

Subject:

I have chosen to create a question based on study by Dan Kahan, on how politics can affect your mathematics ability.

Question:

In a recent study Professor Dan Kahan recruited more than 1,000 people and gave them the raw statistics needed to gauge the effectiveness of a politically neutral product (a skin cream for rashes) and another "product" that was politically charged (a gun control law). Study respondents were presented with one of four possible scenarios:

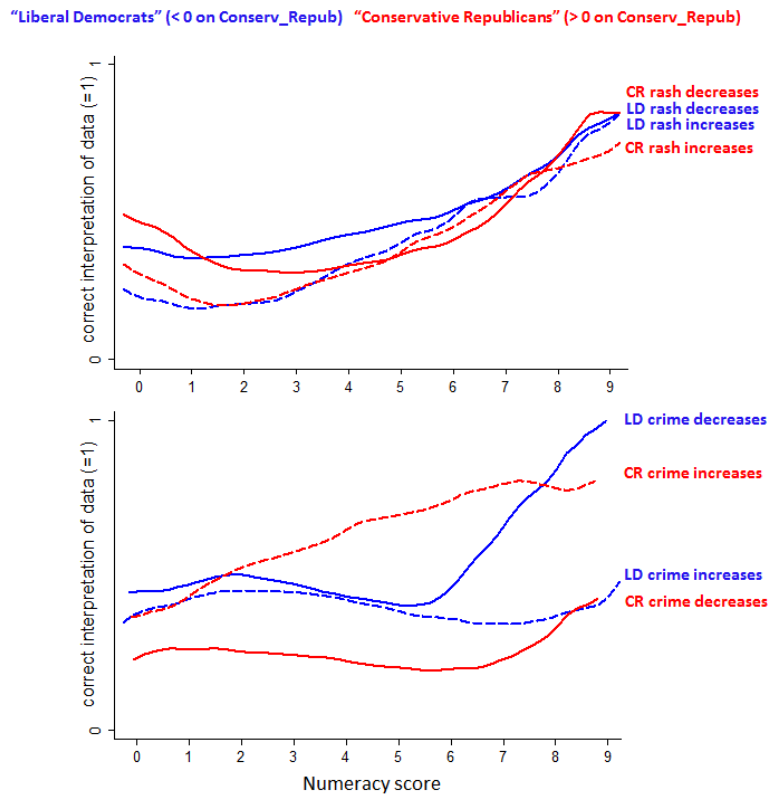
	Rash got worse	Rash got better
Patient who did use the new skin cream	223	75
Patient who did not use the new skin cream	107	21

	Rash got better	Rash got worse
Patient who did use the new skin cream	223	75
Patient who did not use the new skin cream	107	21

	Increase in crime	Decrease in crime
Cities that did ban carrying concealed handguns in public	223	75
Cities that did not ban carrying concealed handguns in public	107	21

	Decrease in crime	Increase in crime
Cities that did ban carrying concealed handguns in public	223	75
Cities that did not ban carrying concealed handguns in public	107	21

Here the result



What do you think did just happen?

Answers

The first instinct is to compare which number is bigger and this leads to the wrong answer. In the case the answer does not go against the political beliefs people do not do the mathematic part of the problem, while if the answer offends their political sensibilities, they dig deeper, think harder, and even start performing some calculations which in this case would have led to a more accurate response.

"If the wrong answer is contrary to their ideological positions, we hypothesize that that is going to create the incentive to scrutinize that information and figure out another way to understand it," Kahan.

Task	Date	Start	End	Interruptions
Write out problem statement	11/05/14	13:55	13:59	
Review lesson topic	11/05/14	13:59	14:03	
Write up thoughts	11/05/14	14:03	14:33	00:05