are not getting a lot of our news from social media.

And, now that we have figured out the best means to inform people, the next difficult task: inspiring New Jerseyans to get out and vote.

o inform people, the next difficult task: inspiring New Jerseyans to get out and vote.

*Sharon Schulman is executive director of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University.*

*Bookmark [NJ.com/Opinion](http://NJ.com/Opinion). Follow on Twitter [@NJ\\_Opinion](https://twitter.com/NJ_Opinion) and find NJ.com [Opinion on Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/NJ.com/Opinion).*