



Key words, notions, events

- Quality papers / dailies
- Tabloids / the popular press
- Media outlets
- Mainstream media
- Legacy media
- Media bias
- Media coverage / to cover an event
- Free speech extremism / absolutism
- Echo chambers / rabbit holes / cognitive bubbles
- Siloing
- Bothsidesing / bothsidesism
- News deserts
- The Watergate / The Pentagon Papers
- The First Amendment
- The Digital Service Act / The Oline Service Act / The Communication Decency Act

• For the journalism geeks among you, two things :

>> on cahier de prépa, you'll find all the files that the spé anglais worked on last year to prepare the Saclay Programme, The Evolution of the Media in the digital age

>> Here is a very good selection of podcasts on journalism

https://podcasts.feedspot.com/journalism_podcasts/

Document 1 -Attacks on press freedom around the world are intensifying, index reveals

In the past year, in virtually every region, journalists and independent media outlets faced increasing repression
Annie Kelly, *The Guardian*, Fri 3 May 2024

Political attacks on press freedom, including the detention of journalists, suppression of independent media outlets and widespread dissemination of misinformation, have significantly intensified in the past year, according to the annual World Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders (RSF).

5 The index ranks 180 countries on the ability of journalists to work and report freely and independently.

In a year when more than half the world's population will go to the polls in democratic elections, the RSF's index shows an overall decline in press freedom globally and a steep rise in the political repression of journalists and independent media outlets.

10 "RSF sees a worrying decline in support and respect for media autonomy and an increase in pressure from the state or other political actors," said Anne Bocandé, RSF editorial director. "States and other political forces are playing a decreasing role in protecting press freedom. This disempowerment sometimes goes hand in hand with more hostile actions that undermine the role of journalists, or even instrumentalise the media through campaigns of harassment or disinformation."

15 The Maghreb and Middle East regions performed the worst in terms of restrictions on press freedom by government forces, according to the report. In the past year, said RSF, governments across the region have attempted to control and curtail the media through violence, arrests and draconian laws, compounded by "systematic impunity for crimes of violence against journalists".

The RSF says that, since October 2023, more than 100 Palestinian reporters have been killed by in Gaza, including at least 22 in the course of their work.

20 Elsewhere in the region, journalists have been killed in Sudan, where there have been serious attempts to curb independent reporting of violence and civil war. The situation for media professionals in Syria has also deteriorated, with journalists who have fled press repression in their home country threatened with expulsion from neighbouring Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon. The RSF also says that four of the world's biggest jailers of journalists – Israel, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Iran – have continued to attack and detain them.

25 The RSF says that Latin America is also showing alarming indicators of political repression of journalism. In Argentina, the new president, Javier Milei, has boasted about his assault on the free press and has shut down the country's biggest new agency. Press freedom is also under sustained political attack in Peru and El Salvador. The US has performed badly due to increasing attacks on journalists from political officials, including public calls to imprison reporters.

30 Elections in sub-Saharan Africa saw violence against journalists fuelled by political attacks on media freedom. In Nigeria nearly 20 reporters were attacked in early 2023, and in Madagascar, reporters were targeted while covering pre-election protests. More recently, Burkino Faso has suspended dozens of foreign news organisations, including the Guardian, over reporting of an alleged massacre of hundreds of civilians by the Burkinabe army.

35 In Europe, the index showed Russia dropping down the ranks of countries mounting attacks on press freedom for what the RSF terms its "crusade" against independent journalism. More than 1,500 Russian journalists have fled abroad since the invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Belarus's position near the bottom of the RSF's index is due to the persistent persecution of journalists under the pretext of combating "extremism".

40 Last week, a report by the German-based Civil Liberties Union for Europe (Liberties) warned that press freedom is "perilously close to breaking point" in several European countries.

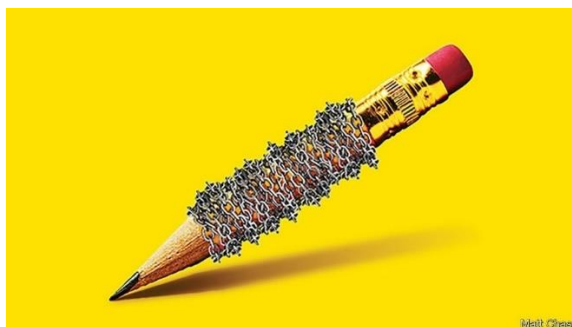
45 Repression of the free press also worsened in the Asia-Pacific region. The RSF says that the region's dictatorial governments have been tightening their hold over news and information with "increasing vigour" in countries such as Afghanistan, where the Taliban have all but destroyed independent journalism, and North Korea and China's "all-out persecution" of local media. Vietnam and Myanmar also fell in the rankings this year due to their pursuit of mass imprisonment of media professionals.

The RSF also painted a bleak picture of the increasing use of artificial intelligence, calling its use in the arsenal of disinformation for political purposes “disturbing”, with deepfakes being used to influence the course of elections. Reporting on the war against nature is also proving increasingly dangerous. Forty-four journalists have been killed for covering environment stories over the past 15 years, according to a separate report by Unesco, which organises today’s World Press Freedom Day. 718 words

[Leaders](#) | The gag tightens

Document 2 -Press freedom is under attack. It needs defenders

Autocrats pay lip service to free speech while eroding it in insidious ways



The Economist, May 7th 2022

Here’s a thought experiment. If Russia had a [free press](#), how many Russians would support Vladimir Putin’s invasion of Ukraine? Here’s another: how might the early days of covid-19 have unfolded if the virus had first emerged in a country with a free press, rather than China? Could the government of such a country have hushed it up* for those crucial early weeks?

As news junkies celebrated World Press Freedom Day on May 3rd, it was worth remembering why it matters. A free press can scrutinise the mighty, expose corruption and deter abuses*. For a tyrant, as Napoleon Bonaparte once lamented, “Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than 1,000 bayonets.” The free flow of information is the lifeblood of democracy. Without it, voters cannot make informed choices. Governments struggle to notice or correct their mistakes. And free media make it easier for good ideas and useful information to spread, thereby accelerating progress.

Yet around the world, [press freedom is in decline](#). Around 85% of people live in countries where it has been constricted in the past five years. It is now as hamstrung* as it was in 1984, during the cold war. The nature of censorship has evolved since then, however. Hundreds of reporters are still jailed, and dozens are killed each year. But most modern autocrats at least pay lip service* to the idea of a free press, and choose more subtle weapons with which to attack it.

State advertising budgets are lavished on fawning outlets*. Critical ones get tax audits and fines for defamation. Such harassment can tip struggling media firms into the red. Some may then be bought by ruling-party cronies*, who may not mind if their television stations lose money, so long as they please the people who dole out* public-works contracts. Mr Putin pioneered this approach; it has been widely imitated.

Technology is being used to make life hell for uppity hacks*. New tools make it easier to spy on them. Investigations last year found Pegasus eavesdropping software had been slipped into the mobile phones of almost 200 journalists, to read their messages, track them and identify their sources. Social media can be used to harass reporters. A survey found almost three-quarters of female journalists have endured online abuse. This is scariest when it is organised, and has the tacit backing of the ruling party. In India, for example, critics of the prime minister, Narendra Modi, face

torrents of death and rape threats from Hindu nationalist trolls, who sometimes publish their addresses and incite vigilantes to visit them.

Even in liberal democracies, laws against libel* and invasion of privacy are often abused. Oligarchs from elsewhere sue muckraking* reporters in [London](#), hoping to impose on them ruinous legal costs and endless hassle. In Poland one popular newspaper, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, has been hit with more than 60 cases in recent years, many brought by leaders of the ruling party. A Maltese journalist who exposed state corruption was dealing with over 40 cases when she was assassinated in 2017.

How can defenders of press freedom fight back? An easy place to start would be for liberal governments to scrap archaic laws that criminalise defamation, which are still surprisingly common. They should also curb bogus* lawsuits, as the European Commission is currently contemplating. Next, independent media need to find new sources of funding. Charities can chip in, as can crowdfunding and rich proprietors who care about free speech. Public broadcasters can play a useful role, but only if they have enough safeguards to be truly independent.

In more repressive places the task is harder, but technology can help. Where reporting on the ground is too risky, satellite imagery and big data sets allow journalists to pull together stories from afar. Free countries should offer them asylum, and a safe place to keep working. Where censorship is tight, citizens can use virtual private networks to access blocked content and online tools to capture web pages before they are censored.

Journalists in free countries can help those in autocracies. Cross-border collaborations have exposed scandals such as Pegasus and the Panama papers. The *Washington Post*'s cloud-based publishing system allowed *Apple Daily*, a beleaguered pro-democracy tabloid in Hong Kong, to keep publishing for longer than it otherwise could have.

The struggle will be uphill*. The pandemic has given governments a plausible excuse to curb* press freedom: nearly 100 have done so in the name of public safety. Donald Trump has shown how a demagogue can undermine trust in the media, and others are copying him. In a survey last year, almost 60% of respondents in 28 countries said journalists deliberately mislead the public. Some do, of course, and World Press Freedom Day is a moment for journalists who enjoy protection to ask themselves if they are making the best use of their freedom. (802 words)

- You can also watch this **video** from *The Economist*: **Press Freedom: Why you should be worried**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojvsUv_08Zk

- Here you can explore the work of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists: <https://www.icij.org/>
And in particular their investigation on the Panama Papers: <https://www.icij.org/investigations/panama-papers/>

Falling Trust in the media – A fragmented media landscape



Pew Research Center

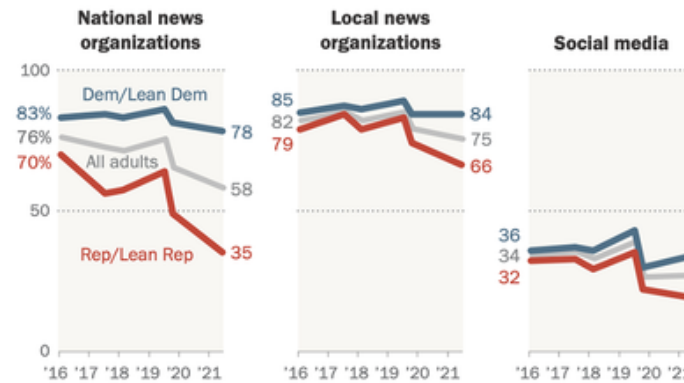
AUGUST 30, 2021

Document 3 - Partisan divides in media trust widen, driven by a decline among Republicans

In just five years, the percentage of Republicans with at least some trust in national news organizations has been cut in half – dropping from 70% in 2016 to 35% this year. This decline is fueling the continued widening of the partisan gap in trust of the media.

Wider partisan gaps emerge in trust of national and local news organizations, social media

% of U.S. adults who say they have a lot or some trust in the information that comes from ...



Note: In 2016, trust of information from social media was only asked of and based on internet-using U.S. adults.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 14-27, 2021. For dates of other surveys, see the topline.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

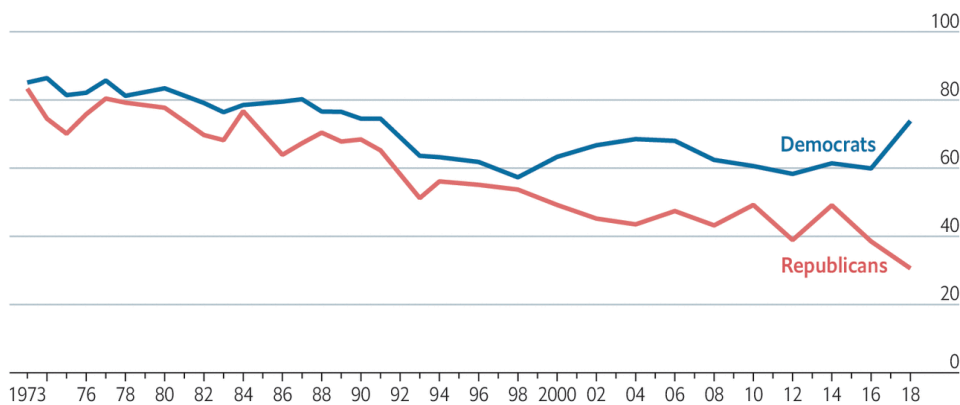
[Graphic detail](#) | [Daily chart](#)

Document 4 - For Americans, trusting the media has become a partisan issue

Donald Trump has convinced Republicans to disbelieve mainstream journalism. Democrats have reacted the opposite way

And that's the way it is

Americans with "a great deal of" or "only some" confidence in the press, by political party, %



Source: General Social Surveys, 1972-2018

The Economist

The Economist, Apr 3rd 2019

IN 1972 Walter Cronkite, the presenter of CBS News, was famously named the "most trusted man in America" after a poll showed that he was more loved than the nation's most powerful elected office-holders. Such days of reverence for the media are long gone.

According to figures from the General Social Survey (GSS), a long-running poll run by the University of Chicago, trust in the press fell sharply from 84% in 1973 to just 54% last year. Both Republicans and Democrats lost faith in the media at roughly similar rates until the mid-1990s. But since then—when Newt Gingrich pushed the Republican Party to the right, and shock radio and ideological cable TV were born—a partisan gap has opened ever wider. Today trust in the press is closely linked to political preference.

According to newly released data from the GSS, less than a third of Republicans reported having “a great deal of” or “only some” confidence in the press last year, a record low. After seeing very little change from 2000 to 2010, that share dipped 19 percentage points in the past nine years.

This trend has become particularly pronounced since Donald Trump entered the 2016 presidential campaign. The president has exacerbated it through his attacks on the “fake news media”, which he admits are intended to “discredit you all and demean you all so that when you write negative stories about me no one will believe you”.

Predictably, Mr Trump’s attacks seem to have had the opposite effect on Democrats. Their confidence in the press has risen by 14 percentage points since his election. Indeed, last year’s GSS showed that Democrats were 43 percentage points more likely to trust the press than Republicans were.

You can also listen to this:

- **Why Americans are losing trust in elections and the media**

NPR, JANUARY 16, 2022

<https://www.npr.org/2022/01/16/1073505164/why-americans-are-losing-trust-in-elections-and-the-media>

Document 5 - Why the press will never have another Watergate moment

Perspective by [Margaret Sullivan](#), Columnist

The Washington Post, May 29, 2022 (abridged)

You’ll be hearing a lot about **Watergate** in the next several weeks, as the 50th anniversary of the infamous June 17, 1972, burglary at the Democratic National Committee headquarters approaches. There will be documentaries, cable-news debates, the finale of that Julia Roberts miniseries (“Gaslit”) based on the popular Watergate podcast (“Slow Burn”). (...)

5 The scandal has great resonance at *The Washington Post*, which won a **Pulitzer Prize** for public service in 1973 for its intrepid reporting and the courage it took to publish it. And it has particular meaning for me, because, like many others of my generation, I was first drawn into journalism by the televised **Senate hearings in 1973**, and I was enthralled by the 1976 movie “All the President’s Men,” based on the book by Post reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein.

10 Yet thinking about Watergate saddens me these days. The nation that came together to force a corrupt president from office and send many of his co-conspirator aides to prison is a nation that no longer exists.

It’s not just our politics that have changed. It’s also our radically transformed media environment.

15 “The national newspapers mattered in a way that is unimaginable to us today, and even the regional newspapers were incredibly strong,” Garrett Graff, author of “Watergate: A New History,” told me last week. (...)

20 Woodward and Bernstein were almost alone on the story for months. But eventually, the leading newspapers of the nation started to cover the hell out of the burgeoning scandal and the percolating questions of what — and when — the president knew about the burglary plot. Americans read this coverage in their local papers; many cities still had two or more dailies at that point. Later, they were riveted by the proceedings of the **Senate Watergate Committee**, whose hearings were aired live on the three big television networks during the summer of 1973. Graff reports that the average American household watched 30 hours of the hearings, which were also rebroadcast at night by **PBS**. (...)

Still, “we forget how close Nixon came to surviving Watergate,” Graff told me. “Even at the end of the hearings, there was no guarantee that Nixon was out of office.”

25 What changed that? The increasing public awareness of the president’s wrongdoing and the coverup. “The sheer accumulation of the lies,” he said, “at a time when the idea that a president could lie to America was unthinkable.”

Fast-forward to today. The House select committee investigating the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection will hold hearings beginning early next month, some of which will be televised during prime-time hours. Rep. Jamie B. Raskin (D-Md.), a prominent member, predicts that the revelations will “blow the roof off the House” — offering evidence, he promises, of an organized coup attempt involving Donald Trump, his closest allies and the supporters who attacked the Capitol as they tried to overturn the 2020 presidential election results.

I’m willing to believe that the hearings will be dramatic. They might even change some people’s minds. But the amount of public attention they get will be minuscule compared with what happened when the folksy Sen. Sam Ervin (D-N.C.) presided over the Senate Watergate Committee.

Our media environment is far more fractured, and news organizations are far less trusted.

And, in part, we can blame the rise of a right-wing media system. At its heart is Fox News, which was founded in 1996, nearly a quarter-century after the break-in, with a purported mission to provide a “fair and balanced” counterpoint to the mainstream media. Of course, that message often manifested in relentless and damaging criticism of its news rivals. Meanwhile, Fox News and company have served as a highly effective laundry service for Trump’s lies. With that network’s help, his tens of thousands of false or misleading claims have found fertile ground among his fervent supporters.

As Graff sees it, the growth of right-wing media has enabled many Republican members of Congress to turn a blind eye to* the malfeasance of Team Trump. Not so during the Watergate investigation; after all, it was Sen. Howard Baker (R-Tenn.) who posed the immortal question: “What did the president know, and when did he know it?” Even the stalwart* conservative Sen. Barry Goldwater (Ariz.) was among those who, at the end, managed to convince Nixon that he must resign. “Republican members of Congress understood that they had a unique and important role as the legislative branch to hold the abuses of the executive branch in check,” Graff said. “That freedom of action was made possible because there was no right-wing media ecosystem.”

Not everything was good about the media world of the 1970s. It was almost entirely White and male, barely open to other views or voices. This was long before the democratizing effect of the Internet, which has elevated the ideas of people of color, women and other marginalized groups.

But it was a time when we had a news media that commanded the trust of the general public, a necessity in helping bring Nixon to justice. That, at least during his presidency, was never possible with Trump.

As we remember Watergate, we ought to remember how very unlikely its righteous conclusion would be today.

Richard M. Nixon’s presidency would have survived. (870 words)

Document 6 - Why This Election Is the Media's Opportunity to Rebuild Trust

Ideas

By [Nancy Gibbs](#), *TIME*, April 25, 2024

Gibbs, a former writer and editor in chief at TIME, is the director of the Shorenstein Center and the Edward R. Murrow Professor of the Practice of Press, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard Kennedy School.

What does it tell us, my students ask, that nine years after Donald Trump oozed down the golden escalator and into contention as Leader of the Free World, the American press, mainstream edition, is still arguing about how to cover him?

Once the charge was that he gets millions of dollars in free media because reporters obsessively overcover him; now it's that he gets a free ride because they have outrage fatigue. If you fact-check his lies, you risk spreading them further; if you don't, you are normalizing nonsense. Round and round the arguments go, especially now that reporters must weigh how to cover the first criminal trial of a former President, a campaign conducted from a courtroom where voters once again are judge and jury.

James Madison defended even a young, sloppy, partisan press as a "great bulwark of liberty" and you can feel in the growing attacks on press performance an urgent, underlying "do better; this election is too important to screw up." Conservatives for years have flayed the "lamestream" press as arrogant and agenda-driven but political independents' faith in the media has also dropped rather precipitously and according to Gallup, for the first time more Americans say they have no trust at all in the press than say they have a great deal or a fair amount.

In fact, these days the most indignant denunciations of the mainstream political press often come from the left (though this could be because so many on the right have stopped watching and reading). Critics who charge reporters with "false equivalency" and "bothsidesism" condemn reporters for performing objectivity rather than practicing it, for normalizing depravity and numbing the audience to each shattered norm. Now that we experience politics in surround sound, inescapable and all-consuming, it's little wonder researchers are tracking "news avoidance," a rational response to coverage that people say feels disconnected from their lives and needs, and leaves them feeling depressed and angry.

The debate over how to cover this campaign reflects in part the challenge of unprecedentedness; have reporters ever faced more new questions than this fateful election presents? Everything from a candidate campaigning from criminal court to the rarity of presidential rematches to the implications of age, the threats of AI, the speed and scale of contagious falsehood, and sadly, the challenge of doing a job whose business model is shredding beneath us makes practical and ethical choices harder. At the very least, these conditions should be enough to chasten the press critics who suggest that the answers are obvious.

Fortunately, while there are few easy answers—we *do* have to cover the Trump trial and reckon with AI—there are clear opportunities. The core of journalism remains curiosity, with its patient partner, humility. We are seeing things in our politics we've never seen before, which is an invitation to explore and inquire and inform, not in perfunctory "diner safaris" but in an open-ended, open-minded conversation with people who hear the same speeches, read the same tweets and truths, and come to wildly different conclusions about what they mean and why they matter.

Research into political division often uncovers mass distortion; we see one another through a glass darkly, exaggerating differences, attributing extreme positions to those who don't actually hold them. Research by the nonpartisan group More in Common, for instance, drilled down on the radioactive topic of how we teach history. "Many Republicans believe most Democrats want to teach a history defined by shameful oppression and white guilt," they observed. "Many Democrats believe most Republicans want to focus on the white majority and overlook slavery and racism. But we found that both impressions are wrong." People at the extremes of left and right are far more likely to post and tweet about politics than the vast center of the electorate, which adds more distortion to the picture.

The challenge is that even when you tell voters that their political opponents are less extreme than they think, people don't believe it. In much of our current media landscape, we aren't likely to encounter the layered worldviews of voters who hold complex, even apparently contradictory views on everything from tax rates to trans rights to GMOs to wind turbines. Reporters perform a true public service when they embed not in campaigns but in communities,

capture the trials and trade-offs of small-business owners and caregivers, working parents and police officers, and refocus the lens from the hated horse race to the intimate, immediate information voters need to make decisions about their lives as well as their votes.

One reason local news is far more trusted than national news is that it is simply closer to the facts on the ground. But people don't only trust it more for the information they need to engage with their communities; they trust it far more for information about how to vote. The collapse of local news outlets—more than two newspapers a week go under on average—puts all the more responsibility on larger regional or national newsrooms to fill in the gaps, deploy reporters creatively, recruit local partners, and present a true picture of the issues most relevant to communities.

Show, don't tell, as we teach young reporters, and there's no better time or place than the campaign that promises to shape our fates and fortunes for a generation. 887 words

• You can also listen to this

As 2024 approaches, the media is faced with the question of how to cover Donald Trump

NPR, DECEMBER 10, 2023

<https://www.npr.org/2023/12/10/1218433023/as-2024-approaches-the-media-is-faced-with-the-question-of-how-to-cover-donald-t>

Document 7 - Republicans and Democrats see news bias only in stories that clearly favor the other party

The Conversation, October 25, 1922

Marjorie Hershey Professor Emeritus of Political Science, Indiana University

Charges of media bias – that “the media” are trying to brainwash Americans by feeding the public only one side of every issue – have become as common as campaign ads in the run-up to the midterm elections.

As a political scientist who has examined media coverage of the Trump presidency and campaigns, I can say that this is what social science research tells us about media bias.

First, media bias is in the eye of the beholder.

Communications scholars have found that if you ask people in any community, using scientific polling methods, whether their local media are biased, you'll find that about half say yes. But of that half, typically a little more than a quarter say that their local media are biased against Republicans, and a little less than a quarter say the same local media are biased against Democrats. Research shows that Republicans and Democrats spot bias only in articles that clearly favor the other party. If an article tilts in favor of their own party, they tend to see it as unbiased.

Many people, then, define “bias” as “anything that doesn't agree with me.” It's not hard to see why. ‘Liberal bias’ for instance in the media is a constant topic on Fox News.

‘Media’ is a plural word

American party politics has become increasingly polarized in recent decades. Republicans have become more consistently conservative, and Democrats have become more consistently liberal to moderate. As the lines have been drawn more clearly, many people have developed hostile feelings toward the opposition party.

In a 2016 Pew Research Center poll, 45% of Republicans said the Democratic Party's policies are “so misguided that they threaten the nation's well-being,” and 41% of Democrats said the same about Republicans. A poll conducted in midyear 2022 by Pew showed that “72% of Republicans regard Democrats as more immoral, and 63% of Democrats say the same about Republicans.”

Not surprisingly, media outlets have arisen to appeal primarily to people who share a conservative view, or people who share a liberal view.

That doesn't mean that “the media” are biased. There are hundreds of thousands of media outlets in the U.S. – newspapers, radio, network TV, cable TV, blogs, websites and social media. These news outlets don't all take the same perspective on any given issue. If you want a very conservative news site, it is not hard to find one, and the same with a very liberal news site.

First Amendment rules

“The media,” then, present a variety of different perspectives. That’s the way a free press works.

The Constitution’s First Amendment says Congress shall make no law limiting the freedom of the press. It doesn’t say that Congress shall require all media sources to be “unbiased.” Rather, it implies that as long as Congress does not systematically suppress any particular point of view, then the free press can do its job as one of the primary checks on a powerful government.

When the Constitution was written and for most of U.S. history, the major news sources – newspapers, for most of that time – were explicitly biased. Most were sponsored by a political party or a partisan individual. For example, Thomas Jefferson described the partisan newspaper, The Gazette of the United-States, as ‘a paper of pure Toryism ... disseminating the doctrines of monarchy, aristocracy, and the exclusion of the people.’

The notion of objective journalism – that media must report both sides of every issue in every story – barely existed until the late 1800s. It reached full flower only in the few decades when broadcast television, limited to three major networks, was the primary source of political information.

Since that time, the media universe has expanded to include huge numbers of internet news sites, cable channels and social media posts. So if you feel that the media sources you’re reading or watching are biased, you can read a wider variety of media sources.

If it bleeds, it leads

There is one form of actual media bias. Almost all media outlets need audiences in order to exist. Some can’t survive financially without an audience; others want the prestige that comes from attracting a big audience.

Thus, the media define as “news” the kinds of stories that will attract an audience: those that feature drama, conflict, engaging pictures and immediacy. That’s what most people find interesting. Writer Dave Barry demonstrated this media bias in favor of dramatic stories in a 1998 column.

He wrote, “Let’s consider two headlines. FIRST HEADLINE: ‘Federal Reserve Board Ponders Reversal of Postponement of Deferral of Policy Reconsideration.’ SECOND HEADLINE: ‘Federal Reserve Board Caught in Motel with Underage Sheep.’ Be honest, now. Which of these two stories would you read?”

The problem is that a focus on such stories crowds out what we need to know to protect our democracy, such as: How do the workings of American institutions benefit some groups and disadvantage others? In what ways do our major systems – education, health care, national defense and others – function effectively or less effectively?

These analyses are vital to citizens but they aren’t always fun to read. So they get covered much less than celebrity scandals or murder cases.

By focusing on the daily equivalent of the underage sheep, media can direct our attention away from the important systems that affect our lives.

That’s the real media bias. (884 words)

Document 8 - Etats-Unis : les podcasts pro-Trump, fer de lance d’une contre-culture médiatique

Construites en opposition aux médias traditionnels, les émissions en ligne, animées par des influenceurs conservateurs, irriguent le mouvement Make America Great Again.

5 Par [Piotr Smolar](#) (Milwaukee, envoyé spécial) , *Le Monde*, Publié le 19 juillet 2024

10 Il existait une géographie du pouvoir médiatique, dans le périmètre ultrasécurisé de la convention républicaine, à Milwaukee (Wisconsin). Les puissants réseaux de diffusion américains disposaient évidemment d’un plateau au-dessus de l’arène où avaient pris place les délégués. Mais toutes les personnalités républicaines de marque, à commencer par la famille Trump, privilégiaient

15 une enceinte sportive voisine. Dans ce grand espace divisé en studios s’activaient les poumons du mouvement MAGA (Make America Great Again) : les podcasts et les émissions de radio qui à la fois irriguent cette base trumpiste et qui s’en nourrissent, au sens idéologique et financier.

20 Vaccins supposément dangereux, fraudes électorales imaginaires, rumeurs sur un Joe Biden grabataire manipulé en coulisses ? Tout se noue dans cette chambre d’écho hermétique aux faits. Ce paysage est celui de l’ère post-Fox News. La toute-puissante chaîne du magnat Robert Murdoch reste influente. Le présentateur Sean Hannity est en symbiose caricaturale avec Donald Trump. Mais cette antenne a cessé d’être prescriptive. Fox News

a été débordée par d'autres chaînes ultraconservatrices et, surtout, par de nouveaux influenceurs politiques. Méprisant tout code éthique, indifférent à la pratique journalistique, ils vivent de leurs opinions tranchées, en lointains héritiers du légendaire Rush Limbaugh. Décédé en 2021, il fut un présentateur radio vénéré à droite, prêcheur politique offensif et impitoyable, dont l'émission était diffusée sur 600 radios locales. A son quasi-monopole, dans les années 1980, a succédé un archipel d'émissions et d'antennes, sous d'autres formes que la radio, média écouté essentiellement par des personnes de plus de 60 ans.

« Les podcasts, à gauche comme à droite, sont devenus un moyen de plus en plus prisé pour atteindre des gens en dehors des filtres des médias traditionnels, dit au Monde l'entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy, qui participa aux primaires républicaines avant de se ranger derrière Trump. *C'est une bonne chose, cette culture où les deux partis apprécient la liberté d'expression.* » L'ancien candidat, qui envisage de se présenter pour le poste de sénateur dans l'Ohio à la place de J. D. Vance, le colistier de Trump, participait au podcast de Russell Brand, comédien britannique aux yeux hallucinés et aux airs de surfeur. Ses émissions sont un nid conspirationniste. Comme Joe Rogan, la superstar des podcasts américains, Russell Brand prétend incarner la réhabilitation de la virilité masculine par la misogynie. Les scandales l'escortent. A l'automne 2023, la presse britannique a révélé des accusations multiples d'agressions sexuelles à son endroit. Mais dans ce monde alternatif, ces publications ne représentent pas un handicap. Elles consolident un personnage auprès des fans.

Parmi les émissions les plus courues et populaires figure « The Clay Travis & Buck Sexton Show », une émission présentée par un ancien journaliste de Fox Sports Radio, Clay Travis, et Buck Sexton, un ex-agent de l'Agence centrale de renseignement (CIA). Les deux compères ont pris la tranche horaire de Rush Limbaugh en 2021, avant de lancer leur plate-forme de podcasts deux ans plus tard. Ils ont des millions de fans, et il est très difficile de suivre tous les supports sur lesquels leurs performances sont diffusées. Le duo est assez improbable, par son contraste, mais se révèle très complémentaire. Au sein de la CIA, Buck Sexton a notamment travaillé comme analyste sur l'Irak. En 2012, il a écrit un livre sur le mouvement de protestation Occupy Wall Street, ancré à gauche, pour en révéler les ambitions révolutionnaires.

« **Le journalisme objectif est une fiction** »
Selon lui, les élections de 2020 ont accéléré le développement de ce nouvel écosystème conservateur, comme une autre voie aux médias traditionnels « *biaisés* ». D'autant qu'il n'existe pas d'obstacle pour se lancer, en petit artisan des ondes. « *Il y a donc à la fois plus d'options et une plus grande sensibilité du public, qui a conscience de pouvoir trouver comme jamais*

auparavant une personne s'exprimant en conformité avec ses vues et ses opinions », dit-il.

Buck Sexton a grandi à New York avec les fils de Donald Trump, Eric et Don Jr. Il connaît l'ancien président depuis une époque lointaine, bien avant son entrée en politique. Lorsqu'on l'interroge sur cette proximité, il répond sans hésiter. « *Il faut juste être honnête au sujet de ses convictions et de ses fréquentations. Le journalisme objectif est une fiction. Si l'on se penche sur les premiers temps du journalisme aux Etats-Unis, il était directement aligné sur les partis politiques et certains personnages. L'idée selon laquelle on ne devrait rapporter que les faits, c'est une invention de la seconde moitié du XX^e siècle.* »

Si les démocrates ont table ouverte sur la chaîne libérale MSNBC et commencent à développer leur toile de podcasts et émissions, les républicains ont pris de l'avance, s'épanouissant dans une forme de contre-culture médiatique. Lara Trump, la belle-fille de l'ancien président, qui codirige à présent le Comité national républicain, Eric Trump et Don Jr, les deux fils aînés du milliardaire, ou encore les élus les plus radicaux à la Chambre des représentants, telle Marjorie Taylor Greene (Géorgie), sont quelques-unes des figures familières de ces podcasts conservateurs. « *Je pense que l'opinion MAGA est déjà acquise*, explique Lara Trump au Monde. *Ce sont des gens qui aiment leur pays, des patriotes qui veulent le voir réussir. Nous avons déjà leurs voix. Nous devons parler à des gens qui hésitent peut-être à voter pour Trump.* »

Mark Kaye est l'un des personnages de cet archipel en ligne. Né au Canada, il produisait une émission de radio, supprimée en février par la station qui l'hébergeait. Mark Kaye avait partagé une fausse photo produite par l'intelligence artificielle, montrant Donald Trump entouré de personnes noires radieuses et festives. Ce petit souci éthique ne l'a nullement contrarié. Il présente aujourd'hui une émission sur Newsmax, chaîne en pleine ascension, débordant Fox News sur sa droite. Et puis il anime son propre podcast, « Mark Kaye Saves The Republic ». Saisissant son téléphone, il consulte le classement du moment. « *Je suis 51^e sur iTunes dans les émissions politiques.* » Il compte aussi 1 million d'abonnés sur Facebook, et 150 000 sur TikTok.

Imagination commerciale

« *Les réseaux sociaux, c'est le Far West*, dit-il, *surtout depuis qu'Elon Musk a repris Twitter et qu'il le promeut comme une plate-forme de libre expression. Ce qui est intéressant à propos de la base MAGA, c'est que ses membres ont toujours pensé la même chose, mais ils ne communiquaient pas entre eux. Ce que Trump a fait, c'est de leur dire : je pense comme vous.* » Donald Trump a ouvert la voie, en court-circuitant les médias traditionnels, pour s'adresser directement à son public. Puis, en quelques années, les influenceurs conservateurs se sont multipliés dans son sillage. Les élus eux-mêmes s'y sont mis. Le sénateur texan Ted Cruz a son propre podcast,

comme Matt Gaetz, représentant de Floride. Dans ce secteur de plus en plus encombré, la clé du succès repose sur l'imagination commerciale et l'originalité. Il faut, comme au catch, se créer un personnage distinctif. « Vous pouvez percevoir une partie des revenus générés, comme le fait YouTube avec la publicité, explique Mark Kaye. Les réseaux de podcasts le permettent. Vous pouvez aussi vendre les soutiens que vous apportez, vendre des produits dérivés. » Lui vend des livres, des bonnets et des tee-shirts.

Mark Kaye connaît bien Lara Trump. Par capillarité, il a donc sympathisé avec son mari, Eric Trump, et le frère de celui-ci, Don Jr, qui ont pris une importance inédite dans le dispositif de campagne ces derniers mois. Tous vivent en Floride. Mark Kaye est installé à Jacksonville. « West

Palm Beach [une ville voisine de Miami], c'est le Washington des podcasts ! », s'amuse celui qui est régulièrement invité à Mar-a-Lago, la résidence de Donald Trump. Lorsqu'on lui parle de la confusion entre les podcasts comme le sien et l'entourage du milliardaire, il s'esclaffe en évoquant les télévisions dites *mainstream*. Mark Kaye cite l'exemple de George Stephanopoulos, présentateur vedette de la chaîne ABC, qui a obtenu le premier entretien avec Joe Biden après son naufrage lors du débat face à Trump. « La raison pour laquelle ABC a engagé Stephanopoulos est le fait qu'il dispose d'une ligne directe pour joindre Bill Clinton, Barack Obama, et tout le Parti démocrate. » Les médias traditionnels méprisent les orateurs MAGA. Ceux-ci se sont construits en miroir inversé de leurs contempteurs.

- You can also get a closer look at the June 22 2016 Pew Research Center poll “Key facts about partisanship and political animosity in America”
<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2016/06/22/key-facts-partisanship/>
- See here how two events are covered by either conservative medial outlets or liberal ones
<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/08/24/business/media/rfk-jr-trump-endorsement-media.html>
<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/16/business/media/id-vance-media-coverage-left-right.html>
- In the UK, here is a look at **audience and readership data and media bias** in the context of the Summer 2024 elections
https://pressgazette.co.uk/media-audience-and-business-data/media_metrics/uk-media-bias-2024/
- About media and objectivity see also:
<https://time.com/5443351/journalism-objectivity-history/>
<https://magazine.columbia.edu/article/objectivity-journalism-even-possible>



Total UK newspaper circulations by political stance

Average daily circulation per ABC or using Press Gazette estimates where no official data available.



Chart: Press Gazette • [Get the data](#)

UK national newspaper circulations and political leaning

Circulations are per ABC for January 2024. Telegraph, Times, Sun and Guardian are Press Gazette estimates.

Publication	Jan 2024 circulation	Political leaning
Metro (free)	953,233	Neutral
Daily Mail	705,311	Right
The Sun	700,000	Right
Daily Mirror	240,799	Left
Evening Standard (free)	234,492	Right
The Times	180,000	Right
Daily Telegraph	190,000	Right
Daily Express	147,267	Right
Daily Star	131,640	Neutral
i	126,001	Neutral
FT	108,125	Neutral
City AM (free)	68,009	Neutral
The Guardian	60,000	Left

Table: Press Gazette • [Get the data](#)

The decline of local journalism



Total Number of Local U.S. Newspapers: 2005 & 2023

There has been a net loss of 2,886 papers since 2005.

■ Nondaily ■ Daily

2004

7,419

1,472

2023

4,792

1,213

Chart: Medill Local News Initiative • Source: Local News Initiative Database • Created with Datawrapper

Newsroom employees by news industry, 2008 to 2020

Number of U.S. newsroom employees in each news industry

Year	Total	Newspaper publishers	Broadcast television	Digital-native	Radio broadcasting	Cable television
2008	114,260	71,070	28,390	7,400	4,570	2,830
2009	104,490	60,770	28,040	8,090	4,330	3,260
2010	98,680	55,260	28,640	8,090	4,100	2,590
2011	97,350	54,050	28,050	9,520	3,540	2,190
2012	95,770	51,430	27,830	10,750	3,610	2,150
2013	92,240	48,920	25,650	11,250	3,700	2,720
2014	89,820	46,310	26,300	11,180	3,820	2,210
2015	90,400	44,120	28,430	11,710	3,380	2,760
2016	89,220	42,450	28,190	12,830	3,190	2,560
2017	87,630	39,210	28,900	13,260	3,320	2,940
2018	86,100	37,900	28,670	13,470	3,370	2,690
2019	87,510	34,950	30,120	16,090	3,530	2,820
2020	84,640	30,820	29,700	18,030	3,360	2,730

Note: The OEWS survey is designed to produce estimates by combining data collected over a three-year period. Newsroom employees include news analysts, reporters and journalists; editors; photographers; and television, video and film camera operators and editors. Digital-native sector data is based on "other information services" industry code, whose largest segment is "internet publishing and broadcasting and web search portals."

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics data.

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Document 9 To Protect Democracy, Revive Local Journalism

Project Syndicate, Sep 20, 2023, LAURA TYSON and LENNY MENDONCA

Laura Tyson, a former chair of the President's Council of Economic Advisers during the Clinton administration, is a professor at the Haas School of Business at the University of California, Berkeley, and a member of the Board of Advisers at Angelino Group.

Lenny Mendonca, Senior Partner Emeritus at McKinsey & Company, is a former chief economic and business adviser to Governor Gavin Newsom of California and chair of the California High-Speed Rail Authority.

BERKELEY – The *Washington Post*'s famous slogan, "Democracy Dies in Darkness," is sadly coming true in many parts of the United States. The digital age has shattered newspapers' business model, turning many communities into "news deserts" with no local journalism. Some 2,500 daily or weekly newspapers have folded since 2005, and there are now fewer than 6,500 left. Every week, two more disappear.

The decline of local journalism is driven by many factors, but economic challenges top the list. Earlier in the internet era, Craigslist supplanted the classified ads that previously funded newspaper journalism. Then came the big digital platforms, which put the final nails in the coffin of the traditional advertising model. Starved of revenue, local news outlets have had to lay off staff, reduce coverage areas, or shut down altogether.

According to Pew Research, the number of local newsroom employees in the US fell by 57% between 2008 and 2020, resulting in thousands of "ghost newspapers" that barely cover their own communities. Small local newspapers simply do not have the scale to compete against digital advertising giants like Google and Facebook.

Media industry consolidation has also played a role in the decline of local journalism. In recent years, many smaller newspapers have become part of larger conglomerates that are focused wholly on profits, usually at the expense of local reporting. As a result, news coverage has been homogenized, and coverage of local issues has suffered, with editorial decisions being made at the corporate level rather than by journalists on the ground.

5 It should go without saying that local journalism is vital for informing citizens about government decision-making, community events, and the local issues that will most directly affect them. The traditional local newspaper served as a watchdog, holding local officials accountable and facilitating public engagement. Without local journalism, citizens become less informed, and corruption becomes more likely, leading to a decline in voter turnout and erosion of democratic institutions. Worse, the absence of credible information allows for the proliferation of misinformation, rumors, and outlandish conspiracy theories, further undermining trust in the democratic process.

10 The decline of local journalism has also contributed to political polarization more broadly. As local newspapers diminish in number and influence, citizens increasingly rely on national news outlets, which tend to be more partisan. Without local outlets offering neutral and balanced reporting, citizens are pulled into echo chambers, consuming only media that align with their preexisting beliefs. The creation of “filter bubbles” by social-media algorithms means that the electorate increasingly lacks a foundation of shared facts and information. As news consumers become less exposed to competing points of view, polarization deepens.

15 But it doesn’t have to be this way. Nonprofit news organizations, community-supported journalism, and membership-based models have emerged as potential alternatives to the traditional advertising-driven approach. Most of these models rely on community engagement and philanthropic support, and new entrants have already become essential for local journalism in many areas.

20 For example, in the space of less than a decade, the nonprofit CalMatters has increased its staff of journalists covering California state politics and other issues to 40, providing crucial information and accountability for the world’s fifth-largest economy.

25 Moreover, large foundations are supporting journalists who cover their areas of interest, from climate change and education to inequality. Over the past decade, philanthropic spending on journalism in the US has nearly quadrupled, to over \$250 million per year. TheGuardian.org alone has more than a dozen funders providing at least \$500,000 per year.

30 But much more is needed. Steve Waldman, the president of Rebuild Local News and a co-founder of Report for America, estimates that it will cost \$1.5 billion per year to restore local journalism (by employing roughly 25,000 reporters on salaries of \$60,000 per year). While substantial, that is equal to a mere 0.02% of federal-government spending – or less than 50 cents per American per month. For comparison, there are nearly 700 higher-education institutions in the US with endowments over \$1 billion.

35 Broader public funding is likely necessary to fill this financing gap. The US government currently spends a mere \$3.16 per person on public media, most of which goes to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to support local public television and radio stations. A country like Germany, meanwhile, spends more than \$142 per capita on public media.

40 Some states and local governments have already been providing additional funding. For example, New Jersey’s Civic Information Consortium funds 14 separate local news organizations; the New Mexico Local News Fund supports 16 journalists across the state; and a recent \$25 million budget appropriation in California will support 39 journalism fellows, with a “focus on underserved communities.” (...)

Such measures may prove indispensable. Local journalism plays a vital role in protecting democracy. But to protect both, we urgently need more business innovation, philanthropic investment, and public support for independent media. 801 words

Getting information on Social media

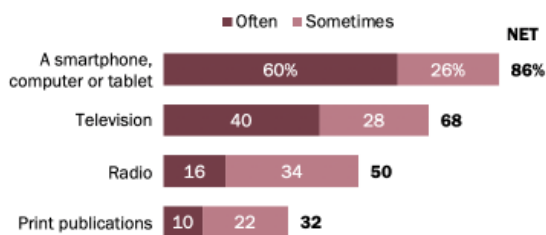
Document 10 - More than eight-in-ten Americans get news from digital devices

PEW RESEARCH CENTER, JANUARY 12, 2021

The transition of news from print, television and radio to digital spaces has caused huge disruptions in the traditional news industry, especially the print news industry. It is also reflected in the ways individual Americans say they are getting their news. A large majority of Americans get news at least sometimes from digital devices, according to a Pew Research Center survey conducted Aug. 31-Sept. 7, 2020.

Large majority of Americans get news on digital devices

% of U.S. adults who get news ____ from ...



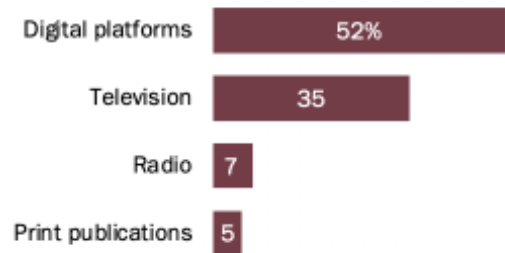
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Aug. 31-Sept. 7, 2020.

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More than eight-in-ten U.S. adults (86%) say they get news from a smartphone, computer or tablet “often” or “sometimes,” including 60% who say they do so often. This is higher than the portion who get news from television, though 68% get news from TV at least sometimes and 40% do so often. Americans turn to radio and print publications for news far less frequently, with half saying they turn to radio at least sometimes (16% do so often) and about a third (32%) saying the same of print (10% get news from print publications often).

Roughly half of Americans prefer to get news on a digital platform; about a third prefer TV

% of U.S. adults who prefer ____ for getting news



Note: Digital platforms includes respondents who said they prefer news websites or apps, social media, search, or podcasts.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Aug. 31-Sept. 7, 2020.

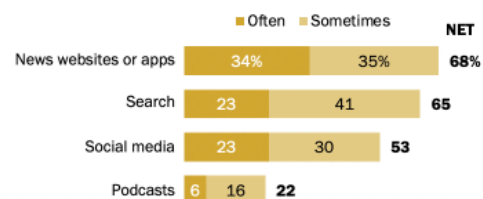
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When asked which of these platforms they *prefer* to get news on, roughly half (52%) of Americans say they prefer a digital platform – whether it is a news website (26%), search (12%), social media (11%) or podcasts (3%). About a third say they prefer television (35%), and just 7% and 5% respectively say they prefer to get their news on the radio or via print.

Though digital devices are by far the most common way Americans access their news, where they get that news *on* their devices is divided among a number of different pathways. About two-thirds of U.S. adults say they get news at least sometimes from news websites or apps (68%) or search engines, like Google (65%). About half (53%) say they get news from social media, and a much smaller portion say they get news at least sometimes from podcasts (22%).

Americans more likely to get news on digital devices from news websites, apps and search engines than from social media

% of U.S. adults who get news ____ from ...



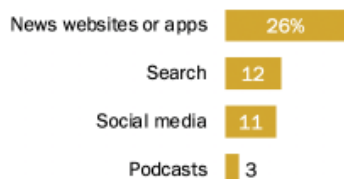
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Aug. 31-Sept. 7, 2020.

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Changing the way we measure news consumption

News websites most preferred way to get digital news

% of U.S. adults who prefer ____ for getting news



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Aug. 31-Sept. 7, 2020.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

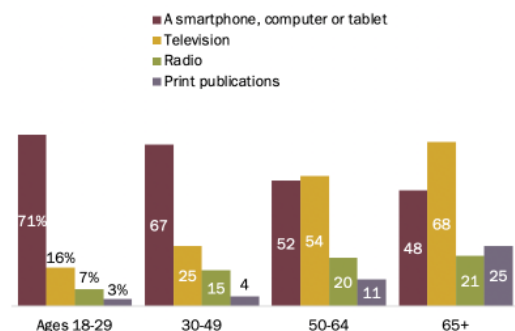
Among digital platforms, the most preferred one for news is news websites or apps: About a quarter of U.S. adults (26%) prefer to get their news this way, compared with 12% who prefer search, 11% who prefer to get their news on social media and 3% who say they prefer podcasts.

Younger Americans vary widely from their elders in news consumption habits

Underneath these numbers lie stark differences by age, with those under 50 showing very different news use patterns than their elders. Americans ages 50 and older use both television and digital devices for news at high rates, while the younger age groups have almost fully turned to digital devices as a platform to access news.

Those under 50 turn more frequently to digital devices for news

% of U.S. adults who get news *often* from ...



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Aug. 31-Sept. 7, 2020.

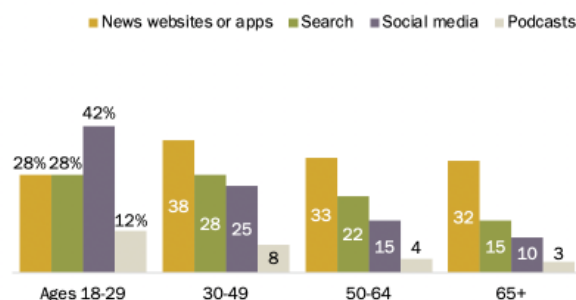
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About half or more of adults 50 and older are still turning to TV for news often – 54% of those 50 to 64 and about two-thirds (68%) of those 65 and older. But among those ages 30 to 49, just a quarter say they get news on TV often, and just 16% say the same among those 18 to 29. For those age groups, digital devices are the dominant choice for news, with 67% of those 30 to 49 and 71% of those 18 to 29 getting news from a digital device often.

Among those 50 and older, differences between digital and non-digital news sources are less pronounced. Among adults 50 and older, 64% get news at least sometimes from both television and digital devices.

Online, most turn to news websites except for the youngest, who are more likely to use social media

% of U.S. adults who get news *often* from ...



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Aug. 31-Sept. 7, 2020.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Within digital platforms for news, most age groups turn to news websites at higher rates than other platforms, with one exception. Americans ages 18 to 29 stand out in that the most common digital way they get news is social media, with 42% saying they get news this way often versus 28% saying the same of either news websites or search engines.

Document 11 - TikTok is not the enemy of journalism. It's just a new way of reaching people.

Adapted from Chris Stokel-Walker, *The Guardian*, 23 July 2022

Twenty-three million people in the UK use TikTok every month. Enhanced by the pandemic and its impact on remote work, apps like TikTok and Instagram have become the digital equivalent of the watercooler. It's where we talk about Love Island, the latest soaps, the dysfunction in our government and what's going on in the world.

So why are we so surprised that it's a place people turn to for news?

Ofcom's latest report on news consumption in the UK, showing that TikTok is the fastest-growing source of news for adults, has been met with incredulity and worries about the death of "traditional journalism".

But rather than seeing it as a threat, old media bods should see it as a natural evolution. News finds us in the best possible way, and always has. Whether it's the switch from newspapers to TV bulletins that summed up a day in an evening, to the constant updates of 24-hour TV channels and social media updates, the way journalism has been presented has always been in flux.

When radio, then television, first began to dabble in reporting on the world, newspaper folk worried that the speed and immediacy of broadcast media would put paid to print. Decades on, print is still with us. Nightly news broadcasts were also due to go the way of the dodo when CNN first started transmitting 24 hours a day, yet appointment viewing remains relatively strong for well-packaged summaries of the day's news. And all of them were due to be overtaken by the internet. At each inflection point in the evolution of journalism, the arguments were the same: the medium was so different, and the speed at which information was gathered and imparted, that journalism was going to the dogs. The old ways of presenting news were always the best – until the new thing came along, the world didn't end and, actually, people preferred the alternative.

Now, TikTok does things differently – in style, format and how it presents videos to users – than even other tech platforms, and so was always going to be a more significant break from what's gone before. It also has a different cadence, language and style of presentation to even other social media platforms, which is why it is less possible for news outlets to simply recut their existing TV or Facebook video for the platform.

But all that doesn't necessarily mean dumbing down, nor is it the end of journalistic values. Journalism's old guard has latched on to one key stat to make its case: less than a third of youngsters trust what they see on TikTok – less than half the proportion that trust TV news.

While news outlets such as the *Washington Post* have successfully migrated to the platform, producing idiosyncratic videos that take a wry stance on the day's news, most media platforms have steered clear of TikTok to date.

That leaves a vacuum that individuals, who are often not trained journalists, have filled. Nearly twice as many users (44%) say they get information from other people they follow on the app as opposed to news organisations (24%). When confronted with stories such as the Amber Heard-Johnny Depp defamation trial, TikTok's "news" output can often come up short, becoming a talking shop for scurrilous gossip and painfully off-piste over-analysis.

547 words

Document 12 - Harris Joins TikTok, Another Sign of the App's Value in Reaching Young Voters

Vice President Kamala Harris launched her account on Thursday with an eight-second video that has since been viewed 5.8 million times.

The New York Times, By Ken Bensinger, July 26, 2024

Vice President Kamala Harris, the presumptive Democratic nominee for president, is now officially on TikTok. Ever since President Biden announced on Sunday that he would no longer be running for re-election and instead endorsed his vice president for the job, the social media platform has been inundated with memes about coconut trees, Brat summer and other fawning content related to Ms. Harris.

On Thursday night, Ms. Harris joined the party, launching her own account with a video in which she stated simply that she "thought I would get on here myself."

Within six hours, the eight-second post had been viewed 5.8 million times, and Ms. Harris had reeled in more than 1.1 million followers.

Her arrival is the latest sign of the site's growing importance for politicians seeking to reach young, highly online audiences. Although TikTok has fewer people on it in the United States than Facebook does, its demographics tilt far more heavily toward people under 35. More than a third of the 170 million people on TikTok say they use it to keep abreast of politics and political issues, according to a recent survey by Pew Research, a considerably higher share than those on Facebook or Instagram.

Before Mr. Biden pulled out of the race, his campaign had made significant investments in social media and particularly TikTok, spending \$2 million, for example, to hire a marketing firm specializing in recruiting influencers. Nearly 100 social media influencers were credentialed for this month's Republican National Convention as part of what former President Donald J. Trump's campaign called a "Creator's Hub" designed to generate buzzy content about Mr. Trump's efforts to regain the White House.

But wooing potential voters online is not without its challenges. Mr. Biden's campaign did not join TikTok until February, more than nine months after announcing his re-election bid. And almost immediately, he alienated many of the platform's most loyal users with his support of legislation that would ban TikTok unless it was sold. In March, Ms. Harris said that the administration had "national security concerns" about the site but that it had "no intention to ban TikTok." A month later, however, the president signed the bill banning the site unless its parent company, the Chinese-owned ByteDance Ltd., sells the site.

Mr. Biden has never opened a personal TikTok account. The campaign's account, called "Biden-Harris HQ," struggled to get much traction, reeling in about 340,000 followers by June 1, when Mr. Trump joined the platform himself with a video featuring him and the chief executive of Ultimate Fighting Championship, Dana White. As president, Mr. Trump took steps to try to ban the site, but in March he reversed his stance, saying that blocking the site would benefit Facebook, which he called "a true Enemy of the People."

In just 15 hours, Mr. Trump's first post on TikTok attracted 38 million views and the account netted 2.2 million followers — more than six times the number of followers of the Biden campaign account at the time. Since then, Mr. Trump's account has grown to 9.2 million followers, and his posts have accumulated nearly 500 million views combined.

But Ms. Harris's ascent to the top of the Democratic ticket has clearly breathed enthusiasm into the party's social media game.

Earlier this week, the Biden-Harris HQ account changed its name to KamalaHQ, and it now has 1.8 million followers. At the same time, Ms. Harris's account on Instagram has ballooned to 17 million followers, and a post praising Mr. Biden and seeking donations for her campaign racked up 1.6 million views, a significant number for the site. A post announcing her run on the social media site X, meanwhile, has been viewed 14 million times since it was posted on Wednesday night. 631 words

Document 13 - The U.K. Riots Were Fomented Online. Will Social Media Companies Act?

Prime Minister Keir Starmer called out social media groups for the misinformation on their platforms that sparked violent clashes this week. But holding them accountable is tough.

By [Adam Satariano](#), Reporting from London, *The New York Times*, Aug. 2, 2024

Standing in front of a lectern on Thursday, his voice at times taut with anger, Britain's prime minister announced a crackdown on what he called the "gangs of thugs" who instigated violent unrest in several towns this week.

But the question of how to confront one of the key accelerants — a flood of online misinformation about a deadly stabbing attack — remained largely unanswered.

- 5 Prime Minister Keir Starmer called out online companies directly, after false information about the identity of the 17-year-old suspected in the attack spread rapidly on their platforms, no matter how many times police and government officials pushed back against the claims.

Three girls died after the attacker rampaged through a dance class in Southport, northwest England, on Monday. Of the eight children injured, five remain in the hospital, along with their teacher, who had tried to protect them.

10 Immediately after the attack, false claims began circulating about the perpetrator, including that he was an asylum seeker from Syria. In fact, he was born in Cardiff, Wales, and had lived in Britain all his life. According to the BBC and The Times of London, his parents are from Rwanda.

The misinformation was amplified by far-right agitators with large online followings, many of whom used messaging apps like Telegram and X to call for people to protest. Clashes followed in several U.K. towns, leading to more than 50 police officers being injured in Southport and more than 100 arrests in London. (...)

Officials fear more violence in the days ahead. The viral falsehoods were so prevalent that a judge took the unusual step of lifting restrictions on naming underage suspects, identifying the alleged attacker as Axel Rudakubana.

“Let me also say to large social media companies and those who run them: Violent disorder, clearly whipped up online, that is also a crime, it’s happening on your premises, and the law must be upheld everywhere,” Mr. Starmer said in his televised speech, though he did not name any company or executive specifically. “We will take all necessary action to keep our streets safe,” he added.

The attack in Southport, England, has been a case study in how online misinformation can lead to actual violence. But governments, including Britain, have long struggled to find an effective way to respond. Policing the internet is legally murky terrain for most democracies, where individual rights and free speech protections are balanced against a desire to block harmful material.

Last year, Britain adopted a law called **the Online Safety Act** that requires social media companies to introduce new protections for child safety, while also forcing the firms to prevent and rapidly remove illegal content like terrorism propaganda and revenge pornography.

But the law is less clear about how companies must treat misinformation and incendiary, xenophobic language. Instead, the law gives the British agency **Ofcom**, which oversees television and other traditional media formats, more authority to regulate online platforms. Thus far, the agency has not taken much action to tackle the issue.

Jacob Davey, a director of policy and research at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, a group that has tracked online far-right extremism, said many social media platforms have internal policies that prohibit hate speech and other illicit content, but enforcement is spotty. Other companies like X, now owned by Elon Musk, and Telegram have less moderation.

“Given the confrontational tone set by some companies it will be challenging to hold them accountable for harmful but legal content if they decide they don’t want to enforce against it,” said Mr. Davey.

The European Union has a law called **the Digital Services Act** that requires the largest social media companies to have robust content moderation teams and policies in place. With the new powers, regulators in Brussels are investigating X and have threatened to fine the company in part for its content moderation policies.

In the United States, where free speech protections are more robust than in Europe, the government has few options to force companies to take down content. (...)

British policymakers said the country must address false information spread by the far right on social media.

Al Baker, the managing director of Prose Intelligence, a British company that provides services for monitoring Telegram, said the online discourse was a reflection of wider societal challenges. “It’s important not to go too far and say the internet is the cause,” Mr. Baker said. “The internet and social media are an accelerant that intensify existing problems we have as a society.” 742 words

Document 14- AUDIO

Telegram CEO Pavel Durov indicted in France

NPR, August 28, 2024

Document 15 - Explainer- What is Telegram and why has its founder Pavel Durov been arrested?

Alex Hern Technology editor - The Guardian, Mon 26 Aug 2024

The arrest of Pavel Durov, the Russian-born founder of Telegram, in Paris on Saturday has thrown the spotlight on the messaging app. Prosecutors said on Monday he

5 was being held in custody as part of a cybercrime investigation.

What is Telegram?

At its core, Telegram is a messaging app, competing with services including WhatsApp, Signal and

iMessage. For many of its users, it's nothing more than that: a good place to chat with friends.

But the app also offers more social networking features than most of its peers. Group chats are in effect
5 unlimited in size, as are Telegram's broadcast "channels", which let users "follow" individual accounts.

Those channels also let followers leave comments under posts, and have back and forth conversations with each
10 other, in a manner far more reminiscent of a Facebook group or even an old-school internet forum than a simple instant messaging service.

Is it encrypted?

15 That is a surprisingly controversial question. "Everything on Telegram, including chats, groups, media, etc is encrypted using a combination of 256-bit symmetric AES encryption, 2048-bit RSA encryption, and Diffie-Hellman secure key," the company says, and
20 that's true. But it's a different sort of encryption to that which has become standard in messaging apps, known as end-to-end (e2e) encryption.

For Telegram users, unless they go through a laborious process of setting up a "secret chat" (which isn't an
25 option for group chats or broadcast channels), their messages aren't protected from being read by Telegram itself – and so Telegram doesn't have the same excuse for not aiding law enforcement that its competitors can turn to.

Who's got Telegram's back?

Despite that different approach to security, Telegram has long appealed to communities who haven't found a home on more mainstream platforms; cryptocurrency
35 advocates, anti-vax activists and QAnon believers have all migrated to the platform after crackdowns on social networks such as Facebook.

Durov, once known as the "Russian Mark Zuckerberg", has spoken about his belief in the importance of free
40 speech, and others with similar absolutist views, including Elon Musk, have come to his defence.

Surprisingly, Russia has also expressed its concern about the arrest. The state in effect seized control of his first company, Facebook clone VKontakte, and
45 Telegram was founded by Durov in exile.

He is now believed to hold three other citizenships beside his Russian passport, but that hasn't stopped the Russian foreign ministry from attacking France for its detention of the chief executive.

Why did the French arrest Durov?

The French allegations are, broadly, that Telegram failed to fight the use of the service for crime – including the spread of child sexual abuse material.

55 The investigation concerns crimes related to illicit transactions, child sexual abuse, fraud and the refusal to communicate information to authorities. The arrest warrant was issued by OFMIN, a French child protection agency, the group's secretary general said in
60 a post on LinkedIn.

It is extremely rare to hold the providers of web services liable for the actions of their users, and rarer still to append personal liability. What remains unclear is whether the alleged failures of Telegram are
65 extraordinary, or if the escalation is instead on the part of the French authorities.

In a statement on Sunday, Telegram said Durov "had nothing to hide" and that "it is absurd to claim that a platform or its owner are responsible for abuse of that
70 platform".

What does this mean for other messaging services?

Some have already spoken out in fear of a "chilling effect", with executives feeling like they need to over-
75 moderate and over-censor their services lest their own safety is at risk whenever they jet to Cannes for a holiday.

The arrest is also likely to hasten the move to adopt universal end-to-end encryption, with leaders unable to
80 be held liable for content they cannot see.

The specifics of Durov's arrest remain unclear, particularly whether his behaviour was in line with industry standards.

In 2015, for instance, Telegram's founder famously
85 dismissed accusations his platform was a safe haven for Islamic State, arguing only that "privacy is more important than our fear of bad things happening, like terrorism".

Document 16 - Telegram's Pavel Durov is a poor poster boy for free speech

With about 1 billion users and almost no content moderation, Telegram exemplifies power without responsibility.

By Max Boot, *The Washington Post*, August 29, 2024

5 The decision by French authorities to arrest Pavel Durov, the billionaire, Russian-born founder of the Telegram social media app, has sent his fellow tech bros into a predictable frenzy.

10 X owner Elon Musk posted “#FreePavel” and warned of a near future in Europe where “you’re being executed for liking a meme.” Tech investor David Sacks suggested it was all part of a plot to shut down popular social media sites, beginning with TikTok (whose
15 Chinese owners will have to sell or stop operating the app in the United States under a newly passed U.S. law). Chris Pavlovski, chief executive of the video-sharing platform Rumble, wrote that France had “crossed a red line” and added, “Rumble will not stand for this
20 behavior and will use every legal means available to fight for freedom of expression, a universal human right.”

The tech moguls have a partial point: It is, admittedly, a disturbing precedent for a democracy such as France to
25 arrest a chief executive in a dispute over content moderation, even if Durov was not exactly sent to Devil’s Island. On Wednesday, he was released on bail of about \$5.6 million and indicted on charges related to allowing child sexual abuse material, fraud and drug
30 trafficking on his platform while refusing to cooperate with law enforcement. (Telegram claims to abide by European Union laws and insists, “It is absurd to claim that a platform or its owner are responsible for abuse of that platform.”)

35 “Countries should be able to enforce content moderation,” my Council on Foreign Relations colleague Adam Segal, a cybersecurity expert, told me. “But arresting the CEO sets a really bad precedent, especially for more illiberal states.”

40 That’s true. But it’s also true that Durov makes a poor poster boy for freedom of speech. His platform exemplifies power without responsibility. Telegram claims nearly 1 billion users around the world but does next to no content moderation and refuses to cooperate
45 with law enforcement investigations. Its entire staff reportedly numbers just 50 or so people. By contrast,

Facebook’s parent company, Meta, employs around 40,000 people on its safety and security teams alone.

As Stanford University’s Internet Observatory has
50 documented, Telegram does not even police some of the vilest content on the internet — “child sex abuse material,” or CSAM. A report from the Internet Observatory concluded: “Telegram implicitly allows the trading of CSAM in private channels.”

55 What this means in practice was described by my Post colleagues in a disturbing article that should be required reading for Durov’s defenders: Adults who prey on children use Telegram, they wrote in March, to “post child pornography, videos of corpse desecration and
60 images of the cuts they have made children inflict on themselves In chat groups with as many as 5,000 members, they brag about their abusive acts and goad each other on. They share tips on where to find girls with eating disorders and other vulnerabilities
65 congregating online, and on how to manipulate them.”

Telegram is of importance as well to the brutal Russian war effort in Ukraine — Russian troops use it to communicate with one another, and it provides a platform for pro-war bloggers to spread their
70 propaganda. (Ukrainians also use Telegram, but to a lesser degree.) That explains why Russian officials and commentators have been having a meltdown over Durov’s arrest, even though the Telegram CEO, who is now a citizen of France and the United Arab Emirates,
75 has had his own disputes with Vladimir Putin. (...)

In sum, as Alex Stamos — the former director of the Internet Observatory who is now at the cybersecurity firm SentinelOne — told me regarding Telegram: “They are truly bad actors.” That doesn’t mean that
80 Durov necessarily deserves to be in prison, but it does mean that Telegram and other social media platforms need to take content moderation much more seriously. Ideally, these companies would have responsible owners who would understand the need to balance free
85 speech (and profits) with public safety, but, as Durov shows, many of these social media giants are taking an absolutist approach that puts society at risk — with Telegram being the most irresponsible.

X is doing more than Telegram to stop child abuse
90 materials, Stamos told me, but it has given up trying to stop disinformation designed to influence elections or even to foment violence. Just a few weeks ago, Britain was dealing with anti-immigrant rioting after right-

wing social media users falsely claimed that the perpetrator of a horrific attack that killed three girls was a Muslim immigrant. Far from trying to quell the toxic misinformation on X, Musk amplified it, tweeting that “civil war is inevitable” and echoing unfounded right-wing claims that Prime Minister Keir Starmer was tougher on right-wing rioters than minority groups.

While the United States, like most countries around the world, actively polices child sex material online, there is much less that the U.S. government can do about online disinformation, even when its being spread by foreign countries to manipulate U.S. elections. Internet companies are protected not only by the First Amendment but also by the 1996 Communications Decency Act, which exempts internet platforms of most liability for content posted by their users.

European countries have more robust regulations, such as the British Online Safety Act and the European Union’s Digital Services Act. The goal, as the European Commission writes, is “to prevent illegal and harmful activities online and the spread of disinformation.” If the E.U. is successful, it may have an impact on what

U.S. users see, because large social media companies can be fined up to 6 percent of their global revenue for noncompliance.

The problem, Stamos told me, is that these regulations are testing the ability of European bureaucrats to implement them. Mercifully, the E.U. isn’t a dictatorship like China, where authorities clamp down on everything on the internet, from political dissent to child pornography. In democratic countries, regulators have to weigh free speech in the balance — and one person’s disinformation is another person’s bold truth-telling. “Coming up with enforceable minimums is tough,” Stamos said. “The E.U. is pushing in this area, but it’s slow going. It’s actually spectacularly difficult.” Let’s hope Europe can get it right. The West desperately needs a model of social media regulation that allows robust debate while limiting criminal activity and disinformation, and the E.U. could show the way. But we haven’t gotten there yet, which is presumably why French authorities have sidelined the E.U. and resorted to arresting Telegram’s CEO. That’s troubling — but so is all the vile and dangerous content that Telegram allows online.

Document 17 - Twitter and Elon Musk: why free speech absolutism threatens human rights

The Conversation, November 7, 2022

Sarah Glozer, Senior Lecturer in Marketing & Society, University of Bath

Emily Jane Godwin, PhD Candidate in Cyber Security, University of Bath

Rita Mota, Assistant Professor, Department of Society, Politics and Sustainability, ESADE

For a man who made a fortune from electric cars, the Twitter takeover has turned into a fairly bumpy ride so far. Soon after buying the social media company for US\$44 billion (£38 billion), Elon Musk said he had “no choice” about laying off a large proportion of the company’s staff.

He has already faced a backlash over his move to charge Twitter users a monthly fee for their “blue tick” verified status. And those users should also be concerned about plans from the self-proclaimed “free speech absolutist” to reduce content moderation.

Moderation, the screening and blocking of unacceptable online content, has been in place for as long as the internet has existed. And after becoming an increasingly important and sophisticated feature against a rising tide of hate speech, misinformation and illegal content, it should not be undone lightly.

Anything which weakens filters, allowing more harmful content to reach our screens, could have serious implications for human rights, both online and offline.

For it is not just governments which are responsible for upholding human rights – businesses are too. And when different human rights clash, as they sometimes do, that clash needs to be managed responsibly.

Social media has proved itself to be an extremely powerful way for people around the world to assert their human right to freedom of expression – the freedom to seek, receive and impart all kinds of information and ideas.

But freedom of expression is not without limits. International human rights law prohibits propaganda for war, as well as advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence. It also allows for restrictions necessary to ensure that rights or reputations are respected.

So Twitter, in common with other online platforms, has a responsibility to respect freedom of expression. But equally, it has a responsibility not to allow freedom

40 of expression to override other human rights completely.

After all, harmful online content is often used to restrict the freedom of expression of others. Sometimes, online threats spill over to the offline world and cause
45 irreparable physical and emotional harm.

Any moves to remove content moderation therefore risk breaching corporate human rights obligations. Unlimited freedom of expression for some almost inevitably results in the restriction elsewhere of that
50 exact same freedom. And the harm is unlikely even to stop there.

Musk claims that Twitter will now become a more democratic “town square”. But without content moderation, his privately owned version of a town
55 square could become dysfunctional and dangerous.

Twitter – again, like most other social media platforms – has long been linked to overt expressions of racism and misogyny, with a flood of racist tweets even surfacing after Musk closed his deal.

60 And while Musk reassures us that Twitter will not become a “hellscape”, it is important to remember that content moderation is not the same as censorship. In fact, moderation may facilitate genuine dialogue by cracking down on the spam and toxic talk which often
65 disrupt communication on social media.

User friendly?

Moderation also offers reassurance. Without it, Twitter risks losing users who may leave for alternative platforms considered safer and a better ideological fit.

You can also listen to this program on NPR:

<https://www.npr.org/2022/10/08/1127689351/elon-musk-calls-himself-a-free-speech-absolutist-what-could-twitter-look-like-un>

• See also “The Voices Young Conservatives Are Listening to Online” *The New York Times*, July 2024

Thirty people ages 18 to 30 said they sought out individuals with strong opinions, especially those they see as outside the mainstream media.

https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/19/style/young-conservative-republican-social-media-influence.html?unlocked_article_code=1.Gk4.gotJ.obqmf-0vWidz&smid=url-share

On the arrest of Telegram’s Ceo, you can also read:

• *The Geopolitical Fallout of Telegram Founder Pavel Durov’s Arrest*, Foreign Policy, August 27, 2024

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/08/27/telegram-founder-arrest-pavel-durov-france/>

• “Telegram Becomes Free Speech Flashpoint After Founder’s Arrest”, *The new York Times*

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/08/25/technology/pavel-durov-telegram-detained-france.html>

• https://www.lemonde.fr/pixels/article/2024/08/26/des-medias-et-personnalites-d-extreme-droite-se-plaignent-de-censure-apres-la-fermeture-de-leurs-comptes-instagram_6295790_4408996.html

• https://www.lemonde.fr/pixels/article/2024/08/26/arrestation-de-pavel-durov-la-defense-de-l-etat-de-droit-plus-qu-une-attaque-contre-la-liberte-d-expression_6295041_4408996.html

70 Valuable advertisers are also quick to move away from online spaces they consider divisive and risky. General Motors was one of the first big brands to announce a temporary halt on paid advertising on Twitter after Musk took over.

75 Of course, we do not yet know exactly what Musk’s version of Twitter will eventually look like. But there have been suggestions that content moderation teams may be disbanded in favour of a “moderation council”. If it is similar to the “oversight board” at Meta (formerly
80 Facebook), content decisions are set to be outsourced to an external party representing diverse views. But if Twitter has less internal control and accountability, harmful content may become a harder beast to tame.

Such abdication of responsibility risks breaching
85 Twitter’s human rights obligations, and having a negative impact both on individuals affected by harmful content, and on the overall approach to human rights adopted by other online platforms. (...)

Content moderation is by no way a panacea and the
90 claim that social media platforms are “arbiters of the truth” is problematic for many reasons. We must also not forget the emotional and psychological toll of human content moderators having to view “the worst of humanity” to protect our screens. Yet, sanitisation of
95 social platforms is also not the answer. The internet is a better place when the most successful platforms engage in human rights-focused screening – for everyone’s benefit.