



# PERCEIVED ACCURACY AND BIAS IN THE NEWS MEDIA

A GALLUP/KNIGHT  
FOUNDATION SURVEY

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# PERCEIVED ACCURACY AND BIAS IN THE NEWS MEDIA

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# INTRODUCTION

A GALLUP/KNIGHT FOUNDATION SURVEY

Gallup and Knight Foundation's 2017 Survey on Trust, Media and Democracy<sup>1</sup> found that Americans believe the news media have a critical role to play in U.S. democracy but are not performing that role well. One of Americans' chief concerns about media is bias, and Americans are much more likely to perceive bias in the news today than they were a generation ago.

A Feb. 5-March 11, 2018, Gallup/Knight Foundation survey of 1,440 Gallup Panel™ members assessed how pervasive U.S. adults believe bias in news reporting is, and whether they make distinctions between bias and inaccuracy. The survey also probed for Americans' reactions when they see biased or inaccurate reporting and sought to determine if the reactions depend on whether that reporting is about groups or individuals they support or oppose. Among the key findings in the survey:

- **Overall, Americans believe 62% of the news they see on television, read in newspapers and hear on the radio is biased. They are much more inclined to see news on social media as biased, estimating that 80% of the news they see there is biased.**
- **Americans tend to think the majority of news reporting is accurate, but they still believe a substantial percentage of it, 44%, is inaccurate. They think 64% of news on social media is inaccurate.**
- **More than eight in 10 U.S. adults report being angry or bothered by seeing biased information. A slightly greater proportion of Americans — more than nine in 10 — get angry or bothered by inaccurate information.**
- **In rating various news organizations, Americans make little distinction between bias and accuracy — generally, those that are perceived as biased are also perceived as inaccurate, and those that are perceived as unbiased are perceived as being accurate.**
- **Republicans' and Democrats' ratings of the accuracy and bias of certain news organizations diverge sharply, most notably with respect to Fox News®, Breitbart News®, CNN® and MSNBC®.**

<sup>1</sup> <https://knightfoundation.org/reports/american-views-trust-media-and-democracy>

**AMERICANS ESTIMATE THAT 44% OF THE NEWS THEY SEE ON TV, READ IN NEWSPAPERS OR HEAR ON RADIO IS INACCURATE. THEY BELIEVE 64% OF THE NEWS THEY SEE ON SOCIAL MEDIA IS INACCURATE.**

To a large degree, bias and accuracy appear to be in the eye of the beholder, greatly influenced by whether one agrees with the ideological leaning of the news source. Americans' perceptions of fairly widespread bias and inaccuracy in news may be unduly influenced by the bias they perceive from the "other side" of the ideological spectrum rather than their own side. Counteracting perceptions of bias and inaccuracy may have a role to play in addressing the lack of trust in the news media and giving Americans more confidence in the media's ability to carry out its democratic responsibilities.

Gallup and Knight Foundation acknowledge support for this research from the Ford Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Open Society Foundations.

# DETAILED FINDINGS

## EXTENT OF BIAS IN NEWS AND ON SOCIAL MEDIA

U.S. adults think most of the news they see is biased. They estimate that an average of 62% of the news they see on television, read in newspapers or hear on the radio is biased. Consistent with the finding in the 2017 survey that Americans believe social media has had a negative impact on the news environment, they believe a higher 80% of the news they see on social media is biased.

The survey defined bias for respondents as “news organizations reporting stories in a way that unfairly favors one person or group over another, even if the facts reported are accurate.”

### Estimated Percentage of Bias Seen in News

What percentage of the news that you see on television, in newspapers or hear on the radio do you think is biased?

What percentage of the news that you see on social media do you think is biased?

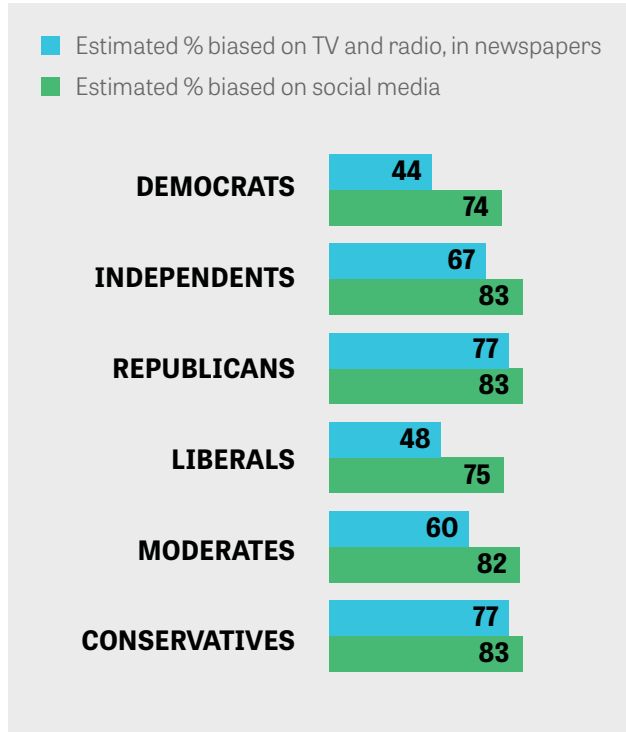
	TV, NEWSPAPERS, RADIO	SOCIAL MEDIA
	%	%
0%-25%	19	4
26%-50%	21	12
51%-75%	22	16
76% or more	38	66
No answer	1	2
Mean	62	80
Median	70	90

Due to rounding, percentages may total 100% +/- 1%.

Republicans perceive much more bias on television and radio and in newspapers (77%, on average) than independents (67%) and Democrats (44%) do. Democrats are one of a limited number of subgroups for which the estimate is below 50%.

Political groups are similarly negative in their evaluations of biased news on social media — with all major political and ideological groups estimating that 74% or more of the news on social media is biased.

**Estimated Percentage of News Seen That Is Biased, by Political Party and Ideology**



As might be expected, those who have a negative opinion of the news media estimate, on average, a much higher percentage of bias in news from traditional news organizations (81%) than do those who have a positive or neutral opinion of the media (estimating 42% and 57%, respectively).

Perceptions of bias are also related to the amount of attention paid to national news — those who are less attentive believe there is more bias. Those who pay a great deal of attention to national news estimate that 58% of the news they see from traditional news organizations is biased, compared with 62% among those who pay a moderate amount of attention and 78% among those who pay little or no attention.

In other key demographic groups, women, older adults, nonwhites and postgraduates tend to think there is less bias in news on television, on the radio and in newspapers than men, younger adults, whites and those with less formal education do. Subgroup differences in estimates of biased news on social media are smaller, though generally show the same pattern of differences.

**Perceived Bias in News, by Subgroup**

	ESTIMATED % OF BIASED NEWS ON TV AND RADIO, IN NEWSPAPERS	ESTIMATED % OF BIASED NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA
<b>Gender</b>		
Men	66	82
Women	58	78
<b>Age</b>		
18-34 years old	65	85
35-54 years old	65	81
55+ years old	56	74
<b>Race</b>		
Non-Hispanic white	64	81
Nonwhite	53	77
<b>Education</b>		
High school or less	65	79
Some college	62	81
College graduate only	61	82
Postgraduate	54	80
<b>Attention paid to national news</b>		
A great deal	58	78
A moderate amount	62	80
Not much/None at all	78	88
<b>Opinion of news media</b>		
Very/Somewhat favorable	42	73
Neutral	57	76
Very/Somewhat unfavorable	81	87

**REPUBLICANS PERCEIVE THAT THERE IS MUCH MORE BIAS IN NEWS ON TV, IN NEWSPAPERS AND ON THE RADIO THAN DEMOCRATS DO. BOTH REPUBLICANS AND DEMOCRATS PERCEIVE EXTENSIVE BIAS IN NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA.**

A regression analysis that assesses the average effects of different variables while taking into account the effects of other variables finds party identification the strongest predictor of perceived bias in traditional media.<sup>2</sup> Republicans and independents perceive more bias than Democrats do, controlling for the effects of other demographics and attitudes. Political ideology, measured using respondents' self-identification as liberal, moderate or conservative, also is related to perceived bias, though its effects are about half as large as those of party.

Older Americans and those who pay greater attention to national news tend to perceive less bias in traditional media once the effects of other variables are taken into account. Race, gender and getting news from just one political perspective are also significant predictors of perceived bias in traditional media — whites, men and those who consume mainly right-leaning news tend to see more bias in reporting.

The regression model does not show as strong effects in trying to predict differences in perceived bias for news on social media, likely because there is more consensus among subgroups that much of the news on social media is biased. The strongest predictors of perceived bias in news on social media are party and age. Republicans and younger adults tend to perceive more bias in news on social media, once the effects of other variables are taken into account.

<sup>2</sup> See the appendix for the results of the regression models.



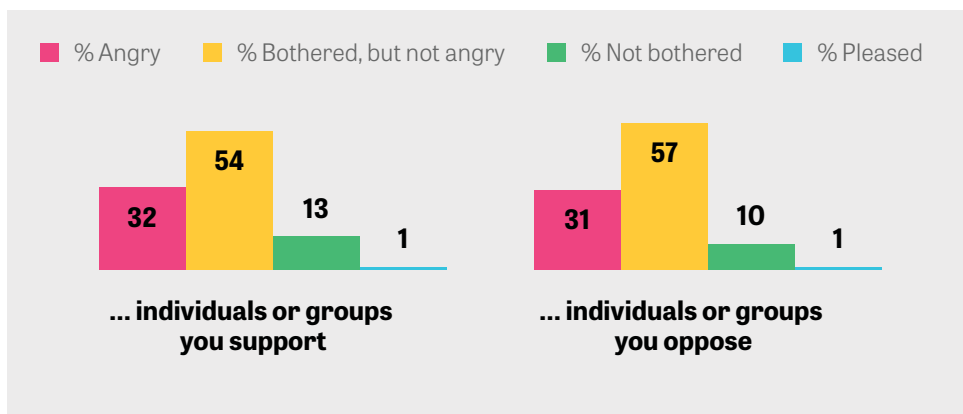
# DETAILED FINDINGS

## REACTIONS TO SEEING BIASED NEWS

Most Americans report being angry or bothered by seeing biased information. Their reactions are similar whether the bias is against groups they support or groups they oppose, with about one-third reporting being angered and a slim majority saying they are bothered when they see biased reporting. Hardly any U.S. adults have a positive reaction to seeing biased news, even against groups they oppose.

### Reactions to Seeing Biased News

Which of the following best describes your reaction when seeing news reports that you believe contain **biased** reporting about ...



For the most part, reactions to seeing biased news about favored individuals or groups are similar among subgroups. However, political independents (27%) and moderates (25%) are somewhat less likely to say they get angry when that occurs than are Republicans (35%), Democrats (34%), liberals (34%) and conservatives (39%).

Also, those who are highly attentive to national news (39%) are more inclined to say they get angry seeing biased news about groups they support than are those who pay a moderate amount (25%) or little or no attention (26%) to national news.

Moderates (23%) are also less likely than liberals (32%) and conservatives (39%) to get angry seeing biased news about groups they oppose. Notably, conservatives and liberals are about equally likely to say they get angry when they see biased reporting, regardless of whether it is about groups or individuals they support or oppose. This suggests that liberals and conservatives see bias as problematic, even if it may serve to portray a disliked group or individual in a negative light.

# DETAILED FINDINGS

## ACCURACY OF REPORTING IN NEWS AND ON SOCIAL MEDIA

U.S. adults think the majority of the news they see on television, read in newspapers or hear on the radio is accurate rather than inaccurate. However, they estimate that a substantial 44% of the information is inaccurate.

In contrast, Americans believe most of the news they see on social media is inaccurate, estimating that 64% of it is. The survey defined accuracy as “facts reported in a news story are backed up by strong evidence and have been thoroughly checked with reliable sources.”

### Estimated Percentage of Inaccuracy Seen in News

If you had to estimate, what percentage of the news that you see on television, in newspapers or hear on the radio do you think is inaccurate?

If you had to estimate, what percentage of the news that you see on social media do you think is inaccurate?

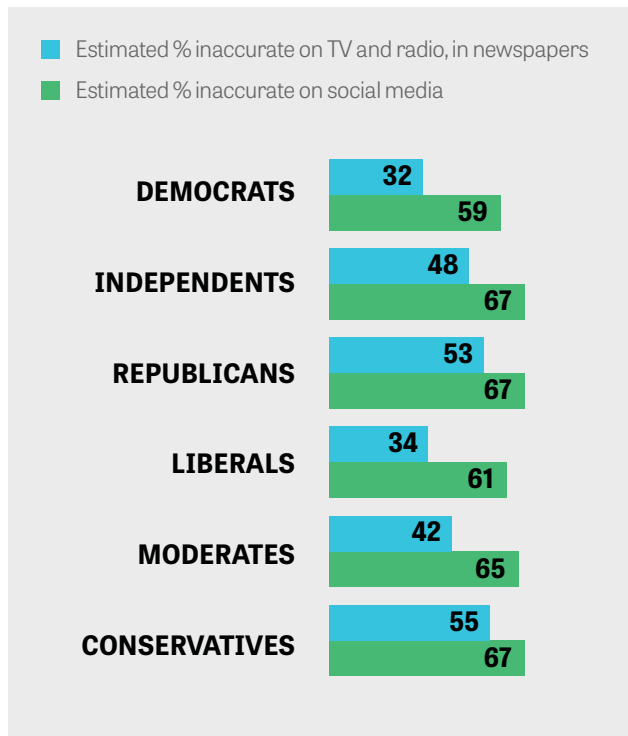
	TV, NEWSPAPERS, RADIO	SOCIAL MEDIA
	%	%
0%-25%	34	9
26%-50%	35	27
51%-75%	16	27
76% or more	13	34
No answer	1	3
Mean	44	64
Median	45	70

Due to rounding, percentages may total 100% +/- 1%.

The 20-percentage-point gap in average estimates of inaccuracy for social media versus traditional news media (64% to 44%) is similar to the 18-point gap between the two on bias (80% to 62%). A separate Gallup/Knight Foundation report on misinformation found a slightly larger gap — 26 points — in average estimates of the percentage of news that is misinformation on social media (65%) and traditional media (39%).<sup>3</sup>

Democrats are distinct from Republicans and independents in estimating a lower percentage of inaccurate reporting in traditional news media. Conservatives believe 55% of news on television and radio and in newspapers is inaccurate — much higher than among moderates (42%) and liberals (34%). The party and ideological groups do not differ much in their perceptions of inaccurate news on social media.

**Estimated Percentage of News Seen That Is Inaccurate, by Political Party and Ideology**



**CONSERVATIVES AND REPUBLICANS BELIEVE THAT MORE THAN HALF OF THE NEWS THEY SEE ON TV, READ IN NEWSPAPERS OR HEAR ON THE RADIO IS INACCURATE.**

Americans with a negative opinion of the news media believe that more than half of the news reported on television, on the radio and in newspapers is inaccurate. People with an unfavorable opinion of the news media estimate that 55% of the news in legacy media is inaccurate. That compares with averages of 32% and 39% among those with favorable or neutral opinions of the media, respectively.

Similarly, Americans who get all or most of their news from conservative-leaning sources and little or none from liberal-leaning sources estimate that 60% of the news they see in traditional media is inaccurate. That compares with an average estimate of 32% among those who get mostly liberal news and 44% among those who get a mixture of liberal and conservative news.

<sup>3</sup> [kf.org/tmdreport2](http://kf.org/tmdreport2)

Americans with less formal education tend to perceive more inaccuracy in traditional media than do those with more formal education. Men and women and older and younger adults do not differ meaningfully in their perceptions of inaccuracy.

There is much more consensus by subgroup as to the estimated percentage of inaccurate information on social media.

**Perceived Inaccuracy in News, by Subgroup**

	<b>ESTIMATED % OF INACCURATE NEWS ON TV AND RADIO, IN NEWSPAPERS</b>	<b>ESTIMATED % OF INACCURATE NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Men	45	65
Women	43	63
<b>Age</b>		
18-34 years old	39	65
35-54 years old	46	64
55+ years old	45	63
<b>Race</b>		
Non-Hispanic white	45	65
Nonwhite	41	63
<b>Education</b>		
High school or less	48	65
Some college	44	64
College graduate only	39	64
Postgraduate	36	61
<b>Attention paid to national news</b>		
A great deal	42	64
A moderate amount	43	62
Not much/None at all	53	71
<b>Opinion of news media</b>		
Very/Somewhat favorable	32	60
Neutral	39	61
Very/Somewhat unfavorable	55	68

**ADULTS WITHOUT  
A COLLEGE  
DEGREE BELIEVE  
THERE IS MORE  
INACCURATE  
REPORTING IN  
NEWSPAPERS, ON  
TV AND ON RADIO  
THAN COLLEGE  
GRADUATES DO.**

As with assessments of bias, party identification has a significant and strong effect in a regression model that predicts ratings of accuracy. However, exposure to one-sided news has stronger effects — in the models for both traditional media and social media — taking into account the effects of other demographics and attitudes.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The regression model results on the accuracy questions are in the appendix.

# DETAILED FINDINGS

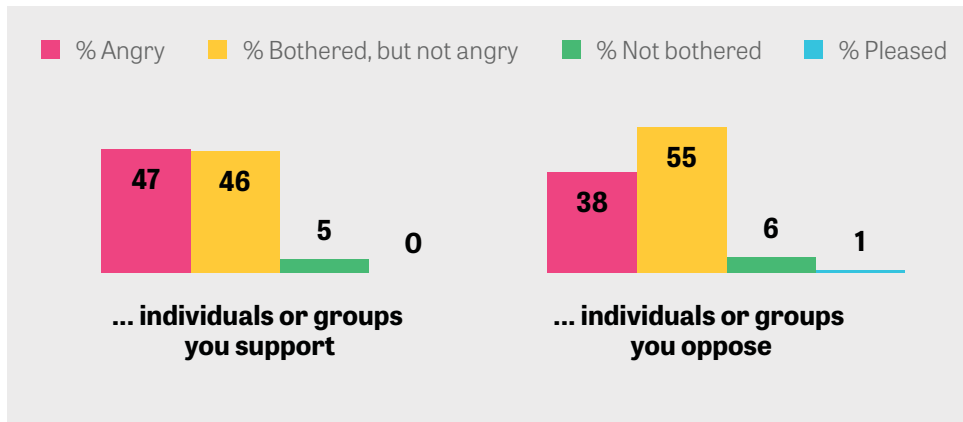
## REACTIONS TO SEEING INACCURATE NEWS

Americans have slightly stronger negative reactions to seeing inaccurate news rather than biased news. Ninety-three percent say they are angry or bothered when they see inaccurate information about both groups they support and groups they oppose. That compares with 86% who are angry or bothered by seeing biased news about groups they support and 88% about groups they oppose.

Americans also are more likely to report getting angry seeing inaccurate news about individuals or groups they support (47%) compared with getting angry seeing inaccurate reporting about groups they oppose (38%).

### Reactions to Seeing Inaccurate News

Which of these reactions best describes how you feel when you see news reports that you believe contain **inaccurate** information about ...



Whites, younger adults, noncollege graduates, political liberals, those with negative opinions of the news media and those most attentive to national news are among the groups most likely to get angry when they see inaccurate news about individuals or groups they support. Notably, Republicans, Democrats and independents have similar reactions when they see what they believe is inaccurate news.

**Reactions to Seeing Inaccurate News About Individuals or Groups You Support, by Subgroup**

	<b>ANGRY</b>	<b>BOTHERED, BUT NOT ANGRY</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
% Men	48	46
% Women	46	47
<b>Age</b>		
% 18-34 years old	52	42
% 35-54 years old	50	44
% 55+ years old	41	52
<b>Race</b>		
% Non-Hispanic white	51	43
% Nonwhite	36	57
<b>College graduate</b>		
% Yes	42	52
% No	50	44
<b>Party identification</b>		
% Democrat	48	48
% Independent	47	47
% Republican	48	43
<b>Ideology</b>		
% Liberal	53	41
% Moderate	41	53
% Conservative	51	42
<b>Attention paid to national news</b>		
% A great deal	52	42
% A moderate amount	43	50
% Not much/None at all	41	50
<b>Opinion of news media</b>		
% Very/Somewhat favorable	43	53
% Neutral	35	53
% Very/Somewhat unfavorable	55	39

**AMERICANS ARE MORE LIKELY TO SAY THEY GET ANGRY WHEN THEY SEE INACCURATE REPORTING ABOUT INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS THEY SUPPORT THAN ABOUT INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS THEY OPPOSE.**

One of the effects of getting news from liberal but not conservative news organizations is a stronger negative reaction to inaccurate information. Sixty percent of adults who get one-sided liberal news get angry seeing news reports that they believe contain inaccurate information about groups they support, compared with 51% of those getting one-sided conservative news and just 42% who get a mixture of perspectives in their news.

Those getting one-sided liberal news (49%) are also more likely to report getting angry seeing inaccurate information about groups they oppose, compared with 37% of those getting one-sided conservative news and 34% getting a mixture. This is one of the few meaningful differences in reactions to inaccurate information about opposition groups.



## DETAILED FINDINGS

### BIAS AND ACCURACY RATINGS OF NEWS ORGANIZATIONS

In addition to assessing bias and accuracy in the news media as a whole, respondents indicated how accurate and biased they think particular news organizations are. The survey included leading national newspapers, network news organizations and cable news networks. Each respondent rated a random subset of 10 out of 17 news organizations on bias and, separately, accuracy.

**AMERICANS TEND TO PERCEIVE THAT PUBLICLY FUNDED BROADCAST ENTITIES, TELEVISION NETWORK NEWS AND NEWSPAPERS ARE LESS BIASED THAN CABLE NEWS AND INTERNET-ONLY NEWS SITES.**

## BIAS

Americans are most likely to rate PBS® News, The Associated Press® (AP®) and National Public Radio® (NPR®) as being “not biased at all” or “not very biased.” In contrast, they are most likely to rate Fox News (67%) and Breitbart News (57%) as “extremely biased” or “very biased.” Close to half of Americans believe MSNBC (52%), CNN (50%) and the Huffington Post® (46%) are extremely or very biased.

### Ratings of News Organizations on Bias

Regardless of whether or not you agree with them, please indicate how biased, if at all, you think each of the following news organizations usually are.

	NOT BIASED AT ALL	NOT VERY BIASED	SOMEWHAT BIASED	VERY BIASED	EXTREMELY BIASED	NOT FAMILIAR WITH
	%	%	%	%	%	%
PBS News	22	26	19	9	8	17
NPR, National Public Radio	18	20	20	12	14	16
AP, The Associated Press	17	28	23	13	9	10
ABC News®	11	24	25	16	15	10
CBS News®	9	26	24	18	12	10
NBC News®	8	22	28	18	19	7
<i>The New York Times</i> ®	7	21	24	16	23	10
<i>The Washington Post</i> ®	7	20	24	14	20	15
CNN	7	16	21	17	33	7
<i>The Wall Street Journal</i> ®	6	23	36	10	9	16
<i>USA Today</i> ®	6	20	25	13	8	27
Fox News	4	12	16	21	46	2
MSNBC	4	11	24	21	31	9
The Huffington Post	2	12	25	20	26	16
Breitbart News	1	5	11	9	48	25
Vox®	1	4	12	8	9	66
<i>Mother Jones</i> ®	<1	5	13	12	15	55

The rank order of news organizations suggests that Americans see the major public broadcasting entities PBS and NPR as less biased than other media.

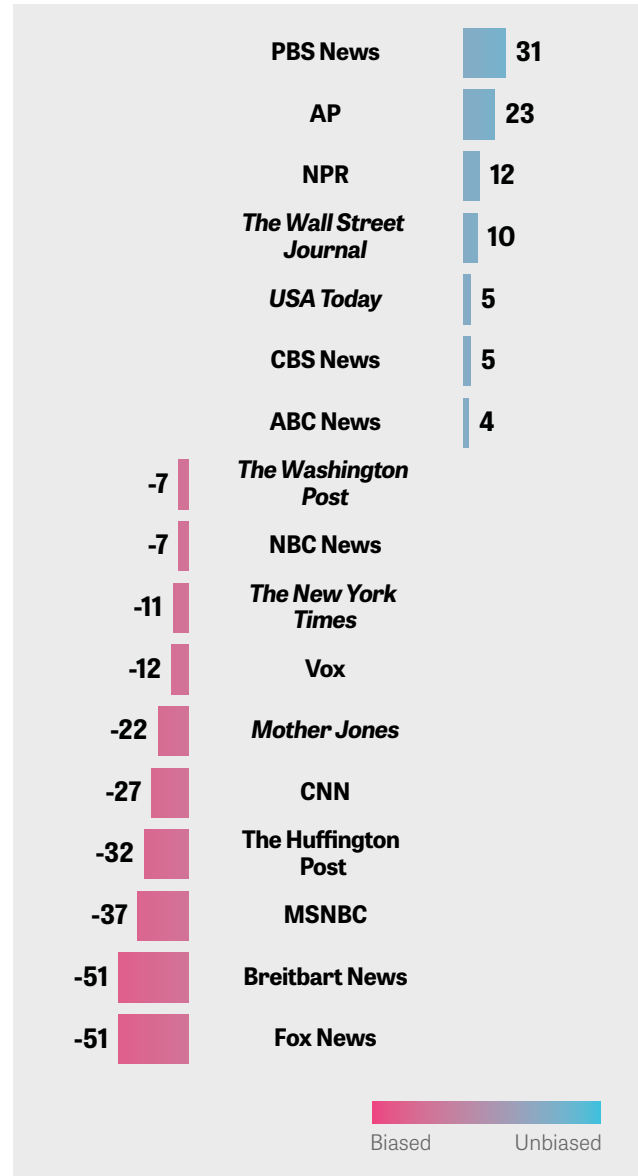
Television network news and newspapers are generally seen as less biased than cable news or the better-known internet-only news sources like Breitbart News and the Huffington Post. This rank order is consistent with one of the findings of the 2017 Survey on Trust, Media and Democracy, which showed that Americans have greater confidence in “national television network news” and “major national newspapers” than in “cable news” and “internet-only news websites” to provide news that is “mostly accurate and politically balanced.”

Given differences in familiarity with the various news organizations, it is useful to compute a net bias score — the percentage who see each as “not biased at all” or “not very biased” minus the percentage who see each as “extremely biased” or “very biased.” On this measure, positive scores indicate that more people consider the news source unbiased than biased, and negative scores mean more people consider it biased than unbiased.

PBS News has the highest score of +31, followed by AP at +23. Five other organizations — NPR, *The Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, CBS News and ABC News — are more likely to be described as being unbiased rather than biased. The remainder are seen as biased, with Fox News and Breitbart News perceived as most biased with net bias scores of -51.

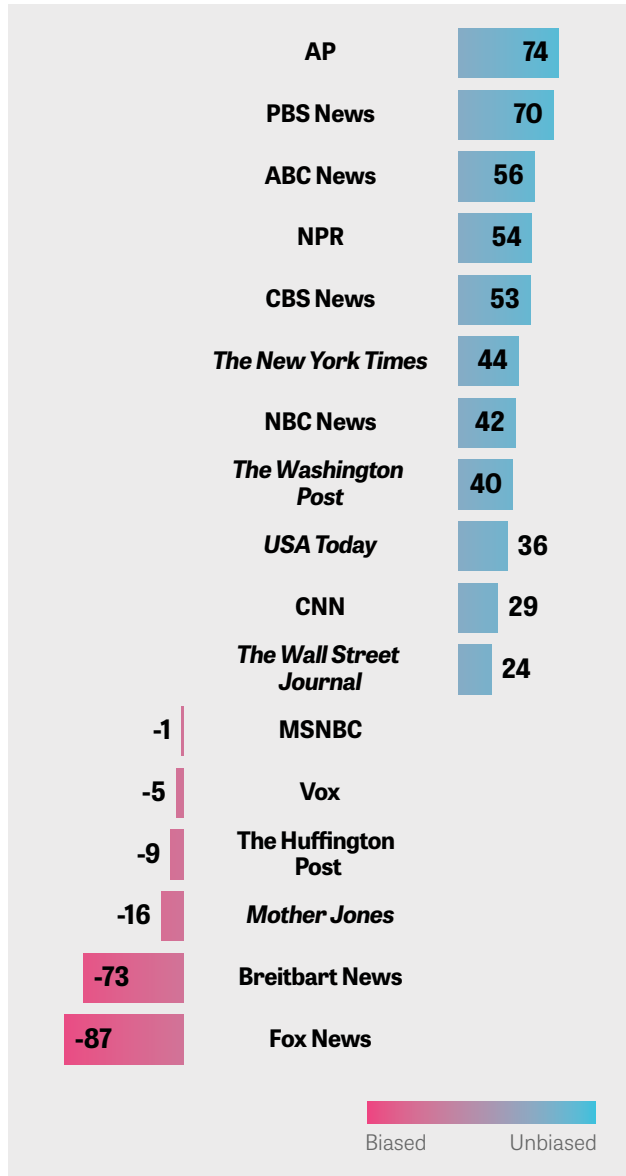
### Net Bias Scores of News Organizations, U.S. Adults

Percentage rating each as unbiased minus percentage rating each as biased



### Net Bias Scores of News Organizations, Democrats/Democratic Leaners

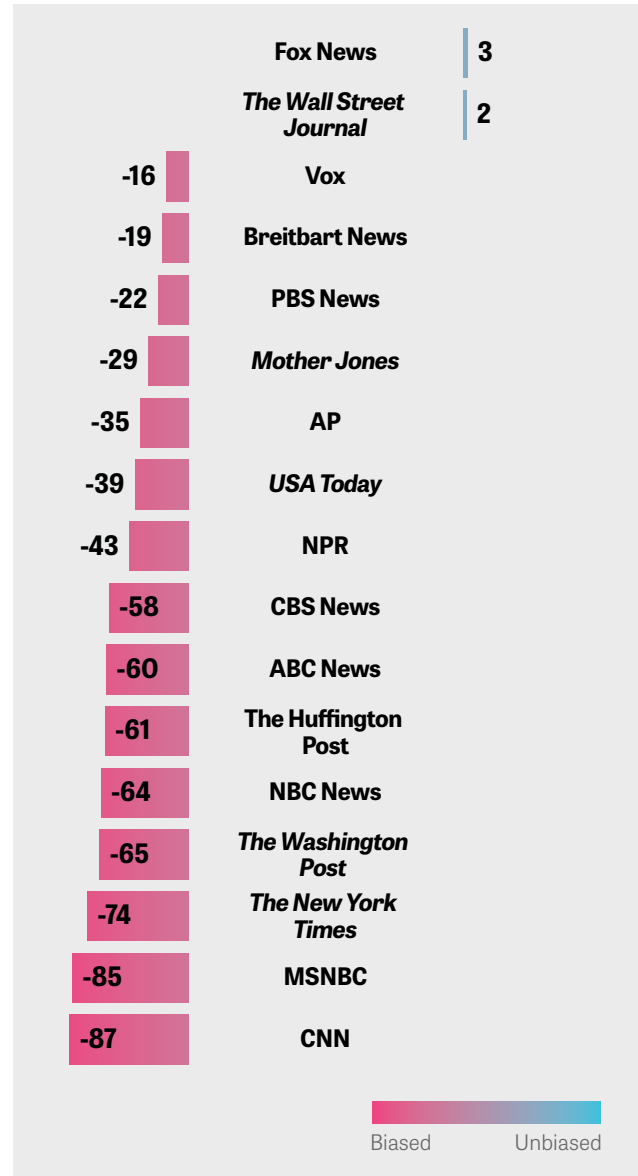
Percentage rating each as unbiased minus percentage rating each as biased



Democrats, including Democratic-leaning independents, tend to see most news organizations as unbiased, except for Fox News, Breitbart News, *Mother Jones*, the Huffington Post and Vox. Democrats are divided as to whether MSNBC is biased: 27% believe it is not biased, and 28% believe it is. Democrats are especially likely to see Fox News (89% biased and 2% unbiased, resulting in a net score of -87) and Breitbart News (76% biased and 3% unbiased, for a net score of -73) as biased news organizations.

### Net Bias Scores of News Organizations, Republicans/Republican Leaners

Percentage rating each as unbiased minus percentage rating each as biased



In contrast to the pattern among Democrats, Republicans, including Republican-leaning independents, tend to see all news organizations as biased. The two exceptions are Fox News and *The Wall Street Journal*. Republicans are divided as to whether those organizations are biased or unbiased. Republicans view CNN and MSNBC as the most biased.

## ACCURACY

PBS News, NPR and AP also ranked at the top of the list in terms of accuracy, along with the major national newspapers. The internet-only sites Breitbart News, the Huffington Post and Vox, get lower accuracy ratings, but to a large degree, that reflects lower familiarity with them.

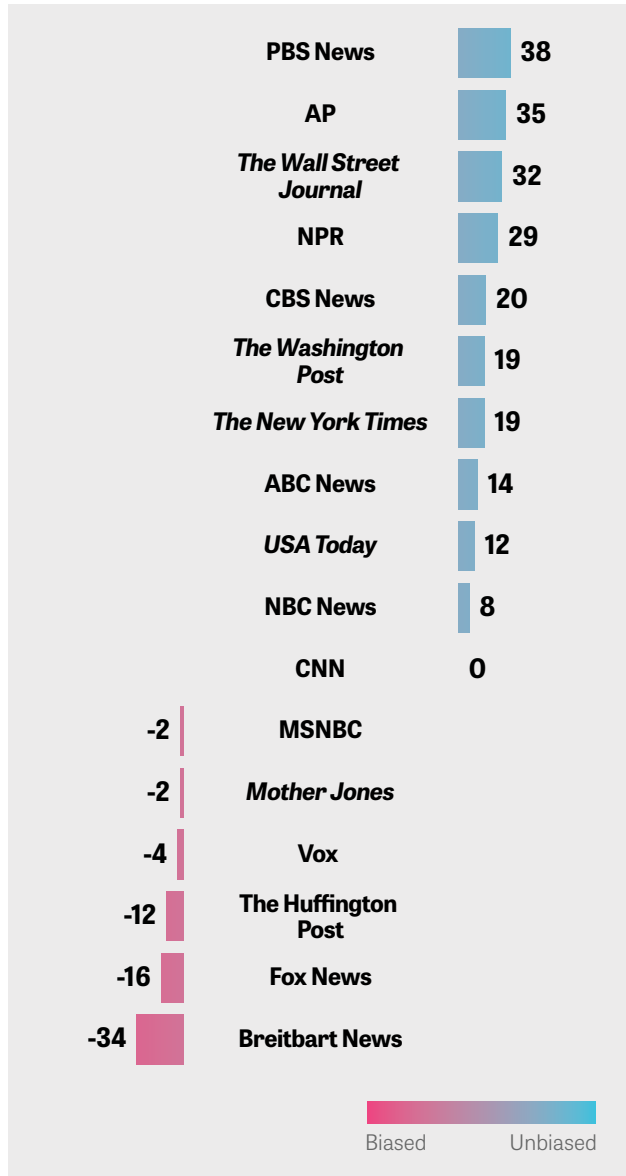
### Ratings of News Organizations on Accuracy

Regardless of whether or not you think it is biased, please indicate how accurate each of the following news organizations usually are.

	<b>EXTREMELY ACCURATE</b>	<b>VERY ACCURATE</b>	<b>SOMEWHAT ACCURATE</b>	<b>NOT VERY ACCURATE</b>	<b>NOT ACCURATE AT ALL</b>	<b>NOT FAMILIAR WITH</b>
	%	%	%	%	%	%
PBS News	24	25	23	8	3	16
NPR, National Public Radio	24	19	25	8	6	18
<i>The New York Times</i>	18	25	21	14	10	12
AP, The Associated Press	17	31	28	11	2	11
<i>The Washington Post</i>	16	25	22	13	9	14
<i>The Wall Street Journal</i>	13	29	32	7	3	16
ABC News	10	26	34	17	5	8
Fox News	9	20	24	23	22	2
CNN	8	24	33	18	14	4
NBC News	8	26	32	19	7	9
MSNBC	8	21	33	18	13	8
CBS News	6	31	37	14	3	8
<i>USA Today</i>	5	23	31	13	3	26
The Huffington Post	5	12	36	18	11	18
<i>Mother Jones</i>	2	10	17	6	8	57
Breitbart News	2	8	22	17	27	24
Vox	1	7	13	7	5	67

### Net Accuracy Scores of News Organizations, U.S. Adults

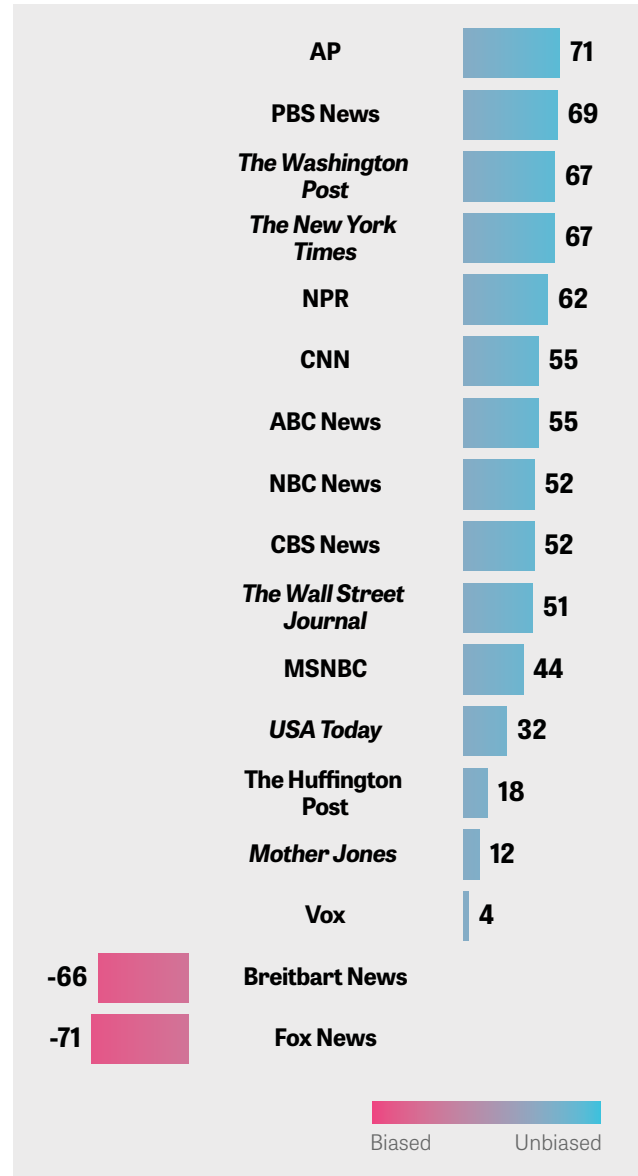
Percentage rating each as accurate minus percentage rating each as inaccurate



The net accuracy scores — the percentage who describe each as being “extremely accurate” or “very accurate” minus the percentage rating each as “not very accurate” or “not accurate at all” — shift the right-leaning news organizations (Fox News and Breitbart News) to the bottom of the list. Also, the network news channels are perceived as more accurate than the cable news channels using this measure. PBS News, AP, *The Wall Street Journal* and NPR get the highest net accuracy scores. Notably, none of the cable news networks get positive accuracy scores, nor do the internet-only organizations.

### Net Accuracy Scores of News Organizations, Democrats/Democratic Leaners

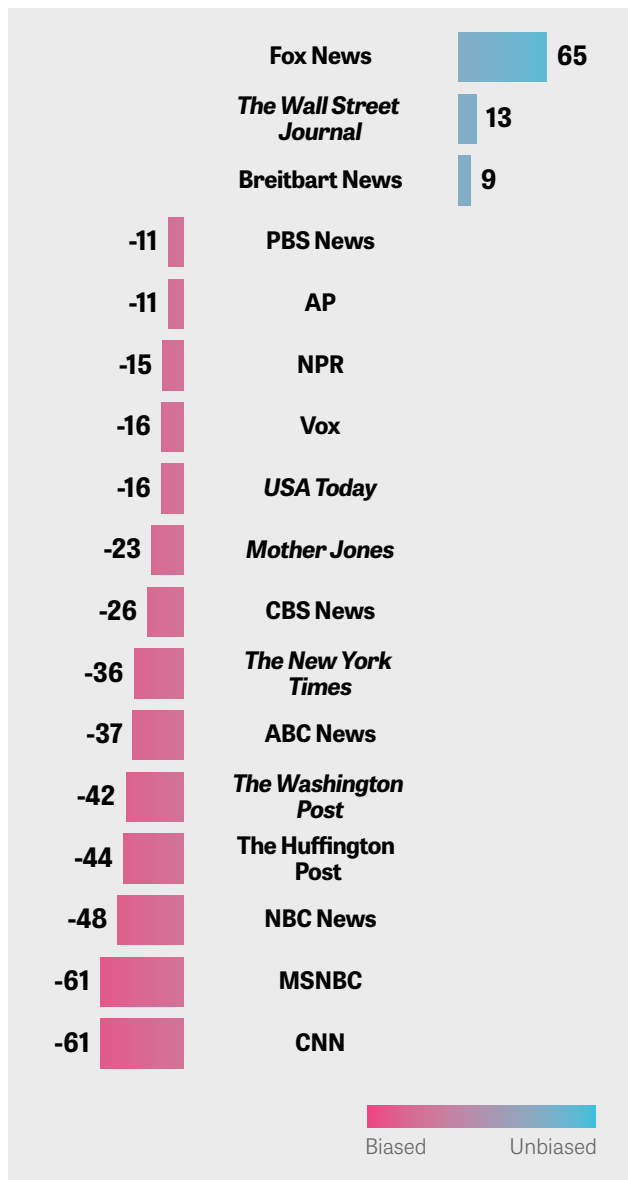
Percentage rating each as accurate minus percentage rating each as inaccurate



Democrats view most organizations as accurate, with the notable exceptions of Fox News and Breitbart News, which Democrats overwhelmingly see as being inaccurate. AP, PBS News, *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* get the highest net accuracy scores among Democrats. Democrats perceive CNN and MSNBC as more accurate than inaccurate.

### Net Accuracy Scores of News Organizations, Republicans/Republican Leaners

Percentage rating each as accurate minus percentage rating each as inaccurate



Republicans view most organizations as inaccurate rather than accurate, except for Fox News (overwhelmingly seen as accurate), *The Wall Street Journal* and Breitbart News. Republicans rate CNN and MSNBC as least accurate.

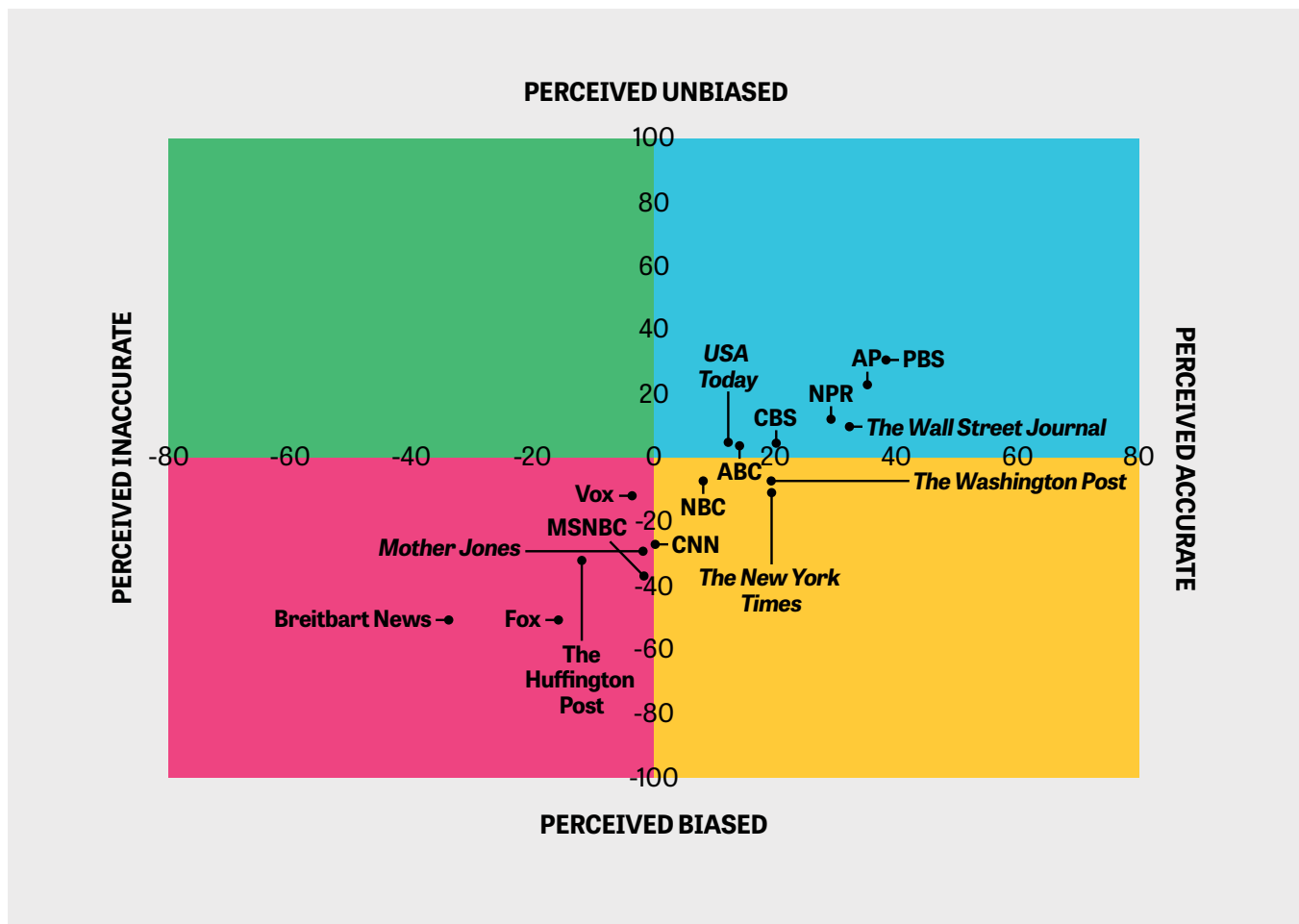
**DEMOCRATS RATED MOST OF THE MAJOR NEWS ORGANIZATIONS AS BEING ACCURATE, EXCEPT FOR FOX NEWS AND BREITBART NEWS. REPUBLICANS RATED MOST OF THE MAJOR NEWS ORGANIZATIONS AS INACCURATE, EXCEPT FOR FOX NEWS, THE WALL STREET JOURNAL AND BREITBART NEWS.**

## BIAS AND ACCURACY

Americans appear to make little distinction between bias and accuracy — news organizations that are viewed as biased also tend to be viewed as inaccurate, and news organizations that are viewed as unbiased tend to be viewed as accurate. The two sets of ratings are correlated at better than .90 (with a value of 1.0 representing a perfect linear relationship and a value of 0 indicating no relationship).

Plotting the news organizations on the bias and accuracy dimensions underscores the relationship between the two, with most of the news organizations falling into the upper-right (rated positively on both bias and accuracy) or lower-left (rated negatively on both bias and accuracy) quadrants of the graph.

### Bias and Accuracy Scores of News Sources, U.S. Adults

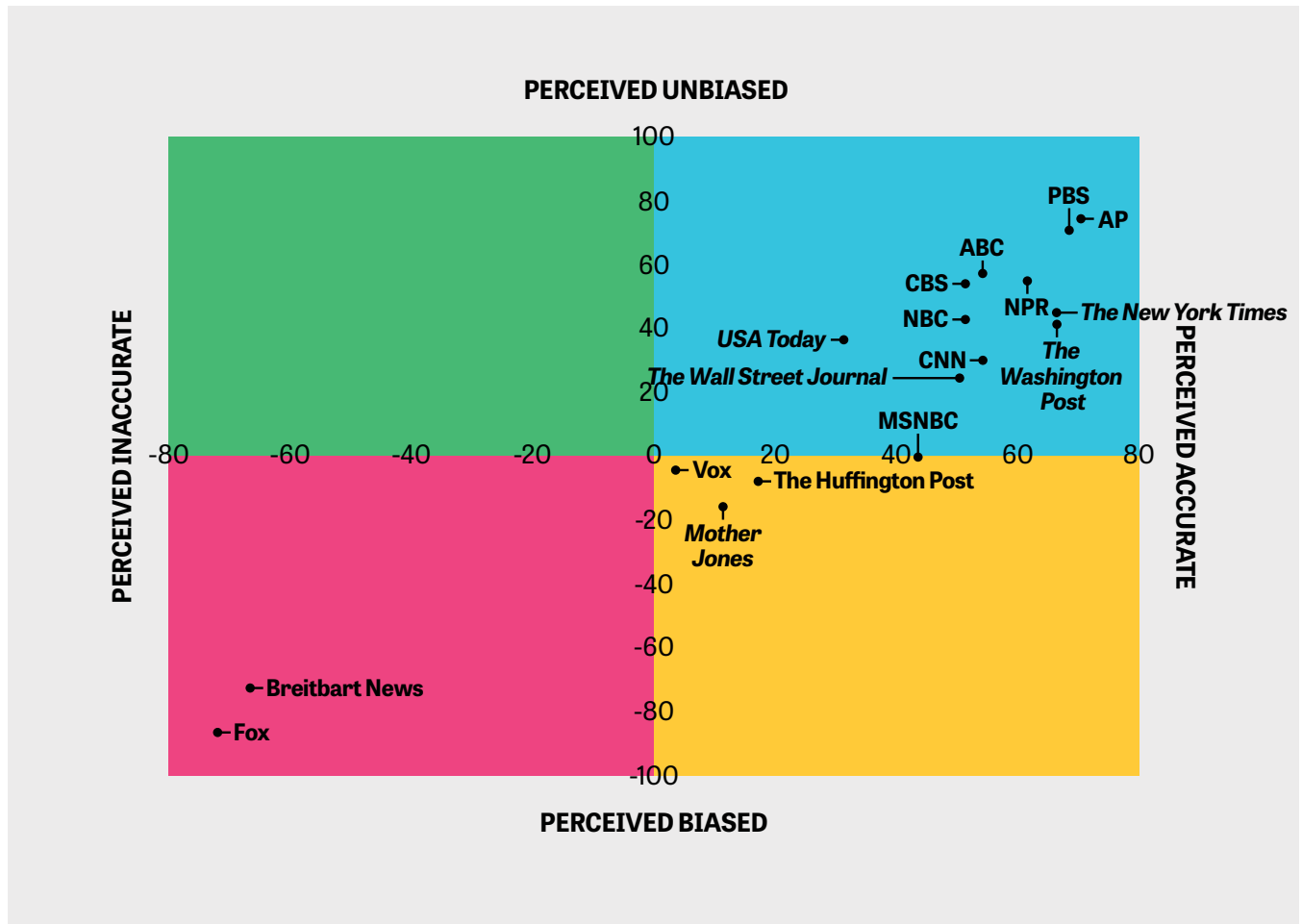




Organizations perceived as accurate and unbiased, based on the net accuracy and net bias scores, include PBS News, AP, NPR, *The Wall Street Journal*, CBS News, ABC News and *USA Today*. Organizations in the lower-right quadrant are believed to be accurate but biased and include NBC News, *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*. Organizations in the lower-left quadrant are regarded as inaccurate and biased, and include Breitbart News, Fox News, the Huffington Post, MSNBC, *Mother Jones* and Vox. No organizations are perceived as unbiased and inaccurate. CNN is perceived as biased, but the public is divided on whether it is accurate or inaccurate.

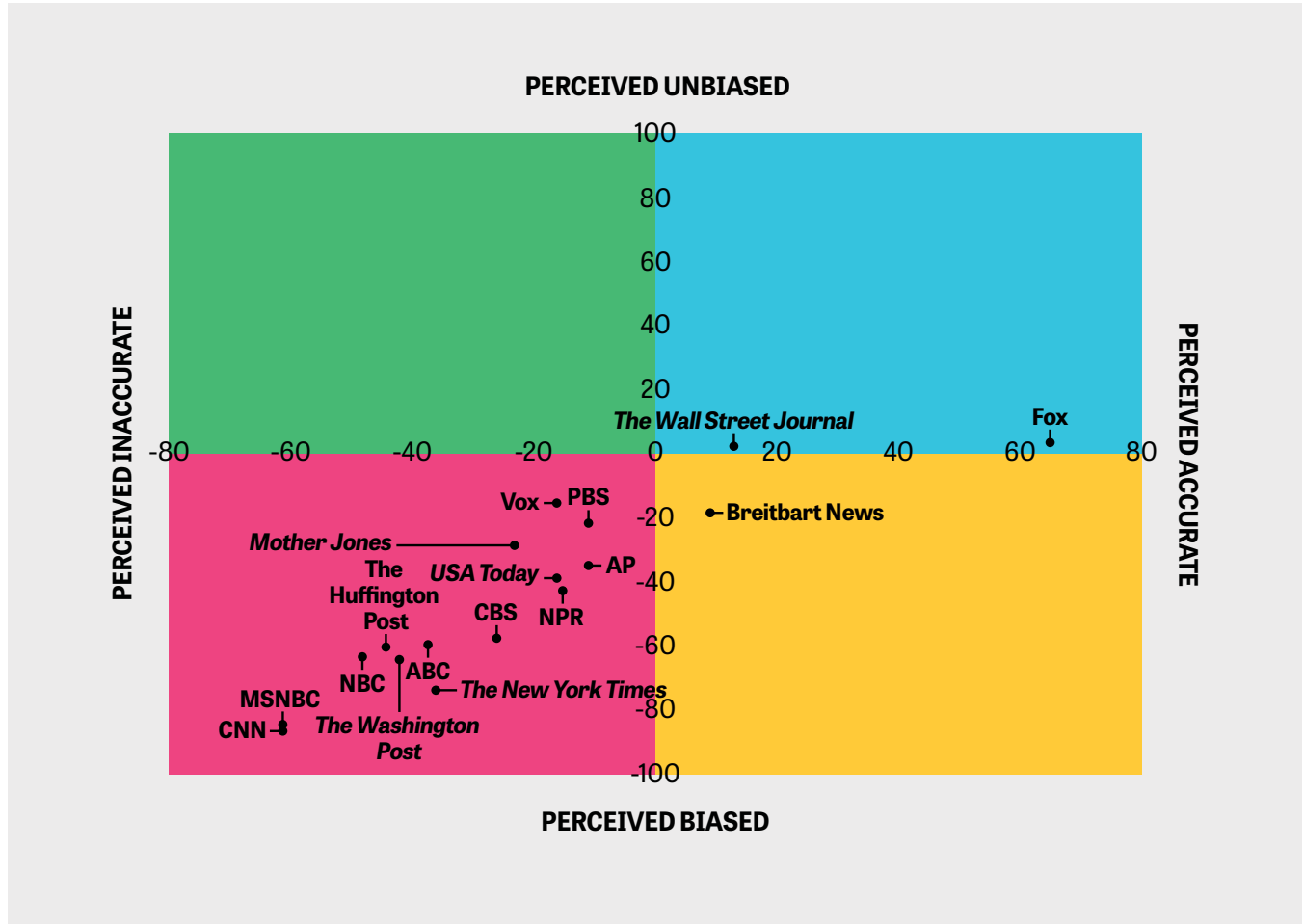
Given Democrats' and Republicans' divergent beliefs about the accuracy of most news organizations, as well as the bias of certain organizations, the accuracy and bias plots for the two groups of partisans are very different. For Democrats, the majority of news organizations — including all of the major newspapers and the major television networks — are perceived to be more unbiased than biased, and more accurate than inaccurate. Democrats perceive the Huffington Post, *Mother Jones* and MSNBC as accurate but slightly biased, and they are generally divided about Vox. Fox News and Breitbart News are in the extreme lower left of the plot, indicating that Democrats believe these organizations are extremely biased and extremely inaccurate.

**Bias and Accuracy Scores of News Sources, Democrats/Democratic Leaners**



For Republicans, all but three news organizations fall in the lower-left quadrant of the graph, indicating that they believe those organizations are inaccurate and biased. Within that space, Republicans are more likely to see CNN and MSNBC as inaccurate and biased than PBS News and AP, for example. Republicans believe Fox News and *The Wall Street Journal* are accurate, but are about as likely to think they are biased as unbiased. They view Breitbart News as more accurate than inaccurate, but biased.

**Bias and Accuracy Scores of News Sources, Republicans/Republican Leaners**



## CONCLUSION

Americans perceive much bias and inaccuracy in news reporting and are generally bothered by its presence, even when the bias or inaccuracy is against groups they oppose. They generally believe there is more bias than inaccuracy in news reporting today, both in traditional news media and on social media.

When assessing individual news organizations, Americans do not make much distinction between accuracy and bias. Rather, their opinions may be driven by a more basic positive or negative opinion of the organization — news organizations they like are perceived to be both accurate and unbiased, and news organizations they dislike are perceived to be both inaccurate and biased.

Also, the category of news media seems to influence the way people view particular news organizations. In general, public news entities are rated best on both dimensions, and network news and newspapers are rated better than cable news. That hierarchy appears to exist when Americans rate specific news organizations, as here, and when rating the larger categories of news media, as in the 2017 survey.

Perceptions of bias certainly do not help foster confidence in the news media. To a large extent, Republicans perceive more bias in the news media than Democrats do. However, it is not just a “Republican issue” since independents perceive about as much bias in news reporting as Republicans do. Also, Republicans are about as likely to believe that GOP-leaning Fox News is biased as unbiased.

Technology has made news more easily accessible to Americans and given them more choices of news providers. But the more recent additions to the news landscape — internet news, cable news and social media — tend to be the ones most likely to be perceived as biased and inaccurate. As such, it could be that these newer sources of news greatly contribute to the perceptions of bias in news media.

Having more choices also means having a greater ability to get a one-sided view of the news. Those who get news mostly from conservative-leaning sources appear especially likely to perceive inaccuracy and bias in the news. Those who primarily rely on liberal-leaning sources are especially bothered by perceived inaccuracy.

Results of the Gallup/Knight Foundation 2017 Survey on Trust, Media and Democracy revealed that majorities of Americans perceive issues related to bias and inaccurate reporting are “major” problems with news coverage today, and they see substantial amounts of both. Increasing trust in the news media thus depends on reducing the amount of actual inaccuracy and bias in reporting, as well as trying to change perceptions about the extent to which inaccuracy and bias exist.

## METHODOLOGY

Results are based on self-administered web surveys with a random sample of 1,440 U.S. adults, aged 18 and older, who are members of the Gallup Panel. Gallup uses probability-based, random sampling methods to recruit its panel members.

Interviewing took place between Feb. 5 and March 11, 2018.

The response rate among panel members sampled for this study was 31%.

Gallup weighted the obtained sample to correct for nonresponse. Nonresponse adjustments were made by adjusting the sample to match the national demographics of gender, age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, education and region. Demographic weighting targets were based on the 2015 Current Population Survey figures for the aged-18-and-older U.S. population. For results based on this sample of U.S. adults, the margin of sampling error is  $\pm 4$  percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Margins of error for subgroups are higher.

All reported margins of sampling error include the computed design effects for weighting.

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.

The full questionnaire, topline results, detailed cross tabulations and raw data may be obtained upon request. For questions about how the survey was conducted, please contact [galluphelp@gallup.com](mailto:galluphelp@gallup.com).

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The Ford Foundation is an independent, nonprofit grant-making organization. For more than 80 years it has worked with courageous people on the front lines of social change worldwide, guided by its mission to strengthen democratic values, reduce poverty and injustice, promote international cooperation, and advance human achievement. With headquarters in New York, the foundation has offices in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia. [www.fordfoundation.org](http://www.fordfoundation.org)

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Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people — especially those with the fewest resources — have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Sue Desmond-Hellmann and Co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.

## ABOUT THE OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS

The **Open Society Foundations** work to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable and open to the participation of all people. In the United States, the Open Society Foundations aim to nurture the development of a society that allows all people to participate equitably in political, economic and cultural life; encourages diverse opinions and critical debate; protects human rights; and promotes broadly shared prosperity and security.



## ABOUT GALLUP

Gallup delivers analytics and advice to help leaders and organizations solve their most pressing problems. Combining more than 80 years of experience with its global reach, Gallup knows more about the attitudes and behaviors of employees, customers, students and citizens than any other organization in the world.

For more information, visit [www.gallup.com](http://www.gallup.com) or [education.gallup.com](http://education.gallup.com).

# APPENDIX

## REGRESSION RESULTS

**Model 1. Perceived bias in news on television, on radio and in newspapers**

VARIABLE	CODING	B	STD. ERROR
Constant		48.4*	3.3
Gender	0=female, 1=male	4.3*	1.4
Race	0=nonwhite, 1=non-Hispanic white	7.6*	1.6
Age	0=18-34, .5=35-54, 1=55+	-9.1*	1.9
Education	0=high school or less, .33=some college, .67=college graduate only, 1=postgraduate	0.7	2.1
Party identification	0=Democrat, .5=independent, 1=Republican	22.5*	2.1
Ideology	0=liberal, .5=moderate, 1=conservative	10.9*	2.0
Political knowledge	0=low, .5=medium, 1=high	1.1	2.1
Live in East	0=no, 1=yes	1.2	2.1
Live in South	0=no, 1=yes	-0.8	1.8
Live in West	0=no, 1=yes	2.8	2.0
Live in city	0=no, 1=yes	1.6	2.1
Live in suburb	0=no, 1=yes	-2.5	1.7
Live in rural area	0=no, 1=yes	-6.6*	2.3
Attention to national news	0=not much/none at all, .5=a moderate amount, 1=a great deal	-11.6*	2.1
Attention to local news	0=not much/none at all, .5=a moderate amount, 1=a great deal	-1.5	2.0
Exposure to news	0=all or most liberal and little or no conservative, .5=mixture of both, 1=all or most conservative and little or no liberal	5.3*	2.7

Dependent variable: estimated percentage of bias in news reported on television, on radio and in newspapers

\*Significant at  $p < .05$

$R^2 = .29$

**Model 2. Perceived bias in news on social media**

VARIABLE	CODING	B	STD. ERROR
Constant		81.3*	2.8
Gender	0=female, 1= male	3.8*	1.2
Race	0=nonwhite, 1=non-Hispanic white	3.3*	1.4
Age	0=18-34, .5=35-54, 1=55+	-8.4*	1.6
Education	0=high school or less, .33=some college, .67=college graduate only, 1=postgraduate	3.7*	1.8
Party identification	0=Democrat, .5=independent, 1=Republican	8.3*	1.8
Ideology	0=liberal, .5=moderate, 1=conservative	4.4*	1.7
Political knowledge	0=low, .5=medium, 1=high	1.7	1.8
Live in East	0=no, 1=yes	-3.3	1.8
Live in South	0=no, 1=yes	-2.2	1.5
Live in West	0=no, 1=yes	-1.4	1.7
Live in city	0=no, 1=yes	-2.4	1.8
Live in suburb	0=no, 1=yes	-3.8*	1.4
Live in rural area	0=no, 1=yes	-6.0*	2.0
Attention to national news	0=not much/none at all, .5=a moderate amount, 1=a great deal	-4.3*	1.8
Attention to local news	0=not much/none at all, .5=a moderate amount, 1=a great deal	-0.1	1.7
Exposure to news	0=all or most liberal and little or no conservative, .5=mixture of both, 1=all or most conservative and little or no liberal	-5.4*	2.3

Dependent variable: estimated percentage of bias in news reported on social media

\*Significant at p < .05

R<sup>2</sup> = .10

**Model 3. Perceived inaccuracy in news on television, on radio and in newspapers**

VARIABLE	CODING	B	STD. ERROR
Constant		35.1*	3.2
Gender	0=female, 1=male	0.0	1.4
Race	0=nonwhite, 1=non-Hispanic white	0.4	1.6
Age	0=18-34, .5=35-54, 1=55+	2.3	1.8
Education	0=high school or less, .33=some college, .67=college graduate only, 1=postgraduate	-5.3*	2.1
Party identification	0=Democrat, .5=independent, 1=Republican	8.3*	2.1
Ideology	0=liberal, .5=moderate, 1=conservative	6.3*	2.0
Political knowledge	0=low, .5=medium, 1=high	-2.7	2.1
Live in East	0=no, 1=yes	3.6	2.1
Live in South	0=no, 1=yes	3.6*	1.7
Live in West	0=no, 1=yes	5.0*	1.9
Live in city	0=no, 1=yes	0.2	2.0
Live in suburb	0=no, 1=yes	-1.2	1.7
Live in rural area	0=no, 1=yes	-2.4	2.3
Attention to national news	0=not much/none at all, .5=a moderate amount, 1=a great deal	-8.5*	2.0
Attention to local news	0=not much/none at all, .5=a moderate amount, 1=a great deal	-1.1	1.9
Exposure to news	0=all or most liberal and little or no conservative, .5=mixture of both, 1=all or most conservative and little or no liberal	15.5*	2.6

Dependent variable: estimated percentage of inaccuracy in news reported on television, on radio and in newspapers

\*Significant at  $p < .05$

$R^2 = .17$

**Model 4. Perceived inaccuracy in news on social media**

VARIABLE	CODING	B	STD. ERROR
Constant		69.9*	3.2
Gender	0=female, 1= male	1.2	1.3
Race	0=nonwhite, 1=non-Hispanic white	-0.9	1.6
Age	0=18-34, .5=35-54, 1=55+	-3.0	1.8
Education	0=high school or less, .33=some college, .67=college graduate only, 1=postgraduate	-1.2	2.0
Party identification	0=Democrat, .5=independent, 1=Republican	4.1*	2.1
Ideology	0=liberal, .5=moderate, 1=conservative	-1.4	1.9
Political knowledge	0=low, .5=medium, 1=high	-0.2	2.1
Live in East	0=no, 1=yes	-2.2	2.0
Live in South	0=no, 1=yes	-1.4	1.7
Live in West	0=no, 1=yes	-3.5	1.9
Live in city	0=no, 1=yes	-6.2*	2.0
Live in suburb	0=no, 1=yes	-4.5*	1.6
Live in rural area	0=no, 1=yes	-3.1	2.2
Attention to national news	0=not much/none at all, .5=a moderate amount, 1=a great deal	-3.5	2.0
Attention to local news	0=not much/none at all, .5=a moderate amount, 1=a great deal	-1.1	1.9
Exposure to news	0=all or most liberal and little or no conservative, .5=mixture of both, 1=all or most conservative and little or no liberal	6.9*	2.6

Dependent variable: estimated percentage of inaccuracy in news reported on social media

\*Significant at  $p < .05$

$R^2 = .04$

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