

New nationwide survey shows MAGA supporters' beliefs about the pandemic, the election and the insurrection

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In the wake of the Capitol riot and on the eve of former President Trump's second impeachment trial, [new data](#) from the University of Washington reveals the attitudes and beliefs that are growing within the Republican Party.

Surveys of hundreds of fervent Trump voters, whom researchers refer to as Make American Great Again (MAGA) supporters, reveal strong beliefs that the election was stolen; that COVID-19 is a bioweapon from China; and that the riot was the work of antifa. The data, collected just before and after the Capitol riot, is believed to be the only information of its kind, shedding light on MAGA supporters' opinions about race, gender, the pandemic and the 2020 election.

The data also uncovers demographic information that may dispel some myths about hard-core Trump supporters: Nearly half of MAGA adherents, for example, roughly half earn at least \$50,000 a year, considered middle-income by many standards, and approximately one-third have at least a college degree.

"Right now, these people feel like they're losing their country and their identity. They feel like they're being displaced by communities of color, by feminists and by immigrants. These people are motivated by what they see as an existential threat to their way of life," said Christopher Sebastian Parker, professor of political science at the UW and co-author

of the research.

The results have not yet been peer-reviewed and will be submitted to an academic journal, Parker said.

The impetus for the study was something Parker and co-author Rachel Blum of the University of Oklahoma have been pursuing in their individual research for years: what drives the Trump wing of the GOP, which in many ways builds on the Tea Party movement of a decade ago. The two researchers planned an [online survey](#) to be administered in late 2020—regardless of who won the November election—by placing ads on Facebook, identifying MAGA affinity groups. Nearly 1,500 people completed the survey at the end of December.

Then, after the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol, Parker and Blum again surveyed respondents who had supplied their email addresses in the first wave of the study, providing rare insight into MAGA supporters' beliefs and perspectives before and after that historic event. This time, about 300 people responded.

"The historic nature of the Capitol Riot, and the involvement of MAGA supporters, forced us to re-interview people sooner than we preferred. But we needed to capture how the event may have affected their opinions on the country," Parker said.

Results of the Panel Study of the MAGA Movement are grouped by categories: demographics of the respondent and their views on democracy and the election, on the Capitol riot, on COVID-19, and on "difference"—namely, race, gender and other characteristics.

Highlights of the findings include:

- Nearly all (98%) of respondents said they believe Trump's

election fraud claims and distrust the actual results of the presidential election;

- About 90% said voting "shouldn't be easier"
- More than two-thirds said Trump bears no responsibility for the events of Jan. 6—roughly the same percentage that laid the blame on antifa
- At least 90% said Trump was honest about COVID-19, and that state and local government restrictions related to the pandemic should be loosened

The findings related to "difference"—race, gender and immigration status—provide an additional lens through which to view the MAGA movement, Parker said.

On race, significant majorities of respondents agreed with statements like "Black people should work their way up like other minorities" and "Black people would be as well off as white people if they tried." Along the same lines, a majority disagreed with statements such as "Slavery/discrimination made working up difficult for Black people" and "Black people have gotten less than they deserve."

Similar themes emerged in the results regarding women and immigration. A majority of respondents agreed with statements such as "Women interpret innocent remarks as sexist," "Feminists are seeking more power than men," and "Immigration is changing our culture for the worse."

Such statements are a reaction to decades of change, from the civil rights and women's movements of the 1960s, to the election of President Obama and an increasingly multiracial society, Parker said: "Like clockwork, whenever racial progress occurs, it's followed—in short order—by racial retrenchment. Reconstruction, the Civil Rights Movement, and the election of Barack Obama, are the most prominent

examples."

In the second wave of the study—the post-riot portion—researchers also sought to determine what role race might have played in MAGA supporters' perspectives on events. Parker and Blum devised questions about whether the January 6 riot was justified based on the idea that the election was stolen. If so, was it because of voter fraud in Pennsylvania and Georgia, or because of [voter fraud](#) in Philadelphia and Atlanta, two cities predominantly made up of people of color.

Results showed 25 percent more of the respondents believed the riot was justified when the cities were mentioned, compared when only the states were included.

Accessing supporters through affinity groups fell within a narrow window of opportunity, Parker said, given Facebook's eventual crackdown on posts and pages that promoted baseless and dangerous ideas, and many conservatives' departure to other platforms.

In the end, Parker said, the study shows the popularity of more extremist views within the Republican Party, a pattern that dates back to the early 1960s when the party was divided between the more reactionary Sunbelt conservatives, and the more establishment East Coast conservatives. The same pattern is essentially repeating itself. It's no wonder, he said, that members of the party are fighting over whether to punish Congressional Republicans who voted for impeachment and/or those who promote conspiracy theories.

"One of the two major political parties is essentially captured by these people. They're not going away any time soon. They were here before Trump, and they'll be here after Trump," Parker said.

Results of the study, including charts and information on data collection

and survey methodology, are available [here](#).

Provided by University of Washington

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