



Americans and the News Media: What they do — and don't — understand about each other

Journalist Survey

**Conducted by the Media Insight Project
An initiative of the American Press Institute and The Associated Press-NORC
Center for Public Affairs Research**

*Interviews: 3/1-4/12/2018
1,127 journalists*

Margin of error: +/- 3.5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level among all journalists

NOTE: All results show percentages among all respondents, unless otherwise labeled.

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Q1. Here are some statements about news consumers in the United States. For each of the following statements, please indicate whether it describes news consumers a lot, a little, or not at all.

AP-NORC 3/1-4/12/18	A lot	A little	Not at all	SKP
They rarely read beyond the headline	42	49	9	*
They read deeply into the details of stories	10	76	14	*
They focus on opinion and mostly skip over news reporting	27	60	13	*

N=1,127

Q2. Choose the statement that you think best describes news consumers in the United States, even if neither is exactly right. In general...

	AP-NORC 3/1-4/12/18
Most news consumers actively seek out news and information	28
Most news consumers bump into news and information as they do other things or hear about it from others	72
SKIPPED ON WEB	*

N=

1,127

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Q3. Next, indicate how important you think each item is for the news media to try to do.

[ITEMS RANDOMIZED]

AP-NORC 3/1-4/12/18	Not at all/Not very important NET	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Extremely/ Very important NET	Very important	Extremely important	SKP
Act as a watchdog of powerful institutions and people	2	1	1	6	93	22	70	-
Verify and get the facts right	*	*	-	*	99	4	95	*
Be fair to all sides	1	*	1	11	87	25	62	*
Be neutral	4	1	3	20	76	25	50	*
Provide diverse points of view	2	1	1	13	85	35	50	*
Make it easier to find important civic information	2	*	2	24	74	42	32	*
Make the news entertaining so people will pay attention to it	27	6	21	49	24	19	6	-
Help people understand communities unlike their own	7	1	6	24	69	41	28	-
Report on possible solutions to problems in society	4	1	3	25	71	44	27	*
Provide forums for community discussions	12	2	10	38	50	32	18	-

N=1,127

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Q4. There is a lot of talk about media building trust today. How important do you think it is for journalists to do each of the following:

[ITEMS RANDOMIZED]

AP-NORC 3/1-4/12/18	Not at all/Not very important NET	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Extremely/ Very important NET	Very important	Extremely important	SKP
Explain how the reporting for a story was done	15	2	12	43	42	31	11	-
Offer more information about the sources or evidence cited in a story	6	*	6	28	66	43	23	*
Explain more about the news organization and its policies	12	2	10	40	48	34	14	-
Offer more information about the background and experience of reporters	29	4	25	47	23	16	7	*
Explain why stories were chosen in the first place	30	5	25	44	26	20	6	*
Explain any controversial decisions made during reporting	9	2	8	33	58	41	17	*

N=1,127

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Q5. Next, in your opinion, which of the following best describes what most Americans want from the news these days...

	AP-NORC 3/1-4/12/18
They mostly want news coverage that just reports the facts	14
They mostly want news coverage that reports the facts but includes some context and analysis	66
They mostly want news analysis since they've already seen the headlines	7
They mostly want commentary and opinion	13
SKIPPED ON WEB	*

N=

1,127

Q6. Now, we'd like to ask you about the content of news reports, putting aside pure commentary and opinion content. Which of the following do you think best describes the content news reporters publish these days?

	AP-NORC 3/1-4/12/18
Most news reports include just the facts	10
Most news reports include the facts with some appropriate context and analysis	53
Most news reports include a little too much analysis	12
Most news reports cross a line into commentary and opinion	25
SKIPPED ON WEB	*

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Q7. For each of the following items related to the news media, please indicate whether you think most Americans have a very positive, somewhat positive, neither positive nor negative, somewhat negative, or very negative view of that item?

[ITEMS RANDOMIZED]

AP-NORC 3/1-4/12/18	Very/ Somewhat positive NET	Very positive	Somewhat positive	Neither positive nor negative	Very/ Somewhat negative NET	Somewhat negative	Very negative	SKP
Journalists as a group	11	1	11	13	75	58	18	*
News organizations in general	11	*	11	13	75	62	14	*
Local newspapers	56	10	46	19	24	22	2	*
National newspapers	27	3	24	18	55	42	12	*
Local TV news	48	5	43	20	33	27	6	*
Cable TV news such as Fox News, CNN, or MSNBC	13	1	12	7	80	52	28	*
Broadcast TV news such as NBC, CBS, or ABC	30	2	28	22	48	38	10	*
Digital-only news websites, such as Vox or Texas Tribune	25	1	23	49	26	23	3	*
Public radio such as NPR	64	17	47	21	15	12	4	*
Talk radio	31	5	26	21	47	37	11	*
Social media platforms such as Facebook or Twitter	40	7	33	19	40	33	8	*
PBS	63	18	45	27	10	8	1	*
Individual journalists they read or follow	85	26	58	12	3	3	1	*

N=1,127

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Q8. Next, how much influence do you think the news media has in shaping public opinion?

	AP-NORC 3/1-4/12/18
A great deal/Quite a bit NET	82
A great deal	34
Quite a bit	48
Some	15
None/A little NET	2
A little	2
None	*
SKIPPED ON WEB	*

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Q9. As a news organization employee, you may interact with people in many ways. In general, how often do you experience each of the following?

[ITEMS RANDOMIZED]

AP-NORC 3/1-4/12/18	Daily/ Weekly NET	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	A few times a year/Never NET	A few times a year	Never	Not applicable	SKP
People write a letter to the editor about your story	17	5	12	14	48	35	13	21	*
People post comments about your stories on your news organization's website	47	29	18	11	20	15	5	23	-
People post comments about your stories on your news organization's social media posts	66	43	23	11	15	12	2	8	*
People contact you with story ideas	70	35	35	14	14	12	2	2	*
You interview a member of the public	62	27	35	14	16	13	3	8	*
You engage with audiences on social media	72	47	25	8	15	8	7	5	*
You include a person's social media post in a story	22	6	16	16	55	32	23	7	*
You participate in a public event held by your news organization	6	1	5	17	64	51	13	13	*

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Q10. How well do you think most Americans understand each of the following concepts of journalism?

[ITEMS RANDOMIZED]

AP-NORC 3/1-4/12/18	Extremely/ Very well NET	Extremely well	Very well	Somewhat well	Not well at all/Not very well NET	Not very well	Not well at all	SKP
What the term “source” means	15	3	11	42	43	31	13	-
How journalists gather information for a story	2	*	2	18	79	55	24	*
What “fact-checking journalism” means	8	1	7	30	62	43	18	*
The editing process at most news organizations	1	*	1	8	91	49	42	-
The First Amendment rights of the press	11	2	9	33	56	37	19	*
What “anonymous sources” means	15	3	12	32	53	36	17	*
The difference between news content and opinion content	4	1	3	21	74	47	27	*

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Q11. Next is a list of different terms or concepts that sometimes appear in journalism and media. For each one, please rate how well you think most Americans understand the difference between the terms or the meaning of the concept.

[ITEMS RANDOMIZED]

AP-NORC 3/1-4/12/18	No/A little under- standing NET	No under- standing	A little under- standing	Moderate under- standing	Completely /Mostly understand NET	Mostly under- stand	Completely under- stand	SKP
Analyst vs. Commentator	83	41	42	15	2	2	1	*
Editorial vs. news story	60	14	45	28	12	11	1	-
Op-Ed	56	14	42	28	15	14	1	*
Reporter vs. Columnist	65	21	44	27	8	7	1	-
Attribution	62	17	45	28	9	8	1	1
Breaking news	12	2	11	22	65	44	21	*
Native advertising	87	60	27	10	3	2	*	-
News story vs. press release	60	19	41	29	11	9	2	-
Political endorsement	30	4	27	36	33	28	5	-

N=1,127

Q12. Which of the following statements comes closest to describing how you think most Americans view the news?

[HALF SAMPLE SHOWN RESPONSE OPTIONS IN REVERSE ORDER]

	AP-NORC 3/1-4/12/18
They think most news reports are fairly inaccurate and they need to check multiple sources to verify information	36
They think most news reports are fairly accurate and they don't need to check multiple sources to verify information	63
SKIPPED ON WEB	1

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Q13. Thinking about news coverage, how accurately do you think news organizations portray each of the following topics?

[ITEMS RANDOMIZED]

AP-NORC 3/1-4/12/18	Completely /Very accurately NET	Completely accurately	Very accurately	Moderately accurately	Not at all/Slightly accurately NET	Slightly accurately	Not at all accurately	SKP
Issues around race and ethnicity	14	1	13	52	34	25	9	*
Issues around religion	13	*	12	53	34	26	8	*

N=1,127

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Q14. Thinking about news coverage, how accurately do you think news organizations portray each of the following?

[ITEMS RANDOMIZED]

AP-NORC 3/1-4/12/18	Completely /Very accurately NET	Completely accurately	Very accurately	Moderately accurately	Not at all/Slightly accurately NET	Slightly accurately	Not at all accurately	SKP
Women	16	*	16	55	28	24	5	*
Men	28	1	26	52	20	15	5	*
Republicans	20	1	19	45	35	26	10	*
Democrats	21	1	20	50	29	21	7	*
Political independents	11	*	11	47	41	33	8	*
Liberals	16	1	14	48	36	27	9	*
Conservatives	16	1	15	42	41	30	12	*
People in rural areas	8	1	7	33	59	40	19	*
People in urban areas	20	1	19	50	30	22	8	*
The political establishment	24	2	22	41	35	25	10	*
Grassroots political movements	11	1	10	44	45	36	9	*
Wealthy people	21	2	19	42	36	27	9	*
Lower-income people	8	*	7	35	57	40	17	*
The middle class	18	*	18	46	36	28	8	*

N=1,127

Q15. Now, generally speaking, would you say the news industry is headed in the...

	AP-NORC 3/1-4/12/18
Right direction	39
Wrong direction	61
SKIPPED ON WEB	*

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Q16. Next, in general, do you think the news media is...

	AP-NORC 3/1-4/12/18
Very/Somewhat trustworthy NET	72
Very trustworthy	16
Somewhat trustworthy	56
Neither trustworthy nor untrustworthy	12
Very/Somewhat untrustworthy NET	16
Somewhat untrustworthy	12
Very untrustworthy	3
SKIPPED ON WEB	*
<i>N=</i>	<i>1,127</i>

Q17. In the last year, do you think most Americans' level of trust in the news media has...

	AP-NORC 3/1-4/12/18
Strongly/Somewhat increased NET	12
Strongly increased	1
Somewhat increased	11
Neither increased nor decreased	11
Strongly/Somewhat decreased NET	77
Somewhat decreased	51
Strongly decreased	26
SKIPPED ON WEB	-
<i>N=</i>	<i>1,127</i>

Q18. Here is a pair of opposite phrases. Which phrase do you feel better describes the news media in general. Would you say the news media in general...

	AP-NORC 3/1-4/12/18
Protects democracy	71
Hurts democracy	12
Neither	17
SKIPPED ON WEB	-
<i>N=</i>	<i>1,127</i>

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Q19. Do you think the news media is too liberal, just about right, or too conservative?

	AP-NORC 3/1-4/12/18
Too liberal	30
Just about right	54
Too conservative	16
SKIPPED ON WEB	1

N= 1,127

Q20. Do you think the issue of fake news and misinformation is a major problem, a minor problem, or not a problem at all for the news media today?

	AP-NORC 3/1-4/12/18
Major problem	76
Minor problem	21
Not a problem at all	3
SKIPPED ON WEB	-

N= 1,127

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If "Major problem" or "Minor problem" in Q20

Q21. To address the issue of fake news and misinformation, how important do you think each of the following actions is for your news organization?

[ITEMS RANDOMIZED]

AP-NORC 3/1-4/12/18	Not at all/Not very important NET	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Extremely/ Very important NET	Very important	Extremely important	SKP
Make the difference between news stories and opinion pieces more distinct	6	1	4	16	79	38	41	-
Write more stories that educate the public about fake news and misinformation	15	3	11	32	54	32	22	-
Be clearer about the identity and credentials of our sources	4	1	3	23	74	44	29	-
Be more transparent about the reporting process	7	1	7	29	63	42	22	*
Spend more resources to engage audiences on social media platforms and elsewhere	19	3	17	41	39	27	13	-
Seek change in policies from the social media platforms to fight fake news and misinformation	10	1	9	24	66	34	32	-

N=1,089

Questions after Q21 and before LENGTH1 are part of a separate study and will be released separately.

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LENGTH1. Now a few questions about you.

How many years have you worked in the news media industry?

[OPEN-ENDED]

	AP-NORC 3/1-4/12/18
1-9 years	25
10-19 years	25
20-29 years	22
30+ years	28
SKIPPED ON WEB	*

N=

1,127

LENGTH2. How many years have you worked for your current news organization?

[OPEN-ENDED]

	AP-NORC 3/1-4/12/18
1-4 years	38
5-9 years	22
10-19 years	21
20+ years	18
SKIPPED ON WEB	1

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OUT1. Which of the following best describes the media outlet type of your current news organization?

	AP-NORC 3/1-4/12/18
Local newspapers	31
National newspapers	*
Local TV News	20
Cable TV news such as Fox News, CNN, or MSNBC	*
Broadcast TV news such as NBC, CBS, or ABC	1
PBS	2
Digital-only news websites, such as Vox or Texas Tribune	11
Public radio, including NPR and other public radio operations and their digital offerings and podcasts	8
Talk radio	5
Other radio	9
News wires	*
Magazines	11
Other, please specify	3
SKIPPED ON WEB	-

N=

1,127

NATLOC1. Is the news organization you work for primarily considered a national organization or a local organization?

	AP-NORC 3/1-4/12/18
National	6
Local	94
SKIPPED ON WEB	-

N=

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JOB1. Which of the following best describes your current job title?

	AP-NORC 3/1-4/12/18
Assignment editor	4
Calendar Editor	*
Editor	27
Editorial Coordinator	1
Host/Anchor	12
News Director	7
Producer	7
Program Director	4
Public Service/Community Affairs Director	*
Reporter/Writer	26
Station Manager	3
Web Content Producer	3
Other, please specify	6
SKIPPED ON WEB	*

N=

1,127

AGE. What is your age?

[OPEN-ENDED]

	AP-NORC 3/1-4/12/18
18-29	15
30-44	28
45-59	33
60+	21
SKIPPED ON WEB	2

N=

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LATINO. Are you of Latino or Hispanic descent, or not?

	AP-NORC 3/1-4/12/18
Yes	7
No	92
SKIPPED ON WEB	1
<i>N=</i>	<i>1,127</i>

RACE. What is your racial or ethnic heritage? Please select all that apply.

	AP-NORC 3/1-4/12/18
White	88
African American, black	6
Asian	2
Other, please specify	4
SKIPPED ON WEB	1
<i>N=</i>	<i>1,127</i>

RACE/ETHNICITY

	AP-NORC 3/1-4/12/18
White, non-Hispanic	81
Black or African American, non-Hispanic	5
Hispanic	7
Other, including multiracial, non-Hispanic	5
SKIPPED ON WEB	2
<i>N=</i>	<i>1,127</i>

GENDER. How do you describe yourself?

	AP-NORC 3/1-4/12/18
Male	54
Female	45
Transgender	*
Do not identify as male, female, or transgender	*
SKIPPED ON WEB	*
<i>N=</i>	<i>1,127</i>

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Media Insight Project Poll – Americans and the News Media: What they do — and don't — understand about each other:

Methodology

This study 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 study was funded by API. Staff from API and The AP NORC Center collaborated on all aspects of the study.

The survey was conducted from March 1 through April 12, 2018. The study was designed to reach a representative sample of newsroom personnel with editorial or reporting responsibilities. To reach this target population, we drew a sample across different types of outlets and job titles, using a database of media contacts maintained by Cision Media Research (available to the public through a paid account). The sample was drawn along three dimensions — job title, outlet type, and whether the outlet was a national or local organization. The Cision Media Research database may not include some members of the target population, including new journalists or those working at certain outlets not covered by the database. Contacts from the following job titles were included in the sample:

- Assignment editor
- Calendar Editor
- Editor
- Editorial Coordinator
- Host/Anchor
- News Director
- Producer
- Program Director
- Public Service/Community Affairs Director
- Reporter/Writer
- Station Manager
- Web Content Producer

Contacts with those job titles were then narrowed down to include only those who worked at outlet categories in the following groups:

- Cable/satellite – network/station
- Cable/satellite program
- Magazine, consumer
- Magazine, news and business
- Newspaper
- Newspaper Publisher
- Newspaper, community
- Newspaper, neighborhood/classified
- Online, consumer (includes some news sites)
- Online, news and business
- Radio network

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- Radio program
- Radio program, national
- Radio program, regional
- Radio station
- TV network
- TV program
- TV program, national
- TV program, regional
- TV station
- Wire service

Journalists in this database were classified as working for either “major national outlets” or “minor national outlets or local outlets.” Major national outlets include the following, with all others classified as minor national outlets or local outlets.

Newspapers:

- The New York Times
- The Washington Post
- USA Today
- The Wall Street Journal

Magazines (Circulation of 2 million or greater based on Alliance for Audited Media 2017 data)¹:

- Better Homes and Gardens
- Game Informer
- Good Housekeeping
- Family Circle
- People
- Woman's Day
- National Geographic
- Sports Illustrated
- Time
- Reader's Digest
- Cosmopolitan
- Southern Living
- Taste of Home
- Shape
- O, The Oprah Magazine
- Glamour
- Parents
- Redbook

¹ <http://abcas3.auditedmedia.com/ecirc/magtitlesearch.asp>

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- ESPN The Magazine
- American Rifleman
- FamilyFun
- Martha Stewart Living
- Real Simple
- Seventeen

Television:

- ABC
- CBS
- NBC
- PBS
- CNN
- C-SPAN
- MSNBC/CNBC
- FOX Cable News/FOX Business News
- Telemundo
- Univision
- ESPN/ESPN2

Newswires:

- Associated Press
- McClatchy Newspapers
- Bloomberg News
- Reuters

In total, 5,022 sample lines were classified as major national outlets, and 72,514 sample lines were classified as minor national/local outlets. Of these 77,536 sample lines, 75,488 contained working email addresses. These 75,488 journalists from U.S. major national, minor national, and local outlets with working email addresses were mainly from the United States (all 50 states and territories) with some sample lines in Canada. They were all contacted by email to participate in the survey, and interviews were conducted online using the Qualtrics platform. The survey confirmed eligibility (adults working for an organization that reports on the news). Respondents were offered a small monetary incentive (\$15) for completing the survey. All interviews were conducted in English.

The final sample is made up of 1,127 completed interviews with journalists, including 1,120 in the United States and seven in Canada. The response rate is 1.5 percent. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 3.5 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

Once the sample was selected and fielded, and all the study data had been collected and made final, a poststratification process was used to adjust for any survey nonresponse as well as any noncoverage or under- and over-sampling resulting from the study specific sample design. Poststratification variables

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included the type of media outlet the respondent worked for (television, radio, newspaper, magazine, online/digital, news wire, or other) and whether the outlet the respondent worked for was considered a national or local organization. The weighted data, which reflect the drawn sample of newsroom personnel, were used for all analyses.

Details about the Media Insight Project can be found at: www.mediainsight.org. For more information, please contact info@apnorc.org.