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86% Believe Newspaper Journalists are Biased as Media Honesty and Ethics Ratings Fall

Finding No. 3778 - September 16, 2004

Australians are very critical of the media being often biased, with 86% of Australians saying Newspaper journalists are often biased, 75% of Australians said Talk-back radio announcers were often biased and 73% TV reporters and journalists, a special Morgan Poll finds.

Of Newspaper journalists, Andrew Bolt (3.5%) was most often mentioned by Australians as being often biased, followed by Piers Ackerman (3%) and Miranda Devine (1.5%). Ray Martin (6%) and Kerry O'Brien (4.5%) were the most frequently mentioned TV reporters or journalists who were often biased, along with Laurie Oakes (2%) and Richard Carlton (1%).

Talk-back 'giants' John Laws and Alan Jones topped the list, mentioned by 28.5% (37% in NSW) and 26% (41.5% in NSW) of Australians respectively. They were followed by Derryn Hinch, Neil Mitchell and Stan Zemanek, all with 3.5% of Australians naming them as often biased. Ninemsn (3%) topped the list of internet sites that were often biased, followed by Fairfax Digital (1.5%) and abc.net.au (1%).

Newspaper journalists were considered by 63% of Australians to often get facts wrong, while more than half of Australians said Talk-back radio announcers (55%) and TV reporters and journalists (54%) often get facts wrong. Specifically, Alan Jones (13.5%) and John Laws (13%) were the talk-back radio announcers most often mentioned for getting their facts wrong, while Ray Martin was the TV reporter most often mentioned by respondents for getting facts wrong (2.5%).

Television reporters and journalists (74%) took top place in regards to invading people's privacy unnecessarily. Newspaper journalists (69%) were the next highest, while only 26% of Australians believed Talk-back radio announcers invaded people's privacy unnecessarily. TV current affairs programs and reporters were mentioned most often as unnecessarily invading people's privacy, with Ray Martin mentioned by 4% of Australians, followed by *A Current Affair* (2%), *Today Tonight* (1.5%) and Naomi Robson (1%).

Alan Jones and John Laws were named by 13.5% and 9% of Australians respectively as being too right-wing leaning. Newspaper journalists Piers Akerman and Andrew Bolt were mentioned by 1.5% of respondents, along with TV journalist Ray Martin. Kerry O'Brien was mentioned by 1.5% as being too left-wing leaning.

While a poll on Image of Professions is conducted annually covering 28 professions, this special Morgan Poll was conducted in September in the lead up to the Federal election and covered seven professions - Doctors, Police, News journalists, TV reporters, Talk-back radio announcers, Federal and State MPs.

Australians' regard for the honesty and ethics of Talk-back radio announcers, TV reporters and Newspaper journalists has dropped since December last year. Talk-back radio announcers (18%, down 3% since December 2003) scored the highest rating for honesty and ethics out of the three media professions surveyed, followed closely by TV reporters or journalists (16%, down 1%). Newspaper journalists (10%, down 2%) were the lowest of the three media professions surveyed.

Australians' believe Federal Members of Parliament (MPs) standards of honesty and ethics have plummeted. Now, only 9% of Australians mentioned Federal MPs as having high or very high standards of honesty and ethics, down 8% from 17% in December 2003. This is the lowest result recorded for Federal MPs since 1998, when they were rated by 7% of Australians as having high or very high standards of honesty and ethics. State MPs also experienced a sharp decline, with 10% of Australians now rating State MPs as having high or very high honesty and ethical standards (down 7% from 17%).

The only profession to experience a rise in standards of honesty and ethics were Doctors (81%, up 1%), and Australians' regard for the honesty and ethics of Police is down 7% to 57% - the lowest result since 1997.

These are the findings of a special telephone Morgan Poll conducted September 1/2, 2004 with an Australia-wide cross-section of 678 people aged 14+.

For further information:

Gary Morgan: Office (03) 9224 5213 Mobile 0411 129 094 Home (03) 9419 3242
Michele Levine: Office (03) 9224 5215 Mobile 0411 129 093 Home (03) 9817 3066

Occupations	'85	'86	'87	'88	'89	'90	'91	'92	'93	'94	'95	'96	'97	'98	'99	'00	'01		'02	'03	'04	Dif
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%		%	%	%	%
Doctors	64	63	65	67	62	70	69	69	65	66	69	72	66	69	74	71	75		80	80	81	+1
Police	53	56	56	53	53	54	54	53	54	56	59	55	55	60	62	62		58	65	64	57	-7
Talkback radio announcers	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	18	14	17		17	21	18	-3
TV reporters	-	-	-	-	16	17	15	14	15	16	13	12	11	12	14	12	18		18	17	16	-1
Newspaper journalists	11	12	11	11	9	10	8	7	8	8	8	7	7	9	9	7	13		9	12	10	+3
State MPs	14	17	12	14	15	11	10	10	11	10	12	12	9	7	13	12	14		17	17	10	-7
Federal MPs	13	16	13	14	15	13	10	10	11	10	9	13	9	7	13	11	16		16	17	9	-8

Table 2 - Bias

Respondents were asked: "Do you believe Newspaper Journalists/ TV Reporters or Journalists/ Talk-back Radio Announcers/ Internet Sites are often biased?"

	Newspaper Journalists	TV Reporters or Journalists	Talkback Radio Announcers	Internet Sites
	%	%	%	%
Yes, often biased	86	73	75	41
No, not often biased	11	23	16	14
Can't say	3	4	9	45
Total	100	100	100	100

Table 3

Respondents were then asked: "Which Newspaper Journalists specifically?"

	Most often mentioned Newspaper Journalists	
	%	
Andrew Bolt	3.5	10.5% in Victoria
Piers Akerman	3	8.5% in NSW
Miranda Devine	1.5	4% in NSW
Alan Jones	1	2.5% in NSW
Phillip Adams	1	
Someone else mentioned	10.5	
Can't say	69	
Total Yes, often biased*	86	

*Note: Some people gave more than one response

Table 4

Respondents were then asked: "Which TV Reporters or Journalists specifically?"

	Most often mentioned TV Reporters or Journalists
	%

Ray Martin	6
Kerry O'Brien	4.5
Laurie Oakes	2
Richard Carlton	1
A Current Affair	1
Someone else mentioned	9.5
Can't say	53.5
Total Yes, often biased*	73

*Note: Some people gave more than one response

Table 5

Respondents were then asked: "Which Talkback Radio Announcers specifically?"

Most often mentioned Talkback Radio Announcers		
	%	
John Laws	28.5	37% in NSW
Alan Jones	26	41.5% in NSW
Derryn Hinch	3.5	10.5% in Victoria
Neil Mitchell	3.5	12% in Victoria
Stan Zemanek	3.5	6.5% in NSW, 2.5% in Victoria
Someone else mentioned	13	
Can't say	28.5	
Total Yes, often biased*	75	

*Note: Some people gave more than one response

Table 6

Respondents were then asked: "Which Internet Sites specifically?"

Most often mentioned Internet Sites	
	%
Ninemsn	3
Fairfax Digital (F2)	1.5
Abc.net.au	1
Yahoo.com.au	0.5
Advertising sites/ Pop-ups/ Any site promoting themselves	0.5
Mentioned other site	4.5
Can't say	32.5
Total Yes, often biased*	41

*Note: Some people gave more than one response

Table 7 - Often Get Facts Wrong

Respondents were asked: "Do you believe Newspaper Journalists/ TV Reporters or Journalists/ Talk-back Radio Announcers/ Internet Sites often get their facts wrong?"

	Newspaper Journalists	TV Reporters or Journalists	Talkback Radio Announcers	Internet Sites
	%	%	%	%
Yes, often get their facts wrong	63	54	55	38
No, don't often get facts wrong	30	38	30	16
Can't say	7	8	15	46
Total	100	100	100	100

Table 8

Respondents were then asked: "Which Newspaper Journalists specifically?"

	Most often mentioned Newspaper Journalists
	%
Piers Akerman	0.5
Jill Singer	0.5
Courier Mail	0.5
Sydney Morning Herald	0.5
Local newspaper writers	0.5
Someone else mentioned	3.5
Can't say	57.5
Total Yes, often get facts wrong*	63

*Note: Some people gave more than one response

Table 9

Respondents were then asked: "Which TV Reporters or Journalists specifically?"

	Most often mentioned TV Reporters or Journalists
	%
Ray Martin	2.5
Richard Carlton	0.5
Mike Munro	0.5
A Current Affair	0.5
Commercial TV channels	0.5
Someone else mentioned	4.5
Can't say	46.5
Total Yes, often get facts wrong*	54

*Note: Some people gave more than one response

Table 10

Respondents were then asked: "Which Talkback Radio Announcers specifically?"

	Most often mentioned Talkback Radio Announcers	
	%	
Alan Jones	13.5	23% in NSW
John Laws	13	21% in NSW
Stan Zemanek	2	4% in NSW
Neil Mitchell	1.5	5.5% in Victoria
Derryn Hinch	0.5	1.5% in Victoria
Someone else mentioned	5	
Can't say	33.5	
Total Yes, often get facts wrong*	55	

*Note: Some people gave more than one response

Table 11

Respondents were then asked: "Which Internet Sites specifically?"

	Most often mentioned Internet Sites
	%
Ninemsn	2
Yahoo.com.au	0.5
Medical sites	0.5
Fairfax Digital (F2)	0.5
Abc.net.au	0.5
Mentioned other site	4
Can't say	31.5
Total Yes, often get facts wrong*	38

*Note: Some people gave more than one response

Table 12 - Invade People's Privacy Unnecessarily

Respondents were asked: "Do you believe Newspaper Journalists/ TV Reporters or Journalists/ Talk-back Radio Announcers/ Internet Sites invade people's privacy unnecessarily?"

	Nespaper Journalists	TV Reporters or Journalists	Talkback Radio Announcers	Internet Sites
	%	%	%	%
Yes, invade people's privacy unnecessarily	69	74	26	21
No, don't invade people's privacy unnecessarily	25	23	62	38
Can't say	6	3	12	41
Total	100	100	100	100

Table 13

Respondents were then asked: "Which Newspaper Journalists specifically?"

	Most often mentioned Newspaper Journalists
	%
Piers Akerman	0.5
Celebrity reporters	0.5
Herald Sun	0.5
Local newspaper writers	0.5
Sydney Morning Herald	0.5
Someone else mentioned	2.5
Can't say	65
Total Yes, invade people's privacy unnecessarily*	69

*Note: Some people gave more than one response

Table 14

Respondents were then asked: "Which TV Reporters or Journalists specifically?"

	Most often mentioned TV Reporters or Journalists
	%
Ray Martin	4
Naomi Robson	1
A Current Affair	2
Today Tonight	1.5
Current affairs programs	1
Someone else mentioned	7
Can't say	62.5
Total Yes, invade people's privacy unnecessarily*	74

*Note: Some people gave more than one response

Table 15

Respondents were then asked: "Which Talkback Radio Announcers specifically?"

	Most often mentioned Talkback Radio Announcers	
	%	
John Laws	5	7.5% in NSW
Alan Jones	5	8% in NSW
Derryn Hinch	1	3.5% in Victoria
Stan Zemanek	1	2% in Victoria, 1.5% in NSW
Neil Mitchell	1	4% in Victoria

Someone else mentioned	1.5
Can't say	17
Total yes, invade people's privacy unnecessarily*	26

*Note: Some people gave more than one response

Table 16

Respondents were then asked: "Which Internet Sites specifically?"

	Most often mentioned Internet Sites
	%
Pornographic sites	1
Advertising sites/ pop-ups/ Any site promoting themselves	0.5
SPAM	0.5
Hotmail	0.5
Ninemsn	0.5
Mentioned other site	2
Can't say	17
Total Yes, invade people's privacy unnecessarily*	21

*Note: Some people gave more than one response

Table 17 - Are Too Left-Wing Leaning

Respondents were asked: "Do you believe Newspaper Journalists/ TV Reporters or Journalists/ Talk-back Radio Announcers/ Internet Sites are too left-wing leading?"

	Newspaper Journalists	TV Reporters or Journalists	Talkback Radio Announcers	Internet Sites
	%	%	%	%
Yes, too left-wing leaning	22	20	17	5
No, not too left-wing leaning	55	58	57	43
Can't say	23	22	26	52
Total	100	100	100	100

Table 18

Respondents were then asked: "Which Newspaper Journalists specifically?"

	Most often mentioned Newspaper Journalists	
	%	
Jill Singer	0.5	2.5% in Victoria
Named journalists including Laurie Oakes, Mark Day and Mike Secombe	0.5#	

The Age	0.5
Someone else mentioned	1.5
Can't say	18.5
Total Yes, are too left-wing leaning*	22

*Note: Some people gave more than one response
 #Each less than 0.5%

Table 19

Respondents were then asked: *"Which TV Reporters or Journalists specifically?"*

	Most often mentioned TV Reporters or Journalists	
	%	
Kerry O'Brien	1.5	
Ray Martin	1	
Laurie Oakes	0.5	
Steve Lieberman	0.5	
ABC TV	0.5	
Someone else mentioned	1.5	
Can't say	15	
Total Yes, are too left-wing leaning*	20	

*Note: Some people gave more than one response

Table 20

Respondents were then asked: *"Which Talkback Radio Announcers specifically?"*

	Most often mentioned Talkback Radio Announcers	
	%	
Alan Jones	2.5	4% in NSW
John Laws	2.5	
Mike Carlton	0.5	
Derryn Hinch	0.5	
Liam Bartlett	0.5	
Someone else mentioned	2	
Can't say	10.5	
Total Yes, are too left-wing leaning*	17	

*Note: Some people gave more than one response

Table 21

Respondents were then asked: *"Which Internet Sites specifically?"*

Most often mentioned Internet Sites	
	%
Mentioned a site	0.5
Can't say	4
Total Yes, are too left-wing leaning	4.5

Table 22 - Too Right-Wing Leaning

Respondents were asked: "Do you believe Newspaper Journalists/ TV Reporters or Journalists/ Talk-back Radio Announcers/ Internet Sites are too right-wing leaning?"

	Newspaper Journalists	TV Reporters or Journalists	Talkback Radio Announcers	Internet Sites
	%	%	%	%
Yes, too right-wing leaning	22	17	26	5
No, not too right-wing leaning	54	59	47	41
Can't say	24	24	27	54
Total	100	100	100	100

Table 23

Respondents were then asked: "Which Newspaper Journalists specifically?"

Most often mentioned Newspaper Journalists	
	%
Piers Akerman	1.5
Andrew Bolt	1.5
Gerard Henderson	0.5
Telegraph	1
Herald Sun	0.5
Someone else mentioned	2
Can't say	16
Total Yes, are too right-wing leaning*	22

*Note: Some people gave more than one response

Table 24

Respondents were then asked: "Which TV Reporters or Journalists specifically?"

Most often mentioned TV Reporters or Journalists	
	%
Ray Martin	1.5
Richard Carlton	0.5
Naomi Robson	0.5
Steve Lieberman	0.5

Channel 9	0.5
Someone else mentioned	2
Can't say	13
Total Yes, are too right-wing leaning*	17

*Note: Some people gave more than one response

Table 25

Respondents were then asked: "Which Talkback Radio Announcers specifically?"

	Most often mentioned Talkback Radio Announcers	
	%	
Alan Jones	13.5	21.5% in NSW
John Laws	9	12.5% in NSW
Stan Zemanek	2	4% in NSW
Neil Mitchell	1	3% in NSW
Derryn Hinch	0.5	
Someone else mentioned	3	
Can't say	9.5	
Total Yes, are too right-wing leaning*	26	

*Note: Some people gave more than one response

Table 26

Respondents were then asked: "Which Internet Sites specifically?"

	Most often mentioned Internet Sites
	%
Ninemsn	0.5
Yahoo.com.au	#
Foxnews.com	#
News.com.au	#
Abc.net.au	#
Someone else mentioned	#
Can't say	4
Total Yes, are too right-wing leaning*	5

*Note: Some people gave more than one response

#Less than 0.5%