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The Political Consequences of Elite News Consumption and Media Gatekeeping

by

Julia B. Christensen

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Political Science

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Gabriel S. Lenz, Chair

Professor Eric Schickler

Associate Professor David Broockman

Summer 2026

Abstract

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Julia B. Christensen

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Professor Gabriel S. Lenz, Chair

Why do we think that news media affects policy and other political outcomes? Most research on media adopts an *indirect* model of media effects, where the press shapes public opinion, and in turn, elites respond to voters. In comparison, my research embraces a *direct* model of media effects, where media matters because political actors themselves consume it. This perspective emphasizes the value of news as a source of information for decision-makers and opens up new opportunities for studying media's role in politics.

In this dissertation, I show that elite news consumption is distinct from mass media consumption and explore its implications for policymaking and representation. I argue that political elites rely on news media to navigate a complex information environment and to make strategic decisions. To minimize the costs of extracting critical information from news coverage, elites have strong incentives to invest in systems for media monitoring.

I argue that the media functions as a connective institution, linking different parts of the political system and serving as a hub of information. Crucially, it does so unevenly. By subsidizing access to some kinds of information while neglecting others, the media shapes the strategic environments in which political actors operate.

In the first chapter, I examine how presidents and their staffs have monitored, summarized, and circulated news inside the White House from the Nixon administration to the present. Drawing on a variety of primary sources and press accounts, I examine the evolution of White House media monitoring. Before 2001, each administration assigned an internal team to produce daily news summaries. These operations varied substantially. Beginning with George W. Bush, White House media monitoring was outsourced to Bulletin Intelligence. Subsequent administrations continued to hire the same company, which created greater continuity across administrations. Nevertheless, the content and format of the summaries continued to adapt to changing technologies, expanding media environments, and the needs of each administration.

By reconstructing this institutional history, I shed light on a critical aspect of governance. In the face of an overwhelming volume of information, Presidents and their staffs rely on information-filtering institutions like the White House news summary. These systems determine which events, perspectives, and signals reach the White House. This paper provides historical context necessary for studying these processes and for understanding how media information reaches the White House.

In the second chapter, I examine how bureaucracies seek information from news coverage. Bureaucrats rely on news media to navigate a complex information environment and make strategic decisions, yet the volume of news is overwhelming. Agencies, therefore, contract private firms to distill news into daily "clipbooks." I analyze these clipbooks across U.S. executive agencies and find a systematic skew. Conservative news sources appear more often in briefings for conservative agencies like Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The skew does not appear to arise from biased news selection; instead, it mirrors the news supply. Conservative outlets generally produce less content about liberal agencies, and vice versa. Because of this supply asymmetry, liberal agencies receive little news from conservative sources. While the pattern is generally stable across administrations, there is evidence of biased selection during Trump's second term, representing a clear departure from prior periods. I close by discussing how these disparities in coverage may affect agency decision making and representation.

In the third chapter, I examine how media selection bias affects the supply of information. Last year, over a hundred thousand pedestrians were hit by cars in the United States and around eight thousand died. Decisions by local governments determine where and how often these deaths occur. While deaths often prompt cities to consider pedestrian improvements, responses vary widely and depend on whether politicians feel pressure from their constituents. This pressure is dependent on people learning about policy problems, which depends (in part) on the news media. Due to it's critical role, we need to understand when and why the news chooses to feature pedestrian fatalities and other indicators of policy failure. When do journalists choose to feature a particular case? From prior research, we know that victim characteristics like race and gender can shape perceptions of newsworthiness in policy areas with strong racial and gender stereotypes. I find little evidence that these racial disparities persist when we look at coverage of pedestrian fatalities, although I do find that other victim characteristics like gender and age affect the likelihood of coverage. I also find some evidence that the hollowing-out of local news coverage has reduced coverage of pedestrian fatalities, but the effect is concentrated to certain papers.

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Chapter 1

White House News Collection (1968-2025)

On February 5, 2010, the Obama administration and Democrats in Congress faced a pivotal decision. They were in the final phase of passing the Affordable Care Act (ACA) when a special election eliminated their filibuster-proof majority in the Senate. Suddenly, resistance among House Democrats to the Senate bill presented an existential threat to the ACA (Connolly, 2010). Politico described "a party that was on the brink of a political and nervous breakdown in late January" (Budoff Brown & Thrush, 2010). At this pivotal moment, the future of the ACA was uncertain. Yet the ACA would pass less than two months later. How did this reversal happen? According to press coverage at the time, credit can be partially traced back to the White House news summary and a Los Angeles Times article about a routine bureaucratic decision (Barabak & Helfand, 2010).

Months earlier, Anthem Blue Cross, California's largest for-profit health insurer, submitted a plan to California state regulators. Anthem proposed a double-digit rate increase for insurance policies held by fewer than a million Americans. The plan, like so many others, went through a routine regulatory review and was approved with little pushback or press attention (Barabak & Helfand, 2010). Luckily for the Obama administration, this time the rate hike did make the news (Helfand, 2010). Although not a major national story, it was collected and distributed to White House staff as part of the White House's daily news summary.

On February 5, Dan Pfeiffer, a senior White House strategist, spotted the article and realized its potential to change the public conversation about health insurance (Barabak & Helfand, 2010). Anthem "had given Obama, who struggled for months to find a cogent argument, a simple way to crystallize his case for change" (Barabak & Helfand, 2010). In the days following the story, Obama would go on the offensive, using his bully pulpit to criticize Anthem's rate increase and paint it as "a portrait of the future if we don't do something now" (Barabak & Helfand, 2010). Anthem's rate increase became a centerpiece of the White House's communications strategy and would be picked up by allies in Congress, who bolstered the president's message by summoning Anthem executives to testify in committee hearings (Barabak & Helfand, 2010). While recognizing other factors, media coverage from

the time credits Anthem's rate hikes with changing the narrative and momentum around the ACA, which was critical to its eventual passage (Barabak & Helfand, 2010; Budoff Brown & Thrush, 2010).

The ACA episode illustrates how news media can shape governance by influencing what information reaches the White House. Presidents depend on media monitoring to collect, filter, and summarize information about developments inside and outside government. Because these processes operate largely out of public view, their influence is difficult to measure directly. Even so, presidents and their advisers have repeatedly described White House news summaries as important sources of information.

On occasion, presidents have directly identified news summaries as a source of important information. For example, in a press conference, Gerald Ford cited his morning news briefing when discussing foreign policy: "I noticed in the morning news summary before I left Washington that the President of the Philippines, Mr. Marcos, is reviewing the Philippine relationship with the United States" (Ford, 1977).

Ford's case is not the only time that White House media monitoring factored into a president's response to unfolding events. In a tribute to George H.W. Bush, a staffer recalls interrupting a meeting between the president and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher with a breaking news story (Cooper, 2018). Mikhail Gorbachev had just issued an ultimatum demanding that Lithuania rescind its recent declaration of independence and restore Soviet law. The speed and force of Bush and Thatcher's joint response was noted in contemporary press coverage: "The fact that the intensely cautious Mr. Bush, acting for himself and Mrs. Thatcher, chose to bring up the news report at the outset of the news conference, before they were asked about it, illuminated the alarm with which the two leaders viewed the Kremlin's ultimatum more than their words did" (Cooper, 2018).

Records also show that presidents rely on news summaries to monitor events within the White House. One of the best accounts of White House media monitoring comes from an oral history of Jimmy Carter's Press Secretary, Jody Powell. Powell recalled instances where Carter took immediate action directly after reading the news summary: "On occasion he [Carter] would comment on the stories that said the President is considering doing such-and-such, when he didn't even know we were considering the problem at all yet—wondering who it was that was passing himself off as being the President and considering such a thing" (Powell, 1981).

Beyond specific incidents, the historical record speaks more generally to the importance of the White House news summary to presidents and their staff. In his tribute, George H.W. Bush's staffer also recalls how the president valued the morning news summaries produced by his staff. The president "would frequently walk around with our Summaries, highlighted in parts with items to be addressed" (Cooper, 2018). Other accounts emphasize that the summaries served a much broader audience than the president alone. Carter's Press Secretary describes the White House news summary as "a very important source of information for everybody around the White House" (Powell, 1981). They were a routine part of White House activities, helping presidents and their staffs monitor events, share information, and coordinate the work of governing.

These accounts provide a tantalizing glimpse into the potential importance of news. However, the ubiquity of White House media monitoring is perhaps the most powerful evidence of its importance. Since Richard Nixon, each subsequent administration has continued to invest in news collection, analysis, and distribution. Moreover, White House news collection efforts are not merely the product of bureaucratic inertia. They continuously evolve to meet the needs of each administration and adapt to changes in technology and the media ecosystem.

Why would presidents monitor the news? In their 1981 book, Michael Baruch Grossman and Martha Joynt Kumar describe a range of benefits: "The White House News Summary keeps the President informed about the coverage the media give to his administration, provides items for his agenda, gives the staff an additional means of legitimizing their activities, and allows readers of the summary to learn whether the President is aware of certain items" (Grossman & Kumar, 1981, p. 102). Subsequent scholarship suggests additional motives for White House media monitoring. Presidents can also use news to monitor their own communications efforts and to communicate with other parts of government (Cook, 1998). Additionally, presidents use the media for reality testing. As an outside source, news allows a president to form a sense of reality and test the information being provided by internal channels of information (Burke & Greenstein, 1989; Karpowitz, 2009). Lastly, news summaries helped the White House monitor public opinion (Karpowitz, 2009).

More broadly, White House media monitoring helped construct the informational environment in which presidents governed. The design of these systems determined how information was filtered, organized, and prioritized. In an environment where time and attention are scarce and information abundant, media monitoring operations shaped which events, perspectives, and signals reached the White House. Even when information can be collected through other means, news media is often an efficient and cost-effective solution.[1] Rather than create expensive systems for comprehensive data collection, presidents and their staffs often rely on journalists, editors, and news organizations to identify and investigate events of potential importance.

This paper begins with Nixon because his administration marked the emergence of the modern White House news summary and the beginning of a relatively continuous institutional lineage.[2] Drawing on archival records, oral histories, contracts, press accounts, and other sources, I examine how successive administrations have collected, analyzed, and distributed

[1] See also McCubbins & Schwartz (1984). While McCubbins and Schwartz assume that individuals or interests groups pull the fire alarm, news coverage can also play this role. The efficiency of news as an information source can also be found in primary sources. When discussing the cost effectiveness of information gathering, one of George H.W. Bush's intelligence aides explained that he pushed agencies to "ask is this information really worth the risk we're taking to get it?" and argued that "We don't need to go recruit an agent to tell us something we can read about in the newspaper" (Gates, n.d.).

[2] Before the expansion of the Executive Office of the President (EOP) in the 1940s and 1950s, presidents faced a different set of institutional constraints. For example, Franklin Delano Roosevelt had an expansive operation for monitoring news coverage and compiling clips into a daily "Press Intelligence Bulletin" (Stiles, 2017). However, due to resource limitations, the operation was housed in the Commerce department and was vulnerable to changes in congressional appropriations. In 1947, a Republican Congress "put it out of business" (Stiles, 2017, p. 250). Nixon broke from his immediate predecessors by investing EOP resources in a more extensive system for media monitoring (Karpowitz, 2009). Scholars have repeatedly described Nixon as the originator of the White House "news summary" (Grossman & Kumar, 1981; Kumar & Sullivan, 2003).

news from 1968 through today. During this period, daily news reports were produced for the president and distributed widely among White House staff (Karpowitz, 2009; Kumar & Sullivan, 2003). According to Kumar & Sullivan (2003), the news summary is "a document describing and quoting from articles in newspapers and on television. It reflected the administration's interest in how they were covered, including providing a sense of what the major news stories were on any given day" (p. 244). Among some staffers, this summary is known as the internal White House newspaper (Kumar & Jenkins, 1999).

While every administration since Nixon produced daily news reports, the systems used to collect, organize, and distribute information changed substantially over time. When computer technology transformed both news production and news collection, White House media monitoring evolved from an in-house model to a service provided by an outside contractor. Before 2001, administrations developed their own internal media-monitoring operations, which led to considerable variation in organizational structure and output. Starting in 2001, production was outsourced to a contractor. Each subsequent administration chose to hire the same company, Bulletin Intelligence, creating greater continuity. Nevertheless, despite similar procedures for news collection and summary production, news summaries continued to be shaped by internal and external forces, including changes in technology, the media environment, and presidential priorities.

1.1 The Historical Development of White House News Summaries (1968-2000)

While historical records often refer to the "news summary" as if it was one single report, White House media monitoring encompassed not only a narrative summary of the news, but also clipbooks, wire compilations, and other specialized reports. Confusingly, the term "news summary" is sometimes used to describe the White House's broader media monitoring operation, rather than a single report. In some periods, the summary itself was the primary product; in others, it functioned alongside a packet of full-text clips or a wider set of supporting materials. To understand how presidents and their staffs monitored the press, it is therefore necessary to consider the broader information system for collecting, filtering, and circulating politically relevant news.

During this early period, each administration had to design its own system for monitoring news. When Ken Chitester, Director of the Office of News Analysis from 1993-94, arrived in the Office of News Analysis, he describes an office that had been stripped to bare and left empty by the prior administration (Chitester, 1997, p. 37). Each new administration had to build its own news summary capability.

Differences in presidential preferences, organizational resources, and technology produced substantial variation in White House media monitoring systems. These factors shaped how news was collected and processed, influencing which sources were monitored and how clips were gathered, sorted, and organized. They also affected the scope, content, and audience of the reports themselves.

1.1.1 Early Administrative Discontinuity: Richard Nixon through George H. W. Bush

The expansion of White House media monitoring under Nixon illustrates how presidents tailor the news summary based on their preferences and needs. According to Christopher F. Karpowitz's excellent article on Nixon's news summaries, Nixon intended for his media monitoring system to be a complete substitute for all other media coverage. He consciously avoided directly reading or watching news, believing that direct consumption would introduce bias into his information environment. However, Karpowitz (2009) provides compelling evidence that Nixon's isolation from the media opened him up to manipulation by the staffers who controlled his news summaries. In fact, under his successors, Ford and Carter, the news summary operation was modified with the goal of producing "a neutral reflection of what actually appears in the media" (Grossman & Kumar, 1981, p. 103). Additionally, while Nixon's successors continued to invest in systematic media monitoring, they supplemented their news summaries with direct news consumption.[3]

Like Nixon, Jimmy Carter's media habits also shaped his administration's news summaries, albeit with very different results. While most presidents focused news collection on national sources[4] and Washington media,[5] Carter took a different approach. Unlike presidents before or since, Carter's news summaries excluded the New York Times, Washington Post, and other Washington media because Carter separately read those papers every morning (Powell, 1981). His administration took the opposite approach from Nixon. His briefing "was intended not to be the President's only source of information from the press" (Powell, 1981).

Carter's personal preference for evening summaries also contributed to their form. Unlike other presidents, Carter preferred to read his briefing at night, so the summaries were produced during the day and finished by the early evening (Powell, 1981). Given when papers went to press, clips from evening editions of papers would be fresher and morning editions would be staler. Other presidents did the opposite. They had staff work overnight to produce morning news summaries with fresh clips from the morning editions of papers. According to Carter's Press Secretary, the president's preference for evening summaries contributed to why they did not include major national and Washington papers and why Carter supplemented the news summaries with full copies of the morning editions of these papers (Powell, 1981). Carter's news summaries therefore cannot be understood in isolation. Their content is dictated by a broader information system in which the president relied on both an evening summary and direct access to major morning newspapers.

Despite very different approaches, Nixon and Carter's news summaries were both tailored to an audience of one: the president. In later administrations, White House news reports would be targeted at a broader audience. However, even in this early period, news summary circulation went far beyond the president. Over Nixon's first term, distribution expanded

[3]See the following sources: Ford (Ford, 1976; Fuller, 2014), Carter (Powell, 1981), Reagan (Fuller, 2014), George H.W. Bush (The Christian Science Monitor, 2000), and Clinton (The Christian Science Monitor, 2000). Prior presidents also directly consumed news, including Nixon's immediate predecessors, Lyndon B. Johnson and John F. Kennedy (Fuller, 2014; The Christian Science Monitor, 2000).

[4]Common national sources include the New York Times and Wall Street Journal.

[5]Common Washington media include the Washington Post and Washington Times.

from a handful of senior staff in 1969 to nearly 100 people by 1972, including the Cabinet and various agencies in the executive branch (Nixon Foundation, 2010). While Nixon's staff used the summary to stay broadly informed, it was especially valuable because of its influence on Nixon: "The senior staff used news summaries to stay informed, but perhaps more importantly hoped to stay a half step ahead of the president" (Nixon Foundation, 2010). Similarly, despite being "designed entirely for the President's daily reading," Carter's news summaries were regularly circulated to several hundred White House staff and considered "a very important source of information for everybody around the White House" (Powell, 1981). The distribution list started at about 120 and grew until it was capped at 200 (Powell, 1981). In 1983, Ronald Reagan's news summaries were distributed about to about 175 staffers (Pugh, 1993).

A president's interests and the political environment can also shape news collection. Richard Nixon and George H.W. Bush both had systems for monitoring foreign news outlets (Cooper, 2018; Karpowitz, 2009). During George H.W. Bush's administration, "U.S. embassies around the world would dutifully provide our team with translations of foreign coverage" (Cooper, 2018). Later presidents like Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama would have relatively little foreign press content in their news summaries. While it is tempting to connect this to the end of the Cold War, Reagan's news summaries complicate a Cold War explanation. Based on a limited review of his news summaries, Reagan's news summaries contained little foreign press coverage.[6] Explaining the presence of international news outlets in presidential news summaries requires considering other factors, including how each administration's news summaries fit into a larger information ecosystem.

During some administrations, news summaries served a relatively narrow role. Compared to other presidents, Reagan's news summaries are strikingly narrow in scope. According to a staffer in 1983, Reagan's news summaries only contained stories that were directly about the administration, and they only collected clips from five wire services and four papers (Pugh, 1993).[7] By 1984-1987, Reagan's news summaries regularly included content from the major broadcast networks (ABC, NBC, CBS) as well but remained overwhelmingly composed of articles from the same nine print sources. Other sources were almost exclusively relegated to short 1-2 page inserts added at the back of some, but not all, of the news summaries. [8]

In comparison, news summaries had a much larger scope under the Carter's administration. According to his staff, Carter's summaries were designed to (i) "give him an idea of what was going on in the rest of the country in terms of trends and news events that might not yet be covered in Washington, and in terms of editorial comment from other papers, a variety

[6]Recently, some of Reagan's news summaries were digitized and posted by the Reagan presidential library (see Appendix A.2 for details). I reviewed 15 news summaries from June 1984 to August 1987. Occasionally, his briefings would contain a page of excerpts from foreign press, but these clips were not integrated into the main news summary and put at the very end of the briefing. Only five of fifteen news summaries contained "Foreign Media Reaction" sections. All but one example had only one page of foreign press clips, and the only exception had two pages of foreign press clips.

[7]Specifically, the article describes monitoring five wire services and the following papers: The Washington Post, New York Times, Washington Times, and Wall Street Journal (Pugh, 1993).

[8]See prior discussion of foreign press in Reagan's news summaries and Appendix A.2.2. Out of fifteen summaries, eight had a one to two page section with local and national editorials. In each case, local clips were limited to editorial sections at the end of the summary.

of voices" and (ii) "give some idea of how the things that were going on in Washington were being portrayed through the outlets that reached the largest numbers of people" (Powell, 1981). To achieve this goal, Carter's team regularly reviewed "about a hundred and twenty newspapers among us from all over the country, plus looking at the wire services" (Powell, 1981).[9]

The sophistication of media monitoring under the Carter administration led the news summary staff to play a larger role in the White House. While designed for a narrow purpose, over time, the Carter media monitoring operation began to take on a larger research role (Powell, 1981):

> People gradually learned that it was useful to have all those newspapers lying around, and folks would call from different offices and say, You know, we're working on a project on water policy, and we want to know what you see about drought and flooding and water problems or political problems over water in the western newspapers. Can you watch it for two weeks and then tell us what you get? And people would compile those sorts of things.

Over time, their research function expanded and influenced the operations of the office (Powell, 1981).

News summary content is also affected by other news reports and information sources. As discussed previously, White House media monitoring often produced multiple reports. In addition to a narrative summary, they created a variety of clipbooks, hourly updates, and weekly roundups.[10] In some cases, news covered in a separate report would be excluded from the main summary. For example, when political cartoons or magazine articles are compiled into separate reports, they are sometimes omitted from the main news summary.[11]

1.1.2 Clinton as a Transitional Case

Media monitoring during the Clinton administration was strongly shaped by the emergence of the internet and personal computers. Online news led to information overload, even in the early days of the internet. In the 1990s, staffers experienced rapid changes to news accessibility, distribution, and production, which overwhelmed them with stories at all hours of the day. For the most part, Clinton's Office of News Analysis retained key features of the

[9]Carter's staff would rotate through different papers; they didn't use the same newspapers and editorial sources every day (Carter, 1978). On an average day, they reviewed 30-40 newspapers: "Miss Townsend…heads a staff of five that scans 30 to 40 newspapers and the morning and evening network news and assembles a 10- to 15-page typed summary designed to give the President "a feeling for events going on in the country" (UPI, 1977).

[10]Many presidents had other reports. For example, Nixon had weekly magazine reports (Karpowitz, 2009). Carter had a separate weekly magazine report (Powell, 1981). George H.W. Bush also receive continuous news updates throughout the day (Cooper, 2018).

[11]While Carter had political cartoons in his daily news summary (Powell, 1981), Clinton's cartoons were placed in a separate 'Clintoon' report. Clinton had a separate report for magazine articles whereas George W. Bush and Obama had magazine articles placed directly in their daily news summaries.

earlier in-house model: a small staff, a labor-intensive clipping operation, and a limited set of sources. While retaining this earlier model, Clinton's staff struggled to adapt to a rapidly changing media environment and take advantage of new technology. As a result, the Clinton years capture how major technological changes challenged older forms of White House media monitoring.

During Clinton's administration, White House news reports were produced by the White House Office of News Analysis. The office was in "in charge of monitoring all of the news coverage of the President and summarizing it for White House staff" (Chitester, 1997, p. 37). Each morning, they created a 150-200 page set of newspaper clippings and a 4-7 page narrative news summary. They also sent out wire updates and produced separate weekly reports for magazines, editorials, and political cartoons.[12] Later, in Clinton's second term, the office would also produce a weekly specialized news report. While additional analysis will be required to determine what portion of Clinton's news summaries and clipbooks contain coverage of the president, not every article mentions the president.[13]

The shorter news narrative was delivered to personnel each weekday morning. For the first time, a news summary could be distributed electronically, partly but not completely eliminating bottlenecks responsible for capping distribution in the past. Unlike the clips, it was possible to distribute these reports electronically over email and an electronic "bulletin board" accessible to everyone at the White House. Tracking software showed that many staffers read the Office's electronic news reports. During one month, the average readership exceeded 168 per day (Chitester, 1997, pp. 42, 59). Compared to prior administrations, fewer resources seem to have been devoted to the news summaries. According to Ken Chitester, Director of the Office of News Analysis, a single staff member working overnight wrote all of the daily news summaries (Chitester, 1997, p. 59). It is also possible that the summaries were not produced after 1994. The Clinton library only located electronic records of emailed summaries from 1993-1994, raising the possibility that the summaries were discontinued (for details, see Appendix A.2).

While the summaries could be distributed electronically, the clips were only available in hardcopy. Most clips were cut out of printed newspapers. Like prior administrations, the time required to photocopy the clips limited their distribution (Chitester, 1997, p. 61). Unlike the news summary, the clips were only available to the president and senior White House staff (Kumar & Sullivan, 2003). On weekdays, the Office distributed about 125 copies of the news clips. Weekend news clips were shorter and only delivered to several dozen people (Chitester, 1997, p. 59).

Although news reports provided valuable information to White House staff,[14] receiving the

[12]For examples of Clinton's reports for magazines, editorials, and political cartoons ('Clintoons') can be found in Ira Magaziner's Files, 1993–1994 (National Archives Identifier 12092985) and David Kusnet's Files, 1993–1994 (National Archives Identifier 7431944).

[13]For example, in the June 11, 1999 clipbook, there is an article on a recent Supreme Court decision about police policy in Chicago (p. 9).

[14]For examples, see Barabak & Helfand (2010) and Powell (1981). Annotations on archived copies of news reports also show that the reports were actively reviewed by White House personnel. For examples, see Ira Magaziner's Files, 1993–1994 (National Archives Identifier 12092985) and David Kusnet's Files, 1993–1994 (National Archives Identifier 7431944). Both can be found in collection WJC-TFNHC: Records of the Task

clips also became a status symbol. According to Ken Chitester, "It was amazing how seriously people took the packages of news clippings we produced each morning. A lot of folks who got them didn't even need them—they just wanted to be on the distribution list because somebody else with a similar title was, and they didn't want to be left out" (Chitester, 1997, pp. 62–62). This status was partly a byproduct of the technology used to produce and distribute news reports. Before email and digital distribution, each additional recipient imposed printing and delivery costs, which forced administrators to limit circulation. As a result, inclusion on the distribution list became a visible marker of standing within the White House. Unsurprisingly, these technological constraints produced similar dynamics during prior administrations. An official from the Carter administration recalled, "the news summary, the original one that came from the White House, had a Carter green logo. When people would want to add on to the subscription list, we would tell them, Feel free to copy it. Well, that wasn't the same thing, because then you had a black cover where it said, The White House News Summary, whereas insiders would have the green one" (Powell, 1981).

By 1996, the Clinton administration made other changes to media monitoring. Most notably, the scope of the clipbooks shrank dramatically. During his first term, daily news reports contained clips from over 50 news sources. The new daily reports only contained clips from 11 sources. Instead of including a rotating selection of local newspapers in the daily news report, the office created a new weekly report. This new weekly report had additional local news sources[15] and a section for 'specialized news,' which included outlets affiliated with various ethnic groups, gender/sexuality groups, religious groups, and trades.[16] While these new reports had far fewer local news sources, they had a uniquely high number of other specialized sources. Tellingly, Jimmy Carter was once confronted for having so little Hispanic news in his news summaries.[17] Based on my review of Bush and Obama news reports (see Appendix A.2 for more details), neither included much news from ethnic, LGBTQ, or religious news outlets.

Unlike some prior administrations, Clinton's news reports were intended for White House staff broadly, not just the president. The intended audience of the clips is made explicit in a disclaimer included with the daily news clips package, which states that the clips were "prepared by the White House office to bring News items of interest to the attention of key

Force on National Health Care (Clinton Administration).

[15]In the local and specialized reports from 1999, the following local papers appear at least once: Boston Globe, Miami Herald, Philadelphia Inquirer, Arkansas Democrat Gazette, Detroit Free Press, St. Louis Post Dispatch, Houston Chronicle, San Francisco Chronicle, and Seattle Times.

[16]In the specialized reports from 1999, the following sections appear at least once: African-American, Asian American, Latino/Hispanic, Native American, European Ethnic, Asian, Gay/ Lesbian, Women's Issues, Social Issues, Religious, and Trades.

[17]In the conference, a reporter asked whether Carter would consider including more Hispanic media and mentioned that Carter's staff claimed that there "wasn't a staffer in the White House who could cull the information from the Hispanic media" (Carter, 1978). Carter acknowledged that "we could use more information from the Spanish-speaking community" but also defended their news summary operation: "We do use all three networks and summarize their evening news program, and we do use the lead stories from AP and UPI. That's the only thing that's included every day. The rest of the time they come from a very wide range of sources, sometimes little tiny newspapers, sometimes Spanish-Hispanic-American newspapers, sometimes black-owned newspapers" (Carter, 1978).

personnel for use in their Official capacities."[18]

Although news reports had a wide audience, they remained an important source of information for President Clinton. Staff repeatedly commented on Clinton's interest in the news and the daily clipbook. In a 1995 press briefing, a White House spokeswoman remarked that "in the morning, [Clinton] gets news clips, and he reads them" (Terzano, 1994). As Press Secretary Mike McCurry explained in 1997, the president sometimes noticed "the most amazingly obscure piece of journalism that you could imagine" (McCurry, 1997). Even when Clinton did not have time to read every article, the summary and his staff helped him stay up to date on news (McCurry, 1997).

Despite its central role in informing both staff and the president, the Office of News Analysis struggled to stay on top of the news. The office's difficulties reflected both persistent staffing constraints and the challenge of adapting older media-monitoring practices to a changing information environment. By the 1990s, the volume of available information was growing rapidly while new technologies were transforming how news could be collected and distributed. The office occupied an awkward position between the old world of manually assembled clipbooks and the emerging world of electronic news distribution. As a result, staff faced a growing flood of news content while trying to incorporate unfamiliar technologies into an existing workflow.

Part of this challenge involved persistent personnel shortages. According to Ken Chitester, the staff of the office was downsized from five full-time staff at the end of the George H.W. Bush administration to three full-time staff at the beginning of the Clinton administration (Chitester, 1997, p. 37).[19] Possibly as a response to its limited resources, the Office of News Analysis embraced a narrower role within the White House. While Carter's media monitoring staff routinely handled various research requests, Clinton's staff referred such requests to other offices, freeing the Office of News Analysis to focus on producing its regular media reports (Chitester, 1997, p. 62). Similarly, they used technology to shift media monitoring responsibilities to other offices. According to Chitester, "The goal was for Presidential aides or their assistants to be able to check for wire stories in their area of responsibility and hopefully take some of the load off of our understaffed Office of News Analysis" (Chitester, 1997, p. 42).

Compounding staff shortages, the office also struggled to adapt to a changing media environment. Technological advances made it possible to electronically deliver news directly to the White House at all hours of the day.[20] The office's first Director, Keith O. Boykin, had a new computer system installed right away (Gammill, 1993). By December 1994, the White House had fifteen workstations that could access wire services. This system also allowed Chitester to email "four daily compilations of wire stories directly to the bulletin

[18]For an example, see the "White House News Report, Wednesday, August 4, 1993, Morning Edition."

[19]Note that other sources report slightly different staffing numbers. In 1993, Clinton's first Director of the Office of News Analysis told the Harvard Crimson that the staff had halved from eight during the Bush administration to four under Clinton (Gammill, 1993).

[20]Before the internet, the White House had an older system for electronically transmitting news summaries to the President when he traveled, but it was cumbersome. During George H.W. Bush's administration, there was "an Air Force officer accompanied the President, responsible for the secure system that allowed us to directly transmit our reports in a pre-internet world" (Cooper, 2018).

board on our computer system so everybody at the White House could scroll through them" (Chitester, 1997, p. 42).

Computers also impacted how clips were collected. As early as 199X, the first printed articles appear in the clipbooks. By 1996, the Press Secretary had access to an electronic clipping service called "News Edge" (Fetig, 1999).[21] The White House also had access to services like Lexis Nexis, another database of news articles.[22] Despite access to these services, most clips continued to be collected by hand from print copies of newspapers.

Importantly, online article databases enabled new methods for finding and organizing clips and changed the economics of media monitoring. Physically cutting out clips from newspapers required someone to read every article and determine whether it was relevant. In contrast, digital files could be searched with computers, allowing for time-intensive tasks to be automated. Suddenly, the marginal cost of collecting news was far lower if online articles were available. This likely pushed the White House towards papers that happened to be available online before the clips packet needed to be circulated. As discussed previously, by 1996, the format of clipbooks had changed. Daily news reports only included the major national sources, papers from Washington DC, and three local/regional papers.[23] Tellingly, the only West Coast Paper, the Los Angeles Times, and the three local papers were all printed, rather than cut out of newspapers.

In their book on White House transitions, Martha Joynt Kumar and Terry Sullivan (2003) predicted that the internet would reduce the importance of the White House news summary: "In a sense, the news summary has been transformed and downgraded in importance by the advent of newspapers found on the Internet. While in earlier times the White House would send someone down to the Post for the early, or 'Bull Dog,' edition released late at night, today the staff view stories online" (p. 244). Given the reduced scope of centralized media monitoring during the Clinton administration, it is easy to see how they came to this conclusion. However, changing technology did not reduce the White House's demand for information. While undermining the old system of media monitoring, the internet also produced new challenges that necessitated new solutions. Rather than abandon news summaries, technology pushed White House media monitoring to evolve.

In summary, the Clinton years were a transitional period marked by tension between an inherited media monitoring system and a rapidly changing information environment. Despite attempts to incorporate new technology, they never fully integrated these tools into their media monitoring system. Faced with electronic delivery, new clipping services, staffing

[21] In 1997, the company that offered this service, Desktop Data Inc., merged with another company to form NewsEdge Corp. At that time, the "combined company will have more than 2,000 information sources under license, delivering about 50,000 stories daily to more than 840,000 readers" (Dow Jones Newswires, 1997). The service was also described as particularly expensive and potentially threatened by upcoming free services (Rigdon, 1996).

[22] For evidence of Lexis Nexis use, see the National Archive files named "Lexis-Nexis" (NAID: 52874518) and "Lexis-Nexis Awareness Search Hillary Rodham Clinton, February 18, 1998" (NAID: 26415290).

[23] Specifically, the clipbooks included the following sources: major national sources (wire reports, TV headlines, New York Times, Wall Street Journal, USA Today, Los Angeles Times), papers from Washington DC (Washington Post, Washington Times), and papers that could be accessed via Lexis Nexis (Chicago Tribune, Knight-Ridder, Dallas Morning News). In the 1990s, Knight-Ridder owned dozens of local and regional papers.

constraints, and a widening media environment, the office moved away from producing a single comprehensive news report. Instead, they experimented with various spin off reports, encouraged other offices to search online news directly, and reduced the scope of their primary media monitoring report. Even in its last years, the administration relied extensively on a labor-intensive system of manually reviewing and cutting clips from major newspapers.

1.2 The Bulletin Era and the Institutionalization of Greater Continuity (2001-2025)

A major institutional break occurred when George W. Bush took office in 2001 (Kumar & Sullivan, 2003). Beginning that year, production of the White House news summary was outsourced to a private contractor, Bulletin Intelligence ("Bulletin").[24] Bulletin went on to produce news summaries for every subsequent administration. Its contract with the Executive Office of the President (EOP) extended through the Obama, Trump, and Biden administrations, creating a degree of continuity that had been largely absent in the earlier period. Across these administrations, Bulletin's reports retained a broadly similar format and production process. As a result of this continuity, differences across administrations are less likely to reflect changes in how the reports were produced and more likely to reflect differences in presidential priorities, media environments, and technology.

To understand the purpose and audience of the White House News Summaries (WHNS) and News Clips (WHNC) produced by Bulletin, I submitted a Freedom of Information Request (FOIA) for all email correspondence between Bulletin and the Bush White House before March 31, 2001 (Bush Library FOIA 2024-0154-F).[25] I also searched USA Spending, a database of federal spending information, for payments from the Executive Office of the President (EOP) to Bulletin. Lastly, I reviewed SAM.gov for contract solicitations and similar documents related to White House media monitoring (see the Appendix A.1 for more details). I also collected a sample of 320 WHNC and 205 WHNS (see Appendix A.2 for details).

In examining Bulletin's contract with the White House, I relied extensively on four sets of documents: the contract proposal from Bulletin Intelligence in 2001 and three contract solicitations in 2010, 2018, and 2021.[26] Contract solicitations contain multiple documents, including a Statements of Work (SOW), which describes the purpose, scope and requirements for a contract.

[24]Bulletin Intelligence has gone through several name changes over the years. In the 2000s, it was also known as Bulletin News Network Incorporated. Its name changed again after it was acquired by Cision, Inc in 2017 (Bulletin Intelligence, 2025). The 'Bulletin Intelligence' name continued to be used on Cision products before being phased out in recent years. For simplicity, I will use the name 'Bulletin' to refer to the company before and after the merger.

[25]I also submitted a similar request to the Obama library for the emails between the White House and Bulletin as well (24-70035-F, 24-70034-F). As of June 2026, this request is still being processed.

[26]The 2001 proposal was produced in response to Bush Library FOIA 2024-0154-F. The other documents were attached to contract solicitations on SAM.gov (notice nos. OAS-GEN-R-10-0101, OND-GEN-D-18-0052, and 11316021Q0005EOP). For additional details about these documents, see Appendix A.1.

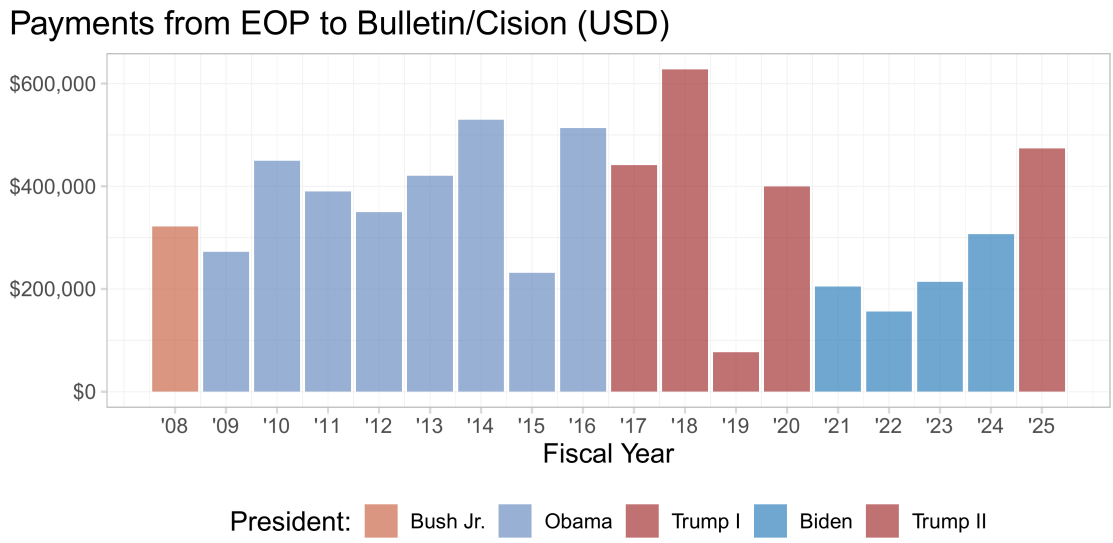


Figure 1.1: Total obligations by the Executive Office of the President (EOP) to Bulletin News Network Incorporated, Bulletin Intelligence LLC, and Cision US Inc. Data from USA Spending.

From 2008 to 2025, the White House paid Bulletin an average of $354,430 per year (see Figure 1.1).[27] USA Spending does not have data before this period. While Figure 1.1 shows fluctuations in White House spending on Bulletin's media monitoring services, these changes in spending are difficult to interpret without further data collection and analysis. First, the yearly fluctuations are partly an artifact of how USA Spending aggregates the data.[28] Second, the scope of the contracts changed over time.

Specifically, the number of reports and services covered by the Bulletin contract increased over time. The original contract only included the main WHNS and WHNC. The total first year cost for 2001 was around $142,500.[29] By 2018, Bulletin's EOP contract included a mid-day and evening edition of the WHNS, covered news reports for at least two additional EOP components,[30] and authorized other EOP components to also order off the Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA).[31] The 2018 and 2021 contracts also required an analytics dashboard with news media and social-media metrics.

[27]Remarkably, despite his administration's threats to cut other news services (Basu & Caputo, 2025; Guardian Staff, 2025; Kornfield et al., 2025), Trump's administration has continued to renew the Bulletin contract. EOP finalized a new $321,551 contract with Cision for "NEWS CLIPS/BRIEFING" in September 2025. See USA spending page for Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA) Call, PIID 11316025F0013WHO.

[28]According to USA Spending's website: "Obligations across the life of the award are aggregated and displayed under the latest month, quarter, or year of the latest transaction action date for each award."

[29]According to the 2001 draft proposal, "Bulletin News will provide the summary and clips package at only the cost required to hire the three additional writers and meet the new 6:00 a.m., 7-day-a-week deadline. The three workers will average $45,000 per year, which means the monthly rate for these workers will be $11,250. There will be an additional cost of $7,500 for the first month for the overtime weekend duty for existing Bulletin News staff."

[30]The 2018 and 2021 contracts required separate reports for Office of the Vice President and Office of National Drug Control Policy.

[31]See the Statement of Work for the Solicitation for "Expert-edited Daily and Intra-day News Briefings" posted Sept. 14, 2018 (OND-GEN-D-18-0052).

1.2.1 Why Privatize News Summaries?

Why did the Bush administration break with the prior six presidents and outsource its news summaries? Unfortunately, none of the documents that I reviewed provide a clear answer. However, there were likely several factors.

First, an ideological commitment to privatization may have spurred the Bush administration to outsource the news summary. Early in his administration, Bush announced plans for making almost half of all government jobs eligible for outsourcing (Chen, 2002). Compared to other presidents, Bush was particularly aggressive in pushing public-private competitions for jobs and "included it as one component of the President's Management Agenda" (Halchin, 2012). Over his administration, payments to government contractors doubled (Zwerdling, 2008, p. 2).

Second, the early leaders of Bulletin had experience reading and producing White House news summaries. Many of Bulletin's early leaders worked for Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush. One of its editors, Bruce Wilmot, served in both administrations as the White House Director of News Summary and Audio Services.[32] Bulletin's promotional material emphasizes the fact that its "editorial staff is trained in politics, and applies a layer of seasoned human judgment to the technological underpinning of BNN information services."[33]

Third, and perhaps most importantly, the internet changed the economic calculus of media monitoring by creating economies of scale. Previously, there were companies like Burrelle's Press Clipping Bureau that specialized in collecting and filing newspaper articles (Popp, 2014). However, it took time to read, index, retrieve, and send clips. To monitor breaking news, the White House had to review papers in real time and identify articles that met a narrow set of criteria. In contrast, the internet and digital copies of articles made it possible to automate news collection, use keywords to quickly sort articles, and rapidly distribute summaries.

While the marginal cost of a new report was far lower than under manual clipping systems, building digital news collection infrastructure required substantial upfront investment and continual maintenance. In 2001, Bulletin had a fairly sophisticated system of scraping news using "proprietary software, search-and-delivery engines, and web spiders."[34] By the time that they began to produce the WHNS and WHNC, Bulletin had a decade of experience producing a popular electronic daily newsletter.[35] Although this existing product was not customized for individual clients, it helped fund systems and develop expertise that Bulletin later used to produce tailored news summaries for the White House.

[32]See the draft proposal for Draft Proposal For White House News Summary and Clips Package, which is attached to an email from Paul Roellig to Vickers B. Meadows on February 16, 2001 (Bush Library FOIA 2024-0154-F).

[33]See the January 30, 2001 email from Mark Gabor to Brian Bravo (Bush Library FOIA 2024-0154-F).

[34]See email from Mark Gabor to Brian Bravo dated January 30, 2001 (Bush Library FOIA 2024-0154-F).

[35]See the draft proposal for Draft Proposal For White House News Summary and Clips Package, which is attached to an email from Paul Roellig to Vickers B. Meadows on February 16, 2001 (Bush Library FOIA 2024-0154-F). See also the email from Mark Gabor to Brian Bravo dated January 30, 2001 (Bush Library FOIA 2024-0154-F).

Having already built the necessary news-gathering infrastructure, Bulletin could offer new products at a fraction of the cost. In their original proposal, Bulletin noted this explicitly: "The full cost associated with the production of such an in-depth news summary and clipping service, obviously, is far greater, but Bulletin News already has many of these costs covered through existing operations."[36] Their contract proposal states that they would only charge the White House for the additional staff required to complete the White House news reports.

Between lowering barriers to publication and making traditional media more accessible, the internet also increased pressure to monitor larger quantities of news. Scholars of political communication and journalism have long argued that the rise of cable television, online news, and later social media fragmented audiences and accelerated the news cycle [Chadwick (2017); prior2007post]. Instead of a relatively stable media environment dominated by a handful of national newspapers and broadcast networks, political actors increasingly confronted a growing number of outlets operating on a 24-hour news cycle. The rise of continuous news coverage created what one Clinton aide described as a "giant monster" that had to be continually fed (O'Mara, 2015, p. 184). For the White House, these developments increased the value of systematic media monitoring. The challenge was no longer simply collecting a small number of influential stories each morning, but identifying relevant information from an expanding and increasingly fragmented information environment.

Bulletin's own marketing emphasizes this challenge. In its press releases, Bulletin has described itself as "The perfect antidote to information overload" (Bulletin Intelligence, 2014). Acquiring Bulletin Intelligence, Cision shared a similar sentiment, describing how "In an era of excess information and the 24/7 news cycle, the addition of Bulletin's world-class analyst services bolsters our ability to provide data-driven insights that today's executives need to make critical business decisions" (Cision Ltd., 2017).

1.2.2 How did Bulletin Produce the News Summary?

The 2001 proposal and the 2010, 2018, and 2021 contract solicitations all describe a similar process for producing the news summaries: (1) find and review news clips, (2) identify relevant information in the clips, (3) write short summaries of the relevant information in articles, remove redundant information, and "weave the remaining (important) information such that it reads as a single story rather than subsets of the myriad stories on the same topic" (2021 SOW, p. 2-3).

The first stage involved identifying and collecting relevant news coverage. In its original proposal, Bulletin lists its main sources, which include all major TV networks, wire services, and major papers.[37] In later contracts, the list of sources would expand to include "all

[36]See the draft proposal for Draft Proposal For White House News Summary and Clips Package, which is attached to an email from Paul Roellig to Vickers B. Meadows on February 16, 2001 (Bush Library FOIA 2024-0154-F).

[37]The original proposal included the following papers: "newspapers regularly covered within the news summary will be the Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Washington Times, USA Today, Los Angeles Times, Detroit News, New York Post, Baltimore Sun, Miami Herald, Chicago Tribune, Seattle Post-Intelligencer, Atlanta Constitution-Journal, and the Boston Globe. In addition, Bulletin News

major (and many smaller) daily newspapers, national television and cable news, most local television markets, newsweeklies, relevant magazines and journals, internet sites, specialty press, etc." (2021 SOW, p. 2). Additionally, Bulletin was expected to expand the scope of its search "when analysts determine a source outside the core list has additional important information or when, for example, the President travels, in which case the White House News Summary will include deeper coverage from outlets in that market" (2021 SOW, p. 2).

Many day-to-day editorial judgments were made by Bulletin independently, but the White House had input into key decisions. Contract solicitations required that contractors be able to, on short notice, "change the topics to be covered; the deadlines; the topic sections; the format of the briefing; etc. as directed" (2010 SOW, p. 3; see also 2021 SOW, p. 3; and 2018 SOW, p. 4). Emails between Bulletin and the Bush administration contain evidence of numerous adjustments requested by the Bush administration. In February 2001, the White House asked for numerous modifications to the news summaries, including an early edition for the President's Chief of Staff, the addition of a section with "summaries of relevant editorials from the NYT, WP, WSJ and LAT," and putting "Bush news" first in the WHNS.[38]

In other emails, White House requests involve specific stages of news summary production. In various emails, the White House requests changes to the first stage by specifying particular sources to be added to the briefings. At one point, the White House provided a list of columnists for Bulletin to monitor.[39] In other emails, they discuss what local sources the administration wants added to the first stage.[40]

Occasionally, the White House would provide direct input into the second stage by asking for a specific clip to be included in the next day's reports. In the first two-and-a-half months of the Bush administration, this occurred at least twice. In one case, the clip was requested over email.[41] In the other case, an email apologizes for missing a clip requested by voicemail.[42] If other clips were requested only by phone, they would not appear in the surviving email correspondence, making it difficult to determine how often such requests occurred.

The topic sections in a report affect both steps two and three by defining what information is important. Because they are determined by the White House, the topic sections in a report can tell us about how presidential input and external events shape the news summaries. While many sections stay constant across administrations, presidential interests are reflected in the topic sections. Sometimes sections reflect major personal or political concerns. From 2002-2004, the Bush administration had a section called "Corporate Scandal News," which was mostly Enron coverage (see also Benke, 2018). In 2015, the Obama administration added

will include coverage of unique or breaking stories from hundreds of other regional and overseas papers, Congressional Quarterly and the major newsweeklies" (p. 1).

[38]See the February 14, 2001 04:18:11 PM email from Paul Roellig to Blake Gottesman (Bush Library FOIA 2024-0154-F).

[39]See the February 14, 2001 04:18:11 PM email from Paul Roellig to Blake Gottesman (Bush Library FOIA 2024-0154-F).

[40]See proposal attached to the February 7, 2001 16:14:01 email from Paul Roellig to William T. Griffin (Bush Library FOIA 2024-0154-F). For a list of requested local papers, see Appendix A.3.

[41]See the March 15, 2001 emails between Paul Roellig and Brian Bravo (Bush Library FOIA 2024-0154-F).

[42]See the February 21, 2001 emails between Paul Roellig and Brian Bravo (Bush Library FOIA 2024-0154-F).

"National Policing Debate News" as a section. Other times, temporary sections reflecting major events were added. For example, after the Deepwater Horizon disaster in 2010, a section called "Oil Spill" was temporarily added to the WHNS.

In addition to describing similar procedures, the contract documents justify needing the news summaries using similar, albeit vague, language. The 2010 contract solicitation explains that "In furtherance of the EOP's mission, senior officials shall start each day fully informed regarding important news printed and broadcast nationwide. The EOP has determined that this can best be accomplished via an expert-edited briefing rather than full-text articles or computer-generated summaries" (2010 SOW, p.2). Similar language can be found in the 'Purpose' section of the 2018 solicitation: "The EOP is committed to providing its staff and components the latest news, headlines, and analysist [sic] that give subscribers rapid, accurate, and critical information via desktop and mobile devices, so that the EOP staff and its components are able to become acquainted with voluminous news information, quickly and efficiently, in order to execute critical and strategic planning and decision-making" (2018 SOW, p.1).

While some prior administrations focused primarily on coverage of the president, the contract documents all describe a broader scope for the Bulletin-produced news summaries. The most detailed description of the briefing scope comes from emails between Bulletin's leaders and the Bush administration in 2001:[43]

> In doing the White House News Summary, we literally scan the universe for anything to do with politics and policy with a Washington impact. That includes issue areas affecting virtually all the Cabinet agencies...We also cover state level issues which are likely to have a national impact - e.g., the California electricity situation. It also includes stories specifically covering the President, Vice President, Cabinet officers, party officials of both parties, congressional leaders and members. The White House News Summary also keeps track of political developments in Washington and around the country, including Federal races (US House, US Senate, President) and major state races (primarily governors). In addition, we cover White House stories, including personnel developments, scandals, policy planning, management and administration. The news summary also keeps track of developments in Congress - policy, political, structural (e.g., committee restructuring), and personnel.

The later contract solicitations similarly require Bulletin to look beyond coverage of the president. For example, the solicitations require that contractors consider "various constituencies within the EOP" when determining the relevance of a story (2021 SOW, p. 2; 2018 SOW, p. 2; 2010 SOW, p. 4). Also, they all require a national news section "suitable to the needs of EOP officials who shall be kept aware of important developments affecting the federal government broadly so they may interact with peers in the Administration and Congress" (2010 SOW, p.3).

[43] See email dated February 1, 2001 4:01 PM, produced in response to Bush Library FOIA No. 2024-0154-F.

Taken together, the contracts and correspondence reveal a striking degree of continuity in how White House news summaries were produced. Across administrations, Bulletin relied on a similar process for collecting, selecting, and synthesizing information, even as the specific sources, topics, and stories changed over time. This continuity created a relatively stable institutional framework through which both White House priorities and external events could shape the content of the summaries.

1.2.3 What Changed?

Although Bulletin's basic approach to producing White House news summaries remained remarkably stable, the service continued to evolve. Changes in the media environment, advances in technology, and shifting White House needs altered the products Bulletin delivered and the tools it used to create them. Three developments are particularly important. First, the services covered by the contracts evolved. Second, technological change transformed both the production of the summaries and the broader media environment they were designed to monitor. Third, later contracts imposed fewer explicit requirements regarding analyst qualifications and the use of automated tools.

Table 1.1: White House News Monitoring Contract Documents

Contract Document	News Summary (WHNS)	News Clips (WHNC)	Analytics Dashboard	Social Media Analytics
2001 Proposal	X	X		
2005 Description*	X	X		
2010 SOW	X		X**	
2018 SOW	X		X	X
2021 SOW	X		X	X

* Only the contract description is available for the 2005 contract on SAM.gov.
** While not required, the The analytics dashboard is an optional service in the 2010 SOW.
*** For the 2001 proposal, see Bush Library FOIA 2024-0154-F. For the other documents, see the SAM.gov entries for the following following notice IDs EOPOA-25010 (2005), OAS-GEN-R-10-0101 (2010), OND-GEN-D-18-0052 (2018), and 11316021Q0005EOP (2021).

(1) Services provided by Bulletin — While all contracts require a WHNS, the other services vary. Table 1.1 summarizes the main services provided under each contract.[44] Bulletin's 2001 proposal describes two documents that it would produce every day: a 15-20 page WHNS and a 75+ page WHNC, which would be a packet of full text news articles used to construct the WHNS. Eventually, the WHNC were dropped from the contract. The 2010, 2018, and 2021 contract documents do not require WHNC and the Obama library could not find any emailed copies after 2010.[45] Instead, links would be provided to full-text articles or

[44]Table 1.1 does not include additional reports for other EOP components (e.g. the Vice President News Summary), which are covered by the 2018 and 2021 SOW. Because of gaps in the available documentation, I could not determine whether other reports were included in the other contracts.

[45]According to a September 20, 2024 call with the Obama library, news clips were not emailed after 2010 but news summaries were emailed throughout the Obama administration. Requesting similar records from the Presidential Materials Division of the National Archives produced a similar result. In a September 25, 2024 email, Jessica Owens confirmed that the archivists were unable to find any WHNC in Joe Biden's Vice

video/audio clips.

Dropping the WHNC did not shrink Bulletin's workload; instead, other services were added to the contract. By 2018, the Bulletin contract included additional midday and evening versions of the WHNS as well as an analytics dashboard. While the 2010 contract solicitations only requires one 25-30 page WHNS document, it invites contractors to propose an additional service similar to the 'analytics dashboard' that appear as requirements in the 2018 and 2021 SOW.[46] Both the 2018 and 2021 solicitations provide detailed requirements for this dashboard, requiring that it provide metrics for stories "that mention the White House in conjunction with a topic of interest to the White House" (2018 SOW, p. 4). Unlike the WHNS, the contractor was expected to use automated tools (including sentiment analysis) for this product. The 2018 and 2021 solicitations also require a similar service for social media analytics.

While dropped by later administrations, there is some evidence that the Clips were particularly valued by the Bush administration, but the evidence is not conclusive. Most compellingly, the headings/sections were also changed far more frequently in the WHNC compared to the WHNS. In the WHNS and WHNC that I collected (see Appendix A.2), there are only 15 unique headings in the WHNS and 154 unique headings in the WHNC. Additionally, news coverage of Bush's reading habits suggest that he preferred to skim headlines (Kinsley, 2003). On the other hand, the WHNC were sent to fewer people. According to a 2005 contract solicitation, the WHNC were circulated to approximately 100 staff and the WHNS were circulated to approximately 2500 staff.[47]

(2) Technology – Technology had many effects on Bulletin's operations. Internally, their technology for scraping and analyzing news evolved. Externally, access to online articles also improved.

In 2001, Bulletin was still developing their system for collecting news from websites. According to a February 2001 email chain about one of their several hundred code files, Bulletin's web scraping scripts were fragile.[48] When discussing their script for scraping USA Today's state-by-state wrap-up, an employee estimated "the reliability of the process at 85%." They struggled with key tools crashing and could not fully adapt to inconsistent website html

Presidential records after October 1, 2010.

[46]Per the 2010 SOW, "EOP desires a service to provide a perspective/view of media coverage trends over a time period designated by the end user. The capability shall provide a simple presentation tool that EOP officials can use to view the analytics in charts and graphs and in multiple slices, including daily, weekly and monthly trends, positive/negative coverage of national and regional stories from media types (print, television, internet, regional trends, etc.) Vendors are invited to address such a service in their responses and to provide separate pricing" (p. 5).

[47]See the 2005 contract solicitation description, Notice ID EOPOA-25010.

[48]The email contains additional details about the scraping script: "The page is updated by a vbscript in Autotask at around 6 a.m. each weekday morning. The vbscript pulls the paper feed in from Edev, formats and parses the news onto this page and each individual state page. I'd rate the reliability of the process at 85%. Five percent of problems with this page are related to Autotask crashes. The other 10 percent of the problems occur when the format of the feed changes. Even minor items, like an extra blank line can throw the process off." See the email from Vin Narayanan to Kinsey S. Wilson on February 14, 2001 (Bush Library FOIA 2024-0154-F). See also the email from Kinsey S. Wilson to Paul Roellig on February 14, 2001 (Bush Library FOIA 2024-0154-F).

formatting. Because of these challenges, they had to temporarily rely on less automated methods of collecting news, like having USA Today email Bulletin the articles directly. In the long term, Bulletin planned to rewrite its scripts.

Early news websites also imposed additional constraints. In 2001, critical news sources were not always available in time. In some cases, Bulletin arranged to receive early copies of stories.[49] In at least one case, Bulletin arranged for news websites to post stories earlier. On Feb 14, 2001, the White House told Bulletin that Andy Card[50] wanted editorials from the LA Times (LAT) by 5:55am every morning. At the time, LAT did not post it's editorials early enough to be included. After they reached out, Bulletin reported that "The LA Times says they will speed up a new system to post their editorials on the Web in time for us to put them in the Summary, but this won't be in place until later this spring. In the meantime, they are working to find a way to have somebody email us the editorials once they are finished."[51] On March 22, Bulletin reported, "The LAT just called to say they have redone their Web site system to allow their editorials to be posted by 5:00 a.m. They plan to overhaul the rest of the system over the next few months, but they did a temporary fix for us to get the editorials up early."[52]

However, some sources, especially West Coast news outlets, were excluded from early WHNS because they were not posted early enough and Bulletin had not arranged for early delivery of their articles. In February 2001, the White House asked Bulletin whether they could produce a separate local news summary. In Bulletin's proposal, they proposed a later deadline (9:30 am) and emphasized the difficulties of acquiring local news:[53]

> Due to the inconsistent times the daily news is posted on the Web sites of a number of the local papers selected by the White House, it is difficult to accurately state what BNN [Bulletin] can do and at what cost...BNN has developed special relationships with a number of media companies and their reporters, however, which allows BNN to acquire by email and fax the relevant news stories before they are posted on the newspapers' Web sites. BNN would attempt to develop such relationships with the White House-selected newspapers, but cannot guarantee success.

Ultimately, the Bush administration chose not to pay for expanded local news coverage and

[49]Bulletin arranged to receive an early copy of USA Today's state-by-state wrap-up via email. In addition to a fragile web scraper, Bulletin also struggled with when these articles were posted. According to a February 14, 2001 04:18:11 PM email from Paul Roellig to Blake Gottesman, "I've been informed that USA Today's state-by-state wrap-up is often not available on their Web site by 6:30 a.m. However, the editor in chief of USAToday.com is a friend, and I've asked him to consider the possibility of emailing us the file in time for its inclusion in the White House News Clips" (Bush Library FOIA 2024-0154-F).

[50]Andy Card was Bush's chief of staff. According to press coverage from the time, he was one of two people who would regularly brief Bush on the news each morning.

[51]See email from Paul Roellig to Blake Gottesman dated February 28, 2001 (Bush Library FOIA 2024-0154-F).

[52]See email from Paul Roellig to Blake Gottesman dated March 22, 2001 (Bush Library FOIA 2024-0154-F).

[53]See p.2 of the attachment to Paul Roellig's February 7, 2001 email to William T. Griffin (Bush Library FOIA 2024-0154-F).

continued to monitor local TV news "in-house."[54] By 2010, the contracts had been expanded to cover local TV and print news.

In another instance, Bulletin advised against reaching out to the newspaper for an early copy. In February 2001, the White House requested that Bulletin add the Washington Post's "Reliable Source" column, which was the paper's society and gossip column. In their response, Bulletin noted that the column was usually published after their 6:30am deadline, but it advised against reaching out: "I would guess it is possible to call and ask them to email their stories in advance each day, but think it possible/likely that they would figure a way to mention this fact in their column. I'll let you decide if the juice is worth the squeezing."[55]

Technology also influenced the kinds of media embedded in news summaries. Early Bulletin-produced WHNS did not contain links to audio or video clip. When citing a TV or radio source, Bulletin would either provide no link or it would provide a link to a print story on the broadcaster's website. Around 2006, Bulletin started linking to videos hosted on its own servers. By 2010, links to video or audio clips became a contract requirement "[f]or broadcast stories in which reviewing the actual audio/video would be particularly useful" (2010 SOW, p. 3). The 2018 and 2021 solicitations contain similar language.

(3) Role of expertise and human review — Emphasis on expertise and human review appear in all of the contracts, but the contract language changes over time. All of the contract solicitations require using "human analyst/editors" and require "expert analysts to search, analyze, and filter the nation's news" (2021 SOW, p. 1-2). However, early contracts have more stringent language around human review. For example, the 2010 solicitation requires that bidders submit "resumes/bios of relevant managers and editors/analysts" (2010 SOW, p. 4). While justifying this requirement, the solicitation states that expertise is needed because the reports "will be a significant source of information for EOP officials" (2010 SOW, p. 4). Later contracts do not require proof of employee expertise.

The 2018 and 2021 contract documents are also less clear about how automated tools can be used. In fact, the 2018 solicitation "requires the Contractor to utilize seasoned analysts with the potential to supplement with artificial-intelligence engines (i.e., Natural Language Processing) to deliver functionality cost-effectively, responsively, and with high quality" (2018 SOW, p. 1). In comparison, the 2010 solicitation emphasizes that its goals require "an expert-edited briefing rather than full-text articles or computer-generated summaries" (2010 SOW, p. 2). The 2010 solicitation also specifically limits overreliance on automated tools: "The vendor shall review important news outlets in hardcopy to identify stories not available electronically or news of interest to the EOP even if that news does not contain relevant keywords" (2010 SOW, p. 2). By the 2018 and 2020 solicitations, the language had been watered down: "The Contractor shall review important news outlets of interest to the EOP, even if that news does not contain relevant keywords" (2021 SOW, p. 2)

[54]See email from William T. Griffin to Paul Roellig dated March 30, 2001 (Bush Library FOIA 2024-0154-F).

[55]See the February 14, 2001 04:18:11 PM email from Paul Roellig to Blake Gottesman (Bush Library FOIA 2024-0154-F).

1.2.4 Audience and Circulation

While there is evidence that both Bush and Obama were consumers of the daily news reports, the reports were intended for a much broader audience and circulated widely. Officially, Bulletin's 2001 contract only allowed distribution to a narrow list of people: "our deal with the White House calls for limited distribution of the White House News Summary to the President, his cabinet, and senior White House aides."[56] However, as early as June 2001, the daily press briefings listserve contained 267 emails.[57] Later, the contract was updated to cover all EOP staff.[58]

Unlike the other presidents since Nixon, George W. Bush was noted for consuming relatively little news.[59] According to press reports, he skimmed paper headlines and relied on a verbal briefing on the news from Andy Card and Condoleezza Rice each morning (Kinsley, 2003). Notably, the WHNC contained a table of contents with story headlines organized by topic, and internal emails reveal that Bush did get a copy of the WHNC every morning.[60] In fact, in March 2001, the White House scolded Bulletin for sending the Clips after 6:50 a.m., saying "today the clips barely made it to the President and Ari [his Press Secretary] before they left for Orlando, while both were expecting them before they left."[61] Additionally, internal emails reveal that Andy Card requested an early copy of the news summary by 5:55 a.m. each morning.[62] Arranging for an early copy of the briefing suggests that Card valued it as an information source and needed it before he would verbally brief the president.

In contrast, Obama was widely regarded as an avid consumer of news. According to the Washington Post, Obama "reads his news summary each morning" and supplements his briefing with many other sources (Kornblut, 2009). Press coverage describes him "reading newspapers and magazines on his iPad and in print and dipping into blogs and Twitter" (Chozick, 2012). He began his days "reading the major newspapers, including his hometown Chicago Tribune and Chicago Sun-Times, mostly on his iPad through apps rather than their Web sites" (Chozick, 2012).

While I could not find any press coverage about Biden's news habits during his presidency, Politico published a detailed story on his news consumption in December 2020, shortly before he took office (Lippman, 2020). A news summary or clipbook is the first source mentioned

[56]See the February 1, 2001 email from Mark Gabor to Ashley E. Davis (Bush Library FOIA 2024-0154-F).

[57]See emails from Brian Bravo on June 3, 2001 (Bush Library FOIA 2021-0121-F).

[58]See the 2005 contract solicitation description, Notice ID EOPOA-25010: "The WHNS is made available via the EOP intranet to all Executive Office of the President staff of approximately 2500 employees. The WHNS Clips are made available to approximately 100 White House staff and the ONDCPNB is made available to approximately 150 ONDCP staff." See also the Question and Answer document attached to the 2021 solicitation for "News briefings summaries, news clips, or full texts of the articles or transcripts summaries," Notice ID 11316021Q0005EOP. According to the answers, the "access to the daily news summary briefing on the IP-protected website…should be provided to all EOP staff, with an expected use by at least 250+ staff." In comparison, approximately 50 staff were expected to use the Analytics Dashboard.

[59]For evidence that Obama, Trump, and Biden all directly consumed news from various media outlets, see Chozick (2012); McGraw (2024); and Lippman (2020).

[60]See the March 21, 2001 email from Brian Bravo to Mark Gabor (Bush Library FOIA 2024-0154-F).

[61]See the March 21, 2001 email from Brian Bravo to Mark Gabor (Bush Library FOIA 2024-0154-F).

[62]See the February 14, 2001 email from Paul Roellig to Blake Gottesman (Bush Library FOIA 2024-0154-F).

in the article: "Like many other politicians, Biden gets a clips package at 9 a.m. On a busy day, it can run up to 50 pages. On a slower day, it is more in the 15- to 20-page range." Biden supplemented the clips package with other sources, including the New York Times and MSNBC's Morning Joe.

While Donald Trump is most known for closely watching Fox News (Bump, 2017), his media diet extends to other television networks and print sources (Smith, 2017; VandeHei & Allen, 2017). I have been unable to find any evidence that he reads the Bulletin-produced WHNS, but his campaign staff were known for using clipping services to find articles for him to read (VandeHei & Allen, 2017). Supplementing clips printed by his staff, Trump also reads several print newspapers every morning, including the New York Times and New York Post [Smith (2017); McGraw (2024); allen2017trumpreads; Lippman (2019)].

During his first term, Trump's aides put together a 1- to 2-inch thick folder with printed copies of new clips for him to read every morning (Lippman, 2019). Trump's staff tried to control the clips that he would see, limiting his exposure to certain kinds of coverage. Others would try to go around this system to achieve their own political ends: "people would put articles on the president's desk that were things he didn't need to see, things that were meant to gin him up or get him mad at somebody…When somebody prints something off to hand to him, good or bad, that's when you knew somebody was out for you. 'Hey, how come there's a copy here of a story from Breitbart?' " (Lippman, 2019).

In his second term, Trump's staff continue to print clips for him to read, but he had additional means of accessing clips (McGraw, 2024). After leaving office in 2021, his news diet broadened as he began receiving article links directly on his phone from a large network of contacts.[63] He also began getting news through Truth Social, which was launched in 2022 (McGraw, 2024).

1.3 Conclusion

For more than half a century, presidents and their staffs have relied on systematic media monitoring to collect, summarize, and circulate politically relevant information. Yet the historical record reveals that the "White House news summary" was never a single, stable institution. Across administrations, media monitoring systems differed substantially in their intended audience, sources, organizational structure, and relationship to other information channels. Nixon's summaries were designed to substitute for direct news consumption whereas Carter's were tailored to complement it. Reagan's summaries focused narrowly on coverage of the administration while George H. W. Bush's media monitoring staff monitored a much wider range of domestic and international developments. Each administration's media monitoring efforts reflected presidential preferences, organizational priorities, and the broader information environment.

[63]Specifically, after leaving office in 2021, Trump's news diet expanded substantially because he "learned to use the iMessage feature on his iPhone" (McGraw, 2024). He now receives news links from a much broader set of people—anyone who has his number can text him articles or blog posts.

The largest institutional break occurred in 2001, when the George W. Bush administration outsourced news collection and summary production to Bulletin Intelligence. Outsourcing created greater continuity than had existed under the earlier in-house model. The same contractor produced news summaries for five consecutive administrations, and contract documents describe a remarkably consistent production process. Even so, White House media monitoring continued to evolve. Changes in technology, the growth of digital news, the fragmentation of the media environment, and shifting presidential priorities all shaped what information was collected, summarized, and distributed.

This history sheds light on the data generating process that produced White House news reports. The contents of these reports reflect both editorial decisions and the institutional systems that produced them. Differences across administrations may arise from changes in technology, organizational structure, distribution practices, reporting requirements, or presidential preferences rather than shifts in the underlying news environment alone. Understanding how these reports were created is therefore essential for interpreting what they contain.

More broadly, the history of White House media monitoring highlights a critical aspect of presidential governance. Presidents and their staffs confront far more information than they can consume directly. News summaries, clipbooks, and related reports help transform a vast and fragmented media environment into a manageable stream of information. In doing so, they shape what decision-makers learn about the world, what problems receive attention, and which developments are elevated inside the executive branch. This paper provides the historical context necessary for studying those processes and for understanding how media information reaches the White House.

Chapter 2

How Bureaucracies Acquire Information from a Partisan Media Supply

Effective government depends on bureaucrats acquiring accurate and timely political information. Incomplete or biased information can distort how bureaucrats perceive their strategic environment, affecting judgments about other political actors, public opinion, and policy. Yet despite the central role of expertise and information asymmetries in contemporary theories of American bureaucracy (Gailmard & Patty, 2012), we know surprisingly little about how bureaucrats actually acquire information and develop expertise. In this paper, I examine how bureaucracies collect information from news media and investigate whether that collection is systematically skewed.

Across more than 2,000 agency daily news briefings, I find that briefings for liberal agencies contain strikingly little coverage from conservative media. By comparing the articles in these briefings to the supply of news, I show that agencies select left- and right-leaning articles at similar rates. The source of partisan imbalance lies upstream: partisan outlets choose which agencies to cover. Across agencies and time periods, conservative outlets produce less coverage of liberal agencies, and liberal outlets similarly under-cover conservative agencies. In practice, agencies largely collect whatever news is readily available. This pattern is consistent with bureaucratic incentives, as satisfying diverse internal constituencies generally encourages broad and comprehensive information collection.

Although unbiased selection is typically viewed as normatively desirable, this supply-side disparity raises new concerns. Even absent preferential selection, agency information environments may still be systematically distorted. The very system designed to ensure that officials are well-informed can itself filter, distort, or politicize information. These processes matter: the information that reaches federal decision makers determines which actors, issues, and narratives are most visible and shapes beliefs about the larger strategic environment. Even when selection is unbiased, the final product can still provide a partial and incomplete picture of public opinion and the larger political environment.

While the supply of news usually explains partisan variation in agency news briefings, I find

some evidence that changes in agency leadership can affect partisan news collection. Consistent with the second Trump administration's hostility towards mainstream news media, the composition of Homeland Security briefings dramatically changed after Donald Trump returned to office in 2025. Importantly, agency leadership does not always lead to changes. After Trump's first election in 2017, the composition of the Department of Interior's briefings remained relatively stable. Together, these findings suggest that, under certain conditions, individuals involved in news collection will manipulate the partisan content of the briefings.

In summary, while agency news collection has always been shaped by the interaction between media monitoring tools and the media supply, the partisan composition of news in the briefings is usually explained by the supply of news rather than preferential selection. However, in a highly-partisan climate where news has been politicized, agency leadership may prioritize collecting information from likeminded sources.

This paper contributes to the growing literature on news media and political elites (see Green-Pedersen & Stubager, 2010; Karpowitz, 2009; Sevenans, 2017a; Severin-Nielsen et al., 2025; Vliegenthart, Walgrave, Wouters, et al., 2016; Vliegenthart, Walgrave, Baumgartner, et al., 2016; Willis, 2013). I add to this research by revealing that political elites have strong reasons to systematically monitor the news, even absent electoral incentives. More broadly, the findings speak to fundamental questions about political accountability, media effects, and information inequality. Unless we study how elites collect and use news, we will underestimate the role of media in political outcomes. By leveraging a new source of data—administrative records of agency news briefings—this paper provides the first systematic evidence of how bureaucracies monitor the news. Combining qualitative analysis of media monitoring practices with quantitative analysis of briefing content reveals important disparities in the supply of news that have previously gone unrecognized.

2.1 Background

News contains valuable information, but bureaucrats have limited time to search for and consume it (Baumgartner & Jones, 2015). This problem has been intensified by the rise of the internet and media fragmentation (Bawden & Robinson, 2009). To solve this trade-off, US agencies and other elite actors optimize information collection by creating daily news compilations—typically called daily news briefings, summaries, or "clipbooks." The content of these briefings depends on two key factors: (1) an agency's motives for media monitoring and (2) the underlying supply of news.

2.1.1 What are daily news briefings?

Like many political elites, federal agencies collect and distribute news.[1] The particular tools used for media monitoring vary depending on exact needs and resources of the user, but

[1]While federal bureaucracies have more resources than many other elites, legislators and interest groups engage in similar topic-based media monitoring (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 2020; Willis, 2013).

all of them involve searching a range of sources for news about specific topics of interest (Sullivan, 2012). Once relevant clips are identified, they are typically organized by story or topic with the most important stories appearing first (Sullivan, 2012).

To better understand the purpose of agency daily news summaries, I submitted Freedom of Information Act Requests (FOIAs) for internal emails, documents, and contracts related to custom daily media monitoring reports. I also reviewed contracts for media monitoring posted on USAspending.gov, examined solicitations for contracts on sam.gov, and searched through online archives where journalists and organizations post FOIA documents.[2]

Today, most large agencies employ third-party vendors to compile an electronic daily news briefing or clipbook that is emailed every morning to a large number of staff.[3] While government employees consume news outside of clipbooks and briefings, these documents are circulated widely and are consistently produced across a wide set of agencies and time periods. This consistency and ubiquity allows for comparison of government news collection across time and agencies.

The market for custom news reports is dominated by four companies: Bulletin Intelligence/Cision,[4] Barbaricum, TechMIS, and Rendon. Bulletin Intelligence's early employees were former members of the Reagan White House who had been previously tasked with producing Reagan's news summaries. Based on their websites and other government contracts, Barbaricum, TechMIS, and Rendon are veteran-owned businesses with large military contracts. While Bulletin dominated the market in the 2000s, it began losing contracts to Barbaricum, TechMIS, and Rendon in the mid-2010s. Today, all four companies hold lucrative contracts for agency news briefings.

According to the contracts, news briefings are generally targeted at agency leadership and communications staff. However, the email list often extends beyond these two audiences.[5] The exact list of email recipients depends on the agency, but based on internal emails and the contracts, briefings are often sent to thousands of employees.[6] In addition to staff who directly receive the full agency news briefing, some individual departments or offices forward a smaller set of relevant clips to their staff. Employees also forward the news clips as a way of starting policy-relevant conversations.[7]

Agency news briefings are the product of a multi-step process and tailored to the priorities

[2]The replication files contain a detailed list of contracts and documents. Many of the reviewed documents were posed on Document Cloud or produced through Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.

[3]Between 2002 and 2024, at least 26 agencies had contracts for custom media monitoring (USASpending.gov). See also Sullivan (2012, p. 20).

[4]Bulletin Intelligence was acquired by Cision, Inc in 2017 (Bulletin Intelligence, 2025).

[5]In addition to top agency leadership, briefing recipients hold positions related to communications, legislative affairs, intergovernmental affairs, and the budget office.

[6]Homeland Security (DHS) reported approximately 5,000 recipients in 2023, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission reported agency-wide circulation (3,000–4,000 employees) in 2014, and TechMIS reported serving over 50,000 government employees in 2017 (Department of Homeland Security, 2023; Mains, 2017, p. 5; Nuclear Regulatory Commission, 2014, p. 8).

[7]For example, in an email chain from May 2017, DOI employees discuss how to respond to a local news story about coyote hunting (Foley et al., 2017). In another example from the VA, an employee suggests that an article in the news briefing be sent to the Commissioners prior to an upcoming meeting (Leinenkugel, 2018).

and goals of each agency. First, the contractor and agency decide on a procedure for identifying potentially relevant articles. Usually, this involves selecting a list of news sources to monitor and identifying a set of topics or keywords.[8] These keywords are used to identify a set of potentially relevant articles. Next, the contractor applies human judgment and an expert understanding of the agency to sort articles into the appropriate section of the briefing, remove irrelevant or redundant information, and produce a short 1-3 sentence summary of each article.[9] Each article citation is accompanied by basic metadata about the article, including a link to the full text or video, the authors, and the publication date.

In summary, the content of agency news briefings reflects both a series of choices made by agencies and their contractors and the underlying supply of news. How these choices are made depends on the agency's motives for collecting news.

2.1.2 Why do agencies collect news?

While there is a substantial literature on the importance of information and specialization in US bureaucracies (e.g. Gailmard & Patty, 2012; Workman, 2015), we know surprisingly little about how bureaucrats collect information. Given the rich information content of news, it should not be surprising that bureaucrats invest in news collection. Like many political elites, bureaucrats face critical strategic decisions where success or failure depends on their expectations about other political actors. News contains a wealth of information about the activities and positions of these actors (Cook, 1998). Many agencies also rely on news to monitor the effectiveness of their own communication efforts as well as to gather other policy-relevant information (Baumgartner & Jones, 2015; Bustos, 2021; D. Carpenter, 2014; D. P. Carpenter & Krause, 2012). As a result, they have fundamentally different incentives for consuming news media, relative to the general public. In general, agencies are incentivized to collect a broad selection of media.

For bureaucrats, the value of news is not necessarily tied to perceptions of trustworthiness or factual accuracy. Whereas members of the public tend to seek out news they regard as credible and that aligns with their partisan or ideological leanings (e.g. Guess, 2021; Iyengar & Hahn, 2009; Mangold et al., 2024), bureaucrats generally need to monitor their political adversaries and correct false narratives, leading them to value news from low-quality or untrustworthy sources.[10] Because the content of news and the politicians featured in news varies by partisan slant (Kim et al., 2022), we would expect bureaucrats and the agencies they represent to seek out news from a diverse and comprehensive set of sources.

While an agency's optimal strategy for news collection will depend on a multitude of factors, their motives for collecting news will generally disincentivize biased selection of ideologically-

[8] In a 2017 document, TechMIS claims to monitor over 50,500 traditional print and broadcast news sources as well as 400,000 social media accounts or blogs (Mains, 2017, p. 5).

[9] Typically, the articles are then aggregated by 'story.' For each story, only one to four article summaries are provided. For stories picked up by many news organizations, additional articles are cited at the bottom of the story but not separately summarized.

[10] In December 2025, a White House spokeswoman succinctly captured this logic, telling the Washington Post "unfortunately we are forced to read Fake News so we know what lies we have to debunk" (Kornfield et al., 2025).

aligned news sources. These motives can be sorted into three general categories: (1) monitoring the strategic environment, (2) evaluating agency communications, and (3) gathering policy feedback.

First, agencies use news to monitor their strategic environment. While information may be available through other channels, media coverage is often the most straightforward and efficient means of finding out what is going on in politics (Cook, 1998). It is not a coincidence that news collection has been a critical part of open source intelligence collection for over a century (Van Puyvelde & Rienzi, 2023).[11] In addition to monitoring external actors, agency leaders use news to monitor their own agencies and reduce agency loss through "reality testing" (Burke & Greenstein, 1989; Karpowitz, 2009).[12] All media monitoring contracts require that briefings contain coverage of the agency, and most specify that the briefings will be used to keep their staff and leadership broadly informed about developments outside of their agencies.[13] Often, agency briefings have dedicated sections for national news or sections for news about other institutions like Congress, the White House, or the Supreme Court.[14]

Second, media contains information critical to evaluating an agency's communications and public relations efforts. An agency's reputation is a vital strategic asset that can be used to manage internal and external threats (Bustos, 2021; D. P. Carpenter & Krause, 2012). Almost every contract connects news monitoring to communications or public relations, and many specify that they are interested in monitoring "public interest" in the agency or a "larger public conversation."[15] In addition to protecting their reputations, agencies with strong communications capacities are better positioned to advance policy goals and core missions.[16] This is evident in contracts from both public-facing agencies like the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)[17] and those that primarily interact with other institutions, such as

[11]Importantly, intelligence collection is not limited to newspapers in countries with free press. Even in the most highly censored, repressive regime, news coverage contains information relevant to predicting the government's future actions.

[12]See also the literature on censorship and authoritarian regimes (Distelhorst, 2013; Lorentzen, 2014).

[13]For example, in its media monitoring contract, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) states that its "officials and staff must start each day fully informed about local, regional, national and international news that is of interest to, or could impact, the NRC (Nuclear Regulatory Commission, 2014, p. 5).

[14]For example, the Department of Interior requires a 'national news' section in their briefing "suitable to the needs of Department Officials who must be kept aware of important developments affecting the federal government broadly so they can interact with peers in the administration and congress" (Department of the Interior, 2021, p. 2). Similarly, the Department of Justice requires a section on 'Administration, Congress, and Supreme Court' (Justice Management Division of the Department of Justice, 2012, 2018, 2022).

[15]For examples, see Environmental Protection Agency (2016); Small Business Administration (2022); Drug Enforcement Agency (2019); Nuclear Regulatory Commission (2014). For bureaucrats with limited direct feedback mechanisms, media coverage can serve as an important indicator of public sentiment. Surveys of bureaucrats have found that career civil servants are attentive to media portrayals of their agency's work (Karlsen et al., 2020).

[16]See also Cook (1998), who argues that news can help agencies achieve policy goals (p. 148-149). Emergency communications is another case where communications effectiveness has been linked to policy outcomes (Bonnevie et al., 2021; Environmental Protection Agency, 2016; Miller & Goidel, 2009; Prue et al., 2003; Small Business Administration, 2022).

[17]For the VA, communication is critical to informing veterans and their families about available benefits and programs (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2013).

the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA).[18]

Third, news can play a role in policy feedback and provide other information relevant to policymaking. While information about their strategic environment and communications effectiveness can have policy implications, the news media plays other, more direct roles in policymaking. In their contracts, the Consumer Product Safety Commission[19] and Department of Labor[20] describe using the media to monitor for 'fire alarms' (McCubbins & Schwartz, 1984).[21] More generally, media can influence policymaking by shaping how the government detects and defines policy problems (Baumgartner & Jones, 2015).

Together, these motives will generally push agencies to search widely for relevant news, collecting articles from a wide range of sources and perspectives. While an individual bureaucrat may disproportionately value a particular type of information, agency news briefings are designed to satisfy multiple audiences and purposes within the agency. The relative importance of these motives may shift an agency's optimal monitoring strategy, but systematically favoring ideologically-aligned sources is unlikely to satisfy all of the constituencies within an agency.

While the agency as a whole might benefit from a broad approach to news selection, it is possible for the briefings to be influenced by the interests of individuals within the agency. The contracts and internal emails suggest that the final composition of the briefings is a result of an incremental process where some individuals and groups have greater input. Contractors learn what to include in the news summaries by talking with agency staff and getting continuous feedback from various individuals at the agency (see Joshua, 2018). Research on the mass public shows that people tend to prefer news sources aligned with their partisan leanings (Guess, 2021), raising the possibility that similar preferences among agency staff could shape the briefings' content, even unintentionally.

Under some circumstances, agency leaders may also take steps to intentionally alter the information available to their staff. Two incidents during the first Trump administration suggest that other considerations can dominate the needs of some constituencies within an agency. In the first case, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) leadership prioritized controlling the flow of information within the agency over maximizing the value of the news briefing to the EPA as a whole. In 2017, EPA leadership first pressured and then fired Bulletin Intelligence during a dispute about negative coverage of EPA leadership in the daily

[18]The DEA promotes its mission by raising public awareness about U.S. drug laws and their consequences (Drug Enforcement Agency, 2019, pp. 4–5).

[19]The CPSC's contract explains that "Emerging hazards identification, remedial strategy analysis, and regulatory development activities are built upon timely receipt, review, and analysis of news clips covering incidents occurring throughout the country" and that due to past news briefings, "serious product-related accidents reported by the news media have been brought to the attention of the Commission" (Consumer Product Safety Commission, 2020, pp. 4–14).

[20]The DOL contract says, "news clips serve as an alert to emerging issues, leads for potential DOL investigations, and information that can be shared internally about ongoing programs or activities…[clips] point to problem areas that DOL agencies may need to address" (Department of Labor, 2020, p. 5).

[21]Scholars of authoritarian regimes have similarly recognized the value of media as a feedback mechanism, noting that censorship can be costly because it deprives governments of information (Distelhorst, 2013; King et al., 2013; Lorentzen, 2014).

news briefing.[22] In the second case, the Department of Justice (DOJ) fired its contractor after employees complained to reporters about "a blog post from a white nationalist website [VDare] that used an anti-Semitic slur" (Barrett, 2019). While some parts of the agency might benefit from following a white nationalist news source,[23] the value was not large enough to outweigh the costs imposed on other employees and risk of additional negative news coverage (see also Aleaziz et al., 2019). While the motives were different, both agencies narrowed the scope of their news briefings to control what stories circulated.

In summary, news collection within agencies is the product of multiple motives and goals. The final product will depend on the supply of relevant news and key decisions during the news selection process. As a whole, agencies should actively seek out news from all partisan or ideological perspectives. However, when we consider the agencies as collections of individuals with their own biases and incentives, there are scenarios where individual biases or motives could affect news selection.

2.2 Methods

Previous attempts to study elite news consumption relied on interviews and surveys (Kingdon, 1992; Sevenans et al., 2016; Sevenans, 2017a, 2017b). However, surveys and interviews may underestimate the role of news (Kingdon, 1992, pp. 59–60). Elite recollection of media consumption may be inadequate when they regularly review large volumes of information from a wide variety of sources. In such contexts, self-reports may fail to capture the scope and nature of news exposure. While internal government records have limitations, they offer a more detailed and verifiable foundation for studying elite communication.

To examine the balance of partisan news in agency news briefings, I first categorize the sources cited in agency news briefings. To assess whether the ideological biases of agency staff affect the selection of news, I compare news collection across liberal and conservative agencies and across Democratic and Republican presidential administrations. I also compare the agency news briefings to the news supply.

2.2.1 Daily News Briefs

For this paper, I collected custom news briefings produced for US executive agencies by private contractors.[24] To identify contractors, I used USAspending, which is the US gov-

[22] In emails, staffers complained about sending negative stories about their leader to "everyone" (Choma & Leber, 2016; Leber et al., 2017), claimed that the stories were "junk" or "fake" news (Benton, 2017; Ericksen, 2017a), and argued that Bulletin couldn't provide real-time alerts (Ericksen, 2017b).

[23] Benkler et al. (2018) document that popular far-right sources like Brietbart pick up stories from VDare and circulate them to a wider audience (p. 124). Monitoring VDare would alert the DOJ to potentially damaging or inflammatory stories before they are picked up by other parts of the conservative media ecosystem.

[24] FOIA requests and database search queries need to be specific. Reports produced by third parties were relatively easy to identify because third-party contractors use consistent naming conventions across their reports and often include their company name in their reports.

ernment's official database of federal spending information.[25] After identifying contractors, I searched publicly-available databases and submitted FOIAs for briefings produced by the contractors. I selected four sets of briefings where I had more than 30 copies of briefings from multiple presidential administrations. Collectively, these briefings were produced for four agencies by three different third-party contractors under four presidential administrations.

Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and **US Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS)** – The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is responsible for policy areas and agencies related to immigration, security, and terrorism. The US Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) is a sub-agency of DHS tasked with administering the US naturalization and immigration system. Webpages for TechMIS-produced USCIS and DHS news briefings are indexed and can be found through a search engine like Google. Although USCIS is a subagency of DHS, the briefings are separate. USCIS and DHS have separate contracts with TechMIS. In total, I collected all USCIS briefings from February 1, 2022 through November 5, 2025 (n=922) and all DHS briefings from January 2, 2024 through November 5, 2025 (n=655).[26] In both briefings, the citations contained hyperlinks. I identified sources by extracting the URLs and hyperlink text. A small number of cited articles were excluded from the analysis because they did not have URLs or identifiable names.

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides healthcare and benefits for US military veterans and their families. Barbaricum-produced VA daily news briefings from June 3, 2020 through February 25, 2021 are available through the VA History Office's Covid-19 archive (n = 233).[27] Like the DHS and USCIS briefings, I extracted hyperlinked URLs to identify cited articles.

Department of the Interior (DOI) – The US Department of Interior (DOI) is responsible for numerous policy areas relating to national parks, wildlife, Native Americans, energy, and US territories. Unlike the other agencies, the DOI sample is not complete. To identify DOI briefings, I searched an online archive where journalists and interest groups post FOIA-produced documents. In total, I discovered 213 copies of DOI daily news briefings produced by Bulletin Intelligence between February 19, 2015 and November 13, 2018 (n = 213). Because the DOI briefing sample depends on journalist and interest group FOIAs, I only have briefings that mention certain keywords. While this could introduce bias, it is unlikely that sampling bias explains the results.[28]

Because the hyperlinks were stripped from the PDFs, identifying the DOI sources required

[25] I searched USAspending for media monitoring contracts, focusing on contracts for custom media monitoring reports. In total, I identified relevant contracts for 26 federal agencies. On average, each contract is worth approximately $200,000 per year.

[26] USCIS briefings are only produced for weekdays (Monday-Friday). DHS briefings are produced for all days of the week, excluding federal holidays.

[27] The archive contains all VA briefings from June 3, 2020 through January 2021. Some of the February 2021 briefings are missing from the archive.

[28] If selection on particular FOIA topics affect a result, the result would vary over time because the FOIA topics change over time. To test for sampling bias, I verify that my results are consistent across the whole time period covered by the briefings (see Figure B21).

a different process. To convert the DOI briefings into structured data, I used the Gemini 2.0 Flash large language model (LLM) to identify all news sources in the briefings and extract the original text for each source, including any typos (see Appendix B.1). I manually reviewed the resulting list of text snippets, removed misidentified sources, and added website domains. I then split the documents by heading and searched each section for the source text snippets.[29] To categorize each source and add source domains, I cleaned the text snippets, merged them with names of US news sources from ABYZ News Links, and filled in missing information based on my own review of the news source.[30]

2.2.2 Categorizing Sources

To evaluate the balance of agency news diets, I categorized sources by partisan slant, which is the degree that a source's reporting generally reflects a particular political affiliation or ideological leaning. I replicated the results in this paper using four different measures of partisan slant; however, I only report the Media Bias/Fact Check (MBFC) scores in the main paper because they are the most complete and missingness is uncorrelated with agency ideology.[31] Regardless of the measure, the news briefings tend to contain more center or liberal-leaning news, although there is variation across agencies and briefings.

When analyzing partisan bias, I excluded three types of sources: local general interest news sources (25.5%), government websites (0.2%), and sources with no identifiable URLs or names (0.1%).[32] Local general interest sources are defined by their geographic scope, prioritizing news and stories that directly impact the residents of the community they serve.[33] These stories can include national politics, but they more often cover topics like local and state politics, local sports, and entertainment. General interest local sources were dropped because the MBFC scores were less complete for local news sources and there was less agreement between the MBFC and Allsides scores for local general interest sources (see Table B1). In the Appendix, I show that the results are similar if local general interest sources and government websites are included. After excluding government and general interest local

[29]Rather than search the full text, I only searched 10 word chunks preceding each forward parenthesis ("("). In the document text, news source names were almost always followed by descriptive information enclosed in parentheses.

[30]ABYZ News Links (abyzlinks.com) has been used in other research, including Lutscher (2023) and Matter & Widmer (2021), and has been used by Media Cloud to identify news sources (Media Cloud Blog, 2020). ABYZ News Links categorizes news sources by location, geographic scope, media type, media focus, and language.

[31]Two of the sources—Media Bias/Fact Check (MBFC) and Allsides—use human coders to assign partisan slant scores and two of the sources— Bakshy et al. (2015) and Robertson et al. (2018) — estimate slant based on website audience. See Appendix B.1 for more details about the partisan bias measures. See also Figure B2.

[32]Sources were categorized by first matching the sources to ABYZ News Links and manually filling in missing information. Where possible, sources were matched by URL host or domain. Where URLs were missing or not identifiable (e.g. link to video hosting service), I matched by source name. For more details about dropped news sources and articles, see Table B2.

[33]News outlets that focus exclusively on local or state politics (e.g. the Oregon Capital Chronicle) are not considered general interest.

news, 5.3% of the articles in the briefings could not be matched to MBFC scores.[34]

2.2.3 Agencies

By exploiting the structure of the DOI and DHS news briefings, I estimate news collection for 16 separate agencies.[35] Both the DHS and DOI are large cabinet agencies that oversee many smaller agencies, bureaus, and offices. Their briefings are broken into sections, and some of these sections are dedicated to specific subagencies (see Table 2.1). Thus, the DOI and DHS briefings can be used to estimate the news collection for 15 different agencies.

Estimates of DHS and DOI news collection use the whole briefing, including sections that do not correspond to a specific subagency (e.g. "top news"). Estimates for their subagencies use only the section of the briefing corresponding to the subagency. Because USCIS has its own dedicated section of the DHS news summary, the USCIS results are estimated twice. The first estimate is based on the separate USCIS news briefing. The second is based on the USCIS section of the DHS news briefing. The USCIS results suggest that the composition of a subagency's briefing is reasonably similar to its section of the parent agency's briefing. This is consistent with agency emails, where subagency staff discuss their input into the briefings.[36]

To test whether agency ideology shapes news collection, I used agency ideology scores from Richardson et al. (2018).[37] Their scores characterize the long-term policy views of government agencies and range from -2 to 2.[38] The sixteen agencies in my main analysis represent a wide range of ideology scores (-1.59 to 1.79).

[34]Partisan bias is missing for less than 6% of the articles in the DOI, DHS, and USCIS briefings, but the VA briefing is missing scores for 29.3% of articles. The VA briefing has more missing scores because it contains more news from smaller, specialized news outlets.

[35]The VA and USCIS briefings do not have any headings that correspond to sub-agencies. Headings may be dropped from individual briefings when there is no relevant news coverage. Because the DOI headings change partway through 2017, a Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) section is only available for 2017-2018.

[36]For example, in 2018, an employee from a DOI subagency emailed two directors, writing that she regularly sent the contractor (Bulletin Intelligence) specific articles to be included in the next day's DOI news summary and invited them to also send "articles that are important to your mission and you think should be highlighted [in the main DOI briefing]" (Joshua, 2018).

[37]Richardson et al.'s (2018) scores were used because they are available for the most agencies. One other agency ideology measure is available for more than five agencies in my sample (Napolio, 2025), but its use of a large language model partially trained on news media raises concerns about reverse causality. Where possible, I have verified that my results replicate when using alternative measures of agency ideology (Chen & Johnson, 2015; Clinton & Lewis, 2008; Napolio, 2025).

[38]Richardson et al. (2018) calculated these scores using a 2014 survey of political appointees and civil servants. Respondents were asked, "Some agencies have policy views due to law, practice, culture, or tradition that can be characterized across Democratic and Republican administrations as liberal or conservative. This can be an important feature of the environment of public management in these agencies (which is why we ask about it)…In your opinion, do the policy views of the following agencies tend to slant liberal, slant conservative, or neither consistently in both Democratic and Republican administrations?" (p. 304).

Table 2.1: Composition of briefing data. Sample sizes calculated after dropping local general interest sources and government websites.

Briefing	Agency	Agency Name	Part of Briefing	Years	Total Articles	Total Dates
DOI	DOI	Department of Interior	Whole	2015-2018	27,083	213
DOI	BLM	Bureau of Land Management	Section	2015-2018	525	210
DOI	FWS	Fish and Wildlife Service	Section	2015-2018	1,093	210
DOI	GS	US Geological Survey	Section	2015-2018	323	160
DOI	NPS	National Park Service	Section	2015-2018	1,505	212
DOI	BOR	Bureau of Reclamation	Section	2016-2018	94	104
DOI	BIA	Bureau of Indian Affairs	Section	2017-2018	232	128
VA	VA	Department of Veterans Affairs	Whole	2020-2021	2,386	233
USCIS	USCIS	US Citizenship and Immigration Service	Whole	2022-2025	26,773	922
DHS	DHS	Department of Homeland Security	Whole	2024-2025	61,446	655
DHS	CG	Coast Guard	Section	2024-2025	1,875	583
DHS	FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency	Section	2024-2025	5,243	643
DHS	SS	Secret Service	Section	2024-2025	1,980	567
DHS	TSA	Transportation Security Agency	Section	2024-2025	1,128	454
DHS	USCBP	Customs and Border Protection	Section	2024-2025	3,664	648
DHS	USCIS	US Citizenship and Immigration Service	Section	2024-2025	2,459	591
DHS	USICE	Immigration and Customs Enforcement	Section	2024-2025	6,414	618

2.2.4 News Supply (Media Cloud)

As previously described, the composition of the briefings is determined by the supply of news and the news selection process. To estimate the supply of news, I queried Media Cloud, an open-source collection of online news, for articles from US news sources that mention each agency name (Roberts et al., 2021). Because the coverage quality varies over time (see Appendix B.8), I do not use Media Cloud to compare news selection across presidential administrations. However, I find that the Media Cloud sample reliably captures cross-agency variation. Comparing across agencies reveals how news outlets allocate limited reporting resources during periods where data is available. As a robustness check, I also replicated the analysis using the Global Database of Events, Language, and Tone (GDELT), which is another large collection of online news.

After dropping local general interest sources and government sources, the Media Cloud database contains 478 of the 1,275 domains in the briefing dataset. However, these domains account for 94% of the articles in the briefings.

2.3 Results

The following analysis evaluates whether agency news collection is balanced and, if not, whether the imbalance reflects biased selection or supply. I first examine whether the partisan composition of agency news briefings varies systematically by agency ideology. Although briefings appear ideologically skewed, I show that this pattern is driven by asymmetries in

the supply of news rather than biased selection. I then examine whether partisan leaders shape news collection by analyzing changes across presidential transitions.

2.3.1 Variation across agencies

Is agency ideology associated with the partisan composition of news briefings?

To examine the relationship between the partisan content of the briefings and agency ideology, I calculate how often each briefing cites articles from a left-leaning, center, or right-leaning news sources.[39] For each partisan slant category, I create a separate subplot, comparing the proportion of articles in the category to agency ideology. Due to the structure of the US media market, the results should be particularly clear when comparing agency ideology to the amount of news from right-leaning news sources (Benkler et al., 2018; Guess, 2021). The scarcity of major center-right outlets makes it easier to differentiate center and right-leaning sources (see Figure B1).

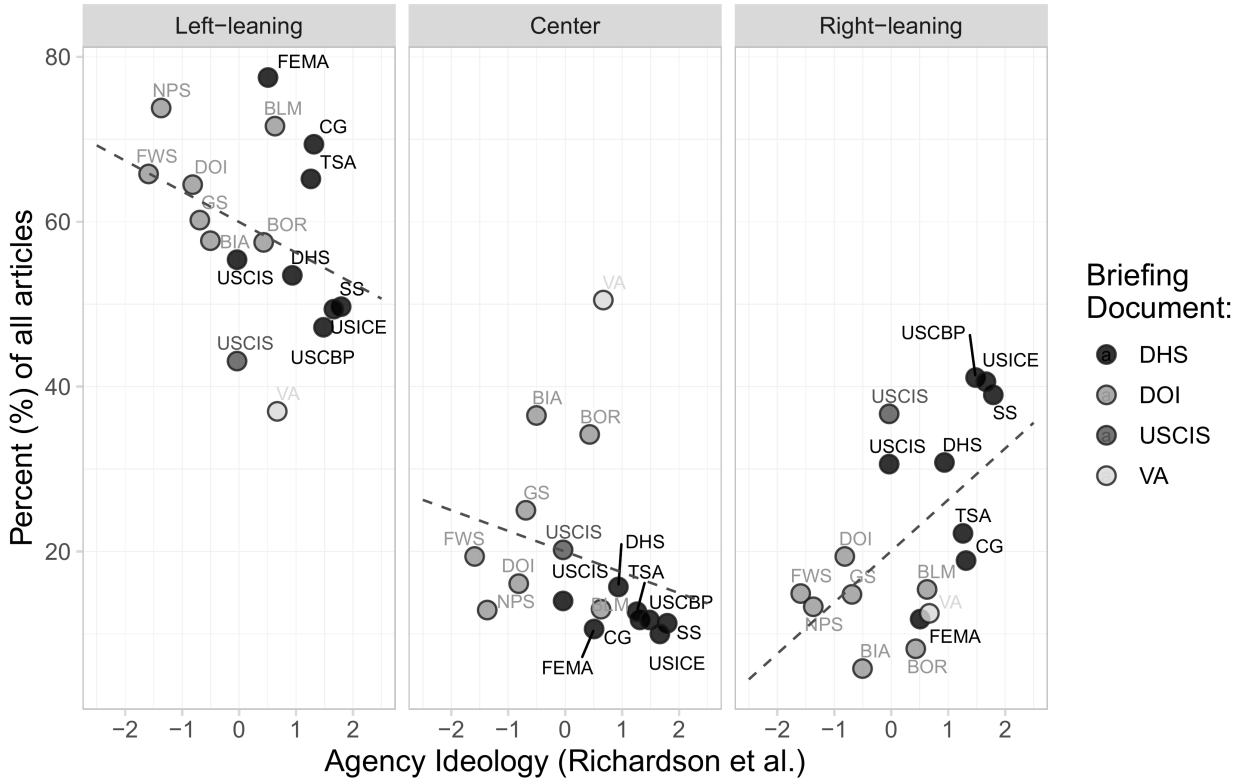


Figure 2.1: Association between agency ideology and the partisan-slant of sources in agency news briefings. The y-axis is the proportion of articles in a partisan-slant category (Center, Left-leaning, or Right-leaning). Partisan slant is determined by the source of an article.

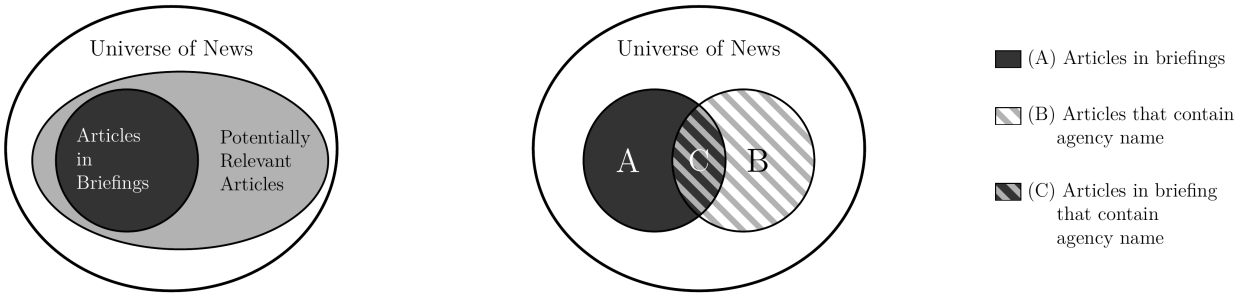
[39]In Figure 2.1, I drop articles from sources that could not be matched to partisan slant. The proportion of articles with missing partisan slant scores is generally low and unrelated to agency ideology (see Figure B2).

The results in Figure 2.1 show a strong association between agency ideology and the partisan composition of the briefings. Conservative agencies collect more news from right-leaning sources and less news from center and left-leaning news sources, relative to more liberal agencies. As expected, this pattern is most evident in the 'Right-leaning' subplot. The best fit line ($\beta = 0.062$) is substantively large: comparing the most liberal to the most conservative agency, we would expect a 24.8 percentage point increase in right-leaning coverage.[40]

As previously discussed, the partisan composition of briefings in Figure 2.1 is the product of the available supply of news and the news selection process. Given strong motives for comprehensive news selection, I expect the disparity in Figure 2.1 to be produced by an asymmetric supply of news, rather than biased selection.

Is there an asymmetric supply of news?

Consistent with a supply-sided explanation for the relationship in Figure 2.1, I find that there is a sizable asymmetry in the supply of news. To test whether partisan news sources publish more articles relevant to agencies with similar ideological slants, I identify the set of potentially relevant news for each agency and calculate the proportion of news from right-leaning sources.



(a) How articles are selected for news briefings.

(b) Method of approximating potentially relevant news using agency names as keywords.

Figure 2.2: Diagram of agency news selection.

To estimate the relevant supply of news for each agency, I searched for each agency's name, limiting the results to news outlets cited in the briefings. Recall that the briefings are the result of a multi-step filtering process. As shown in Figure 2.2a, there are three primary steps: (1) collect all published articles, (2) identify a set of potentially relevant articles using keywords, and (3) use human employees to select articles for the news briefings. To determine the larger universe of scraped news, I subset the Media Cloud results to domestic news sources cited in the briefings.[41] While I could not identify all keywords used to define

[40]For regression tables and alternative regression specifications, see Appendix B.2.

[41]I excluded articles from Media Cloud if (1) the source domain never appeared in a briefing, (2) it came from a general interest local source or government website, or (3) it came from an international source, which includes sources based outside the US or primarily covering other countries. Major wire services (AP, Reuters, UPI) were not counted as international sources. Because other countries have similarly named agencies, a large number of articles from international sources were not relevant to US agencies.

potentially relevant articles, the agency name is almost certainly one of these keywords.[42] Figure 2.2 visualizes how querying agency names is used to approximate the set of potentially relevant news articles.

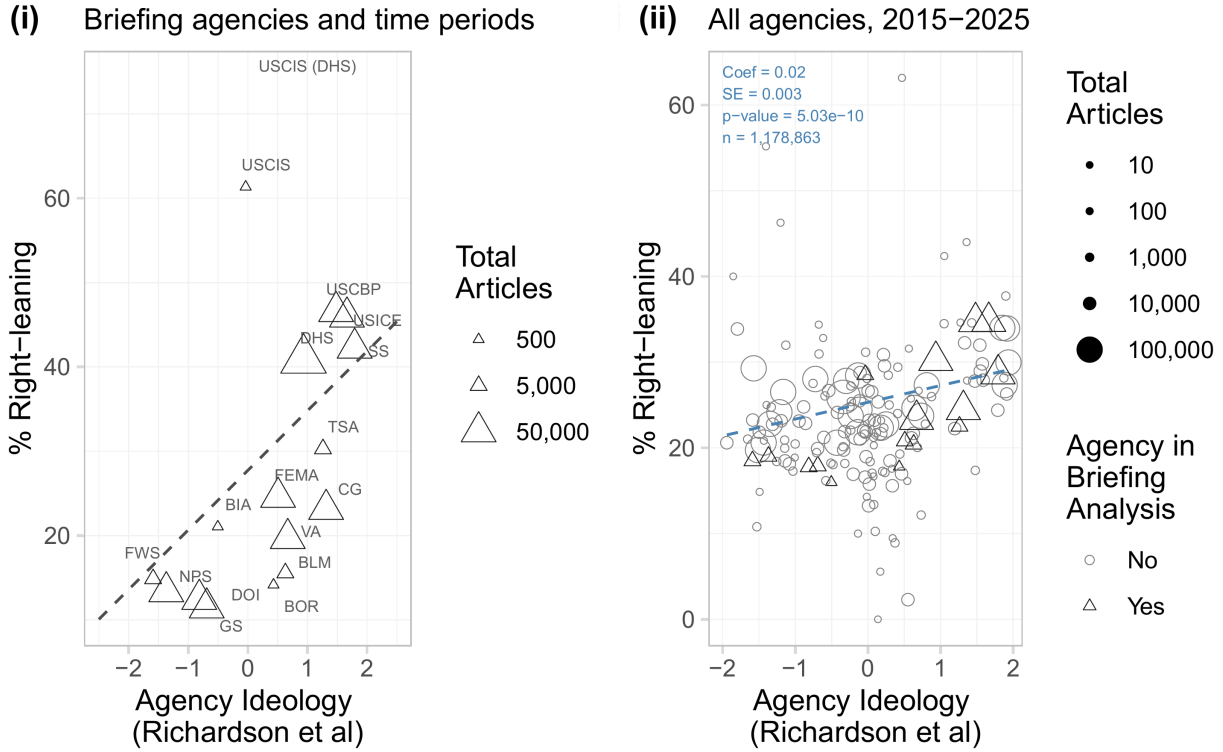


Figure 2.3: Supply of partisan news about government agencies. The subplots are generated using different sets of Media Cloud data: (i) articles about briefing agencies during time periods covered by briefings; (ii) articles about agencies with ideology scores during 85 randomly sampled weeks from 2015-2025. Standard errors calculated using heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors and clustering by agency, news source, and article URL.

Figure 2.3 plots the partisan composition of the news supply.[43] Each subplot corresponds to different time periods and agencies. The first plot shows that composition of the briefings can be explained by an unbalanced supply of news. The second plot shows that this supply-side asymmetry extends beyond the agencies and time periods in the briefings sample. For Figure 2.3(ii), I queried Media Cloud for all 165 agencies categorized in Richardson et al. (2018) over 85 randomly sampled weeks from January 2015 through May 2025.[44]

To produce Figure 2.3(i), I queried Media Cloud for articles that mention the agencies in the briefing dataset during the time periods covered by the briefings.[45] For each agency, I then

[42]During the contract solicitation process, a potential contractor asked, "Do you have a list of keywords to share?" and the DHS replied "We suggest including all component names and their jurisdiction as keywords to start" (Department of Homeland Security, 2018, p. 8).

[43]For versions of Figure 2.3(i) and (ii) with the proportion of news from other partisan slant categories (center, left-leaning, and not categorized sources), see Appendix B.3.

[44]The weeks were selected using stratified random sampling and 6-month strata. An extra week was sampled from April 2025; removing it does not affect the results.

[45]When I have a complete sample of briefings, I collect all news published between the first and last briefing

calculate the proportion of articles from right-leaning sources. The regression line shows the relationship between agency ideology and the amount of coverage an agency receives from right-leaning news outlets. If the conservative news sources preferentially cover conservative agencies or center/liberal sources preferentially cover liberal agencies, we will see a positive coefficient. Consistent with this supply-side explanation, Figure 2.3(i) reveals a strong positive relationship between agency ideology and the production of news ($\beta = 0.071$). Specifically, partisan news sources are more likely to publish news about ideologically-aligned agencies. Because Media Cloud does not monitor all sources in the briefings, Figure 2.3(i) is not directly comparable to Figure 2.1. To compare the supply-side disparity to the briefings, I recalculate the regression line from Figure 2.1 after dropping domains that are not collected by Media Cloud ($\beta = 0.075$). The effects are similar across measures: for a one-unit change in agency ideology, right-leaning outlets produce about 7.1 percentage points more coverage mentioning the agency by name and compose roughly 7.5 percentage points more of its news briefing.

In Figure 2.3(ii), I examine whether the asymmetries in Figures 2.1 and 2.3(i) are unique to the time periods and agencies in the briefing sample.[46] Examining the relationship between the supply of news and agency ideology does not require agency briefings, so I extended the Media Cloud queries to include all 165 agencies with ideology scores from Richardson et al. (2018) and 85 randomly sampled weeks from 2015-2025. For each agency, I then calculate the proportion of articles from right-leaning sources.

Figure 2.3(ii) reveals that there is a durable asymmetry in the supply of news and that it extends beyond the 16 agencies in the briefing sample. To calculate the standard error of the regression line in Figure 2.3(ii), I clustered the standard errors by agency, news source, and article URL.[47] The plot shows a statistically-significant, positive relationship between an agency's ideology and the amount of coverage it receives from right-leaning news sources. Compared to the most liberal agencies, the most conservative agencies receive approximately 8 percentage points more news from right-leaning media sources (β=0.02, se=0.003, p=5.03e-10, n=1,178,863).[48] In Appendix B.4, I examine outlet-level heterogeneity, showing that left-leaning outlets generally produce more coverage of liberal agencies and right-leaning outlets generally produce more coverage of conservative agencies.

in the sample. For the DOI and its subagencies, I subset the Media Cloud results to articles in the window directly before the date of a briefing in the sample. The results replicate when the window size varies (see Appendix B.3).

[46] As an additional robustness test, I replicate these results using 17 randomly sampled weeks (2017-2025) from a second publicly available media database, GDELT (Global Database of Events, Language, and Tone). I also reproduce the plot using other media slant measures from Guess (2021) and Allsides. See Appendix B.3.

[47] Each agency only has one ideology score, so the independent variable is assigned at the agency-level. Partisan slant is determined by the slant of the news source, so dependent variable is assigned at the source-level. Clustering by article URL addresses the non-independence of observations arising when a single article mentions multiple agencies. The Media Cloud query results are stacked such that an article can appear in the dataset multiple times, once for each agency name in the article. The final dataset contains 1,178,863 article-agency pairs, 889,440 unique URLs, 165 agencies, and 334 sources.

[48] See Appendix B.3 for alternate regression specifications.

Is there evidence of preferential selection after controlling for the supply of news?

While the results in Figure 2.3 show that a supply asymmetry could explain the relationship in Figure 2.1, the analysis is not conclusive. To formally test whether there is any evidence of selection bias conditional on an article being published, I directly compared the briefings to potentially relevant articles published during the same period.[49]

Referring back to Figure 2.2b, I collect the set of articles mentioning an agency's name (Region B) and determine which articles were included in the news briefings (Region C). I then determine whether the included articles (Region C) are more likely to be from right-leaning news sources, compared to the other potentially relevant articles (Region B).

For Figure 2.4, I match the Media Cloud dataset to the briefing data using the article publication date and domain.[50] The resulting 'matched sample' contains all published articles that mention each agency name and an outcome variable that is 1 if the article is matched to the briefings and 0 otherwise. If an article with the same news source and publication date could be found in the relevant briefing or section of briefing, all articles from that news source were counted as included.[51] Because article URLs were available for about half of the agencies, I also matched by URL and used the results to validate the match quality (see Appendix B.5).[52] I also verified that the URL matched sample produces similar results (see Figures B18, B19, and B20).

Before testing for preferential selection, I used the URL matched sample to verify that agency names are a reasonable proxy for the keywords used to define the set of potentially relevant news (see Figure 2.2). For all but one agency, these tests support using agency names as keywords; however, they raise concerns about the representativeness of the USCIS results.[53] Due to these tests and the small size of the USCIS sample[54], the USCIS results should arguably be dropped. However, for transparency, I have included the USCIS results in Figure 2.4. Excluding the USCIS articles does not substantively affect the results (see Figure B18).

[49]Like the previous analysis, I drop articles from Media Cloud if (1) the source domain never appeared in a briefing, (2) it came from a general interest local source or government website, or (3) it came from an international source. The results are similar if all local, government, and international sources are included in the regression.

[50]Publication date is available for all Media Cloud articles and for 98.5 of the articles in the DHS, DOI, and USCIS briefings. Due to the structure of the VA briefings, the publication date could not be determined. When matched by URL, the VA results are also null (see Figure B20). To reduce false positives, I removed three national news sections from the DOI briefing before matching (e.g. "Top National News").

[51]For example, when matching the Media Cloud results to the DHS briefing, I looked for a matching article anywhere in the briefing. For a subagency like FEMA, I only looked for a match in the FEMA section of the DHS briefing.

[52]See Appendix B.6 for error rate estimates. Although URL matches are only possible for approximately half of the briefing sample, they can be used to test the validity of other matching strategies. Based on this error rate analysis, one source had an abnormally large false positive rate (yahoo.com) and has been dropped from Figure 2.4. Including yahoo.com does not substantively affect the results (see Figure B18).

[53]See Appendix B.6 for more details and robustness checks.

[54]Over the whole USCIS briefing period from January 2022 through June 2025, Media Cloud identified 206 articles that mention the agency by name. Only 119 are from right-leaning sources, and most (61%) are from a single source (newsweek.com).

I performed two tests to verify that the articles mentioning an agency's name are representative of all articles in the news briefing. First, I check that the results in Figure 2.1 replicate when the briefing sample is limited to articles mentioning agencies by name (Region C in Figure 2.2b). For all but one agency (USCIS), the results of this test suggest that the matched sample is representative. Second, I estimate how many articles in the briefings include an agency's name. In other words, I compare the included articles (Region C) to all articles in the briefings (Region A). For most agencies, articles with agency names make up at least 13-50% of the briefing articles (see Table B7).[55] However, USCIS is mentioned in <1% of the articles in its briefing or section of the DHS briefing.

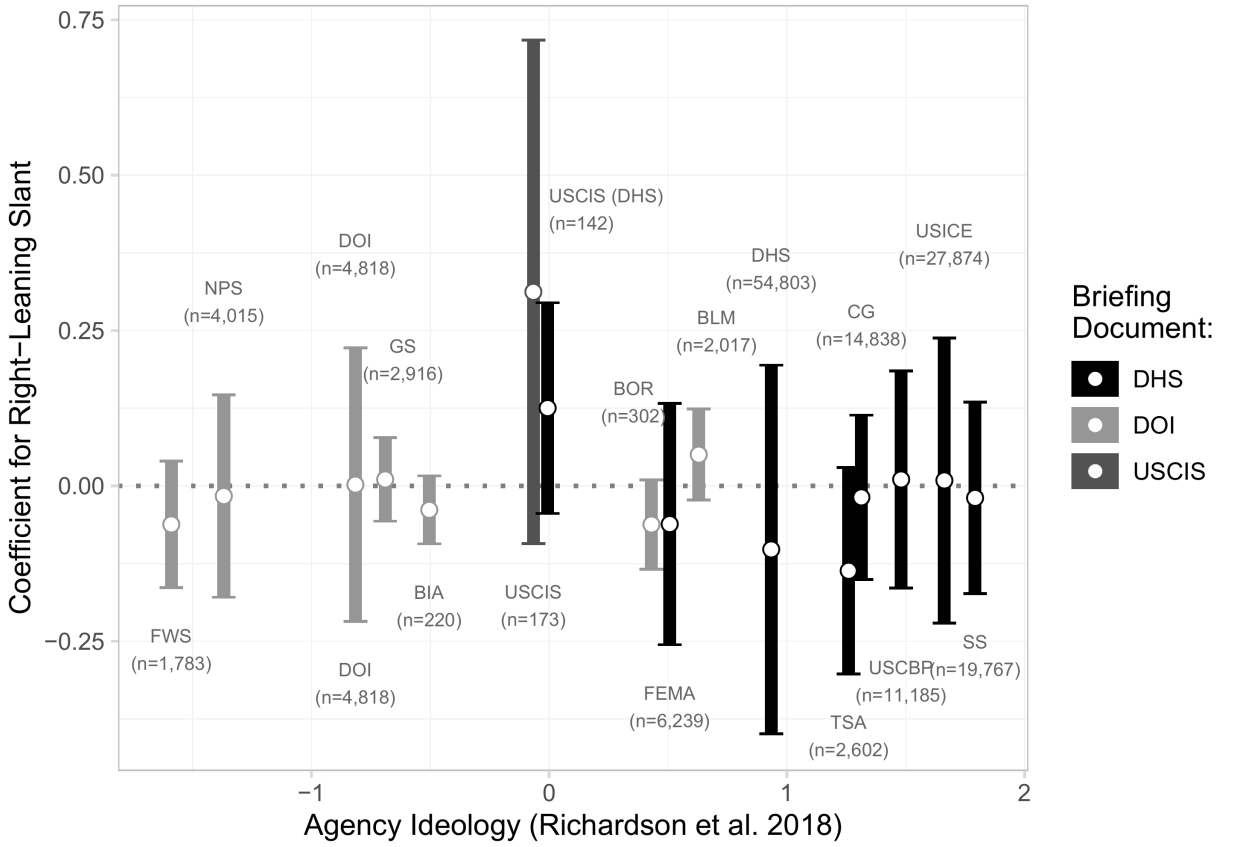


Figure 2.4: Estimated effect of right-leaning slant on the probability that an article is included in the news briefing. 95% confidence intervals. Models use OLS with robust standard errors clustered by news source and article URL. Outcome variable is binary indicator (1 if article included in news briefing, 0 otherwise). Independent variable is media slant; left-leaning sources are the reference category.

Formally, to test whether the slant of an outlet still affects its inclusion after accounting for supply, I use the following model: $Incl_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 S_i + \beta_2 I_i + \beta_3 (S_i \times I_i) + \epsilon$. For each article i, $Incl_i$ is 1 if the article is included in the briefing, S_i is the slant of the news outlet, and I_i is the ideology of the agency mentioned in the article. If agencies are preferentially selecting articles from ideologically-aligned sources, the interaction between agency ideology

[55] See Appendix B.6. Because some articles have multiple URLs, these numbers likely underestimate the number of briefing articles that mention an agency's name.

and right-leaning slant (β_3) would be positive. In contrast, the results suggest a weak, possibly negative relationship. To test the robustness, I ran the regression with varying samples, matching methods, slant measures, and ideology measures. Across specifications, the interaction estimates are small, not significant, and negative (see Figures B18 and B19).

This null finding is evident in Figure 2.4. Instead of an interaction, I run a separate regression for each agency, $Incl_i = \beta_0 + \beta_R \text{Right}_i + \beta_C \text{Center}_i + \epsilon$, and plot the coefficient for right-leaning news sources (β_R). A positive coefficient indicates that the agency is more likely to include articles from right-leaning sources, compared to left-leaning sources. A negative estimate indicates the opposite, and a value near zero suggests it is equally likely to include articles from left- or right-leaning sources.

In Figure 2.4, I arrange the coefficients by agency ideology. If agencies preferentially selected co-partisan news sources, we would expect the point estimates to be higher for more conservative agencies. Figure 2.4 shows that the estimates do not follow this pattern, providing no evidence of biased selection. When the results are matched by URL, the DHS and DHS subagency estimates in Figure 4 become even smaller (see Figure B20).[56]

Collectively, the results yield three key findings. First, there is a strong association between an agency's ideology and the extent to which it cites partisan news sources. Second, the supply asymmetry extends beyond the specific agencies and time periods included in the briefings data. Third, conditional on news publication, there is no evidence that liberal or conservative agencies prefer news from ideologically-aligned sources.

2.3.2 Variation across administrations

While agencies have strong motives that disincentivize preferential selection, individuals within an agency could impose their own preferences on the news selection process, particularly in the highly-partisan climate of current US politics. To test whether the preferences of agency staff shape news selection, I examine the partisan composition of the briefings across presidential transitions. Political appointees have input into contracting decisions and help administer the contracts, and presidential transitions affect the composition of agencies and their leadership (Bolton et al., 2021; Spenkuch et al., 2023).

Evidence of changes across presidential administrations is mixed. The proportion of conservative coverage in the DOI briefings remains relatively stable from 2015 through 2018, including during the transition from Barack Obama to Donald Trump in 2017.[57] However, the DHS briefings underwent a dramatic change shortly after Trump took office in January 2025.

Beginning in late March 2025, DHS briefings began to incorporate much more right-leaning coverage (see Figure 2.5).[58] This change in composition that cannot be attributed solely to

[56]Recall that URL matching was not possible for the DOI briefings.

[57]See Figure B21. The VA briefings also show little change, but the available briefings stop about a month after Joe Biden's inauguration.

[58]The rightward shift appears when Figure 2.5 is reproduced using the alternative measures of media slant. See Figures B24 and B25. It also appears when local general interest sources and government websites are

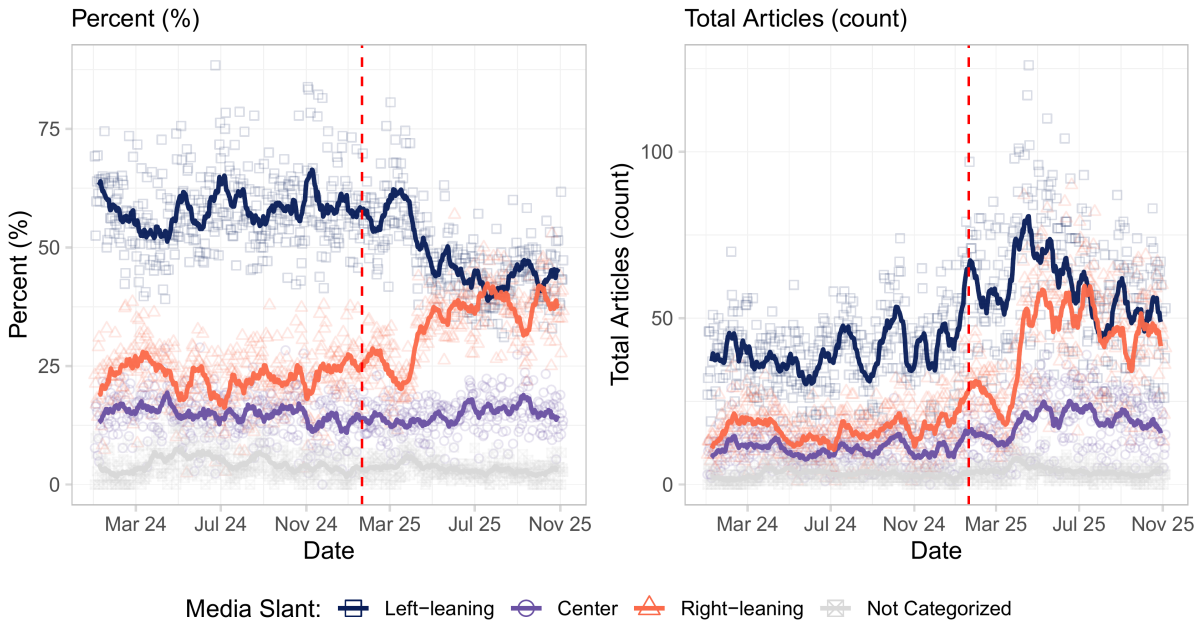


Figure 2.5: Over-time partisan composition of the DHS news briefings. Dotted line at Trump's 2025 inauguration. Lines are 2-week rolling averages.

supply-side factors. Between January 2022 and March 2025, the DHS news briefings never cited certain far right news sources, including Breitbart, Newsmax, the Blaze, the Daily Wire, the Daily Caller, the Daily Signal, and the Federalist. Since April, all of these sources have been featured prominently.[59] Because these sources were never included in DHS briefings prior to March 2025, their addition cannot be attributed to changes in the news supply.[60]

Interestingly, despite being housed under DHS, the balance of partisan coverage in the USCIS briefings follows a different pattern (see Figure B21). The aggregate long-term composition of the USCIS briefings changed less dramatically. However, upon closer examination, an anomalously large number of new right-leaning sources were also added around April and May 2025.[61] In both the USCIS and DHS briefings, there is a clear deviation from the normal process of adding sources. In April and May, there is a spike in the number of new, ideologically extreme sources (see Figure B29). Notably, there is no equivalent spike in DOI or VA briefings.

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included (see Figure B23).

[59]For example, the top 10 DHS briefing sources after April include two far right sources that were never cited previously: Brietbart and Newsmax.

[60]In order for supply to explain the number of newly added conservative sources, sources like Breitbart would need to have produced zero relevant news before March 2025. Using Media Cloud and the source websites, I verified that each of the 31 right-leaning sources added after April existed before 2025. Because some of these sources like Breitbart were included in the TechMIS-produced USCIS briefing before 2023, we know that TechMIS was collecting news from these sources before 2025.

[61]Starting in April, the USCIS briefings increasingly cite sources like Breitbart, Newsmax, the Blaze, the Daily Wire, the Federalist, One America News Network (OAN), and the Daily Signal. Interestingly, while some of these sources were occasionally cited during the Biden administration, they were rare and not cited after 2023.

In summary, leadership may affect the partisan content of the news summaries under some circumstances. Those circumstances were not present at DOI in 2017 but are present at DHS in 2025. Additional conservative news sources have also been appearing in the USCIS briefings, but these sources appear infrequently and contribute less to the aggregate balance of coverage.

2.4 Discussion

This paper examines how federal agencies collect information from the news and the consequences of these efforts. I first consider agencies as unitary actors, assessing patterns across the organization as a whole, and then examine individual incentives by looking at presidential transitions. The results suggest that agencies as a whole do not systematically prefer ideologically aligned news outlets. However, they raise important questions about the consequences of an asymmetric news supply and how agencies should approach news collection. While less conclusive, the recent changes to the DHS briefing suggest that agency leadership can influence news selection, particularly in highly politicized environments.

Importantly, this paper reveals that asymmetries in the supply of news are reflected in agency news exposure. To fully understand the consequences of asymmetric coverage, additional research will be needed on its origins and implications. Nevertheless, prior research on government decision making and partisan media suggest that the asymmetries in Figures 2.1 and 2.3 have important political and policy consequences. Examining this research also suggests directions for future research and provides insight into the normative implications of an asymmetric information supply.

Information about the existence of policy problems and demand for policy change has been shown to affect policy decisions and elite strategy. Collectively, this research suggests that differences in news content can affect policymaking when they affect judgment about public opinion or the existence, severity, and solutions to policy problems. The only previous study of government news summaries (Karpowitz, 2009) used Richard Nixon's handwritten notes to prove that information in the White House news briefings affected Nixon's communications efforts, policy-making activity, personnel management, and emotional state. Studies have also linked news exposure to important judgment about public opinion (Broockman & Skovron, 2018; Furnas & LaPira, 2024), the existence of policy problems (Baumgartner & Jones, 2015), the importance of policy problems (Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2016; Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006), the best solutions to policy problems (Jablonski & Seim, 2024), and the activities of other political actors (Cook, 1998). Beyond studies of media, information has been shown to affect elite decision making and responsiveness (Jablonski & Seim, 2024; Liaqat, 2019; Seim et al., 2020).

Turning to prior research on partisan media bias, existing research has established that left- and right-leaning sources produce different information. A large body of existing research has established that the partisan slant of a source shapes the information content of news by affecting story selection and presentation (Broockman & Kalla, 2025; Groeling, 2013; Grossman et al., 2022; Hosseinmardi et al., 2025; Larcinese et al., 2011; Mullainathan &

Shleifer, 2005; Puglisi, 2011; Puglisi & Snyder Jr, 2011; Shultziner & Stukalin, 2021). This evidence is further bolstered by the results of this paper. The asymmetric supply of news shown in Figure 2.3 illustrates how right-leaning news sources produce more coverage of conservative agencies and less coverage of liberal agencies.

Future research should investigate the causes and consequences of the partisan asymmetry found in Figure 2.3. Compared to the dangers of asymmetric supply, more attention has been paid to the dangers of preferential news selection (e.g. Broockman & Kalla, 2025). Nevertheless, an asymmetric supply of news also raises concerns, particularly in the context of elite news consumption and given the size of the disparity. Some liberal agencies collect almost no coverage from conservative sources. If bureaucrats believe that the briefing collection process is unbiased, they may be less likely to recognize supply-driven limitations to their information environment. Being aware of bias has been shown to mitigate the effects of bias (Lee, 2017). An incomplete information supply could increase the chances that the agency makes a strategic error, but it could also affect agency behavior in less visible ways, like forcing an agency to expend more resources on other types of information collection efforts. Unless they explicitly seek out conservative voices from other sources, liberal agencies will have less information about the thoughts and opinions of conservatives elsewhere in government and in the wider public.

Interestingly, outside of a few sectors like emergency communication, there has been limited prior research on how political elites should optimize media monitoring. The lack of clear guidance may explain why very few media monitoring contracts contain specific provisions for ensuring the balance of agency news briefings.[62] Arguably, agencies should over-sample news from less common types of news. When combined with political sensitivities around news diversity, agency staff or the monitoring service itself may choose not to adopt more complex optimization strategies and instead favor basic heuristics like selecting news equally or in proportion to the news supply. Especially in the age of large language models and other technological advancements, future research should consider how to design government media monitoring strategies that efficiently capture the all information in news and inform staff about the limitations of news collection.

As expected, the complex motives behind agency news consumption disincentive agencies from preferentially seeking out co-partisan news; however, under some circumstances, the partisan preferences of powerful individuals within an agency can shape the selection process. Figure 2.5 reveals that the composition of DHS news briefings changed dramatically after Donald Trump returned to office. Under Kristi Noem's leadership, coverage from far-right news sources has increased in volume and prominence. While Figure 2.5 shows a dramatic and persistent change, the briefings alone cannot conclusively identify the cause of this change. There are several possible explanations, some of which are consistent with the agency's overall preferences while others require the priorities of agency leadership dominate other motives for news collection.

First, the new administration could make different judgments about the value of news to the

[62]Only one contract contains quotas or other provisions for ensuring source diversity, and its quotas apply to the geographic diversity of local news coverage (Consumer Product Safety Commission, 2020). None of the contracts require that contractors monitor an ideologically-diverse set of sources.

agency as a whole. Not all sources are created equally. In order to create a quickly digestible and representative picture of the news, agencies might choose to prioritize information based on factors like source popularity, influence, or accuracy. Agencies may also choose to exclude low-value information when the cost of including it is too high. Agencies may choose to remove particularly offensive or false information from a document circulated widely within an agency. Given the DOJ's decision to fire TechMIS over an antisemitic blog (Barrett, 2019), contractors themselves may adjust content to avoid controversy or termination. Individual judgments of value or cost are influenced by personal attributes like partisan affiliation (Bhuiyan et al., 2020; Ladd & Podkul, 2018) as well as the broader political environment. For example, it may be particularly valuable to have sources monitored by the president, even if they contain offensive or false information.

Alternatively, political leaders may impose their own preferences on the briefings, at the expense of other constituencies within the agency. Most obviously, agency leadership may see these briefings as an opportunity to advance a political agenda by shaping the information environment of other leadership and staff. The EPA's dispute with Bulletin Intelligence during the first Trump administration suggests that leaders might also seek to insulate themselves from negative coverage (Benton, 2017; Choma & Leber, 2016; Dravis et al.; Ericksen, 2017a; Leber et al., 2017).

While there are legitimate reasons for restricting or expanding collection of extreme or low-quality news, the changes at DHS raise concerns. At a critical time in US immigration policy, the prominence of relatively extreme conservative news sources may both reflect and reinforce the administration's priorities. Recent changes to news briefings reflect a broader pattern of politicizing information and manipulating access to media coverage. For decades, the government's extensive efforts to collect, curate, and distribute news drew little outside notice. That changed when these once-routine practices came under heightened political scrutiny. In the early months of his second administration, President Donald J. Trump and his team devoted significant attention to government news consumption and payments for news services, going so far as to cancel widely used services from Politico and other news service providers.[63] This paper highlights a consequence of these actions. These decisions were not merely symbolic; they actively obstructed and politicized the supply of information flowing to government agencies.[64]

Together, the findings of this paper show that even when agencies generally do not select ideologically congenial news, they operate within an information environment shaped by substantial partisan asymmetries in the supply of coverage. Additionally, under certain circumstances, choices by agency leadership can also alter the balance of information available to government staff. These results underscore the need for continued research on information collection within bureaucracies and how informational disparities affect their decision

[63]In addition to targeting Politico, Trump's administration has also explored cancelling other center- and left-leaning news subscriptions (Basu & Caputo, 2025; Guardian Staff, 2025) and taken steps to limit access to news at the Social Security agency (Sheffey, 2025).

[64]In fact, by December 2025, the Trump administration began to quietly reverse its decision to cancel key media contracts. Agencies "raised concerns about losing information when the White House initially requested cancellations," and the White House itself remarked that "unfortunately we are forced to read the Fake News so we know what lies we have to debunk" (Kornfield et al., 2025).

making.

Chapter 3

Local Media and Agenda Setting

Despite decades of research on news production, recent scholarship continues to identify gatekeeping and selection bias as important but insufficiently understood processes (Soroka 2012; Bourgeois, Rappaz, and Aberer 2018).[1] While extensive literature exists on framing and other forms of content bias, we know relatively little about the process of selecting stories. This seems backwards since publication is a necessary condition for the other, better understood forms of bias. So why don't we know more about these key initial processes? Why don't we know more about gatekeeping, selection bias, and newsworthiness?

Gatekeeping research faces several major problems, but the biggest barrier is typically the unobserved population problem (Groeling 2013). By its nature, any measure of gatekeeping bias involves comparing published stories to the universe of possible stories that could be covered, which is often impossible. Nor is there always an obviously correct "balance" of coverage. What would an "unbiased" distribution of coverage look like? Should coverage of a group be equivalent to its relative population size? While this seems like a good starting point, existing studies like Shor and Rijt (2023) raise a major problem (Shor et al. 2015; Bourgeois, Rappaz, and Aberer 2018). Not all groups are equally affected by newsworthy phenomenon, and arguably, some powerful people deserve more media coverage than the average person. Consider constructing a measure of how often black people are mentioned in news coverage from 2000 to 2022. According to this naive measure, race-based gatekeeping would look radically different from 2008-2016 because Barack Obama was the president. Thus, we need a better way of establishing the universe of possible stories.

I solve this unobserved population problem by focusing on pedestrian fatalities. Compared

[1] For example, Soroka (2012) writes "There are vast literatures on the ways in which media content differs from reality, but we thus far have a rather weak sense for how exactly the representation of various topics in media differs from the distribution of information in the real world." Bourgeois, Rappaz, and Aberer (2018) write "News entities must select and filter the coverage they broadcast through their respective channels since the set of world events is too large to be treated exhaustively. The subjective nature of this filtering induces biases due to, among other things, resource constraints, editorial guidelines, ideological affinities, or even the fragmented nature of the information at a journalist's disposal. The magnitude and direction of these biases are, however, widely unknown. The absence of ground truth, the sheer size of the event space, or the lack of an exhaustive set of absolute features to measure make it difficult to observe the bias directly, to characterize the leaning's nature and to factor it out to ensure a neutral coverage of the news."

to other indicators of policy failure – including other crimes – individual-level data on pedestrian fatalities is centralized, extensive, and available over a long time-series. All pedestrian fatalities since 1978 are collected and standardized in one federal database. This database can be used as a measure of the true distribution of pedestrian fatalities across the country and compared to news coverage.

Pedestrian fatalities are worthy of study for two additional reasons. First, rising pedestrian fatalities are an indicator of policy failure. Pedestrian fatalities have been increasing recently and are greatly influenced by local policies. These local policies include speed limits, zoning rules, and enforcement (Schmitt 2020). Local culture around transportation also plays a role, along with state and federal regulations around vehicle design and road safety. Homelessness policy is also implicated given that unhoused individuals are killed at much higher rates (Hickox et al. 2014; Bernhardt and Kockelman 2021).[2]

Second, pedestrian fatalities offer a unique opportunity to examine media bias without the strong stereotypes that often accompany other types of events. Theories of selection bias were developed to explain coverage of highly stereotyped crimes like homicides and missing person cases, and they emphasize the role of stereotypes in story selection. By focusing on a policy area without strong race and gender stereotypes, we can better understand whether stereotypes explain patterns of selection bias.

In this paper, I consider whether victim characteristics affect the likelihood that a death receives media coverage. I find little evidence of racial disparities, although I do find that other victim characteristics like gender and age affect the likelihood of coverage. Cyclists are also more likely to receive coverage. I also look at incident characteristics and find strong evidence that multifatalities and hit-and-run fatalities are more likely to receive coverage. Coverage is also less likely when death occurs days after a crash. Lastly, I look at whether the hollowing-out of local news media has affected coverage of pedestrian fatalities. While coverage has become less likely in recent years, the pattern of decline is relatively recent and is concentrated to certain papers.

3.1 Background

3.1.1 News Selection

News selection is a function of at least four different sets of considerations. First, journalists, editors, and news executives seek to publish the most newsworthy content. *Newsworthiness* is a complex judgment call, but existing models typically include elements like timeliness, proximity, relevance, importance/impact/consequence, human interest, conflict/controversy, sensationalism, prominence of actors involved, novelty/oddity, predictability, unexpectedness, and other reporting (e.g. continuity with earlier stories, difference from other stories) (Galtung and Ruge 1973; Shoemaker and Mayfield 1987). Second, journalists seek to minimize cost. *Cost* includes the resources required to create an article, including the outside

[2]According to one study homeless people in Nevada were more than 20x more likely to be killed by cars (30.7 per 100,000) compared to housed residents (1.4 per 100,000).

resources, time, and mental effort required to turn an idea into a publishable story. This includes the accessibility of 'obvious templates,' which allow journalists to produce ideas faster and with less mental strain (Lundman 2003). Third, news organizations face *other business considerations* including advertising revenue, article popularity, owner preferences, etc (Hamilton 2005). All of these can shape the news selection process.
Fourth, a story's likelihood of publication depends on the set of *competing stories* available on a given day.

Most work on selection bias has focused on identifying components of newsworthiness, the degree that taste-based bias affects judgments of newsworthiness, the costs of news production, and the effects of various organizational factors (e.g. news ownership). Racism, classism, and other personal biases can lead to biased coverage by affecting judgments about newsworthiness or judgments about audience demand. For example, a number of studies have examined how the composition of newsrooms affects the types of stories produced. Newsroom diversity can have multiple effects on selection. First, diversity reduces the chance that personal biases (racism, etc.) will affect judgments of newsworthiness. Second, it can expand the set of stories available to a news organization. Journalists develop networks of sources and rely on personal social networks to learn about and research potential stories (Min and Feaster 2010). Due to segregation and in-group favoritism, these network effects will bias coverage towards the groups most represented in each newsroom.

There are several approaches to studying media bias, depending on how bias is defined and what patterns of coverage are considered important. One common strategy is to control for alternative explanations for publication disparities, attributing any residual differences to bias. For example, some scholars have examined coverage of women and/or minority elected officials, trying to isolate a particular source of bias by controlling for alternative causes of coverage like other politician characteristics (e.g. committee appointments) and campaign characteristics (e.g. competitiveness, funding, etc.) (Gershon 2012; Thesen and Yildirim 2022). This is required for studies where disparities in coverage are only important if they originate from a particular source like taste-based discrimination by journalists. In the examples cited above, if women or minority women receive less media coverage because they have less seniority and fewer powerful appointment, we might expect media attention to naturally increase as they gain more power. However, if they receive less attention even after controlling for other possible explanations, then media attention might continue to disadvantage them even as their careers progress.

A second approach is largely agnostic about the causes of media bias. Rather than attempting to distinguish among competing explanations, it focuses on documenting systematic disparities in coverage, recognizing that such disparities may be substantively important regardless of why they arise. Much of the literature on partisan media bias follows this approach. However, comparatively little research has examined disparities along other dimensions, such as race, class, gender, age, or geography (Soroka 2012). Moreover, the methods developed to study partisan media bias do not readily extend to these other forms of bias. Measures of partisan bias typically rely on comparing relative patterns of coverage across news outlets or over time, an approach that is much harder to apply when there is no obvious benchmark for what constitutes balanced coverage.

While rare, there is limited work in political science on economic, racial, and geographic bias. Soroka (2012) and Jacobs et al. (2021) both compare the tone of economic media coverage to real-world economic trends. Jacobs et al. (2021) find that journalist portrayals of the economy tend to follow the gdp growth and unemployment trends even though, over the past few decades, these economic indicators have begun to diverge from measures that more closely reflect the well-being of the middle- and lower-classes. A larger body of work compares public records of crime to coverage of crime in the news media (Jeanis and Powers 2017; Wright and Washington 2018; Bjornstrom et al. 2010; Dixon and Linz 2000; J. Gruenewald, Parkin, and Chermak 2014; Jeff Gruenewald, Pizarro, and Chermak 2009; Gilens 1996; Owens 2008). Most of these studies compare coverage to actual crime statistics and examine aspects of the content like victim-blaming. They argue that disparities in coverage of murders and missing persons reinforce harmful stereotypes about crime and criminal justice and can affect the chances of solving a case, especially for missing persons. Other, related research considered alternative outcome variables like the number of laws that are named after particular victims (e.g. 'Jacob's' law) (Kulig and Cullen 2017). Research on geographic selection bias in political science has mostly focused on local news (Hayes and Lawless 2021).

3.1.2 Pedestrian Fatalities

According to prior research, pedestrian fatalities can be considered a special case of crime reporting that is less racialized. Instead, research on pedestrian fatalities suggests that pedestrian deaths tend to be reported as isolated, tragic incidents with no broader context. Blame is usually only assigned in cases with hit and runs or impaired drivers (Magusin 2017; Goddard et al. 2019; Fevyer and Aldred 2022; Schmitt 2020; Ralph et al. 2019). While matching the federal database of pedestrian fatalities with local news coverage, I observed this pattern in many cases; however, there is a great deal of local variation. For example, in Tampa and St. Petersburg, news coverage was more likely to specify that the victim was at fault or echo driver claims that the pedestrian fell in front of their car.[3] In a minority of cases, news outlets did report wider context, especially if there had been a recent pattern of casualties.

Interestingly, despite an apparent lack of gender-, age-, and race-based stereotypes associated with pedestrians, there are large disparities in victimization. Black Americans are more likely to be killed by cars and there is experimental evidence that drivers are less likely to stop for pedestrians in crosswalks when they are black (Coughenour et al. 2017; Goddard, Kahn, and Adkins 2015). Men make up approximately 70% of all pedestrian fatalities, and older people are disproportionately likely to die from being hit by a car (Insurance Institute for Highway Safety 2024).

[3]For example, see the November 19, 2019 article titled "VAN HITS, KILLS GEORGIA MAN CROSSING STREET." According to this article, "Clarence Harry Smitherman, 63, of Albany, Ga., was crossing Anderson Road at the Veterans Expressway off-ramp at about 10:20 p.m. when he was struck, deputies said. He was walking against a 'do not cross' signal…[the driver] did not have enough time to react to Smitherman, who was wearing dark clothing, deputies said."

3.2 Methods

This paper uses data on pedestrian fatalities from the national government and local print news from LexisNexis to assess whether victim or incident characteristics affect whether a pedestrian death receives news coverage.

3.2.1 Pedestrian Fatalities

Starting in 1978, all fatal road accidents have been reported to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). These records are standardized and available through the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) database. FARS includes a wealth of information about the location of the crash (lat and long), the road conditions, the road owner (federal, state, local), the people and cars involved, the demographics of the people involved (gender, age, race), the results of any drugs or alcohol tests administered, and emergency response time. This study focuses on all people who might be considered "pedestrians" or "cyclists" by the news media.[4]

While this database is impressive in its scope and consistency, it is not without error. One study in 2012 found that in New Jersey, 3.7% of records that met the FARS definition of pedestrian fatalities were not included in the FARS dataset (Noland et al 2017). While this is fairly low, rates of incorrect demographic, location, and other crash information are reportedly higher – due, in part, to poor police training and limited resources but also due to the fact that the driver is often the only witness and only source of key information in the initial report.

In addition to concerns about incorrectly reported data, some key variables were not consistently reported. In particular, victim race is not available before 1999 and is inconsistently reported after 1999. In many cities, race is reported in 100% of fatalities, but in certain cities, race is under-reported or not reported. For example, in New York City, race was only consistently reported from 2013-2017 (see Appendix C.3).

3.2.2 News Coverage

I focused on daily newspapers with full text available for 2000-2022 through the Lexis Nexis API. Of these, I selected 25 papers, which collectively cover 24 cities. For a full list of sources, see Table 3.1.

I excluded papers for several reasons. First, I excluded papers based in cities with incomplete FARS data. Specifically, I dropped papers in Pennsylvania because the state inconsistently

[4]In addition to people categorized as "pedestrians" and "cyclists," I also include people categorized as riding non-motorized and motorized conveyances. According to FARS coding standards, this category includes people in non-motorized wheelchairs, motorized wheelchairs, and mobility aid scooters as well as people on unicycles, non-motorized roller skates or in-line skates, non-motorized skateboards, baby carriage, non-motorized scooter, motorized skateboards, motorized e-scooters, and self-balancing personal conveyances (e.g., hoverboard or Segway-style devices).

Table 3.1: Papers in Sample

	Paper Name	City	State	Total Articles	Years
1	Anchorage Daily News	Anchorage	Alaska	2,465	2000 - 2022
2	The San Diego Union-Tribune	San Diego	California	11,098	2000 - 2022
3	Tampa Bay Times	Saint Petersburg	Florida	12,870	2000 - 2022
4	The Tampa Tribune	Tampa	Florida	5,595	2000 - 2016
5	The Atlanta Journal-Constitution	Atlanta	Georgia	1,425	2014 - 2022
6	Idaho Falls Post Register	Idaho Falls	Idaho	335	2000 - 2018
7	The Pantagraph	Bloomington	Illinois	1,918	2000 - 2022
8	Bangor Daily News	Bangor	Maine	3,630	2000 - 2022
9	Portland Press Herald	Portland	Maine	919	2000 - 2011
10	The Capital	Annapolis	Maryland	2,073	2000 - 2014
11	Star Tribune	Minneapolis	Minnesota	5,729	2000 - 2022
12	St. Louis Post-Dispatch	St. Louis	Missouri	3,647	2013 - 2022
13	The Santa Fe New Mexican	Santa Fe	New Mexico	1,028	2000 - 2022
14	Daily News	New York City	New York	2,093	2013 - 2017
15	The Bismarck Tribune	Bismarck	North Dakota	3,814	2000 - 2022
16	Dayton Daily News	Dayton	Ohio	6,795	2000 - 2022
17	The Deseret News	Salt Lake	Utah	4,642	2007 - 2022
18	The Salt Lake Tribune	Salt Lake	Utah	3,832	2007 - 2022
19	Richmond Times Dispatch	Richmond	Virginia	5,445	2000 - 2022
20	The Spokesman-Review	Spokane	Washington	3,704	2000 - 2022
21	The Columbian	Vancouver	Washington	2,471	2000 - 2022
22	The Charleston Gazette-Mail	Charleston	West Virginia	7,482	2000 - 2019
23	The Capital Times	Madison	Wisconsin	431	2007 - 2016
24	Wisconsin State Journal	Madison	Wisconsin	3,368	2000 - 2023
25	The Wyoming Tribune-Eagle	Cheyenne	Wyoming	710	2000 - 2022

reports race to the NHTSA (see Appendix C.3 for more information). In other cities, FARS data was not properly reported for part of the 2000-2022 time series. In these cases, I did not collect news data for select years. Second, I excluded the Telegraph Herald (Dubuque, IA) because my normal search criteria returned an abnormally high number of articles (approx. 7,740) for a city with only 8 pedestrian fatalities between 2000 and 2022 (0.35 per year). Upon review, the paper reprints an abnormally high number of wire articles; very few of the articles were local news.

For each of these papers and years, I downloaded all English-language articles that met at least one of the following criteria:

- **Criteria 1:** Articles containing struck/crash/hit/collide/cross within 20 words of a type of car (e.g. car, truck, sedan, bus, vehicle, etc) and within 40 words of a death word (e.g. death, fatal, die, kill).
- **Criteria 2:** Articles containing the words pedestrian, cycl*, or hit-and-run within 40 words of a death word.

For a full list of my search terms and filters, see Appendix C.1. To test the completeness

of my results, I ran a search for any articles with "pedestrian" and a death word, excluding any results returned by my primary search criteria, repeating this process for each paper. I am confident that my article dataset contains all initial reporting on pedestrian fatalities. It also includes most but not all follow-up coverage of court trials involving pedestrian deaths and coverage about pedestrian safety. However, despite trying to narrow the criteria, my search criteria is not perfect. Most downloaded articles contain no reporting on pedestrian fatalities.

After downloading the articles from LexisNexis, I found gaps in coverage for 16 of the 25 papers in the sample. Most often, these gaps began in 2004 or 2005 and lasted until January 2006. For reference, I have provided a full list of the years I attempted to download from LexisNexis and gaps in coverage in Appendix C.2.

Table 3.2: Cities in Sample

City	State	Total Deaths	Deaths per100k	Cyclist Deaths	%Missing Sex	%Missing Age	%Missing Race
ANCHORAGE	Alaska	130	1.91	12	0	0	5
SAN DIEGO	California	102	0.34	7	1	1	14
SAINT PETERSBURG	Florida	102	1.80	19	0	0	1
TAMPA	Florida	102	1.29	17	0	1	1
ATLANTA	Georgia	200	5.08	5	0	1	12
IDAHO FALLS	Idaho	5	0.95	0	0	0	0
BLOOMINGTON	Illinois	18	0.96	3	0	0	6
NORMAL	Illinois	7	0.63	0	0	0	0
BANGOR	Maine	8	2.70	0	0	0	0
PORTLAND	Maine	14	1.76	5	0	0	0
ANNAPOLIS	Maryland	5	1.62	0	0	0	20
MINNEAPOLIS	Minnesota	113	1.27	22	0	1	3
ST. LOUIS	Missouri	151	4.73	10	0	1	0
SANTA FE	New Mexico	25	1.33	3	0	0	12
NEW YORK CITY	New York	611	1.48	65	0	3	6
BISMARCK	North Dakota	5	0.53	1	0	0	0
DAYTON	Ohio	74	2.27	12	0	0	0
SALT LAKE	Utah	92	3.05	11	0	0	5
RICHMOND	Virginia	95	2.00	12	1	3	23
SPOKANE	Washington	71	1.54	10	0	0	4
VANCOUVER	Washington	51	1.31	7	0	0	4
CHARLESTON	West Virginia	23	2.26	1	0	0	0
MADISON	Wisconsin	58	1.06	13	0	0	3
CHEYENNE	Wyoming	19	1.58	3	0	0	0

3.2.3 Matching

Table 3.2 provides basic summary statistics about fatalities each city (for more details about the composition of this sample, see Appendix C.4). After subsetting the FARS data to

include only the places and times where I had news coverage, I matched articles to FARS by hand. Due to time constraints, I was not able to match all fatalities from San Diego, Tampa, and St. Petersburg. Instead, I matched a random sample of fatalities for these cities. I was able to match all other fatalities unless they occurred during a gap in the LexisNexis coverage. I focused on coverage of fatalities that occurred in the home city of each paper and looked at coverage within 2 weeks of each crash. Due to this matching strategy, I excluded all fatalities where the victim died more than two days after the initial crash. Because I am not confident that I identified all follow-up coverage, I used this matched data to generate a binary dependent variable. Coverage equals 1 if a fatality was mentioned in at least one article and 0 otherwise.

3.3 Hypothesis

Due to the complexity of the news selection process, it is difficult to make strong predictions about news coverage of pedestrian fatalities. According to Lundman (2003), journalists tend to cover infrequent, stereotype-consistent events that fit within existing narratives. He explains how two dimensions of newsworthiness are especially important. First, "Occurrences are more likely to be seen as newsworthy when they are unusual, different, and out of the ordinary" (p. 360). In the case of murders, he explains that "Journalists do not consider normal urban murders with Black victims especially newsworthy…In contrast, urban murders with female violators are uncommon" (p. 360). Second, "journalists isolate newsworthy events using typifications that reflect existing social structure, appear logical in terms of commonsense understandings of the ways the world operates, sounds, and feels, and mesh easily with existing stereotypes, including those grounded in the belief systems that reflect and nourish race and gender stratification" (p. 360). Journalists tend to produce stereotype-consistent coverage because it takes less mental energy to produce and have a business incentive to produce the kind of "comfortable, predictable news packages" preferred by consumers and advertisers (p. 360-361). Because of this "Homicides involving Black violators and White victims are therefore more likely to be seen as newsworthy because they can be scripted using stereotypes grounded in White racism and White fear of Black crime" (p. 361).

As mentioned previously, there is little research on stereotypes of pedestrians. If stereotypes exist, they may vary by location and car culture. Relative to pedestrians, other research suggests that people have stronger stereotypes about cyclists. In particular, cyclists may be stereotyped as wealthier, male, white, and uncool (Furness and Furness 2010). This is consistent with government data, which suggests that cyclists tend to be wealthier, whiter, and more male (Nehme et al. 2016). However, in places where biking is safer, bicycles are used by people who can't afford cars, which leads to a more diverse population of cyclists.

Because pedestrian fatalities are not highly racialized, I expected to find weaker, but still detectable, race effects. However, In order to discriminate on the basis of a particular attribute, journalists also need to have that information available to them. It is possible that journalists often lack information about the race of the victim in initial coverage of pedestrian fatalities. Articles reporting on pedestrian fatalities almost always include information about the

location of the fatality, the age of the victim, and the gender of the victim. Unless relatives have already been contacted, articles do not include victim names, further preventing race identification.

In order to receive disproportionate coverage, journalists need to be able to recognize that a particular type of accident is uncommon. It seems reasonable that journalists will tend to publish the information made available to them. Thus, I will focus on the type of information included in initial reports, specifically time of day, age of victim, sex of victim, location of crash, whether it involves a hit-and-run, involvement of alcohol or drugs, number of fatalities, whether the victim died on scene, and whether the victim was a cyclist. Of these, only race and drunk driver have significant amounts of missing data.

Crashes that lead to criminal charges may receive more coverage. When criminal charges are filed or a suspect is identified, there is an opportunity for an additional news story. Sometimes the initial crash is not covered, but it will be mentioned later as part of a legal process like an arrest or trial. To test this hypothesis, I consider two indicators of criminal behavior: hit-and-runs and drunk drivers. I expect that a crash involving a hit-and-run will produce more coverage because the search for a missing driver is also newsworthy. In some cases, the police reach out to the public through the news media, soliciting information about the incident. A drunk driver may also produce more coverage because it involves a crime and may result in charges.

Several kinds of fatalities may receive additional coverage because they are less common. I expect that pedestrian fatalities involving children will be covered at a higher rate because they are less frequent and involve a particularly sympathetic population. Cyclists should also receive more coverage because they are less frequent. Multiple fatalities will receive more coverage for similar reasons. Women may receive more coverage but only if journalists realize that they are less common victims of pedestrian fatalities.

I also consider whether coverage of pedestrian fatalities has gone down over time. As has been shown by many prior scholars, local news has been hollowed-out in recent years (see, for example, Hayes and Lawless 2021). Stories about pedestrian fatalities are always competing with other stories for time and attention. It is possible that they will lose and be cut.

3.4 Analysis

Table 3.3 shows the relationship between victim characteristics and the probability of receiving news coverage. All of the regressions in this paper are OLS regressions with a binary dependent variable and robust standard errors. Coverage is 1 if the fatality received any coverage in the days following the accident and 0 otherwise. Regressions include fixed effects for Source-City and Year. The year fixed effects are calculated using a categorical version of year, so each year is represented by a separate dummy variable. The Source-City fixed effects are the combination of city and source. Deaths that could have been covered by multiple papers are included multiple times, once for each paper. For example, a death in Salt Lake during 2020 could have been covered by the Deseret News and/or the Salt Lake Times. Thus, the data is stacked such that the "coverage" variable contains whether or not

the death received coverage from each paper. In one row, source-city is recorded as "Salt Lake - The Deseret News" and "Coverage" equals 1 if the death received any coverage in the Deseret News and zero otherwise. In the other row, source-city is recorded as "Salt Lake - The Salt Lake Tribune" and "Coverage" equals 1 if the death received any coverage in the Salt Lake Tribune and zero otherwise.

3.4.1 Victim Characteristics

Interestingly, the average likelihood of news coverage does not change depending on victim race. This result is robust to many different specifications, including adding an interaction effect between race and gender. Some prior research suggests that women of color receive disproportionate coverage, but when I subset to only female victims, the effect of race on coverage continues to be small and insignificant (see Table C18 in Appendix C.5 for more specifications). While I can't prove a null hypothesis and the sample isn't large enough to claim that I have a precisely estimated null, this result is consistent with my earlier pilot studies from California, Huston, and Denver. These results hold when I drop the year fixed effects and when I exclude observations with missing race data (see Table C17 in Appendix C.5). I also broke the sample into four time periods to test for any race-time interactions. Many of the prior studies on race and crime occurred in the 1990s and 2000s. However, this specification also produced no evidence of race-based disparities in coverage in any of the time period (see Table C16 in Appendix C.5). I also ran the model separately for large cities and found no strong evidence of an effect (see Table C21 in Appendix C.5).

Consistent with my expectations, children are more likely to receive coverage. In Table 3.3, the reference category is 25-40. Controlling for city-paper and year, compared to adults ages 25-40, children are about 17 percentage points more likely to receive coverage. This result is robust to controlling for other variables and different specifications (see Table C19 in Appendix C.5). I was not expecting to see a lower probability of coverage among elderly people, ages 70+. As can be seen in TableC12 in Appendix C.4, victims over the age of 70 make up 12.9% of fatalities in the sample. Tables C22 and C23 in Appendix C.5 show regressions with age broken into 5- and 10-year year increments.

Women are also, on average, more likely to receive coverage. This gender disparity may be the result of journalists knowing that deaths involving women are less common. Interestingly, some of the gender bias found in coverage of murders may persist in areas where gender stereotypes are weaker. Relative to age, the gender disparity is smaller, but it is robust to different specifications (see Appendix C.4).

While men receive less coverage, cyclists, a victim type typically stereotyped as male, are more likely to receive coverage. This is likely because deaths among cyclists are relatively rare. Cyclists make up 0.1% of fatalities in the sample.

Table 3.3: Regressions (OLS)

	DV: News Coverage					
	Race	All	All	Female	Pedestrians	Cyclists
race.Asian	-0.040	-0.065	-0.065	-0.116+	-0.060	-0.026
	(0.046)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.065)	(0.049)	(0.110)
race.Black	0.010	-0.027	-0.024	-0.065	-0.015	0.003
	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.045)	(0.027)	(0.077)
race.Hispanic/Latino	0.018	-0.018	-0.018	-0.007	-0.014	0.029
	(0.032)	(0.031)	(0.031)	(0.057)	(0.033)	(0.091)
race.Native American	0.053	0.025	0.030	0.014	0.042	-0.214
	(0.047)	(0.048)	(0.048)	(0.087)	(0.049)	(0.230)
race.Unknown/Missing	-0.013	-0.040	-0.042	-0.075	-0.025	-0.170
	(0.042)	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.080)	(0.043)	(0.154)
cyclist		0.067*	0.082**	0.108+		
		(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.054)		
age.0-12		0.166***	0.172***	0.099	0.189***	0.043
		(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.076)	(0.047)	(0.116)
age.12-18		0.104*	0.093+	0.142+	0.075	0.060
		(0.048)	(0.049)	(0.077)	(0.053)	(0.106)
age.18-25		0.044	0.058	0.059	0.039	0.033
		(0.035)	(0.036)	(0.063)	(0.040)	(0.085)
age.40-70		-0.005	-0.002	0.010	0.003	-0.131+
		(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.040)	(0.026)	(0.073)
age.70+		-0.088*	-0.084*	-0.155*	-0.077+	-0.276*
		(0.036)	(0.035)	(0.061)	(0.038)	(0.132)
female		0.056**	0.059**		0.052*	0.045
		(0.019)	(0.019)		(0.021)	(0.061)
hit_run		0.109***	0.105***	0.067+	0.098***	0.222**
		(0.021)	(0.020)	(0.035)	(0.022)	(0.061)
multifatality		0.259***	0.241***	0.239**	0.267***	0.140
		(0.054)	(0.052)	(0.073)	(0.055)	(0.154)
death_delay		-0.108***	-0.108***	-0.141*	-0.099**	-0.192***
		(0.029)	(0.027)	(0.054)	(0.030)	(0.045)
Num.Obs.	2236	2206	2206	705	1946	260
FE: source_cat	X	X	X	X	X	X
FE: year_cat	X	X		X	X	X

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

3.4.2 Incident Characteristics

Crashes that kill pedestrians typically only involve one death. Crashes that kill multiple pedestrians or a combination of pedestrians, drivers, and passengers are rare. In the matched sample, only 3% of the 2081 fatalities are considered multifatalities, which is defined as an incident with two or more deaths (for more details, see Table C14 in Appendix C.4). Due to this scarcity, it is unsurprising that multifatalities receive a disproportionate amount of coverage.

Hit-and-runs also receive disproportionate coverage. This is consistent with journalists having a clear narrative about the criminal hit-and-run driver. It is also consistent with the idea that hit-and-runs are likely to generate additional newsworthy events like police searches, arrests, and trial proceedings. Given the extra police effort, they may also be more likely to be passed along from contacts within police departments. Hit-and-runs may also be perceived as rare events, although they are relatively common compared to other rare categories. In my sample, 24.7% of fatalities were the result of a hit-and-run.

The length of time that it takes a victim to die is strongly predictive of less coverage. This is consistent with newsworthiness involving an element of timeliness. A crash becomes more newsworthy when the victim dies, but if it is upgraded too long after the incident occurs, the story is less timely and, thus, less newsworthy. Death delay is a continuous measure of the number of days that it took for the victim to die. Because I exclude all fatalities where the gap between the crash and death was greater than 2 days, this variable ranges from 0 to 2

In the Appendix, I also look at the time of day of an accident (Appendix C.9) as well as the road where it occurred. Specifically, I examine the road type and whether the road is especially dangerous to pedestrians (see Appendix C.8). Interestingly, there is no evidence that time of day has an effect on the likelihood of coverage. I expected that the time of the day would affect the likelihood of coverage. First, it seems reasonable that the daily publication cycle would benefit incidents occurring at certain times of day (for example, at the beginning of a workday). Second, it seemed likely that people who were killed late at night or early in the morning may differ in ways that would not be fully captured in the FARS data (for example, they may be more likely to be unhoused). However, as can be seen in Table C30 in Appendix C.9, there is no clear relationship between time of day and the probability of coverage.

It seems logical that the smallest cities with the fewest deaths would cover pedestrian fatalities at the highest rate. However, as can be seen in Figure C2 in Appendix C.6, there is no clear relationship between the average number of fatalities per year and the rate of coverage. It is possible that this relationship is negative, but the results would be highly dependent on the model of the fitted line. Similarly, in Figure C3, there does not appear to be a relationship between the rate of coverage and per capita pedestrian fatalities.

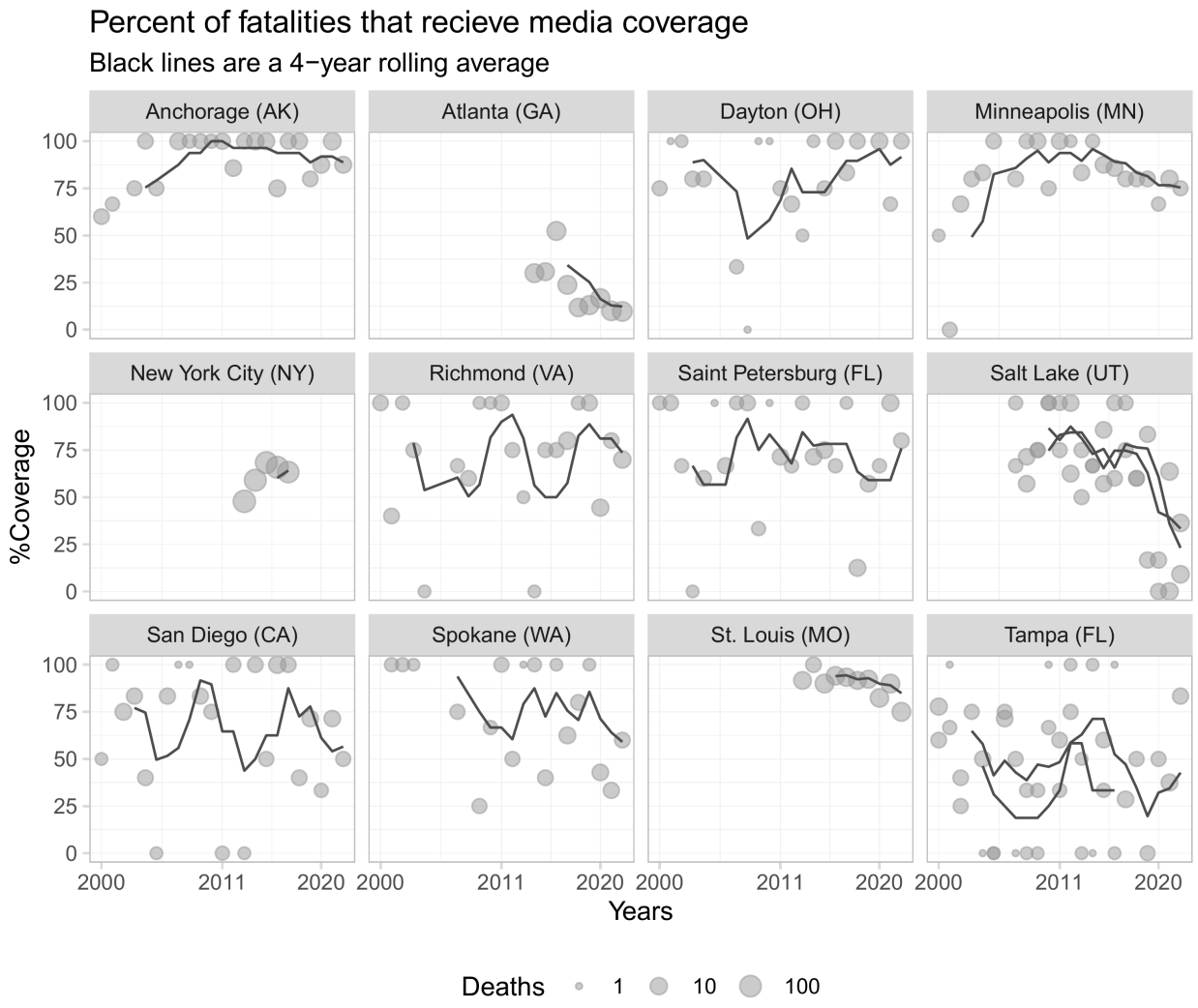

Figure 3.1: Likelihood of news coverage over time

3.4.3 Coverage Over Time

More research on the financial health of each news outlet will be necessary before making any conclusions about the hollowing-out of news media. However, average rates of coverage across all of the outlets, do not suggest a gradual decline in coverage. As can be seen in Figure 3.1 and in Appendix C.7, coverage in most cities has been relatively stable over the past two decades. There are some exceptions. For example, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution and both Salt Lake papers show a gradual decline over the past few decades.

3.5 Conclusion

This paper contributes to the literature on media gatekeeping by extending the study of news selection to a new policy domain. Existing studies have measured gatekeeping by comparing news coverage to economic indicators and administrative records of events like murders, kidnappings, terrorism, and school shootings. Pedestrian and cyclist fatalities provide another opportunity to study the selection process, but one with important theoretical differences. Unlike homicides or missing persons, pedestrian fatalities are less strongly associated with familiar racial and gender stereotypes, making them a useful setting for testing the scope of existing theories of news selection.

Consistent with my expectations, the analysis suggests that fatalities involving children, women, cyclists, hit-and-runs, and multiple deaths are more likely to receive coverage. Fatalities in which victims die days after the initial crash are less likely to be reported.

In contrast, I find little evidence that racial disparities documented in studies of homicide or missing-person coverage extend to pedestrian or cycling fatalities. However, additional research will be needed to confirm this result. In future work, I plan to test whether the results hold when I extend the geographic scope to include suburbs and other areas covered by local papers. I also plan to look at whether the racial composition or socioeconomic status of the crash location predict whether an incident is covered.

While not conclusive, these findings raise the possibility that selection bias may differ substantially across types of events and that theories developed from highly stereotyped forms of crime do not necessarily generalize to other indicators of policy failure. Thus, to understand selection bias, we must look at a broad range of events and topics.

More broadly, this paper highlights the importance of studying the selection stage of news production. Much of what citizens and policymakers learn about public problems depends not only on how events are framed, but also on which events are reported in the first place. By providing a framework for measuring those selection decisions directly, this paper offers a foundation for future research on how gatekeeping shapes political accountability, public opinion, and policy agendas.

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Appendix A

Appendix to Chapter 1

A.1 Data: Contract Solicitations and Requests for Information

In the paper, I repeatedly refer to four sets of contract documents. Below, I provide more details about how to locate each of the key documents.

- **2001 draft proposal**: see the Draft Proposal For White House News Summary and Clips Package, which is attached to an email from Paul Roellig to Vickers B. Meadows on February 16, 2001 (Bush Library FOIA 2024-0154-F).
- **2010 SOW**: see the section entitled "SECTION C: DESCRIPTION/SPECIFICATIONS/ STATEMENT OF Objectives" from the 2010 Request for Proposals for "Daily News Summary/News Clips" posted Sep 01, 2010, Notice ID OAS-GEN-R-10-0101.
- **2018 SOW**: see the Solicitation for "Expert-edited Daily and Intra-day News Briefings" posted Sept. 14, 2018, Notice ID OND-GEN-D-18-0052.
- **2021 SOW**: see the "Statement of Work News Briefing Services" document attached to the 2021 Request for Quotation for "News briefings summaries, news clips, or full texts of the articles or transcripts summaries" posted on Jul 14, 2021, Notice ID 11316021Q0005EOP.

Table A1: Relevant Executive Office of the President (EOP) Contract Solicitations

Year	Title of Contract Opportunity	Notice ID
2005	NEWS SUMMARY AND NEWS CLIP SERVICES	EOPOA-25010
2006	News Summary and News Clip Services	OVP-S-06-001
2010	Daily News Summary/News Clips	OAS-GEN-R-10-0101
2010	News Summaries and News Clips	WHO-GEN-R-10-0009
2016	Daily Expert-Edited News Briefings	EOP-NC-2016
2018	Expert-edited Daily and Intra-day News Briefings	OND-GEN-D-18-0052
2021	News briefings summaries, news clips, or full texts of the articles or transcripts summaries	11316021Q0005EOP

Table A1 lists all relevant contract opportunities that I identified on sam.gov, which is the official U.S. government system for contracting. Some of these listings have the original contract documents, including a Statement of Work (SOW). Older listings tend to have less information.

A.2 Data: WHNS and WHNC

Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama

Bulletin produces two documents every day: a narrative summary of the news (White House News Summary, "WHNS") and a packet of full text news articles used to construct the news summary (White House News Clips, "WHNC"). Unfortunately, not all of the news reports are freely available from the presidential libraries and VP archives. Before these documents can be accessed, a researcher must submit a Freedom of Information Act Request (FOIA) to the relevant presidential library or archive. I submitted FOIA requests for all of the Clinton documents, but due to the cost of scanning, I cannot afford to have all of them scanned. For Bush and Obama, I requested a randomly sampled set of dates (stratified by quarter). Due to long queues at the libraries, I also submitted requests to the Cheney and Biden Vice Presidential Records at the National Archives. As of June 2025, I have copies of 319 WHNC and 126 WHNS from the Bush administration as well as 1 WHNC and 79 WHNS from the Obama administration.

Clinton – Due to previous FOIA requests, many clipbooks from 1993-1996 were already available and digitized. In total, I found 236 WHNC and XXX WHNS from 1993 to 1996. In May 2024, I requested all digital copies of WHNS from the Clinton Presidential Library (FOIA 2024-0621-F). According to a June 12, 2024 email from Dana Simmons, library staff were only able to identify emailed copies of the White House News Reports between 1993-1994. They were also unaware of the electronic "bulletin board" described by Ken Chitester. It is possible that those records were not properly preserved. In May 2024, I also requested all paper records from the Records of the Office of the Press Secretary from the Clinton Presidential Library (FOIA 2024-0592-F and 2024-0593-F).[1] I requested all documents in the series "White House News Reports, 1993–2001"[2] and "White House News Reports emails sent by News Analysis Staff 1993-1994."[3] As of November 2025, both archives are fully available to the public. However, because the records are on paper, they need to be scanned. I have partially digitized the tables of contents from News Clips from 1996-1999.

Bush — Previous FOIA requests contained 237 WHNC and 39 WHNS (see FOIA 2014-0157-F, 2015-0138-F, 2016-0370-F, 2018-0102-F, and 2021-0121-F). From June to October 2024, I requested emailed copies of both documents for a random sample of additional dates (FOIA 2024-0195-F, 2024-0196-F, 2025-0014-F, 2025-0013-F).

Obama — Previous FOIA requests only contained 1 WHNC and 2 WHNS (see FOIA 22-17618-F and 22-17767-F). In October 2024, I requested emailed copies of both documents.

[1] See https://catalog.archives.gov/id/2525058.
[2] See https://catalog.archives.gov/id/7432014.
[3] See https://catalog.archives.gov/id/7432027.

According to a September 20, 2024 call with the Obama library, news clips were not emailed after 2010 but news summaries were emailed throughout the Obama administration. To expedite processing of the FOIA requests, I randomly sampled the dates and requested them in batches of approximately 100 documents (FOIA 24-43837-F, 24-46676-F, 24-70036-F, 24-70037-F, 24-70038-F, 24-70039-F). As of June 2026, none of these records have been released. However, the first two batches (FOIA 24-43837-F and 24-46676-F) should be released around September 2026.

VP Archives — In September 2024, I requested random samples and the largest email containing news reports from the Cheney and Biden Vice Presidential Records at the National Archives (FOIA 2025-0058-F, 2025-0059-F, 2024-0130-F, 2024-0131-F, 2024-0132-F, 2024-0133-F). According to a September 25, 2024 email from Jessica Owens at the National Archive, they could not find any copies of WHNC or WHNS emailed to the Office of the Vice President (OVP) staff members before 2005. They also noted that they could not locate some requested dates in mid to late 2008. In the Biden-era OVP emails, they found no copies of the WHNC from October 1, 2010, until the end of the administration. They found copies of the requested WHNS for all but 3 of the requested 80 dates. As of January 2026, all but one of these requests has been publicly released.

Ronald Reagan's news summaries

Recently, copies of select news summaries from June 1984 to August 1987 were digitized and posted by the Reagan presidential library. See the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library's collected titled "News Summary Office, White House: News Summaries, 1981-1989." The files are available on this web page: https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/research/finding-aids/news-summary-office-white-house-news-summaries-1981-1989.

I reviewed 15 news summaries from Reagan Presidential Library's collection: June 1, 2984; August 27, 1984; October 18, 1984; November 14, 1984; July 10, 1985; July 24, 1985; November 6, 1985; January 10, 1986; May 9, 1986; August 13, 1986; October 29, 1986; December 17, 1986; May 4, 1987; April 22, 1987; and July 7, 1987.

Only five of these news summaries contained "Foreign Media Reaction" sections (November 6, 1985; January 10, 1986; May 9, 1986; December 17, 1986; April 22, 1987). All but one example had only one page of foreign press clips, and the only exception (November 6, 1985) had two pages of foreign press clips.

Sometimes, there would also be an additional page or two of editorials from a wider selection of local and national papers. Eight of the fifteen news summaries that I reviewed had a one to two page section with local and national editorials (October 18, 1984; July 10, 1985; November 6, 1985; January 10, 1986; May 9, 1986; December 17, 1986; April 22, 1987; July 7, 1987). In each case, local clips were limited to editorials sections at the end of the summary.

A.3 Local papers requested by George W. Bush's administration in February 2001

In email from February 2001, the Bush White House asks Bulletin to create a proposal for creating a separate local news report with additional local papers. See the February 2, 2001 08:57:30 email from Brian Bravo to Mark Gabor (Bush Library FOIA 2024-0154-F).

> Also our office of Media Affairs wants to know the possibility of you guys doing a seperate [sic] project of regional newspaper stories. This would not be included in the original clips, but done a little later. I do not know if this is possible are what the billing logistics and service requirements are, but I said I would ask. Please let me know if possible. They have a list of cities they want checked, so anyway let me know.

Bulletin responded with a proposal on February 7th. See proposal attached to the February 7, 2001 16:14:01 email from Paul Roellig to William T. Griffin (Bush Library FOIA 2024-0154-F).

> Due to the inconsistent times the daily news is posted on the Web sites of a number of the local papers selected by the White House, it is difficult to accurately state what BNN can do and at what cost. The attached page shows the approximate times the White House-selected newspaper Web sites were updated today.
>
> BNN has developed special relationships with a number of media companies and their reporters, however, which allows BNN to acquire by email and fax the relevant news stories before they are posted on the newspapers' Web sites. BNN would attempt to develop such relationships with the White House-selected newspapers, but cannot guarantee success.
>
> BNN proposes to produce a separate news clips package for the White House based on the local newspapers selected by the White House. The length of such a package will vary day-to-day, and may increase in size as possible special relationships are developed with the late-posting newspapers. BNN proposes to deliver this additional local newspaper clips package to the White House by 9:30 a.m. each morning.

Table A2 contains the list of local newspapers attached to the proposal in a section called "Target News Sites for Monitoring."

Table A2: Target News Sites for Monitoring from Bulletin's 2001 Local News Proposal

State	Paper Name	News Updated
Arkansas	Arkansas Democrat-Gazette (Little Rock)	Up by 5:00 a.m.
	Southwest Times Record (Ft. Smith)	Not up by 10:00 a.m.

State	Paper Name	News Updated
Florida	Tampa Tribune	Up by 5:00 a.m.
	St. Petersburg Times	Up by 5:00 a.m.
	Orlando Sentinel	Up by 2:30 a.m.
	Miami Herald	Up by 8:00 a.m.
Iowa	Des Moines Register	Up by 8:30 a.m.
	Cedar Rapids Gazette	Up by 8:30 a.m.
	Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier	Not up by 10:00 a.m.
Maine	Portland Press-Herald & Maine Sunday Telegram	Up by 8:30 a.m.
	Bangor News	Up by 10:00 a.m.
Michigan	Detroit Free Press	Up by 5:00 a.m.
	Detroit News	Up by 5:00 a.m.
	Grand Rapids Press	Not up by 10:00 a.m.
	Kalamazoo Gazette	Some, but not most, up by 8:30 a.m.
	Flint Journal	Up by 8:30 a.m.
	Saginaw News	Up by 8:30 a.m.
	Bay City Times	Up by 9:15 a.m.
Minnesota	Minneapolis Star-Tribune	Up by 2:30 a.m.
	Minneapolis Pioneer Press	Up by 2:30 a.m.
Missouri	St. Louis Post-Dispatch	Up by 2:30 a.m.
	Kansas City Star	Up by 2:30 a.m.
	Springfield News-Leader	Up by 5:00 a.m.
Nevada	Las Vegas Review-Journal	Up by 5:00 a.m.
	Las Vegas Sun	Not up by 10:00 a.m.
New Hampshire	Manchester Union Leader	Up by 2:30 a.m.
New Mexico	Albuquerque Journal	Up by 9:30 a.m.
	Albuquerque Tribune	Not up by 9:45 a.m.
Ohio	Cleveland Plain Dealer	Up by 8:30 a.m.
	Cincinnati Enquirer	Up by 2:30 a.m.
	Cincinnati Post	Up by 9:30 a.m.
	Columbus Dispatch	Up by 8:30 a.m.
	Dayton News	Up by 2:30 a.m.
Oregon	Portland Oregonian	Not up by 9:45 a.m.
	Eugene Register-Guard	Not up by 9:50 a.m.
Pennsylvania	Philadelphia Inquirer	Up by 5:00 a.m.
	Philadelphia News	Up by 5:00 a.m.
	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette	Up by 5:00 a.m.
	Pittsburgh Tribune-Review	Up by 8:30 a.m.
	Wilkes-Barre Citizen's Voice	Up by 8:30 a.m.
	Wilkes-Barre Times Leader	Up by 8:30 a.m.
	Scranton Times and Tribune	Up by 8:30 a.m.
Tennessee	Nashville Tennessean	Up by 8:30 a.m.
	Memphis Commercial Appeal	Up by 5:00 a.m.
	Knoxville News-Sentinel	Up by 5:00 a.m.
West Virginia	Charleston Gazette	Up by 5:00 a.m.
	Charleston Mail	Not up by 9:50 a.m.
	Clarksburg Exponent and Telegram	Not up by 9:55 a.m.
	Bluefield Telegraph	Up by 9:50 a.m.
Wisconsin	Milwaukee Journal Sentinel	Up by 2:30 a.m.
	Green Bay News-Chronicle	Up by 8:30 a.m.
	Green Bay Press-Gazette	Up by 5:00 a.m.
	Madison Capitol Times & Wisconsin State Journal	Up by 8:30 a.m.

Appendix B

Appendix to Chapter 2

B.1 Data

Gemini Code

To extract named entities corresponding to media sources, I used the Gemini 2.0 Flash large language model (LLM) to perform entity recognition and classification. After splitting the DOI news briefings by page, I used the following prompt to extract the sources from each page using the Gemini LLM:

```
# Define the model
model_id =  "gemini-2.0-flash"

# Define response schema
class Citation(BaseModel):
    source: str = Field(
        description="Name of news source cited in text. Reproduce the exact
        text. Write 'unable to determine' if not certain or no news source is
        detected.")
    sourceinfo: str = Field(
        description="All text related to the the news source and any
        associated text in () or []. Write 'unable to determine' if not
        certain or no news source is detected.")
    page: str = Field(description="Page number of pdf")
class Sources(BaseModel):
    """For each page of the pdf, extract the news sources cited in the document."""
    citations: list[Citation] = Field(description="The list of news sources")

# API Call
def extract_source_gemini(file_path: str, model: BaseModel):
    # Upload the file to the File API
    file = client.files.upload(
        file=file_path,
        onfig={'display_name': file_path.split('/')[-1].split('.')[0]}
    )
    # Generate a structured response using the Gemini API
    prompt = f"Extract the structured data from the following PDF file"
    response = client.models.generate_content(
        model=model_id,
        contents=[prompt, file],
```

```
    config={
        'response_mime_type': 'application/json',
        'response_schema': model
    }
)
# Convert the response to the pydantic model and return it
return response.parsed
```

Media Bias/Fact Check (MBFC)

On June 2, 2025, I downloaded MBFC scores using the MBFC API (https://rapidapi.com/mbfcnews/api/media-bias-fact-check-ratings-api2). However, I merged the API data with additional information because MBFC combines its scores for partisan slant and factual accuracy. For sources that have been deemed factually questionable, the partisan slant score is replaced by 'Questionable' in the API database. Thus, to obtain partisan slant scores for all sources, I also scraped the MBFC website using the MBFC page URLs provided by the API. I identified several places where partisan slant data could be found on the website (a table in the text and the filename of an image).

To construct a bias variable from these three sources of information (the API, website text, and website image filename), I first created flag variables for each category. I created a variable called `right`, which was 1 if the source was categorized as 'right' by the API, webpage text, or webpage image filename. I also created a variable called `left`, which would be 1 if the source was categorized as 'left' by the API, webpage text, or webpage image filename. Lastly, I created a variable called `center`, which would be 1 if the source was categorized as 'least biased' by the API, webpage text, or webpage image filename. I created a variable called `other`, which was equal to 1 if the source was categorized as a 'satire' by by the API, webpage text, or webpage image filename. Lastly, I created a variable called `notrated`, which was 1 if the source was not categorized as right, left, center, or other (e.g. it was listed as "not rated", "na", "unrated", "pro-science", "pseudoscience", or "junk news"). `notrated` was also 1 if the source was listed as both right and left.

To construct a final partisan bias variable, I used the following rules to determine whether a source was categorized as left, right, center, other, or not categorized:

- Right-leaning: (`right`=1) and (`left`=0)
- Left-leaning: (`left`=1) and (`right`=0)
- Center: (`center`=1) and (`right`=`left`=0)
- Other: (`other`=1) and (`center`=`right`=`left`=0)
- Not Categorized: ((`notrated`=1) and (`other`=`center`=`right`=`left`=0)) OR (`right`=`left`=1)

Some webpages also provided the numeric score for partisan bias as well. However, most of them were missing the negative sign (-) if they were liberal. Thus, I recalculated the numeric scores by multiplying the number by -1 if the score was from a liberal-leaning website. These continuous scores are available for only part of the sample. They are only used in the Appendix as a robustness check and to determine source extremity.

Table B1: Agreement between MBFC and Allsides Scores

Source Type	Total Sources	Total Agree	Percent Agreement
Excluded (local)	577	335	58.1
Included	250	190	76.0

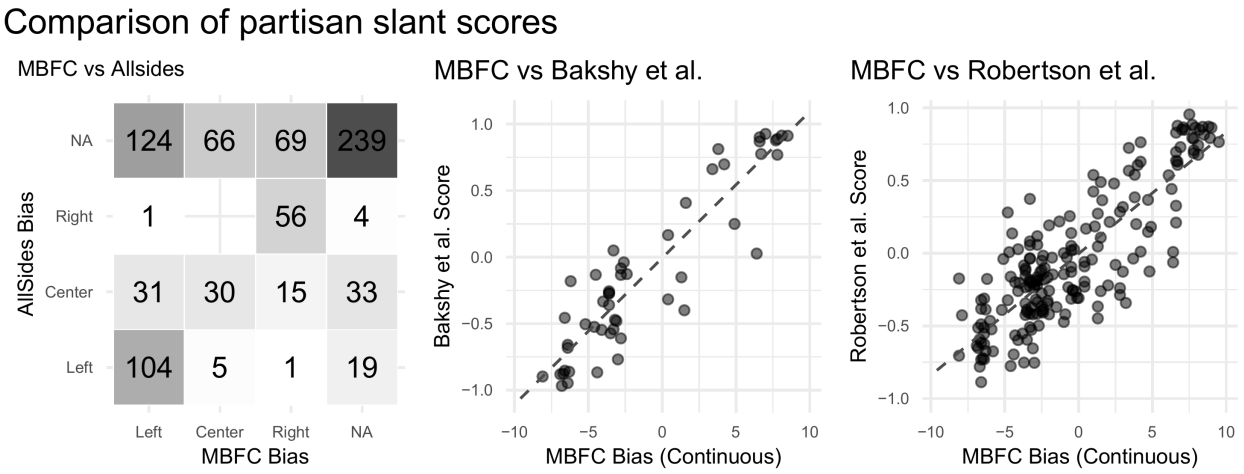

Figure B1: Comparison of media bias scores. Limited to sources cited in briefings. Excludes local general interest sources and government websites.

Summary Statistics

Table B2: Summary Stats for Briefings and Agencies

Briefing	Agency	Part of Briefing	Years	Total Articles	Total Dates	Avg Articles per Day	Unique Source Domains	Unique Source Names	Local General Interest	Gov Websites	Unidentified	International
DOI	DOI	Whole Briefing	2015-2018	37,848	213	177.7	2,110	2,287	10,761	4	0	11,071
DOI	BLM	Section	2015-2018	1,342	210	6.4	313	321	817	0	0	825
DOI	FWS	Section	2015-2018	2,154	210	10.3	586	604	1,060	1	0	1,138
DOI	GS	Section	2015-2018	562	160	3.5	240	245	239	0	0	268
DOI	NPS	Section	2015-2018	3,256	212	15.4	728	767	1,751	0	0	1,810
DOI	BOR	Section	2016-2018	266	104	2.6	128	130	172	0	0	175
DOI	BIA	Section	2017-2018	454	128	3.5	161	162	222	0	0	222
VA	VA	Whole Briefing	2020-2021	6,099	233	26.2	1,671	1,261	3,588	87	38	3,664
USCIS	USCIS	Whole Briefing	2022-2025	44,420	922	48.2	1,845	2,159	17,596	47	4	17,219
DHS	DHS	Whole Briefing	2024-2025	70,346	655	107.4	1,295	1,394	8,566	200	134	8,541
DHS	CG	Section	2024-2025	2,648	583	4.5	284	341	725	38	10	681
DHS	FEMA	Section	2024-2025	6,394	643	9.9	287	284	1,132	2	17	1,026
DHS	SS	Section	2024-2025	3,622	567	6.4	844	830	1,493	148	1	1,658
DHS	TSA	Section	2024-2025	1,379	454	3.0	126	142	239	3	9	188
DHS	USCBP	Section	2024-2025	4,504	648	7.0	161	168	827	2	11	797
DHS	USCIS	Section	2024-2025	2,755	591	4.7	145	133	288	1	7	280
DHS	USICE	Section	2024-2025	7,576	618	12.3	285	281	1,140	2	20	1,047
Total			2015-2025	158,713	1,563	101.5	4,081	4,393	40,511	338	176	40,495

B.2 Figure 1 - Association between sources in briefings and partisan slant

Table B3 contains the regression coefficients for the best fit line in the right-leaning subplot of Figure 1. The table also shows that these results are consistent across different specifications. Figure B2 replicates Figure 1 using different media slant measures and shows the relationship between missing slant and agency ideology. Figure B3 replicates Figure 1 using an alternate agency ideology measure from Napolio (2025).

Table B3: Best fit line in Right-leaning subplot of Figure 2 (aggregated data)

	MBFC	MBFC, keep NA	MBFC, disaggregated	MBFC, continuous	MBFC, keep local+gov	Alt ideo measure
(Intercept)	0.200 (0.024)***	0.184 (0.023)***	0.268 (0.076)**	0.461 (0.010)***	0.201 (0.018)***	0.166 (0.017)***
Agency Ideology	0.062 (0.018)**	0.059 (0.017)**	0.052 (0.012)***	0.025 (0.008)**	0.048 (0.016)**	
Agency Ideology (Napolio)						0.019 (0.002)***
Num.Obs.	17	17	136382	17	17	17
R2	0.302	0.293	0.009	0.290	0.282	0.703
R2 Adj.	0.256	0.246	0.009	0.242	0.234	0.683
Std.Errors	Heteroskedasticity-robust	Heteroskedasticity-robust	by: Source & Agency & ID	Heteroskedasticity-robust	Heteroskedasticity-robust	Heteroskedasticity-robust

Notes: Cols 1-2: Dependent variable (DV) is porportion of articles in an agency's briefing from right-leaning sources, ranges from 0 to 1.
Col 3: DV is 1 if an article is from a right-leaning sources and 0 otherwise. Errors clustered by the agency, news sources, and article.
Col 4: DV is the average value of the MBFC continuous variable, rescaled from 0-1.
Col 4: DV is same as col 1, Ricardson et al agency ideology scores replaced with scores from Napolio (2025), ranges from -10 to 10.

Figure 1 replicates with other partisan slant measures

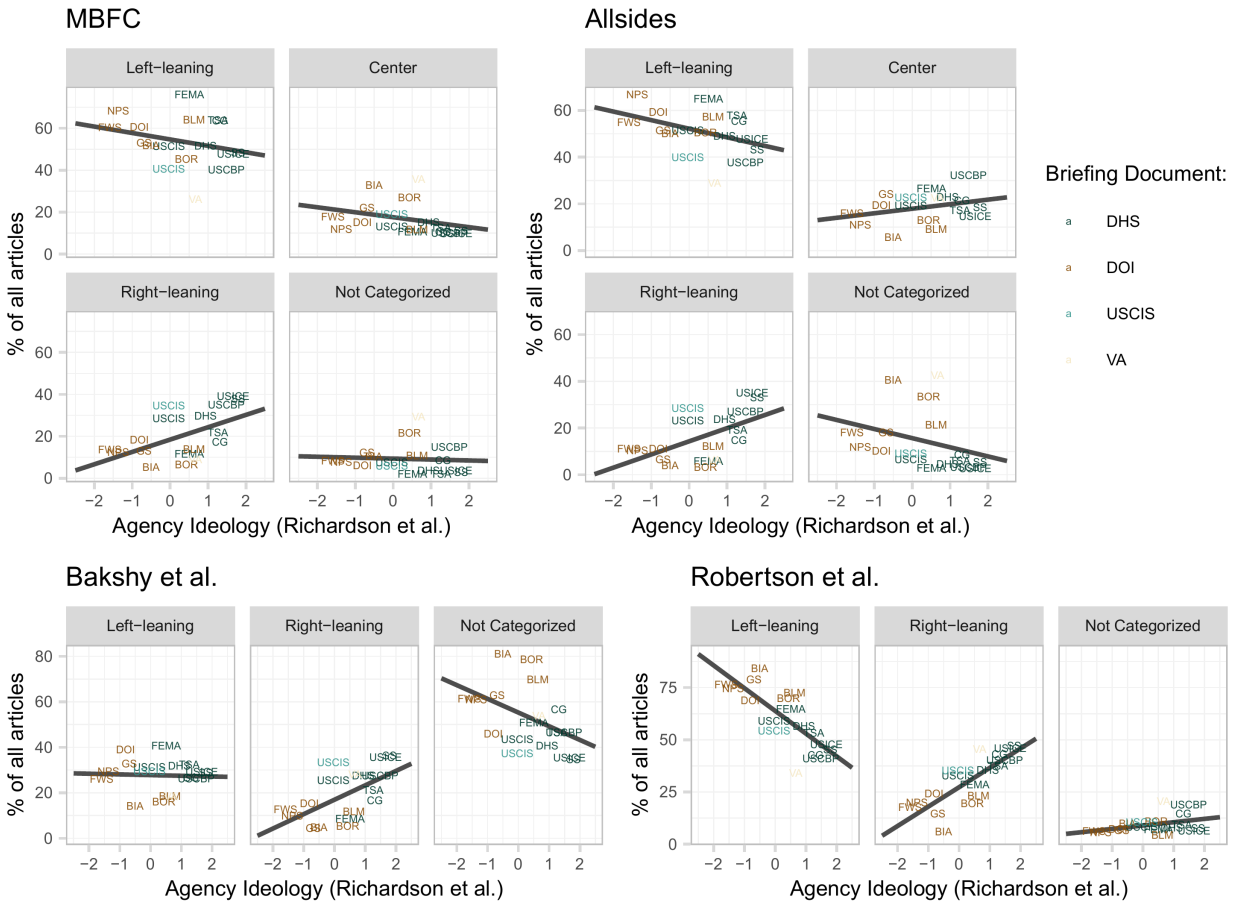

Figure B2: Replication of Figure 1 with alternate partisan slant scores.

Figure 1 replicates with other agency ideology measure

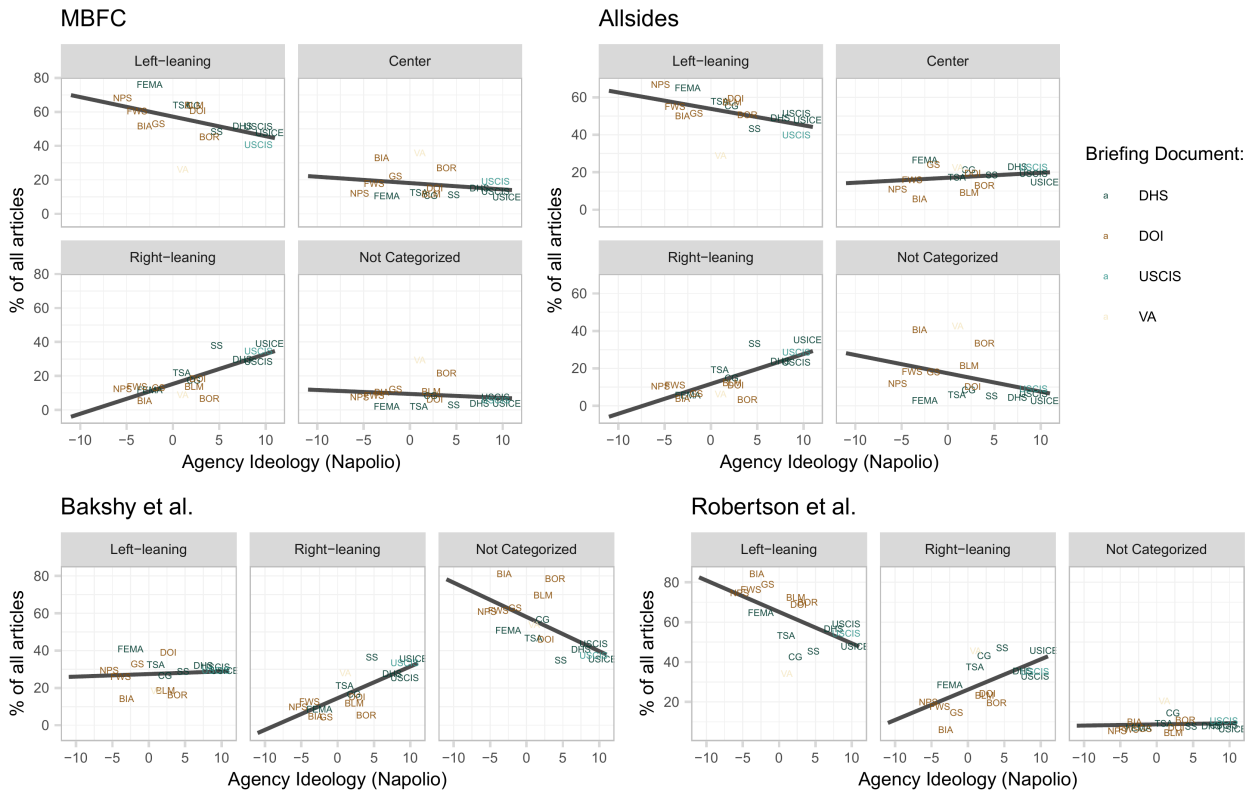

Figure B3: Replication of Figure 1 with Napolio (2025) agency ideology measures.

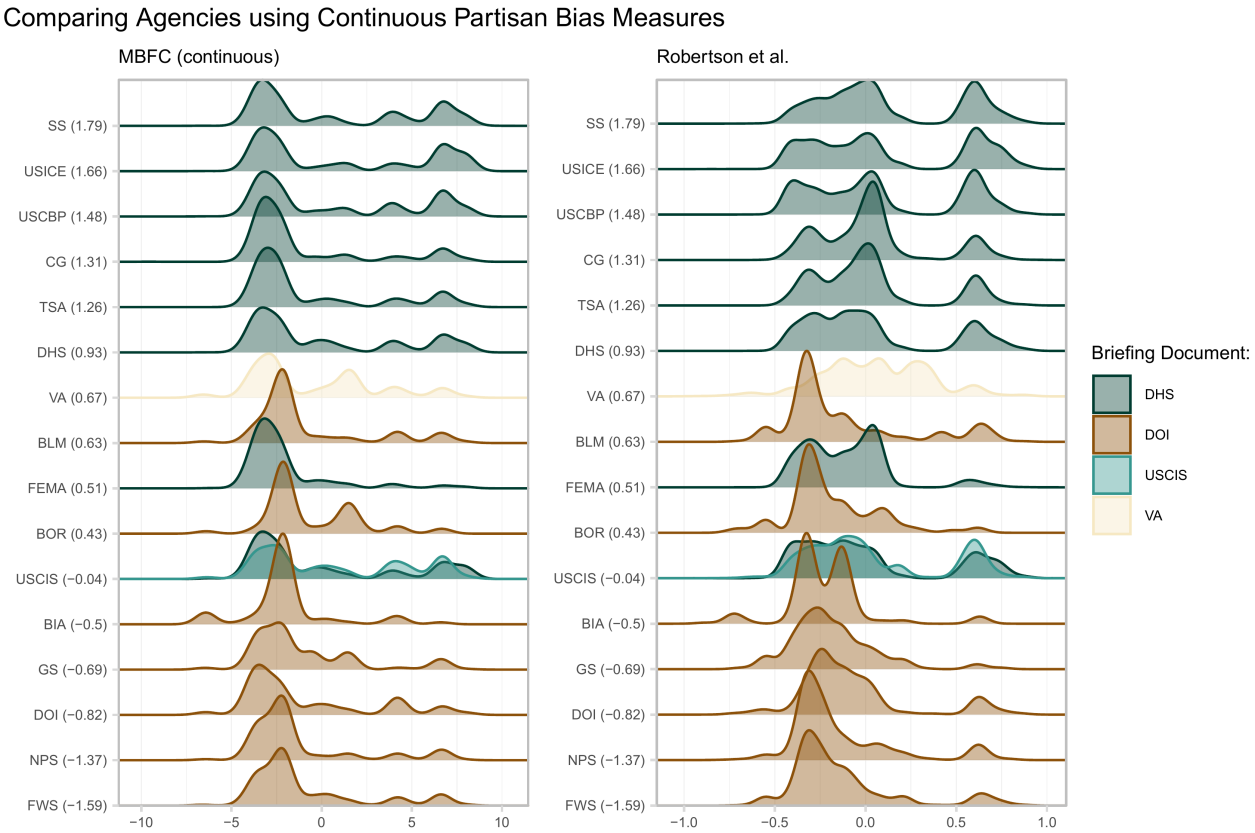

Figure B4: Distribution of Articles using Continuous Partisan Bias Measures. Agencies are ordered by ideology score.

B.3 Figure 3 - Association between news supply and partisan slant

Because I do not have the complete set of daily news briefings for the Department of Interior, I had to make an assumption about which articles from Media Cloud should be considered part of the supply for Figure 3(i).[1] In Figure B5, I show that most articles were included in the briefing 1 day after being published. However, there is some variation. Breaking down the distribution by the day of the week that the briefing was published (Monday, Tuesday, etc), we see that Monday briefings include slightly older articles. I did not find any Sunday DOI briefings, suggesting that DOI briefings are not produced on Sundays. Likely, Monday briefings contain coverage from Saturday and Sunday. Thus, when I determined the relevant supply of news for the DOI briefings in my sample, I included an extra day for briefings published on Mondays. The results reported in Figures 3(i) and 4 assume that an article is part of the DOI's relevant supply of news if it is published on the same day as a briefing in my sample or 1 day prior to a briefing in my sample. For briefings published on Mondays, I include articles published up to 2 days before a briefing in my sample briefing.

The other figures below test the robustness of the findings in Figure 3. Figure B6 compares

[1]Note that I have not replicated Figure 3(i) using the GDELT data. This is because the GDELT API does not report article publication date.

the slope of the best fit line in Figure 3(i) to the comparable best fit line of Figure 1 (after removing sources not found in Media Cloud). Across different specifications, the supply-side disparity is similar sized or larger than the disparity in the briefings. Figure B7 reproduces Figure 3(ii) for each facet in Figure (i) and treats missing slant as a fourth slant category. Figures B8 and B9 replicate Figure 3(ii) using other slant measures. Figure B10 replicates Figure 3(ii) with different samples (e.g. results when local news is included).

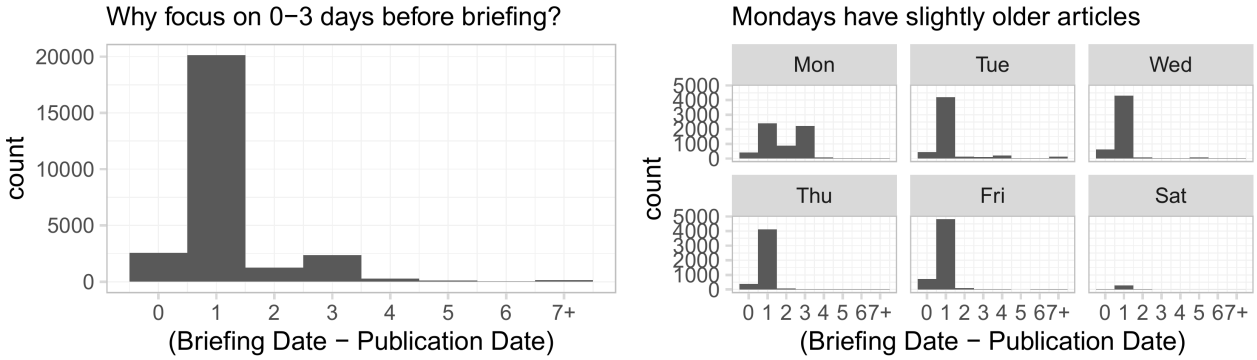

Figure B5: Days between DOI briefing and article publication. Based on article publication date metadata provided in DOI briefing. Excludes local general interest sources and government websites. Plot (ii) shows the distribution grouped by the day of the week of the briefing. No DOI briefings were found for Sundays, suggesting that they are only produced 6 days a week.

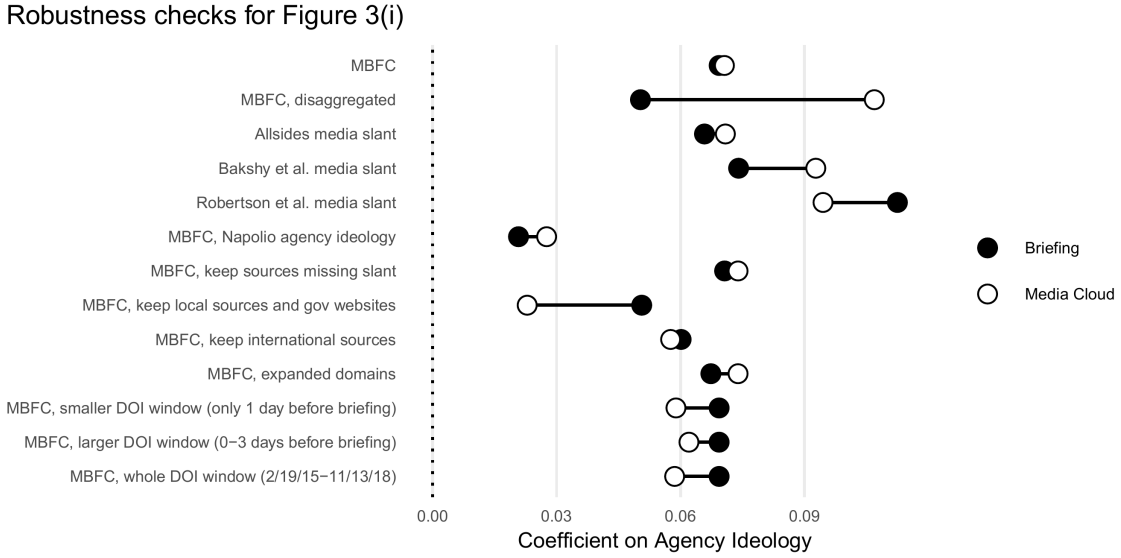

Figure B6: Robustness of finding in Figure 3(i). Open dots are estimates from regressions using Media cloud data. Closed dots are esimates from regressions using briefing data, after dropping articles from sources that do not appear in the Media Cloud sample.

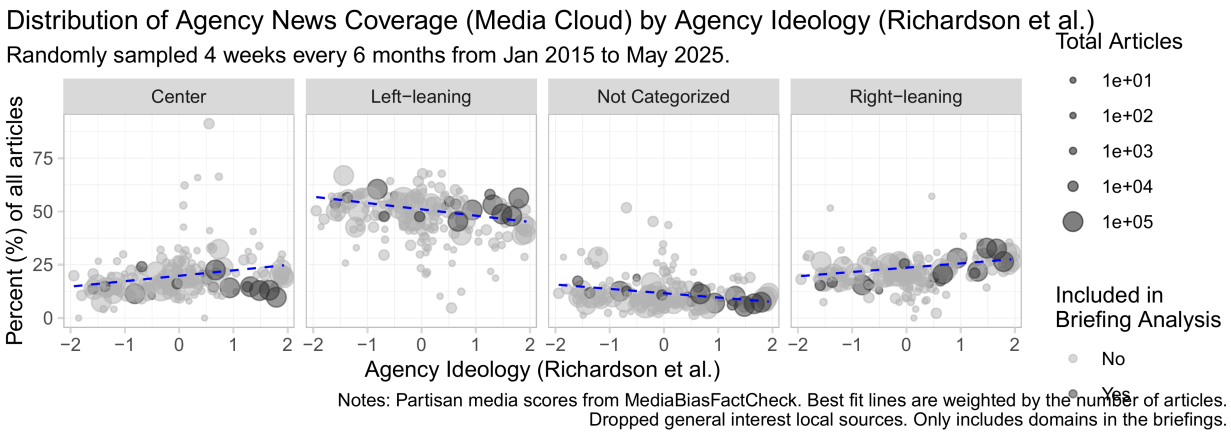

Figure B7: Version of Fig 3(ii) with all media slant categories.

Figure 3 using alternative bias and ideology measures, Media Cloud (2015−2025)

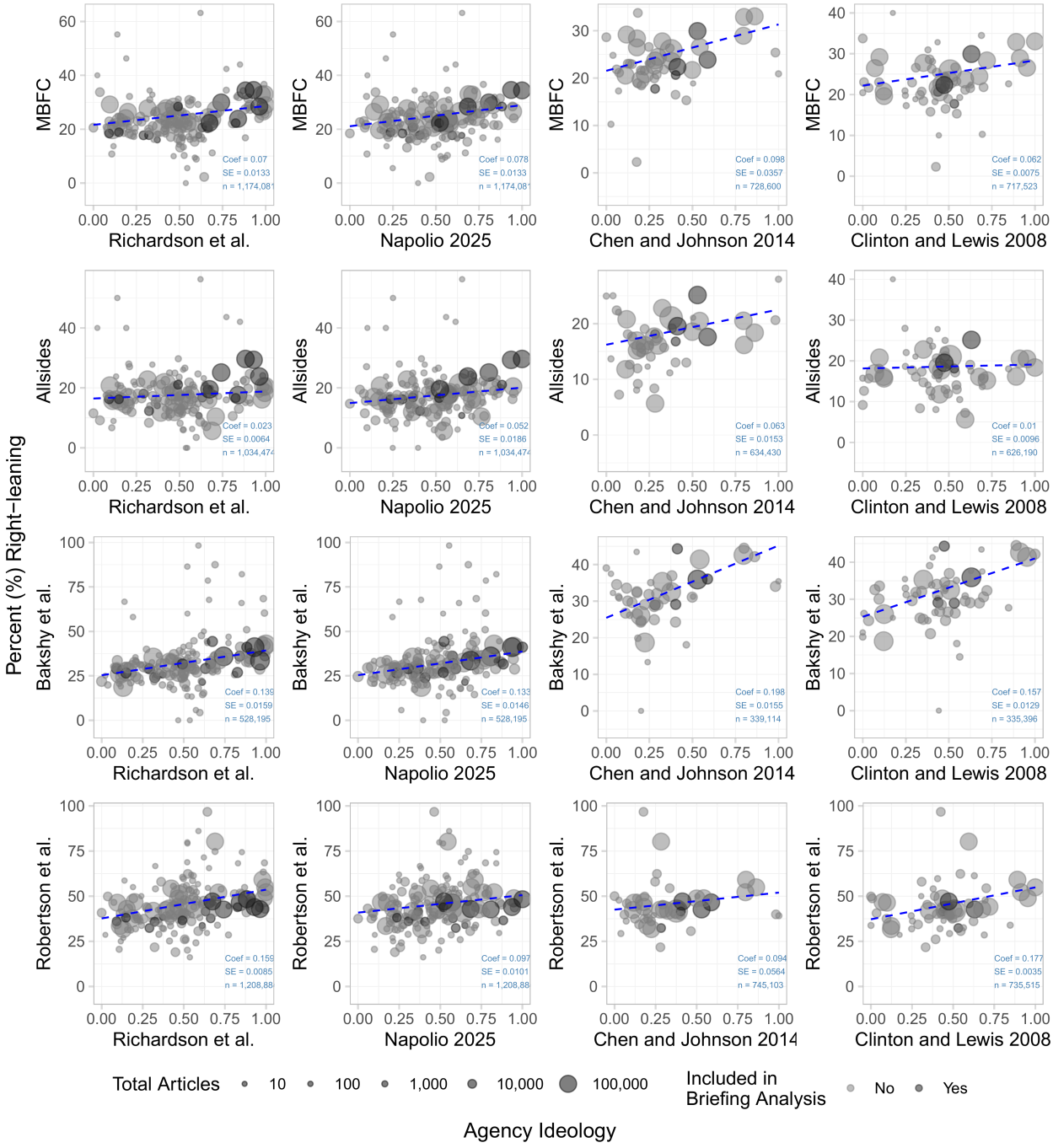

Figure B8: Replication of Fig 3(ii) using alternative measures of news slant and agency ideology.

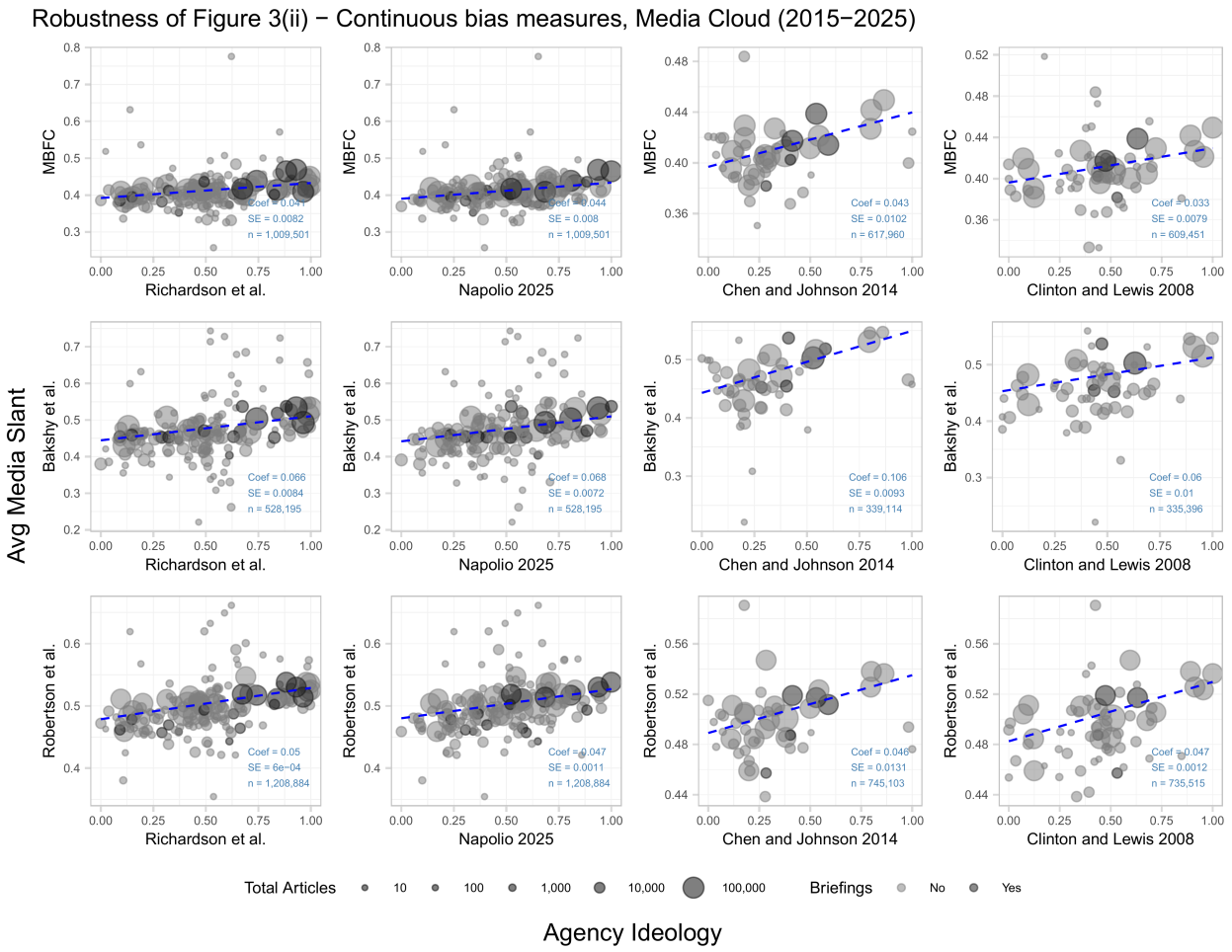

Figure B9: Replication of Fig 3(ii) using continuous measures of slant from MBFC and Bakshy et al. (2015). Slant rescaled to between 0 and 1.

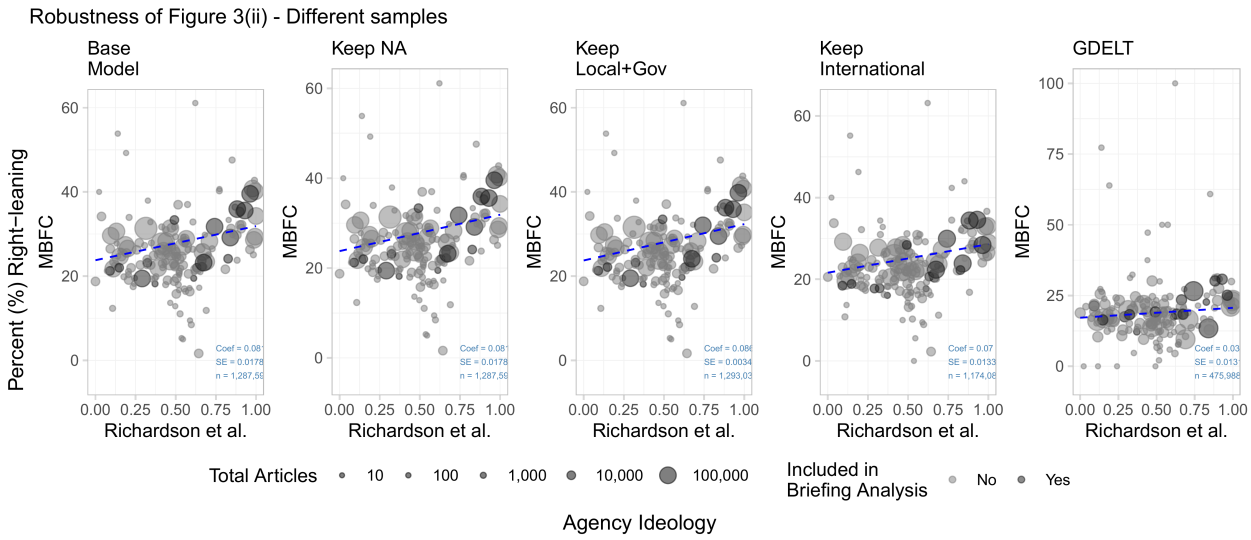

Figure B10: Replication of Fig 3(ii) with alternate data subsets and sources. Fig 3(ii) results after keeping articles with missing media slant, keeping local general interest news and government websites, keeping international sources, and substituting GDELT data.

B.4 Extension of Figure 3(ii) Analysis - Outlet-level heterogeneous effects

While Figure 3 in the main paper suggests that publication decisions explain why conservative and liberal agencies receive different amount of coverage, the pattern could be the result of several large news outlets. Because Media Cloud does not contain all news outlets in the briefings, a supply-side explanation is more plausible if individual-level right- and left-leaning news outlets generally display asymmetric coverage of agencies.

The y-intercept and slope of the best fit line in Figure 3 depend on the ratio of conservative vs non-conservative news sources in the Media Cloud sample, the maximum output of each source, and how each source decides to allocate its resources to different stories. Because the ratio and output are fixed for each time period, any differences in the amount of coverage a news outlet gives to a particular agency will be the product of publication/editorial decisions.

To test for heterogeneous effects, I first run a mixed-effects model, allowing the slope and intercept of the regression to vary for each source (see Table B4). To run this model, I first aggregate the data to the source-agency level. For every source, I calculate the proportion of coverage that it dedicates to each agency (pct_{ij}). This proportion, scaled from 0 to 100, is the outcome variable. To account for the possibility that different media outlets respond differently to agency ideology, I include random intercepts and random slopes for agency ideology by news outlet, allowing both the baseline level of coverage and the ideological effect to vary by outlet. This specification captures outlet-specific deviations from the average relationship and models heterogeneity in how agencies cite different sources. Formally, the model can be written as $pct_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 I_{ij} + \mu_{0j} + \mu_{1j} I_{ij} + \epsilon_{ij}$ where I_{ij} is the ideology of agency, i, which varies within media outlet, j. Rather than include interactions between

Table B4: Random effects model

	DV: Percent			
	Right	Center	Left	Not Categorized
(Intercept)	3.088***	3.762***	2.500***	12.103***
	(0.704)	(0.808)	(0.212)	(1.407)
Agency Ideology	0.309***	-0.062	-0.157***	-0.211**
	(0.073)	(0.201)	(0.031)	(0.072)
SD (Intercept Source)	6.626	6.731	2.808	23.241
SD (Agency Ideology Source)	0.609	1.595	0.253	0.803
Cor (Intercept~Agency Ideology Source)	0.986	-0.426	-0.693	-0.105
SD (Observations)	2.811	2.970	2.701	4.060
Num.Obs.	6938	4472	12359	8819
R2 Marg.	0.002	0.000	0.002	0.000
R2 Cond.	0.850	0.843	0.522	0.970
RMSE	2.79	2.93	2.68	3.97

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Notes: Data is aggregated to the source-agency level. DV is the proprotion of a source's coverage that mentions an agency (out of 100). Model is run seperately for sources belonging to each Media Bias Fact Check (MBFC) category. The following articles were dropped from all models: articles without urls, local general interest sources, government websites, and international news sources. Estimated random effects model using lmr() from lme4 package. Allows for random intercepts and random slopes for each source.

agency ideology and media slant, I split the sample and run separate models for each media slant category (see Table B4).

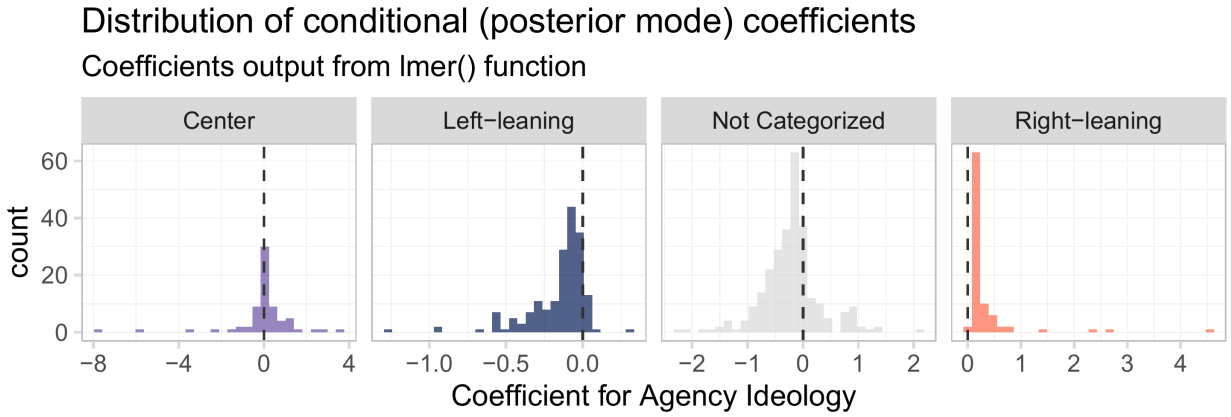

Figure B11: Effect of agency ideology on the proportion of news dedicated to liberal vs conservative agencies. Coefficients from calculated seperately for each news source. Resulting coefficients grouped by the slant of the media outlet (MBFC). Outcome is the percent of news (0-100) that an agency recieves from a news source. Uses same data as Figure 3, aggregated to the source-agency level.

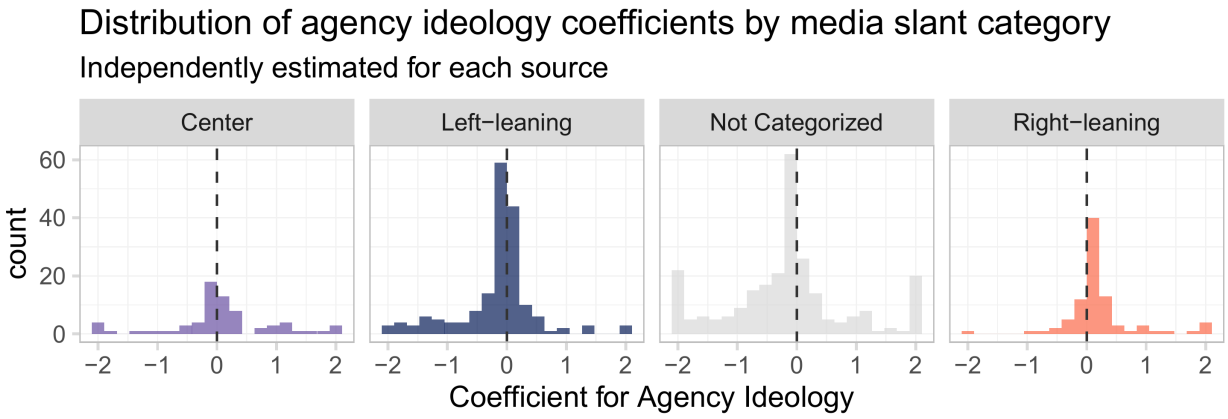

Figure B12: Effect of agency ideology on the proportion of news dedicated to liberal vs conservative agencies. To get coefficients, ran seperate regression for each news source. Source dropped if regression could not be computed (e.g. 1 data point). Resulting coefficients grouped by the slant of the media outlet (MBFC). Outcome is the percent of news (0-100) that an agency recieves from a news source. Uses same data as Figure 3, aggregated to the source-agency level. Tructated coefficient values above 2 or below -2.

To ensure that these results were not driven by a small number of high-frequency outlets, I also estimated separate linear regressions of the share of citations on agency ideology for each news source. For each news source, j, I run a separate OLS regression ($pct_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j} I_{ij} + \epsilon_{ij}$) for each news outlet, j, and plot the resulting coefficients ($\beta_1 j$). The resulting distribution of coefficients (see Figure B12) mirrors the general pattern in the conditional estimates from the mixed-effects model, suggesting that the findings are not the artifact of a single dominant outlet. In Figure B12, the coefficients are unweighted.

Like the initial OLS results, the results of the mixed-effects model also indicate a positive relationship between agency ideology and the share of coverage from right-leaning outlets. On average, more conservative agencies cited right-leaning sources more frequently. To verify that this relationship is not limited to a few news outlets, I plot the the distribution of conditional (posterior mode) coefficients for agency ideology (see Figure B11). These coefficients are outlet-specific estimates of the effect of agency ideology, extracted from a mixed-effects model that allows both intercepts and slopes to vary by media outlet. They reflect how the ideology of an agency affects the amount of news a source publishes about that agency.

In Figure B11, nearly all of the right-leaning sources are positive, indicating that right-leaning sources publish more articles about conservative agencies, relative to liberal ones. Figure B11 also shows that left-leaning sources right-leaning publish more articles about liberal agencies, relative to conservative ones. The coefficients for center and not categorized sources are both centered close to zero. Together, these results suggest that the supply-side asymmetry is driven by both left- and right-leaning news sources.

B.5 Matching Media Cloud to the Briefings

For the analysis in Figure 4, I match the articles in the Media Cloud dataset to the briefings. The resulting 'matched sample' contains all published articles that mention each agency name and an outcome variable that is 1 if the article is matched to the briefings and 0 otherwise. I used two different methods to match the Media Cloud results to the briefings:

1. **URL match:** If an article with the same URL (identified by EITHER option A or B below) could be found in the relevant briefing the article was counted as included. In practice, both URL matching options produce almost identical results. When matching by URL, I consider the whole briefing, not just the appropriate section. Thus, if an article mentioning US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (USICE) is placed in the "Top News" section, I count it as being included in the briefing. When determining which Media Cloud sources to include, I include any source used in the entire briefing, not just the section relevant to an agency. The DOI briefings do not contain article URLs, so this method was only possible for the VA, DHS, and USCIS briefings.
    - Option 1(A): Match by whole URL.
    - Option 1(B): Match by domain and 'slug.' The slug is defined as the longest text segment of the URL path. In practice, I first removed the query text and text following the query. I then split the text between the domain suffix and the end of the URL by forward slash. If there were multiple segments, I selected the longest one.
2. **Source+Date match:** If an article with the same news source and publication date could be found in the relevant briefing or section of briefing, all articles from that news source were counted as included. For the subagencies, I only searched for a match in their subsection of the briefing. Thus, if an article mentioning an agency name is included in another section (e.g. the 'Top news' section), it will not be counted. The VA briefings do not report publication date, so this method was only possible for the DOI, DHS, and USCIS briefings. To reduce false positives, I removed three national news sections from the DOI briefing before matching ("TOP NATIONAL NEWS", "BIG PICTURE", "EDITORIAL WRAP-UP").

In the paper, I use the first matching strategy (Source+Date) to generate Figure 4 because dropping the DOI briefings reduces the sample size. Additionally, matching by Source+Date produces reasonably similar results as the URL match. To test the accuracy of the Source+Date matching strategy, I compare the results of the matching strategies for USCIS and DHS briefings.

Table B5 shows how often the Source+Date matching strategy produced different results from the URL matching strategy. For about 20% of articles, the Source+Date strategy produces a possible 'false positive' (where the Source+Date strategy identifies a match and the URL strategy does not identify a match). Note that some of these are not true false positives because they include cases where the URL matching strategy produced a false negative. For example, if an article has multiple URLs, URL matching may undercount the

Table B5: Comparison of URL and Source+Date matching methods.

'Error' Type	Briefing	Total	%
'Correct' (URL match equals Source+Date match)	DHS	121,483	77.8
'Correct' (URL match equals Source+Date match)	USCIS	168	81.6
'False Negative' (URL match positive, Source+Date match negative)	DHS	4,885	3.1
'False Negative' (URL match positive, Source+Date match negative)	USCIS	1	0.5
'False Positive' (URL match negative, Source+Date match positive)	DHS	29,863	19.1
'False Positive' (URL match negative, Source+Date match positive)	USCIS	37	18.0

Table B6: Comparison of URL and Source+Date matching methods.

'Error' Type	DHS-CG	DHS-DHS	DHS-FEMA	DHS-SS	DHS-TSA	DHS-USCBP	DHS-USCIS	DHS-USICE	USCIS-USCIS
'Correct' (URL match equals Source+Date match)	86.6	70.0	75.7	85.5	88.6	83.0	83.2	79.2	81.6
'False Negative' (URL match positive, Source+Date match negative)	4.1	0.1	4.7	3.2	5.1	8.1	8.7	5.9	0.5
'False Positive' (URL match negative, Source+Date match positive)	9.3	30.0	19.5	11.3	6.3	8.9	8.1	14.8	18.0

number of included articles. In Figure B13 I plot the 'false positive' rate (percent of articles that are matched by the Source+Date method and not matched by the URL method) by the number of articles from each source.

Note that the 'False Negative' rate in Tables B5 and B6 is mostly an artifact of the matching process. This can occur when an article mentions a subagency's name but is included in a different section of the briefing (e.g. an article mentioning ICE is included in the 'top news' section). It can also occur when the publication date is wrong in one of the datasets. To reduce false positives for subagencies, I only considered articles from the subagency's section of the news briefing for the Source+Date matches. Table B5 shows that the 'false positive' rate is much higher for the whole briefings (DHS-DHS, USCIS-USCIS). This is because there is a higher chance that another article from the same source is included.

Figure B13 also raises another possible issue. For some audio and video media formats, the briefings provide a link to a server rather than the original source website. If the story was also posted on the source website and scraped by Media Cloud, the URL match would be incorrect. To verify that the results are not biased by the inclusion of audio and video formats, I replicate the results for Figure 4 after dropping TV and Radio media sources.

Figure B14 shows the proportion of articles missing partisan slant in the matched sample. Especially for the Source+Date match, partisan slant is missing for slightly more of the unmatched articles.

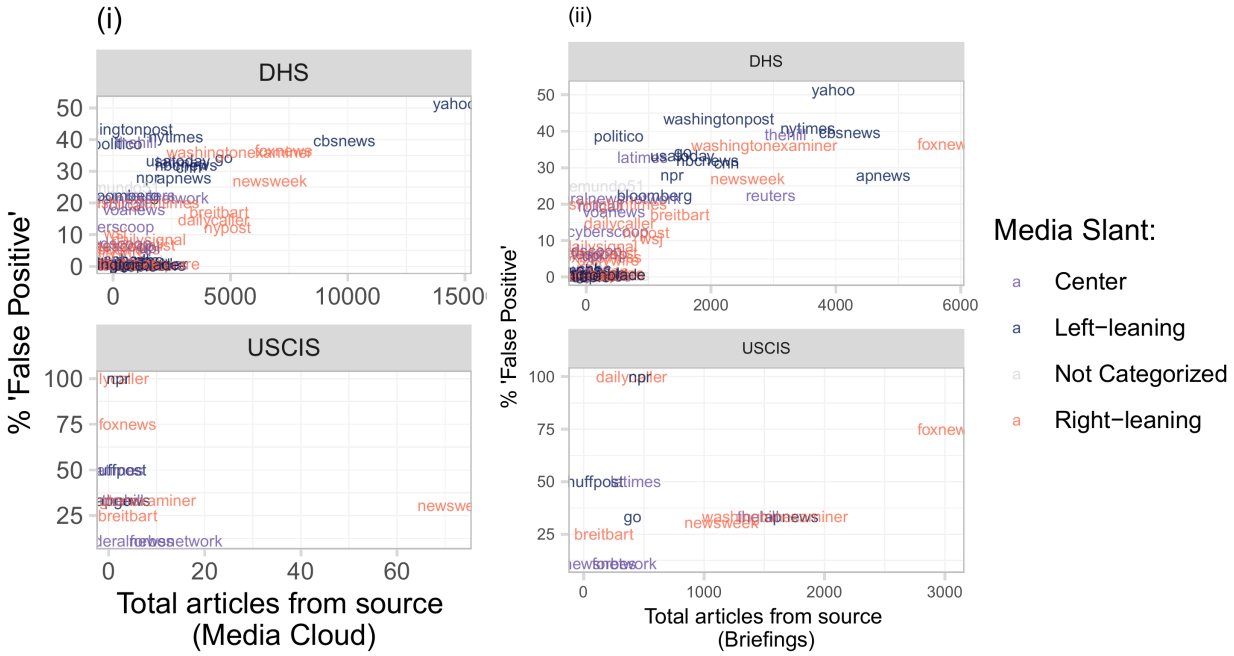

Figure B13: Association between 'false positives' (articles that are matched by the Source+Date method and not matched by the URL method) and the number of articles from each source. In subplot (i), the x-asis is the total number of articles in the Media Cloud sample from each sources. In subplot (ii), the x-asis is the total number of articles in the Briefing sample from each source.

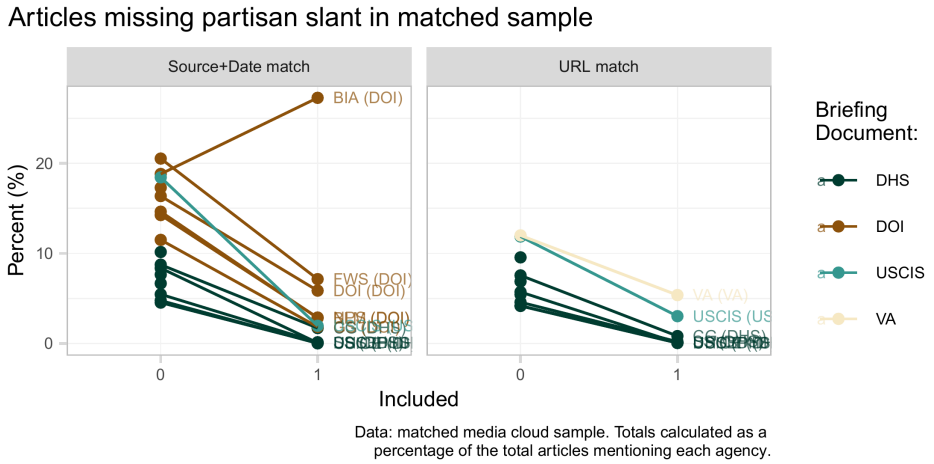

Figure B14: Percent of articles in matched sample that are missing partisan slant. In Source+Date match, dropped yahoo.com.

B.6 Testing Whether Agency Names are a Good Method for Identifying Potentially Relevant News

Should agency names be used as a proxy for the keywords used to define potentially relevant news? - I also tested whether the articles that I identified as 'included'

are representative of the larger briefing sample. If the matching strategy was perfect and the Media Cloud sample was complete, matching would identify all articles that mention an agency name. While the matching strategy is not perfect, it can help us understand how many articles mention each agency's name.

Using the URL match, I identify the proportion of briefing articles matched to the media cloud sample. In other words, I estimate the minimum number of articles in the briefings that mention an agency by name (see Table B7). To make the results as comparable as possible, I only include domains and dates that are included in the matched dataset.

For most sub-agencies, over a third of the articles could be matched to the briefings, suggesting that at least a third of the articles mention the agency by name. However, there are a few outliers. In the DHS briefing, only 18.0128588% of articles could be matched to an article with the agency's name. This is probably because many articles in the DHS refer to subagencies. Of the articles in the DHS briefing, 24.8902083% contain the agency name or the name of one of the 7 subagencies. FEMA is another outlier, probably because it contains articles about developing natural disasters, even when the articles do not mention the agency by name. USCIS is a major outlier. Very few articles in the USCIS briefing or section of the DHS briefing contain the name of the agency – likely because this agency is mentioned so rarely in the news.

Table B7: Articles from briefings that could be matched by URL to Media Cloud sample.

Agency	Briefing	Matched	Total	%
CG	DHS	853	1695	50.3
DHS	DHS	10591	58297	18.2
FEMA	DHS	664	5096	13.0
SS	DHS	928	1879	49.4
TSA	DHS	364	1081	33.7
USCBP	DHS	1005	3040	33.1
USCIS	DHS	19	2309	0.8
USCIS	USCIS	66	24573	0.3
USICE	DHS	2389	6016	39.7
VA	VA	737	1899	38.8

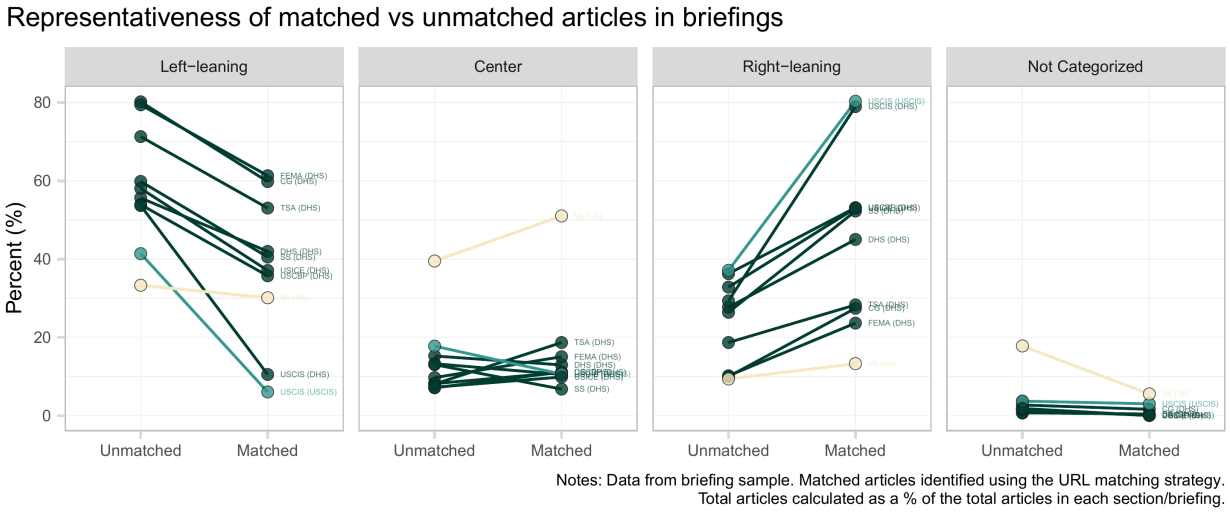

Figure B15: Comparing articles in briefings to subsample of briefings that was matched to the Media Cloud dataset. Matched by URL.

Are articles with agency names representative of the whole briefing sample? - To test the representativeness, I then compare the subset of matched articles in the briefing to the whole briefing sample (see Figure B15). This graph shows the proportion of each sample (all articles in briefings vs only articles matched to media cloud sample) in each media slant category. Overall, the proportion of right-leaning news is slightly higher in the matched sample compared to the whole briefing sample, but USCIS is an outlier.

I also verify that the pattern in Figure 1 exists when I limit the briefing sample to only the articles matched to media cloud. If this is not true, I could not use the matched sample to identify the cause of the pattern in Figure 1. To verify this, I isolate the articles in both the briefings and media cloud and use them to replicate Figure 1 (see Figures B16 and B17). Figure B16 replicates Figure 1 using only the articles from the briefings that were matched to the briefing sample by URL. These plots show that the USCIS is a major outlier. But the other agencies generally show the same pattern observed in Figure 1. Figure B17 replicates Figure 1 using only the articles from the briefings that were matched to the briefing sample by Source+Date. These plots also show that the USCIS is a major outlier. But the other agencies generally show the same pattern observed in Figure 1.

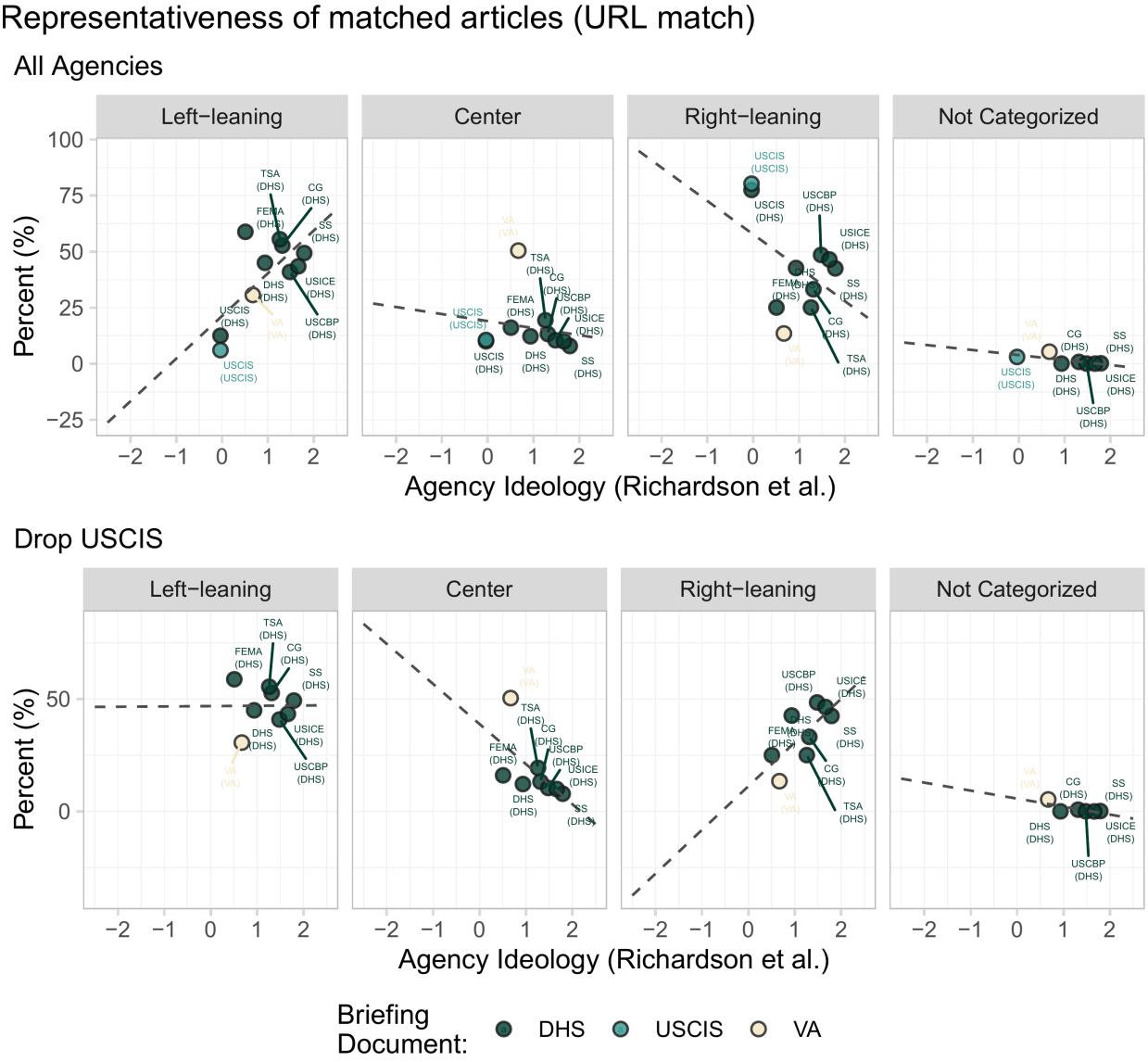

Figure B16: Replication of Figure 1 using only the sources and articles included in the matched dataset (URL match) and the briefings. The y-axis is the proportion of articles in a partisan-slant category (Center, Left-leaning, or Right-leaning). Partisan slant is determined by the source of an article.

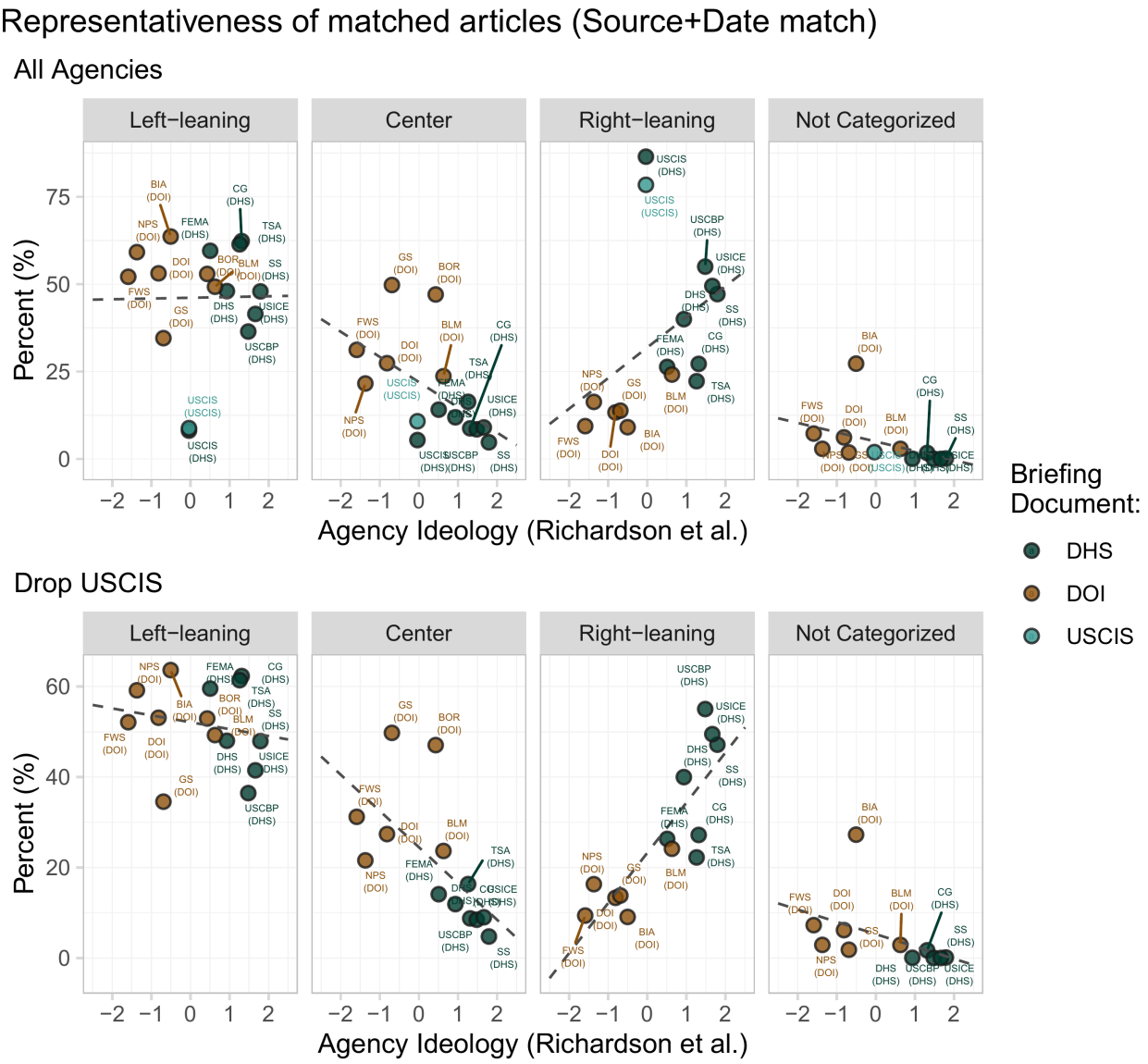

Figure B17: Replication of Figure 1 using only the sources and articles included in the matched dataset (Source+Date match) and the briefings. The y-axis is the proportion of articles in a partisan-slant category (Center, Left-leaning, or Right-leaning). Partisan slant is determined by the source of an article. Dropped yahoo.com.

B.7 Figure 4 - Testing Biased Selection

Formally, to test whether the slant of an outlet still affects its inclusion after accounting for supply, I use the following model: $Incl_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 S_i + \beta_2 I_i + \beta_3 (S_i \times I_i) + \epsilon$. For each article i, $Incl_i$ is 1 if the article is included in the briefing, S_i is the slant of the news outlet, and I_i is the ideology of the agency mentioned in the article. If agencies are preferentially selecting articles from ideologically-aligned sources, the interaction between agency ideology and right-leaning slant would be positive. In contrast, the results suggest a weak, possibly negative relationship across multiple specifications.

First, I vary the sample. In Figure B18, I test the following alterations:

- Keep/Drop Yahoo - Depending on the matching strategy, I show what happens when we add or drop Yahoo.com. For the Source+Date match, I keep Yahoo. For the URL match, I drop Yahoo.
- Drop Print - I drop all TV and Radio sources. Because links to outside video/audio hosts, I have fewer website links for articles/clips from TV and Radio sources. Without these links, I cannot match as many radio and tv citations to the Media Cloud data.
- Expanded Domains - By default, I keep only domains that are cited at least once by the company that produces each briefing. Thus, for the DOI, FWS, NPS, etc Media Cloud results, I only keep articles from sources cited in the DOI briefing. Similarly, for the VA Media Cloud results, I only keep articles from sources cited in the VA briefings. For the USCIS and DHS, I keep articles from sources cited in either briefing because they are produced by the same vendor. In this alternate specification, I allow Media Cloud results to be included if their domains were cited in any of the briefings (DOI, VA, DHS, and USCIS).
- Add Local+Gov - I add back the articles from local general interest news sources and government websites.
- Add Local+Gov+Int - I add back the articles from local general interest news sources, government websites, and international websites.
- Drop Apr-Nov'25 - I drop all articles published after April 1, 2025.
- Keep NA slant - I keep articles from sources with missing slant scores, treating NA slant as a separate category of media slant.
- Drop wire sources - I drop articles from wire sources.
- Drop sources with zero matches - I drop sources that are not successfully matched to the briefing at least once.
- Drop USCIS - I drop articles from the USCIS briefing and USCIS section of the DHS briefing.

Second, I vary the measures of media slant and agency ideology. In Figure B19, I test the following alterations:

- Replace Richardson et al (2018) agency ideology scores with scores from Napolio (2025).
- Replace MBFC partisan slant measures with ones from Allsides; Robertson, Lazer, and Wilson (2018); and Bakshy, Messing, and Adamic (2015).[2] I convert all scores to a 3-category scale (Left-leaning, Center, Right-leaning) to make the results more comparable. I also test a version of the MBFC where center and left-leaning sources are combined into a single center/left category and treated as the reference category.

Lastly, I replicate Figure 4 using the URL matched sample. In Figure B20, the null result is even more evident. This is critical because the URL match strategy is less likely to produce

[2]Note: the Bakshy et al. scores were downloaded from the replication materials for Guess (2021)

false matches. While only available for half of the sample, the null result in Figure B20 strongly suggests that there is no positive relationship between agency ideology and partisan slant after accounting for disparities in the supply of news.

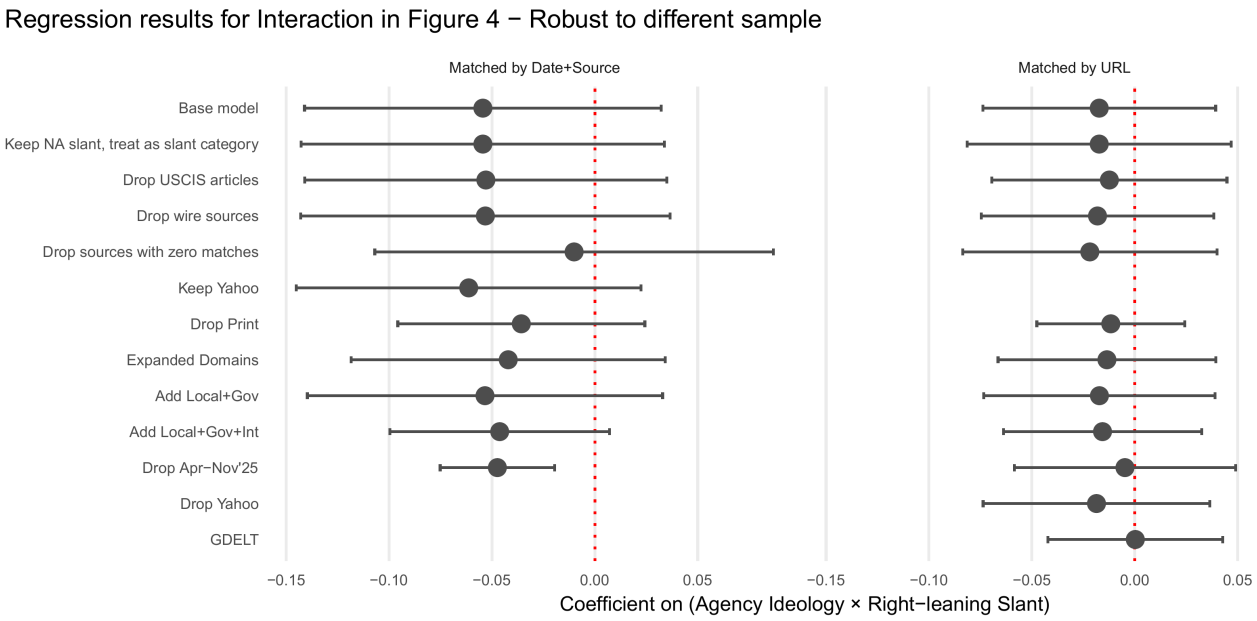

Figure B18: Robustness of interaction effect in Figure 4 to different samples.

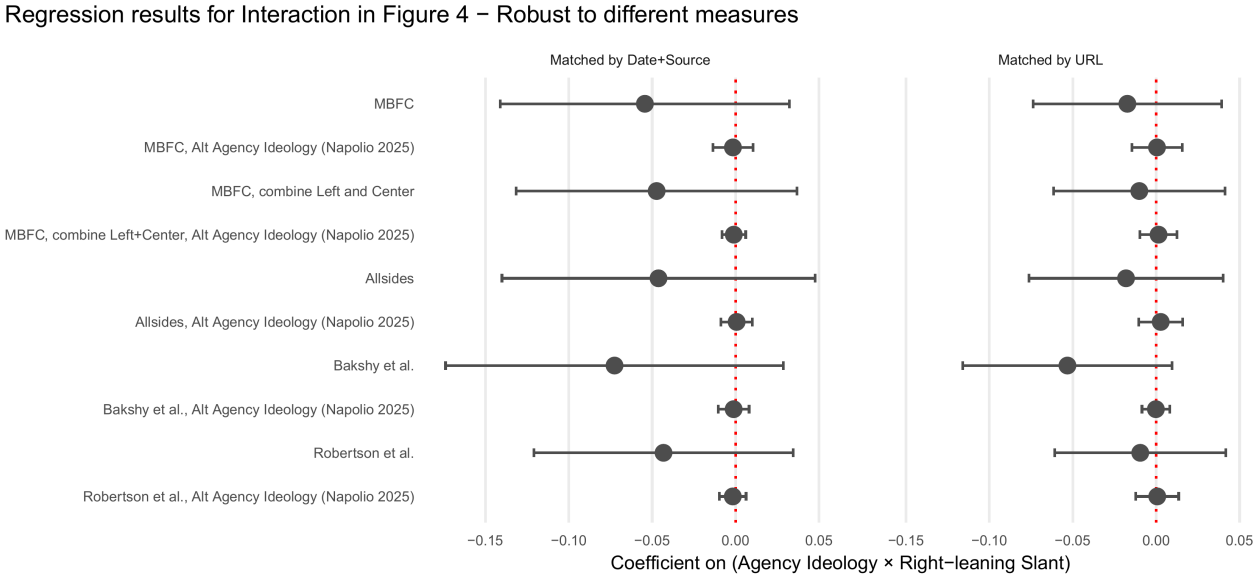

Figure B19: Robustness of interaction effect in Figure 4 to different measures.

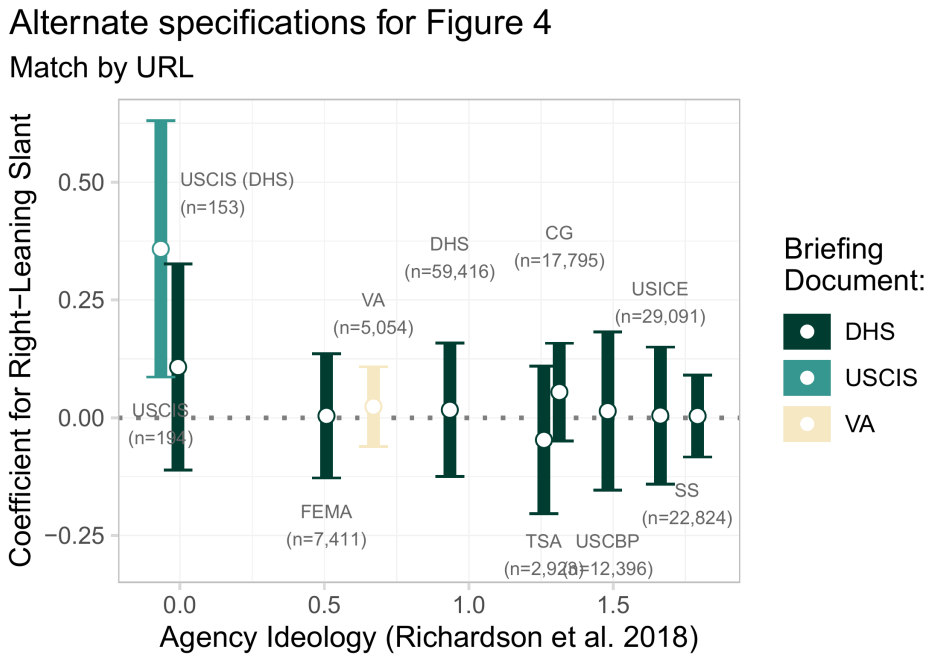

Figure B20: Alternate specifications for Figure 4 - Matched by URL.

B.8 Figure 5 - Over-time partisan slant of sources

Figure B21 produces a version of Figure 5 for the other three briefings. Figure B22 shows that the uptick in conservative content is concentrated in the beginning of the DHS briefing.

The next set of plots demonstrate the robustness of the pattern in Figure 5. Figure B23 reproduces Figure 5 after adding back local general interest news and government websites. Figures B24, B25, and B27 reproduce Figure 5 using alternative media slant measures.

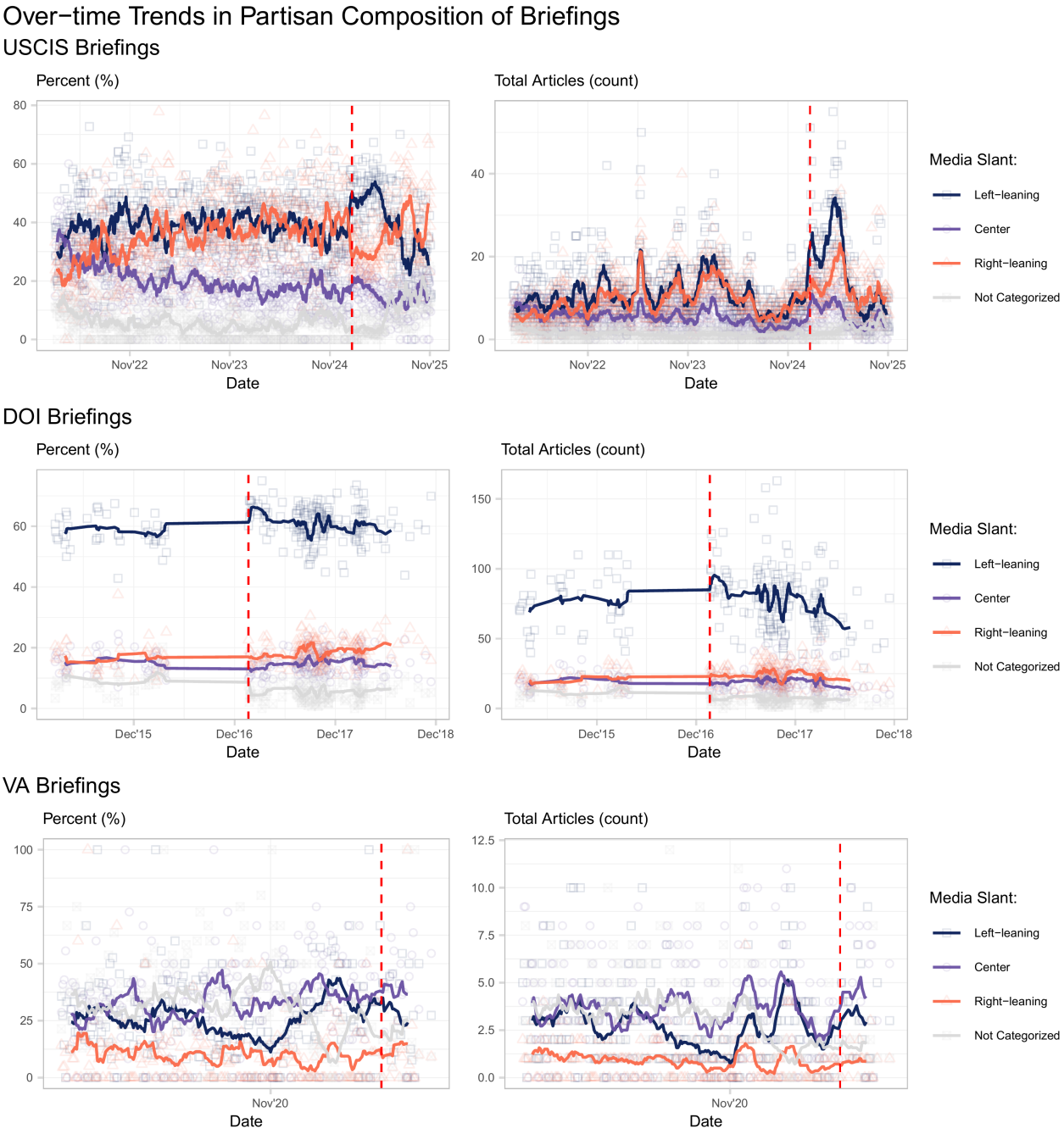

Figure B21: Over-time coverage from partisan sources in the USCIS, VA, and DOI news briefings. Articles from general interest local news sources and government websites are excluded. Partisan media scores from Media Bias Fact Check (MBFC). Dotted line at Trump's 2025 inauguration. Lines are 14-day rolling averages.

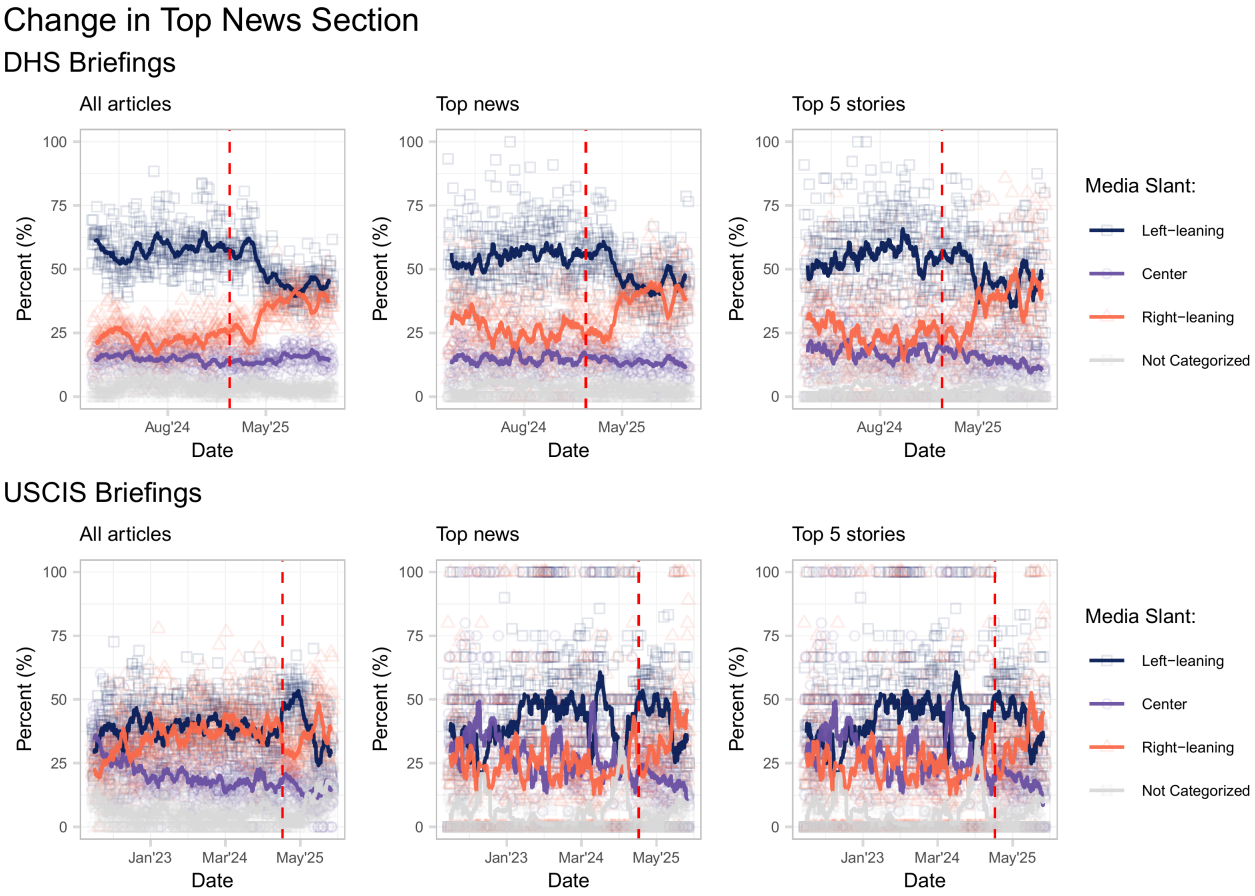

Figure B22: Over-time coverage from partisan sources at the beginning of the DHS and USCIS news briefings. Compares all articles to composition of articles in the 'Top News' section and the composition of the first 5 stories cited in each briefing. Dotted line at Trump's 2025 inauguration. Lines are 3-week rolling averages.

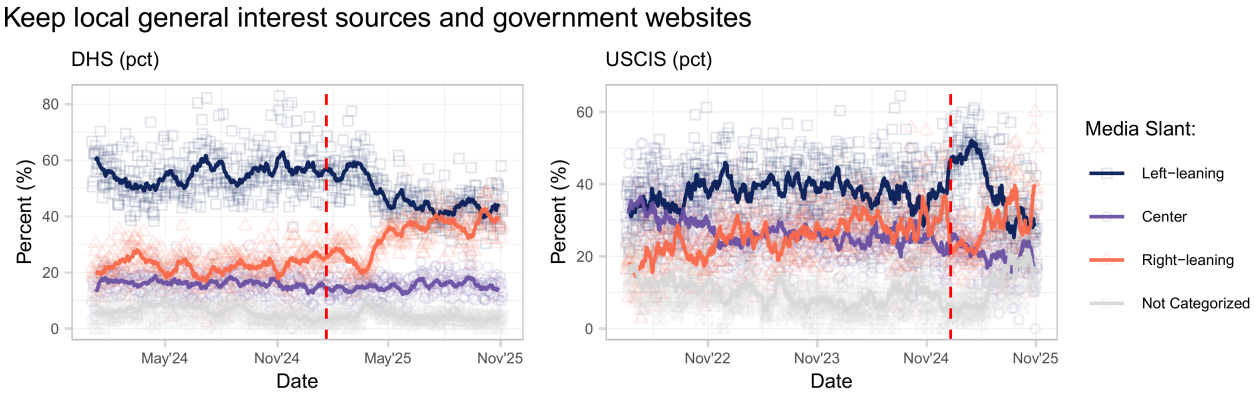

Figure B23: Alternate specifications for Figure 5 - Keep local general interest sources and government websites.

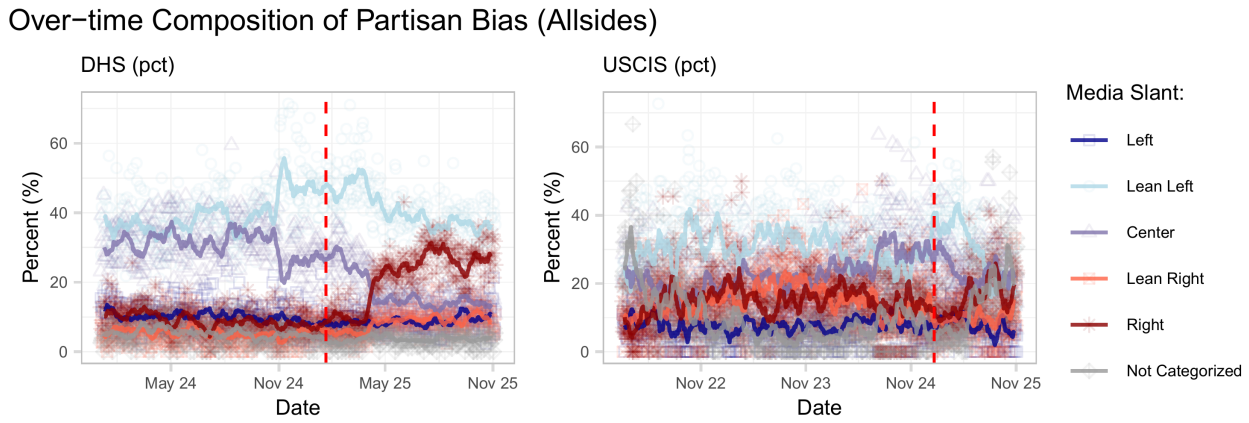

Figure B24: Alternate specifications for Figure 5 - Allsides partisan slant scores. Lines are 2-week rolling averages.

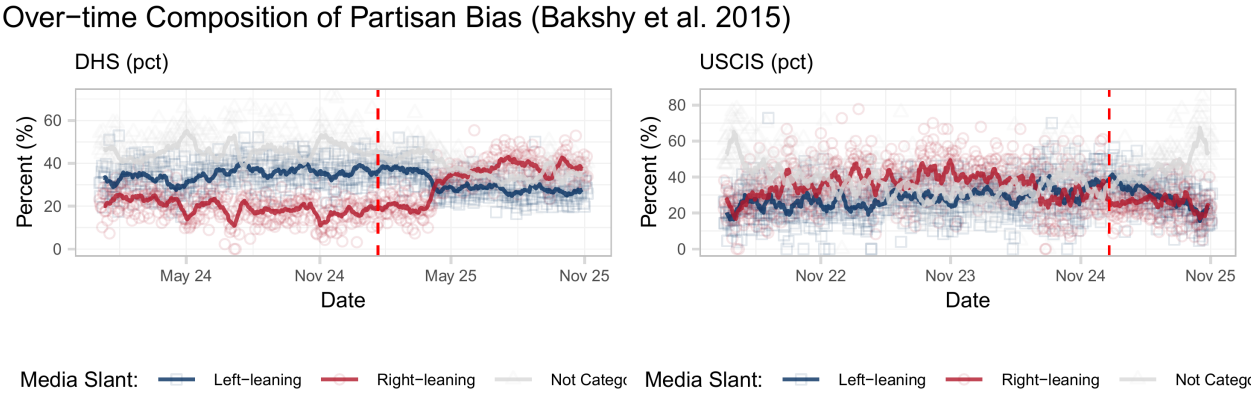

Figure B25: Alternate specifications for Figure 5 - Bakshy, Messing, and Adamic (2015) partisan slant scores. Left/Right-Leaning categories combined with Left/Right categories. Lines are 2-week rolling averages.

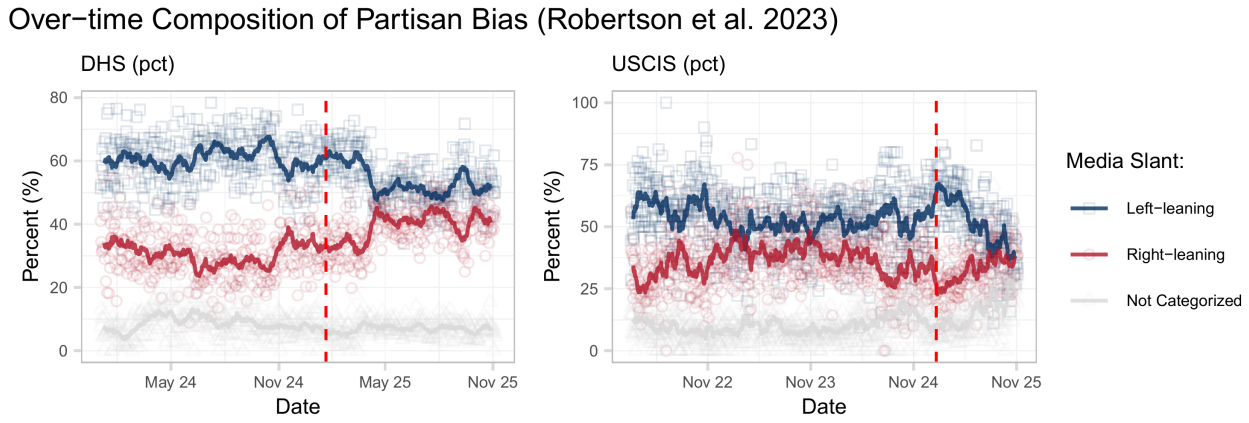

Figure B26: Alternate specifications for Figure 5 - Robertson, Lazer, and Wilson (2018) partisan slant scores. Left/Right-Leaning categories combined with Left/Right categories. Lines are 2-week rolling averages.

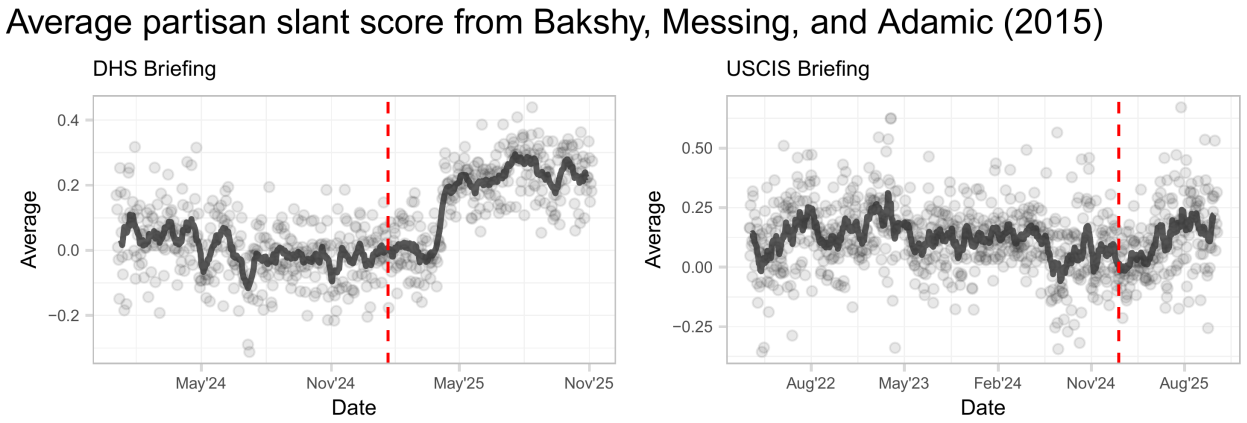

Figure B27: Average partisan bias score from Bakshy, Messing, and Adamic (2015) Lines are 2-week rolling averages.

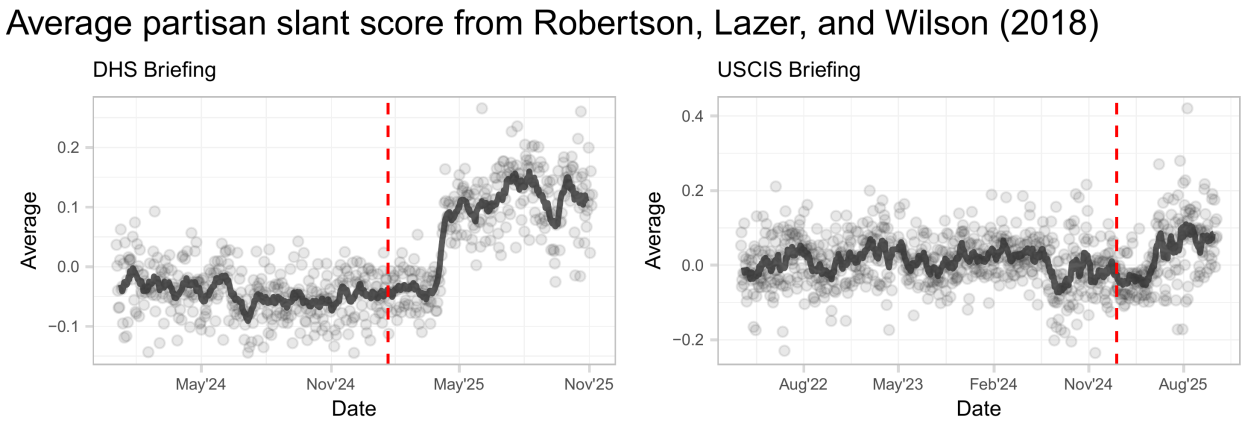

Figure B28: Average partisan bias score from Robertson, Lazer, and Wilson (2018). Lines are 2-week rolling averages.

To visualize how the composition of the DHS and USCIS briefings changed in early 2025, I identified sources that Media Bias/Fact Check considered extreme. To do this, I used a continuous version of the MBFC score.[3] Continuous scores are only available for 48.8% of the sources in the briefings, which is why I use the categorical version elsewhere. The continuous scores range from -10 (most left-leaning) and 10 (most right-leaning). I labeled scores as extreme if they were above 5 or below -5. If the source did not have a continuous score, I labeled it as 'unknown.' In Figure B29, I plot the number of new sources appearing in the briefings by month. Sources are only counted if they have never been included in the briefing previously. I break down sources by their MBFC categorical score and extremity.

Figure B29 shows that an abnormally large number of extreme right-leaning sources were added to the DHS and USCIS briefings around April 2025. Even though the overall composition of the USCIS briefings was less affected, Figure B29 reveals how far-right sources were

[3]After dropping local general interest source, government websites, and sources not found in any briefing, the continuous values range from -9.6 to 9.8. The mean is -0.32 and the median is -1.3. The standard deviation is 4.81.

added to both briefings. The plot also illustrates how this influx of partisan sources deviates from prior time periods. When I produce similar plots for the DOI or VA briefings, the pattern of added sources is stable across presidential transitions. I also explored the spike in new 'not categorized' sources after Trump's inauguration. Because each of these sources contributes a small number of articles to the briefings, they represent a small change to the composition of both briefings.

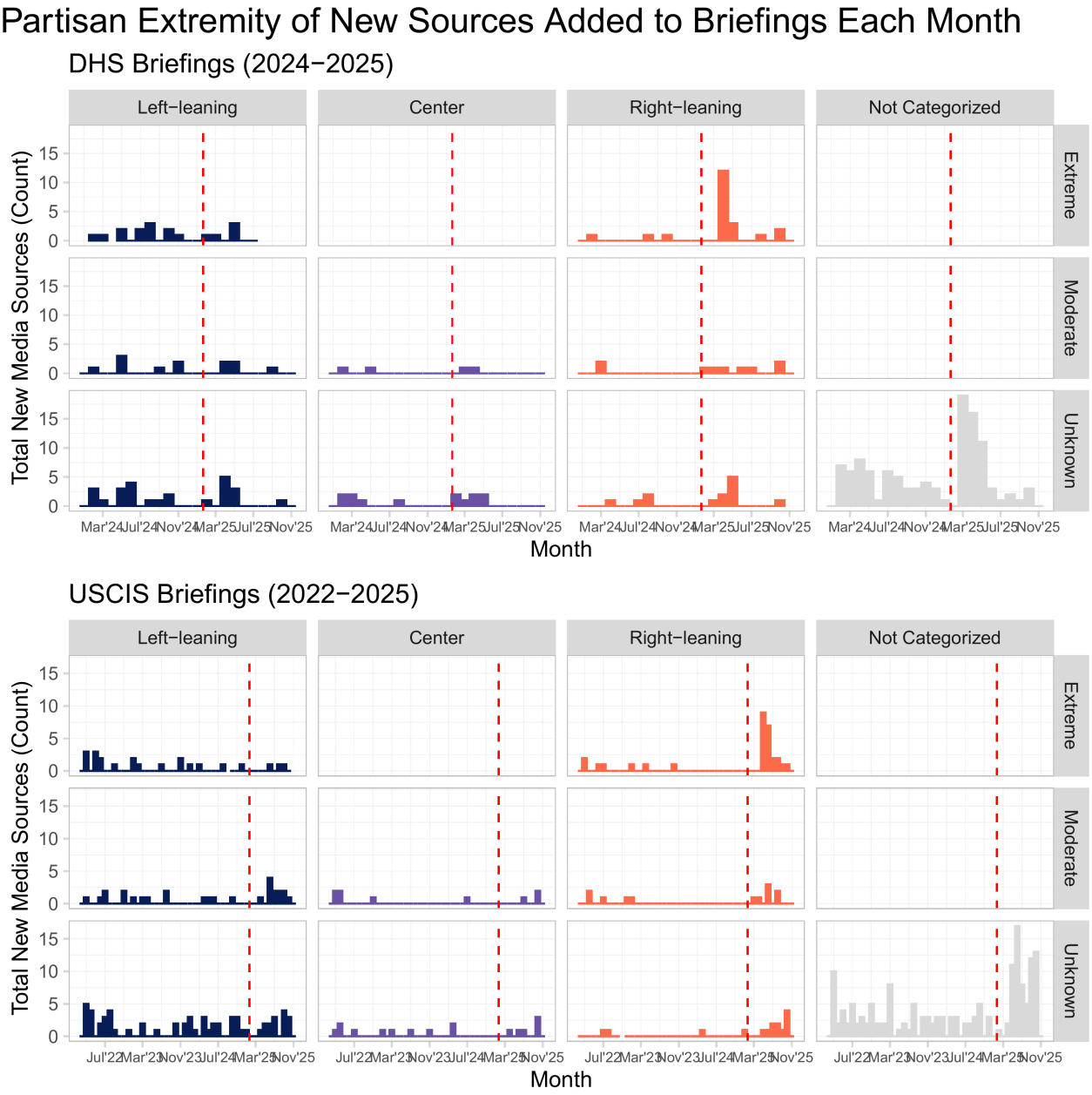

Figure B29: Number of new sources added to USCIS and DHS news briefings by month. Continuous MBFC scores are available for fewer news sources. Source extremity labeled as 'Unknown' if no continuous score is available.

B.9 Extension of Figure 5 Analysis - Using matched data to analyze selection over-time

In theory, the matched data could also be used to test whether supply explains the pattern of conservative in the briefings after March 2025. However, this comparison requires that the quality matched sample is stable over time and representative of the over-time changes in the content of the briefings. Below, I show that the matched sample is not representative. Although the point estimates suggest that the increase in right-leaning news is due to preferential selection, we should be cautious interpreting these results.

For this analysis, I use several variations of the matched data. First, I either (a) keep all of the sources cited at least once in the briefings, or I keep only the sources successfully matched at least once to the briefings. Next, I show the results for two different sets of keywords. (i) First, I show what happens when I only keep the articles that mention "Homeland Security" (DHS only). (ii) Second, I show what happens when I stack the data for all of the agencies in the DHS briefings (DHS agencies/DHS briefing). For each subagency, I search for its name in the Media Cloud database, stack the resulting set of articles, and match the stacked data to the entire DHS briefing. If an article is included anywhere on the DHS briefing, the DV (included) = 1.

Unless stated otherwise, I cluster by source and url. Partisan bias is assigned at the source-level. Because the data is stacked, an article could be included multiple times if it mentions multiple DHS agencies.

For the regression results, I modify the previous regression from B.5.2 to test whether the partisan leaning of an article's source has become predictive of inclusion in the news briefings after March 2025. For completeness, I test this using two samples. First, I run the regression using all of the matched data for all nine DHS agencies and cluster by agency. Second, I run a simpler model with only the matched Media Cloud results for "Homeland Security."

Without knowing the true number of articles published by each outlet, assessing the quality of Media Cloud's data collection is difficult. However, there is some evidence that the quality of Media Cloud's data collection varies over time, which could affect comparison across administrations.

Articles from the following sources change substantially partway through 2024:

- "bizpacreview.com" - missing after Sept 2024
- "business-standard.com" - only available from Sept to Oct 2024
- "cis.org" - missing after July 2024
- "ctvnews.ca" - missing after Jan 2025
- "politico.com" - missing after Feb 2024
- "thedailybeast.com" - missing after Oct 2024
- "voanews.com" - missing after march2024
- "washingtonpost.com" - missing after March 2024
- "washingtontimes.com" - missing after July 2024
- "theblaze.com" - highly reduced sample after Sept 2024

- "yahoo.com" - total articles drop by around 50-75% after October 2024

Unless stated otherwise, I drop all of the sources that stop being included in the Media Cloud sample. I keep blaze.com and yahoo.com, but I have experimented with dropping these as well. Doing so does not change the results.

As an initial test, I first plot the number of articles from each type of source over time, limiting the sample to only the articles matched to the Media Cloud sample (see Figure B30). If the Media Cloud sample is complete and articles are accurately matched by URL, this should reveal the composition of the articles that mention the DHS agencies by name. If the over-time pattern in the matched data is representative of the full briefing sample, we would expect to see the over-time patterns generally match. The level/intercept for each slant category may differ because it depends the exact set of sources included in the matched sample; however, the relative patterns should match. However, as can be seen in Figure B30, the trend-lines for liberal and conservative sources are very similar in the matched data. In comparison, in the actual briefing, the amount of news from liberal vs conservative sources diverge at times.

I plot different subsets of the DHS briefing data to test whether this discrepancy is because the matched sample only contains a subset of the sources in the full briefing. If so, we would expect the briefing data trendlines to differ when restricted to the sources in the matched sample. In Figure B31, I test a more expansive and a more restrictive set of matched sample sources. First, I test what happens when the briefing sample is restricted to the domains that exist in both the matched sample and one of the TechMIS briefings (DHS or USCIS). Second, I restrict the briefing sample to only domains that were successfully matched at least once to the briefing dataset. In either case, the pattern in Figure B31 is very similar to the whole briefing sample (Figure 5 in the paper).

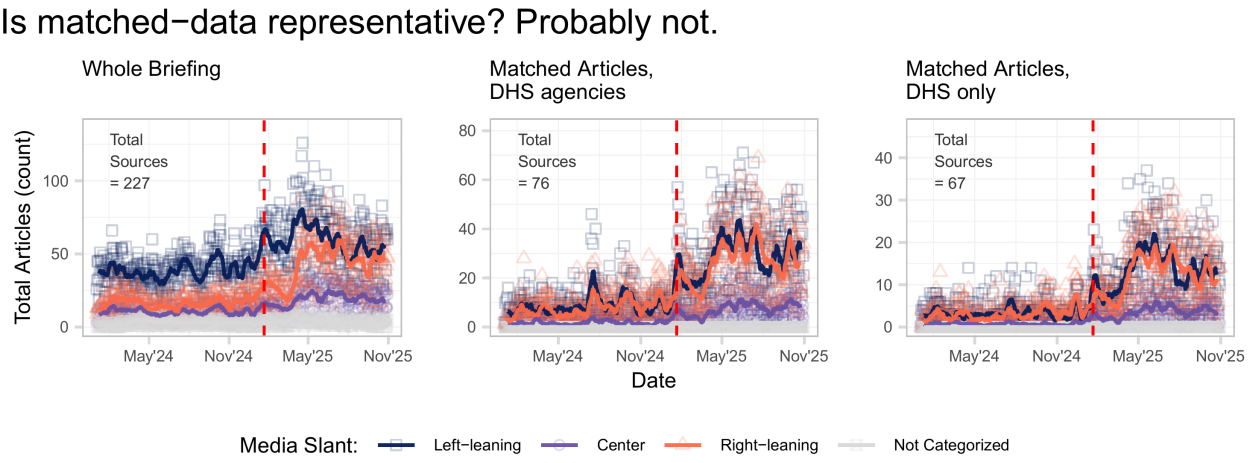

Figure B30: Over-time representativeness of DHS matched sample (included=1 only). Replication of Fig 5 in paper with media cloud articles that were matched to briefings. Dotted line at Trump's 2025 inauguration. Lines are 14-day rolling averages. Drops sources with incomplete Media Cloud data and international sources.

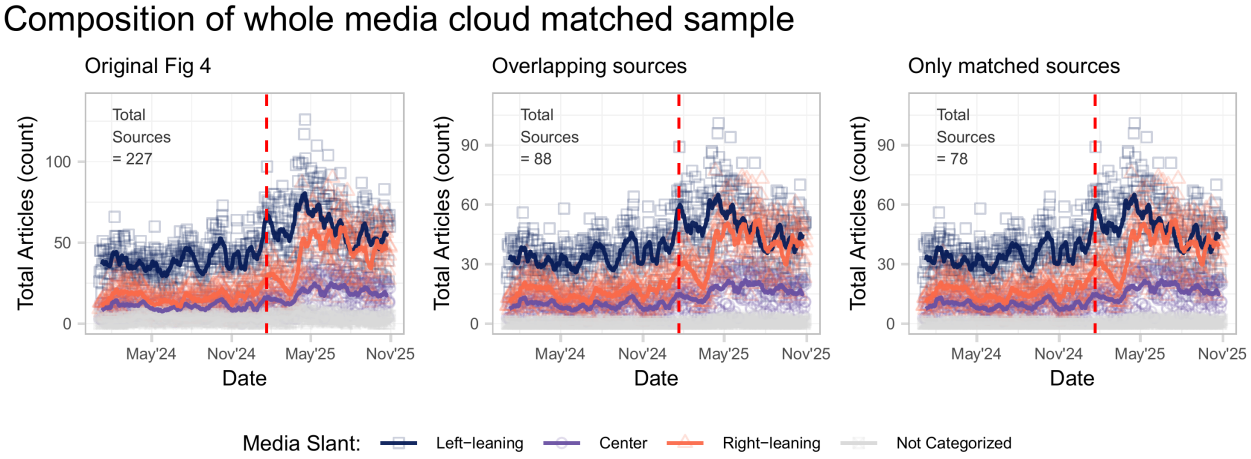

Figure B31: Over-time trend in DHS briefing data. Replication of Fig 5 in paper with domains in matched sample. Dotted line at Trump's 2025 inauguration. Lines are 14-day rolling averages. Drops sources with incomplete Media Cloud data and international sources. Includes articles that mention DHS or one of its subagencies by name.

Regardless, we can test over-time changes in the supply of articles that mention DHS or one of its subagencies by name. Figure B32 shows the composition of the whole matched sample (including articles not matched to the DHS briefing) over time. It shows the composition when we look at all articles that mention DHS by name ("DHS only") and when we look at articles that mention DHS or any of the 7 DHS subagencies ("USICE", "USCIS", "USCBP", "FEMA", "CG", "TSA", "SS") by name ("DHS Agencies").

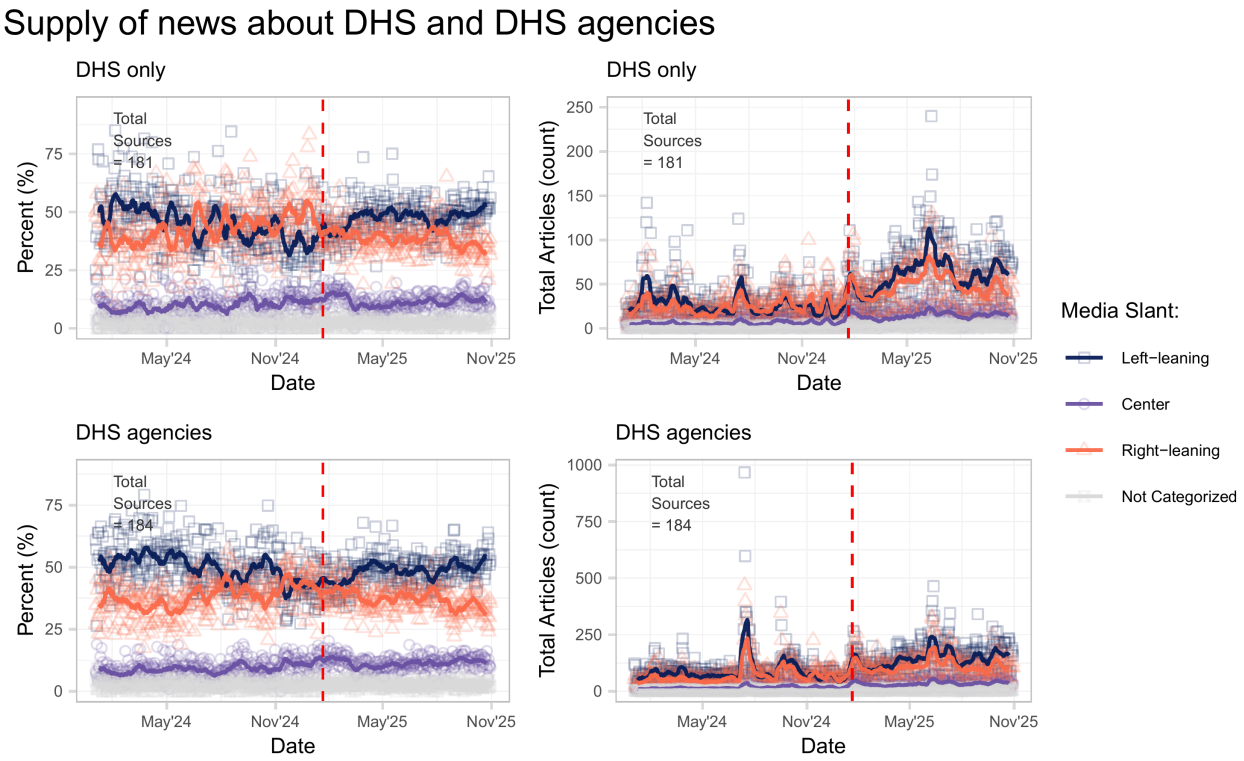

Figure B32: Partisan composition of articles in matched sample of data from Media Cloud. Sources limited to those found in TechMIS briefings (DHS and USCIS). Dotted line at Trump's 2025 inauguration. Lines are 14-day rolling averages. Drops sources with incomplete Media Cloud data and international sources.

Next, we can calculate the probability that an article is included over time. When we look at the percent of articles that are matched to the briefings (included=1) in each partisan slant category (right-leaning, left-leaning, center, or not categorized article), we see that right-leaning articles appear to be included more often around April 2025 (see Figure B33). However, the change is not significant.

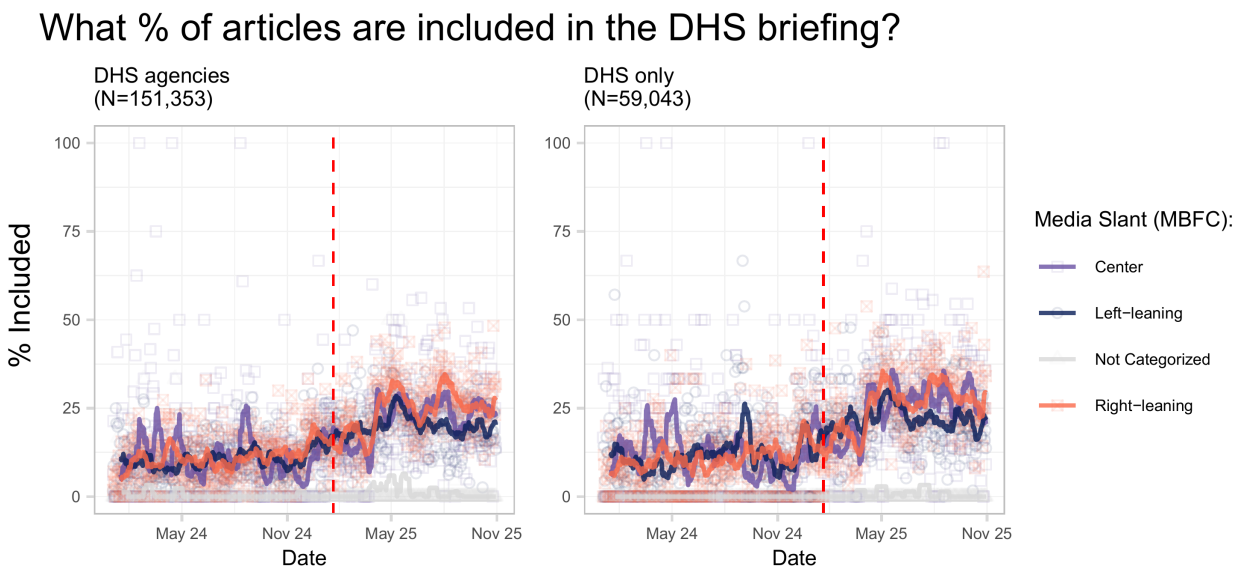

Figure B33: Over-time probability of coverage by partisan source category in the DHS news briefings. Sample limited to agencies in the DHS briefing. Outcome variable is binary indicator (1 if article included in news summary, 0 otherwise). Articles from general interest local news sources and government websites are excluded. Partisan media scores from Media Bias Fact Check (MBFC). Dotted line at Trump's 2025 inauguration. Lines are 14-day right-aligned rolling averages (for each date, average includes values for that date and 13 previous values).

Appendix C

Appendix to Chapter 3

C.1 Search Terms

The LexisNexis API has three primary inputs: (1) resource, (2) search terms, and (3) filters. Below I have copied the API inputs for the Portland Press Herald.

(1) Resource: For all of my searches, I selected "News" as my resource.

(2) Search Terms: I used the same basic search terms for all of my sources. This search returns articles within the time period that meet one or both of the two sets of criteria. For some papers where I chose to download select years (see Appendix C.2), I adjusted the search term so that it included a different set of years. Otherwise, all of the search terms were identical to the example below.

(((struck OR hit OR hitting OR collided OR colliding OR cross) W/20 (car OR truck OR bus OR van OR sedan OR vehicle OR suv OR "RV" OR "Subaru" OR "Ford" OR "Toyota" OR "Chevy" OR "Chevrolet" OR "Honda" OR "Nissan" OR "Jeep" OR "Hyundai" OR "Kia" OR "Ram" OR "Subaru" OR "GMC" OR "Volkswagen" OR "BMW" OR "Mazda" OR "Mercedes" OR "Lexus" OR "Tesla" OR "Dodge" OR "Audi" OR "Buick" OR "Acura" OR "Volvo" OR "Cadillac" OR "Chrystler" OR "Mitsubishi" OR "Land Rover" OR "Lincoln" OR "Porche" OR "Infiniti" OR "Genesis" OR "Mini" OR "Maserati" OR "Alfa Romeo" OR "Jaguar" OR "Bently" OR "Ferrari" OR "Lamborghini" OR "Aston Martin" OR "Polestar" OR "Fiat" OR "Rolls-Royce" OR "McLaren" OR "Lucid" OR "Bugatti" OR "Lotus" OR "Rivian" OR "Canoo" OR "Pontiac" OR "Oldsmobile" OR "Rimac" OR "Mercury" OR "Saturn" OR "Hummer" OR "Plymouth" OR "General Motors" OR "GM" OR "Saab" OR "Suzuki")) AND ((struck OR hit OR hitting OR collided OR colliding OR cross) W/40 (death? OR fatal* OR dies OR died OR kill? OR killed))) OR (((pedestrian* OR bicycle* OR bicycling* OR cycle* OR OR cycling) OR hit?and?run) W/40 (death? OR fatal* OR dies OR died OR kill? OR killed)) and (date > 12/31/1999) and (date < 01/01/2023)

(3) Filters: For each outlet, I changed "Source/Id" expression to match the LexisNexis ID associated with each source. In the example below, the Portland Press Herald is 'TmV3c3BhcGVycw'. For all outlets, I also filtered for articles in English (Language)

categorized as newspapers (PublicationType) from sources the USA (Geography). By selecting newspapers, I excluded Magazines, Newswires, Broadcast Transcripts, Blog and Web Publications.

SearchType eq LexisNexis.ServicesApi.SearchType'Boolean' and (Geography eq 'Z3VpZD11 cm46dG9waWM6 M0YzMUM2Qjk2ODI5NDQxREEwQ0E0OEExNT QyNjcxODg7cGFyZW50Z3VpZD0' or
Geography eq 'Z3VpZD11cm46ZW50aXR5O mdlb2ItMTAzMDgxMjI3O3BhcmVudGd1aWQ 9dXJuOnRvcGljOjNGMzFDNkI5 NjgyOTQ0MURBMENBNDhBMTU0MjY3MTg4') and Language eq LexisNexis.ServicesApi. Language'English' and PublicationType eq 'TmV3c3BhcGVycw' and Source/Id eq 'MTA1NDUzMQ'

C.2 LexisNexis API Download

As discussed previously, for some papers, I only collected data for part of the 2000-2022 time series. In some cases, I did not collect data for years because race was not available through FARS. In other cases, papers closed or were otherwise unavailable through LexisNexis. For example, In 2016, the The Tampa Tribune was purchased by the Tampa Bay Times[1] Lastly, due to an error with my API code, I lost most of the data before 2013 for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri). As a result, I dropped all articles from 2000-2012.

Table C1 contains a list of the years and sources that are included in my sample. I also downloaded articles from The Daily Record (Baltimore, MD) and the New York Observer (New York, NY). However, I excluded these because they had very few articles on local pedestrian fatalities.

The column called "Downloaded" contains the years of data that I attempted to download. Some sources were not available for the whole 2000-2022 time period. In other cases, I chose not to download the full set of articles between 2000 and 2022 because I was missing too much FARS data from some years. The "Notes" column explains why some years were excluded.

The column called "Gap in Coverage" contains the months where the LexisNexis download produced no coverage or partial coverage. Pedestrian fatalities that occurred within these periods were dropped from my analysis.

[1] See https://www.tampabay.com/news/business/tampa-bay-times-purchases-tampa-tribune/2275765/.

Table C1: Articles downloaded through LexisNexis API

Paper	City	State	Downloaded	Gap in Coverage	Notes:
The Capital	Annapolis	Maryland	2000-2014	Nov05-Dec06	Not available after 2014
Daily News	New York City	New York	2013-2017		Limited to years where race was available in FARS
Wisconsin State Journal	Madison	Wisconsin	2000-2022	Oct04-Dec06	
The Capital Times	Madison	Wisconsin	2000-2022	Jan00-Dec06, May16-Dec22	
The Deseret News	Salt Lake	Utah	2007-2022		Limited to years where race was available in FARS
The Salt Lake Tribune	Salt Lake	Utah	2007-2022		Limited to years where race was available in FARS
Dayton Daily News	Dayton	Ohio	2000-2022	Nov04-Dec05	
The Santa Fe New Mexican	Santa Fe	New Mexico	2000-2013	Mar05-Dec06, Mar11-Sep2018	Not available after 2013.
The Columbian	Vancouver	Washington	2000-2022	Feb04-Jan06	
The Spokesman-Review	Spokane	Washington	2000-2022	May04-Dec06	
Bangor Daily News	Bangor	Maine	2000-2022	Jan21-Dec22	
The Bismarck Tribune	Bismarck	North Dakota	2000-2022	Feb04-Dec06	
Richmond Times Dispatch	Richmond	Virginia	2000-2022	Nov04-Dec06	
St. Louis Post-Dispatch	St. Louis	Missouri	2013-2022		Error with download, missing 2000-2012
The San Diego Union-Tribune	San Diego	California	2000-2022	Nov2015-Feb2016	
Star Tribune	Minneapolis	Minnesota	2000-2022	Dec05-Dec06	
The Tampa Tribune	Tampa	Florida	2000-2016		Merged with the Tampa Bay Times in 2016
Tampa Bay Times	Saint Petersburg	Florida	2000-2022		
The Charleston Gazette-Mail	Charleston	West Virginia	2000-2022	Sep19-Dec22	
Anchorage Daily News	Anchorage	Alaska	2000-2022	Jan06-Dec06	
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution	Atlanta	Georgia	2014-2022		Limited to years where race was available in FARS
Idaho Falls Post Register	Idaho Falls	Idaho	2004-2018	Apr01-Dec06	No fatalities from 2000-2003; Not available after August 2018
The Wyoming Tribune-Eagle	Cheyenne	Wyoming	2000-2022		
Portland Press Herald	Portland	Maine	2000-2011		Not available after 2011
The Pantagraph	Bloomington	Illinois	2000-2016	Jan04-Dec05	Not available after 2016

C.3 FARS Data

Fatalities over time

Table C2 shows how many pedestrian fatalities occur in each city each year. This table uses the full set of FARS data from each city. Table C3 shows how many of these deaths are included in the matched sample. Deaths that occur during time periods without news coverage are dropped. Deaths that occur more than 2 days after the initial crash are also dropped.

Table C2: Fatalities by Year (All)

city_state	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
Anchorage (AK)	5	5	8	5	7	4	3	9	3	5	3	6	7	6	11	8	8	6	7	5	9	13	8	151
Annapolis (MD)	1	4	-	-	-	3	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12
Atlanta (GA)	15	21	18	24	17	7	9	15	19	12	16	11	9	20	21	15	22	22	21	25	25	33	38	435
Baltimore (MD)	1	-	13	15	14	13	18	17	11	18	11	9	8	15	14	15	17	17	9	20	18	20	13	306
Bangor (ME)	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	1	-	1	-	2	1	-	2	-	-	1	-	1	1	3	16
Bismarck (ND)	1	-	-	-	1	3	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	1	2	2	14
Bloomington (IL)	1	-	2	-	-	2	-	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	-	-	2	-	1	-	2	4	23
Charleston (WV)	4	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	4	-	3	2	3	2	1	3	1	3	32
Cheyenne (WY)	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	1	1	-	2	-	2	1	-	-	3	5	1	20
Chicago (IL)	79	74	78	77	59	73	55	53	63	40	37	43	55	31	41	53	45	48	53	57	63	78	64	1,319
Dayton (OH)	4	1	2	5	5	4	3	3	2	1	1	4	7	4	2	4	6	7	5	-	8	5	6	89
Dubuque (IA)	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	8
Idaho Falls (ID)	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	1	1	1	-	2	-	1	-	1	2	1	14
Lancaster (PA)	3	-	2	2	-	2	-	-	2	-	3	2	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	19
Madison (WI)	3	3	3	2	4	1	2	2	1	5	4	4	3	4	3	5	5	3	2	3	2	6	5	75
Minneapolis (MN)	3	6	7	6	6	6	2	6	4	7	6	9	3	6	3	8	9	6	5	7	4	11	7	137
New York City (NY)	192	201	185	180	163	176	174	161	174	173	165	160	149	188	146	145	156	117	122	142	111	126	130	3,636
Normal (IL)	-	1	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	1	-	1	-	9
Philadelphia (PA)	41	35	30	37	43	32	40	39	34	33	34	32	36	36	41	33	46	39	45	30	54	52	63	905
Pittsburg (PA)	5	6	3	9	9	4	5	7	8	5	6	2	3	5	4	7	7	5	5	9	4	5	6	129
Portland (ME)	1	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	-	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	3	29
Richmond (VA)	5	5	3	5	5	3	-	3	5	4	3	5	4	2	2	4	5	12	3	6	10	5	11	110
Saint Petersburg (FL)	6	11	6	9	10	6	10	13	14	12	6	15	7	6	14	12	12	11	14	16	9	16	12	247
Salt Lake (UT)	13	5	2	-	5	7	12	3	8	5	4	5	9	4	4	8	5	4	5	8	6	11	12	145
San Diego (CA)	36	24	39	33	37	24	25	27	23	25	26	26	26	32	35	33	43	31	46	48	36	54	56	785
Santa Fe (NM)	1	1	2	-	1	2	2	1	2	1	1	3	4	2	3	6	1	4	6	1	4	4	5	57
Spokane (WA)	2	7	3	2	3	2	2	5	-	7	3	5	5	1	3	5	2	10	5	2	8	9	5	96
St. Louis (MO)	17	12	13	14	12	11	8	15	10	13	12	12	12	12	6	22	19	16	13	16	20	22	23	330
Tampa (FL)	23	15	20	13	17	10	13	15	15	17	21	14	8	15	11	22	23	25	24	26	20	35	28	430
Vancouver (WA)	2	1	4	-	1	1	1	5	1	1	3	4	3	1	5	1	3	4	4	2	7	4	3	61

Table C3: Fatalities by Year (Matched Sample Only)

city_state	2000	2001	2003	2004	2005	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2002	2006	Total
Anchorage (AK)	5	3	4	5	4	9	3	4	3	6	7	5	10	8	8	6	7	5	8	12	8	-	-	130
Annapolis (MD)	1	3	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Atlanta (GA)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	13	21	21	17	23	24	30	31	-	-	200
Bangor (ME)	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	1	-	2	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
Bismarck (ND)	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	1	-	-	5
Bloomington (IL)	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	2	4	2	-	18
Charleston (WV)	4	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	4	-	3	2	3	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	23
Cheyenne (WY)	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	-	1	1	-	2	-	2	1	-	-	3	5	-	1	-	19
Dayton (OH)	4	1	5	5	-	3	1	1	1	4	6	2	2	4	6	6	5	-	8	3	5	2	-	74
Idaho Falls (ID)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Madison (WI)	3	3	2	1	-	1	-	5	4	4	3	2	3	5	4	2	2	2	-	5	4	3	-	58
Minneapolis (MN)	2	4	5	6	5	5	4	7	4	7	2	6	3	8	7	5	5	5	3	10	4	6	-	113
New York City (NY)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	159	122	117	123	90	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	611
Normal (IL)	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	1	7
Portland (ME)	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	14
Richmond (VA)	5	5	4	2	-	3	5	2	2	5	4	2	2	4	4	10	3	6	9	5	10	3	-	95
Saint Petersburg (FL)	3	5	2	5	1	3	5	3	1	7	3	3	7	8	3	2	8	7	3	9	5	3	6	102
Salt Lake (UT)	-	-	-	-	-	3	7	4	4	4	8	4	3	7	5	4	5	6	6	11	11	-	-	92
San Diego (CA)	2	2	6	5	2	1	1	6	4	3	4	2	5	4	10	5	5	7	3	7	4	8	6	102
Santa Fe (NM)	1	1	-	1	-	-	2	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	4	4	5	2	-	25
Spokane (WA)	-	3	2	-	-	4	-	4	3	4	4	1	3	5	2	8	5	2	7	6	5	3	-	71
St. Louis (MO)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	5	20	17	15	12	13	17	20	20	-	-	151
Tampa (FL)	9	3	4	6	2	4	3	3	3	5	4	2	2	5	2	7	4	4	4	8	6	5	7	102
Vancouver (WA)	2	1	-	-	-	4	1	1	3	4	3	-	4	1	3	2	4	2	6	3	3	4	-	51

FARS Summary Statistics

Table C4 contains select summary statistics for each city based on the entire FARS sample from 2000-2022. It includes data that is not present in the final matched sample but was used to select which papers and years to download from LexisNexis.

Deaths per 100k over the period from 2000 to 2022 is calculated using a two step process. I first calculated to rate for each year. I then averaged these yearly estimates to get my final estimate.

Deaths per100k walkers is an attempt to standardize death rates by the number of walkers in a city. It uses the census estimate of total walking commuters over the age of 16 in the denominator. Census data was downloaded from Data Commons.[2] Because the census data on walking commuters was not available before 2011, this statistic uses only the FARS data from 2011-2022. Note that the census does not collect comprehensive data on how many people regularly walk on city streets. Walking commuters is a rough estimate of the number of walkers in a city.

Table C4: Summary of FARS Data from Select Cities (2000-2022)

City	Deaths	Pedestrian Deaths	Cyclist Deaths	Population (2011)	Deaths per100k	Deaths per100k Walkers	%Missing Sex	%Missing Age	%Missing Race
Anchorage (AK)	151	136	14	301,801	2.60	123	0	0	5
Annapolis (MD)	21	12	0	38,815	5.32	24	0	0	25
Atlanta (GA)	435	410	25	507,301	4.60	1,076	0	0	19
Bangor (ME)	22	16	0	33,024	4.83	143	0	0	0
Bismarck (ND)	27	12	2	74,445	2.13	98	0	0	0
Bloomington (IL)	31	17	6	85,610	2.21	26	0	0	4
Charleston (WV)	40	30	2	53,672	4.70	136	0	0	0
Cheyenne (WY)	29	17	3	65,161	3.23	388	0	0	0
Dayton (OH)	90	76	13	165,179	3.45	96	0	0	0
Idaho Falls (ID)	22	12	2	67,723	2.16	152	0	0	21
Madison (WI)	75	60	15	272,903	1.56	19	0	0	4
Minneapolis (MN)	137	110	26	429,014	1.67	28	0	1	5
New York City (NY)	3,636	3,230	398	8,772,978	1.98	17	0	1	79
Normal (IL)	21	9	0	54,685	1.91	22	0	0	0
Portland (ME)	30	23	6	68,427	2.33	19	0	0	21
Richmond (VA)	111	96	14	231,027	2.90	86	1	3	22
Saint Petersburg (FL)	247	197	49	265,463	4.63	309	0	0	1
Salt Lake (UT)	146	124	19	204,657	4.21	79	0	0	34
San Diego (CA)	785	711	71	1,420,200	2.75	113	0	0	15
Santa Fe (NM)	58	54	3	89,008	4.31	293	0	0	5
Spokane (WA)	97	83	12	230,160	2.67	117	0	0	5
St. Louis (MO)	330	311	17	346,937	5.04	157	0	1	0
Tampa (FL)	430	347	79	401,002	5.76	330	0	0	1
Vancouver (WA)	62	52	9	194,512	2.14	161	0	0	7

[2] https://datacommons.org/tools/timeline.

Table C5: Summary of FARS Data from Cities in Sample

City	Deaths	Pedestrian Deaths	Cyclist Deaths	%Missing Sex	%Missing Age	%Missing Race
Anchorage (AK)	142	129	12	0	0	5
Annapolis (MD)	10	10	0	0	0	20
Atlanta (GA)	200	195	5	0	1	12
Bangor (ME)	11	11	0	0	0	0
Bismarck (ND)	8	6	2	0	0	0
Bloomington (IL)	19	16	3	0	0	5
Charleston (WV)	29	27	2	0	0	0
Cheyenne (WY)	19	16	3	0	0	0
Dayton (OH)	81	69	12	0	0	0
Idaho Falls (ID)	9	9	0	0	0	11
Madison (WI)	63	48	15	0	0	3
Minneapolis (MN)	114	90	23	0	1	3
New York City (NY)	611	545	65	0	3	6
Normal (IL)	8	8	0	0	0	0
Portland (ME)	27	21	6	0	0	19
Richmond (VA)	101	88	13	1	3	23
Saint Petersburg (FL)	206	167	38	0	0	1
Salt Lake (UT)	92	79	11	0	0	5
San Diego (CA)	704	640	62	0	0	14
Santa Fe (NM)	54	51	3	0	0	6
Spokane (WA)	77	65	11	0	0	4
St. Louis (MO)	151	140	10	0	1	0
Tampa (FL)	376	306	66	0	0	1
Vancouver (WA)	52	44	8	0	0	4

Race Missingness

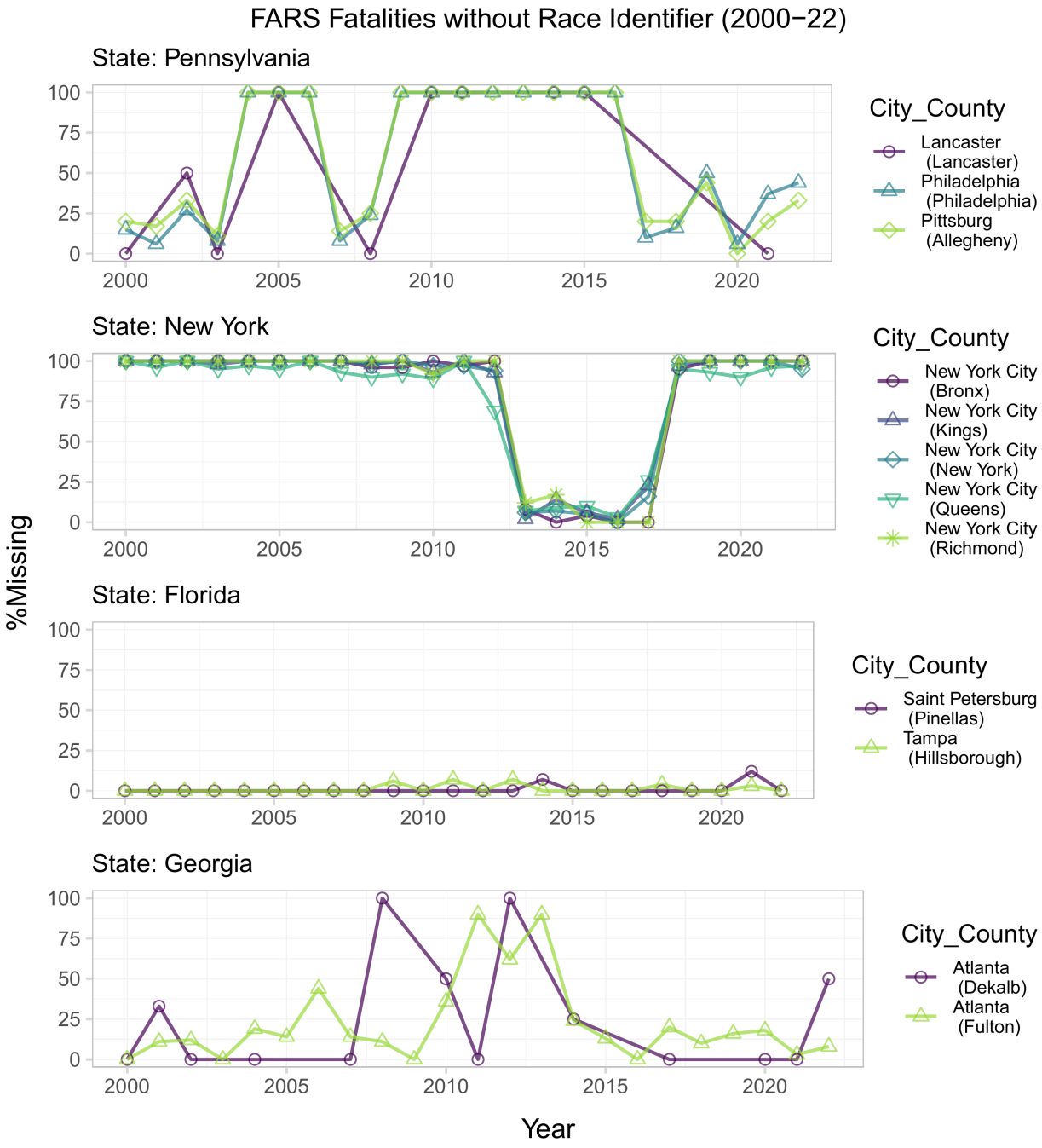

Figure C1: Inconsistent reporting of victim race in FARS

C.4 Matched Sample Summary Statistics

This section contains tables displaying the total deaths in the sample for each of the variables used in Table 3.3. Each statistic is calculated separately for each city/paper combination. Thus, the results for most cities and papers are contained on a single row. But there are multiple rows for cities with multiple papers (e.g. Salt Lake) or papers that cover multiple cities (e.g. Tampa Bay Times).

Table C6: Total Deaths by Race

Source	Asian	Black	Hispanic/ Latino	Native American	Unknown/ Missing	White (non-hispanic)	Total
Anchorage (AK)	2	5	1	76	7	39	130
Annapolis (MD)	-	2	1	-	1	1	5
Atlanta (GA)	1	128	14	-	25	32	200
Bangor (ME)	-	-	-	-	-	8	8
Bismarck (ND)	-	-	-	-	-	5	5
Bloomington/Normal (IL) - Pantagraph	-	7	2	-	1	15	25
Charleston (WV)	1	5	-	-	-	17	23
Cheyenne (WY)	-	1	4	-	-	14	19
Dayton (OH)	1	41	-	-	-	32	74
Idaho Falls (ID)	-	-	2	1	-	2	5
Madison (WI) - Capital Times	2	2	3	-	1	20	28
Madison (WI) - Wisconsin State Journal	3	4	5	-	2	44	58
Minneapolis (MN)	5	21	8	10	3	66	113
New York City (NY)	90	143	138	-	37	203	611
Portland (ME)	-	-	-	-	-	14	14
Richmond (VA)	2	36	10	-	22	25	95
Salt Lake (UT) - Deseret News	6	3	16	9	5	53	92
Salt Lake (UT) - Salt Lake Tribune	6	3	16	9	5	53	92
San Diego (CA)	10	11	27	-	14	40	102
Santa Fe (NM)	-	-	9	2	3	11	25
Spokane (WA)	-	4	2	6	3	56	71
St. Louis (MO)	4	94	1	-	-	52	151
St. Petersburg (FL) - Tampa Bay Times	1	20	7	-	1	73	102
Tampa (FL) - Tampa Bay Times	-	36	21	-	1	44	102
Tampa (FL) - Tampa Tribune	-	19	5	-	-	11	35
Vancouver (WA)	2	4	8	1	2	34	51
Total	136	589	300	114	133	964	2,236

Table C7: Total Deaths by Person Type

City_Source	Cyclist	Other	Pedestrian	Total
Anchorage (AK)	12	1	117	130
Annapolis (MD)	-	-	5	5
Atlanta (GA)	5	-	195	200
Bangor (ME)	-	-	8	8
Bismarck (ND)	1	-	4	5
Bloomington/Normal (IL) - Pantagraph	3	-	22	25
Charleston (WV)	1	-	22	23
Cheyenne (WY)	3	-	16	19
Dayton (OH)	12	-	62	74
Idaho Falls (ID)	-	-	5	5
Madison (WI) - Capital Times	6	-	22	28
Madison (WI) - Wisconsin State Journal	13	-	45	58
Minneapolis (MN)	22	1	90	113
New York City (NY)	65	1	545	611
Portland (ME)	5	-	9	14
Richmond (VA)	12	-	83	95
Salt Lake (UT) - Deseret News	11	2	79	92
Salt Lake (UT) - Salt Lake Tribune	11	2	79	92
San Diego (CA)	7	1	94	102
Santa Fe (NM)	3	-	22	25
Spokane (WA)	10	1	60	71
St. Louis (MO)	10	1	140	151
St. Petersburg (FL) - Tampa Bay Times	19	-	83	102
Tampa (FL) - Tampa Bay Times	17	-	85	102
Tampa (FL) - Tampa Tribune	7	-	28	35
Vancouver (WA)	7	-	44	51
Total	262	10	1,964	2,236

Table C8: Total Deaths by Sex

City_Source	Female	Male	Unknown/Missing	Total
Anchorage (AK)	44	86	-	130
Annapolis (MD)	-	5	-	5
Atlanta (GA)	56	143	1	200
Bangor (ME)	2	6	-	8
Bismarck (ND)	2	3	-	5
Bloomington/Normal (IL) - Pantagraph	6	19	-	25
Charleston (WV)	6	17	-	23
Cheyenne (WY)	3	16	-	19
Dayton (OH)	27	47	-	74
Idaho Falls (ID)	-	5	-	5
Madison (WI) - Capital Times	11	17	-	28
Madison (WI) - Wisconsin State Journal	20	38	-	58
Minneapolis (MN)	42	71	-	113
New York City (NY)	230	381	-	611
Portland (ME)	3	11	-	14
Richmond (VA)	23	71	1	95
Salt Lake (UT) - Deseret News	31	61	-	92
Salt Lake (UT) - Salt Lake Tribune	31	61	-	92
San Diego (CA)	31	70	1	102
Santa Fe (NM)	9	16	-	25
Spokane (WA)	20	51	-	71
St. Louis (MO)	33	118	-	151
St. Petersburg (FL) - Tampa Bay Times	25	77	-	102
Tampa (FL) - Tampa Bay Times	29	73	-	102
Tampa (FL) - Tampa Tribune	10	25	-	35
Vancouver (WA)	18	33	-	51
Total	712	1,521	3	2,236

Table C9: Total Deaths by Age

City_Source	0-12	12-18	18-25	25-40	40-70	70+	NA	Total
Anchorage (AK)	7	7	14	28	67	7	-	130
Annapolis (MD)	1	1	-	1	2	-	-	5
Atlanta (GA)	2	5	21	60	104	6	2	200
Bangor (ME)	-	1	-	1	5	1	-	8
Bismarck (ND)	-	-	-	-	4	1	-	5
Bloomington/Normal (IL) - Pantagraph	3	1	4	5	10	2	-	25
Charleston (WV)	3	-	3	7	9	1	-	23
Cheyenne (WY)	1	2	1	4	10	1	-	19
Dayton (OH)	12	2	5	16	36	3	-	74
Idaho Falls (ID)	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	5
Madison (WI) - Capital Times	2	-	5	3	15	3	-	28
Madison (WI) - Wisconsin State Journal	3	1	6	10	31	7	-	58
Minneapolis (MN)	7	5	11	21	50	18	1	113
New York City (NY)	23	18	48	95	270	140	17	611
Portland (ME)	-	-	-	1	10	3	-	14
Richmond (VA)	2	3	9	18	48	12	3	95
Salt Lake (UT) - Deseret News	5	2	11	13	52	9	-	92
Salt Lake (UT) - Salt Lake Tribune	5	2	11	13	52	9	-	92
San Diego (CA)	1	2	8	31	46	13	1	102
Santa Fe (NM)	1	-	2	6	14	2	-	25
Spokane (WA)	2	2	2	9	43	13	-	71
St. Louis (MO)	7	6	15	26	86	9	2	151
St. Petersburg (FL) - Tampa Bay Times	2	4	5	19	57	15	-	102
Tampa (FL) - Tampa Bay Times	4	6	7	28	49	7	1	102
Tampa (FL) - Tampa Tribune	3	2	2	10	16	2	-	35
Vancouver (WA)	6	4	4	14	18	5	-	51
Total	102	76	194	439	1,109	289	27	2,236

Table C10: Total Deaths by Hit-and-run Status

City_Source	FALSE	TRUE	Total
Anchorage (AK)	99	31	130
Annapolis (MD)	5	-	5
Atlanta (GA)	149	51	200
Bangor (ME)	8	-	8
Bismarck (ND)	5	-	5
Bloomington/Normal (IL) - Pantagraph	18	7	25
Charleston (WV)	19	4	23
Cheyenne (WY)	14	5	19
Dayton (OH)	47	27	74
Idaho Falls (ID)	4	1	5
Madison (WI) - Capital Times	25	3	28
Madison (WI) - Wisconsin State Journal	49	9	58
Minneapolis (MN)	85	28	113
New York City (NY)	486	125	611
Portland (ME)	13	1	14
Richmond (VA)	69	26	95
Salt Lake (UT) - Deseret News	67	25	92
Salt Lake (UT) - Salt Lake Tribune	67	25	92
San Diego (CA)	72	30	102
Santa Fe (NM)	22	3	25
Spokane (WA)	64	7	71
St. Louis (MO)	79	72	151
St. Petersburg (FL) - Tampa Bay Times	72	30	102
Tampa (FL) - Tampa Bay Times	79	23	102
Tampa (FL) - Tampa Tribune	28	7	35
Vancouver (WA)	41	10	51
Total	1,686	550	2,236

Table C11: Total Deaths by Number of Fatalities in Incident

City_Source	1	2	3	4	Total
Anchorage (AK)	124	6	-	-	130
Annapolis (MD)	5	-	-	-	5
Atlanta (GA)	195	2	3	-	200
Bangor (ME)	8	-	-	-	8
Bismarck (ND)	5	-	-	-	5
Bloomington/Normal (IL) - Pantagraph	25	-	-	-	25
Charleston (WV)	23	-	-	-	23
Cheyenne (WY)	19	-	-	-	19
Dayton (OH)	70	4	-	-	74
Idaho Falls (ID)	5	-	-	-	5
Madison (WI) - Capital Times	28	-	-	-	28
Madison (WI) - Wisconsin State Journal	58	-	-	-	58
Minneapolis (MN)	113	-	-	-	113
New York City (NY)	594	12	5	-	611
Portland (ME)	14	-	-	-	14
Richmond (VA)	93	2	-	-	95
Salt Lake (UT) - Deseret News	91	1	-	-	92
Salt Lake (UT) - Salt Lake Tribune	91	1	-	-	92
San Diego (CA)	93	5	-	4	102
Santa Fe (NM)	25	-	-	-	25
Spokane (WA)	70	1	-	-	71
St. Louis (MO)	150	1	-	-	151
St. Petersburg (FL) - Tampa Bay Times	96	6	-	-	102
Tampa (FL) - Tampa Bay Times	97	5	-	-	102
Tampa (FL) - Tampa Tribune	33	2	-	-	35
Vancouver (WA)	45	6	-	-	51
Total	2,170	54	8	4	2,236

Table C12: Total Deaths by Days between Crash and Death

City_Source	0	1	2	Total
Anchorage (AK)	117	12	1	130
Annapolis (MD)	3	2	-	5
Atlanta (GA)	178	14	8	200
Bangor (ME)	6	1	1	8
Bismarck (ND)	3	1	1	5
Bloomington/Normal (IL) - Pantagraph	16	4	5	25
Charleston (WV)	20	3	-	23
Cheyenne (WY)	15	4	-	19
Dayton (OH)	60	11	3	74
Idaho Falls (ID)	5	-	-	5
Madison (WI) - Capital Times	23	3	2	28
Madison (WI) - Wisconsin State Journal	51	5	2	58
Minneapolis (MN)	81	25	7	113
New York City (NY)	505	68	38	611
Portland (ME)	11	3	-	14
Richmond (VA)	79	13	3	95
Salt Lake (UT) - Deseret News	84	7	1	92
Salt Lake (UT) - Salt Lake Tribune	84	7	1	92
San Diego (CA)	94	7	1	102
Santa Fe (NM)	23	1	1	25
Spokane (WA)	48	16	7	71
St. Louis (MO)	132	16	3	151
St. Petersburg (FL) - Tampa Bay Times	93	6	1	100
Tampa (FL) - Tampa Bay Times	81	14	7	102
Tampa (FL) - Tampa Tribune	26	6	3	35
Vancouver (WA)	42	7	2	51
Total	1,880	256	98	2,234

C.5 Other Regression Specifications

Based on the regressions in Table C16, the results for the other variables (Age, Sex, Cyclist, Hit-and-run) are robust to the inclusion or exclusion of the other variables.

Based on the regressions in Table C14, there is no evidence that race had an effect on the chance that a death was covered even when we remove the fixed effects for year or drop the missing race observations from the sample. Based on the regressions in Table C13, there is no evidence that race had an effect on the chance that a death was covered in earlier time periods. There are too few observations in most cities to run a separate regression. However, focusing on the large cities with 50+ fatalities in the sampled period, I find no strong evidence of racial disparities (see Table C18). Asian is significant for St. Petersburg, Atlanta, and St. Louis. But if we look at Table C6, in the matched sample, the total deaths in each city are between 1 and 4 (Anchorage has 2 Asian deaths, Atlanta has 1 death, and St. Louis has 4 deaths). It is entirely possible that these results are driven by outliers and would not appear in a larger sample.

Additional research is necessary to investigate the drunk driver variable. Currently, the variable is complete from 2000-2020 but missing for every observation in 2021-2022. This doesn't make sense because the intoxication of the driver should be unknown in cases where a hit-and-run driver is never discovered. Using the current version of the drunk driver variable, I don't find that pedestrian deaths involving drunk drivers receive disproportionate coverage (see Table C17).

Table C13: Other Regression (OLS) Specifications for Race

	2000-2005	2006-2011	2012-2017	2018-2022
race.Asian	-0.173	-0.007	-0.041	0.125
	(0.174)	(0.124)	(0.053)	(0.141)
race.Black	0.111	-0.076	0.026	-0.037
	(0.074)	(0.073)	(0.038)	(0.046)
race.Hispanic/Latino	-0.162	0.099	0.025	-0.013
	(0.123)	(0.088)	(0.042)	(0.069)
race.Native American	0.127	-0.090	0.104	0.066
	(0.151)	(0.096)	(0.064)	(0.081)
race.Unknown/Missing	-0.108	0.013	0.016	-0.058
	(0.184)	(0.121)	(0.061)	(0.075)
Num.Obs.	229	287	1134	586
Std.Errors	HC1	HC1	HC1	HC1
FE: source_cat	X	X	X	X

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

The dependent variable is 1 if the death recieved any coverage, 0 otherwise.

Table C14: Other Regression (OLS) Specifications for Race

	All	Race	No Year FE	Drop NA
race.Asian	-0.062	-0.040	-0.042	-0.039
	(0.044)	(0.046)	(0.046)	(0.046)
race.Black	-0.027	0.010	0.011	0.008
	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.025)
race.Hispanic/Latino	-0.020	0.018	0.018	0.020
	(0.031)	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.032)
race.Native American	0.021	0.053	0.056	0.050
	(0.048)	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.049)
race.Unknown/Missing	-0.043	-0.013	-0.020	
	(0.041)	(0.042)	(0.042)	
age.0-12	0.180***			
	(0.040)			
age.12-18	0.100+			
	(0.050)			
age.18-25	0.063+			
	(0.036)			
age.40-70	-0.005			
	(0.024)			
age.70+	-0.090*			
	(0.035)			
hit_run	0.104***			
	(0.020)			
female	0.051*			
	(0.019)			
multifatality	0.232***			
	(0.052)			
death_delay	-0.106***			
	(0.027)			
Num.Obs.	2206	2236	2236	2103
Std.Errors	HC1	HC1	HC1	HC1
FE: source_cat	X	X	X	X
FE: year_cat		X		X

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

The DV is 1 if the death recieved any coverage, 0 otherwise.

Table C15: Regression (OLS) Specifications for the Interaction between Race and Sex

	All	Female	All	Female	Interaction	Interaction
race.Asian	-0.047	-0.131+	-0.058	-0.111	-0.004	-0.040
	(0.046)	(0.067)	(0.044)	(0.065)	(0.064)	(0.061)
race.Black	0.010	-0.024	-0.029	-0.071	0.024	-0.012
	(0.025)	(0.047)	(0.025)	(0.045)	(0.029)	(0.029)
race.Hispanic/Latino	0.021	0.029	-0.016	-0.008	0.011	-0.032
	(0.032)	(0.060)	(0.031)	(0.057)	(0.037)	(0.036)
race.Native American	0.050	0.043	0.012	-0.011	0.064	0.037
	(0.048)	(0.088)	(0.048)	(0.088)	(0.053)	(0.054)
race.Unknown/Missing	-0.010	-0.062	-0.041	-0.069	0.014	-0.018
	(0.042)	(0.082)	(0.041)	(0.078)	(0.049)	(0.048)
female	0.046*		0.050*		0.067*	0.069+
	(0.020)		(0.019)		(0.030)	(0.029)
race.Asian × female					-0.095	-0.043
					(0.089)	(0.086)
race.Black × female					-0.045	-0.057
					(0.048)	(0.047)
race.Hispanic/Latino × female					0.045	0.061
					(0.068)	(0.063)
race.Native American × female					-0.041	-0.075
					(0.068)	(0.068)
race.Unknown/Missing × female					-0.089	-0.086
					(0.090)	(0.086)
Num.Obs.	2233	712	2206	705	2233	2206
Std.Errors	HC1	HC1	HC1	HC1	HC1	HC1
FE: source_cat	X	X	X	X	X	X
FE: year_cat	X	X	X	X	X	X
FE: age.			X	X		X
FE: hit_run			X	X		X
FE: multifatality			X	X		X
FE: death_delay			X	X		X

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

The dependent variable is 1 if the death recieved any coverage, 0 otherwise.

Table C16: Other Regression (OLS) Specifications for Other Variables

	All	All	Age	Sex	Cyclist	Hit-and-run	Death Delay
race.Asian	-0.066	-0.067					
	(0.045)	(0.045)					
race.Black	-0.023	-0.021					
	(0.025)	(0.025)					
race.Hispanic/Latino	-0.018	-0.019					
	(0.031)	(0.032)					
race.Native American	0.029	0.031					
	(0.048)	(0.048)					
race.Unknown/Missing	-0.038	-0.041					
	(0.041)	(0.042)					
age.0-12	0.177***	0.186***	0.170***				
	(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.039)				
age.12-18	0.105*	0.095+	0.101+				
	(0.050)	(0.051)	(0.051)				
age.18-25	0.041	0.056	0.046				
	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.037)				
age.40-70	-0.005	-0.002	-0.008				
	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.024)				
age.70+	-0.101**	-0.099*	-0.124**				
	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.036)				
hit_run	0.110***	0.106***				0.114***	
	(0.021)	(0.020)				(0.020)	
female	0.046*	0.048*		0.044*			
	(0.020)	(0.020)		(0.020)			
multifatality	0.231***	0.210***					
	(0.050)	(0.049)					
cyclist					0.059*		
					(0.028)		
death_delay							-0.106**
							(0.032)
Num.Obs.	2206	2206	2209	2233	2236	2236	2236
Std.Errors	HC1	HC1	HC1	HC1	HC1	HC1	HC1
FE: source_cat	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
FE: year_cat	X		X	X	X	X	X

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

The dependent variable is 1 if the death recieved any coverage, 0 otherwise.

Table C17: Regression (OLS) Specifications for Drunk Driver

	DUI	All
drunk_driver_dropNA	0.031	0.010
	(0.031)	(0.032)
race.Asian		-0.067
		(0.045)
race.Black		-0.018
		(0.027)
race.Hispanic/Latino		-0.023
		(0.033)
race.Native American		0.034
		(0.051)
race.Unknown/Missing		-0.054
		(0.045)
age.0-12		0.179***
		(0.041)
age.12-18		0.144*
		(0.052)
age.18-25		0.048
		(0.039)
age.40-70		0.007
		(0.027)
age.70+		-0.107**
		(0.038)
hit_run		0.109***
		(0.022)
female		0.059**
		(0.021)
multifatality		0.229***
		(0.050)
Num.Obs.	1945	1922
Std.Errors	HC1	HC1
FE: source_cat	X	X
FE: year_cat	X	X

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

The dependent variable is 1 if the death recieved any coverage, 0 otherwise.

Table C18: Regressions (OLS) for Select Cities

	All	NYC	NYC2	San Diego	St Pete	Tampa	Anchorage	Minn	St Louis	Atlanta
race.Asian	-0.067	-0.091	-0.079	-0.238	-0.482***		-0.960***	0.214*	-0.296	-0.183*
	(0.045)	(0.060)	(0.060)	(0.155)	(0.142)		(0.030)	(0.105)	(0.295)	(0.081)
race.Black	-0.021	-0.004	-0.002	-0.208	0.123	-0.085	-0.028	0.080	0.028	-0.069
	(0.025)	(0.053)	(0.052)	(0.185)	(0.113)	(0.097)	(0.162)	(0.103)	(0.055)	(0.084)
race.Hispanic/Latino	-0.019	-0.041	-0.021	-0.023	0.196	-0.056	0.028	0.053	0.132*	-0.171
	(0.032)	(0.053)	(0.053)	(0.122)	(0.169)	(0.118)	(0.053)	(0.163)	(0.060)	(0.125)
race.Native American	0.031						0.023	0.081		
	(0.048)						(0.055)	(0.110)		
race.Unknown/Missing	-0.041	0.001	0.003	-0.058	0.522**	-0.964	-0.046	-0.414		-0.171+
	(0.042)	(0.082)	(0.081)	(0.170)	(0.163)	(0.178)	(0.177)	(0.275)		(0.099)
age.0-12	0.186***	0.324***	0.367**	0.504*	0.094	0.311	-0.192	0.094	0.231**	0.799***
	(0.040)	(0.073)	(0.075)	(0.195)	(0.123)	(0.207)	(0.190)	(0.107)	(0.088)	(0.066)
age.12-18	0.095+	0.126	0.139	0.418*	0.061	0.297	0.047	0.061	0.255**	0.240
	(0.051)	(0.102)	(0.100)	(0.163)	(0.121)	(0.189)	(0.071)	(0.134)	(0.091)	(0.223)
age.18-25	0.056	0.026	0.036	-0.084	-0.235	0.085	0.053	-0.049	0.206+	0.087
	(0.036)	(0.085)	(0.080)	(0.214)	(0.253)	(0.157)	(0.067)	(0.139)	(0.116)	(0.111)
age.40-70	-0.002	-0.015	-0.014	0.002	-0.198+	-0.012	-0.002	0.034	0.146	0.042
	(0.024)	(0.058)	(0.057)	(0.115)	(0.115)	(0.104)	(0.074)	(0.095)	(0.093)	(0.062)
age.70+	-0.099*	-0.189**	-0.187*	0.159	-0.367*	0.003	0.087	-0.239	0.262**	-0.177*
	(0.036)	(0.067)	(0.067)	(0.163)	(0.161)	(0.196)	(0.069)	(0.147)	(0.093)	(0.074)
hit_run	0.106***	0.196***	0.186*	0.052	-0.005	0.306	0.081*	0.051	0.006	-0.083
	(0.020)	(0.046)	(0.045)	(0.100)	(0.104)	(0.100)	(0.035)	(0.083)	(0.053)	(0.057)
female	0.048*	0.139***	0.138*	-0.039	-0.085	0.293	0.007	-0.002	0.090+	-0.086
	(0.020)	(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.106)	(0.109)	(0.092)	(0.058)	(0.082)	(0.052)	(0.062)
multifatality	0.210***	0.118	0.139	0.379***	0.387***	0.349	0.094		-0.889***	0.874***
	(0.049)	(0.114)	(0.120)	(0.079)	(0.078)	(0.126)	(0.066)		(0.049)	(0.097)
(Intercept)		0.559***		0.704***	0.849***		0.893***	0.796***	0.715***	0.269**
		(0.060)		(0.112)	(0.107)		(0.073)	(0.102)	(0.102)	(0.093)
Num.Obs.	2206	594	594	100	102	136	130	112	149	197
Std.Errors	HC1	HC1	HC1	HC1	HC1	HC1	HC1	HC1	HC1	HC1
FE: source_cat	X					X				
FE: year_cat			X							

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

The dependent variable is a binary variable called Coverage (1 if the death recieved any coverage, 0 otherwise).

Table C19: Regression (OLS) Specifications for Age (10-year increments)

	All	All	All
age10y.00-09	0.271***	0.200***	0.200**
	(0.044)	(0.042)	(0.044)
age10y.10-19	0.140**	0.115*	0.116+
	(0.047)	(0.046)	(0.045)
age10y.20-29	0.038	0.026	0.015
	(0.039)	(0.035)	(0.034)
age10y.40-49	0.028	0.016	0.005
	(0.039)	(0.035)	(0.034)
age10y.50-59	0.002	-0.013	-0.011
	(0.037)	(0.033)	(0.032)
age10y.60-69	0.008	-0.007	-0.002
	(0.039)	(0.036)	(0.035)
age10y.70-79	-0.023	-0.039	-0.023
	(0.047)	(0.043)	(0.043)
age10y.80-89	-0.212***	-0.233***	-0.212*
	(0.055)	(0.053)	(0.053)
age10y.90+	-0.149	-0.129	-0.122
	(0.136)	(0.135)	(0.133)
Num.Obs.	2209	2209	2206
Std.Errors	HC1	HC1	HC1
FE: year_cat	X	X	X
FE: source_cat		X	X
FE: multifatality			X
FE: race.			X
FE: hit_run			X
FE: female			X

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

The dependent variable is 1 if the death recieved any coverage.

Table C20: Regression (OLS) Specifications for Age (5-year increments)

	All	All	All
age5y.00-04	0.317***	0.210*	0.186+
	(0.071)	(0.078)	(0.077)
age5y.05-09	0.324***	0.244***	0.239**
	(0.058)	(0.054)	(0.056)
age5y.10-14	0.140+	0.096	0.097
	(0.074)	(0.076)	(0.075)
age5y.15-19	0.223**	0.182**	0.164*
	(0.062)	(0.061)	(0.059)
age5y.20-24	0.101+	0.083	0.059
	(0.056)	(0.052)	(0.051)
age5y.25-29	0.077	0.038	0.019
	(0.055)	(0.050)	(0.050)
age5y.35-39	0.100+	0.066	0.045
	(0.058)	(0.051)	(0.050)
age5y.40-44	0.063	0.047	0.022
	(0.057)	(0.052)	(0.052)
age5y.45-49	0.089	0.051	0.032
	(0.054)	(0.050)	(0.049)
age5y.50-54	0.081	0.042	0.034
	(0.052)	(0.048)	(0.048)
age5y.55-59	0.023	-0.001	-0.010
	(0.053)	(0.048)	(0.047)
age5y.60-64	0.054	0.010	0.006
	(0.054)	(0.050)	(0.050)
age5y.65-69	0.064	0.047	0.038
	(0.058)	(0.053)	(0.053)
age5y.70-74	0.019	-0.012	-0.005
	(0.063)	(0.059)	(0.058)
age5y.75-79	0.041	0.003	0.004
	(0.073)	(0.068)	(0.067)
age5y.80-84	-0.201**	-0.232**	-0.226*
	(0.070)	(0.068)	(0.067)
age5y.85-89	-0.081	-0.135	-0.116
	(0.090)	(0.088)	(0.089)
age5y.90+	-0.098	-0.095	-0.100
	(0.139)	(0.138)	(0.136)
Num.Obs.	2209	2209	2206
Std.Errors	HC1	HC1	HC1
FE: year_cat	X	X	X
FE: source_cat		X	X
FE: multifatality			X
FE: race.			X
FE: hit_run			X
FE: female			X

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

The dependent variable is 1 if the death recieved any coverage.

Table C21: Total Deaths by and Age

City_Source	00-04	05-09	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	NA	85-89	90+	Total
Anchorage (AK)	4	1	4	6	10	9	5	15	10	9	16	19	9	5	5	1	2	-	-	-	130
Annapolis (MD)	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Atlanta (GA)	-	1	3	7	15	20	21	17	19	13	18	31	11	12	8	2	-	2	-	-	200
Bangor (ME)	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	1	-	3	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	8
Bismarck (ND)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	5
Bloomington/Normal (IL) - Pantagraph	1	1	1	1	3	3	1	2	2	2	3	1	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	25
Charleston (WV)	1	1	1	1	2	2	3	1	3	2	1	-	2	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	23
Cheyenne (WY)	1	-	1	1	-	2	2	1	1	2	-	3	3	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	19
Dayton (OH)	1	7	4	2	4	4	5	8	6	5	10	8	6	1	-	2	1	-	-	-	74
Idaho Falls (ID)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Madison (WI) - Capital Times	-	1	1	1	4	-	2	1	2	3	3	2	3	2	1	-	2	-	-	-	28
Madison (WI) - Wisconsin State Journal	-	2	2	1	5	2	4	3	6	7	4	4	7	4	3	1	3	-	-	-	58
Minneapolis (MN)	3	3	2	5	7	11	8	5	7	9	7	14	7	4	7	5	6	1	1	1	113
New York City (NY)	6	11	13	14	35	43	35	24	27	33	42	57	53	52	51	28	41	17	20	9	611
Portland (ME)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	3	3	1	1	1	-	3	-	-	-	-	14
Richmond (VA)	-	2	-	4	7	4	8	6	10	10	9	6	8	5	6	3	3	3	1	-	95
Salt Lake (UT) - Deseret News	1	3	2	1	9	7	4	3	5	12	9	7	12	7	5	1	3	-	1	-	92
Salt Lake (UT) - Salt Lake Tribune	1	3	2	1	9	7	4	3	5	12	9	7	12	7	5	1	3	-	1	-	92
San Diego (CA)	-	1	-	2	6	10	12	8	7	8	18	6	6	4	3	4	-	1	3	3	102
Santa Fe (NM)	1	-	-	-	2	3	1	1	4	4	-	4	1	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	25
Spokane (WA)	-	2	-	2	-	4	-	6	6	7	8	9	10	4	4	3	4	-	1	1	71
St. Louis (MO)	-	5	2	6	11	15	5	8	8	17	17	16	17	11	3	4	2	2	2	-	151
St. Petersburg (FL) - Tampa Bay Times	-	1	2	3	2	7	5	6	5	15	13	13	11	4	6	4	2	-	3	-	102
Tampa (FL) - Tampa Bay Times	1	1	2	6	6	5	9	10	11	8	12	7	9	7	2	2	2	1	-	1	102
Tampa (FL) - Tampa Tribune	1	-	2	2	2	2	3	2	6	4	4	2	2	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	35
Vancouver (WA)	1	4	2	3	2	6	4	6	1	6	6	1	3	1	-	2	-	-	3	-	51
Total	23	51	46	71	141	166	141	139	153	192	217	222	197	138	117	67	76	27	37	15	2,236

C.6 Relationship between coverage and pedestrian death rate

It seems logical that the smallest cities with the fewest deaths would cover pedestrian fatalities at the highest rate. However, as can be seen in Figure C2, there is no clear relationship between the average number of fatalities per year and the rate of coverage. It is possible that this relationship is negative, but the results would be highly dependent on the model of the fitted line. Similarly, in Figure C3, there does not appear to be a relationship between the rate of coverage and the rate of pedestrian fatalities.

Note: because the analysis in this section involves calculating yearly estimates, I excluded all years where I only had partial news data since the totals for those years would not be accurate. Because so many papers were missing data between 2004 2007, I excluded data between 2004 and 2007 for all papers and cities. Per capita death rates are calculated by dividing the total deaths in a city by product of the number of years in the sample and the city's population in 2011.

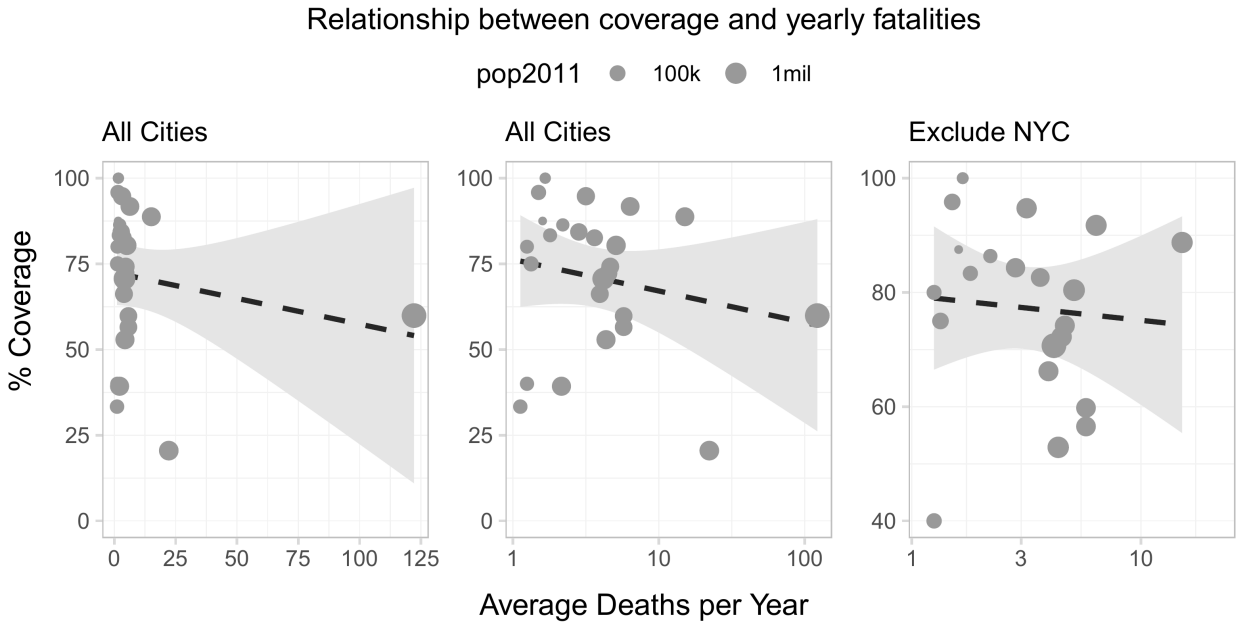

Figure C2: Relationship between coverage and yearly fatalities

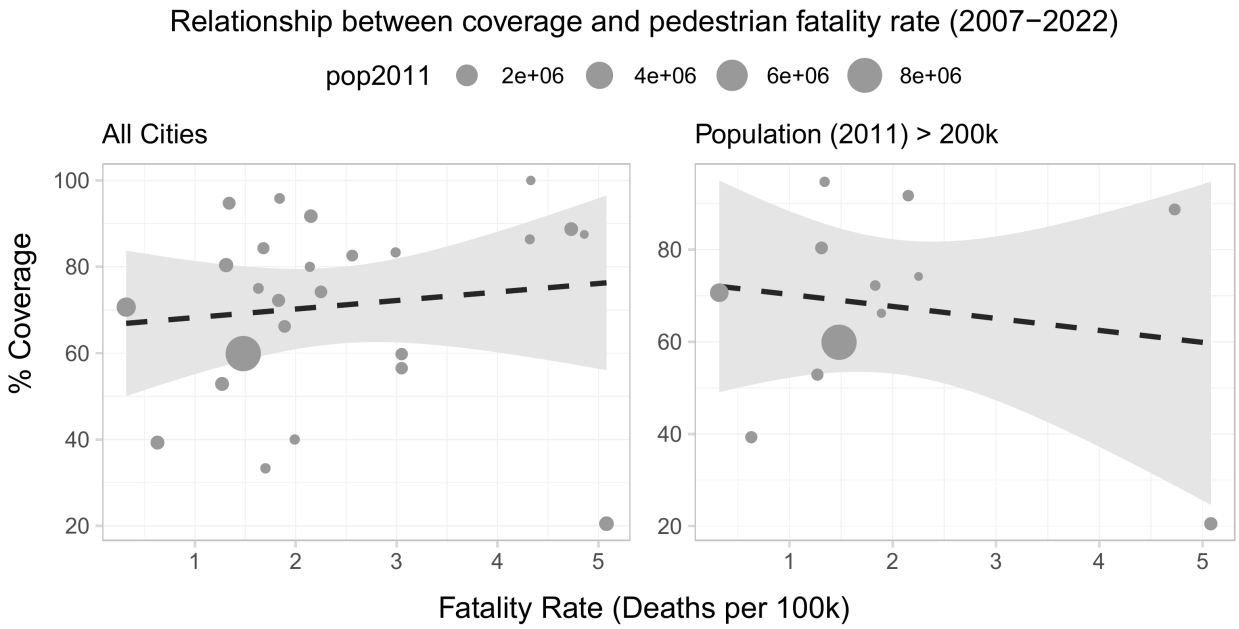

Figure C3: Relationship between coverage and pedestrian fatality rate (2007-2022)

C.7 Coverage over time

As can be seen in Table C22, across the whole sample, coverage does not appear to drop off until 2020. However, recall that cities are being added and removed from the sample depending on data availability (see Table 3.1 in the main paper and Table C1 in Appendix C.2). For a better portrait of the over-time trend by city, see Table C23 and C4. From these, it appears that this overall negative trend is largely attributable to two cities: Atlanta (GA) and Salt Lake (UT).

Figure C5 plots a particularly interesting case study. The Tampa Bay Times is based in St. Petersburg and was previously named the St. Petersburg Times. In 2016, it acquired it's more conservative, rival paper based in Tampa (The Tampa Bay Tribune). Figure C5 shows coverage in both cities over the key period. As mentioned previously, I only had time to code a random sample of deaths from Tampa and St. Petersburg. When the full sample is coded, I hope to see whether the Tampa Bay Times increased its coverage of Tampa after the merger and whether the St. Petersburg times reduced its coverage leading up to the merger.

Table C22: Regressions (OLS) on Entire Sample

	DV: Coverage		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
YEAR	-0.005*		
	(0.002)		
year.2010 to 2019		0.017	0.018
		(0.028)	(0.028)
year.2020		-0.159**	
		(0.048)	
year.2021		-0.096*	
		(0.041)	
year.2022		-0.124**	
		(0.044)	
year.2020 to 2022			-0.123***
			(0.033)
Num.Obs.	2236	2236	2236
Std.Errors	HC1	HC1	HC1

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table C23: Regressions (OLS) by City

	All	All	NYC	San Diego	St Pete	Tampa	Anchorage	Minn	St Louis	Atlanta	Salt Lake
year.2000 to 2004	-0.049	-0.040		-0.084	0.092	0.350+	0.022	-0.218			
	(0.037)	(0.036)		(0.145)	(0.159)	(0.127)	(0.117)	(0.124)			
year.2005 to 2009	-0.012	-0.025		0.051	0.149	0.037	0.087	0.100			-0.035
	(0.036)	(0.037)		(0.153)	(0.149)	(0.124)	(0.064)	(0.096)			(0.129)
year.2010 to 2014	-0.031	-0.035		-0.064	0.162	0.426*	0.109	0.046	0.041	-0.089	-0.018
	(0.024)	(0.024)		(0.161)	(0.157)	(0.127)	(0.080)	(0.108)	(0.066)	(0.105)	(0.097)
year.2020 to 2022	-0.151***	-0.148**		-0.139	0.330+	0.167	0.041	-0.125	-0.092	-0.174*	-0.549**
	(0.027)	(0.027)		(0.233)	(0.145)	(0.147)	(0.074)	(0.133)	(0.062)	(0.056)	(0.098)
YEAR			0.053*								
			(0.014)								
Num.Obs.	2236	2206	594	100	102	136	130	112	149	197	184
Std.Errors	HC1	HC1	HC1	HC1	HC1	HC1	HC1	HC1	HC1	HC1	HC1
FE: female		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
FE: race.		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
FE: age.		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
FE: hit_run		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
FE: multifatality		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
FE: source_cat	X	X				X					X

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Note:

The dependent variable is a binary variable called Coverage (1 if the death recieved any coverage, 0 otherwise). Because of I only matched NYC fatalities from 2013-2017, I used the continuous variable for YEAR instead of the categorical version. For the categorical version of year, the dropped category is 2015to2019. This is because data from several cities (Atlanta, Salt Lake, St.Louis) is not available for the whole time period.

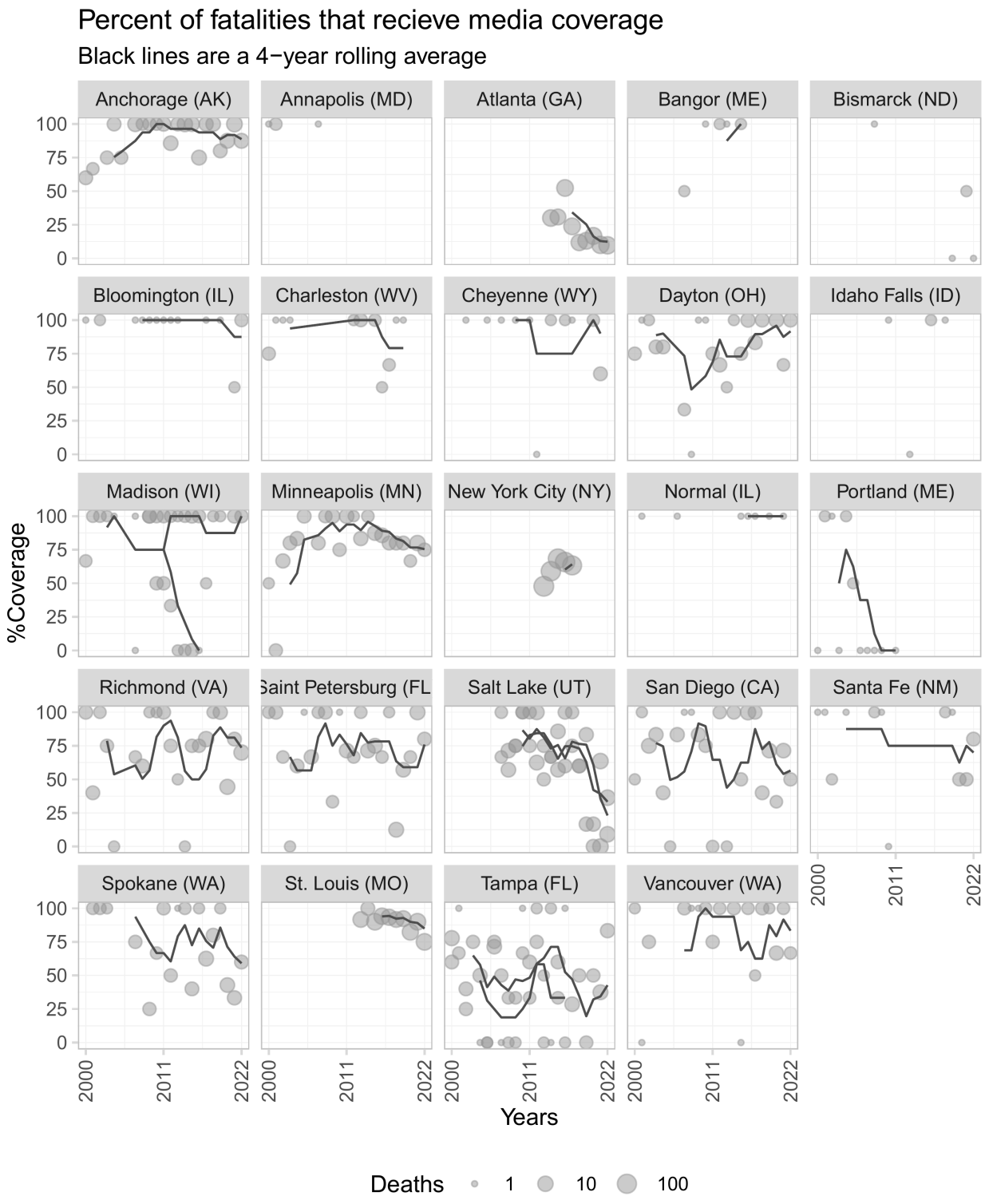

Figure C4: Likelihood of death receiving news coverage over time (all cities)

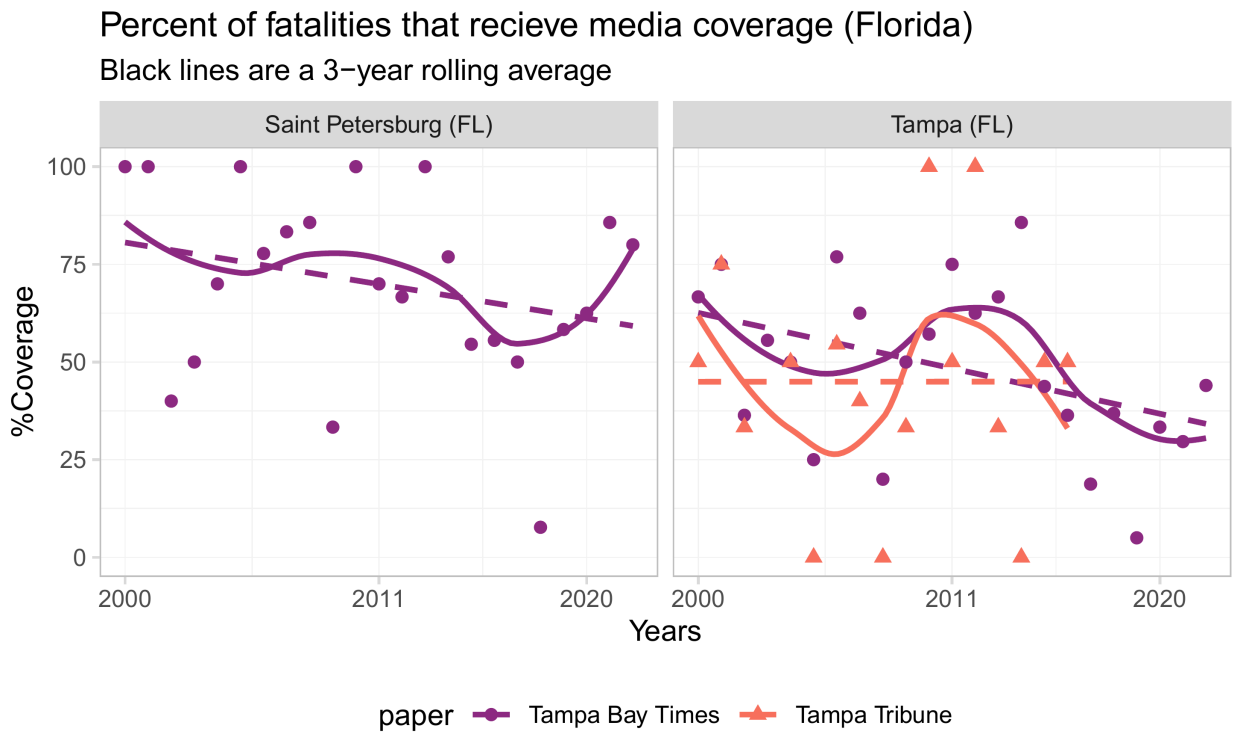

Figure C5: Likelihood of death receiving news coverage over time (Florida)

C.8 Dangerous Road

Based on my experience hand-coding the articles, I expected that a history of dangerous accidents would increase coverage. Certainly, there are specific cases where a street's reputation and history is discussed in the coverage. For example, there was an explosion of coverage about this historic danger of Florida's Bayshore Boulevard after a jogger was killed by a hit-and-run.[3] It also seemed like incidents were more likely to receive coverage when multiple fatalities occurred within a short time period.

In this preliminary analysis, I used the fatality data from 2000-2012 to generate a measure of road safety and applied it to fatalities from 2013-2022 in the largest cities. I took all of the data from 2000-2012, did some preliminary cleaning to try and standardize road names, and generated a list of the most dangerous roads for the largest cities (see Table C24 for a list of the cities). I then ranked the roads by the number of fatalities from 2000-12. If a road was ranked 2 or higher, it was coded as a top2 road. As mentioned previously, this is a crude measure of road danger and the analysis in Table C25 does not suggest that this crude measure of road danger is predictive of news coverage. Dying on an interstate does appear to be predictive of coverage, but the effect dispersal when it is included in the full sample of cities from 2000-2022 (see Table C26).

Table C24: Number of Fatalities by City/Paper and Road Type

Source	total_deaths	deaths_interstate	deaths_top2	pct_interstate	pct_top2
Anchorage (AK)	77	0	8	0.0	10.4
Atlanta (GA)	200	73	89	36.5	44.5
Dayton (OH)	41	0	7	0.0	17.1
Minneapolis (MN)	56	5	9	8.9	16.1
New York City (NY)	611	31	417	5.1	68.2
Richmond (VA)	55	7	30	12.7	54.5
Salt Lake (UT) - Deseret News	62	8	30	12.9	48.4
Salt Lake (UT) - Salt Lake Tribune	62	8	30	12.9	48.4
San Diego (CA)	52	20	33	38.5	63.5
Spokane (WA)	44	2	13	4.5	29.5
St. Louis (MO)	151	20	55	13.2	36.4
St. Petersburg (FL) - Tampa Bay Times	55	1	31	1.8	56.4
Tampa (FL) - Tampa Bay Times	44	2	23	4.5	52.3
Tampa (FL) - Tampa Tribune	7	0	5	0.0	71.4

[3]Here is an example of a 1/21/2020 article discussing the road's danger: https://www.tampabay.com/news/tampa/2020/01/21/is-tampas-bayshore-boulevard-really-that-dangerous/.

Table C25: Regressions (OLS) on Large Cities (2013-2022)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
top2	0.020		0.002	-0.004
	(0.024)		(0.027)	(0.026)
interstate		0.099*	0.098*	0.093*
		(0.036)	(0.040)	(0.041)
highway		0.004	0.004	0.003
		(0.048)	(0.049)	(0.048)
cyclist				0.080+
				(0.038)
race.Asian				-0.043
				(0.051)
race.Black				-0.020
				(0.030)
race.Hispanic/Latino				0.022
				(0.037)
race.Native American				0.081
				(0.061)
race.Unknown/Missing				-0.025
				(0.049)
age.0-12				0.250**
				(0.060)
age.12-18				0.114+
				(0.059)
age.18-25				0.052
				(0.044)
age.40-70				-0.008
				(0.029)
age.70+				-0.070
				(0.043)
female				0.065*
				(0.024)
hit_run				0.111***
				(0.024)
multifatality				0.288**
				(0.073)
death_delay				-0.113**
				(0.036)
Num.Obs.	1517	1517	1517	1487
FE: source_cat	X	X	X	X
FE: year_cat	X	X	X	X

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Note:

The dependent variable is a binary variable called Coverage (1 if the death recieved any coverage, 0 otherwise). top2 is a binary variable indicating whether a death occured on a road with one of the top two highest death counts in a city from 2000-2012. interestate and highway are binary variables indicating whether a death occured on an interstate or a highway.

Table C26: Regressions (OLS) on Full Sample of Cities (2000-2022)

	Road Type	All	Pedestrians	Cyclists
interstate	0.048	0.038	0.046	-0.411
	(0.031)	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.287)
highway	-0.004	-0.002	-0.009	0.023
	(0.032)	(0.031)	(0.034)	(0.098)
cyclist		0.071*		
		(0.027)		
race.Asian		-0.065	-0.060	-0.044
		(0.044)	(0.049)	(0.107)
race.Black		-0.026	-0.014	-0.039
		(0.025)	(0.027)	(0.076)
race.Hispanic/Latino		-0.017	-0.014	-0.047
		(0.031)	(0.034)	(0.083)
race.Native American		0.023	0.043	-0.171
		(0.048)	(0.051)	(0.181)
race.Unknown/Missing		-0.041	-0.032	-0.163
		(0.041)	(0.044)	(0.149)
age.0-12		0.170***	0.204***	0.124
		(0.041)	(0.046)	(0.116)
age.12-18		0.105*	0.063	0.199+
		(0.048)	(0.055)	(0.101)
age.18-25		0.043	0.054	0.078
		(0.036)	(0.040)	(0.087)
age.40-70		-0.002	0.010	-0.059
		(0.024)	(0.026)	(0.068)
age.70+		-0.083*	-0.064	-0.234+
		(0.036)	(0.038)	(0.126)
female		0.058**	0.059**	0.080
		(0.020)	(0.021)	(0.065)
hit_run		0.111***	0.097***	0.199**
		(0.021)	(0.022)	(0.055)
multifatality		0.256***	0.245***	0.103
		(0.053)	(0.052)	(0.093)
death_delay		-0.107***	-0.097**	-0.206***
		(0.029)	(0.028)	(0.048)
Num.Obs.	2236	2206	1946	260
FE: source_cat	X	X	X	X
FE: year_cat	X	X		

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Note:

The dependent variable is a binary variable called Coverage (1 if the death recieved any coverage, 0 otherwise). interestate and highway are binary variables indicating whether a death occured on an interstate or a highway.

C.9 Time of Day

I strongly suspected that the time of the day would affect the likelihood of coverage. First, it seems reasonable that the daily publication cycle would benefit incidents occurring at certain times of day (for example, at the beginning of a workday). Second, it seemed likely that people who were killed late at night or early in the morning may differ in ways that would not be fully captured in the FARS data (for example, they may be more likely to be unhoused). However, as can be seen in Table C27, there is no clear relationship between time of day and the probability of coverage.

Hour is the hour of the day that the crash occurred. I test both continuous and categorical versions of the variable. Hour.0 means that the crash occurred between 12am and 12:59am. The excluded category is noon.

Time of day is based on the hour of the crash. Morning is defined as 6am-11:59am. Midday is defined as 12pm-4:49pm. Evening is 5pm-7:59pm. Night is 8pm-11:59pm. Earlymorning is 12am-5:59am. In regressions, morning (6am-11:59am) is excluded.

Table C28: Number of Fatalities by City/Paper and Time of Day of Crash

Source	Earlymorning	Evening	Midday	Morning	Night	NA	Total
Anchorage (AK)	35	24	12	16	41	2	130
Annapolis (MD)	1	1	1	-	2	-	5
Atlanta (GA)	67	33	16	21	62	1	200
Bangor (ME)	-	4	1	1	2	-	8
Bismarck (ND)	1	-	3	-	1	-	5
Bloomington/Normal (IL) - Pantagraph	1	6	4	3	11	-	25
Charleston (WV)	5	3	5	4	6	-	23
Cheyenne (WY)	1	7	3	2	6	-	19
Dayton (OH)	10	13	11	11	29	-	74
Idaho Falls (ID)	-	2	-	1	2	-	5
Madison (WI) - Capital Times	1	6	4	11	6	-	28
Madison (WI) - Wisconsin State Journal	8	14	9	14	13	-	58
Minneapolis (MN)	23	18	22	24	26	-	113
New York City (NY)	133	114	105	138	121	-	611
Portland (ME)	-	4	3	4	3	-	14
Richmond (VA)	25	17	8	11	34	-	95
Salt Lake (UT) - Deseret News	17	17	6	26	26	-	92
Salt Lake (UT) - Salt Lake Tribune	17	17	6	26	26	-	92
San Diego (CA)	32	13	9	16	29	3	102
Santa Fe (NM)	7	6	3	4	5	-	25
Spokane (WA)	7	23	12	9	20	-	71
St. Louis (MO)	37	23	12	23	56	-	151
St. Petersburg (FL) - Tampa Bay Times	20	22	13	9	38	-	102
Tampa (FL) - Tampa Bay Times	27	13	5	16	39	2	102
Tampa (FL) - Tampa Tribune	10	6	1	5	13	-	35
Vancouver (WA)	6	10	10	6	19	-	51

Table C27: Regressions (OLS) on Full Sample (2000-2022)

	Time of Day	Hour	All
Earlymorning	0.069 (0.030)*		0.025 (0.031)
Midday	0.028 (0.034)		0.025 (0.033)
Evening	0.058 (0.031)+		0.054 (0.030)+
Night	-0.021 (0.029)		-0.020 (0.029)
Hour.0		0.135 (0.069)+	
Hour.1		-0.018 (0.074)	
Hour.2		0.131 (0.074)+	
Hour.3		0.129 (0.074)+	
Hour.4		0.267 (0.077)**	
Hour.5		0.051 (0.079)	
Hour.6		0.083 (0.070)	
Hour.7		0.095 (0.076)	
Hour.8		0.190 (0.084)*	
Hour.9		-0.011 (0.086)	
Hour.10		-0.068 (0.084)	
Hour.11		-0.030 (0.083)	
Hour.13		-0.010 (0.086)	
Hour.14		0.132 (0.079)	
Hour.15		0.072 (0.080)	
Hour.16		0.152 (0.073)*	
Hour.17		0.092 (0.067)	
Hour.18		0.138 (0.066)*	
Hour.19		0.084 (0.066)	
Hour.20		0.081 (0.064)	
Hour.21		-0.010 (0.065)	
Hour.22		0.058 (0.066)	
Hour.23		-0.033 (0.068)	
race.Asian			-0.066 (0.044)
race.Black			-0.028 (0.025)
race.Hispanic/Latino			-0.021 (0.031)
race.Native American			0.020 (0.049)
race.Unknown/Missing			-0.041 (0.041)
age.0-12			0.166 (0.042)***
age.12-18			0.107 (0.049)*
age.18-25			0.046 (0.036)
age.40-70			-0.005 (0.024)
age.70+			-0.097 (0.037)*
female			0.047 (0.019)*
hit_run			0.109 (0.021)***
multifatality			0.245 (0.053)***
death_delay			-0.103 (0.028)**
Num.Obs.	2228	2228	2198
FE: source_cat	X	X	X
FE: year_cat	X	X	X

The dependent variable is 1 if the death recieved any coverage, 0 otherwise.