



AMERICANS SAY FACTS PLAY SMALL ROLE IN ELECTIONS

CHICAGO, Nov. 20, 2019 — Few Americans believe politicians' campaign messages, political debates and even voters' choices are frequently based in fact, according to a national poll by [USAFacts](#) and [The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#).

As the 2020 presidential campaign gets underway, Americans express deep skepticism about the information provided by political candidates. Just 9% of American adults say that candidates' campaign messages are always or often based in fact, and only 13% say the same about political debates. Given that these are fundamental ways Americans learn about candidates and their choice for president, it is perhaps unsurprising that just 14% also say that voters' decisions are frequently based in fact.

Similarly, about 2-in-10 or fewer of Americans believe the news media's reporting as well as decisions by policymakers are always or often based in fact. Republicans tend to be more skeptical than Democrats. Fifty-four percent of Republicans believe candidates' campaign messages are *rarely* or *never* based in facts, compared with 39% of Democrats. There are generational differences as well – Baby Boomers have less confidence in politicians' statements than Millennials.

"Democracy is in danger when Americans so overwhelmingly lack trust in the candidates, the policymakers, the news media, and each other," said [USAFacts](#) President Poppy MacDonald. "But this year's State of the Facts Poll also gave reason for optimism: a significant majority of both Democrats and Republicans agree that facts must be accurate, complete, transparent, and based in data – so there is a prescription to restore trust in our electoral process."

"Elections are fundamental aspects of our democratic process, and the outcomes impact every aspect of our lives. And yet the American public has little confidence that the campaign information they receive, and even the voting decisions they make, are based on trusted facts," said Trevor Tompson, senior vice president of Public Affairs and Media Research at NORC and director of [The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#).

The 2019 State of the Facts Poll also examines Americans' perceptions of what constitutes a fact, their ability to understand facts, and their use and trust of government sources. *For more information, see the first release of the [AP-NORC/USAFacts The State of the Facts Poll 2019](#).*

The nationwide survey of 1,032 adults was conducted using AmeriSpeak®, the probability-based panel of NORC at the University of Chicago, and was funded by USAFacts. Interviews were conducted between October 15 and 28, 2019, online and using landlines and cell phones. The margin of sampling error is +/- 4.2 percentage points.



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