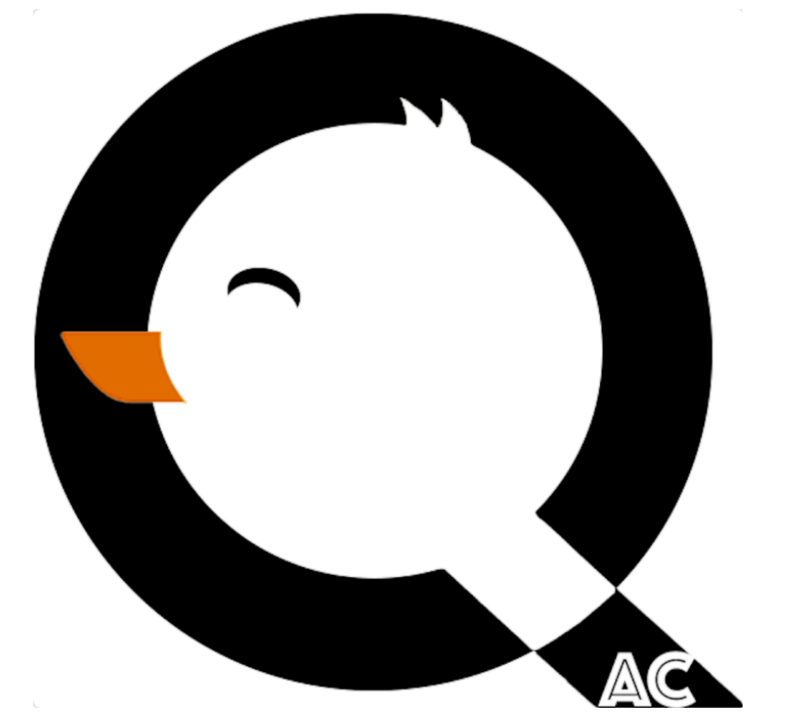




The Association Between Public Opinion on Environmental Spending And Environmental Regulation by Political Party



Xander Starobin, Applied Data Analysis, Wesleyan University

Introduction

- Environmental policy works through two main mechanisms: spending programs and regulatory programs. While connected mechanisms, the public may not view them the same way (Bergquist, P., Konisky, D. M., & Kotcher, J., 2020).
- Republicans tend to view environmental issues as less pressing than Democrats do (Haltinner, K., & Sarathchandra, D., 2023; McCright, A. M., & Dunlap, R. E., 2011).
- While much research has examined partisan views of environmental issues in general, less is known about public preferences for different *policy mechanisms*, and indeed how those preferences are related to party ID.

Research Questions

- What is the relationship between public opinion about federal spending on the environment and public opinion about federal environmental regulations?
- To what extent does the relationship between these two pieces of public opinion differ based on partisan identity?

Methods

Sample

- U.S. Citizens 18+ from all states and Washington D.C. were drawn from the 2024 American National Election Survey (ANES). $n = 5,483$
- ANES used a multi-stage stratified cluster sample to produce a nationally representative sample of U.S. Citizens.

Measures

- Party ID: participants received one of many possible survey questions (survey format-dependent); responses summarized into range from 1 (strong Democrat) to 7 (strong Republican).
- Environmental regulations: participants asked where their beliefs lie on a scale ranging from 1 (tougher regulations on businesses needed to protect the environment) to 7 (regulations to protect the environment already too much a burden on business).
- Environmental spending: participants asked "should federal spending on protecting the environment be increased, decreased, or kept the same?" Answers subsequently weighted by the question "should it be [increased / decreased] a lot or a little?" Responses summarized into a scale ranging from 1 (increased a lot) to 5 (decreased a lot).

Results

Univariate

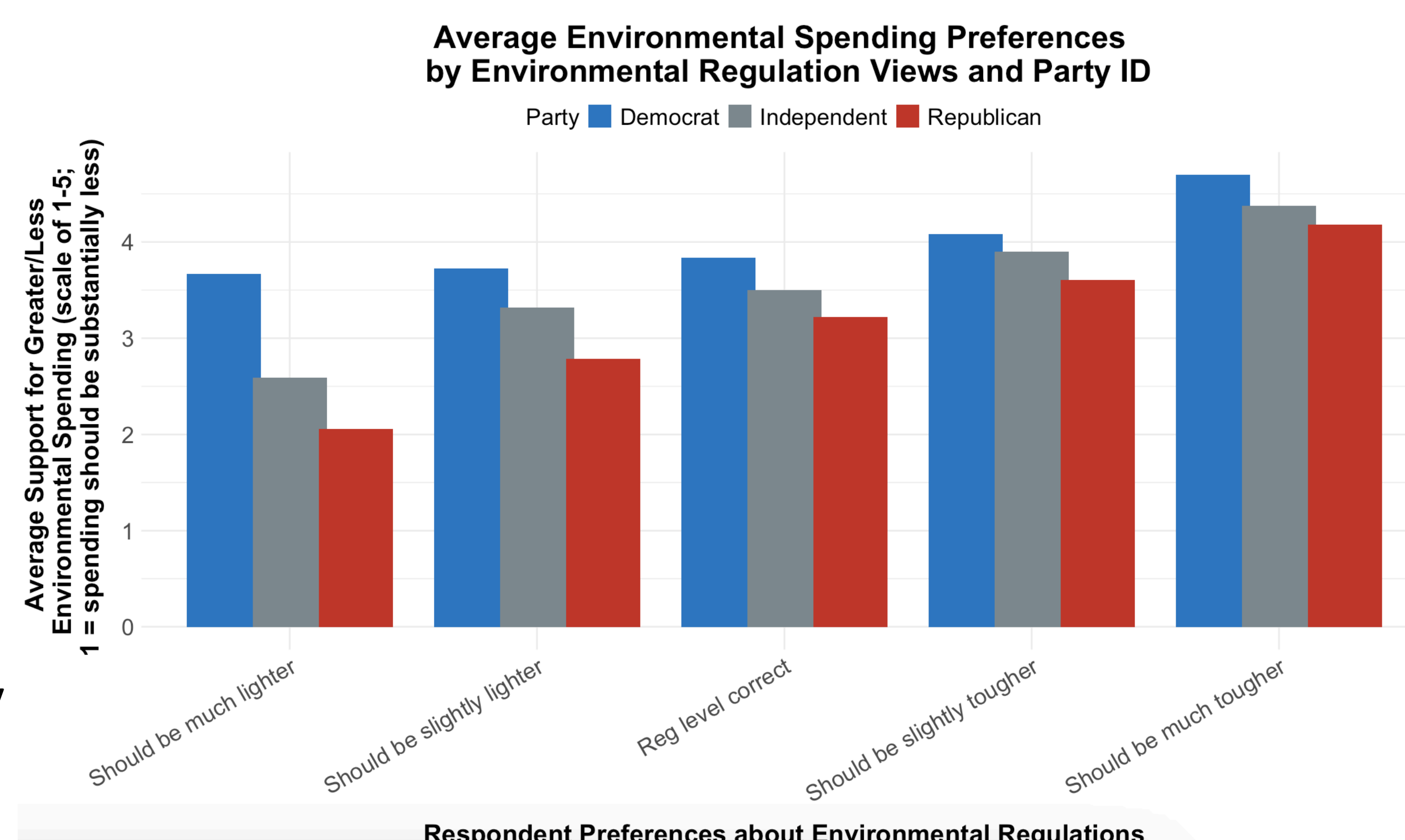
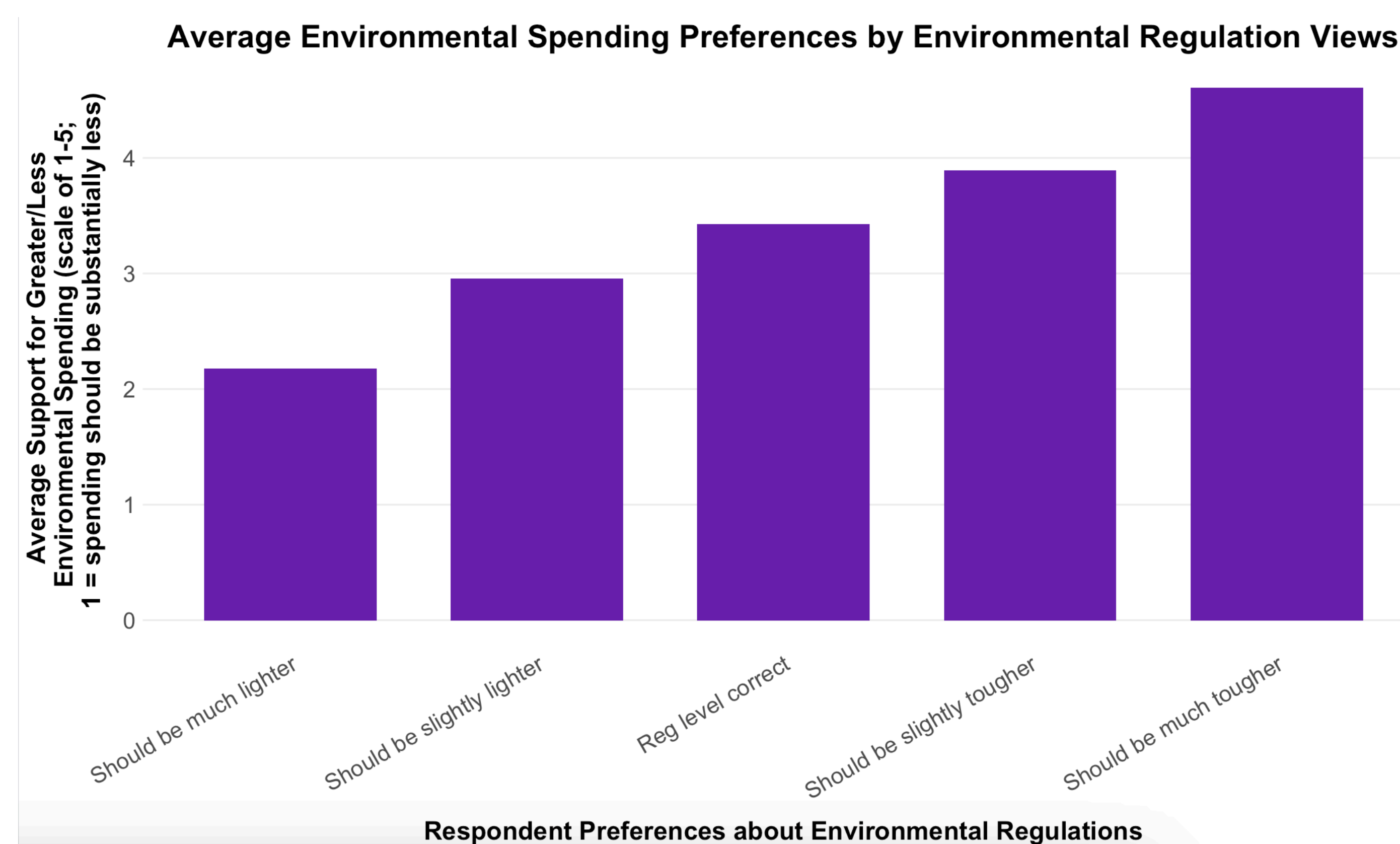
- 48.22% of respondents self-identified as Democrats or as generally aligning closer to the Democratic party than to the Republican party. 44.85% of respondents self-identified as Republicans or as generally aligning closer to the Republican party than to the Democratic Party
- 6.93% of respondents self-identified as Independents or as not aligning closer to either party

Bivariate

- Analysis of Variance revealed that those who believe in stronger environmental regulation were significantly more likely to believe in greater environmental spending. $F=1,144, p<0.0001$
- Post hoc results showed that at each greater level of support for regulation, individuals were significantly more supportive of greater spending.

Multivariate

- Linear regression showed that support for greater environmental regulation was significantly, positively associated with support for environmental spending after controlling for race, gender, social class, education level, and party ID
- However, party ID significantly moderates this relationship at many levels of regulatory attitudes. With Democrats as the reference group, The moderating interaction is strongest and most consistent among Republicans, while evidence of moderation among Independents is more limited and not present at all levels.



Discussion

- Though in general, regulatory and spending attitudes are consistent among voting-age citizens, Democrats tend to support greater environmental spending regardless of views on environmental regulation
- Public opinion is both a driver of and a result of public policy, political campaigns, and political messaging, so the extent to which voters view these distinct policy approaches differently (or not) has important implications for how politicians frame their platforms and campaigns
- In light of this study's results, Democratic political candidates may be able to reach their base more effectively by focussing on environmental spending policies more than regulatory ones, since the party seems to largely agree on a need for greater spending regardless of attitudes regarding regulations

References

- Bergquist, P., Konisky, D. M., & Kotcher, J. (2020). Energy policy and public opinion: patterns, trends and future directions. *Progress in Energy*, 2(3), 032003. <https://doi.org/10.1088/2516-1083/ab9592>
- Haltinner, K., & Sarathchandra, D. (2023). CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF CLIMATE CHANGE. In *Inside the World of Climate Change Skeptics* (pp. 157–178). University of Washington Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/jj.2543548.12>
- McCright, A. M., & Dunlap, R. E. (2011). The Politicization Of Climate Change AND Polarization In The American Public's Views Of Global Warming, 2001-2010. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 52(2), 155–194. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23027550>