**Online Appendix for “Social Trust in Polarized Times: How Perceptions of Political Polarization Affect Americans’ Trust in Each Other”**

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# Five-Wave Panel Study

## Question Wording and Variable Construction

*Generalized Social Trust*

Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people?

Most are trustworthy

Can't be too careful

Do you think most people would try to take advantage of you if they got the chance, or would they try to be fair?

Would take advantage

Try to be fair

Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful, or that they are mostly just looking out for themselves?

Try to be helpful

Look out for themselves

* Responses were summed to create a scale of generalized trust ranging from 0 to 3 (*KR20* = 0.76). Higher values indicate higher social trust.

*Perceived Polarization*

How politically divided are Americans these days?

Not at all divided

Somewhat divided

Very divided

Extremely divided

How much agreement is there between the policies that Republican and Democratic voters want these days?

A great deal of agreement

Some agreement

Very little agreement

No agreement at all

Some people say the American public is extremely polarized politically these days, while others think this is not really true. Which statement best describes your view of the American public?

Americans are extremely polarized

Americans are somewhat polarized

Americans are not very polarized

Americans are not at all polarized

More and more Americans have extreme views these days.

Strongly agree

Somewhat agree

Somewhat disagree

Strongly disagree

* Responses were combined to create an index of perceived polarization ranging from 1 to 4 (*α* = 0.65). Higher values correspond to higher levels of perceived polarization).

*Trump Feeling Thermometer*

Please rate Donald Trump on a thermometer that runs from 0 to 100 degrees. Rating above 50 means that you feel favorable and warm, and rating below 50 means that you feel unfavorable and cool.

* Took the absolute value of the difference of the ratings and the neutral 50-degree. Higher values correspond to more intense affect.

*Issue Attitude*

Please indicate whether you favor or oppose each following proposal addressing immigration:

Provide a path to citizenship for some illegal aliens.

Increase border security by building a wall along the U.S. border with Mexico.

Return illegal immigrants to their native countries.

Strongly favor

Somewhat favor

Neither favor nor oppose

Somewhat oppose

Strongly oppose

Do you favor or oppose the federal government in Washington negotiating more free trade agreements?

Strongly favor

Somewhat favor

Neither favor nor oppose

Somewhat oppose

Strongly oppose

Compared to ten years ago, do you think the U.S. healthcare system is now better, worse or about the same?

Much better

Somewhat better

About the same

Somewhat worse

Much worse

Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

Government should spend more of our taxes providing a financial safety net for all Americans.

Federal taxes should be cut, even if it means cutting back on government programs and services.

Strongly agree

Somewhat agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat disagree

Strongly disagree

* For extremity of attitudes, responses were each folded at the midpoint and averaged across issues. Higher values indicate more extreme attitudes.

*Personal Financial Situation*

We are interested in how people are getting along financially these days. Would you say that you and your family living here are better off, worse off, or just about the same financially as you were a year ago?

A lot better off

A little better off

A little worse off

A lot worse off

Just about the same

* Re-coded to make higher values indicate more negative assessments of personal finances.

*Perceived Discrimination Against Own Gender and Racial/Ethnic Group*

How much discrimination is there in the U.S. today against each of the following groups?

Blacks

Hispanics

Whites

Women

Men

A great deal

A lot

A moderate amount

A little

None at all

* Based on respondent gender and race/ethnicity. Higher values indicate greater perceived discrimination.

*Political Ideology*

Extremely Liberal

Liberal

Slightly Liberal

Moderate

Slightly Conservative

Conservative

Extremely Conservative

* Ideological strength was measured by folding the scale at the midpoint.

*Partisanship*

Strong Democrat

Moderate Democrat

Lean Democrat

Don’t Lean/Independent/None

Lean Republican

Moderate Republican

Strong Republican

* Partisan strength was measured by folding the scale at the midpoint.

## Table A1. Sample Characteristics

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | *Benchmark*  2020 CPS  (Aged 18+) | *Sample*  Weighted | *Sample*  Unweighted |
| **Gender** |  |  |  |
| Male | 48.5 | 47.5 | 49.3 |
| Female | 51.5 | 52.5 | 50.7 |
| **Age** |  |  |  |
| 18-34 | 29.5 | 24.9 | 20.6 |
| 35-49 | 24.2 | 21.3 | 26.1 |
| 50-64 | 24.6 | 27.0 | 29.2 |
| 65+ | 21.7 | 26.8 | 24.1 |
| **Race** |  |  |  |
| White, non-Hispanic | 62.8 | 66.1 | 74.9 |
| Black or African American, non-Hispanic | 12.0 | 12.2 | 8.9 |
| Hispanic | 16.7 | 12.3 | 8.7 |
| Other, non-Hispanic | 7.2 | 6.0 | 4.6 |
| Two or more races, non-Hispanic | 1.5 | 3.4 | 2.9 |
| **Education** |  |  |  |
| No high school diploma | 9.8 | 7.9 | 2.8 |
| High school graduate or equivalent | 27.8 | 30.6 | 19.3 |
| Some college | 27.6 | 21.9 | 29.3 |
| Bachelor’s degree or higher | 34.8 | 39.6 | 48.5 |
| Household Income |  |  |  |
| $9,999 or less | 5.5 | 4.8 | 5.2 |
| $10,000 to $24,999 | 12.6 | 13.5 | 12.7 |
| $25,000 to $49,999 | 19.7 | 24.1 | 24.3 |
| $50,000 to $74,999 | 16.5 | 20.6 | 20.5 |
| $75,000 to $99,999 | 12.2 | 15.9 | 15.4 |
| $100,000 and over | 33.6 | 21.0 | 21.9 |

*Note—*Study sample, *N* = 1337. The population estimates are from the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2020 Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement.

## Change in Perceived Polarization Over Time



**Figure** **A1.** Mean Levels of Perceived Polarization Between 2016 and 2020

*Note—*On the original 1–4 original scale (higher = higher perceived polarization). Error bars represent 95 confidence intervals.

The trend is generally upward. Across five waves, the public consistently reports high levels of perceived polarization, with the mean perception being above 3 on a 1–4 scale at every wave. T-tests show that compared to the first wave’s mean (*M* = 3.16), the means of perceived polarization are significantly higher in the later waves, in Wave 2 (*M* = 3.21, *p* < .001), Wave 3 (*M* = 3.28, *p* < .001), Wave 4(*M =* 3.23, *p* < .001), and Wave 5 (*M* = 3.27, *p* < .001).



**Figure A2.** Frequency Distribution of Perceived Polarization in Each Survey Wave

## Additional Analysis of Panel Data

## Table A2. Fixed Effects Estimates: Unweighted Results

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Model 1 | Model 2 |
| ***Changes in*** |  |  |
| **Perceived Polarization** | **-0.102\*\*\*** | **-0.090\*\*** |
|  | **(0.027)** | **(0.028)** |
| *Changes in* |  |  |
| Personal Financial Situation |  | -0.099\*\*\* |
|  |  | (0.017) |
| Issue Attitude Extremity |  | -0.031 |
|  |  | (0.027) |
| Intensity of Affect Toward Donald Trump |  | -0.002 |
|  |  | (0.015) |
| Partisan Strength |  | 0.012 |
|  |  | (0.021) |
| Ideological Strength |  | -0.011 |
|  |  | (0.016) |
| Perceived Discrimination Against Own Gender |  | -0.007 |
|  |  | (0.022) |
| Perceived Discrimination Against Own Race |  | 0.004 |
|  |  | (0.023) |
| Wave 2 (2017) | 0.028\*\* | 0.024\*\* |
|  | (0.010) | (0.010) |
| Wave 3 (2018) | 0.013 | 0.010 |
|  | (0.010) | (0.011) |
| Wave 4 (2019) | -0.008 | -0.010 |
|  | (0.010) | (0.010) |
| Wave 5 (2020) | -0.005 | -0.009 |
|  | (0.010) | (0.011) |
| Constant | 0.569\*\*\* | 0.634\*\*\* |
|  | (0.019) | (0.031) |
| *N* of Observations | 6651 | 6167 |
| *N* of Individuals | 1336 | 1237 |

*Note—*Results from linear fixed-effects panel models. Standard errors in parentheses. All variables rescaled to range from 0 to 1. \**p*<.05, \*\**p*<.01, \*\*\**p*<.001

## Table A3. Panel Analysis with A Subset of the Data: With Party Feeling Thermometers

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Weighted Results | Unweighted Results |
| **Perceived Polarization** | **-0.100\*** | **-0.081\*** |
|  | **(0.044)** | **(0.032)** |
| *Changes in* |  |  |
| Personal Financial Situation | -0.116\*\*\* | -0.112\*\*\* |
|  | (0.026) | (0.019) |
| Issue Attitude Extremity | -0.082 | -0.036 |
|  | (0.043) | (0.031) |
| Intensity of Party Affect | -0.024 | -0.016 |
|  | (0.029) | (0.022) |
| Partisan Strength | 0.022 | 0.018 |
|  | (0.031) | (0.023) |
| Ideological Strength | -0.016 | -0.015 |
|  | (0.023) | (0.018) |
| Perceived Discrimination against Own Gender | -0.015 | 0.006 |
|  | (0.041) | (0.026) |
| Perceived Discrimination against Own Race | -0.016 | -0.010 |
|  | (0.037) | (0.026) |
| Wave 2 (2017) | 0.031\* | 0.022\* |
|  | (0.013) | (0.010) |
| Wave 3 (2018) | 0.016 | 0.010 |
|  | (0.015) | (0.011) |
| Wave 4 (2019) | - | - |
|  |  |  |
| Wave 5 (2020) | -0.014 | -0.009 |
|  | (0.015) | (0.011) |
| Constant | 0.654\*\*\* | 0.641\*\*\* |
|  | (0.050) | (0.035) |
| *N* of Observations | 4936 | 4936 |
| *N* of Individuals | 1237 | 1237 |

*Note—*Results from linear fixed-effects panel regression models. Standard errors in parentheses. All variables rescaled to range from 0 to 1. Intensity of party affect is measured based on the absolute difference between individuals’ thermometer ratings of the Democratic Party and the Republican party. \**p*<.05, \*\**p*<.01, \*\*\**p*<.001

## Table A4. Estimating the Effects of Perceived and Affective Polarization Separately

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | (1)  No  Affective Polarization | (2)  No Perceived Polarization | (3)  Full Model |
| ***Changes in*** |  |  |  |
| **Perceived Polarization** | **-0.095\*\*** | **-** | **-0.087\*** |
|  | **(0.037)** |  | **(0.037)** |
| *Changes in* |  |  |  |
| Personal Financial Situation | -0.102\*\*\* | -0.105\*\*\* | -0.101\*\*\* |
|  | (0.023) | (0.023) | (0.023) |
| Issue Attitude Extremity | - | -0.068 | -0.067 |
|  |  | (0.041) | (0.041) |
| Intensity of Affect Toward Donald Trump | - | -0.031 | -0.035 |
|  |  | (0.024) | (0.022) |
| Partisan Strength | - | 0.022 | 0.017 |
|  |  | (0.030) | (0.029) |
| Ideological Strength | - | -0.013 | -0.014 |
|  |  | (0.022) | (0.022) |
| Perceived Discrimination Against Own Gender | -0.028 | -0.023 | -0.029 |
|  | (0.034) | (0.034) | (0.034) |
| Perceived Discrimination Against Own Race | 0.015 | 0.016 | 0.020 |
|  | (0.032) | (0.034) | (0.032) |
| Wave 2 (2017) | 0.034\* | 0.032\* | 0.032\* |
|  | (0.013) | (0.013) | (0.013) |
| Wave 3 (2018) | 0.012 | 0.010 | 0.016 |
|  | (0.014) | (0.016) | (0.015) |
| Wave 4 (2019) | 0.003 | 0.001 | 0.004 |
|  | (0.015) | (0.016) | (0.016) |
| Wave 5 (2020) | -0.016 | -0.017 | -0.012 |
|  | (0.014) | (0.014) | (0.014) |
| Constant | 0.590\*\*\* | 0.570\*\*\* | 0.634\*\*\* |
|  | (0.034) | (0.042) | (0.046) |
| *N* of Observations | 6167 | 6190 | 6167 |
| *N* of Individuals | 1237 | 1238 | 1237 |

*Note—*Results from linear fixed-effects panel models. Robust standard errors in parentheses. All variables rescaled to range from 0 to 1. \**p*<.05, \*\**p*<.01, \*\*\**p*<.001

## Cross-Lagged Panel Models with Fixed Effects

To address the issue of reverse causality, I estimate a dynamic panel model with fixed effects introduced by Allison, Williams, and Moral-Benito (2017), the so-called ML-SEM method. This method allows for the possibility that variables have a reciprocal causal relationship. To fit my data, the method will estimate the effect of *Perceived Polarization* at time *t* on *Social Trust* at time *t* + 1, while allowing that *Perceived Polarization* is also affected by past values of *Social Trust*. Note that the model estimates cross-lagged effects, such that the effect of change in one variable is assumed to be observable in the other variable at a later wave. The model does not assume contemporaneous effects, which would then require problematic assumptions and not be identified without additional instrumental variables (Allison, Williams, and Moral-Benito 2017). Theoretically, however, it seems somewhat unrealistic that one’s perception of polarization would take one year (per wave in my data) to come into effect to change one’s views of others. The causal process in the real world may be contemporaneous rather than lagged.

The distinction between contemporaneous and lagged effects is important not only theoretically but also in terms of model specification. Using lagged predictors in fixed-effects models can produce incorrect estimates if the “true” causal effect is contemporaneous; for example, the signs of the coefficients tend to flip if the temporal lags are mis-specified and do not match the real-world process (see Vaisey and Miles 2017). In fact, when I estimate my model by lagging *Perceived Polarization*, its coefficient shows a positive sign (Table A5, Left Columns), which is opposite to the results I report in the text, i.e., the negative effect of *Perceived Polarization* on *Social Trust*. This makes me wonder if this is indeed related to the problem of wrong temporal lags that do not correspond to the true timing of the causal effect.

As a workaround, some recommend including both contemporaneous and lagged values of the predictors in the model and comparing their coefficients (Allison 2015). Although this still does not solve the under-identification problem, it offers insight into the temporal nature of causal effects. Similarly, Leszczensky and Wolbring (2019) show in their simulations that the ML-SEM model produces correct estimates if both contemporaneous and lagged effects are included.

The results of this approach are shown in Table A5. In the right columns, the coefficient for the contemporaneous effect of *Perceived Polarization* shows the “correct” negative sign. The lagged effect also turns to negative, but its effect fades into insignificance. This suggests that the effect of *Perceived Polarization* on *Social Trust* may be more contemporaneous than lagged. Based on these results, the effect of *Perceived Polarization* is statistically significant after controlling for possible reverse causation.

## Table A5. Using ML-SEM Method to Address Reverse Causation, DV: Social Trust (*t*)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Only Lagged Effects of  Perceived Polarization  (1) | |  | Both Lagged and Contemporaneous  Effects  (2) | |
|  | Coef.  (Robust S.E.) |  |  | Coef.  (Robust S.E.) |
| Perceived Polarization (*t*) | - |  | **Perceived Polarization (*t*)** | **-0.143\*** |
|  |  |  |  | **(0.071)** |
| Perceived Polarization (*t–1*) | 0.035 |  | Perceived Polarization (*t–1*) | -0.030 |
|  | (0.036) |  |  | (0.047) |
| Social Trust (*t–1*) | 0.051\* |  | Social Trust (*t–1*) | 0.051\* |
|  | (0.025) |  |  | (0.025) |

\**p* < 0.05

# Experimental Study

## Question Wording and Variable Construction

*Perceived Polarization*

How politically divided are Americans these days?

Not at all divided

Somewhat divided

Very divided

Extremely divided

How much agreement is there between the policies that Republican and Democratic voters want these days?

A great deal of agreement

Some agreement

Very little agreement

No agreement at all

Some people say the American public is extremely polarized politically these days, while others think this is not really true. Which statement best describes your view of the American public?

Americans are extremely polarized

Americans are somewhat polarized

Americans are not very polarized

Americans are not at all polarized

More and more Americans have extreme views these days.

Strongly agree

Somewhat agree

Somewhat disagree

Strongly disagree

Some people say Democrats and Republicans don’t just disagree­--they hate each other, while others say that is not really true. How much animosity is there between Republican and Democratic voters?

A great deal of animosity

Some animosity

Only a little animosity

No animosity at all

* Responses were combined to create an index of perceived polarization, with higher values indicating higher levels of perceived polarization (*α* = .73).

*Generalized Social Trust*

Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people?

Most are trustworthy

Can't be too careful

Do you think most people would try to take advantage of you if they got the chance, or would they try to be fair?

Would take advantage

Try to be fair

Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful, or that they are mostly just looking out for themselves?

Try to be helpful

Look out for themselves

* Responses were combined to create a four-point scale of generalized trust ranging from 0 to 1 (*KR20* = 0.67). Higher values indicate higher social trust.

*Trust in the American Citizenry*

Generally speaking, how much confidence do you have in the American people to…

Treat each other fairly and with honesty

Work together to solve problems

Honestly report their full income when paying taxes

Respect the rights of people who are not like them

Obey federal and state laws

Accept election results regardless of who wins

Cast informed votes in elections

Do what they can to help those in need

A great deal of confidence

A lot of confidence

A moderate amount of confidence

Only a little confidence

No confidence at all

* Responses were combined to create an index of trust in the American citizenry, with higher values indicating higher social trust (*α* = .89).

*Willingness to Trust Strangers in Everyday Situations*

If you find yourself in the following situations, how comfortable would you be…

Giving a ride to a person you do not know well?

Buying used electronics from someone on Craigslist?

Lending your cellphone to a stranger at the airport who asks to borrow it to make a call home?

Very comfortable

Somewhat comfortable

Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable

Somewhat uncomfortable

Very uncomfortable

* Responses were combined to create an index of willingness to trust strangers, with higher values indicating higher social trust (*α* = .69).

*Cooperation in Charitable Contributions*

At the end of the study, the following text was shown to participants:

The survey is complete. In addition to the reward that you are already receiving for completing the survey, you will receive a $2.00 bonus. You can keep all of this bonus for yourself or you can give any or all of this money to any charity listed below. For the amount you decide to keep, it will be paid to your Forthright account within 14 days. The money set aside for donations will be sent directly to the charities when this study is complete. We will send you an email when donations are disbursed.

[***Only shown for the donation-matching condition****:* People all across the country are participating in this study. If it turns out that more than 8 of every 10 participants donate something to charity, we will match all contributions. For example, if you donate $1.00 to a charity, and 80% or more of all participants make a donation to charity as well, we will match your donation and deliver $2.00 to your chosen charity. Please take this into account when making a decision about how much you would like to donate.]

Please use the entries below to distribute your $2.00 bonus. It can be any dollar and cent amount. The total must be $2.00.

United Way:

American Cancer Society:

Goodwill Industries:

American Red Cross:

YOUSELF:

Total:

*Perceived Commonality*

How many Americans would you say share...?

Your values or beliefs

Your interests

All

Almost all

Most

About half

Some

Very few

None

## Table A6. Sample Characteristics

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |
| Gender |  |
| Male | 48.7 |
| Female | 51.3 |
| Age |  |
| 18-34 | 29.8 |
| 35-49 | 25.6 |
| 50-64 | 26.7 |
| 65+ | 17.9 |
| Race |  |
| White, non-Hispanic | 64.5 |
| Black or African American, non-Hispanic | 12.5 |
| Hispanic | 16.9 |
| Other, non-Hispanic | 6.1 |
| Education |  |
| No high school diploma | 2.8 |
| High school graduate or equivalent | 20.8 |
| Some college | 40.2 |
| Bachelor’s degree or higher | 36.2 |
| Household Income |  |
| Less than $25,000 | 21.0 |
| $25,000 to $49,999 | 23.5 |
| $50,000 to $74,999 | 16.3 |
| $75,000 to $99,000 | 11.8 |
| $100,000 to $149,000 | 18.6 |
| $150,000 and over | 8.9 |

## Constructing Experimental Treatments

I created three treatments, one designed to increase perceptions of polarization, one to decrease perceptions of polarization, and one for control. Prior to launching the experiment, I pilot tested my treatments to see whether they were effective enough to alter my independent variable—perceptions of polarization—in the intended directions. All treatments were written in the form of a news article. During each pilot test, I recruited participants using Amazon Mechanical Turk: they were randomly assigned to one of three conditions (high perceived polarization, low perceived polarization, or control), asked to read an article, and asked five questions about their perceived degree of polarization within the American public. The questions were the same as the manipulation check questions used in the experiment. The five items were combined to form an index of perceived polarization ranging from 1 (low) to 4 (high).

For the control condition, I used a political control article in the first pilot and a non-political control article in the second pilot test. After discovering that the non-political control does not help create significant variation in perceived polarization between conditions, I went back to using the political control condition for the third pilot and the experiment. Final versions of the treatments were created by making improvements on those used in the pilot tests.

**Pilot Test 1 (N=159): More Polarization, Less Polarization, Political Control**

Mean scores on the perceived polarization index by condition

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Condition | More Polarization | Less Polarization | Control |
| M (SD) | 3.06 (0.08) | 2.77 (0.07) | 3.03 (0.06) |
| Difference | ————————————  \*\* | |  |
|  |  | ————————————  \*\* | |
|  | ————————————————————————  n.s. (*p*=.78) | | |

**Pilot Test 2 (N=163) More Polarization, Less Polarization, Apolitical Control**

Mean scores on the perceived polarization index by condition

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Condition | More Polarization | Less Polarization | Control |
| M (SD) | 2.94 (0.06) | 2.79 (0.08) | 3.10 (0.07) |
| Difference | ————————————  n.s. (*p*=.11) | |  |
|  |  | ————————————  \*\* | |
|  | ————————————————————————  n.s. (*p*=.12) | | |

**Pilot Test 3 (N=152) More Polarization, Less Polarization, Political Control**

Mean scores on the perceived polarization index by condition

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Condition | More Polarization | Less Polarization | Control |
| M (SD) | 3.17 (0.07) | 2.63 (0.07) | 2.93 (0.08) |
| Difference | ————————————  \*\*\* | |  |
|  |  | ————————————  \*\* | |
|  | ————————————————————————  \* | | |

\**p*<.05, \*\**p*<.01, \*\*\**p*<.001

**High perceived polarization treatment**

*America is More Divided than Ever*

*New research suggests that America is more polarized than ever. Most Americans are either committed Republicans or Democrats—they not only disagree on every single issue—but also dislike and demonize each other. On many key issues, including gun safety laws, access to health care and education, border security and solutions for illegal immigrants, taxes and government spending, there is virtually no agreement. Americans seem unable to find common ground, sweeping the nation to the extremes of the debate.*

*About two-in-three Americans say they have so little in common with people of the other party, a new study finds. Most Americans believe the other party’s policies are so misguided that they pose a serious threat to the country.*

*Tim Anderson, a Democratic voter from Ohio, stated, “All Republicans care about is money. They don’t care about American lives. They are only worried about upsetting the gun lobby when so many people have been killed by guns. We must do something to take guns off the streets and out of people’s homes.*

*Anger toward the opposition runs on both sides. Republicans and Democrats both say people in the other party are dishonest, immoral, and unpatriotic.*

*“We can’t let Democrats destroy the free America we love. We cannot let them take away our guns, any guns,” said Jake Miller, a Republican from Ohio. He also noted, “We cannot let them open our borders to criminals and terrorists. We need to protect our Christian values, our way of life.*

*Divisive and hateful voices are now so pervasive in America. Some even say people of the other party deserve to be mistreated or dead. Democrats and Republicans view each other as enemies with evil intentions and unacceptable views. Polarization is hurting Americans’ capacity to work together as a national community.*

**Low perceived polarization treatment**

*America is Not So Divided After All*

*New research suggests that America is not as polarized as many think. Most Americans belong to the political middle, and both Democrats and Republicans share a good deal of common ground on policies and values. On many key issues, including gun safety laws, access to health care and education, border security and solutions for illegal immigrants, taxes and government spending, the vast majority of Americans are on the same page. There are more areas of consensus across party lines than is normally portrayed in the media.*

*More than three-in-four Americans say our political differences aren’t so great that we cannot come together, a new study finds. Most Americans are sick of partisan rancor and want unity and compromise in politics.*

*Tim Anderson, a Democratic voter from Ohio, stated, “It’s time to challenge the narrative that Democrats want to take away everyone’s guns and open the borders to more illegal immigrants. That is simply not true.” He added, “We respect the rights of law-abiding gun owners. We want our borders secured too.”*

*Most Americans are not hardcore partisans. People may lean toward one party, but they see things they agree with in both.*

*“I’m a gun-rights advocate, but people with violent histories shouldn’t be purchasing guns,” said Jake Miller, a Republican from Ohio. He also noted, “The media feeds the idea that Republicans hate minorities and immigrants, but the truth is most of us believe diversity makes America stronger, and we don’t want to deport all immigrants.”*

*The American public remains moderate and open to compromise. The polarizing and hateful voices we often hear come from the most extreme sides, but they do not represent the majority. The mutual interests and shared values help Americans work together as a national community.*

**Political control condition**

*Important Issues for the 2020 Election*

*With the 2020 presidential election approaching, here is a look at public opinion on important issues to American voters. A national survey by Gallup reveals that about 3-in-4 Americans rate the economy, health care, terrorism, gun policy, and immigration as being “very important” in making their decision about who to vote for in 2020.*

*Economic and security concerns have been consistently ranked at the top of the voters’ agenda over the last several election cycles. This year, 84% of Americans say the economy will be very important to their vote, while 80% rate terrorism as very important. The numbers are almost the same as what they were in the 2016 election.*

*Other domestic issues that ranked highly on voters’ 2020 importance list include health care (81%), gun policy (74%), and immigration (74%).*

*When asked about what issues they care most about in this election, Tim Anderson, a Democratic voter from Ohio, stated, “I would say the economy, definitely number one. Gun control is also a big issue. Immigration reform, taxes, living wages, health care, education, they will all be important to my 2020 decision.”*

*“Issues like immigration enforcement, gun rights, and health care are important to me,” said Jake Miller, a Republican from Ohio. He added, “As a business owner, another important issue for me is creating a more supportive business environment where small businesses can grow and thrive.”*

*As Americans ponder their choice for president, new data suggest that voter enthusiasm for the 2020 election is sky-high. Most Americans say they think a lot about the election, and they are more enthusiastic about voting this year, compared with previous elections. Enthusiasm for voting is among the highest Gallup has measured across presidential election years.*

**Apolitical control condition**

*Football Is America’s Most Popular Sport*

*Despite concerns over player safety, player protests, and declining ratings, an annual survey of sports and society finds that football remains Americans’ favorite sport to watch. Nearly four-in-ten Americans prefer to watch football, almost the same number as baseball, basketball, soccer, hockey, and racing all combined. Americans named football as the most popular sport first in 1972, and it has been the public's favorite ever since.*

*The Super Bowl’s popularity is the clearest evidence of football’s prominence in the U.S. The Super Bowl is the most-watched program on television every year, and the Super Bowl 2020 between the Kansas City Chiefs and the San Francisco 49ers drew 102 million total viewers.*

*No sport dominates American culture more than football. The 50 largest stadiums in the U.S. were built by cities and colleges to host football games. Despite ongoing concern about the safety of football, few Americans say they would prohibit their son from playing the game. Seventy-one percent of Americans say they would allow their son to play competitive football, while twenty-seven percent say they would not.*

*While football is perceived to be a masculine sport played by men and enjoyed by men, women have become an integral part of NFL fandom. Women currently compromise 45 percent of the league’s fan base. They also purchase about 80 percent of the football merchandise.*

*When asked who the more loyal fans are, men or women, Tim Anderson, a fan, said, “I’d probably say men. I think they’re more into the rules of the game and the history of the team.”*

*“I think it’s equal,” said a fan Jake Miller. “I have some female friends who are equally committed and obsessive.”*

*The 2020 NFL Season will be the 101st season of the NFL. The regular season will begin in September.*

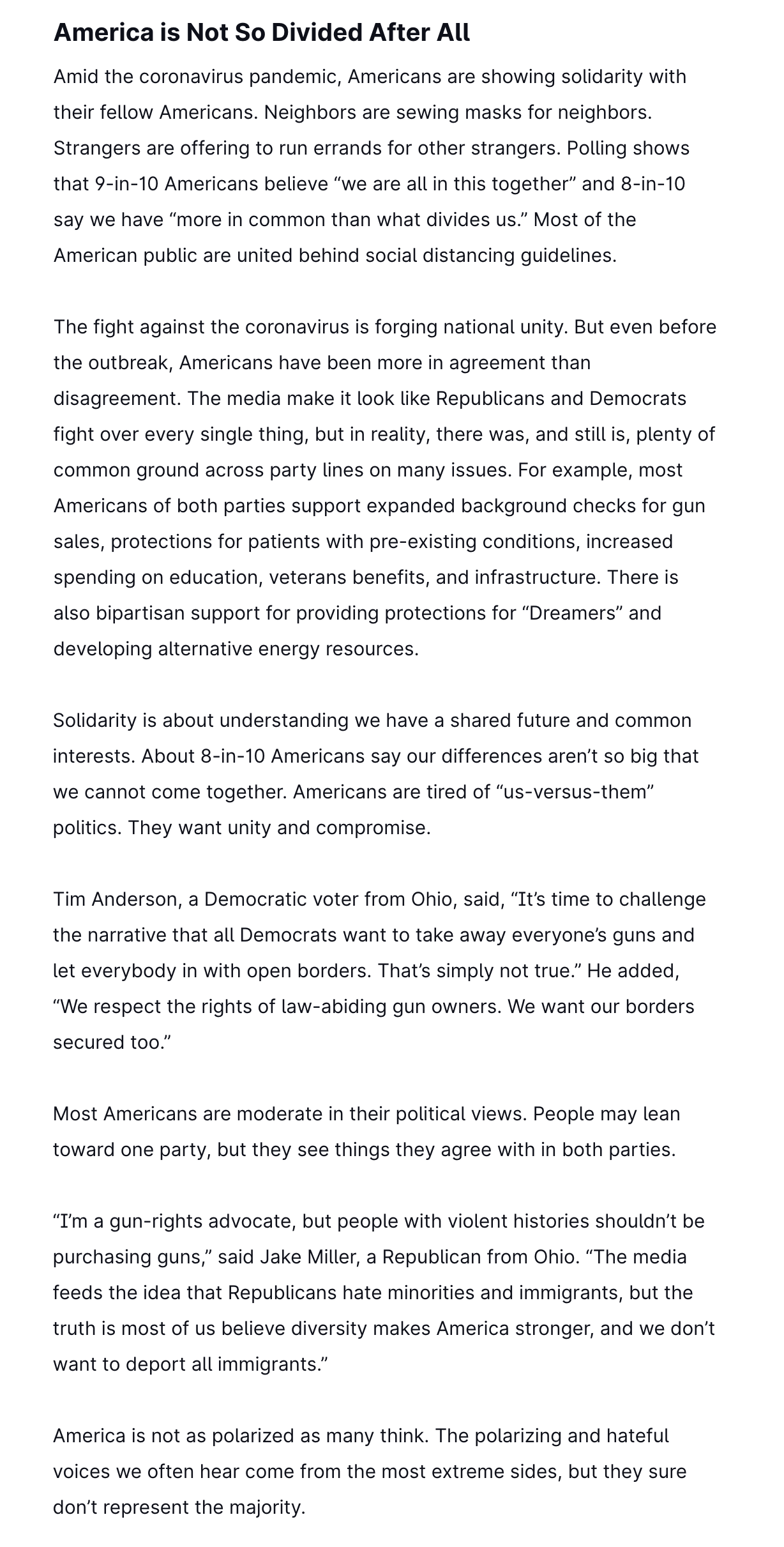
## Treatments Used in the Experiment

***More polarization treatment***

Text, letter

Description automatically generated

***Less polarization treatment***



***Control condition***

