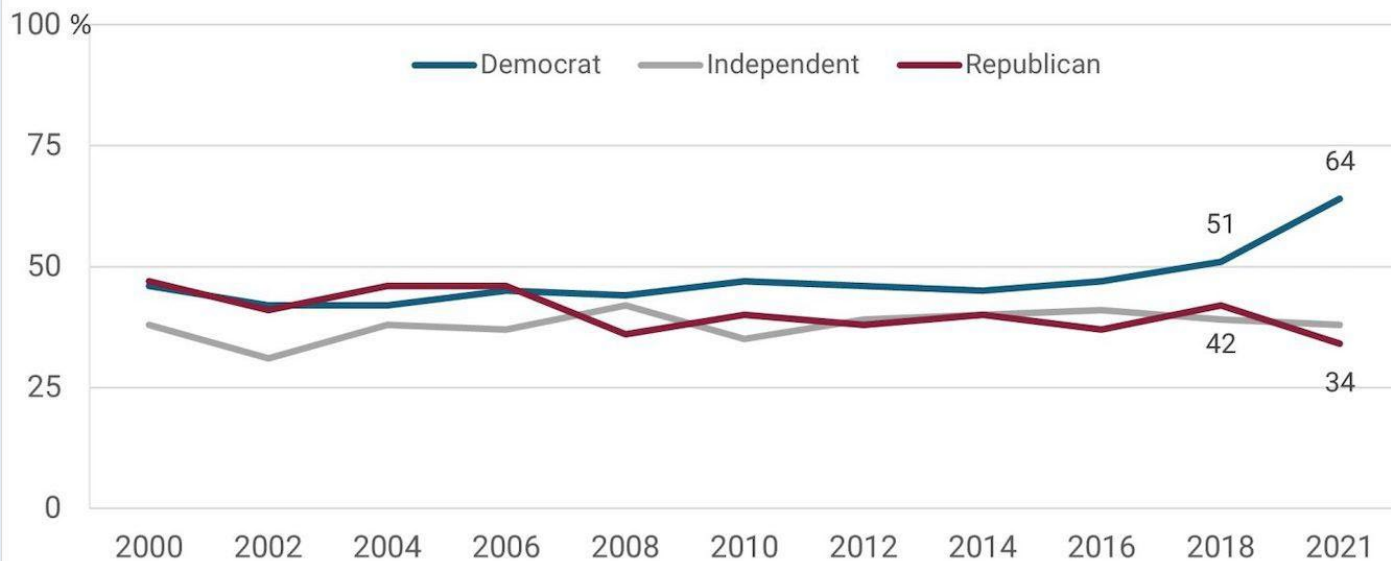


Science Journalism

Trust in science has become a divided issue:

Large partisan gap on confidence in the scientific community.

Percent of adults who have a great deal of confidence



Question: [Scientific community] I am going to name some institutions in this country. As far as the people running these institutions are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?

Source: General Social Survey, the latest conducted December 1, 2020-May 3, 2021

Science Journalism

- **A definition of journalism:** A set of transparent, independent procedures aimed at gathering, verifying & reporting truthful information to citizens in a democracy
- **A definition of science:** A set of transparent, independent procedures aimed at gathering & testing information to explain and understand phenomena in the natural world.

Science Journalism

Why isn't news coverage of science more effective?

- Some journalists don't fully understand it
- Some journalists don't explain it well
- Some journalists assume it's unassailable
- Some journalists don't look at it critically
- Some journalists don't address public concerns

Science Journalism

Even knowledgeable science reporters can have issues:

- They're not always great writers
- They sometimes use too much scientific jargon
- They're sometimes not critical enough
- They sometimes have a narrow point of view
- They're not experts on everything

Science Journalism

Issues with audience beliefs about science:

- Science is an ongoing process – not always well understood
- Continual testing and questioning existing research
- There is often no single, correct answer for all time
- New studies lead to reevaluating previous assumptions & practices
- Influencers can portray evolution as contradiction
- Can promote doubt about all science
- For uninvolved audience, simple (sometimes misguided) ideas are easier to grasp than complex realities
- This can be exploited in the digital age

Science Journalism

General types of science coverage:

- **Outcome**
 - Just reports general conclusions of studies
 - Little or nothing about how they were reached
- **Method**
 - Reports conclusions of studies in some depth
 - Briefly touches on methods involved in arriving at results
- **Process**
 - Reports both conclusions and process in finding them
 - Aims to enlighten reader
- **Connection to society**
 - Ties science topic directly to human activities
 - Can involve political issues, health or environment policies, etc.
- **Scientist**
 - Focuses on people involved – a scientist or group of scientists
 - Can look at specific project or whole career
- **Problematic**
 - Questions outcomes or processes; sometimes science itself
 - Can be valid if reporter has understanding of subject

Science Journalism

Types of coverage

- Outcome
- Method
- Process
- Connection to society
- Scientist
- Problematic

Reporter Roles

- Disseminator
- Interpreter
- Watchdog
- Adversary
- Mobilizer

Science Journalism

Scientific literacy:

- Basic definition – public's general understanding of science
- Not high, especially among people without higher education
- How much should the average person know?
- Who decides this?
- Do journalists' attempts at education actually work?
- Heavy-handed treatment can backfire
- Politicized topics can make people dig their heels in
- What should journalists do?