

Attitudes on Inequality and Political Affiliation

Research Report: SPAS-004 | July 31, 2020

Background

Do beliefs in the prevalence of inequality, and demand for equality, differ by political party affiliation? To investigate this, we assessed attitudes on inequality among self-identified Republicans, Democrats, and those who reported no political party identification in particular. We controlled for educational attainment, sex, and age.

Methodology

Data Source

- Social and Political Attitudes Study (SPAS)
- A nationally representative sample reflecting the U.S. adult population in terms of educational attainment, ethnicity, gender, and household income.

Participants

- 690 adults that identify as members of the Republican Party, Democratic Party, or “no party in particular.”
- 49% Male, 51% Female
- Average age = 46.76 years (range 18 to 85 years)

Measures

- Attitudes on inequality were measured with the, “Critical Consciousness scale.” It has three dimensions:
 1. *Perceived Inequality*: the degree to which groups *are not treated* equally (e.g., “Women have fewer chances to get good jobs,” “Poor people have fewer chances to get good jobs”).
 2. *Egalitarianism*: the degree to which groups *should be treated* equally (e.g., “it would be good if groups could be equal,” “Group equality should be our ideal”).
 3. *Activism*: the degree to which participants report engaging in social and political activities (e.g., “Joined in a protest march, political demonstration, or political meeting,” “Worked on a political campaign”).
- For technical (e.g., statistical) information not included in this document, view the supplemental page for this report.

Summary of Findings

1. Democrats were more likely to perceive women, poor people, and individuals of certain ethnic groups as having fewer educational and occupational opportunities (Figure 1).
 - However, Republicans and Democrats may be interpreting the questions differently. Republicans may be more likely to interpret the perceived inequality questions as referring to overt discriminatory attitudes, while Democrats may be more likely to interpret it as referring to a lack of equal outcomes (e.g., wealth, educational attainment).
2. Democrats were more likely to agree that all groups should be given an equal chance in life (Figure 2).
 - However, all three groups generally endorsed equal treatment, as the average score for all three groups was above 4.0 (i.e., a response of “slightly agree”). In other words, the average difference between members of the Democratic Party and the other two groups was small.
3. Democrats were more likely to report that they have participated in political activities (e.g., signed a petition, wrote a letter, contacted a public official; Figure 3).
 - However, people in this sample (across all three groups) reported infrequent engagement in political activities. All three groups averaged below 2.0 (i.e., a response of “once or twice last year”).
4. People overall (i.e., across all three groups) were less certain that groups *are* treated unequally, and more certain that groups *should be* treated equally.

What do these findings suggest?

- In line with other research (e.g., Diemer et al., 2019), one possibility is that “critical consciousness” is not meaningfully related to political party affiliation.
- Have an interpretation of this you want to share? Email it to research@skeptic.com

SKEPTIC

This report was brought to you by the **Skeptic Research Center** and the Worldview Foundations Research Team.

Become Involved

skeptical.com/research-center/become-involved

Researchers

Anondah Saide, PhD
Kevin McCaffree, PhD
research@skeptic.com

Suggested Citation

Saide, A., & McCaffree, K. (2020). Attitudes on Inequality and Political Affiliation. Skeptic Research Center, SPAS-004.

Become Involved

skeptical.com/research-center/become-involved

Researchers

Anondah Saide, PhD
Kevin McCaffree, PhD
research@skeptical.com

Suggested Citation

Saide, A., & McCaffree, K. (2020). Attitudes on Inequality and Political Affiliation. Skeptic Research Center, SPAS-004.

Figure 1. Perceived Inequality

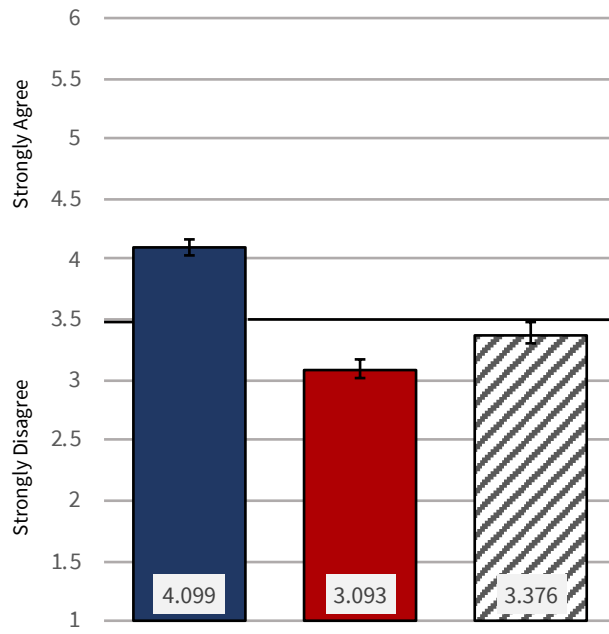


Figure 2. Egalitarianism

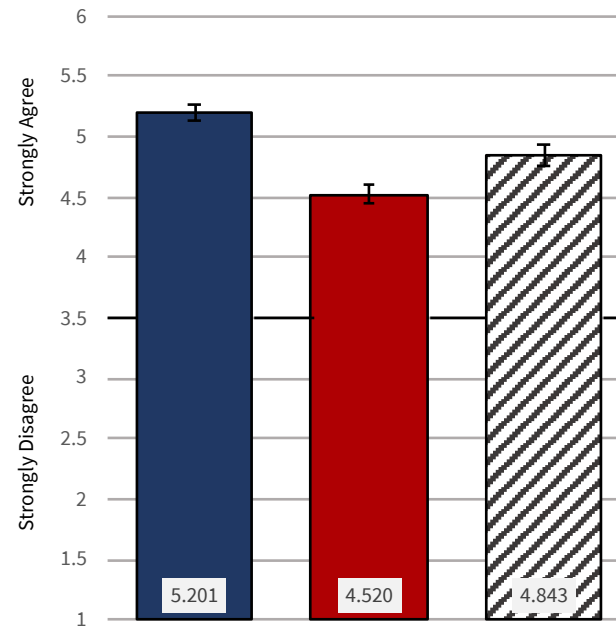
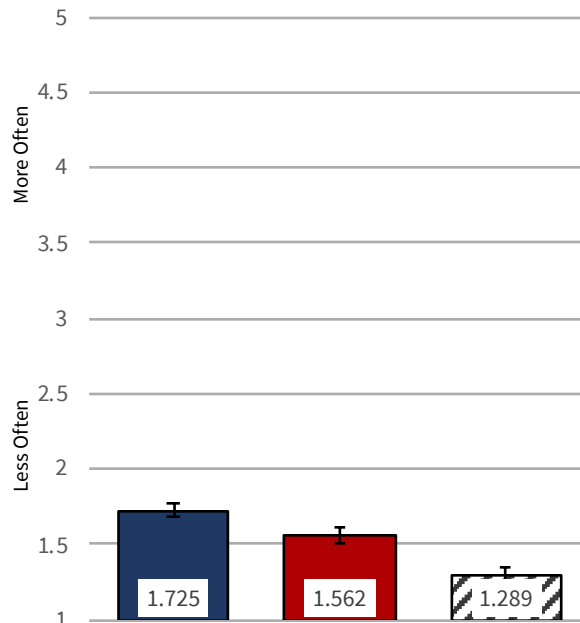


Figure 3. Activism



Notes: (1) The darker horizontal bar on each graph represents the midpoint of the scale. (2) The means depicted in these graphs control for sex, education, and age. (3) Error bars represent standard error. (4) All pairwise comparisons were statistically significant.