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WHO PROTESTS, WHAT DO THEY PROTEST, AND WHY?

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ABSTRACT

We examine individuals' decisions to attend protests during the summer of 2020. Our analysis examines two simultaneous movements: Black Lives Matter along with protests calling for less stringent public health measures to combat the COVID-19 (e.g., for swifter reopening of businesses). Our analysis is made possible by a unique staggered panel data set that is representative of the U.S., which was initially constructed to study COVID-19 and contains a host of sociodemographic, health, and economic variables. A wave of data collected in the summer of 2020 includes explicit variables on protest attendance, political views, and support for different movements. We link this data set to several others to explore factors that could influence attendance decisions, such as local histories of police violence and time-varying infection rates. We find that protest participants are a diverse set of individuals who are representative of the U.S. population—even more so than are voters on some demographic dimensions. We also provide evidence suggesting that protesting appears to be rational, i.e., a deliberate and intentional choice to be civically engaged that is responsive to costs and issue salience; one that, for some individuals, functions as an alternative to voting. Finally, we provide novel evidence of overlap: attending a Black Lives Matter protest increases the likelihood of attending a protest calling for fewer public health restrictions. Together, our findings challenge claims by partisan pundits that protests are driven by extremists with fringe views or that the 2020 movements were diametrically opposed along partisan identity lines. The novelty of our findings suggests that protest is a form of civic engagement that can draw attention to societal preferences broadly held by a kind of silent majority, one whose views might otherwise remain obscured by dominant narratives insisting we are hopelessly polarized.

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All I have is a voice
To undo the folded lie
—
W. H. Auden, September 1, 1939

1 Introduction

Protests—and government responsiveness to them—are often seen as a critical part of a healthy democracy (Tarrow, 1989; Putnam, 1997; Gause, 2022; Gillion, 2020). Yet protest demands during heightened periods of contention and their seemingly opposing nature raise important normative, political, and practical questions. When the goal is to incorporate a diverse array of societal preferences into policymaking, do protests provide useful information for policy? How do protest demands compare to institutionalized forms of civic engagement, like voting, canvassing, or contributing to campaign funds? Answers to these questions depend at least in part on whether protest behavior reveals policy-relevant information about social preferences that might otherwise remain unknown. If so, an examination of protest behavior can help to align policy to social preferences, e.g., through politicians' positions on social issues, party platforms, or the design of voting mechanisms and of policy itself. This is especially true if what is learned by studying protests contradicts dominant and influential narratives about societal preferences perpetuated by partisan media figures.

In this paper, we examine who protested, what they protested, and why during the summer of 2020, a historic year for protest in the United States. Following the video-captured murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, MN, millions of people attended Black Lives Matter protests in what was probably the largest and broadest mass mobilization in American history.[1] These events followed an already-contentious period of protests against

[1]Black Lives Matter emerged as a national protest movement in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman in 2013. Zimmerman had killed teenager Trayvon Martin in Florida. What we refer to as the "BLM movement" in this paper includes the national Black Lives Matter organization, local Black Lives Matter chapters, the Movement for Black Lives coalition, and adjacent Black-led organizations that mobilized in their communities over the past decade to demand racial justice and accountability for police violence against Black people. Black Lives Matter emerged as a protest movement in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman in 2013. Zimmerman had killed teenager Trayvon Martin in Florida the year prior. However, the national movement was catalyzed by an uprising in Ferguson, Missouri, following the killing of Michael Brown in 2014, Freddie Gray in Baltimore, Eric Garner in New York, Tamir Rice in Cleveland, and Sandra Bland in Texas, among others. The movement provided an infrastructure and foundation for the mass mobilization that occurred in 2020 following the killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor. Likewise, when it emerged in 2013, Black Lives Matter had built on decades of work by Black activists, organizers, and community leaders who sought to end police violence and improve community safety Peoples-Wagner and Jerkins (2022) provide an excellent overview of the first decade of the BLM movement. For more on the long-standing demand by Black-led organizations and movements for

lockdowns and other public health measures related to the global COVID-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020. Black Lives Matter protests and protests against COVID-related rules (henceforth: *BLM* and *Reopening*) were caricatured as extremists with fringe views and little relationship to each other or to ordinary citizens. For instance, some characterized BLM as prone to violence and conflated the movement with Antifa (a loose movement of activists that share philosphies and tactics similar to anarchist groups Bogel-Burroughs and Garcia, 2020).[2] Others characterized Reopening protesters as gun-toting, anti-science vigilantes. In reality, there is little evidence (including our own) suggesting that violence was widespread at either kind of protest.[3] Using the most extreme participants to characterize the movements as a whole is thus a gross mischaracterization of typical protestors' views and desires. Doing so also creates the impression that protesters' views are not widespread and thus can be easily ignored or downplayed by politicians and policymakers. Moreover, extreme caricatures forestall consideration of an important possibility: that some individuals may be sympathetic to views expressed by both movements.

We find that BLM and Reopening protesters are a racially and politically diverse group of individuals who are broadly representative of U.S. citizens on several dimensions, which counters the notion that either movement is made up of one specific demographic group or solely of extremists prone to violence. More surprisingly, we find that there is substantial overlap between the two movements. Attendance at a BLM protest strongly predicts attendance at a Reopening protest. When viewing protest attendance as a form of revealed preference, this evidence of overlap contradicts facile, yet dominant narratives that protesters for BLM or Reopening belong to diametrically opposed movements, partisan identities, or demographic cohorts. Examining these empirical patterns could offer clues about potentially

an end to police brutality, see Hinton (2021); Berry (2009); Taylor (2017); Siff (2016); Waxman (2020).

[2]Prominent examples of caricatures that broke through in the media include Senator Tom Cotton's op-ed printed in *The New York Times* titled "Send in the Troops" written in the aftermath of violence that broke out at some BLM protests where he stated that "cadres of left-wing radicals like Antifa" infiltrated protest marches to "exploit Floyd's death for their own anarchic purposes" (Cotton, 2020). In the weeks following George Floyd's death, President Trump regularly described BLM protesters as "thugs" and "anarchists" while a prominent Fox News host compared these demonstrators to the terrorist group Al-Qaeda (Media Matters, 2020). Early Reopening protests occurred in Michigan, which featured armed demonstrators occupying the state capitol. Subsequent demonstrations came to be associated with images of these extremists.

[3]It is important to be precise about the nature of the violence that did result at a small number of the protests in the summer of 2020. While there was not widespread "violence" at far-right protests, such protesters were more likely to bring arms to demonstrations—like the individuals who occupied the Michigan state capitol and subsequently plotted to kidnap and murder the state's governor. These protests were more likely to result in violence, which included Reopening protests and counter-protests at BLM-related events (Jones, 2021). As we discuss further below, protest events in which property destruction and violence committed by people attending BLM protests were extremely rare relative to the scale and scope of the overall movement. Moreover, BLM protests (and anti-police protests more generally) tend to elicit more aggressive policing, which the literature has documented as a key correlate to whether the protesters themselves ultimately engage in violence (Reynolds-Stenson, 2018; Davenport, Soule, and Armstrong, 2011).

broadly held views and thus help to inform policy design so that it is better aligned to social preferences.

Our analysis relies on newly collected panel data designed to be representative of the U.S. population. Two critical features of the data make our analysis possible. First, the data set contains explicit variables measuring protest attendance and stated motivations behind it, along with information about socio-demographic characteristics, income, work arrangements, family structure, and political views. Thus, we can relate protest attendance not only to stated views, but also to individual characteristics and other behaviors, such as labor supply. Second, data were collected at a unique moment in history (summer of 2020) when the large-scale mobilizations of BLM and Reopening movements were underway. We can thus directly examine the possibility of participation in both. The designers of the survey data we analyze decided to collect information about protesting as part of an existing panel study. While the sampling procedure did not take protesting into account, the data reproduce protest attendance rates similar to contemporaneous media reports.[4]

We merge these data with several additional data sets to capture protester representativeness, the supply of protests over time and space, the incidence of local police shootings (which speaks to the salience of BLM for different localities),[5] and the prevalence of COVID-19, which shifts the expected costs of attending protests. Together, these sources allow us to relate participation decisions to various factors that previous literature has suggested could be relevant, including the availability of protests, local COVID risk, or local salience of the issue being protested (e.g., the incidence of recent police shootings). Moreover, since our analysis sample is drawn from a representative survey of the United States, our findings allow us to draw broader conclusions about protesters versus non-protesters compared to other studies in the literature which often collect and analyze data on participants at specific demonstrations, thereby omitting non-participants. This amounts to sampling on an outcome variable, which precludes a comparison between participants and non-participants and thus undermines the ability to identify factors that predict attendance.

Using these data, we report four main sets of results. First, protest participants constitute a diverse set of individuals. The median protester is white, middle class (measured by income), employed, and a parent.[6] While Black people were over-represented at BLM protests (15% versus 13% of the total respondent population in our data set), they did not

[4]We provide more details about data collection, response rates, and the addition of protest information in Section 3.

[5]Other studies in the literature have examined police shootings and their association with racial disparities in the application of lethal force and protesting (see e.g., Streeter, 2019, 2022).

[6]Throughout this paper we follow the AP Stylebook when it comes to the capitalization of race and ethnicity.

constitute the majority of self-reported participants. Protesters came from red and blue states and from cities, towns, and rural areas.[7]

Second, we show that protesters are representative of the U.S. population on a host of demographic variables. In fact, we present evidence that protesters are more representative of the U.S. population than are policymakers. More strikingly, we also document how protesters are more representative of the U.S. population than are voters on demographic dimensions such as gender, race, and ethnicity.[8] While we do not argue that representativeness is a necessary condition for a protest movement to be taken seriously, it is important in this setting as it dispels notions that BLM and Reopening protesters—at least in the summer of 2020—were extremists out of touch with the median citizen.

Third, we find that protest behavior appears deliberate and intentional, suggesting protesters are making a rational decision to participate. Not only does protesting align with stated views, but also protesters respond to expected costs (e.g., attendance consistent with risk of COVID exposure). They also respond to the local salience of an issue: for most control sets BLM protesting is more likely in places where police violence has recently occurred. Deliberateness and intention counter narratives that protesters lack a clear set of views, are expressing general discontent or frustration, or, as has been suggested by some commentators, are participating just to have fun (spun from the "protests are the new brunch" narrative of 2017, see e.g., Doll (2017) and Yglesias (2017, 2019)).

To further investigate the decision to protest, we ask how it interacts with a more traditional form of civic engagement: voting. The panel aspect of the data permits an examination of how protesting relates to the choice to vote in the 2020 election. The relationship is nuanced. The unadjusted correlation is negative, which suggests that protesting provides an alternative form of civic engagement for people who either cannot or will not vote. Consistent with this interpretation, several demographic characteristics (e.g., lower income) predict a higher probability of protesting and a lower probability of voting. Once we control for demographic factors, the relationship between protesting and voting becomes significantly positive, suggesting the two behaviors are complements. In other words, while protesting is an alternative for people who are unlikely to vote, all else equal, the behaviors reinforce one

[7]The survey data capture respondents from all fifty states and the District of Columbia. Respondents in each of these states except Wyoming reported attending some protest or demonstration.

[8]Other work in political science has reached similar conclusions that the segment of the population that participates in the electoral process does not perfectly align with the broader population. For instance, Americans with more wealth are far more likely to vote than those with fewer resources (see e.g., Campbell et al., 1960; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Lewis-Beck et al., 2008; Leighley and Nagler, 2014). Leighley and Nagler (2007) demonstrate that participation of voters from lower socio-economic classes has declined since the 1960s. Franko, Kelly, and Witko (2016) broadly describe these effects as electoral "class bias" and document how the size of this bias impacts government ideology, responsiveness, and the income distribution

another, perhaps by increasing the desire and opportunity to be civically engaged (Holbein, Kawashima-Ginsberg, and Wang, 2021; Timm, 2021).

Fourth, we provide novel evidence of overlap. Contrary to our priors (based on partisan narratives about the two social movements we examine—see e.g., Reopening protesters as armed right-wing radicals and BLM protesters as left-wing extremists prone to rioting), we find that the likelihood of attending a Reopening protest rises dramatically if the individual reports having attended a BLM protest. Moreover, we find little evidence that these overlaps could be explained by counter-protesting behaviors. The finding of these overlaps is inconsistent with the narrative that the summer 2020 protests were manifestations of increasing political polarization, at least at the time they occurred. It also serves as a counterexample to the overall idea that because an individual supports one cause they must hold a particular view on another. Partisan narratives about these social movements rely on this type of thinking, which we find little empirical evidence to support. However, these slanted perspectives can have noticeable impacts on public opinion, as shown through the large decrease in support for the BLM movement among Republicans after months of partisan attacks in the media and by elected officials (Horowitz, 2021; Samuels, 2021).

More broadly, the novelty of our findings suggests that protest is a form of civic engagement that can draw attention to broadly held societal preferences that might remain obscured by partisan narratives. Summer 2020 protests were cast in a way that suggested a potentially false homogeneity of views among participants. Given that politicians both create and take their cues from responses to such portrayals, people who are in the middle may feel like they are the only ones with nuanced preferences, which they have revealed through protest.[9] A failure to understand these nuanced views and overlapping needs (e.g., a tendency to view those who protest in favor of swifter reopening or who support BLM as diametrically opposed, small, and extreme slices of the population) means that policymakers and policy may fail to incorporate them. This is concerning if these views reflect the preferences of ordinary citizens who constitute a kind of silent majority: one whose views do not match the narrative perpetuated, ironically, by a small group of politicians, media outlets, and thought leaders of endlessly rising division and polarization.

The remainder of this paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 provides a review of literature from several disciplines. Section 3 describes our data sources and provides a preliminary analysis. We then turn to our main analysis of who protests and why in Section 4. Section 5 concludes.

[9]For instance, Tucker Carlson Tonight is the highest rated program on cable, with an average audience of over 5 million viewers, and is seen as major influence on Republican politicians (Ellefson, 2020). However, it is important to put this number into perspective: this audience is less than 10% of the Republican voters in the 2020 presidential election.

2 Literature

This study contributes to a wide-ranging and well-developed literature on protest and social movements that crosses several fields (e.g., political science, sociology, and economics) and examines topics ranging from collective action to revolution. The literature includes work that is theoretical, empirical, or focuses on specific case studies. To organize our discussion, we loosely follow Klandermans (2004) by delineating between supply factors (i.e., actions impacting the availability of protest opportunities)[10] and demand factors that drive participation, such as preference heterogeneity.

The literature that focuses on the supply-side examines actions taken by social movement organizations that facilitate individual participation. How social movements frame their beliefs and actions plays an important role in attracting participants and legitimacy. For instance, Snow et al. (1986) argue that a necessary condition for individuals to participate in the movement is alignment of a how a movement is framed across various dimensions (e.g., the nature of the problem, who is the responsible party, and alternatives).[11] Tarrow (1989) introduces the concept of "spillover" to the supply-side of social movements, where established movements create an infrastructure that facilitates easier entry for new movements to gain traction. The idea of spillover relates to our setting, which features two distinct types of protest movements that began nearly concurrently. Spillover can also affect the tactics social movements employ, as Wang and Soule (2012, 2016) note collaboration between movements as a channel for tactical diffusion and innovation. Mobilization—defined as the the conversion of movement sympathizers to participants (see, e.g., Klandermans (2004))—is among the most important supply-side factors as widespread participation is necessary for the success of movements. Theoretical work has highlighted the links between mobilization and the tactical choices of social movements. Among the implications of the model presented in Bueno de Mesquita (2013), for example, is that social movements recognize that mobilization is a function of the opportunity cost of participation. Social movements are not always successful at mobilization, which the literature has attributed to mechanisms such as nonconversion of sympathizers or erosion of support (Oegema and Klandermans, 1994). Our findings are relevant to research on mobilization because we can distinguish between movement sympathizers and protest attendance and can analyze factors that predict attendance after adjusting for movement support, including factors that shift costs of attendance.

The literature on the demand-side of protest and social movements focuses on mechanisms that influence individual participation. Individual motivations to protest have informed ty-

[10] While Klandermans (2004) treats mobilization as a factor separate from supply and demand factors, we view it as a supply factor in our overview of the literature.

[11] For an extensive review of the literature on frames, see Benford and Snow (2000).

pologies of participants, which evidence has shown can vary across types of protests (Walgrave et al., 2011), and theoretical models which illustrate how different types of participant motivations can make movements more resilient to government repression and more likely to succeed (Bueno de Mesquita and Shadmehr, 2022). Individual identities also factor into protest participation, including social pressure or "esteem from an ingroup" (McClendon, 2014), political preferences (Kostelka and Rovny, 2019), and the overlap between individual and movement identities (Klandermans and de Weerd, 2000). The theoretical connection between these identities relates to the concept of intersectional solidarity presented in Tormos (2017) (i.e., a recognition among activists of oppression or issues that affect multiple and interacting social structures). A novel aspect of our analysis is to present evidence of intersecting interests among participants across different social movements, which we see as a crucial component missing from our understanding of, and responses to, the protesting activities we examine. Moreover, the protests we study span several boundaries (e.g., issues and identities, organizations, tactics), which provide us with new information about societal preferences relevant for policymaking.[12]

Earlier literature has also debated the rationality of protesting. Theoretical work by Kim and Bearman (1997) and the analysis of Matsueda, Robbins, and Pfaff (2020) support protesting as a rational choice outcome, while others have pointed to the role of emotions in decision-making (Bandelj, 2009).[13] Our analysis is closely related to that of Passarelli and Tabellini (2017), which develops a model of protesting that demonstrates how individuals displeased with government policy can exert influence over it. The authors test some of the model's implications using data on protest engagement in a variety of countries. While our paper does not develop a formal model of protesting, we argue there are factors that rationalize protest activities. A novel aspect of our analysis relative to theirs is our unique data, which allow for a rich analysis of factors influencing the decision to protest. Moreover, we are able to speak to specific types of protests and factors that influence an individual's motivation to participate in these demonstrations, whereas Passarelli and Tabellini (2017) are only able to observe whether individuals have attended any protest in the recent past. Thus, our paper not only corroborates some of their findings but also extends them by examining a larger set of factors predicting who protests and why.

The demand-side of the social movement literature also features several empirical studies examining the determinants of individual protesting. This body of work has produced five broad themes. First, social networks play an important role in drawing people into

[12]For a survey on research about boundary-spanning protests and their impact on outcomes such as mobilization, see Wang, Piazza, and Soule (2018).

[13]It is important to note that other studies on the role of emotions in social movements tend to attribute deviations from rational behavior as strategic errors. For a review, see Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta (2004).

movements. Second, freedom from personal constraints that increase the cost or risk of protest participation (sometimes deemed "biographic availability") is also an important factor (Petrie, 2004). Third, financial or time resources are among the most important predictors of any form of political participation and resource asymmetries help to rationalize behavior differences across gender and racial groups. This framing is empirically supported in the context of participation in formal institutions, but the evidence is less clear when it is applied to protesting. Fourth, low levels of political trust increase the propensity of protesting due to an increased valuation of the collective goods these activities can produce and that traditional politics are unlikely to deliver. Finally, political engagement—defined as some combination of political interest and efficacy—is a prerequisite for any protesting behavior (Schussman and Soule, 2005). A challenge some of these studies face is that they rely on selected samples (i.e., they can only observe who attended or participated in a protest), which makes it difficult to directly analyze what distinguishes protesters from non-protesters. Since our survey data are a representative sample including non-protesters and protesters at a unique point in time when two large movements were underway, we can directly examine whether and to what degree these broad themes help to explain the decision to attend different types of protests.

Demand-side studies have also recognized important dimensions of individual-level heterogeneity. Examples include an individual's biographic availability and experience with protesting (Saunders et al., 2012) and the link between physical location and preferences (Ong and Han, 2019). DiGrazia (2014) documents how conventional low-risk protesting is associated with factors that predict participation in institutional politics (i.e., greater social privilege and moderate ideology), whereas unconventional-high risk protesting is associated with more extreme ideologies, social disadvantage, and alienation from the traditional political system. Our analysis contributes significantly to our understanding individual heterogeneity and protest attendance. For instance, in addition to accounting for a variety of personal and socioeconomic characteristics, we incorporate heterogeneity in the costs and benefits of protesting across locations. Additionally, as we observe multiple and distinct types of protests, we are able to speak to how these factors are correlated among different actions these people take.

Extant literature has also examined specific cases of social movements and protests.[14]

[14]Prominent examples from political science and sociology include the 1964 Freedom Summer project (McAdam, 1986, low and high risk activism); peace, gender, and labor demonstrations in the Netherlands (Klandermans, 1993, comparative analysis of motivation); student activism in the 1960s in the United States (Sherkat and Blocker, 1994, individual factors influencing activist behaviors among 1965 high school cohort); the 2011 and 2013 protests in Egypt (Jumet, 2015, what factors inform individual protest decisions against authoritarian regimes); and immigrant responses to nativist legislation in the United States (Zepeda-Millán, 2016, cognitive mechanisms that convert groups of unconventional protesters into activists). These fields

Bursztyn et al. (2021) study which factors have a causal effect on participation in the Hong Kong protests against the Chinese Community Party. Among the results of their RCT, the authors find individual incentives directly increase protest turnout and that prior attendance has a persistent effect on future protest engagement. Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, many papers studied the extent to which large gatherings, political rallies, and protests such as Black Lives Matter, the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, and the January 6 Capitol Insurrection impacted COVID transmission and risk avoidance behaviors (see e.g., Dave et al., 2020, 2021; Dave, McNichols, and Sabia, 2021a,b). A theme from these studies is that events which are not paired with or induce some risk mitigation behaviors tend to increase COVID transmission. These papers rely on individual mobility data, which are valuable but lack other details about individuals. Furthermore, these analyses tend to take protest participation as a given and do not attempt to understand what factors, including individual characteristics and costs, lead to the observed composition of protesters, which is a focus of our analysis.

Finally, studies on the effects of protest in the United Sates examine how protests influence policy and politicians. Gillion (2020) finds that electoral districts with more protest activity see increases in voter turnout and campaign contributions to politicians sympathetic to the movements. Gause (2022) notes that legislators running for reelection are more likely to support the preferences of protesters than non-protesters and those of racial minorities, low-income, and grassroots protesters over better resourced protesters. While we not directly address outcomes, our analysis is motivated by the premise that understanding who protests and why is important for policymakers as these events can provide further insight into societal preferences. Moreover, we examine questions related to how protest behavior relates to other forms of civic engagement, such as voting. We also document a surprising overlap between BLM and Reopening protesters, which suggests a greater degree of policy consensus between participants in these movements than prevailing narratives suggest, which may be informative to policymakers.

3 Data and Summary Statistics

In this section we describe the seven data sources we compiled to create the data set we use in our analysis, which provides information on individual demographics, beliefs, and behaviors—including protest participation. Our primary data source is linked to other sources

have examined the protests that arose in the years following the election of Donald Trump, including the protests from the summer of 2020 (see e.g., Fisher, Jasny, and Dow, 2018; Meyer and Tarrow, 2018; McAdam, 2020; McCabe and Brannen, 2021).

that speak to heterogeneity in political participation, the supply of protests, the prevalence of COVID-19, and the incidence of police violence across counties in the United States. We also use information on other sub-populations of Americans to compare them with protesters we observe to draw conclusions about the representativeness of protest participants. After describing the collection and features of these data, we provide summary statistics and highlight key patterns that inform our main analysis of who protests, what they protest, and why.

3.1 Data Collection and Sources

The primary data source for our analysis is the Socioeconomic Impacts of COVID-19 Study (SEICS), conducted by researchers at Washington University in St. Louis.[15] This data set is a balanced panel composed of five waves. Each wave consists of roughly 5,000 individuals located throughout the United States. The sample is representative of the United States along race, household income, age, and gender dimensions. The study collected detailed demographic and financial information about respondents and their families, including their home ZIP Codes. Pandemic-specific factors such as work arrangements, stimulus payment spending, and beliefs about infections and life quality were also captured. Data were collected online at quarterly intervals between April 2020 and June 2021 by Qualtrics. Respondents were recruited from pre-existing panels by Qualtrics with incentives to complete the survey. While these data are the central feature of our analysis, we augment them with other sources, described below, that enable us to capture additional demographics, the supply of protests, the prevalence of COVID-19, the incidence of police violence, and voting behavior at the county level.

Several moments of social unrest broke out during the data collection for Wave 1 that attracted significant media attention. On April 15 one of the first protests against COVID restrictions happened in Lansing, Michigan. Dubbed "Operation Gridlock," attendees in cars blocked traffic and sounded horns in and around the state Capitol for over 8 hours (LeBlanc and Mauger, 2020). Michigan experienced two more Reopening protests in rapid succession: first on April 30 and another on May 15, both of which were noted for the large number of attendees carrying assault weapons on the grounds and into the viewing galleries of the Capitol building (Mauger, 2020; Beckett, 2020; Censky, 2020). The events in Michigan were not isolated incidents. By May 1 similar Reopening protests had occurred in more than half of the states and continued to happen over the summer. On May 25—near the end of the Wave 1 collection period—former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin

[15]For a detailed write up on the SEICS and its methodology, see Roll et al. (2021).

murdered George Floyd in the presence of three other Minneapolis police officers; a lone passerby, Black high school student Darnella Frazier, recorded the murder on her cell phone and shared the video with the world via social media—an intervention for which she later won an honorary Pulitzer Prize (Haines, 2021). Outrage over Mr. Floyd's murder led to widespread protests against police brutality and racial inequality under the rallying cry of "Black Lives Matter." On June 6, shortly after the Wave 1 data was collected, over half a million people attended a BLM demonstration in nearly 550 places throughout the United States in a wave of protests that continued over the summer (Buchanan, Bui, and Patel, 2020).

In response to these extraordinary events, the study added several additional questions ahead of data collection for Wave 2, which occurred between July 30 and September 9 of 2020. Our analysis focuses mostly on the Wave 2 data. The first set of questions that were added pertained to individual perceptions of discrimination in their lives. Another new question gauged whether the respondent was supportive of the BLM protests. The addition of this question reflects the mixture of BLM protests that were occurring. For example, a small number of BLM protests (roughly 3.7%) included property damage or vandalism, leading local authorities to invoke emergency declarations (e.g., Hennepin County Minnesota, Washington D.C., and Portland Oregon) and provoking strong criticism, especially from right-wing commentators. The vast majority were peaceful and saw participation from across the political spectrum, such as when Senator Mitt Romney and a large group of evangelicals marched alongside liberal activists in Washington D.C. (Boorstein and Natanson, 2020). Notably, the perception of BLM protests as violent appears to have been largely driven by media coverage as 96.3% of these demonstrations that occurred involved no property damage or injury and 97.7% of these demonstrations reported no injuries among participants, bystanders, or police (Chenoweth and Pressman, 2020).[16] Third, the new survey questions collected information about protest attendance. Questions were designed to capture attendance at not only BLM and Reopening protests but also whether the respondent had gone to protests previously. These additions to the SEICS connect protest attendance and support to individual sociodemographics and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As mentioned previously, we supplement the SEICS data with information from other sources, which we can map using respondents' ZIP Codes. This additional information facilitates different aspects of our analysis. To gauge how representative protesters are to other players in the political process, we gather information on the demographics of voters and members of Congress. Voter demographics come from Edison Research and the MIT

[16]The data used by Chenoweth and Pressman (2020) are the same we use to measure the supply of available protests.

Election Data + Science Lab. Edison Research is the company that conducts exit polls for the major news networks other than Fox (i.e., ABC, CBS, CNN, and NBC). These exit polls are intended to provide demographic breakdowns of the overall population that participated in an election. While the underlying data for these polls are not readily available to the public, many cross-tabulations are part of the public record. For our analysis we rely on the exit polls from the 2016 presidential election.[17] The MIT Election Data + Science Lab creates several data sets on voting returns in a variety of American elections. From these materials we get information about county-level voter participation, which we use as a measure of political engagement. Information about the demographics of members of Congress come from the Congressional Research Service, which releases a profile on the membership of each Congress.[18]

We also use information on environmental factors that could affect a decision to join a protest. From the Crowd Counting Consortium (CCC; see Crowd Counting Consortium, 2021) we obtain information about the political demonstrations that occurred in the United States, which we aggregate to the county level. These records are detailed, including information about the issue motivating the protest, its location, size, and type. The CCC data also capture whether the protest was associated with participant injury, property destruction, police injury, and whether the police arrested or deployed tear gas or pepper spray against demonstrators. We use these data as a measure of protest supply within a respondent's community that we can relate to protesting behaviors and socio-demographic characteristics during the data collection period. Next, we gather information about the incidence of shootings in local communities involving police from Fatal Encounters. This organization updates and maintains a database of the people killed during any interaction with a law enforcement officer (e.g., on-duty, off-duty, local, state, federal). We use this information to gain insights about an individual's motivation to protest or their familiarity with debates about police violence. Finally, we gather historical information about COVID-19 case counts and deaths from *The New York Times (2021)*. These data were collected by the *Times* based on reports from state and local health agencies and provide us with a measure of the relative "riskiness" of engaging with protests during the sample period.

While the data sources we have assembled are valuable and informative about these protest behaviors and the COVID-19 pandemic, there are noteworthy limitations. We would prefer to use data from an ongoing study consisting of a large and representative sample, with information collected at regular intervals from the same individuals. However, given

[17]Results using the 2018 midterm election exit polls are similar.

[18]We specifically rely on the profiles for the 115th and 116th Congresses (Congressional Research Service, 2018, 2020).

the unique nature of these protests and the COVID pandemic more generally, such data do not exist. The SEICS endeavored to collect this additional protesting information but omitted some aspects. For example, SEICS data capture detailed information about the motives of protesters but it did not capture information about why non-protesters opted not to participate. Second, while the SECIS is representative along demographic characteristics such as race, gender, and income, it is not a random sample of people in the United States. Moreover, Wave 2 of the SECIS had a response rate of approximately 30%, which raise concerns that there may be unobservable variables that jointly predict survey participation and protest attendance. As such our estimates should be interpreted carefully. Fortunately, the SECIS has demonstrated attractive features that assuage these concerns. For instance, the SEICS documents similar patterns and responses to other probability-based surveys such as the Current Population Survey, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's 2017 Financial Well-Being in America Study, and the Federal Reserve's Survey of Household Economics and Decision Making. Additionally, the protest participation rates we observe in the data are consistent with contemporaneous media reports (see e.g., Buchanan, Bui, and Patel, 2020). Finally, as in settings with large representative data sets, it is difficult to make causal claims. We hope that the analyses and data presented in this paper inform data collection efforts across disciplines such as economics, political science, and sociology to better understand any causal mechanisms rationalizing protest attendance.

3.2 Summary Statistics

The first column of Table 1 summarizes the demographics of respondents in the analytic sample, which is composed of all Wave 2 respondents with information about protest attendance and who were linked to our other data sources. The average respondent is about 48 years old with a median income of $68,000. About 13% of Wave 2 is Black. A majority of the sample is male. About 26% of respondents have a child under the age of 18 at home. Close to 60% sample has at least a college degree. The geographic composition of the sample is roughly equal with a larger share in the South. In terms of work arrangements, 40% of respondents were continuing to work in person while a slightly smaller share was not observed working during the data collection period. Nearly 20% of the sample transitioned to tele-work and less than 5% reported they had stopped working altogether due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Respondent ideologies and beliefs vary. Roughly 49% identified with the Democratic party, 35% with the Republican party, and the remaining 16% as Independents. More than half indicated they supported the BLM protests.[19] According to the Cantril Ladder—a measure

[19]Our data do not contain a similar measure for support for Reopening protests.

of perceived well-being—the average respondent felt their lives ranged between "just okay" and "doing well." COVID remained a large concern for most respondents. Along with a high average fear of COVID, the typical respondent believed they faced a 34% chance of infection and a 30% chance of death from the disease if they became infected.

For some analyses related to voting, we analyze a subset of the analytic sample that appeared in Wave 3 of the SEICS, which captured information about voting behaviors. Information about these individuals is reported in the second column of Table 1. Generally this grouping of respondents is similar to the analytic sample. The respondents that appeared in Wave 3 tended to be slightly older with higher incomes. This group also had more males and college graduates and fewer Black respondents and people with young children at home.

3.3 Key Empirical Patterns

Individual Characteristics. We observe distinct protesting behaviors in the sample, which are summarized in Table 2. Not protesting was the most common behavior, as only 13% of respondents attended any demonstration. BLM protesters were the most in the sample, consistent with media reports. Among protesters, we find that 28% attended both BLM and Reopening protests, a pattern we explore in detail in our main analysis, including whether it is driven by counterprotest (for which we find little evidence).

Columns 3–5 in Table 1 reports variable means by different categories of attendance. Respondents that did not attend any protests tended to be older and higher income than those that attended BLM or Reopening protests. Relative to the overall population, Black individuals were over represented among protest attendees (15% of BLM protesters and 16% of Reopening protesters relative to 13% in the population). Perhaps surprisingly given the emphasis on racism raised by the BLM movement, the share of Black protesters is similar across each type of protesting activity. Females accounted for a majority of the respondents that attended a BLM protest, while Reopening protests were majority male. About two thirds of respondents that attended a Reopening protest had young children at home, as did a majority of BLM protesters, while less than a quarter of non-protesters had young children at home. These patterns are consistent with the lower average age of protesters. While a majority of respondents in all categories had college degrees, the highest share was among BLM attendees.

The patterns between work arrangements, ideology, and protest attendance are also important to highlight. Non-protesters were the most likely to have transitioned to tele-work. Protesters on the other hand, were most likely to be working in person with the highest share of attendees working in person found among those attending Reopening protests. These

socio-demographic work arrangement patterns are consistent with studies of the COVID-19 pandemic. Papageorge et al. (2021) find that individuals with lower income are less likely to transition to tele-work, which partially reflects the types of jobs these individuals have and makes the adoption of self-protective behaviors such as social distancing more costly. Protesters tend to have higher fears of COVID and believe they are at greater risk of infection and death, consistent with the risks of continuing to work in person or attending protests.

The ideological breakdown across protesting behaviors is sensible; majorities of non-protesters and protesters supported the BLM protests and BLM attendees overwhelmingly supported these demonstrations. Reopening protesters were also highly supportive of BLM protests. The partisan alignment of BLM and Reopening protesters is sensible, with a majority of BLM protesters identifying as Democrats, while the majority of Reopening protesters identified as Republicans. However, a greater share of Reopening protesters identified as Democrats (36%) than BLM protesters identified as Republicans (33%). Current media narratives about these activities seemingly rule out such ideological nuances among participants, which we view as one of the motivations for further analysis to determine whether protests provide novel information about society preferences. As mentioned previously, Wave 3 of the SEICS data gathered information about participation in the 2020 presidential election, which we use as part of our analysis on the relationship between protesting and voting.

Protest Supply, Voting, COVID, and Police Violence. While respondents in the sample are located throughout the United States, many are clustered in major cities such as Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York. Unsurprisingly, the number of protests, prevalence of COVID, and incidence of police shootings were positively correlated with these larger counties, but these factors also impacted smaller counties. For instance, smaller counties had an average of ten protests over the relevant data collection period and an average of three police shootings. Voter participation displays greater variation across geographies, with the highest rates in competitive swing states such as Arizona and Florida and lower rates in safe states like Texas and New York.[20]

4 Who Protests, What Do They Protest, and Why?

In this section we turn to our main analysis, which we present in four parts. First, we formalize our preliminary analysis to identify which individual factors predict protest atten-

[20]See the Online Appendix for a detailed comparison of the top 12 counties with the most respondents and all other counties in the sample.

dance once we adjust for other factors. Second, we assess the extent to which protesters are representative of different populations in the United States. Third, we assess the degree to which protesting can be cast as a rational decision to be civically engaged, which includes an examination of how protesting relates to voting behavior. Fourth, we provide novel evidence of overlap between BLM and Reopening protest movements.

4.1 Individual Factors and Beliefs Predictive of Protesting

Our analysis begins by codifying the findings from our preliminary analysis using a regression framework that allows us to isolate what factors predict protesting when controlling for other characteristics. We examine three protesting behaviors: attending any protest, a BLM protest, and a Reopening protest. For each option, we estimate a linear probability model with different sets of individual and country characteristics using heteroskedastic robust standard errors. Detailed results are presented in Tables S1, S2, and S3 in Appendix A.[21]

Our baseline specification is presented in column (1) and contains a set of covariates including variables for a respondent's age, income, whether they have young children at home, and their work arrangements. Consistent with our preliminary analysis, these factors significantly predict protest attendance. Coefficients on age, children at home, and work arrangements are the largest. Each factor was associated with a 6–13 percentage point increase in protest participation. The coefficient on low income also indicated a positive correlation with protest attendance but the estimate was smaller (4 percentage points). These patterns were robust to the inclusion of other individual characteristics (i.e., race, gender, education, region) and beliefs which we present in column (2).

Most other demographic factors do not have significant associations with attendance. Demographic attributes that were significant (e.g., Black and Reopening, female and any protest and Reopening, college degree and Reopening) have relatively small coefficient estimates compared to those in the baseline model. A respondent's belief about their perceived quality of life was significant in predicting all three protest behaviors and robust to the inclusion of controls. Somewhat counterintuitively, this finding suggests individuals who are more satisfied with their lives are more willing to protest. Our results also suggest that protesters were more satisfied with their lives than non-protesters. A plausible interpretation for this pattern is that protesters believe their actions may have some impact on the status quo, which gives them hope for the future.[22] Finally, Partisan identity also tends to predict

[21] In addition to linear probability models we also estimated probit versions. Those results are similar to the ones presented here and are available upon request.

[22] Boehnke and Wong (2011), Drury and Reicher (2005), Gilster (2012), Klar and Kasser (2009), and Cherniss (1972) document patterns consistent with this finding.

protest attendance relative to Independent voters. Consistent with dominant narratives, Republicans are more likely to attend any protest and Reopening protests and Democrats are more likely to attend any protest and BLM protests.

The baseline regression results suggests people for whom protesting would presumably be more costly are more likely to protest. For instance, protesters were significantly more likely to be working in-person than non-protesters, which is especially striking considering the state of the COVID pandemic at the time (i.e., pre-vaccine and during the "second wave" of deaths and cases). Under these circumstances, an individual likely would continue working in-person only if they were essential workers, an interpretation that is also consistent with our finding that protesters had significantly lower incomes than non-protesters.[23] Protesters also appear to face domestic constraints in the form of young children at home. The pandemic limited access to schools and other childcare arrangements, which presented additional logistic and economic burdens on parents. Undoubtedly, these burdens fell the hardest on those without flexible work arrangements such as tele-work. We return to this point later when examining whether these patterns are consistent with rational decision making.

4.2 Representativeness of Protesters

Having established the profiles of protesters in our data, we evaluate the extent to which protesters reflect the broader U.S. population. This feature is important for the protest movements we study due to the dominant narratives that cast demonstrators as left- and right-wing extremists. While representativeness is an important factor in this study as it directly addresses the narrative that summer 2020 protesters were largely extremists with fringe views, we do not claim that it is not a necessary condition for establishing the legitimacy of other protest movements.[24]

We perform a series of difference of means tests between protesters and the overall American population using the Wave 2 survey data. Results are presented in Table S4. Since the SEICS data are representative of the U.S. population on age, gender, race, and household income, we focus on these characteristics. Consistent with our regression analysis, protesters tend to be younger, more racially diverse, and lower income than the broader population.

[23]This pattern is also consistent with the earnings for essential workers. According to data from the BLS' National Occupation Employment and Wage Estimates report, professions that are classified as non-health care essential workers (e.g., retail workers, postal service mail carriers, truck drivers, cashiers, janitors, cleaners, etc.) have an average national salary of approximately $32,000 (McQuarrie, 2020). These earnings levels are toward the lower end of the second income quintile and fall within our definition of low income.

[24]For instance, student protests over school debt or miners protesting over safety regulations likely do not represent the broader population but have clearer connections between the protesting population and issue at hand.

Similar shares of men and women attended protests as are present in population.

While the differences between protesters and the population are large, the differences for other sub-groups are even larger. Figure 1 compares the average characteristics of protesters to all Americans, voters, and members of the 115th Congress.[25] Protesters have larger absolute differences relative to voters in the 2016 election than they do to the broader American population. While we cannot comment on the statistical significance of these differences, the level difference supports the broader point that protesters share more in common with the general population than they do with the subset that votes or serves in Congress.

We next ask whether protesters are more or less representative of the population than those that vote in elections. In terms of age and income, protesters are further away from the population than voters as substantially larger shares of protesters are young and low income. Nearly 70% of protesters were under the age of 40, relative to 36% of voters and 38% in the population. Roughly 77% of protesters had an annual income below $100,000, while 67% and 71% of voters and Americans respectively fell into this category. Demographically, protesters are more representative of the American population. A higher proportion of voters are female and white relative to the population. Over 53% of voters are female relative to 51% in the population, while 70% of voters are white despite making up 61% of the population. Protesters match the population gender split (51% female) and more closely reflect the racial diversity of the population—albeit with slightly more racial diversity than the population (roughly 45% of protesters are non-white, while 39% of the population is non-white). These patterns suggest protesters and voters both send signals about preferences in the population. While much is made of voters and their behavior in terms of interpreting public opinion on policy priorities and platforms, less attention has been paid to protesters and their motivations as an accurate representation of the public's preferences.

These results illustrate how protesters fit within the American population and relate to other groups of people in ways more common than one may expect. Protesters are clearly closer to the population on certain demographic dimensions than their elected officials who are overwhelmingly white and male.[26] Protesters also more closely reflect the gender

[25]Voter demographics come from Edison's exit polls of the 2016 presidential election. Since we do not have access to the underlying exit poll data, it is not possible to do a formal difference in means test. We also focus on the demographics of members of Congress and do not examine age or income differences since it is well established these elected officials are older and more well-off financially. Despite these data limitations, comparing the magnitude of the absolute differences across these groups is informative about relative representativeness.

[26]It is also well established that members of Congress are far wealthier than the average citizen. Setting aside fringe benefits and other sources of income, the salary for a member of Congress alone is 185% (287%) greater than the median household income of Americans (protesters) in our sample. Since 2009, the annual salary for members of Congress not in a leadership position is $174,000. The median annual household

and racial diversity of the population than do the voters. While Americans with higher incomes are more likely to vote and not protest, lower income Americans rely on a mixture of protesting and voting. As part of our subsequent analysis, we examine more formally how protest and voting behaviors interact.

4.3 Social Movement Participation as a Rational Decision

Next, we assess the extent to which the decision to protest can be construed as a rational one. If individual choices respond to changes in the perceived costs and benefits, that suggests the decision to protest comes from a thoughtful and deliberate process. We also assess how this behavior interacts with beliefs along with another form of civic engagement: voting. It is of course not readily obvious how to measure benefits to individuals in this context, but it is reasonable to assume they are related to an expression of preferences and an opportunity to influence or change policy. Viewing protesting as a choice coming from an intentional process contrasts with the notion that these people are so extreme in their views that they ignore any costs of their actions or that they are participating sole for affective reasons (i.e., enjoyment or releasing frustrations).

Broad Patterns. We start by examining whether broad relationships between individual and community factors and protest attendance are consistent with rational choice. Two natural questions are whether people attend protests for causes they support and if they attend when it is easy to do so. Both circumstances are consistent with rational decision-making. Individuals that always protested regardless of the cause or difficulty of attendance display behaviors less aligned with this framework. Column (3) in Tables S1, S2, and S3 add protest factors including support for BLM protests and measures for the number of BLM and Reopening protests in a respondent's home county. These factors significantly predict protest attendance. These high-level patterns suggest protesting is consistent with rational decision-making, but individuals face other individual and community factors that impact the decision to protest.

Costs and Benefits. Next, we assess how individuals respond to the potential costs and benefits of protest attendance. Figure 2 presents average protest attendance behaviors within grouping of counties based on quantiles of different community factors. The left panel of Figure 2 examines the correlation between protest attendance and COVID cases. Somewhat surprisingly, counties with higher amounts of new COVID cases see higher levels of protest

income of Americans (protesters) in our sample is approximately $61,000 and ($45,000).

participation, roughly a 5-percentage point increase (45% change) from the first quantile to the fourth quantile.[27] The center panel focuses on protest attendance and the incidence of police shootings in a county. We document a positive relationship between counties with more police shootings and higher levels of protest attendance. In unreported results, we also document that support for BLM protests increases by over 30% from counties with the lowest incidence of police shootings to counties with the most.

These correlations speak to the deliberateness of the decision to protest. The positive association with attendance and COVID metrics provide mixed evidence. On the one hand, greater risks of COVID increase the costs of attending a protest, which all else equal would lower participation. At the same time, higher levels of protest attendance may contribute to the spread of COVID. The positive association between protest attendance (BLM support) and police shootings may reflect how communities that are more familiar with these incidents have a motivation to advocate for change. To draw stronger conclusions about these relationships and the deliberateness of protesting decisions, we broaden our analysis to consider these community factors alongside individual characteristics.

We further examine these patterns by adding additional controls to our baseline regression model to capture these associations in Tables S1, S2, and S3. Column (4) adds county-level COVID factors to the baseline controls. Individual beliefs about COVID infection had a positive and statistically significant relationship with each protesting behavior with a large magnitude (i.e., a 1% increase in this belief is associated with an 18–25 percentage point increase in the probability of attendance). Other county-specific COVID metrics (i.e., cumulative case counts, average new cases, and average new deaths) did not have a significant relationship with any protesting behaviors. We also explore the effect of police shootings on attending any protest and BLM protests. Alongside the baseline factors, police shootings significantly predict an increase in participation, consistent with patterns in Figure 2. The correlation and regression results generally support how individuals respond to community-based factors that impact the incentive to protest. When protests are readily available, the cost of attendance is lower and people are significantly more likely to attend. Similarly, when issues are more salient due to higher levels of police violence, attendance increases.

Together, we argue that it is reasonable to cast protest participation in summer 2020 as a rational decision, which responds to potential costs and benefits. The additional regression specifications support this interpretation. For instance, issue salience predicts protest attendance. We see this through the positive and significant associations between support

[27]We find similar trends for protest attendance and COVID concern when using quantiles based on cumulative COVID deaths, average daily new cases, and average daily new deaths. Concerns about COVID (i.e., fear of the disease and beliefs about infection and death) increase along these dimensions as well, which is intuitive.

for BLM protests and the number of fatal police shootings within a community, controlling for other individual factors. Moreover, our results continue to robustly predict that protesters also have lower incomes, which makes retaining employment a higher priority for them than those with more financial resources. This interpretation provides a motivation for the decision to attend a Reopening protest. We view these patterns as evidence of the benefits individuals perceive from attending a protest, consistent with a rational view of protesting. The extent to which these benefits outweigh the perceived costs of attendance casts protesting as a rational decision.

We return to our initial findings that factors presumably raising costs of attendance have the opposite association, namely the presence of young children at home, work arrangements, and COVID risk. Children are a notable cost facing protesters. Across each regression specification we examine, the presence of children at home had a positive and significant association with the protest behaviors we study. One interpretation of this pattern is that having children at home raises the cost of attending a protest given severe health risks and consequences of COVID. Through this lens protest attendance does not appear to rationally respond to costs. Another interpretation is that people with young children are attending protests despite these higher costs, which speaks to additional individual motivations and perceived benefits from attendance. Perhaps these parents do not want to lose their jobs and childcare or wish to invest in a future for their children where innocent people are not killed by the police (or both).

Another notable cost of protest attendance in our setting is the individual risk of contracting and dying from COVID. The correlation and regression results indicate that a larger beliefs of COVID infection predict protest attendance. A closer examination of this pattern suggests it is driven by differences in behavior as opposed to underlying age patterns that may drive COVID risk. Table 1 shows that perceived risks of COVID infection and death are higher among protesters than non-protesters. In unreported results, we also document that these perceptions are notably higher among young protesters than older ones. While this finding does not diminish COVID as a potential cost impacting protest attendance, it does illustrate that individuals who protest recognize the risks associated with their behaviors. Our results suggests that the marginal health risk from COVID is likely low for protesters, which suggests protest attendance is rational. We robustly predict that higher protest among respondents who are working in-person relative to other work arrangements like tele-work. This group is already exposed to COVID through work, so the marginal cost of attending a protest is relatively lower than people working from home or not working. The economics literature has documented similar decreased marginal health risks in the context of other risky health behaviors such as sexual activity and HIV infection (Kremer and Morcom, 1998;

Auld, 2006). Such a weighing of risks reflects a deliberate thought process about the decision to protest.

Voting. Finally, we examine more closely the relationship between voting and protesting. Both are forms of civic engagement. We have established that protesters are more similar to the U.S. population than voters along several demographic dimensions. Does this mean that individuals protest instead of voting? Alternatively, does protesting perhaps predict more civic engagement, in which case the relationship between the two would be positive?

We examine this relationship in two ways. The most direct method is to use SEICS data from Wave 3, which contain information on participation in the 2020 presidential election. We observe about 30% of Wave 2 protesters in Wave 3, which collected information about participation in the 2020 presidential election. Approximately 92% of these protesters voted in that election. More generally, participation in the 2020 presidential election was monotonically increasing with income. Approximately 72% of respondents in the first income quintile voted in the election. Participation jumped to 81% in the second quintile and steadily rose to over 95% in the fifth-income quintile.

Using data on protesters and non-protesters from our analytic sample that appear in Wave 3, we estimate whether protest participation predicts voting in the 2020 election. Estimates are presented in Table 3.[28] Column (1) suggests there is a negative—albeit insignificant—correlation between protesting and voting. In other words, people who protest are less likely to vote. One interpretation is that voting and protests are substitutes, which means that protesting actually causes people to gain lower utility from voting, leading them to vote less. However, we caution that there could be omitted variables that make people more likely to protest and less likely to vote, which undermines identification of a causal effect and the interpretation of the two actions as substitutes. To probe this point further, we add in our baseline controls and show results in column (2) of Table 3. The relationship between protesting and voting reverses, which suggests that the negative correlation absent controls is consistent with omitted factors predicting low rates of voting and higher rates of protesting (e.g., youth and low income). Once we adjust for these factors, results suggest that protesting is, if anything, a complement to voting. This could be the case if protesting increases people's civic engagement in ways that lead them to perceive voting as more valuable. This association could also hold if organizations that mobilize protest also attempt to increase voter registration or recruit party members at such protests, as seemingly occurred with some frequency during the summer of 2020. Nevertheless, there may still be omitted factors that predict more of one and less of the other, which would flip the sign back. Thus, we are

[28] We find similar results if both types of protests we study are included as separate controls.

cautious in drawing conclusions. The SEICS data provide suggestive evidence to support the claim that many factors that predict protesting also predict a lower likelihood of voting and, moreover, that voting and protesting are complementary in that doing one raises the utility of doing the other, all else equal.

Next, we replicate this finding using another data source. A potential concern is that reliance on the subset of Wave 2 participants observed in Wave 3 reduces sample size too much. Moreover, it is possible that 2020 protests were so unique that any relationship to future voting cannot be generalized. Thus, we consider retrospective voting. In particular, we use data on county-level voter participation in the 2016 presidential election as a measure of voting. The right panel of Figure 2 highlights a negative correlation between protest attendance and voter participation, similar to the estimate from column (1) in Table 3. The final column of Tables S1, S2, and S3 adds this measure of voter participation to our baseline regression specifications. Similar to our previous result, we find that once we control for factors that predict non-voting, the sign on voter participation shifts from negative to positive, suggesting a complementary relationship between protesting and voting.[29]

4.4 Overlapping Social Movements

The most surprising pattern from our descriptive analysis is that nearly 30% of protesters attended both BLM and Reopening demonstrations. Here, we assess the robustness of this empirical pattern and delve into the profile of this group of protesters and probe what—if anything—they tell us about societal preferences.

To start, we run a final regression specification that combines all of the individual and community factors we considered to assess which factors robustly predict protest attendance. These results are presented in Table 4. While most effects remain the same when all controls are included like the baseline factors, some estimates are different. For instance, having a college degree no longer predicts protest attendance. Indicators for the South and West now significantly predict Reopening attendance, which is unsurprising given that relatively more of these protests occurred in those regions relative to the Midwest and Northeast. Political participation goes from an insignificant factor to a significant and positive one after all controls are included and police shootings become insignificant. The former finding is notable as it reverses the correlation pattern presented in Figure 2, suggesting that the union of the individual and community based factors in the final specification explain some of the variation that drives protesting in areas with lower voter participation. Moreover, this

[29]While the point estimates for voter participation in Tables S1, S2, and S3 are insignificant, once we control for all individual and community factors the estimates is significant. These results are discussed as part of the next section.

result casts voting and protesting as complementary, consistent with the voting patterns observed in other waves of the data. Partisan controls also shift somewhat. Identifying as a Republican has a positive and significant association with each behavior, while identifying as a Democrat becomes insignificant. The latter is unsurprising given the relatively equal share of Democrats among protesters and non-protesters.

The relative impacts these factors have on protest attendance are substantial. Across all three outcomes, being young and having children at home had the largest impacts on protest participation with changes in participation probabilities ranging from 8 to 14 percentage points and 7 to 9 percentage points respectively. Low income had large effects as well but was generally smaller than these two factors with the largest effect for Reopening protests—5 percentage point increase in participation. Work arrangements also had sizable effects on participation. Across all three behaviors, arrangements such as tele-work were associated with a 7 to 9 percentage point decrease in protest participation. The magnitude of Republican partisan identification was quite substantial, ranging from 4 to 8 percentage points. Protest factors also have sizable impacts on participation. A one unit increase in support for BLM increased participation 9 percentage points, while for every 100 protests in a respondent's county, protest participation increased between 3 and 19 percentage points. Counties with higher political participation in the 2016 presidential election also saw protest attendance increase around 13 percentage points.

A review of the regression results highlights that many of the same factors predict attendance at BLM and Reopening protests. In particular, young, low income, young children at home, working in-person, positive beliefs about life, partisanship, higher beliefs of COVID infection, and higher levels of available protests and voter participation predict attendance at these demonstrations. These findings are suggestive of the type of individual that attends these protests and their motivations. The overall profile of the protester we described earlier holds up to the full set of controls: protesters are individuals navigating economic and personal constraints that are satisfied with their lives or optimistic about their ability to change them. These factors speak to motivations to protest. Unsurprisingly, protesters are highly engaged politically. While some results related to partisan identification are no longer significant in the presence of other controls, we find that individuals are more likely to protest in counties where voter participation is higher. One interpretation of this result is that individuals in these counties are more attuned to political issues and willing to express their opinions (either through voting, protesting, or both), which is also consistent with our findings about higher protest attendance in counties with more protests and that protesters tend to vote. Alternatively, higher voter participation is found in battleground states which attract political activists that establish the infrastructure necessary to mobilize citizens to

protest. This interpretation is also consistent with higher attendance in counties with more protests. Finally, our finding about COVID infection beliefs is consistent with activities such as attending a protest and working in person. These findings indicate that similarities in terms of demographics and motivations between BLM and Reopening protesters are greater than most commonly held notions about these individuals would suggest.

Figure 3 plots the average characteristics of this group of protesters against the American population, which gives us a sense of the relationship between the median protester and the median American. Both individuals are white and have incomes that classify as middle class with protesters on the lower end of that spectrum. The average protester is about 10 to 14 years younger than the average American and as a result far more likely to have young children at home. The vast majority of protesters are continuing to work in-person while the majority of Americans are either tele-working or not working during the pandemic. Ideologically, both individuals support BLM and hold diverse political beliefs. Suffice to say, the overlaps between BLM and Reopening protesters are greater than what dominant narratives suggest.

A natural question is whether these attendance overlaps are instances of counter-protesting. There is little empirical support for this interpretation. First, respondents that attended a Reopening protest largely supported BLM protests. As shown in Table 1, nearly 70% of Reopening protesters supported BLM protests. This value approaches 80% when looking at the set of Reopening protesters that also reported attending a BLM protest. These overwhelming levels of support for BLM among Reopening protesters are inconsistent with a counter-protesting interpretation. To further get at the possibility of counter protesting, in Table 5 we examine the breakdown of BLM protest attendees by their support for BLM. About 19% of those who attended a BLM protest indicated they did not support these protests.[30] Demographically, these individuals (opposed BLM and attended a BLM protest) more closely align with the protester profile we established in our main analysis than other BLM opponents. Learning is one interpretation to rationalize this pattern—these people may have attended BLM protests out of curiosity and came to oppose BLM after attending. While counter-protesting is also a plausible interpretation, the demographic ideological overlaps we highlighted appear more consistent with learning. It could also be consistent with turning to partisan news sources after attending such a protest and changing one's mind about the movement. Unfortunately, our data do not permit us to do the analogous comparisons among BLM protesters that attended Reopening protests as the survey did not collect respondent's views about the appropriate level of COVID restrictions.[31]

[30]The majority of respondents that fall into this category also attended Reopening protests.

[31]Respondents were asked about their views on mask efficacy at preventing or reducing the spread of

Recognizing these similarities by understanding who protests and why could shift dominant narratives about social preferences. Failure to recognize these nuances disadvantages not only the protesters but also a larger set of the population that opts not to protest but may face similar challenges to the protesters. More broadly, this finding suggests that a segment of the population is using protest as another form of civic engagement to draw attention to their needs. The rising division and polarization that characterizes the policy process appears to in part reflect a nonrecognition of these subtleties.

5 Conclusion

In this paper we examine who protests, what they protest, and why. We find that protest participants constitute a diverse set of individuals who are representative of the United States population and come from a variety of geographies. Decisions to attend protests appear to follow a rational process, as individuals are responsive to the costs (e.g., COVID risks) and benefits of participation, as measured by issue salience. We also relate protest to a more standard form of civic engagement, voting, and find that while demographic factors that predict protesting predict a lower likelihood of voting, the two behaviors appear to be complements. Most strikingly, we find that many people go to different types of protests that dominant narratives pit against one another. This finding not only challenges dominant narratives about movement supporters, but also calls into question the practice of using support for one issue as a sufficient statistic to characterize an individual's full set of political views.

While novel, the fact that there is overlap is not difficult to rationalize. Individuals can simultaneously abhor excessive police violence and also worry that they will lose their jobs or childcare arrangement due to what they perceive to be overly stringent or long-enduring public health measures. Indeed, an analysis of protesters suggests this to be the case. We show that the modal protester tends to be a young parent who is continuing to work in person amid a deadly pandemic with relatively limited economic resources. However, on other dimensions, these protesters appear to share many qualities with the American public. Are their preferences widely shared? Do party platforms adequately reflect them? If not, are they extreme and out of touch? Could platforms shift to better reflect these views? This is not so far-fetched. There are a number of policies that might be considered to address the substance of these findings. For instance, policymakers could facilitate formal opportunities to address with demonstrators in the midst of mobilization, and provide staff resources to

COVID. Over 90% felt masks were effective.

serve as interlocutors between community organizers and elected officials. Existing forms of civic engagement, such as voting, could also adapt to better capture views expressed by protesters and the voting electorate. For example, given that the demographic profile of the model protester is a lower-middle-class working parent, making election day a national holiday may increase the likelihood of getting these protesters out to the polls. Other voting systems such as ranked choice voting, which was recently adopted by Maine and Alaska,[32] are designed to permit candidates with more nuanced views to have greater chances of success in general elections and may produce politicians better positioned to represent the nuanced societal preferences expressed by voters and protesters. Together these actions may provide additional sources of information for newsrooms and pundits to more accurately reflect the nature of future social movements.

More broadly, civic engagement provides signals about societal preferences as well as constrained choices or factors that constrain the ability to act on societal preferences (e.g., lack of job flexibility, limited transportation, criminal record). But engagement can come in multiple forms. Voting is the most prominent and well-studied form. Our analysis highlights protesting is another that contains possible novel information about preferences that comes from a segment of the population that tends to be underrepresented among voters. For example, a large segment of the U.S. adult population cannot vote due to felony convictions. As of 2020, an estimated 5.17 million people were disenfranchised due to a felony conviction. One out of 44 adults—over 2% percent of the total U.S. voting eligible population—were disenfranchised due to a current or previous felony conviction. These impacts can also spill over to communities as prior research has found that people who are not disenfranchised themselves but living in neighborhoods with a high prevalence of criminal justice-involved individuals (i.e., previously incarcerated and/or under community supervision) are less likely to vote (Burch, 2014). Strict voter ID laws and voter registration restrictions can also limit the ability of individuals to vote, disenfranchising swaths of otherwise eligible voters as they lack the proper documentation to vote (Kuk, Hajnal, and Lajevardi, 2022).

Our findings also call into question the assumed homogeneity in political thought and action that are often used in media portrayals to characterize populations, especially economically disadvantaged populations. Such media portrayals are particularly harmful because not only do they serve to reify misleading stereotypes but also they have been shown to inadvertently impact political outcomes by warping public perceptions of population subgroup preferences, beliefs, and behaviors. Many examples of these misperceptions exist. For example, prior research suggests although many people do support efforts to drastically reform

[32]Cities such as New York, Minneapolis, San Francisco, and Oakland also use rank choice voting for their elections.

policing and community safety, community members in highly policed racially segregated areas do not unanimously support efforts to reduce police budgets (Parker and Hurst, 2021). In fact, some people support additional government funding to improve community outcomes along with maintaining an improved police presence when needed (see e.g., Goff, 2021a,b). Media framing reinforcing policing and removal of police as a singular issue in these communities ignores important and often overlapping economic concerns that also need to be addressed to improve well-being.

These are particularly insidious forms of political scapegoating that not only serve political agendas but also allow populations of higher socioeconomic status, often the consumers of news media (see e.g., Martin and Yurukoglu, 2017), to be blameless in the face of extreme inequality. For example, data from the survey used for this analysis reveal that economically disadvantaged populations have been faced with multiple challenges spanning from lack of childcare and job insecurity to mistreatment by the police during the COVID pandemic. Setting these up as opposing issues allows for the mis-recognition of the shared experiences these populations face and inaction to address the fundamental factors driving these experiences (e.g., economic inequality, racial residential segregation, Metzl, 2019)—factors that also constrain the ability for these same populations to vote. Understanding and appreciating these nuances increases the likelihood policy will address them. Failure to do so may lead to ignoring the needs of a potentially silent majority, perpetuating a status quo that mobilized protesters in the first place.

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6 Tables and Figures

Table 1: Variable Means for Different Protesting Groups

	Overall	Repeats	None	BLM	Reopen
Demographics					
Age	48.31	53.09	50.28	34.70	33.94
Median Income ($)	68,000	75,000	70,000	50,000	45,000
Black	0.13	0.11	0.12	0.15	0.16
Female	0.47	0.44	0.47	0.51	0.40
Child < 18	0.26	0.20	0.22	0.55	0.66
College Degree or Higher	0.57	0.62	0.57	0.59	0.57
Northeast	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.21	0.18
Midwest	0.20	0.20	0.21	0.17	0.16
South	0.39	0.36	0.39	0.43	0.43
West	0.21	0.23	0.21	0.19	0.22
Work Arrangements					
Still Working	0.40	0.34	0.35	0.73	0.84
Stopped Working	0.03	0.02	0.03	0.04	0.02
Began Tele-Working	0.19	0.21	0.21	0.10	0.04
Not Obs. Working	0.38	0.43	0.41	0.13	0.10
Partisan Identity and Beliefs					
Support BLM Protest	0.54	0.51	0.51	0.81	0.68
Cantril Ladder (Now)	6.74	6.90	6.70	7.19	7.47
Republican	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.33	0.52
Democrat	0.49	0.49	0.49	0.53	0.36
Independent	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.13	0.12
COVID					
COVID Fear	0.62	0.62	0.61	0.71	0.70
Belief COVID Inf.	0.34	0.31	0.31	0.58	0.65
Belief COVID Death	0.30	0.29	0.27	0.54	0.65
Observations	3,526	1,874	3,069	294	228

Notes: This table reports the mean value of different variables for members of the Wave 2 survey sample. The means are broken out for different groups: the Wave 2 analytic sample, those who appeared in the Wave 2 analytic sample and Wave 3 (Repeats), those who attended no protests (None), those who attended a BLM protest (BLM), and those who attended a Reopening protest (Reopen). The sum of non-protester and protester observations do not match the overall sample because some protesters attended both BLM and Reopening protests.

Table 2: Sample Protest Attendance Shares

	N	Share
Any Protest	646	0.13
Reopening Protest	296	0.06
BLM Protest	382	0.08
Protest Previously	380	0.08
Reopening Protest Only	115	0.02
BLM Protest Only	201	0.04
BLM and Reopening Protests	181	0.04
Total	4,940	

Notes: This table lists the shares of respondents from the Wave 2 sample who engaged in different types of protest activities. Shares are reported as a percentage of the total number of observations.

Table 3: Factors Associated with Participation in the 2020 Presidential Election

	(1)	(2)
Attend Any Protest	-0.01	0.05**
	(0.02)	(0.02)
Demographics		
Less than 40		-0.09***
		(0.02)
Low Income		-0.10***
		(0.01)
Child Under 18		-0.04**
		(0.02)
Work Arrangements		
Stopped Working		-0.13*
		(0.08)
Began Tele-Working		0.03*
		(0.02)
Not Observed Working		0.02
		(0.02)
Observations	2,487	2,472
R^2	0.000	0.056

Notes: This table reports estimates from regressions of whether an individual voted in the 2020 presidential election. The sample is composed of Wave 2 respondents that were also present in Wave 3. Wave 2 of the data contains information about protest attendance and Wave 3 tracks participation in the 2020 election. Column (1) examines whether the respondent participated in any protest and column (2) adds in baseline specification controls. * (p<0.1), ** (p<0.05), *** (p<0.01). Heteroskedastic standard errors in parentheses.

Table 4: Individual and Community Factors Associated with Protest Attendance

	(1) Any	(2) BLM	(3) Reopen
Demographics			
Less than 40	0.14***	0.09***	0.08***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Low Income	0.05***	0.03***	0.05***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Child Under 18	0.09***	0.06***	0.07***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Black	-0.01	-0.02	0.02*
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Female	-0.02**	-0.00	-0.03***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
College Degree or Higher	0.00	0.01	0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Midwest	-0.03	-0.01	0.00
	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)
South	0.00	0.01	0.03**
	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)
West	-0.00	0.01	0.04***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)

Notes: This table reports estimates from regressions of whether an individual engages in different protesting behaviors. Attending a protest is measured as a binary (i.e., yes or no). Column (1) examines whether an individual attended any protest, column (2) whether an individual attended a BLM protest, and column (3) whether an individual attended a Reopening protest. Young is defined as less than 40 years old. Low income is defined as an income in the bottom two quintiles of the income distribution. Police shootings are measured in an individual's home county from January 2018 to September 2020. * ($p<0.1$), ** ($p<0.05$), *** ($p<0.01$). Heteroskedastic standard errors in parentheses. *This table continues onto the next page.*

Table 4: Individual and Community Factors Associated with Protest Attendance (continued)

	(1) Any	(2) BLM	(3) Reopen
Work Arrangements			
Stopped Working	-0.04	-0.01	-0.05**
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)
Began Tele-Working	-0.09***	-0.07***	-0.07***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Not Observed Working	-0.08***	-0.06***	-0.05***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Partisan Identity and Beliefs			
Cantril Ladder (Now)	0.02***	0.02***	0.02***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Republican	0.08***	0.04***	0.06***
	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Democrat	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00
	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Protests			
Support BLM Protests	0.08***	0.09***	
	(0.01)	(0.01)	
N BLM Protests (100s)	0.06***	0.03**	
	(0.02)	(0.01)	
N Reopening Protests (100s)	-0.08		0.19***
	(0.11)		(0.07)

Notes: This table reports estimates from regressions of whether an individual engages in different protesting behaviors. Attending a protest is measured as a binary (i.e., yes or no). Column (1) examines whether an individual attended any protest, column (2) whether an individual attended a BLM protest, and column (3) whether an individual attended a Reopening protest. Young is defined as less than 40 years old. Low income is defined as an income in the bottom two quintiles of the income distribution. Police shootings are measured in an individual's home county from January 2018 to September 2020. * ($p<0.1$), ** ($p<0.05$), *** ($p<0.01$). Heteroskedastic standard errors in parentheses. *This table continues onto the next page.*

Table 4: Individual and Community Factors Associated with Protest Attendance (continued)

	(1) Any	(2) BLM	(3) Reopen
COVID			
Belief COVID Inf. (%)	0.26***	0.19***	0.20***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Total Cases (100,000s)	-0.05	0.01	-0.03
	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.05)
Avg New Cases (100s)	0.00	-0.00	-0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)
Avg New Deaths (100s)	0.21	0.07	0.40*
	(0.34)	(0.28)	(0.22)
Police Violence			
Police Shootings (100s)	0.03	0.02	
	(0.06)	(0.05)	
Political Engagement			
Voter Part. Rate (2016 Pres)	0.14*	0.13**	0.13***
	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.05)
Observations	3,526	3,526	3,526
R^2	0.224	0.170	0.203

Notes: This table reports estimates from regressions of whether an individual engages in different protesting behaviors. Attending a protest is measured as a binary (i.e., yes or no). Column (1) examines whether an individual attended any protest, column (2) whether an individual attended a BLM protest, and column (3) whether an individual attended a Reopening protest. Young is defined as less than 40 years old. Low income is defined as an income in the bottom two quintiles of the income distribution. Police shootings are measured in an individual's home county from January 2018 to September 2020. * ($p<0.1$), ** ($p<0.05$), *** ($p<0.01$). Heteroskedastic standard errors in parentheses.

Table 5: Variable Means by Support for BLM Protests and BLM Protest Attendance

	Oppose		Support	
	No Attend	Attend	No Attend	Attend
Protest Attendance				
Reopening Protest	0.03	0.52	0.03	0.47
BLM Protest Only	0.00	0.48	0.00	0.53
Reopening Protest Only	0.03	0.00	0.03	0.00
Demographics				
Less than 40	0.27	0.83	0.40	0.69
Low Income	0.38	0.59	0.42	0.53
Child < 18	0.24	0.49	0.24	0.54
Black	0.05	0.12	0.21	0.16
Female	0.42	0.63	0.54	0.50
College Degree or Higher	0.52	0.41	0.59	0.59
Northeast	0.18	0.20	0.20	0.22
Midwest	0.21	0.09	0.19	0.19
South	0.38	0.43	0.40	0.40
West	0.23	0.28	0.21	0.18
Work Arrangements				
Still Working	0.40	0.76	0.34	0.71
Stopped Working	0.03	0.06	0.04	0.04
Began Tele-Working	0.17	0.04	0.23	0.11
Not Obs. Working	0.41	0.13	0.39	0.14
Partisan Identity and Beliefs				
Cantril Ladder (Now)	6.83	6.86	6.44	7.12
Republican	0.61	0.42	0.10	0.30
Democrat	0.20	0.36	0.75	0.59
Independent	0.18	0.22	0.14	0.11
COVID				
COVID Fear	0.51	0.65	0.70	0.70
Belief COVID Inf.	0.29	0.61	0.35	0.56
Belief COVID Death	0.25	0.56	0.32	0.52
Observations	1,835	69	1,911	289

Notes: This table provides the means of variables broken out by support for BLM protests and whether the respondent attended a BLM protest. "Oppose" denotes a respondent who does not support BLM protests and "Support" denotes a respondent that does support BLM protests. Low income is defined as an income in the bottom two quintiles of the income distribution.

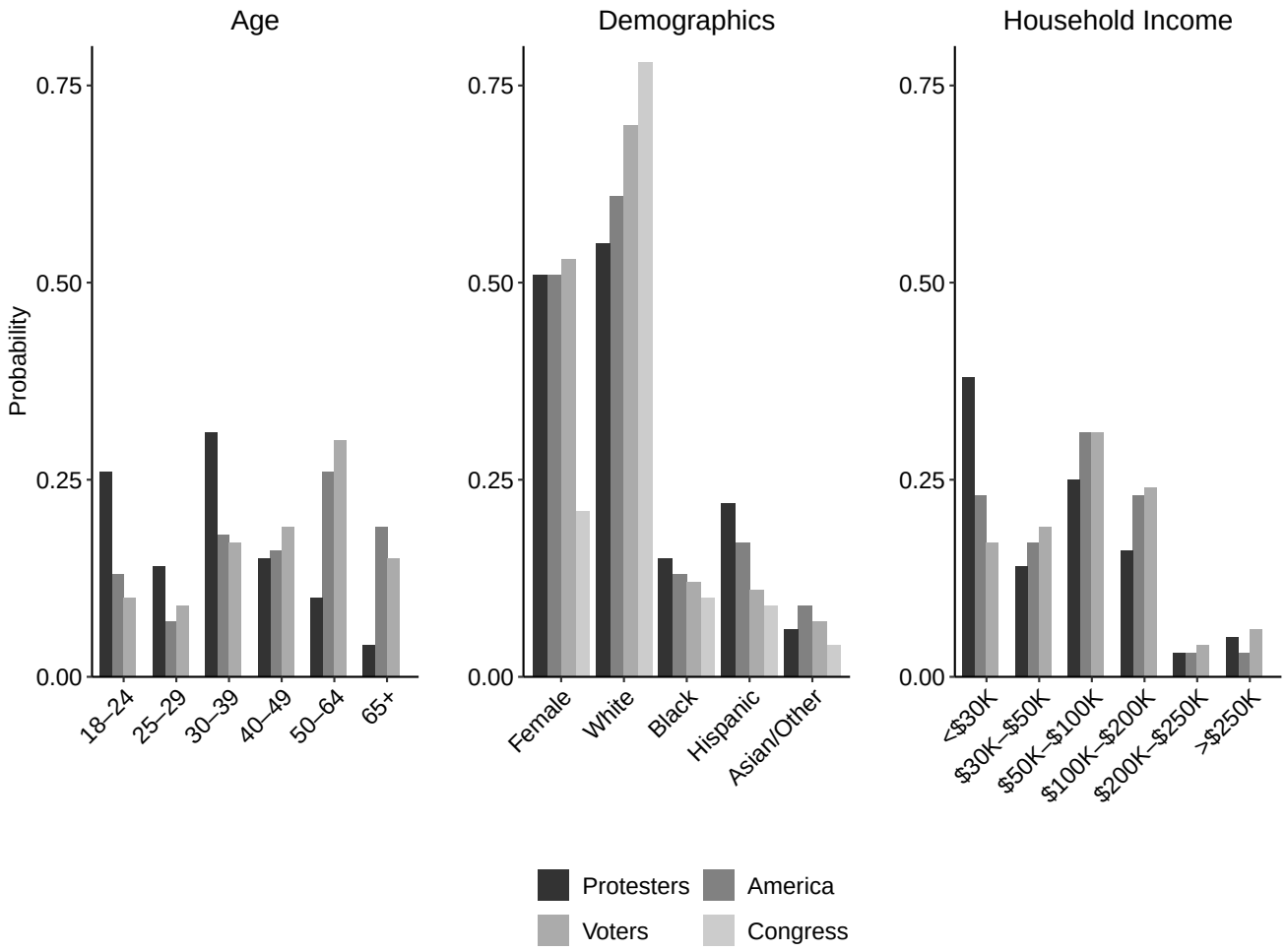

Figure 1: Individual Characteristics of Protesters, Americans, Voters, and Members of Congress.

Notes: This figure reports average characteristics for different populations. These characteristics are the ones the survey data targeted to match the overall population. Voter information comes from the exit polls of the 2016 presidential election conducted by Edison Research. Information on members of Congress comes from the Congressional Research Service profile of the 115th Congress and only appears in the center panel.

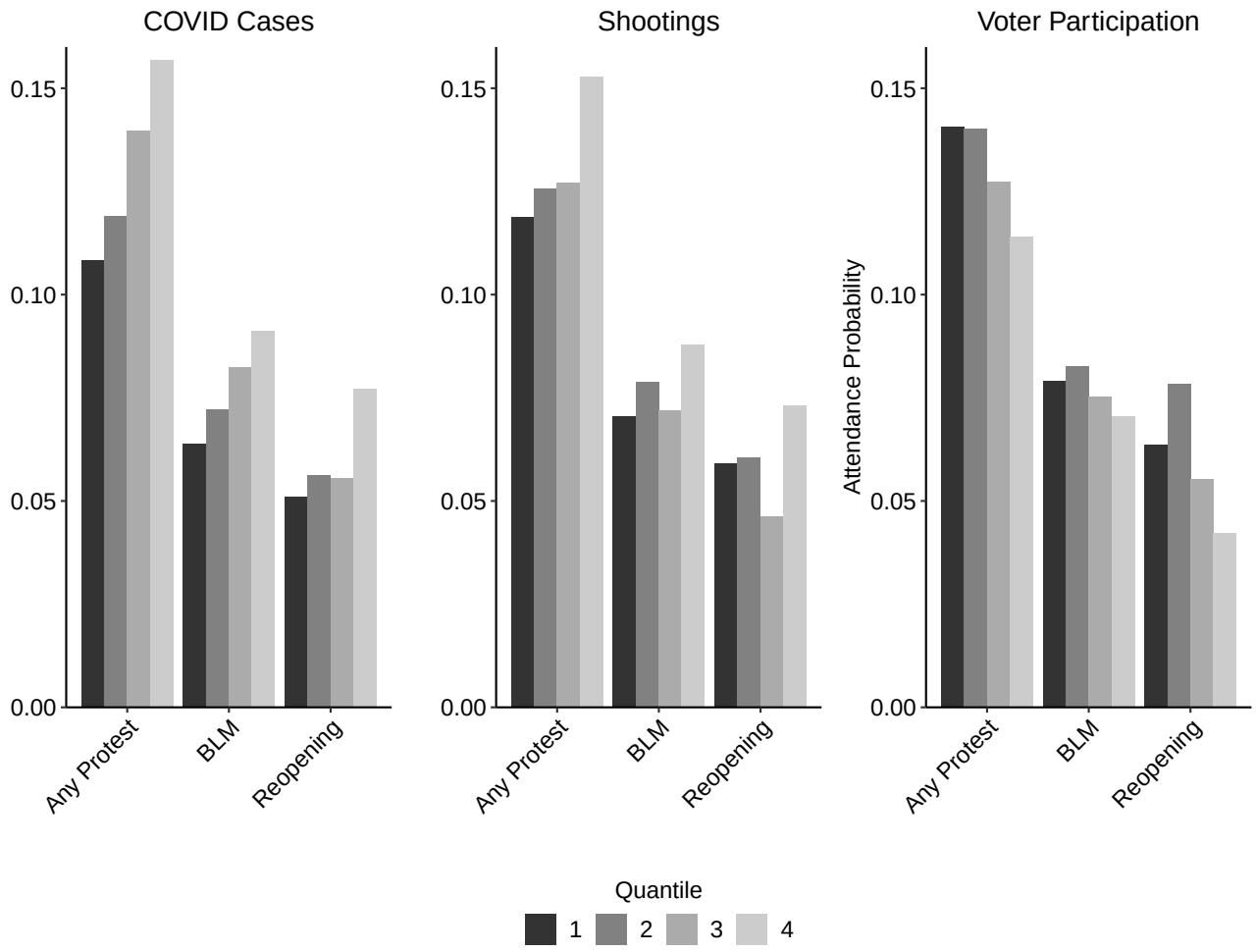

Figure 2: Average Protest Attendance by Quantiles of Voter Participation, Cumulative COVID Cases, and Police Shootings.

Notes: This figure reports average protest attendance in counties within quantiles based on different county-level metrics. Quantiles increase in size from 1 to 4. Cumulative COVID cases come from *The New York Times* for the period April 30, 2020–September 9, 2020. This period corresponds to the time period the survey data asks about protest participation. Police shootings come from Fatal Encounters for the period January 1, 2018–September 9, 2020. Voter participation is measured from the 2016 presidential election using data from the MIT Election Data + Science Lab.

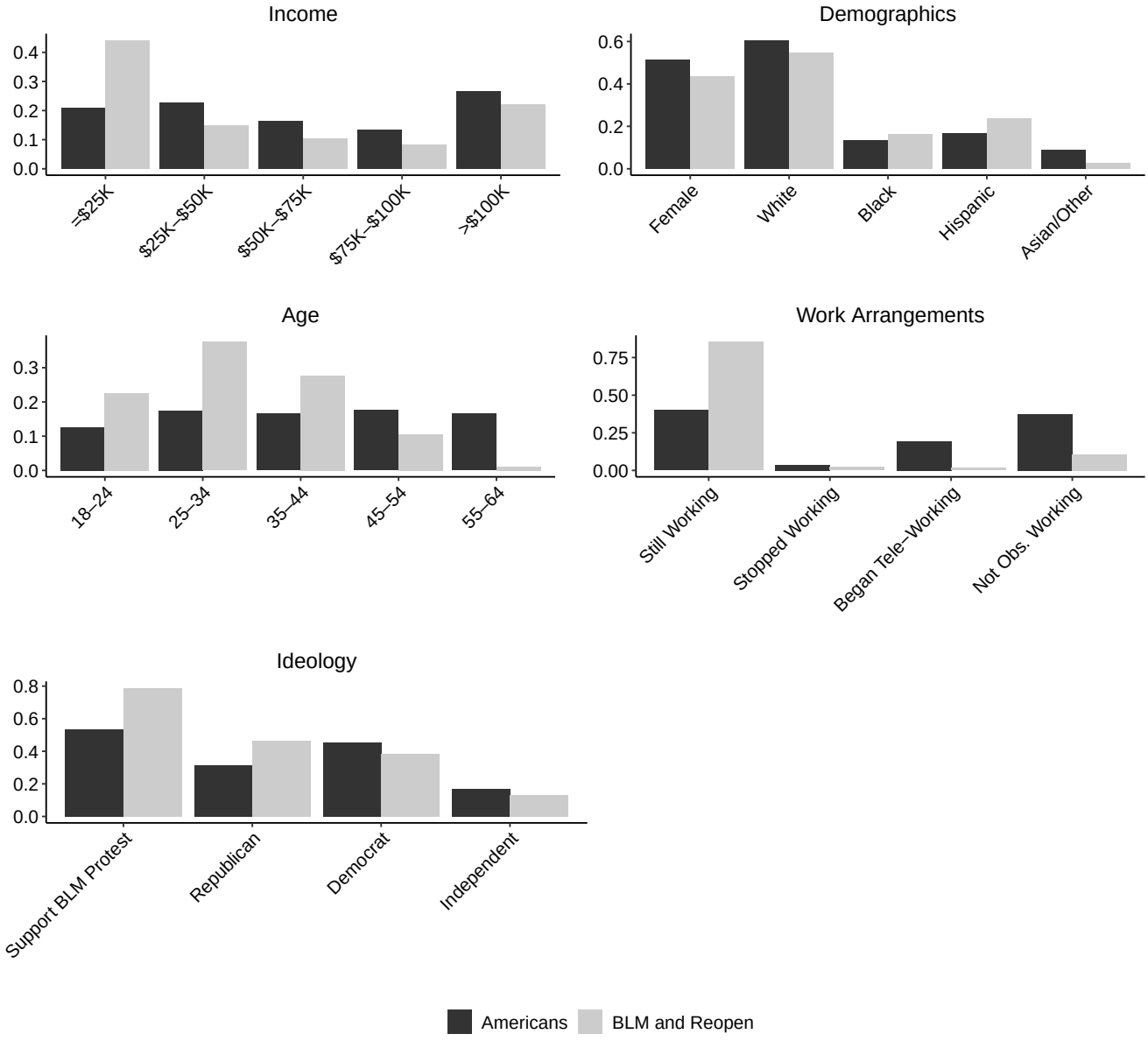

Figure 3: Average Characteristics of BLM and Reopening Protesters and Americans.

Notes: This figure reports the probability respondents have the listed characteristics. "Americans" refers to full sample, which was targeted to represent full population along the "Income", "Demographics", and "Age" dimensions. "BLM and Reopen" refers to the subset of respondents that attended both BLM and Reopening protests.

A Additional Tables

Appendix Table S1: Factors Associated with Attending Any Protest-March-Demonstration

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Demographics						
Less than 40	0.13***	0.15***	0.13***	0.13***	0.13***	0.13***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Low Income	0.04***	0.07***	0.04***	0.03***	0.04***	0.04***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Child Under 18	0.12***	0.12***	0.12***	0.10***	0.12***	0.12***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Black		0.01				
		(0.02)				
Female		-0.02*				
		(0.01)				
College Degree or Higher		0.02				
		(0.01)				
Midwest		-0.05***				
		(0.02)				
South		-0.03*				
		(0.01)				
West		-0.01				
		(0.02)				

Notes: This table reports estimates from regressions of whether an individual attended any protest and various individual and county characteristics. Attending a protests is measured as a binary (i.e., yes or no). Column (1) baseline demographics of respondents. Column (2) includes other individual characteristics and ideological beliefs. Column (3) adds information about the number of protesters in the respondent's county and their opinion about BLM protests. Column (4) considers factors specific to COVID-19 such as the respondent's perceived risk of infection and county specific trends. Column (5) includes historic information about the number of police shootings in a respondent's county from January 2018 to September 2020. Column (6) adds political engagement as measured by the county voter participation rate from the 2016 presidential election. Young is defined as less than 40 years old. Low income is defined as an income in the bottom two quintiles of the income distribution. * (p<0.1), ** (p<0.05), *** (p<0.01). Heteroskedastic standard errors in parentheses. *This table continues onto the next page.*

Appendix Table S1: Factors Associated with Attending Any Protest-March-Demonstration (continued)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Work Arrangements						
Stopped Working	-0.09**	-0.07*	-0.09**	-0.07**	-0.09**	-0.09***
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Began Tele-Working	-0.12***	-0.11***	-0.13***	-0.09***	-0.12***	-0.12***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Not Observed Working	-0.11***	-0.10***	-0.11***	-0.08***	-0.11***	-0.11***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Partisan Identity and Beliefs						
Cantril Ladder (Now)		0.02***				
		(0.00)				
Republican		0.05***				
		(0.02)				
Democrat		0.04**				
		(0.01)				
Protests						
Support BLM Protests			0.05***			
			(0.01)			
N BLM Protests (100s)			0.06***			
			(0.02)			
N Reopening Protests (100s)			-0.08			
			(0.08)			

Notes: This table reports estimates from regressions of whether an individual attended any protest and various individual and county characteristics. Attending a protests is measured as a binary (i.e., yes or no). Column (1) baseline demographics of respondents. Column (2) includes other individual characteristics and ideological beliefs. Column (3) adds information about the number of protesters in the respondent's county and their opinion about BLM protests. Column (4) considers factors specific to COVID-19 such as the respondent's perceived risk of infection and county specific trends. Column (5) includes historic information about the number of police shootings in a respondent's county from January 2018 to September 2020. Column (6) adds political engagement as measured by the county voter participation rate from the 2016 presidential election. Young is defined as less than 40 years old. Low income is defined as an income in the bottom two quintiles of the income distribution. * (p<0.1), ** (p<0.05), *** (p<0.01). Heteroskedastic standard errors in parentheses. *This table continues onto the next page.*

Appendix Table S1: Factors Associated with Attending Any Protest-March-Demonstration (continued)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
COVID						
Belief COVID Inf. (%)				0.27***		
				(0.02)		
Total Cases (100,000s)				0.00		
				(0.07)		
Avg New Cases (100s)				-0.00		
				(0.00)		
Avg New Deaths (100s)				0.20		
				(0.31)		
Police Violence						
Police Shootings (100s)					0.05***	
					(0.02)	
Political Engagement						
Voter Part. Rate (2016 Pres)						0.05
						(0.06)
Observations	3,526	3,526	3,526	3526	3,526	3,526
R^2	0.142	0.159	0.160	0.191	0.144	0.142

Notes: This table reports estimates from regressions of whether an individual attended any protest and various individual and county characteristics. Attending a protests is measured as a binary (i.e., yes or no). Column (1) baseline demographics of respondents. Column (2) includes other individual characteristics and ideological beliefs. Column (3) adds information about the number of protesters in the respondent's county and their opinion about BLM protests. Column (4) considers factors specific to COVID-19 such as the respondent's perceived risk of infection and county specific trends. Column (5) includes historic information about the number of police shootings in a respondent's county from January 2018 to September 2020. Column (6) adds political engagement as measured by the county voter participation rate from the 2016 presidential election. Young is defined as less than 40 years old. Low income is defined as an income in the bottom two quintiles of the income distribution. * (p<0.1), ** (p<0.05), *** (p<0.01). Heteroskedastic standard errors in parentheses.

Appendix Table S2: Factors Associated with Attending a BLM Protest

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Demographics						
Less than 40	0.09***	0.10***	0.08***	0.09***	0.09***	0.09***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Low Income	0.02**	0.04***	0.02**	0.01	0.02***	0.02***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Child Under 18	0.08***	0.08***	0.08***	0.06***	0.08***	0.08***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Black		0.00				
		(0.02)				
Female		-0.00				
		(0.01)				
College Degree or Higher		0.02**				
		(0.01)				
Midwest		-0.03**				
		(0.01)				
South		-0.01				
		(0.01)				
West		-0.01				
		(0.01)				

Notes: This table reports estimates from regressions of whether an individual attended a BLM protest and various individual and county characteristics. Attending these protests is measured as a binary (i.e., yes or no). Column (1) baseline demographics of respondents. Column (2) includes other individual characteristics and ideological beliefs. Column (3) adds information about the number of protesters in the respondent's county and their opinion about BLM protests. Column (4) considers factors specific to COVID-19 such as the respondent's perceived risk of infection and county specific trends. Column (5) includes historic information about the number of police shootings in a respondent's county from January 2018 to September 2020. Column (6) adds political engagement as measured by the county voter participation rate from the 2016 presidential election. Young is defined as less than 40 years old. Low income is defined as an income in the bottom two quintiles of the income distribution. * (p<0.1), ** (p<0.05), *** (p<0.01). Heteroskedastic standard errors in parentheses. *This table continues onto the next page.*

Appendix Table S2: Factors Associated with Attending a BLM Protest (continued)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Work Arrangements						
Stopped Working	-0.05	-0.03	-0.05*	-0.03	-0.05	-0.05*
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Began Tele-Working	-0.08***	-0.08***	-0.09***	-0.06***	-0.08***	-0.08***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Not Observed Working	-0.07***	-0.07***	-0.08***	-0.06***	-0.07***	-0.07***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Partisan Identity and Beliefs						
Cantril Ladder (Now)		0.02***				
		(0.00)				
Republican		0.02				
		(0.01)				
Democrat		0.04***				
		(0.01)				
Protests						
Support BLM Protests			0.08***			
			(0.01)			
N BLM Protests (100s)			0.03***			
			(0.01)			

Notes: This table reports estimates from regressions of whether an individual attended a BLM protest and various individual and county characteristics. Attending these protests is measured as a binary (i.e., yes or no). Column (1) baseline demographics of respondents. Column (2) includes other individual characteristics and ideological beliefs. Column (3) adds information about the number of protesters in the respondent's county and their opinion about BLM protests. Column (4) considers factors specific to COVID-19 such as the respondent's perceived risk of infection and county specific trends. Column (5) includes historic information about the number of police shootings in a respondent's county from January 2018 to September 2020. Column (6) adds political engagement as measured by the county voter participation rate from the 2016 presidential election. Young is defined as less than 40 years old. Low income is defined as an income in the bottom two quintiles of the income distribution. * (p<0.1), ** (p<0.05), *** (p<0.01). Heteroskedastic standard errors in parentheses. *This table continues onto the next page.*

Appendix Table S2: Factors Associated with Attending a BLM Protest (continued)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
COVID						
Belief COVID Inf. (%)				0.20***		
				(0.02)		
Total Cases (100,000s)				0.03		
				(0.06)		
Avg New Cases (100s)				-0.00		
				(0.00)		
Avg New Deaths (100s)				0.03		
				(0.25)		
Police Violence						
Police Shootings (100s)					0.03*	
					(0.02)	
Political Engagement						
Voter Part. Rate (2016 Pres)						0.07
						(0.05)
Observations	3,526	3,526	3,526	3,526	3,526	3,526
R^2	0.092	0.110	0.118	0.134	0.093	0.092

Notes: This table reports estimates from regressions of whether an individual attended a BLM protest and various individual and county characteristics. Attending these protests is measured as a binary (i.e., yes or no). Column (1) baseline demographics of respondents. Column (2) includes other individual characteristics and ideological beliefs. Column (3) adds information about the number of protesters in the respondent's county and their opinion about BLM protests. Column (4) considers factors specific to COVID-19 such as the respondent's perceived risk of infection and county specific trends. Column (5) includes historic information about the number of police shootings in a respondent's county from January 2018 to September 2020. Column (6) adds political engagement as measured by the county voter participation rate from the 2016 presidential election. Young is defined as less than 40 years old. Low income is defined as an income in the bottom two quintiles of the income distribution. * (p<0.1), ** (p<0.05), *** (p<0.01). Heteroskedastic standard errors in parentheses.

Appendix Table S3: Factors Associated with Attending a Reopening Protest

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Demographics					
Less than 40	0.06***	0.08***	0.06***	0.06***	0.06***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Low Income	0.04***	0.06***	0.04***	0.03***	0.04***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Child Under 18	0.09***	0.09***	0.10***	0.08***	0.09***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Black		0.03**			
		(0.01)			
Female		-0.03***			
		(0.01)			
College Degree or Higher		0.02**			
		(0.01)			
Midwest		-0.02*			
		(0.01)			
South		-0.01			
		(0.01)			
West		0.02			
		(0.01)			

Notes: This table reports estimates from regressions of whether an individual attended a reopening protest and various individual and county characteristics. Attending these protests is measured as a binary (i.e., yes or no). Column (1) baseline demographics of respondents. Column (2) includes other individual characteristics and ideological beliefs. Column (3) adds information about the number of protesters in the respondent's county and their opinion about BLM protests. Column (4) considers factors specific to COVID-19 such as the respondent's perceived risk of infection and county specific trends. Column (5) adds political engagement as measured by the county voter participation rate from the 2016 presidential election. Young is defined as less than 40 years old. Low income is defined as an income in the bottom two quintiles of the income distribution. * (p<0.1), ** (p<0.05), *** (p<0.01). Heteroskedastic standard errors in parentheses. *This table continues onto the next page.*

Appendix Table S3: Factors Associated with Attending a Reopening Protest (continued)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Work Arrangements					
Stopped Working	-0.09***	-0.07***	-0.10***	-0.08***	-0.09***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Began Tele-Working	-0.09***	-0.08***	-0.09***	-0.07***	-0.09***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Not Observed Working	-0.07***	-0.07***	-0.07***	-0.05***	-0.07***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Partisan Identity and Beliefs					
Cantril Ladder (Now)		0.02***			
		(0.00)			
Republican		0.05***			
		(0.01)			
Democrat		0.01			
		(0.01)			
Protests					
N Reopening Protests (100s)			0.15***		
			(0.04)		

Notes: This table reports estimates from regressions of whether an individual attended a reopening protest and various individual and county characteristics. Attending these protests is measured as a binary (i.e., yes or no). Column (1) baseline demographics of respondents. Column (2) includes other individual characteristics and ideological beliefs. Column (3) adds information about the number of protesters in the respondent's county and their opinion about BLM protests. Column (4) considers factors specific to COVID-19 such as the respondent's perceived risk of infection and county specific trends. Column (5) adds political engagement as measured by the county voter participation rate from the 2016 presidential election. Young is defined as less than 40 years old. Low income is defined as an income in the bottom two quintiles of the income distribution. * (p<0.1), ** (p<0.05), *** (p<0.01). Heteroskedastic standard errors in parentheses. *This table continues onto the next page.*

Appendix Table S3: Factors Associated with Attending a Reopening Protest (continued)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
COVID					
Belief COVID Inf. (%)				0.20***	
				(0.02)	
Total Cases (100,000s)				-0.02	
				(0.05)	
Avg New Cases (100s)				0.00	
				(0.00)	
Avg New Deaths (100s)				0.22	
				(0.22)	
Political Engagement					
Voter Part. Rate (2016 Pres)					0.03
					(0.05)
Observations	3,526	3,526	3,526	3,526	3,526
R^2	0.112	0.147	0.117	0.161	0.112

Notes: This table reports estimates from regressions of whether an individual attended a reopening protest and various individual and county characteristics. Attending these protests is measured as a binary (i.e., yes or no). Column (1) baseline demographics of respondents. Column (2) includes other individual characteristics and ideological beliefs. Column (3) adds information about the number of protesters in the respondent's county and their opinion about BLM protests. Column (4) considers factors specific to COVID-19 such as the respondent's perceived risk of infection and county specific trends. Column (5) adds political engagement as measured by the county voter participation rate from the 2016 presidential election. Young is defined as less than 40 years old. Low income is defined as an income in the bottom two quintiles of the income distribution. * (p<0.1), ** (p<0.05), *** (p<0.01). Heteroskedastic standard errors in parentheses.

Appendix Table S4: Difference in Means Between Protesters and Americans

	Protesters		Americans				
	Mean	N	Mean	N	Diff	t-stat	p-value
Age							
18–24	0.26	646	0.13	4,940	0.14	9.50	0.00
25–34	0.33	646	0.18	4,940	0.16	9.51	0.00
35–44	0.22	646	0.17	4,940	0.05	3.45	0.00
45–54	0.10	646	0.18	4,940	-0.08	-4.94	0.00
55–64	0.05	646	0.17	4,940	-0.12	-7.79	0.00
≥65	0.04	646	0.19	4,940	-0.15	-9.81	0.00
Demographics							
Female	0.52	640	0.51	4,918	0.00	0.18	0.86
White	0.55	646	0.61	4,940	-0.05	-2.55	0.01
Black	0.15	646	0.13	4,940	0.02	1.64	0.10
Hispanic	0.22	646	0.17	4,940	0.05	3.24	0.00
Asian/Other	0.06	646	0.09	4,940	-0.03	-2.53	0.01
Household Income							
≤$25K	0.36	646	0.21	4,940	0.16	8.99	0.00
$25K–$50K	0.19	646	0.23	4,940	-0.04	-2.04	0.04
$50K–$75K	0.13	646	0.16	4,940	-0.03	-2.10	0.04
$75K–$100K	0.10	646	0.14	4,940	-0.03	-2.22	0.03
>$100K	0.21	646	0.27	4,940	-0.06	-3.11	0.00

Notes: This table summarizes the means of variables the Socioeconomic Impacts of Covid-19 Study used to target the representative of the American population. The means are broken out between the respondents that attended any protest and the overall wave 2 survey sample. The final three columns perform a difference of means test between these two groups.