

# Greater Internet use is not associated with faster growth in political polarization among US demographic groups

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## Significance

By many measures, Americans have become increasingly polarized in recent decades. We study the role of the Internet and social media in explaining this trend. We find that polarization has increased the most among the demographic groups least likely to use the Internet and social media, suggesting that the role of these factors is limited.

## Abstract

We combine eight previously proposed measures to construct an index of political polarization among US adults. We find that polarization has increased the most among the demographic groups least likely to use the Internet and social media. Our overall index and all but one of the individual measures show greater increases for those older than 65 than for those aged 18–39. A linear model estimated at the age-group level implies that the Internet explains a small share of the recent growth in polarization.