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# Further Decline in Credibility Ratings for Most News Organizations

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# Further Decline in Credibility Ratings for Most News Organizations

For the second time in a decade, the believability ratings for major news organizations have suffered broad-based declines. In the new survey, positive believability ratings have fallen significantly for nine of 13 news organizations tested. This follows a similar downturn in positive believability ratings that occurred between 2002 and 2004.

The falloff in credibility affects news organizations in most sectors: national newspapers, such as the New York Times and USA Today, all three cable news outlets, as well as the broadcast TV networks and NPR.

Across all 13 news organizations included in the survey, the average positive believability rating (3 or 4 on a 4-point scale) is 56%. In 2010, the average positive rating was 62%. A decade ago, the average rating for the news organizations tested was 71%. Since 2002, every news outlet's believability rating has suffered a double-digit drop, except for local daily newspapers and local TV news. The New York Times was not included in this survey until 2004, but its believability rating has

fallen by 13 points since then.

# News Organizations' Believability Ratings Decline

Believability rating on 1-4 scale

	1-4 5	scale
Average rating across 13 news organizations (based on those who	Positive (3 or 4)	Negative (1 or 2)
can rate each outlet)	%	%
2012	56	44
2010	62	38
2008	64	36
2006	61	38
2004	63	37
2002	71	30

PEW RESEARCH CENTER July 19-22, 2012. Ratings for each news organization based only on those who could rate it. Identical list of 13 news organizations for each year since 2004; in 2002, 12 organizations were included. New York Times was first asked in 2004.

These are among the major findings of a survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted July 19-22 among 1,001 adults. The survey asks people to rate individual news organizations on believability using a 4-point scale. A rating of 4 means someone believes "all or most" of what the news organization says; a rating of 1 means someone believes "almost nothing" of what they say.

The believability ratings for individual news organizations – like views of the news media generally – have long been divided along partisan lines. But partisan differences have grown as Republicans' views of the credibility of news outlets have continued to erode. Today, there are only two news organizations – Fox News and local TV news – that receive positive believability ratings from at least two-thirds of Republicans. A decade ago, there were only two news organizations that did not get positive ratings from at least

two-thirds of Republicans. By contrast, Democrats generally rate the believability of news organizations positively; majorities of Democrats give all the news organizations tested ratings of 3 or 4 on the 4-point scale, with the exception of Fox News.

## **Current Believability Ratings**

The Pew Research Center has asked about the believability of individual news organizations for more than two decades. During this period, the Center also has asked separately about the news media's overall performance; ratings for the news media's accuracy, fairness and other aspects of performance also have shown long-term declines. (For the most recent report, see "Press Widely Criticized, But Trusted More than Other Information Sources," Sept. 22, 2011.)

The believability measures are based on those who give each news organization a rating. Roughly one-in-five are unable to rate the believability of NPR (21%), the New York Times (19%), the Wall Street Journal (19%) and USA Today (17%).

## **News Organization Believability**

How much can	Positive (3/4)	Negative (1/2)	N	Can't rate
you believe each?	%	%		%
Local TV news	65	35	947	5
60 Minutes	64	35	915	10
ABC News	59	41	930	7
Wall Street Journal	58	41	806	19
CNN	58	42	934	6
CBS News	57	43	943	6
Daily newspaper you know best	57	43	922	8
NBC News	55	44	944	5
NPR	52	47	796	21
MSNBC	50	50	883	10
New York Times	49	50	796	19
Fox News	49	51	916	8
USA Today	49	51	824	17

PEW RESEARCH CENTER July 19-22, 2012. Ratings for each news organization based only on those who could rate it.

As in past believability surveys, local TV news and the CBS News program 60 Minutes receive the most positive ratings. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of those able to rate local TV news give it a rating of 3 or 4. Ratings are comparable for 60 Minutes (64% 3 or 4).

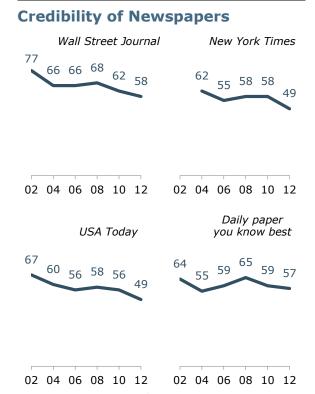
Despite the declines in believability, majorities continue to give most news organizations ratings of 3 or 4. However, ratings are mixed for NPR, MSNBC, the New York Times, Fox News and USA Today. About half give each of these news organizations believability ratings of 3 or 4; approximately the same percentages give them ratings of 1 or 2.

## **Believability of News Organizations: 2002-2012**

Positive believability ratings for the New York Times have fallen by nine points since 2010, from 58% to 49%. The decline has been comparable for USA Today. Two years ago, 56% rated USA Today's believability at 3 or 4; today 49% do so.

About six-in-ten (58%) rate the Wall Street Journal's believability positively. That is little changed since 2010 (62%), but in 2002, 77% rated the Journal's believability at 3 or 4 on the 4-point scale.

Perceptions of the believability of the daily newspaper "you are most familiar with" are about the same as they were two years ago. Currently, 57% give their daily newspaper a positive believability rating, which is little changed from 2010 (59%).



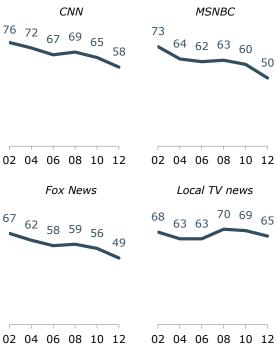
PEW RESEARCH CENTER July 19-22, 2012. Percent giving each news organization believability ratings of 3 or 4 on a 4-point scale. Based on those who could rate each organization in each year.

Believability ratings for all three major cable news outlets have declined since 2010.

MSNBC's believability rating has fallen from 60% to 50%, while the percentages giving CNN and Fox News believability ratings of 3 or 4 have declined seven points each, to 58% and 49%, respectively. In 2002, the ratings for all three cable news outlets were considerably higher – 76% for CNN, 73% for MSNBC and 67% for Fox News.

The believability ratings for local TV news are higher than those for the three cable news outlets. Currently, 65% give local news a rating of 3 or 4. Since 2002, credibility ratings for local TV news have remained more stable than have ratings for the three main cable news outlets.

# **Credibility of Cable, Local TV News**

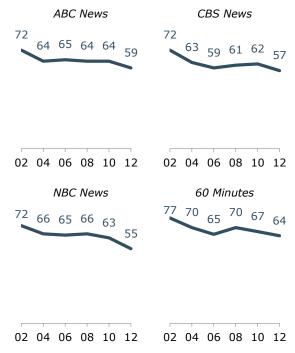


PEW RESEARCH CENTER July 19-22, 2012. Percent giving each news organization believability ratings of 3 or 4 on a 4-point scale. Based on those who could rate each organization in each year.

There also have been slight declines since 2010 in believability ratings for the three major TV networks — ABC News, CBS News and NBC News. Over the past decade, positive ratings for all three have fallen from the low 70s to the mid- to high-50s. More than six-in-ten (64%) give the CBS weekly newsmagazine 60 Minutes believability ratings of 3 or 4. That is down 13 points since 2002.

Since 2010, the percentage giving NPR believability ratings of 3 or 4 has dropped eight points to 52%. NPR's believability ratings had changed little from 2002 to 2010; about six-inten in each year rated NPR's believability positively.

# Credibility of Network News, 60 Minutes



PEW RESEARCH CENTER July 19-22, 2012. Percent giving each news organization believability ratings of 3 or 4 on a 4-point scale. Based on those who could rate each organization in each year.

## **Credibility of NPR**



PEW RESEARCH CENTER July 19-22, 2012. Percent giving NPR believability ratings of 3 or 4 on a 4-point scale. Based on those who could rate NPR in each year.

### **Partisan Gaps in Credibility Ratings**

Republicans have long held a more negative view of the credibility of the news media than Democrats and this continues to be reflected in current assessments of news outlets.

Republicans rate the believability of nine of 13 news organizations less positively than do Democrats. Fox News is the only news organization that is rated higher for believability by Republicans (67% of Republicans vs. 37% of Democrats). However, the percentage of Republicans giving Fox a believability rating of 3 or 4 has fallen 10 points, from 77%, since 2010.

Partisan differences in believability ratings are more pronounced for broadcast and cable TV news organizations, with more modest gaps for most newspapers.

# Wide Partisan Differences in Most Believability Ratings

% giving each				R-D
believability rating	Rep	Dem	Ind	gap
of 3 or 4	%	%	%	%
MSNBC	32	69	46	-37
CNN	40	76	54	-36
ABC News	43	77	53	-34
NBC News	41	74	49	-33
CBS News	45	77	50	-32
60 Minutes	51	81	60	-30
New York Times	37	65	44	-28
Daily newspaper you know best	49	65	52	-16
NPR	48	59	53	-11
Wall Street Journal	57	65	55	-8
USA Today	50	54	44	-4
Local TV News	68	70	58	-2
Fox News	67	37	43	+30

PEW RESEARCH CENTER July 19-22, 2012. Percent giving each news organization believability ratings of 3 or 4 on a 4-point scale. Based on those who could rate each organization.

More than twice as many Democrats as Republicans rate MSNBC's believability positively (69% vs. 32%). The differences are about as large in views of the believability of CNN and the three broadcast networks.

The partisan divide in views of the New York Times' believability also is substantial; 65% of Democrats, but just 37% of Republicans, rate the believability of the Times at 3 or 4. However, there are smaller differences in views of other newspapers. More Democrats (65%) than Republicans (49%) give positive ratings for the newspaper they know best, but about as many Republicans as Democrats rate the believability of the Wall Street Journal and USA Today positively.

A majority of Democrats (59%) give NPR a believability rating of 3 or 4. That compares with 48% of Republicans.

The partisan differences in views of the believability of most news organizations have increased greatly since 2002. For example, the partisan gap in believability of each of the cable networks was only about 10 points a decade ago; today, the gaps in believability ratings for Fox News, MSNBC and CNN are at least 30 points.

# News Organizations' Credibility Ratings by Party 2002-2012

	-		Repub	licans	5	-			Demo	crats				R-D	Gap	
% giving each	02	04	06	08	10	12	02	04	06	08	10	12	02	08	10	12
believability rating of 3 or 4	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%				
CNN	72	64	58	55	48	40	84	83	73	79	78	76	-12	-24	-30	-36
60 Minutes	74	61	58	61	60	51	85	77	73	79	77	81	-11	-18	-17	-30
CBS News	70	53	49	48	51	45	80	71	65	68	71	77	-10	-20	-20	-32
ABC News	67	54	58	55	53	43	80	73	69	72	76	77	-13	-17	-23	-34
MSNBC	70	56	60	52	46	32	80	75	65	74	79	69	-10	-22	-33	-37
NBC News	68	57	56	51	51	41	82	72	71	75	77	74	-14	-24	-26	-33
NPR	63	44	53	50	51	48	64	63	60	68	69	59	-1	-18	-18	-11
Daily newspaper you know best	63	52	54	61	58	49	73	59	64	70	71	65	-10	-9	-13	-16
NY Times		50	43	41	40	37		70	62	70	76	65	-20*	-29	-36	-28
Local TV News	72	64	61	70	67	68	72	67	65	68	71	70	0	+2	-4	-2
Wall St. Journal	86	65	67	66	67	57	75	67	66	68	68	65	+11	-2	-1	-8
USA Today	70	57	54	55	48	50	70	65	59	59	64	54	0	-4	-16	-4
Fox News	76	71	76	75	77	67	67	55	51	51	43	37	+9	+24	+34	+30

PEW RESEARCH CENTER July 19-22, 2012. Percent giving each news organization believability ratings of 3 or 4 on a 4-point scale. Based on those who could rate each organization.

\* New York Times from 2004.

## **About the Believability Survey Data**

The media believability report draws on a series of surveys conducted since 1985. The project was initiated by the Times Mirror Center for the People & the Press and continued by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press since 1996. All believability surveys have been conducted by telephone. Since 2010, cell phone interviewing has been included. All interviews have been conducted in English. The analysis in this report is based primarily on surveys conducted between 2002 and 2012.

Year	Field Dates	Sample Size	Margin of Error (percentage points)	Interview Mode
2002	May 6-16, 2002	1,005	3.5	Telephone—landline
2004	May 3-9, 2004	1,001	3.5	Telephone—landline
2006	June 14-19, 2006	1,004	3.5	Telephone—landline
2008	May 21-25, 2008	1,505	3.0	Telephone—landline
2010	July 8-11, 2010	1,001	4.0	Telephone—landline and cell
2012	July 19-22, 2012	1,001	3.6	Telephone—landline and cell

The current survey is based on telephone interviews conducted July 19-22, 2012 among a national sample of 1,001 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (600 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 401 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 191 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see: <a href="http://people-press.org/methodology/">http://people-press.org/methodology/</a>.

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and region to parameters from the March 2011 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status, based on extrapolations from the 2011 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size within the landline sample. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting.

With a 95% level of confidence, the margin of error for the total sample of 1,001 is plus-or-minus 3.6 percentage points. Analysis in this report was based on those who could rate each news organization. That number ranged from 796, with a margin of error of plus or minus 4.0 points, to 947, with a margin of error of 3.7 points.

The sample included 239 Republicans, 286 Democrats and 384 independents. Margins of error are 7.4 points, 6.8 points and 5.8 points, respectively. Not all partisans offered ratings of all news

organizations. As few as 183 Republicans and as many as 230 Republicans rated the various news outlets, with margins of error ranging from 7.5 to 8.4 percentage points. As few as 222 Democrats and as many as 272 Democrats rated the news outlets, with margins of error from 6.9 to 7.7 percentage points. Among independents, as few as 314 and as many as 363 rated the news outlets, producing margins of error of 6.0 to 6.4 percentage points.

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

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.

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# PEW RESEARCH CENTER July 19-22, 2012 OMNIBUS FINAL TOPLINE N=1,001

#### QUESTIONS PEW.1, PEW.3 AND PEW.4 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED; NO QUESTION PEW.2

#### **ASK ALL:**

PEW.5 As I name some news organizations<sup>1</sup>, please rate how much you think you can BELIEVE each that I name on a scale of 4 to 1. On this four point scale, "4" means you can believe all or most of what the news organization says, and "1" means you believe almost nothing of what they say. First, how would you rate the believability of [INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE] on this scale of 4 to 1? How about [NEXT ITEM]? [IF NECESSARY: How would you rate the believability of [NEXT ITEM] on this scale of 4 to 1 where "4" means you can believe all or most of what the news organization says, and "1" means you believe almost nothing of what they say?] [INTERVIEWERS: PROBE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN "NEVER HEARD OF" AND "CAN'T RATE"]

	UCA Taday	Believe <u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	Cannot Believe <u>1</u>	<b>(VOL.)</b> Never Heard <u>of</u>	( <b>VOL.)</b> Can't <u>Rate</u>
a.	USA Today July 19-22, 2012 July 8-11, 2010 Late May, 2008 June, 2006 May, 2004 May, 2002 May, 2000 May, 1998 April, 1996 February, 1993 August, 1989 June, 1985	12 13 13 15 15 15 17 18 20 20 21	28 30 35 30 32 36 31 35 34 36 32 26	27 22 26 25 22 19 20 21 20 21 18 13	16 12 8 10 8 6 7 5 9 7 5	2 1 2 2 2 1 2 2 3 1 6 4	15 22 16 18 21 23 23 19 14 15 18
b.	The Wall Street Journal July 19-22, 2012 July 8-11, 2010 Late May, 2008 June, 2006 May, 2004 May, 2002 May, 2000 May, 1998 April, 1996 February, 1993 August, 1989 June, 1985	17 18 20 19 18 22 27 30 28 30 30 25	30 27 34 29 31 29 24 30 29 32 26 23	19 17 17 17 17 11 9 9 13 14 9	15 11 8 8 8 4 6 4 7 6 3 2	1 * 2 3 1 1 4 2 3 2 6 1	18 27 19 24 25 33 30 25 20 16 26 43
C.	The New York Times July 19-22, 2012 July 8-11, 2010 Late May, 2008 June, 2006 May, 2004	14 15 14 15 16	26 28 32 26 31	24 15 19 19	17 15 14 14	* 1 2 2 2	19 26 19 24 23

In 2010 and earlier, question introduction referred to "organizations," not "news organizations."

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#### PEW.5 CONTINUED...

PEW.5	CONTINUED					(VOL.)	(1/01 )
		Believe <u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	Cannot Believe <u>1</u>	Never Heard <u>of</u>	( <b>VOL.)</b> Can't <u>Rate</u>
d.	The daily newspaper you	<u></u>	_	_	<del>-</del>	<u></u>	<u></u>
	are most familiar with July 19-22, 2012 July 8-11, 2010 Late May, 2008 June, 2006 May, 2004 May, 2002 May, 2000 May, 1998 April, 1996 February, 1993 August, 1989 June, 1985	18 19 21 18 17 20 23 27 24 22 26 28	34 35 39 37 33 39 38 36 37 41 41 52	27 25 23 26 30 25 24 24 26 25 24 13	13 12 8 12 12 9 8 7 8 8 7 2	* 0 1 1 * 0 * * * * *	8 9 8 6 8 7 6 5 4 2 5
e.	CNN	2.4	0.4	22	4-7		_
	July 19-22, 2012 July 8-11, 2010 Late May, 2008 June, 2006 May, 2004 May, 2002 May, 2000 May, 1998 April, 1996 February, 1993 August, 1989 June, 1985	24 26 28 25 29 32 33 37 34 41 33 20	31 32 36 35 36 34 32 35 37 35 31 24	23 20 18 20 17 15 14 11 14 10 11	17 12 9 10 8 6 5 4 4 4 2	* 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 2 8 10	6 9 8 9 12 15 12 10 8 16 38
f.	The Fox News CABLE Channel	20	24	22	24	*	0
	July 19-22, 2012 July 8-11, 2010 Late May, 2008 June, 2006 May, 2004 May, 2002 May, 2000	20 25 21 22 21 19	24 26 32 29 33 34 28	23 20 21 21 23 20 19	24 20 15 15 9 6	* 2 1 1 2 3	8 9 12 13 19 22
g.	MSNBC	4.7	20	24	24	4	0
	July 19-22, 2012 July 8-11, 2010 Late May, 2008 June, 2006 May, 2004 May, 2002 May, 2000	17 19 21 17 18 21	28 32 34 34 36 34 29	24 18 22 24 22 17 15	21 16 10 8 8 5 6	1 3 2 2 2 4 8	9 12 11 15 14 19 23
h.	ABC News	2.4	25	2-	40	ala.	_
	July 19-22, 2012 July 8-11, 2010 Late May, 2008 June, 2006 May, 2004 May, 2002	21 19 22 20 22 22	35 39 37 39 36 43	25 21 25 23 24 19	13 12 9 10 9 6	* 1 1 * *	7 8 6 8 9 10

#### PEW.5 CONTINUED...

PLVV.3	CONTINUED					(VOL.)	
	May, 2000 May, 1998 April, 1996 February, 1993 August, 1989 June, 1985	Believe 4 26 28 30 34 30 32	3 36 43 44 42 46 51	2 20 18 17 17 14	Cannot Believe 1 6 4 5 4 3	Never Heard of * * * 1	(VOL.) Can't Rate 12 7 4 3 7 5
i.	CBS News  July 19-22, 2012  July 8-11, 2010  Late May, 2008  June, 2006  May, 2004  May, 2002  May, 2000  May, 1998  April, 1996  February, 1993  August, 1989  June, 1985	19 19 20 20 22 23 26 26 30 31 29 33	35 36 34 35 41 37 43 42 44 45 51	28 21 26 27 24 19 20 21 17 16 16	12 13 10 10 9 6 7 4 6 5 4	* 1 1 1 * * * * * 1 1 1 1 *	6 11 7 8 9 11 10 6 5 4 5
j.	NBC News  July 19-22, 2012  July 8-11, 2010  Late May, 2008  June, 2006  May, 2004  May, 2002  May, 2000  May, 1998  April, 1996  February, 1993  August, 1989  June, 1985	19 18 23 21 22 23 26 28 28 31 32 31	33 40 40 39 39 43 37 42 46 42 47 51	26 22 21 24 24 19 21 20 18 18 14	15 13 11 8 9 6 7 4 5 6 2 1	* * * * * * * * * *	575869963355
k.	Your local TV news July 19-22, 2012 July 8-11, 2010 Late May, 2008 June, 2006 May, 2004 May, 2002 May, 2000 May, 1998 June, 1985	27 27 27 22 23 26 30 32 34	35 38 40 38 36 39 39 39 38 47	24 21 21 25 27 22 19 19	9 7 8 10 9 7 6 6	* 0 * * * * * * * *	5 7 4 5 5 6 6 4 5
I.	60 Minutes  July 19-22, 2012  July 8-11, 2010  Late May, 2008  June, 2006  May, 2004  May, 2002  May, 2000	27 28 27 24 29 30 31	32 29 36 34 33 39 37	21 19 21 22 19 15	11 9 7 9 9 5 7	1 1 1 * *	9 14 8 10 10 11 8

#### PEW.5 CONTINUED...

	May, 1998	Believe <u>4</u> 32	<u>3</u> 37	<u>2</u> 20	Cannot Believe <u>1</u> 4	( <b>VOL.)</b> Never Heard of *	( <b>VOL.)</b> Can't <u>Rate</u> 7
m.	NPR, National Public Radio						
	July 19-22, 2012	19	22	19	19	5	16
	July 8-11, 2010	20	23	18	11	7	21
	Late May, 2008 <sup>2</sup>	19	23	18	10	12	18
	June, 2006	17	27	20	12	4	20
	May, 2004	17	25	22	12	3	21
	May, 2002	16	28	20	7	6	23
	May, 2000	16	21	18	8	13	24
	May, 1998	13	34	17	7	7	22

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In 2008 and earlier, item was "National Public Radio."