

# Trump, Biden, and Campaigning on Facebook in 2020



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## Abstract

In recent years, Facebook has become an important host for news, especially when it comes to politics. Candidates will use the platform to campaign, especially in swing states where votes matter most. With this comes misinformation and candidates attempting to appeal more to their preestablished bases rather than trying to win over new voters. All of this leads to the conclusion that Facebook is a poor platform for bipartisan politics

## Hypotheses

1. Biden use Facebook to and Trump communicate to their preestablished bases, making it a bad platform for bipartisan politics.
2. Trump and Biden will have similar spending budgets for advertisements
3. People are beginning to feel fatigued by the number of politics they see on Facebook

## Social Impacts

### Effects on Political Knowledge and Trust

- Multiple studies have shown that using Facebook and social media as your only source of political news can decrease your political knowledge.
- The rise in misinformation and "fake news" on Facebook and social media has led to people having less trust in politicians, especially those of the opposite party.

### Effects on Personal Relationships

“Nearly one-third of social media users (31%) say they have changed their settings to see fewer posts from someone in their feed because of something related to politics, while 27% have blocked or unfriended someone for that reason... this amounts to 39% of social media users – and 60% of them indicate that they took this step because someone was posting political content that they found offensive.” (Pew Research Center). A recent study jointly conducted by the Universities of California: Berkley and Chicago suggest why this is. Their findings suggest that reading text deprives the viewer of a great deal of information and communication about the person providing that information, such as tone, character, competence and education. This suggests that people do not engage a Facebook post as if it is a person speaking to them, but a lifeless object not to be seriously considered. In summary, political posts on Facebook can deepen the perceived gap in politics and pitch otherwise meaningful facts, arguments and speaking points as discardable, unengaged trash.

## Data and Methods

For our data, we did not go for articles and studies pertaining to only Facebook, as there are many other popular social media platforms with similar issues. So, although our research is directed at Facebook, this information can be applied to other social media platforms. Our data was collected from: the Pew Research Center from a few of their social media interaction studies, Facebook’s Ad data for the 2020 Campaign for Trump and Biden, a few articles from reputable news sources, and a press briefing from the US Department of State.

For how we decided to interpret the data, we took both a black and white approach as well as a human approach. What we mean by that, is we took both an emotional point of view and a logical point of view into consideration. Some things came as a shock to us, like Trump and Biden’s campaign spending and their amount of likes on Facebook.

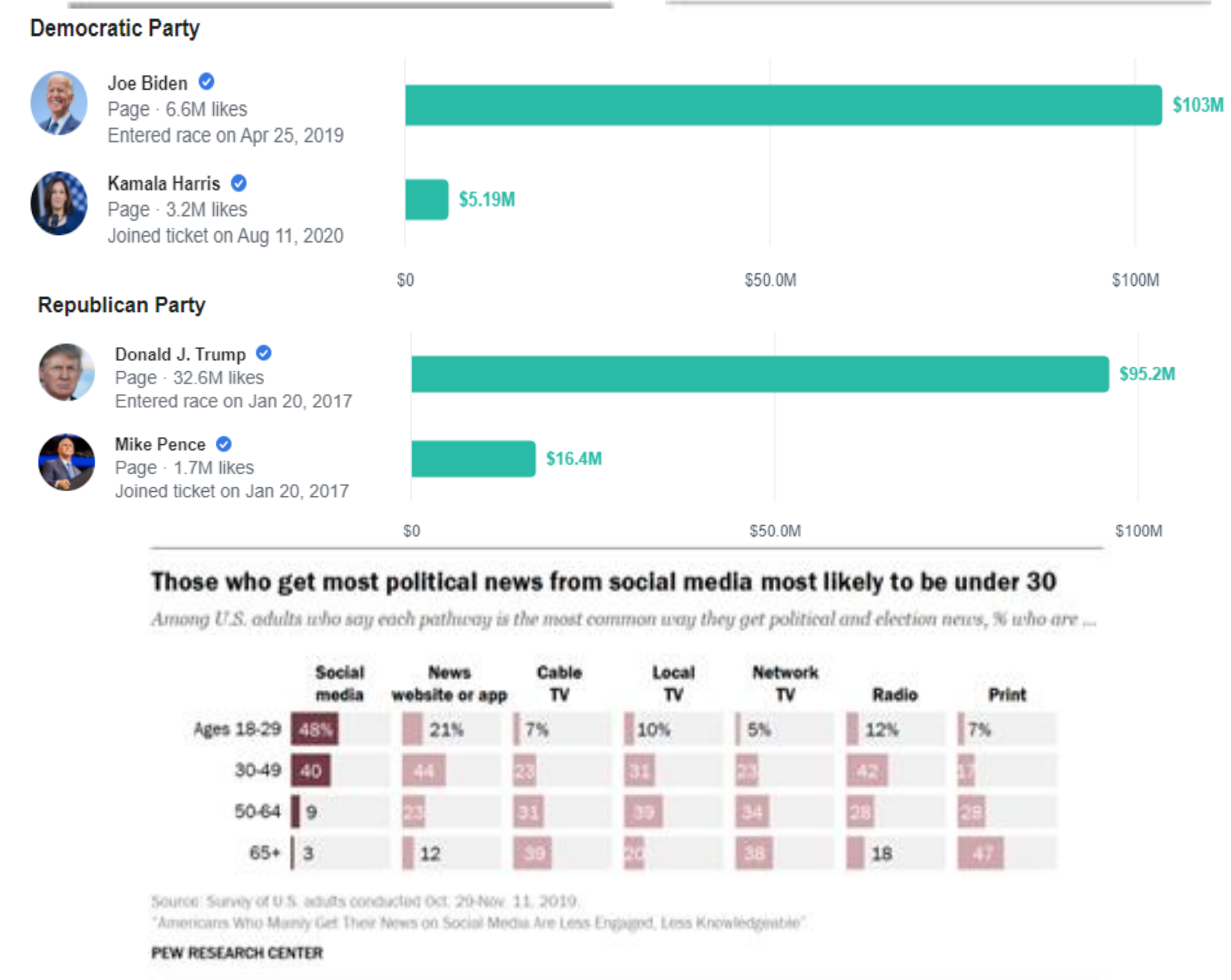
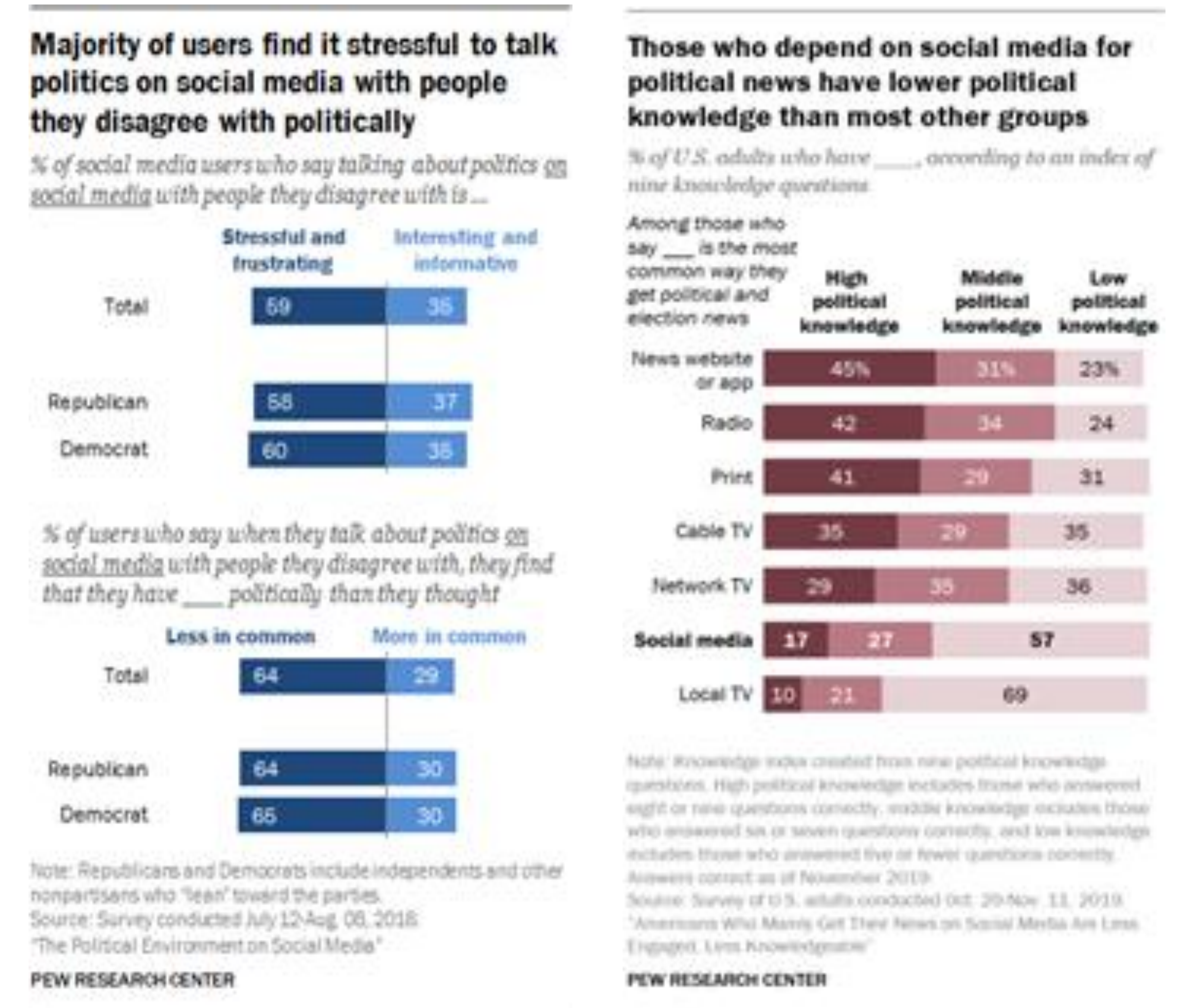
## What We Found related to Spending and Interaction

Biden out spent Trump by \$8 million, but Trump had more engagement on his ads. Biden’s campaign page had 6.6 million likes while Trump’s had 32.6 million. Interestingly, Harris spent \$5.2 million on ads and got 3.2 million likes while Pence spent \$16.4 million and only got 1.7 million likes. Reports covered Obama and Romney’s Campaigns and found they did not engage much with comments and tags. Clinton, and especially Trump retweeted, and responded through Social media. Trump tended to repost mostly public figures or individuals while Clinton stuck to mostly news or articles.



## What We Found related to Fake News

As everyone knows, Fake News has run rampant across social media since before the 2016 election and has only gotten worse. “You can’t tell a coherent story in a 280-character tweet, but you can provide a tantalizing assertion or allude to shared story fragments, especially if you use code words and acronyms” (Bolter, from The Atlantic). With social media in general, it's all about clicks and likes. The spread of Fake News has become so rotten that many social media sites, including Facebook, sort political posts, and have fact-checkers for them. Not even the president can escape fact-checkers, with many of his posts being marked as false by Facebook’s fact-checkers or deleted outright. One can see that both Campaigns are riddled with attacks towards the other candidate, and full of promises that may or may not be kept.



## Conclusion

One would think presidential nominees would be hard at work, educating voters and being role models. But with 2020, that simply isn't the case. Everything related to Trump and Biden's campaigns on Facebook for 2020 is filled with hate towards someone/a group of people; whether it be from the politician themselves or in the reply section. If one’s goal on Facebook is to spread unbiased information, then it has failed as a platform to allow civilized discussion as social media is the only connection to the outside world many have, and with human nature being stubborn it only harms personal relationships.