

### Supplemental Analyses

Our meta-analysis relied exclusively on experimental studies that presented participants with information manipulated to support or challenge their political beliefs. Partisan bias was operationalized as the degree to which politically-congenial information was perceived as more valid than closely matched politically-uncongenial information. Although researchers are generally quite careful about equating the specific details of manipulated information across experimental conditions, a more subtle experimental challenge is equating the general believability of the liberal and conservative information the manipulated materials are designed to support or refute. Specifically, if information designed to be consistent with either liberal or conservative beliefs is more *believable* in general (i.e., to both liberals and conservatives), this could inflate the appearance of that side's bias.

To illustrate, compare the three panels of Supplemental Figure 1. Suppose a study was done presenting liberals and conservatives with carefully matched information suggesting that anthropogenic climate change was either real (supported by the data) or fake (not supported by the data) and participants rated the information's quality. All three panels show the pattern we would expect to observe based on the results of our meta-analysis: political conservatives rate information challenging the reality of climate change as more valid than information supporting its reality, and liberals show the opposite pattern. In the left panel, there is no main effect for type of information. Although both sides favor information that supports their views on climate change over information that challenges those views, overall pro-climate change information is rated as just as valid as anti-climate change information, and liberals and conservatives show bias of the same magnitude (3 scale points on each side). But suppose that instead, people generally (that is, both liberals and conservatives) find one position on climate change as more plausible than the other, and thus are likely to find information consistent with that conclusion

## BIAS IS BIPARTISAN

more believable than information challenging that conclusion. In the middle panel, we have added a main effect such that anti-climate change information is seen as more plausible than pro-climate change information. Consequently, conservatives in that panel show a larger difference than liberals in their ratings of the two types of information (4 scale points vs. 2), thus appearing more biased. Similarly, in the right panel we added a main effect such that pro-climate change information is seen as generally more plausible than anti-climate change information. This results in the appearance of greater bias in liberals than conservatives. In sum, if in a particular study either liberal-friendly or conservative-friendly information is more believable overall, it can inflate the relative magnitude of the bias attributed to liberals and conservatives.

As noted in the main text, the combined strategy of carefully matching the details of information across conditions and asking participants to rate the quality of the presented information (rather than the general plausibility of the conclusion) minimizes the possibility of such main effect differences in information believability. Still, to examine whether this issue might affect the interpretation of our results, we identified all studies ( $k = 30$ ) for which we had the information to compute effect sizes for the main effect comparison between acceptance of liberal politically-congenial and conservative politically-congenial information. To calculate the believability of the liberal-consistent information, we averaged the *Ms* and *SDs* for evaluations of information consistent with liberal ideology (e.g., a study showing gun-control laws are effective). To calculate the believability of the conservative-consistent information, we averaged the *Ms* and *SDs* of evaluations for information consistent with conservative ideology (e.g., a study showing gun-control laws are ineffective). We used these averages to calculate an *r* effect size of the degree to which conservative or liberal information was more believable in general, arbitrarily labeling positive values as conservative information being more believable.

## BIAS IS BIPARTISAN

Using random effects analysis, we found no difference in believability between liberal-friendly and conservative-friendly information ( $r = -.020, p = .430$ ), which is consistent with panel 1 of Supplemental Figure 1. Looking across all 30 studies, information about the existence of climate change or the ineffectiveness of capital punishment was not considered any more valid or convincing than information disputing climate change or advocating the efficacy of capital punishment. Thus, it is unlikely that the degree of liberal and conservative partisan bias ( $r_{\text{liberal}}$  and  $r_{\text{conservative}}$ ) is inflated or underestimated due to how believable or plausible liberal politically-congenial information or conservative politically-congenial information is.

Nevertheless, it is still important to be aware of the political perils of studying partisan bias, particularly when comparing its magnitude across the political spectrum. For instance, it is easy to imagine left-leaning researchers inadvertently constructing studies that pit more plausible liberal beliefs against less plausible conservative ones, or simply being better able to write liberal stimulus materials that are compelling and believable (and vice-versa for right-leaning researchers). Furthermore, studies using samples that underrepresent one end of the political spectrum could produce similar distortions. These possibilities could lead to overestimating bias for liberals or conservatives, which highlights the importance of thorough pre-testing of stimulus materials for information equivalence across conditions (including the possibility of main effects for information believability), as well as careful attention to the composition of participant samples.

## BIAS IS BIPARTISAN

**Fig. S1.** Mock data illustrating the importance of considering the general believability of liberal-consistent and conservative-consistent information. All three panels show partisan bias as expected, but if one set of information is more believable overall, then the magnitude of liberal and conservative bias may be affected.

