

The increasing political divide in the United States

And why we should care



May 14, 2024

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# Introduction

Over the past years it has been hard not to notice the increasing political turmoil in the United States of America. It seems as though year after year we see politics and politicians on both sides of the divide become increasingly unhinged; Demonizing all their opponents, taking opposing positions based on spite, and doing all they can to other anyone not in their support base. This paper will provide a brief summary on the history of this phenomenon, the causes and reasons why this behavior occurs, and why we up in Canada should pay attention and care about this matter.

# Polarization over Time

The overall share of Americans who express consistently conservative or consistently liberal opinions has doubled over the past two decades from 10% to 21%. And ideological thinking is now much more closely aligned with partisanship than in the past. As a result, ideological overlap between the two parties has diminished: Today, 92% of Republicans are to the right of the median Democrat, and 94% of Democrats are to the left of the median Republican.

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Partisan animosity has increased substantially over the same period. In each party, the share with a highly negative view of the opposing party has more than doubled since 1994. Most of these intense partisans believe the opposing party’s policies “are so misguided that they threaten the nation’s well-being.” (Pew Research Center, 2024)[[1]](#footnote-1)

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Figure 1

# Importance of these events

As the U.S.A. becomes increasingly polarized over time, there is a dwindling of bipartisanship and cooperation between the two political parties. This leads to a rise of tribalism and a decreased ability to see one’s political opponents as fellow countrymen, leading to increasing divides and strife among the nation.

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# Why is this relevant to us?

This is relevant to us in Canada for two reasons. The first is that politics within the superpower that is the U.S.A. has a ripple effect that effects all countries within the U.S.A.’s sphere of influence, causing radicalization to happen within those nations as well, albeit to a lesser extent. The second is that we share a lengthy land border with the U.S.A. If the pattern of divide leading to conflict holds true here, we will have to deal with the messy situation of a nation in a civil war on that border.

Table 1(Test)

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1. Pew Research Center (2024) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)