



How Perceptions of the US Government Linked to Varying Levels of Exposure to US Politics

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Introduction

- Over the past year leading up to the 2020 election, the US has seen a 10% increase in participation among voting-eligible youths from ages 18-29
- The 2020 election broke a historic record with the largest popular voter turnout of more than 159 million votes casted
- Due to the massive divide the past election brought, cable news networks have gained massive amounts of fluctuating audiences.
- Conversations around politics have become a sensitive subject over the past election with only 17% of Americans reporting feeling comfortable having a political discussion with someone
- Given that the past election brought a new wave of civic participation and interest in US politics, only 29% of Americans are satisfied with the way the nation is being governed.

Research Questions

- Is there a relationship between perceptions of the us government and levels of US political exposure?
- Does that relationship differ across political affiliations?

Methods

Sample

The study Outlook on Life Surveys (OOL) conducted by GfK Knowledge Networks on behalf of the University of California Irvine surveyed adults ages 18 and over in the United States (n = 2,294).

Measures

- Overall perception of the government was measured by creating a variable that was composed of three questions. Each question addressed perception based on affectedness, execution, and empathy.
- Levels of exposure to US politics was measured by creating a variable that was comprised of four questions. The questions addressed interests in elections, time spend thinking and discussing politics, and time spent watching main stream news.
- Because our statistical tests showed us that perception does not increase with exposure levels, I am rating perception on a scale of 1-4. 1 = positive perception, and 4= negative perception

Results

Univariate

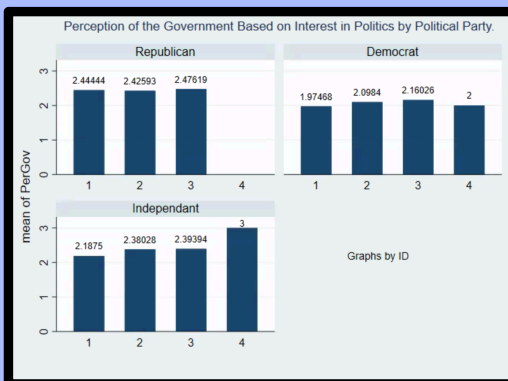
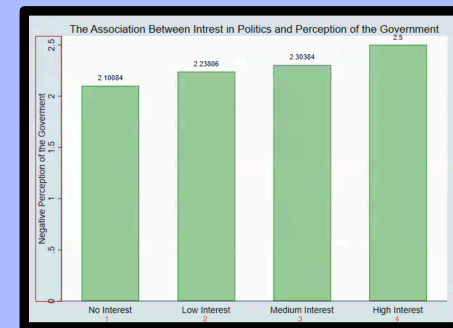
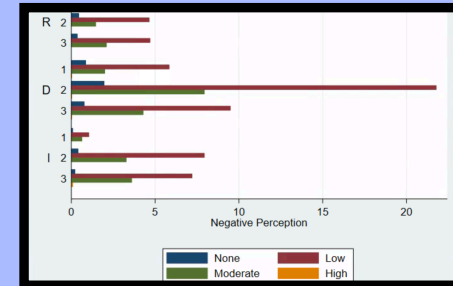
- 51.89% of the sampled population have a negative perception of the government. 11.64% have a mildly negative perception, and 36.48% have a very negative perception.
- 66.61% of the sampled population has a moderate level or exposure to American population. 5.55% has a high level of exposure. 27.53% have a low level of exposure, and 0.31% have no consistent exposure at all.

Bivariate

I ran a Chi-squared test for independence between government perception and exposure levels to US politics. **We can conclude that there is significant evidence to suggest a relationship between more levels of exposure and a negative perception of the government.** $X^2=16.76$, $p=.010$. A post HOC is not necessary because we see a statistical significance with our Chi-squared test.

Multivariate

- Then, I ran a oneway ANOVA test to determine the means of my ID variable. (ID= political affiliation. Republican, Democrat, Independent). **We can conclude that there is no significant difference across the means for exposure levels and government perception.** Between groups $p\text{-value}=.0021$, $\text{Prob}>\text{chi}^2=.202$.
- To predict whether ID or exposure levels would determine perception, I ran a multiple regression analysis test. Coefficients are positive. Exposure levels $p\text{-value} = .015$. Perception $p\text{-value} = .530$.



Discussion

- As levels of political exposure increase, so does the negative perception of the government.
- Across all ID categories, the same remains true.
- Each ID category has different levels of political exposure, yet all follow the same pattern of increasing negative perception as political exposure increases as well.
- With the continuing grown of political polarization in the country, one thing for both sides remains true. As both sides continue to be exposed to politics, their disdain and negative perception of the government grows.
- An interesting topic for future research would be looking into individuals with overwhelmingly positive perceptions of the government, and how political exposure is related to their perception.

References

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