

New Reuters Poll Proves That Many Americans Can't Think for Themselves

It is generally believed that America is more polarized than ever. After all, one need only look at the fallout from the last election to test this theory: both liberals and conservatives are convinced that their ideas and principles are the best and should be followed.

But a [recent survey](#) by Reuters casts a bit of doubt on how well people really know their own minds and understand the political principles they say they adhere to. It appears that many Americans base their views on whether a particular authority figure holds them.

As Reuters explains, surveyors read a variety of political statements which Donald Trump made on the campaign trail to mixed groups of Republicans and Democrats. One group was told that each statement was made by Trump; the other omitted that important detail. In almost every case, Democrat support for the statement decreased when Trump's name was attached, while Republican support increased.

Government-run health care is a prime example of this. When asked if government should take care of everyone, 68 percent of Democrats agreed. Only 33 percent of Republicans did the same. But when Trump's name was thrown into the ring, both parties had a sudden change of heart. Democrats in particular exhibited a 20 percent drop in support for government-run health care.



A similar scenario unfolded when respondents were asked about American exceptionalism. When told that Donald Trump believed

that American exceptionalism is insulting to people from other countries, Republicans displayed a dramatic jump in agreement with the president. Democrats, however, demonstrated another 20 percent drop in support for the idea.



Such outcomes shouldn't be surprising given the vitriol which has surrounded presidential politics of late. Nevertheless, such outcomes are a bit alarming, for they clearly demonstrate that a good chunk of the American public do not make decisions based on thoughtful, informed reasoning. Instead, they pick a public figure they like (or dislike) and move with him (or away from him) as the winds may blow.

This situation is far from healthy for the American government. As Thomas Jefferson [once noted](#), "Every government degenerates when trusted to the rulers of the people alone." To avoid this scenario, Jefferson insisted the American public must be equipped with sound and well-educated minds:

"The people themselves, therefore, are its only safe depositories. And to render even them safe, their minds must be improved to a certain degree."

Sadly, the improvement of American minds isn't happening in today's schools. Many students cannot distinguish between [fact and opinion](#); instruction in [logic and critical thinking](#), while given lip-service, seem to have disappeared from schools; and only [12 percent](#) of the nation's high school seniors are proficient in history, the subject which lays the groundwork for American government.

If America's schools are not teaching students to be independent, well-reasoned, and educated thinkers, is it any wonder that the American public is so easily swayed in their political beliefs and opinions?

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