

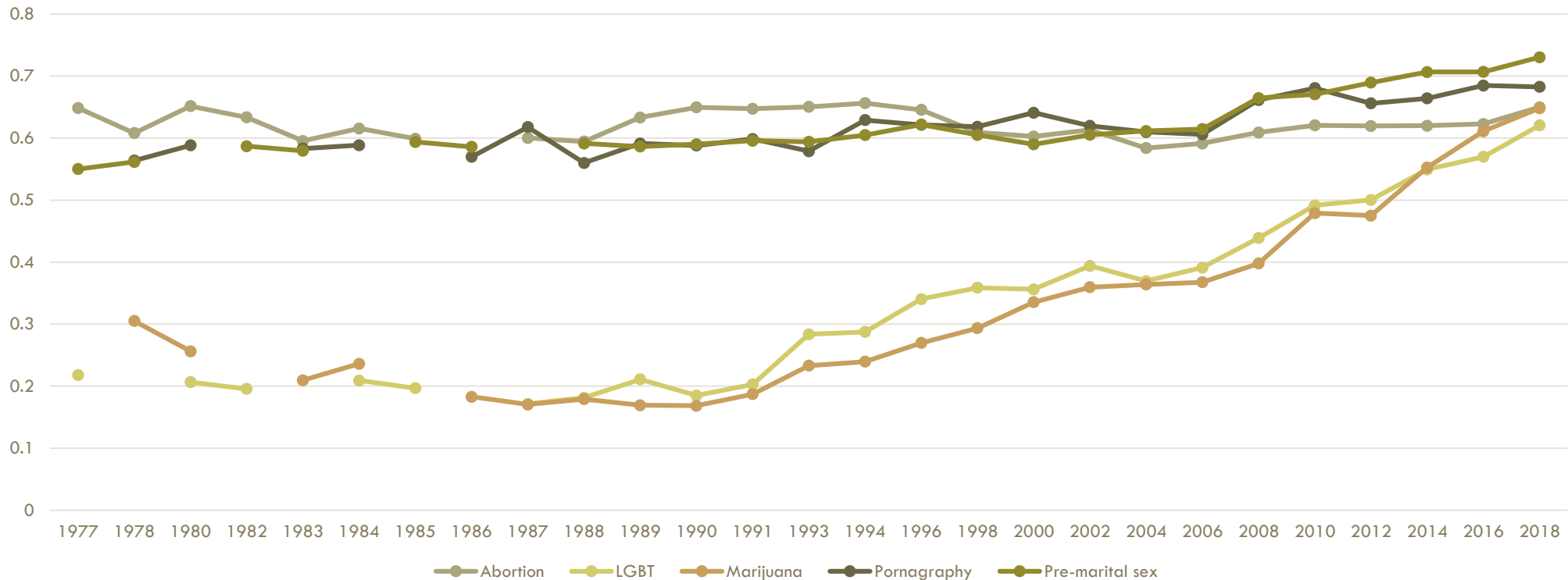
**DECEPTIVELY STABLE? HOW THE
STABILITY OF AGGREGATE ABORTION
ATTITUDES CONCEALS PARTISAN
INDUCED SHIFTS**

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WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? ABORTION IN CONTEXT: CHANGING SOCIAL ISSUE ATTITUDES, 1977-2018 (GSS)

(0-1 SCALE FROM MAX CONSERVATIVE TO MAX LIBERAL)

Figure 1



WHAT WE WANT TO KNOW

Why is abortion so surprisingly stable in the face of shifts on social issues, especially politically salient social issues?

WHAT WE ALREADY KNOW

Aggregate Abortion attitudes have been very stable over 50 years

Abortion attitudes are closely tied to religious attitudes

Religious identification has undergone major shifts in recent decades

Abortion attitudes have seen clear patterns of partisan polarization

WHAT WE DID (DATA & MEASURES)

Explore abortion attitudes in General Social Survey

7 item Abortion measure. In cases of: birth defect, no more children, health of the mother, result of rape, woman is not married, woman is poor, for any reason.

Religious traditions (Steensland et al 2000): **Evangelical Protestant, Mainline, Black Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Other, Unaffiliated**

Education (college), Sex, Race (white/non-white), PID (leaners as partisans)

WHAT WE DID (ANALYSES)

Descriptive charts over time by key sub-groups

Alternative scenario analyses

Regressions by decades, with focus on impact of partisanship

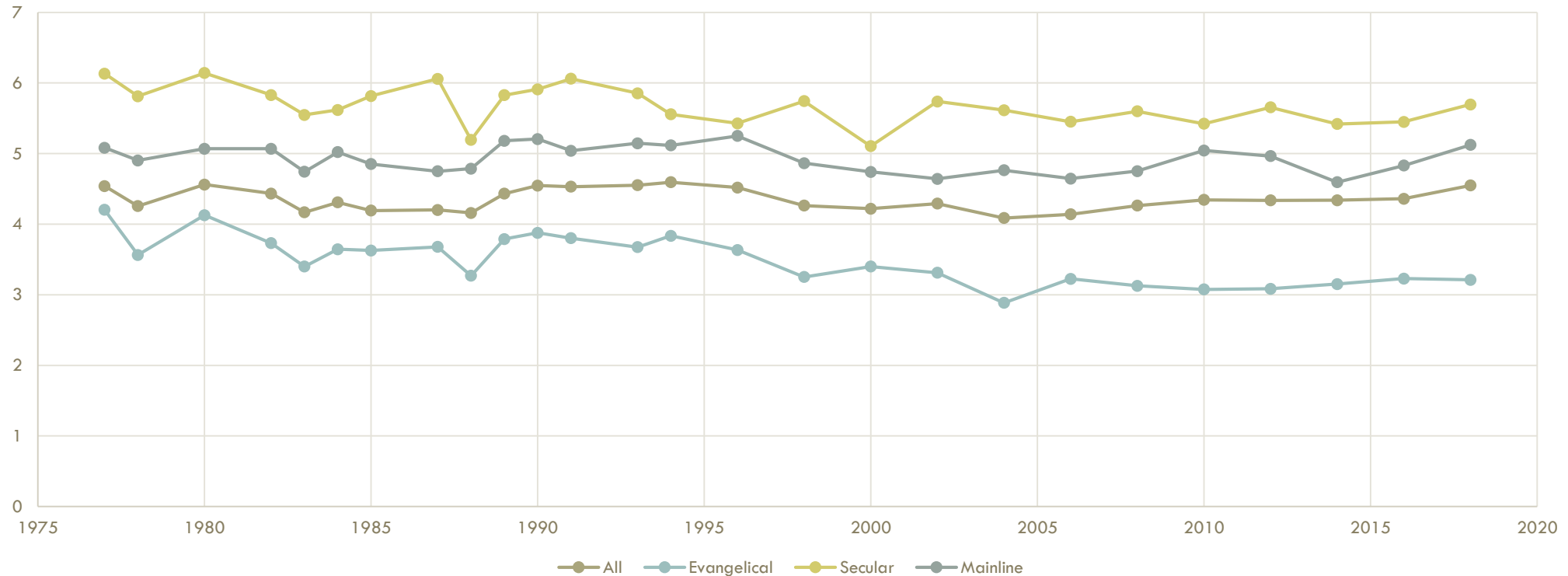


WHAT WE FOUND

AVERAGE ABORTION SUPPORT BY RELIGIOUS GROUP, 1975-2018 , GSS

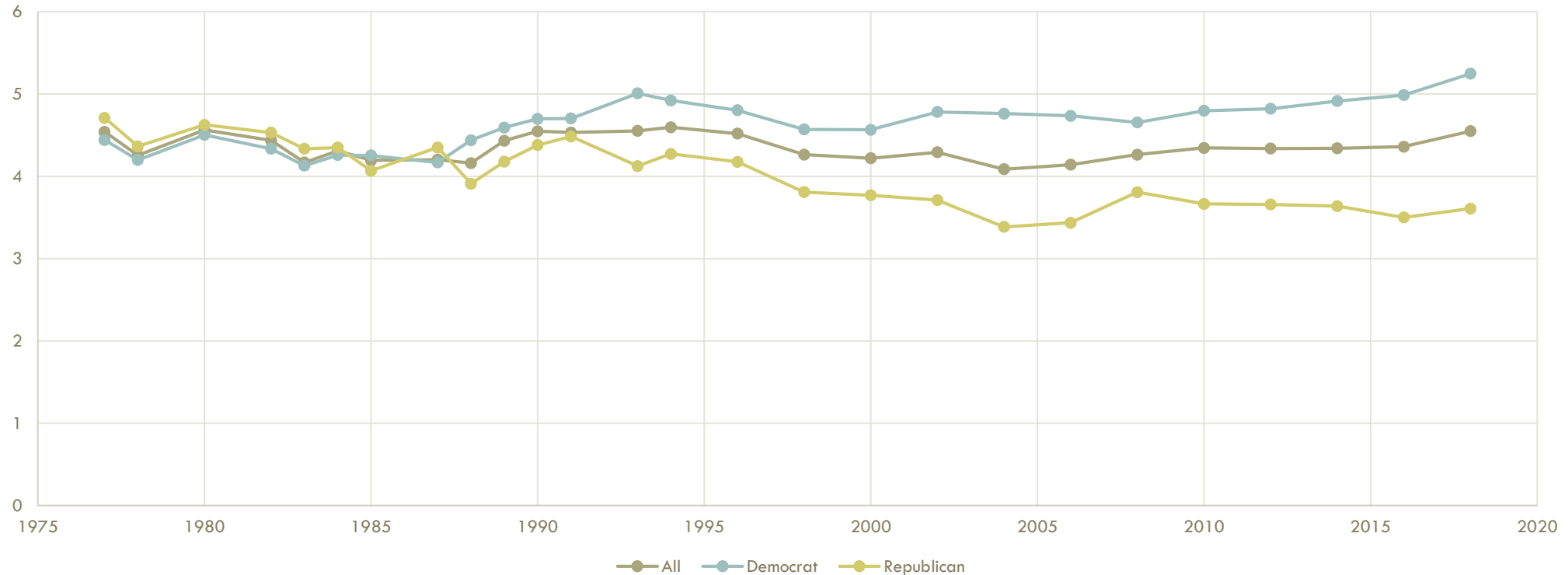
(SCALE 0=NOT LEGAL IN ALL INSTANCES; 7=LEGAL IN ALL CONDITIONS)

Figure 2



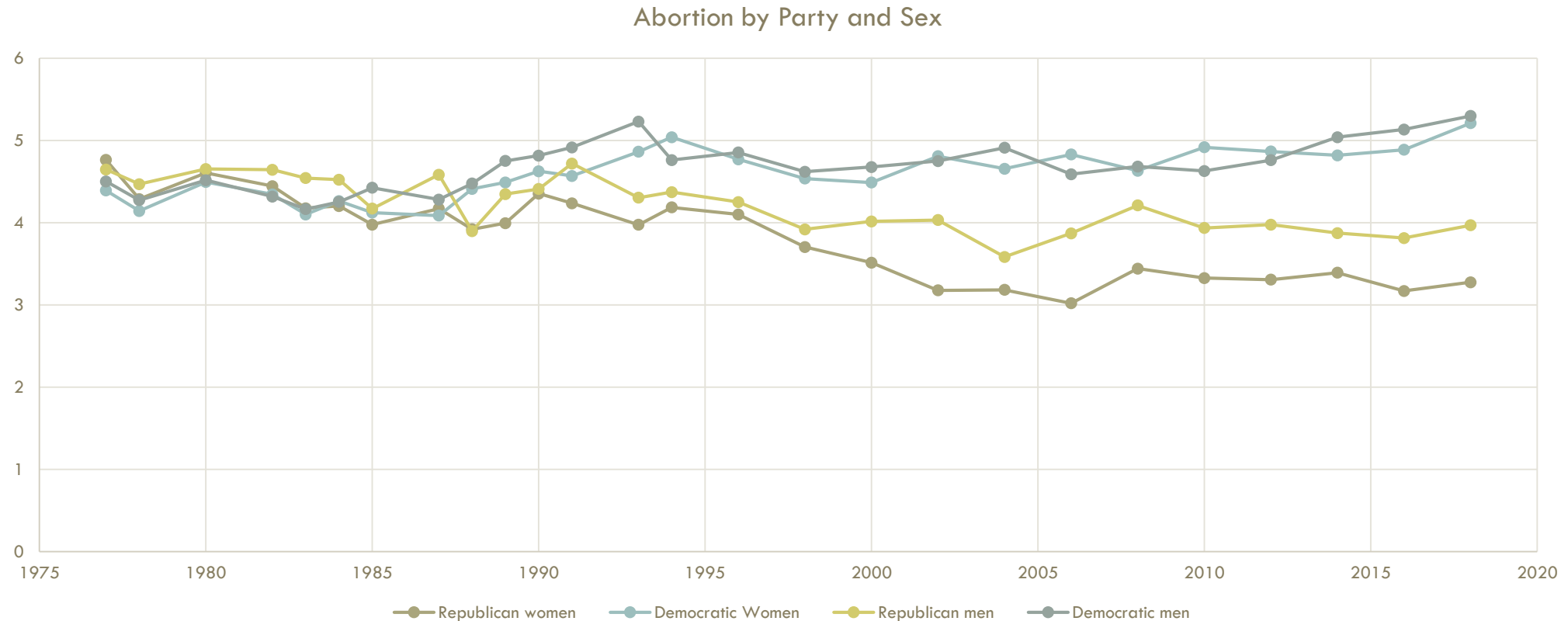
AVERAGE ABORTION SUPPORT BY PARTY, 1975-2018, GSS (SCALE 0=NOT LEGAL IN ALL INSTANCES; 7=LEGAL IN ALL CONDITIONS)

Figure 4



AVERAGE ABORTION SUPPORT BY PARTY AND SEX, 1975-2018, GSS

(SCALE 0=NOT LEGAL IN ALL INSTANCES; 7=LEGAL IN ALL CONDITIONS)

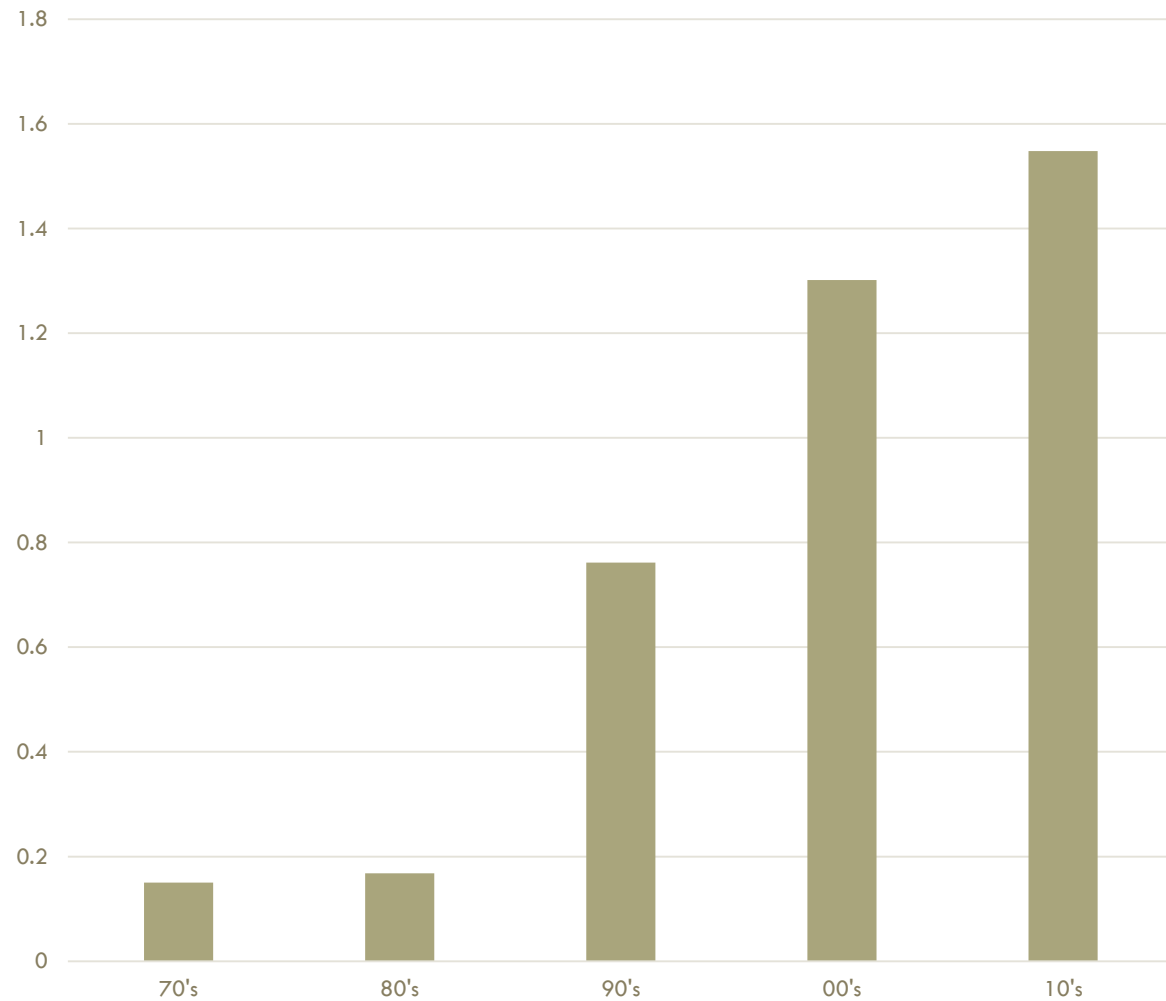


1970s Attitudes and Proportions	4.38
2010s Attitudes and Proportions	4.35
1970s Attitudes and 2010s Proportions	4.51
2010s Attitudes and 1970s Proportions	4.29

**TABLE 1
ALTERNATIVE
SCENARIOS:
RELIGION
Mean Abortion
Attitude on 0-7
scale
(GSS Data)**

1970s Attitudes and Proportions	4.39
2010s Attitudes and Proportions	4.36
1970s Attitudes and 2010s Proportions	4.40
2010s Attitudes and 1970s Proportions	4.44

TABLE 2
ALTERNATIVE
SCENARIOS:
PARTISANSHIP
Mean Abortion
Attitude on 0-7
scale
(GSS Data)



IMPACT OF PARTISANSHIP ON ABORTION ATTITUDES BY DECADE, GSS (REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS)

THE IMPACT OF A SHIFT FROM STRONG REPUBLICAN TO STRONG DEMOCRAT ON ABORTION ATTITUDES.

THE IMPACT CONTINUES TO GROW, SUCH THAT BY THE 2010S, A SIMILAR SHIFT IN PARTISANSHIP—AGAIN, EVEN WITH ALL THE OTHER CONTROLS—WOULD ACCOUNT FOR APPROVING OF ABORTION IN A FULL 1.5 ADDITIONAL CONDITIONS.

Table 3: The Growing impact of Party Identification on Abortion Attitudes

Cell entries are b coefficients for partisanship in models with abortion scale as dependent variable and also controlling for religious tradition, church attendance, marital status, age, race, and sex (except, of course, for models restricting to one of the sub-groups noted in first row). **Bold cells indicate partisanship is statistically significant at p<.05.**

	All	Evang	Secular	White	Black	Men	Women	College	Non-College
PID b									
70s	0.025	0.029	-0.024	0.032	-0.089	0.026	0.026	-0.005	0.03
80s	-0.028	-0.047	-0.014	-0.019	-0.13	-0.012	-0.038	-0.078	0.016
90s	-0.127	-0.136	-0.138	-0.13	-0.042	-0.126	-0.126	-0.211	-0.09
00s	-0.217	-0.226	-0.242	-0.211	-0.219	-0.144	-0.274	-0.321	-0.164
10s	-0.258	-0.233	-0.269	-0.273	-0.176	-0.208	-0.299	-0.347	-0.204

WHAT IT MEANS/TAKE-AWAYS

Growing secularization of public almost perfectly counter-acted by rightward shift among Evangelical Christians

Polarization strikes again!

Why is abortion different from marijuana/LGBT issues?

- Lack of positive media and cultural narratives about abortion leave much more ambiguity and room for elite opinion leadership
- Issue salience as key element of partisanship

WHAT'S NEXT

Did we *really* explain why abortion is different?

What's going on with Republican women?

No, we didn't forget racial attitudes