

# Alarming New Study Finds Half of Americans Believe News Organizations Intend to Mislead and Misinform with their Reporting

By Oliver Darcy, CNN, February 15, 2023

America's Frankenstein-like information environment has shattered trust.

On Wednesday, Gallup and the Knight Foundation released their annual report surveying Americans for insights into how they view the press — and the results were grim.

Only 26% of Americans hold a favorable opinion of the news media, Gallup and the Knight Foundation found — the lowest level recorded by the organizations over the last five years.

Perhaps more startling: the report found that 72% of Americans believe national newsrooms are capable of serving the public, but that they do not believe they're well intentioned. Only 23% said that they believe national newsrooms care about the best interests of their audiences.

Meanwhile, Americans are having more difficulty than ever determining what to believe. 61% of respondents said the increase in information across the media landscape has made it harder to sort bad information from good.

None of this is particularly surprising, though it is, without question, alarming. The media landscape has fractured and it's not uncommon to now see the same story presented in entirely different ways to different audiences.

Our shared reality has given way to algorithmically rendered realities. Some of the most popular media and political figures in the country actively pollute the information landscape. Many profit from propaganda that affirms the worldviews of their audiences and attacks the press in dishonest ways.

The study on Wednesday underscored this polarization. "Media trust continues to vary along predictable lines. Democrats express significantly more trust in news organizations than Republicans. Among Republicans, trust in news continues to decline," Gallup and the Knight Foundation said.

It's unclear how — or if — any single news organization can solve for this. MSNBC boss Rashida Jones offered her perspective on trust in media Wednesday at a New York event where she championed delivering the truth to audiences as the best path forward.

"Rather than looking at a political culture or a political perspective, what we focus on is the truth," Jones said, outlining her editorial philosophy. "Are the angles that we're hitting representative of truth and democracy and the rights of humans across the board? We can get stuck into both sides for a fair amount or however you look at it."

"You can't sacrifice the truth," Jones continued. "Sometimes the truth isn't pretty. Sometimes the truth might be critical of this group or that group. Rather than trying to keep a scorecard of, well, we had X number of perspectives in this party, and X number of perspectives in this party — it's gotten a little bit more nuanced than that."

Jones is correct. The truth isn't pretty. And the truth can offend. What is also clear is that the truth will offend members of one political party far more than the other. That's because the sad reality is that one party — operating in an entirely different media ecosystem largely void of fact-based journalism — tells lies and promotes misinformation at a far higher rate than the other.

Which begs the natural question: Can delivering the truth be at the heart of a news organization's mission in 2023 if the aim is to not offend those on one end of the political spectrum at a far greater frequency than the other?