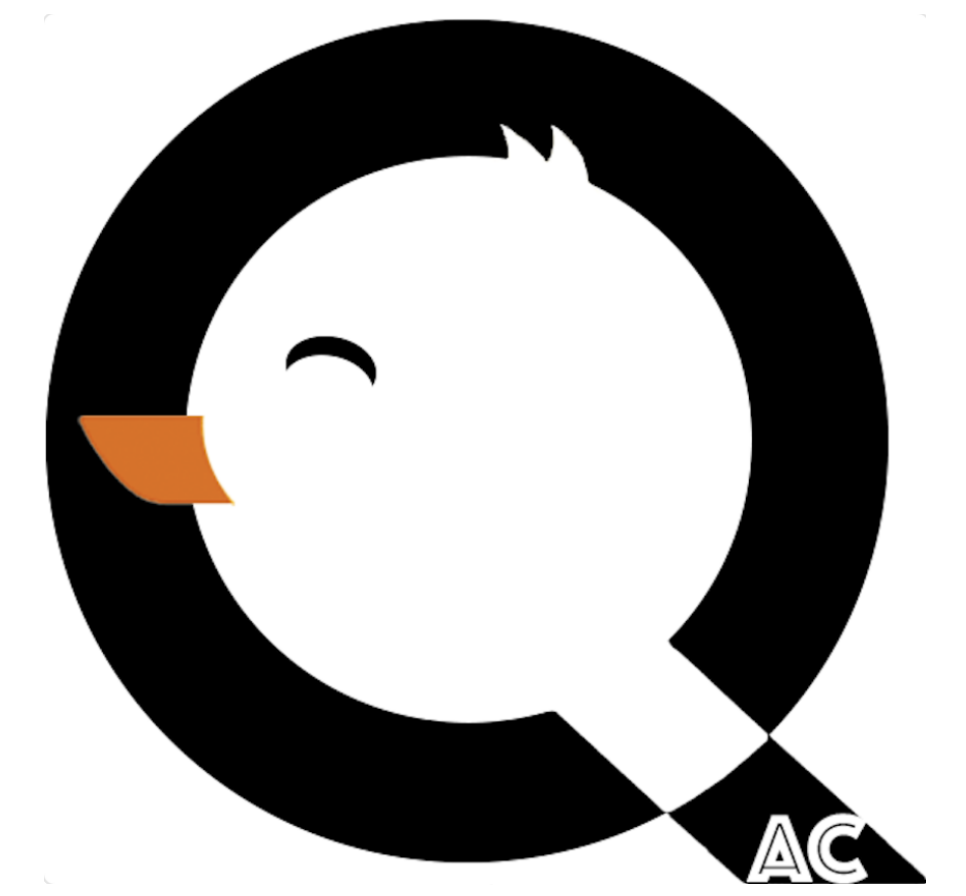




The Association Between Party Identification and Trust in News Media in the United States



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Introduction

- General distrust in media is associated with political disinterest, which often leads to an increase in polarization, due to a lack of exposure to opposing viewpoints (Mellado & Gajardo, 2025; Nath, 2025).
- Research following the 2020 election has revealed that extreme partisans on the left and right both have significantly less trust for the news media, compared to those who are more moderate (Zheng & Zhou, 2024).
- Even in rural areas, which are typically less trusting of the media as a whole, there was a notable difference between responses from Democrats and Republicans, with Republicans being less trusting of the media (Shaughnessy & Hmielowski, 2025).
- Since 2020, political polarization has only escalated, as Republicans and Democrats increasingly shed the moderate label (Gallup, 2025). This suggests that trust in news media may have grown increasingly partisan as well.
- Most recent research has used data from the 2020 election, and it remains unclear to what extent trust in news media has shifted in respect to the 2024 election.

Research Questions

- What is the relationship between party identification and trust in news media during the 2024 presidential election?
- Does this relationship differ from the relationship found during the 2020 presidential election?
- How is this relationship influenced by demographic variables like age?

Methods

Sample

- 2024 respondents (n=5070) were drawn from the 2024 American National Election Studies (ANES) survey, before and after election day.
- 2020 respondents (n=7955) were drawn from the 2020 ANES survey, before and after election day.

Measures

- Party identification was measured with the question “Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an independent, or what?” and coded to only include the two major parties and independents.
- Trust in news media was measured with the question “In general, how much trust and confidence do you have in the news media when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately, and fairly?” and possible responses ranged from 1 (none) to 5 (a great deal).
- Intended President Match was measured by comparing respondents’ answers to “Who do you think you will vote for?” with the current presidential party at the time of the survey (Harris for 2024, Trump for 2020)

Results

Univariate

- In 2024, a total of 51.9% of respondents reported “none” or “a little” trust in news media. 15.1% reported “a great deal” or “a lot” of trust in news media.
- In 2020, a total of 51.3% of respondents reported “none” or “a little” trust in news media. 20.2% reported “a great deal” or “a lot” of trust in news media.

Bivariate

- Chi-Square analysis showed that in 2024, Democrats were significantly more likely to trust news media a great deal, or a lot (65.6%, 58.6%) than Republicans (11.5%, 16.3%), $X^2=947.9$, 8df, $p<.0001$. (Fig. 2)
- In 2020, Democrats were significantly more likely to trust news media a great deal, or a lot (65.99%, 67.8%) than Republicans (7.3%, 10.4%), $X^2=2203$, 8df, $p<.0001$. (Fig. 1)

Multivariate

- In 2020 and 2024, Republicans and Independents were significantly less likely to trust news media than Democrats after controlling for education, age, race, and their intended president match.
- If an individual’s intended vote matched the current presidential party in 2024, they were more likely to trust news media by 0.3 (D) and 1 (R). In 2020, individuals were less likely to trust news media by 0.9 (D) and 0.7 (R) if their intended vote matched the current presidential party. (Figs. 3 & 4)
- In both years, age significantly moderates the relationship between party identification and trust in news media; older individuals were more likely to trust news media by 0.01 (2020) and 0.007 (2024) for each additional year.

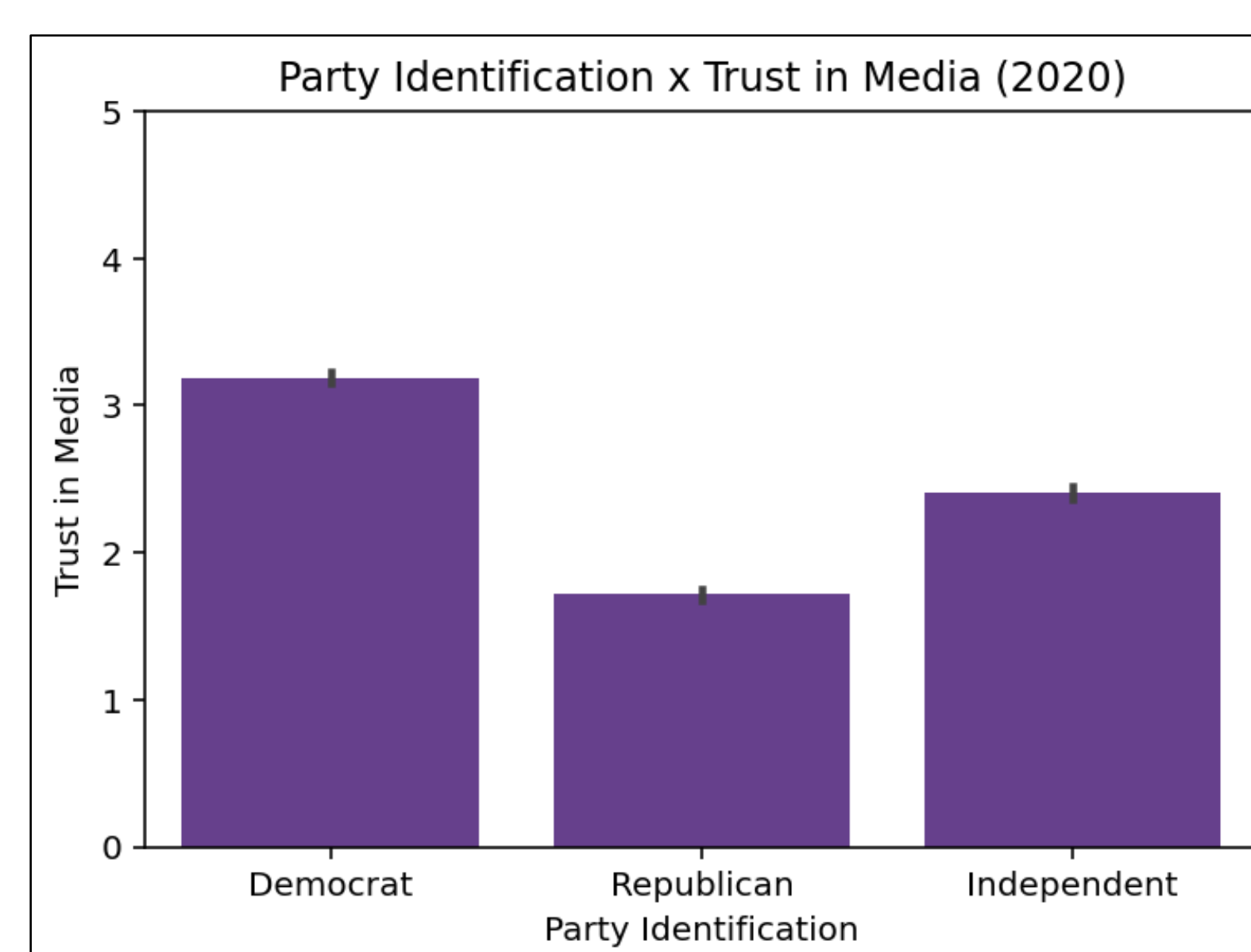


Figure 1: Trust in News Media by Party ID in 2020

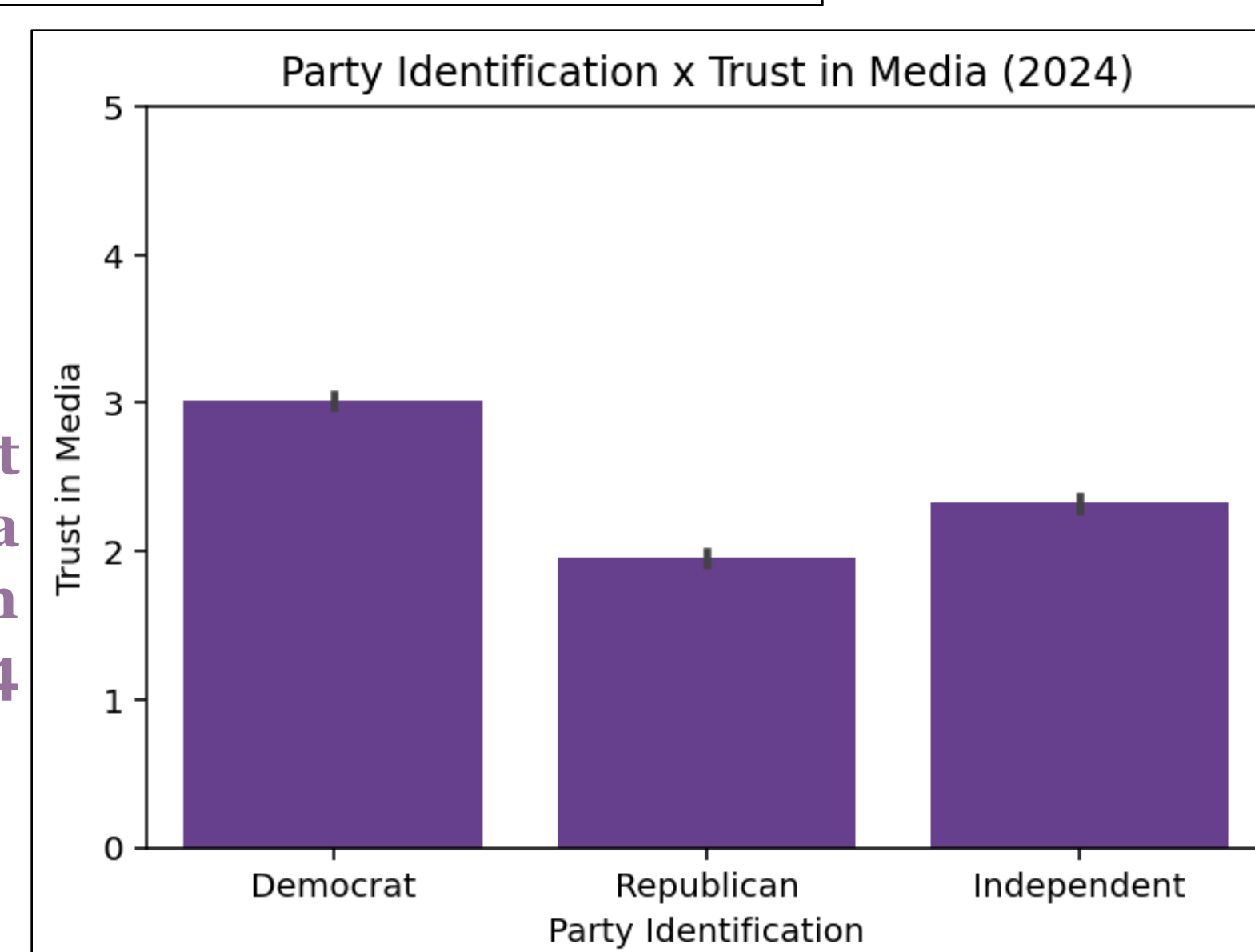


Figure 2: Trust in News Media by Party ID in 2024

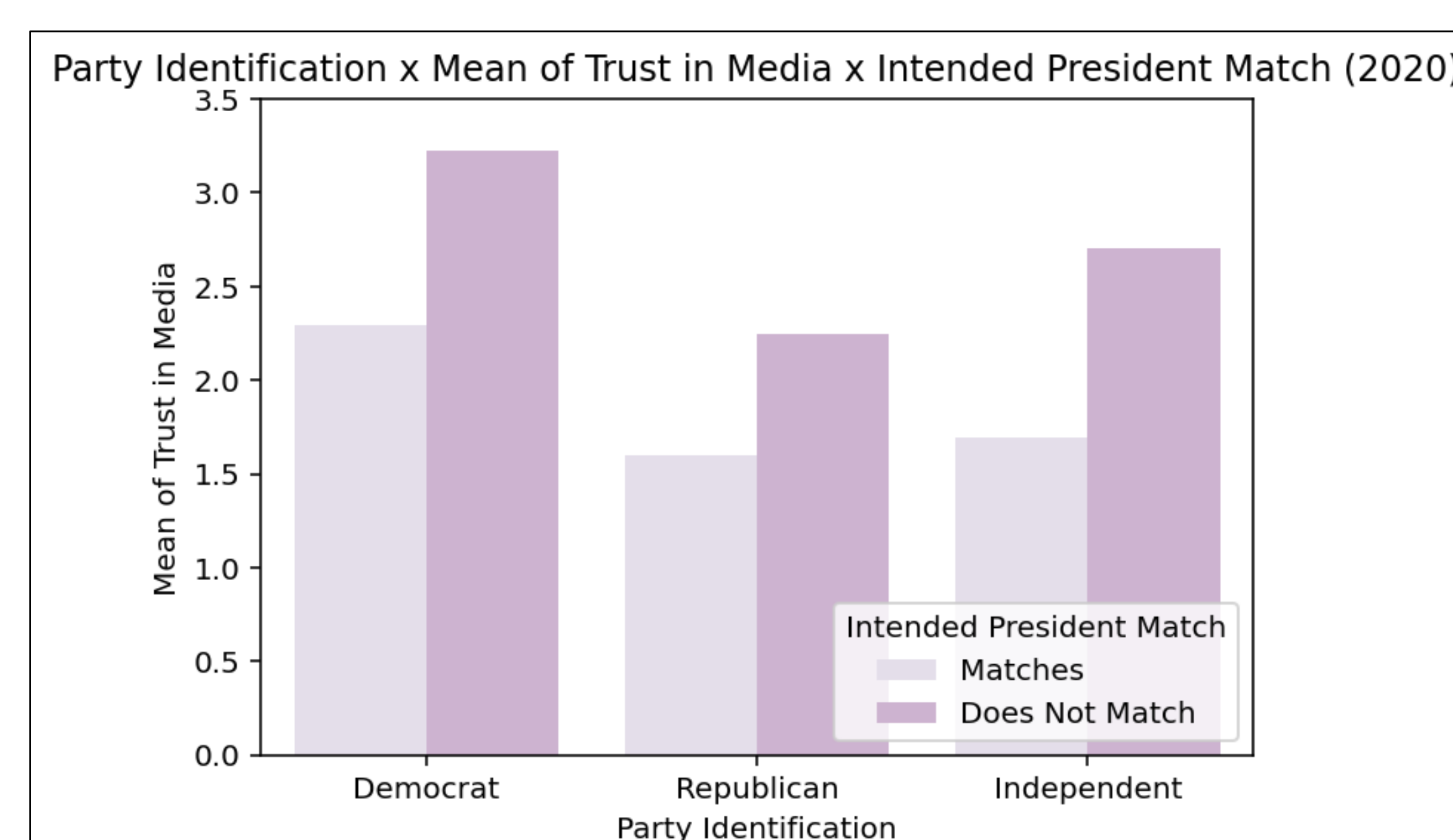


Figure 3: Trust in News Media by Party Identification and Intended President Match in 2020

Discussion

- Democrats are more likely to have a high level of trust in news media, while Republicans and Independents are less likely to have a high level of trust in news media.
- Trust in news media by each party is modified by who the current president/presidential party is at the time—in 2020, individuals were less likely to trust news media if they were voting for the current president (Trump); in 2024, individuals were more likely to trust news media if they were voting for the candidate associated with the current president’s party (Harris).
- These findings have implications for understanding how news media has become increasingly polarized through an inherent bias toward trusting media depending on the current president in office and contribute to research on why people are losing trust in news media. Further research would do well to analyze how social media and other growing sources of news like podcasts relates to this continued loss in trust along party lines, and bias towards individuals’ chosen candidate.

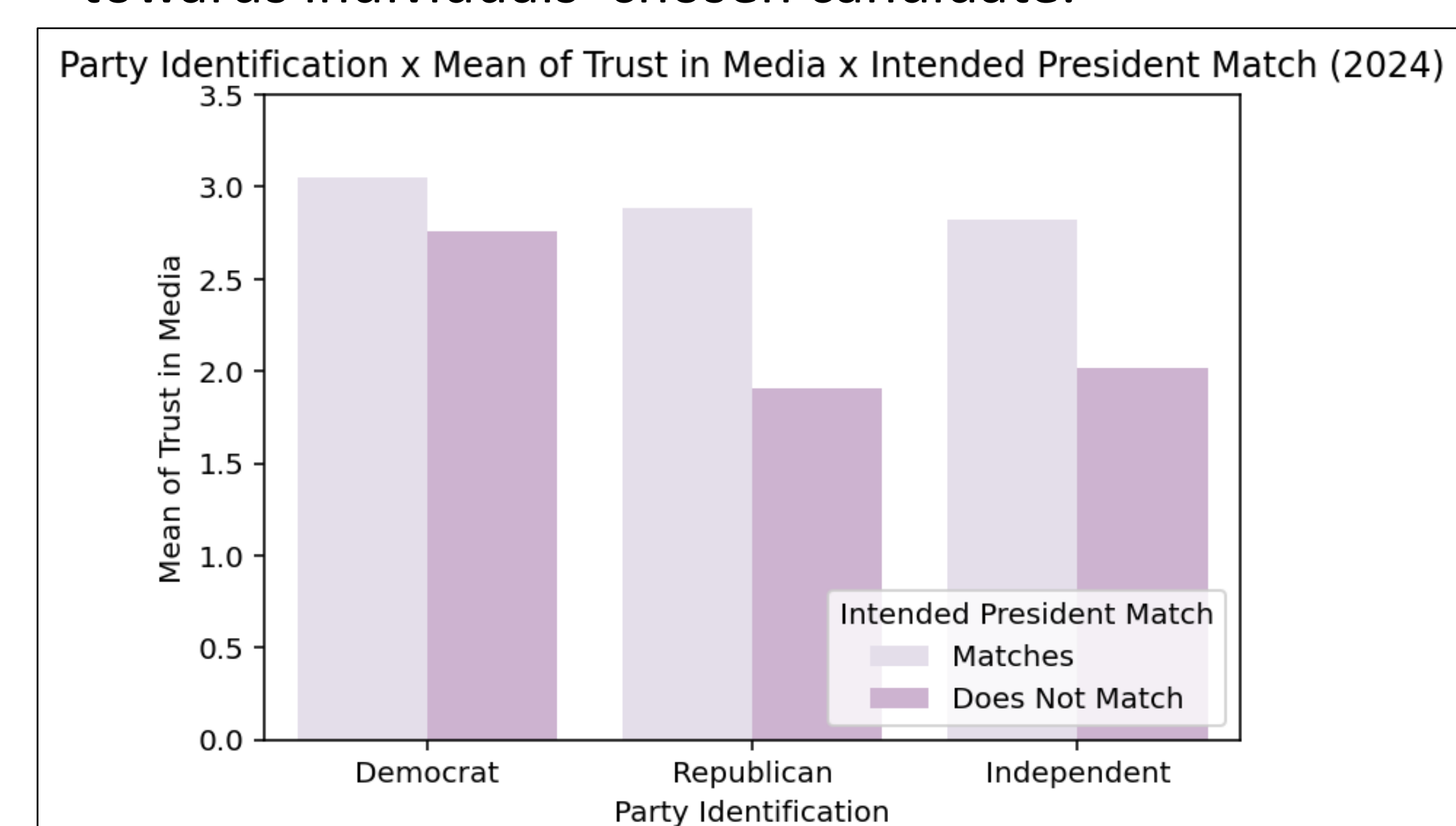


Figure 4: Trust in News Media by Party Identification and Intended President Match in 2024

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