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NEW SURVEY ON MEDIA TRUST SHOWS PEOPLE LIKE THEIR CHOSEN MEDIA BUT DISTRUST THE REST

The findings provide new perspectives on the question of media trust at a time when the value of a free press is being debated

CHICAGO, May 24, 2017— New research exploring Americans’ trust in the news media reveals a sharp contrast between people’s trust in the news media in general and their confidence in the news outlets they use most often.

The study released today by the [Media Insight Project](#), a collaboration of the [American Press Institute](#) and [The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#), uses a survey-based experiment that suggests public attitudes about the news media are more complex and nuanced than many traditional studies indicate, with attitudes varying markedly depending on which media organizations people are asked about.

“For many years, studies have shown a general decline in Americans’ trust in the news media,” said Tom Rosenstiel, executive director of the American Press Institute. “But the numbers suggest that with so many more choices, people are also consuming more news than ever. We wanted to try to reconcile that paradox. We think it is critical to understanding more deeply the question of trust in a free press.”

The study surveyed 2,036 Americans, with half asked a series of time-tested questions about “the news media” and the other half asked the same questions about the “the news media you use most often.”

The results show that Americans are skeptical of the news media in general, but are significantly more trusting of the news they themselves rely on. Most mention traditional or mainstream news sources as the ones they use. However, there are still signs of skepticism.

Key findings include:

- Just 17 percent of Americans say the news media are very accurate, but twice that number (34 percent) say the same about the news media outlets they use.
- Only 24 percent of Americans say they believe the news media in general are moral. But that number more than doubles to 53 percent when people are asked about the news media they use most often.
- Only 22 percent believe the news media in general care about the people they report on, while 36 percent say they do not (about four in ten say neither option reflects their view). But these numbers flip when people are asked about the news organizations they turn to. Nearly twice as many say the news media they rely on care about people (41 percent) as say they do not (24 percent).
- Only eight percent of Republicans -- but 31 percent of Democrats -- describe the news media as very accurate. But that number jumps to 40 percent for Republicans when they think of the news media they use most, a number similar to what is seen among Democrats.
- People under age 40 show markedly less trust in the media than those over that age.

The report also explores the types of media Americans say they use, with cable and broadcast television topping the list.

Various past surveys have established a long-term decline in trust in the news media. This new report includes the idea of individual media use, revealing the higher levels of trust consumers place in news organizations of their choosing.

“Americans tend to use the term ‘the news media’ as a catchall phrase that includes both good and bad actors,” said Trevor Tompson, director of The AP-NORC Center. “But they are much more precise about their trust in the news media they actually use.”

About the survey

The survey was conducted by the Media Insight Project, an initiative of the American Press Institute (API) and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. The survey was conducted from March 8 through March 27, 2017. The survey was funded by API. Data were collected using the AmeriSpeak Panel, which is NORC’s probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. Interviews were conducted with adults age 18 and over, representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. A total of 2,036 people completed the survey via the web and phone. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 3.0 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect.

Details about the Media Insight Project can be found at: www.mediainsight.org.

A full description of the study methodology for the survey and the qualitative group interviews can be found at the end of the report.



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The proper description of the survey's authorship is as follows: This study was conducted jointly by the [American Press Institute](#) and [The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#).

About the Media Insight Project

The Media Insight Project is a collaboration between the American Press Institute and The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research with the objective of conducting high-quality, innovative research meant to inform the news industry and the public about various important issues facing journalism and the news business. The Media Insight Project brings together the expertise of both organizations and their respective partners, and involves collaborations among key staff at the American Press Institute, NORC at the University of Chicago, and The Associated Press.

<http://www.mediainsight.org/>

About the American Press Institute

Founded in 1946, the American Press Institute conducts research, training, convenes thought leaders, and creates tools to help chart a path ahead for journalism in the 21st century. The American Press Institute is an educational non-advocacy 501(c)3 nonprofit organization affiliated with the News Media Alliance. It aims to help the news media, especially local publishers and newspaper media, advance in the digital age.

<http://www.pressinstitute.org>

About The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research

The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research taps into the power of social science research and the highest-quality journalism to bring key information to people across the nation and throughout the world.

www.apnorc.org

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