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**MEDIA  
&  
THE PUBLIC**

**Week 3**  
**Media coverage of  
politics**

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# Why does (mass) media cover politics?





# The function of (mass) media

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- The Jeffersonian dimension: a linkage institution between government and people
  - People → Government
    - Muckraking/Watchdog/Investigative journalism (e.g., Watergate)
  - Government → People
    - "Fireside chats"
  - Gatekeeping
    - Agenda-setting
- The entertainment dimension
  - sports scores, information on lifestyle issues, gossip, etc.
- The economic/business dimension
  - for-profit organization; maximize viewership ("All the News That's Fit to Sell!")

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# What types of (mass) media?





# Typology of media outlet (Humprecht & Esser, 2016)

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- Private broadcasters (e.g., CNN, Fox News)
  - corporate-owned, strongly commercialized
- Public broadcasters (e.g., PBS, NPR, BBC, NHK)
  - financed by fees, public or state funds with a primary public service mission, and a low degree of commercialization
- Corporate newspapers (e.g., NYT, Washington Post)
  - owned by chain or stock exchange-listed company, strongly commercialized
- Independent newspapers
  - alternative ownership form, moderate degree of commercialization
- Popular newspapers (e.g., NYP)
  - tabloid-style mass market, strongly commercialized
- Made-for-Web news providers (e.g., BuzzFeed, HuffPost)
  - either online-only pure player or – where nonexistent – online news provider with an independent profile and organizational structure

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**What Internet has changed  
our news outlet?**



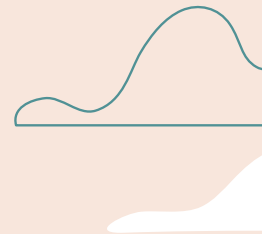
# Mobilized/digitalized news

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- Sociological:
  - The lowered threshold for generating and distributing news
  - The content appealed to sub-groups at the expense of wider social cohesion
- Political:
  - Public engagement at a personal level
    - "In a mobile era, consumption of news and engagement in politically inclined activities all occur within specific social contexts that blur the boundaries between the personal and the political." (Duffy et al., 2020)
- Socio-technological:
  - The changing definition of a journalist and the performance of journalistic act
    - "Moving from a we-tell-you-what-is-important function to providing spaces for non-journalists to engage in determining what is important and discuss why it is important" .'' (Duffy et al., 2020)



# Algorithmic news/journalism



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- Machine-generated news
  - Natural language generation (Example: the Guardian)
- Machine-driven news (Feezell et al., 2021)
  - User-driven algorithms
    - based on past selections and assumed preferences of the individual user and has no known social network-related input
  - Socially driven algorithms
    - news contents based on both the user as well as their network.

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# Algorithmic news/journalism

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- Machine-driven news (Feezell et al., 2021)
  - User-driven algorithms: emphasizes the personal attributes and biases of citizens rather than their ties to other citizens (e.g., YouTube).
    - Users more likely to see news that's seemingly popular, homogeneous across outlets, eschews public affairs, emphasizes national and business news, opinion pieces.
    - Users see much narrower set of topics and perspectives.
    - Expose users to increasingly negative and opinion-reinforcing information.
  - Socially driven algorithms: it takes into account user's activities on SNS, and their ties to others in their network (e.g., Facebook, Twitter)
    - Depends on the ideological characteristics of user's networks.
    - Online network grows, information diversifies.
    - Potential echo chamber? (still under debate)
    - May lead to additional information seeking, mitigate polarization.

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## Key takeaways of Pew report

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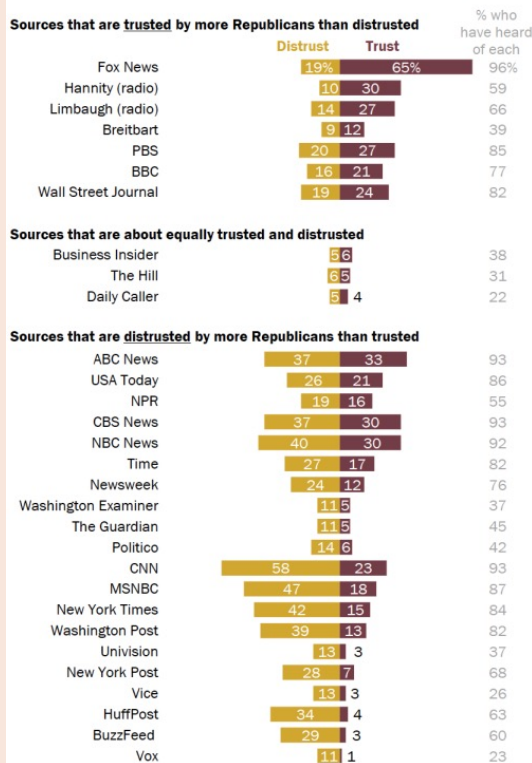
- Greater portions of Republicans express distrust than express trust of 20 of the 30 sources asked about. Only seven outlets generate more trust than distrust among Republicans – including Fox News and the talk radio programs of hosts Sean Hannity and Rush Limbaugh.
  - Fox news phenomenon
- Greater portions of Democrats express trust than express distrust in 22 of the 30 sources asked about. Only eight generate more distrust than trust –

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## Republicans' trust and distrust of news sources asked about

% of Republicans and Republican leaners who trust or distrust each source for political and election news



Note: Those who neither trust nor distrust, hadn't heard of each source, or did not answer are not shown. Grouping of outlets is determined by whether the percent who trust each source is significantly different from the percent who distrust each source. Outlets are then ordered by the proportion of trust to distrust. Order of outlets within each group does not necessarily indicate statistically significant differences.

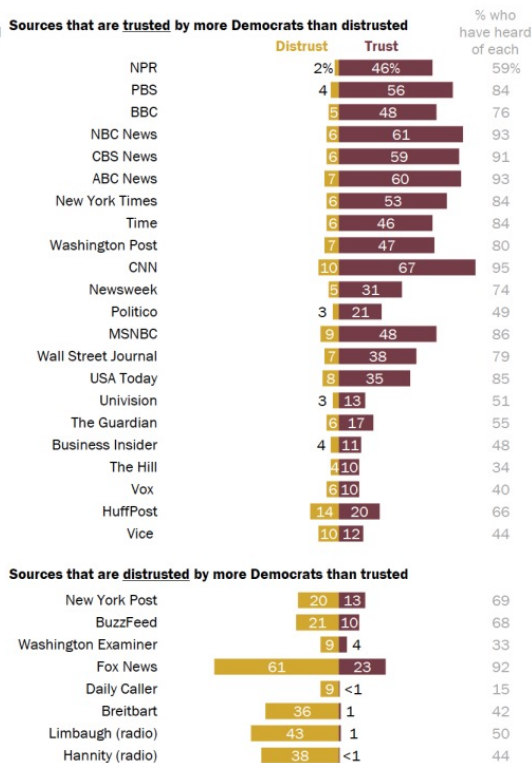
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 29-Nov. 11, 2019.

"U.S. Media Polarization and the 2020 Election: A Nation Divided"

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## Democrats' trust and distrust of news sources asked about

% of Democrats and Democratic leaners who trust or distrust each source for political and election news



Note: Those who neither trust nor distrust, hadn't heard of each source, or did not answer are not shown. Grouping of outlets is determined by whether the percent who trust each source is significantly different from the percent who distrust each source. Outlets are then ordered by the proportion of trust to distrust. Order of outlets within each group does not necessarily indicate statistically significant differences.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 29-Nov. 11, 2019.

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# Key takeaways of Pew report

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- Partisan divides lead to one-sided audiences for many news outlets

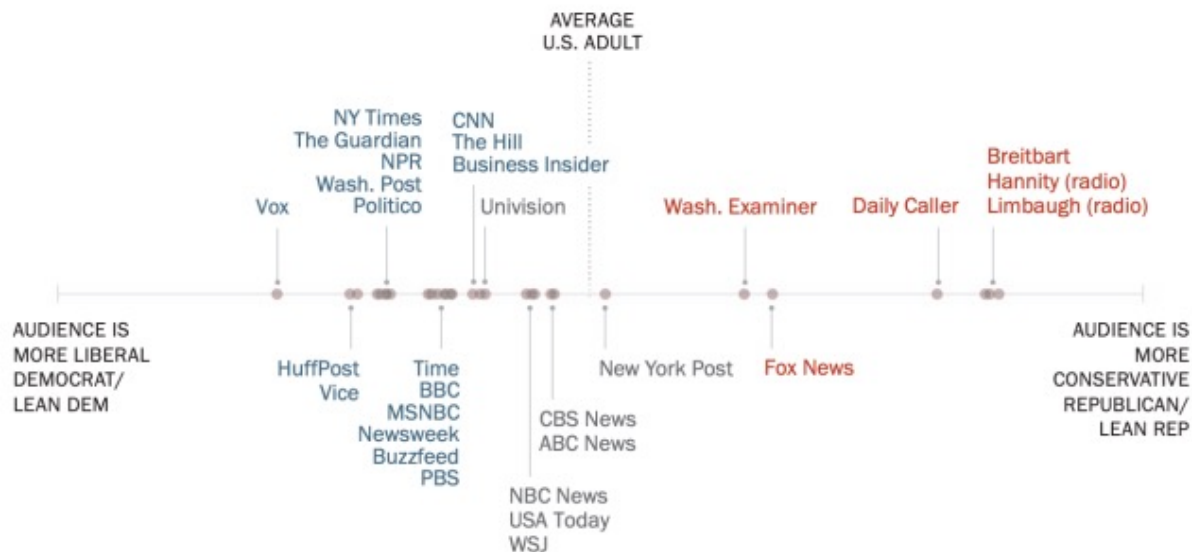
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## About two-in-ten in each party are in tight political news bubbles

Average party and ideological self-placement of those who got political and election news from each source in the past week

**20% of Democrats/Lean Dems** turned only to the outlets **in blue** for political and election news in the past week

**18% of Republicans/Lean Reps** turned only to the outlets **in red** for political and election news in the past week



Note: Lists labeling multiple points are ordered from outlets with more liberal Democrats/lean Democratic audiences on top to those with more conservative Republican/lean Republican audiences on the bottom. Order of outlets does not necessarily indicate statistically significant differences. See methodology for details.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 29-Nov. 11, 2019.

"U.S. Media Polarization and the 2020 Election: A Nation Divided"



ad fontes media

### Hyper-Partisan Left

Skews Left

Middle

Skews Right

### Hyper-Partisan Right

Most  
Extreme

## Fact Reporting

Mostly Analysis  
OR Mix of Fact  
Reporting and  
Analysis

Analysis OR  
High Variation  
in Reliability

Opinion OR  
High Variation in  
Reliability

Selective,  
Incomplete, Unfair  
Persuasion,  
Propaganda, or  
Other Issues

Contains  
Misleading Info

Contains  
Inaccurate/  
Fabricated Info

MORE

## News Value and Reliability

SES-

LEFT

## Bias

RIGHT

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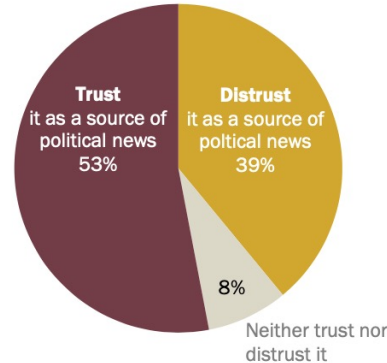


# Key takeaways of Pew report

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  - News consumption does NOT mean trust.

## Many Republicans who use CNN also distrust it

*Of the 24% of Republican/Lean Rep who got news from CNN last week, % who ...*



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 29-Nov. 11, 2019.  
"U.S. Media Polarization and the 2020 Election: A Nation Divided"

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## Key takeaways of Pew report

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- Partisan media divides have grown, largely driven by Republican distrust between 2014 and 2020

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## Trust in news outlets in 2014 and 2019, by party

% of U.S. adults who trust each source for political and election news

	Democrat/Lean Dem		Republican/Lean Rep	
	2014 survey among web-using U.S. adults	2019 survey among U.S. adults	2014 survey among web-using U.S. adults	2019 survey among U.S. adults
	%	%	%	%
ABC News	59	60	39	33
BBC	47	48	23	21
Breitbart	<1	1	9	12
Business Insider	-	11	-	6
BuzzFeed	4	10	1	3
CBS News	55	59	36	30
CNN	65	67	41*	23*
Daily Caller	-	<1	-	4
Fox News	21	23	70	65
HuffPost	25*	20*	11*	4*
MSNBC	50	48	27*	18*
NBC News	61	61	39*	30*
Newsweek	-	31	-	12
New York Post	-	13	-	7
NPR	43	46	15	16
PBS	51	56	25	27
Politico	10*	21*	4	6
Rush Limbaugh Show	1	1	27	27
Sean Hannity Show	1	<1	28	30
The Guardian	11	17	4	5
The Hill	-	10	-	5
New York Times	48	53	19	15
Wall Street Journal	33	38	32*	24*
Washington Post	37*	47*	18*	13*
Time	-	46	-	17
Univision	-	13	-	3
USA Today	37	35	29*	21*
Vice	-	12	-	3
Vox	-	10	-	1
Washington Examiner	-	4	-	5

Note: Asterisk indicates that 2019 value is significantly different from 2014 value at a level of  $p < .01$ , taking into account the change in the percent who have heard of each outlet. Source: Surveys of U.S. adults conducted March 19-April 29, 2014 and Oct. 29-Nov. 11, 2019.

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## Distrust in outlets in 2014 and 2019, by party

% of U.S. adults who distrust each source for political and election news

	Democrat/Lean Dem		Republican/Lean Rep	
	2014 survey among web-using U.S. adults	2019 survey among U.S. adults	2014 survey among web-using U.S. adults	2019 survey among U.S. adults
	%	%	%	%
ABC News	6	7	29*	37*
BBC	4	5	11*	16*
Breitbart	7*	36*	1*	9*
Business Insider	-	4	-	5
BuzzFeed	8*	21*	8*	29*
CBS News	6	6	27*	37*
CNN	8	10	33*	58*
Daily Caller	-	9	-	5
Fox News	59	61	13*	19*
HuffPost	10	14	26*	34*
MSNBC	7	9	39*	47*
NBC News	7	6	34	40
Newsweek	-	5	-	24
New York Post	-	20	-	28
NPR	2	2	17	19
PBS	6	4	19	20
Politico	2	3	8	14
Rush Limbaugh Show	54	43	22*	14*
Sean Hannity Show	32*	38*	9	10
The Guardian	4	6	5*	11*
The Hill	-	4	-	6
New York Times	5	6	29*	42*
Wall Street Journal	8	7	11*	19*
Washington Post	5	7	22*	39*
Time	-	6	-	27
Univision	-	3	-	13
USA Today	9	8	16*	26*
Vice	-	10	-	13
Vox	-	6	-	11
Washington Examiner	-	9	-	11

Note: Asterisk indicates that 2019 value is significantly different from 2014 value at a level of  $p < .01$ , taking into account the change in the percent who have heard of each outlet. Source: Surveys of U.S. adults conducted March 19-April 29, 2014 and Oct. 29-Nov. 11, 2019.

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## RESEARCH ARTICLE



# Exposure to opposing views on social media can increase political polarization

Christopher A. Bail, Lisa P. Argyle, Taylor W. Brown, John P. Bumpus, Haohan Chen, M. B. Falli...

[+ See all authors and affiliations](#)

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<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1804840115>

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