



August 2020 Blind Bias Survey

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Survey Overview

In August 2020, AllSides conducted a multi-partisan blind bias survey to assess the political bias of five popular U.S. media outlets: Associated Press, Epoch Times, BBC, The New York Times and Bloomberg.

A total of 2,115 people across the political spectrum took the survey, including 233 participants with a self-reported Left bias; 529 with a Lean Left bias; 605 with a Center bias; 595 with a Lean Right bias, and 153 with a Right bias.

Participants assessed written, online news content *only* — not radio, TV, or broadcast content. The purpose of the survey was to gather more data on news source bias and ensure that the AllSides Media Bias Ratings for the five news outlets reflect the average judgement of Americans. The data collected in blind bias surveys is just one of multiple methods AllSides uses to rate media bias.

About AllSides Media Bias Ratings

AllSides provides over [800 media bias ratings](#) of online media outlets, writers, think tanks, and other sources. We assign each source a bias rating on a 5-point scale: [Left](#), [Lean Left](#), [Center](#), [Lean Right](#), and [Right](#).



The AllSides **patented bias detection and display technology** drives what is arguably the world's most effective and up-to-date bias detection engine. It's powered by a combination of wisdom-of-the-crowd technology and statistical research and methodologies.

Our bias rating system utilizes multiple methodologies for assessing media bias, and combines them for the best possible results. On AllSides.com, we list which methods we used to arrive at the bias rating for any given source. Blind bias surveys are our most robust methodology; we also employ editorial reviews, independent reviews, and third party data. [Learn about these other methods for rating bias at AllSides.com.](#)

Our bias ratings are fluid and are subject to change over time as the bias of a source changes or as we acquire new information.

Subjectivity of Bias Ratings

The AllSides patented media bias rating system reflects the average judgment of the American people. It is not “accurate” – bias is subjective and “in the eye of the beholder,” so there is no strictly accurate measurement of political bias. What is considered a left-wing view to a right-winger may seem like a centrist view to a left-winger.

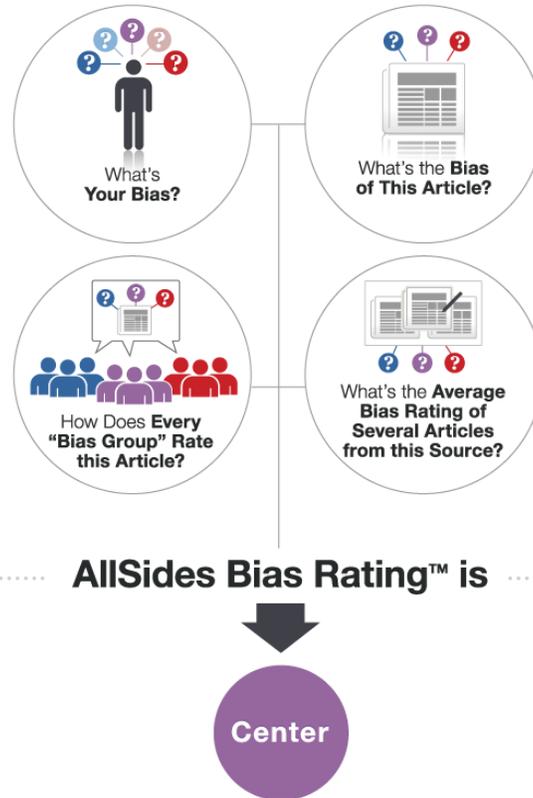
AllSides recognizes that a five-point bias rating scale (Left, Lean Left, Center, Lean Right, Right) cannot capture the multitude of nuance that makes up the landscape of political thought. Far from seeking perfection, our ratings simply serve as a “map” of bias that helps readers to get a general idea of where a media outlet may fall in the modern political landscape, thus helping them to understand which perspectives may be represented or omitted in reading that particular news outlet. Our bias ratings reflect the average judgement of the American people, who have various views and hail from all points on the political bias spectrum.

About AllSides Blind Bias Surveys

During an AllSides blind bias survey, participants are asked to rate the bias of online news content “blindly” — with all branding and identifying information removed.

This provides a robust bias evaluation, and is at the core of the patented AllSides Bias Rating™ methodology.

AllSides Bias Rating™ HOW IT WORKS



How AllSides Chose Which Sources to Evaluate

The August 2020 blind bias survey collected responses on content from the following media outlets:

- Associated Press — Rated by AllSides as **Center** as of July 2020
- BBC — Rated **Center** as of July 2020
- The New York Times (News Only) — Rated **Lean Left** as of July 2020
- Bloomberg — Rated **Center** as of July 2020
- The Epoch Times — Rated **Right** as of July 2020

AllSides chose these outlets to assess based on multiple factors, including one or a combination of the following:

Community feedback from readers. Visitors to the AllSides website are invited to indicate whether they agree or disagree with our media bias ratings. Community feedback does not determine AllSides Media Bias Ratings, but can trigger a deeper review. Some outlets were chosen because a significant portion of readers indicated they disagreed with our bias rating for that outlet.

Traffic to the source page from search engines. AllSides used Google Analytics to determine which sources pages receive the most traffic from search engines.

Existing data. AllSides took into consideration whether or not the outlet had been subject to other AllSides media bias rating methodologies, such as past blind bias surveys, editorial reviews, independent reviews, or third party data.

AllSides chose **Associated Press** because many users voted on our website in disagreement with our current bias rating of Center. As of August 2020, 16,043 users agreed with our rating for AP news and 11,778 disagreed. We also received a number of pieces of feedback from our readers, via email and social media, from people saying AP had a Lean Left bias.

AllSides chose to evaluate **Bloomberg** and **BBC** due to a great deal of reader feedback that these outlets lean to the left. For both of these outlets, our users signaled some disagreement via our on-site voting mechanism as well. As of August 2020, 10,885 users agreed with our rating for Bloomberg and 16,787 disagreed. As of August 2020, 19,953 users agreed with our rating for BBC and 17,965 disagreed.

AllSides chose **The Epoch Times** and **The New York Times** for evaluation in part because our source pages for these outlets on AllSides.com receive a high amount of traffic from Google, and we want to ensure we have robust data to provide for visitors.

In addition, **BBC** and **The Epoch Times** had not been evaluated in past AllSides blind bias surveys. AP was assessed during our [February 2020](#) AllSides blind bias survey, in which participants on average rated AP as Lean Left (a subsequent [editorial review led AllSides to keep AP's bias rating as Center](#)). Bloomberg was assessed during a May 2017 blind bias survey, in which its rating came out to Center. The New York Times was assessed during a March 2013 blind bias survey, in which its rating came out to Lean Left.

Methodology

Content added to the survey was stripped of any clear indications of brand, source, author, etc. No logos, reporter names, or other signals of where the content originated from were included. This ensured that the reader was “blind” to the content’s origins.

Anchor Outlets

AllSides chose three articles covering the same topic from three “anchor” outlets — Wall Street Journal (Center bias), Huffington Post (Left bias) and Breitbart (Right bias) to present at the very beginning of the survey. AllSides chose content from these outlets because we are very confident in their bias ratings.

Because bias is subjective, the inclusion of content from “anchor outlets” was meant to “anchor” participants to a general idea about the range of bias that appears in media from left to right, and to provide them with a baseline of a Left, Center, and Right bias rating in American media. Because bias is subjective and contextual, providing anchor outlets helps readers to get a sense of the extremes of bias before rating content.

AllSides acknowledges that this system is not bulletproof, as bias is still ultimately subjective and there may be people who disagree that WSJ, HuffPost, and Breitbart are Center, Left and Right, respectively. However, we are confident that these three outlets are good representations of Left, Center, and Right political bias in the U.S.

Selecting Content to Measure Bias

AllSides selected content in two ways: 1.) collecting *the top 5 headlines most prominently displayed on the website on two different days at the same time of day*, and 2.) collecting *one article each of the top stories the outlet most prominently displayed around two major national news stories, on two different days at the same time of day*.

Selecting Top Headlines

AllSides collected the top five headlines on each outlet’s homepage on two different days, at the same time of day.

AllSides pulled headlines from each outlet on two separate occasions. The first pull was done between 2:50 and 2:55 p.m. ET on July 15, 2020; the second was done between 3 and 3:05 p.m. ET on July 20, 2020.

Selecting Coverage of Major Ongoing Stories

AllSides also took into account how each outlet displayed bias in its coverage of two major, ongoing news stories: The Washington Redskins football team changing their team name, and coverage of the Trump administration reversing course on previous plans to rescind foreign student visas if they only took online classes during the coronavirus pandemic.

Top headlines on the Washington football team name change were pulled from each outlet between 3 and 3:05 p.m. ET on July 13, 2020; top headlines on foreign student visas were pulled between 2:50 and 2:55 p.m. ET on July 15, 2020.

In addition to the headline, AllSides included the first 40 to 75 words of each article in the survey for respondents to evaluate for bias.

Content was pulled from the homepages of each site, except for Bloomberg and BBC. For these outlets, content was pulled from specific sections of the sites — [BBC's US and Canada section](#), and [Bloomberg's Politics section](#). This is because BBC frequently features stories about celebrity news on its homepage, and Bloomberg features a large amount of business and financial news, which are less suitable for evaluating political bias. Of note is that according to the New York Times, about [1/3 of the content](#) on Bloomberg News uses some form of automated technology.

Minimizing Subjectivity

Each media outlet formats its homepage differently, and determining which stories are “most prominently” displayed is somewhat subjective. In order to determine “prominence” of a story on a homepage, AllSides took into consideration **photo size, headline font size, and whether or not the story was in the center of the display screen**. Stories that had very large headline fonts and photos and were displayed in the middle or at the top of the page were considered to be “most prominent.”

Top headlines were selected either because they were ***the five most prominent stories on the outlet's homepage at the selected time, or the five top stories specifically labeled in an outlet's “Top Stories” section at the selected time.***

The content pulled to reflect coverage of major ongoing stories was ***the most prominent story an outlet displayed on the chosen topic at the selected time.***

AllSides retained screenshots of each site's homepage on the days and times the content was pulled; anyone interested in obtaining them can [contact us](#).

Understanding the Personal Political Bias of Those Who Formatted and Participated in the Survey

Content was gathered by two AllSides team members who have a Lean Left and Lean Right bias. Having people with two different political biases pull the content provided a check and ensured it was done objectively.

Each survey participant was asked to self-determine their bias using the [AllSides Rate Your Bias tool](#) and report their results in the survey. **A total of 233 participants with a Left bias completed the survey; 529 with a Lean Left bias; 605 with a Center bias; 595 with a Lean Right bias, and 153 with a Right bias.**

Note that when examining the results, each group was viewed independently and then the data was normalized. In other words, the overall results of all participants with a Left bias were given the same weight as the results from those with a Right bias (which had fewer participants overall) and from those with a Center bias (which had more participants overall). Each group had an equal impact on the survey results.

Using the tool, participants self-rate their bias on social issues, economic issues, foreign policy, the environment, healthcare, education, social security, and welfare. Users are asked to say whether they believe their views are left, lean left, center, lean right, or right on these issues. They are also asked to rate the importance of these issues to them personally, in order for AllSides to generate an overall bias rating for the individual.

The Rate Your Bias tool does not purport to be definitive, and AllSides acknowledges that political thought is complex and does not fit neatly into boxes of left, center, and right. It is also important to remember that ideas often “change sides” in the political landscape. For example, in the past, those on the left openly supported stricter immigration control to curb job competition for native blue-collar workers; now, those on the left are more likely to support open borders or more liberal immigration policies, while conservatives are more likely to support stricter immigration control (however, this is not monolithic: some conservatives do support liberal immigration policies and vice versa).

When people use this tool, they are able to provide an indication of *where they perceive their own views to fall on the political spectrum*. Because bias is “in the eye of the beholder,” many people approach news articles with their own bias in mind. For example, someone who believes themselves to be Lean Left on many issues likely filters news articles through the lens of that bias. For this reason, while not perfect nor “accurate,” the self-rated bias of AllSides team members and survey participants is a key aspect of our blind bias survey and overall rating system, because it helps us to identify media bias as Americans perceive it.

Distribution

AllSides distributed the survey sign-up link on our website, to our newsletter subscribers, and on our social media platforms — Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn — between the days of August 4th and 9th, 2020.

How the Survey Was Formatted

Participants were asked to disclose their age, gender, [Rate Your Bias](#) result, state or country of residence, and whether or not they live in a rural, urban or suburban area.

Participants were then provided a headline and the first 40-75 words of the three articles taken from the “anchor outlets” — The Wall Street Journal (Center), HuffPost (Left), and Breitbart (Right). They were told the following:

“Below are headlines from 5 major online media outlets in the U.S.

Please indicate whether you think the bias of the headline and content are from a media outlet with a left, lean left, center, lean right, or right political bias. There are no “correct” answers — AllSides is interested in what you perceive the bias of the media outlet to be.”

Participants were then presented with eight pages of survey content (each page displaying all the content for a given media outlet) and were asked to give an overall bias rating for the content. For example, the survey question with the Associated Press content looked like this:

Please indicate what you believe ***the overall bias of the media outlet to be*** based on the headlines and content.

Headlines Day 1:

Profile of a killer: Unraveling the deadly new coronavirus

Cost of ensuring school safety complicates reopening plans

Virus cases rise in U.S. states amid new world restrictions

Judge halts execution amid claims inmate isn’t mentally fit

Walmart latest retailer to require customers to wear masks

Headlines Day 2:

Wrangling over virus relief persists despite high stakes

UK coronavirus vaccine prompts immune response in early test

Workers protest racial inequality on day of national strike

Trump faces divisions with Senate GOP on virus aid

Insults, Flaring Temperatures Mark Marathon EU Summit on budget

Story 1

Washington's NFL team drops 'Redskins' name after 87 years

The Washington NFL franchise announced Monday it is dropping the "Redskins" name and Indian head logo, bowing to recent pressure from sponsors and decades of criticism that they are offensive to Native Americans.

A new name must still be selected for one of the oldest and most storied teams in the National Football League, and it's unclear how soon that will happen. But for now, arguably the most polarizing name in North American professional sports is gone at a time of reckoning over racial injustice, iconography and racism in the U.S.

Story 2

Trump administration rescinds rule on foreign students

Facing eight federal lawsuits and opposition from hundreds of universities, the Trump administration on Tuesday rescinded a rule that would have required international students to transfer or leave the country if their schools held classes entirely online because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The decision was announced at the start of a hearing in a federal lawsuit in Boston brought by Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. U.S. District Judge Allison Burroughs said federal immigration authorities agreed to pull the July 6 directive and "return to the status quo."

Participants were then presented with a multiple choice answer and the five options of Left, Lean Left, Center, Lean Right, and Right.

AllSides collected responses on the survey from August 4, 2020 to August 10, 2020.

Data Analysis

AllSides counted how many people with each self-proclaimed personal bias rating rated the content from each outlet as Left, Lean Left, Center, Lean Right or Right. For example, we found that of the 158 people who describe themselves as on the Left, 99 rated content from AP as Center, 32 rated the content as Lean Left, 13 as Lean Right, and so on.

AllSides then assigned a numeric scale to represent each Left-to-Right bias rating, both as part of a bell curve and as a flat curve, and assigned each of those numeric scales a number. The ranges were:

Bell Curve Range: 0 - 1.5 Left, 1.5 - 2.75 Lean Left, 2.75 - 3.25 Center, 3.25 - 4.5 Lean Right, 4.5 - 6 Right

Flat Range: 0 - 1.2 Left, 1.2 - 2.4 Lean Left, 2.4 - 3.6 Center, 3.6 - 4.8 Lean Right, 4.8 - 6 Right

0 Left, 1.5 Lean Left, 3 Center, 4 Lean Right, 6 Right

Bias	Left	Lean Left	Center	Lean Right	Right
Range : Bell Curve	0-1.5	1.5 - 2.75	2.75 - 3.25	3.25 - 4.5	4.5-6
Range: Flat	0-1.2	1.2-2.4	2.4-3.6	3.6-4.8	4.8-6
#	0	1.5	3	4.5	6

Using these numbers, AllSides then calculated an average for each group of results from users across the spectrum.

In the example below, people’s self-proclaimed biases are on the X-axis (columns B - F) and their responses — what they believed the bias of the media outlet to be — are on the Y-axis (rows 64 - 68). So, cell B83 indicates 99 people who self-reported a personal political bias of Left said they believe The AP’s bias is Center; C83 indicates 208 people who Lean Left believe AP’s bias is Center; D83 indicates 226 people in the Center said they believe AP’s media bias is Center; and so forth.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	
1		People's Bias							
2	Range : Bell Curve	0-1.5	1.5 - 2.75	2.75 - 3.25	3.25 - 4.5	4.5-6			
3	Range: Flat	0-1.2	1.2-2.4	2.4-3.6	3.6-4.8	4.8-6			
4	#	0	1.5	3	4.5	6		Flat	
5	Responses	Left	Lean Left	Center	Lean Right	Right	TOTAL	Average	
80	The AP								
81	Left	11	25	40	76	18	170		
82	Lean Left	32	86	95	101	27	341		
83	Center	99	208	226	186	43	762		
84	Lean Right	13	41	21	27	12	114		
85	Right	3	7	9	10	3	32		
	Total Responses	158	367	391	400	103	1419		
86									
87	Average	2.667721519	2.66893733	2.47826087	2.2275	2.344660194		2.477415982	

AllSides then took the average of these responses, using 0, 1.5, 3, 4.5 and 6 as a proxy to represent each bias rating from Left to Right, to calculate the numbers in row 87. For example, the following equation computed the result in cell B87:

$$((B81*0) + (B82*1.5) + (B83*3) + (B84*4.5) + (B85*6)) / (\text{sum}(B81:B85))$$

These averages were then compared against the bell curve and flat range numbers in rows 3 and 4 to determine what bias, on average, people on the Left believed The AP to have (cell B87 = 2.67, which amounts to a Center bias on the flat curve ranges but Lean Left on the bell curve), or people who Lean Left (cell C87 = 2.67, Center bias on the flat curve ranges but Lean Left on the bell curve), or people who are in the Center (cell D87 = 2.48, Center bias on the flat curve ranges but Lean Left on the bell curve), and so forth.

We then took an average of these individual averages to arrive at a final number in cell H87. This final average was compared against the bell curve and flat curve ranges to arrive at a final bias rating for the media outlet. In this case, 2.48 places The AP as Center on the flat curve ranges but Lean Left on the bell curve. This indicates that the AP's media bias falls between Center and Lean Left.

Conclusions

Upon calculating a flat average for all media outlets, AllSides determined the following:

Outlet	Average Rating	Bell Curve/Flat Curve Analysis	Notes
Associated Press	2.477	Lean Left / Center	Current Rating: Center. Survey: Lean Left / Center. Editorial Review: Keep AP as Center, but make clear AP is close to Lean Left. Pluralities across all groups found AP to be Center. Respondents who identify as Left, Lean Left, and Center on average find AP to be between Lean Left and Center. People with a Lean Right and Right bias on average think AP is clearly Lean Left. Twice as many people across all bias groups found AP to be Center as anything else. Conducted Editorial Review of AP Politics and determined it is Lean Left.
BBC	2.59	Lean Left / Center	Current Rating: Center Survey: Borderline Lean Left and Center. Editorial Review: Keep as Center, note Lean Left story choice. Pluralities of 3 groups of respondents (people whose bias is Lean Left, Lean Right, or Right) thought BBC was Lean Left;

			<i>on average, people on the right clearly think BBC is Lean Left. On average, all groups thought BBC was between Center and Lean Left.</i>
Bloomberg	1.99	Lean Left	Current Rating: Center Survey: Lean Left Editorial Review: Change to Lean Left. All 5 groups of respondents on average agreed Bloomberg is Lean Left. Pluralities of all groups, except those on the far Right, think Bloomberg is Lean Left; the far Right plurality thinks Bloomberg is far Left.
The Epoch Times	3.27	Center / Lean Right	Current Rating: Right Survey: Center/Lean Right Editorial Review: Conducted Editorial Review; will move to Lean Right. Majorities across all groups found The Epoch Times to be Center. Across all respondents, three times as many people said The Epoch Times falls in the Center than said it falls anywhere else. On average, people with a Center and Lean Right bias found The Epoch Times to be clearly Center; people who rate their own bias as Lean Left, Left, or Right find it to be between Lean Right and Center.
The New York Times	1.87	Lean Left	Current Rating: Lean Left Survey: Lean Left Editorial Review: Keep Lean Left. Averages across respondents from every political bias group found NY Times to be clearly Lean Left. Pluralities across all groups, except respondents on the far Right, found NY Times to be Lean Left. The far Right plurality sees NY Times as far Left.

Changes to Bias Ratings Due to Survey Data and Subsequent Analysis

The results appeared to confirm the current AllSides Media Bias Ratings for [The New York Times](#). Because the results for [BBC](#) and the [AP](#) showed they toe the line between Lean Left and Center, and because blind bias surveys only take into account a few pieces of content over a few days from any given source and bias is revealed over time, AllSides conducted Editorial Reviews for both outlets. ([Read more about the AllSides Editorial Review process here.](#)) **We decided to keep the Center rating for BBC and AP, but also were sure to note the slight leftward lean for both. We also provided a separate rating of [Lean Left for AP's Politics section](#). [That decision is detailed here.](#)**

[The Epoch Times](#) was moved to a **Lean Right rating** from a Right rating following an AllSides Editorial Review. We assessed the apparent discrepancy between respondents' perception of

the Epoch Times (a bias between Center and Lean Right) and our rating at the time (Right). AllSides determined Epoch Times has balanced reporting but displays a slight conservative lean in story choice and stated principles (truth and traditional values). Following our multi-partisan team review, The Epoch Times was moved to Lean Right. [The Epoch Times survey results and Editorial Review are detailed here.](#)

The data we received from the Blind Bias Survey put Bloomberg's bias solidly in the Lean Left category. This tracked with other reviews AllSides had conducted of Bloomberg, including when the outlet announced it would not investigate Democratic presidential candidates. [Therefore, Bloomberg was moved to a Lean Left rating from its previous Center rating.](#)

Notes and Limitations

AllSides has conducted blind bias surveys differently in the past; for example, asking participants to rate only headlines for bias. Our process is evolving and is subject to change again as we determine the best ways to evaluate media outlets for bias.

Because the blind bias survey was distributed online, we had to be mindful of participants' time and ensure the survey was not too long. This means respondents only saw a few pieces of content from each outlet over a few days. Bias may be better determined by looking at more articles and headlines from an outlet over a longer period of time; however, making the survey longer would have meant a drop-off in completion rates.

We acknowledge that users could have possibly found ways to "cheat" while taking the survey. Although we trust that the vast majority of respondents completed the survey in good faith and with the intention of contributing to meaningful research, we take many precautions against cheating or gaming the system. These protective measures include but are not limited to recruiting participants from many different places and using other methods in addition to this one to determine a bias rating.