Affective polarization did not increase during the coronavirus pandemic

Levi Boxell, Stanford University*
Jacob Conway, Stanford University
James N. Druckman, Northwestern University
Matthew Gentzkow, Stanford University and NBER

January 2021

Abstract

We document trends in affective polarization during the coronavirus pandemic. In our main measure, affective polarization is relatively flat between July 2019 and February 2020, then falls significantly around the onset of the pandemic. Three of five other data sources display a similar downward trend, with two of five data sources showing no significant change. A survey experiment shows that priming respondents to think about the coronavirus pandemic significantly reduces affective polarization.

Significance Statement: The coronavirus challenges societies’ social, economic, and political infrastructures. In the United States, the pandemic quickly politicized with partisans starkly divided in their behaviors and policy views. This led many to presume that the coronavirus polarized Americans, following a multi-decade trend of increases in affective polarization where partisans dislike and distrust one another. Using multiple data sources, we show that, if anything, affective polarization declined during the onset of the pandemic. A survey experiment that primes respondents to think about the pandemic provides further evidence for a decrease. These results highlight how a crisis may decrease (or not increase) the extent of group attitudinal divides while simultaneously exacerbating the consequences of such divides.

*E-mail: lboxell@stanford.edu, jcconway@stanford.edu, druckman@northwestern.edu, gentzkow@stanford.edu. We acknowledge funding from the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research (SIEPR), Northwestern University, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Sloan Foundation, and the Institute for Humane Studies. This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program under Grant No. DGE-1656518. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation. We thank Anna Wang and our other dedicated research assistants.
1 Introduction

The scientific, economic, and social challenges of responding to the coronavirus pandemic have been compounded in the US by political divisions. Studies using survey and behavioral data from the early days of the pandemic reveal that partisan divisions were among the most significant drivers of health behaviors, concern about the virus, support for specific policies, attributions of responsibility, and even beliefs about basic facts (e.g., Allcott et al. 2020b; Druckman et al. 2020b; Gadarian et al. 2020; Gollwitzer et al. 2020; Romer and Jaimeson 2020). This echoes similar divisions among politicians and the media (e.g., Carothers 2020; Hart et al. 2020; Simonov et al. 2020). Against this backdrop, some commentators have expressed concern that the crisis may have deepened political polarization (Carothers 2020; Feldmann 2020; Harris 2020; Tierney 2020; Victor 2020; Walsh 2020).

In this paper, we use multiple data sources to document trends in political polarization during the coronavirus pandemic. We focus on affective polarization—the extent to which partisans feel more negatively toward the opposing political party than toward their own (Iyengar et al. 2019). Affective polarization in the US has been steadily increasing in recent decades, and this has generated widespread concern about its consequences including undermining democratic institutions and representation, legislative gridlock, and partisan violence (e.g., Kalmoe and Mason 2019; Finkel et al. 2020).

We find no evidence that affective polarization rose during the crisis. Four of six data sources suggest that affective polarization in fact declined with the onset of the coronavirus, with the other two suggesting neither a decline nor an increase. A survey experiment adds further evidence, showing that priming respondents to think about the pandemic significantly reduces affective polarization. Our results suggest that the coronavirus may actually have brought partisans together in the face of a common threat (Brooks 2020; Quarcoo and Kleinfeld 2020), consistent with evidence from previous national threats (Carlin and Love 2018; Levendusky 2020).

Placed in the context of the partisan response to the pandemic (e.g., Allcott et al 2020b; Gadarian et al. 2020), our findings highlight that an intervention—in our case, an international crisis—may lessen (or not impact) the extent of group attitudinal divisions while simultaneously exacerbating the consequences of such divisions.

1Druckman et al. (2020a) show in particular that affective polarization can impact coronavirus attitudes and behaviors.
2 Results

2.1 Descriptive Trends in Affective Polarization

Measures of affective polarization vary in the type of attitudes elicited (e.g., feelings, trust, or behaviors) and the subject of those attitudes (e.g., voters, parties, or candidates). To avoid relying on a single measure or data source, we report trends across six different measures and data source combinations. See Druckman and Levendusky (2019) and Iyengar et al. (2019) for further discussion of the different measures and their relation to one another.

Figure 1 reports trends in affective polarization towards partisans or parties. Panel A of Figure 1 shows our measure of affective polarization towards partisans using Nationscape data that covers more than 300,000 interviews between July 2019 and July 2020. This is our preferred measure due to the size, frequency, and consistent methodology of the Nationscape data. Panel A shows that, prior to the rise of the coronavirus in the US, affective polarization was relatively flat and this flat trend extends back to July 2019. However, after the first publicized coronavirus-related death in the US (on February 29th, 2020), affective polarization exhibits a significant decline through May (p-value = 0.006) prior to the death of George Floyd. The 0.075 standard deviation decline during the onset of the pandemic in Panel A can be compared to the 0.18 standard deviation increase in party affective polarization between 1996 and 2016 as measured in the American National Election Study (ANES), a 0.06 standard deviation decline from quitting Facebook for four weeks, or a 0.06 standard deviation treatment-on-treated decline on an affective polarization index from subscribing to counter-attitudinal news on Facebook (Allcott et al. 2020c; Levy 2020). Furthermore, Panel B shows a marginally insignificant decrease during the onset of the pandemic when measuring affective polarization using questions in the Nationscape data about feelings towards partisan members of Congress (p-value = 0.097).

Panel C of Figure 1 reports our measure of affective polarization towards political parties using a panel of respondents from Druckman et al. (2020b). The estimates indicate little change in affective polarization between July 2019 and April 2020 (p-value = 0.763). The use of a balanced panel in the Druckman et al. (2020b) data addresses concerns regarding the use of repeated cross-sections.

---

2 See Supporting Information (SI) Table 1 for additional detail on the size and statistical significance of affective polarization changes.
3 The estimated decline in SI Table 1 is -3.20 and the standard deviation across respondents is 42.66. The question wording and scaling in the ANES, Allcott et al. (2020c), and Levy (2020) data differ from the Nationscape data.
Figure 2 reports trends in partisan feelings towards Donald Trump. Feelings towards presidential candidates have been previously used as measures of affective polarization (e.g., Lelkes et al. 2017; Levendusky 2018; Iyengar 2019); moreover, presidential approval ratings are often interpreted through a partisan lens—as one recent paper puts it “citizens are increasingly substituting in partisanship for approval” (Donovan et al. 2019: 1213; also see Small and Eisinger 2020). Panel A reports trends in the difference in feelings between Republicans and Democrats towards Donald Trump. While there is a slight upward trend prior to the onset of the pandemic, there is a significant decline upon the onset of the pandemic (p-value = 0.005). Panel B reports a similar decline in partisan differences in presidential approval ratings from the Nationscape data with the onset of the pandemic (p-value = 0.001). Panel C reports estimates of affect towards Donald Trump as measured in the ANES data in December 2018, December 2019, and April 2020. While the difference in affect towards Trump between Republicans and Democrats is relatively constant across the 2018 and 2019 waves, the gap between the parties is significantly lower in April 2020 (p-value < 0.001).

We also observe a subsequent sharp increase in affective polarization during early June in each of the three affective polarization measures that cover this period. In our preferred affective polarization series (Figure 1A), this increase is statistically significant (p-value = 0.017) with affective polarization nearly returning to pre-pandemic levels. In Section 4 we provide suggestive evidence that this increase is likely to have been caused by events related to George Floyd’s death rather than by coronavirus-related events based on the precise timing, the racialized nature of this polarization increase, and a priming experiment.

2.2 Survey Experiment

We also conduct a survey experiment with a nationally representative sample of 1503 respondents. It has three conditions. In the coronavirus treatment, respondents are asked to read two news article excerpts that cover the initial phases of the coronavirus pandemic and to reflect on their own experiences and faith in the United States’ ability to address the pandemic at its onset. This

---

4 We restrict attention to Donald Trump because the Democratic primary was still in progress during our time period of interest.

5 Our three affective polarization series measures which extend into June are all from Nationscape, and include feelings towards partisans (Figure 1A), feelings towards Trump (Figure 2A), and Trump approval (Figure 2B). Each of these three series show a statistically significant decrease in affective polarization between the first coronavirus-related death and late May (see SI Table 1 for detail).

6 Covid Information Treatment in Survey Instrument:
approach follows Levendusky (2018) who had respondents read an article about the strengths of Americans and then reflect on what they like best about America. Here, we instead focus on feelings from the start of the pandemic to see if it leads people to similarly prioritize a shared identity in the face of a threat, or primes alternative experiences from the early pandemic period that shaped affective polarization.\textsuperscript{7} To ensure any effect does not stem from reflection alone, we also include a placebo treatment where respondents are asked to perform the analogous exercise but for Prince Harry and Meghan Markle’s financial separation from the UK royal family (which occurred just before the onset of the pandemic).\textsuperscript{8} In the pure control group, respondents are not asked to perform any exercise. We then ask respondents to report their feelings towards the parties using a set of affective polarization questions taken from Druckman and Levendusky (2019), which include party thermometers, trait measures, trust measures, and social distance measures.

Panel A of Figure 3 reports the estimated treatment effects on the difference between own-party and other-party views. Relative to the pure control group, the coronavirus prime reduces an index of affective polarization by 3.8 units (p-value = 0.042) where own- and other-party affect are on a 0 to 100 scale. The coronavirus treatment effect is larger in magnitude than the placebo’s,

---

\textsuperscript{7}Levendusky (2020) primes 9/11 memories and finds that such priming leads to a decrease in affective polarization (albeit a smaller decrease than the American identity prime).

\textsuperscript{8}Complete survey instruments, including the placebo information treatment, can be found in SI Sections 4 and 5.
though this difference falls short of statistical significance (p-value = 0.290). Panel B reports feelings towards the other party (i.e., negative partisanship), which has been a focus for much of the literature since this is the component of affective polarization that has substantially changed over time (Groenendyk 2018) and drives many of the social ramifications of affective polarization including coronavirus related behaviors (e.g., Abramowitz and Webster 2016; Druckman et al. 2020a). Here, we see the coronavirus prime improves an index of feelings towards the other party by 3.5 units (p-value = 0.005) and this effect is significantly larger than the placebo’s (p-value = 0.046). Similar results are observed for many of the individual components of the index. In contrast, there is no significant difference in reported affect between the pure control and the UK royal placebo.

Despite the coronavirus treatment effects reducing polarization, more than two-thirds of our survey respondents indicated that they believed the coronavirus has made the public more politically divided, consistent with the aforementioned commentary.

### 3 Potential Mechanisms

Heterogeneity in affective polarization within existing survey data and our own experiment provides suggestive evidence of possible mechanisms through which coronavirus events might have decreased affective polarization.

Scholars have demonstrated a close connection between an individual’s identity and her level of affective polarization. American identity can mitigate affective polarization by detracting from partisan identities (e.g., Levendusky 2018; Levendusky 2020), and the alignment of multiple social identities (religious, racial, gender, and partisan) is one hypothesis for growing affective polarization in the United States (e.g., Mason 2016). While SI Table 2 shows that an index measuring strength of identity is positively correlated ($\beta = 16.74$; robust se = 2.56) with affective polarization cross-sectionally across respondents in the Nationscape data, we find no evidence that strength of identity changed significantly with the onset of the pandemic (SI Figure 1 and SI Table 1).

On the other hand, Americans could be united by a common bond (i.e., an external threat) without shifting the value they place across labeled identities. Between January 2018 and March 2020, we also show that neither American identity nor partisan identity exhibit significant individual changes with the onset of the pandemic, and, if anything, American identity weakens over time. This is consistent with West and Iyengar’s (2020) finding that affective polarization may be distinct from the salience of partisan identity.
2020, the share of Americans indicating “we’re all in it together” increased from 63 percent to 90 percent—suggesting a strengthening sense of unity in the face of a national threat (More in Common 2020). Consistent with a “we’re all in this together” mentality reducing affective polarization, SI Tables 2 and 3 show that affective polarization is negatively correlated with a respondent’s (a) concern about the pandemic in the Nationscape data, (b) confidence in the United States’ ability to limit the impact of the coronavirus in the Druckman et al. (2020b) data, and (c) faith in the country’s handling of the pandemic in our survey experiment.

Similarly, personal experiences may counter one’s partisan perspective (e.g., Lerman and McCabe 2017; Druckman et al. 2020a). SI Table 2 shows that respondents in the Nationscape data who had greater exposure to the virus (determined by whether they or members of their network got sick) typically exhibit significantly lower levels of affective polarization ($\beta = -15.08; \text{robust se} = 1.15$).

Another potential mechanism is through shifts in news consumption. Increased exposure to cross-cutting news sources as well as local news sources has been shown to decrease polarization (e.g., Garrett et al. 2014; Darr et al. 2018; Levy 2020). In SI Figure 1, we use the Nationscape data to show that the number of news outlets used by respondents—a proxy for news diversity—increased significantly upon the report of the first coronavirus-related death.$^{10}$ SI Table 2 shows that the number of news outlets used is negatively correlated ($\beta = -11.08; \text{robust se} = 0.74$) with affective polarization cross-sectionally across respondents.

All of these results are correlational based on rough proxies for mechanisms, but they provide a baseline for future work to explore how people process crises in ways that impact polarization.

4 Separating the Effects of the Coronavirus Pandemic from George Floyd’s Death

One question is whether the initial decline with the pandemic and the subsequent rise after George Floyd’s death are caused by the corresponding events or whether there are confounding factors. We provide several suggestive pieces of evidence pointing towards separate causal effects of these events.

Figure 4 shows trends in Google searches related to the coronavirus, George Floyd, and parti-

---

$^{10}$After spiking with the first coronavirus-related death, the number of news outlets slowly declines to be insignificantly different from pre-pandemic levels by the time of George Floyd’s death (see SI Figure 1 and SI Table 1).
sanship. The left inset of Panel A shows that interest in the coronavirus coincides with the initial decrease in affective polarization. It also shows that coronavirus search interest was waning prior to George Floyd’s death. In contrast, the middle and right insets of Panel A show that interest related to George Floyd (e.g., “Black Lives Matter”) and partisanship (e.g., “far left”, “far right”) both spiked simultaneously with the death of George Floyd. In terms of timing, the increase in partisan affective polarization in Nationscape more closely aligns with the rise in George Floyd search activity than with changes in Covid-related searches.\textsuperscript{11}

We also examine trends in the partisanship of racial affect (see figure notes for definition). Panel B of Figure 4 shows that the partisanship of racial affect was flat during the onset of the pandemic, but spikes after George Floyd’s death. The increase in the partisanship of racial affect aligns with the increase in (political) affective polarization in Figure 1. Furthermore, in SI Figure 4, we show that our measure of partisan racial affect exhibits a significant and positive relationship with our measure of (political) affective polarization ($\beta = 0.285$; robust se = 0.005). This link is consistent with prior work connecting race and affective polarization in the United States (e.g., Mason and Wronski 2018; Valentino and Zhirkov 2018; Westwood and Peterson 2020).

Lastly, SI Figure 5 reports results from our pilot experimental study that included a coronavirus prime, a George Floyd prime, and a pure control.\textsuperscript{12} We first note that, as in the results of our main experiment described in Section 2.2, the coronavirus prime has a negative and significant effect on our affective polarization index relative to a pure control sample (p-value = 0.033). Consistent with the pandemic and George Floyd’s death having opposing effects, the estimated effect of the George Floyd prime on our index of affective polarization is positive with p-value = 0.085 and is similar in magnitude to the negative estimated effect of the coronavirus prime. Moreover, the coronavirus and George Floyd treatment effects are statistically different from one another for all but one outcome measure.

These results are consistent with a causal decrease in affective polarization at the onset of the coronavirus pandemic following the first publicized US death, coupled with a subsequent increase in affective polarization induced by events related to George Floyd’s death rather than due to the pandemic itself.

\textsuperscript{11}SI Figure 2 reports trends for each individual term or topic, and SI Figure 3 reports the timing of state reopening decisions from Allcott et al. (2020a).

\textsuperscript{12}In the main experiment, we dropped the George Floyd prime in favor of the placebo prime to address concerns that the reflective exercise may have treatment effects irregardless of the topic.
5 Discussion

Research has shown that early politicization of the virus in the United States led to stark partisan divides in behaviors and policy support (e.g., Allcott et al. 2020b; Gadarian et al. 2020; Gollwitzer et al. 2020; Romer and Jaimeson 2020), driven in part by levels of affective polarization (Druckman et al. 2020a). For some it may follow that affective polarization, which has steadily increased over the past several decades (Iyengar et al. 2019; Finkel et al. 2020), itself increased with the onset of the virus—a sentiment relayed by many commentators and our own survey respondents. Yet, we find evidence that, if anything, affective polarization decreased during this period.

Combined with existing evidence on the polarized response to the pandemic, our results show that a crisis may at once decrease the extent of group attitudinal divides (e.g., affective polarization) while simultaneously exacerbating the consequences of the divides (e.g., partisan divisions in behavioral responses to the pandemic). Group attitudinal changes and related behavioral changes need not align. Scholars and practitioners who examine interventions to mitigate polarization—a burgeoning industry (e.g., Ahler and Sood 2018; Levendusky 2018; Huddy and Yair 2020; Levendusky 2020; Moore-Berg et al. 2020; Wojcieszak and Warner 2020)—may need to separately distinguish the size of attitudinal divisions from their consequences.

6 Material and Methods

Across datasets, we define affective polarization to be the weighted average of individual’s feelings towards one’s own party minus feelings towards the other party. We include leaners, but exclude pure independents (see Druckman and Levendusky 2019). We use survey weights when available consistently across a given data series. We apply an affine transformation to all measures of affect so they range between 0 and 100.

For the survey experiment, we recruited 1503 respondents on Bovitz Inc.’s survey panel between September 29, 2020 and October 4, 2020, and we exclude 89 respondents who failed an attention check (as was pre-registered). The protocol was approved as exempt by Northwestern University’s IRB (STU00212339), and informed consent was obtained at the beginning of the survey. The survey analysis was pre-registered at aspredicted.org (#48474). For each category of affect questions (feelings thermometer, trust, perceived traits, and social distance), we first rescaled responses to range between 0 and 100 before taking the average across responses within a given category for each individual. We then take the average across categories to construct the index.
for each respondent. There are one, one, eight, and three individual measures associated with the feeling thermometer, trust, perceived traits, and social distance categories respectively.

For the pilot survey experiment mentioned in Section 4, we recruited 582 MTurk respondents on September 23, 2020, and we exclude 30 respondents who failed an attention check. Our pilot experiment uses the same affect outcomes and the same IRB protocol as our main survey experiment, and informed consent was obtained at the beginning of the pilot survey.

Replication code and data from Druckman et al. (2020b) and our own survey experiments are available at https://osf.io/dra7s/. Nationscape and ANES data are available respectively at https://www.voterstudygroup.org/publication/nationscape-data-set and https://electionstudies.org/data-center/. The survey instruments are available in SI Sections 4 and 5.
References


Huddy, Leonie, and Omer Yair. 2020. Reducing affective polarization: Warm group relations or policy compromise? Political Psychology.


Note: Figure shows trends in affective polarization using three distinct data sources. Panel A reports affective polarization towards partisans for each ten-day period in the Nationscape data. Panel B reports affective polarization towards members of Congress for each ten-day period in the Nationscape data. Panel C reports affective polarization using a panel of respondents from Druckman et al. (2020) who completed surveys in July 2019 and April 2020. The Druckman et al. (2020) data report lower levels of affective polarization likely due, in part, to an embedded experiment that varied the target evaluated (e.g., “Democrats,” “moderate Democrats”) (see Druckman et al. 2020c). The first dashed vertical line indicates the first period in which a Covid-related death was reported. The second dashed vertical line indicates the period in which George Floyd’s death occurred. The weighted means and their 95 percent confidence intervals come from a weighted OLS regression of the respective variables on indicators for each period (without a constant term) and using robust standard errors.
Figure 2: Trends in Partisan Feelings Toward Trump

Panel A: Nationscape (Feelings)

Panel B: Nationscape (Approval)

Panel C: ANES (Feelings)

Note: Figure shows trends in the difference (Republicans minus Democrats) in average feelings towards Donald Trump. Panel A reports this measure for each ten-day period in the Nationscape data. Panel B reports trends in the difference (Republicans minus Democrats) in average presidential approval ratings for Donald Trump for each ten-day period in the Nationscape data. Panel C reports the difference (Republicans minus Democrats) in average feelings towards Donald Trump for ANES surveys in December 2018, December 2019, and May 2020. The first dashed vertical line indicates the first period in which a Covid-related death was reported. The second dashed vertical line indicates the period in which George Floyd’s death occurred. The weighted means and their 95 percent confidence intervals come from a weighted OLS regression of the respective variables on indicators for each period (without a constant term) and using robust standard errors.
Figure 3: Experimental Treatment Effects of Priming the Pandemic

Panel A: Affective Polarization

Panel B: Affect Towards Other Party

Note: Figure reports estimated treatment effects of the coronavirus and placebo primes relative to the pure control group. Panel A reports estimates on measures of affective polarization (own party minus other party). Panel B reports estimates on measures of affect towards the other party. Both panels report estimates separately for each of four question categories (feelings thermometer; trust; perceived traits; and social distance) and for an index averaging across categories. The 95 percent confidence intervals are constructed using heteroskedastic robust standard errors. Above the bars, we report the p-value from a two-sided test of equality between the coronavirus and placebo treatment effects using robust standard errors.
Figure 4: Separating the Coronavirus Pandemic and George Floyd

Panel A: Google Search Trends

Panel B: Trends in Partisanship of Racial Affect

Note: Panel A reports Google search trends for terms and topics related to the coronavirus, George Floyd, and partisanship. Each term’s search volume is indexed relative to the highest volume day between November 1, 2019 and July 1, 2020. The daily volume is then averaged over each ten day period. The index is constructed by taking the average across each term or topic in the category. The coronavirus category includes “coronavirus” (topic), “lockdown” (topic), “reopen” (topic), and “mask” (term). The George Floyd category includes “black lives matter” (topic), “racist” (topic), and “protest” (topic). The partisan category includes “conservatives” (term), “liberals” (term), “far right” (term), and “far left” (term). Panel B reports trends in the partisanship of racial affect defined as follows. First, for all Democrats, we compute affect towards Blacks minus affect towards Whites. Second, for all Republicans, we compute affect towards Whites minus affect towards Blacks. We then take the weighted average across respondents in each period. The first dashed vertical line indicates the first period in which a Covid-related death was reported. The second dashed vertical line indicates the period in which George Floyd’s death occurred. The weighted means and their 95 percent confidence intervals come from a weighted OLS regression of the respective variables on indicators for each period (without a constant term) and using robust standard errors.
Affective polarization did not increase during the coronavirus pandemic

Levi Boxell, Stanford University
Jacob Conway, Stanford University
James N. Druckman, Northwestern University
Matthew Gentzkow, Stanford University and NBER

January 2021

Contents

1 Data References 3
2 ANES Disclaimer 3
3 Supporting Tables and Figures 4
4 Survey Experiment Instrument 12
5 Pilot Survey Experiment Instrument 18

List of Tables

1 P-values for Changes in Time Series ........................................ 4
2 Mechanisms – Nationscape Data ............................................. 5
3 Mechanisms – Druckman et al. (2020b) and Experiment ............ 6

List of Figures

1 Trends in News Consumption and Identity ............................. 7
Google Trends for Coronavirus, George Floyd, and Partisan Related Terms  
Timing of State Reopening Decisions 
Racial Affect and Partisan Affect 
Experimental Treatment Effects of Priming the Pandemic versus Priming George Floyd — Pilot Data
1 Data References

The American National Election Studies (www.electionstudies.org). These materials are based on work supported by the National Science Foundation under grant numbers SES 1444721, 2014-2017, the University of Michigan, and Stanford University.


2 ANES Disclaimer

The original collector of the data, ANES, and the relevant funding agency/agencies bear no responsibility for use of the data or for interpretations or inferences based upon such uses.
## 3 Supporting Tables and Figures

SI Table 1: P-values for Changes in Time Series

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Change After Covid Onset</th>
<th>Change After George Floyd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partisans (Nationscape)</td>
<td>-3.198 [0.006]</td>
<td>2.640 [0.017]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congressmembers (Nationscape)</td>
<td>-2.143 [0.097]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parties (Druckman et al. 2020b)</td>
<td>0.297 [0.763]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump Feelings (Nationscape)</td>
<td>-4.454 [0.005]</td>
<td>1.688 [0.265]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump Approval (Nationscape)</td>
<td>-5.084 [0.001]</td>
<td>3.341 [0.028]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump Feelings (ANES)</td>
<td>-12.814 [0.000]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Index (Nationscape)</td>
<td>0.006 [0.267]</td>
<td>-0.005 [0.361]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity Index (Nationscape)</td>
<td>-0.011 [0.124]</td>
<td>0.010 [0.098]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partisan Identity (Nationscape)</td>
<td>-0.005 [0.626]</td>
<td>0.011 [0.285]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Identity (Nationscape)</td>
<td>-0.013 [0.170]</td>
<td>-0.007 [0.401]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Table shows the estimated change and associated p-value for our measures of affective polarization and some potential mechanisms with the onset of the coronavirus pandemic and the aftermath of George Floyd’s death. The change after Covid onset is between the last observed period prior to the first publicized coronavirus death in the US (February 29, 2020) and the last observed period prior to George Floyd’s death (May 25, 2020) for each series respectively. When it is well-defined, the change after George Floyd is between the last observed period prior to George Floyd’s death (May 25, 2020) and the last observed period for each series respectively. The p-values (in brackets) are implemented by testing for a difference in the respective coefficients on a weighted OLS regression of the respective variables on indicators for each period (without a constant term) and using robust standard errors.
### SI Table 2: Mechanisms – Nationscape Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
<th>(5)</th>
<th>(6)</th>
<th>(7)</th>
<th>(8)</th>
<th>(9)</th>
<th>(10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>News Index</strong></td>
<td>-15.10</td>
<td>-11.08</td>
<td>(0.73)</td>
<td>(0.74)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identity Index</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19.30</td>
<td>16.74</td>
<td>(2.39)</td>
<td>(2.56)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Covid Concern</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-4.06</td>
<td>-9.97</td>
<td>(1.34)</td>
<td>(1.42)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sick Index</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-21.63</td>
<td>-15.08</td>
<td>(1.13)</td>
<td>(1.15)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sick (Self)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-26.07</td>
<td>-21.76</td>
<td>(1.36)</td>
<td>(1.36)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sick (Family)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-2.11</td>
<td>-2.13</td>
<td>(1.18)</td>
<td>(1.16)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sick (Work)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-5.27</td>
<td>-2.67</td>
<td>(0.80)</td>
<td>(0.80)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sick (Other)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>(0.57)</td>
<td>(0.57)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Observations</strong></td>
<td>242872</td>
<td>242872</td>
<td>23169</td>
<td>23169</td>
<td>70052</td>
<td>70052</td>
<td>70596</td>
<td>70596</td>
<td>70596</td>
<td>70596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Controls</strong></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Table shows estimates from weighted OLS regressions of various variables on the measure of partisan affective polarization (Panel A of Figure 1) in the Nationscape data. All listed independent variables range from 0 to 1. ‘News Index’ is the number of news outlet categories reportedly used by the respondent divided by twelve (the number of potential categories). ‘Identity Index’ is the sum of reported identity strength across six identities rescaled to range between 0 and 1. ‘Covid Concern’ is a four-point measure of degree of concern about the coronavirus pandemic rescaled to range between 0 and 1. ‘Sick (X)’ are indicators for whether oneself, a family member, a colleague at work, or some other member of one’s personal network got sick from the coronavirus. ‘Sick Index’ is the sum across the four sick indicators divided by four. Controls include party indicators, education category indicators, racial category indicators, Hispanic category indicators, gender indicators, census region indicators, age, and period indicators. Sample is restricted to partisans with valid affect scores. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses.
### SI Table 3: Mechanisms – Druckman et al. (2020b) and Experiment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
<th>(5)</th>
<th>(6)</th>
<th>(7)</th>
<th>(8)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree of Faith</td>
<td>-8.43</td>
<td>-5.97</td>
<td>-7.86</td>
<td>-4.98</td>
<td>-7.13</td>
<td>-4.30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.03)</td>
<td>(3.71)</td>
<td>(3.08)</td>
<td>(3.74)</td>
<td>(3.00)</td>
<td>(3.72)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Express Confidence</td>
<td>-6.65</td>
<td>-4.31</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.79)</td>
<td>(2.14)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Express Prepared in Past</td>
<td>-5.27</td>
<td>-0.78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.91)</td>
<td>(2.43)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Express Prepared for Future</td>
<td>5.97</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4.61)</td>
<td>(2.60)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>1072</td>
<td>1070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controls</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Table shows estimates from OLS regressions of partisan affective polarization on views of the United States’ coronavirus response. Columns (1)-(6) use the index of affective polarization from our survey experiment and are restricted to observations in the coronavirus treatment group. Columns (7) and (8) use the index of affective polarization from Druckman et al. (2020b). The Druckman et al. (2020b) data used in Columns (7) and (8) came from an experiment where one group was asked about confidence in the Trump administration and the other group was asked about confidence in the United States; our regressions only use the latter group. All listed independent variables range from 0 to 1. ‘Degree of Faith’ is a manual coding of the open-ended responses from our survey experiment, in which respondents were asked about their faith in the country’s ability to address COVID-19 at the time of the initial outbreak. Responses expressing positive faith are recorded as 1, responses indicating a lack of faith are recorded as 0, and all other responses (including those that change from positive to negative faith) are recorded as 1/2. Columns (3) and (4) use codings from coder 1, who also coded faith in god as expressions of faith. Columns (5) and (6) use codings from coder 2, who did not code faith in god as an expression of faith. Columns (1) and (2) are from the combined codings where disagreements between coders 1 and 2 were settled by a third coder who did not code faith in god as an expression of faith. ‘Express Confidence’ is a four-point measure of the degree of confidence that the United States can limit the impact of the coronavirus in the next month. ‘Express Prepared in Past’ is a four-point measure of the degree of disagreement with the statement that the United States should have done more to prepare for the current coronavirus outbreak; more positive values indicate greater disagreement with the need to have done more. ‘Express Prepared for Future’ is a similar four-point measure of disagreement with the statement that the United States should currently be doing more to prepare for the possibility of a new outbreak of the coronavirus in the fall. Controls include party indicators, education category indicators, racial category indicators, income category indicators, gender indicators, and age group indicators for all columns with controls. Columns (2), (4), and (6) also include state indicators as controls. Column (8) also includes the baseline measure of the index from July 2019 as a control for each participant. Sample is restricted to partisans with valid affect scores. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses.
SI Figure 1: Trends in News Consumption and Identity

Panel A: News Index

Panel B: Identity Index

Panel C: Partisan and American Identities

Note: Figure shows trends in various variables in the Nationscape data. Panel A reports trends in a news consumption index for each ten-day period in the Nationscape data. The news consumption index is the number of news outlet categories reportedly used by the respondent divided by twelve (the number of potential categories). Panel B reports trends in an identity strength index for each ten-day period in the Nationscape data. The identity strength index is the sum of reported identity strength across six identities rescaled to range between 0 and 1. Panel C reports trends in partisan identity (left) and American identity (right) for each ten-day period in the Nationscape data. For the identity measures, a small number of observations (less than 100 each) from the October 16, 2019 and April 23, 2020 time periods are grouped with the October 6, 2019 and April 13, 2020 time periods respectively. The first dashed vertical line indicates the first period in which a Covid-related death was reported. The second dashed vertical line indicates the period in which George Floyd’s death occurred. The weighted means and their 95 percent confidence intervals come from a weighted OLS regression of the respective variables on indicators for each period (without a constant term) and using robust standard errors.
SI Figure 2: Google Trends for Coronavirus, George Floyd, and Partisan Related Terms

Panel A: Coronavirus-Related Searches

Panel B: George Floyd-Related Searches

Panel C: Partisan-Related Searches

Note: Figure reports Google search trends for terms and topics related to the coronavirus, George Floyd, and partisanship. Each term’s search volume is indexed relative to the highest volume day between November 1, 2019 and July 1, 2020. The daily volume is then averaged over each ten day period. The first dashed vertical line indicates the first period in which a Covid-related death was reported. The second dashed vertical line indicates the period in which George Floyd’s death occurred.
SI Figure 3: Timing of State Reopening Decisions

Note: Figure uses data from Allcott et al. (2020a) to show the distribution of reopening dates for states. The first dashed vertical line indicates the first period in which a Covid-related death was reported. The second dashed vertical line indicates the period in which George Floyd’s death occurred.
SI Figure 4: Racial Affect and Partisan Affect

Note: Figure plots a weighted binscatter of the partisanship of racial affect and partisan affective polarization (as defined in Panel A of Figure 1 in the main text) across all respondents with valid responses to both. The partisanship of racial affect is defined as follows. First, for all Democrats, we compute affect towards Blacks minus affect towards Whites. Second, for all Republicans, we compute affect towards Whites minus affect towards Blacks.
SI Figure 5: Experimental Treatment Effects of Priming the Pandemic versus Priming George Floyd — Pilot Data

**Panel A: Affective Polarization**

Note: Figure reports estimated treatment effects of the coronavirus and George Floyd primes relative to the pure control group using our MTurk pilot data. Panel A reports estimates on measures of affective polarization (own party minus other party). Panel B reports estimates on measures of affect towards the other party. Both panels report estimates separately for each of four question categories (feelings thermometer; trust; perceived traits; and social distance) and for an index averaging across categories. The 95 percent confidence intervals are constructed using heteroskedastic robust standard errors. Above the bars, we report the p-value from a two-sided test of equality between the coronavirus and George Floyd treatment effects using robust standard errors.

**Panel B: Affect Towards Other Party**
4 Survey Experiment Instrument

This section provides the full text of our survey instrument.

<Demographic and Background Questions>

We are going to start by asking you some questions about your general attitudes and opinions.

Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or what? [Democrat; Republican; Independent; Some other party]

Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or Republican or a not very strong Democrat or Republican? [Strong; Not very strong]

If you had to choose, do you think of yourself as closer to the Democratic Party or the Republican Party? [Closer to Democratic Party; Closer to Republican Party; Neither]

Which point on this scale best describes your political views? [Very liberal; Mostly liberal; Somewhat liberal; Moderate; Somewhat conservative; Mostly conservative; Very conservative]

In general, how interested are you in politics? [Not at all interested; Not too interested; Somewhat interested; Very interested; Extremely interested]

What is the highest level of education you have completed? [Less than high school; High school graduate; Some college; 4 year college degree; Advanced degree]

What is your estimate of your family’s annual household income (before taxes)? [< $30,000; $30,000-$69,999; $70,000-$99,999; $100,000-$200,000; >$200,000]

Which of the following do you consider to be your primary racial or ethnic group? Check all that apply. [White; African; American; Asian; American; Hispanic or Latino; Native American; Other]

How would you describe your primary racial or ethnic group? [Text free entry]
Which of the following best describes your gender identity? [Male; Female; Transgender; None of the categories offered]

What is your age? [Under 18; 18-24; 25-34; 35-50; 51-65; Over 65]

In what state do you currently live? [Drop-down list of 50 states and Washington D.C.]

Last spring, on average, how many days a week did you read/listen/watch news about COVID-19? [Never; 1 day/week; 2 days/week; 3 days/week; 4 days/week; 5 days/week; 6 days/week; Every day]

Last winter, on average, how many days a week did you read/listen/watch news about Prince Harry and Meghan Markle’s separation from the royal family? [Never; 1 day/week; 2 days/week; 3 days/week; 4 days/week; 5 days/week; 6 days/week; Every day]

This is a question to just make sure you are paying attention. Please choose option C below, regardless of the actual answer. [A. I am enjoying this survey.; B. I do a lot of surveys.; C. I have not done many surveys.; D. None of the above.]

<Randomized Priming and Reflection Tasks>

<Each respondent is randomly assigned to one of three conditions>

<Pages seen if randomly assigned to condition 1 (Covid Prime)>

We are going to ask how you felt about COVID-19 last spring. We also will ask you to read news articles from last spring.

(Page Break)

COVID-19 swept across the United States last March and April, leading states to issue stay-at-home orders. To remind you of ongoing events during this time we are next re-printing segments of two newspaper articles from March and April, 2020. We will then ask you to reflect about your experiences at that time, when the United States faced this uncertain threat.

(Page Break)
The WHO officially declared the coronavirus outbreak a pandemic on March 11 after spreading to more than 100 countries around the world. “WHO has been assessing this outbreak around the clock, and we’re deeply concerned both by the alarming levels of spread and severity and by the alarming levels of inaction,” WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters.

The world soared past the 1 million mark in confirmed coronavirus cases, jobless numbers skyrocketed, Democrats delayed their national convention and the nation’s preeminent infectious disease expert required a security detail on Thursday. More bad news landed early Friday: The U.S. death toll topped 6,000 President Donald Trump and federal health officials predicted a "very painful" period in the country’s fight against the public health emergency.

What were your experiences with COVID-19 last spring, as our country faced this uncertain threat? Did you have faith in the country’s ability to address COVID-19 at that time (i.e., at the initial outbreak)?

Please take your time and do not rush. [Text free entry]

We are going to ask how you felt about Prince Harry and Meghan Markle stepping away from their royal duties in early 2020. We also will ask you to read news articles from January, 2020.

Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, after much speculation, officially stepped away from their royal duties. To remind you of ongoing events at this time we are next re-printing segments of two newspaper articles from January, 2020. We will then ask you to reflect about your experiences at that time, when they made this decision.
After months of speculation, Prince Harry and Meghan Markle put the rumors to rest and officially announced they were stepping down from their duties as senior royals. The Duke and Duchess of Sussex said they planned on being financially independent and split their time between North America and the United Kingdom.

USA TODAY, January 9, 2020

About an hour after their announcement, another palace announcement, sent in an email from the office of the private secretary and the spokesperson for Queen Elizabeth II, landed in media inboxes. "Discussions with The Duke and Duchess of Sussex are at an early stage," the statement said carefully. "We understand their desire to take a different approach, but these are complicated issues that will take time to work through."

To the extent you followed it, what were your experiences with the royal split last winter, as the royals faced an uncertain future? Did you have faith in the UK’s ability to address the royal split?

Please take your time and do not rush. [Text free entry]

<If randomly assigned to condition 3, no articles or reflection questions are seen>

<Polariization Questions>

<All respondents see the following questions. In these questions, “<Outparty>” appears as “Republican” for Democratic and Independent respondents, and as “Democratic” for Republican respondents. “<Inparty>” appears as “Democratic” for Democratic and Independent respondents, and as “Republican” for Republican respondents.>

<Polarization Measure: Thermometer>

We are now going to ask you a set of questions about the Republican and Democratic parties.

We’d like you to rate how you feel towards the Democratic and Republican parties on a scale
of 0 to 100, which we call a "feeling thermometer." On this feeling thermometer scale, ratings between 0 and 49 degrees mean that you feel unfavorable and cold (with 0 being the most unfavorable/coldest). Ratings between 51 and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm (with 100 being the most favorable/warmest). A rating of 50 means you have no feelings one way or the other. How would you rate your feeling toward the Democratic and Republican parties?

the <Outparty> Party [0-100 Slider]
the <Inparty> Party [0-100 Slider]

<Polarization Measure: Traits>

Now we’d like to know more about what you think about the <Outparty> Party. Below, we’ve given a list of words that some people might use to describe them.

For each item, please indicate how well you think it applies to the <Outparty> Party:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Not at all well</th>
<th>Not too well</th>
<th>Somewhat well</th>
<th>Very well</th>
<th>Extremely well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patriotic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-minded</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypocritical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selfish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now we’d like to know more about what you think about the <Inparty> Party. Below, we’ve given a list of words that some people might use to describe them.

For each item, please indicate how well you think it applies to the <Inparty> Party: <Repeat above matrix of trait questions>

<Polarization Measure: Trust>

How much of the time do you think you can trust the <Outparty> Party to do what is right for the country? [Almost never; Once in a while; About half the time; Most of the time; Almost always]

How much of the time do you think you can trust the <Inparty> Party to do what is right for
the country?  [Almost never; Once in a while; About half the time; Most of the time; Almost always]

<Polarization Measure: Social Distance>

How comfortable are you having close personal friends who are <Outparty>s?  [Not at all comfortable; Not too comfortable; Somewhat comfortable; Extremely comfortable]

How comfortable are you having neighbors on your street who are <Outparty>s?  [Not at all comfortable; Not too comfortable; Somewhat comfortable; Extremely comfortable]

Suppose a son or daughter of yours was getting married. How would you feel if he or she married a supporter of the <Outparty>?  [Not at all upset; Not too upset; Somewhat upset; Extremely upset]

How comfortable are you having close personal friends who are <Inparty>s?  [Not at all comfortable; Not too comfortable; Somewhat comfortable; Extremely comfortable]

How comfortable are you having neighbors on your street who are <Inparty>s?  [Not at all comfortable; Not too comfortable; Somewhat comfortable; Extremely comfortable]

Suppose a son or daughter of yours was getting married. How would you feel if he or she married a supporter of the <Inparty>?  [Not at all upset; Not too upset; Somewhat upset; Extremely upset]

<Perceived Polarization>

Some people say that COVID-19 caused the public to become more politically divided or polarized. Others say that it unified the public, making them less polarized. And yet others say it had no effect. What do you think?  [Definitely polarized the public; Possibly polarized the public; No effect; Possibly made the public less polarized; Definitely made the public less polarized]
This section provides the full text of the survey instrument used in our pilot experiment.

**Demographic and Background Questions**

*We are going to start by asking you some questions about your general attitudes and opinions.*

Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or what? [Democrat; Republican; Independent; Some other party]

Would you call yourself a strong Democrat / Republican or a not very strong Democrat / Republican? [Strong; Not very strong]

If you had to choose, do you think of yourself as closer to the Democratic Party or the Republican Party? [Closer to Democratic Party; Closer to Republican Party; Neither]

Which point on this scale best describes your political views? [Very liberal; Mostly liberal; Somewhat liberal; Moderate; Somewhat conservative; Mostly conservative; Very conservative]

In general, how interested are you in politics? [Not at all interested; Not too interested; Somewhat interested; Very interested; Extremely interested]

What is the highest level of education you have completed? [Less than high school; High school graduate; Some college; 4 year college degree; Advanced degree]

What is your estimate of your family’s annual household income (before taxes)? [< $30,000; $30,000-$69,999; $70,000-$99,999; $100,000-$200,000; >$200,000]

Which of the following do you consider to be your primary racial or ethnic group? Check all that apply. [White; African; American; Asian; American; Hispanic or Latino; Native American; Other]

How would you describe your primary racial or ethnic group? [Text free entry]
Which of the following best describes your gender identity? [Male; Female; Transgender; None of the categories offered]

What is your age? [Under 18; 18-24; 25-34; 35-50; 51-65; Over 65]

In what state do you currently live? [Drop-down list of 50 states and Washington D.C.]

Many people don’t know the answers to these questions, so if there are any you don’t know, just check “don’t know.”

How much of a majority is required for the U.S. Senate and House to override a Presidential veto? [Cannot override; 1/3; 1/2; 2/3; 3/4; Don’t Know]

Do you happen to know which party currently has the most members in the House of Representatives in Washington, D.C.? [Democrats; Republicans; Tie; Don’t know]

Whose responsibility is it to determine if a law is constitutional? [President; Congress; Supreme Court; Don’t know]

Who is the current U.S. Vice President? [Rex Tillerson; James Mattis; Mike Pence; Mitch McConnell; Don’t know]

Last spring, on average, how many days a week did you read/listen/watch news about COVID-19? [Never; 1 day/week; 2 days/week; 3 days/week; 4 days/week; 5 days/week; 6 days/week; Every day]

How often have you relied on each source below for information about COVID-19?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Every Day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The New York Times</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Wall Street Journal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Washington Post</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles Times</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Local Newspaper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your local TV News</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABC World News Tonight</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBS Evening News</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBC Nightly News</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSNBC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fox News</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breitbart</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump Press Conferences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State official (e.g. governor) Press Conferences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Centers for Disease Control (CDC)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The World Health Organization (WHO)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wikipedia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media other than Facebook or Twitter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other people I talk to/in conversation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is a question to just make sure you are paying attention. Please choose option C below, regardless of the actual answer. [A. I am enjoying this survey.; B. I do a lot of surveys.; C. I have not done many surveys.; D. None of the above.]

<Randomized Priming and Reflection Tasks>

<Each respondent is randomly assigned to one of three conditions>

<Pages seen if randomly assigned to condition 1 (Covid Prime)>

We are going to ask how you felt about COVID-19 last spring. We also will ask you to read a news article from last spring.
COVID-19 swept across the United States last March and April, leading states to issue stay-at-home orders. To remind you of ongoing events during this time we are next re-printing a segment of a newspaper article from early April, 2020. We will then ask you to reflect about your experiences at that time.

USA Today, April 2, 2020

The world soared past the 1 million mark in confirmed coronavirus cases, jobless numbers skyrocketed, Democrats delayed their national convention and the nation’s preeminent infectious disease expert required a security detail on Thursday. More bad news landed early Friday: The U.S. death toll topped 6,000 President Donald Trump and federal health officials predicted a "very painful" period in the country’s fight against the public health emergency.

More bad news landed early Friday: The U.S. death toll topped 6,000 President Donald Trump and federal health officials predicted a “very painful” period in the country’s fight against the public health emergency.

Of the globe’s 1 million-plus cases, nearly a quarter of them — more than 245,000 — are in the U.S. Jobless numbers released Thursday were stunning. New unemployment claims doubled to 6.6 million from last week’s record-setting 3.3 million.

We’d like to know what you remember about your experiences with COVID-19 during this time last spring. What did you think about the COVID-19 and what were your experiences? How did you feel at that time?

In answering this, try your best to be as thorough and convincing, as if you were explaining to people who did not have a COVID-19 experience what it was like.

Please take your time and do not rush. To help with that, the next screen arrow will not appear for
a few moments to give you time to write out your answer. [Text free entry]

<Pages seen if randomly assigned to condition 2 (George Floyd Protest Prime)>

We are next going to ask how you felt about the George Floyd protests last spring and summer. We also will ask that you read a news article from last spring.

<Page Break>

In late May 2020, protests and civil unrest swept across the county in response to the killing of George Floyd, an African-American man who was killed during an arrest by Minneapolis police officers. To remind you of ongoing events during this time we are next re-printing a segment of a newspaper article from the late May, 2020. We will then ask you to reflect about your experiences at that time.

<Page Break>

USA TODAY, May 31, 2020

From Portland to Pensacola, violent protests flared in more than 30 cities across the U.S. this weekend in the wake of the death of George Floyd, an African American man who pleaded that he could not breathe after a white police officer kneeled on his neck for more than eight minutes during an arrest.

Why did Floyd’s death spark such widespread, visceral outrage, while three other deaths of African Americans this year – Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia and Tony McDade, a black transgender man killed by police officers in Tallahassee – did not?

An array of combustible issues converged to form a “perfect storm” of civil unrest after Floyd’s death and could lead to longer-lasting changes, experts and protest organizers said.

<Page Break>

We’d like to know what you remember about your experiences with the protests during this time last May. What did you think about the protests and what were your experiences? How did you feel at that time?
In answering this, try your best to be as thorough and convincing, as if you were explaining to people who did not experience the protests at that time what it was like.

Please take your time and do not rush. To help with that, the next screen arrow will not appear for a few moments to give you time to write out your answer. [Text free entry]

<If randomly assigned to condition 3, no articles or reflection questions are seen>

**Polarization Questions**

<All respondents see the following questions. In these questions, “<Outparty>” appears as “Republican” for Democratic and Independent respondents, and as “Democratic” for Republican respondents. “<Inparty>” appears as “Democratic” for Democratic and Independent respondents, and as “Republican” for Republican respondents.>

**Polarization Measure: Thermometer**

We are now going to ask you a set of questions about the Republican and Democratic parties. Please take you time, and do your best to answer the questions.

**Page Break**

We’d like you to rate how you feel towards the Democratic and Republican parties on a scale of 0 to 100, which we call a “feeling thermometer.” On this feeling thermometer scale, ratings between 0 and 49 degrees mean that you feel unfavorable and cold (with 0 being the most unfavorable/coldest). Ratings between 51 and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm (with 100 being the most favorable/warmest). A rating of 50 means you have no feelings one way or the other. How would you rate your feeling toward the Democratic and Republican parties?

the <Outparty> Party [0-100 Slider]
the <Inparty> Party [0-100 Slider]

**Polarization Measure: Traits**

Now we’d like to know more about what you think about the <Outparty> Party. Below, we’ve given a list of words that some people might use to describe them.

For each item, please indicate how well you think it applies to the <Outparty> Party:
Now we’d like to know more about what you think about the <Inparty> Party. Below, we’ve given a list of words that some people might use to describe them.

For each item, please indicate how well you think it applies to the <Inparty> Party: <Repeat above matrix of trait questions>

<Polarization Measure: Trust>

How much of the time do you think you can trust the <Outparty> Party to do what is right for the country? [Almost never; Once in a while; About half the time; Most of the time; Almost always]

How much of the time do you think you can trust the <Inparty> Party to do what is right for the country? [Almost never; Once in a while; About half the time; Most of the time; Almost always]

<Polarization Measure: Social Distance>

How comfortable are you having close personal friends who are <Outparty>s? [Not at all comfortable; Not too comfortable; Somewhat comfortable; Extremely comfortable]

How comfortable are you having neighbors on your street who are <Outparty>s? [Not at all comfortable; Not too comfortable; Somewhat comfortable; Extremely comfortable]

Suppose a son or daughter of yours was getting married. How would you feel if he or she married a supporter of the <Outparty>? [Not at all upset; Not too upset; Somewhat upset; Extremely upset]
How comfortable are you having close personal friends who are <Inparty>s? [Not at all comfortable; Not too comfortable; Somewhat comfortable; Extremely comfortable]

How comfortable are you having neighbors on your street who are <Inparty>s? [Not at all comfortable; Not too comfortable; Somewhat comfortable; Extremely comfortable]

Suppose a son or daughter of yours was getting married. How would you feel if he or she married a supporter of the <Inparty>? [Not at all upset; Not too upset; Somewhat upset; Extremely upset]

<Polarization Preferences>

The <Inparty> should do everything they can to hurt the <Outparty> party, even if it is at the short-term expense of the country. [Strongly agree; Somewhat agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Somewhat disagree; Strongly disagree]

If the <Outparty candidate, Trump/Biden> candidate wins in 2020, the <Inparty> should do anything possible to block anyone he nominates to the Supreme Court. [Strongly agree; Somewhat agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Somewhat disagree; Strongly disagree]

The <Inparty>s should do everything in their power within the law to make it as difficult as possible for <Outparty>s to run the government effectively. [Strongly agree; Somewhat agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Somewhat disagree; Strongly disagree]

<Outparty>s are not just worse for politics—they are downright evil. [Strongly agree; Somewhat agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Somewhat disagree; Strongly disagree]

<Outparty>s deserve any mistreatment they get from <Inparty>s. [Strongly agree; Somewhat agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Somewhat disagree; Strongly disagree]

<Perceived Polarization>

Some people say that COVID-19 caused the public to become more politically divided or polarized. Others say that it unified the public, making them less polarized. And yet others say it had no effect. What do you think? [Definitely polarized the public.; Possibly polarized the public.; No effect.; Possibly made the public less polarized.; Definitely made the public less polarized.]

Some people say that the racial protests following the murder of George Floyd caused the pub-
lic to become more politically divided or polarized. Others say that it unified the public, making them less polarized. And yet others say it had no effect. What do you think? [Definitely polarized the public.; Possibly polarized the public.; No effect.; Possibly made the public less polarized.; Definitely made the public less polarized.]