

# TV INSIGHTS

## BIAS IN THE U.S. NEWS MEDIA WHEN PERCEPTION IS REALITY

### INTRODUCTION

In this post-election climate, many are questioning the integrity and factual reporting of news organizations. The issue of *bias* is a hot one, and with the added controversy around “fake news,” many citizens are skeptical of what they see, what they read and what they hear.

But are Americans skeptical of all news outlets or just some? How objective do they find national news sources versus the ones that broadcast from their own communities?

Katz commissioned a study to answer these very questions. Having surveyed a cross-section of Americans, we not only have a clearer picture of how people rely on news information, but of their perceived biases existing in news coverage as well.

### NEARLY ALL AMERICANS FOLLOW THE NEWS FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER

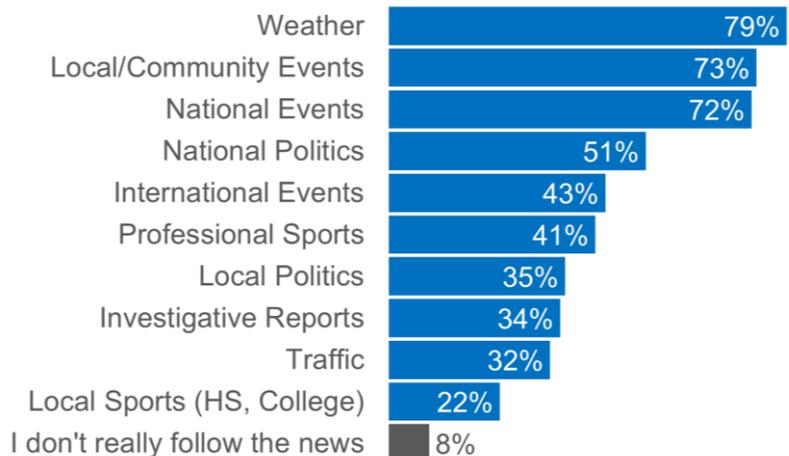
When asked about their interests in specific news topics, 92% of Americans say they stay current on at least one. Only 8% say they don't actively engage with news content of any kind.

To no surprise, weather is cited as the most followed news item. 79% say they try to stay informed about weather-related news.

However, it is evident that *Americans are equally interested in following both locally and nationally-driven news content.*

Three in four Americans try to stay current on events about their own locality or community (73%), which is similar to the percentage that follow national events (72%).

Q: What types of news do you try to stay current on?



## TELEVISION IS THE GO-TO SOURCE FOR NEWS INFORMATION

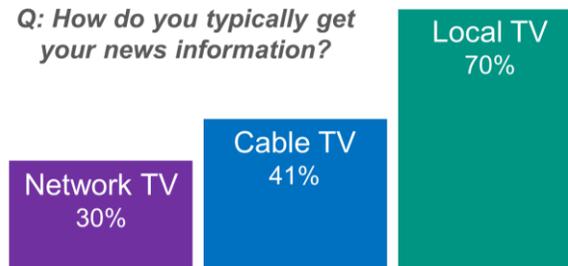
Television is the primary source of news consumption by Americans. There are now as many TV sets in U.S. homes as there are U.S. citizens. And with so many channels offering news content, it is obvious why Television offers easy access to news for people who seek it. And the majority of Americans do seek it!

**87%** of Americans watch news on Television every week.

**5** is the average number of days in a typical week that Americans watch news.

There is a clear preference for the type of TV news programming that Americans rely on: Local TV stations. **70% of Americans typically get their news from Local TV** compared to 41% for Cable and 30% for Network.

Q: How do you typically get your news information?



## CABLE TV AND INTERNET: THE MOST BIASED NEWS SOURCES

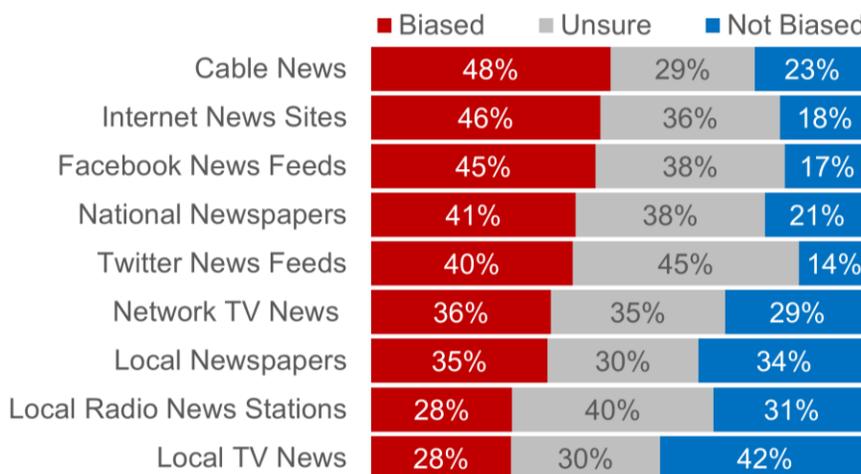
There is an overwhelming belief by the American public that bias is prevalent in news reported on Cable, Internet News Sites and Social media. **Nearly half (48%) of Americans believe Cable News channels are biased, while 46% say the same about Internet News Sites and 45% about Facebook.**

In fact, for Cable News channels, clearly more Americans think they are biased than non-biased (48% vs. 23%), or a 2-to-1 ratio.

This ratio is even more pronounced for news information found on Social media outlets like Twitter (40% biased vs. 14% non-biased) and Facebook (45% vs. 17%).

**On the opposite end, Americans perceive their local media organizations to be the most objective,** especially compared to national news media like Network and Cable TV. Local TV, Newspapers and Radio Stations are ranked the lowest when it comes to bias in their reporting of news.

% of Americans that Believe News Source is Biased or Unbiased



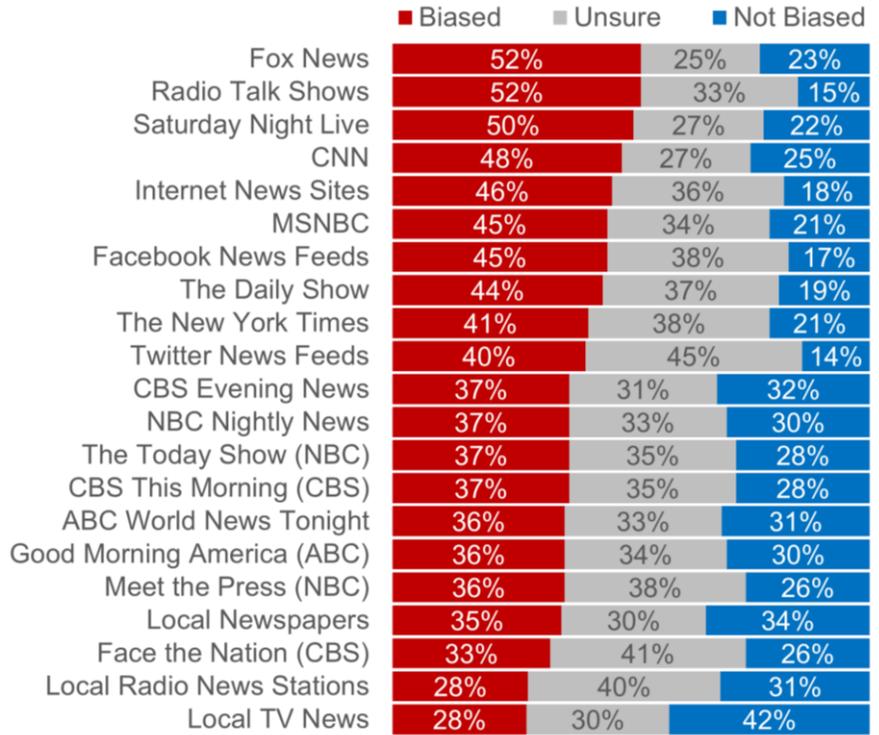
**Winning by a landslide, newscasts on Local Television are believed to be the least biased source of news information.**

Local TV News is the only news source where more Americans believe it is unbiased than biased. Americans are twice as likely to consider their Local TV Newscasts unbiased than Cable News and Internet News Sites. (42% vs. 23% and 18%)

Overall, Americans perceive Network TV newscasts on ABC, CBS and NBC to be less biased than Cable News networks.

FOX News was ranked as the most biased Cable network followed closely by CNN and MSNBC (52% vs. 48% vs. 45%).

**% of Americans that Believe News Source is Biased or Unbiased**



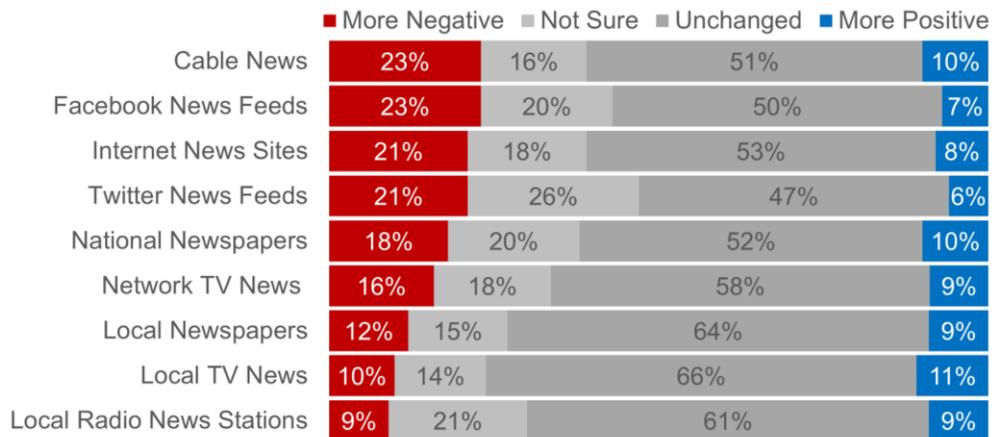
**REPUTATIONS OF CABLE NEWS AND SOCIAL MEDIA TAKE THE BIGGEST HIT**

When asked about how political coverage has impacted their opinions of U.S. news outlets, **1 in 4 Americans expressed a more negative opinion of Cable News.**

Digital and Social Media have also taken a perception hit this political season. 23% of Americans feel more negative towards news on Facebook, and 21% say the same for both Twitter and Internet News Sites.

However, Local TV News is largely unchanged and has felt little impact. Just as many say they have a more positive opinion about Local TV News (11%) as negative (10%).

**Q: Considering the coverage and outcome of the Presidential election, how has your opinion of the following news outlets changed?**



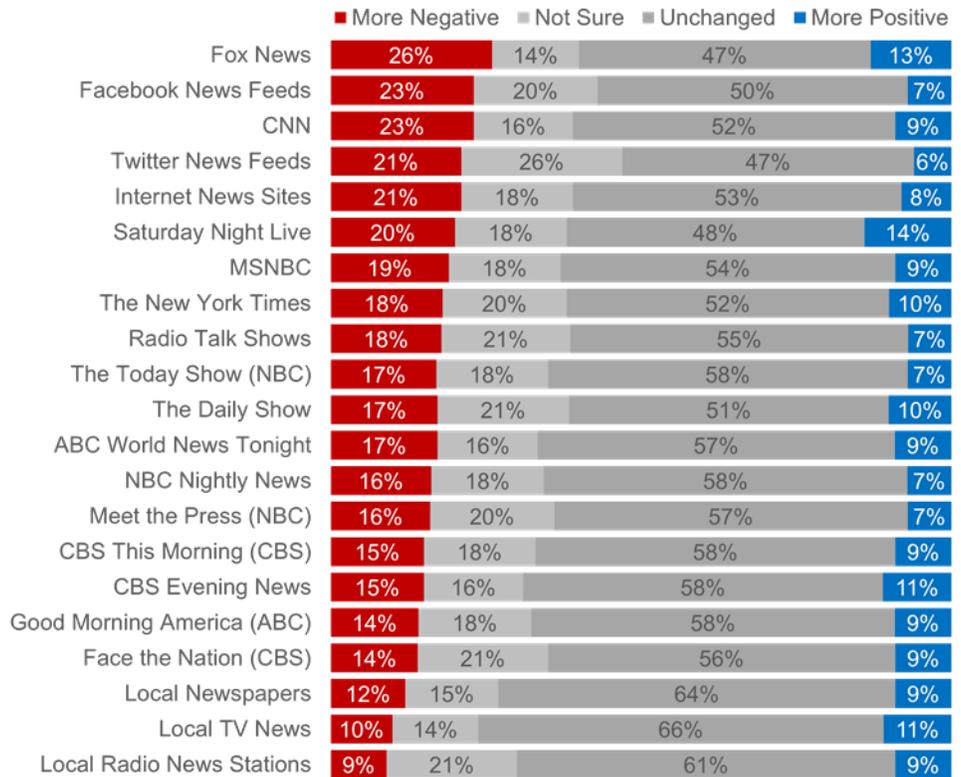
Post-election, Americans tend to be less down on Network TV newscasts on ABC, CBS and NBC vs Cable.

FOX News, in particular, was ranked highest on having a more negative perception (26%).

Also, news encountered on local media, whether it be Radio, TV or Newspapers is least likely to be thought of negatively during this election cycle.

Local media has remained relatively untarnished compared to national news outlets.

**Q: Considering the coverage and outcome of the Presidential election, how has your opinion of the following news outlets changed?**



## AMERICANS HAVE TRUST IN THEIR LOCAL TV NEWSCASTERS

While U.S. news organizations have been questioned about the objectivity of their reporting by the American public, Local TV News has remained relatively unscathed.

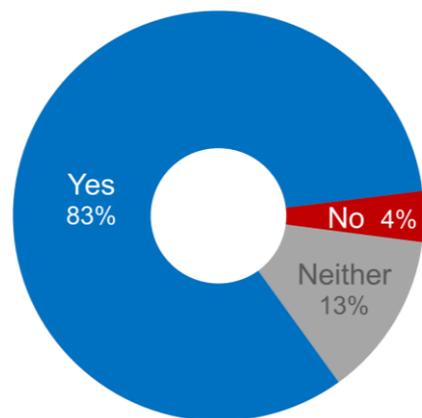
A major reason why there is less perceived bias in Local TV News is the very newscasters that present themselves to viewers in their homes every day.

**Many Local TV News anchors have been fixtures in the markets they serve for years. Hence, they have an established, positive rapport with the public.**

Not only are these local TV news anchors, reporters and weathercasters easily recognizable, but they are also considered influential members of their respective communities.

When asked if they trust the opinions or values of their favorite Local TV News personality, 8 out of 10 Americans say they absolutely do (83%).

**Q: Does Your Favorite Local TV News Personality Have Opinions That You Trust or Value?**



## REPUBLICAN-MINDED AMERICANS ARE MORE LIKELY TO PERCEIVE MEDIA BIAS

Through a political lens, there are big differences in the perceived lack of objectivity in news media. **Overwhelmingly, people who consider themselves Republican are more likely to consider news organizations biased.**

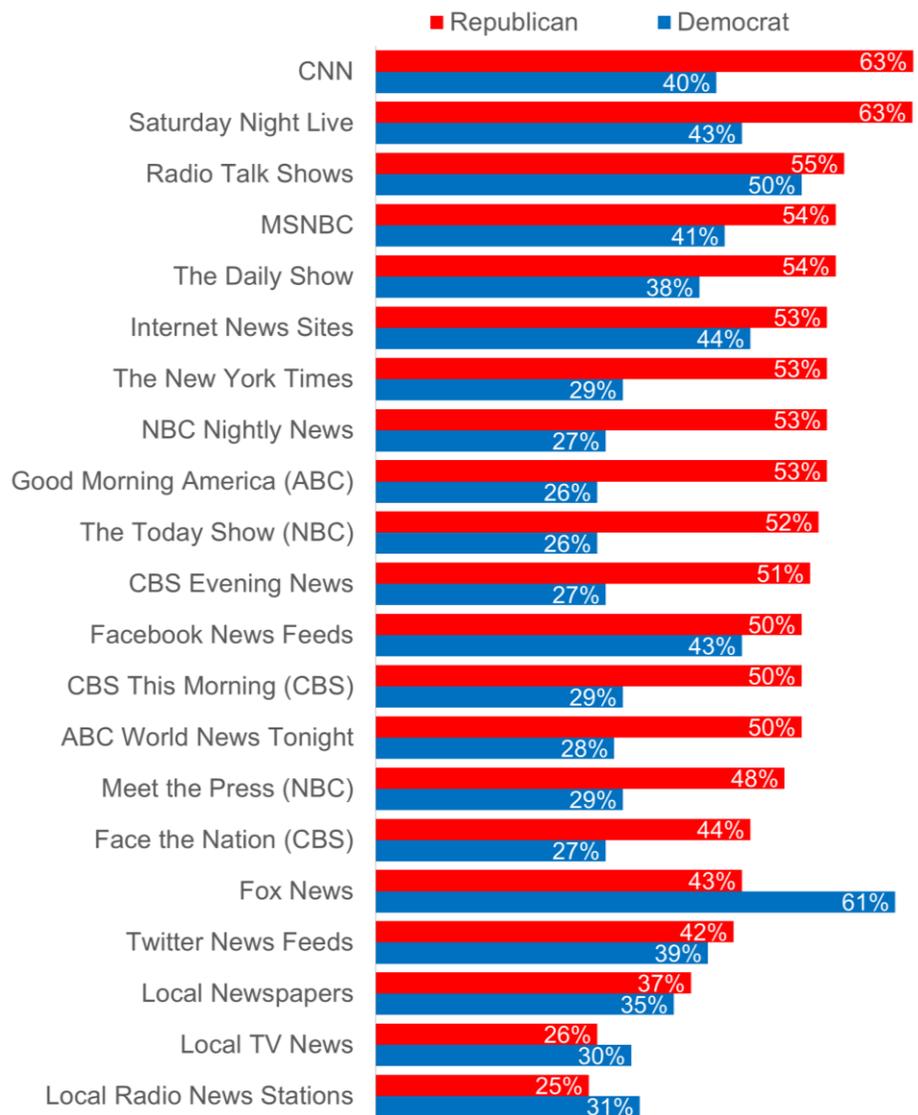
63% of Republicans view CNN as biased vs. 40% of Democrats.

Republicans are twice as likely as Democrats to believe that Network newscasts on ABC, CBS and NBC are biased.

Satire programs like Saturday Night Live and The Daily Show are more likely to be called biased by Republicans.

However, **Republicans do consider their local TV and Radio outlets** as the least biased sources of news reporting.

**% of Americans that Believe News Source is Biased Based on Party Affiliation**



## IMPLICATIONS FOR MARKETERS

Years ago, when the average household received only a few TV channels, it was much easier to connect and expose consumers to a variety of points-of-view. Today, the proliferation of media choices both on and offline make it possible for Americans to seek and engage news and content that reflects their own reality, celebrates their culture and reinforces their values. For marketers, that means having to purchase advertising on many different channels in order to reach audiences with messages that both reinforce and persuade.

***In contrast, local broadcasters offer an opportunity 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 attitudes and usage towards various news sources. A total of 1,010 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 December 7, 2016.