

Fall 11-29-2023

The Truth about Partisan Affiliation: Fear, Trust, and Media

Hailey Merin

Chapman University, hmerin@chapman.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/cusrd_abstracts



Part of the [History Commons](#), [Political Science Commons](#), and the [Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Merin, Hailey, "The Truth about Partisan Affiliation: Fear, Trust, and Media" (2023). *Student Scholar Symposium Abstracts and Posters*. 619.

https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/cusrd_abstracts/619

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for Undergraduate Excellence at Chapman University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Student Scholar Symposium Abstracts and Posters by an authorized administrator of Chapman University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact laughtin@chapman.edu.



The Truth about Partisan Affiliation: Fear, Trust, and Media

Hailey Sky Merin

POSC 410, Senior Capstone with Dr. Ann Gordon

Department of Political Science, Chapman University, Orange, California



Introduction

As the father of Western logic, Aristotle's research of the scientific method of analysis, biology, and psychology has been adopted by present-day America. If America has openly accepted an array of Aristotle's teachings, why have they ignored his observations that political parties are non-Democratic?

This research explores the relationship between political party affiliation, sentiment toward the government, and media influence on fear of corrupt government officials. Firstly, this paper examines the idea that sentiments toward the government are influenced by partisan affiliation. Secondly, it determines that after the 2020 election, Republicans fear corrupt government officials more than any other major political party (Republicans, Democrats, and Independents). Finally, the paper investigates the relationship between Republican media as a driving force for fear of corrupt government officials.

Using Chapman University's Survey of American Fears: Wave 7 and 9, political parties' sentiments of fear are measured throughout different election cycles. The American National Election Studies is used to measure trust/distrust in the government. Chapman University's Survey of American Fears: Wave 9 is used again to show Republican levels of fear in comparison to Democratic and Independent feelings. In addition, Chapman University's Survey of American Fears: Wave 9 is also used to explain how Republican media incites fear of the government.

Findings

H1: ANES data shows levels of trust/distrust are dependent on party affiliation. Cross-tabulations show that fear/no fear toward the government are direct results of partisan affiliation.

H2: Findings based on ANES data used in H1 show that members of the political party in office are less likely to fear the government than those not in office. Because the Republican candidate lost the 2020 Presidential election, Republicans are more likely to fear corrupt government officials in the 2020-2024 election cycle. In addition, cross-tabulation 1 shows that people who voted for Donald Trump show the highest levels of fear toward government officials. As well as people who identified as Republicans in 2022 still showed the greatest levels of fear for corrupt government officials.

H3: Consuming Republican media like Fox News directly correlates to high levels of fear toward government officials. Watching Democratic news outlets such as CNN does not incite higher fear levels of corrupt government officials. The more frequently one watches Fox News, the greater their fear of corrupt government officials is.

Hypotheses:

In American politics:

H1: Feelings toward the government are influenced by partisan affiliation.

In the current election cycle of 2020-2024:

H2: Republicans are more likely to fear corrupt government officials than any other major political party (Democrat, Independent, Republican).

H3: Republican media is more likely to incite fear of corruption among government officials.

H1:

Line Chart: Data collected by ANES shows that besides brief periods in transitional election years, members of political parties show greater levels of trust/distrust toward the government when their political party is in office. Trust/distrust is dependent on political party affiliation. *Bar Graph:* A cross-tabulation between *Political Parties in 2018* and the question: *How Afraid are you of Corrupt Government Officials?* was run. The cross tabulation shows that, in 2018, when Republicans were in the White House, Democrats were more likely to say they were “afraid” of government officials and less likely to say they were “not afraid” of government officials than Republicans. Fear levels are dependent on political party affiliation.

H2:

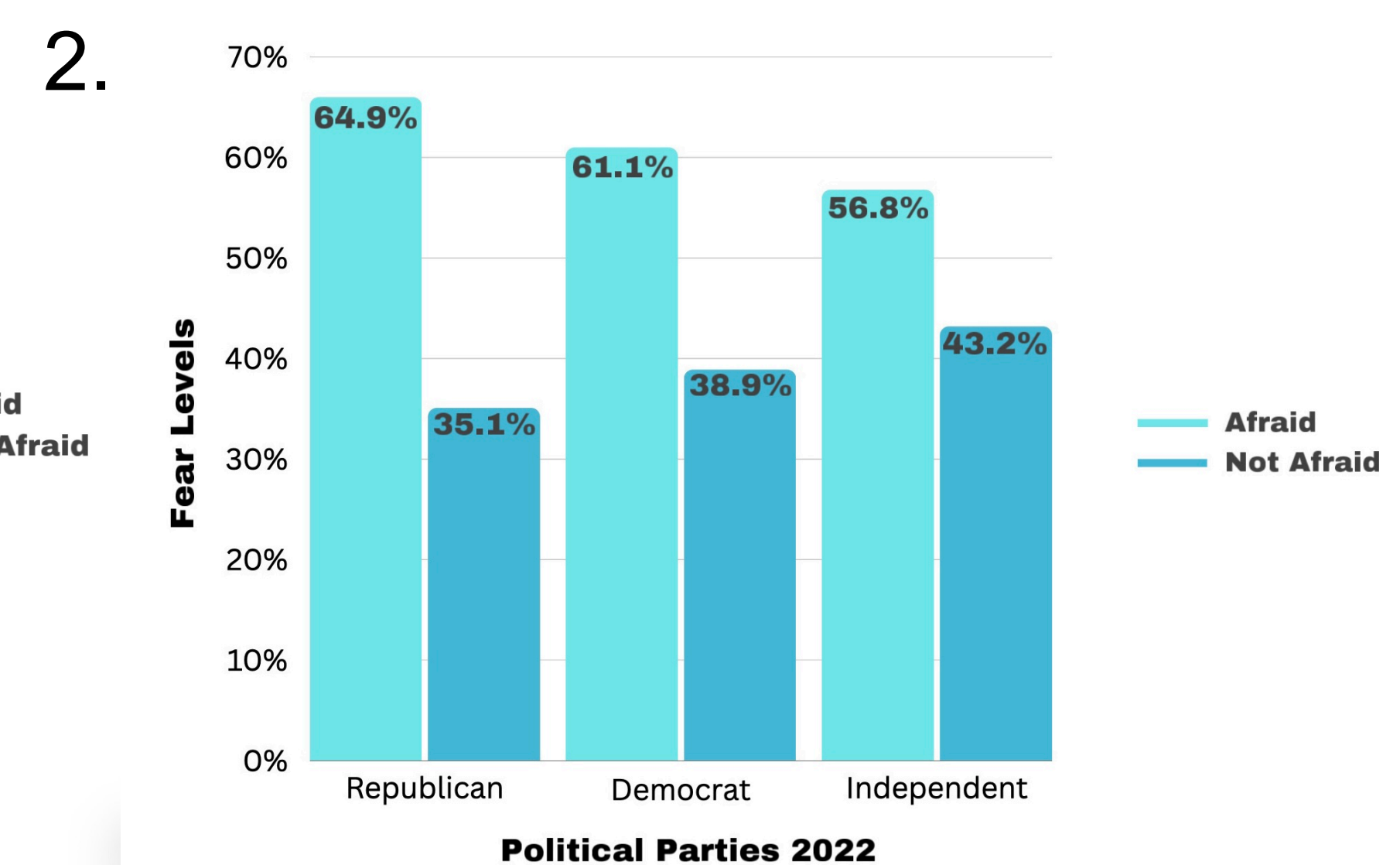
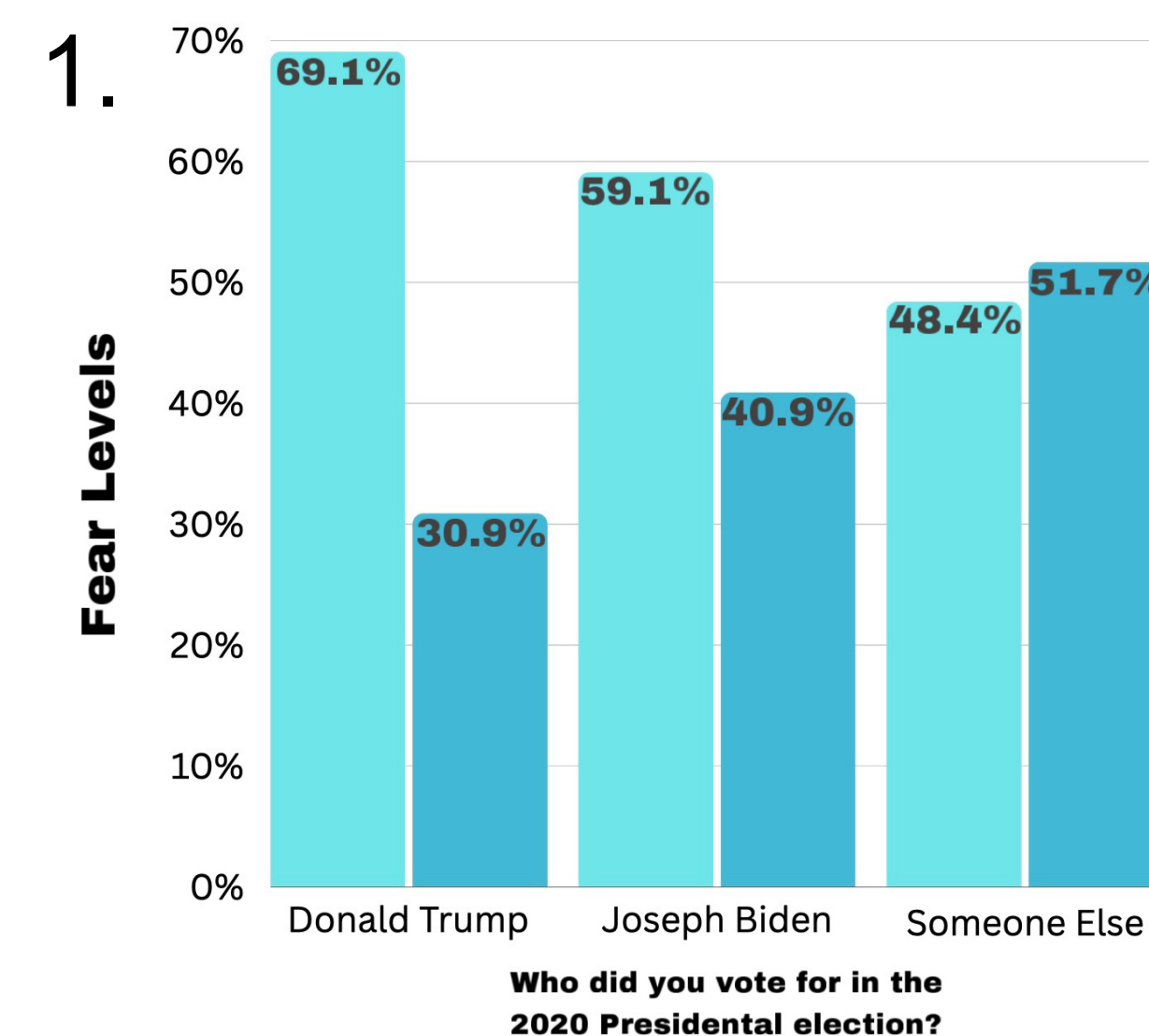
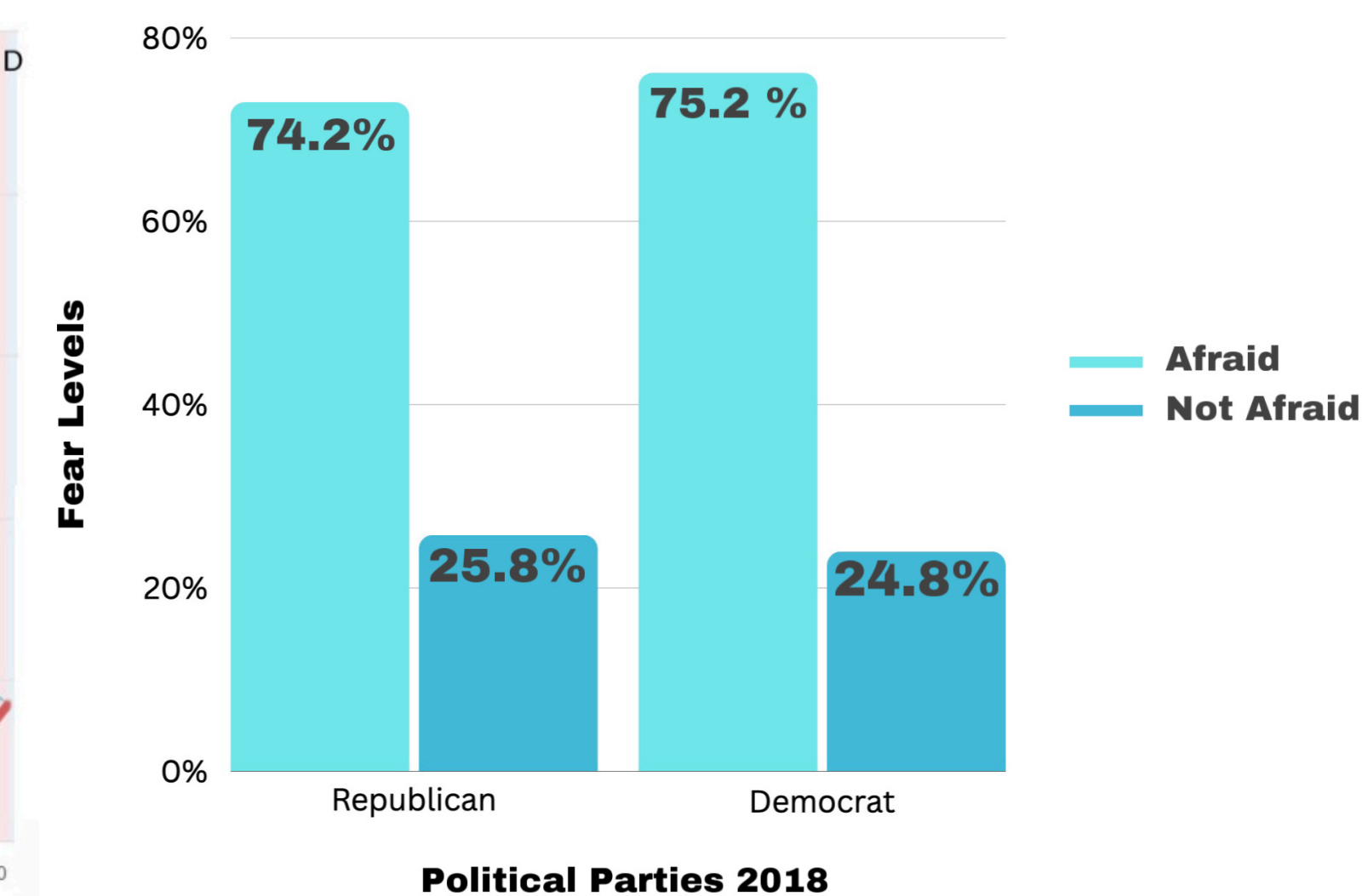
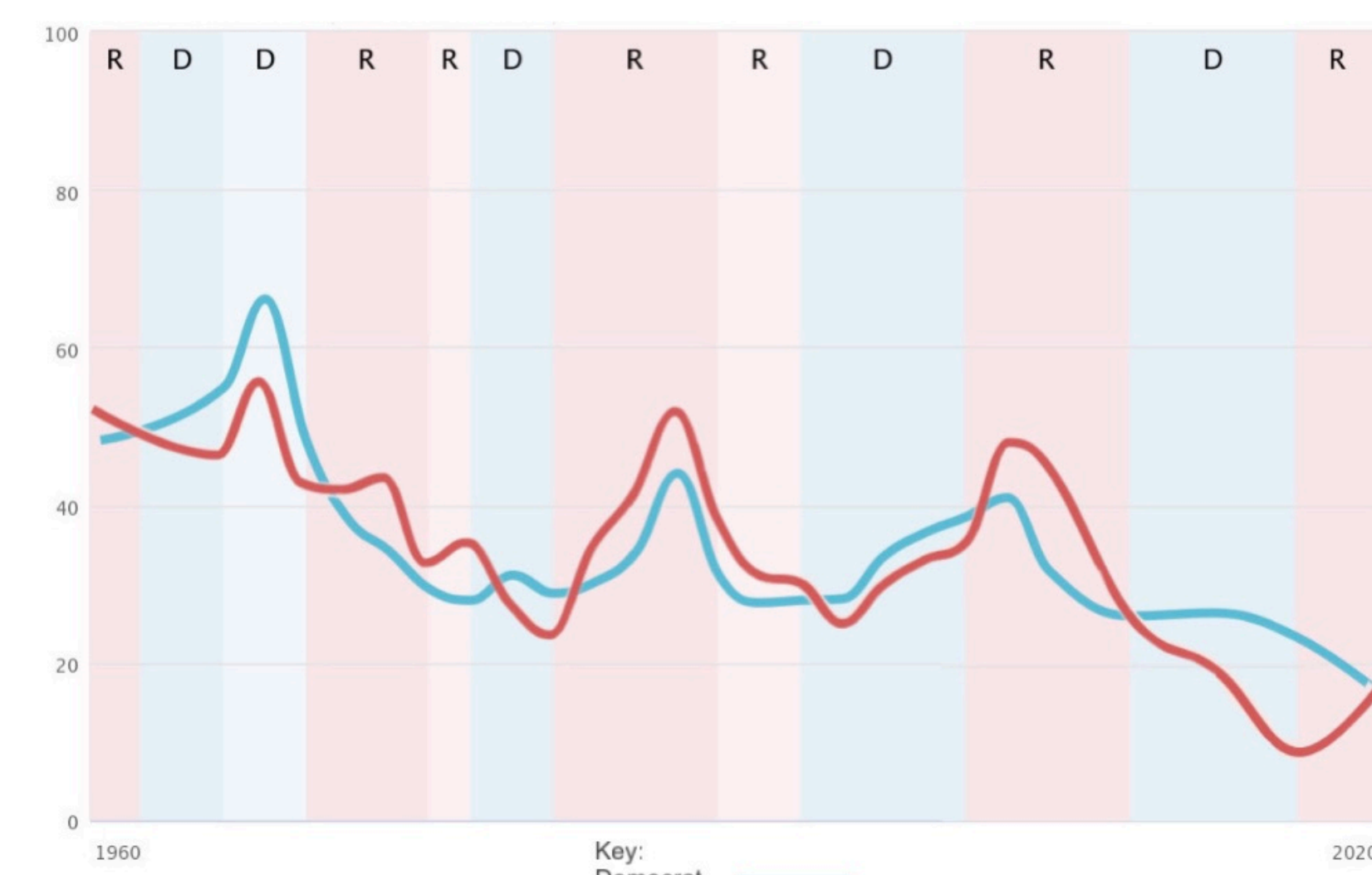
Bar Graph 1: Cross-tabulations found: People who voted for the Republican candidate, Donald Trump, in the 2020 Presidential election are more likely to be “afraid” of corrupt government officials and less likely to be “not afraid” of corrupt government officials, than those who voted for other candidates. *Bar Graph 2:* Cross-tabulations found: Republicans expressed the highest level of fear toward government officials at 64.9% as well as they expressed the lowest level of being “not afraid” in comparison to members of the other major political parties.

H3:

Table: The regression model measures how often one watches Fox News as well as how often one watches CNN in reference to how afraid one is of corrupt government officials. How often one watches the Republican news outlet, Fox News, is significant with how afraid one is of corrupt government officials. Significance level: .001 How often one watched the left leaning news outlet, CNN, is not significant with how afraid one is of corrupt government officials. Significance level: .108

Bar Graph: A cross-tabulation was used to show the more one watches Fox News, the more likely one is to fear corrupt government officials. There is a 15.1% difference in fear of corrupt government officials between those who surveyed watching Fox News “every day” and those who “never” watch. Only 26.2% of people who watch Fox News “every day” surveyed that they were “not afraid” of corrupt government officials.

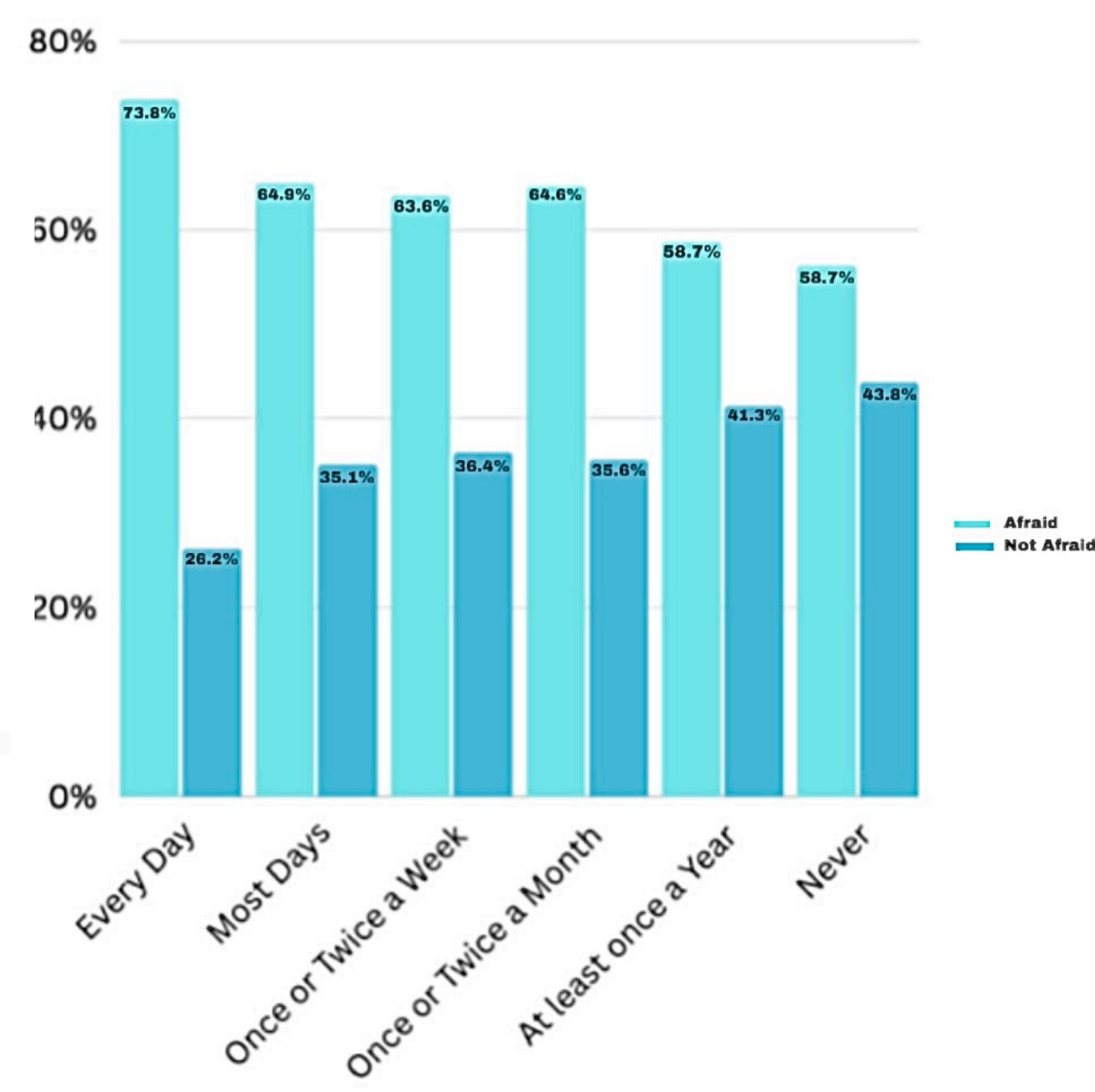
Trust in Government Index



Model	Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	Significance
(Constant)	1.335	.067		20.021	<.001
How often do you watch Fox News?	.030	.009	.103	3.243	.001
How often do you watch CNN?	-.015	.011	-.042	-1.322	.108

a. Dependent Variable: How afraid are you of corrupt Government officials?

Significant at <.05
Adjusted R square: .009



The *Theory of Social Cleavages* states that political parties stem from previous divisions among people. Because society is divided, parties are created to make those divisions into competition during elections.

H1: People who choose to express partisan affiliation are often thrown into competition with those who affiliate with a different party. Losing to an opposing party incites negative feelings such as distrust and fear while beating an opponent incites the opposite. These sentiments are dependent on partisan affiliation.

H2: While there are three major political parties in America (Democrats, Republicans, and Independents), only Democrats and Republicans have had real success winning Presidential elections. Therefore, Democrats and Republicans are direct opponents. When the Democratic Party won the 2020 Presidential election, the Republican Party no longer feared them as their opponent but as the new officials in the White House.

The *Institutional Theory of Generalized Trust* suggests that closely interacting with government/public officials and institutions impacts the general public's trust in leadership. This impact happens because initial interactions mold political and institutional trust.

H3: When the initial interactions Republicans have with the government stem from Republican media such as Fox News, which encourages higher fear levels of corrupt government officials, fondness of the government is hard to rebuild.

Conclusion

Findings from this study can help Americans understand how political affiliation influences views of the government. It can also aid news sources to understand how important their publishings are in the age of media. These findings could help diminish feelings of negativity toward the American government and promote democracy.

References

- "75% in U.S. See Widespread Government Corruption." *Gallup.Com*, Gallup, 4 Mar. 2023, news.gallup.com/poll/185759/widespread-government-corruption.aspx.
- Berelson, Bernard. 1952. "Democratic Theory and Public Opinion." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 16 (Autumn): 313–30.
- Cook, Timothy E. "The Skeptical American: Revisiting the Meanings of Trust in Government and Confidence in Institutions." *The Journal of Politics*, edited by Paul Gronke, No. 3 ed., vol. 67, Southern Political Science Association, 2005, pp. 784–803.
- Hibbing, John R., and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse. 1995. *Congress as Public Enemy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hindness, Barry. "Good government and Corruption" *Corruption and Anti-Corruption* Australian National University Press pp.1-10
- PARMAR,INDERJEET. "Trump's Coup and Insurrection: Biden's Challenge and Opportunity." *Insight Turkey*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2021, pp. 35–50. *JSTOR*, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26989815. Accessed 3 Nov. 2023.
- Rainie, Lee. "Trust and Distrust in America." *Pew Research Center - U.S. Politics & Policy*, Pew Research Center, 22 July 2019, www.pewresearch.org/politics/2019/07/22/trust-and-distrust-in-america/.
- Schroeder, Ralph. "Digital Media and the Rise of Right-Wing Populism." *Social Theory after the Internet: Media, Technology, and Globalization*, UCL Press, 2018, pp. 60–81. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt20krxd.6. Accessed 3 Nov. 2023.
- Warren, Mark E. "What Does Corruption Mean in a Democracy." *American Journal of Political Science*, No. 2 ed., vol. 43, Midwest Political Science Association, 2004, pp. 328–343.