



ESSENTIALS

Political participation is influenced by a variety of media coverage, analysis, and commentary on political events. The rapidly increasing demand for media and political communications outlets from an ideologically diverse audience have led to debates over media bias and the impact of media ownership and partisan news sites.

The nature of democratic debate and the level of political knowledge among citizens is impacted by: Increased media choices/Ideologically oriented programming/Consumer-driven media outlets and emerging technologies that reinforce existing beliefs/Uncertainty over the credibility of news sources and information

1. What is the underlying idea of this cartoon? [Write your response like a claim statement]
2. Where do you find trustworthy information? What strategies can we use to be well informed?

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

In the past 10 years, has your trust in the new media –

	% increased	% decreased	% not changed
US ADULTS	4	69	26
DEMOCRATS	10	42	48
REPUBLICANS	0.2	94	6
LIBERALS	7	46	47
CONSERVATIVES	0.3	95	3

Source: Knight Foundation

Use the information graphic to answer the questions.

- A. Identify the demographic most likely to mistrust the media.
- B. Describe a similarity or difference between trust in the news media between Democrats and Republicans, and draw a conclusion that explains the similarity or difference.
- C. Explain how trust in the news media or lack thereof impacts election outcomes.

Media Source	Bias Liberal or Conservative	Example	Ratings Demographic
ABC			
CBS			
NBC			
FOX			
CNN			
NYTIMES			
WALL ST. JOURNAL			

How do we know when “news” is credible?

CONCEPT APPLICATION

It is widely thought that news organizations exhibit ideological bias, but rigorously quantifying such slant has proven methodologically challenging. Through a combination of machine learning and crowdsourcing techniques, we investigate the selection and framing of political issues in 15 major U.S. news outlets. Starting with 803,146 news stories published over 12 months, we first used supervised learning algorithms to identify the 14% of articles pertaining to political events. We then recruited 749 online human judges to classify a random subset of 10,950 of these political articles according to topic and ideological position. Our analysis yields an ideological ordering of outlets consistent with prior work. We find, however, that news outlets are considerably more similar than generally believed. Specifically, with the exception of political scandals, we find that major news organizations present topics in a largely non-partisan manner, casting neither Democrats nor Republicans in a particularly favorable or unfavorable light. Moreover, again with the exception of political scandals, there is little evidence of systematic differences in story selection, with all major news outlets covering a wide variety of topics with frequency largely unrelated to the outlet’s ideological position. Finally, we find that news organizations express their ideological bias not by directly advocating for a preferred political party, but rather by disproportionately criticizing one side, a convention that further moderates overall differences.

SOURCE: “Fair and Balanced? Quantifying Media Bias,” Microsoft Research and Stanford University

- Referencing the scenario, what conclusion can be made about news organizations expressing ideological bias?
- In the context of this scenario, explain an exception to the conclusion described in part A.
- Explain how our U.S. Constitution answers those who criticize the danger of news organizations’ ideological bias.