

# Trump's tweets reveal hidden unity between Democrats, Republicans

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Democrats and Republicans may stand on opposite ends of the political spectrum, but when it comes to President Donald Trump's tweets, they have more in common than meets the eye.

Both parties disapprove of Trump's tweets that [insult](#) people or contain false information, and they like language that supports the military or shares condolences, regardless of their attitudes toward the president, according to a new University at Buffalo study published this month in the Proceedings of the Thirteenth International Conference on Web and Social Media.

The findings demonstrate that beneath the polarized [political views](#), both Republicans and Democrats share a hidden agreement surrounding Trump's online behavior.

"We were initially a bit surprised, because we had expected to find the opposite, where tweets Republicans liked most were those Democrats hated most," said Kenneth Joseph, Ph.D., first author and assistant professor of computer science and engineering in the UB School of Engineering and Applied Sciences.

The research aimed to examine the extent of political polarization in the U.S. by examining [public support](#) for tweets shared by Trump, a highly polarizing figure in American politics.

While only 8 percent of Americans follow the president on Twitter, more than half of U.S. citizens are exposed to his tweets through other media, finds Gallup.

Investigators examined more than 4,300 tweets shared by Trump between February 2017 and December 2018, a period beginning shortly after his inauguration.

Public opinions of tweets were collected using surveys gathered by the YouGov TweetIndex, which asks hundreds of self-identifying Democrats and Republicans to rate tweets on a five point scale from terrible to great.

More than 1.8 million Twitter users linked to U.S. voter registration records were also analyzed for their responses to Trump's tweets, where it was assumed that retweets generally indicated support while replies showed disapproval.

Of Trump's tweets, 28 percent contained an insult, 22 percent contained

a false statement and 16 percent offered support or condolences, the study found.

The researchers found that both parties liked when Trump showed support for the military and first responders or offered condolences, and disliked when the president shared [false information](#) or an insult.

However, [public opinion](#) differed based on the target of the insult.

Republicans showed more support for tweets that insulted Democrats and reacted negatively to insults toward other Republicans. Democrats, on the other hand, did not react positively toward Trump's assaults on Republicans, demonstrating that the president's attacks on his own party only serve to hurt him by decreasing support from his base, according to researchers.

Democrats reacted negatively to insults toward women and members of the media. But these tweets had no significant effect on Republicans, implying that these types of messages could also hurt Trump by agitating the opposing party without increasing support from his base, the study found.

Democrats also reacted more negatively to insults aimed at white people compared to Middle Eastern individuals.

Overall, Republicans were more forgiving of Trump's actions, and were less likely to view Trump unfavorably, regardless of [tweet](#) content.

**More information:** Polarized, Together: Comparing Partisan Support for Trump's Tweets Using Survey and Platform-Based Measures. Proceedings of the Thirteenth International Conference on Web and Social Media. [www.aaai.org/ojs/index.php/ICWSM/article/view/3230](http://www.aaai.org/ojs/index.php/ICWSM/article/view/3230)

Provided by University at Buffalo

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