

# The Association between Americans' Self-Identified Political View and Their Attribution towards Others' Suffering

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## Introduction

- Psychology found that people tend to attribute behaviors' cause to either internal factors(e.g.she isn't diligent) or to external factors(e.g.the workload is overwhelming)(Moskovitz, 2025, as cited in Leonard et.al.,2021)
- A person's attribution bias tend to be consistent(Sahar, 2014)
- Current research already found that conservatives/republicans are more likely to have internal attribution bias in the certain scenes(e.g.other's poverty/rape)(Cochran et.al, 2006; Leonard et.al, 2021; Anderson et.al, 1997). Additionally, sex, age, and socioeconomic status may also influence people's attribution bias when judging others' suffering(Anderson et.al, 1997).

## Research Questions

- Are Americans who identify themselves as liberals to be more likely to attribute the cause of others' suffering regardless of the type of suffering to external reasons than those who identify themselves as conservatives ?
- Does this relationship still exist when controlling for other demographic traits, such as sex, income, or age?

## Methods

### Sample

- Respondents were drawn from the General Social Survey (GSS) of 2024, a nationally representative sample of non-institutionalized adults in the U.S. who speak either English or Spanish. The sample included 1508 participants who had valid responses for the measures of interest.

### Measures

- Self-identified political view was measured on a 7-point scale, with 1 corresponding to extremely liberal and 7 to extremely conservative. For simplification , this measure was collapsed to three responses: self-identified liberal(1-3), self-identified conservative(5-7), and self-identified neutral(4) political views.
- Participants' attribution towards the cause of suffering in the scene they were shown in the survey was recoded to a binary measurement, which accounted for respondents believing it was likely(internal attribution) or not likely(external attribution) caused by the person's own bad character.

## Results

### Bivariate

- Logistic Regression shows that Compared to self-identified conservatives, self-identified liberals were significantly less likely to attribute others' suffering to internal causes (OR = 0.44,  $p < .001$ ). However, there was no significant difference between self-identified moderates and conservatives (OR = 0.93,  $p = .54$ ).

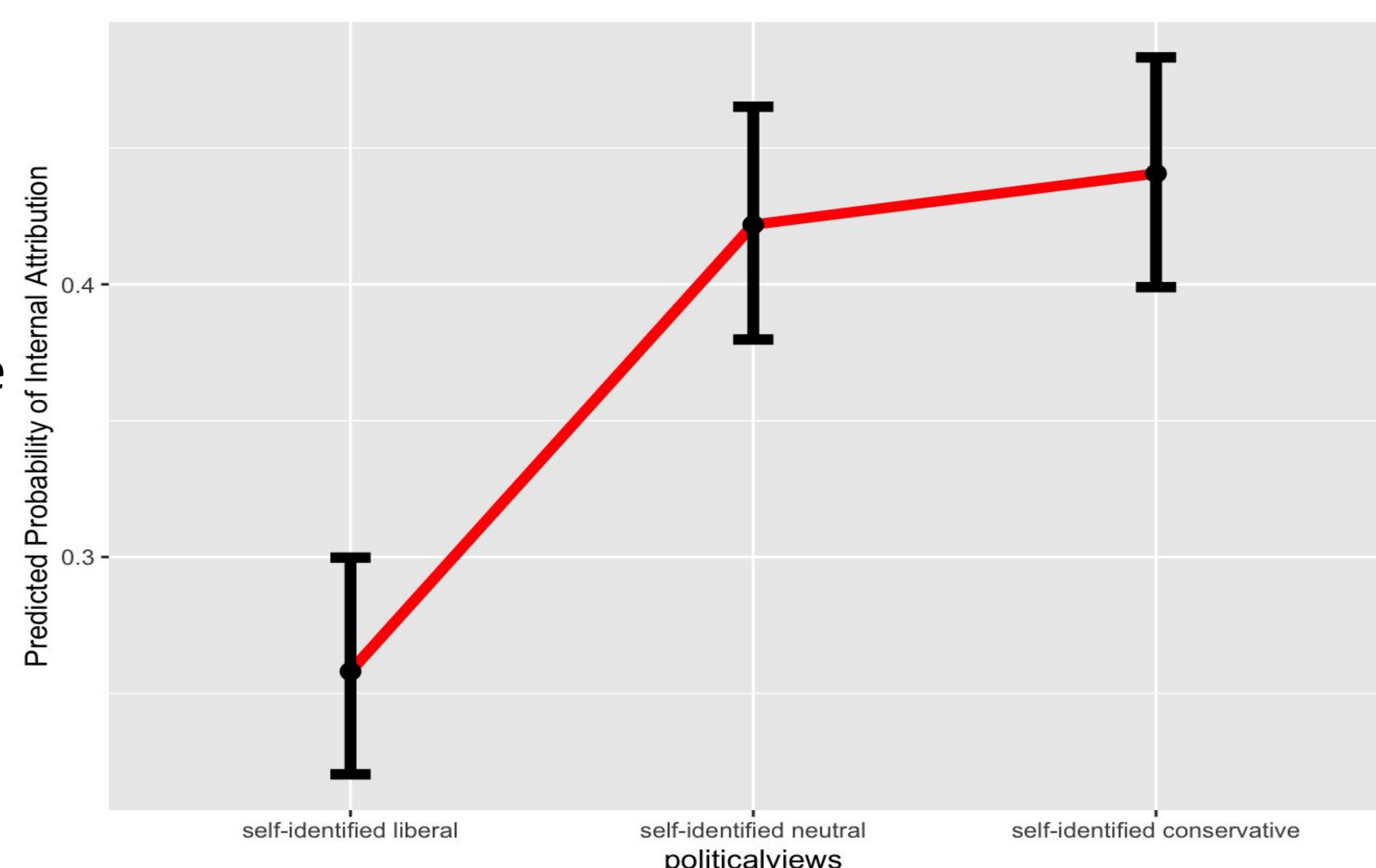


Figure 1: Predicted Probability of Internal Attribution by Self-Identified Political Ideologies

### Multivariate

- Logistic regression analyses showed that Self-identified liberals are less likely to make internal attribution when evaluating the reason for others' suffering after controlling sex, income, and age(O.R. 0.43, CI: 0.32, 0.57,  $p < 0.001$ ).
- In addition, income and sex are also significantly associated with respondents' attribution bias(Income: O.R. 0.55, CI: 0.42, 0.72,  $p < 0.001$ ) (Sex: O.R. 1.73, CI: 1.37, 2.17,  $p < 0.001$ );while age does not show a statistically significant relationship (O.R. 1.00, CI: 0.990, 1.004,  $p = 0.460$ )(Fig. 2).

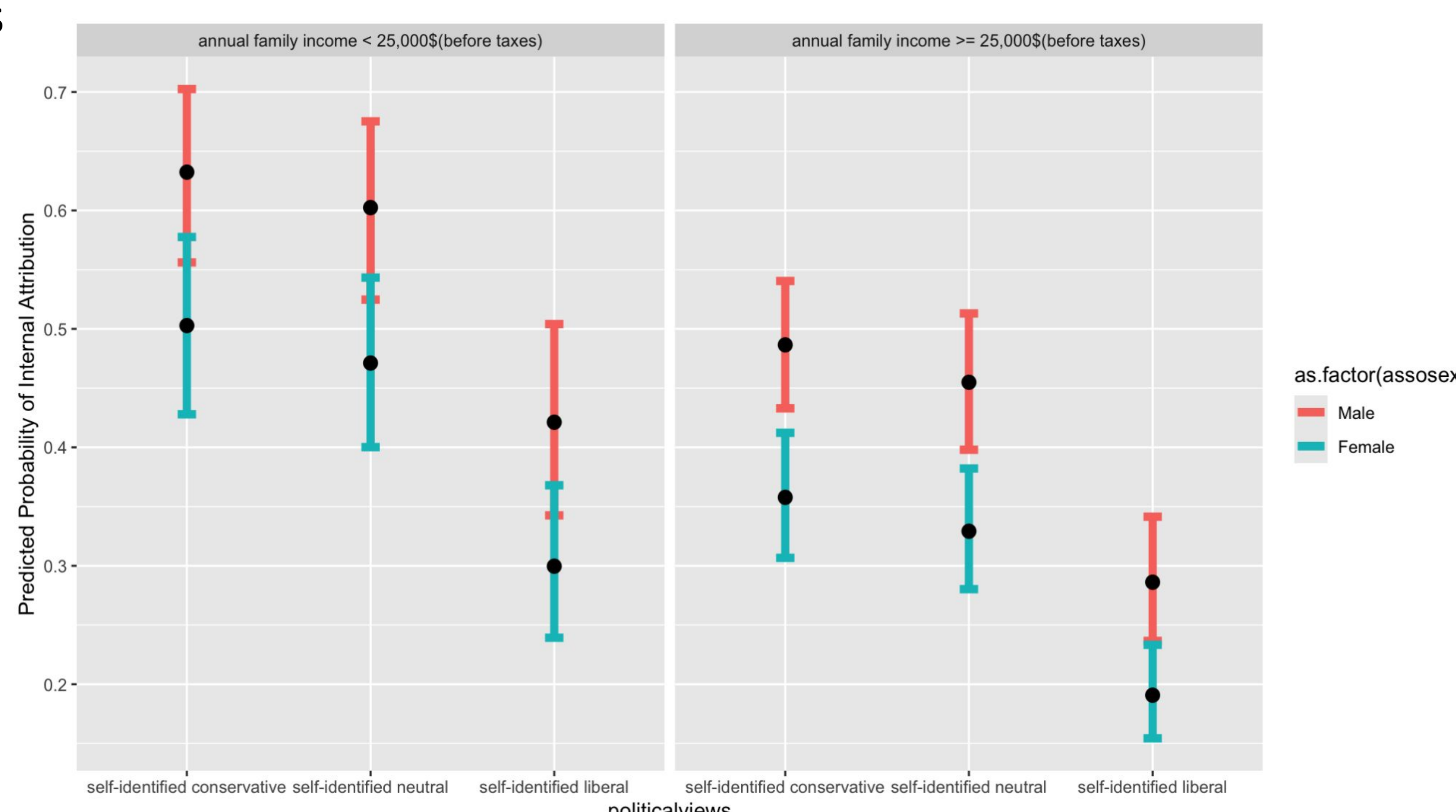


Figure 2: Predicted Probability of Internal Attribution Across Self-Identified Political Ideologies, by Gender and Income Group

## Discussion

- When judging other's suffering, conservatives and moderates are more likely to attribute the cause to internal factors than liberals.
- These findings may contribute to political science research regarding American public opinion on political polarization in social issues.
- Future research is needed to study the possible moderator effect of covariates and the change of attribution bias when the demographic characteristics of others who are suffering change.

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