

**Unveiling Bias: Political Polarization in Mass Media**

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**Abstract**

For decades, bias has infiltrated mass media. News articles, which serve as a primary resource for individuals seeking reliable information to shape their own viewpoints, have especially fallen victim to this bias. Unfortunately, this bias is escalating as news outlets tailor their articles to align with their political preferences. Consequently, this creates a chain reaction with dissemination of misinformation among a misled audience. Recognizing the deceptive and harmful nature of biased news, I decided to analyze news sources on various topics to study the difference in the presentation of the articles based on their political ideologies, and the societal impact that unbiased news has on society. The results indicate that political bias is highly present within prominent news outlets, with notable disparities in the way they present different topics based on their political inclinations. Individuals tend to gravitate towards news sources that align with their political ideologies and beliefs. While research suggests that people need accurate information to form informed opinions about topics, sometimes the inherent biases in news outlets exposes the audience to different perspectives.

## Unveiling Bias: Political Polarization in Mass Media

The two major political parties in the United States—the Democratic and Republican party—have shared polarized views on many issues affecting us domestically and internationally. Recently, the polarization in America has only been growing with no ideological overlap between the two parties, distancing them even further. This has led each party to perceive each other as a threat to one another and to democracy. This deep-rooted polarization is widely present in mass media, specifically political news sources that were once considered reliable for their unbiased stance. The public relies on news sources for accurate and unbiased information. However, recent statistics have shown that this trust is almost non-existent, with only 7% of Americans reporting to have a great deal of trust in political news sources.<sup>1</sup>

Today, rather than presenting current events with an unbiased viewpoint, many news sources cater articles and present information to the public based on their political party views. However, that is not the job of the mass media and it continues to be the reason why their credibility is frequently challenged by the public. Currently, with major events like the 2024 presidential election and the violence between Israel and Hamas, there is bound to be an increase in the dissemination of false information. Liberals, conservatives, and moderates all present the same news in different ways. This creates a chain reaction because with a misinformed audience, there will continue to be a spread of misinformation.

It is crucial to study the bias present among different news sources and why it is that way because not only is it deceiving to those reading or watching the news, but it can also be extremely harmful. Unbiased news is critical for the future of our democracy. The job of mass

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<sup>1</sup> Brenan, M. (2022, October 18). *Americans' Trust In Media Remains Near Record Low*. Gallup News. Retrieved November 12, 2023, from <https://news.gallup.com/poll/403166/americans-trust-media-remains-near-record-low.aspx>

media is to simply present facts. Individuals should be allowed to form their own opinion without the political pressure of a specific party. Accurate information allows individuals to make decisions and in order to keep democracy—a core value of the United States of America—alive, I want to delve deeper into this topic.

## **Literature Review**

Media has always had a strong influence on individuals. For years, scholars have scrutinized the media, examining its biases and societal impact. Since the nineteenth century, there has been evidence of bias in mass media, illustrating their inability to effectively convey factual information, thereby casting doubt regarding the media's role and purpose in society. While bias in media is not uncommon, it resurfaced to a greater extent after the COVID-19 pandemic. Studies reveal that between March 2020 and May 2020, there was an increase in polarization, particularly in COVID-19 coverage. News sources known for having far right-leaning stances misinformed readers by downplaying the virus, while left-leaning news outlets described the outbreak as far worse. The difference in the way Republicans and Democrats were presenting the news contributed to heightened polarization and diminished trust in the media. The media is expected to introduce new information without presenting their own viewpoint, but they have continuously failed to do so, casting doubts on the credibility of the news outlet. Concurrently, given the media's significant influence on shaping individuals perspectives, the media also holds a substantial amount of power.<sup>2</sup>

Elejalde, Ferres, and Herder all suggest that media content often presents a predetermined viewpoint, typically one from either side of the political spectrum.<sup>3</sup> Studies also indicate that

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<sup>2</sup> Thornton, B. (2013, June 12). *A Brief History of Media Bias*. Hoover Institution. Retrieved June 11, 2024, from <https://www.hoover.org/research/brief-history-media-bias>

<sup>3</sup> Erick, E., Leo, F., & Eelco, H. (2018, March 23). *On the nature of real and perceived bias in the mainstream media*. NCBI. Retrieved June 1, 2024, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5865717/>

almost 90% of Americans see a fair amount of bias present in their news sources.<sup>4</sup> While a good majority acknowledge that there is bias present, only about half believe that there are more than enough news sources to sort out the facts, while the other half believe that it is difficult to sort out the facts.<sup>5</sup> Researchers believe that it is imperative to comprehend and identify bias, hence the need for media literacy. This reflects the idea that “news isn’t completely transparent in the stories they choose to report. Having the knowledge that we can’t believe everything we read or see on the news will allow us as a society to become a more educated audience.” Recognizing the different types of bias may be helpful in detecting bias. First, there is bias by omission. This is the most common type of bias with journalists leaving out the entire side of an argument. Next, bias by story selection is when journalists only write or choose to present stories that support the ideologies and political stance of their news outlet’s preferred political party. Label bias is difficult to detect, but researchers believe it is crucial to know because journalists will falsely label people as “experts,” giving them the credibility they have not earned.<sup>6</sup> Figure 1 below presents a breakdown of the various types of possible biases present in media.

Everyone can agree that unbiased information is crucial in forming an understanding and opinion of current events. Although news articles are generally considered more reliable and less biased, bias persists. Many scholars emphasize the importance of knowing how to detect bias. There are many ways to do so and this further allows individuals to form their own opinion about topics. This is pertinent to my research because it provides a framework for detecting bias

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<sup>4</sup> Paulson, K. (2020, September 9). *Knight-Gallup poll sheds light on media-bias perceptions*. Free Speech Center. Retrieved June 12, 2024, from

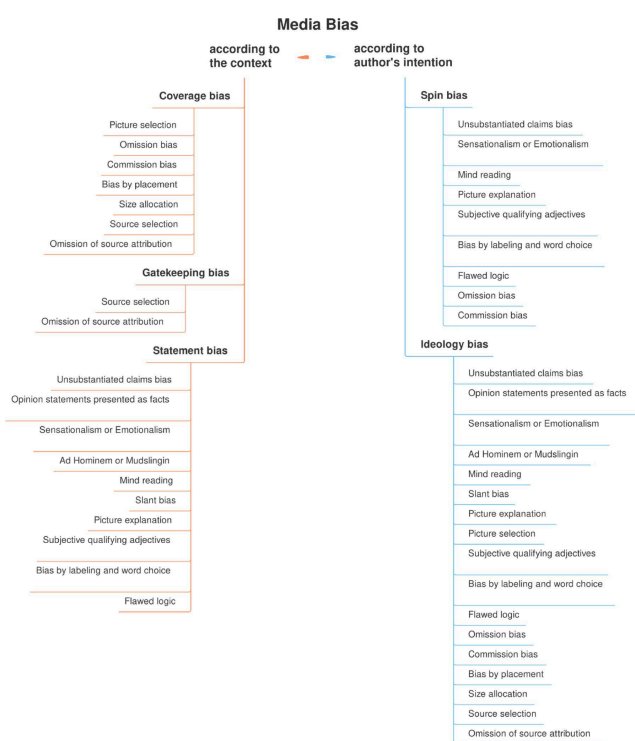
<https://firstamendment.mtsu.edu/post/knight-gallup-poll-sheds-light-on-media-bias-perceptions/>

<sup>5</sup> Watson, A. (2023, March 28). *News sources bias and fact-checking U.S. 2022*. Statista. Retrieved June 12, 2024, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/874821/news-media-bias-perceptions/>

<sup>6</sup> Morrisette, E., McKeon, G., Alison Louie, Luther, A., & Fagen, A. (n.d.). *Media Bias – Introduction to Media Studies*. Pressbooks Create. Retrieved June 12, 2024, from <https://pressbooks.pub/mediastudies/chapter/media-bias/>

in news articles. First and foremost, it is important to know the various sources being referenced or mentioned in the articles. For instance, if an article is sourcing Fox News, there is a greater chance that they are more right-leaning and will tend to report news based on the viewpoints of conservatives. Furthermore, the use of certain words or vocabulary can help determine the political preference of a news source and nature of the bias. Many times, negative connotation is used when mentioning the views of an opposing political party or

**Figure 1**



candidate.<sup>7</sup> Headlines play a significant role in news articles. When an article is first opened, in large and bold letters, the headline is printed. It can be misleading in tone, emotions, details, and more. For example, the following headlines were used to describe the same event: “Judge Allows Testimony of Another Accuser in Cosby Case” and “Bill Cosby Sex Assault Trial: Judge

<sup>7</sup> Erick, E., Leo, F., & Eelco, H. (2018, March 23). *On the nature of real and perceived bias in the mainstream media*. NCBI. Retrieved June 1, 2024, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5865717/>

Allows Only 1 Other Accuser to Testify, Not 13.”<sup>8</sup> Scholars also suggest that detecting bias can sometimes be difficult. Cross-referencing your sources with others and reading about the same topics from different news outlets can help validate the information present in one news article. These are a few of the important methods used by scholars to determine and detect bias.

Researchers stress the importance of recognizing bias due to its adverse societal effects. It can affect individuals of various backgrounds and groups and can reinforce negative stereotypes while also leading to an increase in discrimination and prejudice against certain communities.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, research suggests that exposure to bias only leads to greater polarization among groups of people. For instance, Republicans and Democrats have been extremely polarized for decades now and this has only led to an increase in political segregation. Also, individuals begin to be less open-minded and stick to one perspective rather than being open to reading different sources with other points of view. When presented with conflicting points of view and individuals who refuse to remain open-minded, it will also negatively affect collective decision-making among groups.<sup>10</sup>

While bias remains inherent in the media, readers can mitigate its impact by recognizing and acknowledging it, further fostering open-mindedness and informed decision-making. Media literacy is essential in combating the issue of bias effectively.

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<sup>8</sup> *Library Guides: Savvy Info Consumers: Detecting Bias in the News*. (2024, April 7). Library Guides. Retrieved June 11, 2024, from <https://guides.lib.uw.edu/research/evaluate/bias>

<sup>9</sup> T., D. (2023, October 27). *Understanding media bias and its effects on public opinion*. LinkedIn. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/understanding-media-bias-its-effects-public-opinion-dwayne-thompson-5rx1c/>

<sup>10</sup> Spinde, T., Jeggle, C., Haupt, M., Gaissmaier, W., & Giese, H. (2022, April 13). *How do we raise media bias awareness effectively? Effects of visualizations to communicate bias*. NCBI. Retrieved June 12, 2024, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9007373/>



## Methodology

To conduct and complete this research project, I first read books and academic resources to learn more about the deep-rooted political polarization within the United States of America and the history of bias in mass media, how to detect bias, and more. Furthermore, I gathered data regarding the position each party holds on some key issues I selected. In addition to that, I determined what news outlets are conservative, liberal, or moderate. This was primarily determined through the examination of media bias charts and reading articles from different news outlets. After that, I compared the differences between multiple news sources on different topics and came to a conclusion as to how they respond to current and past issues. This helped me determine the bias present in news outlets. Lastly, I looked into statistics to gauge the societal impact of this phenomenon.

## Data/Results

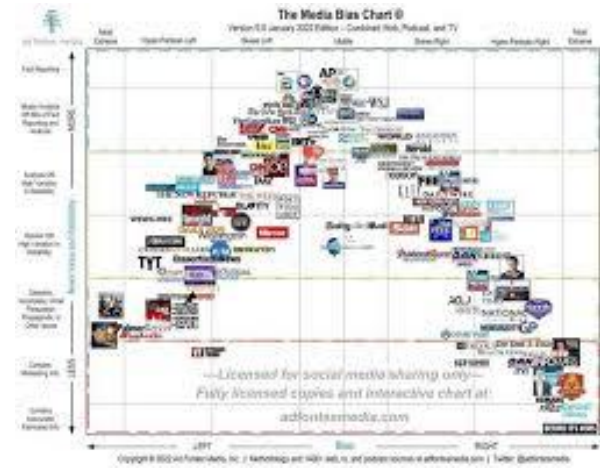
Figure 2 and figure 3 below are mass media charts that were analyzed alongside the articles to determine where different news outlets lie on the political spectrum.

Figure 2



AllSides Media Bias Ratings™ are based on multi-partisan, scientific analysis. Visit AllSides.com to view hundreds of media bias ratings. Version 7 | AllSides 2022

Figure 3



Prior to conducting this research, it was crucial to gather background information regarding the different perspectives on topics of right-leaning and left-leaning parties. The following table presents background information pertaining to the topics included on this poster. Additional information was gathered, but is not included in this table.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Left</b>	<b>Right</b>
Political Parties/Major Differences	Left-leaning individuals, including Democrats and liberals, advocate for equality and equal opportunity for all. They believe in a significant government presence in society in that they should support individuals in every possible manner. Change is important to them.	Right-leaning individuals, including conservatives and Republicans, prioritize limited government, free markets, traditional American values, among other principles. They typically are resistant to change.
Gun Control	In terms of gun control, the left believes that the Second Amendment itself does not give individuals the right to own a gun. They advocate for strict regulations on guns, including thorough background checks prior to handing guns to individuals due to the harm guns cause.	Under the Second Amendment, the right believes that individuals possess the right to bear arms. They argue that gun control laws are ineffective, as criminals can still acquire firearms through loopholes. Gun control laws are not beneficial and do not prevent crime. Instead, they view guns as a form of self defense, thus advocating for individuals' right to own firearms.
Israel Divestment	Aside from individuals within the government, people on the left believe that schools should divest from Israel. Many lives were lost due to the Hamas-Israel conflict and divesting is crucial in order to bring justice to the lives lost and hopefully prevent future casualties.	Right-leaning individuals believe that universities should not divest from Israel. This will create financial difficulties and prevent school from operating normally. They advocate for putting an end to nationwide protests and have resorted to severe measures to put an end to protests.
Immigration	Liberals are more welcoming towards immigrants. They tend to advocate for the protection of immigrants rather than stricter policies. Economically, immigrants contribute a lot as they help fill essential job roles. Liberals are also bigger advocates of providing refuge and protecting individuals who are fleeing their country for protection.	Conservatives believe in stricter immigration controls, including increased border security, enforcement of immigration laws, and more. They tend to prioritize national security and the law. Conservatives also believe that immigrants are destroying the American economy and taking away jobs from the American people. In order to protect America,

		immigration should be limited.
Abortion	Liberals are more accepting of abortion. They believe that bodily autonomy is a fundamental right. They advocate for policies that protect abortion services and funding for organizations like Planned Parenthood. They provide services for reproductive health.	Conservatives tend to favor and prioritize fetal rights. They often are opposed to abortion and constitute it as murdering a child. They argue that it is morally wrong and that by following through with abortion, individuals are violating the rights of an unborn child. They believe that adoption is a better option.
LGBTQ+ Rights	Once again, liberal are more accepting of the LGBTQ+ community. They advocate to help protect the rights of individuals within this community in areas such as employment, healthcare, housing, and more. Liberals believe that everyone has the right to express who they are without fear of harassment.	Conservatives are more traditional and religious. They tend to advocate for measures that limit LGBTQ+ rights, such as opposing marriage equality.
Healthcare	Liberals tend to advocate for healthcare policies that limit the cost for all citizens. They believe in initiatives like the Affordable Care Act and programs like Medicare and Medicaid. According to them, affordable healthcare should be a fundamental right.	Conservatives believe that healthcare is personal responsibility. They don't support government-funded healthcare programs because they believe they are financially unsustainable. With the policies they believe in, healthcare costs are bound to rise.

### **Topic 1: Gun Control**

<p>Summary: With a rise in mass shootings, there has been a surge in public discourse surrounding the topics of gun control and the Second Amendment. The left and the right have different perspectives on gun control and this is evident in the articles presented by different news outlets. The majority of the articles referenced/used for this study were written after the mass shooting that killed 10 at a grocery store in Boulder, Colorado.</p>		
<b><u>Left</u></b>	<b><u>Moderate</u></b>	<b><u>Right</u></b>
Left-leaning news articles focused on victims and advocated for stricter gun	Moderate new articles regarding gun control were largely impartial. Rather than	Right-leaning news articles focused on reactions to the shootings in the political world,

<p>control measures. The news articles repeatedly emphasized the need for limitations on the Second Amendment, often portraying conservatives negatively in the process.</p>	<p>providing a biased perspective, they focused on the issue at hand. They presented facts, statistics, and a breakdown of the problem. These news articles included visuals like tables and graphs to illustrate the data they discovered on gun control and mass shootings.</p>	<p>and criticized left-leaning individuals for creating a false racial narrative around the shootings. In other words, they diverted attention away from the core issue. They engaged in playing the blame game rather than honoring the lives that were lost during the shooting.</p>
<p><b><u>EXAMPLES:</u></b></p>		
<p><b>1. CURRENT AFFAIRS</b>          “Why the Right Will Never, Ever Support Gun Control”          - “The <i>major political obstacle</i> is, of course, <i>the Republican Party</i>, which is staunchly <i>committed to guaranteeing every citizen the right to possess heavy weaponry</i>. Not only do Republicans consistently <i>refuse to consider even the most basic and sensible gun policies</i>, but in fact, after these mass shootings, they tend to <i>argue that we need even more guns.</i>”  <b>2. NATIONAL REVIEW</b>          “A Gun-Control Measure Conservatives Should Consider”          By: David French [Although National Review is more right-leaning, the author is no longer a republican. He is currently an independent.]          - “Many <i>progressives</i>, however, simply <i>don’t care about restrictions on gun</i></p>	<p><b>1. PEW RESEARCH CENTER</b>          “Views on U.S. gun laws, impact of gun ownership of safety”          - “...highlights sharp contrast between the partisan over the role of guns in society: <i>79% of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents say that gun ownership does more to increase safety</i>, while nearly identical share of <i>Democrats and Democratic learners (78%) say that it does more to decrease safety.</i>”  <b>2. USA TODAY</b>          “Boulder grocery store rampage follows spike in mass shootings during 2020”</p>  <p style="font-size: small;">SOURCE: Gun Violence Archive</p>	<p><b>1. DAILY CALLER</b>          “Race Baiters Delete Tweets, Issue Corrections After Frenzied To Pin Boulder Shooting to White Supremacy” by Jordan Lancaster          - “Several prominent <i>leftists</i> took to social media and immediately <i>assumed the shooter in Boulder, Colorado, was white</i> before details about his identity were released.”  <b>2. NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION - INSTITUTE FOR LEGISLATIVE ACTION</b>          “<i>Why Gun Control Doesn’t Work</i>”          - “Criminals, by definition, do not obey the law. <i>Gun control laws only affect law-abiding people</i> who go through legal avenues to obtain firearms. <i>Criminals overwhelmingly obtain their firearms through illegal channels</i> and will never be deterred by state and federal laws. <i>That’s why</i></p>

<p><i>ownership.</i> They don't view it as an individual right, much less an unalienable one. To them, the <i>Second Amendment is an embarrassment, an American quirk that should be limited and confined</i> as much as possible..."</p>		<p><i>background checks have virtually no impact on criminals."</i></p>
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### **Topic 2: Israel Divestment**

<p>Summary: Recently, students nationwide have been participating in protests on their university campuses, urging officials at universities to withdraw investments from Israel. Various news sources offer their take on the issue, with news outlets of differing political leanings offering a different perspective. The majority of the articles referenced/used for this study were recently written amidst the ongoing Hamas-Israel conflict.</p>		
<b><u>Left</u></b>	<b><u>Moderate</u></b>	<b><u>Right</u></b>
<p>Left-leaning news articles delve into the concept of divestment and the objective of student protesters. In other words, left-leaning articles are attempting to inform the audience of what students are trying to accomplish through these protests. While it is difficult to divest, these articles emphasize that major divestments have occurred in the past. Simply stated, they want universities to stand in solidarity with Palestine.</p>	<p>Moderate news sources typically adopt a neutral stance. In this case, they presented factual information and remain nonpartisan. Many moderate articles focused on why students were protesting and what they hoped to achieve/their desired outcomes were. This was similar to left-leaning news articles, but the moderate articles were simply explaining the situation. Previous situations of divestment were not mentioned.</p>	<p>Many right-leaning universities emphasized universities' reluctance to listen to student demands. Additionally, they shed more light on the negative outcomes that weren't mentioned in many moderate and right-leaning news articles, and the demands of the universities who refused to cooperate with the protesters. Some articles, with the use of biased language, illustrated protestors negatively.</p>
<b><u>EXAMPLES:</u></b>		
<p><b>1. WASHINGTON POST</b> "DIVEST": COLLEGE</p>	<p><b>1. THE CONVERSATION</b> "What students protesting</p>	<p><b>1. THE DAILY WIRE</b> "Columbia University Will Not</p>

<p>ENDOWMENTS TURN INTO FLASH POINT OF STUDENT PROTESTS”</p> <p>- “Even if a university abruptly decided to back the divestment goals and alter overall financial strategy, such moves <i>could be difficult to implement...</i>with origin in the border South African divestment campaign in the 1980s. Back then, college students pressured universities to cut ties with companies that did business with South Africa in protest of the nation’s White-minority apartheid rule. A total of <b>155 universities...divested from companies doing business with the country.</b>”</p> <p>2. NBC NEWS</p> <p>“Protesters take over Columbia University building hours after school starts suspending student demonstrators”</p> <p><b>[FOCUSES ON MANY ASPECTS OF THE PROTEST]</b></p> <p>“...broke windows at the Manhattan campus?... encampment has been cleared to make space for upcoming commencement...”</p>	<p>Israel's Gaza siege want — and how their demands on divestment fit into the BDS movement”</p> <p>- “The protesters are <i>demanding divestment, meaning the sale of financial assets either related to Israeli companies or shares in other corporations perceived to assist the Israeli military.</i> In addition, many protests include <i>calls for disclosure of those financial ties.</i> They also feature <i>demands for colleges and universities...</i>”</p> <p>2. HOUSTON CHRONICLES</p> <p>“College students are protesting to get their schools to divest from Israel. Here’s what that means.”</p> <p>- “...students want the <i>state’s flagship campus to pull its endowment investments from companies they say are complicit in the deaths of Palenstinian in Gaza,</i> particularly Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, Boeing, General Dynamics, and other weapons manufacturers.”</p>	<p>Divest From Israel, President Says” by Daniel Chaitin</p> <p>- “Reports of anti-Semitic harassment led a campus rabbi to warn Jewish students to go home for safety. As efforts to uproot tents and detain protesters failed to quell demonstrations, <i>Colombia shifted to remote learning and hybrid classes at the main campus.</i>”</p> <p>2. THE COLLEGE FIX</p> <p>“Occupation at Smith College demanding Israeli divestment enters second week”</p> <p>- “Because the building is effectively closed, <i>people with business within are being significantly inconvenienced.</i>”</p> <p>3. THE WASHINGTON FREE BEACON</p> <p>“Harvard Moves Toward Student Referendum on Divestment from Israel, Led by Rhode Scholarship Recipient”</p> <p>- “...Harvard Undergraduate Palestine Solidarity Committee, <i>an anti-Israel student group...</i>”</p>
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### Topic 3: Immigration

Summary: In the United States, immigration policies have been an issue for years, sparking debates between liberals and conservatives. It is evident through various news sources that liberals and conservatives hold very different views in regards to immigration. The majority of the articles

referenced/used for this study were written in regards to immigration policies or are due to the results of immigration policies.

<b><i>Left</i></b>	<b><i>Moderate</i></b>	<b><i>Right</i></b>
<p>As stated above, liberals tend to support immigrants for many reasons. First and foremost, morally, they believe it is the right thing to do. Additionally, immigrants play a huge role in economic growth because they fill in a lot of essential jobs. They also believe family reunification is extremely important within a community. Due to this, left leaning articles tend to advocate and protect immigrants. To them, sometimes candidates don't matter. If they don't support the policy they are in favor of, they will make it known. For example, the Biden Administration has been supporting stricter immigration policies and VOX explicitly stated that his immigration policies have been similar to those of Trump. Additionally, left leaning articles used biased languages to negatively portray Republican immigration policies. Some words used include: "unrelenting assault," "bullying," etc.</p>	<p>Moderate news articles tend to remain neutral when presenting news. A lot of the time, they remain factual, while presenting both sides of the story. In this case, that was exactly what was done. BBC News presented the viewpoints of both the Democrats and Republicans. While Republicans believe the Biden Administration hasn't done much in terms of immigration policies, Democrats and the United Nation believe they have gone too far. The Washington Post, on the other hand, focused on a lot of statistics in regards to the impact on jobs due to immigration and what might potentially cause the decrease in the number of jobs. Overall, they focused on objectively presenting facts</p>	<p>Conservatives are typically against immigration and advocate for stricter policies. They always portray immigrants as the "bad guy." While numerous studies have shown that immigration does not increase crime, Republicans continue to play the blame game and always emphasize or over exaggerate immigrant crime rates. Not only that, Republicans blame the Democrats for allowing illegal immigrants to enter the United States and stay, claiming they are further endangering citizens. For Republicans, it simply seems like a blame game. However, they refuse to look into the statistics on how many U.S. born citizens conduct crime on a daily basis.</p>
<b><u>EXAMPLES:</u></b>		
<p><b>1. VOX</b> "Biden's incoherent</p>	<p><b>1. BBC NEWS</b> "Biden announces asylum</p>	<p><b>1. TOWNHALL</b> "Biden White House Does a</p>

immigration policy” by Nicole Narea

- “President Biden proposed humane immigration reforms but continued harsh, Trump-era enforcement policies at the border”  
 - “On the campaign trail, ***Biden promised a more humane approach to the southern border*** than former President ***Donald Trump***, whom he described as ***launching an ‘unrelenting assault on our values and our history as a nation of immigrants’ and ‘bullying legitimate asylum seekers.’***”

## 2. WASHINGTON MONTHLY

“Biden’s Immigration Policy Is Not Trump’s” by Bill Scher  
 - “...***Biden and Trump do not share the same vision for America. Trump wants to shut down our immigration system and literally wall off the country*** so far fewer people can become Americans...***Biden wants to fix our immigration system*** to welcome those pursuing the American dream...”

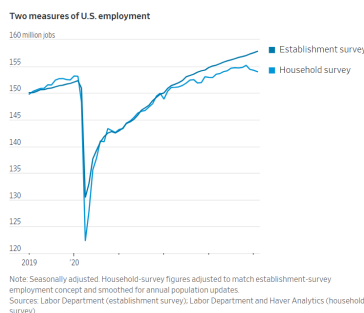
restrictions to ‘control border’”

by Bernd Debusmann Jr  
 - “***Rival Republicans*** say Mr Biden has not gone far enough, while some of the president’s ***Democratic allies*** - and the United Nations - have expressed concerns.”

## 2. WALL STREET JOURNAL

“The Jobs Numbers Aren’t Adding Up. Immigration Helps Explain Why”

- “***Data in the two surveys never precisely match***, even after accounting for differences in the type of employment they cover—***the establishment survey doesn’t include farmworkers, for example***..The establishment survey shows there were about ***2.7 million more jobs in February than a year earlier***...”



Massive Reversal in Its Immigration Policy, but Does It Matter?” by Matt Vespa

- “Still, the ***spike in violent crime nationwide, especially at the hands of illegals***, has forced the Biden White House to tell sanctuary cities it’s time for them to ***work with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (via Fox News)***...”

## 2. Dailywire

“‘Biden Migrant Crime’: Trump Slams Biden After Illegal Immigrant Allegedly Shoots Two NYPD Cops”  
 - “Trump said that Biden had ***enabled a wave of crime from illegal immigrants that was endangering the public***.”

### Topic 4: Abortion

Summary: In the United States, abortion rights have been argued for years. Through the news sources presented below, the stance on both conservative and liberal groups in terms of abortion is



evident. Majority of the articles referenced/used for this study were written as a result of recent changes made to abortion laws.

<b><i>Left</i></b>	<b><i>Moderate</i></b>	<b><i>Right</i></b>
<p>The majority of the time, Democrats support abortion rights. The following is clearly demonstrated in left-leaning news articles, however that is not always the case. Left-leaning articles tend to play the blame game with the right and portray them as the bad guys, while continuing to advocate for abortion rights, but there are times they remain neutral. USA Today, known for its liberal stance, demonstrated in the article about abortion both President Trump and President Biden’s opinion without taking a stance. However, in the Huffpost articles, the author is accusing Trump of spreading lies and myths abortion. They continue to mention that this was done during a Fox News interview, one of the most well-known conservative news outlets.</p>	<p>Once again, moderate news outlets tend to remain neutral. This is demonstrated in both of the articles below. They both stick to presenting factual information with statistics about abortion or initiatives/policies related to abortion. They don’t take sides, but rather only present the information.</p>	<p>Republicans tend to oppose abortion and this is repeatedly demonstrated in a lot of right-leaning news articles. Recently, Kamala Harris participated in an ‘Abortions Around America Tour’ and also became the first vice president to visit an abortion clinic. This is a monumental moment, however the conservative media downplayed it as a “step backward for our country.” Similarly, in the second article I analyzed, that if people don’t believe abortion is illegal, they are incorrect. Their approach to abortion is considered to be “clumsy,” but that of conservatives and Trump isn’t.</p>
<b><i>EXAMPLES:</i></b>		
<p><b>1. USA TODAY</b>  “Abortion laws are on the books but still on voters’ minds in these states” by Sam Woodward, Savannah Kuchar, Margie Cullen</p>	<p><b>1. THE HILL</b>  “Abortion initiative clears signature threshold to get on Colorado ballot”  - <b><i>“Proposed Ballot Initiative 89 would change the states</i></b></p>	<p><b>1. INDEPENDENT JOURNAL REVIEW</b>  “Emily Erin Davis: Vice President Kamala Harris’ celebration of Abortion”  - “This week, Vice President</p>

- “A rallying cry from the *left and potential political quicksand for the right*, reproductive rights weigh heavily on voters’ minds in 2024...In the same video, *Trump said he was ‘proudly the person responsible’ for overturning Roe v. Wade*, having appointed several of the justices...Meanwhile, *President Joe Biden has campaigned heavily on abortion rights and has said that he would write protection for reproductive freedom into law...*”

## 2. HUFFPOST

“Trump Says It’s ‘*A Beautiful Thing To Watch’ States Ban Abortion*”

- “The *former president also repeated lies and myths about abortion policy during an interview with Fox News* host Sean Hannity”

- “He *bragged about his efforts to end the right to an abortion by appointing the three conservative Supreme Court Justices* that ultimately upended Roe...”

- “Donald Trump is *responsible for—and proud of—each and every extreme abortion ban across the country that is ripping away women’s freedoms and putting their lives at risk,*”

Sarafina Chitika, a senior

*constitution to explicitly recognize ‘the right to abortion*, and in connection therewith, prohibiting the state and local governments from denying, impeding, or discriminating against the exercise of that right.’...*Ballot initiatives in Colorado also need to be signed by at least 2 percent of registered voters in every Senate district; the group needs less than 100 additional signatures to account for three state senate districts where it has not yet hit that threshold.*”

## 2. FORBES

“Abortion Back At Supreme Court Today As Justices Consider Whether Hospitals Must Provide Emergency Care”

- “The Supreme Court *will hear oral arguments Wednesday in one of its biggest abortion-related cases since justices*

*overturned Roe v. Wade, as it considers whether hospitals must provide abortions in emergency situations under federal law—even in states where*

*abortion is banned...The court will hear arguments in Idaho v. United States and Moyle v. United States, two consolidates cases that concern the federal government’s challenge*

Kamala Harris continued her ‘Abortions Around America Tour’ and became the first vice president to visit an abortion facility. *While the media tried to make us believe this visit was monumental history in the making, it was in reality a step backward for our country...* When Harris stood in the halls of the abortion facility, she betrayed women like me—who have experienced abortion coercion. She *betrayed the millions of unborn children who have been filled in abortion facilities across the country. She betrayed the majority of Americans who want reasonable limits on abortion.*”

## 2. THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

“*Donald Trump is right about abortion and Lindsey Graham is wrong*”

- “Lindsey Graham would have us believe, however, that abortion is federal policy simply because Lindsey Graham thinks abortion is an important topic. In the nineteenth century, Americans read the text of the US constitution and came to the common-sense conclusion: abortion is not a matter for Congress or the federal courts. Those Americans, however,

<p>spokesperson for the Biden-Harris campaign, told HuffPost.”</p>	<p><i>against Idaho’s restriction abortion ban</i>, which outlaws the procedures and only provinces narrow exception, such as when it’s necessary to prevent the pregnant person’s death.”</p>	<p>perhaps lacked Lindsey Graham’s gift for <i>simply making stuff up...Not content with being wrong about the history of decentralized abortion policy</i>, Graham took things a step further and <i>clumsily compared Trump’s decentralist approach...</i>”</p>
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### Topic 5: LGBTQ+ Rights

<p>Summary: For decades, individuals within the LGBTQ+ community have been fighting for their rights. While they have received support from the majority of liberals, that has not been the case with conservatives. Through the news sources presented below, their stance on LGBTQ+ rights is evident. The majority of the articles referenced/used for this study were written as a result of legislation passing or failing.</p>		
<u>Left</u>	<u>Moderate</u>	<u>Right</u>
<p>Compared to the right wing media, liberals are more supportive of the LGBTQ+ community and their rights. After reading various left-leaning articles on LGBTQ+ rights, I learned that liberals tend to focus more on personal life stories, expanding protection, adding legislature, etc. This was demonstrated in the articles below, however it couldn’t have been done without downplaying the Trump administration. For example, in the AXIOS article, the author stated that the Biden administration expanded</p>	<p>In the majority of the moderate articles I read in regards to LGBTQ+ rights, they remained neutral. The author presented numbers, statistics, and only factual information. Furthermore, in the second article, while addressing the issues faced by individuals in the LGBTQ+ community, the author addressed the problems without blaming either side of the political spectrum. If it were a right-leaning or left-leaning article, the chances of that occurring are high.</p>	<p>After reading various right-leaning articles on LGBTQ+ rights, it is evident that conservatives are not supportive of the LGBTQ+ community. This was demonstrated not only through their use of words in the second article labeling the bride as “mafia”, but also through their disapproval of the court’s decision. Conservatives don’t want anything in the curriculum related to their community.</p>

<p>protections for LGBTQ+ students, but also had to mention how these protections were narrowly or not applied at all under the Trump administration.</p>		
<b><u>EXAMPLES:</u></b>		
<p><b>1. AXIOS</b>  “Biden administration expands protection for LGBTQ+ students”  - The <i>Biden administration on Friday expanded protections for LGBTQ+ students</i> under Title IX, protecting against “discrimination based on sex stereotypes, sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics...The 1972 civil rights law <i>was more narrowly applied under guidance from former President Trump’s administration...</i>”</p> <p><b>2. THE WASHINGTON POST</b>  “Push to restrict LGBTQ+ rights hits a snag in state legislatures”  - “By 2022, <i>that number had tripled as right-wing groups wrote model legislation they believed would reignite the conservative base.</i> They sought to <i>regulate what children can read about LGBTQ+ people, whether trans youth can participate in school athletics, what</i></p>	<p><b>1. TEXAS STANDARD</b>  “Legal groups file complaint with United Nations over anti-LGBTQ laws in Texas” by Aarah Asch  - “Texas lawmakers were behind <i>1 in 5 of all anti-LGBTQ plus bills introduced nationwide in 2023.</i> That’s according to the Human Rights Campaign, the largest LGBTQ political lobbying group in the U.S....<i>number of organizations, including the ACLU of Texas, Equality Texas, and the legal rights group GLAAD, filed a complaint with the United Nations on Monday warning of a systematic attack of the fundamental rights...of LGBTQ+ people.</i>”</p> <p><b>2. CAP20</b>  “<i>The State of the LGBTQ Community in 2020</i>”  - “Overall, the study finds that many <i>LGBTQ people continue to face discrimination in their personal lives, in the workplace and the public sphere, and in their access to</i></p>	<p><b>1. FOX NEWS</b>  “Parents can’t opt K-5 children out of LGBTQ curriculum: appeals court  - “U.S. Circuit Judge A. Marvin Quattlebaum, Jr., who was appointed by former President Trump, dissented, writing that he <i>disagreed with the district court motion finding the parents failed to establish that the board burdened their First Amendment rights... ‘The parents have shown the board’s decision to deny religious opt-outs burdened these parents’ right to exercise their religion....’</i>”</p> <p><b>2. THE BLAZE</b>  “<i>LGBTQ mafia</i> comes for Christian bridal designer; sues for discrimination”  - ““Do I take the money and just turn the blind eye to what I know is against my belief as a Christian,” she recalls as she tells her story to Allie Beth Stuckey. <i>‘I would knowingly be creating a garment for what is against my faith....’</i>”</p>

<i>trans or nonbinary adults can wear in public...</i>	<i>critical health care.</i> This experience of discrimination leads to many adverse consequences for their <i>financial, mental, and physical well-being.</i>	
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### Topic 6: Healthcare

<p>Summary: For decades, healthcare policies have negatively affected many groups of people, particularly low-income communities. Many liberals are in favor of policies that decrease costs, while conservatives believe individuals should pay for their own healthcare. The articles below are not the best representation of their stance on healthcare, but there is bias present.</p>		
<u>Left</u>	<u>Moderate</u>	<u>Right</u>
<p>After reading various right and left-leaning articles, along with moderate ones, it is evident that the left deeply cares about healthcare policies. Senators went above and beyond to ensure that individuals were not being scammed by health care pricing tools. Moreover, in a lot of left-leaning articles, there are constant mentions of improving healthcare policies. However, there is no mention or arguments in regards to what conservatives believe in terms of healthcare policies. They are only presenting one side of the argument.</p>	<p>In terms of healthcare, I came across a lot of historical context and articles about the improvement of healthcare policies. For example, the two articles below both present factual information about current and previous healthcare policies.</p>	<p>While there was no lie told about the healthcare policies implemented by the Biden Administration that negatively impacted a cancer survivor, the right uses a lot of negative connotations to exaggerate the facts of the story. For instance, “worst” or “the left will not tolerate anyone who dares,” etc. are all portraying the liberals as “bad guys.” They could have simply presented the story without exaggeration on their end, which would have eliminated the bias.</p>
<u>EXAMPLES:</u>		
<p><b>1. NEW YORK TIMES</b> “Senators See Possible Conflicts of Interest in Health Care</p>	<p><b>1. KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION (KFF)</b> “The Politics of Health Care</p>	<p><b>1. THE FEDERALIST</b> “Two-Time Bone Cancer Survivor Debunks Biden’s</p>

Pricing Tools”

- “The chairmen of two Senate committees overseeing health policy, *concerned about companies ‘padding their own profits’ at the expense of patients*, are looking into the practice of a data analytics firm that works with big insurers to cut payments to medical providers... The firm, MultiPlan, *recommends what it says are fair payments for medical care, but the firm and the insurers can collect higher fees when payouts are lower.*

and the 2024 Election” by Larry Levitt  
 - “*Harry Truman campaigned on universal health insurance in 1948*, but his plan went nowhere in the face of opposition from the American Medical Association and other groups. *While falling short of universal coverage, the creation of Medicare and Medicaid in 1965 under Lydon Johnson dramatically reduced the number of uninsured people...* Later, *Bill Clinton campaigned on health reform in 1992, and proposed the sweeping Health Security Act...* and the controversy over it has been cited by many factors as a Democrats losing control over both the house and the Senate...”

## 2. CBS 4

*“Dona Ana County launches a program to connect arrested individuals with mental health care.”*

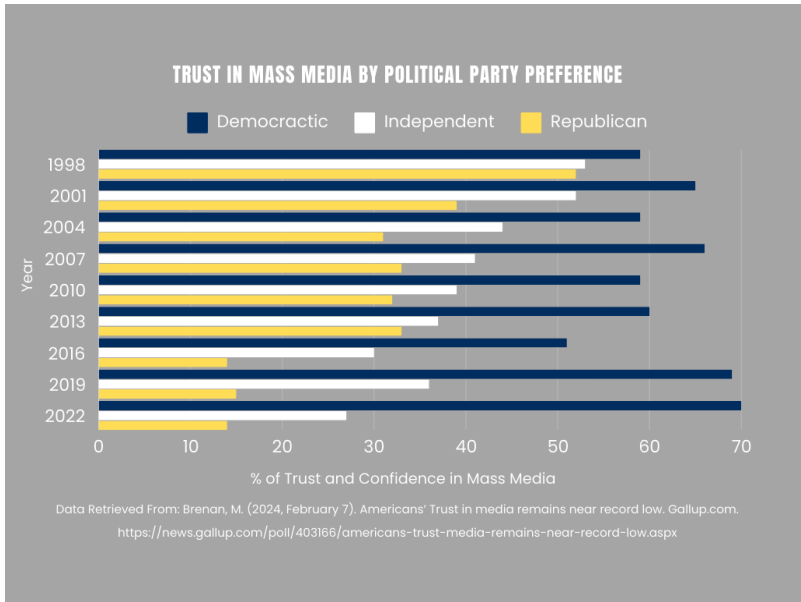
- “The new court-based initiative will *help guide people with mental illness to appropriate treatment and away from the criminal justice system when they are arrested for misdemeanor offenses in Dona Ana County...* It’s something a New Mexico Supreme Court Justice

‘Affordable’ Health Care Policies” by Christopher Jacobs  
 - “The fact that the *Biden administration went and killed the market for short-term limited duration insurance, an option that allowed some people to escape the worst effects of the “Unaffordable” Care Act, shows how the left will not tolerate anyone who dares try to opt out of their regulatory schemes.*”

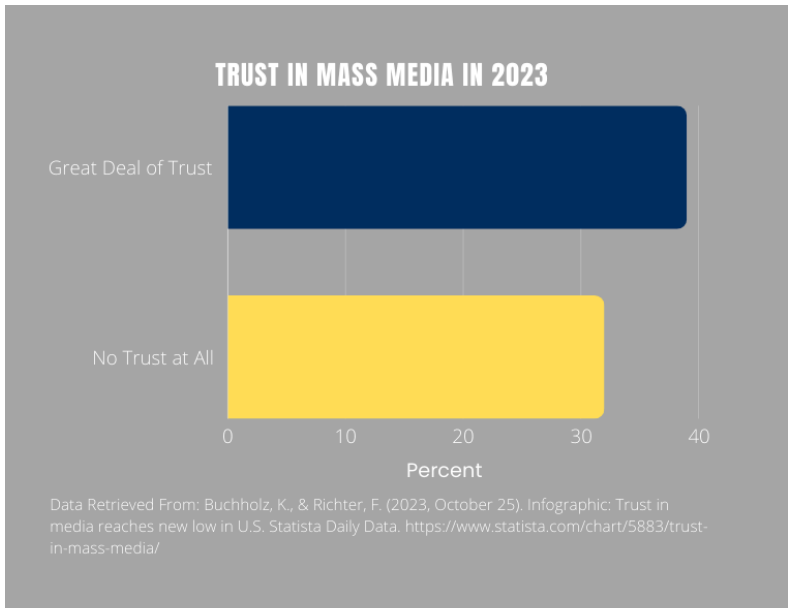
	told CBS4 could help reduce the number of repeat offenders.”	
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***Societal Impact***

**Figure 4**



**Figure 5**



Bias in mass media has led to significant distrust in news outlets. As demonstrated in Figures 4 and 5, over the past few years, the distrust continues to grow, with over 30% of Americans having little to no trust in mass media, defeating the purpose of news outlets. Bias in mass media can also influence perceptions and beliefs in significant ways. They can reinforce stereotypes, further leading to greater polarization, division, and misunderstandings between groups. Due to the misrepresentation of groups or individuals, there are chances they may face discrimination in the workforce, school settings, and more. Furthermore, biased media coverage can affect the public's understanding of complex issues, interfering with the ability of an individual to make well-informed decisions.

Despite this, bias in the media can open up different perspectives for individuals to explore. Because they are exposed to different points of view, they have the opportunity to make decisions based on those perspectives. However, it is incumbent upon individuals to take proactive measures to seek out news sources of different political preferences to expose themselves to these differing viewpoints.

## **Conclusion**

Upon the completion of my research project, I came to a conclusion that there is a visible difference amongst liberal, conservative, and moderate news articles. However, this bias is *not always* present in the news articles. For instance, NBC News, known for its left-leaning news stance, in its articles about Israel divestment, focuses on different perspectives of the protest. They address the good and the bad and cover almost every viewpoint. In other words, while news outlets might have a political preference, they sometimes remain neutral when reporting. This is also demonstrated in the left-leaning articles about immigration. They present the views of both sides of the political spectrum without degrading the conservative point of view. This



was not as evident in a lot of right-leaning news articles. On the other hand, moderate news articles remained factual when presenting news.

Furthermore, my research shows that while bias does have a negative impact on society, it can have its merits. After conducting research on the impact bias has on studies, I found that despite widespread distrust in mass media, bias can serve a crucial role by exposing individuals to various viewpoints, fostering diversity in perspectives and ideas.

Upon the completion of my research, I believe that the following recommendations need to be followed to detect and reduce bias in mass media. First and foremost, **intensive training intervention programs** need to be implemented. There are numerous intensive training intervention programs that aim to address bias that are accessible. These programs are designed to enhance individuals' awareness of bias, which in turn helps foster inclusivity and a reduction in personal biases. This can be useful for both the author and reader in addressing biases. Second, readers need to **seek multiple perspectives**: Rather than relying solely on one news source, use different sources to read different perspectives that others might have on the topic. This way, rather than forming an opinion after reading a singular biased article, one can form a more well-informed opinion after reading different perspectives on the same issue. Third, look for **sources mentioned in the news article**: When reading articles, take note of individuals and different news sources that are quoted or mentioned in the articles. This can help determine the reliability and the level of bias in the news article. Lastly, **visuals and headlines** are highly important. Visuals and headlines are a significant component of articles, given that they are the first few parts encountered by an individual reading an article. Visuals include graphs, charts, pictures, among many other things that represent the article as a whole. Sometimes, visuals and headlines can be misleading and present false information that is otherwise not mentioned in the

article. Visuals can manipulate data and one's perspective. For example, a graph depicting low employment rates for a specific ethnicity or race over two years may not account for other contributing factors affecting unemployment rates that might otherwise be mentioned in the article. Hence, it is crucial to thoroughly read the article and additional sources pertaining to the topic to gain a comprehensive understanding.

Ultimately, while bias may persist in news outlets, there are diverse strategies to address it, and its presence isn't always negative.

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