

# Breaking Bad: The Association between Republicans Voting to Impeach Donald Trump and Approval Rating



Justin Weinstein, QAC Apprenticeship Summer 2024  
Wesleyan University  
Faculty Sponsor: Logan Dancey

## Introduction

- The 2021 impeachment and subsequent Senate trial of President Donald Trump wrought intense discord within the Republican Party, as 10 GOP members of the House and 7 GOP members of the Senate joined with Democrats in voting to impeach and convict Trump, respectively (Gedeon 2022; Sprunt 2021).
- Of the House Republicans that voted to impeach Trump, only 2 emerged victorious their next round of primary elections (Gedeon 2022).
- House Republicans are electorally rewarded in primaries for loyalty to President Trump, outlining a clear incentive to oppose impeachment to stay in the good graces of Trump's impassioned voter base (Bartels and Carnes 2023).

## Research Questions

- Is voting to impeach (or convict) President Trump associated with a lower approval rating among Republican voters? Among Democrats?
- Does such an association differ depending on the chamber---House or Senate---that the member of Congress serves in?

## Methods

### Sample

- Respondents (n=203,682) were drawn from the Cooperative Election Study (CES) cumulative dataset, only keeping observations from 2018 to 2023. The CES is a national stratified sample survey.
- After restructuring the data to reflect mean approval for each member of Congress for each year between 2018 and 2023 (among those who served every year), n = 1,720.

### Measures

- Mean approval of members of Congress was assessed on a scale of 1 ("Strongly Disapprove") to 4 ("Strongly Approve").
- Mean approval was then separated by the party of the respondent, with means for Democratic respondents (scaled 1-4) and Republican respondents (scaled 1-4).
- Whether or not the member voted to impeach (or convict) former President Donald Trump was coded 0 (No) and 1 (Yes).

## Results

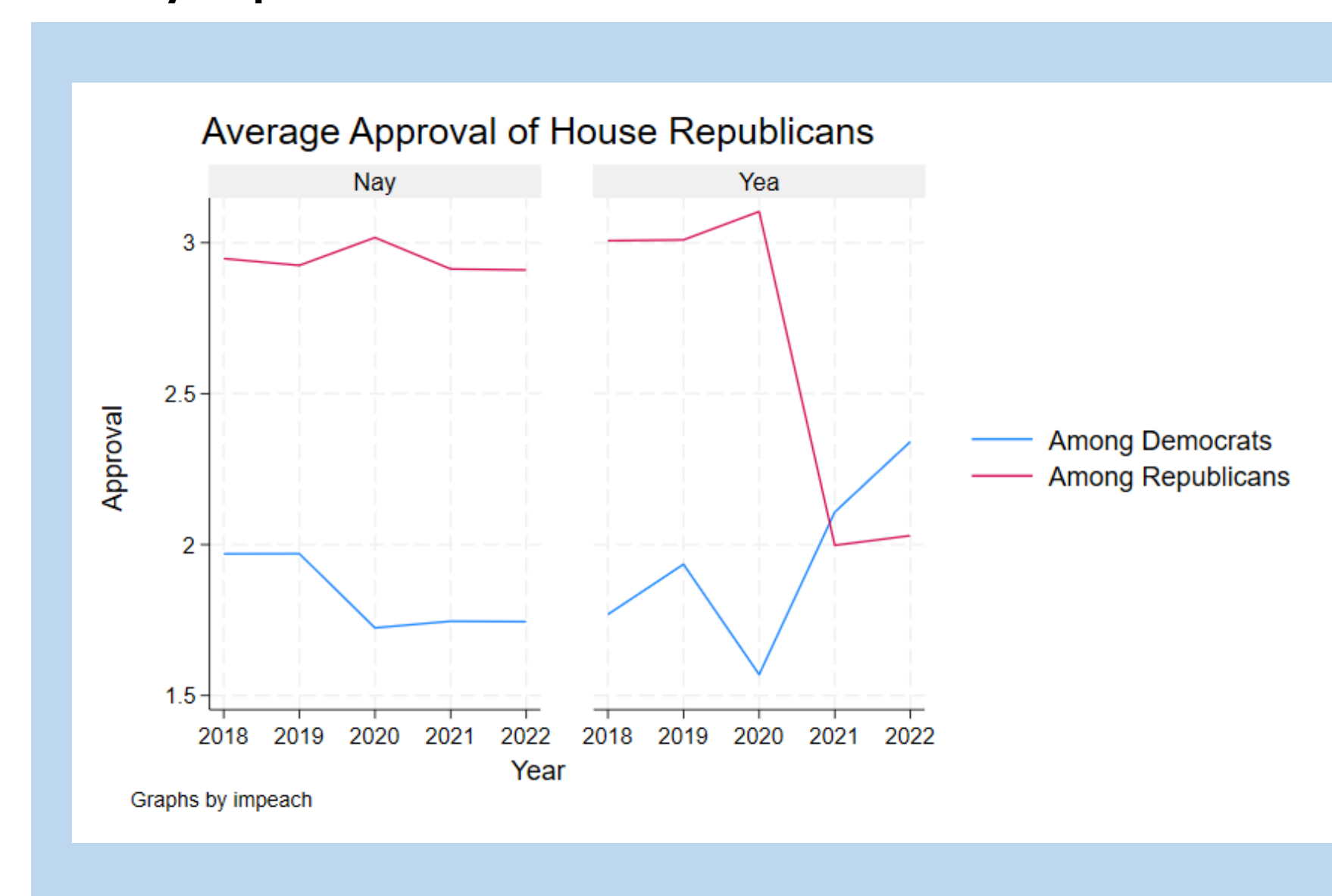
### Univariate

- 42.18% of respondents were either Republicans or leaned Republican.
- 57.82% of respondents were either Democrats or leaned Democratic.
- 4.74% of House Republicans voted to impeach Donald Trump.
- 14% of Senate Republicans voted to convict Donald Trump.

### Bivariate

- ANOVA analysis demonstrated that GOP House members who voted to impeach Trump had a significantly lower approval rating in 2022 than those who did not vote to impeach Trump ( $F=19.24$ ,  $p=0.0000$ ).
- ANOVA analysis also revealed that GOP Senators who voted to convict Trump had a significantly lower approval rating in 2022 than Senators who voted to acquit ( $F=4.07$ ,  $p=0.05$ ).

Figure 1: Average Approval of House Republicans between 2018 and 2022 by Impeachment Vote



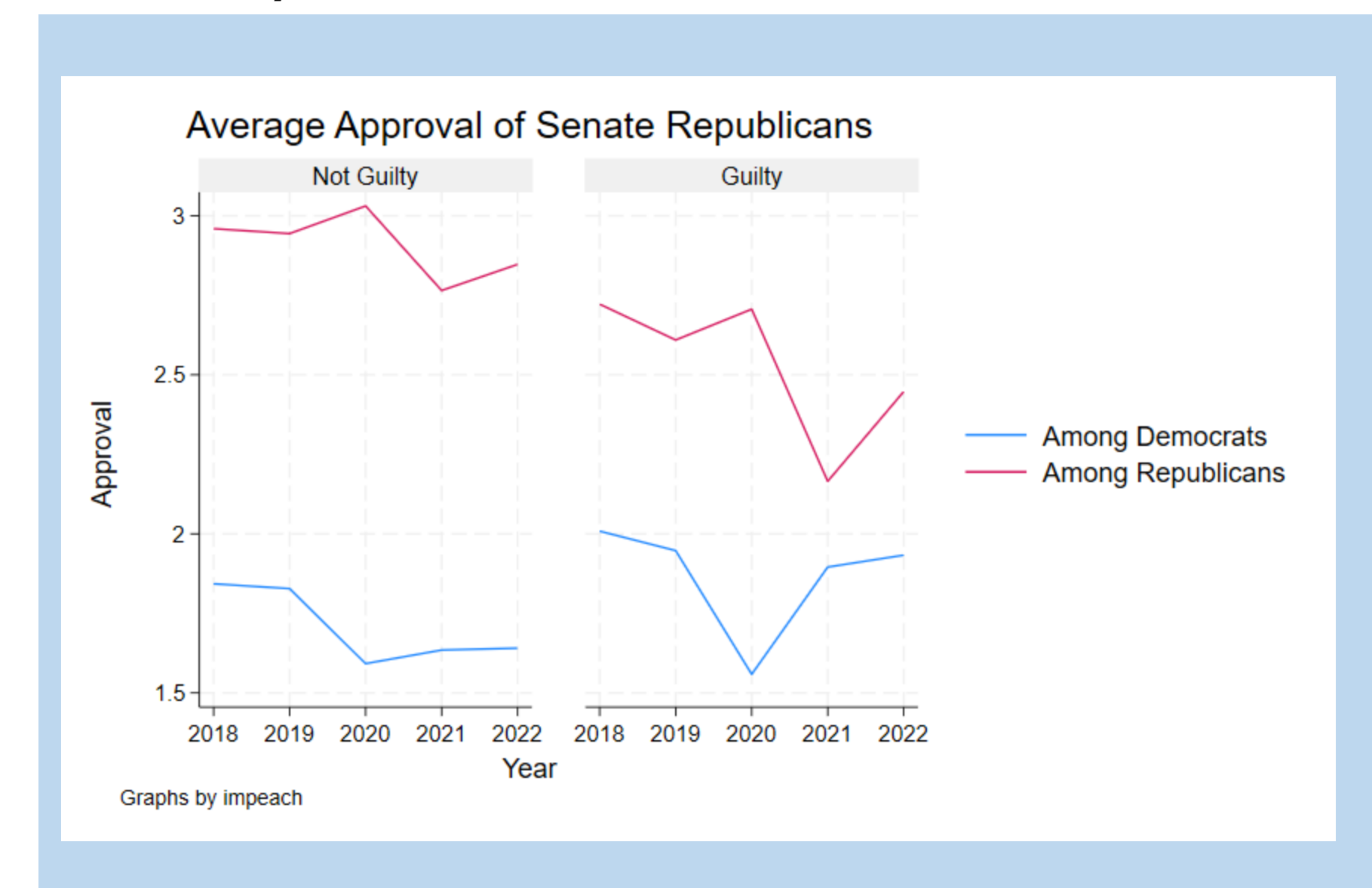
### Regression Analysis - Dems

- Voting to impeach Trump as a House Republican was associated with a boost in approval among Democratic respondents of 0.596 in 2022 ( $p=0.011$ ).
- There was no significant association for Republican Senators among Democratic respondents.

### Regression Analysis - GOP

- Republican members of the House of Representatives who voted to impeach Donald Trump experienced an approval score among Republicans that was, on average, 0.88 points lower than those not voting to impeach in 2022 ( $p=0.000$ ).
- Republican Senators who voted to convict Donald Trump suffered an average drop in approval among Republicans of 0.399 points relative to their colleagues who did not vote to convict in 2022 ( $p=0.05$ ).

Figure 2: Average Approval of Senate Republicans between 2018 and 2023 by Conviction Vote



## Discussion

- Voting to impeach Donald Trump as a Republican member of the House of Representatives is significantly associated with declining approval among Republican respondents.
- Voting to convict Donald Trump as a Republican Senators is significantly associated with a slightly lower (but still considerable) decline in approval among Republicans.
- Voting to impeach Donald Trump as a Republican members of the House is significantly associated with a higher approval among Democrats.
- Further research is merited for non-impeachment related sleights against President Trump that a Republican could make. For instance, is publicly reprimanding Trump about his legal troubles associated with a similar fate in approval?

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Logan Dancey for his invaluable guidance throughout this summer. I'm also especially grateful for coding support from Professors Kaparakis and Nazzaro during our morning sessions. Lastly, I'm indebted to Evan Wacks '25 for his perpetual willingness to drop what he was doing and conference with me in the next room.

### Bibliography

- Gedeon, Joseph (2022). "10 House Republicans voted to impeach Trump. Cheney's loss means only 2 made it past their primaries." *Politico*. Published on 13 August 2022. Accessed at: <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/08/13/cheney-10-house-republicans-trump-impeachment-00050991>.
- Sprunt, Barbara (2021). "7 GOP Senators Voted to Convict Trump. Only 1 Faces Voters Next Year." *NPR*. Published on 15 February 2021. Accessed at: <https://www.npr.org/sections/trump-impeachment-trial-live-updates/2021/02/15/967878039/7-gop-senators-voted-to-convict-trump-only-1-faces-voters-next-year>.
- Bartels, Larry M. and Nicholas Carnes (2023). "House Republicans were rewarded for supporting Donald Trump's 'stop the steal' efforts." *PNAS* 120(34). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2309072120>.