

# GOOGLE CAUGHT USING CIA TACTICS TO RIG MEDIA PERCEPTIONS

## 96 Percent of Google Search Results for 'Trump' News Are from Liberal Media Outlets



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Is Google manipulating its algorithm to prioritize left-leaning news outlets in their coverage of President Trump? It sure looks that way based on recent search results for news on the president.

Conservatives and Trump supporters have for the last several years questioned whether Google was deprioritizing conservative news sites, hiding them from users who utilize their search engine. Google has maintained that all outlets are treated fairly, but nevertheless, conservative sites have reported reduced search traffic and, in the case of Google-owned YouTube, [content creators have been banned and demonetized](#). [Google's high-profile firing of conservative James Damore](#), purportedly over his conservative political views, only reinforces the idea that Google is picking winners and losers.

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## ***Facebook Censors Conservatives Articles, Saying They 'Look Like Spam'***

To test the premise, I performed a [Google search for "Trump"](#) using the search engine's "News" tab and analyzed the results using [Sharyl Attkisson's media bias chart](#).



I expected to see some skewing of the results based on my extensive experience with Google, but I was not prepared for the blatant prioritization of left-leaning and anti-Trump media outlets. Looking at the first page of search results, I discovered that CNN was the big winner, scoring two of the first ten results. Other left-leaning sites that appeared on the first page were CBS, *The Atlantic*, CNBC, *The New Yorker*, Politico, Reuters, and *USA Today* (the last two outlets on this list could arguably be considered more centrist than the others).

Not a single right-leaning site appeared on the first page of search results.

But it got much, much worse when I analyzed the first 100 items that Google returned in a search for news on "Trump."

CNN, by a wide margin, appeared most frequently, with nearly twice as many results returned as the second-place finisher, *The Washington Post*. Other left-leaning outlets also fared well, including NBC, CNBC, *The Atlantic*, and Politico. The only right-leaning sites to appear in the top 100 were *The Wall Street Journal* and Fox News with 3 and 2 results respectively.

PJ Media did not appear in the first 100 results, nor did *National Review*, *The Weekly Standard*, Breitbart, The Blaze, The Daily Wire, Hot Air, Townhall, Red State, or any other conservative-leaning sites except the two listed above.

Here are the sites that appeared most frequently in the top 100 results.



*Google search results for "Trump." (Image credit: PJ Media)*

As you can see, CNN has a disproportionate number of articles returned when searching for "Trump" — nearly 29 percent of the total. In fact, left-leaning sites comprised 96 percent of the total results.



*Google search results for "Trump." (Image credit: PJ Media)*

I performed the search a multiple times using different computers (registered to different users) and Google returned similar results. While not scientific, the results suggest a pattern of bias against right-leaning content.

## ***Social Media Companies the Most Dangerous Monopolies Ever***

Google is secretive about its algorithm, although the company does say that a variety of factors — around 200 of them, according to Google — go into how pages are ranked. In fact, a whole science has developed — called search engine optimization (SEO) — that purports to help sites become more visible in Google search results. Factors such as the relevance of the topic, the design of the website, internal and external links, and the way articles are written and formatted all can affect a site's Google traffic. Google is constantly tweaking their algorithm, and a website's traffic prospects can rise or fall depending on the changes. PJ Media's Google search traffic, for example, dropped precipitously after a May 2017 algorithm change. We have yet to recover the lost traffic. Other conservative sites have reported similar drops in traffic.

"Can I Rank," an SEO company in San Francisco, [also found an anti-conservative bias in Google search results](#). The company studied over 1,200 URLs that ranked highly in Google search results for politically-charged keywords like "gun control," "abortion," "TPP," and "Black Lives Matter" and then assessed whether there was a political slant to the articles.

"Among our key findings were that top search results were almost 40% more likely to contain pages with a 'Left' or 'Far Left' slant than they were pages from the right," Can I Rank found. "Moreover, 16% of political keywords contained no right-leaning pages at all within the first page of results."

They sampled 2,000 results and found that searchers are 39 percent more likely to be presented with left-leaning articles.

For some keywords, the disparity was even more pronounced. Someone searching for "Republican platform," for example, would see the official text of the platform followed by seven left-leaning results that were critical of the platform.

## **How Facebook Is Fact-Checking Conservative Sites into Oblivion**

The company's research turned up no right-leaning sites in the top results for keywords like "minimum wage," "abortion," "NAFTA," "Iraq war," "campaign finance reform," "global warming," "marijuana legalization," and "TPP."

"The proportion of results with a *left-leaning bias* increased for top ranking results, which typically receive the majority of clicks," the company found. "For example, we found that search results denoted as demonstrating a left or far left slant received 40% more exposure in the top 3 ranking spots than search results considered to have a right or far right political slant."

"Our analysis of the algorithmic metrics underpinning those rankings suggests that factors within the Google algorithm itself may make it easier for sites with a left-leaning or centrist viewpoint to rank higher in Google search results compared to sites with a politically conservative viewpoint," the report found. "Though Google would like to portray itself as a fair and balanced arbiter of facts — a role it has recently tried to strengthen with the [launch of a fact checking mechanism](#) — searchers should be aware that ranking algorithms don't currently incorporate an assessment of political bias or even factual accuracy," the company warned. "No attempt is made to present multiple viewpoints on controversial political issues, and

the algorithm in its current form does not return results equally distributed across the entire political spectrum."

Google denies charges that the company is manipulating the algorithm to prioritize news from left-leaning sites. "Google does not manipulate results," Maggie Shiels, a representative from Google's corporate communications and public affairs, told PJM in an email. "There are more than 200 signals taken into account when someone does a search which include freshness of results."

"These stories are put into clusters to organise the news and to make them easy to search through," she said, explaining that they have "[labels like highly cited, in-depth, etc.](#)" She said her personal search for Trump returned results from BBC, the *New York Times*, CNBC, CNN, and the *Wall Street Journal*. "When I click on 'view all' I get full coverage -- I get CNN, Reuters, Axios, Washington Examiner," she said. Following those results, she sees her subscriptions, video from Fox and CNN, a timeline, opinion pieces, Twitter, and "all coverage which covers a lot of different publications and is an endless stream of stories from a wide variety of sources."

Bloomberg columnist Leonid Bershidsky [wrote about the problem of bias earlier this year](#), reacting to the news of James Damore's treatment at Google. "Google's search algorithms are a [black box](#) to the public," he explains. "People inside the company can mess with them without telling us, potentially imposing their internal culture on millions of searchers who have no reason and no desire to share it. This world includes Trump supporters and [Antifa activists](#), creationist pastors and evolutionary biologists, climate change deniers and people who consider them evil. It's not up to an internet search company to try to level these differences."

"But if that company fosters a work culture in which a certain worldview dominates, can its products be trusted to be neutral?" he asks.

It appears not.

My colleague Roger L. Simon is asking the same questions. [He wrote here at PJM earlier this week](#) that social media companies are the most dangerous monopolies — ever. "Facebook, Twitter, and Google are far worse than the original monopolies like International Harvester and Standard Oil and far more dangerous because they monopolize not just our industries but our brains," he explained. "They control, or at least inordinately influence, how Americans and even much of the world think."

As more and more people turn to Google and other social media outlets for their news, it may not be hyperbolic to suggest that the biases inherent in human-created algorithms have the potential to affect the fate of democracy. Certainly they can — and likely do — impact the outcomes of elections both here and abroad. With all the talk and hand-wringing about fake news and bad foreign actors using social media outlets to attempt to manipulate election results, far too little attention has been paid to power brokers like Google, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube and their ability — and perhaps even desire — to manipulate public opinion and shape the world into their own Silicon Valley image.

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