

What a Shame? Domestic Politics and the Paris Agreement

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Key Components of Paris Agreement

Voluntary commitments

Big focus on transparency mechanisms

No formal enforcement

One prominent hope: naming and shaming (N/S)

"The old treaty model with binding emission targets is gone in favor of voluntary commitments that depend on an effectual Transparency Mechanisms to track nations' progress. Going along with international norms, or **being "Named and Shamed" for deviating from those norms**, resides as the strongest pathway the global community has to drive compliance from parties."

<https://envirocenter.yale.edu/transparency-the-backbone-of-the-Paris-Agreement>

Key Questions

Will naming and shaming work?

How will it work?

For whom will it work?

What about alternatives to naming and shaming, like “name and encourage” or praising? What happens when countries respond to shame?

Broad naming and shaming literature

Human rights (does N/S work? When does it work?)

Criminology/law (alternative to formal punishment, perverse effects)

Psychology (in group versus out group)

Parenting (more human rights, or criminology in nature?)

No examples that we are aware (?) of that examine directly the impact of shaming on public opinion, even though public opinion is often implicated.

Nothing in the environmental space on N/S (?)

How might N/S work?

Domestic pressure mechanism

External criticism can stimulate domestic pressure (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Risse-Kappen and Sikkink 1999, Ausderan 2014).

If this is the case, then would expect members of the public to in part be moved by shaming when asked how much they support government policies.

Our focus on public opinion provides one opportunity to look at this.

Broader perspective: external groups that mobilize domestic audiences....

Responses to Shaming

Compels behavior

(most) People do not want to feel social stigma. Threats of shame can compel behavior. Shaming can correct future behavior.

Backlash?

Terman (2017) argues that naming and shaming can be counterproductive if leaders in a targeted state can portray it as being an attack on the country's sovereignty and identity.

More broadly, the effect of shaming may depend on the policy preferences of individuals.

Responses to Shaming

Responses could depend on a variety of factors:

Context

- accuracy of naming and shaming (O'Donnell 2006)
- what type of behavior is being shamed (e.g., big versus small effort; meeting a goal or not)

Who is doing the shaming

Whether there is a “response” (counter-rhetoric)

Implications for “greenwashing”?

Previous literature showed that companies can deflect public criticism by taking minimal voluntary action (or purely symbolic action, i.e., greenwashing).

Can countries do the same? Can minimal action by a government placate its own domestic public?

Can shaming expose greenwashing, and prevent governments from benefiting from this strategy?

Going positive?

“Can one influence more flies with honey than with vinegar” (David Baldwin, 1971)

The UN will not use “name and shame” but instead “name and encourage” (Janos Pasztor, UN assistant secretary-general on climate change during Paris negotiations).

What about the influence of “Praise”? (Huge literature on “positive reinforcement”)

Core Hypotheses

Main effect of N/S: shaming decreases approval for government policies.

Shaming less effective at the extremes, when behavior is already evidently shameful or praiseworthy.

Shaming more effective when country falls short of what promised, than when it does what it promised.

Individuals who oppose regulation of fossil fuels (e.g., proxied by party ID) will a) oppose reductions more and b) be less impacted by shaming (backlash)

Designing a Paris Agreement Experiment....

Lots of design options that we considered.

Selection into Paris (which has a lot of countries); goal set high, medium or low; be transparent or not; meet or not meet goals; conditional on meeting goals issue statements; other entities (other countries, NGO's) can say things (e.g., shame or encouragement) or not; Conditional on what is said/done, target state can verbally respond (or not) or even do something more targeted at the shaming set of countries.....

We focus on a subset of these options.

Experimental design

1. The U.S. joined the Paris Agreement
2. We randomized U.S. effort and foreign shaming
3. We measured approval of the US government

Introduction, part 1

The Paris Agreement is an international agreement about climate change. Every country that joins the agreement promises to contribute to the worldwide goal of fighting climate change, by developing and carrying out a plan to reduce its emissions of carbon dioxide as quickly as possible.

Introduction, part 2

In the future, the U.S. government must decide whether to join the Paris Agreement, and whether to pass new laws to reduce U.S. emissions of carbon dioxide. On the following screens, we will describe one approach the U.S. government could take in the future, and ask whether you approve or disapprove.

The U.S. joined the Paris Agreement

In 2021, the U.S. government announced that it would join the Paris Agreement. When it officially joined later that year, the U.S. said: “As a member of the Paris Agreement, we pledge to reduce U.S. emissions of carbon dioxide by 25%.”

We randomized U.S. laws

- **Cut 25%:** Over the next few years, the government passed new laws to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Experts agreed that the new laws would increase U.S. energy prices by [4 or 10]% and reduce U.S. carbon emissions by 25%.
- **Cut 5%:** Same, but reduce emissions by 5%
- **No Action:** Over the next few years, the government did not pass any new laws to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Because it did not pass any new laws, the government did not affect U.S. energy prices or U.S. carbon emissions.

Half of the vignettes contained shaming

Many countries said the U.S. should be ashamed of itself. They criticized the U.S. for ...

- **If No Action:** doing nothing to reduce U.S. emissions, and for violating the promises it made when it joined the Paris Agreement.
- **If Cut 5%:** doing so little to reduce U.S. emissions, and for violating the promises it made when it joined the Paris Agreement.
- **If Cut 25%:** doing so little to reduce U.S. emissions.

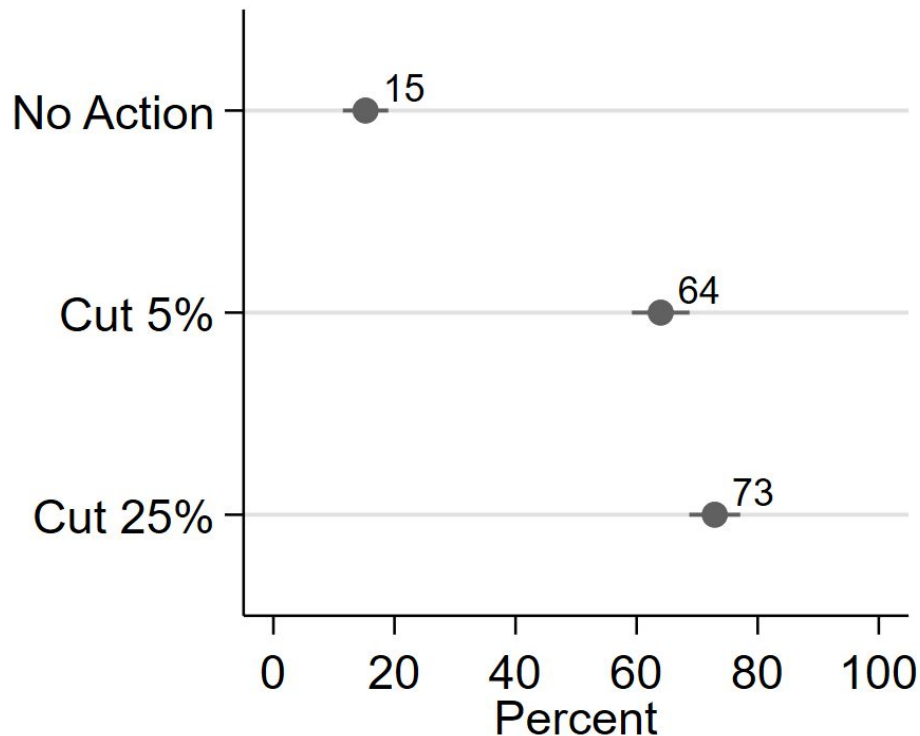
We measured approval

Taking into account all the decisions the U.S. government made in the passage you read, would you approve or disapprove of what U.S. government did overall?

Data collection

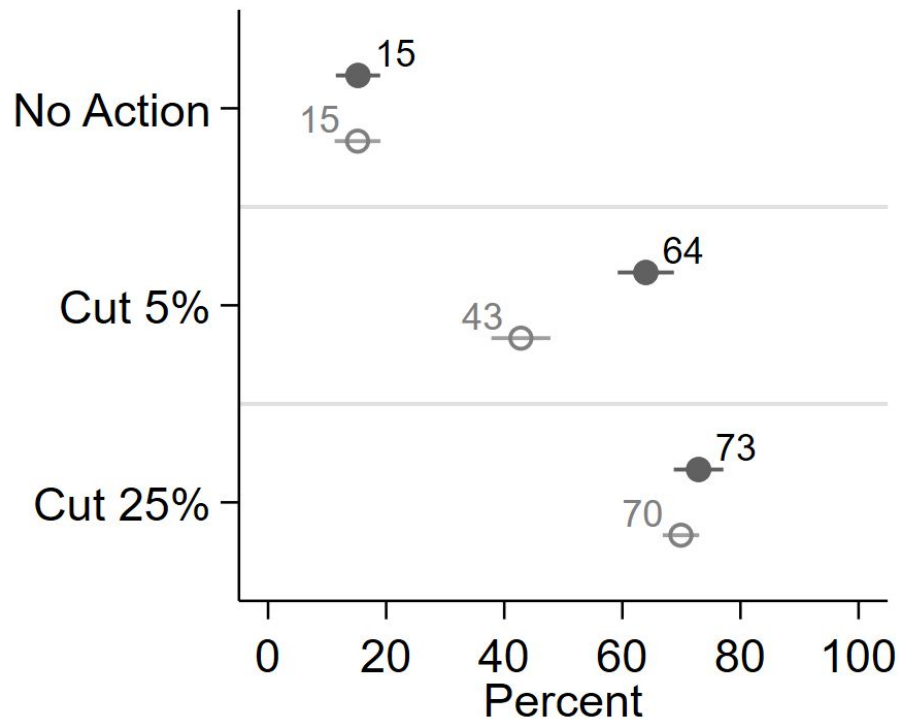
- Lucid fielded the experiment to 5,785 U.S. adults in September/October 2018.
- The sample was 37% Democrat, 32% Independent, 31% Republican.
- We reweighted the sample to match PEW benchmarks: 33% Democrat, 41% Independent, 26% Republican.

Approval without shaming



- *No Action* was unpopular
- *Cut 5%* was very popular (akin to greenwashing)
- *Cut 25%* wasn't much better

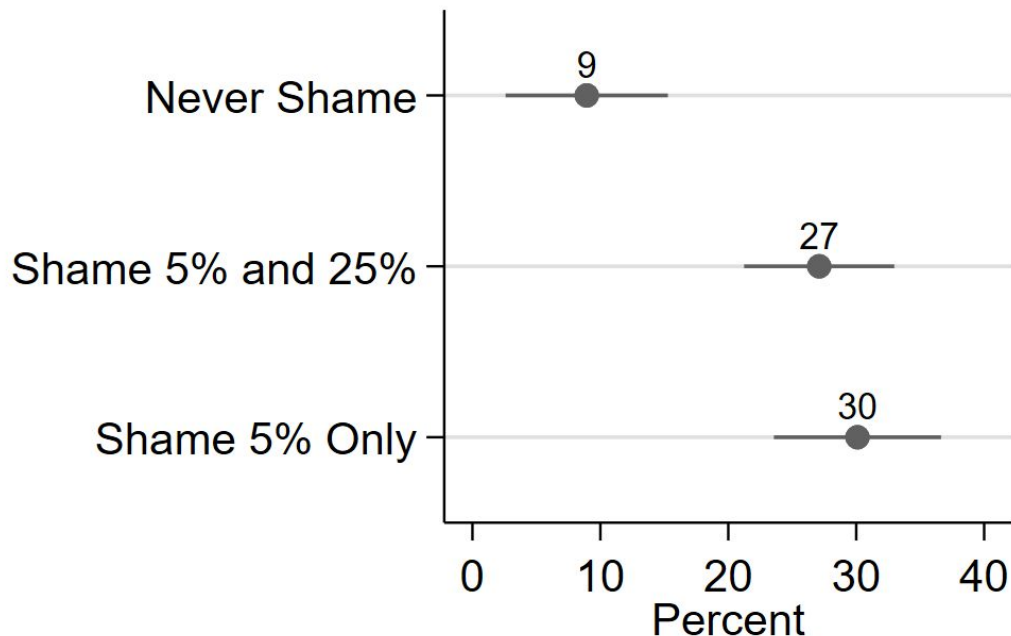
Approval with shaming (gray dots)



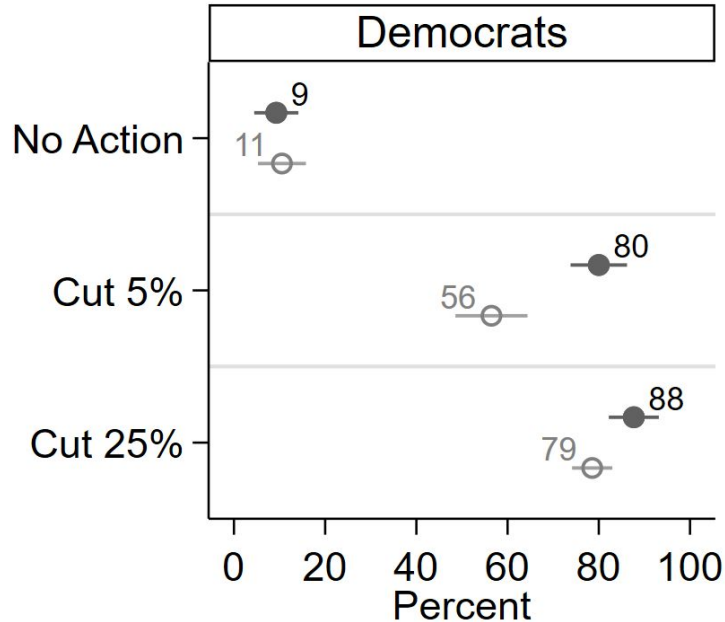
- No effect if *No Action*
- No effect if *Cut 25%*
- Large effect if *Cut 5%*

Shaming raised the incentive to Cut 25%

Incentive = (Approval | *Cut 25%*) – (Approval | *Cut 5%*)

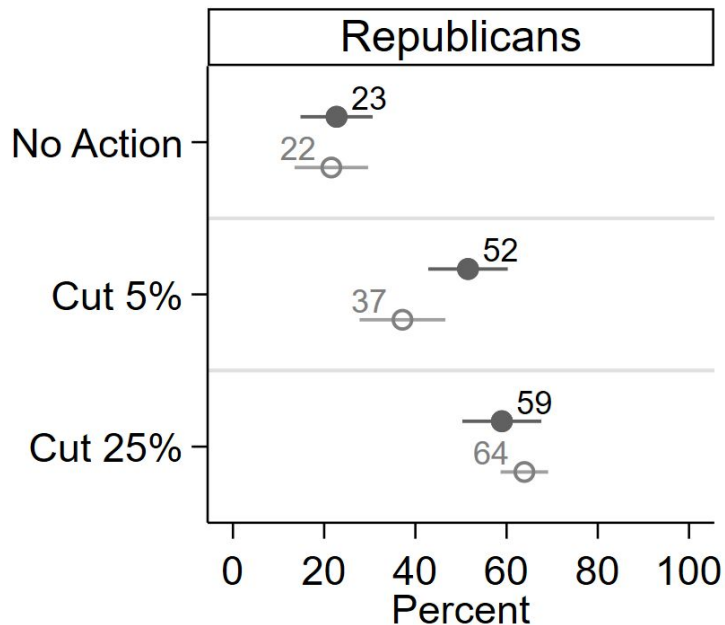


Democrats



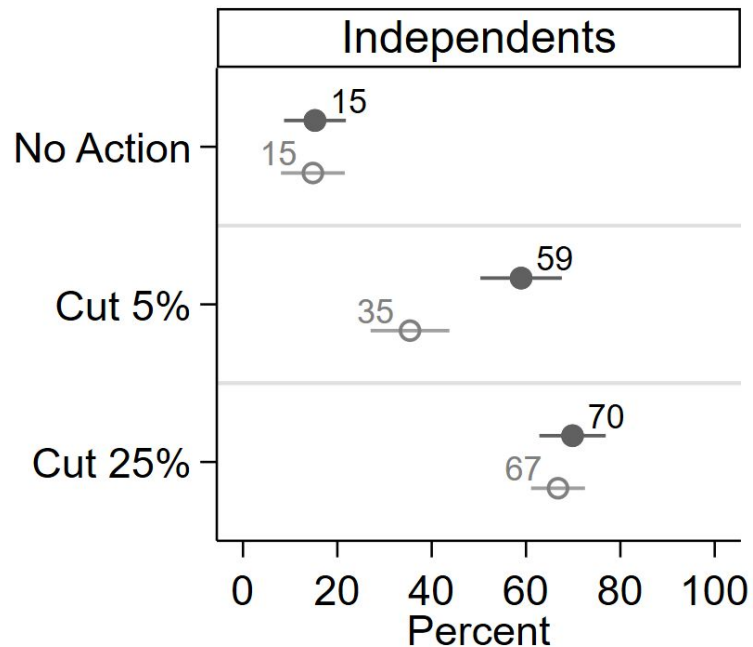
- Without shaming, *Cut 5%* was very popular.
- Shaming made *Cut 5%* much less popular.

Republicans



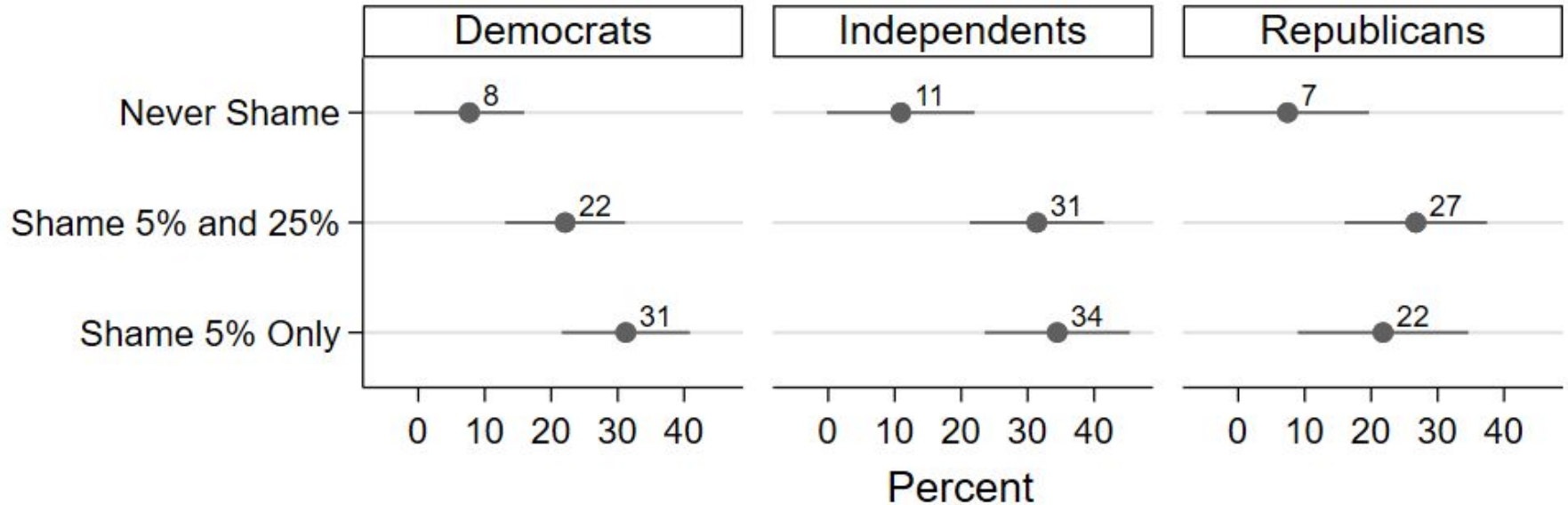
- Inaction was unpopular!
- Without shaming, *Cut 5%* was popular
- Shaming made *Cut 5%* much less popular.

Independents



- Without shaming, *Cut 5%* was popular.
- Shaming made *Cut 5%* much less popular.

For all, shaming raised the incentive to *Cut 25%*

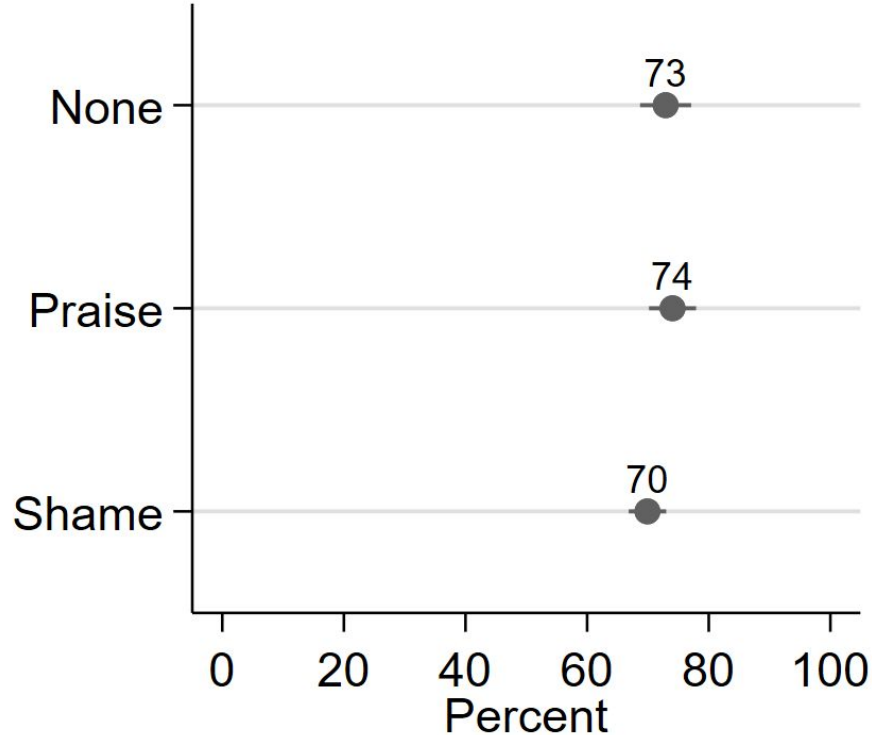


Could praise make Cut 25% more popular?

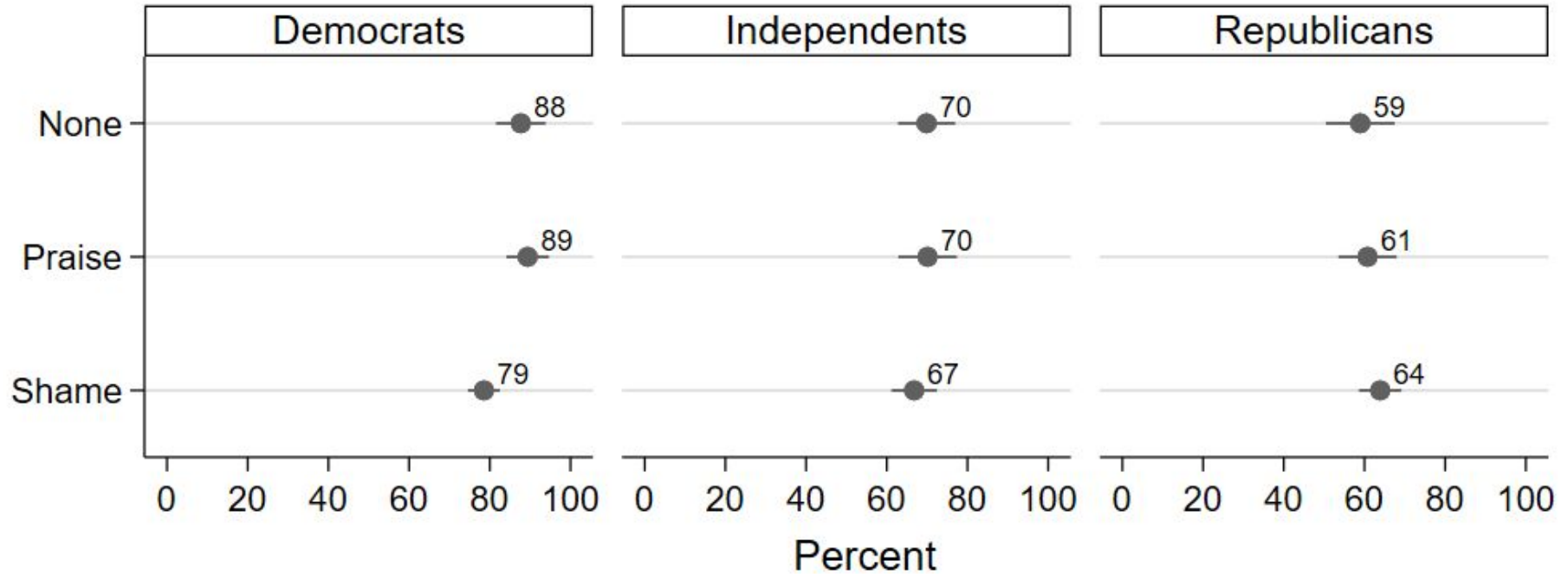
We replaced shaming with the following statement:

“Many countries said the U.S. should be proud of itself. They praised the U.S. for doing so much to reduce U.S. emissions, and for honoring the promises it made when it joined the Paris Agreement.”

Praise did not increase approval of *Cut 25%*



Praise had no effect on any party



Findings so far

- Shaming reduced approval of modest action, increasing the incentive to do more.
- The effects were powerful for all political parties.
- Praise, on the other hand, failed to boost the popularity of strong action.

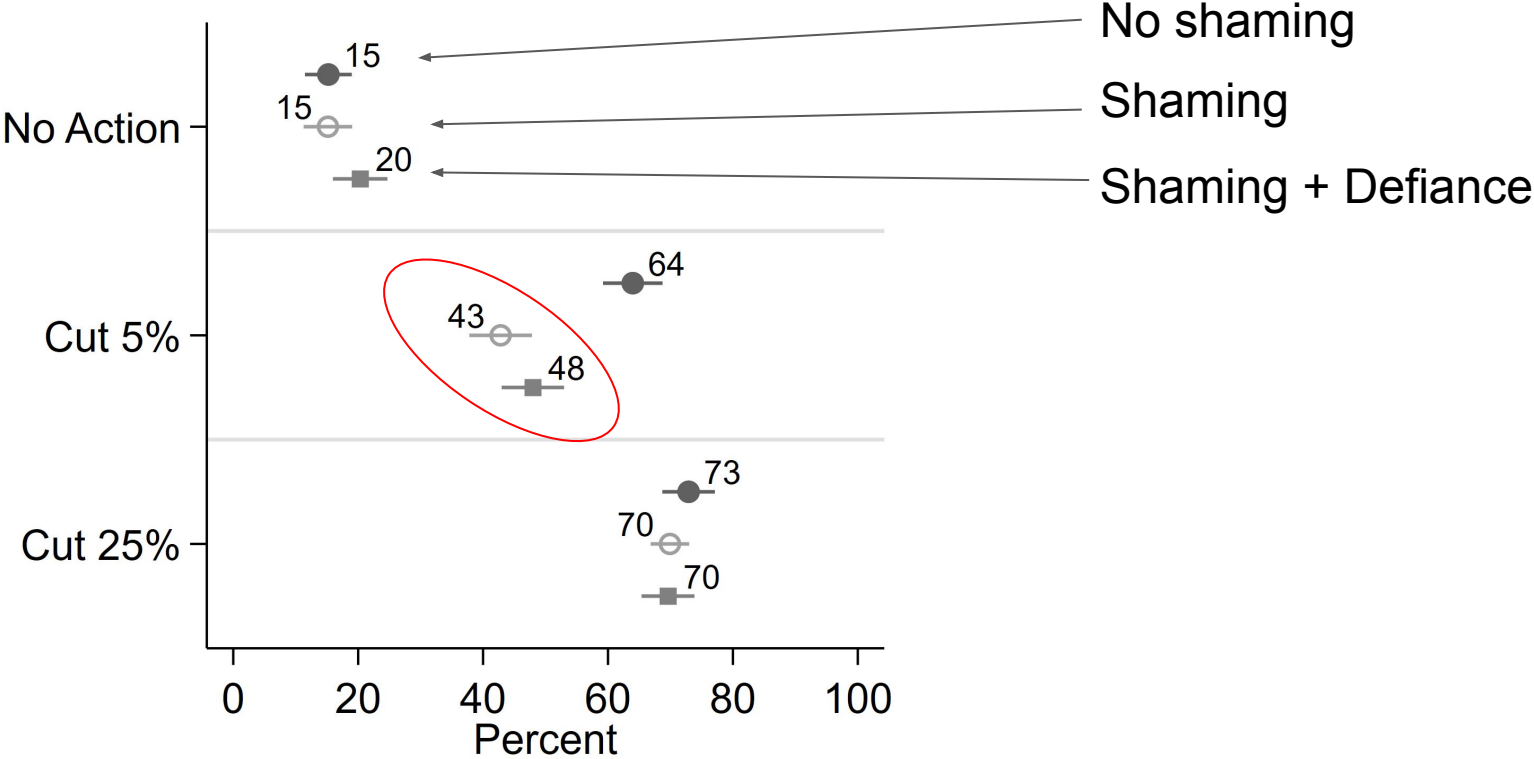
Could rejoinders dampen these effects?

- ***Defiance***: The U.S. government responded by saying that other countries had no right to meddle in our affairs. It said other countries were trying to hurt and control the United States.

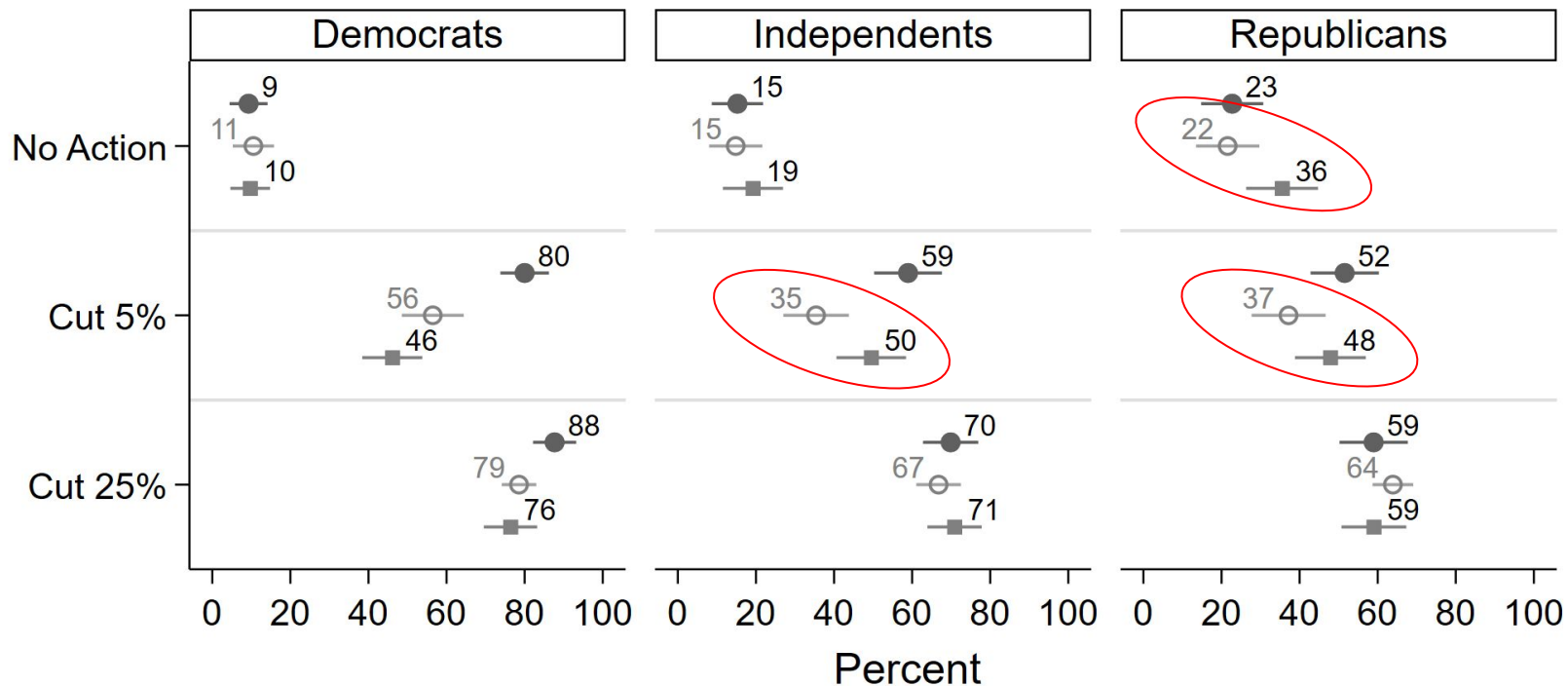
OR

- ***Regret***: The U.S. government responded by saying that other countries were right. It apologized for not doing more and said it would work to reduce U.S. emissions in the future.

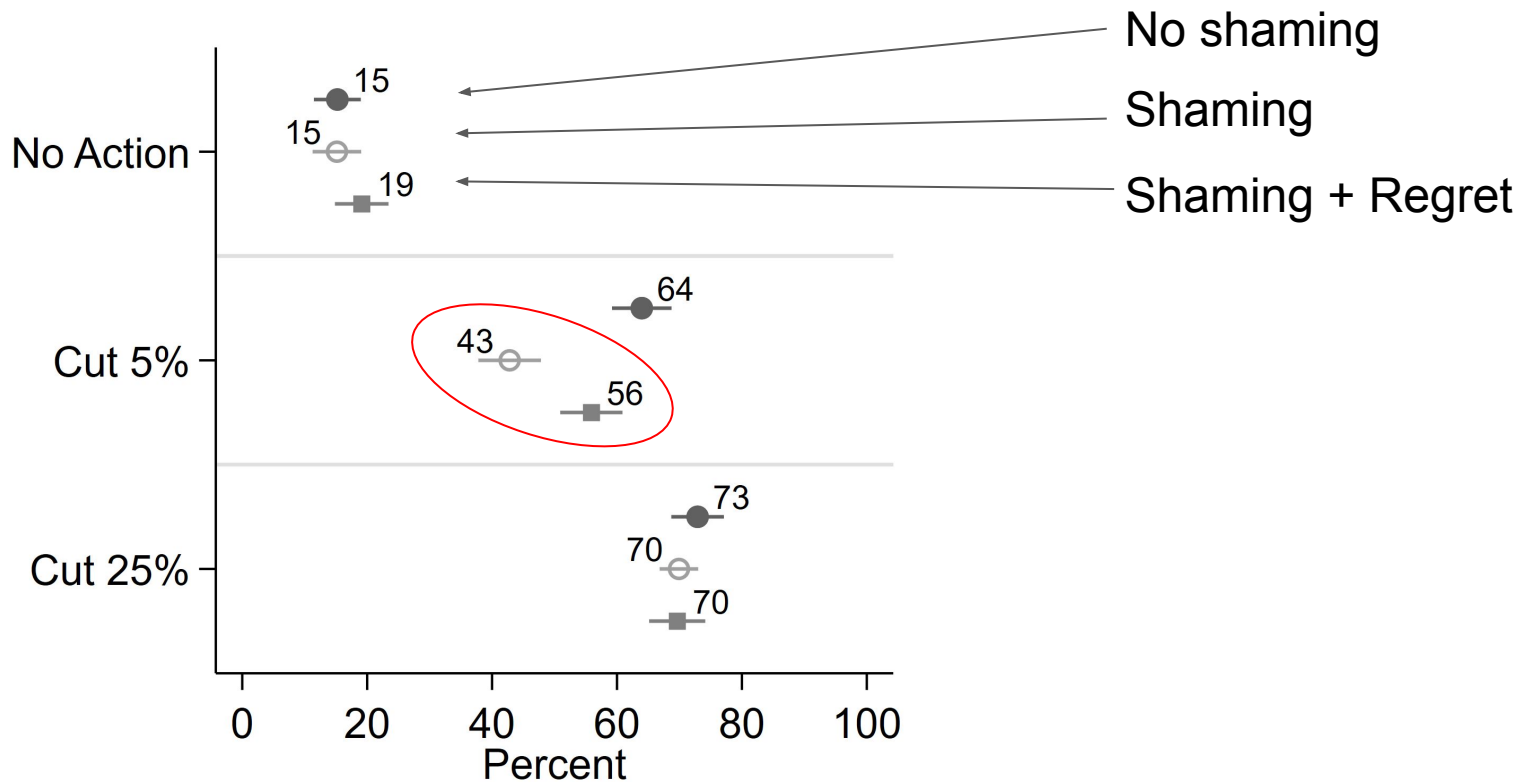
Defiance had little effect overall



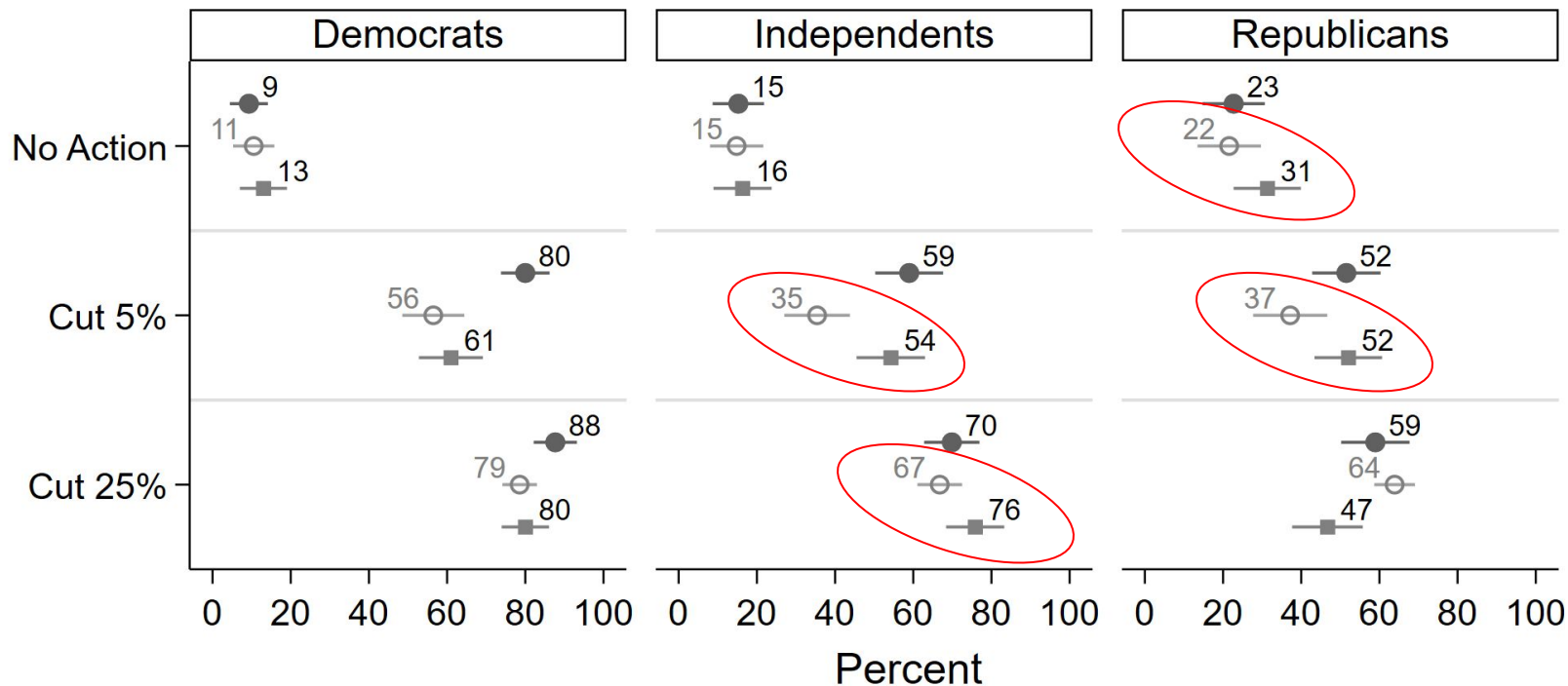
But defiance did appeal to I's and R's



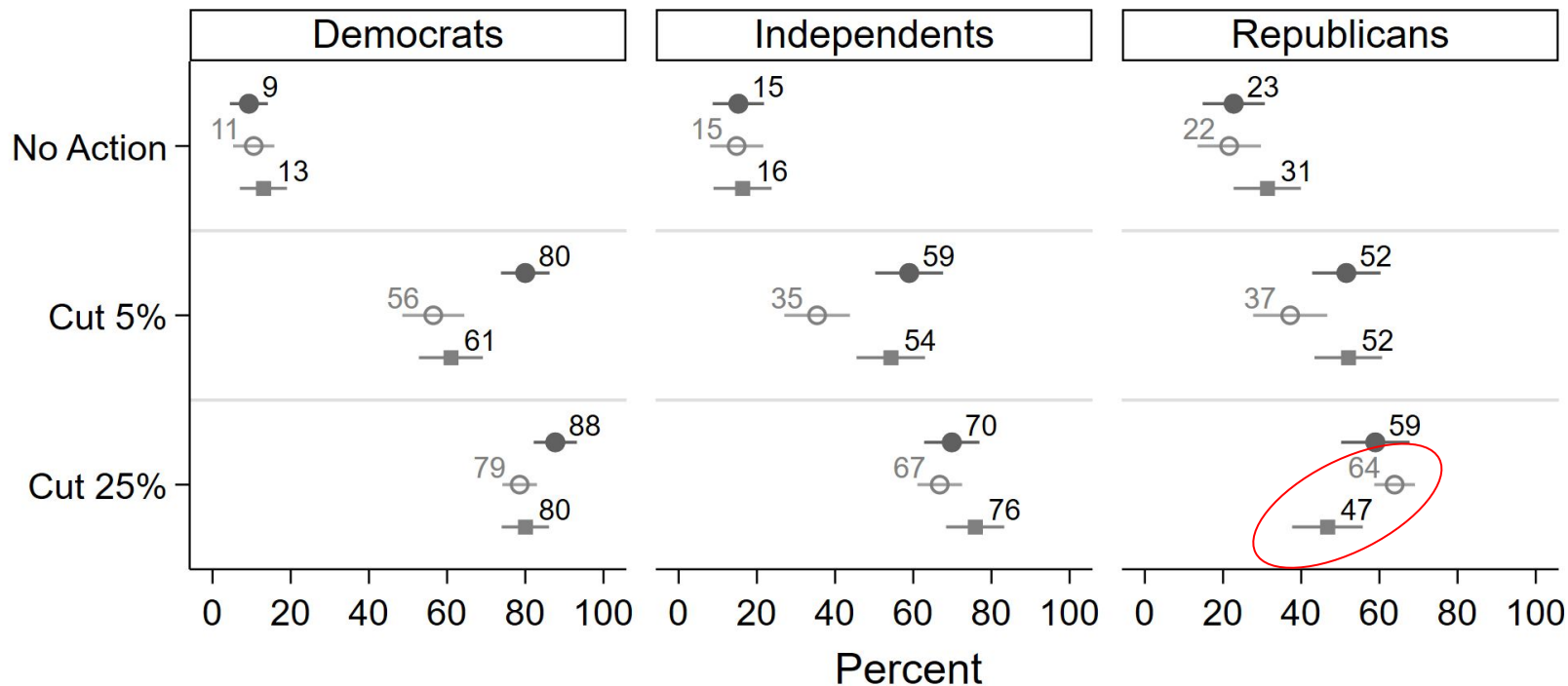
Regret was more effective



Regret often appealed to both I's and R's



But regret backfired among R's after *Cut* 25%



What we've learned about rejoinders

- Rejoinders reduced but did not eliminate the effects of shaming.
- Regret proved more effective than defiance, but neither was effective among Democrats.

Conclusion

- Many think the Paris Agreement relies on shaming.
- Scholars haven't studied the microfoundations of shaming.
- We provide the first micro-level evidence about the power and limits of shaming mechanisms.

Summary of findings

- Absent shaming, governments can gain popularity through modest measures, even when they violate Paris.
- Shaming discredits modest measures, boosting the incentive to do more.
- Regret can counteract shaming, at least for some audiences.

Extensions

- **Vary the Paris pledge.** Does shaming depend on what a country promised? Whether it promised?
- **Study other actions.** What if laws increased emissions, or decreased emissions by more than Paris required?
- **Study the incentives to shame.** What costs might the shamers incur? When is shaming incentive-compatible?

We look forward to your advice!

EXTRA STUFF

Party ID and desire to regulate fossil fuels

P: Party 3 cats (1,2,3)	C: Regulate FF? (Binary)		Total
	0	1	
Dem	361 16.92	1,773 83.08	2,134 100.00
Ind	659 35.95	1,174 64.05	1,833 100.00
Rep	1,011 55.61	807 44.39	1,818 100.00
Total	2,031 35.11	3,754 64.89	5,785 100.00

Party ID and belief that humans are causing CC

P: Party 3 cats (1,2,3)	C: Humans causing? (2 cat)		Total
	No/DK	Yes	
Dem	322 15.09	1,812 84.91	2,134 100.00
Ind	654 35.68	1,179 64.32	1,833 100.00
Rep	1,020 56.11	798 43.89	1,818 100.00
Total	1,996 34.50	3,789 65.50	5,785 100.00

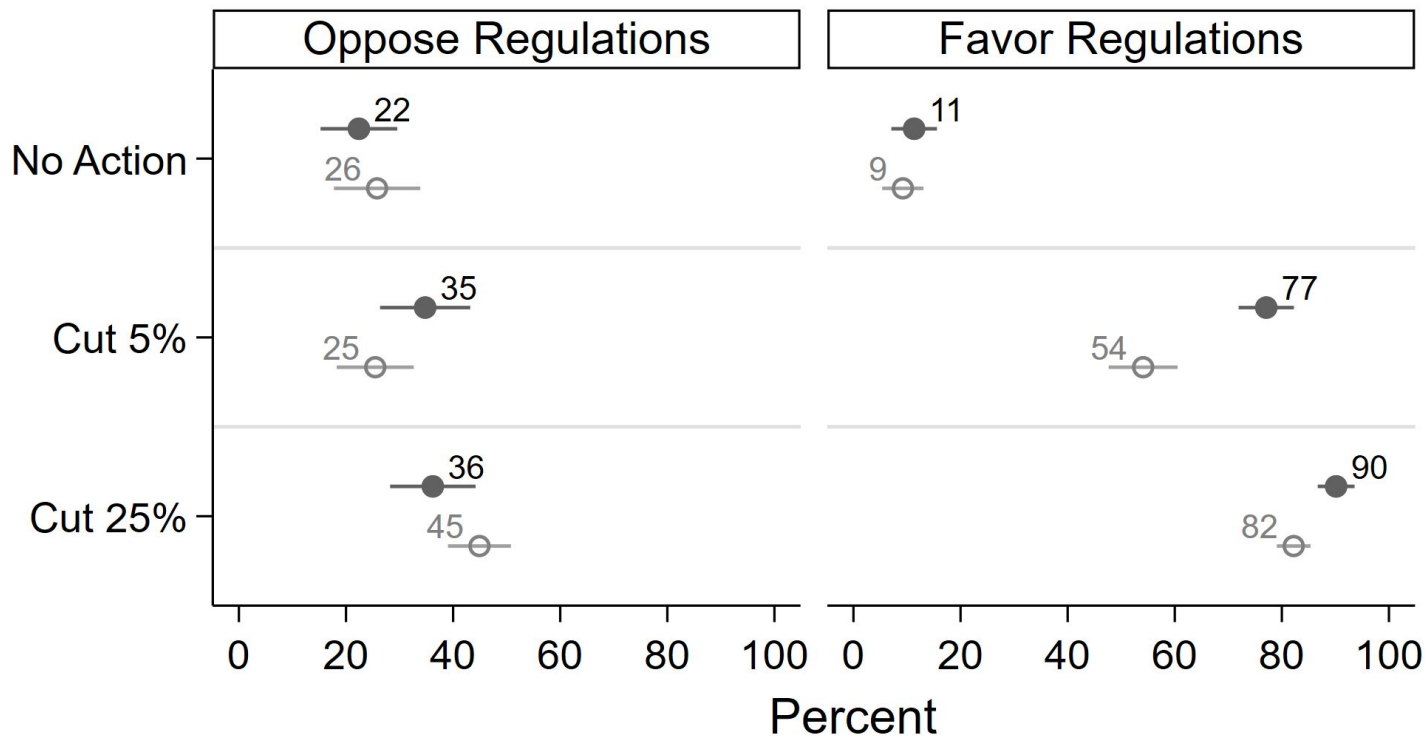
Party ID and belief in cultural superiority

P: Party 3 cats (1,2,3)	N: Culture is superior (binary)		Total
	0	1	
Dem	1,285 60.22	849 39.78	2,134 100.00
Ind	1,120 61.10	713 38.90	1,833 100.00
Rep	587 32.29	1,231 67.71	1,818 100.00
Total	2,992 51.72	2,793 48.28	5,785 100.00

Party ID and belief in U.S. superiority

P: Party 3 cats (1,2,3)	N: US is superior (binary)		Total
	0	1	
Dem	1,206 56.51	928 43.49	2,134 100.00
Ind	1,025 55.92	808 44.08	1,833 100.00
Rep	466 25.63	1,352 74.37	1,818 100.00
Total	2,697 46.62	3,088 53.38	5,785 100.00

Approval by regulatory preferences and shaming



Approval by cultural superiority and shaming

