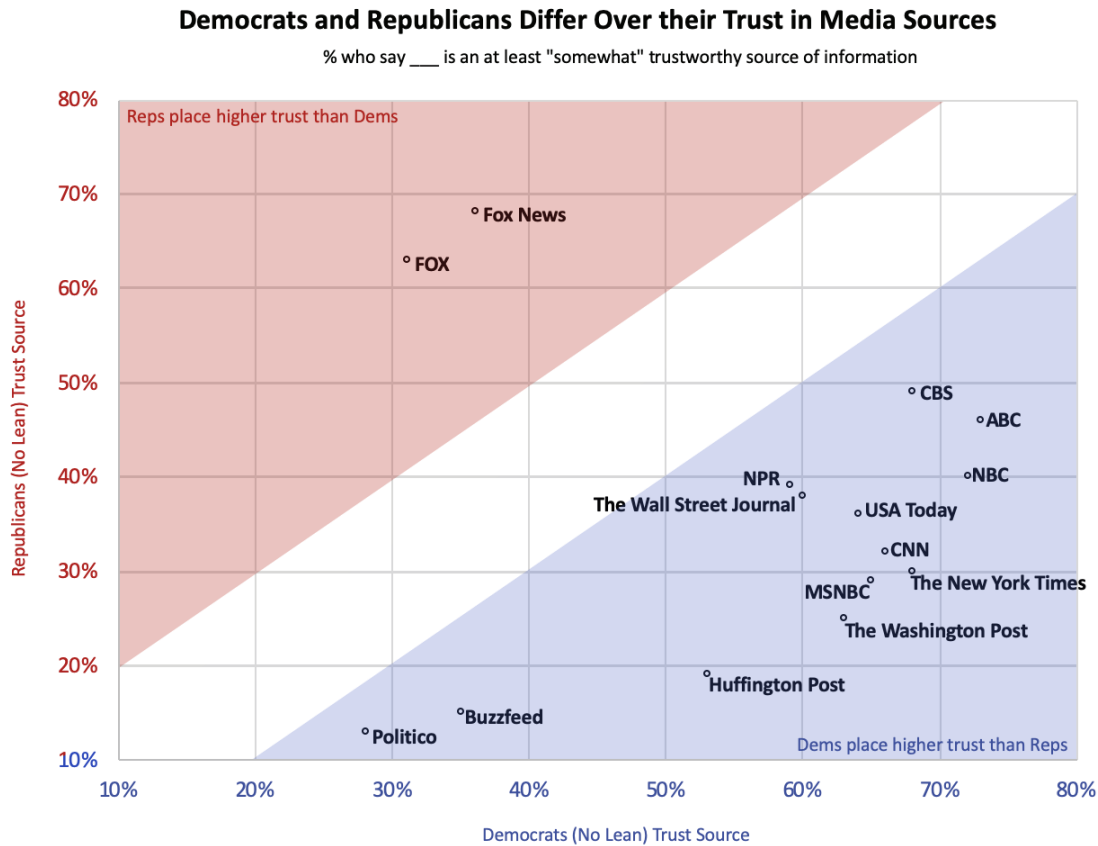# BRIEF:

2019 IPR DISINFORMATION, POLITICS, AND THE MEDIA

HOW POLITICAL AFFILIATION INFLUENCES ATTITUDES ABOUT DISINFORMATION AND THE NEWS MEDIA

This issue brief examines how Republicans and Democrats differ in their perceptions of various media outlets and their role in spreading deliberately misleading or biased information. While many Americans call this "fake news," "false news" or "misinformation," this report uses the term "disinformation" for consistency and clarity.

Results are based on a nationally represented survey of 2,200 Americans conducted by Morning Consult from March 19-24, 2019.

MEDIA SOURCE TRUSTWORTHINESS BY POLITICAL AFFILIATION

Democrats and Republicans Differ Over their Trust in Media Sources

% who say ____ is an at least "somewhat" trustworthy source of information


An individual's political affiliation clearly plays a role in how much they trust certain media sources.

Democrats are more likely to trust mainstream media sources than Republicans. For example, the gap between Democratic and Republican trust is substantial for *The New York Times* (+38 points), *The Washington Post* (+38 points), and *MSNBC* (+36 points). *Fox News*, on the other hand, is much more likely to be trusted by Republicans (+32 points).

MEDIA SOURCES PERCEIVED TO BE MOST RESPONSIBLE FOR SPREADING DISINFORMATION

Democrats and Republicans Differ on Amount of Responsibility Placed on Media Sources for Spreading Disinformation

% who say _____ is at least "somewhat" responsible
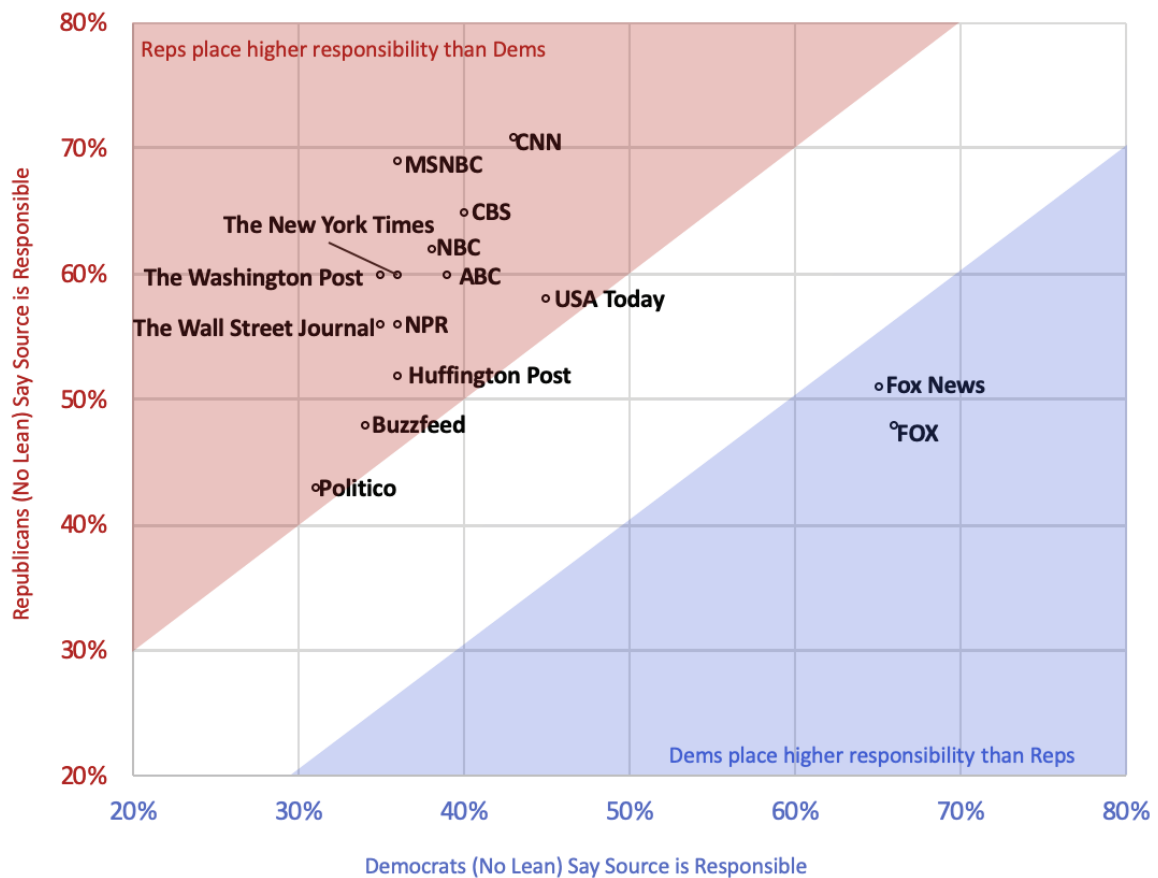
Americans from different political parties also differ in the amount of responsibility they place on media sources for spreading disinformation. The largest gap between perceptions of responsibility is with *MSNBC* (-33 points), followed by *CNN* (-28 points), *The Washington Post* (-25 points), and *CBS* (-25 points). Republicans place more responsibility on all media sources for the spread of disinformation except *FOX* (+18 percentage points) and *Fox News* (+14 percentage points).

Party affiliation is less of a factor with *USA Today* (-13 points) and *Politico* (-12 points).

TOP MEDIA SOURCES FOR COMBATTING DISINFORMATION

How well do media sources combat disinformation?

Information Sources	Percentage Saying Source is Doing at Least "Somewhat Well" in Combatting Disinformation
Fact-checking Websites (e.g. *Snopes, PolitiFact,* etc.)	49%
Local Broadcast News (TV)	48%
Local Newspapers	48%
Radio News (e.g. *NPR*)	46%
Network TV News Stations (e.g. *ABC, CBS, NBC*)	44%
Newspapers (e.g. *The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times*)	44%
Internet Search Engines (e.g. Google, Bing)	39%
Cable News (*Fox News, MSNBC, CNN*)	38%
Late Night TV (e.g. The Daily Show with Trevor Noah, The Late Show with Stephen Colbert)	34%
Social Media Sites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)	26%
Conservative Websites (e.g. Breitbart, Infowar	26%
Progressive Websites (e.g. The Daily Kos, Think Progress, Talking Points Memo)	24%

Americans believe that fact-checking websites such as Snopes and PolitiFact are best at combatting disinformation (49%), followed by local TV news (48%), and local newspapers (48%). The sources given the least credit for combatting disinformation are social media sites (26%), conservative websites (26%), and progressive websites (24%).

Political affiliation does not significantly impact respondents' answers to this question, except with conservative websites (24 point gap between Republicans and Democrats) and progressive websites (16 point gap between Democrats and Republicans).

HOW RESPONSIBLE *SHOULD* NEWS MEDIA BE IN COMBATTING DISINFORMATION?

How responsible should the information sources be for combatting disinformation?

Information Sources	Percentage Saying Source is at Least "Somewhat Responsible"
Local Newspapers	**82%**
Network TV News Stations (e.g. *ABC, CBS, NBC*)	**82%**
Cable News (*Fox News, MSNBC, CNN*)	**82%**
Local Broadcast News (TV)	**81%**
Newspapers (e.g. *The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times*)	**81%**
Radio News (e.g. *NPR*)	**80%**
Fact-checking Websites (e.g. Snopes, PolitiFact, etc.)	**75%**
Social Media Sites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)	**75%**
Internet Search Engines (e.g. Google, Bing)	**74%**
Conservative Websites (e.g. Breitbart, Infowars)	**70%**
Progressive Websites (e.g. The Daily Kos, Think Progress, Talking Points Memo)	**69%**
Late Night TV (e.g. The Daily Show with Trevor Noah, The Late Show with Stephen Colbert)	**68%**

Respondents believe that local newspapers (82%), network TV news stations (82%), and cable news (82%) should be most responsible for combatting disinformation. Regardless of the media source, at least two-thirds of Americans said every single media source presented in this study should help combat disinformation.

METHODOLOGY:

This poll was conducted between March 19-24, 2019 by Morning Consult among a national sample of 2,200 adults. The interviews were conducted online and the data were weighted to approximate a target sample of adults based on age, educational attainment, gender, race, and region. Results from the full survey have a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points.

For the full report and charts, please visit the Institute for Public Relations website at **instituteforpr.org/ipr-disinformation-study**. If you are an academic researcher who would like access to the data, please contact Tina McCorkindale at tina@instituteforpr.org.

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