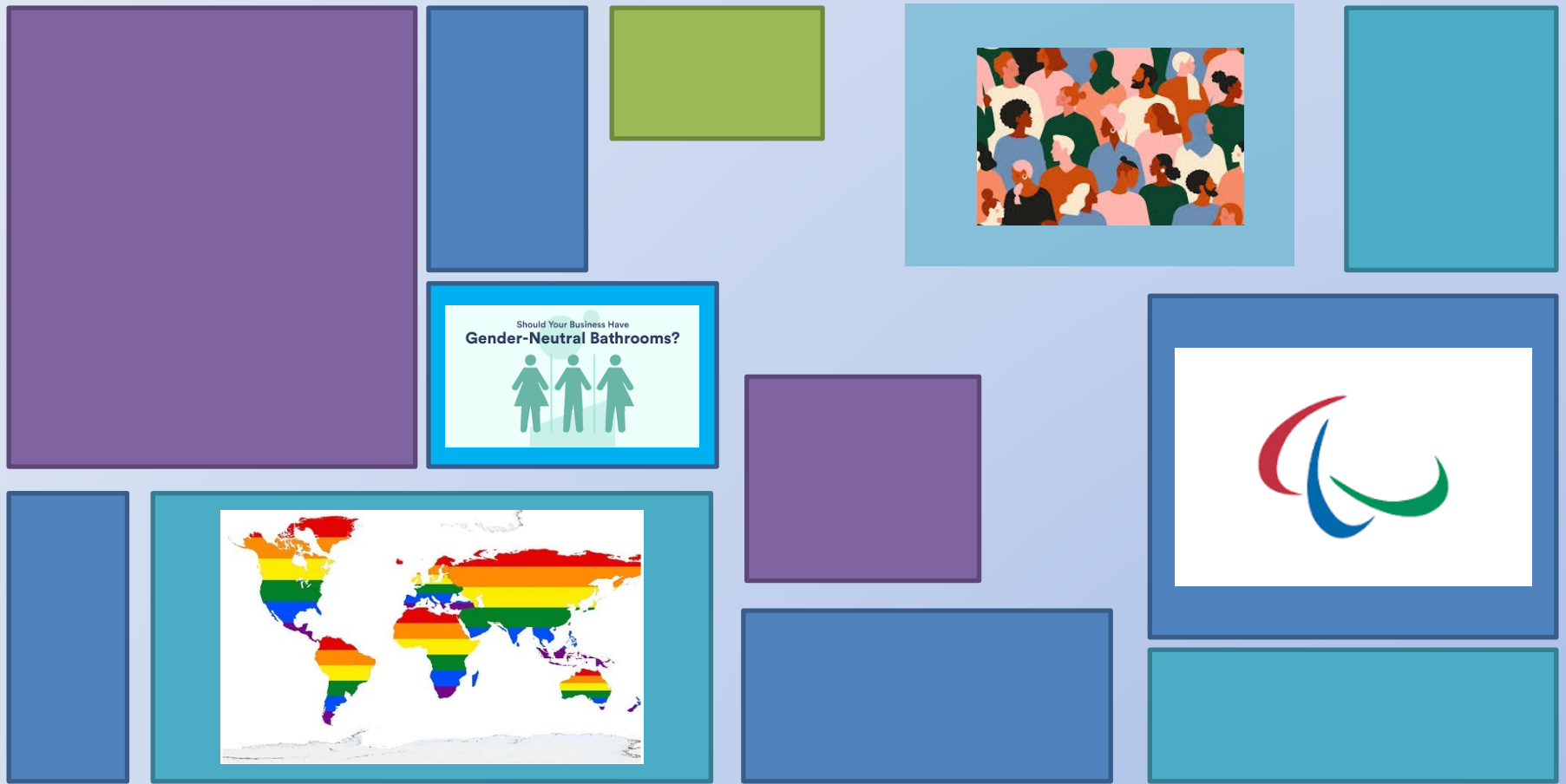




EC5001: Diversity & Difference in a Modern World

Theme 5: Exploring Media Bias

What have we covered already?

*Before we move on, what have we already
looked at in this Module?*

“If something is not a lie, it must be true”

- The media should not deliberately print untruths
- If they do they could be prosecuted for libel
- Because of the libel laws people often believe that the media must print the truth
- However, they CAN use other techniques to misdirect.

Thinking about media bias

Take some time to think about why the media might have a natural bias.



Guided Study Activity 1: Why might the media be biased?

Feedback to the group.



How can we spot bias?

Bias is: Relying on stereotypes and unchallenged assumptions, often with double standards - race, for example.

What other examples can you think of?



How can we spot bias?

- The deliberate use of language with positive or negative overtones

Discuss examples of positive and negative language.

- These two headlines are describing the same event;

Troublesome Teens Terrorise Town

Local Students Campaign for Human Rights

How can we spot bias?

- In August 2011, Mark Duggan was shot by the police.
- Many felt his death was unjustified, caused by racism, and that the police hid what truly happened.
- There was strong feeling on both sides and this was also evidenced by the media coverage
- The death of Duggan was seen as the cause of much of the rioting that occurred in August 2011

How can we spot bias?

- The way that the media use images can also create bias
- The following images were all used in the reporting of the case and the subsequent enquiries and legal findings
- What do they tell you about the stance taken by the people who used them?

How can we spot bias?



Image 2: Source: Daily Mail

This image was used in the Daily Mail.

What image of Mark Duggan does it portray?

What political bias might this indicate?



How can we spot bias?

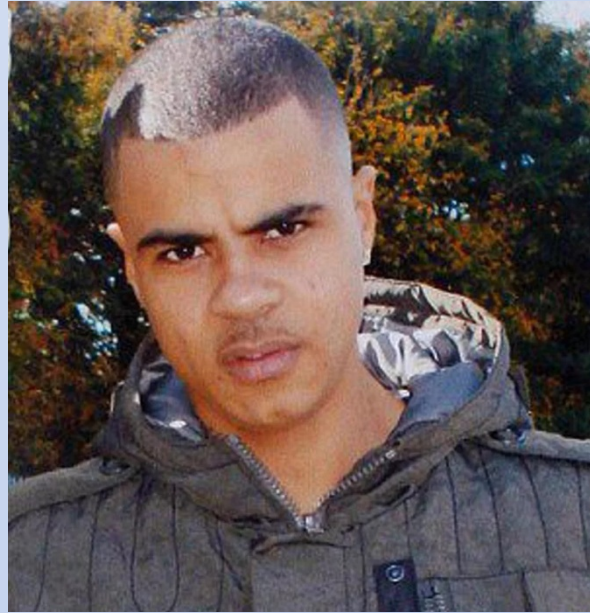


Image 3: Source: The Sun

This image was used in The Sun.

What image of Mark Duggan does it portray?

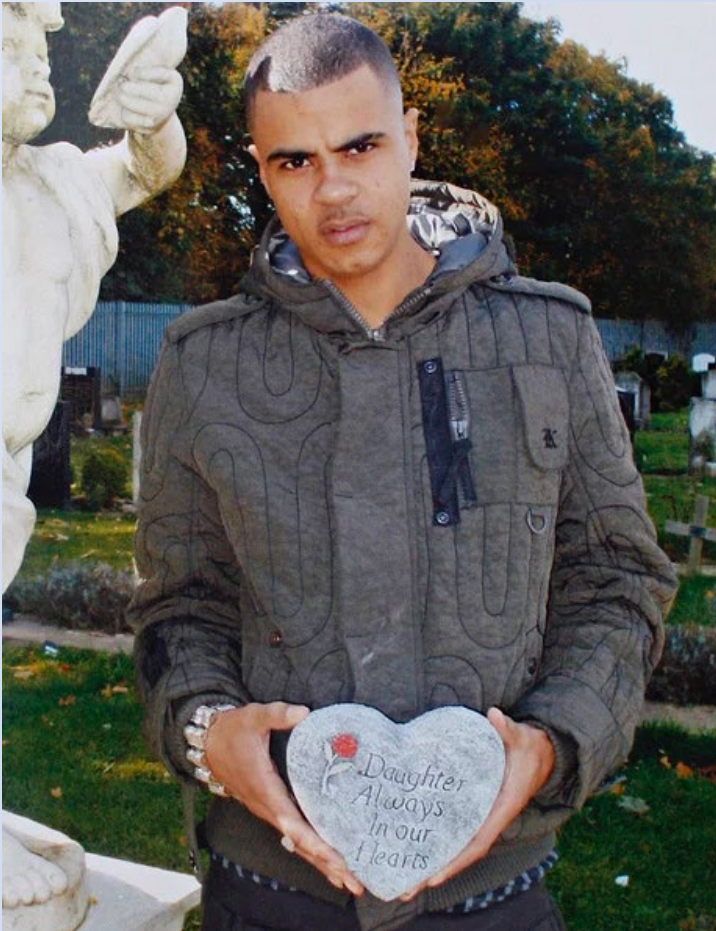
What political bias might this indicate?



Media Practice – Cropping Pictures

- The image of Mark Duggan on the previous slide was ‘cropped’
- Cropping an image is common practice
- *Why might an Editor or Picture Editor want to crop an image?*
- The next slide has the ‘uncropped’ image. How does it differ

How can we spot bias?



This image was used in the Guardian.

What image of Mark Duggan does it portray?

What political bias might this indicate?



Image 4: Source: The Guardian



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

How can we spot bias?



Image 5: Source: Red Youth

This image was used on the Red Youth website.

Why do you think they removed some of the details?

What political bias might this indicate?



How can we spot bias?



Image 6: Source: Ceasefire

This image was used in Ceasefire.

What image of Mark Duggan does it portray?

What political bias might this indicate?

Media Practice – Combining Pictures

- Sometimes a publication will choose to combine pictures
- This, like cropping, is common practice
- *Why might an Editor or Picture Editor want to combine images?*

How can we spot bias?



Image 7: Daily Star

This image was used in the Daily Star.

What image of Mark Duggan does it portray?

What political bias might this indicate?



How can we spot bias?



Image 8: Huffington Post

- Can you detect any bias in these two covers?

Types of Media Bias

Bias by omission

“The action of omitting or failing to include something or someone..” (Shorter Oxford English Dictionary)

- In media reporting it refers to deliberately ignoring certain facts, opinions or points of view
- It can happen in a single article or over a number of articles on the same subject
- Left leaning media may omit to represent conservative views and vice versa so reading both may produce a more balanced view

Types of Media Bias

Bias by selection

“A particular choice; a thing or person selected..”

(Shorter Oxford English Dictionary)

- In media reporting it refers to the act of choosing more examples from one side of the argument
- It can also refer to a media source ‘selecting’ only certain experts to illustrate a point
- However, attempts to provide ‘balance’ can also lead to bias (e.g. giving a lone voice equal weight)

Types of Media Bias

Bias by story selection

- This refers to the process of only publishing stories which highlight one side of an argument
- For example an anti-immigration media source might only publish stories about crimes committed by immigrants whilst a pro-immigration source might only publish good news stories

Types of Media Bias

Bias by placement

- This refers to where an Editor chooses to place a story or article
- Stories on the front page, first few pages or at the top of a page will often have more impact
- For example.....

Bias by placement

The Story



Image 9: Independent

The Apology



Image 10: Independent

Types of Media Bias

Bias by labelling

- This refers to the 'labels' that are given to people or sources by a media source
- One type of labelling is where one side is given a more extreme label than the other side, for example;
 - Hunt saboteurs vs spokesperson for the Countryside Alliance,
- Another example is where the type of label produces a bias, for example;
 - Freedom fighter vs terrorist
- A final example would be when a media source chooses to apply the label 'expert' or 'independent group'

Types of Media Bias

Bias by 'spin'

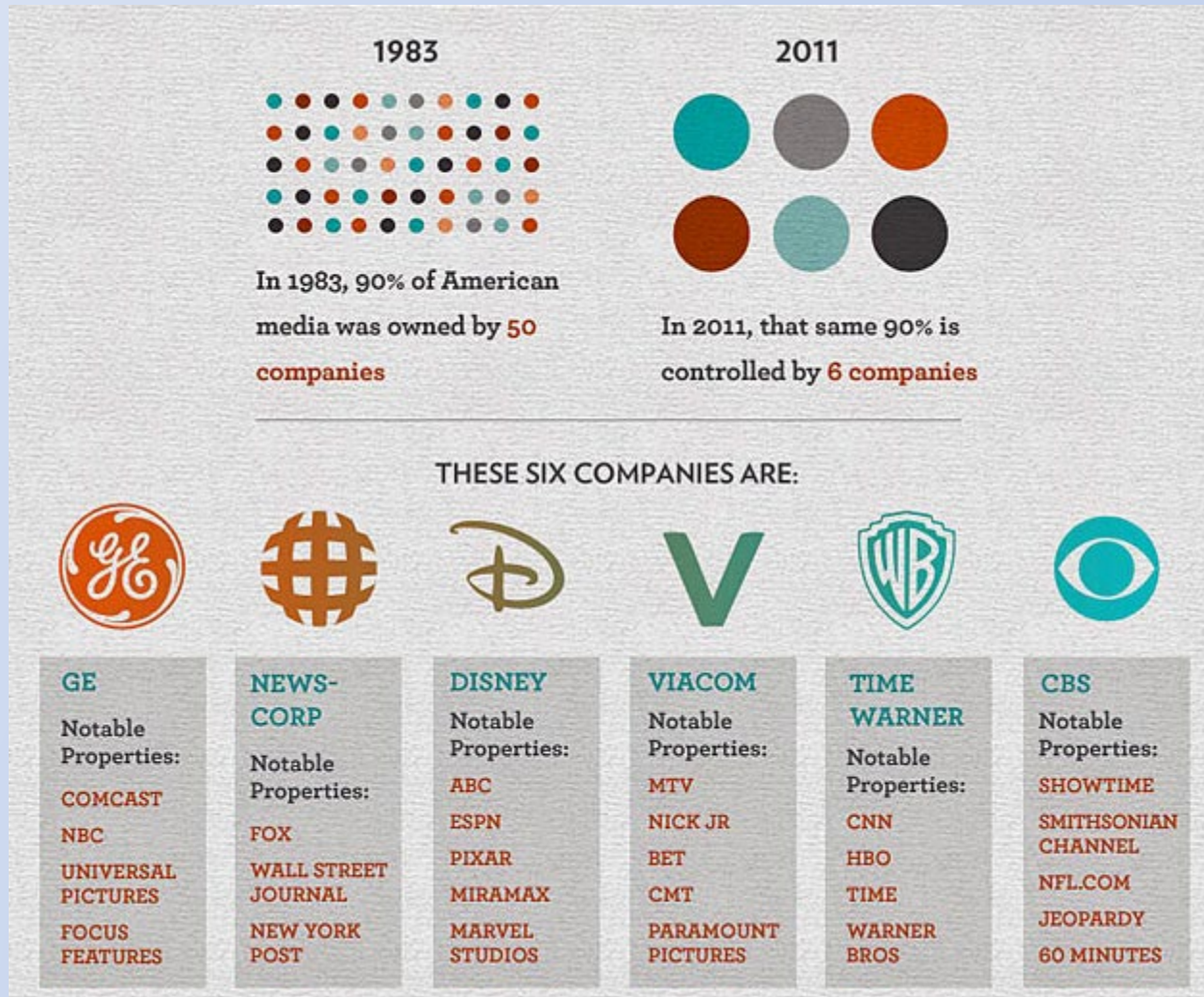
“The presentation of information in a particular way; a bias or slant on information..” (Shorter Oxford English Dictionary)

- This involves using subjective comments about objective facts
- Similar in a way to bias by selection but can be influenced by third parties
- E.g. Journalists may be given biased information by 'spin doctors'

Bias by Monopoly

- In order to gain a balanced view it is important to find different sources of information
- However, one issue we need to be aware of is that what seem to be different sources of information can often be owned by the same organisation
- This monopoly of information can mean that we do not have access to a range of views
- For example;

Bias by Monopoly



Bias by Monopoly?

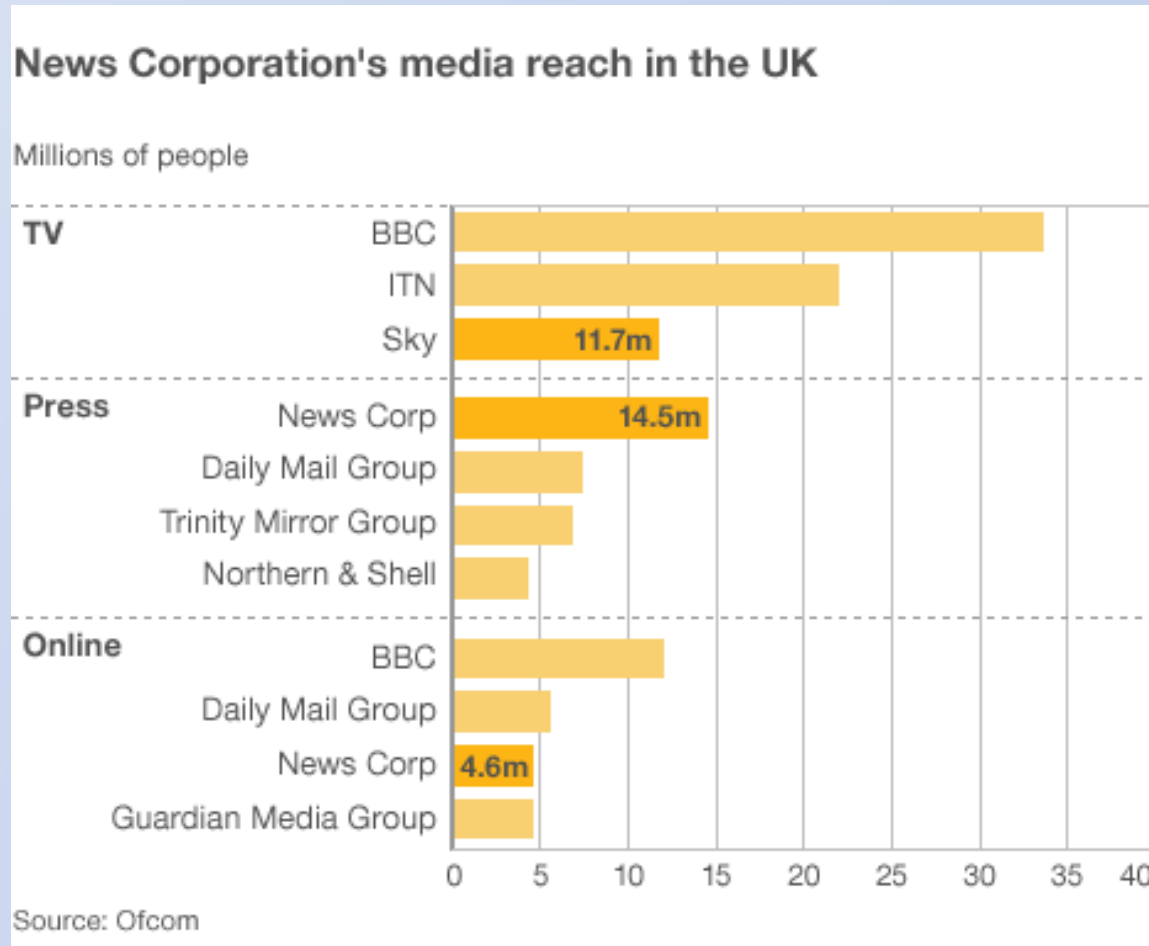


Image 12: BBC



Media Bias – Agenda Bias

- What do we mean by subjectivity? 
- Media sources are often subjective / selective rather than objective (Groeling, 2013)
- We have looked above at factors that might affect how a media source chooses to present a story
- But the media will also make decisions on which stories to present

Media Bias – Agenda Bias

- Hodkinson (2011, p.129) argues that;
- ‘Before any decisions about the construction of a given story are made [....] journalists and others must select which events to cover and which to exclude’
- ‘A process largely invisible to the public and one that has substantial implications of the world presented to us.’

Media Bias – Agenda Bias

- Selecting which stories to present is necessary given the sheer amount of ‘news’ that exists
- However a number of factors (both conscious and unconscious) can lead to subjectivity in the selection of stories
- This is known as agenda bias, ‘gatekeeping’ or ‘agenda setting’

(Hodkinson, 2011)

Media Bias – Agenda Bias

- These factors can include;
 - **Ideological bias** – selecting stories that fit with that organisation's own political views (Eberl *et al*, 2015)
 - **Advertising bias** – selecting stories that will appeal to certain advertisers (who want to target specific readers) (Eberl *et al*, 2018)
 - **Amplitude bias** – selecting stories that are 'big' enough to be considered newsworthy (Hodkinson, 2011)

Media Bias – Agenda Bias

- These factors can include;
 - **Clarity bias** – selecting stories where there is a clear attribution of who is wrong and who is right
 - **Cultural proximity bias** – selecting stories that involve people from a similar culture etc. to the audience (i.e. news is ethnocentric)
 - **Predictability bias** – selecting stories that fit neatly with the expectations of the audience (i.e. the story conforms to the stereotypes that the audience holds)

(Hodkinson, 2011)

Media Bias – Agenda Bias

- These factors can include;
 - **Unexpectedness bias** – unlike many of the above, this is selection of a story because it is different, original or surprising
 - **Bias due to elitism**– only selecting stories that are about ‘important’ counties or people, reporting on the ‘people who matter’
 - **Personification bias** – selecting stories where it can be seen that events are influenced by individual morals, decisions and behaviour rather than ‘faceless’ organisations

(Hodkinson, 2011)

Media Bias – Agenda Bias

Guided Study



Guided Study Activity: News Coverage and Agenda Bias

We will now explore this in some detail by looking at two ‘stories’

1. Using your preferred device search for news stories on the topic ‘[deaths due to terrorism](#)’ in 2017/2018.
2. List the ‘news’ stories that you could find on the Topic and try detect if you can find any bias in these stories’
3. Now, using your preferred device, find ‘news’ stories about the number or people killed on the roads for the whole world in 2017/2018
4. List the ‘news’ stories that you could find on the Topic and try detect if you can find any bias in these stories’

Media Bias – Agenda Bias

- There is at least one, *reliable*, source of information for the second ‘story’



- Who or what is the World Health Organisation (W.H.O.)?
- Why do you think we can consider them to be reliable and appropriate as a source?



W.H.O. Report Methodology

- National Data Coordinators (NDCs) were nominated by their governments, were trained in the project methodology.
- As representatives of their governments, they were required to identify up to eight other road safety experts within their countries from different sectors (e.g. health, police, transport, nongovernmental organizations and/or academia),
- They then had to facilitate a consensus meeting with the respondents as well as to support the overall management of data collection process.
- While each expert responded to the questionnaire based on their expertise, the consensus meeting allowed for discussion of all responses, and the group used this discussion to agree on one final set of information for their country

Media Bias – Agenda Bias

Group Discussion



1. *Which do you think is the more ‘worrying’ story? (Give your reasons for your answer).*
2. *Which do you think is the more ‘important’ story? (Give your reasons for your answer).*



Media Bias – Agenda Bias

Group Discussion



Working in small groups, and using the handout 'Agenda Bias' can you:

- 1. Give reasons why story 1 is so prominent?*
- 2. Give reasons why story 2 has so little coverage?*

Can you think of any other reasons for the difference in coverage?

Public Perceptions of Media Bias

- We have seen that media bias can be conscious (i.e. deliberately designed to mislead, misinform or provide a biased viewpoint)
- And that it can be unconscious (i.e. because of the subjectivity of the journalist or media organisation)
- Whichever form it takes, there is evidence that people are aware that bias exists

Public Perceptions of Media Bias

- One example is research undertaken the Reuter's Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University [*Bias, Bullshit and Lies: Audience Perspectives on Low Trust in the Media*](#)
- Newman and Fletcher (2017) undertook qualitative research in United States, United Kingdom, Ireland, Spain, Germany, Denmark, Australia, France, and Greece
- They asked respondents to rate how much they trusted the media and to give reasons for their answers

Public Perceptions of Media Bias

- Their report identified the following findings, among others
- In many countries, particularly the US and UK, some media outlets are seen as taking sides, encouraging an increasingly polarised set of opinions.
- Others are criticised for not calling out lies, keeping information back, or creating a false equivalence of partisan opinions that are obscuring facts and understanding.
- For those that do trust the news media (40% across the nine markets surveyed), a significant proportion feel journalists do a good job in checking sources, verifying facts, and providing evidence to back up claims.

Public Perceptions of Media Bias

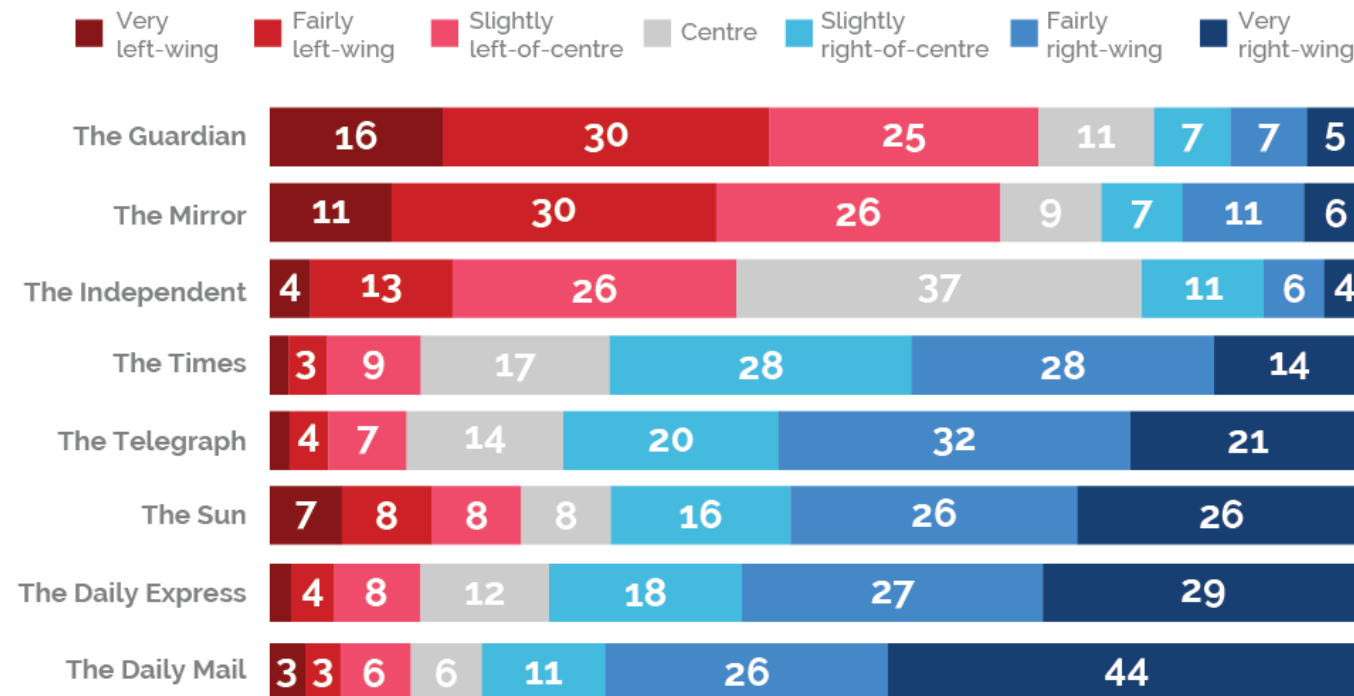
- Their report identified the following findings, among others
- There is more confidence in the professional integrity of journalists (and the transparency of their processes) in the US, Germany, and Denmark than in the United Kingdom, France, and Australia.
- Social media (24%) is trusted less than the news media in its ability to separate fact from fiction. There is a sense from respondents that feeds are becoming polluted with inaccurate information, extreme agendas, and strong opinions, perhaps encouraged by social media algorithms.
- Despite this, there is a substantial minority who trust social media for its broad range of views and authenticity.

Public Perceptions of Media Bias

- The opinion polling organisation YouGov has surveyed people's perceptions of political bias in the press.

How left or right wing are the mainstream UK newspapers?

Some people talk about 'left', 'right' and 'centre' to describe parties and politicians. With this in mind, where would you place each of the following? (excludes those who said "don't know" for each paper - between 39-49% of respondents)



Opinion Polls & Market Research

- We have looked at some information from an Opinion Polling / Market Research Company.
- What do you need to consider when using such companies as sources of information and evidence?



Guided Study 2: Opinion Polls and Market Research

Further Reading on Political Bias in the Media

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<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/broadcast/read/31631> [Accessed 01/02/2020]
- The Reuters Institute (part of the University of Oxford)
<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/> [Accessed 01/02/2020]

Recognising our own bias

- As well as being able to recognise bias in other people and sources we need to be aware of our own bias.
- This is part of the process of reflection that we have discussed in this Module and SJSI5022.
- We will now undertake an exercise to assess our own political bias using the Political Compass website.



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