

# Does Supporting Human Rights Abuse Harm Support for Presidential Candidates in the United States?

Preliminary Version: Active development of this paper is underway. Results and conclusions may change as research proceeds.

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## **Abstract**

In 2016, U.S. Republican front-runner Donald Trump said, “I could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody, and I wouldn’t lose any voters” (Holland & Gibson 2016). Though hyperbolic, this statement raises an interesting question about the potential conflict between a voter’s commitment to democratic norms (such as freedom of speech and protection against torture) and his/her loyalty to a particular candidate or party. A great deal of human rights scholarship presumes that the public will punish elected officials who violate these commonly held norms. We test this presumption with a survey experiment that asks voters to choose between two candidates for president with typical Democratic and Republican positions; the treatment condition varies whether one candidate endorses an abuse of human rights. We find no evidence to suggest that human rights abuses are a “red line” that voters will not cross.

“This Independent voter will be aligned with the only party left in America that stands for what is right and decent and remains fidelitous to our Republic, objective truth, the rule of law and our Allies. That party is the Democratic Party.”

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Steve Schmidt, senior Republican strategist  
McCain 2008 Presidential Campaign  
posted on Twitter, 6/19/2018

“Believe me, I get the frustration. But this... makes no sense. It’s like a disheartened Red Sox fan saying ‘That’s it, I’m rooting for the Yankees.’ If, you know, the Yankees were for higher taxes, big government, abortion and gun bans.”

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S.E. Cupp, responding to the previous statement  
posted on Twitter, 6/20/2018

In 2016, U.S. Republican front-runner Donald Trump said, “I could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody, and I wouldn’t lose any voters” (Holland & Gibson 2016). Though hyperbolic, this statement raises an interesting question about the potential conflict between a voter’s commitment to democratic norms and his/her loyalty to a particular candidate or party. When voters must choose between supporting their “team” (who, presumably, represent at least some of the voter’s important policy convictions) and supporting the core principles of constitutional democratic government (such as freedom of speech or protection against torture), how will they react?

Voters in a modern democracy are likely to share certain values (such as a concern for civil liberties, personal freedoms, and other human rights) that transcend partisan divides and individual policy preferences (Abramson & Inglehart 1995). Indeed, the idea that voters will not support a politician who attacks civil liberties and personal freedoms is sometimes used to explain a finding in the human rights literature: democracies tend to have better human rights records than non-democracies (Cingranelli & Filippov 2010, Davenport 1999, Poe & Tate 1994, Simmons 2009). However, the United States is also more politically polarized now than at any time since shortly before the Great Depression (McCarty, Poole & Rosenthal

2016). It may be tempting for American voters to compromise the crucial norms that support democracy because the potential policy gains are particularly great.

We conduct a survey experiment designed to answer whether voters will continue to support a presidential candidate from their party when that candidate explicitly advocates undermining democratic norms by abusing human rights. Our experiment asks voters to choose between two candidates for president, each of whom takes a position on a wide range of policies. One candidate’s policy portfolio supports the use of torture against foreign nationals or the indefinite detention of protesting American Muslims, while the other candidate’s portfolio does not. This scenario closely mimics the “real-life” decision voters must make, allowing them to take into consideration each candidate’s stance on issues ranging from taxes to health care policy.

We find no evidence to suggest that human rights abuses constitute a “red line” past which voters will not follow a candidate. Instead, we observe that American voters do not (on average) vote differently when one candidate supports the use of torture against foreign nationals or the indefinite detention of protesting American Muslims, regardless of the candidate’s party affiliation. If a Republican or Democratic candidate in our scenario is supportive of torture or the denial of habeas corpus, the effect on voter preferences is statistically undetectable in our experiment. We specifically address, and rule out, the possibility that voters do not take seriously a commitment to violate democratic norms: even those subjects who believed there was a better than 50% chance that a candidate would actually torture or indefinitely detain American Muslims were not affected by those issues. While we cannot definitely rule out small magnitude effects that could sway a close election, our findings are more definitive that the protection of human rights and civil liberties—at least as they were operationalized in this experiment—is not a touchstone issue for most voters in the United States.

Our paper proceeds as follows. First, we provide a brief overview of existing work addressing the relationship between democracy, public opinion, and human rights. Then we

describe our experimental design and present our results. We conclude by discussing the implications of our findings and productive avenues for future research.

## Theoretical Background

Scholars hypothesize that the public's preference for greater, rather than less, human rights protections provides one explanation for the strong empirical relationship that exists between regime type and respect for human rights (Cingranelli & Filippov 2010, Richards & Gelleny 2007). Democracies are unique in, and in some formulations are actually defined by, holding meaningful and competitive elections (Marshall, Gurr & Jagers 2014, Chieub, Gandhi & Vreeland 2010). These elections are one way in which public opinion is translated into government policy, an idea that is at the foundation of many theories of democracy (Downs 1957, Schattschneider 1975, Mayhew 1974, Calvert 1985, Dahl 1961). The responsiveness of elected officials to constituent preferences has been supported by detailed empirical study (Page & Shapiro 1983, Stimson, Mackuen & Erikson 1995, Erikson & Wright 2000, Erikson, Mackuen & Stimson 2002, Clinton 2006), though majoritarian systems like that of the United States are perhaps less responsive than proportional representation systems (Powell 2000). More specifically, officials' whose policy decisions do not reflect public preferences may be punished by voters at the election booth (Ansolabehere, Snyder & Stewart 2001, Canes-Wrone, Brody & Cogan 2002, Bovitz & Carson 2006), and politicians recognize this and react accordingly (Fredriksson, Wang & Mamun 2011). Though elections are not the only mechanism through which voters can express their preferences, electoral viability is often posited as the chief concern of elected officials in the United States and may underpin some of these other mechanisms.

Therefore, if the public favors greater human rights protections, politicians in democratic societies should be less likely to violate human rights because they do not want to suffer the electoral consequences. And, indeed, the positive relationship between democracy and do-

mestic human right protections is one of the most consistent findings in the human rights literature.<sup>1</sup> Democratic political systems have been found to reduce political bans, censorship, torture, disappearances, and mass killings (Davenport 1995, Davenport 1999, Davenport & Armstrong 2004, Henderson 1991, Poe & Tate 1994, Poe, Tate & Keith 1999).

## **Democracy and the protection of human rights**

Scholars emphasize three main mechanisms through which democracy is thought to reduce human rights violations: normative preferences for nonviolent means of dispute resolution (Mitchell & McCormick 1988, Henderson 1991, Poe & Tate 1994, Keith 2002), the existence of institutional checks and balances (Davenport 2007), and greater political accountability (Poe & Tate 1994, Davenport 1999, Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003). Democratic principles emphasizing the use of nonviolent methods for resolving disagreements such as bargaining, compromise, and elections are thought to socialize both leaders and citizens to expect that they will resolve conflicts through peaceful means (Keith 2002). Constitutional constraints and protections also establish norms and expectations, creating standards which citizens use to assess their leaders' performance and their quality of governance. By clearly defining certain rights as worth of protection, constitutions act as a "socializing tool" (Keith 2002), creating an expectation among the public that the government should respect individual rights and freedoms (Simmons 2009). Once established, these norms must still be enforced by constraining institutions such as an independent judiciary or by public opinion.

Democracy is also correlated with the existence of institutions that constrain government behavior (Poe & Tate 1994, Keith 2002, Regan & Henderson 2002, Simmons 2009).<sup>2</sup> A system of checks and balances allows the actions of one government authority to be blocked

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<sup>1</sup>See, among many, Apodaca (2001), Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2005), Cingranelli & Filippov (2010), Davenport (1995), Davenport (1999), Davenport & Armstrong (2004), Henderson (1991), Keith (2002), Poe & Tate (1994), Poe, Tate & Keith (1999), Richards & Gelleny (2007), and Simmons (2009). However, the finding that democracy leads to greater respect for human rights only holds for fully liberal democracies (see Davenport & Armstrong 2004, Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2005, Conrad & Moore 2010).

<sup>2</sup>More specifically, democratic institutions constrain the government's ability to violate human rights in the absence of violent internal dissent (Davenport 1999).

or countered by another (Davenport & Armstrong 2004). This makes it difficult for leaders to use the institutions of the state to commit human rights violations (Poe, Tate & Keith 1999, Regan & Henderson 2002). The existence of checks and balances also increases the likelihood a leader will be held accountable for any human rights abuses (Conrad & Moore 2010). In addition, democratic institutions make it easier for individuals to challenge the regime (Poe & Tate 1994, Keith 2002). For example, when domestic courts are able to sanction violators, they serve as an outlet for citizens to challenge government behavior. In this way, the judiciary may alter a leader's incentives to commit human rights abuses by increasing the probability he or she will face costly litigation and potential punishment by the court (Keith 2002, Powell & Staton 2009).

Scholars also emphasize the role that political accountability plays in incentivizing leaders to respect human rights (Davenport 1999, Keith 2002, Poe & Tate 1994, Poe, Tate & Keith 1999). In particular, scholars have found elections to be a key mechanism for ensuring that a government respects the physical integrity rights of its citizens (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003, Conrad & Moore 2010, Richards & Gelleny 2007). In a state with free and fair elections, "a potentially abusive leader might feel vulnerable to public discontent at the polls and thus be curbed from abusive practices" (Keith 2002, pg. 122). More specifically, elections provide citizens with the opportunity to "make a human rights-friendly choice among other alternatives" (Richards & Gelleny 2007, pg. 507) and to remove repressive leaders from office (Apodaca 2001, Poe & Tate 1994).

It is not hard to believe that the three mechanisms insulating democracies from human rights abuse are intertwined. For example, it is unclear why voters would punish elected officials for human rights abuses at the ballot box if they did not have a normative preference for nonviolence. Conversely, the normative preferences of citizens would probably matter less to those in government if those citizens could not remove them through the electoral process.

## **The role of public opinion in arguments about human rights**

Given the intertwined nature of the mechanisms by which democracies protect human rights, it is not surprising to find that many different arguments in the literature on human rights rely on the assumption that democratic publics oppose abuse and act on that opposition. For example, Conrad & Moore (2010) note that when electoral institutions allow citizens to express their preferences, executives pay close attention to how the public reacts to government policy. In states with free and fair elections, executives are less likely to engage in torture “[b]ecause torture is both morally abhorrent and illegal, [and] nontrivial portions of the public are likely to decry its use” (Conrad & Moore 2010, pg. 463). Similarly, Richards & Gelleny (2007) suppose that “citizens will express a choice for greater respect for physical integrity rights” (pg. 506), and Cingranelli, Fajardo-Heyward & Filippov’s (2013) central premise is that “citizens as principals prefer a high level of human rights protection, but must depend on politicians and bureaucrats to get what they want” (pg. 605).

Studies on the effects of “naming and shaming” human rights abusers make similar assumptions about the public’s opposition to human rights abuses. One way in which shaming might change the behavior of an abusive leader is by encouraging the public in other states to pressure their leaders to take action against the abuser. For the public to do so, they must care that such abuse is taking place, disapprove of it, and have some way to impose costs on the government to express that displeasure. Peksen, Peterson & Drury (2014) find news reports of human rights abuses mobilize the public to pressure their leaders to take actions against those who commit human rights atrocities abroad. The public pays attention to news coverage of human rights abuses, and reports of abuse increase both the public’s negative perception of the abusive state and empathy for the victims of repression (Peksen, Peterson & Drury 2014). Once they are made aware of the abuse, voters, interest groups, and other influential domestic actors appeal to their leaders to take concrete action against the repressive regime. Leaders, in turn, react to the public’s disapproval of those who commit human rights abuses by imposing sanctions against abusive states, both to demonstrate

their willingness to represent their constituents' preference to punish human rights abusers and to avoid critical coverage of their own inaction (Peksen, Peterson & Drury 2014).

News coverage can also drive the decision to engage in humanitarian intervention. When human rights organizations publicize human rights abuses by a foreign regime in the press, they mobilize others to take actions to protect those living in precarious human rights situations (Murdie & Peksen 2014). When governments are publicly “named and shamed” as human rights abusers, governments may also provide less bilateral aid to the abusive regime, depending on how politically important the abusive regime is to the donor government (Esarey & DeMeritt 2016). Leaders may choose to use economic sanctions, engage in humanitarian interventions, or reduce bilateral aid flows to abusive regimes at least in part because their constituents care about human rights and encourage their elected officials to punish those who commit human rights abuses and/or protect the rights of those living in the repressive regime.

Human rights violations have also been found to deter foreign direct investment due to reputational concerns. That is, investors are reluctant to invest in states poor human rights records because of “fears of being associated with countries responsible for [human rights] violations” (Garriga 2016, pg. 160). Consumers who learn about human rights abuses abroad might reduce their demand for products from abusive states and pressure their elected officials to discourage purchases from such states (Peterson, Murdie & Asal 2016). For example, in the 1990s, calls to boycott the repressive regime of Burma resulted in a number of multinational-firms, including Texaco, Levi Strauss, and Eddie Bauer, to cease operations inside Burma (Spar 1998). One of the goals of the “Free Tibet” movement is to draw attention to Chinese human rights abuses inside Chinese-occupied Tibet (Boycott Made in China Campaign 2002). Since 2005, the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) Movement has called for the boycotting of Israeli exports in response to continued Israeli human rights abuses (Aked 2017, Palestinian BDS National Committee 2017). Firms often respond by cutting off abusive suppliers because it is in their financial interest to do so once



the public becomes aware of the abuse (Spar 1998). Similar to the “naming and shaming” literature, investors and firms prefer not to be associated with abusive regimes or suppliers, seemingly because their customers value the protection of human rights and prefer companies that do not invest in or import products from abusive states.

## Measurements of public opinion about human rights abuse

There are empirical reasons to believe that democratic publics *do* oppose human rights abuse, though the evidence also suggests that this opposition is not absolute. For example, a survey by Gronke et al. (2010) examines public opinion polls from 2001–2009 and finds that on average, 55% of the public opposed the use of torture. This finding holds even when respondents are asked about an “imminent terrorist attack,” when enhanced interrogation techniques are not called torture, and when they are assured that torture would “work to get crucial information.” Between 2001 and 2009, 55% of those surveyed were opposed to torture, and a majority did not support torture until June 2009, after the inauguration of President Barack Obama. The authors explain this increase in support for torture by arguing that torture may have become a partisan symbol that distinguishes Republicans from Democrats (Gronke et al. 2010).<sup>3</sup> In a survey experiment examining voters’ responses to violations of international law, Putnam & Shapiro (2013) find voters support punishing foreign human rights abusers when they are told the abusive state’s actions violate international law (Putnam & Shapiro 2013). Similarly, Wallace (2013), using an experimental design, finds respondents are less likely to support torture by their own government when they are told that it violates international law.

But while previous work suggests at least *some* segments of the population oppose leaders who commit human rights violations, opposition to abuse such as torture is not universal, even in democracies. Gronke et al. (2010) find that on average, 55% of the public oppose

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<sup>3</sup>Gronke et al. (2010) note that a survey conducted by World Public Opinion in June 2009 supports this argument. Opposition to torture by Republicans dropped from 66% in 2004 to 59% in 2009, and Republicans who said a ban on torture was too restrictive increased from 30% to 39%, while support for torture among Democrats remained the same.

torture, but this also means that the remaining 45% are supportive of (or at a minimum, not opposed to) the government's use of torture. Public opinion on human rights violations is also affected by factors such as partisanship, ideology, religion, and gender, so that some citizens are more supportive of abuses such as torture than others (Eichenberg 2014, Hertel, Scruggs & Heidkamp 2009, Malka & Soto 2011, Mayer & Armor 2012, Wemlinger 2014).

More importantly, citizens may trade off the protection of certain rights, such as freedom of speech or freedom of association, against other political issues that are important to them. As one example, security is often recognized as a an interest that competes with human rights. Feelings of insecurity and a perceived threat of future terrorism increase support for policies that restrict domestic civil liberties (Huddy, Feldman & Weber 2007). Similarly, when faced with growing crime and violence, citizens may prefer to vote for a candidate who promise to increase the use of repression in exchange for reestablishing order (Ahnen 2007). The public is also more supportive of torture when it is directed at individuals they perceive as threatening, such as a detainee with an Arabic name (Conrad et al. 2016) or a suspect described as a "terrorist" (Spino & Cummins 2014, Conrad et al. 2016). However, security need not be the *only* competing value when voters must choose between two candidates for office; each candidate offers a bundle of policies, and as a consequence some form of comparison among these policies is unavoidable when voting.

Clearly, all citizens do not have the same interest in promoting the protection of physical integrity rights in every circumstance. This is particularly true in heterogenous states like the US, where individuals have conflicting preferences about fundamental principles like freedom and equality. Importantly, these different values do not operate in isolation from one another. Rather, citizens have different feelings about multiple values at the same time. Thus suggests that there is widespread disagreement with societies about which values are more or less important (Jacoby 2014). Citizens may strongly support the protection of human rights in the abstract, but feel even more strongly about other values, such as national security or law and order, which may compete with human rights protections.

## Theoretical prediction

To summarize, democracies may be especially likely to protect human rights because public opinion constrains leaders and prevents them from committing human rights violations. The public may penalize politicians who commit human rights abuses or are supportive of policies which violate human rights norms. One of the most obvious penalties that a public can impose is to vote for another candidate (or perhaps to abstain from voting). While is not the only possible way in which democratic institutions may lead to better human rights protections, we believe that electoral accountability is especially important because:

1. we have ample reason to expect politicians to pay particularly close attention to the possibility of not being (re)elected (Downs 1957, Schattschneider 1975, Mayhew 1974, Calvert 1985, Fredriksson, Wang & Mamun 2011);
2. meaningful elections are unique institutions of democracy (Marshall, Gurr & Jagers 2014, Chiehub, Gandhi & Vreeland 2010); and
3. empirical research has found a connection between policy choices and election outcomes (Ansolabehere, Snyder & Stewart 2001, Canes-Wrone, Brody & Cogan 2002, Bovitz & Carson 2006).

**Thus, we hypothesize that voters in the United States will be less likely to support candidates who openly advocate human rights abuse.**

However, voters must make complex choices and compromise among their different values. In other words, voters also care about other policies related to taxes, health care, education, gun control, etc. Whether or not voters will strongly police human rights norms, in light of their other values and policy preferences, remains an empirical question. To answer this question, we employ an experimental research design that allows us to more directly test the effects of extreme policy positions related to human rights on vote choice.

## Research design

To determine whether advocating human rights abuses influences voters' support for a presidential candidate, we conducted a survey experiment using a panel of respondents selected by Qualtrics.<sup>4</sup> Our sample includes only eligible voters living in the United States. The core survey experiment presents respondents with two candidate profiles, one Republican and one Democrat, and asks the subject to choose their preferred candidate. The Republican and Democratic candidate profiles were built using the platforms of each party in the 2016 election (RNC Platform Committee 2016, Democratic Platform Committee 2016) and statements made by the two major party candidates in that election (Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton). These baseline profiles cover (1) taxation, (2) trade, (3) the minimum wage, (4) national defense and counterterrorism, (5) health care, and (6) law enforcement and criminal justice.

We use a  $2 \times 2$  factorial design (plus a control group), with just over 100 subjects in each treatment cell. Respondents were randomly assigned to the control group or to one of the four possible treatment groups. The control group received the baseline profile, with no proposals to abuse human rights. Our treatments involve including text advocating extreme policies that violate human rights norms to the baseline candidate profiles. Each treatment group received one of two possible additional policy statements (a statement supporting the use of torture, or a statement supporting the indefinite detention of American Muslims who speak out against U.S. policy), added to the baseline profile of one of the two candidates (either the Republican or Democratic candidate). The additional text is added to the candidate's statement on national defense policy. The specific wording of each policy statement is included below in Table 1 (the text of the each treatment is italicized).

After reading the candidate profiles, we asked each subject to complete a manipulation check, in which the subject identified which candidate (Republican or Democratic) advocated for a particular policy position. Whenever an extreme policy statement was included in a

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<sup>4</sup>All respondents completed the survey between March 6–March 8, 2017.

**Table 1: Experimental Treatments**

	<b>Republican candidate</b>	<b>Democratic candidate</b>
<b>T1: Torture</b>	Republicans continue to support American military superiority, which has been the cornerstone of a strategy that seeks to deter aggression and defeat those who threaten our vital national security interests. I will rebuild troop numbers and readiness and confirm their mission: protecting the nation, not nation building. <i>I also support the use of advanced interrogation techniques, including torture, against foreign nationals suspected of terrorism.</i>	I will continue to invest heavily in intelligence and information sharing and will promote those networks among our allies. I will also strengthen our ability to keep nuclear and biological weapons out of the hands of terrorists, promote efforts to better ensure border security, and augment defense of our national infrastructure. <i>I also support the use of advanced interrogation techniques, including torture, against foreign nationals suspected of terrorism.</i>
<b>T2: Detention</b>	Republicans continue to support American military superiority, which has been the cornerstone of a strategy that seeks to deter aggression and defeat those who threaten our vital national security interests. I will rebuild troop numbers and readiness and confirm their mission: protecting the nation, not nation building. <i>As President, I'd also support indefinitely detaining American Muslims who speak out against U.S. policy if they interfere with our ability to defeat terrorist groups like ISIS.</i>	I will continue to invest heavily in intelligence and information sharing and will promote those networks among our allies. I will also strengthen our ability to keep nuclear and biological weapons out of the hands of terrorists, promote efforts to better ensure border security, and augment defense of our national infrastructure. <i>As President, I'd also support indefinitely detaining American Muslims who speak out against U.S. policy if they interfere with our ability to defeat terrorist groups like ISIS.</i>

candidate’s policy platform (support for torture or support for indefinite detention), that statement was also included in the manipulation check, and the subject was always given the correct answer. Respondents were then told to assume that both candidates are equally qualified for the presidency and asked whether they would prefer to vote for the Republican candidate, the Democratic candidate, or to abstain from voting. It is possible that some subjects believed the candidate advocating human rights abuse would not actually implement the policy if elected. Therefore, after selecting their preferred candidate (or abstaining), we also asked subjects in each treatment group how likely they thought it is that the candidate would actually enact the extreme policy if elected.<sup>5</sup>

Subjects in our experiment were also asked some basic demographic questions. These questions included whether they were eligible to vote (no subjects answering “no” are included in our analysis), their gender, age, race, highest level of schooling, and partisan identification on a seven point scale. The full survey document is included as an online appendix.

We compare aggregate respondent support for the baseline profile candidates to aggregate support for the candidates with the modified profiles using basic difference-of-means tests via dummy variable regressions.<sup>6</sup> Given random assignment of the subjects to a treatment condition, the only difference between each group of subjects is the presence or absence of the added text. Consequently, we can attribute any difference in support for candidates between the two positions to the presence of extreme policy commitments.

## Results

In Table 2, we present an ordinary least squares linear probability model (OLS/LPM) estimating the effect of advocating human rights abuse on support for both the Republican and

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<sup>5</sup>Respondents selected from among the following choices: (1) Very likely (between 75% and 100% chance), (2) Likely (between 50% and 74% chance), (3) Somewhat likely (between 25% and 49% chance), and (4) Not at all likely (between 0% and 24% chance).

<sup>6</sup>The analysis in Tables 2, 3, and 4 was preregistered, though there are minor differences in the preregistered code and the final code (Bryant & Esarey 2017).

**Table 2: OLS / LPM Model:** regression coefficient estimates for model of support (binary) for the Republican and Democratic candidates. Heteroskedasticity-consistent robust standard errors are presented in parentheses.

	Support for Republican	Support for Democrat
	(1)	(2)
Intercept (Baseline)	0.447*** (0.049)	0.485*** (0.050)
Torture, D	-0.033 (0.069)	-0.005 (0.070)
Torture, R	-0.072 (0.069)	0.053 (0.070)
Muslim Detention, D	-0.014 (0.070)	-0.024 (0.070)
Muslim Detention, R	-0.014 (0.070)	-0.005 (0.070)
F Statistic	0.331 (p=0.857)	0.343 (p=0.849)
Observations	519	519
R <sup>2</sup>	0.003	0.003

*Note:*

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

Democratic candidate. We find no statistically meaningful evidence of any treatment effect on support for either candidate. As Table 2 demonstrates, among those subjects receiving the treatment (a candidate advocating an extreme policy position supportive of either torture or the indefinite detention of American Muslims), average support for the Republican candidate decreases slightly when either the Republican candidate or the Democratic candidate expresses support for the use of torture, although the change in support is largest when the Republican candidate is supportive of torture. Average support for the Democratic candidate increases when the Republican candidate is supportive of torture, but does not change when the Democratic candidate is supportive of torture.

None of these results achieve statistical significance ( $\alpha = 0.05$ , two-tailed), although the large standard errors make it difficult to argue that all of the treatment effects are exactly zero. In a close election, a small effect might be enough to change the outcome of an election. Still, the magnitude of the effects are small enough for us to rule out the possibility that

advocating human rights abuse is a “red line” that most voters will not cross. In addition, the fact that several of the treatment effects do not go in the expected direction provides further evidence that candidates’ human rights policy positions do not have a consistent, meaningful effect on voting behavior. For instance, when the Democratic candidate is supportive of torture, support for the Republican candidate decreases. Likewise, when the Republican candidate is supportive of the indefinite detention of American Muslims, support for the Democratic candidate decreases.

To increase our statistical power, we also conduct joint  $F$ -tests of the null hypothesis that none of the treatment variables have predictive power. For support for the Republican candidate, the  $F$ -statistic is 0.331 ( $p = 0.856$ ). For support for the Democratic candidate, the  $F$ -statistic is 0.344 ( $p = 0.849$ ). Thus, we fail to reject the null that all of the treatments effects are equal to zero. This finding suggests that none of our treatments (supporting torture or indefinite detention) improve our ability to explain differences in individuals’ vote choices.

## **Same party support**

It is possible that the treatments affect support for a candidate only among voters belonging to the same political party as that candidate, because they serve as symbols of partisanship (Gronke et al. 2010). Therefore, in Table 3, we present the effects of the treatments on support for the Republican candidate among Republican voters only and support for the Democratic candidate among Democratic voters only. Again, we find no positive evidence of a treatment effect on support for either candidate. Voters who identify as Republican are not statistically less likely to vote for a Republican candidate that supports policies violating human rights. Similarly, on average, Democratic voters are not statistically less likely to vote for the Democratic candidate when the Democratic candidate advocates for a violation of human rights. When the Democratic candidate expresses support for torture or indefinite detention, support for the Democratic candidate actually increases relative to the control.



**Table 3: OLS / LPM Model:** regression coefficient estimates for model of support (binary) for the Republican and Democratic candidates in partisan sub-populations (i.e., support for the Republican candidate among Republican voters only, and support for the Democratic candidate among Democratic voters only). Heteroskedasticity-consistent robust standard errors are presented in parentheses.

	Support for Republican	Support for Democrat
	(1)	(2)
Intercept (Baseline)	0.903*** (0.055)	0.800*** (0.065)
Torture, D	0.009 (0.074)	0.097 (0.087)
Torture, R	-0.057 (0.092)	0.085 (0.092)
Muslim Detention, D	0.000 (0.078)	0.061 (0.088)
Muslim Detention, R	-0.065 (0.088)	0.080 (0.094)
F Statistic	0.306 (p=0.874)	0.36 (p=0.837)
Observations	153	156
R <sup>2</sup>	0.009	0.011

*Note:*

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

Such a result is not consistent with the story that citizens believe that human rights abuses are a “red line” that candidates cannot cross without losing their support. The result may indicate that advocating extreme policies can serve as an additional partisan signal, but in that case it is odd that Republican advocacy of the same policies did not increase support among Republican voters.

We also conduct joint  $F$ -tests for each model, and for both the Republican candidate ( $F$ -statistic = 0.306;  $p = 0.874$ ) and the Democratic candidate ( $F$ -statistic = 0.360;  $p = 0.837$ ), we fail to reject the null hypothesis that the treatment effects are all equal to zero. Overall, we find no statistically meaningful evidence that the treatments matter for the level of candidate support among partisan subpopulations, but the size of the confidence intervals make it difficult to argue with certainty that the effect of any of the treatments is exactly zero.

## Model with control variables

Although random assignment ensures that, on average, the treatment and control groups are similar to across both observed and unobserved factors (Campbell & Stanley 1966), we also control for various covariates that may affect respondents' vote choices to reduce residual variance and achieve more efficient estimation of the treatment effects. Table 4 displays the effects of our treatments on support for the Republican and Democratic candidates controlling for party identification, education, ethnicity, age, and gender. We again fail to detect a statistically meaningful effect of our treatments on voting behavior (although Republican candidate support for torture has a negative effect on support for the Republican candidate that is statistically significant using a two-tailed test at  $\alpha = 0.10$ ). Some results remain inconsistent with our theory: a Democratic candidate advocating for torture receives increased support. In both models, we find that party identification has a substantively meaningful and statistically significant ( $\alpha = 0.05$ , two-tailed) effect on vote choice: as respondents more strongly identify with the Democratic party, they are less likely to support the Republican candidate. Similarly, as respondents more strongly identify as Democrats, they are more likely to support the Democratic candidate.

We also conduct joint  $F$ -tests for both models in Table 4, and in each case we fail to reject the null hypothesis that the treatment effects are all equal to zero (for the Republican candidate,  $F$ -statistic = 1.013,  $p = 0.400$ ; for the Democratic candidate,  $F$ -statistic = 0.704;  $p = 0.589$ ). These findings are inconsistent with the theory that the public uses voting to punish an official who abuses human rights.

## Credibility of candidate policy commitments

We also consider the possibility that some subjects might believe that the candidate advocating for a policy violating human rights norms would not truly implement that policy if elected. Figure 1 below shows the respondents' beliefs about the likelihood the candidate will implement the extreme policy position if elected, for each treatment group. Although a

**Table 4: OLS / LPM Model:** regression coefficient estimates for model of support (binary) for the Republican and Democratic candidates, with control variables. Heteroskedasticity-consistent robust standard errors are presented in parentheses.

	Support for Republican (1)	Support for Democrat (2)
Intercept (Baseline)	1.149*** (0.062)	-0.265*** (0.063)
Torture, D	-0.075 (0.049)	0.032 (0.051)
Torture, R	-0.089* (0.053)	0.075 (0.053)
Muslim Detention, D	-0.024 (0.050)	-0.004 (0.054)
Muslim Detention, R	-0.060 (0.052)	0.037 (0.052)
Party ID	-0.162*** (0.007)	0.163*** (0.006)
Education	0.001 (0.012)	0.016 (0.012)
Black	0.028 (0.077)	-0.019 (0.077)
Native American	0.016 (0.063)	-0.407 (0.696)
Asian	-0.167 (0.119)	0.235** (0.116)
Pacific Islander	0.033 (0.237)	0.040 (0.246)
Other Race	-0.070 (0.211)	0.167 (0.204)
Age in years	-0.00000 (0.0001)	-0.00004 (0.0001)
Female	-0.042 (0.033)	0.00004 (0.034)
F Statistic	1.013 (p=0.4)	0.704 (p=0.589)
Observations	506	506
R <sup>2</sup>	0.471	0.470

*Note:*

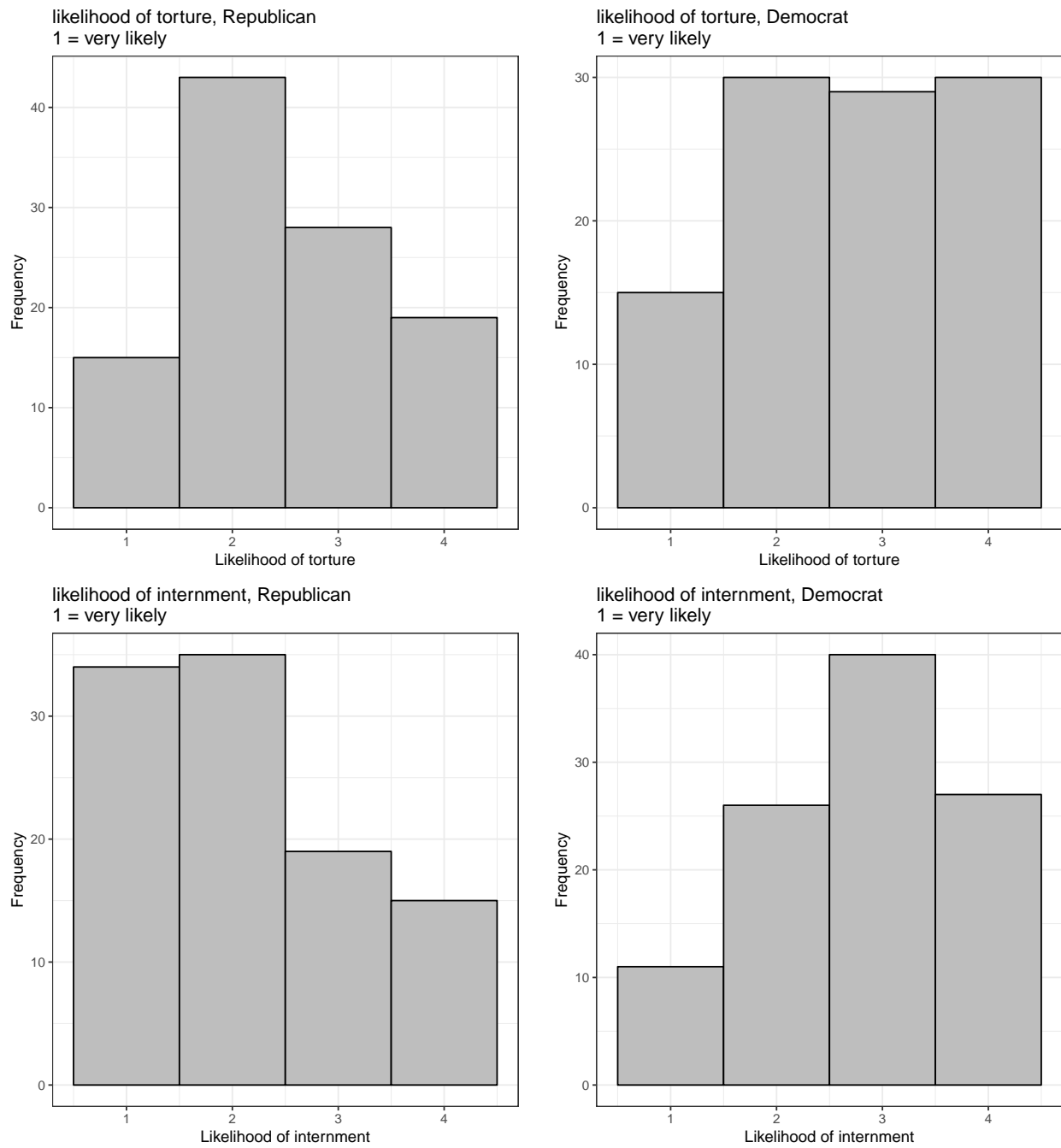
\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

number of subjects in each treatment group thought there was a reasonable probability that each policy would be enacted, respondents were more skeptical of a Democratic candidate actually implementing each policy. While the majority of respondents believed there was a 50% or greater chance that the Republican candidate would enact the proposed policy (either the use of torture or the use of indefinite detention), the majority of respondents receiving the Democratic candidate treatment believed the Democratic candidate was only somewhat or not at all likely to torture or indefinitely detain Muslims if elected (a less than 50% chance).

Table 5 presents the results when we limit our data to only those respondents who believed there was a 50% or greater chance the candidate with the extreme policy position would enact that policy if elected. Even among respondents who believe it is more likely than not that the candidate will enact the policy, we still fail to find statistically significant effects for any of the treatment except one. We do find that a Democratic candidate supporting indefinite detention causes a statistically significant 17.6% decrease in support for the Republican candidate ( $\alpha = 0.05$ , two-tailed). However, the sign on this coefficient goes in the opposite direction from what we expect and does not support the idea that voters punish candidates who advocate for policies that violate human rights norms. We also fail to reject the null hypothesis that the treatment effects are all equal to zero (for the Republican candidate,  $F$ -statistic = 1.596,  $p = 0.175$ ; for the Democratic candidate,  $F$ -statistic = 1.476;  $p = 0.209$ ).

## **Bayesian model averaging**

In each of the above models, we find little evidence of any treatment effect on support for either candidate and all of our joint  $F$ -tests fail to reject the null hypothesis that the treatments effects are equal to zero. However, to be sure that these effects can be considered negligible, we use Bayesian Model Averaging (BMA) to determine whether the results put a high weight on no effect for the treatments. Bayesian Model Averaging allows us to incorporate model uncertainty regarding the choice of variables into our estimation. The



**Figure 1:** The number of respondents who believe a candidate is likely to implement each proposed policy.

**Table 5: OLS / LPM Model:** regression coefficient estimates for support for the Republican and Democratic candidates among those who believe there is at least a 50% chance the candidate will enact the proposed policy. Heteroskedasticity-consistent robust standard errors are presented in parentheses.

	Support for Republican	Support for Democrat
	(1)	(2)
Intercept (Baseline)	0.447*** (0.049)	0.485*** (0.050)
Torture, D	-0.113 (0.087)	0.137 (0.089)
Torture, R	-0.033 (0.082)	0.032 (0.083)
Muslim Detention, D	-0.176** (0.090)	0.136 (0.096)
Muslim Detention, R	0.032 (0.079)	-0.051 (0.078)
F Statistic	1.596 (p=0.175)	1.476 (p=0.209)
Observations	312	312
R <sup>2</sup>	0.019	0.019

*Note:*

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

approach estimates all possible model specifications, given the potential explanatory variables (i.e., the treatment condition dummy variables), and constructs a weighted average over all of potential specifications according to posterior model probabilities (Hoeting et al. 1999). This gives us a measure of how much the treatment effects contribute to modeling respondents' vote choice. Our results are reported in Appendix Tables 6 and 7.

We find several very small non-zero weights if we separate the treatments and include each treatment as a dummy variable, but only one of the treatments – a Republican candidate who advocates for torture of foreign terrorism suspects – is estimated to have an impact on vote choice with a posterior probability of greater than 5%. In the model estimating support for the Republican candidate (Appendix Table 6), there is an estimated 7% probability that the effect of Republican candidate advocating torture is not equal to zero. For the other three treatments, the probability of the treatment having an effect on vote choice is estimated at zero.

Similarly, for the model estimating support for the Democratic candidate (Appendix Table 7), there is only a 7.2% estimated probability that the effect of a Republican candidate advocating torture is not equal to zero. We also estimate a 4.7% probability that the effect of a Democratic candidate advocating indefinite detention is not equal to zero. For the other two treatments (a Democratic candidate advocating for torture and a Republican candidate advocating indefinite detention of Muslims), the posterior probability of a treatment effect is zero. Overall, the posterior probabilities for models that include none of the treatment dummy variables are 93% (for support for a Republican candidate) and 88% (for support for a Democratic candidate) respectively.

## Discussion

In general, although theories of democratic accountability suggest that voters will punish politicians for supporting policies that violate human rights, our study finds no clear evidence

that human rights abuses are a touchstone issue for a majority of voters – a “red line” past which they will not support a candidate they otherwise favor. Indeed, our results appear to rule out the advocacy of torture or indefinite detention of dissidents as disqualifying features of a candidate for most voters in our study. Although a number of studies suggest public support for policies such as torture may serve as partisan symbols (Gronke et al. 2010), we find no evidence of differences among partisans in how they treat policy proposals that violate human rights norms.

Given our relatively small sample size and the uncertainty that accompanies this small sample, we cannot rule out the existence of small magnitude effects that may contribute to tipping an election against a candidate who proposes a policy abusing human rights. While the majority of voters do not appear to oppose candidates who advocate human rights abuse, such extreme policy positions may still matter at the margins. Thus, although we believe our evidence speaks strongly against the idea that human rights violations are a “red line” that voters will not cross, a study with more respondents is needed to identify exactly how much support a candidate loses by advocating for human rights abuse.

If voter behavior in democracies is not a guarantor of human rights protection, as is suggested by our evidence, then why do democracies have better human rights records than autocracies? Our study cannot answer this question, but we believe two lines of inquiry may be fruitful for future research. It may be that *elite* opinion in democracies about human rights abuse, not *mass* voter opinion, is what matters. In this view, elite discourse persuades voters not to support candidates who advocate for human rights abuse (Zaller 1992), even when voters would be happy to support those same candidates if elites did so. Relatedly, perhaps elites—and particularly the people who actually exercise power through elected and appointed office—object (on moral or practical grounds) to human rights abuses and (because voters are indifferent) simply refrain from such abuses because they wish to. These explanations suggest that a democracy’s protection of civil rights and liberties is fragile, in that it can be compromised relatively easily by government leaders whose motivations



change.

Alternatively, it may be that voters react more strongly to retrospective experiences rather than prospective appeals. Seeing actual instances of human rights abuse by a government might influence voting behavior more than campaign rhetoric arguing for abuse. In this view, voters might support a candidate and later have “buyer’s remorse” when that candidate acts on his/her campaign promises to abuse human rights. This explanation is consistent with the idea that structural and economic factors, not campaigning, determines election outcomes (Abramowitz 2016), although voters do update their opinion (which influences future voting behavior) based on their affective response to events (Lodge & Taber 2013). This explanation also suggests the fragility of human rights in democracies, as these rights depend on institutions robust enough to survive individual leaders who wish to violate important democratic norms. Finally, this explanation emphasizes the role of robust checks and balances and competing institutions in protecting human rights in a democracy (Davenport & Armstrong 2004, Poe, Tate & Keith 1999, Regan & Henderson 2002, Conrad & Moore 2010) as being particularly necessary, as the elections and public opinion may not constrain behavior beforehand but only punish it after the fact.

As a last note, we chose our treatment conditions to be more extreme and clearer advocacy of human rights abuse compared to statements made in recent U.S. presidential elections. However, we avoided making our treatments so extreme as to be considered cartoonish or unrealistic. Based on our results, it is clear that our treatments were not sufficient to provoke a large response in our surveyed American voters. We believe it would be productive for future research to introduce more varied, and perhaps more extreme, statements that advocate human rights abuse to probe the limits of voters’ tolerance for such abuse. In particular, we believe that varying the *target* of the abuse (by race, citizenship, gender, age, etc.) might produce interesting insights.

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## Appendix Tables: Bayesian Model Averaging Results

**Table 6: BMA Estimates, Support for Republican.** Estimates are calculated via Bayesian Model Averaging, with the treatments included as separate dummy variables.

Variable	Pr( $\beta \neq 0$ )	Support for Republican			
		EV	Std. Dev.	Model 1	Model 2
Intercept (Baseline)	100	0.420827	0.02212	4.200e-01	4.313e-01
Torture, D	0	0.000000	0.00000	.	.
Torture, R	7	-0.003937	0.02031	.	-5.633e-02
Muslim Detention, D	0	0.000000	0.00000	.	.
Muslim Detention, R	0	0.000000	0.00000	.	.
Number of Variables				0	1
BIC				-2.723e+03	-2.718e+03
Posterior probability				0.93	0.07

**Table 7: BMA Estimates, Support for Democrat** Estimates are calculated via Bayesian Model Averaging, with the treatments included as separate dummy variables.

Variable	Pr( $\beta \neq 0$ )	EV	Support for Democrat			
			Std. Dev.	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Intercept (Baseline)	100	0.488847	0.02263	4.894e-01	4.771e-01	4.964e-01
Torture, D	0.0	0.000000	0.00000	.	.	.
Torture, R	7.2	0.004418	0.02167	.	6.135e-02	.
Muslim Detention, D	4.7	-0.001647	0.01406	.	.	-3.485e-02
Muslim Detention, R	0.0	0.000000	0.00000	.	.	.
Number of Variables				0	1	1
BIC				-2.723e+03	-2.718e+03	-2.717e+03
Posterior probability				0.881	0.072	0.047



## Appendix: Survey Document



## Survey Information and Consent

You are being invited to participate in a research study being done by Justin Esarey and Kristin Bryant of Rice University in Houston, Texas.

The purpose of this research study is to examine the effect of different policy proposals on support for a presidential candidate. If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to complete an on-line survey/questionnaire. This survey/questionnaire will ask you to read two candidate profiles and choose your preferred candidate. It does not include questions of a sensitive nature. We anticipate that this survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

You will receive compensation as reported to you by Qualtrics. In addition, we hope that your participation in the study may allow the political science community to better understand how voters make complex choices and compromise among their values when voting for a presidential candidate.

We believe there are no known risks associated with this research study; however, as with any on-line related activity the risk of a breach of confidentiality is always possible. We will minimize any risks by collecting only de-identified data (i.e., Qualtrics will not link IP addresses, names, or e-mail addresses to the responses of this survey). Data will be maintained on password-protected computers and on-line services (e.g., Dropbox accounts and Qualtrics accounts) accessible only to those researchers affiliated with the project and to the services themselves. However, de-identified data (without IP addresses, names, or e-mail addresses) will be shared with other researchers via posting to public websites for replication purposes and secondary use.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. You are free to skip any question that you choose.

If you have questions about this project or if you have a research-related problem, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Justin Esarey: e-mail: [jee3@rice.edu](mailto:jee3@rice.edu), phone: 678-383-9629. If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research subject, you should contact Stephanie Thomas, Compliance Administrator, at Rice University. Email: [irb@rice.edu](mailto:irb@rice.edu) or Telephone: 713-348-3586.

By continuing on with the survey, you are indicating that you are at least 18 years old, living in the United States, have read and understood this consent form and agree to participate in this research study. Please print a copy of this page for your records.

Please click the "Next" button below to start the survey.

## Demographics

Please answer a few questions about yourself.

Are you eligible to vote in the United States?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

What is your age in years?

What is your race? Indicate one or more races that you consider yourself to be.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> White                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Asian                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black or African American        | <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander |
| <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian or Alaska Native | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                               |

What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

- Less than high school degree
- High school graduate (high school diploma or equivalent including GED)
- Some college but no degree
- Associate degree in college (2-year)
- Bachelor's degree in college (4-year)
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree
- Professional degree (JD, MD)

Which of the following options most closely matches your political affiliation?

- Strong Republican
- Not-so-strong Republican
- Independent, leaning Republican
- Independent, leaning toward neither party
- Independent, leaning Democratic
- Not-so-strong Democratic
- Strong Democratic

## Control

Consider a choice between two candidates for president; some of their policy positions are listed below. Neither candidate is currently serving as president. Presume that both candidates are equally qualified to hold office in terms of character, experience, temperament, and other personal and moral qualities.

**Republican candidate**

**Democratic candidate**

- I oppose any increase in individual or corporate taxes.
- We need to negotiate better trade agreements that put America first and protect U.S. interests.
- Minimum wage is an issue that should be handled at the state and local level.
- Republicans continue to support American military superiority, which has been the cornerstone of a strategy that seeks to deter aggression and defeat those who threaten our vital national security interests. I will also rebuild troop numbers and readiness and confirm their mission: protecting the nation, not nation building.
- I support legislation to protect and privatize health care. We need to keep health care out of the hands of the government and let the free market control health care policy and prices.
- I support mandatory minimum sentencing as an important tool for keeping criminals off the streets; modifications to it should be targeted toward particular categories, especially nonviolent offenders, veterans, and the mentally ill.
- We need to offer tax relief to middle-class families, not those at the top.
- Openness to the world economy is important, but I oppose trade that does not support American jobs, raise wages, or improve our national security.
- Americans should earn at least \$15 an hour, and I will work in every way I can to reach this goal.
- I will continue to invest heavily in intelligence and information sharing and will promote those networks among our allies. I will also strengthen our ability to keep nuclear and biological weapons out of the hands of terrorists, promote efforts to better ensure border security, and augment defense of our national infrastructure.
- Health care is a right, not a privilege. I support expanding all Americans' ability to access health care coverage through a public option.
- Democrats are committed to reforming our criminal justice system and ending mass incarceration. I will reform mandatory minimum sentences and close private prisons and detention centers.

Which candidate opposes any increases in individual or corporate taxes?

- the Republican candidate
- the Democratic candidate
- Neither

Which candidate argues Americans should earn at least \$15 an hour?

- the Republican candidate
- the Democratic candidate
- Neither

Which candidate supports reforming the criminal justice system and ending mass incarceration?

- the Republican candidate
- the Democratic candidate
- Neither

Consider a choice between two candidates for president; some of their policy positions are listed below. Neither candidate is currently serving as president. Presume that both candidates are equally qualified to hold office in terms of character, experience, temperament, and other personal and moral qualities.

#### **Republican candidate**

- I oppose any increase in individual or corporate taxes.
- We need to negotiate better trade agreements that put America first and protect U.S. interests.
- Minimum wage is an issue that should be handled at the state and local level.

#### **Democratic candidate**

- We need to offer tax relief to middle-class families, not those at the top.
- Openness to the world economy is important, but I oppose trade that does not support American jobs, raise wages, or improve our national security.
- Americans should earn at least \$15 an hour, and I will work in every way I can to reach this goal.

**Republican candidate**

- Republicans continue to support American military superiority, which has been the cornerstone of a strategy that seeks to deter aggression and defeat those who threaten our vital national security interests. I will also rebuild troop numbers and readiness and confirm their mission: protecting the nation, not nation building.
- I support legislation to protect and privatize health care. We need to keep health care out of the hands of the government and let the free market control health care policy and prices.
- I support mandatory minimum sentencing as an important tool for keeping criminals off the streets; modifications to it should be targeted toward particular categories, especially nonviolent offenders, veterans, and the mentally ill.

**Democratic candidate**

- I will continue to invest heavily in intelligence and information sharing and will promote those networks among our allies. I will also strengthen our ability to keep nuclear and biological weapons out of the hands of terrorists, promote efforts to better ensure border security, and augment defense of our national infrastructure.
- Health care is a right, not a privilege. I support expanding all Americans' ability to access health care coverage through a public option.
- Democrats are committed to reforming our criminal justice system and ending mass incarceration. I will reform mandatory minimum sentences and close private prisons and detention centers.

Assuming that both candidates are otherwise equally qualified for the presidency, which of the following options would you prefer?

- vote for the Republican candidate
- vote for the Democratic candidate
- abstain from voting

The Democratic candidate supports raising the minimum wage to at least \$15 an hour?. How likely do you think it is that the candidate will actually enact this policy if elected?

- Very likely (between 75% and 100% chance)
- Likely (between 50% and 74% chance)
- Somewhat likely (between 25% and 49% chance)

- Not at all likely (between 0% and 24% chance)

## T1 (Torture, Republican)

Consider a choice between two candidates for president; some of their policy positions are listed below. Neither candidate is currently serving as president. Presume that both candidates are equally qualified to hold office in terms of character, experience, temperament, and other personal and moral qualities.

### Republican candidate

- I oppose any increase in individual or corporate taxes.
- We need to negotiate better trade agreements that put America first and protect U.S. interests.
- Minimum wage is an issue that should be handled at the state and local level.
- Republicans continue to support American military superiority, which has been the cornerstone of a strategy that seeks to deter aggression and defeat those who threaten our vital national security interests. I will rebuild troop numbers and readiness and confirm their mission: protecting the nation, not nation building. I also support the use of advanced interrogation techniques, including torture, against foreign nationals suspected of terrorism.

### Democratic candidate

- We need to offer tax relief to middle-class families, not those at the top.
- Openness to the world economy is important, but I oppose trade that does not support American jobs, raise wages, or improve our national security.
- Americans should earn at least \$15 an hour, and I will work in every way I can to reach this goal.
- I will continue to invest heavily in intelligence and information sharing and will promote those networks among our allies. I will also strengthen our ability to keep nuclear and biological weapons out of the hands of terrorists, promote efforts to better ensure border security, and augment defense of our national infrastructure.



**Republican candidate**

- I support legislation to protect and privatize health care. We need to keep health care out of the hands of the government and let the free market control health care policy and prices.
- I support mandatory minimum sentencing as an important tool for keeping criminals off the streets; modifications to it should be targeted toward particular categories, especially nonviolent offenders, veterans, and the mentally ill.

**Democratic candidate**

- Health care is a right, not a privilege. I support expanding all Americans' ability to access health care coverage through a public option.
- Democrats are committed to reforming our criminal justice system and ending mass incarceration. I will reform mandatory minimum sentences and close private prisons and detention centers.

Which candidate opposes any increase in individual or corporate taxes?

- the Republican candidate
- the Democratic candidate
- Neither

Which candidate supports the use of advanced interrogation techniques, including torture, against foreign nationals suspected of terrorism?

- the Republican candidate
- the Democratic candidate
- Neither

Which candidate supports reforming the criminal justice system and ending mass incarceration?

- the Republican candidate
- the Democratic candidate
-

## Neither

Consider a choice between two candidates for president; some of their policy positions are listed below. Neither candidate is currently serving as president. Presume that both candidates are equally qualified to hold office in terms of character, experience, temperament, and other personal and moral qualities.

### Republican candidate

- I oppose any increase in individual or corporate taxes.
- We need to negotiate better trade agreements that put America first and protect U.S. interests.
- Minimum wage is an issue that should be handled at the state and local level.
- Republicans continue to support American military superiority, which has been the cornerstone of a strategy that seeks to deter aggression and defeat those who threaten our vital national security interests. I will rebuild troop numbers and readiness and confirm their mission: protecting the nation, not nation building. I also support the use of advanced interrogation techniques, including torture, against foreign nationals suspected of terrorism.
- I support legislation to protect and privatize health care. We need to keep health care out of the hands of the government and let the free market control health care policy and prices.

### Democratic candidate

- We need to offer tax relief to middle-class families, not those at the top.
- Openness to the world economy is important, but I oppose trade that does not support American jobs, raise wages, or improve our national security.
- Americans should earn at least \$15 an hour, and I will work in every way I can to reach this goal.
- I will continue to invest heavily in intelligence and information sharing and will promote those networks among our allies. I will also strengthen our ability to keep nuclear and biological weapons out of the hands of terrorists, promote efforts to better ensure border security, and augment defense of our national infrastructure.
- Health care is a right, not a privilege. I support expanding all Americans' ability to access health care coverage through a public option.

**Republican candidate**

- I support mandatory minimum sentencing as an important tool for keeping criminals off the streets; modifications to it should be targeted toward particular categories, especially nonviolent offenders, veterans, and the mentally ill.

**Democratic candidate**

- Democrats are committed to reforming our criminal justice system and ending mass incarceration. I will reform mandatory minimum sentences and close private prisons and detention centers.

Assuming that both candidates are otherwise equally qualified for the presidency, which of the following options would you prefer?

- vote for the Republican candidate
- vote for the Democratic candidate
- abstain from voting

The Republican candidate supports the use of advanced interrogation techniques, including torture, against foreign nationals suspected of terrorism. How likely do you think it is that the candidate will actually enact this policy if elected?

- Very likely (between 75% and 100% chance)
- Likely (between 50% and 74% chance)
- Somewhat likely (between 25% and 49% chance)
- Not at all likely (between 0% and 24% chance)

**T1 (Torture, Democrat)**

Consider a choice between two candidates for president; some of their policy positions are listed below. Neither candidate is currently serving as president. Presume that both candidates are equally qualified to hold office in terms of character, experience, temperament, and other personal and moral qualities.

Consider a choice between two candidates for president; some of their policy positions are listed below. Neither candidate is currently serving as president. Presume that both candidates are equally qualified to hold office in terms of character, experience, temperament, and other personal and moral qualities.

### **Republican candidate**

- I oppose any increase in individual or corporate taxes.
- We need to negotiate better trade agreements that put America first and protect U.S. interests.
- Minimum wage is an issue that should be handled at the state and local level.
- Republicans continue to support American military superiority, which has been the cornerstone of a strategy that seeks to deter aggression and defeat those who threaten our vital national security interests. I will rebuild troop numbers and readiness and confirm their mission: protecting the nation, not nation building.
- I support legislation to protect and privatize health care. We need to keep health care out of the hands of the government and let the free market control health care policy and prices.
- I support mandatory minimum sentencing as an important tool for keeping criminals off the streets; modifications to it should be targeted toward particular categories, especially nonviolent offenders, veterans, and the mentally ill.

### **Democratic candidate**

- We need to offer tax relief to middle-class families, not those at the top.
- Openness to the world economy is important, but I oppose trade that does not support American jobs, raise wages, or improve our national security.
- Americans should earn at least \$15 an hour, and I will work in every way I can to reach this goal.
- I will continue to invest heavily in intelligence and information sharing and will promote those networks among our allies. I will also strengthen our ability to keep nuclear and biological weapons out of the hands of terrorists, promote efforts to better ensure border security, and augment defense of our national infrastructure. I also support the use of advanced interrogation techniques, including torture, against foreign nationals suspected of terrorism.
- Health care is a right, not a privilege. I support expanding all Americans' ability to access health care coverage through a public option.
- Democrats are committed to reforming our criminal justice system and ending mass incarceration. I will reform mandatory minimum sentences and close private prisons and detention centers.

Which candidate opposes any increase in individual or corporate taxes?

- the Republican candidate
- the Democratic candidate
- Neither

Which candidate supports the use of advanced interrogation techniques, including torture, against foreign nationals suspected of terrorism?

- the Republican candidate
- the Democratic candidate
- Neither

Which candidate supports reforming the criminal justice system and ending mass incarceration?

- the Republican candidate
- the Democratic candidate
- Neither

Consider a choice between two candidates for president; some of their policy positions are listed below. Neither candidate is currently serving as president. Presume that both candidates are equally qualified to hold office in terms of character, experience, temperament, and other personal and moral qualities.

**Republican candidate**

- I oppose any increase in individual or corporate taxes.

**Democratic candidate**

- We need to offer tax relief to middle-class families, not those at the top.

**Republican candidate**

- We need to negotiate better trade agreements that put America first and protect U.S. interests.
- Minimum wage is an issue that should be handled at the state and local level.
- Republicans continue to support American military superiority, which has been the cornerstone of a strategy that seeks to deter aggression and defeat those who threaten our vital national security interests. I will rebuild troop numbers and readiness and confirm their mission: protecting the nation, not nation building.
- I support legislation to protect and privatize health care. We need to keep health care out of the hands of the government and let the free market control health care policy and prices.
- I support mandatory minimum sentencing as an important tool for keeping criminals off the streets; modifications to it should be targeted toward particular categories, especially nonviolent offenders, veterans, and the mentally ill.

**Democratic candidate**

- Openness to the world economy is important, but I oppose trade that does not support American jobs, raise wages, or improve our national security.
- Americans should earn at least \$15 an hour, and I will work in every way I can to reach this goal.
- I will continue to invest heavily in intelligence and information sharing and will promote those networks among our allies. I will also strengthen our ability to keep nuclear and biological weapons out of the hands of terrorists, promote efforts to better ensure border security, and augment defense of our national infrastructure. I also support the use of advanced interrogation techniques, including torture, against foreign nationals suspected of terrorism.
- Health care is a right, not a privilege. I support expanding all Americans' ability to access health care coverage through a public option.
- Democrats are committed to reforming our criminal justice system and ending mass incarceration. I will reform mandatory minimum sentences and close private prisons and detention centers.

Assuming that both candidates are otherwise equally qualified for the presidency, which of the following options would you prefer?

- vote for the Republican candidate
- vote for the Democratic candidate

- abstain from voting

The Democratic candidate supports the use of advanced interrogation techniques, including torture, against foreign nationals suspected of terrorism. How likely do you think it is that the candidate will actually enact this policy if elected?

- Very likely (between 75% and 100% chance)
- Likely (between 50% and 74% chance)
- Somewhat likely (between 25% and 49% chance)
- Not at all likely (between 0% and 24% chance)

## T2 (Detention, Republican)

Consider a choice between two candidates for president; some of their policy positions are listed below. Neither candidate is currently serving as president. Presume that both candidates are equally qualified to hold office in terms of character, experience, temperament, and other personal and moral qualities.

### Republican candidate

- I oppose any increase in individual or corporate taxes.
- We need to negotiate better trade agreements that put America first and protect U.S. interests.
- Minimum wage is an issue that should be handled at the state and local level.

### Democratic candidate

- We need to offer tax relief to middle-class families, not those at the top.
- Openness to the world economy is important, but I oppose trade that does not support American jobs, raise wages, or improve our national security.
- Americans should earn at least \$15 an hour, and I will work in every way I can to reach this goal.

### Republican candidate

- Republicans continue to support American military superiority, which has been the cornerstone of a strategy that seeks to deter aggression and defeat those who threaten our vital national security interests. I will rebuild troop numbers and readiness and confirm their mission: protecting the nation, not nation building. As President, I'd also support indefinitely detaining American Muslims who speak out against U.S. policy if they interfere with our ability to defeat terrorist groups like ISIS.
- I support legislation to protect and privatize health care. We need to keep health care out of the hands of the government and let the free market control health care policy and prices.
- I support mandatory minimum sentencing as an important tool for keeping criminals off the streets; modifications to it should be targeted toward particular categories, especially nonviolent offenders, veterans, and the mentally ill.

### Democratic candidate

- I will continue to invest heavily in intelligence and information sharing and will promote those networks among our allies. I will also strengthen our ability to keep nuclear and biological weapons out of the hands of terrorists, promote efforts to better ensure border security, and augment defense of our national infrastructure.
- Health care is a right, not a privilege. I support expanding all Americans' ability to access health care coverage through a public option.
- Democrats are committed to reforming our criminal justice system and ending mass incarceration. I will reform mandatory minimum sentences and close private prisons and detention centers.

Which candidate opposes any increase in individual or corporate taxes?

- the Republican candidate
- the Democratic candidate
- Neither

Which candidate supports indefinitely detaining American Muslims who speak out against U.S. policy if they interfere with our ability to defeat terrorist groups like ISIS?



- the Republican candidate
- the Democratic candidate
- Neither

Which candidate supports reforming the criminal justice system and ending mass incarceration?

- the Republican candidate
- the Democratic candidate
- Neither

Consider a choice between two candidates for president; some of their policy positions are listed below. Neither candidate is currently serving as president. Presume that both candidates are equally qualified to hold office in terms of character, experience, temperament, and other personal and moral qualities.

#### **Republican candidate**

- I oppose any increase in individual or corporate taxes.
- We need to negotiate better trade agreements that put America first and protect U.S. interests.
- Minimum wage is an issue that should be handled at the state and local level.

#### **Democratic candidate**

- We need to offer tax relief to middle-class families, not those at the top.
- Openness to the world economy is important, but I oppose trade that does not support American jobs, raise wages, or improve our national security.
- Americans should earn at least \$15 an hour, and I will work in every way I can to reach this goal.

### Republican candidate

- Republicans continue to support American military superiority, which has been the cornerstone of a strategy that seeks to deter aggression and defeat those who threaten our vital national security interests. I will rebuild troop numbers and readiness and confirm their mission: protecting the nation, not nation building. As President, I'd also support indefinitely detaining American Muslims who speak out against U.S. policy if they interfere with our ability to defeat terrorist groups like ISIS.
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- I support mandatory minimum sentencing as an important tool for keeping criminals off the streets; modifications to it should be targeted toward particular categories, especially nonviolent offenders, veterans, and the mentally ill.

### Democratic candidate

- I will continue to invest heavily in intelligence and information sharing and will promote those networks among our allies. I will also strengthen our ability to keep nuclear and biological weapons out of the hands of terrorists, promote efforts to better ensure border security, and augment defense of our national infrastructure.
- Health care is a right, not a privilege. I support expanding all Americans' ability to access health care coverage through a public option.
- Democrats are committed to reforming our criminal justice system and ending mass incarceration. I will reform mandatory minimum sentences and close private prisons and detention centers.

Assuming that both candidates are otherwise equally qualified for the presidency, which of the following options would you prefer?

- vote for the Republican candidate
- vote for the Democratic candidate
- abstain from voting

The Republican candidate supports indefinitely detaining American Muslims who speak out against U.S. policy if they interfere with our ability to defeat terrorist groups like

ISIS. How likely do you think it is that the candidate will actually enact this policy if elected?

- Very likely (between 75% and 100% chance)
- Likely (between 50% and 74% chance)
- Somewhat likely (between 25% and 49% chance)
- Not at all likely (between 0% and 24% chance)

## T2 (Detention, Democrat)

Consider a choice between two candidates for president; some of their policy positions are listed below. Neither candidate is currently serving as president. Presume that both candidates are equally qualified to hold office in terms of character, experience, temperament, and other personal and moral qualities.

### Republican candidate

- I oppose any increase in individual or corporate taxes.
- We need to negotiate better trade agreements that put America first and protect U.S. interests.
- Minimum wage is an issue that should be handled at the state and local level.

### Democratic candidate

- We need to offer tax relief to middle-class families, not those at the top.
- Openness to the world economy is important, but I oppose trade that does not support American jobs, raise wages, or improve our national security.
- Americans should earn at least \$15 an hour, and I will work in every way I can to reach this goal.

### Republican candidate

- Republicans continue to support American military superiority, which has been the cornerstone of a strategy that seeks to deter aggression and defeat those who threaten our vital national security interests. I will rebuild troop numbers and readiness and confirm their mission: protecting the nation, not nation building.
- I support legislation to protect and privatize health care. We need to keep health care out of the hands of the government and let the free market control health care policy and prices.
- I support mandatory minimum sentencing as an important tool for keeping criminals off the streets; modifications to it should be targeted toward particular categories, especially nonviolent offenders, veterans, and the mentally ill.

### Democratic candidate

- I will continue to invest heavily in intelligence and information sharing and will promote those networks among our allies. I will also strengthen our ability to keep nuclear and biological weapons out of the hands of terrorists, promote efforts to better ensure border security, and augment defense of our national infrastructure. As President, I'd also support indefinitely detaining American Muslims who speak out against U.S. policy if they interfere with our ability to defeat terrorist groups like ISIS.
- Health care is a right, not a privilege. I support expanding all Americans' ability to access health care coverage through a public option.
- Democrats are committed to reforming our criminal justice system and ending mass incarceration. I will reform mandatory minimum sentences and close private prisons and detention centers.

Which candidate opposes any increase in individual or corporate taxes?

- the Republican candidate
- the Democratic candidate
- Neither

Which candidate supports indefinitely detaining American Muslims who speak out against U.S. policy if they interfere with our ability to defeat terrorist groups like ISIS?

- the Republican candidate
- the Democratic candidate
- Neither

Which candidate supports reforming the criminal justice system and ending mass incarceration?

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The Democratic candidate supports indefinitely detaining American Muslims who speak out against U.S. policy if they interfere with our ability to defeat terrorist groups like

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- Very likely (between 75% and 100% chance)
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- Not at all likely (between 0% and 24% chance)