

America During and After Trump: A Panel Analysis of Media-Driven Opinion Change and Polarization

April 9, 2022

Research questions

What happened to public opinion during the Trump era? Possible outcomes:

1. Continued polarization
2. Moderation
3. Move in a liberal direction (thermostatic politics)
4. Conservative entrenchment

Our focus

- ▶ Track the same individuals to measure: did they change their views on issues?
- ▶ Study to what extent is partisan media consumption related to opinion change.

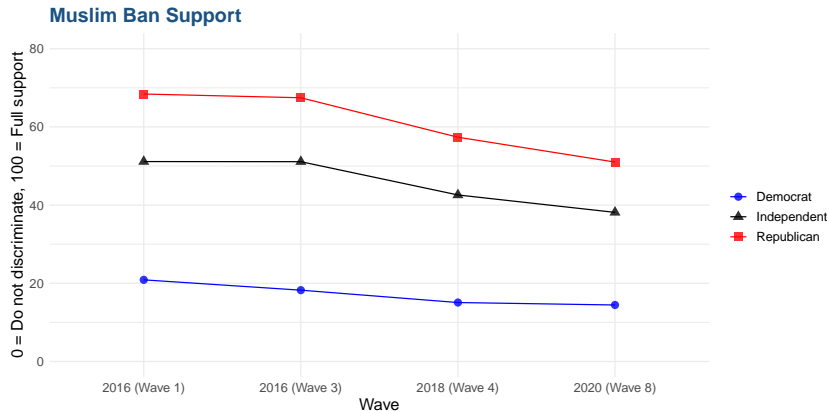
Data

- ▶ YouGov panel (linked with Twitter data for a subset of respondents)
- ▶ Started with 3,500 respondents
- ▶ 1,075 respondents in 2016, 2018 and 2020
- ▶ 1,514 respondents in 2016 and again 2020
- ▶ We observed 917 respondents in early 2016 (wave 1), Sept. 2020 (wave 7), and have some information about their Twitter feeds

Set of issues

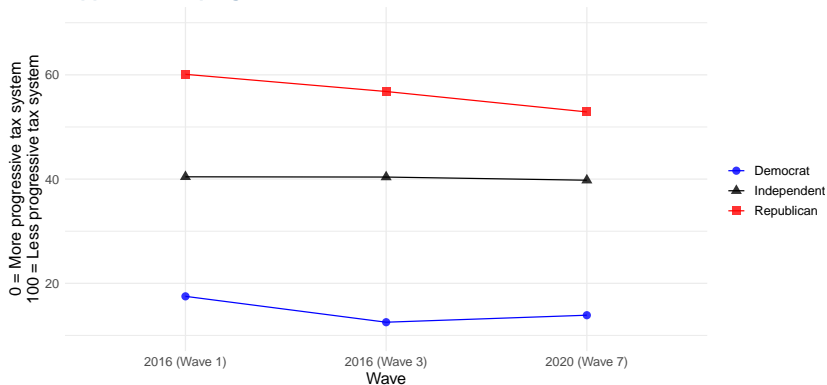
- ▶ Muslim ban
- ▶ Taxing the rich
- ▶ Immigration
- ▶ Obamacare

Muslim Ban: constant set of respondents across waves

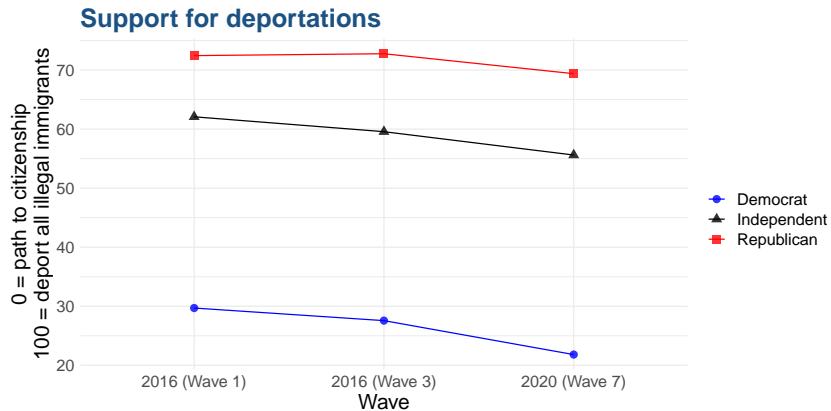


Taxing the rich (constant set of respondents)

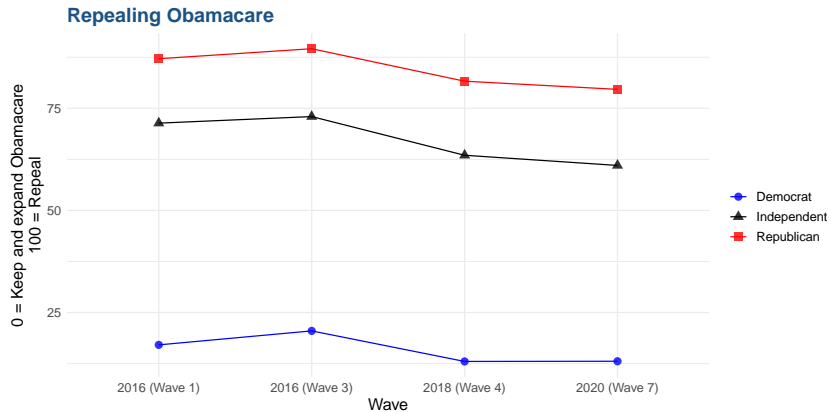
Opposition to progressive taxes



Immigration (constant set of respondents)

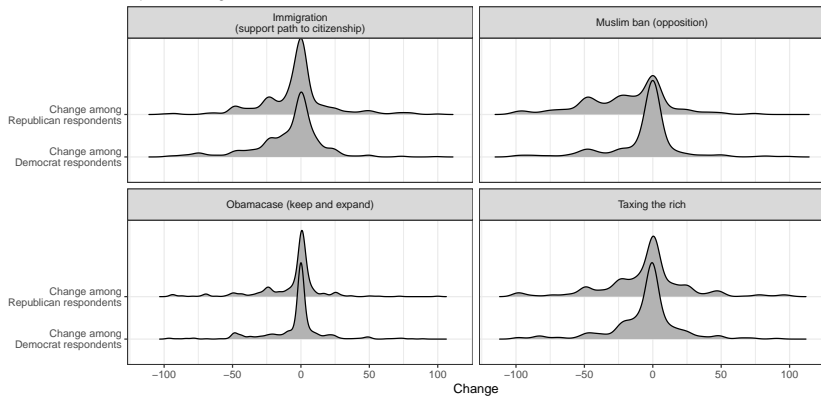


Obamacare (constant set of respondents)

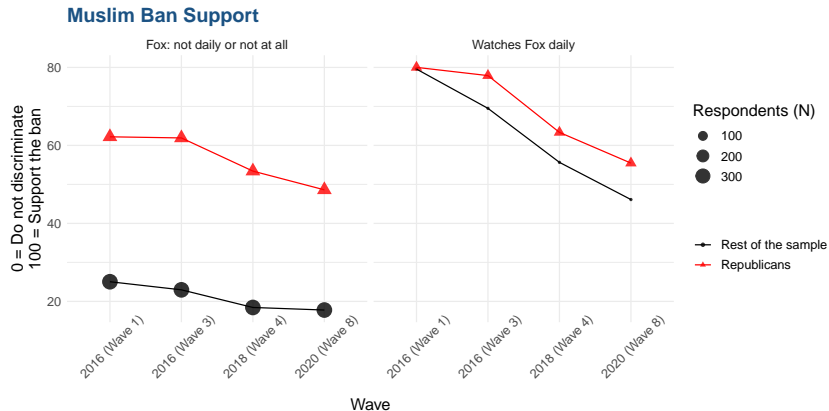


Distribution of changes

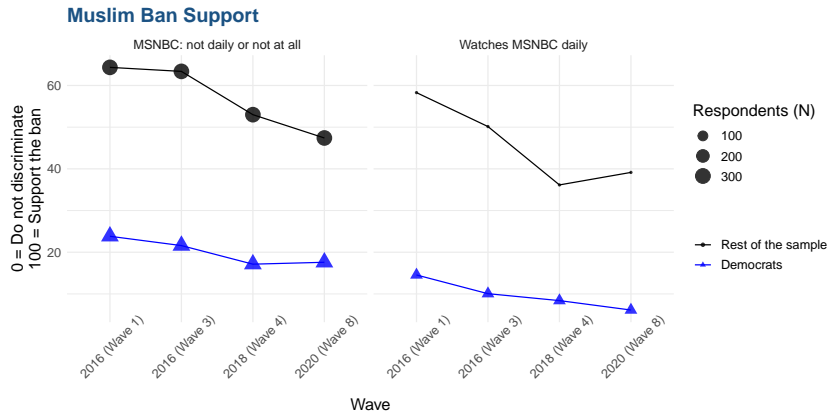
Opinion change between 2016 and 2020



Fox News and the Muslim Ban

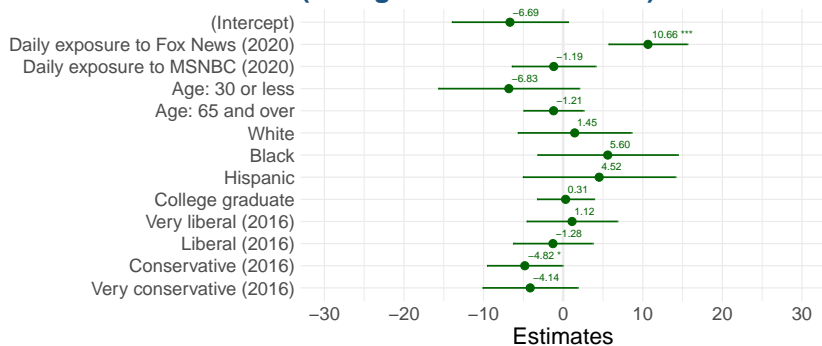


MSNBC and the Muslim Ban



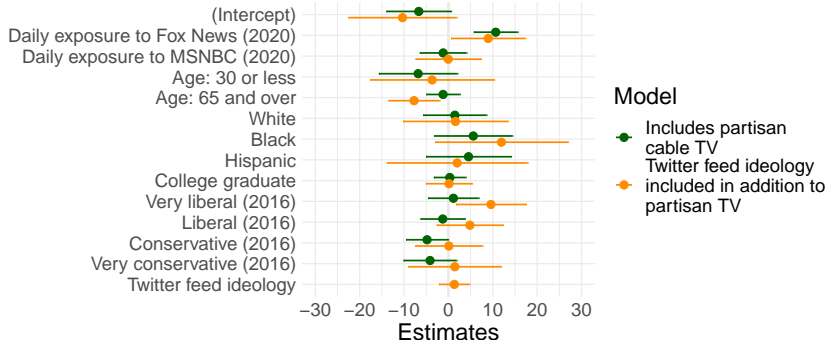
A model with partisan TV + controls

Lower taxes on the rich (change from 2016 to 2020)



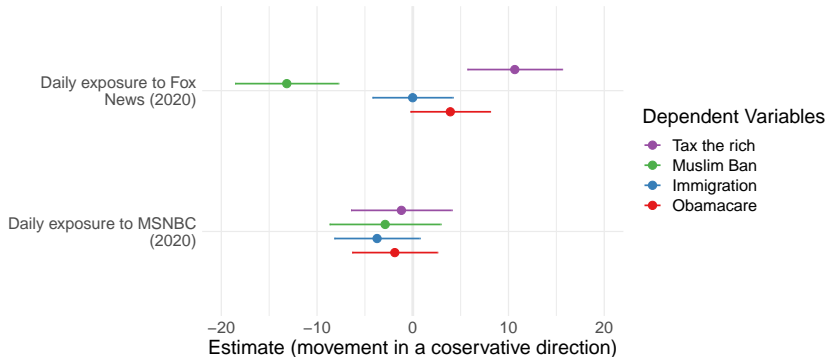
Adding Twitter feed ideology

Raise taxes on the rich (change from 2016 to 2020)



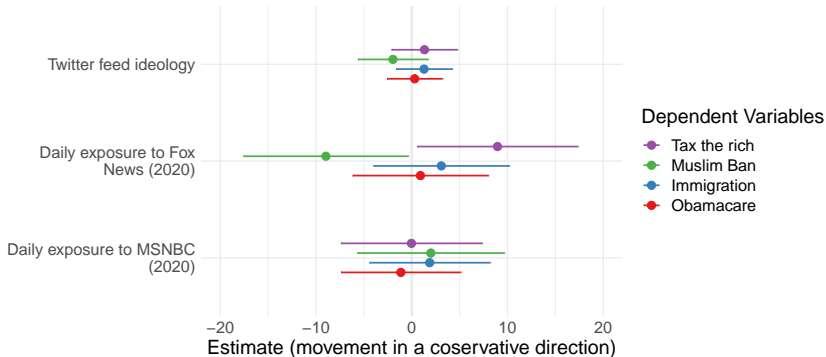
Partisan media and opinion change (no Twitter data)

Controls: Age, gender, education, ethnicity and education



Partisan media and opinion change

Controls: Age, gender, education, ethnicity and education



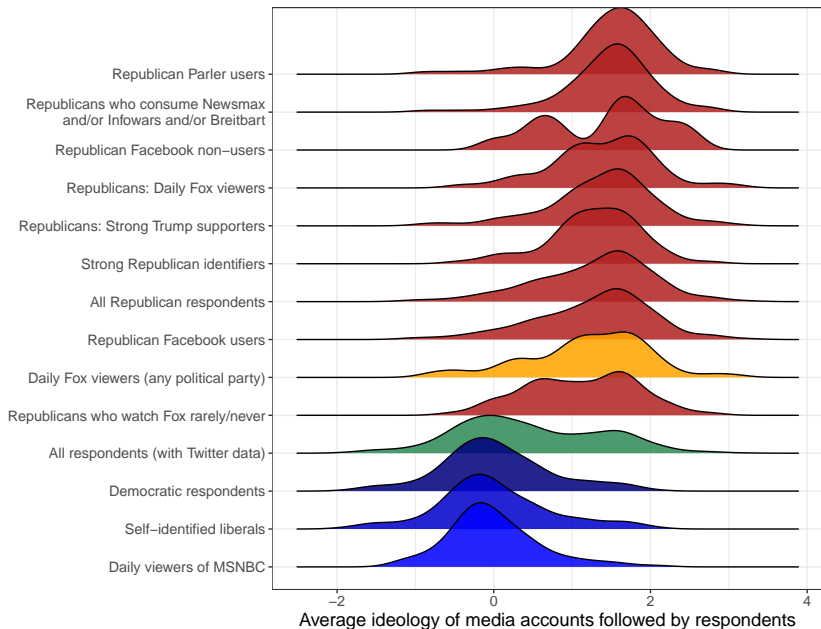
Summing up

- ▶ Voters moved in the liberal direction overall
- ▶ But mixed implications on polarization
 - ▶ The electorate depolarized on the Muslim ban
 - ▶ Continued polarization on immigration
- ▶ Evidence consistent with small media effects
- ▶ In related work (Eady et al.) we also add tweet topics on the RHS.

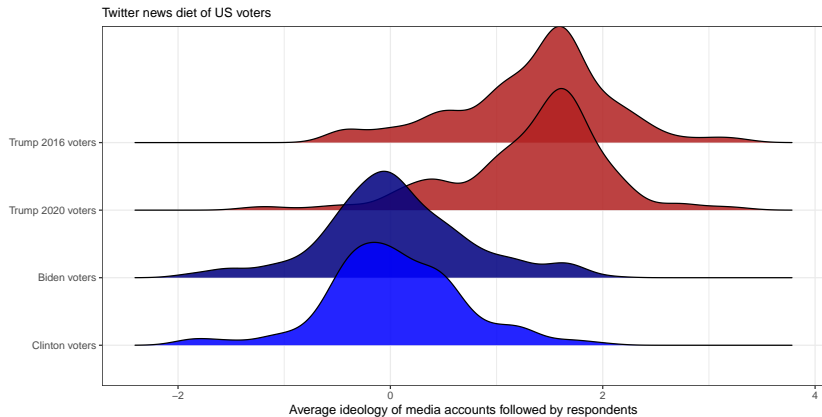
Supplementary slides

Media diet

Twitter news diet broken down by (off-line) attributes of respondents

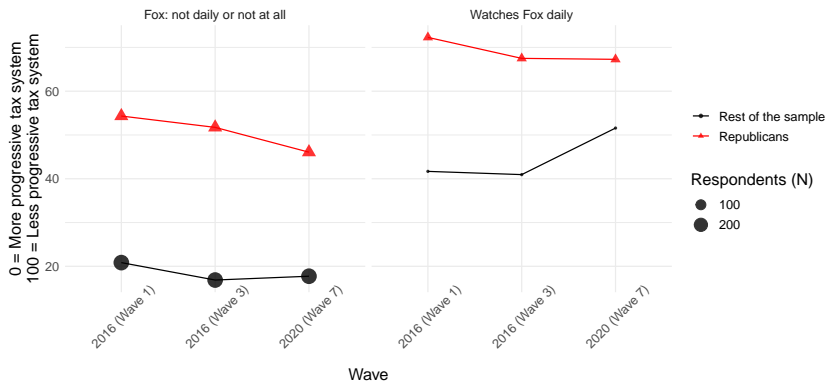


Twitter feed ideology by vote choice



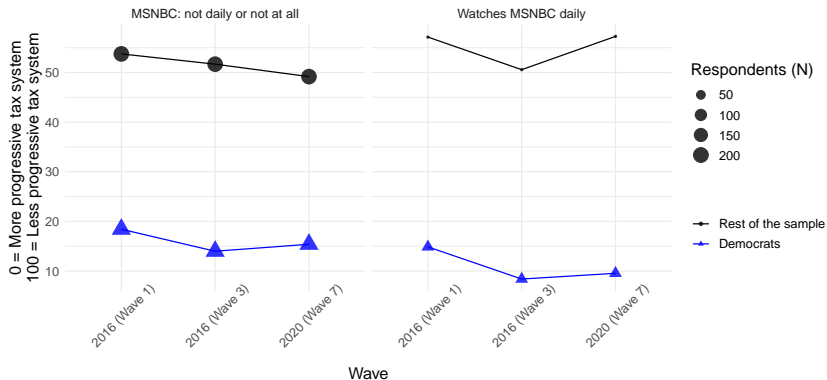
Taxing the rich (Fox News)

Support for a less progressive taxes



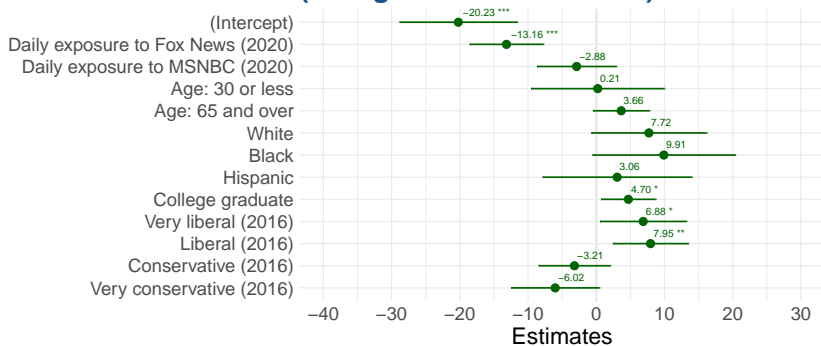
Taxing the rich (MSNBC)

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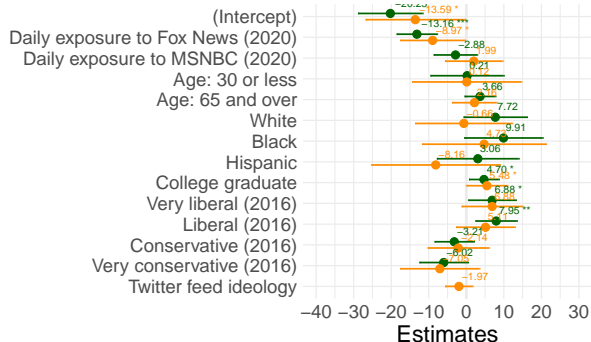
A model with self-reports only

Muslim Ban support (change from 2016 to 2020)



A model with Twitter feed ideology

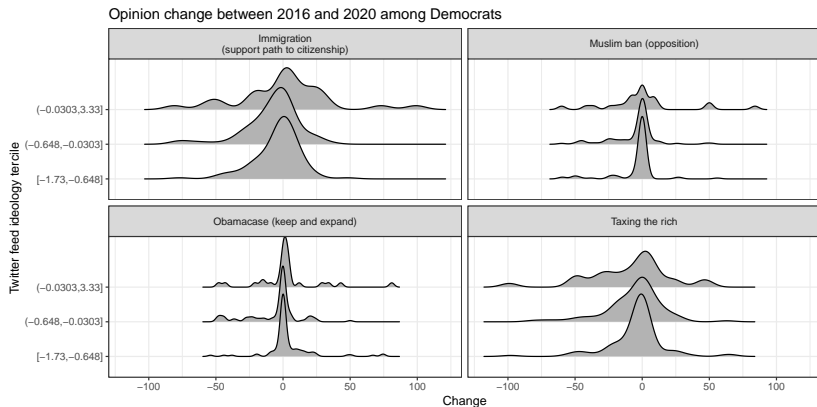
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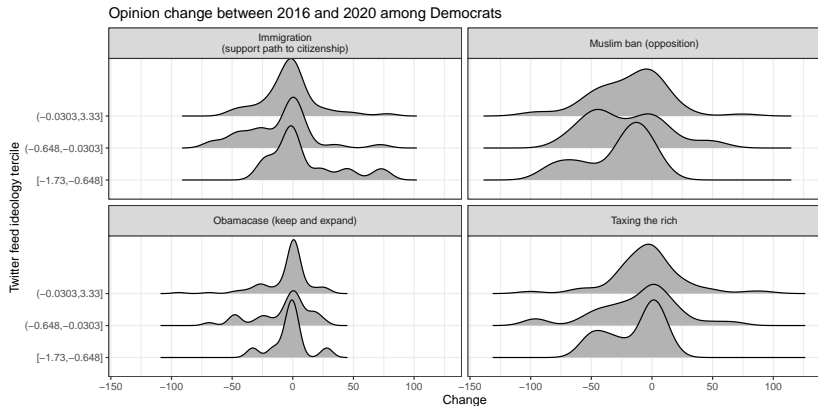
Dependent Variables

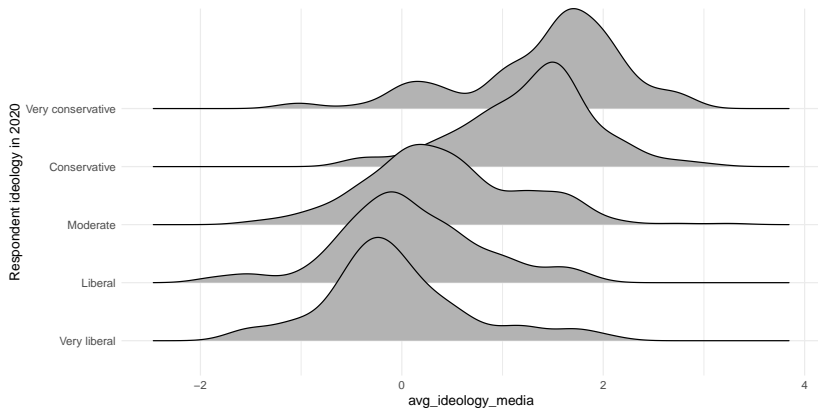
- Includes partisan cable TV
- Twitter feed ideology
- included in addition to partisan TV

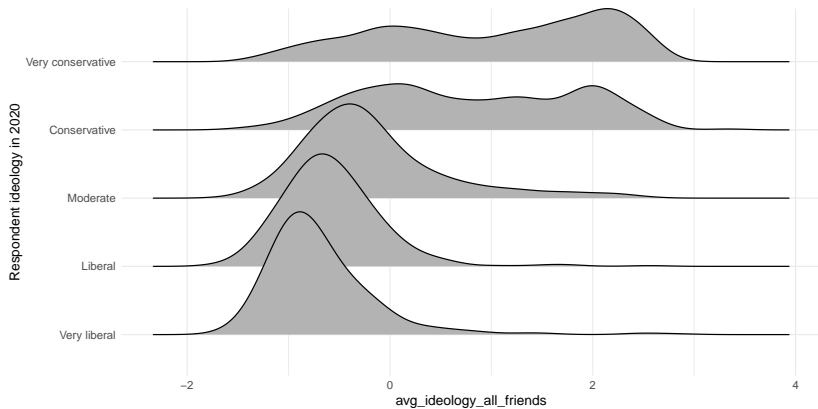
Distribution of changes by Twitter feed ideology among Democrats



Distribution of changes by Twitter feed ideology among Republicans

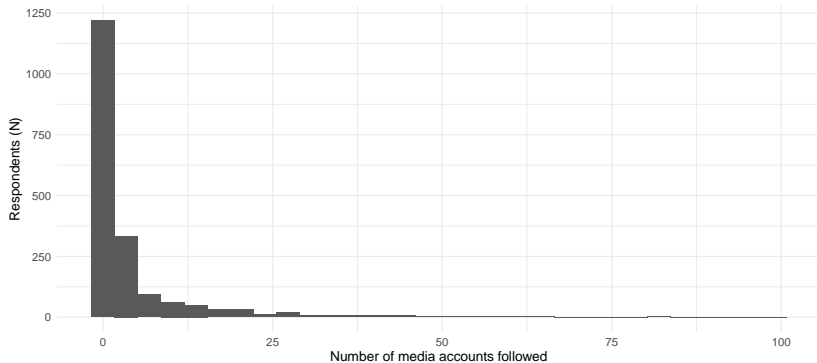






Number of news media accounts followed (2020 YouGov respondents)

Among respondents who provided their Twitter handles



Number of media accounts followed	N	Percent	cumulative
0	987	51.70	0.52
1	233	12.21	0.64
2	141	7.39	0.71
3	70	3.67	0.75
4	73	3.82	0.79
5	50	2.62	0.81
6	35	1.83	0.83
7	27	1.41	0.85
8	31	1.62	0.86
9	22	1.15	0.87
10	18	0.94	0.88
11	22	1.15	0.90
12	14	0.73	0.90