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Inaccurate metaperceptions about the self-reported attraction to ingroup political extremes

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Political polarization has become a persistent problem in many societies, reflected not only in divergent ideas but in the ways we talk about each other. Studies show that we tend to overestimate how much we dislike opposing political groups, generating cognitive distortions that intensify conflicts. This led us to ask whether people also overestimate the appeal of extremes within their own group. We conducted two studies with N=140 and N=100 Argentinian adults. Participants placed themselves on a 7-point ideology scale and rated their sympathy toward each position from three perspectives: personally, as a typical ingroup member, and as an outgroup member. Across both studies, participants systematically overestimated the attraction of opposing group members to ideological extremes, while also overestimating their own group's preference for those extremes. These findings suggest that misperceptions of preferences intensify political divides and can inform interventions to promote constructive dialogue in democratic societies.

Keywords: *polarization, intergroup relations, meta-perception, social psychology*