

# Trump supporters believe U.S. society is fair, according to study

June 30 2017, by Jared Wadley

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Voters who supported Donald Trump are more likely than other Americans—even other conservatives—to oppose social justice efforts, a new University of Michigan study shows.

Specifically, this segment thinks the nation spends too much money promoting equality for the poor, women and minorities; agrees that disadvantaged groups have received more than they deserve economically; and believes that disadvantaged individuals' claims of discrimination are invalid.

Erin Cech, U-M assistant professor of sociology, described Trump supporters as "rugged meritocratists" because they believe society is already meritocratic—already fair and just.

It is this belief—not Trump supporters' greater likelihood of expressing social [bias](#)—that helps explain their resistance to social justice issues, she says.

Cech conducted an online survey of 1,151 people three weeks after the 2016 presidential election. The sample is proportionally representative of U.S. adults. They answered questions about bias and beliefs about inequality, and were asked about the candidates they voted for.

Trump supporters, the study indicates, do express more bias: they have more negative assessments of the competence (e.g., intelligence, motivation) and warmth (e.g., humble, happy) of the poor, African

Americans, Hispanics and women compared with the views of nonsupporters.

Trump supporters are also more likely to agree that too much money has been spent on welfare, homeless shelters and improving conditions for disadvantaged groups. About 60 percent of Trump supporters believe the poor, racial/ethnic minorities and women have been too demanding in their push for equal rights, Cech says.

"Resistance to social justice efforts appears to be based less in overt social bias than in a particular framing of the social world, one that denies structural inequality and blames victims of that inequality for their own circumstances," she said.

This has consequences for social justice advocates: rugged meritocrats, regardless of their political affiliation, will likely resist social justice efforts because such efforts do not match how they see society, she says. If equality advocates are to foster support for social [justice](#) efforts, they must first convince rugged meritocrats that [inequality](#) exists in the first place.

The study appears in the current issue of *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World*.

**More information:** Erin A. Cech. Rugged Meritocrats: The Role of Overt Bias and the Meritocratic Ideology in Trump Supporters' Opposition to Social Justice Efforts. *Socius*. [DOI: 10.1177/2378023117712395](#)

Provided by University of Michigan

Citation: Trump supporters believe U.S. society is fair, according to study (2017, June 30)  
retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-06-trump-society-fair.html>

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