

Inequality and the Economy: Pandemic Tradeoffs

Research Report: CUPES-003 | December 18, 2020

SKEPTIC

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Research Question

This is the third report from our study, the *Civil Unrest and Presidential Election Study* (CUPES). Here, we examine how peoples' attitudes reflect difficult recent tradeoffs associated with racism, the economy and the COVID-19 pandemic. People are concerned about unemployment, COVID-19, and racism, but how do they weigh each concern relative to one another? For example, the more people go out to protest racism and inequality, the more they may contribute to the spread of COVID-19. Or, the more businesses are closed to reduce the spread of COVID-19, the greater the risk of joblessness.

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Methodology

Data Source

- Civil Unrest and Presidential Election Study (CUPES; collected in September/October 2020)

Participants

- 587 Democrats ($M_{age} = 45.47$, $SD = 17.47$, 54% Female)
- 491 Republicans ($M_{age} = 48.64$, $SD = 16.13$, 49% Female)

Measures

- *Political Affiliation*: which political party people affiliate with.
- *Prioritizing Pandemic* was measured with two questions asking, "If you had to choose, which issue would you prioritize?" Answer options were placed on a continuum from:
 1. "reducing the unemployment rate" to "reducing the spread of coronavirus" (Fig. 2)
 2. "protesting against racism" to "reducing the spread of coronavirus" (Fig. 3)
- For additional information (e.g., statistical output, citations) not included in this document, view the supplemental page for this report located at skeptical.com/research-center/civil-unrest-presidential-election-study/

Summary of Findings

1. Overwhelmingly, both Democrats *and* Republicans prioritized reducing the spread of COVID-19 over protesting racism or reducing unemployment.
2. With regard to protesting, however, Democrats reported a greater willingness to protest racism over reducing the spread of COVID-19.
 - Democrats were also more likely than Republicans to say that protesting racism was about as important as reducing the spread of COVID-19.
3. With regard to unemployment, though, Republicans reported a greater willingness to reduce unemployment, over reducing the spread of COVID-19.
 - Republicans were also more likely than Democrats to say that reducing the unemployment rate was about as important as reducing the spread of COVID-19.

Take-home Messages

- Our data indicate that both Republicans and Democrats are concerned about COVID-19, and both want to reduce its spread even if important tradeoffs—protesting racism and reducing unemployment—have to be made.
- Yet, Democrats and Republicans differed with regard to the tradeoffs they were willing to make: Republicans were less willing to protest racism (if this meant reducing the spread of COVID-19) and Democrats were less willing to reduce unemployment (if this meant reducing the spread of COVID-19).

Researchers

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Suggested Citation

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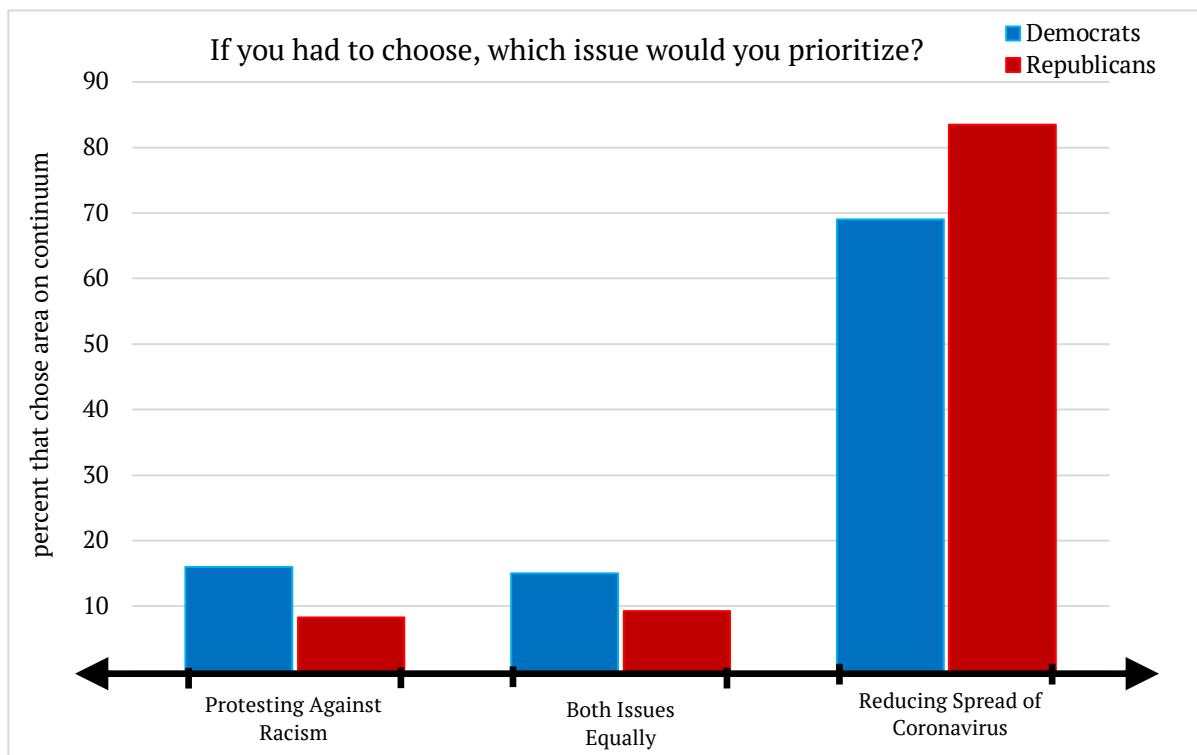


Figure 1

- Most Republicans and Democrats expressed greater concern for reducing the spread of coronavirus.
- Democrats were more likely than Republicans to express concern for protesting against racism.

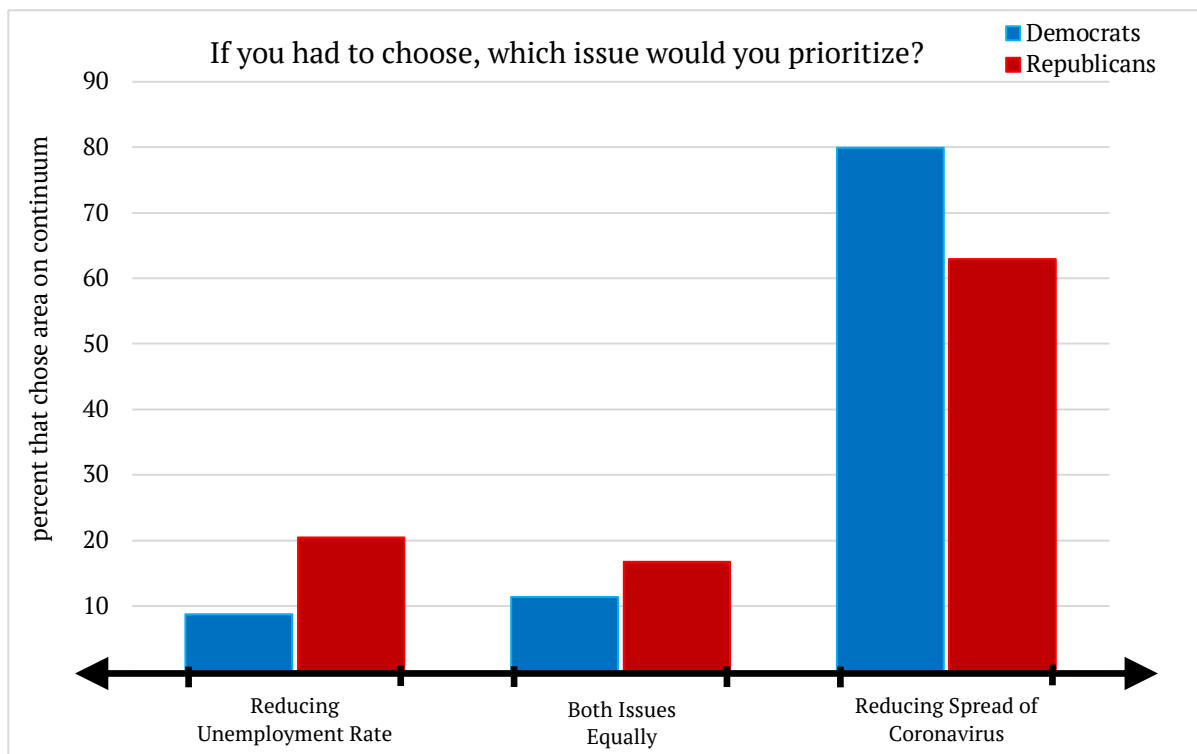


Figure 2

- Most Republicans and Democrats expressed greater concern for reducing the spread of coronavirus.
- Republicans were more likely than Democrats to express concern for reducing the unemployment rate.