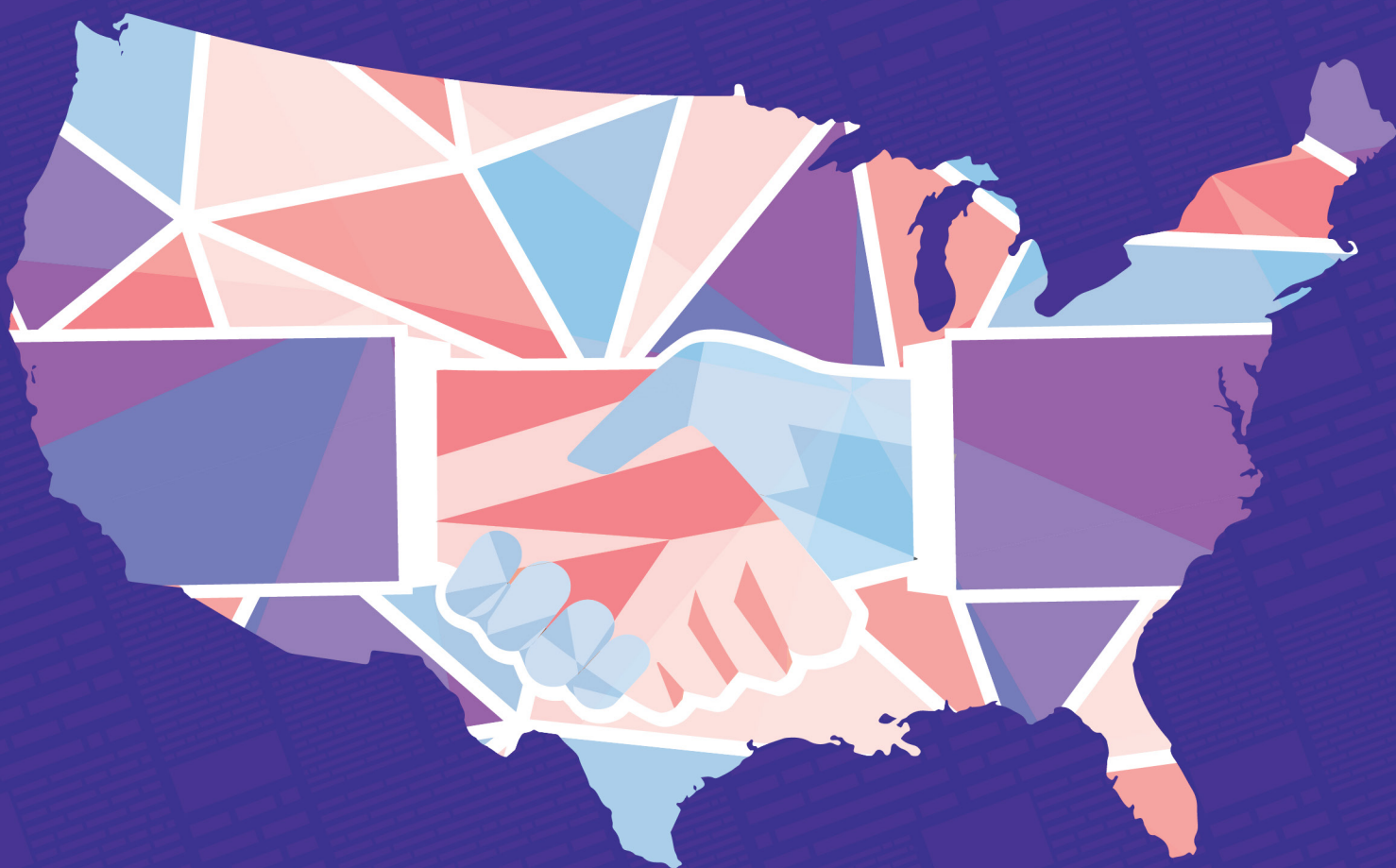


A GALLUP/KNIGHT FOUNDATION SURVEY

American Views 2022: Part 2

Trust, Media and Democracy

JANUARY 2023



The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation's Trust, Media and Democracy initiative aims to address the decline in trust for journalism and other democratic institutions by examining the causes and supporting solutions.

As part of the multidisciplinary initiative launched in 2017, Knight Foundation partnered with Gallup on a research series to better understand Americans' evolving relationship with the media and to inform solutions to the information challenges of our day.

Knight Foundation is also investing in technologists, journalists, academic institutions and others with strong, innovative approaches to improve the flow of accurate information, prevent the spread of misinformation and better inform communities.

Knight Foundation believes that democracy thrives when communities are informed and engaged.

For more, visit kf.org/tmd.

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Overview

Democracy in America relies on an independent press to inform citizens with accurate information. Yet today, two forces pose significant challenges to this function: the growing struggle of news organizations to maintain financial independence and the growing distrust of news among the public.

In Part 1 of the *American Views 2022* report, Gallup and Knight Foundation offer insights into how Americans think about the motivations of news executives and how news is funded. Most believe that the news media put business needs ahead of serving the public. However, those who think news organizations balance civic purpose with corporate needs are more likely to have paid for news in the past and be willing to do so in the future. This finding suggests that the news media's future financial sustainability ties directly to Americans' perception that journalism organizations are fulfilling their democratic role in society.

Gallup and Knight have been tracking the decline of trust in the news media since 2017. Gallup's long-term trend on this measure hit a record low in 2020, when the share of Americans with no confidence in the news media surpassed that of people with at least some confidence for the first time in 40 years.¹ Furthermore, findings from the *American Views 2020* report showed that Americans were "very concerned" about increasing political bias in news coverage and the perception that news organizations "push an agenda."

Media trust continues to vary along predictable lines. Democrats express significantly more trust in news organizations than Republicans. Among Republicans, trust in news continues to decline. New data show that more independents today report distrusting news than ever previously reported. Yet, trust in local news organizations remains higher than trust in national news, as Gallup and Knight have consistently shown.²

The past five years of Gallup/Knight studies on this topic have focused mostly on the practices of news organizations linked to trust. For example, many Americans say they care about transparency, objectivity and accuracy. But if many news outlets already have high journalistic standards in place, why does trust continue to diminish overall? The focus of the *American Views 2022 Part 2* report is to expand understanding of the emotional factors that drive attitudes about the news.

To be sure, distrust of information or institutions is not necessarily bad. Some skepticism may be beneficial in today's media environment, where the number of information sources available feels infinite, advanced technology often makes it difficult to identify reliable information and journalists inevitably make mistakes in their reporting. But this study suggests that many Americans are not solely skeptical of news today — they feel distrust on an emotional level, believing news organizations *intend* to mislead them and are indifferent to the social and political impact of their reporting. Our analysis demonstrates that these indicators of emotional trust in news are, in fact, distinct from the opinion that news organizations are capable of delivering accurate and fair reporting.

Emotional trust is more deeply rooted and is especially important to understand in the context of the news media. This study shows that emotional trust has a strong relationship to perceptions and behaviors that could harm the critical, mutually beneficial relationship between the health of the press and the health of U.S. democracy. The more emotional trust Americans have in news, the more likely they are to say news organizations balance staying in business and serving the public well. The more emotional trust in news, the more empowered Americans feel to navigate a complex information environment. The more emotional trust in news, the more willing Americans are to pay for it. And, emotional trust in news is linked to Americans' overall assessment of U.S. democracy.

The data presented here make a case for *why* the journalism industry should double down on efforts to rebuild the public's trust — and *how* they can do it more effectively.

1 Brenan, M. (2022, October 18). *Americans' trust in media remains near record low*. Gallup News. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/403166/americans-trust-media-remains-near-record-low.aspx>

2 Fioroni, S. (2022, May 19). *Local news most trusted in keeping Americans informed about their communities*. Knight Foundation. <https://knightfoundation.org/articles/local-news-most-trusted-in-keeping-americans-informed-about-their-communities/>

Executive Summary

1

A richer understanding of Americans' declining trust in news

Negative sentiment about the news media has grown over time — particularly among independents.

- Only 26% of Americans have a favorable opinion of the news media, the lowest level Gallup and Knight have recorded in the past five years, while 53% hold an unfavorable view.
- Across all political affiliations, more Americans say they hold an unfavorable opinion of the news media compared to a survey conducted in late 2019-early 2020.³ This rise is especially pronounced among independents but is also apparent among Democrats — who typically hold more favorable views of the media.
- Perceptions of political bias in news coverage have also increased, with independents driving the trend, followed by Republicans, then Democrats.
- Young people continue to hold more negative perceptions of the news media than older generations, confirming previous findings.

Americans believe national news organizations are capable but not always well intentioned.

- While 72% say national news organizations have the resources and opportunity to report the news accurately and fairly to the public, only 35% say most national news organizations can be relied on to deliver the information they need.
- Thirty-five percent say most national news organizations care about how their reporting affects American society, culture and politics; fewer (23%) believe most national news organizations care about the best interests of their readers, viewers and listeners.
- Fifty percent of Americans feel most national news organizations intend to mislead, misinform or persuade the public.

In contrast, most Americans say local news organizations care about the impact of their reporting.

- Sixty-five percent report that local news organizations have the resources and opportunity to report the news accurately and fairly to the public, and more than half of Americans say most local news organizations can be relied on to deliver the information they need.
- Fifty-three percent believe most local news organizations care about how their reporting affects their community broadly, and 47% believe most local news organizations care about the best interests of their readers, viewers and listeners.
- Forty-four percent of Americans say local news organizations *do not* intend to mislead, misinform or persuade the public.

Emotional trust in news is driven by the belief that news organizations care, report with honest intentions and are reliable. More than twice as many Americans report high emotional trust in local news than in national news.

- Forty-four percent of Americans have high emotional trust in local news organizations, compared with 21% who have high emotional trust in national news organizations.
- The inverse is also true: Just 18% of Americans have low emotional trust in local news organizations, compared with 41% who have low trust in national news organizations.

3 The American Views 2020 study reported on data collected from November 2019 – February 2020, prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States.

2

Emotional trust and how Americans get their news

Americans who prefer to get their news online or from “other” sources outside of the 20 most-preferred news outlets exhibit lower levels of emotional trust in national news organizations.

- Nearly half (47%) of Americans who prefer to get most of their news online report low emotional trust in national news organizations, while only 15% report high emotional trust.
- In contrast, only 28% of Americans who prefer to get most of their news from television report low emotional trust in national news.
 - Americans who get their news daily from television are 10 points more likely to report high emotional trust in national news than those who get news daily from websites or social media.
 - The relationship between getting news mostly online and lower emotional trust in national news could be related to age, as the youngest generations of Americans are the highest consumers of online news *and* report the lowest emotional trust in national news organizations.
- Forty-five percent of Americans who name a cable news outlet (CNN, Fox News or MSNBC) as their top news source exhibit low emotional trust in national news organizations overall; only 19% report high emotional trust.
- Network news consumers are more trusting of news. Only 17% percent of those who turn most often to U.S. network news outlets (ABC, CBS or NBC) report low emotional trust in national news organizations, while 37% report high trust.
- Of U.S. adults who turn to news sources outside of the top 20 most-commonly used in America, 70% exhibit low emotional trust in national news organizations, while only 5% of these news consumers report high emotional trust.

3

Emotional trust and news: A deeper look

Trust and the ability to navigate today's information environment

Half or more of Americans report difficulty in sorting out facts and being well-informed.

- Americans' feelings of being overwhelmed by today's information environment hold steady.
 - Sixty-one percent say the increase in information today makes it harder to be well-informed.
 - Fifty percent say there is so much bias in the news media that it is often difficult to sort out the facts.

Low emotional trust in national news is associated with feeling unable to sort out facts or be well-informed.

- Eighty-four percent of Americans with high emotional trust in national news organizations report that although there is some bias in the news, there are enough sources to sort out the facts; only 22% of those with low emotional trust in national news feel this way.
- Seventy-six percent of Americans with low emotional trust in national news organizations say the increase in information available today makes it harder to be well-informed, while 60% of those with high emotional trust in news say it makes being well-informed easier.

Trust, motives of news organizations and paying for news

Americans with higher emotional trust in news are more likely to think news organizations balance business success with civic purpose.

- Ninety percent of Americans with low emotional trust in national news feel most news organizations prioritize financial interests over the public interest.
- Sixty-one percent of those with high emotional trust say most news organizations balance staying in business with serving the public well, while 22% say news organizations mainly prioritize staying in business, and 15% say they mainly prioritize providing a public service.

The tangible cost of low trust

The more emotional trust Americans have in news organizations, the more willing they are to pay for news in the future.

- Thirty-five percent of Americans with high emotional trust in national news have paid for news in the past, and 25% say they would pay for news in the future.
 - In contrast, 23% of Americans with low emotional trust in national news have paid for news; 13% say they would pay for news in the future.
- Similar patterns emerge for local news: Higher emotional trust in local news is related to a higher likelihood of having paid for news and willingness to do so in the future.
- If Americans perceive that local news organizations do *not* have the resources and opportunity to report the news accurately and fairly, they are more likely to say they would consider paying for news in the future.
 - This finding does not hold for national news organizations.

4

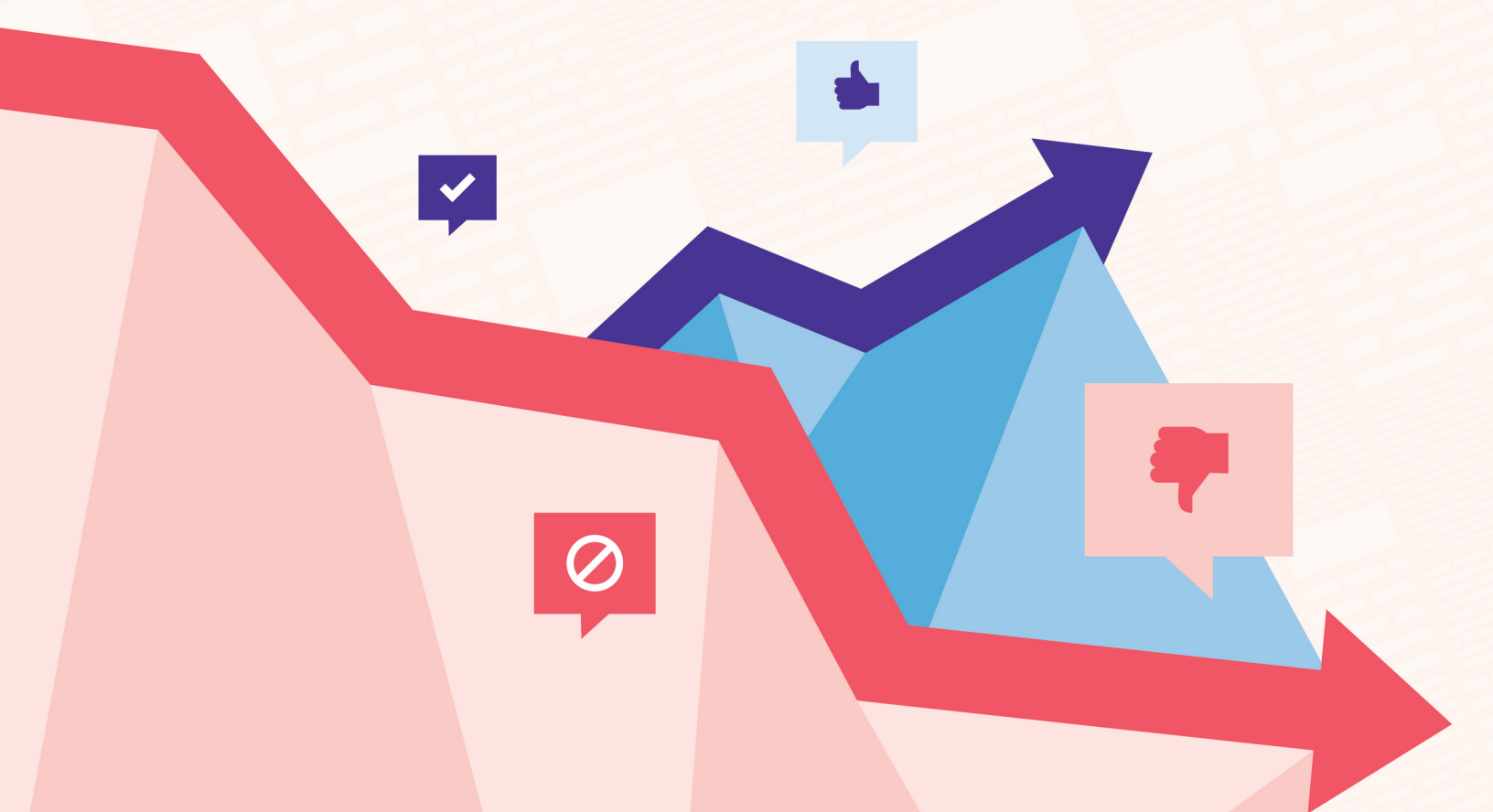
Emotional trust, media and democracy

Americans with low emotional trust in national news are more doubtful of the political process and the opinions of experts.

- Seventy-one percent of those with low emotional trust in national news organizations believe that the people who really "run" the country are unknown to the voters; only 46% of those with high trust believe this.
- Most Americans with low emotional trust in national news organizations think official government accounts of events cannot be trusted (65%), while only 22% of those with high trust say so.
- Americans with lower emotional trust in national news are much less likely to value the opinions of experts than those with high emotional trust.

Low emotional trust in national news organizations is linked to a negative outlook on the state of our democracy.

- While 70% of Americans with high emotional trust in national news organizations believe elections are free and fair, just 22% of those with low emotional trust say the same.
- Twenty-nine percent of Americans who have high emotional trust in national news organizations say elected officials have their constituents' best interests in mind, compared with just 4% of those with low emotional trust.
- Those with low emotional trust in national news are much more likely to believe the government interferes with news organizations' reporting than Americans with high trust.



Detailed Findings

1 A richer understanding of Americans' declining trust in news

The relationship between the U.S. news media and the American people is showing signs of growing strain. Across several metrics tracked since 2017, Americans' dissatisfaction with the news media has intensified.⁴ Five years ago, slightly more U.S. adults held an unfavorable opinion of the news media than favorable. Today, the number of Americans with unfavorable views is more than double the number who see the news positively. And a growing portion of the public reports perceiving “a great deal” of political bias in news coverage. These findings are evidence of a persistent, decades-long trend.⁵

Measuring the drivers of Americans' distrust in the news media is complex.⁶ While past investigation of trust in news has focused on issues of transparency and credibility, recent research has emphasized the affective or emotional aspects of trust⁷ — that is, how trust in news is related to how people feel about news outlets. The first section of this report explores how Americans feel about the capabilities, motivations and intentions of national and local news organizations — factors built on previous research.

4 Knight Foundation and Gallup, Inc. (2018). *American views: Trust, media and democracy*. https://knightfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/KnightFoundation_AmericansViews_Client_Report_010917_Final_Updated-2.pdf

5 Brennan, M. (2022, October 18). *Americans' trust in media remains near record low*. Gallup News. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/403166/americans-trust-media-remains-near-record-low.aspx>

6 Toff, B., Sumitra, B., Mont'Alverne, C., Ross Arguedas, A., Fletcher, R., & Nielsen, R. K. (2020). What we think we know and what we want to know: Perspectives on trust in news in a changing world. *Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism*. https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2020-12/Toff_et_al_Perspectives_on_Trust_in_News_FINAL.pdf

7 Ibid.

The second section then compares the attitudes and behaviors of those who have high emotional trust in news with those who have low emotional trust in news. Through this analysis, we discover that higher trust in national news is related to more willingness to pay for news, greater confidence in navigating today's media environment and a more positive outlook on the state of democracy in the country. The results make clear the importance of established trust in news among the public as it relates to the health of civic society as a whole.

Our analysis reveals that attitudes about the capabilities of news organizations to deliver accurate and fair reporting is distinct from more emotional attitudes. The findings confirm that, even across emotional factors, local news continues to be more trusted than national news. We then explore who has more or less emotional trust in news, identifying differences depending on personal characteristics and news habits.

Furthermore, this exploration into more emotional evaluations of the news media suggests that accurate and objective reporting may not be sufficient for earning Americans' trust — believing news organizations have good intentions and care about their audience matters as well.

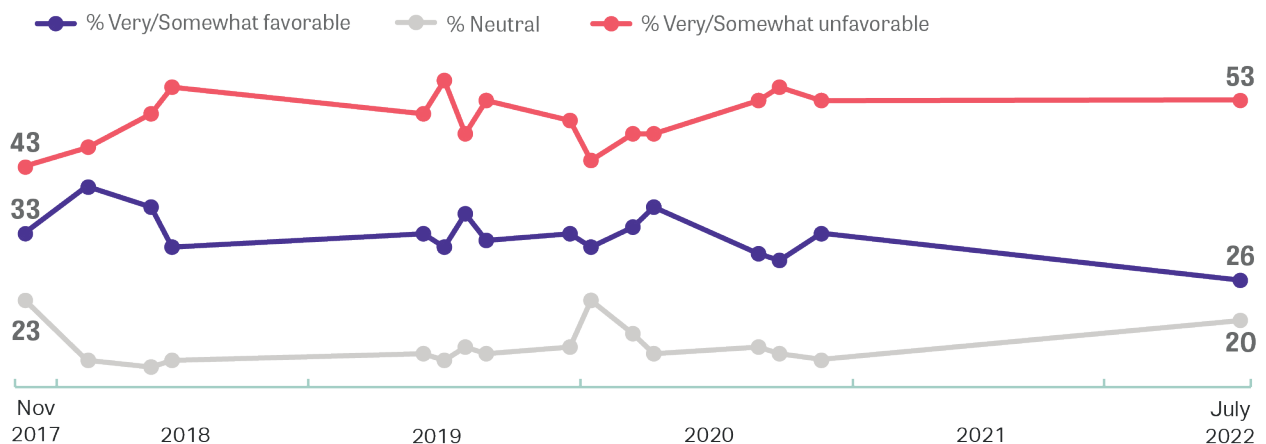
Negative sentiment about the U.S. news media has grown over time.

Americans' overall opinion of the news media in the U.S. today is low. Combined, 53% hold a "very" or "somewhat" unfavorable view of the news in 2022. This trend has remained relatively steady, with a slight increase, since first measured in 2017. While favorable attitudes toward news media have never surpassed unfavorable attitudes since Gallup/Knight started tracking, very or somewhat favorable attitudes today sit at a record-low 26%.

FIGURE 1

Americans' Overall Opinion of the U.S. News Media: 2017-2022

What is your overall opinion of the news media in the United States today?



Note: "No answer" percentages not shown.
* November 2017 and November 2019 - February 2020 surveys were conducted by mail using a random sample of U.S. addresses; the 2022 survey was conducted via web and mail using a Gallup Panel™ sample; all other surveys were conducted by web using a Gallup Panel sample.

Opinions of the news media deteriorated across those of all political affiliations in 2022, though to varying degrees. Independents, a group which previously held static with slightly negative attitudes toward the press, reported much greater unfavorability in 2022. Sixty-six percent hold a very or somewhat unfavorable view — up from 48% in a survey conducted in late 2019-early 2020, just before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Favorable feelings toward the news media fell to 16% among independents from 23% when last measured.

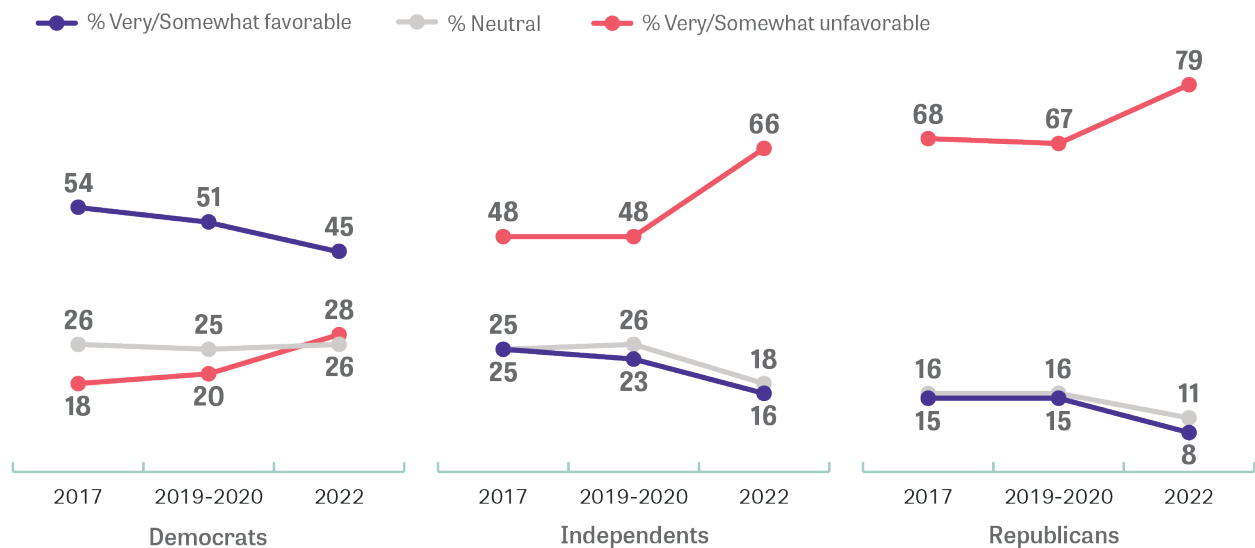
This decline in independents' opinions of the news media cannot be wholly attributed to souring attitudes among Republican-leaning independents.⁸ Among true independents who do not lean Republican or Democrat, 64% view the news media unfavorably — essentially no different from the larger sample of independents that includes those who lean toward a party.

While independents saw the greatest shift in their attitudes toward the media, Republicans are the most unequivocal: 79% view the news media unfavorably, compared with 8% who view the news media favorably. In late 2019-early 2020, this split was 67% versus 15%. Opinions of the news media among Democrats also drifted slightly downward, with favorability falling to 45% in 2022 from 51% in late 2019-early 2020. The proportion of Democrats who view the news media unfavorably rose eight percentage points since last measured.

FIGURE 2

Americans' Overall Opinion of the U.S. News Media, by Political Party: 2017-2022

What is your overall opinion of the news media in the United States today?



Note: "No answer" percentages not shown.
* November 2017 and November 2019 - February 2020 surveys were conducted by mail using a random sample of U.S. addresses; the 2022 survey was conducted via web and mail using a Gallup Panel sample.

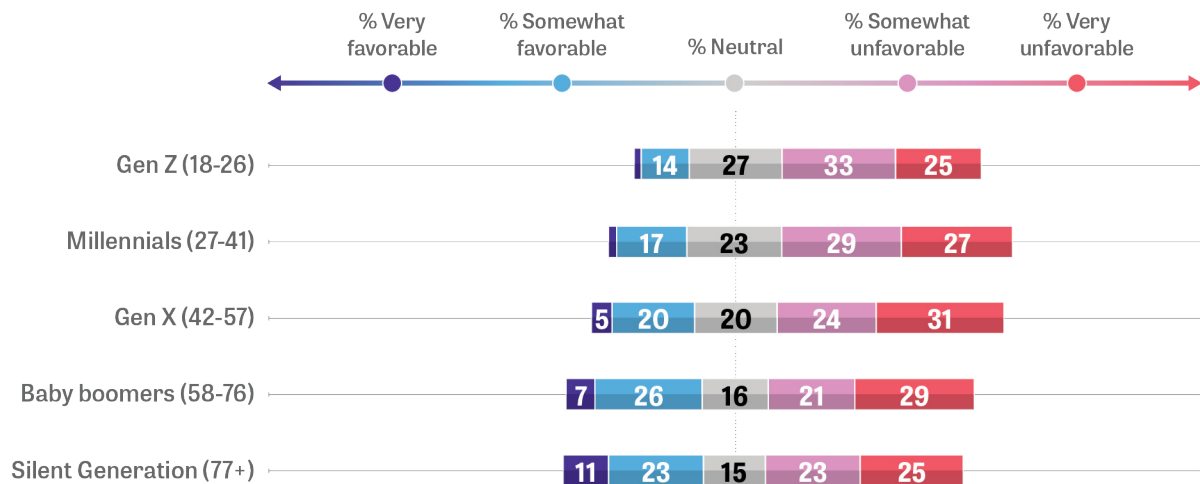
8 The Gallup/Knight American Views survey initially asks respondents, "In politics, as of today, with which political party do you most closely affiliate?" Respondents who select "independent" or "other party" are then asked, "As of today, do you lean more to the Democratic Party or the Republican Party?"

As previous Gallup/Knight studies have found, there are important differences by age in overall opinion of the news media. The two oldest generations — baby boomers and the Silent Generation — are the most likely to have favorable opinions of the news media (33% and 34% very or somewhat favorable, respectively). Majorities of Gen Z (58%), millennials (56%) and Gen X (55%) have an unfavorable opinion. This trend is in line with previous findings that younger Americans hold less favorable views of the press overall than older Americans.

FIGURE 3

Americans' Overall Opinion of the U.S. News Media, by Generation

What is your overall opinion of the news media in the United States today?



Note: "No answer" percentages not shown. Values under 5% are not displayed.

Further analysis shows that differences in attitudes about the news media by generation are also influenced by political party affiliation. Younger Democrats hold more unfavorable views of the news media than older individuals of similar political allegiance, whereas older Republicans are the most hostile in their attitudes about the news media — especially compared with older Democrats. The polarized nature of older generations in particular by partisanship somewhat tempers the collective results by generation reported here.

More Americans see an increase in political bias in news coverage.

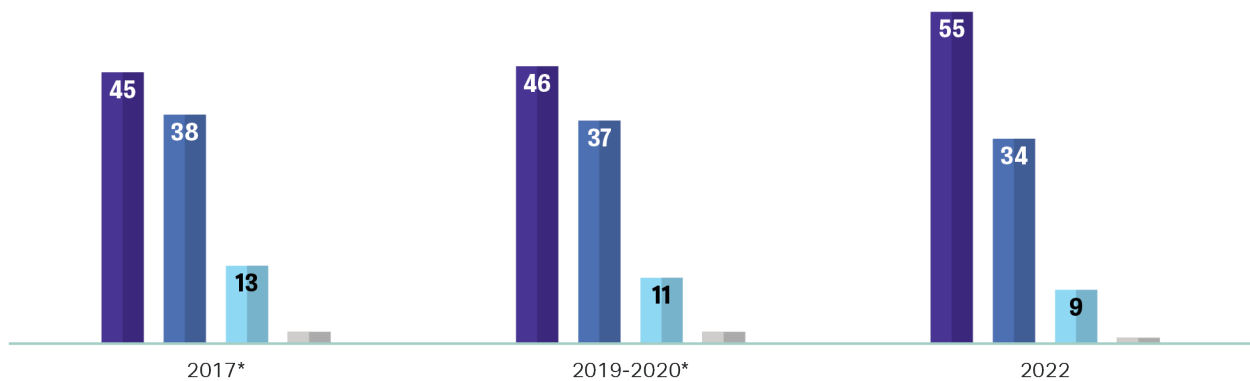
In the current survey, conducted by web and mail using a Gallup Panel sample, 55% of Americans say they see "a great deal" of political bias in news coverage. When compared with prior mail-only surveys conducted in 2017 and late 2019-early 2020, more Americans see bias today than a few years ago. Notably, some, but not all, of this change could be attributed to a slight change in the survey questionnaire in 2022.⁹ A mail survey conducted in 2022 also showed an increase in perceptions of bias compared with the past, though to a slightly lesser degree (51%, compared with 46% and 45% in the prior mail surveys).

FIGURE 4

Perceptions of Political Bias in News Coverage: 2017-2022

To what extent do you see political bias in news coverage?

■ % A great deal ■ % A fair amount ■ % Not too much ■ % Not at all



Note: "No answer" percentages not shown. Values under 5% are not displayed.

* November 2017 and November 2019 - February 2020 surveys were conducted by mail using a random sample of U.S. addresses; the 2022 survey was conducted via web and mail using a Gallup Panel sample. The higher estimate of 55% from the 2022 web survey may, in part, be the result of a change to the survey instrument.

⁹ In versions of the survey fielded before 2022, respondents were asked to write in the news source they use most. Two questions later, they were asked to evaluate political bias in news coverage. In 2022, the survey was updated, and respondents were shown a list of news organizations and asked to mark the one they use most, followed two questions later by the political bias question. Gallup tested the old and new version of the questions via a mail survey experiment conducted in 2022. Both versions showed an increase in perceptions of bias (51% vs. 54%, respectively) compared with the 2017 and late 2019-early 2020 findings. However, people who saw the list of news organizations prior to evaluating political bias were slightly more likely to say they see "a great deal" of political bias (54%). The mail survey and Gallup Panel web and mail survey, which both asked people to select a news organization from a list, had nearly identical results (54% and 55%, respectively). These findings may indicate that showing a list prompts respondents to think of news outlets they may otherwise not have, which could have led to a slight increase in the perception of political bias in the news.

Perceptions of political bias in news coverage have grown most sharply among political independents.

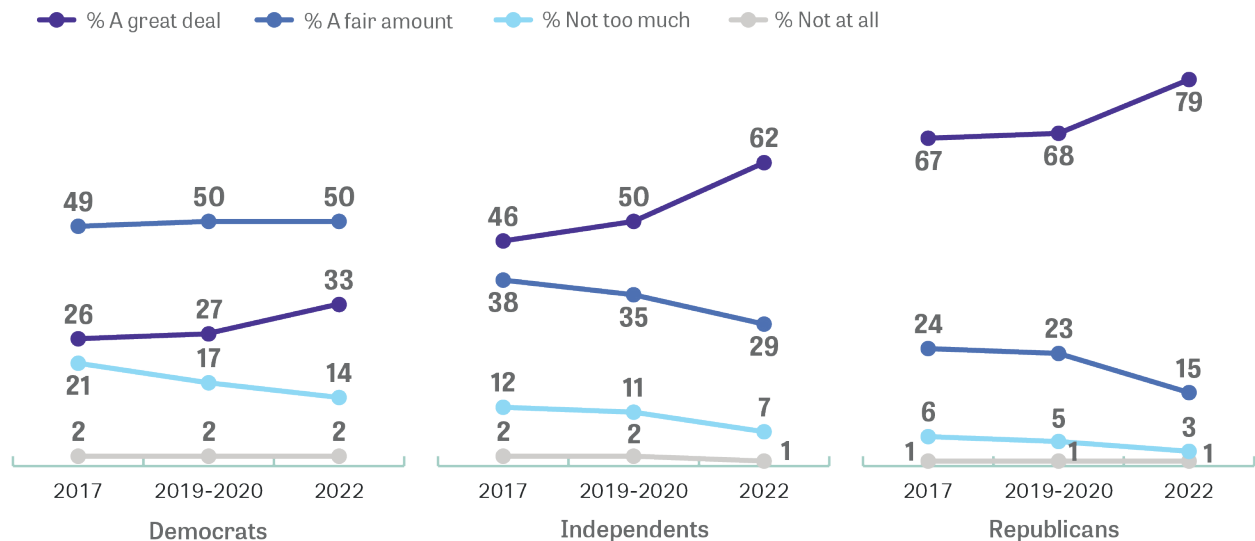
Sixty-two percent of independents say they see a great deal of political bias in news coverage in 2022, a 12-point increase since late 2019-early 2020. This perception has grown among Republicans as well, with nearly eight in 10 saying they see a great deal of political bias — up 11 points from two years ago.

While fewer Democrats (33%) see a great deal of political bias in news coverage, 50% believe there is "a fair amount" — revealing that even those with more positive attitudes about the news media see a significant degree of bias in the current media landscape.

FIGURE 5

Perceptions of Political Bias in News Coverage, by Political Party: 2017-2022

To what extent do you see political bias in news coverage?



Note: "No answer" percentages not shown.
* November 2017 and November 2019 - February 2020 surveys were conducted by mail using a random sample of U.S. addresses; the 2022 survey was conducted via web and mail using a Gallup Panel sample. The higher estimate of perceived bias in news coverage from the 2022 web survey may, in part, be the result of a change to the survey instrument.

Capability versus caring: An exploration of emotional trust in news organizations

Previous Gallup/Knight research has shown that general negative attitudes toward the news media are connected to Americans' lack of trust in it.¹⁰ The depth of this negative sentiment appears to obstruct efforts to repair the news media's relationship with the public. Trust is complex, and it manifests in practices or behaviors — and in emotional connection.¹¹ These complexities mean a deep understanding of trust can be difficult to pinpoint via survey.¹²

Drawing on insights from key social science, Gallup/Knight designed a series of questions aimed at distinguishing between practical and emotional dimensions of trust.¹³ Americans were asked to rate national news organizations and, separately, local news organizations across the following dimensions:

Dimensions of Trust in National News Media and Local News Media

When thinking about [national/local] news organizations in the U.S. ...

Dimension of trust

In general, most [national news organizations/local news organizations] have the resources and opportunity to report the news accurately and fairly to the public.

Competency

In general, most [national news organizations/local news organizations] can be relied on to deliver the information I need.

Reliability

In general, most national news organizations care about how their reporting can either positively or negatively affect American society, culture and politics. / In general, most local news organizations care about how their reporting can either positively or negatively affect their community broadly.

Benevolence
(societal-level)

In general, most [national news organizations/local news organizations] care about the best interests of their readers, viewers, and listeners.

Benevolence
(individual-level)

In general, most [national news organizations/local news organizations] do not intend to mislead, misinform, or persuade the public.

Integrity

Our analysis shows that three of these facets of trust are highly correlated: reliability, benevolence and integrity. In other words, many Americans tend to have similar and consistent feelings about these dimensions distinct from their evaluation of news competency. Together, they have a clear emotional thread running through them — people, in most circumstances, have to rely on feelings and intuition when evaluating these topics.¹⁴ Evaluations of competency will be explored separately throughout this report.

10 Knight Foundation and Gallup, Inc. (2018). *American views: Trust, media and democracy*. https://knightfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/KnightFoundation_AmericansViews_Client_Report_010917_Final_Updated-2.pdf

11 Whipple, J. M., Griffis, S. E., & Daugherty, P. J. (2013). Conceptualizations of trust: Can we trust them? *Journal of Business Logistics*, 34(2), 117-130. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jbl.12014>

12 Toff, B. J., Badrinathan, S., Mont'Alverne, C., Ross Arguedas, A., Fletcher, R., & Kleis Nielsen, R. (2021). Overcoming indifference: What attitudes towards news tell us about building trust. *Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism*. <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/overcoming-indifference-what-attitudes-towards-news-tell-us-about-building-trust>

13 The questions created to evaluate news organizations' competency, reliability, benevolence and integrity were developed from a meta-analysis studying the core theoretical components of the construct of "trust." See: McKnight, D. H., & Chervany, N. L. (2001). Trust and distrust definitions: One bite at a time. *Trust in Cyber-Societies*, 27-54.

14 Respondents who did not offer an opinion across all four items were classified as having "no opinion." For further information about how the indices were developed and calculated, please see the Appendix.

Americans believe national news organizations are capable but are concerned about their intentions.

Seventy-two percent of Americans agree or strongly agree that national news organizations have the resources and opportunity to report the news accurately and fairly to the public, while 12% disagree or strongly disagree. In other words, the vast majority of U.S. adults believe national news organizations have the capability to perform their main service to the public — a role 81% of Americans said was “critical” or “very important” to democracy in 2020.¹⁵

But there is a discrepancy between Americans’ aspirations for national news organizations and their assessment of how these organizations deliver. Only 35% of Americans believe national news organizations can be relied on to deliver the information they need, and an equal amount believe national news organizations care about the impact of their reporting on society. Even fewer say most national news organizations do not intend to mislead, misinform or persuade the public (25%), and 23% say most national news organizations care about the best interests of their readers, viewers or listeners.

FIGURE 6

Americans’ Evaluations of National News Organizations

How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about national news organizations in the U.S.?

■ % Strongly agree/Agree ■ % Neither agree nor disagree ■ % Strongly disagree/Disagree



Note: "No answer" percentages not shown.

¹⁵ Knight Foundation and Gallup, Inc. (2020). *American views 2020: Trust, media and democracy. A deepening divide.* <https://knightfoundation.org/reports/american-views-2020-trust-media-and-democracy/>

Americans believe local news organizations care more than national news outlets do about the impact of their reporting.

Consistent with past Gallup/Knight research, Americans' evaluations of local news are broadly more positive or more trusting across all measures of emotional trust. More than half (53%) agree that most local news organizations care about how their reporting affects their community, and 52% agree most local news organizations can be relied on to deliver the information they need. A similar proportion of Americans agree that most local news organizations care about the best interests of their audience (47%) and do not seek to misinform or mislead the public (44%). Sixty-five percent also believe local news organizations have the resources and opportunity to report the news accurately and fairly to the public.

FIGURE 7

Americans' Evaluations of Local News Organizations

How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about local news organizations in the U.S.?

■ % Strongly agree/Agree ■ % Neither agree nor disagree ■ % Strongly disagree/Disagree



Note: "No answer" percentages not shown.

More than twice as many Americans report high emotional trust in local news than in national news.

Perceptions that news organizations care, report with honest intentions and are reliable represent emotional trust. Our analysis showed that these factors are strongly correlated (see the full methodology in Appendix) and, thus, were combined into one measure of trust with three categories: high, moderate and low emotional trust.

Using this metric, local news organizations far outpace their national counterparts: 44% of Americans report high emotional trust in local news organizations, compared with 21% who have high emotional trust in national news organizations. The inverse is also true: Just 18% of Americans have low emotional trust in local news organizations, compared with 41% who have low trust in national news organizations.

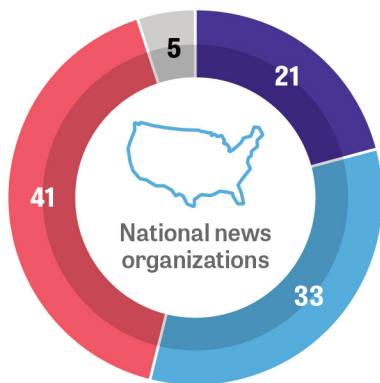
"Typically, a local news source is somebody who lives in the area and actually cares about the area. They know the nuances of the region — at least you hope so — and that's more trustworthy."

— FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

FIGURE 8

Average Emotional Trust in National vs. Local News Organizations

■ % With high trust ■ % With moderate trust ■ % With low trust ■ % With no opinion



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100% ±1%.

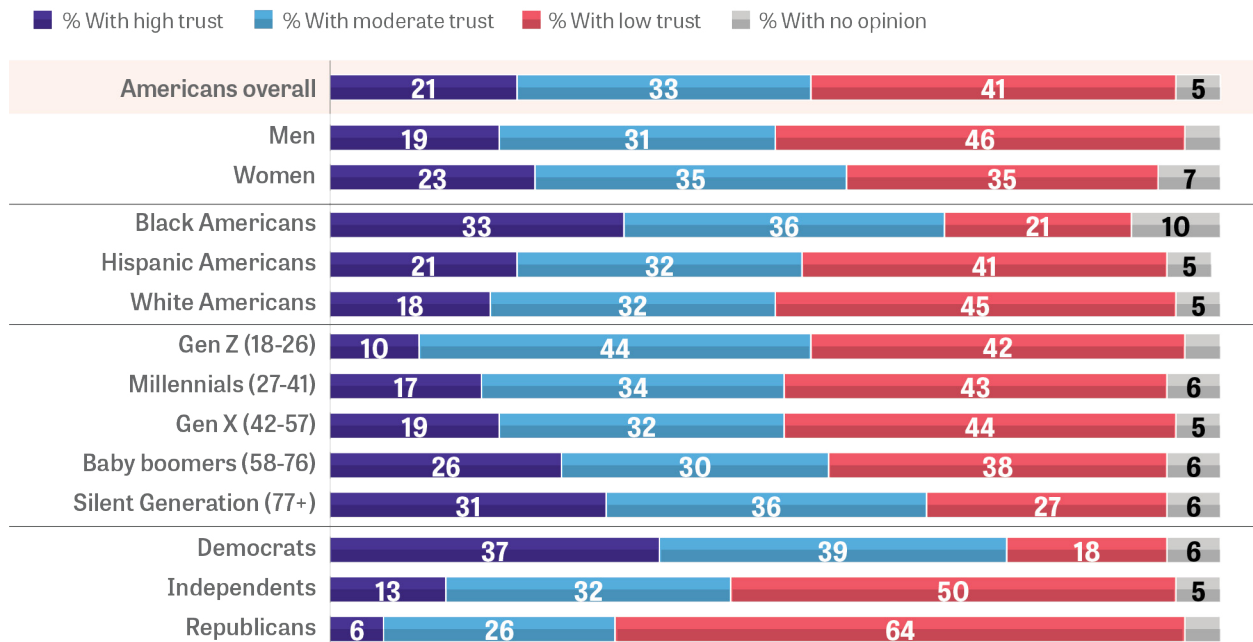
Who trusts more? In line with previous findings, emotional trust in national news varies considerably across demographic groups.

Public polling by Gallup¹⁶ and Pew Research Center¹⁷ continues to show that trust in news varies significantly by news consumers' personal characteristics. In this study, emotional trust in national news organizations breaks along partisan lines, with only 6% of Republicans expressing high levels of emotional trust, compared with 37% of Democrats. Conversely, while most Republicans (64%) express low emotional trust, only 18% of Democrats do so. Independents (13%) are much less likely than Democrats to report high emotional trust in national news and lean more toward *low* emotional trust (50%), though not to the same degree as Republicans.

Emotional trust also varies by racial/ethnic identity. White and Hispanic Americans are twice as likely to report low emotional trust in national news organizations (45% and 41%, respectively) as Black Americans (21%). Black Americans are also 15 points more likely to report high emotional trust in national news organizations than White Americans. This gap is consistent with previous findings¹⁸ and holds regardless of political party affiliation.

FIGURE 9

Emotional Trust in National News Organizations, by Gender, Race, Generation and Political Party Affiliation



Note: Values under 5% are not displayed. Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100% ±1%.

16 Brenan, M. (2021, October 7). *Americans' trust in media dips to second lowest on record*. Gallup News. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/355526/americans-trust-media-dips-second-lowest-record.aspx>

17 Gottfried, J., & Liedke, J. (2021, August 30). *Partisan divides in media trust widen, driven by a decline among Republicans*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/08/30/partisan-divides-in-media-trust-widen-driven-by-a-decline-among-republicans/>

18 Knight Foundation and Gallup, Inc. (2020). *American views 2020: Trust, media and democracy. A deepening divide*. <https://knightfoundation.org/reports/american-views-2020-trust-media-and-democracy/>; Atske, S., Barthel, M., Stocking, G., & Tamir, C. (2019, August 7). *7 facts about black Americans and the news media*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/08/07/facts-about-black-americans-and-the-news-media/>

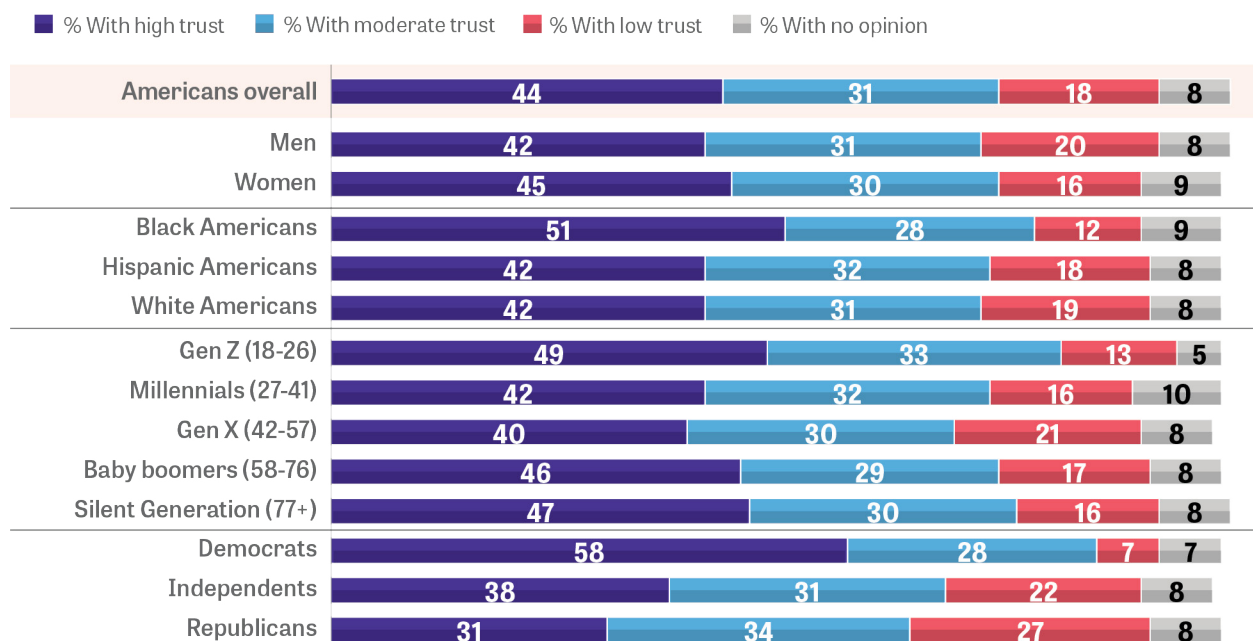
Greater emotional trust in local news is consistent across various demographic groups.

Variation in levels of emotional trust in local news organizations is less pronounced across demographic groups. For example, 31% of Republicans and 58% of Democrats express high levels of emotional trust in local news — a narrower gap than with emotional trust in national news. This finding is consistent with findings from previous Gallup/Knight studies that demonstrate the difference in trust in national news between partisans is wider than for trust in local news.¹⁹ Independents map closely to Republicans, with 22% reporting low emotional trust in local news and 38% reporting high emotional trust.

When it comes to differences by racial/ethnic identity, there are only small differences between White, Black and Hispanic Americans. Black Americans are nevertheless slightly more likely to report higher levels of emotional trust in local news organizations.

FIGURE 10

Emotional Trust in Local News Organizations, by Gender, Race, Generation and Political Party Affiliation



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100% ±1%.

Most Republicans (66%), Democrats (82%) and independents (70%) agree or strongly agree that national news organizations have the resources and opportunities to report accurately and fairly. Majorities of Americans across all demographic subgroups also agree that local news organizations have the resources and opportunity to report the news accurately and fairly, including 70% of Republicans, 65% of Democrats and 64% of independents.

¹⁹ Fioroni, S. (2022, May 19). *Local news most trusted in keeping Americans informed about their communities*. Knight Foundation. <https://knightfoundation.org/articles/local-news-most-trusted-in-keeping-americans-informed-about-their-communities/>

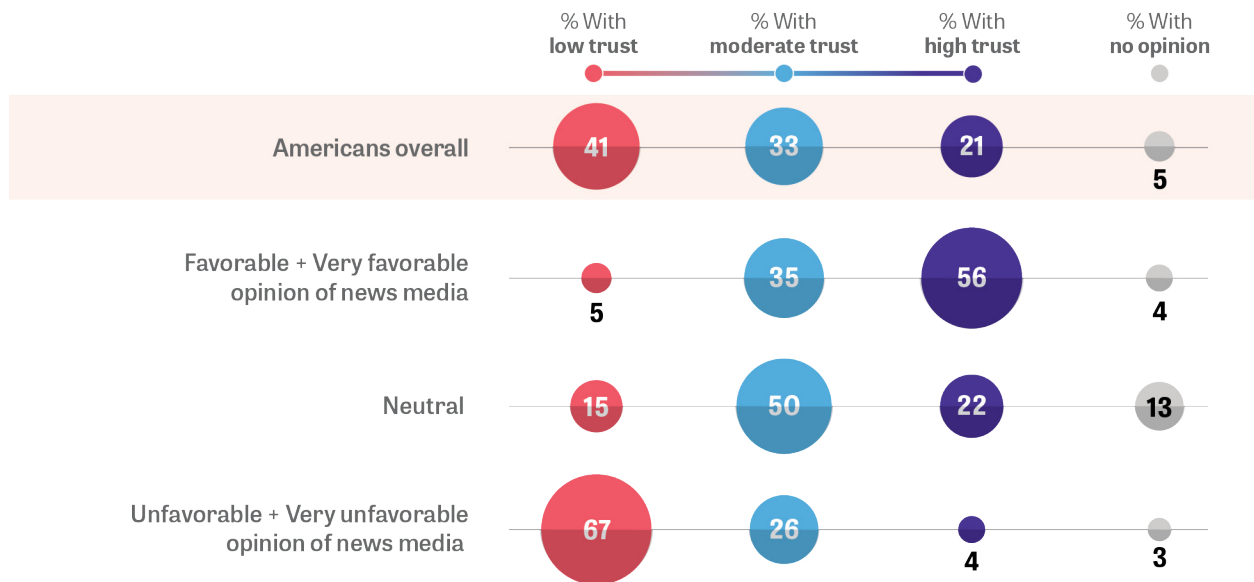
Unfavorable attitudes about the news media and perceptions of bias in news coverage are related to lower emotional trust in national news organizations.

Unfavorable views of the news media in the U.S. go hand-in-hand with low emotional trust in national news organizations. Sixty-seven percent of those who hold unfavorable views of the news media have low emotional trust. Among those with a favorable or very favorable view of the media, 56% have high emotional trust in national news organizations.

FIGURE 11

Relationship Between Overall Opinion of the News and Emotional Trust in National News Organizations

What is your overall opinion of the news media in the United States today?



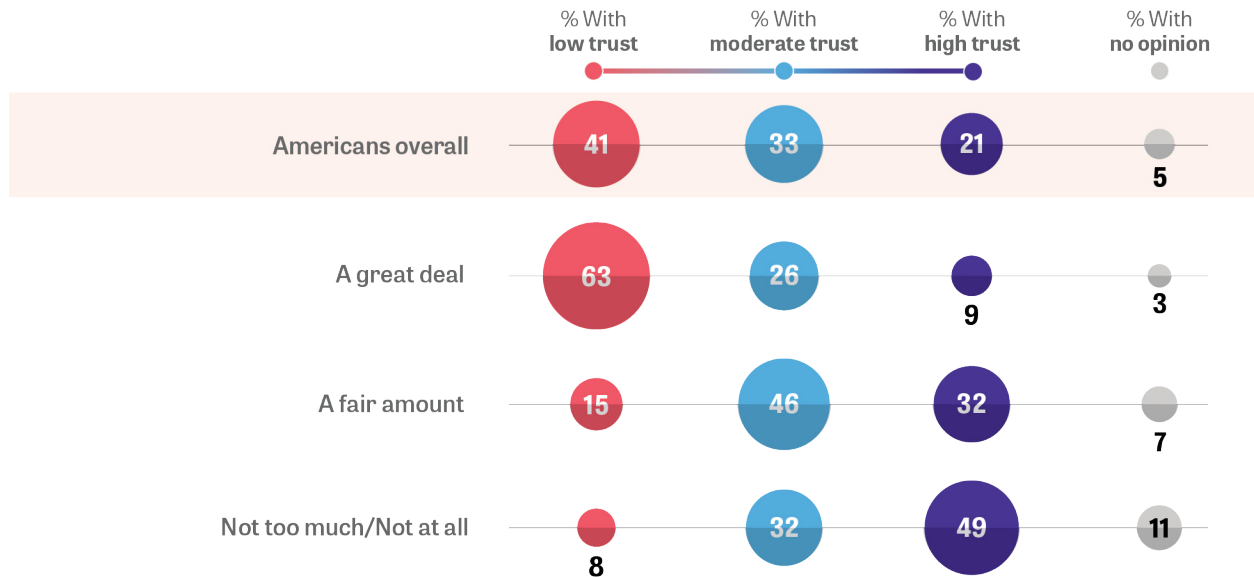
Perceptions of political bias in news coverage are also related to varying levels of emotional trust in national news organizations. More than six in 10 U.S. adults who see "a great deal" of political bias in news coverage have low emotional trust in national news organizations. Among those who see "not too much" or no bias at all, only 8% report low emotional trust.

Americans who see less political bias in news coverage generally have more emotional trust in national news organizations. In fact, 49% of those who see little to no political bias in news coverage report high emotional trust in national news.

FIGURE 12

Relationship Between Perceptions of Political Bias and Emotional Trust in National News Organizations

To what extent do you see political bias in news coverage?



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100% ±1%.

Most Americans agree that national news organizations have the resources and opportunity to live up to a standard of accurate and fair reporting. But when it comes to how they feel about national news, most do not believe that these outlets consider how their reporting impacts them or society. Furthermore, many Americans do not believe national news organizations can be relied on to deliver the information they need and see the news as trying to persuade or mislead them.

Exploration into emotional trust in news has also led to new insight into Americans' greater positive regard for local over national journalism. The public's emotional trust in local news is significantly higher than it is for national news. Twice as many Americans believe local news organizations care about the impact of their reporting on individuals than those who believe national news organizations care. Overall, the largest proportion of U.S. adults report *high* emotional trust in local news, while the largest proportion reports *low* emotional trust in national news.

These findings alone can be useful for efforts to rebuild trust in news among the public. The next section will further examine which news habits most correlate with different levels of emotional trust in news, and subsequent sections will show that emotional trust in news is related to other attitudes and behaviors critical to evaluating the efficacy of democracy in America today.



2 Emotional trust and how Americans get their news

Gallup/Knight trends on Americans' news habits show that the public's attention to news fluctuates over time — often in line with significant current events in the country or the world. Americans express a growing preference for getting most of their news online, though nearly half report getting news from television daily. These preferences and habits are not universal, however. There are significant differences in where Americans get their news depending on generation and racial/ethnic identity in particular — in line with findings from Pew Research Center.²⁰

This section of the report will show that where Americans get their news is connected to emotional trust in news. Americans who get their news mostly online or from radio are the least trusting of national news organizations, while those who get their news mostly from television or print have higher emotional trust. Preferred news outlet also matters — for example, those who get news from U.S.-based network outlets are more likely to think national news organizations are reliable, care about the impact of their reporting and have good intentions. Americans who say their top news source is a national cable news outlet or say “other” — i.e., they do not turn to one of the top 20 most-cited sources for news — have the lowest levels of emotional trust. This finding is critical, as the largest portion of the American public says they turn most often to a cable news outlet to stay up to date with news.

“When I was between the ages of 30 and 50, I read the newspaper every day. And then I stopped cold turkey because I started seeing where it was directing me to. I didn’t like what it was telling me. So, I started searching other avenues, listening to more opinionated shows where they pull from different sources and mix it up instead of reporting in one direction. The newspaper is probably now the last place I’ll go get anything anymore, whereas before it was the first.”

— FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

²⁰ Shearer, E. (2021, January 12). *More than eight-in-ten Americans get news from digital services*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/01/12/more-than-eight-in-ten-americans-get-news-from-digital-devices/>; Forman-Katz, N., & Matsa, K. E. (2022, September 20). *News platform fact sheet*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/fact-sheet/news-platform-fact-sheet/>

Overall attention to news has declined over the past five years.

The Gallup/Knight American Views 2022 survey asks Americans how much attention they pay to each of the following types of news: local, national and international. As previously reported, overall attention to news has declined over the past five years.

About one-third of Americans now report paying “a great deal” of attention to national news, followed by 18% for local news and 17% for international news. While attention to national and local news has not changed much compared to the most recent measure in 2021, attention to international news has increased by five points compared with levels in 2020 and 2021.

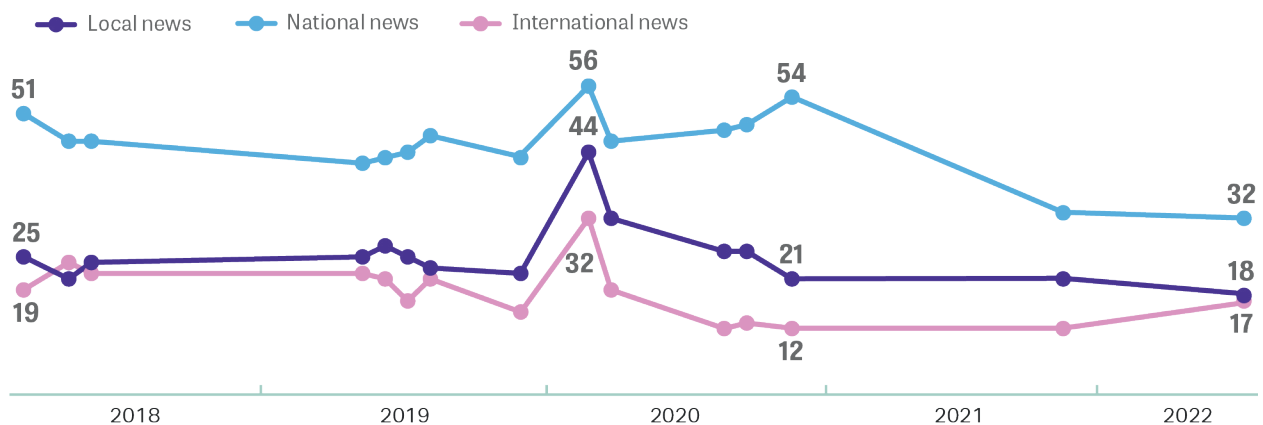
Results from the surveys deployed from March 2020 through November 2020 show a spike in attention news — particularly national and international news. It is important to note that these surveys were fielded during the height of the global COVID-19 pandemic and the 2020 presidential election, which could have contributed to this uptick in attention to news. It is also worth noting that the decreasing attention recorded in 2021 and 2022 may reflect news fatigue from the pandemic.

FIGURE 13

Trends in Attention to Local, National and International News: 2018-2022

How much attention are you currently paying to each of the following?

(% “A great deal” of attention)



Attention to news generally increases with age.

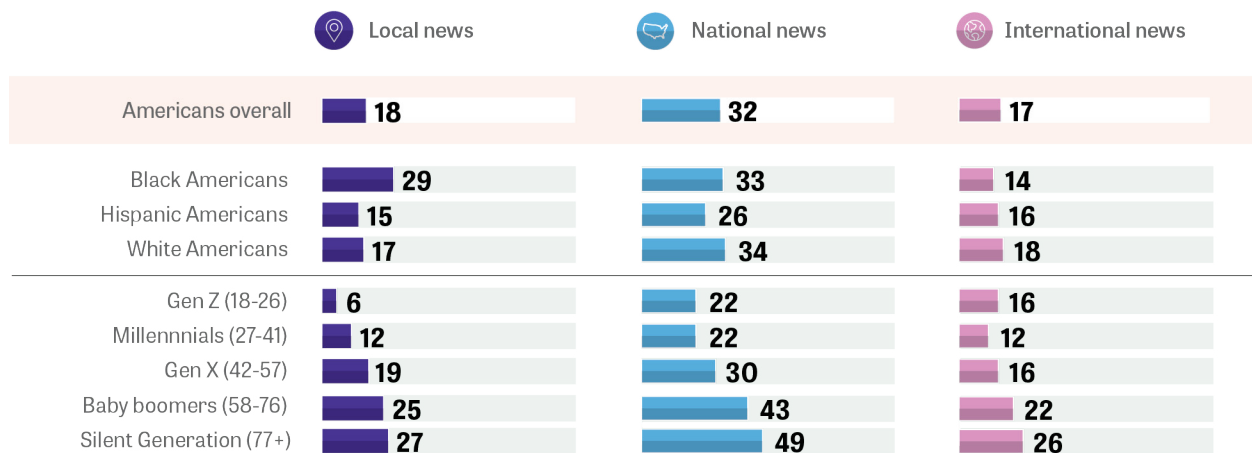
Baby boomers and Silent Generation respondents (those aged 58 and older) are paying more attention to local, national and international news than U.S. adults in younger generations. About twice as many Americans aged 58 and older say they pay a great deal of attention to national news as those aged 41 and younger.

Black Americans are more likely than Hispanic or White Americans to report paying a great deal of attention to local news; attention to news across all racial/ethnic identity groups has remained relatively unchanged since 2021.

FIGURE 14

Demographic Differences in Attention to News, by Race, Generation and Political Party Affiliation

How much attention are you currently paying to each of the following?
(% "A great deal" of attention)



Notably, [Gallup/Knight data collected in 2021](#) showed that younger Americans and Democrats in particular were paying less attention to national news compared with 2020 levels. In 2022, this reversed. Democrats report paying more attention to national news in 2022 than in 2021, while Republicans and independents are paying less attention to national news than in 2021. Importantly, data from 2020 through 2022 were collected during an international pandemic and two contentious U.S. elections, which may explain fluctuations.

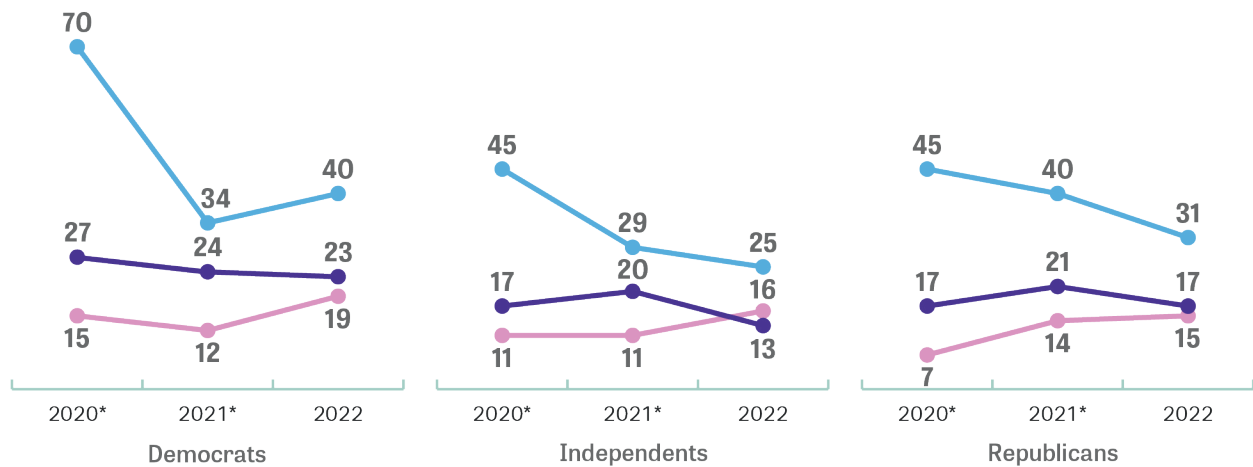
Attention to local and international news has remained relatively steady over the three-year period across partisans.

FIGURE 15

Demographic Differences in Attention to News, by Race, Generation and Political Party Affiliation

How much attention are you currently paying to each of the following?
(% "A great deal" of attention)

Local news National news International news



* Surveys conducted via Gallup Panel November 2020 and November 2021.

Americans who pay the least amount of attention to national news are the least trusting of it.

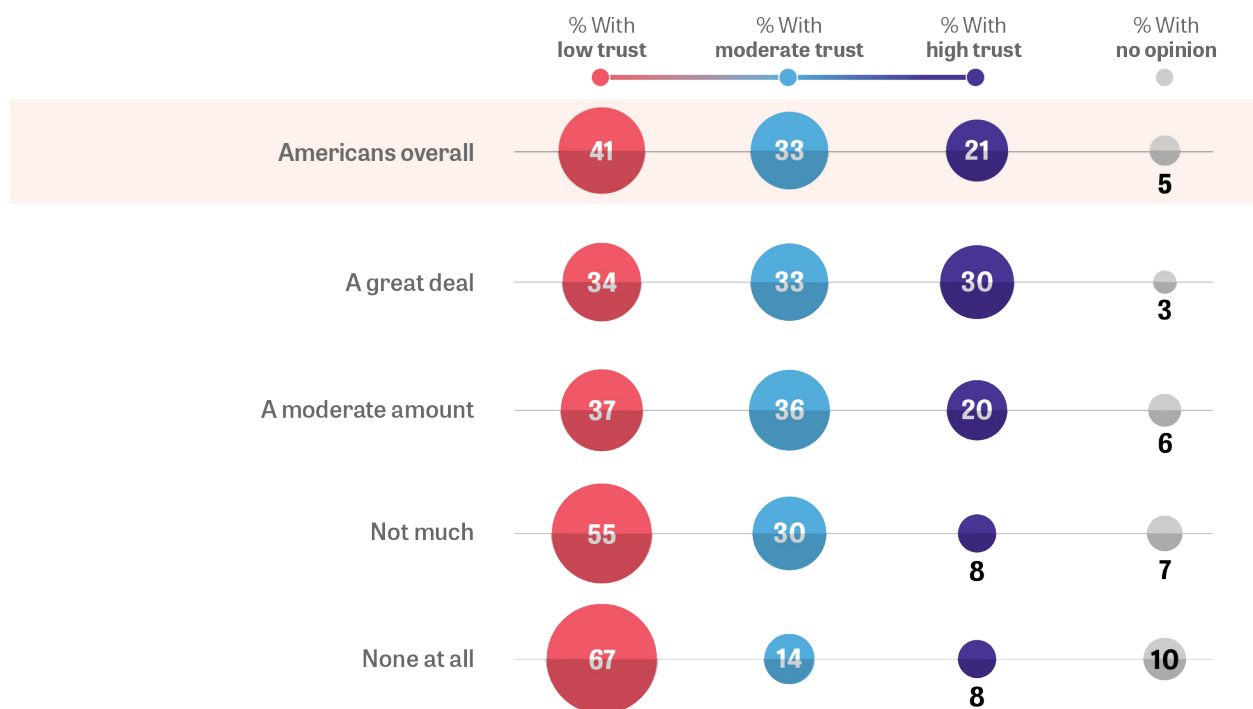
Americans who report paying little to no attention to national news are much more likely to have low emotional trust in national news organizations. More than half who say they pay “not much” attention report low emotional trust (55%), as do 67% of those who say they pay no attention at all.

The relationship between paying a great deal of attention to national news and emotional trust in national news organizations is not as clear. Overall, those who pay a great deal or “a moderate amount” of attention to national news are more likely to report high emotional trust compared with those paying less attention. Equal amounts or more of Americans paying a great deal or moderate amount of attention to national news also report low emotional trust as do high trust.

FIGURE 16

Relationship Between Attention to National News and Emotional Trust in National News Organizations

How much attention are you currently paying to each of the following: National news



Note: "No answer" percentages not shown. Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100% ±1%.

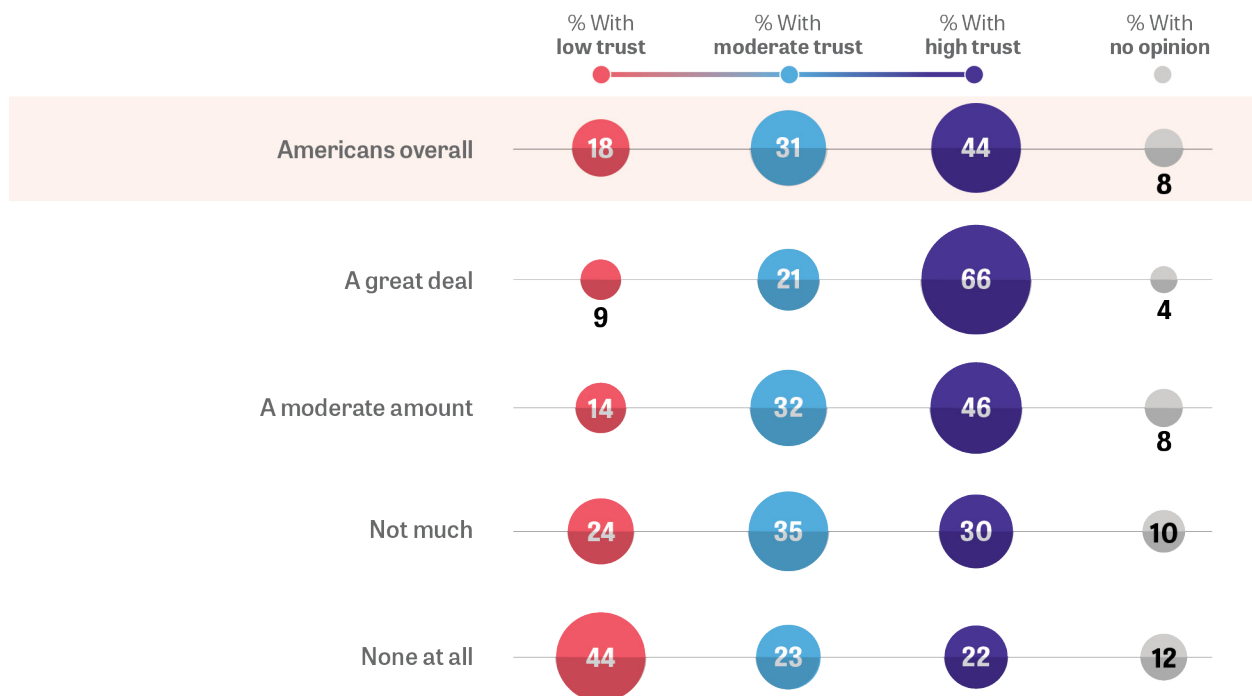
In other words, while there is a strong correlation between low attention to national news and low levels of emotional trust in national news organizations, the link between higher attention to news and emotional trust is weaker.

Higher levels of attention to local news, however, are more clearly related to higher emotional trust in local news organizations, and lower levels of attention correlate with lower emotional trust. Sixty-six percent of Americans who pay a great deal of attention to local news report high levels of emotional trust in local news, while only 9% report low trust. Among those who report paying no attention at all to local news, 44% have low emotional trust in local news; half as many have high trust (22%).

FIGURE 17

Relationship Between Attention to Local News and Emotional Trust in Local News

How much attention are you currently paying to each of the following: Local news



Note: "No answer" percentages not shown. Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100% ±1%.

A growing number of Americans prefer to get news online, while preferring television news is in decline.

When asked which news format they prefer to get most of their news from, more than half of Americans say online using a computer, smartphone or app. Thirty-one percent report preferring to get news from television, 7% prefer radio, and 3% prefer printed newspapers or magazines. Compared with two years ago, the percentage who get most of their news online has increased by 12 points, while getting news mostly from television has decreased by 10 points.

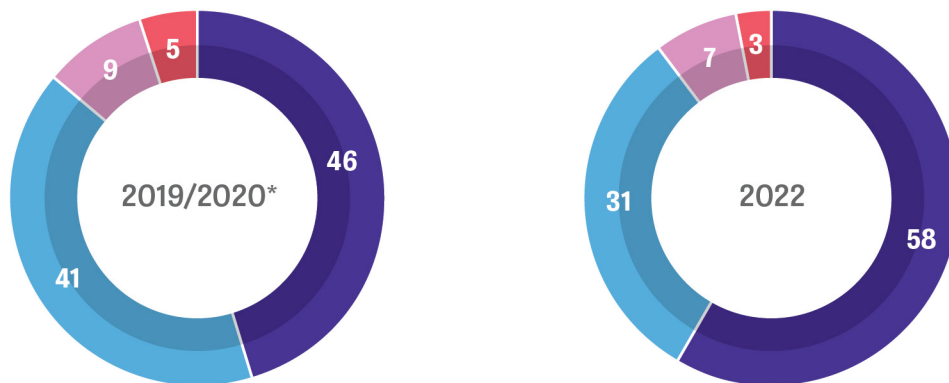
In 2016, Pew Research Center reported that television was Americans' most preferred format for news (46% preferred television, compared with 28% who preferred online). Preference for online news grew to 34% in 2018, while preference for television slightly decreased to 44%.²¹ When Gallup fielded this question in late 2019-early 2020, the results showed that Americans slightly preferred getting news online over television. Preference for getting most news online continues to grow in 2022.

FIGURE 18

Trends in Preferred Format for Getting News

In which format do you get most of your news?

■ % Online using a computer, smartphone, or app ■ % From television ■ % From a radio ■ % From a printed newspaper or magazine



Note: "No answer" percentages not shown. Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100% ±1%.
* November 2019 - February 2020 surveys were conducted by mail using random sample of U.S. addresses; the 2022 survey was conducted via web and mail using a Gallup Panel sample.

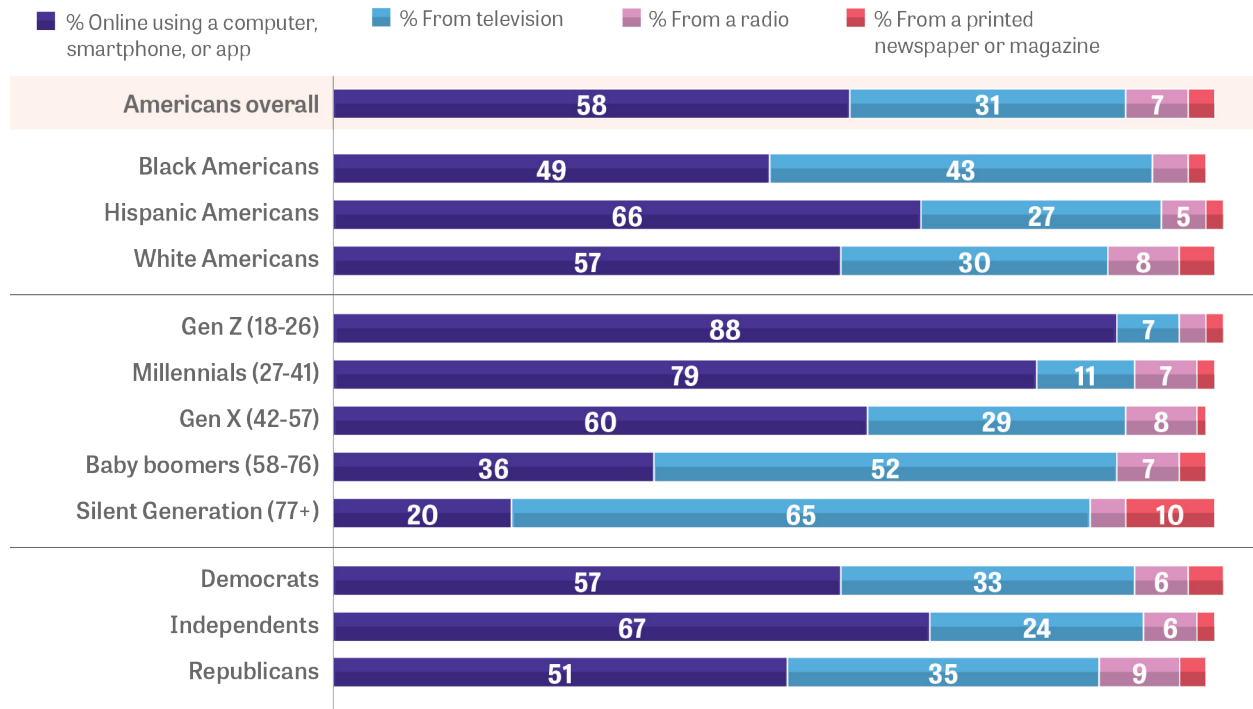
21 Mitchell, A. (2018, December 3). *Americans still prefer watching to reading the news – and mostly still through television*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2018/12/03/americans-still-prefer-watching-to-reading-the-news-and-mostly-still-through-television/>

Younger generations and Hispanic Americans, in particular, are more likely than older generations and White or Black Americans to report getting most of their news online. By contrast, baby boomers (aged 58-76) and those from the Silent Generation (77+) are much more likely to report getting news mostly from television rather than online (52% and 65%, respectively, say television). And while Democrats and Republicans get most of their news online in equal proportions, independents are more likely than both to report getting news online by at least 10 points.

FIGURE 19

Demographic Differences in Preferred News Format

In which format do you get most of your news?



Note: "No answer" percentages not shown. Values under 5% are not displayed. Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100% ±1%.

Americans who prefer to get news online or from radio have lower emotional trust in national news organizations.

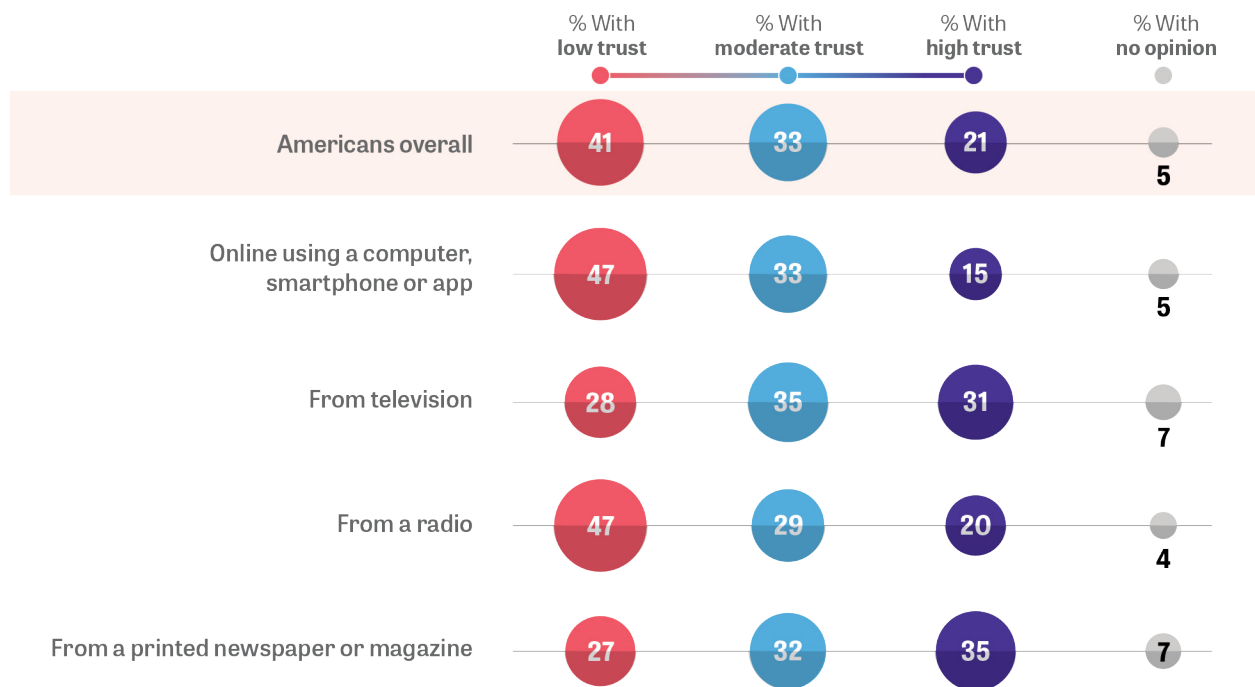
Nearly half of Americans (47%) who prefer to get their news mostly online using a computer, smartphone or app or mostly from a radio report low emotional trust in national news organizations; only 15% of online news consumers and 20% of radio news consumers report high trust. The link between lower emotional trust in national news and preference for getting news online could be related, in part, to age, as younger generations are more likely to prefer getting news online and report lower emotional trust in news.

About an equal proportion of Americans who prefer to get news mostly from television or printed newspapers and magazines report low emotional trust as those who report high emotional trust in national news organizations.

FIGURE 20

Relationship Between Preferred News Format and Emotional Trust in National News Organizations

In which format do you get most of your news?



Note: "No answer" percentages not shown. Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100% ±1%.

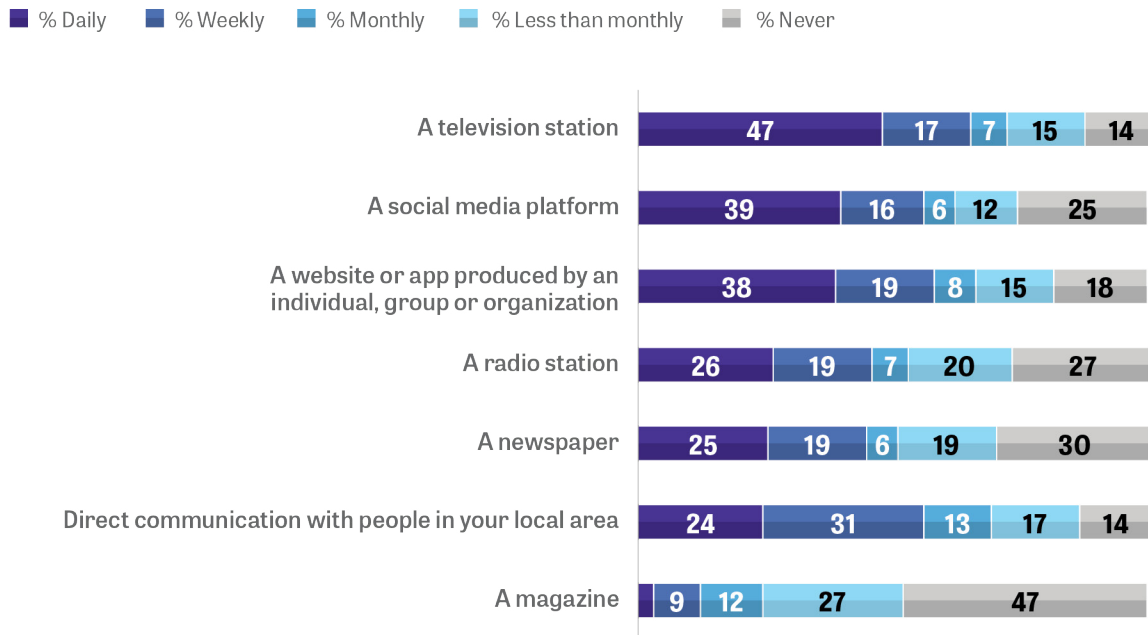
When it comes to the news formats Americans report using daily, television and social media or websites are most used — though this varies across age, race and political partisanship.

Americans were also asked how frequently they get news from various formats — including websites, social media and from direct communication with others. Nearly half of U.S. adults (47%) report turning to television daily, and 39% say they use social media or a website or app (38%) daily for news. Only about a quarter of Americans report getting news from a radio station, newspaper or direct communication with others in their community on a daily basis.

FIGURE 21

Frequency of Media Format Use to Stay Up to Date on News

How often, if at all, do you use each of the following for staying up-to-date on news?



Note: "No answer" percentages not shown. Values under 5% are not displayed.

Older generations of Americans are significantly more likely to report getting news daily from television, while younger generations (particularly Gen Z and millennials) are significantly more likely to get news daily on social media. Gen X respondents are the most likely to get news daily from websites or apps. This finding aligns with overall news preferences, as younger generations are much more likely to say they get most of their news online, while older generations are more likely to say they use television.

Black Americans are much more likely than White Americans to get news daily from television, and they are also more likely than Hispanic and White Americans to stay up to date with news daily via direct communication with people in their community. By contrast, White Americans are slightly more likely to get news daily from websites or apps than Hispanic or Black Americans.

Finally, partisans are more likely than independents to use television daily to stay up to date on news. Republicans are slightly more likely to use websites and radio stations daily, while Democrats are slightly more likely to use newspapers and social media. Independents are about equally as likely to say they turn to social media, television or websites to get news daily.

FIGURE 22

Demographic Differences in Frequency of Media Format Use to Stay Up to Date on News, by Race, Generation and Political Party Affiliation

How often, if at all, do you use each of the following for staying up-to-date on news?

(% Daily)

	A television station	A social media platform	A website or app produced by an individual, group or organization	A radio station	A newspaper	Direct communication with people in your local area	A magazine
Americans overall	47	39	38	26	25	24	3
Black Americans	59	42	31	27	23	30	5
Hispanic Americans	39	43	34	24	21	24	5
White Americans	47	37	39	27	26	22	3
Gen Z (18-26)	11	65	28	7	14	25	4
Millennials (27-41)	22	50	38	22	21	26	4
Gen X (42-57)	49	40	44	33	23	26	4
Baby boomers (58-76)	73	26	37	28	30	20	3
Silent Generation (77+)	81	18	25	23	35	20	3
Democrats	51	43	37	26	33	24	5
Independents	39	40	38	21	20	22	2
Republicans	50	35	41	31	19	25	2

Note: "No answer" percentages not shown.

Americans who get news daily from websites, social media or radio report lower emotional trust in national news organizations.

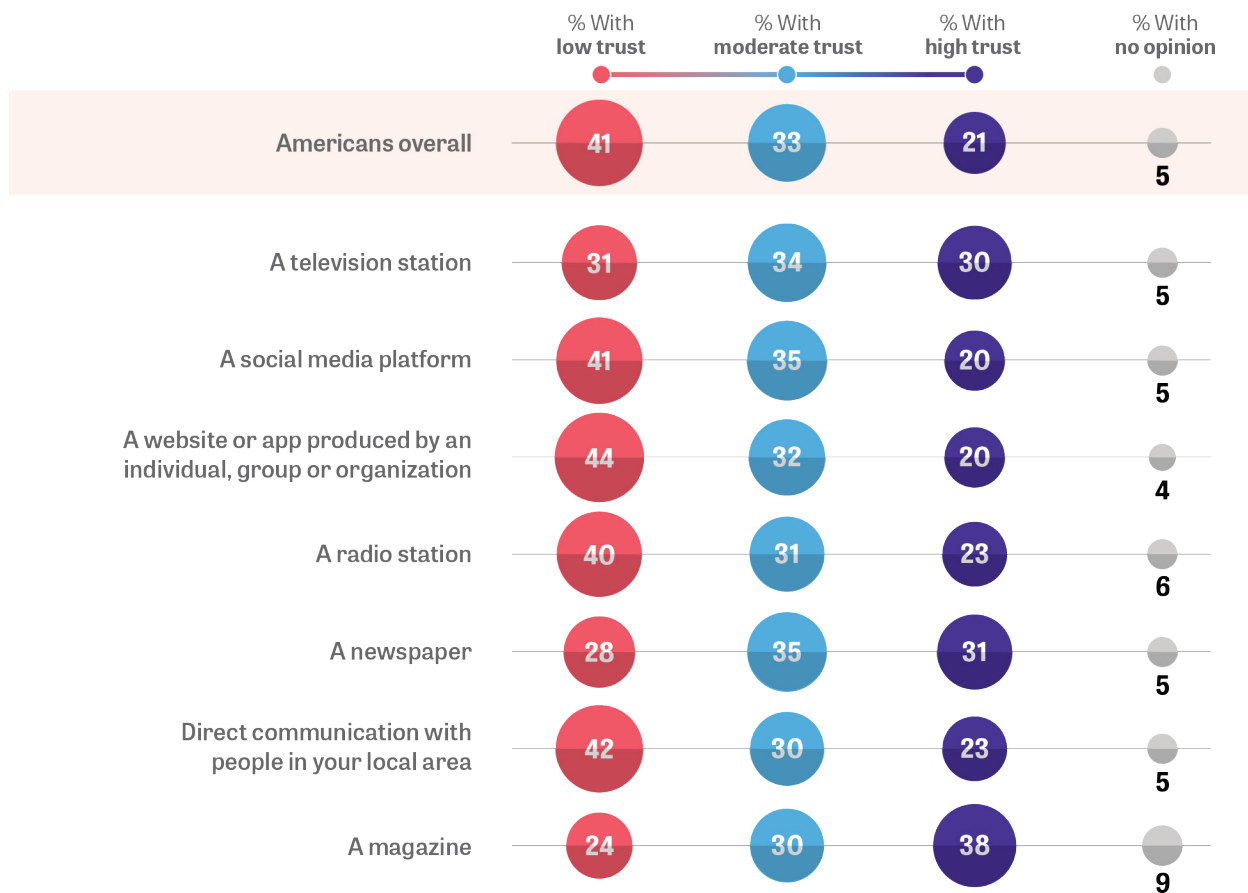
Americans who get most of their news online report lower emotional trust in national news organizations. Thus, unsurprisingly, those who get news *daily* online (from websites or social media) are also less trusting of national news organizations. About four in 10 Americans who get news daily from social media platforms, websites or apps, as well as from a radio station or direct communication with people in their local area, report low levels of emotional trust in national news organizations. By contrast, about three in 10 who get news from television or a newspaper report low emotional trust in national news organizations. Americans who report getting news from television stations and newspapers daily are also at least 10 points more likely to have high emotional trust in national news than those who get daily news online (via social media, websites, apps) or from radio or direct communication.

FIGURE 23

Relationship Between Emotional Trust in National News Organizations and Frequency of Media Format Use to Stay Up to Date on News

How often, if at all, do you use each of the following for staying up-to-date on news?

(% Daily)



Note: "No answer" percentages not shown. Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100% ±1%.

Three in 10 Americans get their news from cable news outlets, making these the most-used news sources.

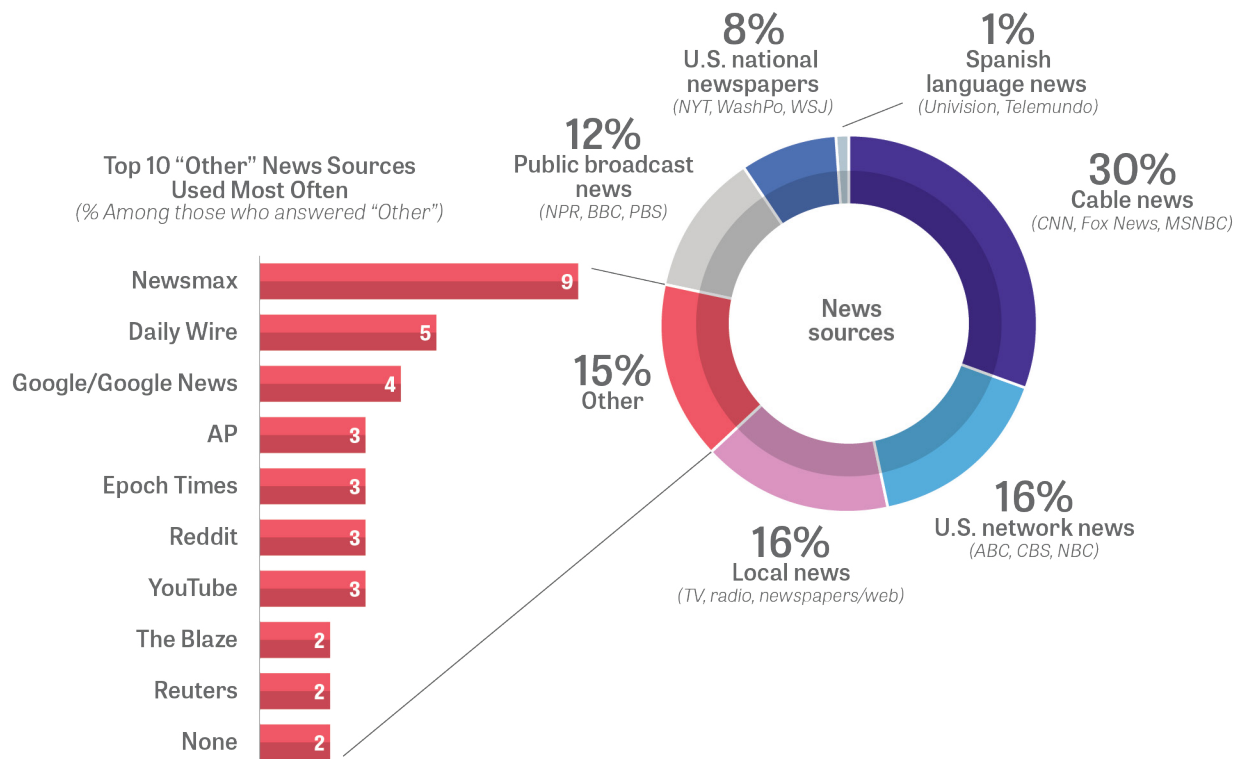
Finally, the current study asked Americans to select from a list of 20 outlets which news source they use most often to get their news. Three in 10 say a cable news outlet — specifically CNN, Fox News or MSNBC — is the news source they use most often. A little more than half as many select a network news outlet — ABC, CBS or NBC — or local TV, radio or newspapers as their top news source. Twelve percent report using public broadcast news, and 8% say they turn most often to one of three major U.S. national newspapers — *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* or *The Washington Post*.

Fifteen percent of U.S. adults report using “other” news sources most often. The most-cited “other” news sources are Newsmax and the Daily Wire. Google News aggregator and social media such as YouTube or Reddit are also frequently mentioned. Overall, no “other” news source listed exceeds 1% of the total sample.

FIGURE 24

Americans' Most-Used News Sources

Which ONE of the following news sources do you use most often?



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100% ±1%.

Americans who name a U.S. network news outlet as the source they use most often report higher emotional trust in national news.

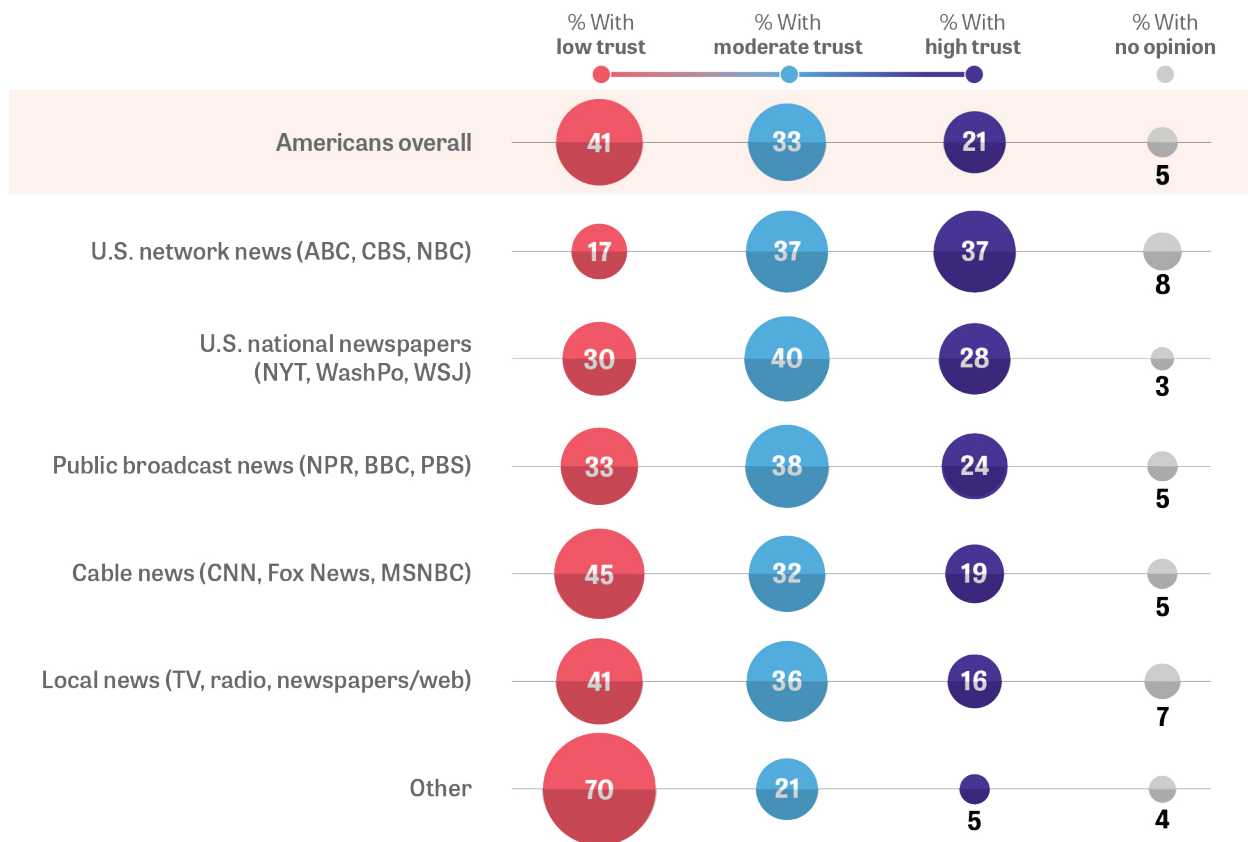
Americans' preferred news outlet appears to be related to their degree of emotional trust in national news organizations. Those who get news most often from a U.S.-based network (ABC, CBS, NBC) report the highest levels of emotional trust in national news organizations — 37%, compared with 19% of those who most often get news from a cable news outlet. Americans who get their news mostly from U.S. national newspapers and public broadcasting news also have higher levels of moderate and high emotional trust in national news organizations.

Among U.S. adults who turn most often to a cable news outlet (CNN, Fox News, MSNBC), 45% have low emotional trust in national news media. Those who turn to local news sources most often also report lower levels of emotional trust in national news (41%). Seven in 10 who report “other” as their top source of news have low emotional trust in national news organizations as well, suggesting a link between low emotional trust and seeking information from alternative outlets.

FIGURE 25

Relationship Between Sources Americans Turn to Most for News and Trust in National News

Which ONE of the following news sources do you use most often?



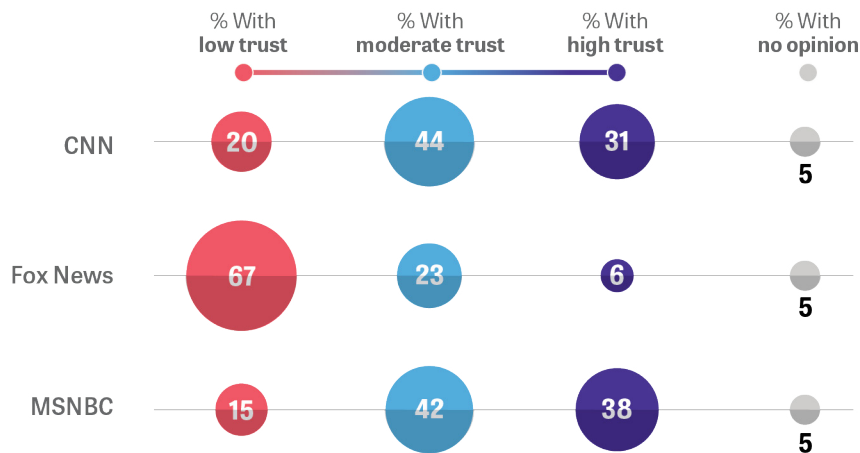
Note: "No answer" percentages not shown. Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100% ±1%.

Americans who consume different cable news sources — who are likely stronger partisans — differ in levels of emotional trust in national news organizations. Self-reported Fox News viewers are significantly more likely to have low emotional trust in national news overall, while MSNBC and CNN viewers tend to exhibit higher levels of emotional trust. Notably, Fox News consumers are predominantly Republicans (67%), while 23% are independents, 6% are Democrats, and 3% report “other” for political party affiliation. Although this finding follows the pattern of Republicans consistently having less trust in news, a Pew Research Center study reports that about two-thirds of Republicans do trust Fox News specifically for political and election news.²²

FIGURE 26

Relationship Between Cable News Source Used Most Often and Emotional Trust in National News

Which ONE of the following news sources do you use most often?



“I would like to not choose a news source based on what validates my belief system, but it’s hard to find something that isn’t biased and offers information one way and the other. So, I end up choosing what is least offensive to me.”

— FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

²² Gramlich, J. (2020, April 8). *5 facts about Fox News*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/04/08/five-facts-about-fox-news/>

Americans' emotional trust in national news organizations is relatively low, especially when compared with their emotional trust in local news organizations. Examining different personal characteristics — most strikingly, political party affiliation — and differing news habits can help increase understanding of which Americans have lower or higher emotional trust in national news organizations overall. Those who prefer to get their news online, from websites and social media daily and turn most often to cable news outlets report the lowest emotional trust in national news organizations. This is a critical connection to track as preference for online news continues to grow.

On the other hand, there appears to be a connection between Americans who prefer getting news from television — particularly, from network news outlets — and greater emotional trust. Thus, the style of news and its format of delivery could be important considerations for the news industry, not just in appealing to audience preferences but in establishing emotional trust as well.

The second half of this report will focus on the implications of emotional trust. Specifically, we investigate how trust may be related to other attitudes and behaviors critical to the American democratic process by comparing Americans with high emotional trust in news to those with low emotional trust. The findings reveal that believing national news organizations cannot be relied on, do not care about the impact of their reporting and intend to mislead the public (i.e., emotional trust) is strongly related to feeling a lack of confidence in navigating today's information environment. Those with lower emotional trust in news are also more likely to see news organizations as solely driven by profit while simultaneously being less willing to pay for news. Finally, emotional distrust in national news is connected to overall pessimism about the state of democracy in the country today.



3 Emotional trust and news: A deeper look

Trust and the ability to navigate today's information environment

In addition to being dissatisfied with the news media, many Americans report feeling overwhelmed by the volume of content available today. In fact, the abundance of information now available may be more of an obstacle than a benefit, with more than six in 10 Americans saying the increased number of information sources make it harder for them to be well-informed.

U.S. adults also worry about the quality of the news they receive, with more than six in 10 reporting that news mixed with non-news online or on social media significantly contributes to them feeling overwhelmed. People who have low emotional trust in national news organizations appear to especially struggle with these concerns — which may, in turn, reinforce their distrust in the news media overall.

Americans continue to be split on whether they feel confident enough to sort out the facts in the face of political bias in news coverage.

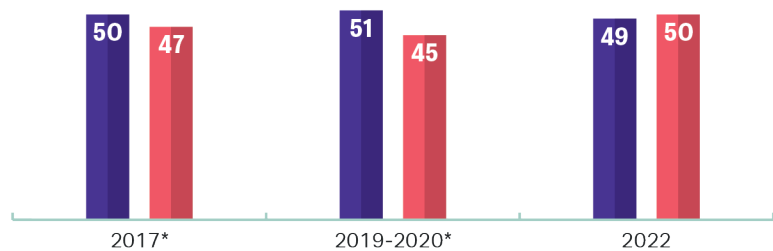
Americans remain nearly evenly divided on whether the perceived bias in the news media can be overcome in terms of their ability to get factual information. Nearly half (49%) believe that “although there is some bias in the news media, there are enough sources to be able sort out the facts,” while 50% say “there is so much bias in the news media that it’s often difficult to sort out the facts.”

FIGURE 27

Effect of Bias on Ability to Sort Out Facts: 2017-2022

Please indicate which of these statements comes closer to how you feel:

- % Although there is some bias in the news media, **there are enough sources of news to be able to sort out the facts**
- % There is so much bias in the news media that **it’s often difficult to sort out the facts**



Note: "No answer" percentages not shown.
* November 2017 and November 2019 - February 2020 surveys were conducted by mail using a random sample of U.S. addresses; the 2022 survey was conducted via web and mail using a Gallup Panel sample.

Nearly eight in 10 Republicans (77%) believe there is too much bias in the news media to sort out the facts, consistent with this group's widespread belief that there is a great deal of political bias in news coverage. A similar percentage of Democrats (75%) take the opposite position — that although there is some bias in the news media, there are enough sources to be able to sort out the facts. Independents are more split but lean toward feeling like there is too much bias (59%) compared with feeling confident in sorting out the facts (40%).

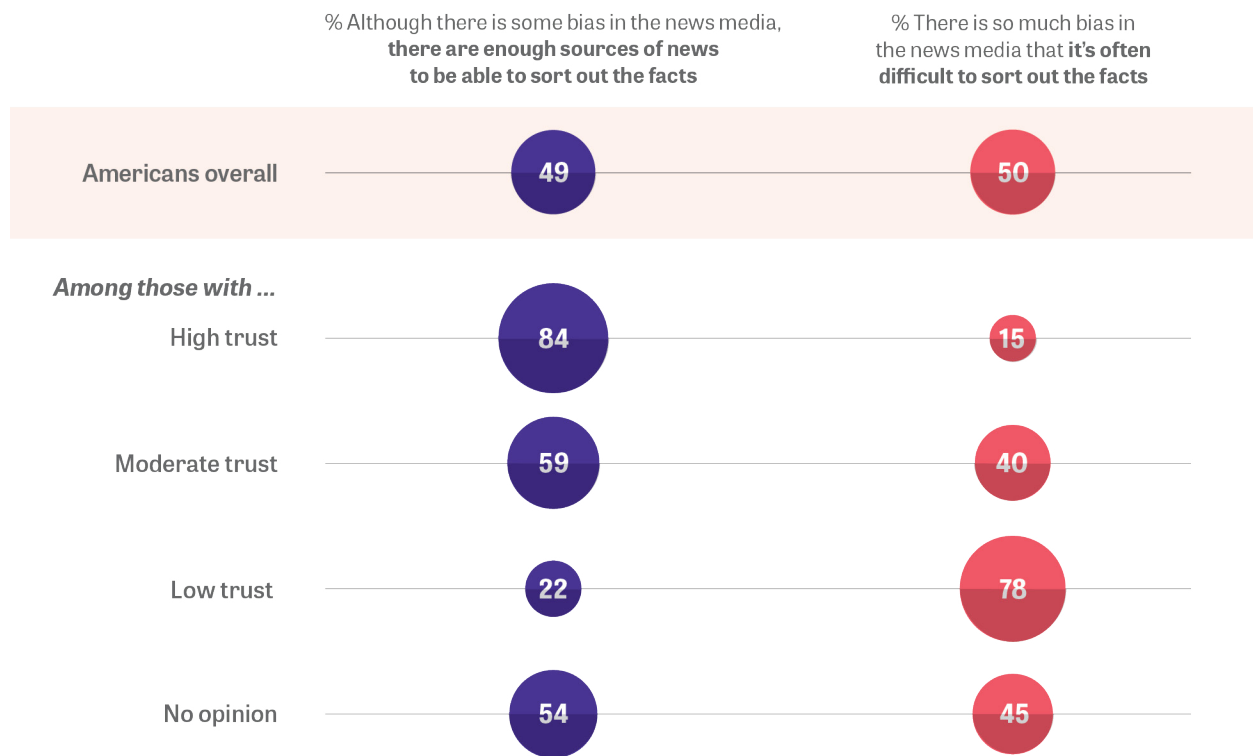
Americans with low emotional trust in national news are much more likely to find it difficult to sort out the facts in today's information environment.

There is a clear relationship between Americans' confidence in their ability to sort out the facts despite political bias in news coverage and emotional trust in national news organizations. As trust in national news organizations increases, so does confidence in one's ability to sort out the facts. Eighty-four percent of those with high emotional trust in national news organizations say they feel able to sort out the facts — 34 points more than the average among Americans overall. Among those with low emotional trust, 78% say it is often difficult to sort out the facts.

FIGURE 28

Relationship Between Effect of Bias on Ability to Sort Out the Facts and Emotional Trust in National News Organizations

Please indicate which of these statements comes closer to how you personally feel:



Note: "No answer" percentages not shown.

Many Americans find it harder to be well-informed due to the increase in available information today.

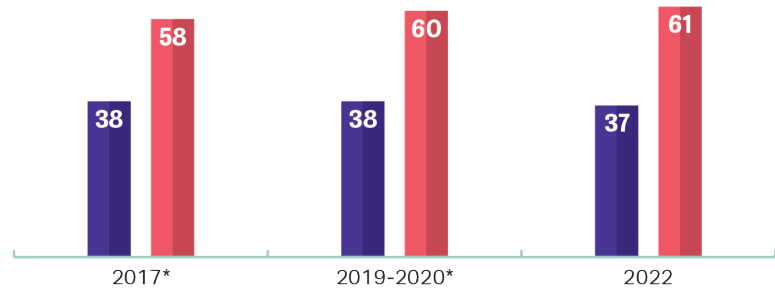
Six in 10 Americans say it is harder (61%) rather than easier (37%) to be well-informed due to the increase in the number of sources of information, essentially unchanged from 2017 and 2020.

FIGURE 29

Perceived Impact of the Increase in Information Available: 2017-2022

Does the increase in information available today make it ... ?

- **% Easier to be well-informed**
because there are more sources of news that are easily accessed through newer technologies
- **% Harder to be well-informed**
because people have to sort through lots of information to determine what is true or important



Note: "No answer" percentages not shown.

* November 2017 and November 2019 - February 2020 surveys were conducted by mail using a random sample of U.S. addresses; the 2022 survey was conducted via web and mail using a Gallup Panel sample.

Among those who say the increased amount of information available makes it harder to stay informed, 67% report that news and non-news items mixed together on social media and internet sites contribute "a great deal" or "a fair amount" to making them feel overwhelmed. Another 64% say the pace or speed of news reporting leads to feeling overwhelmed. These trends are generally stable compared with the previous measurement in late 2019-early 2020, prior to the COVID-19 outbreak.

FIGURE 30

Factors Contributing to Americans' Sense of Being Overwhelmed by Information

How much, if at all, do each of the following aspects of the news environment today contribute to making you feel overwhelmed by information?

(% A great deal/fair amount among those who say the increase in information makes it hard to be well-informed)	2019-2020*	2022
News and non-news items mixed together on social media and internet sites	68	67
The pace or speed of news reporting of the 24-hour news cycle	61	64
An increased number of news organizations reporting the news	63	57
Technological advances that give you access to news wherever you are	52	56

* Survey fielded in November 2019 - February 2020, before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Those with lower emotional trust in national news organizations are more likely to feel it is hard to be well-informed in today's media environment.

Among Americans with low emotional trust in national news, 76% say it is harder to be well informed because people have to sort through lots of information to determine what is important. Only 23% of those with low trust say increased access to information makes being well-informed easier.

Conversely, U.S. adults with high emotional trust in national news are significantly more likely to feel empowered by the increase of available information today. Six in 10 report that today's media environment makes it easier for them to be well-informed because there are more sources of news available to access through new technologies.

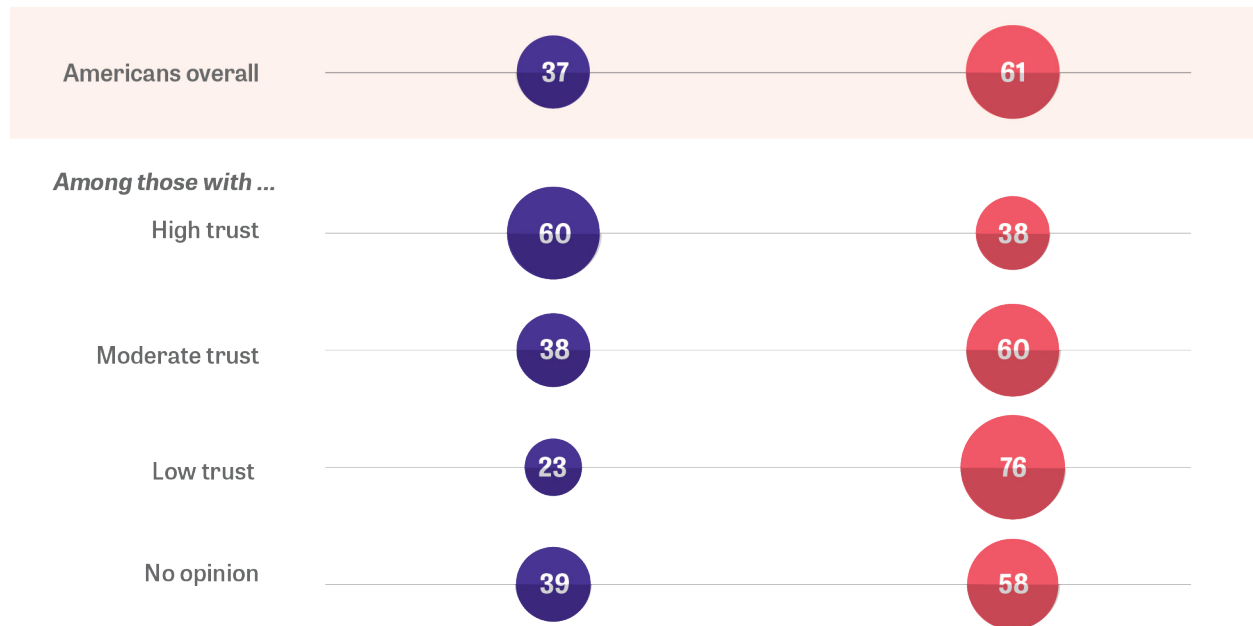
FIGURE 31

Relationship Between Ability to Feel Well-Informed and Emotional Trust in National News Organizations

Does the increase in information available today make it ... ?

% Easier to be well-informed because there are more sources of news that are easily accessed through newer technologies

% Harder to be well-informed because people have to sort through lots of information to determine what is true or important



As the public continues to face an ever-expanding information environment, the perception of political bias in the news and increase in available sources contribute to making Americans feel overwhelmed. Most importantly, though, those who report low emotional trust in national news organizations are significantly more likely to struggle in sorting out the facts and find it hard to be well-informed. Believing that national news organizations are unreliable, do not care about the impact of their reporting and intend to mislead the public are not attitudes in isolation. The data show that emotional trust is strongly connected to the level of confidence Americans feel in navigating today's media landscape and getting the information they need to be informed citizens.

Trust, motives of news organizations and paying for news

As reported in Part 1 of the American Views 2022 study, *News in America: Public Good or Private Enterprise?*, a majority of Americans believe news organizations prioritize profit and business needs over serving the public. Three in four U.S. adults say news organizations are first and foremost businesses, motivated by their financial interests and goals. These attitudes are particularly salient among younger generations of Americans, Republicans and independents.

The data presented in Part 1 indicate that the perceived motives and priorities of news organizations matter when it comes to Americans' overall feelings about the press. For example, those who have positive attitudes about U.S. news organizations are more likely to see those organizations as balancing public service and business needs well, compared with those who have unfavorable views of the news. Similarly, we find that greater emotional trust in national news organizations is related to the perception that news organizations are able to balance civic purpose and corporate needs.

The perception that news organizations balance public service and business needs well is related to higher emotional trust in news.

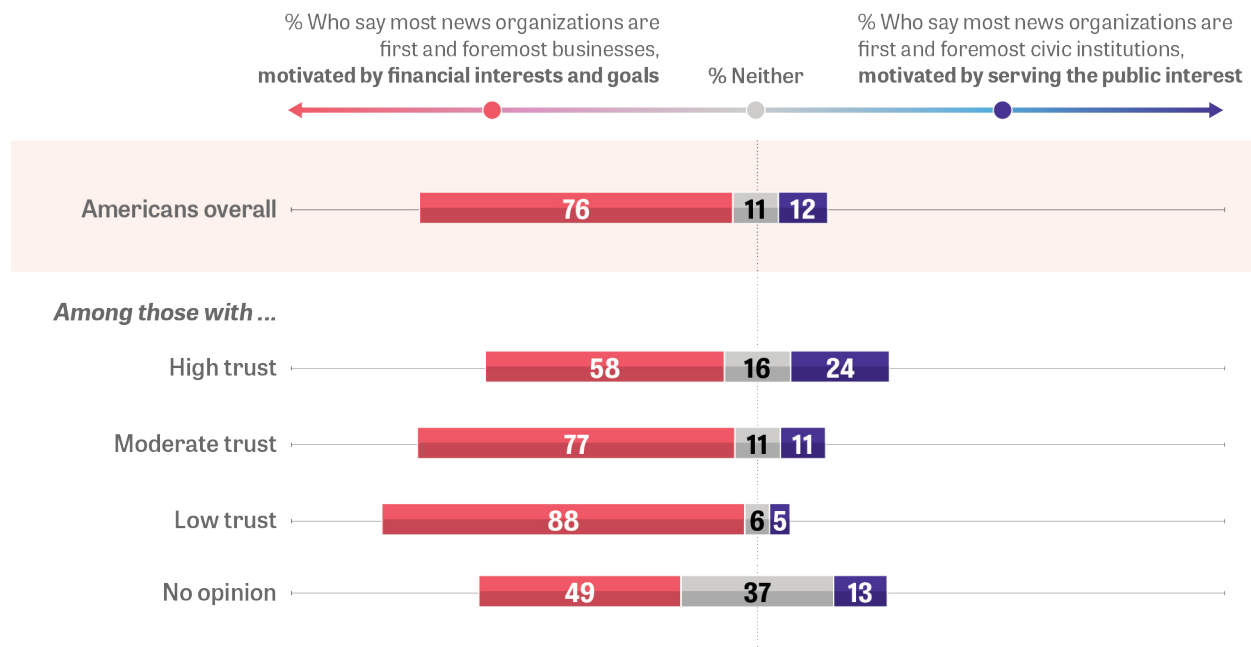
Overall, 76% of Americans say news organizations are first and foremost businesses, while only 12% say they are first and foremost civic institutions. This perception is even more prevalent among those with low emotional trust in national news: 88% believe news organizations put financial interests and goals first. Seventy-seven percent of those with moderate emotional trust say the same.

Those with low emotional trust in national news organizations are 30 points more likely to say most news organizations are first and foremost businesses, motivated by financial interests and goals than Americans with high emotional trust. Conversely, twenty-four percent of those with high trust say news organizations are first and foremost civic institutions, motivated by serving the public interest (19 points higher than those with low trust).

FIGURE 32

Relationship Between Perceived Priorities of News Organizations and Emotional Trust in National News

Which of the following best describes your opinion?



Note: "No answer" percentages not shown.

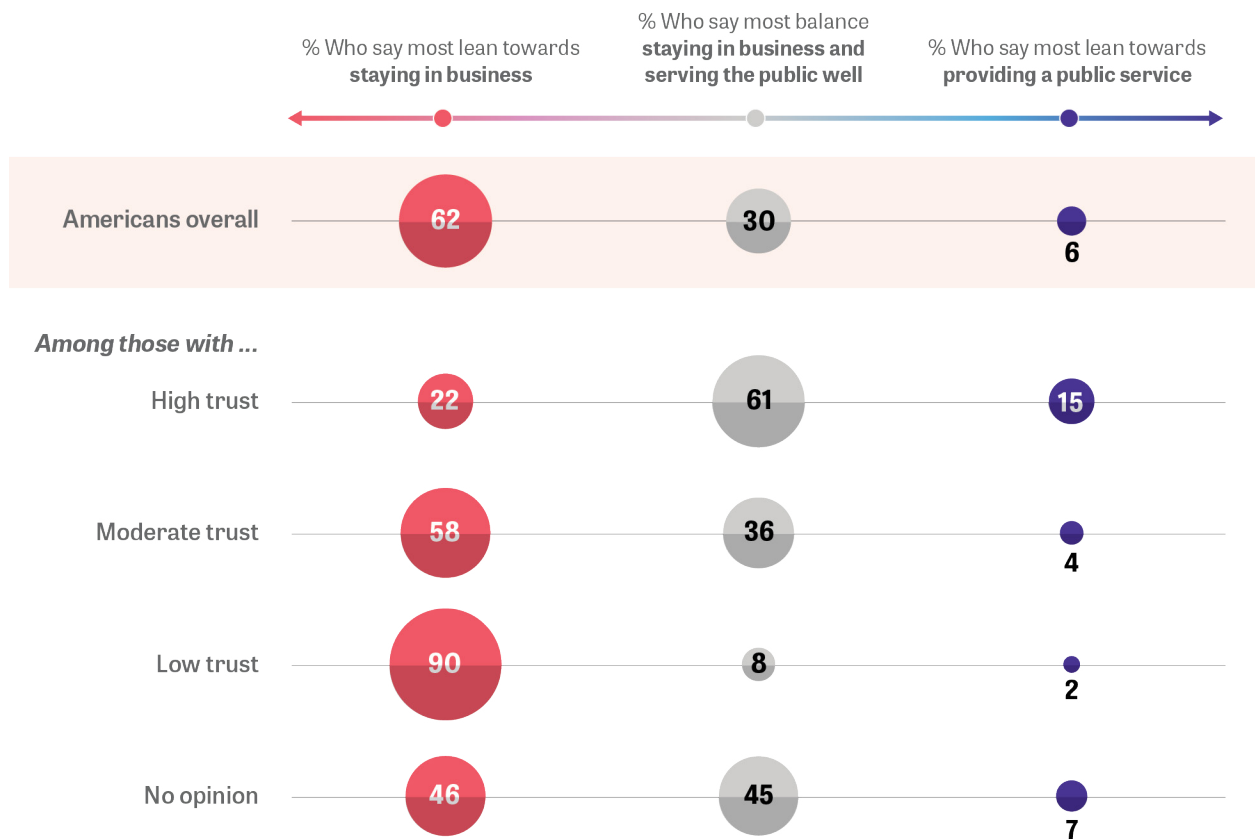
The link between emotional trust in national news and perceptions of news outlets' motives is even stronger when Americans are asked to consider whether news organizations lean toward profit, service or a balance of each. Among those with low emotional trust in national news, 90% say most news organizations lean toward staying in business. By contrast, only 22% of those who have high emotional trust in national news say this.

Sixty-one percent of those with high trust say news organizations are able to balance staying in business with serving the public well. These findings go above and beyond political party affiliation.²³

FIGURE 33

Relationship Between Believing News Organizations Balance Priorities and Emotional Trust in National News

Do you think most news organizations in the U.S. balance staying in business with providing a public service of informing citizens?



Note: "No answer" percentages not shown.

²³ As reported in Part 1 of this series, 45% of Democrats feel news organizations balance these two motivations well — 16 percentage points lower than the percentage of Americans with high emotional trust in news. <https://knightfoundation.org/reports/news-in-america-public-good-or-private-enterprise/>

The perception that national news organizations have ample resources and opportunity to report the news accurately and fairly has little relation to perceptions of their motivations. Seventy-six percent of U.S. adults who agree that national news organizations have the resources and opportunity believe news organizations are first and foremost businesses. Similarly, 84% of Americans who *disagree* that national organizations have ample resources and opportunity feel most news organizations are first and foremost businesses.

FIGURE 34

Views on National News' Resources/Opportunity and Perceived Priorities of News Organizations

Which of the following best describes your opinion?



Note: "No answer" percentages not shown.

The tangible cost of low trust

Part 1 of the American Views 2022 study reports that more than seven in 10 Americans have not paid for nor donated to news organizations in the past, and only 17% say they would be willing to pay for news in the future. However, those who have more favorable attitudes toward the news media are more likely to report having paid for news and be willing to pay in the future.

Is there a tangible cost to Americans' distrust of news organizations? The data suggest that the degree of emotional trust in national news is tied to willingness to pay for news. What's more: While the assessment of whether national news organizations have the resources and opportunity to report the news accurately and fairly has little impact on willingness to pay, the perception that local news organizations do not have ample resources and opportunity is related to greater willingness to pay.

The more emotional trust Americans have in national news organizations, the more willing they are to pay for news in the future.

Only 26% of Americans say they have paid to access news or donated to a news organization in the past. When examined through the lens of emotional trust in national news, Gallup/Knight finds that those with greater trust in news are more likely to have paid for it. People with high emotional trust in national news are nine points more likely than the national average to have paid for it, at 35%. Only 23% of those with low emotional trust in national news have paid for news in the past, compared with 28% of those with moderate levels of trust.

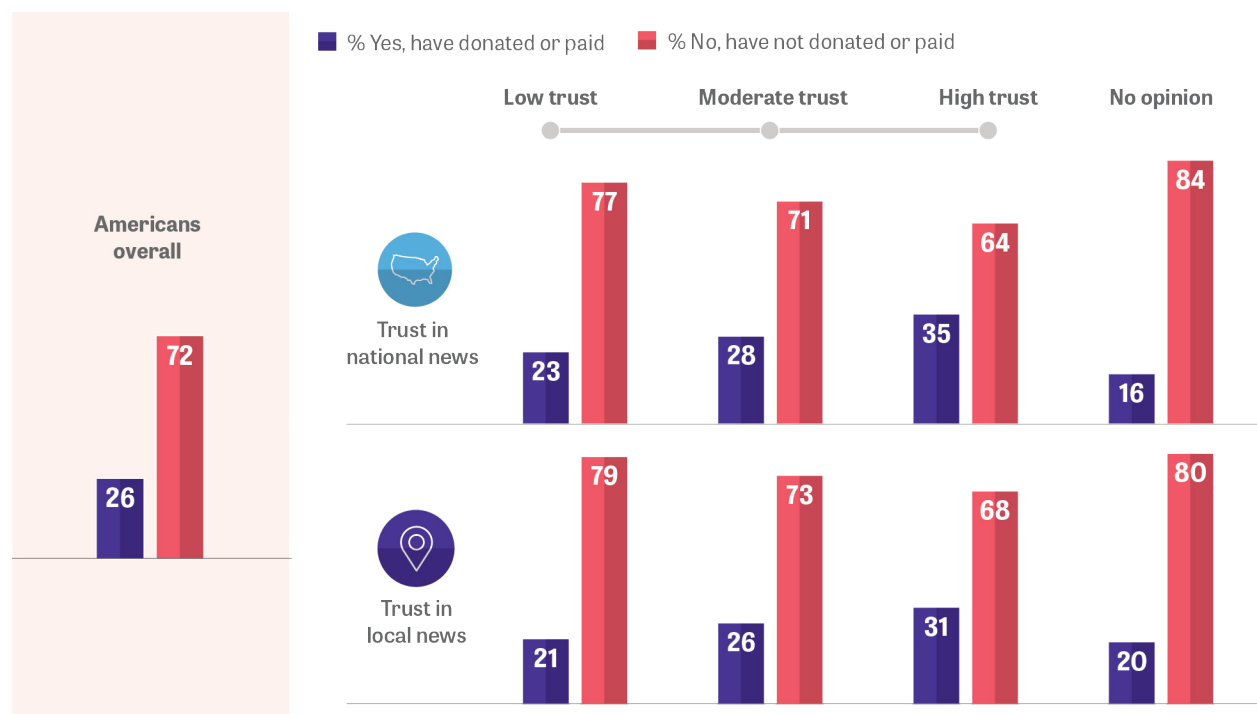
Looking at local news, the findings are nearly identical. Those with higher trust in local news are slightly more likely to have paid for news in the past. These results confirm research conducted by the American Press Institute in 2016, which found that Americans who rated various trust factors as "very important" reasons why they rely on a given source were more likely to report paying for news (28%).²⁴

²⁴ *What makes people trust news?* (2016, April 17). American Press Institute. <https://www.americanpressinstitute.org/publications/reports/survey-research/why-trust-matters/>

FIGURE 35

Relationship Between Emotional Trust in News Organizations and Having Paid for News

Have you ever donated money to a news organization or paid to access news, such as paying for a subscription or article, or buying a news magazine?



Note: "No answer" percentages not shown.

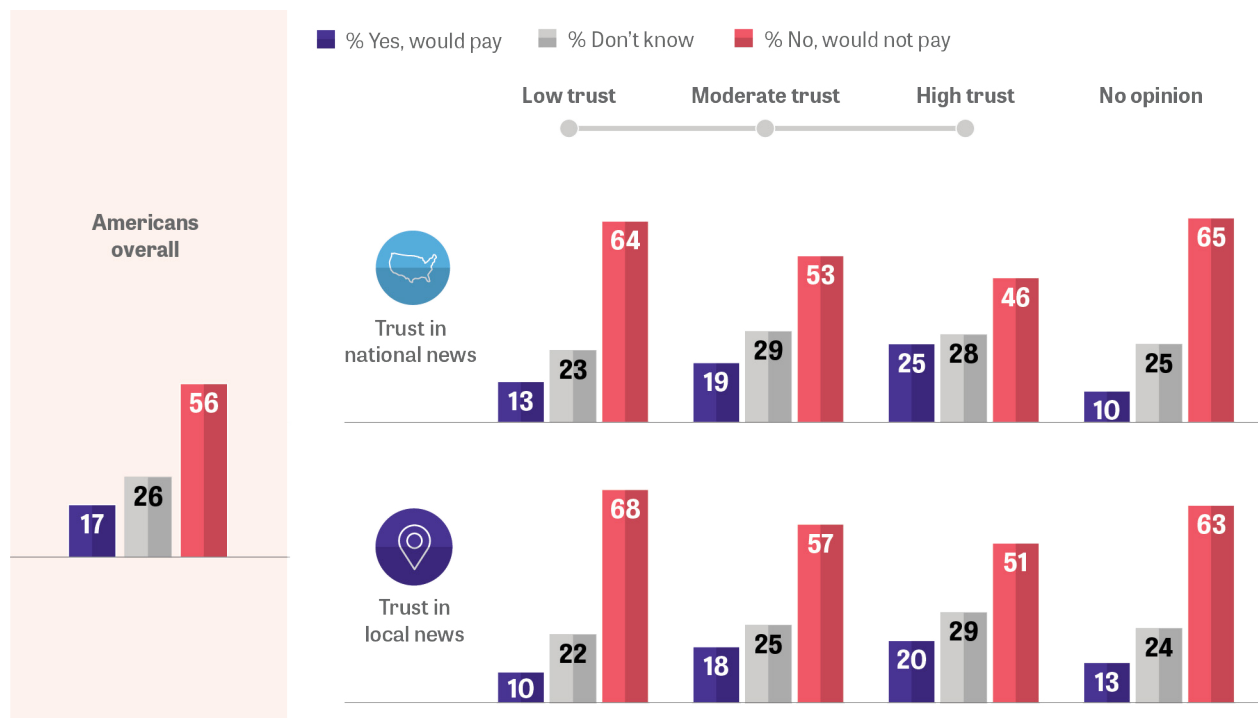
While 56% of Americans say they would not pay for access to news in the future, 17% report being willing to do so, and about a quarter “don’t know.” Among the 41% with low emotional trust in national news, only 13% say they would be willing to pay for news in the future; 23% say they don’t know, and 64% say they would not pay in the future. However, as emotional trust increases, so does willingness to pay. One in four of the 21% of Americans who report high emotional trust in national news say they would be willing to pay for news in the future, and an additional 28% don’t know.

The trends are similar for emotional trust in local news organizations, with more trust being correlated with slightly higher willingness to pay.

FIGURE 36

Relationship Between Emotional Trust in News Organizations and Willingness to Pay for News in the Future

Would you pay to access news in the future?



Note: "No answer" percentages not shown.

Americans who think local news organizations lack the resources and opportunity to report the news accurately and fairly are more likely to pay for news.

The perception that national news organizations have the resources and opportunity to report the news accurately and fairly has little relationship to having paid for news or willingness to do so in the future. There are, however, significant differences in paying for news between those who agree *local news organizations* have the resources and opportunity to report the news accurately and fairly and those who disagree. Among those who agree, 23% report having paid for news in the past. This percentage nearly doubles (45%) among those who disagree. Those who say local news organizations do not have the resources and opportunity to report the news accurately and fairly are more than twice as likely to be willing to pay for news in the future as those who agree (32% vs. 14%, respectively).

These findings mirror previous Gallup/Knight research on local news which found that Americans who are exposed to information about the financial challenges of local newspapers are more likely to donate to a nonprofit organization that supports local journalism.²⁵

FIGURE 37

Views on Local News' Resources/Opportunity and Having Paid for News

Have you ever donated money to a news organization or paid to access news, such as paying for a subscription or article, or buying a news magazine?

■ % Yes, have donated or paid ■ % No, have not donated or paid



Note: "No answer" percentages not shown.

²⁵ Knight Foundation & Gallup, Inc. (2019). *Putting a price tag on local news: Americans' perceptions of the value and financial future of local news.* <https://knightfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Putting-a-Price-Tag-on-Local-News-final-updated.pdf>

FIGURE 38

Views on Local News' Resources/Opportunity and Willingness to Pay for News in the Future

Would you pay to access news in the future?

■ % Yes, would pay ■ % Don't know ■ % No, would not pay



Note: "No answer" percentages not shown.

Greater emotional trust in national news organizations is related to a higher likelihood of having paid for news and being willing to do so in the future. However, when it comes to local news organizations, trust *and* perceptions of the capabilities of those organizations are related to paying for news. Americans with greater emotional trust in local news organizations are more willing to pay for news. And the perception that local news organizations do *not* have the resources or opportunity to report the news accurately and fairly is related to much greater willingness to pay in the future.

The degree of emotional trust Americans have in national and local news organizations can affect their bottom line. But for local news in particular, messaging about the financial health of the organization could be very potent in gaining additional funding or support from the public.



4 Emotional trust, media and democracy

The American public has steadily lost confidence in major U.S. institutions over the last 42 years, with the lowest average levels of confidence recorded in 2022.²⁶ Small minorities of Americans have confidence in political and judicial institutions in particular, with only 7% reporting confidence in Congress and 14% reporting confidence in the criminal justice system.²⁷ Skepticism of U.S. institutions may be a symptom of doubt in the political process and American democracy. This final section of the *American Views 2022 Part 2* report examines how trust in news is related to opinions about the political establishment and the state of the country today.

The results show that distrust in national news media is related to general skepticism about the fairness, legitimacy, reliability and objectivity of American democratic institutions. Lack of emotional trust in news organizations is also connected to discounting other established sources of knowledge, such as expert opinions or official government accounts of events. In sum, the data make clear the importance of trust in news as it relates to the health of civil society as a whole.

"I thought that the role of [the news media] was to give people information, you know? To report. To ask questions. To be the voice of the people. To find out information. But now, I feel very much like it is just being run by the government depending on who is in power."

— FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

²⁶ Jones, J. (2022, July 5). *Confidence in U.S. institutions down; Average at new low*. Gallup News. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/394283/confidence-institutions-down-average-new-low.aspx>

²⁷ Ibid.

A majority of Americans are skeptical about certain aspects of the established political system and the political process in America.

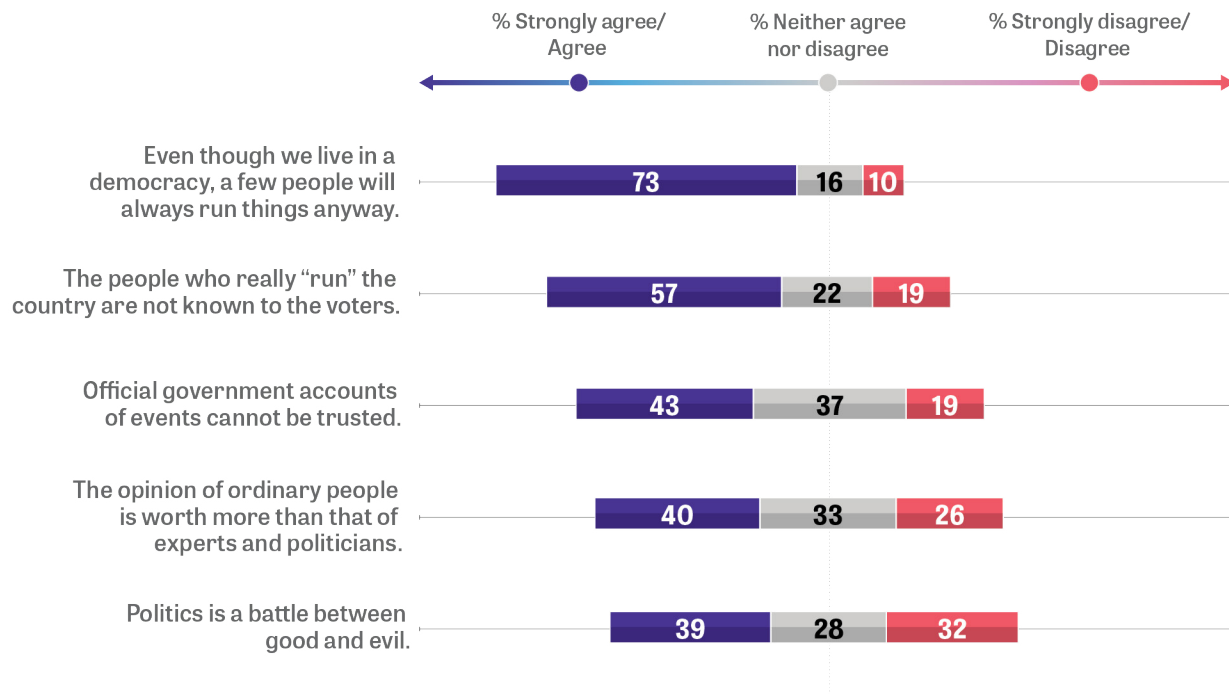
Nearly three-fourths of the public question whether the U.S. political system is truly “governed by the people.” Seventy-three percent agree or strongly agree that even though we live in a democracy, a few people will always run things anyway. A smaller proportion — though still more than half (57%) — believe that those who really “run” the country are not known to the voters. Fewer than half of U.S. adults say official government accounts of events cannot be trusted (43%), the opinion of ordinary people is worth more than that of experts (40%) and politics is a battle between good and evil (39%).²⁸

In short, many Americans feel disillusioned about the state of American democracy and about their ability to participate in it.

FIGURE 39

Attitudes About the Established Political Process and Official Sources of Knowledge

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements when thinking about the United States?



Note: “No answer” percentages not shown. Items are ordered in decreasing level of agreement.

²⁸ Gallup and Knight utilized a validated battery developed by Uscinski, J. E., et al. (2021) to measure anti-establishment views about the political process and official sources of knowledge.

Americans with different levels of emotional trust in [national news](#) have different opinions about political transparency and whether official government accounts of events can be trusted.

U.S. adults with low emotional trust in national news organizations are significantly more skeptical about political transparency than those with high emotional trust. While overall, 57% of Americans agree or strongly agree that the people who really "run" the country are not known to the voters, this number increases to 71% among those with low trust and decreases to 46% among those with high trust in national news.

The same gap between those with low trust and high trust in national news is evident when it comes to whether official government accounts of events can be trusted. Forty-three percent of Americans agree or strongly agree that official accounts of events by the government cannot be trusted, but this number is significantly lower among those with high emotional trust in national news organizations (22%) and higher among those with low emotional trust in national news organizations (65%).

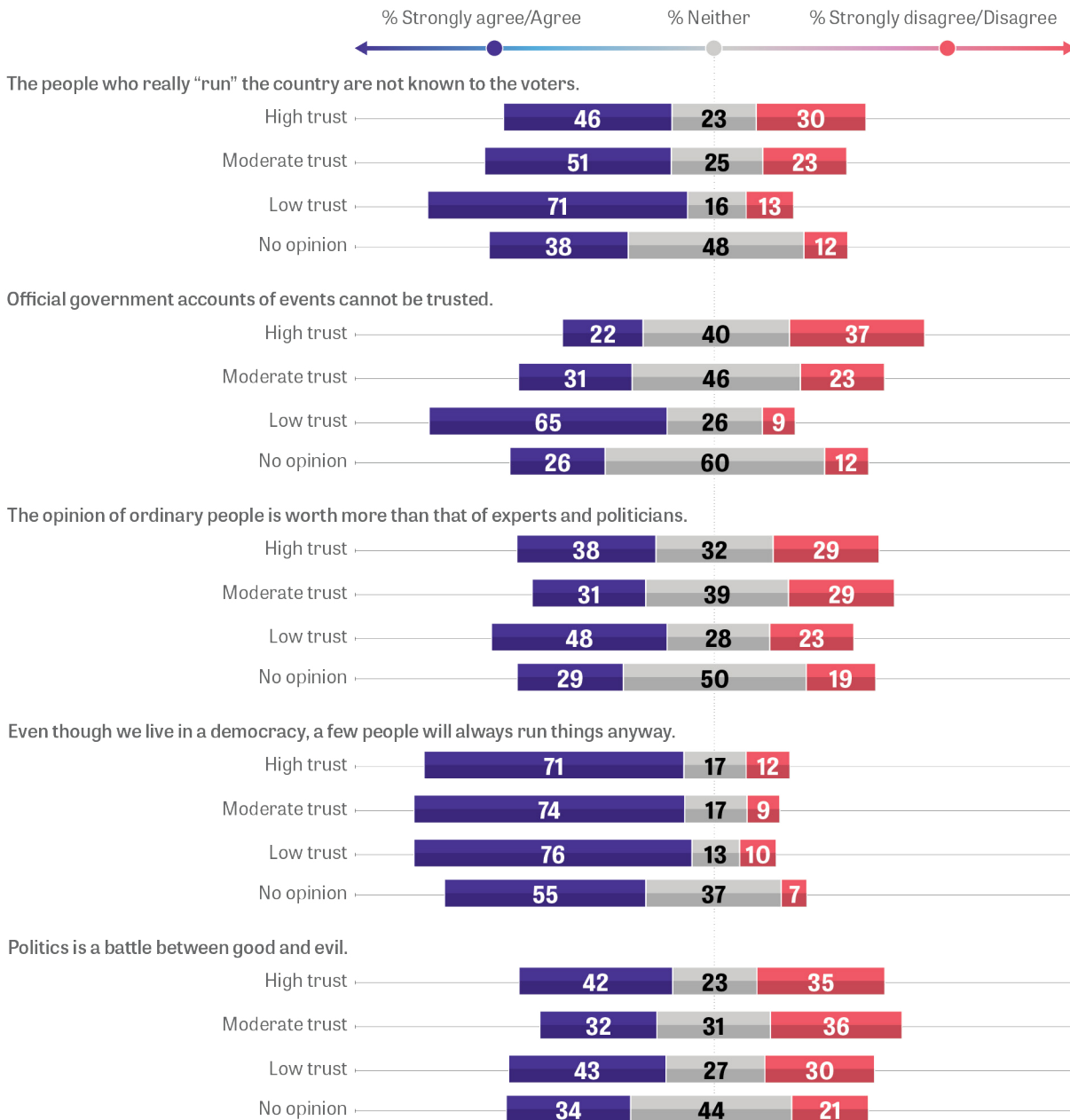
Emotional trust in national news organizations appears to be somewhat related to whether Americans value the opinions of ordinary people over experts. Those who have low trust in national news organizations are 10 points more likely to believe that the opinion of ordinary people is worth more than that of experts than those with high emotional trust.

A majority of Americans believe only a few people run things in the country, but this opinion is not linked to emotional trust in national news. Similarly, there are no differences between those with low and high emotional trust in national news in their views about whether politics is a battle between good and evil (43% of those with low trust and 42% of those with high trust agree or strongly agree).

FIGURE 40

Relationship Between Emotional Trust in National News Organizations And Attitudes About the Established Political System/Official Sources of Knowledge

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements when thinking about the United States?
(Among those with high, moderate or low trust in national news organizations, or no opinion)



Note: “No answer” percentages not shown.

Americans' low emotional trust in national news organizations fits with their overall negative outlook on the state of democracy today.

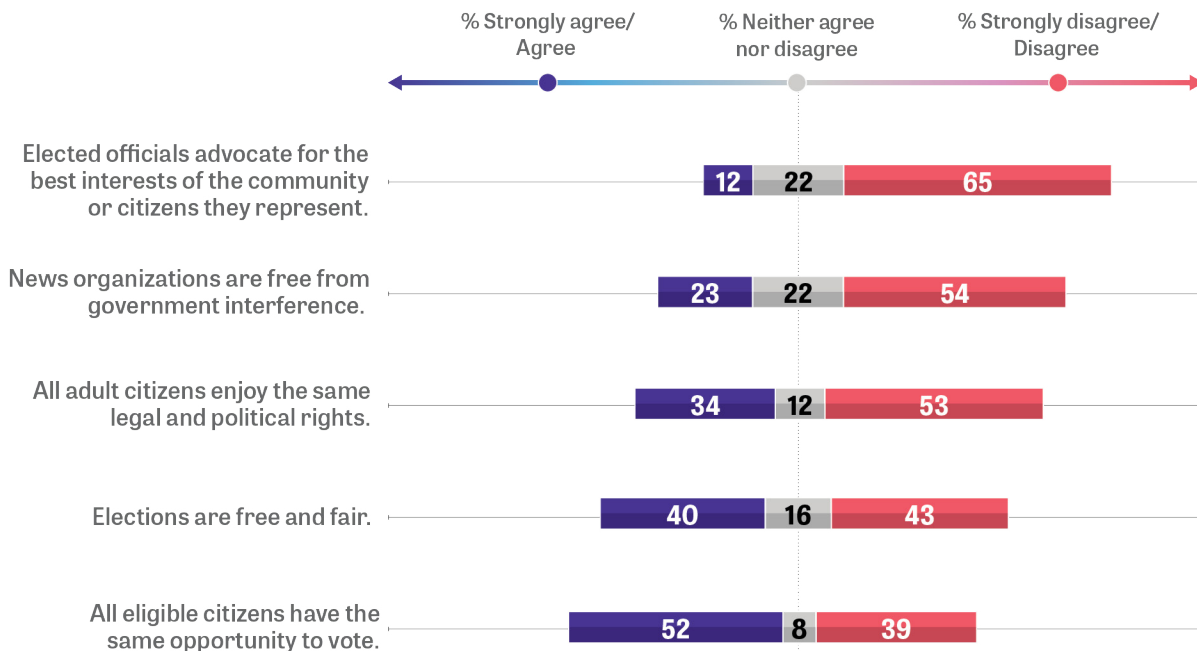
Gallup/Knight also asked Americans to evaluate various aspects of American democracy,²⁹ including voting and election fairness, equal rights, legal protections and accountability. On average, more than half of U.S. adults believe critical aspects of democracy are not functioning well. Sixty-five percent disagree or strongly disagree that elected officials advocate for the best interests of their constituents. Likewise, more than half disagree or strongly disagree that news organizations are free from government interference (54%) or that all adult citizens have equal legal and political rights (53%). About two in five Americans believe elections are not free and fair (43%) and that adult citizens do not all have equal opportunities to vote (39%).

While Americans have largely a negative outlook of the state of U.S. democracy, their skepticism of the intentions of elected officials is strongest, with only 12% saying elected officials advocate for the best interests of the community or citizens they represent.

FIGURE 41

Americans' Attitudes About the State of Democracy Today

Thinking about the current state of our country, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Note: "No answer" percentages not shown. Items are ordered in decreasing level of agreement.

²⁹ Questions were adapted from surveys that were implemented by the Bright Line Watch foundation to test the extent of "democratic stress" in the country after the 2020 election.

There are certain evaluations of the state of American democracy today that appear to be more strongly related to emotional trust in national news organizations than others.

Americans with low emotional trust in national news organizations are four times as likely to disagree or strongly disagree that elections are fair and free (66%) compared with those with high trust (16%). Conversely, seven in 10 Americans with high emotional trust in national news organizations agree or strongly agree that elections are free and fair.

Those with low emotional trust in national news are also more likely to believe the government interferes with news organizations' reporting: 76% of those with low trust disagree or strongly disagree that news organizations are free from government interference, while only 24% of those with high emotional trust do so. About half of the population with high trust (49%) agree or strongly agree that the government does *not* interfere with news organizations.

Finally, while a large majority of those with low emotional trust in national news organizations disagree or strongly disagree (81%) that elected officials have the best interests of their constituents in mind, less than half of those with high emotional trust do so (46%).

When it comes to opinions about equal opportunities and rights (i.e., whether all eligible citizens have the same opportunity to vote or enjoy the same legal and political rights), those with low and high levels of emotional trust in national news organizations exhibit only slightly different profiles. For example, about half from each group disagree or strongly disagree that all adult citizens enjoy the same legal and political rights.

Americans who show high emotional trust and those who show low emotional trust in national news organizations have largely different views about the integrity of elections, freedom from government interference in news reporting and the intentions of elected officials. While most Americans with high levels of trust in national news do not believe that these aspects of democracy are failing, most with low emotional trust believe American democracy is currently dysfunctional in these areas.

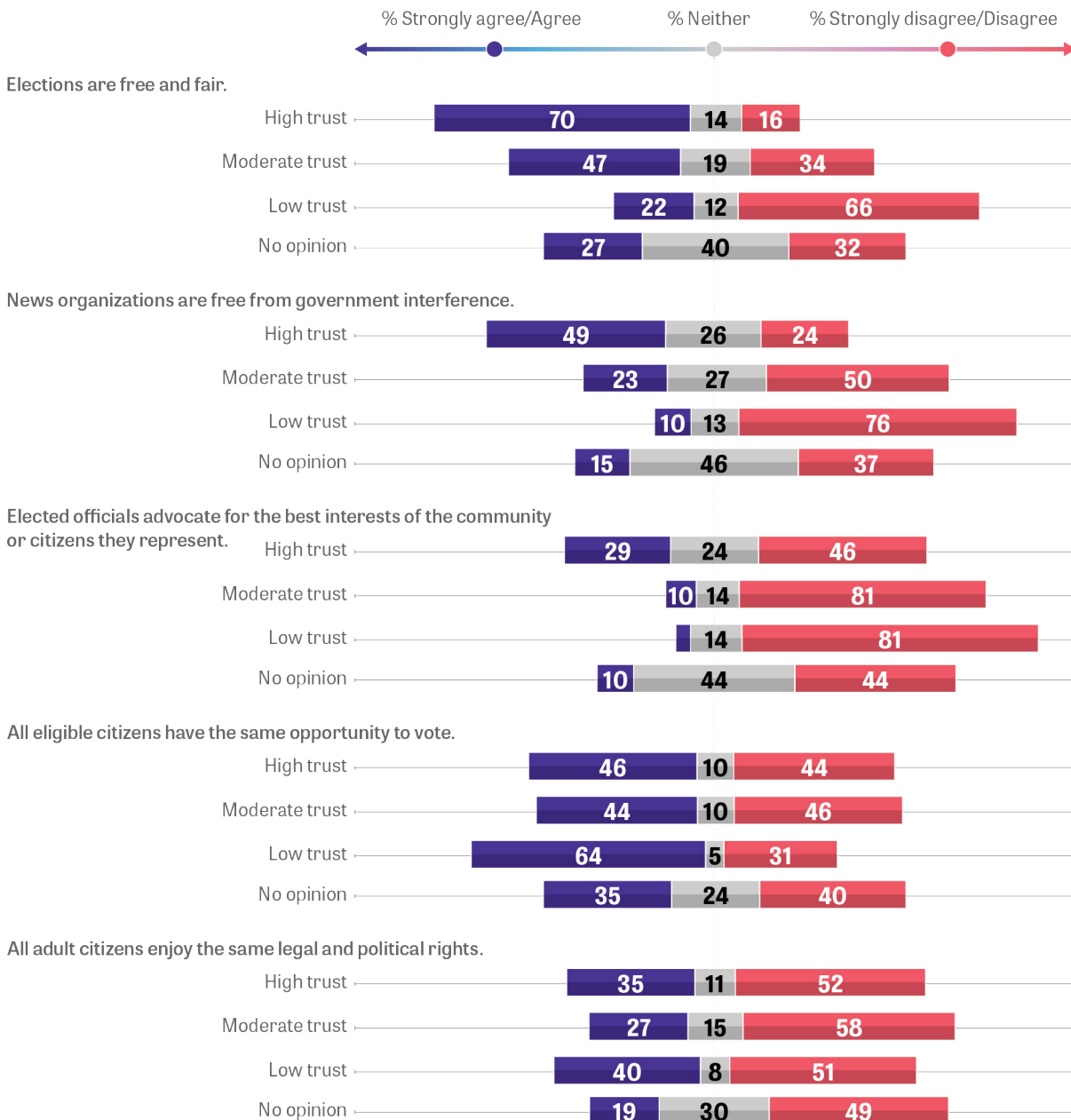
In summary, low emotional trust in news appears to be either a related symptom of or contributing factor to broader skepticism about critical aspects of the American political process, democratic institutions, official sources of knowledge and the intentions of politicians in society today.

FIGURE 42

Emotional Trust in National News Organizations and Attitudes About the State of American Democracy Today

Thinking about the current state of our country, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

(Among those with high, moderate or low trust in national news organizations, or no opinion)



Note: "No answer" percentages not shown.

Conclusion

Gallup and Knight Foundation have been studying Americans' trust in the news media since 2017. Previous work has shown that evaluations of the accuracy, bias and transparency of news organizations are closely linked to trust. This study builds on those findings by demonstrating that Americans' negative sentiment runs deeper than feeling the news falls short on standard practices. Our analysis shows that the perception that news organizations have ample resources and opportunity to report accurately and fairly is distinct from more emotional evaluations — specifically, the feeling that news organizations can be relied on to deliver what people need, that they care about the impact of their reporting and that they do not intend to mislead the public. Furthermore, emotional trust in news appears to be meaningfully linked to feeling overwhelmed by the information environment, willingness to pay for news and broader attitudes about the state of the country today.

Examining emotional trust in news may help increase understanding of why Americans consistently report greater trust in local news organizations than in national news. The biggest differentiator is that the public feels local news organizations care about the impact of their reporting while national news does not. This confirms previous Gallup/Knight polling from 2019 showing Americans were nine times as likely to say local journalists are “caring” than they were to say national journalists are.³⁰

The contrast between Americans' perception that national news organizations have the resources and opportunity to report the news accurately and fairly and their emotional trust in those organizations is also revealing. The public's declining trust in national news organizations does not appear to be indicative of a lack of capability to deliver reliable information. Instead, Americans perceive negative intent in these outlets' reporting.

This study affirms the importance of a more nuanced understanding of Americans' deeply-rooted and growing distrust of the national news media. The data provide compelling evidence that efforts by national news organizations to gain the trust of the public may need to focus on communicating more directly with audiences about how their reporting affects society at large. While emphasizing transparency and accuracy in news remains important, it is just as important for news organizations to demonstrate the care they have for their readers, listeners or viewers. Having a financially stable fourth estate that fuels confidence in Americans' ability to be well-informed and greater optimism about the state of U.S. democracy today may depend on it.

30 Knight Foundation and Gallup, Inc. (2019). *State of public trust in local news*. <https://knightfoundation.org/reports/state-of-public-trust-in-local-news/>

Methodology

Results are based on a Gallup Panel™ web and mail study conducted between May 31 and July 21, 2022. The Gallup Panel is not an opt-in panel; it is a probability-based panel of U.S. adults whom Gallup randomly selects using address-based sampling methods or dual-frame random-digit-dial phone interviews. The survey was completed by 5,593 American adults aged 18 and older. The AAPOR5 response rate was 38%. Gallup weighted the obtained sample to correct for unequal selection probability and nonresponse.

Nonresponse adjustments were made by adjusting the sample to match the national demographics of gender, age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, education and region. Demographic weighting targets were based on the 2019 Current Population Survey figures for the aged-18 and-older U.S. population. For results based on this sample of U.S. adults, the margin of sampling error is ± 1.5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Margins of error for subgroups are higher. All reported margins of sampling error include the computed design effects for weighting.

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

The full questionnaire, topline results, detailed cross tabulations and raw data may be obtained upon request.

For questions about how the survey was conducted, please contact galluphelp@gallup.com.

Trend analysis

The 2022 American Views: Trust, Media and Democracy survey transitioned from a self-administered address-based sampling (ABS) paper survey and sampling frame, which had been used to conduct the 2017 and 2019-2020 versions of the survey frame, to a self-administered web and mail survey using the Gallup Panel. However, most interviews in 2022 were conducted online — 4,928 out of 5,593 (88%).

Changes in the method of interviewing may impact how survey respondents answer questions on the survey, a phenomenon known as “mode effect.”³¹ The use of primarily internet-based interviews in 2022 also has potential implications for the representativeness of the sample, as individuals without access to the internet were unable to participate. The U.S. population without consistent internet access also tends to have a higher incidence rate of Spanish-speaking and lower-income populations.³²

The 2022 survey also incorporated changes to the number, order and reporting formats of some survey items. These changes also can impact how respondents answer questions.³³

31 Tipping, S., Hope, S., Pickering, K., Erens, B., Roth, M. A., & Mindell, J. S. (2010). The effect of mode and context on survey results: Analysis of data from the Health Survey for England 2006 and the Boost Survey for London. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 10(1), 84. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-10-84>

32 *Internet/broadband fact sheet*. (2021, April 7). Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/internet-broadband/#panel-3109350c-8dba-4b7f-ad52-a3e976ab8c8f>

33 Jonge, T., Kamesaka, A., & Veenhoven, R. (2021). How to reconstruct a trend when survey questions have changed over time. Methods for scale homogenization applied to the case of life satisfaction in Japan 1958-2007. *Survey Research Methods*, 15, 101-113. <https://doi.org/10.18148/SRM/2021.V15I1.7725>

To assess the potential impact of these changes on the integrity and interpretability of trended survey questions, Gallup conducted three parallel data collections:

- a Gallup Panel web and mail survey with the 2022 version of the survey
- an ABS mail survey that used the previous Trust in Media survey fielded in November 2019 – February 2020
- an ABS mail survey with the 2022 version of the survey

This test allowed Gallup to determine whether changes from prior survey results were due to survey order/context, survey methodology or a real attitude change over time. For some questions trended across the 2020 and 2022 versions of the survey, Gallup/Knight identified evidence of mode and/or survey order effects, which are noted throughout this report. After conducting a thorough analysis, Gallup found that changes in mode or question order may somewhat overstate the degree of attitude change in some questions, making it appear slightly larger than is likely, but do not influence the direction of the changes in attitude. In reporting these trends, Gallup and Knight are careful to draw readers' attention wherever this dynamic is present and, more generally, that the changes in methodology create a higher level of uncertainty when estimating the degree to which public opinion has apparently shifted over time.

Construction of Emotional Trust in National/Local News Organizations

This report also featured a composite measure of “emotional trust” in national news and local news organizations. Gallup/Knight included a series of questions on this survey designed to measure how Americans rated national and local news organizations on important aspects of trust, as identified by a literature review.³⁴ These items — and the dimension of trust they are meant to represent — appear below.

Dimensions of Trust in National News Media and Local News Media

When thinking about [national/local] news organizations in the U.S. ...	Dimension of trust
In general, most [national news organizations/local news organizations] have the resources and opportunity to report the news accurately and fairly to the public.	Competency
In general, most [national news organizations/local news organizations] can be relied on to deliver the information I need.	Reliability
In general, most national news organizations care about how their reporting can either positively or negatively affect American society, culture and politics. / In general, most local news organizations care about how their reporting can either positively or negatively affect their community broadly.	Benevolence (societal-level)
In general, most [national news organizations/local news organizations] care about the best interests of their readers, viewers, and listeners.	Benevolence (individual-level)
In general, most [national news organizations/local news organizations] do not intend to mislead, misinform, or persuade the public.	Integrity

³⁴ The questions created to evaluate news organizations' competency, reliability, benevolence and integrity were developed from a meta-analysis studying the core theoretical components of the construct of “trust.” See: McKnight, D. H., & Chervany, N. L. (2001). Trust and distrust definitions: One bite at a time. *Trust in Cyber-Societies*, 27-54.

Respondents indicated the extent to which they agreed with each statement using a five-point scale, with the responses ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.”

For each set of questions — those concerning national news organizations and those focused on local outlets — Gallup first conducted a descriptive analysis of the results to identify similar response patterns with respect to the survey questions.

Next, the variables were recoded to fall on a 0-4 scale, with zero representing “strongly agree” and four representing “strongly disagree.” The “no answer” response category was coded as missing. Correlation analysis³⁵ was used to explore the relationship between the survey items (keeping the national news organizations questions separate from the local news items): This analysis found that the inter-item correlations tended to be quite strong (though with some variance) — indicating Americans tended to answer these items in a similar manner. The sole exception to this pattern was the question about competency.

Exploratory factor analysis — a statistical method used to determine whether individual variables (here, survey items) can be combined to measure a larger concept (often referred to as “latent variables”) — further confirmed this relationship. For the question series about national news and local news organizations, the best-fitting solution was one-factor consisting of all questions other than the competency item.

The composite score was then created by calculating a simple average across the four items. Respondents must have provided a substantive answer to at least two of the four items. For ease of interpretation, respondents were divided into three categories: “low,” “medium” and “high” trust. Respondents who answered, “neither agree nor disagree” for all four question items were classified as having “no opinion.”

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³⁵ Specifically, this analysis used polychoric correlation analysis, which is a measure of association for ordinal variables much like the survey items of focus here.

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