

AUVIUS – AUSTRIANS’ VIEWS OF THE U.S.

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*Results
and
Summary*

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1 Introduction

This is the first part of a two-part survey project designed to determine how Austrians and Americans view each other, their societies, and their politics. In keeping with the mission of the Botstiber Institute for Austrian-American Studies (BIAAS), which is to promote an understanding of the historical relationship between the United States and Austria, this project seeks to understand the current relationship between the Austrian and American people in terms of how they view each other and each other's societies at a time of great change not only globally, but specifically in American-European relations. In doing so, this survey seeks not only to fill an important gap in the available data on this relationship, but also to provide a basis for further analysis, informed debate, and ultimately decision-making that has often been based on guesswork, assumptions, or outdated information.

The relationship between Austria and the United States is deeply rooted in a shared history that goes far beyond political alliances. After World War II, the United States played a central role in the rebuilding of the Austrian Republic—not only as a signatory to the State Treaty of 1955, but also through important aid programs such as the Marshall Plan or the Fulbright Scholarship Program. Conversely, many Austrians—including artists, scientists, and entrepreneurs—have contributed significantly to the development of modern American society. For decades, American influence in Austria manifested itself in everything from jazz and Hollywood to consumer culture and entrepreneurship: the U.S. was long held up as a model of freedom and progress.

However, the fascination with this protective role model was always accompanied by critical voices—the political left all too often saw America only as the center of capitalism and social inequality, conservatives and the far right tended to see the U.S. as a socio-cultural place without a refined culture, or worse, as a cultural and racial melting pot, and thus inherently inferior. In other respects, political and social developments in the US have been poorly understood in Europe due to a lack of context or an inability to distinguish between the powerful US entertainment industry and social reality. Since its inception, the US has also served as a canvas for Europeans to project their own ideas and desires—a famous example being the hugely popular novels and late the movies in the German speaking world about noble Apache Chief Winnetou and his friends dreamt up by the writer Kar May—so that anti-Americanism is sometimes a function of disappointment and betrayed expectations when Europeans were confronted with a less than ideal reality.

The same is true for Americans, who often look to Europe for a romantic or authentic past free of the complexities and vicissitudes of modernity. The phenomenally popular musical film *The Sound of Music*, set in and around Salzburg and which seems to have shaped the image of Austria for generations of Americans, is one such example. This search in the other for something we seem to be missing in our own world explains why we are so attracted to particular stereotypes about other places that the locals in turn reject or find hard to understand. Just as Austrians could never quite understand why *The Sound of Music* was so popular in the United States, Americans would shudder at the thought of a French actor playing the Apache Chief Winnetou riding his steed through the Yugoslav countryside that was supposed to be the Wild West.

In short, the image we have of the other is always a construction. These constructions are influenced by deep-seated cultural narratives, but they are also reflective of latent desires, context, and circumstances. Europe's dependence on the U.S. for protection and political and economic stability has bred resentment, especially at times when Washington was paying less and less attention to Europe in the 1990s and 2000s. Yet, the current experience of greater vulnerability in the face of a resurgent Russia may make Europeans nostalgic for their past closer relationship with the U.S. and thus more likely mute typical criticism of the U.S. but reserve their ire for the current administration. Americans, for their part, may have grown weary of what they perceive as needy and free-riding European allies, and of having to engage in far-flung conflicts mainly through their foreign alliances.

Thus, both sides, The United States and Austria as an extension of Europe in general are reassessing their historical relationship with each other.

2 Data presentation and demographics

The online survey on *Austrians' Views of the US* conducted from February 20-27, 2025, by the well-known and well-established Austrian survey company Market Institute comprises a random national sample of 1,501 participants. In the following segment, we describe the sample, its demographic features and what these fundamental characteristics can tell us about how Austrians view the US.

Who are the Austrians? Describing our sample.

The age distribution of the sample shows a relatively balanced ratio between the generations. While almost a third of the respondents are older than 60, about a fifth are between the ages of 16 and 29. The rest of the respondents are spread evenly across the age groups in between. This age range includes important periods in Austrian-American relations, from the postwar period and the early Cold War to the beginning of the Obama presidency. The number of women is almost the same as the number of men, with women making up 51% of the respondents and men making up 48.8%. Only 0.2 percent of people identify as diverse or do not fit into the gender binary construct.

More than 20% of the people surveyed are from Vienna. Overall, about one-third of the respondents live in big cities or their suburbs. By comparison, some 40% of the sample say they live in a village, a rural area, or a small town.

When it comes to education, the numbers show a wide range of educational backgrounds. Just under half of the respondents had completed vocational training. About 25% of the respondents had only finished primary school, 15% had an advanced secondary school diploma ("Matura") or post-secondary education, and about 17% had a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree. The employment situation of the respondents largely corresponds to that of the Austrian population as a whole. About 44% of the respondents are employed full-time, and another 13% work part-time. One-third of the people who responded are already retired, which reflects the high proportion of older respondents. Smaller groups are in education, looking for a job, or working part-time. The survey also included people who have temporarily stopped working. This could be because they are on parental leave or because of health issues.

Another important aspect is how the respondents perceive their own financial situation. Around 40% of the people who responded say they are able to live comfortably on their household income. Almost half of the people claim they were just about managing. On the other hand, about 12% of people indicate that they have a hard time paying for things with the money they make.

The survey also asked about a person's migration background. About 4.7% of the respondents were not born in Austria, and about 13.6% have at least one parent who was born in another country. However, most of the sample had no direct migrant background.

Just under half of Austrians say they are at least “somewhat interested” in politics, while around a quarter consider themselves “very interested.” On the other hand, around 20 percent claim to be “hardly interested” or “not interested at all.” This description of our representative sample is important for understanding and interpreting the rest of the analysis.

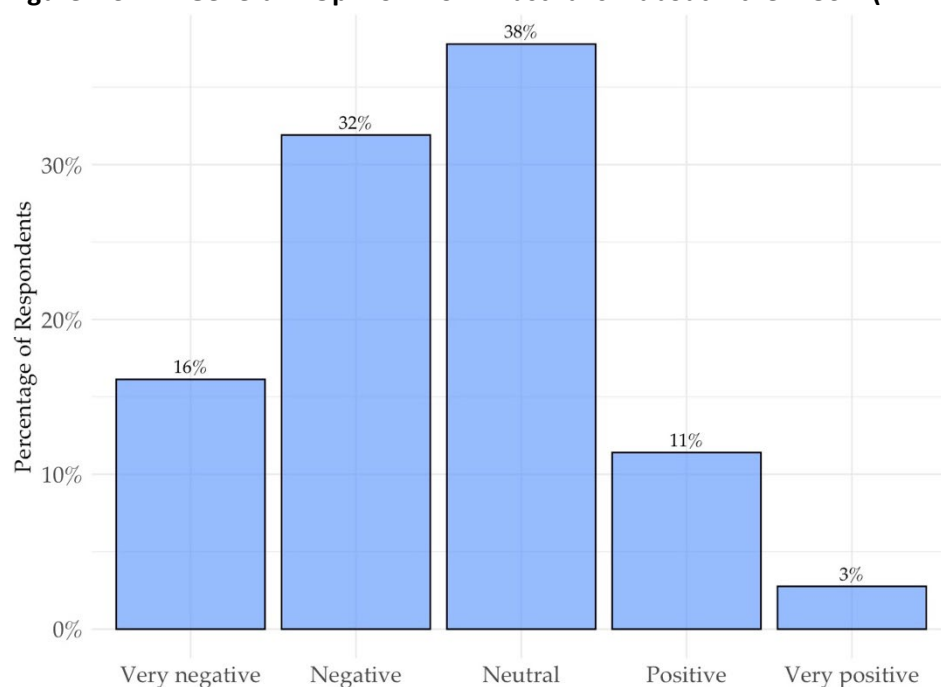
3 The Big Picture

What image do Austrians have of the USA in general?

To better understand how Austrians view the United States, we asked participants to rate their feelings about the U.S. on a scale from 0 (very negative) to 10 (very positive). The result confirms the suspected division (see Appendix AF3.1): 3% of respondents chose the middle value of 5, which indicates uncertainty and can be understood as a mix of different opinions. Despite this convergence in the middle of the scale, the average rating, the statistical mean, is 3.83, which is below the neutral range. This shows a general attitude of considerable skepticism toward the United States. The uneven distribution of extreme judgments is also striking. While 8.2% of respondents gave the US the lowest score of 0, only 1.6% assigned the highest possible score of 10. Overall, only about one-fifth of respondents reported having a positive view of the US. This initial glimpse into the mood in Austria suggests that most Austrians view the country negatively, even though there is a sizeable group with more positive views.

If we simplify the above distribution into the following five categories, we find that 16% hold very negative views, 32% somewhat negative opinions whereas 38% are neutral. By comparison 11% are somewhat positive whereas only 3% are strongly positive about the U.S. (see Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1: General Opinion of Austrians about the US (N= 1482), Mean= 2.53



Note: Original response scale ranges from 0 to 10. Recoded into 1 to 5.

How do Austrians differ in their view of the U.S.? – Breaking down the sample by group characteristics.

The survey results show that different social groups in Austria have different opinions about the USA. These differences are based on age, politics, and culture but not on gender (Figure 3.2). However, we do notice a gender difference when it comes to male and females views on U.S. policy when respondents were asked to think about the contribution the U.S. makes to solving global problems (Figure 3.3). Here, we see that men are somewhat more favorable toward the U.S. than women. Nonetheless, this gap is not statistically significant, meaning that the observed pattern is not large enough so as to generalize from this sample to the population at large. However, later in the report we will point to some gender-related differences in combination with other variables that are indeed remarkable.

Figure 3.2: General Opinion of Austrians about the US, by Sex (N= 1366)

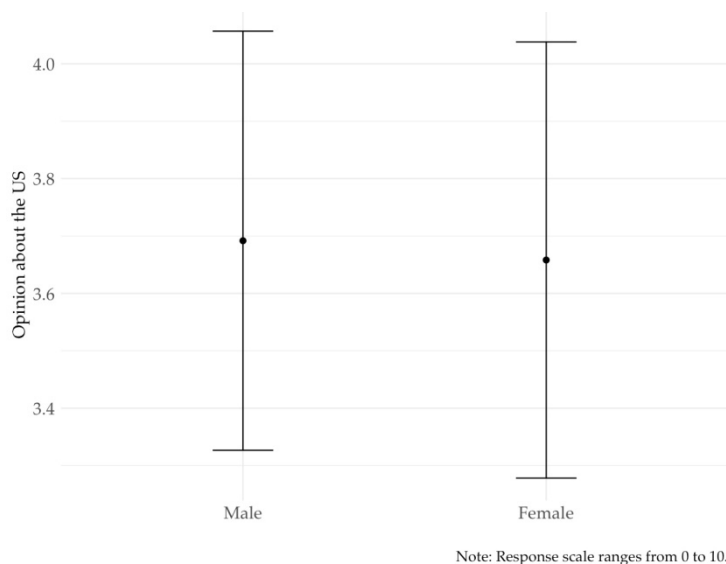
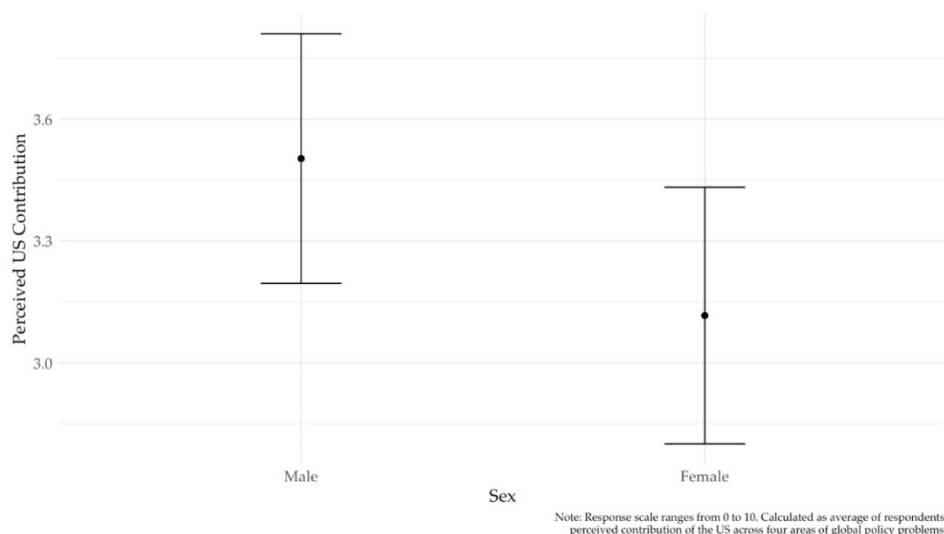


Figure 3.3: Perceived Contribution by the US to solving Global Problems, by Sex (N= 1354)



By comparison, the differences in opinion by age are quite striking. The intergenerational pattern suggests that younger people have a more favorable opinion of the United States than older Austrians. This pattern only stops for those Austrians who came of age during the Reagan years but resumes for the subsequent age cohort. While the 16-29 age group has the highest average opinion of the U.S., those over 60 have the lowest (Figure 3.4). This dynamic is also reflected in assessments of U.S. foreign policy where the progression is even steeper, meaning that each successive cohort has a clearly more favorable view than its predecessor (Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.4: General Opinion of the US, by Age Group (N= 1384)

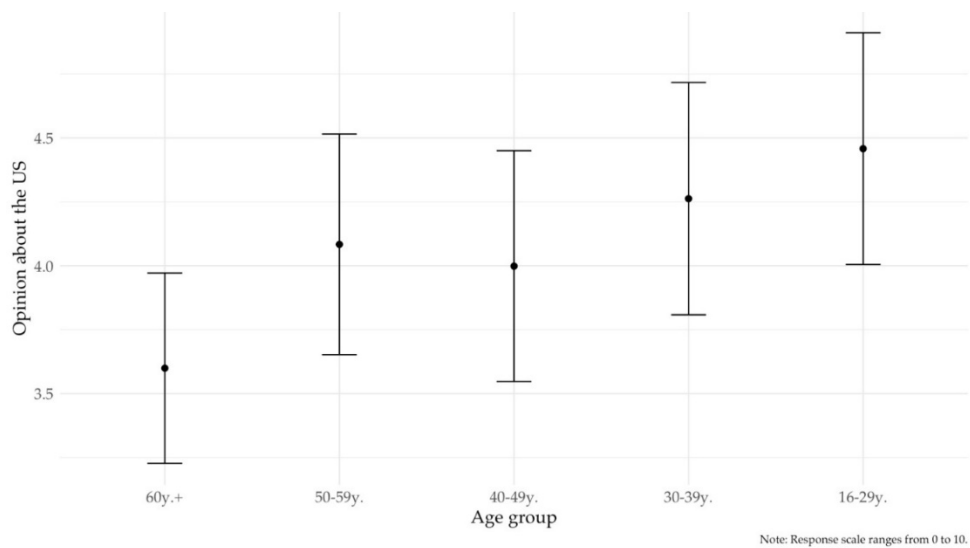
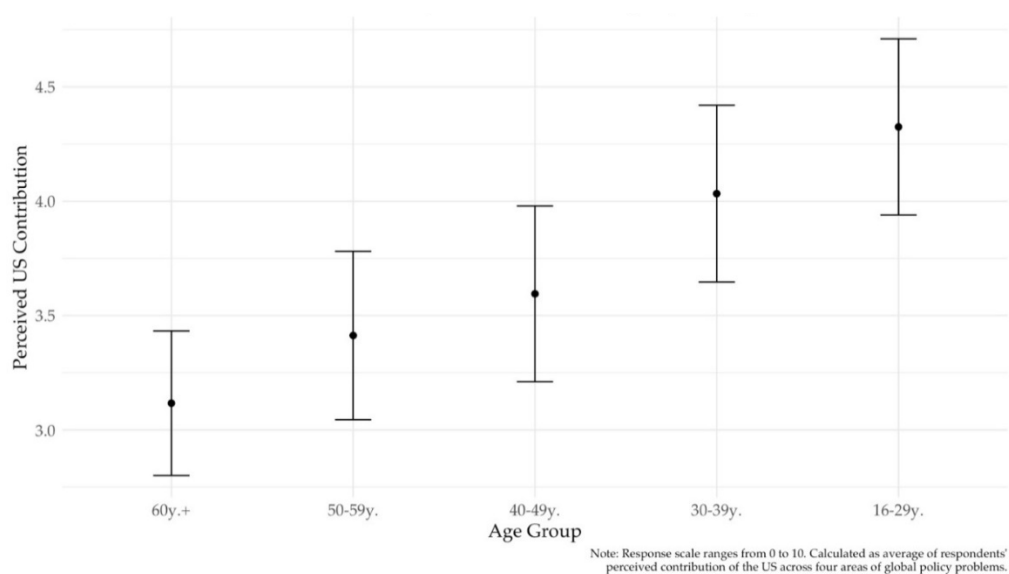
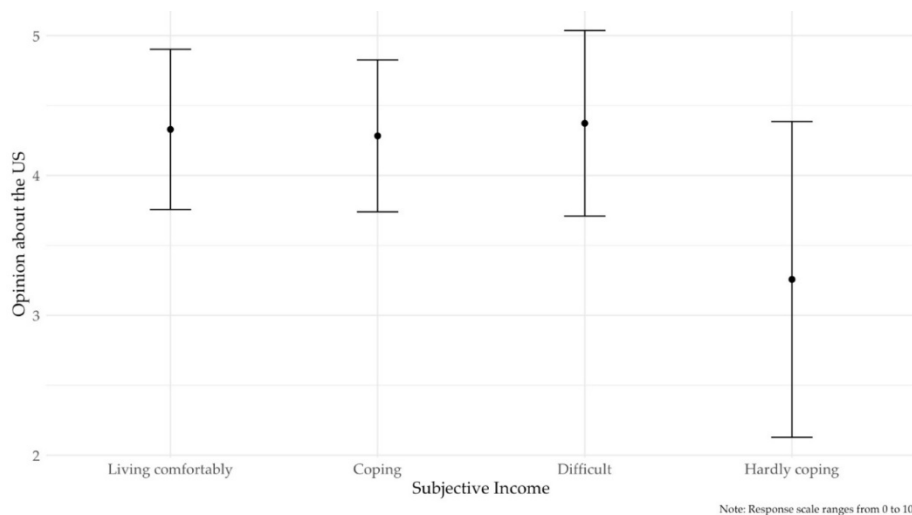


Figure 3.5: Perceived Contribution by the US to solving Global Problems, by Age Group (N= 1354)



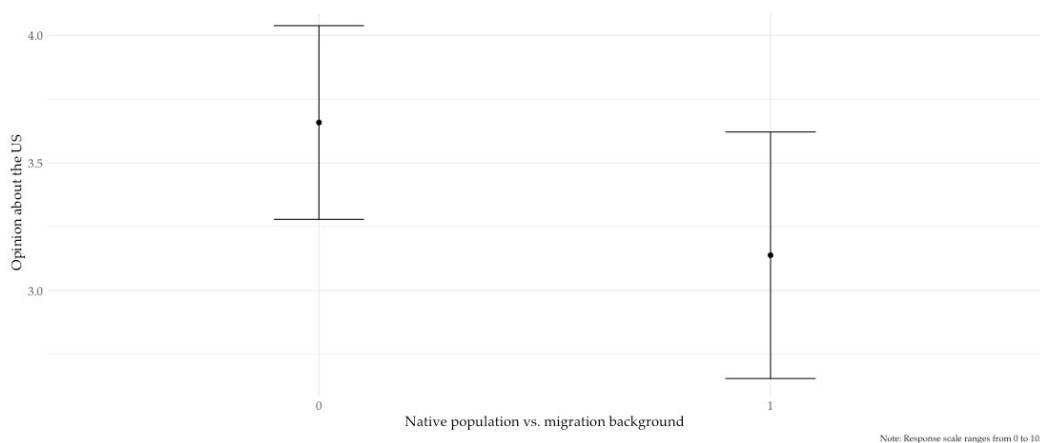
Income is another important differentiating factor. People who state that their income situation is difficult or who barely get by rate the USA more negatively overall than those who are better off (Figure 3.6).

Figure 3.6: General Opinion of the US, by Subjective Income Situation (N= 948)



We also wanted to see whether a migration background made a difference in the assessment and indeed we observe a relative difference. Austrians with migration background have a more negative view of the U.S. than Austrians in general (Figure 3.7). However, this difference is not statistically significant and thus we have to be cautious in generalizing from this sample.

Figure 3.7: General Opinion of the US, by Migration Background (N= 1366)



Two further predictors that help explain the differences in opinion are media and language skills. It appears that people who use social media more intensively and have better English skills have a consistently more positive image of the United States. This suggests that both more intensive use of international media and better language access to American culture and information provide direct exposure to primary sources—without the filtering effect of translations or pre-selection by third parties. Figure 3.8 below clearly shows how language skills serve as a window to another society and

culture, thereby improving perceptions of it. At the same time, the use of social media facilitates direct exchange with US citizens and can thus provide personal insights that go beyond media portrayals.

Figure 3.8: Perception of the U.S. by a respondent's command of English (N= 948)

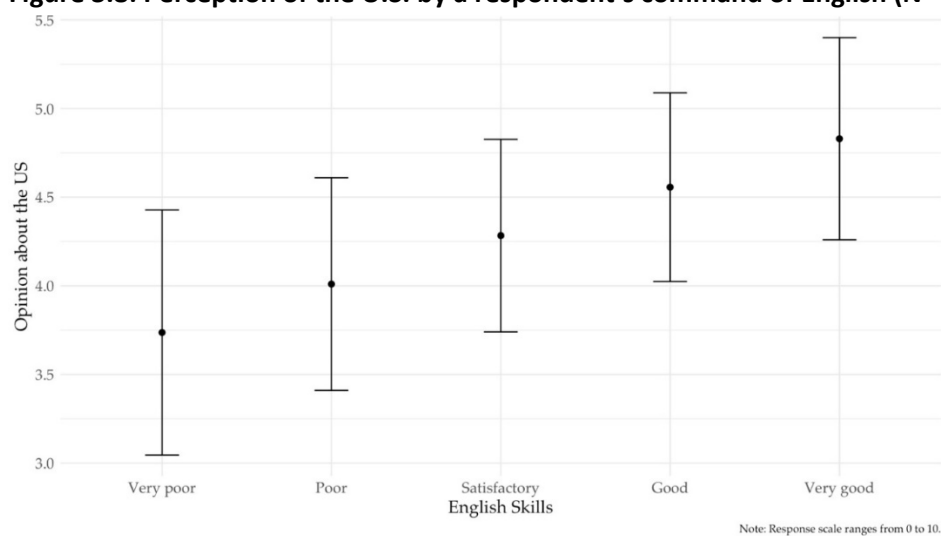
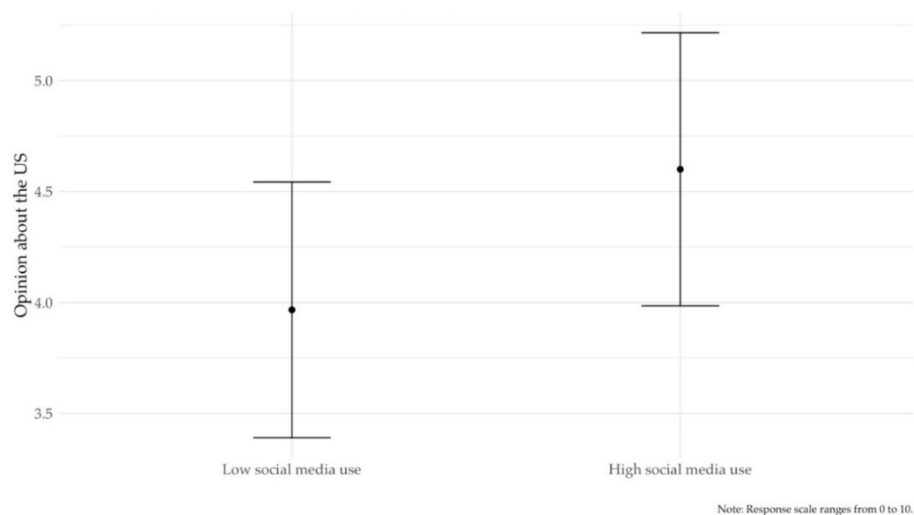


Figure 3.9: General Opinion of the US, by Frequency of Social Media Use (N= 948)



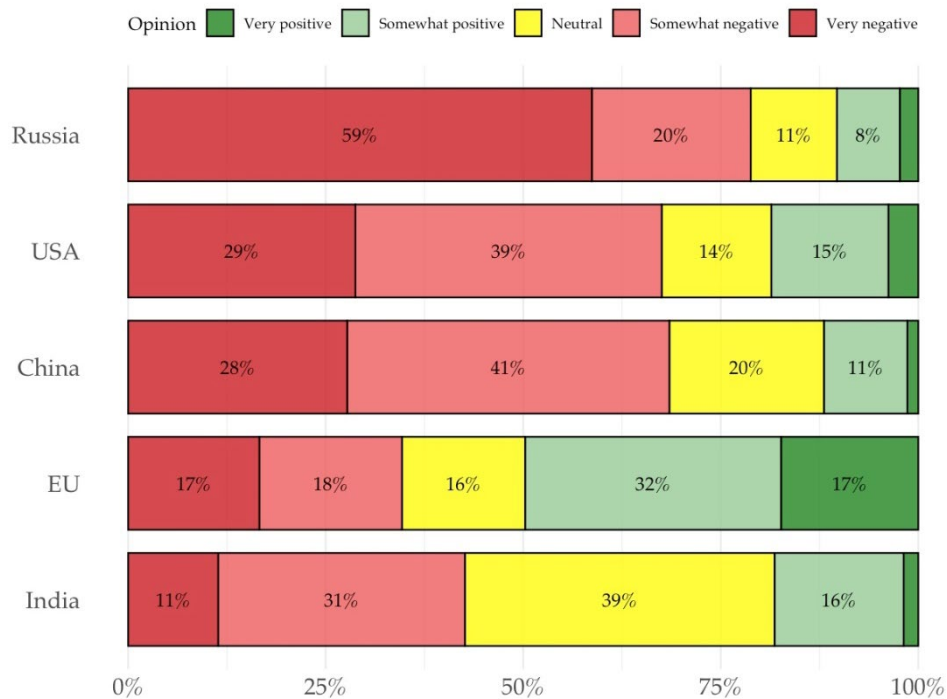
Of course, the relative impact of social media use (Figure 3.9) may be closely related to generational differences (Figure 3.4), as younger people have more positive views of the U.S. and also tend to use social media more frequently than others. We will explore these causal relationships in more detail in the final section of this report.

4 Taking a Closer Look

How do Austrians assess the U.S. relative to other global powers and its role as a global leader?

When comparing the US as a world power on a scale from -5 to +5, Austrians give an average rating of -1.7, which is significantly lower than that of the EU (0.33) and even India (-0.75), but higher than that of China (-1.86) and Russia (-3.02) – the graphs are shown in the appendix (AF4.1-AF4.5). However, a direct comparison of world powers can also be seen in Figure 4.1. Compared to other world powers, Russia and the US received the most negative ratings. On the other hand, America is still viewed more positively than all other major powers with the exception of the European Union.

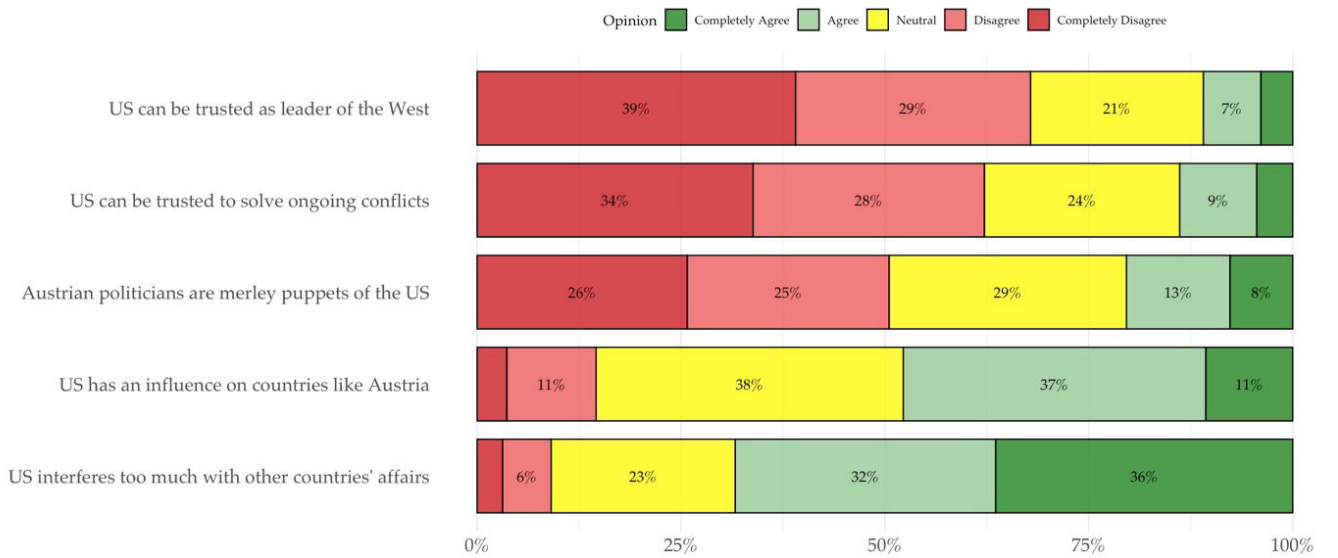
Figure 4.1: Austrians' opinion about the U.S. as a Global Power relative to China, India, and Russia (N ≥ 1467)



Note: Original response scales range from -5 to 5. Recoded into -2 to 2.

The relatively low opinion of the U.S. as a global power appears related to views such as the perceived inability of the U.S. to solve ongoing conflicts – see Appendix AF4.6—which has mean score of only 3.06 on the 10-point scale. Austrian respondents have a particularly negative opinion about the U.S. as leader of the Western world and award it only a mean value of 2.74 (Appendix AF4.7). There is also almost a consensus among respondents that the U.S. interferes too much in the affairs of other countries (mean score of 7.26/10) (Appendix AF4.8). Figure 4.2 clearly summarizes these results.

Figure 4.2: Austrians' Opinion about the US Role in World Politics (N ≥ 1429)

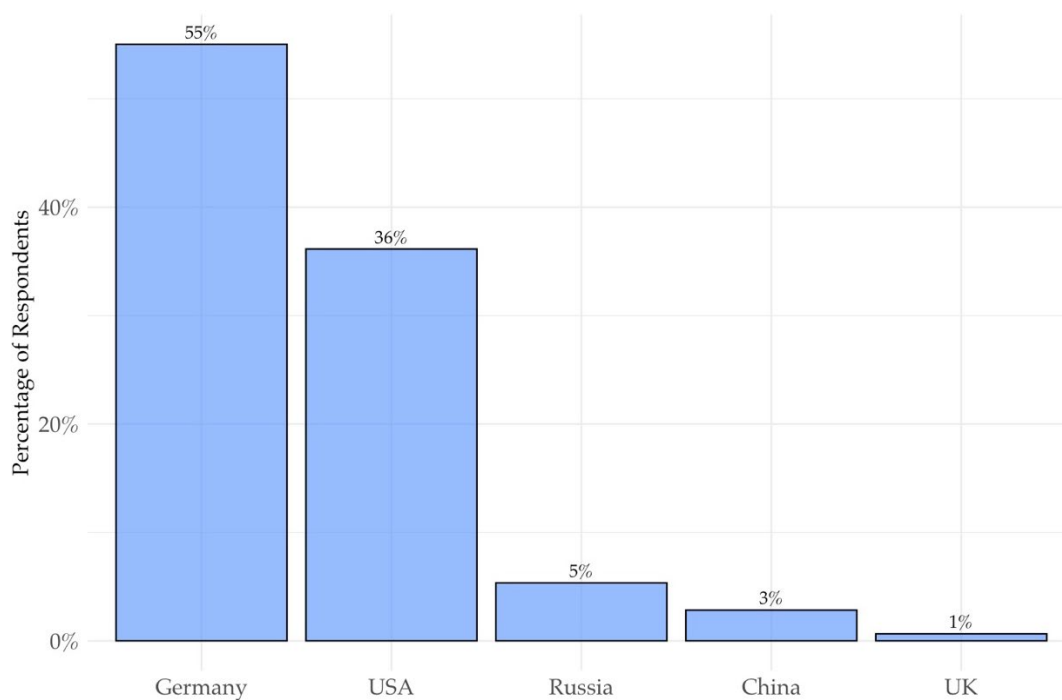


Note: Original response scales range from 0 to 10. Recoded into five categories.

What impact has the U.S. had on Austria, according to Austrians?

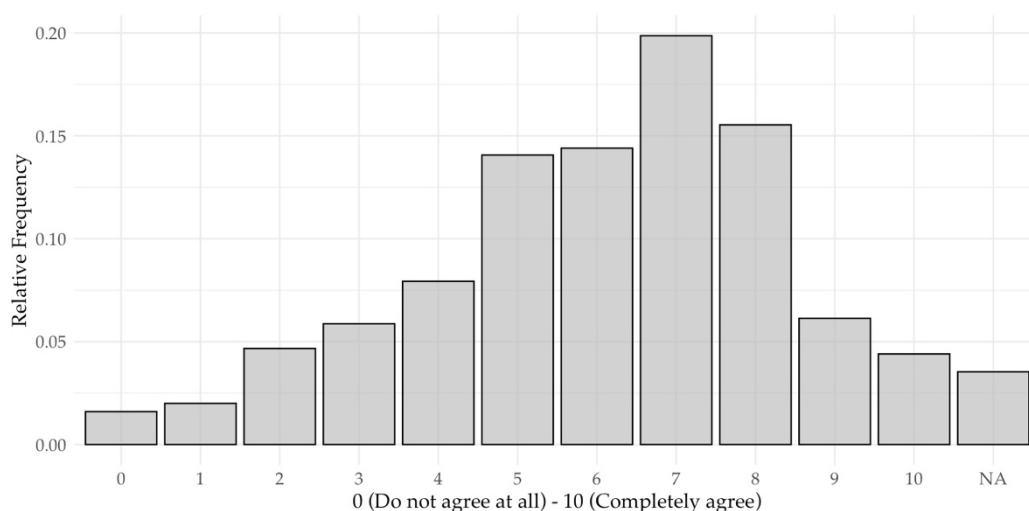
In the next section, we look at the influence of the US on Austria from the perspective of Austrians. Overall, America is seen as the second most influential power after Germany, and by a wide margin (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3: Austrians Assessing the Relative Influence of major Powers on their Country after WW2 (N= 1234)



Overall, a majority of Austrian agree that the US continues to influence developments in Austria (a statistical mean of 6) – Figure 4.4—meaning that the role of the U.S. in people’s minds is not something limited to the postwar years and the reconstruction period but continues into the present.

Figure 4.4: Austrian Perception of the U.S. Influence on developments in Austria (N= 1447), Mean= 6.01



In fact, some Austrian feel that American influence is such that Austrian politicians are merely puppets on Washington’s strings (Figure 4.2). This view, however, is limited only to a minority of Austrians given a distribution mean of 3.8 out of 10— a more specific illustration in Appendix AF4.9.

When asked whether the influence of the US on Austria had decreased or increased, Austrians were unable to decide and chose the middle category on a 10-point scale (see Figure AF4.10 in the appendix). When assessing the influence of the U.S. on various areas on a scale of 0 to 10, respondents rated America's influence as follows: see Table 4.1 (the figures are shown in Appendix AF4.11-AF4.17).

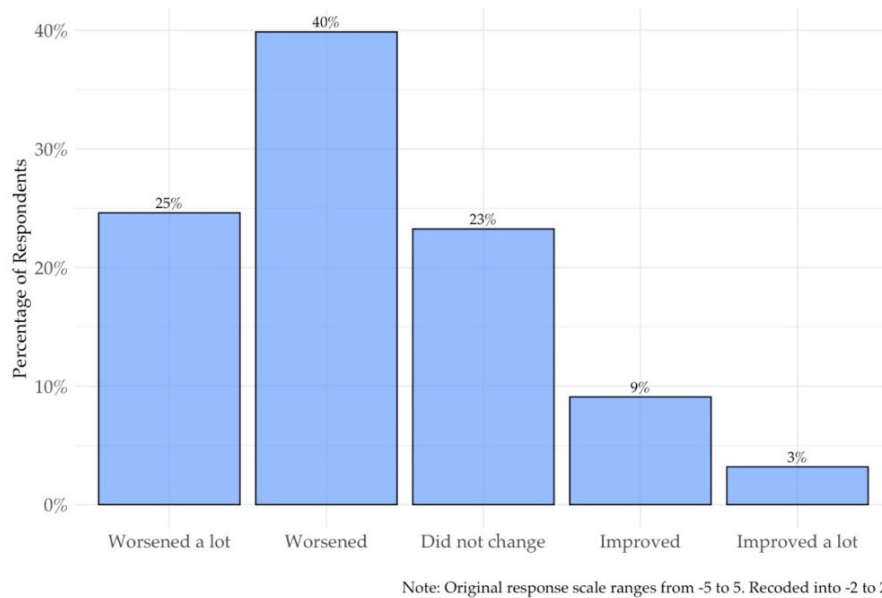
Table 4.1: How Austrians assess the influence of the U.S. on various areas

Technology	6.58
Economy and Industry	6.51
Media and Communication	6.08
Fashion	5.24
Universities and Science	4.84
Society and Culture	4.33
Arts	3.22

How stable are Austrian views, or have they changed recently?

Despite the fact that this survey represents views from one point in time, we were nonetheless interested in understanding how people's perception of the United States may have changed recently and what factors have contributed to this change. Thus, we included questions to this effect. The results clearly show that the most common response was that views of the U.S. had become more negative. This sentiment was expressed by about 65% of the respondent (Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5: How have your views of the U.S. changed? (N= 1475), Mean= -0.74

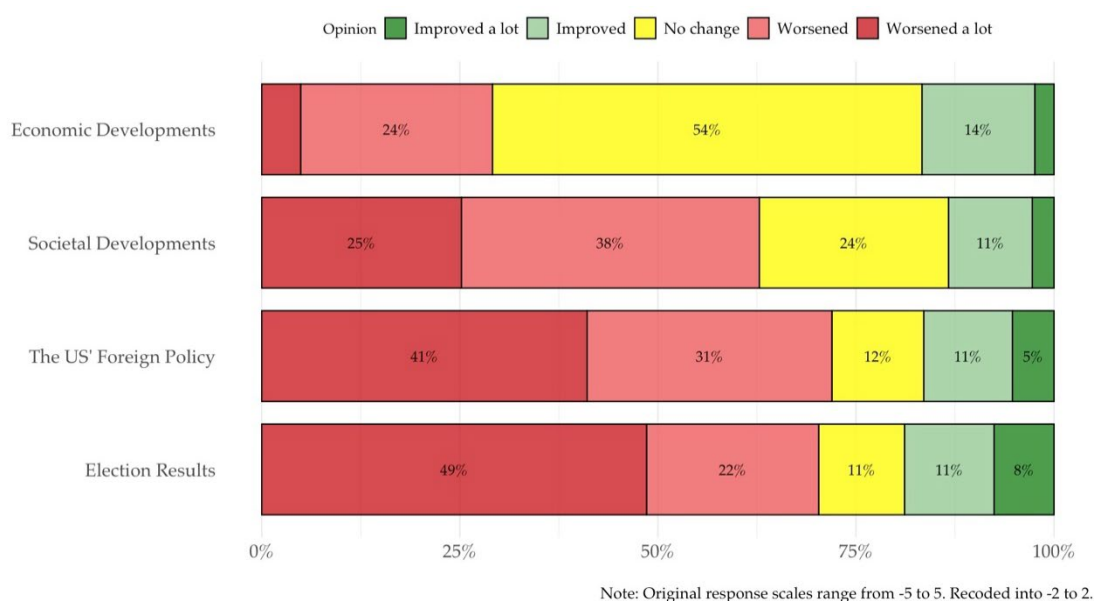


How can this deterioration be explained? When asked about the reasons for their change of opinion (see Figure 4.6 and, for a more detailed analysis, see Appendix AF4.18-4.21), most Austrians cited the recent election results and US foreign policy as the main causes. It is also interesting to note that a large proportion of respondents believe that US foreign policy is damaging the country's image around the world. A total of 72% of respondents share this view, and more than a third of them say that this conveys a very negative image of the US (mean = -0.91).

The US economy has only a minor influence on Austrians' opinion of the US (average = -0.15). Most respondents (54%) say that it does not influence their opinion. However, social polarization in the US is a major problem for many respondents. In fact, 63% of respondents state that it makes them view the US in an unfavorable light, with an average value of -0.72. This is significantly stronger than the influence of the economy. Since, according to our respondents, the outcome of the 2025 US presidential election had the greatest impact on the deterioration of opinion, with an average score of -0.92, we can conclude that Donald Trump's return to the presidency represents an important turning point in the image of the United States for a large proportion of Austrian respondents..

As a result, people based their negative assessment of the U.S. also on what they expected to happen with climate change and foreign policy under Trump (see Figure 5.1). People's opinions were also affected by their personal concerns about how Trump's re-election affected the European Union. On average, respondents gave a score of about -2.9, and 83% of them think there will be negative consequences for the relationship between the U.S. and Europe. Just as many see a significant decline in the general international security situation and global economic development—areas that are closely linked to political stability, international cooperation and trust.

Figure 4.6: Relative Importance of Reasons for People Changing Opinions on the US (N ≥ 1475)



The Trump factor

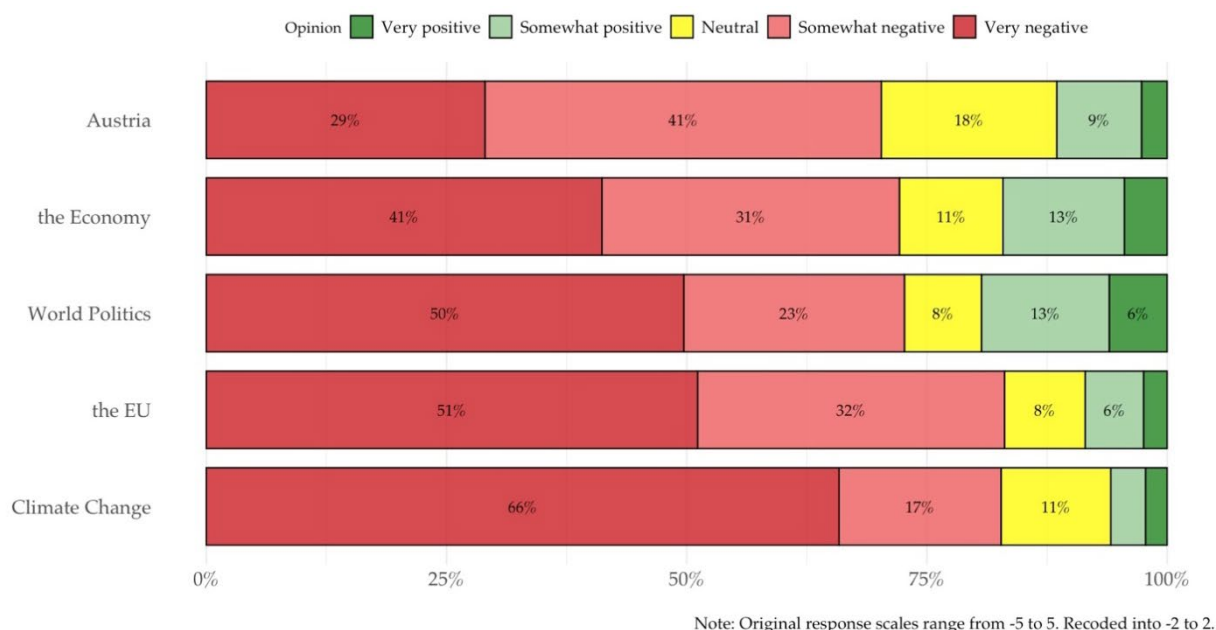
Summing up, the outcome of the U.S. election in 2025 is the most important factor shaping Austrians' perceptions. More than 37% of respondents, by far the largest group of Austrians, said that their opinion was mainly determined by the outcome of the US elections and less by other reasons. In the area of climate change, only 5.8% expect positive developments. We will see later in this report that people do distinguish somewhat between the U.S. in general and the Trump factor. Interestingly and if we paint with a very broad brush, the results show two distinct groups of Austrians who have little in common: those that are more pro-US but anti-Trump and those who are pro-Trump but otherwise skeptical of the US.

5 The Implication of the Trump Presidency for Austria, the EU, and the world

What does the election of Trump mean for Austria, the EU, and the world in general, according to respondents?

Austrians do not view the direct impact on Austria with concern or great pessimism: although around 70% of respondents expect negative consequences, 18% do not anticipate any significant changes. The average impact value of -1.95 (Appendix AF5.1) is thus significantly lower than in the other areas surveyed (Figure 5.1). Only a small minority of respondents expect any positive consequences at all as a result of Trump's re-election.

Figure 5.1: The perceived Impact of the Trump Election on Austria (N ≥ 1475)



In comparison, Austrians see the consequences of the 2025 elections for the EU, the world, and several important policy areas as far worse than for Austria itself. The proportion of those who expect at least some benefits for the global political order is slightly higher: 19.4% of respondents are cautiously optimistic. The reasons for Austrians' negative assessment are also clear: under a Trump presidency, respondents tend to have pessimistic expectations about political issues that are important to them, such as climate change, global peace and security, the world economy, and the war in Ukraine. As these opinions were gathered at the end of February 2025, they were influenced by the events and decisions of the Trump administration at that time, i.e., before the escalation of the tariff dispute and Trump's outburst with Ukrainian President Zelensky in the White House.

If we were to rank the expected negative effects of the Trump administration by policy area, Austrians would see the results in the following order, from the most negative to the least negative: 1) climate change, 2) the European Union, 3) global politics, 4) the global economy, and 5) Austria.

Overall, the results paint a clear picture: the reputation of the United States has suffered significantly in the eyes of many Austrians. Donald Trump's return to the presidency has particularly damaged this reputation. It is perceived by many as a turning point in world affairs.

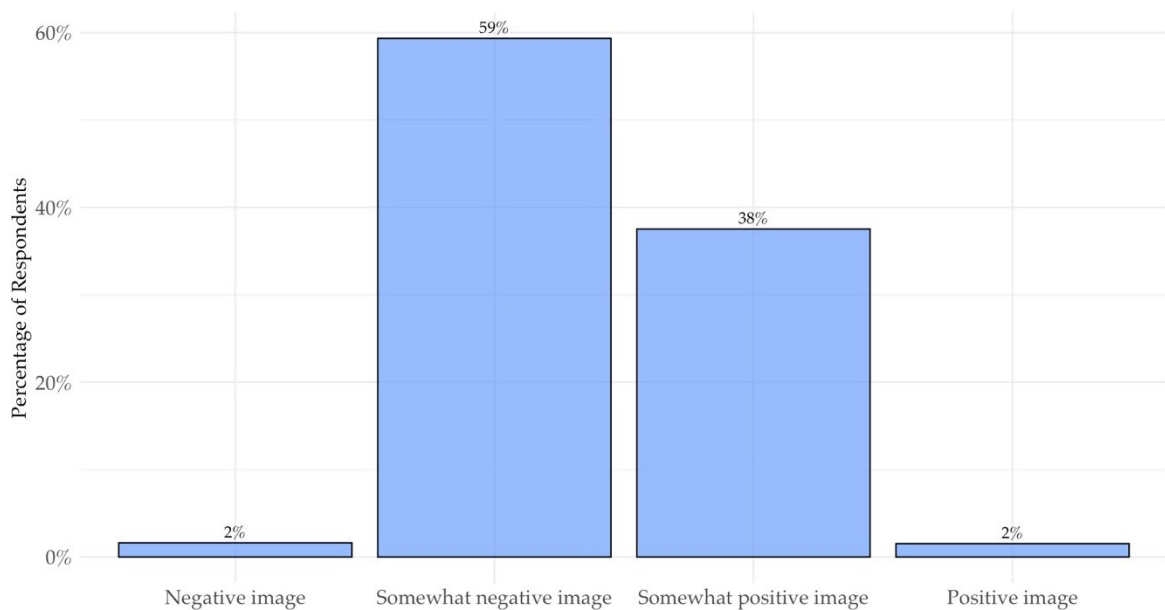
What do Austrians think about society, life, and politics in the U.S.?

One of the study's research interests is to identify areas in which Austrians have particular sympathies or antipathies toward the United States. Another question is whether Austrian respondents distinguish between different dimensions of the image of the United States, for example between Americans as people, American society in general, and American politics, or whether these aspects are mixed together in public opinion.

Perception of people, society, and life in the U.S.

The general impression of Americans is rather mixed: 59% of respondents describe Americans as “somewhat negative,” while 38% give a “somewhat positive” assessment. The average score is 2.39 on a scale from 1 (very negative) to 4 (very positive). Only 2% expressed a very positive attitude and 2% a very negative attitude (Figure 5.2).

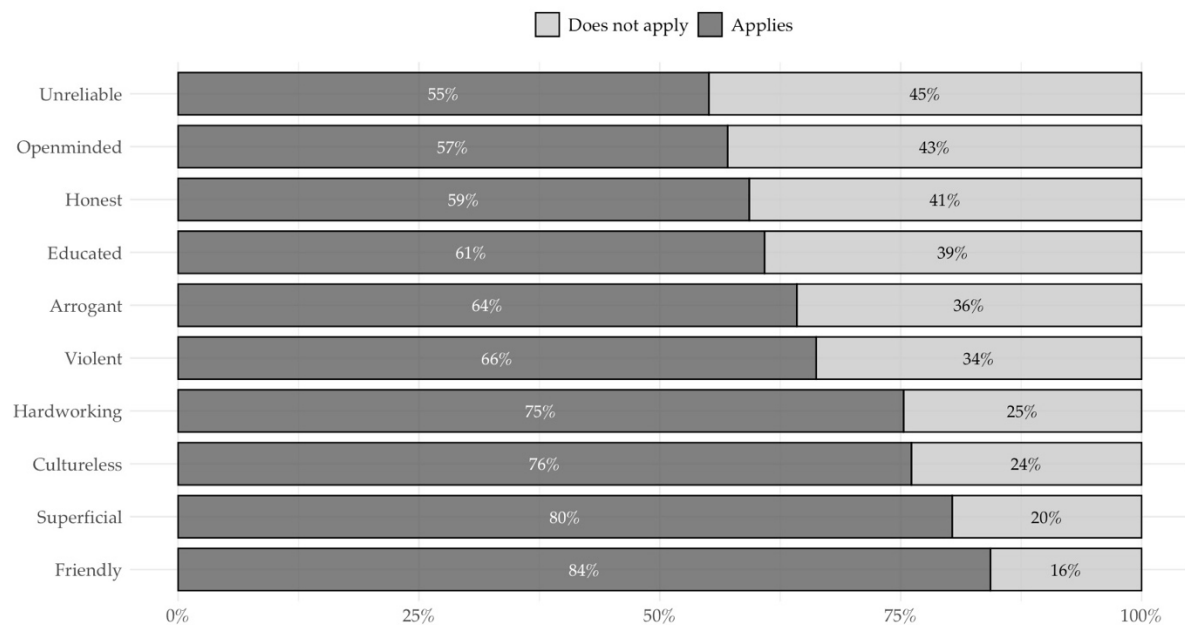
Figure 5.2: Overview Austrian views of Americans as people (N = 1050), Mean= 2.39



Note: Response scale ranges from 1 to 4. Calculated as average of respondents' reported views across ten areas.

Despite this generally skeptical attitude, certain characteristics of Americans are viewed largely positively. The perception of Americans as friendly is very pronounced: 84% agree with this assessment at least partially or completely. Hard work (75%), education (61%), honesty (59%), and open-mindedness (57%) are also frequently mentioned. At the same time, there are negative perceptions: 80% see Americans as superficial, 76% as uncultured, two-thirds as violent, and 64% as arrogant. In fact, 55% of respondents question the reliability of Americans, although this is a rather contested attribution, at 45% (Figure 5.3).

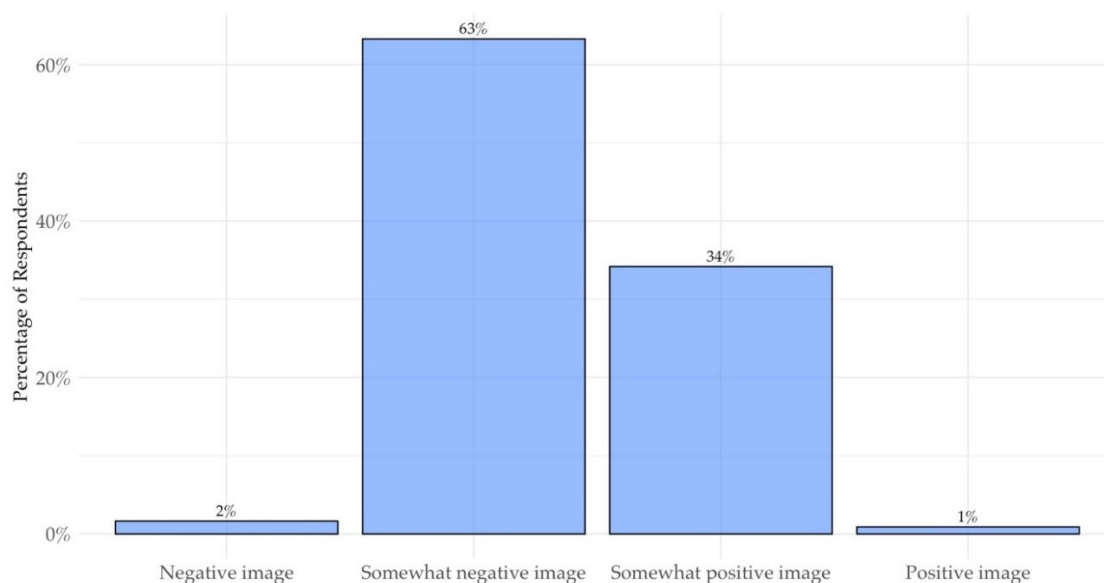
Figure 5.3: Perception of Characteristics of Americans (N ≥ 1050)



Note: Original response scales range from 1 to 4. Recoded into binary categories.

Next, we turn to Austrians' views of life and society in the U.S: Here the image tends to be predominantly negative. 63% of respondents rate it as somewhat bad, while 34% rate it as somewhat good; the mean value of 2.34 corresponds almost exactly to that rating of the population (Figure 5.4). This tells us also that Austrian view Americans more favorably as people than the political and social system.

Figure 5.4: Perception of Characteristics of the U.S. Political and Social System (N = 1475); Mean= 2.34

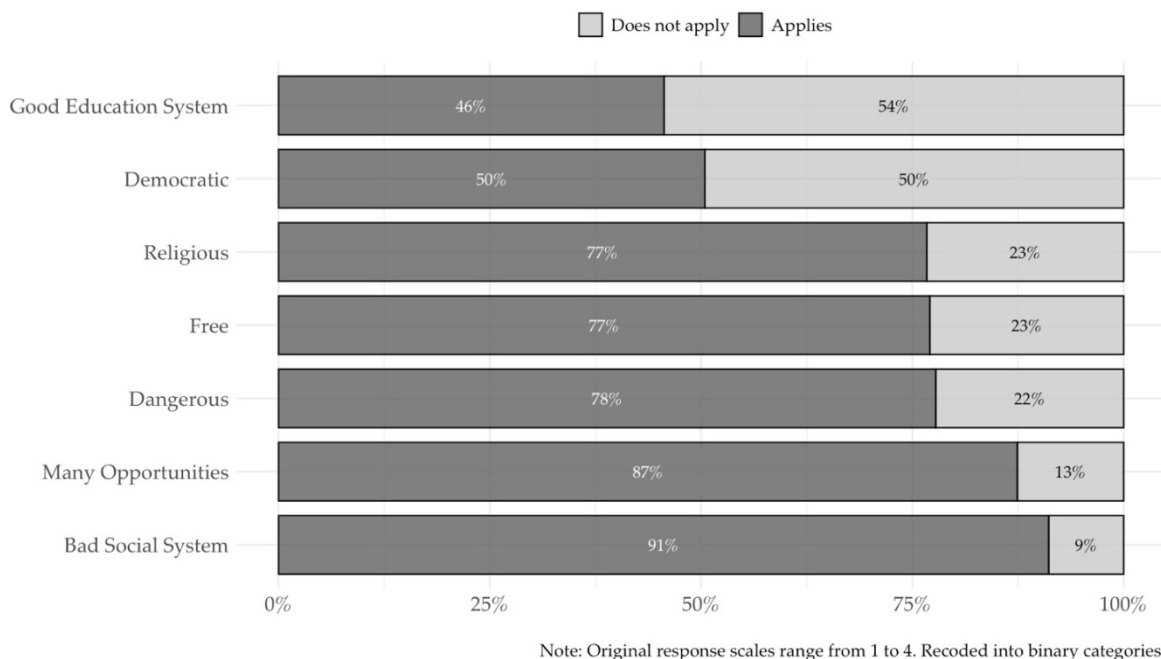


Note: Response scale ranges from 1 to 4. Calculated as average of respondents' reported views across six areas.

Fundamentally, there is a striking gap between certain positive assumptions about America and Americans on the one hand and the negative perception of the US system as a whole on the other: for example, around 87% of respondents see the US as a land of opportunity, and 77% associate it with a high degree of individual freedom (Figure 5.5). At the same time, 91% rate the social security system as poor and 78% consider the US a dangerous place to live. Respondents are very divided on whether democratic rights and freedoms are upheld in the US: half agree with this political assessment, while the other half disagree. Only 46% rate the education system as good.

We also interpreted these contradictory results in connection with the conflicting views of Americans as people, as a lack of understanding on the part of Austrians of the connections between these aspects and thus as an expression of a certain difficulty in understanding the American system and how it works, even though Austrians feel its global impact. We also note that despite widespread skepticism toward the US, “classic” notions of America as the promised land live on in the minds of Austrians, as the US is seen as a land of opportunity and freedom, especially for “hard-working” and “well-educated” people.

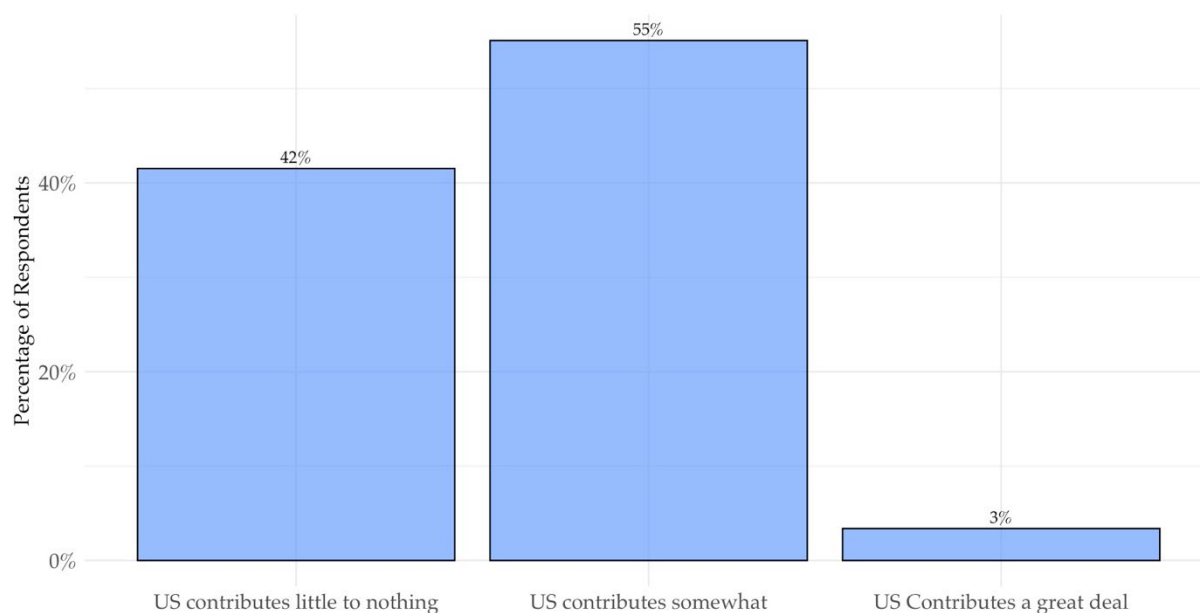
Figure 5.5: Perception of the U.S. System across areas (N ≥ 1337)



What do Austrians think about the U.S. Role in the World?

Austrians' assessment of U.S. policy and its role in the world is much more sobering. When asked about the United States' contribution to solving global problems (see Figure 5.6), only 3% of respondents felt that the U.S. makes a "major contribution". A narrow majority of 55% saw at least some contribution, while 42% viewed the U.S. hardly contributing at all to solving global challenges. The mean score here is just 1.62 (scale from 1 to 3). It is unclear whether these are long terms views or shaped by the developments since the new president came into office.

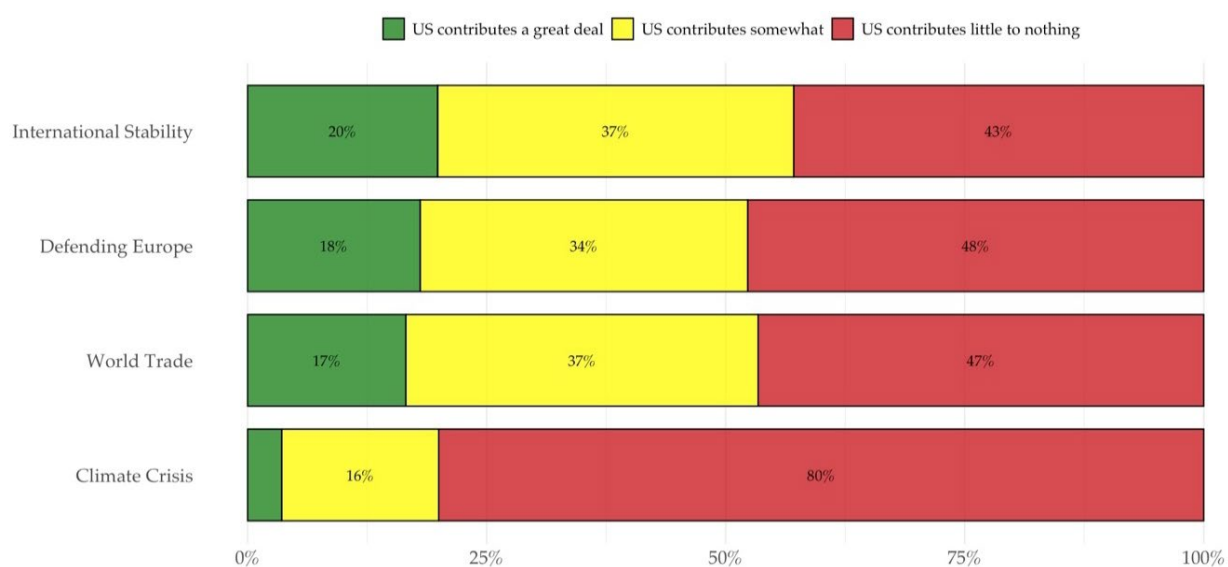
Table 5.6: Perceived US' contribution to solving global problems (N = 1445), Mean= 1.62



Note: Original response scale ranges from 0 to 10. Recoded into three categories. Calculated as average of respondents' reported views across four areas.

As we can see in Figure 5.7, the U.S. role in climate change is viewed particularly negatively, with 80% of respondents seeing no contribution in this area. Skepticism also prevails in the areas of international security, the defense of Europe, and global trade: between 40% and 50% of respondents do not believe that U.S. policy makes a significant contribution in these areas. Only a minority—between 17% and 20%—see U.S. trade policy as helping to solve problems.

Table 5.7: Perception of US' contribution to solving global problems across issue areas (N ≥ 1445)



Note: Original response scales range from -5 to 5. Recoded into -2 to 2.

Summary

The discrepancy between the assessment of American society and the political system is particularly striking. Personal qualities such as friendliness, diligence, and open-mindedness are attributed to the majority of the U.S. population—even if attributes such as superficiality and arrogance are also present. This shows that American society is not rejected out of hand, but is viewed in a more differentiated way—as ambivalent, sympathetic in parts, alien or exaggerated in others. The picture of life in the USA is similar. Many respondents see it as a land of freedom and opportunity that promises individual mobility. At the same time, there is a deep distrust of the state infrastructure and government institutions. Also, the social and welfare system is seen as inadequate, the education system as below average, and the security situation as worrying. And yet, in the minds of Austrians, a sub-par education system is producing reasonably well-educated people. This simultaneous recognition of individual freedoms and rejection of the U.S. in terms of systemic political aspects reveals a selective assessment—positive when it comes to self-realization, critical when it comes to state responsibility. The need for differentiation becomes even clearer when it comes to government policy. Here the assessment shifts noticeably toward the negative.

The majority of respondents do not trust the U.S. government to play a constructive role either in climate protection or in solving global crises. Here in particular, there is a clear tension between the continued strong cultural presence of the United States on the one hand and the lack of trust in its political integrity on the other.

6 Explanations

How can we explain differences in the perceptions Austrians have of the U.S.?

Factor Ideology: Right-wing Austrians view the U.S. now more favorably

Views of American society differ, sometimes markedly, according to ideological orientation. Our study uses two different indicators, one measuring socio-cultural left-right orientations (cosmopolitan vs. anti-cosmopolitan orientations) and the other measuring economic left-right positioning. We find that people with right-wing or nationalist-anti-cosmopolitan attitudes rate Americans and their society significantly less negatively than people with left-wing or green-cosmopolitan attitudes, which is surprising since anti-Americanism used to be particularly pronounced on the Austrian right, given the liberal, multicultural, and relatively egalitarian tradition of the United States.

Figure 6.1 clearly shows this significant difference in the assessment of U.S. society between green-cosmopolitan and right-wing nationalist respondents. We see that the confidence intervals between the two distributions do not overlap, with respective distribution means below 2.3 and above 2.5 on a ten-point scale from 0 (= least favorable) to 10 (= most favorable). This means that the effect is such that we can generalize from this sample to the population at large. The picture is de facto identical for economic left-right placement. Austrians on the right have a less negative view of Americans as shown in Figure 6.2 below.

Figure 6.1: Perceptions of U.S. Society by Cosmopolitan-Nationalist Ideology (N = 1009)

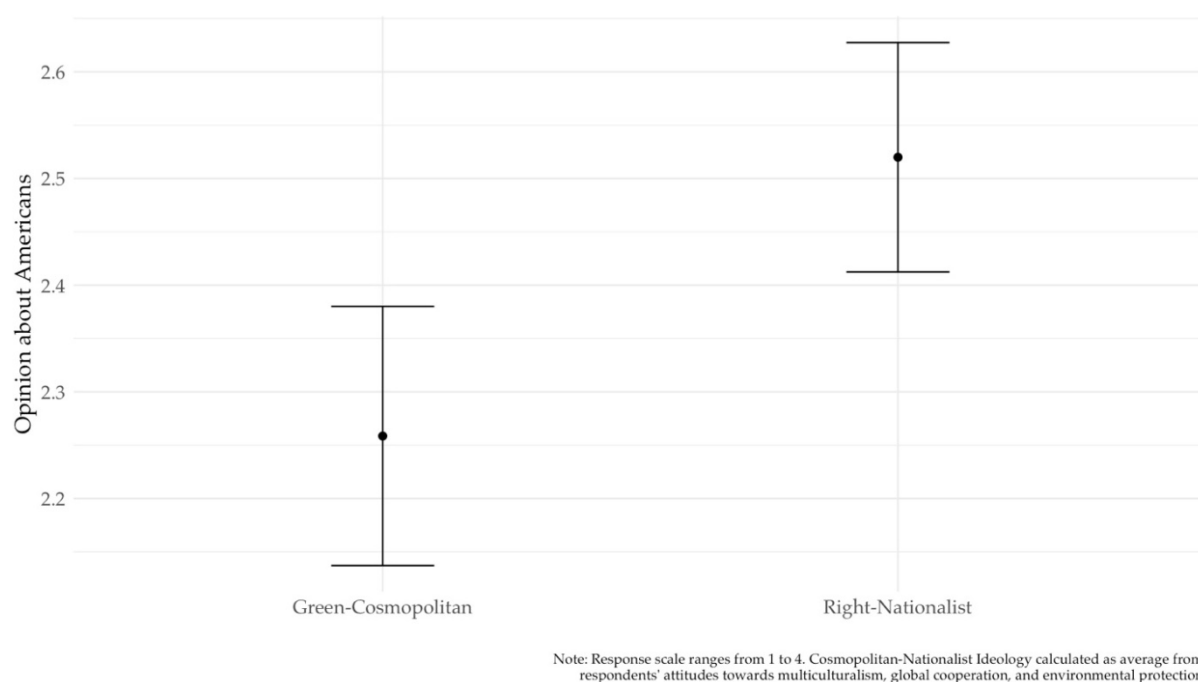
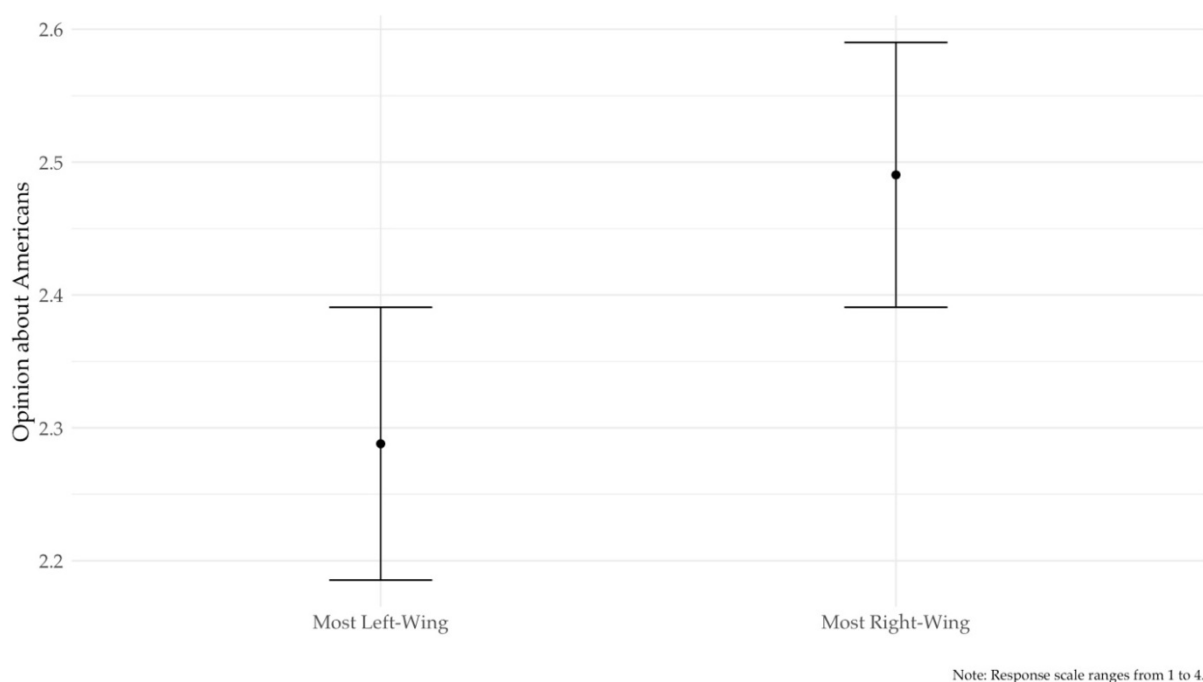


Figure 6.2: Perceptions of U.S. Society by Left-Right Placement (N = 1009)



A similar pattern can be seen in the assessment of the American system and the perceived reality of life in the United States (see Figure 6.3 and 6.4). Mean scores are particularly low among strongly left-wing or green-cosmopolitan respondents—they tend to be around 2.2 ("rather negative"), while right-wing or nationalist groups achieve scores well into the 2.6 range, i.e., in the area of rather positive perceptions. The latter is undoubtedly an indication that people with right-wing or conservative

economic orientations would be more favorable toward American capitalism than their counterparts on the left.

Figure 6.3: Perceptions of Life in the U.S. by Left-Right Placement (N = 1287)

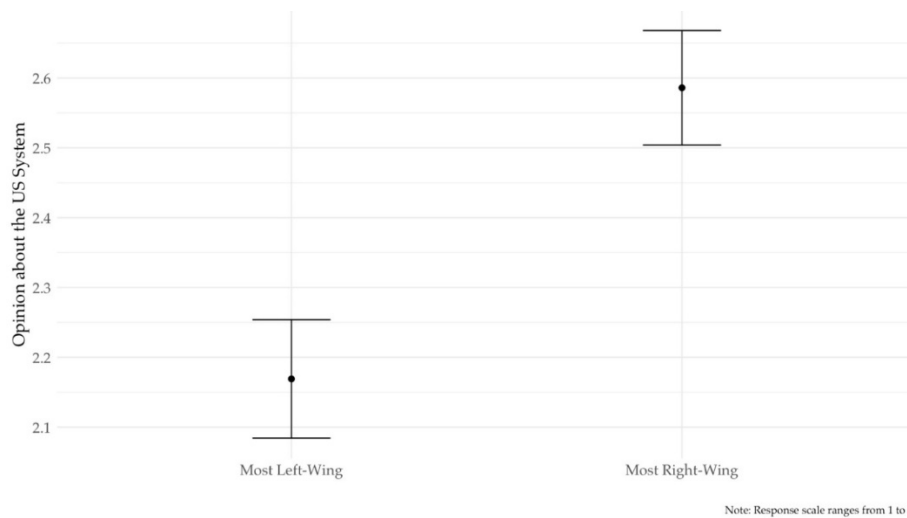
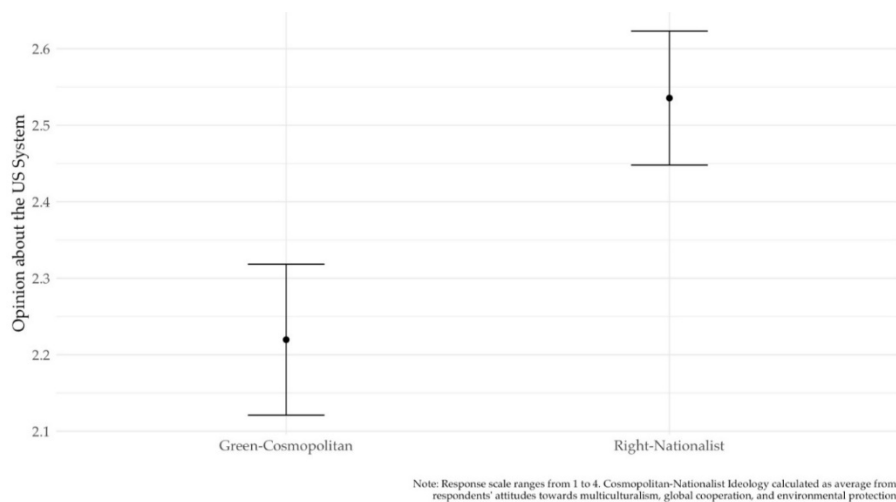
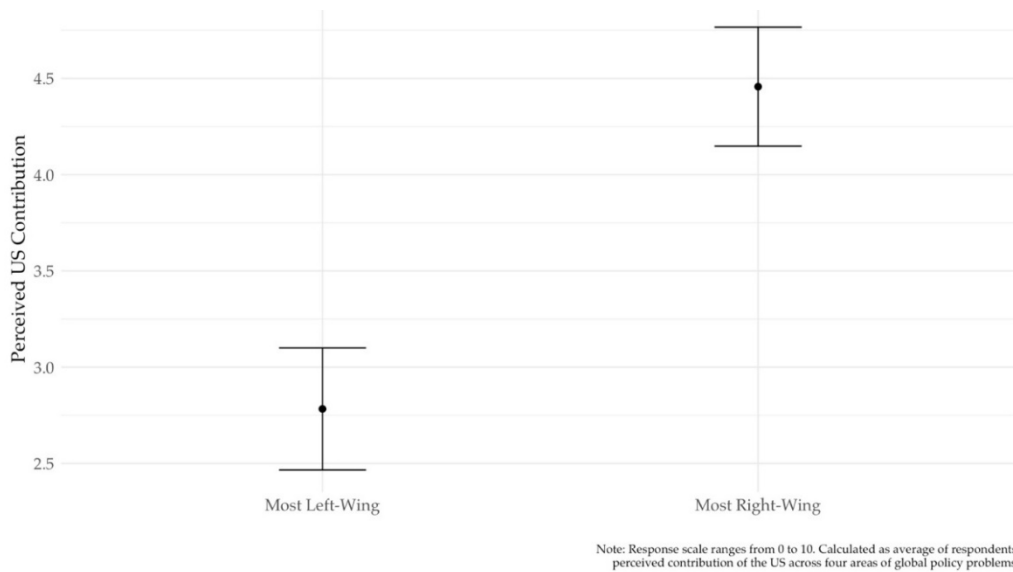


Figure 6.4: Perceptions of Life in the U.S. by Cosmopolitan-Nationalist Orientations (N= 1287)



There is also a clear divide when it comes to the international role of the United States: left-leaning Austrians are much more critical of the USA's contribution to solving global problems. Here, the mean value for people on the left is for the most part below 3 on a scale of 10 whereas for right-wing respondents the values much closer to 5. We may interpret this in one of two ways. For the latter Austrians, the political priorities and policy solutions are different and thus the U.S. contribution appears appropriate or justified. Alternatively, these respondents share the same priorities but have lower expectations as to what is possible and thus perceive the U.S.' role as adequate under the circumstances (Figure 6.5).

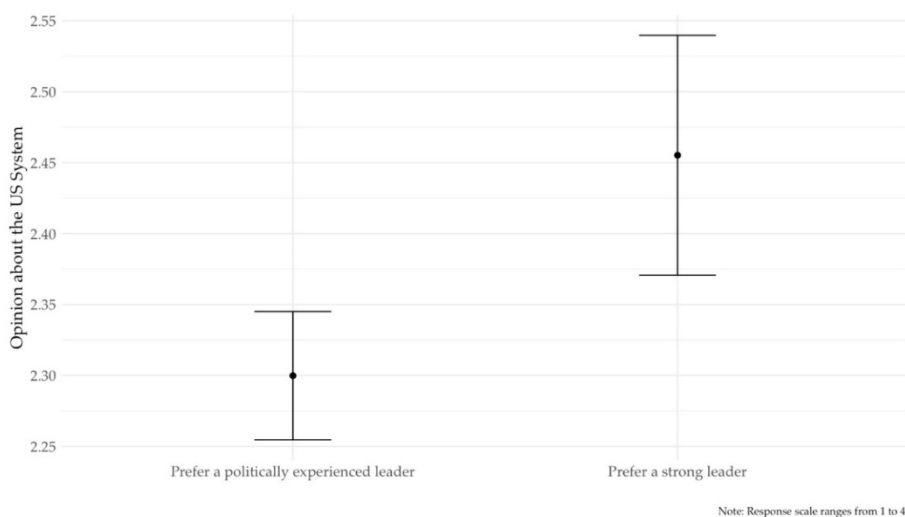
Figure 6.5: Perceived U.S. contribution to solving Global Problems by Left-Right Placement (N= 1385)



Factor leadership: Austrians preferring a strong leader have more favorable views

The difference in preferences for leadership is also interesting (see Figure 6.6): People who prefer a "strong leader" to a politically experienced politician show a more positive image of the U.S. system - suggesting a certain affinity for authority figures more typical of a presidential system, or simply a preference for a strong and charismatic figure, which is what Trump is perceived to be by many on the right.

Figure 6.6: Perceptions of Life in the U.S. by Political Leader Preference (N= 1287)

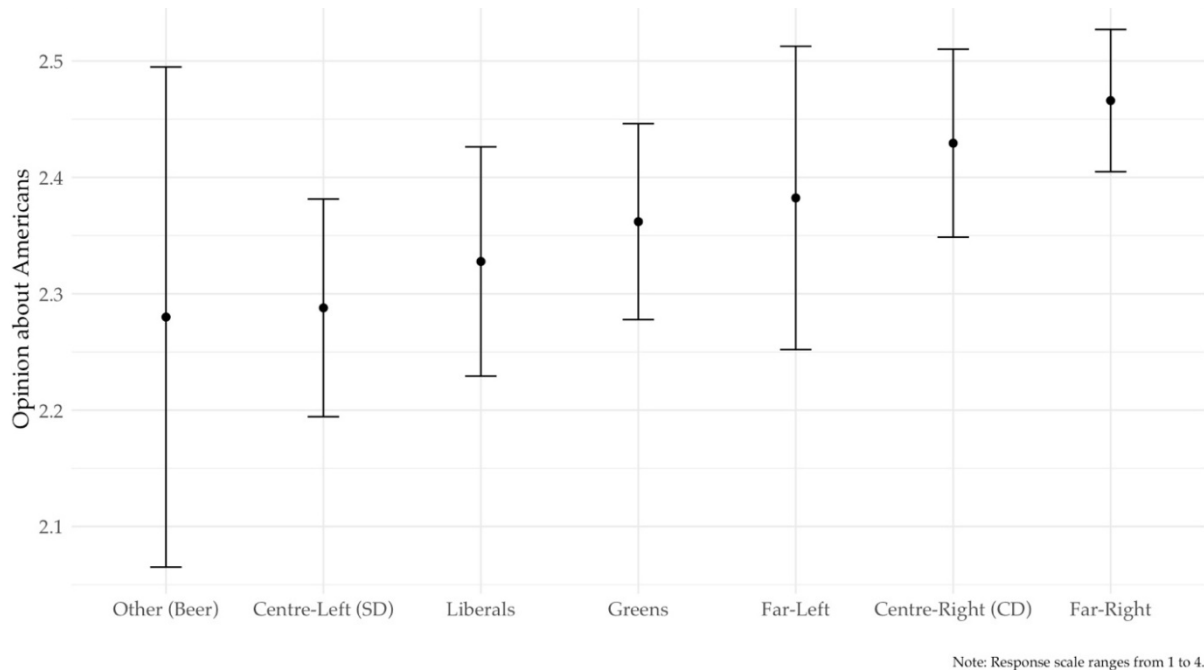


Factor Party ID and party preference: Supporters of the far-right have the most favorable views

Given this clear ideological divide, party preference and party ID are important in assessing the United States. The starkest differences are between the left and the far right. In particular, center-right and far-right partisans hold the relatively most favorable views of American society compared to left, Green

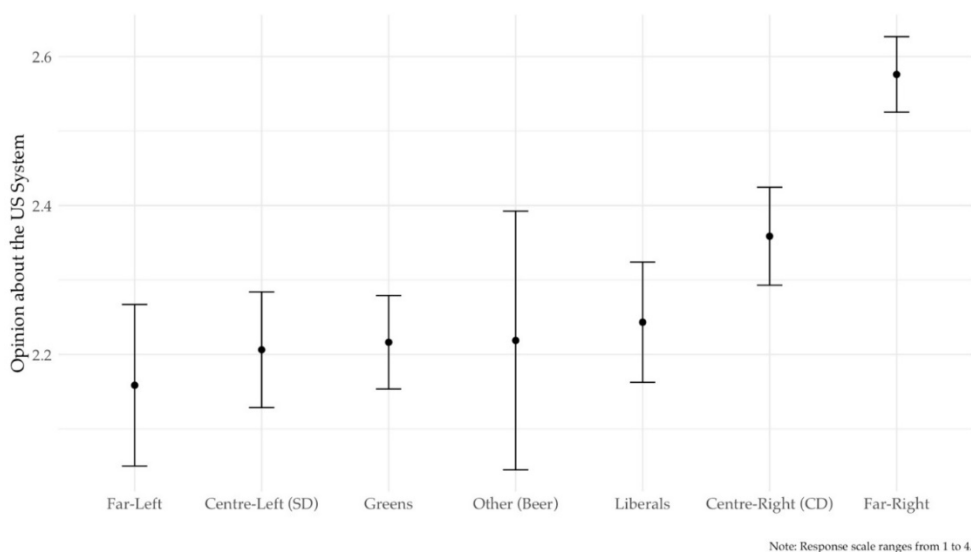
or Social Democratic partisans. Mean scores for the "far right" are above 2.5, in the slightly positive range, while those for the "far left" or the Greens are much closer to 2.2 to 2.3, a more negative picture (cf. Figure 6.7).

Figure 6.7: Perception of U.S. Society by Party Preference (N= 993)



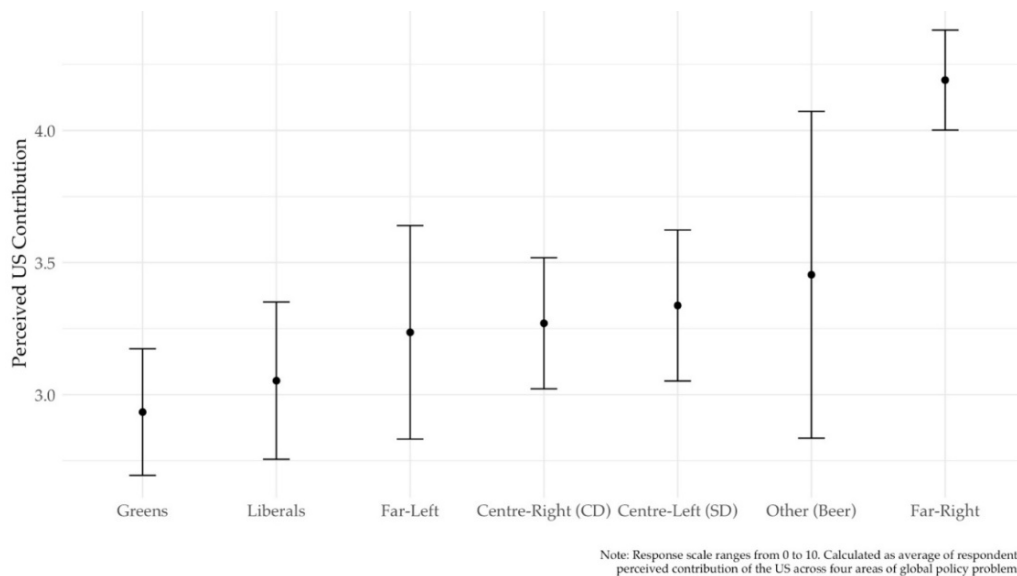
The only exception to this pattern is the assessment of life in the US, which is similar across the entire ideological spectrum, with the exception of the far right, which rates it significantly better than all others, including the center-right group (Figure 6.8). Admittedly, none of these results are particularly positive for the US as a whole, as the mean values across all cohorts are comparatively low, but the gap between left and right remains significant across the board, making the result statistically robust.

Figure 6.8: Perception of Life in the U.S. by Party Preference (N= 1265)



Finally, the assessment of US foreign policy also shows a clear correlation with party affiliation. Supporters of the “far right” tend to attribute a relevant and effective role to the US in world politics, while a very critical attitude prevails among the Greens in particular. In this group, the average rating of the US contribution on a scale of 0 to 10 is below 3, indicating low to barely perceived global relevance. Supporters of the Freedom Party (FPÖ), on the other hand, give top marks of over 4, reflecting a significantly more favorable, but still not positive, assessment. The centrist parties and the “far left” are again remarkably close to each other (Figure 6.9).

Figure 6.9: Perceived U.S. Contribution to Solving Global Problems by Party Preference (N= 1364)



Summary: Ideology and Party ID as important filters for Austrians' image of America

Political worldviews and party affiliations act as filters through which the image of the United States is interpreted. The farther to the right the ideological orientation, both on the left-right scale and in terms of nationalist or authoritarian beliefs, the more positive the assessment of American society, the political and social system, and the international role of the United States. Conversely, left-leaning, green, and cosmopolitan groups are much more critical. It very likely that this clear left-right divide with the latter being favorable toward the US is reflective of Trump having emerged as president, which has been welcomed by the far-right in Austria.

Other factors that affect how Austrian perceive the US

The survey shows differences in the assessment of the USA between different social groups not only based on demographic characteristics such as age and income or political orientations but also on other factors. These will be explored in this segment.

We know from political surveys that institutional trust is an important variable shaping people's perception of political systems and policies. This survey is no exception and indeed political trust proves to be an influential and statistically significant factor. Austrians with a high level of trust in political institutions — be it in the federal government, the national parliament, or politicians — are far more positive about the USA than people with a low level of trust (Figure 6.10). This is especially true when it comes to judging the US as making a contribution to solving global problems (Figure 6.11).

Figure 6.10: General Perception of the US, by political trust (N= 948)

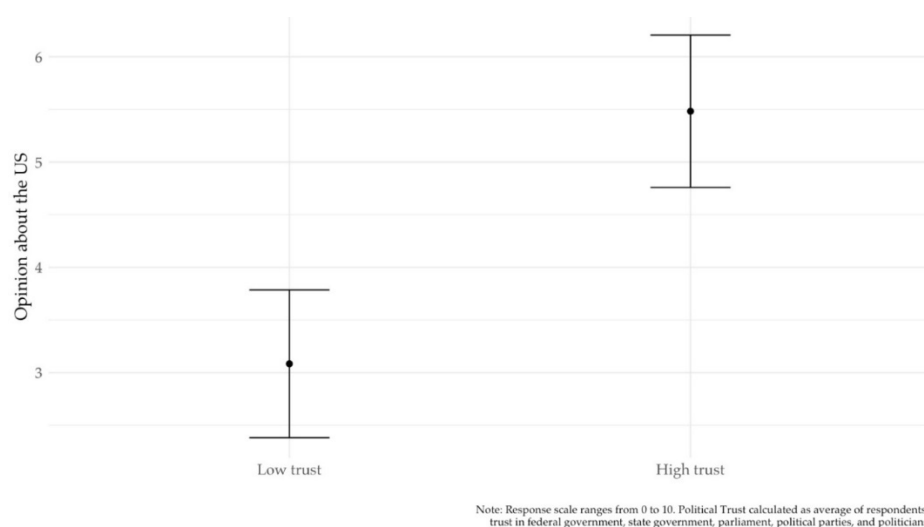
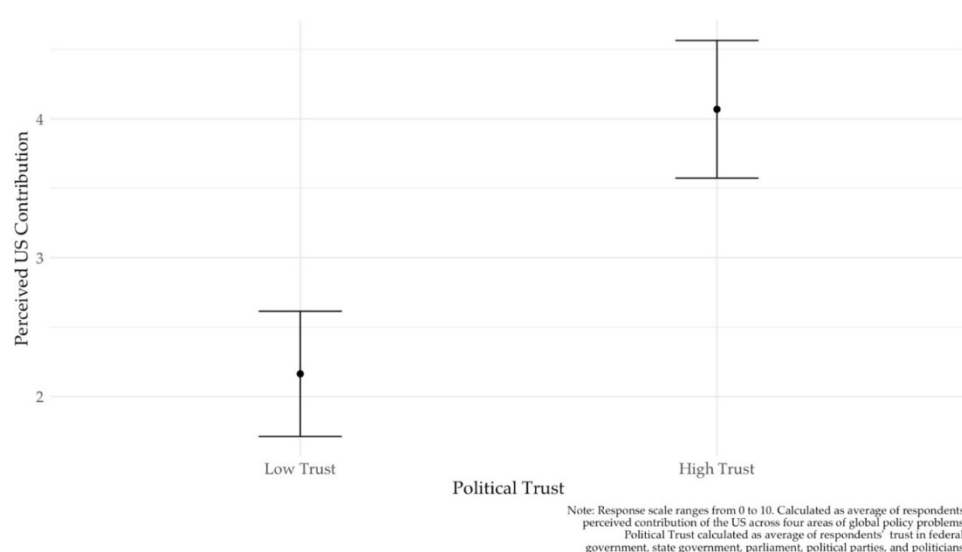
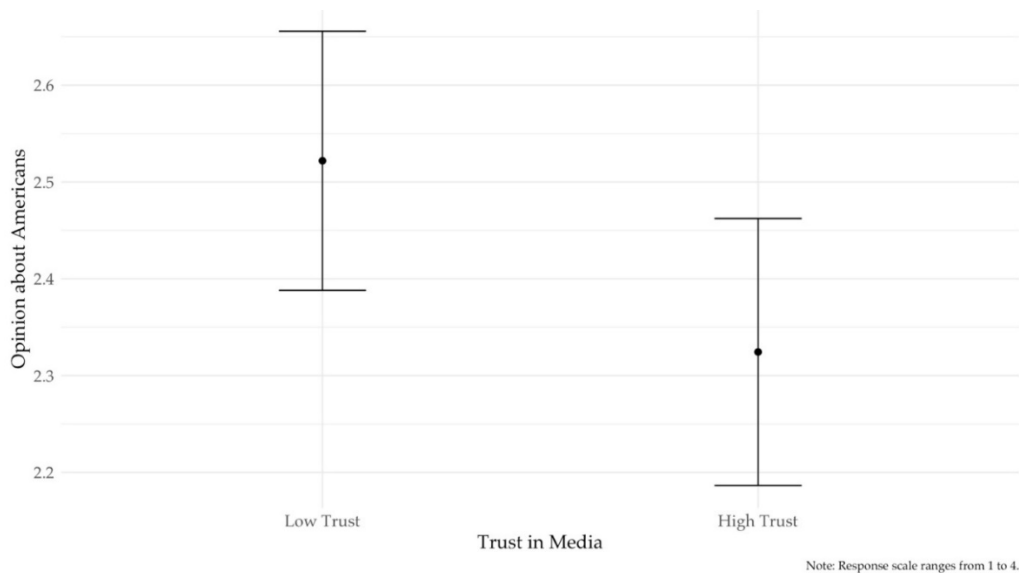


Figure 6.11: Perceived US Contribution of Solving Global Problems, by political Trust (N= 1354)



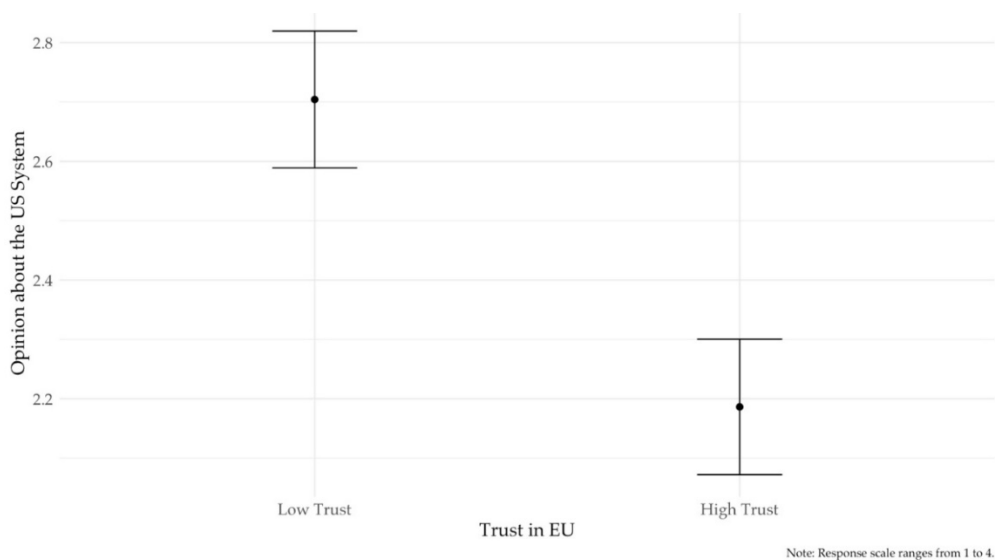
Also trust in Churches and religious institutions has the same effect that people with higher level of trust have a more favorable opinion of the US and its policies (see appendix Figures AF6.1 to AF6.3). However, the same is not true for media trust. Here, it is the respondents with lower levels of trust in media who tend to have a more positive image of the USA, again in all three areas (see Figure 6.12 and Figures A6.4 to A6.5 in the appendix).

Figure 6.12: Perception of U.S. Society by Trust in Media (N= 1001)



When looking at Austrians' trust in the European Union (Figure 6.13), there is a tension between this and their sympathy for America. The greater the trust in the EU, the more critical the assessment of the U.S. system and American foreign policy.

Figure 6.13: Perception of U.S. Society by Trust in the European Union (N= 1264)



Summary: Trust strengthens and weakens the favorability of the U.S. among Austrians

The variable “trust” works in two ways: in general, Austrians who have little trust in institutions are more skeptical toward the US than those who have more trust in institutions. When it comes to trust in the media and trust in the EU, the situation is reversed. Presumably, the two groups differ from each other—those who are hostile toward the media tend to be hostile toward the EU as well—but here, these two groups share similar views on the US.

7 A Deep Dive into the Data

Combining Age, Gender, and Education, what do we learn?

The graph in Figure 7.1 combines the independent variables age and gender and maps these two attributes onto the response to the question of how Trump's election has changed respondents' views of the US. We find that with increasing age (from left to right), the views of men and women diverge further and further apart. In short, while the attitudes of men and women in the 60+ and 50 to 59 age groups are roughly parallel, they begin to diverge among 40 to 49-year-olds and drift apart significantly among the youngest generations. This validates a trend that can also be observed elsewhere, namely that young men are drifting to the right while women are tending to the left, as is also the case here.

Figure 7.1: The effect of the Trump Election on the Change of Austrian Views of the U.S. by Age and Gender

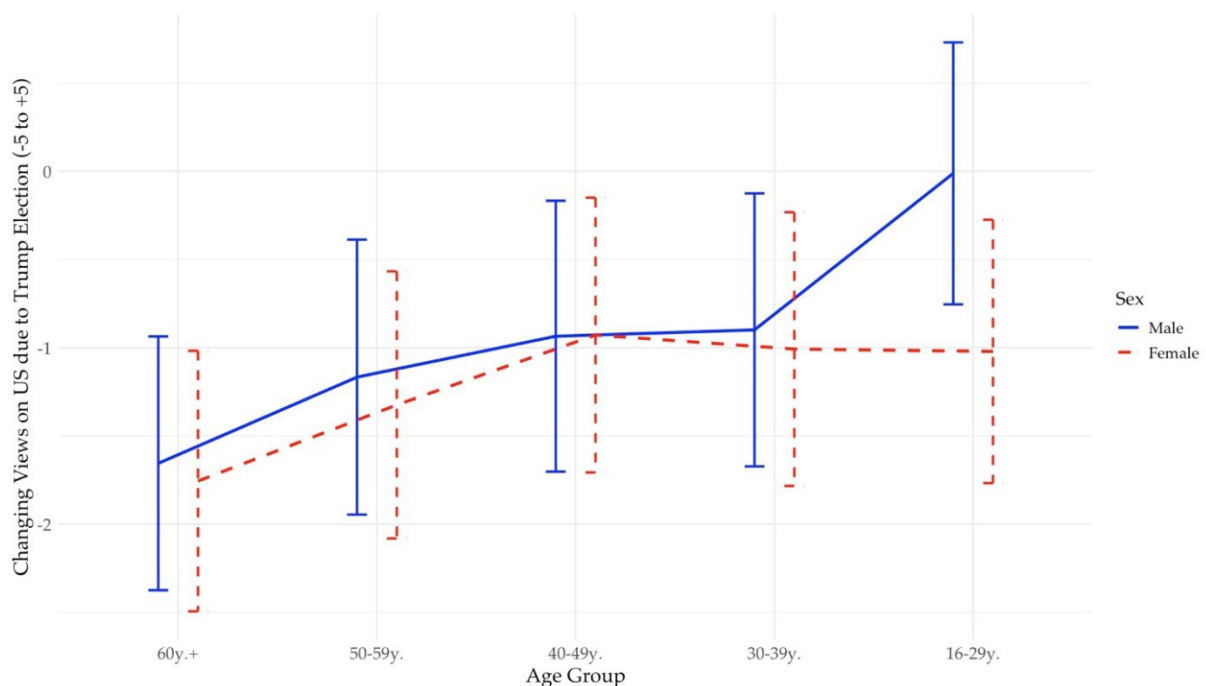
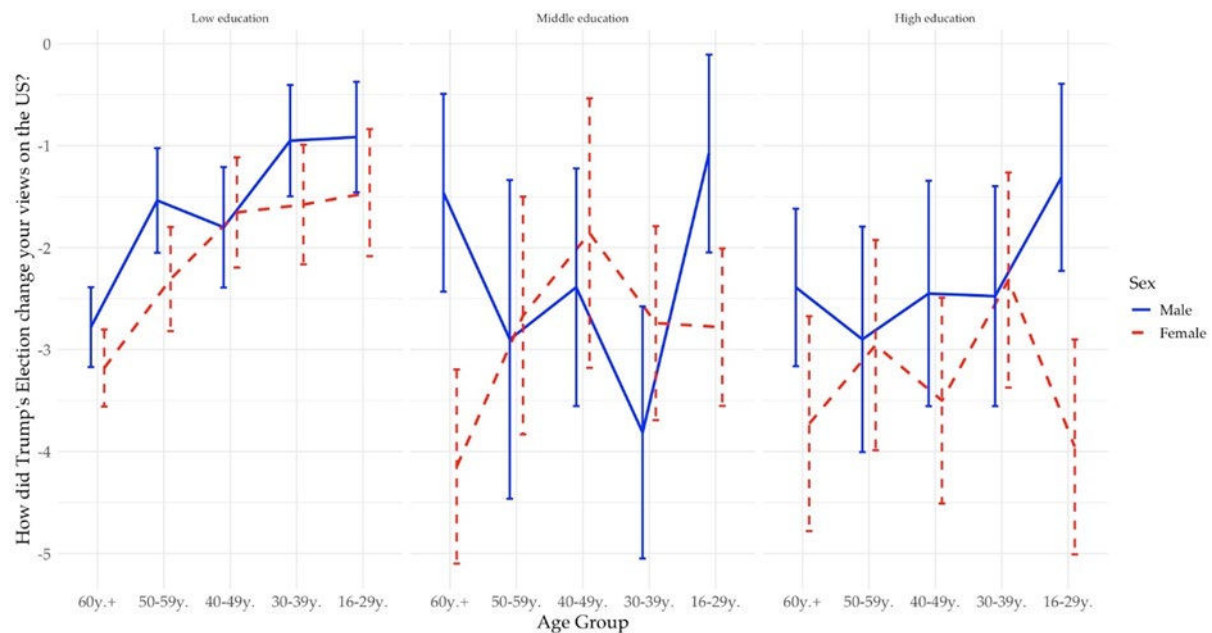


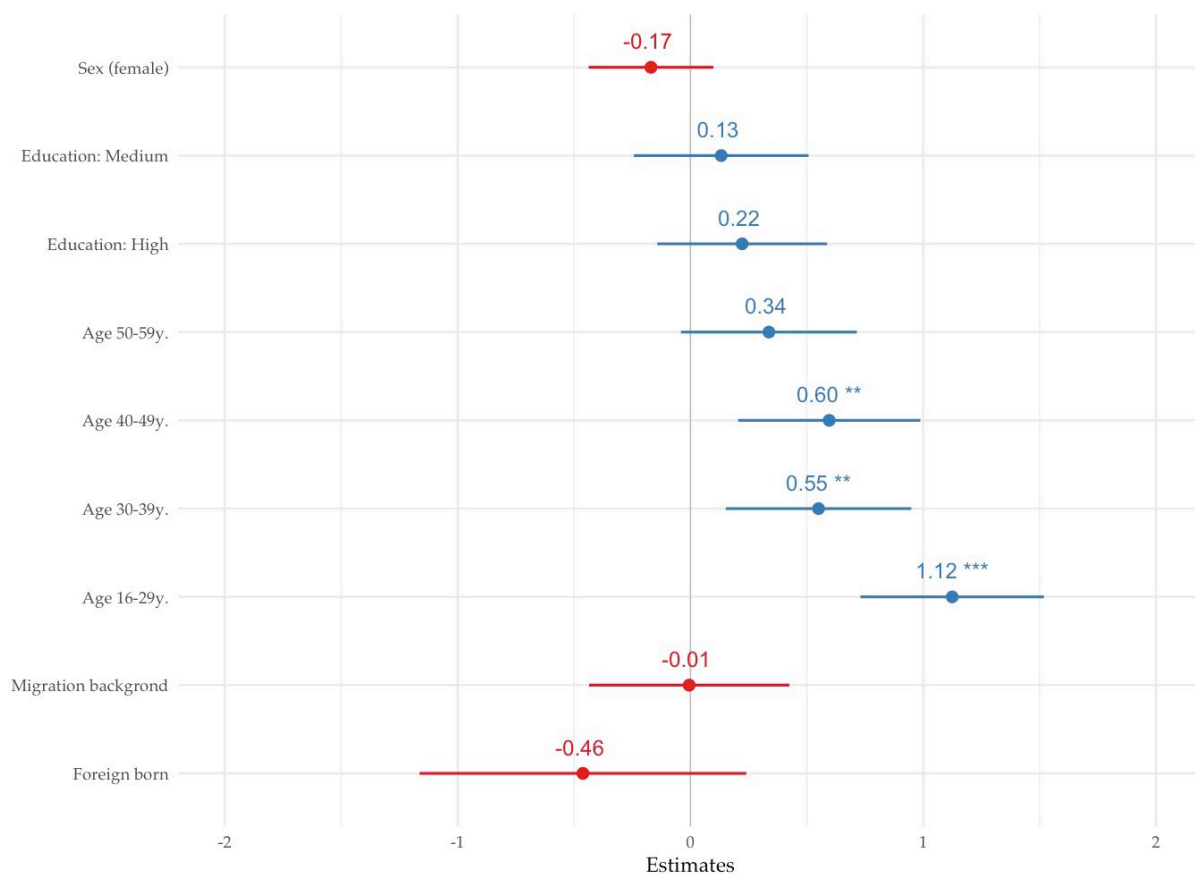
Figure 7.2 below starts from the same premise but adds education to the mix. The resulting three graphs, showing low, medium, and high levels of education, reveal an interesting pattern. The effect of men and women diverging is not noticeable for those with low education, meaning that men and women of the same generation responded uniformly to the Trump election. Among those with a mid-level and post-secondary education, it is younger men who say that Trump's election has made their views of the US more favorable. In contrast, only young women with the highest levels of education diverge sharply from men in their assessment of Trump.

Figure 7.2: The effect of the Trump Election on the Change of Austrian Views of the U.S. by Age, Gender, and education



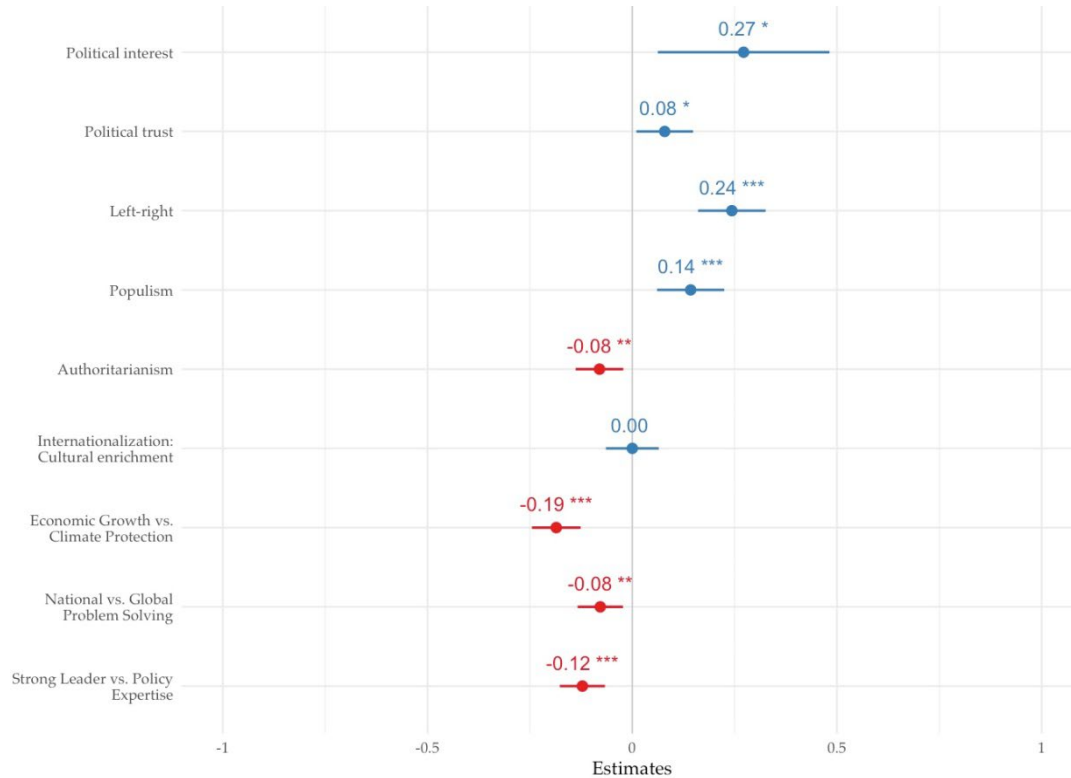
Using regression analysis, we can add a variety of causal factors to an explanatory model of Austrian perceptions. We can then calculate their relative strength or effect of these explanatory factors. Figure 7.3a shows a so-called coefficient plot of this regression, which depicts the relevant variables and their relative impact on Austrians' perception of the effect of the Trump election on world politics. The coefficients to the right of the zero or no-effect line represent positive views, and coefficients to the left represent negative views. In fact, the significant effect we see is age, and here the youngest age cohort also has the most positive views.

Figure 7.3a: Austrians' Views of the Impact of the Trump election on World Politics (Model 1)



The coefficient representation shown in Figure 7.3b explains Austrians' views on Trump's influence on world politics. It shows that authoritarian attitudes, the desire for a strong leader, a preference for national rather than global solutions to problems, and conservative economic views are rated significantly more positively than populist, left-wing political orientations and political interest (Figure 7.3a).

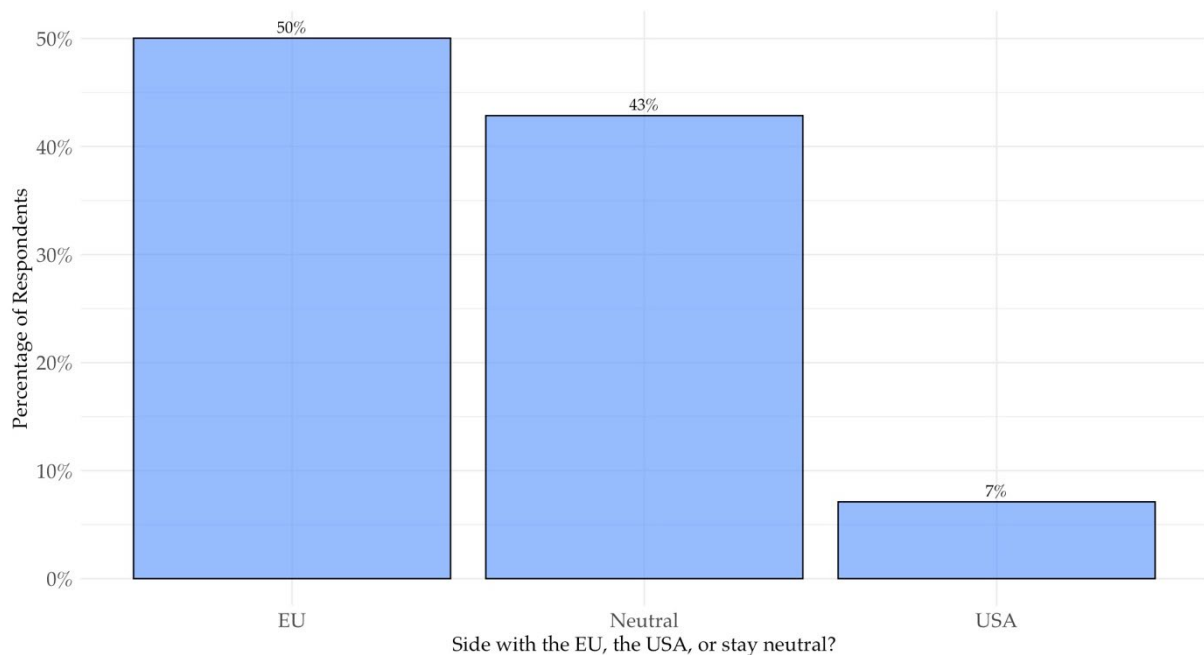
Figure 7.3b: Austrians' Views of the Impact of the Trump election on World Politics (Model 2)



In summary, it can be said that Trump's influence on world politics is perceived more positively by Austrians who are interested in politics, Austrians who trust politicians, and Austrians who consider themselves right-wing, while it is viewed less positively by Austrians who value obedience and respect for authority, prefer climate protection over economic growth, global cooperation over national problem solving, and a politically experienced leader over a loud and strong leader (Figure 7.3b).

Finally, when Austrians were confronted with the choice as to what the country should do in the event of a conflict between the Trump administration and the EU, a relative majority opted for siding with the EU rather (50%) and opting to stay neutral (43%) or side with Washington (7%). This is remarkable given Austria's longstanding insistence on neutrality in international affairs (Figure 7.4).

Figure 7.4: Austrian's preferred reaction to a dispute between the EU and the US under Trump (N=1469)



8 Conclusions and Takeaways

The survey project assessing Austrian views on America shows that Austrians have rather skeptical and negative views toward the United States. These attitudes are largely shaped by the election of Donald Trump, and here it is the expected impact he is likely to have on policy areas that matter to Austrians, such as the defense of Europe, peace and stability, and climate change. However, the US presidential election is not the only factor; there is also a deep-seated skepticism about the American political and social model. U.S. governments are seen as interfering in the internal affairs of other countries and not contributing enough to solving global problems.

Austrians are also quite skeptical about life in the U.S. and U.S. society in general, which is perceived as violent and offering little social protection. Nevertheless, respondents clearly distinguish their assessment of society and politics from that of people, who are viewed more favorably. Here we see several contradictions and divisions in Austrian views, as they attribute both positive (hardworking and friendly) and negative (violent and shallow) characteristics to Americans and society as a whole. Despite the often negative views, certain traditional stereotypes about the U.S. prevail, as America is still seen as a land of freedom, opportunity, and upward mobility. These seeming contradictions also suggest that Austrians do not fully understand American life and culture, which is underscored by the fact that language skills and the frequency of social media results in a more positive assessment of the US. This suggests that Austrians with better tools to inform themselves develop a more sympathetic understanding of the U.S.

Austrians clearly recognize the impact America has had and continues to have on Austria, from arts and culture to fashion, industry, and especially technology. Whether this influence has diminished with the rise of other powers, Austrian could not say. The majority of Austrians disagreed with the

statement that U.S. influence on the country is so strong that domestic politicians are mere puppets of Washington.

While Austrian views are overwhelmingly negative, they are not uniform, and we find significant differences by age, political orientation and party identification, and education. Other factors include gender, trust in institutions, immigrant background, the aforementioned use of social media, and English proficiency. In general, the assessment of U.S. politics and society was less unfavorable among people on the right and relatively most favorable among respondents on the far right. This is consistent with the support of the far-right Freedom Party in Austria for Trump's election. Predictably, this relationship also holds for party identification, with Greens and left-wing voters most negative, centrists and conservatives more cautious, and the right most positive by comparison. However, this affinity between right-wing attitudes seems to be directed more toward President Trump and his policies and less toward the US in general. On the other hand, there are those who have somewhat more positive views of the US but are less politically enamored with the Trump phenomenon.

Perhaps not surprising was the finding that Austrians who prefer a strong leader had a more positive view of the Trump election. Nevertheless, and perhaps surprisingly, respondents with authoritarian tendencies did not. We also see that, all other things being equal, Austrians who are more interested in politics, better educated, more trusting of government and institutions, and also more affluent tend to have more positive views of the US (but less with toward Trump): Here we note that young men in particular have the most positive views of America, while young women, if they are highly educated, have more negative views. This fits well with the hypotheses observed in Western democracy of young men drifting to the right and young women drifting to the left.

Ultimately, the U.S. in its current state poses a challenge to Austrians and leads to cross-cutting divisions. While right-wing Austrians may appreciate Trump as a strong leader who represents political views shared by many Austrians, Trump's "America first" nationalism is not good news for Austrian nationalists, who must fear a negative impact on the country. Similarly, more educated and politically astute Austrians, who generally have a better understanding of the political complexities of a superpower like the U.S. and thus tend to have lower expectations of what is possible, are also the ones who see the Trump presidency as a political threat to issues they hold dear.

The Austrians most friendly toward the US are young, male, and relatively well-off financially. They also have a high level of trust in political institutions. These individuals are very media-savvy and use social media regularly. They generally speak English well, which gives them easy access to American culture, society, and original sources of information. America skeptics tend to be older, female, and less affluent or politically on the left.

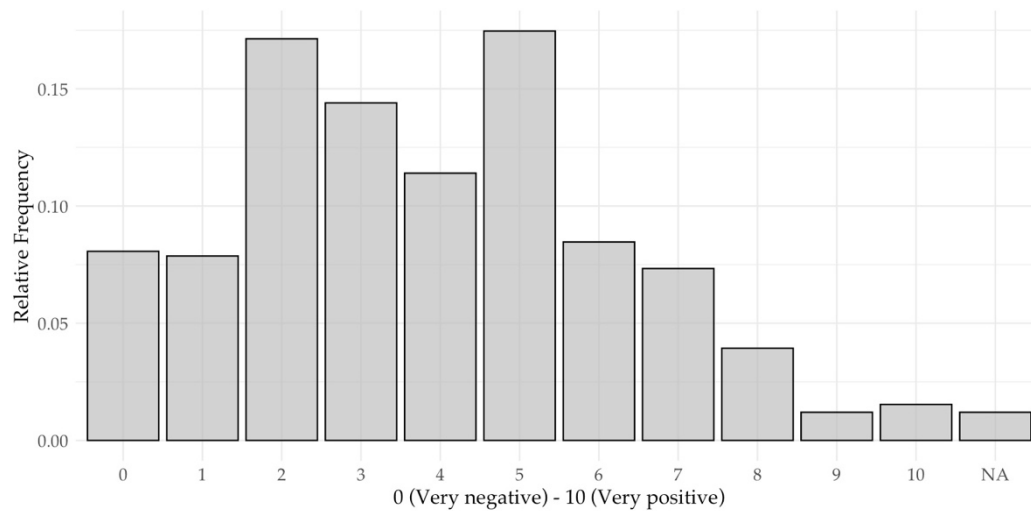
Finally, it is interesting to note that when Austrians were asked what the country should do in the current security situation - remain neutral and go it alone, seek a closer relationship with the U.S., or become part of the EU's security architecture - a relative majority of respondents chose the latter option. This is remarkable given the almost sacred nature of neutrality in the minds of Austrians.

Takeaways:

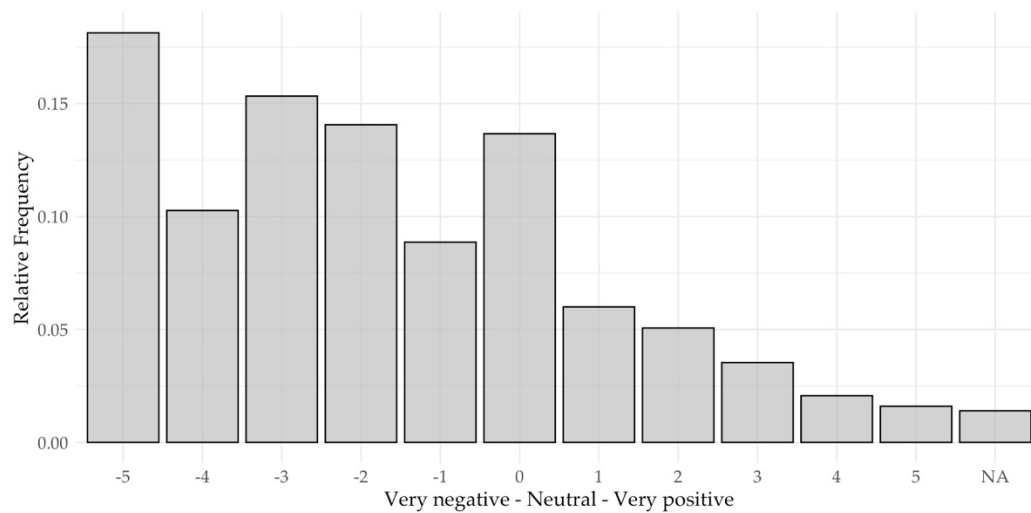
- Overall, Austrians have a rather negative view of the United States, both of its political system and of the life in the country. The American people are viewed somewhat more favorably.
- Certain contradictions in Austrian' views of the U.S. also suggest a lack of understanding of American society and politics.
- Austrians do distinguish their assessment of society and politics from that of the people.
- America is still seen as a land of opportunity and upward mobility.
- Language skills and use of social media make Austrians more sympathetic to the U.S.
- Austrians clearly recognize the influence of the U.S. on Austrian society, from arts and culture to technology. Overall, Austrians credit the U.S. with having the greatest influence on Austria after Germany.
- Austrian views are not uniform, with significant differences by age, political orientation, party identification, and education. Other factors include trust in institutions and immigration background.
- Austrians who are more interested in politics, better educated, more trusting of government and institutions, better educated, and also more affluent tend to have more positive views of the U.S.
- The single most important factor, but not the only one, is the election of Donald Trump, in part because Austrians expect negative consequences for policy areas important to them, such as climate change, the EU, global security and stability.
- Austrians who view Trump's influence on world politics more positively are those who interested in politics, trust politicians, and consider themselves right-wing.
- Austrians who view Trump's influence less favorably are those who value respect for authority, prefer climate protection over economic growth, favor global cooperation over national problem solving, and want a politically experienced leader rather than a loud and strong leader.
- Younger men have more positive views of Trump than older Austrians and younger women.
- Supporters of the far right have the relatively most positive view of the last U.S. election.
- We see divisions between Austrians who are more pro-US but disapprove of Trump, those who are skeptical of the US but approve of Trump, and Austrians who are critical of both.
- Overall, Austrians prefer closer ties with the EU than with the US.

Appendix – AuViUS

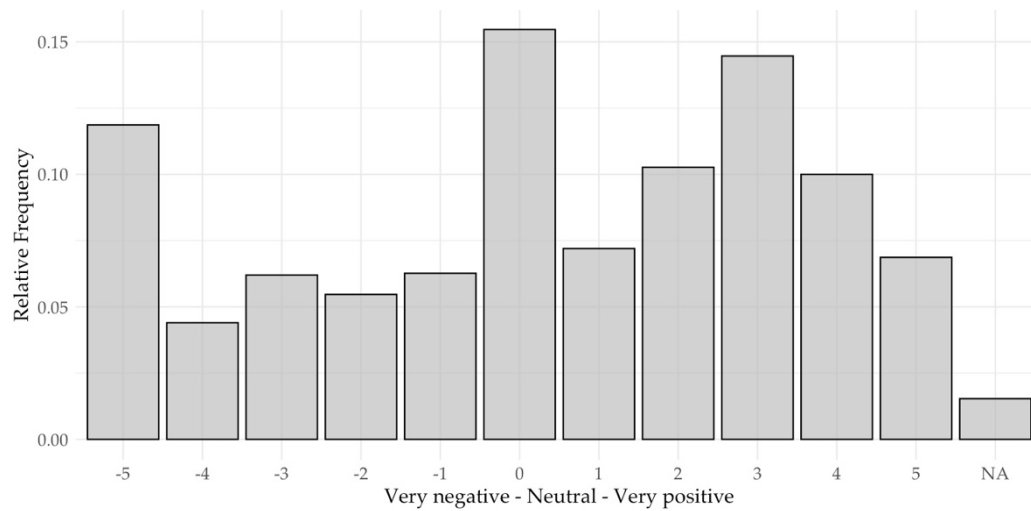
AF3.1: General Opinion on the US (N= 1482), Mean= 3.83



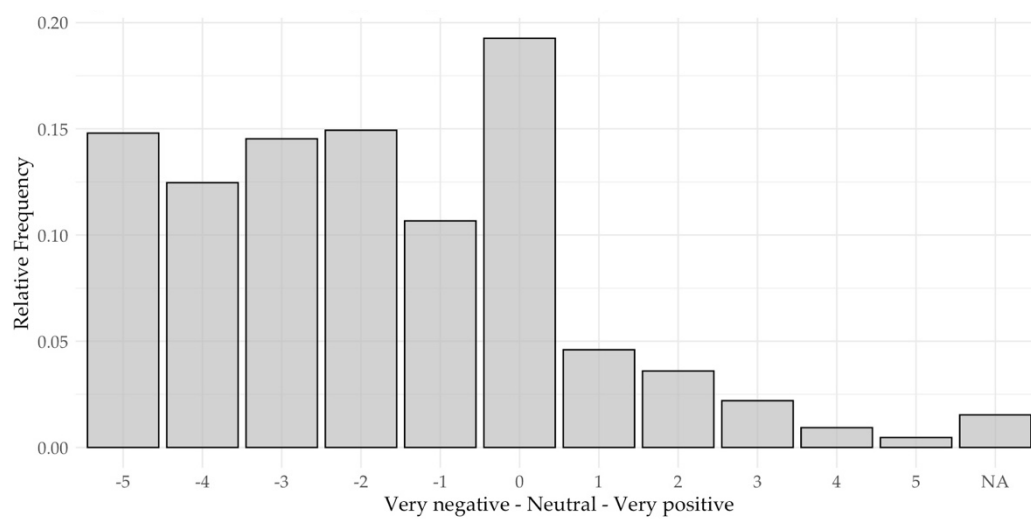
AF4.1: Opinion about the US as a global power (N= 1479), Mean= -1.74



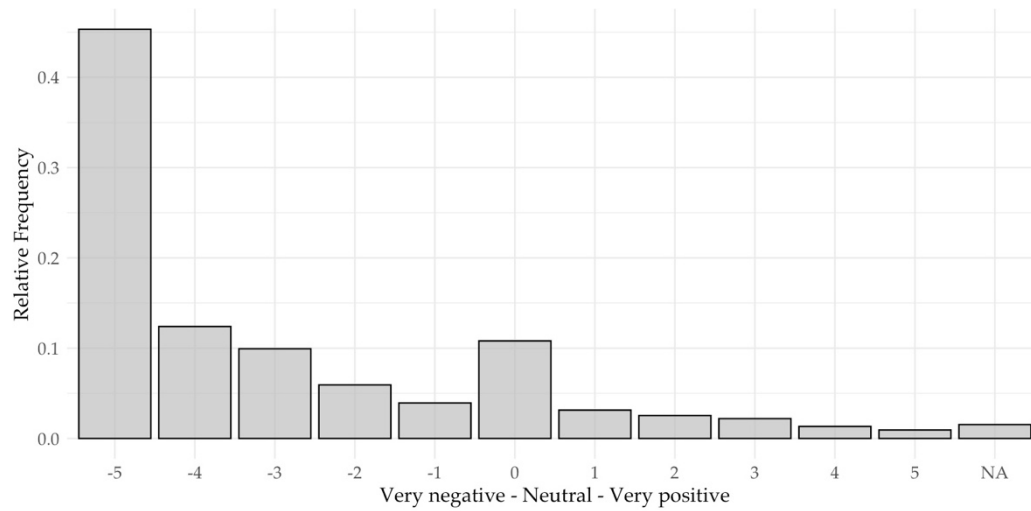
AF4.2: Opinion about the EU as a global power (N= 1477), Mean= 0.33



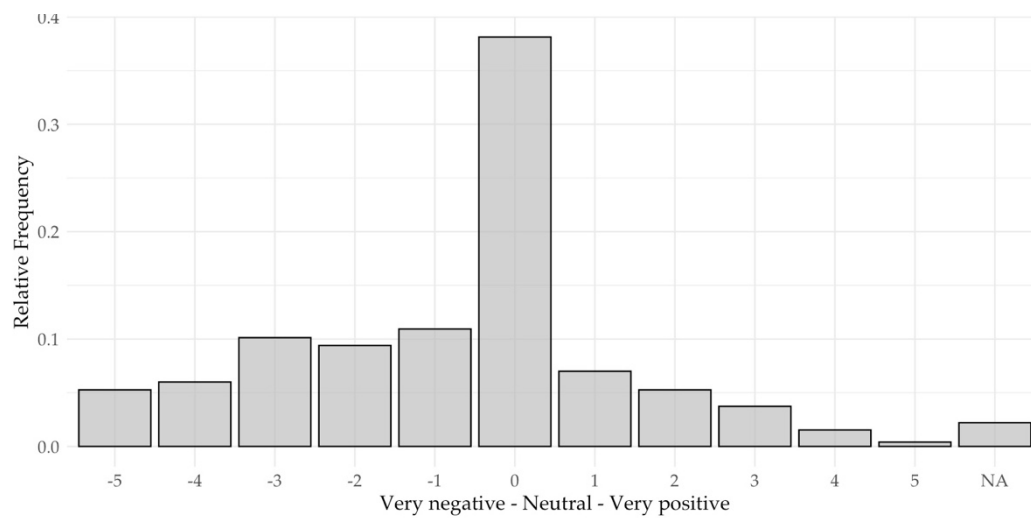
AF4.3: Opinion about the EU as a global power (N= 1477), Mean= -1.86



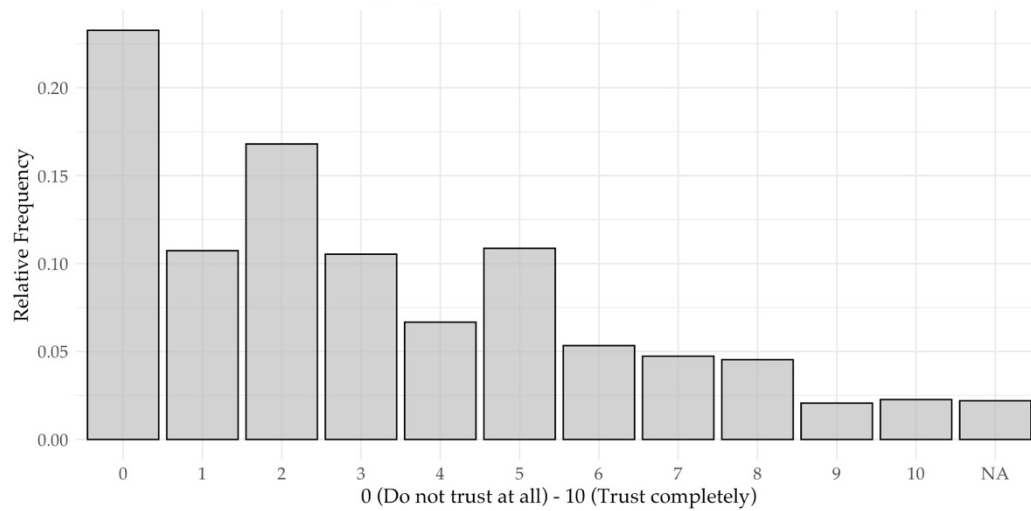
AF4.4: Opinion about Russia as a global power (N= 1477), Mean= -3.02



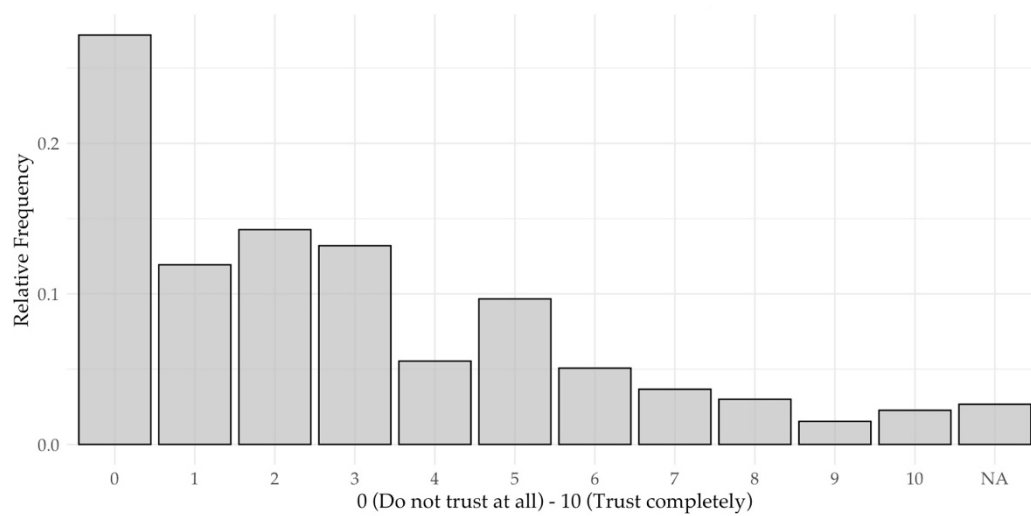
AF4.5: Opinion about Russia as a global power (N= 1467), Mean= -0.75



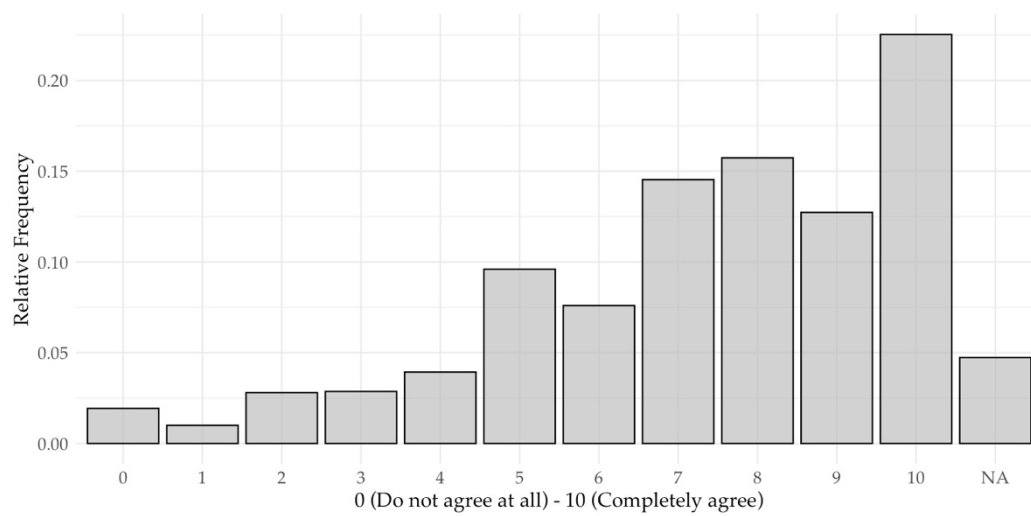
AF4.6: Trust in die USA to solve ongoing conflicts (N= 1467), Mean= 3.06



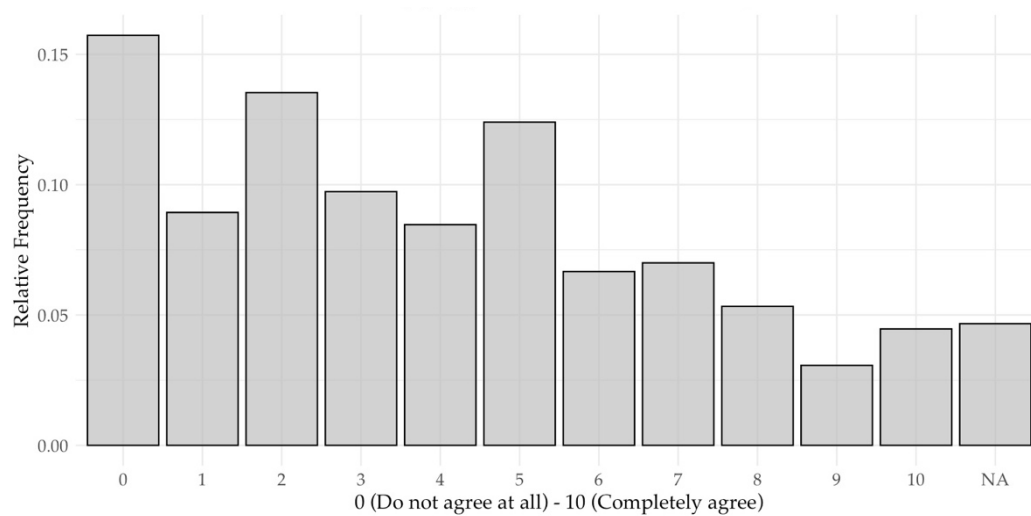
AF4.7: Trust in die USA as a leader of the Western World (N= 1460), Mean= 2.74



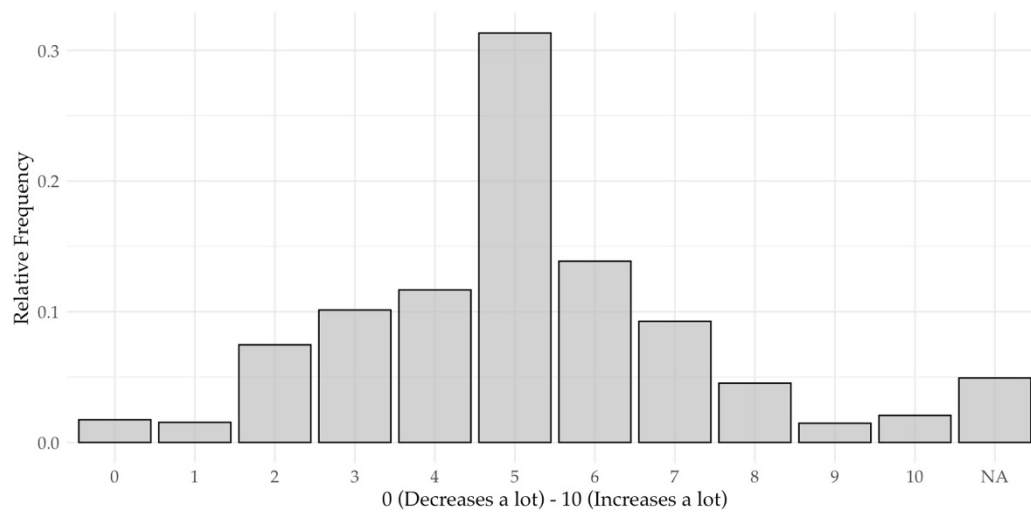
AF4.8: Trust in die USA as a leader of the Western World (N= 1429), Mean= 7.26



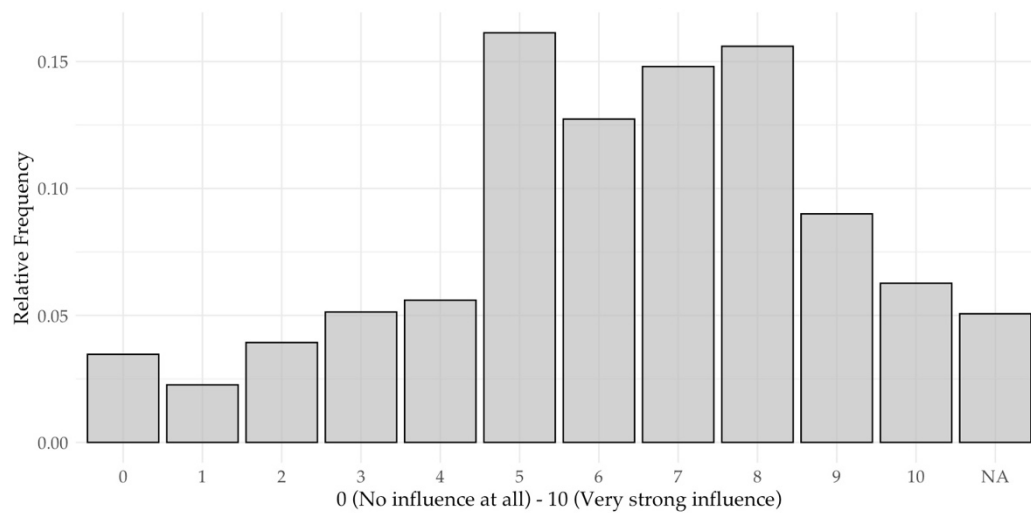
AF4.9: Politicians in Austria are merely puppets of the USA (N= 1430), Mean= 3.83



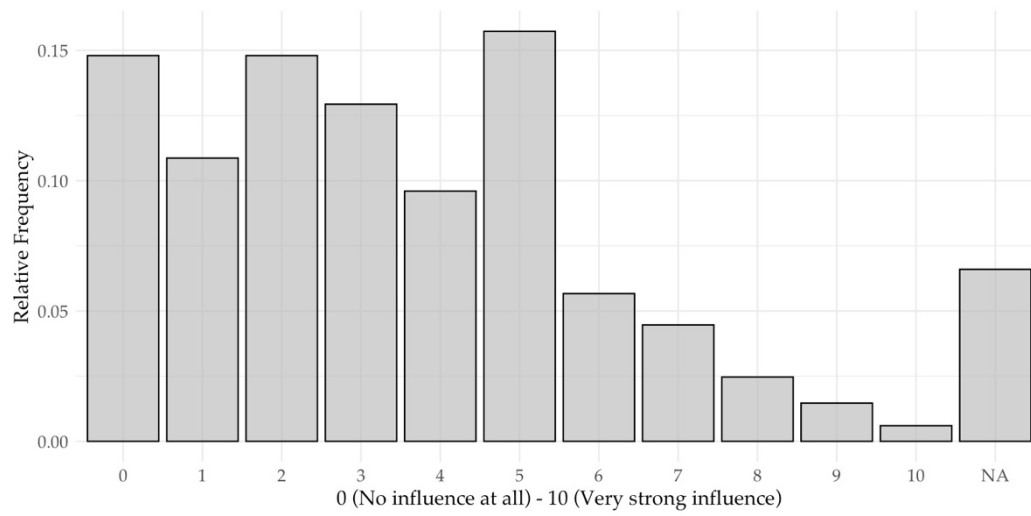
AF4.10: Politicians in Austria are merely puppets of the USA (N= 1426), Mean= 4.93



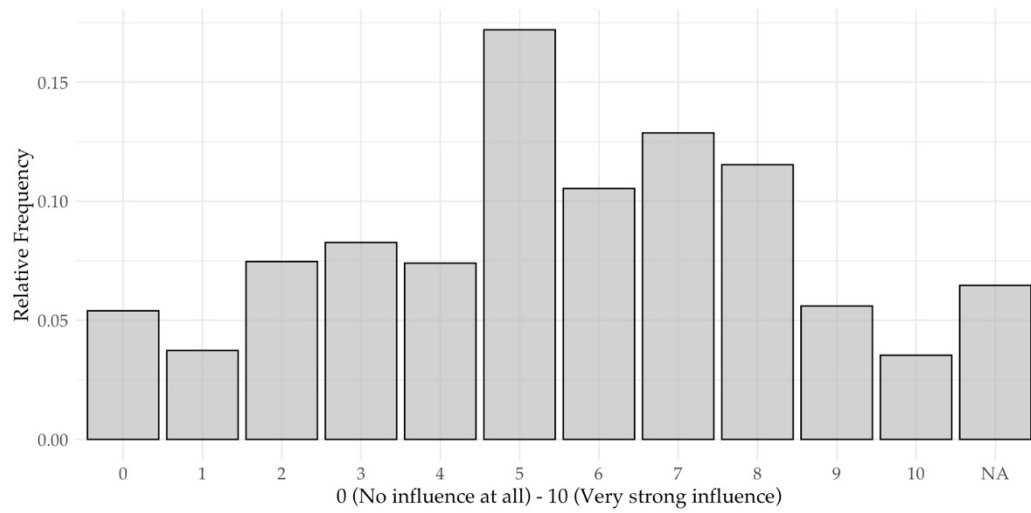
AF4.11: US Influence on Media and Communication (N= 1424), Mean= 6.08



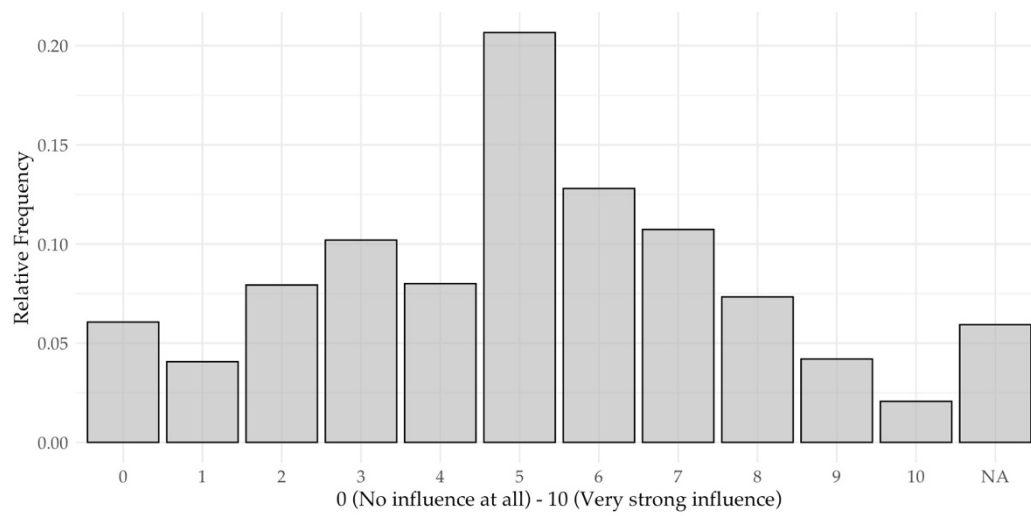
AF4.12: US Influence on Arts (N= 1401), Mean= 3.22



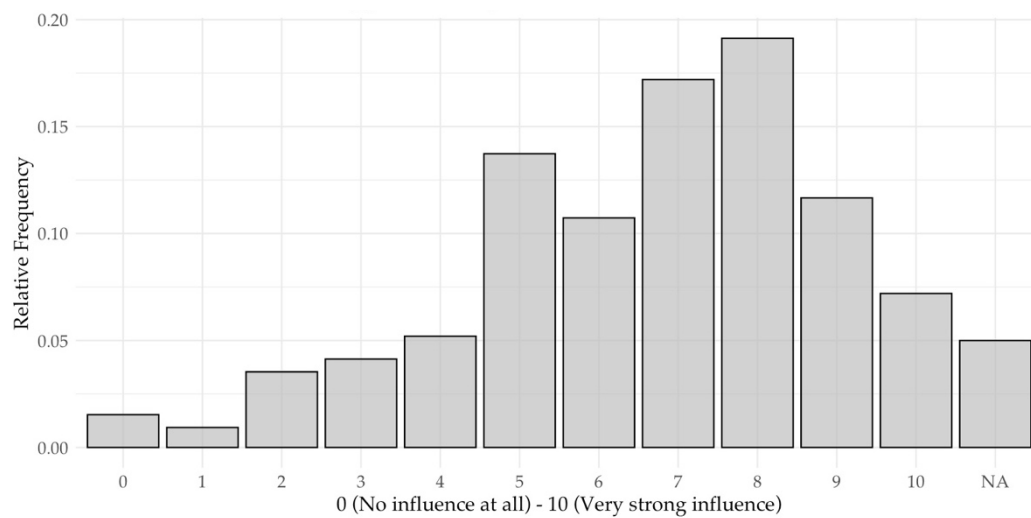
AF4.13: US Influence on Fashion (N= 1403), Mean= 5.24



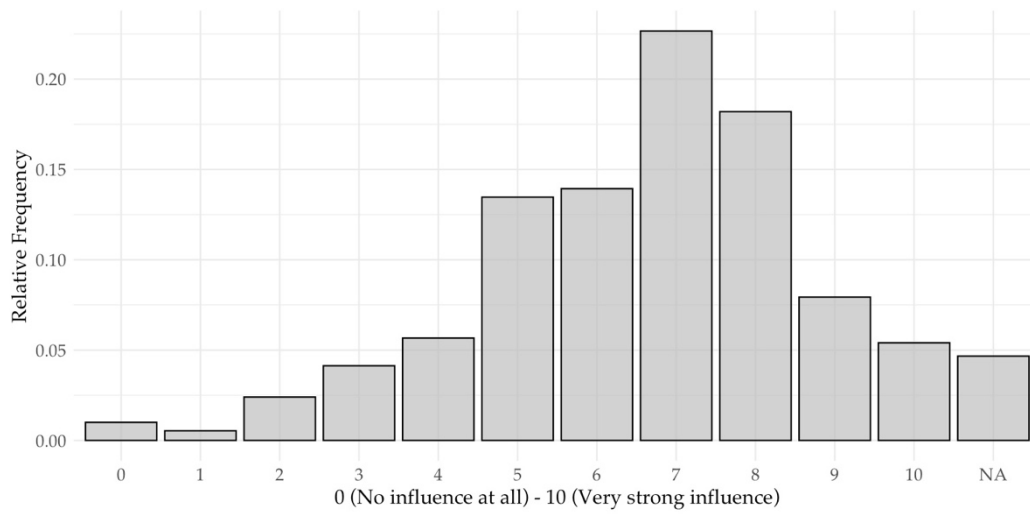
AF4.14: US Influence on Universities and Science (N= 1411), Mean= 4.84



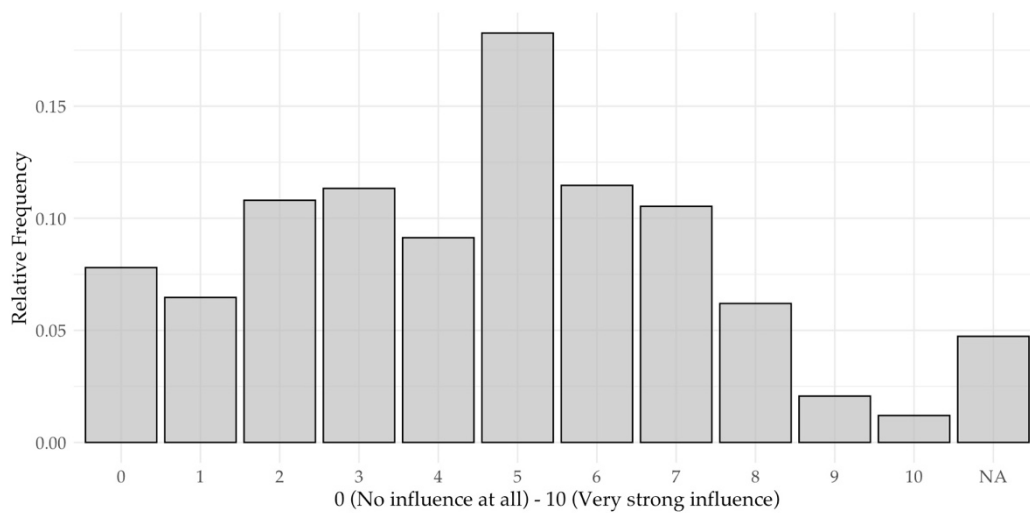
AF4.15: US Influence on Technologies (N= 1425), Mean= 6.58



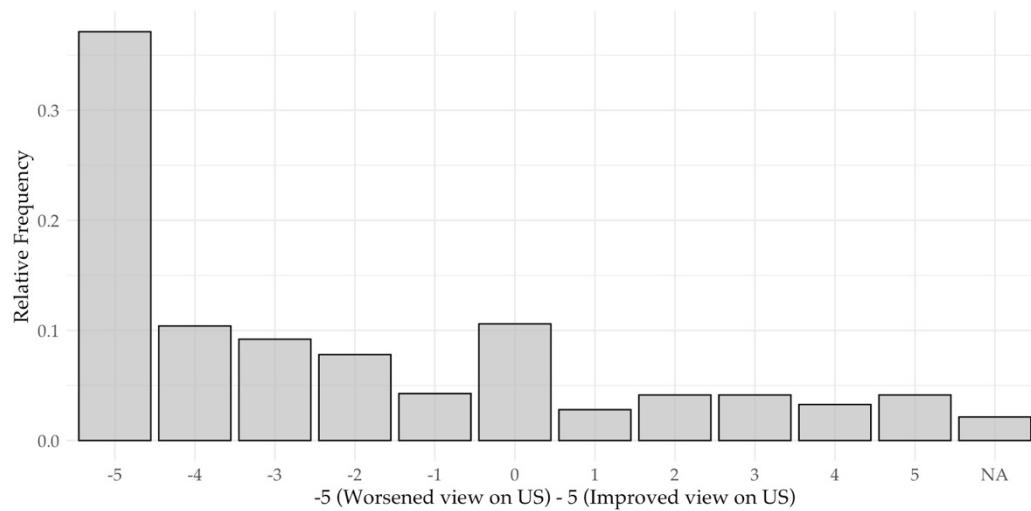
AF4.16: US Influence on Economy and Industry (N= 1430), Mean= 6.51



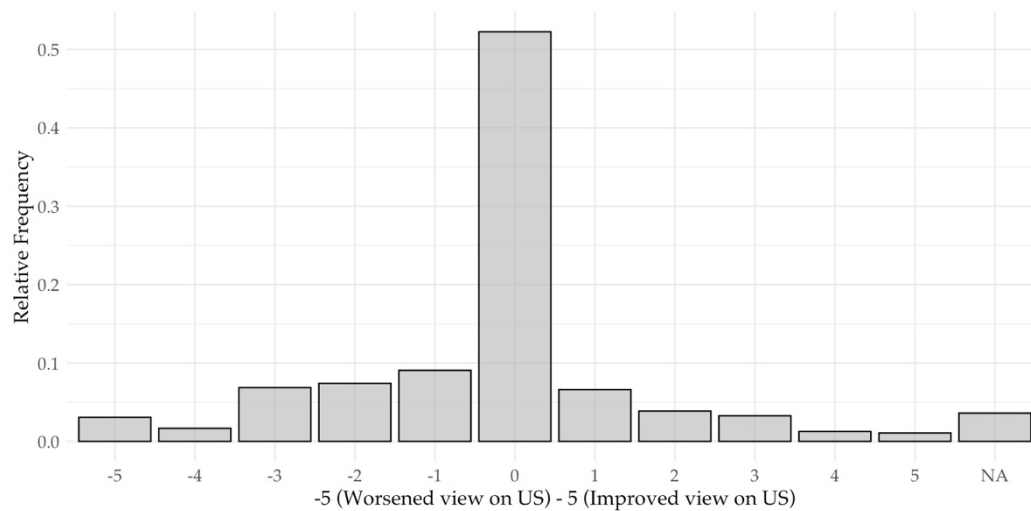
AF4.17: US Influence on Society and Culture (N= 1429), Mean= 4.33



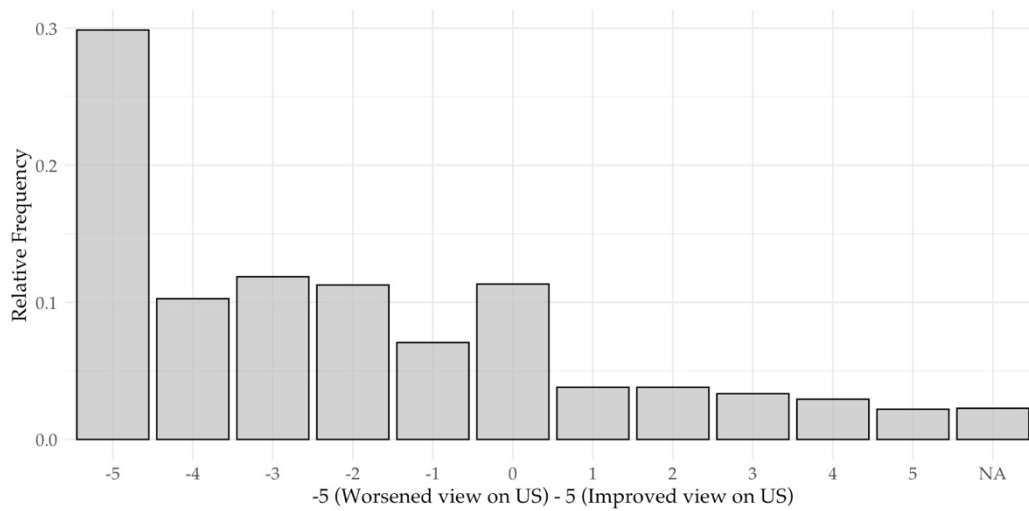
AF4.18: Austrians Attributing Causes for the Change in Their Opinion about the US – Election Results (N= 1468), Mean= -2.22



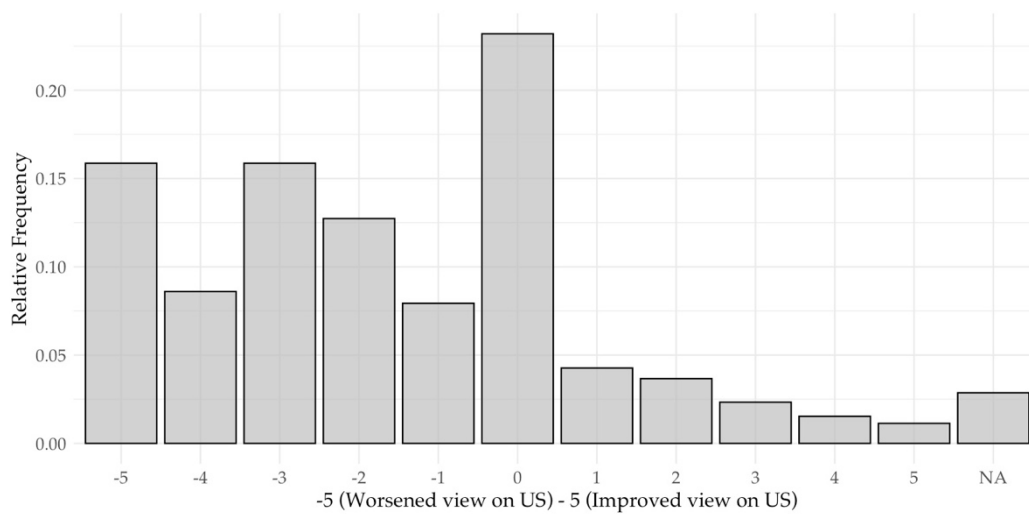
AF4.19: Austrians Attributing Causes for the Change in Their Opinion about the US – US Economy (N= 1446), Mean= -0.33



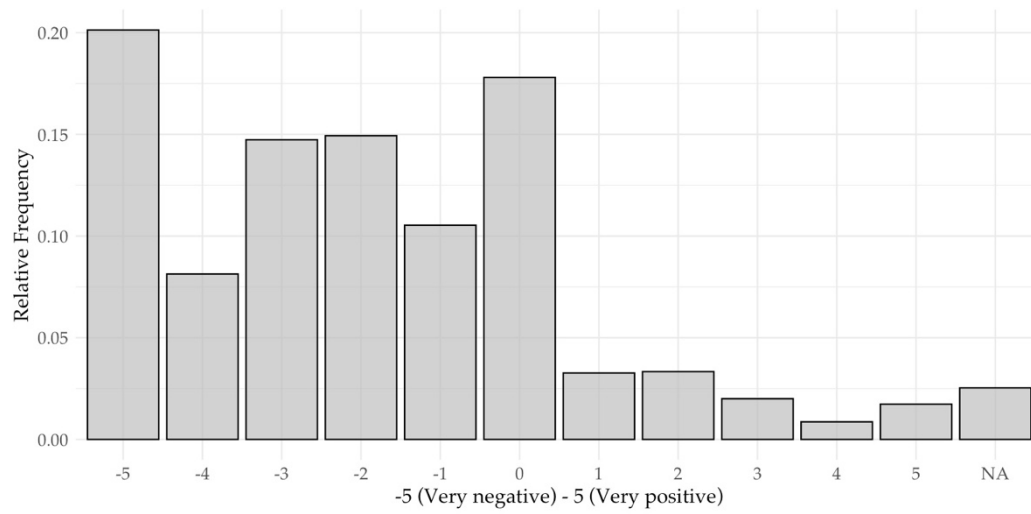
AF4.20: Austrians Attributing Causes for the Change in Their Opinion about the US – US' role in international relations (N= 1446), Mean= -2.16



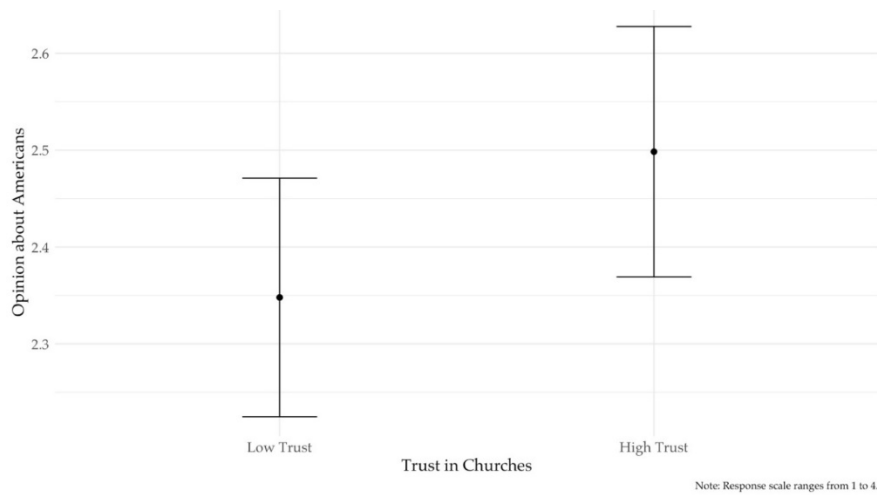
AF4.21: Austrians Attributing Causes for the Change in Their Opinion about the US – Developments in US society (N= 1457), Mean= -1.69



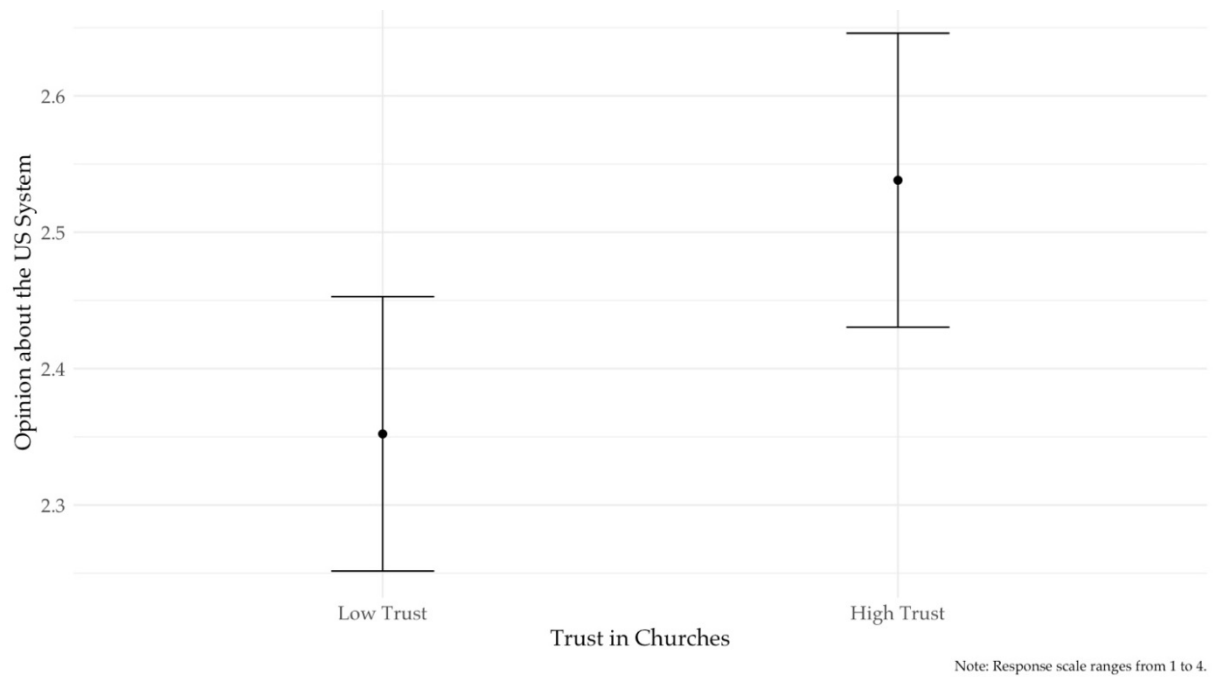
AF5.1: Impact of Trump's re-election... on Austria (N= 1462), Mean= -1.95



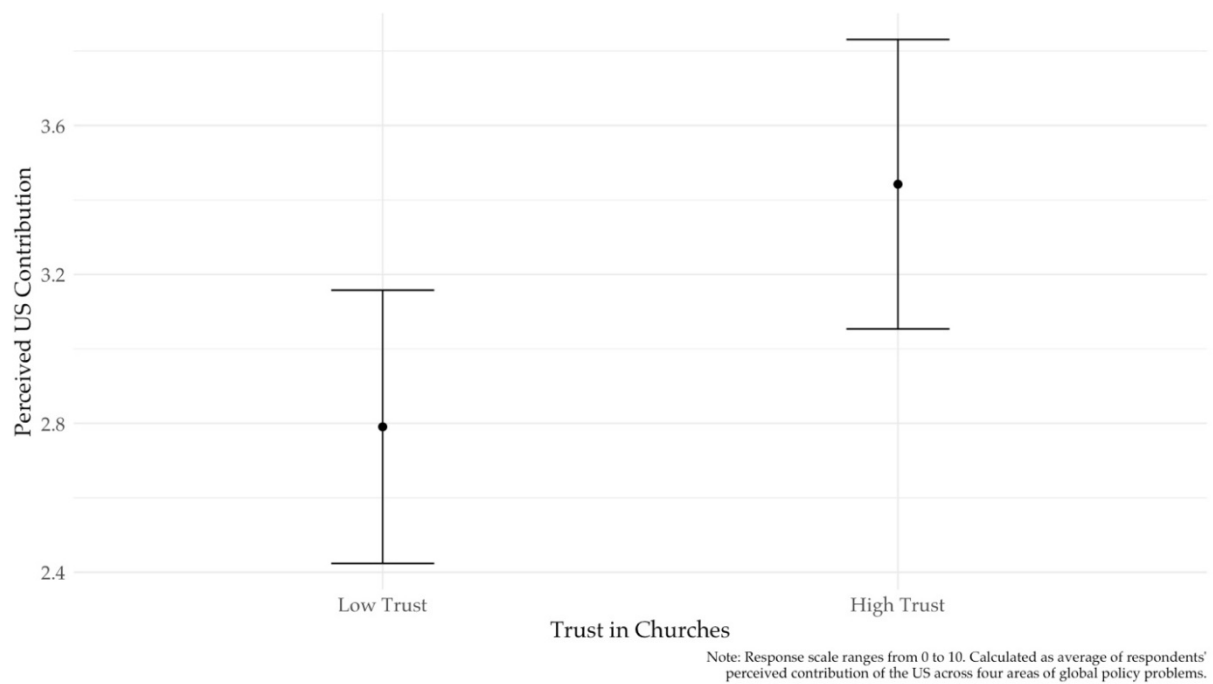
AF6.1: Perception of American Society, by Trust in Churches (N= 1001)



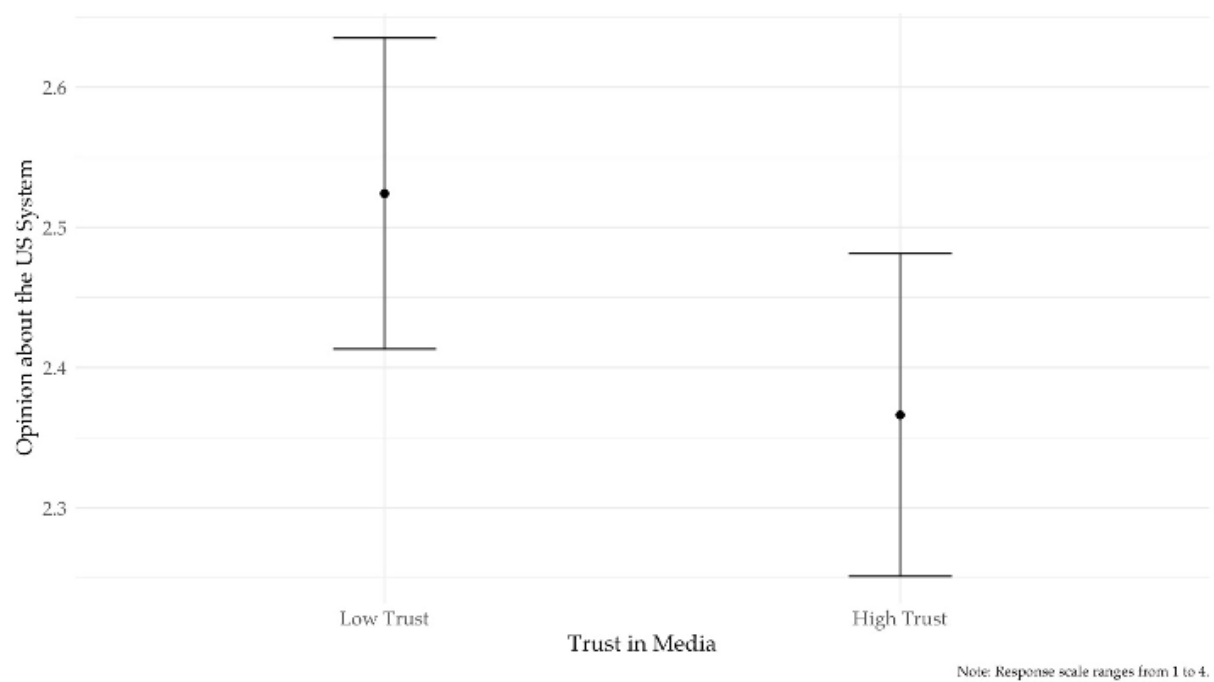
AF6.2: Perception of Life in the US, by Trust in Churches (N= 1264)



AF6.3: Perception of US' Contribution to Solving Global Problems, by Trust in Churches (N= 1354)



AF6.4: Perception of Life in the US, by Trust in Media (N= 1264)



AF6.5: Perception of US' Contribution to Solving Global Problems, by Trust in Churches (N= 1354)

