

Who Believes in *COVID-19* Conspiracies?

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What are Conspiracy Theories?

Attempts to explain the ultimate causes of significant events and complex circumstances as a result of the workings of secret plots by two or more powerful actors.

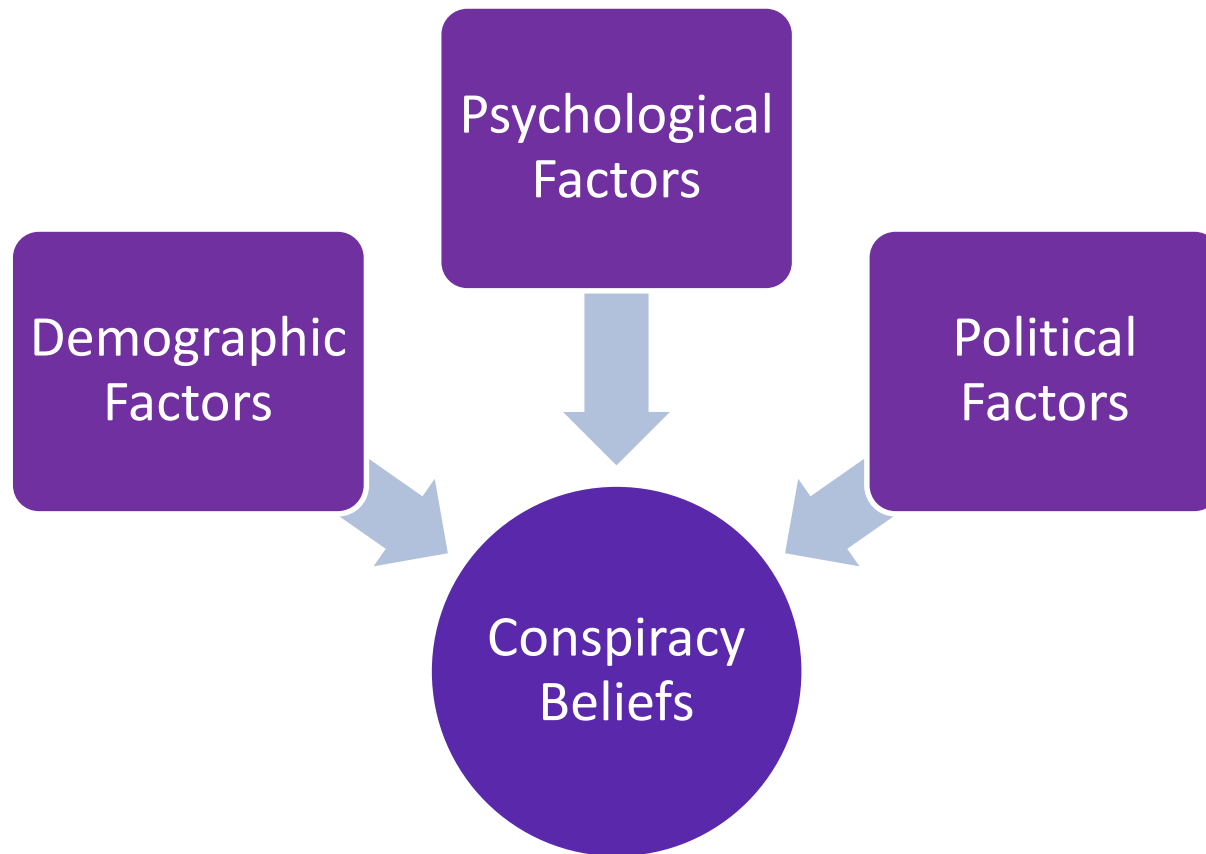
- 1. They are fused with everyday lives.**
- 2. They are universal.**
- 3. They are consequential.**



Research Questions:

1. How *prevalent* are *COVID-19* conspiracy beliefs in Canada and the United States?
2. *Who* believes in *COVID-19* conspiracies?

Why do people embrace conspiracy theories?



COVID-19-Specific Expectations

- Uncertainty, worry, fear, sense of powerlessness and isolation → **embrace conspiracies to explain circumstances and regain control, while also projecting these feelings on social out-groups (i.e., Asian communities).**
- Historically disadvantaged and low status groups most impacted by pandemic → **might believe that dominant groups are conspiring against them.**
- Pandemic sparks uncertainty, fear, powerless, etc. for those on the right → motivation on the right to embrace theories → narratives that the virus is a "hoax", officials as "working for China"

Model Specification: Main Predictors

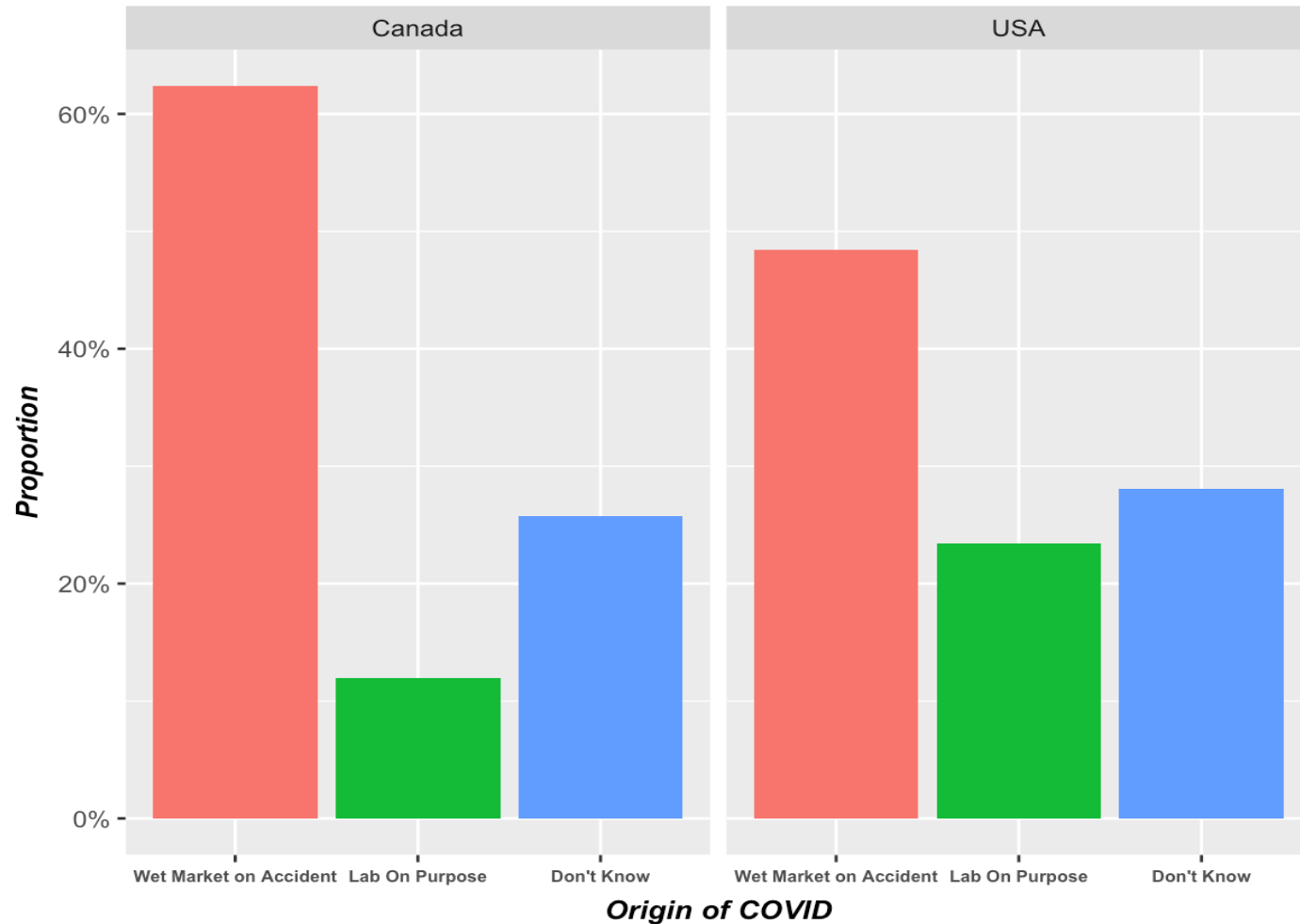
Demographic Variables	Psychological Variables	Political Variables
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sex• Race• Education• Marital Status• Income• Employment Status• Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trust• Influence• Life Satisfaction• Community Connection• Financial Worry• Worry Contracting COVID• Attitudes on Asian Immigration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Party Affiliation• Political Ideology• Political Ideology (Quadratic)• Political Knowledge

Dependent Variable: Origin of COVID-19

Q: Every country in the world is currently confronted with the coronavirus, also known as COVID-19. In your opinion, the coronavirus is:

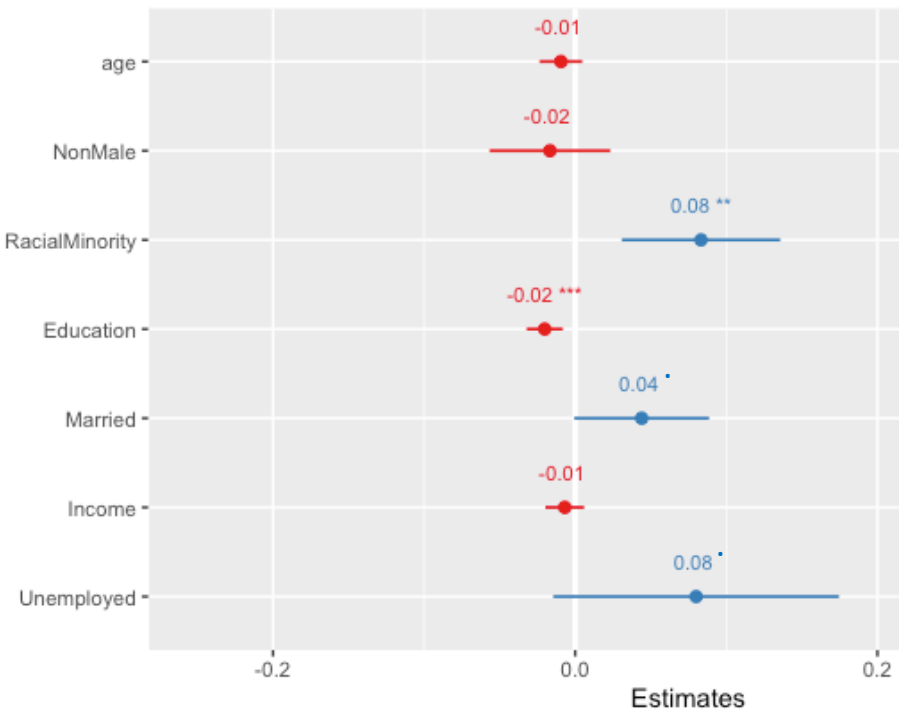
- 1. A virus that originated in a live-animal market in Wuhan, China, that ended up accidentally getting spread throughout the world.*
- 2. A virus that was created on purpose in a Chinese laboratory to increase China's economic power.*
- 3. I don't know which of the options is true.*

How Prevalent are *COVID-19* Conspiracy Beliefs?

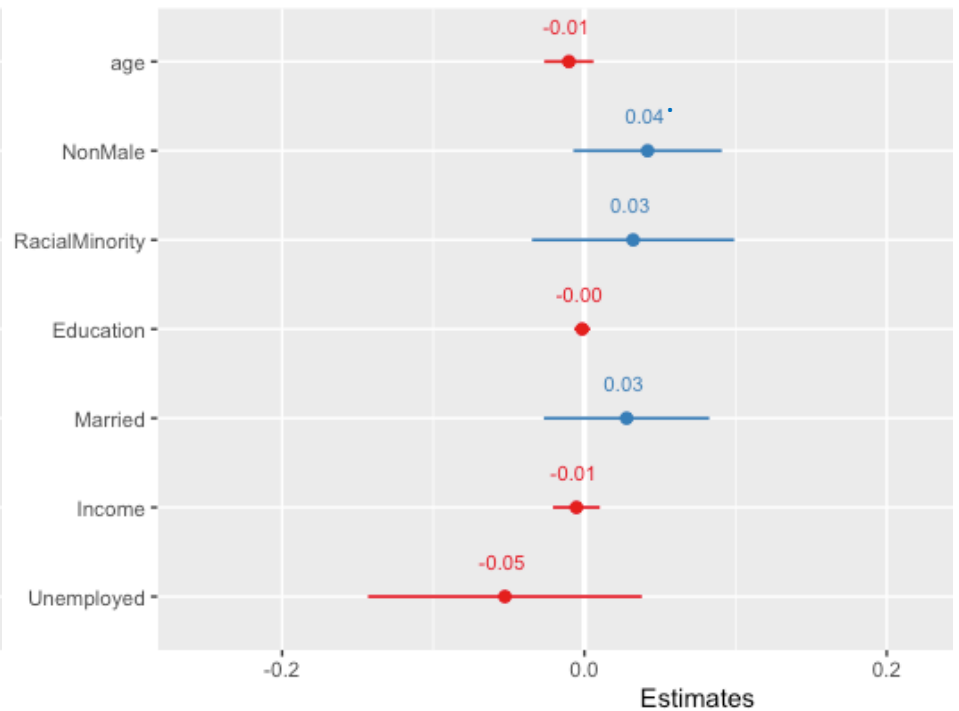


Demographic Predictors

Demographic Results - Conspiracy Belief - Canada

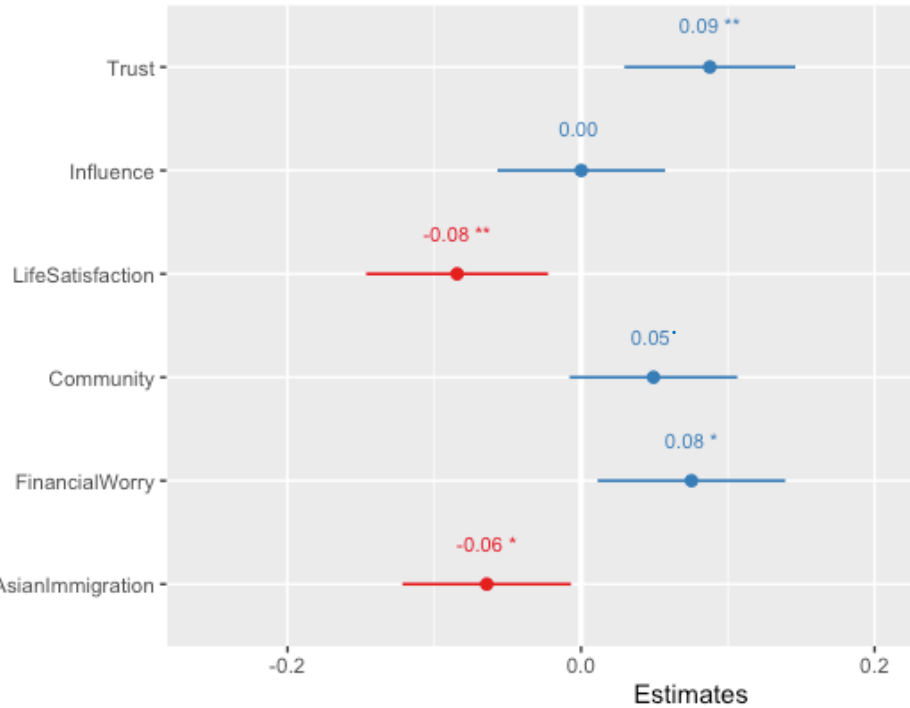


Demographic Results - Conspiracy Belief - USA

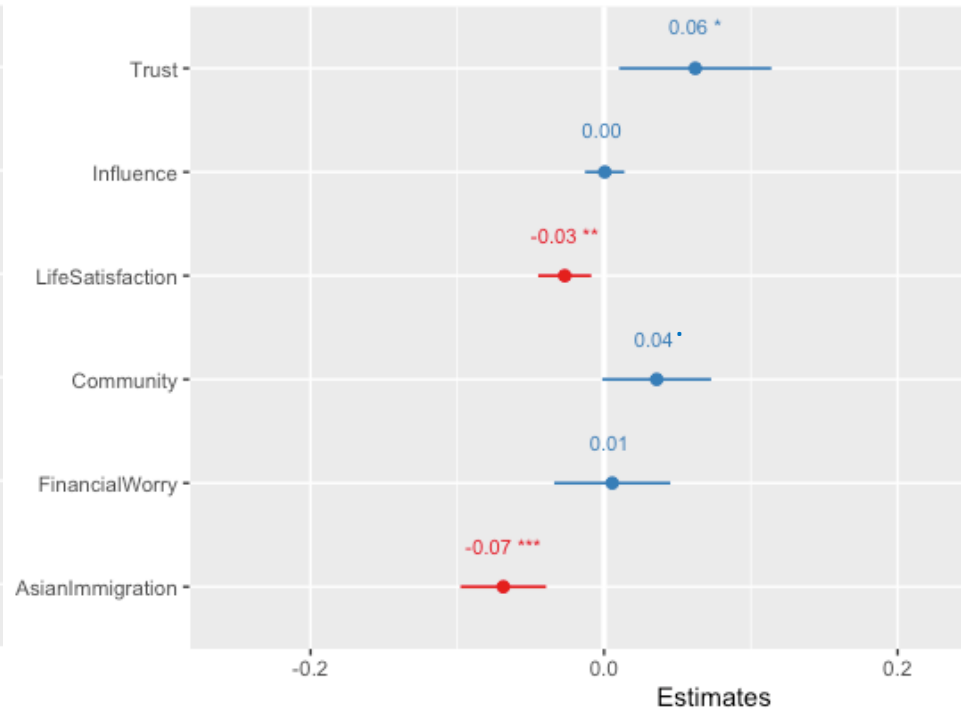


Psychological Predictors

Psychological Factors - Conspiracy Belief - Canada

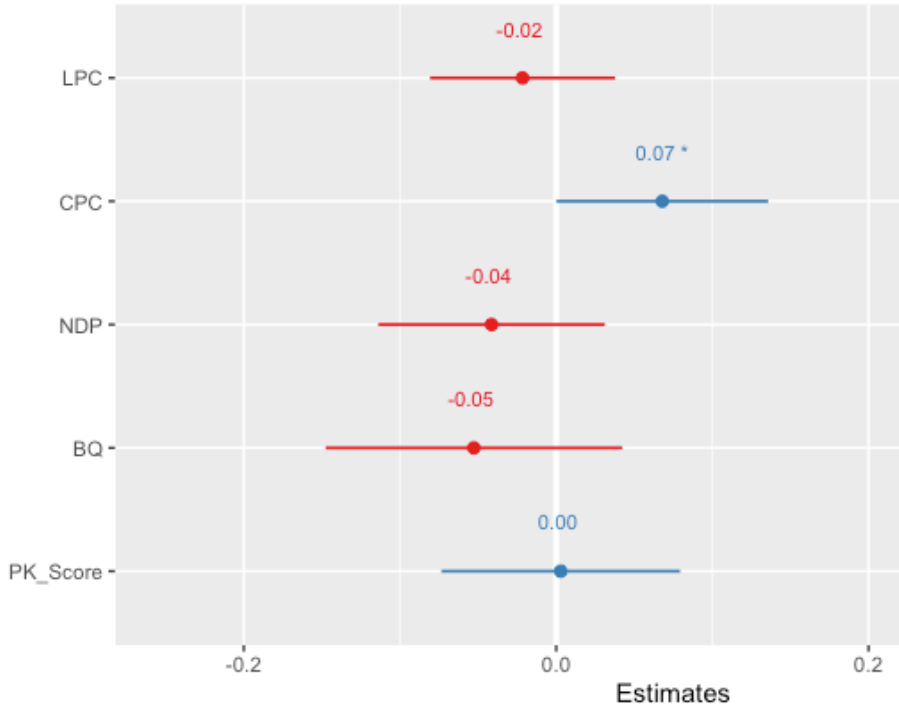


Psychological Factors - Conspiracy Belief - USA

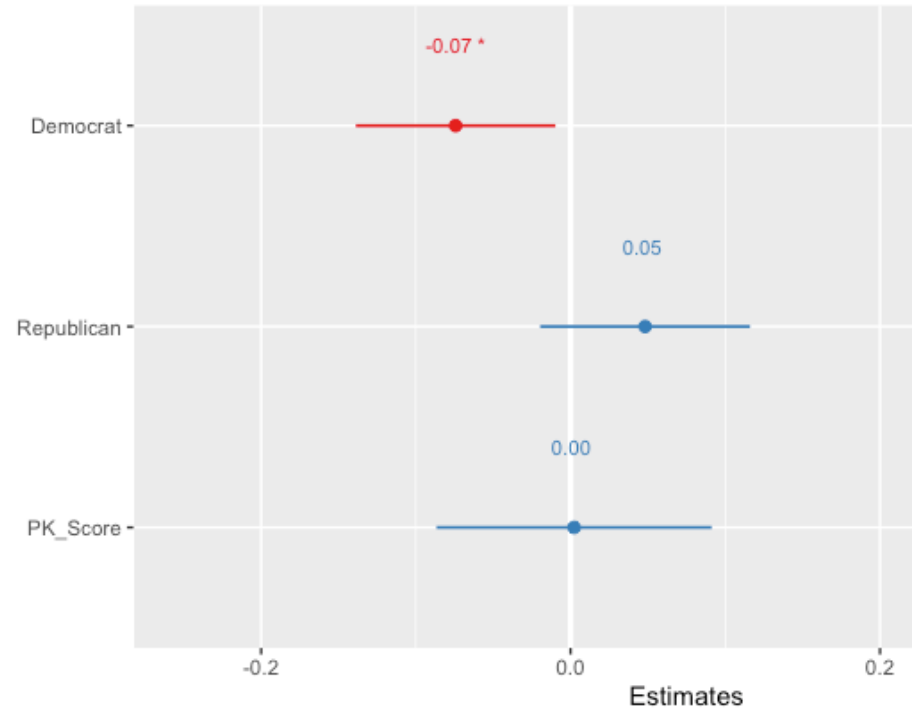


Political Predictors

Political Factors - Conspiracy Belief - Canada



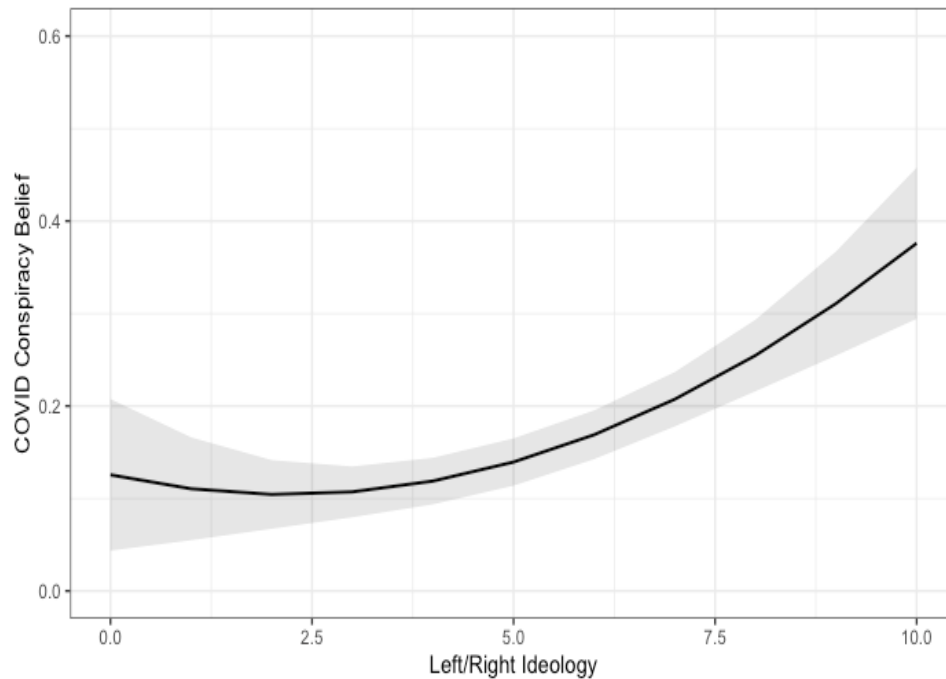
Political Factors - Conspiracy Belief - USA



Political Extremes

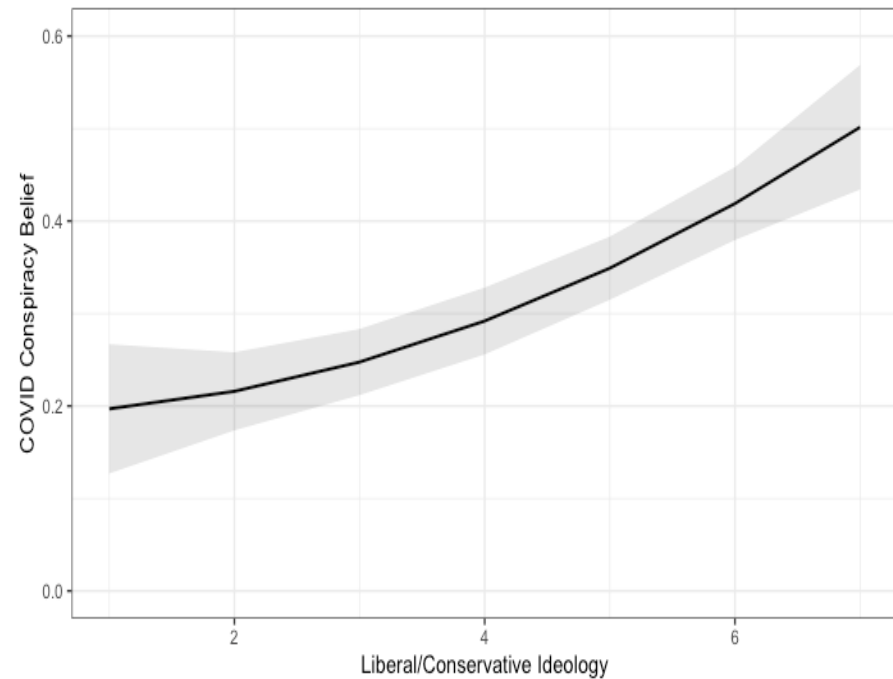
Canada

Conspiracy Belief as a Quadratic Function of Ideology



United States

Conspiracy Belief as a Quadratic Function of Ideology



Summary and Future Research

- Conspiracy beliefs are prevalent in both countries, though more so in the United States.
- A mixture of demographic, psychological, and political factors explain COVID-19 conspiracy beliefs, though not the same in each country.

Next steps: Assessing the effect of each “block” of factors, more predictors.