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# Ideological Differences in Paths to Persistence

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## Abstract

From abortion to vaccination, liberals and conservatives may not share the same views, yet they share a tendency to persist in their own beliefs despite knowing that millions of others disagree. In this paper, we investigate whether this shared tendency for persistence is supported by different psychological mechanisms across the two groups. An experiment with a large, nationally-representative sample in the U.S ( $N = 2,000$ ) focusing on 12 controversies revealed similar rates of persistence across ideologies. However, the drivers of persistence differed across the two groups: Conservatives disproportionately relied on meta-epistemic explanations (i.e., appeals to subjectivity or unknowability) to maintain their controversial scientific views, whereas liberals tended to restrict such explanations to religious and moral controversies. Moreover, reliance on different explanations for persistence predicted differences in affective polarization.