

Fear of Violent Overthrow of the U.S. Government

Chapman Survey of American Fears 2022

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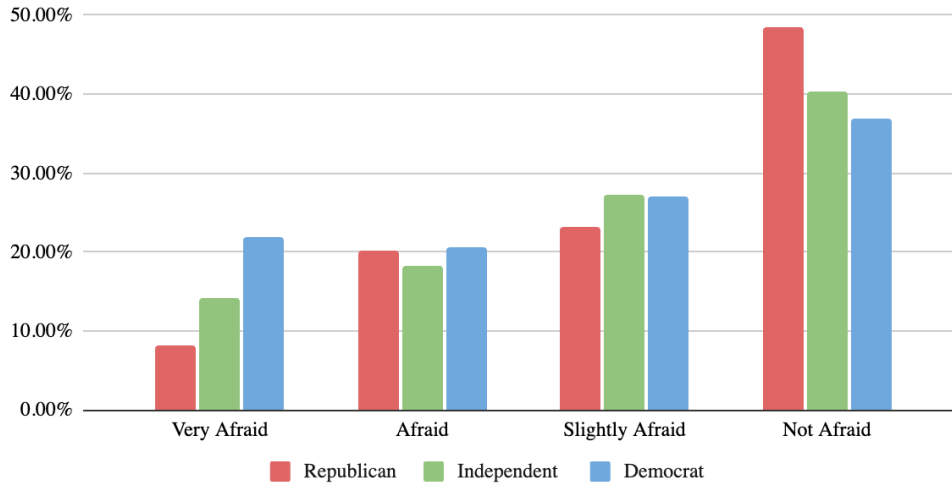
Majors: Political Science, Philosophy, & Law and the Liberal Arts

Following the January 6th insurrection, political violence and a growing discontent with the U.S. Governmental structure has altered how Americans perceive the democratic system. This newfound change prompts analysis into the evolving attitudes of Americans towards the government and the events surrounding major political elections. According to the 2022 Chapman University Survey of American Fears (CSAF), fear of corrupt government officials has remained the top fear since 2015. In the 2020/2021 year, approximately 79.6% of Americans indicated that they were afraid or very afraid of corrupt government officials, whereas 62.1% of Americans indicated that they were afraid or very afraid in the 2022 survey. This fear remaining at the top of the list is reflective of the tempestuous relationship between the U.S. Government and its citizens, in tandem with the rising fear of violent overthrow of the U.S. Government. The implications of these fears can be seen in the respondents' perceptions of the 2020 election and of the insurrection.

In addition to subsequent social protests following the 2020 presidential election, and rising awareness of social injustice and fear stoked by the COVID-19 pandemic, fear surrounding the legitimacy and effectiveness of the U.S. Government and its executive members has been a primary concern for many. However, the question of whether or not attitudes towards these events are driven by partisanship or followership of specific presidential candidates has remained.

Table 1: Governmental Overthrow and Partisanship

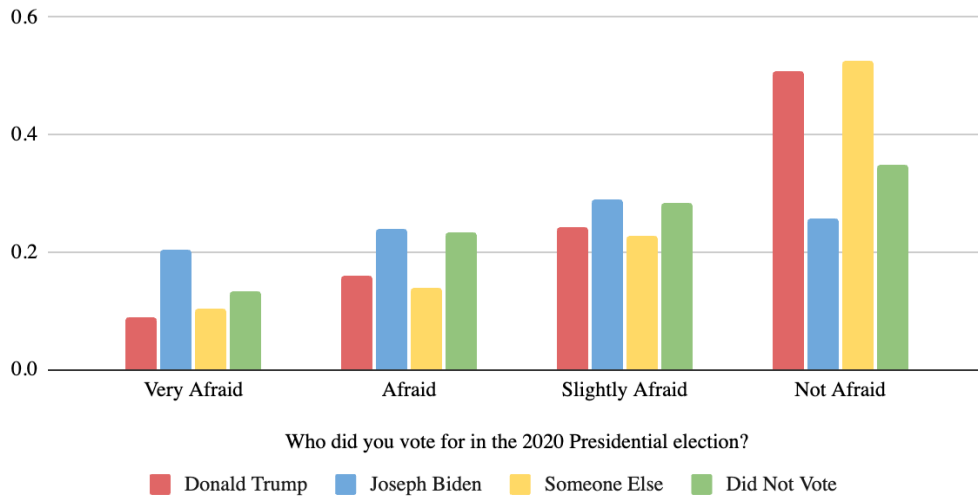
How Afraid Are You of the Following Events: Violent Overthrow of the U.S. Government



Source: CSAF, Wave 8, Chapman University

Table 2: Governmental Overthrow and Voting

How Afraid Are You of the Following Events: Violent Overthrow of the U.S. Government



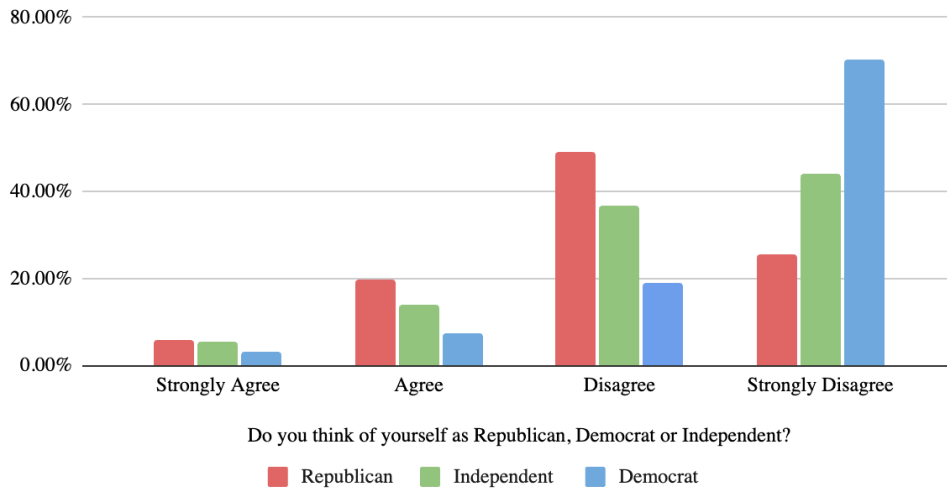
Source: CSAF, Wave 8, Chapman University

Table 1 depicts attitudes towards violent overthrow of the U.S. Government represented through partisanship, and Table 2 shows the attitudes from the demographics of specific 2020

Presidential election candidates. As is represented in the above tables, 51.5% of respondents affiliated with the Republican party indicated their fear of violent overthrow of the U.S. Government, 59.7% of Independents indicated fear, and 69.7% of Democrats expressed fear. In Table 2, 49.2% of Donald Trump’s voting population indicated some level of fear, while 47.3% of voters for other candidates and 73.3% of respondents who voted for Joseph Biden indicated a level of fear. This data represents the variation between partisan affiliation and the attitudes of voters for certain candidates regarding the possibility of major political events. Republicans are more likely to fear violent overthrow of the U.S. Government than those who voted for Donald Trump by 2.3%, whereas Democrats are less likely to fear violent overthrow of the U.S. Government than voters of Joe Biden by 3.6%.

Table 3: The January 6th Insurrection and Partisanship

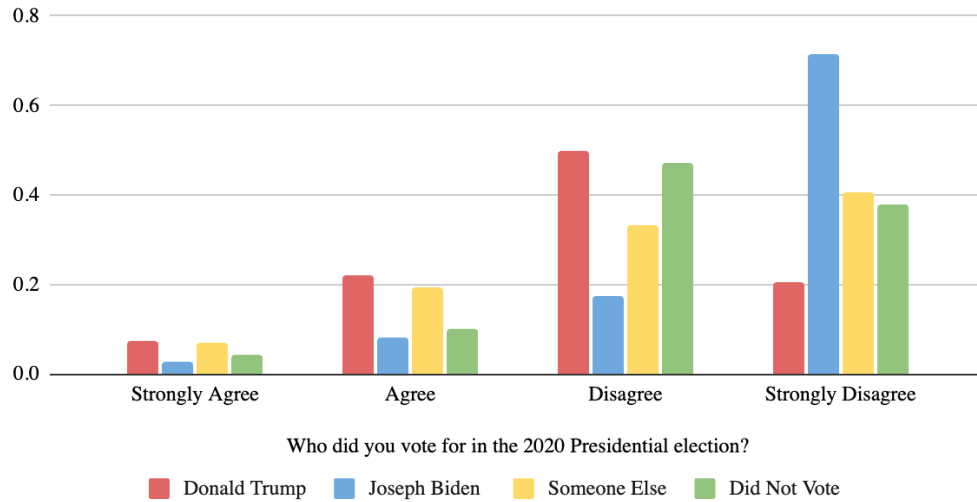
Please Indicate Your Level of Agreement with the Following Statements: The Protestors Who Attacked the Capitol on January 6th, 2021 Were Patriots



Source: CSAF, Wave 8, Chapman University

Table 4: The January 6th Insurrection and Voting

Please Indicate Your Level of Agreement with the Following Statements: The Protestors Who Attacked the Capitol on January 6th, 2021 Were Patriots



Source: CSAF, Wave 8, Chapman University

Table 1 depicts partisan attitudes towards whether or not the participants in the January 6th Insurrection should be considered patriots, whereas Table 2 depicts the attitudes of voters for specific candidates. Similarly, to the attitudes towards violent overthrow of the U.S. Government, those who affiliated with the Republican party were 4.5% more likely to disagree that these individuals should be considered patriots than voters for Donald Trump, whereas 0.6% fewer Democrats disagreed than voters for Joe Biden. 18.7% more of the individuals who voted for Biden than for Trump indicated that they disagreed that the protestors who attacked the capitol on January 6th should be considered patriots. 14.8% more of the individuals who identify as Democrats than as Republicans indicated that they disagreed that the protestors who attacked the capitol on January 6th should be considered patriots.

Generally, the insurrection and attitudes towards the U.S. Government is not an issue clearly divided by partisanship. Instead, there is a pattern to show that the true division lies in voting trends. Voting for candidates affiliated with the Democratic or Republican parties did not produce the same attitudes towards the participants in the January 6th insurrection or towards violent overthrow of the U.S. Government as partisan affiliation. The highest variation between

party affiliation and voters for the candidate representing that specific party was shown in the Republicans. Those who voted for Trump were more likely to consider the participants in the Insurrection as patriots and to indicate a lack of fear for violent overthrow of the U.S.

Government than Republicans. As political affairs continue to divide the nation and cause tension in the relationship between U.S. citizens and their government officials, it will remain crucial to observe the trends in attitudes towards acts of political violence and the general governmental system. Specifically, it will become important to track not only party affiliation, but supporters of specific candidates.