Supplementary Materials

Partisan Motivated Reasoning and Misinformation in the Media: Is News from Ideologically Uncongenial Sources More Suspicious?

A   Hypothesis 2: Selective Exposure

We explore another pre-registered hypothesis in our survey experiment regarding the effects of news source (CNN, Fox News, or no source) and content (true or false information) on study participants' interest in reading the rest of the article excerpt. This analysis is motivated by a large body of research on "selective exposure" (e.g., Festinger, 1962), which suggests that individuals exposed to new information that is contrary to their pre-existing thoughts and beliefs try to achieve cognitive consonance by limiting that exposure. This concept has been used to explain individuals' consumption of mass media insofar as people select media sources that reinforce their existing beliefs, rather than providing them with new points of view (Klapper, 1958). Since the viewer base of many mainstream news outlets is increasingly divided by partisan and ideological lines (Pew Research Center, 2012), selective exposure is likely to operate in contemporary media environments.

However, empirical research on selective exposure has yielded mixed results. While some studies find that people are more likely to read articles from online news sources that they find politically amenable (e.g., Iyengar and Hahn, 2009; Messing and Westwood, 2014; Stroud, 2008), others argue that individuals do not actively screen out sources providing information that runs contrary to their beliefs (e.g., Bakshy, Messing, and Adamic, 2015; Garrett, 2009; Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2011). With these conflicting accounts, we test the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Republicans and conservatives [Democrats and liberals] are more interested in reading the rest of the article with the Fox News [CNN] header, as compared to Democrats and liberals [Republicans and conservatives].

The first two steps of our statistical analysis are the same as those used to test Hypothesis 1. Specifically, we first divide study participants into two groups by their partisanship or ideology and then run the following OLS regression model:

$$
\begin{aligned}
Y_i = \ & b_0 + b_1 \cdot \text{False} + b_2 \cdot \text{CNN} + b_3 \cdot \text{Fox News} \\
& + b_4 \cdot \text{False} \cdot \text{CNN} + b_5 \cdot \text{False} \cdot \text{Fox News} + \epsilon_i,
\end{aligned}
\tag{1}
$$

For Hypothesis 2, the outcome variable (Y_i) is based on the following question: "How interested are you in reading the rest of this article?" The response options were "very interested" (4), "somewhat interested" (3), "not very interested" (2), and "not at all interested" (1). The third step of our analysis is different. For Hypothesis 1, we compare the estimate of b_4 between Democrats/liberals and Republicans/conservatives, and the estimate of b_5 between them. For Hypothesis 2, we compare the estimate of b_2 between Democrats/liberals and Republicans/conservatives, and the estimate of b_3 between them.

Figure A.1 shows the average interest in reading the rest of the article across the six treatment conditions. As the figure shows, respondents who received the false information were slightly more interested in reading the rest of the article than respondents who received the true information, regardless of whether a news source was presented and of which source was presented. The difference between these two groups was not as large as the difference in the average perceived accuracy of the false statement between them (Figure B.1 in Supplementary Materials B). The mean interest in reading the rest of the article for respondents in the true condition (without a source) was 2.74 out of 4, whereas the mean interest for respondents in the false condition (without a source) was 3.01. More importantly, we found a pattern similar to the one presented in the main text of this paper; namely, differences among respondents receiving either true or false information are very small, regardless of source cues.

Figure A.1 shows the average treatment effects, compared to the baseline control condition (true information, no source presented), by partisanship (top) or by ideology (bottom). Similar to the results of presented in the main text, the content of the article (true vs. false,
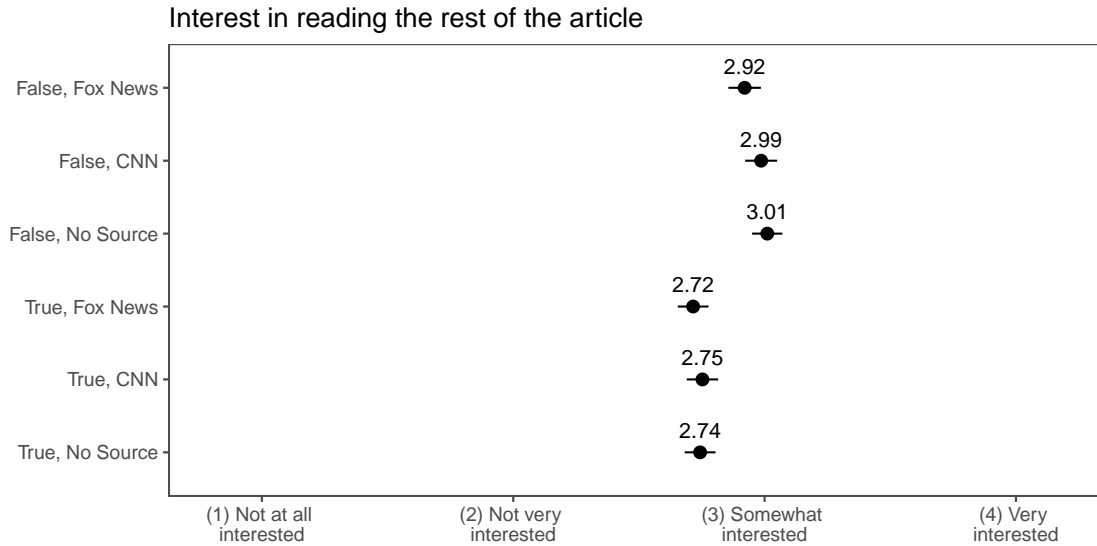
Interest in reading the rest of the article

Figure A.1: Average interest in reading the rest of the article across the six treatment conditions

without a source; $\hat{b_1}$) was a consistently significant variable explaining participants' interest in reading the rest of the article. Participants were significantly more interested in reading the rest of the article when it contained false information than true information, and this effect did not differ by ideology or partisanship.

Why do people show greater interest in reading the story with false information? We do not have an answer to this question, but one possibility is that our findings may be specific to our design. The false information materials used in our design suggested a change in policy, and this change may have been perceived as more surprising or threatening to participants. Considering that the true information alerted participants that the status quo would remain, it may have been less interesting for participants to read on, regardless of source. Future studies should formulate and test hypotheses about the effects of surprising or threatening news *independent of the effects of false news* and test them empirically.

Our Hypothesis 2 concerns the estimates for the CNN treatment with true information ($\hat{b_2}$) and for the Fox News treatment with true information ($\hat{b_3}$). As in our test of Hypothesis 1, and contrary to our prior expectation, most of the coefficient estimates are statistically
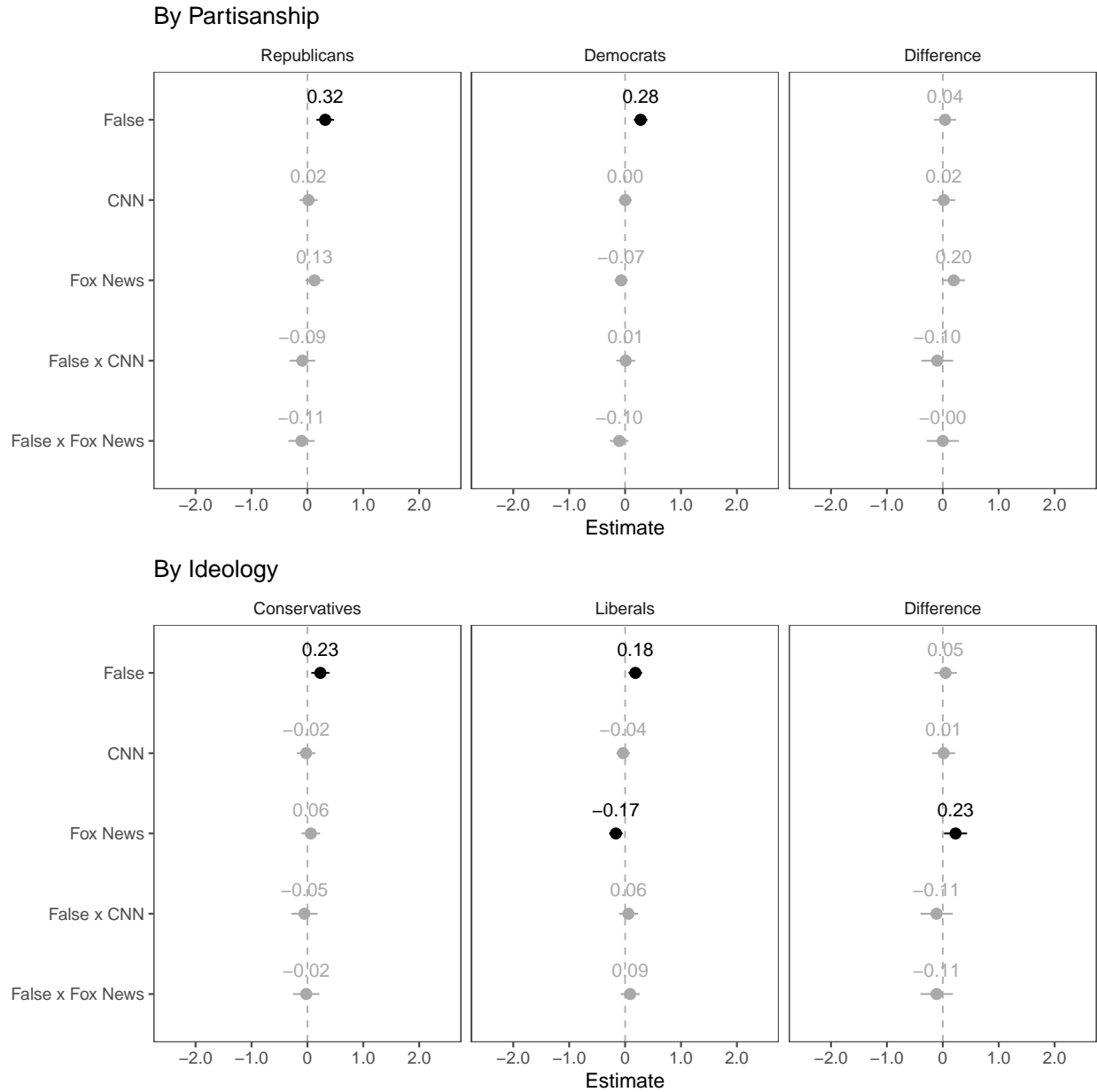
By Partisanship

By Ideology

Figure A.2: Average interest in reading the rest of the article compared to the baseline control condition (true information, no source presented) among Republicans and Democrats (top) and conservatives and liberals (bottom)

insignificant. However, Hypothesis 2 was partially, albeit not fully, supported. The bottom half of Figure A.1 shows that liberals were significantly less interested in reading the rest of the article when it was attributed to Fox News (with true information), compared to the baseline condition ($\hat{b_3} = -0.17$, $p < 0.05$), and the difference between liberals and

conservatives was also significant ($\Delta \hat{b}_3 = 0.23$, $p < 0.05$). Democrats, however, were not significantly less interested in reading the rest of the Fox News article, as compared to the baseline condition, and Republicans and conservatives were not less interested in reading the rest of the CNN article than the article with no source. These results suggest that news source has a significant negative impact on interest in reading the rest of the article for liberals exposed to the Fox News source only. It is important to note, however, that we cannot determine, more generally, whether individuals would actively seek out articles from congenial sources in the first place, as our respondents were presented with an article from a randomly chosen source in an experimental setting. Future research should design experiments to test the behavioral effects (e.g., clicking on a link to the entire news article, etc.) of various congenial and uncongenial news sources.

B Additional Figures

Figure B.1 Average perceived accuracy of the false statement across the six treatment conditions

Figure B.2 Sample treatment article (CNN, false information condition)

Figure B.3 Sample treatment article (Fox News, true information condition)

Figure B.4 Sample treatment article (No source, false information condition)

Figure B.5 Sample treatment article (No source, true information condition)

The (false) statement is accurate

False, Fox News	3.17
False, CNN	3.26
False, No Source	3.21
True, Fox News	1.44
True, CNN	1.33
True, No Source	1.36

(1) Not at all accurate   (2) Not very accurate   (3) Somewhat accurate   (4) Very accurate
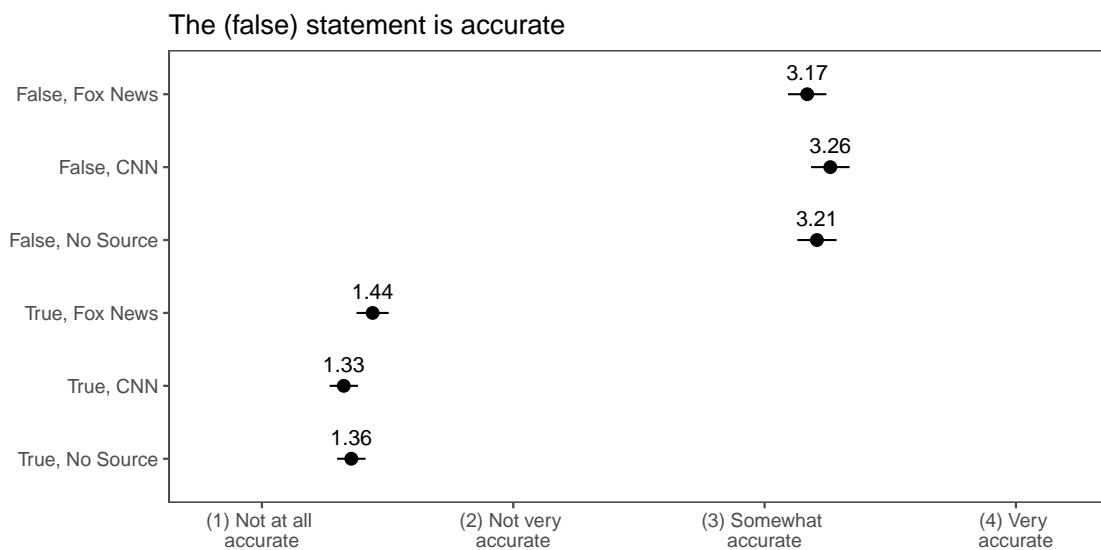
Figure B.1: Average perceived accuracy of the false statement across the six treatment conditions

Developments in health care legislation: Here's what you need to know

By Casey Williams

Published: July 21, 2017

Government sources have announced that the plan to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act has been put on hold, but new information has been released about the most recent drafts of the health care bills proposed by the House and Senate. Under the Affordable Care Act, young adults could stay on their parents' health insurance plan until they turn 26 years old. In the new health care bills proposed by the House and Senate, this provision was eliminated; young adults would lose health coverage through their parents' insurance plan when they turn 18.

Figure B.2: Sample treatment article (CNN, false information condition)

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Figure B.3: Sample treatment article (Fox News, true information condition)

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Figure B.4: Sample treatment article (No source, false information condition)

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Figure B.5: Sample treatment article (No source, true information condition)

C Exploratory Analyses

In addition to the confirmatory analyses based on our pre-registered hypothesis, we undertake further exploratory analyses to examine the robustness of our findings and to explore the heterogeneity of the treatment effects among different types of participants.

Figure C.1 shows the results of testing Hypothesis 1 based on models with control variables. Notably, these variables are independent of the treatment assignment. As expected, the results shown in Figure C.1 are very similar to Figure 3 in the main text. Note that the effect of *False × Fox News* among Democrats becomes insignificant.

Figures C.2 and Figure C.3 show the results after excluding participants who could have used search engines to check the accuracy of the statements or "speeders" who completed the survey faster than the first quartile of the distribution for response time, which was two minutes. Again, the results are very similar to our main results (Figure 1).

Figures C.4 to C.5 show the results using various subsets of participants divided based on their level of interest in politics, their political knowledge, and their trust in the media. Overall, the results found in these additional analyses suggest that there is no substantial heterogeneity in treatment effects by respondents' individual-level characteristics. Regardless of their interest in politics, trust in the media, or level of political knowledge, the single most important variable explaining respondents' likelihood of believing the false statement is exposure to the false information. The interaction effects of the false information and the CNN and Fox News sources are mostly insignificant and the differences between Democrats/liberals and Republicans/conservatives in terms of the source effects are rarely significant.

Figure C.1 Average perceived accuracy of the false statement compared to the baseline control condition (true information, no source presented) among Republicans and Democrats (top) and conservatives and liberals (bottom). *The results are based on models with control variables.*

Figure C.2 Average perceived accuracy of the false statement compared to the baseline control condition (true information, no source presented) among Republicans and Democrats (top) and conservatives and liberals (bottom). *For this analysis, we exclude participants who could have used search engines to check the accuracy of the statements.*

Figure C.3 Average perceived accuracy of the false statement compared to the baseline control condition (true information, no source presented) among Republicans and Democrats (top) and conservatives and liberals (bottom). *For this analysis, we exclude participants who completed the survey faster than the first quartile of the distribution of response time, which was two minutes.*

Figure C.4 Average perceived accuracy of the false statement compared to the baseline control condition (true information, no source presented) among Republicans and Democrats (top) and conservatives and liberals (bottom) with *high* interest in politics

Figure C.5 Average perceived accuracy of the false statement compared to the baseline control condition (true information, no source presented) among Republicans and Democrats (top) and conservatives and liberals (bottom) with *low* interest in politics

Figure C.6 Average perceived accuracy of the false statement compared to the baseline control condition (true information, no source presented) among Republicans and

Democrats (top) and conservatives and liberals (bottom) with *high* political knowledge

Figure C.7 Average perceived accuracy of the false statement compared to the baseline control condition (true information, no source presented) among Republicans and Democrats (top) and conservatives and liberals (bottom) with *low* political knowledge
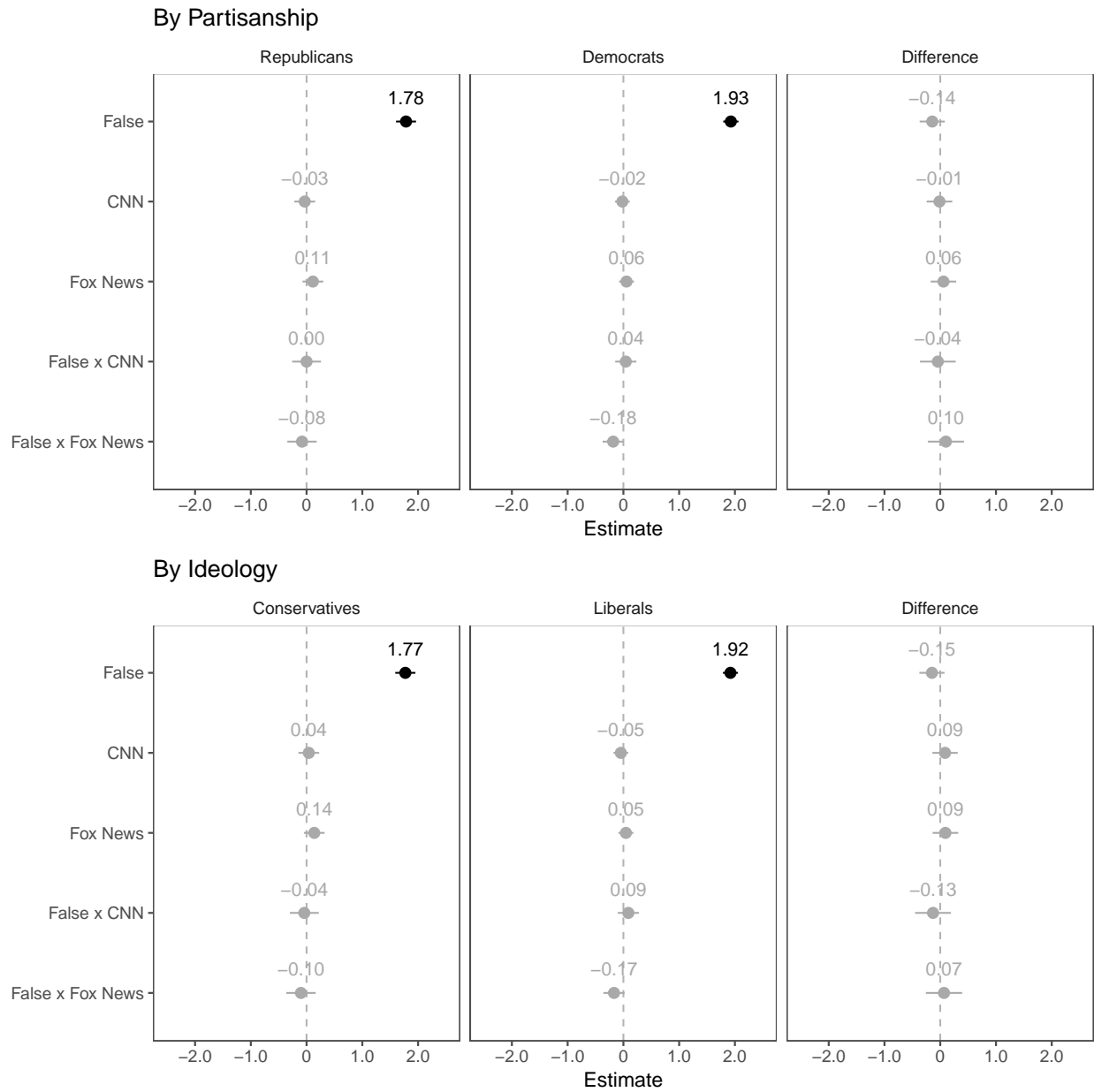
Figure C.8 Average perceived accuracy of the false statement compared to the baseline control condition (true information, no source presented) among Republicans and Democrats (top) and conservatives and liberals (bottom) with *high* trust in the media

Figure C.9 Average perceived accuracy of the false statement compared to the baseline control condition (true information, no source presented) among Republicans and Democrats (top) and conservatives and liberals (bottom) with *low* trust in the media

By Partisanship

By Ideology

Figure C.1: Average perceived accuracy of the false statement compared to the baseline control condition (true information, no source presented) among Republicans and Democrats (top) and conservatives and liberals (bottom). *The results are based on models with control variables.*
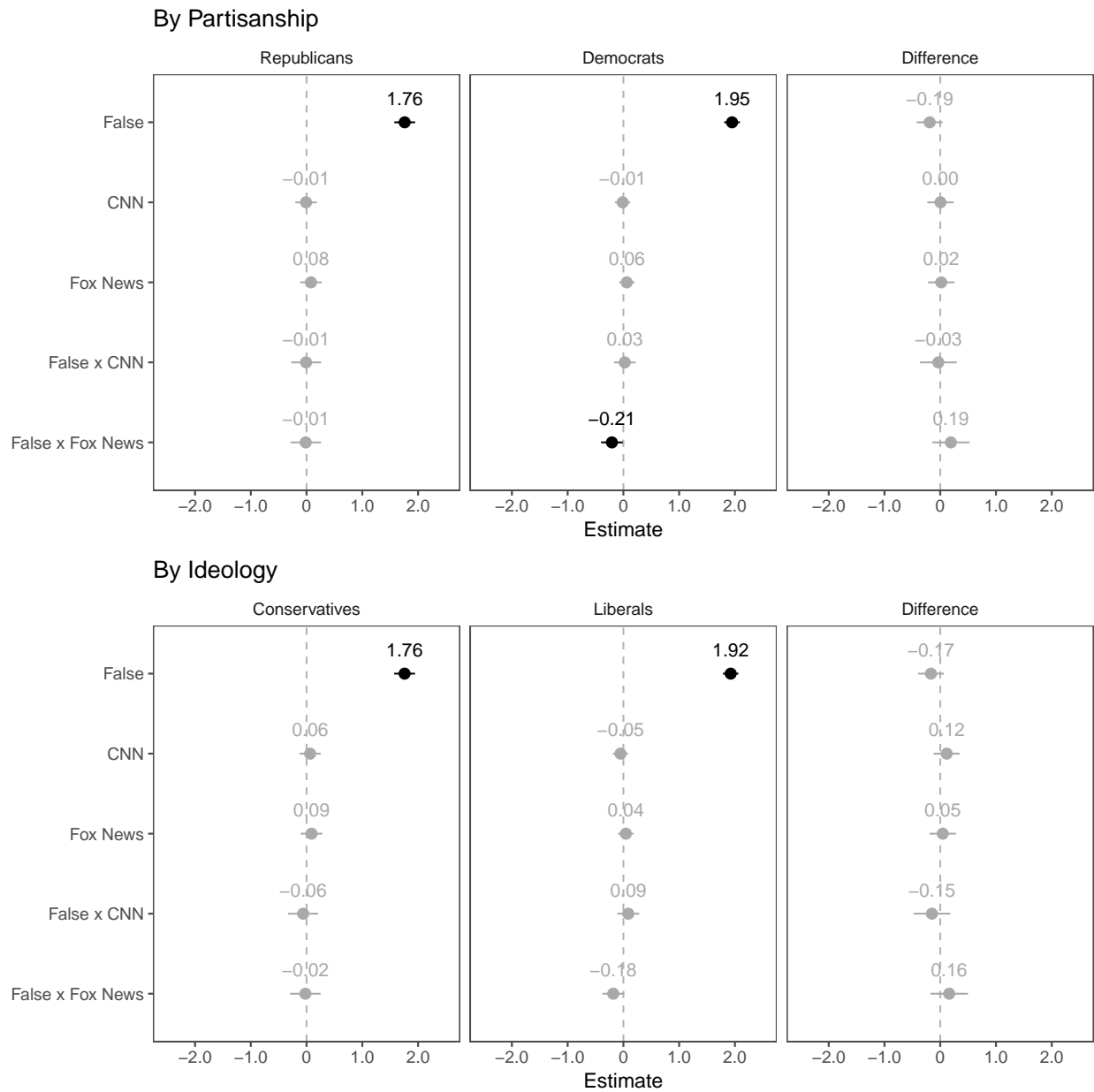
By Partisanship

By Ideology

Figure C.2: Average perceived accuracy of the false statement compared to the baseline control condition (true information, no source presented) among Republicans and Democrats (top) and conservatives and liberals (bottom). *For this analysis, we exclude participants who could have used search engines to check the accuracy of the statements.*
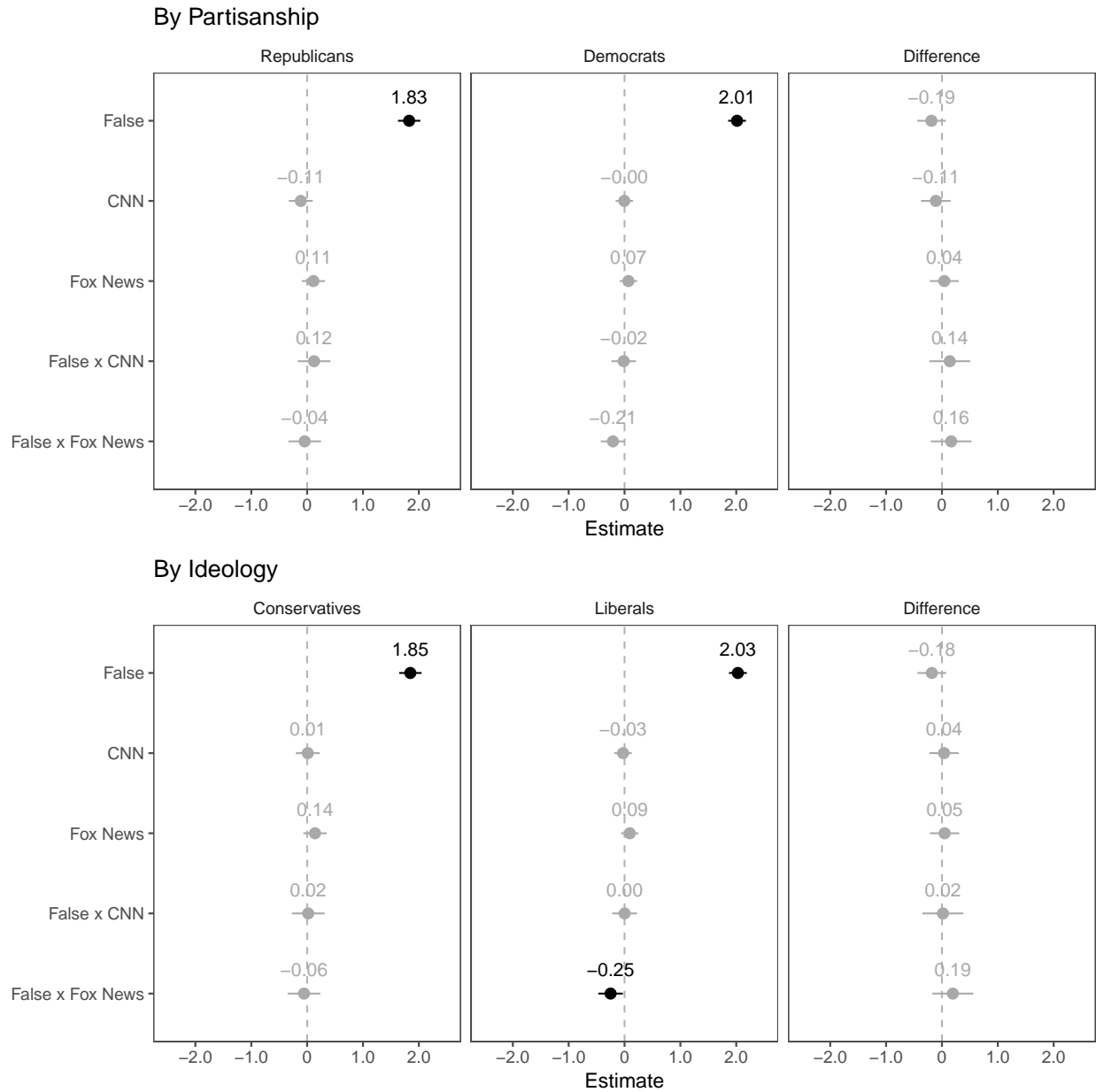
Figure C.3: Average perceived accuracy of the false statement compared to the baseline control condition (true information, no source presented) among Republicans and Democrats (top) and conservatives and liberals (bottom). *For this analysis, we exclude participants who completed the survey faster than the first quartile of the distribution of response time, which was two minutes.*
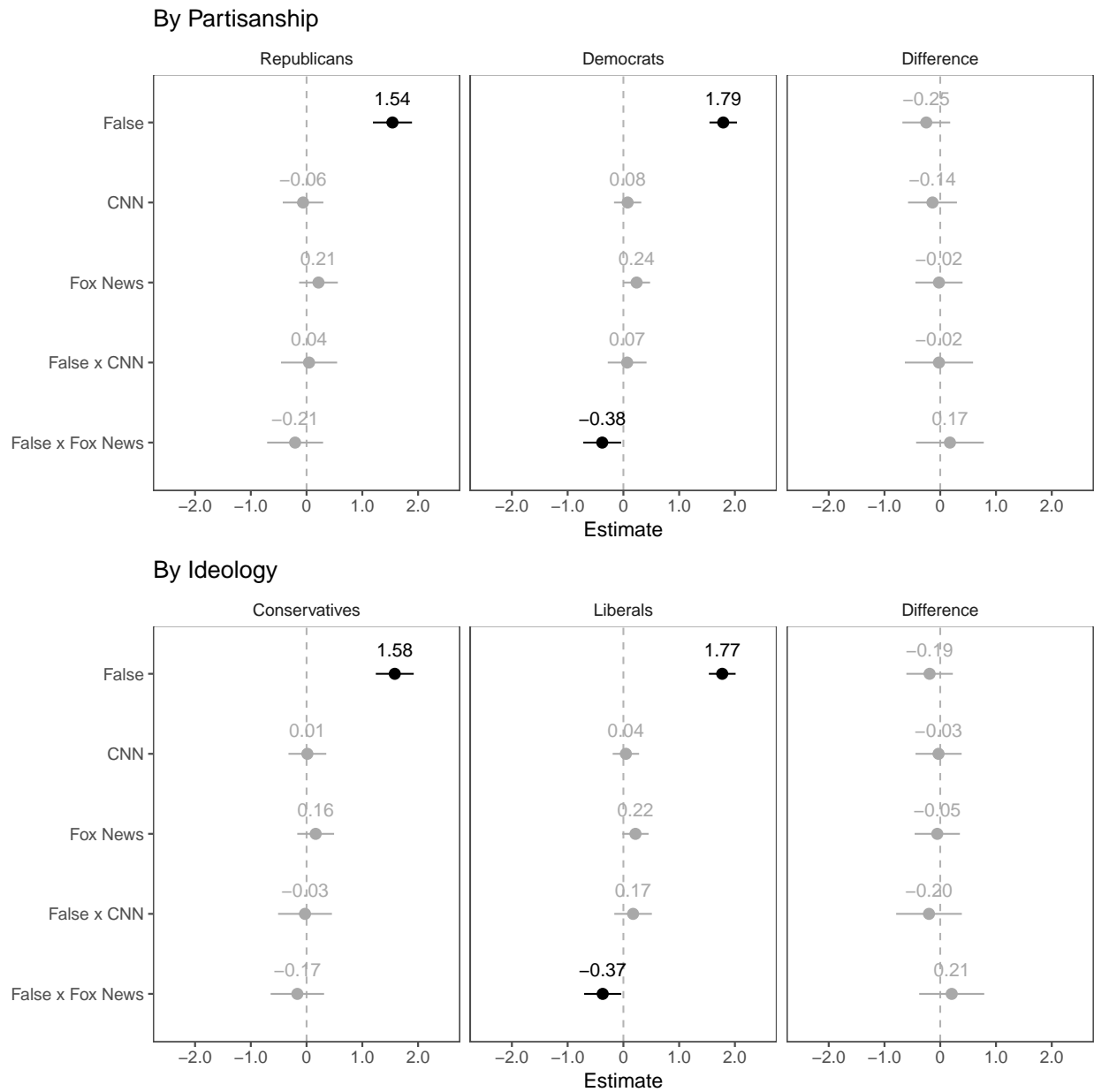
By Partisanship

By Ideology

Figure C.4: Average perceived accuracy of the false statement compared to the baseline control condition (true information, no source presented) among Republicans and Democrats (top) and conservatives and liberals (bottom) with *high* interest in politics
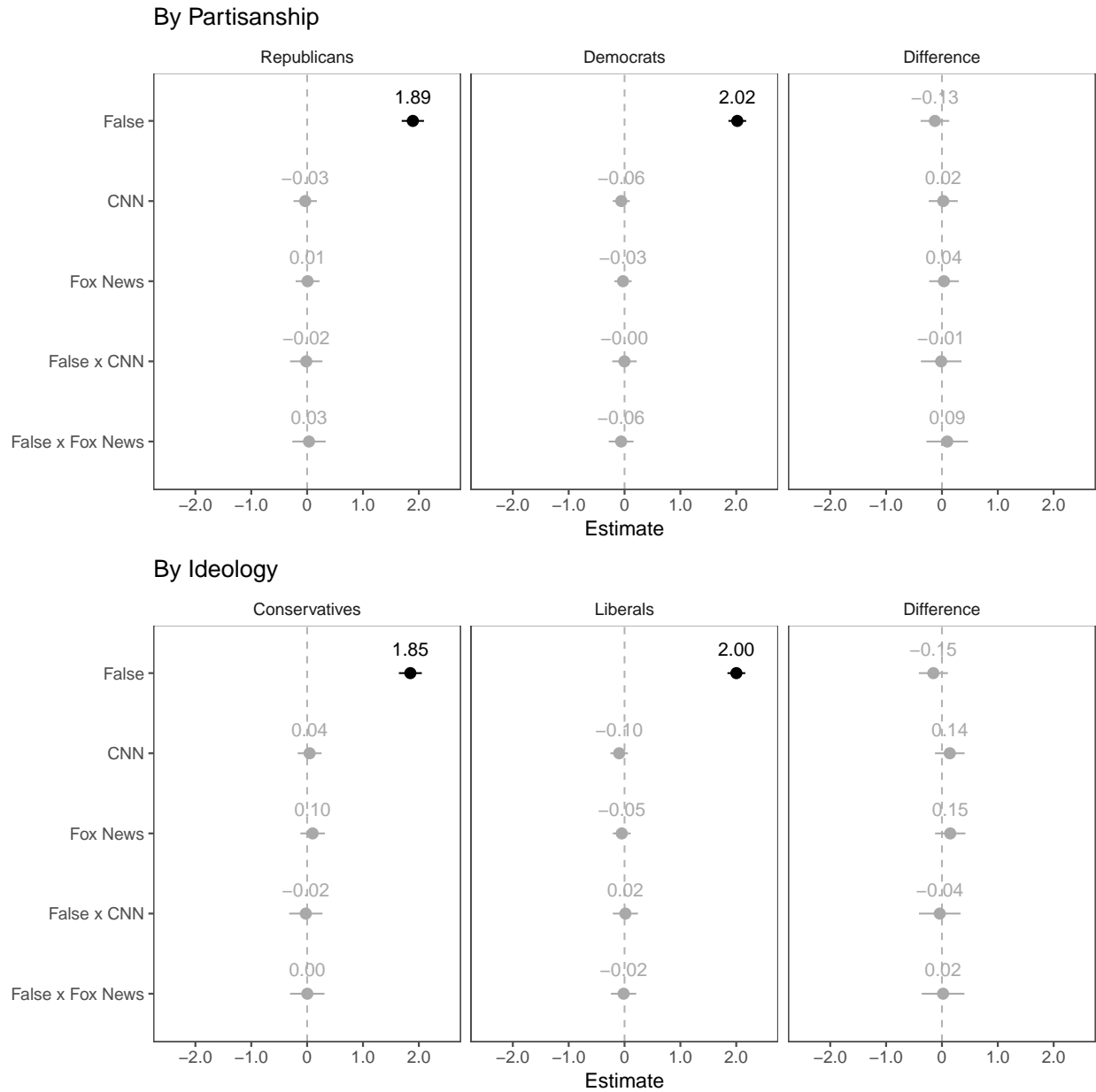
By Partisanship

	Republicans	Democrats	Difference
False	1.89	2.02	−0.13
CNN	−0.03	−0.06	0.02
Fox News	0.01	−0.03	0.04
False x CNN	−0.02	−0.00	−0.01
False x Fox News	0.03	−0.06	0.09

Estimate

By Ideology

	Conservatives	Liberals	Difference
False	1.85	2.00	−0.15
CNN	0.04	−0.10	0.14
Fox News	0.10	−0.05	0.15
False x CNN	−0.02	0.02	−0.04
False x Fox News	0.00	−0.02	0.02

Estimate

Figure C.5: Average perceived accuracy of the false statement compared to the baseline control condition (true information, no source presented) among Republicans and Democrats (top) and conservatives and liberals (bottom) with *low* interest in politics
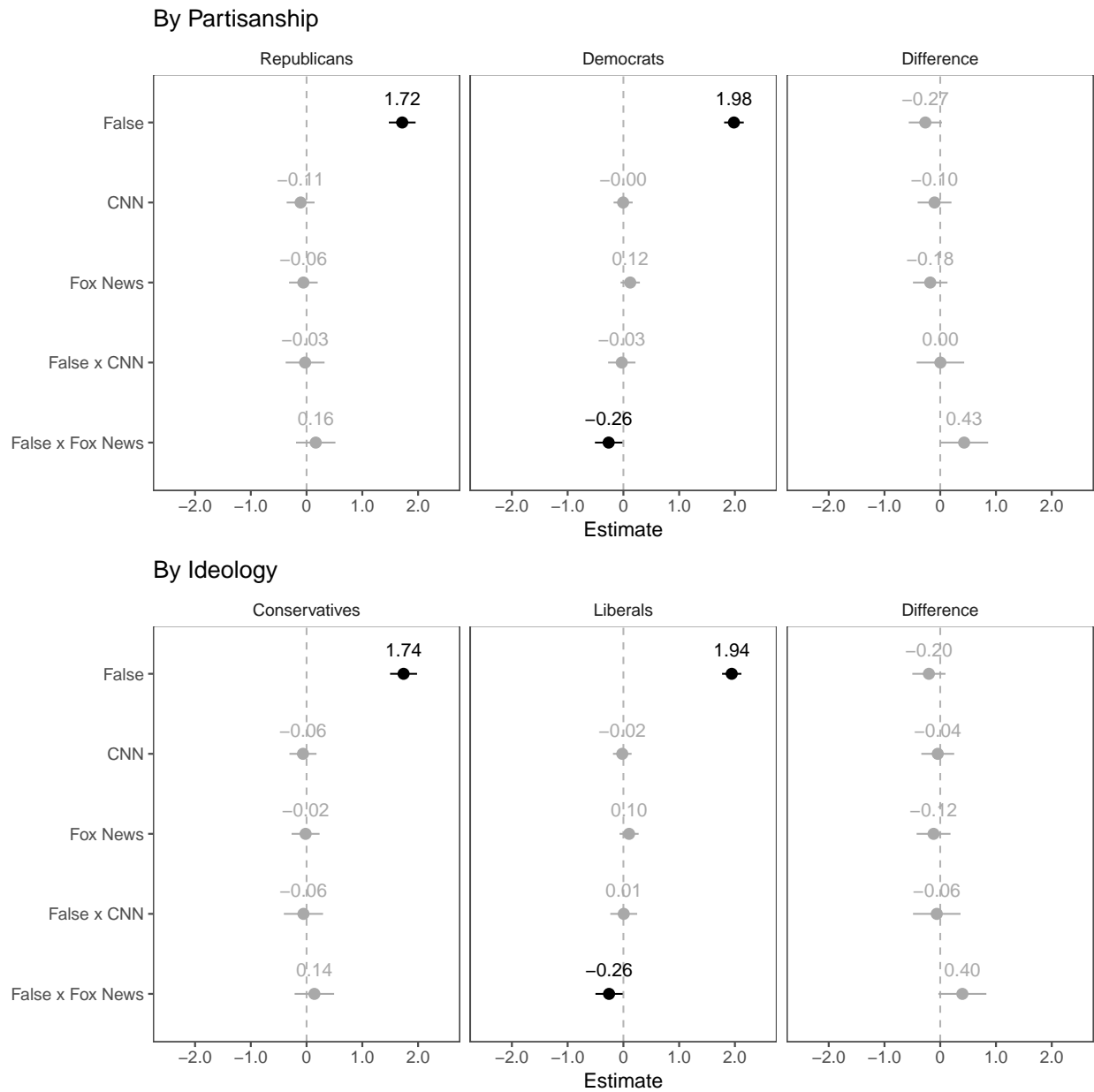
Figure C.6: Average perceived accuracy of the false statement compared to the baseline control condition (true information, no source presented) among Republicans and Democrats (top) and conservatives and liberals (bottom) with *high* political knowledge
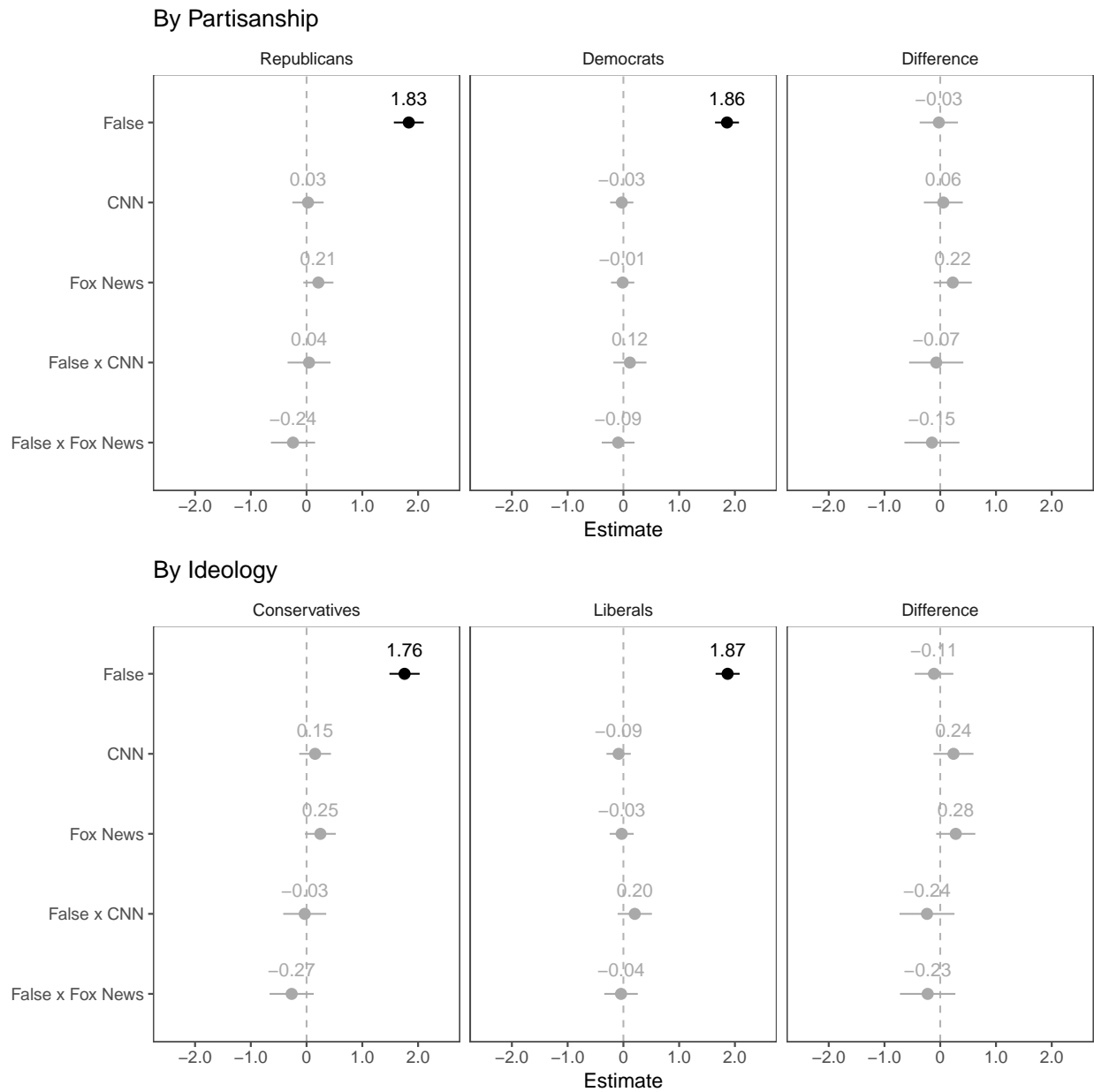
By Partisanship

By Ideology

Figure C.7: Average perceived accuracy of the false statement compared to the baseline control condition (true information, no source presented) among Republicans and Democrats (top) and conservatives and liberals (bottom) with *low* political knowledge
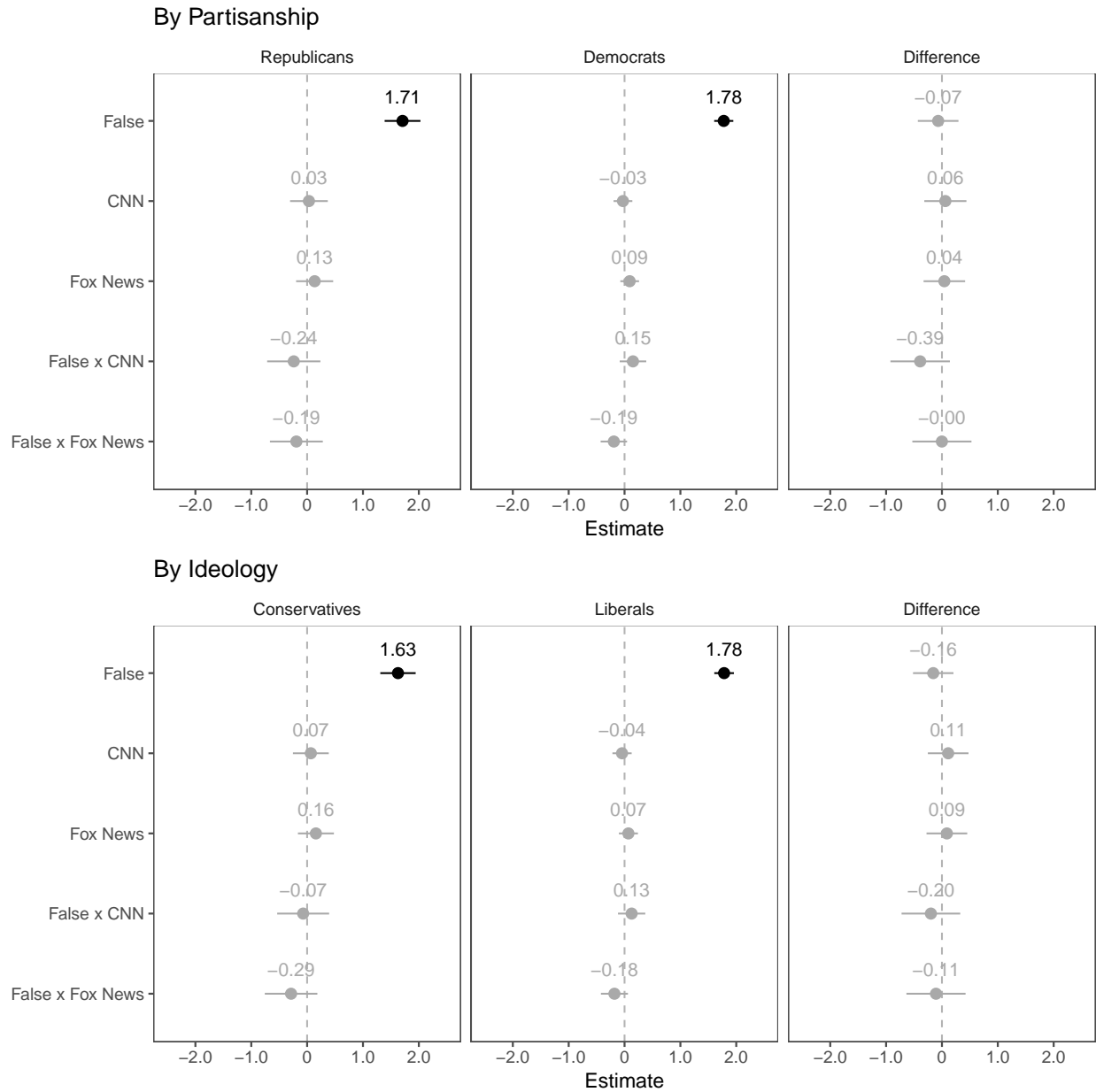
By Partisanship

By Ideology

Figure C.8: Average perceived accuracy of the false statement compared to the baseline control condition (true information, no source presented) among Republicans and Democrats (top) and conservatives and liberals (bottom) with *high* trust in the media
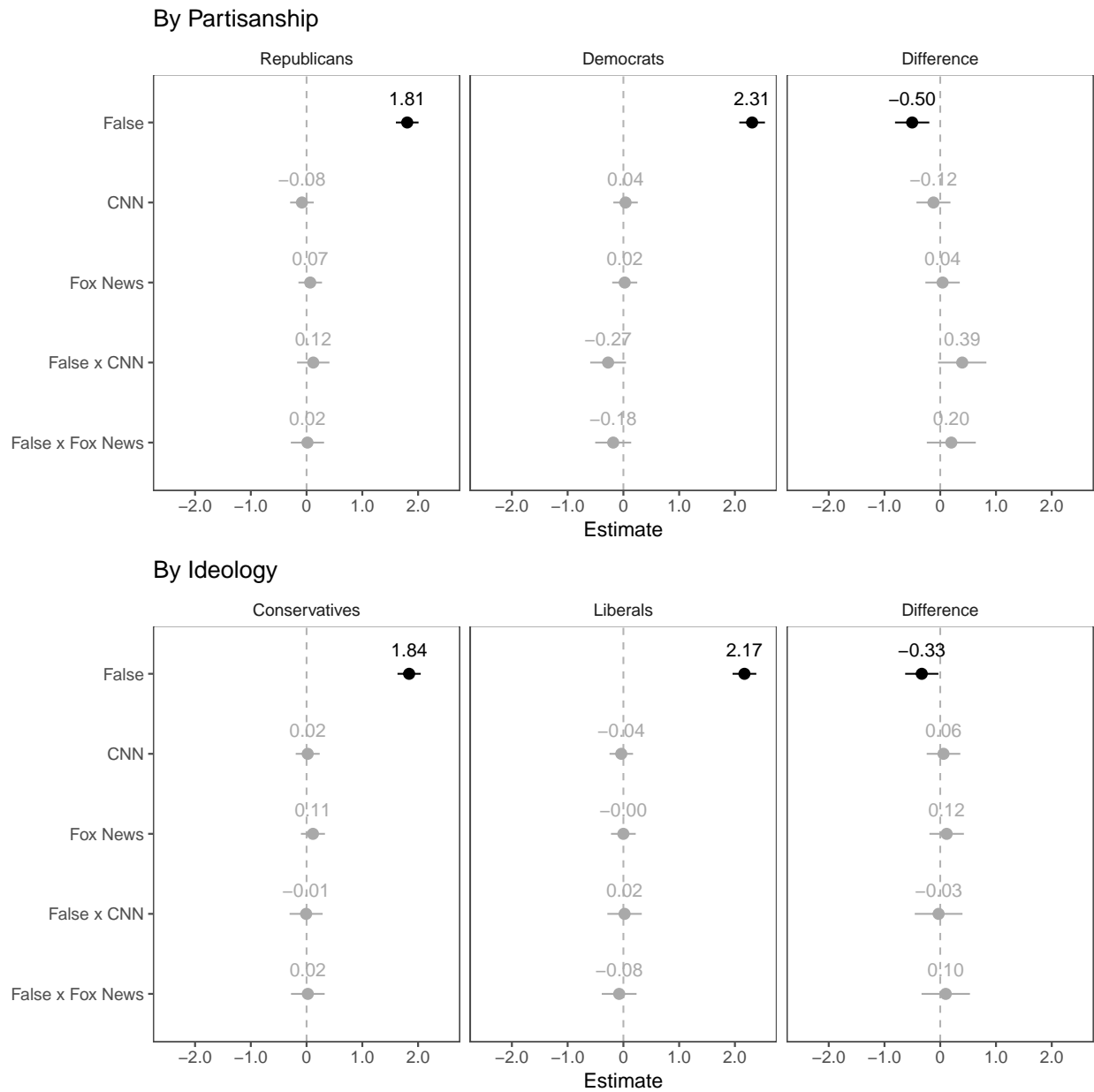
By Partisanship

By Ideology

Figure C.9: Average perceived accuracy of the false statement compared to the baseline control condition (true information, no source presented) among Republicans and Democrats (top) and conservatives and liberals (bottom) with *low* trust in the media

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