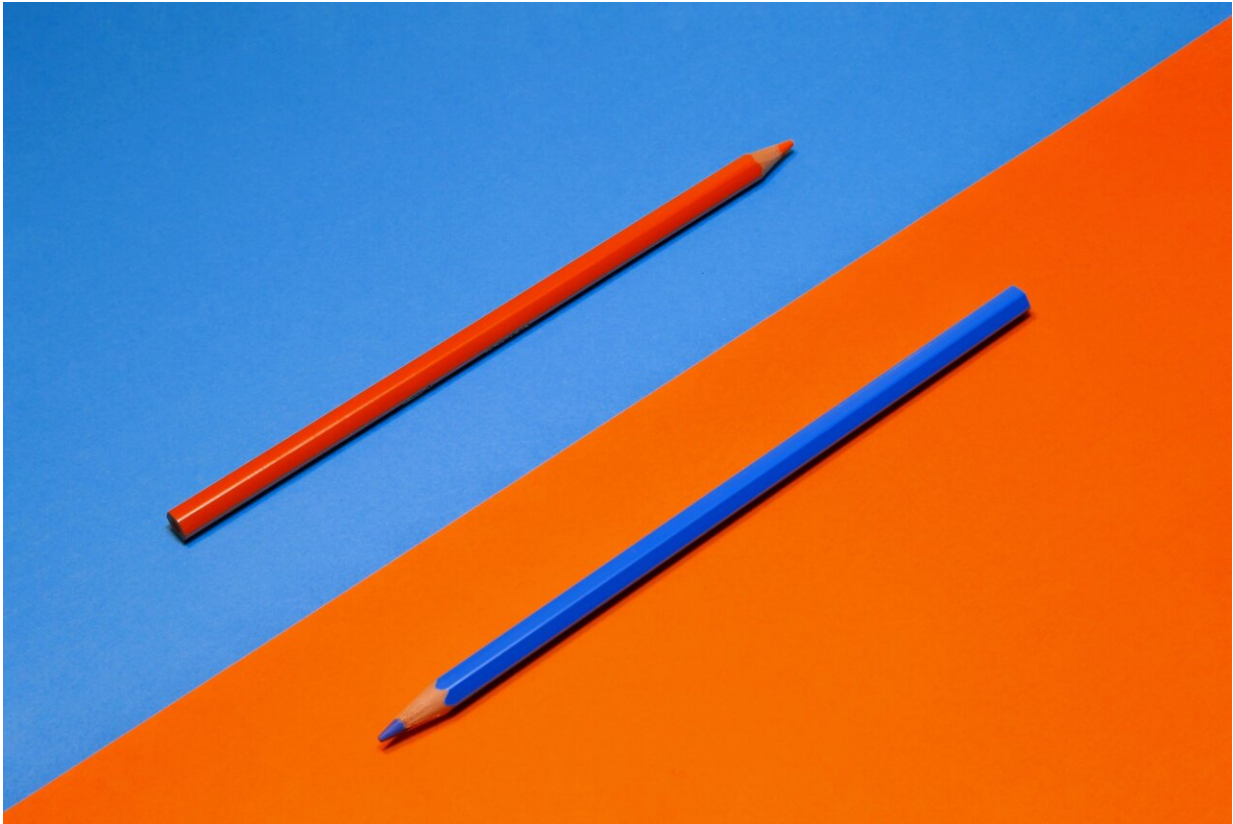


# New study: Political animosity is global

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A new study by an interdisciplinary team of researchers across six different countries has found that affective polarization, or the tendency to dislike people who belong to opposing political parties while favoring people from their own political party, is a global bias—not just an American one. The research further indicates that the dislike grows

stronger when two people think about political issues the same way but come away with different beliefs about those issues. The work is published in the journal *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*.

For instance, two people from two separate [political parties](#) both may think that tax policy and trade should be thought of together as a package. The researchers found that even though these two people share a way of thinking about political issues, they will have the largest degree of affective [polarization](#) if they end up having different conclusions. This suggests that sharing cognitive frameworks with political outgroups can intensify negative attitudes toward them.

"You can imagine how frustrating it is to interact with someone who seems to think about things in a similar way and who shares the same basic logic of how things work as you do, but yet come to opposite conclusions," said Mark Brandt, an associate professor of psychology at Michigan State University and a researcher in the field of social psychology. "We think that sharing a way of thinking about issues with a political outgroup is likely a signal that they are competitors in the political system."

This study, led by Felicity Turner-Zwinkels, a social psychologist from Tilburg University's Department of Sociology, investigated the underlying factors contributing to affective polarization. The findings indicate that across many different countries, we dislike political outgroups the more we disagree with them.

"This study matters because we examined a topic (affective polarization) that is heavily discussed and studied in America and brought it to a global scale. This shows that it is global and not just an American phenomenon," said Brandt. "People should care because it helps better explain the way humans interact with each other in the realm of politics."

"Why do we dislike each other so much even when we think about an issue similarly? This helps explain it," said Brandt. "This tells us that these feelings are widespread. Americans might think we're special in our political entrenchment, but it turns out we're not."

The [research](#) suggests two potential interventions that were not directly tested: highlighting shared opinions across [political groups](#), which could reduce affective polarization, and encouraging individuals to contemplate political issues and their interconnectedness in new and unique ways.

**More information:** Felicity M. Turner-Zwinkels et al, Affective Polarization and Political Belief Systems: The Role of Political Identity and the Content and Structure of Political Beliefs, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* (2023). [DOI: 10.1177/01461672231183935](https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672231183935)

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