

Political Polarization May Be Distorted When It Comes to Police Reform

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Abstract : Republicans and Democrats are often polarized when it comes to important topics, but the portrayal of polarization of key issues might be distorted and exaggerated. We examined Republicans' and Democrats' attitudes about police reform policy during the 2020 racial justice protests and calls to 'defund the police'. We hypothesized that a) Republicans and Democrats will be polarized on the "defund police" question; however, b) they will have similar overall attitudes towards specific police reform policies (will be on the same side of the scale--disagree vs. agree), but c) will differ in their extent of agreement or disagreement (main effect of political party ID, but located on the same side of the scale). Using one-way, Multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) controlling for race, education, and income, we found an overall effect of political party ID. Six out of the nine policies studied were, in fact, not polarizing; both groups were in consensus on whether they disagreed or agreed with the policy, including "defund police". Results suggest that polarization might be exaggerated.

Keywords : political psychology, social, ideology, polarization

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