

THE STATE OF THE MEDIA
January 20-25, 2006

A majority of Americans have at least a fair amount of trust and confidence in the news media, although relatively few express a great deal of confidence in the institution. Still, most think the stories the news media report are generally accurate, and the news media generally tells the truth (something many think the Administration does not do). And while the relationship between the White House and the news media has been contentious at times, nearly half say the news media has treated George W. Bush the same as it has other Presidents.

TRUST, CONFIDENCE AND ACCURACY

63% have at least a fair amount of trust and confidence in the news media. This includes just 15% who say they have a great deal of confidence in the media.

HOW MUCH CONFIDENCE DO YOU HAVE IN THE NEWS MEDIA?

	Now	Gallup 9/2005	Gallup 9/2004	Gallup 4/1974
A great deal	15%	13%	9%	21%
Fair amount	48	37	35	48
Not very much/None	36	49	55	29

This level of confidence in the media is higher than it has been in recent years. In September 2005, the Gallup Poll found that 50% had a great deal or fair amount of confidence in the media. And in September 2004, during the hard fought Presidential race, when the media was under a great deal of criticism, just 44% had a great deal or fair amount of confidence in the media.

Gallup has been asking about trust and confidence in the media for many years. In the 1970s, after the exposure of the Watergate scandal by the press, ratings of the news media were high. According to a 1974 Gallup Poll, 69% of Americans had a great deal or a fair amount of trust and confidence in the media.

Today, 69% describe the stories the news media report as generally accurate, but 22% say the stories are generally inaccurate. Heading into the mid-term elections of 1994, views of the media were identical.

ARE THE STORIES BY THE NEWS MEDIA ...

	Now	10/1994
Accurate	69%	69%
Inaccurate	22	22

Americans under age 45 are more likely than those over 45 to say stories by the media are accurate. And more Democrats and Independents than Republicans say the news media's stories are accurate.

THE MEDIA AND THE PRESIDENT

45% say the news media has treated George W. Bush the same as other Presidents. 35% say they have been harder on Bush, while 18% say the news media as been easier on him. In February 1995, when Bill Clinton was in office, the public held similar views on how he was treated by the news media.

COMPARED TO OTHER PRESIDENTS, THE MEDIA HAS BEEN...

Harder on Bush	35%
Easier on Bush	18
Treated the same	45

Republicans are more than five times as likely as Democrats to say the news media has been harder on George W. Bush compared to other presidents. In 1995, it was the Democrats who were more critical of the media's treatment of then President Clinton.

On the matter of telling the truth, 59% think the news media tells the truth all or most of the time, while 40% say they are truthful only some of the time or hardly ever. The public is more critical of the Bush Administration on this measure. A majority -59%- says the Bush Administration tells the truth only sometimes or hardly ever; just 39% say the Administration is truthful always or most of the time.

HOW OFTEN DOES THE ... TELL THE TRUTH?

	News <u>Media</u>	Bush <u>Admin</u>
Always/Most of the time	59%	39%
Only sometimes/Hardly ever	40	59

As expected, views on whether the Bush Administration tells the truth break down along party and ideological lines. Majorities of Republicans and conservatives say the Administration is truthful all or most of the time, while most Democrats and liberals hold the opposing view. Also, the President is not extremely popular right now; his approval rating is at a low 42%.

In November 1986, during the early stages of the Iran-Contra scandal, the American public did not view the Reagan Administration as being very truthful either - 63% said that administration told the truth only some of the time or hardly ever. 46% approved of the overall job President Reagan was doing at that time.

As for the media, large majorities of Democrats and liberals (about seven in 10 of each) think the news media tells the truth all or most of the time. About half of Republicans and conservatives agree.

This poll was conducted among a nationwide random sample of 1229 adults, interviewed by telephone January 20-25, 2006. The error due to sampling for results based on the entire sample could be plus or minus three percentage points.

CBS NEWS/NEW YORK TIMES POLL
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q36 In general, how much of the time do you think members of the Bush Administration tell the truth -- all of the time, most of the time, only some of the time, or hardly ever?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **			
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
All of the time	3	7	0	2
Most of the time	36	67	10	34
Some of the time	39	21	52	42
Hardly ever	19	3	36	17
None of the time (vol.)	1	0	2	2
DK/NA	2	2	0	3

q89 In general, how much trust and confidence do you have in the news media -- such as newspapers, T.V., and radio -- when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately, and fairly -- a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all?

Gallup Poll*

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	9/2005*
					%
Great deal	15	9	22	13	13
Fair amount	48	43	53	49	37
Not very much	28	35	21	29	37
None at all	8	13	4	8	12
DK/NA	1	0	0	1	1

* In general, how much trust and confidence do you have in the **mass media** -- such as newspapers, T.V., and radio -- when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately, and fairly -- a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all?

q90 Do you think the stories the news media report are generally accurate or inaccurate?

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Oct94b
					%
Accurate	69	60	78	68	69
Inaccurate	22	31	15	23	22
Depends (vol.)	5	6	5	6	7
DK/NA	4	3	2	3	2

q91 Compared to the way the news media have treated other presidents, have the news media been harder on George W. Bush, easier on George W. Bush, or have they treated him the same as other presidents?

Harder	35	61	11	36
Easier	18	1	34	16
The same	45	37	53	45
DK/NA	2	1	2	3

q92 In general, how much of the time do you think the news media tells the truth -- all of the time, most of the time, only some of the time, or hardly ever?

** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **

*** Party ID ***

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
All of the time	5	3	7	5
Most of the time	54	48	61	52
Some of the time	36	39	30	39
Hardly ever	4	8	2	2
DK/NA	1	2	0	2

	<u>UNWEIGHTED</u>	<u>WEIGHTED</u>
Total Respondents	1229	
Total Republicans	372	360
Total Democrats	388	412
Total Independents	469	456