



EMBARGOED UNTIL 3/26 at 9AM*

Even Among Republicans, Fox News Viewership is Correlated with More Skeptical Attitudes Towards Coronavirus Outbreak, Lower Likelihood of Staying Home

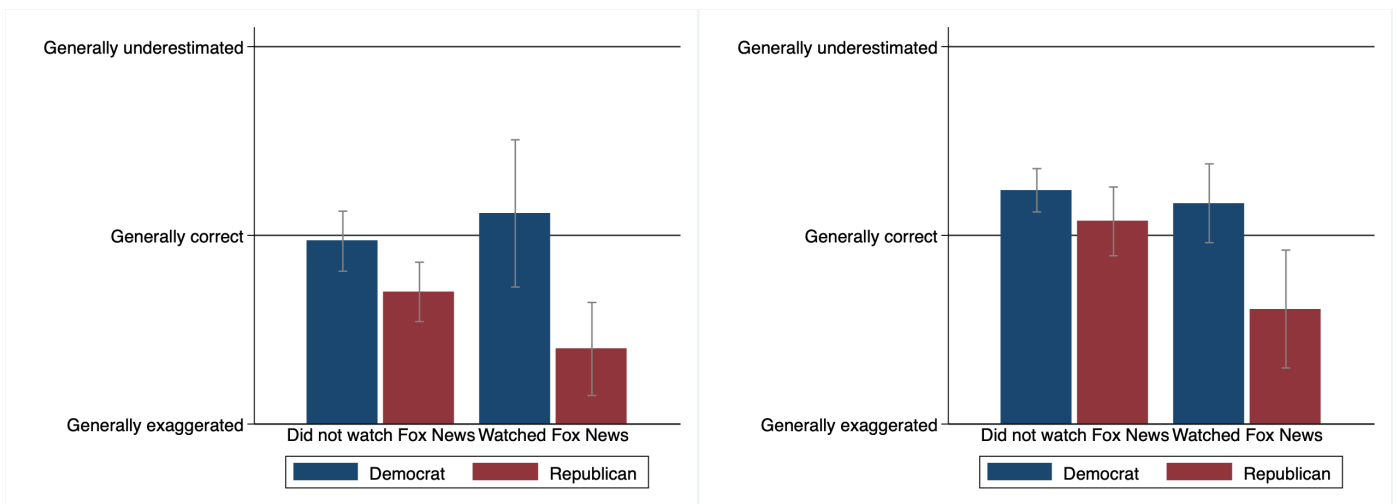
March 26, 2020

Numerous surveys have shown a partisan gap in attitudes about the outbreak of coronavirus and COVID-19, the disease it causes. Data from a new survey shows that even accounting for party identification, there are important differences in how media consumption relates to responses regarding the virus, with Republicans who report watching Fox News more likely than Republicans who don't watch Fox News to report that the seriousness is exaggerated, and less likely to report that they are staying home because of the outbreak.

A national survey of registered voters, with an oversample in Washington State, conducted by Survey 160 and Gradient Metrics using Survey 160's live interviewer SMS survey technology, finds a large divide *among* Republicans in their attitudes about coronavirus, based on self-reported Fox News viewership. Nationally, 64% of Republicans who reported watching Fox News in the prior 24 hours said the media was exaggerating the seriousness of the coronavirus outbreak, as compared to 43% of those who did not report watching Fox News.

If anything, this gap is at least as large or even larger in Washington State, where the crisis hit first. There, 58% of Fox News-watching Republicans said the media had exaggerated the crisis, as opposed to just 22% of their non-Fox News-viewing co-partisans, although because of the smaller sample size this estimate is less precise than the national estimates. The graphs below report these differences in perceived seriousness on a scale from "Generally exaggerated" to "Generally underestimated."

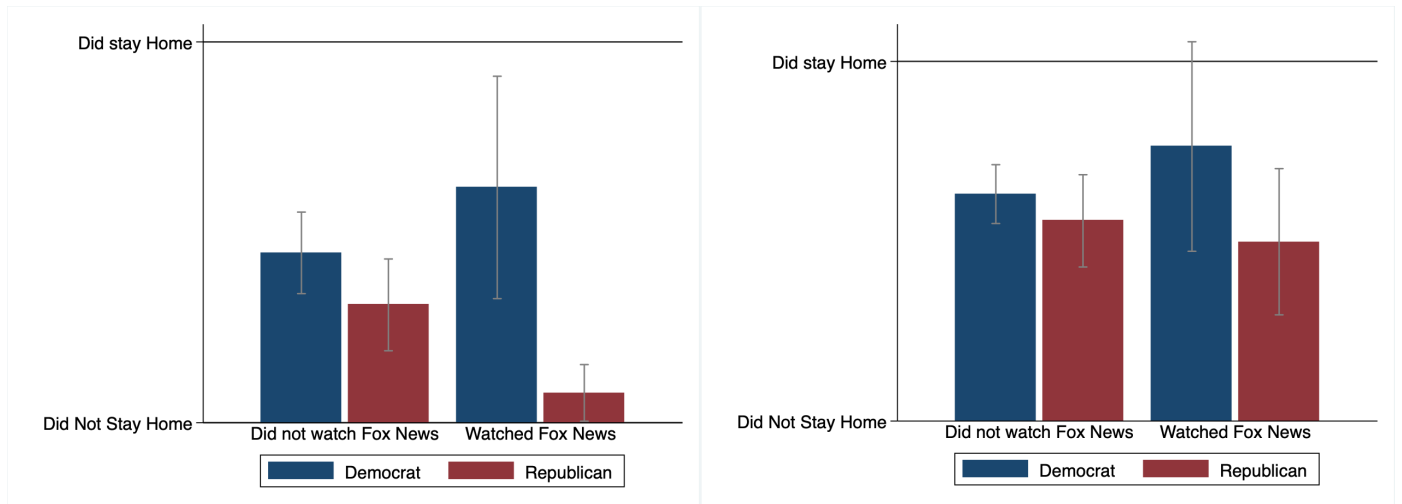
Figure 1: Reported seriousness of Coronavirus, Nationally (L) and in WA State (R)



"Now more than ever, it is important that Americans share the same set of facts, even if not the same political beliefs", said Thomas Vladeck, Managing Director of Gradient Metrics. "The fact that this important data shows that, even in a national crisis, differences in media consumption go hand in hand with different basic interpretations of the situation should be concerning to us all."

These attitudes also translate into behavior that will shape Fox News viewers' susceptibility to the disease. This survey also asked "Have you or anyone you know personally stayed home from work because of the coronavirus outbreak?" Nationally, just 8% of Fox News-watching Republicans reported staying home themselves, compared to 31% of their co-partisans who did not report watching Fox News. This gap is smaller in Washington State, where there had been more shutdowns at the time of the survey.

Figure 2: Reported Staying At Home from Work, Nationally (L) and in WA State (R)



Importantly, this correlation is unique to Fox News. When looking at other sources of news, we find that, for instance, among Republicans, self-reported MSNBC viewership is correlated with a lower likelihood of saying the news media was exaggerating the seriousness of the outbreak.

This is not the only data to show a relationship between Fox News viewership and coronavirus attitudes. According to [data collected by Pew Research](#), those who name Fox News as their main source of election news are less likely to say coronavirus is a major threat to the population (27% vs. 47% nationally) and more likely to say the media have greatly exaggerated the risks (56% vs. 37% nationally).

Further research indicates that the differences between Democratic and Republicans in surveys are not about information, but about attitudes and behavior. Data from [a recent Kaiser Family Foundation survey](#) shows that Republicans and Democrats are equally aware of expert

guidance on coronavirus. Where they differ are their beliefs about the seriousness of the risks that COVID-19 poses to themselves and their families.

To be very clear, these correlations do not draw a causal arrow from media consumption to attitudes about the coronavirus; cross-sectional survey data of this type cannot be used to make such causal inferences reliably because even within a group of partisans, choices of media consumption may reflect other attitudes like trust (or lack thereof) in the media that are not observed. And indeed, the same Pew Research study highlighted above shows that [Fox News viewers are less trusting of the national media](#) generally. Moreover, the demographic profile of those who have time to watch cable news in the prior 24 hours, and those who do not, differs as well.

“Fox News has an obligation to inform and protect its audience,” said Kevin Collins, Chief Research Officer of Survey 160. “While these survey data cannot prove that Fox News is causing these different attitudes, they do show that Fox News is reaching a uniquely vulnerable audience, both because of their [age](#) and because of that audience’s attitudes and behavioral response (or lack thereof) to the coronavirus outbreak. With that power comes a responsibility to ensure the public health message of social distancing and self-quarantining is heard clearly.”

While the network’s coverage may have shifted in tone somewhat from [earlier dismissals of the outbreak](#), the bulk of the survey data from Survey 160 and Gradient Metrics described here were collected after that “pivot.”

Methodology statement.

The survey was conducted between March 13 and March 16 utilizing voter-file based sample of registered voters. There were 609 responses in the national sample and 409 in the Washington State oversample. Interviews were conducted via live interviewer SMS surveys, in which interviewers and respondents ask questions and provide answers via text message. The sample was weighted to the national and Washington State registered voter population (respectively) on age, education, race, gender, and (for the national sample) region. The largest margin of error, accounting for the design effect from weighting, for the national and state sample are 6.0 and 6.5 percentage points, respectively. For more information on the live interviewer SMS survey methodology, please see survey160.com or email info@survey160.com

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Weighted Toplines and Crosstabs

Q1: How much have you heard or read about the outbreak of a new coronavirus disease also called COVID-19?

National Sample							
	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Silent/Boomers	Gen X	Millenials/Gen Z
A lot	90%	91%	91%	86%	90%	89%	89%
Some	8%	6%	7%	12%	9%	4%	10%
Only a little	1%	0%	2%	2%	1%	4%	0%
Nothing at all	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	3%	1%
N	609	208	215	186	259	126	213
WA Sample							
	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Silent/Boomers	Gen X	Millenials/ Gen Z
A lot	92%	94%	90%	91%	92%	91%	93%
Some	7%	5%	8%	9%	6%	9%	6%
Only a little	1%	0%	2%	0%	1%	0%	1%
Nothing at all	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
N	409	226	46	137	170	146	84

Q2_self: How worried are you that you, personally, will become sick with the coronavirus?

National Sample							
	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Silent/Boomers	Gen X	Millenials/Gen Z
Extremely worried	4%	6%	2%	3%	1%	2%	7%
Very worried	7%	13%	0%	7%	5%	8%	6%
Somewhat worried	33%	39%	19%	41%	32%	27%	39%
Not too worried	36%	31%	44%	33%	43%	30%	36%
Not worried at all	20%	11%	35%	16%	19%	33%	12%
Don't know	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
N	609	208	215	186	259	126	213
WA Sample							
	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Silent/Boomers	Gen X	Millenials/ Gen Z
Extremely worried	9%	12%	10%	4%	5%	6%	17%
Very worried	10%	12%	7%	7%	10%	13%	5%
Somewhat worried	32%	37%	5%	33%	35%	30%	23%
Not too worried	38%	35%	50%	39%	43%	35%	43%
Not worried at all	11%	4%	28%	17%	7%	15%	11%
Don't know							
Nothing at all	409	226	46	137	170	146	84

Q2_family: How worried are you that someone in your family will become sick with the coronavirus?

National Sample							
	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Silent/Boomers	Gen X	Millenials/Gen Z
Extremely worried	13%	18%	5%	15%	5%	9%	23%
Very worried	14%	21%	6%	12%	11%	14%	16%
Somewhat worried	36%	35%	33%	41%	38%	31%	37%
Not too worried	27%	18%	38%	26%	35%	30%	18%
Not worried at all	10%	8%	18%	5%	10%	16%	6%
Don't know							
N	609	208	215	186	259	126	213
WA Sample							
	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Silent/Boomers	Gen X	Millenials/ Gen Z
Extremely worried	17%	24%	10%	10%	8%	14%	31%
Very worried	21%	25%	16%	17%	18%	25%	16%
Somewhat worried	33%	31%	16%	43%	40%	32%	29%
Not too worried	23%	17%	40%	25%	30%	23%	15%
Not worried at all	6%	3%	19%	6%	4%	6%	9%
Don't know							
Nothing at all	409	226	46	137	170	146	84

Q3: How worried are you about the impact of the coronavirus on the American economy?

National Sample							
	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Silent/Boomers	Gen X	Millenials/Gen Z
Extremely worried	27%	31%	21%	27%	24%	34%	23%
Very worried	33%	40%	26%	33%	34%	28%	39%
Somewhat worried	26%	18%	37%	25%	27%	26%	27%
Not too worried	10%	7%	11%	11%	12%	6%	7%
Not worried at all	4%	4%	5%	4%	2%	6%	4%
Don't know							
N	609	208	215	186	259	126	213
WA Sample							
	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Silent/Boomers	Gen X	Millenials/ Gen Z
Extremely worried	42%	51%	27%	35%	42%	47%	35%
Very worried	27%	26%	16%	33%	28%	26%	28%
Somewhat worried	21%	18%	32%	22%	23%	20%	24%
Not too worried	6%	4%	16%	6%	3%	6%	6%
Not worried at all	2%	1%	9%	2%	0%	1%	7%
Don't know	1%	0%	0%	2%	3%	0%	0%
N	409	226	46	137	170	146	84

Q4: Thinking about what is said in the news, in your view is the seriousness of coronavirus generally exaggerated, generally correct, or is it generally underestimated?

National Sample							
	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Silent/Boomers	Gen X	Millenials/Gen Z
Generally exaggerated	47%	26%	73%	48%	47%	50%	44%
Generally correct	38%	50%	21%	41%	42%	34%	37%
Generally underestimated	15%	24%	6%	11%	12%	16%	19%
N	609	208	215	186	259	126	213
WA Sample							
	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Silent/Boomers	Gen X	Millenials/ Gen Z
Generally exaggerated	23%	12%	49%	30%	16%	24%	28%
Generally correct	46%	54%	21%	43%	60%	39%	44%
Generally underestimated	31%	34%	30%	27%	24%	37%	29%
N	409	226	46	137	170	146	84

Q5: Do you approve or disapprove of the way that the federal government has handled the response to the coronavirus so far?

National Sample							
	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Silent/Boomers	Gen X	Millenials/Gen Z
Strongly approve	24%	3%	56%	17%	36%	30%	9%
Somewhat approve	16%	8%	26%	16%	17%	20%	12%
Neither approve or disapprove	14%	11%	11%	22%	10%	12%	18%
Somewhat disapprove	16%	22%	6%	19%	9%	20%	21%
Strongly disapprove	30%	55%	1%	26%	28%	18%	40%
N	609	208	215	186	259	126	213
WA Sample							
	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Silent/Boomers	Gen X	Millenials/ Gen Z
Strongly approve	13%	5%	44%	15%	12%	16%	12%
Somewhat approve	12%	4%	29%	17%	11%	15%	9%
Neither approve or disapprove	5%	5%	7%	6%	4%	2%	8%
Somewhat disapprove	15%	16%	6%	16%	16%	12%	19%
Strongly disapprove	55%	70%	14%	47%	57%	55%	52%
N	409	226	46	137	170	146	84

Q6: Do you approve or disapprove of the way that your state government has handled the response to the coronavirus so far?

National Sample							
	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Silent/ Boomers	Gen X	Millenials/ Gen Z
Strongly approve	29%	27%	33%	26%	43%	31%	13%
Somewhat approve	32%	35%	25%	35%	30%	27%	34%
Neither approve or disapprove	21%	18%	25%	21%	16%	24%	27%
Somewhat disapprove	12%	12%	12%	12%	8%	11%	17%
Strongly disapprove	7%	9%	5%	6%	4%	7%	9%
N	609	208	215	186	259	126	213
WA Sample							
	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Silent/ Boomers	Gen X	Millenials/ Gen Z
Strongly approve	41%	53%	21%	30%	57%	37%	26%
Somewhat approve	34%	33%	31%	38%	26%	37%	38%
Neither approve or disapprove	10%	6%	14%	14%	8%	11%	13%
Somewhat disapprove	11%	8%	21%	12%	5%	12%	19%
Strongly disapprove	4%	0%	14%	6%	4%	4%	5%
N	409	226	46	137	170	146	84

Q8: Have you or anyone you know personally stayed home from work because of the coronavirus outbreak?

National Sample							
	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Silent/Boomers	Gen X	Millenials/ Gen Z
Yes, I have stayed home from work	7%	7%	2%	13%	5%	7%	10%
Yes, I have and other people I know personally have stayed home from work	20%	39%	4%	13%	8%	19%	30%
I have not stayed home from work but know someone personally who has	19%	20%	14%	25%	18%	12%	26%
No, I don't know anyone personally who has stayed home from work	53%	33%	81%	49%	68%	63%	34%
Don't Know / Refused	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%
N	609	208	215	186	259	126	213

WA Sample							
	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Silent/Boomers	Gen X	Millenials/ Gen Z
Yes, I have stayed home from work	18%	15%	20%	21%	15%	25%	14%
Yes, I have and other people I know personally have stayed home from work	40%	49%	23%	33%	37%	37%	41%
I have not stayed home from work but know someone personally who has	30%	26%	34%	33%	30%	28%	37%
No, I don't know anyone personally who has stayed home from work	11%	9%	23%	10%	14%	11%	8%
Don't Know / Refused	1%	1%	0%	2%	4%	0%	0%
N	409	226	46	137	170	146	84