# Representation on Continuous Policies

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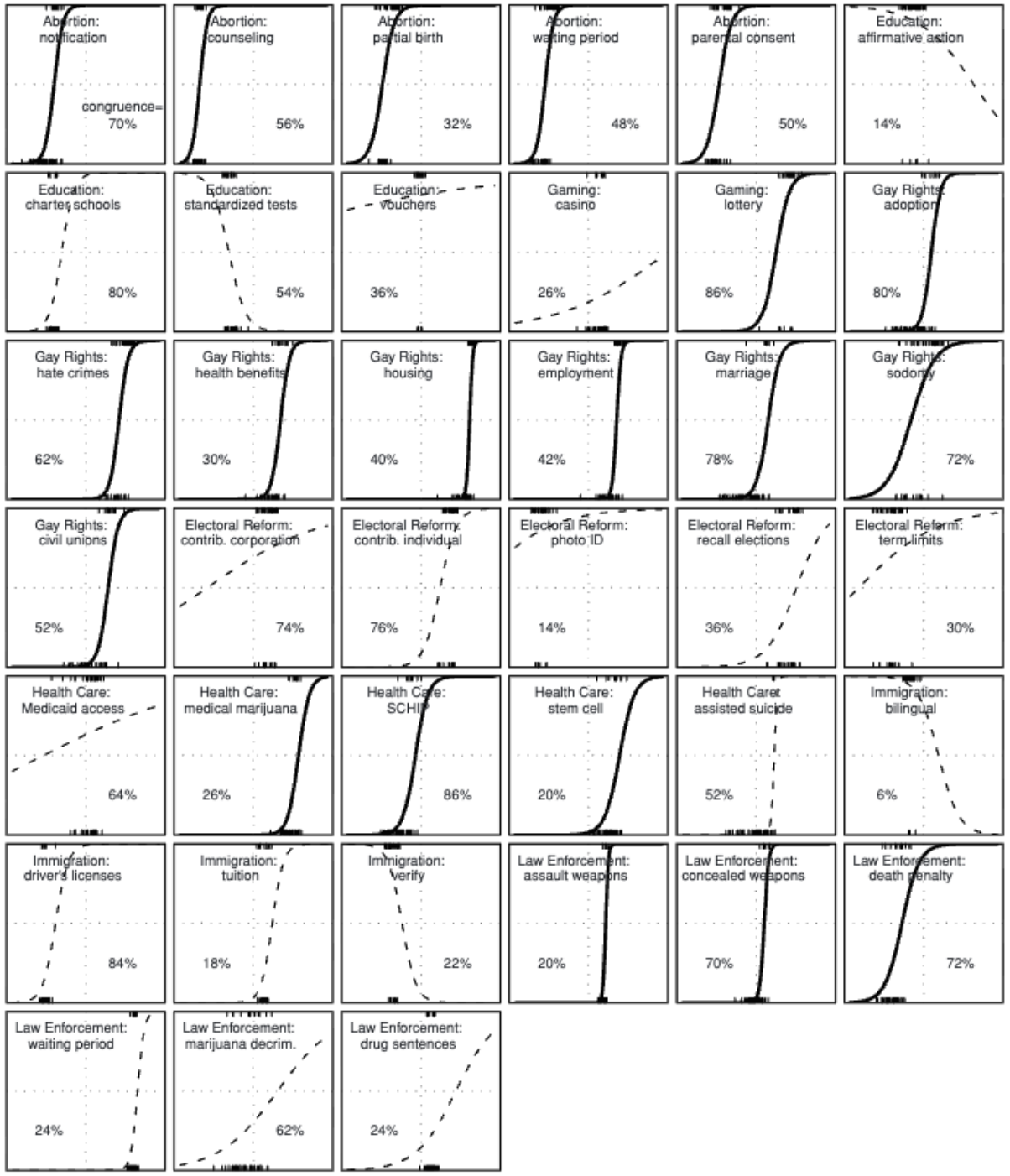
# Incongruence (Lax and Phillips 2011)

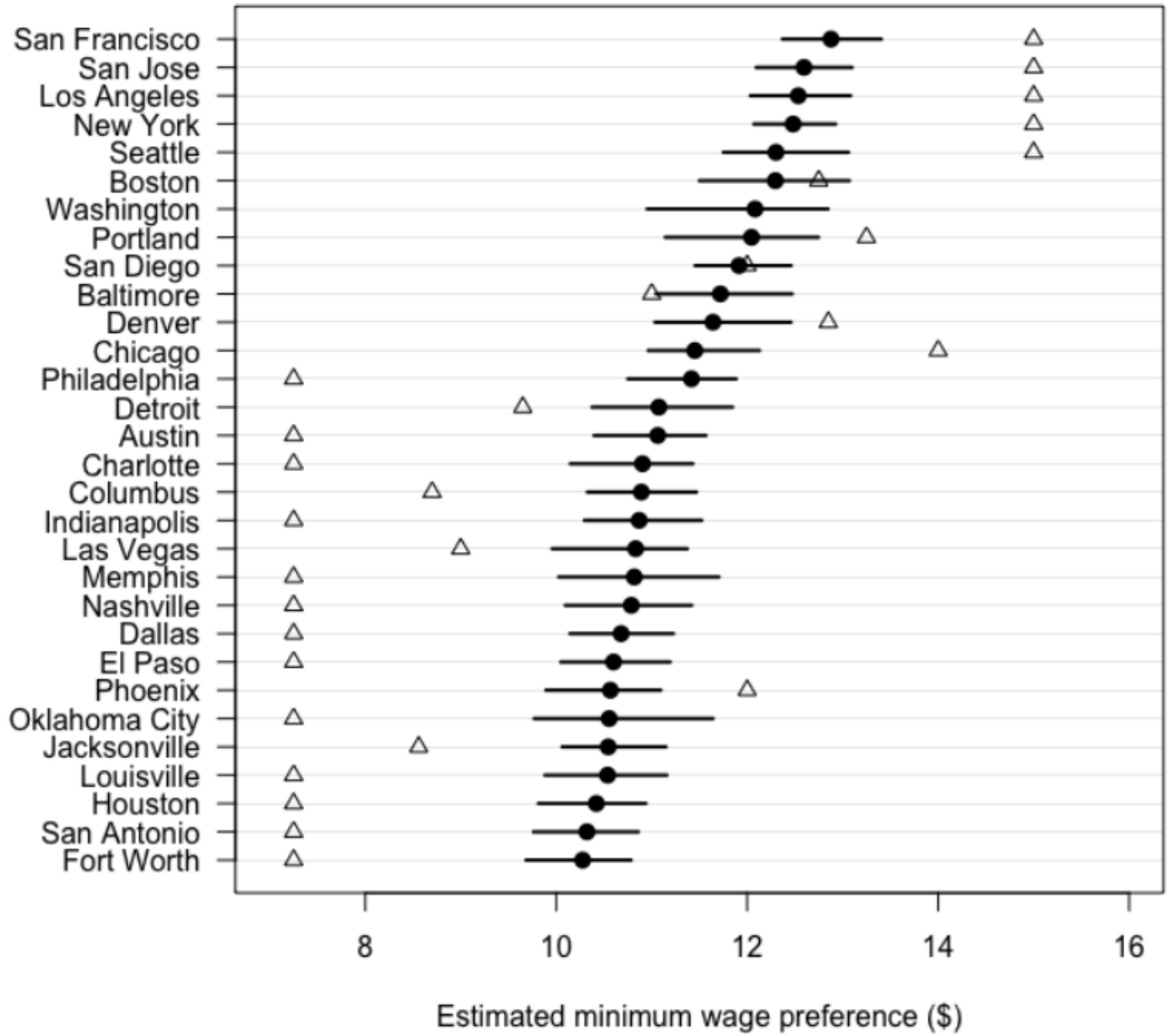
# A “Democratic Deficit?”



# Is 40% a lot of incongruence? (Warshaw and Caughey 2021)

- Policy is a continuum -> this is a function of how we draw the lines
- Do people consider policy “very” incongruent?
- More importantly: is the difference between public opinion and policy enough to change votes/behavior?
    - *Even if* we assume complete knowledge, faith in the political system, etc?
- Need a good case study policy

# The Minimum Wage (Simonovits and Payson 2023)



# A choice experiment

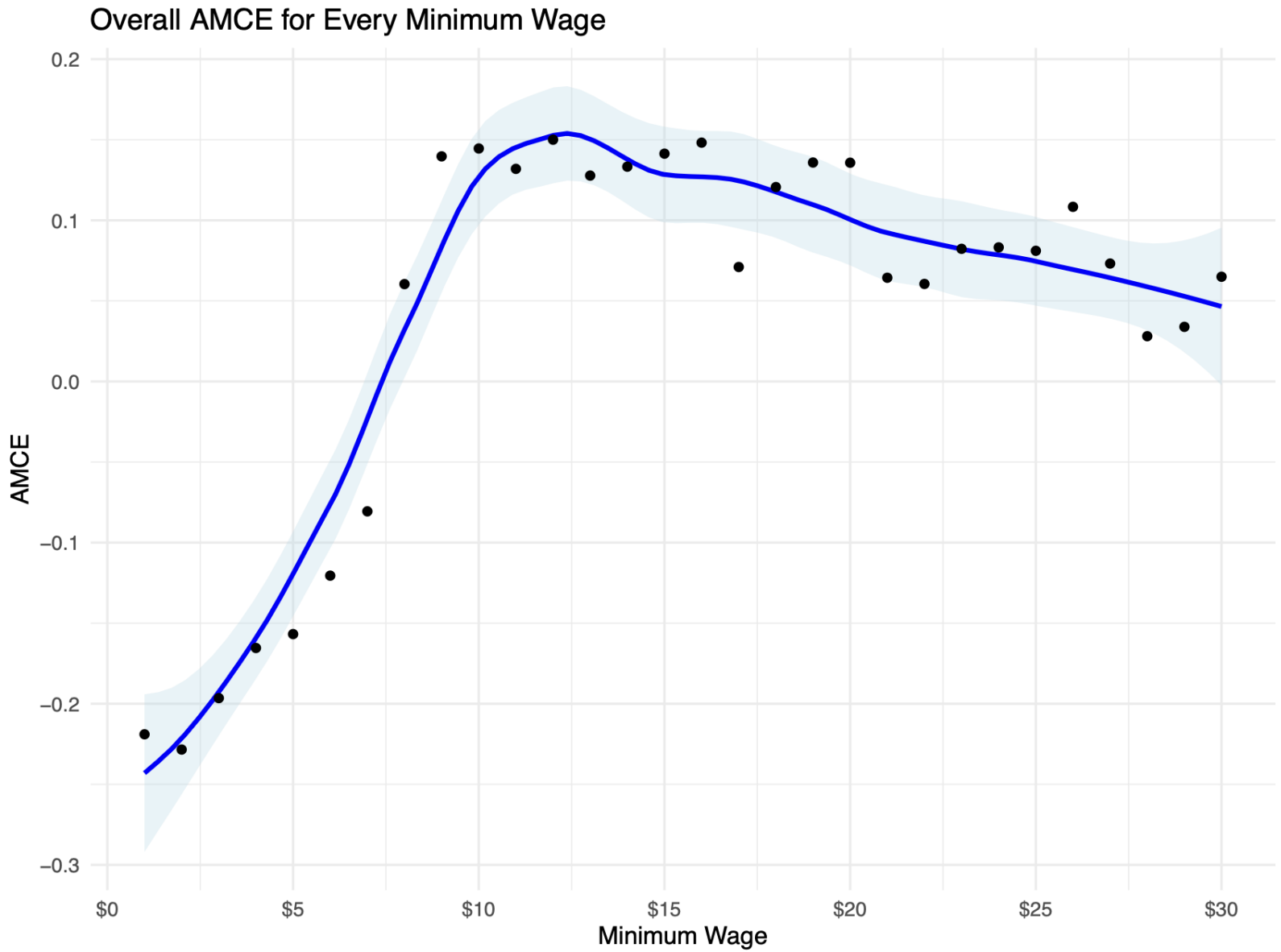
Given this choice, which one would you prefer?

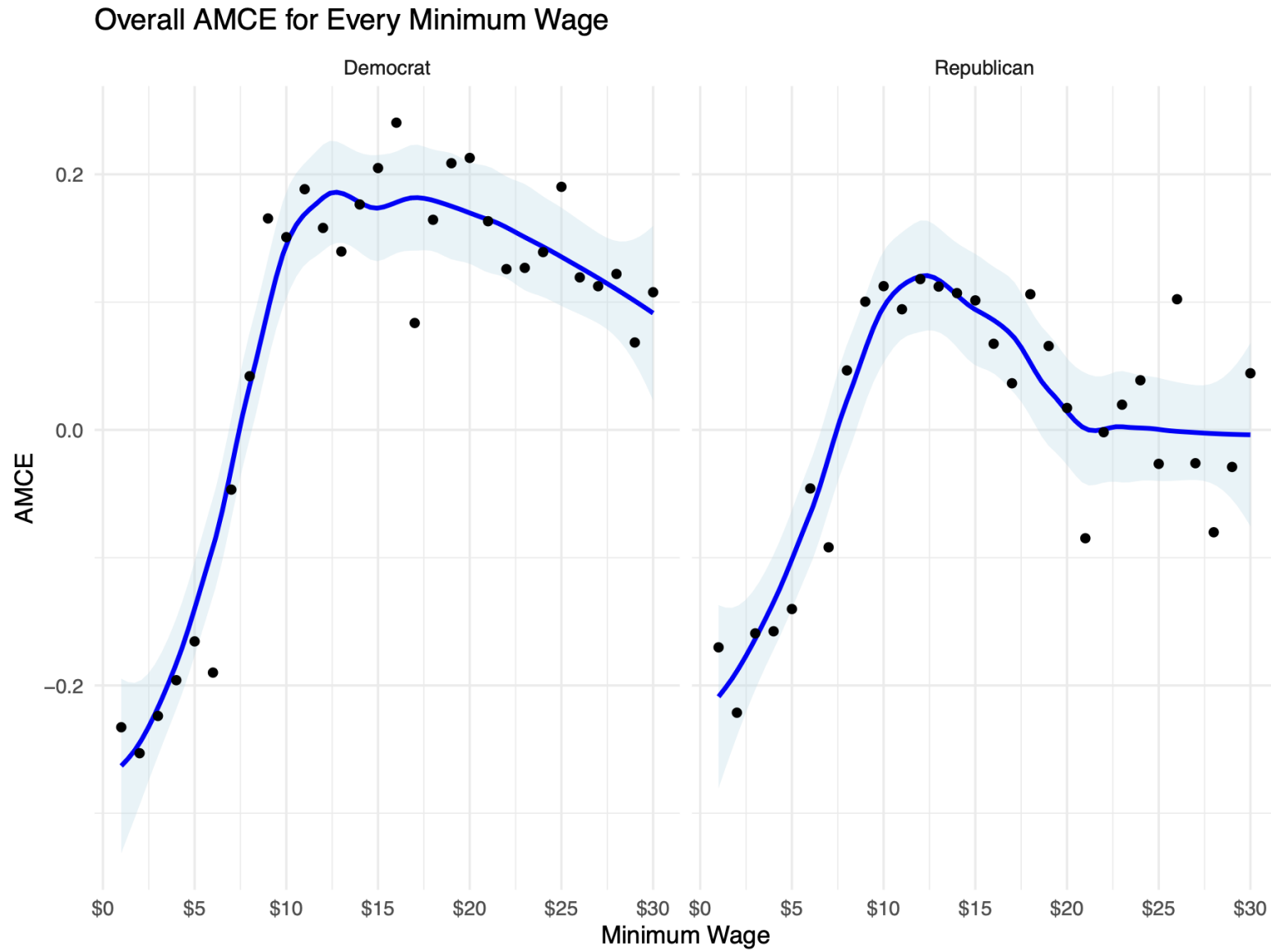
| Set A | Set B |
| --- | --- |
| Permit abortion | Never permit abortion |
| Legalize marijuana nationwide | Do not legalize marijuana nationwide |
| Raise the federal minimum wage to $23 per hour | Keep the federal minimum wage at $7.25 per hour |
| Do not ban assault rifles | Ban assault rifles |

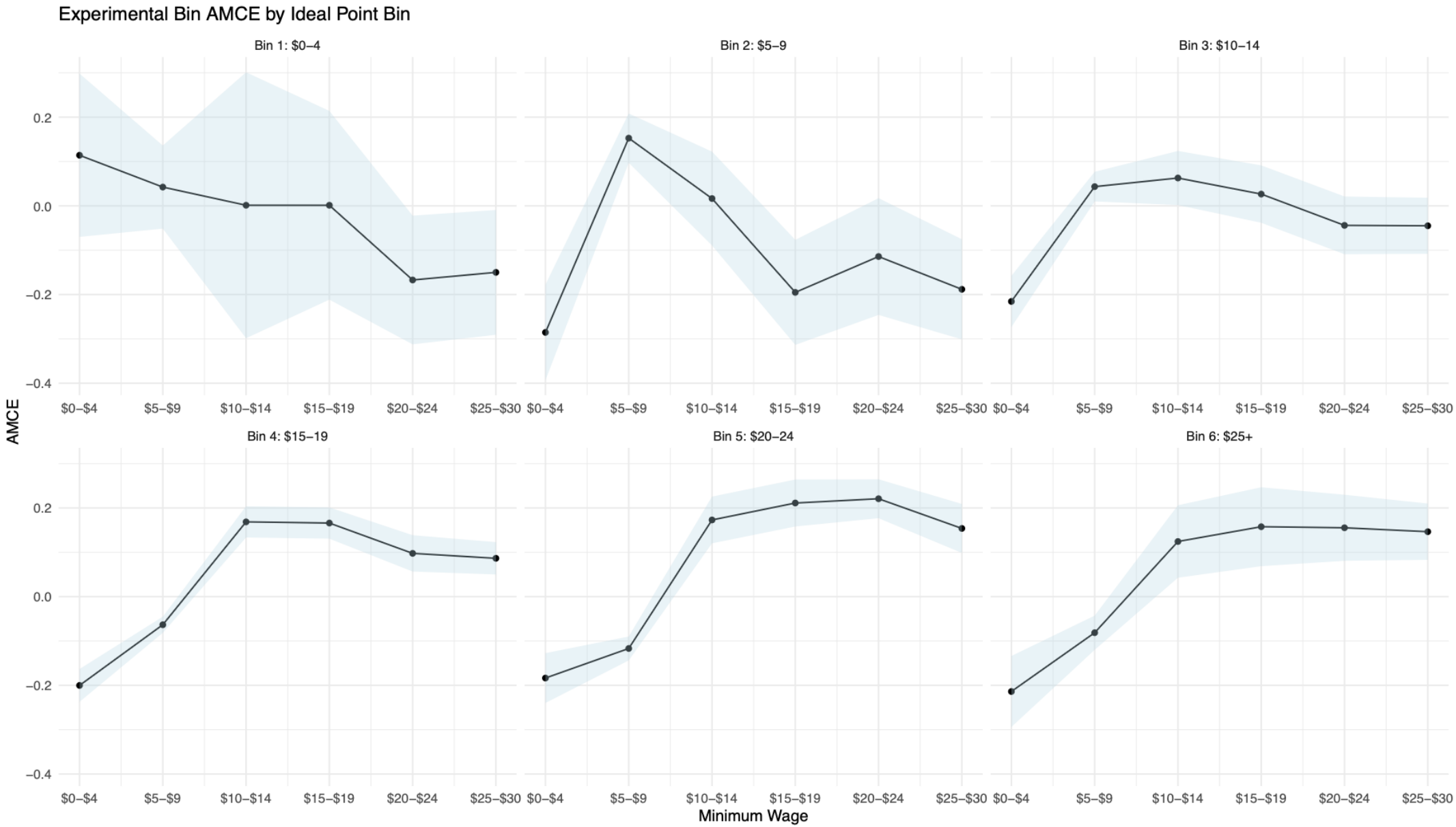
- ○ Set A
- ○ Set B

# Average Marginal Component Effect

- Simple linear regression with errors clustered by respondent
- DV: 1 if respondent chooses Set A, 0 if B
- IVs for each attribute:
  - 1 if Set A includes the affirmative version
  - -1 if Set A includes the negative version
  - 0 otherwise


Overall AMCE for Every Minimum Wage
0.2
0.1
0.0
−0.1
−0.2
−0.3
AMCE
$0
$5
$10
$15
$20
$25
$30
Minimum Wage

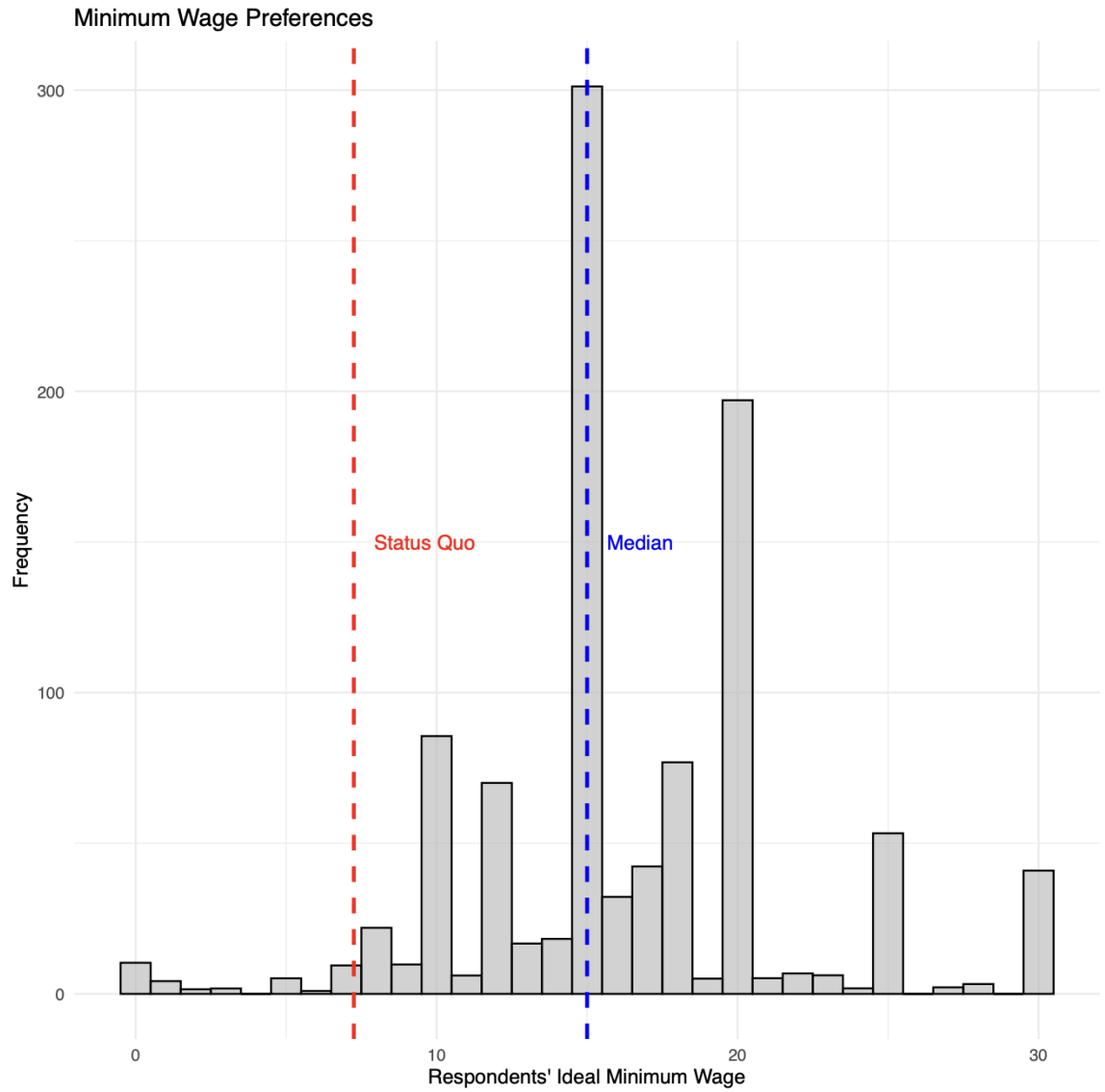

Overall AMCE for Every Minimum Wage
Democrat
Republican
AMCE
0.2
0.0
−0.2
$0
$5
$10
$15
$20
$25
$30
Minimum Wage

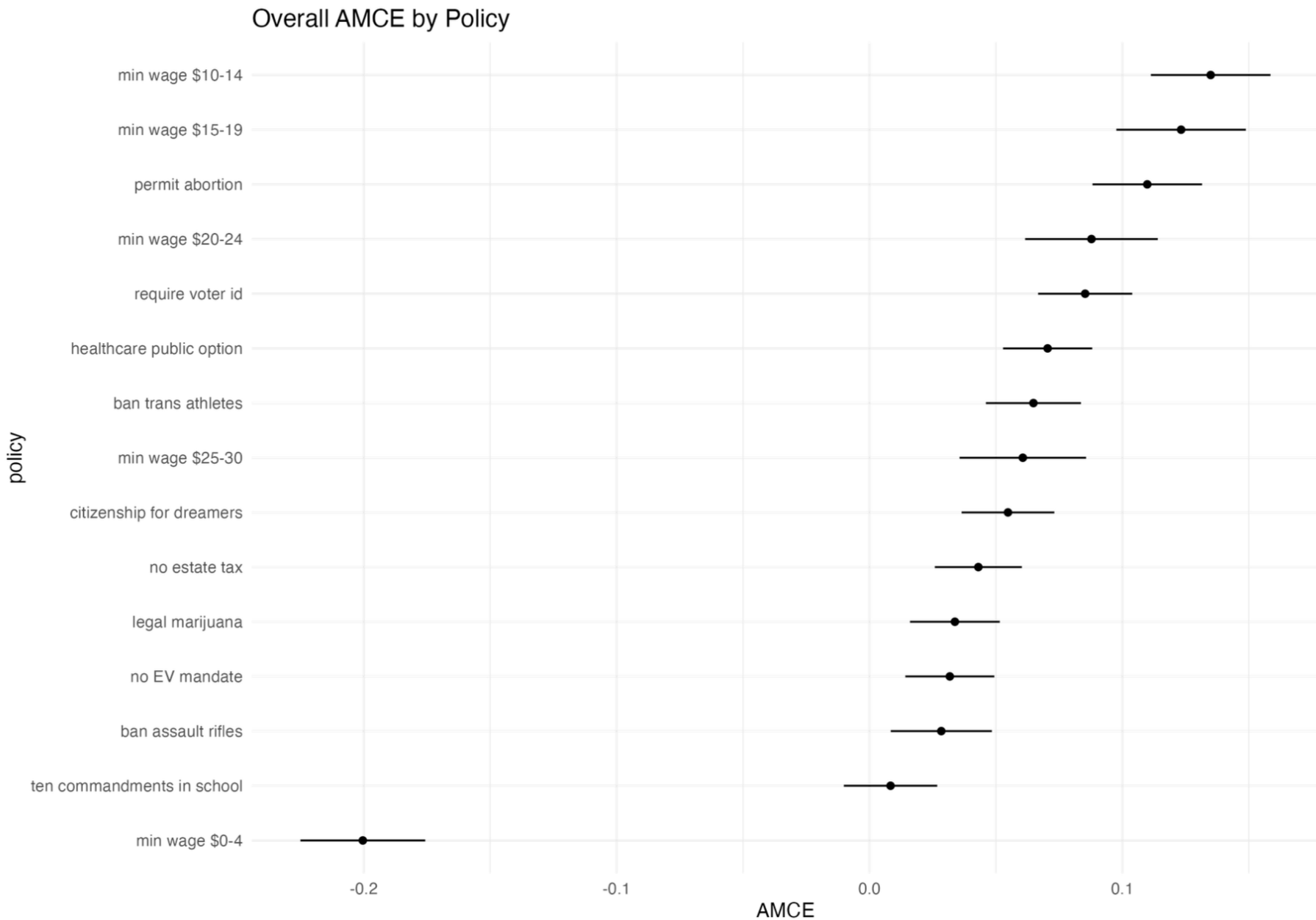

Experimental Bin AMCE by Ideal Point Bin
Bin 1: $0–4
Bin 2: $5–9
Bin 3: $10–14
Bin 4: $15–19
Bin 5: $20–24
Bin 6: $25+
AMCE
0.2
0.0
−0.2
−0.4
$0–$4
$5–$9
$10–$14
$15–$19
$20–$24
$25–$30
Minimum Wage

# Conclusion

- In the United States, people are close-to-indifferent over large ranges of potential values for the minimum wage
- Incongruence does not necessarily imply that people are very dissatisfied with policy
- Understanding the intensity of preferences in a continuous policy space is fundamental to understanding electoral incentives

# The Minimum Wage




Overall AMCE by Policy
min wage $10-14
min wage $15-19
permit abortion
min wage $20-24
require voter id
healthcare public option
ban trans athletes
min wage $25-30
citizenship for dreamers
no estate tax
legal marijuana
no EV mandate
ban assault rifles
ten commandments in school
min wage $0-4
policy
-0.2
-0.1
0.0
0.1
AMCE

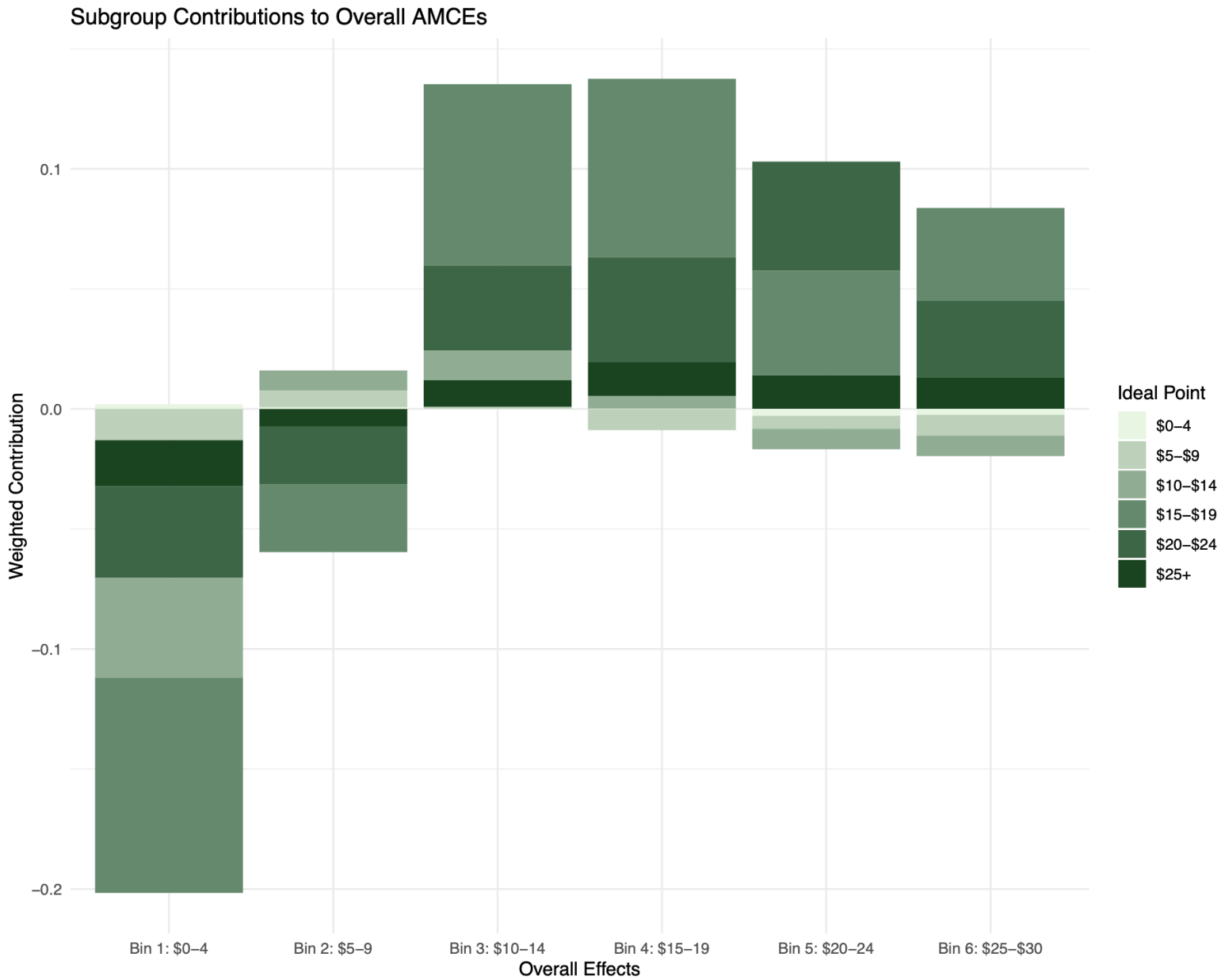

Subgroup Contributions to Overall AMCEs
0.1
0.0
−0.1
−0.2
Weighted Contribution
Bin 1: $0–4
Bin 2: $5–9
Bin 3: $10–14
Bin 4: $15–19
Bin 5: $20–24
Bin 6: $25–$30
Overall Effects
Ideal Point
$0–4
$5–$9
$10–$14
$15–$19
$20–$24
$25+

Table 1: List of policy attributes besides the minimum wage

| Affirmative | Negative |
|---|---|
| Permit abortion | Never permit abortion |
| Ban assault rifles | Do not ban assault rifles |
| Create a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants brought here as children | Do not create a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants brought here as children |
| Prohibit transgender people from competing in womens' and girls' sports | Do not prohibit transgender people from competing in womens' and girls' sports |
| Eliminate a rule that mandates that electric vehicles be at least half of all new cars and trucks sold in the United States by 2032 | Keep a rule that mandates that electric vehicles be at least half of all new cars and trucks sold in the United States by 2032 |
| Require people to provide documentary proof of citizenship in order to vote | Do not require people to provide documentary proof of citizenship in order to vote |
| Allow the display of the Ten Commandments in public schools and courthouses | Do not allow the display of the Ten Commandments in public schools and courthouses |
| Provide the option to purchase government-run insurance to all Americans | Do not provide the option to purchase government-run insurance to all Americans |
| Eliminate the estate tax | Keep the estate tax |
| Legalize marijuana nationwide | Do not legalize marijuana nationwide |

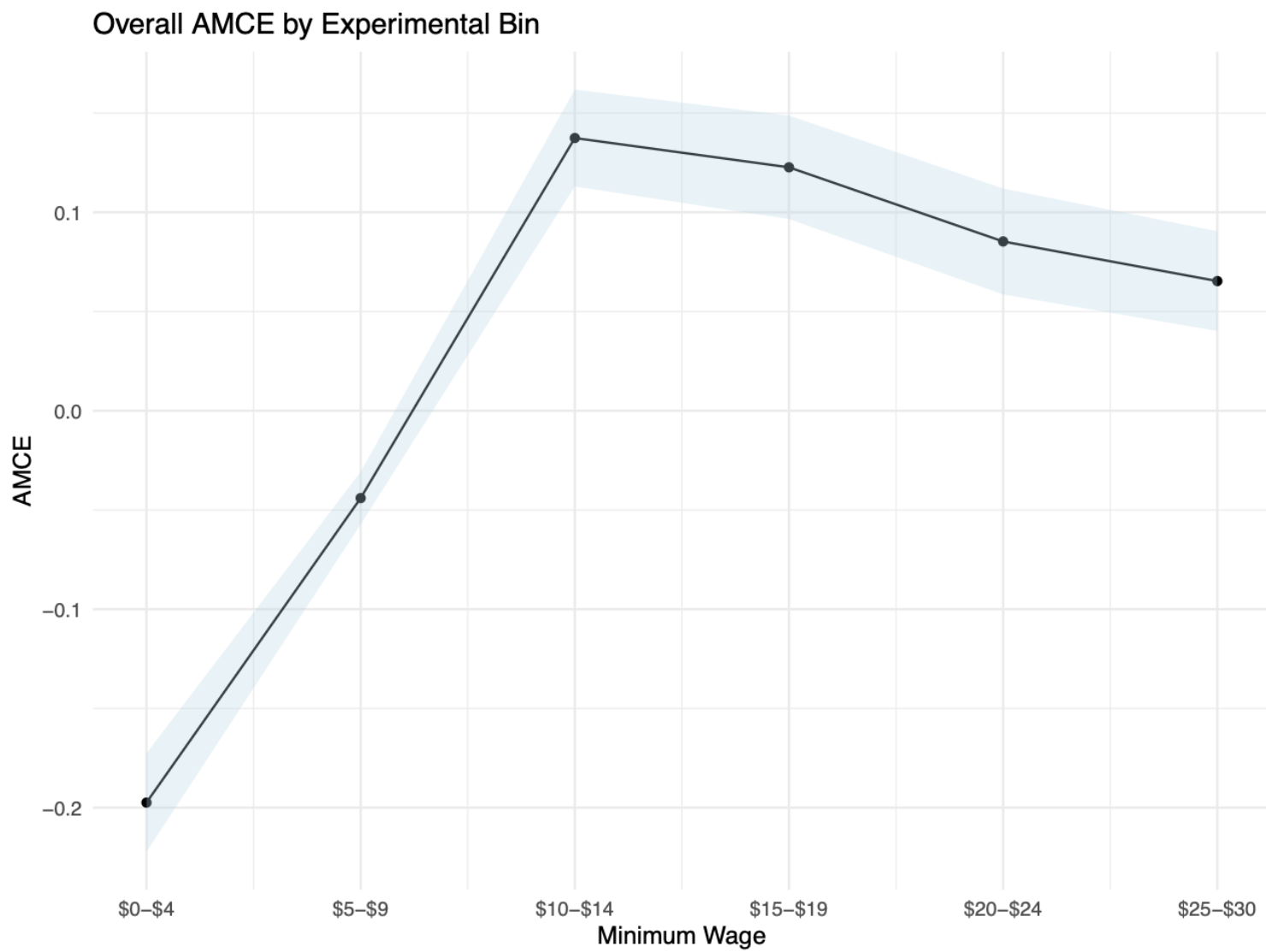
| Variable | Unweighted Proportion | Weighted Proportion | 2023 ACS Proportion |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Gender** | | | |
| Male | 50.5% | 50.5% | 49.5% |
| Female | 49.1% | 49% | 50.5% |
| Other | 0.4% | 0.4% | NA |
| **Education** | | | |
| HS or less | 35.3% | 36.4% | 36.1% |
| Some college/2-yr degree | 26.3% | 26% | 27.7% |
| 4-yr/post-graduate degree | 38.4% | 37.5% | 36.2% |
| **Age** | | | |
| 18-29 | 16.6% | 19.7% | 16.5% |
| 30-44 | 25.3% | 25.9% | 24.1% |
| 45-64 | 33.1% | 31% | 33.4% |
| 65+ | 24.7% | 23.1% | 26% |
| **Race** | | | |
| White | 61% | 60.3% | 59.3% |
| Black | 12.5% | 12.2% | 13.6% |
| Hispanic | 16.4% | 17% | 18.9% |
| Other | 10.1% | 10.5% | 2.1% |
| **2024 Vote** | | | |
| Donald Trump | 39.6% | 40% | |
| Kamala Harris | 40.7% | 38.4% | |
| Someone else: | 2.3% | 2.5% | |
| I abstained | 0.9% | 0.9% | |
| I don't recall | 0.5% | 0.5% | |
| **Party** | | | |
| Democrat | 34% | 30.9% | |
| Republican | 36.1% | 35.7% | |
| Independent | 26% | 29% | |
| Something else | 3.7% | 4.1% | |

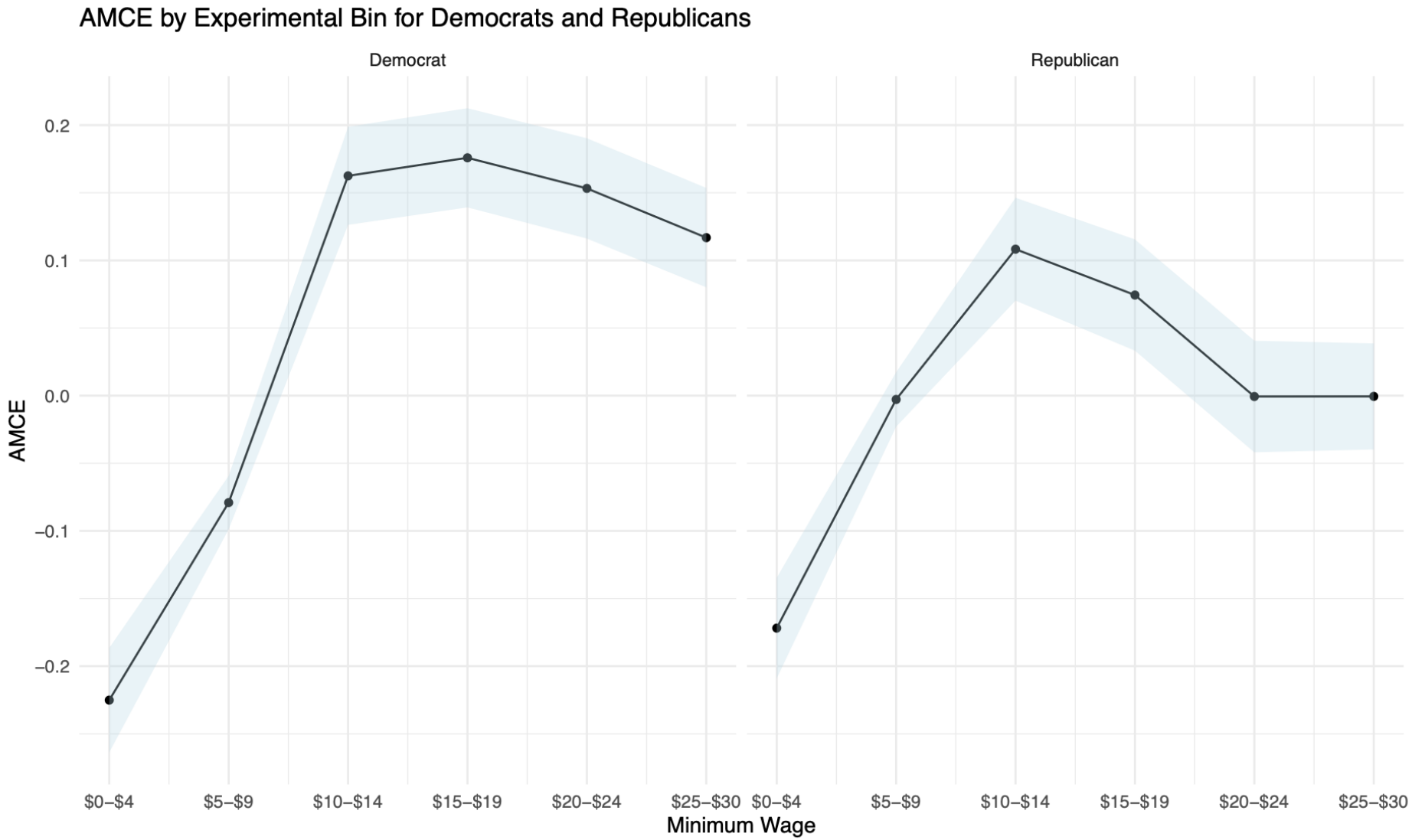
Table A1: Characteristics of the sample, both weighted and unweighted, compared to the 2023 American Community Survey.

Table A2: Impact of Question Wording on Preferred Minimum Wages

| | DV: Minimum Wage | | DV: Minimum Wage $<$ \$7.25 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | All Obs | Obs $\leq$ \$50 | All Obs | Obs $\leq$ \$50 |
| Intercept | 1,822.761 | 17.621*** | 0.046*** | 0.049*** |
| | (1,174.215) | (0.293) | (0.009) | (0.009) |
| Local Condition | −1,075.995 | −0.560 | 0.016 | 0.017 |
| | (1,657.287) | (0.414) | (0.013) | (0.013) |
| Observations | 1,253 | 1,196 | 1,253 | 1,196 |
| $R^2$ | 0.0003 | 0.002 | 0.001 | 0.001 |

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01


Overall AMCE by Experimental Bin
AMCE
0.1
0.0
−0.1
−0.2
$0–$4
$5–$9
$10–$14
$15–$19
$20–$24
$25–$30
Minimum Wage


AMCE by Experimental Bin for Democrats and Republicans
Democrat
Republican
AMCE
0.2
0.1
0.0
−0.1
−0.2
$0–$4
$5–$9
$10–$14
$15–$19
$20–$24
$25–$30
Minimum Wage