

FOR RELEASE SEPTEMBER 25, 2018

# Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their Attitudes About the News Media

*While most Americans expect news will be accurate, most also say news organizations cover up mistakes, take sides*

**BY** *Jeffrey Gottfried, Galen Stocking and Elizabeth Grieco*

**FOR MEDIA OR OTHER INQUIRIES:**

Jeffrey Gottfried, Senior Researcher  
Amy Mitchell, Director, Journalism Research  
Rachel Weisel, Communications Manager

202.419.4372

[www.pewresearch.org](http://www.pewresearch.org)

**RECOMMENDED CITATION**

Pew Research Center, September, 2018,  
“Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their  
Attitudes About the News Media”

## About Pew Research Center

Pew Research Center is a nonpartisan fact tank that informs the public about the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world. It does not take policy positions. The Center conducts public opinion polling, demographic research, content analysis and other data-driven social science research. It studies U.S. politics and policy; journalism and media; internet, science and technology; religion and public life; Hispanic trends; global attitudes and trends; and U.S. social and demographic trends. All of the Center's reports are available at [www.pewresearch.org](http://www.pewresearch.org). 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, the Ford Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Open Society Foundations. Support for the research is part of Knight Foundation's Trust, Media and Democracy initiative, which aims to strengthen the role of strong, trusted journalism as essential to a healthy democracy.

© Pew Research Center 2018

## Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their Attitudes About the News Media

*While most Americans expect news will be accurate, most also say news organizations cover up mistakes, take sides*

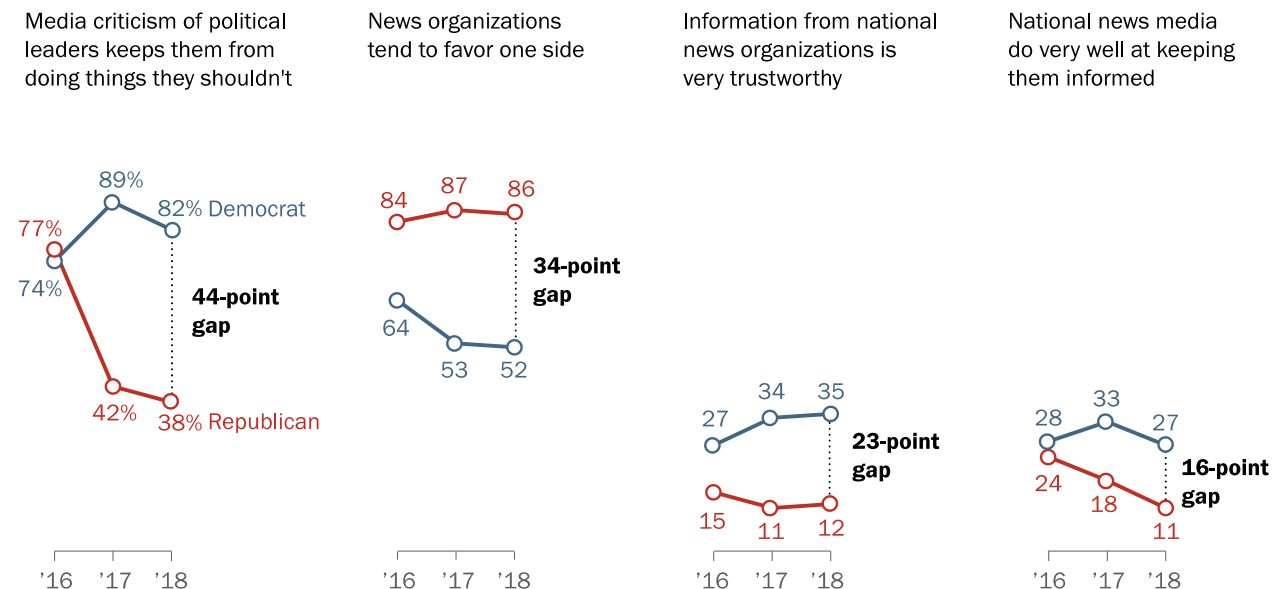
After a year of continued tension [between President Donald Trump and the news media](#), the partisan divides in attitudes toward the news media that [widened in the wake of the 2016](#) presidential election remain stark, according to a new Pew Research Center analysis of survey data of 5,035 U.S. adults collected between Feb. 22 and March 4, 2018.

Specifically, strong divisions between Republicans and Democrats persist when it comes to support of the news media's watchdog role, perceived fairness in political coverage, trust in information from both national and local news organizations, and ratings of how well the news media keep people informed.

Americans are particularly divided politically on whether or not they think news media criticism keeps political leaders in line – the so-called “watchdog role” of the news media. A vast majority of Democrats (82%) say in the survey conducted earlier this year that they support the news media's

### Stark partisan divides remain in the American public's views of the news media

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



Note: Independents not shown.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 22-March 4, 2018. For dates of other surveys see the Methodology.

“Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their Attitudes About the News Media”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

watchdog role, believing that news media criticism keeps political leaders from doing things that shouldn't be done. On the other hand, the majority of Republicans (58%) think news media criticism gets in the way of political leaders doing their job.

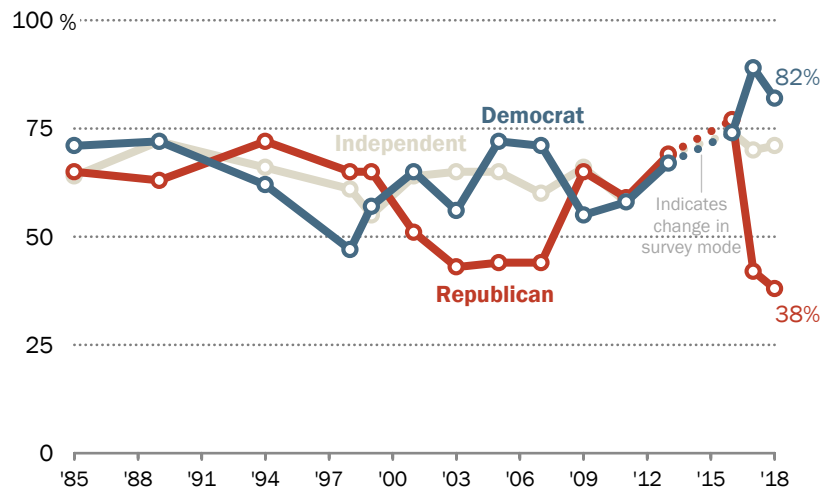
The 44-percentage-point gap between Democratic and Republican support for the watchdog role (82% vs. 38% respectively), along with the 47-point difference last year, are the largest measured by Pew Research Center in the more than three decades the question has been asked. In contrast, members of the two parties were about equally likely to support the news media's watchdog role in 2016 during the Obama administration.

Most Americans also continue to think the news media favor one side when covering political and social issues. About two-thirds (68%) say this, compared with three-in-ten who say they deal fairly with all sides. And as in previous years, Republicans (86%) are far more likely than Democrats (52%) to say news organizations favor one side.

Further, the findings reveal low levels of trust in social media as a source for news and information among the public and members of both parties. While one-in-five Americans (21%) have a lot of trust in the information they get from national news organizations, that share is about five times as high as the portion that have a lot of trust in the information they get from social media sites (4%). And few Republicans or Democrats express a lot of trust in the information they get from social media (3% and 6%, respectively).

### In 2017 and 2018, partisan divides on news media's watchdog role are largest 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, 2017 and 2018, polls were conducted online.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 22-March 4, 2018. For dates of other surveys see the Methodology.

"Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their Attitudes About the News Media"

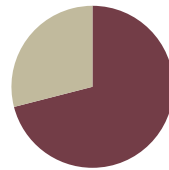
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Additional questions shed light on some of the nuances in how the public may evaluate trust. Although a minority of Americans (21%) express high levels of trust in the information they get from national news organizations, most are confident in the accuracy of news content: 71%, including majorities of both parties, go into a national news story expecting it will be largely accurate. At the same time, though, a similar portion of Americans (68%) lack confidence in news organizations' willingness to admit when they have made mistakes. And many Americans tend to feel disconnected from the news media. A little more than half (58%) say news organizations don't understand people like them, and about the same share (56%) says they do not feel particularly connected to their main sources of national news.

---

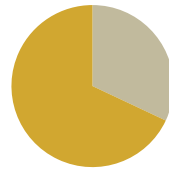
## Most Americans think their news will be accurate, but most also say news organizations cover up mistakes

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



**71%**

... typically go into a national news story expecting it will largely be **accurate**



**68%**

... think news organizations try to **cover up** their mistakes

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 22-March 4, 2018.

"Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their Attitudes About the News Media"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

---

## 1. Democrats and Republicans remain split on support for news media's watchdog role

Republicans and Democrats hardly see eye to eye when it comes to views of the news media. As in 2017, the most striking difference between members of the two parties continues to be their varying support of the news media's "watchdog role" – the idea that criticism from news organizations keeps political leaders from doing things that they shouldn't be doing.

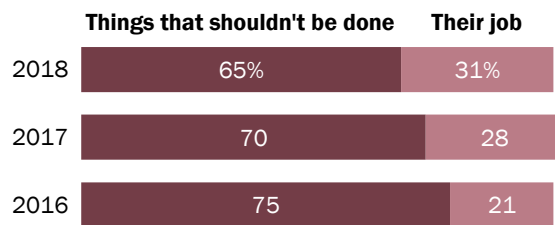
Overall, most Americans (65%) say news media criticism keeps political leaders in line, while about three-in-ten (31%) say that media criticism keeps leaders from doing their job. But the share of Americans who support the news media's watchdog role has dropped 10 percentage points between 2016 and 2018 – driven largely by declines among Republicans.

Two years ago, before the 2016 election, about three-fourths of both Republicans and Democrats expressed support for the news media's watchdog role. Last year, however, the parties diverged sharply in their views, and in 2018 Democrats continue to be about twice as likely as Republicans to support this role (82% vs. 38%, respectively). This 44-percentage-point difference is about as large as that seen in 2017, when there was a 47-point gap.

Most independents (71%) continue to support the watchdog role of the news media, although how they lean ideologically does influence their views. Independents who lean toward the Democratic Party and those who lean toward the Republican Party are also strongly divided (87% vs. 51%, respectively, say news media criticism keeps political leaders in line).

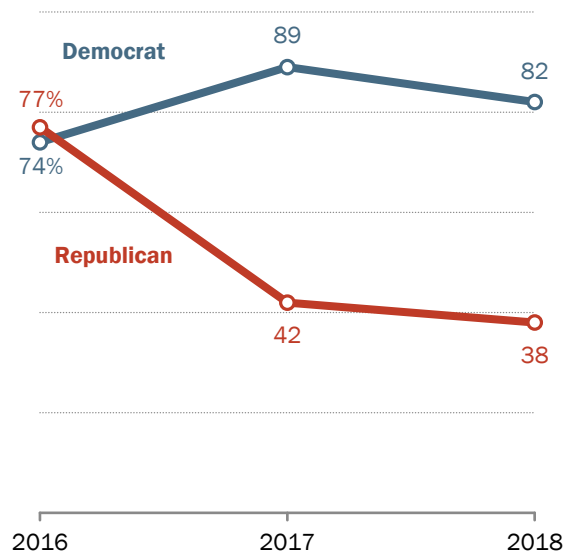
### Most Americans still support the watchdog role of the news media

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



### But Democrats and Republicans are as sharply divided as in 2017

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



Note: Percent who did not answer not shown. Independents not shown in second chart.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 22-March 4, 2018. For dates of other surveys see the Methodology.

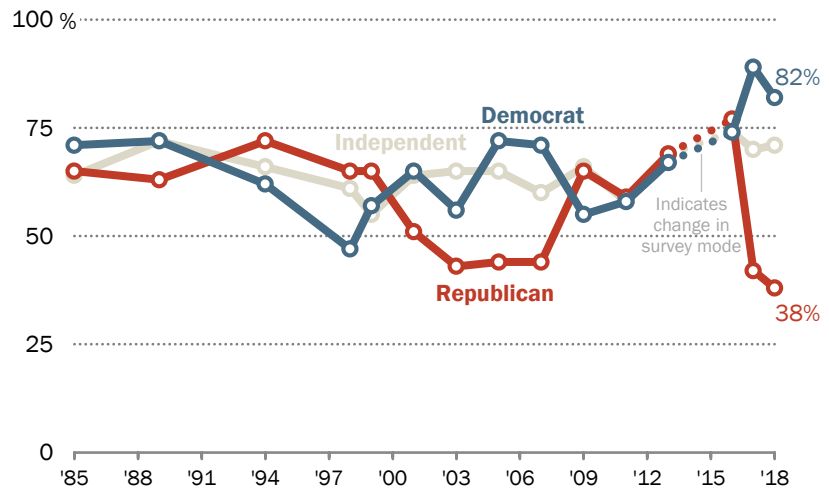
"Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their Attitudes About the News Media"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

The wide partisan divides this and last year are the largest ever measured by Pew Research Center. In 2017 and 2018, the differences in support of the watchdog role between Republicans and Democrats are the largest since the question was first asked in 1985.<sup>1</sup>

## In 2017 and 2018, partisan divides in support of the news media's watchdog role largest 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, 2017 and 2018, polls were conducted online.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 22-March 4, 2018. For dates of other surveys see the Methodology.

"Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their Attitudes About the News Media"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

<sup>1</sup> For detailed historical data on these questions going back to 1985, see [Appendix A](#).

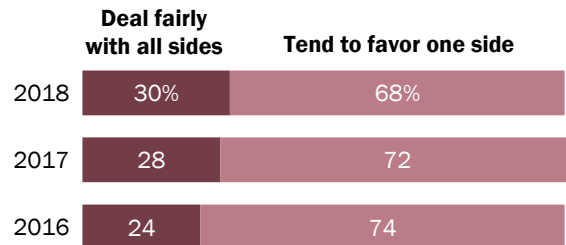
While a majority of Americans support the news media's watchdog role, most also continue to see a lack of fairness in news coverage. About two-thirds of Americans (68%) say that news organizations tend to favor one side when they cover political and social issues, compared with three-in-ten who say that news organizations deal fairly with all sides. The portion who says they tend to favor one side is slightly lower than in 2016, when 74% said so.

As in previous years, Republicans are far more likely than Democrats to say the news media favor one side. In 2018, the vast majority of Republicans (86%) say news organizations favor one side in their coverage, 34 percentage points higher than Democrats (52%). Unlike Republicans – whose views have remained mostly unchanged over the last three years – Democrats are now less likely to say news organizations favor one side, declining from 64% in 2016 to 52% in 2018.

Independents' perception of fairness in news coverage – as with their views of the media's watchdog role – falls in between that of Republicans and Democrats, with about 72% thinking that the news media tend to favor one side.

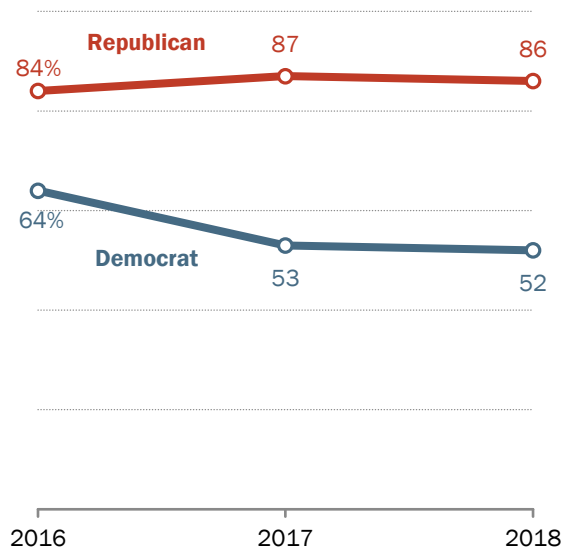
## About two-thirds of Americans think the news media favor one side

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



## But Republicans are still far more likely than Democrats to think so

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



Note: Percent who did not answer not shown. Independents not shown in second chart.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 22-March 4, 2018. For dates of other surveys see the Methodology.

"Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their Attitudes About the News Media"

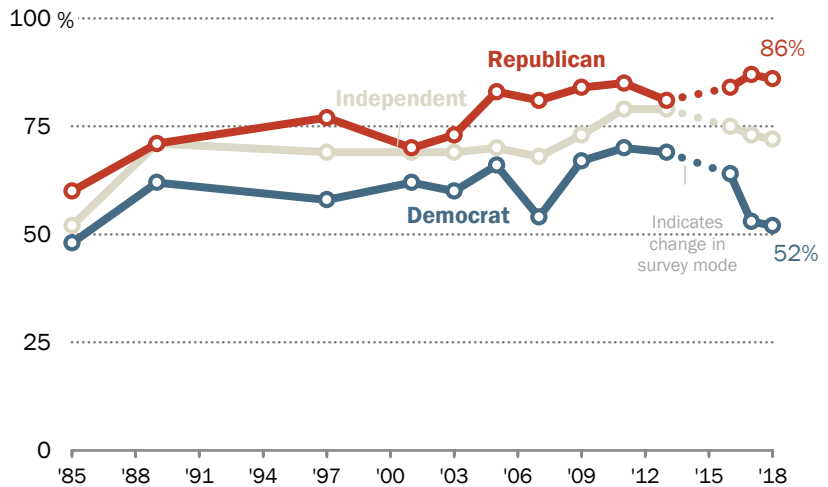
PEW RESEARCH CENTER



And just like with support of the watchdog role, partisans are split at historic levels on whether they perceive the news media as favoring one side. In both 2017 and 2018, the differences between Republicans and Democrats in perceived fairness of news media coverage are larger than at any other point over the past three decades except in 2007, at the end of the George W. Bush presidency when partisans were about as split as they are today.

## Partisan divides in 2017 and 2018 on perceived fairness in news coverage some of the largest ever measured

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



Note: Dotted line indicates a change in mode. Polls from 1985-2013 were conducted via phone. In 2016, 2017 and 2018, polls were conducted online.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 22-March 4, 2018. For dates of other surveys see the Methodology.

"Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their Attitudes About the News Media"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

When comparing the different pathways people can get news, more Americans have a lot of trust in the information they get from professional news organizations than from friends and family or social media – although few express high levels of trust in any of these sources. And just as there were differences between Republicans and Democrats in views of the news media’s watchdog role and perceived fairness in news coverage, there are notable partisan differences in how much they trust information from national and local news organizations.

About one-in-five Americans (21%) have *a lot* of trust in the

information that they get from national news organizations. Slightly more have a lot of trust in information from local news organizations (28%). Fewer Americans (13%) express this level of trust in the information they get from family and friends, and a mere 4% say they trust the information they see on social media a lot. These numbers are mostly unchanged since 2016.

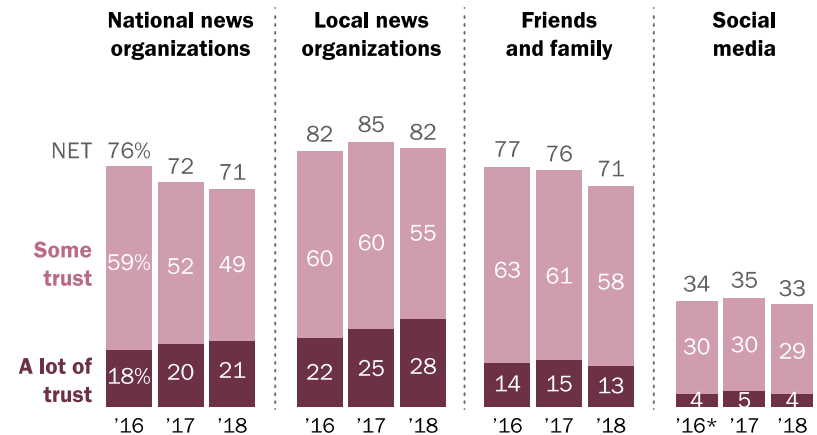
This gap for social media remains when looking at how many Americans have at least *some* trust (a lot or some trust) in the information they get from these sources. Large majorities have at least some trust in information from national news organizations (71%), local news organizations (82%), and friends and family (71%). The same cannot be said of social media, however: Only a third say they have at least some trust in the information they get from these sites.

A partisan gap in trust also exists, with Republicans again expressing far lower levels of trust in information from news organizations, particularly national news organizations. About three times as many Democrats as Republicans have a lot of trust in national news organizations (35% vs. 12%, respectively). A smaller gap emerges when it comes to local news: 37% of Democrats have a lot of trust in local news organizations, 14 percentage points higher than Republicans who say the same (23%).

Among independents, about two-in-ten (19%) have a lot of trust in the information they get from national news organizations, and one-quarter do for local news organizations.

## Few Americans think information they get on social media is trustworthy

% of U.S. adults who say they have a lot or some trust in information from ...



\* In 2016, trust of information from social media was only asked of and based on web-using U.S. adults.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 22-March 4, 2018. For dates of other surveys see the Methodology.

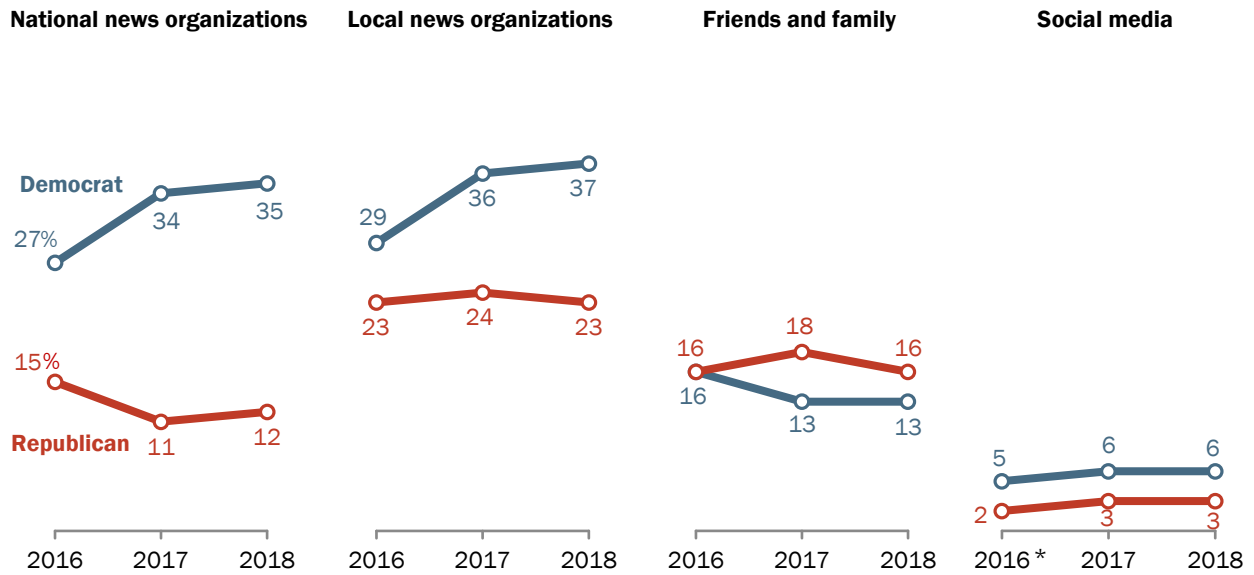
“Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their Attitudes About the News Media”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

There is little difference between Republicans and Democrats in the share who say they have high levels of trust in the information they get from their social connections – either from their friends and family or through social media.

### Partisan differences persist in trust of national and local news organizations

% of U.S. adults who say they trust the information they get from \_\_\_ a lot



\* In 2016, trust of information from social media was only asked of and based on web-using U.S. adults.

Note: Independents not shown.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 22-March 4, 2018. For dates of other surveys see the Methodology.

“Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their Attitudes About the News Media”

## 2. Most Americans think their news will be accurate but are less confident that news organizations will admit mistakes

While few Americans have high levels of trust in professional news organizations, a close look at Americans' expectations of and relationship with the news media offers a more nuanced view. Overall, most Americans expect the news they get will be largely accurate. Yet, most also believe that news organizations will try to cover up their mistakes rather than admit to them. And while majorities of both parties believe the information they receive will be accurate, positive sentiments toward the news media are stronger among Democrats than Republicans, as seen in previous findings.

About seven-in-ten Americans (71%) go into national news stories expecting they will be largely accurate, compared with about three-in-ten who think they will be largely inaccurate (27%). And while few Americans have a lot of trust in the information they get from national news organizations, this figure is in line with the portion who have at least some trust (71%).

But despite the public's confidence in the accuracy of news stories, most Americans doubt that news organizations will react in good faith when mistakes are made. About two-thirds of Americans (68%) believe news organizations will try to cover up mistakes, more than double the share who thinks news organizations will admit to them (30%).

Even a majority of those who see national news as largely accurate lack faith that news organizations will admit to their missteps: Six-in-ten of those who expect news to be accurate think news organizations will try to cover up mistakes rather than admit to them. However, Americans who think their news is largely inaccurate are even more likely to be wary, with almost nine-in-ten (88%) saying news organizations will cover up mistakes.

### Most Americans expect their news will be accurate, but most also think news media will cover up mistakes

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



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



Note: Percent who did not answer not shown.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 22-March 4, 2018.

"Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their Attitudes About the News Media"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

While majorities of both Democrats and Republicans believe their national news will be accurate, this view is more common among Democrats (86%) than Republicans (62%). Republicans are about three times as likely as Democrats to expect the national news stories they get will largely be inaccurate (37% vs. 13%).

Republicans also tend not to have much confidence in news organizations' integrity when mistakes are made: A large majority (86%) believes that news organizations will cover up their mistakes, compared with only 12% who say they will admit to them. Democrats, though, are about split, with half saying news organizations will cover up mistakes and 48% saying they will admit to them.

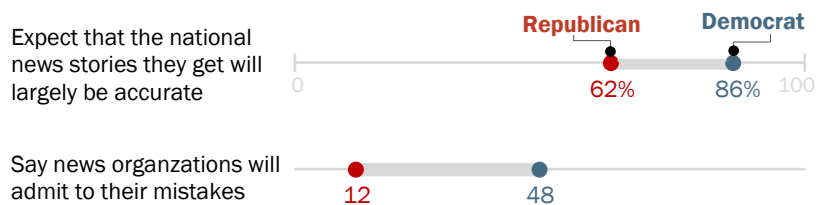
Independents fall between Democrats and Republicans on both questions, with nearly seven-in-ten (69%)

saying their news will largely be accurate, and about a quarter (27%) saying that news organizations will admit to their mistakes.

---

### Majorities of both parties expect their news to be accurate, but few Republicans think the news media will admit mistakes

*% of U.S. adults who ...*



Note: Independents not shown.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 22-March 4, 2018.

"Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their Attitudes About the News Media"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

---

And in what may be another indicator of trust levels, most Americans say they do not feel understood by or connected to news organizations. This sense of disconnectedness is stronger among Republicans than Democrats.

A little more than half of Americans (58%) do not feel like news organizations understand people like them, while four-in-ten say that they do feel understood. A similar portion of Americans (56%) do not feel particularly connected to their main sources of national news, whereas about four-in-ten (42%) say they do feel connected.

---

## More Americans feel disconnected from the news media than feel connected

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



*% of U.S. adults who say they \_\_\_ to the outlet they get most of their national news from*



Note: Percent who did not answer not shown.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 22-March 4, 2018.

"Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their Attitudes About the News Media"

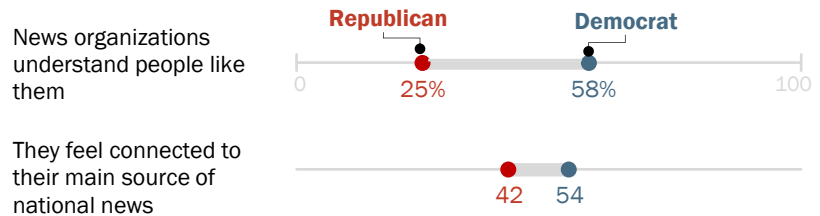
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

---

Democrats again are more likely to have a positive impression of the news media than Republicans – that is, more likely to say they feel understood by and connected to news organizations. Almost six-in-ten Democrats (58%) say that news organizations understand people like them, more than twice the share of Republicans (25%) and higher than independents (36%). Democrats are also more likely than Republicans to feel personally connected to their main source of national news, although the gap is smaller (54% vs. 42%, respectively). Independents are less likely (35%) to feel this connection than members who identify with either of the major parties.<sup>2</sup>

## Democrats feel more connected to news sources than Republicans, even to their main news source

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



Note: Independents not shown.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 22-March 4, 2018.

“Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their Attitudes About the News Media”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

<sup>2</sup> For a close look at demographic breakdowns, see [Appendix A](#).

## Acknowledgments

This report was made possible by The Pew Charitable Trusts, which received support from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Ford Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Open Society Foundations. Support for the research is part of Knight Foundation's Trust, Media and Democracy initiative, which aims to strengthen the role of strong, trusted journalism as essential to a healthy democracy.

This report is a collaborative effort based on the input and analysis of the following individuals. Find related reports online at [journalism.org](http://journalism.org).

Jeffrey Gottfried, *Senior Researcher*  
Galen Stocking, *Computational Social Scientist*  
Elizabeth Grieco, *Senior Writer*  
Amy Mitchell, *Director, Journalism Research*  
Claudia Deane, *Vice President, Research*  
Katerina Eva Matsa, *Associate Director, Journalism Research*  
Sophia Fedeli, *Research Assistant*  
Michael Barthel, *Senior Researcher*  
Margaret Porteus, *Information Graphics Designer*  
Rachel Weisel, *Communications Manager*  
Hannah Klein, *Communications Associate*  
Sara Atske, *Assistant Digital Producer*  
Shannon Greenwood, *Copy Editor*  
Elisa Shearer, *Research Associate*  
Nami Sumida, *Research Analyst*  
Mason Walker, *Research Assistant*  
José Carreras-Tartak, *Intern*



## Methodology

The analysis in this report is based on a nationally representative survey conducted from Feb. 22 to March 4, 2018, among 5,035 U.S. adults ages 18 years or older. The margin of error for the full sample is plus or minus 1.5 percentage points. This report was made possible by The Pew Charitable Trusts, which received support from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Ford Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Open Society Foundations. Support for the research is part of Knight Foundation's Trust, Media and Democracy initiative, which aims to strengthen the role of strong, trusted journalism as essential to a healthy democracy.

The survey was conducted by the GfK Group in English and Spanish using KnowledgePanel, its nationally representative online research panel. KnowledgePanel members are recruited through probability sampling methods and include those with internet access and those who did not have internet access at the time of their recruitment (KnowledgePanel provides internet access for those who do not have it, and if needed, a device to access the internet when they join the panel). A combination of random-digit-dialing (RDD) and address-based-sampling (ABS) methodologies have been used to recruit panel members (in 2009 KnowledgePanel switched its sampling methodology for recruiting members from RDD to ABS).

KnowledgePanel continually recruits new panel members throughout the year to offset panel attrition as people leave the panel. All active members of the GfK panel were eligible for inclusion in this study. In all, 8,066 panelists were invited to take part in the survey. All sampled members received an initial email to notify them of the survey and provided a link to the survey questionnaire. Additional follow-up reminders were sent to those who had not responded as needed.

The final sample of 5,035 adults was weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, race, Hispanic origin, education, region, household income, home ownership status and metropolitan area to the parameters of the Census Bureau's March 2016 Current Population Survey (CPS). This weight is multiplied by an initial sampling or base weight that corrects for differences in the probability of selection of various segments of GfK's sample and by a panel weight that adjusts for any biases due to nonresponse and noncoverage at the panel recruitment stage (using all of the parameters described above).

Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting at each of these stages.

The table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% confidence level.

---

### Margins of error

	<b>Sample size</b>	<b>Margin of error in percentage points</b>
U.S. adults	5,035	+/- 1.5
<i>Party affiliation</i>		
Republican	1,437	+/- 2.8
Democrat	1,633	+/- 2.7
Independent	1,438	+/- 2.8

Note: The margins of error are reported at the 95% level of confidence and are calculated by taking into account the average design effect for each subgroup.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 22-March 4, 2018.

"Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their Attitudes About the News Media"

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

---

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.

Pew Research Center is a nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization and a subsidiary of The Pew Charitable Trusts, its primary funder.

The dates of the web surveys for the 2016 and 2017 trends are Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016, and March 13-27, 2017. The following table shows the dates for the phone trends for the watchdog role and news media fairness questions.

---

<b>Question</b>	<b>Dates</b>	
<p>“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?”</p>	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	
	<p>“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?”</p>	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		

---

© Pew Research Center, 2018

## Appendix A: Detailed tables

### Views of news media's watchdog role, by political party (1985-2018)

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

	Phone surveys										Web surveys				
	Reagan 1985	Bush 1989	Clinton			W. Bush				Obama			Obama	Trump	
			1994	1998	1999	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013	2016	2017	2018
Republican	65%	63%	72%	65%	65%	51%	43%	44%	44%	65%	59%	69%	77%	42%	38%
Democrat	71	72	62	47	57	65	56	72	71	55	58	67	74	89	82
Independent	64	72	66	61	55	64	65	65	60	66	58	69	74	70	71
<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>	<i>D+44</i>

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 22-March 4, 2018. For dates of other surveys see the Methodology.  
 "Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their Attitudes About the News Media"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

### Perception that news organizations favor one side, by political party (1985-2018)

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

	Phone surveys								Web surveys				
	Reagan 1985	Bush 1989	Clinton 1997	W. Bush				Obama			Obama	Trump	
				2001	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013	2016	2017	2018
Republican	60%	71%	77%	70%	73%	83%	81%	84%	85%	81%	84%	87%	86%
Democrat	48	62	58	62	60	66	54	67	70	69	64	53	52
Independent	52	71	69	69	69	70	68	73	79	79	75	73	72
<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>	<i>R+34</i>

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 22-March 4, 2018. For dates of other surveys see the Methodology.  
 "Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their Attitudes About the News Media"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

---

## View of news media's watchdog role, by demographic group

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

	<b>Keeps political leaders from doing things that shouldn't be done</b>	<b>Keeps political leaders from doing their job</b>
Total	65%	31%
Ages 18-29	69	28
30-49	68	29
50-64	61	35
65+	64	32
Men	66	32
Women	65	30
White	60	36
Nonwhite	74	22
HS or less	62	33
Some college	65	32
College+	71	27
Republicans	38	58
Democrats	82	16
Independents	71	27

Note: Nonwhite includes all racial and ethnic groups, except non-Hispanic white.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 22-March 4, 2018.

"Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their Attitudes About the News Media"

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

---

---

## Perception that news organizations favor one side, by demographic group

*% of U.S. adults who say that news organizations tend to \_\_\_\_\_ when presenting the news on political and social issues*

	<b>Deal fairly with all sides</b>	<b>Favor one side</b>
Total	30%	68%
Ages 18-29	27	70
30-49	31	67
50-64	31	68
65+	31	68
Men	29	70
Women	32	66
White	24	74
Nonwhite	41	57
HS or less	35	63
Some college	27	72
College+	27	72
Republicans	13	86
Democrats	47	52
Independents	27	72

Note: Nonwhite includes all racial and ethnic groups, except non-Hispanic whites.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 22-March 4, 2018.

"Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their Attitudes About the News Media"

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

---

---

## Trust in information from national news organizations, by demographic group

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

	<b>A lot</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Not too much</b>	<b>Not at all</b>
Total	21%	49%	20%	9%
Ages 18-29	16	45	24	15
30-49	18	53	19	9
50-64	26	48	19	7
65+	26	49	18	6
Men	22	46	21	11
Women	21	52	19	8
White	20	47	22	10
Nonwhite	23	53	16	7
HS or less	16	50	21	12
Some college	20	49	21	9
College+	29	49	16	5
Republicans	12	50	26	12
Democrats	35	52	9	3
Independents	19	49	23	9

Note: Nonwhite includes all racial and ethnic groups, except non-Hispanic whites.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 22-March 4, 2018.

"Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their Attitudes About the News Media"

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

---

---

## Trust in information from local news organizations, by demographic group

*% of U.S. adults who trust the information they get from local news organizations ...*

	<b>A lot</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Not too much</b>	<b>Not at all</b>
Total	28%	55%	12%	5%
Ages 18-29	18	55	17	10
30-49	24	57	12	5
50-64	34	52	10	3
65+	35	53	10	2
Men	26	54	13	5
Women	29	55	11	4
White	27	55	12	5
Nonwhite	28	54	12	4
HS or less	27	52	13	7
Some college	26	56	13	4
College+	30	56	10	3
Republicans	23	59	14	4
Democrats	37	51	8	2
Independents	25	57	13	5

Note: Nonwhite includes all racial and ethnic groups, except non-Hispanic white.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 22-March 4, 2018.

"Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their Attitudes About the News Media"

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

---



---

## Trust in information from friends and family, by demographic group

*% of U.S. adults who trust the information they get from friends, family and acquaintances ...*

	<b>A lot</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Not too much</b>	<b>Not at all</b>
Total	13%	58%	23%	5%
Ages 18-29	15	54	22	8
30-49	12	58	24	5
50-64	13	60	23	4
65+	15	58	23	3
Men	14	56	24	5
Women	13	60	22	5
White	13	59	22	5
Nonwhite	13	55	25	5
HS or less	15	56	21	7
Some college	12	59	24	4
College+	12	60	25	3
Republicans	16	61	18	3
Democrats	13	57	26	3
Independents	12	59	24	5

Note: Nonwhite includes all racial and ethnic groups, except non-Hispanic white.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 22-March 4, 2018.

"Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their Attitudes About the News Media"

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

---

---

## Trust in information from social media, by demographic group

*% of U.S. adults who trust the information they get from  
social media sites ...*

	<b>A lot</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Not too much</b>	<b>Not at all</b>
Total	4%	29%	36%	30%
Ages 18-29	8	33	37	21
30-49	4	33	38	24
50-64	3	27	35	34
65+	1	20	35	43
Men	4	25	36	35
Women	5	32	37	25
White	3	26	38	33
Nonwhite	7	33	34	25
HS or less	6	31	33	29
Some college	3	29	38	29
College+	3	26	39	32
Republicans	3	28	36	32
Democrats	6	33	35	26
Independents	3	25	39	32

Note: Nonwhite includes all racial and ethnic groups, except non-Hispanic white.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 22-March 4, 2018.

"Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their Attitudes About the News Media"

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

---

---

## Perception that news organizations understand people like me, by demographic group

*% of U.S. adults who think that news organizations \_\_\_\_\_ people like them*

	<b>Understand</b>	<b>Do not understand</b>
Total	40%	58%
Ages 18-29	38	60
30-49	39	58
50-64	40	58
65+	41	56
Men	38	61
Women	42	55
White	36	62
Nonwhite	46	51
HS or less	34	62
Some college	39	59
College+	47	51
Republicans	25	73
Democrats	58	40
Independents	36	63

Note: Nonwhite includes all racial and ethnic groups, except non-Hispanic white.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 22-March 4, 2018.

"Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their Attitudes About the News Media"

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

---

---

## Sense of connectedness to main source of national news, by demographic group

*% of U.S. adults who feel \_\_\_\_ to the outlet they get most national news from*

	<b>Connected</b>	<b>Not connected</b>
Total	42%	56%
Ages 18-29	31	66
30-49	38	60
50-64	49	50
65+	52	46
Men	42	57
Women	43	55
White	40	59
Nonwhite	47	51
HS or less	42	56
Some college	41	58
College+	44	55
Republicans	42	57
Democrats	54	44
Independents	35	64

Note: Nonwhite includes all racial and ethnic groups, except non-Hispanic white.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 22-March 4, 2018.

"Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their Attitudes About the News Media"

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

---

---

## Perception of accuracy of national news stories, by demographic groups

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

	<b>Accurate</b>	<b>Inaccurate</b>
Total	71%	27%
Ages 18-29	64	34
30-49	70	28
50-64	75	24
65+	77	22
Men	69	30
Women	74	24
White	70	29
Nonwhite	75	23
HS or less	68	30
Some college	70	29
College+	77	22
Republicans	62	37
Democrats	86	13
Independents	69	30

Note: Nonwhite includes all racial and ethnic groups, except non-Hispanic white.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 22-March 4, 2018.

"Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their Attitudes About the News Media"

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

---

---

## Perception that news organizations are willing to admit their mistakes, by demographic group

*% of U.S. adults who think news organizations ...*

	<b>Are willing to admit their mistakes</b>	<b>Try to cover up their mistakes</b>
Total	30%	68%
Ages 18-29	24	73
30-49	29	69
50-64	32	66
65+	34	63
Men	29	69
Women	31	67
White	27	71
Nonwhite	34	62
HS or less	25	71
Some college	27	71
College+	38	61
Republicans	12	86
Democrats	48	50
Independents	27	71

Note: Nonwhite includes all racial and ethnic groups, except non-Hispanic white.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 22-March 4, 2018.

"Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their Attitudes About the News Media"

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

---

## Appendix B: Political party detailed tables (2016-2018)

---

### Views of the watchdog role of the media

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

	2016	2017	2018
<b>Keeps political leaders from doing things that shouldn't be done</b>			
Republican	77%	<b>42%</b>	38%
Democrat	74	<b>89</b>	<b>82</b>
Independent	74	70	71
<b>Keeps political leaders from doing their job</b>			
Republican	20	<b>56</b>	58
Democrat	22	<b>9</b>	<b>16</b>
Independent	23	29	27

Note: Refused/Don't know responses not shown. Bolded numbers in 2017 and 2018 indicate that the change for that party is significant from the previous year.

Source: Surveys conducted Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016, March 13-27, 2017, and Feb. 22-March 4, 2018.

"Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their Attitudes About the News Media"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

---

---

## Views of perceived fairness in media coverage

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

	2016	2017	2018
<b>Tend to favor one side</b>			
Republican	84%	87%	86%
Democrat	64	<b>53</b>	52
Independent	75	73	72
<b>Deal fairly with all sides</b>			
Republican	15	13	13
Democrat	32	<b>46</b>	47
Independent	23	27	27

Note: Refused/Don't know responses not shown. Bolded numbers in 2017 and 2018 indicate that the change for that party is significant from the previous year.

Source: Surveys conducted Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016, March 13-27, 2017, and Feb. 22-March 4, 2018.

"Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their Attitudes About the News Media"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

---



---

## Trust in the news media

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

	2016	2017	2018
<b>National news organizations</b>			
Republican	15%	11%	12%
Democrat	27	<b>34</b>	35
Independent	13	15	19
<b>Local news organizations</b>			
Republican	23	24	23
Democrat	29	<b>36</b>	37
Independent	18	20	25
<b>Friends, family and acquaintances</b>			
Republican	16	18	16
Democrat	16	13	13
Independent	11	14	12
<b>Social media sites</b>			
Republican	2	3	3
Democrat	5	6	6
Independent	5	5	3

Note: Trust in social media was only asked of web users in 2016 (N=4,339). Bolded numbers in 2017 and 2018 indicate that the change for that party is significant from the previous year.

Source: Surveys conducted Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016, March 13-27, 2017, and Feb. 22-March 4, 2018.

"Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their Attitudes About the News Media"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

---

---

## Job approval of national news media

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

	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>
Republican	24%	<b>18%</b>	<b>11%</b>
Democrat	28	33	<b>27</b>
Independent	20	15	13

Note: Bolded numbers in 2017 and 2018 indicate that the change for that party is significant from the previous year.

Source: Surveys conducted Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016, March 13-27, 2017, and Feb. 22-March 4, 2018.

"Partisans Remain Sharply Divided in Their Attitudes About the News Media"

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

---

## Appendix C: Topline questionnaire

**2018 FACTUAL/OPINION NEWS STATEMENTS SURVEY**  
**Feb. 22–March 4, 2018**  
**FINAL TOPLINE**  
**TOTAL N=5,035**

### 5 QUESTIONS PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

**ASK ALL:**

NEWSSKEP

Which of the following best describes how you approach national news stories, even if neither is exactly right? I typically go into a news story expecting that it will... **[RANDOMIZE]**

Feb 22-March 4  
2018

71	Largely be accurate
27	Largely be inaccurate
2	No answer

### 2 QUESTIONS PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

**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					
Feb 22–March 4, 2018	21	49	20	9	*
Mar 13–Mar 27, 2017	20	52	22	6	*
Jan 12–Feb 8, 2016	18	59	18	6	*
b. Local news organizations					
Feb 22–March 4, 2018	28	55	12	5	1
Mar 13–Mar 27, 2017	25	60	12	2	*
Jan 12–Feb 8, 2016	22	60	14	3	1
c. Friends, family, and acquaintances					
Feb 22–March 4, 2018	13	58	23	5	1
Mar 13–Mar 27, 2017	15	61	21	3	1
Jan 12–Feb 8, 2016	14	63	19	3	1
d. Social media sites (such as Facebook, Twitter or Snapchat) <sup>3</sup>					
Feb 22–March 4, 2018	4	29	36	30	1
Mar 13–Mar 27, 2017	5	30	40	25	*
Jan 12–Feb 8, 2016					
<i>Based on web-using U.S. adults [N=4,339]</i>	4	30	33	32	1

<sup>3</sup> For the January 2016 and March 2017 surveys, GROUP\_TRUSTd read "Social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter".

**ASK ALL:**

NEWSCON1

Thinking about the outlet you get most of your national news from, which comes closer to your view? **[RANDOMIZE]**

Feb 22-March 4

2018

42

I feel connected to the outlet I get most of my national news from

56

I do not feel particularly connected to the outlet I get most of my national news from

2

No answer

**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?

Feb 22-March 4

2018

17

Very well

58

Fairly well

18

Not too well

6

Not at all well

1

No answer

Mar 13-Mar 27

2017

21

54

20

4

\*

Jan 12-Feb 8

2016

23

54

17

5

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?

Feb 22-March 4

2018

31

Keep political leaders from doing their job

65

Keep political leaders from doing things that shouldn't be done

4

No answer

Mar 13-Mar 27

2017

28

70

2

Jan 12-Feb 8

2016

21

75

4

**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?

Feb 22-March 4

2018

30

Deal fairly with all sides

68

Tend to favor one side

2

No answer

Mar 13-Mar 27

2017

28

72

\*

Jan 12-Feb 8

2016

24

74

3

**4 QUESTIONS PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**

**ASK ALL:**  
NEWSUND

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

Feb 22-March 4  
2018

40	News organizations understand people like me
58	News organizations don't understand people like me
3	No answer

**ASK ALL:**  
NEWSMIS

And, which of the following statements comes closer to your view? In general... **[RANDOMIZE]**

Feb 22-March 4  
2018

30	News organizations are willing to admit their mistakes
68	News organizations try to cover up their mistakes
2	No answer

**17 QUESTIONS PREVIOUSLY RELEASED****ASK ALL:**  
PARTY

In politics today, do you consider yourself a...?

Feb 22-March 4  
2018

26	Republican
34	Democrat
28	Independent
10	Something else
3	No answer

**ASK IF DID NOT SELECT REPUBLICAN OR DEMOCRAT AT PARTY:**  
PARTYLN

As of today do you lean more to...

Feb 22-March 4  
2018

N=1,965

38	The Republican Party
48	The Democratic Party
14	No answer

**ASK ALL:**  
IDEO

In general, would you describe your political views as... **[REVERSE ORDER FOR HALF OF RESPONDENTS]**

Feb 22-March 4  
2018

7	Very conservative
24	Conservative
44	Moderate
17	Liberal
6	Very liberal
3	No answer