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## **New Poll Finds Political Party Affiliation Drives Americans' Views on our Democracy**

WASHINGTON, DC – Political party, far more than any other demographic characteristic including age, race, or education level, drives Americans' views on our democracy, according to a new poll from Georgetown University and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

The [2018 American Institutional Confidence Poll](#), sponsored by Georgetown University's Baker Center for Leadership & Governance and Knight Foundation, found that far more Republicans (76%) are "somewhat" or "very" satisfied with U.S. democracy, compared to just 44% of Democrats and 40% of the overall public.

Party affiliation also largely determined confidence in our institutions: the Executive branch is the institution in which Democrats have the least confidence, while for Republicans it is the fourth-highest. The press is the institution in which Republicans have the least confidence, while it is the seventh highest institution in terms of confidence for Democrats.

"Few institutions have the confidence of Americans across the political spectrum," said **Jonathan Ladd**, an associate professor at Georgetown's McCourt School of Public Policy and the survey director. "We need to look seriously at this troubling trend, to determine why this is happening and how we can return more institutions to a place of widespread respect."

### **Age, Location, and Social Media Usage Not a Factor in Satisfaction with Democracy**

The authors also examined other demographic characteristics to determine what drives satisfaction with democracy, including age, region of the country, and social media usage.

The survey found that the young are no less satisfied with democracy than any other age group. In fact, the young had the highest level of satisfaction with democracy, although all the age groups scored similarly.

Similar to the results among younger respondents, the survey found that white midwesterners without a college degree do not have less confidence in institutions and satisfaction with democracy than other Americans.

The survey also found that social media usage – including those who are “always using” (at least 10 times a day on a single platform, 19%) social media, those who “never use” (14%) social media; and those who use social media “regularly” (67%) – has basically no relationship to satisfaction with democracy. To the extent that there is any relationship, it is that non-users of social media have the lowest level of satisfaction with democracy.

“In addition to satisfaction with democracy, we found no evidence that increased social media usage was related to lower levels of confidence in the press, the FBI, or political parties, all institutions where we might have suspected increased exposure to social media could have driven down confidence,” said **Joshua Tucker**, a professor in the Wilf Family Department of Politics at New York University and a survey co-author. “While still preliminary, these findings suggest that the received wisdom that social media could be responsible for declining trust in institutions in the United States may need to be re-examined.”

### **Cutting-Edge Methodology**

The 2018 American Institutional Confidence Poll was co-authored by **Jonathan Ladd**, associate professor, McCourt School of Public Policy and the Department of Government, Georgetown University; **Joshua A. Tucker**, professor in the Wilf Family Department of Politics, New York University; and **Sean Kates**, a PhD candidate in the Department of Politics, New York University.

They surveyed 5,400 Americans, more than five times the typical political poll, including over-samples of African Americans, Latinx Americans, and Asian Americans.

The poll included both close-ended and open-ended questions about confidence in specific institutions and satisfaction with American democracy, enabling researchers to go beyond quantitative snapshots about respondents’ views and draw qualitative insights into their underlying reasons and feelings.

*For more information about the **2018 American Institutional Confidence Poll** visit [bakercenter.georgetown.edu/aicpoll](http://bakercenter.georgetown.edu/aicpoll).*

### **About The Baker Center for Leadership & Governance**

The [Baker Center for Leadership & Governance](#) is housed within the McCourt School of Public Policy at Georgetown University, and is committed to cultivating future leaders, preparing them with the skills, capabilities, and adaptive mindset they need to meet the rapidly evolving challenges of the 21st century government, business and civil society. Much of our work centers on giving undergraduate and graduate students hands-on experience in building bridges across political, social and cultural divides.

### **About the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation**

[Knight Foundation](#) is a national foundation with strong local roots. We invest in journalism, in the arts, and in the success of cities where brothers John S. and James L. Knight once published newspapers. Our goal is to foster informed and engaged communities, which we believe are essential for a healthy democracy.

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