



# Communicating in an Information Age

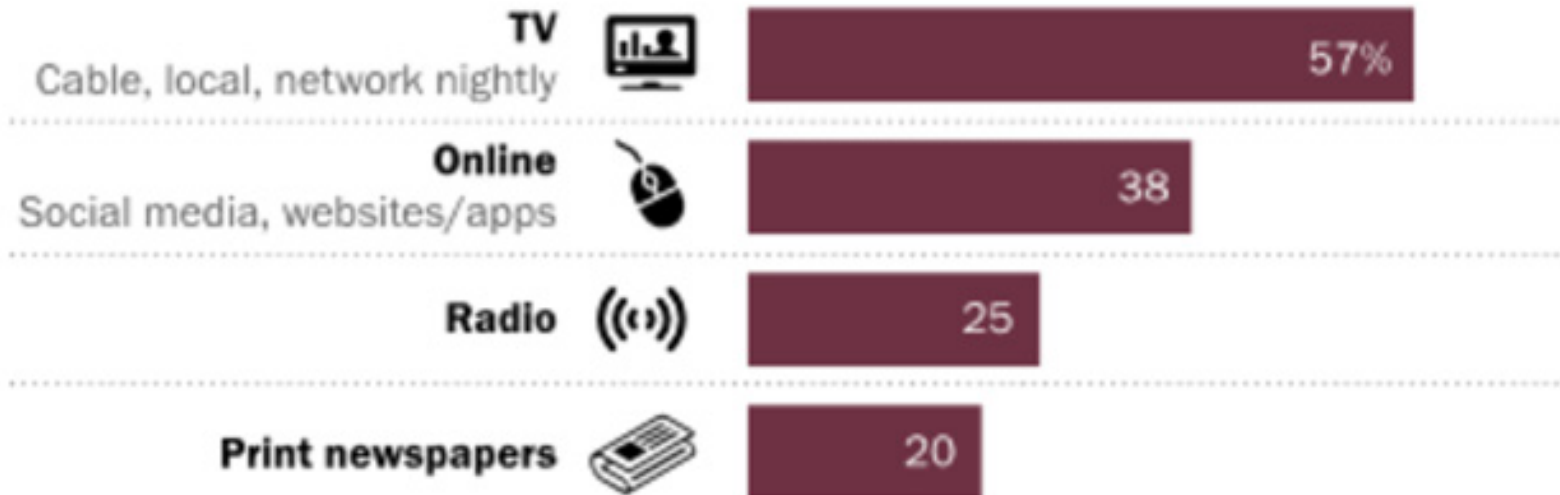
Jacques Arsenault  
Digital Communications Manager  
Office of Public Affairs



U.S. GOVERNMENT  
ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

# Digital News Surpasses Radio, Newspapers

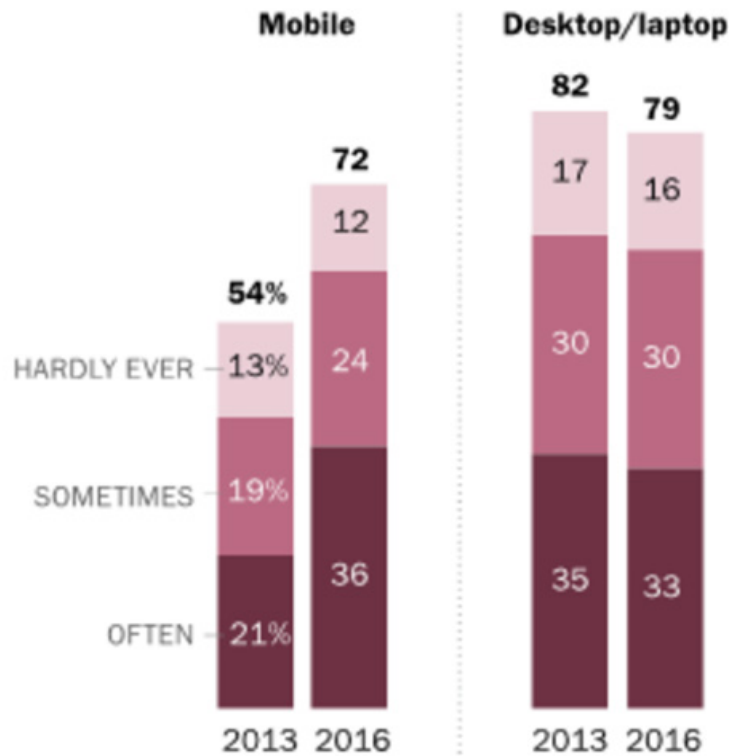
% of US adults who often get news on...



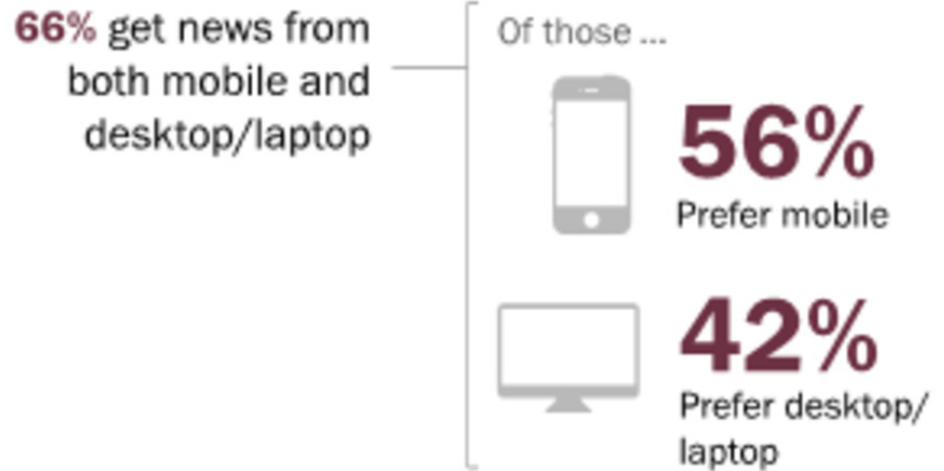
*“About four-in-ten Americans often get news online.”*

# Mobile News Consumption Rising

% of US adults who ever get news on...



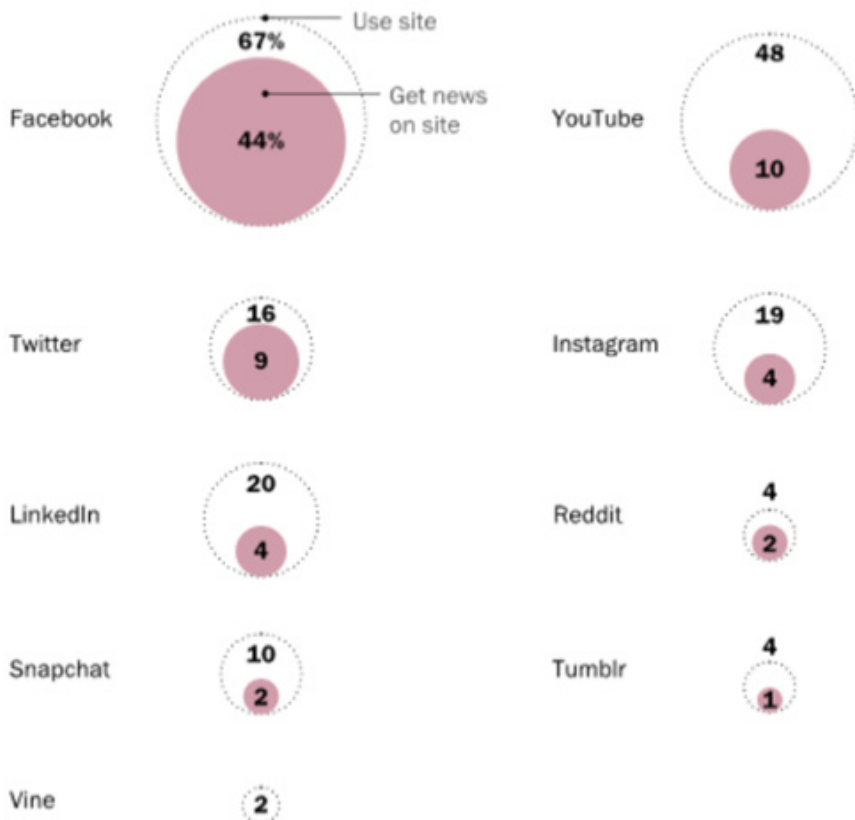
Among people who get news on both, more prefer mobile



Source: Pew Research Center "[Pathways to News](#)" July 2016

# Social Media News Use: Facebook Leads the Pack

% of adults who get news on...



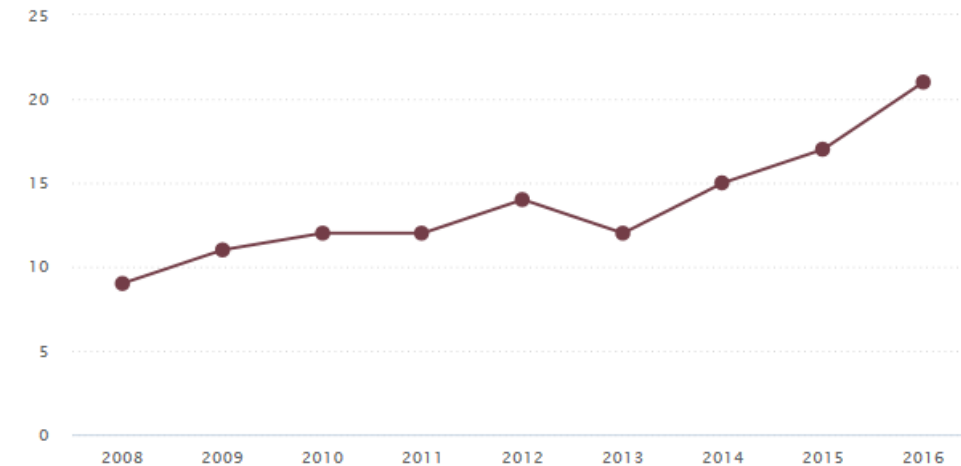
*“Social media, particularly Facebook, is now a common news source. Overall, 62% of U.S. adults get news on social media, and 18% do so often.”*

Source: Pew Research Center [“10 facts about the changing digital news landscape”](#) September 2016

## Percentage of Americans who have listened to a podcast in the past month has increased steadily since 2013

Chart Data Embed

*% of U.S. adults ages 12 or older who have listened to a podcast in the past month*



Note: Edison's survey is conducted in January and February of each year.

Source: Edison Research.

"State of the News Media 2016"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

# A Growing Podcast Market

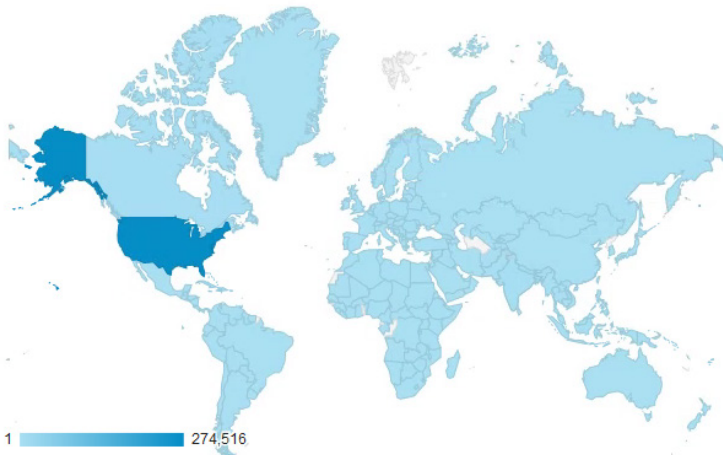
Pew Research Center's ["Podcasting Fact Sheet"](#)

June 2016

# New Media Lessons from Google Analytics

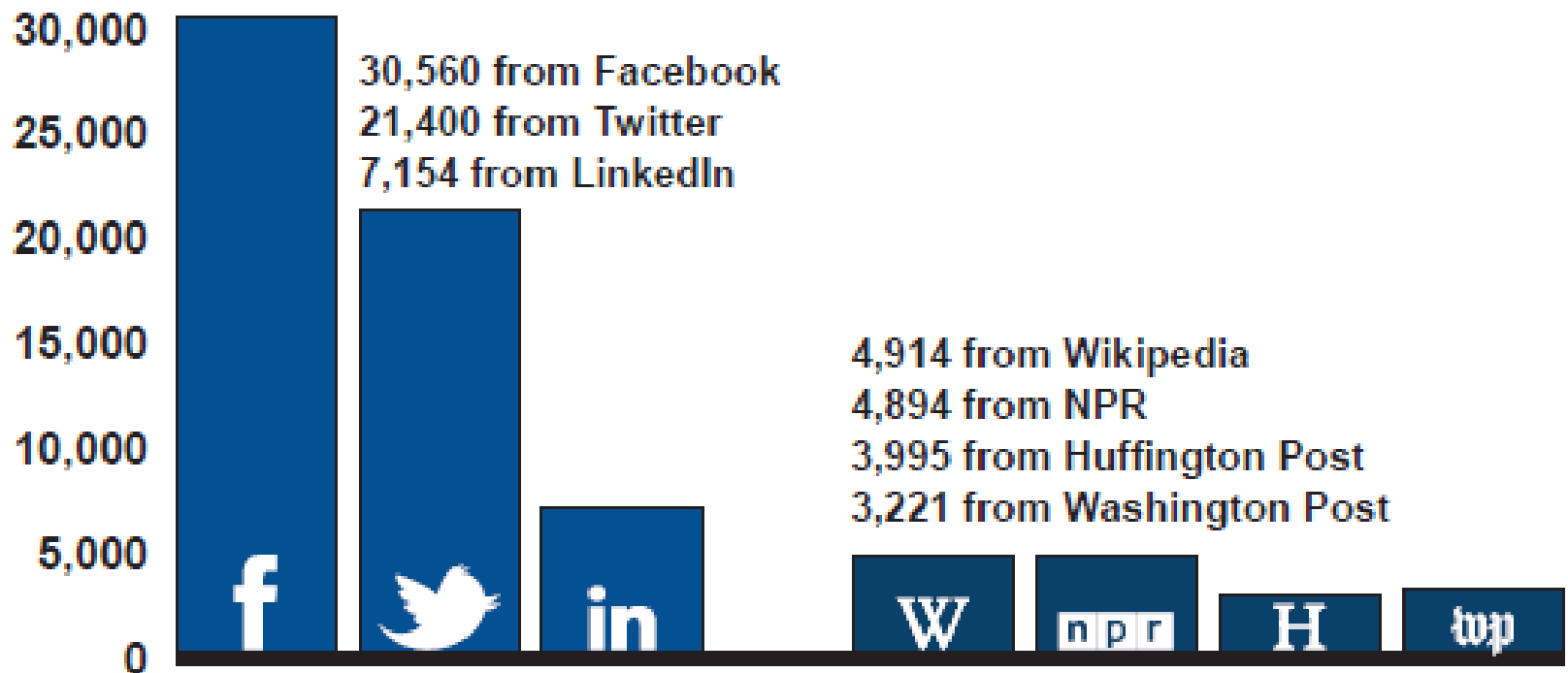


- Added Google Analytics to GAO.gov in 2012
- Provides key metrics on
  - Visitors' behavior (engaging content, devices, time on page)
  - How people find our work (referral traffic, search engines)
  - Effectiveness of our social media campaigns (tagging)



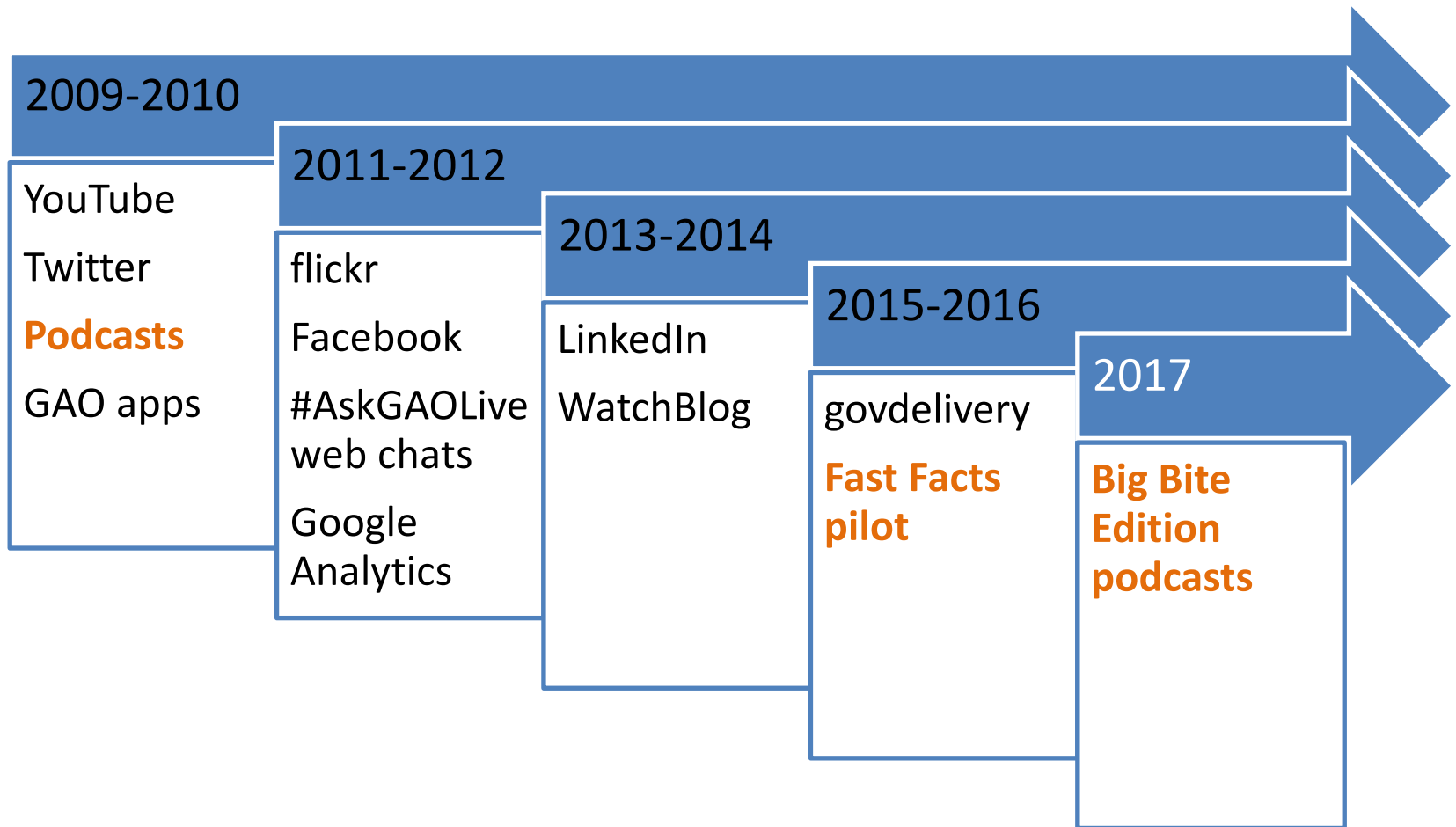
# Google Analytics: More Come to GAO.gov from Social Than Mass Media

Top sources of traffic to GAO.gov



Source: GAO 2016 Social Media Report

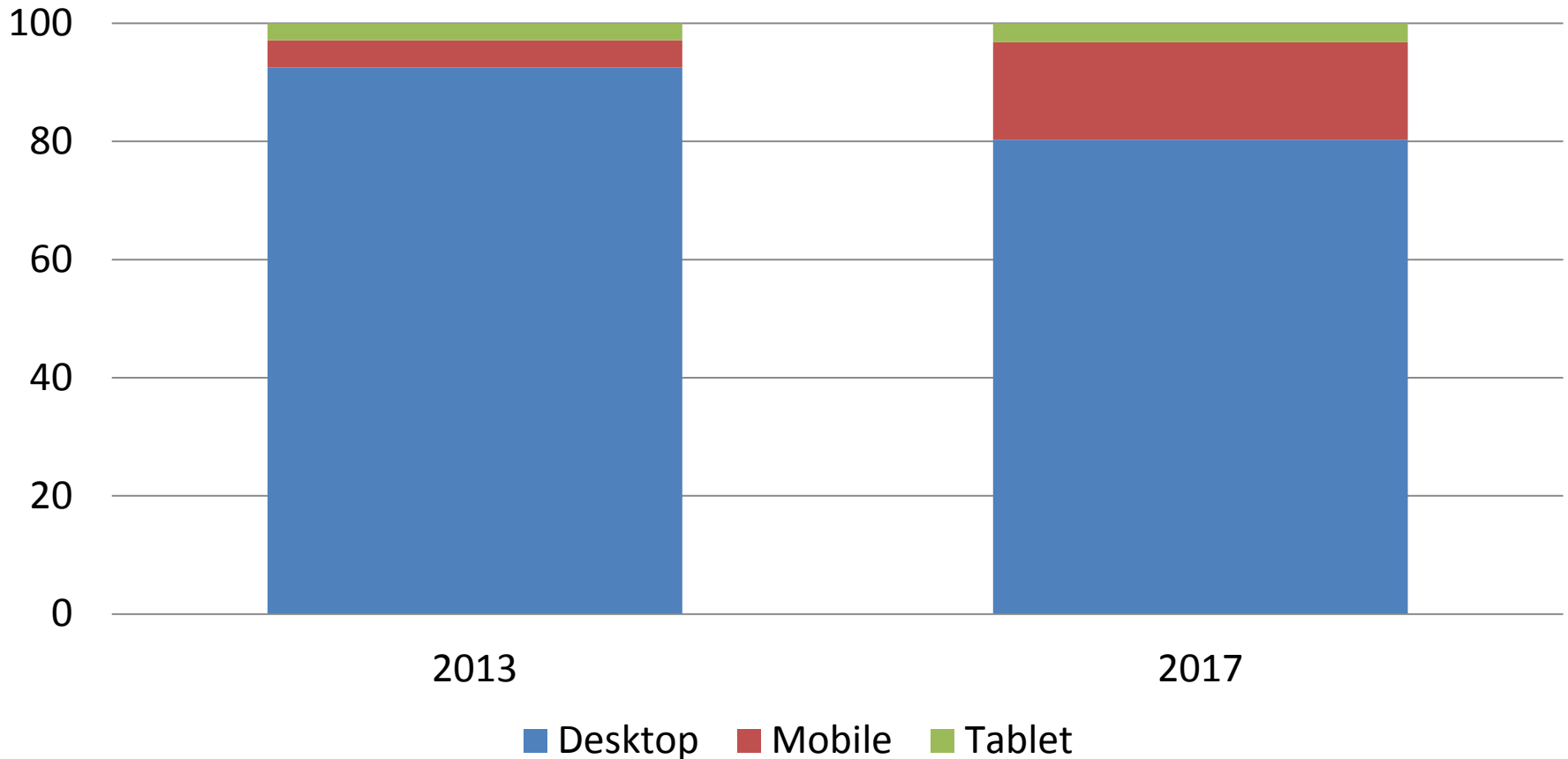
# GAO's Social and Digital Media Timeline





# Google Analytics: Growth of Mobile

Percent of Traffic to GAO.gov



# GAO Social Media



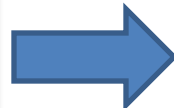
# Twitter



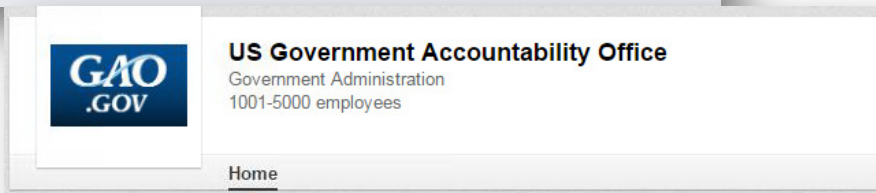
## Real Time Access to:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- Reports
- Testimonies
- Podcasts
- Blog Posts
- Breaking News
- Legal Decisions

# Twitter – GAO Plugged In



# Facebook & LinkedIn



- 
- Daily Posts
  - Podcasts
  - Blog Posts
  - Videos
  - Live Web Chats



# Facebook/LinkedIn - Daily Post

Figure 6: Example of an 8-Inch Floppy Disk



Source: GAO. | GAO-16-468

**GAO** U. S. Government Accountability Office (GAO)  
Page Liked · May 25 ·

No, this isn't Throwback Thursday. The Department of Defense still uses 8-inch floppy disks in a legacy IT system that coordinates the operational functions of U.S. nuclear forces. Read about the costs of maintaining the federal government's aging legacy IT systems, and check out three more reports and testimonies issued today: <http://1.usa.gov/1sax22U>

Like Comment Share

145 Chronological

155 shares 45 comments

View 39 more comments

**Beyond Bogus** This is funny. One of the most important dept. is utilizing outdated equipment and floppy disk? Too much room for error. Just nvr mind  
Like · Reply · May 27 at 7:47am

**John Childs** Yeah, but y'all got state of the art computers to spy on American citizens and our allies tho, huh?  
Like · Reply · May 27 at 8:47am

**Brittney Mahlstedt** Surprising no one.  
Like · Reply · May 27 at 10:00am

**Guilherme Gasparoni** Interesting.  
Like · Reply · May 27 at 10:54am

Write a comment...  
Press Enter to post.

Text (1 to 3 sentences)

Link to Report

Engagement: How many people liked, shared, and commented on the post

Engaging image from the report

# Facebook - Video



## Fighting to Protect Wildlife



U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO)



about 3 months ago · 🌐

1 wildlife ranger dies every 4 days worldwide, according to one estimate. For World Ranger Day, see rangers in action to stop poachers and help protect elephants, rhinos, and other large animals, and read about U.S. efforts to help combat wildlife trafficking: <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-717...> #WorldRangerDay

👍 🤔 😬 31

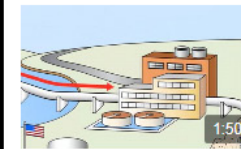
14 Shares 5.3K Views

👍 Like    💬 Comment    ➦ Share



### Comments

### Up Next



#### Lead in Drinking Water

U.S. Government Accountability...  
1.3K Views



#### Cuppa GAO - Disaster Assistance & Preparedness

U.S. Government Accountability...  
566 Views



#### State of Retirement

U.S. Government Accountability...  
3.8K Views

# Facebook Live

- Cuppa' GAO: Coffee with Our Experts
- Shot on iPad
- Promote in advance
- Encourage participation from key audiences





# GAO.gov Website - Fast Facts

- Communications is rapidly changing
  - Deluge of information demands we present our work in a clear and concise top layer
- Data show we face challenges communicating
  - Google Analytics data show the bounce rate for Highlights pages is 57%, meaning those users quickly decide not to engage further with the report, or with other GAO.gov content.

FAST FACTS HIGHLIGHTS VIEW REPORT (PDF, 51 PAGES) 

## What GAO Found

Federal and state policymakers have used a range of policies to encourage the deployment of solar systems and other technologies that allow residential customers to generate, store, and manage their electricity consumption. For example, federal tax incentives—such as the investment tax credit—have reduced customers' up-front costs of installing solar systems. In addition, a Department of Energy funded database of renewable energy incentives identifies 41 states with net metering policies that require electricity suppliers to credit customers for electricity sent from their solar systems to the grid, providing an additional incentive. Moreover, in 14 states, customers can also receive state tax credits for installing solar systems, according to the database, which further reduces the up-front costs.

According to GAO's analysis of Energy Information Administration (EIA) data, deployment of solar systems has increased significantly in some states, with the total number of residential customers with solar systems increasing sevenfold from 2010 to 2015. However, customers with solar systems represent a very small portion of overall electricity customers—about 0.7 percent of U.S. residential customers in 2015, according to EIA data. Every state experienced growth in the number of customers with residential solar systems, although certain states, such as California and Hawaii, accounted for most of the growth and have had more widespread deployment. For example, about 14 percent of residences in Hawaii have installed a solar system, according to EIA data. Although comprehensive data on the deployment of electricity storage systems and smart devices are not available, the data and information provided by stakeholders GAO interviewed suggest their deployment is limited.

The increasing residential deployment of solar systems and other technologies poses potential benefits and challenges, and some policymakers have implemented or are considering measures to address these, as GAO found in its analysis of reports and stakeholder interviews. Specifically, these technologies can provide potential benefits through more efficient grid operation, for example, if customers use these technologies to reduce their consumption of electricity from the grid during periods of high demand. Nonetheless, grid operators GAO interviewed said they have begun to confront grid management and other challenges in some areas as solar deployment increases. For example, in some areas of Hawaii, solar systems have generated more electricity than the grid was built to handle, which resulted in the need for infrastructure upgrades in these areas. However, grid operators reported that challenges generally have been manageable because overall residential solar deployment has been low. Policymakers in some states have implemented or are considering measures to maximize potential benefits and mitigate potential challenges associated with the increasing deployment of these technologies. For example, two states' regulators have required electricity suppliers to identify areas of the grid where solar and other technologies would be most beneficial to grid operation. In addition, several state regulators recently have allowed electricity suppliers to adopt voluntary time-based electricity prices that increase when demand for electricity is high, providing customers with an incentive to reduce consumption at these times, potentially by using solar, storage, and other technologies.

## Why GAO Did This Study

Traditionally, electricity has moved in one direction—from electricity suppliers to customers. Today, solar systems allow electricity to be generated at a customer's home and sent to the grid for electricity suppliers to use to meet other customers' electricity needs. Storage systems allow residential customers to store electricity from the grid or their own solar system for use at a later time. Furthermore, customers can use smart devices, such as thermostats, to manage their electricity consumption.

GAO was asked to provide information on the deployment and use of technologies that give customers the ability to generate, store, and manage electricity. This report describes (1) key federal and state policies used to encourage the deployment of these technologies, (2) the extent to which these technologies are being deployed, and (3) the benefits and challenges of deploying these technologies. GAO analyzed available data on technology deployment from EIA and reviewed relevant reports and regulatory documents. GAO interviewed a non-generalizable sample of 48 government agencies and stakeholder organizations. This sample included state regulators and at least one electricity supplier from each of five states: Arizona, California, Hawaii, Minnesota, and New York, which were selected based on state policies and having high levels of technology deployment.

GAO is not making recommendations in this report.

Source: [GAO-17-142](#)

# What Are Fast Facts?

## Editorial Guidelines

- 650 characters total, including spaces
- Relatable language, no jargon
- Flexibility on structure
- Link to recommendations tab



### HIGH-RISK SERIES:

#### Progress on Many High-Risk Areas, While Substantial Efforts Needed on Others

GAO-17-317: Published: Feb 15, 2017. Publicly Released: Feb 15, 2017.

FAST FACTS

HIGHLIGHTS

VIEW REPORT (PDF, 684 PAGES)

Every 2 years, we examine federal programs and operations that are especially vulnerable to waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement, or that need transformative change—our High Risk List. This report reviews the status of areas on the list and outlines steps to lasting solutions.

This year, we added 3 areas, expanded 2 existing ones, and found many areas still in need of substantial attention. Yet, a number of agencies have made solid progress, including in 1 area that we removed and 2 others we narrowed.

The new High Risk areas are:

- Federal Indian education, health, and energy programs
- Federal environmental liabilities
- The 2020 Census



Source: [GAO-17-317](https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-317)

# Fast Facts: External Pilot Examples

## Report-Related Visual

- Simple data graphics
- Photographs, including pre-approved GAO stock photos



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE:

**Medical Conditions and Care for End-of-Service Military Working Dogs**

GAO-17-358: Published: Mar 10, 2017. Publicly Released: Mar 10, 2017.

FAST FACTS

HIGHLIGHTS

VIEW REPORT (PDF, 26 PAGES)

DOD has used military working dogs at home and abroad to assist and protect servicemembers by helping to detect explosives or other threats. After completing their service, the dogs can be adopted, transferred to a law enforcement agency, or euthanized.

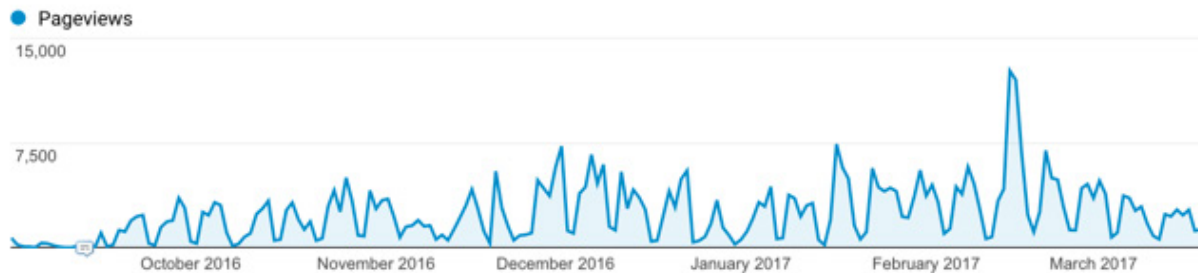
Based on available data, we found that the most prevalent medical conditions for dogs adopted during 2014 and 2015 included skin conditions, dental disease or dental injury, and musculoskeletal issues. The owners of adopted military working dogs are responsible for the costs of their veterinary care, although some assistance is available through non-profit organizations.



Source: [GAO-17-317](#)

# Fast Facts Pilot Initial Results

## 135 Fast Facts publicly released from 5 teams



*Initial Google Analytics and usability tests show Fast Facts improves the GAO.gov user experience by quickly communicating main ideas to users and enticing them to further explore GAO.gov.*

# GAO's Watchdog Report Podcast

- Started in 2010
- Over 300 episodes
- *Short, unscripted conversations with GAO directors about newly issuing work.*



GAO's Watchdog Report podcast episodes on [GAO.gov](http://GAO.gov) and [iTunes](#).



# How They're Made

- Scan upcoming reports for potential podcasts
- Schedule interview
- Record 2-3 weeks before report will issue
- 5-10 minute conversation becomes 5-6 minute podcast
- Aim for 8-10 episodes per month



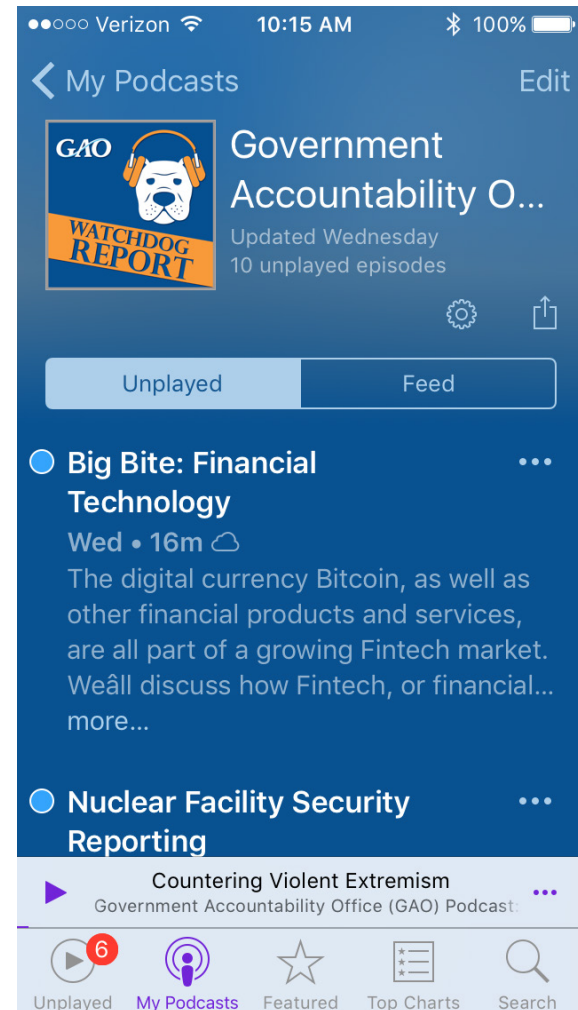
# Roles and Responsibilities

- **Host:** plans schedule, develops questions and intros
- **Producer:** records, edits, mixes (software can vary)
- **Guests:** internal agency experts
- **Introductions:** could be by host or by a different person



# Spreading the Word

- Via:
  - iTunes
  - Sharing via social media channels
  - Player on GAO homepage
- Results
  - Over 400,000 downloads
  - 4.5 stars on iTunes





# Recent Episodes

- [Low Wage Workforce](#)
- [NASA Human Space Exploration](#)
- [Imported Seafood Safety](#)



# Watchdog Report Podcast: Big Bite

- Started in 2017
- 4 initial episodes
- *15-30 minute, conversations with GAO directors about newly issuing work. Some recorded on location.*



GAO's Watchdog Report podcast episodes on [GAO.gov](https://www.gao.gov) and [iTunes](https://www.apple.com/itunes/).

# Podcasts – What You Need to Get Started

- An audience and something to say
- A notional schedule
- Basic recording and editing equipment
  - Like a smartphone and free audio editing software
- A way to distribute your podcasts
  - iTunes, Stitcher, Google Play Music Podcasts, Soundcloud, your website



# Podcasting Resources

- [Popular Mechanics](#) getting started in podcasting
- [Lifehacker](#) starting your own podcast
- [The Audacity to Podcast](#) audio editing software
- [Soundcloud](#) podcast hosting and distribution



# Social Media: What Can You Do?

- One advantage of social media is the low cost.
- Most platforms are free, and content can be created with limited resources.
- Think about time/approval resources and processes needed from your team.

# Social Media: Looking to Start?

- Consider your
  - audience
  - message
  - goals
  - Capacity
- Try one new platform at a time, assess and adjust
- Get to know the platforms as an individual user, to learn what works



# Questions?

- Jacques Arsenault, Digital Communications Manager, U.S. Government Accountability Office, [arsenaultj@gao.gov](mailto:arsenaultj@gao.gov)