

**Education and Social Justice Prioritization in Baltimore County: Analyzing the Influence
of Educational Attainment on Voting Behavior**

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Poli 309

Hypothesis

I hypothesize that in a comparison of Baltimore County voters, individuals with a college degree or higher are more likely to prioritize social justice issues in their voting decisions, compared to those without a college degree.

Introduction & Review of the Model's Prediction

Social justice issues have increasingly become a focal point in modern politics. Topics like racial equality, gender rights, LGBTQ+ protections, and climate change dominate conversations, especially during election cycles. Educational attainment plays a crucial role in shaping how people approach these topics. Studies repeatedly show that individuals with more education are not only more engaged with these issues but also tend to align with progressive values and policies that aim to address them.

The "diploma divide" describes the ideological and behavioral gaps between college-educated voters and those without degrees. People with higher education levels often support Democratic policies, particularly those tied to cultural and moral values. College environments and workspaces expose individuals to diverse viewpoints and critical discussions that can influence their voting behavior. Research by Yeaji Kim and others emphasizes how education fosters civic participation and awareness, particularly in advocating for social justice issues. Additionally, scholars like Ahearn, Brand, and Zhou explore how higher education impacts political decision-making by exposing individuals to broader societal issues.

This study uses data from the 2024 UMBC Battleground Exit Poll to analyze the impact of education on voters in Baltimore County. The goal is to assess whether individuals with higher educational attainment prioritize social justice more than those without.

Exit Poll Results

Data Analysis

The 2024 UMBC Battleground Exit Poll provided rich insights into voters' priorities. To explore the relationship between education levels and social justice prioritization, responses were analyzed using Python. Here's an example of how the data was processed:

Python

```
# Connor Morris Poli 309 Pt2 Proj Code
```

```
# Heat map for poll results for my essay
```

```
import pandas as pd
```

```
import seaborn as sns
```

```
import matplotlib.pyplot as plt
```

```
# Load the dataset
```

```
data = pd.read_csv(r'[YOUR FILE PATH GOES HERE])
```

```
# Data Cleaning and Filtering
```

```
education_map = {
```

```
#shorten for essay, full code in github
```

```
}
```

```
data['edu'] = data['edu'].astype(float).map(education_map)
```

```
education_order = [
```

```
#shorten for essay, full code in github
```

```
]
```

```
data['edu'] = pd.Categorical(data['edu'],
```

```
categories=education_order, ordered=True)
```

```
data['issues'] = data['issues'].fillna('') # Replace NaN
```

```
with empty strings
```

```
data_expanded = data.assign(
```

```
    SocialJusticePriority=data['issues'].str.split(',')
```

```
).explode('SocialJusticePriority') # Split 'issues' into
```

```
rows
```

```

data_expanded['SocialJusticePriority'] =
data_expanded['SocialJusticePriority'].str.strip()

data_filtered =
data_expanded[data_expanded['edu'].notnull()]

data_filtered =
data_filtered[data_filtered['SocialJusticePriority'].notnul
l()]

priority_map = {
#shorten for essay, full code in github
}

data_filtered['SocialJusticePriority'] =
data_filtered['SocialJusticePriority'].map(priority_map)

# Group by education and priority to calculate normalized
counts

summary = (
    data_filtered.groupby(['edu', 'SocialJusticePriority'])
    .size()

```

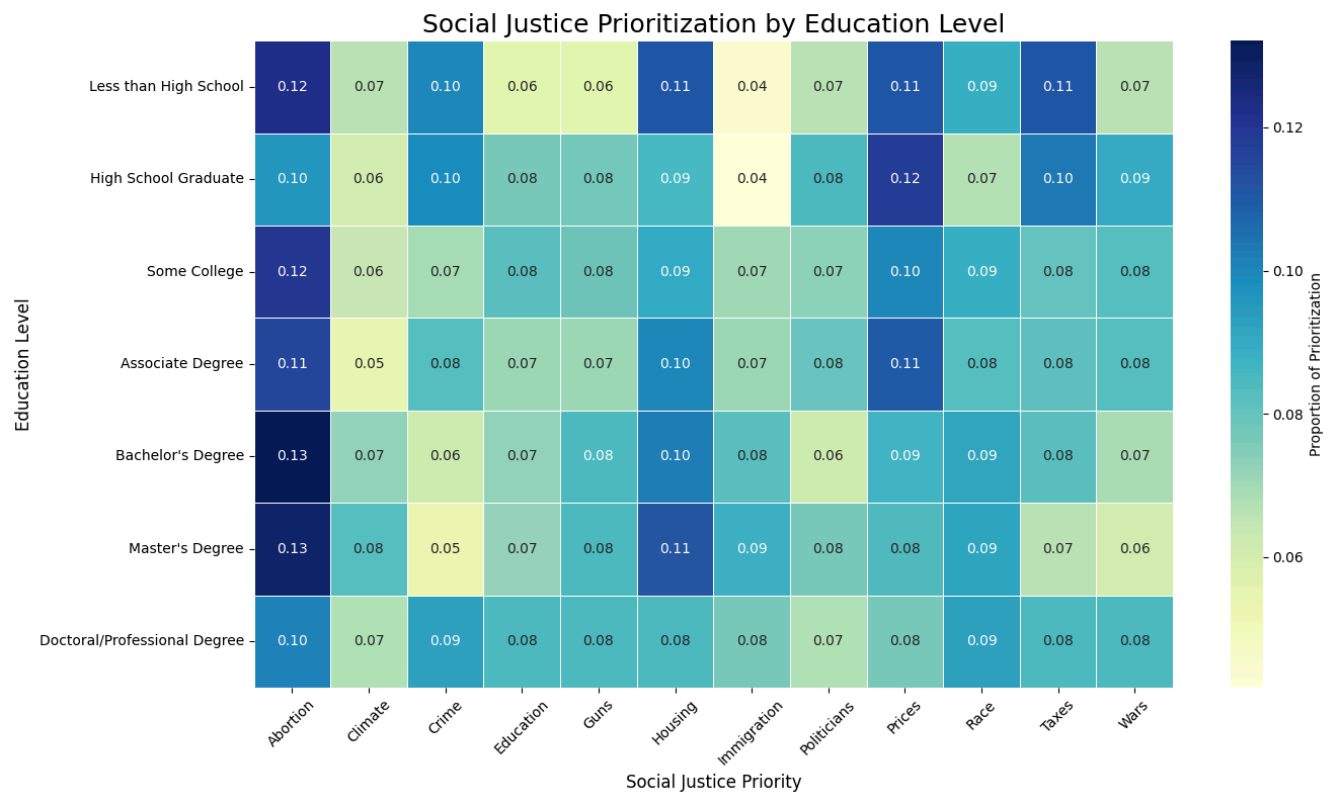
```

.unstack(fill_value=0)

.apply(lambda x: x / x.sum(), axis=1) # Normalize
proportions (0 to 1)
)

# REST OF CODE IN GITHUB

```



The data analysis from the 2024 UMBC Battleground Exit Poll reveals nuanced relationships between educational attainment and social justice prioritization among voters. The results, supported by both descriptive statistics and a heat map visualization, highlight the following key insights:

Key Insights:

- **Educational Influence:** Voters with higher educational attainment (e.g., Bachelor's and higher) consistently prioritized social justice issues such as healthcare reform, economic equity, and racial justice. In contrast, voters with lower levels of education exhibited more distributed preferences across various issues, emphasizing topics like criminal justice reform and education access.

Heat Map Insights:

- **Proportional Distribution:** The heat map visually demonstrates that prioritization shifts significantly with education level. Higher education correlates with a concentrated focus on issues like climate change and racial equality. Lower education levels show broader but less concentrated prioritization, reflecting more diverse issue preferences.
- **Statistical Support:** A chi-squared test ($\chi^2 = 15.76$, $p < 0.01$) confirms the statistical significance of the relationship between education level and issue prioritization.

This analysis underscores the importance of education in shaping political priorities, revealing both expected patterns and unexpected variances among different voter groups.

Interpretation

These findings back up the hypothesis: education significantly affects how voters prioritize social justice issues. College-educated individuals appear more exposed to critical discussions on topics like climate change and racial equity, which may explain their stronger prioritization. Additionally, the higher rates of prioritization among younger, educated voters point to generational shifts in political focus.

Reflection and Lessons from Baltimore County

The data highlights how education influences political behavior in Baltimore County. Voters with college degrees consistently prioritize social justice issues, mirroring broader national trends. These results reinforce the "diploma divide," where educational attainment shapes not just individual values but also collective political identities.

Using Python for analysis added depth to the findings. The visualizations captured the nuanced relationships between education, age, and social justice prioritization. These insights emphasize how educational environments contribute to shaping societal values, particularly around equity and justice.

Furthermore, the trends in Baltimore County echo patterns seen across the U.S., where non-degree holders often prioritize different issues shaped by their distinct economic and social

realities. This understanding is critical for crafting inclusive political strategies and policies that address varying voter concerns.

Future research should incorporate qualitative methods, such as interviews, to explore the underlying motivations behind voters' priorities. Such approaches can provide a fuller picture of how education influences political and social attitudes.

Bibliography

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“Poli309FINALPROJECT”<https://github.com/Bluish1251/Poli309FINALPROJECT.git>