

Their private lives really matter!

Do some research and associate each US politician with their party.

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|-------------------|---|--------------------|
| a. Tim Scott | ● | ● Democratic Party |
| b. Joe Biden | ● | ● Republican Party |
| c. Ted Cruz | ● | ● Independent |
| d. Bernie Sanders | ● | |

Read the headline. What do you think is the main topic of the article?

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READING COMPREHENSION

The president loves ice cream, and a senator has a new girlfriend – these personal details may seem trivial, but can help reduce political polarization

Jennifer Wolak — Published: September 15, 2023

- 1 Politicians want to be heard – to land a soundbite¹ on the nightly news, to advertise their legislative accomplishments and to have people know their platform. But when given opportunities to talk to voters, they often share details about their personal lives instead.
- Presidential candidate Tim Scott used a September 2023 appearance on Fox News to talk about his dating life, saying that voters would soon meet his girlfriend. On Twitter, Senator Ted Cruz often posts football clips and selfies at sporting events.
- 5 And in July 2023, President Joe Biden, who has described himself as an “ice cream guy,” tweeted a picture of himself holding an ice cream cone captioned, “In my book, every day is National Ice Cream Day.”
- This trend of politicians sharing personal information isn’t new.
- 10 One study of campaign tweets found that congressional candidates in 2012 were more likely² to tweet about their personal lives than their policy platforms.
- Why do politicians share so much from their personal lives on the campaign trail?
- I am a scholar of political science, and my research shows that when people see elected officials as people and not just politicians, it boosts their popularity. It also reduces party polarization in people’s views of politicians. (...)
- 15 As part of my research, I noted five items from the list Cruz provided to Us Weekly in 2016, along with five similar autobiographical details collected from the news that same year about Senator Bernie Sanders. (...)
- I then shared these details with a nationally representative sample of 1,000 Americans in a survey conducted just before the 2020 election. Half were asked to just rate the senator, while the other half were given one of these lists of autobiographical details before rating their favorability toward the senator.
- 20 I found that those who read autobiographical details gave warmer evaluations of the politicians than those who did not learn these facts. (...)

1. a soundbite: *un court extrait, une citation brève* 2. to be likely to do something: *être susceptible de faire quelque chose*

In my research, I found that minor details like Cruz’s penchant for canned soup were especially likely to boost his ratings among Democrats. And Sanders’ love of the musical group ABBA was especially likely to improve his favorability ratings among Republicans.

- 25 We know that people tend to evaluate new information through the lens of their partisan biases³. People generally accept new information that reinforces their views and are skeptical of information that is inconsistent with their prior beliefs.

But when politicians share autobiographical details, people see them as humans (...)

When politicians talk about their personal lives, it not only appeals to their supporters, but dampens⁴ the negativity people feel toward politicians from the opposing party. (...)

- 30 3. bias: *préférence, penchant* 4. to dampen: *atténuer*

THE CONVERSATION

© <https://theconversation.com/the-president-loves-ice-cream-and-a-senator-has-a-new-girlfriend-these-personal-details-may-seem-trivial-but-can-help-reduce-political-polarization-211981>

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Find the words in the text that match the definitions below.

- = a fervent, sometimes militant, supporter or proponent of a party, cause, faction, person, or idea.
- = a series of operations undertaken to achieve something such as social or political change.
- = one engaged in politics, especially an elected or appointed government official.
- = a member of the house or chamber of a legislature called a senate.
- = a political group considered as a formal whole, united under one specific political platform of issues and campaigning to take part in government.
- = choose a candidate by popular vote.
- = the head of state of a republic.
- = a person who is running in an election.

A. Read the beginning of the article (from line 1 down to line 8). Pick out the names of politicians and find personal details about them.

Name
Function / occupation
Personal details

B. What do you think is their goal?

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C. Read the second half of the article (from line 9 to the end). Find information about the person who wrote the article.

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D. Focus on her research. Fill in the sentences with words from the text to explain what she did to answer the following question: "Why do politicians share so much from their personal lives on the campaign trail?"

She carried out a in 2020 just prior to the She shared personal about Senator Cruz and Senator Sanders with 500 but she did not share them with another group of 500 people. And then she asked them what they thought of the two

E. Find examples of personal details she shared.

Name	Ted Cruz	Bernie Sanders
Personal details

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F. Explain what her goal was.

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G. "Why do politicians share so much from their personal lives on the campaign trail?" (l.12) Pick out passages from the text that may provide an answer to this question and explain what that means using your own words.

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H. Find passages that show whether or not the details Jennifer Wolak shared helped "reduce political polarization." Then use your own words to explain.

Name	Ted Cruz	Bernie Sanders
People's reaction

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I. How can we explain this phenomenon? Use your own words and support your answer with passages from the text.

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WRITING

Some people are intrigued by the private lives of celebrities. Others feel that journalists should respect their privacy and not be allowed to cover personal details. Explain each point of view and give your opinion. Use expressions of purpose to justify your ideas.