



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on April 4, 2018

Poll: Public Convinced That Media Reports Fake News to Advance Their Own Agenda

“These findings are troubling, no matter how you define ‘fake news.’ Confidence in an independent fourth estate [a name often used for the media] is a cornerstone of a healthy democracy. Ours appears to be headed for the intensive care unit,” said Patrick Murray, director of Monmouth University Polling Institute, in summarizing the results of its poll, taken from March 2-5 of this year of 803 adults in the United States. Setting aside the fact that America is supposed to be a federal republic, rather than a “democracy,” as Murray called it, the poll results are rather startling.



Perhaps the most important finding from this poll about the news business is that a majority of Americans are highly skeptical of the honesty of the mainstream media. Forty-two percent in the poll (a plurality) said that traditional news media deliberately report “fake news” for the purpose of advancing a particular agenda. Twenty-six percent judged that the reporting of “fake news” is due to journalistic incompetence — either by accident or shoddy work, failing to check sources accurately. Seven percent said both reasons — the deliberate and the accidental reporting of fake news — happen.

It has long been recognized that the greatest power of those in the media is that they “set the agenda”: they decide what to report, leaving the consuming public to conclude that what the media is reporting on is what is important. A good example of this is the media’s obsession with the alleged collusion between the campaign of Donald Trump and the Russian government, though as of yet there is zero evidence of collusion and much evidence that this was a [contrived scandal by liberal loyalists in the White House and the intelligence agencies](#). If the media doesn’t cover something, then the logical conclusion would then be that it is not important, such as the media’s refusal to cover the Clinton’s collusion with the Russians in the Uranium One scandal. Another recent example of this is the failure of the liberal media to even report on the new *Chappaquiddick* movie, due to open in theaters on Friday. Jason Clarke, who plays Senator Edward Kennedy in the film, told *Deadline* that Bill Maher and Rachel Maddow “passed on covering the film.”

This poll, however, reveals that the public perceives that the bias in the media is even more pervasive than simply reporting what they want the public to know, or failing to report what they do not want the public to know (although that is still done on a regular basis). The public believes that media makes editorial decisions to simply create fake news stories.

Seventy-seven percent of Americans believe that fake news stories happen at least occasionally, with 31 percent believing that such stories are disseminated on a regular basis.

In addition to the public believing that major media sources, such as CNN and MSNBC, simply make up stories, the Monmouth Poll found the public also believes that fake news “is the result of both outside



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agents trying to plant fabricated stories,” and “the editorial process of mainstream media outlets that disseminate false narratives.” Murray added, “The perception of this problem couldn’t be more pervasive.”

Eighty-seven percent of those polled believe that these outside groups plant their “fake news stories” on social media sites such as Facebook and YouTube. Yet 60 percent of those polled still contend that traditional media sources are more responsible for the spread of fake news than social media.

As bad as the results were for MSNBC, CNN, and Fox News, the Monmouth Poll reported that Democrats tended to trust MSNBC and CNN more than President Donald Trump, while Republicans trusted Trump more than those two media outlets. Republicans trusted Trump over CNN at a rate of 75-12 percent and MSNBC, by a percentage margin of 72-11. Republicans, not surprisingly, tended to trust Fox News more than MSNBC and CNN.

One poll question asked, “When you use the term fake news, does it only apply to stories where the facts are wrong or does it also apply to how news outlets make editorial decisions about what they choose to report?” While 25 percent answered that it applied only to stories “where the facts are wrong,” 65 percent believed it also applied to how news outlets “make editorial decisions.”

Monmouth’s polling percentages of age groups were distributed 30 percent for those 18-34; 33 percent in the 35-54 age bracket; and 36 percent for those 55 and older. But considering that those in the age bracket of 55 and older vote at a much higher percentage than younger groups, it is probable that the dissatisfaction with the news media is higher with the actual *voting* public than the poll indicated. We can make this inference because older Americans voted for Trump (who is regularly savaged by CNN and MSNBC) in higher numbers than younger Americans, and older Americans actually vote in much higher numbers than younger Americans.

In other words, those most distrustful of the American news media tend to be older *and wiser*, based on more years of experience, and they no doubt have good reason to be suspicious of the liberal media’s honesty in “reporting” the news.

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