

MISPERCEPTIONS, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND POLICY SUPPORT: EVIDENCE FROM A LARGE-SCALE SURVEY EXPERIMENT

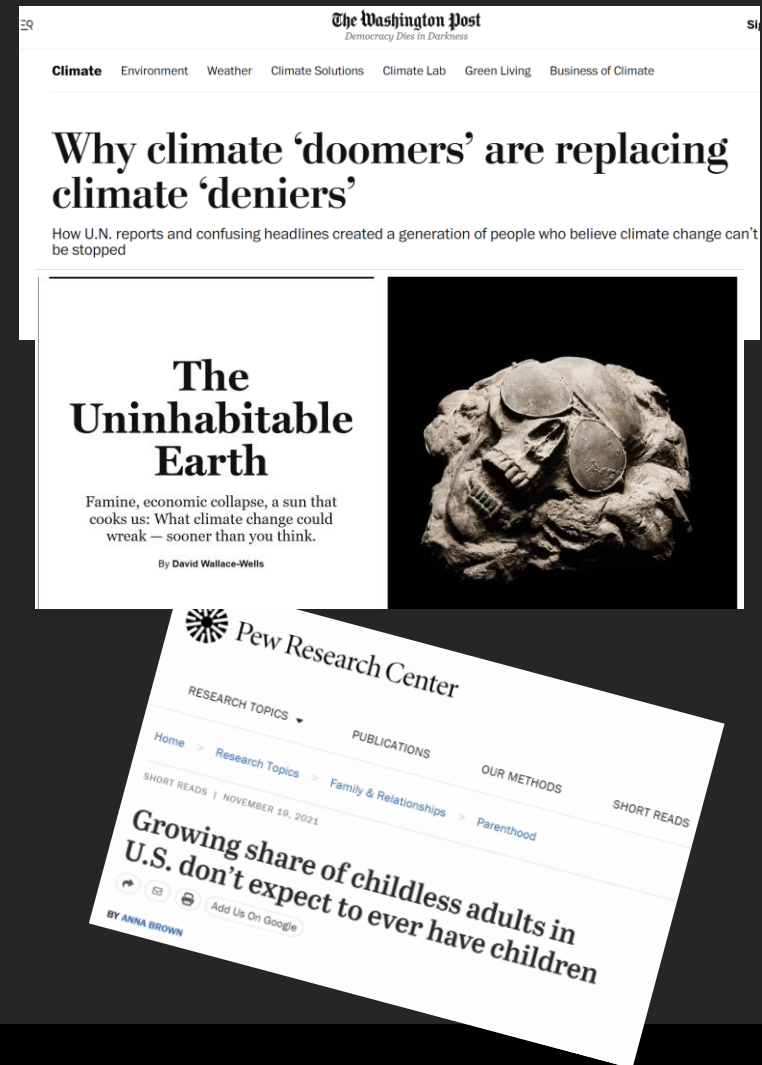
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Ongoing project

- Nationally representative survey of U.S. adults (N > 10,000; Nov–Dec 2025)
- The study and experimental design allows us to:
 - Elicit beliefs about scientific (IPCC) projections on long-term economic, demographic, and climate impacts
 - Compare these beliefs to IPCC projections; assess misperceptions and their relation to policy attitudes, private behavior, and emotions
 - Provide causal evidence on whether correcting misperceptions affects beliefs and attitudes (*preregistered 2 × 2 between-subjects information experiment*)
- Today: Very preliminary insights from a subsample (~6,000 respondents)

What started this project

- Internal discussions about policy attitudes of “doomers”: if societal collapse is seen as inevitable, people may endorse extreme policy responses or disengage entirely (*why would policy matter if it is already too late?*)
- Little is known about this group (more focus has been on climate deniers). But what does it mean to be a “doomer”?
- Dechezleprêtre et al. (2025) AER: ~60% of respondents in high-income countries (and ~40% in middle-income countries) believe it is likely that climate change will *cause the extinction of humankind if nothing is done to limit climate change*



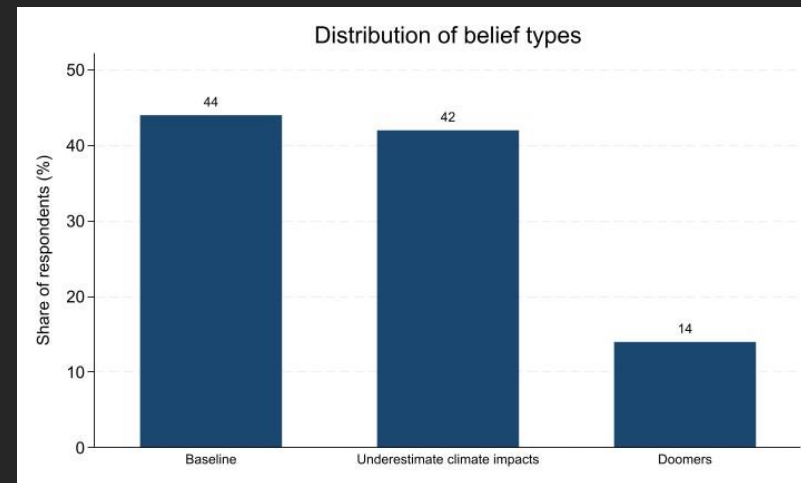
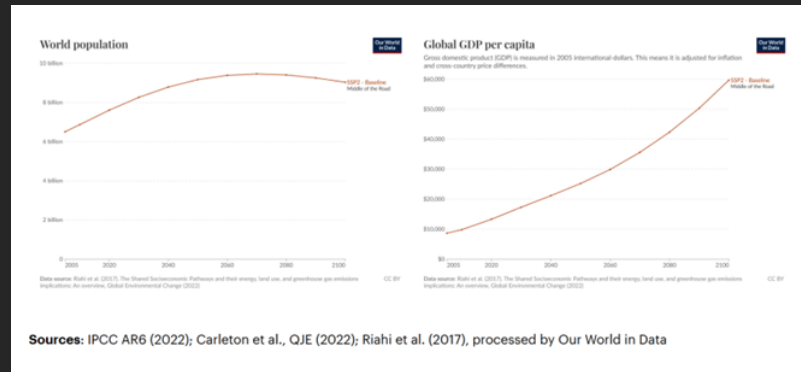
Preliminary insights – belief types

Classification of respondents:

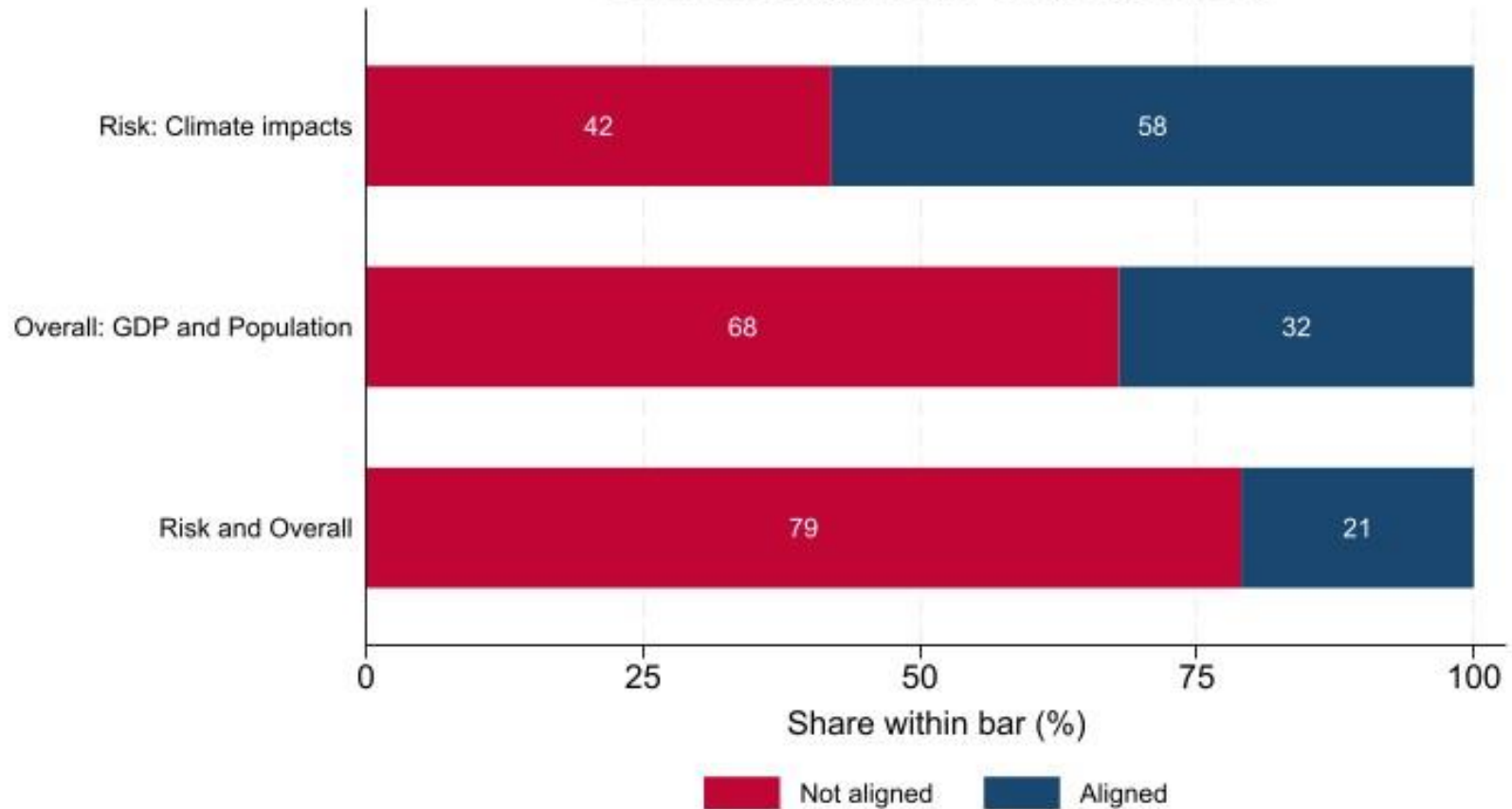
- Based on beliefs about what IPCC projections imply for 2100 (vs. today):
 - Climate impacts: projected to increase
 - Global development (SSP2 “middle-of-the-road”): larger population and higher GDP per capita

Three groups:

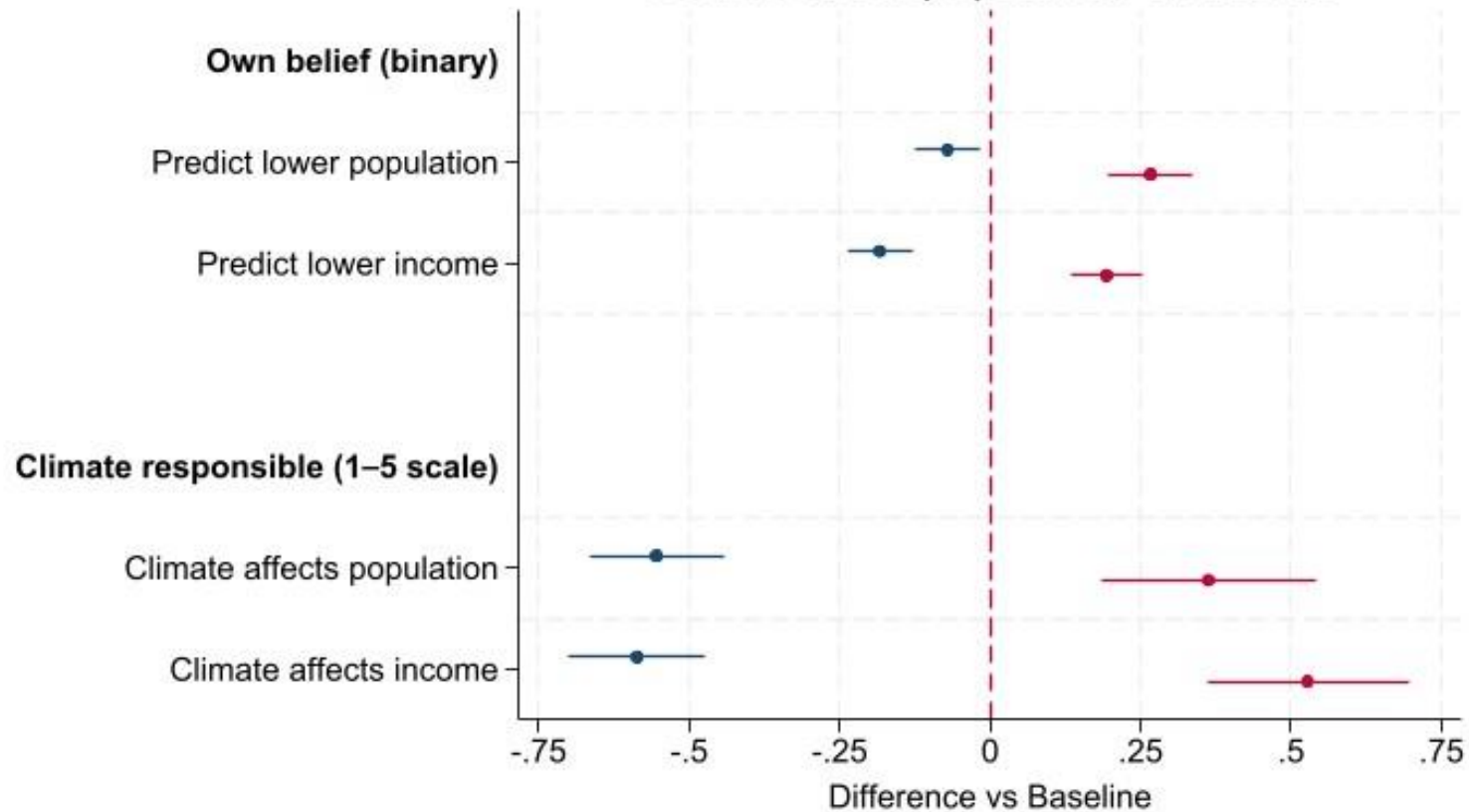
- Baseline group
 - Beliefs broadly consistent with IPCC/SSP2 projections
- Underestimators
 - Underestimate future climate impacts
- Doomers
 - Expect increased climate impacts **and**
 - Believe global GDP per capita and/or global population will *decrease a lot* by 2100



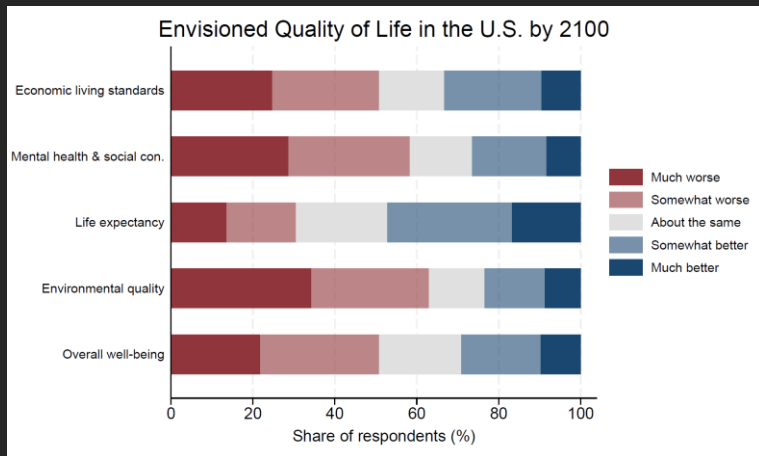
Science alignment on projections



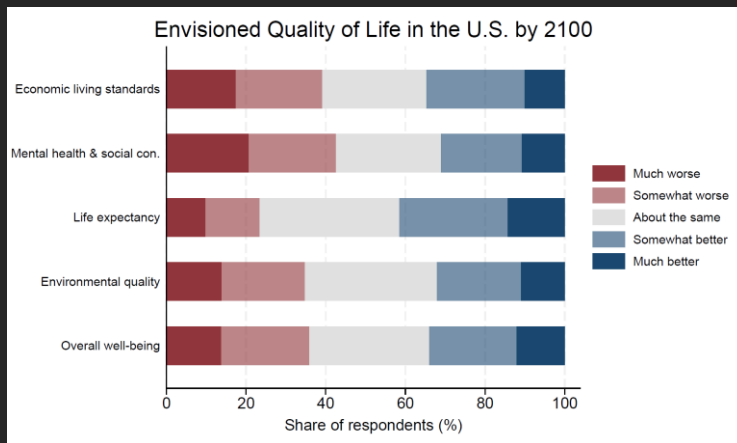
Beliefs about population & income



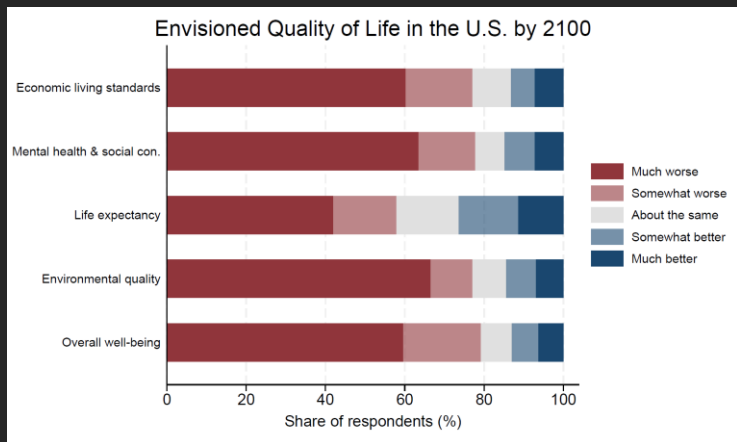
Baseline



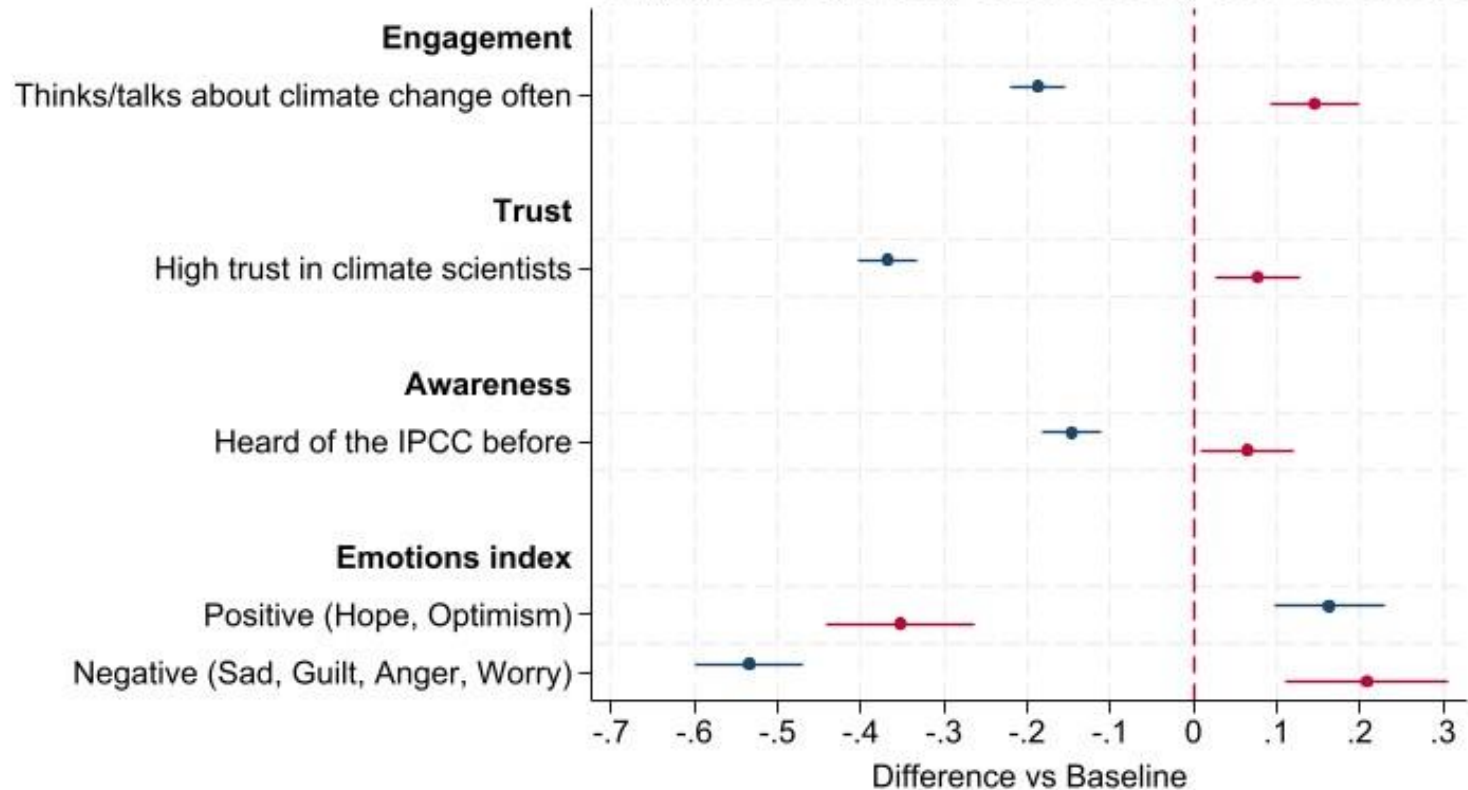
Underestimators



Doomers

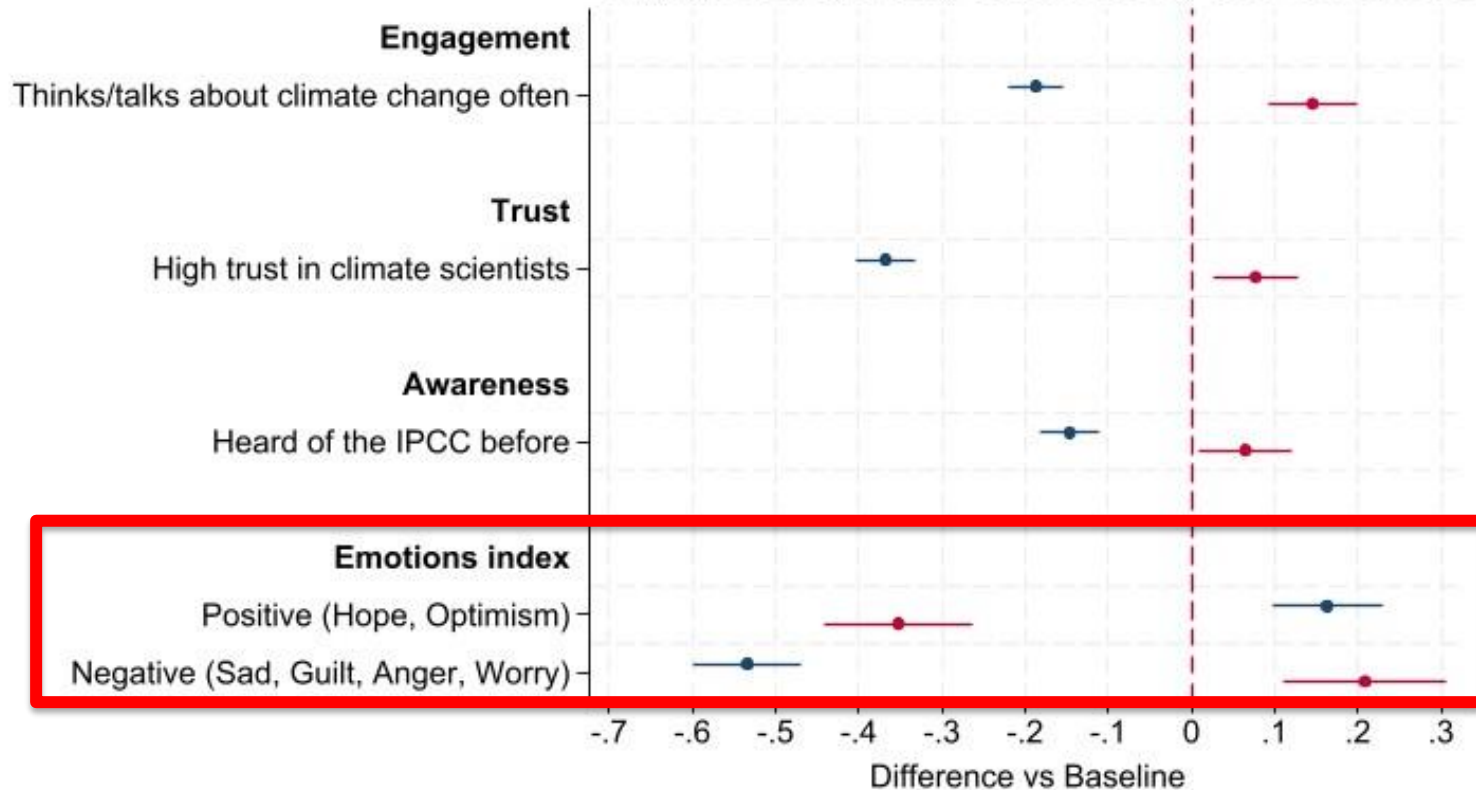


Engagement, trust, awareness, and emotions



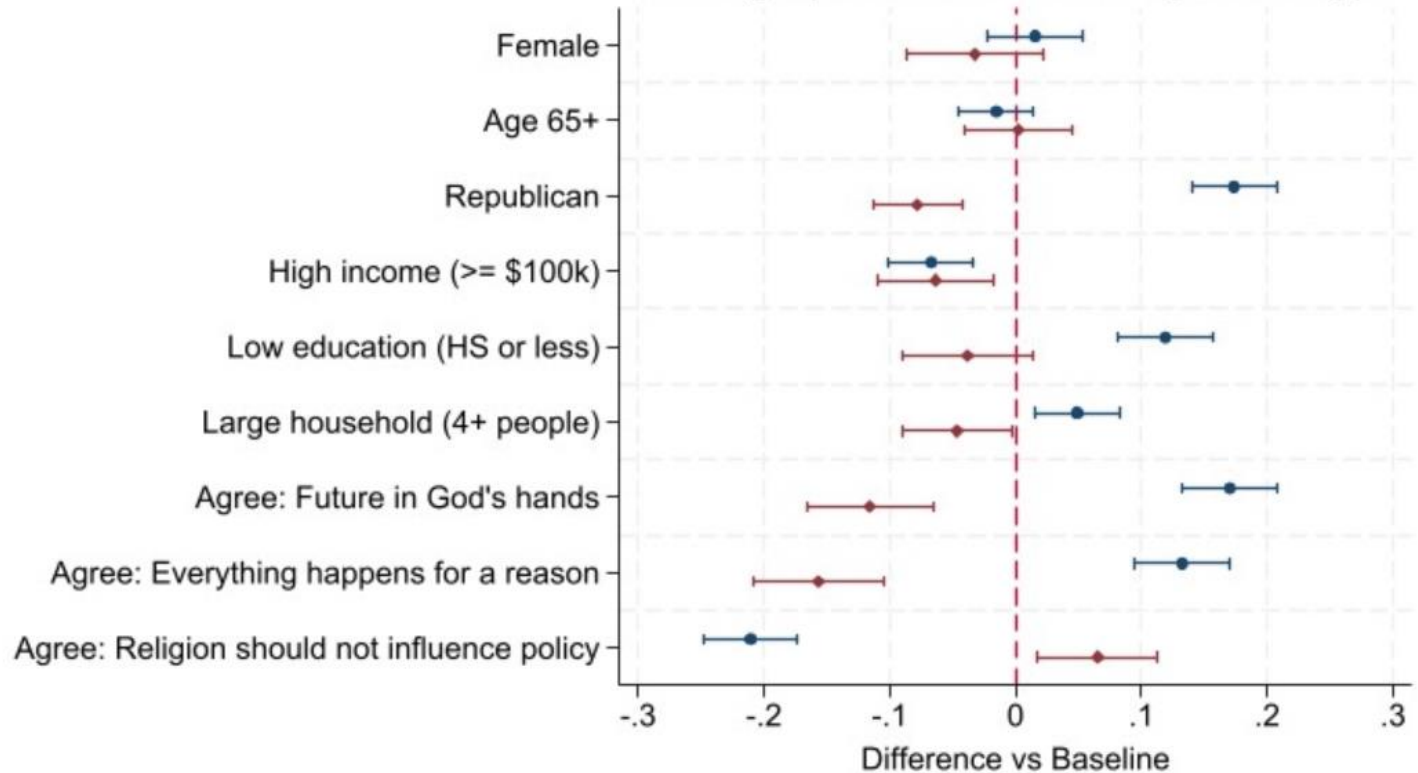
Blue markers denote respondents underestimators, while red markers denote doomers.

Engagement, trust, awareness, and emotions



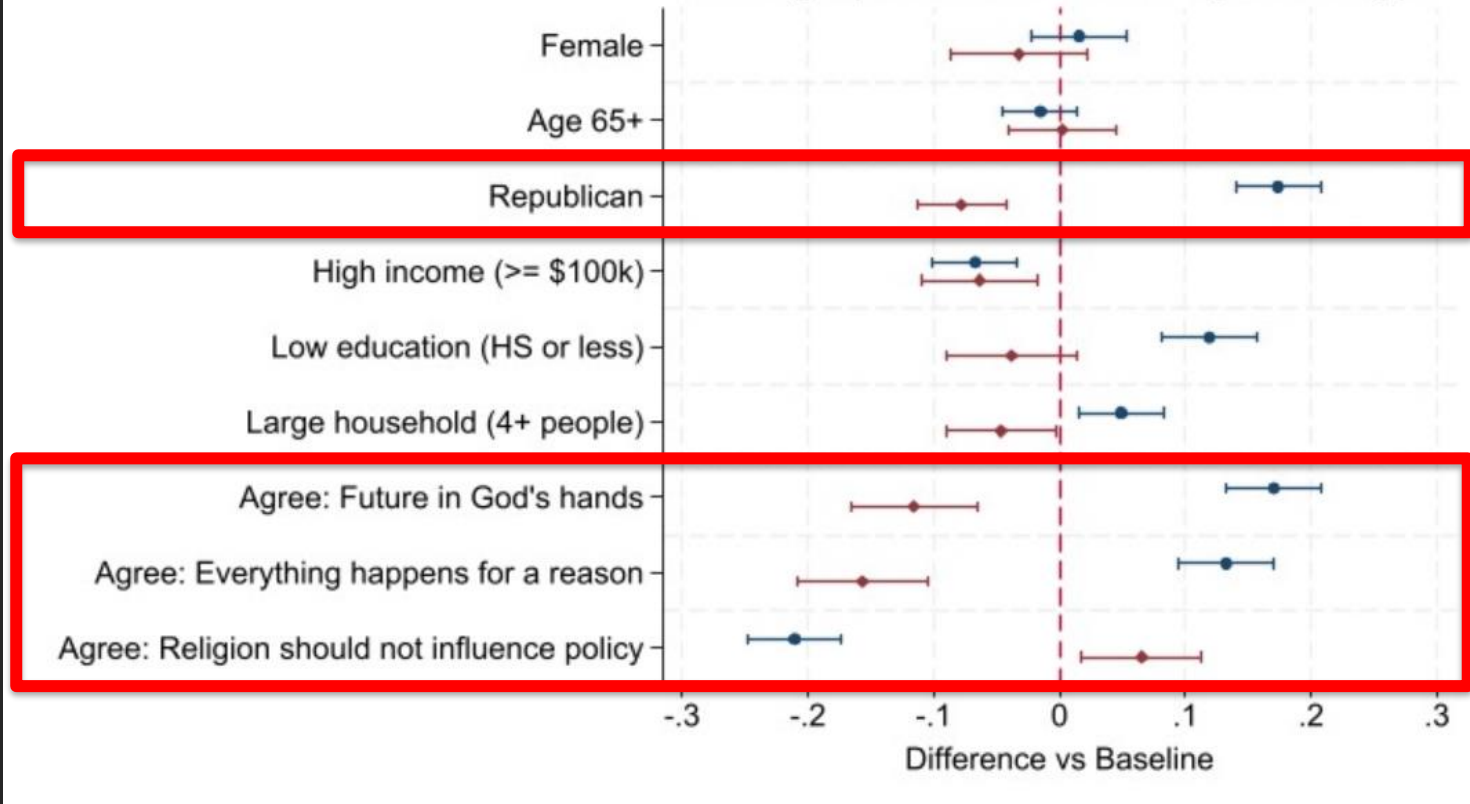
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Demographics and values by belief type



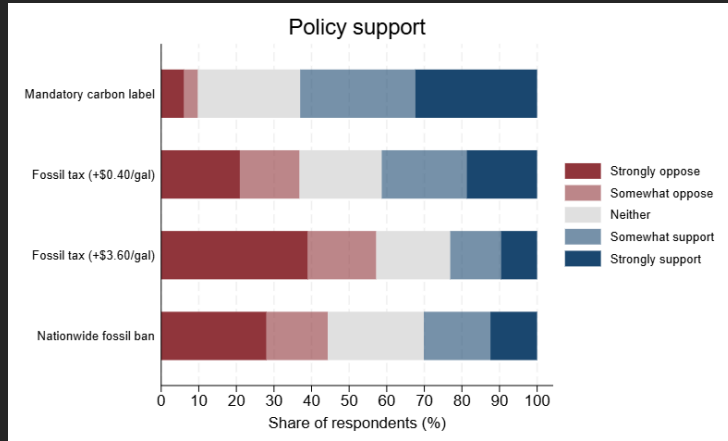
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Demographics and values by belief type

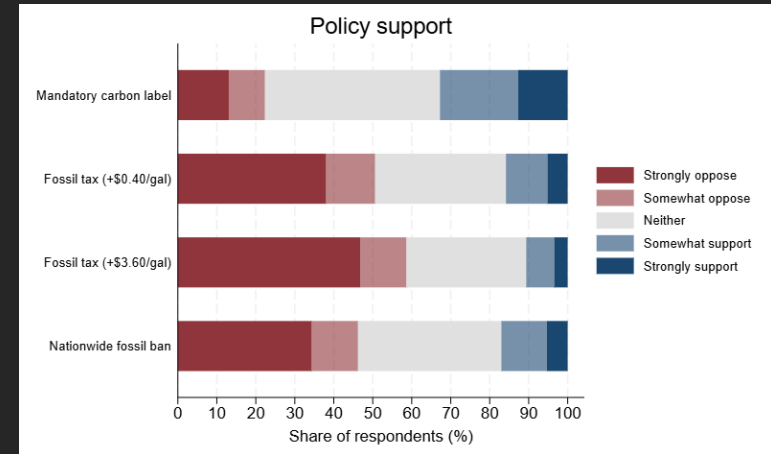


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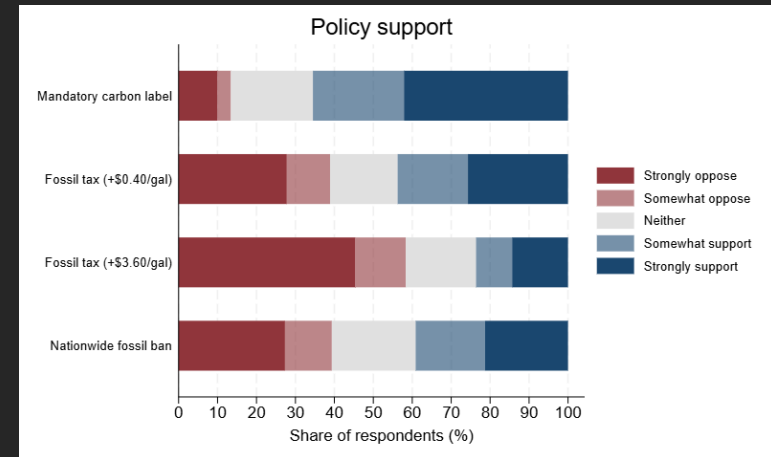
Baseline



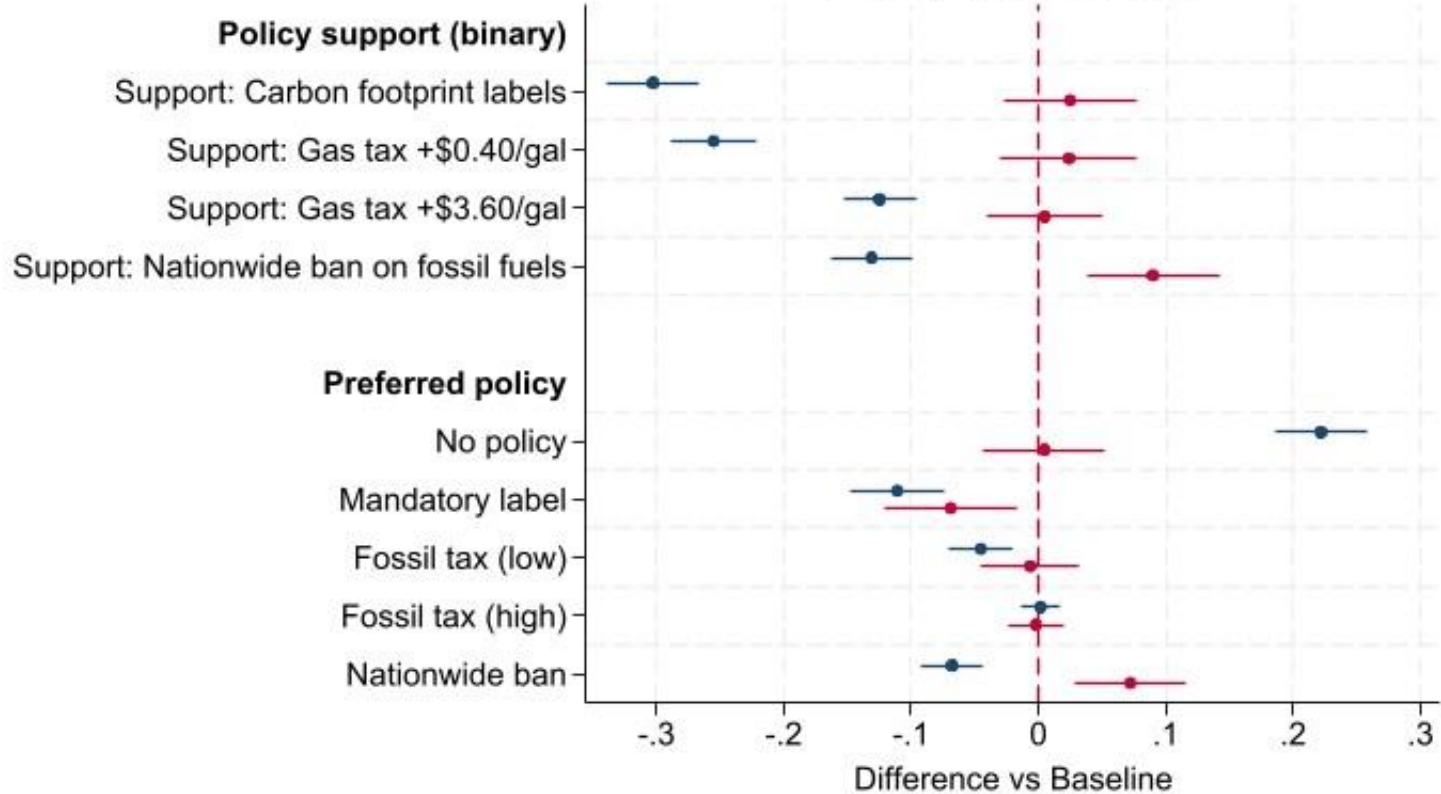
Underestimators



Doomers



Policy preferences



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Thanks for listening!