

Educational Attainment and Support for Government Responsibility for Jobs and the Standard of Living

Introduction

Many Americans today are noticing the effects of inflation and cost of living increasing all over the country with expenses such as rent, cost of groceries, and tuition rising exponentially compared to decades past. It is hard to escape the feeling of unsustainable living in the United States (US). Simultaneously, Americans have a variety of views on how interventionist the government should be about job handling and the standard of living. This research was conducted because I wanted to learn more about how educational attainment affects attitudes towards policies on redistribution, job procurement, and the standard of living, especially in a world where politics and economics make it more complicated. This research aims to help the reader understand how solutions should be approached from an educational standpoint.

Hypothesis

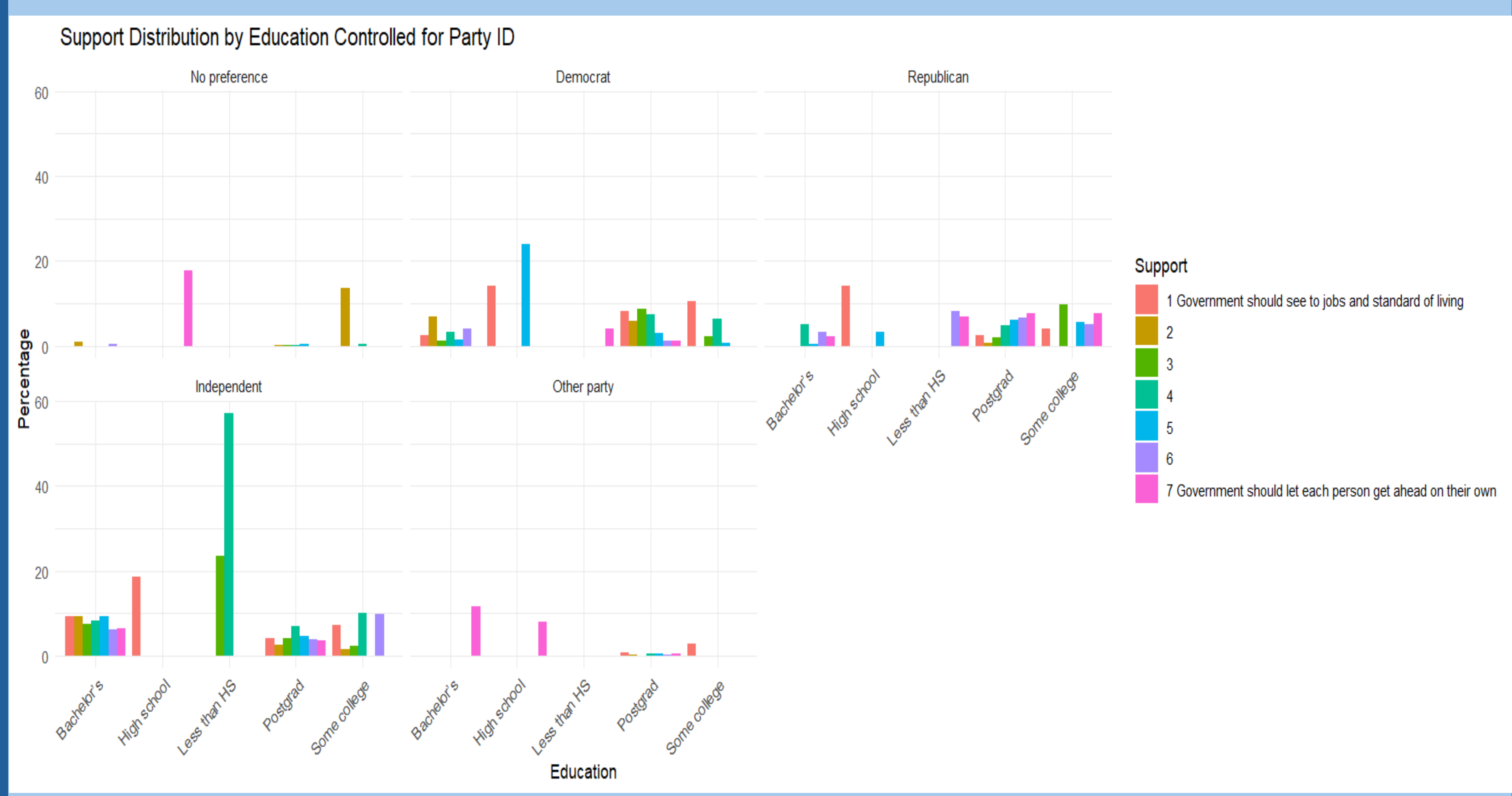
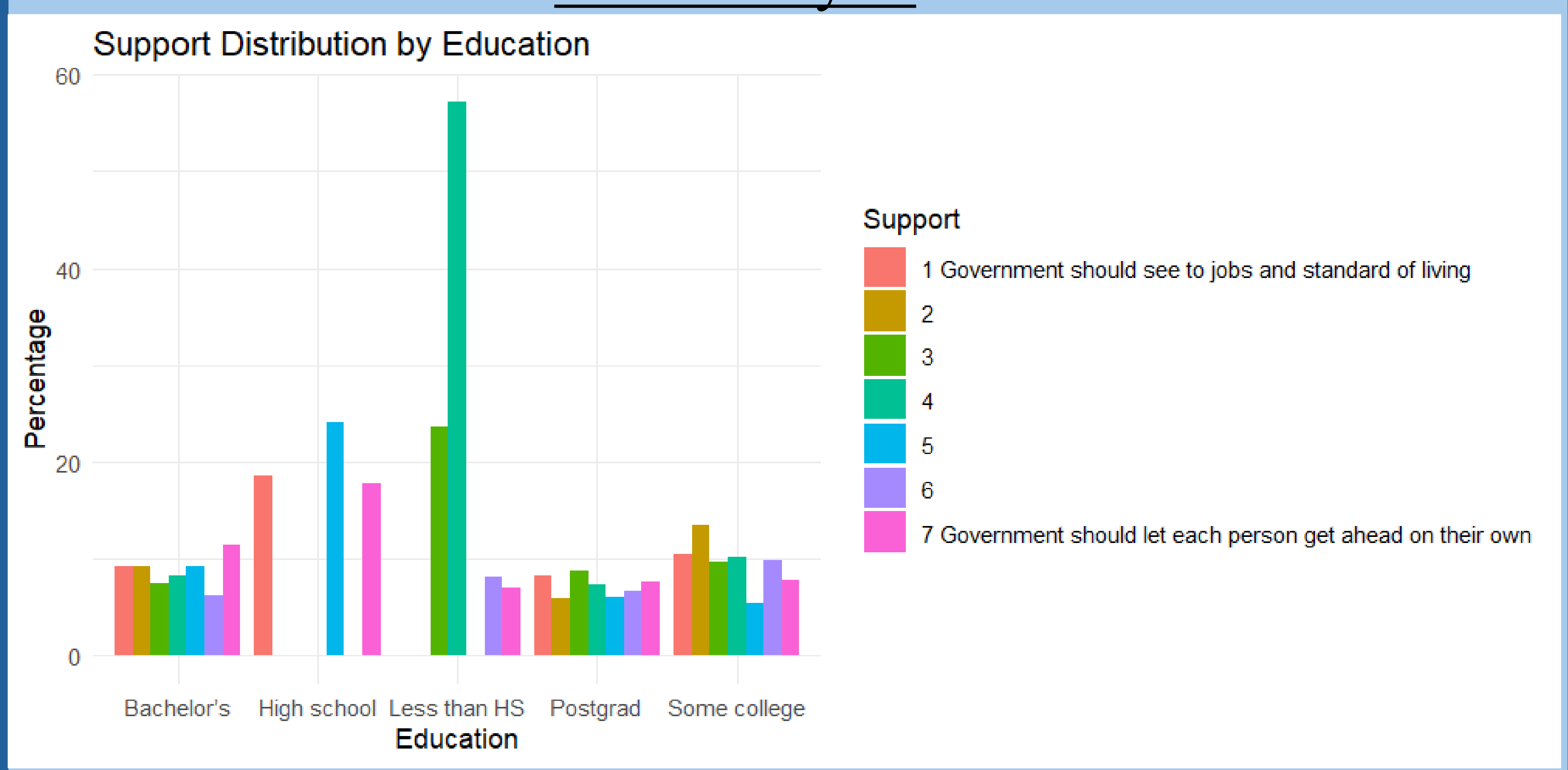
In comparison of individuals, those with higher educational attainment are more likely to support the government's handling of jobs and the standard of living.

Literature Review

A literature review shows the higher education an individual has, the less in favor they are of supporting policies aimed at redistribution (job procurement and the standard of living). A study done with data from 30 countries around the world, including the US, showed individuals with higher education obtained were more likely to support for redistribution policies. Specifically, policies helping people in school or retirees rather than the general population. People with lower education were in greater favor of all redistribution policies (Ferrari, 2021). This research recognizes that the more education someone obtains, the more streamlined and concise their vote will be (Ferrari, 2021). This suggests that education decreased support that people have for the government to liberally distribute resources, but for those who have “deserved” it.

Solely in the US, these attitudes are mirrored. Another study assessing education’s effects on American attitudes for government-handled redistribution showed education has little to no effect on redistribution attitudes, slightly showing higher education decreases support for redistribution policies. Estimates show on average just one more year of high school education makes people’s redistributive views 3-6% more conservative (Bullock, 2020). This range depends on whether the question is framed around redistribution or welfare, as the study suggests welfare has connotations from “altruism or racial stereotypes”. The trend shown in research highlights the connection of other factors like how redistributive policies are framed. While literature on redistribution contradicts my hypothesis, this research shows the connection between education and support for government job handling and the standard of living.

Data Analysis



Methods & Variables

The data were pulled from the American National Election Studies (ANES) 2024 and analyzed through R and R Studio within two and three-way crosstabulations. This analysis produced the graphs seen on this poster.

Predictor Variable: Education (Less than HS, HS, Some college, Bachelors, Postgrad)
 Response Variable: Support for Government Responsibility for Job Handling and the Standard of Living (1 = hands on approach to 7 = laissez-faire, no interference, approach)
 Control Variables: Gender, Age, Income, Political Party Registration, Trust in Government

Findings

Overall, the data analysis partially supported my hypothesis.

- 'Less than HS' and 'High school' groups have 0% of respondents selecting 1 or 2. These groups have centralized results with about 25% of 'High school' respondents answering 5 and ~60% of 'Less than HS' respondents selecting 4.
- 'Some college', 'Bachelor's', and 'Postgrad' each having ~10% of respondents answering with 1 or 2. Although, this could be from little responses from respondents with lower levels of education.

However, **when looking at education, party ID intensifies the support for hands-on (1) or laissez-faire (7) amongst different parties.**

- 'Postgrad' Democrats, 1, 2, and 3 all are near 10% compared to ~1% for those who selected 7.
- 'Postgrad' Republicans followed suit with answers 5, 6, and 7 near 10% and ~2% for those who answered 1 and 2.
- Independents fall in between, with Bachelor's where answers 1-5 all surpass 5% with 1 and 2 around 9%.

This analysis shows party ID is an interactive variable when controlling education's effect on support for hands-on or laissez-faire, amplifying partisan attitudes from their educational attainment while showing that polarization impacts views on redistribution.

Conclusions

Although my original hypothesis wasn't fully supported by my data analysis, the pattern recognized in the literature review was similarly reflected in my bivariate crosstabulation, with greater amounts of education (generally) increasing support for hands-on (1). However, it isn't a cause-and-effect relationship. Varied responses increased all throughout the different education groups in bivariate and three-way crosstabulations. The effect that party controlled for education had on the analysis is significant because it intensified partisan attitudes towards redistribution. The key contribution this research provides is partisan attitudes intensify with more education, showing that polarization is a huge dividing factor towards redistribution for future policies on redistribution, job handling, and the standard of living. It's crucial to grasp how partisan divides can be bridged to deal with an increasingly-expensive society. Future research should account for American demographics like racial background, geographic residence, or even immigration status to get a more holistic view on how people in the United States feel about redistribution.

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