

# Has Time Spent with Family and Friends Declined?

Research Report: CUPES-009 | March 20, 2021

## Research Question

In this ninth report from the *Civil Unrest and Presidential Election Study* (CUPES), we investigate the extent to which peoples' time spent with family and friends may have changed during a particular period in American history: the leadup to the 2020 Presidential election amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Given that both the 2020 presidential election and COVID-19 were significant political events embroiled in significant political disagreements, we draw from a sample of adults taken in Fall 2020 to investigate potential changes in peoples' interactions with friends and family compared to the prior Fall of 2019.

## Methodology

### Data Source

1. Civil Unrest and Presidential Election Study ("CUPES," collected in September/October 2020)
2. Social and Political Attitudes Study ("SPAS," collected in October 2019)

### Participants

1. Fall 2020 (CUPES Dataset)
  - 1078 adults in the United States that affiliate with the Democratic or Republican Party.
  - Mean Age = 46.86 years ( $SD = 16.95$  years), 51% Female
2. Fall 2019 (SPAS Dataset)
  - 433 adults in the United States that affiliate with the Democratic or Republican Party.
  - Mean Age = 48.75 years ( $SD = 16.02$  years), 48% Female

### Measures

1. **Political Affiliation:** Measured with a question that asked, "Generally speaking, which of the following do you affiliate with?" Participants that chose one of the two dominant political parties were included in the analyses for this report.
2. **Time Spent with Family:** Measured with a question that asked how often they, "Spend a social evening with relatives/family?" Answer options ranged from "never" (0) to "daily" (6).
3. **Time Spent with Family:** Measured with a question that asked how often they, "Spend a social evening with friends?" Answer options ranged from "never" (0) to "daily" (6).

## Summary of Findings

1. Only Republican males reported spending the same amount of time with family between Fall 2019 and Fall 2020 (see Figure 1)
2. No significant differences were observed regarding political affiliation and time spent with friends between Fall 2019 and Fall 2020 (see Figure 2).
  - Interestingly, however, Republican *and* Democrat males reported spending more time with friends across this period compared to females.

### Take-home Messages

1. Our results suggest that the dynamics driving time spent with family and time spent with friends differed between Fall 2019 and Fall 2020.
    - Time spent with family declined for all groups except male Republicans, but no political differences were observed for time spent with friends.
  2. Particularly intense conflicts over politics might have reduced peoples' motivation to interact and spend time with family.
    - For example, research conducted in 2018 found that 45% of Democrats (and 35% of Republicans) said they'd feel "very unhappy" if their son or daughter married a person with a different political affiliation (Jones & Najle 2018; see also Chen & Rohla, 2018).
  3. It is also possible that fear of infecting family members with COVID-19 might have reduced motivation to spend time with family members.
- Do you have an interpretation of this you want to share? Email it to us ([research@skeptic.com](mailto:research@skeptic.com)) and it may be included in the Fall issue of Skeptic Magazine.

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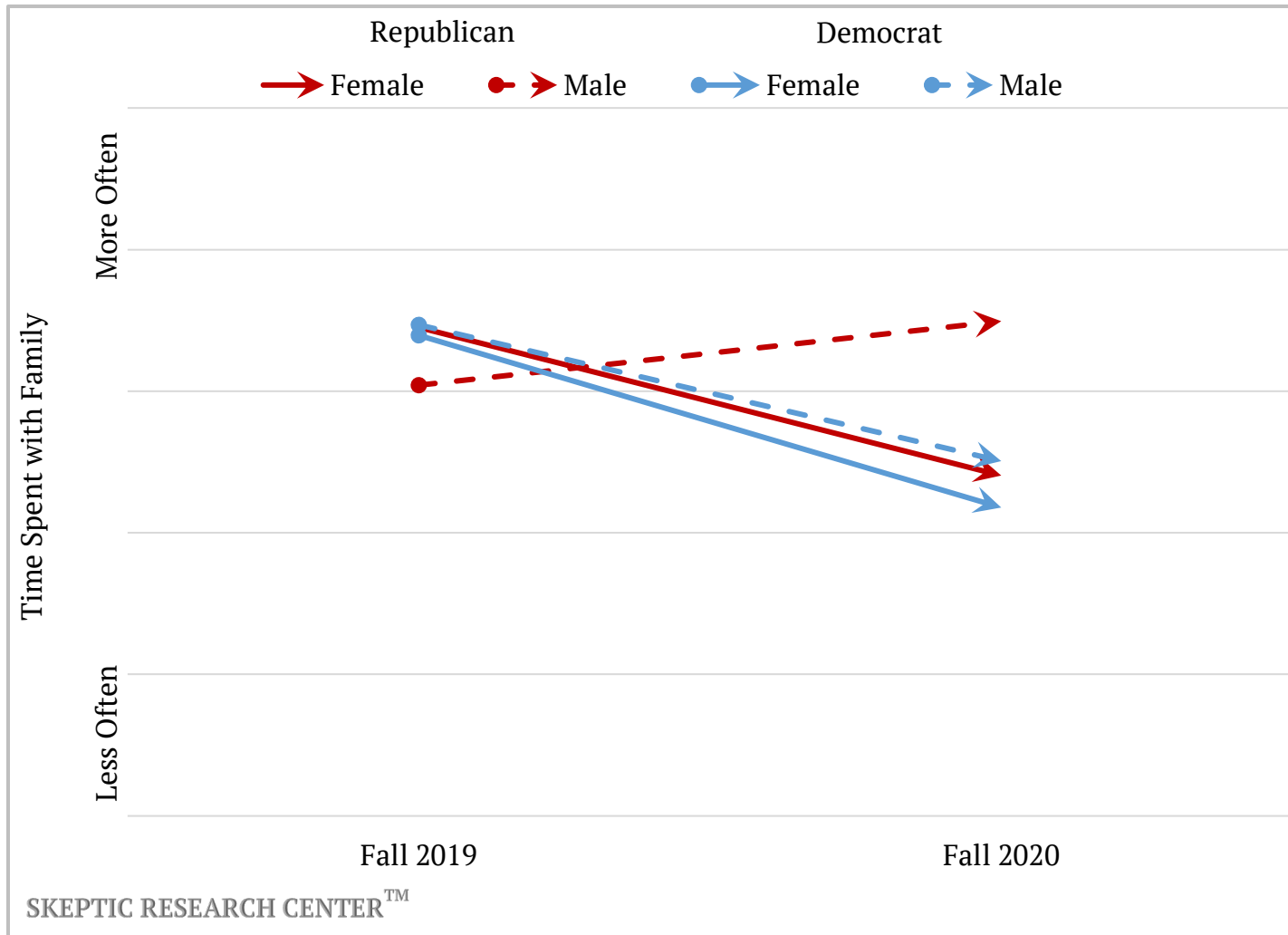
### Researchers

Anondah Saide, PhD  
Kevin McCaffree, PhD  
[research@skeptic.com](mailto:research@skeptic.com)

### Suggested Citation

Saide, A., & McCaffree, K. (2021). Has Time Spent with Family and Friends Declined? Skeptic Research Center, CUPES-009.

Figure 1: Change in Time Spent with Family



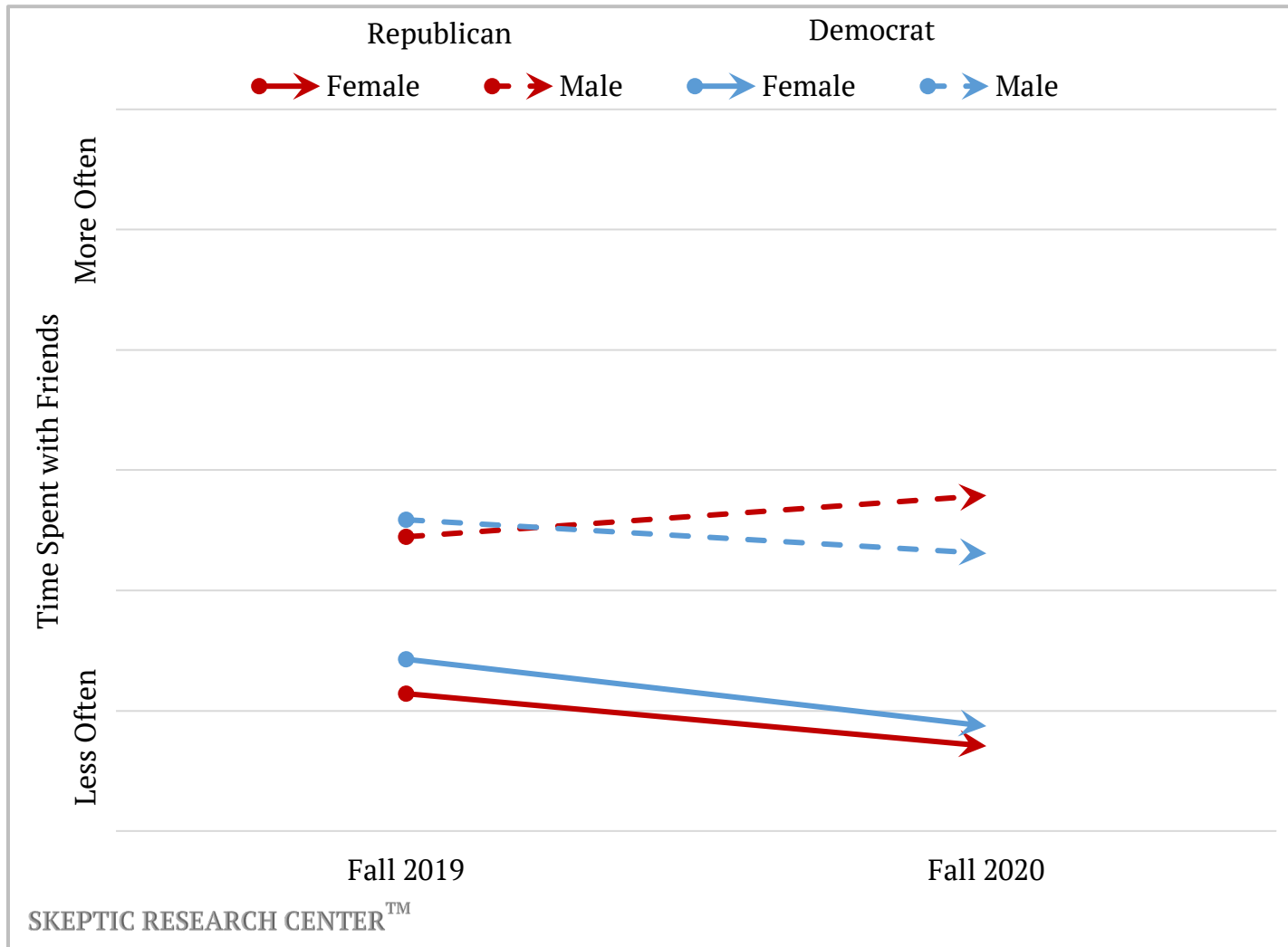
Are the differences depicted in this graph statistically significant?

- Democrats—both males and females—reported spending significantly less time with family.
- Republican females reported spending significantly less time with family.
- Republican males reported no significant difference in time spent with family.

Note: This visual depiction is zoomed in to highlight the relations between groups.

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/](https://skeptical.com/research-center/civil-unrest-presidential-election-study/)

Figure 2: Change in Time Spent with Friends



Are the differences depicted in this graph statistically significant?

- Overall, there was not a significant change from 2019 to 2020 in reported time spent with friends.
- Overall, there was not a significant difference between Republicans and Democrats in time spent with friends.
- There was a significant difference between males and females in Fall 2020, such that males of both political parties reported spending more time with friends than females of both political parties.

Note: This visual depiction is zoomed in to highlight the relations between groups.

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