DATA COHERENCE TEST — NOVEMBER 2026

# Trust in Named News Brands

## When the brand is named, do synthetic respondents tell brands apart and link their answers the way real people do?

Pew Research Center asked 12,043 U.S. adults whether they have heard of, trust or distrust each of 30 named news outlets. We simulated the same respondents and compared every person's pattern of answers across the 30 brands, their party and their ideology.

**0.89**

Pattern match of 528 links between answers

Two halves of the live sample: 0.99 · shuffled: 0.03

**0.91**

Correlation of trust across the 30 brands, Simsurveys vs live

"Have not heard of": 0.94

**27** of 30

Brands that split by party in the same direction as live

Party gap per brand correlates at 0.92

Respondent-level live and Simsurveys data files are available on request: **request the data files**

# Study overview

Our earlier coherence test (ACSI) could not name the brand each respondent rated. Here every respondent rates the same 30 named brands, so the test can ask whether synthetic respondents know which brands are known, trusted and distrusted, and by whom.

PUBLISHED STUDY

## Pew Research Center, American Trends Panel Wave 57

| | |
|---|---|
| Audience | U.S. adults |
| Sample | 12,043 respondents, probability-based panel, weighted |
| Fieldwork | October 29 – November 11, 2019, online, English and Spanish |
| Brands | 30 national news outlets, from the broadcast networks to talk radio and digital-native sites |

SIMSURVEYS SIMULATION

## Research Studio, consumer model

| | |
|---|---|
| Sample | 12,043 synthetic respondents, U.S. census age and gender |
| Party | Set to Gallup's 2019 annual party identification, not to Pew's sample |
| Questions | Party lean, ideology, attention to political news, then each of the 30 brands |
| Comparison | Each respondent's full set of answers against the live respondent file |

# How we measure coherence

Totals can match while the answers inside each respondent are unrelated. We test the relationships directly and read every result between two reference points.

BENCHMARK

## Live vs live

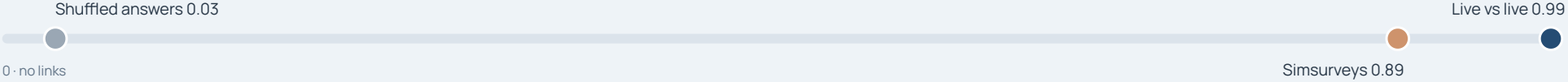
The live sample split at random into two halves and compared with each other. This is the closest a second live sample of the same size would come.

FLOOR

## Shuffled answers

Our answers with each question shuffled across respondents. Every total is unchanged and every link between answers is gone.

PATTERN MATCH OF ALL 528 LINKS BETWEEN ANSWERS (1.0 = SAME PATTERN AS LIVE)




1

### Links between answers

Trust in each brand against every other brand, party and ideology.

2

### Brand differences

Which brands are known, trusted and distrusted.

3

### Party splits

Which side of politics trusts each brand, and by how much.

4

### Answer totals

Each brand's share who trust, distrust or have not heard of it.

01 · ALL 528 PAIRS OF ANSWERS

# Answers link together in the same pattern as live, and more strongly



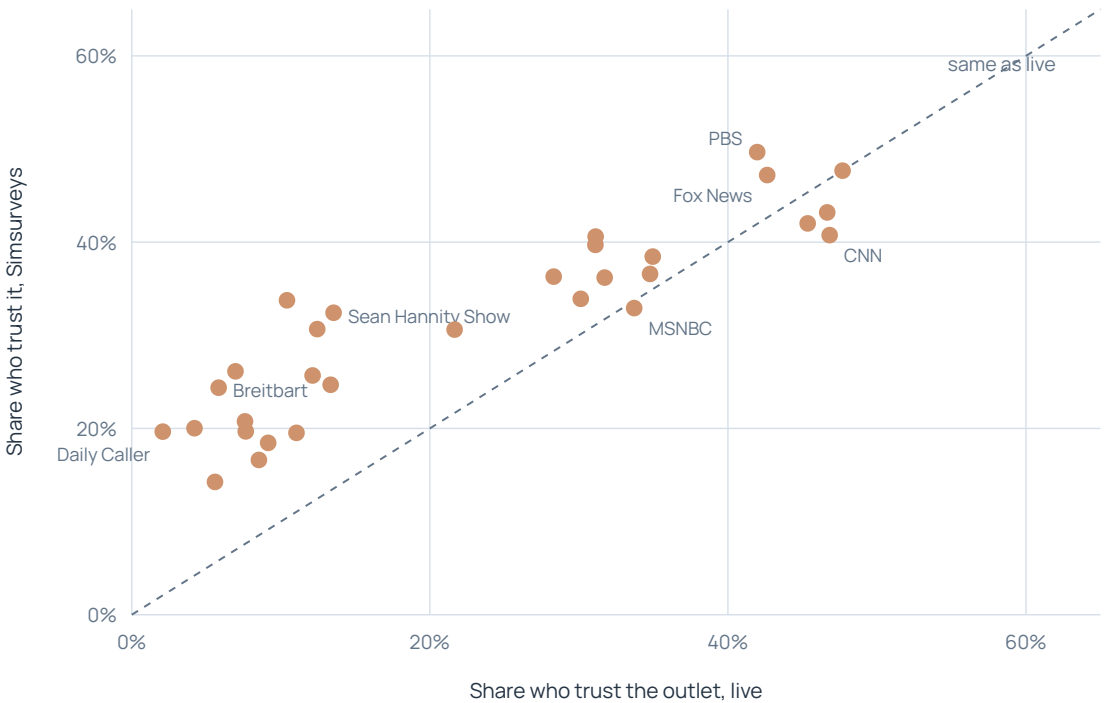

| | Live vs live | Simsurveys vs live | Shuffled |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pattern match | 0.99 | **0.89** | 0.03 |
| Average link (live 0.31) | 0.31 | **0.37** | 0.01 |
| Average gap per pair | 0.032 | **0.133** | 0.310 |
| Pairs within 0.10 (of 528) | 517 | **230** | 72 |

| Block | Live | Simsurveys | Pattern |
|---|---|---|---|
| Brand × brand | 0.32 | 0.38 | 0.90 |
| Party × brand | 0.38 | 0.39 | 0.92 |
| Ideology × brand | 0.33 | 0.51 | 0.93 |

Each brand scored trust +1, neither 0, distrust −1; "have not heard of" left out. Orange dots are within ±0.10 of live. Of the pairs outside that band, 217 are stronger than live and 81 weaker.

02 · BRAND DIFFERENCES

# Simsurveys ranks the 30 brands nearly as live does



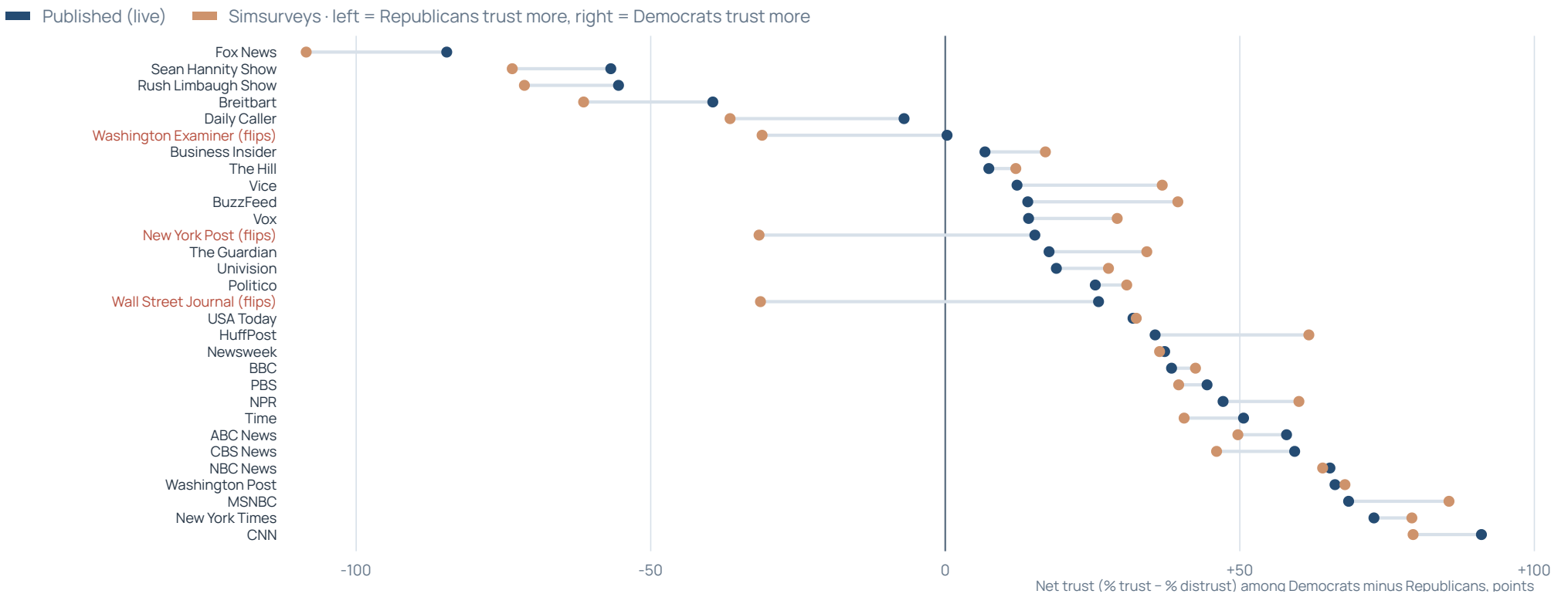

| Across 30 brands | Correlation with live |
|---|---|
| Share who trust | **0.91** |
| Share who distrust | **0.80** |
| Share who have not heard of it | **0.94** |

| Trust | Live | Simsurveys |
|---|---|---|
| ABC News | 48% | 48% |
| CNN | 47% | 41% |
| Fox News | 43% | 47% |
| MSNBC | 34% | 33% |

Well-known brands sit on the line. Lesser-known brands sit above it: Simsurveys respondents know more of them, so more of them rate them.

03 · PARTY SPLITS

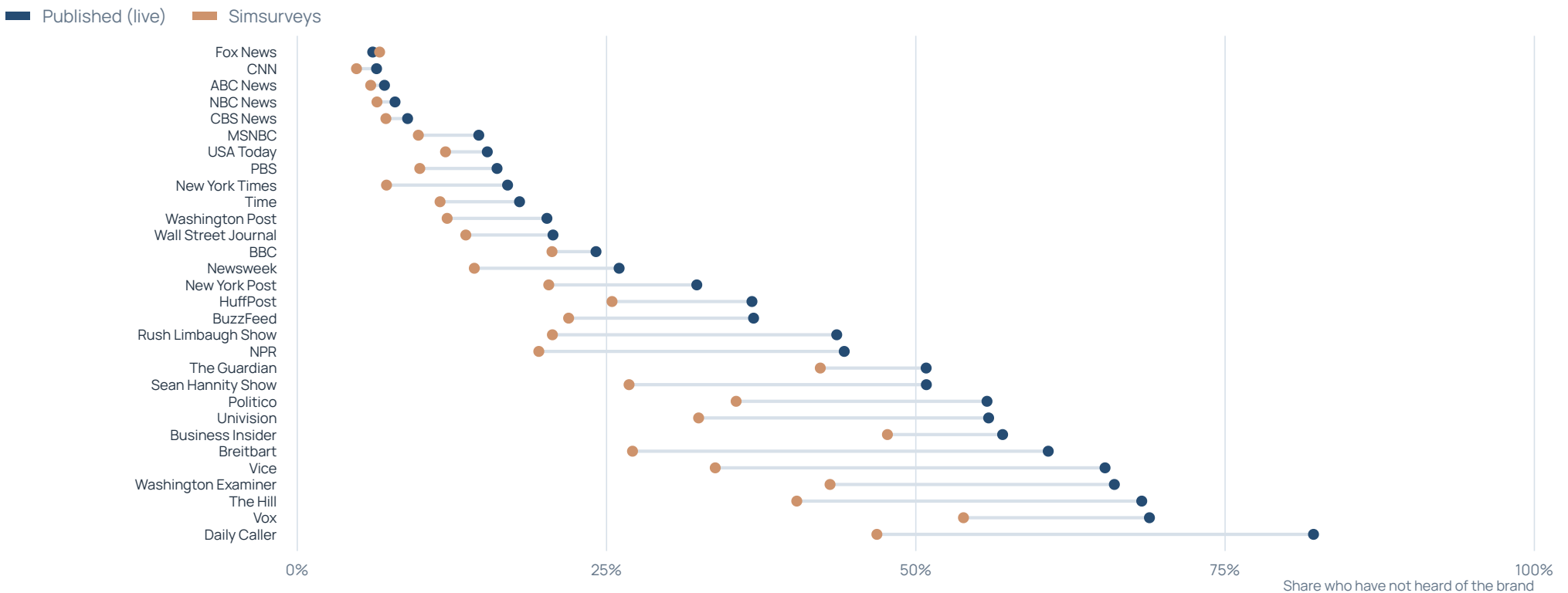
# 27 of 30 brands split by party the same way as live, more sharply




Average gap between the parties: 49 points in Simsurveys, 39 live. The 3 brands that flip (Wall Street Journal, Washington Examiner, New York Post) are read as right-leaning; live Democrats trust the Wall Street Journal more than Republicans do.

04 · AWARENESS

# Simsurveys respondents know more of the lesser-known brands




Brands not heard of per person: 6.8 in Simsurveys, 10.8 live, out of 30. Pew asked "click all you have heard of" grids, which tend to collect fewer selections than asking about each brand; we asked about each brand, so part of this gap is the question format.

05 · DIFFERENCES FROM LIVE

# Four differences from live

1

## Answers are more consistent and partisan

Average link between two answers

0.37 Simsurveys

0.31 Live

Ideology links run 0.51 against 0.33 live. The shape of the relationships matches; their strength is overstated.

2

## Lesser-known brands are trusted too often

Trust in the Sean Hannity Show

32% Simsurveys

14% Live

Daily Caller: 20% against 2%. This follows from higher awareness: respondents who know a brand go on to rate it.

3

## Less distrust of Fox News

Distrust Fox News

27% Simsurveys

40% Live

Simsurveys Democrats more often answer "neither" than "distrust". Trust in Fox News is 47% against 43%.

4

## 3 smaller brands lean the wrong way

Brands that split by party in the same direction

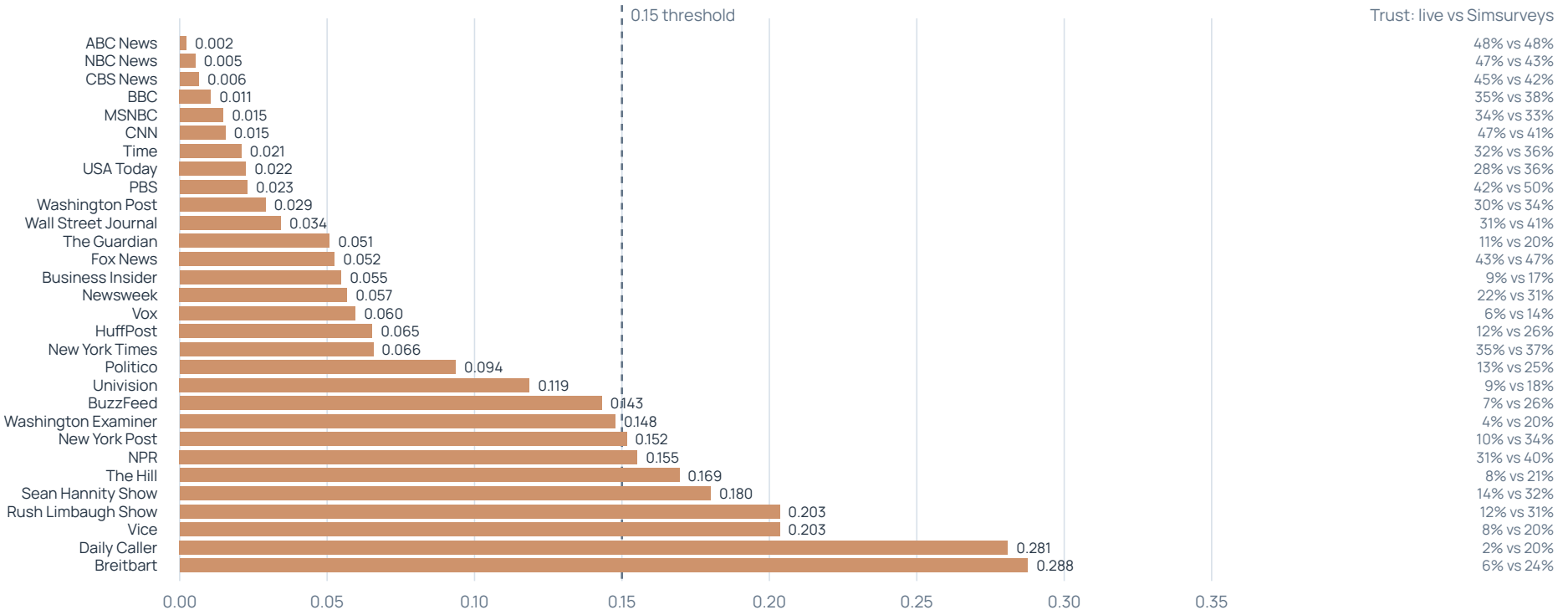
27 Simsurveys

30 Live

Wall Street Journal, Washington Examiner, New York Post. Every broadcast and cable news brand splits the right way.

06 · ANSWER TOTALS FOR CONTEXT

# Totals: median KL divergence 0.058, 22 of 30 brands below 0.15




KL divergence of each brand's four answers (trust, distrust, neither, have not heard of), live (weighted) vs Simsurveys (smoothing 0.005). Right: share who trust, live vs Simsurveys.

# Method and sources

- **Simulation:** Simsurveys Research Studio, production engine and consumer model, November 2026. 12,043 respondents, U.S. census age and gender; party identification set to Gallup's 2019 annual average (Democrat 30%, Republican 28%, Independent 41%).
- **Questions:** Pew's party, ideology and attention-to-news wording. For each brand one question with four answers (trust, distrust, neither, have not heard of), the four groups Pew reports; Pew asked them as three "click all that apply" grids. Answer order rotated.
- **Research context:** when the survey ran, who was asked and what about, plus general lines on partisan media trust; no live results were used.
- **Live data:** Pew's per-brand summary variables, weighted (WEIGHT_W57). Correlations are weighted Spearman, pairwise.

- Pew Research Center, American Trends Panel Wave 57, October 29 – November 11, 2019 (N = 12,043).
- Gallup, "Party Preferences Steady During Trump Era" (January 2020), 2019 annual party identification.

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DATA FILES

## Run the analysis yourself

The respondent-level live and Simsurveys files, with a codebook, are available on request.

Request the data files