



# Americans Distrustful of Mass Media

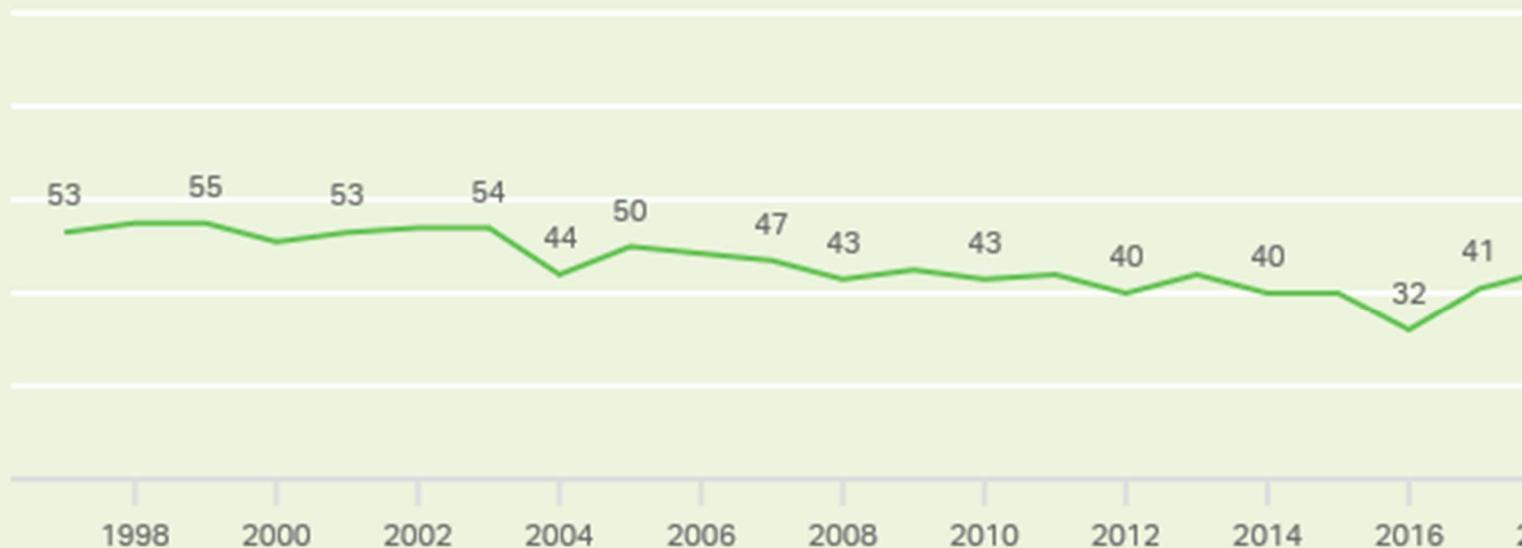
- **ONLY 9% IN THE U.S. TRUST THE MASS MEDIA “.. A GREAT DEAL”**
- **27% have "not very much" trust and 33% "none at all" with 31% saying “ a fair amount”.**
- **The percentage with no trust at all is a record high, up five points since 2019**

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- At a time when Americans are relying heavily on the media for information about the coronavirus pandemic, the presidential election and other momentous events, the public remains largely distrustful of the mass media. Four in 10 U.S. adults say they have "a great deal" (9%) or "a fair amount" (31%) of trust and confidence in the media to report the news "fully, accurately, and fairly," while six in 10 have "not very much" trust (27%) or "none at all" (33%).

## Americans' Trust in Mass Media

In general, how much trust and confidence do you have in the mass media -- such as newspapers, TV and radio -- when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately and fairly -- a great deal, a fair amount, not very much or none at all?

■ % Great deal/Fair amount



Data from 1972, 1974 and 1976 not shown

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Line graph. Americans' trust in the mass media when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately and fairly since 1997. Currently, 40% have a great deal or fair amount of trust in the mass media, and 60% have not very much or none at all.



Gallup first asked this question in 1972 and has continued to do so nearly every year since 1997. Trust ranged between 68% and 72% in the 1970s, and though it had declined by the late 1990s, it remained at the majority level until 2004, when it dipped to 44%. After hitting 50% in 2005, it has not risen above 47%.

The latest findings, from Gallup's annual Governance poll conducted Aug. 31-Sept. 13, are consistent with all but one recent trust rating -- in 2016, a steep decline in Republicans' trust in the media led to the [lowest reading on record](#) (32%).

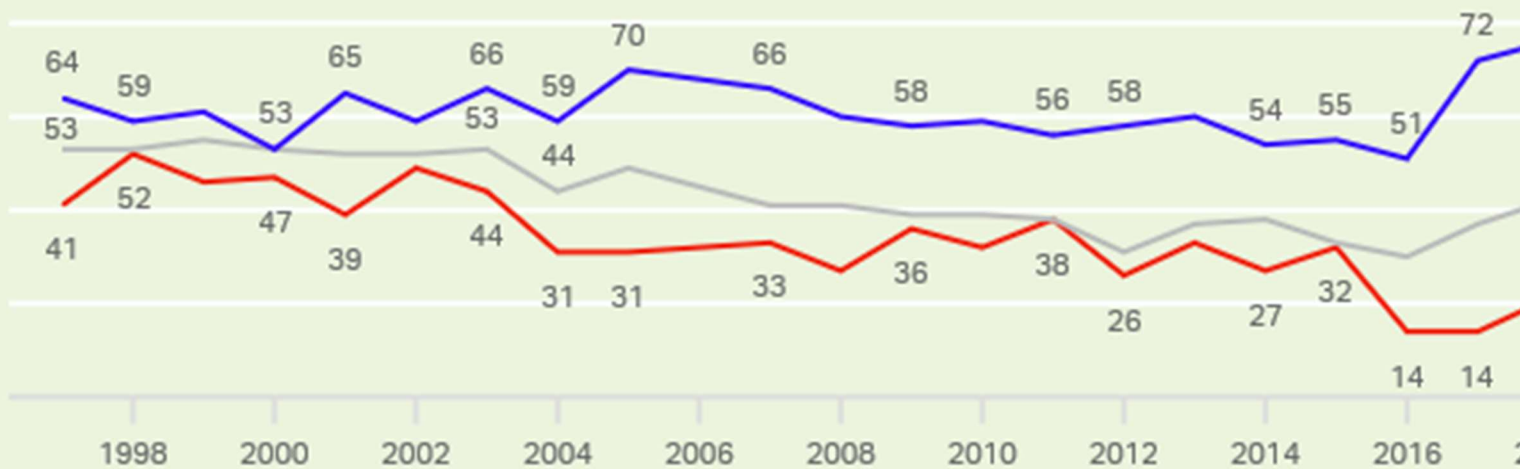
Republicans' trust has not recovered since then, while Democrats' has risen sharply. In fact, Democrats' trust over the past four years has been among the highest Gallup has measured for any party in the past two decades. This year, the result is a record 63-percentage-point gap in trust among the political party groups.

## Americans' Trust in Mass Media, by Political Party

In general, how much trust and confidence do you have in the mass media -- such as newspapers, TV and radio -- when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately and fairly -- a great deal, a fair amount, not very much or none at all?

% Great deal/Fair amount

■ Republicans ■ Independents ■ Democrats



Data from 1972, 1974 and 1976 not shown

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Line graph. Partisans' trust in the mass media when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately and fairly since 1997. Currently, 73% of Democrats, 36% of independents and 10% of Republicans have a great deal or fair amount of trust in the mass media. This is the widest gap in trust between Democrats and Republicans that Gallup has recorded.

While majorities of Democrats have consistently expressed confidence in the media since 1997, this has not been true of independents since 2004. Republicans' last majority-level reading for trust in the media was in 1998.

## Democrats' and Republicans' Degrees of Trust Have Shifted

Although Americans' overall trust in the media has remained steady since last year, the 33% who do not have any confidence this year reflects a five-point uptick and is the highest reading on record. Republicans are the main drivers behind this change: 58% of them now express this view, marking a 10-point increase and the first-ever majority-level reading.

Although Democrats' overall level of trust has not changed, the 57% who now say they have a fair amount of trust represents a 12-point jump from 2019, mostly attributable to a decrease in the percentage saying they trust the media a great deal.

### Partisans' Trust in Mass Media, 2019 vs. 2020

In general, how much trust and confidence do you have in the mass media -- such as newspapers, TV and radio -- when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately and fairly?

	A great deal	A fair amount	Not very much	None at all
	%	%	%	%
<b>Total U.S. adults</b>				
2020	9	31	27	33
2019	13	28	30	28
<b>Democrats</b>				
2020	16	57	21	6
2019	24	45	21	10
<b>Republicans</b>				

	A great deal	A fair amount	Not very much	None at all
	%	%	%	%
2020	3	7	31	<b>58</b>
2019	4	11	37	48
<b>Independents</b>				
2020	6	30	29	35
2019	9	27	34	30

Bolded figures are statistically significant changes

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## Bottom Line

Americans' confidence in the media to report the news fairly, accurately and fully has been persistently low for over a decade and shows no signs of improving, as Republicans' and Democrats' trust moves in opposite directions. The political polarization that grips the country is reflected in partisans' views of the media, which are now the most divergent in Gallup's history. Many cite the high level of censorship, misinformation, sub-liminal advertising, and clear bias in reporting the News by once reliable News sources as destructive to America. Trust in journalists and journalism is also down. In response, alternative News sources that face off against the larger,



more established and more biased media are emerging. The New York Post and the Epoch Time, for example, are growing in popularity while the once vaunted New York Times and CNN are declining. In addition, individuals and groups alienated by censoring media have taken to social media to distribute news and express their views.

Despite the sharp decline in trust of the media and journalists in America, a

recent Gallup/Knight Foundation polling has shown that although [Americans increasingly see bias in news coverage](#), they nonetheless believe that an independent media is key to democracy.