

5 Shocking Stats Reveal Bad News for Mainstream Media

The ongoing battle between President Donald Trump and the mainstream press is showing no signs of simmering, with Trump repeatedly accusing the media of creating—and being—“fake news,” and with journalists incessantly responding with incredulous horror and dismay.

But while both sides continue to spar over claims of bias, Trump’s purported First Amendment malfeasance and other associated themes, it’s important to take a moment to cut through the rhetoric to focus on what we absolutely do know about the media.

Believe it or not, there’s plenty of hard data out there, especially surrounding the public’s stance on mainstream outlets, and that data unfortunately paints a pretty bleak and convicting picture for the mainstream press, regardless of where critics stand on Trump and his rhetoric.

Let’s explore just a few of the more eye-opening statistics that show exactly how wary Americans are when it comes to the media—stats I include in my new book, *Fault Line: How a Seismic Shift in Culture Is Threatening Free Speech and Shaping the Next Generation*.

No. 1: Americans lack confidence in media.

First, a June 2016 Gallup poll found that just 8 percent of Americans expressed “a great deal” of confidence in newspapers, with an additional 12 percent saying they have “quite a lot” of confidence. In sum, that means just 20 percent of the public expressed an elevated view of newspapers. And it didn’t end there.

When it came to TV news, 8 percent also indicated “a great deal” of confidence, with an additional 13 percent saying they had “quite a lot” of confidence. The public expressed more confidence for public schools, small businesses, the military and other societal institutions.

No. 2: The trust factor is also a major problem for the press.

In a separate 2015 study, Gallup got a bit more specific, asking the public about trust in media. The firm asked, “How much trust and confidence do you have in the mass media—such as newspapers, TV and radio—when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately and fairly?” and offered a number of response options: “a great deal,” “a fair amount,” “not very much” and “none at all.”

The results were once again pretty stunning. While 55 percent of the public said they had at least “a fair amount” of trust back in 1998 and 1999, that share plunged to 40 percent in 2015—and to 32 percent in 2016, the lowest in Gallup polling history.

No. 3: A minority of Americans think the media report without bias.

But confidence isn’t the only problematic metric for the press, as the Newseum Institute specifically asked a question about bias in its “The 2016 State of the First Amendment” report, finding that only 23 percent of American respondents “believe that the news media attempts to report on news without bias.” Meanwhile, 74 percent disagreed with this notion.

No. 4: Majorities of conservatives and

liberals see bias in media.

Diving a bit deeper into the Newseum data, 85 percent of conservatives disagreed with the idea that the media report without bias, with 71 percent of moderates and even 68 percent of liberals feeling the same. These stats were corroborated by a separate 2016 poll conducted by the Pew Research Center, which found the majority of Americans—74 percent—believe the media “tend to favor one side” when covering social and political issues.

No. 5: Far more see a liberal bias in media than a conservative one.

And finally, a 2014 report noted that “historically, Americans are most likely to feel the news media are ‘too liberal,’” finding that year that 44 percent of Americans felt the press were too left-of-center, compared to 19 percent who said too conservative and 34 percent who selected “just about right.”

So, are the media “fake news” or “the enemy of the American people,” as Trump has charged? That’s up to the people to decide, but, at the least, the mainstream press has a bias and credibility problem, with polls repeatedly showing that the public has little confidence in how mainstream outlets process and present information to the masses.

You can read more about the ongoing media bias problem in *Fault Line*. {eo}

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