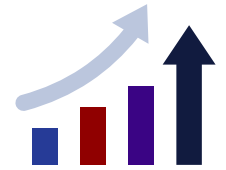


DC Insiders' Media Diet by Age

MAY 2026

DC insiders' media habits shift significantly by generation. Younger staffers spend 5+ hours a day on social platforms like X and TikTok, making them the most likely to consume news through social media. Mid-career professionals lead AI adoption and engage broadly across every channel. Late-career policymakers are the most AI-confident at 49%, and seasoned DC insiders (age 66+) remain anchored to traditional media.



Social media disengagement increases steadily with age.



41%
Spend 5+ hrs a day on social media (18-35)



40%
of AI users are ages 36-49



44%
Rarely or never check social media for news (66+)

GEN Z & YOUNGER MILLENNIALS
18-35
Hyper-Connected, Platform-Concentrated, and Trust-Fragmented Consumers



- Only 5% rarely check social media for news
- ~56% rely primarily on X or TikTok, creating high-impact but narrow entry points
- Lower engagement with broadcast/cable news
- Higher relative trust in AI tools and newsletters

MID-CAREER POLICYMAKERS
36-49
Digitally Fluent Generalists with Cross-Platform Expectations



- 20% rarely or never check social media
- 32% are somewhat confident using AI tools
- Among the highest podcast engagement levels (21%)
- Regular use of newsletters, TV, social, and podcasts

LATE-CAREER POLICYMAKERS
50-65
Pragmatic Adopters with Selective Digital Engagement



- 32% rarely or never check social media
- 49% are very confident using AI tools
- Strong, consistent podcast listenership
- Continued reliance on TV and newsletters

SEASONED POLICYMAKERS
66+
Traditionalists with Measured but Meaningful Digital Adoption



- No dominant social platform preference
- 34% rank newspapers as most trusted
- 22% are not confident at all using AI tools
- 49% say broadcast TV has lost influence

AI Adoption Is Rising Across Every Generation

Percentage of DC Insiders who use AI

