

01 Introduction

While Republican politicians tend to share **more misinformation** than Democrats (Lasser et al., 2022; Osmundsen et al., 2021), mitigating factors are underexplored. This study examines how **sentiment**, **locality**, and **topic** moderate this partisan behavior.

02 Objective

Main Objective:

- This study investigates the **contextual conditions** under which Republican politicians share **more trustworthy news**, thereby offering a nuanced perspective on the established trend of partisan asymmetry in misinformation sharing.

Specific Objectives:

- Analyzing how content characteristics (**sentiment**, **locality**, **topic**) predict the trustworthiness of shared news.
- Testing the moderating effect of party affiliation on the relationship between content characteristics and news trustworthiness.

03 Methodology

Dataset

Comprises ~120,000 news articles shared on Twitter by U.S. Congress members (Republicans and Democrats).

Measures

Trustworthiness (Dependent Variable): The reliability of each news source was quantified using its NewsGuard score, an established metric of journalistic quality.

Content Features (Independent Variables):

Party Affiliation: The political party of the sharing Congress member.

Sentiment: The emotional tone of the full article text was calculated using natural language processing (nlp).

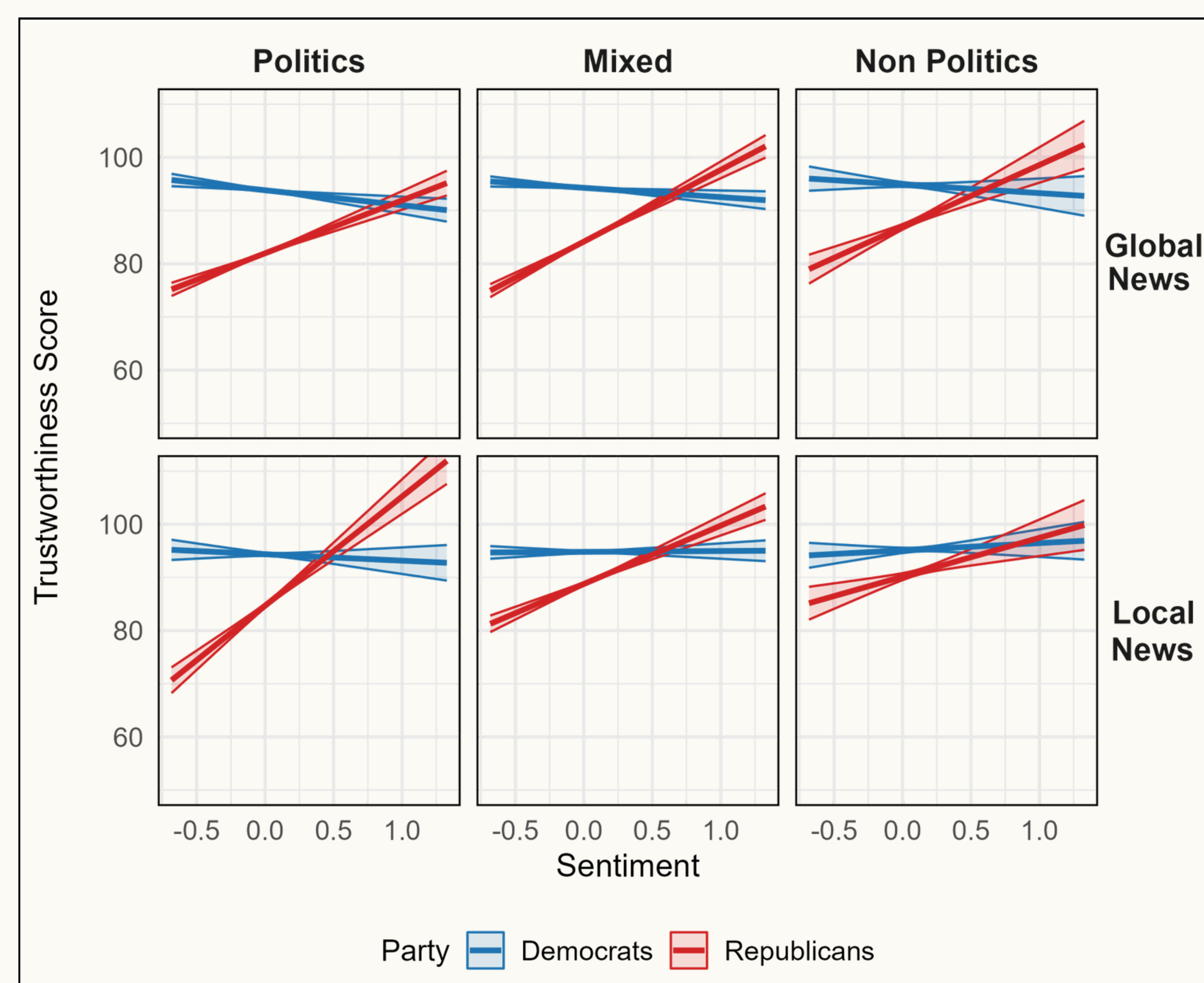
Locality: Articles were classified as 'Local' or 'Global' by GPT-4.

Topic: Key topics were identified using BERTopic modeling.

Analysis

A linear regression model tested the main and interactive effects of party, sentiment, locality, and topic on trustworthiness.

04 Results



Predictor	Estimate	95% CI	p
Intercept	94.28	[94.116, 94.444]	<0.001
Republicans	-10.119	[-10.387, -9.851]	<0.001
Republicans × Sentiment	15.248	[13.152, 17.344]	<0.001
Republicans × Local News	4.081	[3.607, 4.554]	<0.001

- While Republicans share news rated ~10 points less trustworthy on average, this partisan gap narrows significantly with **local content** or a **positive sentiment**.
- Specifically, **positive sentiment** strongly predicts **trustworthiness** for **Republicans**, not Democrats.
- The moderating effects of **sentiment** and **locality** were strongest for **political news** (four-way interaction: $\beta = 13.40$, $p < .001$).

05 Discussion

Our findings show the partisan gap in news trustworthiness is context-dependent, narrowing significantly when Republicans share news that is positive or local. This leads us to propose two hypotheses for future research:

- The “No Need to Lie” Hypothesis:** Positive content—often about community, appreciation, or kindness may not require misinformation to be persuasive. This could explain why Republicans use more trustworthy sources for such content.
- The “No Opportunity to Lie” Hypothesis:** The public verifiability of local news may limit strategic misinformation, acting as a “trustworthiness buffer,” especially for Republicans.

References:

- Osmundsen, M., Bor, A., Vahlstrup, P. B., Bechmann, A., & Petersen, M. B. (2021). Partisan polarization is the primary psychological motivation behind political fake news sharing on twitter. *American Political Science Review*, 115(3), 999-1015.
- Lasser, J., Aroyehun, S. T., Simchon, A., Carrella, F., Garcia, D., & Lewandowsky, S. (2022). Social media sharing of low-quality news sources by political elites. *PNAS Nexus*, 1(4), pgac186.

Explore the Data



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