



All the News That's Fit to Print?

The global news agency AFP reported recently that we don't trust the media any more. Do tell.

A 2009 Gallup poll, surveying 1,020 adults in the continental United States, found that 25 percent of Americans feel a "great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in newspapers and 22 percent in television news, which is in line with a steady two-decade slide. The poll revealed that liberals, at 35 percent, are the most trustful of newspapers, with conservatives clocking in at 18 percent. The gap narrows in views on TV media, with moderates the most confident.



Interestingly, the greatest confidence level comes from young people, aged 18-29, but they are often the same demographic blamed for the decline in U.S. dailies' subscription rates. Once Americans reach the ages of 30-49, that confidence falls sharply before rising again among the middle-aged and elderly.

AFP's article continued, "Explaining the results, Gallup said young people tend to place more trust in institutions in general and noted that online media, despite growing popularity, often linked back to traditional media. 'But so long as roughly three in four Americans remain distrustful, it will be difficult to attract the large and loyal audiences necessary to boost revenues.'"

An obvious omission from the article was this observation: If 25 percent of Americans feel a lot of confidence in newspapers, it means 75 percent don't. According to AFP, the media were among the national institutions in which Americans placed the least confidence, just ahead of Congress, big business and healthcare coverage. The same poll found that about 2 in 10 Americans have no confidence in the media at all — one of the worst grades Gallup has ever recorded. A majority of those surveyed perceive bias, with a majority of that number saying the media are too liberal, not too conservative.

Democrats, nonwhites and those with a high school education or less place the most trust in the media, followed by liberals, women, and Americans 18 to 29.

According to Gallup, the findings underscore the challenge facing the media as they struggle with economic difficulties and increasing competition.

The Fourth Estate has earned this distrust. In spite of the *New York Times'* motto, "All The News That's Fit To Print," it and other major newspapers have not printed it. Apparently, Americans really do want the truth. We don't believe the emperor is wearing those new clothes after all.



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