



# YOU DON'T TRUST THE MEDIA, BUT DO YOU KNOW WHY?



## Author

Luke Chambers



## Affiliation

University of New Hampshire Political Science Department

## Introduction

Many of us have heard the quote. *“Our liberty depends on the freedom of the press, and that cannot be limited without being lost.”* Yet never did any of us believe we would find ourselves living in a time in which it would be so relevant. But there's another part to this. A part that may not have been etched by the pen of Thomas Jefferson but remains just as true. In order to have **true freedom** of the press, those who are consuming it **must** believe what they see. **If they don't, then the press loses its power.**

It is a fact that people today are **less trusting** of the media than **they've ever been before**. The verdict is still out on why. Through doing this study, I hope to gain insight into this question. Maybe once we've discovered what has caused people to become so distrusting, we can begin to work towards a more **stable** world.

## Literature Review

Trust in the Media is at an **all-time low\***. As a fact, it's at **28%** (Brenan, 2025). Only **6%** of the US Adult population believes that journalists act in their best interest (Eddy, 2026). Over the past 10 years, the rate of distrust in media has **outpaced every other country** in the Americas (Collier, 2026). So, **how did we get here?**

**67%** of adults blame it on **bias, spin, and agendas**; stating that those are the reasons they **don't trust the media** (Newman and Fletcher, 2017). This makes sense. Over the last 10 years, cable news has become more biased, with a larger percentage of people tuning into it as opposed to broadcast networks (Staff, 2025). Yet the question remains: **where have those feelings that everything is meant to influence us come from?**

Political trust (Fawzi and Steindl, 2026) and political interest are believed to have played a part (Collier, 2026). Modern developments of media have also had a substantial role. **Digital platforms** now dominate the news sphere, with **86%** of U.S adults at least sometimes getting their news from their phones (Atske, 2026). **AI** introduces a new set of problems, paving the way for **mass misinformation** campaigns (Kolo et al. 2026), while **social media** provides the perfect platform for them.

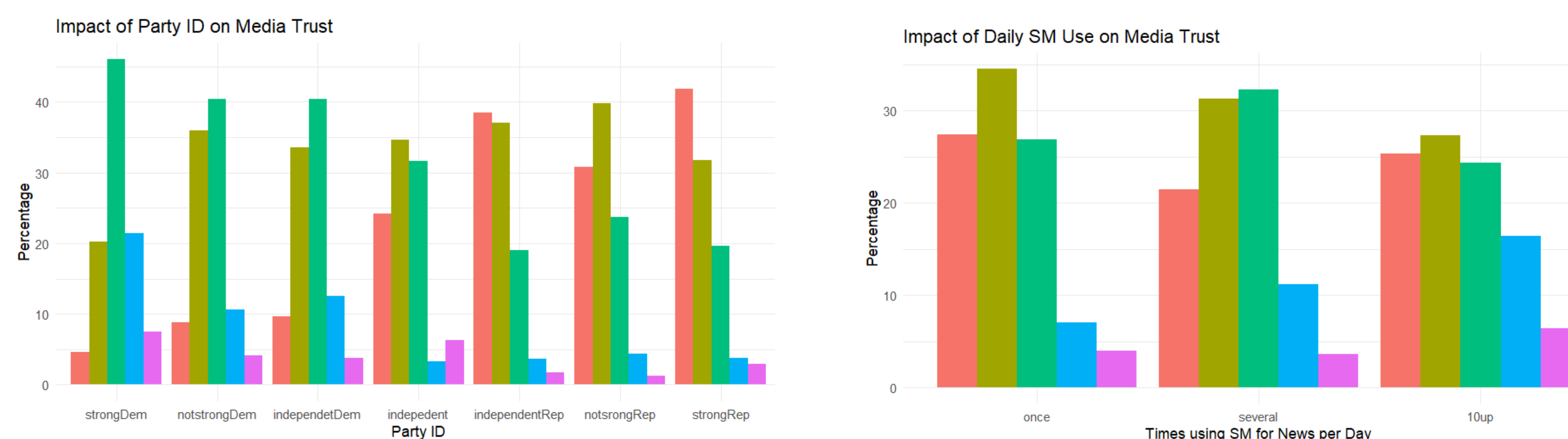
\*Since when Gallup began recording this statistic (1972)

## Hypothesis

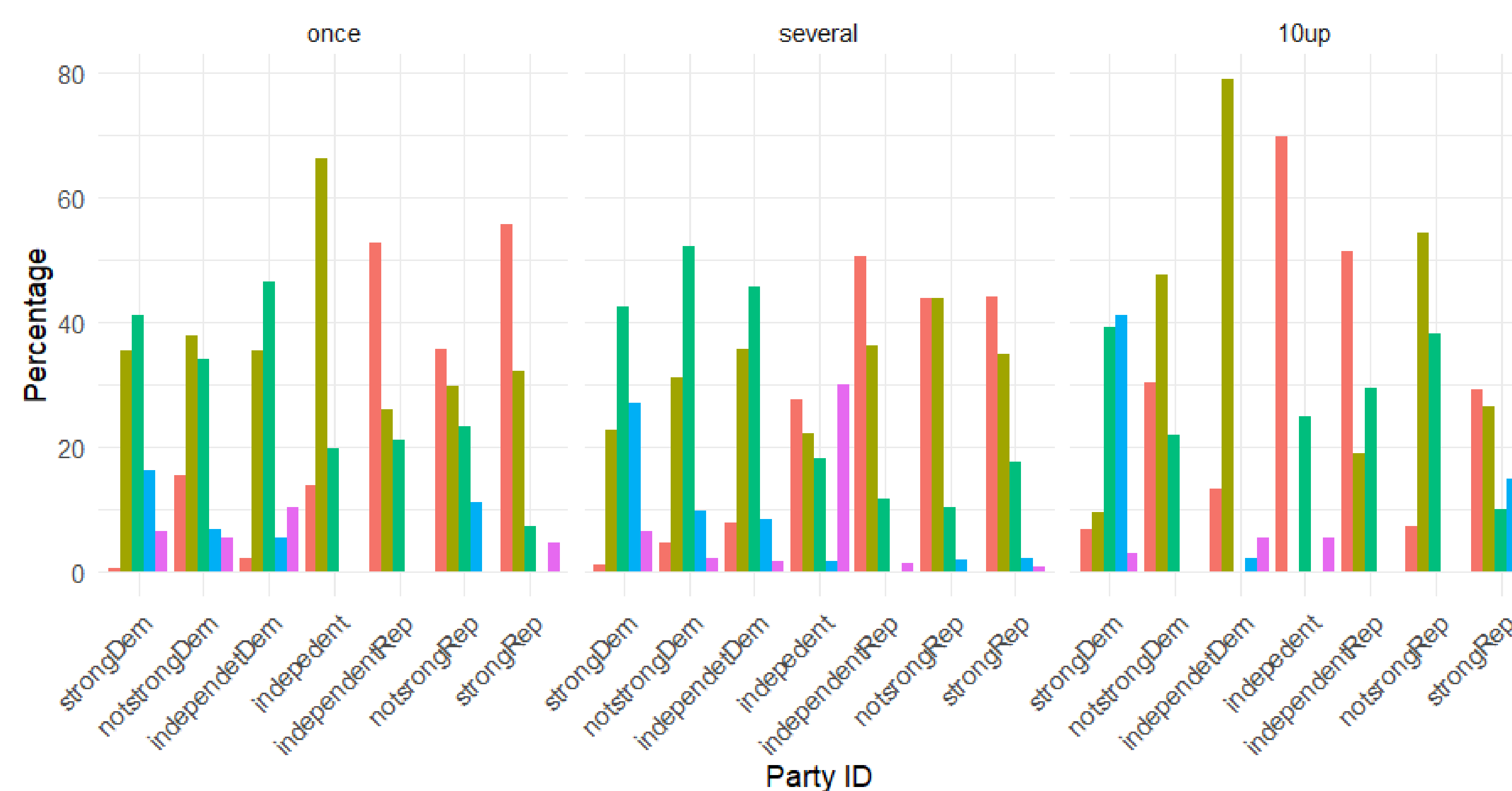
**In a comparison of Americans, those who spend less time on Social Media will be more trusting that the news is reported truthfully, fairly and accurately than those who spend more time on social media.**

Variable	Type	Contents
Mediacon	Dependent	Trust in the Media
Daily_use	Independent	Number of Times one uses social media for news per day
Days_spent	Independent	Number of Days one uses social media per week
Gender	Independent	Respondents' Self-Identified Gender
House_Income	Independent	Respondents' Household Income
Party_ID	Independent	Respondents' Self-Identified Party ID
Age	Independent	Respondents' Age

### Level of Confidence



Effect of Party ID and Daily SM Usage on Media Trust



## Key Sources & Acknowledgements

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## Methods

In this project, I am assessing data collected from variables in the **2024 ANES Survey**. The ANES survey collects data on U.S voters' political attitudes, opinions, and behaviors, primarily surrounding the election season.

To conduct this research, I utilized **R code** in the software **RStudio**.

- Step 1 - Combined the Data into Data Frames
- Step 2 - Ran 2-way Crosstabs
  - 2a. Collected Each Variable's Effect on Trust in the Media
- Step 3 - Ran 3-way Crosstabs
- Step 4 - Converted all Data into Bar Graphs
- Step 5 - Interpreted all relevant Data
  - 5a. Used Percentages as Primary Point of Comparison

## Findings

When evaluating the relationship between daily social media use and trust in the media, one key point emerged. There is a **positive relationship** between **social media use and trust** in the media to report truthfully, fairly, and accurately. The **more one uses social media per day, the more trusting they are of media** as a whole.

Party Identification and trust in the media had a clearer trend. The **more republican** one identifies, the **less trust** they have in the media, and vice versa. **75.5%** of Indep. Reps. reported they have **“none”** or **“a little”** trust, while only **43.2%** of Indep. Dems. reported the same. We see this on the flip too. **29%** of Strong Dems. reported they have a **“lot”** or **“great deal”** of trust, with only **6%** of Strong Reps. feel the same.

Party Identification has an **interactive effect** on the relationship between daily social media usage and trust in the media. As daily social media use amongst republicans **increases**, their trust in the media **increases**. As daily social media use amongst democrats **increases**, their trust in the media **decreases**.

This **disproves** my hypothesis that social media is a driving factor in media distrust.

## Conclusion

When I began this project, I hoped to establish a correlation between social media use and distrust of the media. This did **not** come to fruition. Instead, I've discovered something even more fascinating. Social Media has **some** impact. The relationship **is there**, but it is **dependent** on the **other variables** that influence it.

Trust in the media remains one of the **most important** factors in the health of our democracy. The impact that social media plays on trust will be **crucial** to the building of narratives and influencing policy for the foreseeable future. In our modern world, understanding how social media usage can affect different people's trust in different ways is crucial to building the **strategies to success**.

**Words are paint, words are brushes, words create the beautiful art of life, but it is the canvas of trust that allows them to do so.**