The Media Insight Project

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A New Way of Looking at Trust in Media: Do Americans Share Journalism's Core Values?

April 2021

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I. INTRODUCTION

The deep divides over trust in the news media are usually portrayed as largely ideological. Democrats are seven times more likely than Republicans to say they trust the mainstream media, and independents are four times as likely.[1] But the argument over media trust often has the feel of people talking past each other—many journalists denying they slant the news to help one party over another, while many of their critics, especially on the right, scoff at that denial.[2] Still others, particularly on the left, question whether some basic notions of journalistic independence and open-minded inquiry are a delusion and the press should become more strictly partisan.[3]

A major 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, opens up a new way of looking at the issue of media trust and may offer new avenues to address it.

The study finds that not all Americans universally embrace many of the core values that guide journalistic inquiry. And uneasiness with these core values of journalism is more connected to people's underlying moral instincts than to politics.

When journalists say they are just doing their jobs, in other words, the problem is many people harbor doubts about what the job should be.

The study tested public attitudes toward five core values of journalistic inquiry that many journalists consider fundamental. We identified these principles based on previous studies and input from a group of journalists. These core journalism values include such ideals as it's vital for a free society to monitor the powerful to keep them from misbehaving, and the press should be a voice for the less powerful in society.

A New Window into Media Trust: Moral Instincts

- Only one of the five core journalism values tested has support of a majority of Americans: the idea that more facts get us closer to the truth (67% of adults support this).
- There is least support for the idea that a good way to make society better is to spotlight its problems. Only 29% agree.
- Only 11% of Americans fully support all five of the journalism values tested.
- But support for these journalism values does not break cleanly around party or ideology. Instead, there is a link to differences in moral instincts, which cut across demographics and ideology.
- People who most value loyalty and authority are much less likely than others to endorse the idea that there should be a watchdog over those in power.
- Americans who most value care and fairness, meanwhile, are more likely to think society should amplify the voices of the less powerful.

[1] The General Social Survey (GSS) has been tracking confidence in the press since 1973. In 2018, only 6% of Republicans say they have "a great deal of confidence" in the press, compared with 12% for independents and 21% for Democrats. The GSS is a project of the independent research organization NORC at the University of Chicago, with principal funding from the National Science Foundation. In addition, Gallup has been tracking trust in news media since 1972. Its annual Governance poll found that only 10% of Republicans say they have even "a fair amount of trust" in the news media, compared with 36% for independents and 73% for Democrats. Megan Brenan, "Americans Remain Distrustful of Mass Media," Gallup.com, September 30, 2020. https://news.gallup.com/poll/321116/americans-remain-distrustful-mass-media.aspx.

[2] In another Media Insight Project study, results showed that 38% of adults believed that the personal biases or political opinions of a journalist influence their decision about if or how to cover a story.

[3] In a Knight Foundation/Gallup study, 43% say journalists' biases are so overwhelming it can be difficult to sort out the facts.

In all, only 11% of Americans unreservedly embrace all five of the journalism principles tested and these people tend to be politically liberal. However, most Americans don't fully endorse these journalism principles, and the distrust goes beyond traditional partisan politics.

How people view those core values of journalism, moreover, is closely associated with deeper feelings they have about what moral values are important generally.

People who put more emphasis on the moral values of loyalty and authority, for example, tend to be more skeptical of some of the core values journalists try to uphold, or at least worry that these values could be taken too far. People who put more emphasis, by contrast, on the moral values of fairness for all and caring for the less fortunate tend to be more aligned with core press values. These differences persist even when we control for a person's political partisanship and ideology.

These moral differences also influence what kinds of news stories people think the press should emphasize and how stories should be framed.

The differences are subtle and cannot be dismissed as another case of political or ideological divide. We find, for instance, some people often associated with having more liberal political views (such as Democrats, women, or people of color), are hesitant about some core journalistic values. And there are some core journalistic values that do resonate among conservatives. Education level also correlates with how people respond to some of the values journalists hold dear.

Rather than distrust toward the media being tied only to the perception of partisan bias, the problem at the heart of the media trust crisis may be skepticism about the underlying purpose and mission journalists are trying to fulfill in the first place.

The results of the study shed light on why the debate over trust in the news media has long seemed so intractable, with journalists believing they are just doing their jobs and critics seeing clear signs of political leaning and the denials of journalists as proof of dishonesty.

The findings also point to some changes journalists can make in the way they report that could help rebuild trust. Journalists may be able to win the trust of skeptical audiences by reexamining some basic notions of what is important, the story mix, what themes stories touch on, by broadening how those stories are framed, and what values are emphasized in headlines.

As an example, the research suggests stories that are focused largely on care and fairness are more likely to appeal to people with liberal instincts. Stories that talk about heroes and loyalty, meanwhile, are more likely to resonate with people who identify as conservatives. At the same time, people who define themselves as conservatives also like stories that touch on themes of care and fairness, but often not as enthusiastically.

In tests we conducted, small changes that added in other values and perspectives in addition to care and fairness made news stories appeal to a much wider range of audiences.

The findings build on a growing body of social and cultural research called Moral Foundations Theory. At its core is the idea that different people instinctively respond more strongly to certain moral values than others—such values as care, fairness, loyalty, authority, and purity.

Separately, our study identified five core principles that journalists value highly, such as the importance of spotlighting problems in society as a way to solve them, or the notion that more facts are likely to get us closer to the truth.

Some critics blame the trust crisis on the growing ecosystem of far-right media outlets that market themselves as an antidote to a mainstream press they deride as biased and liberal. And indeed, the rise of talk radio in the 1980s and later ideological cable news coincided with the long-term decline in media trust among conservatives. But the findings here suggest the roots of the dilemma go deeper and connect to some of the verities the press embraced as it split from partisanship more than a century ago.

The study also did not attempt to probe how or why people believe information that has been repeatedly established by evidence or even courts to be false. This is not, at heart, a study of people's media behavior, but an attempt to get at underlying attitudes that have made the crisis in trust seem so intractable, the media landscape so fragmented, and the prospects of a public square with a common set of facts seem so at risk.

AMONG THE FINDINGS:

- **One journalism principle—factualism—generally wins more public support than the others tested.** The idea that the more facts we have in society the more likely we are to solve problems was fully embraced by 67% of Americans. In contrast, social criticism, the idea that shining a spotlight on problems is the best way for society to solve them is the least endorsed (29% of Americans support it).
- **The trust crisis may be more rooted in people's moral values than their politics.** We found the participants in our study fell into four distinct clusters based on similar moral values and attitudes toward core principles of journalism. Only one of those clusters leans clearly partisan—a liberal, mostly Democrat cluster of people who strongly endorsed journalism values. The other three groups are composed of a mix of party affiliations and ideologies, and have varying degrees of hesitation about some core journalism principles.
- **The one group of Americans that showed the strongest support for the core journalism principles we tested was the smallest.** This group—whom we call Journalism Supporters—make up only 2 in 10 of those surveyed. That number suggests that some of the traditional framing journalists bring to stories, and many of the traditional marketing appeals journalism organizations use that trumpet traditional journalism values, will only reach so far in rebuilding trust or winning new subscribers. The people in this cluster tend to put a higher emphasis on two of the five moral values: caring for others and fairness, values that closely align with what the press considers its core professional values. A great majority of this group think the news is accurate (83%) and a majority think the news media are trustworthy (58%). But even here there are reservations. Less than half of this group thinks the media are moral (26%) and only a quarter believe they care about people like them (24%). This group is also the most liberal of the four clusters.

- **People who put more emphasis on authority and loyalty tend to be more skeptical about fundamental journalism principles.** These people—whom we call Upholders—put a high value on respect for leaders and groups. They worry that some of the things journalists believe in can be intrusive and get in the way of officials doing their jobs. This group would like to see more stories about what works, not just what is going wrong. Upholders however, actively seek out and consume a lot of news. Most of them (60%) also think the news they consume is accurate. At the same time, they evince some deep reservations about the press and its values. Only 33% believe the news media in general are trustworthy. Even fewer (15%) think the press cares about them, or is moral (13%). Ideologically, Upholders are evenly split between conservatives and moderates (43%); another 13% call themselves liberal. Politically, half are Republicans, 3 in 10 are Democrats, and 2 in 10 are independents.
- **Another group, people who care deeply about all five moral values, are generally supportive of journalism principles, but that support is not unqualified.** This group, whom we call the Moralists, score higher than any other group on all five moral values. They are also a political and ideological mix, predominantly moderate and slightly more Democrat than Republican. They are also the most diverse group by age and race. And while the majority of Moralists think the news is trustworthy (51%) and accurate (74%), Moralists share some deep suspicions about the press. Only 2 in 10 think the news media care about people like them (20%) or are moral (22%). Only a third believe the press protects democracy (35%).
- **The study also points to ways journalists can rebuild trust.** If stories are rewritten to broaden their moral appeal, they become more interesting to people in all groups—both those more trusting of media and those more skeptical. We took some basic news stories and wrote each of them two different ways. The revised versions edited the lead sentence and headline to emphasize different themes of the story that highlight the moral values of authority or loyalty (e.g., calling out leaders or ties to the local community). The revised versions also included an additional paragraph that emphasized another moral angle of the story in addition to the frames included in the original. In all other ways, the two versions contained the same information. In some instances, the revised stories were more appealing to all types of people. For example, significantly more people considered a revised version of a story about election security to be balanced (62% versus 44%). More also considered the revised story trustworthy (78% versus 70%). And even people who already trust the press tended to like stories more when those stories were revised to broaden their appeal.
- **To woo subscribers, the media will need to vary its messaging beyond traditional appeals about journalism being a watchdog.** The survey also tested different messages asking respondents to financially support a local news organization. The findings suggest people's moral leanings definitely influence what kind of messaging about journalism they find appealing. People who most emphasize care or fairness, for instance, were more motivated by a message that highlighted the outlet's commitment to protecting the most vulnerable through their news coverage. People who emphasized authority and loyalty preferred a message about the outlet's long-term service to the local community.

HOW WE CONDUCTED THE STUDY

The study builds on moral foundations research led by social psychologist Jonathan Haidt, which tests how people respond to different moral principles. Research has found that some people put a higher moral value on caring about others' well-being and ensuring fairness for all. Others also value giving deference to authority and loyalty. Typically, liberals relate most to the values of care and fairness. Care and fairness speak to conservatives as well, but conservatives place additional import on loyalty, authority, and purity.

Starting with this moral foundation framework, this study asked people for their reactions to a group of basic journalistic values[4] to see the relationship between people's moral foundations and their attitudes about core principles of journalism. Respondents were asked a series of questions to measure their scores on the typical moral foundations values as well as common journalistic values,[5] such as the importance of transparency in public institutions, monitoring powerful people, and giving voice to the less powerful in society. For each of the values, people were asked about whether they also worry about the antithesis of those values (for instance, that too much focus on problems might make them worse). They then read common news headlines and the opening paragraphs of stories that reflected these journalism values. We measured feelings and reactions to each story and people told us how interested they were in them.

In a follow up to the initial survey, we gave the same respondents additional news stories to read. There were two versions of each story. Version A was written with a common frame and version B included additional angles aimed at people valuing authority and loyalty. Respondents were randomly assigned to receive different versions of each story. Following each story, respondents answered a series of questions about their assessments of the story and their engagement with the material.

For journalists who aspire to traditional journalistic values, such as intellectual independence and separating news from opinion, the findings suggest potentially unexplored ways to garner broader public support without sacrificing these values. By adding additional framing to stories, including additional perspectives or even just adjusting a headline, the same common news stories can appeal to conservatives as much as they do to liberals, gaining a broader audience. And in the cases we tested, liberals who already had favorable views of the press didn't like the revised stories any less; in some cases, they liked them more.

The first nationwide survey was conducted with 2,727 American adults from October 22 to November 15, 2019. The survey featured 1,413 interviews from the AmeriSpeak® Panel, the probability-based panel of NORC at the University of Chicago, and 711 interviews from the Dynata nonprobability panel. The second survey was conducted from August 18 to 24, 2020, and featured interviews with 1,155 AmeriSpeak® panelists who completed the first survey.[6]

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[4] The five journalistic principles we tested build upon values identified in *The Elements of Journalism,* past surveys of journalists such as those conducted by The Project for Excellence in Journalism, and feedback from a diverse group of journalists and researchers who are listed in Appendix II.

[5] Respondents answered each item from 1-Strongly agree through 6-Strongly disagree. Half of the items are favored to one side of a value or the other and are reverse coded, so that all range from 1-low in value to 6-high in value. Each of the four items measuring a value are averaged, excluding missing items. The final average of items for each value is the final item score.

[6] The second survey was conducted in summer 2020 before the presidential campaign was in full swing. The partisan gap in trust toward the media widened during the Trump presidency, but Republicans have been significantly less trusting of the media than Democrats for the last few decades, regardless of the party in the White House. https://news.gallup.com/poll/321116/americans-remain-distrustful-mass-media.aspx.

SECTION II. WHAT WE SET OUT TO DO

Half of the current decline in trust occurred before the widespread adoption of the public internet and so much news coverage moved online and or to social media. It took place roughly between 1980 and 2000. That timing correlated to the advent of cable and the deregulation of electronic media, which ended rules like the Fairness Doctrine and the Equal Time Rule and made one-sided or more partisan electronic media like Rush Limbaugh or programming on Fox News or MSNBC free of any legal challenge.

During this pre-internet era, between 1972 and 2000, trust in media as measured by Gallup fell 17 percentage points, from 68% of Americans to 51%.

A second wave of decline in trust occurred between 2000 and 2020, when those with confidence in the media fell 11 percentage points, from 51% to 40%. That decline during the last two decades has been driven by a significant drop in confidence among Republicans. Trust in the media among Democrats has risen from 53% to 73% in the last 20 years. During that same period, trust among Republicans has fallen from 47% to 10%.[7]

Yet journalists are often frustrated by these patterns. Particularly those in traditional or mainstream newsrooms do not see themselves as partisan and ascribe passionately to values of fairness and independence.

To try to make sense of this paradox, the Media Insight Project, a collaboration of the American Press Institute and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, decided to take a new approach to understanding media trust.

We were struck by a body of work called Moral Foundations Theory,[8] developed by psychologist Jonathan Haidt and his colleagues. Haidt's work identified an initial five foundational moral instincts that over the last several years he and other researchers have probed many times.

In Haidt's work, people are asked a series of questions about which moral values are important to them. Those values are often set up as a continuum, for instance, authority versus subversion.

Haidt and his colleagues theorize that these moral foundations are cross-cultural and stem from evolutionary behaviors that allowed humans to live in groups. He explains that the foundations are universal but different groups and cultures rely more or less on each of them.

Haidt's approach asks people a series of questions so researchers can place them on a continuum for five moral values (sometimes there is a sixth, liberty).

The five basic moral values are:

- **Care versus harm:** Tests how important it is to be kind and protect others, especially the less fortunate, and keep them from harm.

[7] The Gallup poll shows a decrease in trust and confidence in the news media.

[8] https://moralfoundations.org/publications/.

- **Fairness versus cheating:** Tests how important it is to think about justice, equality, and reciprocal altruism and how much people should be punished for dishonesty and fraud.
- **Loyalty versus betrayal:** Tests people's feelings about a group they are part of and self-sacrifice for group gain. It measures how much someone feels tied to a group or idea and rewards self-sacrifice and conformity.
- **Authority versus subversion:** Tests people's attitudes toward social hierarchy and respect for leadership, tradition, and authority.
- **Purity versus degradation:** Tests how people feel about virtues such as sanctity and touches on disgust for things that are unnatural.

At the same time, we at the Media Insight Project know that journalists are driven by some foundational values as well. Some of us who work in the project have devoted our careers to refining and articulating these values in other work and books. We also gathered input from a small, diverse group of journalists currently in or helping news organizations.

The research team identified five basic core journalism values to test. We wanted to see how people responded to these core journalism values—how universally shared these journalism values were with the public—and if they were at all correlated with Haidt's moral values.

In other words, we set out to determine whether what people think was important morally impacted their views of journalism and what journalists are trying to do.

It seemed, hypothetically, that what people considered to be important morally might influence what they thought was important journalistically.

The five core journalism values we identified were:

- **Oversight:** This value measures how strongly a person feels the need to monitor powerful people and know what public officials are doing. The flip side would be that people need to trust leaders to do their jobs, and that people in positions of authority need the privacy to do some things behind closed doors to fulfill their duties.
- **Transparency:** This is the idea that society works better when information is out in the open and the public knows what is happening. The other side of this value emphasizes how sometimes all of the information cannot be released specially without the right context. Too much information can hinder progress and leave room for gross misinterpretation.
- **Factualism:** This is the idea that the more facts people have, the closer they will get to the truth. The inverse is that for a lot of things that matter, more facts will only get you so far in understanding any situation.
- **Giving voice to the less powerful:** This measures whether people want to amplify the voices of people who aren't ordinarily heard, or think that is overdone and favoring the least fortunate doesn't help them.
- **Social criticism:** This value measures how people feel about the importance of casting a spotlight on a community's problems to solve them versus celebrating what is right and working well to reinforce the good things.

We did find a strong relationship between people's moral values and their views toward core journalism principles.

At the risk of oversimplifying, those who most valued care or fairness tended to embrace journalism principles more strongly. Those who put more value on loyalty and authority, by contrast, tended to be more skeptical of journalism values such as giving voice to the less powerful. This connection between people's moral values and views of journalism principles exists regardless of people's age, race/ethnicity, education, gender, or political affiliation or ideology. These people did not completely reject journalistic values; they are also not absolutists. For example, they saw some value in spotlighting problems but also supported the idea of celebrating what's right.

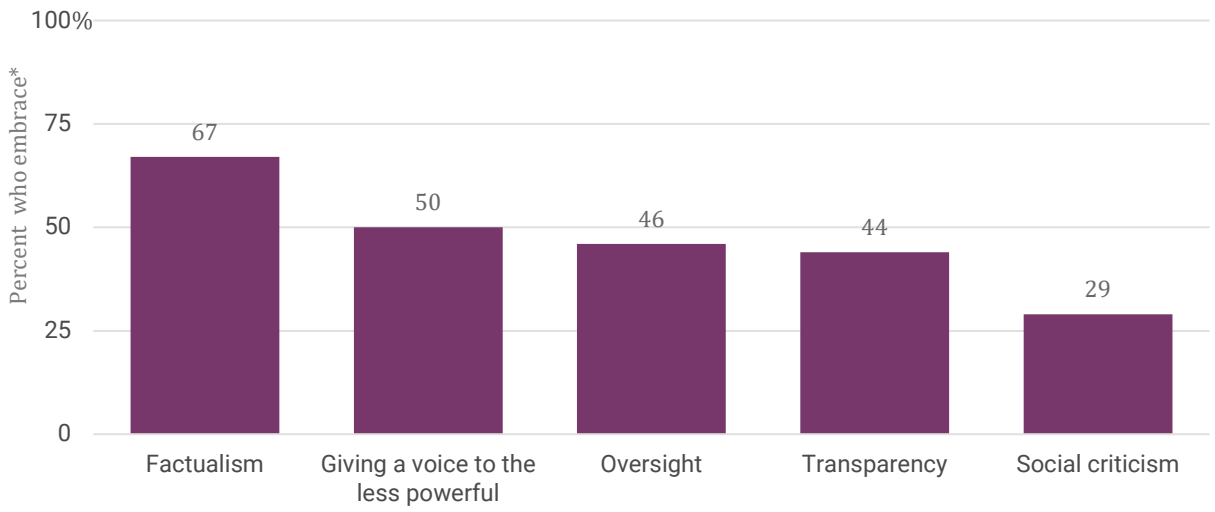
We also found that reactions to journalism values did not break down along purely political lines. As we will detail later (see Section III. MORAL VALUES AND JOURNALISM VALUES), Democrats or liberals who put a high value on loyalty or authority tended to have mixed reactions about some core journalism values.

While journalists may consider the five journalism values we identified as universal, non-journalists do not. Only 11% of the public supports all five of the core journalism values unreservedly.

Overall, the principle that is most popular is factualism (67%), followed by giving a voice to the less powerful (50%). Fewer endorse the values of oversight, transparency, and social criticism.[9]

[9] Those who, on average, at least slightly agree with the two affirmative statements and slightly disagree with the two contradictory ones for each principle can be considered as embracing it.

Among the Five Journalism Principles, "Factualism" Is the Most Widely Embraced.



Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18+ nationwide.

* The percent who embrace each value is the percent who on average at least slightly agree with the two affirmative statements and slightly disagree with the two contradictory statements used to measure each value.

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We then conducted an experiment. We gave people some very short samples of stories to read—just the headline and opening paragraph of a possible news story. Some of these, which were drawn from real news articles, tended to reinforce some moral values. They also tended to reflect certain journalism values. Other stories tended to reinforce or touch themes found in other moral values. Each of the stories in one way or another demonstrated a journalism value.

We wanted to test whether what we saw in the first part of the survey—the correlation between moral values and attitudes toward journalism values—would play out when people encountered actual news, or at least the beginning of a news story. We found that they did. People who resonated toward certain moral values in the survey also resonated toward stories that touched on or demonstrated those values in the news. The first part of the study was now complete. We had established a new way of looking at trust in the media. The problem wasn't strictly a matter of liberal versus conservative or Democrat versus Republican. It may be that some of what journalists value actually only resonates as important to a small percentage of Americans in an unreserved way.

Then we wanted to go further. If journalists wrote the same stories but thought more broadly about their audiences, broadened the frame of the way stories were written, and broadened what they considered news, was there any sign that this might broaden the appeal, and therefore impact, of their work?

THE FOLLOW-UP STUDY: THE SAME STORY TWO WAYS

We then took a third step designed to build further on the question of whether journalists could broaden the appeal of their work by making some fairly simple changes to it. Building on the robust literature around media framing effects, we designed an experiment to manipulate the values framing a particular story.[10] We gave people who participated in the first survey a second survey with three new news stories to read, which were based on real stories from The Associated Press. For each story people might see one of two versions. The first version was written as a relatively standard news story with a tendency to emphasize care and fairness values. The revised version featured additional values frames by changing some elements (a different headline, modified first sentence, and added paragraph). These revisions highlighted aspects of the story related to a different moral theme or angle, in particular touching on themes of loyalty and authority. This was done because Americans who most value loyalty and authority tend to be most skeptical of the media.

For example, a story on water pollution was revised to include a headline and lead emphasizing the role of authority figures involved and the impact on local neighbors. Further, the revised version had an additional paragraph that highlights how it was the military authority's guidance that was not followed. All other facts, including those that discuss care and fairness frames, were included in both stories. In all, we tested three stories this way.

The goal was to see if emphasizing these values could lead to broader appeal of those news stories. Might people trust these stories more, attend to them more closely, see them as accurate, and so on? And if those additions did broaden their appeal to audiences, we also wanted to see if those changes might alienate people who do not place as much importance on loyalty and authority and who already trust the news more.

The standard version highlights the story themes related to care (e.g., health risks) and fairness (e.g., low-income communities being harmed). The revised version maintains these elements of the story, but also emphasizes angles related to authority (e.g., parks boss deceiving the mayor) and loyalty (e.g., going against the will of the local community).

[10] Thomas J. Leeper and Rune Slothuus, "How the News Media Persuades: Framing Effects and Beyond," in *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Persuasion*, ed. Elizabeth Suhay, Bernard Grofman, and Alexander H. Trechsel (Oxford University Press, 2020).

STANDARD

New recreation center for low-income neighborhood a casualty of parks scandal

A project aimed at helping the city's most marginalized, low-income neighborhood has been abandoned in the wake of a misuse of city funds by the Parks Director, according to documents obtained by a local media investigation.

The Mayor had designated the money for a recreation center in the city's poorest district, but the director funneled the money to a series of unauthorized projects.

The documents show the director misled city officials about how the funds were being spent, and the city no longer has the money to build the recreation center to help both low-income seniors and at-risk youth.

REVISED

Parks boss deceived Mayor, misused taxpayer money

The city's Parks Director intentionally defied the orders of the Mayor and diverted city money from a key recreation project to businesses owned by his friends and family, according to documents obtained by a local media investigation.

The Mayor had designated the money for a recreation center in the city's poorest district, but the director funneled the money to a series of unauthorized projects.

The Parks Director bypassed protocols in order to send money to businesses with close connections to his family and friends, the investigation finds. Emails from the Parks Director reveal that he repeatedly disregarded instructions from the Mayor's office about the funds and the project that residents voted to fund.

The documents show the director misled residents and other top city officials about how the funds were being spent, and the city no longer has the money to build the recreation center to help both low-income seniors and at-risk youth.

Other standard versus revised story text can be found in Appendix III.

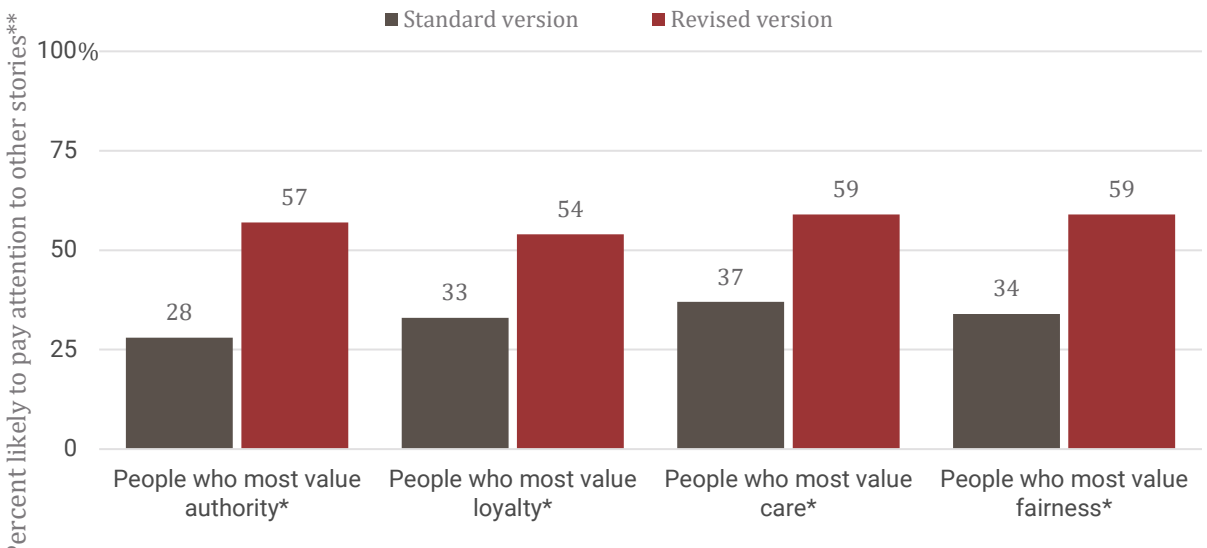
Did the revised versions of the stories broaden their appeal? And if so, did they in turn alter the appeal to the audiences who already liked the original stories?

The answers were encouraging. The revised versions of the stories did broaden their appeal to more skeptical audiences.

In some cases revising the story made it more likely for people to report paying closer attention to it or interest in reading other stories from the same news source. Across the three stories—one about pollution, another about local corruption, and one about election law—there are no instances in which the version revised to emphasize the values of authority and loyalty alienated those who do not consider those moral values as most important and who are also more trusting of the news and media.

Encouragingly, far from alienating other audiences, those revisions also made stories even more appealing to audiences who already agreed with core journalism values. For example, with the pollution story, those who most emphasize fairness are more likely to pay attention to other stories from the same source after reading the revised version compared to those who read the standard version (59% versus 34%). Likewise, those who most emphasize authority, loyalty, and care also significantly prefer the revised version of the pollution story compared to the standard.

Revised Pollution Story Is More Appealing to Most Audiences, Not Only Those Who Value "Authority" or "Loyalty."



Question: After reading this news story, how likely are you to pay attention to other stories from the same news source?
Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18+ nationwide.
* The groups are those who fall in the highest quartile for each moral value.
** Percent who are extremely or very likely to pay attention to other stories from this news source

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In other words, the experiments we did suggested that even small changes to the headline, first sentence, and added paragraph on the revised version were able to broaden the appeal of the story, attract those who tend to be less attracted and trustworthy of the media, and still maintain the traditional audiences that are more likely to consume this type of stories.

THE FOUR CLUSTERS OF AMERICANS

To explore this notion that the findings go beyond politics, we also grouped everyone in the survey into four statistical categories, based on how they responded to journalistic values and moral values. Those four groups or clusters were interesting (see Section V. CLUSTER ANALYSIS).

An especially interesting group, whom we call Moralists, were the second largest cluster with 23% of Americans belonging to it. They included people who tended to resonate with the largest number of moral instincts. They were also diverse. One-third were people of color and two-thirds were white. Half (49%) were Democrat, a third (35%) Republican, and nearly 2 in 10 (16%) independent. The largest share of this group (49%) called themselves moderate, 17% liberal, and 34% conservative. This was also the oldest group. Half of them were over 60. They also were relatively religious. And while they responded strongly to all of the moral values, they also had a fair amount of faith in the five journalism values. But their reaction to journalism values was not absolute.

Only one group seemed fairly absolute in their support of journalism values: the Journalism Supporters, who represent 20% of American adults. This group tended to be liberal (62%) and highly educated, and put a high value on the two most liberal moral foundational instincts, care for others and fairness in the system. Fully 78% of them are Democrats. One reassuring thing for journalists: this group was relatively evenly distributed across age groups and had more young adults than other groups. But one interesting finding is that this group only comprised about 20% of Americans. This was a dramatic way of illustrating that what journalists consider universal principles—and may assume the public does too—is not universal. Journalists are a different breed.

The other two groups were also interesting. One group we called the Upholders tended put a high value on loyalty and authority and be well informed. They consumed a lot of news, but at the same time they were fairly suspicious of the news media. Interestingly, only half of these people were Republicans. Half considered themselves moderates. This is a group that the news media is reaching but to a large degree failing to earn their trust. This is particularly intriguing since this is the largest of the four clusters with 35% of the population, and as we detail later in the report, the media could potentially reach this group by making minor changes to the way they write or edit stories.

The fourth cluster, named the Indifferent, is probably the toughest group to reach. They don't consume much news. They also don't score particularly high on any of the moral values or any of the journalism values. The group features a mix of education levels as well as a blend of Republicans (39%), Democrats (34%), and independents (27%). This group is made up of 21% of adults.

SECTION III. MORAL VALUES AND JOURNALISM VALUES

To provide our own baseline for trust with respondents, we began by asking about their level of trust in the news media. We asked the question differently than Gallup does annually—giving people three levels of trust to choose from rather than five—but the results are basically similar.

Overall, about 40% of people say the media is trustworthy; another 37% say it is not.

Sixty percent say the news is at least somewhat accurate while 25% think it is "not too accurate."

Disturbingly, a majority of Americans (60%) say that the media tries to cover up their mistakes. Majorities of Americans also believe the media doesn't care about them.

REPUBLICANS AND DEMOCRATS DISAGREE ABOUT THE MEDIA

But as with other studies, our data found the biggest divide in trust is revealed in partisan splits. A majority of Democrats (64%) say the press is trustworthy, while a similar majority of Republicans (63%) say it is untrustworthy. More independents say the media is untrustworthy (37%) than say it is trustworthy (28%).

But the point of this study was to dig beneath those well-known partisan divides and explore causes for the lack of trust. To do that, we turned to a growing body of work in social science called Moral Foundations Theory. The work, developed by social psychologist Jonathan Haidt and colleagues, tried to probe the moral intuitions that motivated people, and it has become an important new way of thinking about the differences between cultures and even between different political groups within the United States.

The theory attempts to understand the underlying framework from which different people and cultures base their morality. As we noted earlier, the framework includes asking people about five moral foundations. Each has a corresponding opposite value.

Haidt and colleagues such as Jesse Graham theorize that these foundations stem from ancient qualities that allow humans to peacefully co-exist in groups. The five foundations they have identified are:[11]

[11] Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Vintage Books, 2012); Jesse Graham, Brian A. Nosek, Jonathan Haidt, Ravi Iyer, Spassena Koleva, and Peter H. Ditto, "Mapping the Moral Domain," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 101, no. 2 (2011): 366–385.

- **Care versus harm:** Care measures the attention or sensitivity toward the pain of others, especially the less fortunate. This is the balance between cherishing and protecting other people, and a level of ambivalence to their pain. It is tied to virtues such as kindness and gentleness.
- **Fairness versus cheating:** Fairness stems from the evolutionary principle of reciprocal altruism and justice in society. The value of fairness refers to the instinct to punish or correct dishonesty or deceit, as well as the importance people place on autonomy and personal responsibility.
- **Loyalty versus betrayal:** Loyalty refers to how much someone feels tied to a group or idea. It relates to self-sacrifice for the collective benefit of the group, patriotism, and conformity. This value emphasizes the sense of belonging to a group or ideal over individualism.
- **Authority versus subversion:** This measures how much a person relies on tradition, hierarchical structures, and legitimate authority. It refers to how much people prefer obedience and order. Respect for tradition and official leadership is high.
- **Purity versus degradation:** This measures someone's feelings of sanctity and disgust for things that people would consider revolting or unnatural. It can be related to beliefs that underlie religion but are not unique to religion, such as striving to live a noble life and avoiding immoral activities.

The survey used questions to measure the moral foundation values that have been developed and used by scholars previously.[12] Using the short version of these Moral Foundational Theory questions, we scored respondents based on their responses and coded five different variables that measure how strongly a respondent agrees with each moral foundation value.[13]

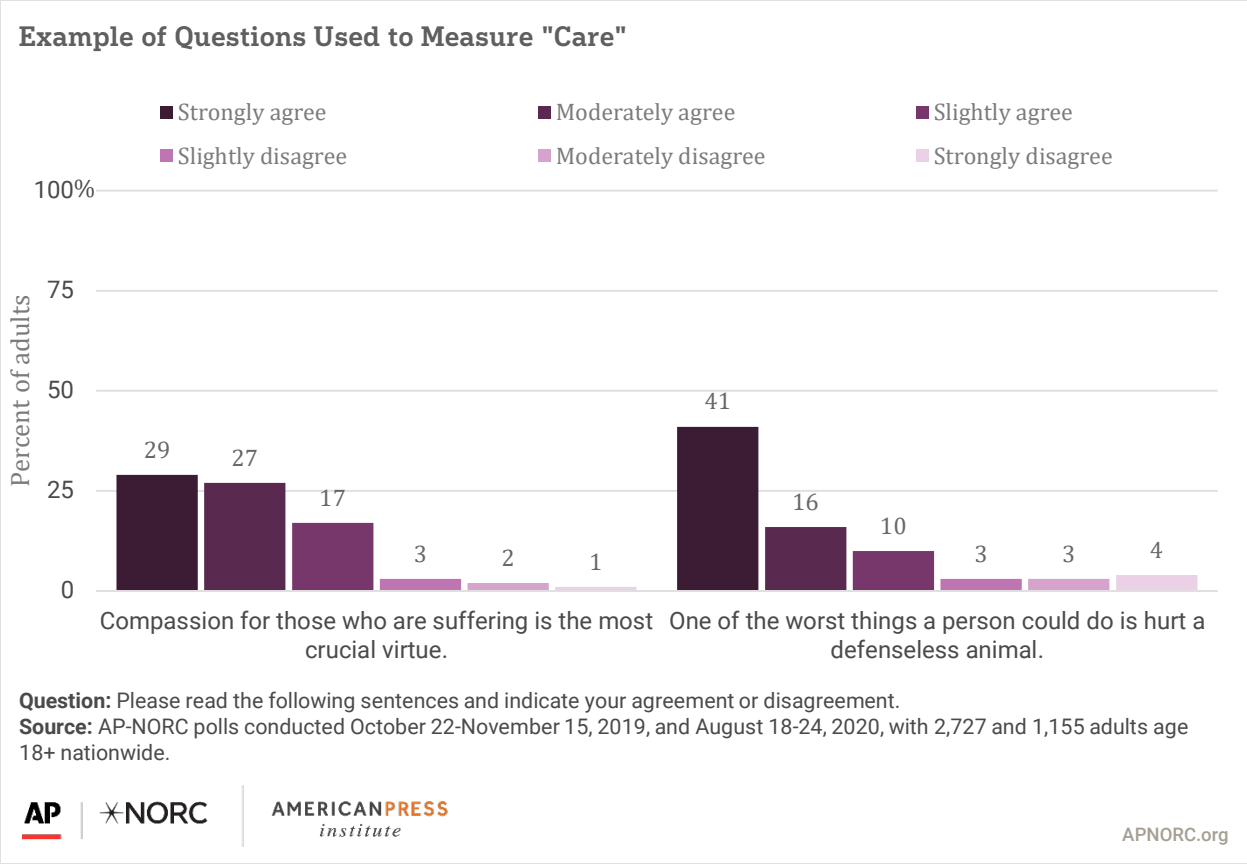
For example, to measure how strongly a respondent considers care as an important value, we asked how much they agreed or disagreed (using a 6-point Likert scale) to the following survey items:

A. Compassion for those who are suffering is the most crucial virtue.

B. One of the worst things a person could do is hurt a defenseless animal.

[12] Jonathan Haidt, "The New Synthesis in Moral Psychology," *Science* 316 (2007): 998–1002.

[13] Respondents answered each item from 1-Strongly agree through 6-Strongly disagree. Half of the items are favored to one side of a value or the other. We reversed coded half of the items so that all range from 1-low in value to 6-high in value. We averaged each of the four items measuring a value, excluding missing items. The final average of items for each value is the final item score.



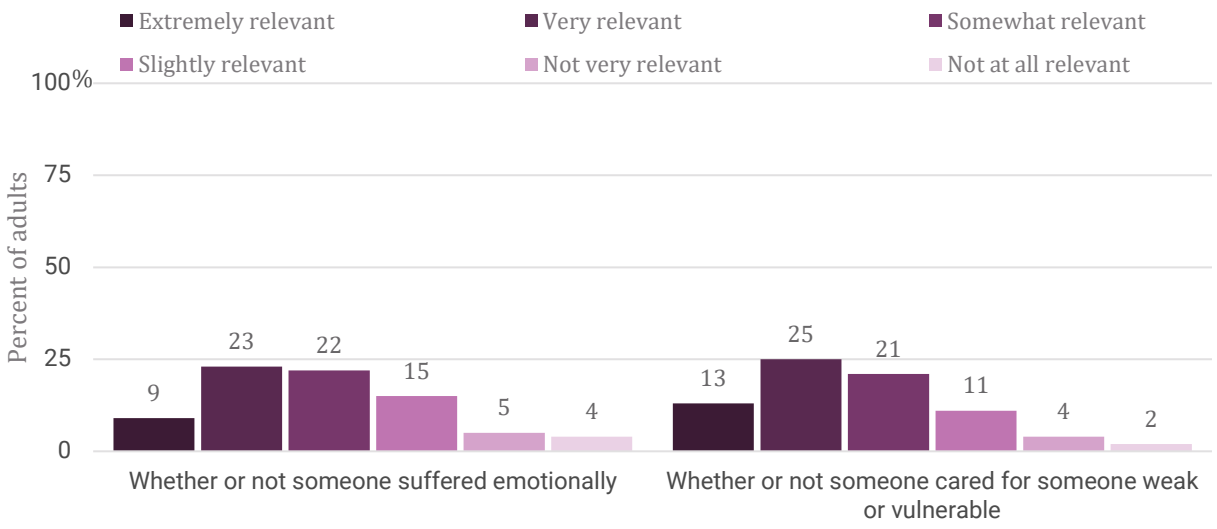
We also asked respondents how relevant each of the following items is when deciding whether something is right or wrong. We used a 6-point scale that ranged from extremely relevant to not at all relevant.[14]

A. Whether or not someone suffered emotionally

B. Whether or not someone cared for someone weak or vulnerable

[14] Respondents answered each item from 1-Extremely relevant through 6-Not at all relevant. Half of the items are favored to one side of a value or the other. We reversed coded half of the items so that all range from 1-low in value to 6-high in value. Each of the four items measuring a value are averaged, excluding missing items. The final average of items for each value is the final item score.

Example of Questions Used to Measure "Care"



Question: When you decide whether something is right or wrong, to what extent are the following considerations relevant to your thinking?
Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18+ nationwide.

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The full set of questions used to create the variables for the other moral foundation values—fairness, loyalty, authority, and purity—can be found in Appendix I.

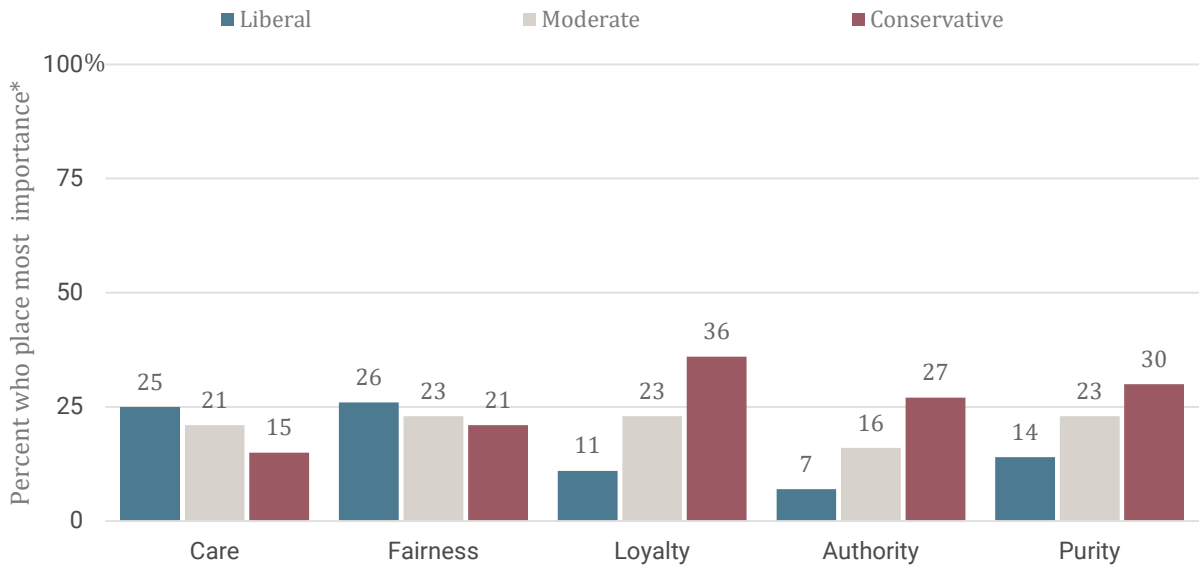
To better explain differences in people's beliefs about the values, we divided respondents in four equal-sized groups for each of the moral and journalism values. Respondents in the highest quartile are those 25% who consider that value most important. Those in the lowest quartile are those 25% who emphasize it least.

For example, a person's responses to the four care questions could show they emphasize it more than most other respondents, which would place them in the highest quartile. That person may also fall in the top 25% of other values, or they may fall in lower quartiles because each value score is unrelated to the other scores.

Throughout the report, we highlight what percent of groups are among those who place the highest importance quartile on each value. These figures help highlight how a value is tied to people's demographic characteristics or other attitudes.

Our findings were consistent with previous research on these values. Republicans and conservatives tend to fall in the highest quartile on values like loyalty, purity, and authority. Democrats and liberals tend to be among those who most emphasize the importance of care and fairness. For instance, more than a third of Republicans (36%) place high importance on loyalty, twice as many as Democrats (18%). Conservatives were also twice as likely as liberals to be among the highest quartile in purity (30% versus 14%). To be clear, the findings here and in other Moral Foundations Theory research do not imply conservatives do not care for others or about fairness in society. But these values fall somewhat lower on the scale than the value put on loyalty. And the reverse is true of liberals. They value loyalty, but less so than others.

Liberals and Conservatives Differ on Moral Values They Most Emphasize.



Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18+ nationwide.
* Those in the highest importance quartile are those who most emphasize each value.

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Age also makes a difference. Older adults are more likely than younger Americans to most emphasize the importance of all five values. In that sense, you might say we become more morally balanced as we age. A third of adults 60 or older, for instance, fall in the highest quartile for thinking fairness is key, twice as many as those age 18-29 (16%). Older adults also value loyalty more, with 38% falling in the highest quartile for the importance of loyalty, compared to 16% of adults 18-29, and just 13% of adults age 30-44. Women are also more likely than men to highly value care and fairness. Men are more likely to care about loyalty. Meanwhile, Black Americans are more likely than white Americans to highly value fairness (35% versus 21%), authority (26% versus 18%), and purity (35% versus 22%).

Those without college degrees are more likely than those with graduate degrees to highly value care (25% versus 16%), loyalty (30% versus 20%), and purity (28% versus 15%).

ASSESSING PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD FIVE JOURNALISM VALUES THAT RELATE TO CORE PRINCIPLES OF THE PROFESSION

The moral foundational questions gave us a baseline to work with. After we asked these people about their moral foundational instincts, we then asked them to respond to five journalistic values that we had identified as broadly important to news people.

We wanted to know two things: If these five journalism values were basically universally held among journalists, did the public share them? And if not, was there any correlation between supporting any of these journalism values and the moral instincts people had?

First, we identified through our own experience five professional principles that most journalists endorse. We then refined these ideas over the course of a day's working session with a diverse group of journalists and experts (see Appendix II). From that process we selected five values that drive the types of stories journalists pursue and how they frame them:

- **Oversight:** This value measures how strongly a person feels there is a need to monitor people in power and know what public officials are doing or saying. The flip side of this value is worry about intrusiveness or this oversight becoming a hindrance, getting in the way, or placing too much importance on insignificant events.
- **Transparency:** This is the idea that transparency is usually the best cure for what's wrong in the world, and that on balance it's usually better for things to be public than for things to be kept secret. The inverse is that sometimes the need to keep things secret is more important than the public's right to know and that most problems can be solved without embarrassing facts being laid out in the open.
- **Factualism:** This value measures whether on balance more facts are always better and facts are the key to knowing what is true. The flip side is that the truth is more than just a matter of adding facts and that this emphasis on factualism can mask bias.
- **Giving voice to the less powerful:** This value measures whether people want to amplify the voices of people who aren't ordinarily heard and if a society should be judged on how it treats the least fortunate. The inverse instinct is that inequalities will always exist and favoring the least fortunate does not always help them.
- **Social criticism:** This value measures how important people think it is to put a spotlight on a community's problems in order to solve them. The flip side puts more emphasis on the value of celebrating things that are going right or working well in order to reinforce them and encourage more of them.

To assess public attitudes toward these core journalism values, the survey asked respondents a series of questions modeled after the type of statement used to measure the moral foundations. We used two affirmative statements and two contradictory ones to measure each journalism principle. Through these answers, we created five variables that measure how strongly a respondent agrees with each journalism value.

For example, to create the variable for the value of oversight, we asked respondents how much they agree or disagree (using a 6-point Likert scale) with the following survey items:

A. The powerful need to be monitored or they will be inclined to abuse their power.
B. It's important to put some trust in authority figures so they can do their jobs.
C. It's vital that the public know what government leaders are doing and saying each day.
D. Leaders need to be able to do some things behind closed doors to fulfill their duties.

The questions used to create the variables for the other journalism values—transparency, factualism, giving voice to the less powerful, and social criticism—can be found in Appendix II.

Similar to the moral foundation values, the population was divided into four groups or clusters. We focus in the rest of the report on the 25% of the population that places the highest emphasis on each principle.

JOURNALISM VALUES AND DEMOGRAPHICS

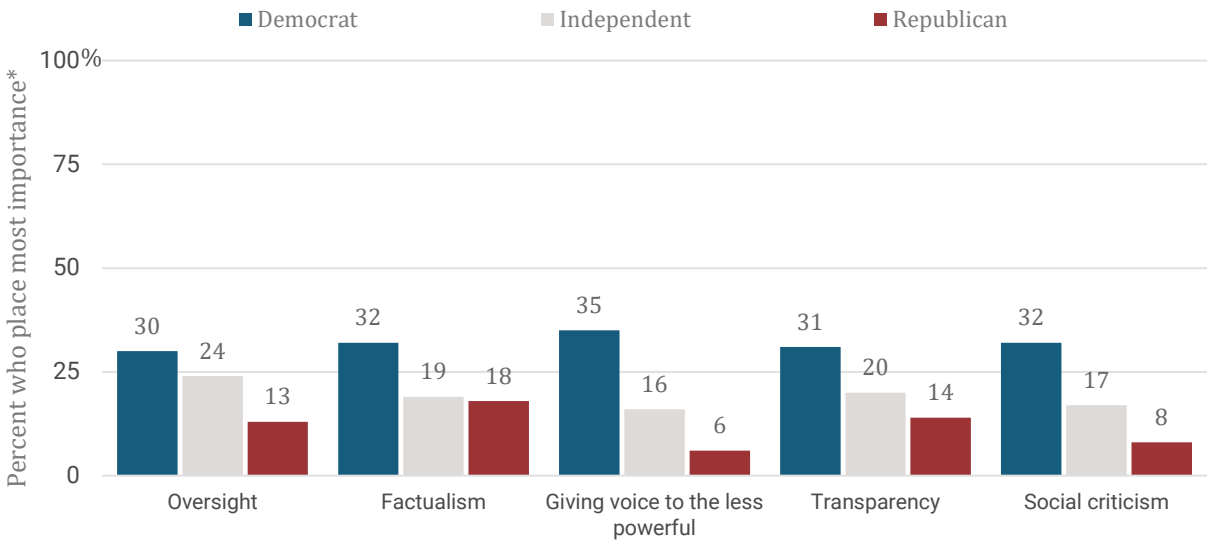
The study found significant differences in support of journalism values depending on people's partisanship, ideology, race, and education.

We found that ideology and partisanship do relate closely to the core journalism values that journalists define as part of their mission. That finding by itself may help explain why journalists often argue they are just doing their job and some conservatives will see bias.

To put it simply, liberals are just more likely than conservatives to consider the five journalism values important. There are numerous examples. Nearly half of those who described themselves as liberal in the study (41%) think it's important to spotlight problems in order to solve what is wrong in society. Only 8% of conservatives put the same value on such social criticism.

Partisan differences also showed up when it came to how much importance people put on the need to have oversight of the powerful and how important it was to amplify the voices of the less powerful. At least 3 in 10 Democrats (30%) were among those who ranked such oversight and giving voice to the less powerful (35%) as top values. Just 6% of Republicans fell into the highest quartile when it came to giving voice to the less powerful and 13% for oversight.

Democrats Are More Likely to Emphasize Journalism Principles than Republicans.



Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18 and older nationwide.
* Those in the highest importance quartile are those who most emphasize each value.

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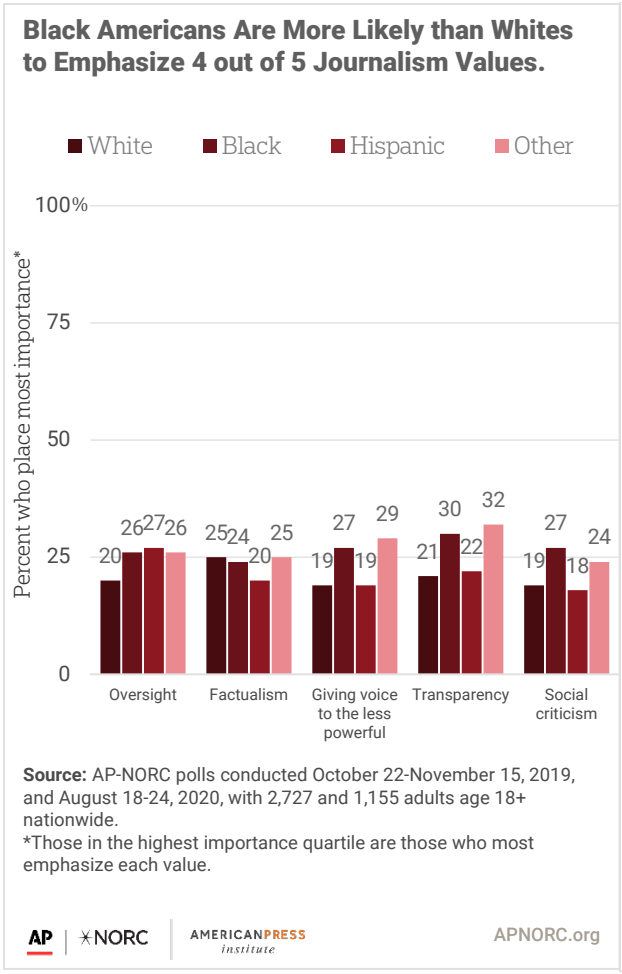
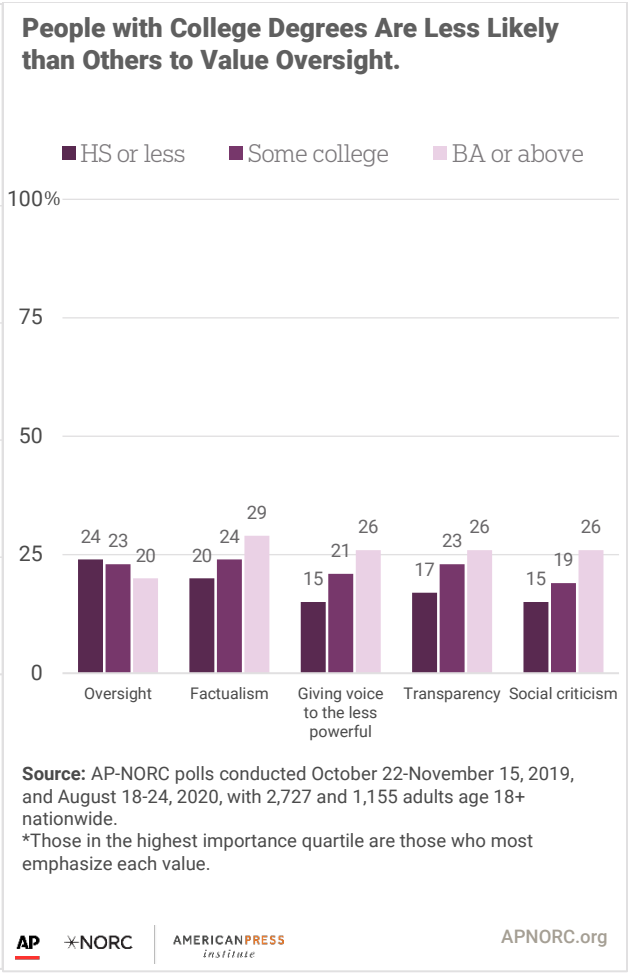
Age and race also seem to make a difference in how people view these core notions about journalism. Older Americans are more likely to place a high value on transparency in society. Twenty-seven percent of adults age 60 or older fall into the highest quarter for valuing transparency in society. Nineteen percent of adults 18 to 29 are among the top quartile.

Black Americans are more likely than white Americans to place a high value on four out of five of the journalism values we tested. They are much more likely to place a high value on the need for oversight of the powerful, offering voice to the less powerful, the importance of transparency in society, and spotlighting or criticizing problems. Black Americans and white Americans endorsed at similar rates the idea that more facts about a subject are usually better, and this value was the one most widely embraced across the public.





Education is often correlated with support for journalistic principles, except for one of the five concepts. People with college degrees were less likely than others to value the watchdog role of the press.

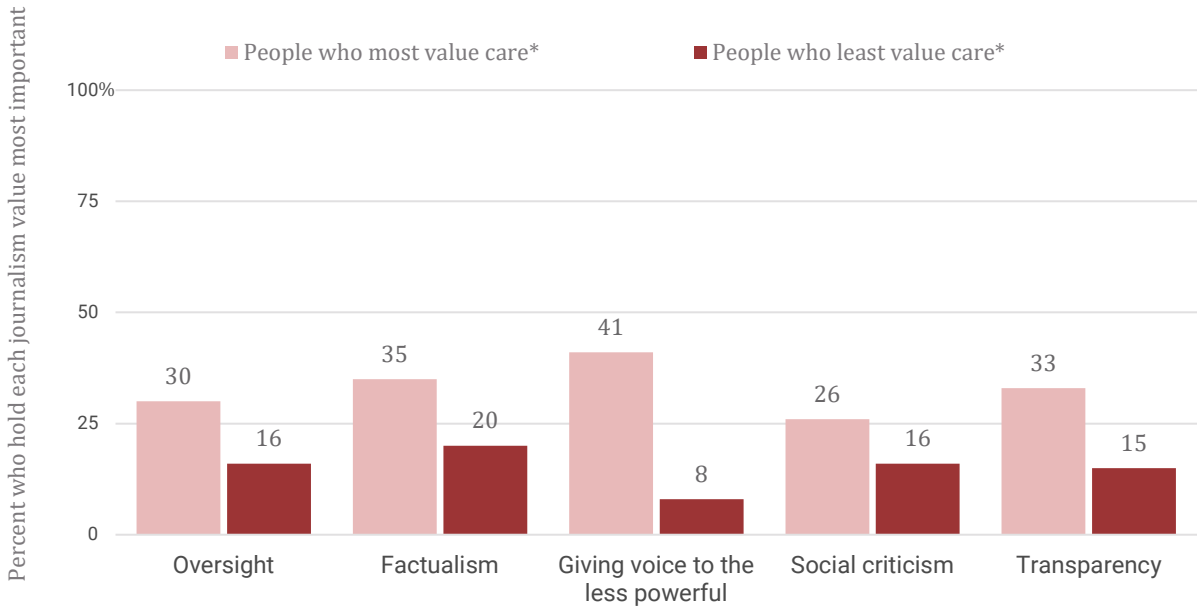
THE LINK BETWEEN MORAL VALUES AND JOURNALISM VALUES

One of the key findings of this study is how strongly moral foundation values are connected to how people view core journalism values. In particular, people who highly value care or fairness are more likely to embrace journalism values, while those who put most stock in loyalty or authority are less likely to endorse journalism principles. This connection between people's moral values and views of journalism principles exists regardless of people's age, race/ethnicity, education, gender, political affiliation, or ideology. This is particularly important for the news media because it provides a deeper understanding of how people's moral framework associates with journalism's core principles.

Americans who stand out for the importance they put on caring for others or fairness in society are more likely to strongly support each of the five journalism values. However, adults who stand out for the importance they place on the values of loyalty or authority, are more likely to put the ***least*** emphasis on each of the journalism values.

Those who put the highest value on caring for others, for example, are three times more likely to consider the watchdog principle of the press as vital as those who put a low emphasis on caring for the less fortunate (30% versus 16%). They are also, perhaps not surprisingly, four times as likely to think it is important to offer voice to the less powerful than those who rank caring for the less fortunate as a lower value. This effect was similar when it came to factualism, social criticism, and transparency.

People Who Emphasize "Care" Are More Likely to Support Journalism Values.



Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18+ nationwide.
* Refers to people whose value of care was in the top or bottom quartiles among all respondents.

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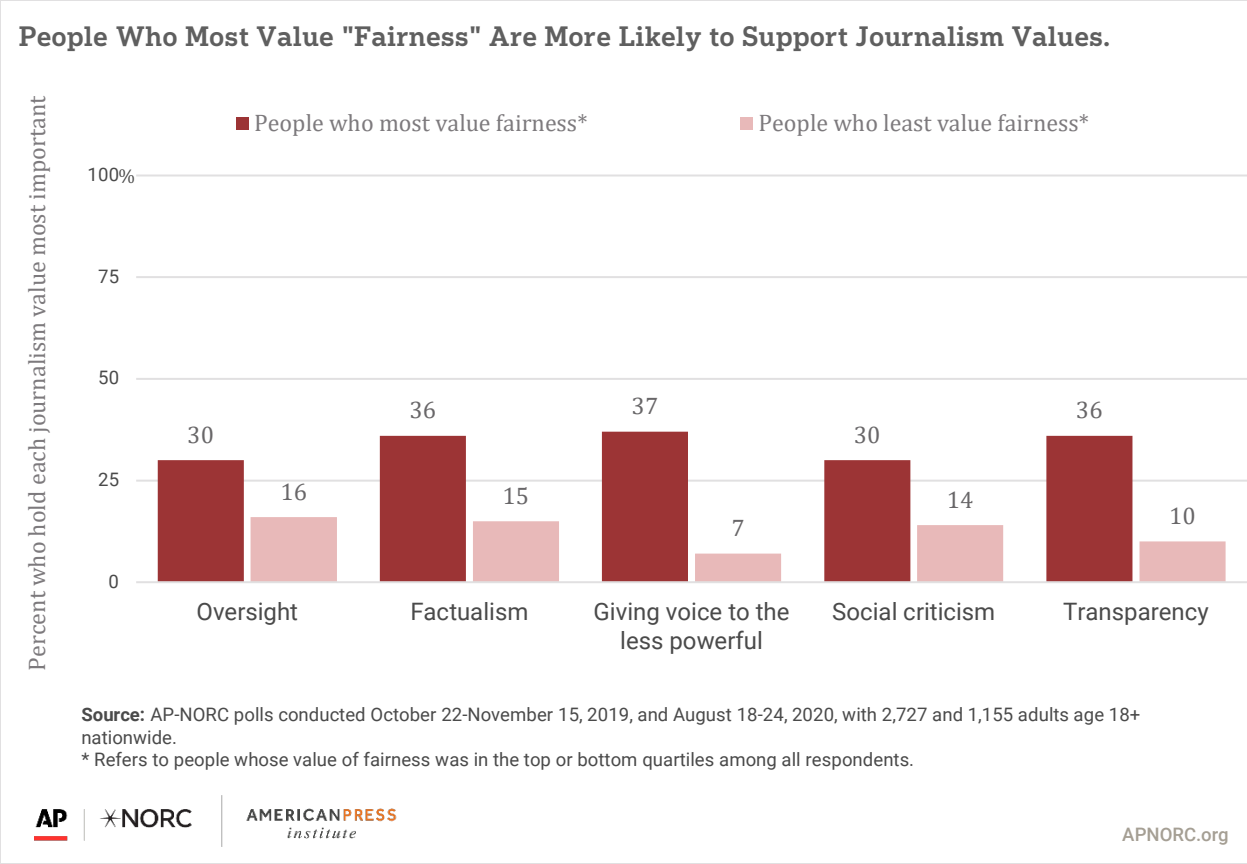
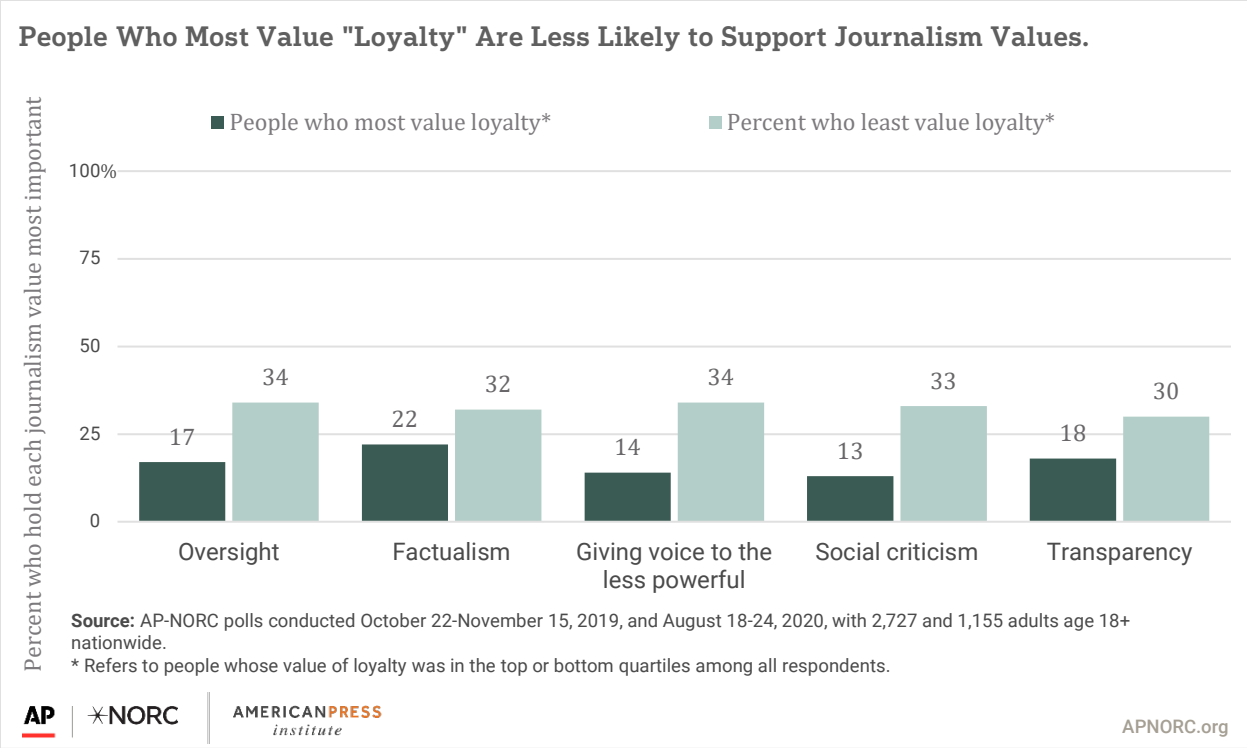
People who put a high emphasis on fairness in society are similarly more likely to endorse journalism values. This group, for instance, is four times more likely to also consider transparency vitally important compared with those who consider fairness in society not that important (36% versus 10%).

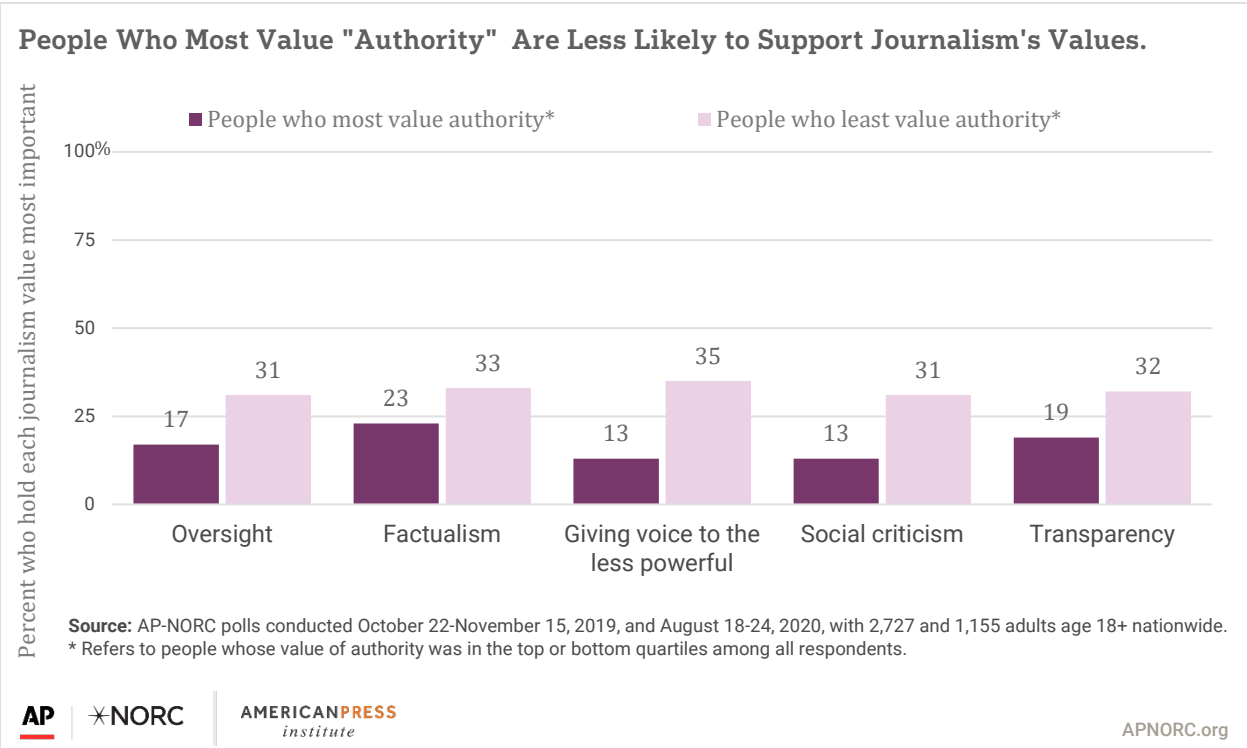


While higher emphasis on care and fairness correspond to putting a higher value on most journalism principles, those who most emphasize either loyalty or authority tend to place the least emphasis on journalism values.

For example, adults who most emphasize loyalty are less likely than those who least embrace it to support journalism values such as social criticism (13% versus 33%).



Similarly, adults who place the most emphasis on authority tend to place the least importance on the journalism values we tested. Only 13% of adults who most emphasize authority place a similar emphasis on giving voice to the least powerful. For those who are the most skeptical of authority, the number is 35%.



HOW VALUES RELATE TO ATTITUDES TOWARD THE MEDIA AND NEWS BEHAVIOR

An important set of findings from this study is how people's values are associated with their attitudes toward the media. For example, we find that people who highly value care or fairness are more likely to trust news, while people who are high in loyalty and authority tend to be more skeptical of the media.

There is also a surprising result when looking at the two sets of values and people's beliefs about the media: People's moral values are more likely to be connected to trust in the media than to their views of core journalism principles.

Understanding the way both sets of values relate to these attitudes toward the news is critical for journalists and media in general.

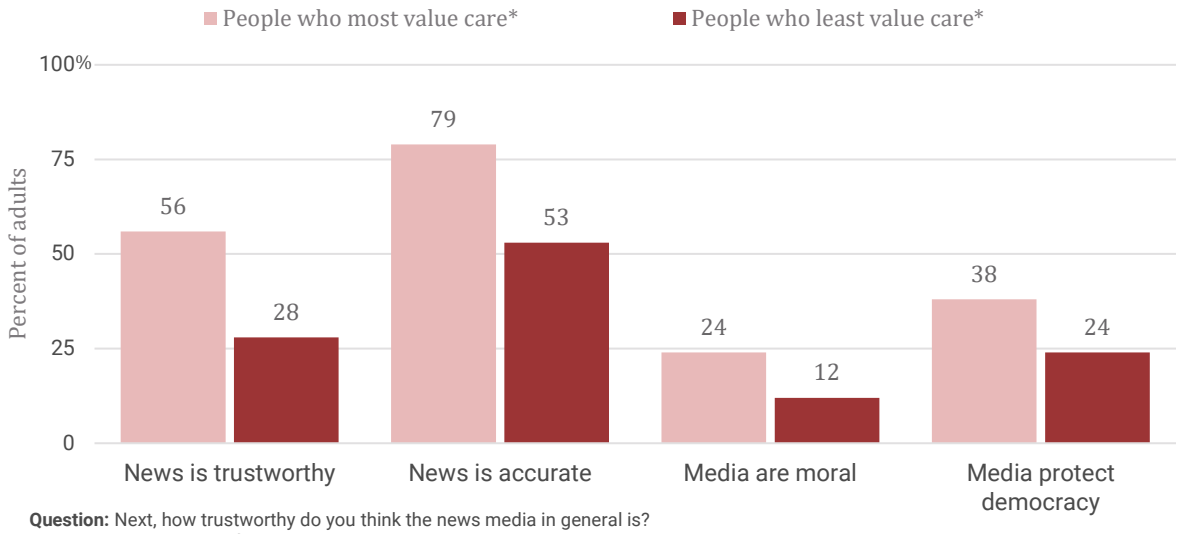
MORAL VALUES AND NEWS BEHAVIOR

People who put particular emphasis on two of the five moral foundation values—the importance of caring for others and fairness in society—are more likely to trust the news, think it accurate, and believe the media protects democracy than do people who put lower stock in the importance of those two moral values. This is true even when controlling for political partisanship and demographic factors.

In contrast, people who put more stock in the moral values of loyalty, authority, and purity tend to be more skeptical of the media.

Almost 8 in 10 of those who most value care say the media is accurate. Of those who least emphasize care, just 53% think the media is accurate. Similarly, people who place the most importance on caring for others are twice as likely to think the press is trustworthy than those who rank low on care (56% versus 28%).

People Who Place Most Importance on "Care" Are More Trusting of News They See.



Question: Next, how trustworthy do you think the news media in general is?
Would you say the news from the media is…?
Here is a pair of opposite phrases. Which phrase do you feel better describes news media? [Are moral/are immoral/neither applies] [Protect democracy/hurt democracy/neither applies].
Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18+ nationwide.
* Refers to people whose value of care was in the top or bottom quartiles among all respondents.

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People who put great stock in society being fair also are more likely to rate the media highly. Those who rank at the top for thinking fairness is an important value, for instance, are twice as likely to believe the press protects democracy as are those who rank low in fairness (41% versus 21%). We see the same pattern when we asked people if the press was trustworthy. People who most value fairness were twice as likely to see the press as trustworthy as those who rank lowest in fairness (54% versus 26%). Those who most emphasize fairness are also more likely to think the news is accurate than those who least emphasize it (75% versus 54%).

If support for two of the five core moral values usually are related to giving the press high marks, the three other moral values tend to work the other way. The more emphasis people put on the importance of authority, loyalty, and purity, the more likely they are to doubt the news media's intentions, its morality, and the idea that it protects democracy. People who rank high on authority, loyalty, and purity also believe the press usually hides rather than admits its mistakes.

People Who Emphasize "Authority, Loyalty, or Purity" Do Not Think the Media Is Willing to Admit Their Mistakes.

Question: Here is a pair of opposite phrases. Which phrase do you feel better describes news media? [Are willing to admit their mistakes/try to cover up their mistakes/neither applies].
Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18+ nationwide.
* Refers to people whose value was in the top or bottom quartiles among all respondents.

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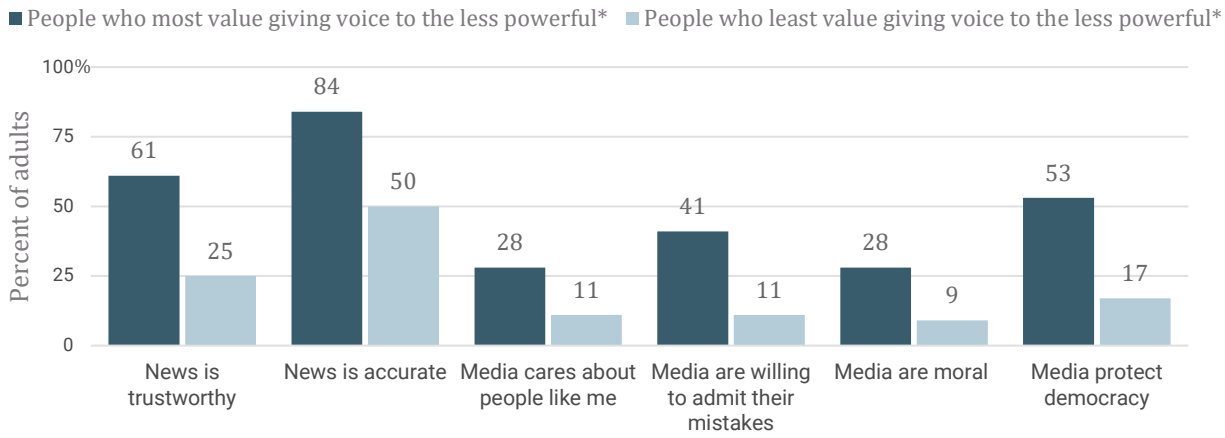
Indeed, skepticism about the press seems deeply associated with people who put high stock in being loyal, on trusting authority, and believing in the importance of purity and sanctity.

VIEWS TOWARD JOURNALISM PRINCIPLES AND ATTITUDES TOWARD THE MEDIA

People's views toward several of the core journalism principles are tied to their broader attitudes toward the media. In particular, people who most embrace the journalism principles of giving voice to the less powerful and social criticism are more likely to have positive opinions of the news.

For example, those who most embrace giving voice to the less powerful are more likely than those who least emphasize it to say the news is trustworthy (61% versus 25%). Likewise, those who most endorse the journalism principle are more likely to say the news media is moral and protects democracy.

Those Who Embrace "Giving Voice to the Less Powerful" Are More Likely to Trust News.



Question: Next, how trustworthy do you think the news media in general is?
Would you say the news from the media is…?
Here is a pair of opposite phrases. Which phrase do you feel better describes news media? [Care about people like me/don't care about people like me/neither applies].
[Are willing to admit their mistakes/try to cover up their mistakes/neither applies].
[Are moral/Are immoral/neither applies].
[Protect Democracy/hurt democracy/neither applies].
Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18+ nationwide.
* Refers to people whose value of giving voice to the less powerful was in the top or bottom quartiles among all respondents.

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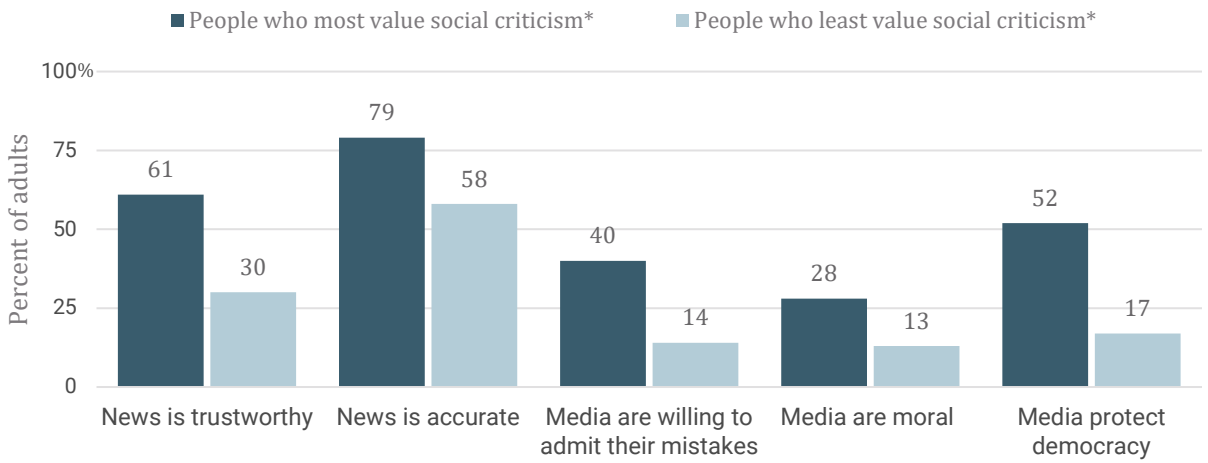
Americans who place the most emphasis on the journalism value of social criticism also tend to have more positive views of the media.

Strong Endorsements of "Social Criticism" Are Associated with Trust in News.



Question: Next, how trustworthy do you think the news media in general is?
Would you say the news from the media is…?
Here is a pair of opposite phrases. Which phrase do you feel better describes news media?
[Are willing to admit their mistakes/try to cover up their mistakes/neither applies].
[Are moral/Are immoral/neither applies].
[Protect Democracy/hurt democracy/neither applies].
Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18+ nationwide.
* Refers to people whose value of social criticism was in the top or bottom quartiles among all respondents.

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Aside from the two values of social criticism and giving a voice to the less powerful, the rest of the journalism values aren't related to these opinions of the press.

MORAL VALUES, JOURNALISM VALUES, AND NEWS CONSUMPTION

What people cite as their foundational moral values and how they respond to journalism values also appear to be related to the way people read, watch, or listen to news, but not in predictable ways.

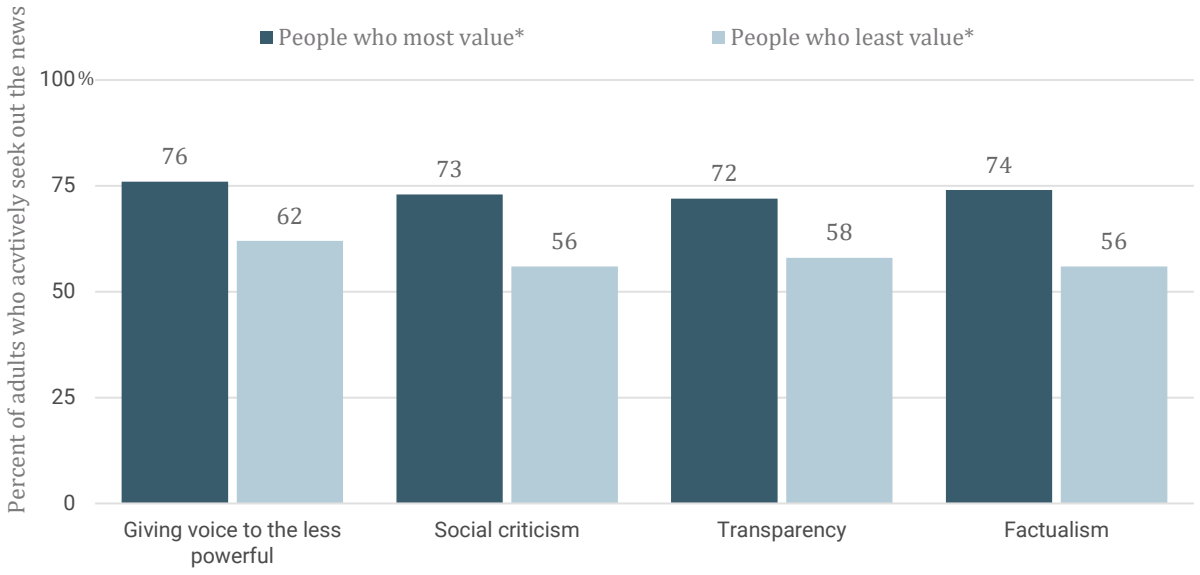
For instance, people who put a high value on authority—a value not correlated to trusting news or embracing news values—are more likely than those who rank authority as less important to be active news consumers who seek out news rather than just bumping into it (72% versus 59%). Again, this is true even when controlling for political partisanship and demographic factors.

That is also true of people who put high stock in the value of social fairness, a group that is more trusting of the press.

And whether people actively seek out the news they are interested in (we call them seekers) or they tend to just randomly bump into the news (we call them bumpers) tends to be associated with how people feel about the news they see. People who actively seek out news are more likely to say they value the journalism principles of giving voice to the less powerful, of importance of facts, of social criticism as a way to solve problems, and of transparency in society more generally.

Interestingly, there is one value that news seekers do not tend to rate more highly than other Americans. They put no special stock in the press playing the watchdog over people in power.

People Who Support Journalism Values Are More Likely to Be "News Seekers."



Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18+ nationwide.
*Refers to people whose value of each was in the top or bottom quartiles among all respondents.

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SECTION IV. EXPERIMENTS IN BROADENING THE APPEAL OF STORIES

Americans who value loyalty and authority most highly tend to be the most skeptical of the news media. In experiments with readers, however, we see promising signs that emphasizing these values in stories when they are relevant could broaden the appeal of those stories and of the media generally, without alienating people who revere other values.

The findings are provocative in part because some suspicion of authority and caution about the dangers of excessive loyalty are embedded in journalistic norms. That is why journalists put a high premium on keeping an eye on the powerful. While many people value loyalty and authority, journalists tend to worry that power corrupts, that people in power need to be watched, and that too much loyalty or trust can allow bad actors too much room.

Yet moral values, as well as other demographic and partisan characteristics, connect to how people perceive, trust, and consume news media as a whole. Further, people's support for moral foundations values relate to the kind of journalism values they consider important, and to the type of stories or news they are most interested in or more likely to engage with.

So, how should journalists operate? Can they both stay true to their journalistic vocation and refine their stories to resonate with people who may prioritize different values? Can they expand their audience while not turning off loyal followers? That's what we set out to test.

We tested variations of some common types of news stories to see whether changes in the way they were framed, or even just changes to the headlines, could change and broaden the appeal of those stories. We tested three different news stories. For each one, respondents might have seen one of two different versions. Each was based on an actual news story, slightly modified to make it more generic. The first version was a standard story written fairly closely to the original. The second included elements designed to explicitly touch on the values of loyalty and authority while still maintaining the parts related to care or fairness. The goal was to see if emphasizing these additional values could broaden their appeal, without alienating people who do not place as much importance on these values and who are already more trusting of the news.

Importantly, we changed little else. The two versions of the story were identical except for two elements: 1) The headline and first sentence were different in the revised version to touch on themes related to loyalty or authority; and 2) The revised version also has an additional paragraph that emphasizes the authority or loyalty angles of the news story. In other words, the facts were the same but what was emphasized changed.

The unaltered stories, inspired by real news stories, mostly emphasized moral values of care or fairness. Care and looking out for those who may be harmed –by policy, a person, or an event—and fairness for all are also somewhat embedded in journalistic norms. Further, people who value care and fairness tend to also see media favorably and also are more supportive of journalism values. In offering an alternative to these stories that also emphasized authority and loyalty, our experiment tested what might happen if journalists composing their stories think about the values of their most skeptical readers.

Respondents were randomly assigned to read one version of each story, and then asked a series of questions about the story, including the headline and first sentence, and the additional paragraph if they received the revised version. The goals of the experiment were to see if the revised version led to more positive views about the story among those who place the most importance on loyalty and authority (broadening the audience), and no negative impact on views toward the story among those who most value care or fairness (without alienating those who already trust media).

Overall, the experiment was promising and found reasons for journalists to try to write and frame stories more broadly. Some revisions were more effective than others. But in general the revisions helped broaden trust. And in some cases the revised version made the story more appealing even to people who already tended to trust the media. For example, a story about government corruption was seen generally as more balanced, more trustworthy, and more likely to get readers' attention.

The three short news stories were designed to be similar in style and presentation to articles in local news outlets. They concerned one of three fairly common news topics: 1) local environmental issue (polluted water); 2) local corruption (mayor's misuse of funds); or 3) state election laws (photo identification and voter registration). One might expect differing values to play out prominently in national news, but we wanted to look at their salience at a community-level as well.

STANDARD

New recreation center for low-income neighborhood a casualty of parks scandal

A project aimed at helping the city's most marginalized, low-income neighborhood has been abandoned in the wake of a misuse of city funds by the Parks Director, according to documents obtained by a local media investigation.

The Mayor had designated the money for a recreation center in the city's poorest district, but the director funneled the money to a series of unauthorized projects.

The documents show the director misled city officials about how the funds were being spent, and the city no longer has the money to build the recreation center to help both low-income seniors and at-risk youth.

REVISED

Parks boss deceived Mayor, misused taxpayer money

The city's Parks Director intentionally defied the orders of the Mayor and diverted city money from a key recreation project to businesses owned by his friends and family, according to documents obtained by a local media investigation.

The Mayor had designated the money for a recreation center in the city's poorest district, but the director funneled the money to a series of unauthorized projects.

The Parks Director bypassed protocols in order to send money to businesses with close connections to his family and friends, the investigation finds. Emails from the Parks Director reveal that he repeatedly disregarded instructions from the Mayor's office about the funds and the project that residents voted to fund.

The documents show the director misled residents and other top city officials about how the funds were being spent, and the city no longer has the money to build the recreation center to help both low-income seniors and at-risk youth.

Other standard versus revised story text can be found in Appendix III.

To understand the impacts of the changes, the study looked at three sets of questions:

1) How do the elements relate to overall views of a story?
2) How does changing the headline and first sentence impact people's views of those parts of the story?
3) How do people view the additional paragraph highlighting the loyalty and authority elements of the story?

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF REVISED VERSION

In no case was the revised version of the story—the one designed specifically for people who put more value on loyalty and authority—less appealing overall. And while not every revision in every story enhances trust, we find some changes were effective in reaching broader audiences and making those readers less skeptical of the media. Moreover, we find some instances where the generalized appeal of the revised version was even greater than the appeal of the standard version. For example, half of respondents who read the revised version of the corruption story are more likely to say they would pay attention to the rest (compared to 42% of those who saw the standard version). The revised version of the election story was also more likely to be seen as more balanced (62% versus 44%) and trustworthy (78%vs. 70%) than the standard version.

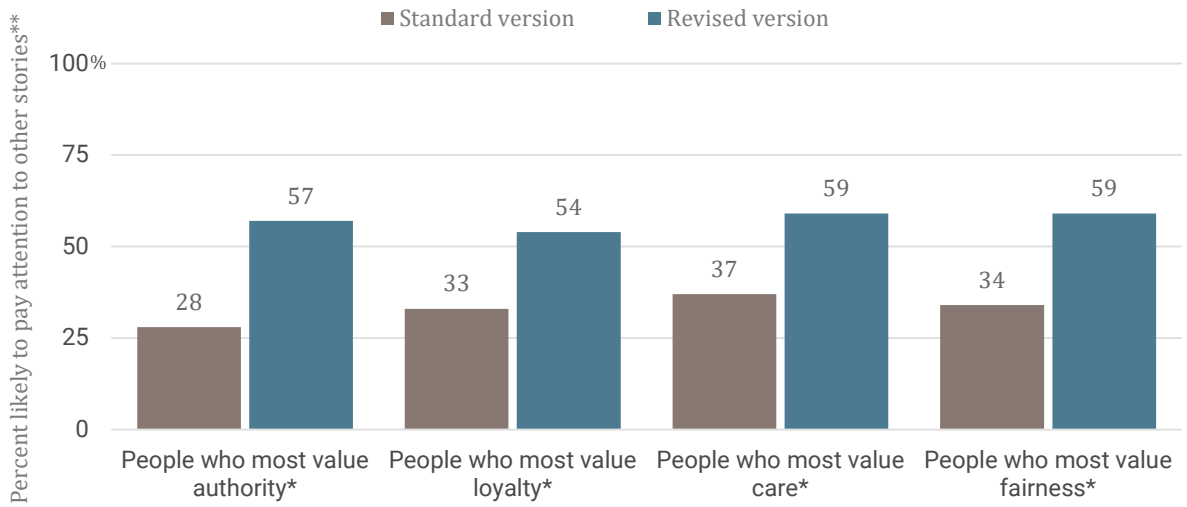
GENERALIZED APPEAL OF REVISED VERSION ACROSS MORAL VALUES

Across the three stories—about pollution, local corruption, and election law—there were no instances where the revised version alienated those more trusting of the news.

Indeed, some of the revised versions were even more appealing than the original version to those audiences. This was the case for both the pollution and corruption stories.

For the pollution story, every audience group preferred the revised version, the one emphasizing more moral values. As an example, people who put a high value on fairness (a group associated with high trust in the news media) more likely to pay attention to other stories from the same news source after reading the revised version than those who read the standard version (59% versus 34%). The response was even more positive among people who most valued authority (57% versus 28%).

Broadening Pollution Story Can Build More Engagement across Audiences.



Question: After reading this news story, how likely are you to pay attention to other stories from the same news source?
Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18+ nationwide.
* The groups are those who fall in the highest quartile for each moral value.
** Percent who are extremely or very likely to pay attention to other stories from this news source.

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The corruption story also tended to engender more trust across the board when it was revised to make it more appealing to people whose values make them more skeptical of the press. As an example, about 6 in 10 respondents who highly valued purity said they were more likely to pay attention to similar stories about government corruption after seeing the revised version of that story, compared to 39% percent who said that about the standard story. The numbers were similarly boosted among people who value fairness highly, a group highly trusting of the press. In all, 63% of this fairness group said they would pay attention to similar stories after reading the revised version, versus 45% who said that after reading the standard account. Unlike the pollution story, we did not see a significant effect for those who most emphasize other values like care, loyalty, or authority.

These findings indicate that making a story touch on more values with the intent to appeal to those with more often conservative values may make it more appealing overall.

The election story significantly improved feelings of trustworthiness for those who most emphasize values such as purity or loyalty. The revised headline for this story downplayed details about minority and economic status, provided more information on how the proposed law would change the experience of voting generally, and provided an additional paragraph that mentioned state legislators' concerns about voter fraud within the story's body.

These minor alterations in the revised story improved perceptions of trustworthiness significantly across respondents in two groups who tend to be less trusting of the press—people who most value purity or loyalty. Seventy-four percent of those who most emphasize loyalty think the revised version of the election story was more trustworthy, compared to 60% who say the same for the standard version. The increased perception of trustworthiness in the revised version compared to the standard one was also more prevalent among those who most emphasize purity (81% versus 64%).

EFFECTS DRIVEN BY HEADLINE AND FIRST SENTENCE

The findings from the pollution and corruption stories provide evidence that changing the headline and first sentence (or lead) alone can improve the appeal of the story to those who tend to be most skeptical of the media.

The revised versions of the headlines and first sentences in the pollution and corruption stories made the stories more appealing to those who most value authority, loyalty, or purity.

How did those headlines and leads change?

For the corruption story, the headline shifted from ***"New recreation center for low-income neighborhood a casualty of parks scandal"*** *to* ***"Parks boss deceived Mayor, misused taxpayer money".***

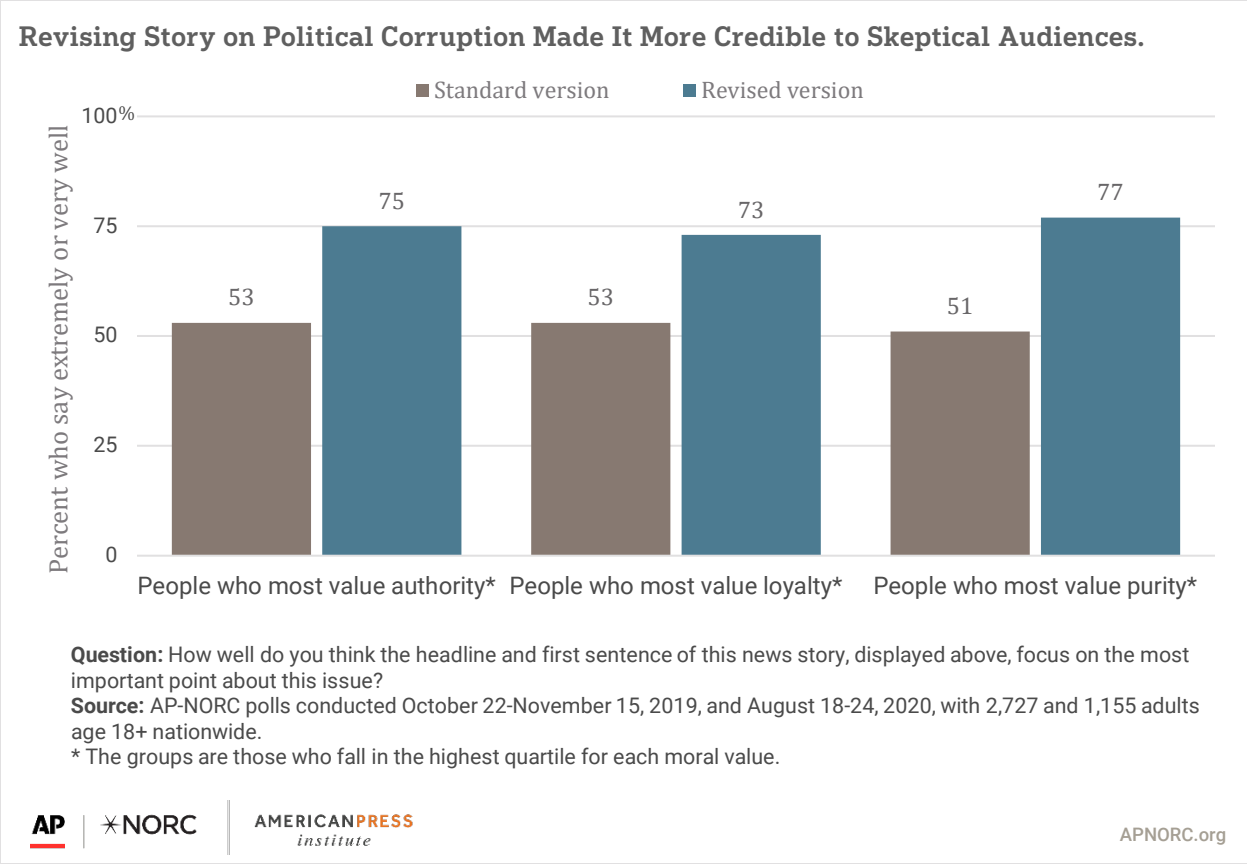
The lead, or first sentence, shifted from this:

"A project aimed at helping the city's most marginalized, low-income neighborhood has been abandoned in the wake of a misuse of city funds by the Parks Director, according to documents obtained by a local media investigation."

To this:

"The city's Parks Director intentionally defied the orders of the Mayor and diverted city money from a key recreation project to businesses owned by his friends and family, according to documents obtained by a local media investigation."

The information in the headline and first sentence was the same, but the revised headline and lead was more popular and more trusted. Americans who place most emphasis on authority, loyalty, and purity, for instance, were more likely to say the revised headline and opening sentence focused on the most important part of the story.



We saw the same effect for the pollution story.

Here the headline changed from ***"At-risk neighborhood now facing new health threat from toxic drinking water"*** to ***"Local community at risk after state officials ignore military study."***

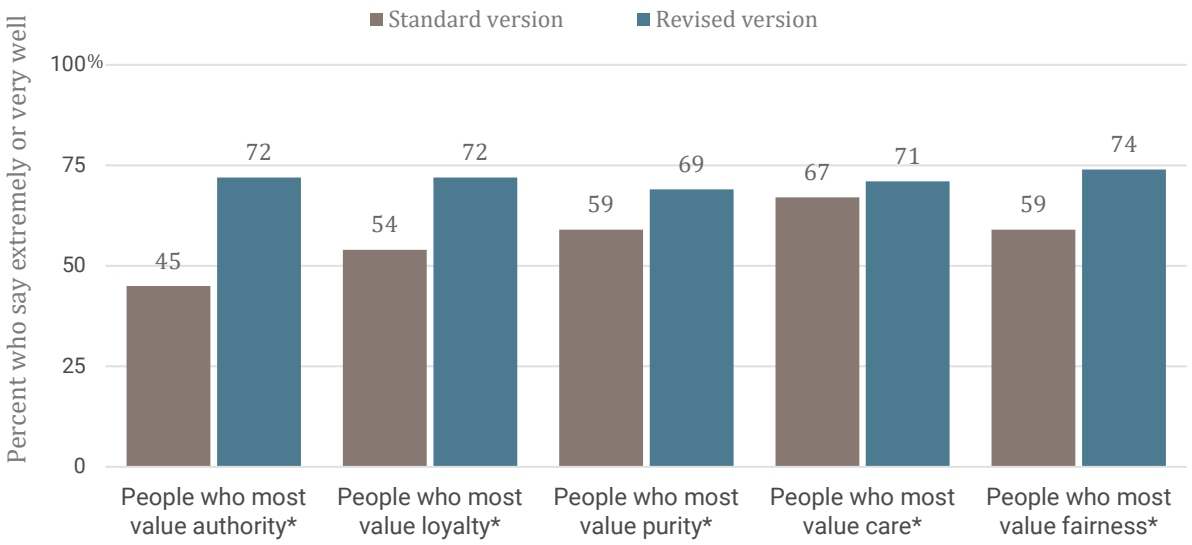
And the first sentence changed from this:

"A toxic chemical has polluted drinking water at a local mobile home park, making it the latest low-income community to face a public health crisis due to the nation's deteriorating infrastructure."

To this:

"After state officials failed to act on warnings from a military study last year, the local community is now facing a public health risk as a toxic chemical has been found in the community's drinking water."

Revising Pollution Story Made It More Focused to All Audiences.



Question: How well do you think the headline and first sentence of this news story, displayed above, focus on the most important point about this issue?
Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18+ nationwide.
* The groups are those who fall in the highest quartile for each moral value.

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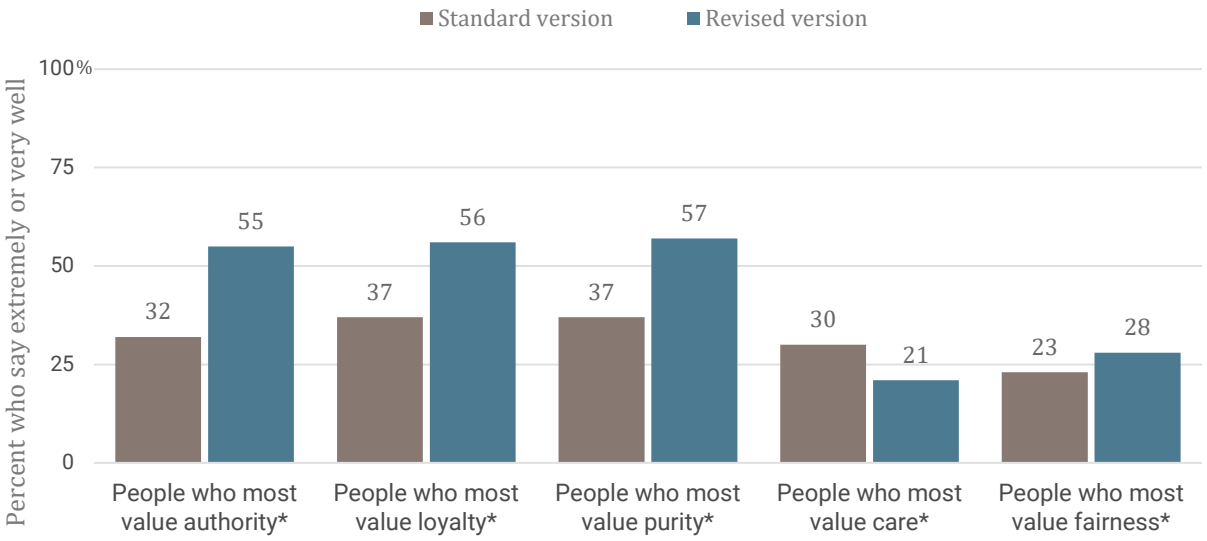
The revised versions of the headlines and first sentences also motivated respondents to read the whole story. Those who placed most importance on authority and loyalty, for instance, were more likely to think the revised version of the first sentence in the pollution story makes them want to read the rest. Only 45% of those who highly valued authority say they would want to keep reading the standard story. But that number jumped to 72% for the version with the different headline and first sentence.

Yet far from pandering to one audience, those revisions did not make the story less trustworthy for audiences who put more emphasis on the so-called liberal values of care and fairness. They were just as likely to read the pollution story with the revisions as the standard version.

The revised openings to the stories improve the likelihood that those who most value authority, loyalty, or purity see their personal views reflected in the story. Only 32% of respondents who most value authority think the standard pollution story represents the views of people like them, but 55% say so when reading the revised version. Those most valuing loyalty and purity show similar findings. The revisions were able to add the views of people valuing authority, loyalty, and purity without losing the views of people valuing care and fairness. Those who place most emphasis on care and fairness don't have a significantly different reaction to the revisions in the pollution story.

Revised Headline and Lead in Pollution Story Reflects Views from All Audiences.



Question: Based on the headline and first sentence, how well do you feel like the story reflected the views of people like you on the issue?
Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18+ nationwide.
*The groups are those who fall in the highest quartile for each moral value.

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EFFECTS DRIVEN BY EXPLICIT ADDED PARAGRAPH

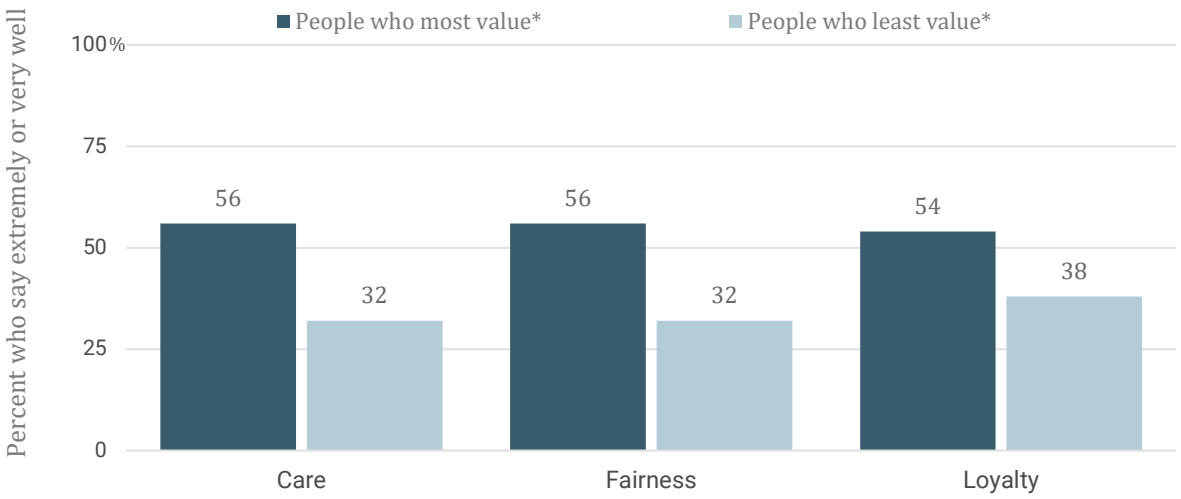
We also made a second revision to the story—a new paragraph in the middle—in addition to a different headline and lead sentence. This new paragraph, emphasizing values of loyalty and authority, also made a material difference with audiences. This suggests that framing elements of story text to include a broader range of values, not just changing headlines and leads, can help broaden the appeal of news stories and address trust.

The additional paragraphs in the revised stories emphasized angles of the stories designed to be more appealing to those more attracted to values like loyalty, authority, and purity. Respondents who saw the revised versions of the stories were asked a series of questions designed to measure whether the added content made the story easier to understand, reflected the views of people like them, and how relevant it was for the story overall. Respondents who saw the standard versions of the stories with no changes, and thus without the additional paragraphs, were later asked to read the additional paragraphs separately and then answer whether they would have made the story more trustworthy, less trustworthy, or had no effect.

The findings suggest that including those paragraphs helped people think the media reflected their values and increased the chance that they would engage with the story. People who put a premium on loyalty and authority, for instance, were both more likely to say they saw their perspectives reflected in each story. This evidence shows that emphasizing such values can help people believe that their views are included in the story and increase the chance they engage with the story overall.

For the pollution story, a majority of those who most emphasize fairness, care, and loyalty report the additional paragraph is helpful and reflects their views on the issue of water pollution compared to fewer of those who least emphasize these values.

Revised Pollution Story Reflects Views of Those Who Most Value Care, Fairness, and Loyalty.



Question: Based on this sentence, displayed above, how well do you feel like the story reflected the views of people like you on the issue?
Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18+ nationwide.
* Refers to people whose value of each was in the top or bottom quartiles among all respondents.

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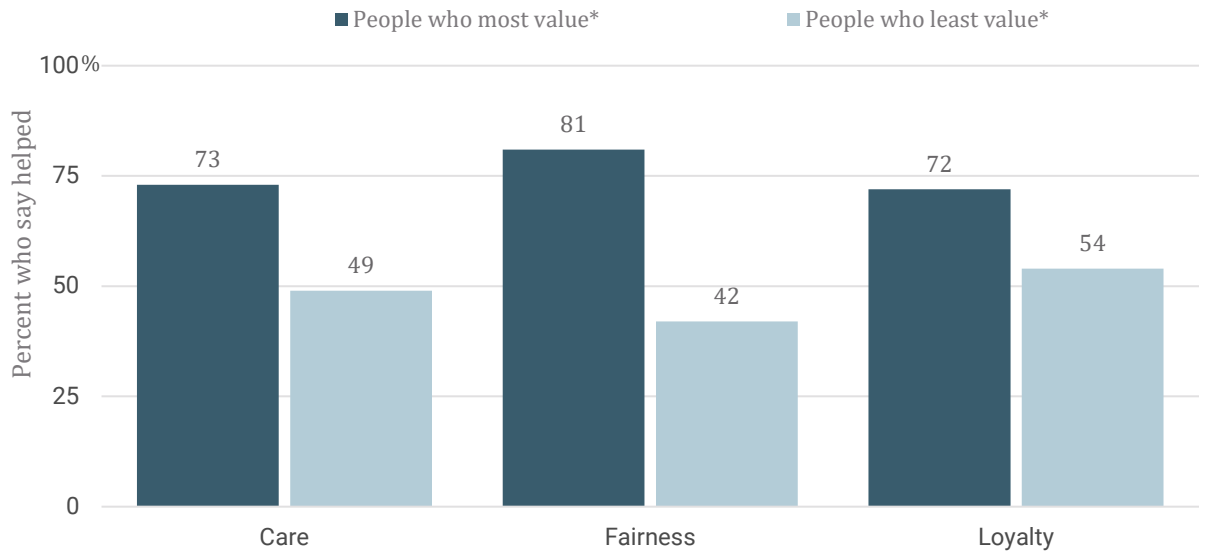
For the corruption story, over half of those who most emphasize care (59%) or fairness (55%) say their opinions are reflected in the story compared to about a third of those who least emphasize each value: care (34%); fairness (31%).

Americans who most emphasize values like loyalty and authority are more likely to say the additional paragraph in the election story helps the story reflect views of people like them. Forty percent of those who most emphasize loyalty say the additional paragraph reflects their point of view compared to just 19% of those who least emphasize it. The same is true for those who most emphasize authority compared to those who least emphasize it (37% versus 17%).

The additional paragraph also helps with people's understanding of the pollution story, particularly for those who most emphasize values like care, fairness, and loyalty. Again, this provides evidence showing how the broader angle in the story effectively engaged respondents, even among readers who value care and fairness, as well as those who emphasize loyalty. For example, a majority of those who most emphasize fairness, care, and loyalty say the added paragraph helped them understand the topic or theme of the pollution story compared to those who least emphasize each value. Put another way, the new text may also help the story feel more robust.

Additional Paragraph in Revised Version of Pollution Story Helps People Understand the Story.



Question: Did the sentence displayed above help, hurt, or neither help nor hurt your understanding of the topic?
Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18+ nationwide.
* Refers to people whose value of each was in the top or bottom quartiles among all respondents.

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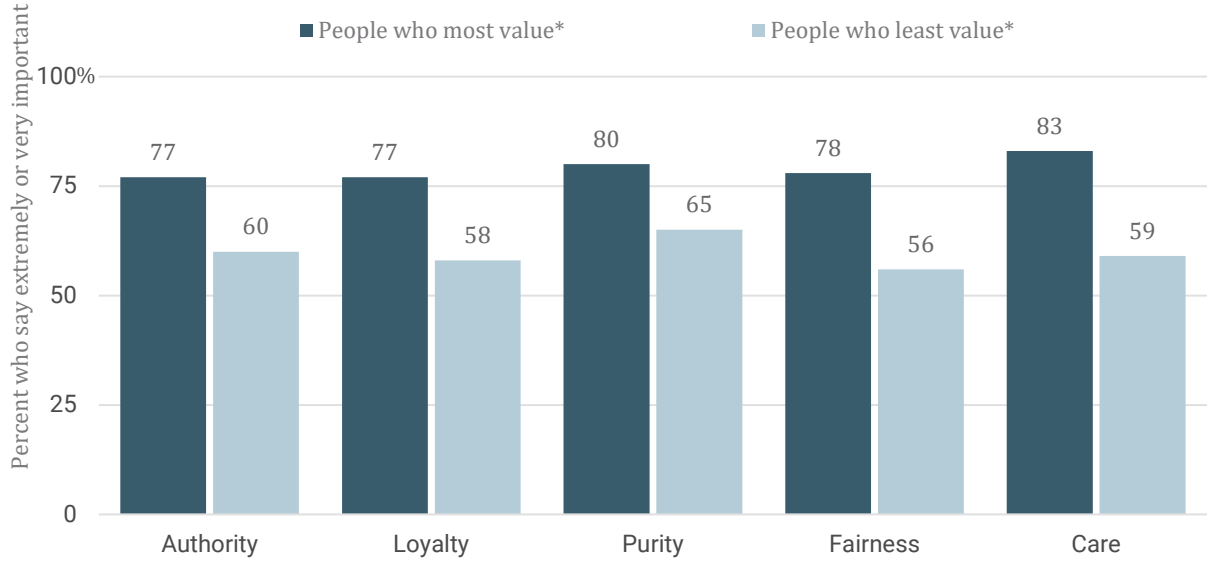
In the case of the pollution story, the additional paragraph also appealed to everyone who held any of the tested moral values as particularly important. Across all moral values—care, fairness, loyalty, authority, and purity—those who fell in the top quartile for each were more likely to say the additional paragraph provided important information to the story than those in the lowest quartile.

Additional Paragraph in Revised Pollution Story Gives Important Facts to All Audiences.



Question: How important to the story is the information provided by this sentence?
Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18+ nationwide.
Refers to people whose value of each was in the top or bottom quartiles among all respondents.

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The findings show the additional paragraph in the election story could significantly improve the trustworthiness of the story for those who most emphasize authority, purity, and loyalty. Among those who read the standard version of the election story (i.e., the version without the additional paragraph) and were asked about the additional paragraph later in the survey, those who most emphasize authority, purity, and loyalty are more likely to say the standard story would have been more trustworthy with the added paragraph than those who least emphasize each value. The different versions of the story did not show significant difference in trustworthiness among those who most and least emphasize care (56% versus 56%) or fairness (54% versus 57%).

Additional Paragraph in Revised Version of Election Story Improves Trustworthiness.

Question: Do you think the news story would have been more trustworthy, less trustworthy, or it would have made no difference if it included the following information?
Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18+ nationwide.
* Refers to people whose value of each was in the top or bottom quartiles among all respondents.

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SECTION V. CLUSTER ANALYSIS

FOUR GROUPS OF AMERICANS BASED ON THEIR RESPONSES TO MORAL AND JOURNALISTIC VALUES

Despite partisan differences, Americans' attitudes about journalism are more complicated than a simple Democrat versus Republican divide. To better understand how values relate to views of the news media, this study used a "k-means cluster analysis," a statistical technique that groups people together based on their answers—in this case, their moral values and views toward the journalism values. If you start with people's moral principles and their reaction to core journalistic values—rather than their politics—you find different dividing lines about how Americans think about the media than you would if you use the traditional way researchers look at trust by party identification and ideological leaning.

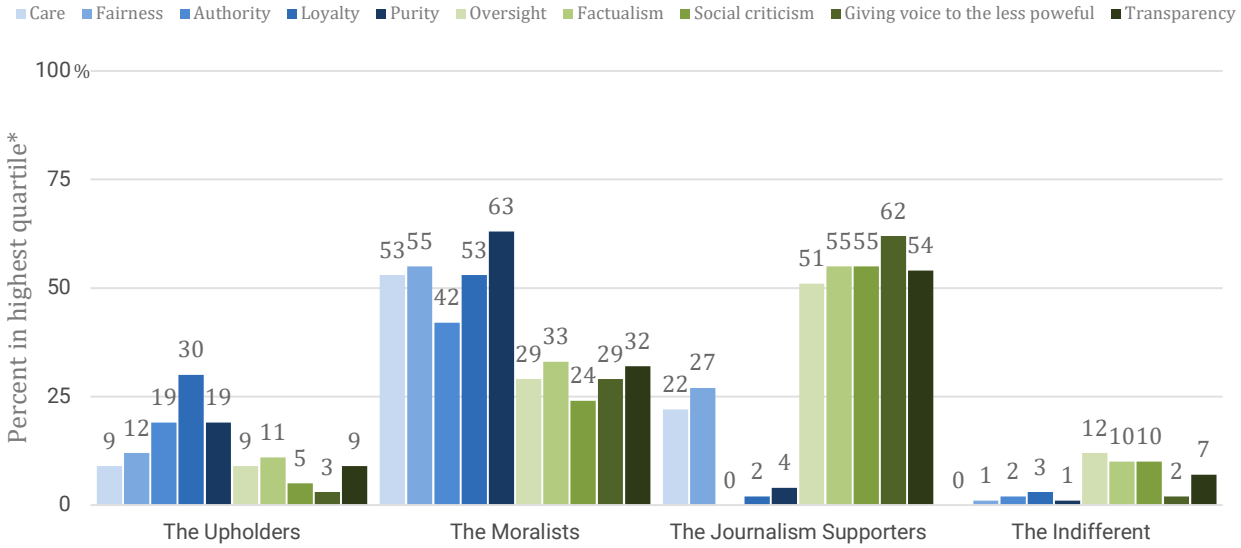
The k-means cluster analysis groups people by comparing their average scores to the five moral foundation values and the five journalism values. People with similar scores across the 10 values are grouped together, and the clusters are identified independently from people's political views or demographic characteristics. These four clusters capture a more nuanced perspective of values than the traditional left-right continuum by picking up how Americans emphasize different moral values and how that interacts with their views of journalism principles.

With this clustering approach, people divide into four distinct groups described for the purposes of this report as: 1) Upholders, 2) Moralists, 3) Journalism Supporters, and 4) the Indifferent. Here is a thumbnail sketch of each group.

Clusters are based on respondents' average moral and journalism values scores.

The four clusters of Americans based on their attitudes toward moral and journalism values	
The Upholders *(35% of Americans)* • ***Strong emphasis*** *on moral values like* ***authority*** *and* ***loyalty****.* • ***Less support for journalism values,*** *yet follows news frequently.* • *The group has more* ***conservatives*** *than other clusters.*	**The Moralists** *(23% of Americans)* • ***Strong support for both*** *moral and journalism values.* • *Most* ***actively seek*** *out news and have positive views toward the media.* • *The group is older than other clusters.*
The Journalism Supporters *(20% of Americans)* • ***High importance*** *on moral values like* ***care*** *and* ***fairness****.* • ***Strongest support of the five journalism values*** *amoug the other groups.* • *Only cluster made up primarily of* ***one political party****.*	**The Indifferent** *(21% of Americans)* • ***More skeptical*** *group about moral and journalism values.* • ***Few trust*** *the media or believe it is accurate..* • *The group features a* ***partisan mix*** *with the highest percent of* ***moderates****.*

Americans Divide into Four Groups Depending on How Much They Value Journalism and Moral Values.



Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18+ nationwide. * Refers to people whose value of each was in the top quartile among all respondents.

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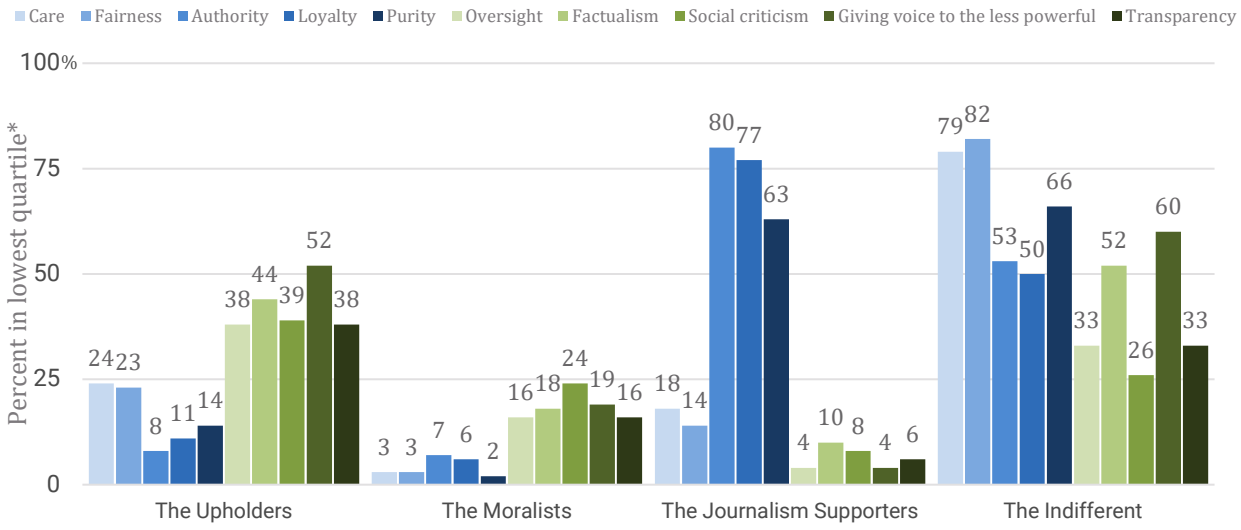
Americans Divide into Four Groups Depending on How Little They Value Journalism and Moral Values.



Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18+ older nationwide. * Refers to people whose value of each was in the bottom quartile among all respondents.

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The first group, Upholders, cares strongly about many moral values, but especially loyalty, authority, and purity, or in other words, the values that most speak to respect for leaders, groups, and tradition. They do not place much importance on the core values of journalism, which taken together with their moral values may be read as skepticism about journalism's goals. Even so, they don't avoid news. They often follow the news frequently, even actively seeking it out—and many find the news they get accurate. Yet they tend to distrust the media in general, in line with their unenthusiastic attitudes toward journalism's values.

The second group, Moralists, registers highly on all five moral foundation values. Yet unlike the Upholders, Moralists also view journalism values positively. Their strong emphasis on moral and journalism values alike distinguishes them from the other groups we identified. The majority of moralists also tend to believe the news media are trustworthy and accurate, but their support for journalism is by no means unqualified. Only 2 in 10 believe the press cares about people like them or is moral.[15]

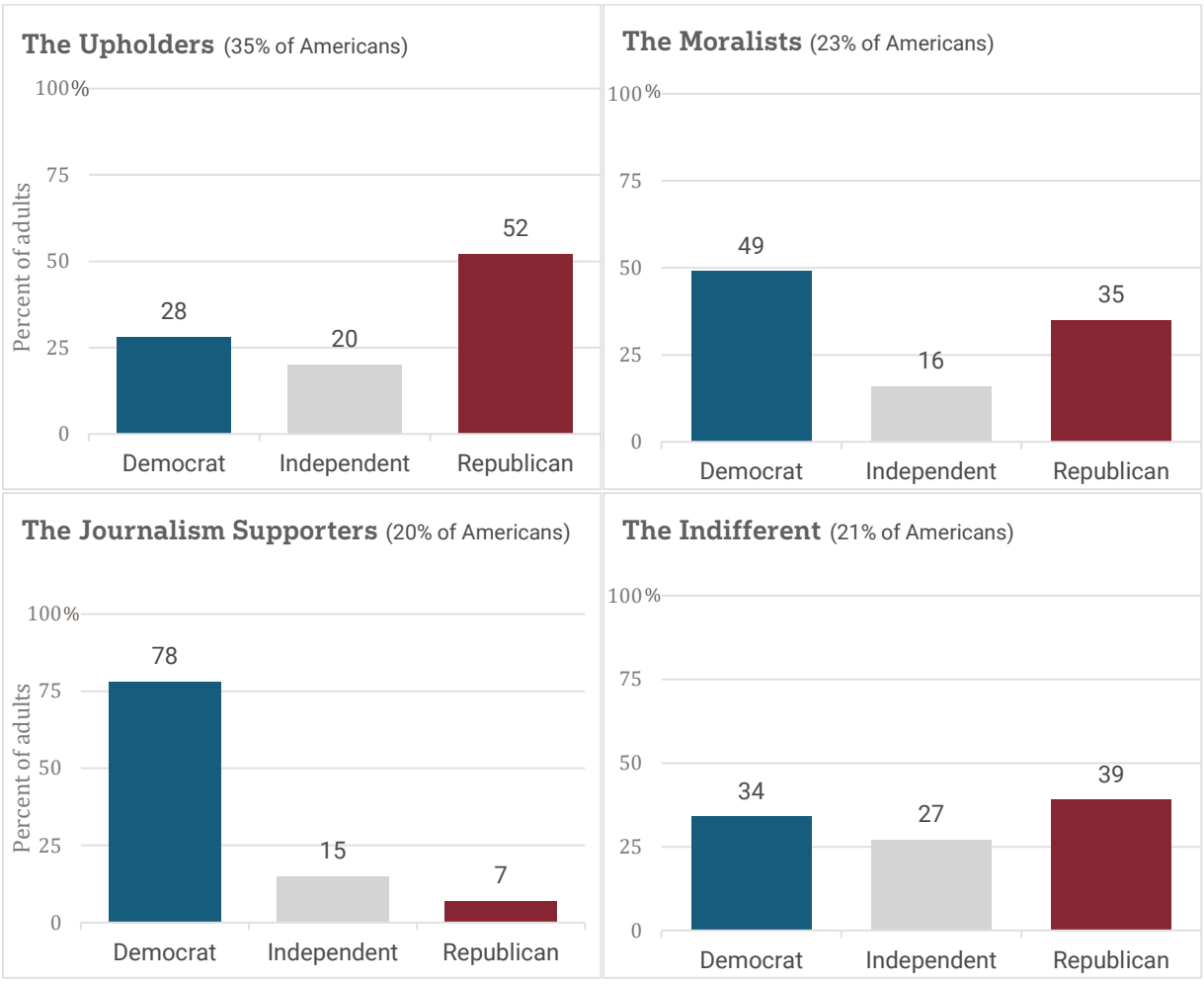
The third group, Journalism Supporters, most strongly believes in the journalistic values we tested and has the most positive views of the news media in general. They also tend to place less emphasis than the other groups on three of the five moral foundational values—authority, loyalty, and purity. What distinguishes this group, indeed, is the high importance they put on two other of the five moral foundational values. They place the highest value on caring for others and the idea that society should be fair to everyone. Interestingly, these two moral values strongly correlate to the five journalism values and suggest that the five journalism values have an inherent closeness to these two moral values in particular. This is both illuminating and perhaps also limiting, and helps unlock one of the problems journalists face. It is interesting to note that the Journalism Supporters group is also the smallest of the four clusters. Only about one in five people fit here.

The fourth group, Indifferent, is comprised of people who are more lukewarm in their embrace of any values we tested. Like Upholders, the Indifferent are skeptical about the journalism values we probed. But unlike Upholders, the Indifferent tend to be ambivalent about the five foundational moral values as well, or evince less support for any of them. They may be skeptical in general. Few in this group trust the media or believe it is accurate, adding to the challenge journalists will have in reaching them.

What is interesting is that these groups do not break strictly along partisan or demographic lines. For instance, Moralists, who tend to have some but not unqualified trust in the media, include a large number of people who identify as politically conservative as well as many Democrats and people of color. Meanwhile, Upholders include a mix of political moderates and conservatives as well as people with varying levels of education. And Journalism Supporters, the group most trusting of the press, make up the most educated and youngest of the groups. While many are Democrats, a large proportion—roughly a third—describe themselves as politically moderate. The Indifferent are very politically diverse with a mix of Democrats, Republicans, and independents.

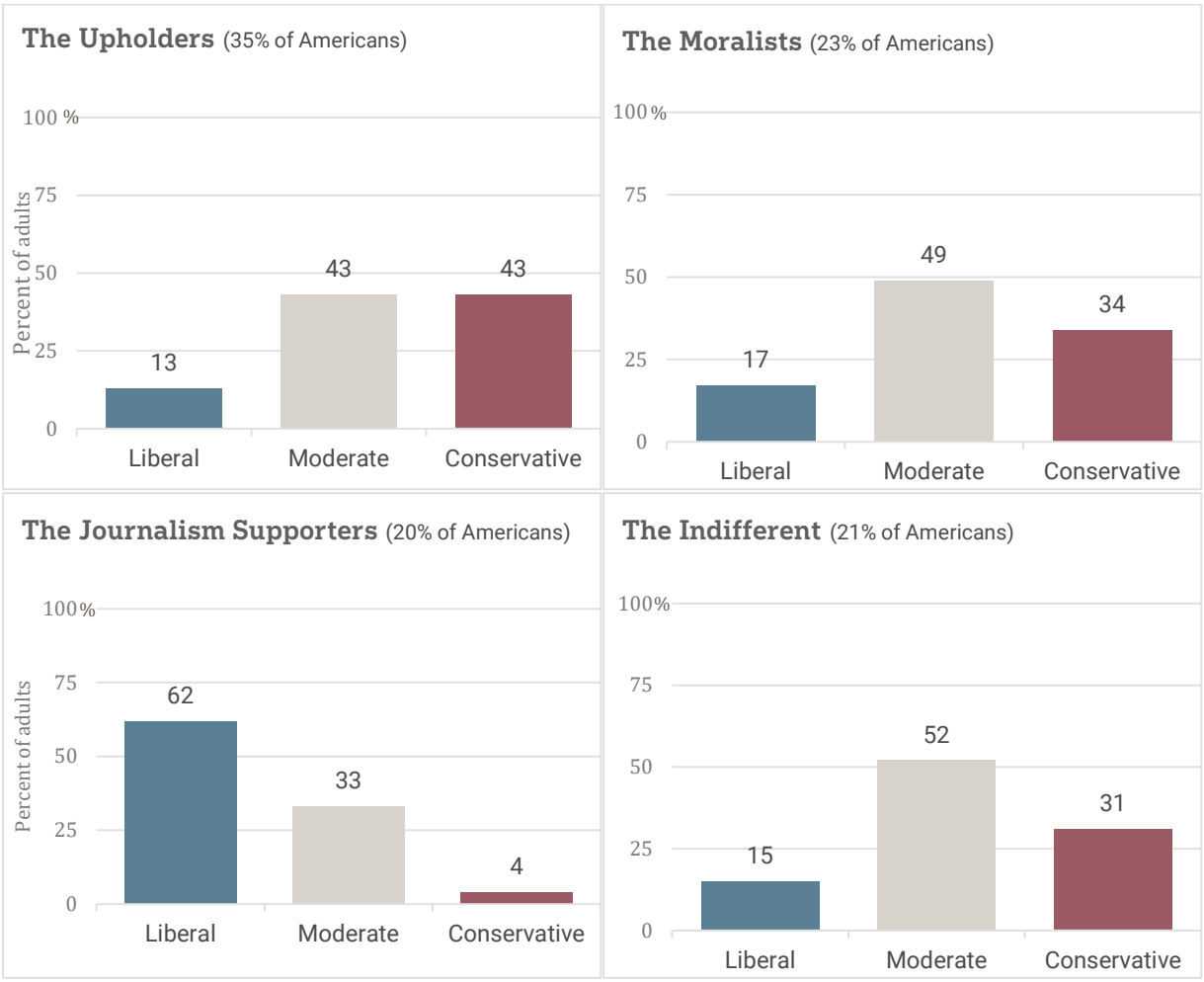
[15] A New Way of Looking at Trust in Media: Do Americans Share Journalism's Core Values Topline: ADD LINK

Relationships between Moral and Journalism Values Go Beyond Partisan Lines.



Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

Relationships between Moral and Journalism Values Do Not Break Along Ideology.



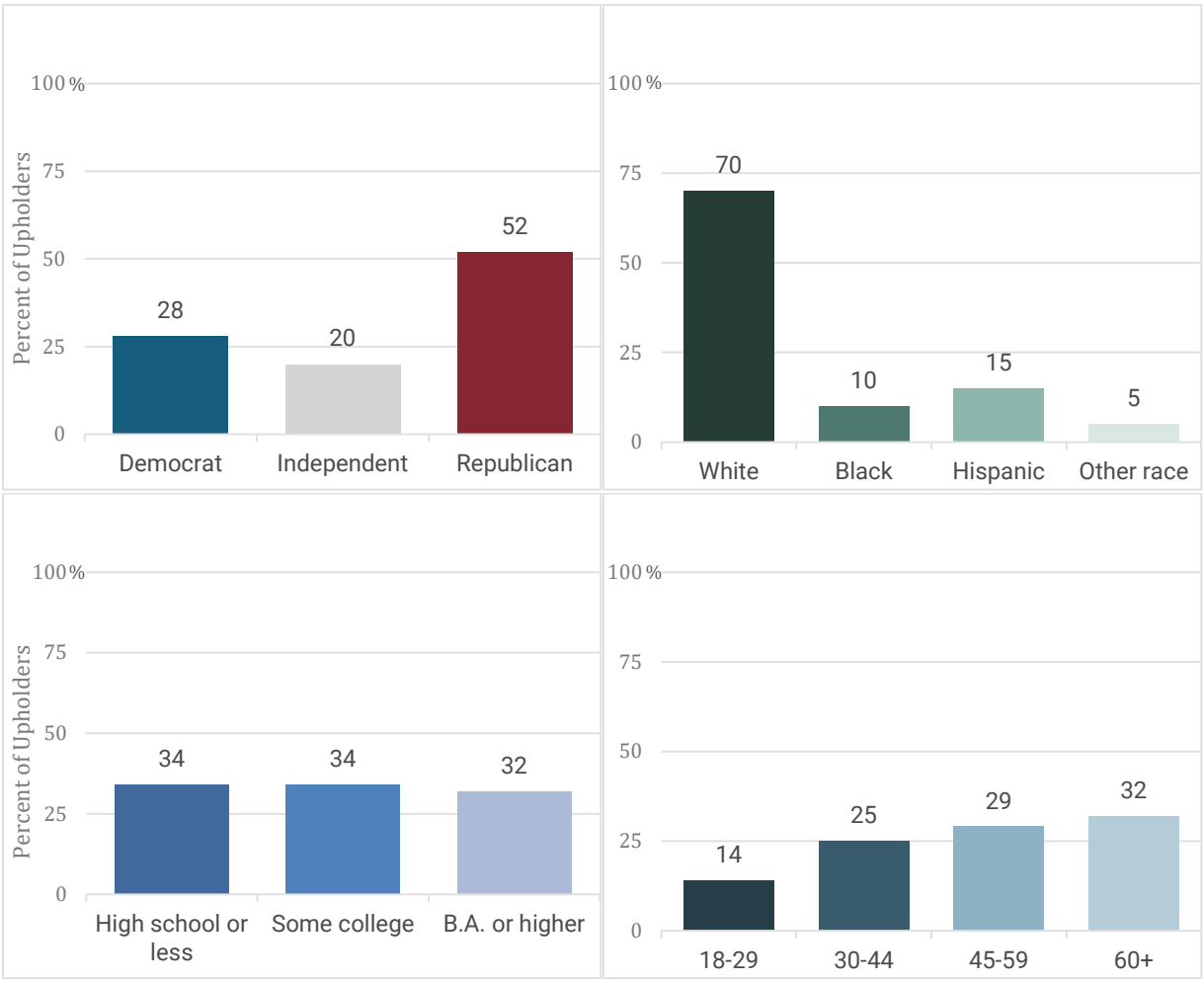
Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

CLUSTER 1: THE UPHOLDERS (35% OF THE POPULATION)

The Upholders include many people who put a high value on loyalty and authority. At the same time, they also tend to place less importance than most other people on the five key journalism values. Yet these Upholders are also highly engaged news consumers. They tend to follow a good deal of news, to actively seek it out, and even to consider the news they get accurate. But they do not have much confidence in the news media to tell them the truth or to protect democracy. And despite the perception that distrust of the news is a partisan divide, only about half of Upholders identify as Republicans, and nearly half describe themselves as political moderates.

Demographically, the group is made up mostly of Americans age 30 or older (86%) and a strong majority (70%) are white. Many attend religious services more often than others. Educationally, they are evenly split; about a third of the group has a high school diploma or less, a third some college, and the remaining have a college degree.

Who Are the Upholders?



Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

Of the five moral foundational values, Upholders place the most value on loyalty with 30% in the highest quartile, followed by authority (19%) and purity (19%). But they put relatively lower importance on two other moral values, care and fairness (9% and 12%). Upholders are unlikely to be among those who most strongly endorse journalism values. Only 9% are in the top quartile on oversight, 5% on social criticism, and 3% on giving a voice to the less powerful.

Upholders are evenly split ideologically between those who identify as moderate (43%) or conservative (43%). Thirteen percent describe themselves as liberal. But even the Upholders do not line up in a strictly partisan way. While about half are Republicans, Democrats still comprise 28% of the group. Independents make up 20%.

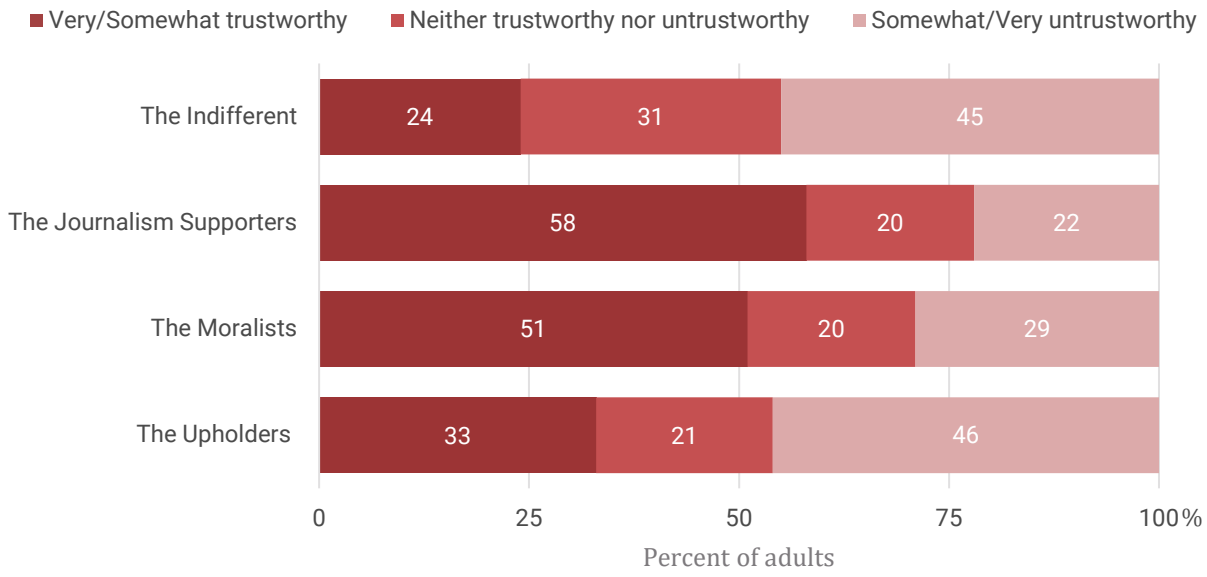
These results suggest that the conclusion of traditional trust data—that the news media has a Republican problem—is too simplistic. Looking at trust through the lens of moral and journalistic values, this group of highly engaged but skeptical news consumers place less emphasis on some of the values journalists elevate as important and include political independents and Democrats who are wary of the news media as well.

A relatively high percentage of Upholders are frequent church goers; 23% attend religious services once a week or more. A majority of Upholders are white (70%), but 1 in 10 are African American (10%); more than that (15%) are Hispanic. Upholders also skew older than most other clusters. A third (32%) are 60 years old and older.

Along with the lack of emphasis Upholders place on some core journalism values, they also tend to have negative views of the media. Only one in three (33%) say the news is even somewhat trustworthy. They also don't think that journalists admit their mistakes; more than two-thirds of Upholders (69%) think journalists try to cover up their mistakes. And only 20% say journalists protect democracy, versus 41% who think journalists hurt democracy.

But these are people who are interested in news. And while they are distrustful of the news media, they navigate through their distrust.[16] Fully 60% of this group says the media is at least somewhat accurate; 61% say they actively seek out news. Eighty-six percent say they follow news at least daily. In other words, this is a group of people who are highly skeptical of the news media but they rely on news. The size of this group (the largest of the four clusters), their inclination to follow the news in spite of being skeptical of it, and the findings in the previous experiment section (see SECTION IV) makes them an attractive group for the media to reach.

The Upholders Are More Likely to Say News Is Untrustworthy than Other Three Groups.



Question: Next, how trustworthy do you think the news media in general is?
Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18+ nationwide.

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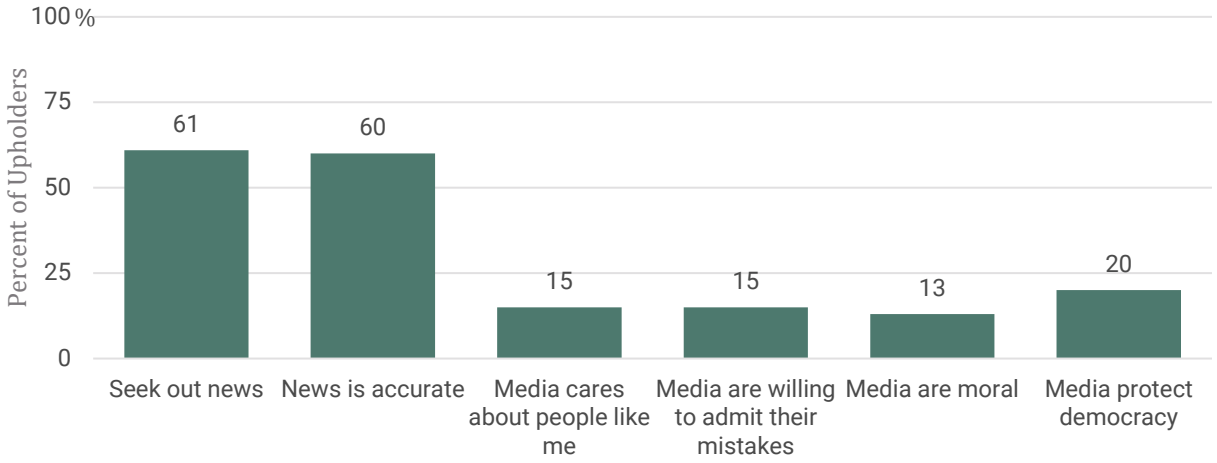
[16] https://apnorc.org/projects/my-media-versus-the-media-trust-in-news-depends-on-which-news-media-you-mean/.

Majority of Upholders Actively Seek Out News and Think News Is Accurate.



Question: Choose the statement that best describes you, even if it is not exactly right. In general…
Would you say the news from the media is…?
Here is a pair of opposite phrases. Which phrase do you feel better describes news media? [Care about people like me/don't care about people like me/neither applies].
[Are willing to admit their mistakes/try to cover up their mistakes/neither applies].
[Are moral/Are immoral/neither applies].
[Protect Democracy/hurt democracy/neither applies].
Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18+ nationwide.

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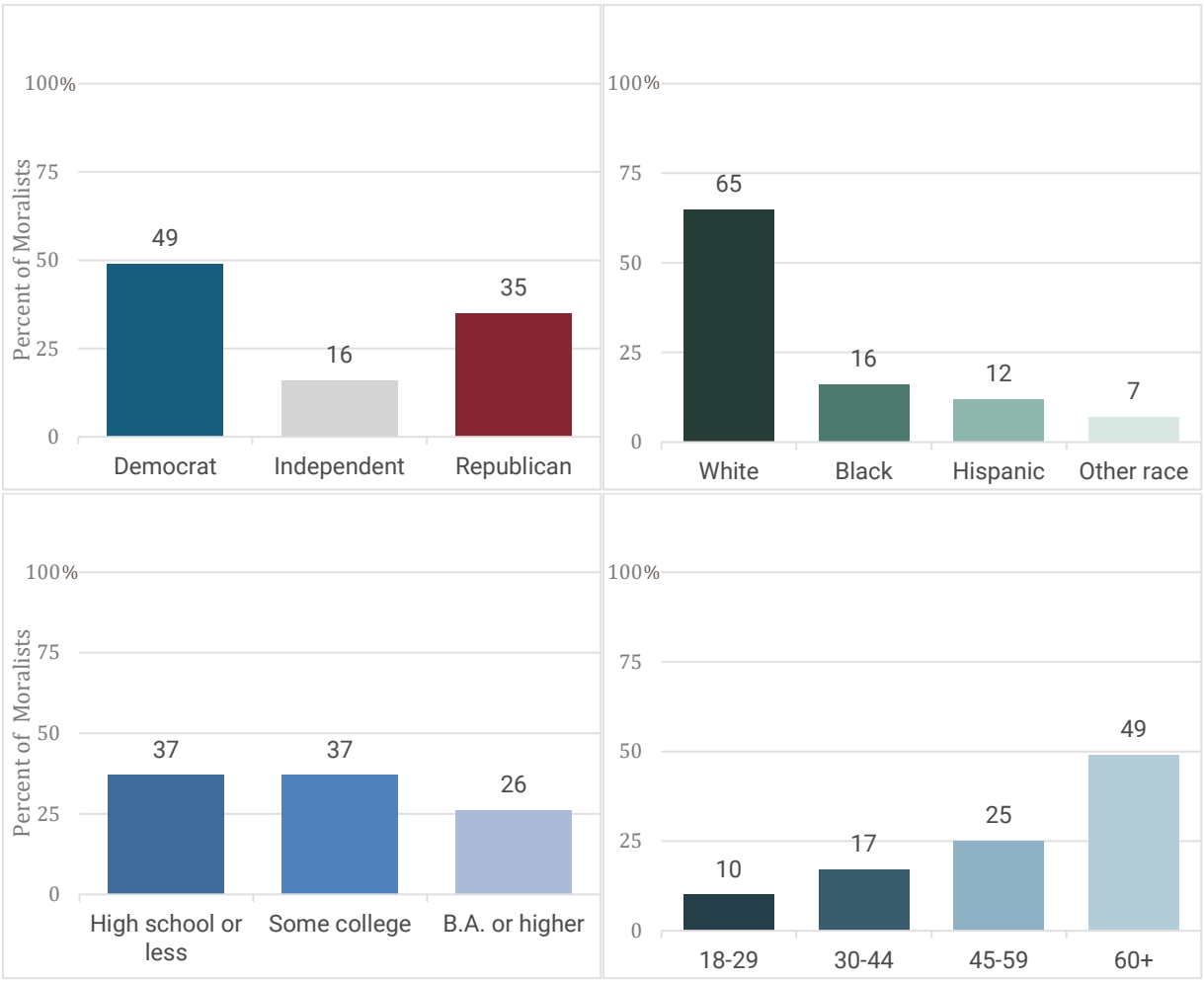
CLUSTER 2: THE MORALISTS (23% OF THE POPULATION)

The Moralists group is comprised of those who tend to strongly emphasize all five moral foundation values. This group also holds journalism values in fairly high regard, particularly factualism and transparency, but their support is not unqualified. They are a mix of partisans and moderates, and are the most racially diverse. In all, 65% are white. Many Moralists are older adults (about half are 60 or older); they have fewer college graduates than other groups (26%). Most Moralists actively seek out news and many tend to believe the news media is trustworthy, accurate, and protects democracy.

Who Are the Moralists?



Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

Moralists tend to register high on most of the moral values, more so than Upholders. More than half of Moralists are among the top 25% who place the most importance on four different moral values—care (53%), fairness (55%), loyalty (53%), and purity (63%). The only one missing here is authority.

Differing from Upholders, they also place weight on journalism values. But they gravitate more strongly toward some more than others. They connect most strongly to factualism and transparency (33% most emphasize and 32% most emphasize, respectively). They score lowest on social criticism and giving voice to the less powerful (24% and 29% most emphasize each value).

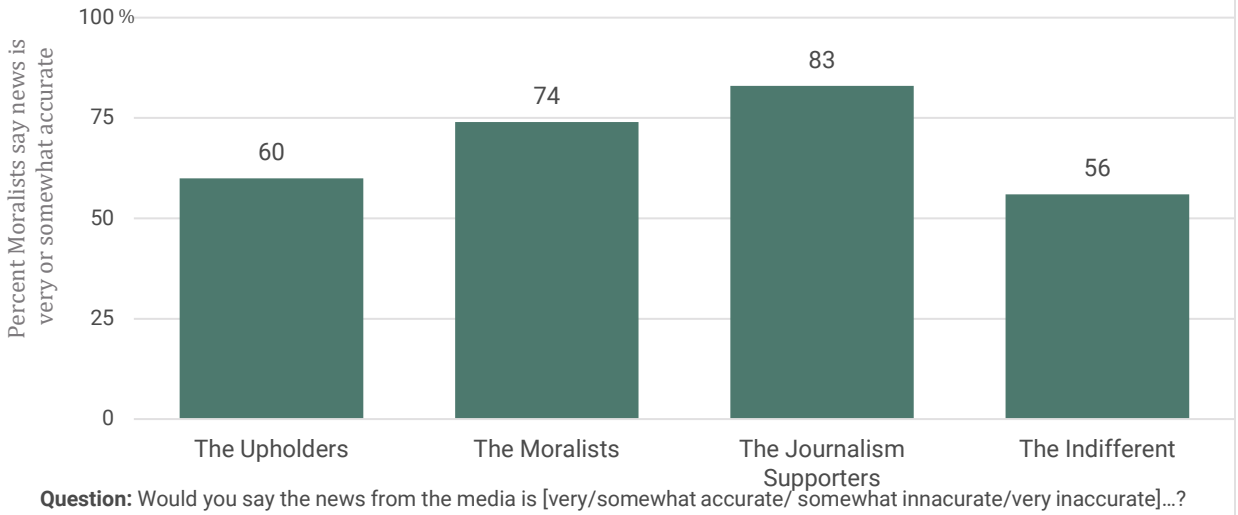
Moralists are a political mix. About half identify as political moderates, about 3 in 10 (34%) as conservatives, and just under 2 in 10 (17%) as liberals. By party identification, there is a similar mix: 49% are Democrats, 35% Republicans, and 16% independents.

The Moralists group is older than other clusters. Nearly half are age 60 and older. The group also has a higher percentage of Black Americans (16%) than other clusters. The Moralists consist of more women (58%) than men (42%). This group has the least amount of college graduates compared to the other groups.

If journalists were looking for a way to broaden the appeal across party and ideology, this group would be an important place to start. Indeed, looking at these data together, Moralists share many strong moral tendencies and come from a wide variety of backgrounds—politically, racially, ethnically, and educationally. Importantly, they register some support for journalism values, more than Upholders, but it is not enthusiastic support.

Nonetheless, most Moralists seek out news and have a relatively positive view of the news they follow. About three-quarters say they actively seek out news, which is more than any other cluster. Half say that the news is trustworthy and 74% perceive the news as accurate. In addition, 42% say it is enjoyable to follow news, while fewer say the media is moral (22%), protects democracy (35%), and admits its mistakes (28%). While Moralists are not as positive about news as the Journalism Supporters, they are significantly more likely to view the media as accurate (74%) and trustworthy (51%) than either Upholders or The Indifferent. Thus, Moralists engage with news quite a bit and even have a positive attitude about a lot of it, yet it is also not without critique.

A Majority of Moralists Think News Is Accurate.



Question: Would you say the news from the media is [very/somewhat accurate/ somewhat innacurate/very inaccurate]…?
Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18+ nationwide.

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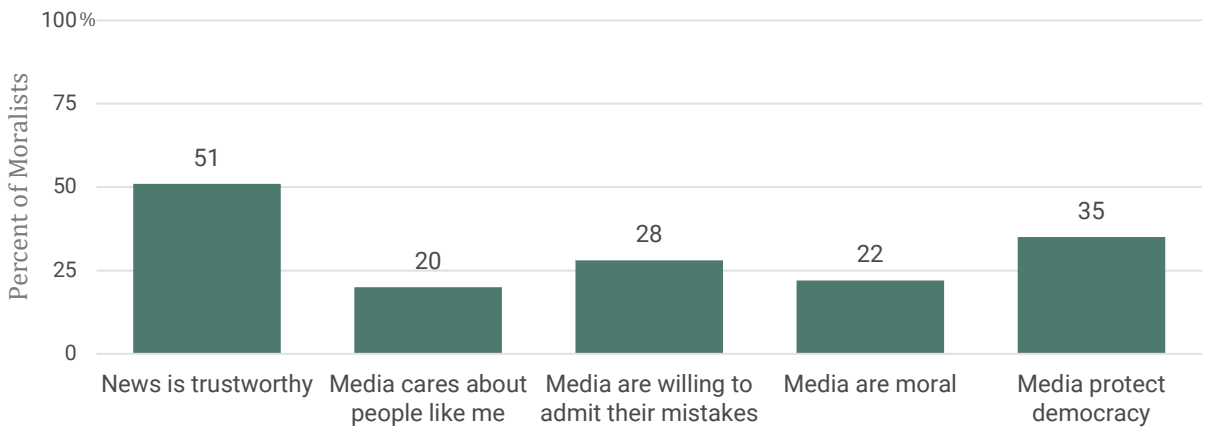
Most Moralists Think News Is Trustworthy.



Question: Next, how trustworthy do you think the news media in general is?
Here is a pair of opposite phrases. Which phrase do you feel better describes news media? [Care about people like me/don't care about people like me/neither applies].
[Are willing to admit their mistakes/try to cover up their mistakes/neither applies].
[Are moral/Are immoral/neither applies].
[Protect Democracy/hurt democracy/neither applies].
Source: AP-NOAP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18+ nationwide.

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CLUSTER 3: THE JOURNALISM SUPPORTERS (20% OF THE POPULATION)

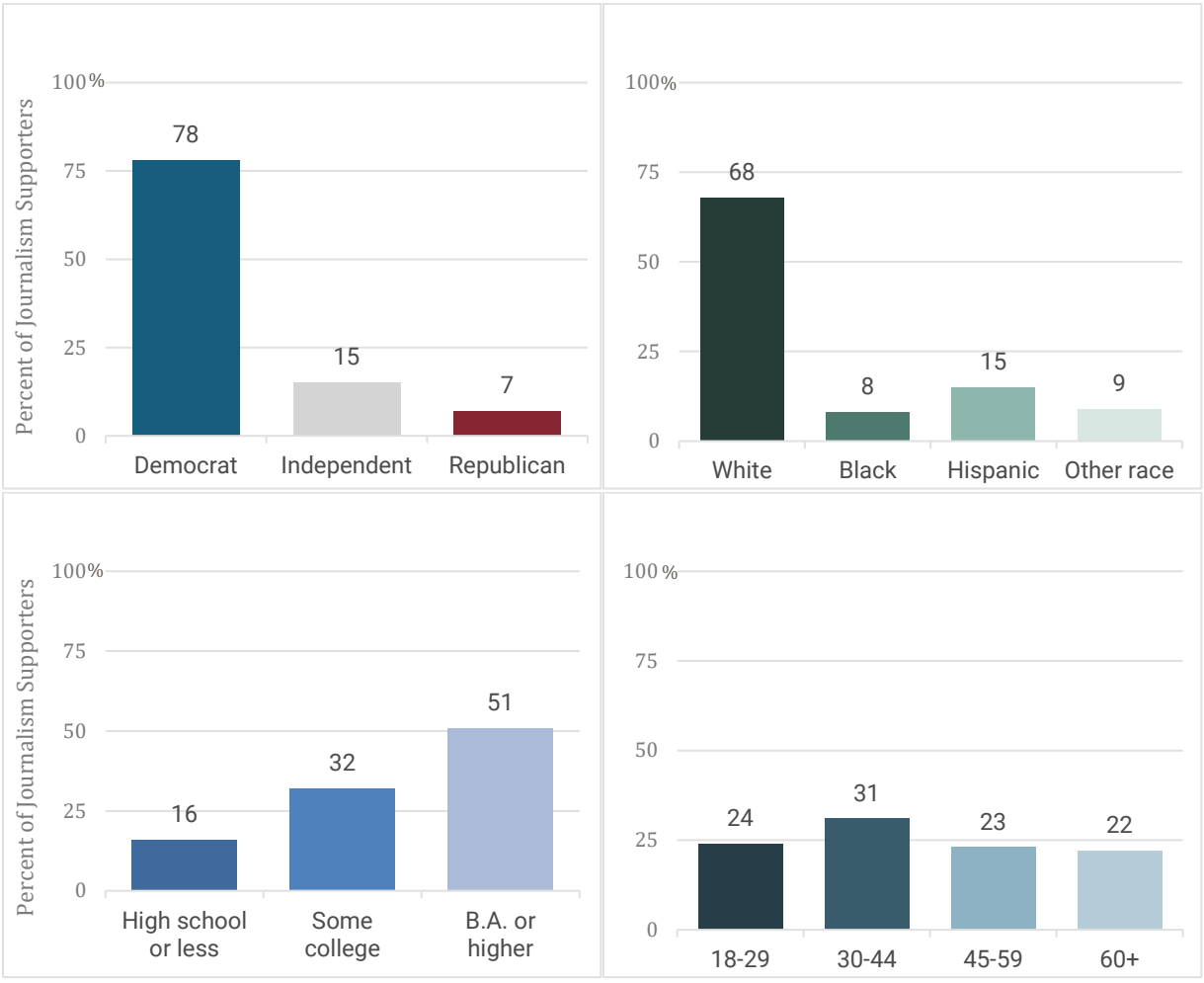
Journalism Supporters, as their name suggests, tend to strongly believe in the five journalistic values of oversight, factualism, transparency, social criticism, and giving voice to the less powerful. They differ from other clusters in the moral values they're drawn to: Americans in this group are much more likely to strongly value care and fairness than they do authority, loyalty, and purity. Notably, more than three-quarters of the Journalism Supporters are Democrats, and many in this group are younger and have college degrees. And this group has more positive views of the media than the other three groups. Most of them believe the media is accurate. Of the many different uses for news, this group believes it is most important to be informed and understand the facts. They are less likely than the Moralists to say the main reason they use news is because it's enjoyable or shares their view.

Of all clusters, this group most strongly supports the journalism values we tested. A majority of them are in the highest quartile believing that the press should be a watchdog over those in power (51%), that more facts are usually better (55%), that society should be as transparent as possible (54%), and that the best way to solve problems is to put a spotlight on them (55%). And 62% of these people rank in the top category for supporting the idea that the press should give a voice to those who are less powerful.

The problem for the press is that this group is relatively small. Only 20% of those surveyed fall into the category of Journalism Supporters. And no other cluster comes close to echoing such strong support for what journalists might imagine are fundamental principles that everyone would agree on. The next closest group in registering support for these journalistic notions is Moralists, though they only register close to half the same level of support.

Journalism Supporters also differ by their most common moral values and the strength of their prominence. The values of care and fairness are of significant importance to Journalism Supporters, while other moral values are far weaker than Upholders' or Moralists' believe. While around a quarter of Journalism Supporters are among those who most value care or fairness, less than 5% are among those who most emphasize loyalty, authority, or purity.

Who Are the Journalism Supporters?



Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

The Journalism Supporters make up the only cluster consisting primarily of one political party: it is 78% Democrats and only 7% Republicans. Sixty-two percent are also self-described liberals. The political and ideological make-up of Journalism Supporters is consistent with both the moral foundation literature finding that Democrats place more importance on care and fairness and media studies showing Democrats have more trust in news.

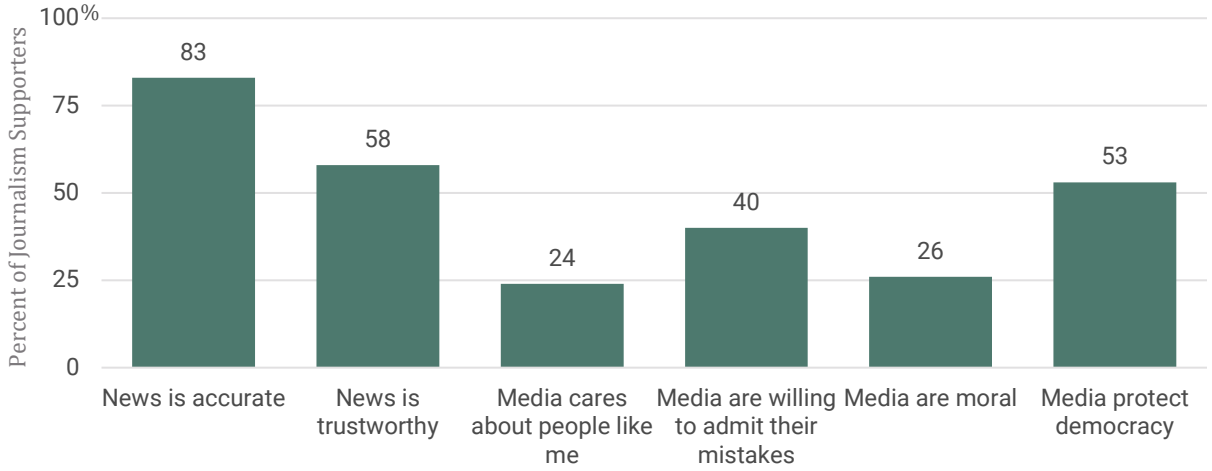
Journalism Supporters also tend to be more educated and younger than other groups. This is the most educated cluster. A majority hold a college degree. Journalism Supporters are also the youngest cluster. Fully a quarter (24%) are under age 30. This group is also the least religious. Forty-eight percent of Journalism Supporters say they never attend religious services compared with 23% of both Upholders and Moralists.

Put another way, this group shares many qualities that partisan critics might use to describe or stereotype journalists. It is mostly liberal, mostly white, and with educational experiences that differ from many Americans.

But as the clusters show, there are Democrats and liberals across all four groups with varied demographics by race and ethnicity. The same is true of education.

As one might expect, Journalism Supporters tend to follow a lot of news (79% follow news more than daily), and they tend to have a relatively positive view of the news. Eighty-three percent of this group perceive the news as accurate and 58% trust the news. Moreover, many feel the media is driven by good impulses. Those in this group are much more likely than those in other groups to say the media is moral (26%).

Journalism Supporters Have the Most Positive View of the Media across All Groups.



Question: Would you say the news from the media is…?
Here is a pair of opposite phrases. Which phrase do you feel better describes news media? [Care about people like me/don't care about people like me/neither applies].
[Are willing to admit their mistakes/try to cover up their mistakes/neither applies].
[Are moral/Are immoral/neither applies].
[Protect Democracy/hurt democracy/neither applies].
Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18+ nationwide.

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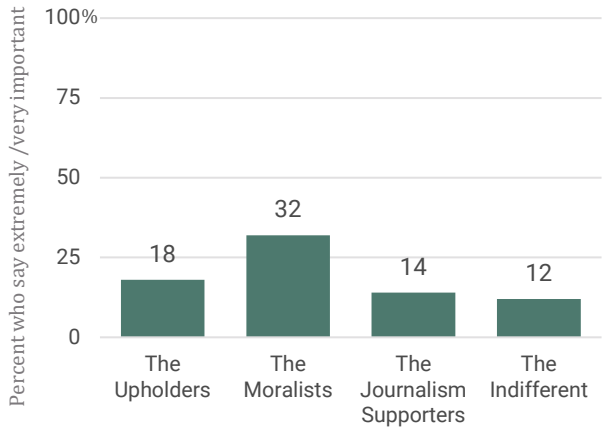
Although the group seeks out a lot of news, it isn't important to them that they enjoy following it. Journalism Supporters report quality coverage (72%) and informative news (78%) being the main reason they seek out news coverage. Only 23% say that finding the news enjoyable is an important reason why they follow it. In addition, just 14% say that news sharing their views is an important reason they follow news despite many believing the news is accurate. Yet again, they are the strongest supporters of core journalism values that drive most journalism.

Journalism Supporters do not care about the media sharing their point of view.



Question: People use news for many reasons. When it comes to the biggest reasons you use news, how important to you is it that the news [share the views of people like me]?
Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18+ nationwide.

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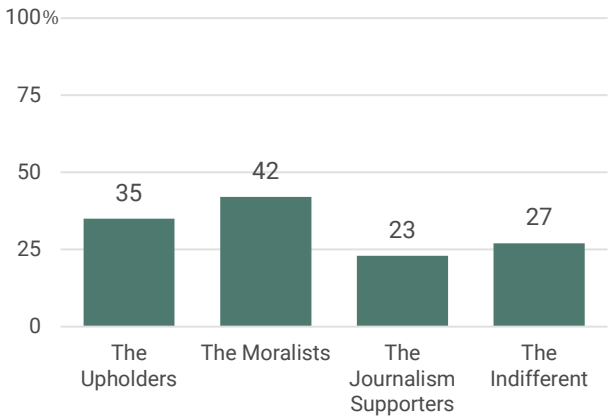
Journalism Supporters do not care about whether the news is enjoyable.



Question: People use news for many reasons. When it comes to the biggest reasons you use news, how important to you is it that the news [are enjoyable]?
Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18+ nationwide.

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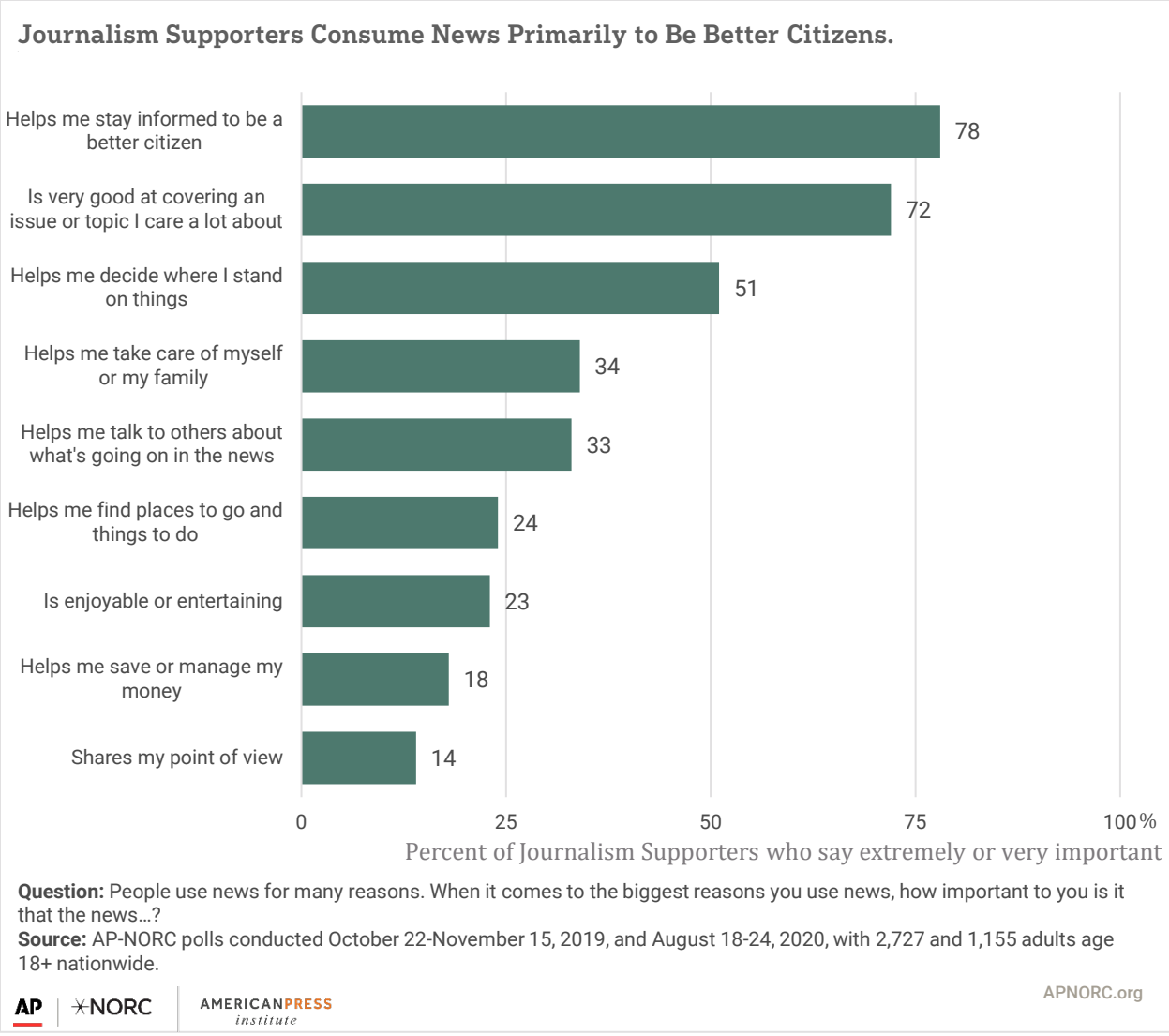


CLUSTER 4: THE INDIFFERENT (21% OF THE POPULATION)

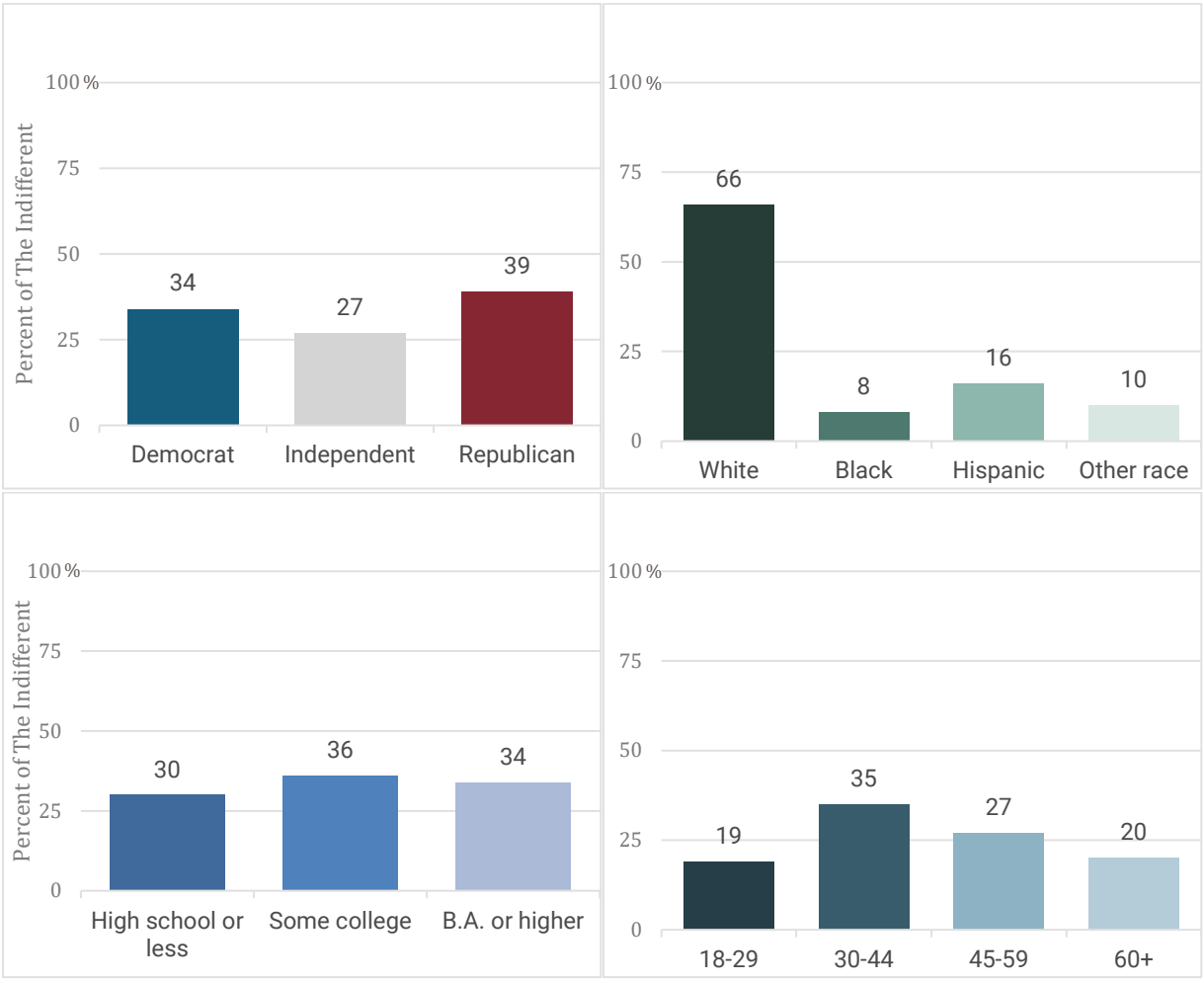
The Indifferent tend to not place a lot of importance on any of the moral foundations. Nor do they resonate strongly with the core journalism values. People in this group tend to follow news less than most. They also are less likely to pay for news than those in other clusters. Few in this group trust the media or believe it is accurate.

Yet, it would be a mistake to view this group in purely political terms. The Indifferent is a mix of Republicans, Democrats, and independents, and the majority describe themselves as political moderates. The group is racially and educationally diverse. It is also relatively younger than other groups.

Among the Indifferent, few people strongly endorse any of the moral foundation values. In trying to understand this, it may be easier to register how many fall into the lowest group or quartile in support of certain ideas, rather than identifying what they do feel strongly about. As an example, fully 8 in 10 of the Indifferent (82%) fall into the lowest category when it comes to valuing the idea that society should be fair; Nearly 8 in 10 (79%) fall into the lowest category when it comes to thinking that it is important to care for the less fortunate.

The same low resonance is found in their attitudes toward what journalists feel their mission is. Six in 10 of the indifferent (60%) fall in the lowest rank of those who consider it important to give a voice to the less powerful. And more than 5 in 10 fall in the lowest rank of those who believe that more facts are always better to get closer to the truth about something (52%).

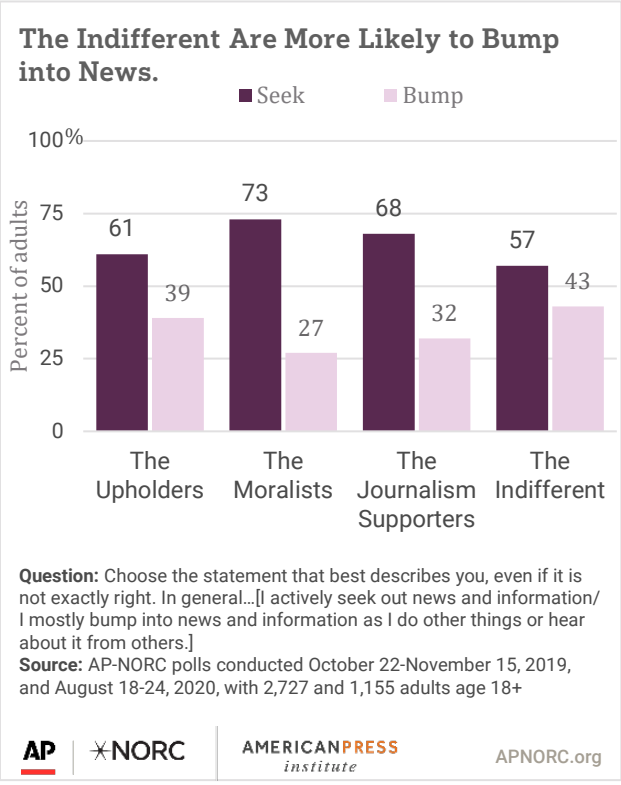
Who Are the Indifferent?

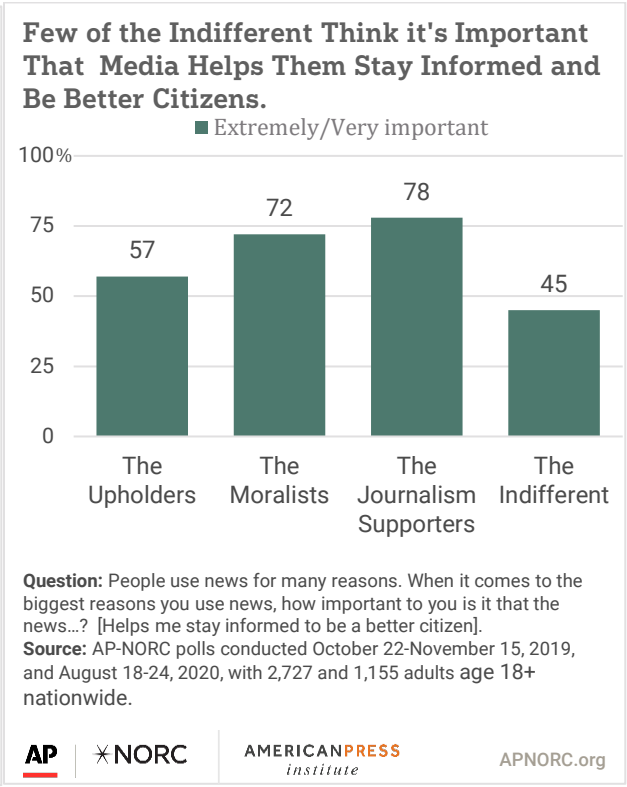


Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

The Indifferent are demographically and politically diverse. Indeed, the group is similar to the overall makeup of Americans when it comes to factors such as age, religious attendance, and education. For example, the group features a mix of education levels, with 34% holding a college degree or more, 36% with some college, and 30% with only a high school education or less. This group features a mix of Republicans (39%), Democrats (34%), and independents (27%), and it has the highest percent of those who identify as political moderates (52%).

The Indifferent tend to follow news less frequently than other groups. About 1 in 5 follow the news less than once a day, and 43% bump into the news instead of actively seeking it out. They are also the least likely of the clusters to pay for news (79%). The indifferent are also the least likely to find staying informed and being better citizens an important reason to follow news.

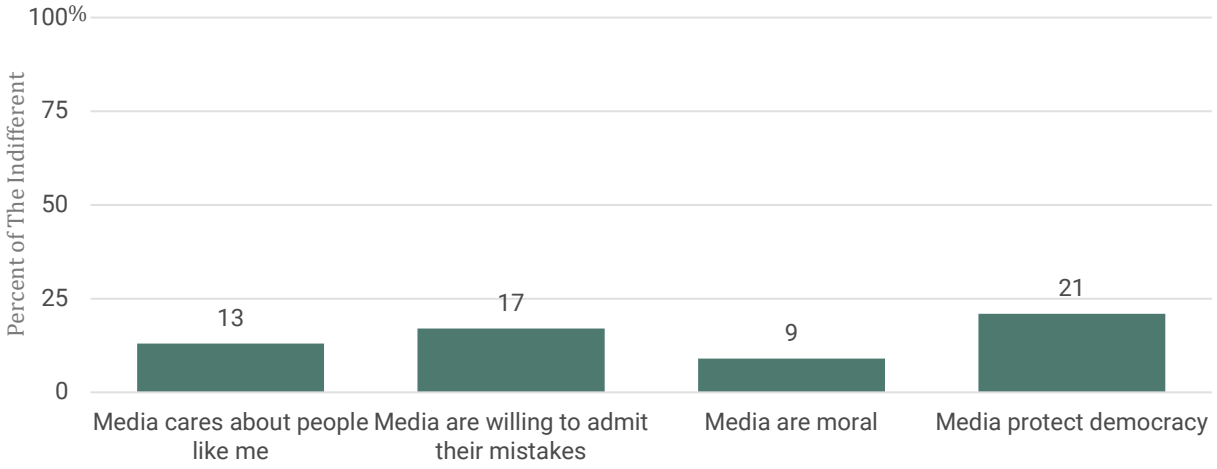




The Indifferent are also highly skeptical about the media, with just 24% saying the media is trustworthy, 56% reporting the media is accurate, and 21% believing that the media protects democracy.

This group will also likely be the hardest for journalists to reach. The Indifferent tend to have negative views about the media. But unlike Upholders or Moralists, it is unlikely that framing stories to appeal to a broader range of moral values would improve their trust in news.

The Indifferent Are Highly Skeptical about the Media.



Question: Here is a pair of opposite phrases. Which phrase do you feel better describes news media?
Here is a pair of opposite phrases. Which phrase do you feel better describes news media? [Care about people like me/don't care about people like me/neither applies].
[Are willing to admit their mistakes/try to cover up their mistakes/neither applies].
[Are moral/Are immoral/neither applies].
[Protect Democracy/hurt democracy/neither applies].
Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18+ nationwide.

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SECTION VI. HOW NEWS ORGANIZATIONS CAN BROADEN THEIR MESSAGING

While the majority of our research looked at how moral foundations intersect with perceptions of core journalistic concepts and content, we also wanted to test how people's values influence how they perceive the marketing messages that encourage them to pay or donate for news.

The study found a strong correlation between people's moral instincts and what kind of messaging about media they found persuasive. Among other things, the findings suggest news organizations that hitch their subscription pitches only to standard messages, such as the importance of facts and democracy, or do not think critically about them may be missing opportunities to appeal to and get support from varied audiences.

HOW MORAL VALUES INTERSECT WITH READER REVENUE APPEALS

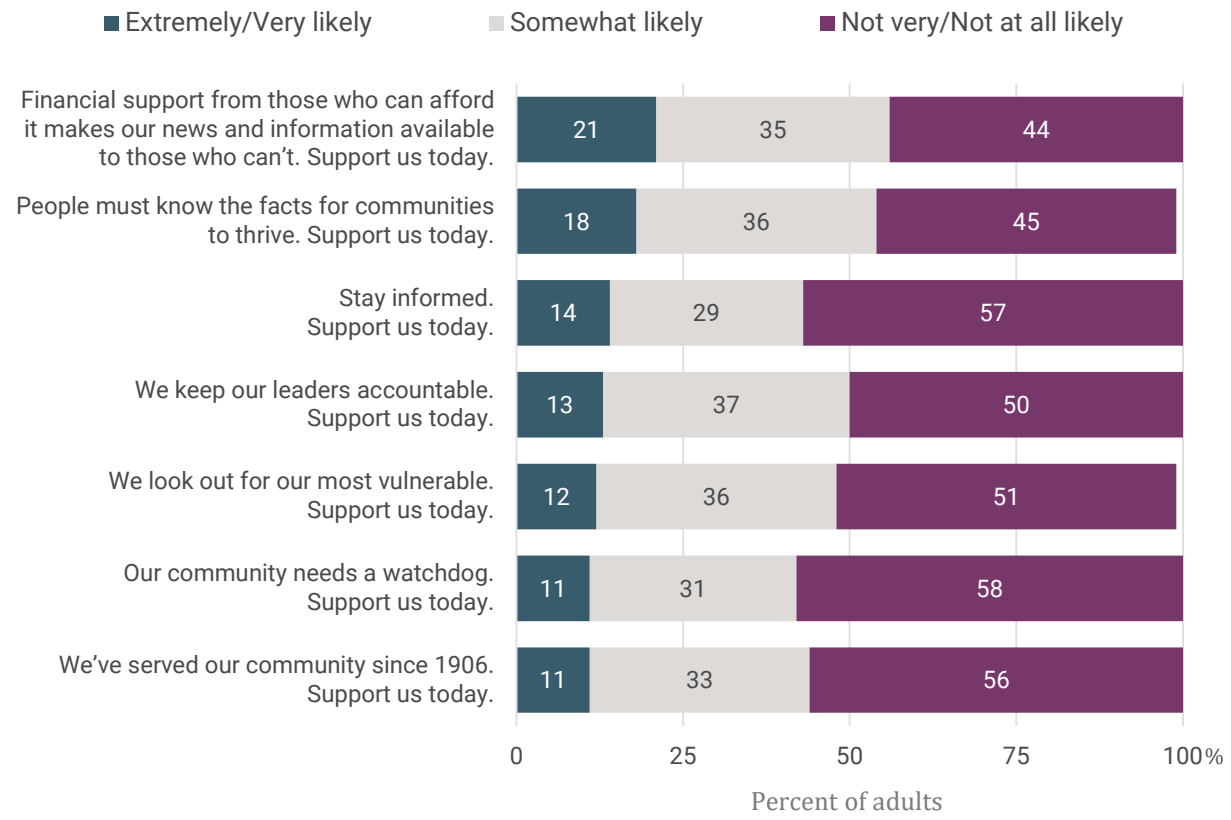
To test this idea, the second phase of the study included different messages asking respondents to support a local news organization to see if certain messages about journalism were more appealing to people, depending on which moral foundational instincts they found most compelling.

The messages were inspired by a range of marketing angles in the real world. For the purposes of this inquiry, we designed pitches that appealed to different moral values and some that addressed different journalistic values.

Those messages included:

- We keep our leaders accountable. Support us today.
- We've served our community since 1906. Support us today.
- We look out for our most vulnerable. Support us today.
- Financial support from those who can afford it makes our news and information available to those who can't. Support us today.
- Our community needs a watchdog. Support us today.
- People must know the facts for communities to thrive. Support us today.
- Stay informed. Support us today.

Messaging Reflecting Different Values Affects Americans' Overall Likelihood to Subscribe.



Question: Some local news outlets ask people to pay to support their operations. If each of the following was a message asking you to support a local news organization you read regularly, how likely would you be to pay after seeing the message?
Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18+ nationwide.

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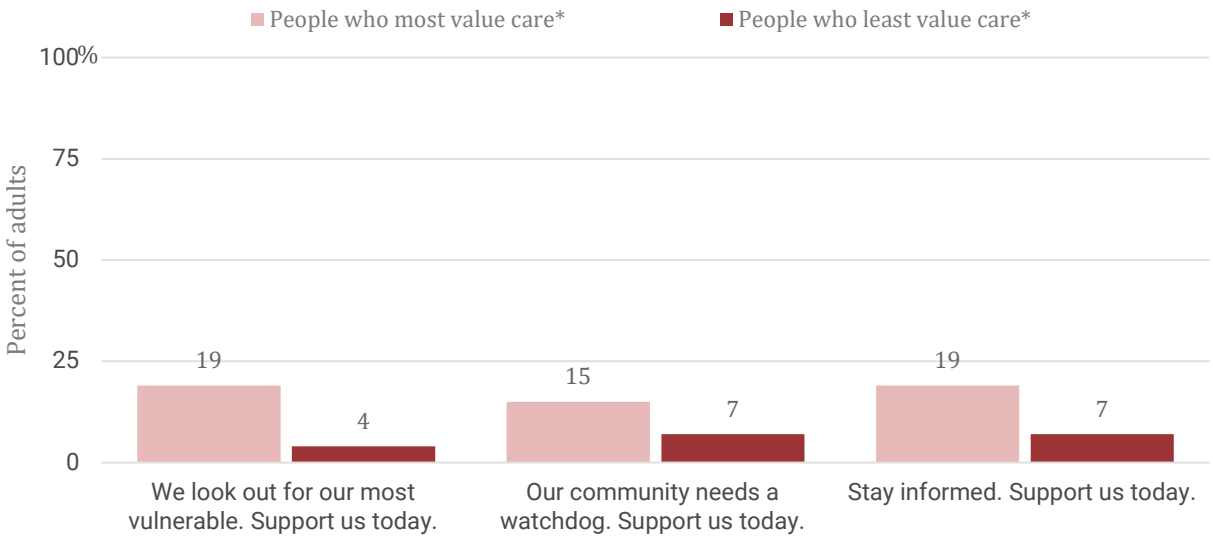
While only about 1 in 5 respondents say they would be extremely or very likely to pay to support their local news organization based on the different messages, there are important variations in how appealing these messages are to those who most and least emphasize each moral and journalism value.

Those who most emphasize the value of care were more likely to say they would contribute financially to their local news organization if they received the message highlighting the media's role in looking out for the most vulnerable, the media as a watchdog for their community, or emphasizing the need to stay informed.

Strong Endorsements of Care Are Associated with Likelihood to Contribute Financially to Local Media Efforts.



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Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18 and older nationwide.
*Refers to people whose value of care was in the top or bottom quartiles among all respondents.

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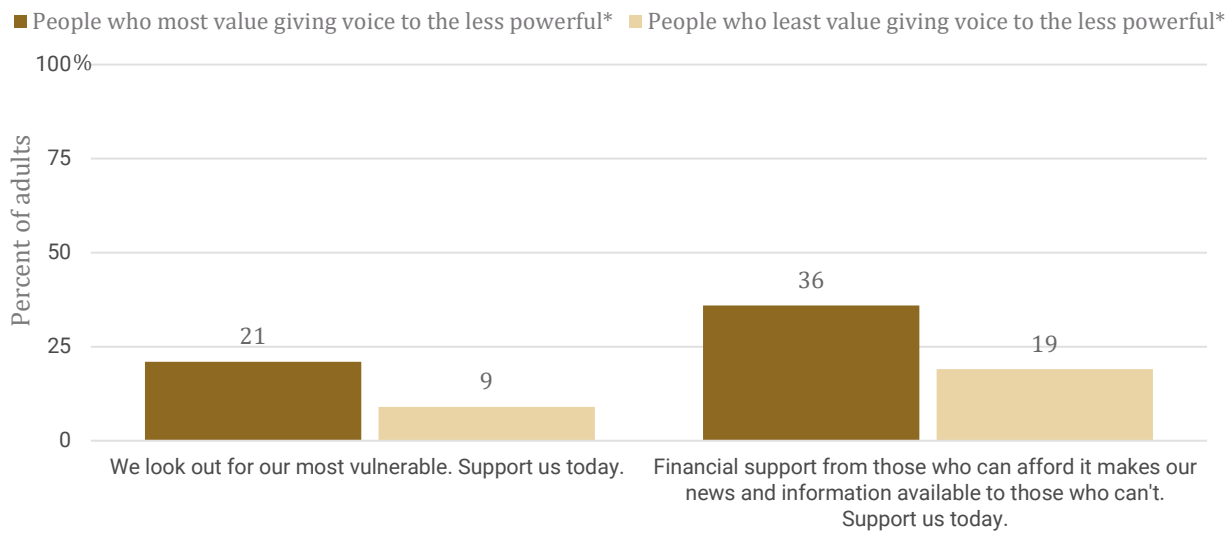
The message that mentions how the local news media outlet looks out for the most vulnerable resonated with those who place the most importance on fairness (17%) compared to those in the quartile that places the least importance on fairness (7%).

The message highlighting the local news media's history in the community appealed to those who most emphasized authority. Fifteen percent of those in the highest quartile of authority said they were more likely to contribute financially to their local news outlet if they got the message "We've served our community since 1906. Support us today." Only 6% of those in the lowest quartile said that message would convince them to contribute financially.

We found patterns like this when evaluating not just moral values' ties to marketing messages but also journalism values' ties to the appeals.

Several journalism values also are associated with a higher likelihood of contribution to their local news organization depending on their message for support. Individuals who place the highest emphasis on offering a voice to the less powerful are more likely to contribute to their local media if they get the message in defense of those who are the most vulnerable and asking for financial support for those who cannot afford it.

Strong Endorsements of Giving a Voice to the Less Powerful Motivate Financial Contribution to Local Media.



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Source: AP-NORC polls conducted October 22-November 15, 2019, and August 18-24, 2020, with 2,727 and 1,155 adults age 18+ nationwide.
*Refers to people whose value of giving a voice to the less powerful was in the top or bottom quartiles among all respondents.

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The message about financial support from those who can afford it to make news available to those who cannot also resonated with those who most emphasized the importance of transparency, the value assessing the importance of having information open to the public. Those in the highest quartile for transparency were almost twice as likely to donate to their local news outlet if they got this message as those who least emphasized transparency (26% versus 14%).

The findings suggest that news organizations should further explore whom their marketing messages appeal to and whom they do not. As discussed earlier, many of the journalism values more strongly resonate with people already supportive of journalism, often liberal-leaning Americans. Yet people who most value authority, which is often a more conservative value and often held by people more distrustful of the press, may respond favorably to different messaging. As publishers continue to explore reader revenue as an important part of their sustainability, understanding these and other nuances across the communities they serve may help their pursuits.

STUDY 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 study featured two surveys. Interviews for the first survey were conducted between November 22 and December 15, 2019, with 2,727 adults age 18 and older representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The first survey included both a probability-based sample and a nonprobability based sample.

For the second survey, 2,124 probability-based respondents who completed the first survey and did not skip key survey questions were invited to complete it. The second survey was conducted between August 18 and August 24, 2020, with 1,155 adults age 18 and older.

The probability interviews were all conducted using AmeriSpeak®, NORC's probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population.

During the initial recruitment phase of the AmeriSpeak Panel, randomly selected U.S. households were sampled with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame and then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, and field interviewers (face-to-face). The panel provides sample coverage of approximately 97% of the U.S. household population. Those excluded from the sample include people with P.O. Box only addresses, some addresses not listed in the USPS Delivery Sequence File, and some newly constructed dwellings.

Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak panel, and interviews for both surveys were conducted online in English.

The final stage completion rate for the first survey was 26.8%, the weighted household panel response rate was 24.1%, and the weighted household panel retention rate was 85.6%, for a cumulative response rate of 5.5%.

The second survey had a final stage completion rate of 68%, a weighted household panel response rate of 24%, and a weighted household panel retention rate of 86%, for a cumulative response rate of 14%.

The first survey also included a nonprobability sample. Dynata provided 1,020 nonprobability interviews. The Dynata sample was derived based on quotas related to age, race and ethnicity, and gender. Interviews were conducted in English and via the web only. For panel recruitment, Dynata uses invitations of all types, including email invitations, phone alerts, banners, and messaging on panel community sites to include people with a diversity of motivations to take part in research. Because nonprobability panels do not start with a frame where there is a known probability of selection, standard measures of sampling error and response rates cannot be calculated.

To incorporate the nonprobability sample with the probability sample for the first survey, NORC used TrueNorth®, a calibration approach developed at NORC that features small domain estimation methods to account for potential bias associated with the nonprobability sample. The purpose of TrueNorth calibration is to adjust the weights for the nonprobability sample, so as to bring weighted distributions of the nonprobability sample in line with the population distribution for characteristics correlated with the survey variables. Such calibration adjustments help to reduce potential bias, yielding more accurate population estimates.

A small domain model was used with the combined samples to generate estimates at the domain level, where the domains were defined by race/ethnicity, age, and gender. The dependent variables for the models were key survey variables derived from a gradient boosted tree model, and the small domain model included covariates and domain-level random effects. The covariates were external data available from other national surveys such as health insurance, internet access, and housing type from the American Community Survey. The final combined AmeriSpeak and nonprobability sample weights were derived so the weighted estimates of the combined sample were consistent with the small domain model estimates derived for key survey variables.

Once the samples for the two surveys had been selected and fielded, and all the study data had been collected and made final, a raking process was used to adjust for any survey nonresponse in the probability sample as well as any noncoverage or under- and oversampling resulting from the study-specific sample design. Raking variables for the probability sample included age, gender, census division, race/ethnicity, and education. Population control totals for the raking variables were obtained from the 2019 Community Population Survey for the first survey, and the 2020 Community Population Survey for the second survey. The weighted data reflect the U.S. population of adults age 18 or older.

The overall margin of error for the first survey sample is +/- 2.3 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups. Although there is no statistically agreed upon approach for calculating margins of error for nonprobability samples, these margins of error were estimated using a calculation called the root mean squared error, along with other statistical adjustments. A mean square error is a measure of uncertainty that incorporates the variability associated with the estimates, as well as the bias associated with the estimates derived from a nonprobability sample.

The overall margin of error for the second survey sample is +/- 4.1 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

For more information, email info@apnorc.org.

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API's Stephanie Castellano contributed to production of this study and its release. API's Amy Kovac-Ashley and Susan Benkelman participated in the expert panel of journalists that informed the work see Appendix II.

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

The American Press Institute advances an innovative and sustainable local news industry by helping publishers understand and engage audiences, grow revenue, improve public-service journalism, and succeed at organizational change. API is a national 501(c)3 nonprofit educational organization affiliated with the News Media Alliance. It works with and draws on the best ideas from technology, business and publishing.
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

The Associated Press (AP) is the essential global news network, delivering fast, unbiased news from every corner of the world to all media platforms and formats. Founded in 1846, AP today is the most trusted source of independent news and information. On any given day, more than half the world's population sees news from AP.
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NORC at the University of Chicago is an objective and non-partisan research institution that delivers reliable data and rigorous analysis to guide critical programmatic, business, and policy decisions. Since 1941, NORC has conducted groundbreaking studies, created and applied innovative methods and tools, and advanced principles of scientific integrity and collaboration. Today, government, corporate, and nonprofit clients around the world partner with NORC to transform increasingly complex information into useful knowledge.
www.norc.org

The two organizations have established The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research to conduct, analyze, and distribute social science research in the public interest on newsworthy topics, and to use the power of journalism to tell the stories that research reveals.

APPENDIX I. MORAL AND JOURNALISM VALUES QUESTIONNAIRES

MORAL FOUNDATIONS THEORY QUESTIONNAIRE

This survey used a battery of questions often used in academic studies to assess respondents' inclinations toward values in Moral Foundations Theory. Below is the specific set of questions we used to create variables for the moral foundation values in this study: care, fairness, loyalty, authority, and purity.

MFT1. WHEN YOU DECIDE WHETHER SOMETHING IS RIGHT OR WRONG, TO WHAT EXTENT ARE THE FOLLOWING CONSIDERATIONS RELEVANT TO YOUR THINKING?

RANDOMIZED ITEMS:

A. Whether or not someone suffered emotionally
B. Whether or not some people were treated differently than others
C. Whether or not someone's action showed love for his or her country
D. Whether or not someone showed a lack of respect for authority
E. Whether or not someone violated standards of purity and decency
F. Whether or not someone was good at math
G. Whether or not someone cared for someone weak or vulnerable
H. Whether or not someone acted unfairly
I. Whether or not someone did something to betray his or her group
J. Whether or not someone conformed to the traditions of society
K. Whether or not someone did something disgusting

RESPONSE OPTIONS

1. Not at all relevant (This consideration has nothing to do with my judgments of right and wrong)
2. Not very relevant
3. Slightly relevant
4. Somewhat relevant
5. Very relevant
6. Extremely relevant (This is one of the most important factors when I judge right and wrong)

MFT2. PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES AND INDICATE YOUR AGREEMENT OR DISAGREEMENT:

RANDOMIZED ITEMS:

A. Compassion for those who are suffering is the most crucial virtue.
B. When the government makes laws, the number one principle should be ensuring that everyone is treated fairly.
C. I am proud of my country's history.
D. Respect for authority is something all children need to learn.
E. People should not do things that are disgusting, even if no one is harmed.
F. It is better to do good than to do bad.
G. One of the worst things a person could do is hurt a defenseless animal.
H. Justice is the most important requirement for a society.
I. People should be loyal to their family members, even when they have done something wrong.
J. Men and women each have different roles to play in society.
K. I would call some acts wrong on the grounds that they are unnatural.

RESPONSE OPTIONS

1. Strongly disagree
2. Moderately disagree
3. Slightly disagree
4. Slightly agree
5. Moderately agree
6. Strongly agree

JOURNALISM VALUES QUESTIONNAIRE

The research team identified five basic core journalism values based on input from a small, diverse group of journalists currently in or helping news organizations. Below is the set of questions used to create the variables for the journalism values: oversight, transparency, factualism, giving voice to the less powerful, and social criticism.

JVALUE. Please read the following sentences and indicate your agreement or disagreement:

RANDOMIZED ITEMS:

A. The powerful need to be monitored or they will be inclined to abuse their power
B. It's important to put some trust in authority figures so they can do their jobs
C. It's vital that the public know what government leaders are doing and saying each day
D. Leaders need to be able to do some things behind closed doors to fulfill their duties
E. The more facts people have, the more likely it is they will get to the truth
F. A lot of the time you know enough about something and more facts don't help
G. For most things, knowing what's true is a matter of gathering evidence and proof
H. For a lot of things that matter, facts only get you so far
I. A society should be judged by how it treats its least fortunate
J. Sometimes favoring the least fortunate doesn't actually help them
K. It's important to offer a voice to the voiceless
L. Inequalities will always exist and you can't eliminate them
M. We need to put a spotlight on problems in society in order to solve them
N. Too much focus on what's wrong can make things worse
O. The way to make a society stronger is through criticizing what's wrong
P. The way to make a society stronger is through celebrating what's right
Q. On balance, it's usually better for the public to know than for things to be kept secret
R. Sometimes the need to keep a secret outweighs the public's right to know
S. Transparency is usually the best cure for what's wrong in the world
T. Most problems can be addressed without putting embarrassing facts out in the open

RESPONSE OPTIONS

1. Strongly disagree
2. Moderately disagree
3. Slightly disagree
4. Slightly agree
5. Moderately agree
6. Strongly agree

APPENDIX II. PANEL OF EXPERTS

The panel of experts in the working session included: Susan Benkelman – American Press Institute, Director of Accountability Journalism; Jenny Benz, PhD, - AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, Deputy Director; Maria Carrillo - *Tampa Bay Times*, Deputy Editor/Enterprise; Joel Christopher - *Knoxville News Sentinel* and knoxnews.com, Executive Editor; Noreen Gillespie - Associated Press, Deputy Managing Editor for U.S. News; Kevin Loker - American Press Institute, Director of Program Operations and Partnerships; Rod Hicks - Society of Professional Journalists, Journalist on Call; Dan Malato - AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, Research Scientist; Dominic Packer, PhD - Lehigh University, Associate Professor of Psychology and Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Programs; Amanda Ripley - Contributing Writer at *The Atlantic* and a Senior Fellow at the Emerson Collective; Tom Rosenstiel - American Press Institute, Executive Director; Jeff Sonderman - American Press Institute, Deputy Executive Director and Executive Vice President; David Sterrett, PhD - AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, Senior Research Scientist; Emily Swanson – Associated Press, Polling Editor; Trevor Tompson - AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, Vice President for Public Affairs Research; and René Weber, MD, PhD – University of California Santa Barbara Media Neuroscience Lab, Founder and Director.

APPENDIX III. EXPERIMENTAL STORIES

STORY VERSIONS

Story 1. Pollution story – Standard Version

At-risk neighborhood now facing new health threat from toxic drinking water

A toxic chemical has polluted drinking water at a local mobile home park, making it the latest low-income community to face a public health crisis due to the nation's deteriorating infrastructure.

Lab testing shows tap water at the mobile home park contains significant levels of a chemical known as PFOS, which is the same chemical found last year in an Air Force study of the water at the neighboring military base.

Since the study was published last year, state officials have said that local residents had no reason to be concerned with their drinking water.

However, public health officials are now warning residents of the low-income neighborhood about the potential health dangers for those who have been drinking the contaminated water.

Story 1. Pollution story – Revised Version

Local community at risk after state officials ignore military study

After state officials failed to act on warnings from a military study last year, the local community is now facing a public health risk as a toxic chemical has been found in the community's drinking water.

Lab testing shows tap water at a mobile home park contains significant levels of a chemical known as PFOS, which is the same chemical found last year in an Air Force study of the water at the neighboring military base.

Army officials say they repeatedly warned state officials about the concern but that the officials did little to minimize the impact on the community. The contamination, the army study warned, "could endanger lives as well as lead to declines in home values and business across the city."

Since the study was published last year, state officials have said that local residents had no reason to be concerned with their drinking water.

However, public health officials are now warning residents of the low-income neighborhood about the potential health dangers for those who have been drinking the contaminated water.

Story 2. Corruption story – Standard Version

New recreation center for low-income neighborhood a casualty of parks scandal

A project aimed at helping the city's most marginalized, low-income neighborhood has been abandoned in the wake of a misuse of city funds by the Parks Director, according to documents obtained by a local media investigation.

The Mayor had designated the money for a recreation center in the city's poorest district, but the director funneled the money to a series of unauthorized projects.

The documents show the director misled city officials about how the funds were being spent, and the city no longer has the money to build the recreation center to help both low-income seniors and at-risk youth.

Story 2. Corruption story –Revised Version

Parks boss deceived Mayor, misused taxpayer money

The city's Parks Director intentionally defied the orders of the Mayor and diverted city money from a key recreation project to businesses owned by his friends and family, according to documents obtained by a local media investigation.

The Mayor had designated the money for a recreation center in the city's poorest district, but the director funneled the money to a series of unauthorized projects.

The Parks Director bypassed protocols in order to send money to businesses with close connections to his family and friends, the investigation finds. Emails from the Parks Director reveal that he repeatedly disregarded instructions from the Mayor's office about the funds and the project that residents voted to fund.

The documents show the director misled residents and other top city officials about how the funds were being spent, and the city no longer has the money to build the recreation center to help both low-income seniors and at-risk youth.

Story 3. Election story – Standard Version

New law will make voting easier, could boost participation by minorities, poor residents

State legislators narrowly approved a new law designed to make voting more fair and accessible to all residents.

The law will allow all people to vote on Election Day without having to register in advance or show a photo ID. The law is expected to increase voter turnout, especially among those groups of residents including racial minorities and poor residents who have tended to not participate in elections in the past.

Supporters of the new law say it will allow everyone an equal opportunity to participate in democratic process while opponents of the law say voter identification laws do not impact voter turnout.

Story 3. Election story – Revised Version

New law removes some of state's traditional voting rules

State legislators narrowly approved a new law designed to reduce long-standing voting requirements to verify the identity of all voters before they participate in an election.

The law will allow all people to vote on Election Day without having to register in advance or show a photo ID. The law is expected to increase voter turnout, especially among those groups of residents including racial minorities and poor residents who have tended to not participate in elections in the past.

Some state legislators critical of the law feared the change could lead to an increase in voter fraud, noting that all residents have an interest in rules that support fair and secure elections.

Supporters of the new law say it will allow everyone an equal opportunity to participate in democratic process while opponents of the law say voter identification laws do not impact voter turnout.