

Political Polarization Study

Divide the class up into 5 groups. Create a Google doc of this exercise and make a copy for each student. Have each group read 1 section of the Report and complete the questions (dividing up the questions among group members or partners will be the quickest way to do it). Then each group should prepare a poster of the section's findings and be ready to present it to the class. Printing graphics, poll results, and summaries is preferred to hand drawing them.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2014/06/12/section-1-growing-ideological-consistency/>

Questions Section 1:

1. What does the term ideologically consistent mean? Why do people with those view have a disproportionate influence on the political process? Who do they believe should give ground on political issues?
2. How has the partisan gap changed on a range of issues in the past 25 years?
3. What % of Democrats and Republicans today are either more conservative or more liberal than the median of the opposite party?
4. How does the % of Americans with mixed views changed in the past 20 years? Discuss how this impacts the ability to compromise on an issue.
5. How has the % of Democrats and Republicans that are consistently liberal or conservative shifted over the past 20 years? Describe how this shift is even more pronounced among political engaged people.
6. How have the views of elected officials drifted apart? How does this compare to 40 years ago? What party is most responsible for driving that shift?
7. What is the one issue where Republicans and Democrats have grown closer together?

Questions Section 2

1. How has the % of people changed who have a very unfavorable opinion of the other party changed over the past 20 years?
2. How do those numbers change when just consistently liberal or conservatives are looked at? What do these numbers suggest about the ability to compromise on issues between people who are active in politics?
3. What % of people on either side feel the opposing party represent a "threat to the nation?"
4. What % of Republicans felt President Obama was doing a good job in office? How does that figure compare to Democrats' view of the job Bush II did or their view of the job Trump did?
5. How has the opposing party's view of the sitting President changed over the past 50 years?
6. How does holding a deeply negative of the opposing party affect political participation like voting or campaign donations?

Questions Section 3

1. How do conservatives and liberal differ about the choice of community they would prefer to live in? How is this reflected in the electoral map (the distribution of red pro Republican and blue pro Democrat areas in the country)? You may have to look this answer up by looking at the map [here](#).
2. What facet of daily life do consistent liberals and conservatives share? With whom do restrict those conversations to?
3. What region of a community do neither liberal nor conservatives express a strong desire to live in?
4. What is one facet of the community both groups express a strong desire to live near?
5. How do liberals and conservatives compare on demographic considerations of a community like diversity and faith?
6. How does political identification and religious values play a role in marriage attitudes?
7. What is the ideological echo chamber? Which group liberal or conservative is more likely to insulate themselves in an echo chamber? Why do you think this may be the case?
8. How do liberals and conservative views of Fox News and MSNBC differ?

Questions for Section 4

1. Why does polarization make compromise more difficult?
2. What is the ideal outcome on a political compromise according to most Americans? How does this change for consistent liberals or conservatives? How do these theoretical outcomes different than actual political outcomes in many cases?
3. Is the ideological center “moderate?” Explain.
4. Which ideology is more likely to compromise?
5. Why do all or nothing proposals on gun control attract little support on either side of the spectrum?
6. What position is most favored by most Americans on issues like abortion or immigration?
7. What % of Americans view NSA surveillance in all or nothing terms? Is the NSA program popular or unpopular overall?
8. How do liberals and conservatives differ on government involvement in health care?

Questions for Section 5

1. What inference can we draw from the U-shaped curve about rates of political participation?
2. How does the rate of voter engagement vary with ideological consistency?
3. How does the rate of political donation vary with ideological consistency?
4. How does having a strongly negative view of the other party affect political engagement?
5. General election candidates (those up for office on the ballot) are chosen in primary elections. Based on the table showing who votes in primaries, what does this say about

the types of candidates who would be selected? Do you think they would be more centrist in their views or lean heavily to one side as either liberal or conservative?

6. Why do consistent liberals or conservatives not drown out the voices of people in the middle of the spectrum?