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# Middle America Project

2019  
ANNUAL  
REPORT

From the impeachment hearings of President Donald Trump, to the gridlock in Congress, to the damaging rhetoric used by both political parties, Americans **distrust** has fallen across the federal government and with fellow citizens – 75 percent don't trust the government and 64 percent don't trust each other. The combination of divisiveness and distrust leaves little room for agreements or compromise. Even more so, according to a report by **Pew Research**, the majority of Democrats and Republicans disagree on even basic facts.

But for the country to move out of this period of negativity, misinformation, and inaccuracy, we need to actively seek factual information and meet on middle ground. The underpinnings of American democracy are based on compromise and collaboration. As we see it, Middle America refers not only to a geography but also a mindset.

While the extreme left and the extreme right are often the loudest group **on the internet**, they are also the smallest group in terms of representation. **97 percent** of tweets that mentioned politics in the United States came from only 10 percent of users.

There is a large, overshadowed, and painfully underrepresented, moderate American middle who want to see sensible policies enacted on issues such as trade, health care, taxation, and the environment. That's where Middle America Project comes in.

The Middle America Project was created to inform and educate moderate messaging with the help of thinkers and doers to move national and local conversations. By taking meaningful, substantive, and measured steps to tackle complex, but not intractable, topics through social media and across internet, the Middle America Project monitors, evaluates, and contributes to policy conversations with an aim for compromise, based in facts.



# Introduction.

## What we do.

The Middle America Project aims to help turn the policy conversation from one that is normally filled with highly politicized rhetoric to one filled with facts, information, and rational discussion. Middle America Project regularly engages with policymakers, think tanks, and academics to identify moderate ideas and policy solutions and elevate thoughtful, nuanced policy options through our public platforms.

## Our Issues

Middle America Project is focused on the issues that we **know** concern most Americans, and that have inspired some of the most heated online debates. Specifically, we want to encourage rational dialogue and effective action on:

- The Changing American Workplace and Workforce
- Access to, and Affordability of, Health Care
- Ensuring Trade Helps American Businesses and Workers
- Fair and Effective Tax Policies
- Encouraging American Innovation
- Improving America's Infrastructure
- Encouraging American Technology
- Combating Climate Change

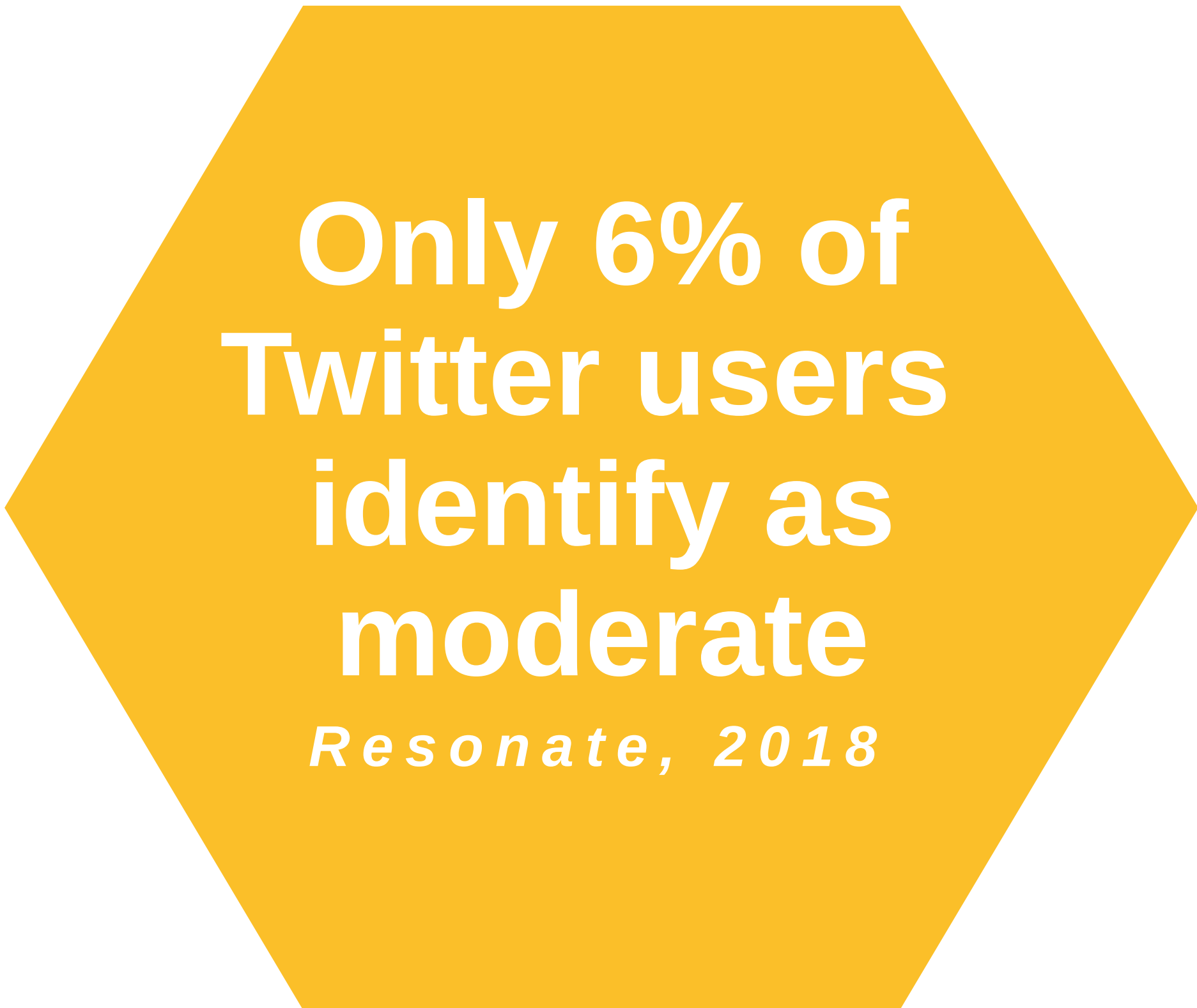
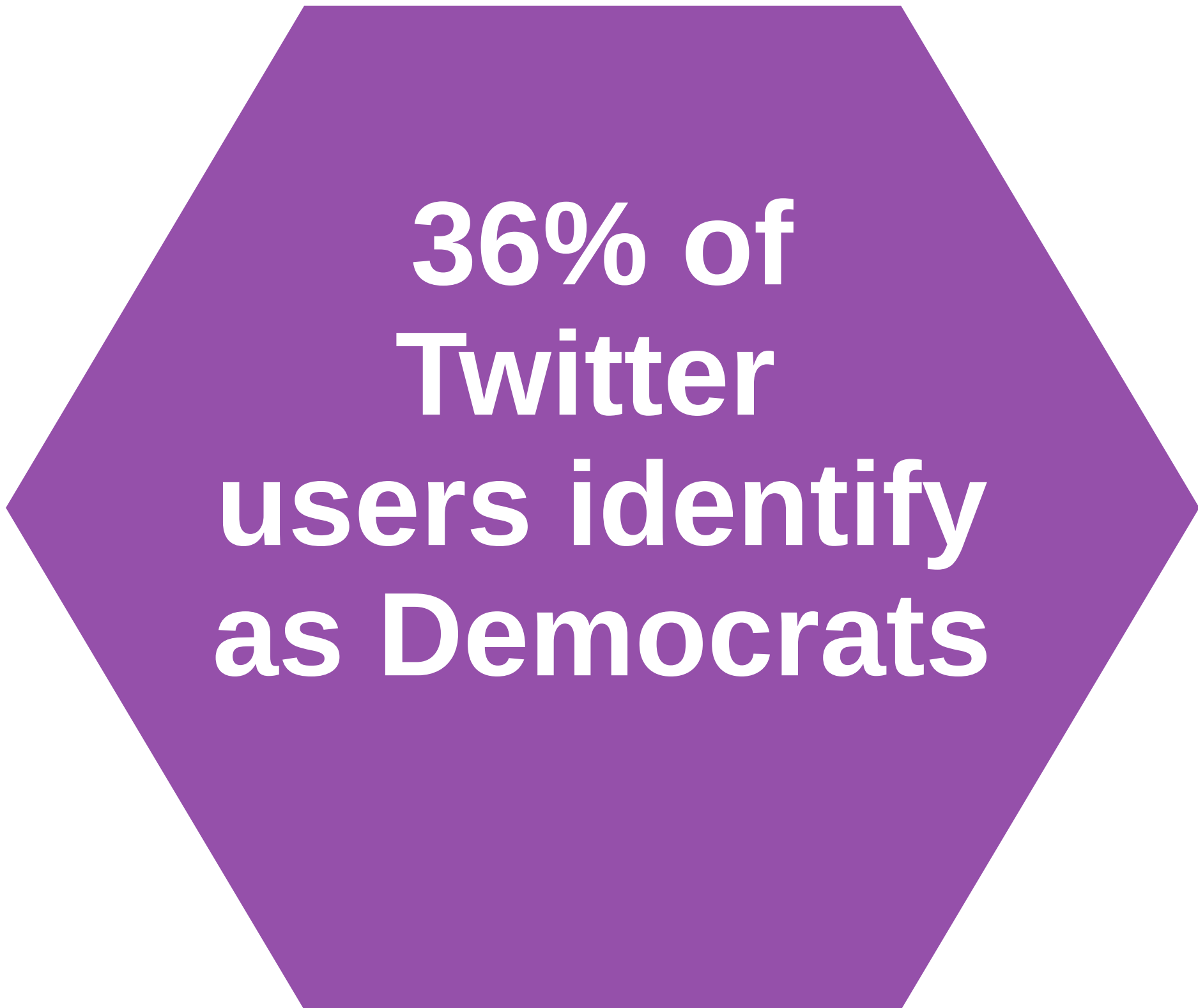
## Americans and the Consumption of News

A **2019 Pew Research Center** report found that “more than half of U.S. adults get news from social media often or sometimes (55%), up from 47% in 2018. About three-in-ten Americans now get news on social media often (28%), up from 20% in 2018.”

Further, **71% of Twitter's users** get their news on the site. And while **36% of users identify as Democrats**, only **6% identify as moderate** according to data from **Resonate**. This increase in the use of social media as a news source, along with those sites' lack of editorial control, has made social media ripe for the dissemination of **inflammatory and often inaccurate stories**. This, in turn, has made the prospects for moderate and rational debate harder and harder to facilitate.

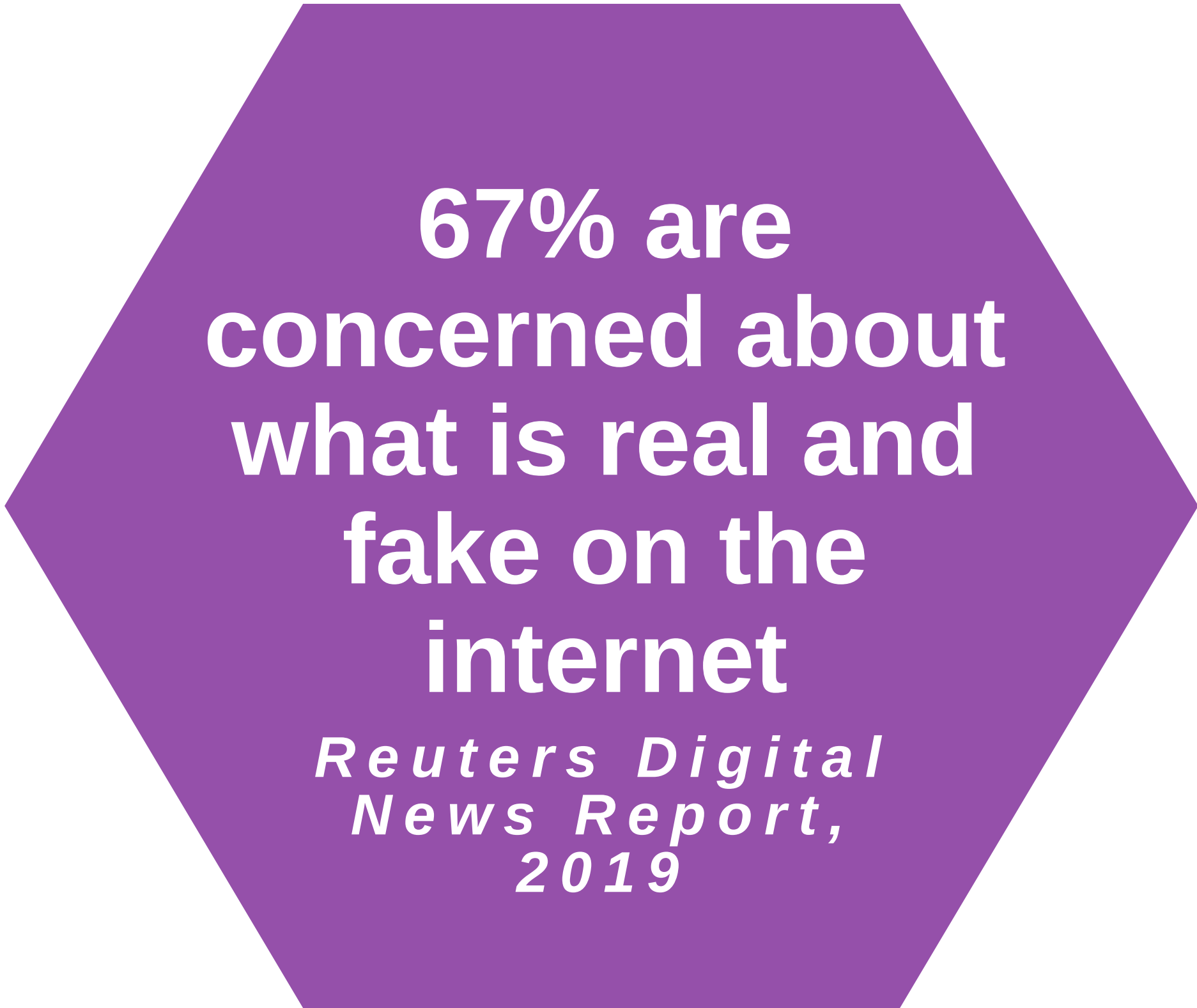
"About three-in-ten Americans now get news on social media often (28%), up from 20% in 2018."





The [Reuters Digital News Report for 2019](#) found in the United States, **67% of respondents among the general population** are “very or extremely concerned about what is real and ‘fake’ on the internet,” up from 54% the previous year. The United States is among the most worried countries, coming only second to the UK (70%).

That same report shows news publishers are struggling to distinguish themselves from “the mass of information that is now published on the internet.” Plagued by misinformation, many online users are seeking out more “reputable” news outlets.



That’s where Middle America Project comes in - by sharing through social media and other resources, fact-checked and edited news stories that offer moderate analyses and proposals on the issues that matter most to most Americans. Since Middle America Project's launch, we have reached almost twenty million people.

*Social media is a powerful tool and it is critical it is used correctly and responsibly.*

# Our Content Creation

In 2019, the Middle America Project launched its **#GetSmartOn** series, aimed at educating users online about various topics including the administration’s tariffs on Chinese goods and price setting. The series included video explainers, ads, and other content. Going into 2020 and beyond, the Middle America Project will continue this series and expand it to include other topics and will create an educational newsletter.



*#GetSmartOnDrugPrices explainer video. Watch the full video [here](#).*



*#GetSmartOnTrade explainer video. Watch the full video [here](#).*

Other content included creating a microsite on drug pricing and innovation, advertisements on long-term care and other topic areas, and weekly updates of the Middle America Project website.





# The News On the Issues

Any reporter, political commentator, and even the average American, will tell you 2019 surpassed 2018 as the **most polarizing year in news**. From Medicare for All-style proposals to hot-button immigration issues, the continuation of the 24-hour news cycle created even more head-turning, unbelievable, and sensational news stories than ever before.

The Middle America Project's mission is to promote middle of the road positions and arguments on a variety of stories. To do this, we work to amplify the coverage of these positions. Here are some of the stories we promoted in 2019:

- [The disaster aid fight shows just how unprepared Congress is to deal with the effects of climate change](#)  
(Vox, 05/16/19)
- [This Startup Wants to Remake the Last Mile of Parcel Delivery](#)  
(Wired, 06/06/19)
- [Trump Fails Farmers](#)  
(Forbes, 07/31/19)
- [Big Tech spends billions to help housing crisis](#)  
(Axios, 11/06/19)

In our 2018 annual report, we declared that “We learned a lot this year, and are excited for what 2019 holds for us” and that holds true for 2019 as well – we learned even more and are still very excited about how information is shared online and how to quantify it, and to bring the Middle America Project message to more audiences. By understanding what people are saying online and how they are talking about it, Middle America Project will be able to effectively craft messaging that reaches more audiences. But most importantly, we know the need for shining a light on the Middle America mindset will be even more relevant during the 2020 election year. Our excitement is about more growth and to support that growth, our strategy will include:

- 1) **Capturing mind share** – By building out the platform, refining our mission and differentiating ourselves
- 2) **Growing the community** – By recruiting influencers and thought leaders aligned with our mission and helping them amplify their messages, and by diversifying our audience
- 3) **Engaging the community** – By expanding our content creation and our participation in more communications platforms

## What's Next?



## Conclusion.

Middle America Project enjoyed a number of successes in 2019, especially as we worked to increase our reach and original content. We reached over 11 million people online with our message of rational, moderate, and responsible education. We engaged with Americans on issues ranging from tax reform to pre-existing conditions in health care.

If our research shows us anything, it's that the American people are dissatisfied with their government and the media and are increasingly turning to social media to get their news. We believe that is due in large part to the polarization of the voices on the right and left. The Middle America Project is fighting to help our political leaders and all Americans reach agreements that both sides agree with, helping everyone reach some middle ground.