Do Political Conservatives Prefer Private Sector Action to Mitigate Climate Change?

An Experimental Examination

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KEY QUESTIONS

• Are political conservatives more receptive to private sector climate policies?
  • Message framing vs. choice of solution (e.g., solution aversion; Campbell & Kay, 2014)

• Why might conservatives prefer private climate policies?
  • Attitude, policy feasibility, and policy effectiveness beliefs

• Do conservatives who read about private climate policies report reduced support for public climate policies?
  • Negative spillover (e.g., Truelove et al., 2014)
STUDY DESIGN

- US adults (MTurk; \(N = 1,225\)) randomized to a message about:
  - (1) private sector policies for climate change
  - (2) public regulation policies (non-tax) for climate change
  - or (3) a public nationwide carbon tax policy

**Measured before and after:**
- Support for each of the three policies (completely oppose to completely support)
- Support for reducing carbon emissions (completely oppose to completely support)

**Measured after:**
- Attitude (bad to good), feasibility (completely infeasible to completely feasible), and effectiveness (completely ineffective to completely effective)
- Political ideology (very conservative to very liberal)
• Regardless of ideology, reading about private climate policies led to positive attitudes and effectiveness beliefs \((p = .003 \text{ and } .013)\)

• Conservatives who read about private climate policies found them particularly feasible \((p = .009)\)

• Conservatives did not show decreased support for regulation, but did show decreased support for a carbon tax \((p = .034)\)
CONCLUSIONS

• Conservatives prefer private sector climate policies

• Reading about private policies led to more positive attitudes and effectiveness beliefs, and for conservatives particularly positive feasibility beliefs

• Reading about private policies led to stronger support for private policies, and for conservatives this was linked to stronger mitigation support

• Mixed evidence whether reading about private policies led conservatives to support public policies less