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Who is Googling Trump's tariffs—And why that matters

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates U.S. public concern over tariffs during the initial three months of Donald Trump's second term. By analyzing state-level Google search frequency for the topic 'tariff', it explores whether tariff-related anxiety was uniformly distributed across states or influenced by political affiliation. The data reveal widespread political polarization: states that supported Kamala Harris exhibited significantly higher search intensity compared to states that supported Trump. These findings suggest that voters in Harris-leaning states were more alarmed by the potential economic consequences of Trump's trade policies, highlighting both the politicization of trade policy and its varying resonance across the political spectrum.

1. Introduction

Following Donald Trump's re-election on November 5th, 2024, analysts and market participants widely anticipated that his administration would pursue a policy agenda largely consistent with his first term—characterized by protectionist trade measures, stricter immigration and border enforcement, broad-based tax reductions, and a systematic dismantling of environmental regulations. These expectations of pro-capitalism and economic nationalism were swiftly priced into equity markets, with major stock indices posting significant gains. The market rally was not only driven by the perceived business-friendly policies but also by the resolution of uncertainty following an intensely contested and unconventional election campaign. Interestingly, while overall policy uncertainty – as measured by the U.S. Economic Policy Uncertainty (EPU) Index – remained relatively stable post-election, climate policy uncertainty saw a dramatic spike. In fact, the U.S. Climate Policy Uncertainty (CPU) Index surged sharply in November 2024, reaching its highest level on record (Gavriilidis, 2021). This spike reflected widespread market and policy expectations of a substantial reversal in environmental regulations, signaling a marked departure from prior commitments to climate-related initiatives.

Nonetheless, few analysts – including those in financial markets – anticipated the magnitude of disruption that ultimately followed the administration's tariff measures. The sharp and sustained sell-off in equity markets between April 2nd and April 8th underscored just how dramatically these policies deviated from initial expectations. Far from representing a straightforward extension of past protectionist actions, the tariffs were (and remain) defined by substantial ambiguity, abrupt reversals, and inconsistent messaging from policymakers. These factors compounded market uncertainty, raising deeper questions about the coherence and strategic direction of the administration's broader economic agenda.

As Trump's tariff war escalates, encompassing much of the globe and unleashing serious economic consequences for both international trade and the U.S. economy, a critical question emerges: How concerned are American voters about these tariffs? More importantly, do Trump's supporters share the same level of concern as those who voted for Harris? And ultimately, who is searching for information on Trump's tariffs, and why does it matter? To explore this, we analyze, at the U.S. state level, Google Search intensity for the topic "tariff" over the first three months of Trump's second term, examining whether search activity – and by extension, public concern – is higher in pro-Harris states compared to pro-Trump states. Our analysis offers robust evidence that electoral composition meaningfully influences public concern over tariffs, even after controlling for state-level demographic variables. A clear political polarization emerges: states supporting Trump report markedly lower concern over tariffs than those favoring Harris. This pattern likely reflects deeper structural differences in economic outlook, perceived vulnerability among political constituencies, and confidence in the different political leaders. In states aligned with

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Harris, elevated concern over tariffs suggests a heightened sensitivity to the potential economic disruptions posed by Trump-era trade policies.

Overall, our novel findings highlight the extent to which political affiliation can shape not only policy preferences but also broader economic perceptions—particularly in periods marked by volatility and uncertainty in trade policy.

2. Related literature

Our work primarily engages with the literature on the socio-economic implications of Trump's trade-related policies. Although existing studies – during and after his first term – focus on the macroeconomic consequences of these policies, both domestically and internationally (for example, Alessandria et al., 2025; Clausing and Obstfeld, 2024; Caldara et al., 2020; Eichengreen, 2020; Fetzer and Schwarz, 2021; Saussay, 2024), none have examined their impact on public interest concerns within the U.S. Crucially, no study has examined whether the effects of Trump's global trade war on tariff-related public attention differed between states that predominantly supported Trump and those that supported Harris (or Biden) in the 2020 or 2024 election.

To gauge public concern over the turmoil surrounding Trump's tariffs, we draw on established approaches that use Google search volume as a proxy for anxiety, awareness, or uncertainty about specific issues—in our case, the topic 'tariff'. In this regard, our study aligns with the economic literature suggesting that "economic agents [...] search for online information when they are uncertain" (Castelnuovo and Tran, 2017). Previous work has employed similar strategies to gauge macroeconomic uncertainty (e.g. Bilgin et al. (2019) for Turkey; Bontempi et al. (2021) for the U.S. and Italy), personal worries unrelated to financial markets (Donadelli and Gerotto, 2019), and even mental health concerns (Bae et al., 2023).

Our contribution extends this framework by disaggregating search trends at the state level, distinguishing between states where a majority voted for Trump and those where a majority voted for Harris. By analyzing state-level variations in search intensity, we capture heterogeneous public responses to these trade policy shocks across different political and economic contexts.[1]

3. Empirical strategy

3.1. Data

We analyze Google search data from U.S. users related to the topic "tariff" during the first quarter of President Trump's second term.[2] Specifically, we analyze 'interest by subregion' data from Google Trends, focusing on the state level (hereafter referred to as 'interest by state'). Our analysis is limited to a carefully selected set of 23 days — specifically, those days when at least one tariff directly affecting the U.S. was either announced or became effective. This period extends from February 1st to April 14th, and a comprehensive list is available in Appendix A (see Table A.1).[3] We consider the 50 U.S. states plus the District of Columbia (DC). The data provider (i.e., Google) measures 'interest by subregion' on a scale from 0 to 100, "where 100 is the location with the most popularity as a fraction of total searches in that location", and the interest of remaining locations are normalized accordingly.[4] Presidential Election results have been obtained from the Federal Election Commission.[5]

3.2. Regression analysis

The regression model we use to investigate the interplay between public concern on "tariff" and political preferences across U.S. states is described by Eq. (1):

$$\begin{aligned} Interest_{i,t} =& \beta_0 + \beta_1 Votes_i^{Gap} + \beta_2 I_t^{Tariff} + \beta_3 I_t^{Proposed} + \beta_4 I_t^{Retaliation} + \\ &+ \beta_5 I_t^{Announce} + \beta_6 I_t^{Effective} + \beta_7 Votes_i^{Gap} \cdot I_t^{Tariff} + \\ &+ \beta_8 Votes_i^{Gap} \cdot I_t^{Proposed} + \beta_9 Votes_i^{Gap} \cdot I_t^{Retaliation} + \\ &+ \beta_{10} Votes_i^{Gap} \cdot I_t^{Announce} + \beta_{11} Votes_i^{Gap} \cdot I_t^{Effective} \\ &+ \beta_{12} X_i + \epsilon_{i,t}, \end{aligned} \tag{1}$$

where $Interest_{i,t}$ captures 'interest by state' for state i in day t. Among regressors, our main regressor is the difference – expressed in percentage points – in the share of votes obtained by candidates Trump and Harris, respectively, at 2024 Presidential Election in state i ($Votes_i^{Gap}$). A set of dummy variables defines the tariff-related event(s) of day t. Specifically, I_t^{Tariff} ($I_t^{Retaliation}$) is equal to one if a tariff, imposed by the U.S. to any other country (imposed by any other country to the U.S.), either is announced or becomes effective; $I_t^{Proposed}$ is equal to one if a future possible tariff, tentatively defined and not yet implemented, is announced; $I_t^{Announce}$ is equal to one if any tariff is announced; $I_t^{Effective}$ is equal to one if any tariff becomes effective. Each of these dummies is also interacted with $Votes_i^{Gap}$ in order to understand if the interest that emerged from that state to different kinds of tariff-related events depends on electorate composition. $X_{i,t}$ is a vector of demographic controls, related to state-level measures of sex, age, income and education obtained from the last American Community Survey. Namely, we consider the sex ratio, the median age, the age dependency ratio,[6] the median per-capita income, and the Gini index to measure income inequality. For education, the population is divided in four (mutually exclusive) groups: those without high school degree (Edu^1), high school graduates (Edu^2), those with some college or associate's degree (Edu^3), and those with Bachelor's degree or higher (Edu^4).[7]

To ensure robustness, we will also consider:

(i) a more parsimonious version of the model that considers as regressors only $Votes^{Gap}$ and the demographic controls:

$$Interest_{i,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Votes_i^{Gap} + \beta_{12} X_i + \epsilon_{i,t};$$

[1] This approach mirrors studies linking web searches to financial markets (Dzielinski, 2012; Lyócsa et al., 2020), cryptocurrencies (Aslanidis et al., 2022), industry volatility (Szczygielski et al., 2022), and broader macroeconomic conditions (Donadelli, 2015), but with a novel focus on geopolitical polarization in public responsiveness to trade policy.

[2] To facilitate replication, the topic is identified by Google Trends code /m/0ffnx.

[3] Since Google Trends data are based on UTC, while our focus is on the behavior of U.S. users (whose timezone ranges between UTC-4 for the East Coast and UTC-10 for the Hawaii), we consider interest over a period consisting on both the day of the event and the following day (for example, for February 1st we consider February 1st and February 2nd). To ensure robustness, an additional test extends the data window by 24 h to account for late searches; for example, the analysis for February 1st includes data through February 3rd. The main regression results from this additional analysis, which corroborate our main findings (see Table 1), are presented in Table B.1.

[4] Verbatim from Google's definition: "Values are calculated on a scale from 0 to 100, where 100 is the location with the most popularity as a fraction of total searches in that location, a value of 50 indicates a location which is half as popular. A value of 0 indicates a location where there was not enough data for this term. Note: A higher value means a higher proportion of all queries, not a higher absolute query count. So a tiny country where 80% of the queries are for "bananas" will get twice the score of a giant country where only 40% of the queries are for "bananas"".

[5] https://www.fec.gov/resources/cms-content/documents/2024presgeresults.pdf.

[6] The age dependency ratio is the combined under-18 and 65-and-over populations over the 18-to-64 population.

[7] Given that $Edu^1 + Edu^2 + Edu^3 + Edu^4 = 1$, we exclude one group ($Edu^1$), that can be expressed as a linear combination of the others, from the regression. For additional details on controls and their corresponding units of measure, please refer to the notes of Table 1.

Table 1
Public concern on "tariff" vs. political preferences across U.S. states.

	Dependent variable: Interest by state ($Interest_{i,t}$)							
	OLS		*FE*		*OLS*		*FE*	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
$Votes_i^{Gap}$	−0.34***	−0.23***		−0.34***	−0.36***	−0.19***		−0.35***
	(0.07)	(0.06)		(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.05)		(0.06)
I_t^{Tariff}	2.09*		2.08*		1.88		1.88	
	(1.26)		(1.23)		(1.45)		(1.43)	
$I_t^{Proposed}$	−15.98***		−16.06***		−17.07***		−17.18***	
	(2.00)		(1.97)		(2.11)		(2.08)	
$I_t^{Retaliation}$	−5.04***		−5.05***		−5.80***		−5.81***	
	(1.25)		(1.23)		(1.29)		(1.27)	
$I_t^{Announce}$	−3.38**		−3.38***		−3.48***		−3.48***	
	(1.00)		(0.98)		(1.14)		(1.12)	
$I_t^{Effective}$	5.10***		5.10***		5.52***		5.51***	
	(0.77)		(0.76)		(0.82)		(0.80)	
$Votes_i^{Gap} \cdot I_t^{Tariff}$	0.10**		0.10**	0.10**	0.12*		0.12*	0.12*
	(0.05)		(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.07)		(0.06)	(0.06)
$Votes_i^{Gap} \cdot I_t^{Proposed}$	0.23**		0.23**	0.23**	0.35***		0.35***	0.34***
	(0.11)		(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)		(0.10)	(0.10)
$Votes_i^{Gap} \cdot I_t^{Retaliation}$	0.16**		0.16***	0.16***	0.23***		0.23***	0.23***
	(0.06)		(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)		(0.06)	(0.06)
$Votes_i^{Gap} \cdot I_t^{Announce}$	−0.09**		−0.09**	−0.09**	−0.08		−0.08	−0.08
	(0.04)		(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.05)		(0.05)	(0.05)
$Votes_i^{Gap} \cdot I_t^{Effective}$	−0.06		−0.05	−0.06	−0.09**		−0.09**	−0.10***
	(0.04)		(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)		(0.04)	(0.04)
$MedianAge_i$	0.49	0.48		0.50	1.31***	1.33***		1.31***
	(0.40)	(0.40)		(0.40)	(0.36)	(0.35)		(0.36)
$SexRatio_i$	0.58*	0.60*		0.57*	1.03***	1.07***		1.01***
	(0.33)	(0.32)		(0.33)	(0.29)	(0.28)		(0.29)
$AgeDependency_i$	−0.28	−0.23		−0.28	−0.23	−0.18		−0.23
	(0.28)	(0.27)		(0.28)	(0.26)	(0.25)		(0.26)
$MedianIncome_i$	0.67*	0.79**		0.62*	0.30	0.39		0.25
	(0.37)	(0.38)		(0.37)	(0.34)	(0.34)		(0.33)
$Gini_i$	−0.11	−0.18		−0.11	−0.51	−0.60		−0.51
	(0.62)	(0.62)		(0.62)	(0.51)	(0.51)		(0.51)
Edu_i^2	1.35**	1.37**		1.32**	0.60	0.60		0.58
	(0.60)	(0.60)		(0.59)	(0.53)	(0.52)		(0.53)
Edu_i^3	1.47**	1.45**		1.44**	0.79	0.75		0.77
	(0.66)	(0.66)		(0.65)	(0.61)	(0.58)		(0.60)
Edu_i^4	1.02*	0.92		1.05*	0.75	0.65		0.78
	(0.59)	(0.60)		(0.59)	(0.53)	(0.53)		(0.52)
Constant	−137.11*	−146.19**			−132.82**	−141.23**		
	(70.86)	(70.25)			(59.50)	(58.85)		
Observations	1149	1149	1149	1149	1126	1126	1126	1126
States	51	51	51	51	50	50	50	50
Excluded states	None	None	None	None	DC[a]	DC[a]	DC[a]	DC[a]
Fixed effects	None	None	State	Time	None	None	State	Time
R^2	0.56	0.35	0.35	0.61	0.52	0.27	0.37	0.56

Notes: ***, **, * indicate significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively. Standard errors clustered at state level. $Votes_i^{Gap}$ is the difference in percentage points (pp) in the share of votes obtained by candidates Trump and Harris, respectively, at 2024 Presidential Election in state i. I_t^{Tariff}, $I_t^{Retaliation}$, $I_t^{Proposed}$, $I_t^{Announce}$ and $I_t^{Effective}$ are dummy variables that define the tariff-related event(s) of day t. I_t^{Tariff} is equal to one if a tariff imposed by the U.S. to any other country is either announced or becomes effective in day t; $I_t^{Retaliation}$ is equal to one if a tariff imposed by any other country to the U.S. is either announced or becomes effective in day t; $I_t^{Proposed}$ is equal to one if a future possible tariff (tentatively defined and not yet implemented) is announced in day t; $I_t^{Announce}$ is equal to one if any tariff is announced in day t; $I_t^{Effective}$ is equal to one if any tariff becomes effective in day t. For state-level demographic controls, $MedianAge_i$ is the median age expressed in years; $AgeDependency_i$ is the ratio of the combined under-18 and 65-and-over populations over the 18-to-64 population, expressed in pp; $SexRatio_i$ is the number of males per 100 females; $MedianIncome_i$ is median per-capita income in thousands dollars; $Gini_i$ is the Gini index, expressed in pp; Edu^2 is the population share of high school graduates, Edu^3 is the population share with some college or associate's degree, Edu^4 is the population share with Bachelor's degree or higher; Edu^2, Edu^3 and Edu^4 are expressed in pp.

[a] DC is the District of Columbia.

(ii) a specification with state fixed effects (μ_i) in which $Votes_i^{Gap}$ and the demographic controls are dropped:

$$\begin{aligned} Interest_{i,t} =& \beta_2 I_t^{Tariff} + \beta_3 I_t^{Proposed} + \beta_4 I_t^{Retaliation} + \beta_5 I_t^{Announce} + \\ &+ \beta_6 I_t^{Effective} + \beta_7 Votes_i^{Gap} \cdot I_t^{Tariff} + \beta_8 Votes_i^{Gap} \cdot I_t^{Proposed} + \\ &+ \beta_9 Votes_i^{Gap} \cdot I_t^{Retaliation} + \beta_{10} Votes_i^{Gap} \cdot I_t^{Announce} + \\ &+ \beta_{11} Votes_i^{Gap} \cdot I_t^{Effective} + \mu_i + \epsilon_{i,t}; \end{aligned}$$

(iii) a specification with time fixed effects (α_t) in which the dummies (but not the interactions with $Votes_i^{Gap}$) are dropped:

$$\begin{aligned} Interest_{i,t} =& \beta_1 Votes_i^{Gap} + \beta_7 Votes_i^{Gap} \cdot I_t^{Tariff} + \\ &+ \beta_8 Votes_i^{Gap} \cdot I_t^{Proposed} + \beta_9 Votes_i^{Gap} \cdot I_t^{Retaliation} + \\ &+ \beta_{10} Votes_i^{Gap} \cdot I_t^{Announce} + \beta_{11} Votes_i^{Gap} \cdot I_t^{Effective} + \\ &+ \beta_{12} X_i + \alpha_t + \epsilon_{i,t}. \end{aligned}$$

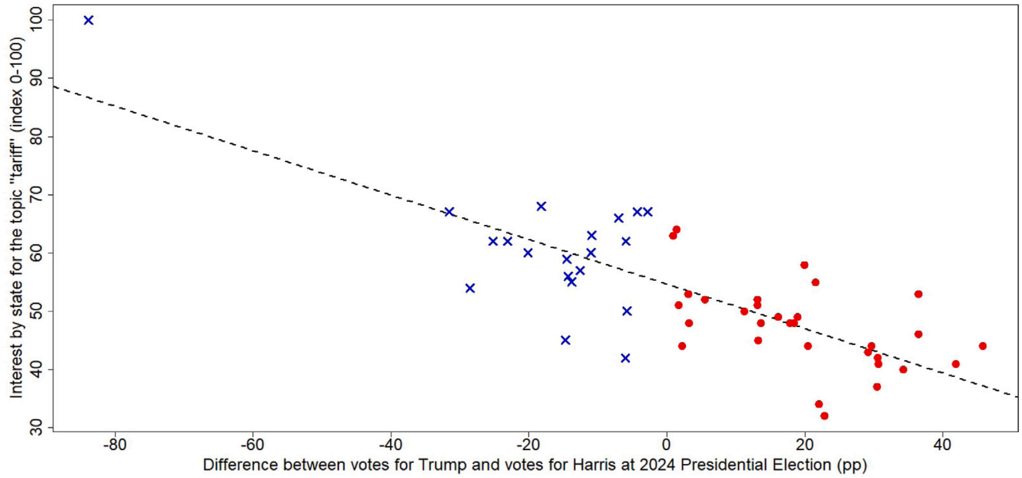

Fig. 1. Google Searches for "tariff" vs. "Trump-Harris" Vote Gap.
Notes: This figure depicts a scatter plot showing state-level interest in the topic "tariff" (measured between January 20 and April 20, 2025) plotted against the vote share gap between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris in the 2024 U.S. Presidential Election. Each point represents a U.S. state. Red dots indicate states where Trump received a higher vote share than Harris, while blue crosses represent states where Harris outperformed Trump.

4. Results

To offer preliminary visual evidence, we present a scatter plot (Fig. 1). This plot illustrates the relationship between "interest by state" (measured on the vertical axis) during the period of January 20th to April 20th, 2025, and the vote margin between Trump and Harris in each state (represented on the horizontal axis). The scatter plot reveals a strong negative correlation of –79% between these two variables. We also observe the presence of an outlier, the District of Columbia. Notably, even when this outlier is excluded, the correlation remains remarkably high at –69%.[8]

The negative correlation is further corroborated by the visual evidence in Fig. 2. This figure comprises two U.S. maps: one illustrating state-level interest for the topic "tariff" (left panel) and the other depicting the Trump-Harris vote gap (right panel). A visual examination of these maps suggests a clear correspondence: states with a comparatively high frequency of Google searches for "tariff" (represented by darker shading in the left map) are, on average, co-located with states where candidate Harris received relatively more support (indicated by lighter shading in the right map).[9]

Table 1 summarizes the results of the regression (see Eq. (1)) under different specifications of the model, and both with and without considering the outlier (District of Columbia). Model 1 (5) represents the baseline specification considering (excluding) the outlier; Models 2 to 4 (6 to 8) represent the alternative specifications (i), (ii) and (iii), as detailed in Section 3, considering (excluding) the outlier. Notably, the estimates of the baseline model are remarkably robust across the different specifications, in particular when instead of state-specific (date-specific) variables we include state (time) fixed effects; this suggests that the state-level demographic controls (tariff-related-event indicators) that we have considered are able to capture the main features of a state (date) affecting attention towards tariffs.

Across all specifications and samples examined, the effect of the vote gap is both economically meaningful and consistently statistically significant at the 1% level. Holding other factors constant, states where the electorate showed stronger support for Trump exhibited significantly lower levels of interest in tariffs. From a behavioral perspective, this finding suggests that Trump's supporters were less concerned about tariffs. This aligns with broader political economy literature (Besley, 2006) since voting preferences reflect, among other factors, the level of confidence on the different political leaders; ceteris paribus, the greater the confidence on the leader, the lower the interest in verifying the adequacy of the policies actually implemented.

The kind of tariff-related event (β_2 to β_6 of Eq. (1)) affects the level of attention as well. Observing that $\beta_2 > \beta_4 > \beta_3$ suggests that *ceteris paribus* the level of interest is higher for tariffs implemented by the U.S. (I^{Tariff}), than for the ones implemented by the other countries ($I^{Retaliation}$), than for what we defined as "Proposed tariffs" ($I^{Proposed}$). Similarly, since $\beta_6 > \beta_5$ a tariff that becomes effective ($I^{Effective}$) leads to greater attention with respect to announcements ($I^{Announce}$).

Finally, an analysis of the sum of coefficient β_1 ($Votes^{Gap}$) with the interactions coefficients (β_7 to β_{11} of Eq. (1)) allows to understand whether the impact of political preference on interest is heterogeneous as a function of the tariff-related event. First, summing β_1 with β_8 ($Votes_i^{Gap} \cdot I_t^{Proposed}$) and β_{10} ($Votes_i^{Gap} \cdot I_t^{Announce}$) leads to a net effect

[8] Let us stress that the results are robust to the choice of either a longer or a shorter time window. For instance, using a four-month period (December 20, 2024–April 20, 2025) instead of the original three-month window yields a correlation of –77% when the outlier is included and –66% when it is excluded. This consistency across different temporal specifications reinforces the reliability of our findings. Results, not reported for brevity's sake, are available upon request.

[9] In response to a valuable suggestion from a reviewer, we additionally examine the relationship between state-level interest for "tariff" over the full four-year term of the Biden administration and the 2020 Presidential election results. This is illustrated in Fig. B.1, which mirrors the format of Fig. 1. The analysis reveals a weak negative correlation (–10%) after excluding the District of Columbia as an outlier – substantially lower than the –69% correlation observed during the early months of the second Trump administration. Such a gap suggests a significantly lower level of politicization in public perceptions of trade policy during the Biden presidency compared to the early period of Trump's second term. It is important to note that a deeper ex-post analysis of the relationship between search interest in "tariff" and political preferences during the Biden administration – along the lines of the approach employed in Eq. (1) – is not feasible due to the near absence of search activity for "tariff" during this period (see Fig. B.2). This underscores how escalating public concern over tariffs and global trade tensions has become a defining – and still unfolding –feature of Trump's presidency, as his administration continues to generate policy chaos through abrupt measures and erratic implementation.

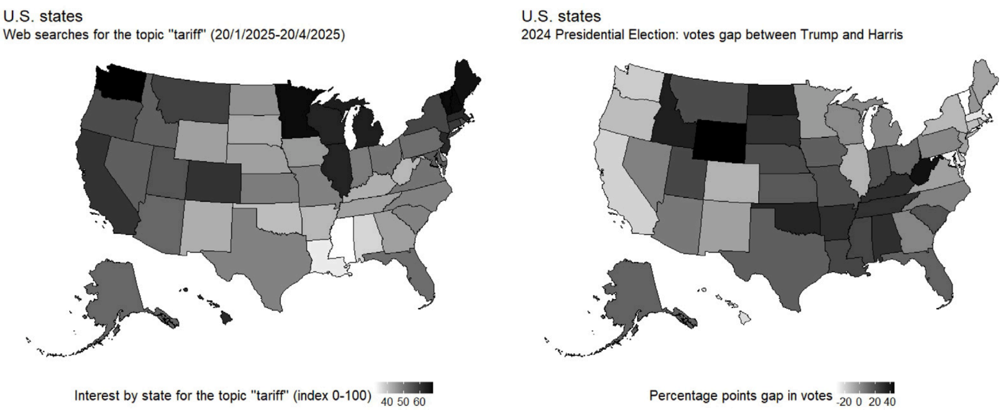

Fig. 2. State-Level Public Concern About Tariffs and Voting Preferences in the 2024 U.S. Presidential Election.
Notes: This figure shows two U.S. state-level maps. The left panel illustrates interest in the topic "tariff" from January 20 to April 20, 2025, with darker shading indicating higher levels of interest. The right panel displays the vote share gap between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris in the 2024 U.S. Presidential Election, where darker shading corresponds to greater support for Trump relative to Harris. The District of Columbia, identified as an outlier, is excluded from both maps.

statistically indistinguishable from zero, suggesting that there is no significant role of the vote gap on the interest for announcements of tariff proposals. A similar reasoning suggests that the effect of the vote gap in case of foreign retaliation ($\beta_1 + \beta_9 + \beta_{10}$ for announcements, $\beta_1+\beta_9+\beta_{11}$ for effective measures) is significant but attenuated, while in case of tariffs implemented by the U.S. ($\beta_1+\beta_7+\beta_{10}$ for announcements, $\beta_1 + \beta_7 + \beta_{11}$ for effective measures) the net effect is not statistically different from β_1. Put differently: the political divide is especially clear when tariffs are imposed by the Trump administration, and is present – although in a weakened form – for foreign retaliation. Tariff proposals, that are more vaguely defined, probably alarm less Harris supporters, leading to no evidence of a different interest with respect to the one shown by Trump supporters.

Late google searches. To address the possibility of a delayed public response, a robustness analysis was performed. This supplementary test extended the observation window to include Google Trends data on "tariff" search activity for up to two days post-event. As shown in Table B.1, these extended findings corroborate our primary results. The coefficient β_1, in particular, retains its sign, magnitude and statistical significance, indicating that individuals in pro-Trump states consistently demonstrate significantly lower concern regarding tariff-related issues compared to those in pro-Harris states.

5. Concluding remarks

This study investigates whether variation in tariff concern across U.S. states correlates with political preferences. Analyzing Google search volumes for the topic "tariff" during the first three months of Trump's second term, we find robust evidence that public concern over tariffs is significantly lower in states with higher electoral support for Donald Trump in the 2024 presidential election.

Prior research (Fetzer and Schwarz, 2021) shows that foreign retaliation under Trump's first administration disproportionately targeted Trump-leaning regions, particularly through Chinese trade measures. Theoretically, such targeting could have amplified tariff awareness among Trump supporters by highlighting their exposure to retaliatory risks. Yet our findings suggest that this retaliatory mechanism was overshadowed by deeper partisan dynamics: Harris supporters express greater concern about tariffs. Pro-Harris states, often more urbanized and economically reliant on globalized industries (e.g., technology, finance), appear more attuned to the systemic risks of trade wars, including supply chain disruptions and inflationary pressures. By contrast, pro-Trump states, despite their material vulnerability to retaliation, may discount these concerns due to a combination of confidence in political leadership, ideological commitment to protectionist rhetoric, trust in conservative media narratives that frame tariffs as a defensive tool, and a tendency to attribute trade-related hardships to foreign adversaries rather than domestic policy choices.

The implications of this divide are significant. Politically, it suggests that tariffs – despite their economic costs – remain a durable feature of coalitional politics, with Republican candidates likely to continue leveraging protectionist appeals to mobilize their base. Economically, the asymmetry in concern could exacerbate regional disparities, as pro-Trump states double down on tariff-shielded industries while pro-Harris states accelerate their pivot toward globalization-dependent sectors. Over time, this dynamic may reinforce a feedback loop in which geographic polarization on trade policy becomes self-perpetuating, complicating efforts to forge bipartisan consensus on trade liberalization even when warranted by macroeconomic conditions.

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Appendix A. Tariffs-related events

See Table A.1.

Appendix B. Supplementary tests and robustness

See Figs. B.1, B.2 and Table B.1.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

Table A.1
List of considered days and details on the tariffs-related events.

Date	Tar.	Ret.	Pro.	Ann.	Eff.	Event
Feb 1st	1	1	0	1	0	U.S. tariffs on Canadian, Mexican and Chinese goods announced; Canada announces tariffs on U.S. goods as well.
Feb 4th	1	1	0	1	1	U.S. tariffs on Chinese goods become effective; China announces tariffs on U.S. goods.
Feb 10th	1	1	0	1	1	U.S. tariffs on steel and aluminum announced. Chinese tariffs on U.S. goods become effective.
Feb 21st	0	0	1	1	0	U.S. administration announces an investigation, and possible reactions, concerning "the digital service taxes (DSTs)"
Feb 25th	0	0	1	1	0	U.S. administration announces an investigation, and possible reactions, concerning "copper imports"
Mar 1st	0	0	1	1	0	U.S. administration announces an investigation, and possible reactions, concerning "timber and lumber"
Mar 4th	1	1	0	1	1	U.S. tariffs on Canadian and Mexican goods become effective; already effective U.S. tariffs on Chinese goods are increased; Canadian tariffs on U.S. goods become effective; China announces further tariffs on U.S. goods
Mar 10th	0	1	0	0	1	Further Chinese tariffs on U.S. goods become effective
Mar 12th	1	1	0	1	1	U.S. tariffs on steel and aluminum become effective; further Canadian tariffs on U.S. goods are announced; EU tariffs on U.S. goods are announced
Mar 13th	0	1	0	0	1	Further Canadian tariffs on U.S. goods become effective
Mar 24th	0	0	1	1	0	It is announced that tariffs could be imposed by the U.S. on those countries that are importing Venezuelan oil
Mar 26th	1	0	0	1	0	U.S. tariffs on automobiles (and parts) is announced
Apr 1st	0	0	1	1	0	U.S. administration announces an investigation, and possible reactions, concerning "pharmaceuticals" and "semiconductors"
Apr 2nd	1	0	0	1	0	U.S. tariffs are announced for a minimum of 10% for all countries and higher "reciprocal tariffs" for selected countries. U.S. tariffs on aluminum expansion are announced.
Apr 3rd	1	0	0	0	1	U.S. tariffs on automobiles become effective. Canada announces additional tariffs on U.S. goods.
Apr 4th	1	1	0	1	1	China announces additional tariffs on U.S. goods. U.S. tariffs on aluminum expansion (announced April, 2) become effective.
Apr 5th	1	0	0	0	1	U.S. universal tariffs become effective.
Apr 8th	1	0	0	1	0	U.S. announces a further increase in tariffs for China.
Apr 9th	1	1	0	1	1	U.S. "reciprocal tariffs" for China become effective (and are increased); the ones for the other countries are suspended. Canadian tariffs on U.S. goods become effective. Additional Chinese tariffs on U.S. goods are announced
Apr 10th	0	1	0	0	1	Additional Chinese tariffs on U.S. goods become effective
Apr 11th	0	1	0	1	1	China announces - with immediate effectiveness - export suspension of several goods towards the U.S.[a] China announces a further increase in tariffs for U.S.
Apr 12th	0	1	0	0	1	Additional Chinese tariffs (announced the previous day) on U.S. goods become effective.
Apr 14th	0	1	0	1	0	EU announces suspension of the tariffs on U.S. goods deemed to become effective on April, 15

Notes: Tar. stands for Tariffs (from U.S. to other countries); Ret. stands for Retaliation (from other countries to U.S.); Pro. stands for Proposed tariffs (from U.S. to other countries); Ann. stands for Announcement of a tariff; Eff. means a tariff has become effective. Variable equal to 1 if there is at least one event in that day that satisfies the definition, 0 otherwise. This list was constructed based on sources cited in the Wikipedia page https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tariffs_in_the_second_Trump_administration, and subsequently verified and supplemented with additional references.

[a] Although the export control measure was likely implemented on April 4th, the earliest widely accessible reference is a Reuters article dated April 11th. For consistency, April 11th is used as the reference date. Robustness checks using April 4th yielded no significant differences and are omitted for brevity.

Table B.1
Public concern on "tariff" vs. political preferences across U.S. states (late Google searches).

	Dependent variable: Interest by state ($Interest_{i,t}$)							
	OLS		*FE*		*OLS*		*FE*	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
$Votes_i^{Gap}$	−0.34***	−0.26***		−0.34***	−0.33***	−0.21***		−0.32***
	(0.06)	(0.07)		(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)		(0.06)
I_t^{Tariff}	3.85***		3.85***		3.75***		3.75***	
	(1.13)		(1.11)		(1.31)		(1.29)	
$I_t^{Proposed}$	−7.16***		−7.09***		−8.08***		−8.05***	
	(1.72)		(1.71)		(1.83)		(1.82)	
$I_t^{Retaliation}$	1.15		1.15		0.74		0.74	
	(1.05)		(1.04)		(1.16)		(1.14)	
$I_t^{Announce}$	−7.53***		−7.53***		−7.54***		−7.54***	
	(0.96)		(0.94)		(1.10)		(1.08)	
$I_t^{Effective}$	−0.30		−0.30		−0.08		−0.08	
	(0.72)		(0.71)		(0.79)		(0.77)	
$Votes_i^{Gap} \cdot I_t^{Tariff}$	0.07		0.07	0.07	0.08		0.08	0.08
	(0.05)		(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.07)		(0.07)	(0.07)
$Votes_i^{Gap} \cdot I_t^{Proposed}$	0.13		0.13	0.14	0.23**		0.23**	0.23**
	(0.09)		(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.10)		(0.09)	(0.10)
$Votes_i^{Gap} \cdot I_t^{Retaliation}$	0.12***		0.12***	0.12***	0.16***		0.16***	0.16***
	(0.05)		(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.06)		(0.05)	(0.05)
$Votes_i^{Gap} \cdot I_t^{Announce}$	−0.06		−0.06	−0.06	−0.06		−0.06	−0.06
	(0.04)		(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.06)		(0.06)	(0.06)
$Votes_i^{Gap} \cdot I_t^{Effective}$	−0.03		−0.03	−0.03	−0.05		−0.05	−0.05
	(0.03)		(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)		(0.04)	(0.04)
$MedianAge_i$	0.38	0.41		0.39	1.42***	1.46***		1.45***
	(0.48)	(0.48)		(0.47)	(0.39)	(0.39)		(0.38)
$SexRatio_i$	0.59	0.59		0.61*	1.15***	1.17***		1.18***
	(0.36)	(0.37)		(0.36)	(0.31)	(0.32)		(0.31)
$AgeDependency_i$	−0.28	−0.27		−0.27	−0.21	−0.20		−0.20
	(0.30)	(0.29)		(0.29)	(0.27)	(0.27)		(0.26)
$MedianIncome_i$	0.61	0.63		0.59	0.13	0.13		0.11
	(0.45)	(0.47)		(0.45)	(0.39)	(0.40)		(0.39)
$Gini_i$	0.08	0.08		0.09	−0.44	−0.45		−0.44
	(0.68)	(0.68)		(0.67)	(0.53)	(0.52)		(0.52)
Edu_i^2	1.48**	1.48**		1.49**	0.53	0.52		0.53
	(0.68)	(0.68)		(0.67)	(0.57)	(0.57)		(0.56)
Edu_i^3	1.60**	1.60**		1.58**	0.75	0.74		0.72
	(0.72)	(0.73)		(0.72)	(0.62)	(0.62)		(0.61)
Edu_i^4	1.16*	1.15		1.17*	0.82	0.82		0.83
	(0.70)	(0.71)		(0.69)	(0.59)	(0.60)		(0.59)
Constant	−151.96*	−160.08**			−145.51**	−154.05**		
	(77.53)	(77.51)			(63.25)	(63.17)		
Observations	1166	1166	1166	1166	1143	1143	1143	1143
States	51	51	51	51	50	50	50	50
Excluded states	None	None	None	None	DC[a]	DC[a]	DC[a]	DC[a]
Fixed effects	None	None	State	Time	None	None	State	Time
R^2	0.53	0.41	0.24	0.64	0.48	0.32	0.25	0.57

Notes: ***, **, * indicate significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively. Standard errors clustered at state level. For variable description, see the Tablenote to Table 1. In the main analysis (Table 1) we consider interest over a period consisting on both the day of the event and the following day (for example, for February 1st we consider February 1st and February 2nd). In this robustness check we add further 24 h of data to include late searchers: for example for February 1st we consider searches from February 1st to February 3rd.

[a] DC is the District of Columbia.

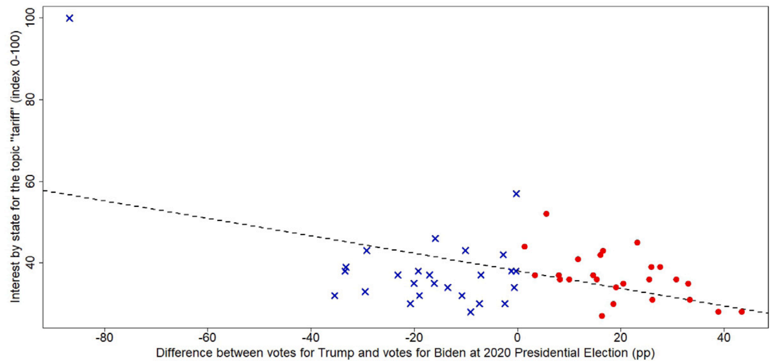

Fig. B.1. Google Searches for "tariff" vs. "Trump-Biden" Vote Gap.
Notes: This figure shows a scatter plot relating state-level interest in the topic "tariff" – measured over the period from January 20, 2021, to January 19, 2025 – to the vote share gap between Donald Trump and Joe Biden in the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election. Each point represents a U.S. state. Red dots indicate states where Trump received a higher vote share than Biden, while blue crosses represent states where Biden received more votes than Trump.

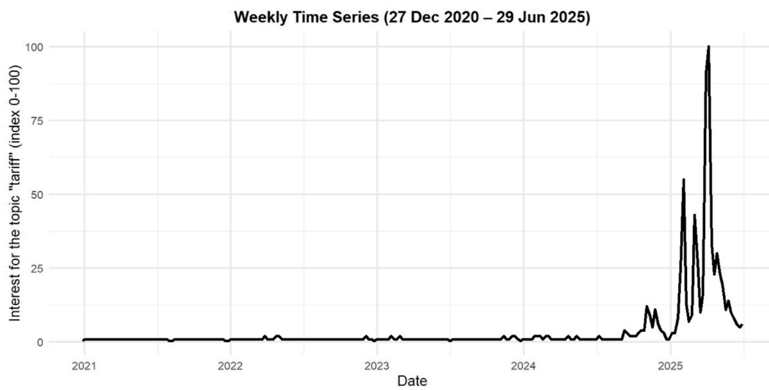

Fig. B.2. Google Trends analysis of public concern about tariffs.
Notes: This figure shows the evolution of public interest in the topic 'tariff' in the U.S., based on Google Trends data covering the period from December 27, 2020, to June 29, 2025.

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