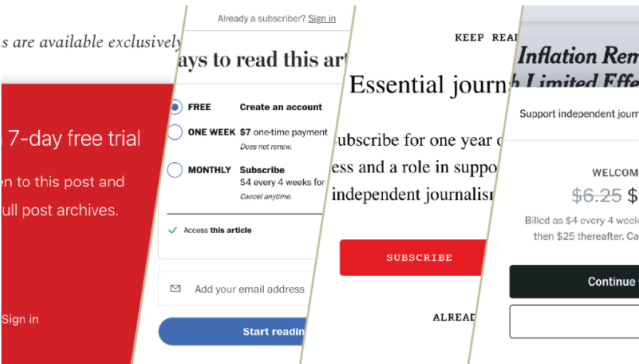


# Few Americans pay for news when they encounter paywalls

BY EMILY TOMASIK AND MICHAEL LIPKA



Compilation of major news outlets' paywalls prompting readers to become paid subscribers to view their content. (Pew Research Center collage)

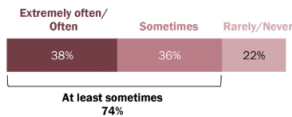
Newspaper revenue has [been in decline for decades](#), and most Americans now [prefer to get news from digital devices](#). In this environment, many news organizations – and [not just newspapers](#) – put paywalls on their websites or apps, blocking access to articles or other content unless news consumers pay or subscribe.

The vast majority of Americans (83%) say they have *not* paid for news in the past year, according to a Pew Research Center survey conducted in March. Another 17% say they have directly paid or given money to a news source by subscribing, donating or becoming a member during that time.

At the same time, 74% run into paywalls at least sometimes when they are looking for news online. This includes 38% who say they come across paywalled articles extremely often or often.

## About three-quarters of Americans run into paywalls sometimes or more often

% of U.S. adults who say, when looking for news online, they \_\_\_\_ come across articles that block them from viewing unless they pay for the article or a subscription



Note: Respondents who did not answer, or who don't use the internet (and thus didn't receive this question), are not shown. Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted March 10-16, 2025.

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### How we did this

#### What people do when they reach a paywall

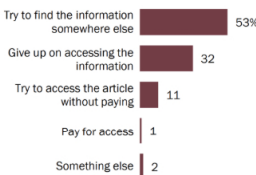
The survey also asked anyone who said they ever come across paywalls what they typically do first when that happens.

Just 1% say they pay for access when they come across an article that requires payment.

The most common reaction is that people seek the information somewhere else (53%). About a third (32%) say they typically give up on accessing the information.

#### Most often, Americans who hit paywalls first try to find the info elsewhere

Among U.S. adults who ever come across paywalled news articles, % who say they typically do each of the following first when that happens



Note: Respondents who did not answer are not shown. Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted March 10-16, 2025.

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## Why Americans don't pay for news

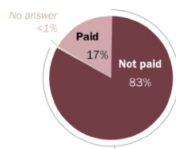
Among the 83% of U.S. adults who have not paid for news in the past year, the most common reason they cite is that they can find plenty of other news articles for free. About half of those who don't pay for news (49%) say this is the main reason.

Indeed, many news websites do not have paywalls. Others have recently [loosened paywalls](#) or removed them for certain content like [public emergencies](#) or [public interest stories](#).

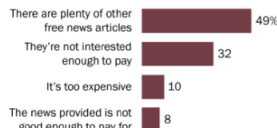
Another common reason people don't pay for news is that they are not interested enough (32%). Smaller shares of Americans who don't pay for news say the main reason is that it's too expensive (10%) or that the news provided isn't good enough to pay for (8%).

### About half of U.S. adults who don't pay for news say the main reason is that there's plenty of free news

% of U.S. adults who have \_\_\_ or given money directly to any news sources by subscribing, donating or becoming a member in the last 12 months



Among those who have not paid for news in the past 12 months, % who say the main reason is ...



Note: Respondents who did not answer the question about their main reason for not paying for news are not shown.  
Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted March 10-16, 2025.

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### Which groups are more likely to pay for news?

Overall, 17% of U.S. adults pay for news. However, highly educated adults, Democrats and older Americans – among other demographic groups – are more likely to have paid for news.

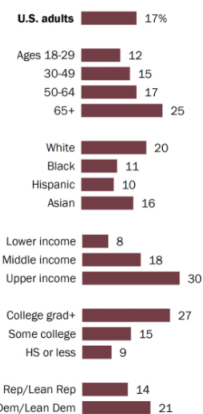
For example, 27% of college graduates say they have directly paid a news source by subscribing, donating or becoming a member in the last year – triple the share of those with a high school diploma or less formal education who have done so.

In addition:

- 21% of Democrats and independents who lean Democratic have paid for news in the last year, compared with 14% of Republicans and GOP leaners.
- 25% of those ages 65 and older have paid for news in the past year, versus 12% of those ages 18 to 29.
- 8% of U.S. adults in the lowest income group paid for news, compared with 30% of those in the highest income group. (For more information about how we define income groups, refer to the [methodology](#).)
- 20% of White Americans have paid for news, about double the share of Black Americans (11%) and Hispanic Americans (10%) who have done so.

### Highly educated and high-income Americans more likely to pay for news

% of U.S. adults who have paid or given money directly to any news sources by subscribing, donating or becoming a member in the last 12 months



\* Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only.

Note: White, Black and Asian adults include those who report only being one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Family income tiers are based on adjusted 2023 earnings.  
Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted March 10-16, 2025.

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Note: Here are the [questions used for this analysis](#), the [topline](#) and the [survey methodology](#).

Topics [Digital News Landscape](#), [News Platforms & Sources](#)

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