For this analysis, I selected a set of variables from the General Social Survey (GSS) to explore the relationship between education and political views in the United States. The chosen variables include the respondent's age (AGE), highest degree earned (DEGREE), and sex (SEX). Political leanings are gauged using variables ranging from extremely liberal to extremely conservative (POLVIEWS) and political party affiliation (PARTYID). I also included variables on attitudes toward gun control (GUNLAW), opinions on abortion (ABANY), and the race of the respondent (RACECEN1). These variables provide a view of respondents' demographic background, political leanings, and opinions on key social issues. By examining the relationship between these variables, while considering demographic factors, we can gain insights into how these opinions influence political ideology and party affiliation.

The decision to focus on this topic stems from a deeply personal connection to recent political events. The 2024 election was a pivotal moment that affected me, and even though some time has passed since the results were announced, the ongoing ICE raids and their impact on communities across the country have kept these issues at the forefront of my mind.

 By analyzing how these variables correlate with political views and attitudes towards specific issues like gun control and abortion, I hope to gain a better understanding of the factors that shape political discourse in our country. This research feels particularly relevant and meaningful to me as I grapple with the divisions exposed by recent elections and their ongoing consequences.

Through this analysis, I aim to explore whether certain demographics are associated with more nuanced political views or particular stances on contentious issues. Understanding these relationships could provide valuable insights into the role of demographics in fostering informed citizenship and potentially bridging political divides.

Distribution of Age
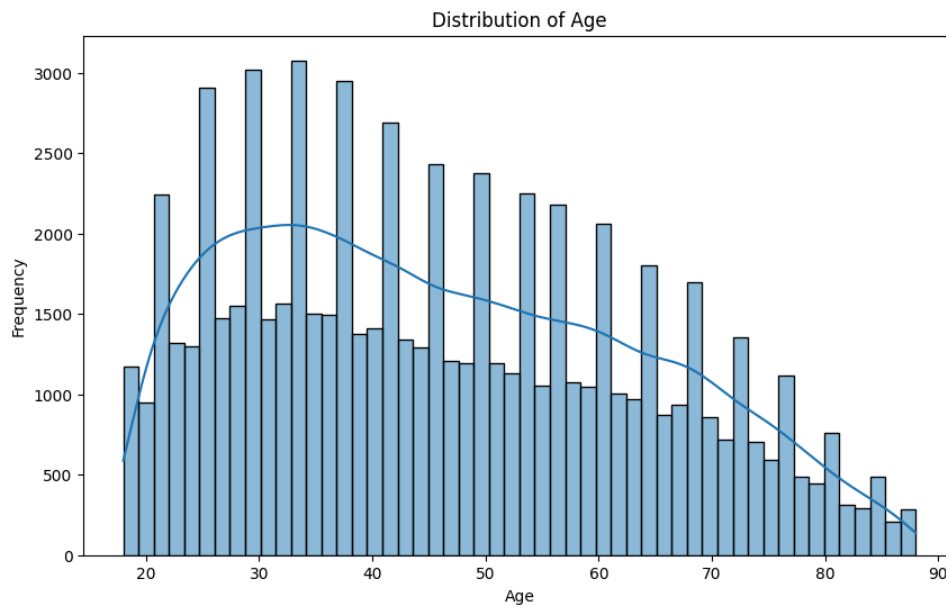
The histogram of age shows the distribution of respondents' ages in the dataset. The age distribution appears to be slightly right-skewed, with a peak around the 40-60 age range. This suggests that a significant portion of the respondents are middle-aged. The presence of a few older respondents, above 80, indicates that the dataset includes a diverse age range, though younger individuals, below 20, are less represented



Distribution of Highest Degree
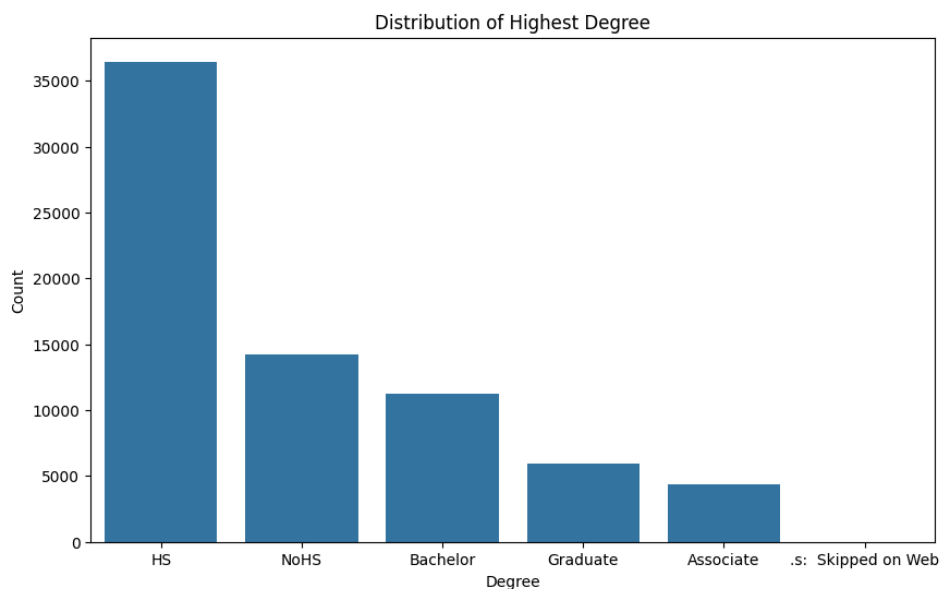
The bar plot for the highest degree earned by respondents reveals that the majority of respondents have a high school diploma (HS), followed by those with no high school degree (NoHS). Bachelor's and graduate degrees are less common, with associate degrees being the

least frequent. This distribution reflects the educational attainment levels in the general population, where higher degrees are less prevalent.

The Heatmap of Degree vs. Political Views visualizes the relationship between the highest degree earned and political views. The color intensity represents the number of respondents falling into each combination of education level and political view. A large number of respondents, regardless of the education level, identify as "Moderate, middle of the road." Most respondents with a High School Degree are politically moderate and there are few respondents who classify as "Extremely conservative" or "Extremely liberal," especially among those with an associate degree
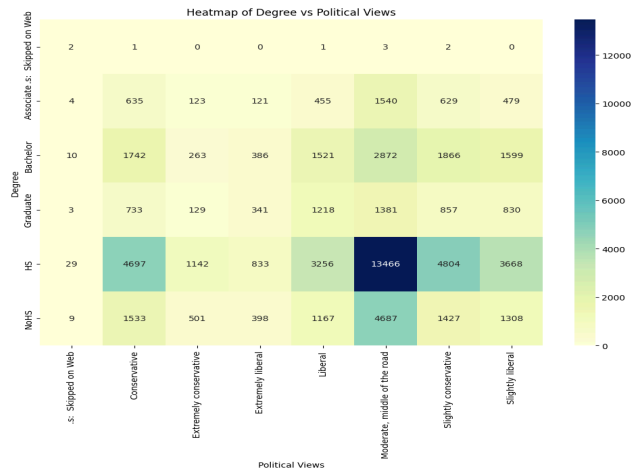


The Heatmap of Party ID vs Political Views visualizes the relationship between the respondent's political party affiliation and their expressed political views. As with the previous heatmap, color intensity corresponds to the frequency of respondents within each pairing. Individuals who identify as "Independent (neither, no response)" are more likely to be politically "Moderate, middle of the road". Those who identify as "Strong Republican" are more likely to be "Conservative" and those who identify as "Strong Democrat" are more likely to classify themselves as "Liberal".
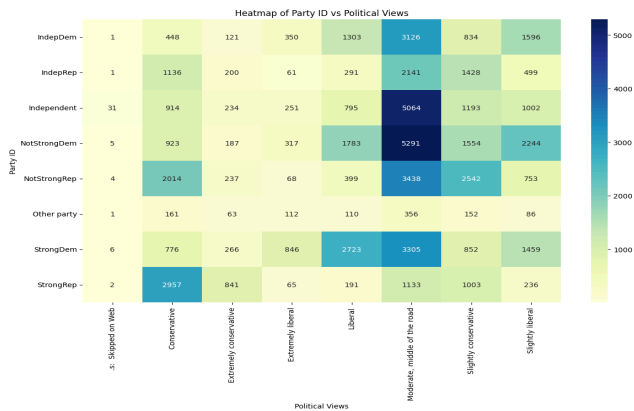
The General Social Survey (GSS) data showed some interesting trends and correlations that both supported and contradicted some of my early assumptions about political beliefs and educational attainment as I investigated the relationships in the dataset. These relationships were driven by current political events like the 2024 election and persistent problems like ICE raids.

The first significant trend I saw was that "Moderate, middle of the road" political beliefs were prevalent at all educational levels. It was evident from the Degree vs. Political Views Heatmap that most respondents, irrespective of their level of education, classified themselves as politically moderate. In terms of promoting bipartisan dialogue, this trend may appear positive, but it also poses significant issues. Many Americans may be disconnected from major ideological divides, as suggested by the political middle ground. It may be seen as an indication of stability, but it also suggests a possible lack of political consciousness or involvement. Many people may not actively participate in political discussions or may not have strong enough opinions about political ideas to take radical positions.

Furthermore, a significant number of respondents who had only completed high school described themselves as "Moderate." This could support the notion that people are more likely to identify with the political center when they have less education since they are less likely to have strong political beliefs or expertise.

The association between political party affiliation and political opinions was further established by the Party ID vs. Political Views Heatmap. It was interesting to observe that people who identified as "Strong Republicans" were nearly always categorized as "Conservative," and people who identified as "Strong Democrats" were almost always "Liberal." This points to a deep partisan division in which party affiliation and political opinions are highly correlated. But what was striking was the sizable percentage of Democrats who identified as "Moderate." This middle-ground stance may be a reflection of an increasing number of people who are fed up with severe polarization, whether as a result of political impasse or discontent with the more divisive elements of the Democratic Party. Although political opinions seem to be greatly influenced by party affiliation, the moderate positions of Democrats and Independents may indicate that socioeconomic and educational criteria are now more important in influencing political opinions than party allegiance alone.

The Histogram of Age, in addition to party affiliation and education, offered a crucial framework for comprehending these patterns. With a peak between the ages of 40 and 60, the age distribution is slightly biased to the right, indicating a cohort of middle-aged respondents who may have lived through periods of both political stability and upheaval. It's interesting to notice that, despite being less numerous, older respondents (those over 80) would have witnessed important historical changes that shaped their political opinions throughout time.

The age distribution can provide context for whether or not different age groups exhibit differences in political ideas since the bulk of members of political parties are closely connected with particular political views. A greater representation of younger respondents (those under 20) in the survey, for example, may indicate a shift toward more liberal viewpoints, maybe in reaction to issues that younger demographics are more likely to emphasize, such as social justice and climate change. The results allow for further research into how political opinions change with age, particularly in light of the influence of generational experiences on political convictions, even though these younger people are underrepresented in the data.

The majority of respondents in the GSS sample have a high school education, followed by those without one, according to the bar plot displaying the highest degree achieved. Graduate degrees are somewhat less popular, with bachelor's degrees coming in second. This distribution roughly reflects the general levels of educational achievement among Americans. Higher education (college and graduate degrees) is less prevalent in this sample, though, which raises the possibility of an underlying trend in which more radical political opinions are associated with higher educational attainment. By examining those with more education and determining whether they have a more liberal or conservative inclination than their peers with only a high school education, this theory can be investigated.

The General Social Survey data offered an intriguing look at political beliefs and how they interact with demographic factors including age, party affiliation, and level of education. The overwhelming inclination of respondents to identify as "Moderate" was the most notable finding. This may indicate stability, but it may also indicate a lack of political participation. Though the moderate viewpoints inside the Democratic Party were a prominent exception, the correlation between party affiliation and political opinions further exacerbated the nation's growing partisan differences. The data shows that, although its influence is nuanced and entangled with other demographic variables, schooling does seem to influence political opinions.

In addition to highlighting the state of politics today, these findings serve as a starting point for future research on how American political discourse is changing, particularly in light of the country's continued political polarization. By gaining a deeper understanding of the factors that influence political conduct, we may be able to identify solutions to some of the divisions that have surfaced in recent years.