



INSTITUTE FOR
SOCIAL RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Motivated Reasoning and Acceptance of Poll Results on a Health Policy Issue

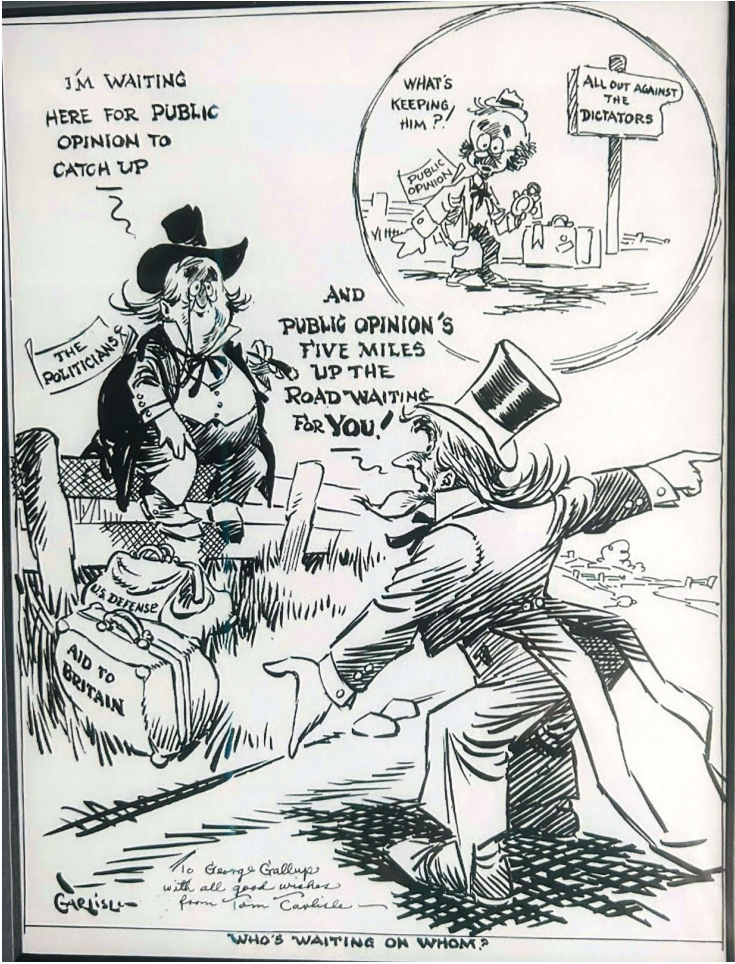
Michael Traugott and Yongchao Ma

CIPHER Conference

February 26, 2025

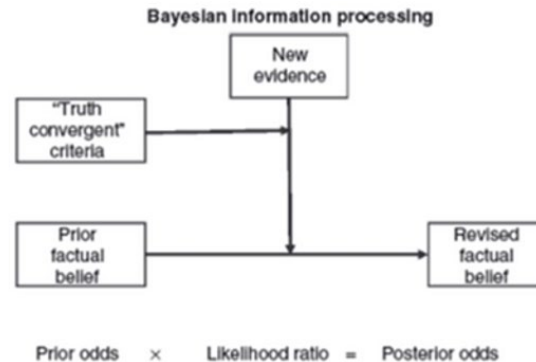
Washington, DC

The Role of Polls in a Democratic Society

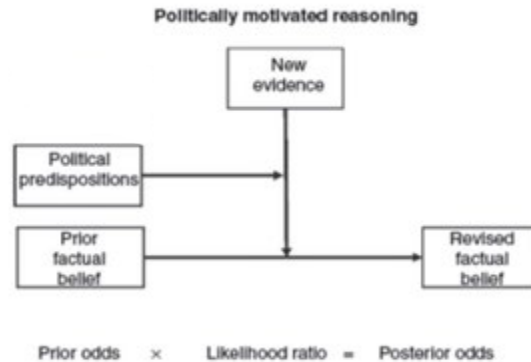


Motivated Reasoning and New Information

Do individuals respond to new information with accuracy goals?



Or with directional goals to preserve current attitudes and beliefs?



Design of the Study

Survey-based experiments embedded in 2 waves of the UAS Survey

Measure respondents' satisfaction with Social Security and Medicare and their prospective vote in the 2024 election

Random assignment to a visual poll result showing a majority agree or disagree with their opinion or candidate choice

Ask 3 questions about how credible they find that poll result

Accurate

Trustworthy

Credible

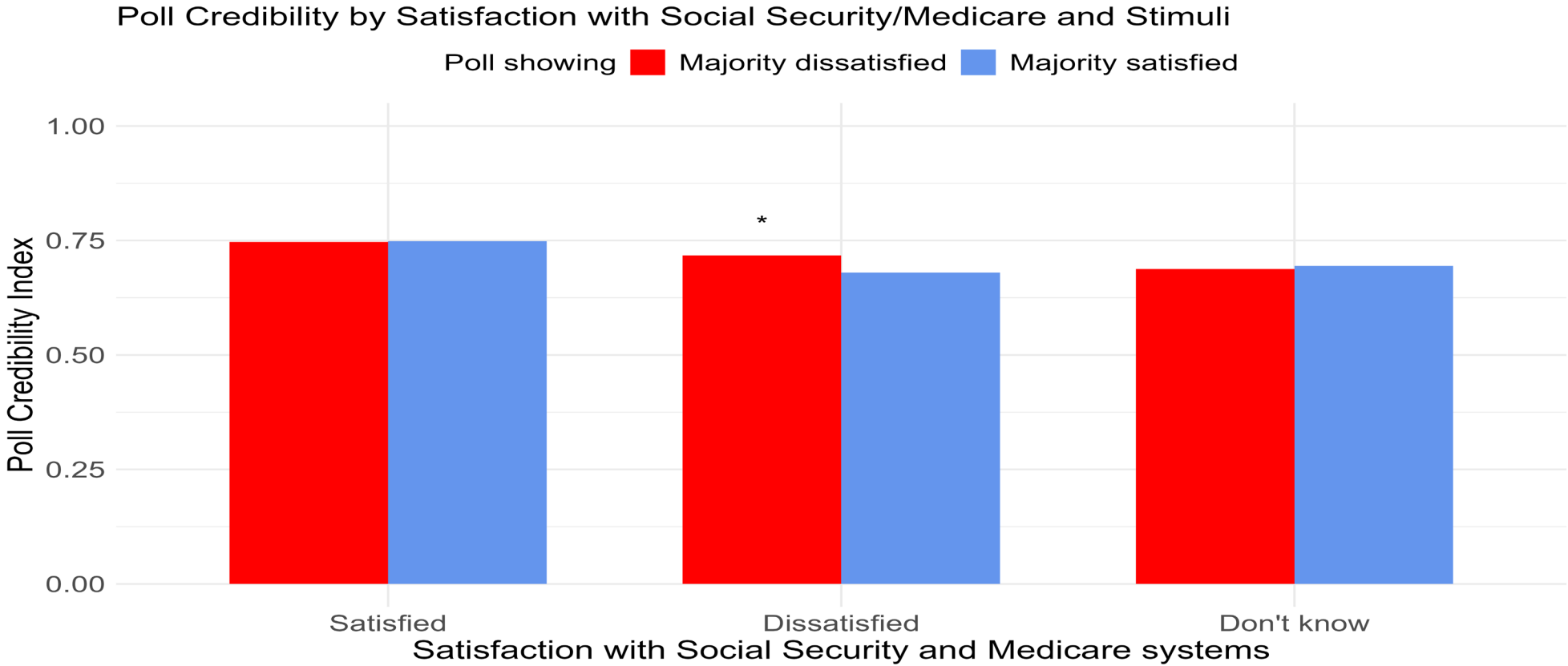


Poll Credibility Index

H: Those who saw a poll result where a majority agreed with their opinion would find the poll more credible (give a higher score on the Poll Credibility Index)

Results

The expected relationship was found only among those dissatisfied with Social Security and Medicare

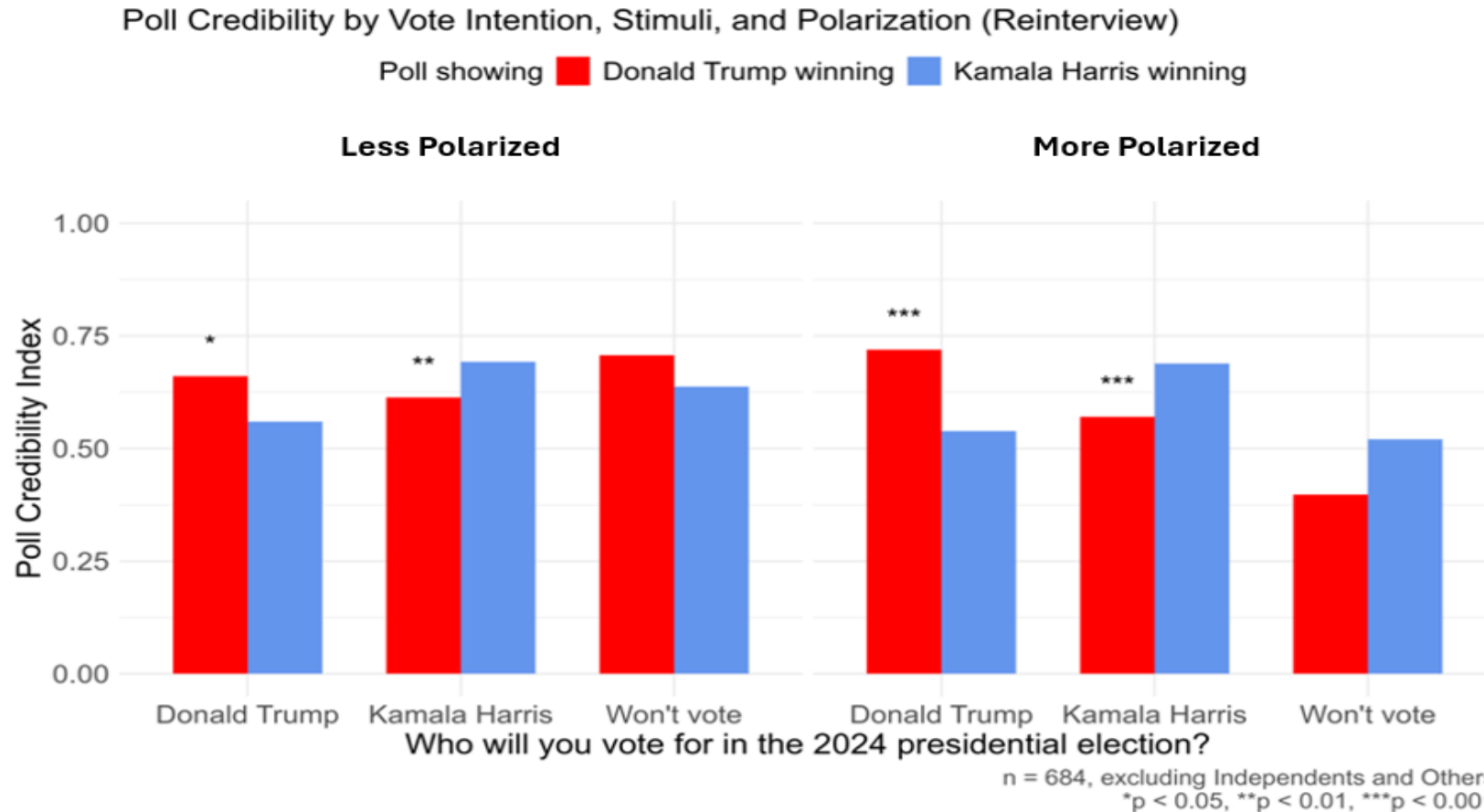


n = 1008; * p < 0.05

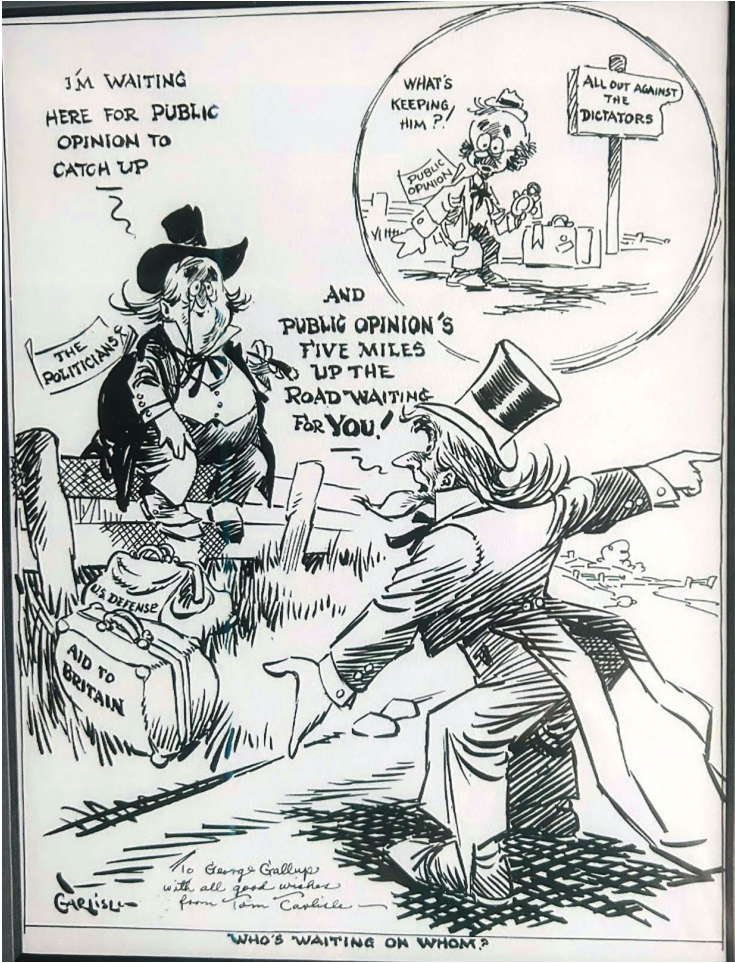


Results

For political polls, the expected relationship was found for both Trump and Harris supporters and was stronger among More Polarized respondents



The Role of Polls in a Democratic Society



Thank you!

And thanks to Jill Darling, Bart Orriens, and Arie Kapteyn from the Center for Economic and Social Research, University of Southern California

Supplemental Details of the Study

UAS 640 (Wave 1): Field dates

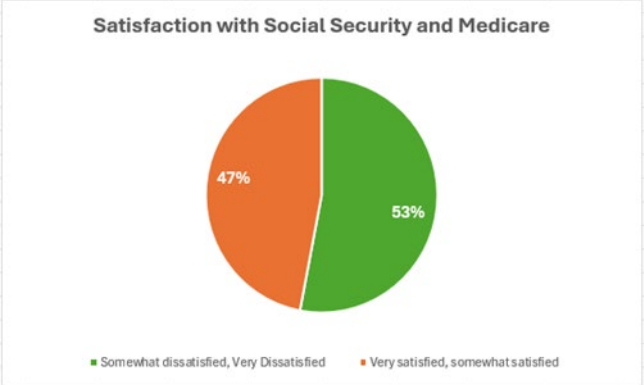
A3. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the Social Security and Medicare systems?

1. Very satisfied
2. Somewhat satisfied
3. Somewhat dissatisfied
4. Very dissatisfied
5. Don't know, not sure

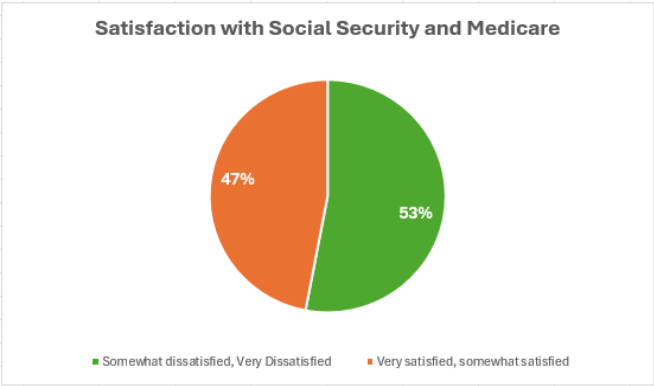
Supplemental Details of the Study

Here are some results from a recent national poll.

According to a recent national poll, a majority of Americans are dissatisfied with Social Security and Medicare.



According to a recent national poll, a majority of Americans are satisfied with Social Security and Medicare.



Supplemental Details of the Study

After the administration of a stimulus, the respondent is asked:

How informative did you find this poll result?

1. Very informative
2. Somewhat informative
3. Not very informative
4. Not informative at all

How accurately do you think the results of this poll represent public opinion on this issue in the United States?

1. Very accurately ...
4. Not accurately at all

How trustworthy do you think the results of this poll are?

1. Very trustworthy ...
4. Not trustworthy at all

Supplemental Details of the Study

UAS 645 (Wave 2): Field dates

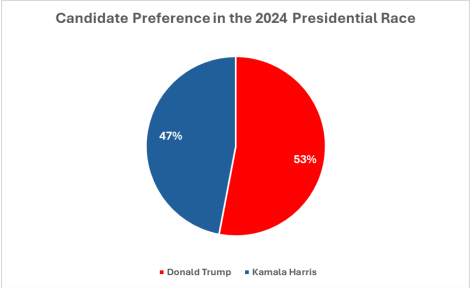
In the race for President in 2024, will you vote for [randomize order of v002 answer options] or [randomize order of v002 answer options], or won't you vote for President?

1. Donald Trump
2. Kamala Harris
3. Won't vote for president

Supplemental Details of the Study

Here are some results from a recent national poll.

According to a recent national poll, Donald Trump is leading Kamala Harris by 53% to 47%.



According to a recent national poll, Kamala Harris is leading Donald Trump by 53% to 47%.

