



# The association between Judeo-Christian religions, political orientation and views on global warming

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## Introduction

- Some studies (Eckberg and Blocker, 1989; Arbuckle and Konisky, 2015) find that belief in Judeo-Christian religions (Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism) significantly correlates with weaker environmental attitudes.
- However, other studies (Greeley, 1993; Shaiko, 1997; Woodrum & Wolkomir, 1997) find that political factors, not religious beliefs, are responsible for variations in respondents' environmental concern.
- Moreover, cross-national studies have found no consistent pattern of difference between Judeo-Christian and non-Judeo-Christian respondents' environmental concern and behavior.
- Established literature (Dunlap et al., 2001; Konisky et al., 2008) finds that political factors are more important predictors of environmental views than religious affiliation.

## Research Questions

- Within the US, is belief in Judeo-Christian religions associated with weaker views on global warming, and does this association hold when controlled for political orientation?
- Within the US, how do socioeconomic factors (race, education level, income) affect views on global warming?

## Methods

### Sample

- Respondents (N=929) were drawn from the National Surveys on Energy and Environment (NSEE), a biannual national opinion survey on energy and climate policy.
- The results are based on a national telephone survey of non-institutionalized adult (age 18 or older) US residents in 2017.

### Measures

- Religious affiliations were collapsed into two groups, Judeo-Christians (Protestants, Catholics and Jews) and non-Judeo-Christians.
- Political orientations were collapsed into three groups (conservative-leaning, moderate and liberal-leaning).
- Views on global warming were analyzed through three metrics:
  - whether global warming is a serious problem
  - whether governments should take immediate action to address global warming in general
  - a global warming action score ranging from 0 to 5, composited from questions on support for five specific greenhouse gas reduction policies

## Results

### Bivariate

- Chi square analysis shows that both political orientation and religion are significantly associated with whether global warming is viewed as a serious issue ( $p < 0.001$  for both). Post hoc tests (Bonferroni) showed this association held across all political orientations ( $p < 0.001$ ).
- Political orientation is significantly associated with whether governments should take immediate action on global warming ( $p = 1.5e-12$ ), but religion is not ( $p = 0.21$ ). Post hoc tests (Bonferroni) showed this association held across all political orientations ( $p < 0.01$ ).
- ANOVA analysis shows that both political orientation and religion are significantly associated with the global warming action score ( $p < 2e-16$ ,  $p = 2.2e-05$ ). Post hoc tests (Tukey) showed this association held across all political orientations ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Figure 1. Religious affiliation, political orientation and predicted probability of belief that global warming is a serious problem (Logistic regression)

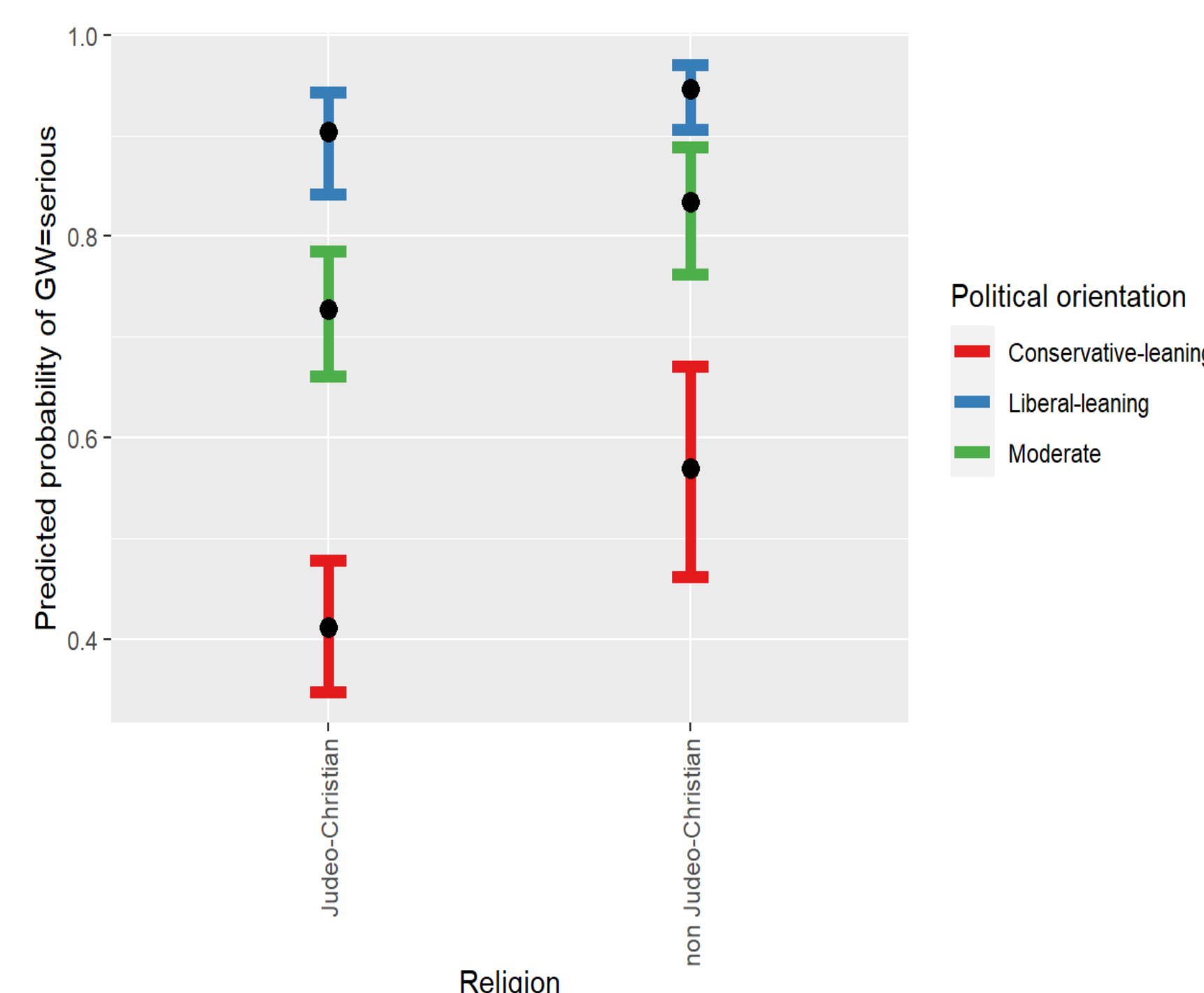
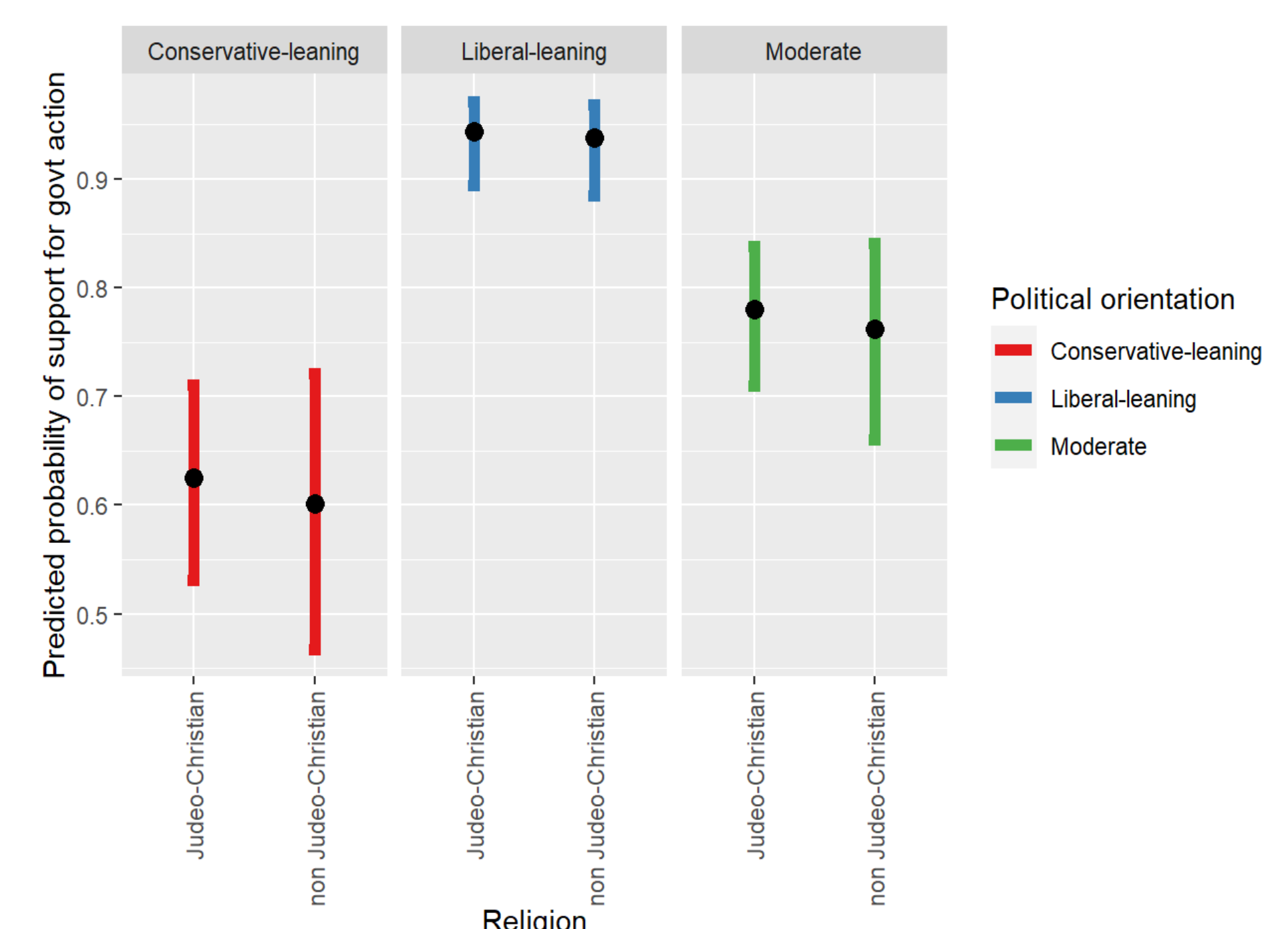


Figure 2. Religious affiliation, political orientation and predicted probability of support for immediate government action on global warming (Logistic regression)



### Multivariate

- Religion is significantly and negatively associated with whether global warming is viewed as a serious issue**, controlling for political orientation and other socioeconomic factors (race, education level, and income) ( $OR = 0.48$ ,  $p = 0.008$ ).
- Religion is not significantly associated with support for immediate government action on global warming**, controlling for political orientation and other socioeconomic factors ( $OR = 1.15$ ,  $p = 0.66$ ).
- Controlling just for political orientation, religion is not significantly associated with the global warming action score ( $b = -0.23$ ,  $p = 0.1$ ). However, controlling for other socioeconomic factors in addition to political orientation, **religion is significantly and negatively associated with the global warming action score** ( $b = -0.33$ ,  $p = 0.045$ ).
- Socioeconomic factors are not significantly associated with whether global warming is viewed as a serious issue and support for immediate government action**, except for **race** as a factor between **Whites** and **African Americans** on both metrics ( $OR = 3.17$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ;  $OR = 2.85$ ,  $p = 0.045$ ).
- Socioeconomic factors are not significantly associated with the global warming action score** except for **race** as a factor between **Whites** and **African Americans** ( $b = 0.61$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ), and **education level** as a factor between **grad degree holders** and **HS/less than HS** ( $b = -0.57$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ) and **college graduates** ( $b = -0.36$ ,  $p = 0.04$ ).

## Discussion

- While causal inference cannot be made, this observational study indicates that Judeo-Christians, on average, tend to view global warming less seriously and offer less support for specific climate action policies, even when controlling for political and socioeconomic variables. This contradicts some of the established literature.
- Political orientation is the strongest correlate across all three metrics of views on global warming, in line with established literature.
- Further research is still needed to validate the results due to a relatively small sample size, to determine which specific aspect of Judeo-Christian religions leads to the association found, and to investigate the significant racial difference between the views of Whites and African Americans on global warming.
- Educators and policymakers may use this information to target environmental education policies.