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Title: Perceptions of the Partisan Homogeneity of Social Groups: A Report to the NES Board of Overseers

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Abstract

As has been often noted, groups and their alignments with the parties are important points of orientation for citizens' maps of the political world. In the 1997 NES pilot study, respondents were asked about their perceptions of the partisan homogeneity of social and political groups using two different question formats. In this report, we compare these formats. In addition, we examine the origins of perceptions of partisan homogeneity and their consequences for inferences about groups' ideological locations. We find that perceptions of group-party alignment are generally shaped by political knowledge. For certain groups, affect towards the group, in combination with one's own party membership, is also influential. For inferences about a group's ideology, we find that perceptions of partisan homogeneity increase the use of party locations to make inferences about the group's ideological location.