

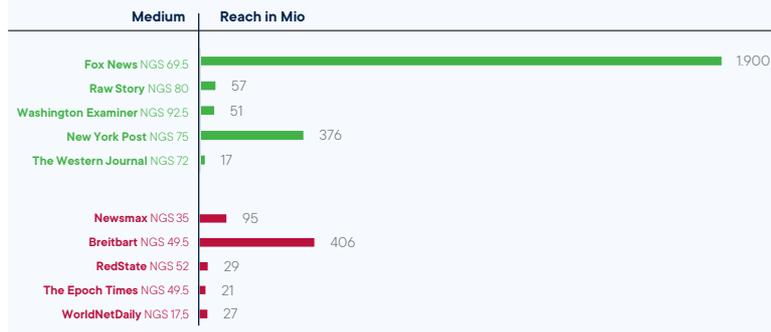


# Media Analysis of the US Election: Hunter Biden's Laptop "Scandal"

Insights from **pressrelations**

# Introduction

## Top 5 Media (trustworthy and untrustworthy) Media Coverage according to BUZZ\* (descending)



This analysis is focused on the media impact the current allegations against **Hunter Biden** have, broken down to the main topics - **allegations of corruption regarding Ukraine and China and allegations of child abuse**. This analysis' goal is not to debunk or to fact-check the yet so far unproven allegations but to analyse the impact social media and non-trustworthy news sites have on the current media attention.

The analysis is based on a set of 196 U.S. online media, consisting of 158 trustworthy and 38 untrustworthy media sources (according to NewsGuard's analysis of these media outlets).

The data shows that the publication of a New York Post article on October 14th was also the **start of extraordinary activity of non-trustworthy media outlets** (with a NewsGuard-Score lower than 60/100) and social media activities. The allegations against Hunter Biden have been spread since late September by untrustworthy media and conservative actors on social media, but during the past 2 weeks after the NYP article **untrustworthy online media activity increased enormously** compared to the first half of October.

While the NYP article claims to have access to data from a laptop that belongs to Hunter Biden and accuses him and his father of corruption regarding Burisma in Ukraine, social media quickly creates further conspiracy theories.

A live infoboard can be found [here](#).



## Introduction

Right after the publication all online and social media attention towards the Ukraine topic declines while **allegations of corruption regarding China** are **pushed massively on social media** simultaneously with the NYP article.

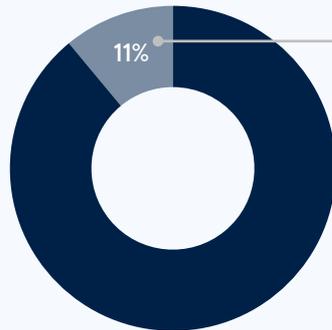
Only one day later disinformative media outlets like **Revolver News on Oct. 15th** (NG-Score 39.5/100), an untrustworthy news outlet that has been **promoted by Trump on Twitter before**, started to spread **allegations of child abuse** which are also tied to the China story. This story has been amplified by conservative pundits like **Alex Jones** (Infowars) and even made it into mainstream media, primarily through right-leaning outlets like **Fox News** and **Newsmax**, and even **Donald Trump Jr. repeated the allegations**.

While TV stations with high journalistic standards like CNN only mentioned the allegations in 7 broadcasts since Oct. 14th, media outlets like Fox News Channel exploit the topic and mention it in 68 broadcasts in the same time period. **Therefore, media attention of trustworthy outlets expectedly declines quickly after the 14th. However, they are forced to pick up on the allegations again due to the massive push of social and untrustworthy media and conservative influencers.**

During the past 2 weeks this topic-cluster around Hunter Biden was responsible for 11% of Joe Biden's total online news coverage, which makes that **topic nearly twice as prominent as the ongoing discussions about racism**, which only made 7% of the news coverage.

### Online News Coverage (Buzz\*)

October 14, 2020 – November 1, 2020



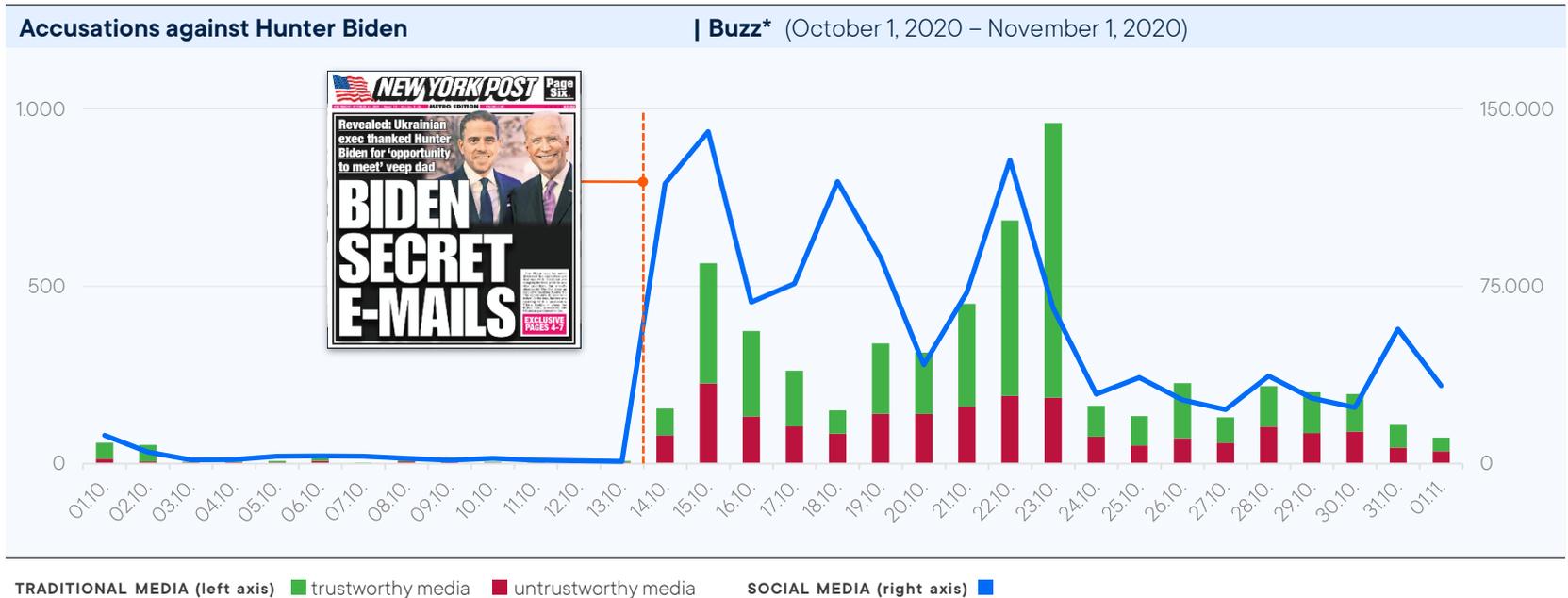
The topic-cluster around Hunter Biden was responsible for 11% of Joe Biden's total online news coverage

TIMELINE OF THE ALLEGATIONS

## Social and untrustworthy media push the allegations into traditional online news

**Social media coverage explodes after Oct. 14th.** The first **peak on Oct. 15th** consists not only of speculations and allegations of corruption in **Ukraine** that have been fueled by the NYP article the day before. On the same day, allegations of corruption regarding **China** are spread massively on social media and primarily untrustworthy online media, making these allegations the biggest subtopic which also dominates the next two peaks on Oct. 18th and 22nd.

Ties to **child abuse** start to spread especially from Oct. 17th to Oct. 20th, but even though right-leaning influencers and untrustworthy media tries to push the topic, it doesn't get much momentum compared to the corruption allegations (see next slides). Due to the massive social media attention more **trustworthy online** news are picking up the allegations around Oct. 23rd to **summarize what was spread during the past days and to debunk disinformation.**



BIDEN VERSUS CLINTON

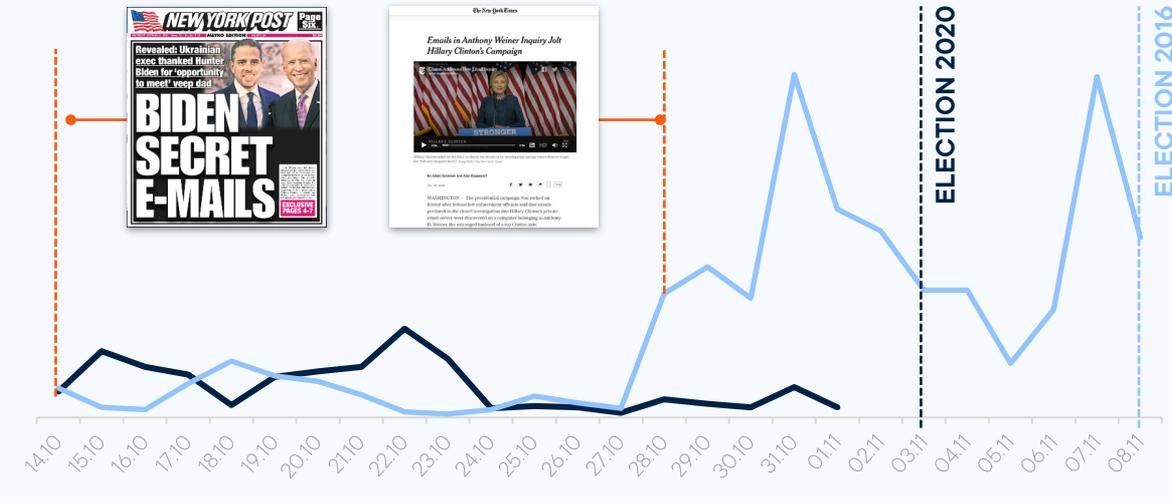
# "Laptop scandal" does not achieve media response of Hillary Clinton's 2016 "email scandal"

On October 28, 2016, James Comey announced that the **FBI** had begun its **investigation of Hillary Clinton's private email server**. On November 7, the day before the election, the issue was at its highest point.

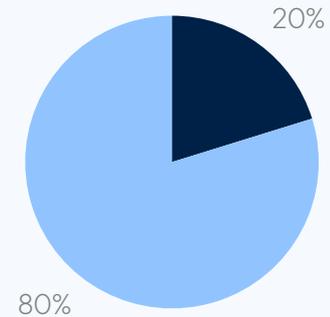
In 2020, **the similar topic related to Hunter and Joe Biden achieved only 1/5 of the media response**. The fact that the FBI is also investigating Hunter Biden has so far only been spread by media that NewsGuard considers **untrustworthy**, e.g.: [Breitbart](#) (NG score: 49.5/10).

**No trustworthy US media outlet** with a score of 100 picked up the topic. In Europe, the [Daily Mail](#) (NG score: 77), among others, reported entirely in the spirit of the Trump camp, and the next day the Stern journalist Gernot Krampfer took over the unproven accusations: "[Secret contact data and porn bills - the data disaster of Hunter Biden](#)."

## Scandals in comparison | Buzz\*



## Media presence in comparison



■ HUNTER BIDEN LAPTOP SCANDAL ■ HILLARY CLINTON E-MAIL SCANDAL

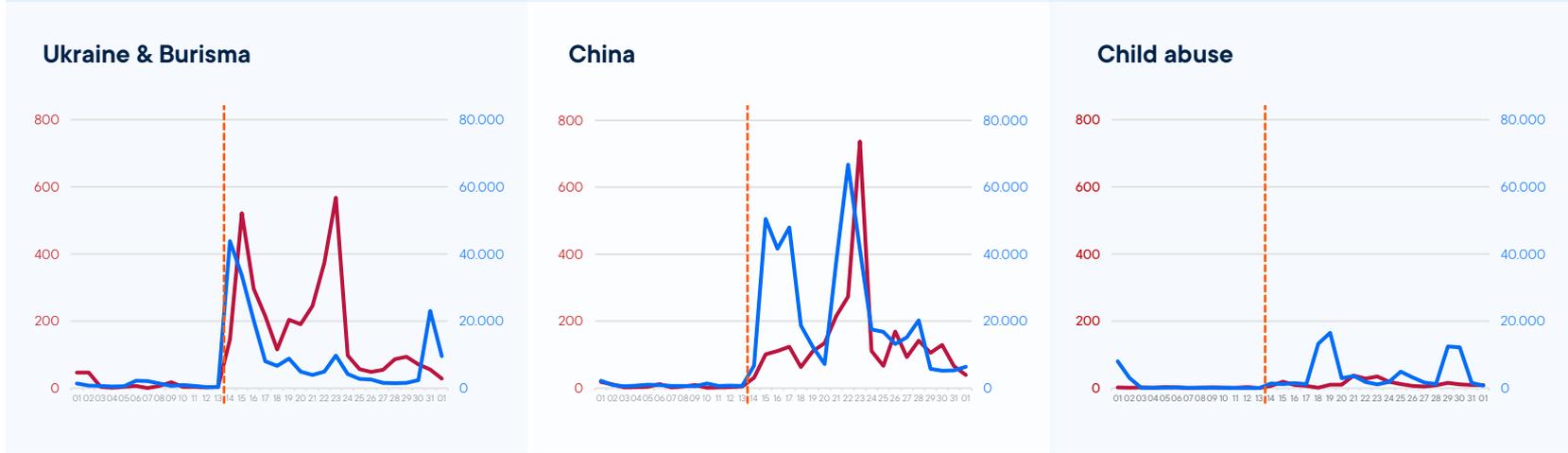
MAIN ALLEGATIONS IN COMPARISON

## Accusations regarding China becoming the dominant issue

The allegations of possibly illegal business-related behavior of Joe Biden and his son stood in the room long before but were almost not covered by traditional and social media at all. Since the October 14th, however, the **NYP article** heated up the discussion tremendously. A widely reported "downplaying" of this new issue by Twitter and Facebook took place in the days thereafter, including a so-called Streisand-Effect. At first especially the connections to **Ukraine** were taken up. Traditional (delayed by a day) and social media went to this issue more or less simultaneously and in comparable intensity. A second peak, with slightly more media coverage but with less interest on social media, took place on the 23rd.

The Bidens' connections to **China** were also taken up from the beginning, but at first wildly pushed for three days by more or less social media only. The media at first hesitated to report about this to a bigger extent until the 23rd. – also driven by a second social media outburst. The China topic caught up with the Ukraine topic and outperforms it until today. The rumors about the inappropriate behavior of Hunter Biden regarding **underage women** is a relatively small issue (see next page). The media coverage is generally very rare (except on the 21st and 23rd). Social media got into this especially on the 18th and 19th als well as on the 29th and 30th.

Accusations against Hunter Biden | Buzz\* (October 1, 2020 – November 1, 2020)



TRADITIONAL MEDIA ■ SOCIAL MEDIA ■ NYP ARTICLE RELEASE DATE |

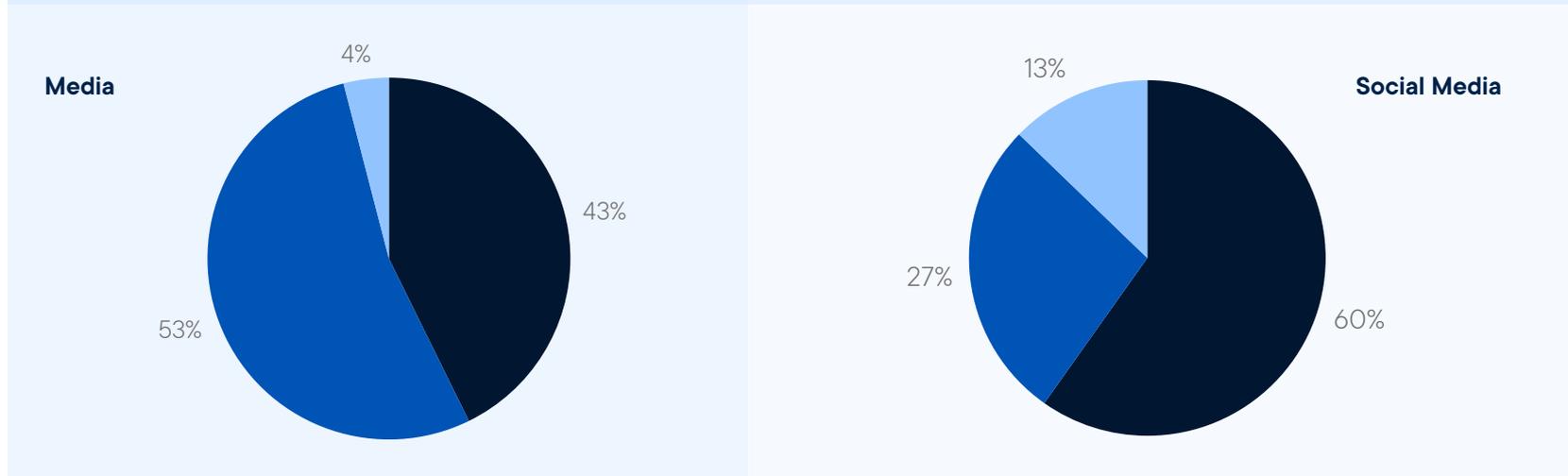
MAIN ALLEGATIONS IN COMPARISON

## Accusations regarding China were pushed extremely on social media

The proportions of the three **variants of the allegations** against the Bidens are compared below. In the overall view, covering the complete analyzed period of time, the **China**-related issues are especially stretched in the social media arena (60%). The media covers this to a lesser extent (43%), also because the China-related issues took off later in October with peak on 23rd.

The **Ukraine**-related topics were dominantly taken up in the first phase and were pushed aside by the China issues. **Social Media** pays less attention to this (27%) than traditional media (53%). The rumors about inappropriate behavior of Hunter Biden regarding **underaged** women is (still) a relatively small issue – especially in traditional media (only 4%).

Accusations against Hunter Biden | Buzz\* (October 1, 2020 – November 1, 2020)



CHINA ■ UKRAINE & BURISMA ■ CHILD ABUSE ■

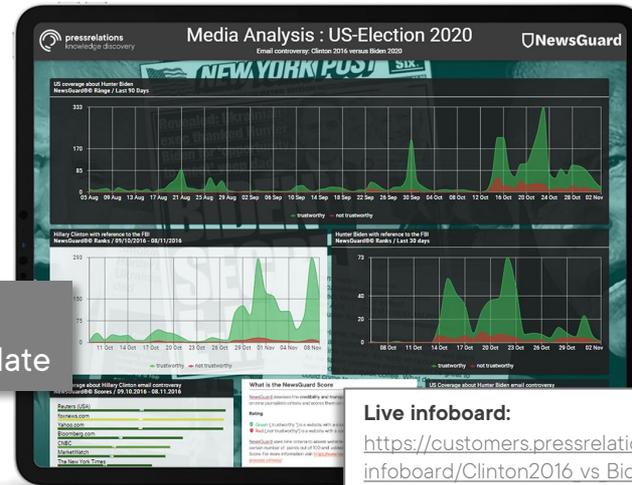
TRUMPS CAMPAIGN AGAINST HUNTER BIDEN EVAPORATES

## The scandal around Biden and his son does not manage to generate more attention in trustworthy media

The social media **Twitter and Facebook** initially hindered the spread of the alleged laptop scandal via their platforms. Many "**mainstream media**" such as the New York Times, the Washington Post or CNN hardly report on the accusations. **In contrast to 2016**, when eleven days before the presidential election, the then FBI director James Comey officially announced investigations against the presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, **the alleged scandal about Biden is not lastingly covered in the media shortly before the election**. Even classic amplifiers of "news" that could help Donald Trump in his election campaign against Joe Biden, such as Fox News, **doubted the credibility** of Rudy Giuliani's alleged evidence against Hunter Biden.

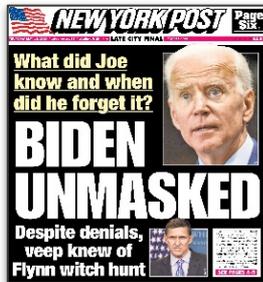
As a result, President Donald Trump's complaints are growing louder and louder: "Why aren't the mainstream media reporting on the laptop story of Hunter Biden?" This may also have something to do with the fact that **trusted media** in particular do **not want to be made use of for a Trump campaign**, like in 2016, which may have a decisive influence on the outcome of the election.

Always  
up to date



# Appendix

- New York Post Dossier
- NewsGuard Score
- Contact



This website mostly adheres to basic standards of credibility and transparency.

Score: 75/100



Does not repeatedly publish false content (22 points)



Gathers and presents information responsibly (18)



Regularly corrects or clarifies errors (12.5)



Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly (12.5)



Avoids deceptive headlines (10)



Website discloses ownership and financing (7.5)



Clearly labels advertising (7.5)



Reveals who's in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest (5)



The site provides names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information (5)

The New York Post (NY Post) is a **conservative tabloid newspaper**, and it is a nationwide daily newspaper that has one of the **widest coverages in the USA**. The print edition currently ranks first by distribution, ahead of even the Wall Street Journal and the New York Times.<sup>1</sup> The website of the newspaper ranks **among the top 100 news websites** in the USA with approximately 110 million visitors and is financed by advertising.

Founded as early as 1801, the New York Post is also one of the oldest daily newspapers in the USA and has been **part of Rupert Murdoch's conglomerate** since 1976 (except for a brief gap between 1988 and 1993). Its publisher is the NYP Holdings Inc, a subsidiary of Murdoch's News Corp. which also includes the Wall Street Journal and Barron's.

The New York Post, which had previously held a liberal orientation, has increasingly adopted a **conservative political stance** since 1976. At the same time, it has become a sensation-seeker with a page six column added by Murdoch, which contains gossip about stars and starlets, scandals, and crime stories.

Today, the coverage of the New York Post as well as nypost.com consists mainly of NY local news, politics, sports, real estate, and a strong lifestyle/fashion section with gossip on famous people. The articles are **rather loose and lurid**, the NY Post is also known for its sensationalist headlines.

The political website AllSides rates the news section of the NY Post with **"slightly right"** and the **opinion section with "right"**.<sup>2</sup>

On November 26, **the NY Post officially endorsed Donald Trump as president for the election.**

## What is the NewsGuard Score

NewsGuard assesses the **credibility and transparency** of news websites based on nine journalistic criteria and scores them on a **scale from 0 to 100 points**.

### Rating:

-  **Green** („trustworthy“) is a website with a score of **60 points or higher**
-  **Red** („not trustworthy“) is a website with a score **below 60 points**

NewsGuard uses nine criteria to assess websites. Each criterion is worth a certain number of points out of 100 and added together they form the NG-Score. For more information visit the [website](#).

### Criteria and their corresponding weighting points:

- Does not repeatedly publish **false content** \_\_\_\_\_ 22
- Journalists gather and present information **responsibly** according to journalistic criteria \_\_\_\_\_ 18
- Regularly **corrects** or **clarifies** errors \_\_\_\_\_ 12.5
- Handles the **difference** between news and **opinion** responsibly \_\_\_\_\_ 12.5
- Avoids **deceptive** headlines \_\_\_\_\_ 10
- Website discloses **ownership and financing** \_\_\_\_\_ 7.5
- **Clearly** labels **advertising** \_\_\_\_\_ 7.5
- Reveals who's **in charge**, including possible **conflicts of interest** \_\_\_\_\_ 5
- The site provides **information** about the journalists \_\_\_\_\_ 5



**This website mostly adheres to basic standards of credibility and transparency.**

---

**Score:** 75/100

---

-  **Does not repeatedly publish false content** (22 points)
-  **Gathers and presents information responsibly** (18)
-  **Regularly corrects or clarifies errors** (12.5)
-  **Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly** (12.5)
-  **Avoids deceptive headlines** (10)
-  **Website discloses ownership and financing** (7.5)
-  **Clearly labels advertising** (7.5)
-  **Reveals who's in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest** (5)
-  **The site provides names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information** (5)

## CONTACT

**Any questions? Get in touch with us!**

---

Florian Klaus, *Head of International Business Development*

T +49 211 1752077 – 32

[florian.klaus@pressrelations.de](mailto:florian.klaus@pressrelations.de)

Janine Castronovo, *Project and Analytics Manager*

T +49 30 200 07 75 – 37

[janine.castronovo@pressrelations.de](mailto:janine.castronovo@pressrelations.de)

Axel Oepkemeier, *Project Manager Media Analysis*

T +49 30 200 07 75 – 33

[axel.oepkemeier@pressrelations.de](mailto:axel.oepkemeier@pressrelations.de)

Anna-Maria Hollain, *Project Manager Media Analysis*

T +49 30 200 07 75 – 19

[anna.hollain@pressrelations.de](mailto:anna.hollain@pressrelations.de)

**USA**

4516 Burseson Rd

Austin, Texas

T 001 888 5442100

[usa@pressrelations.com](mailto:usa@pressrelations.com)

**GERMANY****Düsseldorf**

pressrelations GmbH

Klosterstraße 112

40211 Düsseldorf

T 0049 211 1752077 – 0

F 0049 211 1752077 – 13

**Berlin**

T 0049 30 200077521

[germany@pressrelations.de](mailto:germany@pressrelations.de)

pressrelations.com

pressrelations and its partners are politically independent and do not support political parties, platforms, campaigns, or candidates.  
If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.