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# Americans See Skepticism of News Media as Healthy, Say Public Trust in the Institution can Improve

*72% of U.S. adults say news organizations do an insufficient job telling their audiences where their money comes from*

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## How we did this

This report is the culmination of a yearlong study into Americans' views of the news media. This report was made possible by The Pew Charitable Trusts, which received support from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

The main source of data comes from a Pew Research Center survey of 10,300 U.S. adults conducted Feb. 18 to March 2, 2020. Additionally, the question about the influence of corporate and financial interests comes from a survey of 13,200 U.S. adults conducted August 3-16, 2020. Everyone who took part in these surveys are members of the Center's American Trends Panel, an online survey panel that is recruited through national, random sampling of residential addresses. Recruiting our panelists by phone or mail ensures that nearly all U.S. adults have a chance of selection. This gives us confidence that any sample can represent the whole population (see our [Methods 101 explainer](#) on random sampling). To further ensure that each survey reflects a balanced cross section of the nation, the data is weighted to match the U.S. adult population by gender, race, ethnicity, partisan affiliation, education and other categories.

Here [\[LINK\]](#) and here [\[LINK\]](#) are the questions that were in these two surveys, along with responses, and the methodology [\[LINK\]](#). Visit our [interactive data tool](#) to access the data on Americans' attitudes toward the news media.

The report also draws on a series of focus groups conducted by the Pew Research Center. The primary goal of these focus groups was to inform the development of the Feb. 18-March 2, 2020 survey. Ten focus groups were held in November 2019 in Houston, Texas; St. Louis, Missouri; and Charlotte, North Carolina. The report includes a number of quotations from the focus groups to help illustrate and add nuance to the survey findings. These quotes are not intended to be representative of Americans' views, but rather as examples of how everyday people think about these topics when they have the opportunity to express themselves in their own words. Quotations may have been lightly edited for grammar, spelling and clarity. For more information, [see the methodology](#).

Finally, this report pulls from previously reported data and findings from the yearlong study, including [a previously published report](#) that looked at more than 50 Pew Research Center surveys conducted across several years and a report that looked at Americans' attitudes of the news media during the [COVID-19 outbreak](#). It also draws from other Pew Research Center data on [news coverage of the outbreak](#) and of the [protests in the wake of killing of George Floyd](#).

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# Americans See Skepticism of News Media as Healthy, Say Public Trust in the Institution can Improve

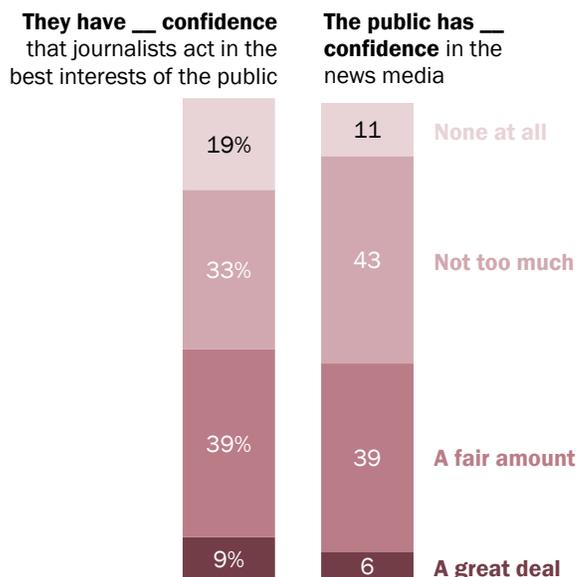
*72% of U.S. adults say news organizations do an insufficient job telling their audiences where their money comes from*

In a year filled with major news stories – from impeachment to a contentious election, from a global pandemic to nationwide protests over racial injustice – Americans continue to have a complicated relationship with the news media.

While large swaths of the public often express negative views toward journalists and news organizations, a major Pew Research Center analysis – culminating [a yearlong study on Americans' views of the news media](#) – also finds areas where U.S. adults feel more affinity toward the media and express open-mindedness about the possibility that their trust in the industry could improve.

## No more than half of U.S. adults feel confident in the news media or think other Americans feel this way

% of U.S. adults who say ...



## And Americans say skepticism of the media is a good thing, but see room for confidence to rise

# 63%

of U.S. adults say that ideally, it's better if the public is **skeptical** rather than trusting of the news media

# 75%

of U.S. adults say it is possible to **improve the level of confidence** Americans have in the news media

Note: Respondents who did not give an answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 18-March 2 (views of the public's confidence, skepticism, increase in confidence) and April 20-26, 2020 (own confidence).

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Many Americans remain skeptical toward the news media, questioning not only the quality of journalists' work but their intentions behind it. For instance, no more than half of U.S. adults have confidence in journalists to act in the best interests of the public, or think that other Americans have confidence in the institution. And the public is more likely than not to say that news organizations do not care about the people they report on.

While most Americans (61%) expect the news they get to be accurate, nearly seven-in-ten (69%) think news organizations generally try to cover up mistakes when they do happen.

The reasons for *why* Americans think these mistakes happen underscore the distrust that substantial portions of the public feel: Many say that careless reporting (55%) or even a desire to mislead the public (44%) are major factors behind significant mistakes in news stories, although other, less negligent or nefarious reasons such as the rapid pace of breaking news (53%) also are seen as responsible for mistakes.

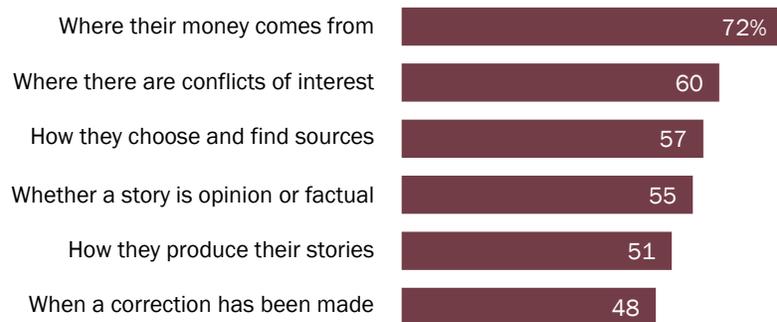
Americans take issue with what they perceive as a lack of transparency by news organizations – both with respect to the work they do and the inner workings of their companies. Indeed, not only do many people see news outlets as opaque in how they produce their stories and choose their sources, but a large majority – 72% – say news organizations do an insufficient job explaining to the public where their money comes from ([see Chapter 2](#)).

Six-in-ten U.S. adults also say news organizations are not forthcoming about conflicts of interest. On top of that, a vast majority of Americans (80%) think that the news they get is at least “somewhat” influenced by financial and corporate interests.

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### Many Americans see news organizations as opaque, particularly when it comes to their financing

*% of U.S. adults who say news organizations do **not too or not at all well** at telling their audiences about each of the following*



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 18-March 2, 2020.

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But findings from the study also suggest that the relationship between Americans and the media is not a lost cause. For one, the public gives the media fairly high marks for coverage of specific issues and events, including the [recent coronavirus outbreak](#) and the [protests in the wake of the police killing of George Floyd](#).

And public skepticism toward the media does not appear to be purely antagonistic: Most Americans view some level of wariness toward the news media as healthy for a well-functioning society. Overall, 63% of U.S. adults say that, in an ideal world, it is better for society if Americans are skeptical of the news media. Far fewer (36%) say it is better if people are trusting of the news media.

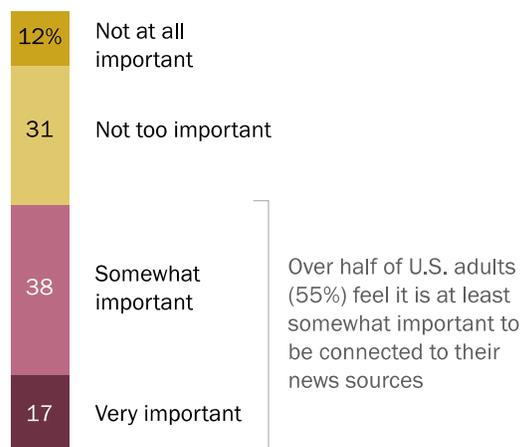
Still, when asked directly whether Americans think their level of confidence in journalists can improve, three-quarters say such an outcome is possible.

This raises the question: Where might there be opportunities for the news media to gain more trust? First and foremost, the survey finds that personal connections with news tie strongly to Americans' views of the media overall, echoing earlier Pew Research Center findings [at the local level](#). Americans who feel connected to news outlets – whether in feeling valued by, understood by or loyal to them – express far more positive views toward the news media. For instance, those who feel that their news sources value them are much more likely to expect their news to be accurate and to think news outlets are transparent with audiences.

According to the findings, there is plenty of room for improvement in this area: While most Americans *want* to have personal connections

### Over half of Americans desire a personal connection with their news sources ...

% of U.S. adults who think it is \_\_\_ to be connected to news organizations they get their news from



### ... but most do not feel that personal connection

% of U.S. adults who ...



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 18-March 2, 2020. "Americans See Skepticism of News Media as Healthy, Say Public Trust in the Institution can Improve"

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with their news sources, many do not experience it (again in line with [previous Center findings](#) on local news). More than half of U.S. adults say their news outlets do not particularly value them (57%) or that news organizations do not [understand people like them](#) (59%), and nearly two-thirds (63%) say they do not feel particularly loyal to the outlets they get their news from.

Americans' personal connections with specific news stories also are linked with their attitudes toward the media. When Americans encounter news stories that hit close to home, they generally have good things to say about the media's coverage. Roughly two-thirds of those who felt personally connected to a story – either because it covered an issue they believe they are an expert on, or because it was about a significant event that they experienced or witnessed – think that story was covered well. And those who feel this way express far more favorable views toward the news media in general than those who think the story was *not* covered well.

One of the most fundamental ways this manifests itself is in whether people think the news they get is accurate. About three-quarters of those who think that an issue in their wheelhouse or an event they experienced was covered well (74%) also believe the news they get overall is largely accurate. Among those who say that a story close to them missed the mark, just 39% expect to encounter accurate news; this group also is far more likely to feel that news organizations do not understand people like them ([see Chapter 3](#)).

Being transparent about corrections is another area where the public says news organizations have an opportunity to gain trust. While Americans perceive a range of reasons why mistakes in stories happen, about half (51%) say that seeing official corrections from news outlets makes them *more* confident in that outlet, compared with just 12% who say it makes them less confident.

### Many Americans say that seeing corrections to news stories increases their confidence in news outlets

*% of U.S. adults who say they tend to feel \_\_\_ in a news organization when they issue an official correction to a story*



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 18-March 2, 2020.

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These are among the key findings from a yearlong study of Americans' trust and attitudes toward the news media. This report draws on data included in [a previously published report](#) that looked at more than 50 Pew Research Center surveys; new survey data collected both before and [during the](#)

[COVID-19 outbreak](#); and [a series of 10 focus groups](#) conducted in three U.S. cities in November 2019. But the bulk of this report is based on previously unreleased data from a survey conducted Feb. 18-March 2, 2020, among 10,300 U.S. adults who are part of the Center's [American Trends Panel](#). Quotations drawn from the focus groups are scattered throughout the report; these quotes are not intended to be representative of Americans' views. Instead, the quotations serve as examples of how everyday people think about these topics when they have the opportunity to express themselves in their own words.

## Deep partisan divides in views of the news media, with Republicans who support Trump most critical

The [first phase of this yearlong study established](#) that partisanship is the strongest factor in Americans' views of the news media. And support for Donald Trump, [who continues to strike a combative tone toward journalists](#), is another dividing line – particularly within the Republican Party.

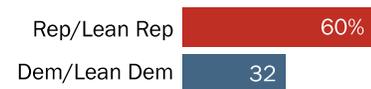
One area in which this plays out is in perceptions of why errors occur in news stories. Republicans overall are more likely to think that mistakes happen because of ill will. Six-in-ten Republicans and Republican-leaning independents cite a desire to mislead audiences as a major reason why significant mistakes make their way into news stories, compared with about a third of Democrats (32%) who feel this way. And within the GOP, this view is especially prevalent among Republicans who strongly approve of the job that Trump is doing as president.

But just because Republicans consistently express far more negative sentiments toward the news media does not mean that Democrats are always singing the media's praises. For example, Democrats – like Republicans – are more likely to say that news outlets do *not* care about the people they report on than say they do care.

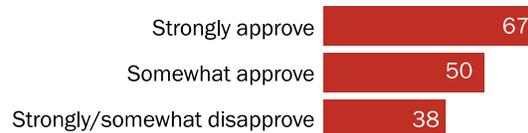
There also are places where the two parties see more eye to eye. Majorities of both parties think it is beneficial for society to be skeptical of the news media, large portions think that confidence in the institution can increase, and they generally agree on the qualities that are important in choosing news sources ([see Chapter 4](#)).

### Republicans who strongly approve of Trump are far more likely to say news errors occur because of malintent

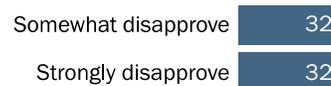
*% of U.S. adults who think that the **desire to mislead** is a major reason why significant mistakes make their way into news stories*



Among **Rep/Lean Rep** who \_\_\_ of the way Trump is handling his job as president



Among **Dem/Lean Dem** who \_\_\_ of the way Trump is handling his job as president



Note: The 7% of Democrats who approve of how Trump is handling his job as president is not a large enough sample to reliably include in the analysis. "Somewhat approve/disapprove" indicates those respondents who said they "not so strongly" approve/disapprove. Source: Surveys of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 6-20 (Trump approval) and Feb. 18-March 2, 2020 (the "desire to mislead" question).

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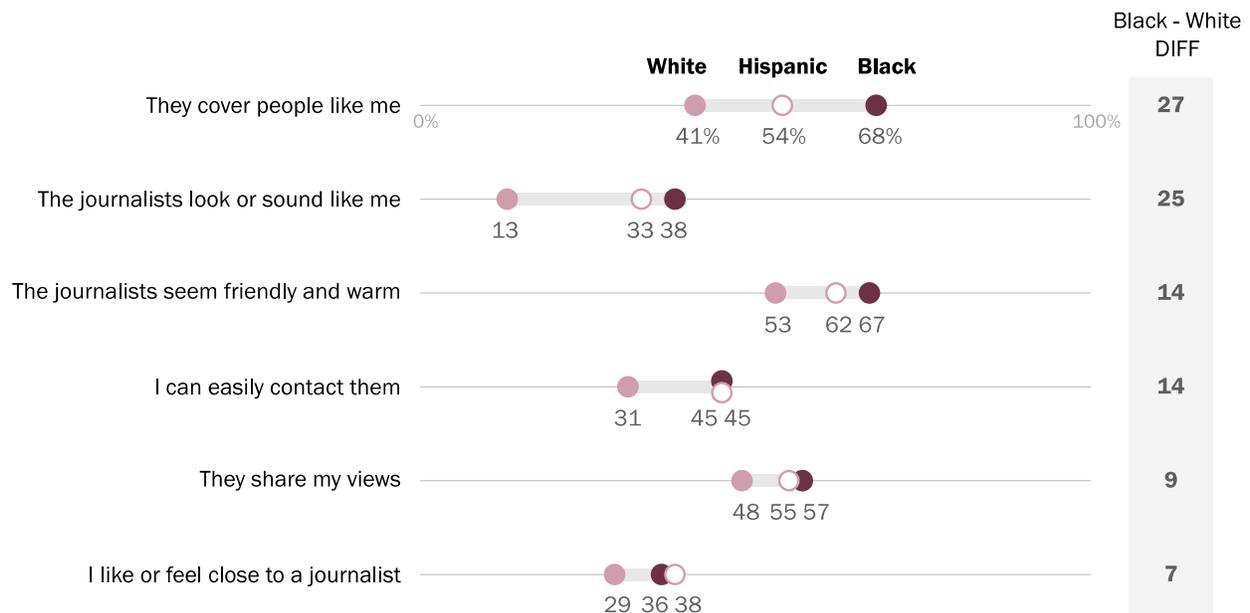
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## Black Americans seek out news sources that cover people like themselves

The study also finds that beyond partisanship, there also are sharp differences across certain segments of the population in their attitudes of, relationships with and priorities for the news media. At a time when questions about [representation in newsrooms](#) are amplified in the wake of the protests in response to the killing of George Floyd, Black adults also are far more likely than others to say it is important to see themselves both in news coverage and in the newsroom.

### Black Americans are more likely to pick their news sources based on whether they see themselves in the coverage

*% of U.S. adults who say each of the following is **very or somewhat important** in deciding which outlets to get news from*



Note: White and Black adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 18-March 2, 2020.

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When asked whether six different aspects of personal connections between news organizations and their audiences are important in deciding where to get their news from, Black Americans are more likely than White Americans to say each is at least somewhat important. But two factors related to representation stand out: Nearly seven-in-ten Black adults (68%) say it is at least somewhat important that their news outlets cover people like them, 27 percentage points higher

than White adults (41%) and 14 points above Hispanic adults (54%). And nearly four-in-ten Black Americans (38%), along with a third of Hispanic Americans (33%), think it is important for the journalists themselves at a news outlet to look or sound like them, compared with just 13% of White Americans who say the same.

## 1. Americans are largely skeptical of the news media, but say there is room for confidence to improve

In general, Americans tend to express more negative than positive views about the news media and feel that that it is beneficial for society to approach the media with some level of skepticism. But the public does not view the media as a lost cause: A vast majority of U.S. adults say it is possible to increase their level of confidence in the institution.

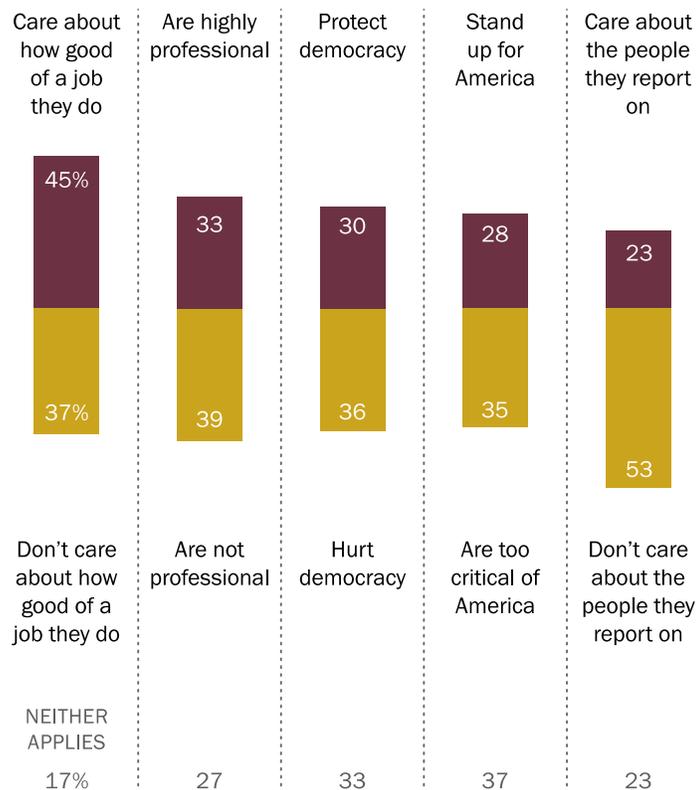
Americans have a number of specific reservations about the news media's role, standards and impact on society.

Respondents were asked to evaluate news organizations overall across five different dimensions: whether or not they care how good of a job they do; whether or not they act professionally; whether they protect or hurt democracy; whether they stand up for America or are too critical of the country; and whether or not they care about the people they report on.

Across these five areas, Americans rate only one more positively than negatively: whether news organizations care about how good of a job they do. Just under half (45%) say they do care, slightly higher than the share who say they do not (37%). The remaining 17% say neither statement reflects their views.

### Americans are often more negative than positive about the news media's role in society, standards

% of U.S. adults who say news organizations ...



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 18-March 2, 2020.

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For the remaining four evaluations, Americans are more likely to hold a negative than positive view.<sup>1</sup> One that particularly stands out is that many think news organizations lack empathy toward those they cover, with 53% saying news organizations do not care about the people they report on, 30 percentage points higher than the portion who says news outlets do care (23%).

There is some indication that these evaluations are more negative than in previous years. For example, Americans [in 2013](#) were much more likely to say that news organizations were highly professional than not.<sup>2</sup> Further, Americans [think that trust](#) more generally has declined in society.

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<sup>1</sup> There is some evidence that Americans feel more positively about [local news organizations](#) than they do of [national ones](#). The current study does not break out views about local or national news media, but instead looks at the institution as a whole.

<sup>2</sup> In 2013, 60% of U.S. adults said that news organizations were highly professional while 29% said they were not professional. While that survey was conducted by phone, it's highly unlikely that such large differences could be explained by the different survey modes.

Americans' reservations about the news media extend into the level of confidence they think the public overall has in the institution, as well as their own personal confidence. Fewer than half of U.S. adults (45%) say the public has at least a "fair amount" of confidence in journalists, including a mere 6% who think Americans trust the media "a great deal." A slim majority says the public has either "not too much" confidence (43%) or no confidence at all (11%) in the news media.

What's more, relatively few think the public's level of confidence in the news media *should* be higher. Most

Americans say that the public

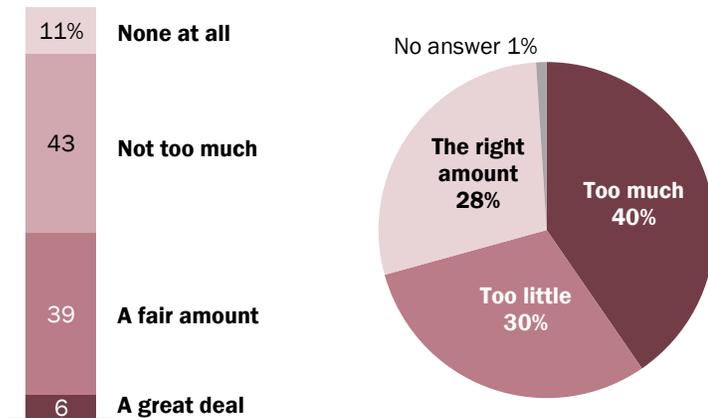
either has too much (40%) or about the right amount (28%) of confidence in journalists, while just three-in-ten say the news media deserve more confidence.

There is little connection between views about how much confidence Americans *do* have in the news media and how much they say Americans *should* have. For instance, among those who think the public has at least a fair amount of confidence in journalists, four-in-ten say that it is too much. And among those who say the public has little to no trust in the media, an almost identical share – 41% – also say this level of confidence is higher than it should be.

## Fewer than half of Americans say the public is confident in the media, and most do not think confidence should be higher

% of U.S. adults who say the public has \_\_\_ confidence in the news media

% of U.S. adults who say the public has \_\_\_ confidence in the news media



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer to the first question not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 18-March 2, 2020.

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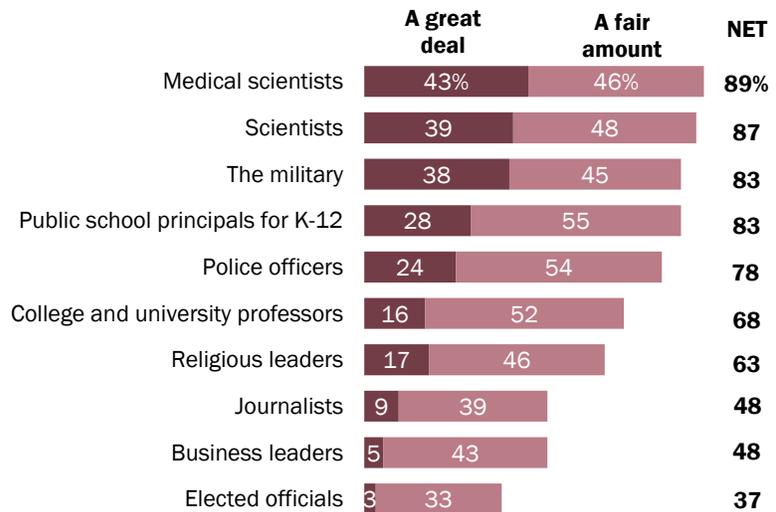
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As [reported earlier](#) in this yearlong study, Americans also are somewhat split in their own levels of confidence in journalists. About half (48%) have at least a fair amount of confidence in journalists to act in the best interests of the public, while 51% say they have little to no confidence that this is the case. Faith in journalists is slightly down from [late 2018](#), when 55% had at least a fair amount of confidence.

Journalists do not fare as well on this measure as several other groups of professionals. Of 10 groups asked about, seven received a higher level of confidence than journalists: medical scientists, scientists in general, the military, public school principals, police officers, college professors and religious leaders.<sup>3</sup> Journalists rank higher than just one group – elected leaders – and are on par with business leaders.

### About half of Americans have confidence in journalists to act in the public interest, lower than several other professions – but higher than elected officials

*% of U.S. adults who have \_\_\_\_ of confidence in each to act in the best interests of the public*



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted April 20-26, 2020.

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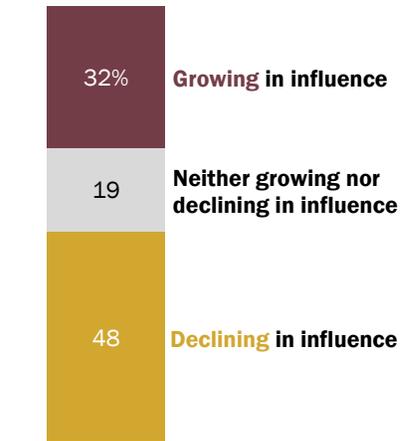
<sup>3</sup> This question was asked before the protests in wake of the police killing of George Floyd.

Alongside these often negative views of the news media is the sense that the news media are losing influence in the country. In another question asking Americans to evaluate the news media's standing, about half (48%) say that news organizations are declining in influence, compared with 32% who say their influence is growing. The remaining 19% say that the news media are neither increasing nor decreasing in influence.

This pattern is the opposite to that of previous years. [Americans in 2011](#) were more likely to say the news media were growing than declining in influence.<sup>4</sup>

## Americans more likely to think news organizations are losing than gaining influence in the country

*% of U.S. adults who say news organizations are ...*



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 18-March 2, 2020.

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<sup>4</sup> In 2011, 52% of U.S. adults said that news organizations were growing in influence compared with 34% who said they were declining. Again, while that survey was conducted by phone, it's highly unlikely that such large differences could be explained by the different survey modes.

## Most Americans think it is better if people are skeptical of the news media and see potential for confidence in the news media to increase

What may in part explain these often negative or split views is a prominent sense that skepticism of the news media can be healthy.

Roughly two-thirds of Americans (63%) think that, ideally, it is better for society if the public is skeptical of the news media. This is far higher than the portion who say it is better if the public is trusting of the news media (36%).

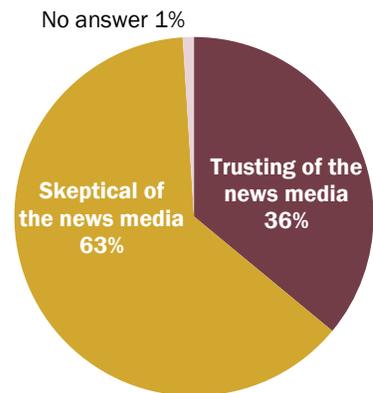
Not only do Republicans largely feel that skepticism of the news media is a good thing, but a majority of Democrats also feel this way ([see Chapter 4](#)).

### Quote from focus groups:

*“You don’t want to not trust them [the news media] no matter what, but you don’t want to be on the other side and trust a news organization one hundred percent of the time.” – Man, 34*

### Most Americans think skepticism of the news media is good for society

*% of U.S. adults who say that, ideally, it’s better for society if the American public is ...*



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 18-March 2, 2020.

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Americans, however, also see plenty of room for sentiments toward the news media to become more positive. Three-quarters of Americans say it is possible for the public to increase its level of confidence in the news media, compared with about a quarter (24%) who say it is not possible. This view is largely shared by both major parties, as well as across demographic groups [\[LINK TO TOOL\]](#).

The view that confidence in the media could increase also is common among both those who say that, in an ideal world, the public would be trusting of the news media (85%) *and* those who say it is better for society to be skeptical of journalists (69%). This suggests that even if views of the news media become more positive, many still think it is important to maintain some level of healthy skepticism.

The sense that confidence can increase lines up with how Americans feel about other institutions and each other. In 2018, [large majorities said](#) it is possible to increase the level of confidence in the federal government as well as in other Americans.

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### Three-quarters of Americans say confidence in the news media can improve

*% of U.S. adults who say \_\_\_ to improve the level of confidence Americans have in the news media*



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 18-March 2, 2020. "Americans See Skepticism of News Media as Healthy, Say Public Trust in the Institution can Improve"

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## The news media get fairly good marks at covering specific issues and events

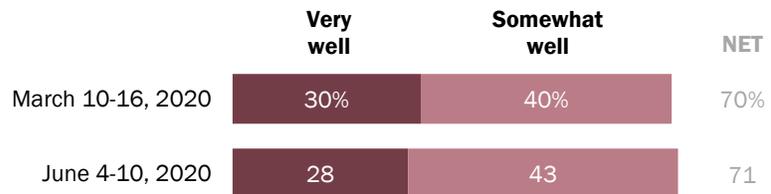
While the public holds many concerns about the news media broadly, views are somewhat more positive about news coverage of a range of specific issues and events, including recent ones.

Previous Pew Research Center studies have shown that about seven-in-ten Americans say the news media have done “very” or “somewhat” well [covering the coronavirus outbreak](#), and more than half (57%) say news organizations have done an “excellent” or “good” job [covering the protests following the police killing of George Floyd](#).

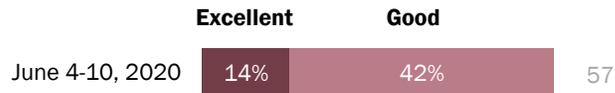
This is similar to views of other specific issues and events. For example, the public has thought highly of the news media’s coverage of other crises, such as the [war against terrorism immediately after 9/11](#). And Americans also have expressed somewhat positive views about coverage of specific science news topics, such as [childhood vaccines](#).

### Americans give fairly good marks to the news media’s coverage of COVID-19, protests following Floyd killing

*% who think the news media have covered the coronavirus outbreak ...*



*% of U.S. adults who rate the job news organizations have done covering the demonstrations to protest the death of George Floyd as ...*



Source: Surveys of U.S. adults conducted March 10-16, 2020 and June 4-10, 2020. “Americans See Skepticism of News Media as Healthy, Say Public Trust in the Institution can Improve”

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## 2. Americans largely see news organizations as opaque, particularly when it comes to finances

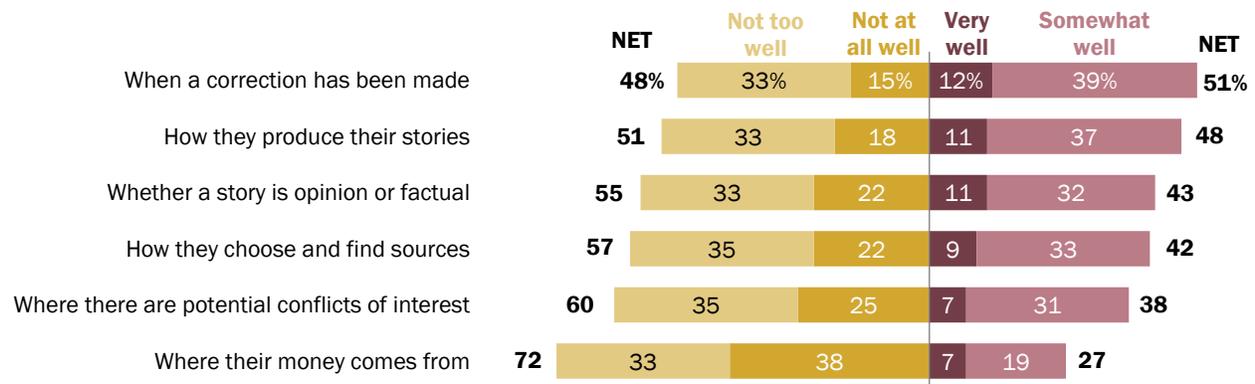
The public often feels in the dark about how news organizations produce their news and the potential influences on it. Americans think news outlets are not fully transparent with them in a number of ways, which may also help explain [their negative evaluations of the news media](#).

When asked how well news organizations explain six different aspects of their process to audiences – ranging from how they produce their news to article corrections and their finances – Americans overall give news outlets more negative than positive marks. But one aspect stands out as especially opaque to audiences: Where do news organizations get their funding?

About a quarter of Americans (27%) say news organizations do “very” or “somewhat” well when it comes to explaining where their money comes from, while an overwhelming majority say they do either “not too” (33%) or “not at all” (38%) well at this – a tension that has been noted [by journalists themselves](#). Perhaps relatedly, six-in-ten U.S. adults say news outlets do not do a good job telling their audience about conflicts of interest.

### Many Americans see issues with news outlets’ transparency, particularly in how they are financed

% of U.S. adults who say news organizations do \_\_\_ at telling their audiences about each of the following



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer not shown.  
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 18-March 2, 2020.  
“Americans See Skepticism of News Media as Healthy, Say Public Trust in the Institution can Improve”

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Majorities of both political parties and a range of demographic groups feel news organizations aren't transparent about their finances [[LINK TO TOOL](#)].

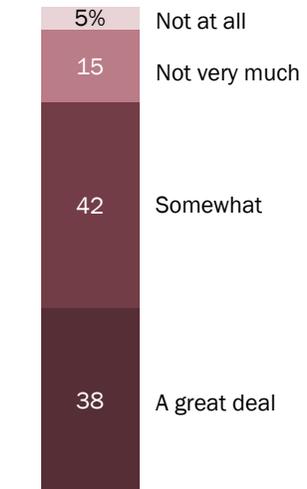
While Americans see a lack of transparency of the media's revenue stream, many are unaware of the financial situations of news organizations. A 2018 Pew Research Center study found that [a majority of Americans \(71%\)](#) thought their local newsrooms were doing well financially, when in fact [local news organizations in general are struggling](#). And about a third of Americans (34%) said in April of this year that they were unsure of what [financial impact the coronavirus outbreak](#) has had on news outlets.

This perceived lack of transparency is amplified by the public's opinion that financial and corporate interests have influence on the news in some way. In fact, a vast majority of Americans (80%) think that these interests at least "somewhat" influence the news they get, including 38% who say they have "a great deal" of influence. Only 19% say they have not very much or no influence at all on the news.

---

## Most Americans think their news is influenced by corporate interests

*% of U.S. adults who think that the news that they get is influenced by corporations and financial interests...*



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Aug. 3-16, 2020.

"Americans See Skepticism of News Media as Healthy, Say Public Trust in the Institution can Improve"

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Financial information is not the only area where Americans see a lack of transparency from news organizations. More than half of U.S. adults say news outlets do not too or not at all well in telling their audiences about how sources are chosen (57%) and about whether a story is based on fact or opinion (55%). The public is about evenly split on whether the industry does an adequate job explaining how stories are produced and when corrections have been made.

**Quotes from focus groups:**

*“Who’s paying you? That’s what we want to know. Who’s paying you? Who’s paying you to say this?” – Woman, 24*

*“You want to say what those – the contributors want you to say. Say the people with the money put a lot of money into researching a pharmaceutical medicine. Well, they want to push this pharmaceutical medicine, so they want the news to talk positively about that. And if they’re contributing to campaigns or somehow paychecks of the media, then the media is going to lean more towards feeling positively about this new medicine. Same thing for politics.” – Woman, 46*

*“With news, I end up trying to stay away from big conglomerates... When there’s a big conglomerate, there’s more money involved. ... In short, money corrupts.”  
– Man, 40*

## Most Americans think news organizations won't admit when they make mistakes, and many say corrections boost their confidence in outlets

Even though about half of Americans think news organizations are at least somewhat transparent when they make a correction, the public lacks confidence that news organizations will even get to the point of admitting that they made a mistake.

Americans generally express confidence that their news will be accurate both overall and for specific topics such as the [coronavirus outbreak](#).<sup>5</sup> Overall, most Americans (61%) say that they go into a news story expecting that it will largely be accurate, compared with 38% who expect it to be largely inaccurate.

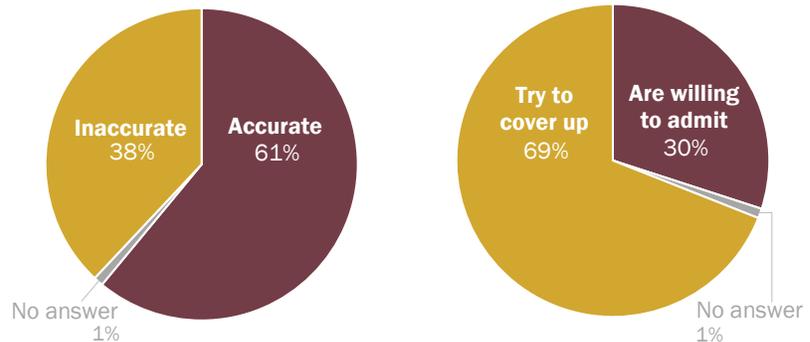
Still, most Americans think that news outlets try to cover up mistakes when they do happen. Nearly seven-in-ten Americans (69%) say this, while far fewer (30%) think news outlets are willing to admit mistakes. This is on par with [early 2018](#), the last time Pew Research Center asked this question.

Eight-in-ten of those who say news organizations are willing to admit their mistakes say that news organizations do at least somewhat well in explaining when they do make corrections. While much lower, 38% of those who think news organizations try to cover up their mistakes say the same.

### Most Americans expect their news will be accurate, but think news organizations won't admit to mistakes

*% of U.S. adults who say they typically go into a news story expecting that it will largely be ...*

*% of U.S. adults who say they think news organizations \_\_\_ their mistakes*



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 18-March 2, 2020. "Americans See Skepticism of News Media as Healthy, Say Public Trust in the Institution can Improve"

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<sup>5</sup> While most Americans expect their news overall to be largely accurate, most of those who get news on [social media](#) expect the news they get on those sites to be largely inaccurate.

Fessing up to mistakes may be beneficial to news organizations' reputations in the long run. About half of Americans (51%) say that they feel more confident in a news organization when they see an official correction, far higher than the portion who say it makes them less confident (12%). The remaining 36% say that it makes no difference in their confidence about that outlet.

## Many Americans say that seeing corrections to news stories increases their confidence in news outlets

*% of U.S. adults who say they tend to feel \_\_\_ in a news organization when they issue an official correction to a story*



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 18-March 2, 2020.

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At the same time, a minority of Americans report having recently seen an official correction. About a third of Americans (36%) say they have seen one in the previous few months, while most (63%) say they have not seen one.

### Quotes from focus groups:

*"Whatever came out first, they're going to tell you. If it's changed, they will retract it. So that is what I like, they admit to a retraction – this was wrong, we are retracting this, ... and I like that, specifically, because I watch it on my show, and you can see here – there's a retraction." – Woman, 53*

*"I like when they report something and get it wrong, they apologize for it and retract it. They say it out. 'We made a mistake, we reported this and it wasn't true.' Some don't." – Woman, 32*

*"When they double down, and they're like, 'No, well.' Now just admit that you got it wrong. I'm going to respect you more if you just say, 'Yeah, we messed up.'" – Man, 31*

When mistakes do make their way into news reporting, Americans see a range of reasons why these errors occur, from malicious to more accidental.

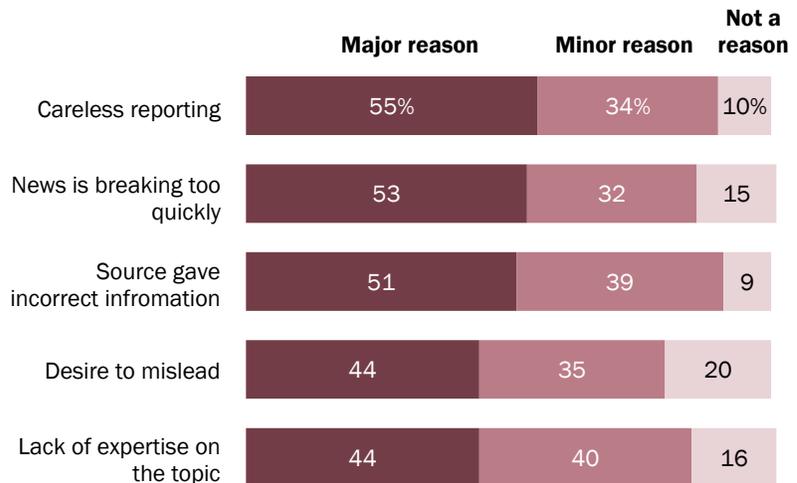
The survey asked about five potential reasons for why significant mistakes may occur in news stories; no single reason dominates. A little over half of respondents say carelessness is a major reason (55%), and a similar portion say it is because news is breaking too quickly (53%). About half say that sources giving incorrect information is a big reason for mistakes in news stories. This is closely followed by the feeling that a desire to mislead (44%) and a lack of expertise (44%) are major reasons for errors.

Whether people think errors in news stories happen unintentionally or with ill

intent aligns with their broader views of the news media. For instance, those who think the public has at least a fair amount of confidence in the news media are less likely than others to say the desire to mislead is a major reason why significant mistakes occur (31% vs. 55%). There also are divides between the two major political parties on these questions, with Republicans more likely to expect ill intent from journalists ([see Chapter 4](#)).

### Americans see a range of reasons why mistakes can make their way into news stories

*% of U.S. adults who say each of the following is a \_\_\_ reason for why significant mistakes make their way into news stories*



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 18-March 2, 2020.

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### 3. Americans who have a closer relationship with their news sources are more supportive of the news media overall

Americans' relationships with their news sources are strongly linked to their views of the news media more generally. For example, those who feel connected with their news sources are much more positive toward the news media in general – though most say they don't feel this type of connection. Likewise, those who think something close to them personally was covered well also tend to have more positive views toward the media overall.

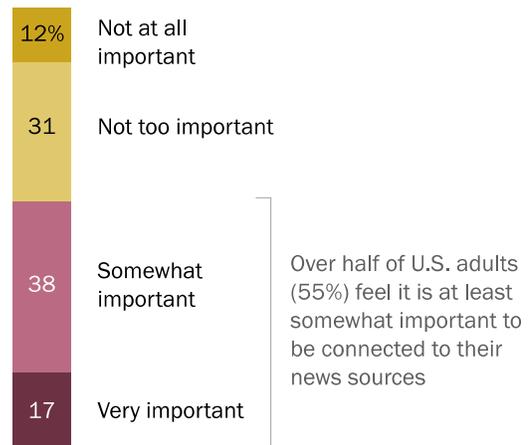
When deciding how to choose their news sources, Americans have a range of priorities, with journalists' demeanor, perspectives and willingness to cover people like them rising to the top.

Just over half of U.S. adults (55%) say it is at least "somewhat important" to be connected to the outlets they get their news from, including 17% who say it is "very important." But most Americans do not feel this personal connection. More than half (57%) say their news outlets do not particularly value them, while 39% do feel valued. And as reported earlier in this yearlong study, most (59%) say news organizations [do not understand people like them](#), on par with the last time the [question was asked in 2018](#).

In turn, most Americans do not feel loyal to their news sources, a feeling that has become more common. About two-thirds of adults (63%) say they do not feel particularly loyal to the outlets they get their news from, while far fewer feel loyal (36%). This is about on par with [early 2019](#), but [in a 2016 study](#), a considerably higher share (51%) said they felt loyal to their news sources.

#### Over half of Americans desire a personal connection with their news sources ...

% of U.S. adults who think it is \_\_\_ to be connected to news organizations they get their news from



#### ... but most do not feel that personal connection

% of U.S. adults who ...

**57%** think the news source(s) they get their news from **do not particularly value them**

**59%** think news organizations **do not understand people like them**

**63%** say they are **not particularly loyal** to the source(s) they get news from

Note: Respondents who did not give an answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 18-March 2, 2020. "Americans See Skepticism of News Media as Healthy, Say Public Trust in the Institution can Improve"

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This builds on [previous Pew Research Center findings](#) that many Americans do not feel that local journalists are connected to their communities.

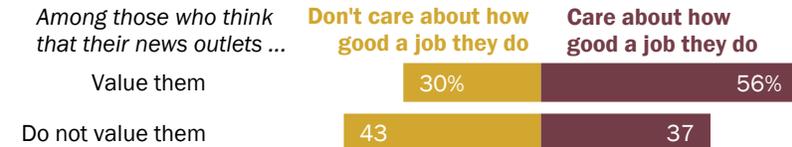
Those who do feel a personal connection with news organizations often are more supportive of the news media overall, a pattern that persists even when accounting for party identification and age.

This relationship clearly stands out in perceptions of the news media’s place in society and their standards. When asked to evaluate the news [media across five dimensions](#), those who feel valued by, understood by and loyal to news organizations often view the news media more positively than those who don’t feel these things.

For instance, 46% of adults who feel their news sources value them say news organizations are highly professional, compared with a quarter among those who do not feel valued. And while 56% of those who feel valued think the news media care about how good of a job they do, this falls by 19 percentage points among those who do not feel valued (37%).

### Americans who feel valued by their news sources are more positive toward the news media generally

% of U.S. adults who say the news media ...



Note: Those who said neither phrase reflects their views not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 18-March 2, 2020.

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Similar divides emerge across a range of attitudes, including perceptions of how much confidence the public has in the news media, expectations about the accuracy of news and views of whether news outlets are transparent.

**Quotes from focus groups:**

*“You just tend to trust them more because you know them.” – Woman, 46*

*“If you are personally connected to that person, that could dictate bias.” – Man, 37*

## Personal experiences with news coverage are closely linked to attitudes of the news media more generally

Americans' connections with specific news stories also strongly tie to their views of the news media. Those who think that something personally close to them was covered poorly are far more negative toward the news media in many ways, a relationship that persists even when accounting for partisan differences.

Nearly six-in-ten U.S. adults (59%) say they have been personally connected to a story, either because it covered an issue they believe they are an expert on or because it was about a significant event that they experienced or witnessed. Most of those who have had this personal connection to a story think that the issue or event they were close to was covered at least “somewhat” well (65%), though few – 12% – say it was covered “very” well. The remaining 34% say the news story covered the issue or event “not too” or “not at all” well.

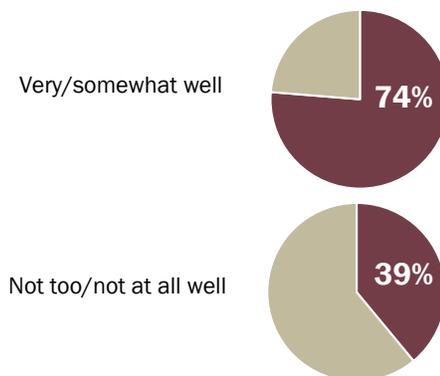
Where Americans come down on this question appears to go hand in hand with their broader evaluations of the news media, including their perceptions about the accuracy of news overall. Nearly three-quarters of those who think favorably of the news story they were close to (74%) expect the news they get to be largely accurate. This falls dramatically to 39% among those who say the story close to them was not covered well.

There is a similar divide on the question about whether news organizations admit to their mistakes. Just 14% of those who think news that was personal to them was *not* covered well say journalists own up to their errors, compared with 41% among those who think the story they were close to was covered at least somewhat well.

### People who think a story close to them wasn't covered well are less likely to think news generally is accurate

*% of U.S. adults who say they typically go into a news story expecting that it will **largely be accurate***

Among those who say a news story they were personally connected to was covered ...



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 18-March 2, 2020. “Americans See Skepticism of News Media as Healthy, Say Public Trust in the Institution can Improve”

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This pattern persists across many other opinions people have about the news media. For example, those who say that something personal to them was covered poorly are much less likely to say news organizations are transparent with their audiences in a variety of ways, and they also are less likely to think that the public has confidence in the news media.

**Quotes from focus groups:**

*“I work for the county, I’ve been there 18 years, some things we hear about in the news before we even hear about it within our jobs; or sometimes, things we hear about in the news are just totally wrong. So, I know from working there that, okay, this is a prime example of why you can’t believe everything that you hear on the news.” – Woman, 50*

*“I think that I have to check everything they’re saying against another source. I try not to form an opinion until I’m able to vet it. You see something and if it’s in your wheelhouse, you altogether know that they’ve gone and lied. It makes you defensive. Now you know you can’t trust them, or you can only put so much trust in them.” – Man, 70*

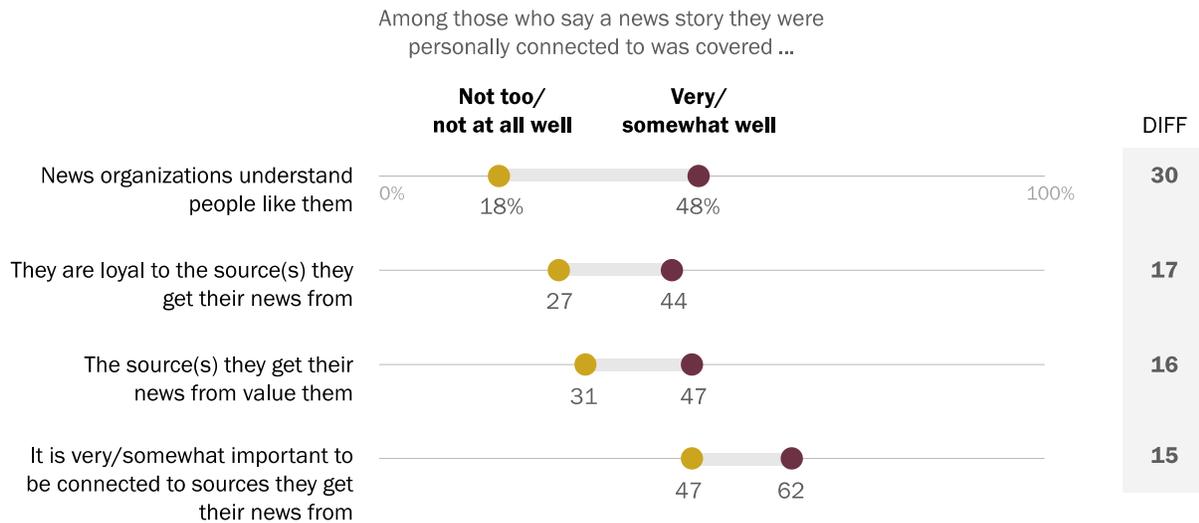
*“I remember watching this one interview ... and I happened to see the report. I’m watching the interview, and it’s totally different than, I mean, I was like 5 feet away from this man. So I’m literally hearing and watching it. It was just skewed.” – Woman, 21*

These varying perspectives on news coverage also are linked with whether people feel that news organizations value and understand them. Those who think poorly of the news story that was familiar to them are substantially less likely than those who think it was covered well to say news organizations understand people like them (18% vs. 48%).

And while 44% of those who think positively of the news story they were close to say they feel loyal to their news sources, this drops to about a quarter among those who think negatively of the story they had expertise on (27%). Similar gaps exist on questions about whether people feel valued by their news sources and whether they think it is important to feel a personal connection to their news sources.

### Americans who think that a news story they were personally close to was covered poorly are far less likely to think that news organizations understand them

% of U.S. adults who say each of the following



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 18-March 2, 2020.

“Americans See Skepticism of News Media as Healthy, Say Public Trust in the Institution can Improve”

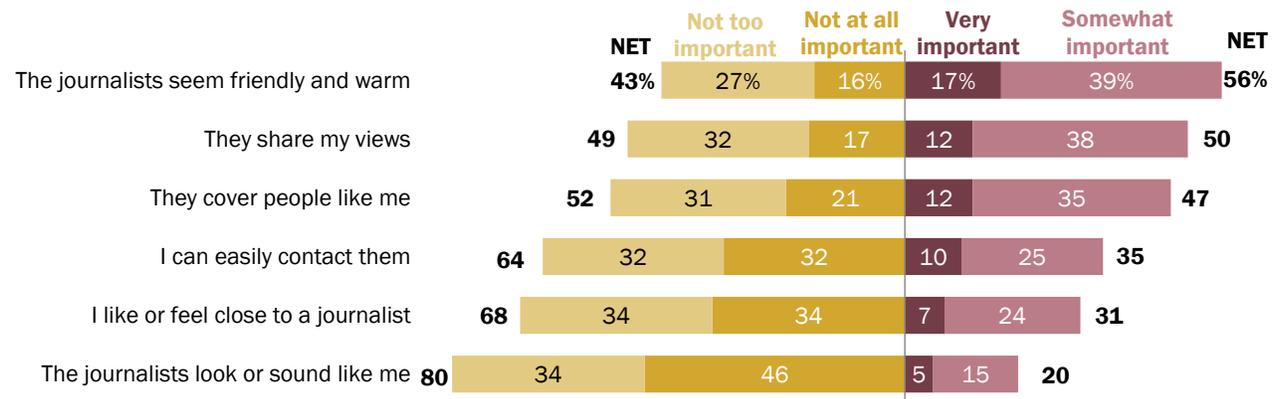
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## Many Americans want to follow news organizations that have friendly and warm journalists, share their views

Of course, Americans put weight on the [quality of journalists' work](#) when choosing their news outlets, but many also look for personal connections with a news source. The survey asked whether six different attributes of a news outlet and the content it produces – all related to how news organizations and journalists connect with their audience – are important in deciding where they get their news from. Among these six, journalists' demeanor rises to the top: More than half of

### Americans see journalists' demeanor as more important than other personal factors in choosing news outlets

% of U.S. adults who say each of the following is \_\_\_ in deciding which outlets to get news from



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 18-March 2, 2020.

"Americans See Skepticism of News Media as Healthy, Say Public Trust in the Institution can Improve"

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#### Quotes from focus groups:

*"The personality and the way they present the news. There are two or three I watch sometimes. It's not so scripted. They're giving you the news and you're listening to it, but it's kind of scripted. They read it with a prompt. It sounds more natural – a little bit homey and not arrogant. ... I feel like being talked to. That kind of thing. Some of them put a little humor in there. It's a balance. That's what I look for."* – Man, 70

*"What I don't trust is when the anchors yell at each other."* – Woman, 21

U.S. adults (56%) say that journalists being friendly and warm is “very” or “somewhat” important in deciding on their news outlets.

Half of Americans say finding an outlet that shares their views is at least somewhat important. This is counter to a [survey conducted in 2013](#), in which most people said they do not necessarily want news that aligns with their own views.

**Quotes from focus groups:**

*“I think we’re really drawn to news sources that agree with our beliefs. And it’s hard to not.” – Woman, 71*

*“And so, for me, personally, if this headline reads more to my values or what I’m already agreeing with, I’m more to trust this.” – Man, 23*

*“The people on there are the same people. You build a relationship even though you don’t know them personally. You know their stance on things, and how they portray certain things” – Woman, 51*

A similar portion of Americans (47%) say it is at least somewhat important that the news outlet covers people like them in its stories.

Fewer say the same of being able to easily contact the outlet (35%) or feeling close to a specific journalist (31%). And one-in-five (20%) say that when they are selecting a news outlet, it is important to find journalists who look or sound like them. These priorities differ dramatically, however, across demographic categories – particularly by race and ethnicity ([see Chapter 5](#)).

## 4. Partisans remain sharply divided in many views toward the news media; stark differences between Trump’s strongest supporters, critics

A major takeaway of the first phase of this yearlong study was that [partisan dynamics are the strongest factor](#) in Americans’ trust in the news media and other related concepts. The findings here reinforce that conclusion: Republicans, and especially strong Trump supporters, consistently express more negative sentiments about the news media.

There are a few places, though, where there is somewhat more agreement, including opinions about whether the news media should be approached with skepticism, perceptions of whether confidence in the institution can increase, and important factors that draw people to their key sources of news.

### Republicans are more negative than Democrats in views of the news media’s role in society

Across a range of attitudes toward the news media, Republicans and those who lean toward the Republican Party are far more negative than Democrats and Democratic leaners, including in their [levels of confidence in the media](#), their perceptions of how transparent news outlets are, and their views about the role and impact of news organizations in America.<sup>6</sup>

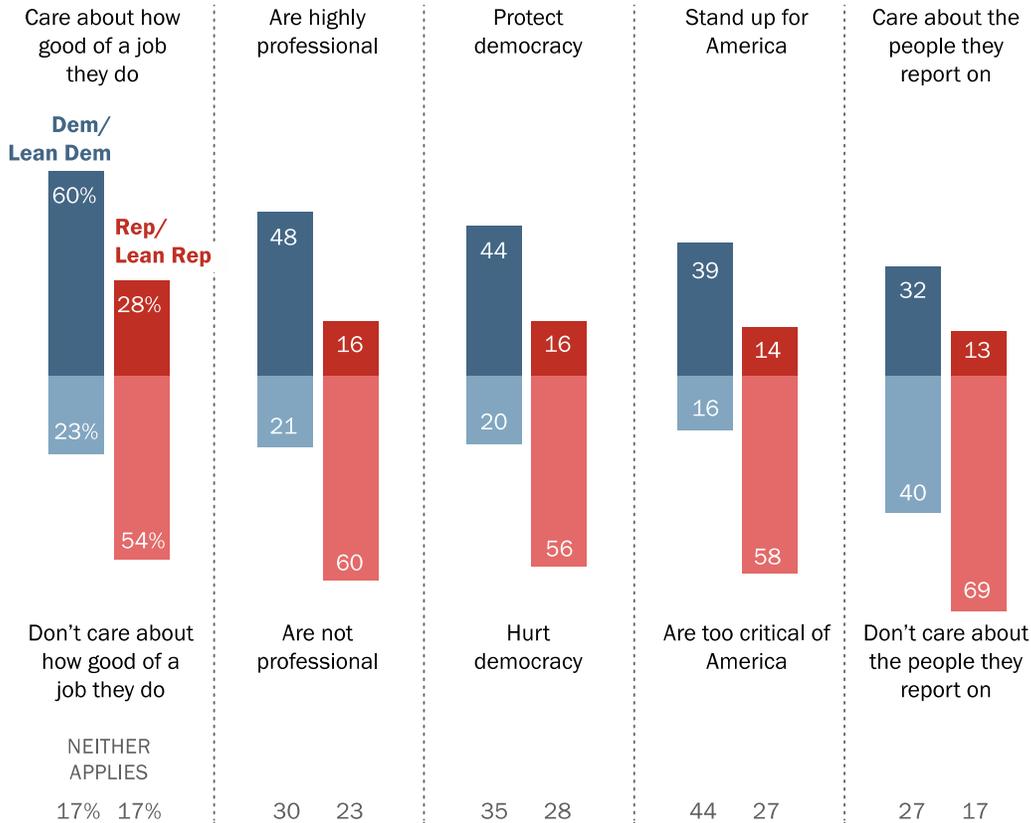
Republicans are far less likely to think the American public has confidence in the news media, and they have a lower level of confidence themselves [that journalists act in the best interest of the public](#). Additionally, Republicans tend to think that news organizations are not transparent with their audiences in many ways – though most Democrats also feel news outlets do an insufficient job explaining where their money comes from.

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<sup>6</sup> Throughout this chapter, “Republicans” refers to respondents who identify as Republican or who say they are independents but indicate in a follow-up question that they lean toward the GOP, and “Democrats” include both respondents who identify as Democrats or who say they are independents but lean toward the Democratic Party.

## Republicans far more negative than Democrats in their evaluations of the media

% of U.S. adults who say news organizations ...



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer not shown.  
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 18-March 2, 2020.  
"Americans See Skepticism of News Media as Healthy, Say Public Trust in the Institution can Improve"

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There also are large partisan divides in views of the role news organizations play in society, as well as of their professional standards. When asked to evaluate [news organizations along five dimensions](#), Republicans are less likely than Democrats to hold a positive view in all five areas.

For example, six-in-ten Democrats say the news media care about how good of a job they do, compared with 28% of Republicans who say the same. And nearly seven-in-ten Republicans (69%) say journalists do not care about the people they report on. Democrats are far less negative in this way, although they also are more likely to say news organizations do *not* care about those they cover (40%) rather than that they do care (32%).

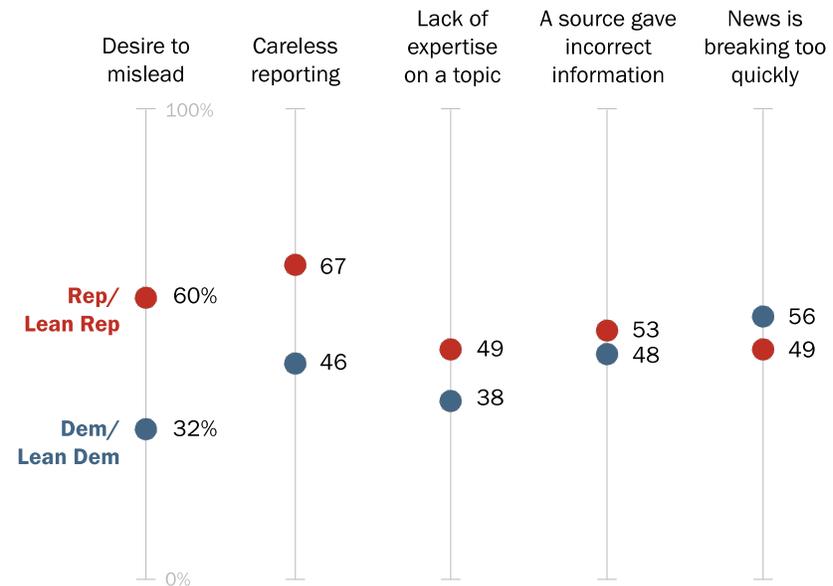
## Republicans far more likely than Democrats to think that mistakes in news reports happen because of an intention to mislead audiences

Much more so than Democrats, many Republicans generally go into news stories expecting they will be inaccurate. But they also go a step further: There is a deep sense among Republicans that ill will leads to mistakes in news stories.

Republicans are about twice as likely as Democrats to say that a major reason significant mistakes happen in news stories is that there is a desire to mislead audiences (60% vs. 32%). And about two-thirds of Republicans (67%) say careless reporting is a major reason, compared with 46% of Democrats. Republicans also are modestly more likely to say that lack of expertise and incorrect information from sources are major reasons for errors in news stories.

### Republicans far more likely to cite deception and carelessness for why mistakes in news stories occur

*% of U.S. adults who say each is a major reason for why significant mistakes occur in news stories*



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 18-March 2, 2020. "Americans See Skepticism of News Media as Healthy, Say Public Trust in the Institution can Improve"

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#### Quote from focus group:

*"I don't know. A lot of times they lie. To me, they lie a lot. And they don't tell the truth when I watch them."* – Republican woman, 53

But Democrats are somewhat more likely than Republicans to cite one possible reason for errors, one that is less of an indictment of journalists' own work: More than half of Democrats (56%) say the fast pace of breaking news is a major reason why significant mistakes happen in news stories, 7 percentage points higher than Republicans (49%).

## Majorities in both parties see the benefit of approaching the news media with some level of skepticism

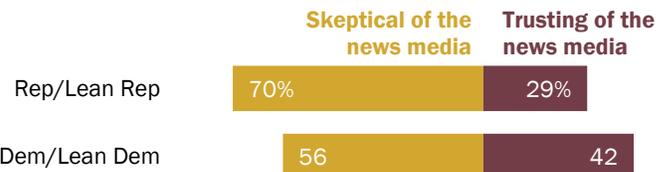
Despite a long list of divides between the two major parties in their views toward the news media, there are a few places where Republicans and Democrats are more likely to see eye to eye.

Seven-in-ten Republicans say that, in an ideal world, it would be better for society if the public is skeptical of the news media (rather than trusting). Most Democrats – albeit a smaller majority (56%) – also say that skepticism toward the news media is better than trust.

At the same time, large majorities of both parties feel that the public's confidence in the news media could improve in the future. Eight-in-ten Democrats say it is possible for this to happen, as do seven-in-ten Republicans.

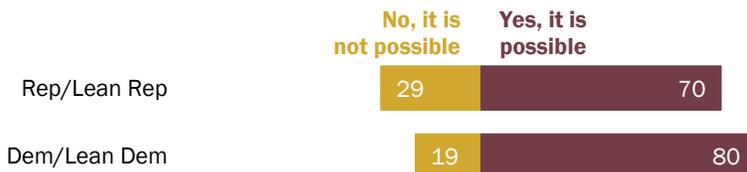
### Majorities of both Republicans and Democrats say it is better for society to be skeptical of the media ...

*% of U.S. adults who say that, ideally, it's better for society if the American public is ...*



### ... but that it's possible for confidence in the news media to increase

*% of U.S. adults who say \_\_\_ to improve the level of confidence Americans have in the news media*



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 18-March 2, 2020.

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Republicans and Democrats also navigate the news environment in very similar ways. Members of the two parties hardly differ from each other, if at all, in thinking that [six different aspects](#) of how news organizations connect with their audiences are important in deciding where to get their news. For example, 56% of Democrats and a nearly identical share of Republicans (55%) say it is at least somewhat important for journalists at a news outlet to be warm and friendly. And about half of both groups say that it is important that the source shares their views. Democrats are slightly more likely to say that it is very or somewhat important that the journalists at a particular news outlet look or sound like them (23%, vs. 16% of Republicans), in part because Black and Hispanic Americans – [who make up a larger share of the Democratic Party](#) – are more likely to take this position ([see Chapter 5](#)).

## Republicans and Democrats largely agree on the personal connections they seek in their news sources

*% of U.S. adults who say each of the following is **very or somewhat important** in deciding which outlets to get news from*

### The journalists seem friendly and warm



### They share my views



### They cover people like me



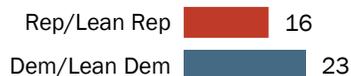
### I can easily contact them



### I like or feel close to a journalist



### The journalists look or sound like me



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 18-March 2, 2020. "Americans See Skepticism of News Media as Healthy, Say Public Trust in the Institution can Improve"

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## Support for Trump connects with views of the news media, particularly within the Republican Party

Another major takeaway of the [first phase of this study](#) is that Americans' views of the news media closely tie to their views of Donald Trump – within and across the parties. Trump's strongest Republican supporters view the news media more negatively than other Republicans. Similarly, there are some divides within the Democratic Party based on the intensity of their feelings toward Trump, [who often clashes with the news media](#). In a survey conducted Jan. 6-20, 2020, 64% of Republicans said they strongly approve of how Trump is handling his job as president. The remaining Republicans were split between those who said they approve of Trump somewhat (16%) and those who disapprove either strongly or somewhat (18%). The vast majority of Democrats (92%) disapproved of the job Trump was doing at the time, including 79% who strongly disapproved.<sup>7</sup>

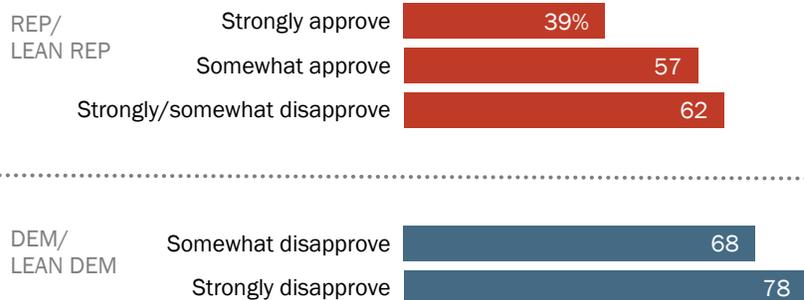
One place in which there is a clear relationship between attitudes toward the media and strong approval of Trump is in opinions about the accuracy of news. Not only do Republicans and Democrats overall differ dramatically in whether they expect the news to be accurate, but Republicans who strongly approve of Trump are much less likely than other Republicans to expect accurate reporting.

Roughly four-in-ten Republicans who strongly approve of Trump (39%) expect the news they get will largely be accurate, compared

### Trump's strongest Republican supporters least likely to expect their news to be accurate

*% of U.S. adults who expect that the news they get will largely be accurate*

Among those who \_\_\_ of the way Trump is handling his job as president



Note: The 7% of Democrats who approve of how Trump is handling his job as president is not a large enough sample to reliably include in the analysis. "Somewhat approve/disapprove" indicates respondents who said they "not so strongly" approve/disapprove in the survey. Source: Surveys of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 6-20 (Trump approval) and Feb. 18-March 2, 2020 (views toward the accuracy of news).

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<sup>7</sup> The Jan. 6-20 2020 Trump approval measure is used in this analysis because this measure is the closest in time prior to the Feb. 18-March 2 survey that was asked on the Center's American Trends Panel.

with 57% of Republicans who approve of Trump somewhat and 62% of those who disapprove of the president.

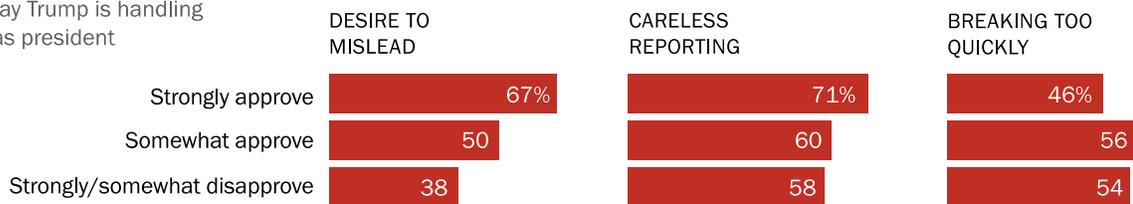
There are not enough Democrats who approve of Trump in the survey to analyze them separately. But there is still a difference within Democrats on this question: 78% of Democrats who strongly disapprove of Trump generally expect news to be accurate, while a smaller majority of those who disapprove of the president somewhat (68%) say the same.

Clear differences also exist in why people think errors occur in news coverage – particularly within the GOP. Republicans who strongly support Trump are more likely than other Republicans to say mistakes in news stories stem from malintent or carelessness. One of the most commonly named reasons for inaccurate reporting among Trump’s most approving Republicans is that there is an intention to mislead. About two-thirds (67%) say this is a major reason why significant mistakes occur; fewer Republicans who somewhat approve of Trump (50%) or disapprove of him (38%) share this view. And about a third of Democrats (32%) – among both those who strongly and somewhat disapprove of Trump – say an intention to mislead is a major reason for errors in news stories.

## The reasons why Republicans think mistakes happen in news often diverge based on their approval of Trump

% of U.S. adults who think that each of the following is a **major reason** why significant mistakes make their way into news stories

Among **Rep/Lean Rep** who \_\_\_  
of the way Trump is handling  
his job as president



Among **Dem/Lean Dem** who \_\_\_  
of the way Trump is handling  
his job as president



Note: The 7% of Democrats who approve of how Trump is handling his job as president is not a large enough sample to reliably include in the analysis. “Somewhat approve/disapprove” indicates respondents who said they “not so strongly” approve/disapprove in the survey. Source: Surveys of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 6-20 (Trump approval) and Feb. 18-March 2, 2020 (views toward mistakes in news stories). “Americans See Skepticism of News Media as Healthy, Say Public Trust in the Institution can Improve”

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Republicans who are very supportive of Trump also are somewhat more likely than those who are less supportive to say that carelessness is a major reason for errors in news stories, though majorities of all Republican groups take this position. Conversely, those who are *less* supportive of Trump (among both Republicans and Democrats) are more likely to say the fast pace of breaking news is a major reason for mistakes in reporting.

A similar pattern exists within the GOP on a number of other opinions about the news media, such as views of the public's confidence in the institution. While roughly a quarter of Republicans (24%) who strongly approve of Trump say the public has a "great deal" or "fair amount" of confidence in the news media, this rises to 37% among Republicans who approve of Trump somewhat and nearly half of those who disapprove of him (47%). About six-in-ten Democrats who strongly disapprove (58%) or somewhat disapprove (59%) of Trump say the same.

[Previous findings](#) from the yearlong study show the same relationship across a number of attitudes related to trust in the news media, including views of journalists' ethics, trust in the information from national news organizations and perceptions of the news media's watchdog role.

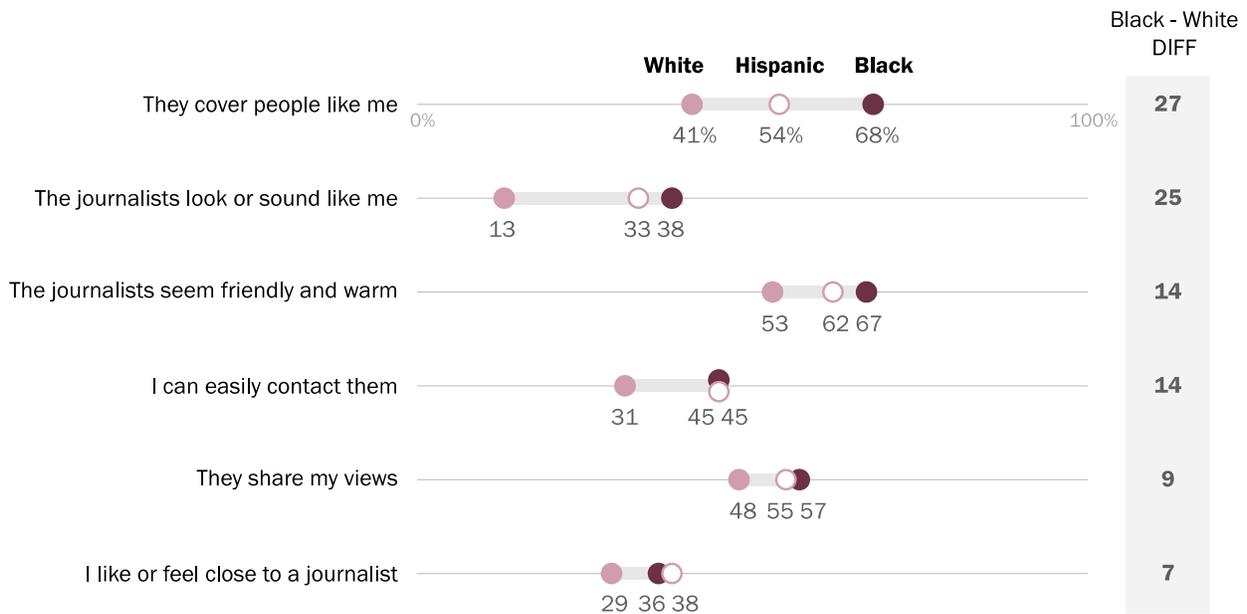
## 5. Black Americans see representation as key in determining how they stay informed

People in different subgroups within the U.S. population often have different views of, relationships with and priorities for the news media. Partisanship is among the strongest divides, with Republicans expressing much more negativity toward the media than Democrats ([see Chapter 4](#)). But striking divisions also emerge between other groups in the country, including racial and ethnic groups, age groups, and people who rely on different pathways for political news – particularly when that pathway is social media.

Black, Hispanic and White Americans often have different perspectives as they navigate the information environment to get news they trust. Black adults have clear priorities, which are different from those of White adults, in what they look for in their news sources.

### Black Americans more likely to see representation in news and the newsroom as an important way they connect with news sources

*% of U.S. adults who say each of the following is very or somewhat important in deciding which outlets to get news from*



Note: White and Black adults include those who report being only once race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 18-March 2, 2020.

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Americans were asked whether six different aspects of how news outlets connect with their audiences are important in deciding where to get their news from. Black Americans, and to a somewhat lesser extent Hispanic Americans, are more likely than White Americans to say each of these factors is important, but those relating to representation – both in newsrooms and in coverage – stand out as especially important or unique priorities for Black people.

Nearly seven-in-ten Black adults (68%) say that it is at least somewhat important to look for news outlets that cover people like them in stories, 27 percentage points higher than White Americans (41%) and also higher than Hispanic Americans (54%). And both Black (38%) and Hispanic (33%) Americans are much more likely than Whites (13%) to say it is at least somewhat important that the journalists look or sound like them, though this priority does not rise to the top for any of these groups.

#### Quotes from focus groups:

*“For me, for the news stations, we live in America where diversity counts; so, I also look at a station that actually is fully diverse and, of course, have a format that is conducive to the entire population. ... Well, in terms of being fully diverse, in terms of staff, it’s very important to me, I’m able to have my kids see individuals like themselves, too. And in terms of their reporting, it’s not just limited just to specific topics, only to breaking news, but they incorporate topics that actually reach out to a broad spectrum of not only community, but America itself.” – Black man, 64*

*“But I’ll just say it like this: It’s important for me, if I were to watch the news daily, in terms of a specific channel or something like that, that I see diversity in the company, in terms of who they present on TV. ... I think America’s very diverse. And I think sometimes we don’t get to see a reflection of that diversity in places like news channels, and who presents, who’s the anchor. And these discussions that we’ve talked about, that newscasters have sometimes, it’ll be a panel just all one race.” – Multiracial woman, 24*

These divides are in line with [previous findings](#) that Black Americans are far more likely than White or Hispanic Americans to feel that their race or some other demographic characteristic is what news organizations most misunderstand about them.

Discussions about representation in newsrooms have become amplified in the wake of the protests [in response to the police killing of George Floyd](#). While these survey questions were asked before

the protests, the divisions speak to how much Black Americans and, to a lesser extent, Hispanic Americans see representation as important in how they stay informed. And according to [a recent Pew Research Center analysis](#) of U.S. Census data on newsroom employment, Black Americans tend to be underrepresented in U.S. newsrooms overall relative to White Americans.

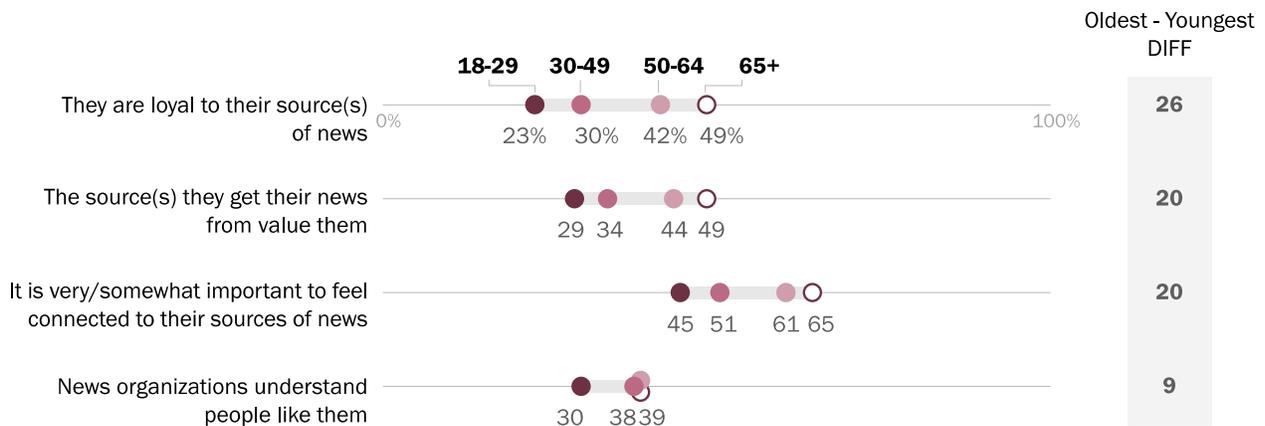
## Younger Americans, those who rely on social media for political news largely feel disconnected from their news sources

Two other subgroups – young adults and those who rely on social media for their political news – distinctly stand out for how they connect with news outlets: Both tend to feel disconnected from their sources of news.

Young adults are less likely to feel loyal to or valued by their news sources. About a quarter of Americans ages 18 to 29 (23%) say that they consider themselves to be loyal to the sources they get their news from, compared with about twice that share among those ages 65 and older (49%). And while 29% of adults under 30 say they feel valued by their news sources, this jumps 20 percentage points among the oldest age cohort. On both measures, those ages 30 to 49 and 50 to 64 fall somewhere in between. Younger adults also are somewhat less likely than their elders to feel that news organizations understand them.

### Younger Americans feel much less connected to their news sources

% of U.S. adults who say ...



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 18-March 2, 2020.  
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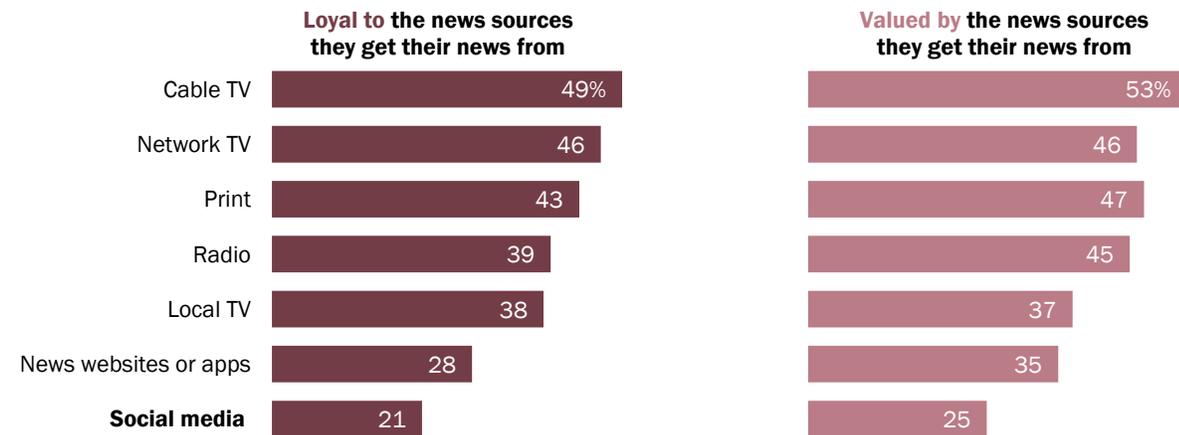
Furthermore, young adults are less likely to say it is important to feel a bond with their news sources. Younger adults, those ages 18 to 29, are less likely to say it is at least somewhat important to feel a connection with their news sources compared with those ages 65 and older (45% vs. 65%, respectively). Again, those 30 to 49 and 50 to 64 years of age fall in between.

Similarly, the nearly [one-in-five Americans who rely on social media for political news](#) are less likely than others to feel connected to their news sources. This group also tends to be young, but the relationship largely persists even when accounting for age differences between those who get most of their news on social media versus those who get news in other ways.

Those who rely on social media the most for their political news are less likely to feel loyal to or valued by their sources of news than those who rely on other pathways – including TV (network, local or cable), print, radio, or news websites or apps. They are less likely to feel loyal to their news sources (21%) or valued by them (25%), and they also fall near the bottom in the share who feel that news organizations understand people like them.

## Those who rely on social media the most for political news feel less loyal to or valued by their news sources

Among U.S. adults who rely on each pathway the most for political news, % who say they feel ...



Source: Surveys of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 29-Nov. 11, 2019 (pathway for political news) and Feb. 18-March 2, 2020 (loyal to and valued by news sources).

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## Methodology

This report is the culmination of a yearlong study into Americans' trust and attitudes toward the news media. The main source of data for this report comes from a survey of 10,300 U.S. adults conducted Feb. 18 to March 2, 2020. The question about the influence of corporate and financial interests on the news comes from a survey of 13,200 U.S. adults conducted August 3-16, 2020. The report also draws on a series of 10 focus groups conducted in three different cities by Pew Research Center.

This report also relies on previously reported data and findings from the yearlong study, including [a previously published report](#) that looked at more than 50 different Pew Research Center surveys conducted across several years and a report that looked at Americans' attitudes of the news media during the [COVID-19 outbreak](#). It also uses data from other Center studies on [news coverage of the outbreak](#) and of the [protests in the wake of the killing of George Floyd](#).

This report was made possible by The Pew Charitable Trusts, which received support from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

### The American Trends Panel survey methodology

The American Trends Panel (ATP), created by Pew Research Center, is a nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults. Panelists participate via self-administered web surveys. Panelists who do not have internet access at home are provided with a tablet and wireless internet connection. The panel is being managed by Ipsos.

Data in this report is drawn from the panel wave conducted Feb. 18 to March 2, 2020. A total of 10,300 panelists responded out of 11,036 who were sampled, for a response rate of 93%. This does not include six panelists who were removed from the data due to extremely high rates of refusal or straightlining. The cumulative response rate accounting for nonresponse to the recruitment surveys and attrition is 5%. The break-off rate among panelists who logged onto the survey and completed at least one item is 1.3%. The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 10,300 respondents is plus or minus 1.5 percentage points.

The subsample from the ATP consisted of 11,036 ATP members who responded to the Wave 57 survey and were still active.

The ATP was created in 2014, with the first cohort of panelists invited to join the panel at the end of a large, national, landline and cellphone random-digit-dial survey that was conducted in both English and Spanish. Two additional recruitments were conducted using the same method in 2015 and 2017, respectively. Across these three surveys, a total of 19,718 adults were invited to join the ATP, of which 9,942 agreed to participate.

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### American Trends Panel recruitment surveys

Recruitment dates	Mode	Invited	Joined	Active panelists remaining
Jan. 23 to March 16, 2014	Landline/ cell RDD	9,809	5,338	2,315
Aug. 27 to Oct. 4, 2015	Landline/ cell RDD	6,004	2,976	1,337
April 25 to June 4, 2017	Landline/ cell RDD	3,905	1,628	685
Aug. 8 to Oct. 31, 2018	ABS/web	9,396	8,778	6,417
Aug. 19 to Nov. 30, 2019	ABS/web	5,900	4,720	4,694
	<b>Total</b>	<b>35,014</b>	<b>23,440</b>	<b>15,448</b>

Note: Approximately once per year, panelists who have not participated in multiple consecutive waves or who did not complete an annual profiling survey are removed from the panel. Panelists also become inactive if they ask to be removed from the panel.

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In August 2018, the ATP switched from telephone to address-based recruitment. Invitations were sent to a random, address-based sample (ABS) of households selected from the U.S. Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File. In each household, the adult with the next birthday was asked to go online to complete a survey, at the end of which they were invited to join the panel. For a random half-sample of invitations, households without internet access were instructed to return a postcard. These households were contacted by telephone and sent a tablet if they agreed to participate. A total of 9,396 were invited to join the panel, and 8,778 agreed to join the panel and completed an initial profile survey. The same recruitment procedure was carried out on Aug. 19, 2019, from which a total of 5,900 were invited to join the panel and 4,720 agreed to join the panel and completed an initial profile survey. Of the 23,440 individuals who have ever joined the ATP, 15,448 remained active panelists and continued to receive survey invitations at the time this survey was conducted.

The U.S. Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File has been estimated to cover as much as 98% of the population, although some studies suggest that the coverage could be in the low 90% range.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> AAPOR Task Force on Address-based Sampling. 2016. "[AAPOR Report: Address-based Sampling.](#)"

## Weighting

The ATP data was weighted in a multistep process that begins with a base weight incorporating the respondents' original selection probability. The next step in the weighting uses an iterative technique that aligns the sample to population benchmarks on the dimensions listed in the accompanying table.

Sampling errors and test of statistical significance take into account the effect of weighting. Interviews are conducted in both English and Spanish.

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

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## Weighting dimensions

Variable	Benchmark source
Gender	2018 American Community Survey
Age	
Education	
Race/Hispanic origin	
Country of birth among Hispanics	
Home internet access	
Region x Metropolitan status	2019 CPS March Supplement
Volunteerism	2017 CPS Volunteering & Civic Life Supplement
Voter registration	2018 CPS Voting and Registration Supplement
Party affiliation	Average of the three most recent Pew Research Center telephone surveys.

Note: Estimates from the ACS are based on non-institutionalized adults. Voter registration is calculated using procedures from Hur, Achen (2013) and rescaled to include the total U.S. adult population.

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The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

<b>Group</b>	<b>Unweighted sample size</b>	<b>Plus or minus ...</b>
Total sample	10,300	1.5 percentage points
Republican/Lean Republican	4,245	2.2 percentage points
Democrat/Lean Democrat	5,771	2.1 percentage points
White	7,027	1.7 percentage points
Hispanic	1,750	4.2 percentage points
Black	813	4.9 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

One previously unreported survey question in this study comes from separate wave that was conducted August 3-16, 2020. A total of 13,200 panelists responded to that wave. The margin of sampling error for these 13,200 panelists is plus or minus 1.4 percentage points.

Finally, the analysis in this report also uses previously reported data from three other waves of the American Trends Panel (ATP), which were fielded during January, April and June 2020. For each, see the full methodologies for each of these three surveys below:

- [American Trends Panel June 2020 survey methodology](#)
- [American Trends Panel April 2020 survey methodology](#)
- [American Trends Panel January 2020 survey methodology](#)

<b>Group</b>	<b>Unweighted sample size</b>	<b>Plus or minus ...</b>
Total sample		
June 2020 ATP	9,654	1.6 percentage points
April 2020 ATP	10,139	1.5 percentage points
January 2020 ATP	12,638	1.3 percentage points

## Focus groups

Pew Research Center conducted a series of focus groups as part of a yearlong study exploring Americans' views of the news media. Ten focus groups were held across the following three cities: Houston, Texas; St. Louis, Missouri; and Charlotte, North Carolina. These three cities were chosen because of their demographics and recommendations by our vendor.

The primary goal of these focus groups was to inform the development of the survey that was conducted Feb. 18-March 2, 2020, among U.S. adults who are part of the Center's [American Trends Panel](#). This survey was the main source of data for this report. The report includes a number of quotations from the focus groups to help illustrate and add nuance to the survey findings. Quotations are chosen to provide context and are not necessarily representative of the majority opinion in any particular group or city. Quotations may have been edited for grammar, spelling and clarity.

Each group consisted of six adults coming together for about an hour and a half for a discussion led by a professional moderator using a guide developed by Pew Research Center. Many of the groups were made up of people of one demographic characteristic. Beyond that demographic characteristic, each of the groups was recruited to have a mix of other characteristics and attitudes as appropriate, including gender, education, income, age, race or ethnicity, political party affiliation, urban and rural location, employment status and amount of trust in the news media. Finally, aside from one of the groups in St. Louis which focused on "less newsy" Americans, all groups required participants to follow the news at least some of the time. The 10 focus groups are the following:

*Houston:*

- Group 1, “General group” – Participants included a mix of demographic characteristics and attitudes toward the news media.
- Group 2, “Hispanic Americans” – Participants were selected based on whether they self-identified as either Hispanic or Latino.

*St. Louis:*

- Group 1, “General group” – Participants included a mix of demographic characteristics and attitudes toward the news media.
- Group 2, “Republicans” – Participants self-identified as Republican, consisted of a mix of those who identify as either “very” or “somewhat” conservative and included those who approve and disapprove of the job Donald Trump is doing as president.
- Group 3, “Less newsy” – Participants said they either follow the news “some of the time” or “only now and then” and that they follow news closely “only when something important is happening.”
- Group 4, “Highly newsy” – Participants said they follow the news “all or most of the time” and that they follow the news “most of the time, whether or not something important is happening.”

*Charlotte:*

- Group 1, “Democrats” – Participants self-identified as Democrats and consisted of a mix of those who identify as either “very” or “somewhat” liberal.
- Group 2, “African American” – Participants self-identified as either Black or African American.
- Group 3, “Older group” – Participants were between 48 and 74 years old.
- Group 4, “Younger group” – Participants were between 18 and 39 years old.

Focus groups were held in the following locations and on the following dates:

- Houston: Nov. 18, 2019
- St. Louis: Nov. 19-20, 2019
- Charlotte: Nov. 21, 2019

Ipsos Inc. worked with local field partners in each of the three cities to recruit the participants using a screener designed by Pew Research Center. All participants were given financial remuneration for their time.

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**2020 PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S AMERICAN TRENDS PANEL**  
**Wave 62 FEBRUARY-MARCH SURVEY**  
**FINAL TOPLINE**  
**February 18-March 2, 2020**  
**N=10,300**

**ASK ALL:**

CAMPNII

How closely have you been following news about candidates for the 2020 presidential election?

Feb 18- Mar 2 <u>2020</u>		July 22- Aug 4 <u>2019</u>	Oct 25- Nov 8 <u>2016</u> <sup>9</sup>	Sept 27- Oct 10 <u>2016</u>	June 7- July 5 <u>2016</u>
23	Very closely	15	41	35	35
37	Fairly closely	37	37	40	43
29	Not too closely	34	16	18	18
12	Not at all closely	14	6	7	4
*	No answer	*	*	*	*

**ASK ALL:**

DTNEWS

Thinking about the past couple of weeks, would you say the news for Donald Trump has been... **[RANDOMIZE DISPLAY OF OPTIONS 1-5 and 5-1]**

Feb 18- Mar 2 <u>2020</u>	
11	Very good
22	Mostly good
27	Neither good nor bad
26	Mostly bad
13	Very bad
2	No answer

<sup>9</sup> In surveys conducted in 2016, question asked about 2016 presidential election.

**RANDOMIZE ORDER OF DEMPNWSPOS AND DEMPNWSNEG****ASK ALL:**

DEMPNWSPOS

Regardless of how much they've been in the news, which Democratic candidate for president would you say has gotten the BEST news coverage over the past couple of weeks? **[RANDOMIZE; DISPLAY RESPONSE OPTIONS IN SAME ORDER FOR BOTH DEMPNWSPOS AND DEMPNWSNEG]**

Feb 18-	
Mar 2	
<u>2020</u>	
39	Bernie Sanders
24	Mike Bloomberg
13	Pete Buttigieg
8	Joe Biden
5	Elizabeth Warren
4	Amy Klobuchar
1	Tom Steyer
1	Tulsi Gabbard
5	No answer

**RANDOMIZE ORDER OF DEMPNWSPOS AND DEMPNWSNEG****ASK ALL:**

DEMPNWSNEG

Regardless of how much they've been in the news, which Democratic candidate for president would you say has gotten the WORST news coverage over the past couple of weeks? **[RANDOMIZE; DISPLAY RESPONSE OPTIONS IN SAME ORDER FOR BOTH DEMPNWSPOS AND DEMPNWSNEG]**

Feb 18-	
Mar 2	
<u>2020</u>	
27	Joe Biden
20	Mike Bloomberg
13	Bernie Sanders
11	Tulsi Gabbard
9	Elizabeth Warren
5	Tom Steyer
5	Amy Klobuchar
4	Pete Buttigieg
7	No answer

**ASK ALL:**

Now, thinking about news more generally...

SEEK Which statement best describes how you get news? **[RANDOMIZE]**

Feb 18- Mar 2 <u>2020</u>		Feb 19- Mar 4 <u>2019</u>
52	I mostly get news because I'm looking for it	60
47	I mostly get news because I happen to come across it	39
*	No answer	1

**2 QUESTIONS HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**

**ASK ALL:**

NEWSCONFLEVEL Overall, how much confidence would you say Americans have in the news media?

Feb 18-	
Mar 2	
<u>2020</u>	
6	A great deal
39	A fair amount
43	Not too much
11	No confidence at all
*	No answer

**ASK ALL:**

NEWSCONF4 When you think about the amount of confidence Americans have in the news media, do you think they have... **[RANDOMIZE ORDER 1 AND 2; ALWAYS DISPLAY OPTION 3 LAST]**

Feb 18-	
Mar 2	
<u>2020</u>	
40	Too much confidence
30	Too little confidence
28	The right amount of confidence
1	No answer

**ASK ALL:**

NEWSTRUSTCURE Do you think it is possible to improve the level of confidence Americans have in the news media or is that not possible to do?

Feb 18-	
Mar 2	
<u>2020</u>	
75	Yes, it is possible
24	No, it is not possible
1	No answer

**ASK ALL:**

NEWSIDEAL Ideally, do you think it's better for society if Americans are... **[RANDOMIZE]**

Feb 18-	
Mar 2	
<u>2020</u>	
36	Trusting of the news media
63	Skeptical of the news media
1	No answer

**ASK ALL:****NEWSPAIRS**

For each pair of opposite phrases, which one do you feel better describes news organizations generally? If you think neither phrase applies, please indicate so.

**[PROGRAMMING NOTE: RANDOMIZE ITEMS A-F, SHOW RESPONSES 1-3 IN ORDER; DISPLAY A-F ON THE SAME SCREEN WITH A LINE SEPARATING EACH SET OF RESPONSES]**

a.	Care about the <u>people they report on</u>	Don't care about the <u>people they report on</u>	Neither <u>applies</u>	No <u>answer</u>
Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	23	53	23	1
<b>PHONE TREND FOR COMPARISON:</b>				
July 2013	31	59	6	4
July 2011	26	63	6	4
July 2009	32	55	8	4
July 2007	35	53	7	5
June 2005	28	58	9	5
Early July 2003	31	56	9	4
July 2002	30	55	10	5
Mid Nov 2001	47	38	11	4
Early Sep 2001	23	64	10	3
Feb 1999	21	67	9	3
Jan 1987	41	45	9	5
July 1985	35	48	10	7

b.	Protect <u>democracy</u>	Hurt <u>democracy</u>	Neither <u>applies</u>	No <u>answer</u>
Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	30	36	33	1
<b>PHONE TREND FOR COMPARISON:</b>				
July 2013	48	35	11	6
July 2011	42	42	11	5
July 2009	46	37	10	7
July 2007	44	36	13	7
June 2005	47	33	12	8
Early July 2003	52	28	13	7
July 2002	50	29	14	7
Mid Nov 2001	60	19	14	7
Early Sep 2001	46	32	15	7
Feb 1999	45	38	13	4
Aug 1989	55	19	20	6
Jan 1987	52	27	13	8
July 1986	58	18	17	7
July 1985	54	23	13	10

**NEWSPAIRS CONTINUED**

c.	<u>Stand up for America</u>	<u>Too critical of America</u>	<u>Neither applies</u>	<u>No answer</u>
Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	28	35	37	1
<b>PHONE TREND FOR COMPARISON:</b>				
July 2011	41	39	14	6
July 2009	41	44	10	5
July 2007	41	43	12	4
June 2005	42	40	14	4
Early July 2003	51	33	12	4
July 2002	49	35	12	4
Mid Nov 2001	69	17	10	4
Early Sep 2001	43	36	16	5
Feb 1999	41	42	13	4
Jan 1987	53	35	8	4
July 1986	53	28	15	4
July 1985	52	30	10	8

d.	<u>Growing in influence</u>	<u>Declining in influence</u>	<u>Neither applies</u>	<u>No answer</u>
Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	32	48	19	1
<b>PHONE TREND FOR COMPARISON:</b>				
July 2011	52	34	7	7
July 2009	52	34	7	7
July 2007	52	36	6	6
June 2005	49	36	7	8
Early July 2003	55	29	8	8
July 2002	57	29	7	7
Early Sep 2001	55	29	9	7
Feb 1999	59	32	6	3
July 1985	63	17	7	13

e.	<u>Highly professional</u>	<u>Not professional</u>	<u>Neither applies</u>	<u>No answer</u>
Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	33	39	27	1
<b>PHONE TREND FOR COMPARISON:</b>				
July 2013	60	29	8	2
July 2011	57	32	8	3
July 2009	59	27	10	4
July 2007	66	22	9	3
June 2005	59	25	12	4
Early July 2003	62	24	9	5
July 2002	49	31	15	5
Mid Nov 2001	73	12	12	3
Early Sep 2001	54	27	15	4
Feb 1999	52	32	13	3
July 1986	71	13	12	4
July 1985	72	11	9	8

**NEWSPAIRS CONTINUED**

f.	Care about how good <u>a job they do</u>	Don't care about how <u>good a job they do</u>	Neither <u>applies</u>	No <u>answer</u>
Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	45	37	17	1
<b>PHONE TREND FOR COMPARISON:</b>				
July 2013	67	26	5	2
July 2011	62	31	5	3
July 2009	67	23	5	4
July 2007	69	23	6	2
June 2005	65	25	6	4
Early July 2003	68	22	7	3
July 2002	65	23	8	4
Mid Nov 2001	78	14	6	2
Early Sep 2001	69	22	7	2
Feb 1999	69	22	6	3
July 1986	77	16	5	2
July 1985	79	11	4	6

**ASK ALL:**

ACCNEWS Which of the following best describes how you approach news stories, even if neither is exactly right?

I typically go into a news story expecting that it will... **[RANDOMIZE]**

Feb 18- Mar 2 <u>2020</u>	61	Largely be accurate
	38	Largely be inaccurate
	1	No answer

**ASK ALL:**

NEWSMISINTENT When significant mistakes make their way into news stories, how much, if at all, do you think each of the following is a reason why they occur? **[RANDOMIZE A-E]**

	A major <u>reason</u>	A minor <u>reason</u>	Not a <u>reason</u>	No <u>answer</u>
a. Careless reporting Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	55	34	10	1
b. A source gave incorrect information Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	51	39	9	1
c. Desire to mislead Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	44	35	20	1
d. Lack of expertise on the topic Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	44	40	16	1
e. The news is breaking too quickly Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	53	32	15	1

**ASK ALL:**NEWSMIS Which of the following statements comes closer to your view? In general... **[RANDOMIZE]**

Feb 18- Mar 2 <u>2020</u>		Feb 22- Mar 4 <u>2018</u>
30	News organizations are willing to admit their mistakes	30
69	News organizations try to cover up their mistakes	68
1	No answer	2

**ASK ALL:**

NEWSCORRECENT In the PAST FEW MONTHS, have you seen a news organization make an official correction to a story?

Feb 18- Mar 2 <u>2020</u>	
36	Yes
63	No
1	No answer

**ASK ALL:**NEWSCORIMP When a news organization issues an official correction to a story, do you tend to feel... **[RANDOMIZE 1-2; ALWAYS DISPLAY OPTION 3 LAST]**

Feb 18- Mar 2 <u>2020</u>	
51	More confident in that organization
12	Less confident in that organization
36	No difference in confidence in that organization
1	No answer

**ASK ALL:**WATCHDOG\_3 In presenting the news dealing with political and social issues, do you think that news organizations... **[RANDOMIZE]**

Feb 18- Mar 2 <u>2020</u>		Oct 29- Nov 11 <u>2019</u>	Feb 19- Mar 4 <u>2019</u>	Feb 22- Mar 4 <u>2018</u>	Mar 13 Mar 27 <u>2017</u>	Jan 12- Feb 8 <u>2016</u> <sup>10</sup>
20	Deal fairly with all sides	22	26	30	28	24
79	Tend to favor one side	76	72	68	72	74
2	No answer	1	2	2	*	3

<sup>10</sup> For the comparable phone trends from before 2016 for WATCHDOG\_3, see [here](#).

**2 QUESTIONS HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE****[RANDOMIZE ORDER OF NEWSPERSONAL1 AND NEWSPERSONAL2]****ASK ALL:**

NEWSPERSONAL1 Have you ever read, watched or listened to a news story about a significant event that you directly experienced or witnessed?

Feb 18-

Mar 2

2020

43

Yes, I have

57

No, I have not

\*

No answer

**ASK ALL:**

NEWSPERSONAL2 Have you ever read, watched or listened to a news story about an issue that you consider yourself to be an expert on due to your profession or experience?

Feb 18-

Mar 2

2020

43

Yes, I have

56

No, I have not

\*

No answer

**ASK IF YES TO EITHER EVENT OR ISSUE [NEWSPERSONAL1=1 OR NEWSPERSONAL2=1] [N=6,908]:**  
 NEWSPERSWELL Overall, how well do you think the issue or event was covered in that story? If there is more than one issue or event, think about the one that stands out the most to you.

Feb 18- Mar 2 <u>2020</u>	
12	Very well
53	Somewhat well
26	Not too well
8	Not at all well
1	No answer

### 1 QUESTION HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

**ASK ALL:**

MEDIALOYAL3 Which of the following statements comes closer to your view? **[RANDOMIZE]**

Feb 18- Mar 2 <u>2020</u>		Feb 19- Mar 4 <u>2019</u>	Jan 12- Feb 8 <u>2016</u>
36	I consider myself to be loyal to the news source(s) I get my news from	39	51
63	I am not particularly loyal to the news source(s) I get my news from	60	48
1	No answer	1	1

**ASK ALL:**

MEDIAVALUE Which of the following statements comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right? **[RANDOMIZE]**

Feb 18- Mar 2 <u>2020</u>	
39	I think that the news source(s) I get my news from value me
57	I think that the news source(s) I get my news from do not particularly value me
4	No answer

**ASK ALL:**

NEWSTRANSPWELL

Thinking about news organizations generally, how well do they do at telling their audiences about each of the following? **[RANDOMIZE A-F]**

	Very <u>well</u>	Somewhat <u>well</u>	Not too <u>well</u>	Not at <u>all well</u>	No <u>answer</u>
a. How they produce their news stories Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	11	37	33	18	1
b. Where their money comes from Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	7	19	33	38	2
c. When there are potential conflicts of interest with other corporations or individuals Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	7	31	35	25	1
d. Whether a news story is opinion or factual reporting Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	11	32	33	22	1
e. When a correction has been made to a news story Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	12	39	33	15	1
f. How they find and choose sources for their stories Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	9	33	35	22	1

**2 QUESTIONS HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**

**ASK ALL:**

NEWSCONIMPT

How important is it that you feel connected to a news organization that you get news from?

Feb 18-	
Mar 2	
<u>2020</u>	
17	Very important
38	Somewhat important
31	Not too important
12	Not at all important
1	No answer

**ASK ALL:**

NEWSUND

And now, which of the following statements comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right? In general... **[RANDOMIZE]**

Feb 18-		Feb 22-
Mar 2		Mar 4
<u>2020</u>		<u>2018</u>
37	News organizations understand people like me	40
59	News organizations don't understand people like me	58
4	No answer	3

**ASK IF UNDERSTOOD (NEWSUND=1) [N=4,477]:**

NEWSUNDYES

Which of the following do news organizations understand the most about people like you? **[RANDOMIZE]**

Feb 18-	
Mar 2	
<u>2020</u>	
25	Political views
23	Personal characteristics, such as age, race or gender
13	Personal interests
35	Social and economic class
3	No answer

**ASK IF NOT UNDERSTOOD (NEWSUND=2) [N=5,435]:**

NEWSUNDNO

Which of the following do news organizations misunderstand the most about people like you? **[RANDOMIZE]**

Feb 18-	
Mar 2	
<u>2020</u>	
34	Political views
16	Personal characteristics, such as age, race or gender
18	Personal interests
30	Social and economic class
2	No answer

**ASK ALL:**

NEWSCONWHICH

How important, if at all, is each of the following to you in deciding which outlets to get news from? **[RANDOMIZE A-F]**

		Very <u>important</u>	Somewhat <u>important</u>	Not too <u>important</u>	Not at all <u>important</u>	No <u>answer</u>
a.	They share my views Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	12	38	32	17	1
b.	The journalists look or sound like me Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	5	15	34	46	1
c.	I like or feel close to a specific journalist Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	7	24	34	34	1
d.	They cover people like me in their stories Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	12	35	31	21	1
e.	The journalists seem friendly and warm Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	17	39	27	16	1
f.	I can easily contact them Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	10	25	32	32	1

**ASK ALL:**

NEWSHEARD

Thinking about some stories covered by news organizations in the past couple of weeks...

How much, if anything, have you heard or read about each of the following?

**[RANDOMIZE ORDER OF ITEMS; PLEASE ADD A LINE OF SPACE BETWEEN THE QUESTION STEM AND FIRST SUB-ITEM]**

		<u>A lot</u>	<u>A little</u>	Nothing <u>at all</u>	No <u>answer</u>
a.	The Trump administration adding six countries to the list of those whose citizens face restrictions on travel to the U.S. Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	22	46	31	1
b.	Possible political influence by the Trump administration on criminal cases at the Department of Justice Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	47	33	19	1
c.	A recent report about surveillance by the FBI of people connected to Trump's campaign in 2016 Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	24	43	31	1
d.	Donald Trump's treatment of people who testified in the impeachment process Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	50	34	16	1

e.	The amount of money the government has spent at Donald Trump's properties and businesses				
	Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	25	37	37	1
f.	The amount of money the government spent on the impeachment process				
	Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	25	37	37	1

**ADDITIONAL QUESTION HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE****ASK ALL:**

DEM20UNDER

How well do you feel you understand what's been happening in the Democratic presidential primaries so far?

Feb 18- Mar 2 2020	Very well
20	Somewhat well
46	Not too well
25	Not at all well
9	No answer
1	

**ASK ALL:**

DEM20IDEO

For each of the following presidential candidates, please indicate how you would describe their political views. **[RANDOMIZE RESPONSE ITEMS ACROSS TWO SCREENS; RANDOMIZE DISPLAY OF OPTIONS 1-7 AND 7-1; ALWAYS ASK OPTION 8 LAST; USE SAME ORDER FOR EACH CANDIDATE]**

	<u>Very liberal</u>	<u>Mostly liberal</u>	<u>Slightly liberal</u>	<u>Mode- rate</u>	<u>Slightly conserv- ative</u>	<u>Mostly conserv- ative</u>	<u>Very conserv- ative</u>	<u>Not sure</u>	<u>No answer</u>
a. Joe Biden Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	12	18	15	21	6	5	2	18	2
b. Bernie Sanders Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	56	13	4	4	2	2	3	15	2
c. Elizabeth Warren Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	33	21	8	6	3	2	2	23	2
d. Pete Buttigieg Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	15	16	14	15	4	2	1	31	2
e. Amy Klobuchar Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	7	13	12	17	4	2	1	42	2

f. Mike Bloomberg  
Feb 18-Mar 2,  
2020

13 14 10 17 10 7 4 24 2

**ASK ALL:**

PRES20\_MFA

As far as you know, have the following presidential candidates publicly voiced their support for a single national health insurance program run by the government that would replace private insurance, sometimes called "Medicare for all"? **[RANDOMIZE ITEMS A-E]**

		Yes, has <u>voiced</u> <u>support</u>	No, has <u>not voiced</u> <u>support</u>	Not <u>sure</u>	No <u>answer</u>
a.	Joe Biden Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	22	33	43	2
b.	Bernie Sanders Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	71	4	24	2
c.	Elizabeth Warren Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	52	7	40	2
d.	Pete Buttigieg Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	17	27	54	2
e.	Amy Klobuchar Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	11	26	62	2

**RANDOMIZE ORDER OF KNOWBUTTIGIEG, KNOWSANDERS, KNOWWARREN****ASK ALL:**

KNOWBUTTIGIEG

As far as you know, which candidate running for president, if any, is openly gay or lesbian? **[RANDOMIZE DISPLAY OF CANDIDATE OPTIONS 1-8; ALWAYS ASK 9-10 LAST; DISPLAY RESPONSE OPTIONS IN SAME ORDER FOR KNOWBUTTIGIEG, KNOWSANDERS, KNOWWARREN]**

Feb 18- Mar 2 <u>2020</u>	
60	Pete Buttigieg (correct)
1	Elizabeth Warren
1	Mike Bloomberg
1	Amy Klobuchar
1	Tom Steyer
1	Tulsi Gabbard
*	Joe Biden
*	Bernie Sanders
4	None of them
31	Not sure
1	No answer

**RANDOMIZE ORDER OF KNOWBUTTIGIEG, KNOWSANDERS, KNOWWARREN**

**ASK ALL:**

KNOWSANDERS

As far as you know, which candidate running for president, if any, calls themselves a "democratic socialist"? **[RANDOMIZE DISPLAY OF CANDIDATE OPTIONS 1-8; ALWAYS ASK 9-10 LAST; DISPLAY RESPONSE OPTIONS IN SAME ORDER FOR KNOWBUTTIGIEG, KNOWSANDERS, KNOWWARREN]**

Feb 18-

Mar 2

2020

61	Bernie Sanders (correct)
2	Mike Bloomberg
1	Joe Biden
1	Elizabeth Warren
*	Tulsi Gabbard
*	Amy Klobuchar
*	Pete Buttigieg
*	Tom Steyer
2	None of them
30	Not sure
1	No answer

**RANDOMIZE ORDER OF KNOWBUTTIGIEG, KNOWSANDERS, KNOWWARREN****ASK ALL:**

KNOWWARREN

As far as you know, which candidate running for president, if any, was a leader in the creation of the consumer financial protection bureau in 2010? **[RANDOMIZE DISPLAY OF CANDIDATE OPTIONS 1-8; ALWAYS ASK 9-10 LAST; DISPLAY RESPONSE OPTIONS IN SAME ORDER FOR KNOWBUTTIGIEG, KNOWSANDERS, KNOWWARREN]**

Feb 18-

Mar 2

2020

19	Elizabeth Warren (correct)
4	Joe Biden
4	Mike Bloomberg
2	Bernie Sanders
1	Tom Steyer
1	Amy Klobuchar
*	Pete Buttigieg
*	Tulsi Gabbard
2	None of them
65	Not sure
2	No answer

**ASK ALL:**

IACOUNT

As you may know, full results from the Iowa Democratic caucuses in early February were not released publicly for several days.

From what you've seen or heard, which of the following do you think best describes why releasing the results of the Iowa Democratic caucus was delayed? **[RANDOMIZE DISPLAY OF 1-2; ALWAYS DISPLAY OPTION 3 LAST]**

Feb 18-

Mar 2

2020

39

There were unintentional problems that caused delays but not major efforts to purposefully delay the results

32

Not only were there unintentional problems causing delays, there were also major efforts to purposefully delay the results

28

Not sure

1

No answer

**ASK ALL:**

IMPEACHFOL

Thinking back over the past few months...

How closely, if at all, did you follow news about the impeachment and trial of Donald Trump?

Feb 18-

Mar 2

2020

24

Very closely

35

Fairly closely

28

Not too closely

12

Not at all closely

1

No answer

**ASK ALL:**

IMPEACHUNDER

How well do you feel you understood the facts and events that surrounded the impeachment proceedings?

Feb 18-

Mar 2

2020

28

Very well

40

Somewhat well

22

Not too well

9

Not at all well

1

No answer

**ASK ALL:**

IMPEACHWHY Here are a few possible reasons why the Senate voted to acquit Donald Trump and keep him in office.

For each one, please indicate whether you think it was a reason or not a reason why the Senate voted to acquit Trump. **[RANDOMIZE ITEMS; ALWAYS DISPLAY OPTION 3 LAST]**

	<u>Yes, was a reason</u>	<u>No, was NOT a reason</u>	<u>Not sure</u>	<u>No answer</u>
a. Republicans did not want to remove Trump because he is a member of their own party Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	60	25	14	1
b. Democrats did a poor job making the case for removal Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	43	39	17	1
c. Key witnesses and evidence were prevented from being a part of the impeachment trial Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	46	33	19	1
d. Trump's actions did not justify being removed from office Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	45	38	16	1
e. Senators were reluctant to remove a sitting president from office in an election year Feb 18-Mar 2, 2020	43	37	20	1

**ASK ALL:**

IMPEACHACT Regardless of your views about the outcome of the impeachment trial, which comes closest to your view of Donald Trump's conduct and the evidence presented against him in the impeachment trial? **[RANDOMIZE ORDER 1-3 AND 3-1]**

Feb 18-  
Mar 2  
2020

46	Trump did something wrong, and it was enough to justify his removal from office
28	Trump did something wrong, but it was NOT enough to justify his removal from office
25	Trump did nothing wrong
2	No answer

**ASK ALL:**

IMPEACHNEWS Thinking about the mix of news and information you got about the impeachment proceedings, which better describes you? **[RANDOMIZE OPTIONS 1-2; ALWAYS DISPLAY OPTION 3 LAST]**

Feb 18-  
Mar 2  
2020

38	I mostly saw the same set of facts across the sources I turned to for news
31	I mostly saw conflicting facts across the sources I turned to for news
28	I didn't follow impeachment news across multiple sources
2	No answer

**ASK ALL:**

IMPEACHVOTE As far as you know, did any REPUBLICANS vote to convict Donald Trump during the impeachment trial in the U.S. Senate?

Feb 18-  
Mar 2  
2020

66	Yes
12	No
22	Not sure
1	No answer

**RANDOMIZE ORDER OF MEDDLE\_RU AND MEDDLE\_UA; DISPLAY ON SAME SCREEN****ASK ALL:**

MEDDLE\_RU From what you've seen or heard, did the RUSSIAN government interfere in the 2016 U.S. presidential election?

Feb 18-  
Mar 2  
2020

36	Definitely interfered
26	Probably interfered
13	Probably did NOT interfere
7	Definitely did NOT interfere
17	Not sure
1	No answer

**ASK ALL:**

MEDDLE-UA From what you've seen or heard, did the UKRAINIAN government interfere in the 2016 U.S. presidential election?

Feb 18-	
Mar 2	
<u>2020</u>	
7	Definitely interfered
18	Probably interfered
24	Probably did NOT interfere
23	Definitely did NOT interfere
28	Not sure
1	No answer

**ASK ALL:**

FKNWSSEE1 In the last couple of weeks, have you seen any stories about politics or the presidential election that seemed completely made-up?

Feb 18-	
Mar 2	
<u>2020</u>	
35	Yes
63	No
2	No answer

**ADDITIONAL QUESTION HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE****ASK ALL:**

QAHRD How much, if anything, have you heard or read about QAnon?

Feb 18-	
Mar 2	
<u>2020</u>	
3	A lot
20	A little
76	Nothing at all
2	No answer

**ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE****ASK ALL:**

PARTY In politics today, do you consider yourself a:

**ASK IF INDEP/SOMETHING ELSE (PARTY=3 or 4) OR MISSING:**

PARTYLN	As of today do you lean more to... <sup>11</sup>						
	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	<u>Something else</u>	<u>No answer</u>	<u>Lean Rep</u>	<u>Lean Dem</u>
	27	29	29	13	1	17	22

<sup>11</sup> PARTY and PARTYLN asked in a prior survey.

**2020 PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S AMERICAN TRENDS PANEL  
WAVE 72 AUGUST SURVEY  
FINAL TOPLINE  
August 3-16, 2020  
N=13,200**

**ASK ALL:**

NEWSFINCORP How much, if at all, do you think that the news that you get is influenced by corporations and financial interests?

Aug 3-16

2020

38	A great deal
42	Somewhat
15	Not very much
5	Not at all
1	No answer