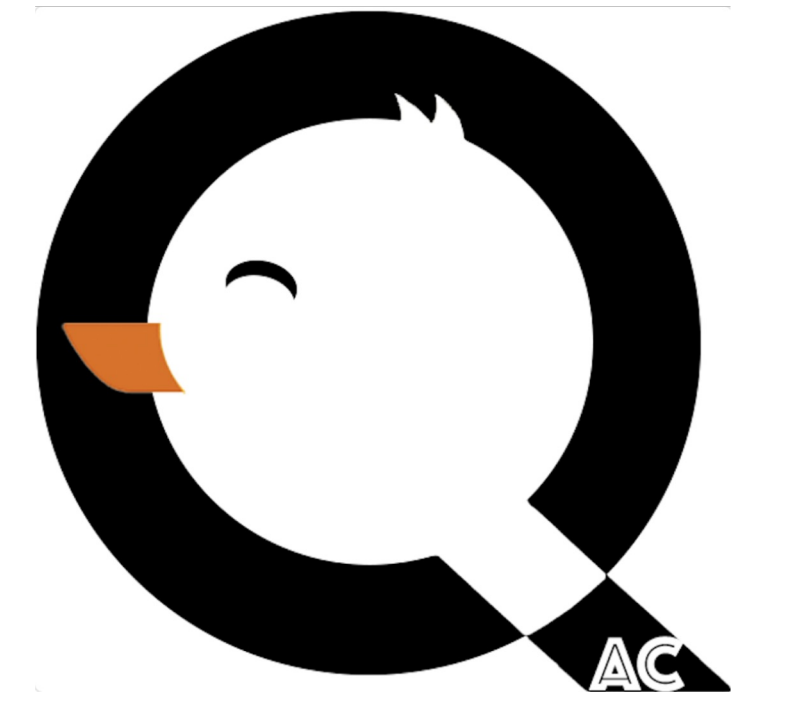


The Association Between Political Views and Attitudes Toward Scientific Research Spending, with Differences by Race



Sophia Baez, Applied Data Analysis, Wesleyan University

Introduction

Public attitudes toward science are often shaped by politics, but support for science can also depend on how that support is measured. In this study, I examine whether political views are associated with opinions about U.S. spending on scientific research using data from the 2024 General Social Survey. Rather than measuring abstract trust in science, this project focuses on whether respondents think the country spends too much, too little, or about the right amount on scientific research. I also test whether this relationship differs by race.

Research Questions

- Are political views associated with attitudes toward spending on scientific research?
- Do these attitudes differ by race?
- Does race moderate the relationship between political views and attitudes toward science spending?

Methods

Sample

- The analytic sample included respondents with non-missing data on political views, attitudes toward scientific research spending, and race from the 2024 General Social Survey (GSS). The final sample size used in the analysis was N= 2976

Measures

- Political views were collapsed into liberal (1-3), moderate (4), and conservative (5-7) categories from the GSS seven-point ideology.
- Attitudes toward scientific research spending were based on whether respondents thought the U.S. spends too much (1) or does not spend too much(0) on supporting scientific research.

- Race was recoded into three categories: White, Black, and Other.

Results

Descriptive Results

Fig. 1 shows that conservatives had the highest proportion of respondents who said the U.S. spends too much on scientific research, while liberals had the lowest proportion. Moderates fell in between these two groups. This pattern suggests that more conservative political views were associated with greater likelihood of viewing scientific research spending as too high.

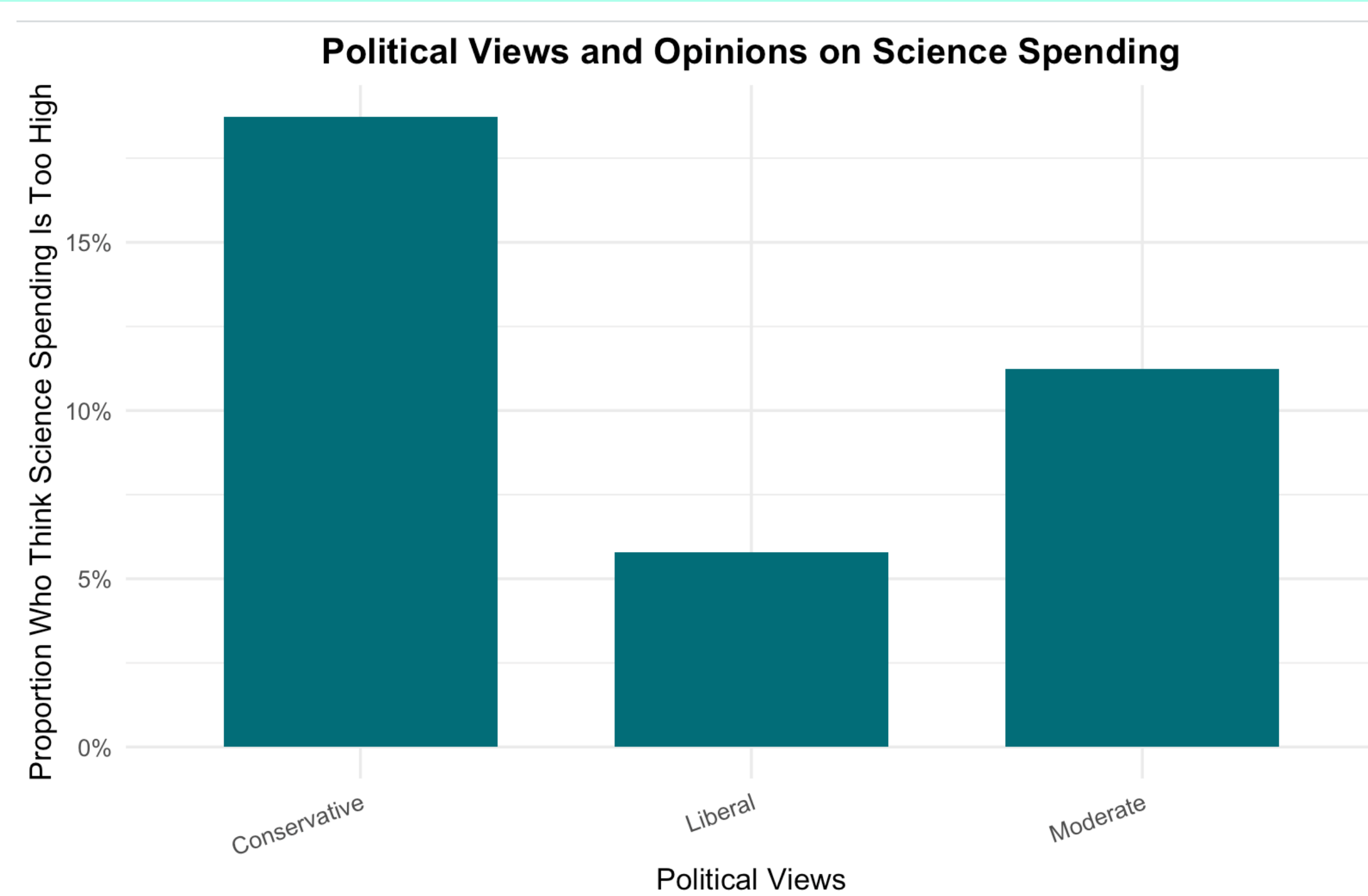


Figure 1: Proportion of respondents who say the U.S. spends too much on scientific research, by political views.

Regression Results

Fig 2. shows that the predicted probability of saying the U.S. spends too much on scientific research generally increased from liberals to conservatives across racial groups. Black respondents showed the highest predicted probabilities across most political categories, while White respondents showed the lowest predicted probability among liberals. These results suggest that the relationship between political views and attitudes toward scientific research spending varied somewhat by race, particularly between Black and White respondents.

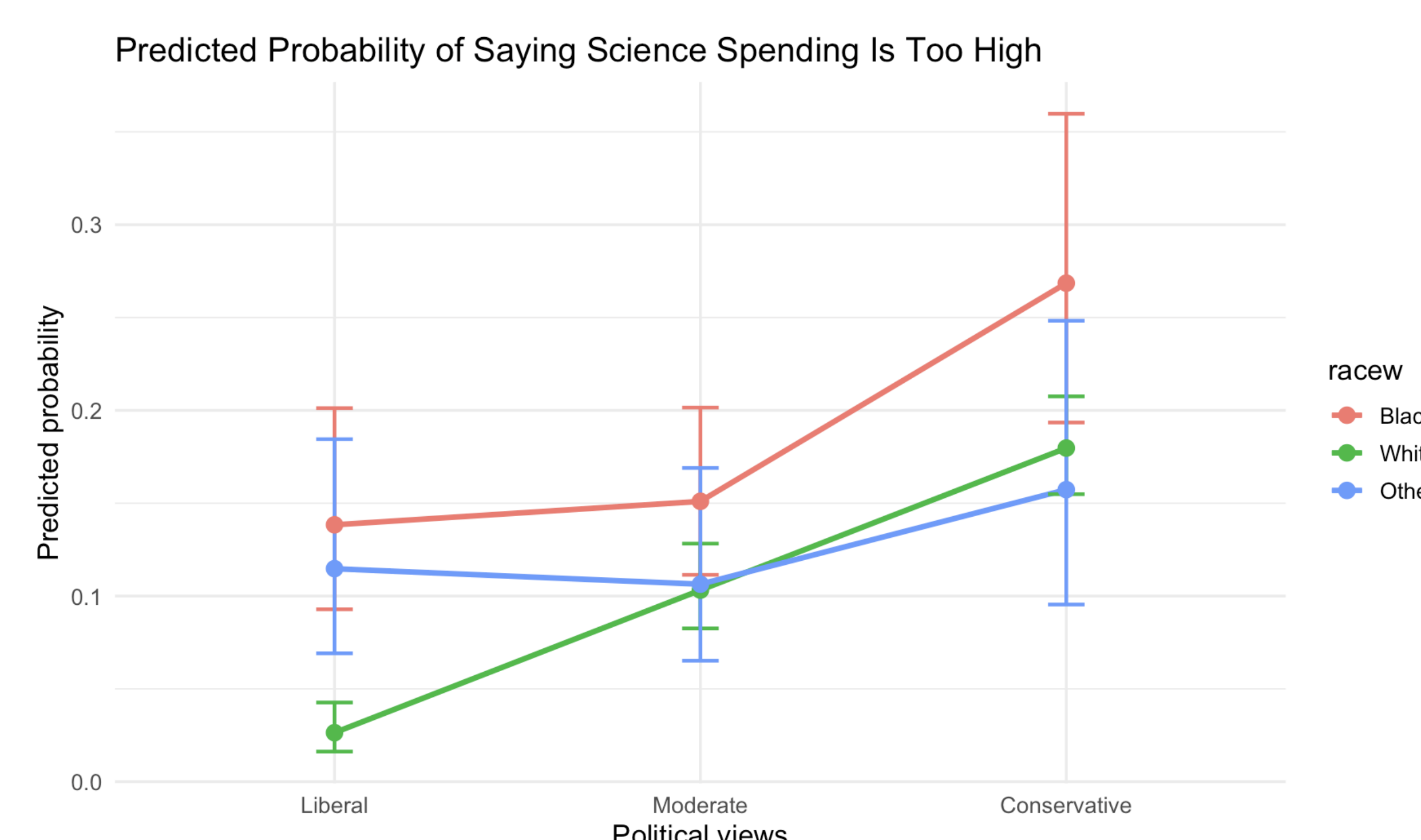


Figure 2: Predicted Probability of Saying the U.S. Spends Too Much on Scientific Research by Political Views and Race

Discussion

- Taken together, these results suggest that attitudes toward scientific research spending are structured more by political ideology than by race. Respondents with more conservative political views were more likely to believe that the U.S. spends too much on science, which may reflect broader differences in views about government spending and public investment. While some racial variation was present, it did not fully reshape the overall pattern. This indicates that race may add context to these attitudes, but political orientation remains the clearest predictor in this analysis.

References

Freiling, I., Cacciatore, M. A., & McKasy, M. (2025). Religious values and confidence in science: Perceived tensions and common ground. *PLOS ONE*, *20*(9), e0332477.

Gligorić, V., van Kleef, G. A., & Rutjens, B. T. (2025). Political ideology and trust in scientists in the USA. *Nature Human Behaviour*, *9*(7), 1501–1512.

Milkoreit, M., & Smith, E. K. (2025). Rapidly diverging public trust in science in the United States. *Public Understanding of Science*, *34*(5), 616–627.

NORC at the University of Chicago. (2024). *General Social Survey (GSS) 2024 cross-section codebook* (Release 1).