

A background image featuring several microphones and hands holding them. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent grid pattern. The colors transition from a warm yellow/orange at the top to a cool blue at the bottom. The text 'AMERICAN VIEWS: TRUST, MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

AMERICAN VIEWS: TRUST, MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY

A GALLUP/KNIGHT
FOUNDATION SURVEY

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AMERICAN VIEWS: TRUST, MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY

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OVERVIEW

A GALLUP/KNIGHT FOUNDATION SURVEY

Technological advances have made it easier for Americans to connect with each other and to find information, including details about the major issues facing the country. But those advances present both challenges and opportunities for individuals and U.S. institutions.

Not only is more information readily available, but so is more misinformation, and many consumers may not be able to easily discern the difference between the two.

Amid the changing informational landscape, media trust in the U.S. has been eroding, making it harder for the news media to fulfill their democratic responsibilities of informing the public and holding government leaders accountable.

Results of the 2017 Gallup/Knight Foundation Survey on Trust, Media and Democracy show that most Americans believe it is now harder to be well-informed and to determine which news is accurate. They increasingly perceive the media as biased and struggle to identify objective news sources. They believe the media continue to have a critical role in our democracy but are not very positive about how the media are fulfilling that role.

The research reported here is based on a nationally representative mail survey of more than 19,000 U.S. adults aged 18 and older. This project received support from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Open Society Foundations.

KEY FINDINGS

Americans believe the news media have an important role to play in democracy, particularly in terms of informing the public, yet they do not believe the media are fulfilling that role.

- More than eight in 10 U.S. adults believe the news media are critical or very important to our democracy. They see the most important roles played by the media as making sure Americans have the knowledge they need to be informed about public affairs and holding leaders accountable for their actions.
- At the same time, Americans are more likely to say the media perform these roles poorly than to say they are performing them well.
- The public divides evenly on the question of who is primarily responsible for ensuring people have an accurate and politically balanced understanding of the news — 48% say the news media and 48% say individuals themselves.

Americans believe that it is increasingly harder to be a well-informed citizen.

- By 58% to 38%, Americans say it is harder rather than easier to be informed today due to the plethora of information and news sources available.
- Half of U.S. adults feel confident there are enough sources to allow people to cut through bias to sort out the facts in the news — down from 66% a generation ago.
- Twenty-seven percent of Americans say they, personally, are “very confident” that they can tell when a news source is reporting factual news versus commentary or opinion.
- Based on their self-reported knowledge of current events and perceptions of how easy it is to discern truth from misinformation in news reporting, most Americans fall into the categories of either Knowledgeable Optimists, who are informed and believe it is possible to find the truth, or Inattentive Skeptics, who are less informed and pessimistic that the truth can be identified. Partisanship and education influence these beliefs.

Americans’ perceptions of the news media are generally negative, and their perceptions of bias have grown considerably from a generation ago. A majority cannot name an objective news source.

- More Americans have a negative (43%) than a positive (33%) view of the news media, while 23% are neutral.
- Today, 66% of Americans say most news media do not do a good job of separating fact from opinion. In 1984, 42% held this view.
- Less than half of Americans, 44%, say they can think of a news source that reports the news objectively. Republicans who can name an accurate source overwhelmingly mention Fox News®, while Democrats’ responses are more varied.
- On a multiple-item media trust scale with scores ranging from a low of zero to a high of 100, the average American scores a 37.
- Media trust is highly influenced by partisanship, with Democrats largely trusting the media and Republicans distrusting. Older Americans tend to view the media more positively than younger adults do.

Americans are highly concerned about the effects of “fake news” on our democracy, but their definitions of “fake news” vary.

- Seventy-three percent of Americans say the spread of inaccurate information on the internet is a major problem with news coverage today; this percentage is higher than for any other potential type of news bias.

- A majority of U.S. adults consider “fake news” a very serious threat to our democracy.
- Americans are most likely to believe that people knowingly portraying false information as if it were true always constitutes “fake news.”
- Four in 10 Republicans consider accurate news stories that cast a politician or political group in a negative light to always be “fake news.”

Americans view many newer sources of news positively, but they are less positive about social media.

- Underscoring the changing news landscape, equal proportions of Americans rely on social media as rely on newspapers to stay informed.
- Majorities say the effect of citizen videos, the internet, cable news and news aggregators has been positive for the news environment, while a majority say the impact of social media — and politicians’ use of it to communicate directly to citizens — has been negative.

Even in the midst of technological change affecting the news environment, television news programs are the most popular news source. TV news and newspapers are most trusted.

- Roughly two-thirds of U.S. adults say they rely on television news “a great deal” or “a fair amount” for staying up to date on news.
- Internet news websites are the next-most-common source.
- Americans have the greatest trust in national network news and local and national newspapers to provide mostly accurate and politically balanced news. They trust cable news more than they trust internet news sources.
- Younger adults (aged under 50) are more likely to consume news online, including on social media, while older adults are much more likely to watch or listen to news.
- Reliance on newspapers is most common among adults with graduate degrees, as well as those who are aged 65 and older.

The public expresses concerns about the role that major technology companies are playing in the modern news environment, but it is divided on whether they should be regulated.

- Seven in 10 U.S. adults report getting news at least occasionally from major internet platforms such as Google®, Facebook® or Yahoo®.
- The public considers these internet platforms’ methods to direct news stories to individual users based on their past browsing history problematic for democracy. However, they divide on whether these companies’ methods should be regulated.

The news media may have as much potential to reinforce existing views as they do to persuade.

- Most Americans claim to rely on a mix of liberal and conservative news sources, but one in four admit to getting news from only one perspective.
- Forty-six percent of U.S. adults claim to have firm views that rarely change.
- Americans commonly share news stories with others — primarily with like-minded people.

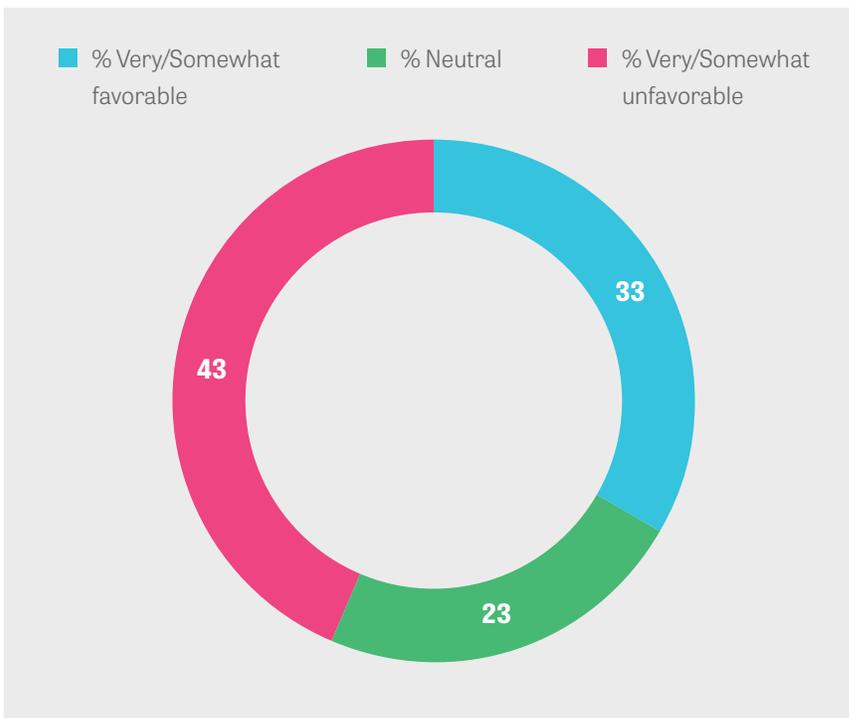
DETAILED FINDINGS

MEDIA TRUST AND BIAS

AMERICANS VIEW NEWS MEDIA MORE NEGATIVELY THAN POSITIVELY

Long-term Gallup trend data document a decline in Americans' trust in the news media, with 41% in 2017 saying they trust the media, down from 54% in 2003.¹ Consistent with the relative lack of trust in the media, Americans' overall opinion of the news media is more negative than positive — 43% say they have a “very unfavorable” or “somewhat unfavorable” opinion of the news media, while 33% have a “very favorable” or “somewhat favorable” opinion. Twenty-three percent are neutral.

What is your overall opinion of the news media today?



Graph excludes percentage for respondents who did not provide an answer.

¹ <http://news.gallup.com/poll/219824/democrats-confidence-mass-media-rises-sharply-2016.aspx>

Politics is a major influence on views of the news media — whereas 54% of Democrats have a very or somewhat favorable opinion, 68% of Republicans view the news media in an unfavorable light. Independents also view the news media negatively overall, but not quite to the extent that Republicans do.

Given their strong Democratic political leanings, blacks tend to have positive views of the media. Among age groups, young adults are the most negative, with twice as many 18- to 29-year-olds saying they have an unfavorable than a favorable opinion of the news media. Senior citizens are the least negative age group, with slightly more rating the news media positively than negatively. These age differences could be tied to the level of trust in the media that existed when Americans came of age. Younger adults have grown up in a time of greater public skepticism toward the news media.

Overall Opinion of News Media, by Age, Race and Party Identification

	FAVORABLE	NEUTRAL	UNFAVORABLE
% All	33	23	43
% 18-29 years old	22	31	45
% 30-49 years old	29	26	44
% 50-64 years old	35	20	44
% 65+ years old	43	15	39
% White	28	20	51
% Black	51	26	21
% Hispanic	38	29	32
% Democrat	54	26	18
% Independent	25	25	48
% Republican	15	16	68

Republican college graduates are one subgroup with an especially unfavorable opinion of the media, with 76% saying they have a “somewhat unfavorable” or “very unfavorable” view. A significantly lower percentage of Republicans without college degrees, 64%, have a somewhat or very unfavorable view of the media.

Similarly, 74% of conservative Republicans rate the news media unfavorably, compared with 57% of moderate Republicans and 35% of liberal Republicans. Majorities of liberal (58%), moderate (51%) and conservative Democrats (58%) have a favorable opinion of the news media.

POLITICS IS A MAJOR INFLUENCE ON VIEWS OF THE NEWS MEDIA — 54% OF DEMOCRATS HAVE A FAVORABLE OPINION, AND 68% OF REPUBLICANS HAVE AN UNFAVORABLE OPINION.

AMERICANS SEE MANY PROBLEMS WITH NEWS COVERAGE TODAY

Majorities of Americans describe each of eight potential forms of news bias or inaccuracy as “major problems” in news coverage today. Chief among these are the spread of inaccurate information on the internet and owners of news outlets attempting to influence the way stories are reported. Americans also see overly sensational coverage, bias in the reporting and selection of stories, an expansion of news sources promoting an ideological viewpoint, a lack of investigative journalism, and inaccurate reporting as major problems.

Among these, the only issue on which a considerable partisan gap does not exist is the spread of inaccurate information on the internet. On all others, Republicans are much more likely than Democrats to believe the matter is a major problem.

Problems Associated With News Coverage Today, by Party Identification

Would you say each of the following is a major problem, a minor problem or not a problem with news coverage today?

Figures are the percentages who say the matter is “a major problem”

	ALL	DEMOCRATS	INDEPENDENTS	REPUBLICANS
The spread of inaccurate information on the internet	73	71	75	76
Owners of news outlets attempting to influence the ways stories are reported	69	61	72	76
News organizations being too dramatic or too sensational in order to attract more readers or viewers	66	56	70	75
Too much bias in the reporting of news stories that are supposed to be objective	65	50	68	81
Too much bias in the selection of what stories news organizations cover or don't cover	64	51	69	78
Increasing number of news sources reporting a specific ideological viewpoint rather than being neutral	61	51	64	71
Not enough investigative journalism to uncover important facts	59	51	63	66
News organizations reporting information they think is accurate but turns out to be inaccurate	57	46	59	68

Whites and blacks show varying levels of concerns about possible media biases. Whites are much more likely than blacks to see overly sensational news coverage and biased reporting as problematic. Young adults between the ages of 18 and 29 are more likely than adults aged 65 and older to see the spread of inaccurate information online, biased reporting and biased selection of stories as major problems.

Perceptions of Problems With News Coverage Today, by Age and Race

Figures are the percentages who say the matter is “a major problem”

	18-29 YEARS OLD	30-49 YEARS OLD	50-64 YEARS OLD	65+ YEARS OLD	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC
The spread of inaccurate information on the internet	80	75	73	68	76	63	70
Owners of news outlets attempting to influence the ways stories are reported	71	69	69	65	72	55	63
News organizations being too dramatic or too sensational in order to attract more readers or viewers	66	68	67	62	70	46	62
Too much bias in the reporting of news stories that are supposed to be objective	72	67	65	59	70	49	56
Too much bias in the selection of what stories news organizations cover or don't cover	72	67	64	57	68	53	56
Increasing number of news sources reporting a specific ideological viewpoint rather than being neutral	61	61	63	61	65	47	57
Not enough investigative journalism to uncover important facts	62	59	60	58	61	49	59
News organizations reporting information they think is accurate but turns out to be inaccurate	58	57	58	56	58	49	59

AMERICANS THINK OF TV, NEWSPAPERS AS MORE CREDIBLE THAN OTHER SOURCES

News is delivered and consumed in the U.S. across a variety of modes, and the survey asked respondents how credible they consider several of these to be. More Americans express “a lot” or “a fair amount” of confidence in all mainstream TV and newspaper outlets (network and cable TV, national newspapers, and local newspapers) to provide accurate, politically balanced information than they do in online sources like news aggregators or internet-only news websites. Although viewed better than internet sources, cable news engenders less trust than national network news and local and national newspapers do.

Across all modes of news media, Republicans are less confident than Democrats that the information provided is accurate and balanced. The greatest partisan difference concerns national television network news and major national newspapers. Three-quarters of Democrats, but only about three in 10 Republicans, express “a lot” or “a fair amount” of confidence that the information provided by these media sources is accurate and politically balanced.

Whites tend to be less confident than blacks and Hispanics are across these various modes; however, 52% of whites are confident in their local newspapers. The largest age difference concerns news aggregators — 47% of 18- to 29-year-olds are confident in their accuracy, compared with 28% of those aged 65 and older.

Confidence That News Media Are Providing Mostly Accurate and Politically Balanced News to Its Users, by Age, Race and Party Identification

Figures are the percentages who have “a lot” or “a fair amount” of confidence in each source

	YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER	NATIONAL NETWORK NEWS	MAJOR NATIONAL NEWSPAPERS	CABLE NEWS	NEWS AGGREGATORS*	INTERNET-ONLY NEWS WEBSITES
All	54	52	51	46	38	36
18-29 years old	58	46	54	43	47	40
30-49 years old	55	49	52	41	41	40
50-64 years old	52	52	49	46	34	36
65+ years old	54	58	50	53	28	30
White	52	45	46	40	34	31
Black	64	74	67	65	50	51
Hispanic	55	61	58	54	44	48
Democrat	66	75	73	60	45	44
Independent	52	46	48	38	38	35
Republican	45	31	29	34	28	29

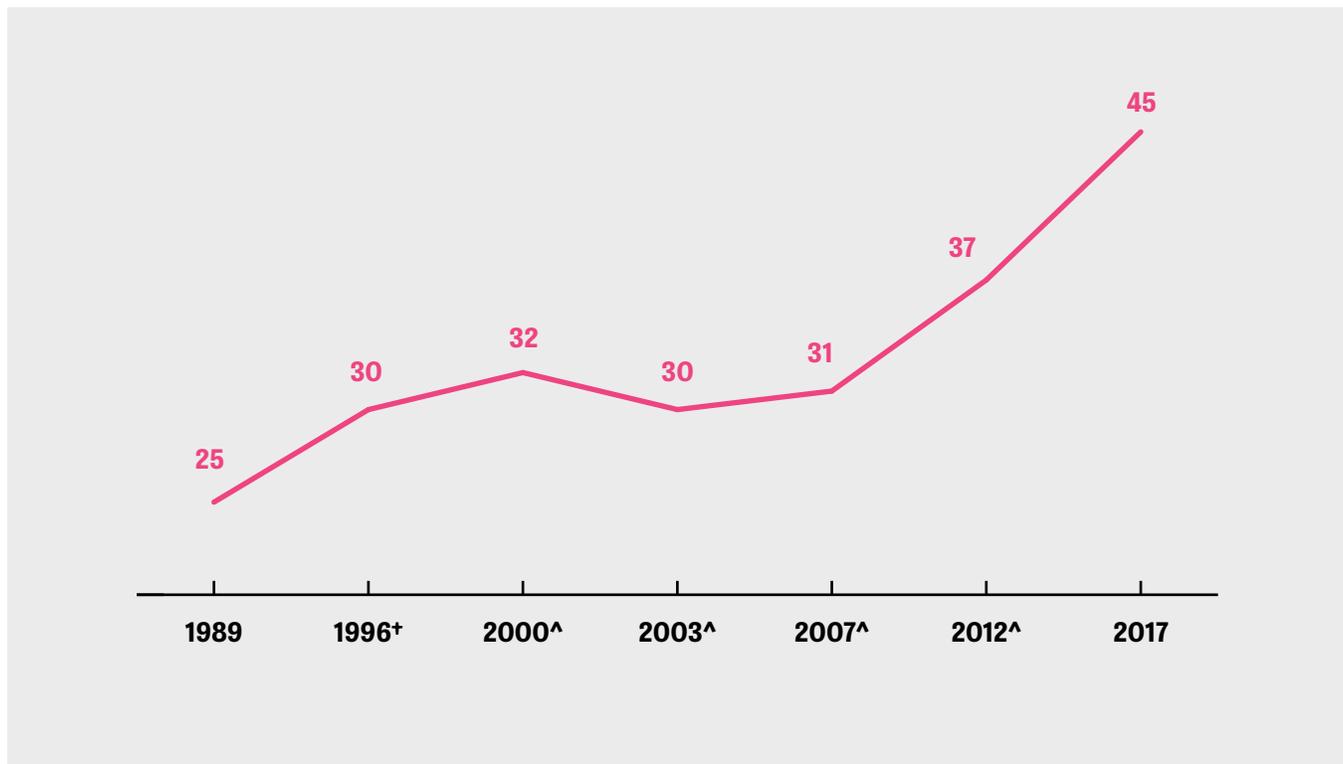
* Wording: News aggregators — apps or websites that gather and show news from many different news organizations

AMERICANS PERCEIVE MORE NEWS BIAS THAN IN THE PAST

Given the many problems that Americans see in news coverage today, it is not surprising that they are more likely than in the past to see greater bias in the news. Forty-five percent of Americans say there is “a great deal” of political bias in news coverage, a sharp increase compared with what other polls have measured on the same question in the past. Only 25% felt this way in 1989. By 1996, 30% of U.S. adults perceived a great deal of bias in the media, with little change over the next decade, until a 2012 Pew Research Center poll found 37% holding this view.

IN 1989, 25% OF U.S. ADULTS SAID THERE WAS A GREAT DEAL OF POLITICAL BIAS IN NEWS COVERAGE; NOW, 45% DO.

Percentage of Americans Seeing “A Great Deal” of Political Bias in News Coverage



^ Telephone survey conducted by Pew

+ Telephone survey conducted by Louis Harris & Associates

Sharp differences in perceptions of media bias are apparent along party lines today. Although 67% of Republicans say they see “a great deal” of political bias in the news, only 26% of Democrats agree. Independents fall in the middle, at 46%. Republican college graduates (74%) are more likely than Republicans without a degree (65%) to say there is “a great deal” of bias.

Consistent with their political leanings, non-Hispanic whites are much more likely than blacks and Hispanics to perceive bias in news. Perceptions of bias are similar by age, as well as region.

Perceptions of Political Bias in News, by Age, Race and Party Identification

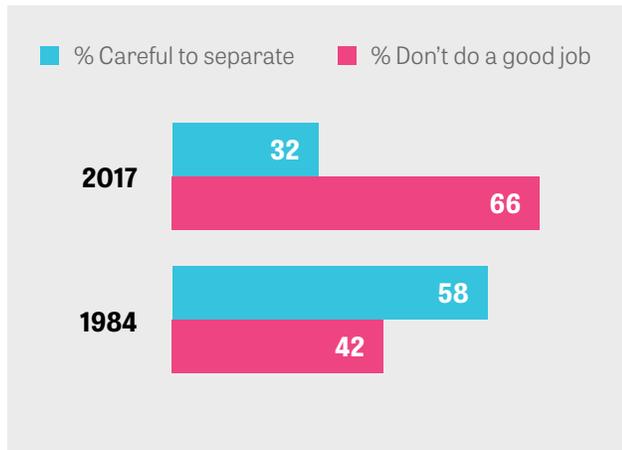
To what extent do you see political bias in news coverage?

	A GREAT DEAL	A FAIR AMOUNT	NOT TOO MUCH	NOT AT ALL
% All	45	38	13	2
% 18-29 years old	48	38	10	2
% 30-49 years old	43	41	13	2
% 50-64 years old	47	36	14	2
% 65+ years old	45	37	14	2
% White	50	36	11	2
% Black	31	44	17	4
% Hispanic	35	42	18	2
% Democrat	26	49	21	2
% Independent	46	38	12	2
% Republican	67	24	6	1

MINORITY OF AMERICANS CONSIDER NEWS MEDIA OBJECTIVE, STRUGGLE TO IDENTIFY AN OBJECTIVE SOURCE

Accompanying the perceived creep of political bias into news coverage, fewer Americans feel the media are doing a good job reporting the news objectively. Sixty-six percent say most news media do not do a good job letting people know what is fact or opinion, up from 42% in a 1984 American Society of Newspaper Editors survey. Thirty-two percent currently say the media are careful to separate fact from opinion, a view that was held by a majority, 58%, in 1984.

Which comes closer to your view: “Most news media are careful to separate fact from opinion” or “Most news media don’t do a good job of letting people know what is fact and what is opinion”?



Fifty-three percent of Democrats and 50% of blacks believe the news media are careful to separate fact from opinion, but all other age, race and political subgroups say the media does not do a good job of this, including nearly nine in 10 Republicans.

Job News Media Do in Separating Fact From Opinion, by Age, Race and Party Identification

	CAREFUL TO SEPARATE	DO NOT DO A GOOD JOB
% All	32	66
% 18-29 years old	25	73
% 30-49 years old	30	68
% 50-64 years old	34	64
% 65+ years old	37	60
% White	27	70
% Black	50	46
% Hispanic	36	62
% Democrat	53	44
% Independent	27	71
% Republican	13	86

When asked if they can think of a news source that reports the news objectively, less than half of Americans, 44%, say they can.² Partisan differences on this item are fairly muted, as 51% of Democrats, 42% of Republicans and 40% of independents say they could think of an objective news source. Democrats and adults over age 65 are among the groups most likely to say they could think of an objective news source.

² The 44% figure includes 2% who say they could name an objective news source but when asked to name one could not do so, leaving 42% of U.S. adults who are able to identify an objective news source by name.

Can Think of an Objective News Source, by Age, Race and Party Identification

	YES	NO
% All	44	51
% 18-29 years old	35	62
% 30-49 years old	40	56
% 50-64 years old	48	48
% 65+ years old	52	41
% White	46	50
% Black	40	53
% Hispanic	38	57
% Democrat	51	44
% Independent	40	56
% Republican	42	54

Even though Americans who self-identify as “very conservative” are highly critical of the media, a majority of them say they can name an objective news outlet. “Very liberal” respondents are the ideological group most inclined to say there is an organization that reports the news accurately.

LESS THAN HALF OF AMERICANS CAN IDENTIFY A NEWS SOURCE THEY BELIEVE IS OBJECTIVE.

Can Think of an Objective News Source, by Ideology

	YES	NO
% All	44	51
% Very liberal	67	29
% Liberal	56	41
% Moderate	38	57
% Conservative	41	55
% Very conservative	52	42

Postgraduates are also much more likely than those with no more than a high school education to indicate they could think of an objective news source. Residents of the eastern (48%) and western U.S. (45%) are slightly more likely than those in the Midwest (41%) and South (42%) to be able to identify an objective news outlet. Regional differences are smaller when comparing coastal (45%) versus non-coastal states (43%).

Of respondents who could name an objective media outlet, Fox News is the top-cited source, named by 24%. CNN® (13%) and NPR® (10%) follow in second and third.

Fox News’ top overall ranking is a function of its dominant positioning among Republicans — 60% of Republicans who can name an objective news source named Fox News. Among Democrats, CNN (21%) and NPR (15%) led, but by much smaller percentages than Fox News had among Republicans.

Fox News is also the clear leader among whites and older Americans. It ties with CNN for first among young adults and with NPR for first among 30- to 49-year-olds. Blacks and Hispanics are most likely to name CNN as an objective news source.

News Sources Believed to Be Objective, by Age, Race and Party Identification*

Figures are the percentages mentioning each source

	FOX NEWS	CNN	NPR	LOCAL NEWS (NONSPECIFIC)	BBC*	MSNBC*	PBS*/PBS* NEWS HOUR	NBC*/NBC NEWS*	THE NEW YORK TIMES*	ABC*/ABC NEWS*
All	24	13	10	5	5	4	3	3	3	3
18-29 years old	15	15	13	4	7	3	2	3	3	2
30-49 years old	16	14	16	5	7	3	3	2	3	2
50-64 years old	28	13	7	5	4	4	3	3	2	2
65+ years old	35	12	4	4	2	6	4	4	2	4
White	29	10	10	4	5	3	3	3	3	2
Black	6	28	6	8	2	9	1	3	1	3
Hispanic	14	21	7	4	4	4	3	1	2	2
Democrat	3	21	15	5	5	7	4	4	5	3
Independent	16	11	12	5	7	4	4	2	3	3
Republican	60	4	1	4	3	0	1	1	0	1

*Based on those who say they can name an objective news source (n=9,814 national adults)

Majorities of conservative (55%) and very conservative (58%) adults who believe there is an objective news source identify Fox News as that source. Moderates are most likely to name CNN (18%). CNN essentially ties with NPR as the most named objective news outlet among liberal respondents, while NPR is the top choice among those who describe their views as “very liberal” (26%).

NPR is also the most often mentioned objective news source among postgraduates, at 19%. Fox News leads among other educational groups, but it is mentioned less often by those with a four-year college degree but no postgraduate education (19%) than by those with some college education (27%) or a high school education or less (32%).

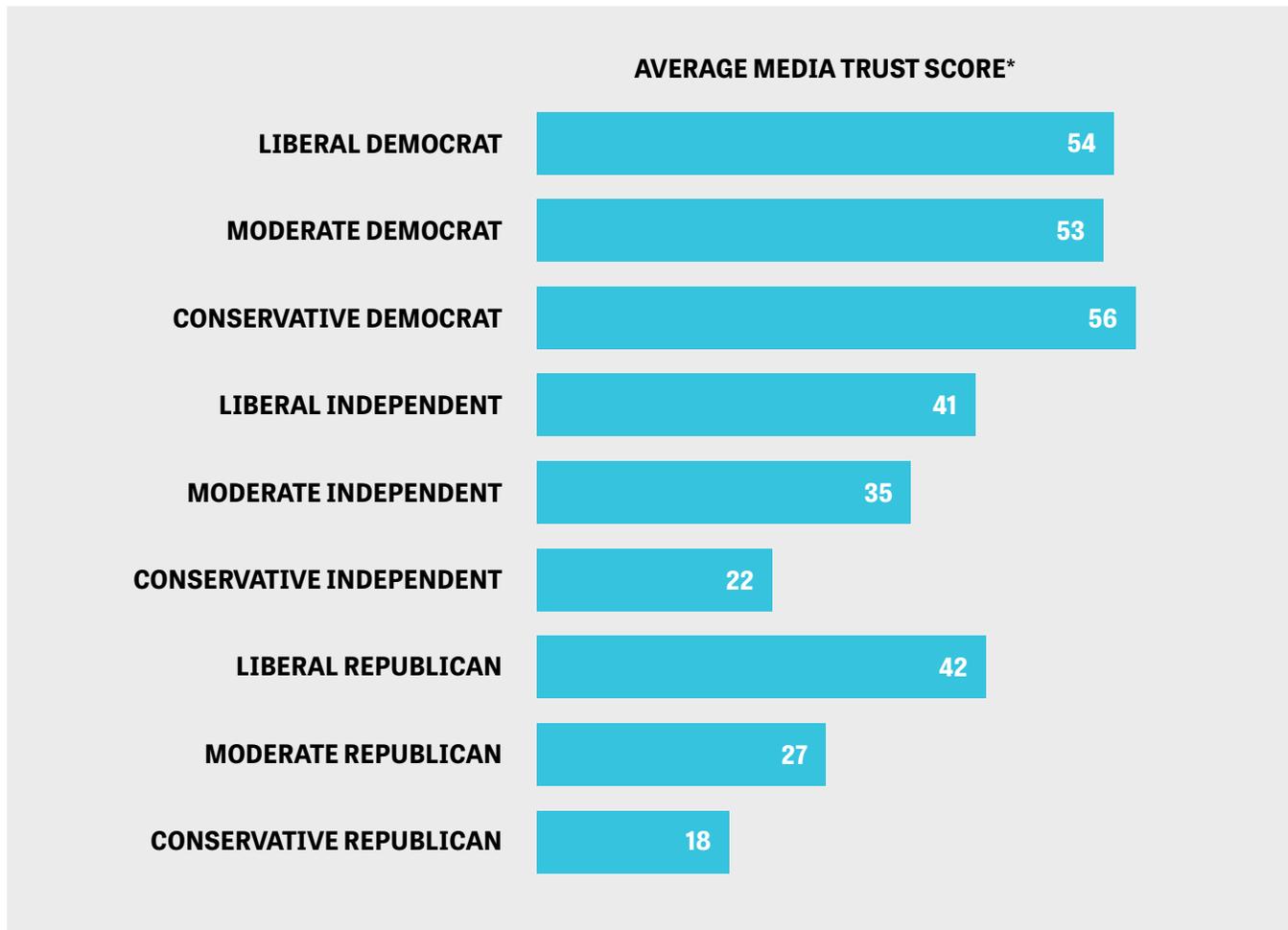
A SCALE OF MEDIA TRUST

Gallup combined four ratings of the news media — overall opinion of the news media, the extent to which people see political bias in news coverage, whether the media are careful to separate fact from opinion and how well the media do in providing objective news reports — to create an index of trust in the media. A statistical factor analysis method confirms that all four items are essentially measuring the same underlying (positive or negative) attitude about the media.³ The four items were recoded such that the most negative responses on each item were scored zero and the most positive were scored 100. The average score among all U.S. adults across the four items on this scale is 37.

Trust in the media is strongly associated with partisanship. Democrats (average score of 54 on the trust scale) generally trust the media, and Republicans (21) and independents (33) do not.

Democrats' trust in the media is similar regardless of their ideological views. Ideology matters more among independents and Republicans. Conservative Republicans and conservative independents are most distrusting of the media, while liberal Republicans (42) and liberal independents (41) are slightly above the national average in terms of trust.

Trust in the News Media, by Political Party and Ideology



* Average score on four-item media trust scale ranging from zero (least trust) to 100 (most trust)

³ The factor analysis was conducted using principal components factor analysis. The four items were recoded so that higher scores indicated positive ratings of the news media and lower scores indicated negative ratings. The factor analysis identified a single factor solution (eigenvalue of 2.63). The Cronbach's reliability score of the four items is alpha = .79.

Most of the demographic differences in trust tend to reflect the basic political leanings of the subgroup. Some of the subgroups showing above average media trust are blacks, Hispanics, Asians, political liberals, those with a high school education or less, lower-income Americans, those residing in big cities, and Eastern residents. Trust is lower among whites, political conservatives, those with a bachelor’s degree but no postgraduate education, upper-income Americans, and those living in rural areas or suburbs of small cities. The observed age differences — higher trust among older adults and lower trust among young adults — are not consistent with the typical political leanings of those age groups and may reflect the “coming-of-age” effects discussed earlier.

Average Score on Media Trust Scale, by Demographic Subgroup

Figures are average scores for the subgroup on a media trust scale ranging from zero to 100

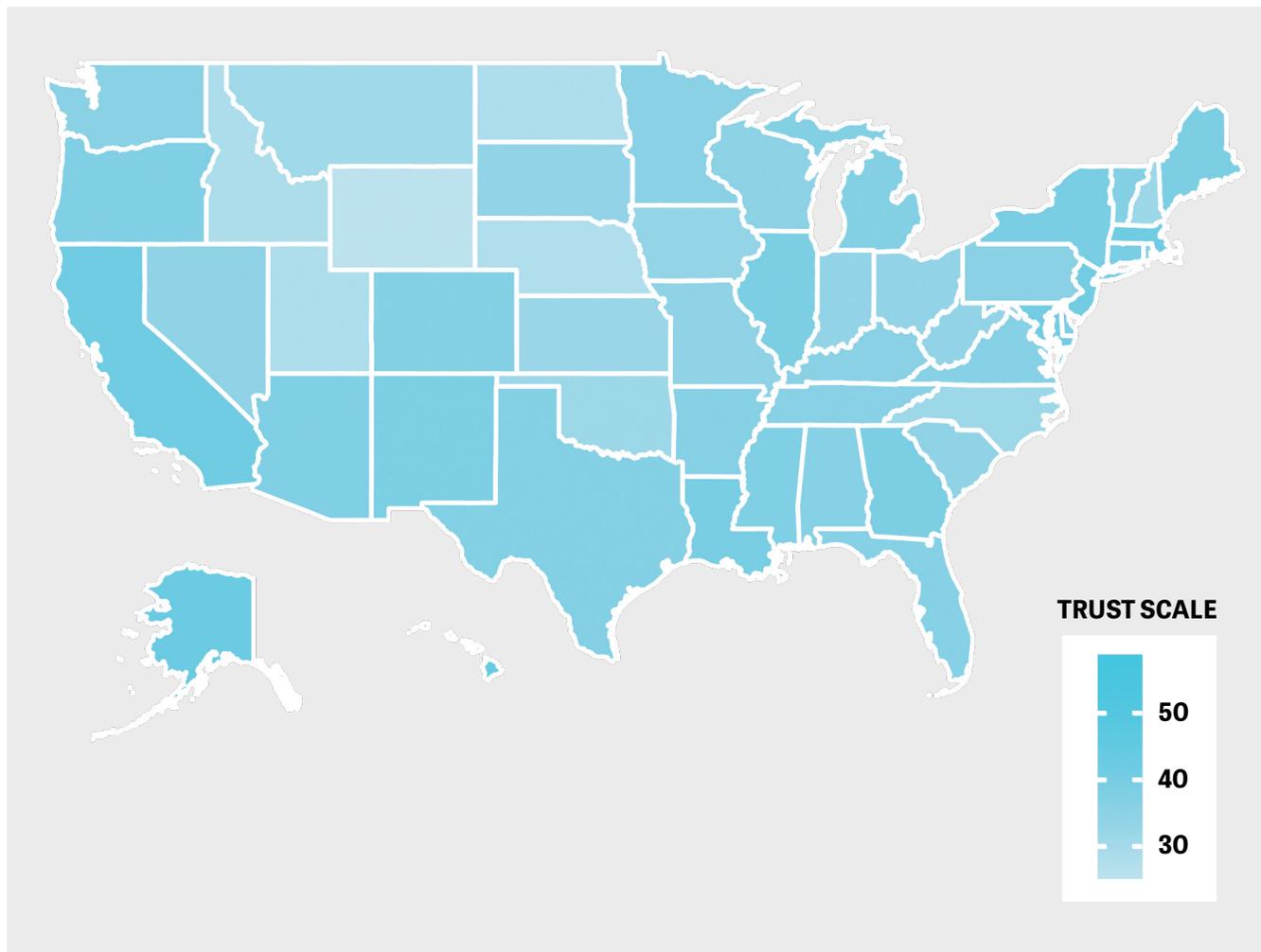
U.S. adults	37
White	32
Black	52
Hispanic	43
Asian	44
18-29 years old	33
30-49 years old	36
50-64 years old	37
65+ years old	41
High school education or less	41
Some college	34
Four-year college degree only	33
Postgraduate	37
Very liberal	48
Liberal	50
Moderate	41
Conservative	25
Very conservative	23

Annual household income less than \$50,000	42
Annual household income \$50,000-\$99,999	35
Annual household income \$100,000 or more	32
Big city	43
Small city	38
Suburb of big city	35
Suburb of small city	33
Town	37
Rural area	32
East	40
Midwest	36
South	36
West	37
Coastal state resident	38
Non-coastal state resident	36

The large sample size of the survey — more than 19,000 respondents — provides a good basis for assessing media trust at the state level, but it still does not provide an adequate sample size for analysis of smaller states.

A statistical modeling technique that analyzes the survey data along with known demographic characteristics of state populations allows for estimates of trust scores in all 50 states.⁴ Generally speaking, media trust estimates do not vary much by state but tend to be above the national average in states that are Democratic-leaning or have larger minority populations. The states with the highest estimated trust scores are Hawaii (44), Alaska (43), California (42), Massachusetts (42), Maryland (41) and New Jersey (41). States with lower estimated media trust tend to be Republican-leaning and have small minority populations, including Wyoming (25), Nebraska (27), Utah (27), North Dakota (28) and Idaho (28).

Estimated Media Trust Score, by State*



*Average score on four-item media trust scale ranging from zero (least trust) to 100 (most trust)

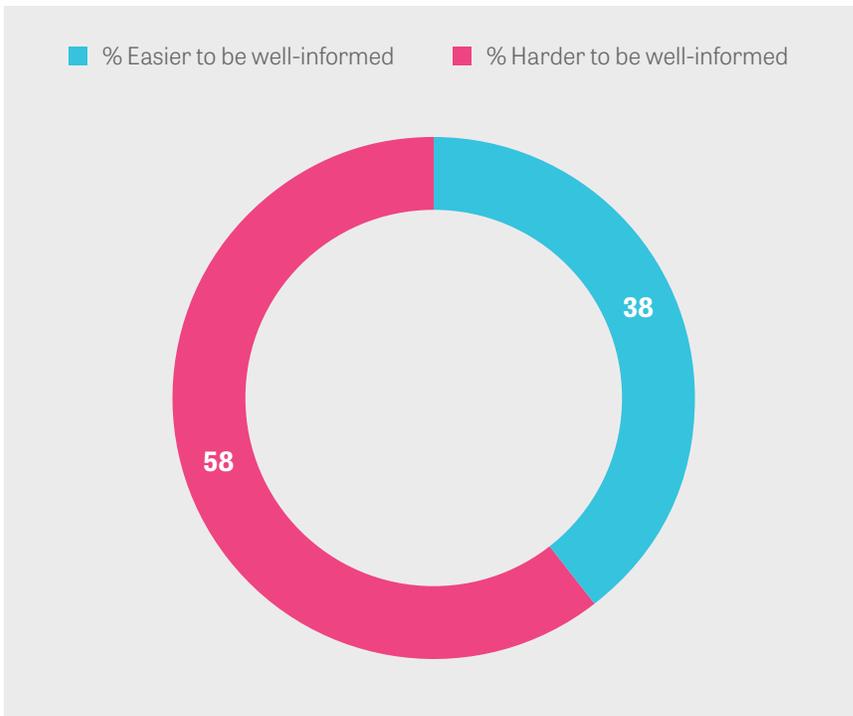
4 The statistical technique used is a multilevel regression modeling approach known as Multilevel Regression with Poststratification, or MRP. The dependent variable in the model is the zero to 100 trust scale score. Independent variables were state, gender, education, race, age, partisanship and ideology. State-level demographics used estimates from the 2011-2015 American Community Survey. State-level partisanship and ideology uses estimates from 2016 through June 2017 Gallup Daily tracking. The model fit (using BIC statistic) is .50.

DETAILED FINDINGS

NAVIGATING THE MODERN MEDIA LANDSCAPE

The explosion of information is a defining feature of the modern media landscape. Many Americans find this transformation daunting. By 58% to 38%, Americans say the increased amount of information available today makes it harder rather than easier to be well-informed because people have to devote considerable effort to determine what is true or important.

Does the increase in information available today make it: “Easier to be well-informed because there are more sources of news that are easily accessed through newer technologies” or “Harder to be well-informed because people have to sort through lots of information to determine what is true or important”?



Republicans are far more likely than Democrats to believe the increase in available information makes it harder to stay well-informed, while independents' views are closer to those of Republicans. Nearly two-thirds of whites say this proliferation makes it harder to be well-informed, but blacks disagree and Hispanics are evenly divided. There are no meaningful differences in these attitudes by age, education or region.

**Effect of Increase in Available Information,
by Age, Race and Party Identification**

	HARDER TO BE WELL- INFORMED	EASIER TO BE WELL- INFORMED
% All	58	38
% 18-29 years old	58	39
% 30-49 years old	59	39
% 50-64 years old	59	38
% 65+ years old	59	37
% White	65	33
% Black	39	55
% Hispanic	47	48
% Democrat	47	49
% Independent	61	36
% Republican	69	28

AMERICANS SAY THAT THE EXPLOSION OF INFORMATION SOURCES MAKES IT HARDER, RATHER THAN EASIER, TO BE WELL-INFORMED.

Attitudes about the increase in information are related to how one perceives the media and where one consumes information.⁵ Those holding favorable views of the media are much more likely than those with unfavorable views to believe more information makes staying informed easier (59% vs. 24%, respectively).

Frequent consumers of news from major websites like Facebook or Google (47%) are also more likely than those who rarely or never use such online platforms for news (33%) to believe the burgeoning information environment makes it easier to be well-informed.

5 See the appendix for survey findings on news consumption habits, including how closely Americans follow national political news and how knowledgeable they are about important issues facing the United States.

MODERN NEWS SOURCES SEEN POSITIVELY, EXCEPT FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

The rise in technology has fostered the development of a novel set of news sources that did not exist before the 1980s. When asked to evaluate the impact of these modern sources, a slight majority of Americans are positive about most of them, except for social media. Specifically, they believe the internet, news aggregators, citizen videos and cable news have had a more positive than negative effect on the U.S. news environment over the past 10 years. However, more say that the impact of social media sites like Facebook and Twitter® and political leaders using social media to directly communicate with constituents has been more negative than positive.

Evaluations of the Impact of Newer Information Sources on the News Environment, by Age, Race and Party Identification

What kind of an impact do you think each of the following has had on the news environment in the U.S. over the past 10 years?

	VIDEOS SHOT BY REGULAR PEOPLE AND THEN SHARED WITH NEWS ORGANIZATIONS OR POSTED ONLINE		THE INTERNET		NEWS AGGREGATORS — APPS OR WEBSITES THAT GATHER AND SHOW NEWS FROM MANY DIFFERENT NEWS ORGANIZATIONS	
	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
% All	58	39	57	38	54	40
% 18-29 years old	64	35	66	33	65	34
% 30-49 years old	59	40	62	36	60	36
% 50-64 years old	57	41	55	42	50	45
% 65+ years old	54	40	46	43	43	44
% White	54	42	53	43	51	44
% Black	69	27	68	27	62	32
% Hispanic	63	34	66	29	63	32
% Democrat	66	30	64	31	61	32
% Independent	59	39	59	38	57	39
% Republican	49	49	49	48	45	48

Evaluations of the Impact of Newer Information Sources on the News Environment, by Age, Race and Party Identification *Cont'd.*

What kind of an impact do you think each of the following has had on the news environment in the U.S. over the past 10 years?

	CABLE NEWS		POLITICAL LEADERS FROM ALL PARTIES USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO COMMUNICATE DIRECTLY WITH THE PEOPLE		SOCIAL MEDIA SITES LIKE FACEBOOK AND TWITTER	
	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
% All	52	44	45	53	42	54
% 18-29 years old	51	47	47	52	52	48
% 30-49 years old	50	48	47	53	44	55
% 50-64 years old	52	44	42	56	40	58
% 65+ years old	55	36	41	52	37	54
% White	45	50	41	56	37	60
% Black	70	26	50	46	57	38
% Hispanic	63	32	51	46	54	43
% Democrat	63	33	42	54	49	48
% Independent	46	52	41	57	41	57
% Republican	45	51	49	48	38	59

Democrats are more likely than Republicans to believe that all of these more modern news sources, except for political leaders using social media, are having a positive impact. Democrats may view politicians' use of social media less positively in light of Republican President Donald Trump's high-profile use of Twitter.

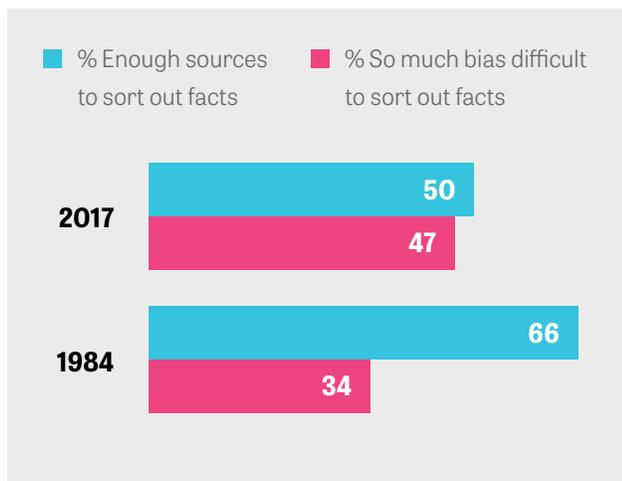
Young adults tend to be more positive than do older Americans about the type of impact that modern news sources have had on the news environment over the past 10 years. In particular, more adults between the ages of 18 and 29 believe the internet and news aggregators (66% and 65%, respectively) have had a positive impact compared with the beliefs of those aged 65 and older (46% and 43%). The exception is cable news — Americans over 65 years old (55%) are slightly more inclined to see a positive impact, compared with those aged 18-29 (51%).

Opinions on these newer types of news sources also vary by race and ethnicity. Non-Hispanic whites are less likely than blacks, Hispanics and Asians to see these media as having a positive impact over the past 10 years. Perceptions differ most starkly on cable news, for which blacks (70%) are much more likely than whites (45%) to perceive a positive impact. These differences probably stem from blacks' and whites' broader views of the media filtered through their partisanship, rather than from their consumption of specific cable news channels.

AMERICANS ARE LESS CERTAIN TODAY ABOUT THEIR ABILITY TO SORT OUT THE FACTS

Americans are increasingly pessimistic that people can sort out the facts from the bias in the news. Currently, 50% of U.S. adults believe enough news sources exist to help people sort out facts in the face of media bias, while 47% say there is so much bias that it is often difficult to decipher the facts. The same question was posed to the public in a 1984 American Society of Newspaper Editors survey. Back then, 66% of Americans said enough sources were available to determine the facts, and 34% said there was so much bias that sorting out the facts was often difficult.⁶ Clearly, the proliferation of news sources has not led Americans to believe it is easier to get the facts.

Please indicate which of these statements comes closer to how you personally feel: “Although there is some bias in the news media, there are enough sources of news to be able to sort out the facts” or “There is so much bias in the news media that it’s often difficult to sort out the facts.”



More than twice as many Democrats (72%) as Republicans (31%) are confident that enough sources exist to identify the facts. Independents fall in between at 46%, closer to Republicans than to Democrats. Members of different age groups show modest differences, while blacks and Hispanics are much more optimistic than whites are that Americans can sort out the facts from the bias.

**FEWER
TODAY (50%)
THAN IN
1984 (66%)
BELIEVE
THERE ARE
ENOUGH
NEWS
SOURCES
AVAILABLE
TO SORT OUT
THE FACTS.**

⁶ American Society of Newspaper Editors News Credibility mail survey conducted by MORI Research

Ability to Sort out Facts Given Available News Sources, by Age, Race and Party Identification

	ENOUGH SOURCES TO SORT OUT FACTS	SO MUCH BIAS DIFFICULT TO SORT OUT FACTS
% All	50	47
% 18-29 years old	48	50
% 30-49 years old	50	47
% 50-64 years old	50	47
% 65+ years old	52	45
% White	46	51
% Black	64	32
% Hispanic	56	42
% Democrat	72	26
% Independent	46	51
% Republican	31	67

Education also appears to matter in perceptions of media bias. Those with a postgraduate education are most likely to say enough sources exist to sort out the facts (61%), followed by college graduates (52%) and those with less than a college degree (47%). Notably, these educational differences are apparent among Democrats and independents, but not Republicans.

When asked about their own ability to distinguish fact from opinion, most Americans are confident, but not overly so. Roughly one-quarter of adults, 27%, describe themselves as “very confident,” and another 49% say they are “somewhat confident.”

Confidence in Own Ability to Sort out Facts Given Available News Sources, by Age, Race and Party Identification

	VERY CONFIDENT	SOMEWHAT CONFIDENT	NOT TOO CONFIDENT	NOT AT ALL CONFIDENT
% All	27	49	17	3
% 18-29 years old	26	50	18	3
% 30-49 years old	26	50	17	4
% 50-64 years old	28	48	17	4
% 65+ years old	27	50	16	3
% White	26	50	17	4
% Black	32	46	15	3
% Hispanic	26	50	17	3
% Democrat	31	50	13	2
% Independent	25	50	18	4
% Republican	24	48	21	5

Those with stronger ideological views — who describe themselves as “very liberal” or “very conservative” — are much more likely to be very confident compared with those who have moderate political positions.

Confidence in Own Ability to Sort out Facts Given Available News Sources, by Political Ideology

	VERY CONFIDENT	SOMEWHAT CONFIDENT	NOT TOO CONFIDENT	NOT CONFIDENT AT ALL
% Very liberal	45	37	10	4
% Liberal	33	52	11	2
% Moderate	23	51	19	4
% Conservative	23	51	19	4
% Very conservative	41	39	12	5

Again, educational differences exist among Democrats but not among Republicans when evaluating confidence in their being able to discern fact from opinion. Democrats with college degrees are much more likely than less-educated Democrats (41% vs. 26%, respectively) to be very confident. In contrast, Republican college graduates share about the same amount of confidence as Republican noncollege graduates (24% vs. 23%). These patterns might indicate that Democrats look inward to their own skill sets when answering the question and Republicans look outward to the pervasive media bias they see, reinforced by antimedia opinions voiced by many Republican Party leaders.

FOUR IN 10 ARE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THEIR ABILITY TO NAVIGATE THE NEWS ENVIRONMENT

Based on Americans' self-described knowledge of current events, confidence in their ability to discern fact from opinion and more general views on the ability of people to sort out facts from media bias, a cluster analysis identifies four broad types of media consumers⁷:

<p>KNOWLEDGEABLE OPTIMISTS (41% OF U.S. ADULTS)</p> <p>are informed about current events and confident that they can sort out facts.</p>	<p>KNOWLEDGEABLE SKEPTICS (17%)</p> <p>are informed about current events and confident that they can discern fact from opinion, but they believe too much bias exists to sort out the facts.</p>
<p>INATTENTIVE OPTIMISTS (7%)</p> <p>are the least knowledgeable about current events and not very confident in their own ability to discern fact from opinion, but they believe enough sources exist that people can discover the truth.</p>	<p>INATTENTIVE SKEPTICS (35%)</p> <p>are less informed about current events and say there is too much bias to sort out the truth.</p>

⁷ Gallup tested two, three, four and five cluster models using three survey items — how knowledgeable people say they are about important issues facing the U.S., how confident people are that they can tell when news sources are reporting factual news versus opinion and commentary, and whether people think there are enough news sources to sort out the facts or if there is too much bias, it is difficult to sort out the facts. Gallup implemented the k-means algorithm in SAS on standardized variables, and clusters were determined based on values of the pseudo-f statistic, approximate expected overall R-squared, and graphical examination of the distribution of clusters.

Members of the four groups vary in several key ways.

	KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT THE NEWS	INATTENTIVE TOWARD NEWS
OPTIMISTIC ABOUT ABILITY TO DISCERN TRUTH	<p>52% are Democratic</p> <p>22% have postgraduate degree</p> <p>52% rely on newspapers for news</p>	<p>40% are Democratic</p> <p>51% did not attend college</p> <p>68% are female</p>
SKEPTICAL ABOUT ABILITY TO DISCERN TRUTH	<p>52% are Republican</p> <p>17% have postgraduate degree</p> <p>62% are male</p> <p>56% rely on talk shows for news</p>	<p>40% are Republican</p> <p>42% did not attend college</p>

In general, Democrats are more confident than Republicans and independents are that enough sources exist to find the truth. Depending on how well they grade their own knowledge of current events, Democrats most commonly land in either the Knowledgeable Optimists or Inattentive Optimists cluster. Republicans mostly end up in either the Knowledgeable Skeptics or Inattentive Skeptics cluster, again based on their self-reported familiarity with current events.

As might be expected, inattentive consumers tend to use fewer sources of news. Knowledgeable Optimists commonly use online sources and watch and listen to the news. They are also much more avid newspaper readers than all other groups. Knowledgeable Skeptics, who consider themselves knowledgeable but find it difficult to discern truth in the news, are more inclined to watch or listen to news — especially talk shows — and rely less on newspapers.

Other demographic attributes associated with these general archetypes are worth mentioning:

- Knowledgeable Skeptics are disproportionately male, and Inattentive Optimists are disproportionately female. The remaining categories are fairly balanced by gender.
- Less educated Americans are more likely to fall into the inattentive categories, while those with more education land in the self-reported knowledgeable designation.
- Although regional differences are not large, coastal state residents have a slightly greater likelihood of falling into the knowledgeable groups (both optimistic and skeptical), and non-coastal state residents of falling into inattentive groups. Specifically, whereas 52% of all U.S. adults live in non-coastal states, 56% of Inattentive Skeptics and 54% of Inattentive Optimists do. And while 48% of adults live in coastal states, 51% of Knowledgeable Optimists do.

NEWS AGGREGATORS' METHOD OF STORY SELECTION CONCERNS AMERICANS

A novel feature of the modern media landscape is individuals' ability to seek out information that reinforces prior beliefs while limiting their exposure to information that challenges those beliefs. This can be an intentional choice by citizens if they choose to rely on news sources with a clear political point of view. However, it can be more indirect if people visit major websites or use apps that collate news stories from around the web. Sometimes these news aggregator websites present users with news stories that align with their search history or site usage, which can further reinforce prior beliefs and help users stay away from information that challenges their views.

Americans do not appear to be comfortable with the consequences that such methods have for promoting an informed citizenry. The majority of Americans (57%) perceive the selection of stories by news aggregators as "a major problem" for U.S. democracy, and 35% see this as a minor problem. There are only modest differences in these concerns by age and party identification. Blacks are somewhat less inclined than other subgroups to view it as problematic.

Opinions on Major Websites' News Selection Methods, by Age, Race and Party Identification

As you may know, it's possible that the methods major websites use for selecting the news stories they show to individual users may exclude certain kinds of stories depending on what the user has read in the past. How much of a problem do you consider this for our democracy?

	A MAJOR PROBLEM	A MINOR PROBLEM	NOT A PROBLEM
% All	57	35	6
% 18-29 years old	55	38	6
% 30-49 years old	56	36	6
% 50-64 years old	58	33	7
% 65+ years old	57	32	6
% White	59	34	5
% Black	48	39	10
% Hispanic	54	36	8
% Democrat	54	39	6
% Independent	58	34	7
% Republican	60	32	6

Opinions on Major Websites' News Selection Methods, by Educational Attainment and Annual Household Income

Figures are the percentages who say story selection methods are "a major problem" for our democracy

High school or less	51
Some college	59
College graduate only	61
Postgraduate	62
Less than \$50,000	51
\$50,000-\$99,999	60
\$100,000 or more	62

This attitudinal difference by education seems partly mediated through partisanship. Democrats with college degrees (62%) are more likely than noncollege graduate Democrats (49%) to describe such politically reinforcing selections as a major problem. By contrast, Republican college graduates (60%) are just as likely as Republicans without a college degree (61%) to consider selection of news stories to be a problem.

Americans who say they follow political news closely are also more likely than those who do not follow it closely (64% vs. 50%, respectively) to describe the selection of news stories as a major problem.

PUBLIC DIVIDES ON REGULATION OF NEWS AGGREGATORS

Despite broad agreement on the potentially damaging effects of online platform methods on productive public discourse, Americans are divided on whether regulation of those methods is warranted. Forty-nine percent say there should be rules or regulations on the methods that major websites use to determine what news content they provide to consumers, while 47% believe these websites should be free to provide news content using whatever methods they choose.

Opinions of Regulating Major Websites' Methods for Showing News Items, by Age, Race and Party Identification

Which of the following statements comes closer to how you feel about regulating the methods these types of major websites use to show news items: "There should be rules or regulations on the methods these major websites use to determine what news content they provide to individual users of their sites" or "These websites should be free to provide users with news content using whatever methods they choose"?

	SHOULD BE REGULATIONS	SHOULD BE ABLE TO USE METHODS THEY CHOOSE
% All	49	47
% 18-29 years old	46	53
% 30-49 years old	49	49
% 50-64 years old	50	47
% 65+ years old	52	40
% White	50	47
% Black	50	46
% Hispanic	48	49
% Democrat	50	47
% Independent	46	52
% Republican	52	45

Opinions on regulating major online platforms are generally divided among most key subgroups. There are modest education differences, as 52% of adults without a college degree favor regulation, compared with 45% of college graduates who feel the same.

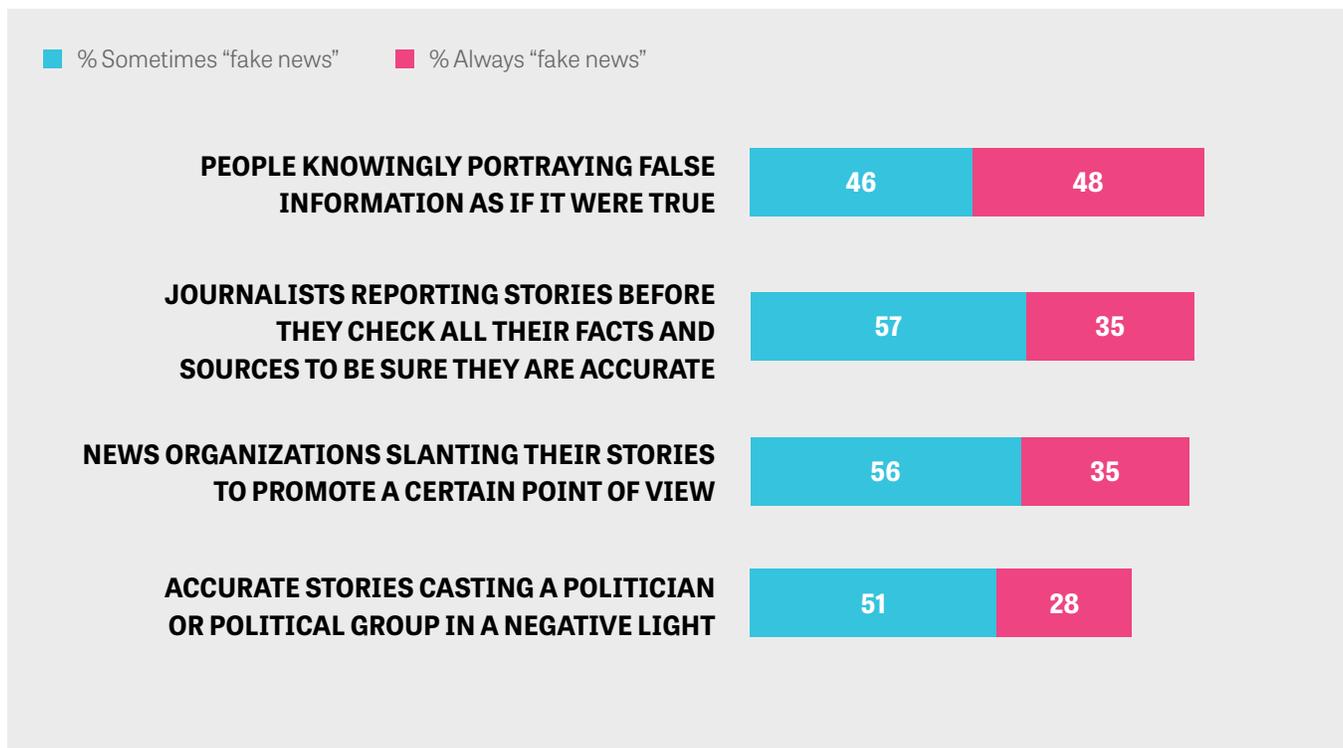
AMERICANS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE METHODS THAT NEWS AGGREGATORS USE TO STEER NEWS CONTENT TO READERS BUT ARE DIVIDED OVER REGULATING THOSE METHODS.

AMERICANS HAVE VARYING DEFINITIONS OF “FAKE NEWS” BUT AGREE IT IS A THREAT

The research community often defines “fake news” as misinformation with the appearance of legitimately produced news but without the underlying organizational journalistic processes or mission. However, some political and opinion leaders, including Trump, commonly label news stories they disagree with or that portray them in a negative light as “fake news.”

Americans themselves have not reached a clear consensus on what constitutes “fake news.” Most adults agree that false information portrayed as if it were true always (48%) or sometimes (46%) deserves the label “fake news.” Strikingly, most Americans also say that accurate stories portraying politicians in a negative light always (28%) or sometimes (51%) constitutes “fake news.”

You may have heard the term “fake news,” which refers to inaccurate information presented as an objective news story and designed to deceive people in some way. How often do you think each of the following situations represents “fake news”?



Republicans hold much more expansive definitions of “fake news” than Democrats do. Four in 10 Republicans say accurate stories that portray political leaders or groups in a negative light are always “fake news,” roughly the same percentage of Democrats who believe that knowingly portraying false information as true constitutes “fake news.” Young adults are most likely to say knowingly passing off false information is always “fake news.”

Perceptions of “Fake News,” by Age, Race and Party Identification

	PEOPLE KNOWINGLY PORTRAYING FALSE INFORMATION AS IF IT WERE TRUE			JOURNALISTS REPORTING STORIES BEFORE THEY CHECK ALL THEIR FACTS AND SOURCES TO BE SURE THEY ARE ACCURATE		
	ALWAYS	SOMETIMES	NEVER	ALWAYS	SOMETIMES	NEVER
% All	48	46	4	35	57	5
% 18-29 years old	60	36	3	37	55	6
% 30-49 years old	51	44	4	35	58	5
% 50-64 years old	43	51	5	35	58	5
% 65+ years old	40	51	5	36	56	4
% White	50	45	3	37	57	4
% Black	37	50	9	28	59	9
% Hispanic	45	48	4	34	56	7
% Democrat	43	48	7	24	66	8
% Independent	50	45	4	36	57	5
% Republican	52	44	2	48	48	2

Perceptions of “Fake News,” by Age, Race and Party Identification *Cont'd.*

	NEWS ORGANIZATIONS SLANTING THEIR STORIES TO PROMOTE A CERTAIN POINT OF VIEW			ACCURATE NEWS STORIES CASTING A POLITICIAN OR POLITICAL GROUP IN A NEGATIVE LIGHT		
	ALWAYS	SOMETIMES	NEVER	ALWAYS	SOMETIMES	NEVER
% All	35	56	6	28	51	19
% 18-29 years old	38	54	7	27	45	26
% 30-49 years old	33	58	7	25	50	23
% 50-64 years old	37	56	5	30	53	14
% 65+ years old	36	55	5	30	55	11
% White	38	56	5	29	49	19
% Black	26	60	11	22	54	18
% Hispanic	34	56	7	26	55	15
% Democrat	20	67	10	17	55	25
% Independent	36	57	5	26	50	22
% Republican	53	44	2	42	46	10

Although definitions of “fake news” vary, Americans do agree that “fake news” is a problem. The majority of Americans, 56%, say “fake news” is “a very serious threat” to U.S. democracy, while 32% say it is a “somewhat serious threat.” Republicans are substantially more likely than Democrats to believe “fake news” is a very serious threat to democracy.

Perceptions of “Fake News” as a Threat to Democracy, by Age, Race and Party Identification

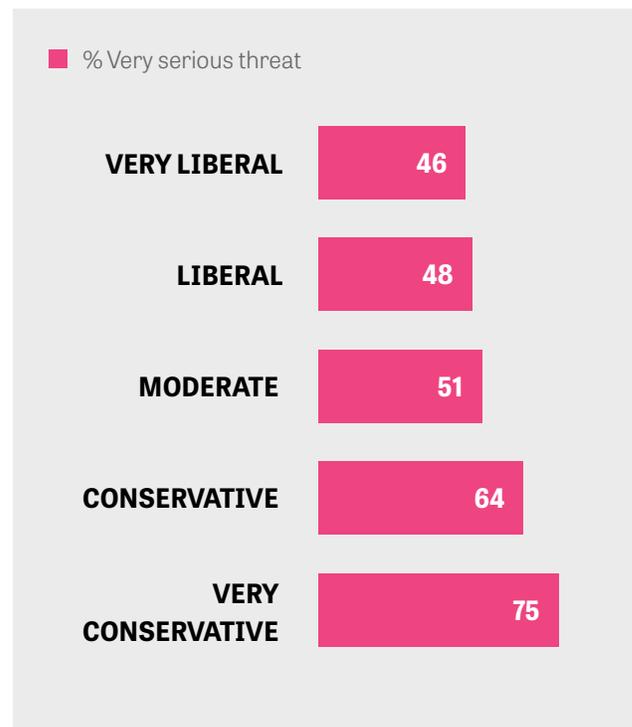
How much of a threat do you believe “fake news” is to our democracy?

	A VERY SERIOUS THREAT	A SOMEWHAT SERIOUS THREAT	NOT MUCH OF A THREAT
% All	56	32	11
% 18-29 years old	56	33	10
% 30-49 years old	53	34	12
% 50-64 years old	57	30	12
% 65+ years old	60	28	11
% White	56	32	11
% Black	52	31	16
% Hispanic	59	30	10
% Democrat	49	34	16
% Independent	53	35	12
% Republican	67	27	5

The perception that “fake news” constitutes a very serious threat increases as one moves from left to right across the ideological spectrum — from 46% of those with very liberal views to 75% of those with very conservative views.

CONSERVATIVES ARE MUCH MORE LIKELY THAN LIBERALS TO SAY “FAKE NEWS” IS A SERIOUS THREAT TO DEMOCRACY.

Perceptions of “Fake News” as Very Serious Threat to Democracy, by Ideology



DETAILED FINDINGS

POTENTIAL IMPACT OF INFORMATION ON ATTITUDES

AMERICANS DIVIDE EVENLY IN SAYING THEY HAVE FIXED VERSUS FLEXIBLE VIEWS

The news media can play a powerful role in shaping the way citizens think about the major issues facing the country and job the government is doing to address them. But the media's ability to influence people can be limited if citizens only pay attention to news from their own point of view, or if people more generally are not open to changing their minds even in the face of new information that could call their beliefs into question. Several findings from the survey indicate that the media's influence may be as great in reinforcing existing attitudes as it is in changing them.

Americans are about as likely to describe their attitudes on political issues as firm views that do not change much (46%) as to say they are flexible and change from time to time (52%). As might be expected, political independents are among the subgroups most likely to describe their views as flexible rather than firm. A majority of Democrats also tend to describe their views as flexible. In contrast, six in 10 Republicans say their views are firm and do not change much.

Self-Reports of Having Firm vs. Flexible Views on Political Issues, by Age, Race and Party Identification

Would you describe yourself as someone who has firm views on political issues, meaning your views don't change much, or as someone who has flexible views, meaning your views change from time to time?

	FIRM VIEWS	FLEXIBLE VIEWS
% All	46	52
% 18-29 years old	43	55
% 30-49 years old	44	54
% 50-64 years old	49	49
% 65+ years old	50	47
% White	48	50
% Black	42	55
% Hispanic	43	55
% Democrat	43	54
% Independent	34	64
% Republican	63	36

About three-quarters of very conservative respondents say they have firm political views, as do 59% of very liberal respondents. Moderates are most likely to say they have flexible views.

Description of Political Views, by Party and Ideology

	FIRM VIEWS	FLEXIBLE VIEWS
% Very liberal	59	38
% Liberal	44	55
% Moderate	32	66
% Conservative	61	37
% Very conservative	76	21

Notably, Americans of varying educational backgrounds do not differ in describing their views as firm or flexible. There are differences, however, by attention paid to political news and voter participation. Those who pay closer attention to news and vote frequently are much more likely to say they have firm political views than do those who pay little attention to news and rarely or never vote. In other words, active and informed citizens may be more rigid in their views than is the general population.

MOST AMERICANS SAY THEY GET A MIX OF LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE NEWS

Three-quarters of Americans say they get at least some news from organizations that are liberal in their point of view, and 70% say they get at least some news from conservative-leaning organizations. The slightly greater reliance on liberal sources may be based on the perceptions that more news sources are left-leaning than right-leaning.⁸

More Democrats say they get all or most of their news from liberal sources than Republicans say they get all or most of their news from conservative sources (54% vs. 45%, respectively). In addition, Republicans are more likely to say they get all or most news from liberal sources (26%) than Democrats are to say they get all or most of their news from conservative sources (17%).

Amount of News From Liberal vs. Conservative Sources, by Age, Race and Party Identification

How much of the news you read or watch comes from news organizations that are generally liberal/generally conservative in their point of view?

	GENERALLY LIBERAL SOURCES					GENERALLY CONSERVATIVE SOURCES				
	ALL	MOST	SOME	ONLY A LITTLE	NONE	ALL	MOST	SOME	ONLY A LITTLE	NONE
% All	5	32	38	15	8	5	22	43	22	7
% 18-29 years old	5	36	39	12	7	3	15	44	26	11
% 30-49 years old	5	29	42	16	8	3	20	44	24	8
% 50-64 years old	5	32	38	16	9	5	24	44	20	6
% 65+ years old	6	36	33	16	9	7	29	39	18	5
% White	4	31	38	16	9	4	23	42	22	7
% Black	10	35	36	12	5	5	22	42	21	8
% Hispanic	7	32	40	14	7	5	19	47	20	8
% Democrat	8	46	35	8	3	3	14	42	29	12
% Independent	3	28	48	14	7	2	18	51	22	7
% Republican	4	22	34	25	15	8	37	37	14	3

Combining responses to the liberal/conservative news source questions reveals that 71% of Americans report receiving a mix of liberal and conservative news — they say they get at least “some” news from each perspective. The remainder divides into 16% who get all or most of their news from liberal sources and little or none from conservative sources, and 12% who get all or most news from conservative sources and little or none from liberal sources.

8 <http://news.gallup.com/poll/207794/six-partisan-bias-news-media.aspx>

Political News Sources Used by Americans

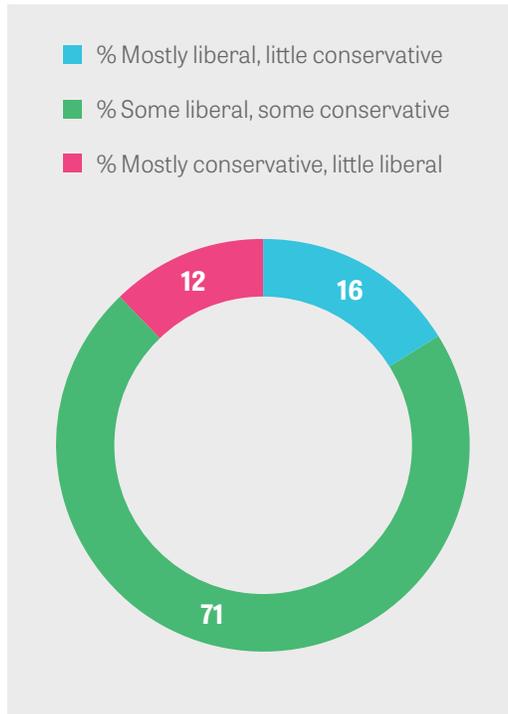


Chart excludes percentage for respondents who did not provide an answer.

Democrats are about as likely to get one-sided liberal news (26%) as Republicans are to get one-sided conservative news (28%).

News Exposure Patterns, by Age, Race and Party Identification

	PRIMARYLY LIBERAL NEWS	MIX OF LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE NEWS	PRIMARYLY CONSERVATIVE NEWS
% All	16	71	12
% 18-29 years old	22	70	7
% 30-49 years old	16	73	10
% 50-64 years old	15	71	14
% 65+ years old	14	68	16
% White	17	67	15
% Black	13	82	4
% Hispanic	14	78	7
% Democrat	26	71	2
% Independent	12	80	7
% Republican	9	62	28

There are bigger differences at the ideological extremes, particularly on the left. The majority of respondents who describe their views as “very liberal,” 55%, get mostly liberal news, as do 39% of Americans who describe their views as “liberal.” Thirty-six percent of “very conservative” respondents and 26% of “conservative” respondents report exposure to primarily conservative news.

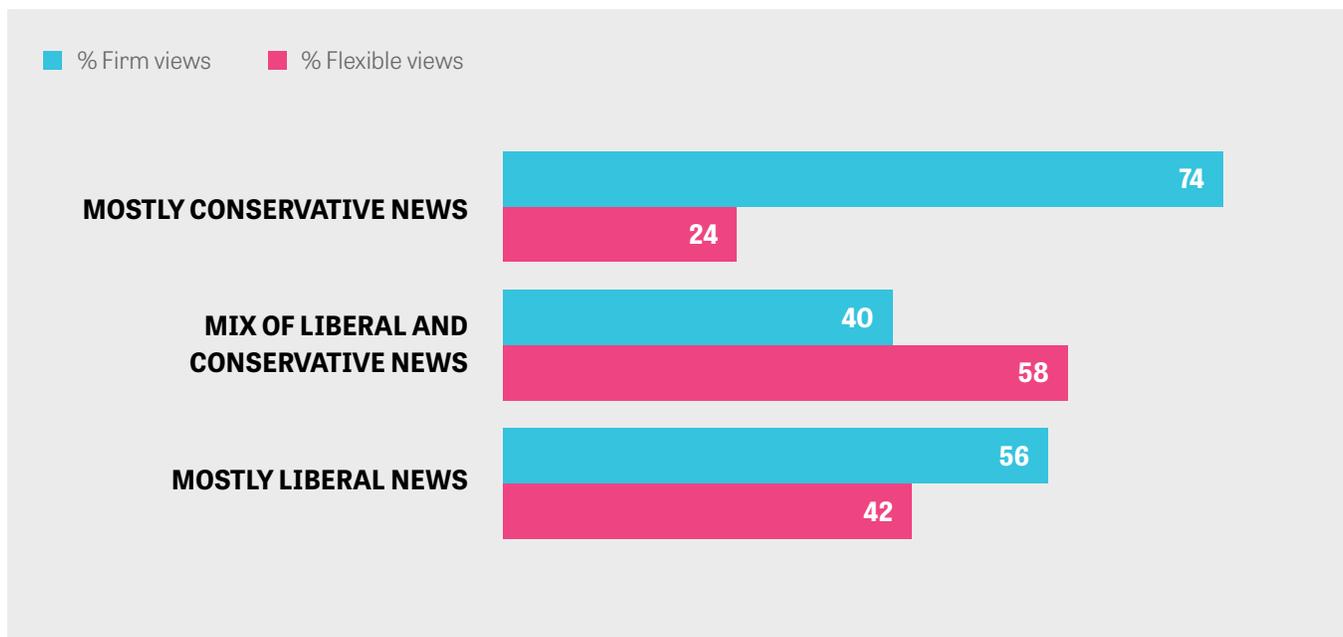
Americans with higher education levels are more likely than those with less formal education to report getting one-sided news rather than a mix of perspectives. One reason this difference exists is that more educated respondents may have greater awareness that some of the sources they rely on have a particular slant. College graduates may also be able to better identify which of the available news sources fit with their political leanings when choosing where to get their news.

News Exposure Patterns, by Educational Attainment and Ideology

	PRIMARYLY LIBERAL NEWS	MIX OF LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE NEWS	PRIMARYLY CONSERVATIVE NEWS
% High school or less	10	77	11
% Some college	14	72	13
% College graduate only	24	64	12
% Postgraduate	27	63	9
% Very liberal	55	44	1
% Liberal	39	59	1
% Moderate	11	85	4
% Conservative	9	65	26
% Very conservative	10	54	36

Americans who get one-sided news are much more likely than those who get a mix of liberal and conservative news to say they have firm rather than flexible views. The differences are especially pronounced among those who mainly get right-leaning news — 74% of these respondents say they have firm views. Slightly fewer people who get mostly liberal news, 56%, say they have firm views. The majority of those who get a mix of liberal and conservative news claim to have flexible views on political issues.

Perceptions of Views as Firm or Flexible, Based on News Sources Used



AMERICANS SEE ONE-SIDED NEWS CONSUMPTION, ASSOCIATING WITH LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE, AS PROBLEMATIC

Regardless of how prevalent it might be, Americans believe that people choosing news from sources that fit with one’s political leanings is problematic. Sixty percent of Americans say it is a “major problem” for people to choose news sources that share the same views as their own; 30% say it is a “minor problem.” Majorities of all age groups describe making such news choices as a major problem, but young adults are most inclined to do so. Independents are more likely than Democrats or Republicans are to say choosing news aligned with one’s own views is a major problem.

Perceptions of Choosing News Sources With Similar Views to Your Own as Problematic, by Age, Race and Party Identification

Do you think people only choosing news sources that have the same views as their own is a major problem, a minor problem or not a problem in the U.S. today?

	MAJOR PROBLEM	MINOR PROBLEM	NOT A PROBLEM
% All	60	30	10
% 18-29 years old	69	25	6
% 30-49 years old	63	29	8
% 50-64 years old	57	31	12
% 65+ years old	54	33	12
% White	62	30	9
% Black	55	32	13
% Hispanic	57	32	11
% Democrat	61	30	9
% Independent	67	26	8
% Republican	55	33	12

Sixty-eight percent of very liberal respondents — who are among the subgroups most likely to report getting news from only one perspective — describe one-sided

news consumption as a major problem. A much smaller percentage of very conservative respondents, 48%, share this view, perhaps reflecting their greater distrust of traditional news media. As such, those who hold very conservative views may see relying on one-sided, presumably right-leaning, media as justifiable given the extent of left-leaning bias they perceive in traditional news media.

Perceptions of Choosing News Sources With Similar Views to Your Own as Problematic, by Ideology

	MAJOR PROBLEM	MINOR PROBLEM	NOT A PROBLEM
% Very liberal	68	26	6
% Liberal	66	27	7
% Moderate	63	29	8
% Conservative	54	35	11
% Very conservative	48	30	22

Americans also believe it is problematic for people to only associate with others who share the same views — 57% describe it as a major problem and 32% as a minor problem. Younger adults (66%) and graduate degree holders (65%) are among the subgroups most likely to see spending time only with those holding similar views as a major problem. Very liberal respondents (66%) are much more likely than very conservative respondents (47%) to see associating with only like-minded people as a major problem.

Perceptions of Associating Only With People Who Share One’s Own Views as Problematic, by Age, Race and Party Identification

Do you think people only associating with people who have the same views as their own is a major problem, a minor problem or not a problem in the U.S. today?

	MAJOR PROBLEM	MINOR PROBLEM	NOT A PROBLEM
% All	57	32	11
% 18-29 years old	66	27	7
% 30-49 years old	60	31	9
% 50-64 years old	55	32	13
% 65+ years old	49	37	14
% White	57	33	10
% Black	56	31	13
% Hispanic	57	31	13
% Democrat	58	32	10
% Independent	63	28	9
% Republican	51	35	13

NEWS SHARING IS COMMON AND PRIMARILY DONE WITH LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE

Self-described news sharing behavior offers further evidence that Americans may mainly operate in “filter bubbles.” Sixty-four percent of Americans say they “frequently” (27%) or “occasionally” (37%) share news stories with friends, family or social media followers. News sharing does not differ much by demographic subgroup,

but it is more common among those who say they follow news more closely and who spend more time using online platforms.

Frequency of Sharing News Stories Online, by Age, Race and Party Identification

How often do you share news stories you’ve seen online with other people, such as friends, family or social media followers?

	FREQUENTLY	OCCASIONALLY	RARELY	NEVER
% All	27	37	21	13
% 18-29 years old	24	37	24	14
% 30-49 years old	27	36	24	13
% 50-64 years old	29	39	20	11
% 65+ years old	29	37	16	15
% White	25	38	22	14
% Black	34	37	16	11
% Hispanic	32	36	18	12
% Democrat	30	38	18	12
% Independent	24	37	24	14
% Republican	27	37	22	13

However, Americans who share news stories admit that their sharing is mostly done with people who hold similar (68%) rather than different views from their own (29%).

Sharing News With Others Who Have Similar vs. Different Views, by Age, Race and Party Identification

Do you share news stories mostly with people who have views similar to your own or mostly with people whose views differ from your own?*

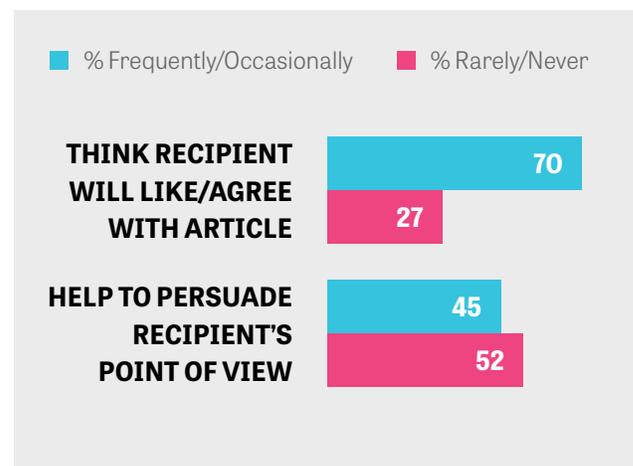
	SIMILAR VIEWS	DIFFERENT VIEWS
% All	68	29
% 18-29 years old	66	32
% 30-49 years old	68	30
% 50-64 years old	68	29
% 65+ years old	70	26
% White	71	26
% Black	58	39
% Hispanic	60	38
% Democrat	70	28
% Independent	60	37
% Republican	73	24

* Based on those who share news stories (n=16,567 national adults)

Liberal Democrats (81%), postgraduates (78%), Democratic college graduates (80%) and Republican college graduates (79%) are among the subgroups of sharers most likely to send stories to like-minded people. Blacks (58%), conservative Democrats (55%) and moderate independents (57%) who share news stories are least likely to do so with like-minded people, perhaps because there are fewer of them in the U.S. adult population.

Americans may primarily share with like-minded people because of their motivations behind sharing. Seventy percent of U.S. adults say they “frequently” (22%) or “occasionally” (48%) share an article because they think the person will agree with and like the article. By comparison, a much smaller 45% say they frequently (10%) or occasionally (35%) attempt to persuade others to change their views by sharing articles with them. Americans may doubt their ability to change others’ minds through sharing an alternative perspective, or they may simply want to avoid getting into an argument.

Reasons for Sharing News Stories



Attempts to persuade by sharing are fairly even across demographic groups. Blacks are less inclined to share news stories with people they think will like the article than whites and Hispanics are. Partisans and college graduates are slightly more likely than independents and those with less formal education to share news stories because they think the recipient will agree or like the article.

Frequency of Sharing News for Specific Reasons, by Age, Race and Party Identification

How often do you share news stories with people for each of the following reasons?*

	BECAUSE YOU THINK THEY WILL AGREE WITH AND LIKE THE ARTICLE				BECAUSE YOU THINK IT MAY HELP TO PERSUADE THEM TO CHANGE THEIR POINT OF VIEW			
	FREQUENTLY	OCCASIONALLY	RARELY	NEVER	FREQUENTLY	OCCASIONALLY	RARELY	NEVER
% All	22	48	20	7	10	35	34	18
% 18-29 years old	24	51	19	5	13	37	32	17
% 30-49 years old	22	49	22	6	10	36	35	18
% 50-64 years old	20	49	21	7	9	34	35	18
% 65+ years old	22	46	18	7	8	34	33	17
% White	23	50	19	6	8	36	35	18
% Black	18	41	27	9	12	33	31	18
% Hispanic	21	48	22	6	14	32	34	16
% Democrat	26	47	18	5	11	35	33	17
% Independent	17	49	24	8	8	35	36	18
% Republican	22	50	19	6	10	35	34	18

* Based on those who share news stories (n=16,567 national adults)

DETAILED FINDINGS

ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN A DEMOCRACY

MOST SEE MEDIA PLAYING CRITICAL ROLE IN DEMOCRACY BUT GIVE ITS PERFORMANCE LOW MARKS

Free and robust news media are often portrayed as necessary for any democratic political system to thrive, both to inform citizens of public affairs and to hold leaders accountable to the public by serving as a “watch dog” on their actions. The vast majority of Americans agree about the importance of the media’s role in a democracy, with 84% saying it plays a “critical” (44%) or “very important” (40%) role in our democracy.

Americans with a postgraduate education and self-identified liberals are among the subgroups most likely to say the media play a critical role in our democracy. In fact, liberals are roughly twice as likely as conservatives, and postgraduates are twice as likely as those with a high school education or less, to say the media are critical for democracy.

EIGHT IN 10 AMERICANS SAY THE NEWS MEDIA ARE CRITICAL OR VERY IMPORTANT TO OUR DEMOCRACY.

Importance of News Media to Our Democracy, by Ideology and Educational Attainment

Regardless of your opinion of the news media today, generally speaking, how important is the news media to our democracy?

	CRITICAL	VERY IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	NOT THAT IMPORTANT
% All	44	40	12	3
% Very liberal	75	12	7	4
% Liberal	64	26	7	1
% Moderate	41	41	13	3
% Conservative	33	48	13	3
% Very conservative	38	42	12	5
% High school or less	32	47	15	4
% Some college	43	40	11	3
% College graduate only	53	34	9	2
% Postgraduate	63	28	7	2

Republicans (33%) are more reluctant than Democrats (54%) and independents (44%) are to describe the media as critical to democracy, although 79% of Republicans still say the media are very important or critical.

Importance of News Media to Our Democracy, by Age, Race and Party Identification

Regardless of your opinion of the news media today, generally speaking, how important is the news media to our democracy?

	CRITICAL	VERY IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	NOT THAT IMPORTANT
% All	44	40	12	3
% 18-29 years old	46	35	12	5
% 30-49 years old	44	38	13	3
% 50-64 years old	44	40	11	3
% 65+ years old	43	44	9	2
% White	44	39	13	3
% Black	42	45	8	2
% Hispanic	44	39	12	3
% Democrat	54	36	7	1
% Independent	44	36	13	4
% Republican	33	46	15	4

Educational attainment matters much more for how Democrats and independents view the role the media play in promoting good democratic governance than it does for Republicans. College-educated Democrats are especially likely to consider the news media critical to democracy (73%). A majority of college-educated independents, 58%, agree. Republicans are least positive, with only modest differences between those who graduated college (38%) and those who did not graduate (31%).

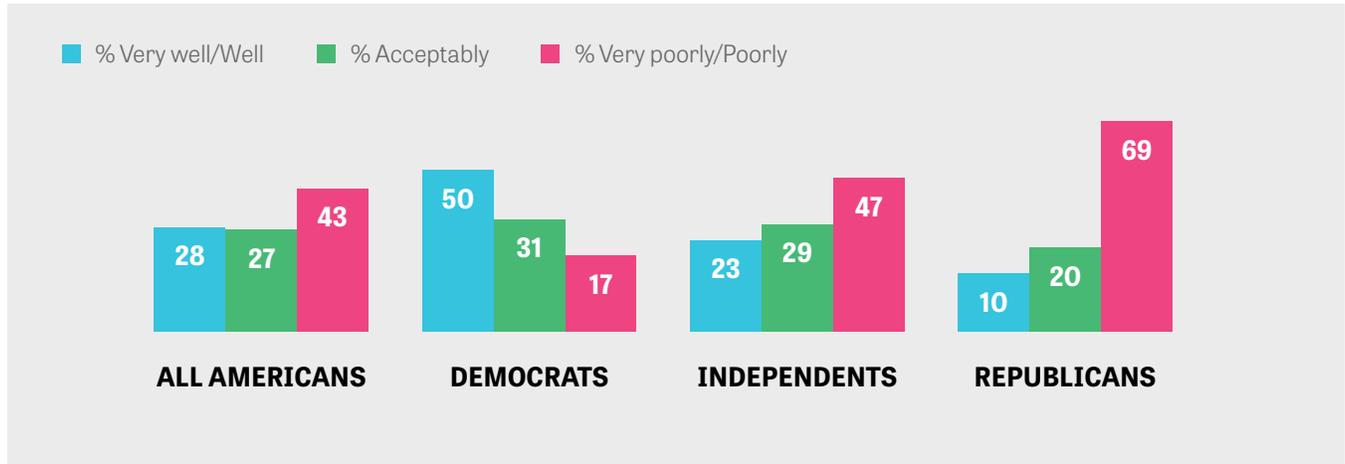
Importance of News Media to Our Democracy, by Party and Educational Attainment

Regardless of your opinion of the news media today, generally speaking, how important is the news media to our democracy?

	CRITICAL	VERY IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	NOT THAT IMPORTANT
% All	44	40	12	3
% Democrats with college degree	73	22	3	0
% Democrats with no college degree	44	43	9	1
% Independents with college degree	58	29	9	2
% Independents with no college degree	37	40	15	5
% Republicans with college degree	38	44	13	3
% Republicans with no college degree	31	47	16	4

Despite the widely shared belief in the media's importance in democratic societies, most Americans do not feel the media are delivering. Twenty-eight percent of Americans say the media support U.S. democracy well. Another 27% consider the media's performance acceptable, and 43% say the media are doing a poor job. The majority of Republicans (69%) believe the media are doing a poor job supporting democracy today, while the majority of Democrats (50%) feel the media are doing their job well.

How Well the News Media Are Supporting Our Democracy Today, by Party Identification



Americans aged 65 and older are the most charitable among age groups in their evaluations of the job the news media are doing in supporting democracy, but they are divided overall — 35% say the media are supporting democracy well and 38% say poorly. Blacks are especially positive about the media with twice as many saying news organizations are supporting democracy well as say they are doing poorly. Hispanics are divided in their views, while whites are decidedly negative.

How Well the News Media Are Supporting Our Democracy Today, by Age and Race

	VERY WELL/WELL	ACCEPTABLY	VERY POORLY/POORLY
% All	28	27	43
% 18-29 years old	22	32	45
% 30-49 years old	26	29	43
% 50-64 years old	30	24	45
% 65+ years old	35	23	38
% White	24	24	50
% Black	45	33	20
% Hispanic	34	32	31

There are only modest differences in the way educational groups, and thus educational groups within party, rate the way the media are performing their role.

INFORMING CITIZENS, HOLDING LEADERS ACCOUNTABLE SEEN AS MOST IMPORTANT DEMOCRATIC ROLES

A majority of Americans say the media are “critical” for accomplishing the specific democratic goals of keeping citizens informed about public affairs and holding leaders accountable. Forty-seven percent also believe the media perform a critical function by providing objective news reports. Far fewer believe the media are critical for connecting people to their community or the U.S. more broadly (30% and 38%, respectively). There is general consensus across subgroups on the importance of each of these roles, though young adults and Democrats tend to be more likely than older adults and Republicans are to describe each as critical.

Importance of News Media in Accomplishing Various Goals, by Age, Race and Party Identification

How important is the role of the news media in accomplishing each of the following goals?

	MAKING SURE AMERICANS HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE THEY NEED TO BE INFORMED ABOUT PUBLIC AFFAIRS				HOLDING LEADERS IN POLITICS, BUSINESS AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR ACTIONS			
	CRITICAL	VERY IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	NOT THAT IMPORTANT	CRITICAL	VERY IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	NOT THAT IMPORTANT
% All	54	34	7	2	50	33	11	3
% 18-29 years old	61	27	8	2	52	30	11	4
% 30-49 years old	57	31	7	2	52	31	11	4
% 50-64 years old	53	36	7	2	50	34	11	3
% 65+ years old	46	41	7	2	47	37	8	2
% White	55	34	6	2	51	33	10	4
% Black	49	34	10	2	49	33	10	2
% Hispanic	51	33	9	2	47	33	13	3
% Democrat	58	31	6	1	58	29	8	1
% Independent	56	32	7	2	53	31	11	4
% Republican	49	38	8	3	41	39	13	5

Importance of News Media in Accomplishing Various Goals, by Age, Race and Party

Identification *Cont'd.*

How important is the role of the news media in accomplishing each of the following goals?

	PROVIDING OBJECTIVE NEWS REPORTS				MAKING RESIDENTS FEEL CONNECTED TO THE U.S. AS A WHOLE			
	VERY CRITICAL	VERY IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	NOT THAT IMPORTANT	VERY CRITICAL	VERY IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	NOT THAT IMPORTANT
% All	47	38	10	2	38	41	15	3
% 18-29 years old	50	34	11	2	42	35	16	5
% 30-49 years old	50	36	10	2	37	40	18	4
% 50-64 years old	47	40	9	2	38	42	15	3
% 65+ years old	42	43	9	2	36	46	10	2
% White	50	37	8	2	37	42	16	4
% Black	39	42	12	1	40	39	12	3
% Hispanic	41	39	14	2	41	38	15	2
% Democrat	49	38	9	1	40	41	14	2
% Independent	50	36	10	2	36	39	18	4
% Republican	45	40	9	3	37	42	14	4

Importance of News Media in Accomplishing Various Goals, by Age, Race and Party Identification *Cont'd.*

How important is the role of the news media in accomplishing each of the following goals?

MAKING RESIDENTS FEEL CONNECTED TO THEIR COMMUNITY				
	CRITICAL	VERY IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	NOT THAT IMPORTANT
% All	30	45	19	4
% 18-29 years old	35	40	18	4
% 30-49 years old	31	41	21	4
% 50-64 years old	29	46	19	3
% 65+ years old	25	51	16	3
% White	28	45	20	4
% Black	35	43	14	3
% Hispanic	32	44	16	3
% Democrat	33	46	16	2
% Independent	30	41	22	5
% Republican	27	46	20	5

However, U.S. adults generally do not believe the media are playing any of these roles particularly well. In fact, more say the media are handling each role poorly than say they are handling it well. They do not make much distinction in their rating of how the media are handling each goal — roughly three in 10 say the media are performing the task well and four in 10 say poorly — except for making residents feel connected to their community. On that item, 28% say the media are doing well and 29% poorly, with 40% describing the media’s work as acceptable.

Evaluations by subgroup of the way media are handling each role generally correspond to the group’s opinions of the media. Democrats and blacks are positive about how the media are performing each role, while Republicans and independents are generally negative. Senior citizens are more positive than are those in younger age groups, though in most cases, seniors are about equally likely to say the media are doing a good job as to say they are doing a poor job.

Views on How Well Media Are Achieving Goals, by Age, Race and Party Identification

How is the media performing in each of these same areas?

	MAKING SURE AMERICANS HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE THEY NEED TO BE INFORMED ABOUT PUBLIC AFFAIRS			HOLDING LEADERS IN POLITICS, BUSINESS AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR ACTIONS			PROVIDING OBJECTIVE NEWS REPORTS		
	VERY WELL/ WELL	ACCEPTABLY	VERY POORLY/ POORLY	VERY WELL/ WELL	ACCEPTABLY	VERY POORLY/ POORLY	VERY WELL/ WELL	ACCEPTABLY	VERY POORLY/ POORLY
% All	30	29	38	30	26	42	30	26	40
% 18-29 years old	25	32	41	26	30	42	25	30	43
% 30-49 years old	28	31	39	28	27	43	28	28	42
% 50-64 years old	30	28	39	30	24	43	31	24	42
% 65+ years old	37	25	35	37	22	38	37	22	36
% White	24	28	44	26	25	47	25	24	49
% Black	47	31	18	41	26	28	47	32	16
% Hispanic	39	31	27	36	29	31	40	30	25
% Democrat	48	31	18	47	26	23	50	31	15
% Independent	24	29	45	26	25	48	24	27	47
% Republican	16	26	57	15	24	58	13	20	65

Views on How Well Media Are Achieving Goals, by Age, Race and Party Identification *Cont'd.*

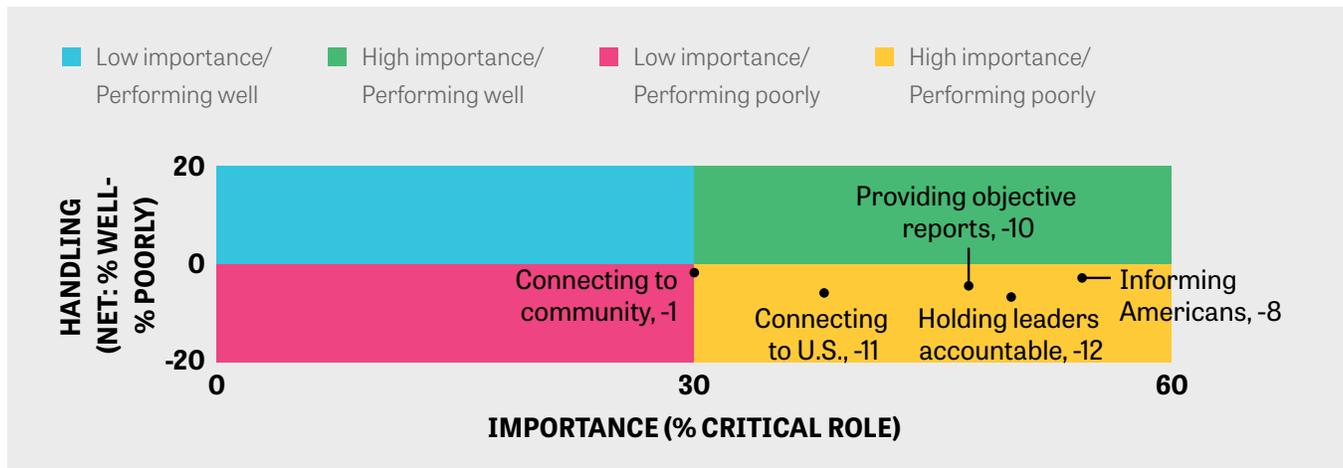
How is the media performing in each of these same areas?

	MAKING RESIDENTS FEEL CONNECTED TO THE U.S. AS A WHOLE			MAKING RESIDENTS FEEL CONNECTED TO THEIR COMMUNITY		
	VERY WELL/ WELL	ACCEPTABLY	VERY POORLY/ POORLY	VERY WELL/ WELL	ACCEPTABLY	VERY POORLY/ POORLY
% All	27	32	38	28	40	29
% 18-29 years old	21	33	44	25	40	32
% 30-49 years old	24	34	39	26	42	29
% 50-64 years old	27	32	38	28	40	30
% 65+ years old	33	29	32	33	36	26
% White	21	32	43	23	41	32
% Black	41	32	22	41	35	19
% Hispanic	34	32	29	35	38	23
% Democrat	41	35	20	41	39	17
% Independent	21	33	43	22	42	33
% Republican	15	28	54	19	38	40

Avid consumers of political news are much more likely than inattentive audiences to say the news media are performing their jobs well in providing objective news (41% vs. 23%, respectively), holding leaders accountable (41% vs. 23%) and making sure Americans have information they need (39% vs. 24%).

Taking the results together about the importance of the media and how well the media are performing, the media are doing relatively better on the item Americans see as least important — connecting residents to their local community. On the most important media roles — informing Americans and holding leaders accountable — the scores are negative but not much different from ratings on less important functions.

Importance and Handling of News Media Roles in Fulfilling Democratic Goals



PUBLIC DIVIDED ON WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MAKING SURE CITIZENS ARE INFORMED

The proliferation of “fake news” stories and the related distrust in the news media’s overall objectivity have implications regarding who is mainly responsible for making sure Americans receive an accurate and politically balanced picture of the news. The stakes of this debate are weighty, touching on fundamental constitutional and ideological issues with freedom of speech and responsiveness to market demand on one side and regulation aimed at protecting the social fabric of the nation on the other.

Such dilemmas may explain why Americans are divided equally on whether individuals (48%) or the news media (48%) are mainly responsible for making sure Americans receive an accurate and politically balanced picture of the news. Republicans tilt toward placing main responsibility on the individual, while Democrats tilt toward placing responsibility on the news media.

Perceptions of Who Is Responsible for Ensuring Americans Receive Accurate and Balanced News, by Age, Race and Party Identification

Who do you think should have the main responsibility for making sure Americans receive an accurate and politically balanced picture of the news: news organizations, by virtue of how they report the news and what stories they cover, or Americans themselves, by virtue of what news sources they use and how carefully they evaluate the news?

	NEWS ORGANIZATIONS	AMERICANS THEMSELVES
% All	48	48
% 18-29 years old	48	50
% 30-49 years old	51	46
% 50-64 years old	48	48
% 65+ years old	44	52
% White	47	50
% Black	50	44
% Hispanic	51	45
% Democrat	53	43
% Independent	47	50
% Republican	45	53

CONCLUSION

Americans have more news sources available to them now than they did in the past, but they feel that expansion hinders their ability to stay up to date on news more than it helps to keep them informed. The internet and cable television have transformed the news landscape from a few nominally nonpartisan news outlets to one with countless options, many having clear political perspectives that cater to certain niches of the public.

Americans increasingly perceive bias in the news media, so much so that less than half of U.S. adults can name a single objective news source. Increased perceptions of bias may be a major reason behind the erosion in media trust, especially among Republicans. It may also be a reason why Americans are just as likely to say individuals, as to say the news media, are primarily responsible for ensuring citizens get an accurate and balanced view of the news.

Nevertheless, Americans continue to believe the news media play a critical role in our democracy, even though they say the media are not doing well fulfilling that role.

Technology has provided the means for modern Americans to be more informed than their predecessors were. It also has expanded opportunities for direct communication between leaders and citizens. So while it may be easier for Americans to find information than it was in the past, the trade-off comes in working harder to sort through the vast amounts of information available to them to become truly informed and engaged democratic participants.

METHODOLOGY

Results are based on self-administered mail surveys with a random sample of 19,196 U.S. adults, aged 18 and older. Gallup used a random, addressed-based sample of 109,962 U.S. households in all 50 states, purchased from Survey Sampling International. Gallup oversampled households known to include harder-to-reach respondents, specifically blacks, Hispanics and young adults.

Each sampled household was mailed an English and a Spanish version of the survey, along with a prepaid \$1 cash incentive and a postage-paid return envelope. Within households, respondent selection was done using the “birthday method,” asking the household member with the next birthday to complete the questionnaire.

The computed response rate for valid surveys was 20%.

Gallup weighted the obtained sample to correct for unequal selection probability and nonresponse. Nonresponse adjustments were made by adjusting the sample to match the national demographics of gender, age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, education, region and population density. Demographic weighting targets were based on the 2016 Current Population Survey figures for the aged-18-and-older U.S. population. Population density targets were based on the 2010 census. For results based on this sample of U.S. adults, the margin of sampling error is ± 1 percentage point at the 95% confidence level. Margins of error for subgroups are higher.

All reported margins of sampling error include the computed design effects for weighting.

In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

The full questionnaire, topline results, detailed cross tabulations and raw data may be obtained upon request. For questions about how the survey was conducted, please contact galluphelp@gallup.com.

ABOUT THE KNIGHT FOUNDATION

The Knight Foundation is a national foundation with strong local roots. We invest in journalism, in the arts, and in the success of cities where brothers John S. and James L. Knight once published newspapers. Our goal is to foster informed and engaged communities, which we believe are essential for a healthy democracy. For more, visit knightfoundation.org.

This report is part of the Knight Foundation Trust, Media and Democracy Initiative, which supports the role of strong, trusted journalism as essential to a healthy democracy. Knight **launched** the initiative in September 2017 with an initial \$4.5 million investment.

ABOUT THE FORD FOUNDATION

The Ford Foundation is an independent, nonprofit grant-making organization. For more than 80 years it has worked with courageous people on the front lines of social change worldwide, guided by its mission to strengthen democratic values, reduce poverty and injustice, promote international cooperation, and advance human achievement. With headquarters in New York, the foundation has offices in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia. www.fordfoundation.org

ABOUT THE BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people — especially those with the fewest resources — have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Sue Desmond-Hellmann and Co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.

ABOUT THE OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS

The **Open Society Foundations** work to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable and open to the participation of all people. In the United States, the Open Society Foundations aim to nurture the development of a society that allows all people to participate equitably in political, economic and cultural life; encourages diverse opinions and critical debate; protects human rights; and promotes broadly shared prosperity and security.

ABOUT GALLUP

Gallup delivers analytics and advice to help leaders and organizations solve their most pressing problems. Combining more than 80 years of experience with its global reach, Gallup knows more about the attitudes and behaviors of employees, customers, students and citizens than any other organization in the world.

For more information, visit www.gallup.com or education.gallup.com.

APPENDIX

NEWS CONSUMPTION HABITS

TV IS MOST COMMON NEWS SOURCE, FOLLOWED BY ONLINE NEWS SITES; SOCIAL MEDIA TIES NEWSPAPERS

Americans are most likely to say they rely on television news programs to stay up to date on the news. Sixty-five percent say they rely on TV news “a great deal” or “a fair amount.” Slightly less than half, 47%, say they rely on internet-only news websites, placing it second among the nine sources tested in the survey. Newspapers tie with social media and TV/ radio talk shows, with about four in 10 saying they rely on those sources. One in three rely on news alerts on their smartphone to stay up to date.

How much, if at all, do you use each of the following approaches for staying up to date on the news?

	% A GREAT DEAL/ A FAIR AMOUNT
Watching television news programs that report the day's news	65
Visiting internet-only news websites	47
Tuning in to TV or radio talk shows that provide commentary on the news	42
Reading a newspaper (printed or online version)	41
Seeing or reading links to news stories on Facebook or other social media sites	41
Listening to news programs on the radio that report the day's news	36
Getting news alerts on your smartphone	34
Subscribing to a particular news source that sends you links to its top news stories for each day	20
Using a website or app that organizes news links for you from a variety of sources, often called a news aggregator	17

News consumption habits differ sharply by age. Younger adults — those under age 30 — show strong tendencies toward online sources, with social media the top overall source among this age group, followed by news websites. Younger Americans are much less likely than older age groups to watch or listen to news or to read newspapers.

NEWS CONSUMPTION HABITS DIFFER SHARPLY BY AGE. YOUNGER ADULTS — THOSE UNDER AGE 30 — SHOW STRONG TENDENCIES TOWARD ONLINE SOURCES, WHILE TV NEWS IS THE CLEAR LEADER AMONG OLDER ADULTS.

Adults between the ages of 30 and 49 also show a strong inclination to rely on online sources. News websites are their top source at 58%, edging out TV news and social media, which tie for second at 54%.

TV news is the leading source for adults older than 50. Among 50- to 64-year-olds, 77% rely a great deal or a fair amount on TV news programs, as do 86% of senior citizens, those aged 65 and older. Unlike younger adults, social media is not a major news source for those over age 50. Americans aged 50-64 rely on news websites to get news — but not to the extent that younger adults do. News websites are not among the top sources for senior citizens. Seniors are the only age group for whom newspapers are one of the top news sources, at 55%.

Top News Sources, by Age

Figures are the percentages who rely a great deal or a fair amount on the source for staying up to date on news

18-29 YEARS OLD	30-49 YEARS OLD	50-64 YEARS OLD	65+ YEARS OLD
Social media 68	News websites 58	TV news 77	TV news 86
News websites 57	TV news 54	Talk shows 46	Newspaper 55
News alerts 46	Social media 54	News websites 45	Talk shows 52
TV news 43	News alerts 44	Newspaper 44	Radio news 30

News consumption patterns do not vary greatly by political party identification. The major difference is that Republicans and Democrats are more reliant on TV news shows than independents are. Republicans are slightly less likely to rely on newspapers (37%) than Democrats and independents are.

Top News Sources, by Party Identification

Figures are the percentages who rely a great deal or a fair amount on the source for staying up to date on news

DEMOCRAT	INDEPENDENT	REPUBLICAN
TV news 70	TV news 57	TV news 69
News websites 48	News websites 50	News websites 45
Newspaper 47	Social media 42	Talk shows 44
Social media 46	Newspaper 40	Social media 39

Ideological differences are, however, apparent in news consumption, particularly at the extreme ends of the spectrum. Newspaper reading is much more common among those who describe their political views as “very liberal” (55%) than as “very conservative” (35%). Very liberal respondents are also much more likely than very conservative respondents to use news websites (58% to 43%) and social media (55% to 38%) to stay up to date on the news.

In contrast, 67% of very conservative adults, but only 44% of very liberal adults, rely on TV news programs to be informed. Very conservative respondents are also more likely than very liberal respondents (53% to 40%) to watch or listen to TV or radio talk shows that comment on the news.

Top News Sources, by Ideology

Figures are the percentages who rely a great deal or a fair amount on the source for staying up to date on news

VERY LIBERAL	LIBERAL	MODERATE	CONSERVATIVE	VERY CONSERVATIVE
News websites 58	TV news 59	TV news 67	TV news 71	TV news 67
Newspaper 55	News websites 55	News websites 46	Talk shows 46	Talk shows 53
Social media 55	Social media 51	Newspaper 42	News websites 45	News websites 43
TV news, Radio news 44	Newspaper 47	Social media 41	Social media 38	Radio news 43

These ideological differences could indicate that ideologues may seek out news sources where they are more likely to find perspectives similar to their own — newspapers for liberals and talk radio and TV news for conservatives.

Watching TV news programs is the primary way that Americans with less education stay informed — 74% of adults with a high school education or less and 66% of those who did not complete college rely on TV as a news source. While TV viewing is also common among college-educated adults, news websites are just as likely to be a top news source. A majority of postgraduates also rely on newspapers for news.

Top News Sources, by Educational Attainment

Figures are the percentages who rely a great deal or a fair amount on the source for staying up to date on news

HIGH SCHOOL OR LESS	SOME COLLEGE	FOUR-YEAR DEGREE ONLY	POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION
TV news 74	TV news 66	Websites 58	Websites 60
Talk shows 44	Websites 49	TV news 56	TV news 55
Social media 40	Social media 44	Social media 46	Newspaper 53
Newspaper 39	Talk shows 42	Newspaper 42	Radio news 43

Other notable demographic differences in news consumption:

- A significant difference exists within the Democratic Party regarding reliance on TV news. Eighty-five percent of conservative Democrats rely on TV news shows — the highest percentage for any subgroup based on party and ideology. Liberal Democrats, at 58%, are the least likely party/ideology subgroup to rely on TV news.
- Fifty-one percent of women, compared with 33% of men, say they rely a great deal or a fair amount on news links on social media sites to stay informed.
- A majority of blacks, 55%, rely on TV or radio talk shows to stay up to date, compared with 42% of Hispanics, 40% of whites and 34% of Asians.
- News habits are generally similar by household income, region or place of residence (urban, suburban or rural). One exception is that upper-income Americans (59%) are much more likely than lower-income Americans (36%) to rely on news websites.
- Americans with negative views of the news media tend to be less reliant on all sources than are those with positive views, particularly newspapers (54% to 32%) and TV news shows (79% to 56%).

ONLINE PLATFORMS ARE AN OCCASIONAL SOURCE OF NEWS FOR MOST U.S. ADULTS

The rise of the internet and emergence of smartphone technology has led to the development of websites and apps that people can use to engage in a variety of activities. Google, Facebook and Yahoo are some of the major online platforms. Their reach is profound, as 74% of adults surveyed say they use Google frequently (52%) or occasionally (22%), while 60% use Facebook frequently (45%) or occasionally (15%). Smaller percentages say they use Yahoo, MSN® or Apple® at least occasionally.

Please indicate how often you, personally, use each one, either by visiting the website or using its mobile app.

	% FREQUENTLY	% OCCASIONALLY	% RARELY	% NEVER
Google	52	22	10	14
Facebook	45	15	10	28
Yahoo	16	17	22	42
Apple	7	9	19	63
MSN	7	13	18	60

Many of these platforms also provide news content to users, through original reporting, aggregating news stories from other websites or providing the means for users to share news stories with others in their network. Overall, seven in 10 adults say they get news frequently (35%) or occasionally (35%) from these platforms.

Consistent with young adults' greater reliance on online sources more generally, 82% of 18- to 29-year-olds say they get news from online platforms at least occasionally, compared with 79% of those aged 30-49, 67% of those aged 50-64, and just 49% of those aged 65 and older.

How Often Get News From Major Online Platforms, by Age, Race and Party Identification

	FREQUENTLY	OCCASIONALLY	RARELY	NEVER
% All	35	35	17	12
% 18-29 years old	46	36	13	4
% 30-49 years old	41	38	15	5
% 50-64 years old	31	36	20	11
% 65+ years old	21	28	20	11
% White	32	36	19	12
% Black	40	34	13	11
% Hispanic	42	32	15	9
% Democrat	39	34	14	11
% Independent	34	37	18	10
% Republican	31	36	19	13

POLITICAL NEWS, LOCAL NEWS GET MOST ATTENTION; AMERICANS CLAIM GREATER KNOWLEDGE OF NATIONAL ISSUES

Americans report paying closer attention to news about political figures and events in Washington and about local matters than to four other major categories of news measured in the poll. Sixty-nine percent say they follow local and national political news “very closely” or “somewhat closely.” Slightly fewer, roughly six in 10, say they follow news about state government or international affairs very or somewhat closely. Sports and business and finance topics receive less attention.

How closely do you follow each of these different news topics?

	% VERY CLOSELY	% SOMEWHAT CLOSELY	% NOT TOO CLOSELY	% NOT AT ALL	% VERY/SOMEWHAT CLOSELY
News about political figures and events in Washington	31	38	21	10	69
News about issues affecting your local community	25	44	24	6	69
International affairs	20	40	27	12	60
News about your state government	16	41	32	11	57
Sports	18	23	24	34	41
Business and finance	11	28	38	22	39

Attention to national political news varies by education and income — as those with higher educational attainment and higher income pay greater attention to political news than do those with less education and income. However, attention to local news does not vary much by the same factors, perhaps because those with less formal education may have less interest in political news, or see it as less relevant to their lives, than local news.

How Closely Follow National Political vs. Local News, by Educational Attainment and Annual Household Income

Figures are the percentages who say they follow news about the topic “very closely” or “somewhat closely”

	NEWS ABOUT POLITICAL FIGURES AND EVENTS IN WASHINGTON	NEWS ABOUT ISSUES AFFECTING YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY
All	69	69
High school or less	63	72
Some college	68	70
College graduate only	73	65
Postgraduate	82	65
Less than \$50,000	61	70
\$50,000-\$99,999	70	70
\$100,000 or more	79	66

In addition to the education and income differences, the survey finds:

- Republicans (72%) and Democrats (72%) are equally likely to follow political and national news closely, but independents lag at 63%.
- There are modest differences in the percentages of Democrats (73%), Republicans (68%) and independents (66%) who follow local news closely.
- Younger adults (under age 30) tend to pay less attention to all types of news than do those 30 and older.
- Blacks (77%) are more likely to follow local news closely than are whites (69%), Hispanics (69%) and Asians (52%).

How Closely Follow National Political vs. Local News, by Age, Race and Party Identification

Figures are the percentages who say they follow news about the topic “very closely” or “somewhat closely”

	POLITICAL NEWS	LOCAL NEWS
All	69	69
18-29 years old	54	59
30-49 years old	63	67
50-64 years old	75	73
65+ years old	82	75
White	72	69
Black	65	77
Hispanic	62	69
Democrat	72	73
Independent	63	66
Republican	72	68

When asked to report how knowledgeable they are about important issues facing the United States and, separately, their local community, Americans profess greater awareness of national news. Eighty-three percent say they are “very knowledgeable” (29%) or “somewhat knowledgeable” (54%) about important issues facing the U.S., compared with 72% who are very (18%) or somewhat (54%) knowledgeable about local issues. News about national issues may be more readily available than news about local issues, which could explain the difference.

Americans with higher levels of education and income pay more attention to and claim greater knowledge of national

news rather than local news. The level of attention paid to local news is similar regardless of educational attainment or income level.

Knowledge About Important Issues Facing the U.S. and Local Community, by Educational Attainment and Annual Household Income

Figures are the percentages who say they are “very knowledgeable” or “somewhat knowledgeable”

	KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING THE UNITED STATES	KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY
All	83	72
High school or less	79	74
Some college	84	73
College graduate only	87	70
Postgraduate	92	72
Less than \$50,000	79	72
\$50,000-\$99,999	85	73
\$100,000 or more	90	72

Older Americans profess to be more knowledgeable about local and national issues than do younger Americans. While there are no racial differences in knowledge about national news, blacks tend to report greater knowledge than whites and Hispanics about local issues. In fact, blacks (32%) are nearly twice as likely as whites (16%) and Hispanics (19%) to describe themselves as “very knowledgeable” about issues facing their local community.

Knowledge About Important Issues Facing the U.S. and Local Community, by Age, Race and Party Identification

Figures are the percentages who say they are “very knowledgeable” or “somewhat knowledgeable”

	ISSUES FACING THE U.S.	ISSUES FACING COMMUNITY
All	83	72
18-29 years old	75	61
30-49 years old	81	72
50-64 years old	88	76
65+ years old	89	77
White	84	73
Black	83	80
Hispanic	83	71
Democrat	85	75
Independent	80	70
Republican	85	73

There are also not meaningful differences between residents of the U.S. coastal states — those living on states that border the Atlantic or Pacific oceans — and the non-coastal or “flyover states” in between. Eighty-five percent of coastal state residents and 83% of non-coastal state residents say they are knowledgeable about national issues. On local issues, the percentages are 71% and 74%, respectively.

Knowledge about both local and national issues is similar across the four major regions of the country. On national issues, the percentage saying they are very or somewhat knowledgeable about issues facing the U.S. ranges from a low of 81% among Midwestern residents to a high of 86% among Eastern residents. On local issues, a low of 69% of Western residents and a high of 75% of Southern residents say they are knowledgeable.⁹

⁹ Regions of the country are based on U.S. census definitions. The East region includes ME, NH, VT, MA, RI, CT, NY, NJ and PA. The Midwest region includes OH, MI, IN, IL, WI, MN, IA, MO, ND, SD, NE and KS. The South region includes MD, DE, WV, VA, NC, SC, GA, FL, AL, MS, KY, TN, AR, LA, TX, OK and Washington, D.C. The West region includes NM, AZ, CO, UT, WY, MT, ID, WA, OR, CA, NV, AK and HI.

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