

The Media Insight Project



NORC
at the
University of
Chicago



ELECTION INSIGHTS: UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC PREFERENCES FOR NEWS COVERAGE FOR 2024

The public relies heavily on local and national news organizations as sources for news about elections, but many adults have concerns about the reliability of the information they get, according to a new survey by the Media Insight Project, a collaboration of 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, and more report frequently receiving news about elections from national (50%) or local (39%) news outlets than other sources such as friends or family (21%) or individuals on social media (19%).

Although most adults, regardless of age, race or ethnicity, or partisanship, tune into news about elections, only 14% express a great deal of confidence in election-related information they receive from national sources, and 11% say the same about local news media.

In particular, people are worried about the news containing misinformation and amplifying 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%).



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Three Things You Should Know

About the Media Insight Project Poll
Among U.S. Adults

- 1) Only 14% have a great deal of trust in national news outlets for information on the 2024 elections, and 11% say the same about local news media.
- 2) About half of adults are extremely or very concerned news organizations may report inaccurate (53%) or unverified information (47%) or may excessively focus on divisions or controversies (48%) in their coverage of the 2024 elections.
- 3) 13% of Black adults and 9% of Hispanic adults express a great deal of confidence in the election-related information they obtain from social media compared with 3% of white adults.

The survey also reveals some important differences based on people's race or ethnicity, age, or political affiliation. For example, Black adults (13%) and Hispanic adults (9%) are more likely than white adults (3%) to have a great deal of confidence in the news about elections they obtain from social media.

Younger adults are less engaged with election news and have less confidence in the media than older adults, but older adults have more concerns about inaccurate election news.

While there are clear differences across party lines about confidence in the news media, there is also common ground about what Democrats and Republicans want from media coverage. Both Democrats and Republicans want national media to report about candidates' positions on key social issues and policies (Democrats 82% and Republicans 76%) as well as candidates' values and character (Democrats 81% and Republicans 75%). Independents are less likely to say they want national media to cover all aspects of the elections compared with Democrats or Republicans.

Despite common perceptions about the country's growing geographic divisions, 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.

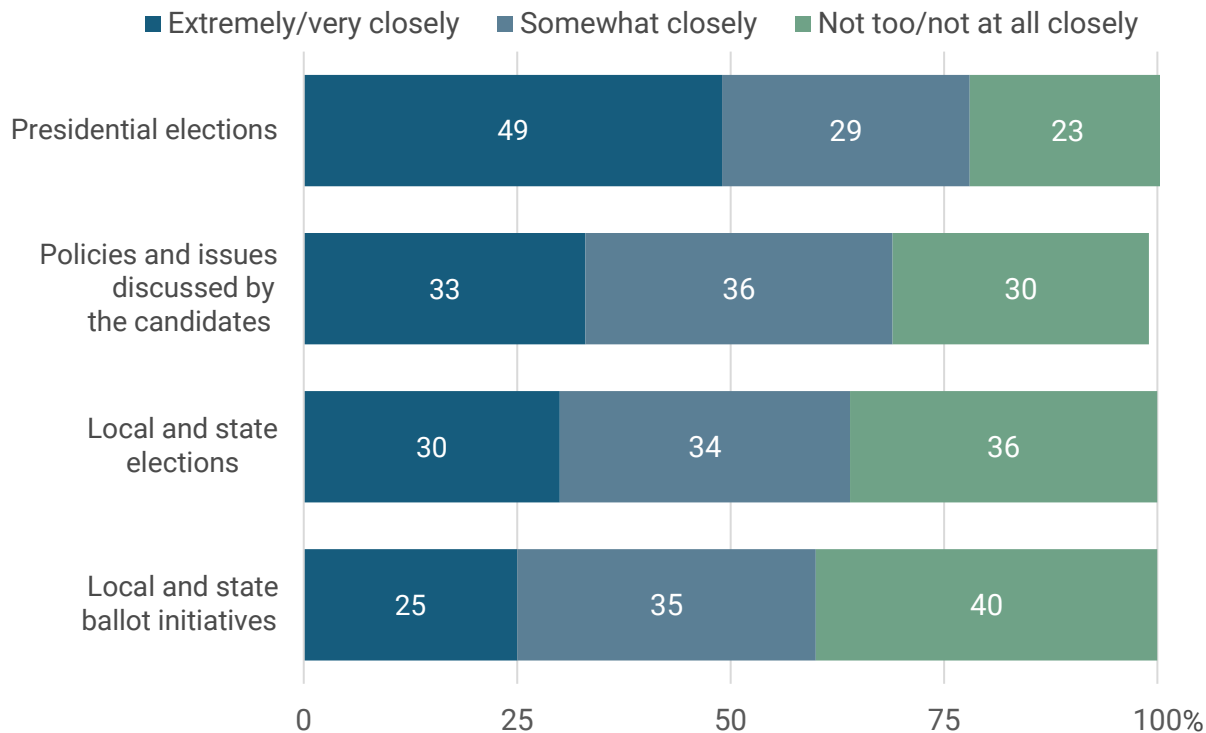
The nationwide poll was conducted by the Media Insight Project, a collaboration of the American Press Institute and The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research from March 21 to March 25, 2024, using the AmeriSpeak[®] Panel, the probability-based panel of NORC at the University of Chicago. Online and telephone interviews using landlines and cell phones were conducted with 2,468 adults. The margin of sampling error is +/- 2.9 percentage points.

MOST ADULTS FOLLOW NEWS ABOUT ELECTIONS, PARTICULARLY NEWS RELATED TO PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Most adults follow news about elections – from presidential (77%) and state (64%) elections to local ballot initiatives (59%) and policies (70%) – at least somewhat closely. And about half of the public follow news regarding presidential elections very or extremely closely compared to about a third who say the same about policies or issues, or state and local elections. Only a quarter of adults say they follow news about local and state ballot initiatives very or extremely closely.

Adults follow news about presidential elections more closely than news on policies, local elections, or ballot initiatives

Percent of adults



Question: In general, how closely do you follow news about each of the following?

Source: AP-NORC poll conducted March 21-25, 2024, with 2,468 adults nationwide.



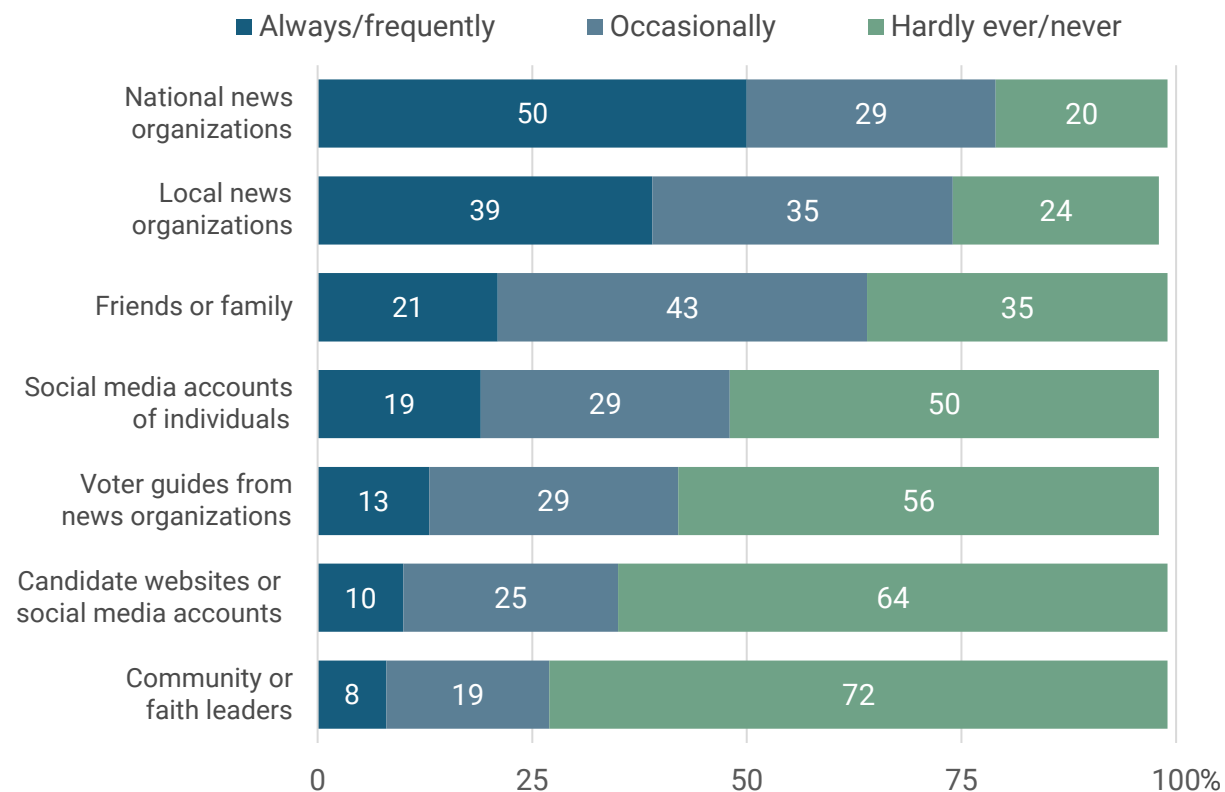
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THE PUBLIC GETS NEWS ABOUT ELECTIONS FROM A VARIETY OF SOURCES, YET NATIONAL AND LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS STAND OUT AS MOST FREQUENTLY USED

Adults rely predominantly on national or local news organizations for their election news. Social media platforms or information shared by friends or family rank as the second-most-frequently used sources for election news. In contrast, voter guides from news organizations, candidate websites or social media, or input from community or faith leaders, are far less frequently used for election news.

National and local news organizations are the most frequently used sources of news about elections

Percent of adults



Question: Think about the ways you typically get news about elections. How often do you get news from...?

Source: AP-NORC poll conducted March 21-25, 2024, with 2,468 adults nationwide.



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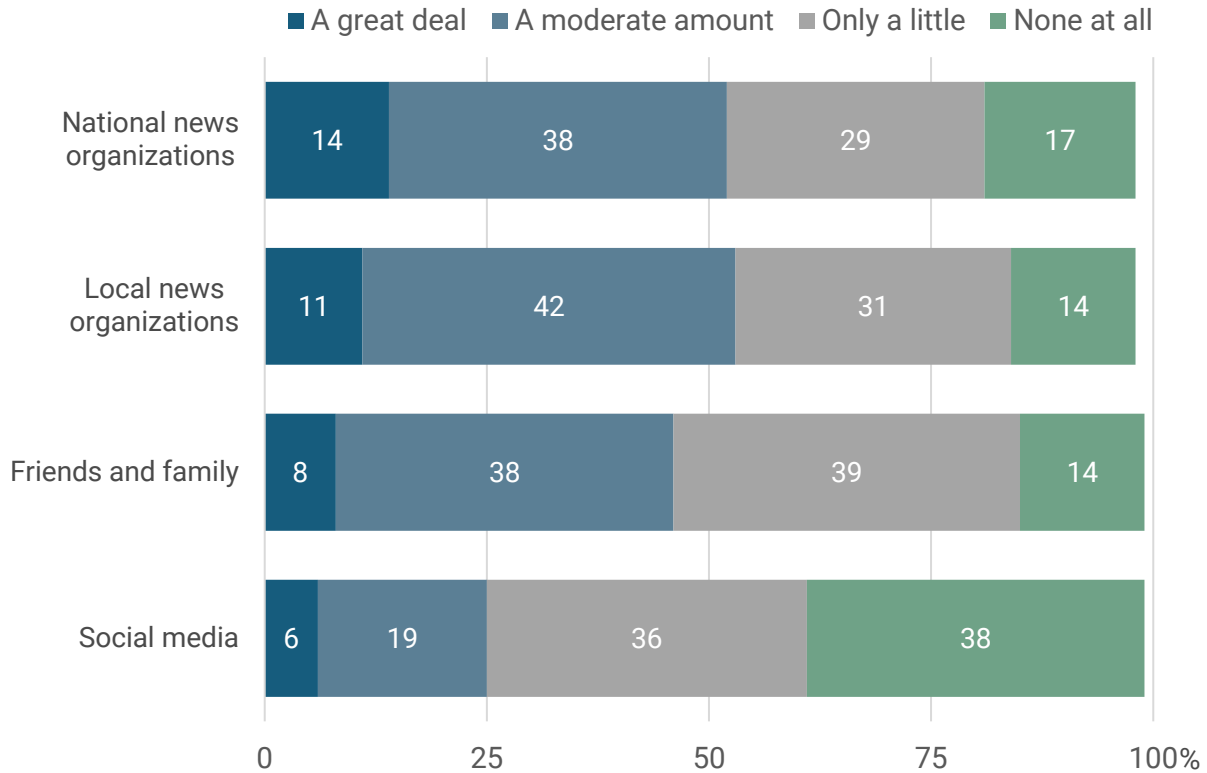
TRUST OF THE MOST FREQUENTLY USED NEWS SOURCES ABOUT THE 2024 ELECTION IS SOMEWHAT LOW

Despite reliance on traditional national or local news sources for election news, about half have a moderate or great deal of confidence in the information they receive from these sources. And only about 1 in 10 adults express a great deal of confidence in them.

This moderate level of confidence in news regarding the 2024 elections is similar to the public's confidence – or lack thereof – in the accuracy of vote counting in the upcoming election. According to a [December 2023 AP-NORC poll](#), 46% of adults express a great deal or quite a bit of confidence that votes in the 2024 presidential election will be counted accurately. Another 23% express a moderate amount of confidence, while 31% have little or no confidence at all.

Only about 1 in 10 have a great deal of confidence in the information they get about the 2024 elections from these sources

Percent of adults



Question: How much confidence do you have in the information about the 2024 elections you receive from each of the following?

Source: AP-NORC poll conducted March 21-25, 2024, with 2,468 adults nationwide.



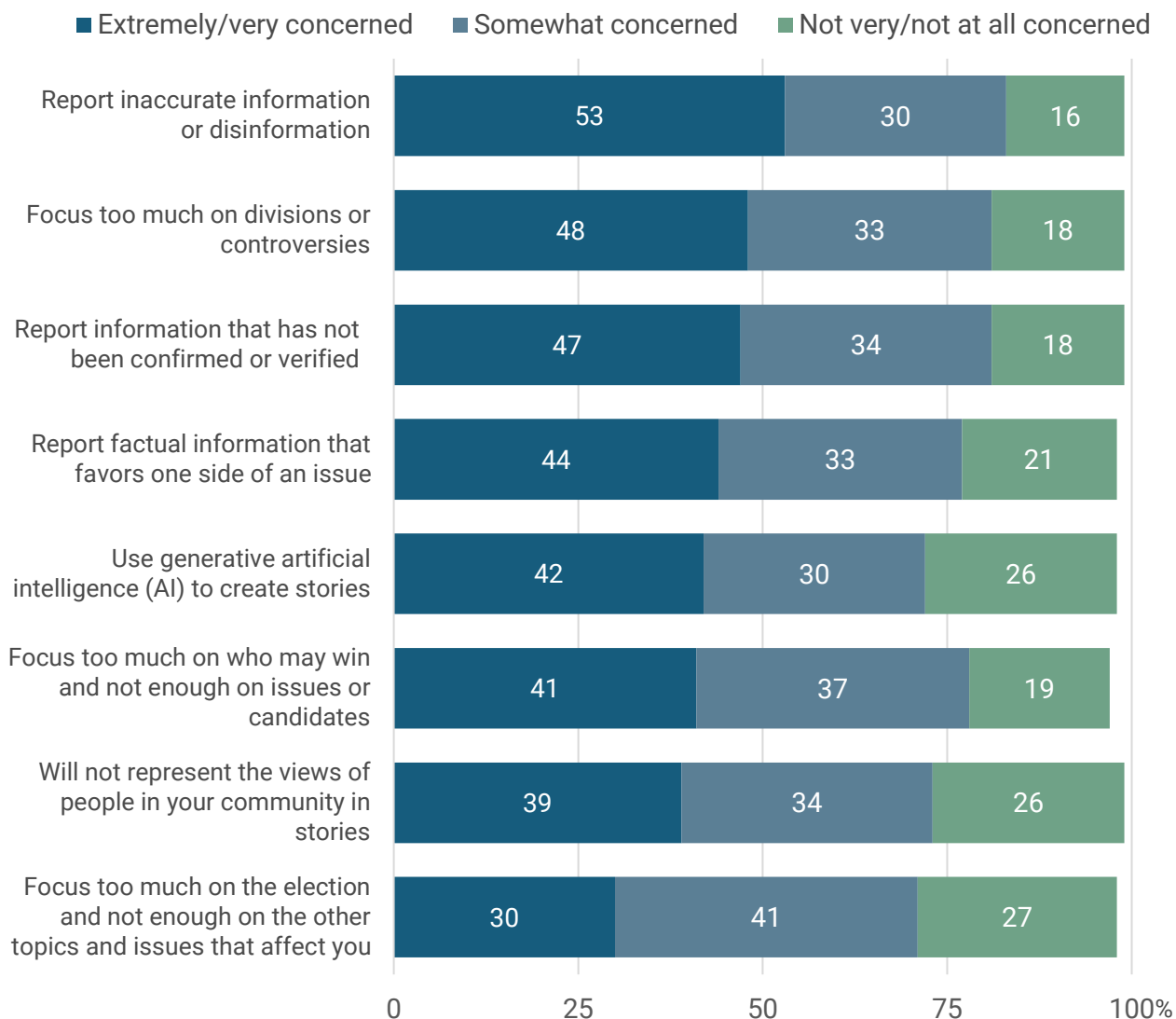
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THE PUBLIC HOLDS A NUMBER OF CONCERNS ABOUT NEWS COVERAGE OF THE 2024 ELECTION

Roughly half of adults say they are extremely or very concerned about news organizations reporting inaccurate or unverified information, as well as focusing excessively on divisions or controversies in their coverage of the 2024 election. About 4 in 10 are worried that the media may report news favoring one side, utilize generative artificial intelligence (AI) for story creation, prioritize speculation on election outcomes over addressing important issues, or fail to represent local community perspectives. Fewer are concerned about news media prioritizing election coverage at the expense of other relevant topics.

Adults are concerned about misinformation, unverified information, and too much focus on controversies in the news coverage of the 2024 elections

Percent of adults



Question: How concerned are you about each of the following when it comes to the news coverage during the upcoming 2024 elections?

Source: AP-NORC poll conducted March 21-25, 2024, with 2,468 adults nationwide.

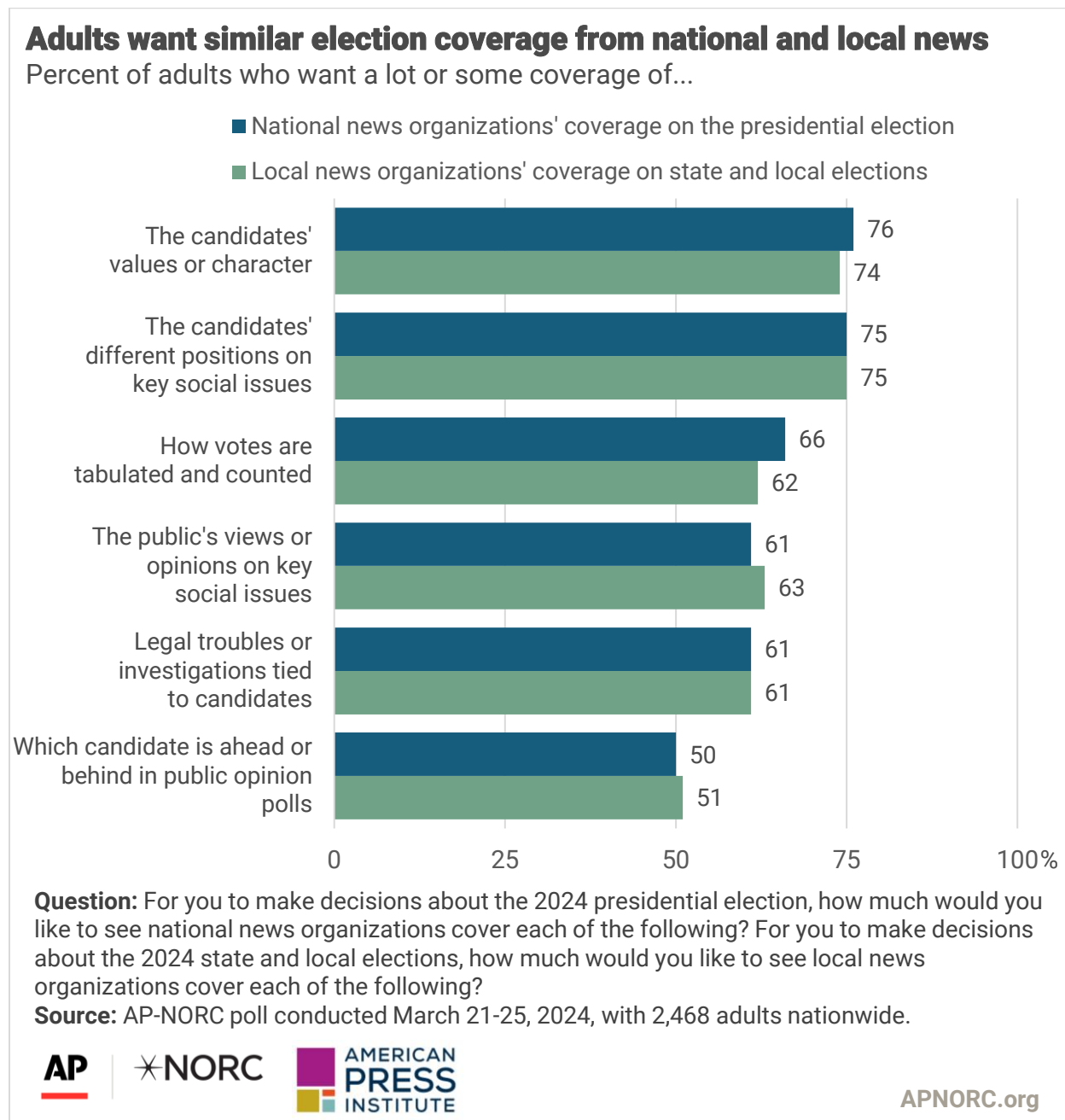


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THE PUBLIC HAS SIMILAR PREFERENCES FOR COVERAGE FROM NATIONAL AND LOCAL NEWS ORGANIZATIONS

The survey asked respondents which topics or aspects of the election they would like to see covered more during the campaigns to help them make decisions about the election.

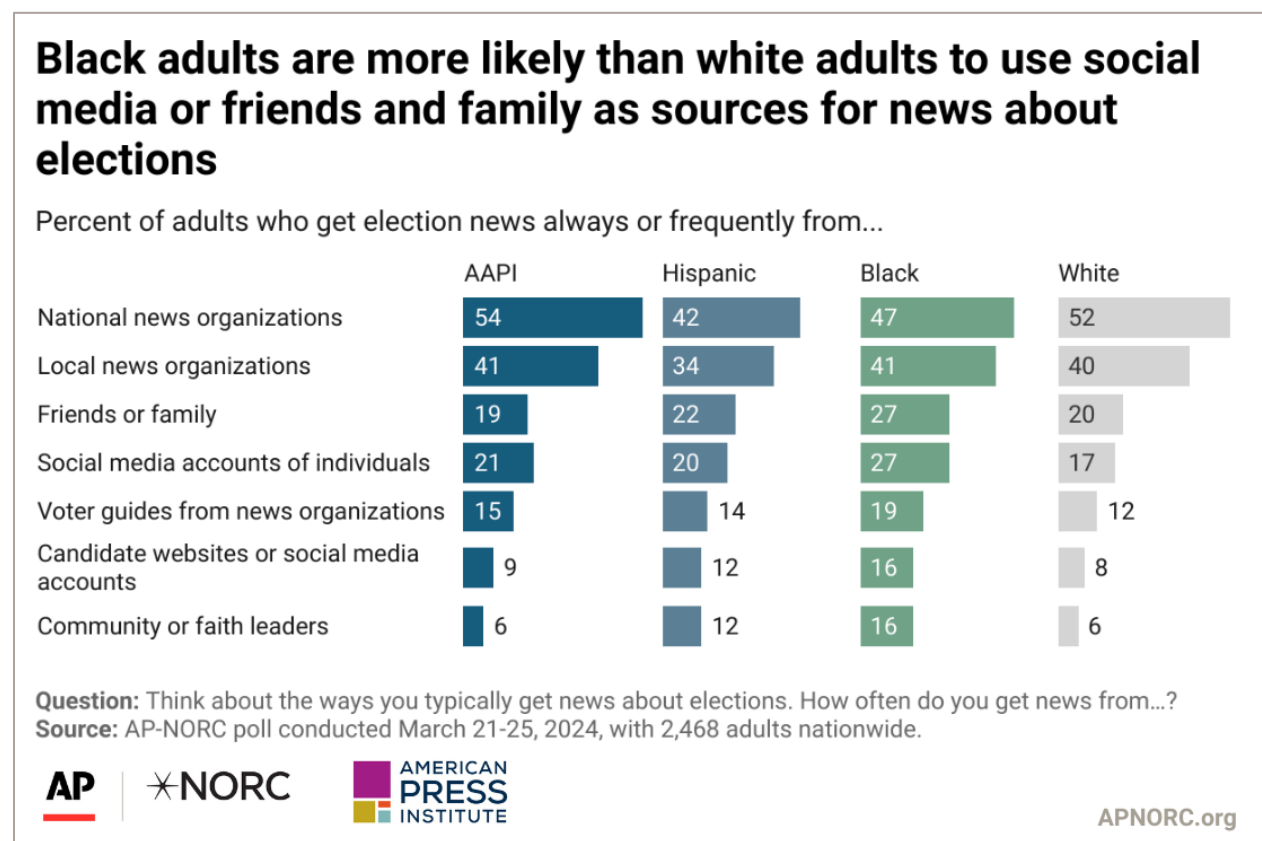
For both local and national news organizations, the topics the public anticipates they would want covered most are the candidates' values or character or their policy positions. About 2 in 3 adults say they would like national and local news media to cover how votes are tabulated, legal troubles or investigations tied to the candidates, and the public's views on key social issues. About half of adults express a desire for coverage from these outlets about who is ahead or behind in the polling. These priorities largely do not differ between local and national news outlets.



THERE ARE DIFFERENCES ACROSS RACIAL AND ETHNIC GROUPS IN SOURCES OF ELECTION INFORMATION, CONFIDENCE IN THOSE SOURCES, AND WHAT PEOPLE WANT FROM NEWS COVERAGE

The survey highlights several key differences in election news sources and attitudes among Black adults, Hispanic adults, white adults, and Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (AAPI) adults.

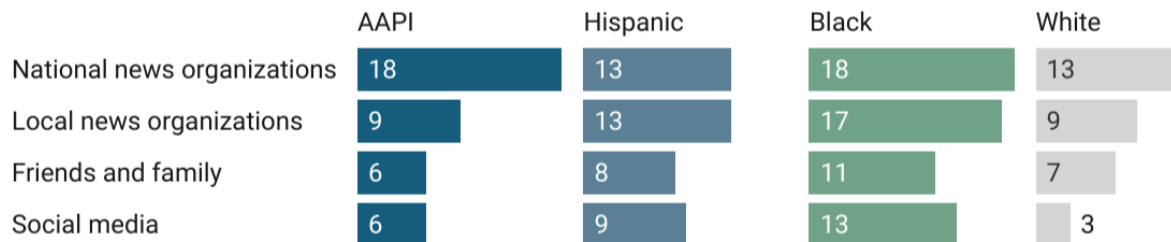
Adults across racial and ethnic categories are more likely to rely on national or local news organizations for information about elections than other sources. However, Black adults are more likely than white adults to frequently or always obtain election news from individuals on social media, candidate websites, voter guides from news organizations, or through friends or family. Moreover, both Black adults and Hispanic adults are significantly more inclined than white adults to receive election-related updates from their community or faith leaders.



Black adults (13%) and Hispanic adults (9%) are more likely to say they have a great deal of confidence in election information from social media platforms compared with their white counterparts (3%).

Black and Hispanic adults have more confidence in election news from social media than white adults

Percent of adults who have a great deal of confidence in election information from...



Question: How much confidence do you have in the information about the 2024 elections you receive from each of the following?

Source: AP-NORC poll conducted March 21-25, 2024, with 2,468 adults nationwide.

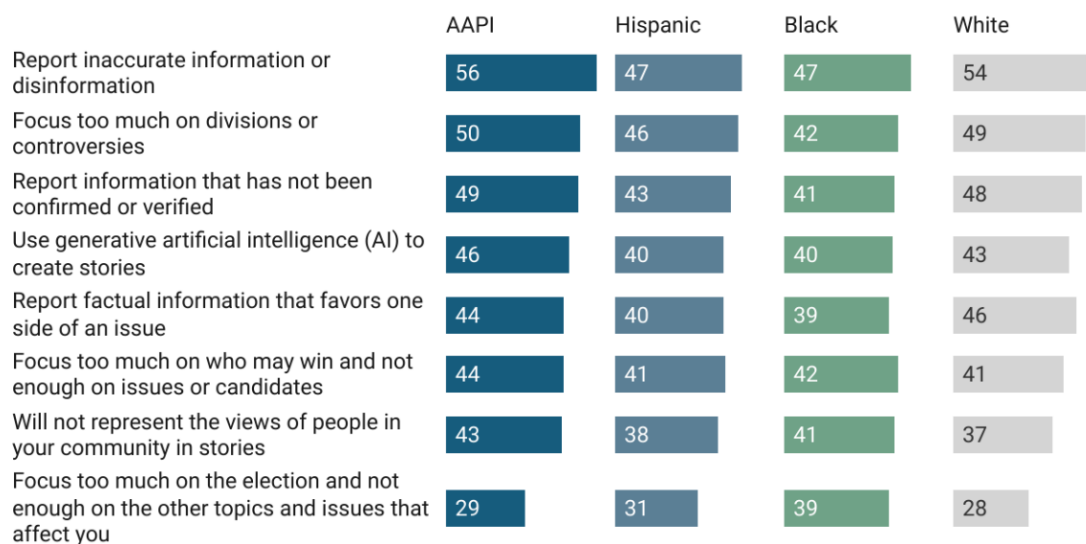


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Concerns about election news coverage are similar across racial and ethnic groups, but Black adults express more apprehension than white adults or AAPI adults that news coverage will overly emphasize the election at the expense of other relevant topics or issues that impact them personally.

Black adults are more concerned the news media will focus too much on the election at the expense of other relevant topics that affect them personally

Percent of adults who are extremely or very concerned



Question: How concerned are you about each of the following when it comes to the news coverage during the upcoming 2024 elections?

Source: AP-NORC poll conducted March 21-25, 2024, with 2,468 adults nationwide.



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While the candidates’ values or character or their positions on key social issues are the highest ranked topics across all racial and ethnic groups, there is a particular interest for these topics among AAPI adults and white adults compared with Hispanic adults or Black adults.

The topics at the local level that are most interesting to adults, regardless of race or ethnicity, are similar to topics prioritized at the national level, with the candidates’ values or character or their positions on key social issues at the top. Black and AAPI adults are more interested than white adults in local news media covering which candidate is ahead or behind in the polling.

There are differences in what to prioritize in election coverage among racial and ethnic groups

Percent who want a lot or some coverage of...

| | AAPI | Hispanic | Black | White |
|--|------|----------|-------|-------|
| National news organizations | | | | |
| The candidates’ values or character | 82 | 66 | 76 | 77 |
| The candidates’ different positions and history on key social issues or policies | 83 | 65 | 68 | 78 |
| How votes are tabulated and counted | 65 | 62 | 68 | 66 |
| Legal troubles or investigations tied to candidates | 74 | 63 | 68 | 58 |
| The American public’s views or opinions on key social issues or policies | 66 | 59 | 67 | 59 |
| Which candidate is ahead or behind in public opinion polls | 57 | 52 | 58 | 47 |
| Local news organizations | | | | |
| The candidates’ values or character | 80 | 66 | 75 | 75 |
| The candidates’ different positions and history on key social issues or policies | 79 | 64 | 76 | 77 |
| How votes are tabulated and counted | 59 | 61 | 63 | 62 |
| Legal troubles or investigations tied to candidates | 73 | 61 | 71 | 58 |
| The views and opinions in your local community on key social issues or policies | 67 | 59 | 67 | 63 |
| Which candidate is ahead or behind in public opinion polls | 59 | 56 | 57 | 48 |

Questions: For you to make decisions about the 2024 presidential election, how much would you like to see national news organizations cover each of the following? For you to make decisions about the 2024 state and local elections, how much would you like to see local news organizations cover each of the following?

Source: AP-NORC poll conducted March 21-25, 2024, with 2,468 adults nationwide.

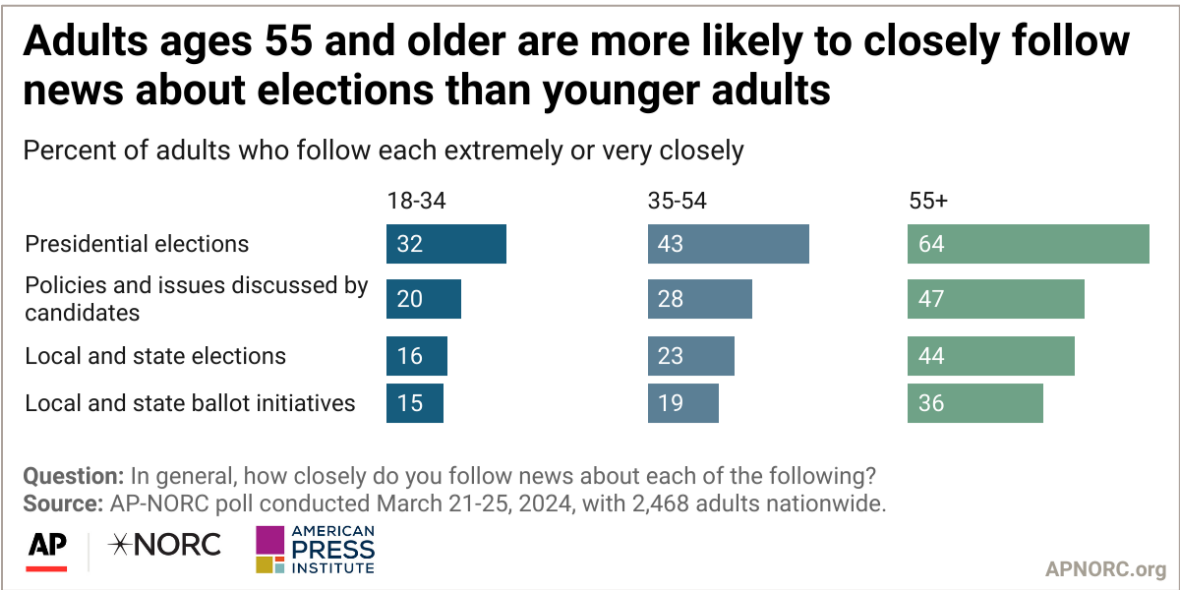


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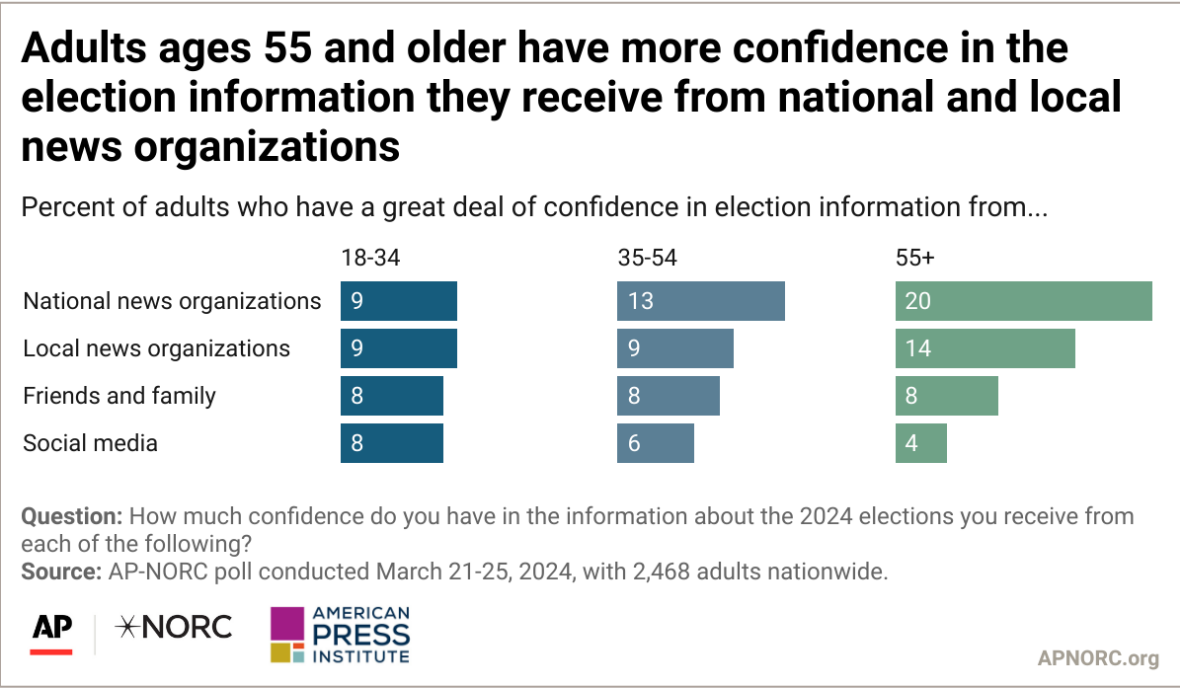
OLDER ADULTS HAVE MORE CONFIDENCE IN INFORMATION FROM NEWS OUTLETS THAN YOUNGER ADULTS, BUT OLDER ADULTS ARE ALSO MORE CONCERNED ABOUT MISINFORMATION

Across various types of election related news and coverage, public engagement and interest increase with age.

Adults ages 55 and older most closely monitor news related to elections, and adults ages 35 to 54 are more likely than 18 to 34-year-olds to follow local and state elections, presidential elections, and discussions surrounding candidates' policies and issues with a high level of attention.



Older adults – those ages 55 and older – are more likely to have confidence in the information they get from national and local news sources than younger adults.



Older adults are more likely to be extremely or very concerned about news organizations reporting disinformation or unverified information than younger adults. The same is true about the media using generative AI. The older the age group, the more likely they are to be extremely or very concerned about these issues.

Similarly, concerns about news outlets focusing excessively on election outcomes rather than on issues or candidates, not accurately representing community views, or exhibiting bias toward one side of an issue are more prevalent among adults ages 55 and older compared with younger adults.

Older adults are more likely to be concerned about the news media reporting disinformation and biased coverage, among other issues

Percent of adults who are extremely or very concerned

| | 18-34 | 35-54 | 55+ |
|--|-------|-------|-----|
| Report inaccurate information or disinformation | 40 | 52 | 63 |
| Focus too much on divisions or controversies | 40 | 48 | 53 |
| Report factual information that favors one side of an issue | 35 | 41 | 53 |
| Focus too much on who may win and not enough on issues or candidates | 34 | 39 | 49 |
| Report information that has not been confirmed or verified | 33 | 46 | 56 |
| Will not represent the views of people in your community in stories | 32 | 37 | 45 |
| Focus too much on the election and not enough on the other topics and issues that affect you | 28 | 27 | 34 |
| Use generative artificial intelligence (AI) to create stories | 27 | 38 | 57 |

Question: How concerned are you about each of the following when it comes to the news coverage during the upcoming 2024 elections?

Source: AP-NORC poll conducted March 21-25, 2024, with 2,468 adults nationwide.



NORC

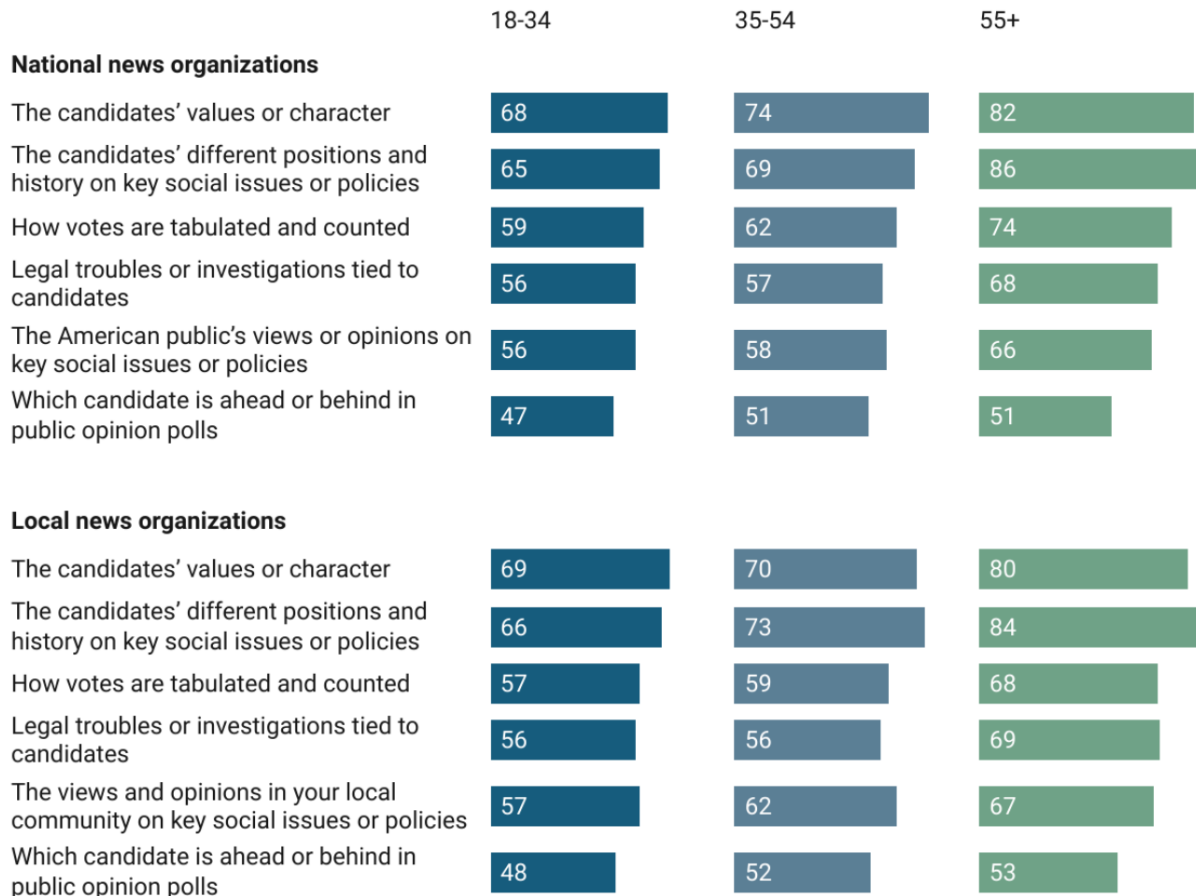


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All age groups place the candidates' values and policy positions as their highest priorities for election coverage. However, adults ages 55 and older are more likely than younger adults to want a lot or some coverage of candidates' policy positions and values, legal investigations or troubles tied to candidates, or how votes are tabulated or counted.

Older adults are more likely to prioritize coverage of candidate positions and character, legal investigations, and how votes are counted

Percent who want a lot or some coverage of...



Questions: For you to make decisions about the 2024 presidential election, how much would you like to see national news organizations cover each of the following? For you to make decisions about the 2024 state and local elections, how much would you like to see local news organizations cover each of the following?

Source: AP-NORC poll conducted March 21-25, 2024, with 2,468 adults nationwide.



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WHILE REPUBLICANS ARE MORE CONCERNED THAN DEMOCRATS ABOUT MISINFORMATION, DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS HAVE SIMILAR VIEWS ON WHAT THEY WANT THE MEDIA TO COVER DURING THE 2024 ELECTIONS

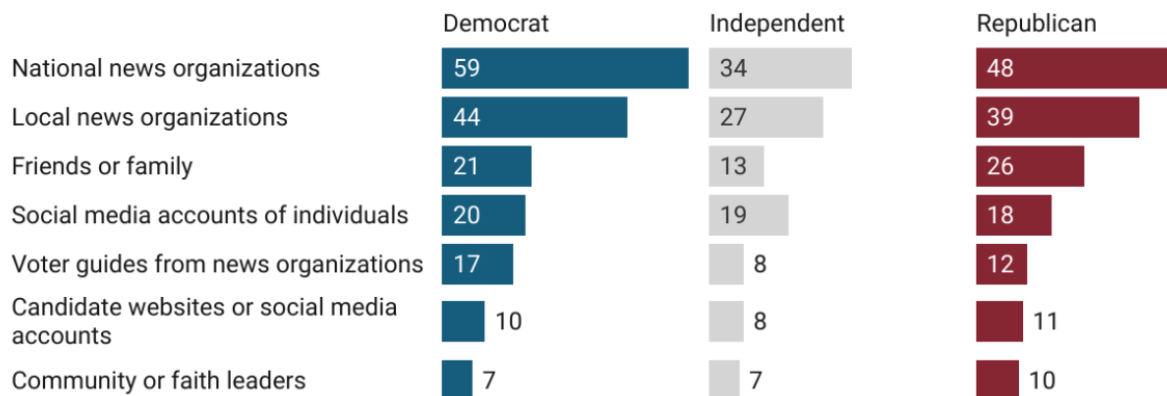
Democrats, Republicans, and independents use similar types of sources for election news, but there are some differences in how frequently they use these sources.

Democrats and Republicans have a higher tendency than independents to always or frequently follow news from local news organizations. And while Democrats are more inclined than Republicans or

independents to stay updated on election news through national news organizations, Republicans are more likely than Democrats or independents to always or frequently acquire information about elections from friends or family. There is common ground across partisan lines regarding the reliance on sources such as individual social media accounts, community or faith leaders, or candidate websites for election-related news.

Democrats and Republicans turn to local and national media for news about elections more frequently than independents

Percent of adults who get election news always or frequently from...



Question: Think about the ways you typically get news about elections. How often do you get news from...?

Source: AP-NORC poll conducted March 21-25, 2024, with 2,468 adults nationwide.



APNORC.org

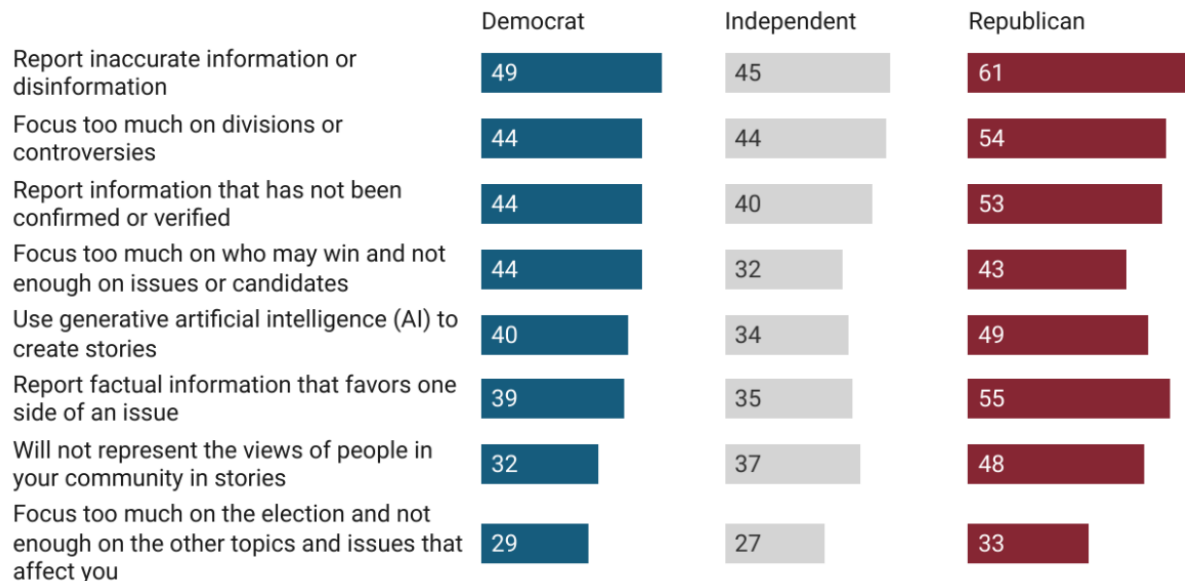
Democrats (70%) are more likely to have a great deal or a lot of confidence in national news organizations compared with independents (36%) or Republicans (41%). And Republicans (55%) exhibit a higher level of confidence in election-related information that comes from friends or family compared with Democrats (42%) or independents (34%).

Republicans are more likely to be very or extremely concerned than either independents or Democrats that news organizations may favor one side of an issue, employ generative AI for story creation, fail to represent community views accurately, or report inaccurate or disinformation.

Moreover, Republicans are also more likely than Democrats to express apprehension about news outlets reporting unverified information or placing excessive focus on divisions or controversies. Democrats and Republicans share similar levels of concern about news coverage focusing too much on who may win and not enough on issues or candidates.

Democrats and Republicans share concerns about news prioritizing speculation of election outcomes rather than issues or candidates

Percent of adults who are extremely or very concerned



Question: How concerned are you about each of the following when it comes to the news coverage during the upcoming 2024 elections?

Source: AP-NORC poll conducted March 21-25, 2024, with 2,468 adults nationwide.

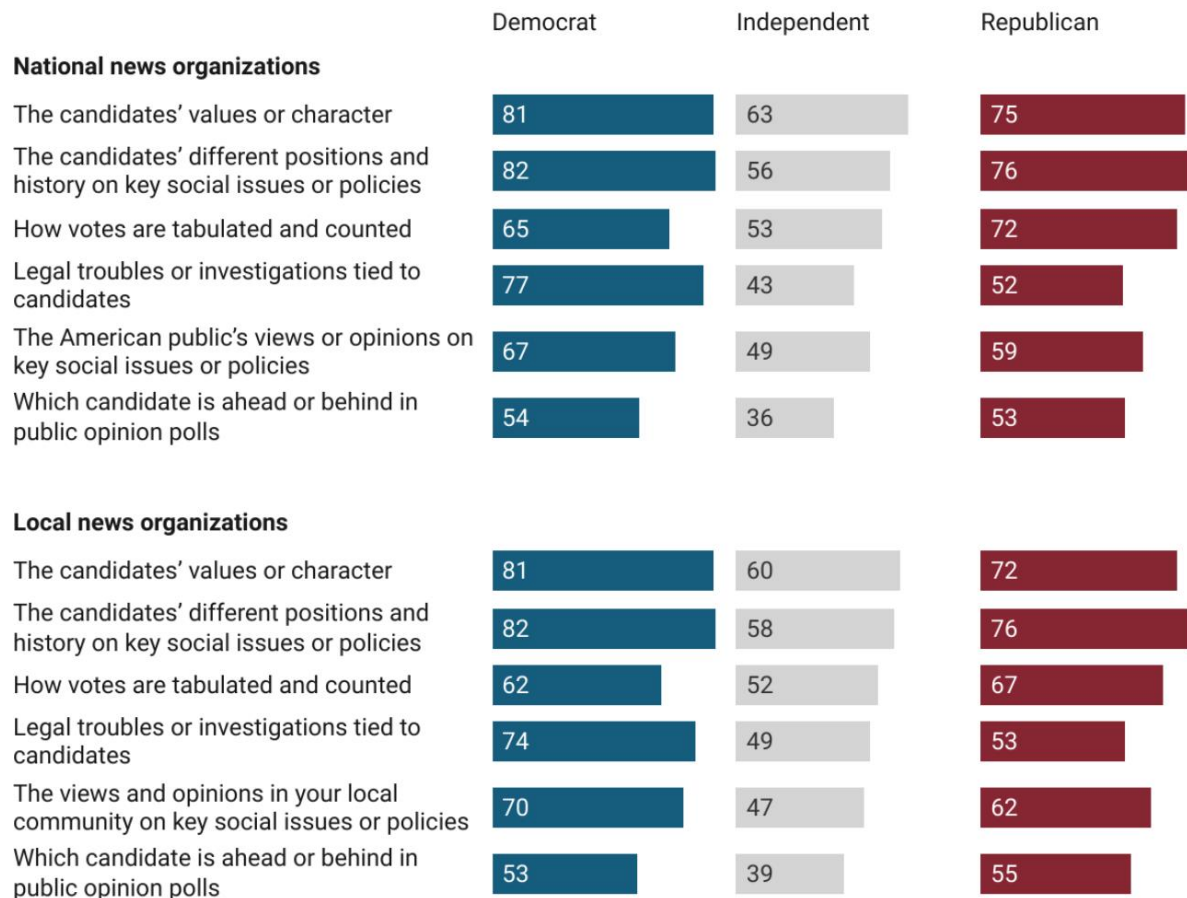


APNORC.org

In both national and local election coverage, Democrats and Republicans are more likely than independents to want reporting about the candidates' positions on key social issues or policies, who is ahead or behind in public opinion polls, the public's views on key issues or policies, and how votes are tabulated or counted. Democrats are more likely to want coverage about legal troubles or investigations tied to candidates than Republicans or independents.

Democrats and Republicans are more likely to want coverage about candidate policy positions, among other topics

Percent who want a lot or some coverage of...



Questions: For you to make decisions about the 2024 presidential election, how much would you like to see national news organizations cover each of the following? For you to make decisions about the 2024 state and local elections, how much would you like to see local news organizations cover each of the following?

Source: AP-NORC poll conducted March 21-25, 2024, with 2,468 adults nationwide.



APNORC.org

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

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.

Data were collected using the AmeriSpeak Omnibus®, a bi-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 and then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, and field interviewers (face-to-face). The panel provides sample coverage of approximately 97 percent 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.

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. For purposes of analysis, the survey 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. Respondents were offered a small monetary incentive for completing the survey. The final stage completion rate is 16.3 percent, the weighted household panel response rate is 22.3 percent, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 78.9 percent, for a cumulative response rate of 2.9 percent.

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 AAPI adults.

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, 144 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 noncoverage 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 2023 Current Population Survey. The weighted data reflect the U.S. population of adults age 18 and over.

Complete questions and results are available at: apnorc.org.

Additional information on the AmeriSpeak Panel methodology is available at: <https://amerispeak.norc.org/about-amerispeak/Pages/Panel-Design.aspx>.

For more information, email info@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
- NORC at the University of Chicago is one of the oldest objective and nonpartisan research institutions in the world. 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.