



PARTY DISFAVOR

ACCORDING TO A NEW POLL, U.S. ADULTS OVERALL HOLD A DIM VIEW OF BOTH POLITICAL PARTIES BUT RESULTS REVEAL CONSIDERABLE PESSIMISM IN THE WAY DEMOCRATS PERCEIVE THEIR OWN PARTY. A4

SCIENCE

Are ‘alpha males’ a myth? For most primates, yes.



An analysis of power dynamics between male and female primates confirms that the alpha male is in fact relatively rare across 121 species of primates, according to a new study. Adobe Stock

A study finds that sex-based hierarchies in primates are more fluid than has been assumed, raising questions about the origins of inequalities between men and women.

Leo Sands Washington Post

Observations of “alpha male” behavior among apes — including some of humans’ closest relatives in the animal kingdom — have helped shape the archetype of the dominant male into a controversial touchstone of modern culture. But a sweeping analysis of power dynamics between male and female primates confirms that the alpha male is in fact relatively rare across 121 species of primates, finding that sex-based hierarchies across the vast order are more fluid — and successfully contested more frequently — than was historically assumed. The study’s authors say their research could pave the way to a deeper understanding into one of science’s murkiest questions: the origins of power inequities between men and women. “Male dominance is not a baseline, as was implicitly thought for a long time in primatology,” said Elise Huchard, a behavioral ecologist at the University of Montpellier who co-wrote the study. She said that her research found there was far more flexibil-

“It’s actually a beautiful continuum, and most species lie in the middle and are not strictly male- or female-dominant.”

Elise Huchard, a behavioral ecologist at the University of Montpellier who co-wrote the study

ity in power dynamics between male and female primates than previously envisioned and that it raises questions over the extent to which modern inequities between men and women can be traced to humanity’s primate legacy. The peer-reviewed paper, published this week in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, reviewed quantitative data from 253 studies on contested interactions between male and female primates from 121 species. The contested interactions included anything from acts of physical aggression to ritualized signals indicating submission. The scientists recorded which sex “won” each interaction and then analyzed the data to compare the results between different species and populations of primates. They found that for 70% of observed primate populations, neither sex was clearly dominant (defined as winning more than 9 in 10 contests.) At the same time, males were clearly dominant in 17% of populations and females in 13%. “It’s actually a beautiful continuum,

and most species lie in the middle and are not strictly male- or female-dominant,” Huchard said. The study found that female power was most likely to arise in scenarios where females have the most choice in which partner to mate with. This includes species in which females are monogamous or where they are a similar size to males. They also found that primate species that primarily forage in trees are more likely to be biased toward female power. “This is because it’s easier to escape, you’ve got three dimensions instead of two,” making it harder for males to wield control, Huchard explained. It adds to a growing body of research into why males dominate in some primate species while females dominate in others. For example, a study in April found that female bonobos maintained power by forming alliances to gang up on males. Research is showing that male-biased power is not as ubiquitous as once thought among primates, said Rebecca Lewis, a

TRUMP’S PRESIDENCY

EPA bars state expert from drinking water advisory board

Elin Betanzo has been ordered to cease work due to her “potential signature on a petition.”

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Trump administration has ordered a Michigan drinking water expert who played a pivotal role in exposing the Flint water crisis to “cease all work” on a federal advisory council because she allegedly criticized the government. Elin Warn Betanzo, a former federal drinking water engineer and private consultant based in Detroit, said she was barred from regular participation in a July 28 meeting of the National Drinking Water Advisory Council while the agency conducts an investigation into her “potential signature on a petition.” Betanzo, who has served four years on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency council, said she was notified July 3 that she was under investigation but has received no further information about that process scope, timeline or evidence. Betanzo was among many who signed a “Stand Up For Science” petition criticizing the agency, whom signers say has abandoned its mission to protect human health and the environment. The EPA put employees who signed the petition on leave last month. She called her removal a “dangerous precedent.” “This action is chilling — not only because it removes my voice from the conversation but because it sends a clear message to others: speak out, and you may be silenced,” she said. “Silencing a member of this council — without explanation or due process — undermines the credibility of the advisory process and betrays the values of transparency, inclusion and public accountability that EPA claims to uphold,” Betanzo said. SEE TRUMP’S PRESIDENCY, A3



Elin Betanzo, a former federal drinking water engineer and private consultant based in Detroit, was ordered to cease EPA work due to her “potential signature on a petition.” She is pictured at a Benton Harbor meeting holding a lead pipe in October 2021. MLive.com files

Lawsuit attacks use of health code to restrict solar farms

St. Clair County makes claims of noise and “visual pollution.”

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PORT HURON — County officials in Michigan’s Thumb face a lawsuit from the state’s largest electric utility after they placed new restrictions on solar farms, claiming noise and “visual pollution” from the arrays endanger public health. DTE Electric Co. sued St. Clair County on July 3, challenging its unique use of county health department rules to impose limits on big solar farms and grid-scale battery installations, which county officials believe is a first in Michigan. DTE argues the new requirements

amount to zoning regulations illegally masquerading as public health protections. The county medical director’s justification for the rules “was not supported by any scientific or medical evidence,” the utility’s lawsuit says. The county has pledged to fight the lawsuit. The case will test its novel use of health authority to effectively circumvent parts of state law passed in 2023 by Democrats, meant to prevent communities from blocking or heavily restricting large renewable energy projects necessary to meet state climate goals. In May, the majority-Republican St. Clair

County board approved the rules, developed by its health department with its authority under Michigan’s Public Health Code. The unanimous vote prompted applause from onlookers at the board’s meeting. The energy facilities pose “risks and dangers to public health,” reads the county resolution. They require large solar and battery projects to be completely screened from public view, ensure power inverters don’t emit “tonal noise,” require projects generally meet 45-decibel noise limits and force developers to post \$100,000 per megawatt

