

THE LOUISIANA SURVEY 2018

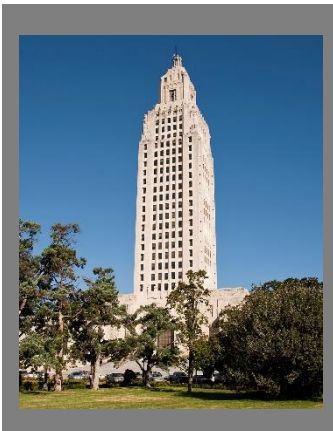
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Manship School of
Mass Communication
Reilly Center For
Media & Public Affairs



Local media seen as more trustworthy and accurate than national media, but many still claim bias

The sixth in a series of six reports from the 2018 Louisiana Survey



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**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
ON THIS REPORT:**

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Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs

The Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs, an integral part of Louisiana State University's Manship School of Mass Communication, uses the intellectual muscle of the school's faculty to help solve practical problems and advance good government initiatives. The Reilly Center's mission is to generate thoughtful programs, dialogue, and research about social, economic, and political affairs, as well as the developing role of the media in American society. The Center is committed to advancing the Manship School's national leadership in media and politics.

The Center's agenda is diverse and fluid – from the annual John Breaux Symposium, which brings in national experts to discuss a topic that has received little or no attention, to conducting the annual *Louisiana Survey*, a vital resource for policymakers, which tracks advancements and regressions of citizen attitudes about state services. The Center's role, within the state's flagship university, is to respond quickly to the needs of state governance in addressing challenges facing Louisiana, particularly in times of crisis such as during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Its action-oriented and partnership-driven philosophy underscores the Reilly Center's dedication to tackling ideas and issues that explore the relationship of media and the public in democratic society.

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About the Louisiana Survey

The *2018 Louisiana Survey* is the seventeenth in an annual series sponsored by the Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs at Louisiana State University's Manship School of Mass Communication.

The mission of the *Louisiana Survey* is to establish benchmarks as well as to capture change in residents' assessments of state government services. The survey is further dedicated to tracking public opinion on the contemporary policy issues that face the state. Each iteration of the *Louisiana Survey* contains core items designed to serve as barometers of public sentiment, including assessments of whether the state is heading in the right direction or wrong direction, perceptions about the most important problems facing the state, as well as evaluations of public revenue sources and spending priorities.

In the *2018 Louisiana Survey*, this core is supplemented by measures of perceptions of political polarization in the state and support for compromise; trust in government and media; opinion on proposals to address the state's "fiscal cliff;" beliefs about the role of government in business and the economy; approval of major recent policy developments such as criminal justice reform and Medicaid expansion; and beliefs about gender discrimination and sexual harassment.

As part of an effort to ensure that the *Louisiana Survey* fulfills its public service mission, the research team solicited input about topics for the survey from members of the government and policy community across the political spectrum. Additionally, the research team drew upon expertise in public policy and polling from Louisiana State University faculty. These advisors provided invaluable insight into the design of the questionnaire and in identifying the contemporary policy questions that could most benefit from an understanding of the public's views. While we are indebted to them for their time and contributions, they bear no responsibility for any mistakes in the questionnaire, analysis, or interpretation presented in this report.

We especially thank the Reilly Family Foundation for their generous support and vision in helping to create the Louisiana Survey.

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Overview

The *2018 Louisiana Survey*, a project of the Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs, examined public opinion about local and national media coverage of political topics. Results show:

- About three-fourths of Louisiana residents say that *local* news organizations keep them very well informed (25 percent) or fairly well informed (49 percent) about state politics.
- When it comes to trusting information from news organizations, more Louisiana residents trust local media than national media. Overall, 78 percent trust the information they get from local news organizations a lot or some, but only 57 percent trust the information they get from national news organizations.
- Many Louisiana residents see a bias in local news. Sixty percent say local news organizations tend to favor one side, while only 36 percent say they deal fairly with all sides.
- Most Louisiana residents (56 percent) think that local news organizations are accurate in their reporting, which is much higher than the share who think national news organizations generally get the facts straight (32 percent).

The *2018 Louisiana Survey* was administered over the telephone from January 26 to March 3, 2018, to both landline and cell phone respondents. The project includes a representative sample of 852 adult Louisiana residents. The total sample has a margin of error of +/- 3.4 percentage points.

This is the sixth in a series of six releases on results from the *2018 Louisiana Survey*.

Most state residents say local news organizations keep them informed about state politics

About three-fourths of Louisiana residents say that *local* news organizations keep them very well informed (25 percent) or fairly well informed (49 percent) about state politics (Figure 1). This is somewhat higher than the share saying *national* media keep them very well informed (25 percent) or fairly well informed (41 percent) about national politics.

More Democrats than Republicans say that local and national media keep them informed about politics. Eighty-five percent of Democrats say local media keep them very well or fairly well informed about state politics, and 83 percent say national news organizations keep them informed about national politics. Among Republicans 67 percent say local news organizations keep them informed about state politics, and 69 percent say national media keep them informed about national politics.

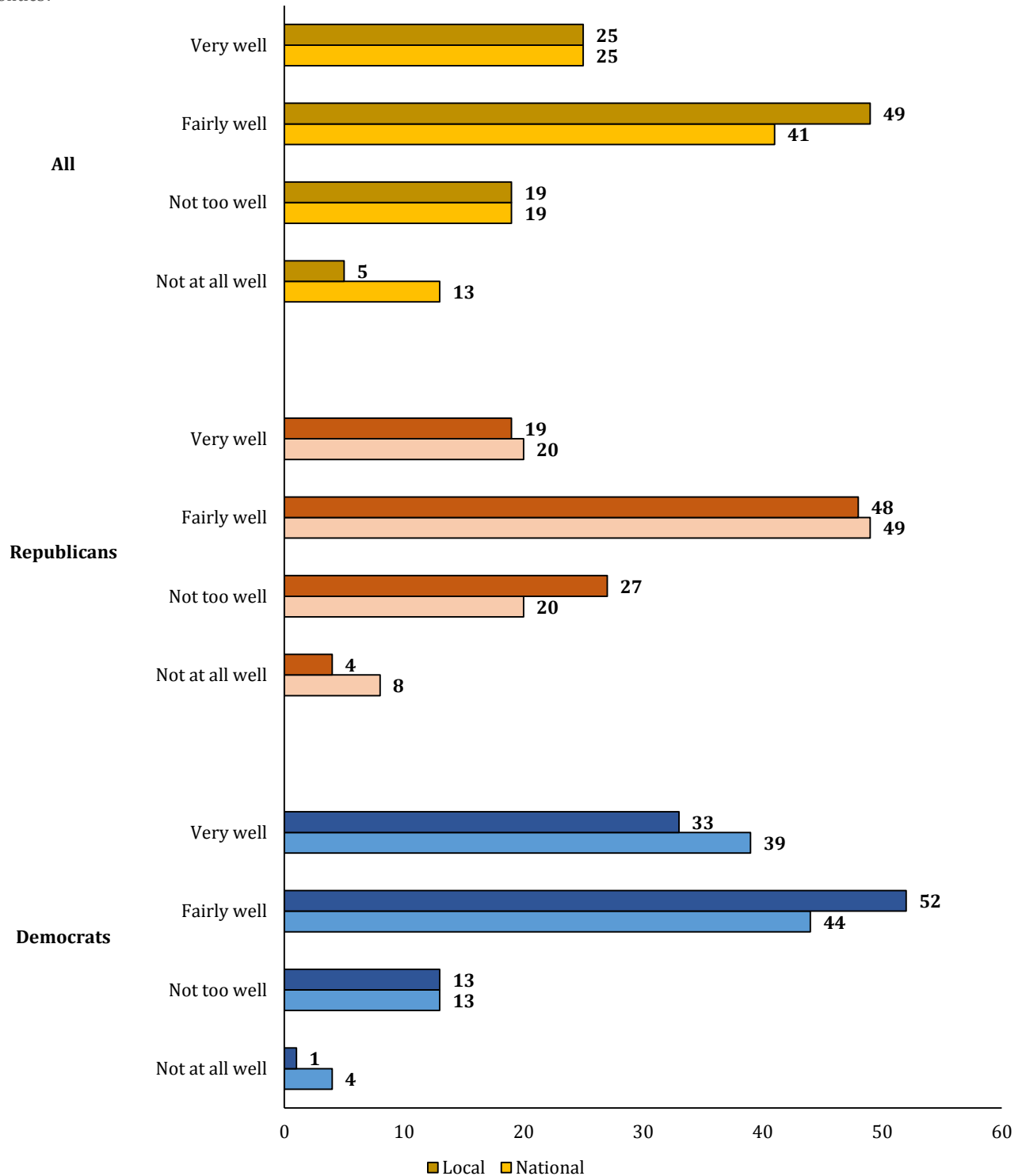
Local news is trusted more than national news

When it comes to trusting information from news organizations, more Louisiana residents trust local media than national media. Overall, 78 percent trust the information they get from local news organizations a lot or some, but only 57 percent trust the information they get from national news organizations (Figure 2).

The trust gap between local and national media is especially large among Republicans: 76 percent have a lot of trust or some trust in the information they get from local news organizations, but only 47 percent trust the information they get from national news organizations. The local versus national media trust gap is smaller for Democrats, but even among this group local media is seen as more trustworthy: 89 percent have at least some trust in the information they get from local media and 78 percent have at least some trust in the information they get from national media.

Figure 1: Most think media keep them very well or fairly well informed

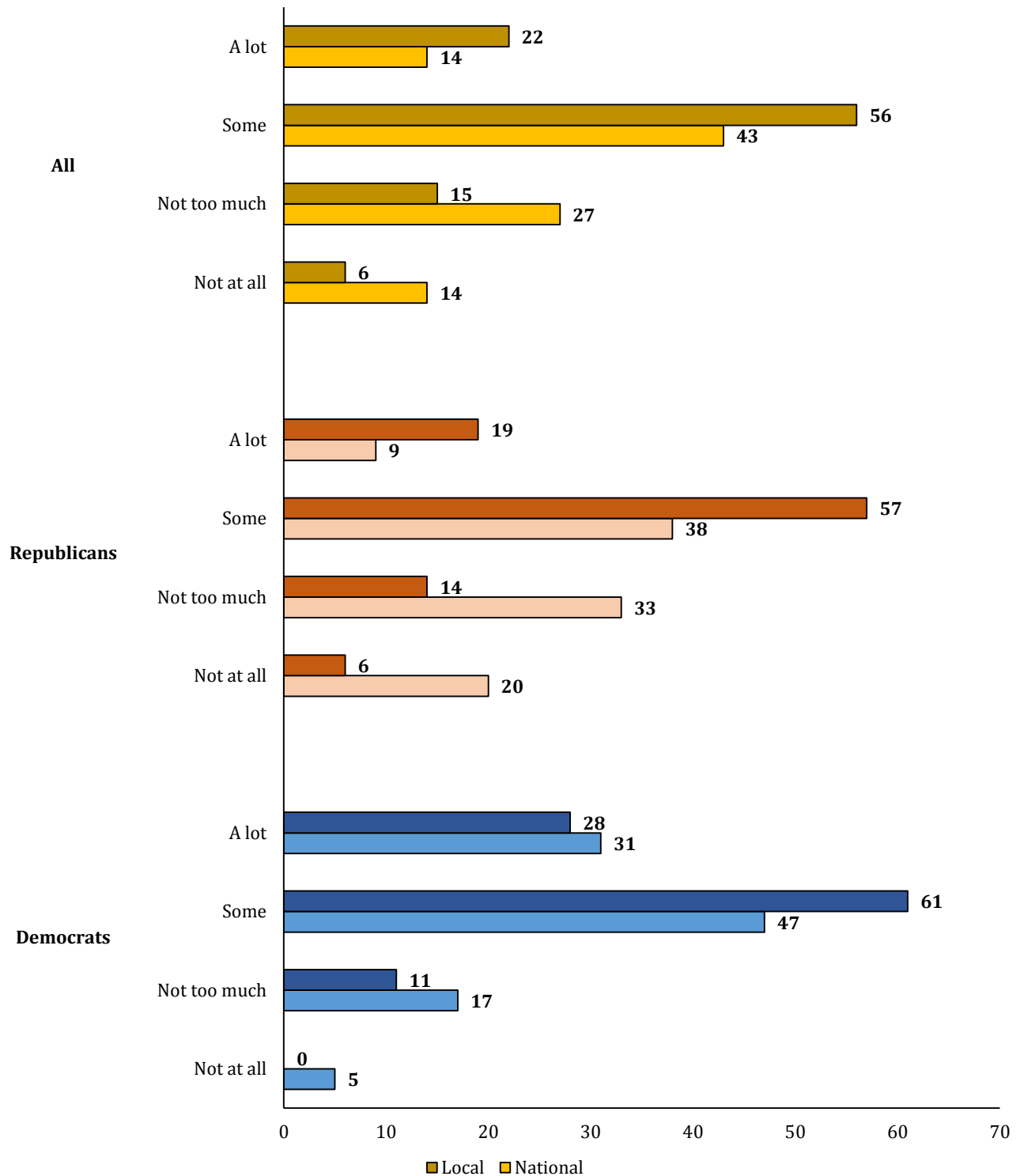
How well do [local/national] news media keep you informed of the most important stories of the day about [state/national] politics?



SOURCE: 2018 Louisiana Survey

Figure 2: Local media trusted more than national media

How much, if at all, do you trust the information you get from [local/national] news organizations?



SOURCE: 2018 Louisiana Survey

Most think local news organizations tend to favor one side

Despite trusting the information they get from local media more than the information they get from national media, many Louisiana residents believe there is a bias in local news. Sixty percent say local media tend to favor one side, and 36 percent say local media deal fairly with all sides (Figure 3). Even so, the share who believe local media report the news in a biased way is much smaller than the share who believe the national media is biased (79 percent).

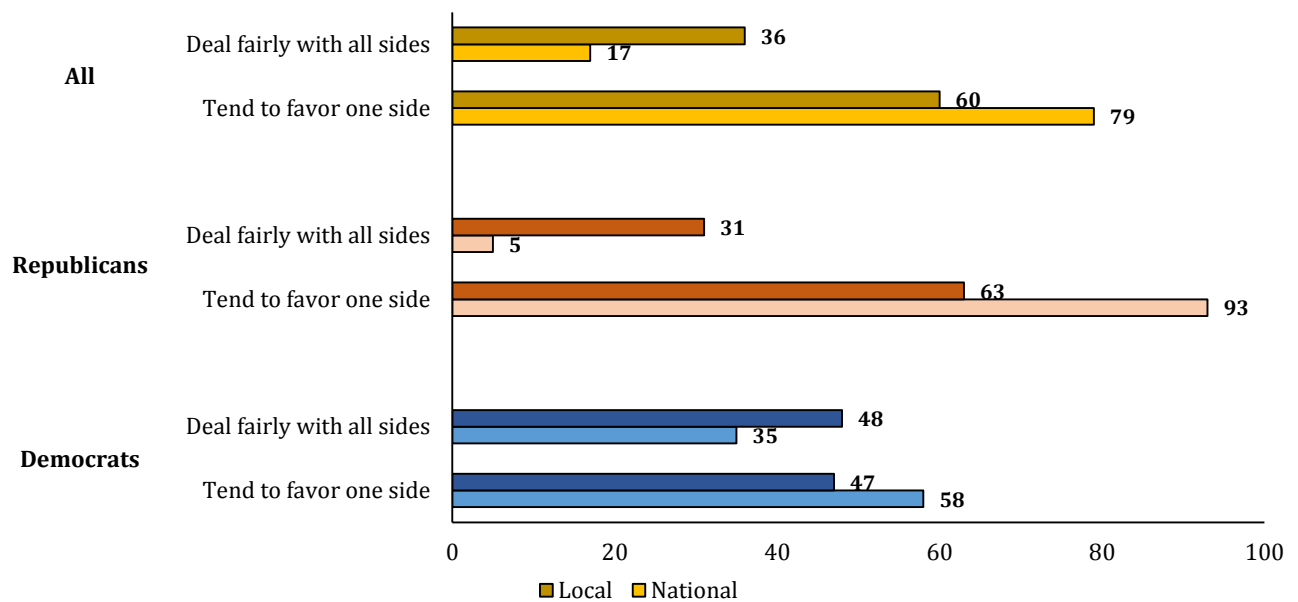
A larger share of Republicans (63 percent) than Democrats (47 percent) believe there is a bias in local news. Both parties think there is bias in national news, but Republicans are especially likely (93 percent) to say national news organizations tend to favor one side.

Local media seen as more accurate than national media

Most Louisiana residents (56 percent) think that local news organizations in general get the facts straight (Figure 4). This share is much higher than the share who think national news organizations generally get the facts straight (32 percent). Among Democrats, the perceived accuracy of news is about the same for local media and national media – with 64 percent and 62 percent, respectively, saying they generally get the facts straight. Republicans, however, see a big difference in the accuracy of local reporting versus national reporting. A majority of Republicans (59 percent) say local news organizations get the facts straight, but 81 percent say that national news organizations are often inaccurate.

Figure 3: Most see bias in local media, but not as much as for national media

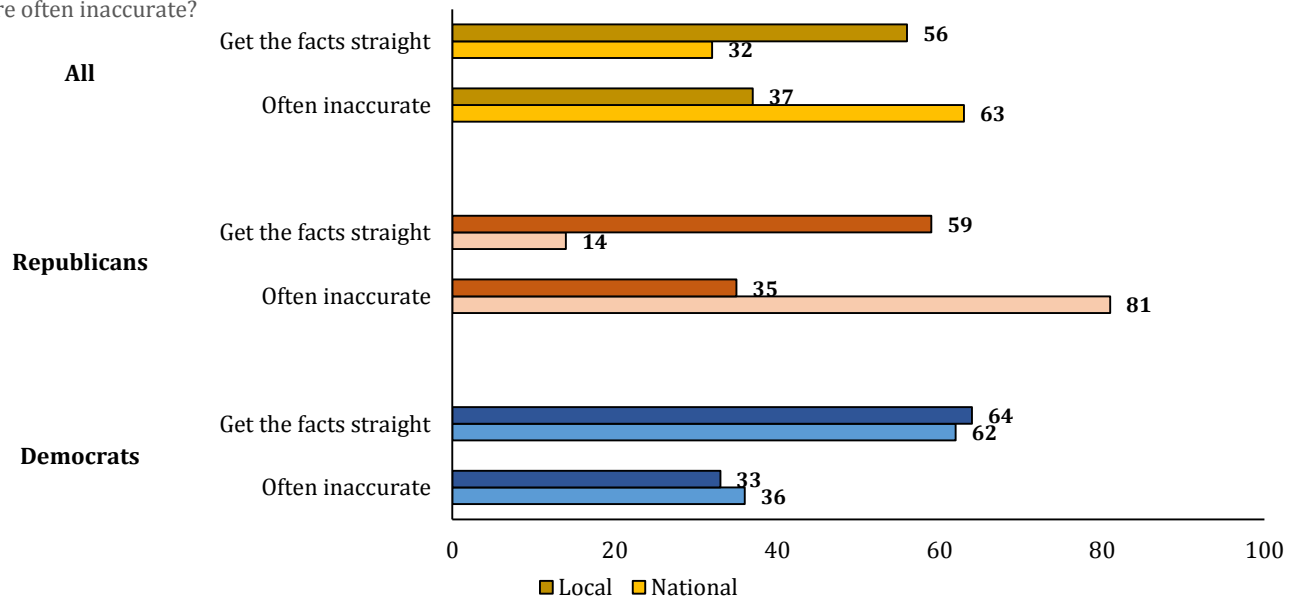
Do you think [local/national] news organizations deal fairly with all sides, or do they tend to favor one side?



SOURCE: 2018 Louisiana Survey

Figure 4: Most say local media get the facts straight but national media often inaccurate

In general, do you think [local/national] news organizations get the facts straight, or do you think that their stories and reports are often inaccurate?



SOURCE: 2018 Louisiana Survey

Survey Methodology

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted among a statewide sample of 852 adults (18 years of age or older) living in Louisiana. The survey was conducted by interviewers at Louisiana State University's Public Policy Research Lab. The sample includes 326 respondents interviewed via landline telephone and 526 respondents interviewed on a cellphone, including 344 who do not have a landline telephone. The design of the landline sample ensures representation of both listed and unlisted numbers by use of random digit dialing. The cell phone sample is randomly drawn from known, available phone number banks dedicated to wireless service. Both samples, landline and cellphone, were provided by Marketing Systems Group.

The combined landline and cell phone sample is weighted using an iterative procedure that matches race, education, household income, gender and age to known profiles for the adult population of Louisiana found in the Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2016 one-year estimates. The sample is also weighted for population density by parish. Weighting cannot eliminate every source of nonresponse bias. However, proper administration of random sampling combined with accepted weighting techniques has a strong record of yielding unbiased results.

The sample has an overall margin of error of +/- 3.4 percentage points.

In addition to sampling error, as accounted for through the margin of error, readers should recognize that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls. As often as possible, the *Louisiana Survey* follows the wording of relevant questions repeatedly used by reputable public opinion research institutions and projects, such as the Pew Research Center, Gallup Inc., and the American National Election Studies.

Interviews for this survey were conducted from January 26 to March 3, 2018. Because data collection overlaps with a special session of the Louisiana Legislature from February 19 to March 3, 2018, responses to questions included in this report were analyzed for any differences between the pre-session interviews and interviews conducted during the session, controlling for mode of interview. There is no evidence for differences by date of interview for any questions in this report either in the total sample or by party identification.

The *2018 Louisiana Survey* has a response rate of 11 percent. This response rate is the percentage of eligible residential households or personal cell phones in the sample for which an interview is completed. The rate is calculated using the American Association for Public Opinion Research's method for Response Rate 3 as published in their Standard Definitions. Response rates for telephones have been on decline for several decades and frequently fall in the single digits even among the very best survey research organizations. The response rate for this survey is within the typical range for reputable live-interviewer telephone survey firms.

Louisiana State University's Public Policy Research Lab, a division of the Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs, designed the survey questionnaire and sampling strategy, computed the survey weights, and conducted all statistical analysis.

Question Wording & Toplines

NOTE: Unless otherwise indicated, results are for the total sample. Not all respondents were asked each question, and questions asked to a subset of respondents are labelled accordingly. For these questions, percentages are only for those respondents who were asked the particular question. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

[RESPONDENTS RANDOMLY ASSIGNED EITHER TO THE LOCAL MEDIA BATTERY (VERSIONS A) OR TO THE NATIONAL MEDIA BATTERY (VERSIONS B)]

Q1A.

Regardless of how closely you follow news, how well do local news media keep you informed of the most important stories of the day about state politics?

Very well	25
Fairly well	49
Not too well	19
Not at all well	5
Don't know/Refused [VOLUNTEERED]	2

Q1B.

Regardless of how closely you follow news, how well do national news media keep you informed of the most important stories of the day about national politics?

Very well	25
Fairly well	41
Not too well	19
Not at all well	13
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	2

Q2A.

How much, if at all, do you trust the information you get from local news organizations?

A lot	22
Some	56
Not too much	15
Not at all	6
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	2

Q2B.

How much, if at all, do you trust the information you get from national news organizations?

A lot	14
Some	43
Not too much	27
Not at all	14
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	2

Q3A.

In presenting the news dealing with political and social issues, do you think that local news organizations deal fairly with all sides, or do they tend to favor one side?

Deal fairly with all sides	36
Tend to favor one side	60
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	4

Q3B.

In presenting the news dealing with political and social issues, do you think that national news organizations deal fairly with all sides, or do they tend to favor one side?

Deal fairly with all sides	17
Tend to favor one side	79
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	5

Q4A.

In general, do you think local news organizations get the facts straight, or do you think that their stories and reports are often inaccurate?

Get the facts straight	56
Often inaccurate	37
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	7

Q4B.

In general, do you think national news organizations get the facts straight, or do you think that their stories and reports are often inaccurate?

Get the facts straight	32
Often inaccurate	63
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	5