

Do People Really Want Corrective Information? Public Attitudes Toward Fact-Checking and Conventional News^{*†}

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January 4, 2024

Abstract

In response to rising concerns about misinformation, many news outlets provide information to correct misperceptions, with fact-checking being a prominent example. Most Americans have favorable views on fact-checking, but relatively few use fact-checking sites. To clarify why, I compare public perceptions of fact-checking and the news media in the abstract, and also compare people's attitudes toward specific fact-checking sites and conventional news outlets. The results from two surveys reveal that, in the abstract, people trust fact-checking more than the conventional media; however, when it comes to individual outlets, people trust conventional news outlets more than fact-checking sites. Source familiarity helps understand this pattern. Familiarity with fact-checking sites is associated with greater trust in those sites among not only Democrats, but also Republicans who are often considered as having unfavorable views on fact-checking. Yet, many people remain unaware of specific fact-checking sites. The findings suggest that professional fact-checkers face the questions of how to effectively publicize their services and communicate their value as useful complements to conventional news media.

Keywords: media trust, misinformation mitigation, fact-checking, conventional news, source familiarity

*This study was supported by the the Gerald R. Ford research fund and the Garth Taylor Dissertation Fellowship in Public Opinion at the University of Michigan. This study was deemed exempt by the University of Michigan Institutional Review Board. The study materials, data, and code for this study are available at https://osf.io/bs6kq/?view_only=090b7358a1e3459fa08a8c8b2cb456bb.

†I thank Ted Brader, Phoebe Ellsworth, Chris Fariss, Arthur Lupia, Brendan Nyhan, Mara Ostfeld for helpful comments at various stages of this study.

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As the spread of misinformation jeopardizes important decision-making in individuals' lives and the health of democracy, people are in need of information sources that check available evidence and correct misperceptions. In the U.S., nearly seven out of ten people (68%) are concerned that misinformation significantly erodes people's trust in government, and more than half Americans (54%) believe misinformation harms people's trust in each other (Mitchell et al. 2019). A global survey in 16 countries, including Algeria, Austria, Croatia, Ghana, India, Mexico, and the U.S., finds that more than 85% of people are worried about online disinformation and 87% believe misinformation has already harmed their country's politics (Henley 2023). In terms of who is responsible for mitigating misinformation, more than half U.S. adults (53%) believe the news media and journalists are responsible (Mitchell et al. 2019).

Fact-checking, a genre of news reporting that emerged in early 2000s (Graves 2016), reflects the urgency of the problems around misinformation and a widespread desire for a remedy. A substantial majority of Americans (more than 80%) have favorable views of the general idea of fact-checking (Nyhan and Reifler 2016). However, when it comes to the actual use of fact-checking sites, only a small proportion of Americans (about 25%) visit fact-checking sites for information (Guess, Nyhan and Reifler 2020). This limited use of fact-checking sites is surprising in light of widespread public demands for corrective information against misinformation. What is preventing broader use of fact-checking sites?

To explain the inconsistency between favorable views and limited use, I take two approaches. First, I examine public assessments of fact-checking at two different levels, fact-checking in aggregate versus individual fact-checking sites, in comparison to conventional media. Although people hold distinct views on the media in the abstract versus individual news sources (Ladd 2012), prior research on fact-checking has focused on either the aggregate-level or source-level perceptions (e.g., Nyhan and Reifler 2016; Wood and Porter 2019). This study is the first to directly compare how people assess fact-checking in the aggregate with individual sites. Second, this study focuses on familiarity with and trust in news

sources, two important determinants of the usage of news sources. Familiarity with a news source is an important first step or factor in forming evaluations about the source (Hamilton 2006; Peterson and Allamong 2022). Trust in news sources is an important predictor of direct visits to and continued use of the sources (Hmielowski et al. 2022; Stroud and Lee 2013; Taneja and Yaeger 2019). While prior research suggests that the “disconnect” between favorability and usage of fact-checking occurs because different factors explain awareness and attitudes (Robertson, Mourão and Thorson 2020), my approach examines how knowing and trusting fact-checking sites are related to each other. By doing so, this study lays the groundwork for behavioral research that examines the contexts that promote the actual usage of fact-checking sites and news outlets more broadly.

To examine public perceptions of fact-checking sites relative to fact-checking in the aggregate and conventional news media, I conducted two surveys among partisans in the U.S. A noteworthy attribute of this study is that both surveys examine people’s perceptions of fact-checking and the news media in general (macro level) and specific fact-checking sites and conventional news outlets (micro level). Study 1 focused on public views of leading fact-checking sites (FactCheck.org, PolitiFact, Washington Post Fact Checker, Snopes; Graves 2016) in addition to fact-checking sites that Facebook partnered with for its fact-checking program. Study 2 focused on fact-checking sites endorsed by the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN), many of which have partnered with Facebook. Unlike Study 1, Study 2 additionally examined people’s perceptions of conventional news outlets and employed a bipolar measure of source trust to capture the degree of both trust and distrust. These features of Study 2 allowed for comparisons between fact-checking sites and conventional news outlets, and a refined analysis of the relationship between source familiarity and trust.

This study answers two questions that have remained unanswered in prior research on fact-checking. First, do people assess fact-checking in aggregate more favourably than the conventional media or individual fact-checking sites? Second, under what circumstances are individuals less likely to trust fact-checking sites? Specifically, how is trust in fact-checking

sites related to knowing fact-checking sites or trusting conventional media? To the first question, I find that people trust fact-checking more in the aggregate than the conventional news media. However, at the level of individual sources, many Americans remain unaware of specific fact-checking sites and trust individual fact-checking sites less than fact-checking in the aggregate. Regarding the second question, limited awareness of individual sites and the availability of trusted conventional outlets likely have prevented the widespread use of fact-checking sites. I find that knowing a fact-checking site is associated with greater trust in the site. Surprisingly, source familiarity is positively associated with greater trust in the site among not only Democrats but also Republicans who often encounter uncongenial fact-checks and suspect fact-checkers to be biased (Ferracioli, Kniess and Marques 2022; Shin and Thorson 2017; Walker and Gottfried 2019). Moreover, partisans from both sides have conventional news outlets that they trust more than fact-checking sites.

This work also clarifies another question where the answer remained speculative: Are people distrusting of or neutral toward unknown news outlets? While it has been found that people are far less willing to “select” news from unfamiliar sources than from familiar sources (Peterson and Allamong 2022), it remains uncertain whether people “trust” unfamiliar sources more than familiar outlets. Because many people remain unaware of specific fact-checking sites, an answer to this question can refine our understanding of how people assess less-known fact-checking sites. Prior research used unipolar trust measures (e.g., choices ranging from “not at all” to “entirely”) and speculated that people tend to distrust unfamiliar news sources (Pennycook and Rand 2019). Yet, the unipolar scale cannot capture the degree of distrust or neutral attitudes. I employ two different measures (unipolar in Study 1, bipolar in Study 2) and find that when individuals are allowed to express degrees of both trust and distrust (e.g., bipolar scale from “strongly distrust” to “strongly trust”), it becomes clear that people are neutral toward, rather than strongly distrust, unknown news outlets.

This paper presents both an in-depth examination of public perception of fact-checking sites and a refined understanding of how the public assesses fact-checking at both macro-

and micro-levels vis-à-vis conventional media. Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on source reputation and the growing body of research on fact-checking. While trusted sources more effectively persuade people (Lupia and McCubbins 1998) and source credibility even mitigates resistance to corrective information that runs counter to preexisting beliefs (Liu et al. 2023), little is known about the factors that hinders or builds trust in fact-checking sites. By focusing on source trust, which can motivate information seeking and learning from the source (Taneja and Yaeger 2019), this study identifies potential factors that may have limited people’s trust in fact-checking sites. At the same time, this study broadens the current research on fact-checking that has focused on how people assess fact-checking in the aggregate (e.g., Nyhan and Reifler 2016; Walker and Gottfried 2019) or the effects of exposure to fact-checking articles (e.g., Fridkin, Kenney and Wintersieck 2015; Gottfried et al. 2013; Nyhan et al. 2020; Wood and Porter 2019). Many existing studies have relied on experiments that require individuals to read fact-checking articles, a rare activity if most people do not visit or trust fact-checking sites. To advance our understanding, the current study examines how public assessments of fact-checking, compared to conventional media, is related to source familiarity and partisanship.

Practically, this research helps assess the performance and promise of fact-checking and a broader range of communicators that seek to effectively deliver corrective information to the public. This work offers insights into how evidence-based sources build broader trust, such as by increasing the chance that people are exposed to their news coverage, and publicizing the usefulness and credibility of their services and information.

Public Awareness of and Trust in Fact-checking Sites

Americans hold distinct opinions about the news media in the abstract—conceived as a body of institutionalized journalism—and individual news outlets (Ladd 2012). While public trust in the news media has been in decline, where only three out of ten Americans trust the news organizations to “report the news in a full, fair and accurate way” (Brenan 2023), a

majority of Americans still expect journalists to tackle misinformation (Mitchell et al. 2019) and are supportive of the idea of fact-checking (Nyhan and Reifler 2016). Overall, people likely trust fact-checking in general—conceived as a collection of fact-checking sites—more than the news media in general.

H1: Trust in fact-checking in general will be greater than trust in the news media in general.

A discrepancy between trust in a category and its individual components is likely to emerge when the preferences for individual entities are stable while the attitudes toward the category are unstable. When people receive negative information about a category (e.g., news media, Congress), the negative information likely worsens the trust in the category, but not individual entities for which people already have stable preferences (e.g., trusted news outlets, own representatives) (Lammers et al. 2022). For instance, while public trust in the news media in general has declined in the past decades, Americans have remained more trusting of the news sources that they prefer (Media Insight Project 2017; Gottfried 2021). However, there are two reasons that this pattern may not apply to fact-checking. First, most people are relatively unfamiliar with fact-checking and may not have developed stable preferences for individual fact-checking sites (Guess, Nyhan and Reifler 2020; Nyhan and Reifler 2016). Second, people tend to assume news sources to be less trustworthy when they do not recognize them (Pennycook and Rand 2019; Peterson and Allamong 2022). In light of these considerations, I examine whether people’s trust in individual fact-checking sites is lower than trust in fact-checking sites generally conceived.

H2: Fact-checking in general is trusted more than individual fact-checking sites.

When people assess news sources, familiarity can play an important role. Because news sources are experience goods, actual experience of reading or watching news stories is essential for readers to assess the quality of news outlets (Hamilton 2006). Absent direct experience,

people assess news sources based on preexisting stereotypes (e.g., partisan leaning) that may not accurately reflect the true nature of the specific news sources (Peterson and Kagalwala 2021).

One possibility is that people are initially hesitant to trust unfamiliar news sources, and depending on the experience they have with the source, people will come to either trust or distrust the source (Pennycook and Rand 2019). Getting familiar with a news source does not necessarily generate greater trust in the source. For instance, most Democrats and Republicans are aware of Fox News and MSNBC, but they diverge in whether they trust or distrust each outlet (Pennycook and Rand 2019). Because fact-checking sites have corrected Republicans more often than Democrats in recent years (Ferracioli, Kniess and Marques 2022; Shin and Thorson 2017), exposure to fact-checking sites is likely to yield positive impressions among Democrats but negative experience among Republicans. In this case, familiarity with fact-checking sites will be associated with greater trust in those sites among Democrats, but lower trust among Republicans.

Yet, exposure to news coverage that runs counter to the negative stereotype of a source (i.e., neutral portrayal of political events from a source that was expected to be biased) rather improves source assessments (Peterson and Kagalwala 2021). There is a chance that, despite negative stereotype of fact-checking among Republicans, direct exposure to neutral or well-grounded news coverage may lead even Republicans to trust a specific fact-checking site more as they become more familiar with the outlet. Because familiarity may lead to either greater trust or distrust in fact-checking sites, I examine whether familiarity with fact-checking sites is positively or negatively associated with greater trust in those sites among Democrats and Republicans respectively.

RQ1: Is familiarity with fact-checking sites positively associated with trust in those sites among Democrats, but negatively among Republicans?

Because approximately half of Americans consider themselves to be unfamiliar with fact-checking (Nyhan and Reifler 2016), another understudied question is how people assess

unfamiliar fact-checking sites. Two conjectures are available in prior research. Pennycook and Rand (2019) speculated that people tend to strongly distrust unfamiliar news sources. However, because people assess news outlets by directly consuming them (Hamilton 2006) or based on available stereotypes about unfamiliar sources (Peterson and Kagalwala 2021), people may not necessarily hold actively negative views, but rather hold neutral attitudes toward unknown news outlets. The empirical evidence for the first conjecture comes from a unipolar trust scale (“not at all trust” to “entirely trust”; Pennycook and Rand 2019), where both weak distrust and neutral attitudes likely manifest as the extreme choices on the lower end of the scale. To clarify whether people tend to actively distrust or hold neutral attitudes toward unknown sources, I examine trust ratings using both unipolar (Study 1) and bipolar scales (“strongly distrust” to “strongly trust”; Study 2), where the bipolar measure allows respondents to indicate the degree of both trust and distrust (strongly vs. not strongly) and neutral attitudes (“neither trust nor distrust” as the midpoint) toward a news source.

RQ2: Are people strongly distrustful of or neutral toward news outlets that they do not recognize?

The way people assess conventional news outlets is another factor that can shape how people assess fact-checking sites. While fact-checking was initiated to reform conventional journalism (Amazeen 2020; Dobbs 2012; Iannucci 2017), little is known about how the public views fact-checking sites relative to conventional media outlets. Professional fact-checkers believe their reporting overcomes the shortcomings of conventional media (Dobbs 2012), yet the public may not necessarily share this notion and instead trust preferred conventional news outlets more than fact-checking sites. To explore whether fact-checkers’ expectations are warranted, I compare the degree to which people trust fact-checking sites relative to conventional news outlets.

RQ3: Are fact-checking sites trusted more than conventional news outlets?

Study Design

To examine public perceptions of fact-checking, I analyzed two sets of data. I conducted two surveys through Prolific, an online crowdsourcing platform that has been found to offer higher response quality compared to alternative platforms, demonstrated through more honest behavior, attention check performance, and ability to reproduce prior findings (Palan and Schitter 2018; Peer et al. 2017). As noted below, a key difference between Studies 1 and 2 was that they measured source trust on two different scales—unipolar (“not at all,” “barely,” “somewhat,” “a lot,” “entirely”) in Study 1 and bipolar (“strongly distrust,” “distrust,” “neither distrust nor trust,” “trust,” “strongly trust”) in Study 2.

Study 1 Materials and Methods

For Study 1, I recruited 720 adults residing in the U.S. via Prolific on August 10, 2020. Equal numbers of Republicans and Democrats were recruited based on the prescreening data on Prolific.

Study Materials

To measure public perceptions of individual fact-checking sites, I first identified a list of professional fact-checking sites. While there were 58 fact-checking outlets in the U.S. as of 2020 (Stencel and Luther 2020), there was a need for criteria that assess whether these sites fulfilled the norms of fact-checking practice. The criterion used in Study 1 was Facebook’s past and current U.S.-based fact-checking partners since Facebook started fact-checking partnership program in December 2016. As of August 2020, at the time of Study 1, fact-checking sites listed in Table 1 were fact-checking partners with Facebook, except for ABC News and Snopes, which previously were partners but had left the program by then. I also added the Washington Post Fact Checker given its prominence in the fact-checking movement although it had never joined Facebook’s fact-checking program. This approach heavily relied on Facebook’s source quality assessments, which I assumed were likely based on careful investigation

to inform their huge investment—which is known to have costed them an annual spending of approximately \$100,000 for each fact-checking partner (Welch 2019).

Table 1: List of Fact-checking and Conventional News Sources in Studies 1 and 2

Study 1	Study 2	
Fact-checking	Fact-checking	Conventional
FactCheck.org (A)	FactCheck.org (A)	CBS
Lead Stories (N)	Lead Stories (N)	CNN
PolitiFact (N)	PolitiFact (N)	Fox News
Science Feedback (N)	Science Feedback (N)	Huffington Post
Snopes (N)	Snopes (N)	MSNBC
ABC News (P)	Reuters (P)	NBC
Associated Press (P)	USA TODAY Fact Check (P)	New York Times
Reuters Fact Check (P)	Washington Post Fact Checker (P)	PBS
USA TODAY (P)	Daily Caller Check Your Fact (L)	USA TODAY
Washington Post Fact Checker (P)	The Dispatch (L)	Washington Post
AFP United States (L)		
Daily Caller Check Your Fact (L)		
The Dispatch (L)		
Weekly Standard (L)		

Note: Letters inside parentheses indicate institutional affiliations of fact-checking sites: A: Academic, N: Non-profit, P: Prominent Media, L: Less Prominent Media.

To compare fact-checking sites by organizational affiliations, I follow Graves (2018)’s categorization that included academia (e.g., FactCheck.org), non-profit organizations (e.g., PolitiFact,¹ Snopes), and news media. I further categorize media-affiliated sites into prominent media (e.g., Washington Post Fact Checker) and less prominent media (e.g., AFP United States), depending on the relative degree of public awareness of these sites.² Because

¹PolitiFact was originally owned by the Tampa Bay Times, but was acquired later by the Poynter Institute, a non-profit organization, in February 2018 (Sharockman 2018).

²Fact-checking sources recognized by more than 30% of the respondents were considered as fact-checking sources affiliated with “prominent media” (Study 1: PolitiFact, Washington Post Fact Checker, ABC News, Associated Press, Reuters Fact Check, USA Today; Study 2: PolitiFact, Washington Post Fact Checker, USA Today Fact Check, Reuters) whereas those recognized by 30% or less were categorized into “less prominent journalism” (Study 1: AFP

FactCheck.org is the only fact-checking site that is affiliated with academia (University of Pennsylvania) and given its leading role in the fact-checking movement (established in 2003), FactCheck.org is presented as its own name, rather than its affiliation, when presenting the results (e.g., Figures 1 and 3).

Measures

To measure familiarity with and trust in individual fact-checking sites, I adopted two questions from Pennycook and Rand (2019). Given the list of fact-checking sites, respondents were first asked whether they recognize each of the sources, indicating either “yes” or “no.”³ Respondents were also asked the degree to which they trust each source, on a unipolar five-point scale (“not at all” “entirely”). In accordance with Pennycook and Rand (2019)’s approach, which assumes people are capable of assessing unfamiliar sources and often do so in their everyday life, I asked respondents to indicate their levels of trust in not only the sources that they recognize, but also the ones that they did not recognize.

To assess public appraisals of fact-checking and the news media at the macro-level, I measured trust in fact-checking and the news media in general. Because people tend to perceive “the mass media” or “the news media” as similar concepts with conventional media (Ladd 2012), I adapted a question from the American National Election Studies (ANES) (2018 ANES pilot study; ANES 2018) to measure public trust in the news media in general.⁴

United States, Daily Caller Check Your Fact, The Dispatch, Weekly Standard; Study 2: Daily Caller Check Your Fact; The Dispatch).

³A limitation is that this approach does not capture the degree of familiarity, but I adopt Pennycook and Rand (2019)’s binary operationalization of ‘familiarity’ so that the results are comparable.

⁴“Conventional sources” are defined as “news sources with the most online traffic” (Pennycook and Rand 2019), thus referring to news outlets that are most frequently viewed by the general public. Pennycook and Rand (2019) and Ladd (2012) use the term “mainstream media,” but I refer to them as “conventional media” given the partisan connotations at-

Participants were asked to indicate the degree of their “trust and confidence in the mass media - such as newspapers, TV, and radio - in reporting news fully, accurately, and fairly,” on a unipolar five-point scale that ranged from “not at all” to “a great deal” (ANES 2018). To measure trust in fact-checking sites collectively as a genre, the same question wording was used, but the phrase “the mass media” was replaced with “fact-checking sources in general.”

Fact-checking familiarity, which refers to the degree of familiarity with professional fact-checking sources, was measured using the number of recognized sources among the four major fact-checking sites: FactCheck.org, PolitiFact, Washington Post Fact Checker, and Snopes. These four sites were established in the 2000s at the beginning of the fact-checking movement and are often identified as the major fact-checking outlets in the U.S. (Graves 2016). For these four major fact-checking sites, the median number of recognized outlets among the respondents was two. The binary measure of fact-checking familiarity was constructed as a median split, given my focus on group differences rather than individual heterogeneity (Iacobucci et al. 2015). Respondents were considered as being familiar with fact-checking if they recognized two or more of these major fact-checking sites, and unfamiliar if they recognized one or none.

Study 2 Materials and Methods

A total of 1,000 adults residing in the U.S. were recruited on February 27, 2021 via the survey platform Prolific. Equal numbers of Republicans and Democrats were recruited using the prescreening data on Prolific.

tached to the term “mainstream media” in recent years. Ladd (2012) examined public trust in conventional media by using questionnaires that asked the degree of trust in “the press” or “the news media.” It was found that people’s opinions about conventional media stayed consistent across different wordings and that most Americans had concrete understanding of and firm opinions about conventional media (Ladd 2012).

Study Materials

Professional fact-checking sites and conventional outlets listed in Table 1 were incorporated in Study 2. To identify professional fact-checking sites, in addition to the criterion used in Study 1 (i.e., fact-checking partners of Facebook), I additionally considered verified signatories of the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) in Study 2. This selection criterion ensured that the chosen fact-checking sites were assessed by independent reviewers at the IFCN and were verified as complying with the IFCN codes of principles that require non-partisanship and the transparency of sources, funding, methods, and corrections. Using this criterion, I narrowed down the list of fact-checking sites in Study 2 to those that were both Facebook’s fact-checking partners and IFCN signatories as of February 2021.⁵ Washington Post Fact Checker and Snopes—which were IFCN signatories but not Facebook partners then—were kept on the list given their prominent status in the fact-checking movement.⁶

As for conventional news outlets, I followed Pennycook and Rand (2019), who identified mainstream outlets as 20 news outlets with the most US online traffic according to a Pew report. Among the sources that Pennycook and Rand (2019) studied, I selected 10 outlets. These outlets were recognized by more than 90% of respondents in their first study and more

⁵In Study 1, fact-checking source names were presented as they appeared in Facebook’s description of their fact-checking program (e.g., “Reuters Fact Check”). In Study 2, I presented the source name as they appeared in the IFCN signatories (e.g., “Reuters”). One exception was “Check Your Fact,” whose name itself did not clearly make connection with its parent outlet, The Daily Caller. Given that its inclusion to Facebook program caused intense debate on the partisan impartiality of Facebook (Levin 2019), I presented this outlet as “Daily Caller Check Your Fact.”

⁶In compiling the list of fact-checking sources, I included the Associated Press (AP) in Study 1, but inadvertently excluded it from Study 2. Given that the AP is not an outlier in Study 1, there is little reason to believe that this omission changes the result. I nevertheless regret the error because AP has been a consistent member of both the IFCN signatories and Facebook’s fact-checking program since 2017.

than 70% of respondents in their second study. Two of the selected conventional outlets had their standalone fact-checking sites endorsed by the IFCN. These outlets were presented with and without the labels “Fact Checker” (Washington Post, Washington Post Fact Checker) and “Fact Check” (USA Today, USA Today Fact Check), consistent with how these outlets label their specialized fact-checking unit.

Measures

Similar to Study 1, given the list of fact-checking and conventional news sources, respondents first indicated whether they recognized each of the sources. After that, they indicated the degree to which they distrusted or trusted each source on a five-point scale. In Study 2, I deviated from Pennycook and Rand (2019)’s unipolar trust measure. To capture varying degrees of both trust and distrust assessments, I instead used a bipolar scale ranging from “strongly distrust” to “strongly trust,” with a neutral, middle category, “neither trust nor distrust.”

Unlike Study 1 where the trust question on conventional media referred to “the mass media - such as newspapers, TV, and radio,” in Study 2, the question simply referred to “the news media” following the 2020 ANES time-series questionnaire (ANES 2020). This revision was made to focus respondents’ attention to news organizations, rather than the various means of mass communication. Compared to Study 1, the question wording was further simplified to avoid double-barreled wording: 1) “trust and confidence” to “trust,” 2) “fully, accurately, and fairly” to “accurately.” To measure trust in fact-checking in aggregate, the phrase “the news media” was replaced by “fact-checking sources in general.” Both questions were asked on a five-point bipolar scale ranging from “strongly distrust” to “strongly trust.”

Fact-checking familiarity, or the degree to which individuals were familiar with major fact-checking outlets, was measured in the same way as Study 1. Among the four major fact-checking sites (FactCheck.org, PolitiFact, Washington Post Fact Checker, and Snopes), the median number of recognized outlets was two in Study 2 as well. Respondents were

considered as being familiar with fact-checking if they recognized two or more of these fact-checking sites and unfamiliar if they recognized one or none.

Results

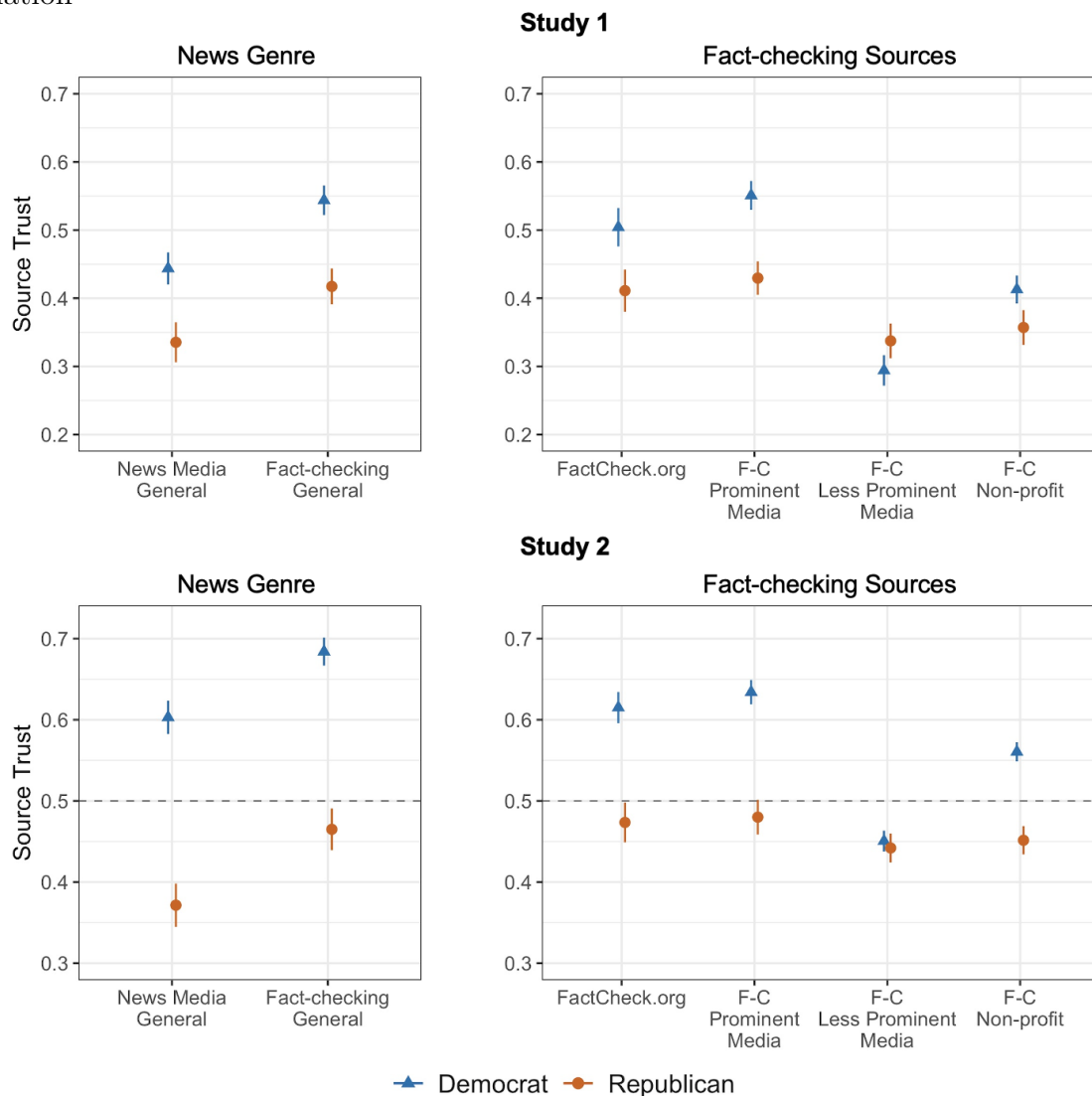
Fact-checking in General and as Individual Sources

Consistent with the expectation that people will trust fact-checking more than conventional media at the aggregate level (H1), people tend to trust fact-checking more than the conventional news media at the level of general category, as shown in Figure 1. The results were also largely consistent with the expectation that fact-checking in general will be trusted more than individual sites (H2). As shown in Figure 1, fact-checking in general was trusted similarly or slightly more than individual fact-checking sites affiliated with the academia or prominent media, and significantly more trusted than those affiliated with less prominent media or non-profit organizations.

When general categories are considered (“News Genre” pane in Figure 1), both Democrats and Republicans trusted fact-checking more than the news media in both studies ($ps < .01$; t-statistics in Tables S2-S3 in supplementary materials). At the macro level, Republicans trusted both fact-checking and the news media to a lesser extent than Democrats in both studies. The tendency to favor fact-checking more than conventional media is also reflected in partisans’ perceptions of bias from each category. While only one out of ten partisans thought most news organizations were unbiased (Study 1: 10.0% Democrats, 10.0% Republicans; Study 2: 10.8% Democrats, 7.8% Republicans), a greater number of partisans perceived most fact-checking sites as unbiased (Study 1: 52.5% Democrats, 24.4% Republicans; Study 2: 57.4% Democrats, 25.8% Republicans).⁷

⁷More details are provided in Figure S1 in supplementary materials. A majority of Republicans thought most conventional media “favored Democrats” (Study 1: 56.7%, Study 2: 63.2%). Most Democrats also perceived conventional media as biased, but with high per-

Figure 1: Trust in the News Media, Fact-checking in General, and Fact-checking Sources by Affiliation



Note: Means and 95% confidence intervals by news genres and fact-checking sources. Source Trust is scaled to range from 0 to 1. In Study 1, it was measured on a five-point unipolar scale (“not at all” to “entirely”). In Study 2, it was measured on a five-point bipolar scale (“strongly distrust” to “strongly trust”; the midpoint (dashed line on .5) indicates “neither distrust nor trust”). Tables S2-S5 in supplementary materials present these results in tabular form.

The tendency to trust the genre of fact-checking in aggregate (“Fact-checking General”) more than individual fact-checking sites (“Fact-checking Sources” pane) was more prominent among Democrats than Republicans. Among Democrats, fact-checking in general was significantly more trusted than FactCheck.org ($p < .05$) and fact-checking sites affiliated with less prominent journalism or non-profits in both studies ($ps < .01$; t-statistics in Tables S4-S5). Fact-checking in general was also trusted significantly more than fact-checking sites tied to prominent journalism, but only in Study 2. Among Republicans, the degree to which the category was trusted more than sources was relatively weaker. For instance, fact-checking as a genre was trusted to a similar extent with FactCheck.org and sites affiliated with prominent journalism. Republicans still trusted the genre more than fact-checking sites tied to less prominent journalism or non-profits ($ps < .01$), but these gaps were smaller than the case of Democrats.

Familiarity with and Trust in Fact-checking Sources

Across the two studies, a majority of people were unfamiliar with most professional fact-checking sites. For instance, less than half of the respondents recognized major fact-checking sites such as FactCheck.org (49% in Study 1, 43% in Study 2), PolitiFact (46% in Study 1, 45% in Study 2), and Washington Post Fact Checker (47% in Study 1, 35% in Study 2). Another major non-profit fact-checking site, Snopes, was relatively more recognized (60% in Study 1, 63% in Study 2), but still relatively unknown compared to conventional outlets that were recognized by more than 90% of participants (familiarity rates for all sources by

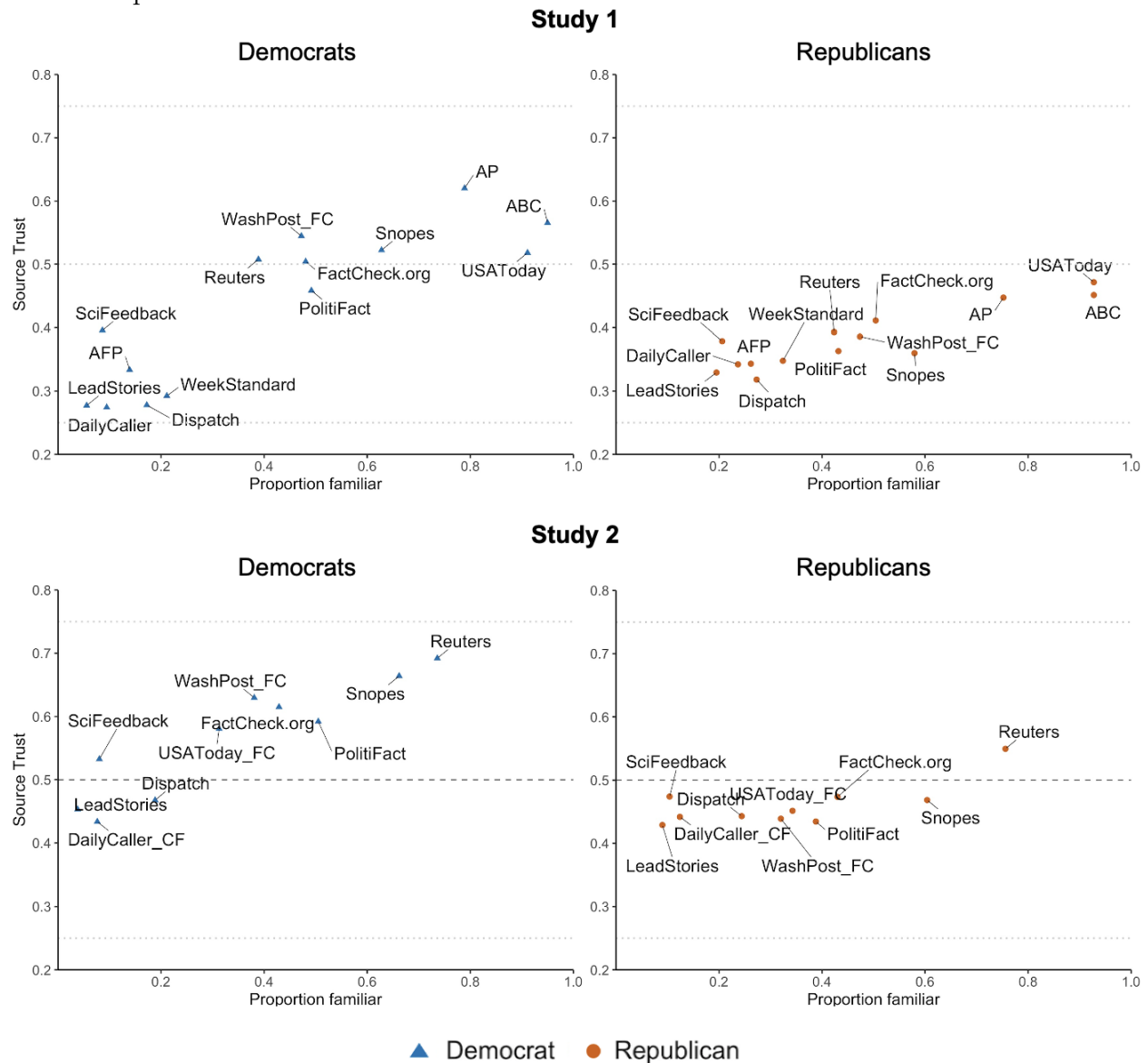
percentages of “similar numbers of outlets favoring either Democrats or Republicans” (Study 1: 64.7%, Study 2: 64.4%). Such bias perceptions were weaker toward fact-checking. Compared to conventional media, a relatively smaller number of Republicans thought most fact-checking sites “favored Democrats” (Study 1: 41.4%, Study 2: 43.2%) and fewer Democrats perceived “equal numbers of fact-checking sites as favoring either party” (Study 1: 30.8%, Study 2: 27.0%).

partisan groups are presented in Tables S6-S8).

What does relatively low familiarity with fact-checking sites imply for public trust in them? To answer this question, Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between source familiarity and trust at the source level. In this figure, familiarity is measured as the proportion of respondents that recognize each source, and source trust indicates respondents' average level of trust in each source. Regarding the exploratory question of whether source familiarity and trust are positively associated with each other among Democrats but negatively among Republicans (RQ1), source familiarity and trust in fact-checking sites were positively associated among both partisan groups. Surprisingly, familiarity and trust had a positive relationship not only among Democrats, but also among Republicans who are likely to encounter uncongenial fact-checking coverage and are known to be more suspicious of fact-checking (Ferracioli, Knies and Marques 2022; Shin and Thorson 2017).

In Study 1, source familiarity and trust were highly correlated among both Democrats ($r = .86, p < .01$) and Republicans ($r = .89, p < .01$), with one key substantive partisan difference. Among Democrats, many of the fact-checking sites, especially those that people were more familiar with, were highly trusted (i.e., above the "Somewhat" (midpoint) response). However, among Republicans, average trust ratings of even the most familiar fact-checking sites stayed below the "Somewhat" response. This difference suggests a limit to which recognizing a site can be associated with a high level of trust among Republicans. The positive relationship between source familiarity and trust was also found in Study 2, with a clearer partisan difference. The association between familiarity and trust was again statistically significant among both Democrats ($r = .92, p < .01$) and Republicans ($r = .72, p < .05$). Although the magnitude of correlation was greater among Democrats, average trust in individual fact-checking sites among Republicans was higher when a greater proportion of Republicans recognized them. Republicans also tended to trust fact-checking sites more when they recognized them. This finding implies that low trust in fact-checking sites is related to low public awareness of those sites.

Figure 2: Familiarity with and Trust in Fact-checking Sources by Partisan Identity: Source-level Comparisons



Note: *Proportion familiar* indicates the proportion of respondents who recognized each source. Source Trust is scaled to range from 0 to 1. In Study 1, it was measured on a five-point unipolar scale (“not at all” to “entirely”). In Study 2, it was measured on a five-point bipolar scale (“strongly distrust” to “strongly trust”; the midpoint (dashed line on .5) indicates “neither distrust nor trust”). Tables S6-S7, S9-S10 in supplementary materials present these estimates in tabular form.

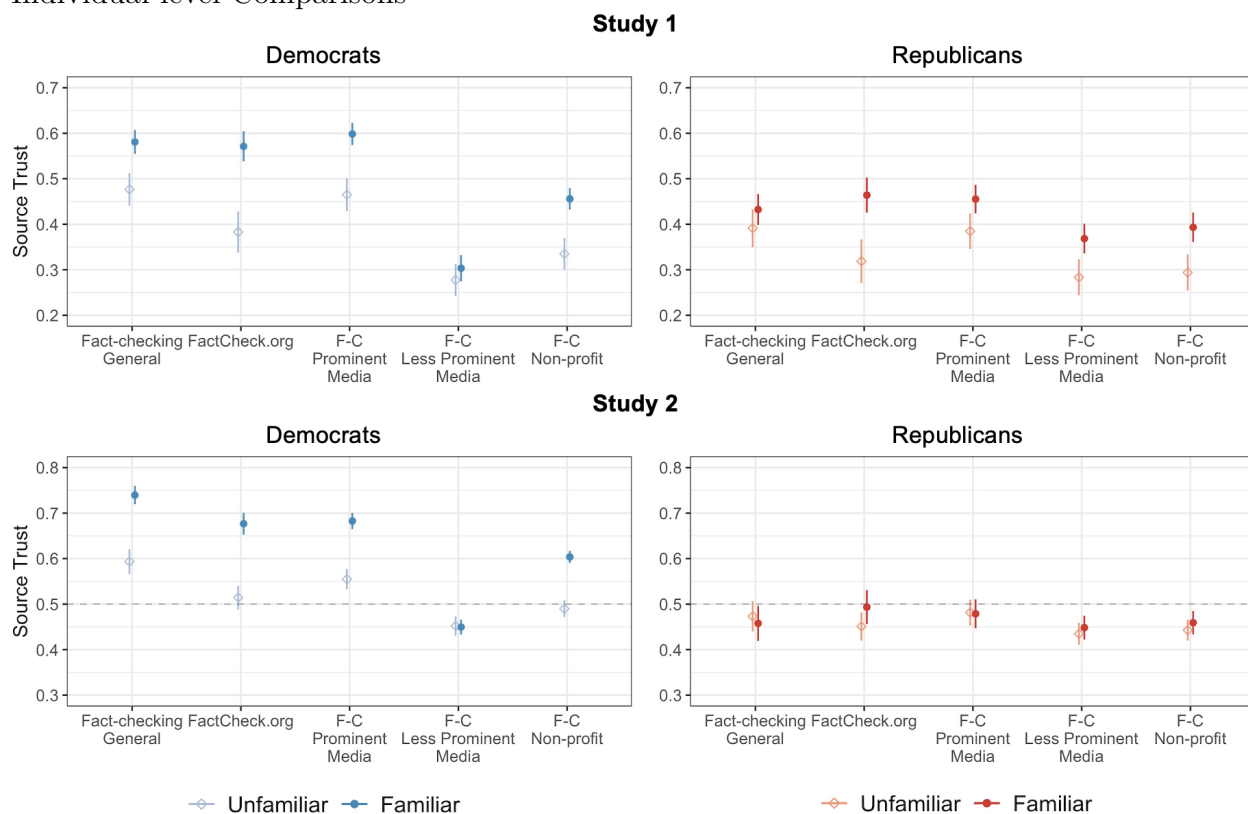
In addition to Figure 2 that examines fact-checking familiarity and trust by comparing different fact-checking sites (source-level comparison), I further examine this relationship by comparing different groups of individuals (respondent-level comparison). Figure 3 compares individuals familiar with major fact-checking sites (“familiar individuals”) and those unfamiliar with major fact-checking sites (“unfamiliar individuals”). Respondents were categorized by fact-checking familiarity, a median split of the number of recognized major fact-checking sites (details are provided in the Measures sections).

As shown in Figure 3, familiar individuals trust the fact-checking in the abstract (“Fact-checking General”) and specific sites (the second through fifth items in Figure 3) to a greater extent than unfamiliar individuals. Among Democrats, familiar individuals trusted fact-checking in general and sources of different institutional affiliations (academia, prominent journalism, non-profit) significantly more than unfamiliar individuals ($ps < .01$ in both studies; t-statistics available in Tables S12 and S13). However, familiar and unfamiliar individuals did not differ much in their trust in fact-checking sites affiliated with less prominent journalism (Study 1: $p = .26$; Study 2: $p = .86$).

A similar pattern was found among Republicans, but only in Study 1. Among Republicans, familiar individuals trusted fact-checking sources of any affiliations significantly more than unfamiliar individuals ($ps < .01$ in Study 1). However, familiar and unfamiliar individuals did not differ much in their trust in fact-checking in general (Study 1: $p = .13$; Study 2: $p = .55$). In Study 2, familiar individuals trusted FactCheck.org more than unfamiliar ones ($p < .10$). However, familiar and unfamiliar individuals did not differ much in their trust in sources of other affiliations (prominent and less prominent journalism, nonprofit) ($ps = .35 - .90$). I explain a likely reason for this difference between the two studies in the following section on the use of unipolar and bipolar scales in Studies 1 and 2 respectively.

Overall, familiarity with fact-checking sources is positively associated with trust in them, not only among Democrats who are typically believed to be favorable to fact-checking, but also among Republicans who are often thought to be resistant to fact-checking. In terms

Figure 3: Familiarity with and Trust in Fact-checking Sources by Partisan Identity: Individual-level Comparisons



Note: Means and 95% confidence intervals by news genres and fact-checking sources. Source Trust is scaled to range from 0 to 1. In Study 1, it was measured on a five-point unipolar scale (“not at all” to “entirely”). In Study 2, it was measured on a five-point bipolar scale (“strongly distrust” to “strongly trust”; the midpoint (dashed line on .5) indicates “neither distrust nor trust”). The binary measure of fact-checking familiarity categorized respondents as being *familiar* if they recognized two or more of four major fact-checking sites (FactCheck.org, PolitiFact, Washington Post Fact Checker, Snopes), *unfamiliar* if they recognized one or none. Tables S12-S13 in supplementary materials present these results in tabular form.

of the relative magnitude, familiarity makes less of a difference for trusting fact-checking sites among Republicans compared to Democrats. These patterns were found across the two studies, both as differences across sources and individuals.⁸

Unipolar vs. Bipolar Measures of Source Trust

Regarding the question of whether people actively distrust or are neutral toward unfamiliar sources (RQ2), there was key difference between Studies 1 and 2 was the two different modes of trust measure—unipolar (“not at all,” “barely,” “somewhat,” “a lot,” “entirely”) and bipolar (“strongly distrust,” “distrust,” “neither distrust nor trust,” “trust,” “strongly trust”) scales—leading to two interesting observations. First, when respondents can indicate the degree of both trust and distrust using the bipolar scale, the substantive meaning of partisan differences is further clarified, compared to the unipolar scale that captures only the degree of trust, but not distrust. In Figures 1 and 2, under unipolar scales (Study 1), only the partisan difference in the degree of trust (e.g., Democrats trust fact-checking ‘more’ than Republicans) can be detected. Using bipolar scales (Study 2), the substantive meaning of this difference is refined. Democrats tend to “strongly trust” fact-checking outlets (above the midpoint) whereas Republicans “lean toward distrusting” fact-checking outlets yet quite close to neutral attitudes (below but near the midpoint).

Second, the use of a bipolar scale clarifies the substantive meaning of trust ratings of

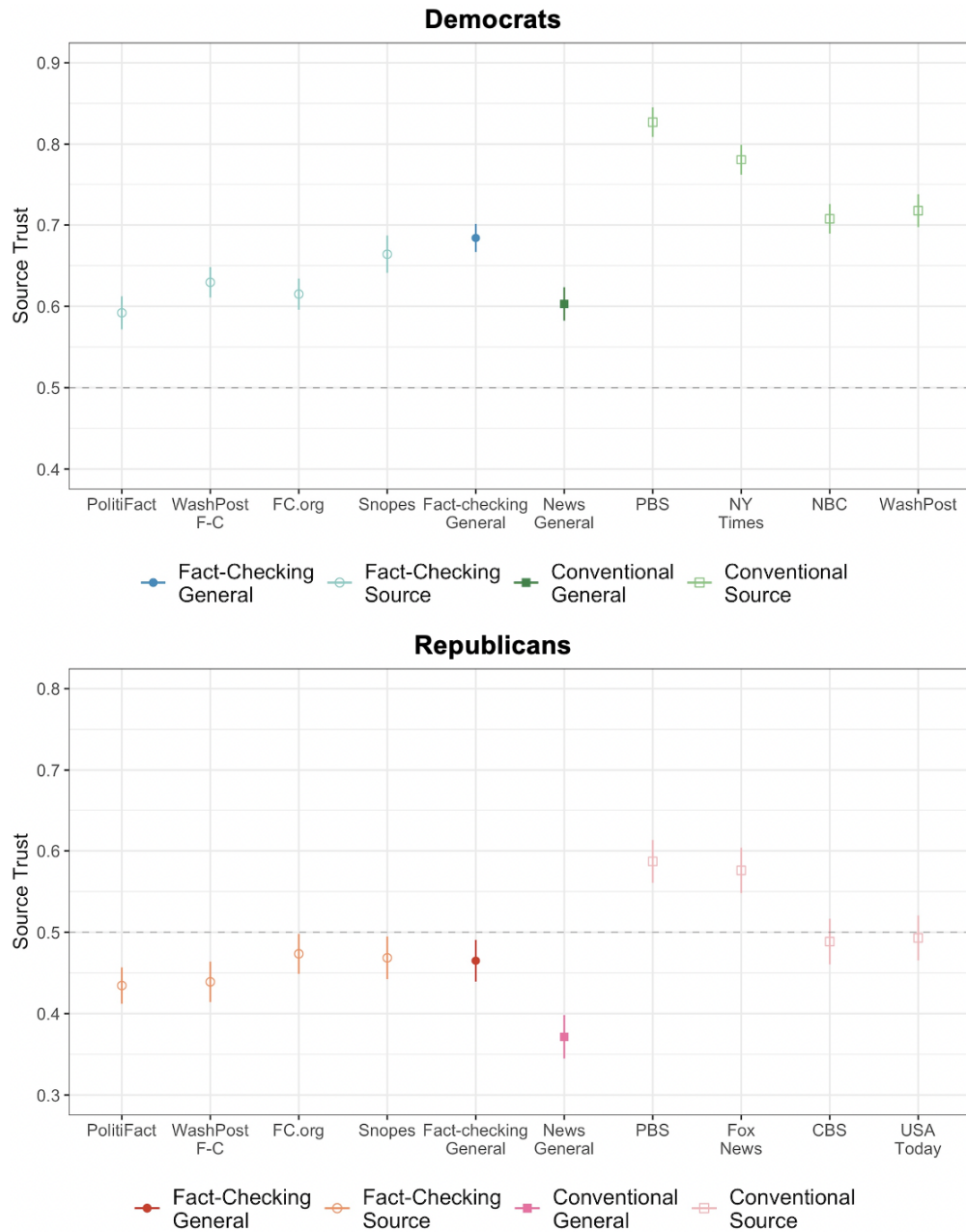
⁸I additionally confirmed that the perceptions of fact-checking and conventional outlets are not strongly correlated with basic demographics or political predispositions that may purportedly be correlated with media perceptions. As shown in Tables S14 and S15, these correlations were relatively weak ($< .20$), suggesting that media perceptions and individual demographic/political characteristics were distinguishable constructs (discriminant validity is indicated by weaker coefficients; e.g., $< .20$, Anastasi et al. 1997). This result indicates that public perceptions of fact-checking and the news media are not simply variables that replicate variations in demographic or political tendencies.

“unfamiliar” sources. Using unipolar scales, Pennycook and Rand (2019) speculated that source unfamiliarity was associated with distrust rather than indifference. However, given the unipolar scale, it is possible that both ‘distrust’ and ‘neutral attitudes’ are manifested as responses on the lower extreme of the scale (“not at all” trust). In Figure 3, the use of bipolar scale helps disaggregate these two distinct perceptions. Under unipolar scales (Study 1), trust ratings among partisans unfamiliar with fact-checking lean toward the lower end of the scale, consistent with Pennycook and Rand (2019)’s conjecture based on the unipolar measure. Yet, using bipolar scales (Study 2), it is clarified that people tend to be neutral (near the midpoint) toward unfamiliar sources, rather than strongly distrusting them. Furthermore, compared to unfamiliar partisans, Democrats familiar with fact-checking express stronger trust in fact-checking sites, whereas Republicans familiar with fact-checking still hold neutral attitudes toward fact-checking sources. The use of bipolar scales not only shows that unfamiliar Democrats trust fact-checking sources less than familiar Democrats (a finding detectable by unipolar scales), but also that unfamiliar Democrats tend to hold neutral attitudes toward, instead of strongly distrust, fact-checking sites (a finding not detectable by unipolar scales).

Fact-checking Familiarity and Trust in Conventional Media

Although fact-checking intends to offer a form of reporting that redresses shortcomings in the conventional media (Dobbs 2012), it remains uncertain whether people trust fact-checking sites more than conventional news outlets (RQ3). As shown in Figure 4, people do not necessarily trust fact-checking outlets more than conventional outlets. As a general genre, fact-checking is trusted more than the news media among both partisan groups (“Fact-checking general” and “News General”). However, when compared to major fact-checking sites (on the left-hand side), there exist conventional news outlets (on the right-hand side) that partisans trust more. For instance, Democrats tend to trust PBS, New York Times, Washington Post, and NBC more than major fact-checking sites. Republicans tend to trust PBS and Fox News

Figure 4: Trust in Fact-checking and Conventional Media by Partisan Identity: General and Sources



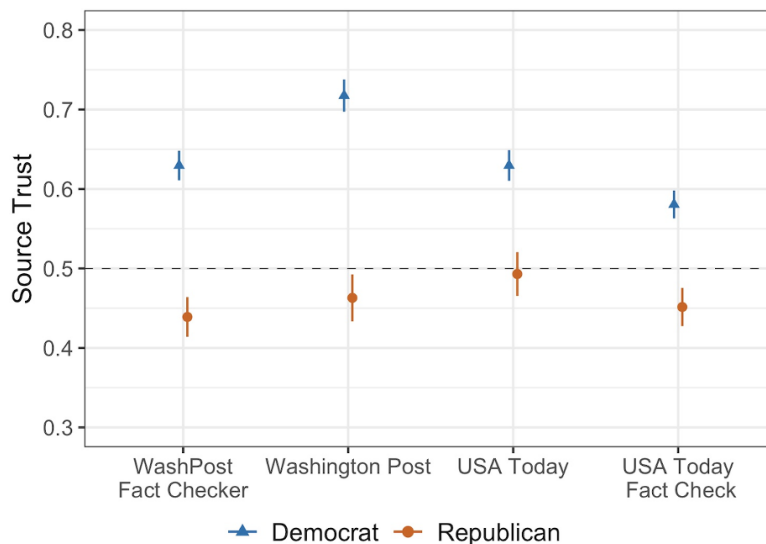
Note: Means and 95% confidence intervals by news genres and sources. Source Trust is scaled to range from 0 to 1. It was measured on a five-point bipolar scale (“strongly distrust” to “strongly trust”; the midpoint (dashed line on .5) indicates “neither distrust nor trust”). Tables S10-S11 in supplementary materials provide these estimates in tabular form.

more than major fact-checking outlets, and trust CBS and USA Today more than PolitiFact and Washington Post Fact Checker. These results indicate that partisans tend to trust at least one or two conventional outlets more than major fact-checking sites. Average trust ratings for all sources by partisan identity are available in supplementary materials (Tables S9-S11).

Among the conventional news outlets in this study, Washington Post and USA Today operate standalone fact-checking sites (Washington Post Fact Checker, USA Today Fact Check). Their practice reflects professional motivation among journalists to adopt fact-checking that is perceived as a reputable style of reporting (Graves, Nyhan and Reifler 2016). Despite its professional prestige, however, partisans from both sides do not necessarily trust the fact-checking extensions more than the parent news outlets. As shown in Figure 5, USA Today was trusted significantly more than USA Today Fact Check among both Democrats ($t = 3.70, p < .01$) and Republicans ($t = 2.23, p < .05$). Likewise, Washington Post was trusted more than Washington Post Fact Checker among Democrats ($t = 6.28, p < .01$), though the difference was smaller among Republicans ($t = 1.22, p = .22$).

Regarding the public's relative trust in fact-checking and conventional media, these results indicate that fact-checking sites are not necessarily trusted more than conventional ones. Both Democrats and Republicans have conventional news outlets that they trust more than fact-checking sites. When conventional news outlets run fact-checking sites, people tend to trust the parent conventional outlets more than their fact-checking units.

Figure 5: Trust in Conventional News Outlets and Their Standalone Fact-checking Sites by Partisan Identity



Note: Means and 95% confidence intervals by sources. Source Trust is scaled to range from 0 to 1. It was measured on a five-point bipolar scale (“strongly distrust” to “strongly trust”; the midpoint (dashed line on .5) indicates “neither distrust nor trust”). Tables S10-S11 in supplementary materials provide these estimates in tabular form.

Discussion

This study examines public perceptions of fact-checking in the aggregate and as individual sources, with three major findings. First, fact-checking in the aggregate is trusted not only more than the news media in general, but more than individual fact-checking sites affiliated with academia, prominent journalism, or non-profits. Fact-checking sites affiliated with lesser-known media outlets are much less trusted. Second, a majority of Americans do not recognize many of the professional fact-checking sites. Still, awareness of specific fact-checking sites is positively correlated with trust in them, and this relationship is found among not only Democrats but also Republicans who are often seen as being unfavorable to fact-checking. Third, despite fact-checkers’ intentions to complement conventional media with a more reputable form of reporting, fact-checking sites are not more trusted than conventional news outlets. Partisans on both sides have conventional news outlets that they trust more

than major fact-checking sites.

These findings help explain why many Americans are favorable to the idea of fact-checking yet rarely visit fact-checking sites. Most people perceive fact-checking as a desirable form of reporting in the aggregate, but many of the same people do not express high levels of trust in individual fact-checking outlets. Furthermore, low familiarity with specific fact-checking sites is correlated with low trust in them. The availability of conventional outlets more trusted than fact-checking sites is another factor that can explain why favorable views to the general practice of fact-checking have not been evolved into a widespread use of fact-checking sites.

Measuring source trust in two ways (i.e., unipolar in Study 1 and bipolar in Study 2) enriches the substantive and methodological contribution of this study. Overall patterns of findings were similar between the two measures, rendering more confidence to substantive implications. Moreover, these multiple measures provide a direct comparison between unipolar and bipolar measures of source trust and clarify how people assess unfamiliar sources depending on available choice sets. Unlike the unipolar measure, the bipolar measure disentangles strong distrust and neutral attitudes, and suggests people lean toward being neutral to, instead of being distrustful of, the sources that they do not recognize.

One interesting finding is that the positive relationship between recognizing and trusting fact-checking sites was found among both Democrats and Republicans. This finding is promising for the prospect of building trust in fact-checking sites across party lines, but also puzzling for three reasons. First, liberal-leaning conventional outlets have been more prominent in the enterprise of fact-checking (e.g., Washington Post Fact Checker), despite the existence of conservative-leaning fact-checking outlets (e.g., Daily Caller Check Your Fact). Second, major fact-checking sites have been more critical of Republicans than Democrats under both Democratic and Republican presidents (Davis 2013; Ferracioli, Kniess and Marques 2022). Third, in recent years, Democratic politicians have more frequently referenced fact-checking to support their claims (e.g., Hilary Clinton during the 2016 presidential election)

whereas Republican politicians have been openly hostile to fact-checking (e.g., Matt Maddock, a Republican representative, proposed a bill to fine fact-checkers for errors; LeBlanc and Mauger 2021). Future research can further disentangle the dynamics of fact-checking in partisan politics.

There are a number of limits to this study. The sample is not nationally representative. So the exact findings here may not replicate for the overall U.S. population. Despite this limitation, this study still provides insights on how Americans assess fact-checking at both macro and micro levels. Another limitation is that the results are based on descriptive surveys, which do not directly test causal directions between familiarity and trust, or between attitudes toward fact-checking and those toward conventional outlets. Future research could use experiments to clarify these causal relationships. Lastly, this study did not include behavioral measures of the actual visits to fact-checking sites. One extension of this study could be to pair digital trace data (e.g., web tracking) with survey responses to examine how familiarity, trust, and usage of news sources are related to each other.

Looking forward, it is noteworthy that journalists' adoption of fact-checking was largely driven by the concept's prestige in the profession rather than audience demand for a different form of reporting (Graves, Nyhan and Reifler 2016). This study sheds insights into when people are more likely to trust fact-checking sites and how evidence-based sources build public trust. First, more people are likely to trust fact-checking sites as people become more acquainted with those sites. Future research can explore effective strategies that can increase exposure or visits to fact-checking sites and under which conditions those exposures lead to greater trust in and continued use of those sites. Second, more people will trust fact-checking sites if they find these outlets as providing services and information that are useful compared to what is already available from conventional outlets. Future studies can investigate public demands for evidence-based reporting and what has not been fulfilled by conventional media. With these next steps, public confidence in, and use of, fact-checking sites can come closer to widespread favorability that many Americans have in the general idea of fact-checking.

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Supplementary Materials for
Do People Really Want Corrective Information?
Public Attitudes Toward Fact-Checking Sites

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1 Distribution of Demographic Variables

Table S1: Distribution of Demographic Variables

		Study 1	Study 2
Age	18-24	22.2	22.8
	25-34	35.6	33.0
	35-44	19.2	17.1
	45-54	12.6	12.0
	55-64	7.6	10.0
	65-	2.8	5.1
Gender	Female	47.5	46.0
	Male	51.1	53.0
	Non-binary	1.4	1.0
Education	No college degree	34.8	39.3
	College degree	65.2	60.7
Partisan Identity	Democrat	50.0	50.0
	Republican	50.0	50.0
N		720	1,000

Note: The entries are in percentage (%), except for the final row (“N”) that indicates the number of respondents.

2 Trust in Fact-checking: General and Sources

2.1 Trust in Fact-checking and Conventional Media: In General

Table S2: Average Trust in Fact-checking and Conventional Media in General: Study 1

	Fact-checking in general	News media in general	Difference between fact-checking and news media (t-statistic)	N
Democrats	0.54	0.44	6.16 ($p < .01$)	360
Republicans	0.42	0.34	4.08 ($p < .01$)	360

Table S3: Average Trust in Fact-checking and Conventional Media in General: Study 2

	Fact-checking in general	News media in general	Difference between fact-checking and news media (t-statistic)	N
Democrats	0.68	0.60	5.98 ($p < .01$)	500
Republicans	0.47	0.37	4.96 ($p < .01$)	500

2.2 Trust in Fact-checking: In General and by Source Affiliations

Table S4: Average Trust in Fact-checking in General and by Source Affiliations: Study 1

	Democrats	Difference from Fact-checking General (t-statistic)	Republicans	Difference from Fact-checking General (t-statistic)
Fact-checking in general	0.54	NA	0.42	NA
Academic	0.50	2.19 ($p < .05$)	0.41	0.30 ($p = .76$)
Prominent media	0.55	-0.46 ($p = .65$)	0.43	-0.67 ($p = .50$)
Less prominent media	0.29	15.79 ($p < .01$)	0.34	4.28 ($p < .01$)
Non-profit	0.41	8.64 ($p < .01$)	0.36	3.23 ($p < .01$)
N	360		360	

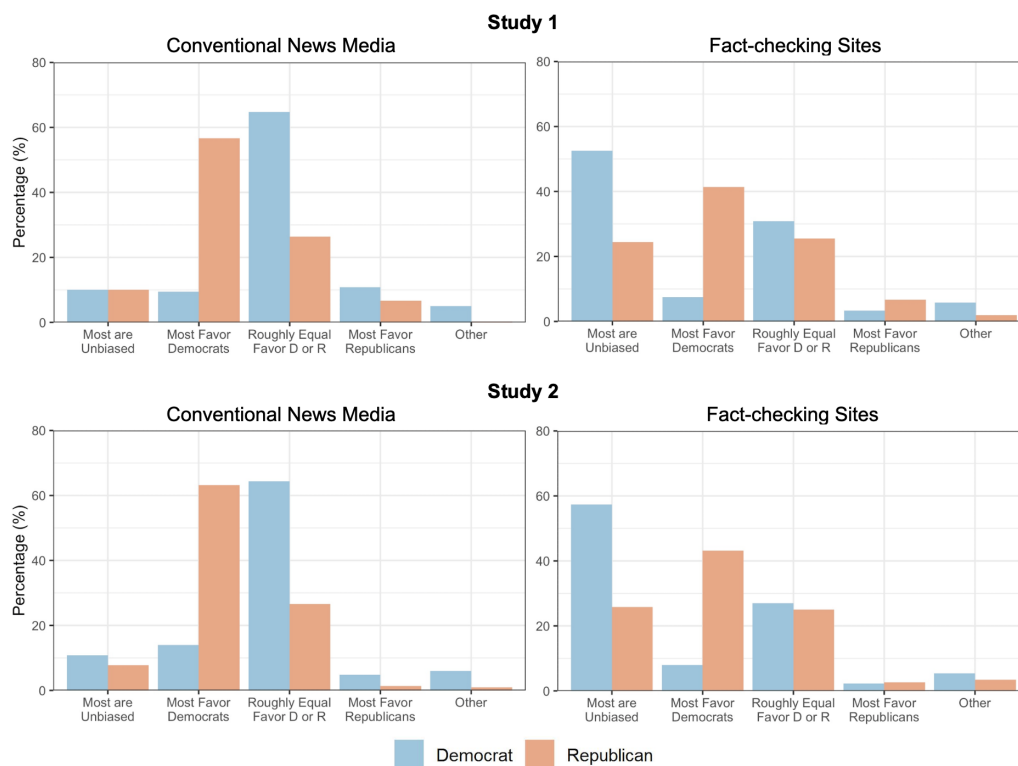
Table S5: Average Trust in Fact-checking in General and by Source Affiliations: Study 2

	Democrats	Difference from Fact-checking General (t-statistic)	Republicans	Difference from Fact-checking General (t-statistic)
Fact-checking in general	0.68	NA	0.47	NA
Academic	0.62	5.25 ($p < .01$)	0.47	-0.47 ($p = .64$)
Prominent media	0.63	4.30 ($p < .01$)	0.48	-0.88 ($p = .38$)
Less prominent media	0.45	21.27 ($p < .01$)	0.44	1.44 ($p = .15$)
Non-profit	0.56	11.61 ($p < .01$)	0.45	0.85 ($p = .39$)
N	500		500	

2.3 Bias Perceptions: Fact-checking and Conventional Media in General

After answering questions related to source trust, participants indicated whether they thought the news media or fact-checking sites in general tended to be unbiased or biased when presenting information: 1) most are not biased, 2) most are biased in favor of Republicans, 3) most are biased in favor of Democrats, 4) most are biased, but equal numbers favor either Democrats or Republicans, and 5) other (open-ended response).

Figure S1: Perceived Bias of Conventional Media and Fact-checking Sites in General



As discussed in the main text, in both studies, perceived bias of the news media was more prevalent than that of fact-checking sites among both partisan groups. There is an

interesting partisan difference in how Democrats and Republicans perceive bias from the media and fact-checking. Among partisans who perceive most news organizations or fact-checking sites as biased, most Republicans think “most outlets favor Democrats,” whereas most Democrats perceive “equal numbers of outlets favor either Democrats or Republicans.” This partisan difference is starker for the news media than fact-checking.

3 Familiarity with and Trust in Fact-checking Sources

3.1 Familiarity with Fact-checking Sources by Partisan Identity

Table S6: Familiarity Rate (Proportion Familiar) of Fact-checking Sources: Study 1

	All	Democrats	Republicans	Affiliation
FactCheck.org	0.49	0.48	0.50	Academic
Lead Stories	0.13	0.06	0.19	Non-profit
PolitiFact	0.46	0.49	0.43	Non-profit
Science Feedback	0.15	0.09	0.21	Non-profit
Snopes	0.6	0.63	0.58	Non-profit
ABC News	0.94	0.95	0.93	Prominent media
Associated Press	0.77	0.79	0.75	Prominent media
Reuters Fact Check	0.41	0.39	0.42	Prominent media
USA TODAY	0.92	0.91	0.93	Prominent media
Washington Post Fact Checker	0.47	0.47	0.47	Prominent media
AFP United States	0.2	0.14	0.26	Less Prominent media
Daily Caller Check Your Fact	0.17	0.09	0.24	Less Prominent media
The Dispatch	0.22	0.17	0.27	Less Prominent media
Weekly Standard	0.27	0.21	0.32	Less Prominent media
N	720	360	360	

Table S7: Familiarity Rate (Proportion Familiar) of Fact-checking Sources: Study 2

	All	Democrats	Republicans	Affiliation
FactCheck.org	0.43	0.43	0.43	Academic
Lead Stories	0.06	0.04	0.09	Non-profit
PolitiFact	0.45	0.51	0.39	Non-profit
Science Feedback	0.09	0.08	0.10	Non-profit
Snopes	0.63	0.66	0.60	Non-profit
Reuters	0.75	0.74	0.76	Prominent media
USA TODAY Fact Check	0.33	0.31	0.34	Prominent media
Washington Post Fact Checker	0.35	0.38	0.32	Prominent media
Daily Caller Check Your Fact	0.10	0.08	0.12	Less prominent media
The Dispatch	0.22	0.19	0.24	Less prominent media
N	1000	500	500	

Table S8: Familiarity Rate (Proportion Familiar) of Conventional News Sources: Study 2

	All	Democrats	Republicans
CBS	0.93	0.96	0.91
CNN	0.96	0.98	0.93
Fox News	0.94	0.93	0.96
Huffington Post	0.87	0.92	0.82
MSNBC	0.90	0.91	0.88
NBC	0.94	0.95	0.92
New York Times	0.96	0.98	0.94
PBS	0.90	0.94	0.85
USA TODAY	0.93	0.95	0.92
Washington Post	0.94	0.96	0.91
N	1000	500	500

3.2 Trust in Fact-checking Sources by Partisan Identity

Table S9: Average Trust in Fact-checking Sources by Partisan Identity: Study 1

	Democrats	Republicans	Partisan difference (t-statistic)	Affiliation
FactCheck.org	0.5	0.41	4.37 ($p < .01$)	Academic
Lead Stories	0.28	0.33	-2.64 ($p < .01$)	Non-profit
PolitiFact	0.46	0.36	4.37 ($p < .01$)	Non-profit
Science Feedback	0.4	0.38	0.76 ($p = .45$)	Non-profit
Snopes	0.52	0.36	7.38 ($p < .01$)	Non-profit
ABC News	0.57	0.45	5.60 ($p < .01$)	Prominent media
Associated Press	0.62	0.45	8.46 ($p < .01$)	Prominent media
Reuters Fact Check	0.51	0.39	5.32 ($p < .01$)	Prominent media
USA TODAY	0.52	0.47	2.33 ($p < .05$)	Prominent media
Washington Post Fact Checker	0.54	0.39	7.07 ($p < .01$)	Prominent media
AFP United States	0.33	0.34	-0.48 ($p = .63$)	Less prominent media
Daily Caller Check Your Fact	0.27	0.34	-3.36 ($p < .01$)	Less prominent media
The Dispatch	0.28	0.32	-2.08 ($p < .05$)	Less prominent media
Weekly Standard	0.29	0.35	-2.83 ($p < .01$)	Less prominent media
Fact-checking in general	0.54	0.42	7.29 ($p < .01$)	
News media in general	0.44	0.34	5.67 ($p < .01$)	
N	360	360		

Table S10: Average Trust in Fact-checking Sources by Partisan Identity: Study 2

	Democrats	Republicans	t-statistic	Affiliation
FactCheck.org	0.62	0.47	8.92 ($p < .01$)	Academic
Lead Stories	0.45	0.43	2.11 ($p < .05$)	Non-profit
PolitiFact	0.59	0.43	10.26 ($p < .01$)	Non-profit
Science Feedback	0.53	0.47	4.65 ($p < .01$)	Non-profit
Snopes	0.66	0.47	11.02 ($p < .01$)	Non-profit
Reuters	0.69	0.55	8.20 ($p < .01$)	Prominent media
USA TODAY Fact Check	0.58	0.45	8.53 ($p < .01$)	Prominent media
Washington Post Fact Checker	0.63	0.44	12.02 ($p < .01$)	Prominent media
Daily Caller Check Your Fact	0.43	0.44	0.62 ($p = .53$)	Less prominent media
The Dispatch	0.47	0.44	2.03 ($p < .01$)	Less prominent media
Fact-checking in general	0.68	0.47	13.90 ($p < .01$)	
N	500	500		

Table S11: Average Trust in Conventional News Sources by Partisan Identity: Study 2

	Democrats	Republicans	Partisan difference (t-statistic)
CBS	0.70	0.49	12.54 ($p < .01$)
CNN	0.70	0.37	17.18 ($p < .01$)
Fox News	0.16	0.58	-22.83 ($p < .01$)
Huffington Post	0.60	0.40	11.75 ($p < .01$)
MSNBC	0.66	0.40	14.23 ($p < .01$)
NBC	0.71	0.48	13.11 ($p < .01$)
New York Times	0.78	0.48	16.29 ($p < .01$)
PBS	0.83	0.59	14.74 ($p < .01$)
USA TODAY	0.63	0.49	12.54 ($p < .01$)
Washington Post	0.72	0.46	7.95 ($p < .01$)
News media in general	0.60	0.37	13.50 ($p < .01$)
N	500	500	

3.3 Trust in Fact-checking Sources by Familiarity with Fact-checking

Table S12: Average Trust in Fact-checking Sources by Familiarity: Study 1

Democrats	Unfamiliar	Familiar	Difference by fact-checking familiarity (t-statistics)
Fact-checking in general	0.48	0.58	-4.65 ($p < .01$)
Academic	0.38	0.57	-6.64 ($p < .01$)
Prominent media	0.46	0.6	-6.06 ($p < .01$)
Less prominent media	0.28	0.3	-1.13 ($p = .26$)
Non-profit	0.33	0.46	-5.65 ($p < .01$)
N	128	232	
Republicans	Unfamiliar	Familiar	Difference by fact-checking familiarity (t-statistics)
Fact-checking in general	0.39	0.43	-1.51 ($p = .13$)
Academic	0.32	0.46	-4.65 ($p < .01$)
Prominent media	0.38	0.46	-2.79 ($p < .01$)
Less prominent media	0.28	0.37	-3.27 ($p < .01$)
Non-profit	0.29	0.39	-3.84 ($p < .01$)
N	131	229	

Table S13: Average Trust in Fact-checking Sources by Familiarity: Study 2

Democrats	Unfamiliar	Familiar	Difference by fact-checking familiarity (t-statistics)
Fact-checking in general	0.59	0.74	-8.53 ($p < .01$)
Academic	0.51	0.68	-8.99 ($p < .01$)
Prominent media	0.55	0.68	-8.84 ($p < .01$)
Less prominent media	0.45	0.45	0.17 ($p = .86$)
Non-profit	0.49	0.6	-9.93 ($p < .01$)
N	190	310	
Republicans	Unfamiliar	Familiar	Difference by fact-checking familiarity (t-statistics)
Fact-checking in general	0.47	0.46	0.60 ($p = .55$)
Academic	0.45	0.49	-1.73 ($p < .10$)
Prominent media	0.48	0.48	0.13 ($p = .90$)
Less prominent media	0.43	0.45	-0.75 ($p = .46$)
Non-profit	0.44	0.46	-0.93 ($p = .35$)
N	234	266	

3.4 Correlations among Media Perceptions and Demographic Variables

Table S14: Correlations among the Media Perceptions and Demographic/Political Predispositions: Study 1 ($n = 720$)

	Trust in Fact-checking	Trust in News Media	Familiarity with Fact-checking
Female	-.02	-.05	-.05
Age	-.05	.02	.12***
College	.16***	.17***	.12***
Trump Favorability	-.25**	-.14***	-.02

Note: Entries are bivariate correlations among each media perceptions (Trust in Fact-checking, Trust in News Media, Familiarity with Fact-checking) and demographic variables and political predisposition. Trust in Fact-checking indicates the degree of trust in fact-checking in general, coded to range from 0 to 1. Female = 1 if female, 0 if male; Age indicates the respondent's age (range from 18 to 84); College = 1 if college graduates, 0 if no college degree; Trump Favorability refers to the thermometer rating toward Donald Trump (range from 0 (unfavorable) to 100 (favorable)). * $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$.

Table S15: Correlations among the Media Perceptions and Demographic Variables: Study 2 ($n = 1,000$)

	Trust in Fact-checking	Trust in News Media	Familiarity with Fact-checking
Female	.02	.02	-.12***
Age	-.17***	-.12***	.05
College	.06	.09*	.02

Note: Entries are bivariate correlations among each media perceptions (Trust in Fact-checking, Trust in News Media, Familiarity with Fact-checking) and demographic variables and political predisposition. Trust in Fact-checking indicates the degree of trust in fact-checking in general, coded to range from 0 to 1. Female = 1 if female, 0 if male; Age indicates the respondent's age (range from 18 to 84); College = 1 if college graduates, 0 if no college degree. * $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$.

4 Survey Questionnaire

The study materials, data, and code for this study are available at:
https://osf.io/bs6kq/?view_only=090b7358a1e3459fa08a8c8b2cb456bb.

4.1 Study 1

[Trust in News Media in General] In general, how much trust and confidence do you have in the mass media - such as newspapers, TV, and radio - when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately, and fairly?

- Not at all (1)
- A little (2)
- A moderate amount (3)
- A lot (4)
- A great deal (5)

[Perceived News Accuracy] How often can you find a news source that provides accurate information about what is happening in the country?

- Never (1)
- Some of the time (2)
- About half the time (3)
- Most of the time (4)
- Always (5)

[Misinformation Concern] How concerned are you about the spread of false information through the Internet?

- Not at all concerned (1)
- A little concerned (2)
- Moderately concerned (3)
- Very concerned (4)
- Extremely concerned (5)

[Perceived Bias of Conventional Media] Do you think the news media these days tend to be unbiased or biased when presenting information?

- Most news media organizations are not biased (1)
- Most news media organizations are biased in favor of Republicans (2)
- Most news media organizations are biased in favor of Democrats (3)
- Most news media organizations are biased, but roughly equal numbers favor Republicans and Democrats (4)
- Other (5) -----

Note: The order of (2) and (3) was randomized across respondents.

[page break]

[Instruction about Source Evaluations]

Now you will be presented with a series of online news sources.

We are interested in two things:

- 1) Whether you are familiar with the news source.
- 2) Whether you trust the information that comes from the news source. That is, in your opinion, does the source provide truthful news content that is relatively unbiased and balanced.

[page break]

[Source Familiarity] Do you recognize each of the following websites?

	No (1)	Yes (2)
ABC News (1)		
AFP United States (2)		
Associated Press (3)		
Daily Caller Check Your Fact (4)		
The Dispatch (5)		
FactCheck.org (6)		
Lead Stories (7)		
PolitiFact (8)		
Reuters Fact Check (9)		
Science Feedback (10)		
Snopes (11)		
USA TODAY (12)		
Washington Post Fact Checker (13)		
Weekly Standard (14)		

Note: The order of items was randomized across respondents.

[page break]

[Source Trust] How much do you trust each of the following websites?

(Even for sources that are unfamiliar to you, we are interested in how much you would trust the information they provide.)

	Not at all (1)	Barely (2)	Somewhat (3)	A lot (4)	Entirely (5)
ABC News (1)					
AFP United States (2)					
Associated Press (3)					
Daily Caller Check Your Fact (4)					
The Dispatch (5)					
FactCheck.org (6)					
Lead Stories (7)					
PolitiFact (8)					
Reuters Fact Check (9)					
Science Feedback (10)					
Snopes (11)					
USA TODAY (12)					
Washington Post Fact Checker (13)					
Weekly Standard (14)					

Note: The order of items was kept the same with the preceding familiarity matrix.

[page break]

[Trust in Fact-checking in General] In general, how much trust and confidence do you have in **fact-checking websites** when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately, and fairly?

- Not at all (1)
- A little (2)
- A moderate amount (3)
- A lot (4)
- A great deal (5)

[Perceived Bias of Fact-checking in General] Do you think fact-checking websites these days tend to be unbiased or biased when presenting information?

- Most fact-checking websites are not biased (1)
- Most fact-checking websites are biased in favor of Republicans (2)
- Most fact-checking websites are biased in favor of Democrats (3)
- Most fact-checking websites are biased, but roughly equal numbers favor Republicans and Democrats (4)
- Other (5) -----

Note: The order of (2) and (3) was randomized across respondents.

4.2 Study 2

[Instruction about Source Evaluations]

We'd like to start by presenting a series of news sources.

We are interested in whether you are familiar with them and whether you trust the information that comes from each source.

[page break]

[Source Familiarity] Do you recognize each of the following websites?

	No (0)	Yes (1)
FactCheck.org (1)		
PolitiFact (2)		
Washington Post Fact Checker (3)		
Snopes (4)		
USA TODAY Fact Check (5)		
Reuters (6)		
Daily Caller Check Your Fact (7)		
Science Feedback (8)		
Lead Stories (9)		
The Dispatch (10)		
PBS (11)		
New York Times (12)		
NBC (13)		
Washington Post (14)		
USA TODAY (15)		
CBS (16)		
CNN (17)		
MSNBC (18)		
Huffington Post (19)		
Fox News (20)		

Note: The order of items was randomized across respondents.

[page break]

[Source Trust] How much do you trust each of the following websites?

(Even for sources that are unfamiliar to you, we are interested in how much you would trust the information they provide.)

	Strongly distrust (1)	Somewhat distrust (2)	Neither distrust nor trust (3)	Somewhat trust (4)	Strongly trust (5)
FactCheck.org (1)					
PolitiFact (2)					
Washington Post Fact Checker (3)					
Snopes (4)					
USA TODAY Fact Check (5)					
Reuters (6)					
Daily Caller Check Your Fact (7)					
Science Feedback (8)					
Lead Stories (9)					
The Dispatch (10)					
PBS (11)					
New York Times (12)					
NBC (13)					
Washington Post (14)					
USA TODAY (15)					
CBS (16)					
CNN (17)					
MSNBC (18)					
Huffington Post (19)					
Fox News (20)					

Note: The order of items was kept the same with the preceding familiarity matrix.

[page break]

[Trust in the News Media in General] In general, how much do you distrust or trust **the news media** when it comes to providing accurate information?

- Strongly distrust (1)
- Somewhat distrust (2)
- Neither distrust nor trust (3)
- Somewhat trust (4)
- Strongly trust (5)

[Perceived Bias of Conventional Media] Do you think the news media these days tend to be unbiased or biased when presenting information?

- Most news media organizations are not biased (1)
- Most news media organizations are biased in favor of Republicans (2)
- Most news media organizations are biased in favor of Democrats (3)
- Most news media organizations are biased, but roughly equal numbers favor Republicans and Democrats (4)
- Other (5) -----

Note: The order of (2) and (3) was randomized across respondents.

[Trust in Fact-checking in General] In general, how much do you distrust or trust **fact-checking websites** when it comes to providing accurate information?

- Strongly distrust (1)
- Somewhat distrust (2)
- Neither distrust nor trust (3)
- Somewhat trust (4)
- Strongly trust (5)

[Perceived Bias of Fact-checking in General] Do you think fact-checking websites these days tend to be unbiased or biased when presenting information?

- Most fact-checking websites are not biased (1)
- Most fact-checking websites are biased in favor of Republicans (2)
- Most fact-checking websites are biased in favor of Democrats (3)
- Most fact-checking websites are biased, but roughly equal numbers favor Republicans and Democrats (4)
- Other (5) -----

Note: The order of (2) and (3) was randomized across respondents.