

Most Americans Don't Trust Mass Media: According to a September 28 Gallup poll, the number of Americans who trust mass media, such as newspapers, TV and radio, has declined significantly over the past decade. For the past year, only 40% of Americans have a “great deal” or a “fair amount” of trust and confidence in mass media.

Trust in the media tends to fall during election years including 2000 (declined from 55% to 51%), 2004 (54% to 44%), 2008 (47% to 43%) and 2012 (44% to 40%). There is a generation gap: only thirty-six percent of eighteen to forty-nine year olds have a “great deal” or “fair amount” of trust compared to 45% of those over the age of fifty.

A majority of Republicans and Independents have not trusted the media for over a decade. 1998 was the last time most Republicans (52%) had a great deal or fair amount of trust in mass media and 2003 was the last year for Independents (53%). In 2015, only 32% of Republicans trust the media, albeit up from 27% in 2014, as do 33% of Independents, a five-point decrease from 38% in 2014. Fifty-five percent of Democrats say they trust media, a one-point increase from 2014.

Since trust in mass media is historically low, political candidates have even more reason to reach voters directly, especially via the web and cable TV. Candidates can take advantage of alternative methods, such as social media platforms, especially to attract Independent and younger voters, to develop and garnish support.

