

# 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.*

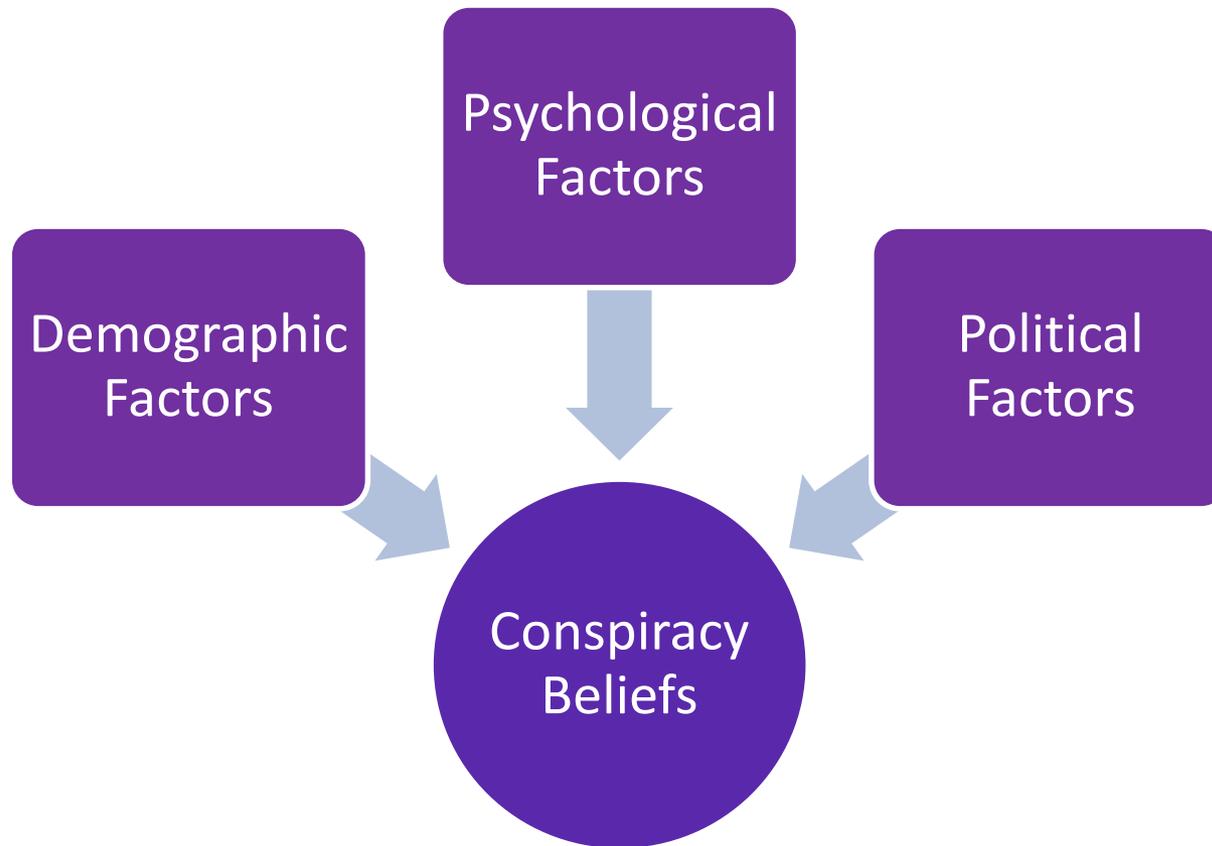
- 1. They are fused with everyday lives.**
- 2. They are universal.**
- 3. They are consequential.**



# 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

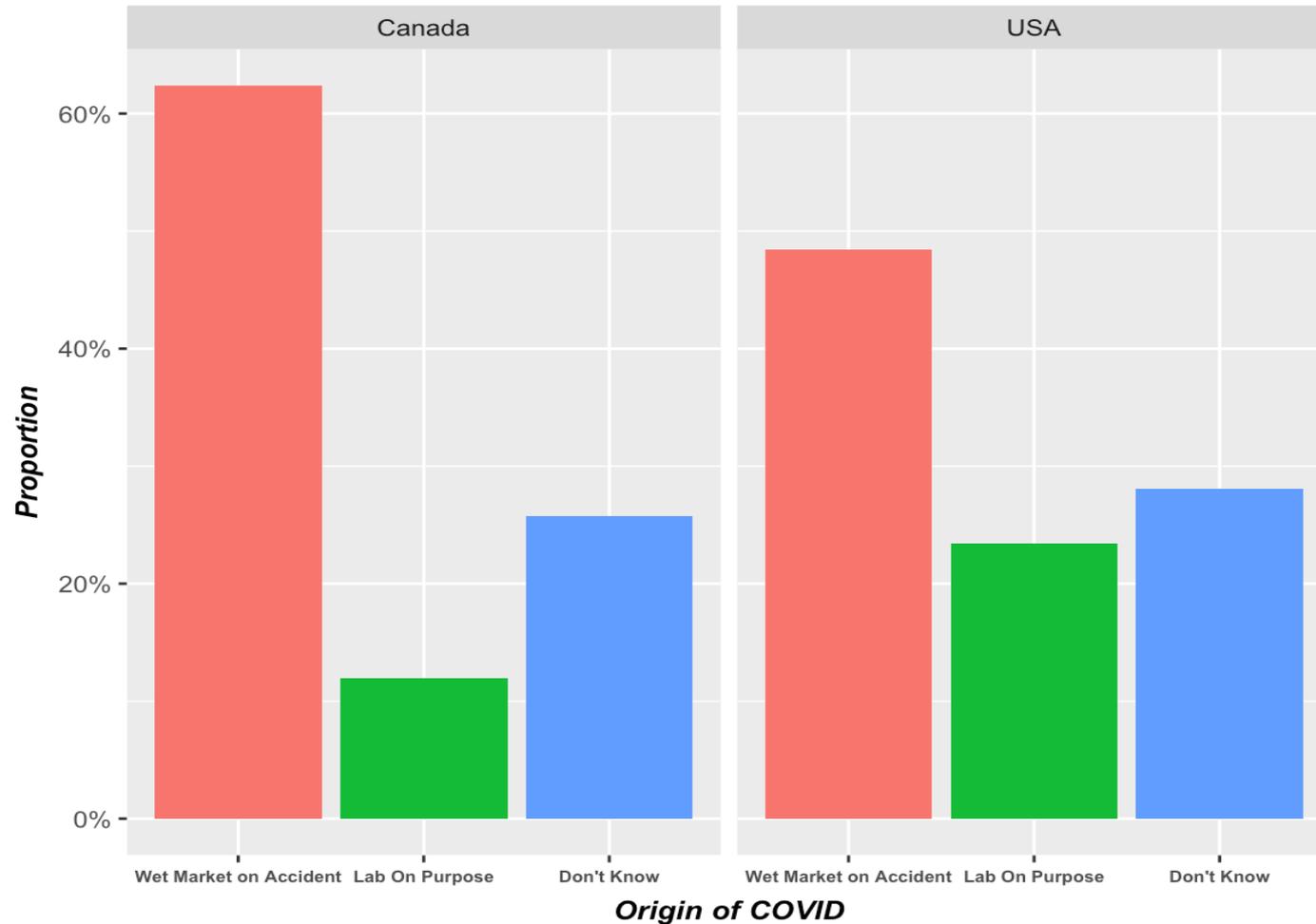
Demographic Variables	Psychological Variables	Political Variables
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sex</li><li>• Race</li><li>• Education</li><li>• Marital Status</li><li>• Income</li><li>• Employment Status</li><li>• Age</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Trust</li><li>• Influence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

# 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:***

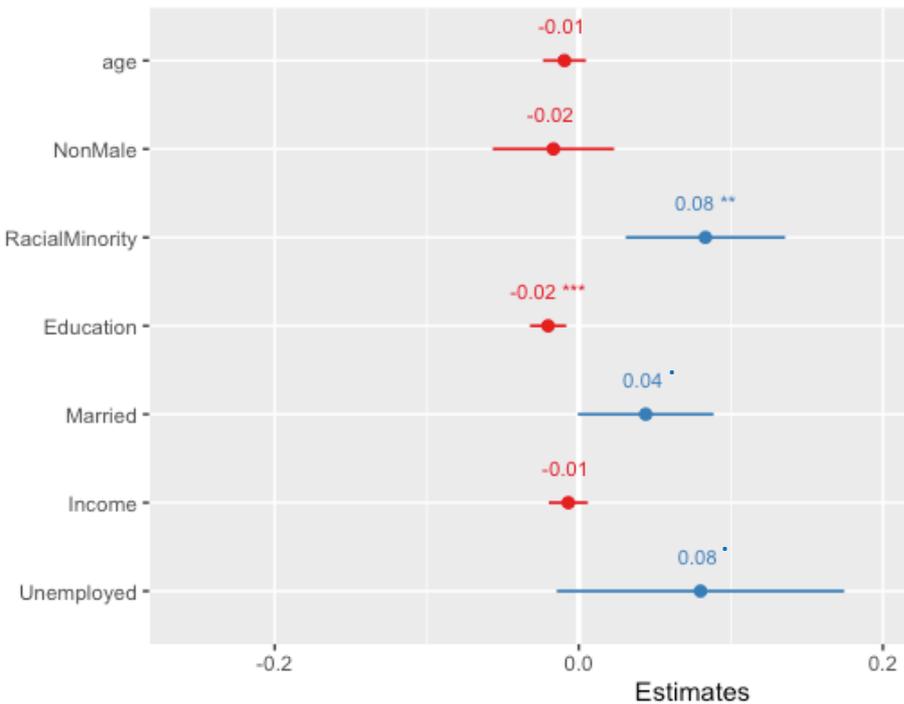
- 1. A virus that originated in a live-animal market in Wuhan, China, that ended up accidentally getting spread throughout the world.*
- 2. A virus that was created on purpose in a Chinese laboratory to increase China's economic power.*
- 3. I don't know which of the options is true.*

# How Prevalent are *COVID-19* Conspiracy Beliefs?

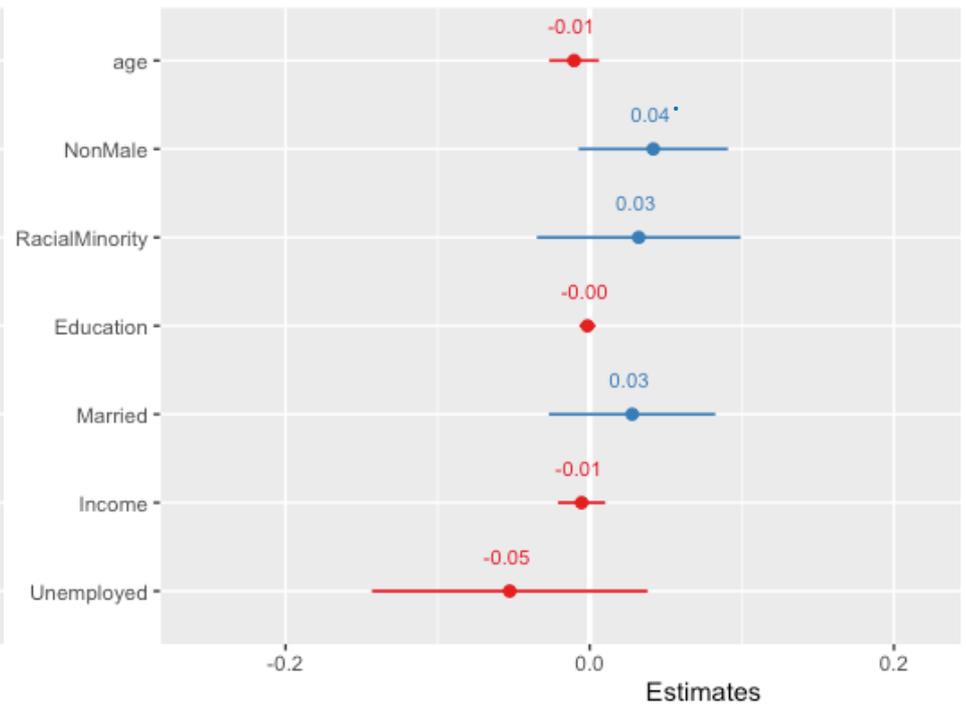


# Demographic Predictors

Demographic Results - Conspiracy Belief - Canada

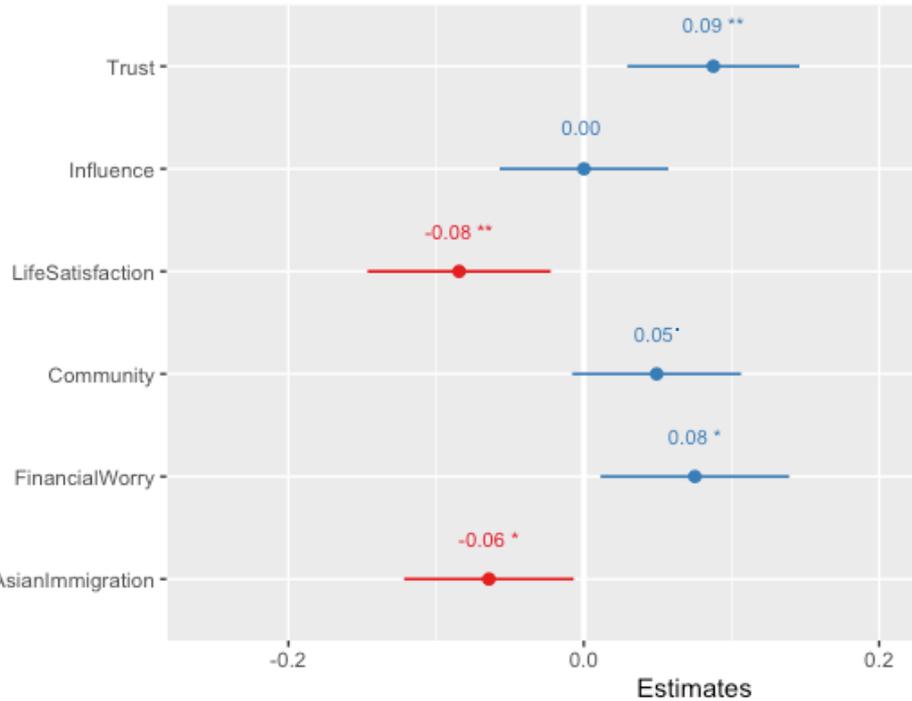


Demographic Results - Conspiracy Belief - USA

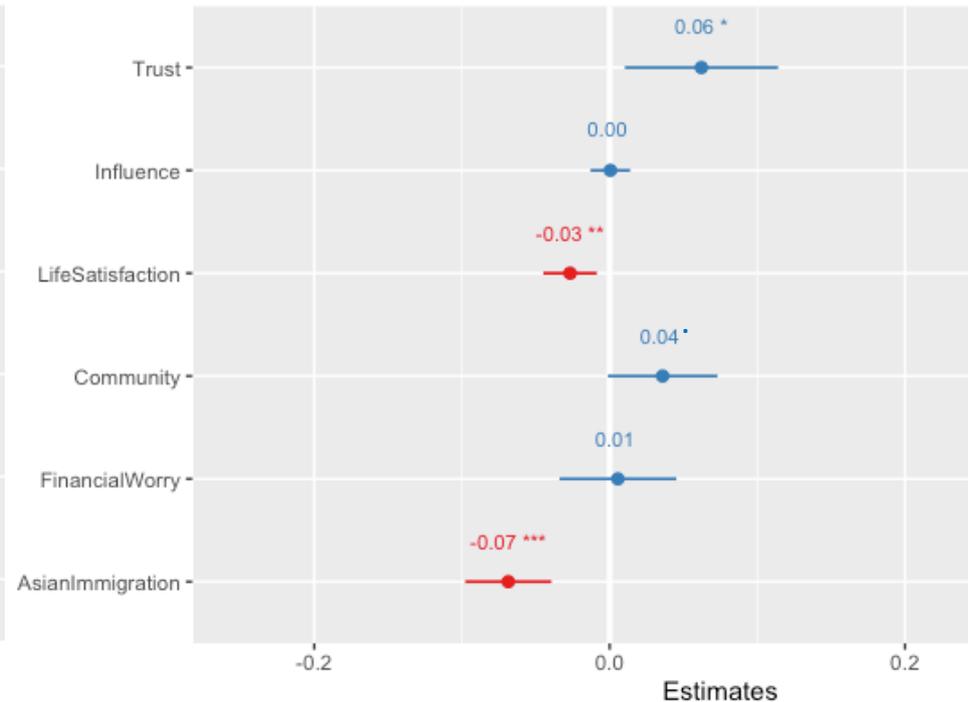


# Psychological Predictors

Psychological Factors - Conspiracy Belief - Canada

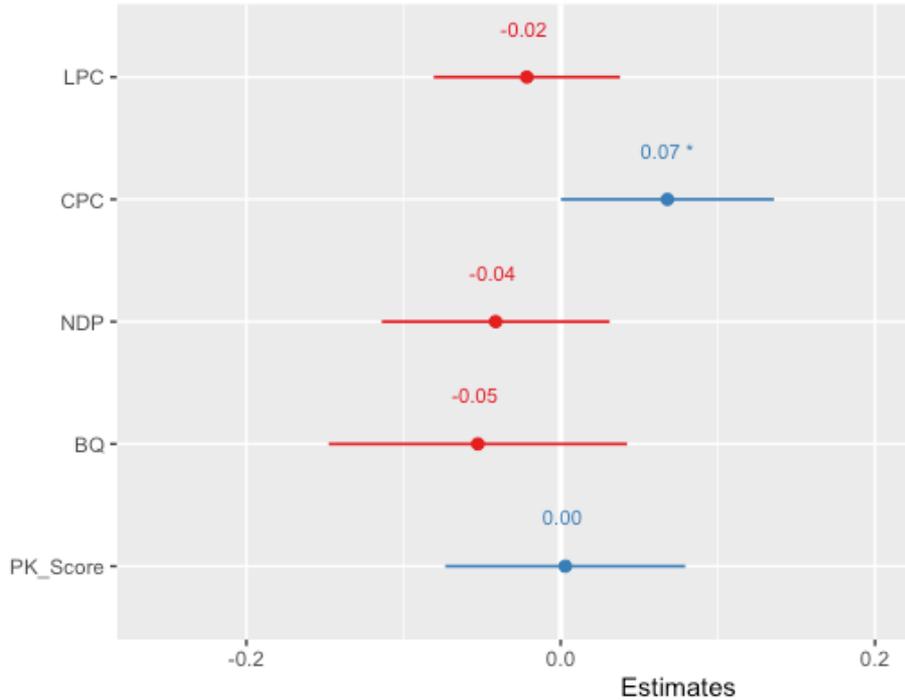


Psychological Factors - Conspiracy Belief - USA

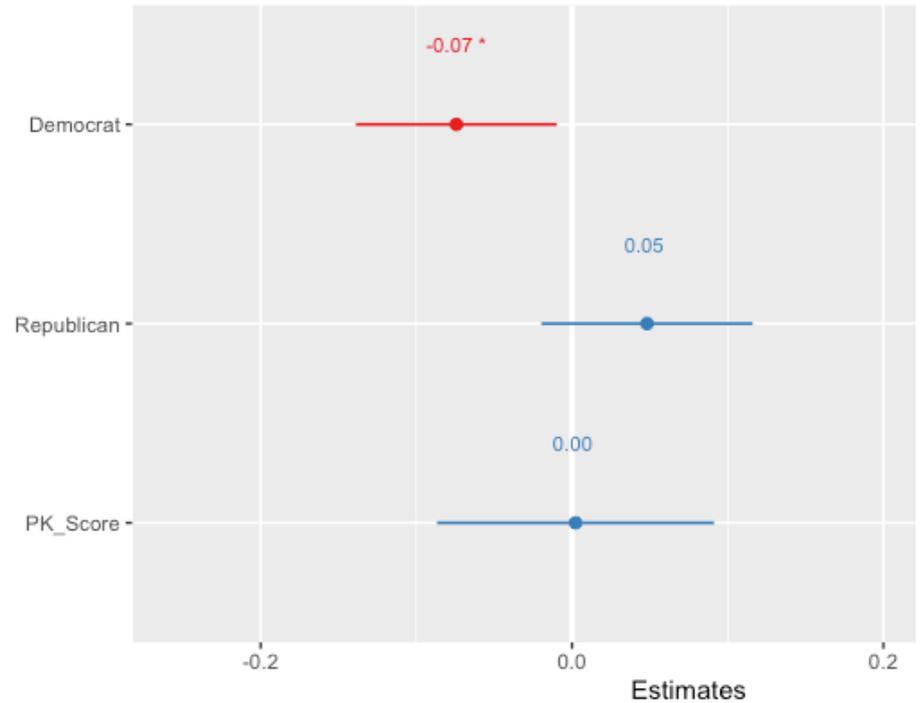


# Political Predictors

Political Factors - Conspiracy Belief - Canada



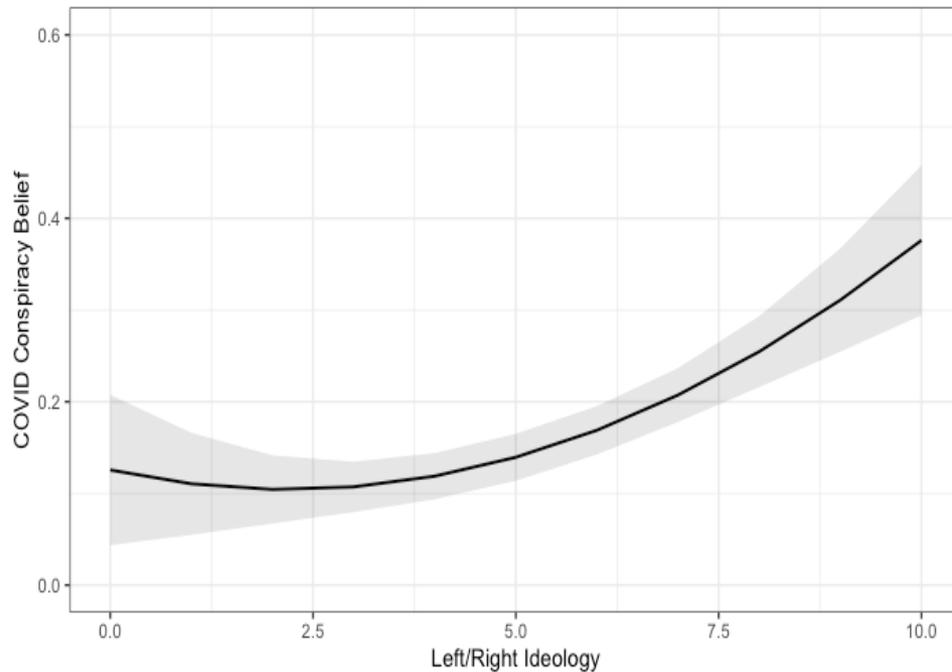
Political Factors - Conspiracy Belief - USA



# Political Extremes

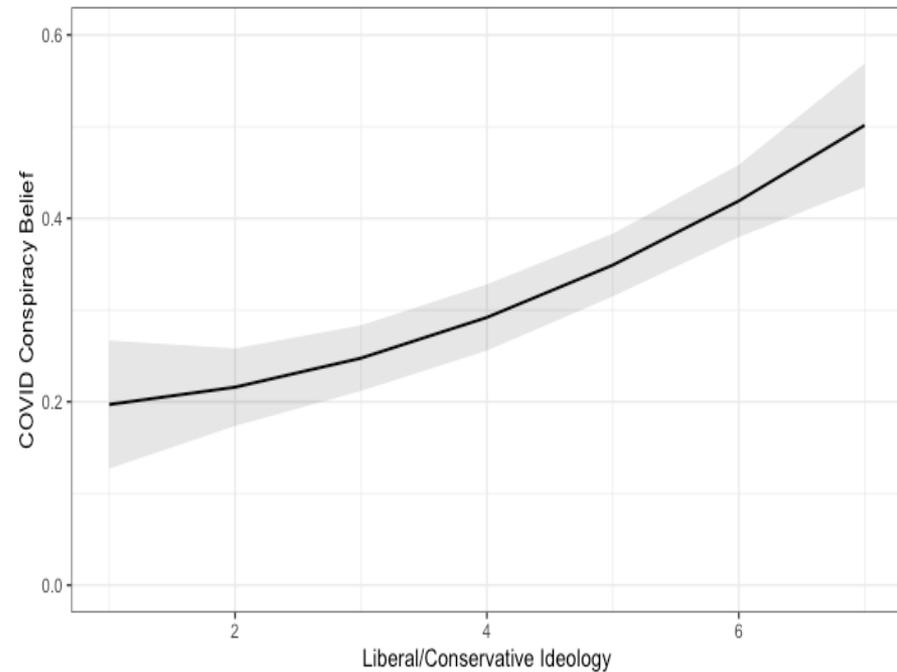
## Canada

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.