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QAnon: The Effects of Radical Ideology on Conspiracy Belief

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Introduction to Research

- This study examines the relationship between known correlates of conspiracy belief and the newfound QAnon conspiracy system.
- Conspiracy theories can be categorized as either partisan or non-partisan.
  - The most accurate predictor of partisan conspiracy belief is political orientation while the most accurate predictor of non-partisan conspiracy belief is conspiratorial thinking.
- The two most significant factors in conspiratorial thinking are paranoid ideation and distrust of officialdom. Belief in the paranormal was also a significant factor in conspiratorial thinking.
  - American conservatives are asymmetrically more likely to exhibit both paranoid ideation and distrust of officialdom than American liberals.
  - American conservatives are more susceptible to conspiratorial thinking than American liberals.
- Super-conspiracy
  - A construct wherein multiple conspiracy theories are linked together hierarchically.

The QAnon Conspiracy

- QAnon is a super-conspiracy centered around an anonymous image board user called "Q".
  - Q is believed by their supporters to be high ranking military intelligence with "Q-level clearance".
- The conspiracy is centered around a cabal of high-ranking government officials called the "deep state" or the "new world order" who use their power and influence to abduct, traffic, and engage sexually with children.
  - The conspiracy is tied to Donald Trump who is believed to be the savior of the country and will usher in the "storm" and the "Great Awakening".
  - During the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, many Q believers believed the pandemic was a false-flag operation to hurt Trump's reelection.
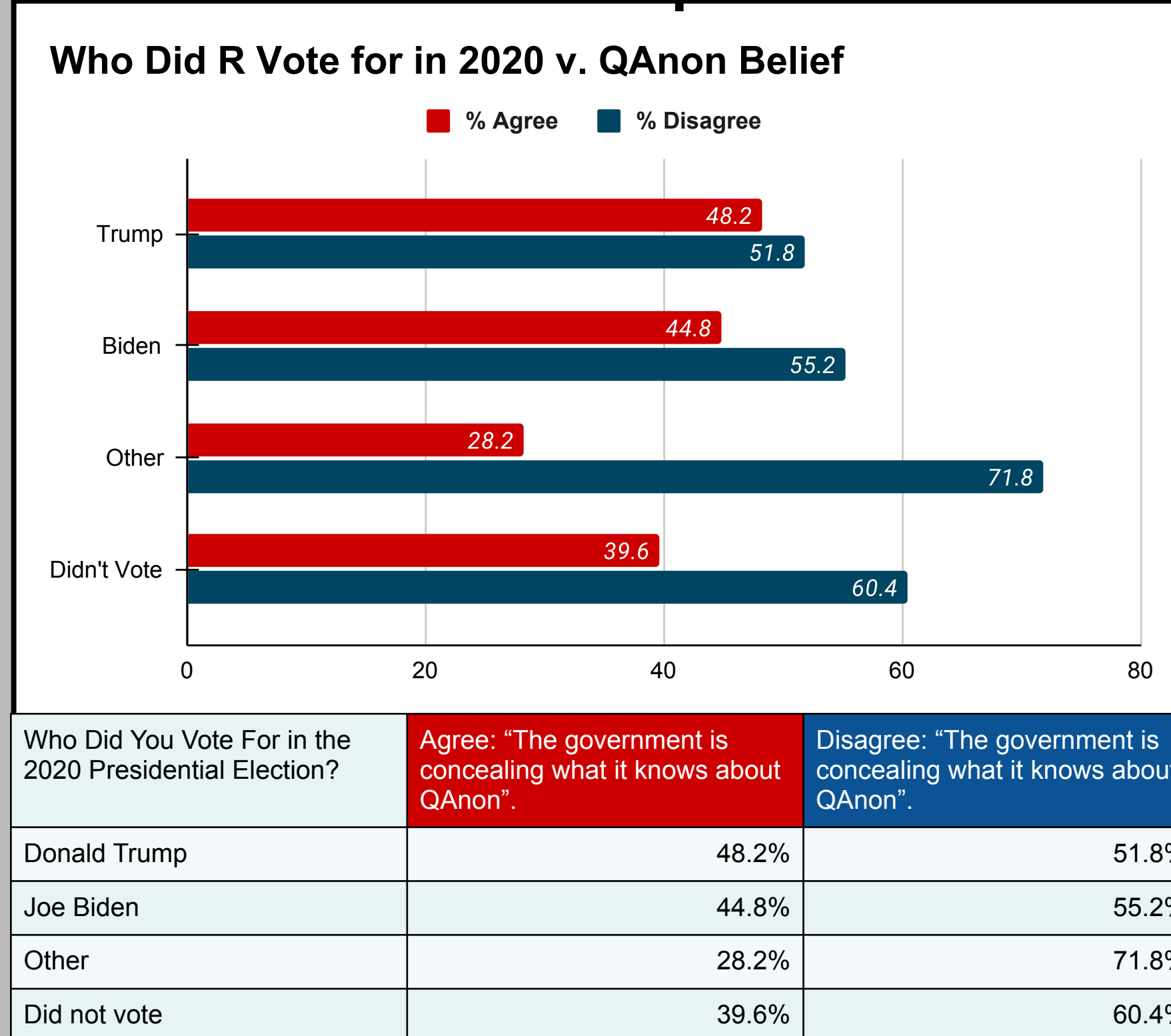 - Q frequently advises against listening to the mainstream media.

Hypotheses:

H 1: Respondents who voted for Republican candidate Donald Trump in the 2020 Presidential election are more likely than respondents who voted for another candidate to believe the government is concealing information about QAnon.

H 2: Respondents who believe in one or more conspiracy theories are more likely than respondents who believe in no conspiracy theories to believe the government is concealing information about QAnon.

H 3: Belief in other conspiracy theories (i.e. conspiratorial thinking) will have a greater effect on belief in QAnon than any other factor.

Data
H1: Partisanship v. QAnon

Who Did R Vote for in 2020 v. QAnon Belief

Who Did You Vote For in the 2020 Presidential Election?	Agree: "The government is concealing what it knows about QAnon".	Disagree: "The government is concealing what it knows about QAnon".
Donald Trump	48.2%	51.8%
Joe Biden	44.8%	55.2%
Other	28.2%	71.8%
Did not vote	39.6%	60.4%

*Combined strongly and agree as agree, same with disagree
N=1030   Source: Chapman Survey of American Fears, 2020

H2: Conspiratorial Thinking v. QAnon

Conspiracy Belief vs QAnon Belief

N=1028
*Combined strongly and agree as agree, same with disagree

(I): Illuminati conspiracy, (M): Moon landing conspiracy, (G): Global Warming conspiracy, (S): South Dakota Crash Conspiracy

Source: Chapman Survey of American Fears, 2020

H3: Linear Regression of QAnon Belief Predictors

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	Significance
Constant	0.008	0.129		0.952
Who R Voted for in 2020 Election	0.078	0.023	0.087	0.001
Fear of Corrupt Government Officials	0.143	0.058	0.067	0.013
South Dakota Crash Conspiracy	0.421	0.062	0.232	0.000
Global Warming Conspiracy	0.275	0.047	0.161	0.000
Moon Landing Conspiracy	0.145	0.061	0.075	0.018
Illuminati Conspiracy	0.362	0.056	0.212	0.000
Belief in Hauntings by Spirits	0.077	0.024	0.088	0.001
Fear of Left-Wing Extremists	0.058	0.018	0.085	0.001

Source: Chapman Survey of American Fears, 2020

Table 1
*significant at <.05
R Square for Model is .364
Adj. R Square is .359

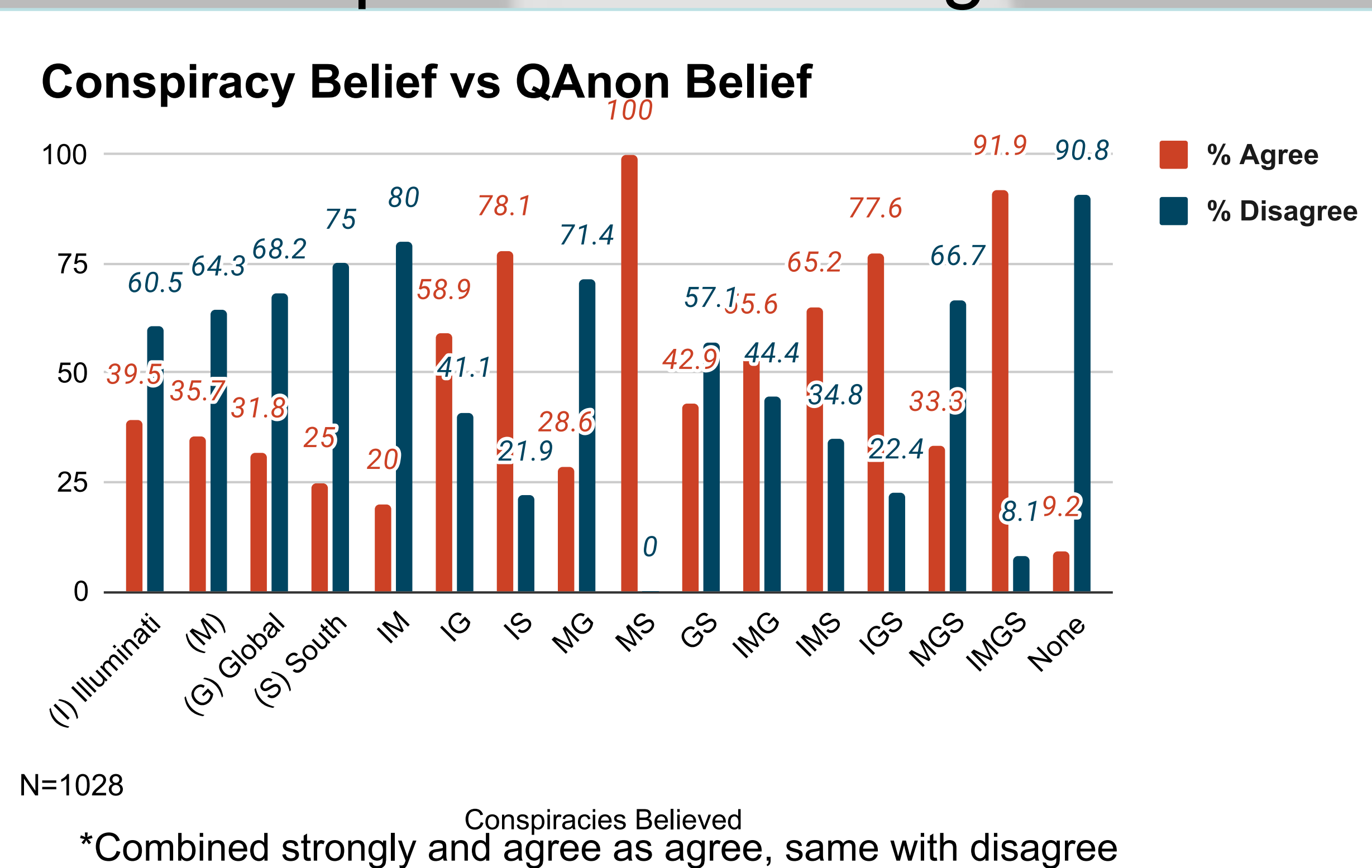*Combined strongly and agree as agree, same with disagree

The four conspiracies were all significant, with the South Dakota Crash having the highest coefficient, *R who believed in other conspiracies were more likely to believe in QAnon.* Who R voted for in 2020 was significant, *Those who voted for Trump were more likely to believe in QAnon.* Belief in hauntings and fear of left-wing extremists both were significant, *R who believe in the paranormal or are afraid of left-wing extremists are more likely to believe in QAnon.* Fear of corrupt government officials was also significant, *R who were afraid of corrupt government officials were more likely to believe in QAnon. Relating to distrust of officialdom.*

Interpretation:

The table measures who R voted for in the 2020 election, fear of corrupt government officials, belief in the four significant conspiracy theories, belief in spirit hauntings, and fear of left wing extremists in reference to respondent's belief the government is concealing information about QAnon.

The South Dakota Crash had the highest coefficient: 0.232 meaning it is the biggest predictor of belief in QAnon.

Findings

H1: Partisanship v. QAnon

The results showed that those who voted for Donald Trump in 2020 were 3.4% more likely to believe the government is concealing information about QAnon than those who voted for Joe Biden. Trump voters also had the lowest percentage in disagreement with the statement. Interestingly, those who voted for a third party candidate were the least likely to believe in QAnon with 71.8% of respondents disagreeing.

H2: Conspiratorial Thinking v. QAnon

Results showed that R who believed in none of the four significant conspiracies on the survey had a 9.2% likelihood of believing in QAnon, whereas R who believed in one had an average 33% likelihood, R who believed in two had an average 54.75% likelihood, R who believed in three had an average 57.93% likelihood, and R who believed in all four had a 91.9% likelihood. Interestingly, R who believed in the moon landing conspiracy and the South Dakota crash had a 100% likelihood of believing in QAnon.

H3: Linear Regression of QAnon Belief Predictors

The first regression ran narrowed down eight significant factors relating to QAnon belief. The second regression (Table 1) revealed that, except for the moon landing conspiracy, all of the conspiracies had the three highest coefficients, and of those, the South Dakota crash had the highest with a coefficient of 0.232. The SD crash being a fake conspiracy included to show conspiratorial thinking in general. Other significant factors include: 2020 election vote, fear of government corruption, fear of left-wing extremists, and belief in hauntings. Oddly, fear of ghosts, fear of vaccine microchips, fear of Antifa and Black Lives Matter, and agreement that the Covid-19 pandemic was created to hurt Donald Trump were all ruled out in the first regression as insignificant.

Conclusions

- While R who voted for Trump in 2020 are more likely to believe in QAnon, the gap between them and Biden voters is not more than 4%.
  - The high percentage of Biden voters believing the government is concealing information about QAnon could be due to the government at time of survey being controlled by Trump who is a key figure in the conspiracy.
- Conspiratorial thinking is the strongest predictor of QAnon belief.
- The principal factor of QAnon belief and the partisanship divide means that QAnon is a super-conspiracy beyond previous categorization of conspiracies, a hybrid-partisan conspiracy system.

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