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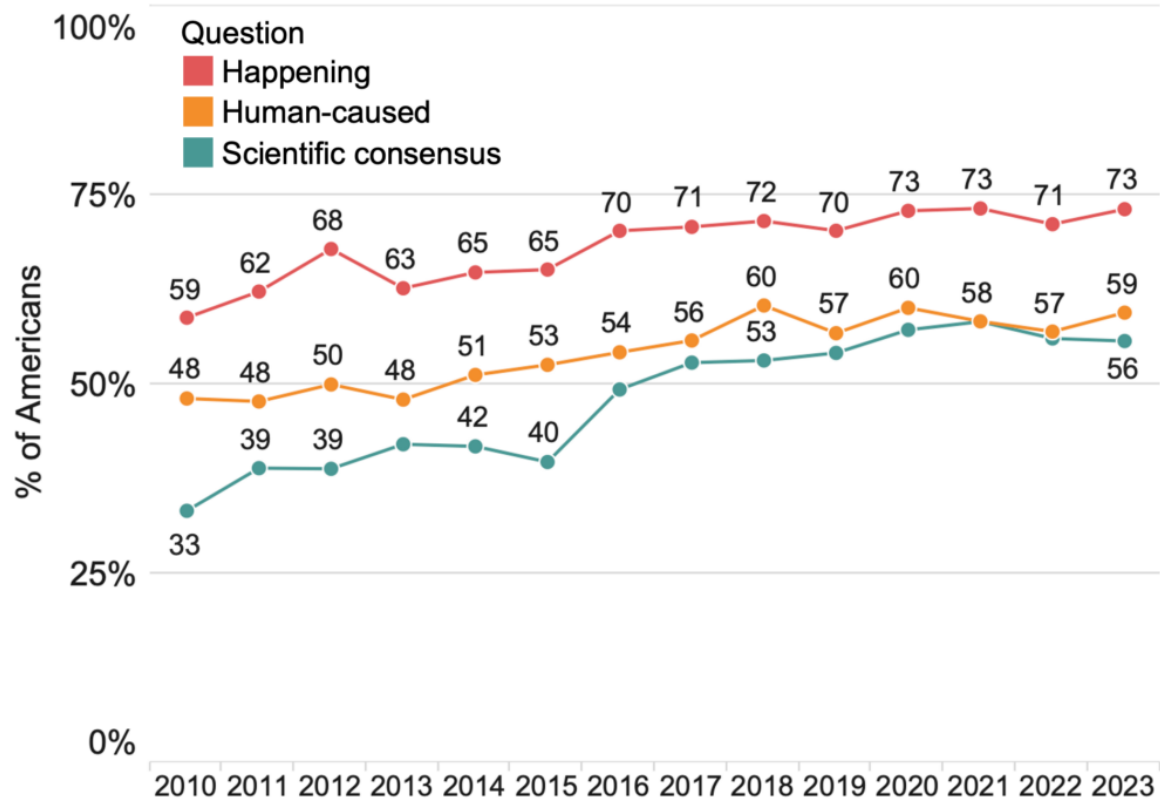
# Climate Change Polarization in the US

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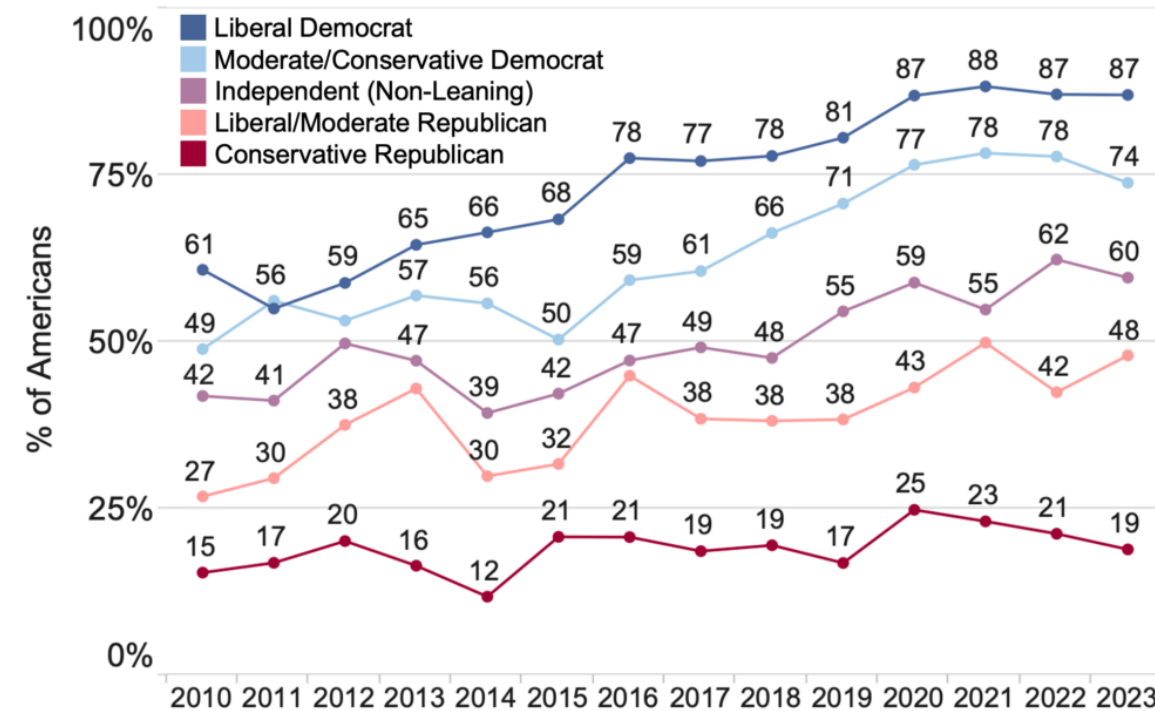
# **What do Americans think about climate change?**

# Americans increasingly understand that global warming is happening and human-caused, and that most scientists agree that it is happening



Climate Change in the American Mind Data Explorer (U.S. adults across 2010-2023)  
Source: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication;  
George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication

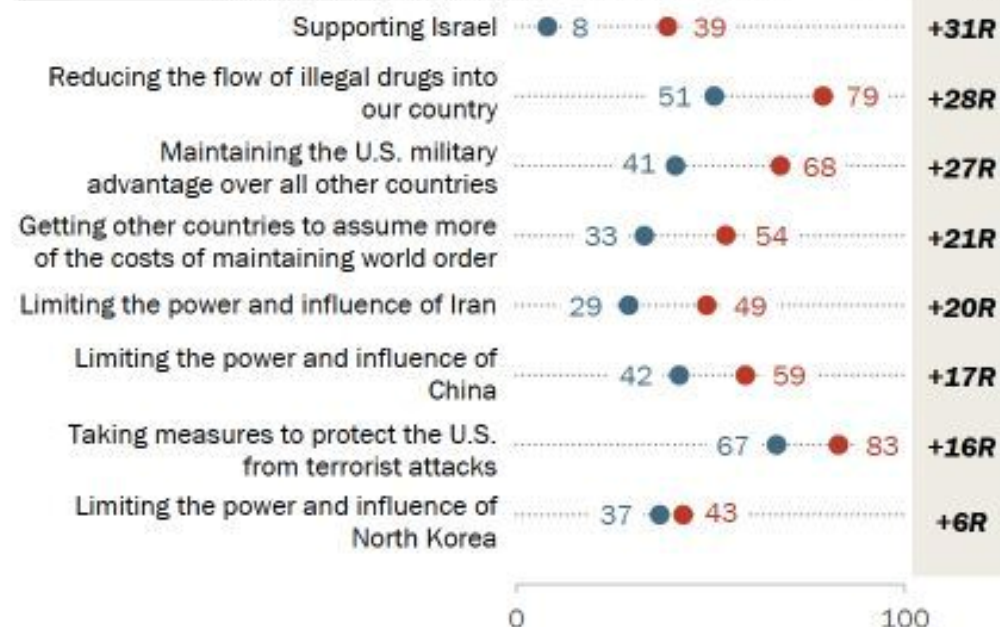
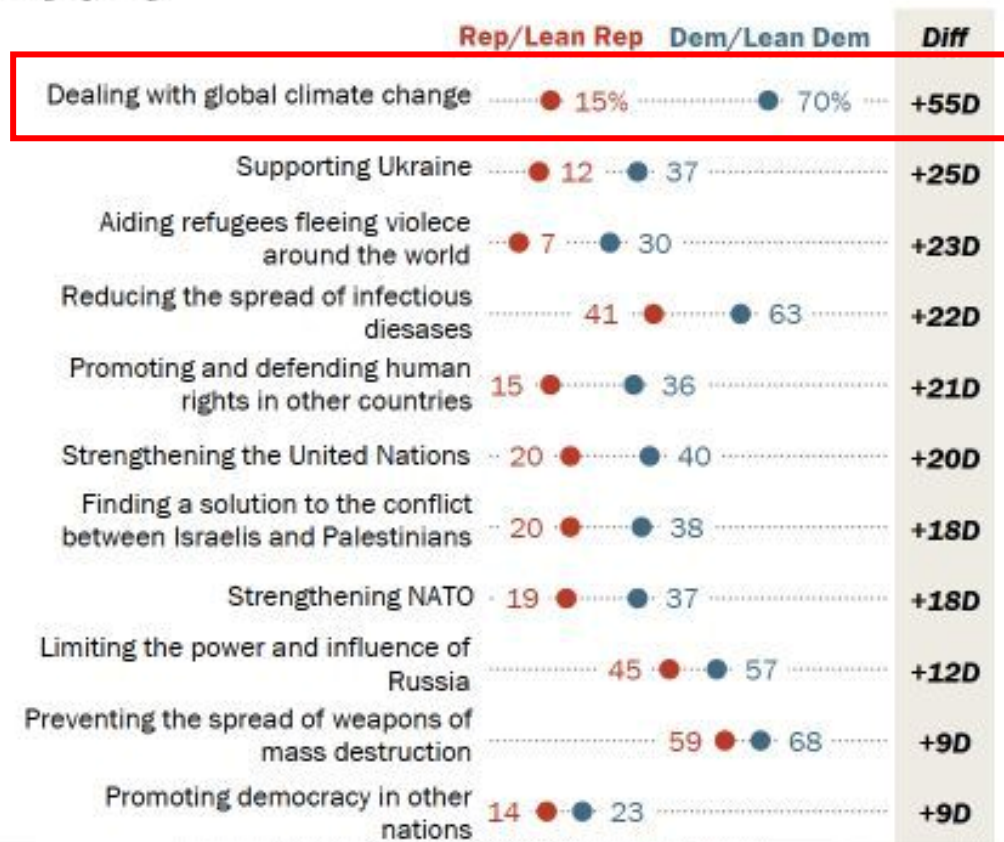
# Public perception that global warming is already harming Americans now, or will do so within 10 years, has grown across most political groups



Climate Change in the American Mind Data Explorer (U.S. registered voters across 2010-2023)  
Source: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication;  
George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication

## Large partisan gaps on foreign policy priorities, especially climate change

% who say each of the following should be a **top priority** in U.S. long-range foreign policy



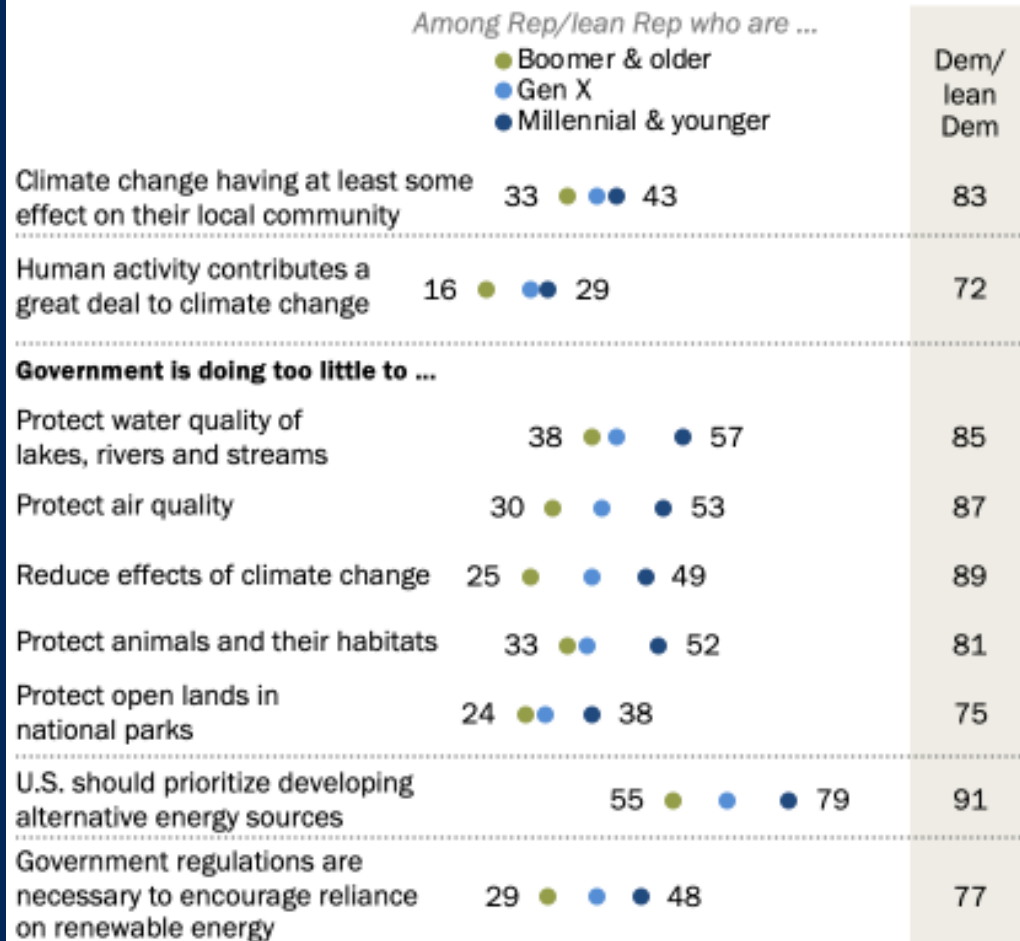
Note: Only statistically significant differences are shown.  
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted April 1-7, 2024.  
"What Are Americans' Top Foreign Policy Priorities?"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

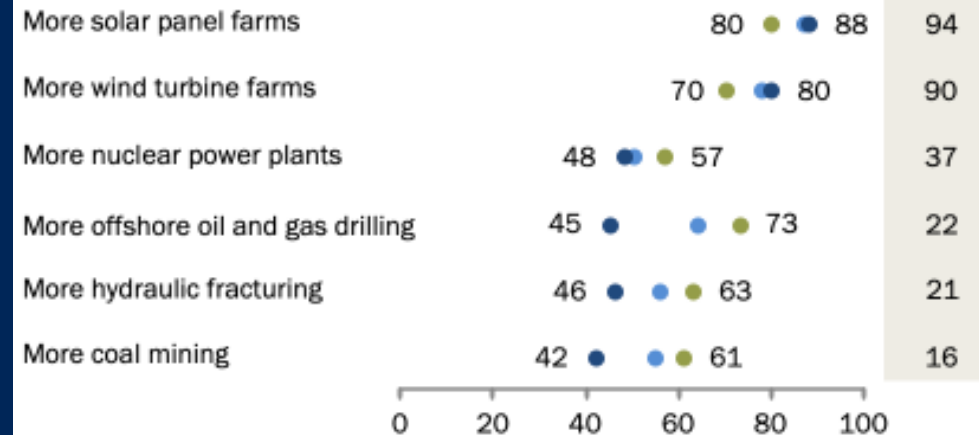
# Variation within parties

## Younger Republicans prioritize alternative energy sources more than older Republicans

% of U.S. adults who say ...



### Favor expanding each energy source



Note: Respondents who gave other responses or did not give an answer are not shown.

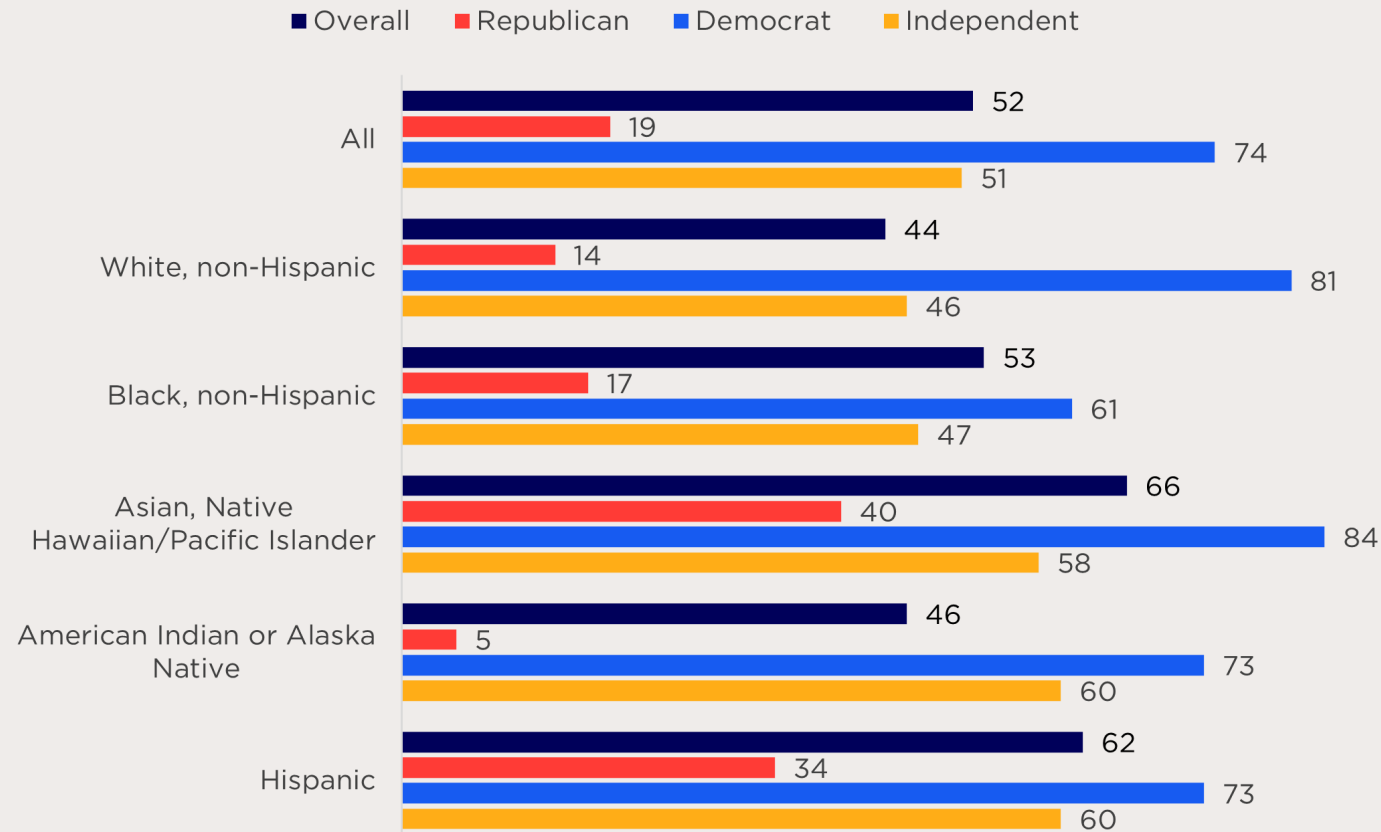
Source: Survey conducted April 29-May 5, 2020.

"Two-Thirds of Americans Think Government Should Do More on Climate"

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# Support for Taking Action on Climate

*There is a controversy over what the countries of the world, including the U.S., should do about the problem of climate change. Here are three statements. Please tell me which statement comes closest to your own point of view: (% Climate change is a serious and pressing problem and we should try taking steps now even if this involves significant costs)*



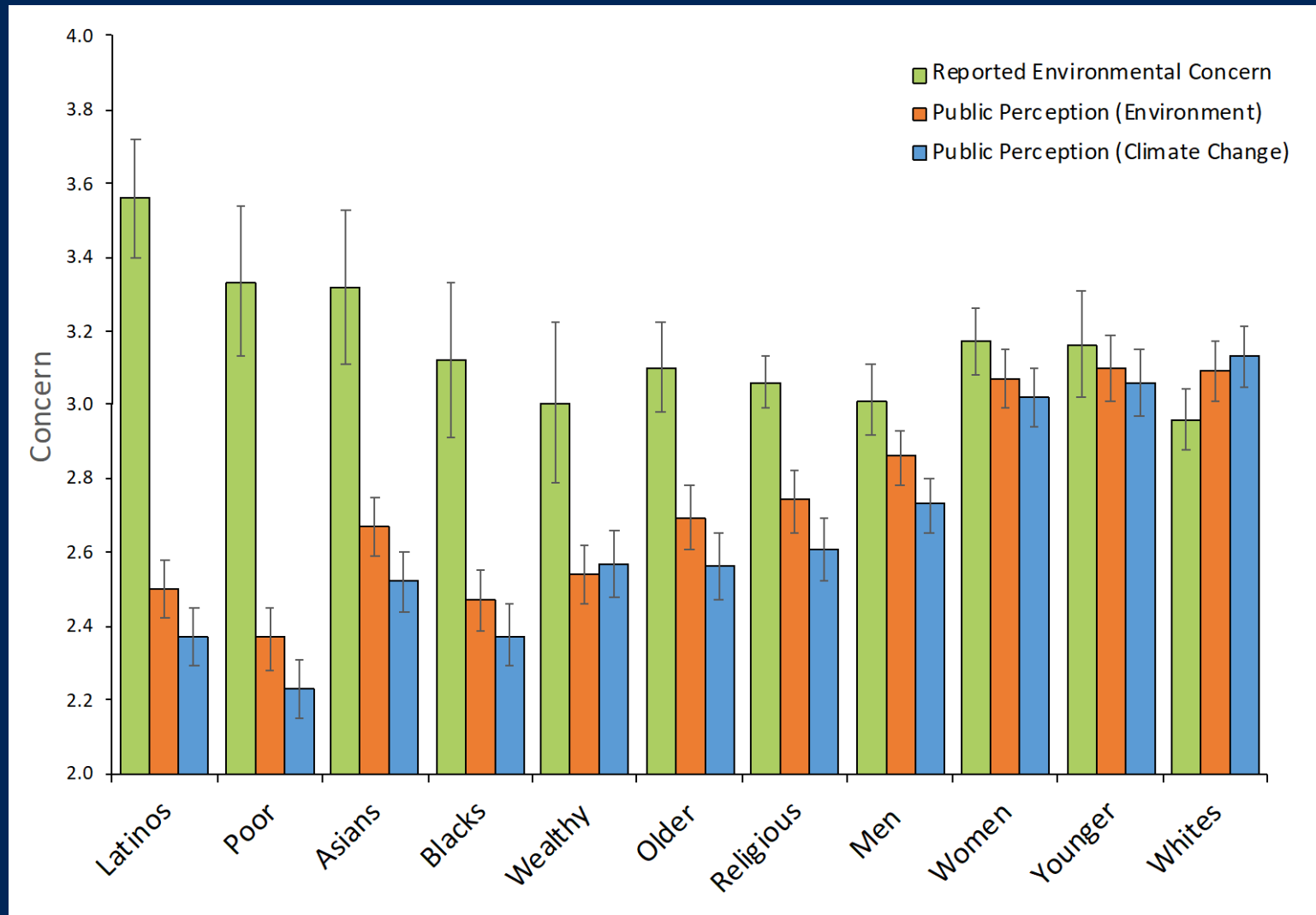
July 15 - August 1, 2022 | n=3,106  
CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

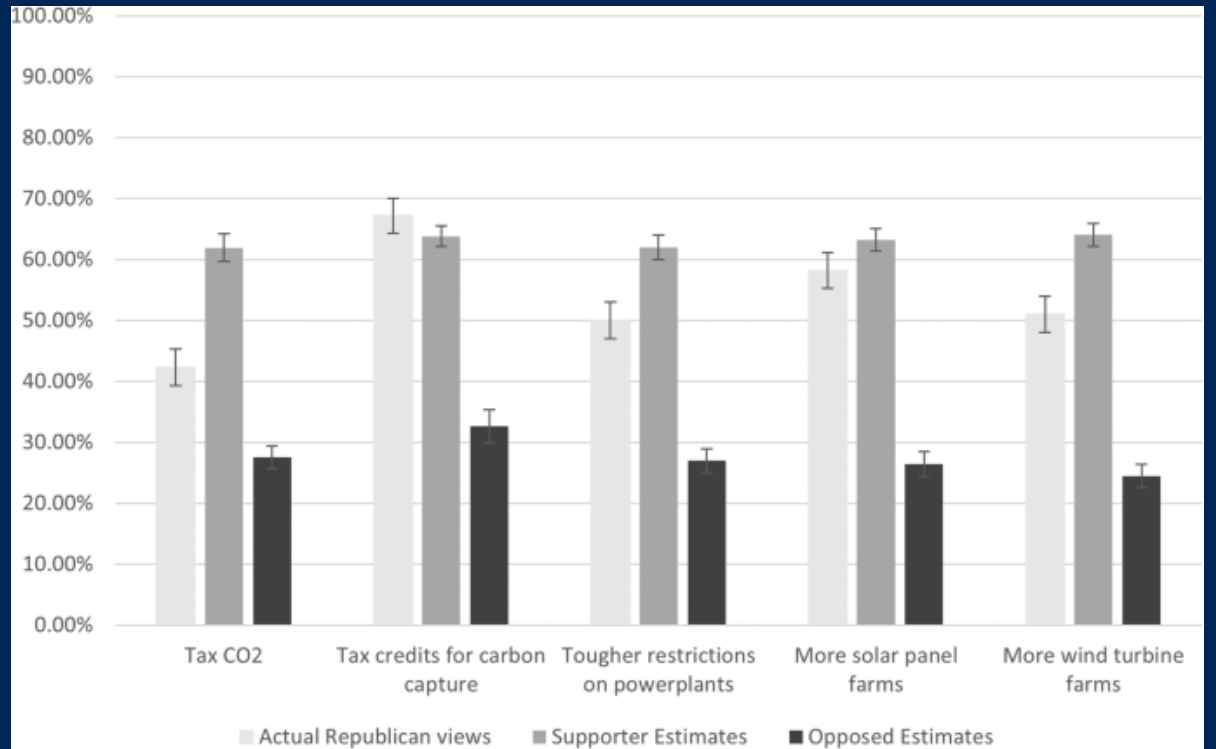
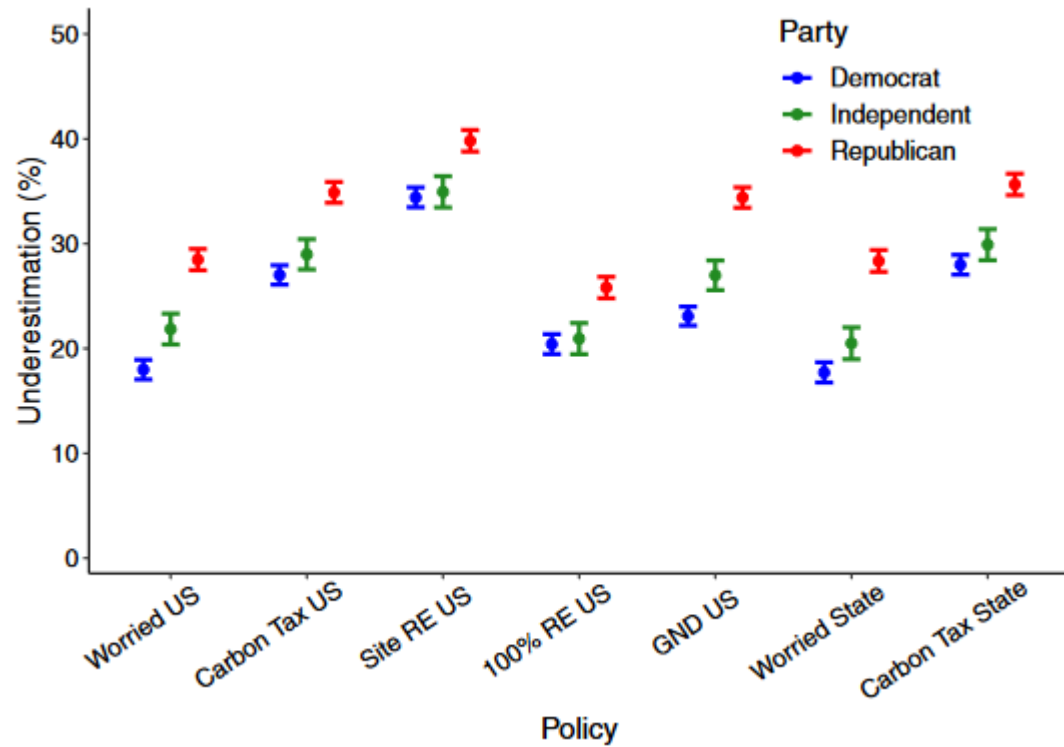
# Implications of Demographic Divides

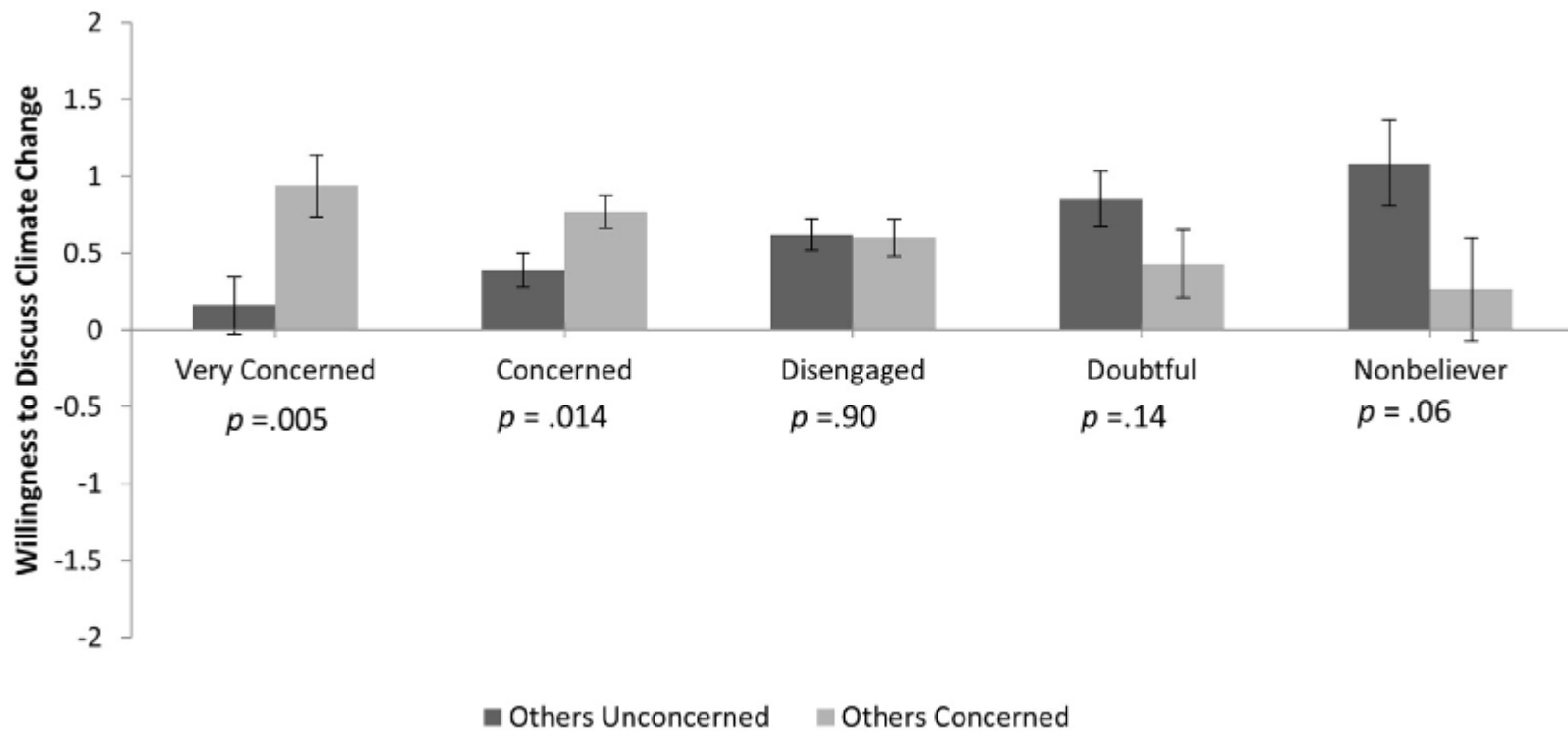
- Important to consider which audiences matter for a given message/vote/policy/infrastructure discussion
- For any particular development, left/right divides may matter less than the makeup of that community or audience



# **Americans underestimate Americans' climate concerns**



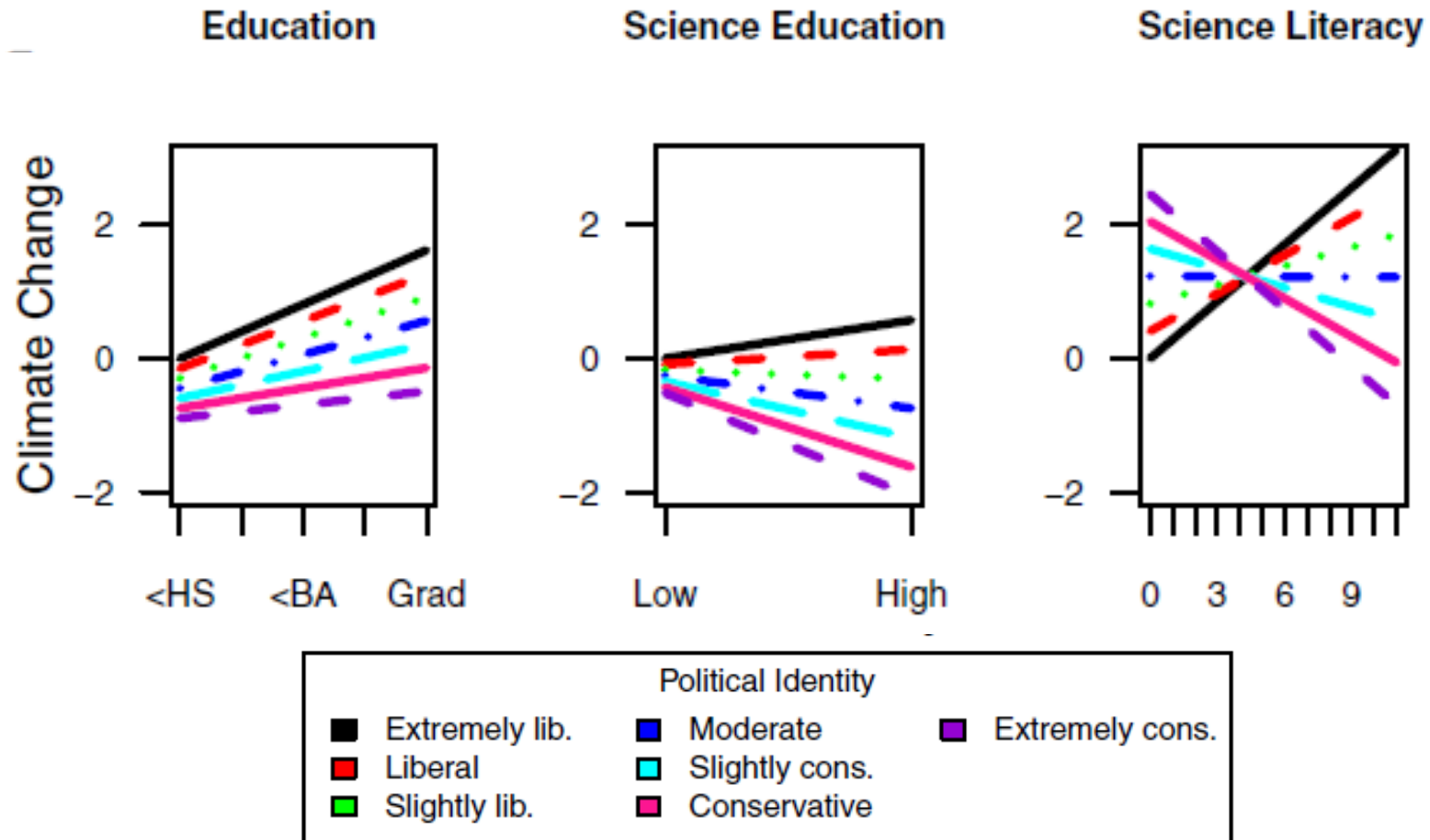


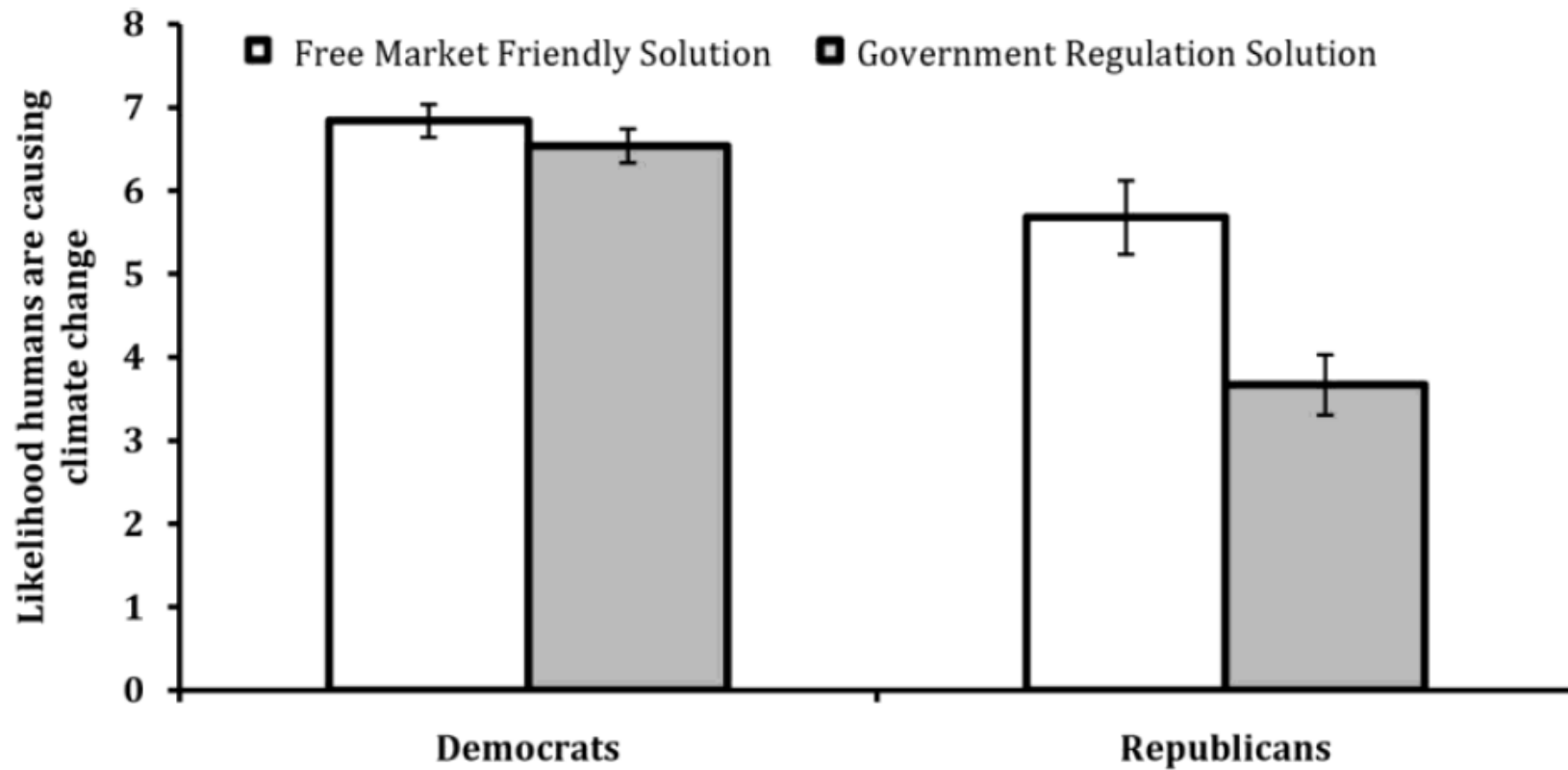


# Implications of this underestimation (Pluralistic Ignorance)

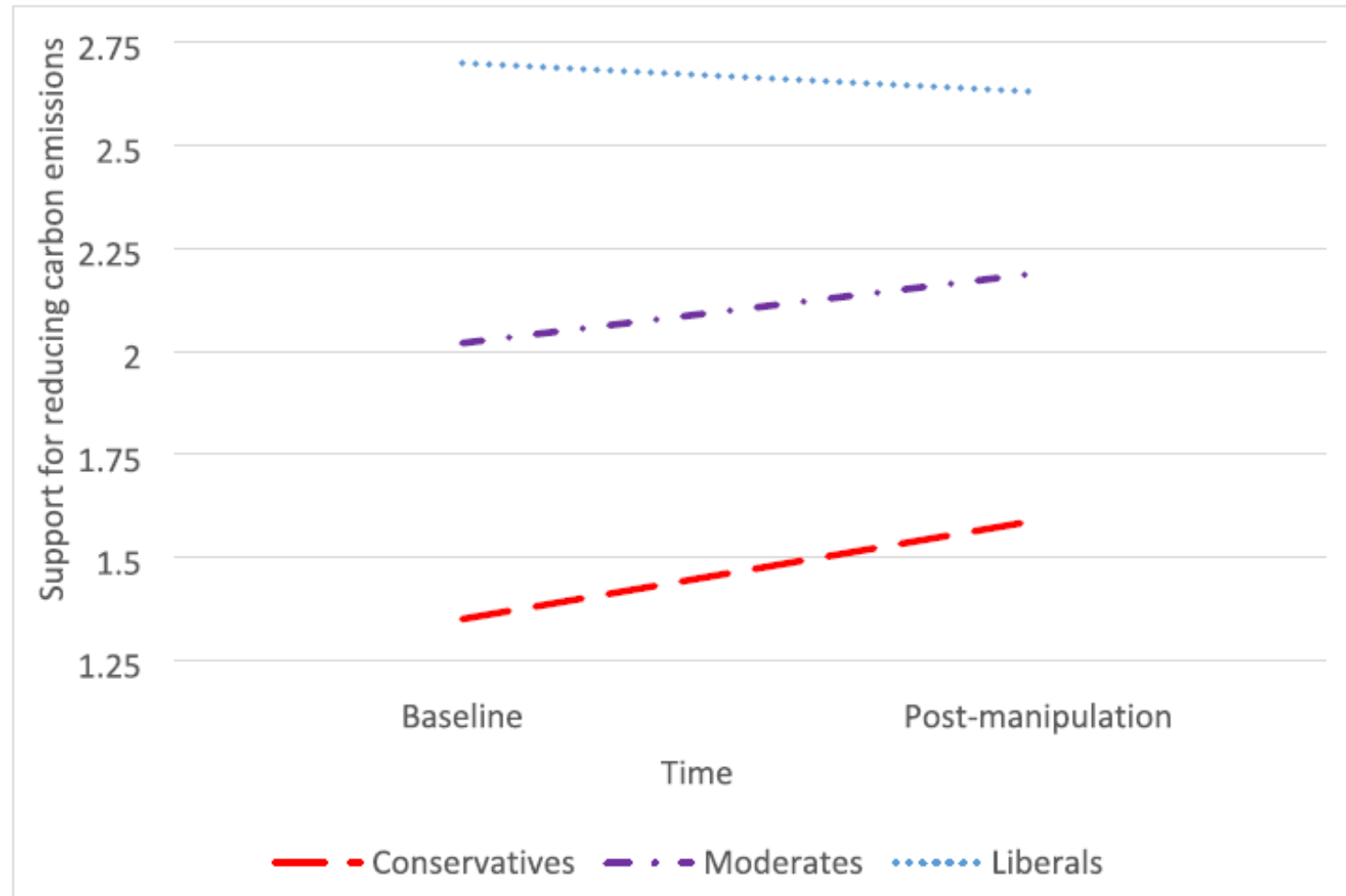
- Some inaction and political polarization on climate change could be driven by Americans (especially Republicans) underestimating other people's concerns
- Providing accurate information about US climate concern/policy support could shift discussion/action toward the majority view
  - Could work both by encouraging concerned to speak up/act/support policies and by discouraging minority from doing so

**Polarization may be about  
the solutions, not the  
problem**







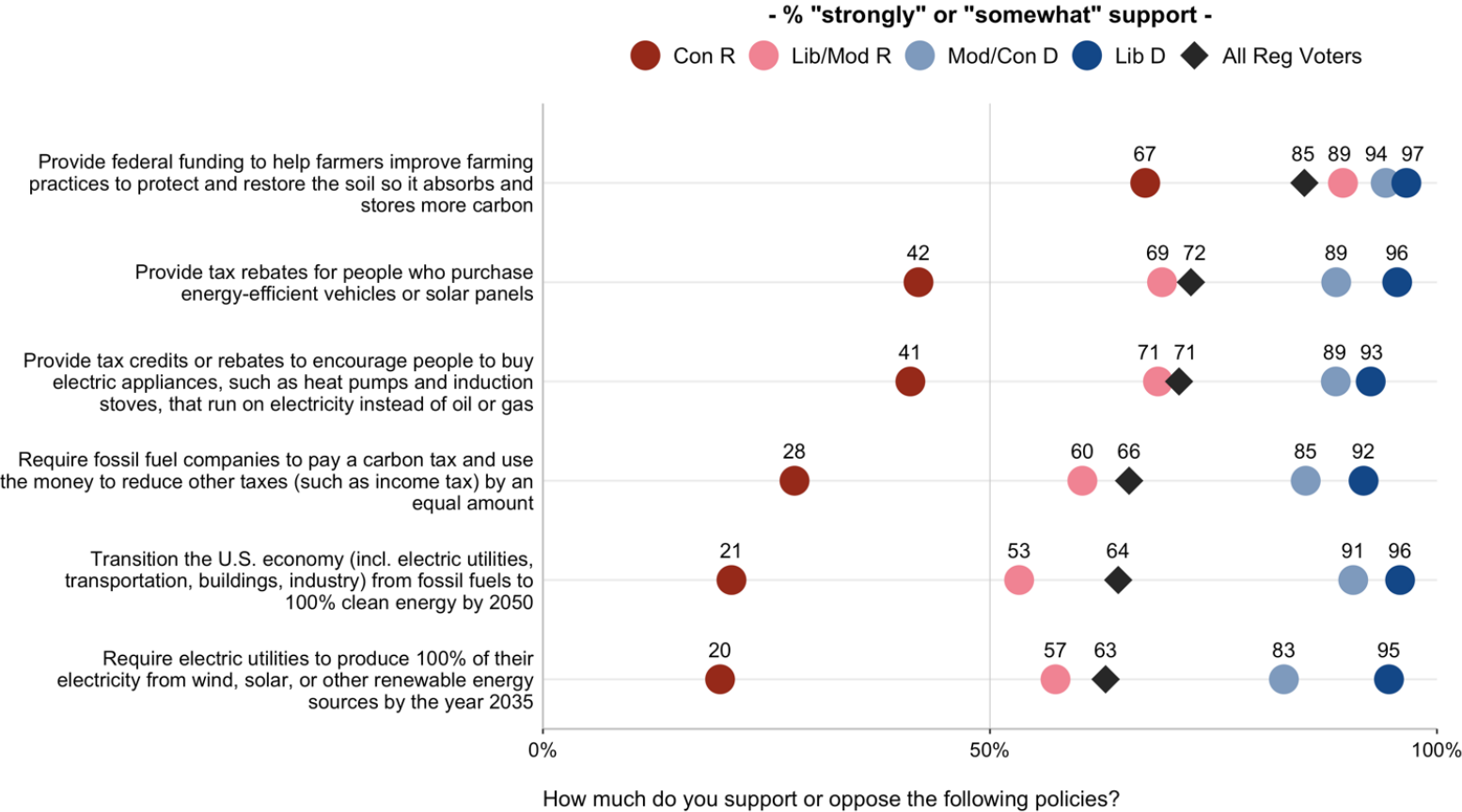


**Fig. 1.** Effect of private sector condition on support for reducing carbon emissions by political ideology. Note: Means between baseline and post-manipulation were significantly different for conservatives and moderates at  $p < .05$ .

# Implications of Solution Aversion

- “Belief” in climate change may instead reflect acceptance of policies/actions to address it
- Providing more education and facts about climate change is important but will only go so far
- If the goal is to adopt climate policies, need to start by identifying policies/actions that can garner widespread support

# Most registered voters support climate-friendly policies



Registered U.S. Voters, Fall 2023

Source: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication;  
George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication

# Summary

- US public is polarized on climate change and there is substantial variation within parties, not just between them
- But, despite our (incorrect) perceptions, most Americans are concerned about climate change and support a variety of climate policies
- However, people's acceptance of specific solutions might matter more than their beliefs about the problem

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