

# TV INSIGHTS

## THE PRESIDENT, THE PRESS AND THE PEOPLE WHEN THE NEWS BECOMES THE NEWS

### INTRODUCTION

To say there's been friction between the new administration and the U.S. press corps would be a huge understatement. Since the January 20<sup>th</sup> inauguration, not only do news organizations continue to be questioned on their integrity and factual reporting, but now there is extra scrutiny around statements made by the White House. In this war of words (and facts) between the President and the press, the American people are caught in the middle.

It is understandable why many Americans would be skeptical of what they see, what they read and what they hear. But do they still believe the news media serves an important role in our society? Do they side with the new administration that the media is not giving them a fair shake? Plus with controversy around fake news stories, are all news outlets being tarnished, or just a few? These are important questions that Katz sought to answer.

Katz is monitoring the pulse of the American people on how they both view and value news organizations. And with our latest study, what we are seeing is abundantly clear:

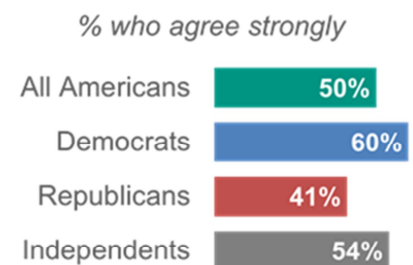
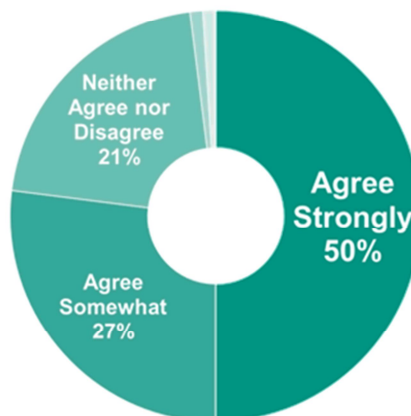
***American perception of bias in the U.S. news media is intensifying.***

### MOST AMERICANS RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Overwhelmingly, the American public believes in the concept and practice of the First Amendment. When asked about the importance of freedom of the press in our American democracy, half of Americans said they feel very strongly about this with another 27% also agreeing, but to a lesser extent.

Differences arise when taking political affiliation into consideration. ***While 60% of Democrats and more than half of Independents strongly agree that freedom of the press is important to the functioning of our democracy, only 41% of Republicans feel the same way.***

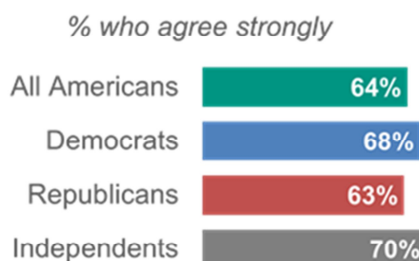
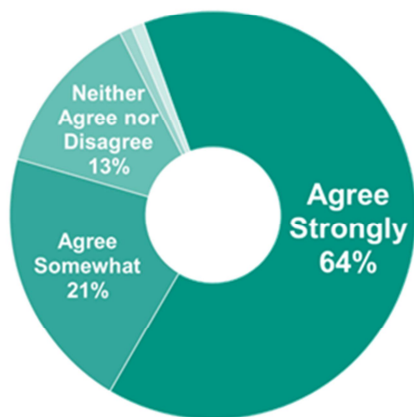
***Freedom of the press is important to the functioning of American democracy***



## THERE IS CONSENSUS: ELECTED OFFICIALS NEED TO BACK UP THEIR CLAIMS

The public wants to see the receipts. When asked about the importance for governmental officials to have factual evidence to support their claims, two-thirds of Americans strongly agreed (64%).

*When government officials make public statements, factual evidence should support their claims*



*This sentiment is shared by people across the political spectrum.* 68% of Democrats feel strongly about this, while 63% of Republicans feel the same.

Americans who consider themselves Independent were the most likely to feel strongly about officials backing up their claims, at 70%.

## REPUBLICANS SAY NEW ADMINISTRATION IS JUSTIFIED TO CRITICIZE THE PRESS

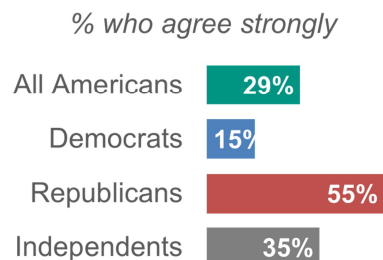
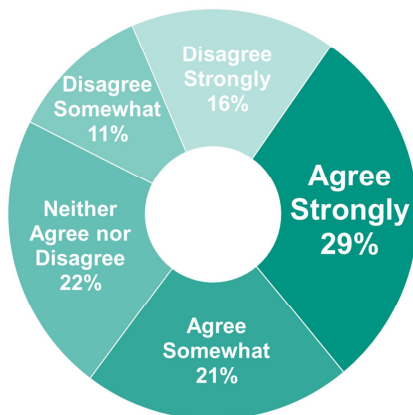
The calling out of the press by the current administration has become a leading news story. But what side is the public taking on this issue? Overall, 29% of Americans feel strongly that the administration has good reason to be critical of the media.

However, there are big differences when accounting for party affiliation.

**55% of Republicans feel strongly that that administration is justified to be critical of the press, compared to only 15% of Democrats that feel the same.**

As for Independents, 35% strongly side with the current administration on this issue.

*The new administration has good reason to be critical of the media*



## PERCEPTION OF MEDIA BIAS IS RISING AMONG REPUBLICANS AND INDEPENDENTS

While there is a belief by many Americans that some bias exists in news coverage, the differences are more pronounced when looking through a political lens.

Historically, Republicans have been most skeptical of news coverage. Currently, Republicans are most likely to believe there is bias in the average news outlet (54%), followed closely by Independents at 48% and Democrats at 36%.

But how do these current levels compare to before the inauguration? Have the headlines around the battle between the new administration and the press increased the perception of media bias in the populace?

To find out, Katz compared the perception of media bias from this current study vs. our December 2016 study where we asked the very same question.

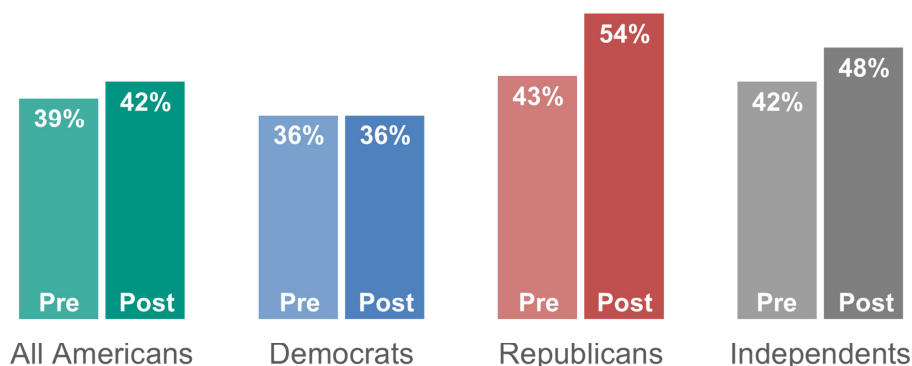
For Democrats, it is clear they have exhibited no significant change in perceived media bias. 36% of Democrats believe the average news outlet is biased now, which is flat compared to pre-inauguration.

***On the other hand, there is a measurable increase in media bias among Republicans and Independents.***

54% of Republicans perceive bias in the average news outlet now vs. 43% before the new administration took over, an 11 point lift.

For Independents, 48% currently perceive bias in the average news outlet vs. 42% before, a 6 point lift.

**% of Americans that perceive bias in the U.S. news media**  
*Pre vs. Post Inauguration*



To be read: Currently, 42% of Americans perceive bias existing in the average U.S. news outlet. This compares to 39% of Americans when asked the same question seven weeks before the inauguration.

## SOCIAL MEDIA: FERTILE GROUND FOR FAKE NEWS

The controversy continues to swirl around fake news. But have all news outlets been tarnished by fake news stories, or just a handful? Overall there is good news here: Americans don't associate fake news with the majority of U.S. news sources and outlets.

However, a few are overwhelmingly considered ideal environments for fake news stories, namely Social Media and Internet News Sites.

**Over half (58%) of Americans believe Facebook is a place they'd encounter fake news, the highest of all media outlets listed.**

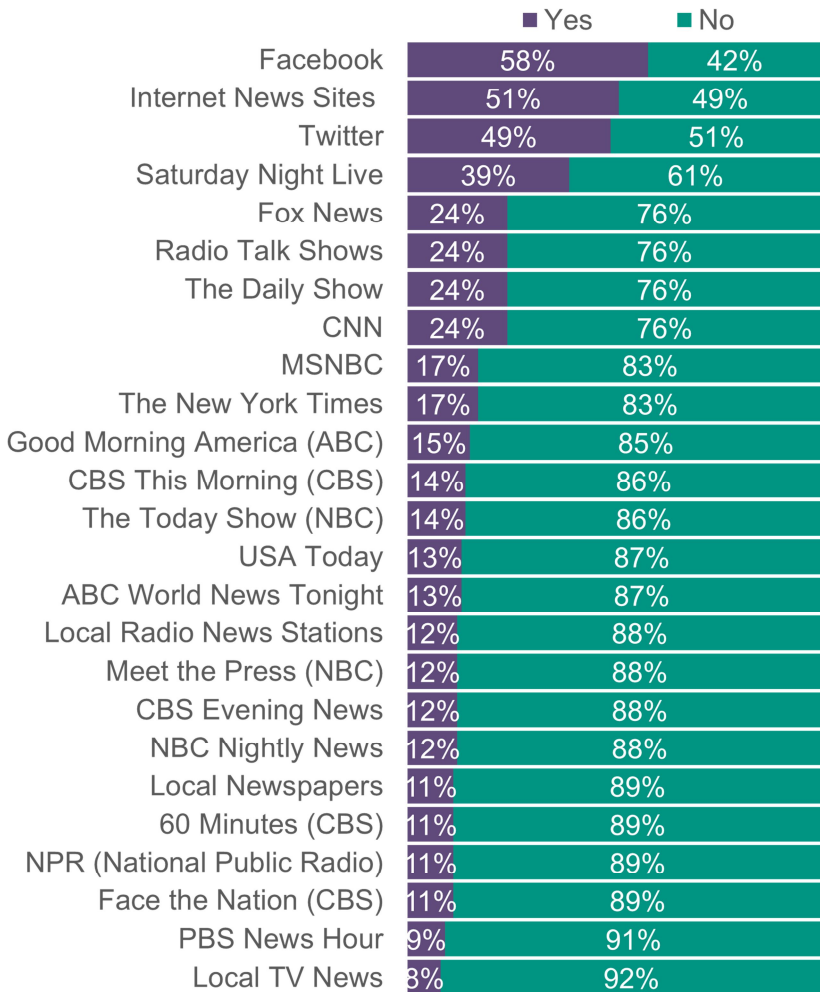
**Another 49% of Americans have the same reservation about Twitter.**

Internet News Sites was the second highest, deemed a fake news environment by 51% of Americans.

Generally, Americans believe Network TV newscasts on ABC, CBS and NBC are less likely to run fake news stories than Cable. 24% of Americans cite FOX News and CNN as places they'd experience it.

The least likely place to find fake news stories: Local TV News. **92% of Americans do not expect to find fake news stories on newscasts from their Local TV stations.**

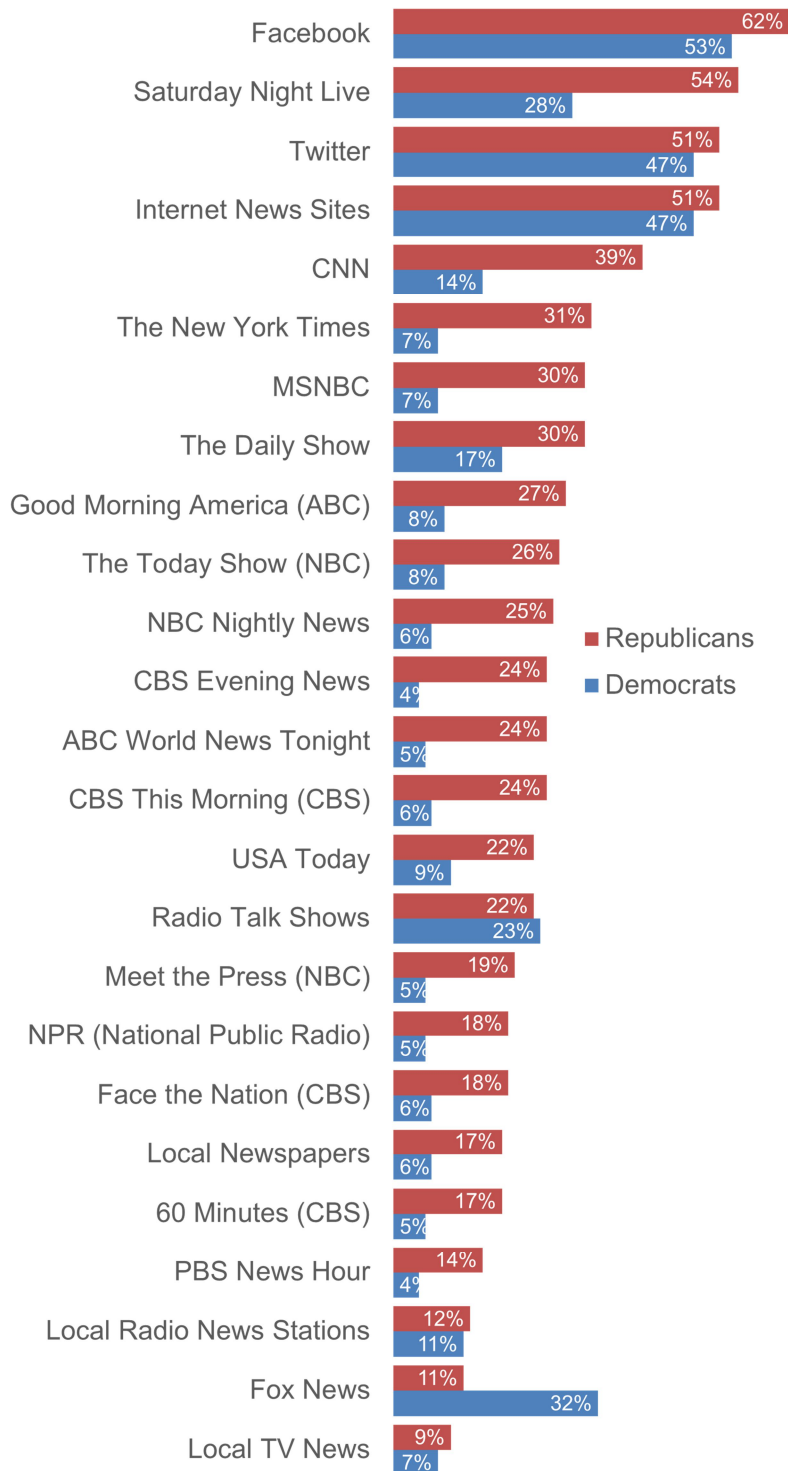
### Do you think you'd encounter 'fake news' stories in...



## REPUBLICANS BELIEVE FAKE NEWS IS MORE PREVALENT IN THE PRESS

Similar to the pattern seen with perceived bias in news media, Americans that identify themselves as Republican are more likely to believe fake news exists across the board, especially in the mainstream media.

**% who think they'll encounter 'fake news' stories on or in it**



**Republicans and Democrats both agree that Facebook is the most likely media outlet they'd encounter fake news stories. But Republicans feel stronger about it (62% vs. 53%)**

Overall, Republicans are 3 to 5 times more likely than Democrats to consider Network TV newscasts (ABC, CBS, NBC) as places for fake news.

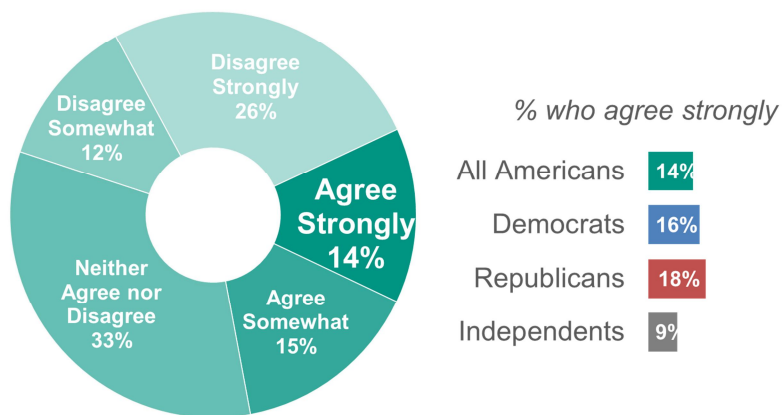
Only 11% of Republicans view FOX News as a source of fake news, while Democrats are three times as likely to say the same (32%).

**Both Republicans and Democrats agree that Local TV News offers an environment with only a minimal chance to encounter fake news, at 9% and 7%, respectively.**

## ILLEGAL VOTING IN ELECTION: NOT A MAJOR CONCERN FOR AMERICANS

A major issue raised by the current administration is the prospect that millions of people voted illegally in November's election. But does the public agree with this assertion?

**Millions of people voted illegally in this past Presidential election**



Overall, only 14% of Americans strongly agree with the charge that millions of illegal votes were cast.

In fact, Americans are twice as likely to vehemently disagree with this issue (26%), while another 33% has no opinion about it whatsoever.

There is a consensus by party affiliation as well. **Only a minority of Republicans feel strongly that voter fraud took place in this past election (18%).** This is similar to the levels expressed by Democrats (16%) and Independents (9%).

Most Americans simply disagree or aren't focused on this assertion.

## RUSSIAN INTERFERENCE: A POLARIZING TOPIC

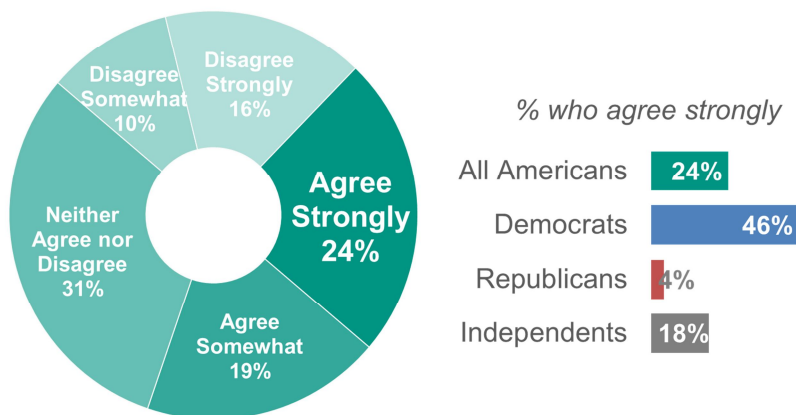
The controversy continues to simmer around the alleged Russian hacking and its potential impact on the outcome of the election. But do Americans feel it had any impact?

Overall, 1 in 4 Americans feels strongly that Russia had some influence over the election (24%).

**But there is an absolute divide by party lines.**

For Democrats, nearly half (46%) strongly believe that Russian interference impacted the election. As for Republicans, only 4% have this same opinion.

**Our most recent election was impacted by Russian interference**



## IMPLICATIONS FOR MARKETERS

In this chaotic political climate, the integrity of all news outlets is being challenged. Despite clear polarization of opinion around many issues facing the nation,

***Americans have remarkable consensus around the unbiased presentation of their Local Television News.***

This is not an insignificant fact. Local broadcasters are charged with presenting content that reflects and serves the prurient interest of their communities - and licensed by the government to do so. Social Media, Digital News Sites and Cable News Channels have no such obligation to serve their communities and are not held to the same standards as local broadcasters.

Local broadcasters offer an opportunity for marketers to reach viewers and listeners of all points-of-view in an environment that is perceptually neutral, lending both credibility and efficiency to marketers' media strategies.

## METHODOLOGY

Katz Media Group commissioned the research firm, Vision Critical, to conduct a nationwide poll of Adults 18+. Respondents were asked questions about their usage and attitudes towards various news sources. A total of 1,007 interviews were conducted online and the data was weighted to be demographically representative of the U.S. population based on age, gender, race/ethnicity and region. Fieldwork was conducted on January 27, 2017.

The pre-inauguration data cited in this report was based on fieldwork conducted on December 7, 2016. In total, 1,010 interviews were conducted in this wave.