

# Is Part of Your Audience in a Media Bubble?

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**W**ith a presidential election and expected record spending on voter persuasion in 2020, there's no doubt political polarization will be a prominent feature of US culture this year. According to two recent pieces of research, this polarization extends to digital media habits, meaning marketers who know their audience spans the political spectrum will have their work cut out for them.

According to November 2019 polling by [Pew Research Center](#), there were massive differences, not only in which news outlets US adults trusted depending on their political party identification, but also in the overall amount of trust they placed in the 30 news outlets Pew asked about. Six of the news sources were trusted by at least half of respondents who identified as Democrats or said they leaned that way, compared with just one source trusted by at least half of Republicans and Republican-leaners. Only two sources were trusted by at least one-third of Republicans, vs. 13 on the other side of the political spectrum.

### Sources Trusted for Political/Election News According to US Democratic vs. Republican Adults, Nov 2019

% of respondents

Democrats/ lean Democrat		Republicans/ lean Republican		Total	
CNN	67%	Fox News	65%	ABC News	48%
NBC News	61%	ABC News	33%	CNN	47%
ABC News	60%			NBC News	47%
CBS News	59%			CBS News	45%
PBS	56%			Fox News	43%
The New York Times	53%			PBS	42%
BBC	48%			BBC	35%
MSNBC	48%			The New York Times	35%
Washington Post	47%			MSNBC	34%
NPR	46%				
Time	46%				
The Wall Street Journal	38%				
USA Today	35%				

Note: ages 18+; sources trusted by 33% or more shown

Source: Pew Research Center, "U.S. Media Polarization and the 2020 Election: A Nation Divided," Jan 24, 2020

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Trust isn't a perfect proxy for readership or viewership, and some survey respondents indicated that they consumed news from outlets they distrusted. But the same general pattern held: Relatively few of the right-leaners relied on most of the outlets studied. At least one-quarter of left-leaning respondents reported using eight of the sources in the past week. Only four of the sources studied were as popular on the right.

### Top 10 Outlets from Which US Adults Get Political/Election News, by Political Party, Nov 2019

% of respondents in each group

Democrats/ lean Democrat		Republican/ lean Republican		Total	
1. CNN	53%	1. Fox News	60%	1. CNN	39%
2. NBC News	40%	2. ABC News	30%	2. Fox News	39%
3. ABC News	37%	3. NBC News	28%	3. NBC News	34%
4. CBS News	33%	4. CBS News	26%	4. ABC News	33%
5. MSNBC	33%	5. CNN	24%	5. CBS News	30%
6. The New York Times	31%	6. Hannity (radio)	19%	6. MSNBC	24%
7. NPR	30%	7. Limbaugh (radio)	17%	7. NPR	20%
8. The Washington Post	26%	8. MSNBC	14%	8. The New York Times	20%
9. BBC	22%	9. NPR/PBS/The Wall Street Journal	11%	9. The Washington Post	17%
10. NPR	22%			10. PBS	16%

Note: ages 18+; in the past week

Source: Pew Research Center, "U.S. Media Polarization and the 2020 Election: A Nation Divided," Jan 24, 2020

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To some extent, Republicans are seeking out sources Democrats avoid, such as Fox News. But overall usage of these sources appears to be lower on the right—a finding also confirmed by research from audience insights platform [Disqo](#).

Disqo found that while Republicans overindexed as users of Fox News, for example, they underindexed as users of any other video-based news source studied, including cable and broadcast networks. They also had less of a presence than Democrats on most of the editorially focused news sites studied and even on business-focused news sites like Forbes and Business Insider. (Republicans overindexed on CNBC, however, where Democrats underindexed.)

Marketers looking to target a politically diverse audience, or Republicans specifically, will have to broaden strategies beyond news sites—and based on the Disqo research, it appears they are simply spending their digital media time elsewhere. Republicans overindexed on Facebook and Pinterest within the social media category, but also had an outsized presence on the sites of major sports leagues, other sports news sites like CBS Sports and ESPN and certain retail sites like Walmart and eBay.