

Stockton Poll Finds Strong Distrust of News Media among New Jersey Adults

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Galloway, N.J. - New Jersey residents for the most part believe news media across the spectrum is biased, and a large majority of them are concerned about fake news, according to a Stockton Poll released today.

Most New Jersey adults (87 percent) say they pay some or a great deal of attention to the news, and majorities say print newspapers, cable news, broadcast news, online news sites and radio do a good or excellent job of keeping them informed.

The biggest majority of news consumers (79 percent) get their news from cable TV networks, and 72 percent watch broadcast network news. Sixty-five percent read online newspapers and news websites, and 57 percent get news from the radio often or sometimes. But only 46 percent rely on print newspapers. Forty-two percent use social media to get news.

Only respondents who said they used a particular type of news media were asked if they thought that media were mostly unbiased or mostly biased in some way. Majorities say they find bias in newspapers (53 percent), cable TV news (67 percent), online news (62 percent) and social media (82 percent). Fifty percent say broadcast TV news and radio are biased.

Eighty-five percent are very or somewhat concerned that a news story may be fake news. Two-thirds say they believe they are able to spot fake news at least some of the time, but one-third say they don't know or are unsure when a news story is false.

The poll of 786 adult New Jersey residents was conducted by the Stockton Polling Institute of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy Feb. 15-21, 2017. The poll's margin of error is +/- 3.5 percentage points and higher for data subsets.

"It's striking how deep the distrust is among New Jersey adults for the news media, regardless of its format," said Sharon Schulman, executive director of the Hughes Center. "These views cause concern given the role a free press plays in disseminating information in our democracy."

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Asked to name their one main source of news, 34 percent cite cable TV news, with 22 percent identifying online news sites and 19 percent citing broadcast TV news. Only 9 percent say print newspapers are their main source, followed by radio (7 percent) and social media (6 percent).

People younger than age 30 are much more likely to use social media as their main news source. In fact, two-thirds of that age group mainly get their news from digital sources: 37 percent online and 29 percent social media.

Still, among all age groups, social media is considered the least accurate and most biased of the news sources tested in the poll. Among social media users, Facebook is the clear choice for news (68 percent), followed by Twitter (16 percent).

Beyond getting news, Facebook and Twitter followers have used social media in the past year to research politics (50 percent), to post or re-tweet political news (51 percent) or to learn about a meeting or rally (37 percent).

While only 9 percent choose newspapers as their main news source, print papers fare better when New Jersey residents are asked where they expect to get news about the state's upcoming gubernatorial and legislative elections. Thirty-four percent identify TV news (any type) followed by 25 percent citing New Jersey newspapers and 21 percent citing online news. Asked who is trusted to provide unbiased coverage about state political news, respondents pick TV news (33 percent), New Jersey newspapers (24 percent) and online news (16 percent).

"Newspapers fill a distinct role in New Jersey, where TV coverage is dominated by New York and Philadelphia news stations," said John Froomjian, a Hughes Center researcher who manages the Polling Institute.

"These poll results show that even with declining readership, state residents still rely more heavily than usual on print publications for news about Garden State politics and government," said Froomjian, a former Statehouse reporter for The Press of Atlantic City.

The complete [poll results](#) can be found at stockton.edu/hughescenter.

Methodology

A statewide public opinion poll was conducted by the Stockton Polling Institute of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy (www.stockton.edu/hughescenter) at Stockton University. Live interviewers on the Stockton campus called both landlines and cell phones from February 15-21, 2017. The poll was conducted with 786 adult residents of New Jersey. The poll's margin of error is +/- 3.5 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level. MOE is +/- 3.6 percentage points for the 760 respondents who follow the news at all, and is higher for subsets. Data are weighted based on United States Census Bureau demographics for New Jersey.

About the Hughes Center

The William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy (www.stockton.edu/hughescenter) at Stockton University serves as a catalyst for research, analysis and innovative policy solutions on the economic, social and cultural issues facing New Jersey, and promotes the civic life of New Jersey through engagement, education and research. The center is named for William J. Hughes, whose distinguished career includes service in the U.S. House of Representatives, Ambassador to Panama and as a Distinguished Visiting Professor at Stockton. The Hughes Center can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/StocktonHughesCenter> and can be followed on Twitter @hughescenter. # # #