



The Associated Press-NORC  
Center for Public Affairs Research

# MANY BELIEVE MISINFORMATION IS INCREASING EXTREME POLITICAL VIEWS AND BEHAVIORS

Ninety-one percent of adults say the spread of misinformation is a problem and most believe misinformation contributes to extreme political views and hate crimes, according to a new Pearson Institute/AP-NORC Poll.

The poll is being released in conjunction with the 2022 Pearson Global Forum, an event that will bring together researchers and policymakers to develop strategies to prevent and resolve international conflicts.

With the midterm elections approaching, significant majorities of Democrats, Republicans, and independents believe misinformation is a problem. Nearly three-quarters of the public are at least somewhat concerned they have been exposed to misinformation and just under half are worried they have spread misinformation.

The public believes misinformation is having serious consequences. More than half of adults say misinformation increases political engagement, and about 7 in 10 say misinformation increases extreme political views and hate crimes such as violence motivated by race, gender, or religion. About half also say misinformation decreases trust in government.

Given the widespread concerns about misinformation, majorities of adults report engaging in behaviors at least some of the time to avoid consuming or spreading misinformation such as checking multiple sources or even deciding not to share content on social media at all.

The nationwide poll was conducted by the Pearson Institute and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research from September 9 to 12, 2022, using



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## Three Things You Should Know About the Pearson Institute/AP-NORC Poll Among Adults:

- 1) 91% believe the spread of misinformation is a problem, a figure that has not changed significantly in the past year.
- 2) 71% are concerned they have been exposed to misinformation and 43% are concerned they have spread misinformation.
- 3) Most believe misinformation increases extreme political views (73%) and hate crimes including violence motivated by race, gender, or religion (77%).

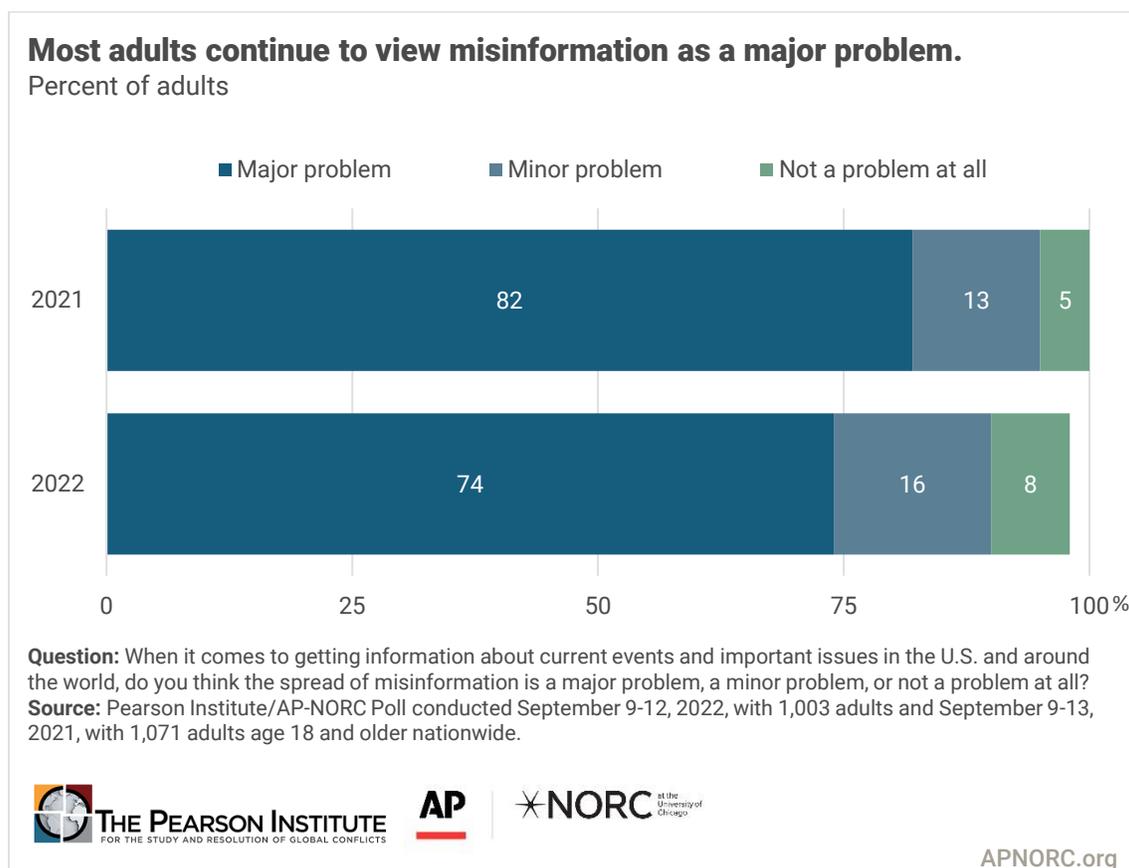
AmeriSpeak®, the probability-based panel of NORC at the University of Chicago. Online and telephone interviews using landlines and cell phones were conducted with 1,003 adults. The margin of sampling error is +/- 4.0 percentage points.

## MOST ADULTS ARE WORRIED ABOUT MISINFORMATION, REGARDLESS OF THEIR PARTISANSHIP, AGE, OR RACE AND ETHNICITY.

More than 9 in 10 adults report misinformation is a problem, and there is concern about misinformation across the political spectrum, age groups, and race and ethnicity.

Adults with a college education are slightly more likely to view misinformation as a major problem than adults who did not go to college (81% vs 70%), but strong majorities in both groups agree it is a problem.

There has also been no significant decrease in concern about misinformation in the last year.



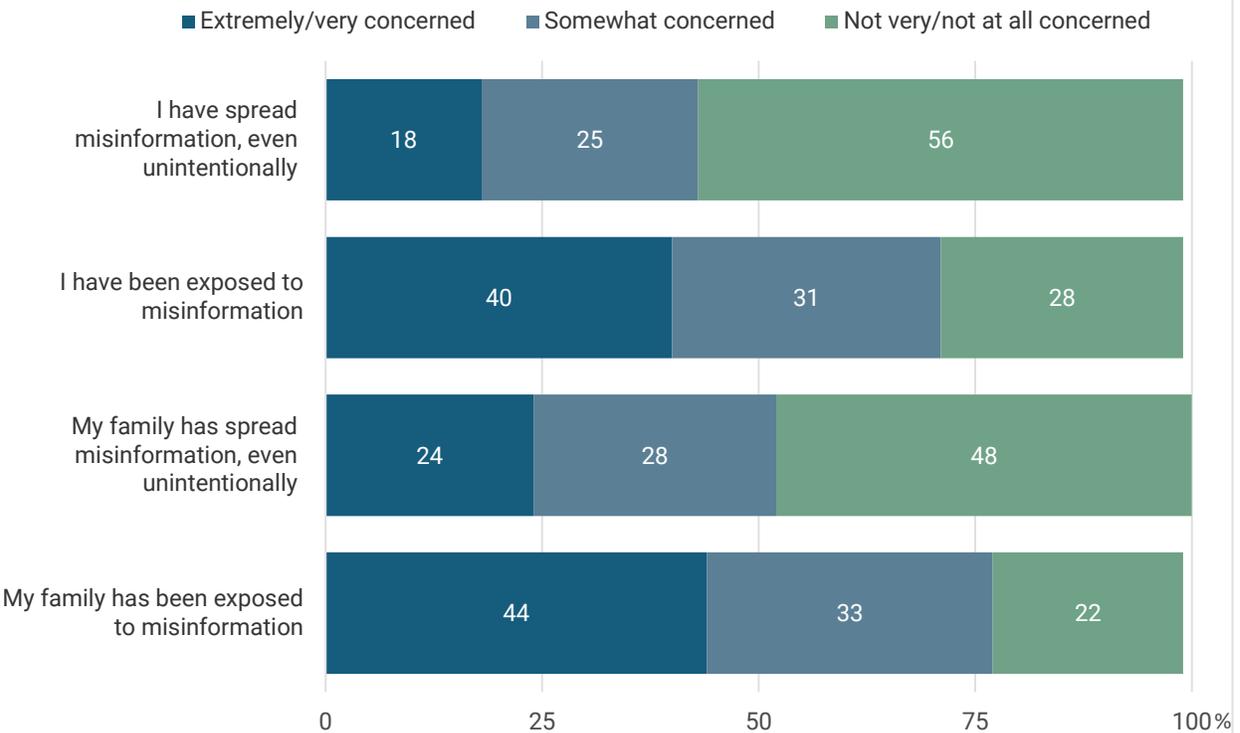
When it comes to personal experiences with misinformation, the public is more worried they have been exposed to misinformation than worried they have spread misinformation, even unintentionally. This is consistent with the results of the Pearson Institute/AP-NORC poll conducted in 2021.<sup>1</sup>

Concerns about exposure to and spread of misinformation are similar across demographic and political groups.

<sup>1</sup>The Pearson Institute/AP-NORC 2021 poll found 46% of adults were at least somewhat concerned they had spread misinformation and 76% were at least somewhat concerned they had been exposed to misinformation. [https://apnorc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/misinformation\\_Formatted\\_v2-002.pdf](https://apnorc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/misinformation_Formatted_v2-002.pdf)

### Many adults are concerned about exposure to misinformation.

Percent of adults



**Question:** How concerned are you about each of the following?

**Source:** Pearson Institute/AP-NORC Poll conducted September 9-12, 2022, with 1,003 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



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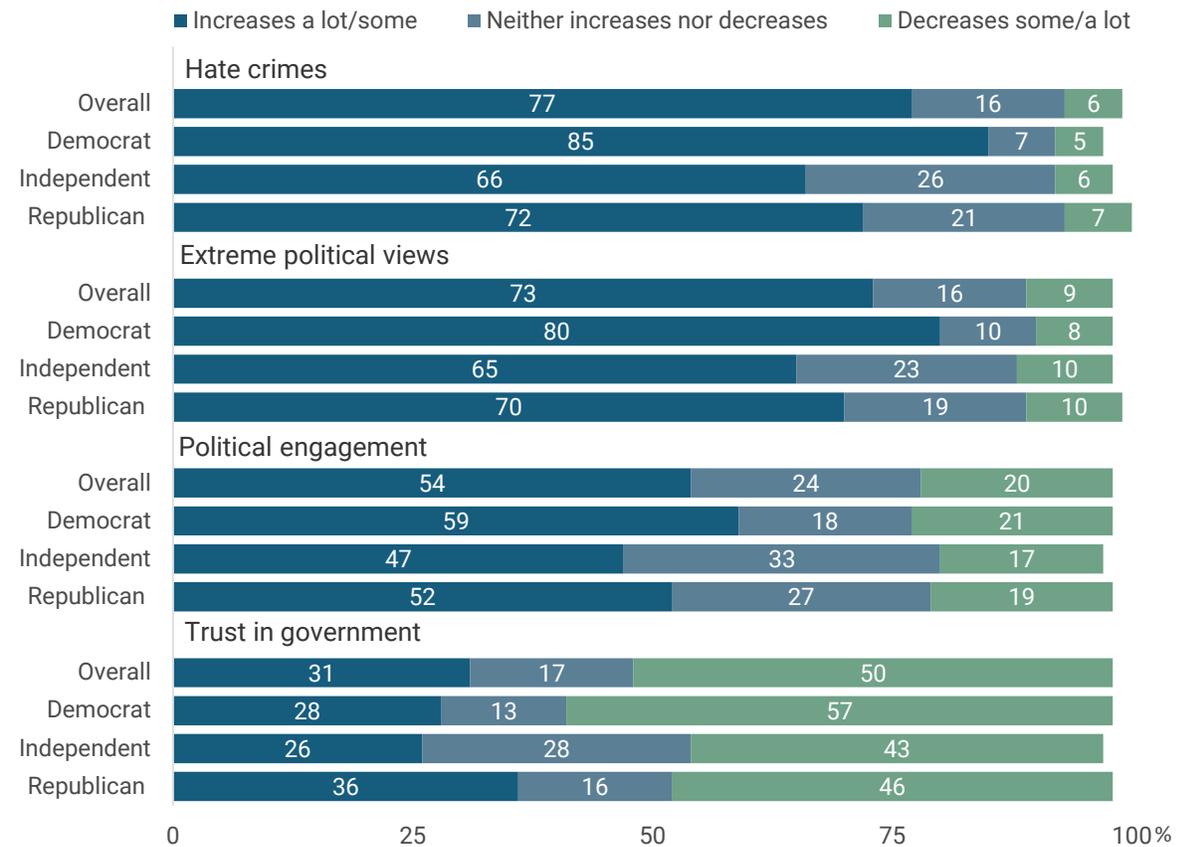
## MOST ADULTS BELIEVE MISINFORMATION IS INCREASING EXTREME POLITICAL VIEWS AND BEHAVIORS.

The public views misinformation as a problem that has significant impacts for extreme views and behaviors. About half of adults think misinformation increases political engagement. And even more, about three-quarters, believe misinformation is increasing extreme political views and hate crimes including violence motivated by race, gender, or religion. About half of adults say misinformation reduces trust in government.

The impacts of misinformation are viewed similarly by Democrats and Republicans. Members of both parties view the impacts of misinformation on trust in government and political engagement in a similar manner. Democrats are slightly more likely than Republicans to believe misinformation increases extreme political views and hate crimes, but it's still a solid majority in both parties.

## Majorities think misinformation increases extreme political views and behaviors.

Percent of adults



**Question:** Do you think misinformation increases, decreases, or neither increases nor decreases each of the following?

**Source:** Pearson Institute/AP-NORC Poll conducted September 9-12, 2022, with 1,003 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



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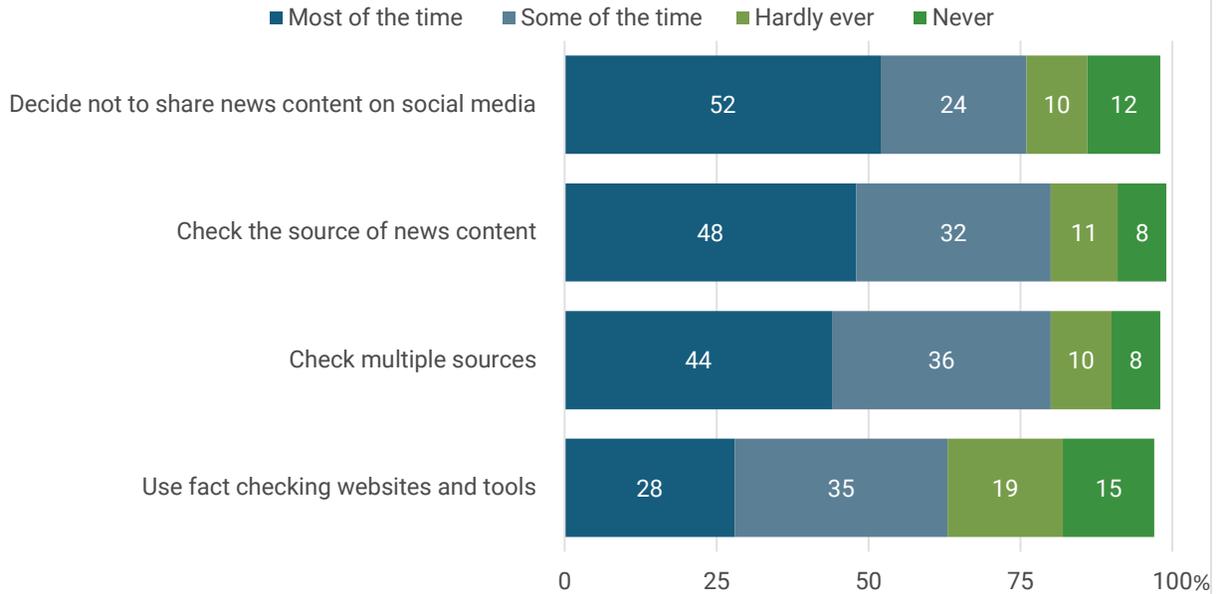
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## MANY PEOPLE REGULARLY TAKE STEPS TO AVOID CONSUMING OR SPREADING MISINFORMATION.

With the widespread concern about misinformation, many adults report they take steps to avoid consuming or spreading misinformation. Most people report they avoid sharing content on social media and that they investigate and cross-check sources at least some of the time. Fewer say they regularly use fact checking websites.

## Many report engaging in behaviors to avoid consuming or spreading misinformation.

Percent of adults



**Question:** How often do you do each of the following to avoid consuming or spreading misinformation?

**Source:** Pearson Institute/AP-NORC Poll conducted September 9-12, 2022, with 1,003 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



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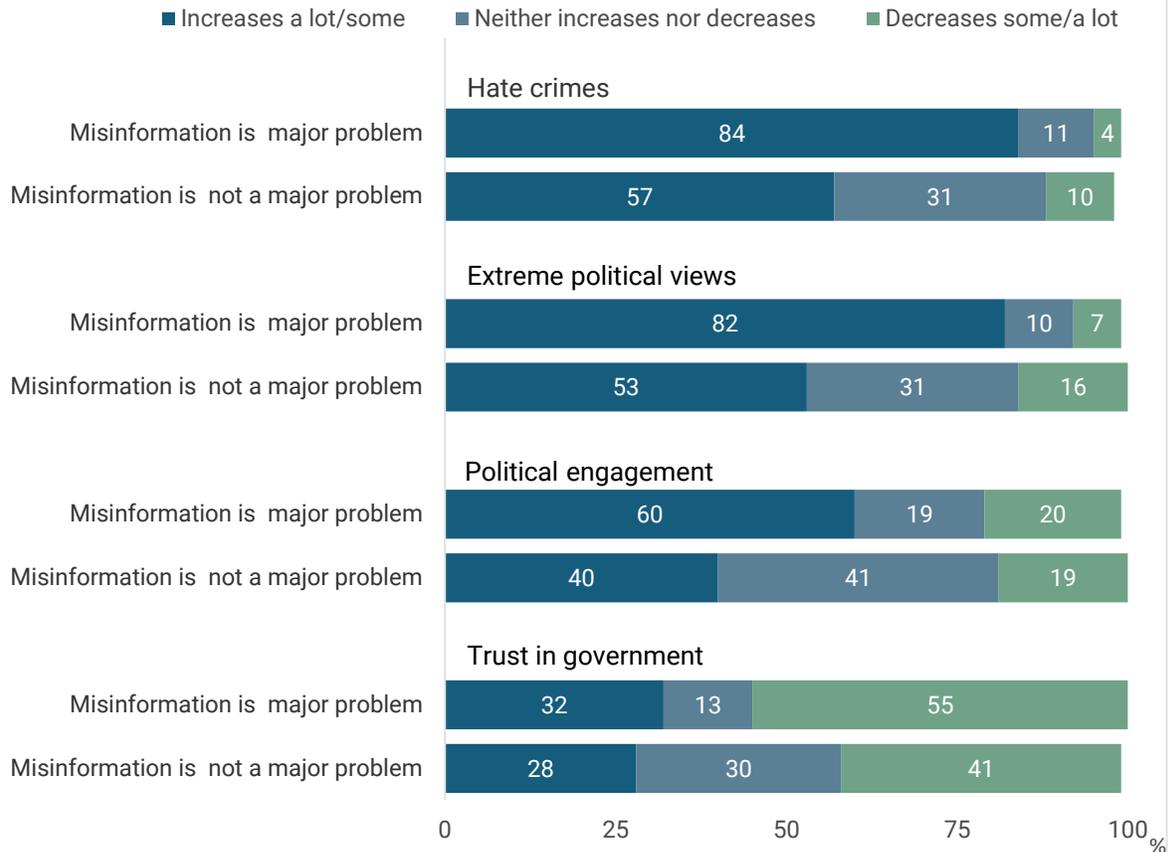
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## PEOPLE WHO VIEW MISINFORMATION AS A MAJOR PROBLEM ARE MORE LIKELY TO BELIEVE IT IMPACTS EXTREME POLITICAL ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS AND ENGAGE IN BEHAVIORS TO AVOID CONSUMING OR SPREADING MISINFORMATION.

Adults who view misinformation as a major problem are more likely to view misinformation as a cause of extreme attitudes and behaviors compared to those who view misinformation as a minor problem or not a problem at all.

## People who view misinformation as a major problem are more likely to say misinformation has impacted extreme political views and behaviors.

Percent of adults



**Question:** Do you think misinformation increases, decreases, or neither increases nor decreases each of the following? When it comes to getting information about current events and important issues in the U.S. and around the world, do you think the spread of misinformation is a major problem, a minor problem, or not a problem at all?

**Source:** Pearson Institute/AP-NORC Poll conducted September 9-12, 2022, with 1,003 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



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Those who view misinformation as a major problem are more likely than those who don't to express concern they have been exposed to misinformation (48% vs. 17%), their families have been exposed to misinformation (53% vs. 18%), and their families have spread misinformation (27% vs. 13%).

Furthermore, viewing misinformation as a major problem is related to behaviors to avoid consuming or spreading misinformation, such as using fact checking websites and tools (68% vs. 52%) and checking the sources of news content (83% vs. 71%).

## STUDY METHODOLOGY

This study was funded by the Pearson Institute and conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Staff from the Pearson Institute and The AP-NORC Center collaborated on all aspects of the study.

Data were collected using the AmeriSpeak Omnibus®, a monthly multi-client survey using NORC’s probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. The survey was part of a larger study that included questions about other topics not included in this report. During the initial recruitment phase of the panel, randomly selected U.S. households were sampled with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame or a secondary national address frame, both with over 97% coverage of all U.S. addresses, and then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, or 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 population.

Interviews for this survey were conducted between September 9 and September 12, 2022, with adults age 18 and older representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak, and 1,003 completed the survey—954 via the web and 49 via telephone. Panel members were invited by email or by phone from an NORC telephone interviewer. Interviews were conducted in English. Respondents were offered a small monetary incentive (\$3) for completing the survey.

The final stage completion rate is 17.1%, the weighted household panel recruitment rate is 20.8%, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 78.8%, for a cumulative response rate of 2.8%. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 4.0 percentage points at the 95% confidence level including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

Sampling error is only one of many potential sources of error and there may be other unmeasured error in this or any other survey.

Quality assurance checks were conducted to ensure data quality. In total, 53 interviews were removed for nonresponse to at least 50% of the questions asked of them, for completing the survey in less than one-third the median interview time for the full sample, or for straight-lining all grid questions asked of them. These interviews were excluded from the data file prior to weighting.

Once the sample has been selected and fielded, and all the study data have been collected and made final, a poststratification process is used to adjust for any survey nonresponse as well as any non-coverage or under and oversampling resulting from the study specific sample design. Poststratification variables included age, gender, census division, race/ethnicity, and education. Weighting variables were obtained from the 2022 Current Population Survey. The weighted data reflect the U.S. population of adults age 18 and over.

The sample is also weighted to match the average of self-identified party identification in the previous two waves of the AmeriSpeak Omnibus survey and this current survey.

For more information, visit [www.apnorc.org](http://www.apnorc.org), or email [info@apnorc.org](mailto:info@apnorc.org).

## CONTRIBUTING RESEARCHERS

From NORC at the University of Chicago

David Sterrett  
Haley Broughton  
Ridgley Knapp  
Jennifer Benz

From the Associated Press

Hannah Fingerhut  
Emily Swanson

From the Pearson Institute

Sheila Kohanteb

## ABOUT THE ASSOCIATED PRESS-NORC CENTER FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS RESEARCH

Celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, 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.

- The Associated Press (AP) is an independent global news organization dedicated to factual reporting. Founded in 1846, AP today remains the most trusted source of fast, accurate, unbiased news in all formats and the essential provider of the technology and services vital to the news business. More than half the world's population sees AP journalism every day. [www.ap.org](http://www.ap.org)
- NORC at the University of Chicago is one of the oldest objective and nonpartisan research institutions in the world. [www.norc.org](http://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. In its 10 years, The AP-NORC Center has conducted more than 250 studies exploring the critical issues facing the public, covering topics like health care, the economy, COVID-19, trust in media, and more.

Learn more at [www.apnorc.org](http://www.apnorc.org).

## ABOUT THE PEARSON INSTITUTE

The Pearson Institute for the Study and Resolution of Global Conflicts at the University of Chicago promotes the ongoing discussion, understanding and resolution of global conflicts, and contributes to the advancement of a global society more at peace. Established through a grant from The Thomas L. Pearson and The Pearson Family Members Foundation, and led by Institute Director James Robinson, co-author of *Why Nations Fail* and *The Narrow Corridor*, the Institute achieves this by employing an analytically rigorous, data-driven approach and global perspective to understanding violent conflict. It is global in its scope, activities, and footprint. Attracting students and scholars from around the world, its faculty is in the field studying conflicts – and approaches to conflict resolution – in Nigeria, Colombia, and Afghanistan, to name just a few.

Learn more at <https://thepearsoninstitute.org/>