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## Americans' Trust in Media Remains at Trend Low

Trust in political and civic institutions highest for local and state governments, lowest for media and Congress

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WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Americans continue to register record-low trust in the mass media, with 31% expressing a "great deal" or "fair amount" of confidence in the media to report the news "fully, accurately and fairly," similar to last year's 32%. Americans' trust in the media -- such as newspapers, television and radio -- first fell to 32% in 2016 and did so again last year.

For the third consecutive year, more U.S. adults have no trust at all in the media (36%) than trust it a great deal or fair amount. Another 33% of Americans express “not very much” confidence.

Gallup first asked this question in 1972 and has measured it in most years since 1997. In three readings in the 1970s, trust ranged from 68% to 72%, yet by Gallup's next readings in the late 1990s and early 2000s, smaller majorities of 51% to 55% trusted the news media. The latest findings are from a poll conducted Sept. 3-15, which includes Gallup's annual update on trust in the media and other civic and political entities in the U.S.

As has been the case historically, partisans have different levels of confidence in the media to report the news fully, accurately and fairly. Currently, 54% of Democrats, 27% of independents and 12% of Republicans say they have a great deal or fair amount of trust in the media. Independents' trust matches the record low in 2022, while Democrats' and Republicans' are statistically similar to their historical low points.

After dropping precipitously to the trend low of 51% in 2016, Democrats' trust in the media ranged from 68% to 76% between 2017 and 2022 but fell to 58% last year and has edged down since.

Over the past two decades, significant gaps in trust have also emerged by age. An analysis by age groups using aggregated data to increase sample sizes shows a 17-percentage-point gap in trust between the oldest Americans (those aged 65 and older) and those under age 50 -- 43% vs. 26%, respectively.

Young Democrats trust the media far less than older Democrats do: 31% of Democrats aged 18 to 29 versus 74% of those aged 65 and older have a great deal or fair amount of confidence.

## **Local, State Governments Garner Most Trust; Media, Legislative Branch Least**

The news media is the least trusted group among 10 U.S. civic and political institutions involved in the democratic process. The legislative branch of the federal government, consisting of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, is rated about as poorly as the media, with 34% trusting it.

In contrast, majorities of U.S. adults express at least a fair amount of trust in their local government to handle local problems (67%), their state government to address state problems (55%), and the American people as a whole when it comes to making judgments under our democratic system about the issues facing the country (54%).

Between 40% and 48% of Americans trust the judicial branch headed by the U.S. Supreme Court, men and women in political life, the federal government's handling of international problems, and the executive branch led by the president. Fewer U.S. adults trust the federal government's handling of domestic problems (37%).

Each of these individual readings is below its average dating back to 1972, with several near their historical low ratings -- including the federal government's handling of domestic and international problems, the executive and judicial branches, and the American people as a whole.

The only significant change since last year is a six-point increase in confidence in men and women in political life who either hold or are running for public office.

## **Democrats Trust Most Entities More Than Republicans Do, Except for Judicial Branch**

Majorities of Democrats, ranging from 54% to 82%, express a great deal or fair amount of trust in all but two of the entities -- the legislative and judicial branches of the federal government. For their part, majorities of Republicans have confidence in the judicial branch and state and local governments.

In addition to the media, Democrats' trust exceeds Republicans' by more than 40 points for the executive branch, the federal government's handling of international and domestic problems, and candidates for public office. Republicans' trust outpaces Democrats' in just one of the entities -- the judicial branch.

Each entity garners more trust from older than younger adults except for the legislative and judicial branches, for which there are no differences.

## Bottom Line

The United States continues to suffer from a crisis in confidence in many institutions, including the federal government, its three branches, and those who either hold or are running for public office. In addition, trust in the fourth estate -- the mass media -- is at a new low. Local and state governments and the American people as a whole are the only entities garnering trust from more than half of U.S. adults.

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