



The Dynamics Between Political Emotions and Election Engagement

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Introduction

- Since the 1960s, voter turnout has stagnated in the 50-60% range (McDonald, 2021). Yet tensions regarding the modern political landscape seem to be running increasingly high.
- Many researchers have turned towards examining political emotions to determine their effect on electoral motivation (Valentino, 2011; Weber, 2013; Neyazi & Ozan, 2022). The results have largely been inconclusive and inconsistent across studies.

Research Questions

- Is there a relationship between how a respondent feels about the modern political landscape and how often they participate in election cycles?
- If so, what kind of feeling evokes the most participation, positive or negative ones?

Methods

Sample

- Data were drawn from the American National Election Studies (ANES) in 2020 during the Covid-19 Pandemic.
- Respondents were selected from a random draw of all residential addresses across the US with equal probability of selection. 8,279 respondents (n=8,279) participated in the variables selected.

Measures

- Respondents' answers to questions regarding their political emotions were coded dichotomously, denoting either high or low emotional response. From this, two variables denoting a strong positive political feeling (happiness, hope, and pride) or a strong negative one (fear, outrage, and worry) were created.
- Interest and attention were also coded dichotomously (0= low interest/attention, 1=high interest/attention) to record frequency of each regarding campaigns.

Results

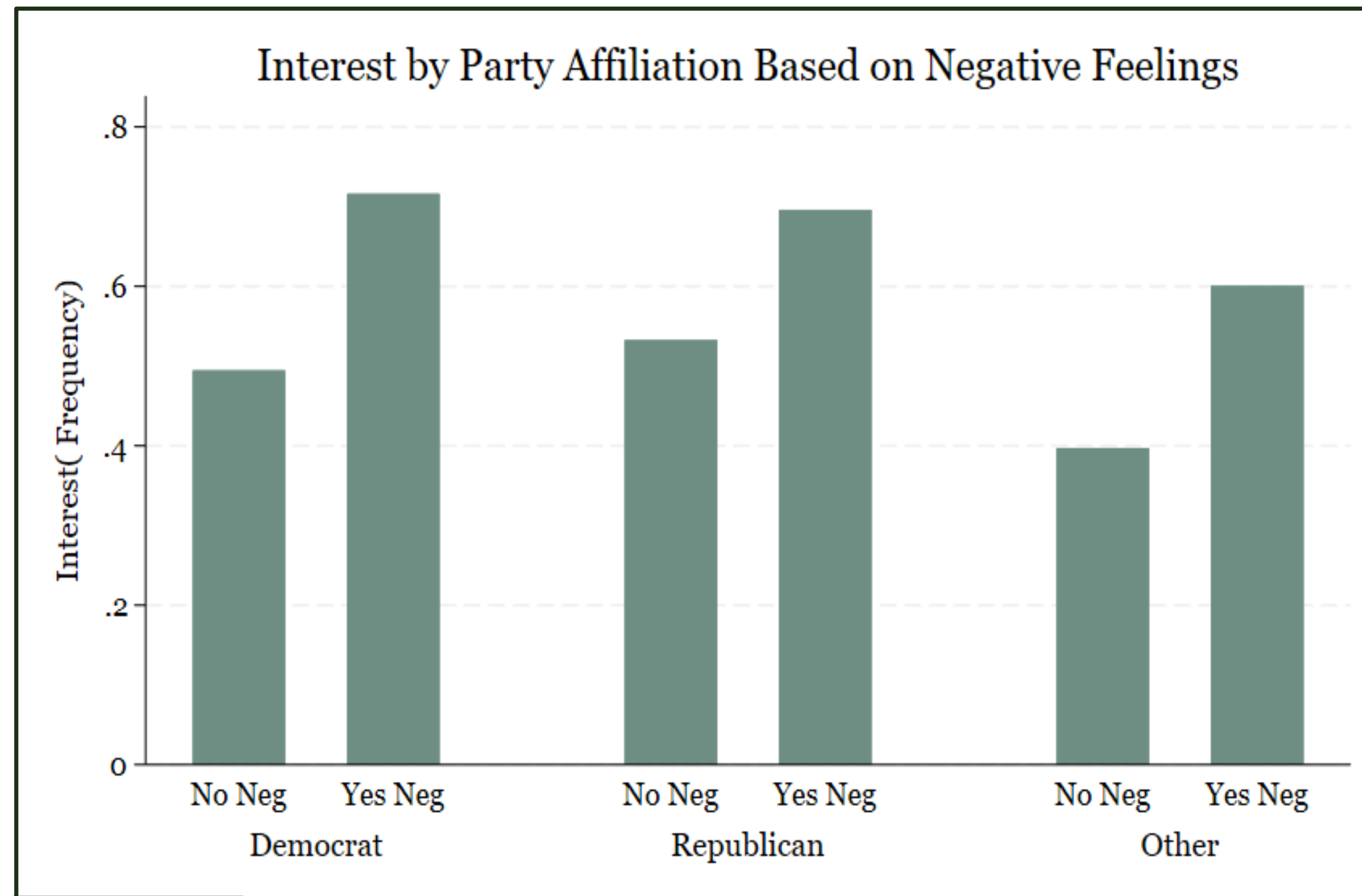


Figure 1

Figure 1

- A Chi Square Test ($X^2=378.12, p<0.001$) revealed significant differences of interest towards campaigns amongst those with negative feelings (Figure 1).
- A similar multivariate graph was created, considering the role of positive feelings in campaign interest. For democrats, feeling strongly positive decreases interest in campaigns.

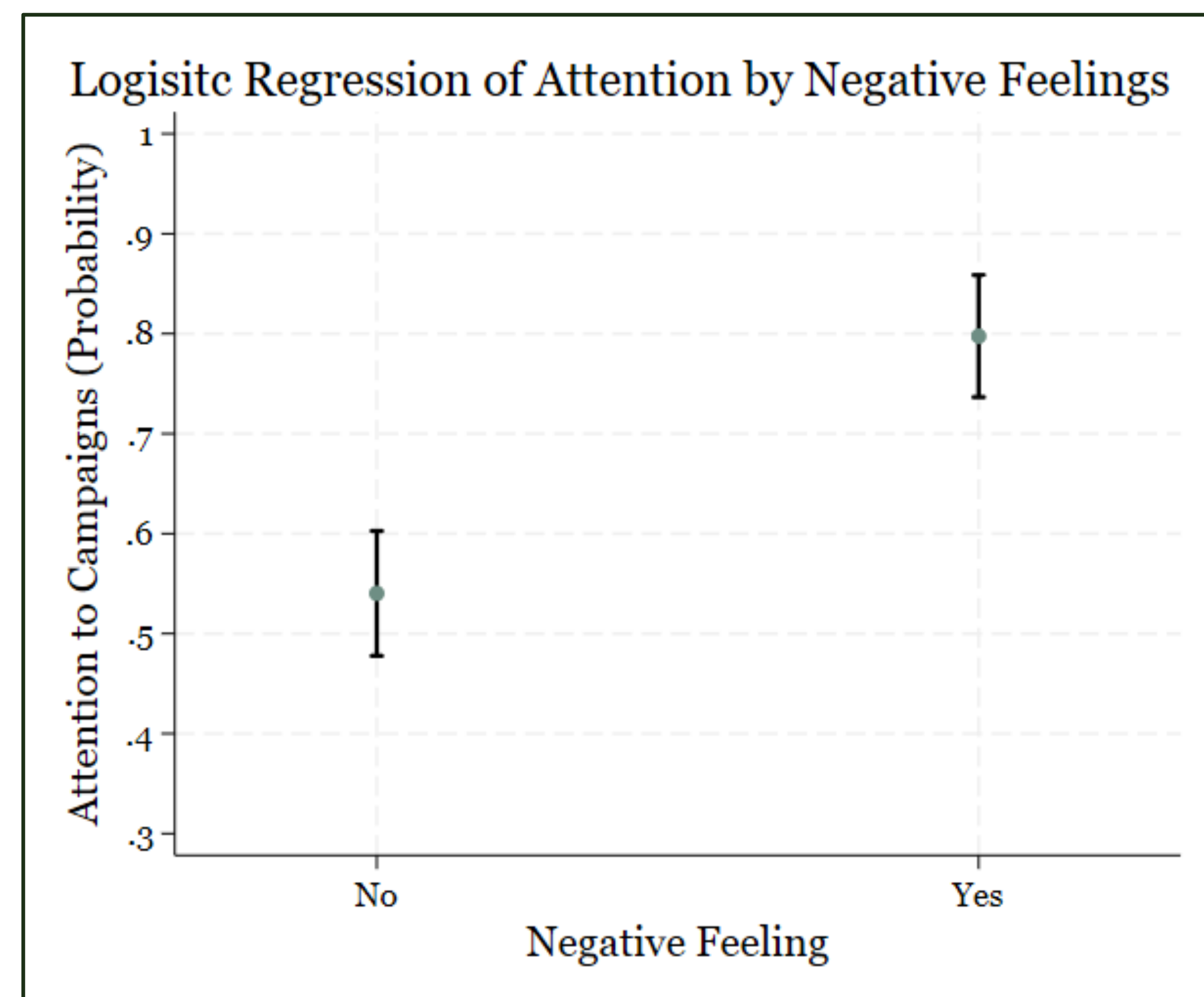


Figure 2

Figure 2

- A simple logistic regression shows that negative feelings predict an increase in the likelihood of attention to campaigns (OR=2.221, $p<0.001$).
- A multivariate logistic regression shows that race (OR=0.47), gender (OR=0.372), identifying as a republican (OR=3.18), and being college educated (OR=3.15) are statistically significant, but do not confound the relationship between negative feelings and attention (OR=4.134, $p<0.001$).

Discussion

Conclusions

- Negative emotions on the current political landscape predicted an increased likelihood of interest and attention toward campaigns.
- One limitation of this study is that respondents were polled during the Covid-19 Pandemic, which could have an undue effect on negative political feelings.



Implications

- Campaigners and political analysts can use this conclusion to their advantage when looking to increase voter turnout. Campaigning and advertisement can be catered towards the public's negative political feelings to boost election engagement and thus create a more representative democracy.
- Future research is needed to investigate what kinds of negative emotions inspire the most election engagement (whether fear, outrage, worry, etc.)

References

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- Weber, C. (2013). Emotions, Campaigns, and Political Participation. *Political Research Quarterly*, 66(2), 414-428.

