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Press "Unfair, Inaccurate and Pushy"

## **FEWER FAVOR MEDIA SCRUTINY OF POLITICAL LEADERS**

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- \* Less enthusiasm for news than in 1985
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## FEWER FAVOR PRESS SCRUTINY OF POLITICAL LEADERS

The American public is more critical of press practices, less enthusiastic about the news product and less appreciative of the watchdog role played by the news media than it was a dozen years ago when The People & The Press surveys were inaugurated. Those polls concluded that criticism of the way the press did its job was offset by the approval the public gave to press scrutiny of political leaders and by its enjoyment of the news.

Today, public criticism of the press for inaccuracy, lack of fairness and sensationalism is even greater than in 1985. At the same time, Americans are much less engaged by the news itself, and fewer think that press scrutiny of political leaders is "worth it." A sizable minority of Americans now say that press criticism prevents political leaders from doing their jobs, and a growing proportion of the public say they do not look forward to following the news each day. The rising criticism of the press is directed more at the national media -- network news and large national newspapers -- than at local television news and daily newspapers.

These are the findings of the latest nationwide Pew Research Center survey, which also found a public both drawn to and repulsed by tabloid coverage of crime, scandal and wrongdoing. Almost half (49%) of the sample reported that it regularly or sometimes watches a tabloid news program, and 70% could correctly identify six-year-old JonBenet Ramsey as the slain Colorado child beauty queen. But fully 89% of respondents favored prohibiting the press from publishing the names of crime suspects before they are charged, and more than 70% approved the decision by news organizations to withhold allegations about an extra-marital affair presidential candidate Bob Dole had 30 years ago.

### *Inaccurate, Unfair and Pushy*

The public's assessment of press performance has grown increasingly negative in recent years. A majority (56%) now say news stories and reports are often *inaccurate*, up more than 20 percentage points since 1985, when a similar majority (55%) said news organizations get the facts *straight*. The greatest increase in complaints has come from young people, especially young men, and college graduates.

	<u>1985</u>	<u>1997</u>
	%	%
News organizations get the facts straight	55	37
Stories/Reports are often inaccurate	34	56
DK/Refused	<u>11</u> 100	<u>7</u> 100

Large majorities of the public also criticize the media for its intrusiveness. Television news programs are held in lower esteem than newspapers in this regard. Nearly two-thirds (64%) now believe TV news programs unnecessarily invade people's privacy, rather than intrude *only* when it serves the public interest. Slightly fewer, though still a majority (57%), complain about newspapers in this regard. Levels of criticism for press intrusiveness are largely unchanged from 1994. Even among those who appreciate the media's watchdog role, six-in-ten say both newspapers and TV news programs are unnecessarily intrusive.

<b>Press Intrusiveness</b>		
	<u>1994</u>	<u>1997</u>
	%	%
Unnecessarily invade people's privacy		
TV programs	63	64
Newspapers	60	57
Only when in the public interest		
TV programs	32	29
Newspapers	35	35

Besides inaccuracy and intrusiveness, the press is attacked for its lack of fairness. Two-thirds (67%) say that in presenting news on political and social issues, news organizations tend to favor one side rather than dealing fairly with all sides. Again, this negative view of the press is more prevalent now than it was twelve years ago, when a much smaller majority (53%) criticized news organizations for biased coverage of political and social issues.

<b>Press Fairness</b>		
	<u>1985</u>	<u>1997</u>
	%	%
In dealing with political & social issues news organization...		
Deal fairly with all sides	34	27
Tend to favor one side	53	67
DK/Refused	<u>13</u>	<u>6</u>
	100	100

Men more often than women criticize the press for being unfair, and young men (under 30) are extremely critical: fully 78% say news organizations tend to favor one side over another. Republicans, who have made press bias part of their mantra, are more likely to say news organizations favor one side than are Democrats or Independents (77% vs. 58% and 69%, respectively). More affluent respondents are also more critical.

In one of the most telling complaints, a majority (54%) of Americans believe the news media gets in the way of society solving its problems, while just over one-third (36%) say the news media helps society solve its problems.<sup>1</sup> This is, however, an improvement over previous years: in 1994, 71% felt the media was a hindrance and in 1995, 57% felt that way. When asked the most important reason *why* they believe the media gets in the way, most respondents in a recent Pew poll said it is too sensational or biased. Other reasons given were distortion of the truth, over-emphasis on negative news, invasion

<sup>1</sup> Pew Research Center for The People & The Press, National Social Trust Survey, February 1997.

of privacy, shallowness, and a tendency to stir up problems without offering solutions.

### ***Opinion of National Media Slumps***

Increased criticism of specific press practices may have contributed to the more general decline in favorability toward various news media outlets. Favorable ratings for the national network television news have fallen to a twelve year low. Only 15% of Americans now have a very favorable opinion of the network TV news, down from 27% in 1992 and 30% in 1985. At the same time, network news viewership has fallen off significantly in recent years.<sup>2</sup> Today, four-in-ten Americans say they watch the nightly network news regularly, compared to 60% in 1993.

Favorable ratings for the large national newspapers, such as The New York Times and The Washington Post, have also fallen off in recent years. Some 41% of Americans now have a favorable opinion of these nationally influential papers, compared to 53% in 1992.

In contrast, ratings for local TV news have remained steady in recent years, suggesting that the public's increased criticism of the media is directed more at national news organizations than at local news establishments.

Local TV news is viewed more favorably and consumed by more people than any other news source. Fully 72% of Americans watch local news regularly. This compares with 56% who read a daily newspaper regularly, 41% who watch network TV news, 28% who watch CNN, and 24% who watch 60 Minutes regularly.

The public's appetite for tabloid television has fallen off somewhat. Still, consumption of tabloid news is substantial. While small percentages watch such shows as A Current Affair, Hard Copy or Inside Edition regularly (15%), half of all adult Americans watch them at least sometimes. Far fewer read tabloid newspapers: 11% read the National Enquirer, The Sun or The Star regularly or sometimes.

	<b>News Media Favorability Ratings</b>		
	<i>Favorable Opinion</i>		
	<u>1985</u>	<u>1992</u>	<u>1997</u>
	%	%	%
Network TV News	84	82	73
Local TV News	84	n/a	81
National Newspapers	48	53	41
Daily Newspaper		81	78
	74		

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<sup>2</sup>

"TV News Viewership Declines," Pew Research Center for The People & The Press, May 13, 1996.

Americans are consuming mainstream media not only less frequently these days but also with far less enthusiasm. Only 26% say they enjoy watching the news on television "a great deal," down dramatically from 42% in 1985. A similar pattern was found for newspaper reading: 27% look forward to reading the paper each day, compared to 42% in 1985.

	<u>1985</u>	<u>1997</u>
% Who enjoy watching TV news <i>a great deal</i>	42	26
% Who look forward to reading the paper <i>very much</i>	42	27

Respondents who had unfavorable opinions of network TV news and daily newspapers gave the same top two reasons: bias and emphasis on bad news. Television was also cited for carrying too much opinion rather than fact and for sensationalism. Newspapers were criticized for failing to report the whole story and for inaccuracy.

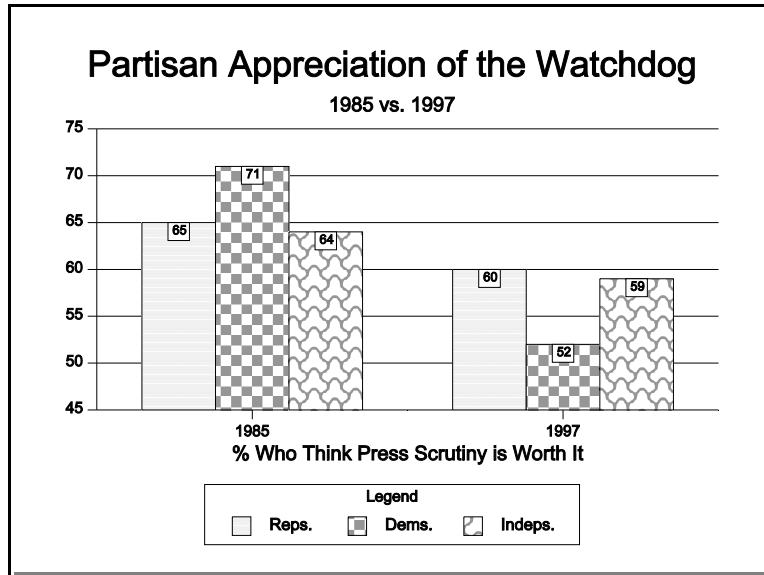
Despite increasing criticism of press performance, the news media still gets high ratings relative to other institutions, such as Congress and the courts. Analysis of the survey finds that an appreciation of the press's watchdog role is no longer a factor in this seeming contradiction. However, liking the news product itself continues to neutralize criticisms of press performance. That is, people who say they enjoy the news rate it more favorably, even when they complain about unfairness, inaccuracy, and intrusiveness, than those who do not enjoy the news.

***Muzzle That Watchdog?***

A 1985 Times Mirror-sponsored Gallup survey found a 67% to 17% majority feeling that press scrutiny of political leaders is *worth it*, because it keeps political leaders honest. That margin has shrunk to 56% to 32% in the current poll. A growing lack of appreciation for the press's watchdog role is apparent among all demographic and political groups but is most pronounced among older Americans and the less affluent.

	<u>1985</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1997</u>
	%	%	%
Criticism by the press keeps political leaders from doing their job	17	24	<b>32</b>
Criticism keeps leaders from doing things that shouldn't be done	67	66	56
DK/Refused	<u>16</u> 100	<u>10</u> 100	<u>12</u> 100

Partisanship clearly plays a role in shaping attitudes toward the press on this issue. Democrats are far less supportive of the watchdog role in the Clinton era than they were in the 1980s, when Republican administrations were undergoing intense press scrutiny. However, Republicans still have a more critical view of the press in general. Fewer have a favorable opinion of network TV news (68% vs. 81% of Democrats), and more accuse the press of bias in its coverage of political and social issues.



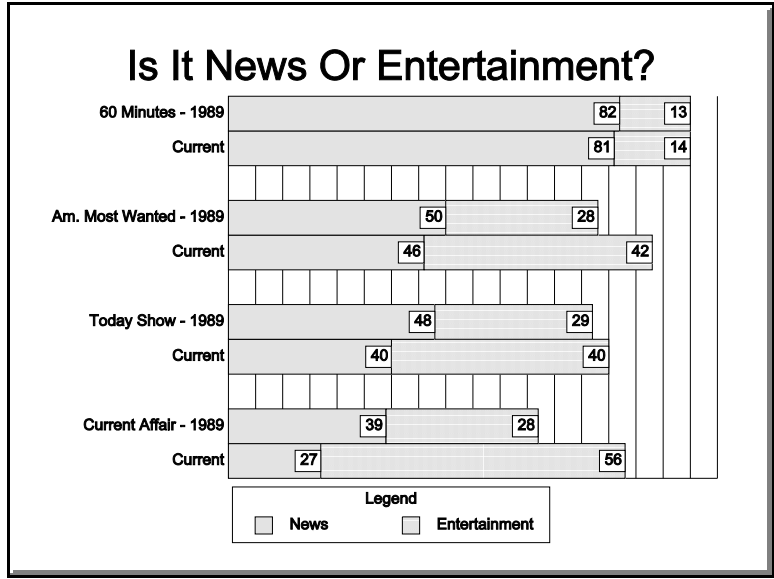
Waning appreciation for the watchdog role may be linked to the fact that more Americans now think press coverage of the personal and ethical behavior of political leaders is *excessive*. Today 65% of the public say press coverage is excessive in this regard, up from 52% in 1989. Those who characterize press coverage of personal scandal as excessive are far more likely to reject the press's watchdog role than are those who say such press coverage is not excessive.

The public distinguishes between press coverage of personal and ethical behavior vs. press criticism of policies and proposals. It is far less likely to condemn the media for excessive criticism of substance than for its focus on character. Only 46% say press criticism of the policies and proposals of political leaders is excessive.

While a large majority agrees that coverage of personal behavior is excessive, the public is evenly divided over whether scrutiny of personal and ethical behavior discourages competent people from entering public life or weeds out undesirable people (47% to 45%). However, there is strong support for the view that criticism of policy proposals helps the policy process rather than gets in the way of society solving its problems (59% to 34%).

***That's Entertainment***

The public is now more discerning about what constitutes news. In 1989, the tabloid TV show A Current Affair was viewed more as news than entertainment (39% to 28%). Now, more than half the public recognizes it as an entertainment show, only one-in-four consider it news. The Today Show was also formerly viewed more as news than entertainment by a margin of 48% to 29%. Now, Americans are evenly divided: 40% say it is mainly a news show, 40% say it is mostly entertainment. America's Most Wanted is also viewed more as entertainment now, though many still consider it news.



Television news magazines, both the long-running 60 Minutes and the newer variation Dateline NBC, are considered news rather than entertainment by most Americans. Fully 81% say 60 Minutes is news, and 71% say the same of Dateline.

Americans deplore tabloid-style news coverage but are clearly drawn to it. On the one hand, the public applauds press restraint, but at the same time, significant proportions closely follow crime stories involving celebrities. Americans overwhelmingly believe the press should wait until formal charges are brought before releasing the name of a criminal suspect. Fully 89% say the press should withhold this information, while 7% say the press should report the names of suspects.

In cases where the names of criminal suspects have been highly publicized, significant numbers of the public admit to pre-judging the accused. One-in-four of those able to identify Richard Jewell say they initially believed he was guilty of planting the bomb in Olympic park. Even more (37%) say they initially thought the two Dallas Cowboys wrongfully accused of sexual assault were guilty. While there was no racial element to the assessment of Jewell's guilt or innocence, blacks and whites clearly diverged on the two football players. Some 39% of whites said they first thought the two players were guilty, while only 17% of blacks shared that view.

In both cases, majorities of the public blamed the *media* rather than law enforcement sources for any harm done to the reputations of the accused. In the Jewell case, 58% blamed the media, 24% blamed law enforcement. In the Dallas case, the media was held accountable by an even wider margin (67% to 16%).

The public endorses media restraint not only in criminal cases, but also in scandals of a more personal nature. An overwhelming majority believes news organizations did the right thing in withholding information about Bob Dole's alleged extra-marital affair during the recent presidential campaign. More than seven-in-ten respondents overall, including 65% of Democrats, support the decision not to publish, and only 23% say news organizations should have made the information available.

In spite of their squeamishness about media feeding frenzies, Americans maintain their own rapacious appetite for scandal. An astounding 70% of respondents in this survey were able to identify JonBenet Ramsey as the child beauty queen slain in her home in Boulder, Colorado. A recent Pew Center survey also found 75% of the public could cite the amount of compensatory damages O.J. Simpson was ordered to pay in his recent civil trial. Far fewer, 52%, knew that President Clinton had named *education* as the top priority for his second term.<sup>3</sup>

More than 40% of Americans are interested in the investigation into JonBenet's death -- 19% are very interested, 25% somewhat. The Ramsey case has particular appeal to senior citizens, women -- especially those over 50 -- high school graduates, and tabloid TV viewers.

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<sup>3</sup> Pew Research Center for The People & The Press, National Social Trust Survey, February 1997.



***Yes to Investigative Journalism, No to Its Methods***

Even in the wake of the recent Food Lion case, which raised questions about news gathering techniques used by ABC News reporters, the public overwhelmingly approves of investigative reporting. Fully 80% say in general they approve of the news media's practice of uncovering and reporting on corruption and fraud in business, government agencies and other organizations. A similar majority (79%) expressed support for investigative reporting in a 1981 Gallup survey.

By a margin of 60% to 28% Americans would like to see *more* of this type of reporting rather than less. In 1981, the public called for more investigative reporting by an even wider margin -- 66% to 19%. Those who are dubious about the media's watchdog role and those who criticize the press for inaccuracy are more likely than others to say they want less, not more, investigative reporting.

The public is less approving of specific investigative techniques. Two-thirds (66%) *disapprove* of reporters concealing their identity and paying informers for information. A majority (54%) also disapprove of the use of hidden cameras, though a substantial minority (42%) approve of this practice. There is greater public acceptance for the use of unnamed sources. More than half (52%) approve of news organizations running stories that quote an unnamed source rather than giving the person's name, up from the 42% who approved in 1981.

<b>Investigative Reporting Techniques</b>			
	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>DK</u>
	%	%	%
Running stories with unnamed sources			
Current	52	45	3=100
Nov. 1981	42	53	5=100
Using hidden cameras and microphones			
Current	42	54	4=100
Nov. 1981	38	58	4=100
Reporters not identifying themselves as reporters			
Current	31	66	3=100
Nov. 1981	32	65	3=100
Paying informers for information			
Current	29	67	4=100
Nov. 1981	36	56	8=100

# TABLES

## PRESS ACCURACY

	--- June 1985 ---		--- February 1997 ---		Change In "Inaccurate"
	Press Gets	Press Often	Press Gets	Press Often	
	<u>Facts Straight</u>	<u>Inaccurate</u>	<u>Facts Straight</u>	<u>Inaccurate</u>	
	%	%	%	%	
<b>Total</b>	55	34	37	56	+22
<b>Sex</b>					
Male	54	36	35	58	+22
Female	55	33	39	54	+21
<b>Race</b>					
White	55	36	38	56	+20
Non-white	49	27	35	58	+31
Black	48	25	33	60	+35
<b>Race and Sex</b>					
White Men	55	37	37	57	+20
White Women	56	34	39	55	+21
<b>Age</b>					
Under 30	60	30	37	59	+29
30-49	59	32	44	51	+19
50-64	47	42	33	60	+18
65+	46	40	28	57	+17
<b>Age and Sex</b>					
Men Under 30	59	32	28	65	+33
Women Under 30	61	27	45	55	+28
Men 30-49	60	32	44	51	+19
Women 30-49	57	32	45	51	+19
Men 50+	44	43	30	60	+17
Women 50+	48	39	30	57	+18
<b>Education</b>					
College Grad.	70	24	44	51	+27
Some College	56	33	37	58	+25
High School Grad.	55	34	37	59	+25
<H.S. Grad	42	43	32	52	+9
<b>Region</b>					
East	56	33	39	55	+22
Midwest	52	40	36	56	+16
South	53	30	38	57	+27
West	59	34	37	56	+22

Question: In general, do you think news organizations get the facts straight, or do you think that their stories and reports are often inaccurate?

Continued ...

	--- June 1985 ---		--- February 1997 ---		Change In " <u>Inaccurate</u> "
	Press Gets <u>Facts Straight</u>	Press Often <u>Inaccurate</u>	Press Gets <u>Facts Straight</u>	Press Often <u>Inaccurate</u>	
	%	%	%	%	
<b>Total</b>	55	34	37	56	+22
<b>Religious Affiliation</b>					
Total White Protestant	54	38	37	56	+18
White Prot. Evangelical	n/a	n/a	36	56	n/a
White Prot. Non-Evang.	n/a	n/a	40	55	n/a
White Catholic	60	33	44	50	+17
<b>Party ID</b>					
Republican	54	37	38	58	+21
Democrat	55	32	39	53	+21
Independent	54	35	38	57	+22
<b>Income</b>					
High	63	28	35	58	+30
Medium	56	34	45	52	+18
Low	47	40	28	59	+19

## PRESS INTRUSIVENESS

	--- Newspapers ---			--- TV News ---		
	Invade <u>Privacy</u>	Only In Pubic <u>Interest</u>	Don't <u>Know</u>	Invade <u>Privacy</u>	Only in Pubic <u>Interest</u>	Don't <u>Know</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Total</b>	57	35	8=100	64	29	7=100
<b>Sex</b>						
Male	58	34	8	66	28	6
Female	57	35	8	62	29	9
<b>Race</b>						
White	61	32	7	65	28	7
Non-white	44	49	7	58	35	7
Black	41	50	9	61	33	6
<b>Race and Sex</b>						
White Men	60	34	6	67	27	6
White Women	61	31	8	64	28	8
<b>Age</b>						
Under 30	58	38	4	67	29	4
30-49	61	35	4	69	27	4
50-64	57	30	13	61	29	10
65+	50	32	18	54	31	15
<b>Age and Sex</b>						
Men Under 30	58	35	7	64	33	3
Women Under 30	56	43	1	68	27	5
Men 30-49	63	33	4	74	23	3
Women 30-49	59	37	4	64	31	5
Men 50+	52	35	13	58	30	12
Women 50+	55	28	17	57	29	14
<b>Education</b>						
College Grad.	68	27	5	73	20	7
Some College	63	33	4	65	27	8
High School Grad.	56	36	8	63	31	6
<H.S. Grad	39	44	17	55	36	9
<b>Family Income</b>						
\$75,000+	66	33	1	72	20	8
\$50,000-\$74,999	61	31	8	72	25	3
\$30,000-\$49,999	60	36	4	65	29	6
\$20,000-\$29,999	59	40	1	65	31	4
<\$20,000	47	38	15	59	35	6

Question: Do you feel newspapers/TV news unnecessarily invade people's privacy or do they only involve themselves in people's privacy when it is in the public interest?

Continued ...

	--- Newspapers ---			--- TV News ---		
	<u>Invide Privacy</u> %	<u>Only In Pubic Interest</u> %	<u>Don't Know</u> %	<u>Invide Privacy</u> %	<u>Only in Pubic Interest</u> %	<u>Don't Know</u> %
<b>Total</b>	57	35	8=100	64	29	7=100
<b>Region</b>						
East	65	30	5	69	27	4
Midwest	54	34	12	66	30	4
South	52	40	8	59	33	8
West	63	31	6	66	22	12
<b>Religious Affiliation</b>						
Total White Protestant	62	30	8	64	28	8
White Prot. Evangelical	61	30	10	56	32	12
White Prot. Non-Evang.	63	31	6	72	24	4
White Catholic	62	33	5	67	27	6
<b>Community Size</b>						
Large City	59	34	7	61	31	8
Suburb	54	40	6	70	22	8
Small City/Town	56	35	9	61	32	7
Rural Area	65	30	5	68	25	7
<b>Party ID</b>						
Republican	64	32	4	66	26	8
Democrat	54	37	9	62	29	9
Independent	55	36	9	65	32	3
<b>1996 Presidential Vote</b>						
Clinton	55	39	6	66	28	6
Dole	69	29	2	65	27	8
<b>1996 Congressional Vote</b>						
Republican	66	32	2	69	24	7
Democrat	58	33	9	68	26	6

## PRESS FAIRNESS

	--- June 1985 ---		--- February 1997 ---		Change in "Unfair"
	Press Deals	Press Favors	Press Deals	Press Favors	
	<u>Fairly</u>	<u>One Side</u>	<u>Fairly</u>	<u>One Side</u>	
	%	%	%	%	
<b>Total</b>	34	53	27	67	+14
<b>Sex</b>					
Male	32	57	24	72	+15
Female	36	50	30	63	+13
<b>Race</b>					
White	33	56	27	68	+12
Non-white	40	35	30	64	+29
Black	36	35	30	62	+27
<b>Race and Sex</b>					
White Men	31	60	25	72	+12
White Women	35	52	29	64	+12
<b>Age</b>					
Under 30	34	54	24	74	+20
30-49	35	53	32	65	+12
50-64	34	54	24	69	+15
65+	33	52	23	63	+11
<b>Age and Sex</b>					
Men Under 30	35	45	19	78	+23
Women Under 30	33	52	28	70	+18
Men 30-49	31	58	29	69	+11
Women 30-49	38	49	34	61	+12
Men 50+	31	57	21	71	+14
Women 50+	35	49	26	61	+12
<b>Education</b>					
College Grad.	33	62	26	71	+9
Some College	32	58	24	72	+14
High School Grad.	36	51	29	66	+15
<H.S. Grad	34	46	29	59	+13
<b>Region</b>					
East	39	45	29	64	+19
Midwest	32	60	23	70	+10
South	33	50	27	68	+18
West	32	59	30	67	+8

Question: In presenting the news dealing with political and social issues, do you think that news organizations deal fairly with all sides, or do they tend to favor one side?

Continued ...

	--- June 1985 ---		--- February 1997 ---		Change in "Unfair"
	Press Deals	Press Favors	Press Deals	Press Favors	
	<u>Fairly</u>	<u>One Side</u>	<u>Fairly</u>	<u>One Side</u>	
	%	%	%	%	
<b>Total</b>	34	53	27	67	+14
<b>Religious Affiliation</b>					
Total White Protestant	32	60	25	69	+9
White Prot. Evangelical	n/a	n/a	24	68	n/a
White Prot. Non-Evang.	n/a	n/a	27	69	n/a
White Catholic	37	51	30	66	+15
<b>Party ID</b>					
Republican	32	60	19	77	+17
Democrat	36	48	34	58	+10
Independent	34	52	28	69	+17
<b>Income</b>					
High	35	55	19	78	+23
Medium	36	53	30	68	+15
Low	31	52	27	62	+10



## TREND IN FAVORABILITY OF NETWORK NEWS

	--- January 1992 ---		--- February 1997 ---		Change in <u>Favorable</u>
	<u>Total Favorable</u> %	<u>Total Unfavorable</u> %	<u>Total Favorable</u> %	<u>Total Unfavorable</u> %	
<b>Total</b>	82	14	73	22	-9
<b>Sex</b>					
Male	78	17	70	26	-8
Female	85	11	76	20	-9
<b>Race</b>					
White	80	15	73	23	-7
Non-white	89	8	77	19	-12
Black	89	9	77	18	-12
<b>Age</b>					
Under 30	86	12	76	19	-10
30-49	78	16	71	25	-7
50-64	82	12	70	26	-12
65+	84	12	78	18	-6
<b>Age and Sex</b>					
Men Under 30	84	14	68	24	-16
Women Under 30	87	9	83	14	-4
Men 30-49	71	22	68	28	-3
Women 30-49	85	11	74	22	-11
Men 50+	82	13	73	24	-9
Women 50+	83	12	74	20	-9
<b>Education</b>					
College Grad.	74	22	68	28	-6
Some College	81	15	68	28	-13
High School Grad.	84	10	79	18	-5
<H.S. Grad	86	10	73	20	-13
<b>Family Income</b>					
\$50,000+	79	16	70	25	-9
\$30,000-\$49,999	79	17	77	19	-2
\$20,000-\$29,999	84	13	76	21	-8
<\$20,000	84	10	73	23	-11

Question: Now I'd like your opinion of some organizations. As I read from a list, please tell me which category best describes your overall opinion of who or what I name. (First), would you say your overall opinion of *network television news* is very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly UNfavorable, or very unfavorable?

Continued ...

	--- January 1992 ---		--- February 1997 ---		Change in <u>Favorable</u>
	<u>Total</u> <u>Favorable</u> %	<u>Total</u> <u>Unfavorable</u> %	<u>Total</u> <u>Favorable</u> %	<u>Total</u> <u>Unfavorable</u> %	
<b><i>Total</i></b>	82	14	73	23	-9
<b><i>Region</i></b>					
East	81	14	76	20	-5
Midwest	84	11	70	25	-14
South	82	13	78	19	-4
West	80	17	67	28	-13
<b><i>Party ID</i></b>					
Republican	78	16	68	28	-10
Democrat	86	11	81	14	-5
Independent	81	15	71	24	-20

## TREND IN FAVORABILITY OF NATIONAL NEWSPAPERS

	--- January 1992 ---		--- February 1997 ---		Change in Favorable
	Total	Total	Total	Total	
	<u>Favorable</u> %	<u>Unfavorable</u> %	<u>Favorable</u> %	<u>Unfavorable</u> %	
<b>Total</b>	53	12	41	20	-13
<b>Sex</b>					
Male	54	16	41	26	-13
Female	53	9	41	14	-12
<b>Race</b>					
White	52	12	40	20	-12
Non-white	66	12	46	22	-20
Black	67	13	46	22	-21
<b>Age</b>					
Under 30	68	15	53	24	-15
30-49	56	12	45	18	-11
50-64	42	11	28	20	-14
65+	40	11	31	18	-9
<b>Age and Sex</b>					
Men Under 30	69	18	43	32	-26
Women Under 30	67	11	62	18	-5
Men 30-49	54	16	47	22	-7
Women 30-49	58	8	42	15	-16
Men 50+	44	14	31	27	-13
Women 50+	38	8	28	12	-10
<b>Education</b>					
College Grad.	57	19	54	17	-3
Some College	58	12	40	25	-18
High School Grad.	53	10	40	16	-13
<H.S. Grad	45	9	27	27	-18
<b>Family Income</b>					
\$50,000+	58	13	52	20	-6
\$30,000-\$49,999	56	13	42	16	-14
\$20,000-\$29,999	52	12	38	24	-14
<\$20,000	52	12	32	23	-20

Question: Now I'd like your opinion of some organizations. As I read from a list, please tell me which category best describes your overall opinion of who or what I name. (First), would you say your overall opinion of *large nationally influential newspapers such as the New York Times and the Washington Post* is very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly Unfavorable, or very unfavorable?

Continued ...

	--- January 1992 ---		--- February 1997 ---		Change in <u>Favorable</u>
	Total	Total	Total	Total	
	<u>Favorable</u> %	<u>Unfavorable</u> %	<u>Favorable</u> %	<u>Unfavorable</u> %	
<b>Total</b>	53	12	41	20	-13
<b>Region</b>					
East	60	12	48	16	-12
Midwest	49	10	36	21	-13
South	52	14	41	21	-11
West	53	14	40	22	-13
<b>Party ID</b>					
Republican	58	14	37	22	-21
Democrat	54	8	41	16	-13
Independent	52	14	46	23	-6
Rep./Lean Rep.	55	16	39	23	-16
Dem./Lean Dem.	55	9	44	18	-11

## TREND IN FAVORABILITY OF DAILY NEWSPAPERS

	--- January 1992 ---		--- February 1997 ---		Change in Favorable
	Total	Total	Total	Total	
	<u>Favorable</u> %	<u>Unfavorable</u> %	<u>Favorable</u> %	<u>Unfavorable</u> %	
<b>Total</b>	78	18	74	19	-4
<b>Sex</b>					
Male	77	19	73	21	-4
Female	79	17	74	18	-5
<b>Race</b>					
White	77	19	74	20	-3
Non-white	82	13	73	15	-9
Black	84	12	73	14	-11
<b>Age</b>					
Under 30	78	19	78	17	0
30-49	76	20	74	22	-2
50-64	77	18	71	18	-6
65+	83	12	69	16	-14
<b>Age and Sex</b>					
Men Under 30	78	19	76	18	-2
Women Under 30	79	18	80	16	+1
Men 30-49	75	20	75	22	0
Women 30-49	77	20	73	22	-4
Men 50+	79	17	69	19	-10
Women 50+	80	13	71	14	-9
<b>Education</b>					
College Grad.	71	26	72	24	+1
Some College	79	18	73	22	-6
High School Grad.	81	15	79	15	-2
<H.S. Grad	78	14	65	18	-13
<b>Family Income</b>					
\$50,000+	73	24	78	20	+5
\$30,000-\$49,999	80	18	79	18	-1
\$20,000-\$29,999	77	18	72	21	-5
<\$20,000	80	15	69	19	-11

Question: Now I'd like your opinion of some organizations. As I read from a list, please tell me which category best describes your overall opinion of who or what I name. (First), would you say your overall opinion of *the daily newspaper you are most familiar with* is very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly unfavorable, or very unfavorable?

Continued ...

	--- January 1992 ---		--- February 1997 ---		Change in <u>Favorable</u>
	Total	Total	Total	Total	
	<u>Favorable</u> %	<u>Unfavorable</u> %	<u>Favorable</u> %	<u>Unfavorable</u> %	
<b>Total</b>	78	18	74	19	-4
<b>Region</b>					
East	80	17	77	19	-3
Midwest	80	15	73	19	-7
South	78	19	75	17	-3
West	73	21	68	23	-5
<b>Party ID</b>					
Republican	79	18	70	23	-9
Democrat	83	13	78	15	-5
Independent	74	21	73	20	-1
Rep./Lean Rep.	79	19	73	22	-6
Dem./Lean Dem.	78	17	75	17	-3

**MEDIA USE**  
**% Who Read/View "Regularly"**

	<u>Daily Paper</u>	<u>CNN</u>	<u>Network News</u>	<u>Local News</u>	<u>60 Mins.</u>	<u>Date-Line</u>	<u>Amer. Most Wanted</u>	<u>Enter-tainment Tonight</u>	<u>Current Affair</u>	<u>Natl Enq.</u>	<u>N</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
<b>Total</b>	56	28	41	72	24	21	16	9	15	5	1,211
<b>Sex</b>											
Male	61	31	41	71	22	18	18	7	14	3	578
Female	52	25	42	73	25	24	15	12	16	6	633
<b>Race</b>											
White	57	27	42	73	24	21	14	9	14	4	987
Non-white	52	32	39	70	20	22	34	10	23	8	202
Black	55	32	42	72	22	22	34	12	21	8	125
<b>Race and Sex</b>											
White Men	63	30	41	72	22	18	15	7	14	3	476
White Women	52	25	43	74	26	24	12	11	14	5	511
<b>Age</b>											
Under 30	39	22	25	67	9	18	21	9	14	6	259
30-49	55	26	36	70	20	19	13	7	11	3	524
50-64	65	35	53	78	31	27	20	12	23	5	228
65+	72	31	60	78	42	25	15	11	18	7	183
<b>Age and Sex</b>											
Men Under 30	45	27	26	63	8	15	20	5	12	3	122
Women Under 30	33	18	24	71	10	21	22	12	17	8	137
Men 30-49	63	30	35	71	19	15	14	6	10	2	241
Women 30-49	47	23	38	69	21	22	12	9	13	3	283
Men 50+	69	35	58	77	33	22	20	8	21	4	205
Women 50+	68	32	56	79	39	29	15	15	21	8	206
<b>Education</b>											
College Grad.	66	34	46	72	22	20	6	6	8	1	409
Some College	55	31	44	74	26	24	14	5	16	3	304
High School Grad.	57	25	36	72	23	21	18	12	17	5	369
<H.S. Grad	44	24	45	70	23	20	28	12	22	11	117

Question: Now, I'd like to know how often you watch certain TV programs or read certain publications. For each item that I read, tell me if you watch or read it regularly, sometimes, hardly ever, or never? (First,) how often do you (**READ ITEM; ROTATE**)... regularly, sometimes, hardly ever or never?

**Continued ...**

	<u>Daily Paper</u>	<u>CNN</u>	<u>Network News</u>	<u>Local News</u>	<u>60 Mins.</u>	<u>Date- Line</u>	<u>Amer. Most Wanted</u>	<u>Enter- tainment Tonight</u>	<u>Current Affair</u>	<u>Natl Enq.</u>	<u>N</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
<b>Total</b>	56	28	41	72	24	21	16	9	15	5	1,211
<b>Family Income</b>											
\$75,000+	76	42	47	72	29	28	13	8	16	1	160
\$50,000-\$74,999	62	30	43	72	19	19	4	7	12	3	214
\$30,000-\$49,999	65	30	40	75	26	25	16	8	15	3	288
\$20,000-\$29,999	45	29	44	78	23	17	19	13	16	4	164
<\$20,000	42	20	36	67	20	20	27	11	20	7	217
<b>Region</b>											
East	61	30	45	73	29	19	17	4	12	6	214
Midwest	57	26	47	74	24	22	14	9	18	4	332
South	55	27	37	73	19	22	15	13	15	5	471
West	51	30	38	68	25	21	20	9	17	4	194
<b>Religious Affiliation</b>											
Total White Protestant	57	27	44	75	25	25	13	10	16	4	595
White Prot. Evangelical	55	27	41	76	24	23	10	8	14	4	258
White Prot. Non-Evang.	58	28	44	74	26	26	15	12	18	4	307
White Catholic	60	31	45	76	26	17	13	10	13	4	217
<b>Community Size</b>											
Large City	57	24	44	75	26	23	22	8	18	4	255
Suburb	56	32	38	71	22	20	10	7	11	2	263
Small City/Town	56	29	41	72	23	21	16	9	16	5	451
Rural Area	57	27	42	70	24	22	20	13	16	5	220
<b>Party ID</b>											
Republican	63	29	43	73	24	20	13	8	10	4	356
Democrat	56	27	44	73	25	26	20	9	20	4	402
Independent	50	27	37	73	21	17	18	10	16	6	362
<b>1996 Presidential Vote</b>											
Clinton	62	32	50	77	30	23	17	10	18	4	421
Dole	66	34	51	78	21	24	8	6	11	4	306
<b>1996 Congressional Vote</b>											
Republican	70	36	50	80	31	23	13	4	11	4	344
Democrat	65	35	55	77	29	24	17	14	21	2	297



## ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE PRESS'S WATCHDOG ROLE

	<i>Press Criticism Keeps Leaders From ...</i>				Change in Support for "Watchdog"
	--- June 1985 ---		--- February 1997 ---		
	<u>Doing Their Job</u> %	<u>Doing Things They Shouldn't</u> %	<u>Doing Their Job</u> %	<u>Doing Things They Shouldn't</u> %	
<b>Total</b>	17	67	32	56	-11
<b>Sex</b>					
Male	19	67	33	58	-9
Female	15	68	31	54	-14
<b>Race</b>					
White	18	68	32	56	-12
Non-white	9	60	31	57	-3
Black	9	59	35	55	-4
<b>Race and Sex</b>					
White Men	20	67	34	59	-8
White Women	16	69	31	54	-15
<b>Age</b>					
Under 30	16	70	32	58	-12
30-49	18	67	32	59	-8
50-64	17	65	31	54	-11
65+	16	66	32	48	-18
<b>Age and Sex</b>					
Men Under 30	20	69	34	59	-10
Women Under 30	12	71	31	58	-13
Men 30-49	21	66	32	62	-4
Women 30-49	16	68	31	56	-8
Men 50+	16	66	32	54	-12
Women 50+	17	65	32	49	-16
<b>Education</b>					
College Grad.	17	75	26	63	-12
Some College	21	69	28	64	-5
High School Grad.	17	67	34	55	-12
<H.S. Grad	14	61	38	39	-22

Question: Some people think that by criticizing leaders, news organizations keep political leaders from doing their job. Others think that such criticism is worth it because it keeps political leaders from doing things that should not be done. Which position is closer to your opinion?

**Continued ...**

	<i>Press Criticism Keeps Leaders From ...</i>				Change in Support for "Watchdog"
	<i>--- June 1985 ---</i>		<i>--- February 1997 ---</i>		
	<u>Doing Their Job</u> %	<u>Doing Things They Shouldn't</u> %	<u>Doing Their Job</u> %	<u>Doing Things They Shouldn't</u> %	
<b>Total</b>	17	67	32	56	-11
<b>Region</b>					
East	18	65	32	58	-7
Midwest	16	73	32	54	-19
South	18	63	36	52	-11
West	16	70	25	64	-6
<b>Religious Affiliation</b>					
Total White Protestant	17	70	33	55	-15
White Prot. Evangelical	n/a	n/a	33	52	n/a
White Prot. Non-Evang.	n/a	n/a	34	58	n/a
White Catholic	15	69	33	55	-14
<b>Party ID</b>					
Republican	22	65	30	60	-5
Democrat	14	71	35	52	-19
Independent	17	64	32	59	-5
<b>Income</b>					
High	20	68	30	63	-5
Medium	18	68	33	59	-9
Low	13	65	33	52	-13

## PRESS COVERAGE OF PERSONAL AND ETHICAL BEHAVIOR

	---- August 1989 ----		---- February 1997 ----		Change in "Excessive"
	<u>Excessive</u>	<u>Not Excessive</u>	<u>Excessive</u>	<u>Not Excessive</u>	
	%	%	%	%	
<b>Total</b>	52	43	65	30	+13
<b>Sex</b>					
Male	53	44	62	35	+9
Female	52	41	68	25	+16
<b>Race</b>					
White	53	43	67	30	+14
Non-white	48	45	59	34	+11
<b>Age</b>					
Under 30	55	41	64	33	+9
30-49	53	45	69	29	+16
50+	51	42	61	33	+10
<b>Education</b>					
College Grad.	49	48	72	26	+23
Some College	53	45	65	32	+12
High School Grad.	56	40	67	29	+11
<H.S. Grad	50	38	52	36	+2
<b>Region</b>					
East	58	39	70	27	+12
Midwest	49	46	65	32	+16
South	49	44	64	29	+15
West	54	41	62	34	+8
<b>Party ID</b>					
Republican	58	38	62	35	+4
Democrat	47	48	74	21	+27
Independent	51	45	62	35	+11

Question: Do you think that press coverage of personal and ethical BEHAVIOR of political leaders is excessive or not?

## EXCESSIVE COVERAGE OF POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

	<u>Yes</u> %	<u>No</u> %	<u>DK</u> %
<b>Total</b>	46	46	8=100
<b>Sex</b>			
Male	45	49	6
Female	48	42	10
<b>Race</b>			
White	46	46	8
Non-white	46	46	8
Black	46	45	9
<b>Race and Sex</b>			
White Men	46	49	5
White Women	47	42	11
<b>Age</b>			
Under 30	53	43	4
30-49	42	52	6
50-64	46	45	9
65+	48	34	18
<b>Age and Sex</b>			
Men Under 30	52	44	4
Women Under 30	54	41	5
Men 30-49	41	55	4
Women 30-49	44	49	8
Men 50+	46	45	9
Women 50+	48	36	16
<b>Education</b>			
College Grad.	38	58	4
Some College	48	46	6
High School Grad.	50	43	7
<H.S. Grad	48	35	17
<b>Family Income</b>			
\$75,000+	43	54	3
\$50,000-\$74,999	48	49	3
\$30,000-\$49,999	47	49	4
\$20,000-\$29,999	53	41	6
<\$20,000	43	42	15

Question: Do you think press criticism of the POLICIES AND PROPOSALS of political leaders is excessive or not?

Continued ...

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK</u>
	%	%	%
<b>Total</b>	46	46	8=100
<b>Region</b>			
East	51	42	7
Midwest	42	51	7
South	48	43	9
West	45	47	8
<b>Religious Affiliation</b>			
Total White Protestant	47	45	8
White Prot. Evangelical	52	39	9
White Prot. Non-Evang.	44	49	7
White Catholic	48	45	7
<b>Community Size</b>			
Large City	45	47	8
Suburb	39	55	6
Small City/Town	46	44	10
Rural Area	57	38	5
<b>Party ID</b>			
Republican	48	46	6
Democrat	49	44	7
Independent	44	48	8
<b>1996 Presidential Vote</b>			
Clinton	48	46	6
Dole	48	46	6
<b>1996 Congressional Vote</b>			
Republican	49	46	5
Democrat	47	47	6

# SURVEY METHODOLOGY

## ABOUT THIS SURVEY

Results for the *main survey* are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates among a nationwide sample of 1,211 adults, 18 years of age or older, during the period February 20-23, 1997. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is plus or minus 3 percentage points. For results based on either Form 1 (N=603) or Form 2 (N=608), the sampling error is plus or minus 4.5 percentage points.

Results for the *National Social Trust* survey are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates among a nationwide sample of 1,003 adults, 18 years of age or older, during the period February 6-9, 1997. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

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.

## **SURVEY METHODOLOGY IN DETAIL**

The samples for each survey are random digit samples of telephone numbers selected from telephone exchanges in the continental United States. The random digit aspect of the sample is used to avoid "listing" bias and provides representation of both listed and unlisted numbers (including not-yet-listed). The design of the sample ensures this representation by random generation of the last two digits of telephone numbers selected on the basis of their area code, telephone exchange, and bank number.

The telephone exchanges were selected with probabilities proportional to their size. The first eight digits of the sampled telephone numbers (area code, telephone exchange, bank number) were selected to be proportionally stratified by county and by telephone exchange within county. That is, the number of telephone numbers randomly sampled from within a given county is proportional to that county's share of telephone households in the U.S. Estimates of the number of telephone households within each county are derived from 1990 Census data on residential telephone incidence that have been updated with state-level information on new telephone installations and county-level projections of the number of households. Only working banks of telephone numbers are selected. A working bank is defined as 100 contiguous telephone numbers containing three or more residential listings.

The sample was released for interviewing in replicates. Using replicates to control the release of sample to the field ensures that the complete call procedures are followed for the entire sample.

At least four attempts were made to complete an interview at every sampled telephone number. The calls were staggered over times of day and days of the week to maximize the chances of making a contact with a potential respondent. All interview breakoffs and refusals were re-contacted at least once in order to attempt to convert them to completed interviews. In each contacted household, interviewers asked to speak with the "youngest male 18 or older who is at home". If there is no eligible man at home, interviewers asked to speak with "the oldest woman 18 or older who lives in the household". This systematic respondent selection technique has been shown empirically to produce samples that closely mirror the population in terms of age and gender.

Non-response in telephone interview surveys produces some known biases in survey-derived estimates because participation tends to vary for different subgroups of the population, and these subgroups are likely to vary also on questions of substantive interest. In order to compensate for these known biases, the sample data are weighted in analysis.

The demographic weighting parameters are derived from a special analysis of the most recently available Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (March 1994). This analysis produced population parameters for the demographic characteristics of households with adults 18 or older, which are then compared with the sample characteristics to construct sample weights. The analysis only included households in the continental United States that contain a telephone.

The weights are derived using an iterative technique that simultaneously balances the distributions of all weighting parameters.



## THE QUESTIONNAIRES

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE AND THE PRESS**  
**FEBRUARY 1997 MEDIA SURVEY**  
**-- FINAL TOPLINE --**  
**February 20-23, 1997**  
**N=1,211**

Hello, I am \_\_\_\_\_ calling for Princeton Survey Research Associates in Princeton, New Jersey. We are conducting a telephone opinion survey for leading newspapers and TV stations around the country. I'd like to ask a few questions of the youngest male, 18 years of age or older, who is now at home. [IF NO MALE, ASK: May I please speak with the oldest female, 18 years of age or older, who is now at home?]

Q.5 Now, I'd like to know how often you watch certain TV programs or read certain publications. For each item that I read, tell me if you watch or read it regularly, sometimes, hardly ever, or never. (First,) how often do you (READ ITEM; ROTATE)... regularly, sometimes, hardly ever or never?

**INTERVIEWER: OBSERVE FORM DIFFERENCES WHERE NOTED: [ Form 1 N=603; Form 2 N=608]**

		<u>Regularly</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Hardly Ever</u>	<u>Never</u>	<u>DK</u>
a.	Watch the national nightly network news on CBS, ABC or NBC? This is different from local news shows about the area where you live	41	31	14	14	*=100
	April, 1996	42	29	15	14	*=100
	March, 1995	48	28	14	10	*=100
	May, 1993	60	28	5	6	1=100
	February, 1993	58	23	10	9	*=100
b.	Watch the local news about your viewing area? This usually comes on before the national news and then later at night at 10 or 11	72	16	7	5	0=100
	April, 1996	65	23	7	5	*=100
	March, 1995	72	18	6	4	*=100
	May, 1993	77	16	5	4	*=100
	February, 1993	76	16	5	3	*=100
c.	Watch Cable News Network (CNN)	28	30	14	28	0=100
	April, 1996	26	33	14	27	*=100
	March, 1995	30	28	13	28	1=100
	July, 1994	33	36	7	24	*=100
	February, 1994	31	32	8	29	*=100
	May, 1993	35	34	7	24	*=100
	June, 1992	30	32	10	27	1=100
	July, 1990	27	28	8	36	1=100
	June, 1990	30	27	6	37	*=100
	May, 1990	27	25	7	40	1=100
	April, 1990	26	29	7	37	1=100
	March, 1990	22	28	8	41	1=100
	February, 1990	23	29	8	40	0=100
	January, 1990	26	25	7	41	1=100

**Q.5 con't ...**

		<u>Regularly</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Hardly Ever</u>	<u>Never</u>	<u>DK</u>
d.	Watch 60 Minutes	24	35	21	20	*=100
e.	Watch Dateline NBC	21	38	17	24	*=100
f.	Watch TV shows such as A Current Affair, Hard Copy or Inside Edition	15	34	23	28	*=100
	April, 1996	19	35	20	26	*=100
	July, 1994	24	40	18	18	0=100
	February, 1994 <sup>4</sup>	19	34	18	29	*=100
g.f1	Watch America's Most Wanted	16	26	24	34	0=100
h.f2	Watch Entertainment Tonight	9	29	23	39	*=100
	June, 1992	11	30	24	35	*=100
	April, 1990	14	30	17	39	*=100
	March, 1990	15	31	15	39	*=100
	February, 1990	11	31	16	42	0=100
	January, 1990	11	34	16	39	0=100
i.	Read a daily newspaper	56	24	9	11	*=100
	May 1993	66	19	7	8	*=100
	February, 1992	71	19	5	4	1=100
j.	The National Enquirer, The Sun or The Star	5	6	12	77	0=100
	April, 1996	5	11	12	72	*=100
	July, 1994	5	13	16	66	*=100
	June, 1992	5	13	14	68	*=100
	March, 1990	5	15	13	67	*=100
	February, 1990	7	13	13	67	*=100
	January, 1990	7	12	13	68	0=100

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<sup>4</sup> In February 1994, the question was asked about "A Current Affair" only.

Q.6 How much do you enjoy watching the news on TV... **(READ)**?

		Nov <u>1985</u> <sup>5</sup>
26	A great deal	42
52	A fair amount	41
16	Not much, OR	12
5	Not at all	4
*	Don't watch the news <b>(VOL)</b>	0
<u>1</u> 100	Don't know/Refused	<u>1</u> 100

Q.7 How much, if at all, do you look forward to reading the paper each day... **(READ)**?

		Nov <u>1985</u>
27	Very much	42
35	A fair amount	29
21	Not too much, OR	18
14	Not at all	10
3	Don't read the paper <b>(VOL.)</b>	0
<u>*</u> 100	Don't know/Refused	<u>1</u> 100

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<sup>5</sup> Question wording for November 1985 was as follows, "How much do you enjoy watching the news itself?"

**ON A DIFFERENT SUBJECT...**

Q.8 Now I'd like your opinion of some organizations. As I read from a list, please tell me which category best describes your overall opinion of who or what I name. (First), would you say your overall opinion of... **(INSERT ITEM; ROTATE)** is very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly UNfavorable, or very unfavorable? **(INTERVIEWERS: PROBE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN "NEVER HEARD OF" AND "CAN'T RATE")**

		Very Favorable	Mostly Favorable	Mostly Unfavorable	Very Unfavorable	Never Heard Of	Can't Rate
a.	Network television news	15	58	18	5	*	4=100
	April, 1996	21	58	13	4	0	4=100
	January, 1996	25	58	11	4	*	2=100
	June, 1995	16	51	21	9	*	3=100
	July, 1994	17	52	22	7	*	2=100
	May, 1993	23	58	12	3	0	4=100
	January, 1992	27	55	11	2	0	5=100
	November, 1991	24	51	16	5	0	4=100
	March, 1991	40	51	5	2	0	2=100
	May, 1990	22	60	12	3	*	3=100
	August, 1989	28	54	11	3	4=100	
	February, 1989	21	61	12	3	3=100	
	August <sup>6</sup> , 1988	29	52	9	5	5=100	
	May, 1988	20	58	14	4	4=100	
	January 27, 1988	12	69	13	3	3=100	
	January 7-18, 1988	18	60	14	4	4=100	
	October, 1987	19	62	10	3	6=100	
	May, 1987	21	63	11	3	2=100	
	January, 1987	19	55	16	6	4=100	
	July, 1986	30	53	10	4	3=100	
	August, 1985	30	51	8	2	7=100	
	June, 1985	25	59	8	2	6=100	
b.	Local TV news	25	56	12	3	0	4=100
	April, 1996	26	58	10	3	*	3=100
	January, 1996	28	56	10	4	*	2=100
	March, 1991	37	52	6	2	*	3=100
	August, 1989	27	53	11	4	5=100	
	July, 1985	27	57	9	2	5=100	

<sup>6</sup>

Based on Registered Voters.

**Q.8 con't ...**

	<u>Very Favorable</u>	<u>Mostly Favorable</u>	<u>Mostly Unfavorable</u>	<u>Very Unfavorable</u>	<u>Never Heard Of</u>	<u>Can't Rate</u>
c. Large nationally influential newspapers such as the New York Times and the Washington Post	8	33	13	7	2	37=100
January, 1992	16	37	9	4	0	34=100
July, 1985	12	36	8	3	1	40=100
d. The daily newspaper you are most familiar with	21	53	15	4	0	7=100
April, 1996	24	56	12	4	0	4=100
January, 1996	27	52	11	5	*	5=100
June, 1995	22	52	14	7	1	4=100
July, 1994	23	57	13	5	*	2=100
May, 1993	26	55	10	4	0	5=100
January, 1992	27	51	13	5	0	4=100
November, 1991	24	56	11	5	0	4=100
March, 1991	30	55	7	3	*	5=100
May, 1990	22	56	12	5	*	5=100
August, 1989	25	52	12	5		6=100
February, 1989	22	56	13	4		5=100
August <sup>7</sup> , 1988	30	48	10	5		7=100
May, 1988	19	59	13	4		5=100
January 27, 1988	19	62	11	3		5=100
January 7-18, 1988	21	59	12	4		4=100
October, 1987	21	58	9	4		8=100
May, 1987	22	59	12	3		4=100
January, 1987	19	57	13	6		5=100
July, 1986	28	51	11	6		4=100
August, 1985	25	52	10	5		8=100
June, 1985	25	56	8	3		8=100

<sup>7</sup>

Based on Registered Voters.

Q.8 con't ...

		Very Favorable	Mostly Favorable	Mostly Unfavorable	Very Unfavorable	Never Heard Of	Can't Rate
e.	Congress	6	46	31	9	*	8=100
	January, 1997	6	50	32	8	*	4=100
	June, 1996	6	39	38	12	*	5=100
	April, 1996	6	39	37	13	0	5=100
	January, 1996	4	38	38	16	*	4=100
	October, 1995	4	38	42	13	0	3=100
	August, 1995	5	40	34	13	*	7=100
	June, 1995	8	45	31	11	*	5=100
	February, 1995	10	44	27	10	0	9=100
	July, 1994	7	46	34	9	*	4=100
	May, 1993	8	35	35	13	0	9=100
	November, 1991	7	44	34	9	0	6=100
	May, 1990	6	53	25	9	1	6=100
	May, 1988	8	56	23	5	0	8=100
	January, 1988	6	58	25	4	0	7=100
	May, 1987	10	64	16	4	*	6=100
	January, 1987	7	52	23	8	0	10=100
	June, 1985	9	58	21	5	*	7=100
f.	The U.S. court system <sup>8</sup>	5	37	33	18	*	7=100
	January, 1996	4	31	37	25	0	3=100
	June, 1995	6	37	34	20	*	3=100
	February, 1995	8	35	31	19	0	7=100
	January, 1994	2	41	35	18		4=100

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<sup>8</sup> Trends for January 1996 and January 1994 refer to "the court system in this country."

**INTERVIEWER NOTE: FOR ITEMS a. AND d., IF RESPONDENT ANSWERS 1-4, FOLLOW-UP WITH Q.9  
OBSERVING FORM DIFFERENCES AS NOTED.**

Q.9 Why do you feel that way?

**NETWORK TV NEWS**

Favorable Responses (N=879)

8	Keeps me informed/In touch with what's going on
5	Very interesting/I just like it
4	Comprehensive coverage/Covers everything/Wide variety of coverage
4	Good coverage
3	Accurate reporting
2	Unbiased views
2	Do a good job of reporting the news
2	They are biased
2	They do a balanced job of reporting the news/Give both sides of the stories
2	Stay on top of the news/Report stories as they happen
1	Does some good/Makes a contribution
1	They get more in depth on stories
1	Reports on things that affect me personally
*	Entertaining
*	Gives national/International coverage
*	Prefer national news to local news
12	Other
56	Don't know/No answer

Unfavorable Responses (N=285)

14	News is biased
8	All the bad news/Too negative
7	Give opinions, not facts
5	News is sensationalized
4	Not enough real news
3	No in depth coverage
3	Too liberal
2	I don't believe most of it
2	No follow through
1	Too much violence/Too much emphasis on crime
1	Rush to judgment/Report on rumors
1	Don't care about people
1	Too political
10	Other
50	Don't know/No answer



**Q.9 con't ...**

**DAILY NEWSPAPERS**

Favorable Responses (N=890)

10	It's local news/Talks about where I live
5	Keeps me informed/In touch with what's going on
4	It is a good newspaper
4	Gives good coverage
3	Unbiased
3	Comprehensive coverage/Covers everything/Wide variety of coverage
3	They report the facts
2	Biased
2	They do a balanced job of reporting the news/Give both sides of the stories
2	It's interesting
2	Gets more in depth/Spends more time discussing the news
1	Like the layout of the paper
1	No accurate
12	Other
53	Don't know/No answer

Unfavorable Responses (N=238)

15	Give biased views
5	Too much negative stuff
4	Don't check the facts/Not always accurate
4	They don't report the whole story
4	Too localized
2	Repetitive stories
2	Too liberal
2	Inject their own opinions
1	Don't give a balanced view of the story
1	Hurt people's reputation
1	Prefer TV News
13	Other
57	Don't know/No answer

**ASK ALL:  
ON ANOTHER SUBJECT...**

Q.14 Now I am going to read a list of television shows. For each, please tell me if you think of them as mainly being NEWS shows or mainly being ENTERTAINMENT shows? First.... **(READ AND ROTATE)**... do you think of this as mainly being a news show or mainly being an entertainment show?

		<u>News Show</u>	<u>Enter-tainment Show</u>	<u>Never Heard of</u>	<u>DK Ref.</u>
a.	The Today Show	40	40	4	16=100
	August, 1989	48	29	2	21=100
b.	A Current Affair	27	56	4	13=100
	August, 1989	39	28	7	26=100
c.	America's Most Wanted	46	42	2	10=100
	August, 1989	50	28	4	18=100
d.	The Tonight Show with Jay Leno	1	83	3	13=100
	August, 1989 <sup>9</sup>	2	84	1	13=100
e.	Dateline NBC	71	16	2	11=100
f.	60 Minutes	81	14	*	5=100
	August, 1989	82	13	*	5=100

**ON A DIFFERENT SUBJECT...**

Q.15 Some people think that by criticizing leaders, news organizations keep political leaders from doing their job. Others think that such criticism is worth it because it keeps political leaders from doing things that should not be done. Which position is closer to your opinion ?

		<u>Late Jan 1994</u>	<u>Early Jan 1994</u>	<u>Aug 1989</u>	<u>Dec 1986</u>	<u>June 1985</u>
32	Criticism by the press keeps political leaders from doing their job 24	18	23	26	17	
56	Criticism keeps leaders from doing things that shouldn't be done	66	69	68	60	67
<u>12</u> 100	Don't know/Refused	<u>10</u> 100	<u>13</u> 100	<u>9</u> 100	<u>14</u> 100	<u>16</u> 100

<sup>9</sup>

August 1989 trend referred to "The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson."

**ASK Q.16 OF FORM 1 ONLY: [N=603]**

Q.16F1 Some people think that by closely covering the PERSONAL and ETHICAL behavior of political leaders, news organizations discourage many competent people from serving in public office. Others think this coverage is worth it because it weeds out the kind of people who should not be in office. Which comes closer to your point of view?

47 Coverage discourages competent people  
45 Coverage weeds out undesirable people  
8 Don't know/Refused  
100

**ASK Q.17 OF FORM 2 ONLY: [N=608]**

Q.17F2 Some people think that by criticizing PROPOSALS made by political leaders, news organizations get in the way of society solving its problems. Others think that such criticism is worth it because it points out possible problems with these proposals. Which is closer to your point of view?

34 Criticism gets in the way  
59 Criticism is worth it  
7 Don't know/Refused  
100

**ROTATE Q.18 AND Q.19, ASK ALL:**

Q.18 Do you think that press coverage of the personal and ethical BEHAVIOR of political leaders is excessive or not?

		Jan <u>1994</u>	Aug <u>1989</u>
65	Yes, coverage is excessive	59	52
30	No, it is not excessive	38	43
<u>5</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>
100		100	100

Q.19 Do you think press criticism of the POLICIES AND PROPOSALS of political leaders is excessive or not?

46 Yes, criticism is excessive  
46 No, it is not excessive  
8 Don't know/Refused  
100

**ASK Q.20 OF FORM 1 ONLY: [N=603]**

Q.20F1 Do you feel newspapers unnecessarily invade people's privacy or do they only involve themselves in people's privacy when it is in the public interest?

		<u>Jan 1994</u>
57	Unnecessarily invade people's privacy	60
35	Only in public interest	35
<u>8</u> 100	Don't know/Refused	<u>5</u> 100

**ASK Q.21 OF FORM 2 ONLY: [N=608]**

Q.21F2 Do you feel TV news programs unnecessarily invade people's privacy, or do they only involve themselves in people's privacy when it is in the public interest?

		<u>Jan 1994</u>
64	Unnecessarily invade people's privacy	63
29	Only in public interest	32
<u>7</u> 100	Don't know/Refused	<u>5</u> 100

**ASK ALL:**

Q.22 In general, do you think news organizations get the facts straight, or do you think that their stories and reports are often inaccurate?

		<u>Jan 1992</u>	<u>Aug 1989</u>	<u>Aug 1988</u>	<u>May 1988</u>	<u>Jan 1988</u>	<u>June 1985</u>
37	Get facts straight	49	54	40	48	44	55
56	Stories often inaccurate	44	44	50	43	48	34
<u>7</u> 100	Don't know/Refused	<u>7</u> 100	<u>2</u> 100	<u>10</u> 100	<u>9</u> 100	<u>8</u> 100	<u>11</u> 100

Q.23 In presenting the news dealing with political and social issues, do you think that news organizations deal fairly with all sides, or do they tend to favor one side?

		<u>Jan</u> <u>1992</u>	<u>Aug</u> <u>1989</u>	<u>Aug</u> <u>1988</u>	<u>May</u> <u>1988</u>	<u>Jan</u> <u>1988</u>	<u>Dec</u> <u>1986</u>	<u>July</u> <u>1986</u>	<u>June</u> <u>1985</u>
27	Deal fairly with all sides	31	28	36	34	30	39	37	34
67	Tend to favor one side	63	68	57	56	59	54	57	53
<u>6</u> 100	Don't know/Refused	<u>6</u> 100	<u>4</u> 100	<u>7</u> 100	<u>10</u> 100	<u>11</u> 100	<u>7</u> 100	<u>6</u> 100	<u>13</u> 100

**NO QUESTION 24-26**

**ON A DIFFERENT SUBJECT...**

Q.27 Some people think the courts should make it easier for people to win libel suits against the news media. Others think this will prevent the news media from reporting stories that may be in the public interest. Which comes closest to your view?

		<i>Gallup/Newsweek</i> <u>Oct 1984</u>
34	Make libel suits easier	32
53	Will prevent important stories	52
<u>13</u> 100	Don't know/Refused	<u>16</u> 100

**NO QUESTION 28**

Q.29 In your opinion, should the press report the names of people who are suspected of committing crimes if they haven't yet been charged, OR should the press wait until formal charges have been brought against a suspect to report his or her name?

7	Press should report names of suspects
89	Press should wait until charges are brought
1	Depends ( <b>VOL</b> )
<u>3</u> 100	Don't know/Refused

Q.30 During the recent presidential campaign, several news organizations learned that Republican candidate Bob Dole had an extra-marital affair 30 years earlier. These news organizations did not publish this information. Do you think they made the right decision, or do you think they should have made this information available to the public?

72	Made the right decision
23	Should have made info. available
<u>5</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

**ASK ALL:  
ON ANOTHER SUBJECT...**

Q.31 As you probably know, the news media -- TV, newspapers and magazines -- often do what is called investigative reporting... uncovering and reporting on corruption and fraud in business, government agencies, and other organizations. In general, do you approve or disapprove of investigative reporting by the news media?

		<i>Gallup</i> <u>Nov 1981</u>
80	Approve	79
17	Disapprove	18
<u>3</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>3</u>
100		100

Q.32 From what you've seen or read about it, would you like to see MORE of this type of reporting, or LESS?

		<i>Gallup</i> <u>Nov 1981</u>
60	More	66
28	Less	19
6	Same/Enough at present ( <b>VOL</b> )	11
<u>6</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>4</u>
100		100

Q.33 Now, I am going to read you a list of techniques the media sometimes use when they are doing investigative reporting. Please tell me whether you approve or disapprove of each technique... (**READ AND ROTATE**)

		<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>DK</u>
a.	Using hidden cameras and microphones <i>Gallup: Nov 1981</i>	42 38	54 58	4=100 4=100
b.	Having reporters not identify themselves as reporters <i>Gallup: Nov 1981</i>	31 32	66 65	3=100 3=100
c.	Running stories that quote an unnamed source rather than giving the person's name <i>Gallup: Nov 1981</i>	52 42	45 53	3=100 5=100
d.	Paying informers for their information or testimony <i>Gallup: Nov 1981</i>	29 36	67 56	4=100 8=100

**NOW I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU ABOUT SOME THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN IN THE NEWS RECENTLY. NOT EVERYONE WILL HAVE HEARD ABOUT THEM ALL...**

Q.34 First, do you happen to know who Richard Jewell is?

46 The man who was first suspected and later cleared of the Olympic Park bombing in Atlanta this past summer

5 Some other answer -- **GO TO Q.35**

49 Don't know/Refused -- **GO TO Q.35**  
100

**Q.34a AND Q.34b BASED ON THOSE ABLE TO IDENTIFY RICHARD JEWELL IN Q.34: [ N=616]**

Q.34a When you first heard about Richard Jewell, did you think he was guilty of planting the bomb in Olympic park, or not?

25 Yes, thought he was guilty

50 No, didn't think he was guilty

21 Wasn't sure (**VOL**)

4 Don't know/Refused  
100  
(**N=616**)

Q.34b Richard Jewell claims his reputation has been damaged as a result of the Olympic park bombing incident. If this is so, who do you think is more to blame for this... law enforcement sources or the news media?

24 Law enforcement  
58 News media  
16 Both equally (VOL)  
1 Neither (VOL)  
\* Some other party (SPECIFY)  
1 Don't know/Refused  
100  
(N=616)

**ASK ALL:**

Q.35 Do you happen to know who JonBenet (**PRONOUNCED JOHN-BEN-NAY**) Ramsey is?

70 Little girl, beauty queen who was murdered in her home in Boulder, Colorado  
6 Other answer -- **GO TO Q.36**  
24 Don't know/Refused -- **GO TO Q.36**  
100

**BASED ON THOSE ABLE TO IDENTIFY JONBENET RAMSEY IN Q.35: [ N=856]**

Q.35a Thinking about the people you know -- that is, your friends and family -- how interested would you say they have been in the investigation into JonBenet's death... would you say they have been very interested, somewhat interested, not too interested or not at all interested?

27 Very interested  
36 Somewhat interested  
24 Not too interested  
10 Not at all interested  
3 Don't know/Refused  
100  
(N=856)



**ASK ALL:**

Q.36 During the NFL playoff season, did you hear or read anything about two Dallas Cowboy football players who were wrongfully accused of sexual assault?

89 Yes, heard or read about this

10 No did not -- **GO TO D1**

1 Don't know/Refused -- **GO TO D1**  
100

**Q.36a AND Q.36b BASED ON THOSE FAMILIAR WITH THE STORY IN Q.36: [ N=1085]**

Q.36a When you first heard about this, did you think the two Dallas Cowboy players were guilty of sexual assault, or not?

37 Yes, thought they were guilty

40 No, didn't think they were guilty

15 Wasn't sure (**VOL**)

8 Don't know/Refused  
100  
(**N=1085**)

Q.36b The two players involved, Michael Irvin and Erik Williams, claim their reputations have been damaged as a result of this incident. If this is so, who do you think is more to blame for this... law enforcement sources or the news media?

16 Law enforcement

67 Media

6 Both equally (**VOL**)

3 Neither (**VOL**)

2 The players themselves

2 The woman that accused them

\* Some other party (**SPECIFY**)

4 Don't know/Refused  
100  
(**N=1085**)

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER  
 NATIONAL SOCIAL TRUST SURVEY  
 -- FINAL TOPLINE --  
 February 6 - 9, 1997  
 N = 1,003**

Hello, I am \_\_\_\_\_ calling for Princeton Survey Research Associates in Princeton, New Jersey. We are conducting a telephone opinion survey for leading newspapers and TV stations around the country. I'd like to ask a few questions of the youngest male, 18 years of age or older, who is now at home. [IF NO MALE, ASK: May I please speak with the oldest female, 18 years of age or older, who is now at home?]

**NOW, ON A TOTALLY DIFFERENT SUBJECT...**

18. Which of the following two statements about the news media do you agree with more... **(READ)**

<u>Nat'l</u>		<u>March</u> <u>1995</u>	<u>July</u> <u>1994</u>
36	The news media helps society to solve its problems -- <b>GO TO Q20</b>	33	25
	OR		
54	The news media gets in the way of society solving its problems	57	71
<u>10</u>	Don't know/Refused -- <b>GO TO Q20</b>	<u>10</u>	<u>4</u>
100		100	100

**BASED ON THOSE WHO ANSWERED "THE NEWS MEDIA GETS IN THE WAY..." IN Q.18 [N=531]**

19. Can you tell me the most important reason WHY you feel this way? (*open-end*)

<u>Nat'l</u>		<u>Sept. 1994</u>
25	Sensationalism/Hype/Exaggerate/Media blows things out of proportion	30
23	Biased/Liberal/Slanted/One-sided reporting/Offer their own opinions and views	36
9	Distort the facts/truth	9
8	Over-emphasize the negative/Sensationalize the negative	9
7	Invalidate people's personal lives/Don't give people enough privacy	
6	Don't get all the facts/Not in-depth reporting	5
6	Don't offer solutions/Stir up problems instead of solving	
5	Too fast to make a judgement/jump to conclusions	
5	Just out to make money/get ratings/sell advertising/sell newspapers, etc.	
5	Too selective in disseminating information/Write only what they want the public to know	7
4	Spent too much time on O.J. Simpson trial	
3	Don't check their facts/Facts aren't accurate	5
3	Spend too much time reporting on a particular news event	
3	Magnify minority/racial group problems/issues	
2	Too much information/Too many issues presented at once	5
2	Not trustworthy/Public cannot trust them	
2	No distinction between hard news and tabloids	
2	The way they cover the news (unspecified)	
2	Too much information on everything	
1	Too aggressive/Too pushy	
2	All other reporting of information mentions	2
2	All other misc. mentions	
9	Don't know/Refused	14