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## Election Insights: Understanding Public Preferences for News Coverage for 2024

*A new Media Insight Project study reveals the public relies heavily on local and national news organizations for election coverage, but most adults have concerns about the reliability of the information.*

**CHICAGO, May 1, 2024** — Although most adults tune into news about elections, only 14% express a great deal of confidence in election-related information they receive from national news organizations and only 11% say the same about local news media, according to a new study from the [Media Insight Project](#), a collaboration between the [American Press Institute](#) and [The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#).

Most adults follow news about presidential (77%) and local and state elections (64%) at least somewhat closely. More report frequently receiving news about elections from national (50%) and local (39%) news outlets than other sources such as friends or family (21%) or individuals on social media (19%).

However, the public is worried about the potential for news organizations to report misinformation or amplify divisions. About half of adults say they are extremely or very concerned about news organizations reporting inaccurate information (53%). Almost as many worry news outlets will report unverified information (47%) or focus too much on divisions or controversies (48%).

“The survey highlights the urgent need we have in journalism for news organizations to build trusted relationships with the people in their communities,” said Michael D. Bolden, CEO and executive director of the American Press Institute. “It isn’t enough to be purveyors of news and information. Journalists and media leaders must be social connectors and convenors with a demonstrated investment in the well-being of their communities to create trust and enduring connections that last through 2024 and beyond.”

There are several differences in attitudes related to race, ethnicity, age, and partisanship.

Black (13%) and Hispanic (9%) adults are more likely than white adults (3%) to have a great deal of confidence in the news about elections they obtain from social media, while there are similar



levels of confidence in news from local and national news organizations across racial and ethnic groups.

Younger adults are less engaged with election news and have less confidence in the media than older adults. However, older adults have more concerns about election news. For example, 63% of adults age 55 or older are very or extremely concerned about inaccurate information compared with 52% of adults 35 to 54 and 40% of adults 18 to 34.

There are clear differences across party lines about confidence in the news media, but there is also common ground about what Democrats and Republicans want from media coverage. Democrats and Republicans want national media to report about the candidates' positions on key social issues and policies (Democrats 82% and Republicans 76%) as well as the candidates' values and character (Democrats 81% and Republicans 75%). Independents are less likely than Democrats and Republicans to say they want national media to cover most aspects of the elections included in the survey such as how votes are tabulated and the public's views on key policies. Coverage of which candidate is ahead or behind in public opinion polls ranks low in terms of priority for national news media coverage across all political affiliations.

Despite common perceptions about divisions in different areas of the country, the survey finds very few significant differences in people's attitudes toward election news depending on whether they live in rural, suburban, or urban communities.

"The study shows that the public wants similar types of news coverage from national news organizations covering the presidential election and local news organizations covering state or local elections," said David Sterrett, a principal research scientist with The AP-NORC Center. "Majorities of Democrats, Republicans, and independents say they want both national and local news organizations to provide information about candidates' values and policy positions to help inform their election decisions."

### **About the report**

This survey was conducted by the Media Insight Project, an initiative of the American Press Institute (API) and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. The survey was funded by API. Staff from API, NORC at the University of Chicago, and AP collaborated on all aspects of the study.

Interviews for this survey were conducted between March 21 through 25, 2024, with adults aged 18 and over representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak, and 2,468 completed the survey—2,327 via the web and 141 by telephone. Panel members were invited by email or by phone from an NORC telephone



interviewer. The sample also included oversamples of Black adults (n=591), Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (AAPI) adults (n=449), Hispanic adults (n=535), and rural residents (n=322). Interviews were conducted in English.

The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 2.9 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups. For example, the margin of sampling error is +/- 3.9 percentage points for white adults, +/- 5.5 percentage points for Black adults, +/-6.5 percentage points for Hispanic adults, and +/-7.5 percentage points for Asian American or Pacific Islander adults.

Complete questions and results are available at [apnorc.org](http://apnorc.org). Details about the Media Insight Project can be found at: [www.mediainsight.org](http://www.mediainsight.org).

A full description of the study methodology for the surveys can be found at the end of the report.

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

### **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**

API supports local and community-based media through research, programs and products that foster healthy, responsive and resilient news organizations. API envisions an inclusive democracy and society, where communities have the news and information they need to make decisions and thrive. API is a national 501(c)3 nonprofit educational organization affiliated with the News/Media Alliance.

<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.

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