

National survey shows public overwhelmingly opposes Internet “fast lanes”

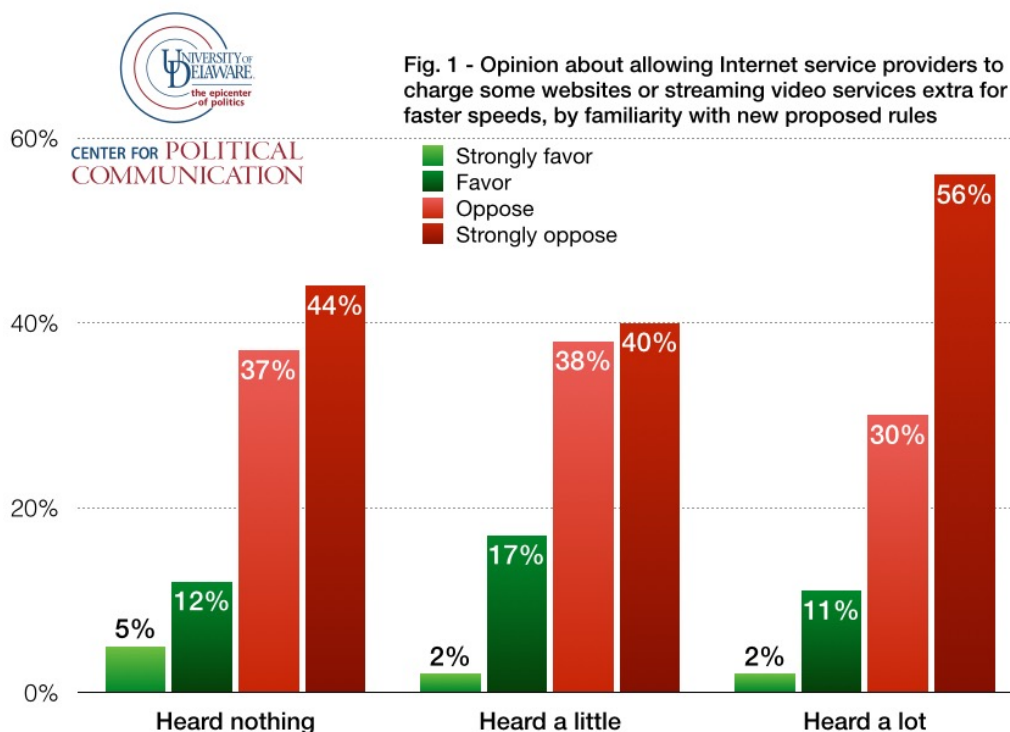
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - November 10, 2014

For more information or to discuss the results, contact: Andrea Boyle Tippett, Office of Communication and Marketing (302) 831-1421.

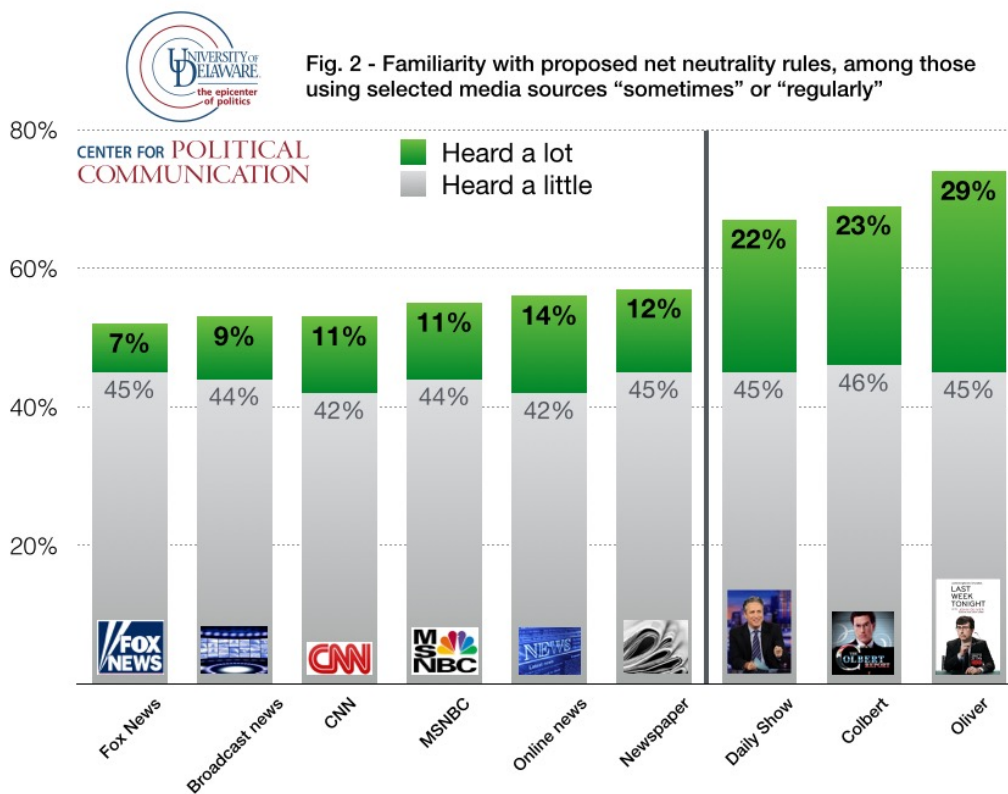
As Washington considers new rules governing Internet speeds and pricing, a new national survey by the University of Delaware’s Center for Political Communication shows a large majority of the public opposes the creation of premium Internet “fast lanes.” Fully 81% oppose “allowing Internet service providers to charge some websites or streaming video services extra for faster speeds,” while only 17% favor doing so. The survey also reveals that viewers of satirical shows such as John Oliver’s *Last Week Tonight* and *The Colbert Report* are far more aware of the issue than consumers of traditional news sources.

The proposed rules could determine whether Internet service providers such as Comcast and Verizon are allowed to set aside higher-speed service for content providers who pay extra to guarantee access to so-called “fast-lanes.” Critics argue this would raise prices for customers of streaming video services, such as Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon, who watch movies and television through the Internet. It might also disadvantage start-up companies and non-profit content providers who do not have the financial resources to pay for “fast-lane” access. Internet service providers argue that government regulation of the Internet discourages innovation and investment. The Federal Communications Commission has received almost 4 million public comments on the issue, which has become known as “net neutrality.”

Opposition to the creation of “fast lanes” is strongest (86%) among those who say they have heard a lot about the proposed rules, but most Americans say they have heard little or nothing about the topic. The University of Delaware research found that only 10% of Americans have heard a lot about how “the U.S. government is considering new rules for Internet service providers.” Another 39% have heard a little, whereas fully half (50%) have heard nothing at all about the topic.

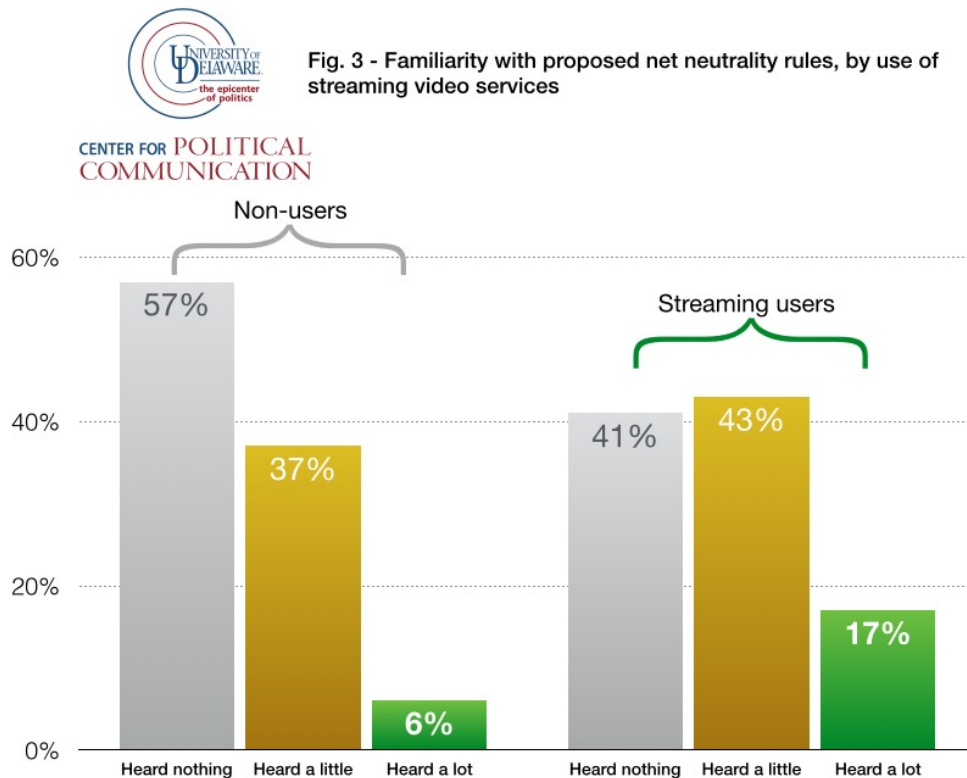


The research suggests satire programs can have a significant – and long-lasting – impact on public consciousness about an important public policy issue receiving little coverage in conventional news media. Among those who regularly or sometimes watch Last Week Tonight with John Oliver, an HBO comedy program that produced a widely viewed segment on net neutrality this summer, 29% say they have heard a lot about the proposed rules—almost three times greater than the level reported by the public as a whole. Among those who regularly or sometimes watch The Colbert Report, a Comedy Central program that also covered net neutrality earlier this year, 23% say they have heard a lot. By contrast, familiarity with the issue is much lower among those regularly or sometimes following traditional news media, including newspapers (12%), CNN (11%), MSNBC (11%), the broadcast evening news programs on ABC, CBS, or NBC (9%), and Fox News (7%).



(more)

Americans who use a streaming video service are much more likely than non-users to have heard about the proposed rules. Among streaming video service users, 17% say they have heard a lot about the topic and another 43% have heard a little. Among non-users, only 6% have heard a lot and another 37% have heard a little.



The telephone survey of 900 U.S. adults was conducted by the University of Delaware's Center for Political Communication from October 21-26, 2014. CPC Associate Director Paul Brewer supervised the study.

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

The U.S. government is considering new rules for Internet service providers... [Some people call this issue NET NEUTRALITY.] How much, if anything, have you heard about this—a lot, a little, or nothing at all?

	Question did not mention “net neutrality” (N = 441)	Question did mention “net neutrality” (N = 459)
A lot	12%	9%
A little	42%	37%
Nothing at all	46%	54%
TOTAL	100%	100%

Please tell me how strongly you FAVOR or OPPOSE each of the following: Allowing Internet service providers to charge some websites or streaming video services extra for faster speeds—do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose this?

Strongly favor	3%
Favor	14%
Oppose	37%
Strongly oppose	44%
Don’t know/refused (volunteered)	3%
TOTAL	100%

Note: Not all columns sum to 100% due to rounding.

Detailed Demographic Tables

The U.S. government is considering new rules for Internet service providers... [Some people call this issue NET NEUTRALITY.] How much, if anything, have you heard about this—a lot, a little, or nothing at all?

	Nothing at all	A little	A lot
ALL RESPONDENTS	50%	39%	10%
Women	52%	42%	7%
Men	49%	37%	15%
18-24 years of age	53%	39%	8%
25-34 years of age	60%	27%	13%
35-44 years of age	54%	35%	11%
45-54 years of age	45%	46%	9%
55-64 years of age	40%	48%	13%
65+ years of age	52%	42%	6%
High school or less	59%	34%	7%
Some college	48%	43%	10%
College degree +	40%	44%	16%
White	50%	40%	11%
African American	49%	44%	7%
Hispanic	57%	36%	7%
Other	51%	32%	17%
Republican	51%	43%	6%
Democrat	45%	41%	14%
Independent	53%	35%	12%

Note: Not all columns sum to 100% due to rounding.

Please tell me how strongly you FAVOR or OPPOSE each of the following: Allowing Internet service providers to charge some websites or streaming video services extra for faster speeds—do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose this?

	Strongly favor	Favor	Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Don't know/ Refused
ALL RESPONDENTS	3	14	37	44	3
Women	4	15	36	43	3
Men	3	13	37	44	3
18-24 years of age	5	15	31	50	0
25-34 years of age	6	15	34	44	1
35-44 years of age	2	13	36	48	1
45-54 years of age	3	16	30	46	4
55-64 years of age	3	14	40	38	6
65+ years of age	0	10	50	33	7
High school or less	4	13	35	45	3
Some college	4	11	38	45	2
College degree +	1	17	37	40	4
White	2	14	36	45	3
African American	5	14	41	36	5
Hispanic	6	12	33	48	1
Other	7	12	41	36	3
Republican	2	11	44	41	1
Democrat	2	13	34	47	4
Independent	4	17	31	45	3

Note: Not all columns sum to 100% due to rounding.