

Last class

- Discussed different kinds of research designs
 - Two-arm experiment
 - K-arm experiment
 - Factorial experiment
 - Conjoint

Internal vs. External Validity

- When assessing what we can learn from a research design, there are two criteria that tend to be highlighted:
 - Internal validity
 - The extent to which a design can tell us about causal processes without confounding
 - Example: student organization membership and voting in elections
 - External validity
 - The extent to which a study's findings generalize to other people, settings, or measures
 - Example: mindfulness meditation and stress

Internal vs. External Validity

- Two research designs in political science
 - Experimental studies
 - Randomize units to different conditions and measure outcomes
 - Observational studies
 - Collect data on units (e.g., “treatments,” outcomes, and covariates).
- Experimental studies tend to score highest on internal validity because they reveal causal effects, whereas observational studies require adjusting for all possible confounds

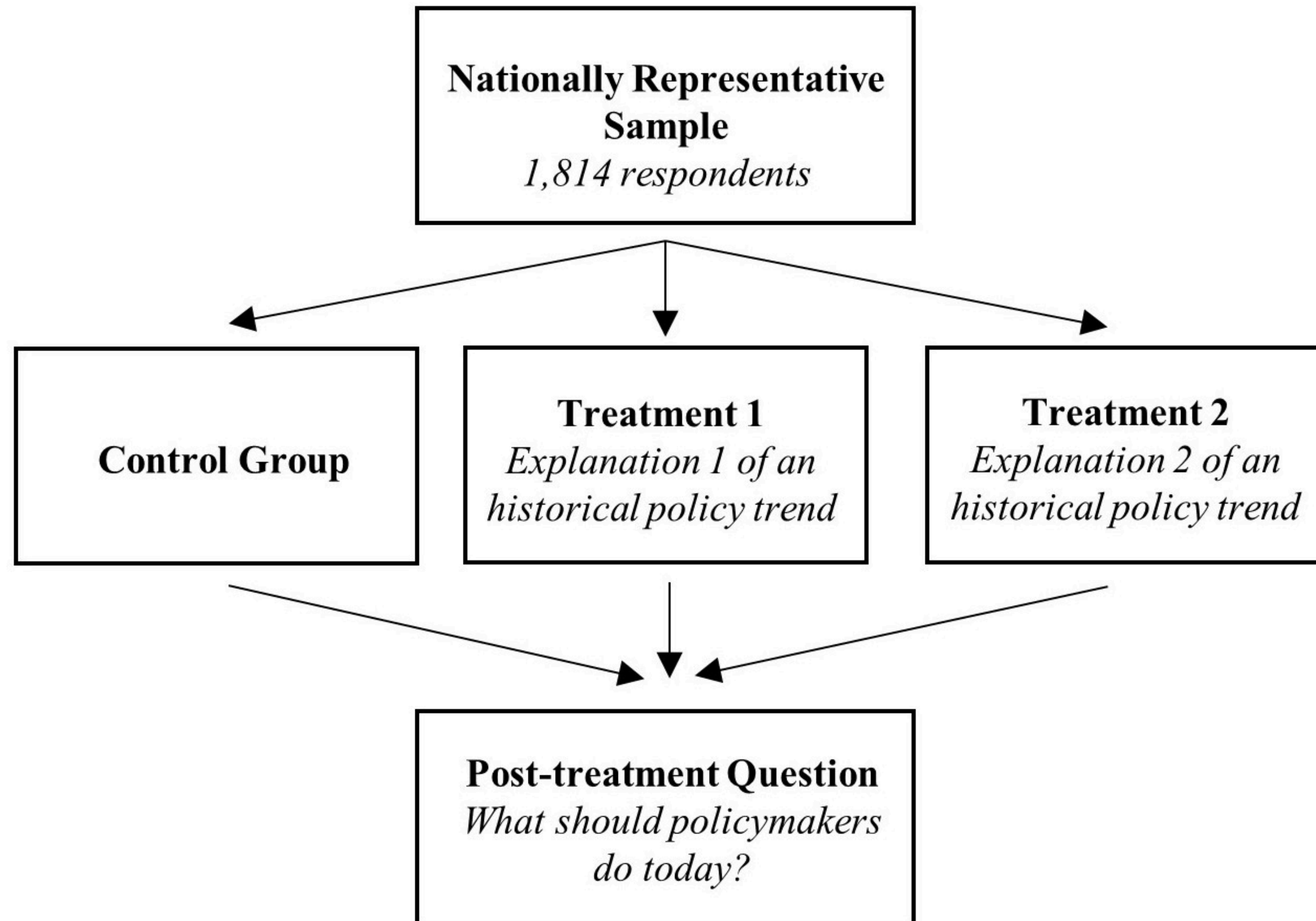
Internal vs. External Validity

- External validity
 - With experiments, it's worth assessing whether the findings can generalize
 - Can a study of persuasive messaging in the US tell us something about how voters in Canada or Mexico respond to new information? (Sample generalizability)
 - Can a study conducted in 2022 generalize to 2025 if the information environment has changed? (Temporal generalizability)
 - Can a study conducted in a lab tell us something about how people respond in the “real world”? (Ecological validity)
 - Aside: There is a belief that observational studies score higher on external validity, but when you have covariates, certain units tend to get a greater weight than others. Even if you have a data set that includes every country in the world, only a subset those countries will determine the regression slope.

Kinds of experiments

- Lab experiments
 - Cheap, relatively easy, and a lot of experimental control
 - Samples tend to be restricted to students
- Field experiments
 - More expensive, difficult to implement, but more realistic
 - Samples tend to be restricted to specific settings
- Survey experiments
 - Between lab and field experiments in terms of cost, relatively easy to implement, somewhere between lab and field experiments in terms of experimental control
 - Generally score lower on “ecological validity”

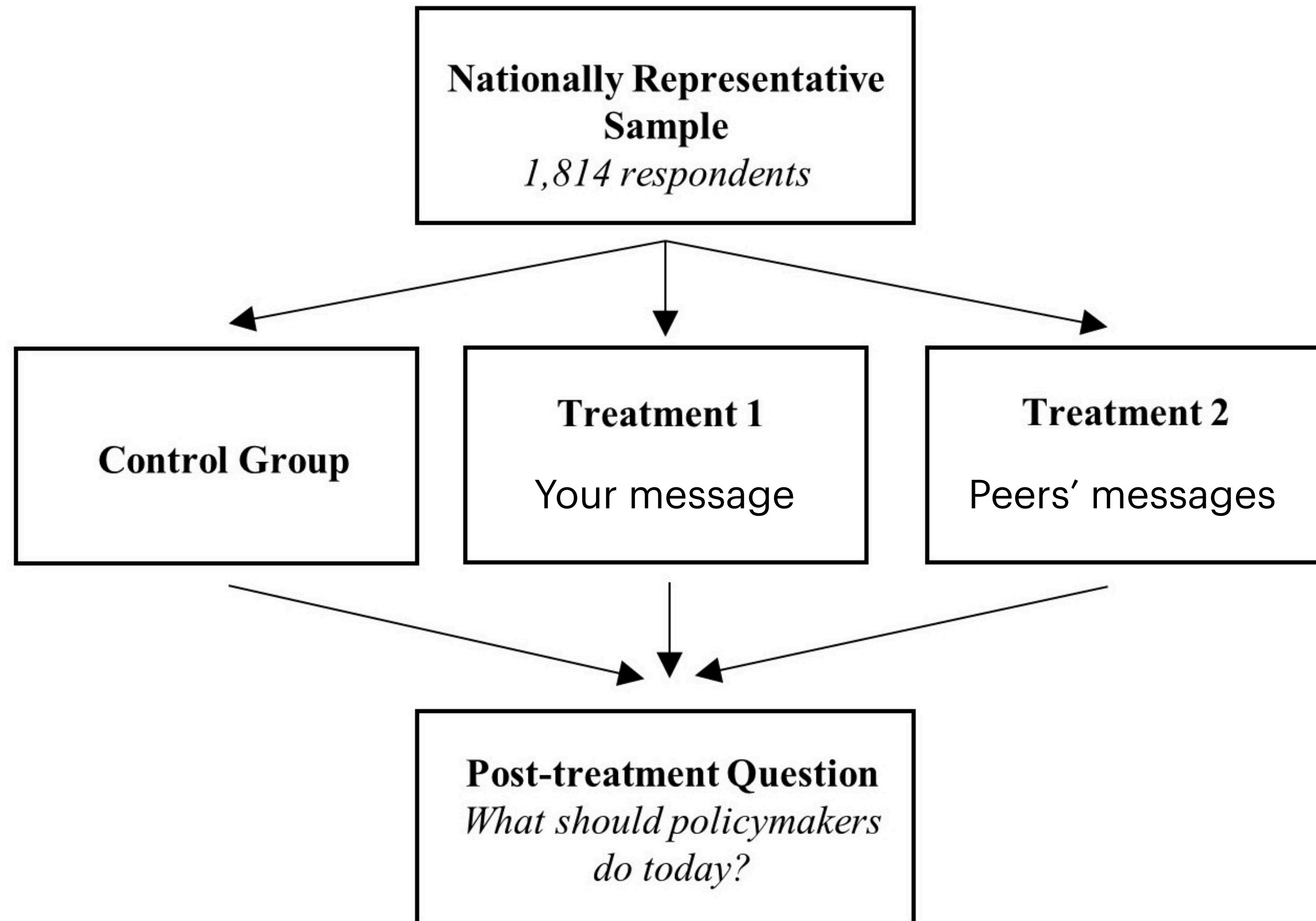
Survey experiment



Analyzing survey experiments

- Units
 - Survey respondents
- Outcomes
 - Numeric scales used in surveys
- Treatments
 - Different pieces of information
- Analysis
 - Computing differences in means for those assigned to different conditions

Survey experiment

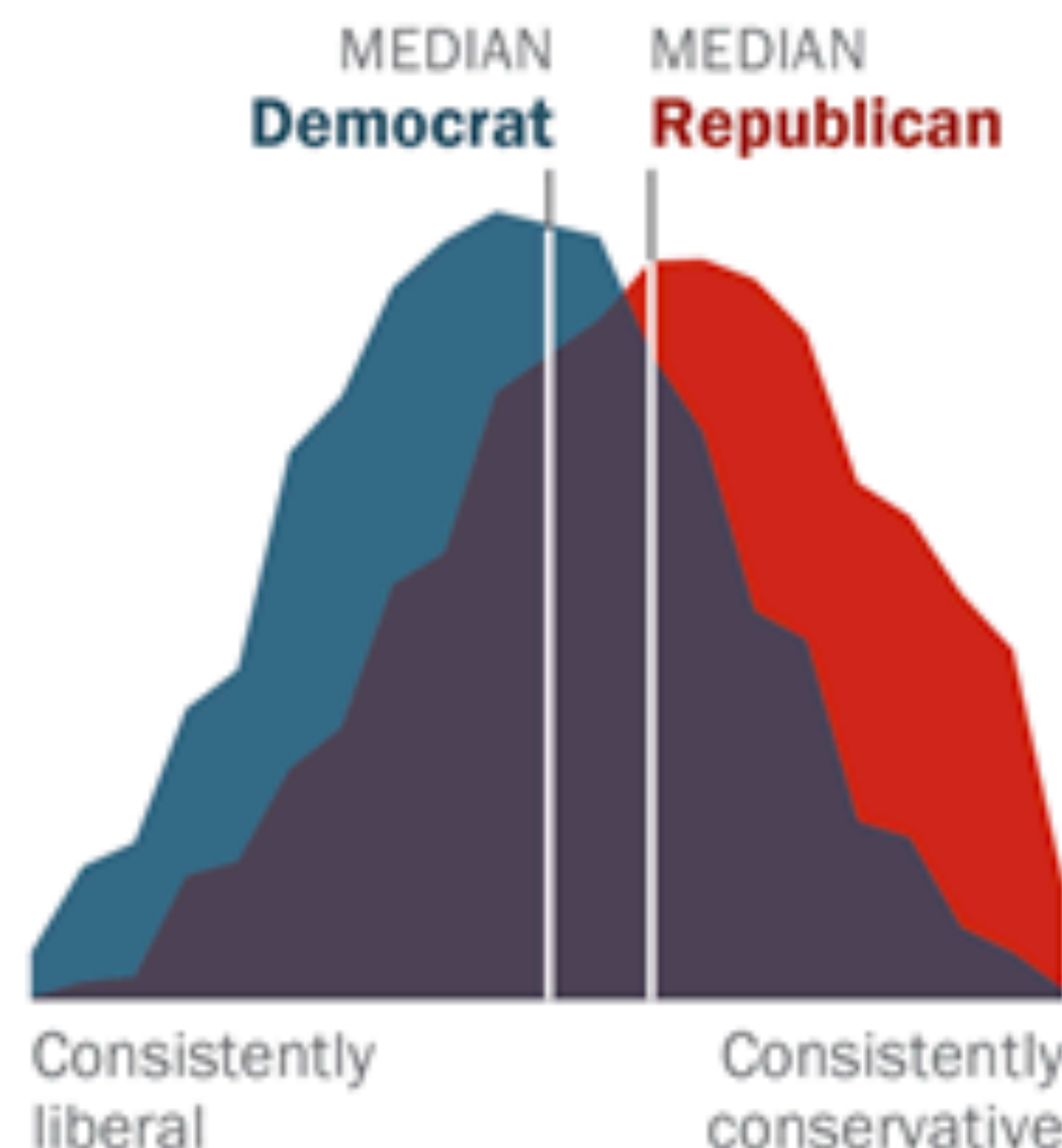


Affective polarization and related outcomes

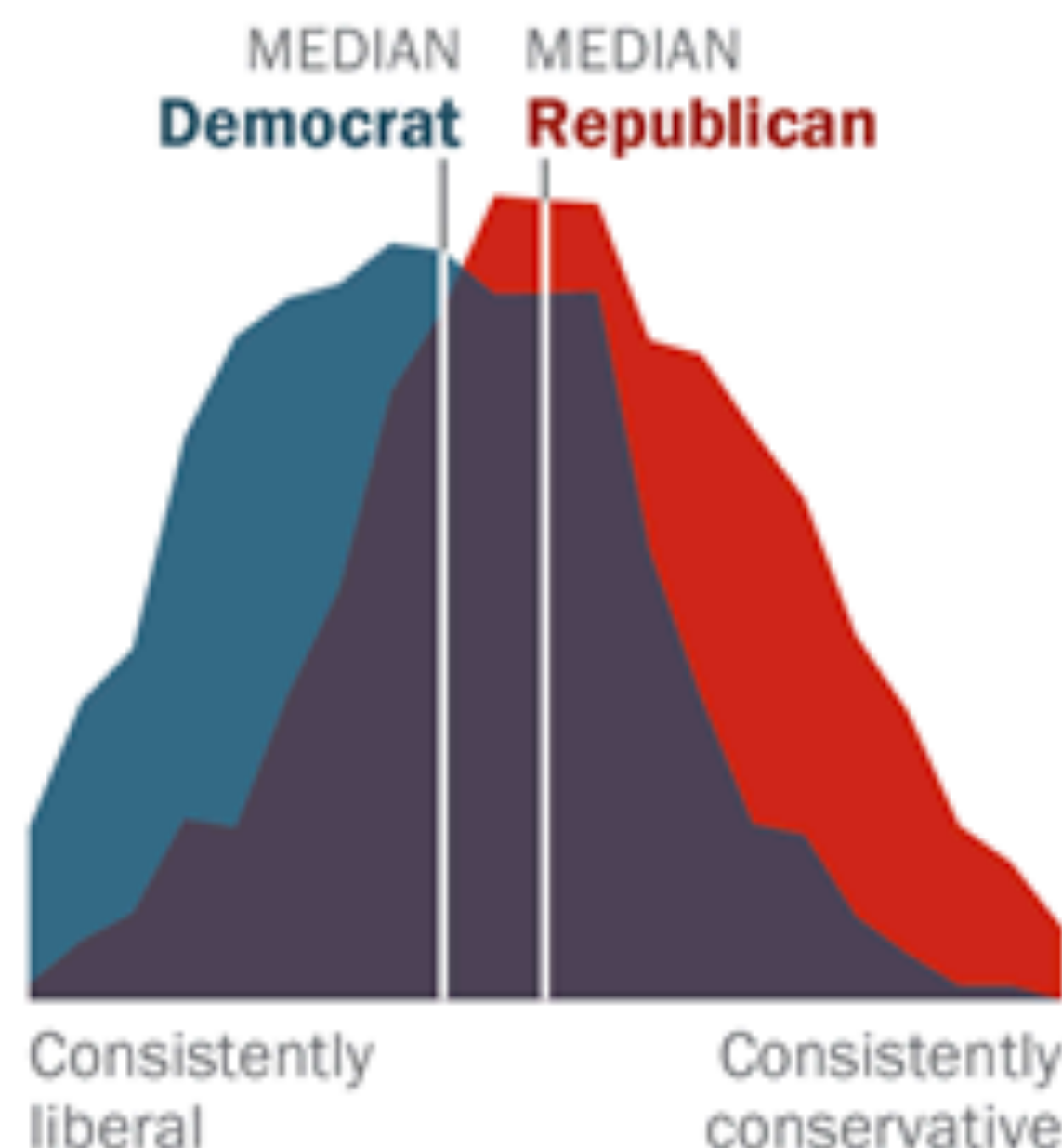
Democrats and Republicans More Ideologically Divided than in the Past

Distribution of Democrats and Republicans on a 10-item scale of political values

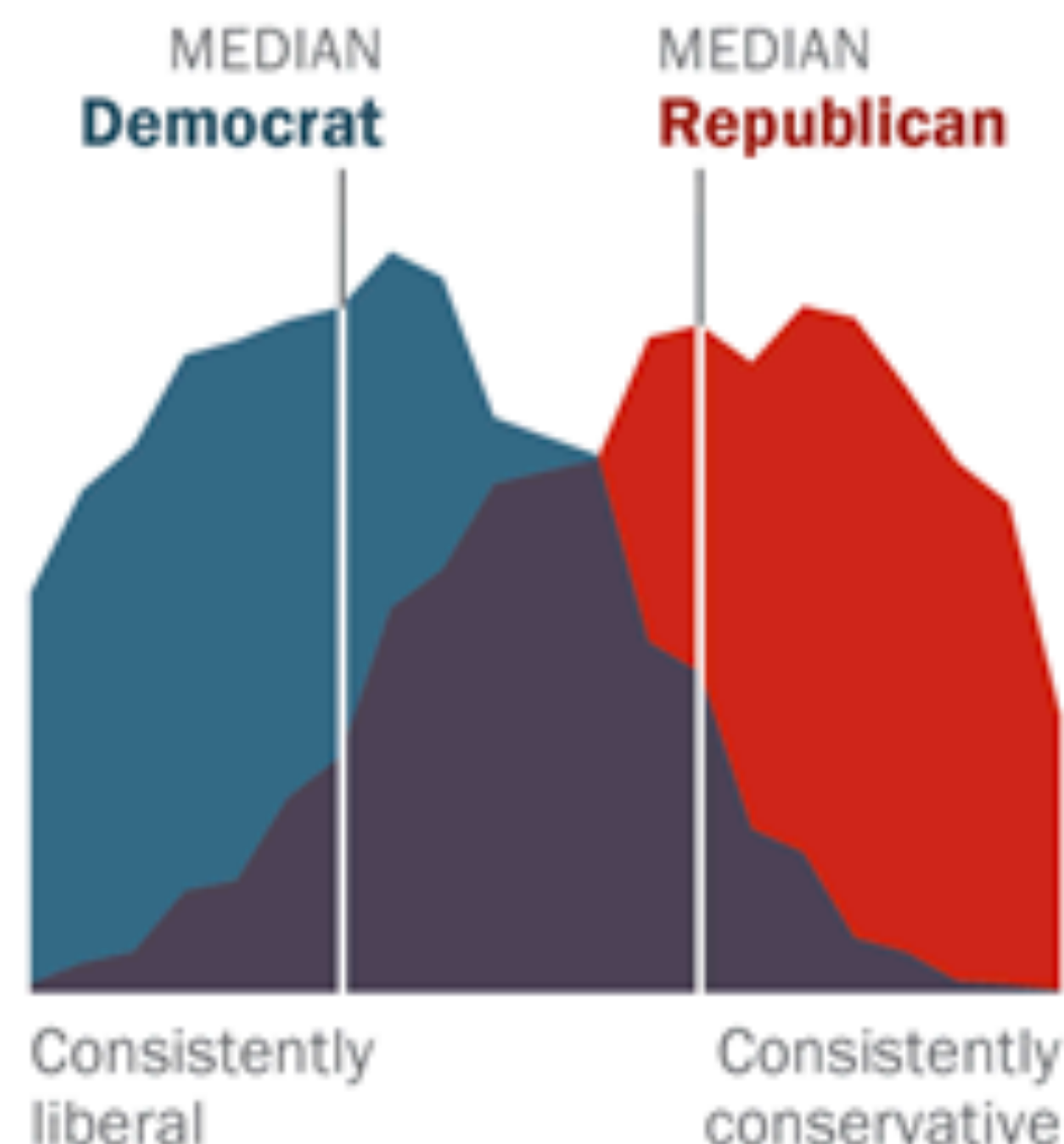
1994



2004



2014



Source: 2014 Political Polarization in the American Public

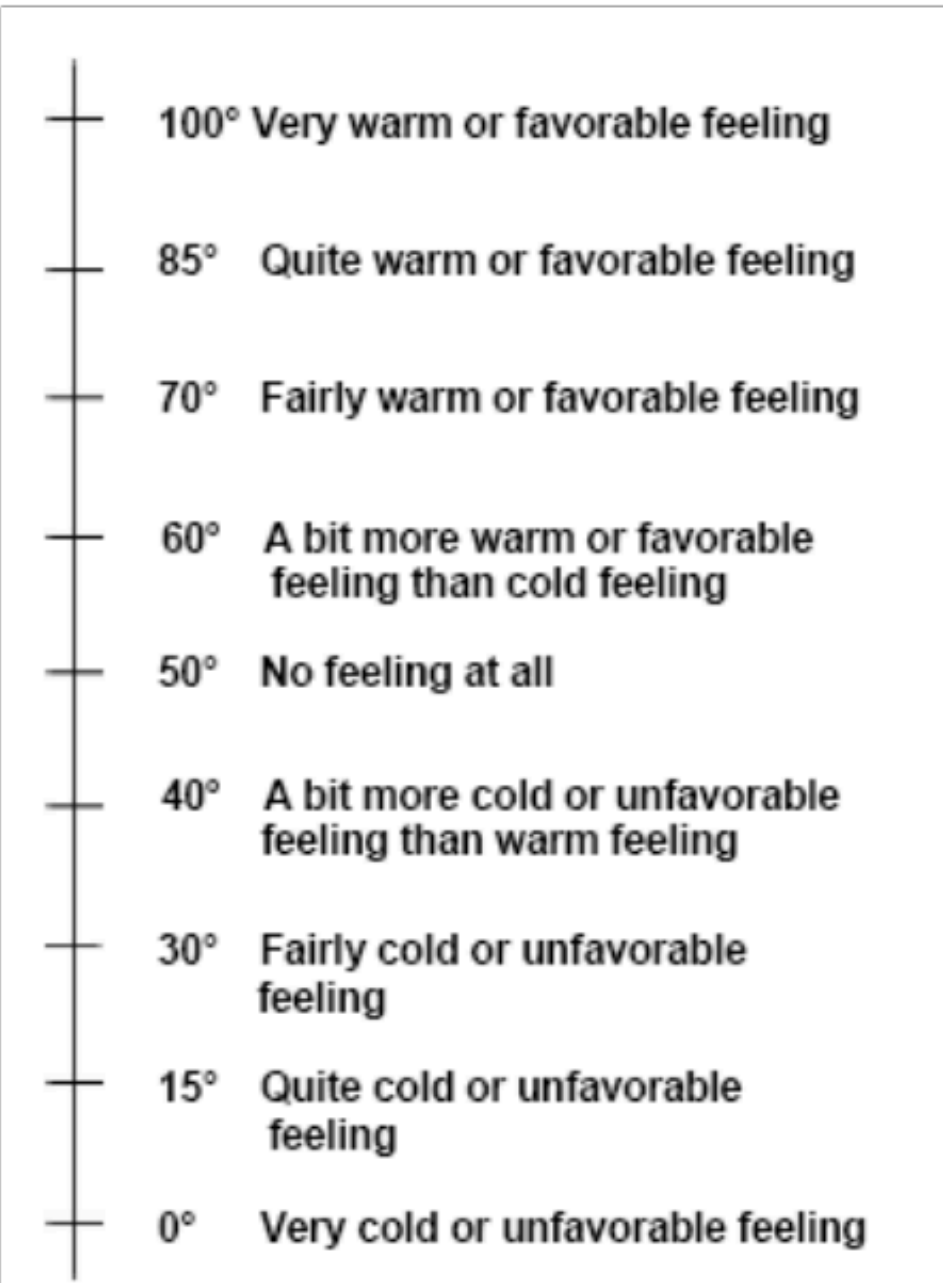
Notes: Ideological consistency based on a scale of 10 political values questions (see Appendix A). The blue area in this chart represents the ideological distribution of Democrats; the red area of Republicans. The overlap of these two distributions is shaded purple. Republicans include Republican-leaning independents; Democrats include Democratic-leaning independents (see Appendix B).

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

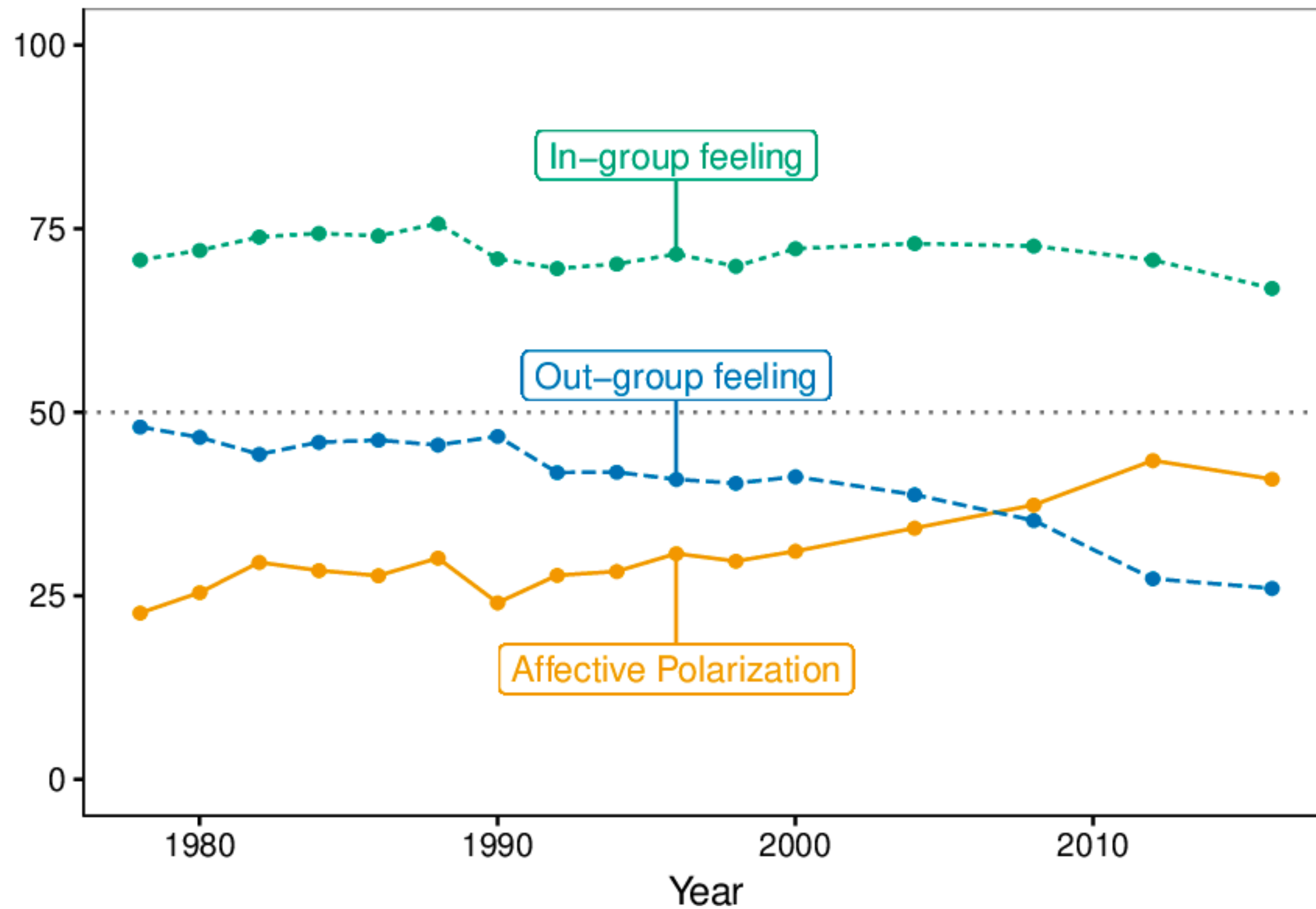
We'd like to get your feelings toward some of our political leaders and other people who are in the news these days. We'll show the name of a person or group and we'd like you to rate that person or group using something we call the feeling thermometer.

Ratings between 50 degrees and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm toward the person. Ratings between 0 degrees and 50 degrees mean that you don't feel favorable toward the person and that you don't care too much for that person. You would rate the person at the 50 degree mark if you don't feel particularly warm or cold toward the person.

If we come to a person whose name you don't recognize, you don't need to rate that person. Just click Next and we'll move on to the next one.



Metric: In-party feeling thermometer - out-party feeling thermometer



Affective Polarization

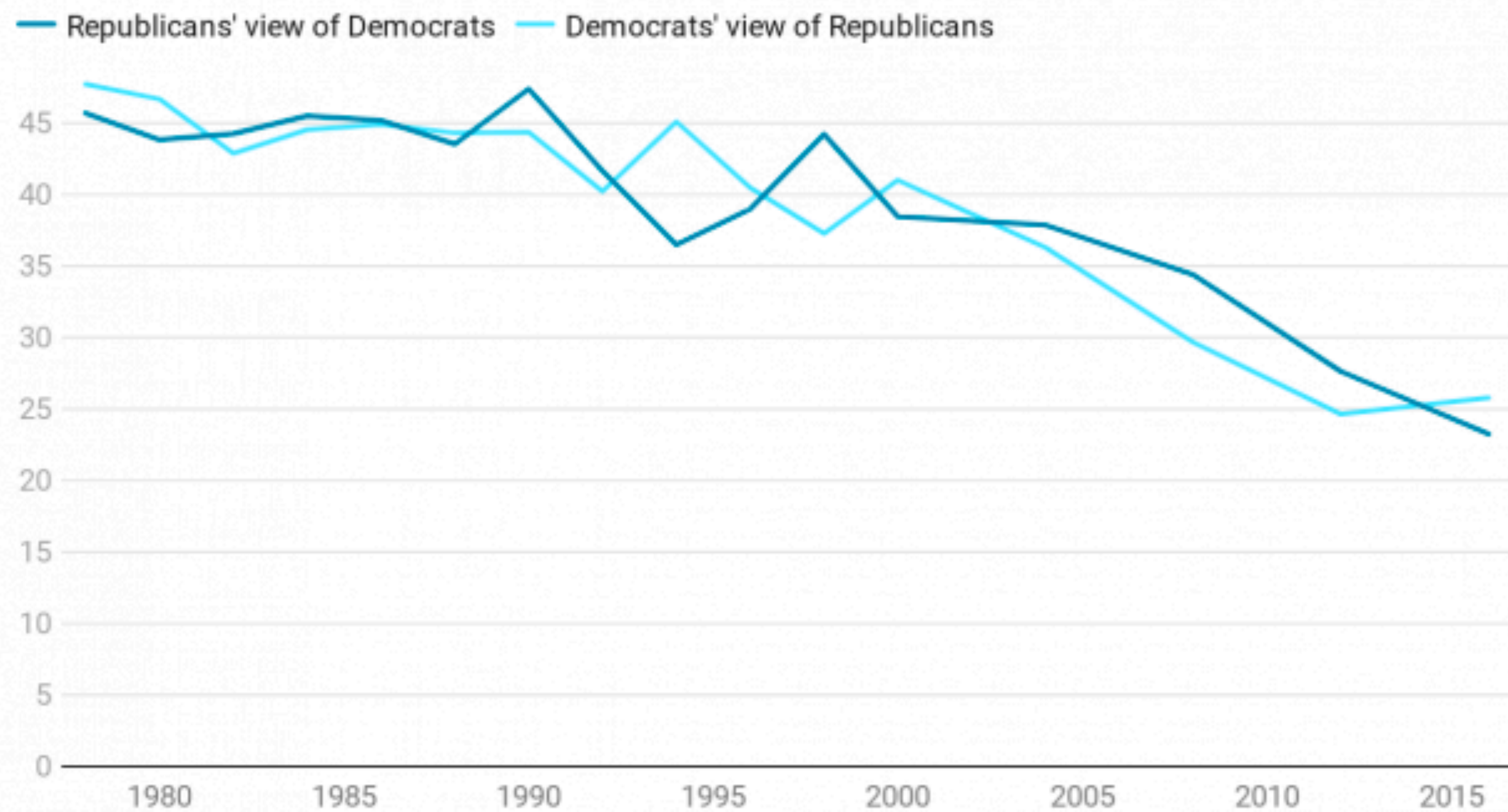
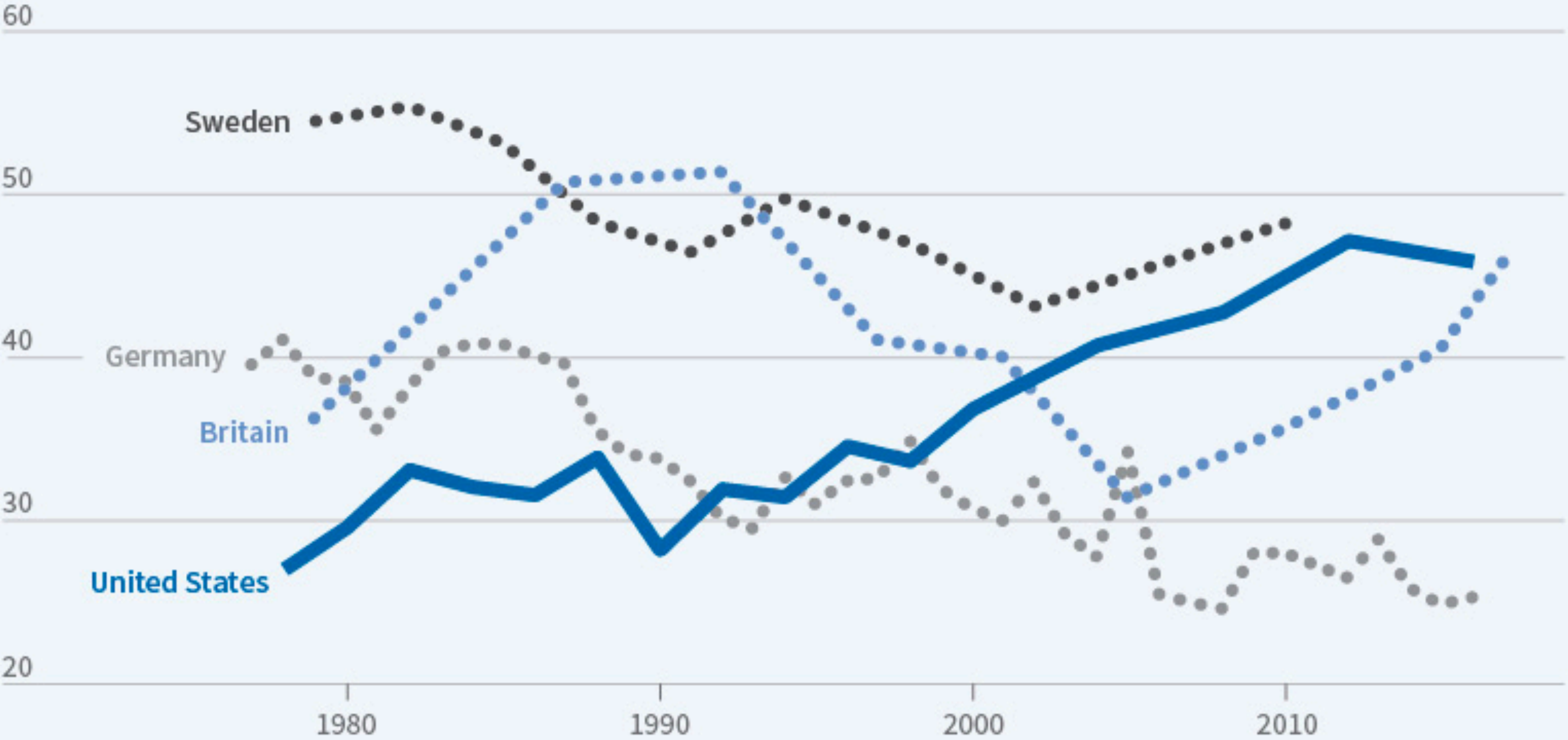


Chart: Peter Levine • Source: American National Election Studies

Trends in Political Polarization by Country, 1975–2017

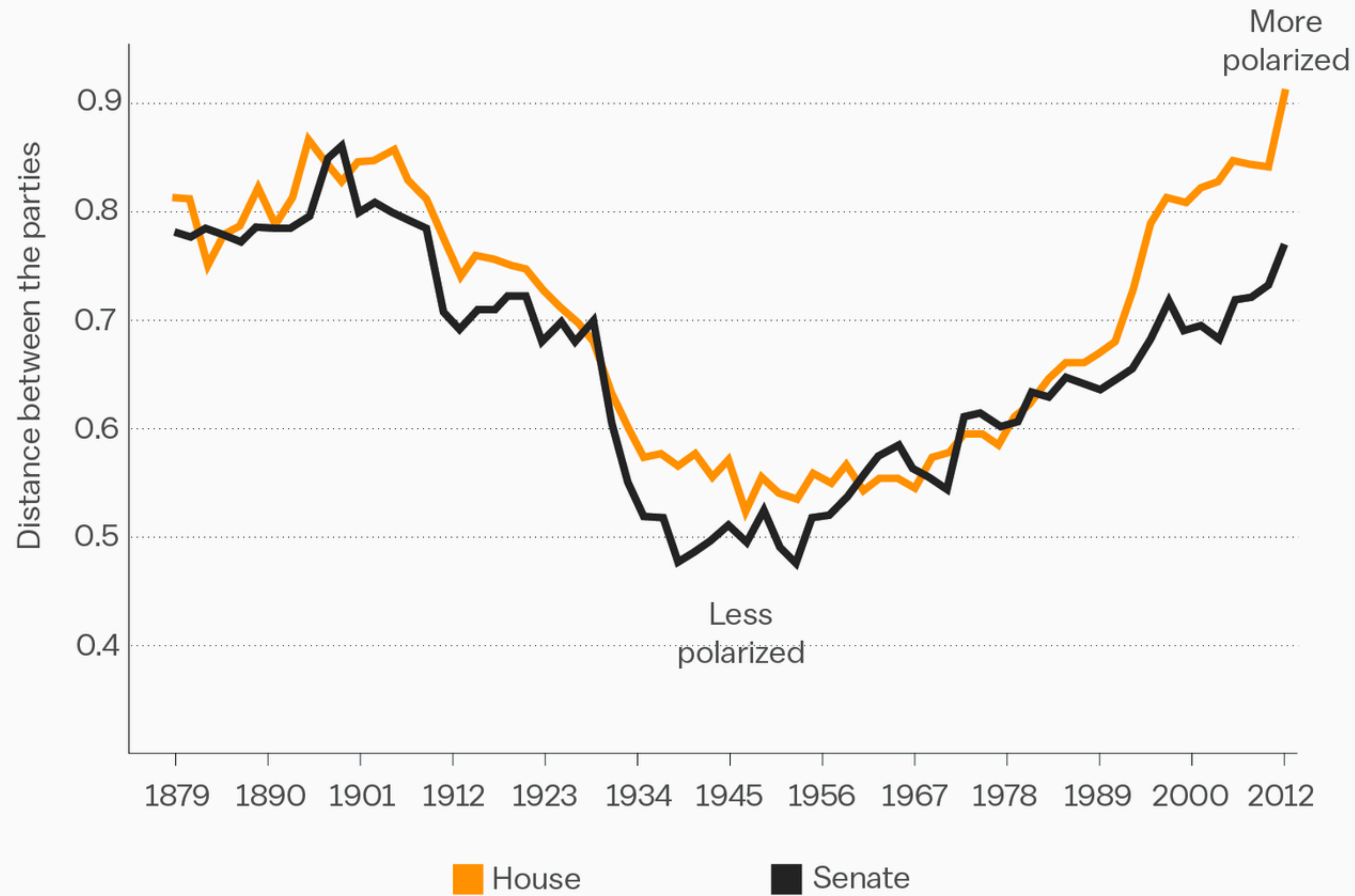
Polarization index, higher = increased polarization



Survey years vary across countries. Survey scales vary across countries; the researchers normalize the scales to a 0–100 scale.
Source: Researchers' calculations using data from the Politbarometers, the British Election Study, Swedish National Election Studies, and the American National Election Study

Party polarization, 1879 - 2012

The ideological gap between the Democratic and Republican caucuses



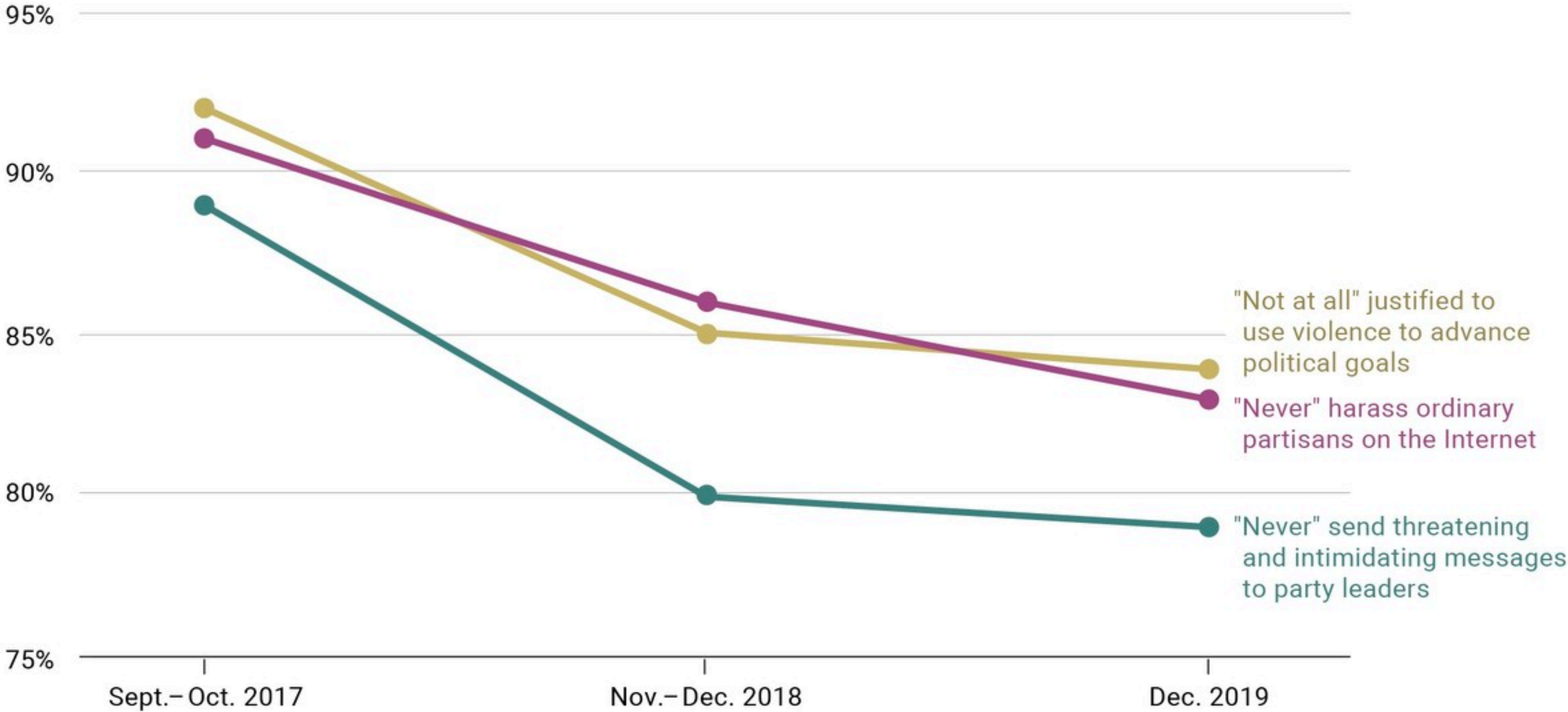
SOURCE: Voteview.com and DW-NOMINATE scores

Vox

Summary of findings

- Affective polarization has increased
 - Mostly driven by declines in out-partisan affect
 - US has seen recent increases in affective polarization
 - Mirrors political polarization in voting behavior at the elite level

Americans Less Likely to Reject Violence Than in 2017

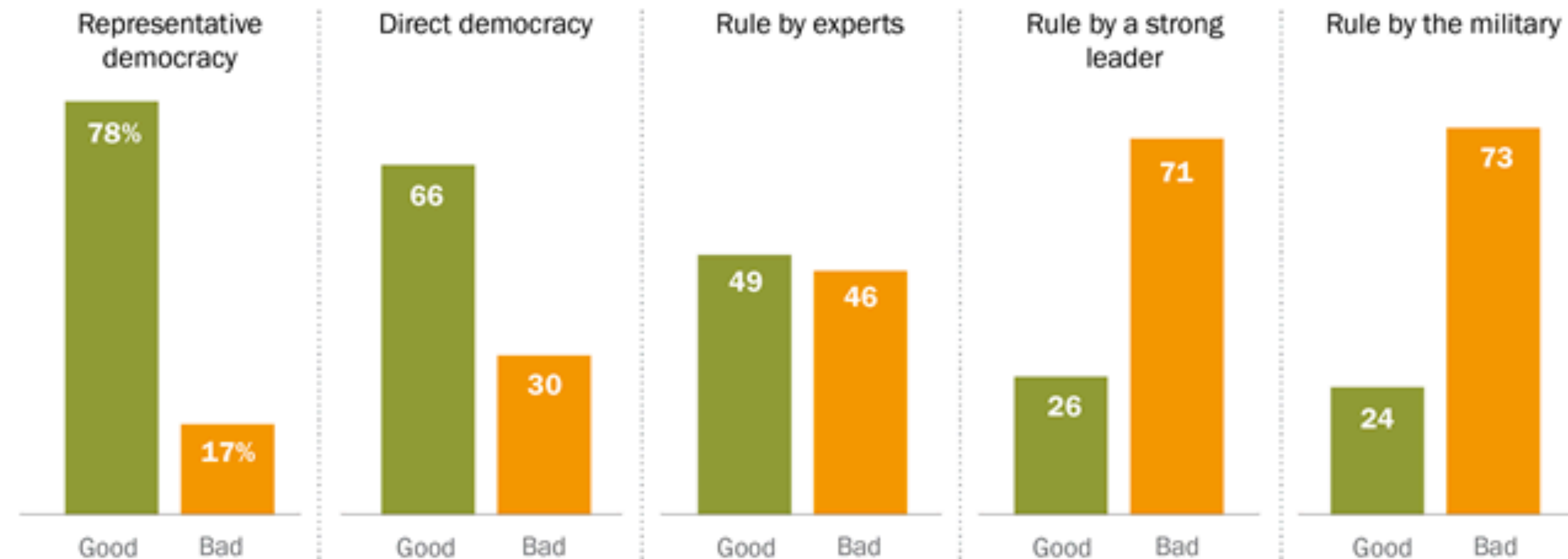


Democracy Fund Voter Study Group

Source: 2017 and 2018 Cooperative Congressional Election Study, Team Modules of Louisiana State University, December 2019 VOTER Survey

Widespread support for representative and direct democracy, but many are also open to nondemocratic alternatives

Would ___ be a good or bad way of governing our country?



Note: Percentages are global medians based on 38 countries. Full question wordings for political systems: Representative democracy, "A democratic system where representatives elected by citizens decide what becomes law"; Direct democracy, "A democratic system where citizens, not elected officials, vote directly on major national issues to decide what becomes law"; Rule by experts, "Experts, not elected officials, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country"; Rule by a strong leader, "A system in which a strong leader can make decisions without interference from parliament or the courts"; Rule by the military, "The military rules the country."

Source: Spring 2017 Global Attitudes Survey. Q29a-e.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Interventions

- Given the possible negative consequences of affective polarization, researchers are trying to evaluate if there are ways to reduce it.
- 252 interventions from 17 countries in four continents
- Selected 25 interventions to test
- $N = 32,252$

Class Project

- Create an intervention that reduces affective polarization or support for undemocratic practices
- Interventions could be blocks of text, videos, audio, or memes (no longer than three minutes)
- Goal is to think about pieces of information that might affect one of the two outcomes

Category	Outcome Variable	Definition	Example Item(s)
Partisan Animosity	Partisan Animosity	Dislike for opposing partisans	...How would you rate [Democrats / Republicans]?...Very cold or unfavorable feeling...No feeling... Very warm or favorable feeling* ...How many cents (if any) will you give to the [Democratic / Republican] participant?*
Anti-Democratic Attitudes	Support for Undemocratic Practices	Willingness to forgo democratic principles for partisan gain	[Republicans / Democrats] should not accept the results of elections if they lose.
	Support for Partisan Violence	Willingness to use violent tactics against outpartisans	How much do you feel it is justified for [Republicans / Democrats] to use violence if the [Democratic / Republican] party wins more races in the next election?
	Support for Undemocratic Candidates	Willingness to ignore undemocratic practices to elect inparty candidates	How would you vote if you learned that the [Republican / Democratic] candidate said that [Republicans / Democrats] should not accept the results of elections they lose?
Cohesion Aversion	Opposition to Bipartisanship	Resistance to cross-partisan collaboration	To what extent would you like to see Democratic and Republican elected representatives work together?
	Social Distrust	Distrust of people in general	Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you need to be very careful in dealing with people?
	Social Distance	Resistance to interpersonal contact with outpartisans	How comfortable are you having close personal friends who are [Democrats / Republicans]?
Politically Biased Judgments	Biased Evaluation of Politicized Facts	Skepticism of facts that favor the worldview of the other party	[Joe Biden / Donald Trump] was lawfully elected President in the [2020 / 2016] election against [Donald Trump / Hillary Clinton].

Notes. Variables specified as targets for submitters, and preregistered as primary outcome variables, indicated in bold print.

*: Text of feeling thermometer and dictator game items are excerpted. See Supplementary Materials for complete wording of these and all other items.

Category	Outcome Variable	Definition	Example Item(s)
Partisan Animosity	Partisan Animosity	Dislike for opposing partisans	...How would you rate [Democrats / Republicans]?...Very cold or unfavorable feeling...No feeling...Very warm or favorable feeling* ...How many cents (if any) will you give to the [Democratic / Republican] participant?*
Anti-Democratic Attitudes	Support for Undemocratic Practices	Willingness to forgo democratic principles for partisan gain	[Republicans / Democrats] should not accept the results of elections if they lose.
	Support for Partisan Violence	Willingness to use violent tactics against outpartisans	How much do you feel it is justified for [Republicans / Democrats] to use violence if the [Democratic / Republican] party wins more races in the next election?
	Support for Undemocratic Candidates	Willingness to ignore undemocratic practices to elect inparty candidates	How would you vote if you learned that the [Republican / Democratic] candidate said that [Republicans / Democrats] should not accept the results of elections they lose?
Cohesion Aversion	Opposition to Bipartisanship	Resistance to cross-partisan collaboration	To what extent would you like to see Democratic and Republican elected representatives work together?
	Social Distrust	Distrust of people in general	Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you need to be very careful in dealing with people?
	Social Distance	Resistance to interpersonal contact with outpartisans	How comfortable are you having close personal friends who are [Democrats / Republicans]?
Politically Biased Judgments	Biased Evaluation of Politicized Facts	Skepticism of facts that favor the worldview of the other party	[Joe Biden / Donald Trump] was lawfully elected President in the [2020 / 2016] election against [Donald Trump / Hillary Clinton].

Notes. Variables specified as targets for submitters, and preregistered as primary outcome variables, indicated in bold print.

*: Text of feeling thermometer and dictator game items are excerpted. See Supplementary Materials for complete wording of these and all other items.

Coming up with an intervention

- What are the sources of affective polarization and its consequences?
- Identify something that can plausibly be varied in a survey setting
 - Information about elites
 - Information about people
 - Appeals to norms/values
 - Misinformation/misperception corrections
- Create a novel message, video, etc. consistent with your expectations

Example

- Affective polarization is partially due to misperceptions
- Have people guess where partisans fall on several issues
- Expose them to the true estimates from public opinion polls

Due on Monday

- A rough draft of a possible intervention
 - Text
 - Image
 - Video (storyboard)