

# The Media Really Has Neglected Puerto Rico

By [Dhruvil Mehta](#)

Filed under [Puerto Rico](#)

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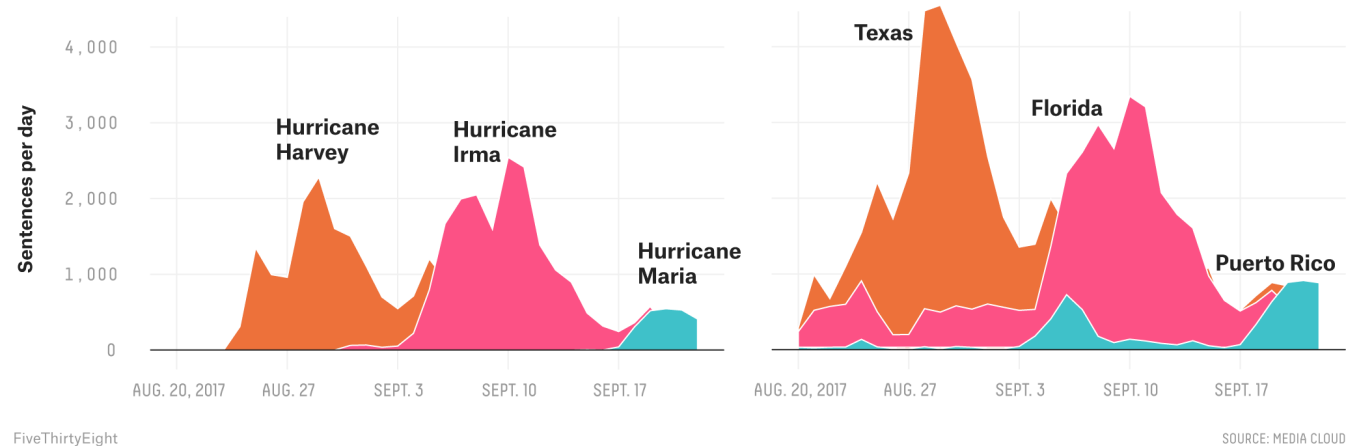
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While Puerto Rico suffers after Hurricane Maria, much of the U.S. media (FiveThirtyEight not excepted) has been occupied with other things: a [health care bill](#) that failed to pass, a [primary election](#) in Alabama, and a [spat](#) between the president and sports players, just to name a few. Last Sunday alone, after President Trump's [tweets about](#) the NFL, the phrase “national anthem” was said in more sentences on TV news than “Puerto Rico” and “Hurricane Maria” combined.

Those other stories are worth covering, of course. But compared to the other natural disasters of the past few weeks, Hurricane Maria has been relatively ignored. Data from Media Cloud, a database that collects news published on the internet every day, shows that the devastation in Puerto Rico is getting comparatively little attention.<sup>1</sup>

## Hurricane Maria and Puerto Rico got comparatively little online coverage

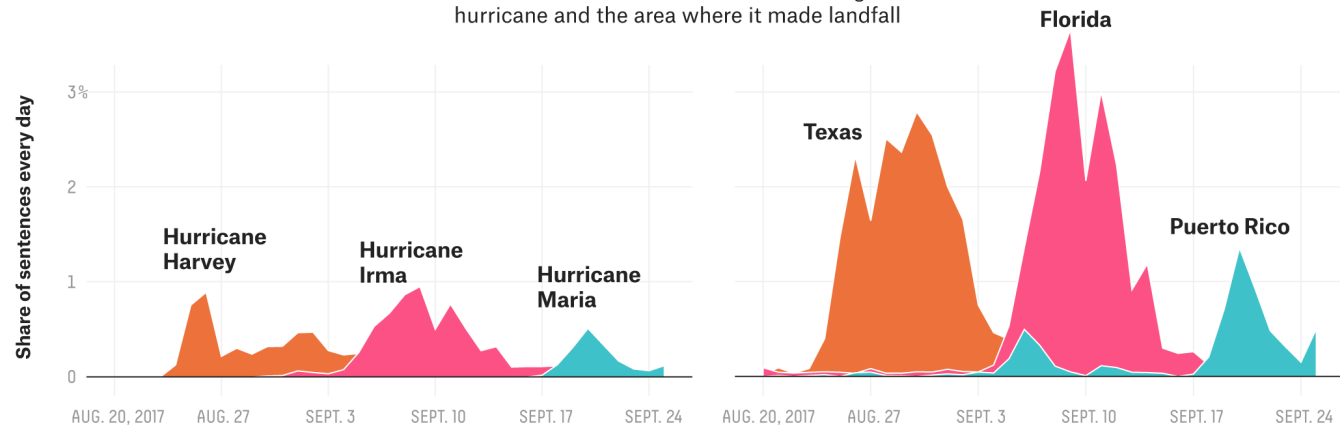
Number of sentences mentioning each hurricane and the place it made landfall, among outlets in Media Cloud's “U.S. Top Online News” collection



TV news coverage reveals a similar trend. Data we collected from [the TV News Archive](#) shows that people on TV news shows spoke significantly fewer sentences about Hurricane Maria than about Hurricanes Harvey and Irma.<sup>2</sup> The spike in conversation about Puerto Rico right as the hurricane hit was also much smaller than the spike in mentions of Texas and Florida on television as each of those states was hit by a hurricane.

## Hurricane Maria and Puerto Rico got comparatively little cable TV coverage

Share of sentences on TV news mentioning each hurricane and the area where it made landfall



Includes Bloomberg, CNBC, CNN, Fox Business, Fox News and MSNBC

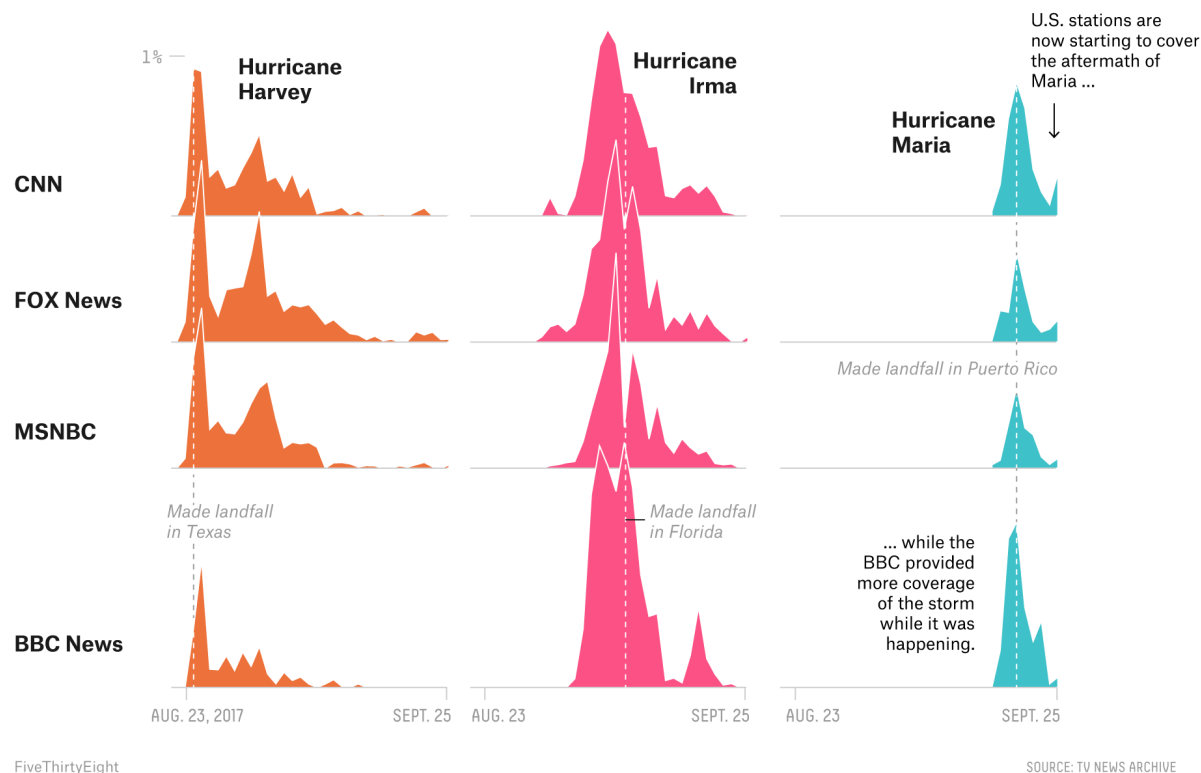
FiveThirtyEight

SOURCE: TV NEWS ARCHIVE

Of the cable news networks that covered Hurricane Maria, the BBC, a British network, initially mentioned Hurricane Maria on air more than the U.S. networks did. CNN seems to have aired more coverage of Maria than its competitors in the U.S. did, and the data hints that the network may again be ramping up its coverage.

## How different cable news channels covered the hurricanes

Share of sentences mentioning each hurricane



According to [one analysis](#) of five political talk shows that aired the Sunday after Maria made landfall, all five programs combined to produce less than one minute of coverage dedicated to the crisis in Puerto Rico, and three out of the five shows didn't mention Puerto Rico at all. [Many observers](#) are [speculating](#) that Puerto Rico's status as a territory is one reason for both the lack of news coverage and [delays in the delivery](#) of aid. The National Association of Hispanic Journalists issued a statement calling on media outlets to cover this disaster more proportionally, and its spokesperson, BA Snyder, told FiveThirtyEight that the dearth of press coverage was "unacceptable."



**NAHJ**  
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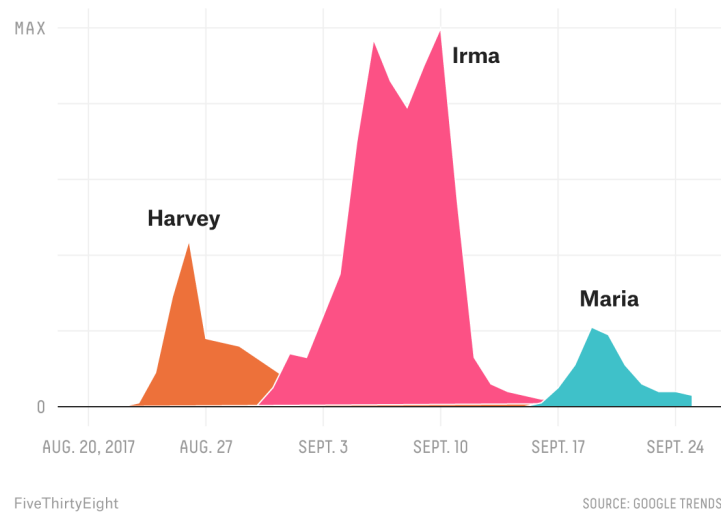
We're calling on national/local media to cover devastation in PR w/ equal attention & responsibility that would be given anywhere in U.S.

8:05 AM - Sep 25, 2017

7 466 540

But it is not just the media that isn't paying attention. A recent poll showed that [less than half](#) of Americans are even aware that Puerto Ricans are American citizens. Google searches from the rest of the U.S. show that public interest was also higher for the two storms that hit the mainland than it was for the storm that hit Puerto Rico.

### Google search trends in the U.S. (excluding Puerto Rico)



After his [initial silence](#) on the issue, President Trump has a visit to Puerto Rico [planned](#) in the coming week. Perhaps his presence will bring more media and citizen engagement from the mainland.

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#### Footnotes

1. We used their "[U.S. Top Online News](#)" collection, which looks at 49 top online news sources as of 2015 according to Pew/Comscore. This includes newspapers like The New York Times and digital-native sites like Vox.
2. We used the [Television Explorer](#) tool which produces analysis by the GDELT Project using data from the Internet Archive Television News Archive.