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USAFACTS RELEASES INAUGURAL “STATE OF THE FACTS” POLL

SURVEY FINDS AMERICANS YEARNING FOR TRUSTED FACTS AND UNBIASED INFORMATION ABOUT GOVERNMENT

Respondents also lament decline of civic education, lack trust in information on social media – a top source of news and information for millennials

July 14, 2017 – The public is hungry for facts about their government but skeptical of the information they receive, with 3 out of 4 considering it biased, according to a new national survey of 2,521 Americans conducted by the Harris Poll for USAFacts. USAFacts is the nonpartisan, \$10 million initiative founded by former Microsoft CEO and LA Clippers owner Steve Ballmer aimed at making government information more accessible and understandable to the public.

When asked about the sources they use to find out about their government, most Americans said they turn to major media, but a majority (57%) of millennials said they turn to social media for their information. 60% of all respondents said social media posts are rarely or never based on facts.

The poll findings paint a portrait of an intensely interested but wary public: data-hungry citizens who prefer facts and figures to anecdotes, who believe that civic education is fair or poor in this country, and who believe that most information they receive about government revenues and expenditures is biased.

“Americans need more trusted, transparent, and understandable information about their government and its expenditures,” said Ballmer. “We have been amazed by the level of interest we’ve seen in USAFacts in its first few months, and we wondered whether that interest in better understanding government’s finances, outcomes, and information about our population was more widespread. This survey suggests the answer is a resounding ‘yes.’ We hope projects like USAFacts spark more reasoned debate about the big issues and questions facing our nation.”

The ‘State of the Facts’:

- 88% of Americans prefer facts and figures to anecdotes. They also prefer to get information in analyzed or written form, rather than in raw form.
- Media (both national: 67% and local: 65%) is relied on most for government information.
- 76% feel that the information they come across about government expenditures and outcomes is biased.

- 77% find civic education in the United States to be “fair or poor.”
- 89% of respondents said most people only believe “facts that fit their beliefs,” but nearly an equal number (88%) believe that a more informed debate would be possible in the country if people used the same data.
- 80% report that facts they learn change their beliefs.
- People are more interested in national data (66%) than they are local information, but view state and local information as more clear, unbiased (42% rate it excellent or good) and trustworthy (64%).
- When it comes to government information, people are most interested (74%) in where the government spends its money.
- The government data and information people are most interested in track closely to issues currently in the news: crime and the justice system, taxes, healthcare, the government budget/deficit, and Medicare/care for the elderly.
- 90% of Americans see data as critical to believing information; 81% believe it must come from a non-partisan source to be seen as factual.

Read more survey results, and more about the polling methodology, at usafacts.org/reports.

About USAFacts

USAFacts is a non-partisan civic initiative that provides a data-driven portrait of our government’s finances, outcomes, and the US population as a free public service. USAFacts was created and financed by Steve Ballmer and launched publicly on April 18, 2017.

About The Harris Poll®

Begun in 1963, The Harris Poll is one of the longest running surveys measuring public opinion in the US and is highly regarded throughout the world. The nationally representative polls, conducted primarily online, measure the knowledge, opinions, behaviors, and motivations of the general public.

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