



EDUCATION WEEK  
RESEARCH CENTER

# Journalism Education

Results of a National Survey



## About Editorial Projects In Education

Editorial Projects in Education (EPE) is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization based in Bethesda, Md. Its primary mission is to help raise the level of awareness and understanding among professionals and the public of important issues in American education. EPE covers local, state, national, and international news and issues from preschool through the 12th grade. Editorial Projects in Education publishes *Education Week*, America's newspaper of record for precollegiate education, the online *Teacher*, *EdWeek Market Brief*, and the TopSchoolJobs employment resource. It also produces periodic special reports on issues ranging from technology to textbooks, as well as books of special interest to educators.

The Education Week Research Center conducts surveys, collects data, and performs analyses that appear in *Education Week* and special reports such as *Quality Counts*, and *Technology Counts*. The center also conducts independent research studies and maintains the Education Counts online data resource.

REPORT: Holly Kurtz, Director, Education Week Research Center - Sterling Lloyd, Assistant Director - Alex Harwin, Research Analyst.



6935 Arlington Road  
Bethesda, MD 20814  
[www.edweek.org/rc](http://www.edweek.org/rc) | [rcinfo@epe.org](mailto:rcinfo@epe.org)

Copyright © 2019 by Editorial Projects in Education Inc.

# Inside:

Executive Summary .....	4
Introduction .....	5
Methodology .....	6
Interest in Journalism .....	7
Enrollment in Journalism Classes .....	7
Participation With School News Outlets .....	8
Interest in Journalism for College and Career .....	9
Reasons for Change .....	10
Criticism of the Media .....	11
Impact of Criticism from President Trump .....	11
Discussion of Criticism from President Trump .....	12
Approach to Discussing Criticism from President Trump .....	13
Reasons for Discussing Criticism From President Trump .....	14
Change in the Amount of Discussion About Media Criticism .....	15
Censorship and Student Press Freedom .....	16
Confidence in the Media .....	17
Student Trust in Mass Media .....	17
Change in Trust Levels .....	18
Teacher Trust in Mass Media .....	19
Student Trust in School Media .....	20
Teacher Trust in School Media .....	21
School Journalism Programs .....	22
Rating Student Abilities .....	22
Types of Publications .....	23
Departments Hosting Classes .....	24
Prior Review .....	25
Challenges .....	26
Racial Diversity in Student Participation .....	27
Results by Locale .....	28
Enrollment in Journalism Classes .....	28
Discussion of Criticism from President Trump .....	29
Impact of Criticism from President Trump .....	30
Results for Majority-Minority Programs .....	31
Challenges .....	31
Teacher Trust in School Media .....	32
Prior Review .....	33
Respondent Demographics .....	34
Professional Roles .....	34
Race and Ethnicity .....	35
Grade Levels .....	36
District Enrollment .....	37
Locale .....	38
Student Poverty .....	39

## Executive Summary

In December 2018, the Education Week Research Center, with the assistance of the Journalism Education Association, conducted an online survey of nearly 500 K-12 journalism educators to learn more about the current status of the programs in which they work. The survey examined their views on the impact of President Trump's criticism of the media and the extent to which they have discussed it with their students. It also explores other fundamental aspects of journalism education, such as student interest in journalism, challenges related to censorship and student press freedom, and student trust and confidence in the mass media.

Major findings from the survey include:

- Roughly 4 in 10 K-12 journalism educators report that enrollment in journalism classes increased at their schools over the past two years while 3 in 10 indicate it decreased.
- Respondents most commonly say that President Trump's criticism of the news media has not had an impact on students' interest in journalism at their schools (45%). A similar share of respondents (43%) report that the anti-media rhetoric increased students' interest. By contrast, just 12 percent find it contributed to a decline.
- Most journalism educators (80%) have discussed President Trump's criticism of the news media with their students. And 22 percent talked about it with students extensively.
- Journalism educators were asked whether they have changed in the extent to which they discussed criticism of the media with students in the past two years. The majority (62%) say they increased discussion of this topic while only 4 percent say they reduced it.
- The vast majority of journalism educators (75%) report that censorship challenges at their schools have not changed in the past two years.
- More than half of journalism educators (57%) say that the level of trust their students have expressed in the media has not changed in the past two years. More than one-third (36%) indicate that it has decreased while 6 percent say it has increased.
- Close to half of journalism educators in urban and suburban schools report that President Trump's criticism of the media has increased interest in journalism at their schools in the past two years. Only about one-quarter of survey respondents in rural or town schools find an increase.
- Nearly half of educators working with journalism programs where students of color make up 50% of enrollment or less see competition with STEM, AP, and other academic commitments as their primary challenge. In majority-minority programs, only 34 percent of journalism educators point to that challenge. Respondents in those programs are more likely than their peers to see low student interest, insufficient funding, and inadequate technology as top concerns.

The survey results provide insight into the perspectives of educators with first-hand experience in school journalism programs nationwide. They also highlight differences in views and experiences based on the racial/ethnic make-up and the location of the schools they serve. Taken together, the results shed light on the current landscape for developing the next generation of journalists.

## Introduction

A testy and often adversarial relationship between the press and American political leaders isn't new. In fact, politicians' unhappiness with their press coverage dates back to the founding of the republic. Elected officials have frequently used colorful language to voice their discontent, ranging from President George Washington's reference to his newspaper critics as "infamous scribblers" to Vice President Spiro Agnew's alliterative description of the media as "nattering nabobs of negativism."

Jabs at the media from President Trump represent the most recent examples of contentious interactions between politicians and the journalists covering them.

Some analysts believe his particular brand of criticism is, as long-time journalist, [Marvin Kalb](#), writes "weakening the very foundation of American democracy."

On the other hand, [Andrew C. McCarthy](#), writing in the conservative *National Review*, contends that the president is pointing out liberal bias in the media and that concerns about his approach do not "necessarily outweigh Trump's concerns that media partisanship and biased reporting distort the public's understanding of important issues." And some [polling](#) suggests that close to a third of Americans may agree with the president's description of his media critics as an enemy of the people.

Without a doubt, Trump's barbs have been controversial and high-profile, generating countless hours of debate on cable news networks.

Consider these events that have generated such debates.

In a September 2018 rally in West Virginia, President Trump decried what he labeled the

"fake media" and described them as "truly an enemy of the people."

On October 24, 2018, pipe bombs were sent to a number of targets, including CNN's New York offices.

On October 29, 2018, President Trump issued the following tweet:

There is great anger in our Country caused in part by inaccurate, and even fraudulent, reporting of the news. The Fake News Media, the true Enemy of the People, must stop the open & obvious hostility & report the news accurately & fairly. That will do much to put out the flame...

Beyond Trump's statements, other trends — such as the continuing evolution of digital platforms and the rise of social media — have also generated conversation about the role and impact of the media.

Against this backdrop, in December 2018, the Education Week Research Center surveyed nearly 500 K-12 journalism teachers and media advisers to learn more about the status of journalism education in K-12 schools. The survey examines the impact of Trump's criticisms and the extent to which journalism educators have discussed them with their students. It also explores other fundamental aspects of journalism education.

- Student enrollment, interest, and participation in journalism
- Challenges related to censorship and student press freedom
- Student trust and confidence in the mass media
- Students' abilities to communicate and evaluate information
- Types of media published in schools

The survey was conducted with the assistance of the [Journalism Education Association \(JEA\)](#), an organization serving school media advisers and supporting scholastic journalism.

## Methodology

The data in this report are taken from an online survey of K-12 journalism teachers and school media advisers developed and fielded by the Education Week Research Center.

In December 2018, the research center sent members of the Journalism Education Association an invitation to participate in the online survey. JEA also promoted the survey through other channels, such as newsletters and social media.

Respondents were disqualified from the survey if they reported that they were not involved with K-12 journalism education or advising. A total of 491 respondents qualified for the survey based on self-identification as a journalism educator.

## SURVEY DETAILS

Survey Administered: December 2018

Sample: Members and followers of the Journalism Education Association

Respondents: Journalism teachers and media advisers in K-12 schools

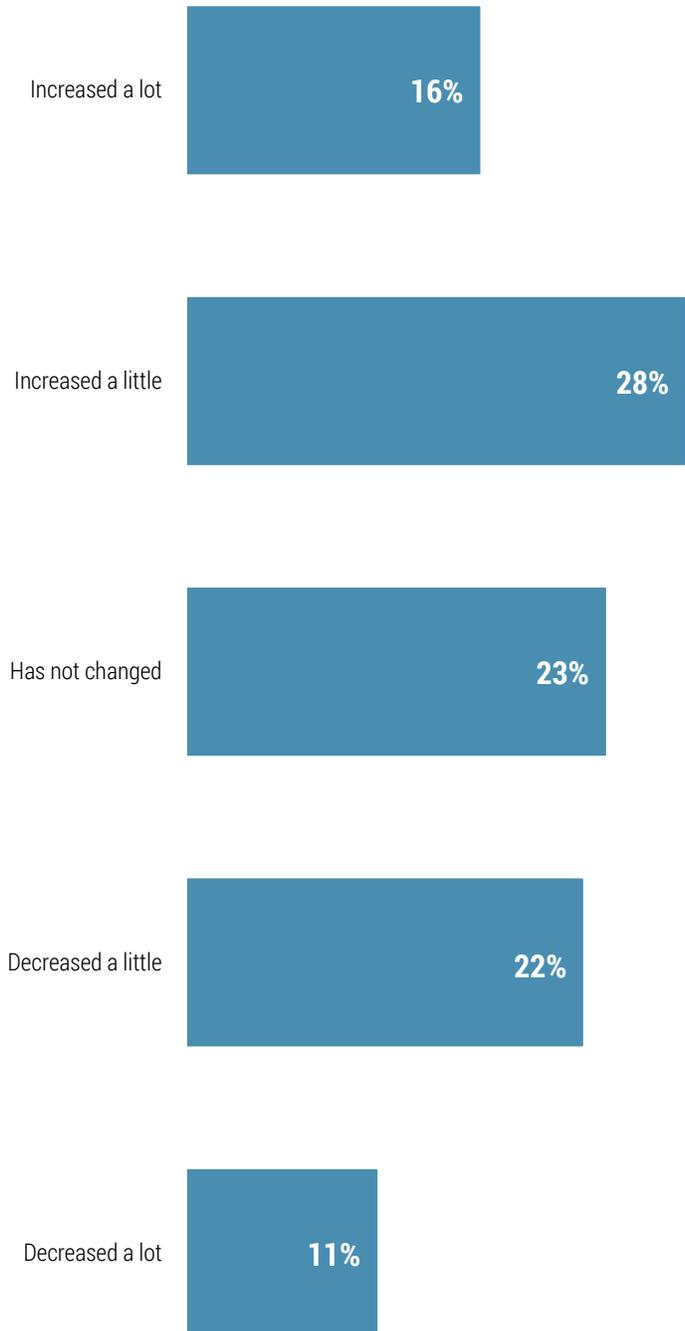
Total Respondents: 491

## Interest in Journalism

### Enrollment in Journalism Classes

Roughly 4 in 10 K-12 journalism educators report that enrollment in journalism classes increased at their schools over the past two years. About 3 in 10 indicate it decreased. The role and impact of the media have been widely discussed during that period. In part, these discussions have been prompted by President Trump's vehement criticism of the media from the world's most visible political office. But other factors — such as the continuing evolution of digital platforms and the rise of social media — have also affected the way that Americans think and talk about journalism. It's reasonable to wonder how such factors have contributed to increases or decreases in young people's participation in journalism classes.

**To what extent (if any) has enrollment in journalism classes at your school changed in the past two years?**

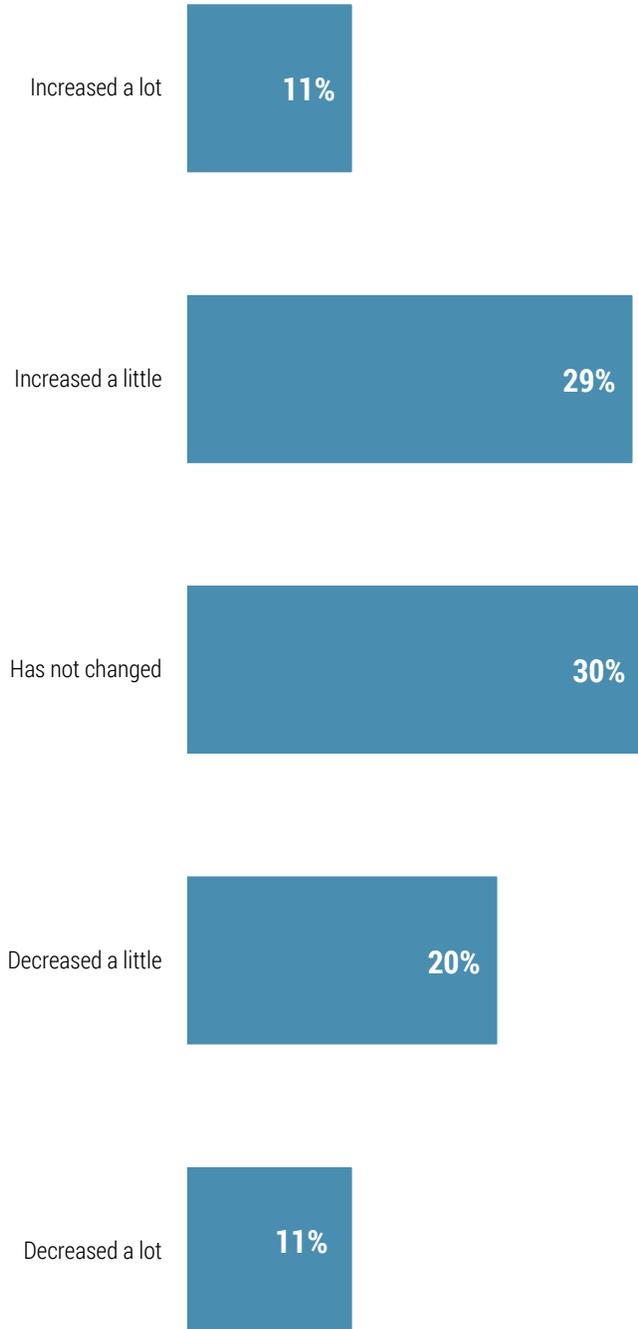


## Participation With School News Outlets

Four in 10 journalism educators say that student participation with school news outlets has increased at their schools. Roughly 3 in 10 indicate it has decreased.

School news outlets exist within a larger context that could either promote or depress student participation with their organizations. A number of factors could have affected student interest ranging from national political battles, including President Trump’s criticism of the media, to more localized efforts to recruit students and expand programs. Potential reasons for changes in student interest are examined in more detail on page 10.

### To what extent (if any) has student participation with school news outlets at your school changed in the past two years?

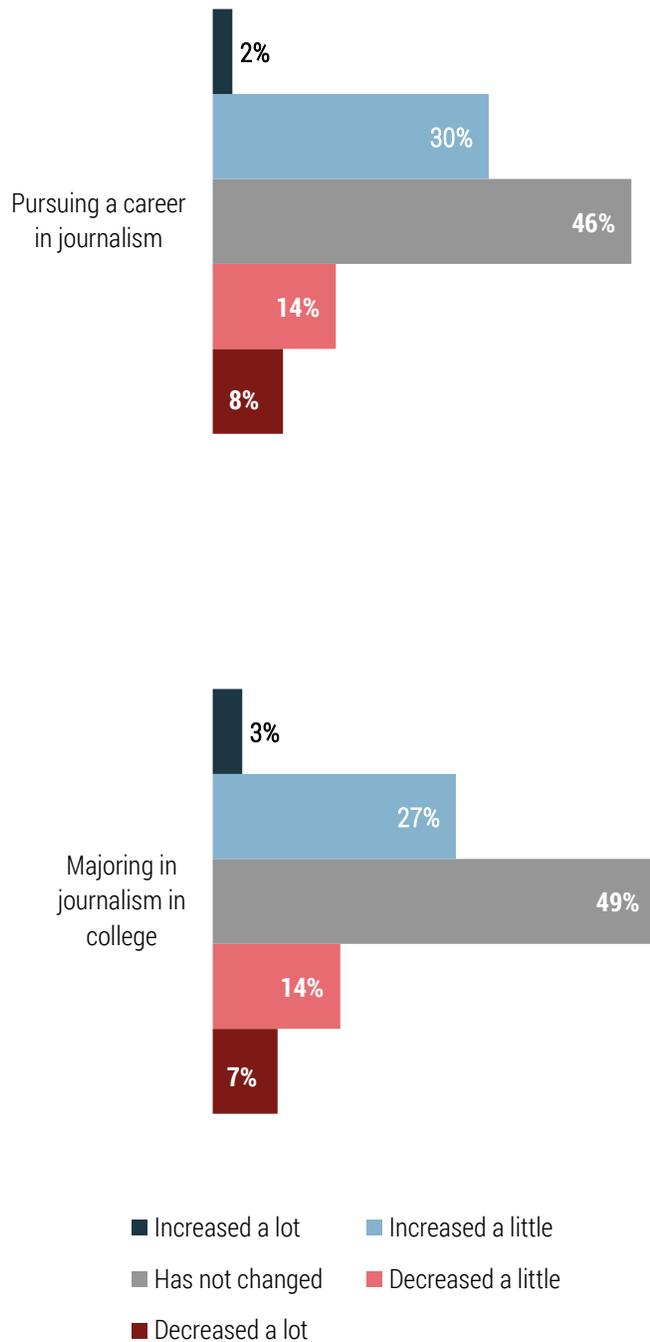


## Interest in Journalism for College and Career

Three in 10 journalism education report an increase in their students' interest in journalism as a potential career path, with 22 percent noting a decrease. Respondents most commonly find that the events of the last two years have not upended the status quo, with 46 percent saying they have not seen a change in student interest.

Similarly, 30 percent of journalism educators report that the number of students expressing interest in majoring in journalism in college increased over the past two years. By contrast, a smaller share (21%) saw a decline. Almost half of respondents (49%) indicate that the level of interest has not changed.

**In the past two years, what (if any) changes have you seen in the number of students who expressed interest in the following?**



## Reasons for Change

Survey respondents indicating that student participation or interest in journalism increased or decreased at their schools were asked to offer their theories on why these changes have occurred.

Of those citing an increase, nearly 4 in 10 point to improved recruitment (39%), new programs or opportunities (39%), the political climate (39%), and exposure to quality journalism (37%).

They explain that better recruitment sometimes comes in the form of increased publicity about school journalism and efforts by students to encourage their classmates to participate. For instance, one respondent says “talking about the success of the program has certainly driven some of it.” Another notes that “current journalism students are enthusiastic and encourage others to join.”

When respondents refer to the impact of the political atmosphere, they sometimes specifically highlight the role of President Trump’s criticism of the media. According to one respondent, students are reacting to “Trump criticizing the media - they are truly wondering what is happening and want to help journalism survive.”

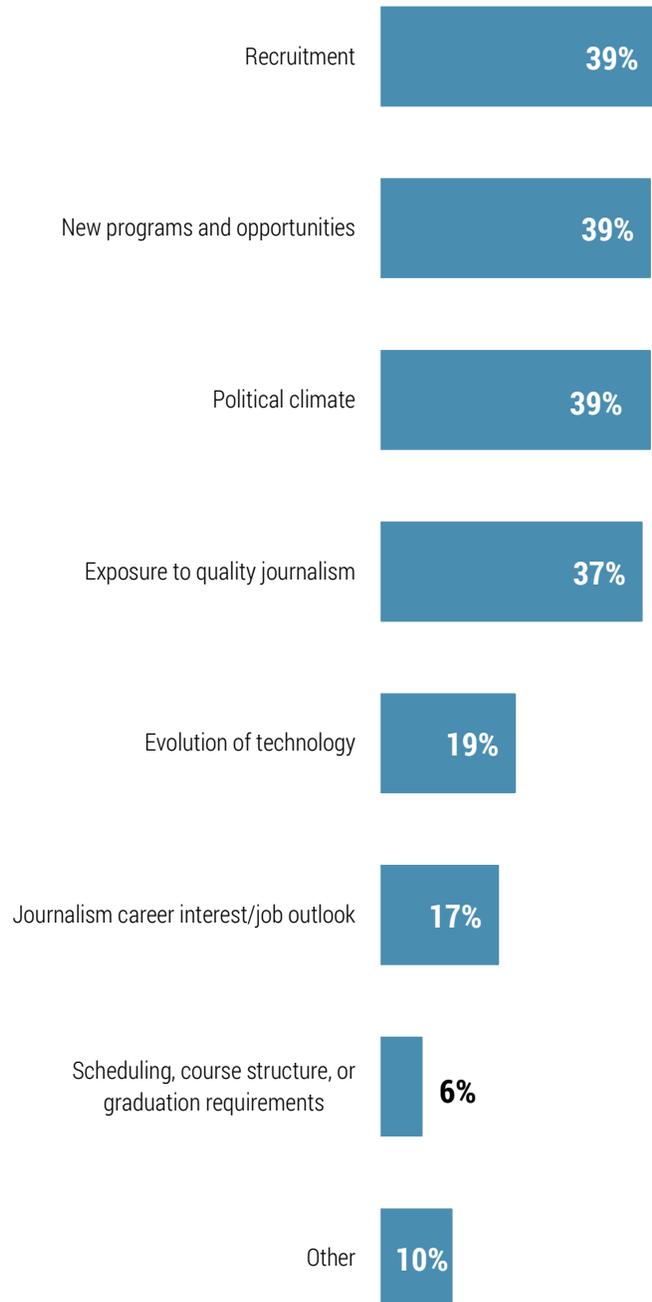
In other cases, respondents refer to a more general political climate. For example, one respondent says: “I believe interest in the current relationship between media and politics has caused increased interest in the field of journalism.”

For some respondents, new programs and opportunities are bringing new journalism teachers or additional resources.

More than half of respondents noting a decrease in student participation or interest in journalism point to competition from other types of courses or time commitments that are part of students’ schedules.

## To what do you attribute any increases/decreases you have seen in overall student participation or interest in journalism?

### Reasons for increases



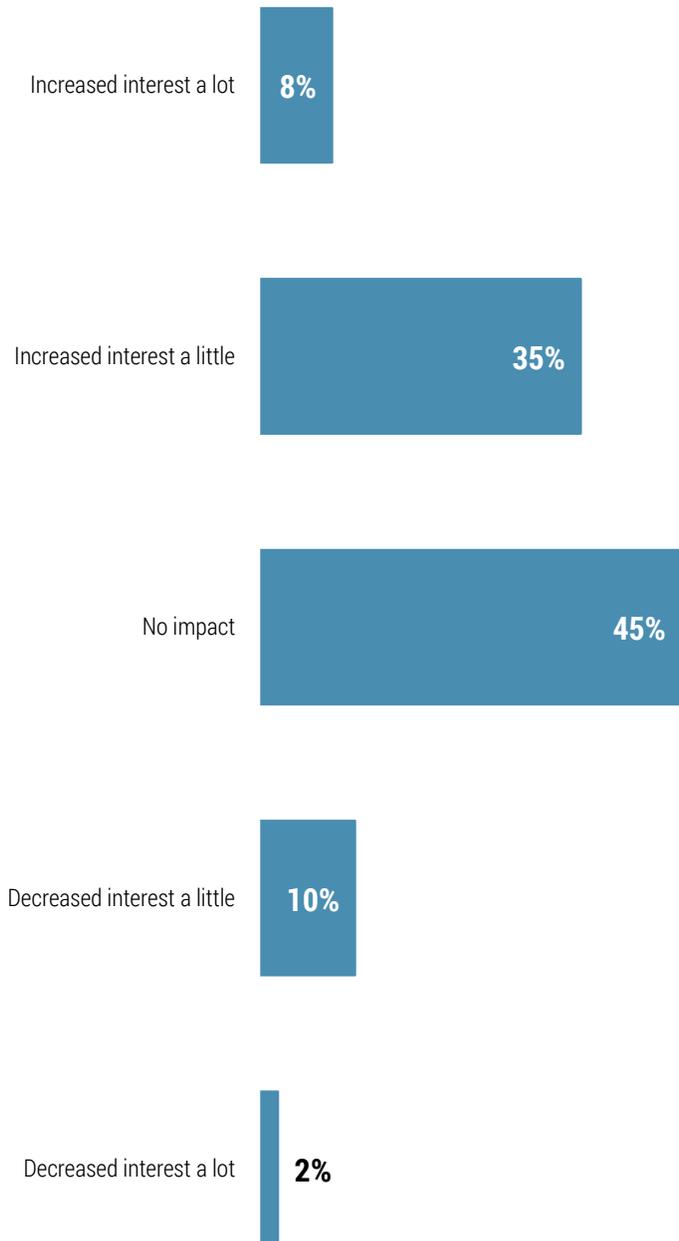
## Criticism of the Media

### Impact of Criticism from President Trump

In tweets and speeches at political events, including rallies in Florida and West Virginia this past fall, President Trump has consistently used the phrase “enemy of the people” to describe what he calls the “fake media.”

Survey respondents were asked how (if at all) this criticism impacted students’ interest in journalism at their schools. Respondents most commonly (45%) say that the criticism has not had an impact. A similar share of respondents (43%) report that the anti-media rhetoric increased students’ interest. By contrast, just 12 percent find it contributed to a decline.

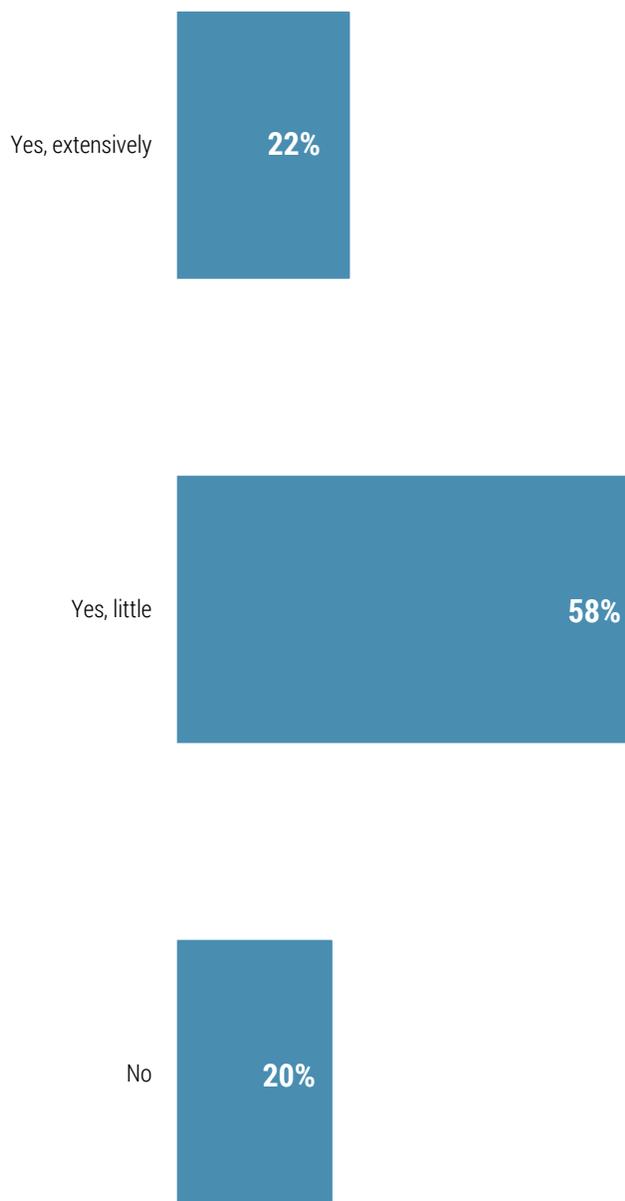
President Trump recently described the news media as “the enemy of the people.” How (if at all) have criticisms like this from Mr. Trump impacted students’ interest in journalism at your school?



## Discussion of Criticism from President Trump

Most journalism educators (80%) have discussed President Trump's criticism of the news media with their students. And 22 percent talked about it with students extensively.

### Have you discussed President Trump's criticism of the news media with your students?



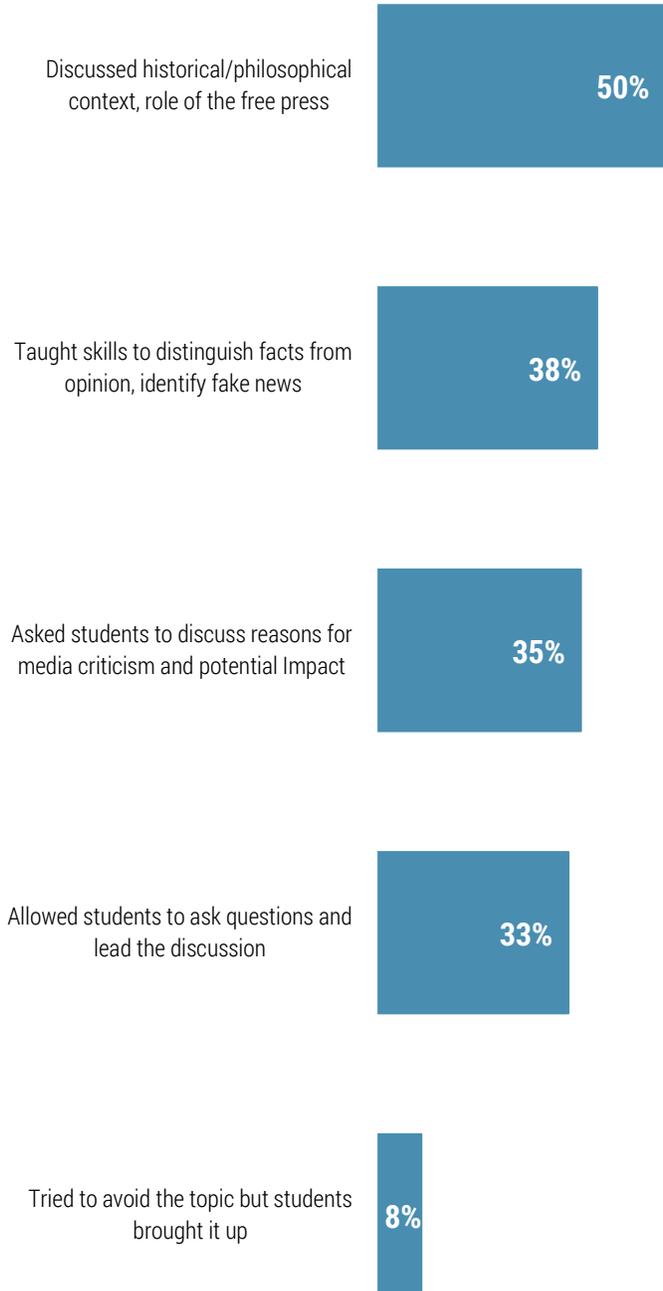
## Approach to Discussing Criticism from President Trump

Journalism educators indicating they have discussed President Trump's criticism of the news media with their students were asked to explain how they approached those discussions.

Half of those respondents say they want to help students understand the role of a free press in America and to place Trump's comments into a historical context. For instance, one respondent "asked what role the media plays in a democratic society, discussed value of the 1st Amendment and how that affords him [the president] the freedom too." Another talked about "comparing him to other presidents' criticism of the media."

Roughly one-third of those respondents cite the need to teach students to evaluate information and distinguish facts from opinion (38%), to help students think about Trump's reasons for criticizing the media (35%), and to allow students to ask questions or lead discussions (33%).

## When you discussed President Trump's criticism of the news media, how did you approach the discussion?



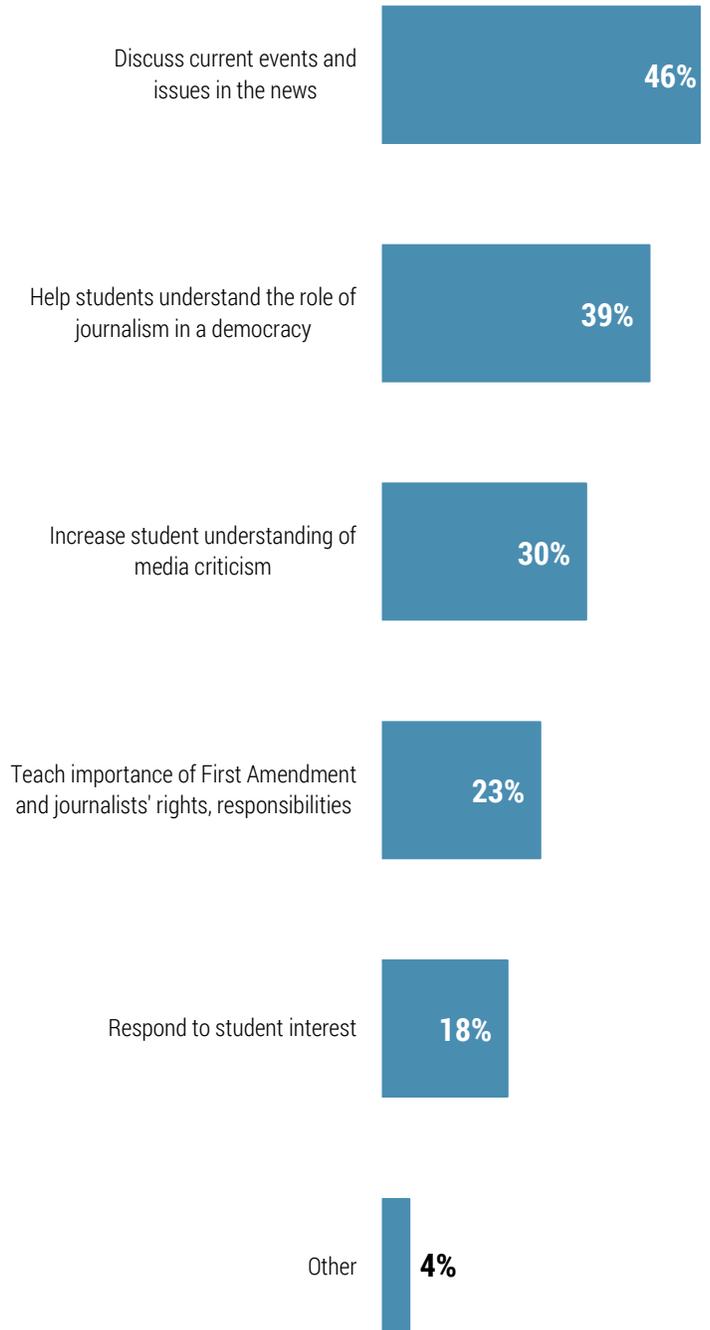
## Reasons for Discussing Criticism From President Trump

When survey respondents said they talked with their students about President Trump’s criticism of the news media, a follow-up question asked them to comment on their reasons for engaging in those discussions.

Nearly half (46%) say the conversations are intended to help students understand current events that are in the news. For instance, one respondent notes the president’s criticism is discussed “because in a journalism class you talk about journalism when it’s in the news.”

About 4 in 10 aim to teach about the role of journalism in a democracy. One respondent, for example, notes that “students need to know the vital function of the press in challenging authority and checking power.”

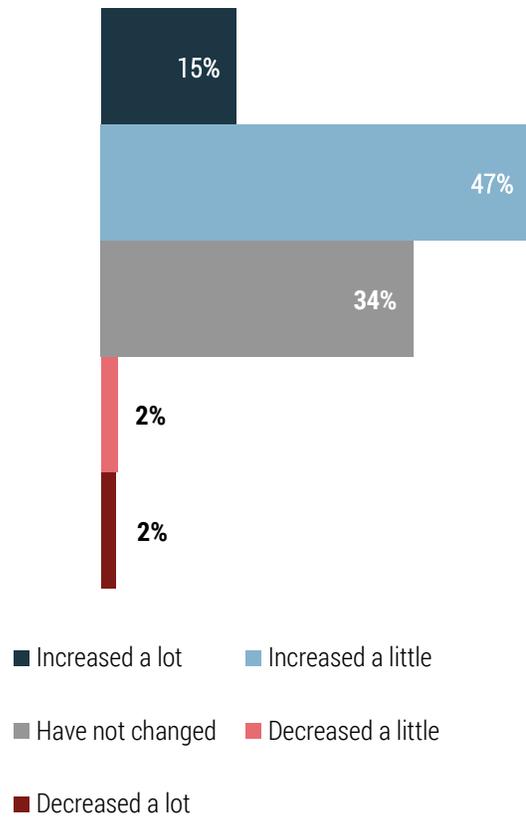
## Why did you discuss President Trump’s criticism of the news media with your students?



## Change in the Amount of Discussion About Media Criticism

Journalism educators were asked whether they have changed in the extent to which they discussed criticism of the media with students in the past two years. The majority (62%) say they increased discussion of this topic while only 4 percent say they reduced it.

In the past two years, have you changed in the extent to which you discuss criticism of the news media with students in your classroom?



## Censorship and Student Press Freedom

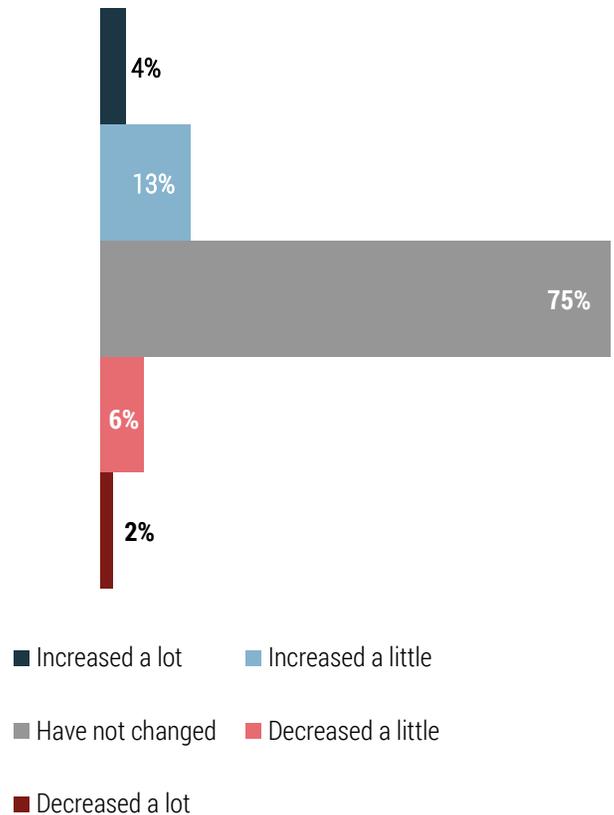
The vast majority of journalism educators (75%) report that censorship challenges at their schools have not changed in the past two years. However, educators were more likely to say that such challenges had increased (17%) than decreased (8%).

Survey respondents reporting an increase or a decrease were asked to identify the specific types of issues they have faced.

When asked to specify types of censorship or student press freedom challenges that increased, respondents most commonly refer to instances in which administrators attempted to influence or block certain stories, especially coverage that was controversial or critical of the school.

Respondents seeing a decrease in censorship cite improved understanding of student journalism on the part of school administrators or the arrival of new administrators at their schools.

To what extent (if any) have challenges you face related to censorship or student press freedom at your school changed in the past two years?



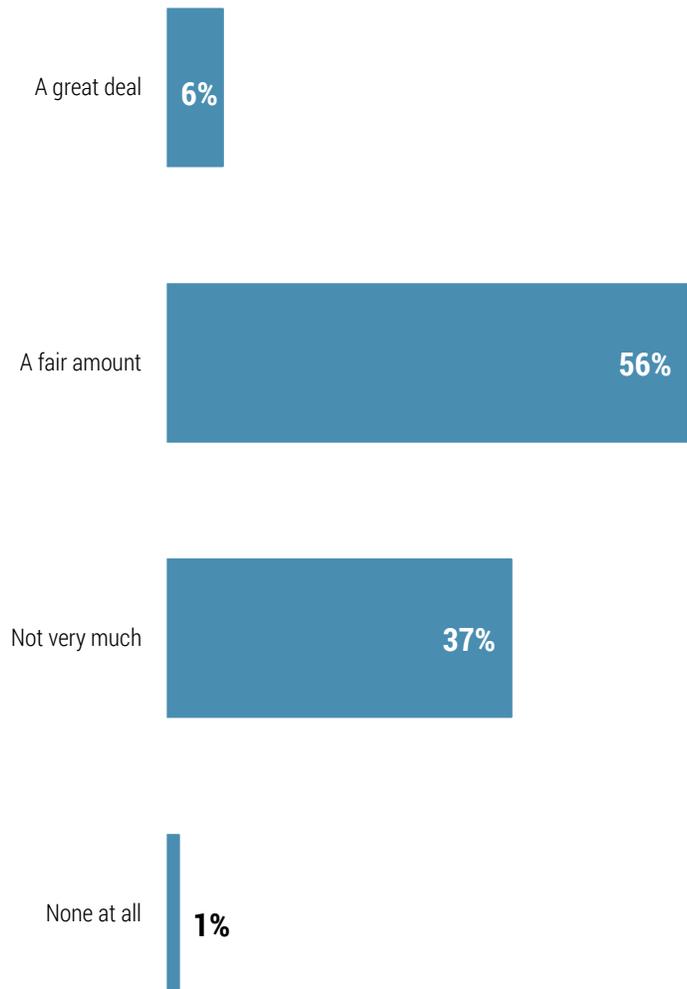
## Confidence in the Media

### Student Trust in Mass Media

According to a September 2018 [Gallup poll](#), 45 percent of Americans have a great deal or a fair amount of confidence in the mass media when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately and fairly.

The majority of journalism educators (62%) say that their students have expressed a fair amount or a great deal of confidence in the mass media.

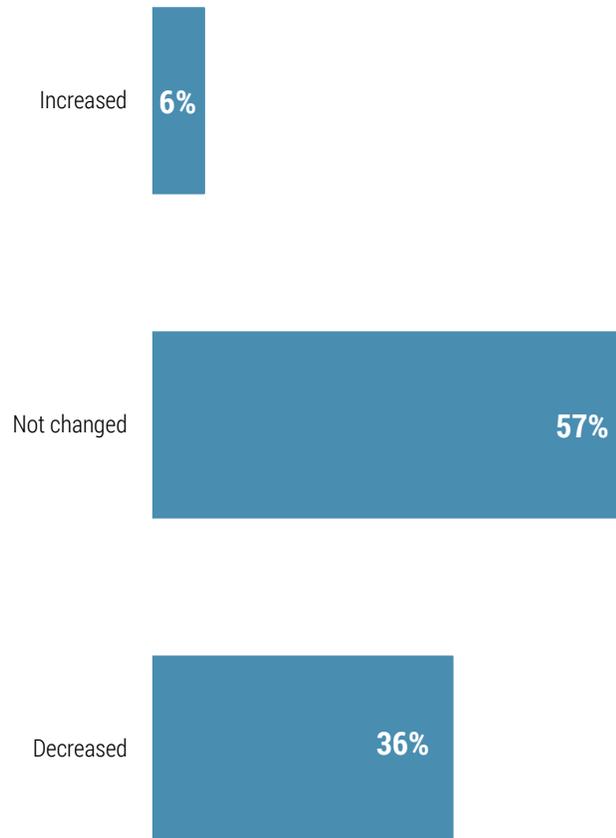
**In general, how much trust and confidence have your students expressed in the mass media — such as newspapers, TV, and radio — when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately, and fairly?**



## Change in Trust Levels

More than half of journalism educators (57%) say that the level of trust their students have expressed in the media has not changed in the past two years. More than one-third (36%) indicate that it has decreased.

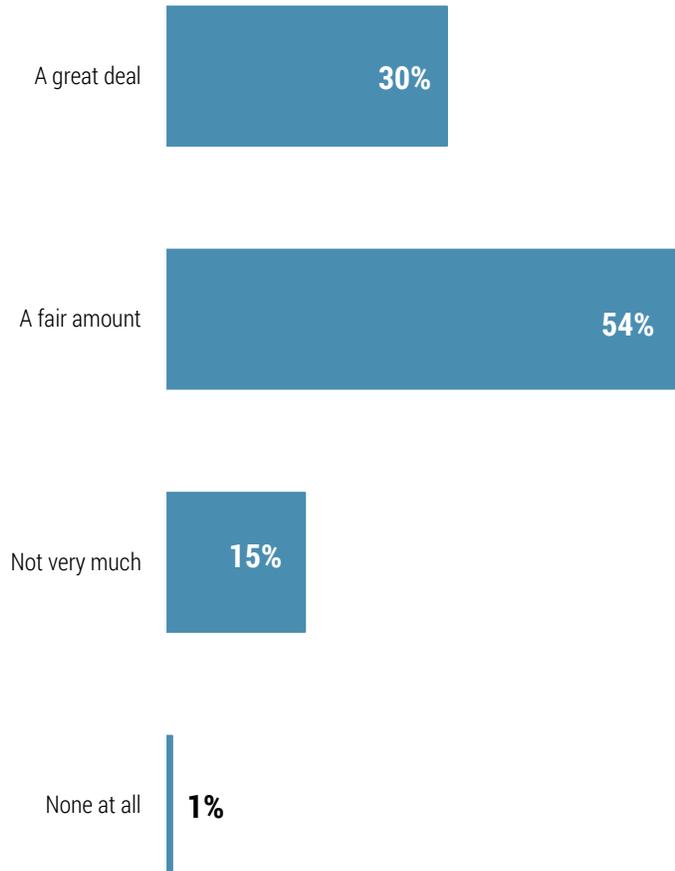
**In the past two years, has the level of trust your students have expressed in the news media:**



## Teacher Trust in Mass Media

When it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately, and fairly, 84 percent of journalism educators have a fair amount or a great deal of trust and confidence in the mass media. That's substantially higher than the 62% reporting that their students express that degree of confidence.

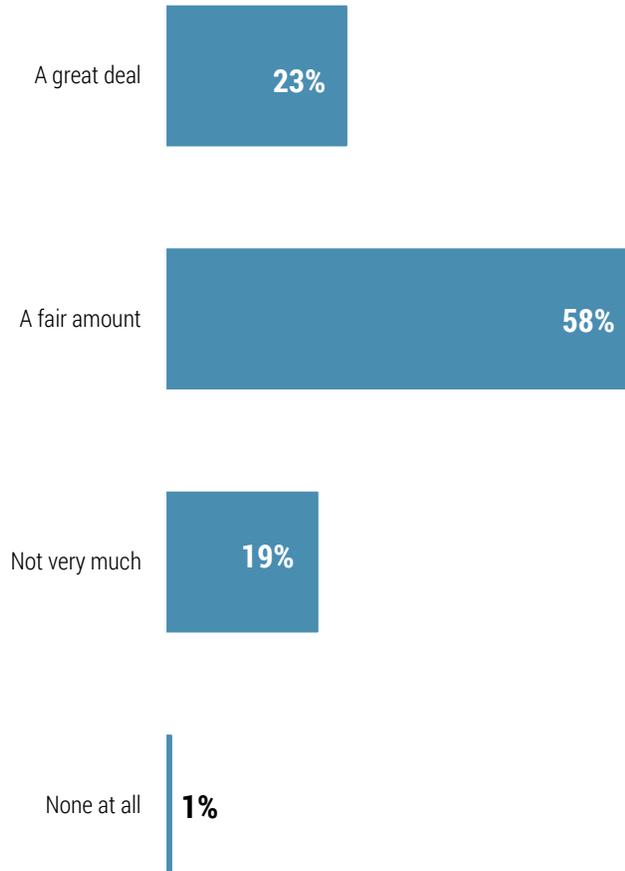
**In general, how much trust and confidence do you have in the mass media — such as newspapers, TV, and radio — when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately, and fairly?**



## Student Trust in School Media

Students express more confidence and trust in school news media than in its mass media counterparts, according to journalism educators responding to the survey. More than 8 in 10 survey respondents say their students express a fair amount or a great deal of confidence in school news media outlets, compared with just over 6 in 10 for the mass media.

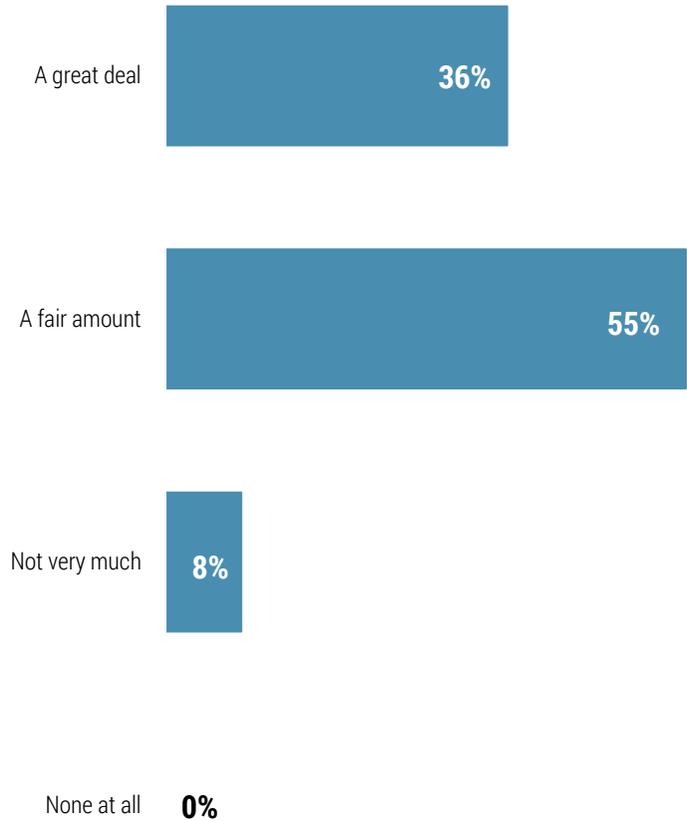
**In general, how much trust and confidence do your students express in school news media when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately, and fairly?**



## Teacher Trust in School Media

Almost all journalism educators (91%) have either a fair amount or a great deal of trust in school news media when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately, and fairly. That's even more than the 84 percent with that type of confidence in the mass media.

**In general, how much trust and confidence do you have in school news media when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately, and fairly?**



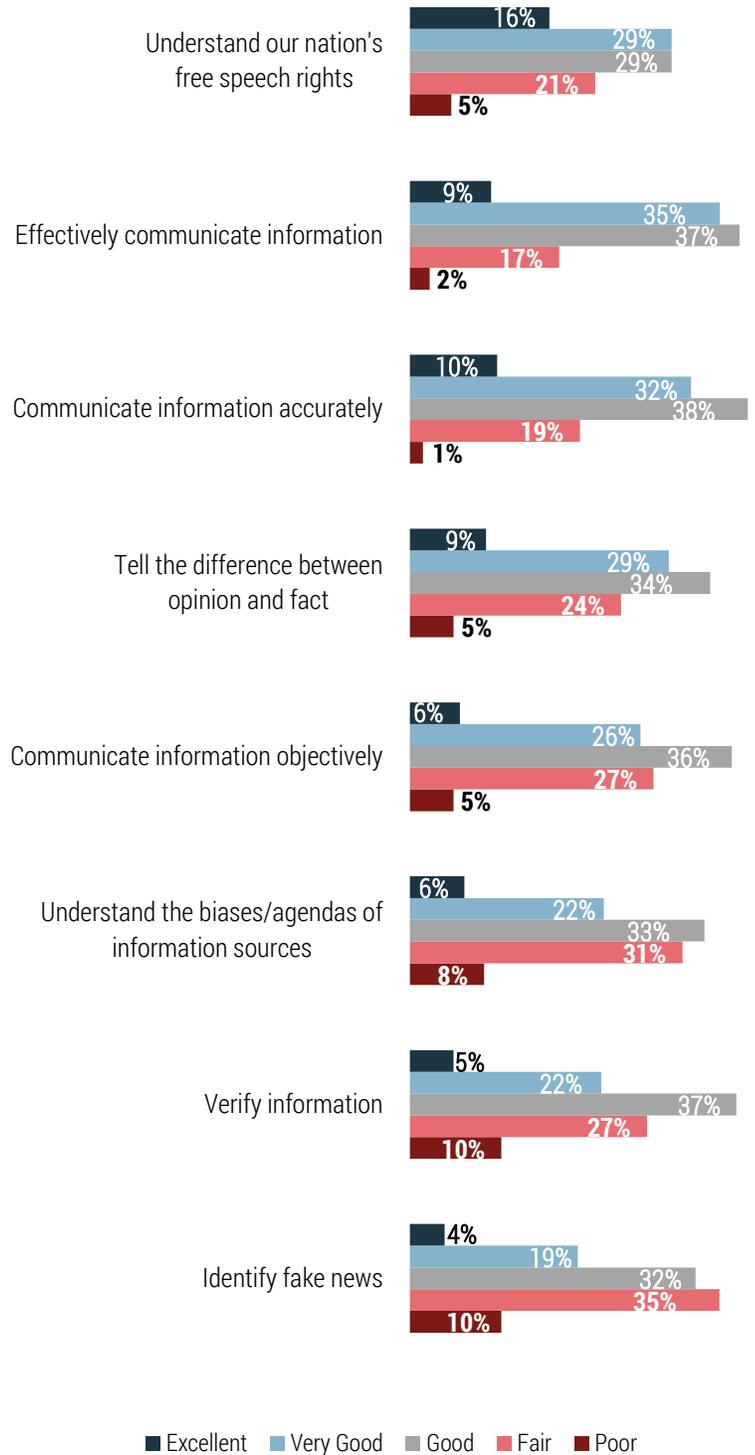
# School Journalism Programs

## Rating Student Abilities

Journalism educators were asked to rate their students' abilities in eight different areas related to effective communication or consumption of information. Media literacy skills emerge as a greater concern than the ability to understand the foundations of a free press or to communicate information.

The educators' highest ratings are for their students' ability to understand our nation's free speech rights. In this area, 45 percent of survey respondents rate their students' capacity as very good or excellent. Only 23 percent say their students have very good or excellent abilities to identify fake news, the lowest rating among the areas examined in the survey.

### How would you rate your students' ability to:

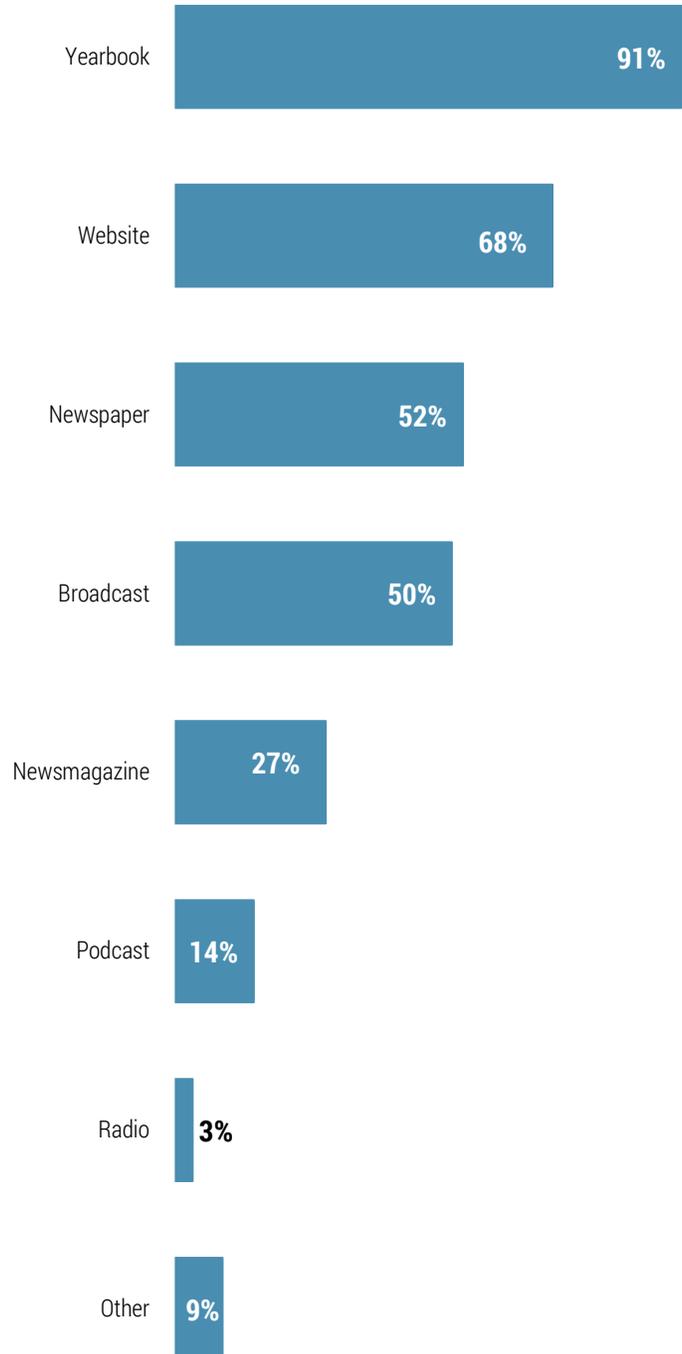


## Types of Publications

Student journalists are producing a relatively diverse range of publications and media offerings but some specific types of news or media content are less common than more general resources, such as yearbooks or websites.

Almost all journalism educators (91%) report that their schools publish yearbooks and nearly 7 in 10 say their schools produce websites. About half of survey respondents indicate their schools produce newspapers (52%) and broadcasts (50%). Podcasts (14%) and radio (3%) are the least common forms of content.

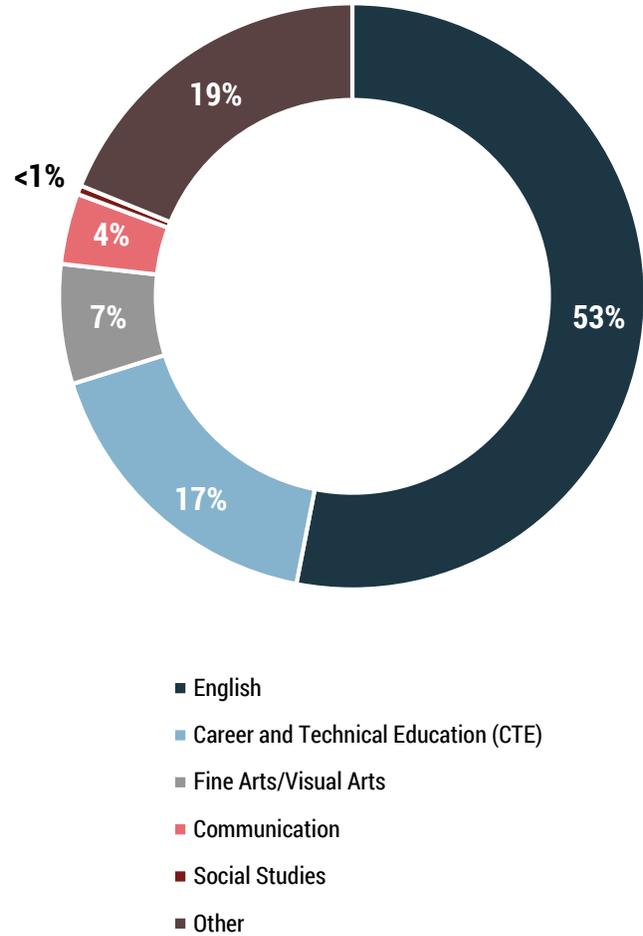
**What type of media is produced/published consistently at your school? *Select all that apply.***



## Departments Hosting Classes

The majority of journalism educators (53%) report that the English department hosts journalism classes at their schools.

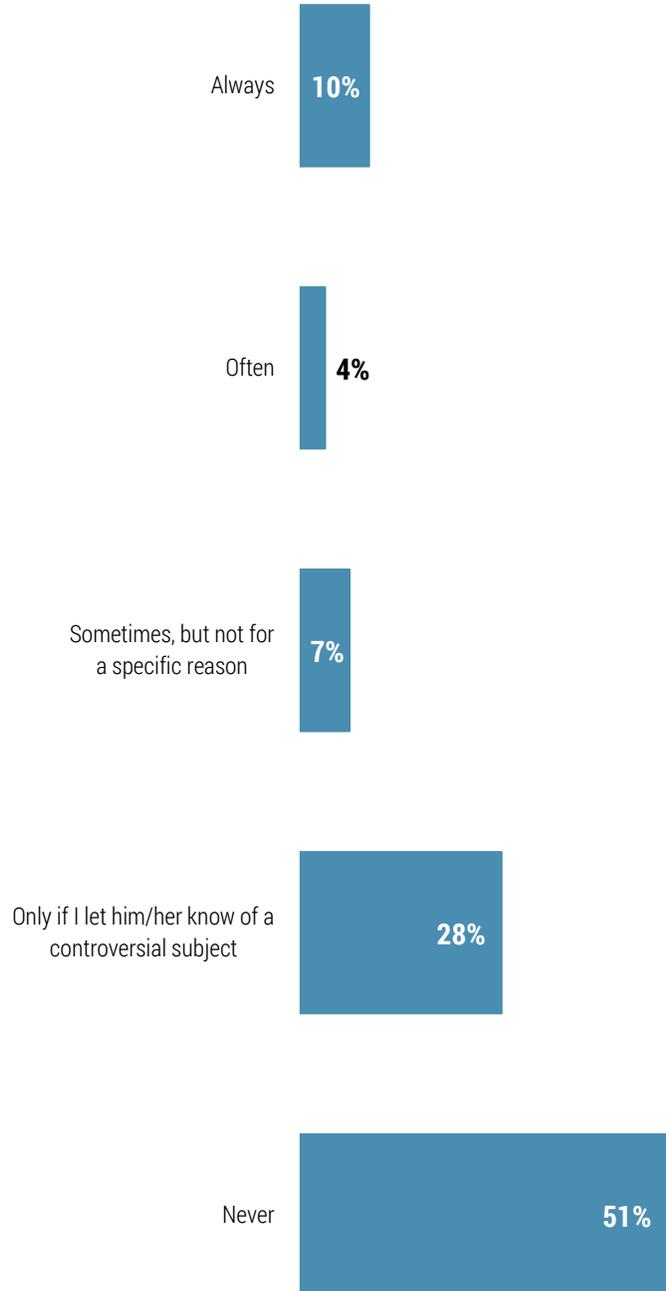
Which department or program/designation hosts your journalism/media classes?



## Prior Review

More than half of journalism educators (51%) indicate that administrators at their schools never engage in prior review. Nearly 30 percent of survey respondents report that prior review occurs when they alert administrators about a controversial subject.

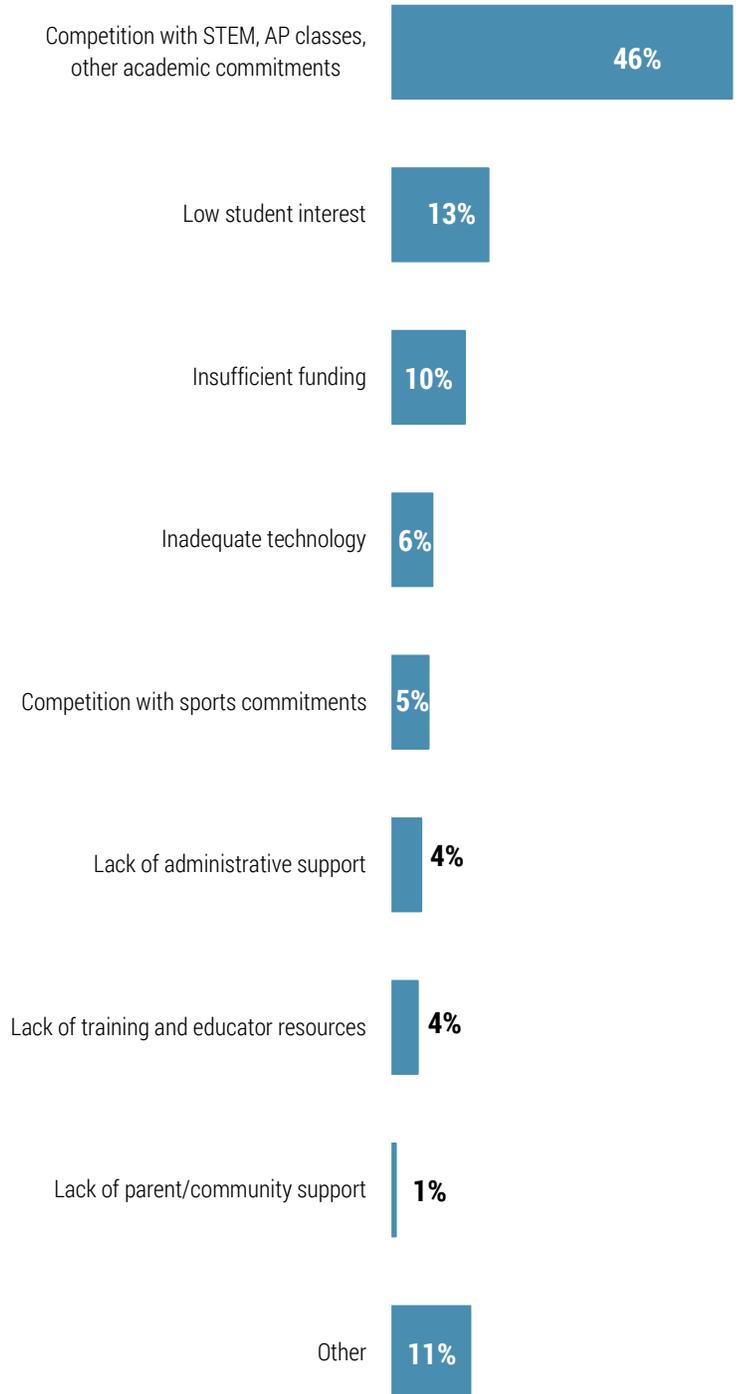
### Does your principal or another administrator engage in prior review?



## Challenges

Competition with STEM, AP classes, and other academic commitments presents by far the greatest challenge for journalism educators. Nearly half (46%) of survey respondents point to this factor as their primary obstacle. Thirteen percent cite low student interest, making it the second most common challenge journalism educators confront.

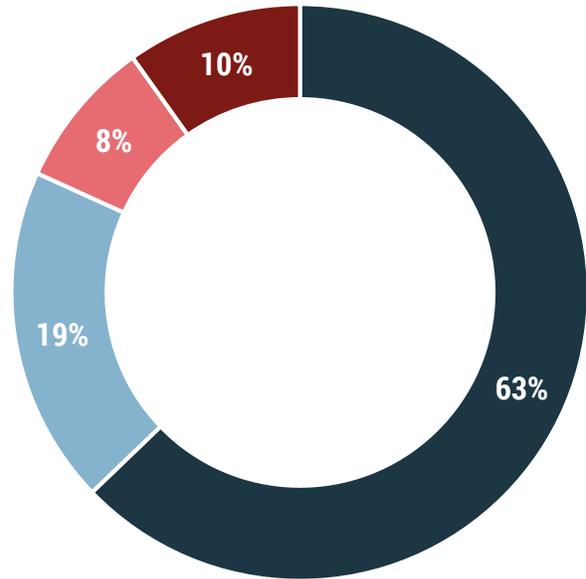
### Which of these presents your greatest challenge as a journalism educator?



## Racial Diversity in Student Participation

Most journalism educators (63%) indicate that less than one-quarter of the participants in their programs are students of color. By comparison, 55 percent of respondents say students of color make up less than a quarter of the overall student population at their schools.

What percentage of the participants in your journalism program are students of color?



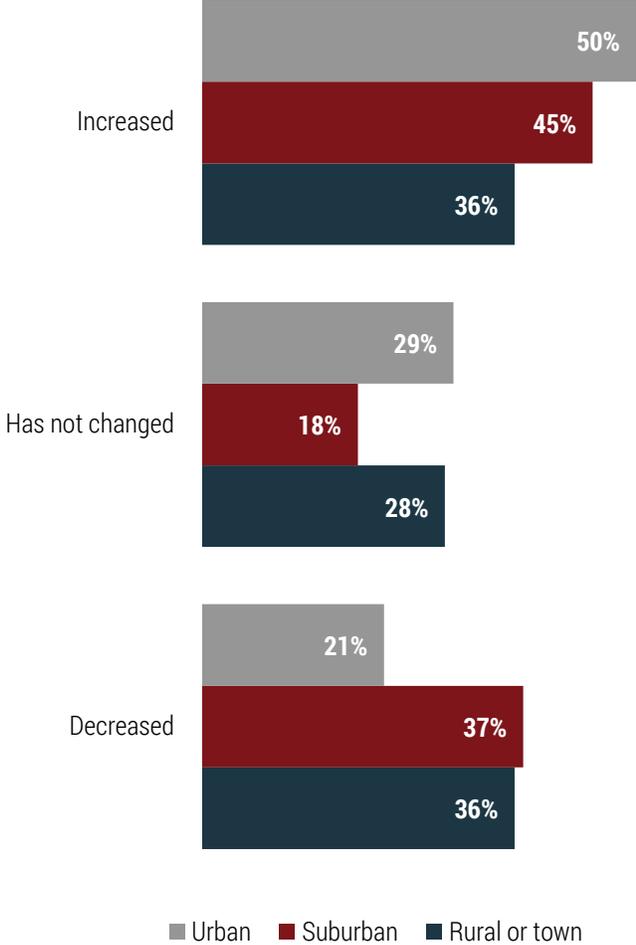
■ Less than 25 percent ■ 25 to 50 percent  
■ 51 to 75 percent ■ More than 75 percent

# Results by Locale

## Enrollment in Journalism Classes

Fifty percent of journalism educators in urban and 45 percent in suburban schools say that enrollment in journalism classes has increased in the past two years. By contrast, just 36 percent in rural or town schools saw an increase.

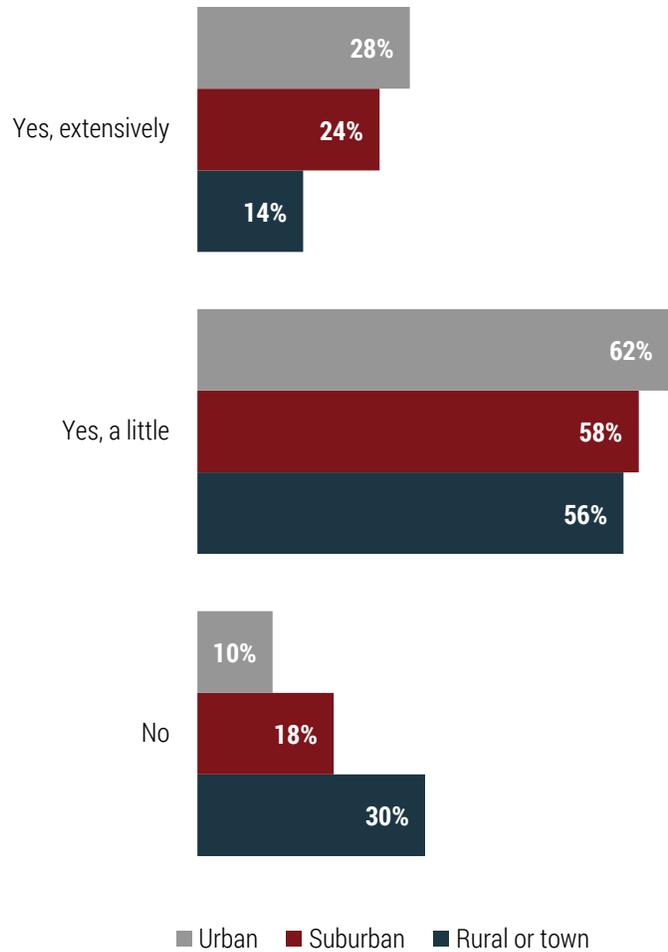
To what extent (if any) has enrollment in journalism classes at your school changed in the past two years?



## Discussion of Criticism from President Trump

Journalism educators in urban or suburban schools are more likely than their counterparts in rural or town schools to have discussed President Trump's criticism of the media with their students. Nine in ten urban and 8 in 10 suburban journalism educators have talked with their students about the topic, compared with 7 in 10 educators in rural or town schools.

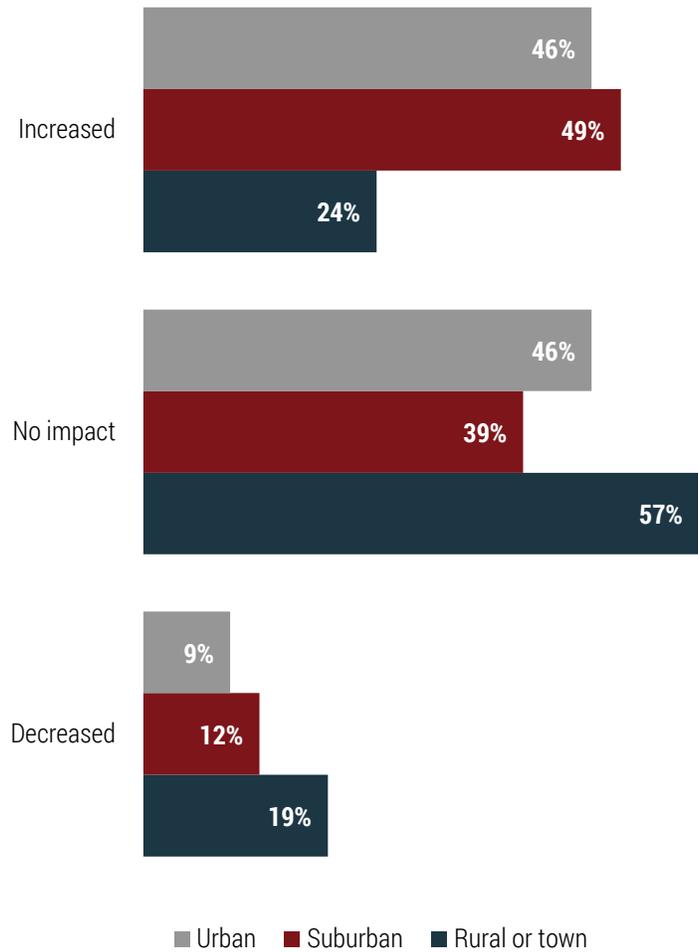
### Have you discussed President Trump's criticism of the news media with your students?



## Impact of Criticism from President Trump

Close to half of journalism educators in urban and suburban schools report that President Trump's criticism of the media has increased interest in journalism at their schools in the past two years. Only about one-quarter of survey respondents in rural or town schools find an increase.

President Trump recently described the news media as "the enemy of the people." How (if at all) have criticisms like this from Mr. Trump impacted students' interest in journalism at your school?

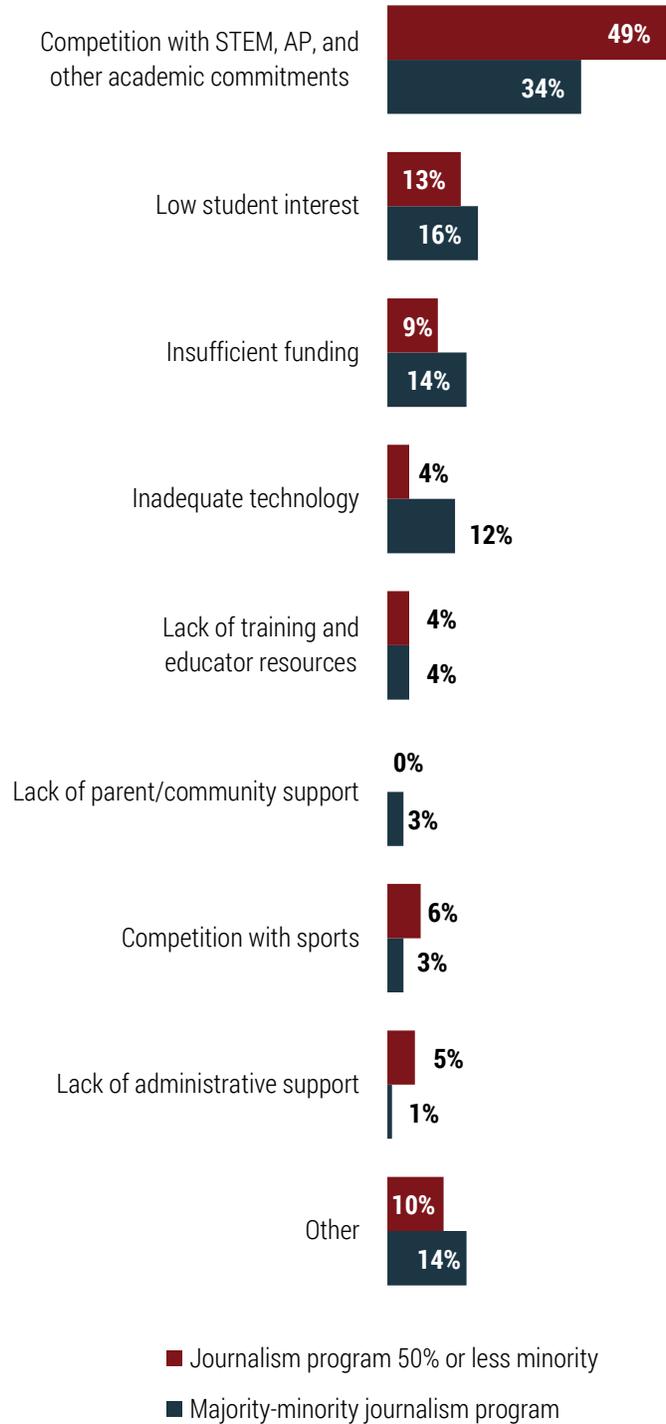


## Results for Majority-Minority Programs

### Challenges

Educators working with journalism programs where students of color make up 50% of enrollment or less see competition with STEM, AP, and other academic commitments as the their primary challenge. In majority-minority programs, only 34 percent of journalism educators point to that challenge. Respondents in those programs are more likely than their peers to see low student interest, insufficient funding, and inadequate technology as top concerns.

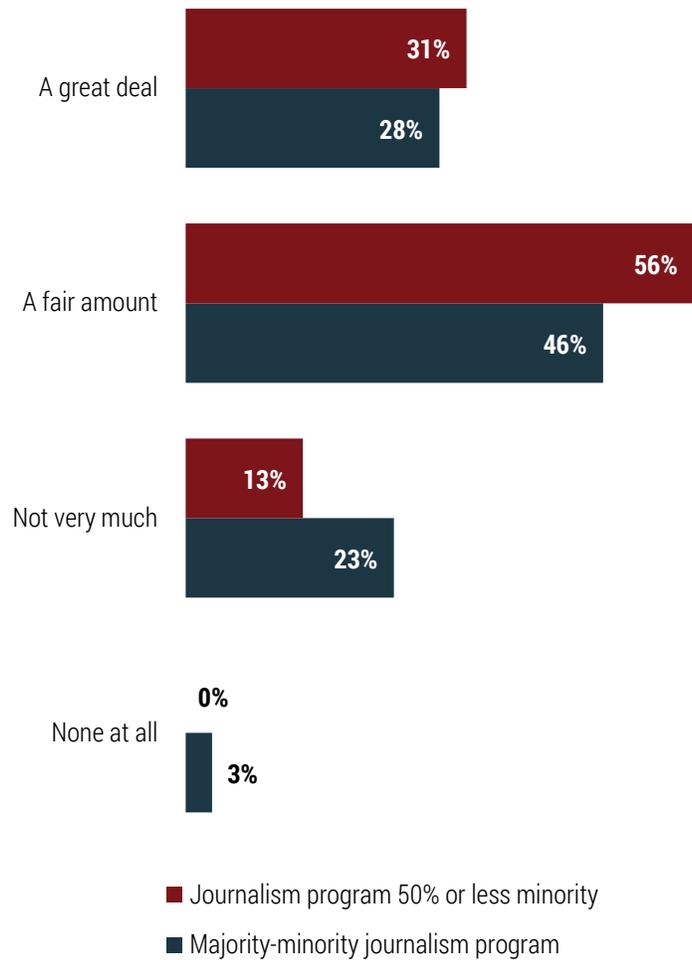
### Which of these presents your greatest challenge as a journalism educator?



## Teacher Trust in School Media

More than one-quarter (26%) of journalism educators in majority-minority programs lack confidence in the mass media, compared with just 13 percent in programs where more students are white.

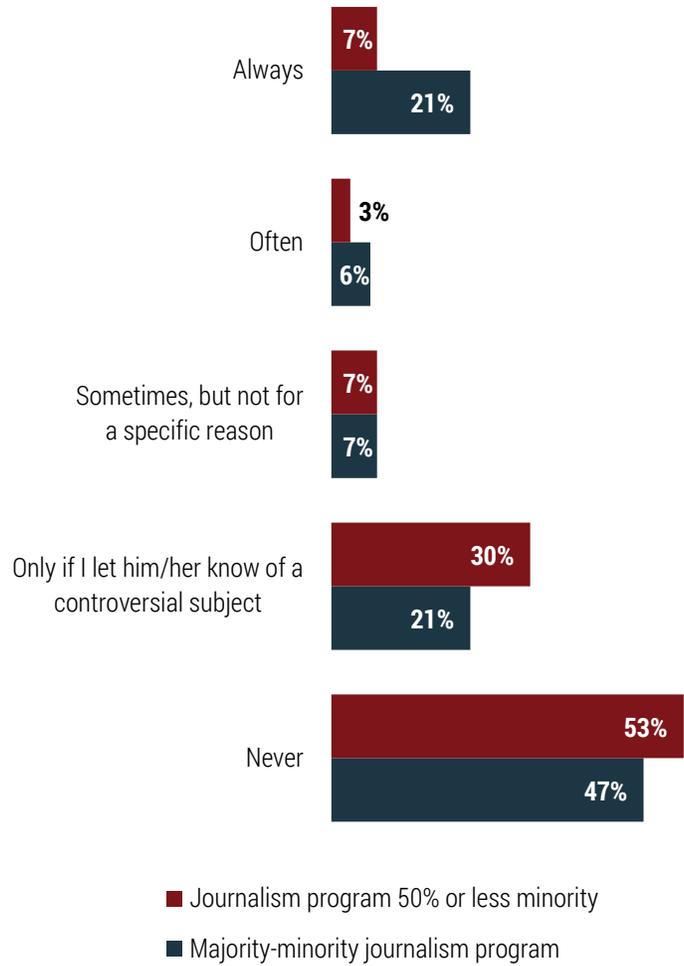
**In general, how much trust and confidence do you have in the mass media — such as newspapers, TV, and radio — when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately, and fairly?**



## Prior Review

Educators working in majority-minority journalism programs more commonly report that their school principal engages in prior review than their peers in programs with fewer students of color.

### Does your principal or another administrator engage in prior review?

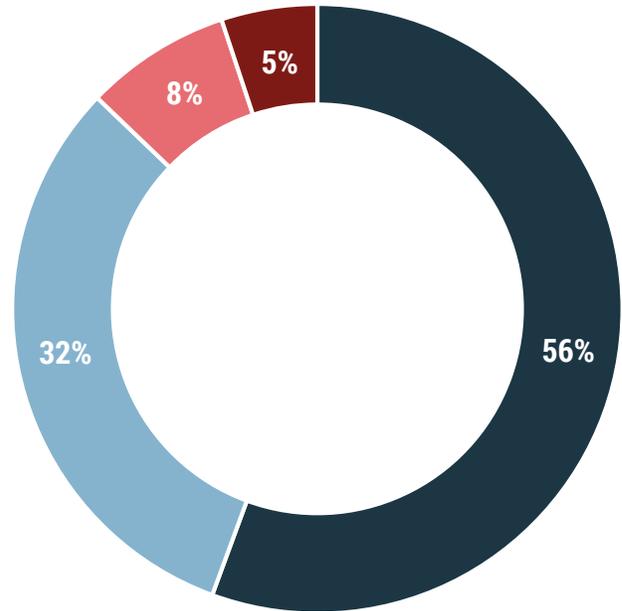


## Respondent Demographics

### Professional Roles

To learn more about the current status of journalism education, the Education Week Research Center surveyed nearly 500 journalism teachers and media advisers from K-12 schools. The majority (56%) serve as both journalism teachers and advisers for student media organizations in their schools.

Which of the following best describes your current professional role in K-12 education?

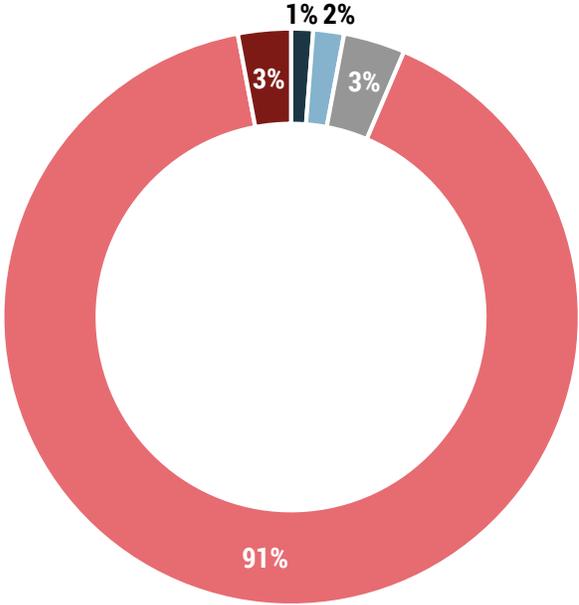


- Journalism teacher and media adviser
- Journalism teacher
- Other journalism-related role
- Media adviser

### Race and Ethnicity

The vast majority of survey respondents (91%) are white.

What is your ethnicity/race?

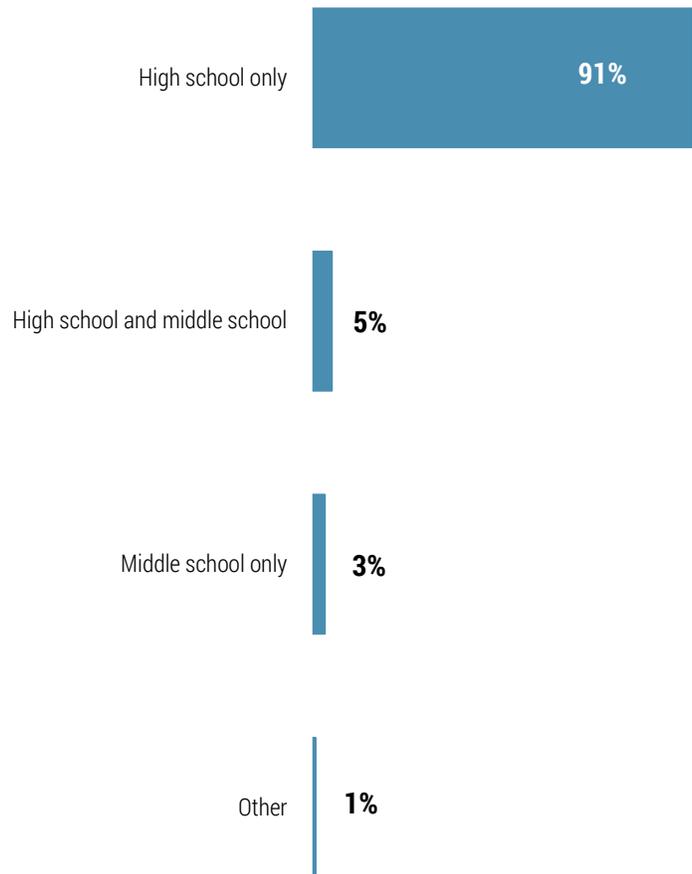


- Asian
- Black
- Hispanic
- White
- Other

## Grade Levels

Nearly all respondents (91%) work exclusively with high school students.

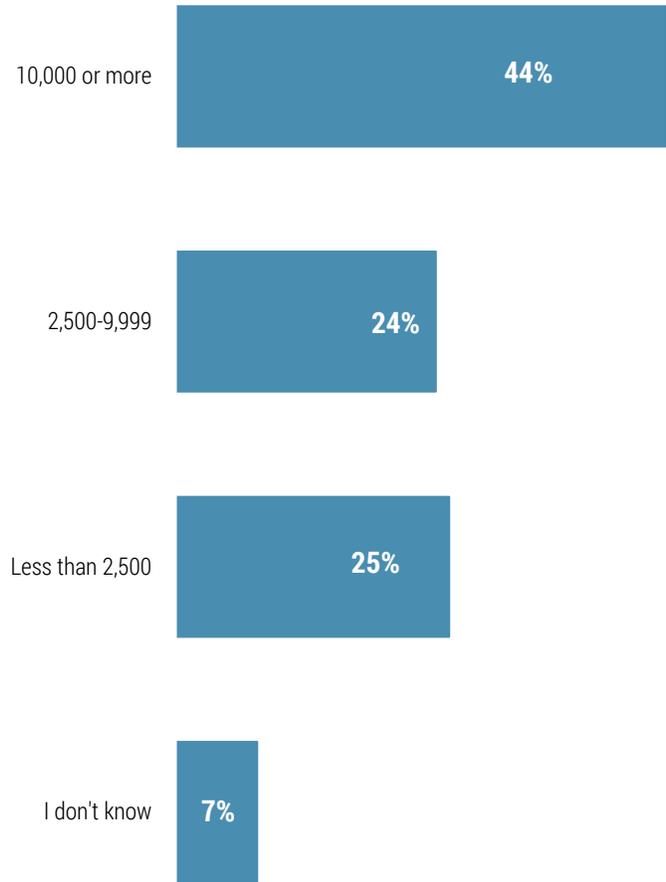
### What grade level(s) do you work with?



## District Enrollment

Survey respondents most commonly work in larger districts serving 10,000 or more students.

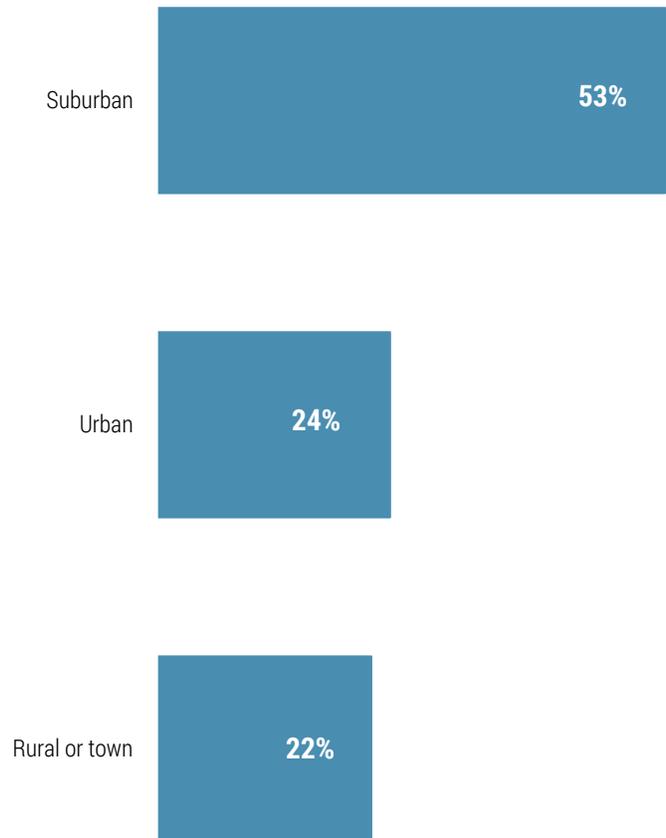
### How many students does your district serve?



## Locale

More than half of survey respondents (53%) work in suburban communities. They hail from 45 states.

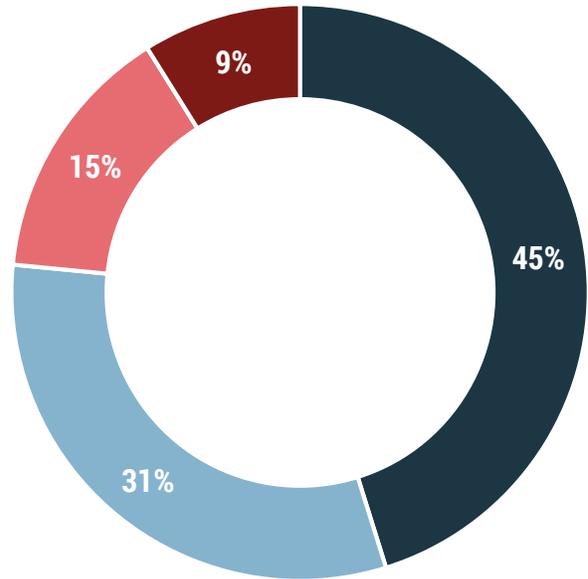
Which of the following best describes the location of your school?



## Student Poverty

Survey respondents most commonly work in low-poverty districts where less than a quarter of students are low-income. Only 9 percent work in high-poverty schools where low-income students make up more than three-quarters of enrollment.

Which of the following best describes the percentage of low-income students in your school?



■ Less than 25 percent ■ 25 to 50 percent  
■ 51 to 75 percent ■ More than 75 percent