

PRESENTER:

Chase Dumais

BACKGROUND:

- This study aims to show how political divisiveness has evolved on the topic of climate change, from a bipartisan concern to the most divisive issue in American politics
- Divisiveness that has paralyzed policy and blocked solutions to a global crisis
- Attempt to outline potential reasons why Congress struggles to act on one of the most urgent threats of our time
- Without understanding this polarization, we can't fix it, and climate action will continue to stay stuck.

METHODS:

- Conduct a literature review of previous research done on politics and climate change
- Explore changes in political polarization on climate change by analyzing previous research on climate-related opinions
- Use previous research to make claims about the future of climate change policy
- Highlight recommendations for future research

Polarization of Climate Change is Largely Driven by Political Ideology, Not Level of Education.

Figure 1: Percent of Americans Who Believe the Effects of Global Warming Have Already Begun to Happen by Political Ideology and Party Identification, Controlling for Educational Attainment (2001–2010 Weighted Data)⁵

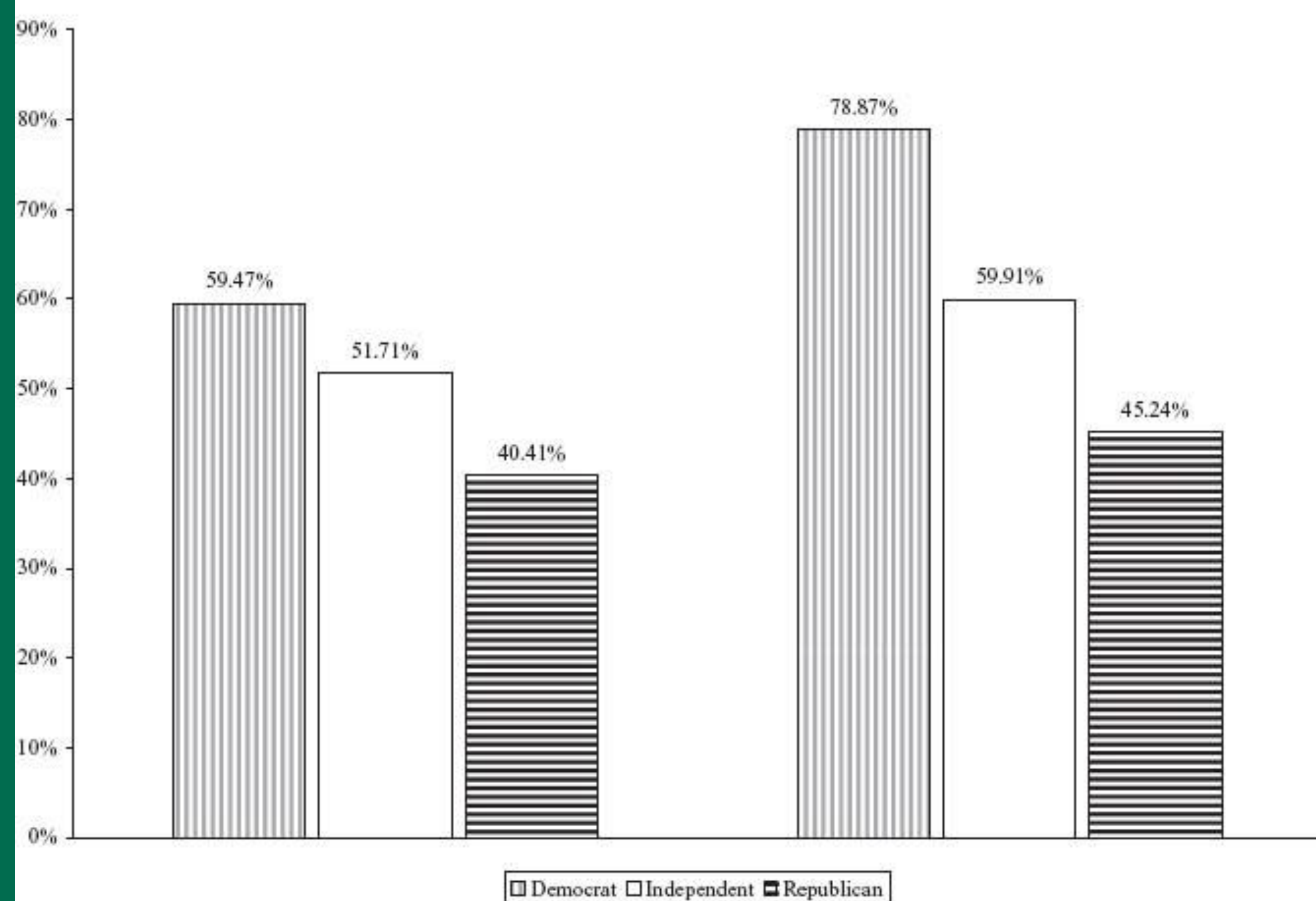
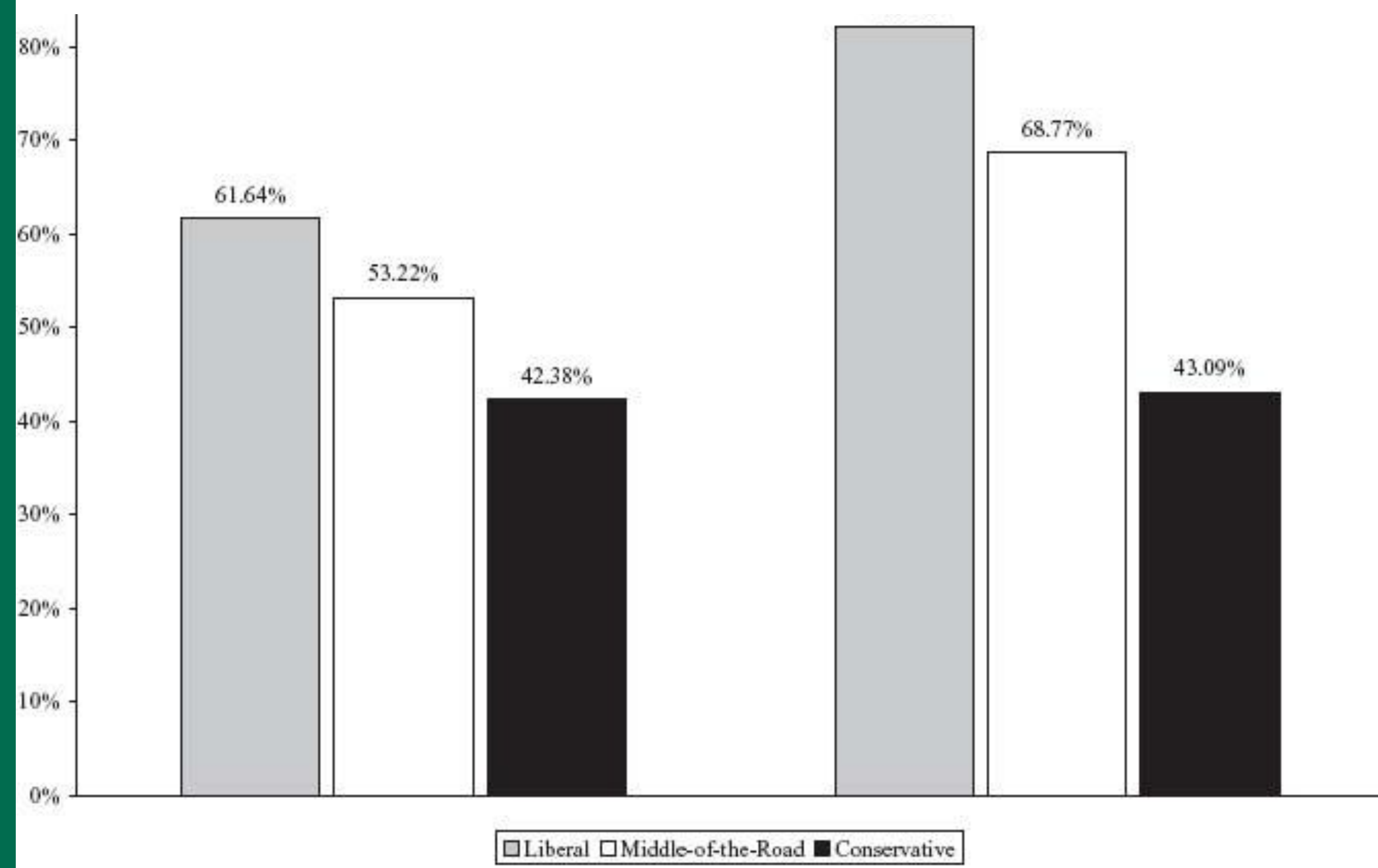
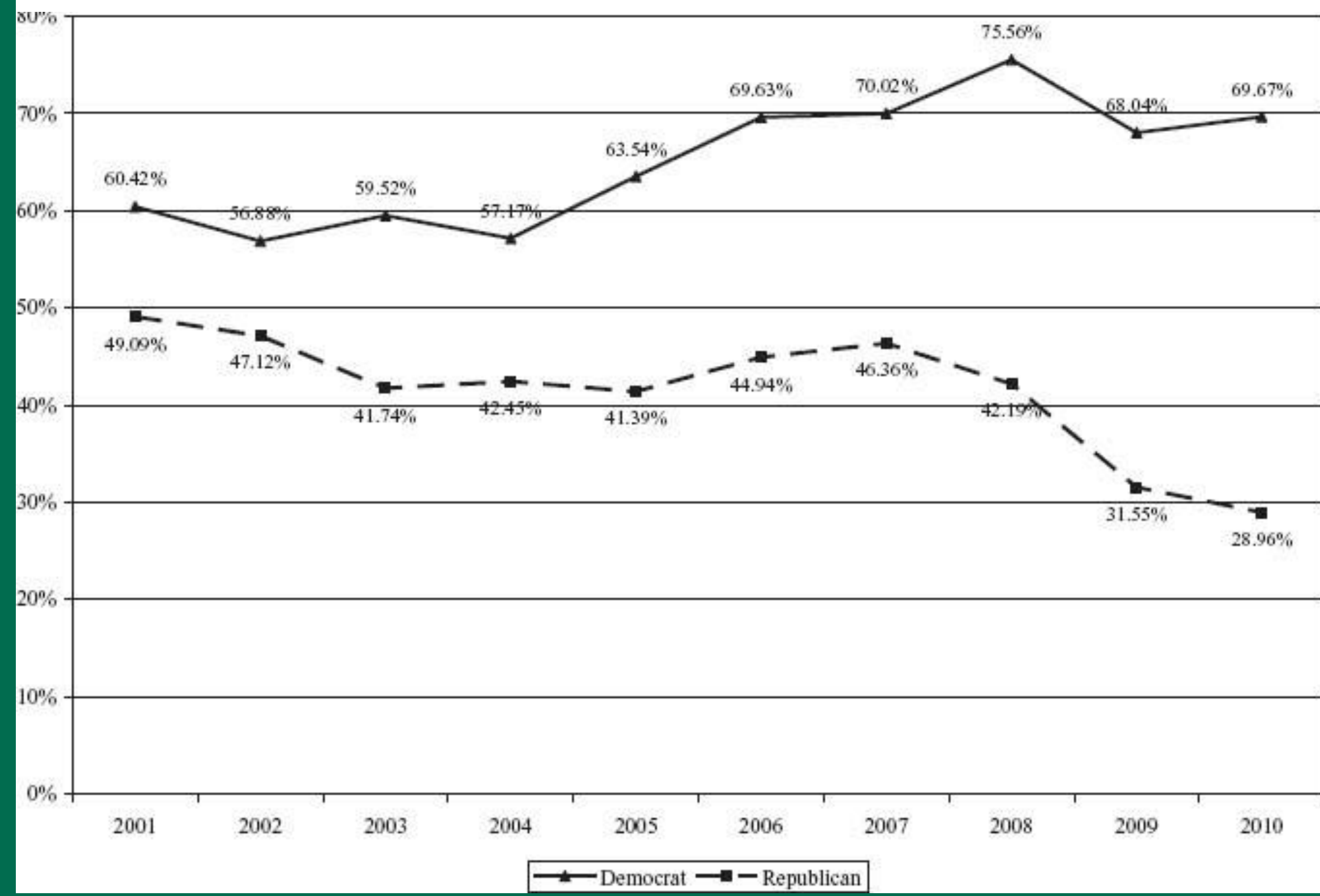


Figure 2: Percent of Americans Who Believe the Effects of Global Warming Have Already Begun to Happen from 2001–2010, by Party Identification⁵



CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE AMERICAN MIND: 2013 TO 2023
Americans' beliefs about climate change have shifted dramatically in the past decade as global warming has accelerated.

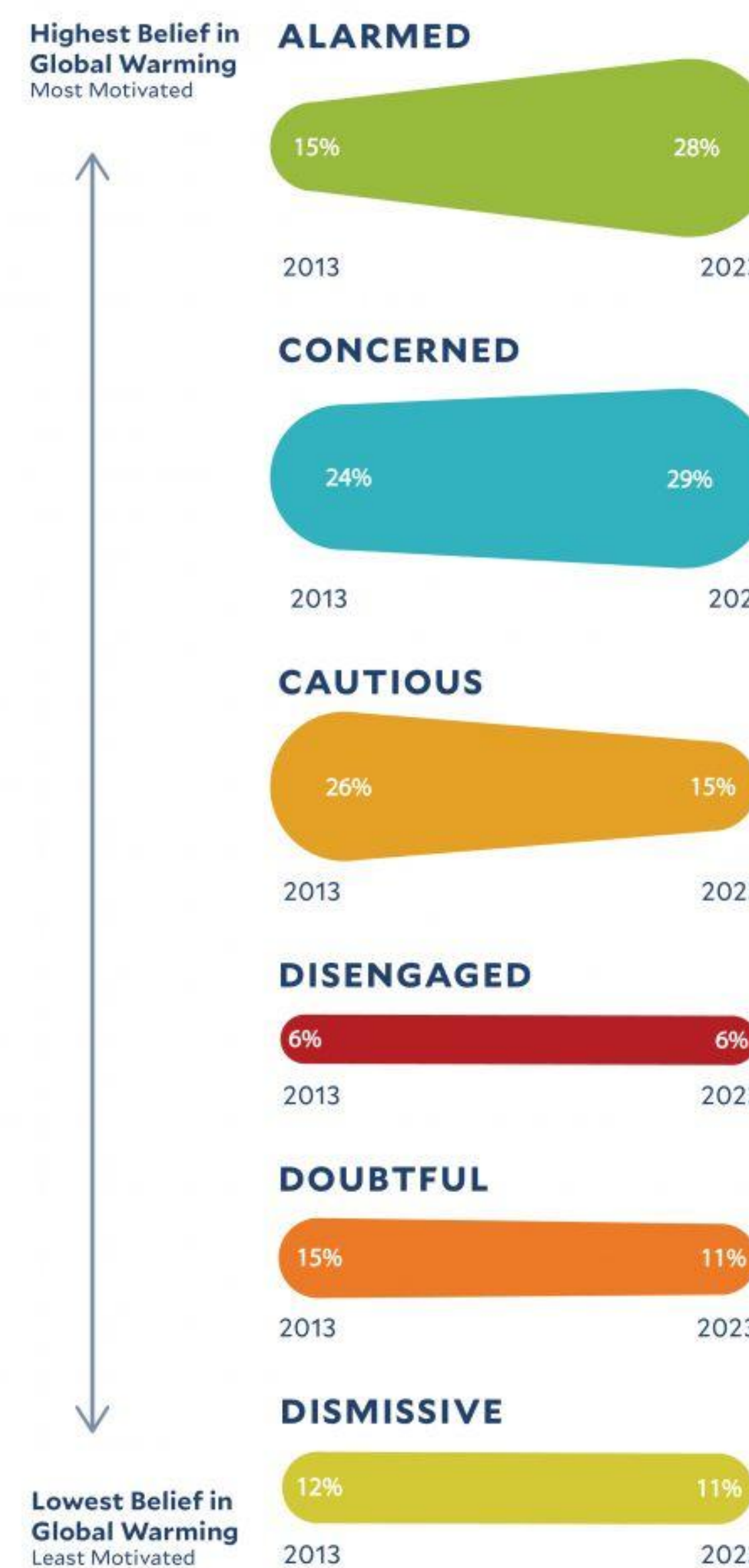


Figure 3: Climate Change in the American Mind: 2013 to 2023⁴

CONCLUSIONS:

- Political Ideology: Has become the dominant factor shaping Americans' views on climate change, complicating efforts to build consensus or implement meaningful climate policies
- Political Polarization Increased: The gap between Democrats/liberals and Republicans/conservatives on climate change beliefs widened significantly from 2001 to 2010.
- Education Effects Differ by Ideology: Higher education and understanding of climate change increased concern among liberals/Democrats but had little or even negative effect among conservatives/Republicans.
- Policy Challenges: Driven by factors such as increased political polarization, influence from fossil fuel industries, shifting party ideologies, and the intensification of climate change impacts.
- Potential Decrease in Polarization: In 2023 26% of Americans were “Alarmed” about global warming, while only 10% are “Dismissive,” meaning those most concerned now outnumber those who reject climate change by more than 2 to 1, compared to only 15% of Americans identifying as “Alarmed” in 2013

FURTHER RESEARCH:

- Political System Characteristics: Further research on how different political system features enable or constrain politicians' climate action, especially outside Western democracies
- Changing Motivations Over Time: How politicians' reasons and ways of handling climate change have evolved over time especially with changes in public opinion
- Quantify Congressional Polarization on Climate Change: Measure how much political polarization on climate change has changed over time by analyzing congressional voting records from the 1990s to 2024, focusing on party affiliation and voting patterns, to quantify how strongly Democrats and Republicans have diverged on climate policy at the congressional level.



References: