



Analyzing Factors That Predict Interest in Critical Race Theory News Stories

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Introduction

Although Critical Race Theory (CRT) didn't receive much attention in 2022 television ads (Moore 2023), it received extensive news coverage (Ray et al. 2021). For instance, Fox News mentioned CRT 1,300 times within about a four-month period (Ray et al. 2021). Some studies have analyzed the portrayal of CRT in the media, finding that most coverage across large media outlets focus on the association between CRT and the teachings of racism and slavery in K-12 schools (Hess 2021).

According to CRT Forward:

- Between Jan. 2021 and Dec. 2022 a total of 563 new anti CRT measures have been introduced by government actors
- There has been a consistent effort in the amount of anti CRT measures pushed the past two years (2021 280 introduced, and in 2022 283 introduced)
- Additionally, in 2023 there have already been four bills proposed in congress that mention CRT

Given the amount of attention CRT receives in the media and increasingly now among policymakers, it is essential to better understand the topic as we head into the 2024 election. This project aims to develop a better understanding of who follows CRT-related news and what factors can predict the likelihood that an individual will follow CRT-related stories.

Methods and Data

A national survey conducted by YouGov for the Wesleyan SurveyLab between August 26, 2022 - September 7, 2022. The national dataset includes 1500 respondents. YouGov provided weights.

Respondents were asked, "Below is a list of some stories covered by news organizations in recent weeks. Please indicate if you happened to follow each news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely or not at all closely," about several topics, including:

- Controversy over critical race theory
- The climate change, health care, and tax bill (named the Inflation Reduction Act) that recently passed in Congress
- Reports on the condition of the U.S. economy

During data management, I created binary response variables. These variables were measured on a four-level scale from "Very closely" to "Not at all closely". To make them binary, "Fairly closely" and "Very closely" were recoded to 1 and "Not too closely" and "Not at all closely" were recoded to 0.

To control for frequency of news consumption, respondents who reported getting news from television, online, newspapers, or radio at least three days per week were recoded to 1. Respondents who reported getting news from these sources fewer than three days weekly were recoded to 0.

After limiting to Democrats, Republicans, and Independents, the final dataset contains 1376 observations. We used a survey-weighted logistic regression model to determine which factors are likely predictors.

Discussion

The findings from this study suggest that attention to CRT does differ from other topics and presents different significant predictor variables, although some shared commonality. Namely, white respondents are more likely to follow CRT-related stories than the reference group. Respondents' race does not present as a significant predictor among stories regarding the Inflation Reduction Act and economic conditions when compared to the reference. Identity politics are a growing issue in the American political sphere, and as racial tensions have also heightened post-George Floyd protests, it is important to analyze and understand the manners race manifests in American political media.

Next steps: In the future, expanding this research to include more recent survey results would be useful as there have been significant changes in the political world since this survey was fielded in August 2022. Additionally, it would be interesting to examine whether CRT news correlates with political attitudes.

References:
 Frederick M. Hess. 2021. "Media's Misleading Portrayal of the Fight over Critical Race Theory". *American Enterprise Institute*. <https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/medias-misleading-portrayal-of-the-fight-over-critical-race-theory/>
 Rashawn Ray, Alexandra Gibbons. 2021. "Why Are States Banning Critical Race Theory?". *Brookings*. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/why-are-states-banning-critical-race-theory/>
 Steven Moore. 2022 Campaign Advertising Highlights: Understanding Themes in Limited Messaging on Climate Change and Critical Race Theory. *Collaborative on Media & Messaging For Health and Social Policy*. <https://commhsp.org/2022-campaign-advertising-highlights-understanding-themes-in-limited-messaging-on-climate-change-and-critical-race-theory/>
 "UCLA School of Law Critical Race Theory Research Project." CRT Forward. URL: <https://crtforward.law.ucla.edu/>

Research Question

Which variables best predict whether someone follows Critical Race Theory news coverage?

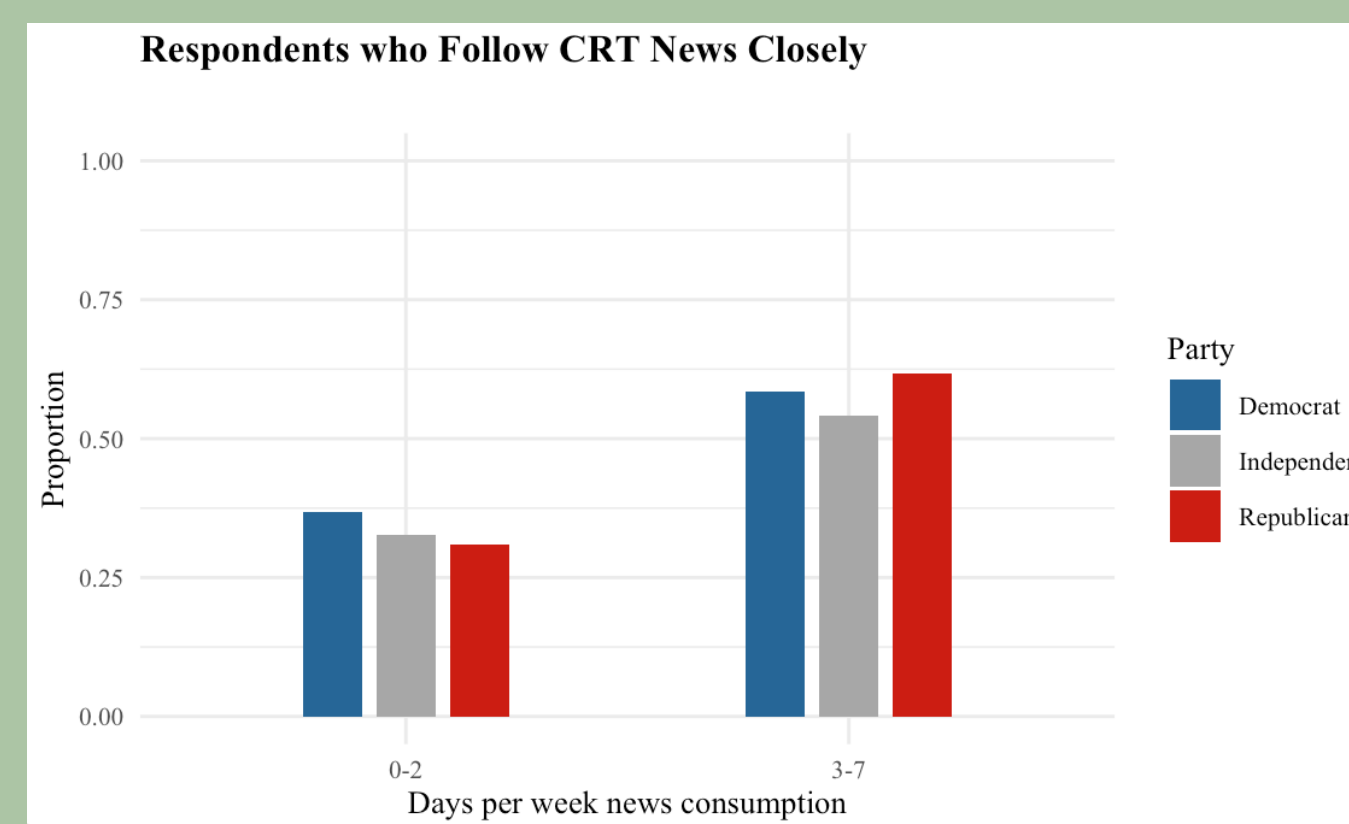


Figure 1, Desc Stat: A higher proportion of Republican respondents who consume news 3-7 days weekly follow CRT stories than Democrats. On the contrary, of respondents who consume news fewer than three days weekly a higher proportion of Democrats follow CRT related stories than their Republican counterparts.

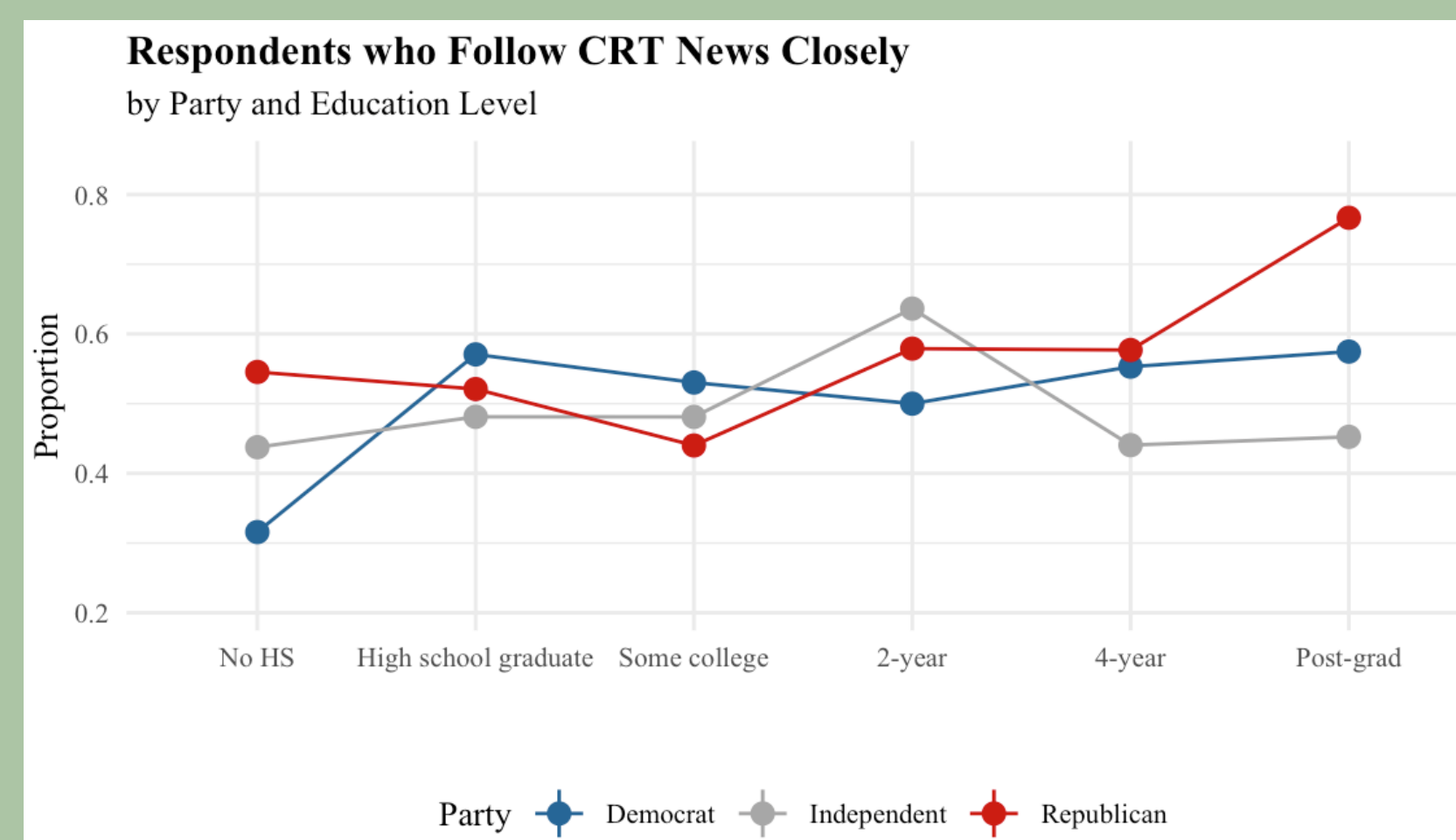


Figure 2, Desc Stat: Republican respondents with high levels of education are more likely to follow CRT news stories than Democrats or Independents.

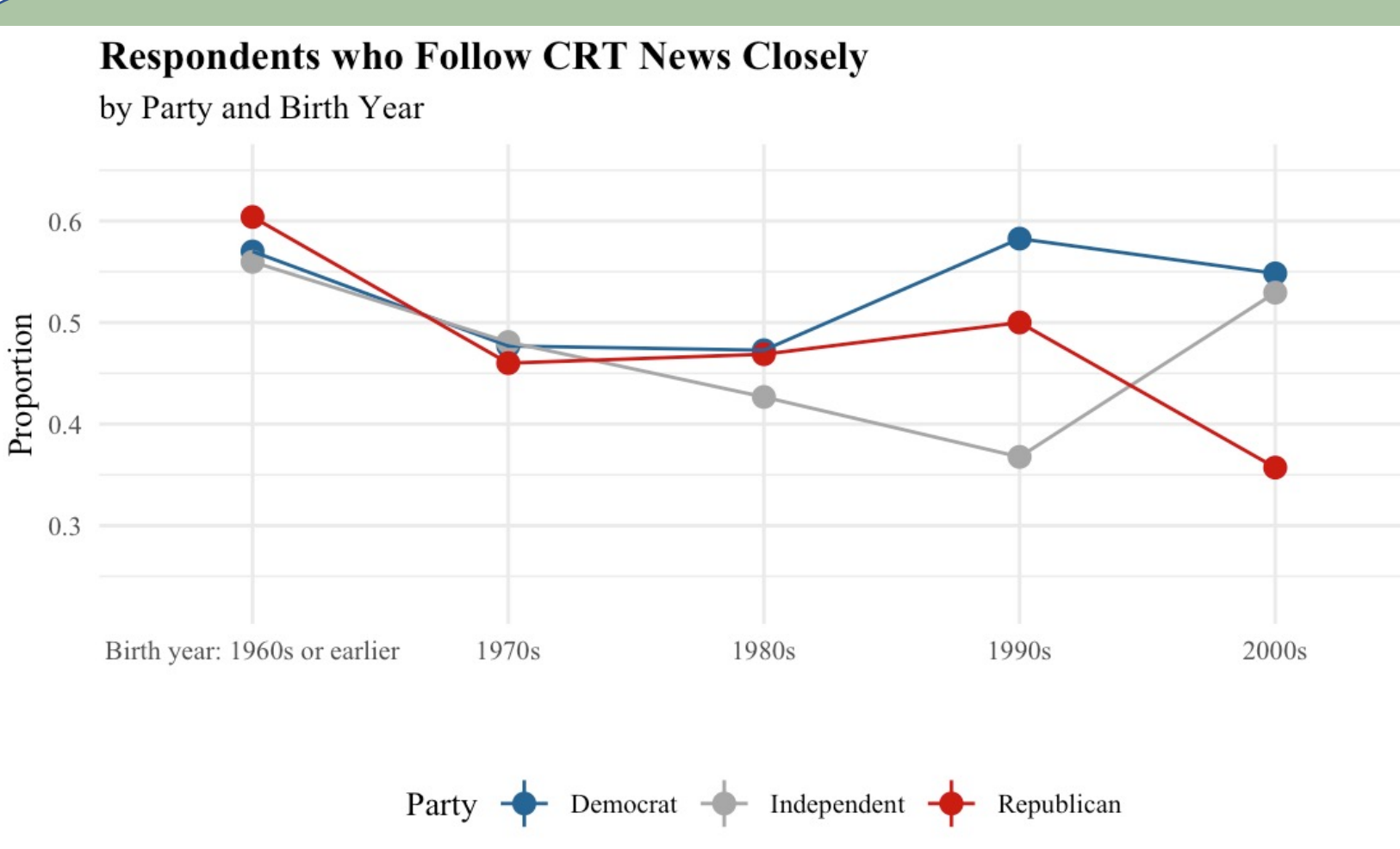


Figure 3, Desc Stat: Among respondents born prior to 1990, the proportion who report following CRT news closely is similar across parties. However, among younger respondents, a higher proportion of Democrats report following CRT.

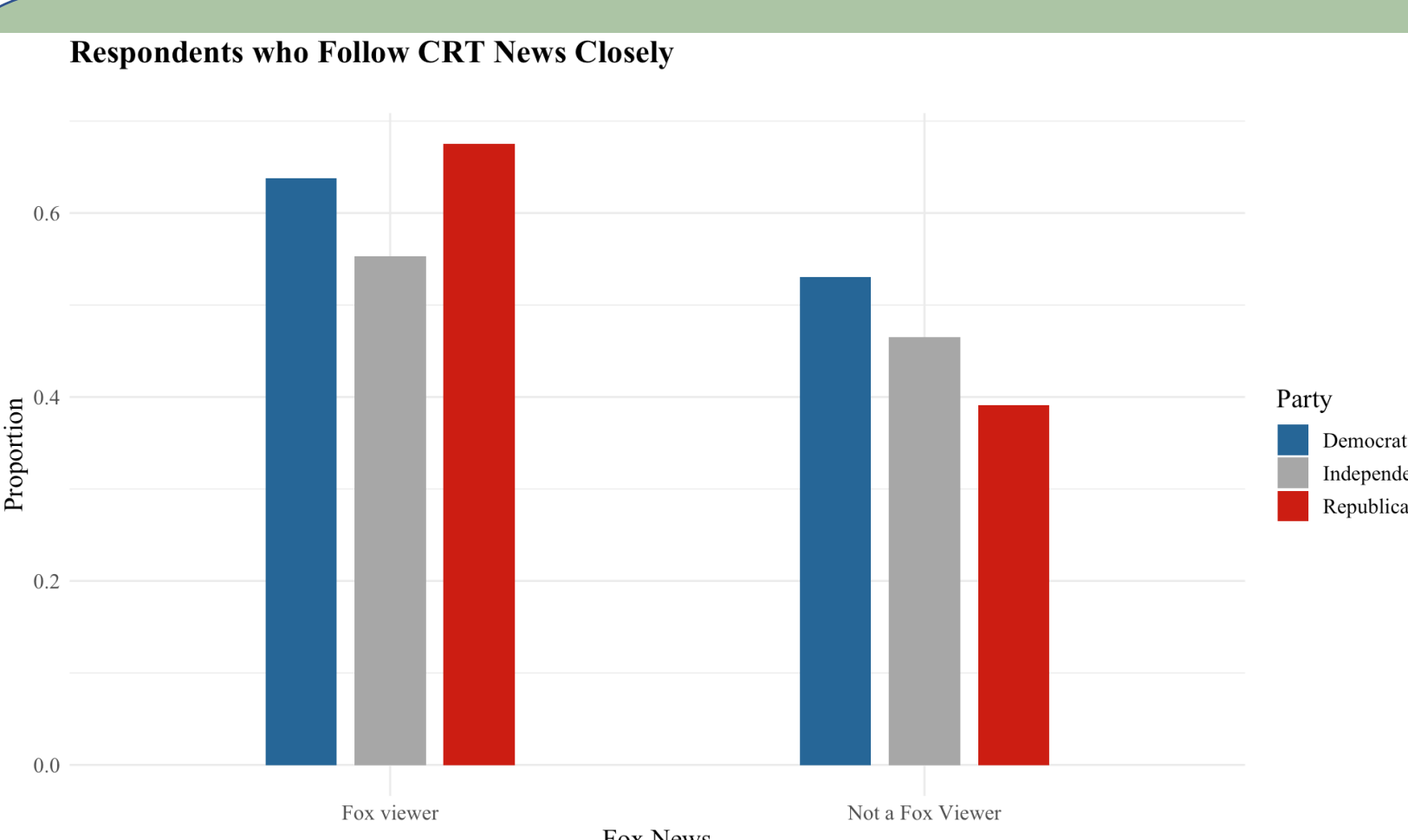


Figure 4, Desc Stat: The proportion of respondents who follow CRT news closely is higher among Fox viewers regardless of a respondent's party.

Descriptive Statistics (Cont'd)

For comparison, we expanded our research to examine respondents who reported following news about the Inflation Reduction Act (a climate change, health care, and tax bill) closely. We also analyzed respondents who reported following news coverage about economic conditions closely. (Fig. 5-6)

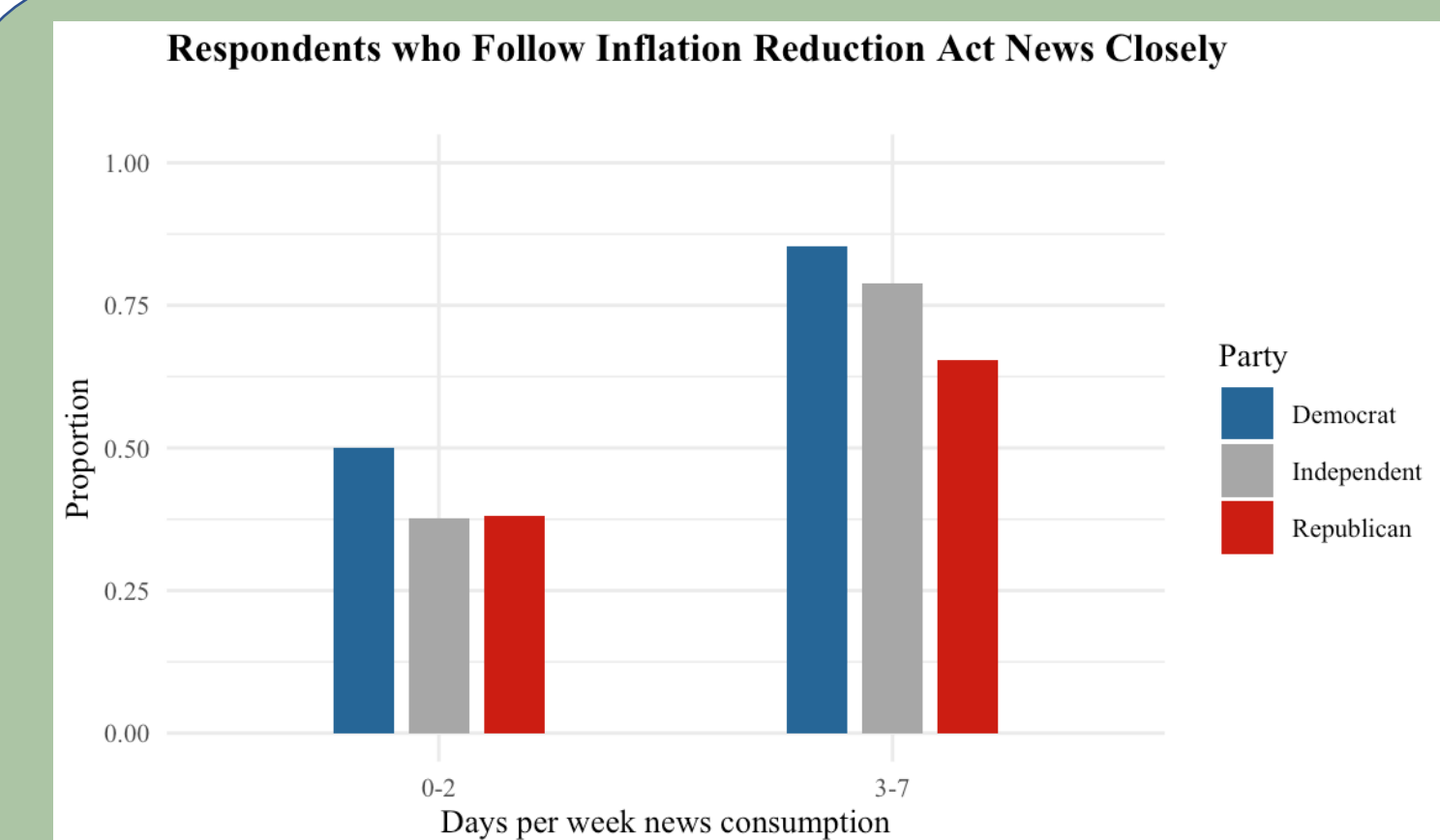


Figure 5, Desc Stat: Among respondents who consume news 0-2 days/week Democrats have the highest proportion of respondents who follow the Inflation Reduction Act closely, the same is seen among respondents who consume news three or more days/week.

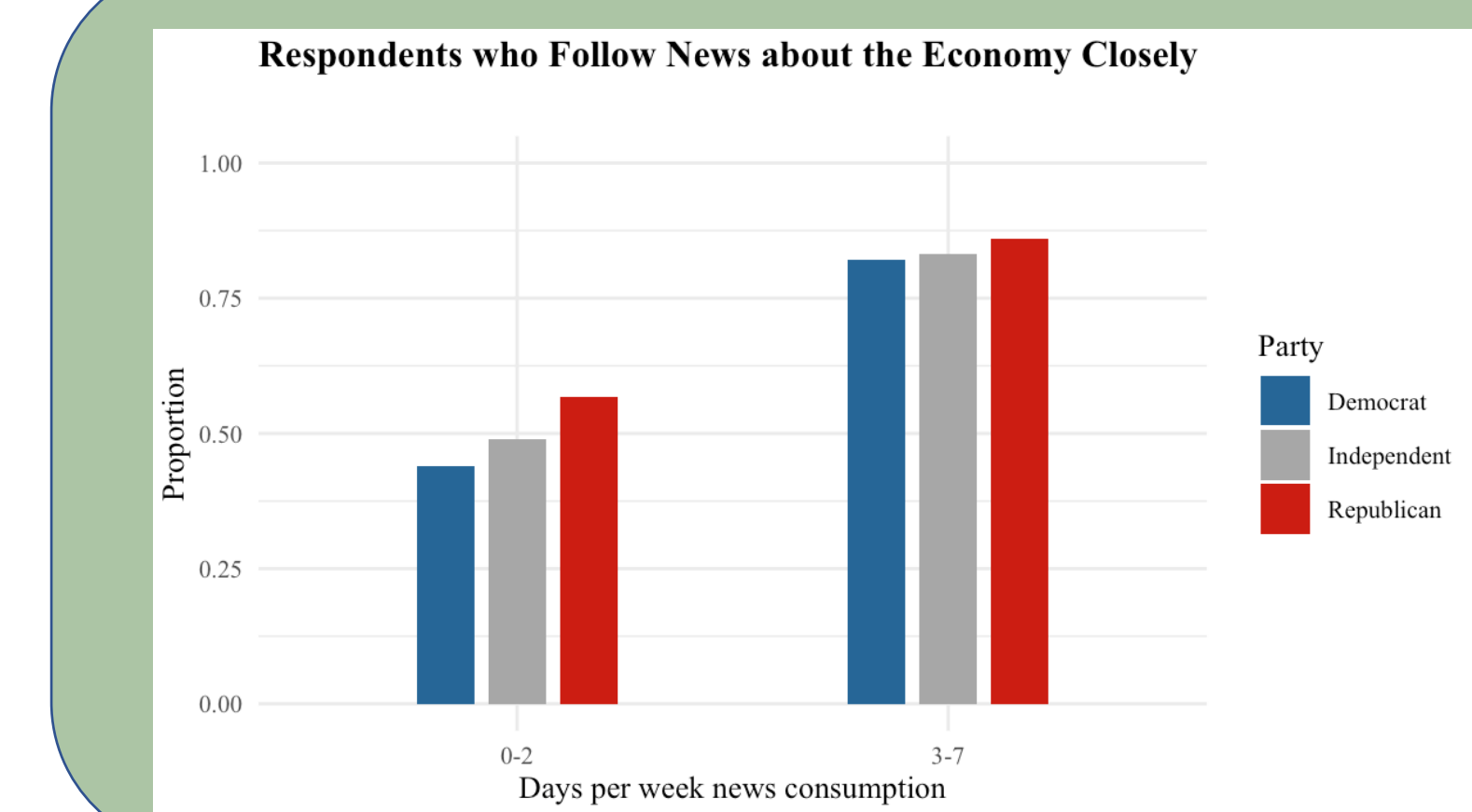


Figure 6, Desc Stat: Across both news consumption frequencies, a higher proportion of Republicans follow news related to economic conditions than Democrats.

Multivariate Statistics

- Being a Fox News viewer is a statistically significant predictor for whether a respondent follows CRT news stories closely. Similarly, consuming news at least three days weekly is also a statistically significant predictor.
- Compared to respondents born in the 1960s or earlier, we see a decrease in the probability that the respondent is likely to follow CRT-related news stories in all other age groups, although it is only statistically significant for the 1980s.
- Having a graduate degree is a statistically significant predictor of whether a respondent follows CRT news

Predictors	CRT		Inflation Reduction Act		Economy	
	Estimate	std. Error	Estimate	std. Error	Estimate	std. Error
(Intercept)	-0.84 *	0.40	0.23	0.45	-0.61	0.41
Democrat	Reference		Reference		Reference	
Independent	-0.08	0.17	-0.69 ***	0.20	0.10	0.21
Republican	0.03	0.18	-1.11 ***	0.21	0.18	0.22
Not Fox viewer	Reference		Reference		Reference	
Fox viewer	0.47 **	0.17	0.33	0.20	0.95 ***	0.24
No HS	Reference		Reference		Reference	
High school graduate	0.37	0.35	0.15	0.37	0.43	0.37
Some college	0.30	0.36	0.15	0.39	0.37	0.38
2-year	0.63	0.39	0.29	0.41	0.83	0.44
4-year	0.68	0.36	0.95 *	0.39	0.72	0.39
Post-grad	0.80 *	0.39	1.63 ***	0.46	0.90 *	0.44
Non-white	Reference		Reference		Reference	
White	-0.34 *	0.16	-0.31	0.19	-0.10	0.20
Female	Reference		Reference		Reference	
Male	0.10	0.14	0.19	0.17	0.63 ***	0.18
Birth year: 1960s or earlier	Reference		Reference		Reference	
1970s	-0.39	0.22	-0.68 **	0.26	-0.71 *	0.29
1980s	-0.50 **	0.18	-0.59 **	0.21	-0.59 **	0.22
1990s	-0.27	0.20	-0.48 *	0.24	-0.47	0.25
2000s	-0.02	0.32	0.10	0.35	-0.68	0.35
News: Fewer than 3 days/week	Reference		Reference		Reference	
News: 3 days/week or more	0.89 ***	0.18	1.40 ***	0.19	1.49 ***	0.19
Observations	1376		1376		1376	
R ² / R ² adjusted	0.058 / 0.047		0.159 / 0.150		0.158 / 0.149	

Figure 7, Multivariate Stat: Logistic regression model of predictor variables, and comparison news issues.

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001