



Earlier this week, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism and University of Oxford released their annual joint report on the current state of digital news. Among other things, it examined the current monetization of the news industry, the efficacy of paywalls, and the rise of podcasts as a means to reach young audiences.

One of the most interesting aspects of the report is its analysis of Populism in the media, and how news outlets are beginning to identify as populist or not-populist as opposed to left wing or right wing.

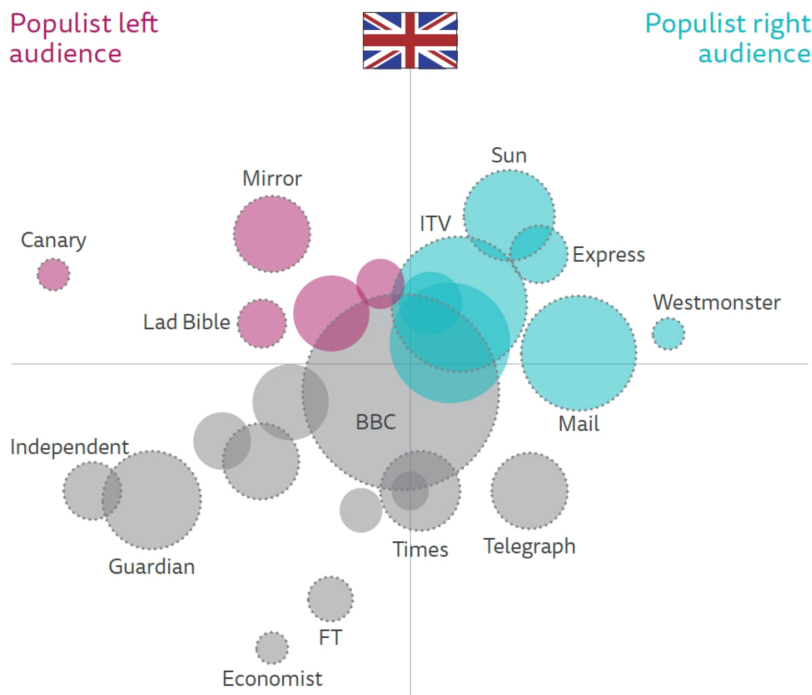
Researchers measured populist attitudes by asking whether or not respondents agreed that there is a “bad” elite and a “virtuous” people, and whether or not they believe in the sovereign will of the people. Those who either answered that they strongly agree or mostly agree with those sentiments, were marked as populist.

Not surprisingly, the research found that most of their populist respondents prefer television over online media, and are loyal to certain news brands. When it comes to social media, most prefer Facebook or YouTube, over platforms like Instagram and Twitter and make use of Facebook’s private groups as a means to seek relevant news stories.

However, it gets interesting when the researchers merged the maps identifying left and

right-leaning outlets with populist and non-populist outlets. Both the US and the UK contain a variety of outlets with both populist-left and populist-right audiences. However, in Germany—where news outlets are more reluctant to take the traditional “left/right” stance—the only populist outlets were also right-leaning. In Spain, there is the opposite, explained by the report as evidenced in the populist left movements that the country has witnessed in recent years.

CROSS-PLATFORM AUDIENCE MAP  
UK and USA



According to the report, there is a smaller trust gap in countries with both populist audiences and populist news outlets, as opposed to countries with populist audiences that are dominated by state-run news outlets.

The report brings up many interesting questions, particularly when it comes to the definition of a populist news consumer, and how to measure populist attitudes in relation to political affiliation. Many questions remain as to what characterizes a right-wing populist compared to a leftwing

populist, and whether there is a difference in which are more likely to spread misinformation or hate speech. What is more, whether the energy of the populist movement can be channeled into something positive for the news industry overall, and what that might look like.

To read the section of the report on Populism's impact on the news industry, [click here](#) . To read the report in its entirety, [click here](#)