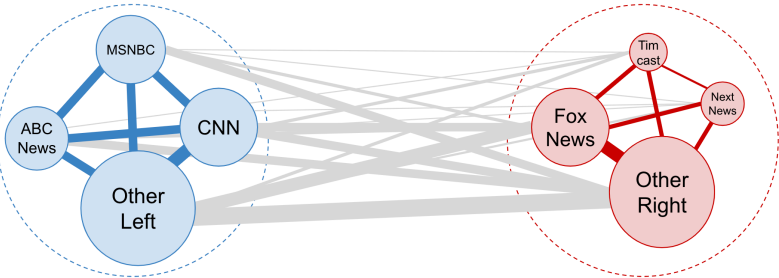


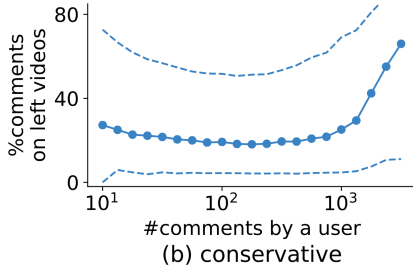
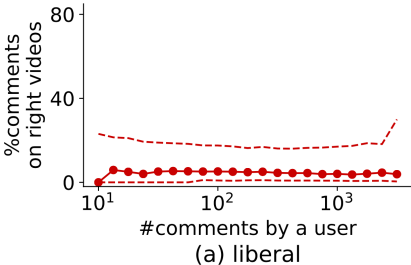
Cross-Partisan Discussions on YouTube: Conservatives Talk to Liberals but Liberals Don't Talk to Conservatives

Siqi Wu, Paul Resnick

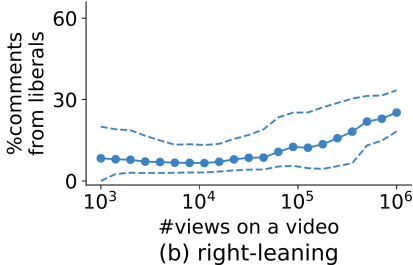
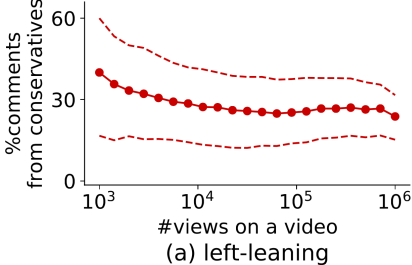
We present the first large-scale measurement study of cross-partisan discussions between liberals and conservatives on YouTube, based on a new dataset of 274,241 political videos from 973 channels of US partisan media and 134M comments from 9.3M users over eight months in 2020.



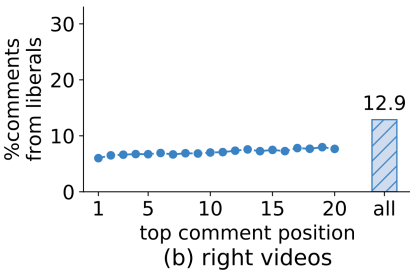
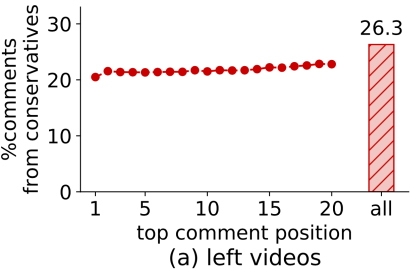
Cross-partisan discussions are common on YouTube: left-leaning and right-leaning channels share many commenters (denoted by grey edges).



Cross-partisan commenting is asymmetric: conservatives are much more likely to comment on left-leaning videos than liberals on right-leaning videos.



As a result, right-leaning channels are more like echo chambers. Even there, however, more than one in ten comments is from a liberal user.



YouTube’s comment sorting algorithm makes cross-partisan comments modestly less visible: root comments from conservatives on left-leaning videos and liberals on right-leaning videos are less likely to appear among the top 20 positions.

from \ to		
	left video	right video
liberal	15.73%	16.31%
conservative	15.77%	14.44%

Conservatives are not significantly more toxic than liberals when users directly comment on the content of videos. Numbers show the percentages of root comments that are toxic (classified by Perspective API).

from \ to	on left video		on right video	
	lib.	cons.	lib.	cons.
liberal	12.12%	18.24%	13.42%	15.31%
conservative	15.24%	11.11%	17.15%	10.18%

Cross-partisan replies are more frequently toxic than co-partisan replies. The highest toxicity occurs when defending one’s home territory. For example, 18.24% of replies are toxic when liberals respond to conservatives on left-leaning videos.