

## Funding the Future

Article URL

<https://www.taxresearch.org.uk/Blog/2025/08/14/who-shapes-the-news/>

Published: January 12, 2026, 7:04 pm

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The Overton Window decides what can – and cannot – be said in politics.

But who builds this “window of acceptability”? In this video, I argue it’s not the public and not politicians – it’s the billionaire-owned mainstream media.

I explain:

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- How news agendas are framed.
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- Why radical ideas are kept out of debate.
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- The role of BBC, Sky and ITV in amplifying media bias.
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- How we can push back.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bw7OT8edfJA?si=LaY2I8a1-\\_UK9MTS](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bw7OT8edfJA?si=LaY2I8a1-_UK9MTS)

This is the audio version:

[https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=wq7p6-19316a9-pb&from=pb6admin&amp;share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&amp;skin=f6f6f6&amp;font-color=auto&amp;logo\\_link=episode\\_page&amp;btn-skin=c73a3a](https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=wq7p6-19316a9-pb&from=pb6admin&amp;share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&amp;skin=f6f6f6&amp;font-color=auto&amp;logo_link=episode_page&amp;btn-skin=c73a3a)

This is the transcript:

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If you are a politics nerd, or if you are just interested in politics and how it is framed by the media, then something called the Overton Window will be of interest to you, and in this video, I want to explain what the Overton Window is, who creates it, and how it affects the way in which we understand the news stories that we are presented with day in, day out by the media that is all around us.

My fundamental point that I'm going to make in this video is that the Overton Window - and I'll explain where the name came from, very soon - is created by the owners and funders of the mainstream media in this country, and not by us as the people of the UK, and not even by our politicians. We are being fed an agenda that is shaping politics before even politicians get to the subject.

So what is this Overton Window? It was named after a man called Joseph Overton, who created the idea of there being a range of acceptable ideas within politics at any point in time, and he said this in the 1990s.

He wrote an academic paper, and in it, he suggested that there were six categories of ideas at any point in time within the political domain.

There were the unthinkable ideas: those things that were so extreme with regard to the mainstream that nobody talked about them.

And then there were the radical ideas: those things that were just considered to be impossible, even though they could be understood.

Then there were the acceptable ideas: things that could at least be discussed, and which were looking as though they could enter the mainstream.

After which, there were sensible ideas: those things that politicians were happy to embrace and adopt because they were, and this is the fifth category, popular as a consequence of which those items became policy. Which is the sixth category of ideas that Joseph Overton talked about.

So he went from unthinkable to radical, to acceptable, to sensible, to popular, to policy. That is the direction in which the Overton Window moves. And the idea of an opinion creator is to move something from being unthinkable, and maybe radical, into being acceptable and then sensible, and popular, and so into policy. And I have in fact done that in my career with regard to something called country-by-country reporting, which is how large multinational companies are now taxed. But the point is that normally, most things that get within the Overton Window, which are those ideas which are sensible and popular, so they become policy, are there because the mainstream media has decided that this is the case.

The politicians follow where the window is, by and large. They very rarely set it. Although, and I have to be honest about this, Nigel Farage is an exception here. He has

dragged the Overton Window in his direction with regard to immigration, but that makes him an exception that proves the rule rather than the person who proves the rule doesn't work.

So the fact is that many ideas never get an airing in our media. They therefore never get the chance to become either acceptable or popular because the mainstream media owners decide that they don't like them.

Let's take an obvious example of this, and that is the taxation of wealth. The owners of our media do not like the taxation of wealth, so they treat it as radical, or even unthinkable, and suggest that this is impossible, and therefore it should never become acceptable and shouldn't be talked about: it must be dismissed at source and therefore politicians are deeply disinclined to engage with this very obviously necessary idea.

And what we're up against is the fact that these mainstream media owners frame their stories in their newspapers and on their radio programmes - because, remember, there are both radio stations and television broadcast channels, which are now owned by billionaires - and they use these to shape public opinion. That's why they're willing to lose money on things like owning GB News, which is obviously a sink into which large amounts of money are always going to be poured, but which lets its owners shape the news agenda.

And the reason why they want to do that is that politicians then detect and adopt the positions that are framed by these billionaires and their media.

And we can see this day in, day out, although newspapers are declining in their significance in terms of their number of sales, just listen to the morning news on the BBC, ITV or Sky, or listen to the BBC news agenda on Radio Four, for example.

Every single one of those morning news programmes is dominated by discussion about what is in the morning's newspapers. They feature the papers. They review the papers. They talk about the papers. They show the headlines from the papers. They discuss the stories in the papers. It's as if the only news agenda that people in the BBC, Sky and ITV could notice is the one that is created for them by the newsprint media. Excepting some cases, like The National newspaper that I write for in Scotland, which is totally ignored by the BBC, which is pro-unionist, and which therefore ignores a newspaper which talks about independence for Scotland.

But by and large, the newspapers - the right-wing newspapers, the papers which are owned by right-wing moguls - are what frame the news stories that the public hears, and they therefore create what is called the Overton Window of Acceptability, which gives rise to policy.

And it is this dominance by the news media that suppresses alternative perspectives and discourages dissent from it. The neoliberal consensus is kept safe by these people

because they ensure that it is their stories that get out from them through their papers into the BBC, ITV, Sky and from there into the debates that we have in our homes and on social media, and everywhere else.

So, this is a fact, and if we don't recognise it, we are not realising that the news that we hear is biased before we ever get to hear it.

We only hear it with certain spins attached, and that is my point.

That is why things like this channel and other channels that you might watch on YouTube are so important.

It is why Twitter, or X, or Blue Sky, or wherever else you might follow the news, are also important, because there you will hear independent views. There are unfettered sources of information which are not controlled by those who seek to demand that it is only their opinion that is heard within this so-called Overton Window of political acceptability.

It is those who do not play by those rules who do, however, create the change.

So remember that if you watch the mainstream media, you're getting a distorted view of the world. And that is really important, because if you are to have political understanding, you've got to understand the bias within it because the whole basis on which we understand politics is by understanding the relationships of power which create the stories that we are told, which in turn therefore inform our opinions, which in turn inform our actions, which in turn lead to our decisions, which in turn have consequences in the real world. And that's what these people want you to not understand because they want you to blindly follow their instructions to be a good neoliberal, and shut up.

If you are interested in economic justice, or the future of democracy, or reform that will deliver for our well-being, including with regard to providing the young people of this country with the jobs that they deserve for a lifetime ahead of them, and to preserve the planet on which we live so that there is a chance of life for everybody, then you've got to shift the Overton Window yourself.

So what do you think? We've put forward a poll on this issue, and it's an unusual poll for us because you can, in fact, answer every single question on it. There is no restriction on the choices you can make.

We're asking, do you think that the mainstream media does frame the news agenda through what is called the Overton Window, so that what we get is biased news?

And do you think that, as a consequence, the BBC, Sky and ITV deliberately promote those biased views on their news channels?

And do you, as a consequence, think that they are participants in this promotion of the billionaire owners' agendas?

What is more, do you think that we have a duty to promote alternative views, and do you support us in doing so?

Let us know because what we get as news shapes our future, and therefore, this thing called the Overton Window is really important because shifting it in the direction of a future for everyone is absolutely, fundamentally important now.

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### **Poll - you have four votes**

[poll id="180"]

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