



Celebrating 5 years

CENTER FOR POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

National survey shows public opposes news media showing images of ISIS beheadings

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - January 29, 2015

For more information or to discuss the results, contact: Donna O'Brien, Office of Communication and Marketing (302) 766-5103.

A national survey by the University of Delaware's Center for Political Communication shows a large majority of Americans say the news media should not show images of beheadings by the organization ISIS. Fully 70% of respondents said news media companies should not show such images. Only 26% said news media companies should show the images. The telephone survey was conducted from October 21-26, 2014, shortly after ISIS released videos of several Western hostages being beheaded by members of the organization. In January 2015, ISIS claimed to have beheaded a Japanese hostage.

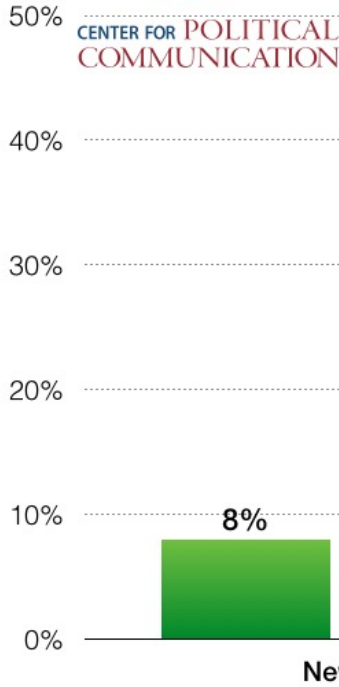
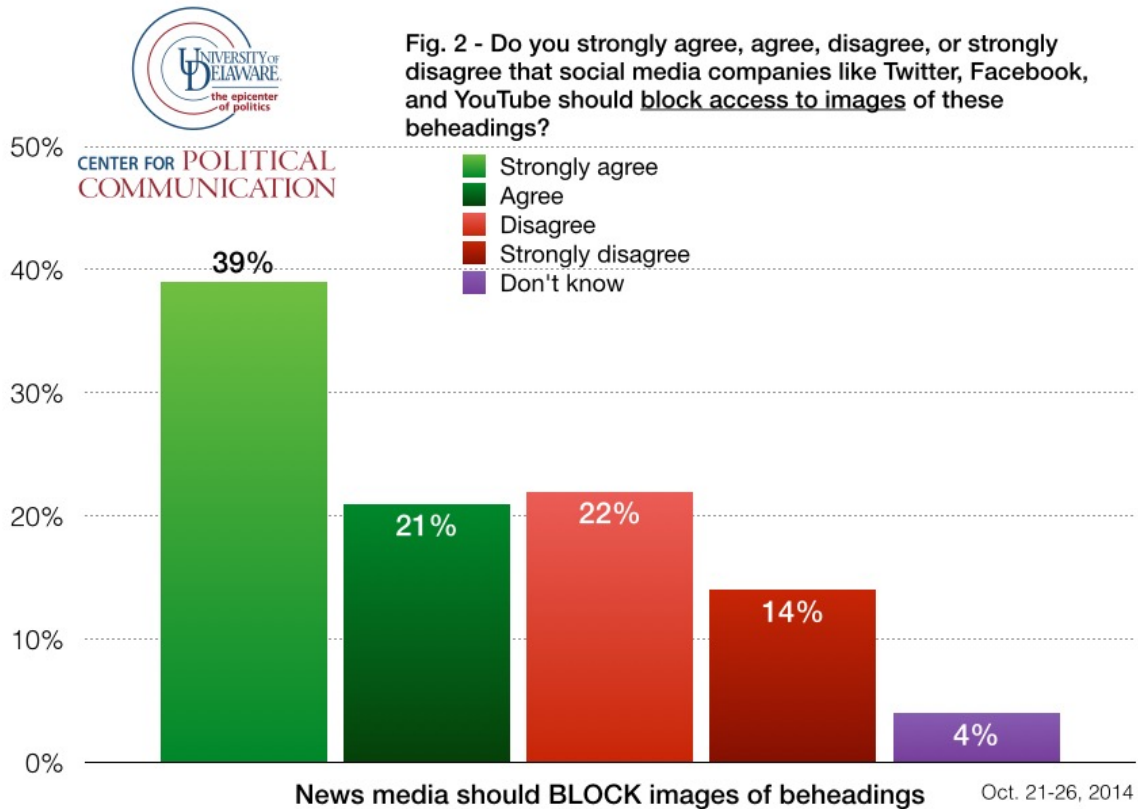


Fig. 1 - As you may know, the organization called ISIS has beheaded journalists and aid workers. Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree that news media companies should show images of these beheadings?

News media should **SHOW** images of beheadings Oct. 21-26, 2014

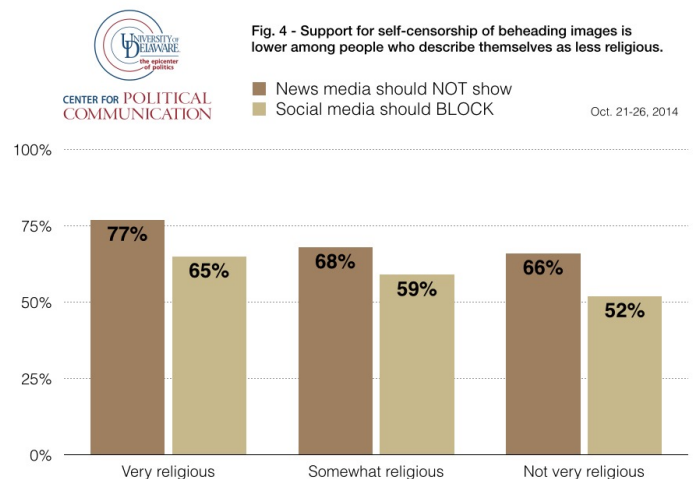
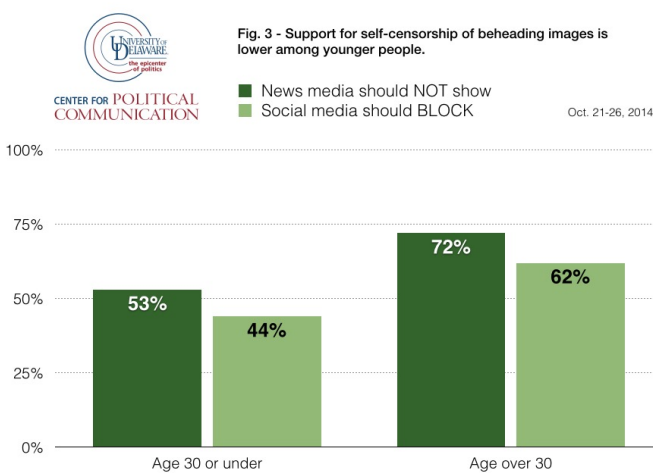
A majority of Americans, 60%, also said social media companies like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube should block access to images of these beheadings. In contrast, only 36% said social media companies should not block access to such images. Controversy has surrounded the issue of whether social media companies should make editorial decisions about the content they allow on their sites.

(more)



“These results suggest Americans support self-censorship by the news media when it comes to these images,” said CPC Associate Director Paul Brewer, who supervised the study. “They also suggest Americans support social media sites taking on active roles as gatekeepers of what people should and shouldn’t see about public affairs.”

The study also shows support for self-censorship of beheading images is lower among younger people and people who describe themselves as less religious. Older and more religious people are more supportive of media taking steps to prevent such images from being seen.



About the study

The National Agenda Opinion Project research was funded by the University of Delaware's Center for Political Communication (CPC) and the William P. Frank Foundation. The study was supervised by the CPC's Associate Director, Paul Brewer, a professor in the Departments of Communication and Political Science & International Relations.

Results are based on telephone interviews with a representative sample of 900 adult U.S. residents. Telephone interviews were conducted via landline (n=450) and cell phone (n=450, including 243 without a landline phone). The survey was conducted under supervision of the Center for Political Communication by Princeton Survey Research Associates International, and the interviews were administered in English by Princeton Data Source. The data were collected from October 21-26, 2014. Statistical results are weighted to correct known demographic discrepancies. The margin of sampling error for the complete set of weighted data is ± 3.2 percentage points.

Readers should be aware that in addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

Please contact Paul Brewer at (302) 831-7771 for more details about the survey's methodology.

UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE CENTER FOR POLITICAL COMMUNICATION
OCTOBER 2014 NATIONAL AGENDA POLL

FINAL TOPLINE

October 21-26, 2014

N =900 U.S. Adult Residents

As you may know, the organization called ISIS has beheaded journalists and aid workers. Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree that news media companies should show images of these beheadings?

Strongly agree	8%
Agree	18%
Disagree	29%
Strongly disagree	41%
Don't know/refused (volunteered)	4%
TOTAL	100%

Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree that social media companies like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube should block access to images of these beheadings?

Strongly agree	39%
Agree	21%
Disagree	22%
Strongly disagree	14%
Don't know/refused (volunteered)	4%
TOTAL	100%

As you may know, the organization called ISIS has beheaded journalists and aid workers. Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree that news media companies should show images of these beheadings?... that social media companies like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube should block access to images of these beheadings?

	News media should NOT show images	Social media should BLOCK images
Very religious	77%	65%
Somewhat religious	68%	59%
Not too/Not at all religious	66%	52%

As you may know, the organization called ISIS has beheaded journalists and aid workers. Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree that news media companies should show images of these beheadings?... that social media companies like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube should block access to images of these beheadings?

	News media should NOT show images	Social media should BLOCK images
Age 30 or under	53%	72%
Over age 30	44%	62%