



FOR RELEASE MAY 10, 2017

Americans' Attitudes About the News Media Deeply Divided Along Partisan Lines

Democrats are 47 points more likely than Republicans to support news media's watchdog role

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Americans' Attitudes About the News Media Deeply Divided Along Partisan Lines

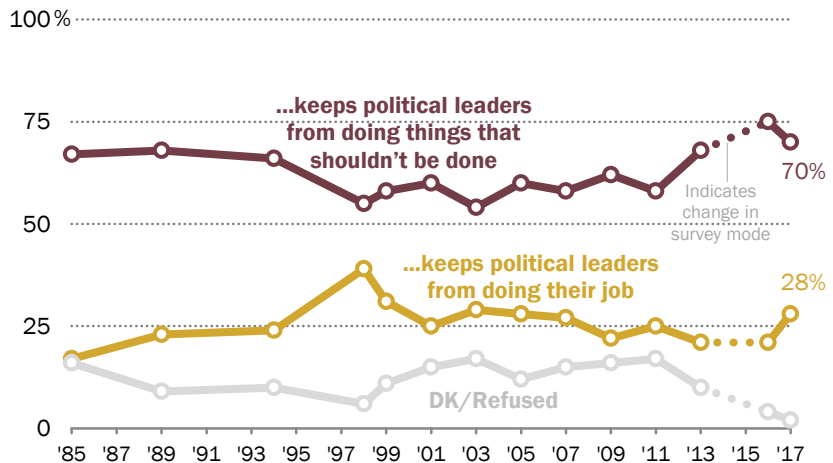
Democrats are 47 points more likely than Republicans to support news media's watchdog role

Democrats and Republicans, who already tend to place their [trust in different news sources](#) and rely on different outlets for [political news](#), now disagree more than ever on a fundamental issue of the news media's role in society: whether news organizations' criticism of political leaders primarily keeps them from doing things they shouldn't – or keeps them from doing their job.

Today, in the early days of the Trump administration, roughly nine-in-ten Democrats (89%) say news media criticism keeps leaders in line (sometimes called the news media's “watchdog role”), while only about four-in-ten Republicans (42%) say

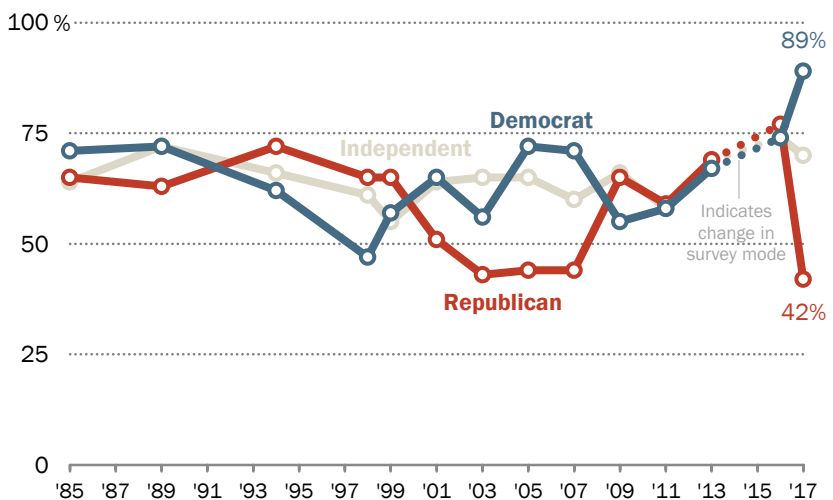
Overall, a majority of the public supports news media's watchdog role ...

% of U.S. adults who think that criticism from news organizations ...



... but 2017 reveals sharpest divide ever measured

% of U.S. adults who think that criticism from news organizations keeps political leaders from doing things that shouldn't be done



Note: Dotted line indicates a change in mode. Polls from 1985-2013 were conducted via phone. In 2016 and 2017, the polls were conducted on the American Trends Panel, which is online.

Source: Survey conducted March 13-27, 2017. For dates of other surveys, see Methodology. “Americans’ Attitudes About the News Media Deeply Divided Along Partisan Lines”

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the same. That is a 47-percentage-point gap, according to a new online survey conducted March 13-27, 2017, among 4,151 U.S. adults who are members of [Pew Research Center's nationally representative American Trends Panel](#). The gap stands in sharp contrast to [January-February 2016](#), when Americans were asked the same question. Then, in the midst of the presidential primary season, nearly the same share of Democrats (74%) and Republicans (77%) supported the watchdog role.

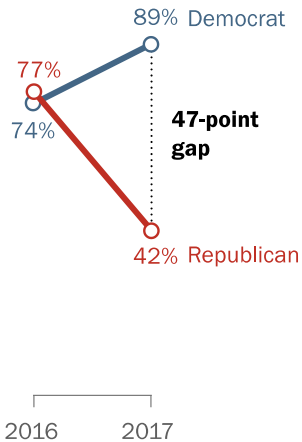
Pew Research Center has asked this question since 1985. While Republicans have been more likely to support a watchdog role during Democratic presidencies and vice versa, the distance between the parties has never approached the 47-point gap that exists today. The widest gap up to now occurred during the George W. Bush administration, when Democrats were 28 points more likely than Republicans to support a watchdog role. It should be noted that prior to 2016, the question was asked by telephone rather than the web, which [can elicit slightly different response patterns](#).¹ Even taking possible mode effects into account, though, this year's difference is so stark that it would still be the largest gap in the Center's polling on this question.

¹ In 2016, a small number of respondents took the survey by mail. For more on mode effects, see our 2015 report "[From Telephone to the Web: The Challenge of Mode of Interview Effects in Public Opinion Polls](#)."

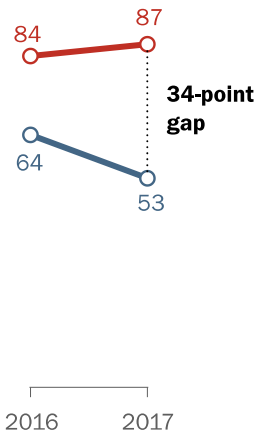
Parties show more disagreement on attitudes about news media

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

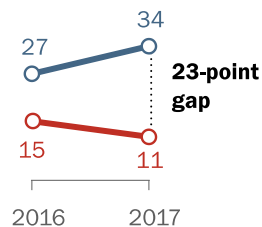
Media criticism of political leaders keeps them from doing things they shouldn't



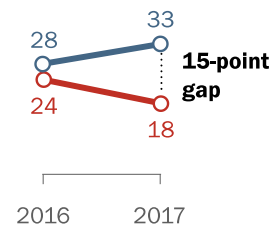
News organizations tend to favor one side



Information from national news organizations is very trustworthy



National news media do very well at keeping them informed



Note: Independents not shown.

Source: Surveys conducted March 13-27, 2017, and Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.

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This partisan split is found in other attitudes about the news media, though none in so dramatic a fashion as with the watchdog role. Compared with 2016, Democrats and Republicans are more divided on whether the press favors one side in its political coverage, on how much trust they have in national news media, and on how good a job national news organizations are doing in keeping them informed.

The divide in news media attitudes also extends to Americans' behaviors around news. Most prominently, Americans are also paying closer attention to national news now than in 2016, with that increase driven by Democrats. Overall, four-in-ten Americans report following national news very closely, up from a third the year before. Among Democrats, about half (49%) say they follow it closely, also up from a third in 2016.

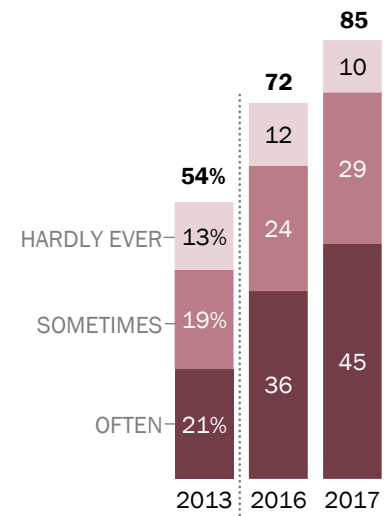
Democrats are also driving an increase in use of mobile devices for news. Nearly half of U.S. adults (45%) often get news on a mobile device. That is 9 percentage points above just a year ago, when 36% often got news this way, with significant growth occurring among Democrats but not Republicans. What's more, an increasing share of Americans also prefer getting news on mobile over a desktop computer. Among those who get news on both types of devices, nearly two-thirds (65%) say they prefer mobile.

Finally, one aspect of news consumption is little changed in either party: the role of friends and family as sources of news. Fifteen percent of Americans have a lot of trust in news that comes to them from friends and family (slightly lower than the trust levels for local and national news organizations), and 16% of online news consumers often get news there from people close to them (about a third as many as do so from news organizations). These figures are on par with 2016 and show less partisan divide than other measures – just a 5-percentage-point gap, for instance, in trust of information from family and friends. There was a slight uptick in the share of Americans who say the political news they get from friends and family represents just one side rather than a mix (40%, up from 35% in 2016), with Democrats and Republicans equally likely to say this.

These findings are a part of Pew Research Center's [ongoing examination](#) of Americans' attitudes about the news media and consumption habits around news, including [findings reported earlier this year](#) that, even amid these partisan divides, strong majorities of both Republicans and Democrats feel the relationship between the press and the Trump administration is unhealthy and getting in the way of Americans' access to political information.

Continued rise in use of mobile devices for news

% of U.S. adults who get news on mobile devices ...



Source: Survey conducted March 13-27, 2017.

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1. Democrats, Republicans now split on support for watchdog role

Democrats and Republicans are widely divided in several of their views of the news media, a finding that is a sharp break from just a year ago.

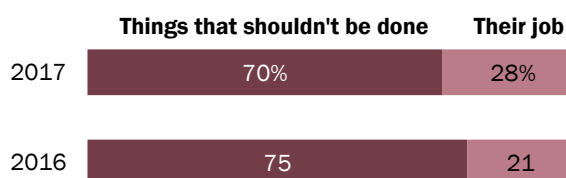
The most striking divide is on the role of criticism by news organizations: whether it is worthwhile because it mostly keeps political leaders from doing things they shouldn't do (the so-called "watchdog role"), or it gets in the way of leaders' ability to do their job.²

Overall, seven-in-ten Americans feel news media criticism keeps politicians in line, down just slightly from last year. But Democrats are far more likely than Republicans to hold this view. Nearly nine-in-ten Democrats (89%) feel media criticism keeps leaders from doing the wrong thing – a sense shared by only about four-in-ten Republicans (42%). In contrast, a year ago about three-quarters of both Democrats (74%) and Republicans (77%) backed the news media's watchdog role. Most of the year-to-year shift occurred among Republicans, whose support for the watchdog role dropped 35 points. At the same time, Democrats are now even more likely to express support for it, rising from 74% in 2016 to 89% today.

Among independents overall, views remained unchanged year to year (74% in 2016; 70% in 2017). However, independents who lean to the

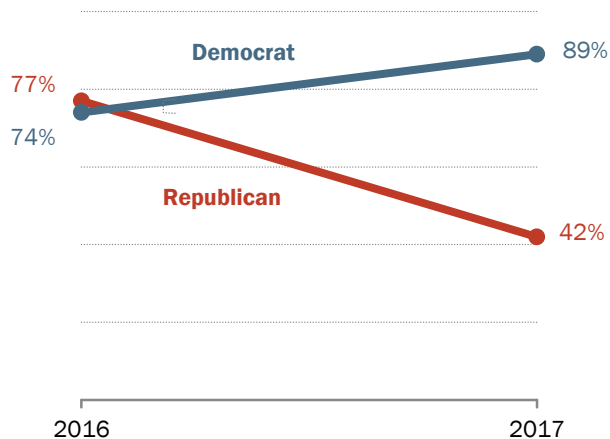
Little change in support for the news media's watchdog role ...

% of U.S. adults who think that criticism from news organizations keeps political leaders from doing ...



... but Democrats and Republicans now diverge

% of U.S. adults who think that criticism from news organizations keeps political leaders from doing things that shouldn't be done



Note: Independents not shown in second chart.

Source: Surveys conducted March 13-27, 2017, and Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.

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² The question asked respondents to choose between two statements: "By criticizing leaders, news organizations keep political leaders from doing their job" and "such criticism is worth it because it keeps political leaders from doing things that should not be done."

Democratic Party have become more likely to back the news media's watchdog role (76% in 2016, 86% in 2017), while Republican-leaning independents have become less likely to do so (76% in 2016, 56% in 2017).

Party support for watchdog role often shifts with control of the White House; 2017 shows greatest divide ever measured

% of U.S. adults who say that news organizations' criticism of political leaders keeps them from doing things that shouldn't be done

	Phone surveys									Web surveys				
	Reagan 1985	Bush Sr. 1989	Clinton			George W. Bush				Obama			Obama 2016	Trump 2017
			1994	1998	1999	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013		
Republican	65%	63%	72%	65%	65%	51%	43%	44%	44%	65%	59%	69%	77%	42%
Democrat	71	72	62	47	57	65	56	72	71	55	58	67	74	89
Independent	64	72	66	61	55	64	65	65	60	66	58	69	74	70
<i>Rep-Dem gap</i>	<i>D+6</i>	<i>D+9</i>	<i>R+10</i>	<i>R+18</i>	<i>R+8</i>	<i>D+14</i>	<i>D+13</i>	<i>D+28</i>	<i>D+27</i>	<i>R+10</i>	<i>R+1</i>	<i>R+2</i>	<i>R+3</i>	<i>D+47</i>

Source: Survey conducted March 13-27, 2017. For dates of other surveys, see Methodology.

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It is not unusual for Americans who align with the party in control of the presidency to be somewhat less likely to support the watchdog role (as Republicans are now). For instance, in prior, phone-based surveys conducted by Pew Research Center, Democrats were more likely to express support for the news media’s watchdog role during the George W. Bush administration, while Republicans were somewhat more likely to hold this view during Bill Clinton’s presidency and in the first year of Barack Obama’s administration. (There was no noticeable partisan divide later in Obama’s presidency, after the GOP won control of Congress.) Still, the current gap is far wider than at any prior point over the past three decades that the Center has been tracking this trend. Indeed, the largest gap in past polling was 28 percentage points in 2005, at the beginning of George W. Bush’s second term in office. While phone surveys show some [different response patterns](#) from web-based surveys (as the current and the 2016 polls are), the gap in 2017 is so large that, even if mode effects were taken into account, it would still be the largest in the Center’s history of polling on this question.³

³ For this particular question, one obvious mode difference is in the share of U.S. adults saying “don’t know” or refusing to answer the question. On the phone, respondents could volunteer a “don’t know” response to this question, and between 6% and 17% of respondents did so each time. On the web, however, respondents could only skip the question, and few did: 4% in 2016, and 2% in 2017. If the web surveys were administered by phone, we could have fewer respondents endorsing the watchdog role because more would be saying “don’t know.” However, there is no year of the phone poll when the gap would be more than 30 points, even when taking out the “don’t know” responses. As such, it is likely the 47-point gap in 2017 is still the largest.

Partisan divide also apparent in perceived fairness of news media

When it comes to the perceived fairness of the news media, a strong majority of Americans continue to say news organizations tend to favor one side in presenting news on political and social issues: 72%, on par with the 74% in 2016. Only a little over a quarter, on the other hand, say they deal fairly with all sides.

But the differences between Democrats and Republicans have grown wider over the last year.

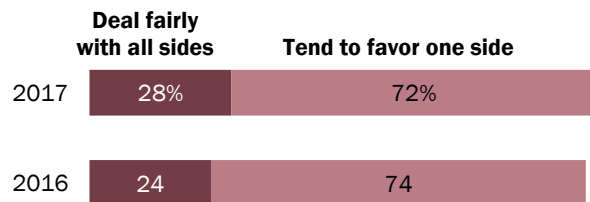
Now, roughly half of Democrats say the news media tend to favor one side (53%), down from nearly two-thirds (64%) a year ago. The views of liberal Democrats in particular have shifted: 53% say the news media favor one side, a 20-percentage-point decline from 2016 (73%). Moderate and conservative Democrats showed no measurable movement.

Republicans, on the other hand, overwhelmingly think news organizations tend to favor one side (87%), in line with their 2016 view. Neither conservative Republicans nor moderate and liberal Republicans showed any movement.

Pew Research Center's long trend of phone surveys on this question (which are not exact comparisons with the current and 2016 web-based surveys due to the potential for small [mode effects](#)) reveals that Republicans have consistently been more likely than Democrats to say the news media favor one side in their

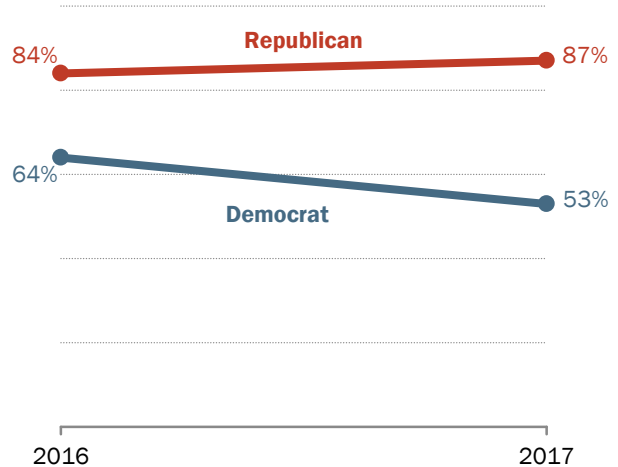
Sense that news media favor one side remains strong ...

% of U.S. adults who think news organizations ___ when presenting the news on political and social issues



... but a larger partisan gap emerges

% of U.S. adults who think news organizations tend to favor one side when presenting the news on political and social issues



Note: Independents not shown in second chart.

Source: Surveys conducted March 13-27, 2017, and Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.

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political coverage. Still, with the exception of the end of the George W. Bush administration in 2007, the current gap is far wider than at any other point in the trend.

Republicans consistently more likely to say news media favor one side

% of U.S. adults who say that news organizations tend to favor one side when presenting the news on political and social issues

	Phone surveys								Web surveys			
	Reagan 1985	Bush Sr. 1989	Clinton 1997	George W. Bush				Obama			Obama	Trump
				2001	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013	2016	2017
Republican	60%	71%	77%	70%	73%	83%	81%	84%	85%	81%	84%	87%
Democrat	48	62	58	62	60	66	54	67	70	69	64	53
Independent	52	71	69	69	69	70	68	73	79	79	75	73
<i>Rep-Dem gap</i>	<i>R+12</i>	<i>R+9</i>	<i>R+19</i>	<i>R+8</i>	<i>R+13</i>	<i>R+17</i>	<i>R+27</i>	<i>R+17</i>	<i>R+15</i>	<i>R+12</i>	<i>R+20</i>	<i>R+34</i>

Source: Survey conducted March 13-27, 2017. For dates of other surveys, see Methodology.
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Trust in news organizations divides on party lines; trust in social media very low for both parties

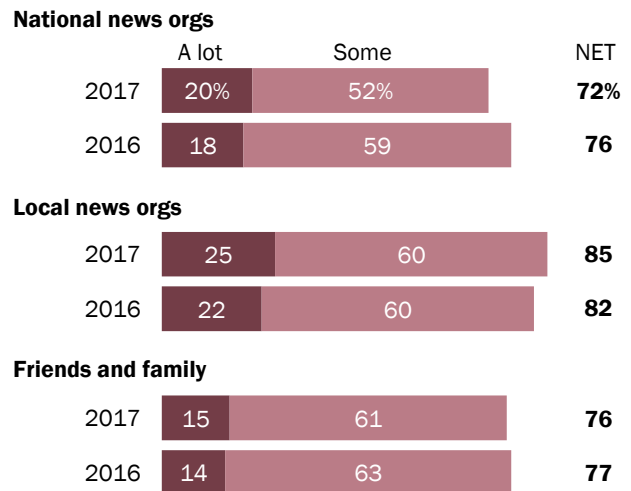
The new survey also finds growing partisan differences in the level of trust Americans have in the information coming from national news organizations.

As in 2016, few Americans express high levels of trust in news they get from professional news organizations or from their social connections. Just one-fifth of adults say they trust information they get from national news organizations “a lot.” Slightly more (25%) say this of news from local news organizations, while slightly fewer (15%) place a lot of trust in the information they get from friends and family.

Lower than all three is social media. Even as [we know](#) Americans rely heavily on social media for their news – which is often at least partly filled by posts from friends and family – they continue to have very low trust in information from social networking sites. Just 5% of web-using U.S. adults have a lot of trust in the information they get there, nearly identical to the 4% who said so in 2016.

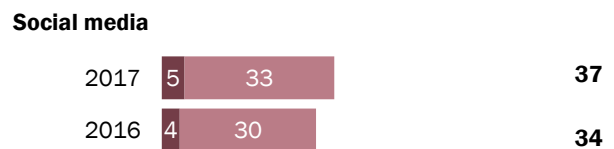
Americans express only moderate trust in most news source types ...

% of U.S. adults who trust the information from ...



... and continue to have much lower trust in social media

*% of **web-using** U.S. adults who trust the information from ...*



Source: Surveys conducted March 13-27, 2017, and Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.

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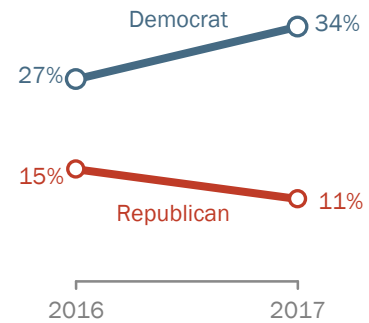
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Among these four sources, trust of national news organizations has the largest partisan divide, and it grew substantially since 2016. Roughly a third of Democrats (34%) express a lot of trust in news they get from national news organizations, compared with just 11% of Republicans, a 23-point gap. In 2016, Democrats also reported higher rates of trust in the national news media, but the difference was more modest (27% compared with 15% among Republicans).

A party divide also exists in trust of local media, though to a lesser degree and without a sizable change in the party gap. About a third (36%) of Democrats trust local news media a lot, compared with nearly a quarter (24%) of Republicans – a 12-point gap. (Independents stayed roughly the same on both questions from 2016 to 2017.)

Partisan gap in trust of national media widens

% of U.S. adults who trust the information they get from national news organizations a lot



Note: Independents not shown.
 Source: Surveys conducted March 13-27, 2017, and Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.
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Democrats more likely than Republicans to give high job approval of national news organizations; more agreement on ratings of local news organizations

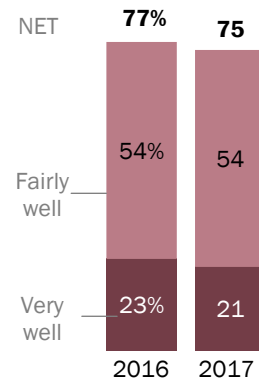
Similar to the level of trust in national news organizations, just 21% of Americans say the national news media do very well at keeping them informed. About half (54%) say they do fairly well, while the remainder say they do their job not too well (20%) or not well at all (4%).

These figures overall are consistent with 2016 but there is now some distance between the parties. A third of Democrats now say the national media do very well at informing them, compared with only 18% of Republicans who say the same, a 15-percentage-point gap. (There was no significant difference between the parties in 2016.) And it is driven by older members of both parties. The percentage of Republicans ages 50 and older that give the national news media top marks declined by 10 points from 2016 to 2017; among Democrats of this age group, approval rose 11 percentage points.

When it comes to local news media, the partisan split is much smaller and unchanged from 2016. Overall, 23% of adults say local news organizations do very well at keeping them informed. That sentiment is expressed by 29% of Democrats, only slightly higher than the 22% of Republicans who say so, with each party's figures little changed since 2016 (21% overall, 25% of Democrats and 22% of Republicans).

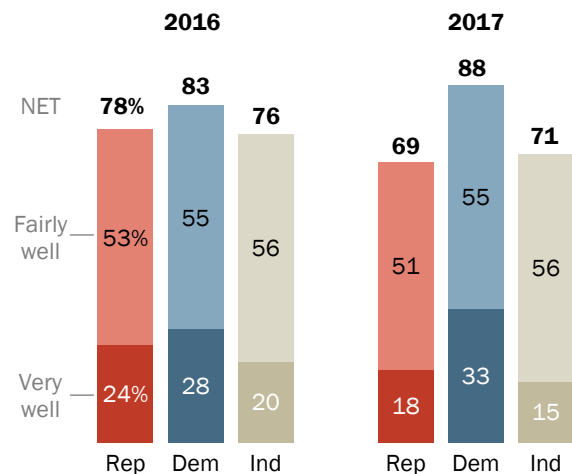
About one-fifth of adults say national news organizations do a very good job ...

% of U.S. adults who say that national news media do very well/fairly well at keeping them informed



... but Democrats now more likely to say this than Republicans

% of U.S. adults who say that national news media do very well/fairly well at keeping them informed



Source: Surveys conducted March 13-27, 2017, and Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.

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2. Interest in national news increases sharply among Democrats

Partisan differences are evident not just in Americans' news attitudes but also in their news practices.

Interest in national news increased over the past year, with four-in-ten Americans now saying they very closely follow national news, compared with a third in 2016. The growth occurred almost solely among Democrats, whose rate of interest jumped 16 points from 33% then to 49% today.

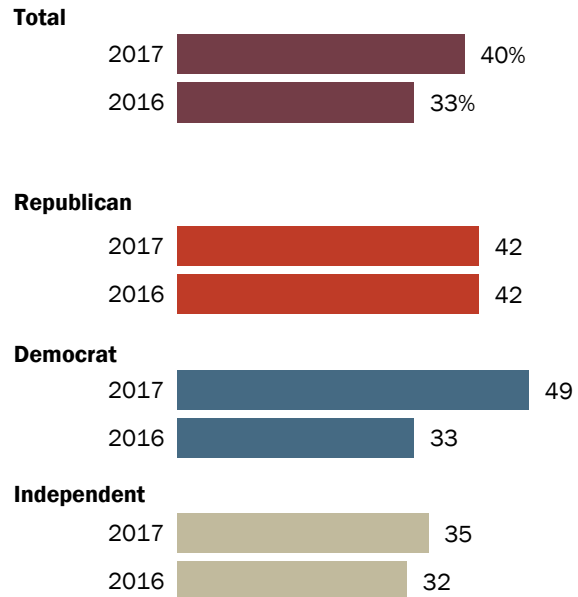
And it is older rather than younger Democrats who are paying closer attention. Sharp increases occurred among both Democrats ages 35 to 49 (from 26% who followed national news very closely in 2016 to 44% in 2017) and Democrats 50 and older (from 41% in 2016 to 63% in 2017), while there was no significant change among Democrats ages 18 to 34.

The heightened overall interest in national news does not carry through to local, neighborhood or international news. Interest

in local news actually saw a slight decline (33% follow local news very closely, compared with 37% in 2016) while interest in international and neighborhood did not change significantly. There were also no party-line changes here other than among independents whose interest in local news fell 9 points from 2016 (35% saying they very closely follow local news) to 2017 (26%). (Topline numbers available [here](#) and party breakdowns can be found in the [detailed tables](#).)

Higher interest in national news driven by Democrats

% of U.S. adults who very closely follow national news



Source: Surveys conducted March 13-27, 2017, and Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.

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Use of mobile devices for news continues to grow

Today, fully 45% of U.S. adults often get news on a mobile device. That is up from 36% in 2016 and 21% in 2013. The use of desktop or laptop computers for news remains steady, with 31% saying they do so often.

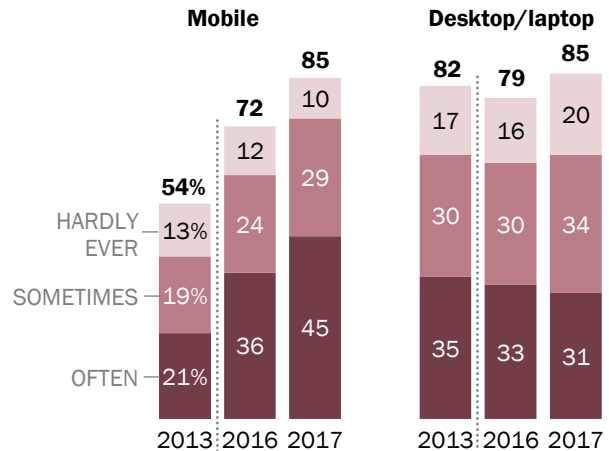
In all, 85% of Americans ever get news on a mobile device, the same proportion who do so on a desktop computer. And, among those who get news both ways, mobile devices are increasingly preferred. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of U.S. adults who get news on both mobile and desktop prefer mobile. This is up from 56% in 2016. (The question was not asked in 2013.)

This increase in mobile news use occurred only among Democrats: While 37% of Democrats said they got news often on mobile devices in 2016, 52% say so today – a 15-point increase. (The gains here were not due to the fact that [Democrats tend to be younger than Republicans](#); in fact, the largest gains were seen among Democrats 50 and older.)

Preference for mobile over desktop grew equally among both Democrats and Republicans.

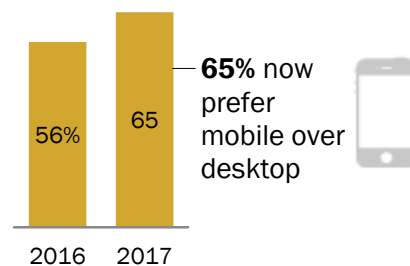
Use of mobile devices for news continues to grow

% of U.S. adults who get news from ...



Of those who get news on both desktop and mobile, most prefer mobile

% of those who get news on both desktop and mobile who prefer mobile



Source: Survey conducted March 13-27, 2017. "Americans' Attitudes About the News Media Deeply Divided Along Partisan Lines"

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News organizations are a larger part of online news consumption, especially among Democrats

To get a better sense of the flow of news online, we asked those who ever get news on a digital device (whether on a desktop computer or mobile device) how often they get digital news from news organizations, from people they are close with and from people they are not close with.

Among the three, news organizations sit at the top as a frequent source for online news and also experienced the largest increase from 2016.

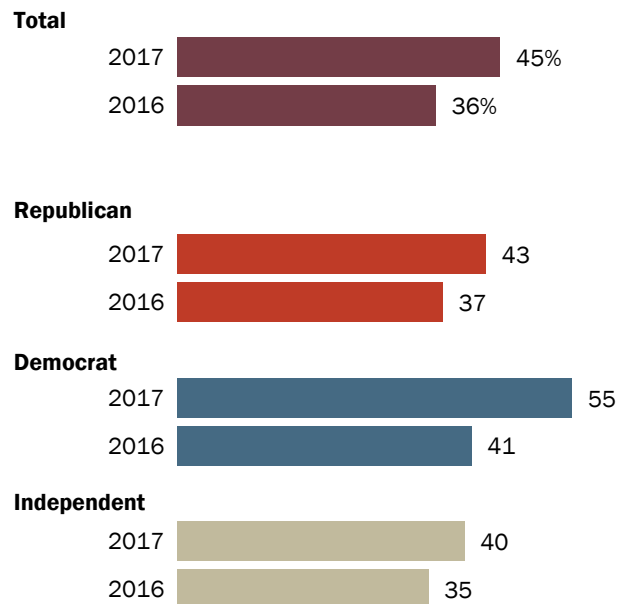
Nearly half of digital news users (45%) often get news from news organizations, up from 36% in 2016. As with interest in national news, this increase is driven primarily by Democrats (55% often get news this way today, up from 41% in 2016). No significant shifts occurred among Republicans or independents.

The share of online news consumers who often get news there from people they know well remained roughly the same as it was last year (16% today, 15% in 2016), including within both political parties. And there was only a small change in the proportion of Americans who say they often get news from people they don't know well: 9% today compared with 6% in 2016, with small growth across Republicans, Democrats and independents. (Topline numbers are available [here](#) and party breakdowns can be found in the [detailed tables](#).)

Online news consumers were next asked to rate the accuracy of the news they get from each of those three types of sources (news organizations, people you know well and people you don't

More Democrats turn to news organizations for digital news

Of U.S. adults who ever get news on a mobile device or desktop/laptop computer, % who often get news online from news organizations



Source: Surveys conducted March 13-27, 2017, and Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.
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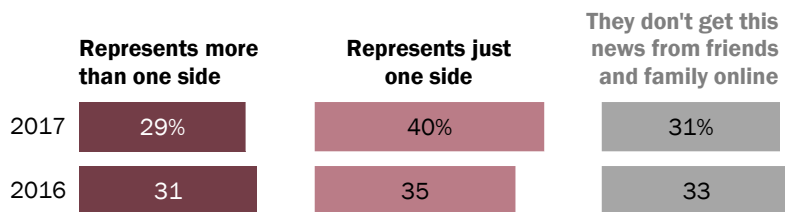
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know well). Democrats, who as noted are turning to news organizations online at higher rates than Republicans, also give these outlets higher marks for accuracy. A third of digital-news-using Democrats who turn to news organizations for online news rate this news as very accurate, compared with 8% of Republicans who get online news that way.⁴ There was also a wide gap in 2016, though not to the same degree (22% of Democrats who got news online from these sources versus 10% of Republicans). Republicans and Democrats did not differ in their accuracy ratings of the other two source types. Overall, among those who get news from each source, there were no significant year-over-year changes in accuracy ratings (full data available in the [topline](#)).

The survey also asked about the degree of balance in the political news Americans get from family and friends online: Does it represent just one side, or multiple sides? Overall, 40% of Americans say their social circle posts primarily one-sided news. This represents a small rise from 2016, when 35% said this, with Republicans and Democrats equally likely to say this both years.

Four-in-ten say political news from friends and family online represents one side

% of U.S. adult online news consumers who think that the news their friends and family post or send online about political and social issues ...



Source: Surveys conducted March 13-27, 2017, and Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.
 "Americans' Attitudes About the News Media Deeply Divided Along Partisan Lines"

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All in all, then, news from one's personal circle remains one area in which Democrats and Republicans largely agree and which saw little year-to-year change.

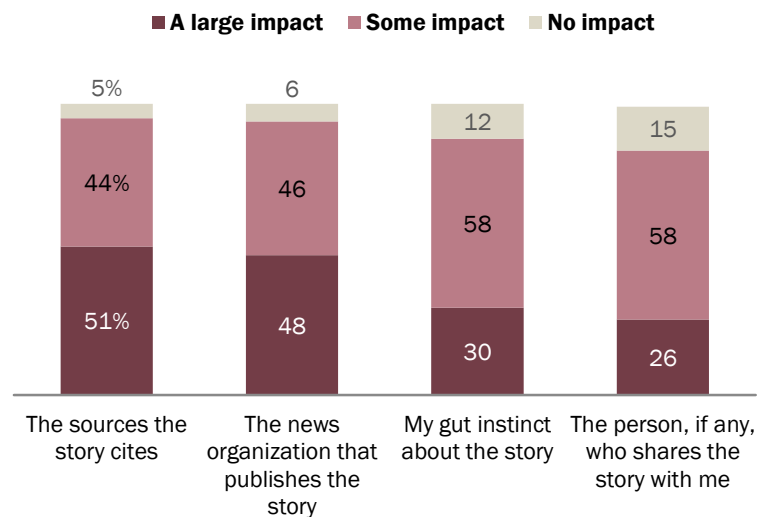
⁴ While more Democrats than Republicans get news online from news organizations, only those who use each online source type were asked to assess its accuracy.

In judging the trustworthiness of a story, Americans take a variety of considerations into account

Among four possible considerations individuals could take into account when deciding whether or not a story is trustworthy, each has at least some impact among sizeable majorities of Americans. Two of the four, however, stand out as being more likely to have a large impact. About half of U.S. adults say the sources the story cites (51%) and the story's publisher (48%) have "a large impact" on trust. Three-in-ten say their gut instinct about the story has a large impact, while about a quarter (26%) say they look to the person who shared the story as a major factor in determining whether they trust it.

Several factors have an impact on perceived trustworthiness of news stories

% of U.S. adults who say each has ___ on whether they think a news story is trustworthy



Note: "No answer" not shown.

Source: Survey conducted March 13-27, 2017.

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Democrats are more likely to give the sources a story cites a lot of weight in judging its trustworthiness (58%, compared with 48% of Republicans) and the same holds true for what news organization publishes the story (56%, versus 47% of Republicans). Both parties, however, have these two factors at the top of their lists. On the other hand, Republicans are more likely than Democrats to cite their gut instinct: About four-in-ten Republicans (38%) say this has a large impact, compared with about a quarter of Democrats (26%). Republicans rank "gut instinct" higher than the person who shared the story, while Democrats cite both as large impacts at roughly the same rate.

Other data add nuance to these findings and suggest that who shares the story might sometimes be a larger factor in assessing accuracy than it appears here. Previous studies have shown that online

news consumers are more likely to take a follow-up action (such as searching for more information) when a news story [comes from a friend or family member](#) than when it comes directly from a news organization, and that friends' recommendations [play a larger role](#) than news outlets' reputations in motivating someone to click on a link to a news story on Facebook.

Acknowledgments

Pew Research Center is a subsidiary of The Pew Charitable Trusts, its primary funder. This report was made possible by The Pew Charitable Trusts, which received support from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation’s “Initiative on Trust, Media and American Democracy,” a collaboration between the Knight Foundation, the Ford Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Open Society Foundations.

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Methodology

The American Trends Panel (ATP), created by Pew Research Center, is a nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults who participate via monthly self-administered web surveys. Panelists were recruited from landline and cellphone random-digit-dial surveys. Panelists who do not have internet access are provided with a tablet and wireless internet connection. The panel is being managed by Abt SRBI.

Data in this report are drawn from the panel wave conducted March 13-27, 2017, among 4,151 respondents. The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 4,151 respondents is plus or minus 2.7 percentage points.

Members of the American Trends Panel were recruited from two large, national landline and cellphone random-digit-dial (RDD) surveys conducted in English and Spanish. At the end of each survey, respondents were invited to join the panel. The first group of panelists was recruited from the 2014 Political Polarization and Typology Survey, conducted Jan. 23 to March 16, 2014. Of the 10,013 adults interviewed, 9,809 were invited to take part in the panel and a total of 5,338 agreed to participate.⁵ The second group of panelists was recruited from the 2015 Survey on Government, conducted Aug. 27 to Oct. 4, 2015. Of the 6,004 adults interviewed, all were invited to join the panel, and 2,976 agreed to participate.⁶

The ATP data were weighted in a multi-step process that begins with a base weight incorporating the respondents' original survey selection probability and the fact that in 2014 some panelists were subsampled for invitation to the panel. Next, an adjustment was made for the fact that the propensity to join the panel and remain an active panelist varied across different groups in the sample. The final step in the weighting uses an iterative technique that aligns the sample to population benchmarks on a number of dimensions. Gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and region parameters come from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2015 American Community Survey. The county-level population density parameter (deciles) comes from the 2010 U.S. Decennial Census. The telephone service benchmark comes from the January-June 2016 National Health Interview Survey and is projected to 2017. The volunteerism benchmark comes from the 2015 Current Population Survey Volunteer Supplement. The party affiliation benchmark is the average of the three most recent Pew Research Center general public telephone surveys. The Internet

⁵ When data collection for the 2014 Political Polarization and Typology Survey began, non-internet users were subsampled at a rate of 25%, but a decision was made shortly thereafter to invite all non-internet users to join. In total, 83% of non-internet users were invited to join the panel.

⁶ Respondents to the 2014 Political Polarization and Typology Survey who indicated that they are internet users but refused to provide an email address were initially permitted to participate in the American Trends Panel by mail but were no longer permitted to join the panel after Feb. 6, 2014. Internet users from the 2015 Survey on Government who refused to provide an email address were not permitted to join the panel.

access benchmark comes from the 2015 Pew Survey on Government. Respondents who did not previously have internet access are treated as not having internet access for weighting purposes. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. Interviews are conducted in both English and Spanish, but the Hispanic sample in the American Trends Panel is predominantly native born and English speaking.

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:

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	4,151	2.7 percentage points
Those who get news on a mobile device or desktop/laptop computer	4,038	2.7 percentage points
Republicans	1,080	5.2 percentage points
Democrats	1,472	4.5 percentage points
Independents	1,193	5.0 percentage points

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.

The March 2017 wave had a response rate of 80% (4,151 responses among 5,177 individuals in the panel). Taking account of the combined, weighted response rate for the recruitment surveys (10.0%) and attrition from panel members who were removed at their request or for inactivity, the cumulative response rate for the wave is 2.6%.⁷

The following table shows the dates for the phone trends for the watchdog and bias questions.

⁷ Approximately once per year, panelists who have not participated in multiple consecutive waves are removed from the panel. These cases are counted in the denominator of cumulative response rates.

Question	Dates	
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?	July 17-21, 2013	
	July 20-24, 2011	
	July 2009	
	July 2007	
	June 2005	
	Early July 2003	
	Early September 2001	
	February 1999	
	Early February 1998	
	Late January 1994	
	August 1989	
	July 1985	
	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?	July 17-21, 2013
		July 20-24, 2011
July 2009		
July 2007		
June 2005		
Early July 2003		
Early September 2001		
February 1997		
August 1989		
July 1985		

Appendix A: Detailed tables

Interest in news

% of U.S. adults who very closely follow ...

	2016	2017
	%	%
National news		
Republican	42	42
Democrat	33	49
Independent	32	35
Local news		
Republican	38	37
Democrat	41	41
Independent	35	26
News about your neighborhood		
Republican	36	31
Democrat	34	35
Independent	32	26
International news		
Republican	23	19
Democrat	19	20
Independent	18	18

Source: Surveys conducted March 13-27, 2017, and Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.

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Desktop and mobile news use

% of U.S. adults who often get news ...

	2016	2017
	%	%
On a desktop or laptop computer		
Republican	34	31
Democrat	30	31
Independent	35	34
On a mobile device (such as a smartphone or tablet)		
Republican	36	40
Democrat	37	52
Independent	36	41

Source: Surveys conducted March 13-27, 2017, and Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.

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Desktop and mobile news use preference

Of those who get news on both a desktop/laptop computer and a mobile device, % who prefer a ...

	2016	2017
Desktop or laptop computer	%	%
Republican	46	38
Democrat	40	30
Independent	43	38
Mobile device (such as a smartphone or tablet)		
Republican	52	62
Democrat	57	68
Independent	55	59

Note: Refused/Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Surveys conducted March 13-27, 2017, and Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.

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Job approval of national and local media

% of U.S. adults who say that the ____ does very well at keeping them informed

	2016	2017
	%	%
National media		
Republican	24	18
Democrat	28	33
Independent	20	15
Local media		
Republican	22	22
Democrat	25	29
Independent	19	20

Source: Surveys conducted March 13-27, 2017, and Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.

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Trust in the news media

*% of U.S. adults who trust the information they get from
 ____ a lot*

	2016	2017
	%	%
National news organizations		
Republican	15	11
Democrat	27	34
Independent	13	15
Local news organizations		
Republican	23	24
Democrat	29	36
Independent	18	20
Friends, family, and acquaintances		
Republican	16	18
Democrat	16	13
Independent	11	14
Social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter		
Republican	2	3
Democrat	5	6
Independent	5	5

Note: Trust in social media was only asked of web users in 2016 (N=4,339).

Source: Surveys conducted March 13-27, 2017, and Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.

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Views of the watchdog role of the media

% of U.S. adults who think that news media criticism of political leaders ...

	2016	2017
	%	%
Keeps political leaders from doing things that shouldn't be done		
Republican	77	42
Democrat	74	89
Independent	74	70
Keeps political leaders from doing their job		
Republican	20	56
Democrat	22	9
Independent	23	29

Note: Refused/Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Surveys conducted March 13-27, 2017, and Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.

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Views of media bias

*% of U.S. adults who think news organizations ____
when presenting the news on political and social issues*

	2016	2017
	%	%
Tend to favor one side		
Republican	84	87
Democrat	64	53
Independent	75	73
Deal fairly with all sides		
Republican	15	13
Democrat	32	46
Independent	23	27

Note: Refused/Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Surveys conducted March 13-27, 2017, and Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.

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Factors in perceived trustworthiness of news stories

% of U.S. adults who say each has “a large impact” on whether they think a news story is trustworthy

	Republican	Democrat	Independent
	%	%	%
The sources the story cites	48	58	48
The news organization that publishes the story	47	56	45
My gut instinct about the story	38	26	29
The person, if any, who shares the story with me	28	28	22

Source: Survey conducted March 13-27, 2017.

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Online news sources

Of those who get news on a mobile device or desktop/laptop computer, % who often get online news from ...

	2016	2017
	%	%
News organizations		
Republican	37	43
Democrat	41	55
Independent	35	40
People you are close with		
Republican	13	16
Democrat	16	20
Independent	16	13
People you are not particularly close with		
Republican	4	8
Democrat	6	11
Independent	5	9

Source: Surveys conducted March 13-27, 2017, and Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.

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Accuracy of online news sources

Of those who get news online from each, % who say that the news they get from ____ is very accurate

	2016	2017
	%	%
News organizations		
Republican	10	8
Democrat	22	33
Independent	13	14
People you are close with		
Republican	8	7
Democrat	8	9
Independent	6	5
People you are not particularly close with		
Republican	1	2
Democrat	3	2
Independent	2	3

Source: Surveys conducted March 13-27, 2017, and Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.

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Perception of bias of news from friends and family online

% of online news consumers who think that the news their friends, family and acquaintances post or send online about political and social issues ...

	2016	2017
	%	%
Represents just one side		
Republican	37	40
Democrat	36	40
Independent	32	40
Represents more than one side		
Republican	31	27
Democrat	32	31
Independent	33	28
They don't send me news about political and social issues		
Republican	31	32
Democrat	30	29
Independent	35	31

Note: Refused/Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Surveys conducted March 13-27, 2017, and Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.

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Topline questionnaire

2017 PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S AMERICAN TRENDS PANEL

WAVE 25 MARCH

FINAL TOPLINE

March 13 – March 27, 2017

TOTAL N=4,151⁸

ASK ALL:

NEWS_LEVEL

How closely do you follow...

		<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Somewhat closely</u>	<u>Not_very closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	<u>No answer</u>
a.	International news					
	Mar 13-Mar 27, 2017	17	49	27	6	*
	Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016	19	46	25	9	*
b.	National news					
	Mar 13-Mar 27, 2017	40	43	14	4	*
	Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016	33	44	16	6	*
c.	Local news					
	Mar 13-Mar 27, 2017	33	45	18	3	*
	Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016	37	41	16	6	*
d.	News about your neighborhood					
	Mar 13-Mar 27, 2017	30	39	22	9	*
	Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016	33	37	20	10	*

ASK ALL:

NEWS_DEVICE

Thinking about news (by news we mean information about events and issues that involve more than just your friends and family), how often do you get news... **[RANDOMIZE]**

		<u>Often</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Hardly ever</u>	<u>Never</u>	<u>No answer</u>
a.	On a desktop or laptop computer					
	Mar 13-Mar 27, 2017	31	34	20	15	*
	Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016	33	30	16	21	*
	Aug 21-Sep 2, 2013	35	30	17	18	*
b.	On a mobile device (such as a smartphone or tablet)					
	Mar 13-Mar 27, 2017	45	29	10	15	*
	Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016	36	24	12	28	*
	Aug 21-Sep 2, 2013	21	19	13	46	*

⁸ The Wave 25 survey was administered exclusively in web mode. The survey included N=181 previous mail mode panelists that were converted to web and were provided an internet-enabled tablet if necessary.

ASK IF GETS NEWS ON BOTH COMPUTER AND MOBILE DEVICE (NEWS_DEVICEa=1-3 & NEWS_DEVICEb=1-3) [N=3,402]:

NEWSDIGPREF Do you prefer to get your news...

Mar 13-Mar 27		Jan 12-Feb 8
<u>2017</u>		<u>2016</u>
34	On a desktop or laptop computer	42
65	On a mobile device (such as a smartphone or tablet)	56
2	No answer	2

RANDOMIZE WHETHER LOCALMEDIA_JOB AND NATLMEDIA_JOB ARE ASKED FIRST**ASK ALL:**

LOCALMEDIA_JOB Regardless of how closely you follow news about YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY, how well do the LOCAL news media keep you informed of the most important local stories of the day?

Mar 13-Mar 27		Jan 12-Feb 8
<u>2017</u>		<u>2016</u>
23	Very well	21
55	Fairly well	54
18	Not too well	18
3	Not at all well	6
*	No answer	1

RANDOMIZE WHETHER LOCALMEDIA_JOB AND NATLMEDIA_JOB ARE ASKED FIRST**ASK ALL:**

NATLMEDIA_JOB Regardless of how closely you follow NATIONAL NEWS, how well do the NATIONAL news media keep you informed of the most important national stories of the day?

Mar 13-Mar 27 <u>2017</u>		Jan 12-Feb 8 <u>2016</u>
21	Very well	23
54	Fairly well	54
20	Not too well	17
4	Not at all well	5
*	No answer	1

ASK ALL:

GROUP_TRUST How much, if at all, do you trust the information you get from...?

	<u>A lot</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Not too much</u>	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>No answer</u>
a. National news organizations					
Mar 13-Mar 27, 2017	20	52	22	6	*
Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016 [N=4,654]	18	59	18	6	*
b. Local news organizations					
Mar 13-Mar 27, 2017	25	60	12	2	*
Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016 [N=4,654]	22	60	14	3	1
c. Friends, family, and acquaintances					
Mar 13-Mar 27, 2017	15	61	21	3	1
Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016 [N=4,654]	14	63	19	3	1
d. Social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter					
Mar 13-Mar 27, 2017	5	30	40	25	*
Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016 ⁹ [N=4,339]	4	30	33	32	1

RANDOMIZE WATCHDOG_1 & WATCHDOG_3**ASK ALL:**

WATCHDOG_1 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?

Mar 13-Mar 27 <u>2017</u>		Jan 12-Feb 8 <u>2016</u>
28	Keep political leaders from doing their job	21
70	Keep political leaders from doing things that shouldn't be done	75
2	No answer	4

⁹ For the W14 survey GROUP_TRUSTd was asked only of web respondents

RANDOMIZE WATCHDOG_1 & WATCHDOG_3**ASK ALL:**

WATCHDOG_3 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?

Mar 13-Mar 27 <u>2017</u>		Jan 12-Feb 8 <u>2016</u>
28	Deal fairly with all sides	24
72	Tend to favor one side	74
*	No answer	3

ASK ALL:

STORYTRUST How much impact does each of the following have on whether you think a news story is trustworthy? **[RANDOMIZE]**

	<u>A large impact</u>	<u>Some impact</u>	<u>No impact at all</u>	<u>No answer</u>
a. The news organization that publishes the story Mar 13-Mar 27, 2017	48	46	6	*
b. The person, if any, who shares the story with me Mar 13-Mar 27, 2017	26	58	15	1
c. The sources the story cites Mar 13-Mar 27, 2017	51	44	5	*
d. My gut instinct about the story Mar 13-Mar 27, 2017	30	58	12	1

Now we are going to ask you some questions about the news you get online, whether on a computer, phone, or tablet. Again, by news we mean information about events and issues that involve more than just your friends or family.

ASK IF GETS NEWS DIGITALLY (NEWS_DEVICEa=1-3 OR NEWS_DEVICEb=1-3) [N=4,038]:

NEWS_SOURCE How often do you get news online from... **[RANDOMIZE]**

	<u>Often</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Hardly ever</u>	<u>Never</u>	<u>No answer</u>
a. People that you are close with Mar 13-Mar 27, 2017	16	54	24	6	*
Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016	15	54	24	6	*
b. People you are not particularly close with Mar 13-Mar 27, 2017	9	32	43	16	*
Jan 12-Feb 8 2016	6	28	41	25	*
c. News organizations Mar 13-Mar 27, 2017	45	39	12	4	*
Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016	36	40	16	7	1

ASK IF AT LEAST HARDLY EVER TO AT LEAST 1 ITEM IN NEWS_SOURCE (NEWS_SOURCEa-c=1-3); SHOW ONLY THOSE AT LEAST HARDLY EVER IN NEWS_SOURCE (NEWS_SOURCEa-c=1-3):

NEWSACC

How accurate, do you think, is the news posted online by... **[KEEP IN SAME ORDER AS NEWS_SOURCE]**

	Very <u>accurate</u>	Somewhat <u>accurate</u>	Not too <u>accurate</u>	Not at all <u>accurate</u>	<u>No answer</u>
a. People that you are close with					
Mar 13-Mar 27, 2017 [N=3,846]	7	70	21	2	1
Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016 [N=4,045]	7	68	22	2	2
b. People you are not particularly close with					
Mar 13-Mar 27, 2017 [N=3,340]	2	49	43	5	1
Jan 12-Feb 8 2016 [N=3,370]	2	49	42	4	2
c. News organizations					
Mar 13-Mar 27, 2017 [N=3,929]	18	62	18	2	1
Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016 [N=4,040]	15	69	13	2	1

ASK IF GETS NEWS DIGITALLY (NEWS_DEVICEa=1-3 OR NEWS_DEVICEb=1-3) [N=4,038]:

DIGWDOG_3

Thinking about the news that your friends, family and acquaintances post or send you online about political and social issues, overall, do you think the mix of news you get from them... **[RANDOMIZE 1 & 2; KEEP 3 LAST]**

Mar 13-Mar 27 <u>2017</u>		Jan 12-Feb 8 <u>2016</u>
40	Represents just one side	35
29	Represents more than one side	31
31	They don't send me news about political and social issues	33
*	No answer	1