Voter Attitudes, Policy Preferences, and Climate Change

Parrish Bergquist[1]

Northeast State Legistlative Climate and Energy Summit

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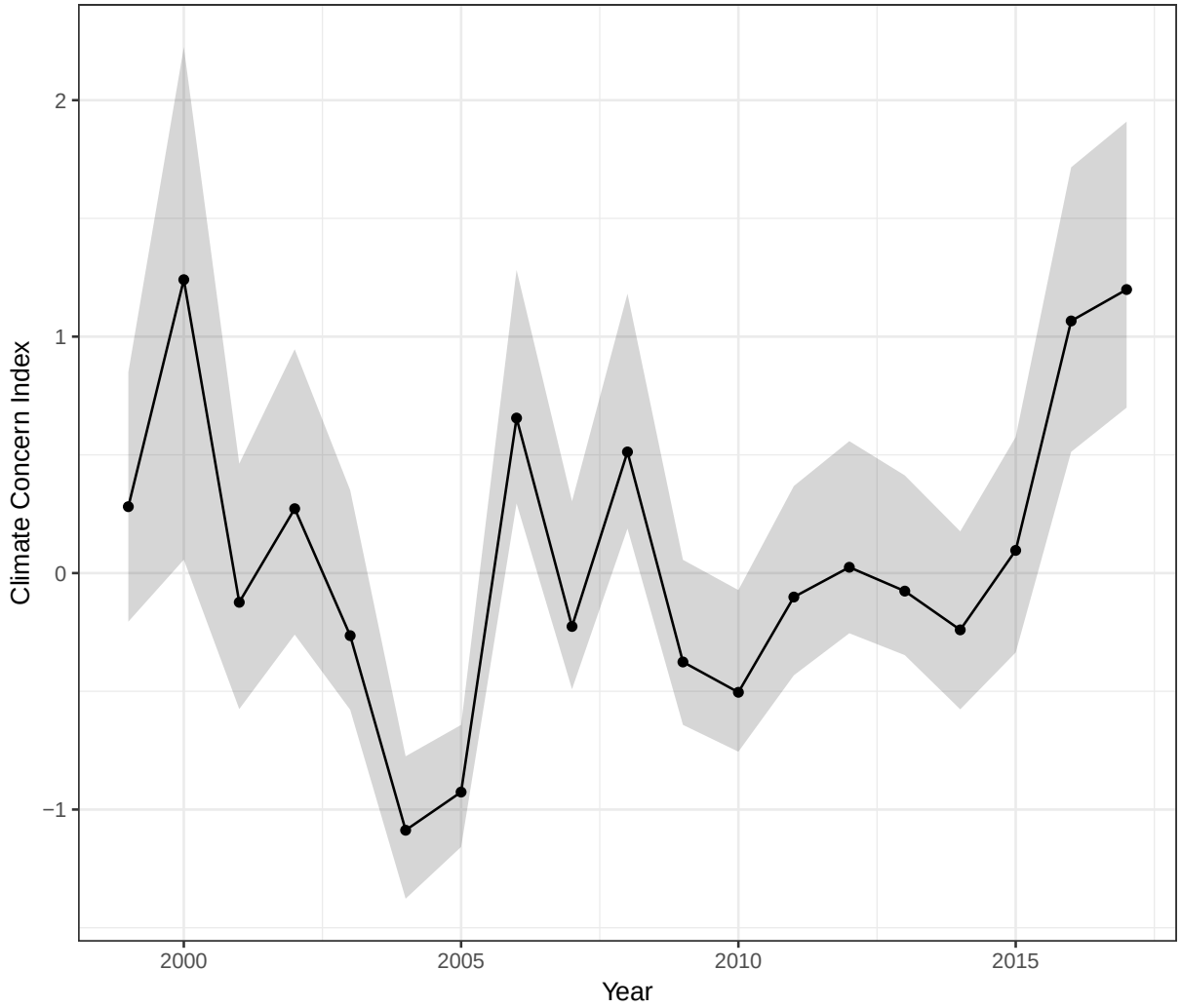
[1]Yale Program on Climate Change Communication

Overview

1. Public Attitudes
2. Public Policy
3. Communicating Climate Policy

Americans are increasingly concerned about climate change



Bergquist and Warshaw 2019

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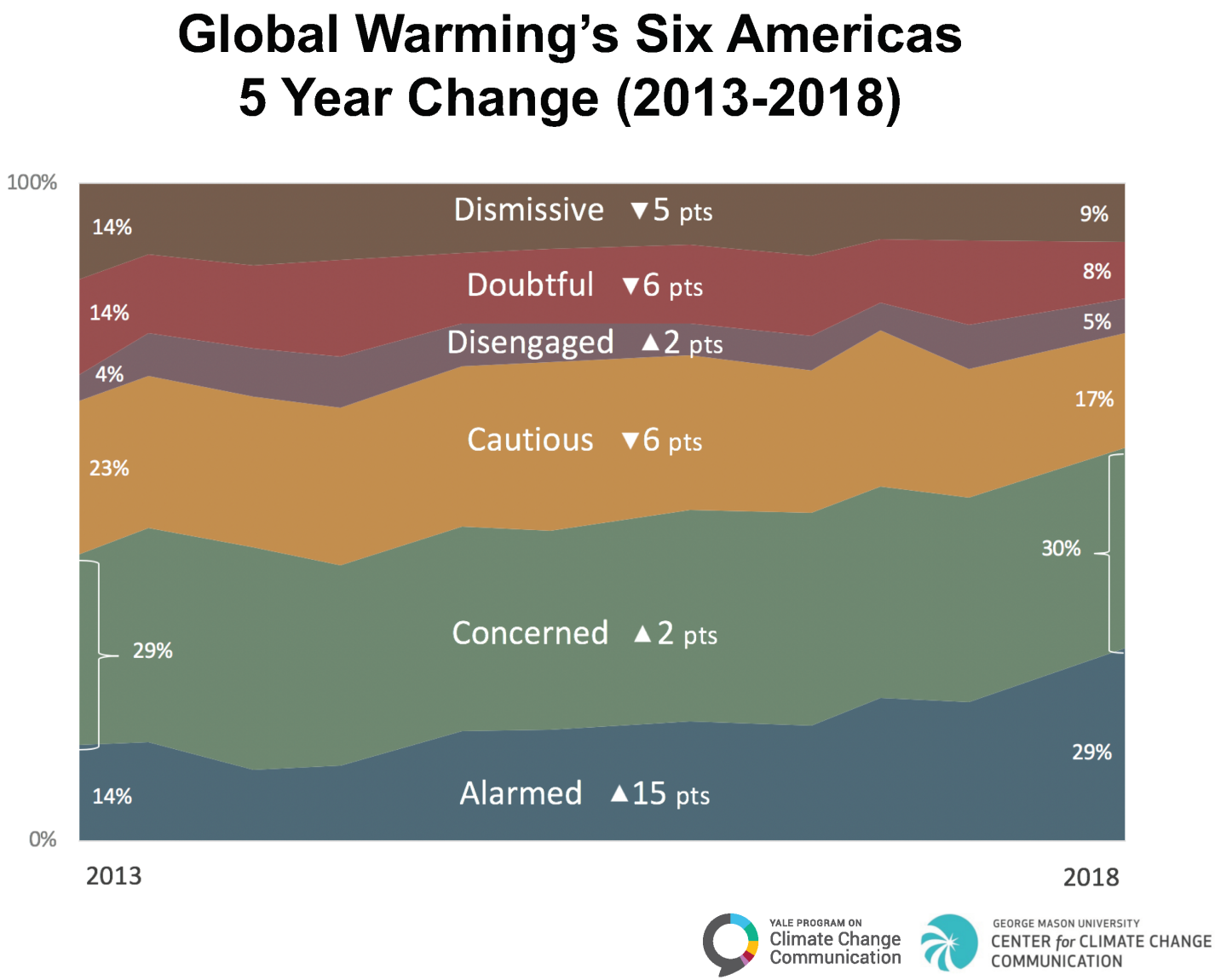
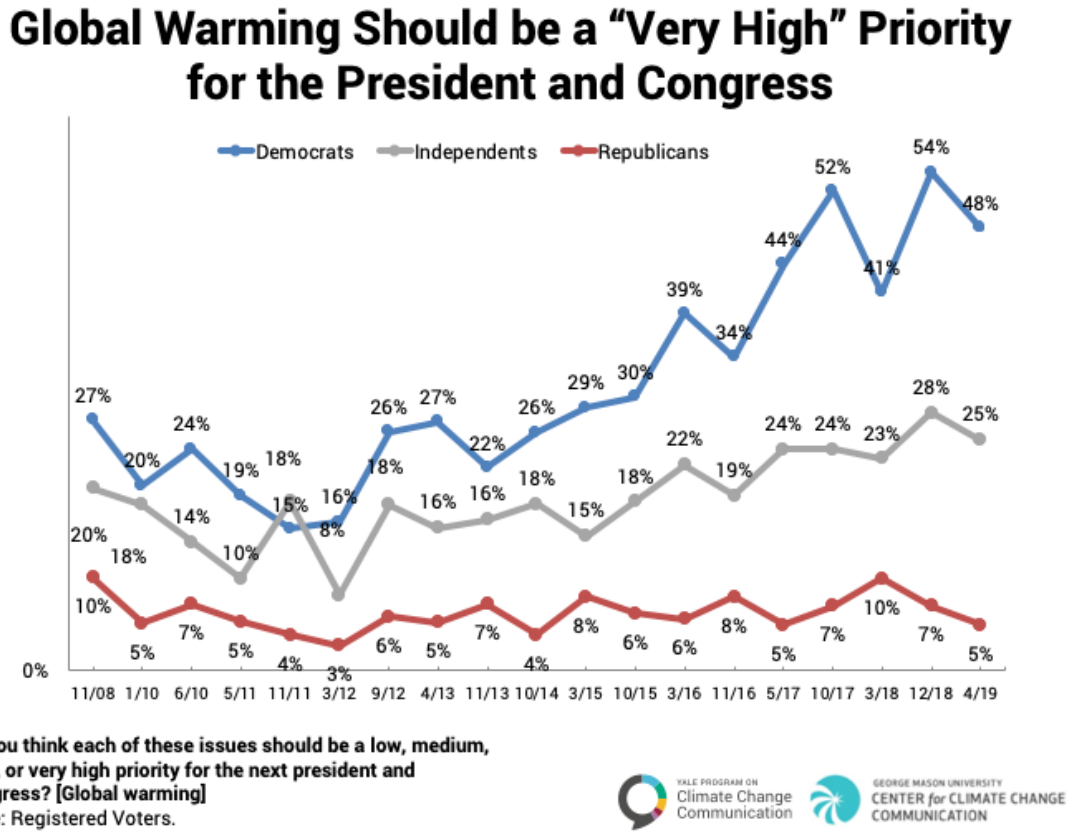


Americans increasingly think the government should prioritize climate change



Americans are prioritizing climate change in their voting

Most Liberal Democrats Say Global Warming Will Be a Very Important Issue When Deciding For Whom to Vote in the 2020 Presidential Election

Rank by "very important"	All Registered Voters	Liberal Democrats	Moderate/Conservative Democrats	Liberal/Moderate Republicans	Conservative Republicans
1	Healthcare	Healthcare	Healthcare	The economy	Border security
2	The economy	Environmental protection	The economy	Healthcare	The economy
3	Social Security	*Global warming*	Education	Social Security	Immigration reform
4	Gun policies	Income gap	Social Security	Terrorism	Terrorism
5	Education	Education	Environmental protection	Border security	Abortion
6	Terrorism	Developing clean energy	Income gap	Immigration reform	Healthcare
7	Immigration reform	Gun policies	Gun policies	Gun policies	Gun policies
8	Federal budget deficit	Russian election interference	*Global warming*	Education	Federal budget deficit
9	Environmental protection	Social security	Russian election interference	Federal budget deficit	Social Security
10	Tax reform	The economy	Federal budget deficit	Tax reform	Tax reform
11	Improving roads, etc.	Race relations	Developing clean energy	Improving roads, etc.	Foreign policy
12	Russian election interference	Disaster relief	Race relations	Energy independence	Education
13	Income gap	Abortion	Terrorism	Foreign policy	Improving roads, etc.
14	Border security	Improving roads, etc.	Improving roads, etc.	Environmental protection	Opioid crisis
15	Abortion	Federal budget deficit	Tax reform	Opioid crisis	Energy independence
16	Developing clean energy	Energy independence	Disaster relief	Disaster relief	International trade
17	*Global warming*	Tax reform	Criminal justice reform	Race relations	Russian election interference
18	Disaster relief	Terrorism	Immigration reform	Russian election interference	Criminal justice reform
19	Race relations	Campaign finance reform	Opioid crisis	Abortion	Disaster relief
20	Foreign policy	Foreign policy	Energy independence	Developing clean energy	War in Afghanistan
21	Energy independence	Immigration reform	Campaign finance reform	Income gap	Same-sex marriage
22	Opioid crisis	Same-sex marriage	Foreign policy	International trade	Legalizing marijuana
23	Criminal justice reform	Criminal justice reform	International trade	*Global warming*	Campaign finance reform
24	International trade	International trade	Legalizing marijuana	War in Afghanistan	Environmental protection
25	Campaign finance reform	Wall Street reform	Wall Street reform	Criminal justice reform	Income gap
26	Same-sex marriage	Opioid crisis	Abortion	Campaign finance reform	Developing clean energy
27	Legalizing marijuana	Legalizing marijuana	War in Afghanistan	Legalizing marijuana	Race relations
28	War in Afghanistan	War in Afghanistan	Border security	Same-sex marriage	Wall Street reform
29	Wall Street reform	Border security	Same-sex marriage	Wall Street reform	*Global warming*

In 2020, there will be an election to choose the U.S. president. As of today, how important will the following issues be to you when you decide who you will vote for in the 2020 Presidential election?

April 2019. Base: Registered American Voters.

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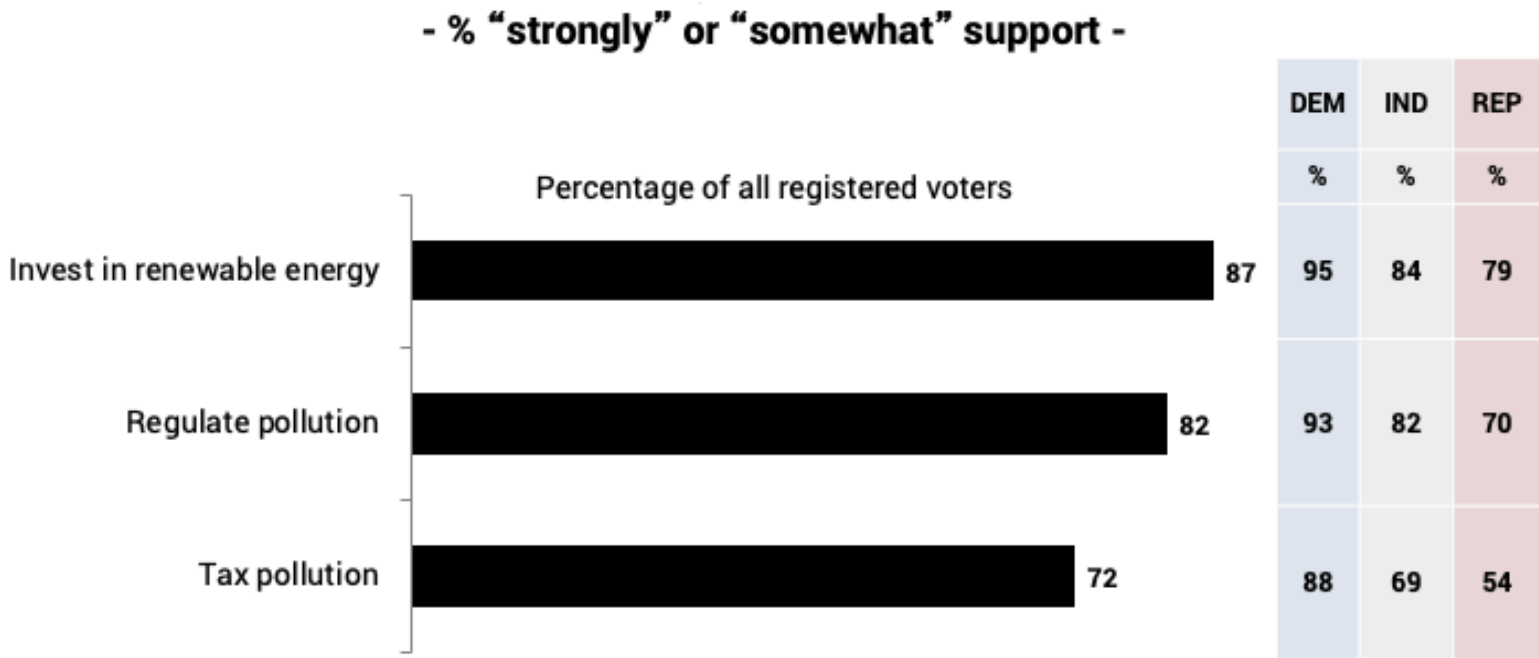
Americans support policy to address climate change



	DEM	IND	REP
	%	%	%
Invest in renewable energy	95	84	79
Regulate pollution	93	82	70
Tax pollution	88	69	54

Governments can reduce the pollution that causes global warming in three main ways. How much do you support or oppose each of these approaches to reducing the pollution that causes global warming [order of presentation randomized]?
1. Regulate pollution (legally require companies to limit the amount of pollution they emit)
2. Tax pollution (require companies to pay a tax on the pollution they emit, which encourages them to reduce their emissions)
3. Invest in renewable energy research and infrastructure (which reduces pollution by making clean energy cheaper)

April 2019. Base: Registered American Voters.

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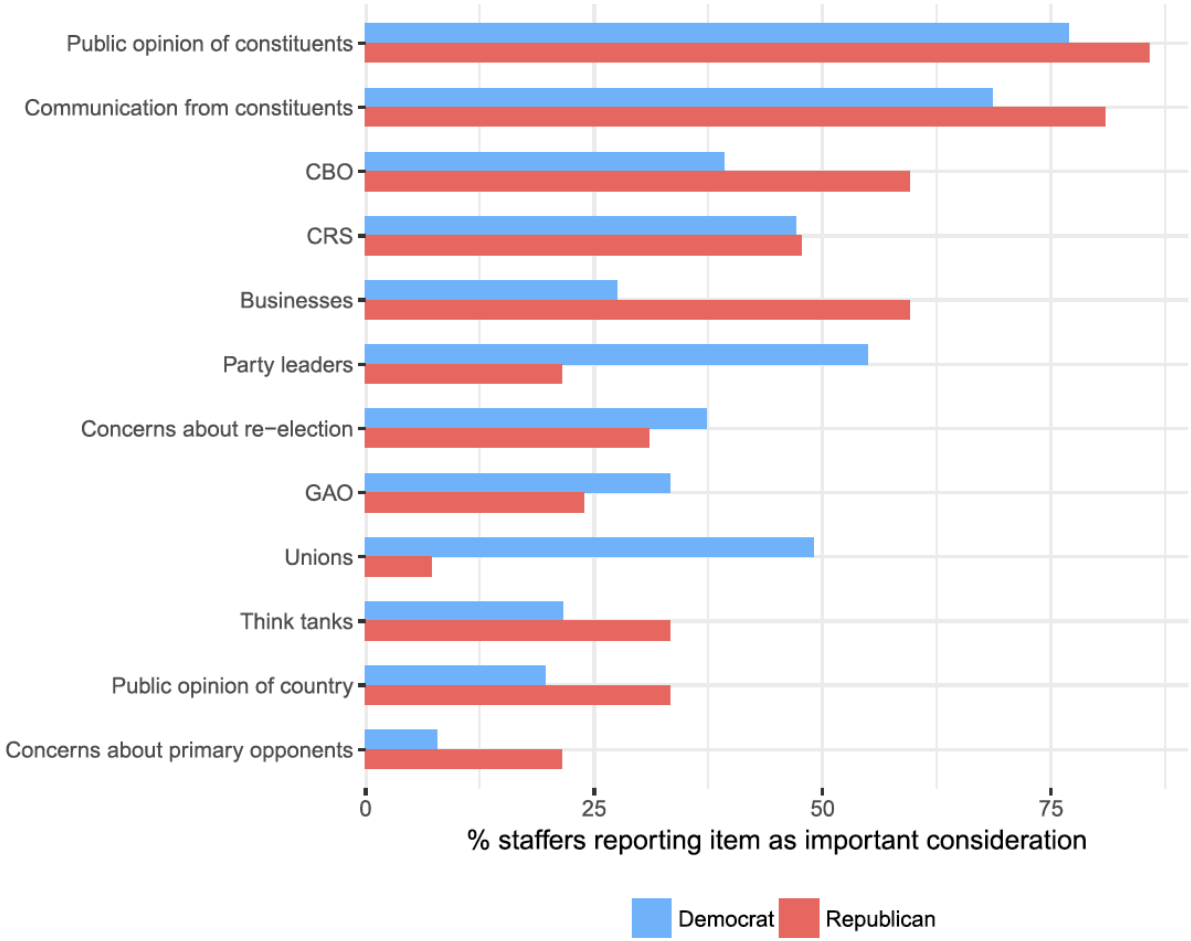
Public opinion matters to legislators (you)

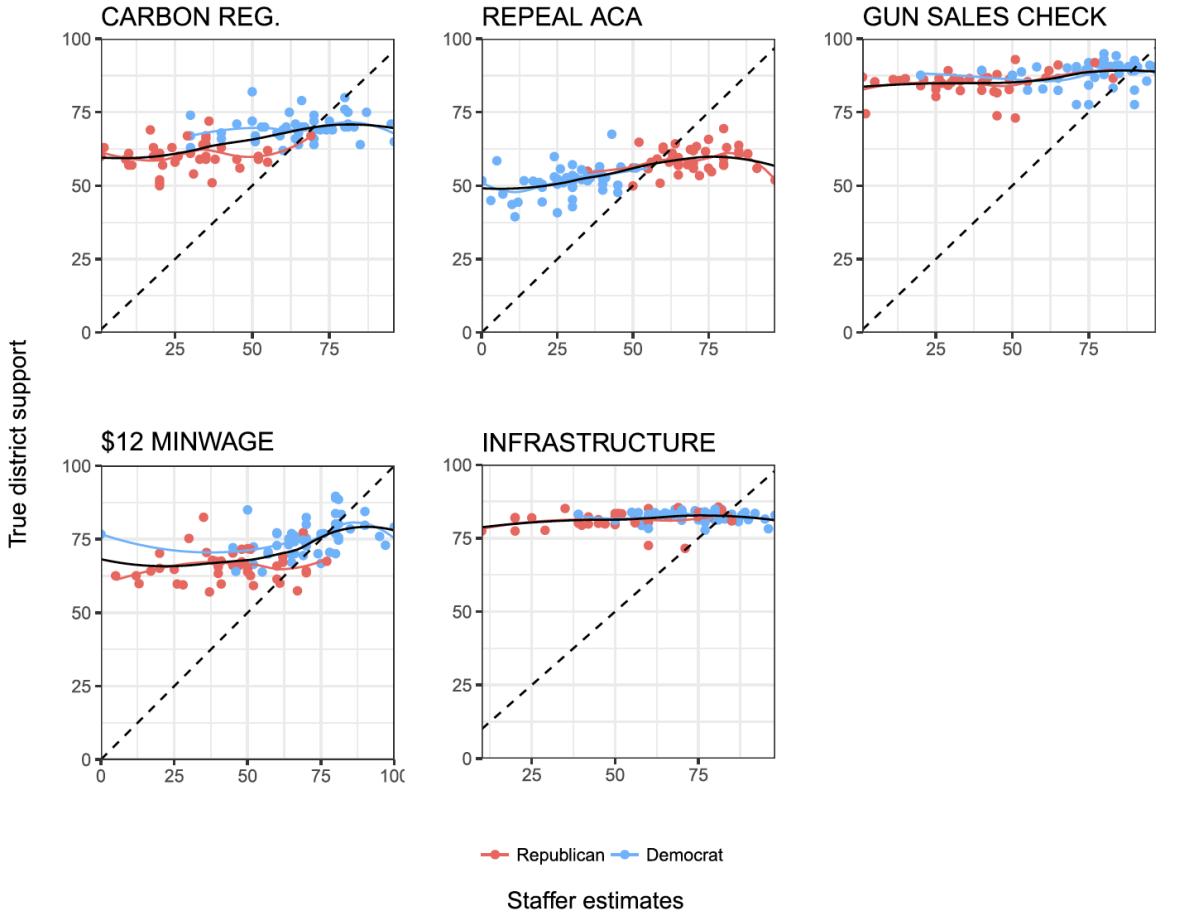
FIGURE 2. Considerations Staffers Reported as Extremely or Very Important in Shaping Advice to Their Members, by Staffer Party



Hertel-Fernandez, Mildenberger, and Stokes 2019

Representatives underestimate support for climate policy

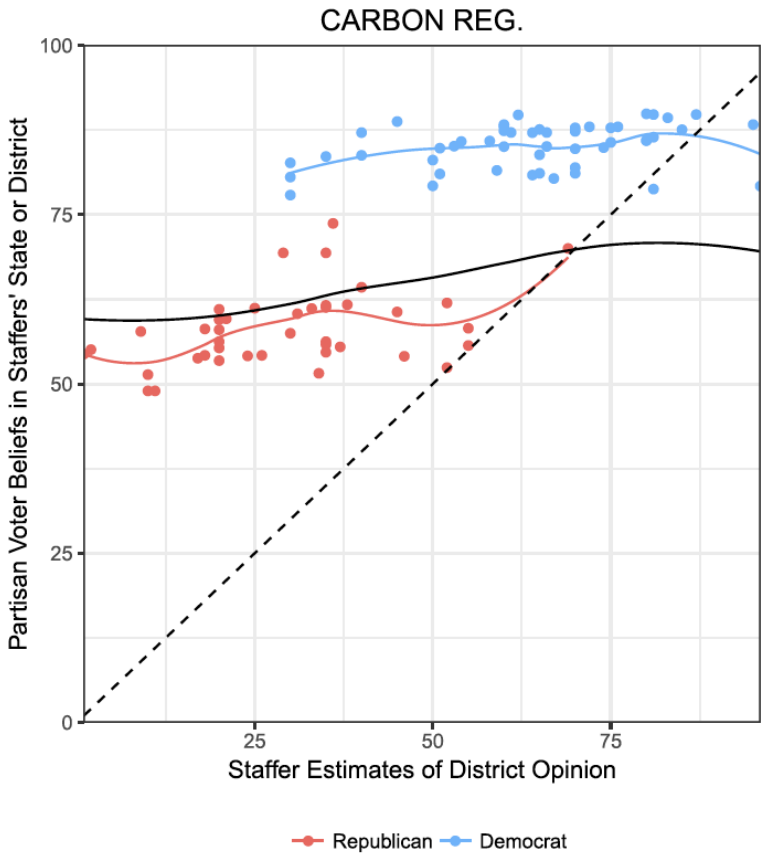
FIGURE 3. Comparing Staffer Perceptions of Constituent Preferences to True District-Level Preferences, by Issue Area



Hertel-Fernandez, Mildenberger, and Stokes 2019

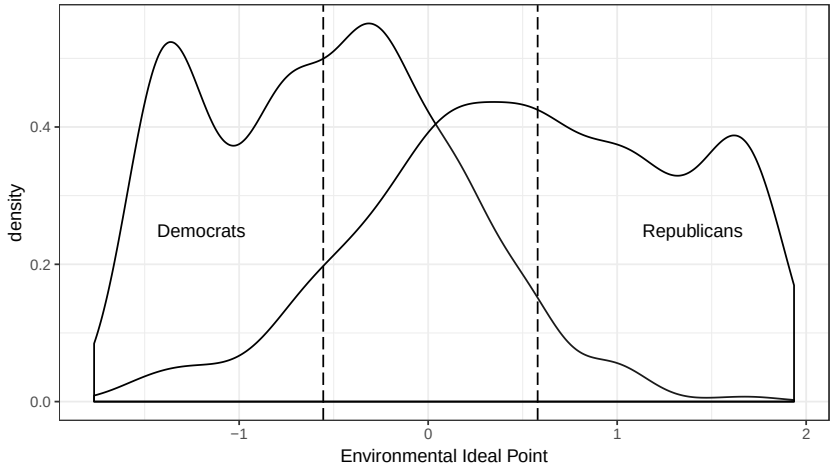
This isn't because legislators are responding to co-partisans

FIGURE 4. Staffer Perceptions of Constituent Preferences Against Distribution of Co-Partisan Constituent Preferences

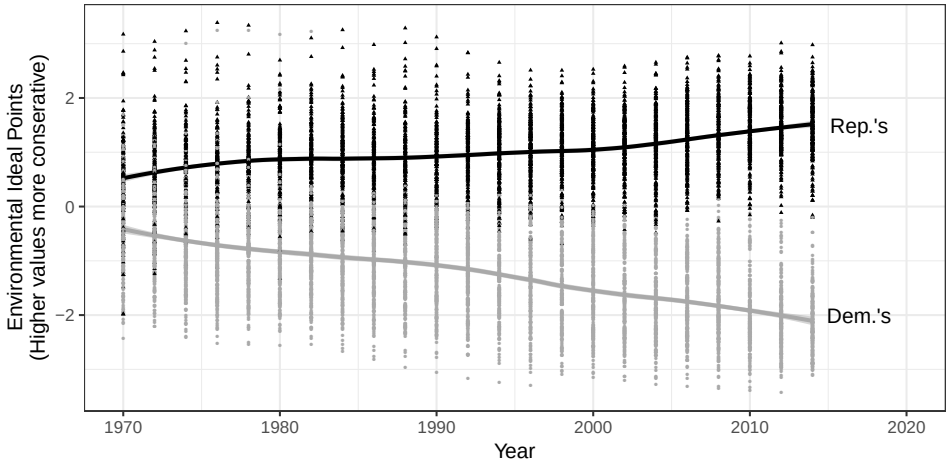


Hertel-Fernandez, Mildenberger, and Stokes 2019

The mismatch is reflected in legislative voting

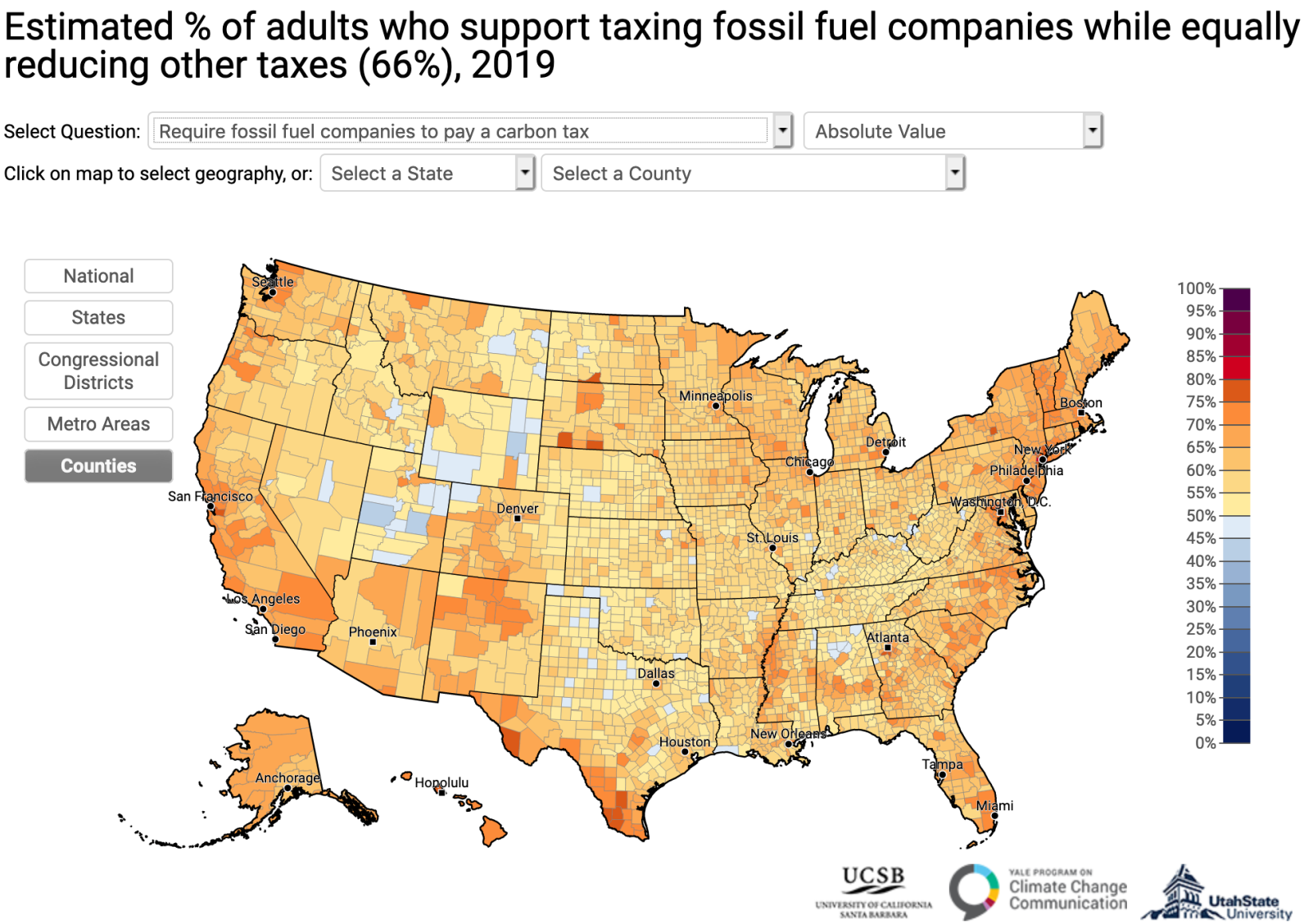


Public ideal points



House of Representatives ideal points

We have local-level estimates of public opinion



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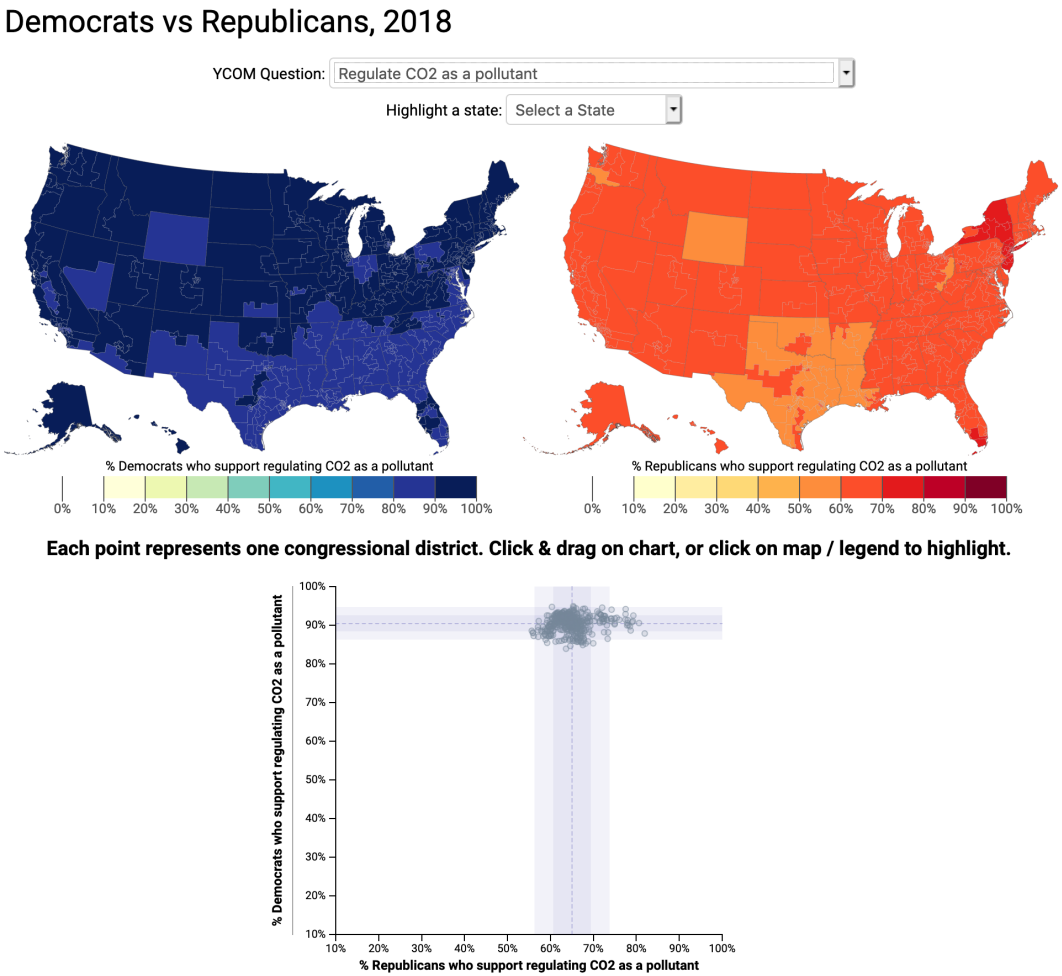
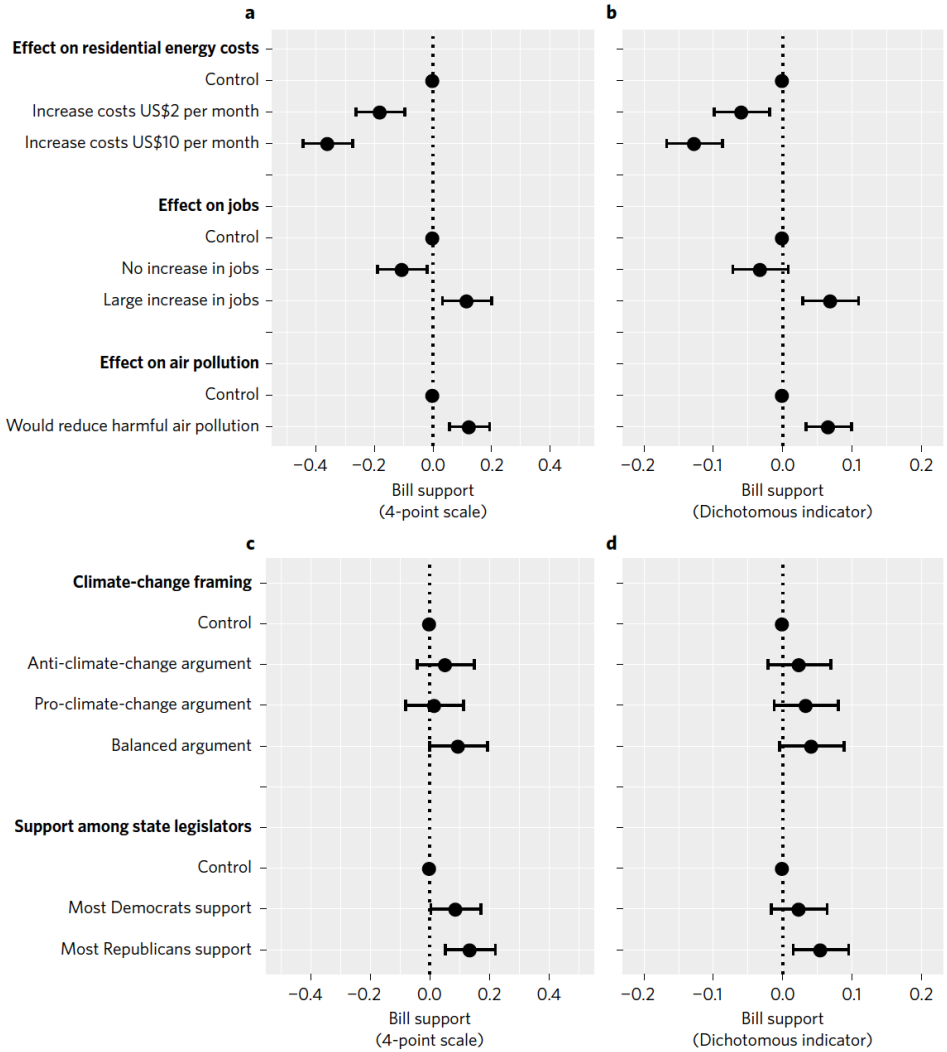
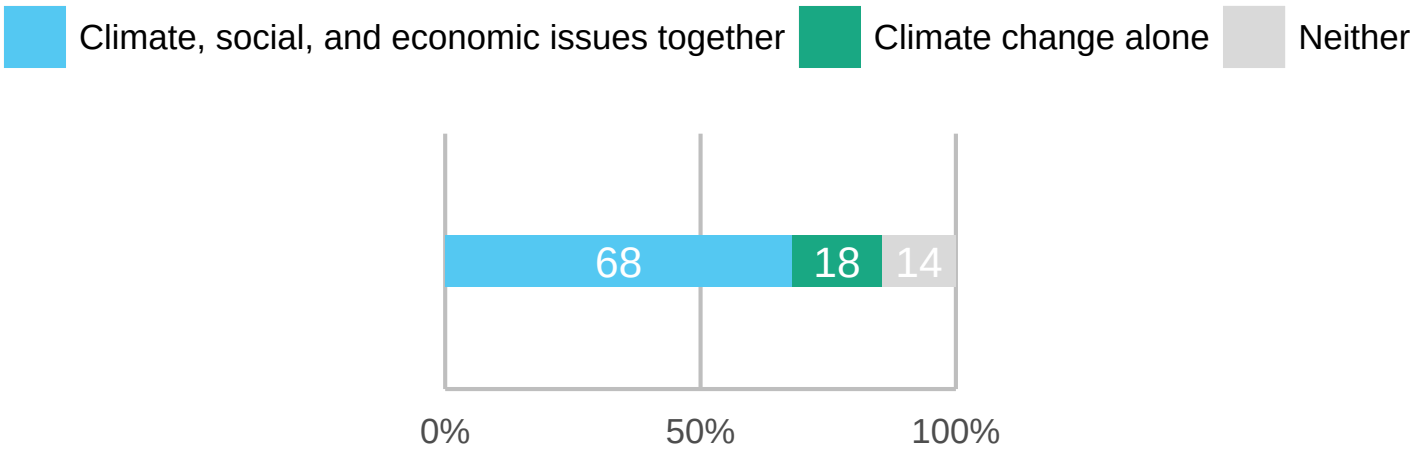


Economic framing influences public views



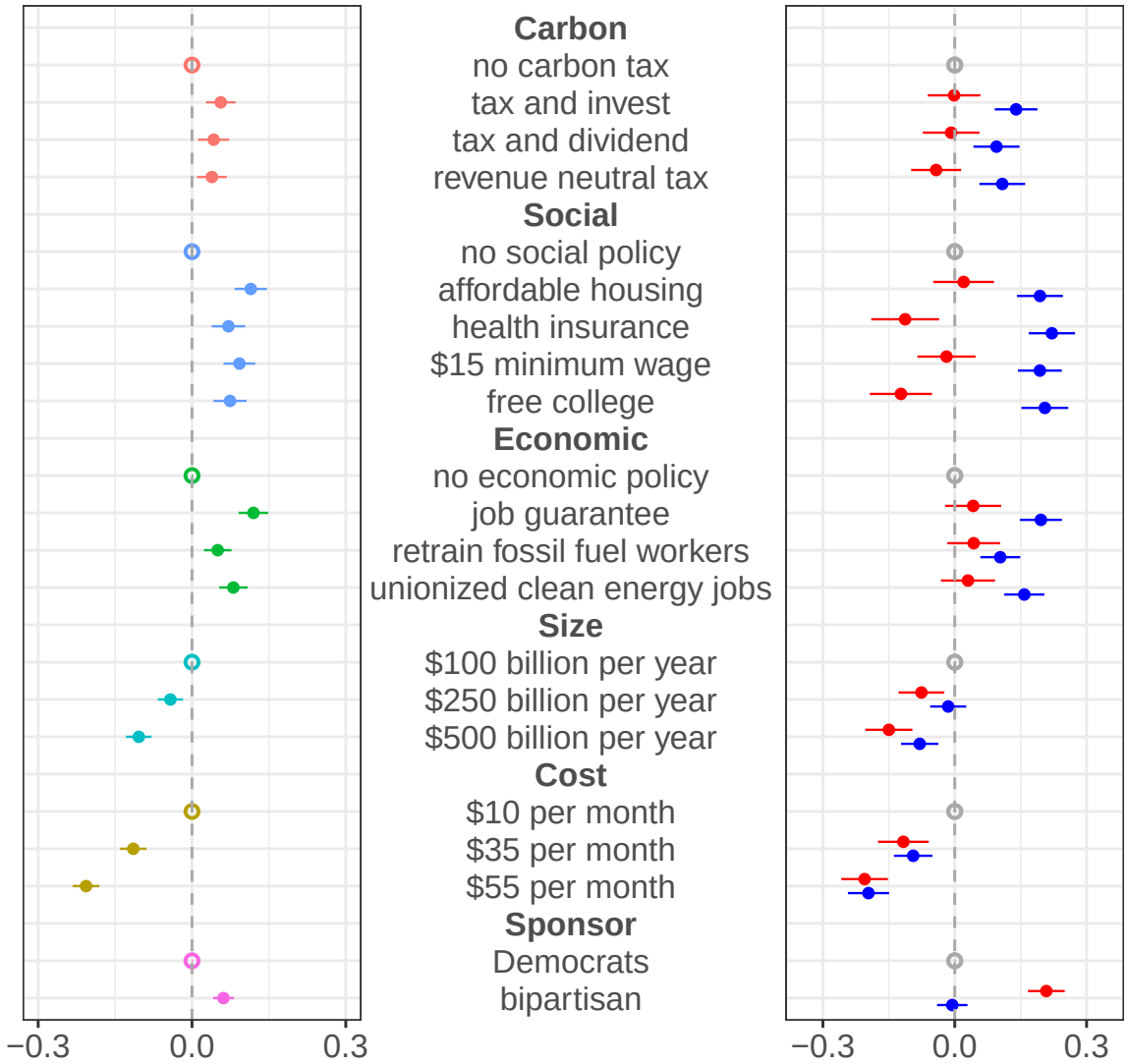
Stokes and Warshaw 2017

The public supports a comprehensive approach



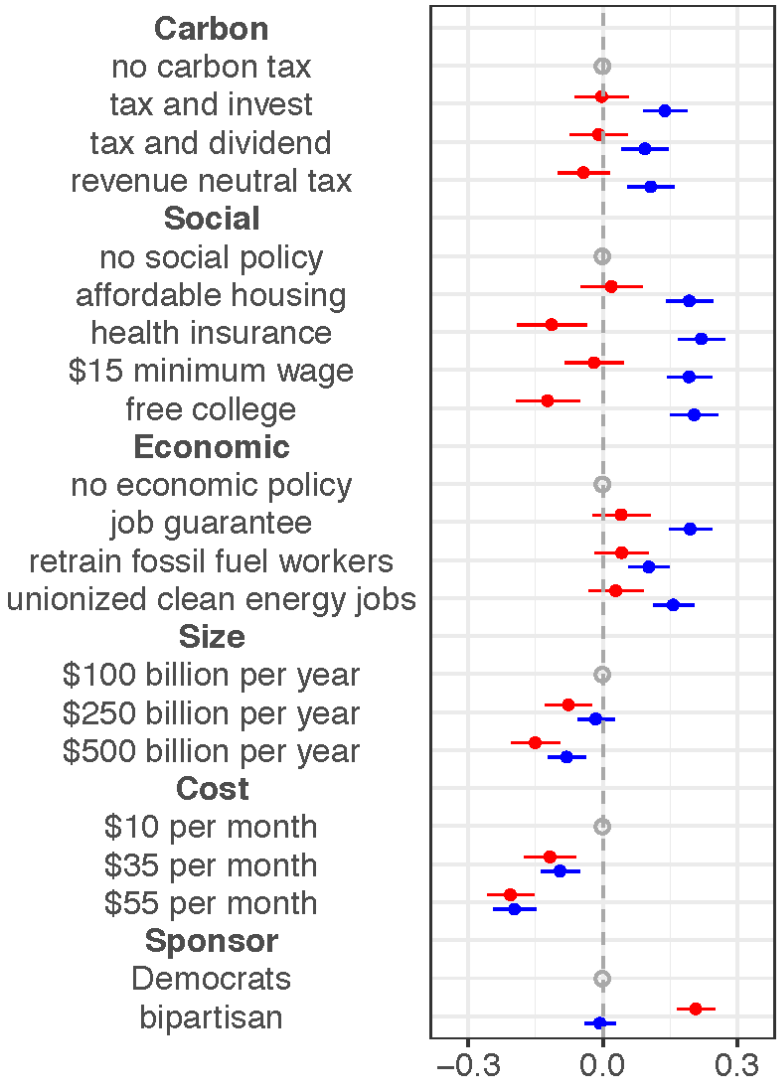
Some members of Congress say that the best way for the U.S. to solve climate change is to create government policies that focus on climate change alone. Others say that climate change policies should be a part of a broader program that also addresses social and economic issues such as jobs, education, and healthcare. Which of these two general approaches do you prefer? (Bergquist, Mildenberger, and Stokes 2019)

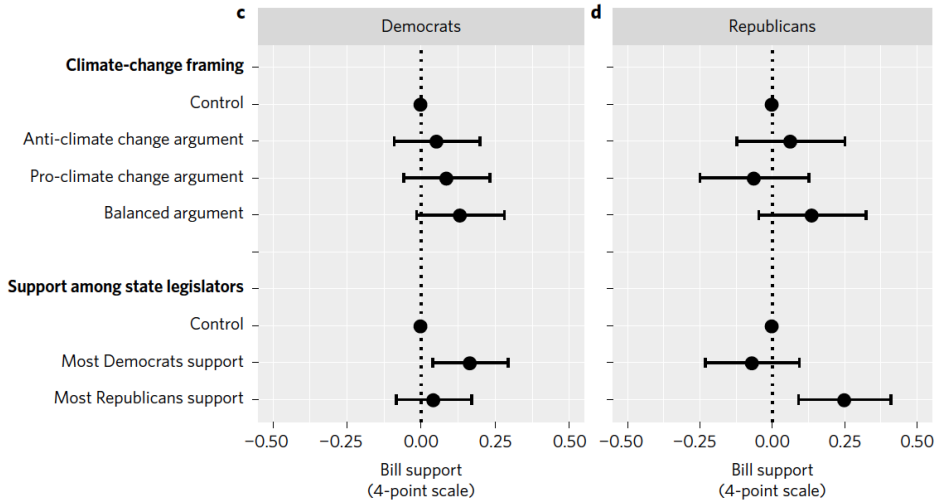
Not all bundles are winners



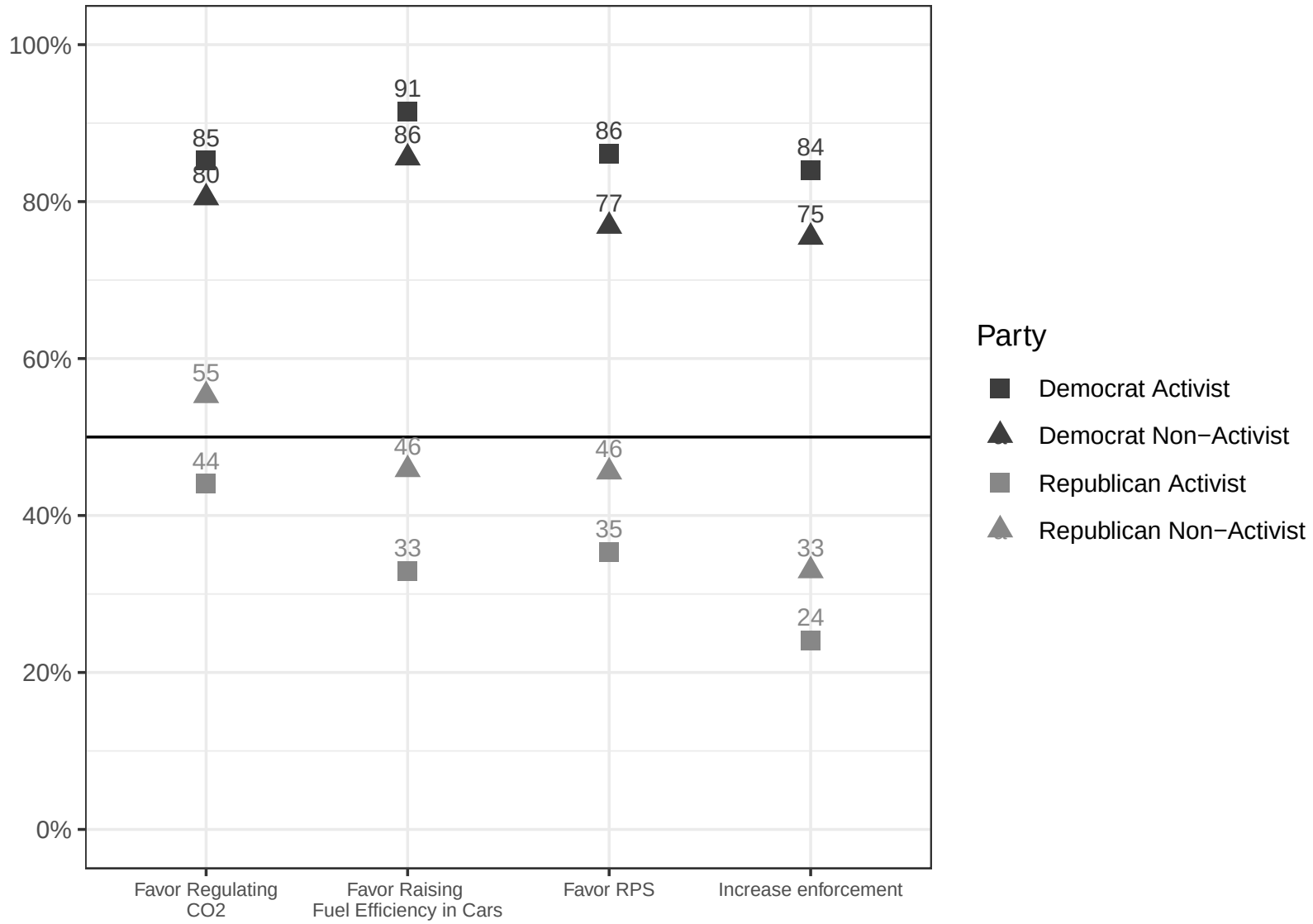
Bergquist, Mildenberger, and Stokes 2019

Bipartisanship matters, particularly for Republicans





Thank you and questions

Parrish Bergquist
parrish.bergquist@yale.edu
climatecommunication.yale.edu
climatechange@yale.edu

Differences by activism levels