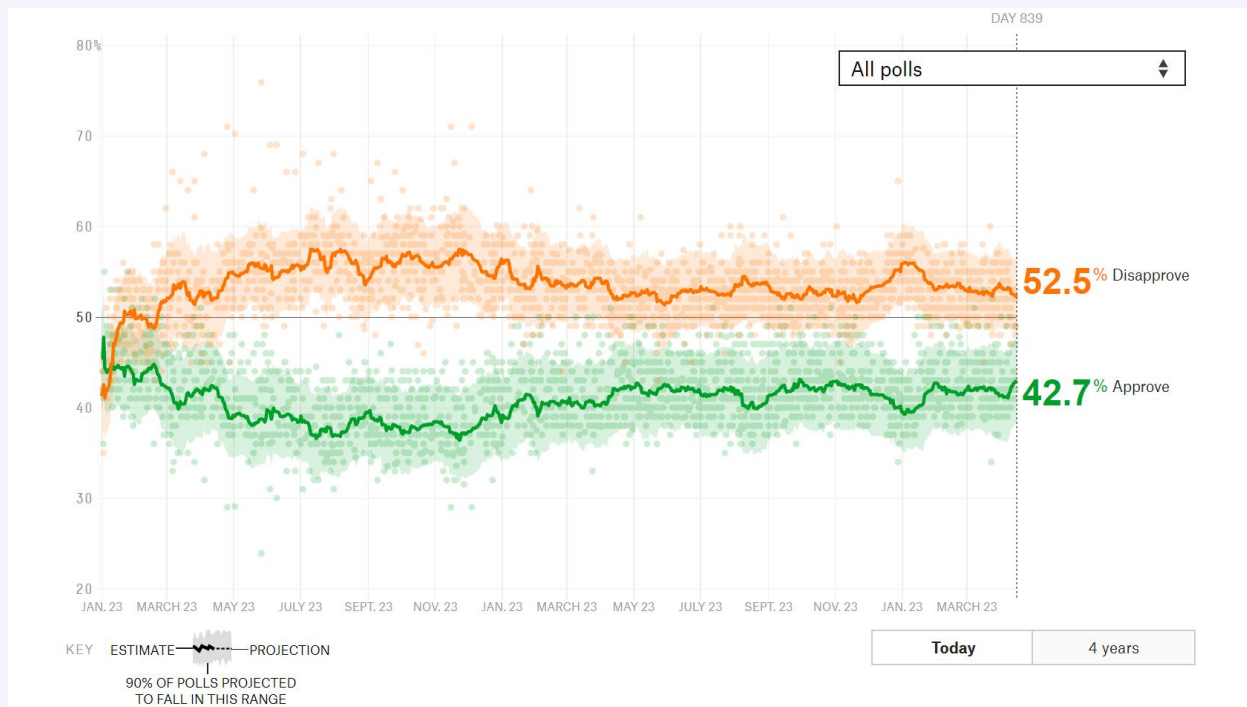


Presidential Scandals and Party Loyalty

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“I could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody and I wouldn't lose any voters, OK? It's like incredible.”

Abstract

This paper takes advantage of the unique aspects of Trump’s Presidency to design and implement a survey-experiment testing various categories of scandals. Although the findings are limited to the current Presidency, the paper contributes to the literature through its categorization of Trump’s scandals, and its application of those categories in an experimental design. The results indicate no significance for any type of scandal; raising questions regarding polarization in the country, and media outlets’ extensive coverage of such scandals. Negative partisanship is also examined here as a potential explanation for the high levels of party loyalty seen in the Republican Party – although the results in that area are similarly insignificant. Further research should be done to draw out precise movements among true independents and understand how positive and negative partisanship interact with one another in generating party loyalty.

Typology

Categorization

Financial
Corruption

Personally profiting
off of financial
impropriety

Trump uses the power of
his office to financially
benefit himself

Political
Corruption

Abuse of office
without profiting
financially

Trump commits crime in
violating campaign finance
laws to win election

Personal
Scandals

Unethical personal
behavior; adultery
or harassment

Trump sexually harasses
and assaults multiple
women

International
Scandals

Violation of laws
involving another
nation

Trump sides with foreign
adversary over domestic
intelligence services

Research Methodology

This survey was designed on Qualtrics and utilized Mturk to reach 2,000 respondents. The survey itself consisted of a series of demographic questions, followed by several questions gauging both positive and negative partisanship, followed by a control and four treatment groups, and, finally, three outcome questions. Regression analysis was run with each of the three outcome questions: approval, feeling thermometer, and support for impeachment.

Results

Regressions run with each of the treatments individually, with the treatments pooled together, and with an interaction between the pooled treatments and a measure of true independents all returned no significant relationships. Marginal effects showed slight movement among true independents.

Implications

Looks like maybe he
could shoot someone and
not lose voters.
Ineffective method of
persuading voters to
change opinions on him.