

**Tabloids, Broadsheets, and Broadcast News:  
What New York City Residents Think About Their Hometown Media**

*A Pace Poll Survey Research Study*

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By Jonathan Trichter  
Director, Pace Poll  
&  
Chris Paige  
Assistant Director, Pace Poll

“A popular government without popular information, or the means of inquiring it, is but a prelude to a farce or a tragedy.”

- James Madison

**I. INTRODUCTION**

As part of its continuing commitment to foster a responsible discussion of urban affairs, the Pace Poll has launched the inaugural benchmark survey in its annual study of public opinion regarding New York City’s media. By enshrining freedom of the press in the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights, the Founders acknowledged the indispensable role of a responsible press in a democratic society. Normatively, the media ought to examine social problems without fear or favor, help citizens identify and coalesce around consensual solutions, and provide a public forum for unfettered debate. Like Paul Revere, the press must sound the alarm whenever freedom is imperiled. But – also like Paul Revere – the press is fallible. Although the media devotes considerable energy to self-assessment and self-criticism, recent scandals involving dishonest journalists call to mind the wisdom contained in the old adage, “no man can be his own judge.” Thus, the press needs other watchmen.

A number of “armchair media scholars” agree and have made important contributions to journalism without “ever venturing into a war zone.” The press’ readership – “The People” as we say – must play an important part in the media’s self-assessment as well. Ultimately, the media serves the people, and so should recognize their right to review the media’s performance. At a more pragmatic level, no business can ignore its consumers. If only to be in a better position to respond to public concerns regarding the state of news-craft and the performance of news organizations, the media needs to include public feedback in its internal assessments.

To be sure, print editors acknowledge the importance of feedback every time they publish letters to the editor. Nevertheless, only a tiny percentage of newspaper readers write in, and these letter writers do not provide a representative sample of public opinion. Nor is anymore than the smallest percentage of such letters published, at least in major newspapers. Electronic media affords even fewer opportunities for detailed public

feedback, although consumers can make their general dissatisfaction known by refusing to watch. Still, declining ratings offer little guidance to journalists trying to improve their performance.

Thankfully, modern survey research tools can collect representative and actionable consumer feedback. As an independent research arm of Pace University, the Pace Poll has both the expertise and the impartiality to apply these tools to this important task. The results of our initial research on the New York City media will be discussed below.

## **II. A BRIEF NOTE ON DEMOGRAPHICS**

To help in our analysis, we divided city residents into groups based on both their demographics and media habits. As a result, the annual Pace Poll Media Survey also provides an extensive profile of the statistical and behavioral distinctiveness of news consumers. Here are some key psychographic categories we examined:

- “News Hounds,” who read at least one New York City newspapers every day;
- “The Persuadables,” who rely on newspaper editorials all of the time or most of the time to help them decide how they feel about a controversial topic.
- “The Endorsistas,” who rely on newspaper editorials to help them decide who to vote for in local political campaigns; and
- “TV News Addicts,” who watch at least one local television news broadcast every day.

## **III. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The twin goals of the annual Pace Poll New York City Media Study are to add public opinion to the course of media assessment and to initiate a dialog between New Yorkers and their press.

More than 4 in 10 New Yorkers (42%) read a newspaper everyday, and by and large New Yorkers read THE DAILY NEWS more than any other city paper (38% of New York City residents identify THE NEWS as the paper they read regularly or most often). THE DAILY NEWS is even more pervasive among minority and working class residents; whereas THE NEW YORK TIMES – New York’s second-most read newspaper (31%) – remains the preferred daily of the rich and well-educated.

And what are New Yorkers reading about? Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s education reforms are the most-closely followed issue of the day (63% follow this issue “very” or “fairly” closely), followed by the City’s bid for 2012 Olympics (52%) and Attorney General Eliot Spitzer’s investigations of Wall Street scandals (48%). The proposed new Jets stadium on the West Side of Manhattan lags behind in fourth place (45%).

Less than half (48%) of New Yorkers read newspaper editorials (and those who do tend to be middle class). And even if they read editorials, more than three-quarters (76%) of New York City residents claim that editorials shape their thinking on controversial topics only “some of the time” or “hardly at all.” Likewise, newspapers’ political endorsements both in general and primary elections influence 11% of city residents; meanwhile, 84% claim that political endorsements affect their decision “only some of the time,” or “hardly at all.” Op-ed pages have even less impact since they enjoy fewer readers; only 40% of newspaper readers peruse the op-ed pages “all the time” or “most of the time.”

Local TV news garners a larger audience than newspapers do; 55% of New Yorkers make local news part of their daily routine. Yet, local TV news remains largely an outer borough phenomenon; just 37% of Manhattan residents watch local TV news habitually. In terms of total viewers, the stations rank as follows:

1. Channel 7 Eyewitness News with Bill Ritter and Liz Cho (21% select Channel 7 as their primary television news provider).
2. Fox 5 News with John Roland and Linda Schmidt (14%)
3. NY1 News (12%)
4. Channel 2 CBS News with Roz Abrams and Ernie Anastos (11%)
5. News 4 with Chuck Scarborough and Sue Simmons (10%)
6. Channel 11 WB News with Kaity Tong and Jim Watkins (8%)
7. Channel 9 UPN 9 News with Harry Martin and Brenda Blackman (4%)
8. Channel 47 Noticiero Telemundo (1%)

In general, media outlet’s job performance numbers mirror their credibility ratings. That is, a news organization’s approval ratings (the percent who approve compared to the percent who disapprove) are very similar to their credibility ratings (the percent who say a particular news outlet is credible compared to the percent who say it is not credible). Nevertheless, THE DAILY NEWS and THE NEW YORK POST beat expectations by attaining higher approval ratings than their credibility ratings appear to merit, while 1010 Wins and THE WALL STREET JOURNAL underachieve by receiving lower approval ratings than their credibility ratings would suggest they deserve.

Channel 7 Eyewitness News manages a TV trifecta: it’s the most watched (21% identify it as their primary news broadcast), the most approved of (73% approval rating against 9% disapproval), and the most credible (64% credible compared to 20% not credible).

Among the other leading New York City TV news organizations, the breakdown on approval and credibility is as follows:

- Channel 2 CBS News with Roz Abrams and Ernie Anastos has an approval rating of 62% approval to 9% disapproval.
  - Channel 2’s credibility rating is 51% credible to 28% not credible.
- NY1 News has an approval rating of 58% to 6%.
  - NY1’s credibility rating is 50% to 14%.

- Next is Channel 4 News 4 with Chuck Scarborough and Sue Simmons; its approval rating is 63% to 9%.
  - Channel 4's credibility rating is 56% to 22%.
- Channel 11 WB News with Kaity Tong and Jim Watkins has an approval rating of 51% to 11%.
  - Channel 11's credibility rating is 47% to 23%.
- Among the 57% of New Yorkers familiar with Channel 9 UPN 9 News with Harry Martin and Brenda Blackman, 84% approve of its performance. But overall, it has an approval rating of 48% to 8%.
  - Channel 9's credibility rating is 43% to 21%.
- Also, among Spanish-language media sources, Latinos most approve of Channel 47's Noticiero Telemundo (54% job approval).

Meanwhile, in print journalism THE NEW YORK TIMES comes close to Eyewitness News's numbers: it's the second most read newspaper (31% identify it as their primary newspaper), the second most approved of media outlet and the most approved of print source (69% approve, 13% disapprove), and the second most credible media outlet and the most credible print source (64% credible, 23% not credible).

Among the other leading New York City newspapers, the breakdown on approval and credibility is as follows:

- THE DAILY NEWS's approval rating is 67% approval to 17% disapproval.
  - The DAILY NEWS's credibility rating is 49% credible to 38% not credible.
- THE NEW YORK POST's approval rating is 58% to 22%.
  - THE NEW YORK POST's credibility rating is 39% to 44%. Among media outlets recognized by at least 60% of all New Yorkers, only THE POST earns a higher negative than positive rating on the credibility scale.

In general, New Yorkers appear to be sanguine about their media. Almost half (49%) believe the local press corps gets the facts straight, compared to just 36% of Americans who feel the same way about the national media. Still, 51% of New Yorkers think the media is politically-biased, which means New Yorkers are considerably less skeptical than other Americans, 65% of whom doubt the media's political neutrality. This seems easily explainable: most Americans who think the press biased think it is liberally biased, but New Yorkers are more liberal than most and so less likely to think this. Perhaps as a result of New Yorkers' aforementioned confidence in the media's ability to get the facts straight, 45% of New Yorkers believe the media helps the city solve its problems; in contrast, just 31% of Americans believe the media helps the country solve its problems. Likewise, 48% of New Yorkers think that the media cares about the people it reports on, but just 30% of Americans share that optimism regarding the media's motives.

Despite this comparative trust, New Yorkers tend to believe that outright fabrication is a common problem in the media; 55% believe that reporter fraud is “very” or “somewhat” common. Indeed, 22% of New Yorkers claim to have been *personally* involved in a news story in which they know the reporter made errors in his or her coverage.

When asked to assess media celebrities, some New Yorkers – surprise, surprise – prefer the opinionated. In terms of positive approval ratings, the eight celebrities we tested rank as follows:

1. Bill O’Reilly (33% positive approval)
2. Michael Moore (30%)
3. Howard Stern (29%)
4. Al Franken (28%)
5. Don Imus (25%)
6. Rush Limbaugh (24%)
7. Brian Lehrer (23%)
8. Sean Hannity (23%)

But many of these media personalities induce an equal amount of disfavor. In terms of their disapproval ratings, then, the same eight celebrities rank – from most disapproved of to least disapproved of – as follows:

1. Howard Stern (51%)
2. Rush Limbaugh (36%)
- 3-4. Don Imus (20%)/Bill O’Reilly (20%)
5. Al Franken (14%)
6. Sean Hannity (13%)
7. Michael Moore (12%)
8. Brian Lehrer (7%)

As the inaugural survey of an ongoing study, this poll also serves to create a baseline from which future changes can be measured. Consequently, many of this survey’s most important findings will emerge *after* subsequent surveys. Nonetheless, this benchmark establishes important points regarding New Yorkers’ assessments of their media, its duties, and performance.

#### **IV. ANALYSIS**

##### *News Hounds*

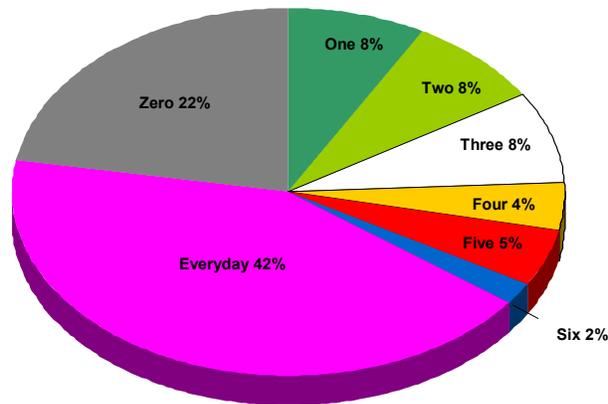
Forty-two percent of New York City residents read at least one newspaper everyday.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a complete profile of New Yorkers who do not read newspapers, please see the Pace Poll’s, THE SOCIAL CAPITAL COMMUNITY BENCHMARK STUDY: ANOTHER WAY TO MEASURE THE HEALTH AND WEALTH OF OUR COMMUNITIES, January 13, 2004.

## When a Tree Falls in the Forest and Becomes a Newspaper, Does Anybody Read It?

Question 3: How many days in the past week you read a daily newspaper?



### The Pace Poll

Chart 1

Nationally, newspaper readership never has been distributed evenly across age groups. Among Americans under the age of 35, for instance, daily newspapers are in danger of becoming the news equivalent of vinyl records; two-thirds of young Americans read a daily newspaper in 1965, but only-one third did so in 1990.<sup>2</sup> The same trend holds here. Only 29% of New Yorkers 18 to 32 years old read the newspaper daily, whereas 50% of 55-65 year olds and 60% of seniors routinely nosh on printed news. In addition, newspaper readership in New York is more prevalent among the wealthy (56% of those making over \$126K a year), whites (49%), and the college educated (48%).

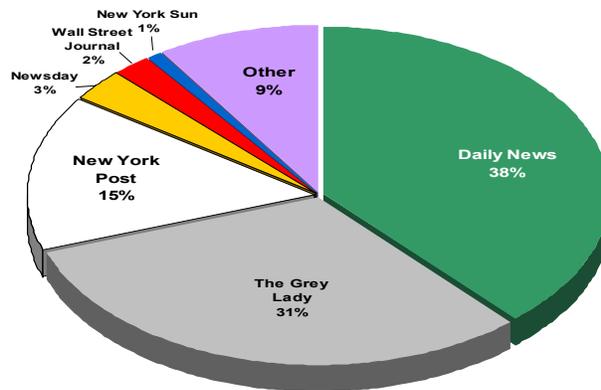
### The Newspaper Wars

In the war for the newsstands, THE DAILY NEWS has liberated more than its rivals; 38% of New York City residents identify THE DAILY NEWS as the newspaper they read regularly or most often. The Grey Lady runs a close second; 31% of New Yorkers report they read THE NEW YORK TIMES regularly or most often. THE NEW YORK POST runs a distant third at 15%. Not surprisingly, given its Long Island emphasis, NEWSDAY trails behind THE POST in the city overall.

<sup>2</sup> Times Mirror Center for the People and the Press, THE AGE OF INDIFFERENCE (Washington, DC: Times Mirror Center, June 28, 1990).

## The Battle at the Newsstands

Question 4: Which daily newspaper do you read regularly or most often?



### The Pace Poll

Chart 2

Of course, the published circulation numbers for THE NEW YORK POST are far closer to those of THE DAILY NEWS than our data suggest. The apparent discrepancy may simply be because THE POST enjoys wider national readership than THE NEWS. Alternatively, people who only occasionally read newspapers may be more inclined to pick-up THE DAILY NEWS when they do read a paper. Or perhaps people simply are unwilling to admit that they read THE POST. (Maybe they buy THE POST and pretend it's THE NEWS.)

New York City Blacks are disproportionately likely to read THE DAILY NEWS (59% read THE NEWS regularly or most often). Latinos (46%) share this preference for THE NEWS, as do Bronx (56%) and Brooklyn (45%) residents. And among people earning less than \$35,000 annually, 54% choose THE NEWS. Thus, in becoming the *true* paper of the working class and minorities, THE DAILY NEWS has achieved what PRAVDA never could.

At the opposite end of the demographic spectrum, THE NEW YORK TIMES is the most widely read newspaper among Manhattan residents (56%), wealthier New Yorkers who earn more than \$126K a year (52%), college graduates (45%), whites (43%), and seniors (40%). As Pace students might say, THE TIMES is the paper of the “bougie” [or bourgeoisie.]

### The Stories They Follow

Despite the media's hype and a rash of television commercials pro and con, the proposal for a new stadium for the Jets on the West Side of Manhattan isn't going to win any Olympic medals – at least when it comes to the contest for most closely followed municipal story of the day. In that race, the gold goes to Mayor Michael Bloomberg's reforms of New York City's public schools. Sixty-three percent of New Yorkers follow

stories on his education reform “very” or “fairly” closely. New York residents most likely to follow this story include Manhattan women (73%), Black women (72%), and women 45+ (70%). The silver medalist is New York’s bid to host the 2012 Summer Olympics (itself a contest in which we hope to win gold); 52% follow this story “very” or “fairly” closely. The New Yorkers most likely to follow this storyline include college men (64%) and white men (60%).

The bronze medal (which several brokerage firms might insist is really gold) goes to New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer and his investigations of Wall Street scandals. Almost half (48%) of New York City residents follow this story “very” or “fairly” closely. Not surprisingly, the demographics of those disproportionately likely to follow this story mirror the investment class and includes seniors (69%), whites (58%), college graduates (57%), and men (53%). (Not to mention temporary residents of Danbury, CT.)

The Jets (in their tireless effort to find new and innovative ways to disappoint their fans) and their new stadium only attract strong interest from 46% of New Yorkers. But in a nod to their days at Shea (and perhaps Richard Todd), Queens men (67%) are more likely to follow this story than other New Yorkers.

### Persuadables

Although newspaper editorial boards often deliberate over controversial issues with a solemnity that befits a papal election, less than half of anyone reading a newspaper (48%) waits for the white smoke. The most likely editorial readers are seniors (51% read the editorial page “all the time”), Bronx women (39%), whites (38%), those with some college education, but not a four-year degree (38%), and New Yorkers earning \$56K to \$85K a year (35%). Empirically, then, editorial readers are New York’s middle class – neither the proletariat nor the bourgeoisie.

This begs the logical question of whether newspaper editorials have significant influence on public opinion. There is plenty of recent historical evidence to suggest they do not. To cite just one example, the drumbeat of editorial protest over President Clinton’s personal behavior may have caused his national approval ratings to dip acutely, but his ratings quickly rebounded to their pre-scandal levels. The findings of the Pace Poll Media Survey are entirely consistent with this historical evidence; only 18% of New Yorkers say that editorials help them decide how they feel about current affairs “all” or “most of the time.” Meanwhile, over three-quarters (76%) say newspaper editorials help them decide how they feel about a controversial topic only some of the time or hardly at all. The most persuadable New York City newspaper readers are Black men and Brooklyn men; 26% of both demographics report that editorials help them evaluate issues all or most of the time. Also, the editorially persuadable seem to be disproportionately middle aged (23% of 55 to 64 year olds).

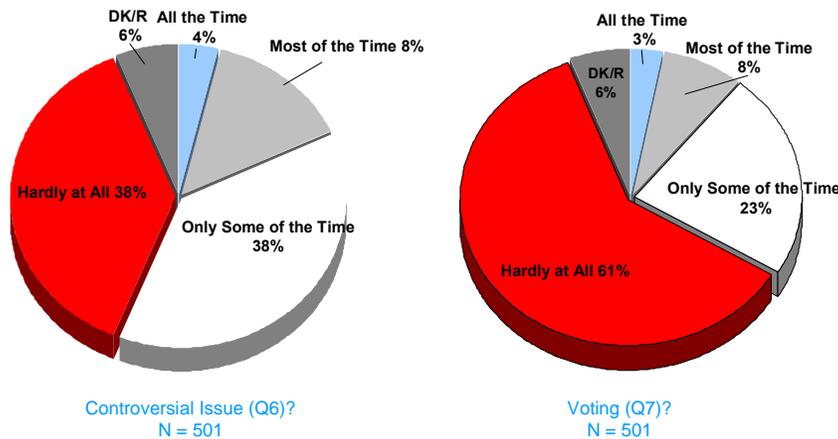
### Endorsistas

New York political consultants have long debated the impact of newspaper endorsements on city elections – both general and primary ones. Conventional wisdom holds that THE TIMES endorsement has real influence among Manhattan voters in contested Democratic primaries, THE DAILY NEWS and THE NEW YORK POST have some lesser amount of influence in the outer boroughs, and more local papers – with the exception of THE STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE – hardly matter at all, even in very local races. But according to the Pace Poll Media Survey, 11% of city residents report that newspaper endorsements help them decide whom to vote for in local political races, and 84% claim the endorsements affect their decision “only some of the time” or “hardly at all.”

### The Editorial Boards Are Talking, But is Anybody Listening?

*Question 6: And how often do those editorials help you decide how you feel about a controversial topic – all the time, most of the time, only some of the time, or hardly at all?*

*Question 7: And how often do those editorials help you decide whom to vote for in a local political campaign – all the time, most of the time, only some of the time, or hardly at all?*



### The Pace Poll

Chart 3

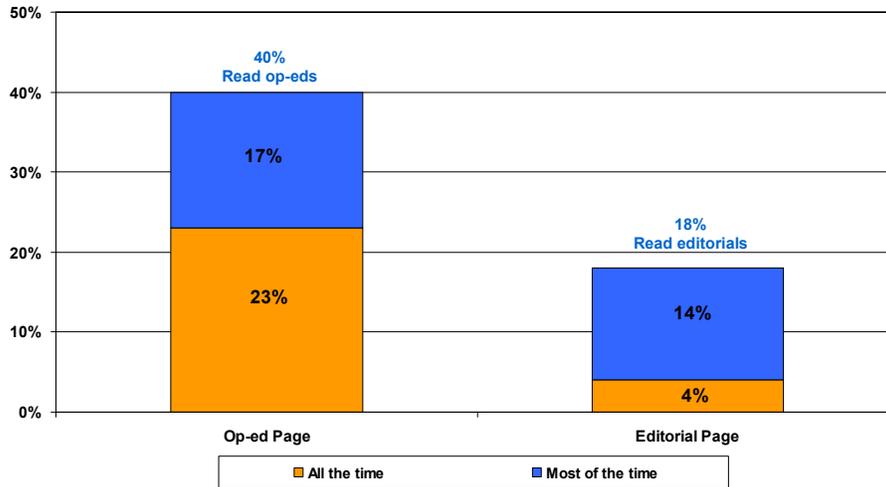
So who are the New Yorkers most likely to carry copies of a newspaper’s editorial endorsements into the voter booth? (Attention direct mail consultants!) Nineteen percent of those making between \$56K and \$85K a year, 16% of women over forty-five, and 16% of lesser educated women (those without a college degree) report that editorials help them decide whom to vote for. Also, a third (33%) of New Yorkers making between \$86K and \$125K and 28% of Latinos report that editorials help them decide whom to vote for *some* of the time.

### The Op-ed Page

Despite the professional honor associated with being a columnist for a newspaper’s op-ed page, only 40% of newspaper readers read the op-ed page “all the time” or “most of the time.” This means an even lower percentage of newspaper readers read the op-ed pages than read the editorials; in fact, over half (57%) of newspaper readers confess that they read the op-ed page “only some of the time” or “hardly at all.”

## When Editorial Boards Talk, Who Listens?

Questions 5 & 8: Thinking about the newspaper you read most regularly, how often do you read the [editorial page, op-ed] page?



### The Pace Poll

Chart 4

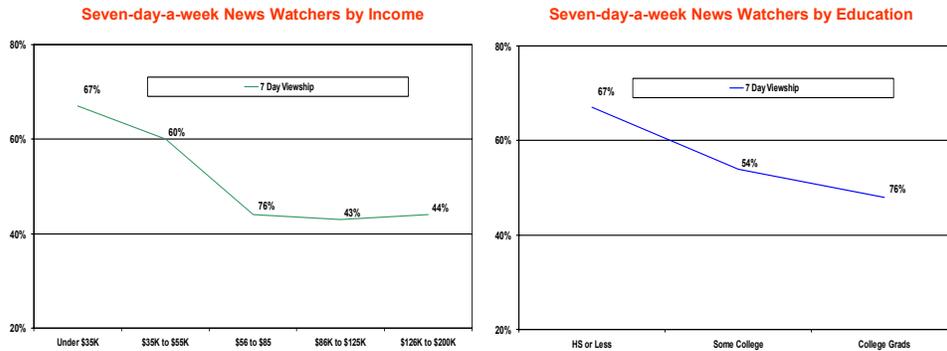
Habitual op-ed readers tend to be older (39% of seniors read op-eds all the time), white (31%), and Manhattan residents (29%). Again, the middle class predominates in the heavy user category; 34% of those with some college, but no four-year degree, and 30% of those making between \$56K and \$85K a year read the op-ed page all the time.

### TV News Addicts: Local Broadcast News

Whereas 42% of New Yorkers read a newspaper everyday, 55% watch a local newscast seven days a week. Bronx women (67%), Blacks (65%), Queens residents (65%), women over the age of 45 (64%), and Latinos (62%) consider their local news must-see-TV, seven nights a week. In fact, local news is predominantly an outer borough phenomenon – only 37% of Manhattanites watch local news seven days a week. (The remaining 63% are content to make local news!) Nevertheless, the most striking patterns in the audience for local news are the inverse relationships between income and viewership and education and viewership.

## Television News: The More You Earn and Know, the Less You Watch

Question 9: How many days in the past week did you watch the local TV news?



### The Pace Poll

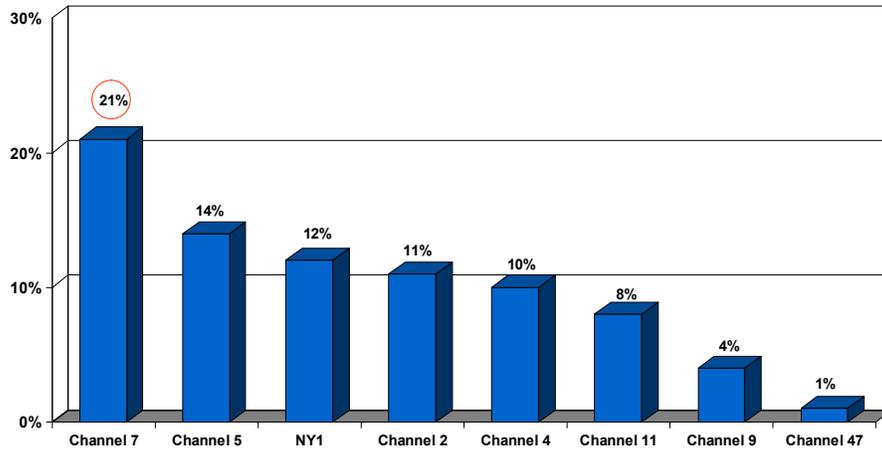
Chart 5

Among local news broadcasts,<sup>3</sup> Channel 7 Eyewitness News with Bill Ritter and Liz Cho emerges as New Yorkers' clear favorite; 21% chose Eyewitness News as their primary TV news provider. Fox 5 News with John Roland and Linda Schmidt (14%), NY1 News (12%), Channel 2 CBS News with Roz Abrams and Ernie Anastos (11%), and News 4 with Chuck Scarborough and Sue Simmons (10%) round out the top five. Interestingly, News 4 is the second most credible local news broadcaster, but the fifth most watched. [See Chart 10 below.] Obviously, New Yorkers do not necessarily seek out the most credible local news broadcast, which strongly suggests that a news broadcast's entertainment value plays a role in viewer choice. This finding is less of a surprise than a disappointing confirmation of the received wisdom in many newsrooms. In addition, UPN 9 News with Harry Martin and Brenda Blackman – a UPN affiliate – ran a distant fifth at (4%) among the city's five major network affiliates. Since only 8% of Blacks chose UPN 9 News and since UPN's primetime schedule is heavily skewed towards programming aimed at Black audiences, Channel 9's relative weakness could reflect UPN's marketing strategy, rather than any shortcomings in its news department.

<sup>3</sup> A complete breakdown of viewers by demographic group is available.

## Eyewitness News Sees its Way to Top

Question 10: Which local television news broadcast do you watch regularly or most often?



### The Pace Poll

Chart 6

Perhaps the most surprising result is NY1's relative performance. As a local cable channel, NY1 is not even available in many households; nevertheless, it came in third among the most-watched local news broadcasts at 12%, beating out Channel 7 Eyewitness News in the crucial 18-32 demographic coveted by advertisers. Benefiting perhaps from preceding the Simpsons and Seinfeld, Fox 5 News wins the 18-32 demographic outright (18%).

### Media Performance

The Pace Poll conducted an experiment in order to measure and distinguish between public approval ratings for New York City news sources and their perceived credibility. At random, half of the respondents were asked to assess news outlets' job performance while the other moiety was asked to assess their believability. The purpose of this experiment was to determine whether or not there is a difference between approval and credibility, or whether those attributes correlate with each other. In other words, we were attempting to assess the role of credibility in the public approval of news sources. And despite a general correlation between credibility and approval, the outliers raise interesting questions regarding the public's perception of the media's job. *As a cautionary note, it is not the case that the news outlets ranked at the bottom of this list are widely disbelieved or disapproved of. Rather, the outlets at the bottom of this chart are less well-known and, therefore, residents are less likely to have any opinion at all about them. This chart should be looked at only for its correlation between approval and credibility.*

Rank	Approval	Credibility
1	Channel 7 Eyewitness News/CNN	Channel 7 Eyewitness News
2	N/A	THE NEW YORK TIMES
3	THE NEW YORK TIMES	CNN
4	THE DAILY NEWS*	Channel 4
5	Channel 4	1010 Wins
6	Channel 2	Channel 5
7	Channel 5	FOX News
8	FOX News	THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
9	NY1 News	NY1 News
10	THE NEW YORK POST*	Channel 2
11	1010 Wins*	THE DAILY NEWS
12	MSNBC	Channel 11
13	Channel 11	MSNBC
14	THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*	Channel 9
15	Channel 9	THE NEW YORK POST
16	NEW YORK MAGAZINE	THE NEW YORKER
17	USA TODAY	USA TODAY
18	THE NEW YORKER	THE VILLAGE VOICE
19	THE VILLAGE VOICE	NEW YORK MAGAZINE
20	WNYC	WNYC

\* Indicates significant discrepancy between approval and credibility

As you can see above, THE DAILY NEWS and THE NEW YORK POST achieve far higher approval ratings than their credibility ratings would suggest they deserve. This gap may mean that New Yorkers believe unsubstantiated rumors and gossip to be a vital, if unreliable form of information. Given the tabloid media’s tendency to write salacious stories about New York’s elite, this gap also might suggest that New Yorkers enjoy their daily doses of schadenfreude. In contrast, 1010 Wins and THE WALL STREET JOURNAL achieve far lower approval ratings than their reputations for veracity would imply. At least in the case of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, one could dismiss this gap as liberal New Yorkers’ disapproval of THE JOURNAL’s conservative editorial bent and its support of conservative economic policies, but New Yorker’s odd assessment of 1010 Wins cannot be dismissed as thinly-disguised, political protest.

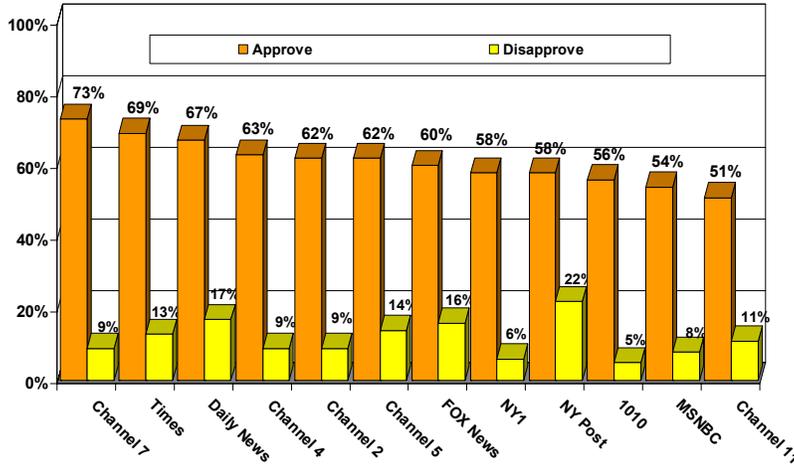
Because some media outlets are more widely recognized than others, we divided the media outlets into two groups based on their levels of familiarity among New York City residents. Among the more recognized New York City news organizations – those with which at least 60% of New Yorkers are familiar - job approval ratings fall out as follows:

- Channel 7, or Eyewitness News with Bill Ritter and Liz Cho, and CNN earn the best approval ratings with 73% who approve of their job performances covering the news and 9% who disapprove of their performances.

- The highest rated newspaper is THE NEW YORK TIMES, which is third overall at 69% who approve and 13% who disapprove.
  - Worth noting is the fact that among our persuadables (76% of persuadables approve) and Endorsistas (70% approve), THE NEW YORK TIMES gets the best approval ratings. Of course, this implies that this is the opinion page that most affects public thinking and voting.
- THE DAILY NEWS is fourth at 67% who approve and 17% who disapprove.
- Next is Channel 4, or News 4 with Chuck Scarborough and Sue Simmons; its approval rating is 63% to 9%.
- Channel 2, or CBS News with Roz Abrams and Ernie Anastos, has a 62% approval rating and a 9% disapproval rating.
- Channel 5, or Fox 5 News with John Roland and Linda Schmidt, also has a 62% approval rating but a 14% disapproval rating.
- The FOX News Channel has a 60% approval rating and a 16% disapproval rating.
- NY1 News has a 58% approval rating and a 6% disapproval rating.
- THE NEW YORK POST also has a 58% approval rating, but a 22% disapproval rating.
- 1010 Wins has a 56% approval rating and a 5% disapproval rating.
- MSNBC has a 54% approval rating and an 8% disapproval rating.
- Channel 11, or WB News with Kaity Tong and Jim Watkins, has a 51% approval rating and an 11% disapproval rating.

## Approval Ratings for the Most Recognized New York City News Outlets

Questions 26A-51A (approve/disapprove): Do you [approve/disapprove] of the job these news outlets do covering the news?



### The Pace Poll

Chart 7

Among the moderately well-known New York City news outlets – those with recognition levels below 60%, but above 45% - job approval ratings may appear higher because far fewer people expressed any opinion at all on their job performance. Bearing that caution in mind, these institutions' job approval ratings fall out as follows:

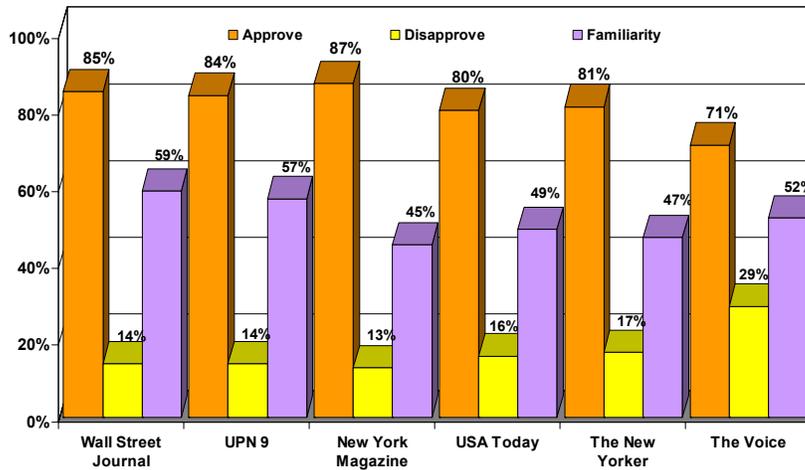
- Among the 59% of New Yorkers familiar with THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, 85% approve of its performance. Overall, it has a 50% approval rating and an 8% disapproval rating.
- Among the 57% of New Yorkers familiar with Channel 9, or UPN 9 News with Harry Martin and Brenda Blackman, 84% approve of its performance. Overall, it has a 48% approval rating and an 8% disapproval rating.
- Among the 45% of New Yorkers familiar with NEW YORK MAGAZINE, 87% approve of its performance. Overall, it has a 39% approval rating and a 6% disapproval rating with a 45% recognition rating.
- Among the 49% of New Yorkers familiar with USA Today, 80% approve of its performance. Overall, it has a 39% approval rating and an 8% disapproval rating with a 49% recognition rating.
- Among the 47% of New Yorkers familiar with THE NEW YORKER, 81% approve of its performance. Overall, it has a 38% approval rating and an 8% disapproval rating with a 47% recognition rating.

- Among the 52% of New Yorkers familiar with THE VILLAGE VOICE, 71% approve of its performance. Overall, it has a 37% approval rating and a 15% disapproval rating.

## Approval Ratings for Moderately Recognized New York City News Outlets

*Questions 26A-51A (approve/disapprove): Do you [approve/disapprove] of the job these news outlets do covering the news?*

Note: These ratings are expressed as a percentage of those familiar with the news outlet.



### The Pace Poll

Chart 8

Among the least well-known New York City media outlets – those with recognition levels less than 45% - job performance ratings fall out as follows:

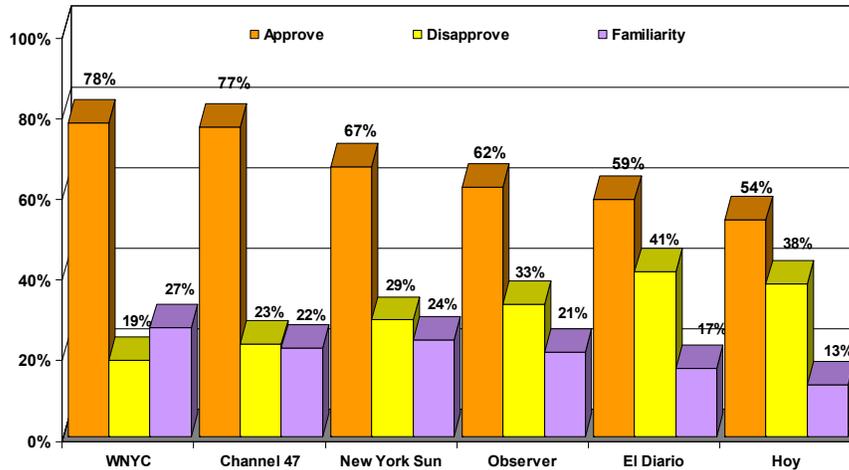
- Among the 27% of New Yorkers familiar with WNYC, 78% approve of its performance. Overall, it has a 21% approval rating and a 5% disapproval rating with a 27% recognition rating.
- Among the 22% of New Yorkers familiar with Channel 47 Noticiero Telemundo, 77% approve of its performance. Overall, it has a 17% approval rating and a 5% disapproval rating with a 22% recognition rating.
- Among the 24% of New Yorkers familiar with THE NEW YORK SUN, 67% approve of its performance. Overall, it has a 16% approval rating and a 7% disapproval rating.
- Among the 21% of New Yorkers familiar with THE NEW YORK OBSERVER, 62% approve of its performance. Overall, it has a 13% approval rating and a 7% disapproval rating.
- Among the 17% of New Yorkers familiar with EL DIARIO LA PRENSA, 59% approve of its performance. Overall, it has a 10% approval rating and a 7% disapproval rating.

- Among the 13% of New Yorkers familiar with HOY, 54% approve of its performance. Overall, it has a 7% approval rating and a 5% disapproval rating.

## Approval Ratings for Least Recognized New York City News Outlets

Questions 26A-51A (approve/disapprove): Do you [approve/disapprove] of the job these news outlets do covering the news?

Note: These ratings are expressed as a percentage of those familiar with the news outlet.



### The Pace Poll

Chart 9

Likewise, controlling for differences in familiarity permits us to compare the credibility ratings of various New York City news outlets. Credibility ratings are the percentage of New Yorkers who find a news organization believable vs. the percentage who find it not believable. These ratings differ from the approval ratings outlined above. Among the most well-known New York City media outlets – those with at least 60% total recognition – credibility ratings fall out as follows:

- The most credible media outlet is Channel 7, or Eyewitness News with Bill Ritter and Liz Cho, which earns a credibility rating of 64% to 20%.
- In second place overall and first place in print is THE NEW YORK TIMES, which achieved a credibility rating of 64% to 23%. [Nationally, THE NEW YORK TIMES' credibility rating is 47% to 28%.]<sup>4</sup>
- CNN's credibility rating is 63% to 19%. [Nationally, CNN's credibility rating is 65% to 25%.]<sup>5</sup>

The Pew Research Center for The People and The Press, Online News Audiences Larger and More Diverse: News Audiences Increasingly Political, June 8, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> The Pew Research Center for The People and The Press, Online News Audiences Larger and More Diverse: News Audiences Increasingly Political, June 8, 2004.

- Channel 4, or News 4 with Chuck Scarborough and Sue Simmons, achieves a credibility rating of 56% to 22%.
- 1010 Wins' credibility rating is 53% to 12%.
- Channel 5, or Fox 5 News with John Roland and Linda Schmidt, achieves a credibility rating of 53% to 26%.
- The FOX News Channel's credibility rating is 52% to 28%. [Nationally, The FOX News Channel's credibility rating is 54% to 32%.]<sup>6</sup>
- The WALL STREET JOURNAL's credibility rating is 51% to 16%. [Nationally, The Wall Street Journal's credibility rating is 49% to 25%.]<sup>7</sup>
- CBS Channel 2, or CBS News with Roz Abrams and Ernie Anastos, achieves a credibility rating of 51% to 28%.
- NY1 News's credibility rating is 51% to 14%.
- The DAILY NEWS's credibility rating is 49% to 38%.
- Channel 11, or WB News with Kaity Tong and Jim Watkins, achieves a credibility rating of 47% to 23%.
- MSNBC's credibility rating is 45% to 19%. [Nationally, MSNBC's credibility rating is 54% to 30%.]<sup>8</sup>
- Channel 9, UPN News with Harry Martin and Brenda Blackman, achieves a credibility rating of 43% to 21%.
- On net, New Yorkers consider THE NEW YORK POST to be incredible (as in *not* credible), by 39% to 44%.
  - Among the most recognized media outlets, only THE POST earns a higher negative than positive rating on the credibility scale.
- Rounding out the most recognized media sources, USA TODAY attains a credibility rating of 35% to 25%. [Nationally, USA TODAY's credibility rating is 47% to 30%.]<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The Pew Research Center for The People and The Press, Online News Audiences Larger and More Diverse: News Audiences Increasingly Political, June 8, 2004.

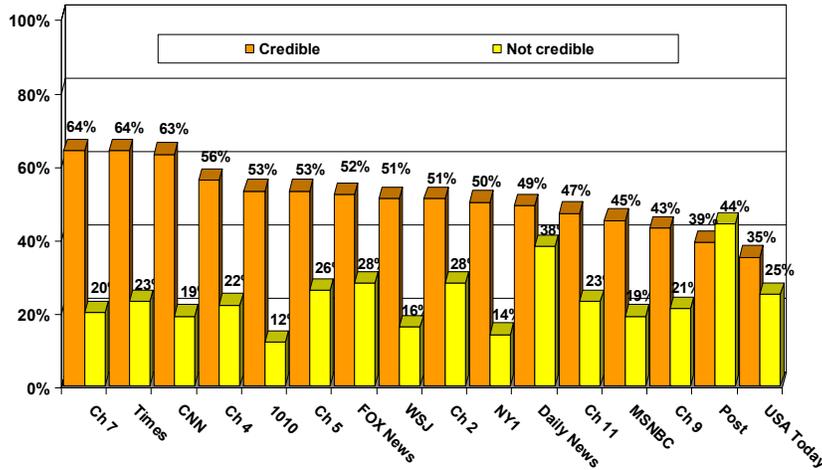
<sup>7</sup> The Pew Research Center for The People and The Press, Online News Audiences Larger and More Diverse: News Audiences Increasingly Political, June 8, 2004.

<sup>8</sup> The Pew Research Center for The People and The Press, Online News Audiences Larger and More Diverse: News Audiences Increasingly Political, June 8, 2004.

<sup>9</sup> The Pew Research Center for The People and The Press, Online News Audiences Larger and More Diverse: News Audiences Increasingly Political, June 8, 2004.

## Credibility Ratings for Most Recognized New York City News Outlets

Questions 26B-51B (believe/don't believe): How do you rate the believability of the following news outlets?



### The Pace Poll

Chart 10

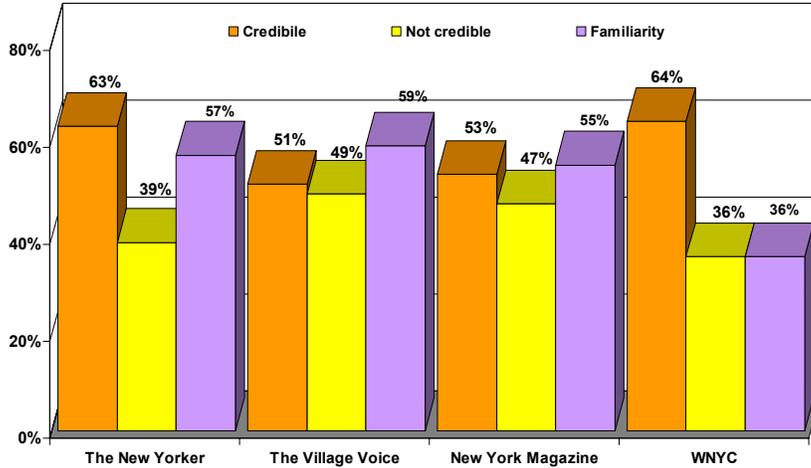
Among the moderately well-known media outlets – those with recognition levels below 60%, but above 45% - credibility ratings fall out as follows:

- Among the 57% of New Yorkers familiar enough with THE NEW YORKER to rate its believability, 63% find it credible. Overall, it attains a 36% to 22% rating.
- Among the 59% of New Yorkers familiar with THE VILLAGE VOICE, 51% find it credible. Overall, it attains a 30% to 29% rating.
- Among the 55% of New Yorkers familiar NEW YORK MAGAZINE, 53% find it credible. Overall, it attains a 29% to 26% rating.
- Among the 36% of New Yorkers familiar with WNYC, 64% find it credible. Overall, it attains a 23% to 13% rating.

## Credibility Ratings for Moderately Recognized New York City News Outlets

*Questions 26B-51B (believe/don't believe): How do you rate the believability of the following news outlets?*

Note: These ratings are expressed as a percentage of those familiar with the news outlet.



**The Pace Poll**

Chart 11

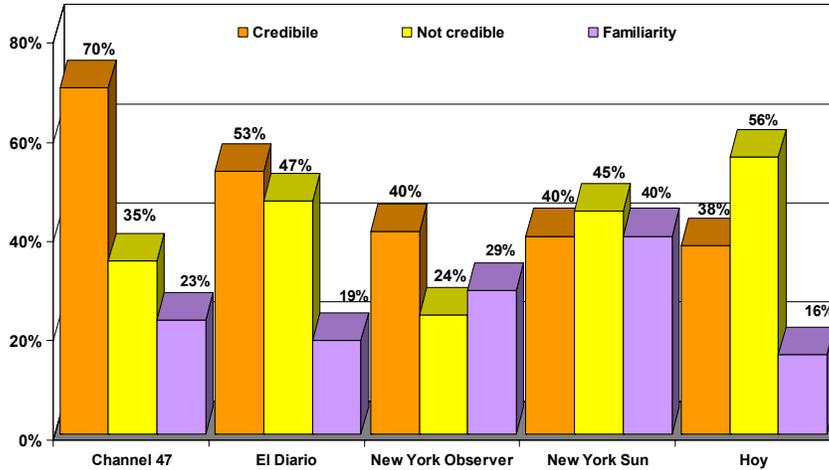
Among the least well-known media outlets – those with recognition levels below 45% - the credibility ratings fall out as follows:

- Among the 23% of New Yorkers familiar with Channel 47's Noticiero Telemundo, 70% find it credible. Overall, it attains a 16% to 8% rating.
- Among the 29% of New Yorkers familiar with THE NEW YORK OBSERVER, 41% find it credible. Overall, it attains a 12% to 7% rating.
- Among the 40% of New Yorkers familiar with THE NEW YORK SUN, 40% find it credible. Overall, it attains a 12% to 18% rating.
- Among the 19% of New Yorkers familiar with EL DIARIO LA PRENSA, 53% find it credible. Overall, it attains at 10% to 9% rating.
- Rounding out the least well-known news sources is HOY. Among the 16% of New Yorkers familiar with HOY, 38% find it credible. Overall, it attains a 6% to 9% rating.

## Credibility Ratings for the Least Recognized New York City News Outlets

*Questions 26B-51B (believe/don't believe): How do you rate the believability of the following news outlets?*

Note: These ratings are expressed as a percentage of those familiar with the news outlet.



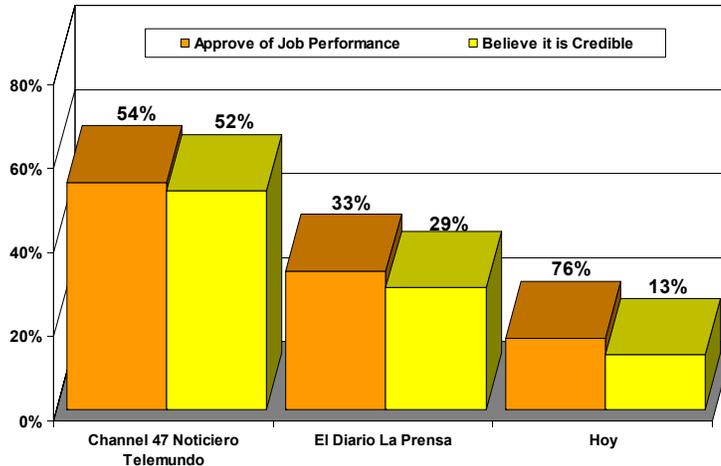
### The Pace Poll

Chart 12

Among Spanish-language media sources, Latinos most approve of Channel 47's Noticiero Telemundo (54% job approval). A third (33%) approve of EL DIARIO LA PRENSA's job performance. Seventeen percent approve of HOY's job performance. These data correspond closely to these institutions' credibility in New York City's Latino community. Interestingly, Latinos approve of The Daily News (80% approval) more than any other news outlet we tested – print or electronic.

## Approval and Credibility Ratings for Spanish Speaking News Outlets Among Latinos

Questions 33A & B/34A & B/45A & B: Do you approve of the job these news outlets do covering the news/How do you rate the believability of the following news outlets ?



### The Pace Poll

Chart 13

The news outlet most approved of by Black New Yorkers is Channel 7 Eyewitness News with Bill Ritter and Liz Cho (82% job approval). The most approved newspaper among Blacks is THE DAILY NEWS; three-quarters (75%) approve of its job performance.

### Media Integrity

Fifty-two percent of New Yorkers approve of the job the local media does in covering local politics (proving incontrovertibly that few politicians participated in our poll). Given the centrality of the media's role in the democratic process, the public's confidence in the media's performance in covering politics is encouraging. And when it comes to general issues of media accuracy, almost half (49%) of New Yorkers believe the local press gets the facts straight; 35% of New Yorkers think news stories are often inaccurate. (By comparison, nationally only 36% of Americans generally believe news organizations get the facts straight.<sup>10</sup>)

Those New Yorkers with more faith in the precision of the local media are college graduates (56%) and those readers who look to newspaper editorials for guidance on complex policy issues (57%) and voting (55%). The most skeptical are Black men (47%) and Brooklyn residents (43%). By comparison, 35% of Americans believe the media gets its facts straight, and 56% believe the media is often inaccurate.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Mark Gillespie, Public Remains Skeptical of News Media (The Gallup Organization, 2003).

<sup>11</sup> The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, News Media's Improved Image Proves Short-Lived, August 4, 2002.

The Pace Poll endeavored to determine whether or not New Yorkers see their local press as part of the solution or part of the problem. It turns out that 45% believe the media helps the city while 31% thinks the media gets in the way. Life in the Bronx must be interesting – a majority of Bronx men (58%) thinks the media helps, but the plurality of Bronx women (42%) thinks the media gets in the way. By comparison, a study by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press in August 2002 found that 31% of Americans believe that the news media helps society solve its problem, and 58% believe that news media gets in the way.

As to whether or not the news media cares about the people they report on, 48% believe they do, but 34% think they don't. By comparison, 30% of Americans believe the media cares about the people they report on, but 55% think they don't.<sup>12</sup>

In addition, 51% of New Yorkers think that news organizations are politically-biased, whereas only a third (33%) thinks they are not. The most likely New Yorkers to think that news organizations have a political axe to grind include 33-44 year olds (62%), Black men (59%), and white women (58%). Americans in general believe the media is politically biased; 59% doubt the media's neutrality while 26% affirm it.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, 72% of New Yorkers think that news organizations care about how good a job they do. Only 16% say they don't care. Nationally, 65% of Americans believe journalists care about their performance; 23% believe they don't.<sup>14</sup>

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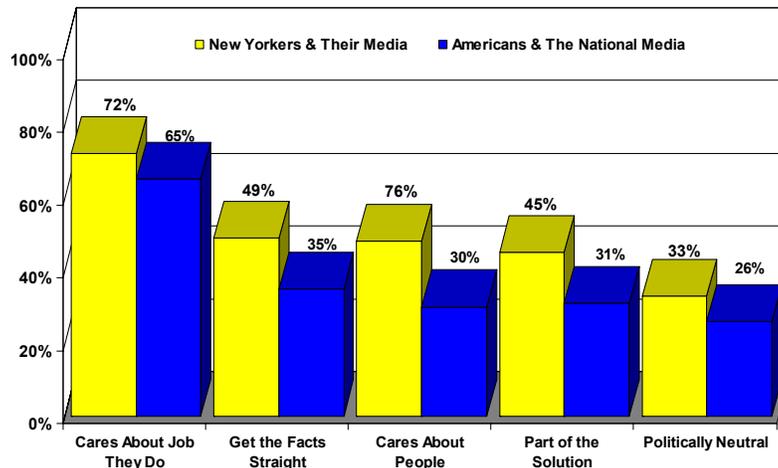
<sup>12</sup> The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, News Media's Improved Image Proves Short-Lived, August 4, 2002.

<sup>13</sup> The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, News Media's Improved Image Proves Short-Lived, August 4, 2002.

<sup>14</sup> The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, News Media's Improved Image Proves Short-Lived, August 4, 2002.

## We ♥ New York Media

Questions 17, 18, 19, 21, 22: (See Topline data for precise wording of questions.)



### The Pace Poll

Chart 14

The Pace Poll sought to find out whether or not New York City residents feel that the press is scaring people by reporting too much about possible terrorist threats, not giving the public the news its needs about terrorist threats, or whether the press is striking the right balance between the two. Few people (8%) think the press is striking the right balance between the two. The majority (53%) believe the press is scaremongering while just 30% think the press is sugar-coating the truth by failing to give the public the news it needs about possible terrorist threats. Manhattan residents (61%) and whites (60%) in particular view the press as scaremongers, as do newshounds (58%).

In the wake of several high profile revelations about crooked reporters and errant reporting, the majority of New Yorkers (52%) think news organizations cover-up their mistakes. Only 30% say that news organizations are willing to admit their mistakes. Those who are disproportionately likely to think that newspapers cover-up their mistakes include Black men (63%), Latinos (62%), and 55 to 64 year olds (59%). Nationally, 23% of Americans believe the media is willing to admit their mistakes while 67% believe they try to cover-up their errors.<sup>15</sup>

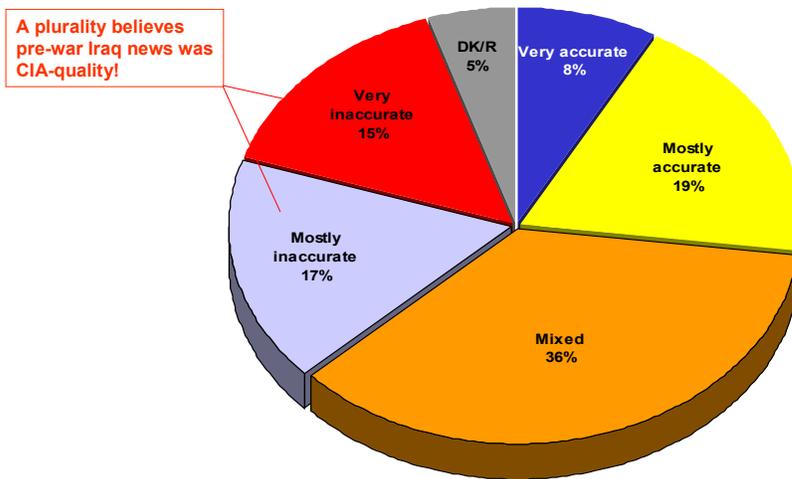
And New Yorkers believe the media has a lot of mistakes to cover-up – a majority (55%) believes that reporter fabrication is a very or somewhat common occurrence. In point of fact, over one-in-five (22%) New Yorkers claim that they *personally* have been close to or part of a local news story in which they *know* that the reporter made errors or factual mistakes in portraying the story.

<sup>15</sup> The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, News Media's Improved Image Proves Short-Lived, August 4, 2002.

To be sure, the NEW YORK TIMES' recent mea culpa regarding the gullibility of its coverage of the pre-war threat of Iraq's WMD may have affected the public's perception of the accuracy of the media's coverage of this issue. Almost a third (32%) of New Yorkers believes the pre-war news about the Iraqi threat to the U.S. was either mostly inaccurate or very inaccurate; 36% think it was mixed; only 27% think it was very accurate or mostly accurate. Those who are disproportionately dubious include those earning between \$86K and \$125K a year (42%), men over 45 (40%), and Black men (37%).

### When it Comes to the Pre-War News About the Iraqi Threat, New Yorkers Think the Media Was Chicken Little

Question 24: How accurate would you say was the pre-war news about the Iraq threat to the US provided by the New York City press?



### The Pace Poll

Chart 15

Finally, without a pre-disclosure baseline, it's impossible to assess the impact of the recent scandals at THE NEW YORK TIMES and USA TODAY on New Yorkers' confidence in the media's fundamental integrity. Nevertheless, it's disturbing to find out that a clear majority (55%) believes that fraud is a common media affliction. By comparison, just 38% of New Yorkers believe deliberate deceptions are *uncommon*. Young New Yorkers are even less trusting; they are more likely to describe such fraud as common (62%).

### Media Celebrities

As many critics suspect and the ratings bear out, people want their infotainment. For example, a majority of New Yorkers (53%) believe it's a good thing for cable news hosts to have strong political opinions; nevertheless, this does not suggest that New Yorkers think that broadcast news should be dominated by political spectacle.

Surprisingly, the people most likely to approve of politically-biased cable news hosts are Black men (71%). Americans in general favor the trend towards politically-opinionated hosts by a margin of 50% to 38%.<sup>16</sup> This leads us to our findings on media personalities.

New Yorkers' assessments of individual journalist-celebrities defy expectations. Perhaps not surprisingly, liberal satirists Al Franken and Michael Moore score well (28% approval to 14% disapproval, and 30% to 12%, respectively); yet, conservative firebrand, radio talk show host, and FOX News Cable Commentator Sean Hannity (23% approval to 13% disapproval) is similarly popular. His colleague at FOX News, Bill O'Reilly, is a somewhat more divisive figure around town; although he has a significantly higher approval rating, his negative rating is also higher (33% approval to 20% disapproval).

In defiance of New York's unofficial anthem, Rush Limbaugh has managed to make it anywhere without making it here; just 24% of New Yorkers approve of him, while 36% disapprove of him. And despite New Yorkers' reputation for feistiness, the more thoughtful and reserved Brian Lehrer commands respect; 23% approve of Brian Lehrer while just 7% disapprove.

Likewise, New Yorkers are not known for their sensitivity to foul language; yet, they crowned Howard Stern the King of All Disapprovals. Over half (51%) of New Yorkers give Mr. Stern negative marks for his performances. To be sure, Mr. Stern's positive approval rating (29%) is among the highest of the personalities we tested. As for Mr. Stern's nemesis, Don Imus splits New Yorkers a bit more evenly; New Yorkers are almost as likely to approve (25%) as disapprove (20%) of his job performance.

Interestingly, the notion of angry white male conservatives does not hold in New York City. That is, white men are among the most likely to disapprove of Rush Limbaugh (52% of white men disapprove) and his doppelgänger Sean Hannity (22% of white men disapprove). In contrast, they are more likely to approve of their liberal antithesis Al Franken (47% of white men approve).

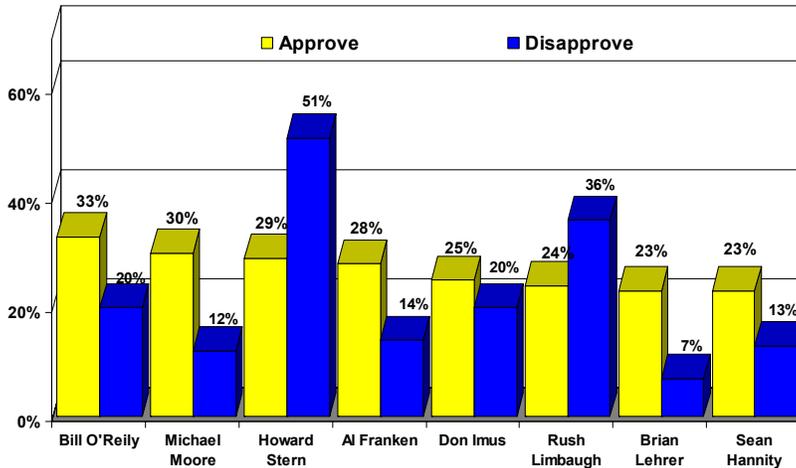
As New York liberals often have alleged, education and support for Rush Limbaugh are inversely related. Thus, college educated men and women (50% and 46% respectively) are more likely to disapprove of Rush than New Yorkers in general. Similarly, daily newspaper readers disproportionately disapprove of Rush (42%). In contrast, better-educated New Yorkers (those with at least a college degree) are more likely to approve of Mr. Limbaugh's Johnny-come-lately competitor, Al Franken (37%).

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<sup>16</sup> The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, News Media's Improved Image Proves Short-Lived, August 4, 2002.

# New Yorkers & Their Media Personalities

Questions 54-61: Please tell me if you approve or disapprove of the job they do.



The Pace Poll

Chart 16

## V. CONCLUSION

Joseph Pulitzer wrote that “Our Republic and its press will rise or fall together. An able, disinterested, public-spirited press...can preserve the public virtue without which popular government is a sham and a mockery. A cynical, mercenary, demagogic press will produce in time a people as base as itself.” In other words, how the media performs its function in a democracy can change the course of human events. Obviously, with that power comes responsibility. And it is the purpose of the annual Pace Poll Media Study to help the New York City press shoulder its burden.

In that spirit, several ideas emerge:

1. New Yorkers generally trust the media, but they remain profoundly concerned about the media’s vulnerability to reporter fraud. To preserve that trust, the media should continue to address this concern.
2. New Yorkers approve of opinionated hosts, but they disapprove of hosts who employ unusually profane language or particularly harsh rhetoric. Thus, a modicum of civility remains an important attribute for would-be media celebrities.
3. Credibility is a significant, if not exclusive component of New Yorkers’ assessment of a media outlet’s job performance. In the never ending race for ratings and readers, it never hurts to remind ourselves that good reporting still matters.

When asked what sort of government the founders had created in their secret deliberations inside Constitution Hall, Benjamin Franklin replied, “A republic...if you can keep it.” Likewise, the Constitution created a free press, if we can keep it. Consider this our humble attempt to help preserve that precious gift.

## **VI. METHODOLOGY**

These results are based on telephone interviews conducted from May 31 – June 7, 2004, with 642 New York City residents 18 years of age or older. The sample consisted of phone numbers selected via random digit dial (RDD) from among exchanges that ensured each region was represented in proportion to its population.

The findings of the survey are statistically significant within a  $\pm 4\%$  margin of error at a 95% level of confidence. Error margins increase for cross-tabulations. Though the Pace Poll adheres to strict methodological standards, the practical elements of fielding any survey can introduce additional sources of error.