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**Online Newspaper Readership Countering Print Losses**  
**PUBLIC MORE CRITICAL OF PRESS, BUT GOODWILL PERSISTS**

*A Survey Conducted in Association with*  
THE PROJECT FOR EXCELLENCE IN JOURNALISM

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## **Online Newspaper Readership Countering Print Losses** **PUBLIC MORE CRITICAL OF PRESS, BUT GOODWILL PERSISTS**

Public attitudes toward the press, which have been on a downward track for years, have become more negative in several key areas. Growing numbers of people question the news media's patriotism and fairness. Perceptions of political bias also have risen over the past two years.

Yet despite these criticisms, most Americans continue to say that they like mainstream news outlets. By wide margins, more Americans give favorable than unfavorable ratings to their daily newspaper (80%-20%), local TV news (79%-21%), and cable TV news networks (79%-21%), among those able to rate these organizations. The margin is only slightly smaller for network TV news (75%-25%).

In fact, the favorable ratings for most categories of news organizations surpass positive ratings for President Bush and major political institutions – the Supreme Court, Congress, and the two major political parties. Favorable ratings for daily newspapers, local TV news and network TV news have all remained fairly stable since July 2001, even as public attitudes toward the news media have declined. The exception to this pattern are large, nationally influential newspapers, such as the Washington Post and New York Times, whose favorable ratings have declined markedly.

The latest national survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted June 8-12 among 1,464 Americans, shows increasing politicization of attitudes toward the news media. Republicans, already more critical than Democrats of the press, have become even more so. Growing numbers of Republicans see the press as too critical of America and hurting democracy. Still, even majorities of Republicans continue to express favorable views of most major news sources.

This is not the first time a Pew Research Center survey has shown the public to be broadly critical of the press, yet still favorable in its overall view of news organizations themselves. In fact, the public has long been two-minded in its views of the news media – faulting the press in a variety

<b>News Media Viewed More Favorably Than Political Institutions</b>			
<i>Favorable opinion of...</i>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>Change</u>
	%	%	
Daily newspaper	82	80	-2
Local TV news	83	79	-4
Cable TV news*	88	79	-9
Network TV news	76	75	-1
Major national papers	74	61	-13
Supreme Court	78	66	-12
Democratic Party	63	57	-6
Congress	65	54	-11
George W. Bush**	64	55	-9
Republican Party	54	52	-2

\* In 2001 the cable news question listed only CNN and MSNBC as examples. In 2005 Fox News Channel was added to question.

\*\* Bush 2005 figure from March.

Percentages based on those who could rate each

of ways, while still valuing the news and appreciating the product of news outlets.

In the current polling, those who expressed favorable opinions of daily newspapers, local TV news, network news and cable news struck similar themes in explaining their positive views of these news outlets. Respondents most often cited the fact that they are able to get the news and information they seek in a timely fashion; the breadth of coverage; and the ability to stay informed about a wide range of news developments, both locally and globally.

The latest Pew survey on the news media finds that the sustained growth in online news consumption has implications for overall newspaper readership. Overall, a third of Americans below age 40 cite the internet as their main source of news, and many of these people are reading newspapers online. Consequently, while people under age 50 remain far less likely to read a print newspaper than are older people, they are turning to local and national newspapers online in fairly significant numbers.

The poll also finds that the public makes broad distinctions between fact-based and opinion-oriented news outlets. Roughly six-in-ten Americans (61%) say local TV news programs mostly report facts about recent news developments, rather than opinions; smaller majorities see daily newspapers (54%) and nightly network TV news (53%) as mostly fact-based.

Though cable news networks are no more likely to be described as opinion-oriented than network evening news programs, fewer (45%) describe them as mostly reporting the facts. That also is the case for major national newspapers; while three-in-ten see them as mostly presenting their opinions, 45% say they mostly report the facts.

On the opinion side of the fact-opinion spectrum are talk radio shows and internet news blogs. Just 10% say talk radio shows are mostly fact-oriented; 68% say they mostly give their opinions about the news. Far fewer Americans are familiar with news blogs than other news sources, but on balance, more say blogs are opinion-oriented than fact-based (by 32%-20%).

	Mostly facts %	Mostly opinion %	Both/ neither %	DK %
Local TV news	61	25	7	7=100
Local daily newspaper	54	31	7	8=100
Network evening news	53	31	7	9=100
Cable news networks	45	29	9	17=100
Major national newspapers	45	30	6	19=100
Network morning news	39	33	6	22=100
Internet news blogs	20	32	3	45=100
Talk radio shows	10	68	5	17=100

Question: Does each "mostly report the facts about recent news developments, or mostly give their opinions about the news?"

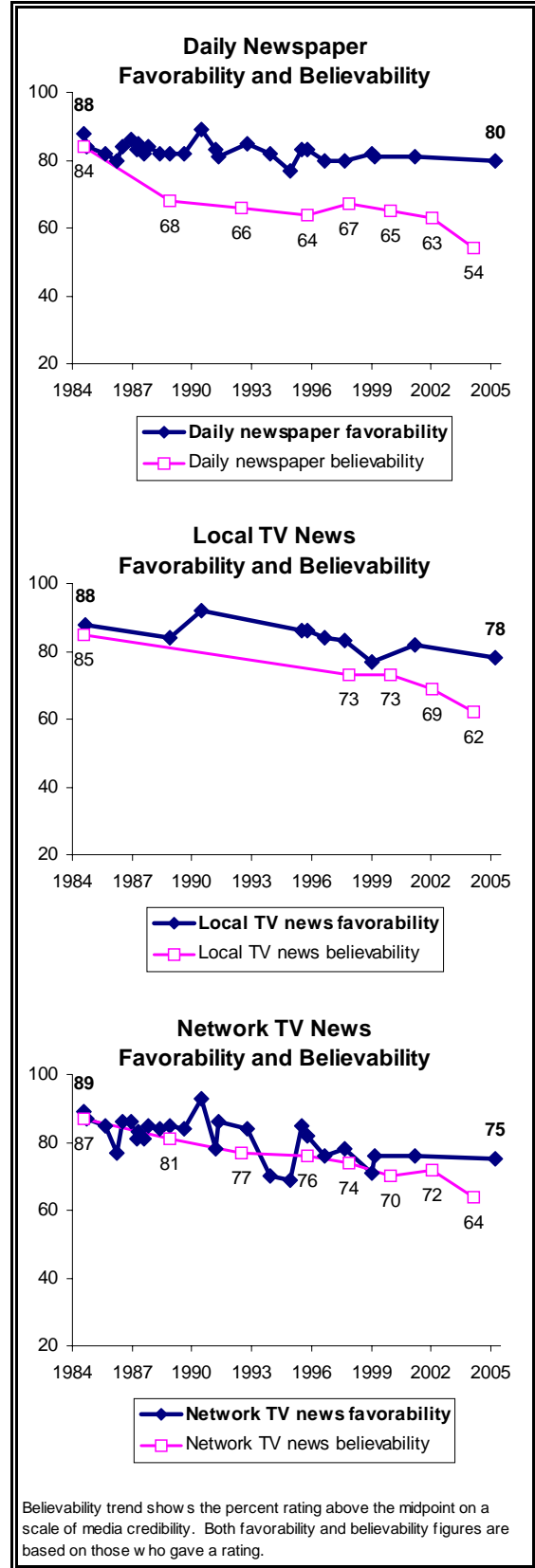
***Favorability vs. Believability***

The predominantly favorable ratings given to media organizations stand in contrast not only to how other institutions are rated, but to the credibility Americans associate with these same news outlets.

A survey conducted last year by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press showed that credibility ratings for most major news outlets had reached a low ebb (see “News Audiences Increasingly Politicized, June 8, 2004). Placing these downward trends in *believability* side-by-side with the long-term trends in *favorability* reveals a growing gap.

The gap is most striking between the public’s evaluations of the credibility, and favorability, of their daily newspapers. The percentage saying they can believe most of what they read in their daily newspaper dropped from 84% in 1985 to 54% in 2004. But the number expressing a favorable opinion of their daily newspaper, based on those familiar enough to give a rating, declined just eight points over the same period (from 88% to 80%).

For both network and local TV news, the patterns are similar though somewhat less dramatic. More people feel *favorably* toward these media organizations than say they can *believe* what they read, see and hear from these outlets.



### *Explaining Favorable Opinions*

As part of the survey, those who expressed favorable opinions of four major types of news organizations – network television news, daily newspapers, local television news, and cable news networks – explained what is most appealing about these outlets.<sup>1</sup> These interviews reveal that, despite the extensive criticisms of the news media’s performance, people generally are able to find what they seek from these outlets – timely information and news coverage. The responses also reveal differences across news audiences in terms of what is most appreciated about each major news source.

Those who expressed positive views of network television news programs most frequently said that these programs do a good job of summarizing the news, and provide a considerable range and breadth of coverage in an understandable fashion. Many respondents also mentioned liking the anchors and reporters.

By contrast, those with a favorable view of the cable news networks most commonly mentioned the timeliness, convenience, and accessibility of the reports – available “anytime” in the words of several respondents. Many noted the advantage that the cable news programs have in reporting up-to-the-minute information on breaking stories.

Local television news is popular in large part because it is local. People frequently mentioned that they appreciate the ability to find out what is happening in their communities – the “hometown factor” in the words of one respondent. Specific mentions touched on the anchors and their personalities, the weather coverage, and the perceived lack of bias in the news.

Those who have a favorable view of newspapers also praise them for their local quality. But people most often cited various aspects to their content – sports scores, classifieds, community features, etc. Several respondents specifically cited the editorial pages as something that they liked about their newspaper, and others also cited a perceived lack of political bias in the paper.

<b>Best Things About...</b>	
<u>Daily newspapers</u>	<u>Network TV news</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Local/area news</i></li><li>• <i>Sports/entertainment/classifieds/editorials</i></li><li>• <i>Balanced/covers all sides</i></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Broad scope</i></li><li>• <i>Concise format</i></li><li>• <i>In-depth coverage</i></li></ul>
<u>Local TV news</u>	<u>Cable TV news</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Local/area news</i></li><li>• <i>Keeps me connected to community</i></li><li>• <i>Up-to-date /current</i></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Up-to-the-minute/breaking news</i></li><li>• <i>Can tune in anytime</i></li><li>• <i>Wide range of topics</i></li></ul>

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<sup>1</sup> A subsample of respondents was re-contacted June 21-22 with open-ended follow-up questions about the news sources they rated favorably.

**Internet News – More Than Just the Young**

The internet continues to grow as a source of news for Americans. One-in-four (24%) list the internet as a main source of news. Roughly the same number (23%) say they go online for news every day, up from 15% in 2000; the percentage checking the web for news at least once a week has grown from 33% to 44% over the same time period.

While online news consumption is highest among young people (those under age 30), it is not an activity that is limited to the very young. Three-in-ten Americans ages 30-49 cite the internet as a main source of news.

The importance of the web for people in their working years is even more apparent when the frequency of use is taken into account. One-third of people in their 30s say they get news online every day, as do 27% of people in their 40s. Nearly a quarter of people in their 50s get news online daily, about the same rate as among people ages 18-29.

**Online Newspapers**

But what of the growing online presence of both national and local newspapers? How important an element are newspapers as part of the overall mix of internet news sources?

<i>Main source of news</i> <sup>1</sup>	<u>Total</u>	<u>18-29</u>	<u>30-39</u>	<u>40-49</u>	<u>50-59</u>	<u>60-69</u>	<u>70+</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Television	74	70	63	74	76	85	83
Newspaper	44	37	39	41	52	50	57
Internet	24	36	31	29	18	9	3
Radio	22	18	26	24	22	19	19
Magazines	5	5	7	4	5	5	6
<i>Read newspaper...</i>							
Mostly in print	40	32	33	36	48	48	54
Online version <sup>2</sup>	16	23	20	21	11	7	2
<i>NET with online</i>	56	55	53	57	59	55	56
<i>Get news online every day</i>							
	23	23	33	27	24	15	7

<sup>1</sup> Figures add to more than 100% because respondents could mention up to two sources.

<sup>2</sup> Includes people who say the internet is their main source and read newspapers online. Newspaper readers also were asked if they mostly read the paper in print or online.

The current study includes two measures that provide some insight into this growing news source. First, by a 90%-6% margin, respondents who say they rely on newspapers as a main source almost universally mean the printed version of the paper, not the online version. Second, when respondents cite the internet as a main source, most are including their use of online newspapers. Fully 62% of internet news consumers say they read the websites of local or national newspapers.

Combined, these questions indicate that while 40% of Americans count the printed newspaper as a main source of news, another 16% are reading newspapers as part of their internet news consumption. The relevance of online newspaper readership is most important among younger

Americans. While only about a third of those under age 40 count the printed newspaper as a main source of news (compared with half of those age 50 and older), another 20% say the online version is at least a part of their internet use. While younger people tend to consume far less news overall than their seniors, newspapers – in one form or another – remain a key part of the media mix for majorities in all age groups.

Convenience is more important than cost in explaining why many Americans are reading the paper online instead of in print. Among those who say they read the web-version of the newspaper, 73% cite convenience, compared with just 8% who do so because it is free. Most Americans say they are reading the print version as much (50%) or more often (12%) than they did before they began reading the paper online. But 35% say the printed newspaper is something they look at less often now that they are using newspapers' websites.

Visitors to newspaper websites are starkly different from print newspaper readers in terms of their demographics, but not their politics. In addition to being much younger than readers of printed newspapers, the online newspaper audience is mostly male, wealthy, and highly educated. Nearly half of web-newspaper readers have college degrees, compared with 27% of those who rely on print, and one-in-five have household incomes of over \$100,000.

People who mostly use newspaper websites instead of newspapers are more likely to describe themselves as liberal (30% vs. 20%, respectively), but are no more likely to think of themselves as Democrats, and divided their votes between Bush and Kerry in the 2004 election along almost precisely the same lines as regular newspaper readers.

<b>Habits of Online Readers</b>	
<i>Reading print version of paper...</i>	
Less often	35
About as much	50
More often	12
Don't know	<u>3</u>
	100
<i>Reading paper online mostly...</i>	
Because it's convenient	73
Because it's free	8
Both (Vol.)	14
Neither (Vol.)	5
Don't know	*
	<u>100</u>
Number of cases	(246)

	<b>Who's Reading Newspapers Online?</b>	
	<i>Newspaper version</i>	
	<u>Print</u>	<u>Online</u>
	%	%
Male	46	57
Female	<u>54</u>	<u>43</u>
	100	100
18-29	16	29
30-49	34	50
50-64	27	15
65+	22	3
College grad	27	48
Some college	24	29
H.S. or less	49	23
\$100,000 +	15	20
\$50-\$99,999	24	28
\$30-\$49,999	23	27
Under \$30,000	25	16
Republican	28	29
Democrat	38	32
Independent/None	34	39
Conservative	35	25
Moderate	41	43
Liberal	20	30
Voted for Bush	35	36
Voted for Kerry	37	38
Didn't vote	18	17
Number of cases	(601)	(246)

Where the views of online newspaper readers differ more dramatically is in their evaluations of mainstream media organizations. People who read the newspaper online have a far less favorable opinion of network and local TV news programming than do people who read the print version, and also have a somewhat less favorable view of the daily newspaper they are most familiar with. But consumers of online newspapers feel far more favorably toward large nationally influential newspapers, such as the New York Times and the Washington Post.

<i>Favorable view of...</i>	<i>Newspaper version</i>		
	<u>Print</u>	<u>Online</u>	<u>Gap</u>
	%	%	
Network TV news	73	58	-15
Local TV news	74	65	-9
Cable TV news	69	63	-6
Local daily paper	84	77	-7
National papers	39	55	+16
Number of cases	(601)	(246)	

***Ever More Critical***

In many cases, attitudes toward the performance of the news media are at or near their low points in Pew trends dating back to the mid-1980s. This is especially the case in opinions regarding the press’s patriotism, bias, and fairness.

Just 42% say news organizations generally “stand up for America;” about as many (40%) believe that news organizations are “too critical of America.” That represents a significant shift since July 2003, when a narrow majority (51%) said that news organizations stand up for America, while 33% said they were too critical. The percentage who say news organizations are too critical is only slightly below the level reached in February 1999 (42%), during former President Clinton’s impeachment trial.

Other measures assessing the basic values of the press also have become more negative. Six-in-ten see news organizations as politically biased, up from 53% two years ago. More than seven-in-ten (72%) say news organizations tend to favor one side, rather than treat all sides fairly; that is the

	Early					
	Feb 1999	Sept 2001	Nov 2001	July 2002	July 2003	June 2005
<i>News organizations ...</i>	%	%	%	%	%	%
Stand up for America	41	43	69	49	51	42
Too critical of America	42	36	17	35	33	40
Neither/Don’t know	<u>17</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>18</u>
	100	100	100	100	100	100
Protect democracy	45	46	60	50	52	47
Hurt democracy	38	32	19	29	28	33
Neither/Don’t know	<u>17</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>20</u>
	100	100	100	100	100	100
Are politically biased	56	59	47	59	53	60
Are not politically biased	31	26	35	26	29	28
Neither/Don’t know	<u>13</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>12</u>
	100	100	100	100	100	100
Favor one side in politics	n/a	67	n/a	n/a	66	72
Deal fairly w/ all sides		26			26	21
Neither/Don’t know		<u>7</u>			<u>8</u>	<u>7</u>
		100			100	100



largest number ever expressing that view. And by more than three-to-one (73%-21%), the public feels that news organizations are “often influenced by powerful people and organizations,” rather than “pretty independent.”

***Partisans Differ on Press Problems***

Partisanship has long been a major factor in these attitudes. Even so, there has been a startling rise in the politicization of opinions on several measures – especially the question of whether the news media stands up for America, or is too critical of America. The partisan gap on this issue has grown dramatically, as Republicans increasingly express the view that the press is excessively critical of the U.S. (67% now vs. 42% in 2002). Over the same period, Democratic opinions on this have remained fairly stable (24% now vs. 26% in 2002).

Republicans are now closely divided as to whether the press protects or hurts democracy; 40% say it protects democracy, while 43% believe it hurts democracy. Two years ago, by a fairly sizable margin (44%-31%) more Republicans felt that the press helped democracy. Democratic opinion on this measure has been more stable. In the current survey, 56% say the press protects democracy while just 27% say it hurts democracy.

Views on whether the press is politically biased have been more consistent over the years. More than seven-in-ten Republicans (73%) say the press is biased, compared with 53% of Democrats. Perceptions of political bias have increased modestly among members of both parties over the past two years.

***Democrats Chide Bush Coverage***

Generally, Democrats are much more positive in their assessments of press values and performance than are Republicans. But increasingly, Democrats are showing dissatisfaction with press coverage of the Bush administration. A majority of Democrats (54%) say that press coverage of the Bush administration has not been critical enough; that represents a sizable increase from May 2004 (39%).

<b>Press Too Critical of America?</b>			
	July 2002	July 2003	June 2005
	%	%	%
Total	35	33	40
Republicans	<b>42</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>67</b>
Independents	39	25	33
Democrats	<b>26</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>24</b>
<i>R-D Gap</i>	+16	+15	+43

<b>Press Hurts Democracy?</b>			
	July 2002	July 2003	June 2005
	%	%	%
Total	29	28	33
Republicans	36	31	43
Independents	22	30	33
Democrats	28	25	27
<i>R-D Gap</i>	+8	+6	+16

<b>More Democrats Say Press Goes Too Easy on Bush</b>		
	<i>Democrats in...</i>	
	May 2004	June 2005
	%	%
<i>Coverage of Bush admin. has been...</i>		
Too critical	18	8
Not critical enough	<b>39</b>	<b>54</b>
About right	35	34
Don't know	<u>8</u>	<u>4</u>
	100	100

An increasing number of independents also believe the press has not been critical enough in its coverage of the Bush's administration's policies and performance (38% now vs. 25% last year). A consistent majority of Republicans say that press coverage of the Bush administration has been too critical; 58% express that view, no change from May 2004.

***Press's Influence Waning***

In past surveys on the press, criticisms of the news media were accompanied by a widespread perception that the power of news organizations was expanding. But that has changed, largely owing to a major shift in perceptions among Republicans. Overall, more Americans still believe the influence of the press is increasing rather than decreasing (by 49%-36%), but the margin has narrowed. Two years ago, 55% said news organizations were growing in influence, while just 29% felt their influence was declining.

	Feb 1999	Sept 2001	July 2002	July 2003	June 2005
<i>Press influence is...</i>	%	%	%	%	%
Growing	59	55	57	55	49
Declining	32	29	29	29	36
Neither	6	9	7	8	7
Don't know	<u>3</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>8</u>
	100	100	100	100	100

In the past, Republicans by wide margins said that news organizations were growing in influence. But in the current survey, as many say the press is losing influence as say it is expanding in influence (45% vs. 43%). Attitudes among Democrats and independents have been much more stable.

***Questioning Press Motives***

While there are deep differences about the press's power and performance, most Americans agree that news organizations, when deciding what stories to report, care more about attracting the biggest audience rather than about keeping the public informed.

Majorities in every demographic and political group express this opinion, but it is especially prevalent among conservative Republicans (90%). However, even two-thirds

	Keeping public informed	Attracting biggest audience (VOL)	Both/Neither	Don't Know
	%	%	%	%
Total	19	75	4	2=100
Men	16	79	4	1=100
Women	23	71	4	2=100
18-29	31	69	0	0=100
30-49	11	83	6	*=100
50-64	23	73	3	1=100
65+	24	67	4	5=100
College Grad	13	82	4	1=100
Some College	12	86	2	*=100
H.S. Grad or less	27	66	5	2=100
<i>Main news source</i>				
Television	21	74	4	1=100
Network	28	66	4	2=100
CNN	23	76	1	*=100
Fox News	14	78	7	1=100
Newspapers	21	74	4	1=100
Radio	17	77	6	0=100
Internet	13	85	2	0=100

of liberal Democrats (67%) say the news media is more motivated by a desire to expand audience than informing the public.

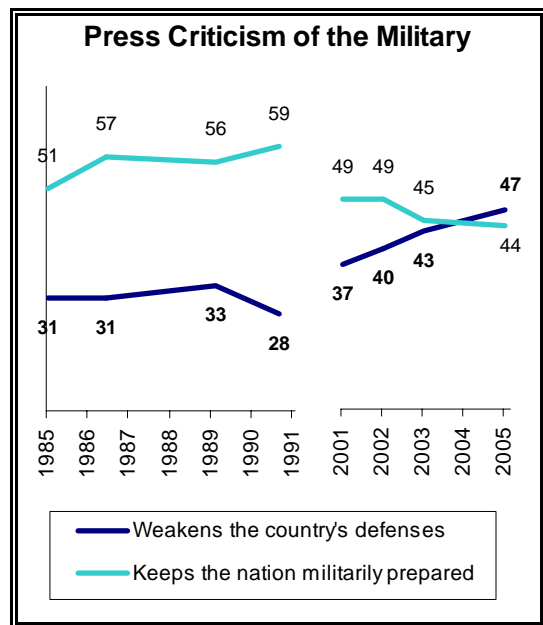
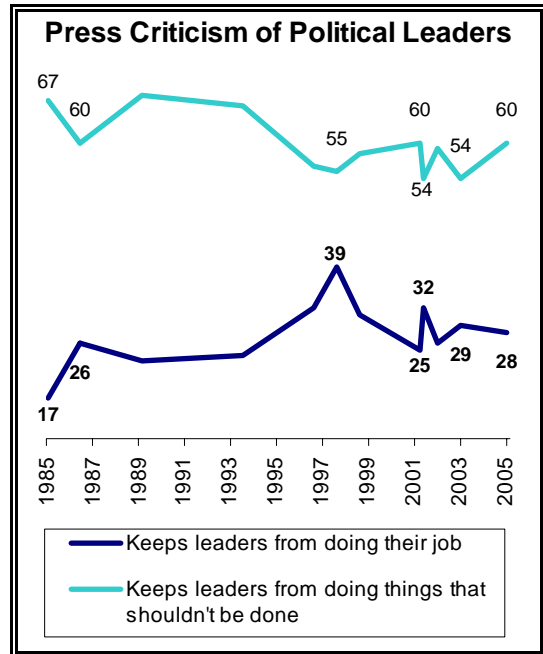
People who have attended college are more likely than high school graduates to say that the press mostly seeks to attract the biggest audience. And 85% of those who cite the internet as a main source believe that news organizations are mostly motivated by a desire to expand their audience, rather than to inform the public.

**Conflicting Views of Watchdog Roles**

Beyond the rising criticism of press performance and patriotism, there also has been significant erosion in support for the news media’s watchdog role over the military. Nearly half (47%) say that by criticizing the military, news organizations are weakening the nation’s defenses; 44% say such criticism keeps the nation militarily prepared. The percentage saying press criticism weakens American defenses has been increasing in recent years and now stands at its highest point in surveys dating to 1985.

By contrast, public support for the news media’s role as a *political* watchdog has endured and even increased a bit. Six-in-ten Americans say that by criticizing political leaders, news organizations keep political leaders from doing things that should not be done; just 28% feel such criticism keeps political leaders from doing their jobs. Two years ago, 54% endorsed the press’s role as a political watchdog.

The long-term growth in the view that press criticism weakens the military has mostly come among Republicans. From the mid-1980s through the end of the Persian Gulf War in March 1991, minorities of Republicans felt that such criticism weakened the military. Currently, two-thirds of Republicans (67%) express that opinion. Attitudes among Democrats and



independents have been far more stable.

While the public has been more consistently supportive of the press's adversarial role in politics, there has been some partisan movement reflecting the changing balance of power in Washington. In the late 1990s, during the Clinton administration, Republicans were somewhat more likely than Democrats to say that criticism of political

leaders was worth it because it could prevent wrongdoing. Since then, Democrats have become much more supportive of the news media's political watchdog role, and Republicans less so.

### Party Split on Press Criticism of Military

*Press criticism of the military weakens the country's defenses*

	July 1985	Aug 1989	Mar 1991	Nov 2001	July 2002	July 2003	June 2005
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Republican	40	39	34	51	53	63	67
Democrat	27	30	24	29	30	29	36
Independent	28	30	28	31	37	38	40
<i>R-D gap</i>	<i>+13</i>	<i>+9</i>	<i>+10</i>	<i>+22</i>	<i>+23</i>	<i>+34</i>	<i>+31</i>

### Neutral Terror Coverage Backed

While the press is taking more heat for its patriotism and performance, the public continues to decisively reject a shift to 'pro-American' coverage of the war on terror. By nearly three-to-one (68%-24%), Americans believe it is better if coverage of the war on terror is neutral rather than pro-American.

### Propaganda Consistently Rejected

	March 1991	Nov 2001	April 2003	July 2003	June 2005
<i>Better if news coverage of war on terror is...</i>	%	%	%	%	%
Neutral	71	64	69	64	68
Pro-American	22	30	23	29	24
Don't know	7	6	8	7	8
	100	100	100	100	100

The preference for neutral coverage of the war on terror is shared by majorities across the demographic and political spectrum. However, about four-in-ten conservative Republicans (39%) favor pro-American coverage, the largest percentage in any category.

### Split Over Anonymous Sources

The recent revelation of the identity of the press informant known as Deep Throat from the Watergate scandal brought the issue of confidential news sources back into public view. Americans are divided on the general question of whether it is acceptable for news organizations to use unnamed sources in their reporting.

About half (52%) say the use of such sources is too risky because it can lead to inaccurate reports, while 44% say it is okay because it can yield important news that they otherwise wouldn't get. People who say they paid very close attention to the Deep Throat story are much more positive about the use of confidential sources than those who paid less attention to this story (60% vs. 41%).

People with college degrees are more apt than the less educated to say the use of confidential sources is acceptable (56% among those with at least a B.A.; 37% among high school graduates), and more Democrats than Republicans say it is okay (51% vs. 36%). Younger respondents are more opposed than older ones to the use of confidential sources, with fully 68% of those 18-24 saying the use of such sources is too risky.

But most Americans think the use of confidential sources is at least sometimes justified. Over three-quarters (76%) think reporters should sometimes be allowed to keep their sources confidential if that is the only way to get information, while 19% say reporters should always reveal their sources. Despite the recent visibility of the Deep Throat story, opinions on this question are no different today than they were twenty years ago.

<b>Secret News Sources Risky, But Sometimes Justified</b>			
	July	Aug	June
	1985	1989	2005
<i>Should journalists always reveal news sources?</i>	%	%	%
Always reveal	15	18	19
Sometimes keep confidential	78	79	76
Don't know	<u>7</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>
	100	100	100
<i>OK or too risky to use confidential sources?</i>			
Okay	--	--	44
Too risky	--	--	52
Don't know	--	--	<u>4</u>
			100

### ABOUT THE SURVEY

Results for this survey are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International among a nationwide sample of 1,464 adults, 18 years of age or older, from June 8-12, 2005. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling is plus or minus 3 percentage points. For results based on Form 1 (N=726) or Form 2 (N=738) only, the error attributable to sampling is plus or minus 4 percentage points.

A subsample of respondents was recontacted June 21-22 with open-ended follow-up questions about what they like most about the news sources they expressed favorable opinions about.

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 PUBLIC'S COMPLICATED VIEWS OF PRESS POINT TO SOLUTIONS

*Tom Rosenstiel, Director of the Project for Excellence in Journalism*

*Bill Kovach, Chairman of the Committee of Concerned Journalists*

After another mean season for the press – with scandals involving inaccuracies and plagiarism – what should we make of the latest survey data about the news media?

By many measures, the public's view of the news media is as low as it has ever been.

Yet we think it would be a mistake to dismiss the data as proof of just a deepening of the news media's so-called "credibility crisis."

The public's view of journalism is more complex than simple disapproval – and in many ways more rational.

Perhaps more significant, we think the data point to ways journalism can restore its bond with the citizenry it purports to serve.

As Americans continue to acquire news in new ways, there remains continued, even stubborn, support for the values of an independent press, a watchdog press, the press as agenda-setter, and even in the traditional journalism brands.

The public is not rejecting the principles underlying traditional journalism. Rather, it suspects journalists are not living up to those principles.

The public's nuanced view suggests the news media should renew, not abandon, its traditional values, but it must also more aggressively about experimentation and innovation. It should respect the voice of the public, but not surrender its role of trying to put the news in some order of importance. And the news media should continue with the fledgling

movement we see in journalism toward greater transparency.

These hints are buried under a blanket of public disapproval. In many ways, the general view of journalism has not been so dour since before Sept. 11, and at the peak of the Clinton impeachment.

The percentage of people who have a favorable view of the press is at new lows for local newspapers, for major national newspapers, for local TV news, and for cable news.

The percentage who thinks the press deals fairly with all sides is also at a new low, as is the similar metric that the press is independent. More people than ever believe the press plays favorites and is influenced by the power establishment.

Those who believe the press helps democracy is down to levels not seen since before 9/11, while the percentage saying it hurts democracy is up. The number who see the press as highly professional, as standing up for America, as caring about the job they do, also are all down again.

More people than ever also think press criticism of the military weakens the country's defenses.

These are powerful signs of disappointment, and the general downward trend, interrupted somewhat shortly after the terrorist attacks of 2001, seems to be gaining again.

What explains these declines?

In part, of course, they might be a response to the widespread reports of inaccuracies and plagiarism in the press of late, from Newsweek and CBS News, to a host of smaller cases involving a nationally known sports columnist, a Pentagon correspondent at USA Today, and several other cases elsewhere. But the percentage of people who think the press is inaccurate has not changed in light of these revelations. Either Americans think these scandals only reinforce what they already suspected, or perhaps they are struck by how aggressively the press has exposed the problems.

There is evidence instead that the new declines in confidence reflect a sense that the press is not aggressive enough in its coverage of major issues. There may be disappointment among some Americans over the failure of the press to probe Bush administration claims of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, to explore major issues such as rising health care costs, or get to the bottom of issues like Social Security. Indeed, the data show a growing number of Americans now feel that press is insufficiently skeptical of the administration and powerful institutions generally.

The data also suggest another factor could be the increasingly partisan nature of the arguments over the press. The criticism from conservatives that the press is biased seems to be cutting two ways. While more conservatives see a liberal bias, the percentage of Americans who reject that critique and believe the press reflects an establishment viewpoint or is conservative is growing as well.

In addition, it would be hard to dismiss the idea that some resent the level of coverage of tabloid stories such as Michael Jackson's child

molestation trial, or the dating habits of Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt, or the Scott Peterson murder trial.

Even the criticisms need to be kept in context, however. More than seven-in-ten Americans still have generally favorable view of most sectors of the news media. And the more people know about a particular news outlet, the more they tend to approve of it.

So, what should journalists do?

One hint may lie in some new questions asked here. The survey data crystallize a "disconnect" between how journalists see what they do and how the public sees it. Do journalists pick stories to inform people or to grab an audience? Three-quarters of Americans think they do so to grab an audience. People suspect journalists make the choices they do to sensationalize and make money. And internet users are especially cynical about press motives.

If, as most journalists would argue, the public is wrong in these assessments, greater transparency about their decision-making could make a difference. If, for example, journalists routinely included explanations of why they thought a story was important, that could begin to help educate the public about these decisions and disabuse them of doubts about journalists' motives. If the explanation is not persuasive, that would be a sign to journalists they should reconsider their decisions about how to play the story.

If the public is correct, and news decisions are motivated by economic need rather than public interest, there is a lesson for journalists there as well. Sensationalizing the news, the data suggest, is a short-sighted strategy that will

erode brand, especially online.

News companies should also look at other lessons here about shifting consumer behavior online. As we live in an on-demand culture, the next generation of consumers wants news in a way that fits their lifestyle. The number of people who get news online everyday is up markedly from even a year ago and is now at a new high. Some are people who earlier got news online at least once a week, but some are people who even a year ago rarely went online for news. A record number of Americans, and a solid majority of web users, now report getting news online at least once a week. And all of this is true of younger audiences, and increasingly, older audiences as well.

In other words, the internet is not merely a place to post yesterday's newspaper or TV stories. It is more than a means to hook people into going to the "primary" or older medium.

The web, it is increasingly clear, is becoming journalism's future, with its own strengths and capabilities. The journalism of the 21<sup>st</sup> century should not be TV stories or newspaper stories posted online, but online multi-media content designed to exploit the unique potential of a new medium. Stories need to be written differently. The depth, interactivity, and the ability to search the web need to be explored.

Perhaps stories should be written for the web first, with its more varied potential, and then adapted to the more limited capability of older media.

In time, we may need to see TV and print as a way to attract audiences to the new core business – the internet. Those companies that fail to do this will lose out.

There is a similarly complicated message in the numbers about blogs, those personal web logs that advocates see as the core of a new citizen-based media and that doubters decry as the rise of yet a new form of the shout culture. A majority of online news consumers now report that they visit blogs or online news columns. Yet nearly half of all Americans still have a scant notion of what blogs are, and less than a third recognize them as mostly a place for opinion and ideas.

Since consumer expectations about blogs are still being shaped, in other words, the blogosphere is nowhere near fully formed. This is an arena where traditional media still have a significant opportunity to distinguish themselves. And commerce, or the demand of making a profit online, is likely to change the nature of blogs in time more than its proponents expect. Consider that in the late 1920s, radio was still predicted to be largely a medium for education and public safety.

We think the key to sorting through the public's view of the press is the residual support for some of the key elements and principles that underlie what traditional journalism is all about.

Even though people like the on-demand nature of the web, the vast majority still responds to the agenda-setting influence of editors and reporters signaling to them what are the most important stories of the day. It is evident in the high percentage of people who say they learn things "accidentally" on the web – going online for one reason and then discovering news there they weren't looking for.

Americans' complicated view of confidential sourcing is similarly significant. A



slight majority worry that anonymous sourcing invites the risk of sources being unaccountable, but an even larger majority believes the press should sometimes rely on such sources if there is no other way to get the information. In other words, the public would prefer that the press not use anonymity, but accepts the practice under special circumstances.

Support for the watchdog role of the press is similarly implied in the numbers about press skepticism. There has been a sizable jump in the percentage who would like to see the press scrutinizing the administration more closely, and a steady rise in the number who feels the press is manipulated by powerful interests.

Perhaps more important, the public still wants an independent rather than a partisan press model. Once again, two-thirds of Americans would prefer a “neutral” press over one that is “pro-American.” Don’t be misled by the inflated notion that the ratings of Fox News Channel suggest something to the contrary.

The ratings data about where people are going online reinforce this. The traditional news brands with their traditional news values dominate. Blogs and alternative forms of information and debate are growing. But they are not replacing traditional news. They are growing up alongside the old journalism of verification, with its emphasis on substantiating facts, on independence, on scrutiny of those in power. People increasingly want both. And the evidence suggests the audience is not splintering over this. The same consumer who visits blogs also visits traditional news sites, but for different reasons.

To us, then, the public is not two-faced or split in its view of the press, or suffering from what social scientists would call “cognitive

dissonance.”

The numbers point in a clearer direction. The news industry, in the public’s view, should renew its conviction in the core principles of American journalism – in independence, skepticism, shoe leather, and substantiation. But the public also is saying, take me with you. The growing movement toward making journalism more transparent, toward bringing the news audiences in as partners in the process rather than treating them as passive onlookers, is the path to the future.

By more experimentation in new delivery systems, new delivery styles, new voices, even in blogging and becoming a forum for citizen voices, traditional news organizations can make journalism a more open dialogue.

## News Organizations Using Confidential Sources

	<i>Using unnamed sources...</i>			<i>News reporters should...</i>		
	<u>Okay</u>	<u>Too risky</u>	<u>DK/Ref</u>	<u>Sometimes keep confidential</u>	<u>Always reveal</u>	<u>DK/Ref</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Total</b>	44	52	4=100	77	19	5=100
<b>Sex</b>						
Male	46	50	4	75	21	4
Female	42	53	5	79	16	5
<b>Race</b>						
White	46	49	5	75	20	5
Non-white	36	62	2	82	14	4
Black	33	63	4	89	6	5
<b>Age</b>						
Under 30	33	63	4	73	25	2
30-49	51	46	3	78	18	4
50-64	45	52	3	76	17	7
65+	40	50	10	78	16	6
<b>Education</b>						
College Grad.	55	42	3	82	15	3
Some College	45	53	2	74	19	7
H.S. Grad. or Less	37	57	6	75	21	4
<b>Family Income</b>						
\$75,000+	55	44	1	75	21	4
\$50,000-\$74,999	48	50	2	71	23	6
\$30,000-\$49,999	43	51	6	79	18	3
\$20,000-\$29,999	41	57	2	79	13	8
<\$20,000	38	55	7	80	17	3
<b>Party ID</b>						
Republican	36	59	5	67	26	7
Democrat	51	46	3	85	13	2
Independent	44	52	4	80	16	4
<b>Ideology</b>						
Conservative	33	63	4	71	22	7
Moderate	45	52	3	79	19	2
Liberal	61	36	3	84	13	3

Questions: Some people think it is okay for news organizations to use unnamed sources because they can sometimes find out important news they otherwise wouldn't get. Others think it is too risky because it can sometimes lead to inaccurate reports. Which comes closer to your opinion?

Some people feel news reporters should ALWAYS reveal the sources of their story to the audience. Others feel that SOMETIMES reporters should be allowed to keep their sources confidential if that is the only way to get information. Which position is closer to your opinion?

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS**  
**JUNE 2005 NEWS INTEREST INDEX / MEDIA UPDATE**  
**FINAL TOPLINE**  
**JUNE 8-12, 2005**  
**N=1,464**

Q.1 Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as president? [IF DK ENTER AS DK. IF DEPENDS PROBE ONCE WITH: Overall do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as president? [IF STILL DEPENDS ENTER AS DK]

	<u>Approve</u>	Dis- approve	Don't know		<u>Approve</u>	Dis- approve	Don't know
June, 2005	42	49	9=100	<b>2002</b>			
Late May, 2005	42	48	10=100	December, 2002	61	28	11=100
Mid-May, 2005	43	50	7=100	Late October, 2002	59	29	12=100
Late March, 2005	49	46	5=100	Early October, 2002	61	30	9=100
Mid-March, 2005	45	46	9=100	Mid-September, 2002	67	22	11=100
February, 2005	46	47	7=100	Early September, 2002	63	26	11=100
January, 2005	50	43	7=100	Late August, 2002	60	27	13=100
<b>2004</b>				August, 2002	67	21	12=100
December, 2004	48	44	8=100	Late July, 2002	65	25	10=100
Mid-October, 2004	44	48	8=100	July, 2002	67	21	12=100
August, 2004	46	45	9=100	June, 2002	70	20	10=100
July, 2004	46	46	8=100	April, 2002	69	18	13=100
June, 2004	48	43	9=100	Early April, 2002	74	16	10=100
May, 2004	44	48	8=100	February, 2002	78	13	9=100
Late April, 2004	48	43	9=100	January, 2002	80	11	9=100
Early April, 2004	43	47	10=100	<b>2001</b>			
Late March, 2004	47	44	9=100	Mid-November, 2001	84	9	7=100
Mid-March, 2004	46	47	7=100	Early October, 2001	84	8	8=100
February, 2004	48	44	8=100	Late September, 2001	86	7	7=100
Mid-January, 2004	56	34	10=100	Mid-September, 2001	80	9	11=100
Early January, 2004	58	35	7=100	Early September, 2001	51	34	15=100
<b>2003</b>				August, 2001	50	32	18=100
December, 2003	57	34	9=100	July, 2001	51	32	17=100
November, 2003	50	40	10=100	June, 2001	50	33	17=100
October, 2003	50	42	8=100	May, 2001	53	32	15=100
September, 2003	55	36	9=100	April, 2001	56	27	17=100
Mid-August, 2003	56	32	12=100	March, 2001	55	25	20=100
Early August, 2003	53	37	10=100	February, 2001	53	21	26=100
Mid-July, 2003	58	32	10=100				
Early July, 2003	60	29	11=100				
June, 2003	62	27	11=100				
May, 2003	65	27	8=100				
April 10-16, 2003	72	22	6=100				
April 9, 2003	74	20	6=100				
April 2-7, 2003	69	25	6=100				
March 28-April 1, 2003	71	23	6=100				
March 25-27, 2003	70	24	6=100				
March 20-24, 2003	67	26	7=100				
March 13-16, 2003	55	34	11=100				
February, 2003	54	36	10=100				
January, 2003	58	32	10=100				

**QUESTION 2 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**

On a different subject...

Q.3 How have you been getting most of your news about national and international issues? From television, from newspapers, from radio, from magazines, or from the Internet? [ACCEPT TWO ANSWERS: IF ONLY ONE RESPONSE IS GIVEN, PROBE FOR ADDITIONAL RESPONSE]

	<u>Television</u>	<u>News- papers</u>	<u>Radio</u>	<u>Magazines</u>	<u>Internet</u>	<u>Other (VOL)</u>	<u>Don't Know/ Refused</u>
June, 2005	74	44	22	5	24	2	1
December, 2004	74	46	21	4	24	2	3
October, 2003	80	50	18	4	20	2	1
August, 2003	79	46	15	3	18	2	1
Early July, 2003	79	45	16	5	19	1	*
March, 2003 <sup>2</sup>	89	24	19	*	11	2	*
February, 2003	83	42	19	4	15	3	*
January, 2003	81	44	22	4	17	2	1
January, 2002	82	42	21	3	14	2	*
Mid-September, 2001	90	11	14	*	5	1	1
Early September, 2001	74	45	18	6	13	1	*
February, 2001	76	40	16	4	10	2	1
October, 1999	80	48	19	5	11	2	*
January, 1999	82	42	18	4	6	2	*
January, 1996	88	61	25	8	--	2	*
September, 1995	82	63	20	10	--	1	1
January, 1994	83	51	15	10	--	5	1
September, 1993	83	60	17	9	--	3	*
January, 1993	83	52	17	5	--	1	1
Early January, 1991	82	40	15	4	--	1	*

**IF '1' TELEVISION AS EITHER 1ST OR 2ND RESPONSE IN Q.3 ASK:**

Q.3a Do you get most of your news about national and international issues from [READ, RANDOMIZE ITEMS 2 THRU 4 AND 5 THRU 8 SEPARATELY, AND RANDOMIZE SETS OF ITEMS (LOCAL; NETWORK; CABLE). ACCEPT MULTIPLE ANSWERS BUT DO NOT PROBE FOR ADDITIONAL]

<b>BASED ON TOTAL:</b>		<u>Dec 2004</u>	<u>Oct 2003</u>	<u>Aug 2003</u>	<u>Early July 2003</u>	<u>Jan 2002</u>
13	Local news programming	15	17	17	17	16
12	ABC Network news	11	12	12	12	11
9	CBS Network news	9	8	10	11	11
12	NBC Network news	14	13	15	14	15
18	CNN Cable news	20	20	26	27	28
5	MSNBC Cable news	6	6	7	9	8
16	The Fox News Cable Channel	19	17	18	22	16
2	CNBC Cable news <sup>3</sup>	3	--	3	3	4
4	<b>(DO NOT READ)</b> Don't know/Refused	3	4	4	3	2

<sup>2</sup> In March 2003, the question was worded “news about the war in Iraq.” In Mid-September 2001, the question was worded “news about the terrorist attacks.” In September 1995, question wording did not include “international.” In Early January 1991 the question asked about “the latest developments in the Persian Gulf.”

<sup>3</sup> In October 2003, CNBC Cable news item was not asked due to programming error.

**IF '5' INTERNET AS EITHER 1ST OR 2ND RESPONSE IN Q.3, ASK [N=351]:**

Q.3b When you get news online, do you read the websites of local or national newspapers, or not?

62	Yes
36	No
<u>2</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

**IF '2' NEWSPAPERS AS EITHER 1ST OR 2ND RESPONSE IN Q.3 ASK [N=670]:**

Q.3c How do you read the newspaper... Do you mostly read the paper version of the newspaper, or do you mostly read the newspaper online?

90	Paper version
6	Online
3	Both (VOL)
<u>1</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

**IF 'YES' IN Q.3b OR '2' ONLINE IN Q.3c, ASK [N=246]:**

Q.3d Do you read the newspaper online mostly because it is free or mostly because it is convenient? [READ AND ROTATE]

8	Mostly because free
73	Mostly because convenient
14	Both (VOL)
5	Neither (VOL)
<u>*</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

**IF 'YES' IN Q.3b OR '2' ONLINE IN Q.3c, ASK [N=246]:**

Q.3e Since you started reading newspapers online, are you reading the PAPER version of the newspaper more often, less often, or about as much as you used to?

12	More often
35	Less often
50	About as much
<u>3</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

**ASK ALL:**

Q.4 Now I'd like your opinion of some groups and organizations in the news. (First,) would you say your overall opinion of... **(INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE)** is very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly UNfavorable, or very unfavorable? **(INTERVIEWERS: PROBE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN "NEVER HEARD OF" AND "CAN'T RATE")**

**QUESTIONS 4a-d PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**

	-----Favorable-----			-----Unfavorable-----			(VOL)	(VOL)
	Total	Very	Mostly	Total	Very	Mostly	Never Heard of	Can't Rate
e. Network television news such as ABC, NBC, and CBS <sup>4</sup>	68	19	49	23	6	17	*	9=100
July, 2001	72	17	55	23	7	16	*	5=100
August, 1999	74	19	55	24	6	18	*	2=100
June, 1999	68	20	48	28	6	22	*	4=100
February, 1998	76	16	60	22	5	17	*	2=100
February, 1997	73	15	58	23	5	18	*	4=100
April, 1996	79	21	58	17	4	13	0	4=100
January, 1996	83	25	58	15	4	11	*	2=100
June, 1995	67	16	51	30	9	21	*	3=100
July, 1994	69	17	52	29	7	22	*	2=100
May, 1993	81	23	58	15	3	12	0	4=100
January, 1992	82	27	55	13	2	11	0	5=100
November, 1991	75	24	51	21	5	16	0	4=100
March, 1991	91	40	51	7	2	5	0	2=100
May, 1990	82	22	60	15	3	12	*	3=100
August, 1989	82	28	54	14	3	11		4=100
February, 1989	82	21	61	15	3	12		3=100
August, 1988 (RVs)	81	29	52	14	5	9		5=100
May, 1988	78	20	58	18	4	14		4=100
January, 1988	81	12	69	16	3	13		3=100
January 7-18, 1988	78	18	60	18	4	14		4=100
October, 1987	81	19	62	13	3	10		6=100
May, 1987	84	21	63	14	3	11		2=100
January, 1987	74	19	55	22	6	16		4=100
July, 1986	83	30	53	14	4	10		3=100
August, 1985	81	30	51	10	2	8		7=100
June, 1985	84	25	59	10	2	8		6=100
f. The daily newspaper you are most familiar with	72	22	50	18	5	13	0	10=100
July, 2001	75	24	51	17	5	12	*	8=100
August, 1999	78	22	56	18	5	13	*	4=100
June, 1999	79	24	55	17	6	11	*	4=100
February, 1998	74	18	56	18	5	13	*	8=100
February, 1997	74	21	53	19	4	15	0	7=100
April, 1996	80	24	56	16	4	12	0	4=100
January, 1996	79	27	52	16	5	11	*	5=100
June, 1995	74	22	52	21	7	14	1	4=100
July, 1994	80	23	57	18	5	13	*	2=100
May, 1993	81	26	55	14	4	10	0	5=100
January, 1992	78	27	51	18	5	13	0	4=100

4

In June 2005, "...such as ABC, NBC, and CBS" was added to the question wording.

Q.4 CONTINUED...	-----Favorable-----			----Unfavorable----			(VOL)	(VOL)
	<u>Total</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>Mostly</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>Mostly</u>	Never Heard of	Can't Rate
November, 1991	80	24	56	16	5	11	0	4=100
March, 1991	85	30	55	10	3	7	*	5=100
May, 1990	78	22	56	17	5	12	*	5=100
August, 1989	77	25	52	17	5	12		6=100
February, 1989	78	22	56	17	4	13		5=100
August, 1988 (RVs)	78	30	48	15	5	10		7=100
May, 1988	78	19	59	17	4	13		5=100
January, 1988	81	19	62	14	3	11		5=100
January 7-18, 1988	80	21	59	16	4	12		4=100
October, 1987	79	21	58	13	4	9		8=100
May, 1987	81	22	59	15	3	12		4=100
January, 1987	76	19	57	19	6	13		5=100
July, 1986	79	28	51	17	6	11		4=100
August, 1985	77	25	52	15	5	10		8=100
June, 1985	81	25	56	11	3	8		8=100
g. Large nationally influential newspapers such as the New York Times and the Washington Post								
Washington Post	38	10	28	25	10	15	1	36=100
July, 2001	52	13	39	17	6	11	1	30=100
February, 1998	47	9	38	18	6	12	1	34=100
February, 1997	41	8	33	20	7	13	2	37=100
January, 1992	53	16	37	13	4	9	0	34=100
July, 1985	48	12	36	11	3	8	1	40=100
h. Local television news								
Local television news	73	22	51	20	6	14	*	7=100
July, 2001	79	25	54	17	4	13	*	4=100
June, 1999	74	25	49	22	7	15	*	4=100
February, 1998	81	19	62	16	4	12	0	3=100
February, 1997	81	25	56	15	3	12	0	4=100
April, 1996	84	26	58	13	3	10	*	3=100
January, 1996	84	28	56	14	4	10	*	2=100
March, 1991	89	37	52	8	2	6	*	3=100
August, 1989	80	27	53	15	4	11		5=100
July, 1985	84	27	57	11	2	9		5=100
i. Cable news networks such as CNN, Fox News Channel and MSNBC <sup>5</sup>								
Cable news networks such as CNN, Fox News Channel and MSNBC <sup>5</sup>	67	23	44	18	4	14	*	15=100
July, 2001	78	28	50	11	3	8	*	11=100
February, 1998	71	26	45	12	3	9	1	16=100

#### QUESTIONS 5 THROUGH 6 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

<sup>5</sup>

In June 2005, "Fox News Channel" was added to the question wording.

Thinking again about the news media...

**ASK FORM 1 ONLY [N=726]:**

Q.7F1 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?

	<u>Keeps leaders from doing their job</u>	<u>Keeps leaders from doing things that shouldn't be done</u>	<u>Don't know/ Refused</u>
June, 2005	28	60	12=100
Early July, 2003	29	54	17=100
July, 2002	26	59	15=100
Mid-November, 2001	32	54	14=100
Early September, 2001	25	60	15=100
February, 1999	31	58	11=100
Early February, 1998	39	55	6=100
February, 1997	32	56	12=100
Late January, 1994	24	66	10=100
Early January, 1994	18	69	13=100
August, 1989	23	68	9=100
December, 1986	26	60	14=100
July, 1985	17	67	16=100

**ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=738]:**

Q.8F2 Some people think that by criticizing the military, news organizations weaken the country's defenses. Others think that such criticism helps keep our nation militarily prepared. Which position is closer to your opinion?

	<u>Weakens defenses</u>	<u>Keeps nation prepared</u>	<u>Don't know/ Refused</u>
June, 2005	47	44	9=100
Early July, 2003	43	45	12=100
July, 2002	40	49	11=100
Mid-November, 2001	37	49	14=100
March, 1991	28	59	13=100
August, 1989	33	56	11=100
December, 1986	31	57	12=100
July, 1985	31	51	18=100

**ASK ALL:**

Q.9 In general, do you think news organizations get the facts straight, or do you think that their stories and reports are often inaccurate?

	<u>Get the facts straight</u>	<u>Stories often inaccurate</u>	<u>Don't know/ Refused</u>
June, 2005	36	56	8=100
Early July, 2003	36	56	8=100
July, 2002	35	56	9=100
Mid-November, 2001	46	45	9=100
Early September, 2001	35	57	8=100
February, 1999	37	58	5=100
Early August, 1998	33	58	9=100
Early February, 1998	34	63	3=100
February, 1997	37	56	7=100
January, 1992	49	44	7=100



**Q.9 CONTINUED...**

	<u>Get the facts straight</u>	<u>Stories often inaccurate</u>	<u>Don't know/Refused</u>
August, 1989	54	44	2=100
August, 1988	40	50	10=100
May, 1988	48	43	9=100
January, 1988	44	48	8=100
July, 1985	55	34	11=100

Q.10 In presenting the news dealing with political and social issues, do you think that news organizations deal fairly with all sides, or do they tend to favor one side?

	<u>Deal fairly with all sides</u>	<u>Tend to favor one side</u>	<u>Don't know/Refused</u>
June, 2005	21	72	7=100
Early July, 2003	26	66	8=100
Early September, 2001	26	67	7=100
February, 1997	27	67	6=100
January, 1992	31	63	6=100
August, 1989	28	68	4=100
August, 1988	36	57	7=100
May, 1988	34	56	10=100
January, 1988	30	59	11=100
December, 1986	39	54	7=100
July, 1986	37	57	6=100
July, 1985	34	53	13=100

Q.11 In general, do you think news organizations are pretty independent, or are they often influenced by powerful people and organizations?

	<u>Pretty independent</u>	<u>Often influenced by powerful people and organizations</u>	<u>Don't know/Refused</u>
June, 2005	21	73	6=100
Early July, 2003	23	70	7=100
Early September, 2001	23	71	6=100
January, 1994	28	63	9=100
January, 1992	35	58	7=100
August, 1989	33	62	5=100
January, 1988	40	49	11=100
July, 1986	37	53	10=100
July, 1985	37	53	10=100

Q.12 In general, do you think news organizations pay too much attention to GOOD NEWS, too much attention to BAD NEWS, or do they mostly report the kinds of stories they should be covering?

	Too much attention to good news	Too much attention to bad news	Report the kinds of stories they should be covering	Don't know/ Refused
June, 2005	3	67	23	7=100
Early July, 2003	2	67	25	6=100
Early September, 2001	3	67	24	6=100
May, 1991	2	54	37	7=100
August, 1989	3	64	30	3=100
July, 1985	1	60	35	4=100

Q.13 I'm going to read you some pairs of opposite phrases. After I read each pair, tell me which ONE phrase you feel better describes news organizations generally. If you think that NEITHER phrase applies, please say so. [NOTE FORM SPLIT; RANDOMIZE ITEMS ON FORM 1; ASK ITEM h. FIRST ON FORM 2 AND RANDOMIZE THE REST]

		Early July	Early July	Mid- Nov	Early Sept	Feb	Aug	Jan	July	July	
<b>ASK FORM 1 ONLY [N=726]:</b>											
a.F1	28	Care about the people they report on, OR	<u>03</u>	<u>02</u>	<u>01</u>	<u>01</u>	<u>99</u>	<u>89</u>	<u>87</u>	<u>86</u>	<u>85</u>
	58	Don't care about the people they report on	31	30	47	23	21	--	41	--	35
	9	Neither applies	56	55	38	64	67	--	45	--	48
	<u>5</u>	Don't know/Refused	9	10	11	10	9	--	9	--	10
	100		<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	--	<u>5</u>	--	<u>7</u>
			100	100	100	100	100		100		100
b.F1	28	Willing to admit their mistakes, OR	27	23	35	24	26	--	--	--	34
	62	Try to cover up their mistakes	62	67	52	67	66	--	--	--	55
	6	Neither applies	5	6	9	5	6	--	--	--	4
	<u>4</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>6</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>2</u>	--	--	--	<u>7</u>
	100		100	100	100	100	100				100
c.F1	43	Moral, OR	45	39	53	40	40	--	--	--	54
	35	Immoral	32	36	23	34	38	--	--	--	13
	15	Neither applies	14	18	17	20	16	--	--	--	20
	<u>7</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>9</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>6</u>	--	--	--	<u>13</u>
	100		100	100	100	100	100				100
d.F1	49	Growing in influence, OR	55	57	--	55	59	--	--	--	63
	36	Declining in influence	29	29	--	29	32	--	--	--	17
	7	Neither applies	8	7	--	9	6	--	--	--	7
	<u>8</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>8</u>	<u>7</u>	--	<u>7</u>	<u>3</u>	--	--	--	<u>13</u>
	100		100	100		100	100				100
e.F1	47	Protect democracy, OR	52	50	60	46	45	55	52	58	54
	33	Hurt democracy	28	29	19	32	38	19	27	18	23
	12	Neither applies	13	14	14	15	13	20	13	17	13
	<u>8</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>7</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>10</u>
	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

**Q.13 CONTINUED...**

			Early July	July	Mid- Nov	Early Sept	Feb	Aug	Jan	July	July
<b>ASK FORM 2 ONLY[ N=738]:</b>			<u>03</u>	<u>02</u>	<u>01</u>	<u>01</u>	<u>99</u>	<u>89</u>	<u>87</u>	<u>86</u>	<u>85</u>
f.F2	65	Care about how good a job they do, OR	68	65	78	69	69	--	--	77	79
	25	Don't care about how good a job they do	22	23	14	22	22	--	--	16	11
	6	Neither applies	7	8	6	7	6	--	--	5	4
	<u>4</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	--	--	<u>2</u>	<u>6</u>
	100		100	100	100	100	100			100	100
g.F2	59	Highly professional, OR	62	49	73	54	52	--	--	71	72
	25	Not professional	24	31	12	27	32	--	--	13	11
	12	Neither applies	9	15	12	15	13	--	--	12	9
	<u>4</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	--	--	<u>4</u>	<u>8</u>
	100		100	100	100	100	100			100	100
h.F2	42	Stand up for America, OR	51	49	69	43	41	--	53	53	52
	40	Too critical of America	33	35	17	36	42	--	35	28	30
	14	Neither applies	12	12	10	16	13	--	8	15	10
	<u>4</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	--	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>8</u>
	100		100	100	100	100	100		100	100	100
i.F2	60	Politically biased in their reporting, OR Careful that their reporting is NOT	53	59	47	59	56	--	47	42	45
	28	politically biased	29	26	35	26	31	--	39	41	36
	6	Neither applies	9	10	11	8	8	--	7	9	7
	<u>6</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>9</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>5</u>	--	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>12</u>
	100		100	100	100	100	100		100	100	100
j.F2	50	Liberal, OR	51	--	--	--	--	--	54	--	41
	26	Conservative	26	--	--	--	--	--	26	--	19
	16	Neither applies	14	--	--	--	--	--	12	--	20
	<u>8</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>9</u>	--	--	--	--	--	<u>8</u>	--	<u>20</u>
	100		100						100		100

**ASK ALL:**

Q.14 Do you think the press has been too critical of the Bush Administration policies and performance so far, not critical enough or do you think that the press has handled this about right?

		Early May 2004 <sup>6</sup>	Early July 2003	Clinton June 1993
28	Press too critical	34	25	35
33	Not critical enough	24	23	12
34	About right	35	48	49
<u>5</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>7</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>
100		100	100	100

<sup>6</sup> In May 2004 the question was worded "Would you say the press has been too critical, not critical enough, or fair in the way it has covered the Bush Administration."

**ASK FORM 1 ONLY [N=726]:**

Q.15F1 Some people think it is okay for news organizations to use unnamed sources because they can sometimes find out important news they otherwise wouldn't get. Others think it is too risky because it can sometimes lead to inaccurate reports. Which comes closer to your opinion?

44	Okay
52	Too risky
<u>4</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

**ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=738]:**

Q.16F2 Some people feel news reporters should ALWAYS reveal the sources of their story to the audience. Others feel that SOMETIMES reporters should be allowed to keep their sources confidential if that is the only way to get information. Which position is closer to your opinion?

		Aug <u>1989</u>	July <u>1985</u>
19	ALWAYS reveal	18	15
76	SOMETIMES keep confidential	79	78
<u>5</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>3</u>	<u>7</u>
100		100	100

**ASK FORM 1 ONLY [N=726]:**

Q.17F1 What do you think news organizations care about most when deciding what stories to report... **[READ AND ROTATE]**

19	Keeping the public informed, OR
75	Attracting the biggest audience
3	Both equally ( <b>VOL</b> )
1	Neither ( <b>VOL</b> )
<u>2</u>	Don't know/Refused [ <b>VOL.</b> ]
100	

**ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=738]:**

Q.17F2 What do you think news organizations care about most when deciding what stories to report... **[READ AND ROTATE]**

22	Informing people in order to serve the public interest, OR
69	Entertaining people in order to attract the biggest audience
4	Both equally ( <b>VOL</b> )
2	Neither ( <b>VOL</b> )
<u>3</u>	Don't know/Refused [ <b>VOL.</b> ]
100	

**ASK ALL:**

Q.18 In your opinion, which is better – that news coverage of the war on terrorism be pro-American or that news coverage of the war on terrorism be neutral?

		Early July <u>2003</u>	Early April <u>2003<sup>7</sup></u>	Late March <u>2003</u>	Feb <u>2003</u>	Mid- Nov <u>2001</u>	March <u>1991</u>
24	Pro-American	29	23	25	16	30	22
68	Neutral	64	69	68	78	64	71
<u>8</u>	No opinion/Don't know/Refused	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>
100		100	100	100	100	100	100

Q.19 As I read a list, tell me if you think these organizations mostly report the facts about recent news developments, or mostly give their opinions about the news. (First,) do [**“does” for item f**] [**INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE**] mostly report the facts about the news, or mostly give their opinions about the news?

		Mostly report facts about recent news developments	Mostly give their opinions about the news	Both <b>(VOL)</b>	Neither <b>(VOL)</b>	<u>DK/Ref</u>
a.	Cable news networks	45	29	8	1	17=100
b.	Network evening news programs	53	31	6	1	9=100
c.	Network morning news programs	39	33	5	1	22=100
d.	News blogs on the Internet	20	32	2	1	45=100
e.	Local television news programs	61	25	6	1	7=100
f.	The daily newspaper you are most familiar with	54	31	6	1	8=100
g.	Major national newspapers	45	30	6	*	19=100
h.	Talk radio shows	10	68	5	*	17=100

**QUESTIONS 20 THROUGH 28 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**

<sup>7</sup>

In Early April 2003 and earlier the question was worded, "... that news coverage of a war be pro-American or that news coverage of a war be neutral?"

On another subject...

Q.29 Do you use a computer at your workplace, at school, at home, or anywhere else on at least an occasional basis?

Q.30 Do you ever go online to access the Internet or World Wide Web or to send and receive email?

	<i>Computer User</i>			<b>Based on Total Respondents:</b> <i>Goes Online</i>		
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK/Ref</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK/Ref</u>
June, 2005	77	23	*=100	69	31	*=100
Late May, 2005	76	24	*=100	70	29	1=100
Mid-March, 2005	78	22	*=100	72	28	0=100
December, 2004	80	20	*=100	72	28	*=100
Mid-October, 2004	79	21	*=100	72	28	*=100
Early September, 2004	78	22	*=100	72	28	*=100
August, 2004	75	25	*=100	68	32	0=100
April, 2004	73	27	0=100	66	34	*=100
March, 2004 <sup>8</sup>	75	25	*=100	68	32	*=100
August, 2003	77	23	*=100	67	33	*=100
Mid-July, 2003	75	25	*=100	65	35	*=100
June, 2003	75	25	0=100	67	33	0=100
January, 2003	76	24	0=100	67	33	*=100
December, 2002	76	24	*=100	67	33	*=100
Early October, 2002	75	25	*=100	63	37	*=100
August, 2002	78	22	*=100	69	31	*=100
June, 2002	74	26	*=100	66	34	*=100
May, 2002	75	25	*=100	66	34	*=100
April, 2002	71	29	*=100	62	38	0=100
February, 2002	71	29	*=100	62	38	0=100
January, 2002	73	27	0=100	62	38	0=100
Mid-November, 2001	73	27	0=100	62	38	0=100
Mid-September, 2001	72	28	*=100	62	38	*=100
June, 2001	72	28	*=100	62	38	0=100
May, 2001	75	25	*=100	64	36	0=100
April, 2001	72	28	*=100	62	38	0=100
February, 2001	72	28	0=100	60	40	*=100
January, 2001	71	29	*=100	61	39	0=100
July, 2000	68	31	1=100	55	45	*=100
June, 2000	68	31	1=100	56	44	*=100
April, 2000	68	32	*=100	54	46	*=100
March, 2000 <sup>9</sup>	72	28	0=100	61	39	0=100
February, 2000	67	33	*=100	52	48	0=100
January, 2000	68	32	*=100	52	48	*=100
December, 1999	67	33	*=100	53	47	0=100
October, 1999	67	33	*=100	50	50	0=100
Late September, 1999	68	32	*=100	52	48	*=100
September, 1999	70	30	*=100	53	47	0=100
August, 1999	67	33	*=100	52	48	0=100
July, 1999	68	32	*=100	49	51	0=100

<sup>8</sup> Beginning in 2004, the online use question is asked of all respondents (in previous years it was asked only of those who identified themselves as computer users). This modification was made to adjust to changes in technology and means of access to the Internet, and increases the percent who are classified as Internet users by 1-2 percentage points.

<sup>9</sup> In March 2000, "or anywhere else" was added to the question wording.

**Q.29/Q.30 CONTINUED...**

**Based on Total Respondents:**

	<i>Computer User</i>			<i>Goes Online</i>		
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK/Ref</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK/Ref</u>
June, 1999	64	35	1=100	50	50	*=100
May, 1999	66	33	1=100	48	52	0=100
April, 1999	71	29	*=100	51	49	*=100
March, 1999	68	32	*=100	49	51	*=100
February, 1999	68	32	*=100	49	51	*=100
January, 1999	69	31	*=100	47	53	*=100
Early December, 1998	64	36	*=100	42	58	0=100
November, 1998	--	--	--	37	63	*=100
Early September, 1998	64	36	*=100	42	58	*=100
Late August, 1998	66	34	0=100	43	57	*=100
Early August, 1998	66	34	*=100	41	59	*=100
April, 1998	61	39	*=100	36	64	0=100
January, 1998	65	35	*=100	37	63	0=100
November, 1997	66	34	*=100	36	63	1=100
June, 1997	60	40	0=100	29	71	0=100
Early September, 1996	56	44	*=100	22	78	0=100
July, 1996	56	44	*=100	23	77	0=100
April, 1996	58	42	*=100	21	79	*=100
March, 1996	61	39	*=100	22	78	0=100
February, 1996	60	40	0=100	21	79	*=100
January, 1996	59	41	0=100	21	79	0=100
June, 1995 <sup>10</sup>	--	--	--	14	86	*=100

**IF INTERNET USER (Q.30=1) ASK [N=1,022]:**

Q.31 How frequently do you go online to get NEWS... would you say every day, 3 to 5 days per week, 1 or 2 days per week, once every few weeks, or less often?

		<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; font-size: small;"> <span>Apr</span> <span>Apr</span> <span>Apr</span> <span>Oct</span> <span>Aug</span> <span>Jul</span> <span>Jun</span> <span>Early Dec</span> <span>Early Nov</span> <span>Sept</span> <span>Apr</span> <span>June</span> </div>											
		<u>04</u>	<u>02</u>	<u>00</u>	<u>99</u>	<u>99</u>	<u>99</u>	<u>99</u>	<u>98</u>	<u>98</u>	<u>98</u>	<u>98</u>	<u>95</u>
34	Every day	27	25	27	25	22	21	22	25	10	23	18	6
15	3-5 days per week	18	16	15	14	15	15	18	17	11	16	17	9
15	1-2 days per week	15	16	19	22	19	22	22	22	16	21	20	15
11	Once every few weeks	12	13	12	11	15	14	14	10	13	14	15	13
16	Less often	17	21	18	20	20	19	18	18	20	19	21	28
9	No/Never (VOL.)	11	9	9	8	9	9	7	8	30	7	9	29
<u>0</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>*</u>	<u>*</u>	<u>*</u>	<u>*</u>	<u>*</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>*</u>	<u>*</u>	<u>*</u>	<u>*</u>	<u>*</u>
<u>100</u>		<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>

<sup>10</sup>

The 1995 figure combines responses from two separate questions: (1) Do you or anyone in your household ever use a modem to connect to any computer bulletin boards, information services such as CompuServe or Prodigy, or other computers at other locations? (IF YES, PROBE: Is that you, someone else or both?) (2) Do you, yourself, ever use a computer at (work) (school) (work or school) to connect with computer bulletin boards, information services such as America Online or Prodigy, or other computers over the Internet?

**IF INTERNET USER (Q.30=1) ASK [N=1,022]:**

Q.32 When you go online do you ever come across news when you may have been going online for a purpose other than to get the news?

		April <u>2004</u>	April <u>2002</u>	Nov <u>2000</u> <sup>11</sup>	Oct <u>1999</u> <sup>12</sup>	Nov <u>1998</u>	April <u>1998</u>	Oct <u>1996</u>
73	Yes	73	65	45	55	48	54	53
26	No	27	35	53	44	51	45	45
<u>1</u>	Don't know/Refused	*	*	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>
100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100

**IF INTERNET USER (Q.30=1) ASK [N=1,022]:**

Q.33 Do you ever read online news columns or web logs that discuss news about current events, public issues and politics?

65	Yes
35	No
<u>*</u>	Don't Know/Refused
100	

Now, just a few questions for statistical purposes only...

PARTY In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or Independent?

<i>Trend</i>	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	(VOL)	(VOL)	<u>Don't know</u>
				No	Other	
				<u>Preference</u>	<u>Party</u>	
June, 2005	30	32	32	4	*	2=100
Mid-May, 2005	30	34	29	4	*	3=100
Late March, 2005	29	32	36	2	*	1=100
Mid-March, 2005	30	34	29	4	*	3=100
February, 2005	31	32	30	4	1	2=100
January, 2005	32	33	30	4	*	1=100
December, 2004	31	34	30	3	*	2=100
Mid-October, 2004	30	33	30	4	*	3=100
Late September, 2004	29	30	31	6	*	4=100
Mid-September, 2004	29	31	30	5	*	5=100
Early September, 2004	30	33	31	3	*	3=100
August, 2004	31	35	27	4	*	3=100
July, 2004	29	33	32	3	*	3=100
June, 2004	30	34	31	3	*	2=100
May, 2004	29	35	26	5	1	4=100
Early May, 2004	27	34	31	4	1	3=100
Late April, 2004	30	31	31	5	*	3=100
Early April, 2004	31	32	28	4	1	4=100
Late March, 2004	30	34	28	4	*	4=100
March, 2004	27	35	32	4	*	2=100
Mid-February, 2004	30	33	30	4	*	3=100
Early February, 2004	31	33	31	3	*	2=100

<sup>11</sup> In 2000 the question asked about "news and information about the 2000 elections."

<sup>12</sup> In 1999 and 1998 the question was worded: "When you go online do you ever encounter or come across news and information on current events, public issues or politics when you may have been going online for a purpose other than to get the news?" In 1996 this question was asked: "are you ever exposed to news..."



**PARTY CONTINUED...**

<i>Trend</i>	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	(VOL)	(VOL)	<u>Don't know</u>
				No Preference	Other Party	
Mid-January, 2004	31	31	31	4	1	2=100
Early January, 2004	29	34	31	4	*	2=100
<i>Yearly Totals</i>						
2004	30	33	30	4	*	3=100
2003	30	31	31	5	*	3=100
2002	30	31	30	5	1	3=100
2001	29	34	29	5	*	3=100
2001 Post-Sept 11	31	32	28	5	1	3=100
2001 Pre-Sept 11	28	35	30	5	*	2=100
2000	28	33	29	6	*	4=100
1999	27	33	34	4	*	2=100
1998	28	33	32	5	*	2=100
1997	28	33	32	4	1	2=100
				No Preference/		
	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	<u>Other/DK</u>		
1996	29	33	33	5=100		
1995	32	30	34	4=100		
1994	30	32	34	4=100		
1993	27	34	34	5=100		
1992	28	33	35	4=100		
1991	31	32	33	4=100		
1990	31	33	30	6=100		
				Independent/		
	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>No Pref/Oth/DK</u>			
1989	33	33	34=100			
1987	26	35	39=100			

**IF ANSWERED 3, 4, 5 OR 9 IN PARTY, ASK:**

PARTYLN As of today do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?

	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Refused to lean</u>
June, 2005	10	16	12=38%
Mid-May, 2005	9	13	14=36%
Late March, 2005	13	17	9=39%
December, 2004	14	12	9=35%
August, 2003	12	16	14=42%
August, 2002	12	13	13=38%
September, 2000	11	13	15=39%
Late September, 1999	14	15	16=45%
August, 1999	15	15	12=42%