KNIGHT FOUNDATION

AMERICANS' VIEWS OF MISINFORMATION IN THE NEWS AND HOW TO COUNTERACT IT

A GALLUP/KNIGHT FOUNDATION SURVEY

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AMERICANS' VIEWS OF MISINFORMATION IN THE NEWS AND HOW TO COUNTERACT IT

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INTRODUCTION

Recent years have seen a rise in concern about the spread of misinformation, frequently referred to as "fake news."[1] Concern about misinformation — which can be defined as stories that are made up or cannot be verified as accurate but are presented to readers as if they are accurate — is not confined to one political party.

A Feb. 5-March 11, 2018, Gallup/Knight Foundation survey of 1,440 Gallup Panel™ members assessed how pervasive U.S. adults believe misinformation is, how responsible major internet companies are for preventing its dissemination and how Americans view various procedures designed to counteract the influence of misinformation. Among the key findings in the survey:

- **Overall, Americans believe 39% of the news they see on television, read in newspapers or hear on the radio is misinformation. They estimate that nearly two-thirds of the news they see on social media is misinformation.**
- **More than three-quarters of U.S. adults (76%) say major internet companies have an obligation to identify misinformation that appears on their platforms. A slim majority say identifying misinformation is one of their most important responsibilities.**
- **Seventy percent or more of the public believes that methods to counteract the spread of misinformation, such as giving greater prominence to stories from reputable news sources, showing readers ratings of a news organization's trustworthiness and providing links to additional stories on the topic, can be at least somewhat effective.**
- **The extent to which Americans perceive misinformation in the news environment and their belief in the effectiveness of methods to counteract it are influenced to a large degree by their political leanings and their opinions of the news media more broadly.**

1 https://medium.com/1st-draft/fake-news-its-complicated-d0f773766c79

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AMERICANS ESTIMATE THAT 39% OF THE NEWS THEY SEE ON TV, READ IN NEWSPAPERS OR HEAR ON THE RADIO IS MISINFORMATION. THEY VIEW 65% OF NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA AS MISINFORMATION.

These results underscore how a lack of trust in the news media intertwines with perceptions of misinformation. Although Americans continue to see the media as playing a critical role in informing citizens in our democracy, the ability of the institution to effectively fulfill that responsibility is hampered when citizens are not confident that the information they receive is accurate.

Gallup and Knight Foundation acknowledge support for this research from the Ford Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Open Society Foundations.

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DETAILED FINDINGS

PERCEPTIONS OF THE EXTENT OF MISINFORMATION IN NEWS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

U.S. adults perceive that there is substantial misinformation in the current news environment — and much more so on social media than in traditional news media. On average, Americans estimate that 39% of the news they see on television, read in newspapers or hear on the radio is misinformation. They believe nearly two-thirds of the news they see on social media — 65% — is made up or cannot be verified as accurate.

Estimated Percentage of Misinformation in News

If you had to estimate, what percentage of the news that you see *on television, in newspapers or hear on the radio* do you think is misinformation? Please enter in a number between 0 and 100.

If you had to estimate, what percentage of the news that you see *on social media* do you think is misinformation? Please enter in a number between 0 and 100.

	TV, NEWSPAPERS, RADIO	SOCIAL MEDIA
	%	%
0%-25%	42	10
26%-50%	35	26
51%-75%	9	25
76% or more	12	36
No answer	1	3
Mean	39	65
Median	35	75

Due to rounding, percentages may total 100% +/- 1%.

Americans perceiving significantly more misinformation on social media than in traditional news media is consistent with their more negative opinions about social media as an information entity. Other questions in the survey, reported separately[2], show that Americans perceive there to be more bias, and more inaccuracy, in news on social media than on television, on radio and in newspapers. Also, the Gallup/Knight Foundation 2017 Survey on Trust, Media and Democracy[3] found a majority of Americans saying social media has had a negative impact on the U.S. news environment.

2 kf.org/tmdreport3

3 https://knightfoundation.org/reports/american-views-trust-media-and-democracy

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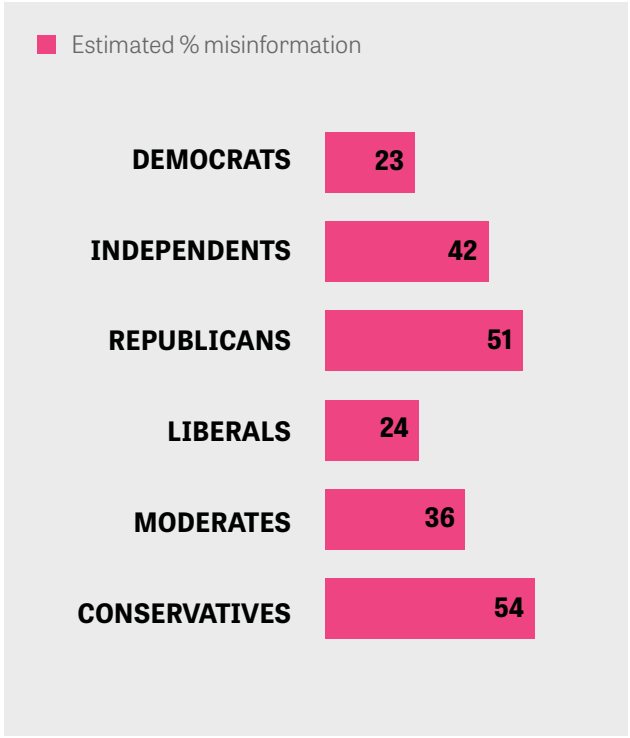
Perceptions of the extent of misinformation on social media are high, and generally similar, across key subgroups by party identification, education and attention to news. However, there are more substantial subgroup differences in perceptions of misinformation on legacy media, primarily according to one's political leanings and exposure to news.

Politically, Republicans (average estimate of 51%) and conservatives (54%) are far more likely to perceive misinformation on legacy media than are Democrats (23%) and liberals (24%). Independents, at 42%, are closer in their opinion to Republicans than Democrats. Political moderates' estimates are closer to those of liberals than conservatives.

Estimated Percentage of News on TV and Radio and in Newspapers That Is Misinformation, by Political Party and Ideology



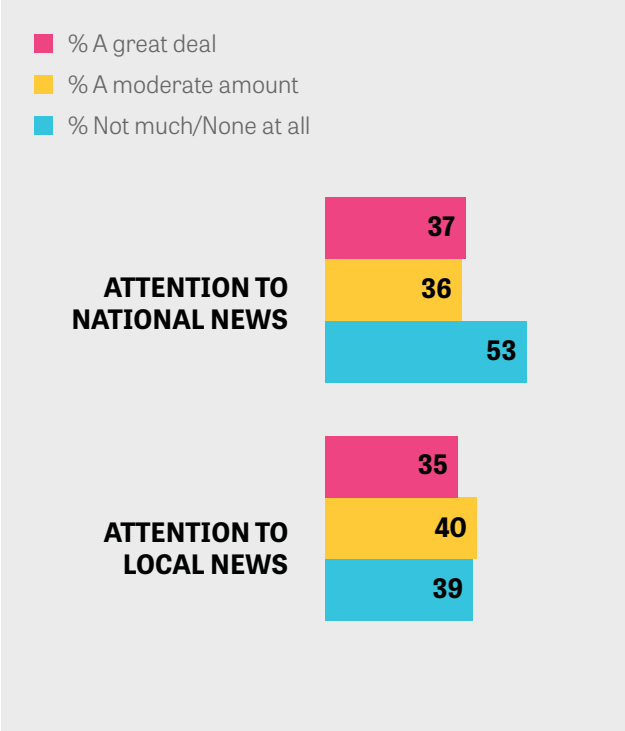
General attitudes toward the media appear to influence the extent to which people perceive misinformation on traditional media. On average, those who have a very or somewhat unfavorable opinion of the news media estimate that 53% of the news they see on traditional media is misinformation. Those who have a neutral opinion of the media believe 33% of the news they see or hear is misinformation. Americans with positive views of the news media perceive less misinformation but still estimate that 23% of the news they see is made up or not verifiable.

Opinions of the news media are strongly related to partisanship, with Republicans tending to view it negatively and Democrats having generally positive opinions.[4]

U.S. adults who are attentive to national news see less misinformation in news reporting than those who pay less attention to it. Americans who say they pay "a great deal" of attention to national news estimate that 37% of what they see reported on television and in newspapers and hear on the radio is misinformation. That is similar to the 36% estimate among those who pay "a moderate amount" of attention, but much lower than the 53% estimated by those who pay little or no attention to national news. In contrast, no meaningful subgroup differences exist based on the level of attention paid to local news.

Estimated Percentage of News on TV and Radio and in Newspapers That Is Misinformation, by Attention to News

Figures are the estimated percentages of misinformation



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

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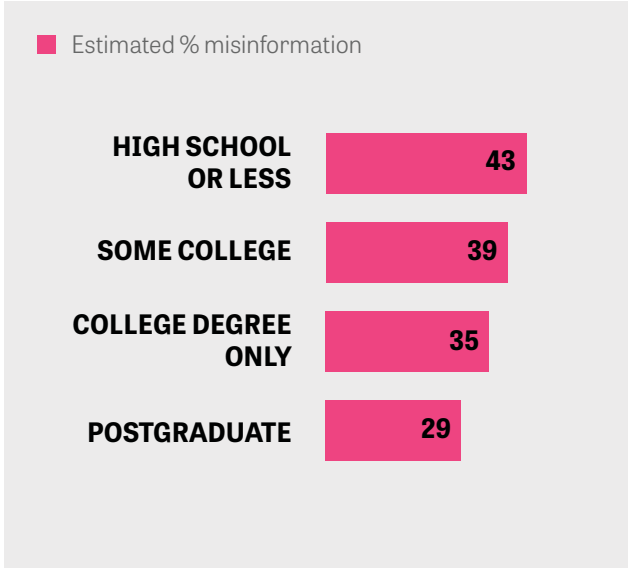
The interaction of news exposure and political leanings is apparent in the especially high estimate of misinformation among those who say they get all or most of their news from news organizations that are generally conservative in their point of view and little or no news from news organizations that are generally liberal in their point of view. This group perceives that 60% of the news they see on television, hear on the radio and read in newspapers is misinformation. That compares with estimates of 25% among those whose exposure is limited to liberal-leaning news sources, and 38% of those who say they get news from a mixture of liberal and conservative sources.

In addition to the differences in perceptions of misinformation by politics and news exposure, there are significant differences among those of various education levels. Postgraduates estimate far less misinformation on television, on the radio and in newspapers than do those with a high school education or less (29% vs. 43%).

Estimated Percentage of News on TV and Radio and in Newspapers That Is Misinformation, by Education



A regression analysis[5] finds that assessments of the pervasiveness of misinformation in traditional news media reporting are most strongly related to ideology, party identification, education, attention to national news and exposure to one-sided news, taking into account the effects of other demographic and attitudinal variables.

The effects of ideology are roughly twice as large as those of party identification, everything else equal. In other words, conservatives (regardless of party affiliation) tend to perceive more misinformation in traditional media than Republicans (regardless of ideology) do.

Education and attention to national news are about equally strong predictors, with higher education and greater attention to news associated with lower estimated percentages of misinformation, holding the effects of other variables constant.

5 Results of the regression model are in the appendix.

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DETAILED FINDINGS

MAJOR INTERNET COMPANIES' ROLES IN COUNTERACTING MISINFORMATION

Major internet companies, including social media companies such as Facebook and news aggregation and information search sites such as Google, have been scrutinized for the role their platforms can play in spreading misinformation. Seventy-six percent of U.S. adults believe that major internet companies have an obligation to alert their users when they are certain a story being shared on their platforms (websites or apps) is misinformation.

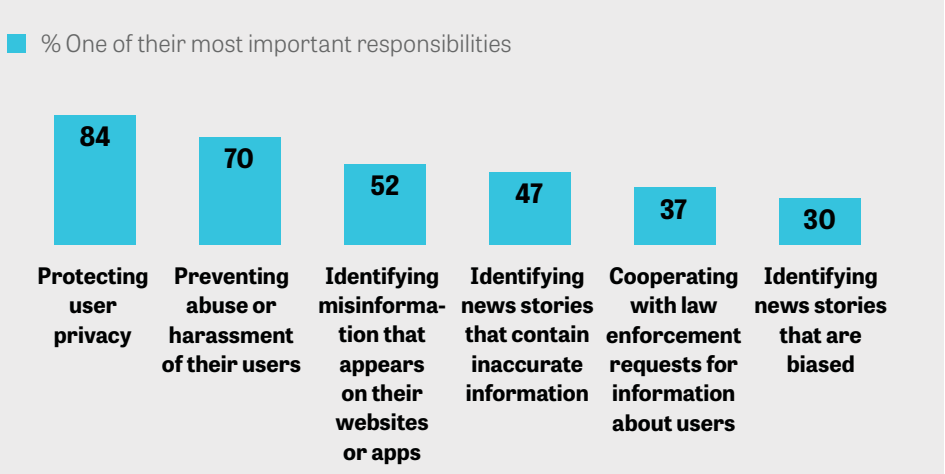
Postgraduates (86%), Democrats (86%) and those who have a favorable opinion of the news media (90%) are among the subgroups most likely to believe major internet companies have this obligation. Conservatives (66%) and those with an unfavorable opinion of the news media (65%) are among the groups least inclined to hold this view.

Roughly half of U.S. adults, 52%, say it is one of major internet companies' most important responsibilities to identify misinformation that appears on their websites or apps. Another 35% say it is important but not one of their most important responsibilities, while 12% say it is not an important responsibility for them.

The perceived importance of identifying misinformation ranks behind protecting user privacy and preventing abuse or harassment of their users, but ahead of identifying news stories that contain inaccurate information, identifying news stories that are biased and cooperating with law enforcement requests for information about users.

Perceptions of Major Internet Companies' Most Important Responsibilities

Please indicate how important each of the following responsibilities is for major internet companies to carry out.



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SEVENTY-SIX PERCENT OF AMERICANS BELIEVE THAT MAJOR INTERNET COMPANIES HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO ALERT USERS WHEN THEY ARE CERTAIN A STORY ON THEIR WEBSITES OR APPS IS MISINFORMATION.

Older respondents are more likely than younger respondents to say identifying misinformation that appears on major internet companies' platforms is one of those companies' most important responsibilities. Specifically, 66% of adults aged 55 and older, compared with 48% of those aged 35 to 54 and 40% of those aged 18 to 34, regard identifying misinformation as a top responsibility for internet companies.

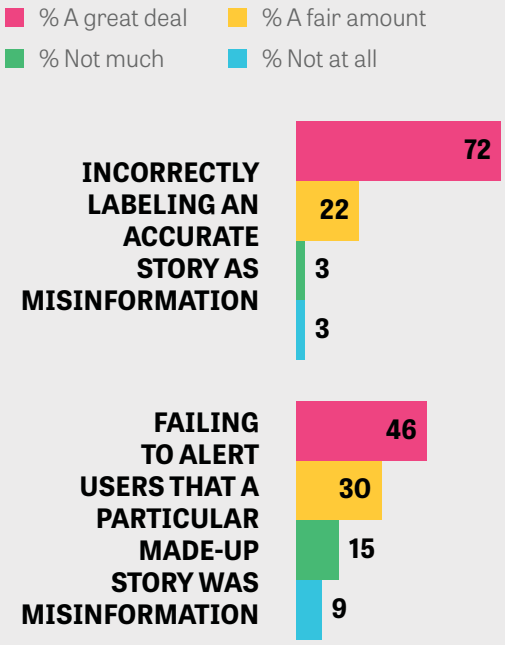
There are no differences in perceived importance among college graduates and nongraduates, but there are differences based on party affiliation. Democrats (64%) are more likely than Republicans (44%) and independents (47%) to see identifying misinformation as one of internet companies' most important obligations.

Major internet companies that believe they have a responsibility to counteract the spread of misinformation may not be able to effectively do so in all circumstances. In some cases, their methods may fail to identify a fake news story as misinformation. In other cases, the methods could mistakenly identify a factual story as misinformation. Of these possible errors, Americans are much more concerned about a "false positive" — mistakenly identifying an accurate story as misinformation. Seventy-two percent say they would have a great deal of concern about that happening. A smaller 46% would have the same level of concern about an error of omission — failing to properly identify a fake news item as misinformation.

Level of Concern About Possible Errors Major Internet Companies Could Make in Identifying Misinformation

How much would it concern you if major internet companies incorrectly labeled an accurate story as misinformation?

How much would it concern you if major internet companies failed to alert users that a particular made-up story was misinformation?



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Concern about false positives is fairly similar by subgroup. However, those who pay more attention to national news (81%) are much more concerned than those who pay a moderate amount (66%) or little or no attention (55%).

Older adults are much more concerned than younger adults about internet companies failing to alert users if stories contain misinformation. There are no differences among those with and without a college degree, and modest differences by party affiliation, with Democrats more concerned than Republicans. Fairly large differences exist among those who pay more versus less attention to the news, with the highly attentive group much more concerned.

Levels of Concern About Major Internet Companies Failing to Alert Users That a Made-Up Story Was Misinformation, by Subgroup

	A GREAT DEAL	A FAIR AMOUNT	NOT MUCH/NOT AT ALL
Party identification			
% Democrats	54	27	18
% Independents	42	31	27
% Republicans	42	31	27
Age			
% 18-34 years	40	36	24
% 35-54 years	39	32	28
% 55+ years	58	22	21
College graduate			
% Yes	49	28	23
% No	45	30	24
Opinion of news media			
% Very/Somewhat favorable	58	29	12
% Neutral	34	39	27
% Very/Somewhat unfavorable	39	27	33
Attention paid to national news			
% A great deal	55	26	19
% A moderate amount	41	31	27
% Not much/None at all	25	42	33

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DETAILED FINDINGS

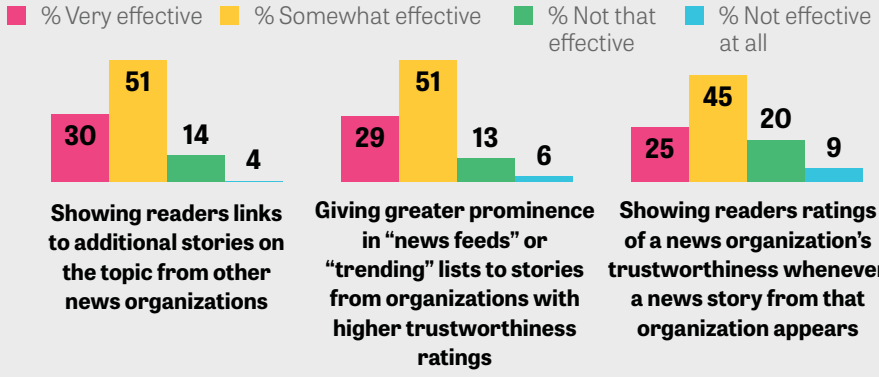
METHODS FOR COUNTERACTING MISINFORMATION

The major internet companies, and other groups hoping to perform a watchdog role, are implementing or considering ways to discourage the spread of misinformation on their platforms. These include providing links to additional news stories on the same topic from other news organizations, giving greater prominence in "news feeds" or "trending" lists to stories from trusted news sources, or alerting readers to the reporting news organization's perceived trustworthiness. U.S. adults think these proposals for counteracting misinformation would be effective, though most tend to think they would be "somewhat effective" rather than "very effective."

Specifically, eight in 10 Americans believe giving greater prominence to stories from trusted organizations in news feeds or trending lists would be very (29%) or somewhat (51%) effective. Similar proportions say the same about showing readers links to additional stories on the topic from other organizations (30% very, 51% somewhat effective). Slightly less believe it would be effective (25% very, 45% somewhat) to show news organizations' trustworthiness ratings each time a story from that news organization appears on an external website or app.

Perceived Effectiveness of Methods to Counteract Misinformation

How effective do you think each of the following methods would be in limiting the spread of misinformation on major internet companies' platforms?



For the most part, subgroups differ little in their perceptions that showing readers links to additional stories from other organizations would be very effective. College graduates and U.S. adults with positive opinions of the news media are slightly more inclined than nongraduates and adults who view the media negatively to perceive additional story links as being highly effective.

Democrats, liberals, those who are highly attentive to national news and those with positive opinions of the news media are much more positive about news source trustworthiness ratings and giving greater prominence in news feeds to certain sources than are Republicans, conservatives, those who pay little attention to national news and those who have negative opinions of the media.

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Young adults are more skeptical than older adults about the potential effectiveness of showing readers news organization trustworthiness ratings.

Perceived Effectiveness of Approaches to Counteract Misinformation, by Subgroup

Figures are the percentages who say each approach would be very effective

	SHOWING LINKS TO ADDITIONAL STORIES FROM OTHER ORGANIZATIONS	GIVING GREATER PROMINENCE TO STORIES FROM TRUSTED ORGANIZATIONS	SHOWING READERS RATINGS OF ORGANIZATION TRUSTWORTHINESS
Party identification			
% Democrats	28	39	33
% Independents	32	30	26
% Republicans	30	15	15
Ideology			
% Liberal	29	43	33
% Moderate	33	29	26
% Conservative	28	16	18
Age			
% 18-34 years	31	32	16
% 35-54 years	30	27	30
% 55+ years	29	27	29
College graduate			
% Yes	36	34	31
% No	28	26	23
Opinion of news media			
% Very/Somewhat favorable	35	42	35
% Neutral	23	24	17
% Very/Somewhat unfavorable	28	19	20
Attention paid to national news			
% A great deal	32	35	31
% A moderate amount	30	26	19
% Not much/None at all	26	15	20

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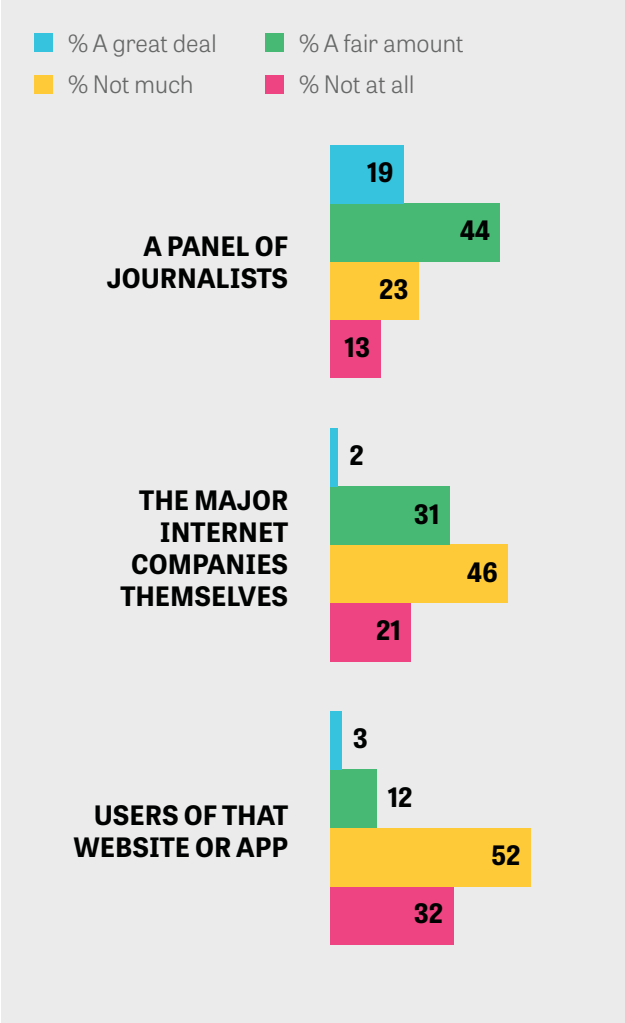
Ratings of news organizations' trustworthiness could be derived from a variety of approaches. Some of the approaches being implemented or considered rely on ratings from website users (sometimes known as "crowdsourcing"), from a third-party group of experts (for example, journalists) or from the internet company itself.

Of these approaches, Americans would be most inclined to trust news organization trustworthiness ratings from journalists — 19% say they would trust such ratings "a great deal" and 44% "a fair amount." The public is unlikely to put much credence into crowdsourced ratings — just 15% would trust this approach a great deal (3%) or a fair amount (12%). This result is especially notable because that is the approach Facebook recently announced it would use, after considering others. Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg mentioned it was using crowdsourced ratings because it didn't want to become an arbiter itself, saying, "We could try to make that decision ourselves, but that's not something we're comfortable with." However, Americans may be more likely to trust Facebook to make the decisions than to rely on user ratings, as 33% say they would have at least a fair amount of trust in news organization ratings from the major internet companies themselves.

Trust in Ratings of News Organization Trustworthiness Derived From Various Sources

How much would you trust ratings of a news organization's trustworthiness from —



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Trust in user ratings is similarly low among major subgroups. Democrats and those positively disposed toward the news media are most likely to trust journalist ratings (89% of each group would have a great deal or a fair amount of trust). Less than four in 10 Republicans and adults with negative opinions of the news media say they would trust journalist ratings, but they are more likely to trust journalist ratings than the alternatives. A majority of most other subgroups would trust the journalist rating approach.

Forty-five percent of Democrats, compared with 28% of independents and 24% of Republicans, say they would trust ratings from major internet companies. Those with favorable opinions of the news media (47%) are also more inclined than those with unfavorable opinions (18%) to trust ratings from major internet content providers.

Trust in Sources That Could Be Used to Derive News Organization Trustworthiness Ratings, by Subgroup

Figures are the percentages who say they would trust each source "a great deal" or "a fair amount"

	PANEL OF JOURNALISTS	WEBSITE/APP USERS	MAJOR INTERNET COMPANIES
Party identification			
% Democrats	89	16	45
% Independents	65	13	28
% Republicans	31	16	24
Age			
% 18-34 years	73	12	35
% 35-54 years	59	13	30
% 55+ years	58	19	34
College graduate			
% Yes	74	16	37
% No	59	14	31
Opinion of news media			
% Very/Somewhat favorable	89	14	47
% Neutral	74	16	40
% Very/Somewhat unfavorable	38	15	18
Attention paid to national news			
% A great deal	64	14	29
% A moderate amount	68	17	41
% Not much/None at all	46	13	21

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DETAILED FINDINGS

FACT-CHECKING WEBSITES

Fact-checking websites, which verify the accuracy of claims made by reporters, politicians, or others attempting to inform or persuade, have existed for many years. These sites are another way to help deter the spread of misinformation.

To assess Americans' awareness of such websites, respondents were asked to name, in an open-ended question format, the names of fact-checking websites.

About six in 10 U.S. adults provided a response, and most of these people correctly named a leading fact-checking website such as Snopes.com (mentioned by 32%) or PolitiFact.com (21%). Seventeen percent mention "FactCheck," "Fact Checker," or "FactCheck.org," though in many instances it is unclear from their response which of two similarly named sites they are referring to — FactCheck.org or Fact Checker.

SNOPES.COM AND POLITIFACT.COM ARE THE MOST WIDELY KNOWN FACT-CHECKING WEBSITES.

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Small percentages of adults named traditional news sources, such as CNN or Fox News, rather than organizations whose primary purpose is to fact-check reported stories rather than to do original news reporting.

Unaided Recall of Fact-Checking Websites

Can you name any organizations or websites whose main focus is fact-checking news stories? Please list your responses in the boxes below.

	PERCENTAGE WHO NAMED ORGANIZATION OR WEBSITE
Snopes.com™	32
PolitiFact.com™	21
FactCheck.org®/Fact Checker™	17
Website/Internet (non-specific)	11
Google	3
CNN®	3
Fox News®/Fox®	3
The Washington Post®	3
National Public Radio®/NPR®	2
Politico.com™	2
Drudge Report®	1
ProPublica.org™	1
Reuters.com™	1
The New York Times®	1
British Broadcasting Corporation™/BBC®	1
RealClearPolitics.com™	1
Wikipedia®	1
Other	7
None/Don't know	4
No answer	39

Percentages total more than 100% due to multiple responses.

Responses mentioned by 1% or more of respondents are shown.

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Higher percentages of younger adults appear to be familiar with some of the most well-known fact-checking websites, as they are among the subgroups most likely to volunteer the name of one in response to the open-ended question. Democrats more frequently recall the name of fact-checking websites than Republicans do, with an especially big difference for PolitiFact.com. There are modest education differences.

Unaided Recall of Fact-Checking Websites, by Subgroup

	SNOPES.COM	POLITIFACT	FACTCHECK.ORG/FACT CHECKER
Age			
% 18-34 years	39	38	23
% 35-54 years	38	20	18
% 55+ years	21	8	10
Party identification			
% Democrats	36	33	21
% Independents	37	22	20
% Republicans	21	6	8
College graduate			
% Yes	34	25	22
% No	31	19	15

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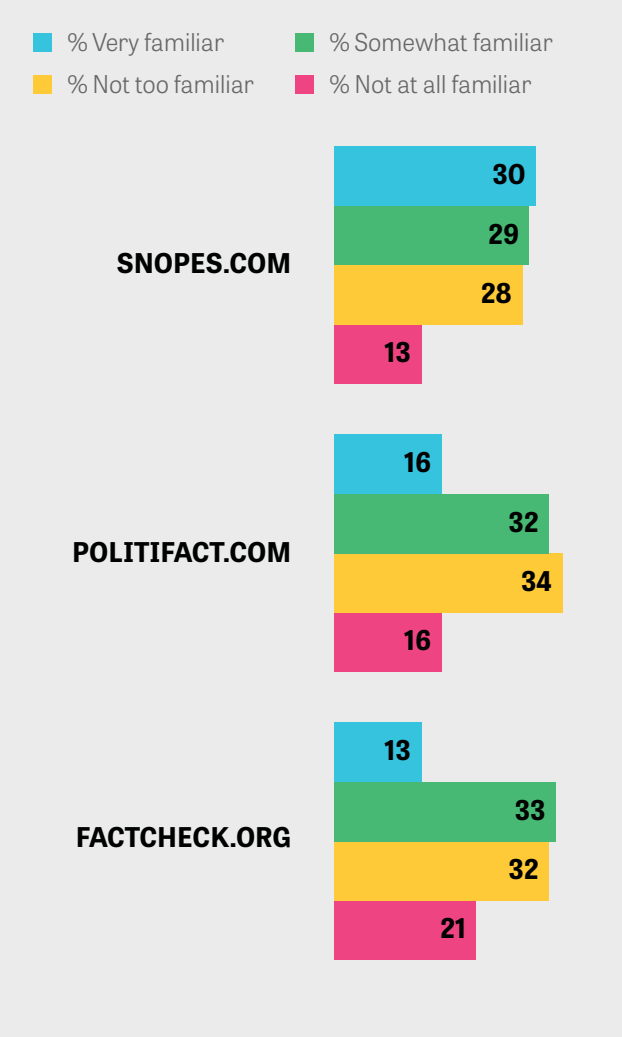
A separate question assessed user familiarity with fact-checking websites by asking them to rate on a 4-point scale how familiar they are with three leading websites. Between 46% and 59% of U.S. adults report being very or somewhat familiar with the fact-checking websites Snopes.com, PolitiFact.com or FactCheck.org. Americans are more familiar with Snopes.com than the other two websites.

Familiarity With Fact-Checking Websites

How familiar are you with each of the following organizations or websites that fact-check news stories?

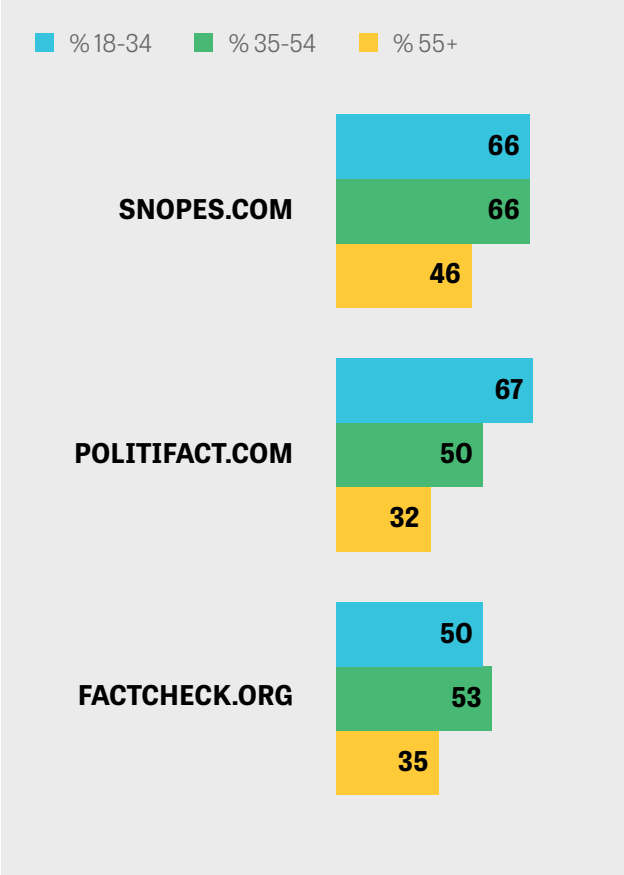


Republicans report less familiarity than Democrats do with FactCheck.org (36% to 49%) and PolitiFact.com (30% to 57%). However, there are only modest differences between Republicans (55%) and Democrats (61%) in familiarity with Snopes.com.

There are significant age differences in familiarity with the main fact-checking websites, with older adults (those aged 55 and older) much less familiar with each.

Familiarity With Fact-Checking Websites, by Age

Figures are the percentages very or somewhat familiar with each website



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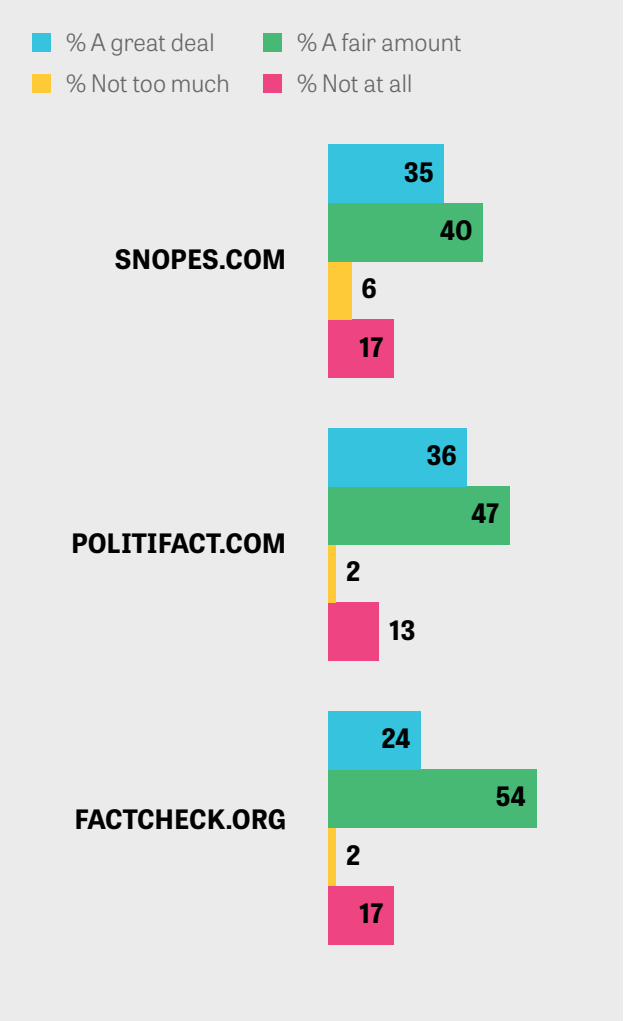
The vast majority of people familiar with these websites trust them at least a fair amount, with slightly more than one in three trusting Snopes.com and PolitiFact.com "a great deal."

Trust in Fact-Checking Websites, Among Those Familiar With the Website

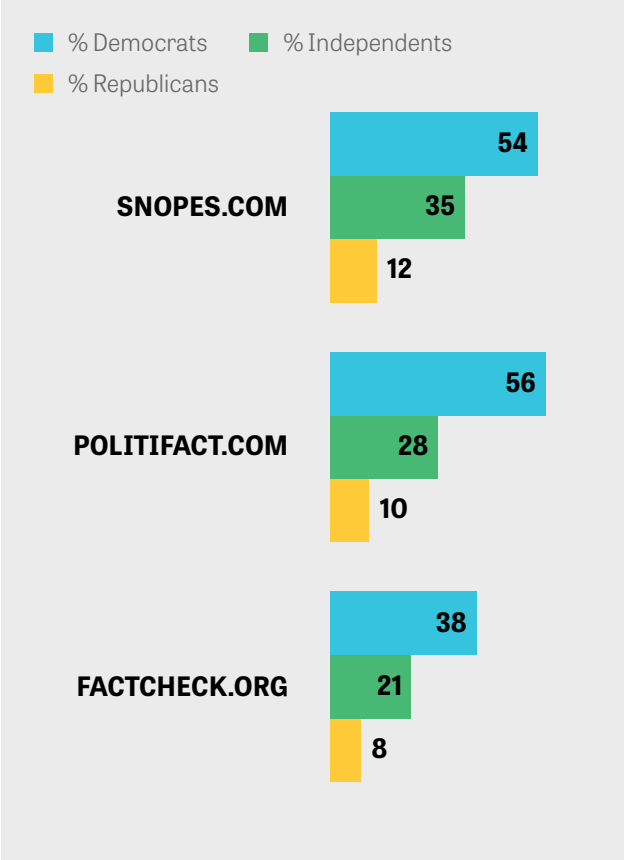
How much do you trust each of the following organizations or websites that fact-check news stories?



Democrats who are familiar with the fact-checking websites tend to be more trusting in these websites than Republicans familiar with the websites are, especially for PolitiFact.com and Snopes.com.

Trust in Fact-Checking Websites, by Party Identification, Among Those Familiar With the Website

Figures are the percentages who have a great deal of trust in each website



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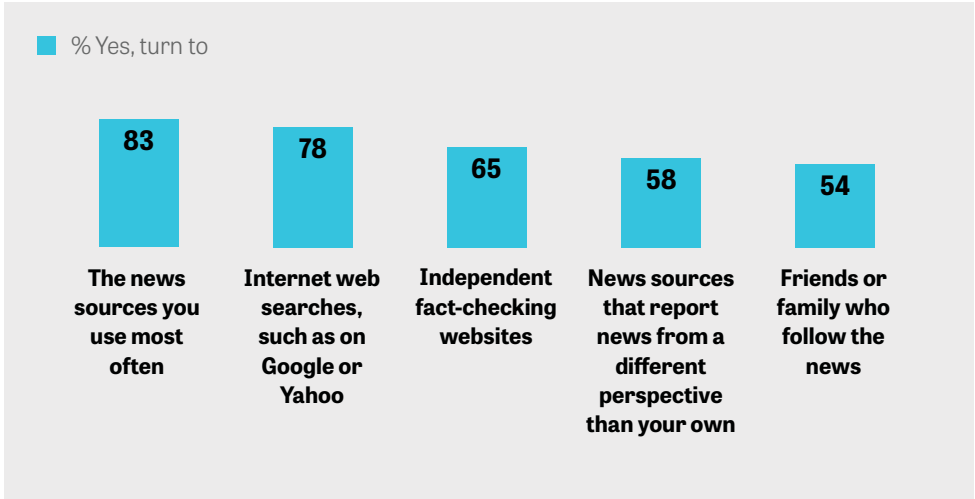
DETAILED FINDINGS

WHERE PEOPLE TURN WHEN THEY SEE MISINFORMATION

When U.S. adults encounter news that they suspect is misinformation, they are most likely to turn to the news sources they use most often (83%) or web searches, such as on Google® or Yahoo® (78%) when they are uncertain about the facts. Nearly two-thirds (65%) say they turn to independent fact-checking websites. Majorities also consult news sources that report from a different perspective than their own (58%) or friends or family who follow the news (54%).

Sources That Americans Turn to When Uncertain About Facts They Hear in News Stories

Next, please say whether you turn to any of the following when you are uncertain about facts you hear in news stories.



In most subgroups, relying on the news sources that people use most often is the most or second most common approach to checking on facts, with roughly 80% or more doing so. The major exception is for people who say they pay little or no attention to national news — just 53% say they turn to the news sources they use most often — presumably because they don't have regular sources on which they rely to learn about the news.

Web searches are also common among key subgroups, but less so among older adults. Sixty-five percent of those aged 55 and older say they conduct web searches when they are uncertain about facts they hear in news stories, compared with 81% of those between the ages of 35 and 54 and 91% among those aged 18 to 34. Web searches are the most common resource for people who pay little or no attention to national news.

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Republicans are much less inclined to consult fact-checking websites, and more likely to consult family or friends, than are Democrats and independents. Just 48% of Republicans say they use fact-checking websites when they encounter information they suspect is false, compared with 72% of both independents and Democrats. Republicans are less likely to use fact-checking websites than any of the other sources included in the survey.

College graduates, independents and young adults are among the groups more inclined to consult a news source that reports news from a perspective that differs from their own.

Sources That Subgroups Turn to When They Encounter Suspected Misinformation

Figures are the percentages who say "Yes, turn to"

	SOURCES USED MOST OFTEN	WEB SEARCHES	FACT-CHECKING WEBSITES	SOURCES REPORTING FROM A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE	FRIENDS OR FAMILY
Party identification					
% Democrats	85	84	72	55	53
% Independents	80	78	72	64	48
% Republicans	85	71	48	55	62
Age					
% 18-34 years	83	91	74	64	57
% 35-54 years	83	81	69	63	53
% 55+ years	84	65	53	49	53
College graduate					
% Yes	87	84	67	66	57
% No	82	75	64	55	53
Opinion of news media					
% Very/Somewhat favorable	88	77	72	57	50
% Neutral	79	90	57	62	59
% Very/Somewhat unfavorable	80	76	61	58	57
Attention paid to national news					
% A great deal	90	75	71	58	53
% A moderate amount	83	84	63	60	57
% Not much/None at all	53	76	45	51	51

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DETAILED FINDINGS

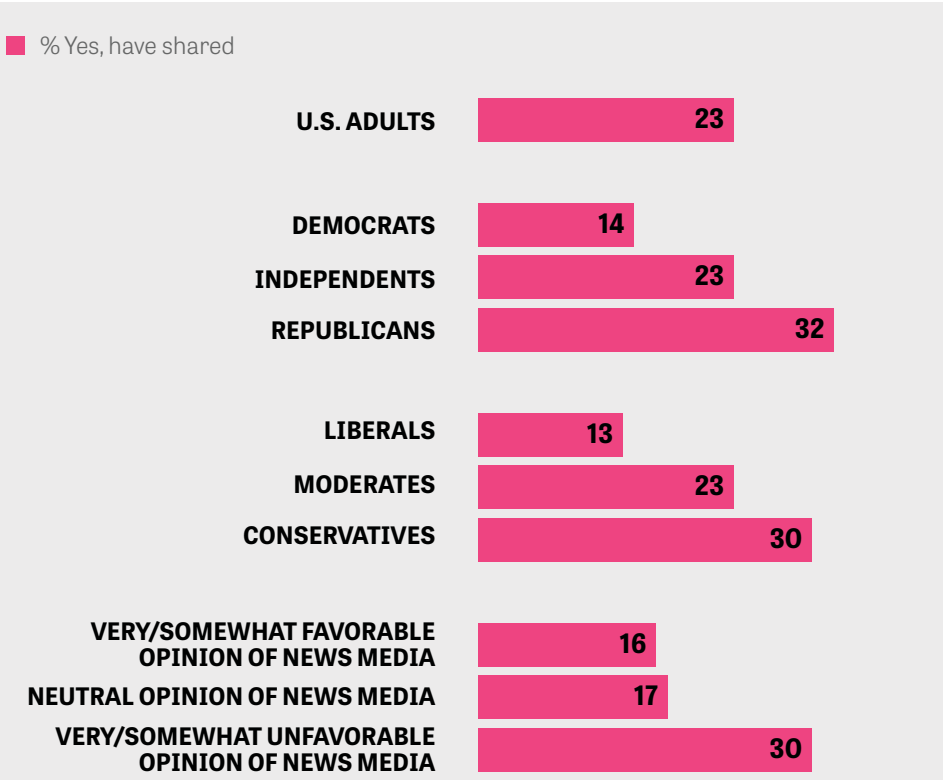
SHARING MISINFORMATION

One of the chief concerns about misinformation is how quickly and easily it can spread via the internet when it is picked up by other websites and shared by users who come across it. Twenty-three percent of U.S. adults say they have shared news stories — apart from obvious comedy or satire — that they suspected contained misinformation.

Sharing of misinformation is more common among people with right-leaning political views: 32% of Republicans and 30% of conservatives say they have done so, compared with 14% of Democrats and 13% of liberals. Also, 30% of those who have an unfavorable opinion of the news media have shared misinformation, compared with 16% who view the news media favorably and 17% who have a neutral view of it.

Reports of Sharing Misinformation, by Subgroup

Apart from articles that are clearly written as comedy or satire, have you ever shared news stories with other people that you suspected were misinformation?



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Thirty-eight percent of adults who say they primarily use conservative-leaning news sources report having shared misinformation, compared with 12% of those who primarily use liberal-leaning sources and 23% who use a mixture of sources.

The political patterns help explain why older adults, who are more likely to be Republican or conservative, share misinformation more often than younger adults do. Twenty-eight percent of those aged 55 and older say they have shared misinformation, compared with 20% of those aged 35 to 54 and 19% of those aged 18 to 34.

A follow-up question, asked of those who have shared misinformation, probed for the reasons why they did so. Most commonly, sharers of misinformation say their aim was to call attention to the story being inaccurate — 84% shared misinformation for this reason. Sixty-two percent say they shared a news item they suspected was misinformation to ask someone's opinion about it. Thirty-four percent shared the story because they thought it might be true.

Smaller percentages of U.S. adults who have shared suspected misinformation did so for nefarious reasons. One-quarter — roughly 6% of the total population — say they shared misinformation to spread the message of the story to a wider audience. Twenty-one percent of those who shared misinformation did so to annoy or upset the recipient.

Reasons for Sharing Stories Suspected to Be Misinformation, Among Those Who Reported Sharing

As best as you can recall, have you ever shared news articles that were misinformation, other than those that were comedy or satire, for each of the following reasons?

	YES, SHARED FOR THIS REASON	NO, DID NOT SHARE FOR THIS REASON
You wanted to call attention to the story being inaccurate	84	16
You wanted to ask the person's opinion about the story	62	38
You thought the story might be true even though you suspected it was false	34	66
You wanted to spread the message of the story to a wider audience	25	75
You wanted to annoy or upset the recipient	21	78

Due to rounding, percentages may total 100% +/- 1%.

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CONCLUSION

Americans perceive a substantial amount of misinformation in the news environment, more so on social media than in traditional news media. The public believes that many of the common approaches to counteracting misinformation would help address the problem but would not be highly effective.

To a large degree, people's views of the proposed solutions for limiting the spread of misinformation seem highly correlated with their views of the media more generally. Those who have a positive opinion of the media tend to think the various methods to counteract misinformation will be effective, and they have greater trust in the sources that would provide the fact-checking information. Meanwhile, those who have a negative opinion of the media, which includes most Republicans, tend to be more skeptical about these methods.

Given the link between attitudes about the media and opinions about misinformation, part of the solution for counteracting misinformation may lie in attempting to restore trust in the media among those who have lost it. Future Gallup/Knight Foundation research will continue to assess the potential effectiveness of approaches to limiting misinformation and increasing trust in the news media.

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METHODOLOGY

Results are based on self-administered web surveys with a random sample of 1,440 U.S. adults, aged 18 and older, who are members of the Gallup Panel. Gallup uses probability-based, random sampling methods to recruit its panel members.

Interviewing took place between Feb. 5 and March 11, 2018.

The response rate among panel members sampled for this study is 31%.

Gallup weighted the obtained sample to correct for nonresponse. Nonresponse adjustments were made by adjusting the sample to match the national demographics of gender, age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, education and region. Demographic weighting targets were based on the 2015 Current Population Survey figures for the aged-18-and-older U.S. population. For results based on this sample of U.S. adults, the margin of sampling error is ±4 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.

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APPENDIX

REGRESSION RESULTS

VARIABLE	CODING	B	STD. ERROR
Constant		27.9*	3.1
Gender	0=female, 1=male	-0.7	1.3
Race	0=nonwhite, 1=non-Hispanic white	-1.8	1.6
Age	0=18-34, .5=35-54, 1=55+	-0.3	1.8
Education	0=high school or less, .33=some college, .67=college graduate only, 1=postgraduate	-5.5*	2.0
Party identification	0=Democrat, .5=independent, 1=Republican	9.7*	2.3
Ideology	0=liberal, .5=moderate, 1=conservative	17.1*	2.4
Political knowledge	0=low, .5=medium, 1=high	-1.3	2.1
Live in East	0=no, 1=yes	3.3	2.0
Live in South	0=no, 1=yes	2.4	1.7
Live in West	0=no, 1=yes	1.6	1.9
Live in city	0=no, 1=yes	2.2	2.0
Live in suburb	0=no, 1=yes	0.2	1.6
Live in rural area	0=no, 1=yes	1.6	2.2
Attention to national news	0=not much/none at all, .5=a moderate amount, 1=a great deal	-8.3*	2.0
Attention to local news	0=not much/none at all, .5=a moderate amount, 1=a great deal	-1.9	1.9
Exposure to news	0=all or most liberal and little or no conservative, .5=mixture of both, 1=all or most conservative and little or no liberal	12.6*	2.6

Dependent variable: estimated percentage of misinformation in news reported on television, on radio and in newspapers

*Significant at $p < .05$

$R^2 = .26$

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