



Key Findings

Ideological Groups

Using the same statistical clustering analysis as in our studies 10 years ago, we again discovered three ideological groups in the United States that share common attitudes and values, regardless of voting history or political party preferences:

- **Blues** who have liberal attitudes toward abortion, the environment, guns, marriage and immigration, make up 47% of the population. **Blues** are the least satisfied with their lives. A majority are women; this group contains the most African Americans.
- **Purples**, a swing group comprising 18% of the population, hold positions across the political spectrum. With the largest share of Asians/Pacific Islanders and Hispanics/Latinx, **Purples** are the most religious group and the most satisfied with their lives.
- **Reds** make up 35% of the country, holding conservative views on most issues, including positive attitudes towards police and skepticism about affirmative action, immigrants and Islam. **Reds** have the highest proportion of senior citizens.

Entertainment & Media Preferences

- **Blues** like many more TV shows than **Reds**. They are open to viewing foreign entertainment options and material that doesn't reflect their values. **Blues** often get their news from MSNBC and news websites, and they typically enjoy watching *Modern Family*.
- **Purples** are the most voracious TV viewers and they enjoy more about the viewing experience than other groups. Since **Purples** appreciate the educational value of TV programming, and are the most likely to say they take action based on what they learn about politics and social issues from fictional movies and TV, they are an ideal target group for social change campaigns. Favorite shows include *The Voice* and *Dancing with the Stars*, but they also like *Saturday Night Live*, a favorite among **Blues**, and *Duck Dynasty*, which is preferred by **Reds**.
- **Reds** say they seldom watch entertainment TV, but when they do, they are likely to say they do so for an adrenaline boost. They watch the Hallmark, History and Ion channels far more than others and their favorite shows include *NCIS* and *Criminal Minds*.

Cultural Touchstones & Fan Favorites

- Five shows have equal appeal for all ideological groups: *America's Funniest Home Videos*, *Bones*, *Criminal Minds* and *MythBusters* are enjoyed by all three groups. *Pawn Stars* has the distinction of being watched, but hated by all groups. Ten years ago, our study found only one show that was equally liked by all groups, *House*.
- *Game of Thrones* is the fan favorite among all groups, though far fewer Reds watch the show.

Social Justice Issues & Patterns of Viewership

- Immigration
 - Those who believe immigrants want to work for a better life are more likely to watch *Saturday Night Live*, *The Tonight Show*, *Modern Family*, *Game of Thrones* and *The Daily Show with Trevor Noah*.
 - Those who believe immigrants want to be handed a better life are more likely to watch *Duck Dynasty*.
 - Americans who rank immigration among their top three issues are more likely to be fans of *The Walking Dead*.⁸
- Gender Equality
 - *Saturday Night Live* viewers are likely to believe that men and women should share parental and household duties equally.
 - Americans who believe a woman's primary responsibility is to her children and home are more likely to watch four reality TV shows: *Wipeout*, *Ridiculousness*, *Cake Boss* and *So You Think You Can Dance*; two scripted shows, *The Walking Dead* and *Adventure Time*; and the music video show *106 & Park*.
- Race Relations/Discrimination
 - Americans who consider race among their top issues are more likely to say their favorite shows are *The Daily Show*, *Orange is the New Black*, *Scandal* and *Fast N' Loud*, a reality show about refurbishing old cars.
 - Respondents who rank race among their least important issues prefer *NCIS*, *The Big Bang Theory*, *The Walking Dead* and *Law & Order: SVU*.
- Actions in Response to Entertainment
 - When they learn something from fictional movies and TV shows, Blues are most likely to discuss it with others and seek even more information.

⁸ Donald Trump's Presidential campaign also discovered this association, as reported in Bertoni, S. (2016, November 23). Exclusive Interview: How Jared Kushner Won Trump The White House. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/stevenbertoni/2016/11/22/exclusive-interview-how-jared-kushner-won-trump-the-white-house/#10452fc13af6>

- **Purples** take more public-facing actions such as contacting newspapers and talk shows, registering consumer complaints, and making their opinions known to public officials.

Ideological Shifts

- Overall, the number of people who described themselves as Democrat or Republican ten years ago has dropped by about 20%, coinciding with a rise in Independents.
- Americans diametrically opposed in 2008 are showing signs of shifting – generally toward moderate views – around nine key issues: environment, regulation of business, privacy around new technologies, public education, guns, marriage, abortion, helping the poor and tax reductions.
- 72% of these shifts are in the **Blue** direction. This finding comes as a surprising reality-check that defies the simplistic media narrative about an increasingly divided nation, as many of the shifts are away from entrenched positions towards the center.

Entertainment Trends: 2008 vs 2018

The biggest differences in viewing patterns in the past ten years are found in shows that feature topical comedy and commentary on current events:

- Among late-night shows, *Saturday Night Live* now ranks highest among **Blues** and lowest among **Reds**. The reverse was true in 2008.
- NBC's *The Tonight Show* switched hosts from Jay Leno to Jimmy Fallon, and we found a big shift in the ideological makeup of its audience. In 2018, **Blues** are most likely to rank it among their favorites and **Reds** are the least likely to do so. The reverse was true in 2008.

For long-running shows, some patterns persisted:

- Despite switching from Jon Stewart to Trevor Noah, Comedy Central's *The Daily Show* remained very popular among **Blues** and rarely watched by **Reds**.
- Fox's *The Simpsons* and *Family Guy* remained most popular among **Blues** and least popular among **Reds**.
- Despite not being a big favorite for any group, ABC's *Grey's Anatomy*⁹ remained popular among **Purples** and least popular with **Reds**.

⁹ The longest running medical drama on primetime TV as reported in Dugan, C. (2019, February 28). *Grey's Anatomy Set to Become the Longest-Running Primetime Medical Drama on TV - Surpassing ER!* Retrieved from <https://people.com/tv/greys-anatomy-longest-prime-time-medical-drama/>