

Update on PolitiFact's effort to consistently post corrected or updated stories to its page of corrected or updated fact checks.

“Fact Checks”

PolitiFact's 2020 website update forced me to adopt new survey methods. I used two searches to build lists of stories PolitiFact had corrected or updated but failed to list on its page of corrected or updated stories.

https://www.google.ca/search?as_q=&as_epq=&as_oq=correction+update&as_eq=&as_nlo=&as_nhi=&lr=&cr=&as_qdr=all&as_sitesearch=politifact.com%2Ffactchecks%2F&as_occt=any&safe=images&as_filetype=&tbs=

https://www.google.ca/search?q=correction+OR+update*+site:politifact.com/article/&lr=&as_qdr=all&tbs=cdr:1.cd_min:1/1/2020.cd_max:5/31/2020&ei=lcndXrutD8Tp_QbKqp2oBw&start=20&sa=N&ved=2ahUKEwj7y6apu_HpAhXEdN8KHUpVB3U4ChDy0wN6BAgLEc4&biw=1920&bih=941

The first search under domain “politifact.com/factchecks/” looked for “correction”+“update”

<https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2020/may/11/chuck-todd/nbcs-chuck-todd-meet-press-leave-out-key-context-s/>

<https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2020/feb/06/free-thought-project/new-yorks-longtime-stargazing-permit-draws-new-att/>

<https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2020/may/22/blog-posting/italian-government-doesnt-want-arrest-bill-gates/>

Only three fact checks with corrections or updates failed to make PolitiFact's list in five months! That shows progress. Is that level of accuracy indicative of "scrupulous" compliance with PolitiFact's own policy on corrections and updates?

"Articles"

How about PolitiFact's articles? Were any of those corrected and updated? Were corrected or updated articles added to PolitiFact's list of corrected or updated "fact-checks"? Do articles count as fact checks only if PolitiFact describes them that way?

This search was in domain "politifact.com/article/" for "correction"+"update"

<https://www.politifact.com/article/2020/jan/24/fact-checking-hoaxes-and-conspiracies-about-corona/>

<https://www.politifact.com/article/2020/mar/25/fact-checking-coronavirus-claims-pennsylvania-poli/>

<https://www.politifact.com/article/2020/jan/07/how-iran-and-united-states-came-brink/>

<https://www.politifact.com/article/2020/mar/04/fact-checking-bernie-sanders-attacks-joe-biden-ove/>

I found two articles tagged with "Corrections and Updates."

PolitiFact sorts entries on its corrections and updates page by the date the claim was made. Articles do not have that information, so it looks like that lack prevents tagged articles from posting to the page.

<https://www.politifact.com/article/2020/may/28/fact-checking-trump-twitter-enters-uncharted-wa-ter/>

<https://www.politifact.com/article/2020/may/08/fact-checking-plandemic-documentary-full-false-c-on/>

Summary

I counted 25 corrections in 2020 taking place before the month of June. I found three fact check articles that lacked the “Corrections and updates” tag. Those fact checks lacking tags failed to appear on PolitiFact’s page of corrected or updated fact checks. Assuming I found all the failures the failure rate comes to 10.7 percent (3/28).

Fact-checking organizations agree to “scrupulously” follow their policies on corrections. It is up to the IFCN to decide whether a 10.7 percent failure rate counts as “scrupulous” compliance.

I found two of six corrected or updated articles had the “Corrections and updates” tag added. That counts as a new and positive development. However, none of the corrected or updated articles appear on PolitiFact’s page of corrected or updated stories. Readers would not know of updates to the stories they had read except by looking at the story again looking for an editor’s note at the top or the bottom. Clicking through on the “Corrections and Updates” tag leads to a list of corrected factchecks from the politifact.com/factchecks/ domain with no listings from the politifact.com/article/ domain.

It seems that starting in May 2020 PolitiFact has started using the “Corrections and Updates” tag on articles, but a website design issue keeps those from appearing on the list of corrected or updated stories.

Reminder: This type of problem has plagued PolitiFact from the outset (2007 and on), but in spite of complaints lodged with the IFCN in the two assessment years prior to this one, the problems persist. The IFCN has always assured the public it has verified PolitiFact’s compliance with the IFCN statement of principles.