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Americans Value Press Freedom but Differ on Its Limits

Many Americans say some restrictions are OK when weighed against concerns about false information or national security

BY Kirsten Eddy, Katerina Eva Matsa, Michael Lipka, Benjamin Toff, Naomi Forman-Katz and Christopher St. Aubin

FOR MEDIA OR OTHER INQUIRIES:

Kirsten Eddy, Senior Researcher
Katerina Eva Matsa, Director, News and
Information Research
David Maas, Communications Manager
info@pewresearch.org
www.pewresearch.org

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Table of Contents

About the Pew-Knight Initiative	2
About this research	3
How much do Americans know about the First Amendment?	13
How Americans define press freedom in their own words	18
Where Americans view the limits of press freedom	24
How Americans think about censorship of news in the U.S.	31
How Americans think about corporate and political influence on the news	41
How Americans view the relationship between the government and the news media	48
Acknowledgments	54
Methodology	55

About the Pew-Knight Initiative

The [Pew-Knight Initiative](#) supports new research on how Americans absorb civic information, form beliefs and identities, and engage in their communities. [Pew Research Center](#) is a nonpartisan, nonadvocacy fact tank that informs the public about the issues, attitudes and trends shaping the world. [Knight Foundation](#) is a social investor committed to supporting informed and engaged communities.

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About this research

This report from the [Pew-Knight Initiative](#) looks at how Americans think about freedom of the press, as well as the related First Amendment concept of freedom of speech, in the United States today.

Why we did this

Pew Research Center has asked about press freedom and free speech both domestically and globally for the past decade. The topic has become especially relevant amid the [changing media environment](#) and the [evolving concept of “the press”](#); the growing role of [technology companies as gatekeepers](#) to news and information; and President Donald Trump’s [tense relationship with the news media](#), which has led some groups and individuals to raise concerns about whether press freedom is being restricted.

It is a good time to take a fresh look at Americans’ views on press freedom in the U.S. – how they define it, what they think about its status and how they weigh it against other ongoing challenges in the news environment.

Learn more about [Pew Research Center](#) and our [research on news habits and media](#).

How we did this

We surveyed 3,507 U.S. adults from March 23 to 29, 2026, and 3,488 U.S. adults from June 22 to 28, 2026. Everyone who took part in these surveys is a member of the Center’s [American Trends Panel](#). The surveys represent the views of the full U.S. adult population.

We also conducted 10 online focus group discussions led by SSRS with 74 U.S. adults, held from May 20 to June 4, 2026. These discussions do not represent the entire U.S. population. This report shares findings and quotes from the focus groups to help illustrate and add detail to the survey results. Quotes were lightly edited for spelling, punctuation and clarity.

Here are the survey questions used for this report, the detailed responses and the [methodology](#).

This is a Pew Research Center report from the Pew-Knight Initiative, a research program funded jointly by The Pew Charitable Trusts and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. Find related reports online at <https://www.pewresearch.org/pew-knight/>.

Americans Value Press Freedom but Differ on Its Limits

Many Americans say some restrictions are OK when weighed against concerns about false information or national security

Most Americans see freedom of the press – protected by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution – as important to society. **But their support for press freedom is far from absolute**, according to a new Pew Research Center study from the [Pew-Knight Initiative](#).

While Americans largely support press freedom in principle, **half or more also say the government should be able to restrict news reporting in certain cases**, particularly if it endangers national security or contains inaccurate information.

In fact, when forced to choose between accuracy and press freedom, Americans are slightly more likely to choose the side of accuracy:

- 53% say it is more important to prevent inaccurate reporting, even if it limits freedom of the press.
- 45% say it is more important for the press to be free to report the news, even if some reporting is inaccurate.

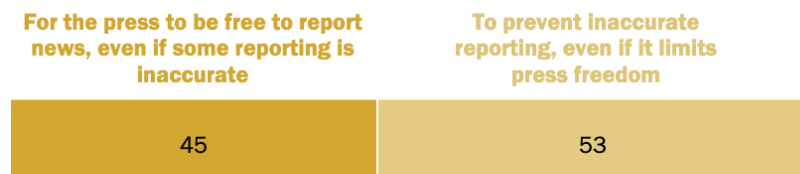
Most Americans see press freedom as highly important to society ...

% of U.S. adults who say the freedom of the press is ___ important to the well-being of society



... but many also support limits to it in some cases

*% of U.S. adults who say it is **more important** ...*



Note: Respondents who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted June 22-28, 2026. "Americans Value Press Freedom but Differ on Its Limits"

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Americans are also divided in how they assess the state of press freedom today. While many say the press has become less free during President Donald Trump’s second term, views differ sharply by political party. And there have been only modest changes in how concerned Americans are about potential restrictions on press freedom over the past few years – and how free they say the press is to report the news.

At this moment, Republicans and Democrats tend to raise different considerations when thinking about press freedom. Democrats often worry about direct government restrictions on the press; Republicans commonly express concerns about false information and the role of news organizations, including their control over what news people see.

These are some of the key findings of two surveys conducted in March and June 2026, each with around 3,500 U.S. adults, and 10 focus groups held in May and June 2026. To learn more about this study, read [“About this research.”](#)

Skip to:

- [What does press freedom mean to Americans?](#)
- [How Americans feel about the state of press freedom today](#)
- [Are Americans as concerned about press freedom as other rights?](#)
- [How Americans view Trump’s impact on press freedom](#)

What does press freedom mean to Americans?

Americans think about press freedom in different ways, and there is no single shared definition. While their ideas generally converge on a core theme – the ability to report or publish information freely – many focus group participants described it through practical concerns about accuracy or truth, government or corporate influence, censorship, or broader access to information.

Read more on [how Americans think about press freedom in their own words](#).

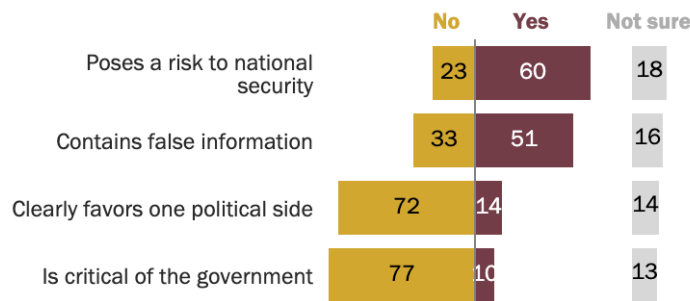
When it comes to support for press freedom, there are few absolutists. There is widespread support for press freedom as a broad ideal, but specifics matter as people weigh press freedom against other factors.

Read more on [where Americans view the limits of press freedom](#).

For instance, six-in-ten Americans say the U.S. government should be able to require a news organization to take down a news story if it poses a **risk to national security**, and about half (51%) say the same for stories containing **false information**.

Many Americans favor government restrictions on news if it threatens national security, contains false info

% of U.S. adults who say that the U.S. government should be able to require a news organization to take down a news story if it ...



Note: Respondents who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted June 22-28, 2026. "Americans Value Press Freedom but Differ on Its Limits"

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Today, Republicans and GOP-leaning independents are more likely than Democrats and Democratic leaners to say the government should have this power in cases of national security (72% vs. 50%) and false information (59% vs. 45%).

"My biggest worry," said a right-leaning focus group participant in his 40s, "is that by having full-fledged press freedom, any journalist can say anything at any time without any facts, without any evidence, claiming that that's true or whatever their opinion piece is or their story is true. And that concerns me that that will then affect everybody who's watching or reading it."

In contrast, a left-leaning man in his 50s said, “Who’s the source that’s telling me that it’s an emergency? They’re citing national security concerns. How many emergencies have we had since our current president took office? Something like 27 emergencies? Like, everything’s an emergency? To me, it’s just another opportunity to clamp down on the press.”

Overall, Americans are far less likely to say the government should be able to restrict a story because it favors a political side (14%) or criticizes the government (10%), with large majorities of U.S. adults rejecting intervention in these cases.

While the First Amendment only addresses government actions, Americans respond very similarly when asked if a *social media company* should be able to take down a user’s post under the same circumstances. Many people support tech companies being able to remove someone’s social media post if it poses a risk to national security (67%) or contains false information (53%), but not if it is politically slanted (11%) or critical of the government (15%).

Read more on [*how Americans think about censorship in the U.S. today.*](#)

How Americans feel about the state of press freedom today

Most Americans (73%) say press freedom is extremely or very important to the well-being of society, a view that has been consistently expressed by about three-quarters of the public in each of the past three years. This compares with just 8% who say it is a little important or not at all important.

“It’s designed to protect all of us. It’s a point of pride of this country,” one focus group participant, a left-leaning man in his 60s, said. “And that’s not true in a lot of other countries. ... It’s for the benefit to the country and its citizens, even more than the journalists.”

Majorities of both parties say press freedom is highly important, with Democrats more likely than Republicans to say this (81% vs. 66%).

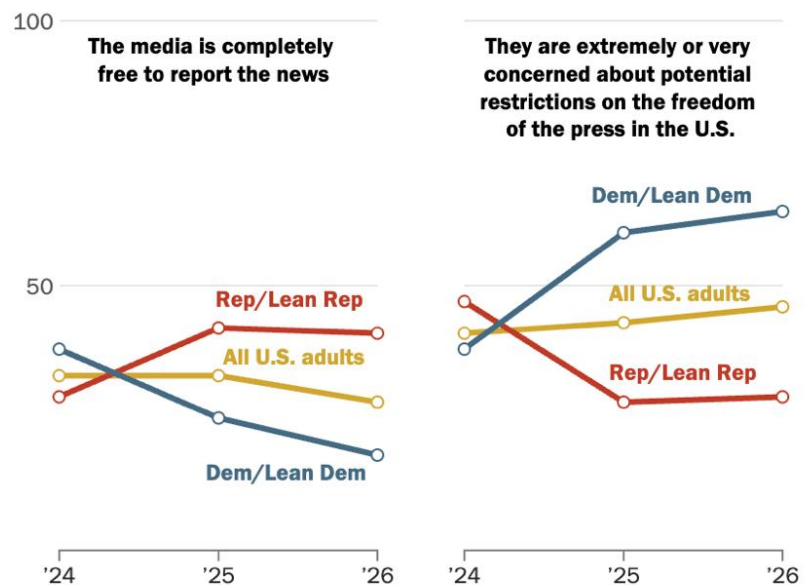
The share of Americans who say the media is completely free to report the news in the U.S. has dropped modestly from 33% last year to 28% today. About half (48%) now say the press is somewhat free, and 23% say it is not very or not at all free.

Meanwhile, the share of Americans who say they are **extremely or very concerned about potential restrictions on press freedom in the U.S.** has ticked up slightly, from 41% in 2024 to 46% today.

There are differences between the parties on both these questions – but those differences are the reverse of 2024, when Joe Biden was president:

Party differences persist in Americans’ overall feelings about the state of press freedom in the U.S.

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



Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted June 22-28, 2026. “Americans Value Press Freedom but Differ on Its Limits”

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- Today, Democrats are less likely than Republicans to see the media as completely free to report the news (18% vs. 41%), and far more likely to express a high level of concern about potential restrictions on press freedom in the country (64% vs. 29%).
- Partisan differences are even more apparent when including ideology. In 2026, conservative Republicans are the *most* likely and liberal Democrats the *least* likely to say the press is completely free.

“[Press freedom is] under attack and it’s taken some hits. An example of that would be the removal of the press corps from the Pentagon, particularly right before we go to war. I think that’s very telling. ... When you have individuals that are able to control, they’re able to purchase media outlets like CBS and then control what’s going to be heard, seen, and whatnot, you have a problem.”

– Man, 50s, left-leaning

“People are being silenced a lot. News outlets can’t say certain things, or touch on topics that they would want to. ... Now, it’s like putting a fear onto people like, ‘Oh, we can’t touch on this topic.’”

– Woman, under 30, left-leaning

“I’m not saying that there’s no resistance, no attempted censorship, but I think the barriers to entry for you to get the news out there are very low. I know that there are networks that ... try to censor their reporters to report a certain way, and censor some information, but there’s other ways to reach the public.”

– Man, 50s, right-leaning

“I think probably out of almost every nation in the world we still have greater protections for journalists and freedom of press. But that doesn’t mean I don’t think we could do better.”

– Man, under 30, right-leaning

Are Americans as concerned about press freedom as other rights?

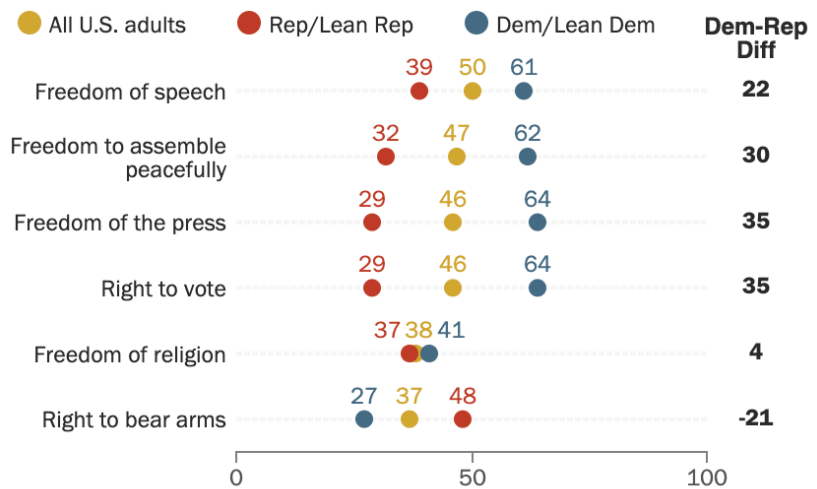
Overall, 46% of U.S. adults are extremely or very concerned about possible restrictions on press freedom. This is similar to the share who say the same about the right to vote (46%), freedom for people to assemble peacefully (47%) and freedom of speech (50%).

Democrats are much more likely than Republicans to be concerned about the status of these four rights.

By contrast, Republicans are far more likely than Democrats to be concerned about possible restrictions on the right to bear arms. And the two partisan groups express similar levels of concern about potential restrictions on freedom of religion.

Republicans are less concerned than Democrats about potential restrictions on several rights, including press freedom

% of each group who say they are **extremely or very concerned** about potential restrictions in the United States on ...



Note: Respondents who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted June 22-28, 2026. "Americans Value Press Freedom but Differ on Its Limits"

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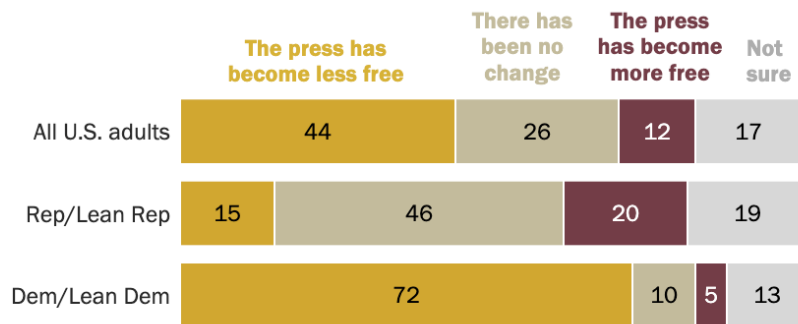
How Americans view Trump's impact on press freedom

Trump has long had an [adversarial relationship with the press](#), and Americans have noticed these tensions since [early in his first term](#). Since Trump returned to office, his new administration has taken several actions it says are necessary and its critics view as restrictions on press freedom. These have included [legal disputes with news organizations](#), [restrictions affecting media access](#) and efforts to [identify confidential sources](#).

Overall, **44% of U.S. adults say the press has become less free during the second Trump administration**, compared with 12% who say it has become more free. About a quarter (26%) say there has been no change, and 17% aren't sure.

44% of Americans say the press has become less free during this Trump administration

% of U.S. adults who say that *during this Trump administration* ...



Note: Respondents who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted June 22-28, 2026.

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Among those who say the press has become less free under Trump, the overwhelming majority (92%) say this is a bad thing for the country.

The gap between the parties on this question is big: **72% of Democrats say the press has become less free since Trump's return to office, compared with 15% of Republicans.**

These partisan differences mirror broader disagreements in our focus groups about what Americans think threatens press freedom. For many left-leaning participants, threats come primarily from the current government's actions to restrict journalists.

"I think the powers that be in this country don't care as much about the Constitution as the rest of us," a left-leaning man in his 50s said. "They will try to limit everything that they can that doesn't slant their way or make them look good. That's a real big problem for me."

On the right, concerns tend to center on information gatekeeping, censorship and media bias. In the survey, **one-in-five Republicans say the press has become more free during this Trump administration.** And in focus groups, several right-leaning participants looked favorably upon Elon Musk’s purchase of Twitter – which one man in his 50s called “a big turning point.”

“The Biden Administration in itself was detrimental to all of this, because there was a lot of censoring,” another right-leaning man in his 50s said. “Elon Musk, he has the money, so he went ahead and bought Twitter and said, ‘Hey, we’re not going to do this anymore.’ ... He opened it up so anybody that had a thought about anything could say it. And I think it started a trend back to where things need to be.”

Others pointed to Trump frequently taking questions from or interviews with reporters.

As one right-leaning man in his 60s said, “I like the fact that President Trump, at least he knows how to hold a press conference every week, versus the administration before. We got nothing. We got nothing.”

“He does do interviews on the other side, and he will call them out,” said a woman in her 50s.

Both Republicans and Democrats (70% and 74%, respectively) mostly say the Trump administration and the news media currently have a very or somewhat bad relationship.

Read more on how Americans view [political and corporate influence on the news](#) and [the relationship between the government and the news media](#).

How much do Americans know about the First Amendment?

Before reading further: Take the quiz to see how much you know about the First Amendment and how you compare to U.S. adults.

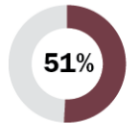
The [First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution](#) protects several fundamental rights, including freedom of the press and free speech. To understand what U.S. adults know about the First Amendment – and press freedom in particular – we asked eight multiple-choice factual questions about what it does and does not protect.

This is part of a broader Pew Research Center study from the [Pew-Knight Initiative](#) exploring U.S. adults' views of press freedom today. Read [key findings from the full study](#), which included two surveys of U.S. adults and a series of 10 focus groups.

About half of U.S. adults (51%) correctly identified that the First Amendment guarantees freedom of the press. Roughly a quarter (26%) incorrectly said it protects “the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” – a phrase from the Declaration of Independence – and 9% chose the right to bear arms, which is protected by the Second Amendment.

Public knowledge varies widely on other questions. **Overall, people were more likely to know *who* is protected by the First Amendment, and less likely to know how it applies to social media and private companies.**

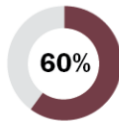
About half of Americans correctly answer that the First Amendment guarantees freedom of the press



% who
answered
each question
correctly

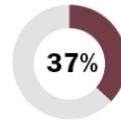
Which of the following
is guaranteed by the
First Amendment to the
U.S. Constitution?

The right to bear arms	9%
Freedom to own property	1%
The right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness	26%
Freedom of the press	51%
Not sure	12%



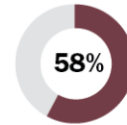
Is it legal or not legal for
social media companies
to restrict content posted
on their sites or apps?

Legal	60%
Not legal	13%
Not sure	27%



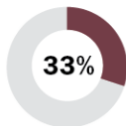
Can the U.S. government
legally force social media
companies to remove
false information posted
on their sites?

Yes	25%
No	37%
Not sure	37%



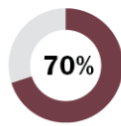
Does the U.S.
Constitution protect the
press from interference
by the U.S. government?

Yes	58%
No	14%
Not sure	27%



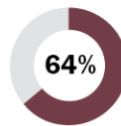
Does the U.S. Constitution
protect the press from
interference by private
companies?

Yes	29%
No	33%
Not sure	37%



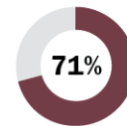
Are information or
opinions published by
news organizations
protected by the First
Amendment?

Yes	70%
No	7%
Not sure	22%



Are information or
opinions expressed by
influencers or creators
protected by the
First Amendment?

Yes	64%
No	10%
Not sure	25%



Are information
or opinions expressed
by ordinary people
protected by the
First Amendment?

Yes	71%
No	8%
Not sure	19%

Note: Correct answers are highlighted and in bold. "Not sure" appeared at the bottom of each option set. All questions were multiple choice. For full question wording, refer to the topline. Respondents who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted March 23-29, 2026.

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For example, about seven-in-ten Americans correctly answered that the First Amendment protects information and opinions both published by news organizations (70%) and expressed by ordinary people (71%). But well below half correctly said that the government *cannot* legally force social media companies to remove false information (37%), and that the Constitution does *not* protect the press from interference by private companies (33%).

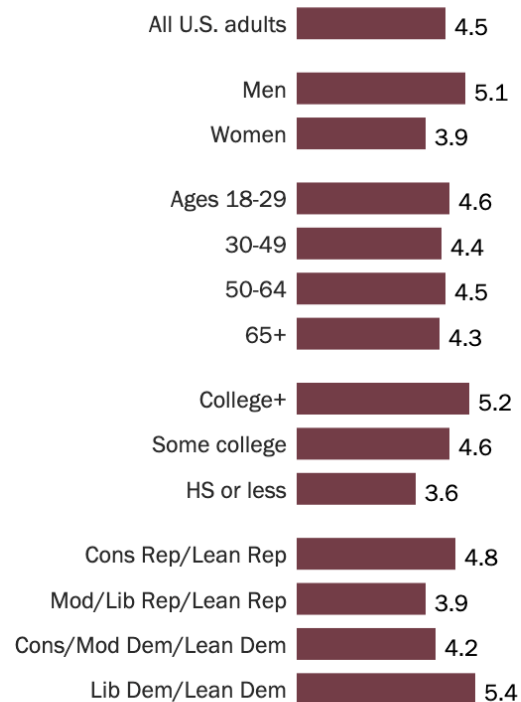
On average, some groups were more likely to answer a higher number of these questions correctly, including:

- **College graduates**
- **Liberal Democrats and, to a lesser degree, conservative Republicans** (compared with others who identify with or lean toward either party, including moderates)
- **Men**

[Research has long shown](#) that when answering knowledge questions, women are more likely than men to say they don't know the answer rather than to take a guess if they are uncertain. Consistent with this pattern, we find "don't know" responses in this survey are 5 to 16 percentage points higher among women than men depending on the question.

College graduates and men answer more questions correctly about First Amendment protections

*Average number of **correct** answers out of eight First Amendment knowledge questions*



Note: All questions were multiple choice. For a list of the questions, refer to the topline.

Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted March 23-29, 2026.

"Americans Value Press Freedom but Differ on Its Limits"

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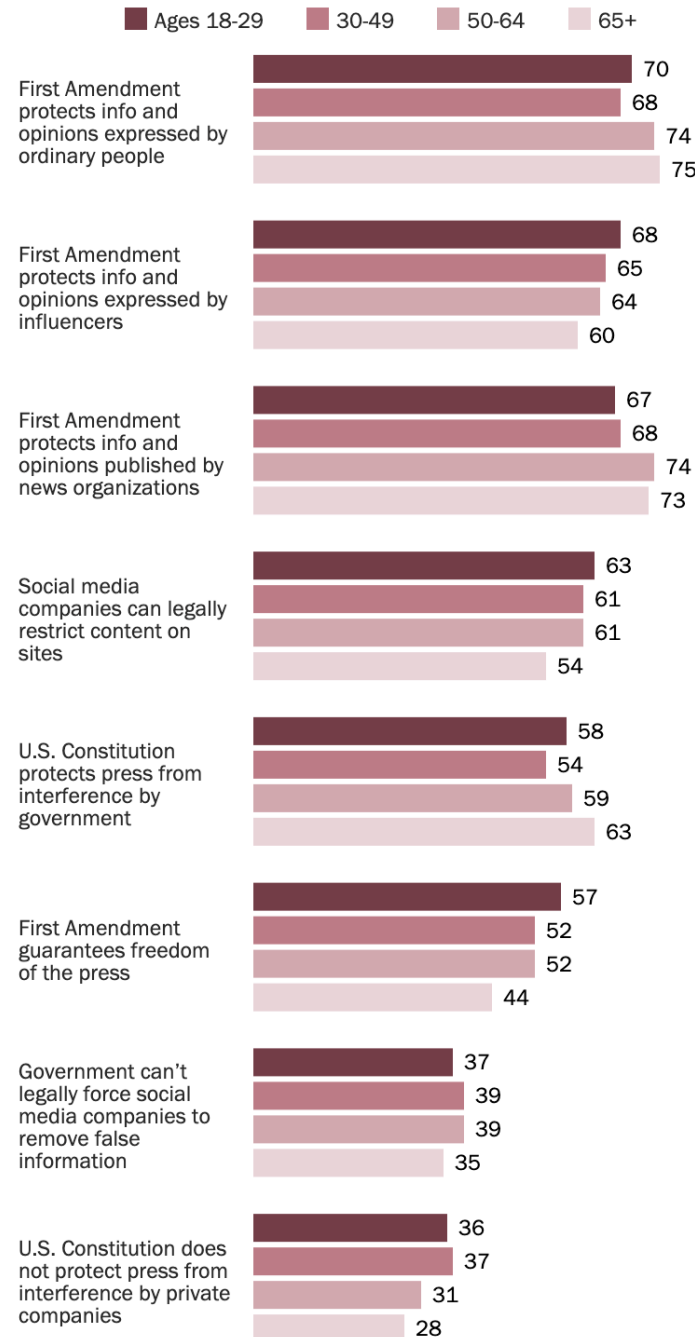
Few age differences in knowledge of First Amendment protections

Overall, we find no consistent age differences when it comes to knowledge of First Amendment protections. Younger and older Americans were about equally likely to get most of the questions right.

The biggest exception is the question about which right is guaranteed by the First Amendment. Adults ages 18 to 29 were the most likely age group to answer correctly that the First Amendment protects freedom of the press (57%), while adults 65 and older were the least likely (44%).

Older and younger Americans have similar levels of First Amendment knowledge

% of U.S. adults who answered each question correctly



Note: All questions were multiple choice. For a list of the questions, refer to the topline.

Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted March 23-29, 2026. "Americans Value Press Freedom but Differ on Its Limits"

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Similar shares of Republicans, Democrats correctly answer factual questions about freedom of the press

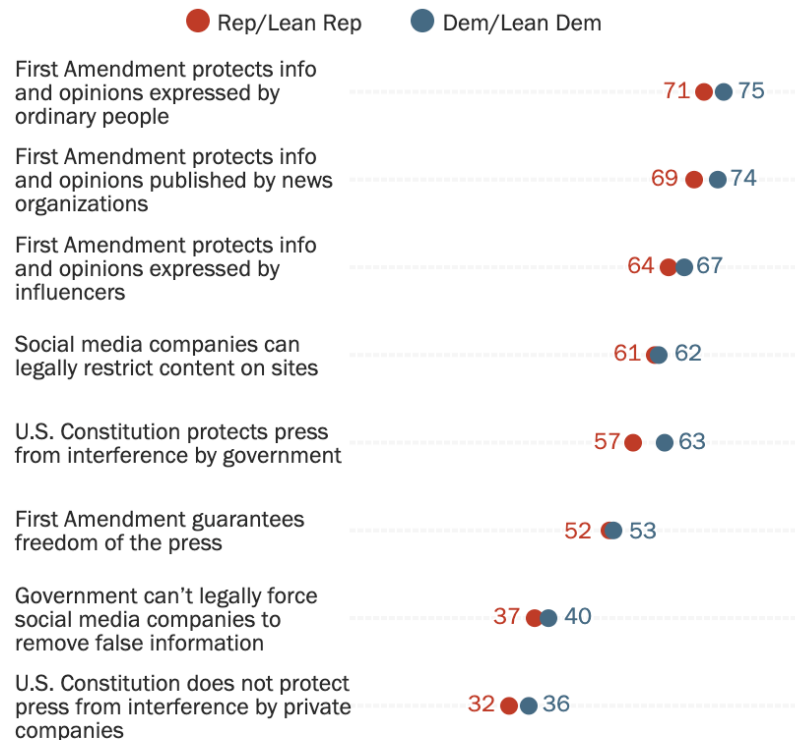
Republicans and Democrats (including independents who lean toward each party) gave correct answers to factual questions about the First Amendment at similar rates.

About one-in-ten among each group answered all questions correctly (10% of Democrats vs. 8% of Republicans). And the two parties are separated by no more than 6 percentage points in the shares who answered each individual question correctly. On some questions, Democrats were slightly more likely than Republicans to answer correctly, including that the U.S. Constitution protects the press from interference by the U.S. government (63% vs. 57%).

On average, conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats answered more questions correctly overall than others within each party.

Few party differences in First Amendment knowledge

% of U.S. adults who answered each question correctly



Note: All questions were multiple choice. For a list of the questions, refer to the topline.

Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted March 23-29, 2026. "Americans Value Press Freedom but Differ on Its Limits"

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How Americans define press freedom in their own words

To understand **how people define press freedom, who they think it protects, how they think it differs from free speech and its importance to society**, we spoke with 74 everyday Americans in 10 focus groups. These discussions do not reflect overall public opinion but reveal interesting insights into how people talk about these issues in their own words.

Even though many participants said they rarely think about freedom of the press in their daily lives, they broadly agreed it is [important to them](#), viewing it as a foundational element of a functioning society. But when asked to define press freedom, participants' answers varied widely, offering a window into the many ways Americans understand this concept.

This is part of a broader Pew Research Center study from the [Pew-Knight Initiative](#) exploring how Americans view the freedom of the press today. Read [key findings from the full study](#), which also included two surveys of U.S. adults.

What do people think ‘freedom of the press’ is?

At the beginning of each focus group, participants were asked to define “freedom of the press” in their own words. Together, these definitions reveal that **people think about press freedom in different ways, often without relying on one single definition.**

However, their ideas generally converged on a recognizable core: **the ability to report or publish information freely.**

One man in his 50s defined it as both a right and a responsibility, saying, “The freedom of press is not only is the freedom to report actual news without fear of prosecution, but it’s also the responsibility to do that. ... You have a responsibility to the people.”

Many defined press freedom as **the ability to report “truth” or “facts,”** often focusing on doing so **“without bias.”** In the focus groups, several participants defined “truth” as information that can be independently verified through multiple sources or firsthand observation.

Others emphasized **the right to share one’s opinions or views** without fear of punishment.

What do people think press freedom is?

Key themes in focus group participants' definitions of 'freedom of the press' include the freedom ...

To report what they want	"Ability to ... put information out there on all sorts of things no matter how controversial"
	"Ability to report freely on news stories"
	"Can say what you want with no restrictions"
	"Can say whatever they want without worrying"
From government censorship	"Journalists and citizens can go about their business in relative freedom from official interference and investigation"
	"Able to express their views without fear of government repercussions"
	"Free from undue influences from the government"
	"No censorship of the news"
From interference from other sources	"The press can present news...without any form of censorship, from the government or other entity"
	"Say whatever they want without their jobs or companies being threatened"
	"Without outside interference/influence ... from the government but also billionaire CEOs"
	"Without fear of retribution or retaliation or bribe"
To report truth or facts without bias	"To present the news in a non-biased, factual way"
	"Ability to report without intentional bias"
	"Freedom to say anything as long as it's true and not fake news"
	"Give the facts in an unrestricted way"
To share opinions and views	"Ability to express your opinions and ideas"
	"Being able to be biased or politically focused"
	"Right to express opinions outwardly"
To report on important events	"Being able to report on the topics that are important and significant"
	"Being able to report on stories that are important for the public"
To access information or sources	"The press can have free and clear access to the place where the news is happening"
	"Ability for media sources to explore, investigate, and gain knowledge"
For the public to access information	"Ability for the public to get accurate information"
	"Ability to find information ... on all sorts of things"

Source: Qualitative focus groups with 74 U.S. adults conducted May 20-June 4, 2026.
 "Americans Value Press Freedom but Differ on Its Limits"

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Some also mentioned **certain rights journalists have to report the news**, such as to report on important or significant events or to have access to “the place where the news is happening.”

A few definitions centered around **the public’s right to be informed or access information**, as opposed to rights granted to the press specifically.

Finally, some participants used the exercise to share their views on the state of press freedom today, expressing doubt that it truly exists.

How people distinguish ‘free speech’ from ‘press freedom’

We asked focus group participants how they feel freedom of the press differs from freedom of speech, if at all. Many treat the two freedoms as related but distinct.

Participants often viewed both rights as sharing a common purpose: protection from government censorship or interference. However, some distinguished the two based on who is involved and why:

- **Freedom of the press** often centered around individuals or organizations whose purpose is to inform the public.
- **Freedom of speech** often centered around individuals expressing their opinions and personal beliefs, regardless of whether those ideas are intended to inform the public.

“I always had the feeling that freedom of speech is, ‘I have the right to voice my opinion.’ But the freedom of the press is beyond that: ‘I have the right to report the truth.’”

– Woman, 50s

“For me, freedom of speech really can be for anybody, any individual, while freedom of the press is more like journalists, news companies, more of some type of organization or something where you’re trying to get information out to the general public.”

– Man, under 30

“Freedom of speech is really just – you’re free from certain censors, but you’re not free from consequences of certain things that you do. ... But freedom of press is the ability to not hold back pertinent information to the public. If it’s something that would actively affect society or the public as a whole, the government can’t be the one censoring it.”

– Woman, 30s

Some participants said that because journalists and news organizations are more “professional,” they have a greater responsibility than the public to provide accurate, verifiable information. Because of this, some described press freedom as narrower and more conditional than free speech.

“I feel like the freedom of the press seems to be more restrictive than freedom of speech because I feel like anyone should be able to say basically whatever they want, unless it’s inciting violence. The press has a duty to maintain a certain qualification or trustworthiness with the people. So they have more of a responsibility to not spread misinformation, or to say lies which ... ordinary people don’t really have as much of a restriction on.”

– Man, under 30

Some participants said the distinction between the two freedoms is increasingly blurred, pointing to the evolving definition of “the press” as one reason for this shift. Some felt that because ordinary individuals can now document events and share information with large audiences online, they should be protected by *both* freedom of the press and freedom of speech.

“I think it’s collectively the same thing. It’s the same amendment. I don’t view them exclusively.”

– Man, under 30

Who is ‘the press’ in freedom of the press?

Two common views came up in the focus groups when participants were asked who is included in “the press”:

- A **narrow view** limiting press freedom protections to traditional journalists working for news organizations. Participants often referred to some kind of official training or credentials.
- An **expansive view** including non-traditional media sources, independent journalists and news content creators, as well as everyday people sharing information.

A man in his 50s described the latter, saying, “Technically and literally, [freedom of the press] applies to every human being in America. No matter what you’re doing.”

Many participants said boundaries around who is included in “the press” are less clear than they used to be – a theme we’ve also found when exploring [what “news” means to Americans today](#). As a woman in her 20s said, “I feel like the lines have been blurred. I feel like we don’t have a definition really anymore.”

Some said being a part of “the press” requires access to information, events or people that is not readily available to the general public.

“I feel like to be the press, you almost have to have a more special type of access than a regular person to be able to get the information you’re disseminating,” said a man in his 20s.

Some participants were more inclined to include nontraditional media in their definition of “the press.” Some pointed to distrust of “mainstream media” as a reason for this, while others described the rise of social media and online news as naturally blurring this distinction.

Throughout the discussions, **participants held mixed views on whether inclusion in “the press” is determined by someone’s actions or their affiliation.**

For example, some said [news influencers](#) are part of the press because they do research, have access to political figures or publish information for the benefit of the public. Others said that while news content creators do journalistic activities, their lack of association with a formal news organization means their work is protected by freedom of speech rather than freedom of the press.

“I think that press, in my mind, it’s split between big press, like people were talking about big stations, Washington Post, New York Times, that kind of thing. But I also think that people who are freelance journalists are considered the press, especially if they’re really trying to in earnest report what they believe is the truth.”

– Woman, 30s

“Only credentialed media. Nowadays there are YouTubers that claim they’re independent journalists, which is such a load of garbage in my mind.”

– Man, 40s

“I feel like if more people, a lot of us in this room, are relying on these social media independent content creators to deliver the news, then either the Constitution needs to be modified, or we need to consider these people the press.”

– Man, under 30

“I wouldn’t want those same freedoms to be given to an influencer or somebody like that on social media, because I’m worried about how they might use those freedoms.”

– Man, 40s

A few groups also debated whether talk show hosts like Jimmy Kimmel are *excluded* from “the press” because they are comedians or *included* because some members of the public rely on them as a news source.

How people talk about the importance of press freedom

Across all 10 focus groups, regardless of political leanings or frequency of news consumption, participants treated press freedom as foundational, with many describing it as a pillar of democracy and a safeguard against authoritarianism – even if they said they rarely think about it in their daily lives.

Even participants who rated the current state of press freedom poorly or said they distrust the press in practice felt that losing press freedom would be catastrophic. However, some participants added that press freedom must be paired with truthfulness and responsibility to truly matter.

“It’s one of the pillars of our democracy. If you lose that, you lose one of the building blocks of the world we live in here. It’s enormous. It’s huge.”

– Man, 50s

“It’s extremely important because if we don’t have freedom of press, what kind of country are we going to have? We’re just going to live in a dictatorship where things are going to be controlled for us.”

– Woman, under 30

“It depends on what it is, because, yes, it’s very important for [the press] to be free to publish what they want. On the other hand, what kind of freedom do they mean? Do they mean the freedom to say whatever they want to say if it’s biased? Did they have an incentive to report a certain way, or is it the truth? If it’s the truth and they have integrity, then it’s more important for them to have freedom to post whatever they want to.”

– Woman, 40s

Where Americans view the limits of press freedom

The First Amendment protects the freedom of the press from restrictions by the government, and most Americans say this is [highly important to the well-being of society](#). But **there are few press freedom absolutists**, and Americans hold a wide range of opinions on how press freedom should play out in practice.

For example, few say it is *always* acceptable for the government to force journalists to reveal unnamed sources. But many see this as warranted in some cases.

There are also lines that some Americans think news organizations should not regularly cross, like publishing confidential information from government sources or classified details during a military conflict.

These attitudes often differ along party lines. In the midst of the second Trump administration, Democrats (including independents who lean Democratic) tend to be more likely than Republicans and GOP leaners to oppose government actions toward news organizations, and to have a broader perspective of what is acceptable for journalists to report and publish.

This is part of a broader Pew Research Center study from the [Pew-Knight Initiative](#) exploring U.S. adults' views of press freedom today. Read [key findings from the full study](#), which included two surveys of U.S. adults and a series of 10 focus groups.

How should the U.S. government act toward journalists?

Should the U.S. government be able to give journalists special access in exchange for positive coverage? What about forcing journalists to reveal their sources, or taking away a news organization's broadcast license?

Far more U.S. adults say these government actions are *never* acceptable than say they are *always* acceptable. For example, 35% say it is never acceptable for the U.S. government to force journalists to reveal the identity of unnamed government sources, compared with 5% who say this is always acceptable.

But many fall somewhere in the middle depending on the circumstances.

Nearly half of Americans say it is usually (6%), sometimes (18%) or rarely (21%) acceptable for the government to do this, and an additional 15% say they are not sure.

Who are the press freedom absolutists? Some groups are currently more likely to say government interventions are *never acceptable*:

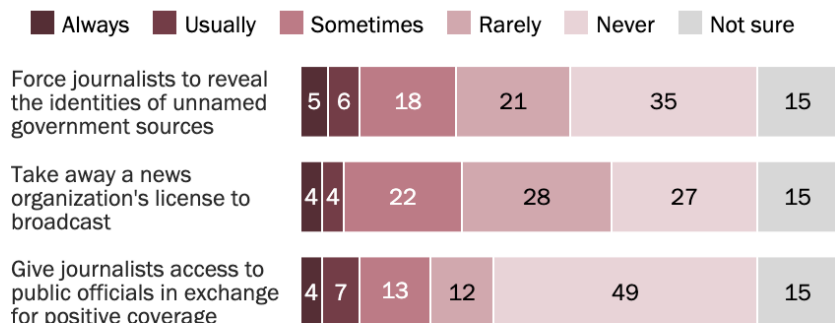
- **Liberal Democrats:**

Democrats who identify as politically liberal are far more likely to say *all* three actions mentioned in the survey are never acceptable. This difference is especially true when it comes to forcing journalists to reveal unnamed government sources. A 58% majority of liberal Democrats say this, compared with 39% of moderate or conservative Democrats, 24% of conservative Republicans and 21% of moderate or liberal Republicans.

- **College graduates:** 61% of college graduates say it's never acceptable for the government to give journalists access in exchange for positive coverage, compared with 43% of U.S. adults with less education.

Americans hold mixed views on U.S. government actions toward journalists or news organizations

% of U.S. adults who say it is ___ acceptable for the U.S. government to ...



Note: Respondents who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted June 22-28, 2026. "Americans Value Press Freedom but Differ on Its Limits"

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- **Upper- and middle-income Americans:** 63% of upper-income and 52% of middle-income adults say giving journalists access for positive coverage is never acceptable, while 38% of lower-income Americans say the same.

Where Americans see the boundaries of acceptable reporting by news organizations

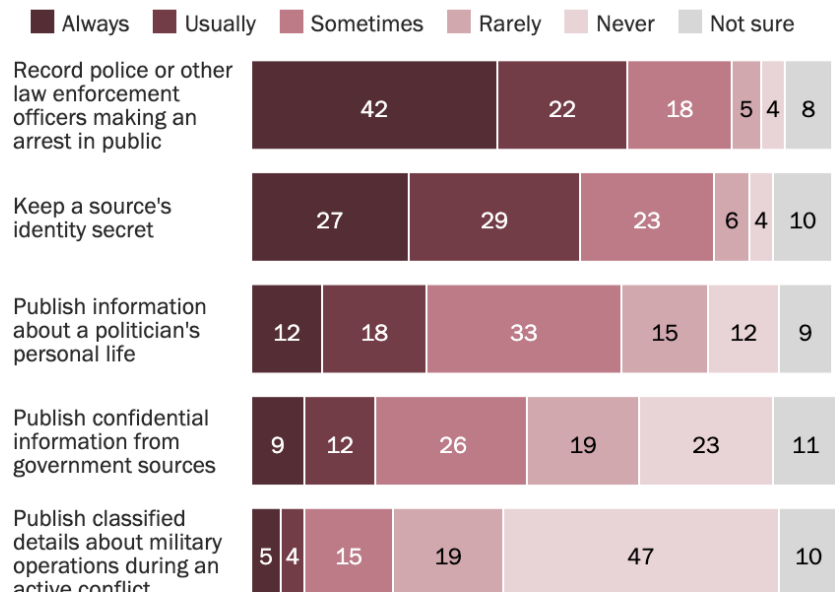
While government actions make up a key part of the press freedom debate – especially when it comes to legal protections in the First Amendment – **Americans also think there should be limits to what is acceptable for journalists and news organizations to do in their reporting.**

The survey asked about five hypothetical actions a news organization might take:

- Recording police or other law enforcement officers making a public arrest
- Keeping a source's identity secret
- Publishing information about a politician's personal life
- Publishing confidential information from government sources
- Publishing classified details about military operations during an active conflict

Americans hold mixed views on what's acceptable for news organizations to do in their reporting

% of U.S. adults who say it is ___ acceptable for U.S. news organizations to ...



Note: Respondents who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted June 22-28, 2026. "Americans Value Press Freedom but Differ on Its Limits"

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None of these are seen as *always* acceptable by most Americans. But U.S. adults are most likely to think it's acceptable to record law enforcement officers, with a majority saying this is always (42%) or usually (22%) acceptable. Meanwhile, most say that publishing classified details about ongoing military operations is rarely (19%) or never (47%) acceptable.

There is even less consensus on the other actions, although majorities say it is *at least sometimes* acceptable for news organizations to keep a source's identity secret or publish information about a politician's personal life.

In focus groups, participants expressed similarly mixed views about journalists keeping sources' identities secret.

"Knowing the identity of that person, that allows me to know whether or not to trust the reporting," said a right-leaning man in his 40s. "Then if they're able to keep the leaker or whatever, the source identity, a secret, can't they just always claim a secret government source leaked this information to me and that's it? They don't need to ever prove or show you who the leaker was. That opens up such a Pandora's box in my mind."

A left-leaning man in his 50s expressed a different view: "The need to be able to protect your sources – those are things that I don't want to see tampered with. I want to see that protected."

Democrats are broadly more accepting than Republicans of all these actions by news organizations. For instance, Democrats are far more likely than Republicans to say recording police making arrests in public (55% vs. 30%) or keeping a source's identity secret (36% vs. 19%) is *always* acceptable. And 60% of Republicans say it is *never* acceptable to publish classified details about military operations during an active conflict, compared with 35% of Democrats who hold this view.

What consequences do Americans think news organizations should face for publishing false information?

Our research consistently finds that [false information](#) is a challenge for Americans as they navigate the news. And the new survey shows that when forced to choose, many people [prioritize accurate reporting](#) over press freedom.

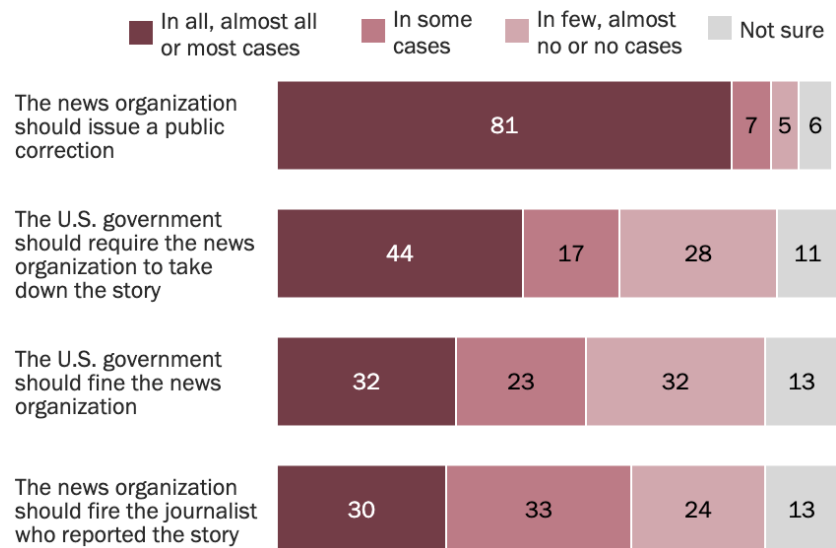
We asked Americans what they think *should* happen when a news organization publishes false information.

Most U.S. adults (81%) say that in all, almost all or most cases, the news organization should **issue a public correction**. Far fewer (30%) say the news organization should usually **fire the journalist who reported the story**.

There are mixed views on whether the U.S. government should step in – either by requiring the organization to take down the story or issuing a fine. For example, 32% of Americans say the government should usually fine news organizations for false information, 23% say this should happen in some cases, and 32% say it should happen in few, almost no or no cases.

Americans expect a correction for false info published by news orgs, but have mixed views on other consequences

% of U.S. adults who say each of the following should happen ___ if a U.S. news organization publishes false information



Note: Respondents who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted June 22-28, 2026. "Americans Value Press Freedom but Differ on Its Limits"

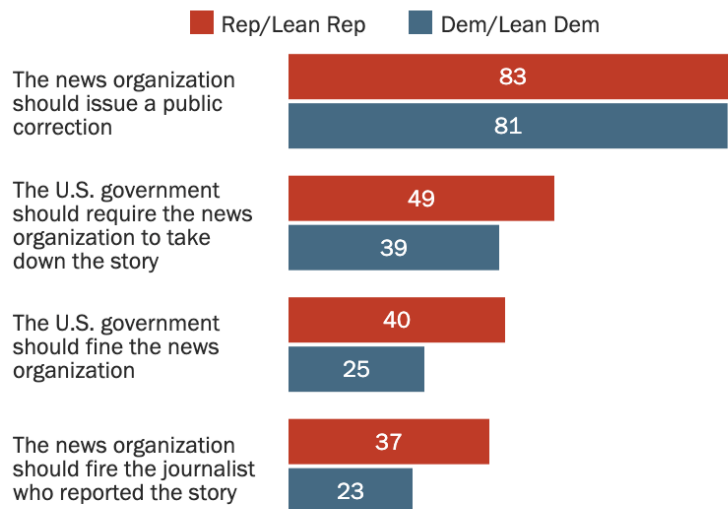
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Some groups are more likely to support these consequences, including:

- **Older Americans:** Adults ages 50 and older are more likely than adults under 50 to say the U.S. government should require the news organization to take the story down (51% vs. 38%) and fine the organization (38% vs. 27%) in all, almost all or most cases when false information is published.
- **Republicans:** Republicans are more likely than Democrats to say the government should usually fine the news organization (40% vs. 25%). And 37% of Republicans say the news organization should usually fire the journalist who reported the story, versus 23% of Democrats.

Republicans are more likely to say a news organization should face a fine, fire journalist if it publishes false info

% of U.S. adults who say each of the following should happen in all, almost all or most cases if a U.S. news organization publishes false information



Across focus groups, participants debated **whether false information was published intentionally and who should judge what is true or false** when deciding what consequences they think should come from a news organization publishing false information.

Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted June 22-28, 2026. "Americans Value Press Freedom but Differ on Its Limits"

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Many participants said they felt news organizations themselves should take accountability and face reputational costs rather than government penalties. Some said they were wary of giving the government any role, fearing it could be weaponized against reporting that criticizes the government.

But others were more open to harsher consequences, including enforcement by government agencies, lawsuits, and the firing or even prosecution of journalists in egregious cases.

“As long as they make the retraction big and you can see it, I think that it’s not really for the government to step in. That’s for your own agency to have its own integrity.”

– Woman, 40s, left-leaning

“I think the [Federal Communications Commission] is an organization that should dig into that as well. Because they’re supposed to regulate what’s being broadcast.”

– Man, 50s, right-leaning

“They should be fined and then made to go on air and say, ‘I gave you the wrong information,’ and it’d be fine.”

– Woman, 50s, right-leaning

“It should really be at the reckoning of the court of public opinion. If you ruin your own credibility, I would hope the public would see that, and no longer follow your site. ... The government only would really have to step in if illegal actions were taken.”

– Man, under 30, left-leaning

“I think intent has to be accounted for. If the journalist or whoever does the reporting has the intent to deceive people, then yes, that’s completely unethical and wrong and it should be sanctioned if it’s found out.”

– Woman, 40s, right-leaning

How Americans think about censorship of news in the U.S.

Discussions about censorship in America have taken many forms in the digital age. The [Supreme Court weighed in](#) on the government’s role in social media content moderation in 2024, and President Donald Trump issued an [executive order](#) aimed at “ending federal censorship” on the first day of his second term.

[Americans have long felt](#) that social media sites intentionally censor political viewpoints they find objectionable, while some also see “[cancel culture](#)” as a form of censorship. Today, **about a third of Americans (36%) say that people who share their political views are extremely or very free to openly express those views.**

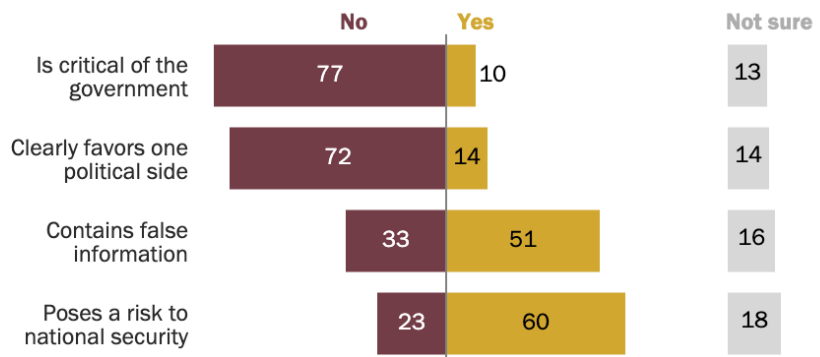
As it pertains to news, concerns about suppression of information go beyond any single institution: **Substantial shares of U.S. adults believe government actors as well as media and technology companies intentionally keep important news from reaching the public.** While Republicans are much more likely than Democrats to say news organizations and journalists suppress important news, Democrats currently are most skeptical of the federal government.

At the same time, **there are some situations in which Americans see certain forms of censorship as acceptable.**

Many say the government should be able to force a news organization to take down a story if it is inaccurate or could endanger national security, or that social media companies should be able to take down posts for these reasons. But far fewer say either action is acceptable when it comes to posts that are politically slanted or critical of the government. And relatively few people

60% of Americans say the government should be able to restrict news if it poses a national security risk

*% of U.S. adults who say **the U.S. government should** be able to require a news organization to take down a news story if it ...*



Note: Respondents who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted June 22-28, 2026.
“Americans Value Press Freedom but Differ on Its Limits”

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say it is acceptable for the owner of a news organization to stop a story from being published because it goes against their political or business interests.

These findings are part of a Pew Research Center study from the [Pew-Knight Initiative](#) exploring how Americans think about freedom of the press today. Read [key findings from the full study](#), which included two surveys of U.S. adults and a series of 10 focus groups.

Many Americans think important news is intentionally kept from the public

Americans are largely suspicious that major institutions keep important news from them. Three-quarters or more say **the U.S. government** (83%), **news organizations** (79%) and **social media companies** (76%) at least sometimes do this. This includes a majority (59%) who say the government does this *extremely often or often*.

Far fewer say **individual journalists** prevent important news from being spread extremely often or often (28%).

“The government has control over the press. If the press says something wrong, the government squashes them. I’ve seen it multiple times.”
– Man, 50s, left-leaning

“Right now, the [Federal Communications Commission] says, if you don’t play by our game, the way we want you to do it, then we’re going to take your rights away as a news station or a TV station.”
– Woman, 60s, left-leaning

“[Social media censorship is] definitely happening at a prominent level to everybody, whether it’s intentional or the design of the algorithm. ... So, you’re not even aware of what you’re not seeing

Majority of Americans say the government often intentionally keeps important news from reaching the public

% of U.S. adults who say ___ intentionally keep(s) important news from reaching the American public

	Extremely often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Not sure
The U.S. government	30	29	25	5	2	9
News organizations	21	25	33	9	2	10
Social media companies	20	26	31	10	3	11
Individual journalists	11	17	37	20	3	11

Note: Respondents who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted June 22-28, 2026.

“Americans Value Press Freedom but Differ on Its Limits”

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because you're not seeing it. ... If you're not aware of it, you're not going to search for it."

– Man, under 30, right-leaning

"As soon as Trump gets in [office], X and Facebook are saying we're going to quit doing all the fake news, we're going to actually check, we're not going to censor stuff."

– Man, 40s, right-leaning

"It just seems like press organizations and journalists themselves kind of shackle themselves to their own restrictions, meaning if I print this particular piece it's going to make a political party or a politician or a group that I am supposed to support in a negative light. So, that will bring clicks down, that will bring ratings down."

– Man, 40s, right-leaning

The suspicion that these institutional actors are intentionally keeping news from reaching the American public aligns with the fact that many Americans say news organizations are influenced by political and corporate interests – and that relatively few say the press is completely free to report the news in the U.S.

Partisan differences in perceptions of censorship

Perceptions of who is responsible for censoring information are closely tied to Americans' political identities.

Republicans (including GOP-leaning independents) are far more likely than Democrats and Democratic leaners to say news organizations and individual journalists extremely often or often keep important news from reaching the American public.

Republicans are also more likely than Democrats to say the same about social media companies, though the gap between the two parties is smaller on that question, and several Republican focus group participants said they

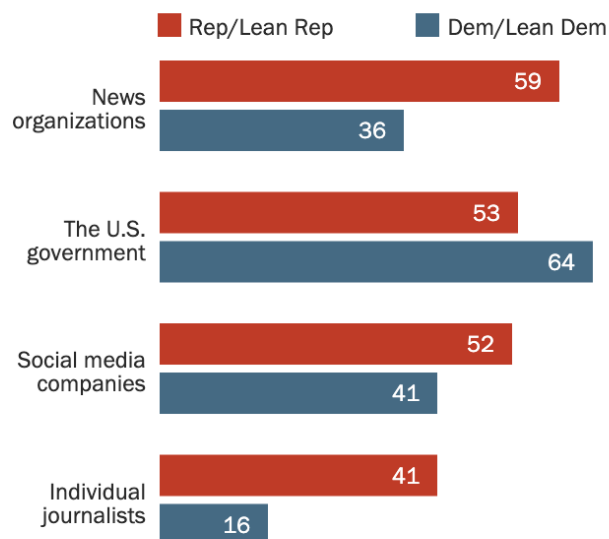
have experienced

improvements in how specific social media companies handle content on their platforms.

Meanwhile, Democrats are more likely than Republicans to say the U.S. government intentionally keeps important news from the public. This aligns with a general trend in [trust in the federal government](#) where people in the same party as the current president are generally more likely to say they trust the federal government to do what is right.

Republicans are much more likely than Democrats to say news organizations, individual journalists often intentionally keep important news from the public

*% of U.S. adults who say that ___ **extremely often** or **often** intentionally keep(s) important news from reaching the American public*



Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted June 22-28, 2026. "Americans Value Press Freedom but Differ on Its Limits"

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Many Americans say the U.S. government and social media companies should be able to restrict news in some – but not all – circumstances

There are some circumstances in which Americans see censorship of the news as warranted.

The survey asked Americans if the U.S. government should have the power to force a news organization to take down a story in four hypothetical circumstances. A majority of Americans (60%) say the U.S. government should be able to require a news organization to take down a news story if it poses a **risk to national security**, and about half (51%) say this should be possible if a story contains **false information**.

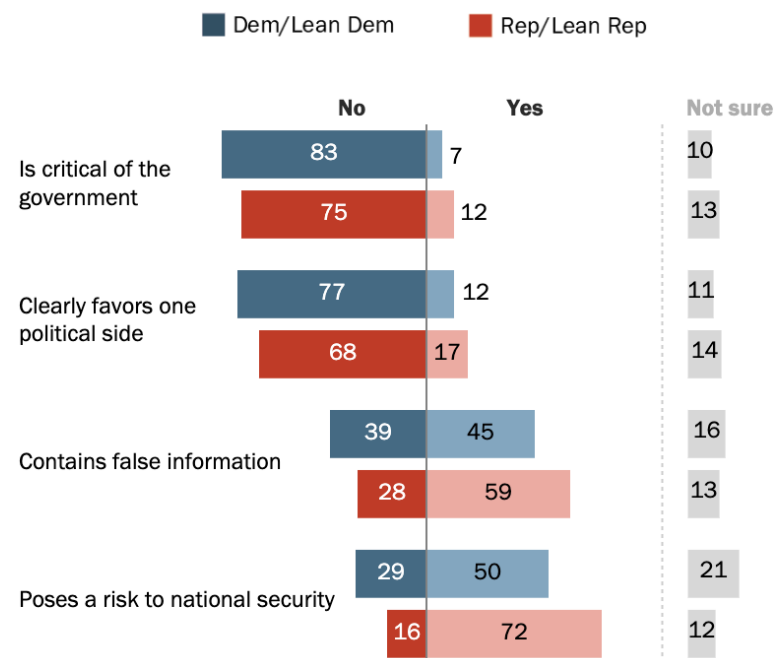
On the other hand, most Americans say the government should *not* be able to take this step because a story is **critical of the government** (77%) or **favors one political side** (72%).

Majorities of both parties say the government should not be able to require a story to be removed if it's critical of the government or favors one political side. But Republicans are more likely than Democrats to say such an action should be allowed in cases of national security (72% vs. 50%) or false information (59% vs. 45%). And adults ages 50 and older (65%) are also more likely than those under 50 (54%) to support this option in the event a news story poses a national security risk.

Focus group conversations – particularly the following dialogue between two participants in a politically

Republicans are more likely than Democrats to say the government should be able to restrict news if it poses a risk to national security

% of U.S. adults who say *the U.S. government should be able to require a news organization to take down a news story if it ...*



Note: Respondents who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted June 22-28, 2026.
"Americans Value Press Freedom but Differ on Its Limits"

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right-leaning group – revealed some people’s mixed feelings when it comes to national security concerns:

Participant 1 (man, 30s): “I mean, a lot of these things could put people’s lives in danger. Military, CIA, anyone undercover, any military. We don’t know whose lives could be at danger for this. I think there’s a reason why it’s classified. It shouldn’t be distributed.”

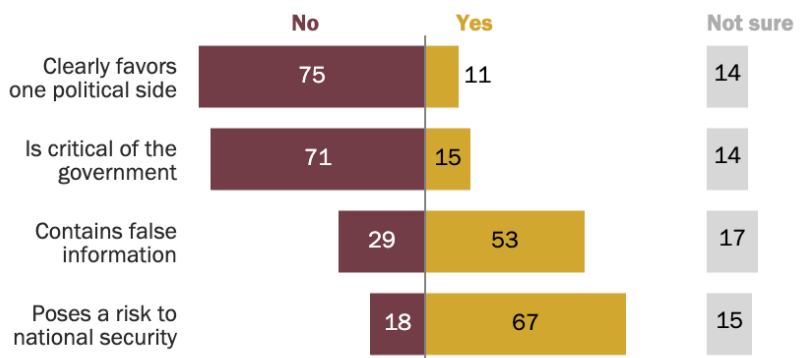
Participant 2 (woman, 40s): “I would agree that if it was truly something that would put our country or anybody in danger, that would be totally wrong for them to publish that. However, can we trust completely that it does have to do with national security concerns? Or is this person a whistleblower, and it’s something we really should know, but they’re putting it under the blanket of ‘this is a security concern?’”

We also asked Americans whether they think a *U.S. social media company* should be able to take down someone’s post under each of the same circumstances.

Results were similar, with most people opposed to social media companies being able to take down posts if they are critical of the government or favor one political side. Many Americans are open to such actions over false information or national security risks.

Most Americans say social media companies should not be able to take down posts for political reasons

% of U.S. adults who say *a U.S. social media company should be able to take down someone’s post if it ...*



Note: Respondents who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted June 22-28, 2026. “Americans Value Press Freedom but Differ on Its Limits”

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Republicans and

Democrats largely respond similarly to these questions. There is one notable exception: Democrats are modestly more likely than Republicans to say a social media company should be able to take down a post that contains false information (58% vs. 47%).

Adults ages 50 and older (59%) are also somewhat more supportive than those under 50 (49%) of social media companies having the right to remove posts with false information.

In focus groups, participants' views reflected a tension between viewing social media companies as private businesses that can set their own rules and worrying that removing posts – even false ones – could go too far and silence free speech.

“You can’t really hold a private company to the same standard [as the government],” a left-leaning focus group participant in his 20s said. “If they set their rules, that’s what’s allowed on their platform. They’re fully within their right to be able to remove something that violates that.”

A right-leaning woman in her 20s said, “I hope that freedom of speech gets expanded to social media because now people are relying more on social media and we see it as a public square. I wish that corporations didn’t have so much control over shadow-banning you or maybe not promoting some people if they’re sharing a certain story.”

How Americans feel about owners of news organizations suppressing coverage for their business or political interests

When it comes to censorship *within* news organizations, the survey asked Americans **whether or not it is acceptable for the owner of a news organization to step in and prevent publication of a story** because it goes against their business or political interests.

Most Americans view such actions as completely or somewhat unacceptable. For instance, 58% say it is *completely* unacceptable for news organizations' owners to stop their outlets from publishing a story that goes against the owner's political interests, and an additional 17% say this is somewhat unacceptable.

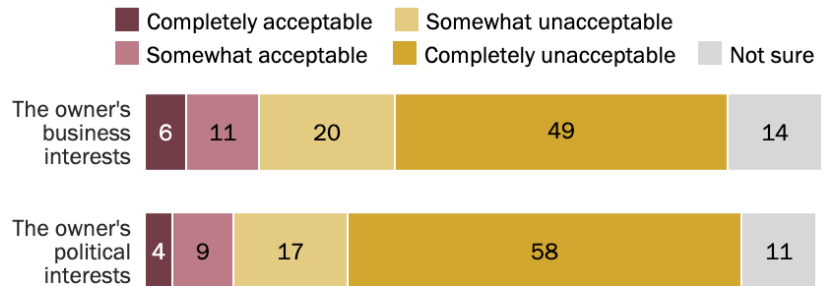
Many news organizations traditionally tried to keep a barrier between their business operations and their editorial department to ensure the independence of editorial decisions.

"People that own newspapers who are not journalists or whatever," said a left-leaning man in his 40s. "It makes me feel very nervous about those kinds of people dictating the reporting that's coming out in their newspapers."

In that same group, a left-leaning man in his 50s said, "When you have individuals that are able to purchase media outlets like CBS and then control what's going to be heard, seen, and whatnot, you have a problem."

Most Americans think intervention from owners of news organizations is unacceptable

% of U.S. adults who say they think it is ___ for the owner of a U.S. news organization to stop it from publishing a story because it goes against ...



Note: Respondents who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted June 22-28, 2026. "Americans Value Press Freedom but Differ on Its Limits"

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The survey found liberal Democrats are more likely than other Americans to say they think it is completely unacceptable for the owner of a news organization to nix a story because it goes against the owner's business or political interests.

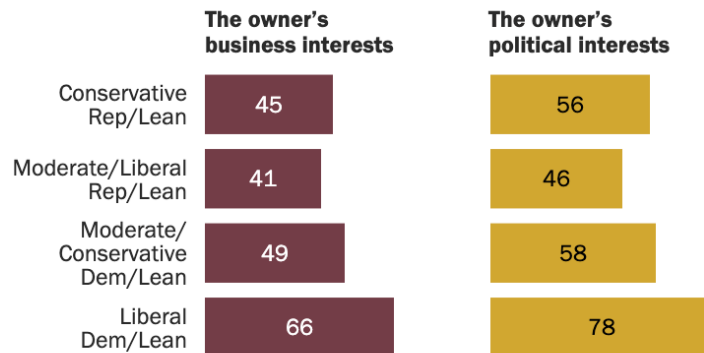
At the same time, **some focus group participants expressed the view that owners maintain a right to influence the news organizations they own,** drawing a distinction between private companies and government censorship.

"It's a private entity," a right-leaning man in his 40s said. "I wouldn't want them to do that, but if he's the owner, he can

run his company however he wants. It's not my place to tell them how to run it. It's only my place whether I agree or disagree with the slant of their news."

Liberal Democrats are more likely than other groups to view intervention from owners of news organizations as completely unacceptable

*% of U.S. adults who say it is **completely unacceptable** for the owner of a U.S. news organization to stop it from publishing a story because it goes against ...*



Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted June 22-28, 2026. "Americans Value Press Freedom but Differ on Its Limits"

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Do Americans think people who share their political views are free to openly express those views?

Most Americans (70%) believe that people who share their political views are at least somewhat free to openly express those views, with similar shares of Democrats (73%) and Republicans (69%) saying this. But fewer than half say people with similar views are extremely or very free to share them (36%).

Several focus group participants discussed feeling like their voices are often silenced on social media platforms in particular.

A fifth of Americans say people who share their political views have little to no freedom to openly express those views

% of U.S. adults who say people who share their political views are ___ to openly express those views

	Extremely/Very free	Somewhat free	A little/Not at all free	Not sure
All U.S. adults	36	34	20	9
Rep/Lean Rep	36	34	23	8
Dem/Lean Dem	38	35	19	8

Note: Respondents who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted June 22-28, 2026. "Americans Value Press Freedom but Differ on Its Limits"

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"I think there's definitely some censorship going on, because my Facebook account, I post a lot of political stuff, but my Facebook account has been suspended so many times," said a right-leaning man in his 50s. "My brother has been banned for life."

How Americans think about corporate and political influence on the news

While the First Amendment protects the press from government interference, **many Americans perceive a subtler – but substantial – form of influence on U.S. news organizations from both corporate and political interests.**

Americans see this influence as taking a few different forms: Most say corporate and political interests have at least somewhat of an impact on which stories get covered, the balance of political perspectives in the news and the accuracy of the news.

Overall views on these forms of influence on the news have been largely stable since 2024, **but the gaps between the two major political parties on these questions have narrowed.** Republicans have become less likely to view the government as exerting a great deal of influence on the press, and Democrats have become somewhat more likely to say they see both financial and political pressures on the media.

These findings are part of a Pew Research Center study from the [Pew-Knight Initiative](#) exploring how Americans think about freedom of the press today. Read [key findings from the full study](#), which included two surveys of U.S. adults and a series of 10 focus groups.

Many see a great deal of financial and political influence in U.S. news

A large majority of Americans say they think **U.S. news organizations are at least somewhat influenced by corporate and political interests**. This includes roughly half who say they think U.S. news organizations are influenced *a great deal* by corporations and financial interests (54%) or government and political interests (49%).

Fewer than 10% of U.S. adults each say they think news organizations are not very or not at all influenced by money or politics, although about one-in-ten say they aren't sure how much influence there is on each of those fronts.

In 10 focus groups we conducted with 74 everyday Americans, many participants expressed concerns about outside pressures on the freedom of the press, with some seeing **financial**

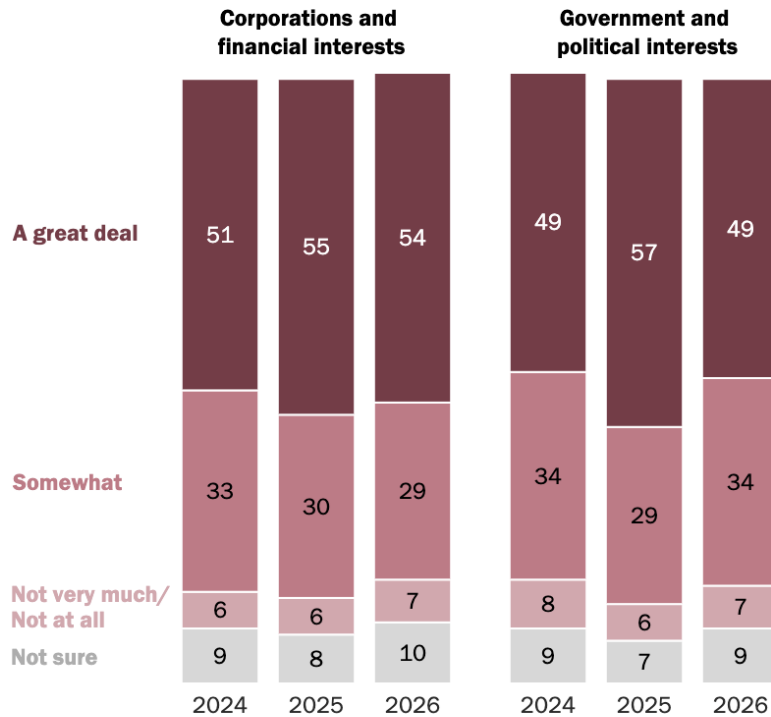
influences as intertwined with political forces that shape what news gets covered and how stories get presented. One common perspective is that this influence plays out behind closed doors, hidden from public scrutiny.

"I think the government is controlled by corporate interests, and the corporations control the media."

– Man, 50s, left-leaning

Americans' views on corporate and financial influence on news are relatively stable

% of U.S. adults who say U.S. news organizations are influenced by ...



Note: Respondents who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted June 22-28, 2026.

For dates of other surveys, refer to the [topline](#).

"Americans Value Press Freedom but Differ on Its Limits"

PEW-KNIGHT INITIATIVE

“The biggest threat currently is all corporations are primarily driven by profits, and viewership drives profits. ... That always is going to influence the news stories that corporations put out.”

– Man, under 30, right-leaning

“I do think that there are players working behind the scenes, using their money to control what’s out there or repress certain things.”

– Woman, 30s, left-leaning

“I kind of view the hyper wealthy people as having a grip over both the government and the media. ... I guess I don’t really think of it as the government censoring it. I think of it as this certain agenda being pushed on all the fronts at once.”

– Man, under 30, right-leaning

“It’s a behind-the-scenes thing. ... It’s just so much side stuff now, you don’t even know who’s in whose pocket.”

– Man, 60s, right-leaning

Party gaps in perceptions of outside influence on news have narrowed

While overall opinions on corporate and political influence on the media have not changed much since we first asked these questions in 2024, there have been shifts within each major political party.

The share of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents who say they think U.S. news organizations are **influenced a great deal by political interests** has dropped since 2024, from 67% to 54%.

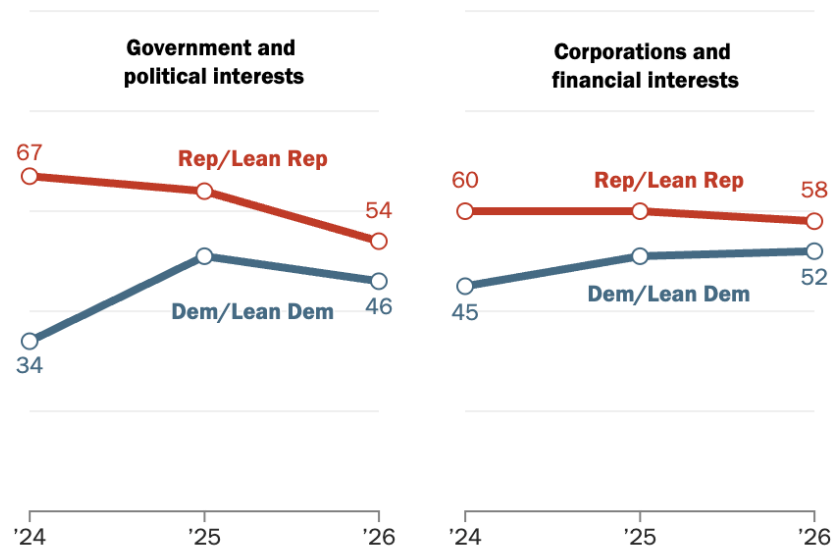
In contrast, Democrats and Democratic leaners are now *more* likely to say they think the news media are heavily influenced by the government. After 34% of Democrats expressed this view at the end of the Biden administration in 2024, that number jumped to 51% in 2025 and now stands at 46%.

A left-leaning man in his 20s said, “It’s not a dictatorship in that regard, but I feel like the sentiment by the government is discouraging people, and threatening shutting people down, and certainly in a roundabout way like [Stephen] Colbert such that I feel like it would dissuade a lot of people who might otherwise speak out.”

Despite these shifts, Republicans remain modestly more likely than Democrats to say political interests influence news organizations a great deal.

Party gaps in Americans’ perceptions of political and financial influence on U.S. news organizations have narrowed since 2024

% of U.S. adults who say U.S. news organizations are influenced a great deal by ...



Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted June 22-28, 2026. For dates of other surveys, refer to the [topline](#).

“Americans Value Press Freedom but Differ on Its Limits”

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“I think [news organizations are] highly influenced,” said a right-leaning woman in her 50s. “Maybe there is a financial reason for that, because of their owner’s links with so-and-so or they have a different agenda ... but what I see is a highly polarized media, divided media. There’s an extreme right and left extreme. There’s nothing in the middle.”

In the same group, a right-leaning man in his 30s said, “I think [the] Democratic side of the house has a much stronger relationship with legacy media or just media in general than a Republican side.”

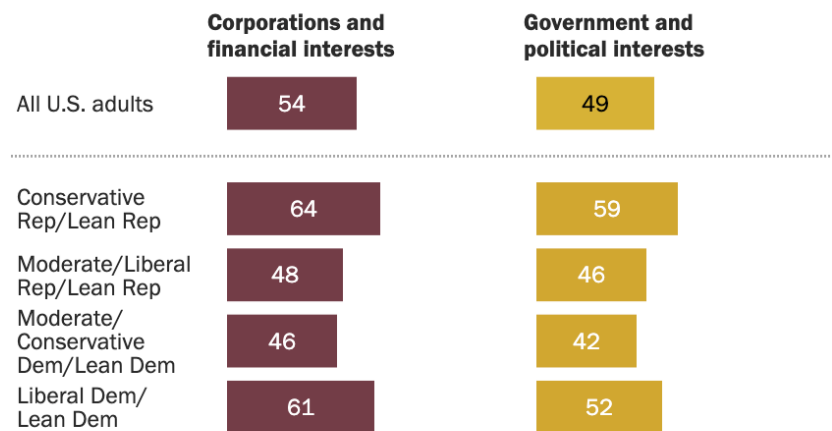
There has been less movement within each party when it comes to **perceptions of corporate influence over news**, but the gap between the parties has also narrowed on this question. Democrats are slightly more likely today to say they think financial interests influence U.S. news organizations a great deal (52% in 2026 vs. 45% in 2024), while Republicans’ views have remained mostly stable (58% in 2026 vs. 60% in 2024).

Conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats are more likely than others in each party to say they think U.S. news organizations are influenced a great deal by both corporate and political interests.

“I think sometimes it’s money over truth,” said a right-leaning woman in her 50s.

Conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats are more likely than others in each party to say there is corporate and political influence on news

% of U.S. adults who say U.S. news organizations are influenced a great deal by ...



Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted June 22-28, 2026. “Americans Value Press Freedom but Differ on Its Limits”

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How do corporate and political interests influence the media, according to Americans?

Not only do Americans overwhelmingly think both financial and political interests influence U.S. news organizations, but they see this impact in a variety of ways.

Large majorities of U.S. adults say they think both financial and political interests affect three aspects of news coverage at least somewhat:

- **Which news stories get covered**
- **The balance of political perspectives in the news**
- **The accuracy of the news**

In focus groups, participants expressed nuanced views about how and why they believe financial and political interests influence the U.S. news media. Some drew distinctions between individual journalists and the constraints placed on them by their employers. Others emphasized ways that news organizations alter their coverage because of financial factors affecting the entire industry or because they are seeking the favor of the government:

“Very few people own the news outlets, and I feel like the power is in the hands of a few and they certainly have special interests. I do believe the regular news reporter is probably honest and well-intended.”

– Woman, 40s, right-leaning

“Obviously it’s a business – journalism. Somebody has to buy it for it to be heard. ... It’s market-driven to that extent. That’s probably why the newspapers are shriveling. Market forces in

Americans see corporate and political influence on what news gets covered, the balance of perspectives and the accuracy of news

% of U.S. adults who say ___ influence each of the following a great deal or somewhat

	Corporate and financial interests			Government and political interests		
	A great deal	Somewhat	NET	A great deal	Somewhat	NET
Which news stories get covered	49	32	81	47	34	81
The balance of political perspectives in the news	47	33	79	44	34	79
The accuracy of the news	39	37	76	38	38	77

Note: Figures may not sum to “NET” column due to rounding.

Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted June 22-28, 2026.
“Americans Value Press Freedom but Differ on Its Limits”

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addition to coercion and intimidation by people that don't want to be criticized."

– Woman, 60s, left-leaning

"It just seems like press organizations and journalists themselves kind of shackle themselves to their own restrictions. ... It could be the government, but it also could be themselves and who their beneficiaries are between clicks and ratings."

– Man, 40s, right-leaning

"There definitely seems to be some favorited company that wants to kiss the ring. And then there's more independent companies that are being kind of pulled over the coals for trying to do actual reporting."

– Man, 40s, left-leaning

How Americans view the relationship between the government and the news media

The writers of the Constitution envisioned a free press as one of the key aspects of American democracy – but that freedom has always come along with tensions between elected officials ([including presidents](#)) and journalists.

Today, Americans across the political spectrum say the **relationship between the president and the press is in a bad place**. Views vary on who is to blame: Democrats largely say [the press has become less free under President Donald Trump](#), while most Republicans say news organizations have too much political power and influence.

Amid these tensions, more than half of Americans say criticism is acceptable from politicians toward journalists, and vice versa. **But a larger share say it is OK for journalists to criticize elected leaders than for those in office to criticize journalists.**

At a time when their party controls the White House and Congress, Republicans are more likely than Democrats to say it is acceptable for elected leaders to criticize journalists, while Democrats are more inclined to say it is OK for journalists to criticize politicians.

These findings are based on a Pew Research Center study from the [Pew-Knight Initiative](#) exploring how Americans are thinking about press freedom today. Read [key findings from the full study](#), which included two surveys of U.S. adults and a series of 10 focus groups.

Views on the relationship between Trump and the media

Most Americans (71%) think the Trump administration and the news media have a very or somewhat bad relationship. About one-in-five U.S. adults (17%) say the relationship between the two is neutral, and just 11% say it is very or somewhat good.

The share of Americans who think President Trump and the news media have a bad relationship is up slightly from last year, when 64% expressed this view.

In focus groups we conducted with 74 everyday Americans, participants echoed this sentiment, with some referring to the current relationship between the government and the news media as “strained,” “contentious” or “volatile.”

Certain groups are more likely to say the relationship between Trump and the media is bad:

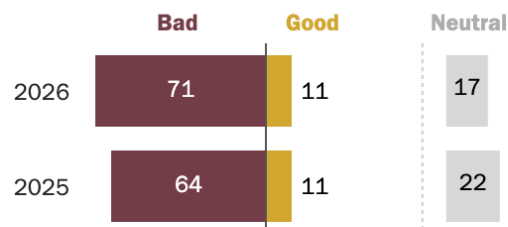
- **Older Americans:** 82% of U.S. adults ages 65 and older say the relationship is bad, compared with 62% of adults under 30.
- **Frequent news followers:** 81% of people who say they follow the news all or most of the time say this, versus 66% of those who follow the news less closely.
- **People who say press freedom is highly important to society:** 76% of Americans who say press freedom is extremely or very important to the well-being of society describe the relationship as bad, compared with 56% of those who don’t find it as important.

But there are no major differences by political party – **Republicans and Democrats largely agree that the relationship between Trump and the media is bad.** While similar shares of Americans in both parties (including independents who lean toward each party) say the relationship is bad, they often have different reasons for feeling this way.

For instance, in [a 2025 survey](#), a majority of Republicans said that the news media has been too critical of Trump, while a similar majority of Democrats said that the Trump administration has been too critical of the news media.

Most U.S. adults think the Trump administration and U.S. news media have a bad relationship

*% of U.S. adults who say the Trump administration and the U.S. news media currently have a **very or somewhat** ___ relationship*



Note: Respondents who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted June 22-28, 2026. For other survey dates, refer to the topline.

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While many participants in this study’s focus groups expressed dissatisfaction with what they saw as an adversarial relationship between Trump and the media, others felt more positively about it.

“I like the way he calls out the press,” one right-leaning man in his 60s said of Trump. “He knows what’s going on.”

Many Americans think news organizations hold too much power in politics

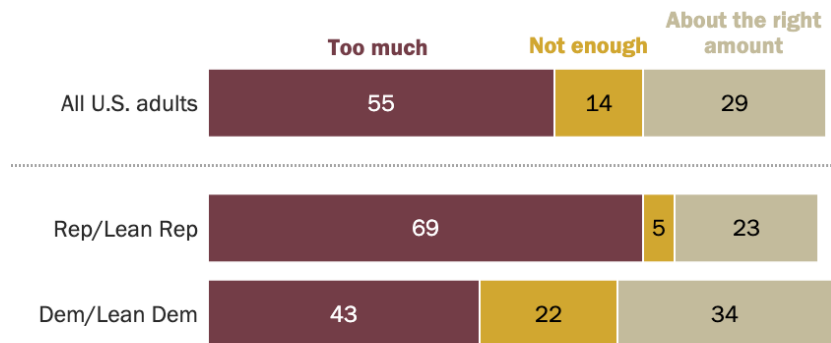
Republicans are also more likely to say that news organizations have too much power and influence in politics. About seven-in-ten

Republicans (69%) express this view, compared with 43% of Democrats. Even among Democrats, this is roughly double the share who take the opposing view that news organizations don’t have enough political power (22%).

Overall, just over half of Americans (55%) think that news organizations have too much power and influence in politics today, versus 14% who say they don’t have enough. About three-in-ten (29%) say they have about the right amount of power and influence.

Just over half of Americans say news organizations have too much power and influence in politics

% of U.S. adults who say U.S. news organizations have ___ power and influence in politics today



Note: Respondents who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted June 22-28, 2026. “Americans Value Press Freedom but Differ on Its Limits”

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What criticism is acceptable between journalists and politicians?

President Trump and the media [have often criticized one another](#).

A 2017 [Pew Research Center study](#) found that news coverage of the early days of Trump's first term was more negative overall compared with coverage of previous administrations. Meanwhile, Trump has long been sharply critical of the media, including [calling journalists](#) the “[enemy of the people](#).” In 2025, the White House launched a “[Media Offenders](#)” webpage dedicated to calling out news organizations it considers biased.

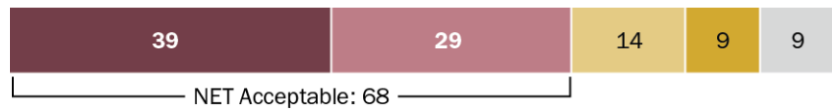
Most Americans (68%) think it's at least somewhat acceptable for news organizations and journalists to criticize politicians. A smaller majority (56%) say it's acceptable for politicians to criticize news organizations and journalists.

Americans are more likely to say it's acceptable for journalists to criticize politicians than vice versa

% of U.S. adults who say it is ___ for ...

■ Completely acceptable ■ Somewhat unacceptable ■ Not sure
■ Somewhat acceptable ■ Completely unacceptable

News organizations and journalists to publicly criticize politicians



Politicians to publicly criticize news organizations and journalists



Note: Respondents who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted June 22-28, 2026. “Americans Value Press Freedom but Differ on Its Limits”

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A larger share of U.S. adults also say it is *completely* acceptable for journalists to criticize politicians than the other way around (39% vs. 25%).

Today, Democrats are more likely than Republicans to think it's okay for **news organizations and journalists to publicly criticize politicians.**

About half of Democrats (48%) – including a clear majority of Democrats who identify as liberal (63%) – say this is *completely* acceptable, compared with 31% of Republicans. Still, majorities of both Democrats (74%) and Republicans (63%) think it's at least somewhat acceptable.

On the other hand, Republicans are more likely than Democrats to say that **politicians publicly criticizing news organizations and**

journalists is at least somewhat acceptable (68% vs. 47%). A third of Republicans (including 41% of conservative Republicans) say this is *completely* acceptable, compared with 19% of Democrats.

When it comes to **news organizations and journalists criticizing politicians**, many focus group participants agreed that this comes with the territory of being a public figure. “[The press] is going to fire some arrows,” said one left-leaning man in his 50s. “If you’re going to have a position of power, you have to be willing to take those shots and stand up for yourself.”

Another participant, a left-leaning woman in her 30s, said, “A politician should be able to show that they are able to stand up to criticism and still be respectful when questioned.”

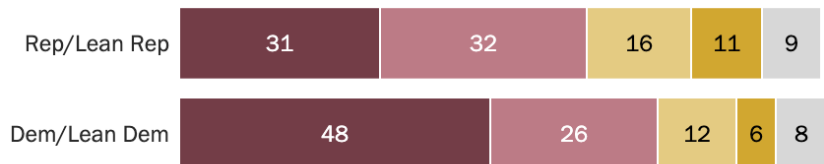
But some participants felt such criticism was uneven, and at times unacceptable. A right-leaning woman in her 60s discussed feeling like the press is harder on Trump than previous presidents: “They just totally criticize him on everything.” A left-leaning man in his 60s, discussing late-night

Republicans are more likely than Democrats to say politicians should be able to criticize journalists

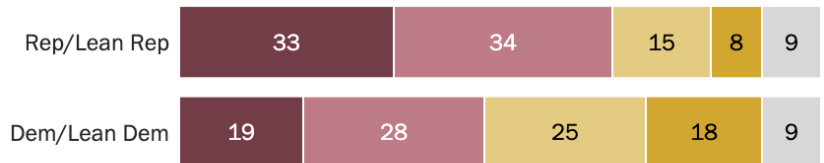
% of U.S. adults who say it is ___ for ...

■ Completely acceptable ■ Somewhat unacceptable ■ Not sure
■ Somewhat acceptable ■ Completely unacceptable

News organizations and journalists to publicly criticize politicians



Politicians to publicly criticize news organizations and journalists



Note: Respondents who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted June 22-28, 2026. “Americans Value Press Freedom but Differ on Its Limits”

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host Jimmy Kimmel, said, “He goes overboard. He crossed the line. Whether you like Donald Trump or don’t like Donald Trump, he has deliberately gone after him and others. In America, you’re free to say what you want, but he just tends to go over the line. And I think that’s wrong.”

Participants also disagreed about politicians criticizing journalists. Many shared beliefs that the Trump administration takes its criticism of the press too far, often to the point of threatening or censoring outlets it disagrees with. But some said they liked the criticism and appreciate when Trump “calls out” news outlets.

Americans who value press freedom are more accepting of criticism in both directions

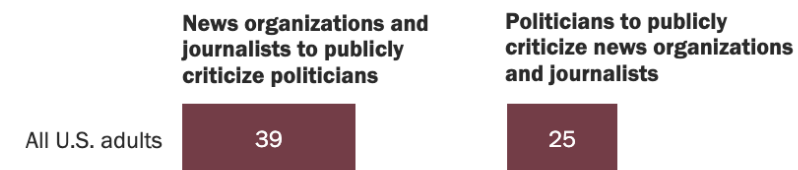
People who think press freedom is highly important to society are more likely than those who say it is less important to accept *both* forms of criticism.

About half of U.S. adults who say press freedom is extremely or very important to the well-being of society (48%) think it’s completely acceptable for journalists to criticize politicians, compared with 14% of those who think press freedom is less important.

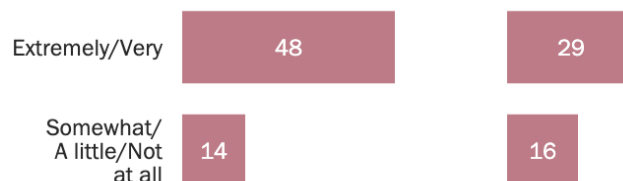
And about three-in-ten Americans who think press freedom is highly important (29%) say it’s completely acceptable for politicians to criticize journalists, about twice the share who think this among those who see press freedom as less important (16%).

People who think of press freedom as highly important are more likely to accept criticism between journalists and politicians

% of U.S. adults who say it is **completely acceptable** for ...



Among those who say press freedom is ___ important to the well-being of society



Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted June 22-28, 2026. “Americans Value Press Freedom but Differ on Its Limits”

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Research

Kirsten Eddy, *Senior Researcher*

Katerina Eva Matsa, *Director, News and Information Research*

Michael Lipka, *Associate Director, News and Information Research*

Benjamin Toff, *Visiting Principal Researcher*

Naomi Forman-Katz, *Research Analyst*

Christopher St. Aubin, *Research Analyst*

Elisa Shearer, *Senior Researcher*

Sawyer Reed, *Research Assistant*

Joanne Haner, *Research Assistant*

Luxuan Wang, *Research Associate*

Emily Tomasik, *Research Analyst*

Editorial and Graphic Design

Shifra Dayak, *Editorial Specialist*

Sharon McGill, *Information Graphics Designer*

Andrea Caumont, *Associate Director, Digital Outreach*

Communications and Web Publishing

David Maas, *Communications Manager*

Julia O'Hanlon, *Communications Manager*

Ashley Loprete, *Communications Associate*

Maya Pottiger, *Communications Associate*

Beshay Sakla, *Associate Digital Producer*

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Methodology

This is a Pew Research Center report from the [Pew-Knight Initiative](#), a research program funded jointly by The Pew Charitable Trusts and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

The American Trends Panel survey methodology, Wave 190

Overview

Data in this report comes from Wave 190 of the American Trends Panel (ATP), Pew Research Center’s nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults. The survey was conducted from March 23 to 29, 2026. A total of 3,507 panelists responded out of 4,046 who were sampled, for a survey-level response rate of 87%.

The cumulative response rate accounting for nonresponse to the recruitment surveys and attrition is 3%. The break-off rate among panelists who logged on to the survey and completed at least one item is 1%. The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 3,507 respondents is plus or minus 1.9 percentage points.

The survey includes an [oversample](#) of Muslim, Jewish and non-Hispanic Asian adults in order to provide more precise estimates of the opinions and experiences of these smaller demographic subgroups. These oversampled groups are weighted back to reflect their correct proportions in the population.

SSRS conducted the survey for Pew Research Center via online (n=3,377) and live telephone (n=130) interviewing. Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish.

To learn more about the ATP, read “[About the American Trends Panel](#).”

Panel recruitment

Since 2018, the ATP has used address-based sampling (ABS) for recruitment. A study cover letter and a pre-incentive are mailed to a stratified, random sample of households selected from the U.S. Postal Service’s Computerized Delivery Sequence File. This Postal Service file has been estimated to cover 90% to 98% of the population.¹ Within each sampled household, the adult with the next birthday is selected to participate. Other details of the ABS recruitment protocol have changed

¹ AAPOR Task Force on Address-based Sampling. 2016. “[AAPOR Report: Address-based Sampling](#).”

over time but are available upon request.² Prior to 2018, the ATP was recruited using landline and cellphone random-digit-dial surveys administered in English and Spanish.

A national sample of U.S. adults has been recruited to the ATP approximately once per year since 2014. In some years, the recruitment has included additional efforts (known as an “oversample”) to improve the accuracy of data for underrepresented groups. For example, Hispanic adults, Black adults and Asian adults were oversampled in 2019, 2022 and 2023, respectively.

Sample design

The overall target population for this survey was noninstitutionalized persons ages 18 and older living in the United States. It featured a stratified random sample from the ATP in which Muslim, Jewish and non-Hispanic Asian adults were selected with certainty. The remaining panelists were sampled at rates designed to ensure that the share of respondents in each stratum is proportional to its share of the U.S. adult population to the greatest extent possible. Respondent weights are adjusted to account for differential probabilities of selection as described in the Weighting section below.

Questionnaire development and testing

The questionnaire was developed by Pew Research Center in consultation with SSRS. The web program used for online respondents was rigorously tested on both PC and mobile devices by the SSRS project team and Pew Research Center researchers. The SSRS project team also populated test data that was analyzed in SPSS to ensure the logic and randomizations were working as intended before launching the survey.

Incentives

All respondents were offered a post-paid incentive for their participation. Respondents could choose to receive the post-paid incentive in the form of a check or gift code to Amazon.com, Target.com or Walmart.com. Incentive amounts ranged from \$5 to \$20 depending on whether the respondent belongs to a part of the population that is harder or easier to reach. Differential incentive amounts were designed to increase panel survey participation among groups that traditionally have low survey response propensities.

² Email pewsurveys@pewresearch.org.

Data collection protocol

The data collection field period for this survey was March 23 to 29, 2026. Surveys were conducted via self-administered web survey or by live telephone interviewing.

For panelists who take surveys online:³ Postcard notifications were mailed to a subset on March 23.⁴ Survey invitations were sent out in two separate launches: soft launch and full launch. Sixty panelists were included in the soft launch, which began with an initial invitation sent on March 23. All remaining English- and Spanish-speaking sampled online panelists were included in the full launch and were sent an invitation on March 24.

Invitation and reminder dates for web respondents, ATP Wave 190

	Soft launch	Full launch
Initial invitation	March 23, 2026	March 24, 2026
First reminder	March 26, 2026	March 26, 2026
Final reminder	March 28, 2026	March 28, 2026

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Panelists participating online were sent an email invitation and up to two email reminders if they did not respond to the survey. ATP panelists who consented to SMS messages were sent an SMS invitation with a link to the survey and up to two SMS reminders.

For panelists who take surveys over the phone with a live interviewer: Prenotification postcards were mailed on March 20. Soft launch took place on March 23 and involved dialing until a total of three interviews had been completed. All remaining English- and Spanish-speaking sampled phone panelists' numbers were dialed throughout the remaining field period. Panelists who take surveys via phone can receive up to six calls from trained SSRS interviewers.

Data quality checks

To ensure high-quality data, Center researchers performed data quality checks to identify any respondents showing patterns of satisficing. This includes checking for whether respondents left questions blank at very high rates or always selected the first or last answer presented. As a result

³ The ATP does not use routers or chains in any part of its online data collection protocol, nor are they used to direct respondents to additional surveys.

⁴ Postcard notifications for web panelists are sent to 1) panelists who were recruited within the last two years and 2) panelists recruited prior to the last two years who opt to continue receiving postcard notifications.

of this checking, five ATP respondents were removed from the survey dataset prior to weighting and analysis.

Weighting

The ATP data is weighted in a process that accounts for multiple stages of sampling and nonresponse that occur at different points in the panel survey process. First, each panelist begins with a base weight that reflects their probability of recruitment into the panel. These weights are then calibrated to align with the population benchmarks in the accompanying table to correct for nonresponse to recruitment surveys and panel attrition. If only a subsample of panelists was invited to participate in the wave, this weight is adjusted to account for any differential probabilities of selection.

Among the panelists who completed the survey, this weight is then calibrated again to align with the population benchmarks identified in the accompanying table and trimmed at the 1st and 99th percentiles to reduce the loss in precision stemming from variance in the weights. Sampling errors and tests of statistical significance take into account the effect of weighting.

American Trends Panel weighting dimensions

Variable	Benchmark source
Age (detailed)	2024 American Community Survey (ACS)
Age x Gender	
Education x Gender	
Education x Age	
Race/Ethnicity x Education	
Race/Ethnicity x Gender	
Race/Ethnicity x Age	
Born inside vs. outside the U.S. among Hispanics and Asian Americans	
Years lived in the U.S.	
Census region x Metropolitan status	
Volunteerism	2023 CPS Volunteering & Civic Life Supplement
Frequency of internet use	2025 National Public Opinion Reference Survey (NPORS)
Religious affiliation	
Party affiliation x Race/Ethnicity	
Party affiliation x Age	
Validated 2024 presidential election turnout and vote choice	Candidate vote share is based on official results from the Federal Election Commission. Turnout is based on estimates from the Election Lab at the University of Florida. The size of the voting-eligible population is based on the 2023 ACS.

Note: Estimates from the ACS are based on noninstitutionalized adults. For weighting to the 2024 presidential election results, panelists are considered validated voters if their self-report of having voted was confirmed after matching to a national voter registry.

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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.

Sample sizes and margins of error, ATP Wave 190

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	3,507	1.9 percentage points
Rep/Lean Rep	1,504	2.8 percentage points
Dem/Lean Dem	1,858	2.7 percentage points

Note: This survey includes oversamples of Muslim, Jewish and non-Hispanic Asian respondents. Unweighted sample sizes do not account for the sample design or weighting and do not describe a group's contribution to weighted estimates. See the Sample design and Weighting sections above for details.

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

Dispositions and response rates

Final dispositions, ATP Wave 190

	AAPOR code	Total
Completed interview	1.1	3,507
Logged in (web) / Contacted (CATI), but did not complete any items	2.11	95
Started survey; broke off before completion	2.12	32
Never logged on (web) / Never reached on phone (CATI)	2.20	407
Survey completed after close of the field period	2.27	0
Other non-interview	2.30	0
Completed interview but was removed for data quality	2.90	5
Total panelists sampled for the survey		4,046
Completed interviews	I	3,507
Partial interviews	P	0
Refusals	R	127
Non-contact	NC	407
Other	O	5
Unknown household	UH	0
Unknown other	UO	0
Not eligible	NE	0
Total		4,046
AAPOR RR1 = $I / (I+P+R+NC+O+UH+UO)$		87%

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Cumulative response rate, ATP Wave 190

	Total
Weighted response rate to recruitment surveys	12%
% of recruitment survey respondents who agreed to join the panel, among those invited	74%
% of those agreeing to join who were active panelists at start of Wave 190	40%
Response rate to Wave 190 survey	87%
Cumulative response rate	3%

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The American Trends Panel survey methodology, Wave 195

Overview

Data in this report comes from Wave 195 of the American Trends Panel (ATP), Pew Research Center’s nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults. The survey was conducted from June 22 to 28, 2026. A total of 3,488 panelists responded out of 4,069 who were sampled, for a survey-level response rate of 86%.

The cumulative response rate accounting for nonresponse to the recruitment surveys and attrition is 3%. The break-off rate among panelists who logged on to the survey and completed at least one item is 1%. The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 3,488 respondents is plus or minus 1.8 percentage points.

The survey includes an [oversample](#) of non-Hispanic Asian adults in order to provide more precise estimates of the opinions and experiences of this smaller demographic subgroup. These oversampled groups are weighted back to reflect their correct proportions in the population.

SSRS conducted the survey for Pew Research Center via online (n=3,362) and live telephone (n=126) interviewing. Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish.

To learn more about the ATP, read “[About the American Trends Panel](#).”

Panel recruitment

Since 2018, the ATP has used address-based sampling (ABS) for recruitment. A study cover letter and a pre-incentive are mailed to a stratified, random sample of households selected from the U.S. Postal Service’s Computerized Delivery Sequence File. This Postal Service file has been estimated to cover 90% to 98% of the population.⁵ Within each sampled household, the adult with the next birthday is selected to participate. Other details of the ABS recruitment protocol have changed over time but are available upon request.⁶ Prior to 2018, the ATP was recruited using landline and cellphone random-digit-dial surveys administered in English and Spanish.

A national sample of U.S. adults has been recruited to the ATP approximately once per year since 2014. In some years, the recruitment has included additional efforts (known as an “oversample”) to improve the accuracy of data for underrepresented groups. For example, Hispanic adults, Black adults and Asian adults were oversampled in 2019, 2022 and 2023, respectively.

⁵ AAPOR Task Force on Address-based Sampling. 2016. “[AAPOR Report: Address-based Sampling](#).”

⁶ Email pewsurveys@pewresearch.org.

Sample design

The overall target population for this survey was noninstitutionalized persons ages 18 and older living in the United States. It featured a stratified random sample from the ATP in which non-Hispanic Asian adults were selected with certainty. The remaining panelists were sampled at rates designed to ensure that the share of respondents in each stratum is proportional to its share of the U.S. adult population to the greatest extent possible. Respondent weights are adjusted to account for differential probabilities of selection as described in the Weighting section below.

Questionnaire development and testing

The questionnaire was developed by Pew Research Center in consultation with SSRS. The web program used for online respondents was rigorously tested on both PC and mobile devices by the SSRS project team and Pew Research Center researchers. The SSRS project team also populated test data that was analyzed in SPSS to ensure the logic and randomizations were working as intended before launching the survey.

Incentives

All respondents were offered a post-paid incentive for their participation. Respondents could choose to receive the post-paid incentive in the form of a check or gift code to Amazon.com, Target.com or Walmart.com. Incentive amounts ranged from \$5 to \$20 depending on whether the respondent belongs to a part of the population that is harder or easier to reach. Differential incentive amounts were designed to increase panel survey participation among groups that traditionally have low survey response propensities.

Data collection protocol

The data collection field period for this survey was June 22 to 28, 2026. Surveys were conducted via self-administered web survey or by live telephone interviewing.

For panelists who take surveys online:⁷ Postcard notifications were mailed to a subset on June 22.⁸ Survey invitations were sent out in two separate launches: soft launch and full launch. Sixty panelists were included in the soft launch, which began with an initial invitation sent on June 22. All remaining English- and Spanish-speaking sampled online panelists were included in the full launch and were sent an invitation on June 23.

⁷ The ATP does not use routers or chains in any part of its online data collection protocol, nor are they used to direct respondents to additional surveys.

⁸ Postcard notifications for web panelists are sent to 1) panelists who were recruited within the last two years and 2) panelists recruited prior to the last two years who opt to continue receiving postcard notifications.

Invitation and reminder dates for web respondents, ATP Wave 195

	Soft launch	Full launch
Initial invitation	June 22, 2026	June 23, 2026
First reminder	June 25, 2026	June 25, 2026
Final reminder	June 27, 2026	June 27, 2026

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Panelists participating online were sent an email invitation and up to two email reminders if they did not respond to the survey. ATP panelists who consented to SMS messages were sent an SMS invitation with a link to the survey and up to two SMS reminders.

For panelists who take surveys over the phone with a live interviewer: Prenotification postcards were mailed on June 18. Soft launch took place on June 22 and involved dialing until a total of 11 interviews had been completed. All remaining English- and Spanish-speaking sampled phone panelists' numbers were dialed throughout the remaining field period. Panelists who take surveys via phone can receive up to six calls from trained SSRS interviewers.

Data quality checks

To ensure high-quality data, Center researchers performed data quality checks to identify any respondents showing patterns of satisficing. This includes checking for whether respondents left questions blank at very high rates or always selected the first or last answer presented. As a result of this checking, two ATP respondents were removed from the survey dataset prior to weighting and analysis.

Weighting

The ATP data is weighted in a process that accounts for multiple stages of sampling and nonresponse that occur at different points in the panel survey process. First, each panelist begins with a base weight that reflects their probability of recruitment into the panel. These weights are then calibrated to align with the population benchmarks in the accompanying table to correct for nonresponse to recruitment surveys and panel attrition. If only a subsample of panelists was invited to participate in the wave, this weight is adjusted to account for any differential probabilities of selection.

Among the panelists who completed the survey, this weight is then calibrated again to align with the population benchmarks identified in the accompanying table and trimmed at the 1st and 99th

percentiles to reduce the loss in precision stemming from variance in the weights. Sampling errors and tests of statistical significance take into account the effect of weighting.

American Trends Panel weighting dimensions

Variable	Benchmark source
Age (detailed)	2024 American Community Survey (ACS)
Age x Gender	
Education x Gender	
Education x Age	
Race/Ethnicity x Education	
Race/Ethnicity x Gender	
Race/Ethnicity x Age	
Born inside vs. outside the U.S. among Hispanics and Asian Americans	
Years lived in the U.S.	
Census region x Metropolitan status	
Volunteerism	2023 CPS Volunteering & Civic Life Supplement
Frequency of internet use	2025 National Public Opinion Reference Survey (NPORS)
Religious affiliation	
Party affiliation x Race/Ethnicity	
Party affiliation x Age	
Validated 2024 presidential election turnout and vote choice	Candidate vote share is based on official results from the Federal Election Commission. Turnout is based on estimates from the Election Lab at the University of Florida. The size of the voting-eligible population is based on the 2023 ACS.

Note: Estimates from the ACS are based on noninstitutionalized adults. For weighting to the 2024 presidential election results, panelists are considered validated voters if their self-report of having voted was confirmed after matching to a national voter registry.

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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.

Sample sizes and margins of error, ATP Wave 195

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	3,488	1.8 percentage points
<i>Form 1</i>	1,751	2.6 percentage points
<i>Form 2</i>	1,737	2.6 percentage points
Rep/Lean Rep	1,513	2.7 percentage points
Dem/Lean Dem	1,826	2.6 percentage points

Note: This survey includes an oversample of non-Hispanic Asian respondents. Unweighted sample sizes do not account for the sample design or weighting and do not describe a group's contribution to weighted estimates. See the Sample design and Weighting sections above for details.

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

Dispositions and response rates

Final dispositions, ATP Wave 195

	AAPOR code	Total
Completed interview	1.1	3,488
Logged in (web) / Contacted (CATI), but did not complete any items	2.11	118
Started survey; broke off before completion	2.12	48
Never logged on (web) / Never reached on phone (CATI)	2.20	413
Survey completed after close of the field period	2.27	0
Other non-interview	2.30	0
Completed interview but was removed for data quality	2.90	2
Total panelists sampled for the survey		4,069
Completed interviews	I	3,488
Partial interviews	P	0
Refusals	R	166
Non-contact	NC	413
Other	O	2
Unknown household	UH	0
Unknown other	UO	0
Not eligible	NE	0
Total		4,069
AAPOR RR1 = $I / (I+P+R+NC+O+UH+UO)$		86%

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Cumulative response rate, ATP Wave 195

	Total
Weighted response rate to recruitment surveys	12%
% of recruitment survey respondents who agreed to join the panel, among those invited	74%
% of those agreeing to join who were active panelists at start of Wave 195	40%
Response rate to Wave 195 survey	86%
Cumulative response rate	3%

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How family income tiers are calculated

Family income data reported in this study is adjusted for household size and cost-of-living differences by geography. Panelists then are assigned to income tiers that are based on the median adjusted family income of all American Trends Panel members. The process uses the following steps:

1. First, panelists are assigned to the midpoint of the income range they selected in a family income question that was measured on either the most recent annual profile survey or, for newly recruited panelists, their recruitment survey. This provides an approximate income value that can be used in calculations for the adjustment.
2. Next, these income values are adjusted for the cost of living in the geographic area where the panelist lives. This is calculated using price indexes published by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. These indexes, known as [Regional Price Parities](#) (RPP), compare the prices of goods and services across all U.S. metropolitan statistical areas as well as non-metro areas with the national average prices for the same goods and services. The most recent available data at the time of the annual profile survey is from 2023. Those who fall outside of metropolitan statistical areas are assigned the overall RPP for their state's non-metropolitan area.
3. Family incomes are further adjusted for the number of people in a household using the methodology from Pew Research Center's previous work on [the American middle class](#). This is done because a four-person household with an income of say, \$50,000, faces a tighter budget constraint than a two-person household with the same income.
4. Panelists are then assigned an income tier. "Middle-income" adults are in families with adjusted family incomes that are between two-thirds and double the median adjusted family income for the full ATP at the time of the most recent annual profile survey. The median adjusted family income for the panel is roughly \$77,800. Using this median income, the middle-income range is about \$51,900 to \$155,600. Lower-income families have adjusted incomes less than \$51,900 and upper-income families have adjusted incomes greater than \$155,600 (all figures expressed in 2024 dollars and scaled to a household size of three). A panelist is assigned "no answer" in the income tier variable if they did not provide all three pieces of information needed to calculate their tier (family income, household size and residential address).

Two examples of how a given area's cost-of-living adjustment was calculated are as follows: the Pine Bluff metropolitan area in Arkansas is a relatively inexpensive area, with a price level that is 19.7% less than the national average. The San Francisco-Oakland-Berkeley metropolitan area in

California is one of the most expensive areas, with a price level that is 18.2% higher than the national average. Income in the sample is adjusted to make up for this difference. As a result, a family with an income of \$40,200 in the Pine Bluff area is as well off financially as a family of the same size with an income of \$59,100 in San Francisco.

Focus groups

Pew Research Center worked with SSRS to conduct 10 90-minute online focus groups with 74 U.S. adults from May 20 to June 4, 2026. These discussions are not nationally representative. This report includes findings and quotes from these focus groups to help illustrate and add nuance to the survey findings.

Recruitment

SSRS and Nichols Research recruited participants from an existing database for a mix of gender, age, party affiliation, political ideology, education, race and ethnicity, urbanicity, region and frequency of news consumption. All participants had to be 18 years of age or older and living in the United States.

Eligible participants had to be willing and able to attend the focus group on the set date and time and provide informed consent before they could participate. This included agreement that all responses could be used in research reports, though participants' names and identifying information would remain private and not be used in any reports.

For each focus group, eight participants were recruited and at least six participants attended. The research team overrecruited participants to account for no-shows, as well as participants who may experience other issues preventing participation. Participants received a \$100 electronic gift card after their focus group. Any participant who arrived more than ten minutes before the start of their group was also eligible for an early-bird lottery, and one of these participants in each group received an additional \$25.

Each focus group included a mix of participants based on their political views and news habits. We sorted participants into four groups by how they described their own political views, their party leanings and their opinions of certain political movements:

Demographic characteristics of focus group participants

Number of participants, out of 74 total

Men	40
Women	34
Ages 18-29	18
30-49	22
50-64	23
65+	11
White	50
Hispanic	7
Black	11
Asian	4
Multiracial/Other	2
Right-leaning	39
Left-leaning	35
High school or less	8
Some college	21
College degree+	45

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- **Progressive left:** Participants who identify as very or somewhat liberal, or moderates who identify with or lean toward the Democratic Party, who said they like political leaders who call themselves democratic socialists “a lot.”
- **Moderate left or leans left:** Participants who identify as very or somewhat liberal, or moderates who identify with or lean toward the Democratic Party, who did not say they like political leaders who call themselves democratic socialists “a lot.”
- **Moderate right or leans right:** Participants who identify as very or somewhat conservative, or moderates who identify with or lean toward the Republican Party, who did not say they “strongly support” the “Make America Great Again” (MAGA) movement.
- **MAGA right:** Participants who identify as very or somewhat conservative, or moderates who identify with or lean toward the Republican Party, who said they “strongly support” the MAGA movement.

We refer to these broadly as “left-leaning” and “right-leaning” groups. This approach differs from how we report survey findings, in which we describe the views of Democrats (including Democratic-leaning independents) and Republicans (including Republican-leaning independents), sometimes also including self-described ideology (conservative, moderate or liberal). We used the focus groups to better understand views across the political spectrum, including among the MAGA movement and democratic socialists.

We also grouped participants by how closely they follow the news: those who say they follow it all or most of the time (“high”) and those who say they follow it some of the time, only now and then or hardly ever (“low to medium”).

Discussion

The Pew Research Center and SSRS research teams developed the discussion guide through an iterative process. After the first two focus groups, the teams made minor changes, including cutting some questions and adjusting the wording of others to better explore key topics.

After the moderator set ground rules and participants introduced themselves, each focus group discussed a range of topics related to press freedom. The moderator asked participants how they follow and trust the news, how they define and value press freedom, and how they think it’s changed in the U.S. in recent years. Participants reacted to real news stories and hypothetical scenarios about press freedom and then discussed how government, news organizations and

technology companies shape access to information. All focus groups were recorded and then human-transcribed.

Analysis

All human-generated transcripts were analyzed and coded by the Pew Research Center research team using ATLAS.ti, a qualitative data analysis software program.

Two members of the research team wrote analytical memos while observing each focus group, noting similarities and differences across participants and linking individual experiences to broader themes. In addition, two coders separately analyzed each focus group transcript in ATLAS.ti using a codebook that was developed before analysis, based on the survey findings, and refined during analysis as new themes emerged from participants' responses. After coding was completed, the research team brought together key findings and selected quotes.

This process allowed the team to identify major patterns in the data and to organize and categorize relevant quotes, including linking them to participants' demographic characteristics. Multiple members of the research team observed and analyzed the focus groups to ensure that the findings accurately reflect the full range of participants' views and experiences.

Reporting

This report includes selected quotes from participants. Quotes were lightly edited by Pew Research Center staff for spelling, punctuation and clarity.

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