

Political Orientation and Political Attitudes

Research Report: SPAS-008 | September 4, 2020

Background

In this report, we asked: (1) to what extent are peoples' political orientation consistent with their political party affiliation, and (2) how does political orientation correspond to political attitudes? To investigate this, we assessed attitudes towards abortion, climate change, and immigration among 600 self-identified liberals, moderates, and conservatives.

Methodology

Data Source

- Social and Political Attitudes Study (SPAS)
 - A nationally representative sample reflecting the U.S. adult population in terms of educational attainment, ethnicity, gender, and household income.

Participants

- 600 adults that identify as:
 1. Liberals: n = 159, 51% female, average age = 42.33 years
 2. Moderates: n = 241, 63% female, average age = 43.46 years
 3. Conservatives: n = 200, 39% female, average age = 52.16 years

Measures

1. To measure political orientation, respondents were asked, "When thinking about the following issues, where would you place yourself on the political continuum?" Participants were asked about their (a) financial/economic orientation and their (b) social/ cultural orientation.
 - If participants answered "liberal" *for both*, they were labeled "liberals." If they answered "moderate" or "conservative" *for both*, they were labeled "moderates," or "conservatives" respectively.
2. To measure political affiliation, respondents were asked to self-report which political group they identify with.
3. To measure political attitudes, respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the following statements:
 - "Abortion should always be the woman's choice."
 - "Global temperatures are rising because of human action."
 - "The United States government should open its borders to all immigrants in need."

Summary of Findings

1. The majority of liberals (85%) and moderates (61%) agreed that abortion should always be a woman's choice; only 38% of conservatives agreed.
2. Conservatives were mixed concerning climate change: 40% agreed that global temperatures are rising due to human actions, 43.5% disagreed. Liberals (89%) and moderates (74%) were much more likely to agree.
3. Relative to liberals, moderates and conservatives were less likely to agree that the US government should open its borders to all immigrants in need. Only 36% of moderates, and 15.5% of conservatives agreed with this statement compared to 69% of liberals.
4. Across topics, moderates were the most undecided; around one fifth of moderates neither agreed or disagreed with the political issues measured.

Take-home messages for SPAS-008

1. There seems to be much more variation in political orientation among democrats. For example, while 47% of self-identified democrats *also* reported being moderate or conservative, only 29% of self-identified republicans *also* reported being moderate or liberal.
 2. There seems to be substantial consistency between how people affiliated politically, and their attitudes on substantive issues.
 - a. Republicans, for example, tended to identify as conservative and tended to disagree that abortion should be a woman's choice, that climate change was being caused by human actions or that immigration should be open to all.
 - b. Interestingly, political non-affiliates tended to fall in between democrats and republicans. They tended to be politically moderate, were more similar to liberals on climate change and abortion, but more similar to conservatives on immigration.
- Have an interpretation of this you want to share? Email it to research@skeptic.com

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Suggested Citation

Saide, A., & McCaffree, K. (2020). Political Orientation and Political Attitudes. Skeptic Research Center, SPAS-008.

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Figure 1. Political Orientation and Political Affiliation

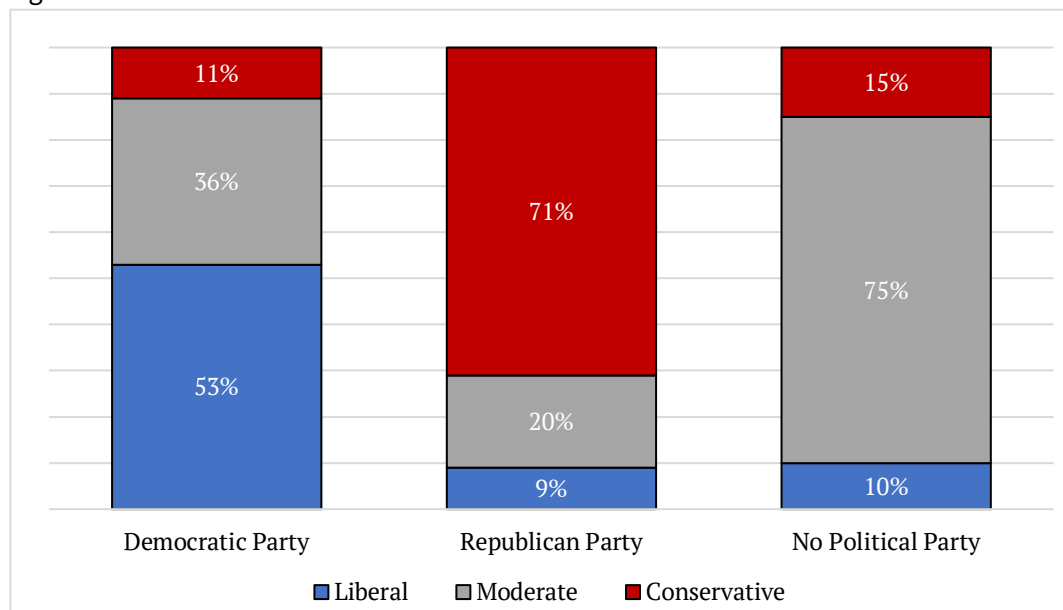
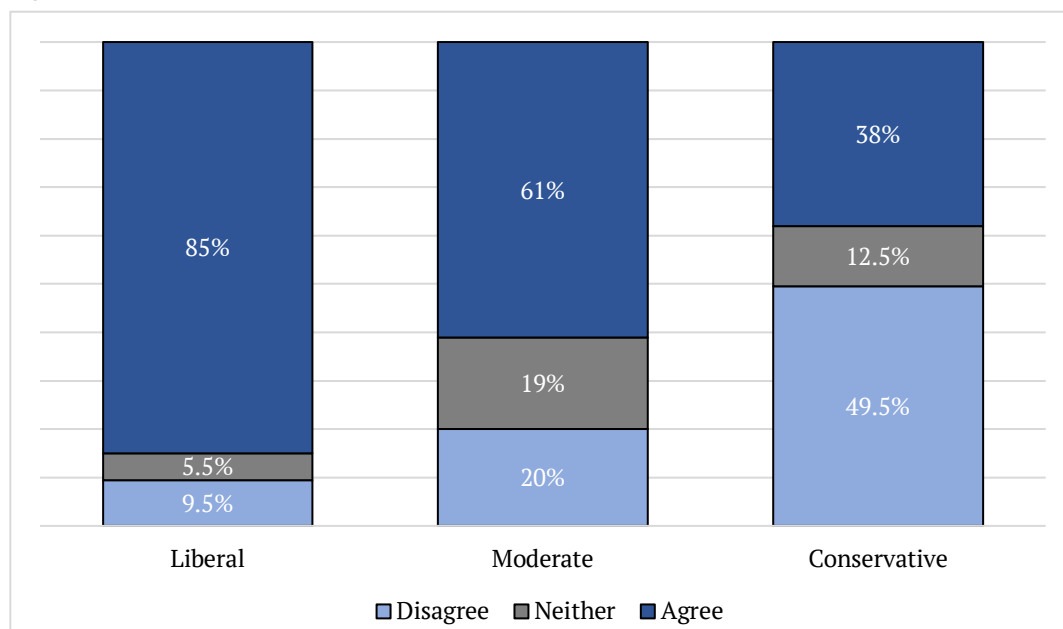


Figure 2. Political Orientation and Abortion



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Figure 3. Political Orientation and Climate Change

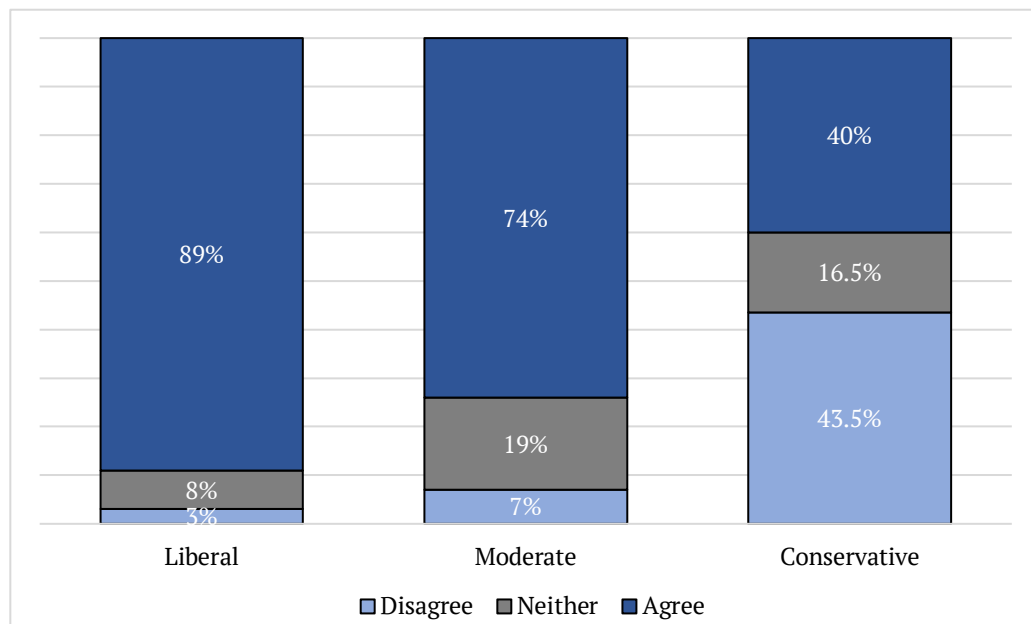
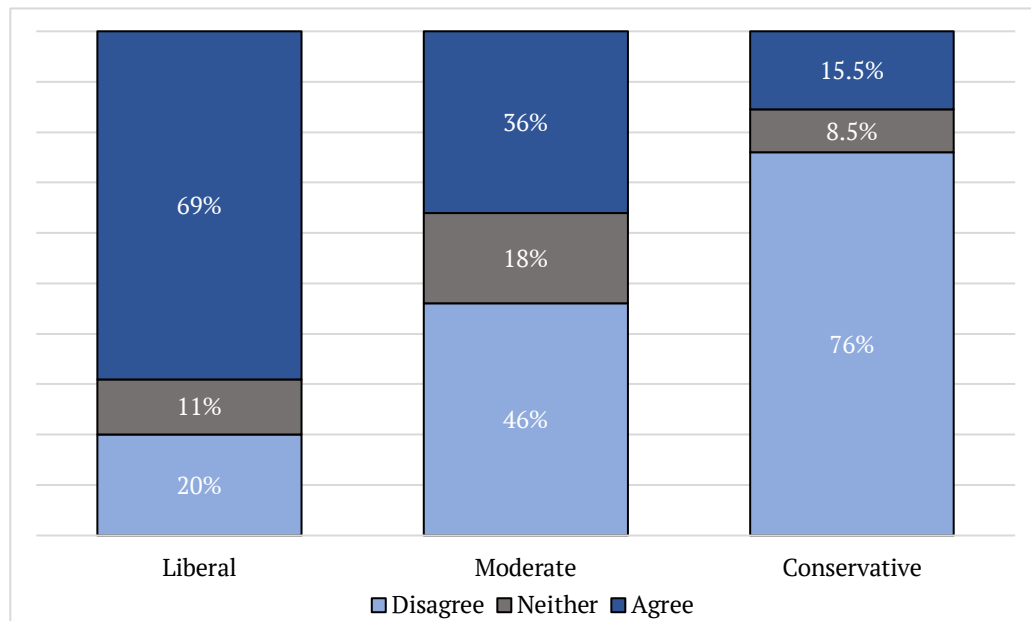


Figure 4. Political Orientation and Immigration



Note: For additional information (e.g., statistical output, full citations) not included in this document, view the supplemental page for this report.