

January 14, 2026

Release is effective immediately

Hawkeye Poll: Traditional News Sources Among Those Most Trusted by U.S. Adults

Data from recent Hawkeye Poll suggests that trust in media as a source of news continues to lean toward televised outlets, even with the rise in popularity of social media and other collaborative platforms. The survey was fielded November 14 – November 20, 2025, to a demographically representative sample of about 1,000 respondents. Respondents, U.S. adults, aged 18+ who were recruited for participation via web panel answered the question “How much do you trust the news when received from the following sources? Please rank in order, with #1 being your most trusted source, and #6 being the least trusted.” The six choices to choose from were: 1. Friends or influencers on social media 2. Local news 3. National news 4. Public news 5. News organizations on social media 6. Podcasts and YouTube. They also had the option to answer “Don’t know” or “Decline”.

When looking at the distribution of ranks for each option we can better understand the overall placement for each option. Friends and influencers on social media are generally not highly trusted, with only 6.0% ranking them as their most trusted source and 26.9% ranking them as their least trusted source. Podcasts and YouTube are also less likely to be trusted with again only 6.0% ranking it as their most trusted source and 41.3% ranking it as least trusted. News organizations on social media received similar rankings, with 5.7% placing them as their most trusted, 22.8% placing them at number four, and 16.5% placing them as their least trusted.

Traditional news sources, such as televised news, seemed to be more trusted overall. Local news is one of the most trusted sources with 22.1% ranking them as number one, and 22.2% ranking them as their number two. National news also had relatively high trust with respondents: 12.2% of respondents placed it as their most trusted source and 21.8% of respondents chose this as their second most trusted source. Still, nearly one in five respondents ranked national news in the fifth spot, (11.4%) or sixth (9.9%) spots. Finally, public news sources were trusted the most overall with 22.5% placing them at number one. It is important to note that 18.2% of the survey respondents responded “Don’t Know” for public news, which was the highest share compared to other the options.

When it comes to the responses from the different parties, there was little difference based on reported party identification. Among Democrats, public news outlets were the most trusted, with 30.2% and another 16.0% trusting them the second most. Local news also scored highly, with 23.2% placing it as their most trusted and 28.1% ranking it number two. National news is trusted as well with 16.3% ranking it as their most trusted, 27.3% ranking it as their second option, and a notable 25.0% ranking it third. Friends or influencers are distrusted, with only 4.7% placing that option at number one, and 32.0% ranking it as their least trusted. News organizations on social media are also viewed skeptically, with just 4.1% ranking them most trusted but 25.0% placing them fourth and 20.0% fifth. Podcasts and YouTube had a mixed result, but still skewed towards lower trust. Only 4.5% ranked it as their most trusted, and 25.7% placed it in the fifth spot. Overall, Democrats lean heavily towards traditional and public news sources.

Independents show strong trust in public news, with 24.7% ranking it as most trusted and 14.7% second. Local news is also valued, with 20.3% ranking it first and 22.0% second. National news earns moderate trust, with 9.2% ranking it first and 20.9% second, though 14.6% place it at rank 5 and 10.2% rank it sixth. Friends and influencers on social media are distrusted with only 6.7% ranking them most trusted and 26.1% ranking them least trusted. News organizations on social media are seen as unreliable, with only 4.3% ranking them first but 23.8% ranking them 4th and 19.4% fifth. Podcasts and YouTube are

mixed with 5.7% ranking them most trusted and 14.5% ranking them last. Notably, Independents have high “don’t know” responses, including 19.0% for influencers, 15.8% for podcasts, and 16.8% for public news, suggesting more uncertainty compared to Democrats.

Republicans placed the most trust in local news, with 23.3% ranking it first and 20.3% ranking it third. National news earns moderate trust with 11.9% ranking it first and 17.3% second, though 14.8% rank it least trusted. Public news is less trusted compared to Democrats and Independents, with only 11.9% ranking it first and 15.2% second, while 20.1% say “don’t know”. Friends/influencers on social media are distrusted with only 6.3% ranking them most trusted and 22.6% least trusted. News organizations on social media are viewed skeptically, with 9.2% ranking them first compared to 19.3% ranking them fourth and 17.3% sixth. Podcasts and YouTube are mixed, with 8.0% ranking them most trusted but 19.7% ranking them fifth. Republicans also show relatively high “don’t know” responses across categories especially for public news (20.1%) and influencers (20.2%).

Across all three groups, friends and influencers on social media were consistently the least trusted, with Democrats showing the strongest distrust (32.0% least trusted). Independents and Republicans also ranked them low. Local news is trusted across the board but especially by Democrats and Republicans, who both place it near the top. Public news is the most trusted source among Democrats (30.2% rank it first) and Independents (24.7% rank at first), but Republicans are more skeptical with only 11.9% ranking at first and a large share saying “don’t know”. National news is trusted by Democrats (16.3% first, 27.3% second) and moderately by Independents but Republicans are more divided, with significant number ranking it both highly and least trusted. Podcasts and YouTube are mixed from all groups with relatively low “most trusted” scores but higher mid-range rankings. News organizations on social media are distrusted across all groups; the Republicans give them slightly more first place trust than Democrats or Independents. Overall Democrats lean most heavily on public and national news, Independents balance between local and public news with more uncertainty, and Republicans favor local news while showing skepticism report public and national outlets.

Respondent Identification: The Iowa Center for Social Science Innovation (CSSI) assisted with survey programming and data collection. The CSSI contracted with Verasight to field the survey to a demographically representative sample of about 1000 respondents. Respondents invited to complete the web survey were U.S. adults, aged 18+, recruited for participation via web panel.

To further ensure data quality, the Verasight data team implements a number of post-data collection quality assurance procedures, including confirming that all responses correspond with U.S. IP addresses, confirming no duplicate respondents, verifying the absence of non-human responses, and removing any respondents who failed in-survey attention and/or straight-lining checks. The Verasight data team also reviewed open-ended items to ensure no responses contained nonsensical, inappropriate, or non-sequitur text. Respondents that completed the survey in less than 30% of the median completion time were removed.

Sample: 1002 U.S. voting-age respondents. The margin of sampling error, which accounts for the design effect and is calculated using the classical random sampling formula, is +/- 3.3%.

Weighting: The data are weighted to match the August 2025 Current Population Survey on age, race/ethnicity, sex, income, education, region, and metropolitan status, as well as to a running three-year average of partisanship distributions from the Pew Research Center NPORS benchmarking surveys and population benchmarks of 2024 vote.

About the Hawkeye Poll: The poll was conducted by the Hawkeye Poll Cooperative, comprised of University of Iowa faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students in the Political Science

departments. The poll is a teaching, research, and service project, and is directed by Frederick J. Boehmke, professor of political science. The Department of Political Science provides financial support for the poll.

Student Research Team: Isabelle Burgett, Rebecca Kenville, Christoph Letsche, Hunter Stevens, Molly Trotter, Amiya Welsh assisted with the preparation of this release.

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