

FOR RELEASE JUNE 5, 2019

# Many Americans Say Made-Up News Is a Critical Problem That Needs To Be Fixed

*Politicians viewed as major creators of it, but journalists seen as the ones who should fix it*

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**RECOMMENDED CITATION**

Pew Research Center, June, 2019, "Many Americans Say Made-Up News Is a Critical Problem That Needs To Be Fixed"

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## Many Americans Say Made-Up News Is a Critical Problem That Needs To Be Fixed

*Politicians viewed as major creators of it, but journalists seen as the ones who should fix it*

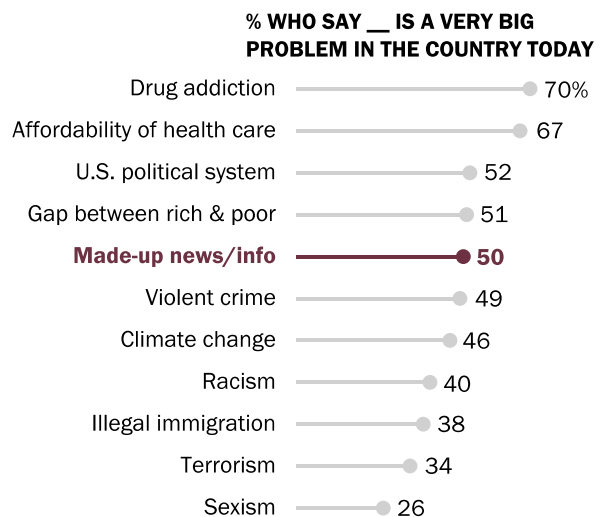
Many Americans say the creation and spread of made-up news and information is causing significant harm to the nation and needs to be stopped, according to a new Pew Research Center survey of 6,127 U.S. adults conducted between Feb. 19 and March 4, 2019, on the Center's American Trends Panel.

Indeed, more Americans view made-up news as a very big problem for the country than identify terrorism, illegal immigration, racism and sexism that way. Additionally, nearly seven-in-ten U.S. adults (68%) say made-up news and information greatly impacts Americans' confidence in government institutions, and roughly half (54%) say it is having a major impact on our confidence in each other.

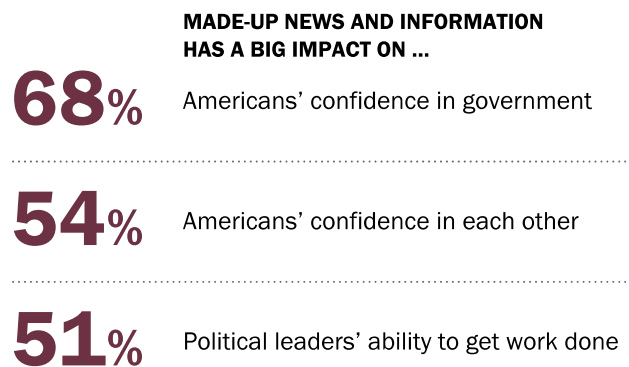
U.S. adults blame political leaders and activists far more than journalists for the creation of made-up news intended to mislead the public. But they believe it is primarily the responsibility of journalists to fix the problem. And they think the issue will get worse in the foreseeable future.

The vast majority of Americans say they sometimes or often encounter made-up news. In response, many have altered their news consumption habits, including by fact-checking the news they get and changing the sources they turn to for news.

### Americans see made-up news as a bigger problem than other key issues ...



### ... and most see it as detrimental to the country's democratic system



Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.  
 "Many Americans Say Made-Up News Is a Critical Problem That Needs To Be Fixed"

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In addition, about eight-in-ten U.S. adults (79%) believe steps should be taken to restrict made-up news, as opposed to 20% who see it as protected communication.

Similar to Americans' news attitudes generally, stark partisan differences exist when it comes to made-up news and information, particularly in the area of assessing blame. Differences also emerge based on political awareness and age. In general, Republicans, the highly politically aware and older Americans express higher levels of concern about the impact of made-up news than their counterparts.

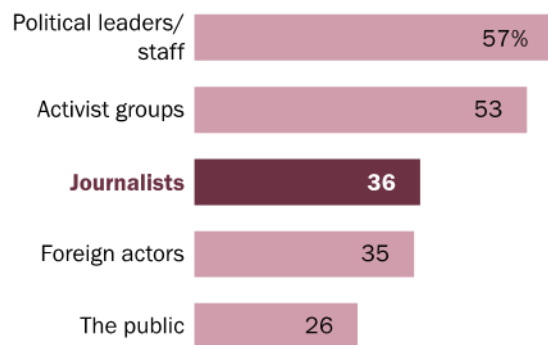
These concerns about made-up news are mingled with pessimism about the future of the issue. Most of those surveyed (56%) think the problem will get worse over the next five years. Only one-in-ten believe progress will be made in reducing it.

Americans do not blame journalists the most for creating made-up news and information, but put most responsibility on them to fix it

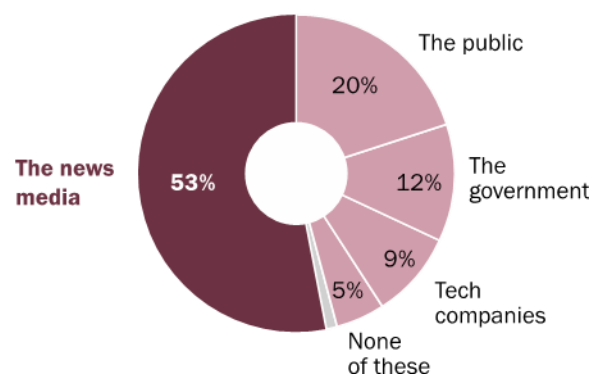
The public singles out two groups of people as the primary sources of made-up news: political leaders and activist groups. Close to six-in-ten U.S. adults (57%) say political leaders and their staff create a lot of made-up news, and about half (53%) say the same thing of activist groups.

### Journalists are not blamed most for creating made-up news and information, but Americans say the news media are most responsible for fixing it

*% of U.S. adults who say \_\_\_ create a lot of made-up news and information*



*% of U.S. adults who say \_\_\_ have the **most responsibility** in reducing the amount of made-up news and information*



Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

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About a third feel journalists (36%) or foreign actors (35%) create a lot, while about a quarter (26%) put the blame on the public.

Even though Americans do not see journalists as a leading contributor of made-up news and information, 53% think they have the greatest responsibility to reduce it – far more than those who say the onus mostly falls on the government (12%) or technology companies (9%).

A somewhat larger percentage of those surveyed (20%) say the public itself bears the most responsibility to reduce it. But another finding suggests the challenges inherent in that effort. Of the 52% of Americans who say they have shared made-up news themselves, a vast majority of them said they didn't know it was made up when they did so.

### Much of the public has taken actions in response to the issue of made-up news and information

Almost four-in-ten Americans (38%) say they often come across made-up news and information, and another 51% say they sometimes do. Given their concerns about made-up news, Americans have also changed their news and technology habits. Almost eight-in-ten (78%) say they have checked the facts in news stories themselves. Roughly six-in-ten (63%) have stopped getting news from a particular outlet, about half (52%) have changed the way they use social media and roughly four-in-ten (43%) have lessened their overall news intake.

Concern about made-up news has also affected how U.S. adults interact with each other. Half say they have avoided talking with someone because they thought that person would bring made-up news into the conversation.

In the digital environment, half of social media news consumers have stopped following someone they know because they thought the person was posting made-up news and information, and the same percentage have stopped following a news organization for this reason.

Republicans express far greater concern than Democrats about the issue and place far more blame on journalists

Not all Americans say they experience the same level of exposure to made-up news and information or express the same level of concern. In addition, people disagree about who is responsible for it and who should shoulder the burden to reduce it. Perhaps not surprisingly, some of the greatest divides occur along party lines.

Just as Republicans express greater skepticism than Democrats [about news coverage and the news media more generally](#), they see made-up news as a bigger problem and place far more blame on journalists.

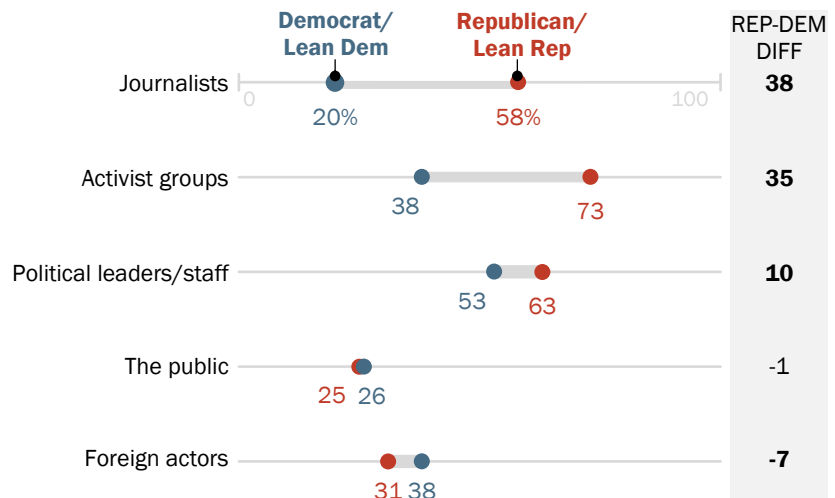
A solid majority of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents (62%) say made-up news is a very big problem in the country today, compared with fewer than half of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents (40%). Republicans also register greater exposure to made-up news. About half of Republicans (49%) say they come across it often, 19 percentage points higher than Democrats (30%).

One of the starkest differences, though, is in assigning blame for creating made-up news and information. Republicans are nearly three times as likely as Democrats to say journalists create a lot of it (58% vs. 20%).

Republicans also place more blame on activist groups, with about three-quarters (73%) saying these groups create a lot, close to twice the rate of Democrats (38%). Political leaders and their staff, though, rank high for both sides of the aisle – half or more of each party say they create a lot. And while members of both parties

### Republicans about three times as likely as Democrats to blame journalists for creating made-up news and information

% of U.S. adults who say \_\_\_ create **a lot** of made-up news and information



Note: Statistically significant differences are in **bold**.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

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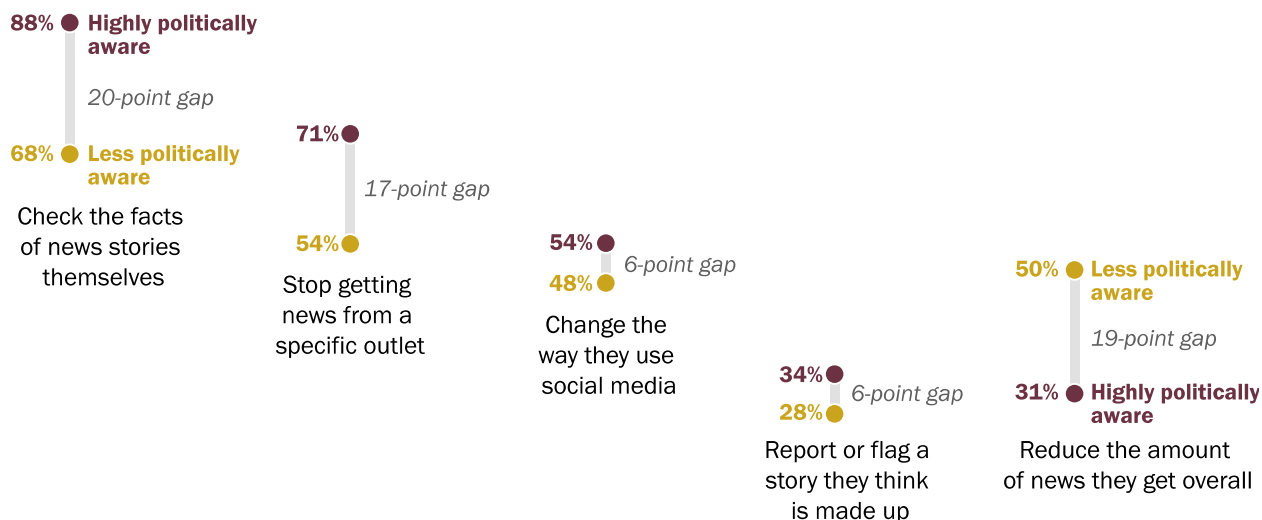
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say the news media bear the primary responsibility for fixing the situation, that feeling is considerably more pervasive among Republicans (69%) than Democrats (42%).

Other factors contribute to differences in how the threat of made-up news and information is perceived. Political awareness – based on how closely one follows politics and answers to [three political knowledge questions](#) – also plays a substantial role. For example, highly politically aware Americans say they see more made-up news than do those who are less politically aware, and they feel it has a more negative impact on our democratic system. People who are less politically aware, on the other hand, are more likely to spread made-up news and to have reduced their news intake in response to it.

## The highly politically aware take more actions in response to made-up news and information, but the less politically aware are more likely to tune news out

Among U.S. adults at each level of political awareness, % who say the issue of made-up news and information has led them to ...



Note: The somewhat politically aware not shown. To see the data for the somewhat aware, see Appendix.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

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While much of the public discussion around made-up news is about [its spread on social media](#), those who prefer to get their news through social media do not appear to be all that different from adults who prefer other ways to get news. In fact, Americans who prefer social media are about as



likely as those who prefer other news pathways to say they frequently come across made-up news. The only areas where those who prefer social media really stand apart are in being somewhat less pessimistic about how the issue will evolve and more likely to share it.

There are also some age-based differences in attitudes toward made-up news. The youngest American adults – those ages 18 to 29 – tend to be less concerned about the impact of made-up news than those older than them, say they see less of it, and are less likely to blame politicians, activists, journalists and foreign actors for it. And like those who prefer social media for news, younger Americans tend to be less pessimistic than their elders about the future of the issue.<sup>1</sup>

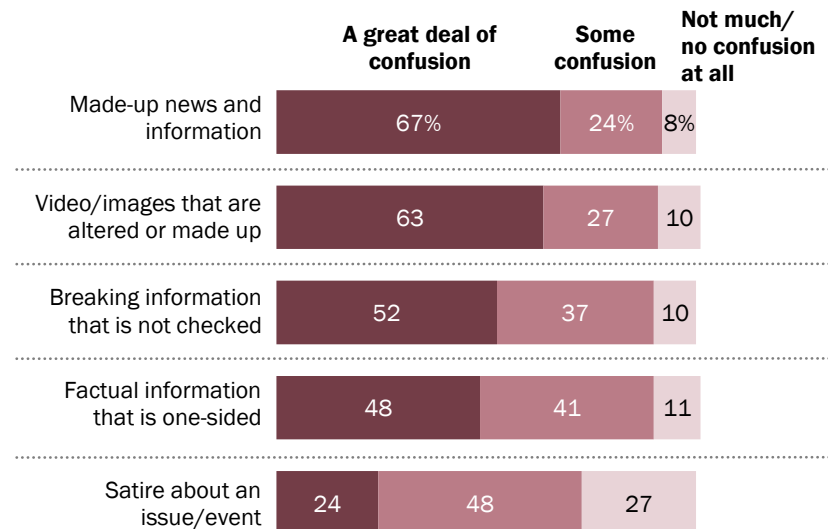
## Americans react differently to different forms of misinformation, see made-up news and altered videos as biggest problems

Most of this study focuses specifically on made-up news and information that is intended to mislead the public. But it also examines some other potentially inaccurate or misleading types of information.

Americans make clear distinctions among five kinds of misinformation asked about in this survey, expressing the greatest concern about fully made-up news as well as altered videos and images. Two-thirds (67%) say that made-up news designed to mislead causes a great deal of confusion about the basic facts of current issues, while 63% feel the same way about a video

### About two-thirds think made-up information and altered videos create a great deal of confusion around facts about current issues

*% of U.S. adults who say each type of news and information causes \_\_\_ about the basic facts of current issues and events*



Note: Those who did not answer not shown.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

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<sup>1</sup> Trust in the news media also seems to have only minimal impact on Americans views about made-up news. Those who are more skeptical of the news media (specifically those who have little or no trust in sources they don't often turn to) are more likely to see the issue of made-up news as a problem for the country and think that it causes a great deal of confusion for the public; beyond that, few consistent differences emerge.

that is altered or made up. And by large majorities, 79% and 77% respectively, they favor restrictions on these kinds of content.

There is significant but less concern about breaking news that is not fully checked and factual information presented in such a way as to favor one side. About half of Americans say those two forms of potentially inaccurate or misleading information cause a great deal of confusion about basic facts, although there is more support for restricting unchecked breaking news (54%) than factual information that is biased (37%).

One form of misinformation that is not perceived nearly as negatively is satire about an issue or event. Only about a quarter of Americans (24%) believe it causes a great deal of confusion about facts and three-in-ten believe it should be restricted.

### Other key findings:

- Americans feel that political divides in the country are the greatest obstacle to addressing the problem of made-up news and information. Almost two-thirds (64%) see those divides as a very big challenge. Between 41% and 44% cite the ability to make money from made-up news, digital technology, the public's lack of effort and low awareness about current events as very big hurdles to a solution.
- Americans see a lot of made-up news and information being generated around two major topics: politics and elections (73%) and entertainment and celebrities (61%). Both politics and entertainment far exceed all of the other four topics asked about.
- In a related finding, Americans say that far more made-up news gets created around national issues and events than around local ones. About six-in-ten (58%) say a lot of made-up news is created around national issues, compared with 18% who say the same about local issues.
- When it comes to identifying very big problems connected to keeping the public informed about current issues and events, about half of Americans (49%) put the amount of made-up news and information in that category. A similar percentage (51%) cites the public's ability to distinguish between facts and opinions as a very big problem, compared with 37% who see journalists inserting their own views into coverage as a very big problem in how the public stays informed.

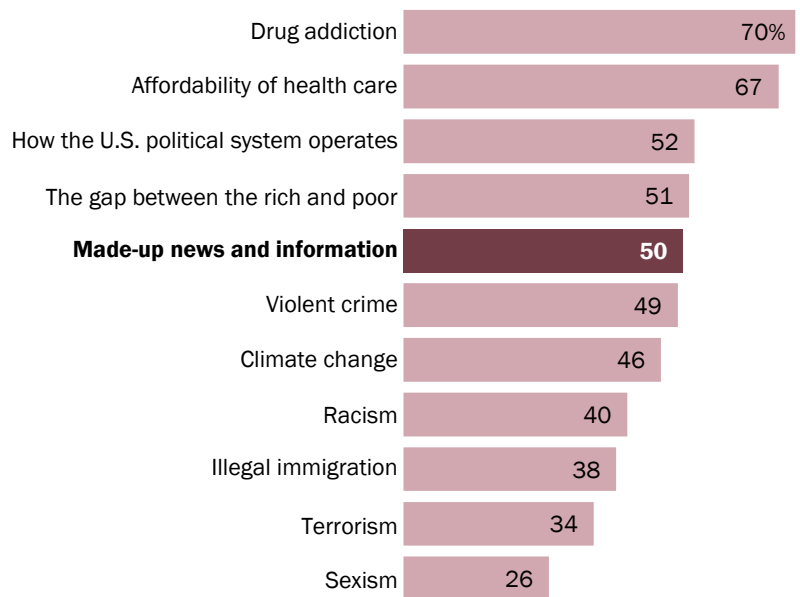
## 1. Americans see made-up news as a bigger problem than other key issues in the country

Half of Americans say the issue of made-up news and information is a very big problem facing our country, ranking it ahead of a number of other major national concerns. Majorities think it is negatively impacting our democratic system and societal functions. And, among the concerns related to Americans' ability to keep up with current events, the problem of made-up news rises to the top.

When asked about 11 major issues facing the country, concern over made-up news is significantly exceeded by only two of them – drug addiction (70%) and affordable health care (67%). Half of adults say made-up news and information is a very big problem for the country. That places it above terrorism, illegal immigration, racism and sexism – and roughly on par with the gap between the rich and poor, violent crime, the way our political system operates and climate change.

### Half of Americans think made-up news and information is a critical problem for the country

*% of U.S. adults who say each is a **very big problem** in the country today*



Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

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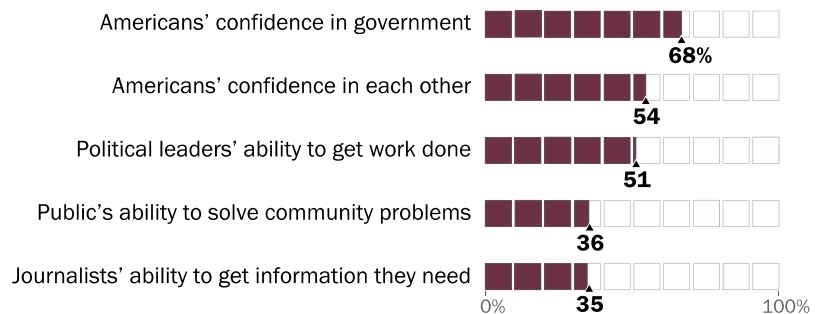
Many U.S. adults also think made-up news and information has a detrimental effect on the country's democratic system.

Nearly seven-in-ten (68%) say made-up news has a big impact on Americans' confidence in government. About half say it greatly impacts people's confidence in each other (54%) and in political leaders' ability to get things done (51%). Fewer see it as a major impediment to the public's ability to solve community problems (36%) or journalists' ability to get the information they need to report the news (35%).

Thinking about the news environment, about half (49%) say the amount of made-up news and information is a very big problem in how the public stays informed. That puts it at the top, along with the public's ability to distinguish between facts and opinions (51%). These concerns outweigh others, including journalists expressing their views in their reporting (37%), the vast amount of news to keep up with (19%) and the large array of information sources (17%).

## Nearly seven-in-ten say made-up news has a big impact on Americans' confidence in government

*% of U.S. adults who say made-up news and information has a big impact on ...*



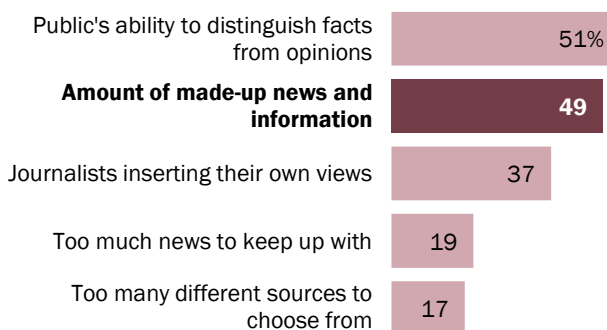
Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

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## About half say the amount of made-up news and information is a very big problem in how the public stays informed

*% of U.S. adults who say each is a very big problem when it comes to how the public stays informed about the basic facts of current issues and events*



Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

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## Most Americans say steps should be taken to address made-up news, see political divides as the greatest obstacle

While the public overwhelmingly wants made-up news reduced, people are pessimistic about the chances of success.

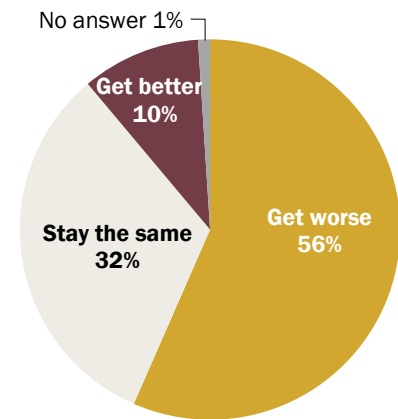
About eight-in-ten Americans (79%) think steps should be taken to restrict made-up news and information intended to mislead, while 20% say it is more important that the freedom to access and publish it be protected.<sup>2</sup>

A similarly high level of support emerges for restrictions on made-up or altered videos and images intended to mislead: 77% of Americans say steps should be taken to restrict the publication of and access to this type of content.

But a majority of those surveyed (56%) think the problem of made-up news will get worse over the next five years. About a third (32%) think it will stay the same, and only one-in-ten say it will get better.

### Most say issue of made-up news will get worse

*% of U.S. adults who say the issue of made-up news and information will \_\_\_ in the next five years*



Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

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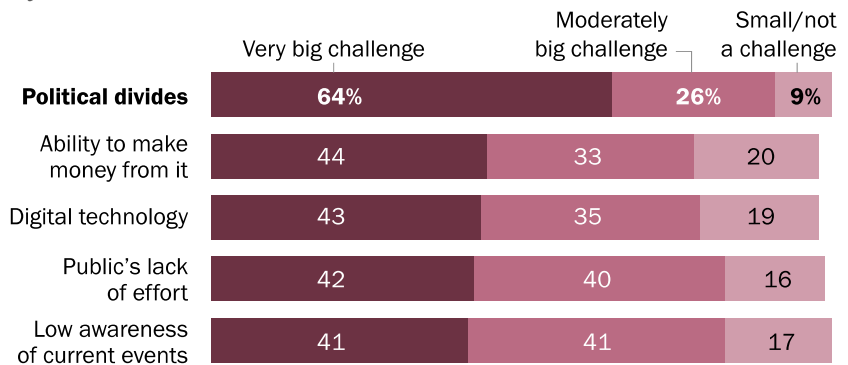
<sup>2</sup> This finding differs from [early 2018](#), when separate questions were asked more specifically about whether the government and technology companies should take steps to restrict made-up news versus further protecting freedom of information. In that report, the public was squarely against the government taking steps but more open to technology companies doing so.

The biggest obstacle people see standing in the way of addressing made-up news is political division in the country. Nearly two-thirds (64%) say political divides are a very big challenge, and about another quarter (26%) say they are a moderately big challenge.

That far outpaces other possible challenges, though all five issues asked about are seen as very big challenges by at least four-in-ten U.S. adults. These areas include the attraction of making money from made-up news (44% say this is a very big challenge), digital technology (43%), the public's lack of effort (42%) and low awareness of current events (41%).

**Many see political divides as a large challenge in overcoming made-up news and information**

*% of U.S. adults who say each is a \_\_\_ in addressing made-up news and information*



Note: Those who did not answer not shown.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

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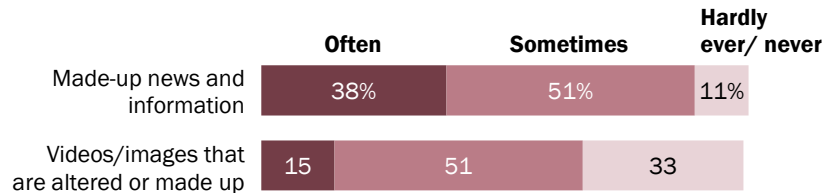
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Made-up news and information reaches the vast majority of U.S. adults; about half have shared it unknowingly

One likely reason why so many Americans feel made-up news and information is a significant problem for the country is the extent to which Americans say they are exposed to it. About nine-in-ten U.S adults (89%) say they often or sometimes come across made-up news intended to mislead the public, including 38% who do so often. That leaves only about one-in-ten U.S. adults (11%) who say they hardly ever or never encounter it.

### Roughly four-in-ten Americans often come across made-up news and information

*% of U.S. adults who \_\_\_ come across each type of news and information*



Note: Those who did not answer not shown.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

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In the era of viral videos, altered or fully made-up videos or images designed to mislead the public also have a substantial reach. About two-thirds of Americans (66%) encounter altered or made-up videos/images at least sometimes, while 15% do so often. One-third say they hardly ever or never see them.



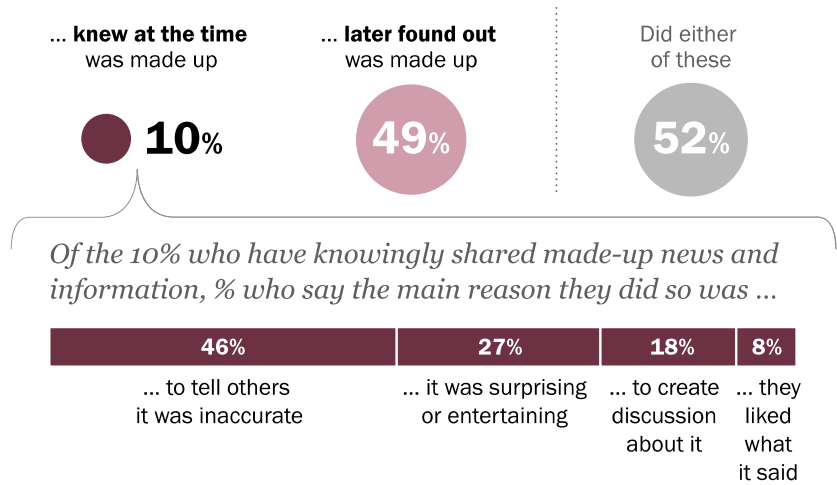
The full reach and impact of made-up news and information depends in part on how much individuals share content they come across with others. About half (49%) of Americans have shared news that they found out later was made up. One-in-ten confess to sharing news they knew at the time was made up. (Of the relatively few who knowingly did so, about half – 46% – say the reason for sharing was to let others know it was inaccurate.) Overall, 52% of Americans have shared made-up news knowingly and/or unknowingly.

And, whether they’ve shared it or not, about six-in-ten

Americans (61%) say they at least sometimes discuss the issue of made-up news with others, while 16% do so often.

## About half have unknowingly shared made-up news and information

*% of U.S. adults who say they have shared news and information they ...*



Note: Those who did not answer not shown.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

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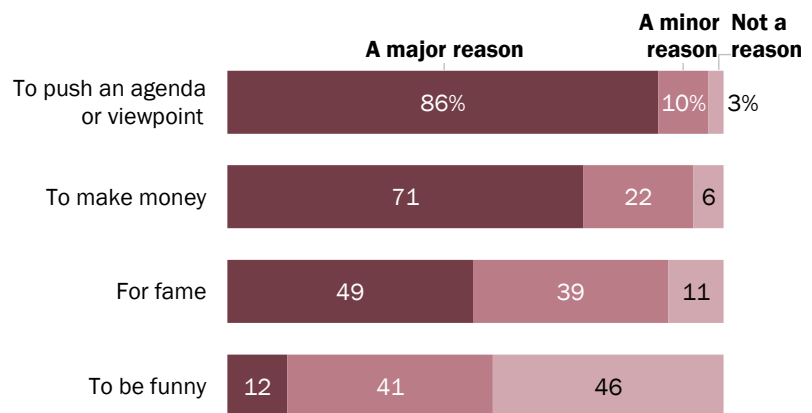
## 2. Political leaders, activists viewed as prolific creators of made-up news; journalists seen as the ones to fix it

Americans sense two central motivations behind the creation of made-up news and information: the desire to push an agenda and to make money.

Fully 86% of U.S. adults think the desire to push an agenda or viewpoint is a major reason why made-up news gets created; 71% say making money is a major reason. Fewer, though still about half (49%), think fame is a major reason, while only 12% say a major motivator is the desire to produce humor.

### Most Americans say pushing an agenda and making money are major reasons made-up news gets created

*% of U.S. adults who say each is \_\_\_ why made-up news and information is created*



Note: Those who did not answer not shown.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

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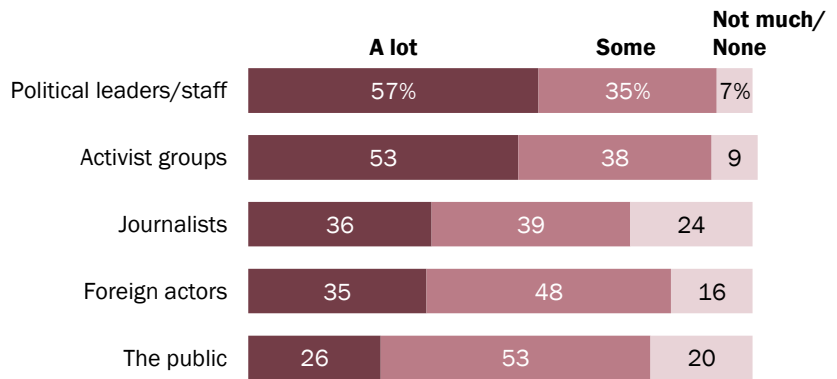
The two groups thought to be the primary creators of made-up news seem closely connected to the desire to push an agenda or viewpoint. Close to six-in-ten U.S. adults (57%) say political leaders and their staff create a lot of made-up news, and about half (53%) say this of activist groups.

Journalists get less blame. About a third of Americans (36%) say they create a lot of made-up news and information while a quarter (24%) say they contribute not much or none at all. Foreign actors are blamed at about the same rate as

journalists (35% say they create a lot), while the public places the least blame on itself. About a quarter (26%) say the public itself creates a lot of made-up news and information – though about half (53%) say the public contributes some of that information.

### Political leaders and activists seen as the most prolific creators of made-up news and information

*% of U.S. adults who say each creates \_\_\_ of made-up news and information*



Note: Those who did not answer not shown.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

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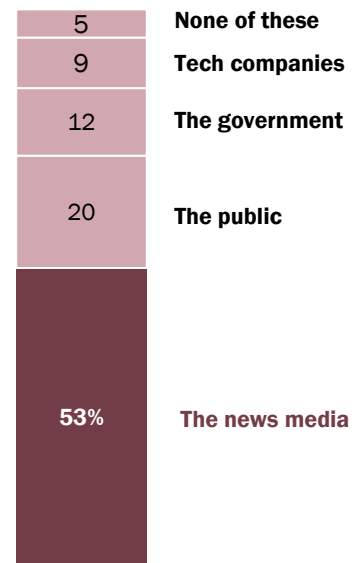
While journalists are less likely to be blamed for creating made-up news than other actors, they are seen as the ones most responsible for reducing it.

Among four groups asked about – the news media, the public, the government and technology companies – about half of U.S. adults (53%) say the news media have the most responsibility to reduce the amount of made-up news and information. This is more than twice the rate of any other group: Two-in-ten put the onus on the public, 12% on the government and 9% on technology companies.

Even those who clearly affix blame to groups other than journalists believe the job of fixing it falls to the news media. For example, 57% of U.S. adults who say political leaders and their staff create a lot of made-up news believe the news media are the ones to address the problem. Similarly, 59% of those who say activists create a lot put the news media at the top when it comes to the responsibility for fixing it.

### About half say the news media have greatest responsibility to reduce made-up news

*% of U.S. adults who say \_\_\_ have the **most responsibility** in reducing the amount of made-up news and information*



Note: Those who did not answer not shown.  
Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

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Most say a lot of made-up news and information is about national news topics, especially politics and entertainment

Much of the news coverage and [public discussion](#) of made-up news and information has occurred in the context of politics and elections. This has resonated with the public.

Of six topics asked about, roughly three-quarters of the public (73%) says a lot of made-up news is created about politics and elections. About six-in-ten Americans (61%) say a lot is created about entertainment and celebrities.

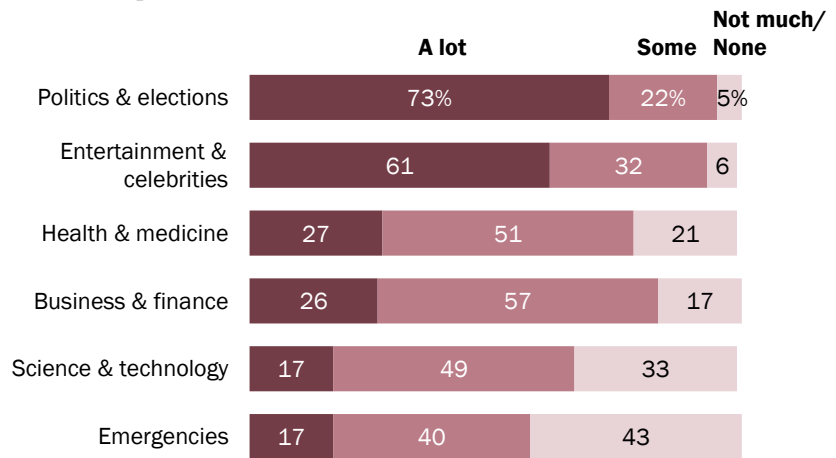
Both politics and entertainment far exceed any other topic. About a quarter say a lot of made-up news gets created in the areas of health and medicine (27%) and business and finance (26%), while just 17% say a lot is created about science and technology or emergencies such as shootings or natural disasters.

Given the dominance of made-up news topics such as politics and entertainment, more than three times as many

Americans say that a lot of made-up news is created about national issues as say that about local issues – 58% vs. 18%. Three-in-ten say very little or no made-up news and information is created around local issues, events or public figures.

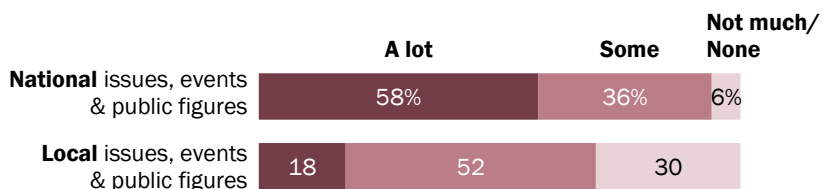
**Roughly three-quarters say a lot of made-up news is created about politics and elections ...**

*% of U.S. adults who think \_\_\_ of made-up news and information is created about each topic*



**... and far more Americans think a lot is created about national than local issues**

*% of U.S. adults who think \_\_\_ of made-up news and information is created about each*



Note: Those who did not answer not shown.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

“Many Americans Say Made-Up News Is a Critical Problem That Needs To Be Fixed”

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## Most have taken steps in response to made-up news

Most Americans say they have altered their news consumption or technology habits in response to made-up news and information they come across.

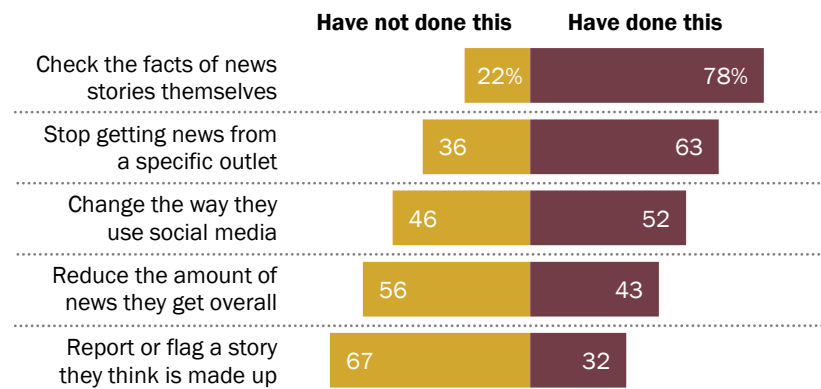
Roughly eight-in-ten U.S. adults (78%) say they have checked the facts of news stories themselves, 63% have crossed a specific outlet off their list of providers and about half (52%) have changed the way they use social media. More than four-in-ten (43%) say they have responded by reducing the amount of news they get. And about one-third (32%) have publicly flagged or reported a story that they thought was made up.

Made-up news has also had an impact on interpersonal relationships, according to the survey. Half of U.S. adults say they have avoided talking to someone because that person might bring made-up news and information into the conversation.

It also influences how people use social media. Of the 76% of Americans who ever get news through social media, half have blocked a news source because they thought it was posting made-up news or information, the same proportion who say they have blocked someone they know for that reason.

### Most have checked facts in stories or stopped getting news from an outlet in response to made-up news

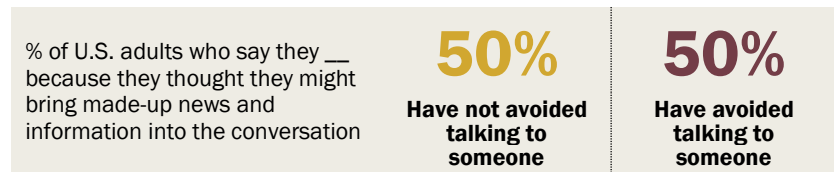
*% of U.S. adults who say the issue of made-up news and information has led them to do each action*



Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019. "Many Americans Say Made-Up News Is a Critical Problem That Needs To Be Fixed"

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### Half say they have avoided someone because they thought they would bring up made-up news



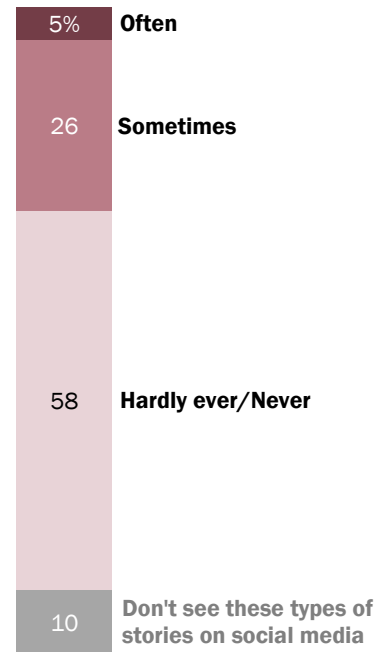
Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019. "Many Americans Say Made-Up News Is a Critical Problem That Needs To Be Fixed"

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That doesn't mean that social media users are completely ignoring made-up news. About a third of them (31%) say they at least sometimes click on the link to a story in their news feed they believe is made up – but 58% say they hardly ever or never do so.

### About three-in-ten social media news consumers at least sometimes click on stories that they think are made up

*% of U.S. adult social media news consumers who say they \_\_\_ click on news stories on these sites that they think are made up*



Note: Those who did not answer not shown.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19–March 4, 2019.

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### 3. Americans think made-up news and videos create more confusion than other types of misinformation

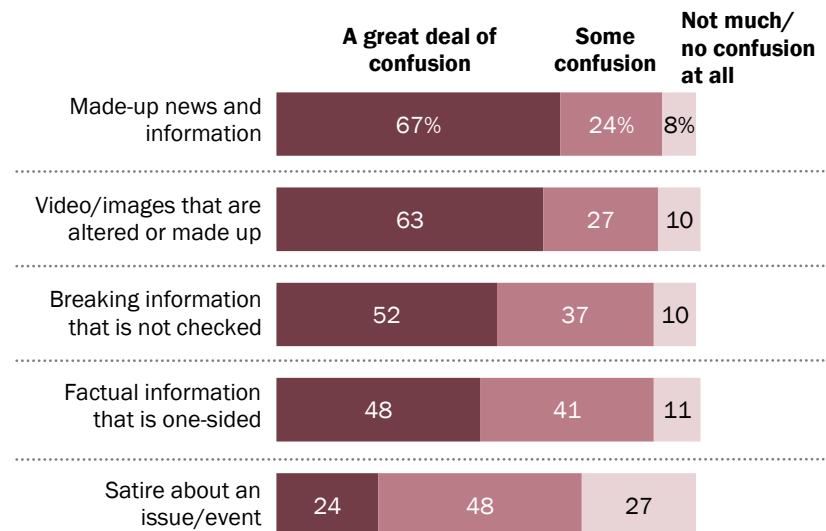
While fully made-up news and information intended to mislead is the primary topic of this report, other potentially inaccurate or misleading types of information also seep into our information streams. These include such things as factually accurate but one-sided news stories, breaking news that may not be verified before publication, and even satire about events and issues. Americans, the study reveals, clearly distinguish among these different types of misinformation and see differences in the levels of confusion they can cause.

Of the five types of information asked about, Americans view made-up news and altered videos/images as the two that confuse the public the most.

Two-thirds of Americans (67%) say made-up news and information cause a great deal of confusion, followed by 63% who say this of videos and images altered to mislead the public. Roughly half (52%) feel that way about breaking information that gets published before being checked. A slightly smaller percentage (48%) says the same thing about news and information that is factual but is presented in a way that favors one side. Only about a quarter, on the other hand, say that of satire (24%).

#### About two-thirds think made-up news and altered videos create a great deal of confusion around the facts of current issues

*% of U.S. adults who say each type of news and information causes \_\_\_\_\_ about the basic facts of current issues and events*



Note: Those who did not answer not shown.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

"Many Americans Say Made-Up News Is a Critical Problem That Needs To Be Fixed"

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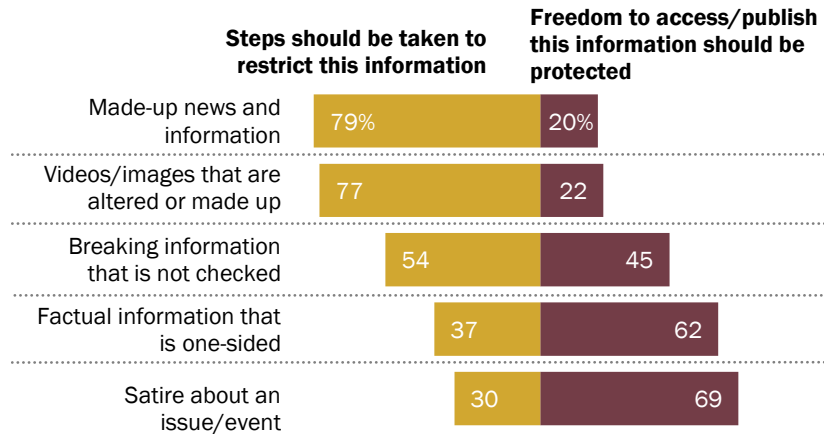


The findings are similar when it comes to whether steps should be taken to restrict misinformation or whether the freedom to access and publish it should be protected.

Most U.S. adults feel steps should be taken to restrict made-up news and information (79%) as well as altered videos and images intended to mislead (77%). A slight majority (54%) also says this of breaking news that is published before being fully checked. But even as about half of Americans see one-sided coverage as causing a great deal of confusion, fewer (37%) feel it should be restricted. When it comes to one-sided news and satire, majorities feel it is better to protect the freedom to produce those types of information (62% and 69%, respectively) than to take steps to minimize them.

### More Americans support restricting made-up news and videos than one-sided information

% of U.S. adults who say ...



Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

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Americans' attitudes about whether to restrict certain kinds of misinformation are tied, in part, to how difficult they believe it is for people to be able to detect it in the first place.

Most Americans think the public should be expected to recognize satire (65%) and factual information that favors one side (58%), both of which they largely favor protecting.

Conversely, far fewer (38%) say Americans should be expected to recognize altered videos and images, compared with 43% who say the same about completely made-up news and 46% who say this of breaking news that is not checked. Of those harder-to-recognize forms, overwhelming majorities want to restrict altered videos and made-up news and information, with slightly more than half expressing a desire to restrict unchecked breaking information.

Survey respondents also put a good deal more faith in their own ability to recognize potentially inaccurate or misleading information than they do in the broader public's ability to discern it. At least half say they are confident in their own ability to recognize each of the five types of misinformation, ranging from 53% who say this about altered videos and images to 78% who say this about satire.

### Many think their ability to detect made-up news and information is better than that of Americans overall

*% of U.S. adults who say ...*

	Americans should be expected to recognize this information	I find it easy to recognize this information
Satire about an issue/event	65%	78%
Factual information that is one-sided	58	77
Breaking information that is not checked	46	58
Made-up news and information	43	63
Videos/images that are altered or made up	38	53

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

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## 4. Republicans see made-up news as a bigger problem than Democrats, are more likely to blame journalists

Republicans and Democrats hardly see eye-to-eye in their views of the news media. For example, Republicans are more likely to say news coverage [favors one side, and they have less trust](#) in information from news organizations. Overall, Republicans are more concerned and pessimistic about the issue of made-up news and information than Democrats, and this manifests itself in a number of key findings.

Republicans are more likely to see made-up news as a big problem, more inclined to think it negatively impacts the country's political system and more likely to predict the problem will get worse. They also say they come across it more frequently. And while majorities of both parties blame politicians and their staff for the creation of made-up news, Republicans and those who lean to the Republican Party are far more likely than Democrats and Democratic leaners to blame journalists for the creation of made-up news and to say the news media have the responsibility to fix it.

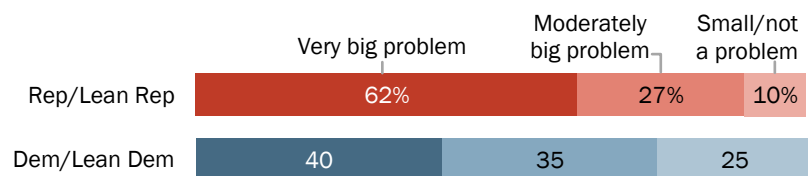
### Republicans are much more likely to say made-up news and information is a major problem

Americans' views of the news media are largely divided politically, and these divides have widened in recent years. Republicans, on the whole, are much more likely to [express negative sentiments](#) about the news media.

That broader skepticism about news and the journalists who produce it also plays out in the arena of made-up news and information.

#### Republicans are more likely than Democrats to see made-up news as a serious problem for the country

*% of U.S. adults who say made-up news and information is a \_\_\_\_ in the country today*



Note: Those who did not answer not shown.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

"Many Americans Say Made-Up News Is a Critical Problem That Needs To Be Fixed"

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Republicans are substantially more likely to think made-up news and information is a very big problem facing the country today. About six-in-ten Republicans and Republican-leaning independents (62%) say this, compared with four-in-ten Democrats and Democratic leaners.

Republicans also are more likely than Democrats to think that made-up news and information impacts the U.S. political system. For example, most Republicans (57%) say made-up news has a big impact on political leaders' ability to do their jobs, 10 percentage points higher than Democrats (47%).

And just as Republicans are more likely to see made-up news as a serious problem for the country, they are also more pessimistic about the future of the issue: 64% of Republicans say it will get worse in the next five years, compared with 50% of Democrats.

As for how to address the issue, members of both parties are most likely to see partisan schisms as a major hurdle. About seven-in-ten Republicans (69%) say political divides are a very big challenge in addressing the issue of made-up news and information, slightly higher than the 61% of Democrats who say the same. Roughly four-in-ten of those in both parties say that financial gain, digital technology, lack of effort and low awareness of current events are very big challenges in addressing the issue.

Not only are Republicans more likely to feel made-up news is a serious problem, but they also say they see more of it. About half of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents (49%) report they often come across made-up news and information, 19 percentage points higher than Democrats and Democratic leaners (30%). Very large majorities of both parties say they see made-up news at least sometimes (93% of Republicans and 85% of Democrats).

And although the share of Americans who often come across made-up or altered videos and images is smaller, Republicans are slightly more likely than Democrats to say they often comes across them (18% vs. 12%).

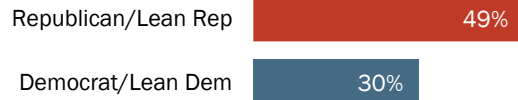
One area where members of the two parties are more in sync is in how frequently they share and discuss made-up news. About half of both Republicans (51%) and Democrats (47%) say they have unknowingly shared made-up news, and about one-in-ten have knowingly done so (9% and 11%, respectively). Slightly less than half of both parties sometimes discuss the topic (47% and 46%, respectively), though Republicans are more likely to often do so (20% vs. 12% of Democrats).

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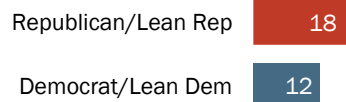
## Republicans are more likely than Democrats to say they regularly see made-up news and information

*% of U.S. adults who **often** come across each type of news and information*

### Made-up news and information



### Videos/images that are altered or made up



Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.  
 “Many Americans Say Made-Up News Is a Critical Problem That Needs To Be Fixed”

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Republicans far more likely to blame journalists for creating made-up news and to see them as responsible for fixing the problem

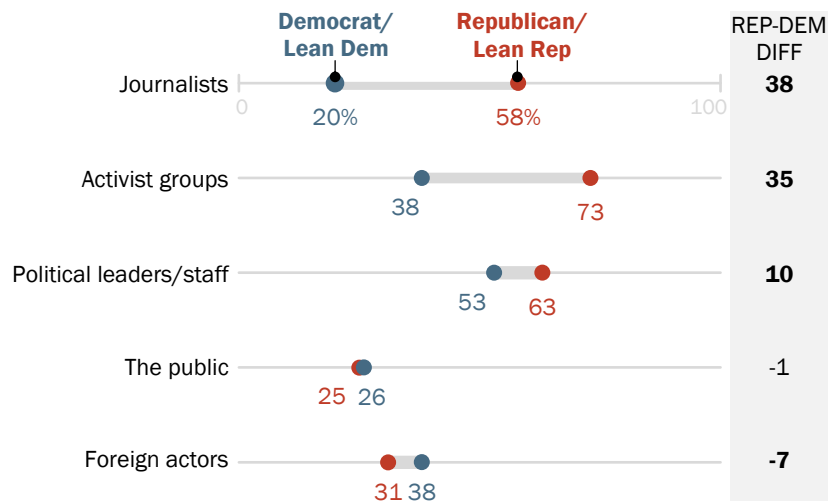
Partisans are also divided in their attitudes about the role journalists play in made-up news and information. Republicans are much more likely than Democrats to think journalists create made-up news and are more likely to hold them responsible for fixing it.

Nearly six-in-ten Republicans and Republican-leaning independents (58%) say journalists create a lot of made-up news, nearly three times the rate among Democrats and Democratic leaners (20%). A similar divide is also evident in the role each group thinks activists play – almost three-quarters of Republicans (73%) say activist groups produce a lot of made-up news and information, roughly twice the share of Democrats (38%).

The gap narrows when it comes to blaming political leaders and their staff, with 63% of Republicans and a majority of Democrats (53%) saying this group creates a lot of made-up news.

**Republicans about three times as likely as Democrats to blame journalists for creating made-up news and information**

*% of U.S. adults who say \_\_\_ create a lot of made-up news and information*



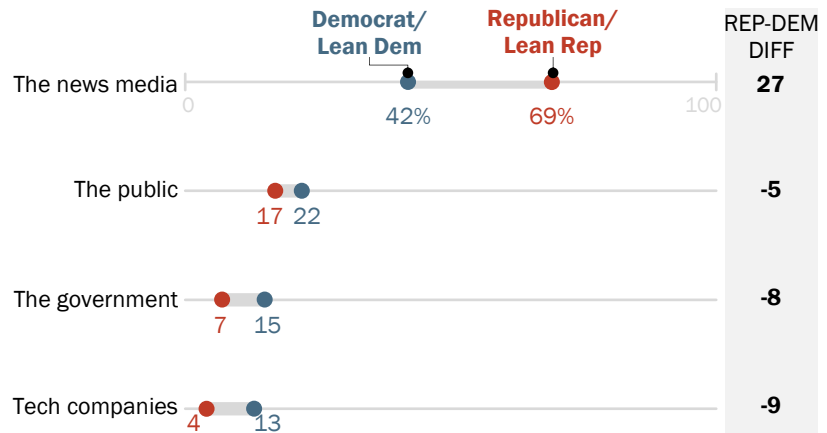
Note: Statistically significant differences are in bold.  
 Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.  
 “Many Americans Say Made-Up News Is a Critical Problem That Needs To Be Fixed”

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When asked who has the most responsibility to reduce the amount of made-up news and information, about seven-in-ten Republicans (69%) point to the news media, 27 percentage points higher than Democrats (42%). Members of both parties, though, are more likely to put the responsibility on the news media than any other group or institution – and by a wide margin.

## Members of both parties largely place responsibility of solving made-up news and information on journalists, but much more so among Republicans

*% of U.S. adults who say \_\_\_ have the **most responsibility** in reducing the amount of made-up news and information*



Note: Statistically significant differences are in **bold**.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

“Many Americans Say Made-Up News Is a Critical Problem That Needs To Be Fixed”

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Republican skepticism toward the news media also emerges when people are asked about factors they think impede the public's ability to stay informed about current events.

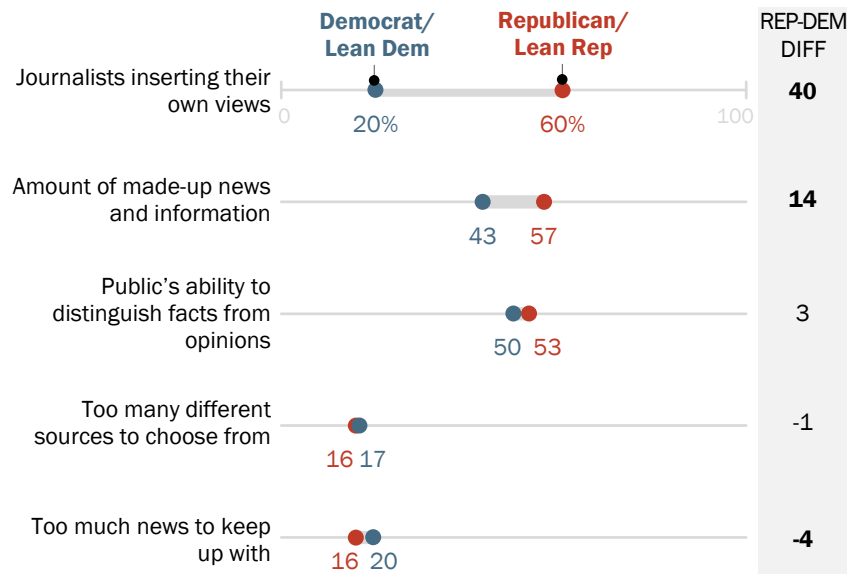
Republicans and Republican-leaning independents see journalists inserting their own views and the amount of made-up news and information as the biggest obstacles in keeping the public informed (60% and 57%, respectively, identify these as very big problems), followed closely by people's ability to distinguish facts from opinions (53%).

Democrats and Democratic leaners, meanwhile, rank the public's ability to separate facts from opinions at the top of the list, with half identifying that as a very big obstacle to keeping the public informed. That's followed by the quantity of made-up news and information (43%), with journalists injecting their views much farther down on the list (20%).

Overall, Republicans are more likely than Democrats to think that the amount of made-up news is a very big problem in how the public stays informed (57% vs. 43%, respectively). But that pales in comparison to the difference between the parties over whether they think journalists inserting their own views is a very big problem, with six-in-ten Republicans saying this, compared with two-in-ten Democrats – a 40 percentage point difference.

### Republicans are more likely than Democrats to see made-up news and journalists inserting their views as problems in how people stay informed

% of U.S. adults who say each is a **very big problem** when it comes to how the public stays informed about the basic facts of current issues and events



Note: Statistically significant differences are in bold.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

"Many Americans Say Made-Up News Is a Critical Problem That Needs To Be Fixed"

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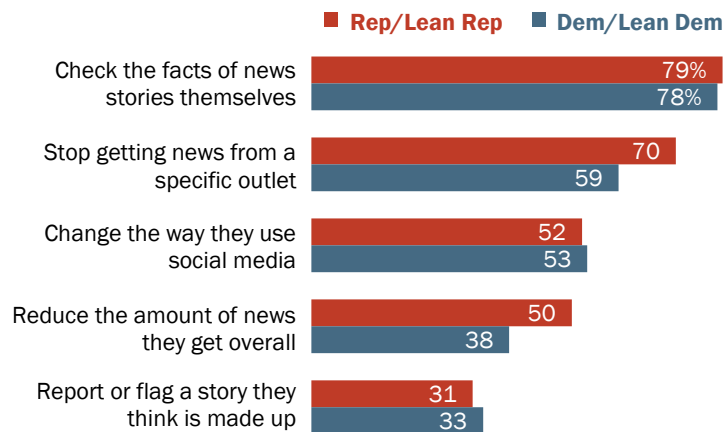
Made-up news has led majorities in both parties to check facts in a story; Republicans more likely to stop getting news from a news outlet, reduce news intake

Some of the sharp partisan differences fade when Americans are asked about actions they take in response to made-up news and information. Overwhelming majorities of both Republicans (79%) and Democrats (78%), for example, say they fact-check news stories themselves. And they are about as likely to change the way they use social media (52% of Republicans and 53% of Democrats) and to report or flag a story (31% of Republicans and 33% of Democrats).

But differences exist in some news consumption changes adopted in response to made-up news. Republicans are more likely than Democrats to say they've stopped getting news from a specific outlet (70% vs. 59%), and they are more likely to have reduced the amount of news they get overall (50% vs. 38% of Democrats).

### Large majorities in both parties say made-up news and information led them to check facts in news stories

*% of U.S. adults who say the issue of made-up news and information has led them to do each action*



Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

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## 5. The highly politically aware are more concerned about made-up news, while the less aware spread it more

Previous studies have shown that Americans' levels of political awareness [relate closely to their news media habits](#). The findings here reveal that political awareness – which is based on how politically knowledgeable one is and how closely one follows politics – impacts perceptions and behaviors around the issue of made-up news and information. Highly politically aware Americans tend to see it as a bigger problem and think it has a greater impact on the democratic system. They also say they come across this type of information more often, though it is the less politically aware who are more likely to spread it. Additionally, the steps the two groups take in response to made-up news seem to reinforce their level of awareness. The highly politically aware are more likely to take more actions overall in response to made-up news, but the less politically aware are more likely to tune out news altogether.

Political awareness is not connected in any substantial way to party identification. Highly politically aware adults make up about equal portions of both major parties – 33% of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents and 32% of Democrats and Democratic leaners. But the highly aware adults tend to be older and have a higher level of education than those who are less politically aware. Overall, the findings between the highly and less politically aware persist even when taking these age and education differences into account.

### How the study measures political awareness

Political awareness is based on answers to three political knowledge questions and one question about how closely respondents say they follow what's going on in government and public affairs. The “highly politically aware” are those who correctly answered all three knowledge items and say they follow politics most of the time – 31% of respondents. The “less politically aware” are the 41% who did not answer all three correctly (i.e., got at least one wrong) and say they follow politics less often. The remaining 27% fall in between and are termed the “somewhat politically aware.” Individuals in this group either follow politics most of the time or answered all three correctly, but not both. Across the views and behaviors around the issue of made-up news, the somewhat politically aware mostly fall somewhere in between the highly aware and the less aware, though they occasionally fall closer to one group or the other. The findings in this section show the results comparing the “highly” and “less” politically aware. For a look at the findings that including the “somewhat” aware, [see Appendix](#).

## The highly politically aware see a greater impact of made-up news and information on the democratic system than the less politically aware

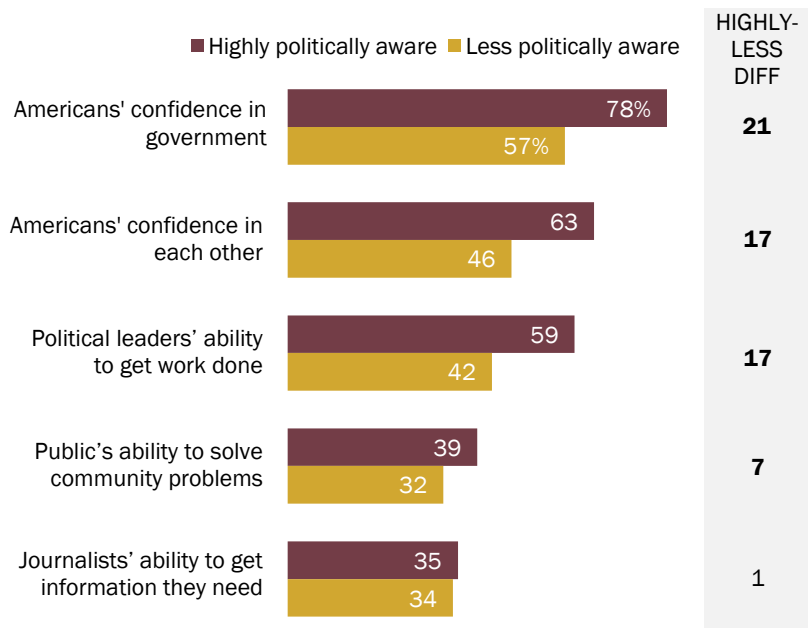
The highly politically aware are more likely than the less politically aware to say that made-up news has a big impact on four of five aspects of our society and democratic system asked about, including Americans’

confidence in government institutions and in each other, politicians’ ability to get work done and the public’s ability to solve community problems. For example, about eight-in-ten of the highly politically aware (78%) say made-up news and information has a big impact on Americans’ confidence in government institutions, compared with 57% of the less politically aware.

The two groups’ views converge on the issue of whether made-up news impacts journalists’ ability to get the information they need.

### The highly politically aware are more likely than the less politically aware to think made-up news and information has an impact on the democratic system

Among U.S. adults at each level of political awareness, % who say made-up news and information has a **big impact** on ...



Note: Statistically significant differences are in **bold**. The somewhat politically aware not shown. To see the data for the somewhat aware, see Appendix.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

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The highly politically aware also see greater hurdles to addressing the issue of made-up news and information and are more likely to see it getting worse.

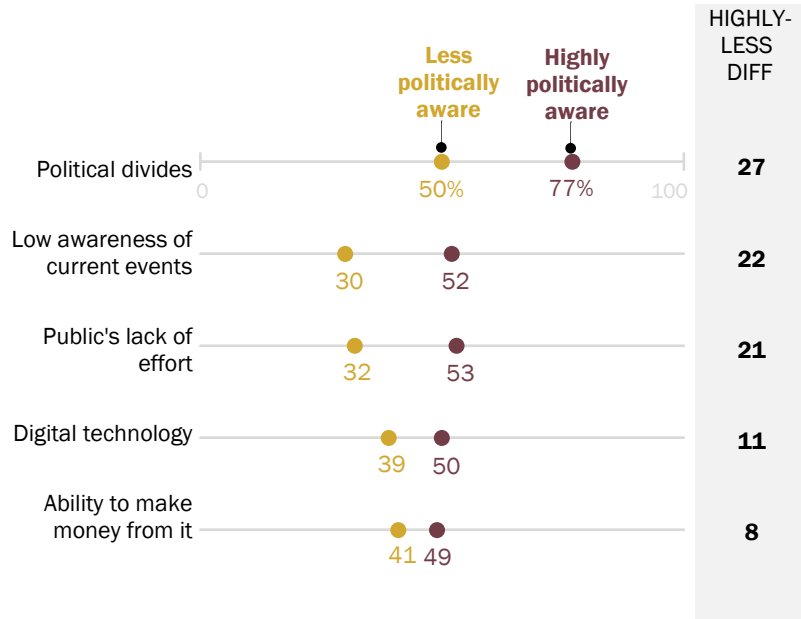
When asked about potential challenges to finding a solution to made-up news, the highly politically aware are more likely than the less politically aware to think that several issues represent very big challenges. For example, about three-quarters of the highly politically aware (77%) say political divides are a very big challenge to finding a solution, 27 percentage points higher than those who are less politically aware (50%). Large differences between the groups emerge for two of the other challenges asked about –

low awareness of current events (52% of highly politically aware see it as a very big challenge compared with 30% of the less aware) and the public’s lack of effort (53% vs. 32%, respectively).

As for the future of made-up news, almost two-thirds of the highly politically aware (64%) think it will get worse in the next five years, compared with half of the less politically aware.

### The highly politically aware are more likely to see hurdles in addressing made-up news and information

Among U.S. adults at each level of political awareness, % who say each is a **very big challenge** in addressing made-up news and information



Note: Statistically significant differences are in **bold**. The somewhat politically aware not shown. To see the data for the somewhat aware, see Appendix.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

“Many Americans Say Made-Up News Is a Critical Problem That Needs To Be Fixed”

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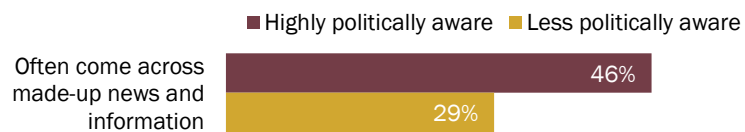
While the highly politically aware are more likely to see made-up news and information, the less aware are more likely to spread it

Not only are the highly politically aware more concerned about made-up news and information, they also say they see it more frequently than the less politically aware. Just under half of the highly aware (46%) report that they often see made-up news and information, compared with 29% of the less aware. This finding is likely tied to their broader news habits, as the highly politically aware generally follow news more closely.

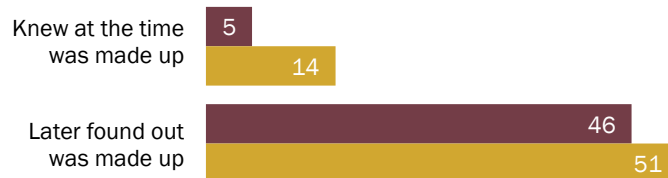
Even though the highly politically aware see made-up news more often, the less politically aware are more likely to spread it. Few Americans overall (10%) report that they purposely share made-up news, but that number moves up to 14% of the less politically aware who have shared news and information that they knew was made up. That makes them about three times as likely to knowingly share made-up news as the highly politically aware (5%).

### The highly politically aware see made-up news and information more often, but the less aware are more likely to spread it

Among U.S. adults at each level of political awareness, % who ...



Among those at each level of political awareness, % who say they have shared news and information that they ...



Note: The somewhat politically aware not shown. To see the data for the somewhat aware, see Appendix.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

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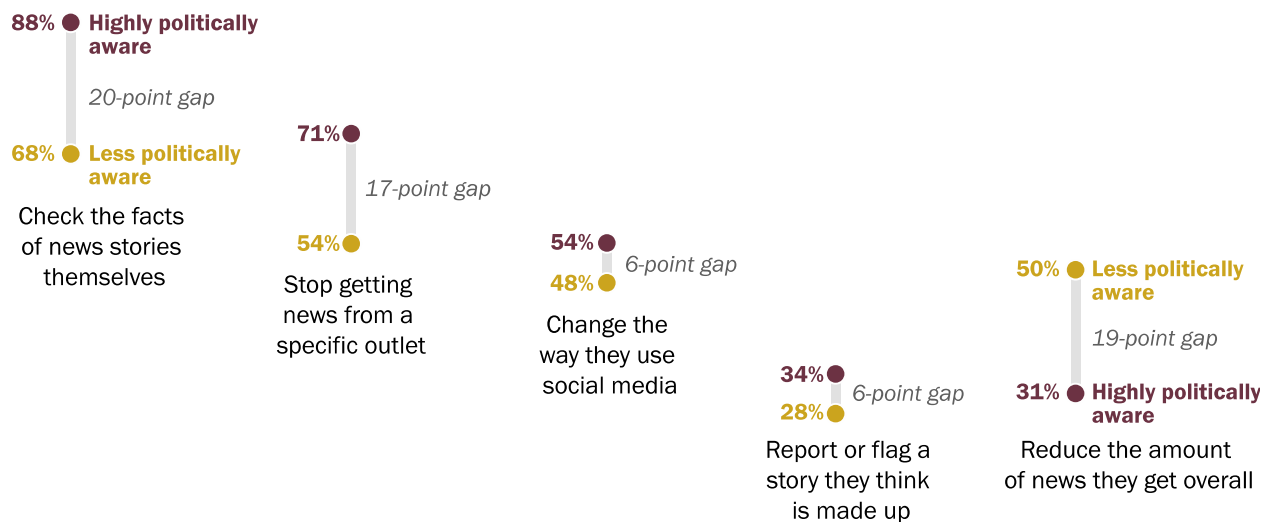
## The highly politically aware take more actions in response to made-up news; the less aware are more likely to reduce their news intake

Overall, the highly politically aware are more likely to have undertaken four of five actions in response to made-up news asked about. One of the biggest differences in the groups' responses to made-up news is that about seven-in-ten of the highly aware (71%) say they have stopped getting news from a specific outlet, compared with 54% of the less aware.

The gap around the decision to reduce overall news consumption is about the same size – but with the less politically more likely to have done so. While about three-in-ten of the highly politically aware (31%) have taken that action in response to made-up news, fully half of the less aware say they have reduced the amount of news they get. This response by the less aware is in line with their news habits more generally: They already tend to follow the news less closely and respond to made-up news by withdrawing further from the news.

### The highly politically aware take more actions in response to made-up news and information, but the less aware are more likely to tune news out

Among U.S. adults at each level of political awareness, % who say the issue of made-up news and information has led them to ...



Note: The somewhat politically aware not shown. To see the data for the somewhat aware, see Appendix.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

"Many Americans Say Made-Up News Is a Critical Problem That Needs To Be Fixed"

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The highly politically aware place more blame than the less aware on activists, foreign actors; majorities of both see political gains as a driver

Both the highly politically aware and the less politically aware rank political leaders and their staff, as well as activist groups, as the leading culprits in creating made-up news and information. But there are differences in degree. Roughly two-thirds of the highly politically aware (63%) say activist groups produce a lot of made-up news, 21 percentage points higher than the less politically aware. There is a far smaller difference between both groups in the blame they place on political leaders and their staff (59% of the highly aware vs. 54% of the less aware).

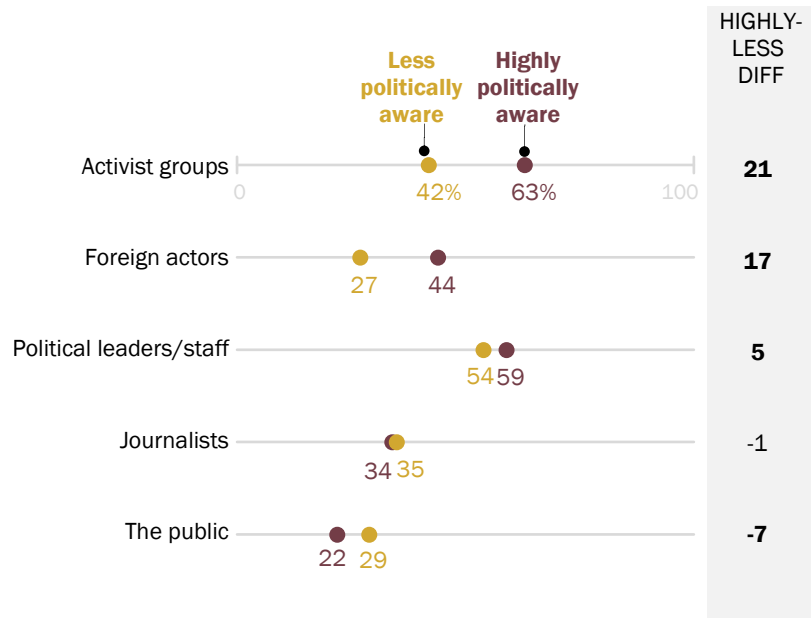
There is also a considerable divergence when citing foreign-based individuals and groups for creating a lot of made-up news (44% for the highly politically aware vs. 27% for the less aware).

Overall, large segments of both groups see political goals as a major reason why people create made-up news, and that view is virtually unanimous among the highly politically aware, with 98% saying this. That compares with a still robust three-quarters of the less politically aware. The less aware are more likely to think a major reason why people create made-up news is for fame and to be funny – though small minorities of both groups say comedy is a major reason.

As for finding a solution to the problem of made-up news, about half of both groups think the news media bear the largest responsibility to reduce it (52% of the highly politically aware and 51% of

### Highly politically aware place more blame on activist groups and foreign actors for creating made-up news

Among U.S. adults at each level of political awareness, % who say each creates **a lot** of made-up news and information



Note: Statistically significant differences are in **bold**. The somewhat politically aware not shown. To see the data for the somewhat aware, see Appendix.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

"Many Americans Say Made-Up News Is a Critical Problem That Needs To Be Fixed"

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the less politically aware). This is far higher than the portion in each group who place responsibility on the public, government and technology companies.



## 6. Younger Americans and those who prefer social media for news feel less concern about the issue of made-up news

Discussions about the issue of made-up news and information are often framed in the context of social media, a news pathway that [younger Americans gravitate to](#) much more frequently than older Americans. On the whole, the youngest U.S. adults and those who prefer social media for their news feel less unease about made-up news and information. The youngest adults – those ages 18 to 29 – are less likely than Americans 50 and older to think made-up news has an impact on the democratic system or that the issue will get worse in the future. They are also less likely to say they frequently come across made-up news. But these differences are not as large as the divides by political party and political awareness discussed in previous sections.

Likewise, those who prefer to get their news on social media are less likely to think the issue will get worse than those who prefer other pathways to getting news, such as print newspapers or the television set. Additionally, they are no more likely to say they encounter made-up news than those who prefer other pathways, but they are more likely to share it.

### The connection between age and social media news use

Previous research has consistently shown that younger American adults rely far more heavily on social media for their news than those older than them. Younger adults get news from these sites more [frequently](#) and across different topics, including [politics](#) and [science](#).

For instance, 40% of 18- to 29-year-olds often get news from social media sites, compared with 30% of those ages 30 to 49 and 16% of those 50 and older. And when asked which pathway they prefer for their news, 30% of 18- to 29-year-olds say social media sites, compared with 15% of 30- to 49-year-olds and a mere 3% of those 50 and older.

The similar patterns across age and preferred news pathway in this section may in part be because those who prefer social media for news are much younger. Even so, the overall findings comparing those who prefer social media for news and those who prefer another pathway, such as print newspapers or the television set, persist even when taking age differences into account.

## Youngest adults less likely than their elders to think made-up news and information has an impact on the democratic system

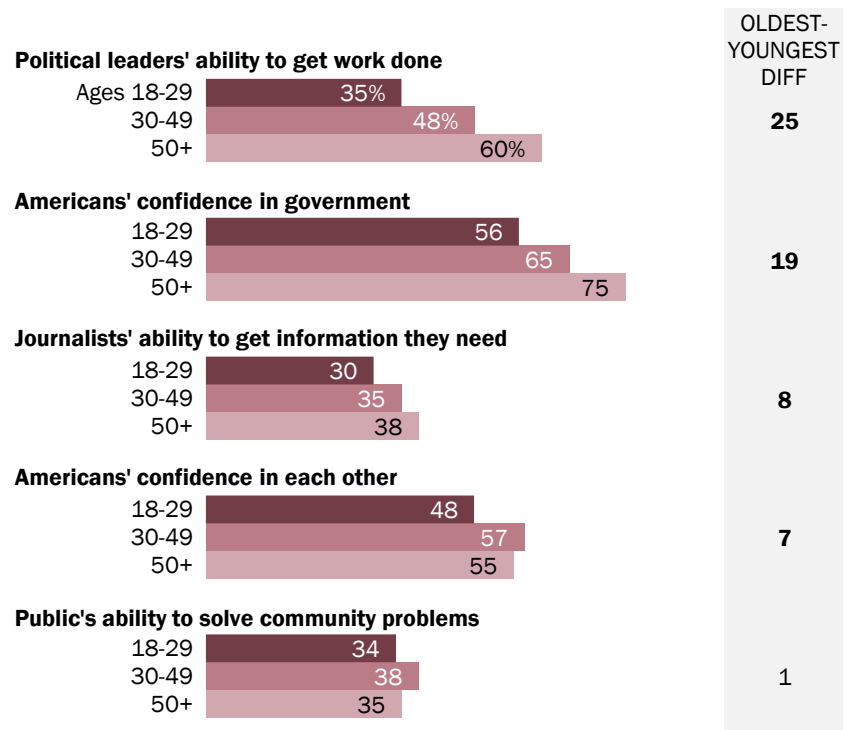
The youngest U.S. adults – those ages 18 to 29 – have less concern about the impact of made-up news and information on the democratic system than those older than them.

For example, roughly one-third of 18- to 29-year-olds (35%) say it has a big impact on political leaders' ability to do their work, far lower than the 60% of those 50 and older who say this, with 30- to 49-year-olds falling in between. Similarly, while a little more than half of the youngest age group (56%) say made-up news has a big impact on confidence in government, this rises to three-quarters among those 50 and older.

Younger Americans also express less concern about the confusion that made-up news creates among the public. Six-in-ten of those ages 18 to 29 say it causes a great deal of confusion, compared with roughly seven-in-ten of those ages 50 and older (72%).

### Youngest adults are less likely than oldest to think made-up news and information impacts the country

*% of U.S. adults who say made-up news and information has a **big impact** on ...*



Note: Statistically significant differences are in bold.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

"Many Americans Say Made-Up News Is a Critical Problem That Needs To Be Fixed"

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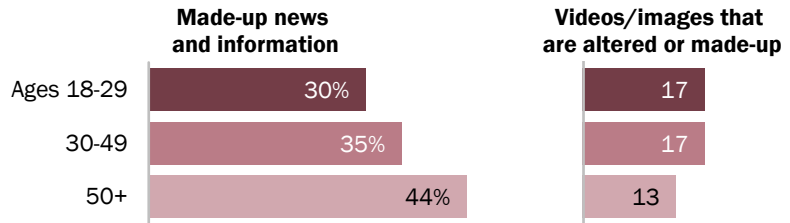
The youngest age group’s lower level of concern about made-up news reflects their lower level of exposure they say they have. The youngest group is also less likely than the oldest group to blame some key actors for creating made-up news.

Three-in-ten 18- to 29-year-olds say they often come across made-up news, 14 percentage points lower than those 50 and older (44%) and modestly lower than 30- to 49-year-olds (35%).

Younger adults are also less likely to think that four of the five actors asked about create a lot of made-up news: politicians, activists, journalists and foreign actors. For example, while 37% of 18- to 29-year-olds say activist groups create a lot of made-up news, this rises to 63% among those 50 and older. The only group that the youngest adults put somewhat greater blame on is the public (30% vs. 23% of the oldest age group). But while the percentages differ somewhat, political leaders and activist groups rise to the top across the three age groups.

### The youngest adults say they encounter made-up news and information less often than those older than them

% of U.S. adults who *often* come across ...

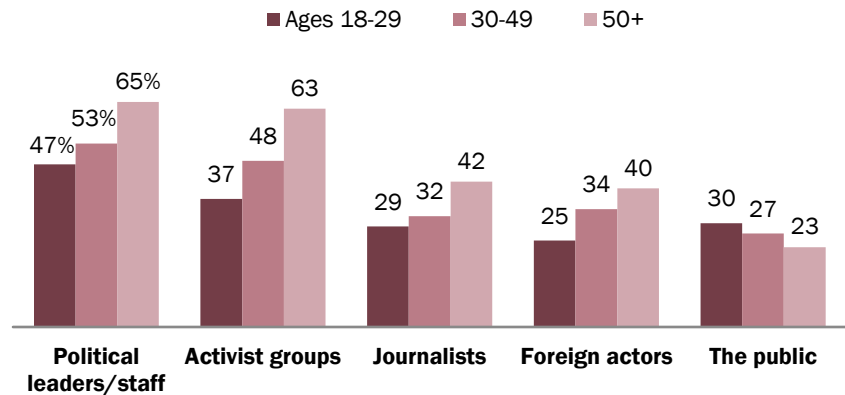


Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.  
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### 18- to 29-year-olds place less blame on several key actors for creating made-up news and information than older Americans

% of U.S. adults who say \_\_\_ create **a lot** of made-up news and information



Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.  
 “Many Americans Say Made-Up News Is a Critical Problem That Needs To Be Fixed”

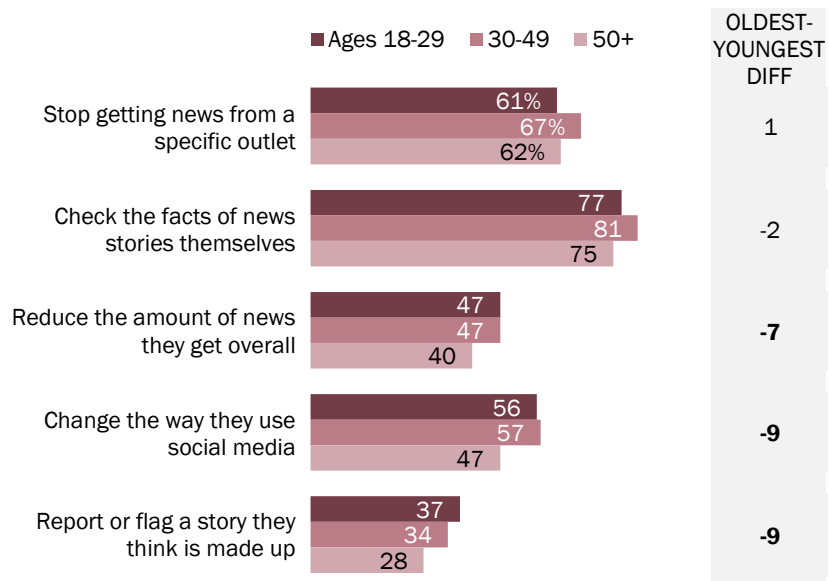
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Despite their lower level of concern over made-up news, the younger age groups are more likely than the oldest group to have taken certain steps to combat it or to limit their exposure to it.

For example, about half of those ages 18 to 29 and 30 to 49 (both 47%) say made-up news and information has led them to reduce the amount of news they get overall, compared with four-in-ten adults ages 50 and over. These younger two groups are also more likely than the oldest group to have changed the way they use social media (56% and 57%, vs. 47%) or to flag or report a story they think is made up (37% and 34%, vs. 28%).

### Majorities of all age groups check facts in response to made-up news and information, but younger adults are more likely to flag stories and reduce news intake

*% of U.S. adults who say the issue of made-up news and information has led them to do each action*



Note: Statistically significant differences are in **bold**.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

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The most common action across the three groups is to check the facts of stories themselves. At least three-quarters of each group say they have done this in response to the issue of made-up news. And majorities of all three age groups also say that they have stopped getting news from a specific outlet as a response to made-up news.

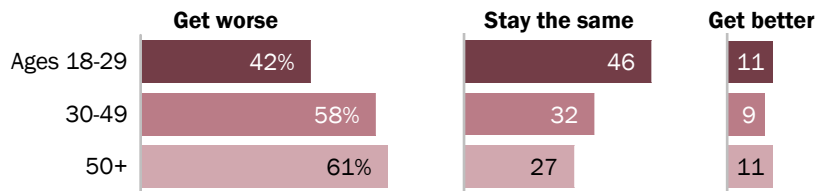
## Youngest adults are less pessimistic about how the issue of made-up news will evolve, more likely to click through to made-up content

The youngest adults, those 18 to 29, stand out from the two older age groups in two other ways.

First, they are less pessimistic about how the issue of made-up news and information will evolve. About four-in-ten 18- to 29-year-olds (42%) say the issue will get worse over the next five years, a notably smaller level of pessimism than registered by 30- to 49-year-olds (58%) or those 50 and older (61%). However, they are no more optimistic about seeing improvement than any other age groups, with about one-in-ten of each group thinking the situation will get better.

### The youngest adults are less pessimistic about the future of made-up news than those older than them

*% of U.S. adults who say the issue of made-up news and information will \_\_\_\_\_ in the next five years*



Note: Those who did not answer not shown.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

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Second, 18- to 29-year-olds are more likely to click on links to news stories in social media they think are made-up. Among social media news consumers, about four-in-ten 18- to 29-year-olds (37%) do so at least sometimes, compared with roughly a quarter of those ages 50 and older (27%).

People who prefer to get news on social media share more made-up news and information than others and are less pessimistic about the future of the issue

Much of the discussion around made-up news and information is about how people [see and engage with it on social media](#). Although much of the focus of made-up news is on how much it spreads on social media, those who prefer to get news that way are no more likely to say they often see it (36%) than those who prefer getting their news through other pathways (38%) such as print newspapers or the television set.

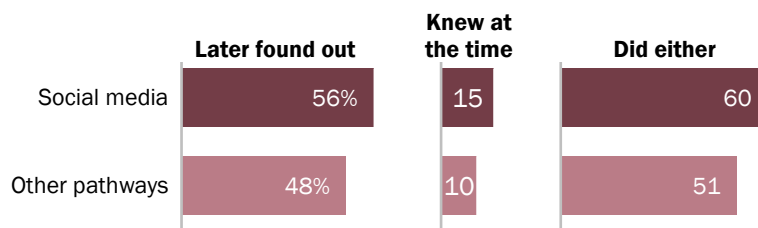
But even though they do not see made-up news more often, those who prefer to get news on

social media are somewhat more likely to share it. More than half of those who prefer to get news on social media (56%) have shared news they later found out was made up, compared with about half of those who prefer other pathways (48%). They are also more likely to have shared news that they knew at the time was made up (15% vs. 10%).

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### People who prefer social media for news are more likely to share made-up news and information than those who prefer other pathways

*Among U.S. adults who prefer to get news from each pathway, % who say they have shared news and information they \_\_\_ was made up*



Note: Those who did not answer not shown. Other pathways include print newspaper, the television set, radio and news website/app.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

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Aside from being more likely to share made-up news, Americans who prefer social media are less likely to think the problem will get worse in the future. Fewer than half of those who prefer social media for news (46%) think the issue of made-up news will get worse in the next five years, 12 percentage points lower than those who prefer other pathways (58%). Still, no more than one-in-ten of both groups say the problem will get better.

### Those who prefer social media for news less likely to say the issue of made-up news will get worse

*Among U.S. adults who prefer to get news from each pathway, % who say the issue of made-up news and information will \_\_\_ in the next five years*

	Get worse	Stay the same	Get better
Social media	46%	43%	9%
Other pathways	58	31	10

Note: Those who did not answer not shown. Other pathways include print newspaper, the television set, radio and news website/app.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

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## Appendix: Political awareness data

### Impact of made-up news and information, by political awareness

Among U.S. adults at each level of political awareness, % who say made-up news and information has a **big impact** on ...

	Political awareness			HIGHLY- LESS DIFF
	Highly aware	Somewhat aware	Less aware	
	%	%	%	
Americans' confidence in government	78	73	57	<b>21</b>
Americans' confidence in each other	63	57	46	<b>17</b>
Political leaders' ability to get work done	59	54	42	<b>17</b>
Public's ability to solve community problems	39	38	32	<b>7</b>
Journalists' ability to get information they need	35	37	34	<b>1</b>

Note: Statistically significant differences are in **bold**. Political awareness is based on number of correct answers to political knowledge questions and how closely one follows government and public affairs.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

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## Challenge in addressing made-up news and information, by political awareness

Among U.S. adults at each level of political awareness, % who say each is a **very big challenge** in addressing made-up news and information

	Political awareness			HIGHLY- LESS DIFF
	Highly aware	Somewhat aware	Less aware	
	%	%	%	
Political divides	77	69	50	<b>27</b>
Low awareness of current events	52	42	30	<b>22</b>
Public's lack of effort	53	43	32	<b>21</b>
Digital technology	50	43	39	<b>11</b>
Ability to make money from it	49	45	41	<b>8</b>

Note: Statistically significant differences are in **bold**. Political awareness is based on number of correct answers to political knowledge questions and how closely one follows government and public affairs.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

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## Seeing and sharing made-up news and information, by political awareness

Among U.S. adults at each level of political awareness, % who ...

	Political awareness			HIGHLY- LESS DIFF
	Highly aware	Somewhat aware	Less aware	
	%	%	%	
Often come across made-up news and information	46	41	29	<b>17</b>

Among those at each level of political awareness, % who say they have shared news and information that they ...

Knew at the time was made up	5	11	14	<b>-9</b>
Later found out was made up	46	48	51	<b>-5</b>

Note: Statistically significant differences are in **bold**. Political awareness is based on number of correct answers to political knowledge questions and how closely one follows government and public affairs.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

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## **Actions taken in response to made-up news and information, by political awareness**

*Among U.S. adults at each level of political awareness, % who say the issue of made-up news and information has led them to do each action*

	<b>Political awareness</b>			<b>HIGHLY- LESS DIFF</b>
	Highly aware	Somewhat aware	Less aware	
	%	%	%	
Check the facts of news stories themselves	88	80	68	<b>20</b>
Stop getting news from a specific outlet	71	67	54	<b>17</b>
Change the way they use social media	54	57	48	<b>6</b>
Report or flag a story they think is made up	34	36	28	<b>6</b>
Reduce the amount of news they get overall	31	47	50	<b>-19</b>

Note: Statistically significant differences are in **bold**. Political awareness is based on number of correct answers to political knowledge questions and how closely one follows government and public affairs.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

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## Views of who creates made-up news and information, by political awareness

Among U.S. adults at each level of political awareness, % who say each creates **a lot** of made-up news and information

	Political awareness			HIGHLY- LESS DIFF
	Highly aware	Somewhat aware	Less aware	
	%	%	%	
Activist groups	63	56	42	<b>21</b>
Foreign actors	44	37	27	<b>17</b>
Political leaders/staff	59	59	54	<b>5</b>
Journalists	34	39	35	-1
The public	22	25	29	-7

Note: Statistically significant differences are in **bold**. Political awareness is based on number of correct answers to political knowledge questions and how closely one follows government and public affairs.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 19-March 4, 2019.

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## Acknowledgments

This report was made possible by The Pew Charitable Trusts. Pew Research Center is a subsidiary of The Pew Charitable Trusts, its primary funder. This report is a collaborative effort based on the input and analysis of the following individuals. Find related reports online at [journalism.org](http://journalism.org)

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## Methodology

### The American Trends Panel survey methodology

The American Trends Panel (ATP), created by Pew Research Center, is a nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults. Panelists participate via self-administered web surveys. Panelists who do not have internet access at home are provided with a tablet and wireless internet connection. The panel is being managed by Ipsos.

Data in this report are drawn from the panel wave conducted February 19-March 4, 2019. A total of 6,127 panelists responded out of 7,961 who were sampled, for a response rate of 77%. The cumulative response rate

accounting for nonresponse to the recruitment surveys and attrition is 5.4%. The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 6,127 respondents is plus or minus 1.6 percentage points.

The subsample from the ATP was selected by grouping panelists into four strata so demographic groups that are underrepresented in the panel had a higher probability of selection than overrepresented groups:

- Stratum A consists of panelists who are non-internet users or have a high school education or less. They were sampled at a rate of 100%.
- Stratum B consists of panelists that are Hispanic, unregistered to vote or non-volunteers. They were sampled at a rate of 74%.
- Stratum C consists of panelists that are black non-Hispanic or 18 to 34 years old. They were sampled at a rate of 29%.
- Stratum D consists of the remaining panelists. They were sampled at a rate of 22%.

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#### American Trends Panel recruitment surveys

Recruitment Dates	Mode	Invited	Joined	Active panelists remaining
Jan. 23 to March 16, 2014	Landline/ cell RDD	9,809	5,338	2,509
Aug. 27 to Oct. 4, 2015	Landline/ cell RDD	6,004	2,976	1,469
April 25 to June 4, 2017	Landline/ cell RDD	3,905	1,628	804
Aug. 8, 2018 to Oct. 31, 2018	ABS/web	9,396	8,778	8,722
	<b>Total</b>	<b>29,114</b>	<b>18,720</b>	<b>13,504</b>

Note: Approximately once per year, panelists who have not participated in multiple consecutive waves or who did not complete an annual profiling survey are removed from the panel. Panelists also become inactive if they ask to be removed from the panel.

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Panelists were grouped into these strata in hierarchical order from A to D. For example, a panelist who is not registered to vote and has a high school education or less would be in Stratum A rather than in Stratum B.

The ATP was created in 2014, with the first cohort of panelists invited to join the panel at the end of a large, national, landline and cellphone random-digit-dial survey that was conducted in both English and Spanish. Two additional recruitments were conducted using the same method in 2015 and 2017, respectively. Across these three surveys, a total of 19,718 adults were invited to join the ATP, of which 9,942 agreed to participate.

In August 2018, the ATP switched from telephone to address-based recruitment. Invitations were sent to a random, address-based sample (ABS) of households selected from the U.S. Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File. In each household, the adult with the next birthday was asked to go online to complete a survey, at the end of which they were invited to join the panel. For a random half-sample of invitations, households without internet access were instructed to return a postcard. These households were contacted by telephone and sent a tablet if they agreed to participate. A total of 9,396 were invited to join the panel, and 8,778 agreed to join the panel and completed an initial profile survey.

Of the 18,720 individuals who have ever joined the ATP, 13,504 remained active panelists and continued to receive survey invitations at the time this survey was conducted.

### Weighting

The ATP data were weighted in a multistep process that begins with a base weight incorporating the respondents' original survey selection probability and the fact that in 2014 and 2017 some respondents were subsampled for invitation to the panel. The next step in the weighting uses an iterative technique that aligns the sample to population benchmarks on the dimensions listed in the accompanying table.

Sampling errors and statistical-significance tests take into account the effect of weighting. Interviews are conducted in both English and Spanish, but the American Trends Panel's Hispanic sample is predominantly U.S. born and English speaking.

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### Weighting dimensions

Variable	Benchmark source
Gender	2017 American Community Survey
Age	
Education	
Race/Hispanic origin	
Hispanic nativity	
Home internet access	
Region x Metropolitan status	2018 CPS March Supplement
Volunteerism	2015 CPS Volunteer Supplement
Voter registration	2016 CPS Voting and Registration Supplement
Party affiliation	Average of the three most recent Pew Research Center telephone surveys.

Note: Estimates from the ACS are based on non-institutionalized adults. Voter registration is calculated using procedures from Hur, Achen (2013) and rescaled to include the total US adult population.

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In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

<b>Group</b>	<b>Unweighted sample size</b>	<b>Plus or minus ...</b>
Total sample	6,127	1.6 percentage points
<i>Party affiliation</i>		
Republican/Lean Republican	2,522	2.5 percentage points
Democrat/Lean Democrat	3,393	2.2 percentage points
<i>Political awareness</i>		
Highly politically aware	2,322	2.6 percentage points
Less politically aware	2,112	2.8 percentage points
<i>Age</i>		
Ages 18-29	933	4.2 percentage points
30-49	2,014	2.8 percentage points
50+	3,174	2.3 percentage points
<i>News platform preference</i>		
Prefer social media	641	5.0 percentage points
Prefer other pathways	5,464	1.7 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

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# Topline questionnaire

**2019 PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S AMERICAN TRENDS PANEL  
WAVE 45 FEBRUARY  
FINAL MADE-UP NEWS TOPLINE  
FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 4, 2019  
TOTAL N=6,127**

**ASK ALL:**  
NATPROBS

How much of a problem do you think each of the following are in the country today?  
**[RANDOMIZE]**

	<u>A very big problem</u>	<u>A moderately big problem</u>	<u>A small problem</u>	<u>Not a problem at all</u>	<u>No answer</u>
<b>ASK ALL:</b>					
a. Made-up news and information Feb 19-March 4, 2019	50	32	16	3	*
<b>ASK FORM 1 ONLY [N=3,033]:</b>					
b. The affordability of health care Feb 19-March 4, 2019	67	26	5	2	*
Sep 24-Oct 7, 2018	70	23	5	2	*
c. Racism					
Feb 19-March 4, 2019	40	37	19	3	*
Sep 24-Oct 7, 2018	46	32	18	4	*
Oct 25-Nov 8, 2016	39	38	19	3	1
d. The way the U.S. political system operates					
Feb 19-March 4, 2019	52	35	11	3	1
Sep 24-Oct 7, 2018	55	30	11	3	1
e. Illegal immigration					
Feb 19-March 4, 2019	38	28	28	6	*
Sep 24-Oct 7, 2018	42	26	25	6	*
Oct 25-Nov 8, 2016	44	30	21	5	1
f. The gap between the rich and poor					
Feb 19-March 4, 2019	51	30	14	5	*
Sep 24-Oct 7, 2018	54	28	12	5	*
Oct 25-Nov 8, 2016	57	29	9	5	1
<b>ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=3,094]:</b>					
g. Violent crime					
Feb 19-March 4, 2019	49	37	13	1	*
Sep 24-Oct 7, 2018	52	33	13	1	*
h. Climate change					
Feb 19-March 4, 2019	46	27	18	9	*
Sep 24-Oct 7, 2018	43	28	20	9	*
Oct 25-Nov 8, 2016	40	26	21	12	1
i. Drug addiction					
Feb 19-March 4, 2019	70	26	4	1	*
Sep 24-Oct 7, 2018	68	25	6	1	*
Oct 25-Nov 8, 2016	56	32	9	2	1

**NATPROBS CONTINUED...**

	A very big <u>problem</u>	A moderately <u>big problem</u>	A small <u>problem</u>	Not a problem <u>at all</u>	No <u>answer</u>
j. Terrorism					
Feb 19-March 4, 2019	34	40	23	2	*
Sep 24-Oct 7, 2018	35	37	25	3	*
Oct 25-Nov 8, 2016	53	30	13	3	1
k. Sexism					
Feb 19-March 4, 2019	26	40	28	5	*
Sep 24-Oct 7, 2018	34	35	24	7	1
Oct 25-Nov 8, 2016	23	36	30	10	2

**ASK ALL:**

NEWS\_PLATFORM

Thinking about news (by news we mean information about events and issues that involve more than just your friends and family), how often do you... **[RANDOMIZE]**

	<u>Often</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Hardly ever</u>	<u>Never</u>	No <u>answer</u>
<b>NO ITEMS A-F</b>					
g. Get news from a social media site (such as Facebook, Twitter, or Snapchat)					
Feb 19-March 4, 2019	25	29	21	24	*
Jul 30-Aug 12, 2018	20	27	21	32	0
Aug 8-Aug 21, 2017	20	27	20	33	0
Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016 <sup>3</sup>	18	26	18	38	*
h. Get news from a news website or app					
Feb 19-March 4, 2019	43	33	16	8	*
Jul 30-Aug 12, 2018	33	31	18	18	*
Aug 8-Aug 21, 2017	33	31	19	17	*
Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016	28	28	18	26	*

**ASK ALL:**NEWSPREFV2 Which of the following would you say you prefer for getting news? **[RANDOMIZE]**

Feb 19-March 4

2019

8	A print newspaper
8	Radio
41	Television
12	A social media site (such as Facebook, YouTube or Snapchat)
30	A news website or app
*	No answer

<sup>3</sup> In the Wave 14 January 2016 survey, this question item read "Get news from a social networking site (such as Facebook or Twitter)?".

**ASK ALL:**

SOURCESKEP How much do you trust the accuracy of the news and information that you get from...  
**[RANDOMIZE]**

	<u>A great deal</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Not much</u>	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>No answer</u>
a. Your main news outlets Feb 19-March 4, 2019	36	49	10	4	*
b. News outlets you don't come across often Feb 19-March 4, 2019	3	36	47	13	*
c. Political leaders and public officials Feb 19-March 4, 2019	4	48	38	9	*
d. Friends and family Feb 19-March 4, 2019	15	65	17	3	*
e. Social media sites (such as Facebook, Twitter or Snapchat) Feb 19-March 4, 2019	4	32	39	24	1

**ASK ALL:**

INFOCONFUSE How much do you think each type of news and information leaves Americans confused about the basic facts of current issues and events? **[RANDOMIZE]**

	<u>A great deal</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Not much</u>	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>No answer</u>
a. Made-up information that is intended to mislead the public Feb 19-March 4, 2019	67	24	5	3	*
b. Satire about an issue or event Feb 19-March 4, 2019	24	48	22	5	1
c. Breaking information that is published before everything is verified Feb 19-March 4, 2019	52	37	8	2	*
d. Factual information presented to favor one side of an issue Feb 19-March 4, 2019	48	41	9	2	*
e. A video or image that is altered or made up to mislead the public Feb 19-March 4, 2019	63	27	6	3	*

**RANDOMIZE ORDER OF INFOKNOW AND INFOOWN****ASK ALL:**

INFOKNOW How do you feel about the AVERAGE AMERICAN'S ability to recognize each type of news and information? **[SHOW IN SAME ORDER AS INFOCONFUSE]**

	The average American should be able to recognize it	It is too much to ask of the average American to be able to recognize it	No answer
a. Made-up information that is intended to mislead the public Feb 19-March 4, 2019	43	56	1
b. Satire about an issue or event Feb 19-March 4, 2019	65	34	1
c. Breaking information that is published before everything is verified Feb 19-March 4, 2019	46	53	1
d. Factual information presented to favor one side of an issue Feb 19-March 4, 2019	58	41	1
e. A video or image that is altered or made up to mislead the public Feb 19-March 4, 2019	38	61	1

**RANDOMIZE ORDER OF INFOKNOW AND INFOOWN****ASK ALL:**

INFOOWN How do you feel about YOUR OWN ability to recognize each type of news and information? **[SHOW IN SAME ORDER AS INFOCONFUSE]**

	I find it easy to recognize it	I find it hard to recognize it	No answer
a. Made-up information that is intended to mislead the public Feb 19-March 4, 2019	63	36	1
b. Satire about an issue or event Feb 19-March 4, 2019	78	20	2
c. Breaking information that is published before everything is verified Feb 19-March 4, 2019	58	40	1
d. Factual information presented to favor one side of an issue Feb 19-March 4, 2019	77	22	1
e. A video or image that is altered or made up to mislead the public Feb 19-March 4, 2019	53	46	1

**ASK ALL:**

MEDIALOYAL3 Which of the following statements comes closer to your view? **[RANDOMIZE]**

Feb 19-March 4 <u>2019</u>		Jan 12-Feb 8 <u>2016</u>
39	I consider myself to be loyal to the news source(s) I get my news from	51
60	I am not particularly loyal to the news source(s) I get my news from	48
1	No answer	1

**ASK ALL:**

LEAD When you talk with friends and family about the news, do you tend to... **[RANDOMIZE]**

Feb 19-March 4 <u>2019</u>	
69	Listen to the conversation more than lead
29	Lead the conversation more than listen
1	No answer

**ASK ALL:**

SEEK Which statement best describes how you get news? **[RANDOMIZE]**

Feb 19-March 4 <u>2019</u>	
60	I mostly get news because I'm looking for it
39	I mostly get news because I happen to come across it
1	No answer

**ASK ALL:**

INFORESTRICT Which comes closer to your view about each type of news and information?  
**[SHOW IN SAME ORDER AS INFOCONFUSE]**

	The freedom to publish and access it <u>should be protected</u>	Steps should be <u>taken to restrict it</u>	<u>No answer</u>
a. Made-up information that is intended to mislead the public Feb 19-March 4, 2019	20	79	1
b. Satire about an issue or event Feb 19-March 4, 2019	69	30	2
c. Breaking information that is published before everything is verified Feb 19-March 4, 2019	45	54	1
d. Factual information presented to favor one side of an issue Feb 19-March 4, 2019	62	37	1
e. A video or image that is altered or made up to mislead the public Feb 19-March 4, 2019	22	77	1

**ASK ALL:**

MADEUPWORD Now, in just a few words, what comes to mind when you think of made-up news and information that is intended to mislead the public? **[OPEN-END; CODED UP TO TWO RESPONSES]**

Feb. 19-March 4

2019

20	A negative feeling/impact
18	News media NET
10	<i>News media generally as a source of made-up news</i>
8	<i>Specific news outlet NET<sup>4</sup></i>
4	<i>Fox News</i>
3	<i>CNN</i>
1	<i>MSNBC</i>
1	<i>InfoWars</i>
2	<i>Other news outlets</i>
12	Trump/administration NET
10	<i>Trump/administration as a source of made-up news</i>
2	<i>Trump is treated unfairly</i>
9	Politics
7	Specific news topics
7	Call to action
4	The public
3	Social media/technology
10	Other response
22	Don't know/no answer

**ASK ALL:**

INFOWHY

How much do you think each of the following is a reason why made-up news and information is created? **[RANDOMIZE]**

	<u>Major reason</u>	<u>Minor reason</u>	<u>Not a reason</u>	<u>No answer</u>
a. To make money Feb 19-March 4, 2019	71	22	6	1
b. To push an agenda or viewpoint Feb 19-March 4, 2019	86	10	3	1
c. For fame Feb 19-March 4, 2019	49	39	11	1
d. To be funny Feb 19-March 4, 2019	12	41	46	1

<sup>4</sup> If respondents named specific news outlets in their first two responses, up to three outlets were accepted. News outlets shown are those that were named by at least 1% of respondents.



**ASK ALL:**INFOCREATE How much made-up news and information do you think is created by... **[RANDOMIZE]**

	<u>A lot</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Not much</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>No answer</u>
a. Journalists Feb 19-March 4, 2019	36	39	20	4	1
b. Political leaders and their staff Feb 19-March 4, 2019	57	35	5	2	1
c. Members of the public Feb 19-March 4, 2019	26	53	18	2	1
d. Foreign-based individuals or groups Feb 19-March 4, 2019	35	48	13	2	1
e. Activist groups Feb 19-March 4, 2019	53	38	7	2	1

**ASK ALL:**

MADEUPOFT How often do you come across made-up news and information that is intended to mislead the public?

Feb 19-March 4

2019

38	Often
51	Sometimes
9	Hardly ever
2	Never
1	No answer

**ASK ALL:**

MADEUPSHARE1 Have you ever shared news and information that you LATER FOUND OUT was made-up?

Feb 19-March 4

2019

49	Yes
50	No
1	No answer

**ASK ALL:**

MADEUPSHARE2 Have you ever shared news and information that you KNEW AT THE TIME was made-up?

Feb 19-March 4

2019

10	Yes
89	No
1	No answer

**ASK IF SHARES NEWS THEY KNEW WAS MADE-UP (MADEUPSHARE2=1) [N=529]:**

MADEUPSHAREWHY What is the main reason why you shared news and information that you knew at the time was made-up? **[RANDOMIZE]**

Feb 19-March 4

2019

27	I thought it was surprising or entertaining
8	I liked what it said
18	I wanted to create a discussion about it
46	I wanted to tell others it was inaccurate
*	No answer

**ASK ALL:**

MADEUPTOPIC How much made-up news and information do you think is created about each of the following topics? **[RANDOMIZE]**

	<u>A lot</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Not much</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>No answer</u>
<b>ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=3,094]:</b>					
a. Politics and elections Feb 19-March 4, 2019	73	22	3	2	*
<b>ASK FORM 1 ONLY [N=3,033]:</b>					
b. Entertainment and celebrities Feb 19-March 4, 2019	61	32	5	1	1
<b>ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=3,094]:</b>					
c. Science and technology Feb 19-March 4, 2019	17	49	29	4	*
<b>ASK FORM 1 ONLY [N=3,033]:</b>					
d. Health and medicine Feb 19-March 4, 2019	27	51	18	2	1
<b>ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=3,094]:</b>					
e. Emergencies, such as shootings or natural disasters Feb 19-March 4, 2019	17	40	34	8	*
<b>ASK FORM 1 ONLY [N=3,033]:</b>					
f. Business and finance Feb 19-March 4, 2019	26	57	15	2	1

**ASK ALL:**

MADEUPELEVEL And, how much do you think is created in each of the following areas? **[RANDOMIZE]**

	<u>A lot</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Not much</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>No answer</u>
a. National issues, events and public figures Feb 19-March 4, 2019	58	36	5	1	1
b. Local issues, events and public figures Feb 19-March 4, 2019	18	52	28	2	1

**ASK ALL:**

MADEUPRES Has the issue of made-up news and information led you to do any of the following?  
**[RANDOMIZE]**

	<u>Yes, have done this</u>	<u>No, have not done this</u>	<u>No answer</u>
a. Stop getting news from a specific outlet Feb 19-March 4, 2019	63	36	1
b. Reduce the amount of news you get overall Feb 19-March 4, 2019	43	56	1
c. Check the facts of news stories yourself Feb 19-March 4, 2019	78	22	1
d. Report or flag a story that you think is made-up Feb 19-March 4, 2019	32	67	1
e. Change the way you use social media Feb 19-March 4, 2019	52	46	1

**ASK ALL:**

MADEUPIMP Overall, how much of an impact do you think made-up news and information has on each of  
the following? **[RANDOMIZE]**

	<u>Big impact</u>	<u>Moderate impact</u>	<u>Small impact</u>	<u>No impact at all</u>	<u>No answer</u>
a. Americans' confidence in government institutions Feb 19-March 4, 2019	68	24	5	2	*
b. Americans' confidence in each other Feb 19-March 4, 2019	54	34	9	2	1
c. Political leaders' ability to get work done Feb 19-March 4, 2019	51	34	11	4	1
d. Journalists' ability to get the information they need for their stories Feb 19-March 4, 2019	35	42	17	5	1
e. The public's ability to solve community problems Feb 19-March 4, 2019	36	42	18	4	1

**ASK ALL:**

MADEUPDIS How often do you discuss the topic of made-up news and information with others?

Feb 19-March 4

2019

16	Often
46	Sometimes
30	Hardly ever
9	Never
*	No answer

**ASK ALL:**

DISAVOID Have you ever avoided talking with someone because you thought they might bring made-up news and information into the conversation?

Feb 19-March 4

2019

50	Yes
50	No
*	No answer

**1 QUESTION HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE****ASK IF GETS NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA (NEWS\_PLATFORMg=1-3) [N=4,580]:**

Now, thinking about the news you come across on social media...

SMSHARER On social media, do you think of yourself more as a... **[RANDOMIZE]**

Feb 19-March 4

2019

12	Sharer of news
87	Receiver of news
1	No answer

**ASK IF GETS NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA (NEWS\_PLATFORMg=1-3):**

SMLIKES How much is each of the following a reason why you click on links to news stories on social media? **[RANDOMIZE]**

	<u>Major reason</u>	<u>Minor reason</u>	<u>Not a reason</u>	<u>No answer</u>
<b>ASK FORM 1 ONLY [N=2,253]:</b>				
a. The story was something I had been following in the news Feb 19-March 4, 2019	56	31	11	1
b. A friend recommended the story Feb 19-March 4, 2019	26	47	26	1
c. The story was published by a news organization I prefer Feb 19-March 4, 2019	35	40	24	1
<b>ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=2,327]:</b>				
d. The story had a lot of shares, comments or likes Feb 19-March 4, 2019	13	34	52	*
e. I was interested in the topic Feb 19-March 4, 2019	78	17	5	*
f. The story was surprising or entertaining Feb 19-March 4, 2019	49	41	10	*

**ASK IF GETS NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA (NEWS\_PLATFORMg=1-3) [N=4,580]:**

SMSHARE When you share a news story on social media, how much do you think it impacts the story's overall reach to the public?

Feb 19-March 4 <u>2019</u>	
8	A lot
28	Some
22	Not much
4	Not at all
37	I don't share news stories on social media
*	No answer

**ASK IF GETS NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA (NEWS\_PLATFORMg=1-3) [N=4,580]:**

MADEUPSMCLICK When you see a news story on social media that you think is made-up, how often do you click on the link to that story?

Feb 19-March 4

2019

5	Often
26	Sometimes
35	Hardly ever
23	Never
10	I don't see these types of stories on social media
1	No answer

**ASK IF GETS NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA (NEWS\_PLATFORMg=1-3) [N=4,580]:**

MADEUPSMFOL1 Have you ever hidden, blocked or stopped following A NEWS SOURCE OR ORGANIZATION on social media because you thought they were posting made-up news and information?

Feb 19-March 4

2019

50	Yes, have done this
49	No, have not done this
1	No answer

**ASK IF GETS NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA (NEWS\_PLATFORMg=1-3) [N=4,580]:**

MADEUPSMFOL2 Have you ever hidden, blocked or stopped following SOMEONE YOU KNOW on social media because you thought they were posting made-up news and information?

Feb 19-March 4

2019

50	Yes, have done this
49	No, have not done this
1	No answer

**ASK IF GETS NEWS ONLINE (NEWS\_PLATFORMg=1-3 OR NEWS\_PLATFORMh=1-3) [N=5,849]:**

ONLINESOURCE In general, does most of the news you see online come from...  
**[RANDOMIZE OPTIONS 1 AND 2]**

Feb 19-March 4

2019

67	Sources you are familiar with
12	Sources you are not familiar with
20	Not sure
1	No answer

**ASK IF GETS NEWS ONLINE (NEWS\_PLATFORMg=1-3 OR NEWS\_PLATFORMh=1-3) [N=5,849]:**

DIGWDOG\_3 Thinking about the news that your friends, family and acquaintances post or send you online about political and social issues, overall, do you think the mix of news you get from them...  
**[RANDOMIZE OPTIONS 1 AND 2]**

Feb 19-March 4

2019

31	Represents just one side
32	Represents more than one side
36	They don't send me news about political and social issues
1	No answer

**ASK ALL:**

NEWSPROB How much of a problem is each of the following when it comes to how the public stays informed about the basic facts of current issues and events? **[RANDOMIZE]**

	A very big <u>problem</u>	A moderately <u>big problem</u>	A small <u>problem</u>	Not a problem <u>at all</u>	No <u>answer</u>
<b>ASK ALL:</b>					
a. The amount of made-up news and information					
Feb 19-March 4, 2019	49	35	12	3	1
<b>ASK FORM 1 ONLY [N=3,033]:</b>					
b. The public's difficulty distinguishing facts from opinions					
Feb 19-March 4, 2019	51	35	10	3	1
c. Too many different sources to choose from					
Feb 19-March 4, 2019	17	33	29	20	1
<b>ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=3,094]:</b>					
d. Too much news to keep up with					
Feb 19-March 4, 2019	19	42	28	11	1
e. Journalists inserting their own views					
Feb 19-March 4, 2019	37	32	25	6	1

**ASK ALL:**

VIDOFT How often do you come across videos or images that have been altered or made-up to mislead the public?

Feb 19-March 4

2019

15	Often
51	Sometimes
26	Hardly ever
6	Never
2	No answer

**ASK ALL:**

MADEUPSOLVE Within the next five years, do you think the issue of made-up news and information will...  
**[REVERSE ORDER FOR RANDOM HALF OF SAMPLE]**

Feb 19-March 4

2019

10	Get better
32	Stay the same
56	Get worse
1	No answer

**ASK ALL:**

INFOCHAL How much of a challenge do you think each of the following is in addressing made-up news and information? **[RANDOMIZE]**

		<u>A very big challenge</u>	<u>A moderately big challenge</u>	<u>A small challenge</u>	<u>Not a challenge at all</u>	<u>No answer</u>
a.	Political divides					
	Feb 19-March 4, 2019	64	26	6	2	2
b.	The public's lack of effort					
	Feb 19-March 4, 2019	42	40	13	3	2
c.	Low awareness of current events					
	Feb 19-March 4, 2019	41	41	14	3	2
d.	Digital technology					
	Feb 19-March 4, 2019	43	35	14	5	2
e.	The ability to make money from it					
	Feb 19-March 4, 2019	44	33	15	6	2

**ASK ALL:**

RESTRICTWHO Who do you think has the most responsibility to reduce the amount of made-up news and information? **[RANDOMIZE WITH "NONE OF THESE" ALWAYS LAST]**

Feb 19-March 4

2019

12	The government
9	Technology companies
20	The public
53	The news media
5	None of these
1	No answer



**ASK ALL:**

ACCCHECK If you wanted to check the accuracy of a news story, how confident are you that you would know what steps to take?

Feb 19-March 4

2019

29	Very confident
46	Somewhat confident
17	Not too confident
6	Not at all confident
1	No answer

**ASK ALL:**

FCFAIR Different organizations and news outlets have taken on fact-checking efforts. Do you think that those who do the fact-checking... **[RANDOMIZE]**

Feb 19-March 4

2019

50	Deal fairly with all sides
48	Tend to favor one side
2	No answer

**RANDOMIZE WATCHDOG\_1 & WATCHDOG\_3****ASK ALL:**

WATCHDOG\_1 Some people think that by criticizing leaders, news organizations keep political leaders from doing their job. Others think that such criticism is worth it because it keeps political leaders from doing things that should not be done. Which position is closer to your opinion? **[RANDOMIZE]**

Feb 19-March 4

2019<sup>5</sup>

29	Keep political leaders from doing their job
68	Keep political leaders from doing things that shouldn't be done
3	No answer

Feb 22-March 4

2018

31
65
4

Mar 13-Mar 27

2017

28
70
2

Jan 12-Feb 8

2016

21
75
4

**RANDOMIZE WATCHDOG\_1 & WATCHDOG\_3****ASK ALL:**

WATCHDOG\_3 In presenting the news dealing with political and social issues, do you think that news organizations... **[RANDOMIZE]**

Feb 19-March 4

2019<sup>6</sup>

26	Deal fairly with all sides
72	Tend to favor one side
2	No answer

Feb 22-March 4

2018

30
68
2

Mar 13-Mar 27

2017

28
72
*

Jan 12-Feb 8

2016

24
74
3

<sup>5</sup> For the comparable phone trends from before 2016 for WATCHDOG\_1, see [here](#).

<sup>6</sup> For the comparable phone trends from before 2016 for WATCHDOG\_3, see [here](#).

**1 QUESTION HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE****RANDOMIZE KNOW1 – HOUCONTR**

Here are a few questions about people and things that you may have seen in the news. Please answer the questions as best as you can.

**ASK ALL:**

KNOW1 How many justices are there on the Supreme Court of the United States?

Feb 19-March 4

2019

2	Three
3	Five
11	Seven
63	Nine
20	Not sure
1	No answer

**RANDOMIZE KNOW1 – HOUCONTR****ASK ALL:**

KNOW2 Who is Mike Pompeo? **[RANDOMIZE]**

Feb 19-March 4

2019

2	Vice President of the U.S.
57	U.S. Secretary of State
3	A U.S. Senator from Minnesota
1	Chairman of General Motors
35	Not sure
1	No answer

**RANDOMIZE KNOW1 – HOUCONTR****ASK ALL:**

HOUCONTR Do you happen to know which political party has a majority in the U.S. House of Representatives? **[RANDOMIZE OPTIONS 1 AND 2]**

Feb 19-March 4

2019

15	The Republican Party
70	The Democratic Party
15	Not sure
1	No answer

**ASK ALL:**

SNSUSE Do you ever use social media (such as Facebook, Twitter or Snapchat)?

Feb 19-March 4

2019

75	Yes
25	No
*	No answer