

A man in a dark suit and white shirt is shown from the waist up, holding a roll of white toilet paper in his right hand. He is looking upwards and to the right. The background is a dark blue gradient with various social media icons and emojis scattered throughout, including the Twitter bird, Facebook 'f', a heart-eyed smiley face, a laughing face with tears, a thumbs up, and a thumbs down. The overall image has a blue tint.

MR. POGREBA, PARKER SCHOOL

Unit 8: Political Participation
The Media & Politics



A Brief History

COMPARISON WITH FOREIGN NATIONS

- ▶ The press tends to be less restricted in the US than other nations.
 - ▶ UK: Libel laws
 - ▶ Austria/Canada: Holocaust coverage
 - ▶ Italy: offense to Islam
- ▶ The US has a longer tradition of **private ownership of media**.
- ▶ **The Freedom of Information Act** preserves the right—if not always in practice—for the media to gain information.



AMERICA'S FIRST NEWSPAPER

HISTORY

- ▶ The Antifederalists pushed hard for a Bill of Rights that protected rights, chief among them the First Amendment.
- ▶ Historians generally describe five periods of press in US History:
 - ▶ **The Party Press Era:** run by parties
 - ▶ **The Popular Press:** still partisan, but largely reflecting the bias of publishers/editors.
 - ▶ **Electronic Journalism:** radio in the 1920s, television in the late 1940s. Encouraged the development of the **sound bite**. This was the **Big 3** era of broadcast journalism.
 - ▶ **Cable news:** Starting with **CNN**, the cable news created the **24-hour news cycle**.
 - ▶ **The Internet Era:** blogs, Twitter, your uncle Pete's "Internet research"



THE MEDIA TODAY?

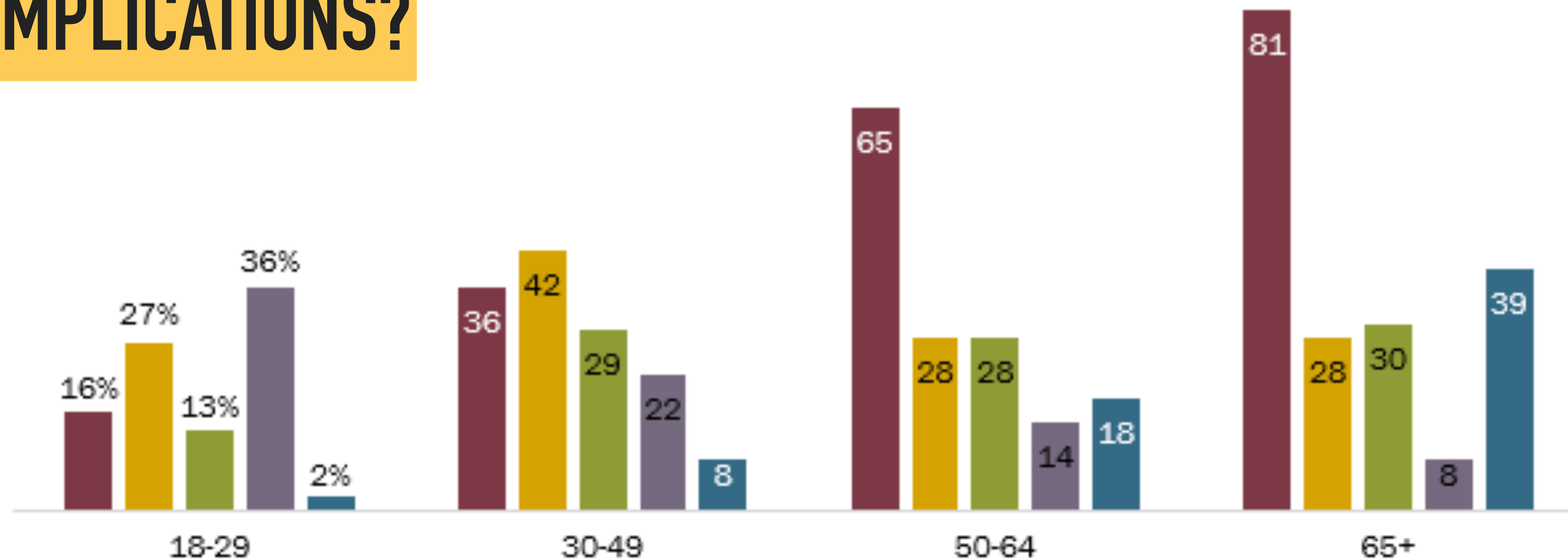
WHERE DO AMERICANS GET THEIR NEWS?

Television dominates as a news source for older Americans

% of each age group who *often* get news on each platform

■ TV ■ News website ■ Radio ■ Social media ■ Print newspapers

IMPLICATIONS?



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 30-Aug. 12, 2018.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER



Types of Media

NEWS REPORTING

- ▶ The credible press today rests on the idea of an **adversarial press** that challenges power.
- ▶ **Investigative journalism**: from the muckrakers through **Watergate** through reporting about Afghanistan today.
- ▶ **Watchdog** reporting is when the media acts as a check on powerful interests like the government and corporations. Some critics argue that the media acts as a **gatekeeper**.
- ▶ **Political analysis** is reporting with commentary about political races, efficacy of government officials.
 - ▶ **Horse race journalism**
 - ▶ **Scorekeeper journalism**
- ▶ Hard news reporting is rooted in the idea of **objectivity**, but some argue that it leads to dangerous "**both sides**" coverage.



COMMENTARY

- ▶ Traditionally, media outlets separated **objective** news coverage from **commentary**.
- ▶ **Editorials** are staff opinion pieces inside newspapers.
- ▶ **Op-Eds** are opinion pieces from columnists and outside advocacy sources.
- ▶ During the partisan press era and today, media critics argue that blurred lines between opinion and reporting are increasing **polarization** and **public misinformation**.





Our Polarized Media

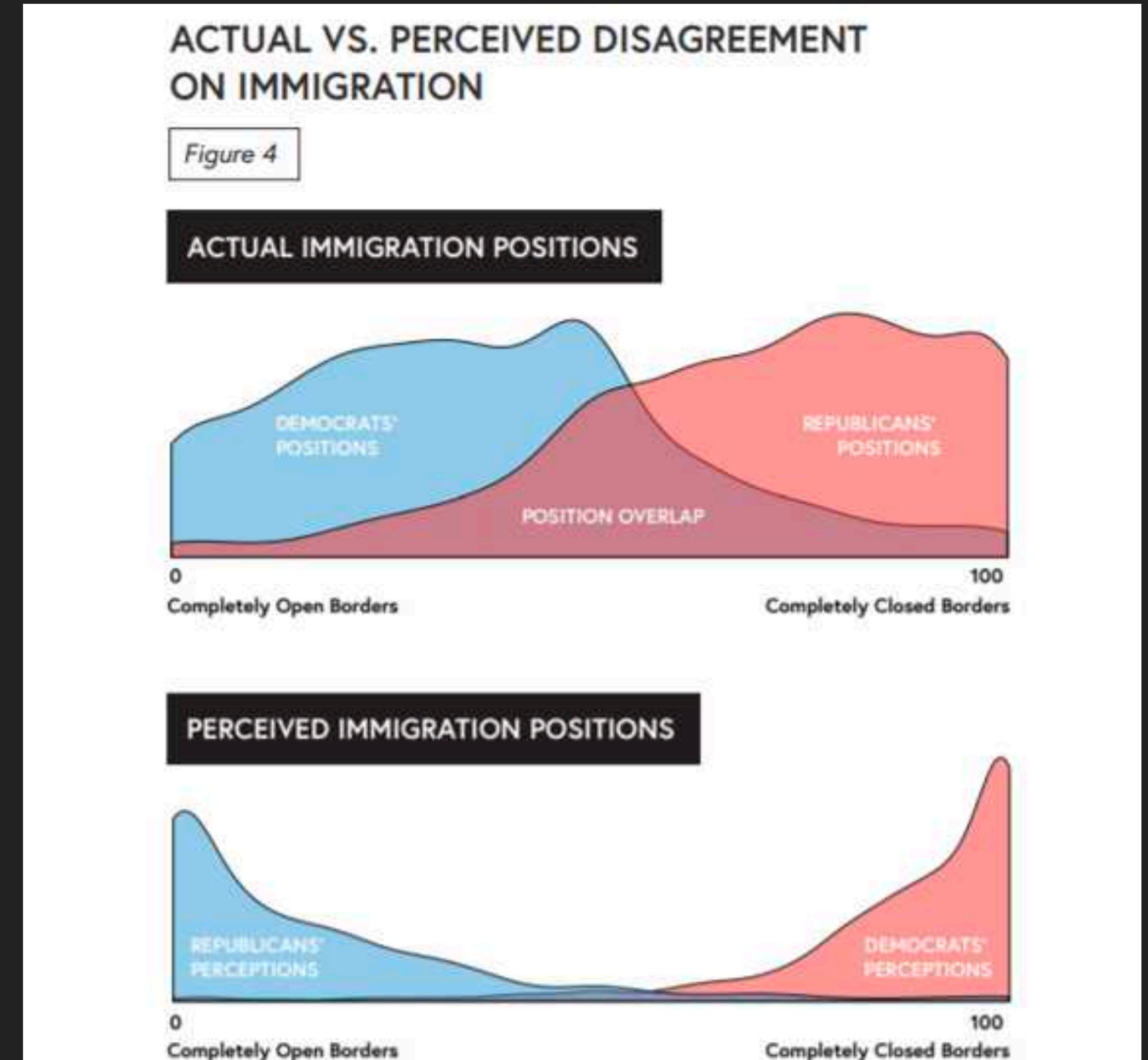
POLARIZED MEDIA

- ▶ **The Fairness Doctrine (1949)** required that those holding radio and TV broadcast licenses devote **equal time** to controversial issues.
- ▶ It was abolished by the FCC in 1987, leading to the rise of **conservative talk radio** and **advocacy cable news**.
 - ▶ **Rush Limbaugh**
 - ▶ **Fox News**
 - ▶ **MSNBC**
 - ▶ **One America News**



IMPACT OF POLARIZED MEDIA

- ▶ The impacts of polarized media have been profound.
 - ▶ It has **hardened partisan identity**, w/ people on either side seeing politics as a matter of life and death.
 - ▶ It fuels **confirmation bias** and encourages **narrowcasting**.
 - ▶ It has **centered extremist views**.
 - ▶ It effects **every part of our lives**. According to journalist Zaid Jilani, "polarization is affecting families, workplaces, schools, neighborhoods, and religious organizations, stressing the fabric of our society."
- ▶ Some argue that this polarization is the **greatest threat to American democracy**. A 2020 study found 1/4 of Republicans and Democrats would support a policy that hurt the other party, even if it hurt the country.



“In the first half of 2019, to take one sample, Public Citizen found that Fox News devoted 247 segments to the climate crisis. Of those, “212 (86%) were dismissive of the climate crisis, cast warming and its consequences in doubt or employed fearmongering when discussing climate solutions,” Public Citizen said.”

The Guardian, 2021



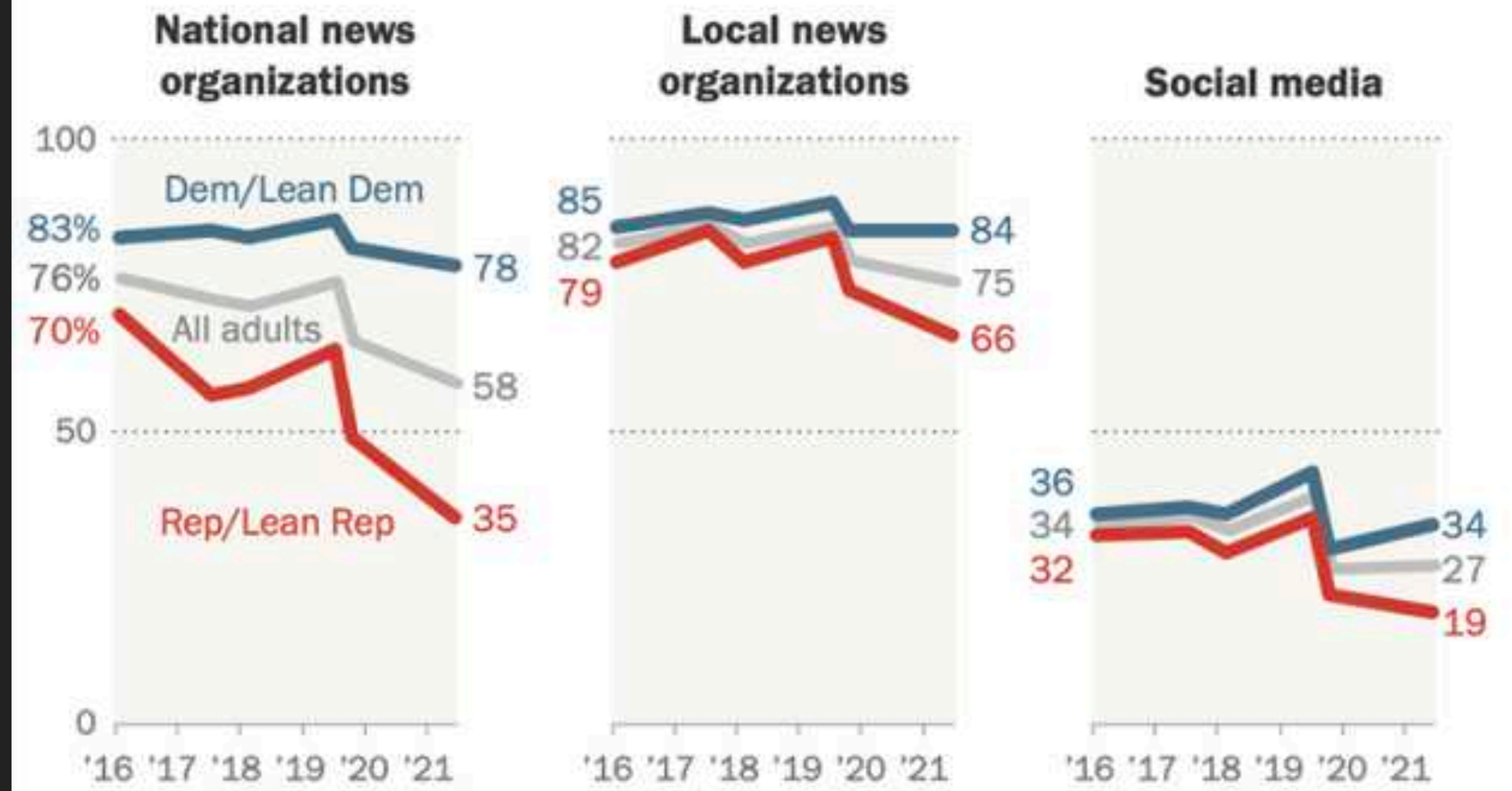
Media Bias

MEDIA BIAS

- ▶ **Media bias** refers to the media presenting **slanted** or **inaccurate coverage** to fulfill an agenda **AND/OR** the **perception of that bias**.
- ▶ Only 35% of Republican have “a lot” or “some” trust in the national media, and most believe it has a **liberal bias**.
- ▶ Liberal critics like Noam Chomsky argue, however, that the **media is actually conservatively biased**: pro-business, pro-military, pro-imperialism.
- ▶ In 2016, candidate Donald Trump supercharged concerns about the media with repeated claims about **fake news**.

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

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



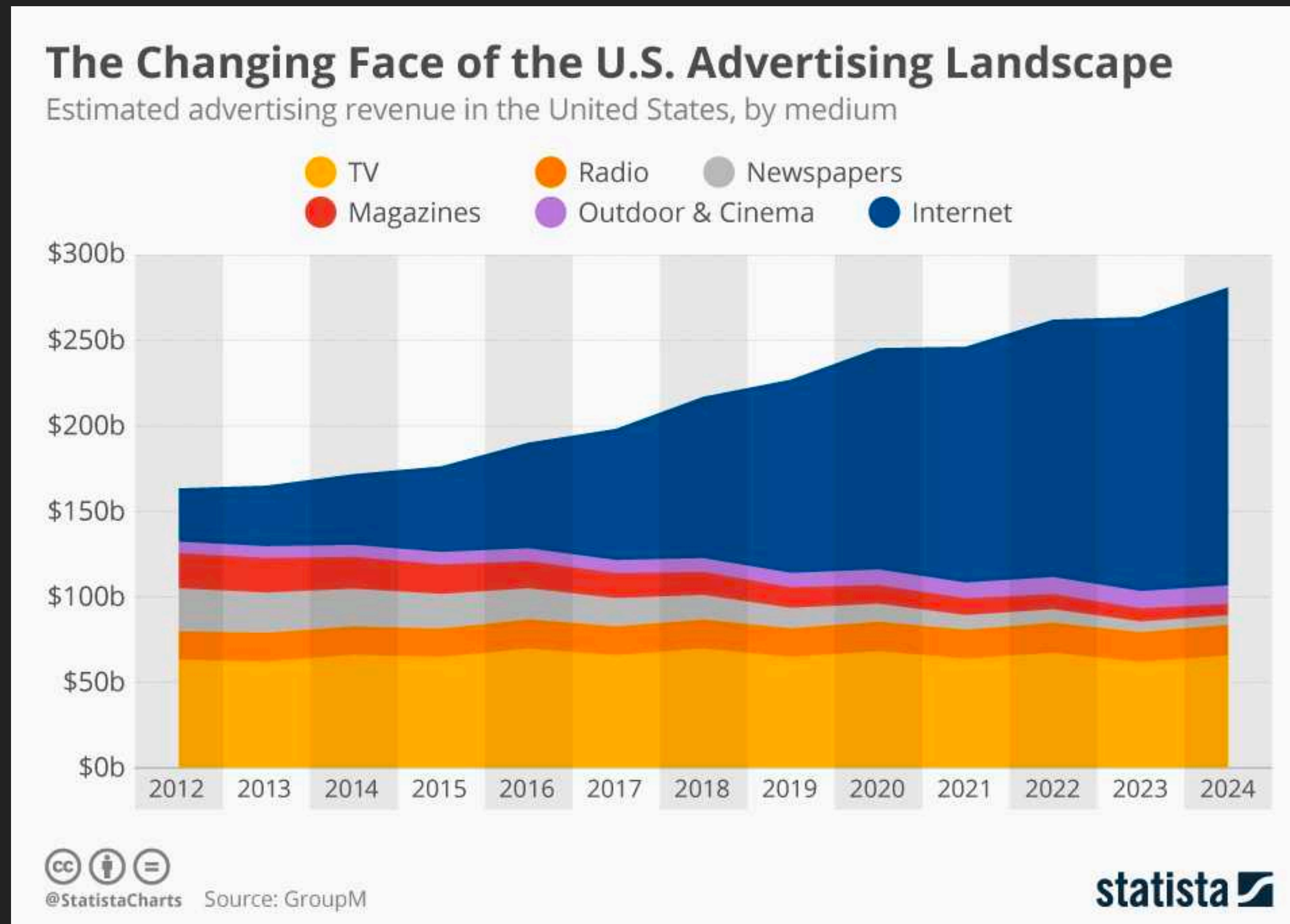
Note: In 2016, trust of information from social media was only asked of and based on internet-using U.S. adults.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 14-27, 2021. For dates of other surveys, see the topline.



Impact of Social Media

THREAT TO TRADITIONAL MEDIA

- ▶ The increasing dominance of sources like **Facebook** and **Google** to dominate **advertising revenue** present an **“existential threat”** to local media outlets.
- ▶ Global newspaper ad revenue has fallen by half between 2016-2021.
- ▶ As far back as 2016, “50% of social media users regarded Facebook as a news provider.”



IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

▶ Positives

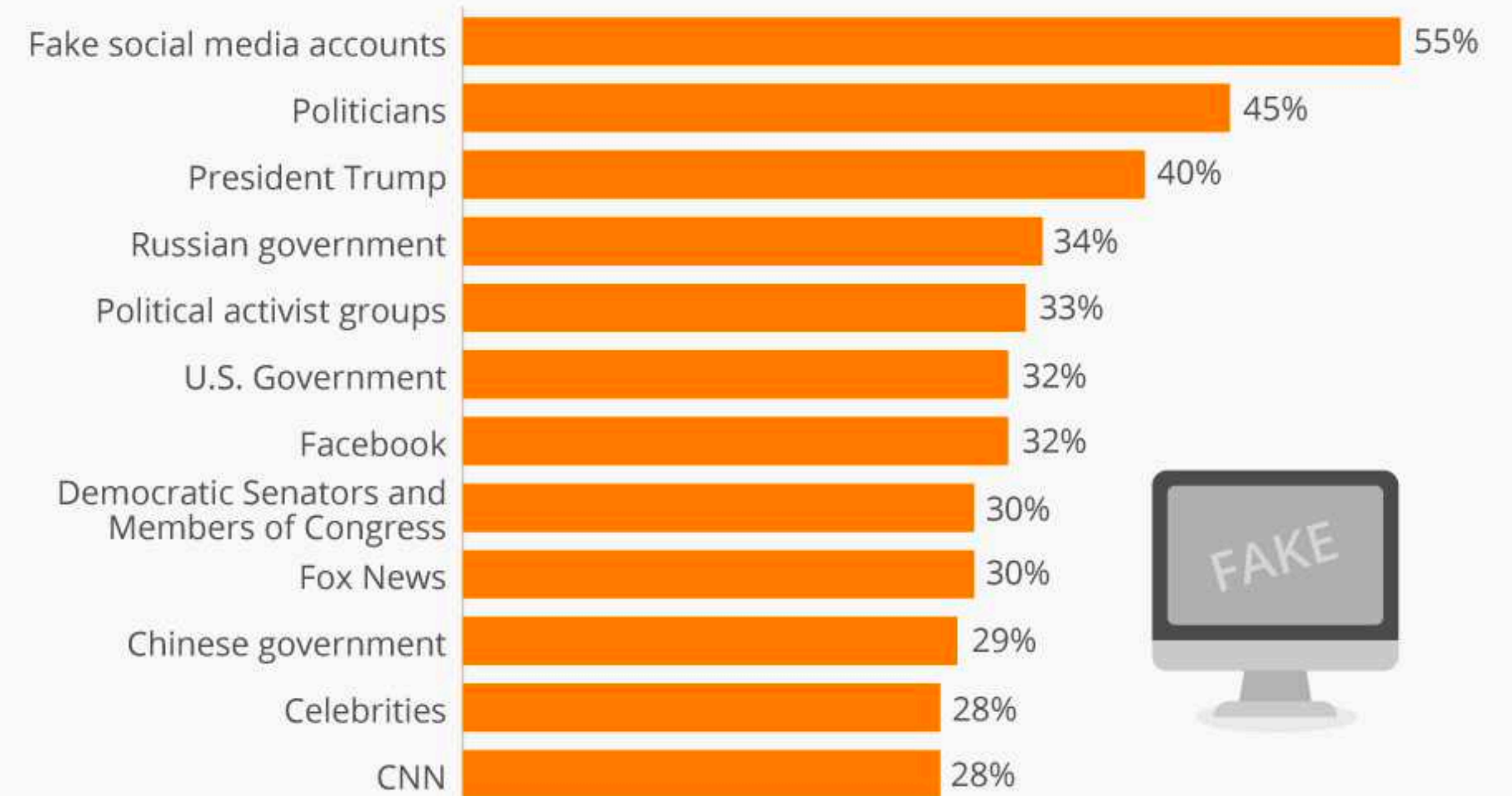
- ▶ True free market of ideas
- ▶ Allows politicians/thinkers to speak directly to the people
- ▶ Mass access to news sources all over the world.

▶ Drawbacks

- ▶ cyber-polarization
- ▶ Confirmation bias
- ▶ Less incentive to be honest.
- ▶ Disinformation (we end where we began)

Who's Responsible for Spreading Disinformation?

% of Americans saying the following are VERY responsible for spreading disinformation*



* Disinformation defined as "deliberately misleading or biased information".
Based on a survey of 2,200 Americans conducted in March 2019.

Source: Institute for Public Relations, Morning Consult