Same Facts, Different Meanings: Factual Information, Interpretation, and Attitude Change*

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Abstract

A key puzzle in the political information literature is why factual information reliably updates citizens' beliefs about the fact in question but rarely shifts downstream political attitudes. Using two preregistered survey experiments ($N \approx 3{,}250$) covering eleven issues across economic indicators and misstatements by prominent political figures, this paper makes two contributions. First, we test whether the muted effect of factual information on downstream attitudes holds for outcomes that are less entrenched and more proximate to the information than those tested in prior work—such as economic evaluations and perceptions of politicians' honesty and competence—and find that even these outcomes respond only modestly. Second, we develop and empirically test a framework of six adjacent belief dimensions—regarding causes, relevance, and intent—through which factual information may be reinterpreted in ways that reshape its political meaning. We find evidence of adjacent belief updating, although concentrated on specific dimensions rather than widespread. The strongest finding is that individuals who learn that a favored politician made an inaccurate claim concede the inaccuracy but shift toward viewing the statement as figurative, with sizable effects across two independent studies. Importantly, where adjacent belief adjustment occurs, its direction is contingent on individuals' predispositions. Uncongenial information triggers adjustment that attenuates the political implications of the fact, while congenial information triggers no such adjustment or small shifts in the opposite direction. Together, the results illustrate how parallel trends in factual accuracy can coexist with divergent trends in how those facts are politically interpreted.

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Introduction

One of the most robust findings in the political information literature of the last decade is that citizens update their factual beliefs in response to corrective information. When exposed to fact-checks or factual information in general, individuals tend to shift their beliefs about the facts in question in the expected direction regardless of political predispositions, with backfire effects being exceedingly rare (Coppock et al., 2023; Nyhan et al., 2020; Swire et al., 2017; Wood & Porter, 2019). Yet the main concern about misperceptions is not merely that citizens hold false beliefs, but that these beliefs shape the evaluations and preferences relevant to voters' decisions (Kuklinski et al., 2000; Velez et al., 2025). A growing body of evidence suggests that factual corrections rarely produce meaningful shifts in downstream political attitudes. Fact-checks correct targeted beliefs but do not appear to affect attitudes such as feelings toward corrected politicians or core policy preferences (e.g., Carey et al., 2024; Coppock et al., 2023; Hopkins et al., 2019; Swire et al., 2017; Swire-Thompson et al., 2020). A recent review by Porter and Wood (2024, p.3) concludes that "corrections often improve belief accuracy without affecting downstream outcomes."

This disconnect between factual belief updating and attitude change opens two questions. First, the downstream outcomes examined in this literature may not capture the full range of attitudes that factual information might impact. The outcomes studied tend to be entrenched abstract dispositions (such as candidate favorability, vote choice, and generalized election confidence) that aggregate many considerations and may be unlikely to move in response to a single piece of information. Whether corrections influence more conceptually proximate outcomes, such as perceptions of a politician's honesty or competence after learning they made an inaccurate claim, or government performance assessments such as economic evaluations and presidential approval, remains largely untested. If attitudes are shaped by multiple beliefs with different relevance, then outcomes for which the corrected belief is directly relevant represent a more favorable case for observing whether belief updating translates into attitude change.

Second, regardless of whether more proximate outcomes prove responsive, a critical question is what explains the apparent disconnect between belief updating and attitude change. Despite the growing documentation of this pattern, few studies have directly addressed why it occurs. Velez et al. (2025) provide the most developed account, drawing on expectancy-value models to argue that the disconnect reflects a tendency for corrections in existing studies to address beliefs that carry limited weight in individuals' attitude functions. They find compelling evidence that targeting beliefs respondents identify as central to their attitudes produces larger attitudinal shifts, though the demonstrated gains remain modest in magnitude, leaving open the question of whether targeting alone can explain the pervasive disconnect observed across studies.

This paper advances a complementary perspective, centered on how individuals reinterpret the implications of the facts they accept. Factual information may not only update the targeted belief but also reshape adjacent beliefs—such as perceptions of a fact's importance or attributions of responsibility—that constitute the interpretive scaffolding through which factual information acquires political meaning. Belief updating does not occur in a vacuum; it involves reconciling a broader set of "logically connected cognitive elements" (Gaines et al., 2007, p. 959). When individuals accept information that contradicts their prior attitudes, they may also update these adjacent beliefs in directions consistent with their core political commitments. If so, belief updating and modest downstream attitude change can coexist not because information is ignored, but because its meaning is reshaped in ways that attenuate its political implications.

Whether such adjustments reflect Bayesian updating with strong priors (Graham & Singh, 2024) or rationalization shaped by motivated reasoning (Bisgaard, 2019; Kunda, 1990), the observable implication is the same: factual information may reshape not just the targeted belief but

a network of interconnected beliefs that together determine its downstream consequences. Although isolated findings are consistent with this possibility (Bisgaard, 2019; Gaines et al., 2007; Nyhan et al., 2020), no study has systematically examined the extent to which factual corrections trigger adjacent belief adjustment across multiple dimensions and political domains.

To address these gaps, we conduct two preregistered[1] survey experiments (Verasight, N $\approx$ 1,250; Prolific, N $\approx$ 2,000) examining the effects of factual corrections across six and eight issues respectively, regarding economic performance indicators and misstatements by prominent political figures. Drawing on insights scattered across different research literatures, we identify and test a structured set of six adjacent belief dimensions that may shape how facts are politically interpreted: attribution, evaluation, fact-relevance, benchmarks, counterfactual comparisons, and second-order beliefs.

We find that while factual corrections reliably update targeted beliefs regardless of political predispositions, they produce only modest shifts in downstream attitudes—between 6 to 10% of the focal belief effect—even for outcomes more proximate to the corrected fact than those examined in prior work. Several factors may contribute to this pattern, including the possibility that corrected beliefs carry limited weight in the attitude function even for proximate outcomes, as well as the interpretive processes we document below. Regarding adjacent beliefs relevant to the fact's political meaning, we find descriptive evidence that respondents who accept the same fact diverge substantially in these beliefs along core political commitments, as well as varied evidence on the causal effects of factual information across the different dimensions. Uncongenial corrections do not trigger adjustment in evaluative judgments, benchmarking or counterfactual reasoning in either study. There is suggestive evidence of adjustment in attribution, though these effects appear in Study 1 but do not replicate in Study 2. Fact-relevance shows a modest but significant effect in Study 2, where corrections to favored political figures lead respondents to place less weight on factual accuracy relative to conveying the right message when evaluating political claims. The strongest finding concerns second-order beliefs: respondents who receive uncongenial corrections shift toward interpreting the politician as having spoken figuratively or having made a general point rather than a literal factual claim. The effect is sizable—approximately 0.4 standard deviations of the control-group outcome—and consistent across both studies and all four misstatement issues in each.

Together, these findings contribute to our understanding of how individuals process and respond to factual information about politics. First, by extending the set of downstream outcomes to include economic and presidential performance evaluations, as well as perceptions of politicians' honesty and competence, we show that even conceptually proximate attitudes respond only modestly to corrections that substantially shift the underlying belief. Whether this reflects the limited weight of any single belief in the attitude function, active reinterpretation of the corrected fact, or some combination remains an open question. Second, we show that factual corrections can trigger updating on beliefs surrounding the corrected fact, that is, the interpretive scaffolding through which factual information acquires political meaning. While adjacent belief adjustment is not pervasive across all dimensions, the framework developed here offers researchers a structured approach to measuring these beliefs alongside focal beliefs and downstream attitudes. The strongest finding concerns second-order beliefs: citizens who learn that a favored politician made an inaccurate claim concede the factual point but reframe the intent behind it, shifting toward the view that the politician was speaking figuratively. This reinterpretation may help insulate downstream evaluations by severing the link between accepting that a claim was inaccurate and concluding that the politician was dishonest or incompetent. Importantly, where adjacent belief adjustment

[1]Pre-registration materials are available at Pre-registration Study 1 and Pre-registration Study 2.

occurs, its direction depends on individuals' predispositions as uncongenial corrections trigger reinterpretation that attenuates the political implications of the fact, while congenial information produces no such adjustment or shifts in the reinforcing direction. Thus, we show that alongside the parallel trends in belief updating documented in prior work, corrections may simultaneously produce divergent trends in how corrected facts are interpreted, a dynamic that warrants attention when assessing citizens' responsiveness to factual information.

The Consequences of Factual Belief Updating

Prior research has documented the narrow effects of factual corrections on downstream attitudes across a wide range of political domains, including evaluations of political figures and vote choice (Coppock et al., 2023; Nyhan et al., 2020; Swire et al., 2017; Swire-Thompson et al., 2020), immigration attitudes (Hopkins et al., 2019; Jørgensen & Osmundsen, 2022; Rovelo et al., 2024), confidence in elections (Carey et al., 2024), public health behaviors (Porter et al., 2023), and attitudes toward the Russia-Ukraine war (Porter et al., 2024). As noted above, however, the downstream outcomes examined in this literature tend to be broad and entrenched, raising the question of whether more proximate outcomes might prove more responsive.

Velez et al. (2025) propose a useful framework based on classic expectancy-value models (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977, 2011) in which an attitude A toward an object is modeled as a weighted function of beliefs: $A = f(w_1 \cdot b_1, w_2 \cdot b_2, \ldots, w_n \cdot b_n)$, where b_i represents the perceived probability that the object has attribute i and w_i captures the relevance or importance of that belief to the overall judgment. Under this framework, a correction that shifts b_i will have a larger downstream effect when its weight w_i is large, that is, when the corrected belief is highly relevant to the attitude being measured. Velez et al. (2025) show that identifying which beliefs hold relatively large weight on an attitude prior to treatment and targeting those beliefs produces larger attitudinal shifts than targeting more distal ones. An analogous and complementary approach is to hold the corrected belief constant but test downstream outcomes for which that belief should be directly and highly relevant, increasing the likelihood that w_i is substantial. We focus on two such cases.

First, for political misstatements, we examine perceptions of politicians' honesty, competence and trustworthiness. This set of traits is directly tied to learning that a political figure made an inaccurate claim. Prior work has relied on broader measures such as feeling thermometer ratings and vote choice (Coppock et al., 2023; Nyhan et al., 2020; Swire et al., 2017), which aggregate across many considerations and may be too entrenched to be susceptible to a single correction. The source credibility literature points to two pillars that might in turn be affected: expertise, the extent to which a source is able to provide accurate information, and trustworthiness, the extent to which a source is willing to do so (Hovland et al., 1953; Lupia & McCubbins, 1998; Swire et al., 2017). A correction establishing that a politician made an inaccurate claim is directly informative about both dimensions, making honesty and competence perceptions a case where is reasonable to expect that the corrected belief should carry more weight in the attitude function than for overall favorability, where a wider range of beliefs might be relevant. However, whether such corrections actually shift these specific trait perceptions has not been systematically tested.

Second, we examine whether factual information about indicators such as inflation and unemployment shapes evaluations of the economy and approval of the president's economic performance. These outcomes are central to theories of retrospective voting (Anderson, 2000; Evans & Andersen, 2006; Lewis-Beck & Stegmaier, 2000), yet are largely absent from the corrections literature. Importantly, the relationship between the corrected belief and the downstream judgment is relatively direct: learning that unemployment rose to a specific level is not merely one considera-

tion among many but a concrete data point about the very outcome that economic evaluations are meant to capture.[2] Furthermore, these outcomes allow us to extend the analysis beyond misinformation corrections. Recent work has argued that the field has focused disproportionately on correcting false claims while neglecting how citizens process reliable information (Acerbi et al., 2022; Altay, 2026). Performance-related statistics—routinely published and widely discussed—provide a natural test case for whether the modest downstream effects documented in the corrections literature extend beyond misinformation corrections to factual information more broadly.

Fact Interpretation and Adjacent Beliefs

Facts, on their own, rarely have an inherent political meaning. Their implications for broader attitudes depend on a surrounding web of beliefs—about causes, context, significance, and intent—that shape how a given fact is interpreted and integrated into political judgments (Gaines et al., 2007). Learning that inflation peaked at 9% under a given administration, for instance, has different political implications depending on whether one believes the president plays a large or small role in determining inflation, whether one considers 9% to be historically extreme or unremarkable, and whether one believes the alternative party would have performed better or worse. Similarly, the political relevance of a political leader making an inaccurate claim depends on whether the voter thinks she was being literal or speaking figuratively, and on whether the person prioritizes political statements being grounded in objective evidence or conveying the right message (Kim et al., 2024). These adjacent beliefs constitute the interpretive scaffolding through which factual information acquires political meaning.

This suggests that understanding the downstream consequences of factual belief updating requires examining not only whether individuals accept new information, but also whether and how the adjacent beliefs surrounding the corrected fact shift in response. Shifts in adjacent beliefs in ways that preserve core political commitments are observationally consistent with both motivated reasoning (Bisgaard, 2019; Kunda, 1990) and Bayesian updating with strong priors (Druckman & McGrath, 2019; Graham & Singh, 2024). This paper does not aim to adjudicate between these accounts, as the two are largely observationally equivalent (Tappin et al., 2020). Throughout this paper we remain agnostic about what underlying model explains this process (we return to this in the discussion section). Importantly, we draw on both literatures to identify the interpretive dimensions below, although the rationalization literature has engaged more directly with these processes and therefore informs much of the framework.

Previous theoretical work has identified some of these interpretive dimensions. Gaines et al. (2007) categorized the ways partisans can agree on facts while disagreeing on their meaning into evaluations, explanations, and inferences. Lauderdale (2016) distinguished between inferred justifications (updating substantive facts related to a core issue) and projections (updating beliefs about others' attitudes). Empirically, however, most research has focused mostly on a single dimension: responsibility attribution on economic or public health performance (Bisgaard, 2015, 2019; Graham & Singh, 2024; Malhotra & Kuo, 2008; Rudolph, 2003; Tilley & Hobolt, 2011). A notable exception is Nyhan et al. (2020) which directly tested whether respondents form attitude-consistent interpretations of fact-checked claims, finding mixed evidence: respondents evaluated the source of corrections in predisposition-preserving ways but did not adopt viewpoint-consistent explanations of the corrected facts, concluding that further research is needed. Despite these con-

[2]Consistent with this, inflation and the cost of living have ranked as Americans' top personal financial concern every year since 2022 (Gallup, 2026), suggesting that price-related beliefs are likely to carry substantial weight in economic evaluations.

tributions, the literature lacks a comprehensive framework for identifying and testing the multiple dimensions through which adjacent beliefs may shape the political meaning of corrected facts.

We propose a framework encompassing six dimensions of adjacent beliefs that may shape how individuals interpret factual information across a wide range of issues: attribution, evaluation, fact-relevance, benchmarks, counterfactual comparisons, and second-order beliefs. Table 1 outlines these dimensions, a description and illustrative examples. Some dimension-issue combinations—such as responsibility attribution for economic outcomes—have been well-studied, but have not been examined alongside other dimensions or applied to domains like political misstatements. Others have been tested only in narrow contexts, such as fact-relevance (Anson, 2017), and others—like counterfactual comparisons—still have not, to the best of our knowledge, been empirically tested. The proposed dimensions are neither mutually exclusive nor exhaustive, and their applicability varies by issue type. They may also operate simultaneously: an individual might attribute negative economic outcomes to global forces while also arguing that conditions would have been worse under the opposing party. Together, these dimensions capture diverse ways in which the political meaning of a fact can be reshaped even after the fact itself is accepted.

Dimension	**Description**	**Examples**
Attribution	Who or what is responsible for the outcome, or how justifiable the behavior is	The increase in unemployment is caused by the global economy, not the current administration. / It is justifiable for politicians to make exaggerated claims to achieve larger political goals.
Evaluation	Subjective assessment of the magnitude or severity of a fact	An increase of X% in unemployment is small.
Fact-Relevance	How important the fact is for forming a political judgment	The unemployment rate is not a relevant indicator of government performance. / Whether a claim conveys the right message matters more than whether it is based on objective evidence.
Benchmarks	How the fact compares to other reference points	The unemployment rate was higher during the previous administration. / The opposing party's leaders make false or exaggerated claims very often.
Counterfactual Comparisons	What would have happened under alternative scenarios	The unemployment rate would be higher if the out-party were in office.
Second-Order Beliefs	Perceptions of the speaker's intent or beliefs	Political leader X was not being literal when she said unemployment has decreased.

Table 1: Adjacent Belief Dimensions

Attribution

Attribution concerns how individuals assign causal responsibility for outcomes. Rooted in Heider (2013)'s attribution theory, this dimension captures the explanations people construct for why an outcome occurred and who or what is responsible for it (Weiner, 2012). Just as individuals construct causal explanations for social outcomes, they apply similar reasoning to politically relevant events (Gaines et al., 2007). This is the most extensively studied adjacent belief dimension in political contexts. Research has documented that partisans selectively assign credit and blame after encountering performance information about economic conditions (Bisgaard, 2015, 2019; Rudolph, 2003; Tilley & Hobolt, 2011), health crises (Graham & Singh, 2024; Tilley & Hobolt, 2011), and natural disasters (Malhotra & Kuo, 2008). However, Nyhan et al. (2020) found that respondents who accepted a fact-check of Trump's crime claims did not adopt viewpoint-consistent explanations for the corrected crime trends. A less explored application concerns misstatements: upon learning that a favored politician made an inaccurate claim, supporters might construct explanations for why the politician made the claim. For instance, attributing it to strategic necessity rather than dishonesty or ignorance, and thus judging the behavior as more justifiable.

Evaluation

A second dimension involves the subjective interpretation of objective facts. While numerical changes can be measured objectively (e.g., unemployment rising from 4.2% to 5.1% is undeniably an increase), qualitative labels like "low" or "high" lack universal benchmarks (Gaines et al., 2007). This creates room for the same figure to be interpreted differently depending on one's political perspective. Roush and Sood (2022) found that even minor changes (e.g., a 0.2 percentage point shift in inflation) were described as the economy having "gotten worse" or "gotten better" depending on partisan framing cues. Similarly, prior work shows that identical figures are assessed differently by individuals with different political commitments, including whether the figures concern Iraq War casualties (Gaines et al., 2007) or the number of immigrants deemed acceptable (Jørgensen & Osmundsen, 2022).

Fact-Relevance

A third dimension involves adjusting the perceived weight or relevance of a fact when forming a broader judgment. When confronted with unfavorable information about one indicator, individuals might shift their focus to other indicators. For instance, emphasizing GDP growth rather than unemployment when assessing overall economic performance. This dimension has received limited empirical attention. Groenendyk (2013) finds that government supporters down-weighted the importance of economic issues when indicators were unfavorable, and Anson (2017) shows that partisans adjusted their perceptions of the stock market's relevance to the national economy depending on its partisan implications. In the context of political misstatements, individuals may also adjust how much weight they place on factual accuracy itself. That is, selectively prioritizing whether a political claim conveys the right message over whether it is grounded in objective evidence (Kim et al., 2024). This dimension is particularly relevant given recent work showing that the belief-attitude disconnect may partly reflect the low relevance of corrected beliefs to downstream attitudes (Velez et al., 2025). If relevance is itself subject to adjustment in response to uncongenial information, then measuring it alongside other outcomes becomes important for understanding what corrections actually change.

Benchmarks

Benchmarking involves contextualizing new information by comparing it to past or alternative reference points. After learning about unfavorable performance under one's preferred party, an individual might revise downward their perception of performance under a previous administration, thereby neutralizing the evaluative implications of the new information. Regarding misstatements, when exposed to factual corrections to in-party figures, individuals might update the perceived frequency in which out-party figures engage in misleading or inaccurate claims as well. Previous work has not directly addressed these possibilities. The closest empirical precedent is Rovelo et al. (2024), which provides evidence that immigration opponents adjust their perceptions of acceptable thresholds for immigrant welfare receipt after learning actual figures.

Counterfactual Comparisons

Counterfactual comparisons involve reasoning about hypothetical scenarios to contextualize factual information. Individuals may maintain positive evaluations of their party's performance while acknowledging negative indicators by reasoning that conditions would have been even worse under the opposing party. This dimension has not, to the best of our knowledge, been empirically tested in the context of factual corrections, despite its intuitive plausibility as a way of reconciling accepted facts with existing political commitments.

Second-Order Beliefs

Second-order beliefs concern perceptions of others' intentions, meanings, or beliefs. This dimension is particularly relevant for corrections of specific misstatements by political elites. Upon learning that a favored leader made an inaccurate claim, individuals may reframe the nature of the statement—inferring that the leader was not speaking literally, was making a broader point, or did not seriously intend the specific claim. This form of reinterpretation is common in everyday political discourse, where defenses such as taking statements seriously but not literally are deployed (Kim et al., 2024). If corrections trigger such reinterpretation, the inferential path from "the claim was false" to "the politician is dishonest or incompetent" is severed, potentially insulating downstream evaluations. The only study testing the effect of factual information on second-order beliefs is Lauderdale (2016), which found that providing information about historical trade patterns and Egyptian public opinion heightened partisan disagreements about Obama's positions on trade and the Egyptian revolution. However, to the best of our knowledge, it has not been tested in the context of factual corrections to political figures.

Hypotheses

This study examines the effect of factual corrections on three sets of outcomes: focal beliefs, downstream attitudes, and adjacent beliefs, across eleven issues concerning economic performance indicators and misstatements by prominent political figures, including both information that is congenial or uncongenial to respondents' political predispositions. Our expectations regarding each outcome are as follows:

Focal Belief Updating. Consistent with a large body of prior research (e.g., Coppock et al., 2023; Wood & Porter, 2019), we expect factual corrections to shift respondents' beliefs in the direction of the information, regardless of whether it is congenial or uncongenial to their predispositions.

H1: Factual corrections will update focal beliefs in the direction of the corrective information, regardless of individuals' political predispositions.

Downstream Attitudes. Although the downstream outcomes tested here are more proximate to the corrected fact than those examined in prior work, we expect that the strength of political predispositions—whether operating through motivated reasoning or strong priors—will be sufficient to prevent meaningful attitude change in response to a single correction.

H2: Individuals presented with uncongenial factual corrections will not update downstream attitudes related to the corrected fact.

For congenial corrections, expectations are more uncertain. On the one hand, when information reinforces rather than threatens political predispositions and the outcome is conceptually close to the corrected fact, downstream updating may face fewer motivational or prior-based barriers. On the other hand, congenial corrections may be largely uninformative: respondents whose predispositions align with the factual claim are likely to already hold accurate beliefs, leaving limited room for updating on either the focal belief or related attitudes (Kane, 2025). The effect of congenial corrections on downstream attitudes therefore likely depends on the degree to which the correction provides genuinely new information. We frame this as a research question rather than a directional hypothesis:

RQ1: Do congenial factual corrections shift downstream attitudes that are conceptually proximate to the corrected fact?

Adjacent Belief Adjustment. Consistent with prior work on rationalization and Bayesian updating in domains such as responsibility attribution and fact interpretation (Bisgaard, 2019; Graham & Singh, 2024; Lauderdale, 2016), we expect corrections to trigger adjacent belief adjustment that varies by congeniality. When corrections are uncongenial, we expect respondents to adjust adjacent beliefs in ways that preserve their political predispositions. When corrections are congenial, we expect either no adjacent belief adjustment—since there is no attitudinal threat to defend against and priors already point in the same direction—or adjustment in the predisposition-consistent direction. For example, a respondent who learns that the economy performed well under their party's administration may attribute more responsibility to the president, not less.

H3A: After receiving uncongenial factual corrections, respondents will adjust adjacent beliefs in a direction congenial to their political predispositions, including shifts in responsibility attributions, evaluative judgments, perceptions of fact relevance, benchmarks, counterfactual reasoning, and second-order beliefs.

H3B: After receiving congenial factual corrections, respondents will either not adjust adjacent beliefs or adjust them in a direction congenial to their political predispositions (i.e., opposite to the direction predicted under H3A).

Heterogeneous Effects by Strength of Predispositions The preceding hypotheses concern average effects across respondents. However, the extent of adjacent belief adjustment may depend on the strength of individuals' political predispositions. Respondents with stronger partisan commitments or more favorable views of the corrected politician face a greater tension between the corrective information and their prior attitudes, fostering adjacent beliefs updating in ways that preserve those commitments. Conversely, respondents with weaker predispositions have less at

stake or weaker priors and may therefore show little adjustment. This moderation pattern is consistent with both motivated reasoning accounts, in which directional goals intensify with identity strength (Kahan, 2015; Kunda, 1990), and Bayesian accounts, in which stronger priors produce larger divergence from the same informational signal (Tappin et al., 2020)

> **H4:** The effect of uncongenial factual corrections on adjacent beliefs will be larger among individuals with stronger political predispositions.

Research Design

We test these hypotheses across two pre-registered survey experiments on two samples of U.S. adults recruited through online platforms (Study 1: Verasight, N = 1,250; Study 2: Prolific, N = 2,019). Study 1 was conducted in July 2025, and Study 2 in April 2026. Both studies are between-subjects experiments where respondents are randomly assigned to a factual information or correction treatment or a control group, followed by measuring three sets of outcomes: (1) the focal belief targeted by the correction; (2) downstream attitudes; and (3) a set of adjacent beliefs relevant to the political interpretation of the fact. Study 1 provides an initial test of the core hypotheses using six issues, one survey item per adjacent belief dimension, and only uncongenial corrections. To replicate and expand findings from Study 1, Study 2 expands the design to eight issues, adds a congenial correction condition, strengthens the treatment stimuli, increases the sample size considerably, and measures each adjacent belief dimension with two items to improve reliability.

Experimental Design

Both studies draw on two categories of factual claims. The first consists of performance-related statements about economic indicators under the Biden and Trump administrations, all of which are factually accurate. Each is selected so that the information is uncongenial to one party: for example, learning that inflation peaked at 9.1% under Biden is uncongenial to Democrats. The second category consists of misstatements by prominent political figures—rated false or mostly false by major fact-checking organizations—regarding immigration, gender equality, and tax fairness. For misstatements, congeniality is defined based on both partisanship and favorability toward the politician who made the claim. A correction is classified as uncongenial if the respondent identifies with the politician's party and reports a favorable pre-treatment opinion of the politician (slightly, mostly, or very favorable). Table 2 lists the full set of issues included in each study as well as the adjacent belief dimensions measures in each.

For each issue, respondents are randomly assigned to receive factual information or no additional information (control). For performance statements—which are factually accurate—the treatment corroborates the claim, while for politicians' misstatements—which are inaccurate—it corrects it. For performance issues, all respondents first receive a brief explanation of the relevant economic indicator (e.g., what the unemployment rate measures). For misstatements, respondents view the original statement along with its author, date, and source. In Study 1 treated individuals see a short paragraph summarizing a fact check, while in Study 2 respondents see the information alongside a TRUE or FALSE label, a colored box, and a more concise summary of the correcting information in order to increase salience and clarity[3].

[3]Correction's text for misstatements is based on fact-checks from well-known organizations as Politifact in line with previous research (Nyhan et al., 2020) while information on performance-based issues was summarized by the authors based on official statistics from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

	Description	Uncong. to	S1	S2	Attr.	Eval.	Fact	Bench.	Ctr.	SOB
(i) Performance-Related Factual Statements										
1	Inflation peaked at 9.1% under Biden	Dem.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
2	Unemployment fell to 50-year low under Biden	Rep.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
3	Unemployment rose in Trump's first year	Rep.		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
4	Inflation fell in Trump's first year	Dem.		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
(ii) Misstatements by Political Figures										
5	Trump: FEMA funds diverted to house immigrants	Trump sup.	✓		✓		✓			✓
6	Vance: 20–25 million illegal aliens in the U.S.	Vance sup.	✓		✓		✓			✓
7	Harris: Worst unemployment since the Depression	Harris sup.	✓		✓		✓			✓
8	Trump: 92% of Somalis in MN don't work	Trump sup.		✓	✓		✓	†		✓
9	Vance: Minneapolis has most immigration violators	Vance sup.		✓	✓		✓	†		✓
10	Harris: Women paid 80 cents on the dollar for same work	Harris sup.		✓	✓		✓	†		✓
11	Biden: Billionaires pay 8% income tax	Biden sup.	✓	✓	✓		✓	†		✓

Table 2: Summary of Factual Statements and Adjacent Belief Dimensions Across Studies

Note: Attr. = Attribution, Eval. = Evaluation, Fact = Fact-Relevance, Bench. = Benchmarks, Ctr. = Counterfactuals, SOB = Second-Order Beliefs, S1 = Study 1, S2 = Study 2. †Benchmarks for misstatements measured only in Study 2 and only for uncongenial corrections.

In Study 1, each respondent is assigned to two issues, both uncongenial to their political predispositions. In Study 2, each respondent encounters two uncongenial issues and one congenial issue. For performance issues, congeniality is defined based on party identification. For misstatements, it is defined by the combination of partisanship and favorability toward the politician who made the claim.[4]. Importantly, in both studies we randomize whether downstream attitude questions appear before or after adjacent belief questions in order to conduct robustness checks for order effects.

Measures and Data Quality

For each assigned statement, respondents answer questions measuring three sets of outcomes. Full question wording for all items is provided in the Supplementary Information. The focal belief item asks how accurate or inaccurate the respondent considers the factual claim on a 4-point scale, following previous work (Wood & Porter, 2019). Downstream attitudes for misstatements are measured by asking how well the terms "Honest", "Knowledgeable", and "Trustworthy" describe the politician who made the claim (5-point scale from "Not well at all" to "Extremely well").[5] For performance issues, respondents rate the overall state of the economy (4-point scale from "Very bad" to "Very good") and their approval of the president's handling of the economy (4-point scale from "Strongly disapprove" to "Strongly approve").

Adjacent beliefs are designed to capture the dimensions outlined in the theory section, with measures tailored to each statement. For performance statements, both studies measure attribution (how responsible the president and administration are for economic outcomes), evaluation (subjective assessment of whether a given indicator value is good or bad), fact-relevance (how important the indicator is for assessing economic performance), counterfactual comparisons (how the indicator would have fared under a different administration or in the absence of specific events), and benchmarks (perceptions of the same indicator under other administrations). For political figures' misstatements, both studies measure fact-relevance (the importance of grounding political claims in objective evidence versus conveying an underlying truth), attribution (the justifiability

[4]Leaners are included as partisans, while pure independents were excluded from the sample.

[5]Study 1 did not include the "Trustworthy" item.

of political exaggeration to achieve broader goals), and second-order beliefs (whether the politician was speaking literally or figuratively)[6]. Study 2 adds benchmarks for uncongenial corrections, asking respondents about the frequency of false claims by the opposing party's leaders.[7] In Study 1, each dimension is measured with a single item; in Study 2, each is measured with two items, which are averaged for analysis.

Respondents were excluded prior to analysis if they did not provide consent, were under 18, declined the honesty pledge, complied with a hidden prompt designed to detect AI-generated responses (Study 2 only), or failed to complete the survey. Additional quality flags such as response time, age verification, duplicate detection, and bot indicators, were used to identify low-quality responses and for sensitivity analyses.[8]

Estimation

We estimate separate hierarchical linear regression models for each set of outcomes. For focal beliefs and downstream attitudes, the models include random intercepts for respondents and random slopes for the treatment effect across issues, yielding a meta-analytic average treatment effect pooled across issues while allowing for issue-specific heterogeneity. Outcome variables are coded so that higher values indicate greater alignment with the information, that is, more accurate focal beliefs and downstream attitudes shifted in the direction of the information.

For adjacent beliefs, the models include random intercepts for respondents and random slopes for the treatment effect across issue-by-dimension pairs. We include fixed effects for dimension type interacted with treatment, which allows us to estimate both a pooled meta-analytic effect across all dimensions and dimension-specific treatment effects. All models include individual-level covariates (age, gender, education, and partisan strength) to increase the precision of estimates (Gerber & Green, 2012). Full model specifications are provided in the Supplementary Information.

Results

Descriptive Analysis

In this section we analyze descriptively whether individuals with different core political commitments differ in how accurate they perceive politically relevant statements to be and how they interpret the statements they accept. We rely on data from Study 2 as it is the only study that measures statements both when they are congenial and when they are uncongenial with respondents' core political predispositions.

We start by assessing the perceived accuracy of focal statements. The left panels of Figure 1 show the perceived accuracy of the eight statements among respondents assigned to the control

[6]Not all dimensions are measured for both statement types. Second-order beliefs are not applicable to performance statements as there is no speaker whose intent could be reinterpreted. Evaluation and counterfactual comparisons were not measured for misstatements to avoid overlap with existing dimensions. For instance, evaluating how bad it is for a politician to make inaccurate claims overlaps conceptually with the attribution measure of justifiability. Future work could further explore the omitted dimension-issue combinations.

[7]For congenial corrections, the analogous item would concern one's own party's leaders and is therefore excluded as it would be closer to a downstream evaluation rather than an adjacent belief.

[8]Results are substantively unchanged when excluding respondents with one or more quality flags, with the exception that focal belief effects are slightly larger in the restricted sample, consistent with greater measurement error among flagged respondents. Full exclusion criteria, flag definitions and sensitivty analysis are reported in the Supplementary Information.

group, who received no factual correction, separating accurate performance facts (top) from misstatements by political elites (bottom). Across all eight issues we find a statistically significant gap in perceived accuracy by partisanship, ranging from 0.17 to 0.42 on the 0–1 scale. The pattern shows a consistent direction. For instance, for performance facts, respondents are more skeptical of negative performance information about their in-party administration but tend to see positive information as more accurate. Similarly, for misstatements, claims by favored politicians are judged more accurate than claims by out-party figures. While the prevalence of such gaps has been questioned (Roush & Sood, 2023), our findings align with work showing that they can emerge and be substantial at least for beliefs with a clear partisan direction (Malka & Adelman, 2023; Peterson & Iyengar, 2021).

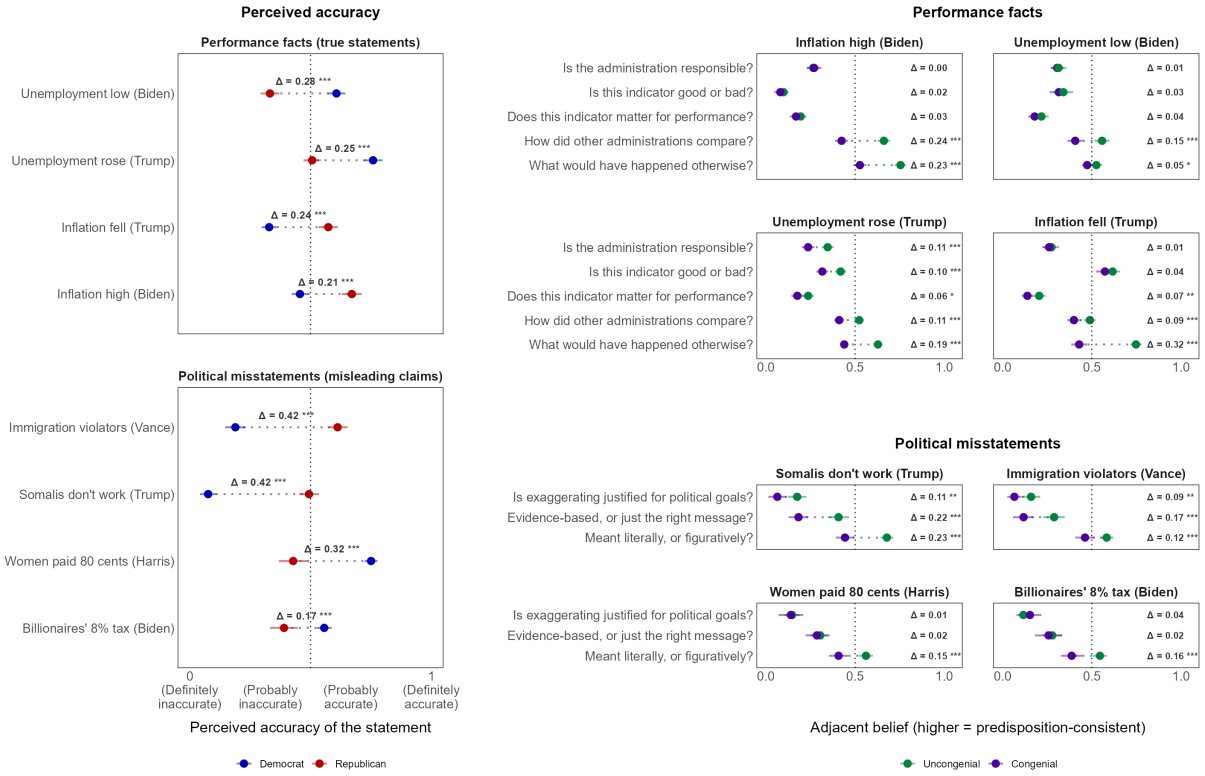

Figure 1: Focal and Adjacent Beliefs by Partisanship and Congeniality (Study 2)

*Note: The panel on the left shows the perceived accuracy of focal beliefs among control respondents disaggregated by party identification. The right panel shows the mean adjacent belief among treated respondents who accepted the focal fact disaggregated by congeniality (with higher values coded as predisposition preserving). Bars are 95% CIs and Δ are between-group differences in means (*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001). For political misstatements, co-partisans of the speaker are restricted to respondents favorable toward that candidate while out-partisans are unrestricted.*

Yet factual disagreement captures only one dimension along which beliefs diverge among individuals with different core political commitments. Even when people converge on accepting a fact—as is common after exposure to corrective information (e.g., Wood & Porter, 2019)—they may still disagree on beliefs that shape the political meaning and implications of that fact. The right panels of Figure 1 plot, for each issue and among respondents who were treated and updated to accurately perceive the focal belief, the mean of a set of adjacent beliefs that give the

accepted fact its political connotation, disaggregated by congeniality. Higher values denote the more predisposition-consistent interpretations. Most beliefs (63%) show significant partisan differences. A few beliefs show small or no gaps at all—blame attribution for performance facts is largely similar across parties, even where prior research would expect otherwise (Bisgaard, 2015, 2019), though it diverges on some issues—but many differ sharply. For instance, consider the (true) statement that inflation reached a 40-year high under the Biden administration. Among respondents who accept it, Democrats are far more likely than Republicans to rate inflation under Trump's administrations as high ($\Delta = 0.24$) and that inflation would have been just as high under different administration or if the pandemic had not occurred ($\Delta = 0.23$). A similar pattern holds for misstatements. For instance, among respondents who accurately claim that Trump's statement that "92% of Somalis don't work" is false, Republicans are more likely than Democrats to say he was speaking figuratively rather than literally ($\Delta = 0.23$), to prioritize conveying the right message over citing objective evidence when evaluating political statements ($\Delta = 0.22$), and that exaggeration can be justified for political ends ($\Delta = 0.11$).

Overall, the descriptive evidence suggests that individuals with different political commitments not only assess facts differently but, even when they agree on the facts, can diverge on the interpretations and context that constitute a fact's political meaning. However, these patterns are suggestive as they compare respondents who accepted the fact, and because acceptance itself differs by congeniality, the groups may differ in composition. Nor can they reveal whether these interpretive gaps are activated in response to uncongenial information or instead reflect more stable predispositions. We examine that question with experimental evidence in the following sections.

Effects of Uncongenial Information (Study 1)

To evaluate the effects of factual information on focal beliefs, downstream attitudes, and adjacent beliefs, we estimate three separate hierarchical models, and, as pre-registered, fit additional models subsetting by issue type (performance-based vs. misstatement). Results for Study 1 are shown in Figure 2. The first row of facets shows the meta-analytic treatment effect on focal beliefs pooled across the six issues. As expected, respondents update their beliefs in the direction of the factual information, that is, treated respondents hold more accurate perceptions. The issue-level differences in means (shown as grey crosses) corroborate this finding: accuracy in the treatment group is higher than in the control group for every issue, with no evidence of backfire effects in line with previous research (Coppock et al., 2023; Wood & Porter, 2019). However, given that respondents received precise directly relevant information about the question being asked, treatment effects on focal beliefs were modest: the pooled meta-analytic estimate is 0.096 points on a 0–1 scale ($p < 0.01$) with a larger effect for performance issues (0.11, $p < 0.01$) than for political misstatements (0.082, $p < 0.01$).

Despite this shift in focal beliefs toward accuracy, the second row of facets shows no significant effect on downstream attitudes: treatment effects are 0.006 ($p = 0.59$), 0.014 ($p = 0.66$), and 0.002 ($p = 0.88$) for the pooled, performance, and misstatement models, respectively.

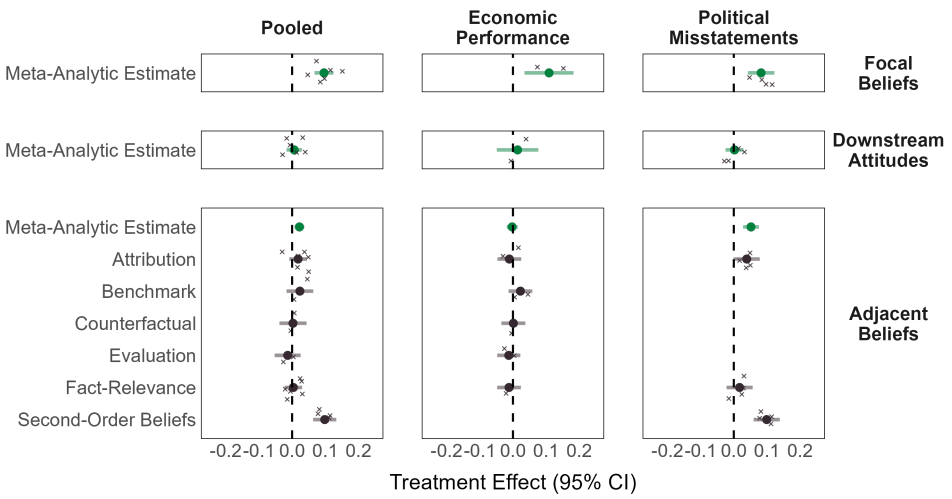

Figure 2: Treatment Effects by Outcome Measure (Study 1)

Note: Meta-analytic treatment effects from hierarchical linear models with random intercepts for respondents and random effects for treatment across issues (focal beliefs, downstream attitudes) or issue-dimension pairs (adjacent beliefs). Green points show pooled estimates with 95% confidence intervals. Grey crosses show issue-level or issue-dimension-level raw differences in means. All outcomes are coded on a 0–1 scale. Focal beliefs are coded so that higher values indicate greater accuracy (correctly identifying true claims or rejecting false ones); downstream attitudes are coded so that higher values indicate attitudes more consistent with the direction implied by the correction; adjacent beliefs are coded so that higher values indicate predisposition-preserving responses.

Turning to adjacent beliefs, we observe variation in treatment effects across dimensions. The pooled meta-analytic estimate is 0.022 ($p < 0.01$), that is in the expected direction and statistically significant, but modest in magnitude. This aggregate masks important differences by issue type: we find no effect for performance issues (-0.002) but a sizable effect for misstatements (0.052, $p < 0.01$). A visual inspection to the adjacent belief coefficients reveals that most dimensions show no meaningful difference between treatment and control. However, there are two exceptions. First, respondents who receive corrections to misstatements by favored politicians shift toward rating false or exaggerated claims by politicians as more justifiable when made in pursuit of larger political goals (0.039, $p = 0.03$). Second, and more substantially, corrections to preferred political leaders trigger a marked shift in the interpretation of the politician's intent: treated respondents disproportionately characterize the politician as having spoken figuratively or made a broader point rather than stating a literal claim. This second-order belief effect is sizable (0.099, $p < 0.01$), equivalent to about a third of a standard deviation of the outcome in the control group, and consistent across all four misstatement issues.

An open question is whether the null effects on downstream attitudes and several adjacent belief dimensions are genuine or partly attributable to the modest focal belief effects observed in Study 1. To address this, we conduct a second study with a larger sample, stronger treatment stimuli, and expanded measurement to test whether the key findings replicate.

Effects of Uncongenial Information (Study 2)

We now turn to Study 2, which tests whether the patterns observed in Study 1 replicate with the expanded design. Figure 3 presents the main results. The redesigned stimuli yielded substantially

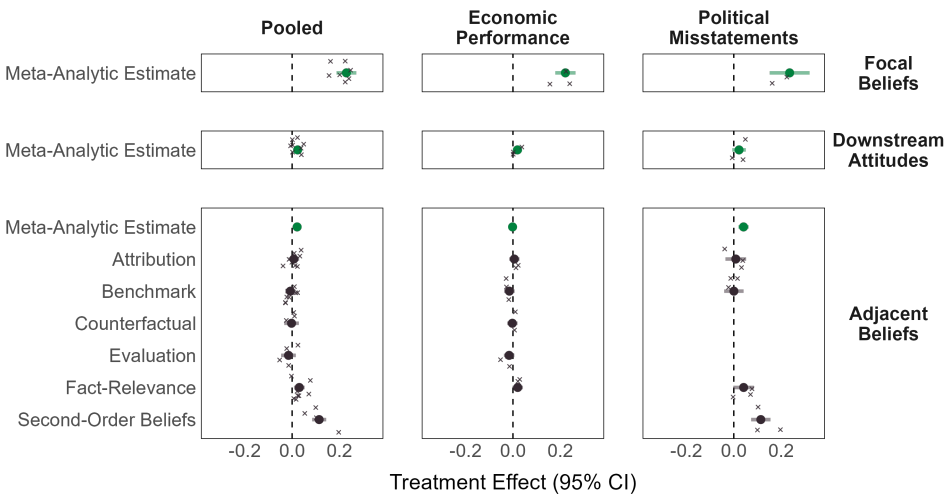

Figure 3: Treatment Effects by Outcome Measure (Study 2)

Note: Meta-analytic treatment effects from hierarchical linear models on uncongenial issues only. Outcome measures coding and visual elements follow Figure 1.

larger effects on focal beliefs, with a pooled meta-analytic estimate of 0.23 ($p < 0.01$), more than double the magnitude observed in Study 1. Turning to downstream attitudes, we find a small but statistically significant pooled effect (0.023, $p < 0.01$). Disaggregating by issue type, the effect on economic evaluations and presidential approval is in the expected direction but substantively modest (0.019, $p = 0.05$). The effect on perceptions of politicians' honesty, knowledgeability, and trustworthiness is similar in magnitude (0.022, $p = 0.13$).

Together with Study 1, these results paint a consistent picture: factual corrections produce substantial increases in the accuracy of corrected beliefs, but the corresponding shifts in downstream attitudes are modest. Learning that inflation peaked at 9.1% or that unemployment fell to a 50-year low shifts perceptions of these indicators but barely moves overall economic evaluations or presidential approval. Similarly, learning that a favored politician made a false claim shifts perceptions of the claim's accuracy but produces only small changes in how honest, knowledgeable, or trustworthy respondents consider that politician to be. This pattern holds even for outcomes more proximate to the corrected fact than the entrenched dispositions examined in prior work (Carey et al., 2024; Coppock et al., 2023; Swire et al., 2017).[9]

Regarding adjacent beliefs, we again observe variation in treatment effects across dimensions. The overall meta-analytic effect is positive and statistically significant, albeit modest in magnitude (0.021, $p < 0.01$). Most dimension-specific effects are not statistically significant and close to zero, including attribution for misstatements ($0.008, p = 0.36$), failing to replicate the effect found on Study 1.

There are, however, two notable exceptions. First, we find evidence that respondents downgrade the relevance of the information presented in the correction after receiving uncongenial fac-

[9] As shown in the Supplementary Information these results are not affected by whether the downstream attitudes were measured before or after the adjacent belief questions (order was randomized and the interaction between treatment and order is not statistically significant in either study).

tual information. The dimension-specific estimate is 0.03 ($p < 0.01$). The effect is weaker for performance issues (0.02, $p = 0.03$), where respondents rate unemployment or inflation as less important for assessing the overall state of the economy or evaluating the president's economic performance. It is larger for misstatements (0.041, $p < 0.01$), where respondents shift from valuing whether the specific statistics cited are accurate or grounded in objective evidence toward prioritizing whether the claim conveys the right message or makes the right overall point. This finding speaks directly to the work of Kim et al. (2024), who show that this form of moral flexibility (specifically prioritizing the message over objective evidence) predicts positive responses to false statements even after controlling for whether respondents believe the statement to be factually accurate. Our results suggest that moral flexibility is not only a stable predictor of how individuals respond to misinformation, but is itself malleable. Receiving an uncongenial correction shifts respondents toward deprioritizing objective evidence relative to conveying the right message.

Second, we replicate the sizable effect on second-order beliefs observed in Study 1. When respondents learn that a preferred politician made an inaccurate claim, they shift toward interpreting the statement as figurative or as making a broader point rather than a literal factual claim. The dimension-specific estimate is 0.11 ($p < 0.01$)—approximately 0.4 standard deviations in the control group—with issue-level differences in means ranging from 0.05 to 0.19. Notably, the magnitude is nearly identical to the Study 1 estimate (0.11), despite differences in the specific misstatements tested, the sample, and the measurement approach (two items per dimension in Study 2 versus one in Study 1). This consistency suggests that the reinterpretation of speaker intent is a robust response to learning that a favored politician made a false claim.

Comparing Congenial and Uncongenial Effects (Study 2)

In Study 2, we also examine how individuals respond to congenial factual information. For performance issues, this means learning about negative economic indicators during out-party administrations or positive indicators during in-party administrations and for misstatements it means receiving corrections to claims made by out-party leaders. Figure 4 presents estimates on all three sets of outcomes, pooled and by issue type. We observe a positive effect on focal beliefs in the expected direction, with a pooled estimate of 0.16 ($p < 0.01$), somewhat smaller than the uncongenial effect. Regarding downstream attitudes, for which we did not have strong directional expectations, the meta-analytic estimate is 0.014 ($p = 0.18$), which constitutes a small but non-significant shift in the direction implied by the information.

One factor contributing to these modest effects is ceiling effects in the control group. In the Supplementary Information we report outcome means by treatment condition for each issue separately. The most extreme case is Trump's claim that 92% of Somalis in Minnesota do not work: among untreated Democrats, the mean focal belief score was 0.92, meaning that 97% already rated the statement as probably or definitely inaccurate. Other issues show similarly skewed distributions, leaving limited room for further updating. A comparable pattern arises for downstream attitudes: the mean of the honesty, knowledgeability, and trustworthiness index, where higher values indicate more negative evaluations, ranged from 0.84 (Republicans' evaluation of Harris) to 0.95 (Democrats' evaluation of Trump) among untreated respondents.

These results admit two interpretations. On the one hand, some issue-level effects are non-negligible: despite skewed control group distributions and smaller focal belief updating, the Harris correction produces a 0.048 shift in trait perceptions—larger than any single uncongenial downstream effect—suggesting that congenial information may, under certain circumstances be better positioned to move downstream attitudes. On the other hand, a 0.14-point increase in focal belief accuracy on Biden administration inflation (where the control group distribution is not skewed)

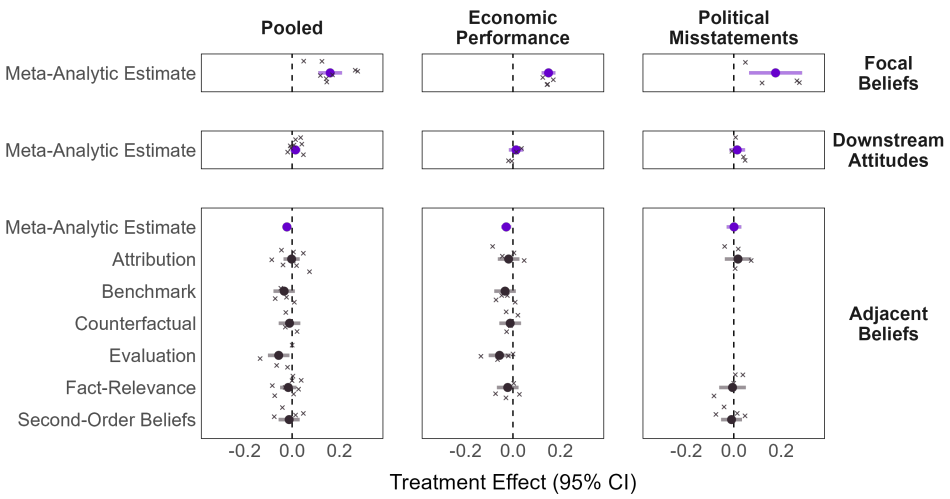

Figure 4: Treatment Effects on Congenial Issues (Study 2)

Note: Meta-analytic treatment effects from hierarchical linear models on congenial issues only. Outcome measures coding and visual elements follow Figure 1.

produces no corresponding change in economic evaluations, consistent with the possibility that factual beliefs merely play a limited role in shaping political evaluations (Malka & Adelman, 2023). Future research is needed to disentangle these accounts.

The bottom panel of Figure 4 shows the effect of congenial information on adjacent beliefs. These items are coded so that higher values indicate predisposition-preserving responses to uncongenial information (e.g., downplaying the relevance of unemployment after learning it rose under one's own party), while under congenial corrections the same coding means that negative effects indicate predisposition-reinforcing adjustment (e.g., emphasizing its relevance after learning it decreased). Consistent with this expectation, the meta-analytic estimate is -0.022 ($p < 0.01$), and all six dimension-specific estimates are negative, with the largest effects for evaluation (-0.057, $p < 0.01$) and benchmarks (-0.033, $p < 0.01$). In other words, the adjacent beliefs that shape the political meaning of a fact can shift in response to both uncongenial and congenial information, and when they do they do so in opposite directions: uncongenial corrections trigger adjustment that attenuates the negative political implications of the fact, while congenial information triggers adjustment that amplifies its positive implications.

Figure 5 illustrates this divergent pattern. The top row plots focal belief means by congeniality and treatment condition for each of the four misstatement issues in Study 2. Consistent with prior work, both congenial and uncongenial respondents update their factual beliefs in response to the correction, producing roughly parallel trends toward accuracy. The bottom row, however, reveals a markedly different pattern for second-order beliefs. Rather than updating in parallel, congenial and uncongenial respondents diverge: uncongenial respondents shift toward interpreting the politician as speaking figuratively, while congenial respondents remain stable (i.e., Harris and Trump issues) or even shift in the opposite direction (i.e., Biden and Vance issues). In either case, the implication is the same: parallel updating on the accuracy of the statement coexists with divergent updating on the political meaning of the fact.

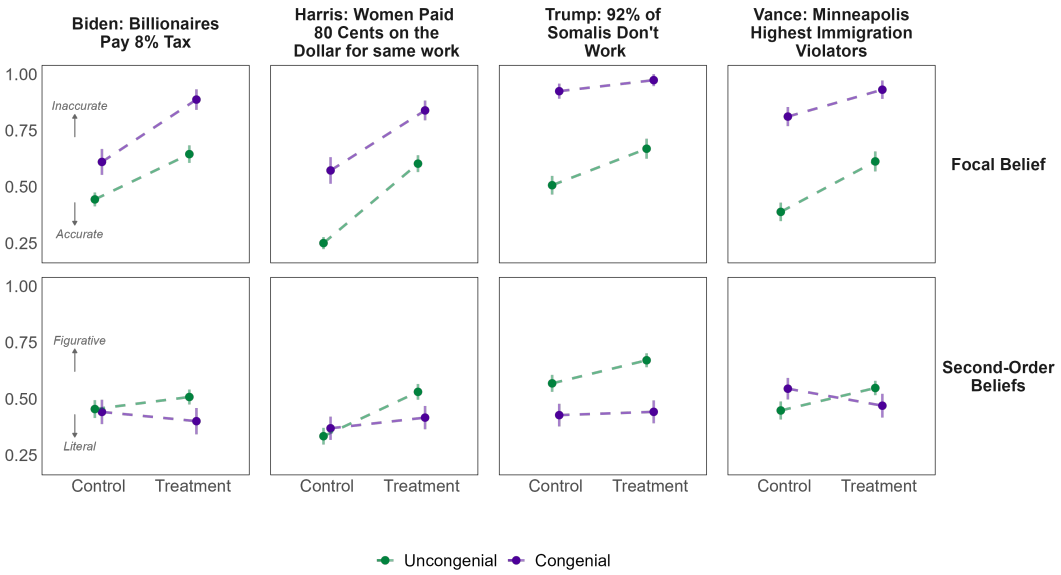

Figure 5: Focal Belief Updating and Second-Order Belief Adjustment by Issue (Study 2)

Note: Group means by treatment condition and congeniality for each misstatement issue in Study 2. Uncongenial respondents are co-partisans who view the politician favorably while congenial respondents are out-partisans of the political figure. Error bars show 95% confidence intervals.

Heterogeneous Treatment Effects

We finally examine whether treatment effects vary by predisposition strength. We base this analysis on Study 2 given the larger sample and expanded pre-treatment measures. Predisposition strength is operationalized as the average of partisan identification strength, in-party warmth, and out-party coldness for performance issues, and as the average of candidate favorability and agreement with the relevant policy position for misstatements (full question wording in Supplementary Information). Figure 6 displays treatment effects separately for respondents with strong (above-median) and weak (below-median) predispositions by issue type.

For focal beliefs, there is evidence that corrections produce larger shifts toward accuracy among respondents with weak predispositions for economic performance (0.231, $p = 0.01$), consistent with ceiling effects among strong partisans who hold less accurate prior beliefs, but no heterogeneity for misstatements (-0.026, $p = 0.76$). For downstream attitudes, we find no heterogeneity for performance issues (0.06, $p = 0.37$) and suggestive evidence that the small downstream effects observed for misstatements are concentrated among weak-predisposition respondents (-0.126, $p = 0.06$).

Turning to adjacent beliefs, the overall interaction between treatment and predisposition strength is in the expected direction but it is not significant for performance issues (0.029, $p = 0.39$) and falls short of conventional thresholds for misstatements (0.068, $p = 0.13$). Examining dimension-specific patterns via three-way interactions, we find that the two dimensions that showed significant main effects—second-order beliefs and fact-relevance—both exhibit larger treatment effects among respondents with stronger predispositions. The pattern is statistically significant for fact-relevance on misstatements (0.244, $p < 0.01$) and in the expected direction but not significant for

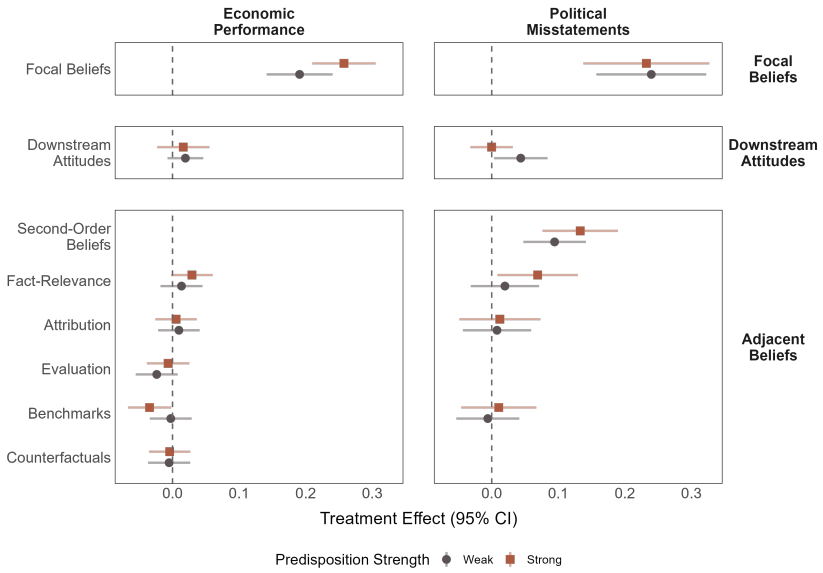

Figure 6: Heterogeneous Effects of Uncongenial Corrections by Predisposition Strength (Study 2)

Note: Treatment effects estimated separately for respondents with weak (below-median) and strong (above-median) political predispositions, by statement type. Coding follows Figure 1. Estimates from hierarchical linear models with 95% confidence intervals.

second-order beliefs (0.059, $p = 0.46$). The remaining dimensions show no consistent pattern of moderation.

Discussion

Overall, across two studies our results show, in line with previous research, that factual information shifts perceptions toward accuracy (**H1**). Downstream attitudes move in the expected direction but modestly. For instance, in Study 2, the pooled effect on downstream attitudes is 0.02 on a 0 to 1 scale (**H2**), compared to 0.23 on focal beliefs. This pattern holds for outcomes more proximate to the corrected belief than those examined in prior work, including perceptions of politicians' honesty and competence after learning they made an inaccurate claim, and economic evaluations after learning about inflation or unemployment trends. Congenial corrections produce similarly small downstream effects (**RQ1**), though the extent to which this reflects ceiling effects or a more general pattern remains an open question.

But does factual information affect a broader set of beliefs that shape the political meaning of a fact? To address this, we develop and empirically assess a framework of six adjacent belief dimensions that may shape the political meaning of facts typically targeted by fact-checking organizations and analyzed in previous research (Coppock et al., 2023; Swire et al., 2017; Wood & Porter, 2019). Results provide mixed support for the expectation that uncongenial factual information triggers adjacent belief updating (**H3A**). We find strong evidence in both studies that respondents selectively adjust second-order beliefs about whether the politician was speaking literally or figuratively, and evidence of fact-relevance adjustment in Study 2. Small adjustments on

attribution for misstatements appear in Study 1 but does not replicate. We find no movement on benchmarks, evaluation, or counterfactual reasoning, even though among those who accept the fact, we observe significant differences across all dimensions between individuals with differing core political commitments. For congenial corrections, consistent with **H3B**, we find small adjustment in the opposite direction, that is, moving towards favorable interpretations, suggesting that adjacent beliefs can move in both directions depending on the congeniality of the information. Finally, where adjacent belief adjustment occurs, we find suggestive evidence that it is more pronounced among those with the strongest political commitments or priors (**H4**).

The most robust finding across both studies is that corrections to misstatements by political figures trigger selective reinterpretation of the politician's intent. When respondents learn that a favored politician made an inaccurate claim, they do not deny the inaccuracy, but they do shift toward viewing the statement as figurative or as making a broader point rather than literally or referring to a specific statistic. This finding speaks to a persistent puzzle in the political information literature: why do corrections that successfully update beliefs about politicians' claims fail to lower evaluations of those politicians? While we cannot establish the causal link directly, our results suggest a possible mechanism. If a voter accepts that a politician's claim was factually wrong but concludes the politician was not seriously asserting it as fact, the inference that the politician is dishonest or incompetent does not follow, decoupling factual corrections from downstream evaluations of the politician.

The fact-relevance finding, though smaller, points in a similar direction. Respondents who receive uncongenial corrections shift toward deprioritizing factual accuracy relative to conveying the right message when evaluating political claims. This resonates with Kim et al. (2024), who find that this form of moral flexibility—valuing the message over objective evidence—predicts positive responses to false statements independently of whether respondents believe them to be true. Although the fact-relevance effect appears only in Study 2, this raises the possibility that this orientation is not only a stable individual disposition but may itself be responsive: exposure to an uncongenial correction can make factual accuracy less important in respondents' own evaluative criteria. Together with the second-order belief finding, this suggests that the two adjacent belief dimensions that respond to corrections share a common logic: individuals do not reject the facts, but the interpretive scaffolding connecting facts to their political meaning can be shaped by predispositions, leading congenial and uncongenial respondents to draw divergent conclusions from the same information.

A key question is whether these findings reflect rationalization shaped by politically motivated reasoning (Bisgaard, 2019; Kahan, 2015; Lauderdale, 2016; Williams, 2023) or Bayesian updating with strong priors (Druckman & McGrath, 2019; Graham & Singh, 2024; Tappin et al., 2020). A respondent who learns that a favored politician made an inaccurate claim and shifts toward viewing the statement as figurative may be confabulating to protect a political commitment or may be drawing on strong prior beliefs about the politician's competence and honesty to infer that the claim was not meant literally. We remain agnostic, as the observable implications of these accounts are identical and our design cannot distinguish between them (Tappin et al., 2020). Moreover, the distinction may be less clear than it appears: individuals may self-select into identities that shape reasoning on the basis of reasonable arguments, and strong priors may themselves be shaped by social and identity-based processes (Graham & Singh, 2024). As Sommer et al. (2024) argue, belief updating can be a rational process sensitive to evidence, while the evaluation of that evidence—including information searching and reasoning—may be subject to directional motivations. In either case, the political meaning of uncongenial factual information is reshaped in ways that may limit its downstream consequences, a pattern that warrants attention when assessing citizens' responsiveness to political information.

More broadly, the modest downstream effects we document raise the question of what corrections can reasonably be expected to achieve. Even for the proximate outcomes we test, the corrected belief is one consideration among several that contribute to the overall attitude (Velez et al., 2025). At the same time, we lack a formal benchmark for how much downstream attitude change a given amount of belief updating should produce. Whether the ratio we observe (a 0.02-point shift in attitudes from a 0.23-point shift in beliefs) is smaller than what the corrected belief's weight in the attitude function would predict, whether it falls short of the responsiveness that normative accounts of democratic accountability require, or whether it is roughly in line with either, is a question our design cannot answer. Future work that measures belief relevance weights alongside treatment effects would allow researchers to generate more precise expectations and assess whether observed downstream effects are smaller than the attitude function implies.

Our findings have important qualifications. First, evidence of adjacent belief adjustment is localized rather than widespread, concentrated primarily in second-order beliefs, with partial evidence for fact-relevance and attribution and no movement among the remaining dimensions. This may reflect that dimensions such as benchmarking and counterfactual reasoning are simply not responsive to factual information on a related claim. Alternatively, reinterpretations along these dimensions may require sustained exposure or elite cues, consistent with the attribution shifts that emerge over the course of real-world crises (Bisgaard, 2015; Graham & Singh, 2024). Second, we measure our outcomes immediately after exposure to information and therefore whether the shifts we do observe persist or decay beyond the immediate post-treatment window remains an open question. Third, while we document that adjacent belief adjustment and downstream attitude stability or modest change co-occur and speculate about the former limiting the latter, our design does not establish a causal link between the two.

Despite these limitations, the findings carry implications for the literature on factual information and belief updating. Our findings suggest that measuring adjacent beliefs alongside focal beliefs and downstream attitudes provides a more complete account of what corrections actually change, and the framework developed here offers researchers a structured set of dimensions for doing so across different issues. More broadly, the coexistence of parallel trends in factual accuracy and divergent trends in how facts are interpreted paints a more nuanced picture of citizens' responsiveness to political information, in which individuals can and do update their factual beliefs regardless of their core predispositions, but where the political meaning of those facts is often shaped by them.

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Supplementary Information

Contents

Additional Figures and Tables

Question Order Effects

For each issue in both studies, the focal belief is measured immediately after the treatment. The order of the remaining two set of outcomes (downstream attitudes and adjacent beliefs) is independently randomized within each issue. This design allows us to test whether exposure to adjacent belief questions affects responses to downstream attitude questions by making available reinterpretation strategies that respondents might not generate on their own.

To assess this we first compare estimates from the fitting the main models to subsets of respondents for whom downstream attitudes were measured before any adjacent belief questions and vice-versa (Figures A1 and A2).

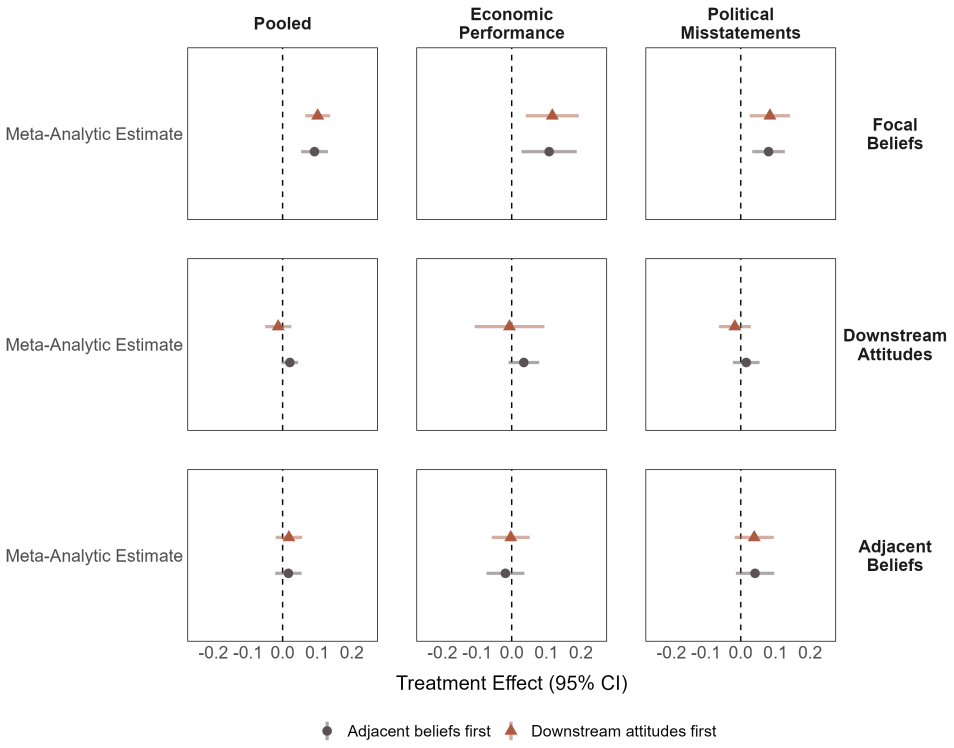

Figure A1: Question Order Effects (Study 1)

Note: Meta-analytic treatment effect (95% CIs) pooled across issues, by outcome type (rows) and issue type (columns), shown separately for respondents who were asked adjacent beliefs before versus after downstream attitudes.

Second, we estimate a model that interacts the treatment indicator with a binary variable indicating whether adjacent belief questions appeared first. The quantity of interest is the interaction effect as a significant estimate would indicate that the treatment effect on downstream attitudes differs depending on whether respondents had first been asked to evaluate the adjacent belief dimensions surrounding the corrected fact. We also estimate the analogous model for adjacent beliefs.

Table A1 reports the interaction between treatment and question order for downstream atti-

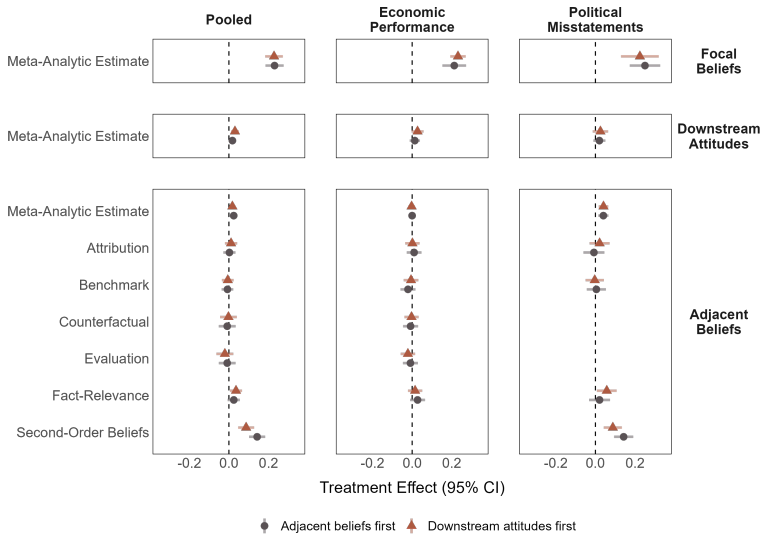

Figure A2: Question Order Effects Order (Study 2)

Note: Meta-analytic treatment effect (95% CIs) pooled across issues, by outcome type (rows) and issue type (columns), shown separately for respondents who were asked adjacent beliefs before versus after downstream attitudes.

tudes and adjacent beliefs. In neither study is the interaction significant for either outcome set. Figures A1 and A2 display treatment effect estimates separately by order condition.

At the dimension level, some variation is visible in the comparison figures. In Study 1, the treatment effect on second-order beliefs is larger when downstream attitudes are measured first, while in Study 2 the pattern reverses. These differences are not consistent across studies and none of the pooled interaction terms reach significance (Table A1).

Table A1: Treatment × Question Order Interaction

		$\hat{\beta}_3$	SE	p
Study 1	Downstream Attitudes	0.029	0.022	.17
	Adjacent Beliefs	−0.02	0.014	.14
Study 2	Downstream Attitudes	−0.011	0.014	.417
	Adjacent Beliefs	0.006	0.008	.475

Sensitivity Analysis by Data Quality

Our primary analyses include all respondents who passed hard exclusion criteria applied during or immediately after survey completion:

- Declining informed consent
- Being under 18
- Not residing in the U.S.
- Declining an honesty pledge

- Identifying as a pure independent (i.e., not identifying with or leaning toward either major party)
- Typing the word "umbrella" in an open-ended question following an embedded instruction not visible to human respondents. (Study 2 only)

After these exclusions, the analytic samples comprise $N = 1,250$ respondents in Study 1 and $N = 2,019$ in Study 2. As pre-registered, we additionally evaluate data quality through a series of flags designed to identify potentially low-quality responses, and compare all main results to a restricted sample that excludes respondents with at least one flag.

Table A2: Data Quality Flags by Study

	Study 1 ($N = 1{,}250$)	Study 2 ($N = 2{,}019$)
Speeding	87 (7%)	113 (5.6%)
Attention check / AI response	37 (3%)	88 (4.4%)
Incoherent open-ended response	11 (0.9%)	1 (0.05%)
Inconsistent age reporting	0 (0%)	7 (0.3%)
Duplicate detection	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Bot detection (reCAPTCHA)	0 (0%)	11 (0.5%)
Fraud detection	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
≥ 1 flag	123 (9.8%)	213 (10.7%)
≥ 2 flags	12 (1%)	6 (0.3%)

Table A2 reports the prevalence of each flag by study. Flags include:

- **Speeding:** defined as completing the pre-treatment part of the survey in less than half the median completion time.
- **Attention check failure:** provides answer that question wording explicitly mentions in Study 1 and by an item asking how respondents would travel one block to a car wash in Study 2 (respondents who did not select "Drive" are flagged).
- **Incoherent open-ended response:** identified by manual review of all open-ended responses and flagging non-sequitur, gibberish, or clearly irrelevant answers.
- **Inconsistent age reporting:** defined as a discrepancy of more than two years between the reported age and the age implied calculated based on reported birth year.
- **Qualtrics automated quality indicators:** using recommended default thresholds: duplicate detection (RelevantID Duplicate Score ≥ 75), bot detection (reCAPTCHA Score ≤ 0.5), and fraud detection (RelevantID Fraud Score ≥ 30).

We compare full-sample results with a restricted sample that excludes respondents that were flagged at least once. Figure A3 shows results for Study 1 and Figure A4 for Study 2. Overall visual inspection reveals no signal of results being driven by low quality responses, on the contrary, as expected, treatment effects are smaller within low-quality respondents, probably as reflecting higher measurement error.

We also interact the treatment indicator with a binary flag for potentially low-quality responses. The interaction is only significant for focal beliefs being larger among high quality respondents on

Study 1. For Study 1, the interaction terms are $-0.097, p = 0.02$ for focal beliefs, $-0.027p = 0.34$ for downstream attitudes, and $0.002, p = 0.90$ for adjacent beliefs; while for study 2 are $0.055, p = .07$, $-0.005, p = .83$ and $-0.012, p = .37$) respectively.

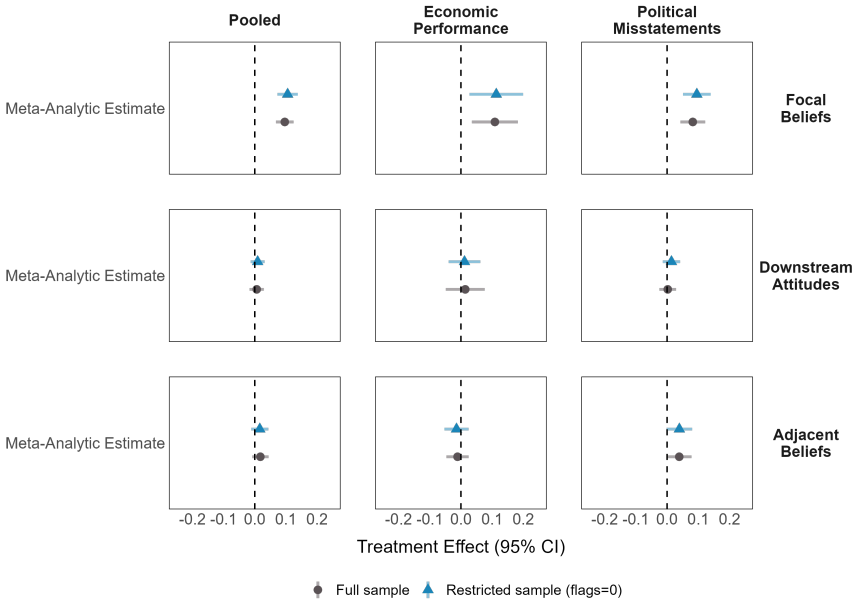

Figure A3: Sensitivity Analysis by Data Quality (Study 1)

Note: Meta-analytic treatment effect (95% CIs) pooled across issues, by outcome type (rows) and issue type (columns), shown separately for the full sample and respondents with no data quality flags.

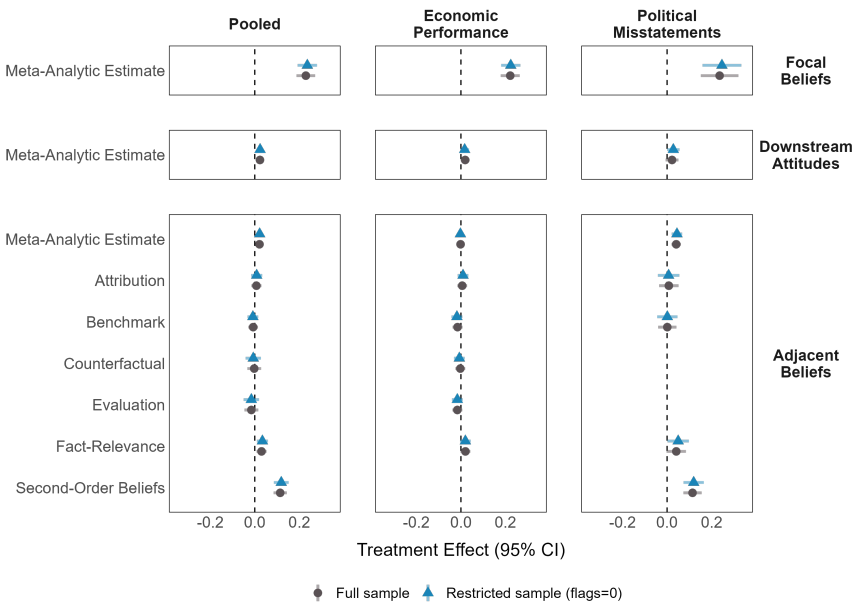

Figure A4: Sensitivity Analysis by Data Quality (Study 2)

Note: Meta-analytic treatment effect (95% CIs) pooled across issues, by outcome type (rows) and issue type (columns), shown separately for the full sample and respondents with no data quality flags.

Outcome Means and Differences by Issue and Outcome

Table A3: Raw Means and Differences by Issue and Outcome

Issue	Control	Treated	Difference
Focal Belief			
Inflation Hits 40-Year High Under Biden	0.380	0.532	0.152
Vance: There are 20–25 Million Illegal Aliens	0.282	0.398	0.116
Harris: Trump Left Worst Unemployment Since Depression	0.257	0.354	0.097
Trump: Biden Stole Hurricane Relief Funds	0.281	0.365	0.085
Unemployment Falls to 50-Year Low Under Biden	0.312	0.385	0.074
Biden: Billionaires Pay 8% Income Tax	0.376	0.423	0.047
Downstream Attitudes			
Unemployment Falls to 50-Year Low Under Biden	0.180	0.219	0.039
Vance: There are 20–25 Million Illegal Aliens	0.218	0.250	0.032
Harris: Trump Left Worst Unemployment Since Depression	0.171	0.185	0.014
Inflation Hits 40-Year High Under Biden	0.323	0.317	-0.006
Biden: Billionaires Pay 8% Income Tax	0.257	0.241	-0.016
Trump: Biden Stole Hurricane Relief Funds	0.288	0.259	-0.029
Attribution			
Trump: Biden Stole Hurricane Relief Funds	0.249	0.299	0.050
Harris: Trump Left Worst Unemployment Since Depression	0.181	0.230	0.049
Vance: There are 20–25 Million Illegal Aliens	0.303	0.340	0.037
Biden: Billionaires Pay 8% Income Tax	0.232	0.249	0.018
Unemployment Falls to 50-Year Low Under Biden	0.362	0.378	0.016
Inflation Hits 40-Year High Under Biden	0.351	0.321	-0.030
Benchmarks			
Unemployment Falls to 50-Year Low Under Biden	0.473	0.519	0.045
Inflation Hits 40-Year High Under Biden	0.639	0.645	0.005
Counterfactuals			
Inflation Hits 40-Year High Under Biden	0.819	0.825	0.006
Unemployment Falls to 50-Year Low Under Biden	0.696	0.692	-0.004
Evaluation			
Unemployment Falls to 50-Year Low Under Biden	0.422	0.426	0.004
Inflation Hits 40-Year High Under Biden	0.189	0.163	-0.026
Issue Importance			
Harris: Trump Left Worst Unemployment Since Depression	0.192	0.222	0.031
Biden: Billionaires Pay 8% Income Tax	0.229	0.258	0.029
Vance: There are 20–25 Million Illegal Aliens	0.361	0.384	0.024
Unemployment Falls to 50-Year Low Under Biden	0.185	0.180	-0.005
Trump: Biden Stole Hurricane Relief Funds	0.345	0.330	-0.015
Inflation Hits 40-Year High Under Biden	0.139	0.118	-0.021
Second-Order Beliefs			
Harris: Trump Left Worst Unemployment Since Depression	0.499	0.613	0.114
Trump: Biden Stole Hurricane Relief Funds	0.444	0.557	0.112
Biden: Billionaires Pay 8% Income Tax	0.565	0.647	0.082
Vance: There are 20–25 Million Illegal Aliens	0.507	0.585	0.078

Table A4: Raw Means and Differences by Issue and Outcome (Study 2, only uncongenial)

Issue	Control	Treated	Difference
Focal Belief			
Harris: Women Paid 80 Cents on the Dollar	0.249	0.602	0.353
Inflation Hits 40-Year High Under Biden	0.456	0.703	0.247
Unemployment Falls to 50-Year Low Under Biden	0.332	0.572	0.240
Inflation Fell Under Trump's First Year	0.329	0.553	0.224
Vance: Minneapolis Highest Immigration Violators	0.388	0.612	0.224
Biden: Billionaires Pay 8% Tax	0.443	0.644	0.201
Trump: 92% of Somalis Don't Work	0.506	0.668	0.162
Unemployment Rose Under Trump's First Year	0.507	0.663	0.156
Downstream Attitudes			
Vance: Minneapolis Highest Immigration Violators	0.315	0.364	0.049
Harris: Women Paid 80 Cents on the Dollar	0.288	0.327	0.039
Unemployment Falls to 50-Year Low Under Biden	0.242	0.280	0.038
Inflation Hits 40-Year High Under Biden	0.382	0.405	0.023
Biden: Billionaires Pay 8% Tax	0.336	0.338	0.002
Inflation Fell Under Trump's First Year	0.103	0.105	0.002
Unemployment Rose Under Trump's First Year	0.425	0.425	0.001
Trump: 92% of Somalis Don't Work	0.372	0.366	-0.007
Attribution			
Harris: Women Paid 80 Cents on the Dollar	0.096	0.134	0.038
Vance: Minneapolis Highest Immigration Violators	0.115	0.148	0.033
Unemployment Rose Under Trump's First Year	0.320	0.342	0.022
Unemployment Falls to 50-Year Low Under Biden	0.312	0.325	0.013
Inflation Fell Under Trump's First Year	0.239	0.248	0.009
Biden: Billionaires Pay 8% Tax	0.112	0.111	-0.001
Inflation Hits 40-Year High Under Biden	0.278	0.266	-0.013
Trump: 92% of Somalis Don't Work	0.214	0.176	-0.038
Benchmark			
Biden: Billionaires Pay 8% Tax	0.826	0.849	0.023
Trump: 92% of Somalis Don't Work	0.735	0.751	0.016
Inflation Hits 40-Year High Under Biden	0.645	0.655	0.010
Harris: Women Paid 80 Cents on the Dollar	0.832	0.819	-0.013
Inflation Fell Under Trump's First Year	0.552	0.535	-0.018
Vance: Minneapolis Highest Immigration Violators	0.764	0.742	-0.022
Unemployment Rose Under Trump's First Year	0.569	0.542	-0.027
Unemployment Falls to 50-Year Low Under Biden	0.619	0.590	-0.029
Counterfactual			
Unemployment Rose Under Trump's First Year	0.619	0.629	0.010
Inflation Fell Under Trump's First Year	0.749	0.756	0.007
Unemployment Falls to 50-Year Low Under Biden	0.565	0.561	-0.004
Inflation Hits 40-Year High Under Biden	0.775	0.750	-0.025
Evaluation			
Inflation Hits 40-Year High Under Biden	0.078	0.103	0.025
Inflation Fell Under Trump's First Year	0.634	0.619	-0.014
Unemployment Falls to 50-Year Low Under Biden	0.397	0.375	-0.023
Unemployment Rose Under Trump's First Year	0.474	0.422	-0.053
Fact-Relevance			
Trump: 92% of Somalis Don't Work	0.362	0.439	0.077
Harris: Women Paid 80 Cents on the Dollar	0.255	0.326	0.071
Inflation Fell Under Trump's First Year	0.150	0.179	0.029
Unemployment Falls to 50-Year Low Under Biden	0.197	0.221	0.024
Unemployment Rose Under Trump's First Year	0.225	0.246	0.021
Biden: Billionaires Pay 8% Tax	0.256	0.273	0.017
Inflation Hits 40-Year High Under Biden	0.177	0.184	0.007
Vance: Minneapolis Highest Immigration Violators	0.335	0.332	-0.003
Second-Order Beliefs			
Harris: Women Paid 80 Cents on the Dollar	0.333	0.530	0.197
Trump: 92% of Somalis Don't Work	0.568	0.670	0.103
Vance: Minneapolis Highest Immigration Violators	0.447	0.547	0.100
Biden: Billionaires Pay 8% Tax	0.454	0.507	0.054

Table A5: Raw Means and Differences by Issue and Outcome (Study 2, only congenial)

Issue	Control	Treated	Difference
Focal Belief			
Biden: Billionaires Pay 8% Tax	0.610	0.887	0.277
Harris: Women Paid 80 Cents on the Dollar	0.572	0.838	0.267
Unemployment Falls to 50-Year Low Under Biden	0.607	0.778	0.170
Inflation Hits 40-Year High Under Biden	0.671	0.818	0.146
Inflation Fell Under Trump's First Year	0.574	0.717	0.144
Unemployment Rose Under Trump's First Year	0.759	0.885	0.126
Vance: Minneapolis Highest Immigration Violators	0.811	0.931	0.119
Trump: 92% of Somalis Don't Work	0.924	0.973	0.049
Downstream Attitudes			
Harris: Women Paid 80 Cents on the Dollar	0.840	0.887	0.048
Vance: Minneapolis Highest Immigration Violators	0.889	0.929	0.041
Inflation Hits 40-Year High Under Biden	0.759	0.795	0.036
Unemployment Rose Under Trump's First Year	0.886	0.900	0.014
Biden: Billionaires Pay 8% Tax	0.850	0.858	0.008
Unemployment Falls to 50-Year Low Under Biden	0.656	0.651	-0.005
Trump: 92% of Somalis Don't Work	0.953	0.945	-0.008
Inflation Fell Under Trump's First Year	0.538	0.519	-0.019
Attribution			
Biden: Billionaires Pay 8% Tax	0.134	0.208	0.073
Unemployment Falls to 50-Year Low Under Biden	0.256	0.304	0.047
Trump: 92% of Somalis Don't Work	0.065	0.083	0.019
Harris: Women Paid 80 Cents on the Dollar	0.132	0.138	0.006
Inflation Hits 40-Year High Under Biden	0.269	0.273	0.004
Vance: Minneapolis Highest Immigration Violators	0.102	0.063	-0.039
Inflation Fell Under Trump's First Year	0.306	0.261	-0.045
Unemployment Rose Under Trump's First Year	0.323	0.238	-0.086
Benchmark			
Unemployment Falls to 50-Year Low Under Biden	0.401	0.410	0.009
Unemployment Rose Under Trump's First Year	0.433	0.410	-0.024
Inflation Fell Under Trump's First Year	0.449	0.402	-0.048
Inflation Hits 40-Year High Under Biden	0.496	0.425	-0.071
Counterfactual			
Inflation Fell Under Trump's First Year	0.438	0.458	0.021
Unemployment Rose Under Trump's First Year	0.453	0.442	-0.011
Unemployment Falls to 50-Year Low Under Biden	0.501	0.475	-0.027
Inflation Hits 40-Year High Under Biden	0.559	0.530	-0.029
Evaluation			
Inflation Fell Under Trump's First Year	0.582	0.582	0.000
Inflation Hits 40-Year High Under Biden	0.111	0.092	-0.019
Unemployment Rose Under Trump's First Year	0.383	0.317	-0.065
Unemployment Falls to 50-Year Low Under Biden	0.451	0.316	-0.135
Fact-Relevance			
Trump: 92% of Somalis Don't Work	0.144	0.183	0.038
Inflation Hits 40-Year High Under Biden	0.158	0.185	0.027
Harris: Women Paid 80 Cents on the Dollar	0.294	0.300	0.006
Unemployment Falls to 50-Year Low Under Biden	0.174	0.178	0.003
Vance: Minneapolis Highest Immigration Violators	0.127	0.127	0.000
Unemployment Rose Under Trump's First Year	0.207	0.178	-0.030
Inflation Fell Under Trump's First Year	0.206	0.133	-0.073
Biden: Billionaires Pay 8% Tax	0.350	0.266	-0.084
Second-Order Beliefs			
Harris: Women Paid 80 Cents on the Dollar	0.368	0.416	0.047
Trump: 92% of Somalis Don't Work	0.427	0.441	0.015
Biden: Billionaires Pay 8% Tax	0.441	0.400	-0.041
Vance: Minneapolis Highest Immigration Violators	0.544	0.469	-0.075

Regression Tables

Table A6: Hierarchical Model Estimates (Study 1)

	Focal Beliefs	Downstream Attitudes	Adjacent Beliefs
(Intercept)	0.470***	0.419***	0.285***
	(0.031)	(0.033)	(0.068)
Treatment	0.096***	0.006	0.018
	(0.014)	(0.012)	(0.013)
Female	−0.012	0.006	−0.002
	(0.012)	(0.010)	(0.007)
Age	−0.001***	−0.003***	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
educ3High school or less	−0.033*	−0.004	0.015
	(0.014)	(0.012)	(0.008)
educ3Some college or 2-year degree	−0.060***	0.001	0.007
	(0.015)	(0.012)	(0.009)
pid_strengthNot very strong	−0.002	0.069***	0.010
	(0.018)	(0.015)	(0.010)
pid_strengthStrong	−0.084***	−0.093***	0.022*
	(0.016)	(0.013)	(0.009)
Treatment:dimension_idBenchmarks			0.006
			(0.025)
Treatment:dimension_idCounterfactuals			−0.015
			(0.025)
Treatment:dimension_idEvaluation			−0.031
			(0.024)
Treatment:dimension_idIssue Importance			−0.014
			(0.019)
Treatment:dimension_idSecond-Order Beliefs			0.080***
			(0.022)
SD (Intercept case_id)	0.000	0.121	0.020
SD (Observations)	0.285	0.171	0.278
SD (Intercept issue_lab)	0.040	0.062	
SD (treated issue_lab)	0.019	0.020	
Cor (Intercept~treated issue_lab)	1.000	−1.000	
SD (Intercept issue_labdimension_id)			0.097
SD (treated issue_labdimension_id)			0.002
Cor (Intercept~treated issue_labdimension_id)			−1.000
Num.Obs.	2239	2239	6716
Issue fixed effects	No	No	Yes
Dimension fixed effects	No	No	Yes
Treatment × Dimension	No	No	Yes

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A7: Dimension-Specific Treatment Effects on Adjacent Beliefs (Study 1)

Dimension	Estimate	SE	CI Low	CI High	p
Pooled					
Meta-Analytic Estimate	0.022	0.007	0.008	0.037	0.001
Attribution	0.018	0.013	-0.008	0.044	0.091
Benchmarks	0.023	0.021	-0.017	0.064	0.126
Counterfactuals	0.003	0.021	-0.038	0.043	0.449
Evaluation	-0.013	0.020	-0.053	0.026	—
Issue Importance	0.004	0.013	-0.023	0.030	0.391
Second-Order Beliefs	0.098	0.018	0.063	0.133	<0.001
Performance					
Meta-Analytic Estimate	-0.002	0.008	-0.018	0.014	—
Attribution	-0.011	0.018	-0.047	0.025	—
Benchmarks	0.023	0.018	-0.013	0.058	0.107
Counterfactuals	0.001	0.018	-0.035	0.037	0.476
Evaluation	-0.013	0.018	-0.048	0.022	—
Issue Importance	-0.012	0.018	-0.047	0.024	—
Misstatements					
Meta-Analytic Estimate	0.052	0.012	0.029	0.075	<0.001
Attribution	0.039	0.020	0.000	0.078	0.026
Issue Importance	0.018	0.020	-0.022	0.057	0.191
Second-Order Beliefs	0.099	0.020	0.060	0.139	<0.001

Table A8: Hierarchical Model Estimates (Study 2, uncongenial)

	Focal Beliefs	Downstream Attitudes	Adjacent Beliefs
(Intercept)	0.471***	0.446***	0.196**
	(0.050)	(0.047)	(0.075)
Treatment	0.229***	0.023***	0.007
	(0.021)	(0.007)	(0.011)
Female	−0.019	0.010	0.002
	(0.010)	(0.008)	(0.004)
Age	−0.002***	−0.002***	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
educ3Some college or 2-year degree	−0.019	−0.005	0.005
	(0.015)	(0.012)	(0.006)
educ3Bachelor's or postgraduate	0.029*	0.019	−0.003
	(0.014)	(0.011)	(0.006)
pid_strengthNot very strong	0.075*	0.033	0.017
	(0.036)	(0.029)	(0.015)
pid_strengthStrong	0.004	−0.084**	0.032*
	(0.036)	(0.029)	(0.015)
Treatment:dimension_idbenchmark			−0.015
			(0.016)
Treatment:dimension_idcounter			−0.010
			(0.019)
Treatment:dimension_idevaluation			−0.023
			(0.020)
Treatment:dimension_idfact			0.023
			(0.016)
Treatment:dimension_idsob			0.107***
			(0.019)
SD (Intercept case_id)	0.095	0.122	0.032
SD (Observations)	0.263	0.171	0.200
SD (Intercept issue_lab)	0.089	0.101	
SD (treated issue_lab)	0.054	0.006	
Cor (Intercept~treated issue_lab)	−0.862	0.027	
SD (Intercept issue_labdimension_id)			0.124
SD (treated issue_labdimension_id)			0.021
Cor (Intercept~treated issue_labdimension_id)			−0.263
Num.Obs.	3631	3630	10 893
Issue fixed effects	No	No	Yes
Dimension fixed effects	No	No	Yes
Treatment × Dimension	No	No	Yes

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A9: Dimension-Specific Treatment Effects on Adjacent Beliefs (Study 2, uncongenial)

Dimension	Estimate	SE	CI Low	CI High	p
Pooled					
Meta-Analytic Estimate	0.021	0.006	0.010	0.032	<0.001
attribution	0.007	0.011	-0.015	0.030	0.259
benchmark	-0.007	0.011	-0.029	0.014	—
counter	-0.002	0.016	-0.033	0.029	—
evaluation	-0.015	0.016	-0.046	0.016	—
fact	0.030	0.011	0.008	0.053	0.004
sob	0.114	0.015	0.084	0.144	<0.001
Performance					
Meta-Analytic Estimate	-0.002	0.005	-0.011	0.008	—
attribution	0.006	0.011	-0.016	0.028	0.297
benchmark	-0.015	0.011	-0.037	0.007	—
counter	-0.003	0.011	-0.025	0.019	—
evaluation	-0.016	0.011	-0.038	0.006	—
fact	0.020	0.011	-0.002	0.042	0.035
Misstatements					
Meta-Analytic Estimate	0.041	0.011	0.020	0.062	<0.001
attribution	0.008	0.022	-0.036	0.051	0.364
benchmark	0.001	0.021	-0.040	0.042	0.482
fact	0.041	0.022	-0.002	0.085	0.031
sob	0.114	0.021	0.073	0.155	<0.001

Table A10: Hierarchical Model Estimates (Study 2, congenial)

	Focal Beliefs	Downstream Attitudes	Adjacent Beliefs
(Intercept)	0.598***	0.666***	0.267***
	(0.058)	(0.060)	(0.070)
Treatment	0.161***	0.014	−0.002
	(0.026)	(0.011)	(0.017)
Female	−0.033**	0.009	−0.005
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.006)
Age	0.001***	0.001***	−0.001***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
educ3Some college or 2-year degree	0.022	0.010	−0.005
	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.009)
educ3Bachelor's or postgraduate	0.004	−0.018	0.003
	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.009)
pid_strengthNot very strong	0.018	0.019	−0.013
	(0.036)	(0.034)	(0.022)
pid_strengthStrong	0.071*	0.112***	−0.027
	(0.036)	(0.034)	(0.022)
Treatment:dimension_idbenchmark			−0.031
			(0.029)
Treatment:dimension_idcounter			−0.009
			(0.029)
Treatment:dimension_idevaluation			−0.055
			(0.029)
Treatment:dimension_idfact			−0.014
			(0.025)
Treatment:dimension_idsob			−0.010
			(0.028)
SD (Observations)	0.228	0.199	0.194
SD (Intercept issue_lab)	0.123	0.133	
SD (treated issue_lab)	0.066	0.008	
Cor (Intercept~treated issue_lab)	−0.831	1.000	
SD (Intercept case_id)			0.065
SD (Intercept issue_labdimension_id)			0.103
SD (treated issue_labdimension_id)			0.035
Cor (Intercept~treated issue_labdimension_id)			−0.393
Num.Obs.	2019	1525	5250
Issue fixed effects	No	No	Yes
Dimension fixed effects	No	No	Yes
Treatment × Dimension	No	No	Yes

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A11: Dimension-Specific Treatment Effects on Adjacent Beliefs (Study 2, Congenial)

Dimension	Estimate	SE	CI Low	CI High	p
Pooled					
Meta-Analytic Estimate	-0.022	0.009	-0.040	-0.004	0.015
attribution	-0.002	0.017	-0.036	0.032	0.906
benchmark	-0.033	0.023	-0.079	0.012	0.151
counter	-0.011	0.023	-0.057	0.035	0.632
evaluation	-0.057	0.023	-0.102	-0.011	0.013
fact	-0.016	0.018	-0.051	0.018	0.374
sob	-0.013	0.023	-0.057	0.032	0.572
Performance					
Meta-Analytic Estimate	-0.029	0.010	-0.049	-0.008	0.004
attribution	-0.018	0.023	-0.066	0.024	0.432
benchmark	-0.032	0.023	-0.077	0.012	0.164
counter	-0.013	0.023	-0.058	0.032	0.572
evaluation	-0.056	0.023	-0.101	-0.011	0.015
fact	-0.020	0.023	-0.065	0.024	0.385
Misstatements					
Meta-Analytic Estimate	0.001	0.016	-0.030	0.032	0.95
attribution	0.019	0.029	-0.038	0.075	0.512
fact	-0.006	0.029	-0.064	0.051	0.836
sob	-0.010	0.023	-0.055	0.035	0.664

Model Specification

This section describes the model specifications included in the analysis plan of the pre-registration which were strictly followed for the results presented in the main text.

Focal Beliefs and Downstream Attitudes

The primary quantities of interest are the effects of the treatment (exposure to factual information) on three main sets of outcomes: focal beliefs, downstream attitudes, and adjacent beliefs. All analyses are estimated separately for congenial and uncongenial corrections[10].

To test H1, the primary outcome variable is the perceived accuracy of the factual statement, while for H2 is the average of the downstream attitude items measured for each issue (two items for performance issues and three for misstatements). The model specification is the same for both:

$$
\begin{aligned}
y_{ij} &= \alpha_j + u_i + \beta_j T_{ij} + X_i\delta + \epsilon_{ij} \\
\alpha_j &= \gamma_0 + z_j \\
\beta_j &= \gamma_1 + w_j \\
\begin{bmatrix} z_j \\ w_j \end{bmatrix} &\sim \mathcal{N}\left(\begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix}, \begin{bmatrix} \sigma_z^2 & \sigma_{z,w} \\ \sigma_{z,w} & \sigma_w^2 \end{bmatrix} \right) \\
u_i &\sim \mathcal{N}(0, \sigma_u^2), \quad \epsilon_{ij} \sim \mathcal{N}(0, \sigma^2)
\end{aligned}
$$

Where y_{ij} is the outcome for individual i on issue j, and T_{ij} indicates whether the individual

[10]Models for congenial information do not include random respondent intercepts because each respondent can only be exposed to one congenial issue.

received the treatment. The model includes a random intercept $\alpha_j = \gamma_0 + z_j$ for each issue, a random treatment slope $\beta_j = \gamma_1 + w_j$ capturing variation in treatment effects across issues, and a covariance $\sigma_{z,w}$ between issue-level intercepts and slopes. A random respondent intercept u_i accounts for within-person clustering. X_i is a vector of individual-level covariates (age, gender, education, and partisanship strength) included to improve estimation precision (Gerber & Green, 2012). The primary parameter of interest is γ_1, the meta-analytic average treatment effect across issues. Issue-specific treatment effects are also of interest and given by $\beta_j = \gamma_1 + w_j$.

Given the directional expectation of factual corrections increasing accuracy, H1 is tested using a one-sided test ($\gamma_1 > 0$). H2 is tested using a two-sided test, given the predicted null.

Adjacent Beliefs

To test H3A and H3B, we also use same model specification separately for uncongenial and congenial corrections, pooling all adjacent belief dimensions, coded on a 0-1 scale with higher values indicating responses congenial to political predispositions (for both). The model includes random intercepts for individuals and for issue-by-dimension pairs, fixed effects for adjacent belief dimension and issue, and random slopes allowing the treatment effect to vary by issue-by-dimension pair:

$$
\begin{aligned}
y_{ijk} &= \alpha_{jk} + u_i + \beta_{jk} T_{ijk} + X_i \delta + \epsilon_{ijk} \\
\alpha_{jk} &= \gamma_0 + \lambda_k + \phi_j + z_{jk} \\
\beta_{jk} &= \gamma_1 + \theta_k + w_{jk} \\
\begin{bmatrix} z_{jk} \\ w_{jk} \end{bmatrix} &\sim \mathcal{N}\left(\begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix}, \begin{bmatrix} \sigma_z^2 & \sigma_{z,w} \\ \sigma_{z,w} & \sigma_w^2 \end{bmatrix} \right) \\
u_i &\sim \mathcal{N}(0, \sigma_u^2), \quad \epsilon_{ijk} \sim \mathcal{N}(0, \sigma^2)
\end{aligned}
$$

Where y_{ijk} is the outcome for individual i on issue j under dimension k. The intercept $\alpha_{jk} = \gamma_0 + \lambda_k + \phi_j + z_{jk}$ includes fixed effects for dimension (λ_k) and issue (ϕ_j), with z_{jk} capturing the remaining variation for each issue–dimension pair. The treatment effect $\beta_{jk} = \gamma_1 + \theta_k + w_{jk}$ includes dimension-specific fixed effects (θ_k) that capture how the average treatment effect varies across adjacent belief dimensions.

The primary quantities of interest are the dimension-specific average effects $\gamma_1 + \theta_k$, which pool over issues within each dimension and the overall meta-analytic average treatment effect which is the unweighted mean of the dimension-specific effects.

H3A is tested using one-sided tests ($\gamma_1 > 0$ overall; $\gamma_1 + \theta_k > 0$ per dimension), given the directional prediction that uncongenial corrections shift adjacent beliefs in the direction congenial to prior dispositions. H3B is tested using two-sided tests on the congenial subsample, since the prediction is either null or adjustment in the opposite direction from H3A.

Treatment Interaction with Question Order

We estimate an additional model for downstream attitudes that interacts the treatment with the order of the adjacent belief questions (whether they were asked before or after the downstream attitude questions), which was independently randomized for each issue:

$$
y_{ij} = \alpha_j + u_i + \beta_j T_{ij} + \theta_j O_{ij} + \psi_j (T_{ij} \times O_{ij}) + X_i \delta + \epsilon_{ij}
$$

$$\alpha_j = \gamma_0 + z_j, \quad \beta_j = \gamma_1 + w_j, \quad \theta_j = \gamma_2 + r_j, \quad \psi_j = \gamma_3 + s_j$$

$$u_i \sim \mathcal{N}(0, \sigma_u^2)$$

where α_j, β_j, θ_j, and ψ_j represent the intercept, treatment effect, order effect, and their interaction, respectively. All four random effects are jointly modeled:

$$\begin{bmatrix} z_j \\ w_j \\ r_j \\ s_j \end{bmatrix} \sim \mathcal{N}\left(\begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix}, \square \right)$$

The primary quantity of interest here is γ_3, the interaction between treatment and question order across issues.

Code

All models are estimated using the `lmer()` function from the R package `lme4`, using the following code:

```
# H1 (focal beliefs) and H2 (downstream attitudes)
m1 <- lmer(y ~ treated + age + gender + educ3 + pid_strength +
             (1 | respondent_id) + (1 + treated | issue_id),
           data = data)

# H2 with question order interaction
m2 <- lmer(y ~ treated * order + age + gender + educ3 + pid_strength +
             (1 | respondent_id) +
             (1 + treated + order + treated:order | issue_id),
           data = data)

# H3 (adjacent beliefs)
m3 <- lmer(y ~ treated + dimension_id + treated:dimension_id + issue_id +
             age + gender + educ3 + pid_strength +
             (1 | respondent_id) +
             (1 + treated | issue_id:dimension_id),
           data = data)
```

Study 1 Details

Sample Demographic Composition

Table A12 compares the sample's distribution on key demographic variables to the U.S. adult population based on the American Community Survey's 2023 data.

Table A12: Sample Demographics (Study 1)

		Study 1 (%)	U.S. Adults (%)
Gender	Female	57	51
	Male	43	49
Age	18–29	16	21
	30–49	36	33
	50–64	25	28
	65+	23	18
Education	No College	31	35
	Some College	28	34
	Bachelor's	26	19
	Post-Graduate	15	11
Party ID	Democrat	58	
	Republican	42	

Experimental Treatments and Outcome Measures

Below is the full wording of experimental treatments and outcome measures for each issue in Study 1. For adjacent-belief questions, response options that correspond to shifts in a direction congenial to respondents' political predispositions are highlighted in color.

Issue 1. Inflation Reached the Highest Level in 40 Years Under Biden

Assigned to Democrats (uncongenial).

> [**All respondents:**] The year-over-year inflation rate measures how much prices have increased over the past 12 months.
>
> [**Only treatment group:**] Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Consumer Price Index show that inflation in June 2022 peaked at a 9.1%, the highest annual rate since the early 1980s.

Focal Belief: *How accurate or inaccurate do you think the following statement is? Inflation reached the highest level in over 40 years under Biden's administration.* [Definitely accurate, Probably accurate, Probably inaccurate, Definitely inaccurate].

Evaluation: *How would you rate a year-over-year inflation rate of 9%?* [Very high, Somewhat high, Somewhat low, Very low].

Fact-relevance: *How important, if at all, is inflation when assessing the overall state of the economy?* [Very important, Somewhat important, Not too important, Not important at all].

Benchmark: *Now I want you to think about Donald Trump's first administration (2016–2020). How would you rate the inflation rate during Donald Trump's first administration?* [Very high, Somewhat high, Somewhat low, Very low].

Counter-factual: *Now imagine a scenario where Donald Trump won the 2020 election. How do you think the inflation rate during the 2021–2024 period would have been?* [Inflation would

have been much higher, Inflation would have been a little higher, Inflation would have been about the same, Inflation would have been a little lower, Inflation would have been much lower].

Attribution: *How much of a role, if at all, does the President play in determining inflation?* [A large role, A moderate role, A small role, No role at all].

Second-order beliefs: Not applicable.

Downstream attitude I: *How would you rate the overall state of the nation's economy during Biden's administration?* [Very good, Good, Bad, Very bad].

Downstream attitude II: *To what extent do you approve or disapprove of the way Joe Biden handled the economy during his administration?* [Strongly approve, Somewhat approve, Somewhat disapprove, Strongly disapprove].

Issue 2. The Unemployment Rate Fell to the Lowest Rate in 50 Years Under Biden

Assigned to Republicans (uncongenial).

[All respondents:] The unemployment rate reflects the percentage of the labor force that is jobless and actively seeking work.

[Only treatment group:] According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate in January 2023, during Biden's administration, was 3.4%, the lowest since 1969.

Focal Belief: *How accurate or inaccurate do you think the following statement is? The unemployment rate fell to the lowest rate in 50 years under Biden's administration.* [Definitely accurate, Probably accurate, Probably inaccurate, Definitely inaccurate].

Evaluation: *Do you consider an unemployment rate of 3.5% to be...* [Very high, High, Low, Very low].

Attribution: *How much of a role, if at all, does the President play in determining unemployment levels?* [A large role, A moderate role, A small role, No role at all].

Fact-relevance: *How important, if at all, is unemployment when assessing the overall state of the economy?* [Very important, Somewhat important, Not too important, Not important at all].

Benchmark: *Now I want you to think about Donald Trump's first administration (2016–2020). Do you think the unemployment rate during Trump's first administration was above or below the historical average?* [Far above average, A little above average, About the same, A little below average, Far below average].

Counter-factual: *Now imagine a scenario where Donald Trump won the 2020 election. How do you think the unemployment rate would have changed from January 2021 to January 2025?* [Unemployment would have increased a lot, Unemployment would have increased a little, Unemployment would have stayed about the same, Unemployment would have decreased a little, Unemployment would have decreased a lot].

Second-order beliefs: Not applicable.

Downstream attitude I: *How would you rate the overall state of the nation's economy during Biden's administration?* [Very good, Good, Bad, Very bad].

Downstream attitude II: *To what extent do you approve or disapprove of the way Joe Biden handled the economy during his administration?* [Strongly approve, Somewhat approve, Somewhat disapprove, Strongly disapprove].

Issue 3. Trump: Biden's Administration Diverted Disaster Response Funding to Housing Illegal Immigrants

Assigned to respondents with favorable views of Donald Trump (*uncongenial*).

[**All respondents:**] At different campaign rallies in October 2024, Donald Trump said: "Kamala spent all her FEMA money, billions of dollars, on housing for illegal migrants, many of whom should not be in our country."

[**Only treatment group:**] In fact, according to the Department of Homeland Security, FEMA has not diverted disaster response funding to housing illegal immigrants. In 2023 Congress directed FEMA to administer a program that helps state and local governments house migrants, but its funding is completely independent from disaster relief funds, and no funds were diverted from one program to another.

Focal Belief: *How accurate or inaccurate do you think the following statement by Donald Trump is? The Biden administration diverted disaster response funding to housing illegal immigrants.* [Definitely accurate, Probably accurate, Probably inaccurate, Definitely inaccurate].

Fact-relevance: *When evaluating a statement made by a political leader, which of the following is more important: that the statement is based on objective evidence, or that it conveys the right message about American priorities?* [It is much more important that the statement is based on objective evidence, It is somewhat more important that the statement is based on objective evidence, It is somewhat more important that the statement conveys the right message about American priorities, It is much more important that the statement conveys the right message about American priorities].

Second-order beliefs: *Do you think Donald Trump literally/seriously meant that the Biden administration diverted disaster relief funds to give them to illegal immigrants, or was he making a point/speaking figuratively?* [He was definitely making a point/speaking figuratively, He was probably making a point/speaking figuratively, He was probably serious/literal, He was definitely serious/literal].

Attribution: *How justifiable or unjustifiable is it for politicians to make inaccurate or misleading claims in order to achieve larger goals?* [Very justifiable, Somewhat justifiable, Somewhat unjustifiable, Very unjustifiable].

Downstream attitude I: *How well, if at all, do you think the word "Honest" describes Donald Trump?* [Very well, Moderately well, Slightly well, Not well at all].

Downstream attitude II: *How well, if at all, do you think the word "Knowledgeable" describes Donald Trump?* [Very well, Moderately well, Slightly well, Not well at all].

Issue 4. J.D. Vance: There Are 20 to 25 Million Illegal Aliens in the U.S.

Assigned to respondents with favorable views of J.D. Vance (uncongenial).

[**All respondents:**] On October 1, 2024, in a vice-presidential debate hosted by CBS News, J.D. Vance said: "We've got 20–25 million illegal aliens who are here in the country."

[**Only treatment group:**] According to the BBC, estimates place the number of illegal immigrants in the U.S. much lower than Vance's claim. Several estimates put the number at around half of what Vance claims. A report published by the Office of Homeland Security estimated the number of illegal immigrants living in the U.S., as of January 2022, at 11 million. And the Center for Immigration Studies estimated there were approximately 12 million illegal immigrants in May 2023.

Focal Belief: *How accurate or inaccurate do you think the following statement by J.D. Vance is? There are 20 to 25 million illegal aliens that are here in the country.* [Definitely accurate, Probably accurate, Probably inaccurate, Definitely inaccurate].

Attribution: *How justifiable or unjustifiable is it for politicians to make inaccurate or misleading claims in order to achieve larger goals?* [Very justifiable, Somewhat justifiable, Somewhat unjustifiable, Very unjustifiable].

Fact-relevance: *When evaluating a statement made by a political leader, which of the following is more important: that the statement is based on objective evidence, or that it conveys the right message about American priorities?* [It is much more important that the statement is based on objective evidence, It is somewhat more important that the statement is based on objective evidence, It is somewhat more important that the statement conveys the right message about American priorities, It is much more important that the statement conveys the right message about American priorities].

Second-order beliefs: *Do you think J.D. Vance literally/seriously meant that there are 20 to 25 million illegal aliens in the U.S., or was he making a point/speaking figuratively?* [He was definitely making a point/speaking figuratively, He was probably making a point/speaking figuratively, He was probably serious/literal, He was definitely serious/literal].

Downstream attitude I: *How well, if at all, do you think the word "Honest" describes J.D. Vance?* [Very well, Moderately well, Slightly well, Not well at all].

Downstream attitude II: *How well, if at all, do you think the word "Knowledgeable" describes J.D. Vance?* [Very well, Moderately well, Slightly well, Not well at all].

Issue 5. Harris: Trump Left Us the Worst Unemployment Since the Great Depression

Assigned to respondents with favorable views of Kamala Harris (uncongenial).

[**All respondents:**] During an ABC debate on September 10, 2024, Kamala Harris said: "Trump left us the worst unemployment since the Great Depression."

[**Only treatment group:**] In fact, while unemployment peaked in April 2020 during COVID, unemployment rapidly declined to 6.4% in January 2021 by the time Trump left office, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Focal Belief: *How accurate or inaccurate do you think the following statement by Kamala Harris is? Trump left us with the worst unemployment since the Great Depression.* [Definitely accurate, Probably accurate, Probably inaccurate, Definitely inaccurate].

Attribution: *How justifiable or unjustifiable is it for politicians to make inaccurate or misleading claims in order to achieve larger goals?* [Very justifiable, Somewhat justifiable, Somewhat unjustifiable, Very unjustifiable].

Fact-relevance: *When evaluating a statement made by a political leader, which of the following is more important: that the statement is based on objective evidence, or that it conveys the right message about American priorities?* [It is much more important that the statement is based on objective evidence, It is somewhat more important that the statement is based on objective evidence, It is somewhat more important that the statement conveys the right message about American priorities, It is much more important that the statement conveys the right message about American priorities].

Second-order beliefs: *Do you think Kamala Harris literally/seriously meant that Trump left us with the worst unemployment since the Great Depression, or was she making a point/speaking figuratively?* [She was definitely making a point/speaking figuratively, She was probably making a point/speaking figuratively, She was probably serious/literal, She was definitely serious/literal].

Downstream attitude I: *How well, if at all, do you think the word "Honest" describes Kamala Harris?* [Very well, Moderately well, Slightly well, Not well at all].

Downstream attitude II: *How well, if at all, do you think the word "Knowledgeable" describes Kamala Harris?* [Very well, Moderately well, Slightly well, Not well at all].

Issue 6. Biden: Billionaires Have an Income Tax Rate of 8%

Assigned to respondents with favorable views of Joe Biden (uncongenial).

[**All respondents:**] During a stop in Superior, Wisconsin, on January 25, 2025, Joe Biden said: "There are a thousand billionaires now, and you know what their average tax rate is? 8%."

[**Only treatment group:**] In fact, according to PolitiFact from the Poynter Institute: Under the current tax code, the top 1% of taxpayers pay an effective tax rate of 25% on the income the government counts.

Focal Belief: *How accurate or inaccurate do you think the following statement by Joe Biden is? Billionaires have an income tax rate of 8%.* [Definitely accurate, Probably accurate, Probably inaccurate, Definitely inaccurate].

Second-order beliefs: *Do you think Joe Biden literally/seriously meant that billionaires have an income tax rate of 8%, or was he making a point/speaking figuratively?* [He was definitely making a point/speaking figuratively, He was probably making a point/speaking figuratively, He was probably serious/literal, He was definitely serious/literal].

Fact-relevance: *When evaluating a statement made by a political leader, which of the following is more important: that the statement is based on objective evidence, or that it conveys the right message about American priorities?* [It is much more important that the statement is based on objective evidence, It is somewhat more important that the statement is based

on objective evidence, It is somewhat more important that the statement conveys the right message about American priorities, It is much more important that the statement conveys the right message about American priorities].

Attribution: *How justifiable or unjustifiable is it for politicians to make inaccurate or misleading claims in order to achieve larger goals?* [Very justifiable, Somewhat justifiable, Somewhat unjustifiable, Very unjustifiable].

Downstream attitude I: *How well, if at all, do you think the word "Honest" describes Joe Biden?* [Very well, Moderately well, Slightly well, Not well at all].

Downstream attitude II: *How well, if at all, do you think the word "Knowledgeable" describes Joe Biden?* [Very well, Moderately well, Slightly well, Not well at all].

Survey Questionnaire

[Informed consent]

We would like to start by asking you a few questions to confirm your eligibility for the survey.

1. What is your sex?
    - Male
    - Female
2. How many years old are you as of today? *Please enter a whole number*
3. In which state do you currently reside?
4. Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, or as an independent?
    - Democrat
    - Republican
    - Independent
    - Other party (please specify)
5. (*If PID = Democrat*) Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or a not very strong Democrat?
    - Strong Democrat
    - Not very strong Democrat
6. (*If PID = Republican*) Would you call yourself a strong Republican or a not very strong Republican?
    - Strong Republican
    - Not very strong Republican
7. (*If PID = Independent*) Do you think of yourself as closer to the Democratic Party or to the Republican Party?
    - Closer to the Democratic Party
    - Closer to the Republican Party
    - Neither

8. Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statement: I commit to giving thoughtful and honest responses.
    - Strongly agree
    - Somewhat agree
    - Neither agree nor disagree
    - Somewhat disagree
    - Strongly disagree
9. Which color is produced by combining blue and yellow? This is an attention check question and the correct answer is green.
    - Orange
    - Green
    - Purple
    - Blue
    - Yellow

    [*Battery of consumption preference questions and conjoint experiment on partisan consumerism for a separate study.*]
10. Next, we'd like to get your overall opinion of some people in the news. What is your overall opinion of the following public figures? [Donald Trump, J.D. Vance, Kamala Harris, Joe Biden]
    - Very favorable
    - Mostly favorable
    - Neither favorable nor unfavorable
    - Mostly unfavorable
    - Very unfavorable

    Experimental Instructions: You will now see a series of statements drawn from a variety of real-world sources. These may or may not be accurate. We're interested in how you evaluate the accuracy of the information you see. Please read carefully and answer the questions that follow.

    Experimental Stimuli and Outcome measures: see Section for details.

    Debrief Statement: (displayed to respondents who where presented with a misstatement.)

    Thank you for participating in our study! We would like to provide you with some important information about the research you just completed. The purpose of this study was to examine whether exposure to false or misleading information influences people's belief in such information. To do this, we may have presented statements that political figures have made, despite their inaccuracy. Showing you these posts is essential for our research, as it helps us understand how the public responds to such content. Please read the following fact-checks that explain that this information was false.

    (*Displayed if respondent was assigned a Biden misstatement.*)

    President Joe Biden distorts income tax rates for the richest Americans. Source: PolitiFact. Posted on January 26th, 2024. Biden said "There are a thousand billionaires now and you know what their average tax rate is? 8%." Biden has used this figure before, but it is inaccurate because it uses a hypothetical calculation and does not refer to the current tax code. The figure comes from a White House report that considered what would happen if the United States were to tax unrealized gains on stocks. IRS data from 2020 shows that the top 1% of taxpayers paid an average federal income tax rate of 25.99%.

    By clicking this button, I affirm that I know I was exposed to false or misleading information. The average tax rate of billionaires in the U.S. is not 8%.

(*Displayed if respondent was assigned the Harris misstatement.*)

Fact-checking economic claims Trump and Harris made at debate. Source: ABC News. Posted on September 11, 2024. The unemployment rate peaked at 14.8% in April 2020 when Trump was in office—that was indeed the highest level since the Great Depression. But unemployment rapidly declined to 6.4% in January 2021 by the time Trump left office, as the economy started to rebalance. And that 6.4% unemployment rate is still better than the 10% peak during the Great Recession in October 2009.

By clicking this button, I affirm that I know I was exposed to false or misleading information. The unemployment rate when Trump left office was 6.4%, lower than the 10% peak during the Great Recession in October 2009.

(*Displayed if respondent was assigned the Vance misstatement.*)

Are there up to 25 million illegal aliens in the US? Source: BBC. Posted on October 2, 2024. Vance claimed "We've got 20–25 million illegal aliens who are here in the country." These numbers are much higher than estimates for the number of illegal immigrants in the U.S. A report published by the Office of Homeland Security estimated the number as of January 2022 at 11 million. The Center for Immigration Studies estimated approximately 12 million in May 2023.

By clicking this button, I affirm that I know I was exposed to false or misleading information. Estimates of the number of illegal immigrants living in the U.S. do not indicate a total of 20 to 25 million.

(*Displayed if respondent was assigned the Trump misstatement.*)

Biden administration didn't steal $1 billion from FEMA for migrants. Source: PolitiFact. Posted on October 4, 2024. Starting in 2019, during the Trump administration, FEMA has been funding migrants' food, shelter, and transportation through two programs that give money to nonprofit organizations and state and local governments. This funding does not come at disaster victims' expense. Neither of the programs for migrants uses money from FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund. Congress funds the migrant and disaster relief programs separately.

By clicking this button, I affirm that I know I was exposed to false or misleading information. There is no evidence that the Biden administration diverted FEMA funds to illegal immigrants.

11. Thank you! We have a few background questions for statistical purposes. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
    - Less than a high school degree or equivalent
    - High school degree or equivalent (for example: GED)
    - Some college, but no degree
    - 2-year college degree/Associate's degree
    - 4-year college degree/Bachelor's degree
    - Postgraduate degree (MA, MBA, MD, JD, PhD, etc.)
12. In what year were you born? *Please enter a 4-digit number:*

Study 2 Details

Sample Demographic Composition

Table A13 compares the sample's distribution on key demographic variables to the U.S. adult population based on the American Community Survey's 2023 data.

Table A13: Sample Demographics (Study 2)

		Study 2 (%)	U.S. Adults (%)
Gender	Female	52	51
	Male	48	49
Age	18–29	22	21
	30–49	44	33
	50–64	21	28
	65+	13	18
Education	No College	16	35
	Some College	33	34
	Bachelor's	35	19
	Post-Graduate	15	11
Party ID	Democrat	53	
	Republican	47	

Experimental Treatments and Outcome Measures

Below is the full wording of the experimental treatments and outcome measures for each issue in Study 2. For adjacent-belief questions, response options that correspond to shifts in a direction congenial to respondents' political predispositions are highlighted in color.

Issue 1. Inflation Reached the Highest Level in 40 Years Under Biden

Uncongenial to Democrats.

> [**All respondents:**] The year-over-year inflation rate measures how much prices have increased over the past 12 months.
>
> A widely discussed claim about the Biden economy is that *inflation reached the highest level in over 40 years under Biden's administration.*
>
> [**Only treatment group:**] **This is TRUE**. Inflation in June 2022 peaked at **9.1%, the highest annual rate since the early 1980s**, according to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Consumer Price Index.
>
> **Focal Belief:** *How accurate or inaccurate do you think the following statement is? Inflation reached the highest level in over 40 years under Biden's administration.* [Definitely accurate, Probably accurate, Probably inaccurate, Definitely inaccurate].

Focal Belief Certainty: *You indicated that the statement* [*Statement*] *is* [*Focal Belief Response*]. *How certain are you of your answer?* [Not at all certain, Not too certain, Somewhat certain, Very certain, Absolutely certain].

Evaluation I: *How would you rate a year-over-year inflation rate of 9%?* [Very high, Somewhat high, Somewhat low, Very low].

Evaluation II: *How would a year-over-year inflation rate of 9% affect the typical American household's finances?* [Very positively, Somewhat positively, Neither positively nor negatively, Somewhat negatively, Very negatively].

Benchmark: *Now think about inflation during other recent periods. How would you rate the inflation rate during each of the following periods?*

	Very high	Somewhat high	Somewhat low	Very low
Donald Trump's first admin. (2016–2020)	◦	◦	◦	◦
First year of Trump's second admin. (2025)	◦	◦	◦	◦

Counterfactual I: *Now please imagine each of the following scenarios. If Donald Trump had won the 2020 election, do you think inflation during 2021–2024 would have been higher or lower?* [Much higher, Somewhat higher, About the same, Somewhat lower, Much lower].

Counterfactual II: *And if the COVID-19 pandemic had not occurred, do you think inflation during 2021–2024 would have been higher or lower?* [Much higher, Somewhat higher, About the same, Somewhat lower, Much lower].

Fact-relevance: *How important, if at all, is inflation in each of the following?*

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not too important	Not important at all
Assessing the overall state of the economy	◦	◦	◦	◦
Evaluating the president's economic performance	◦	◦	◦	◦

Attribution: *How much of a role, if at all, do each of the following play in determining inflation?*

	A large role	A moderate role	A small role	No role at all
The President	◦	◦	◦	◦
The administration's economic policies	◦	◦	◦	◦

Downstream attitude I: *How would you rate the overall state of the nation's economy during Biden's administration?* [Very good, Good, Bad, Very bad].

Downstream attitude II: *To what extent do you approve or disapprove of the way Joe Biden handled the economy during his administration?* [Strongly approve, Somewhat approve, Somewhat disapprove, Strongly disapprove].

Issue 2. The Unemployment Rate Fell to the Lowest Level in 50 Years Under Biden

Uncongenial to Republicans.

[**All respondents:**] The unemployment rate reflects the percentage of the labor force that is jobless and actively seeking work.

A widely discussed claim about the Biden economy is that *the unemployment rate fell to the lowest level in over 50 years under Biden's administration.*

[**Only treatment group:**] **This is TRUE**. The unemployment rate in January 2023, during Biden's administration, reached **3.4%, the lowest rate since 1969**, according to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Focal Belief: *How accurate or inaccurate do you think the following statement is? The unemployment rate fell to the lowest level in over 50 years under Biden's administration.* [Definitely accurate, Probably accurate, Probably inaccurate, Definitely inaccurate].

Focal Belief Certainty: *You indicated that the statement* [*Statement*] *is* [*Focal Belief Response*]. *How certain are you of your answer?* [Not at all certain, Not too certain, Somewhat certain, Very certain, Absolutely certain].

Evaluation I: *Do you consider an unemployment rate of 3.5% to be…* [Very high, Somewhat high, Somewhat low, Very low].

Evaluation II: *How would an unemployment rate of 3.5% affect the typical American worker?* [Very positively, Somewhat positively, Neither positively nor negatively, Somewhat negatively, Very negatively].

Benchmark: *Now think about unemployment during other recent periods. How would you rate the unemployment rate during each of the following periods?*

	Very high	Somewhat high	Somewhat low	Very low
Donald Trump's first admin. (2016–2020)	◦	◦	◦	◦
First year of Trump's second admin. (2025)	◦	◦	◦	◦

Counterfactual I: *Now please imagine each of the following scenarios. If Donald Trump had won the 2020 election, do you think unemployment during 2021–2024 would have been higher or lower?* [Much higher, Somewhat higher, About the same, Somewhat lower, Much lower].

Counterfactual II: *And If pandemic-era federal relief and stimulus programs had not been in place, do you think unemployment during 2021–2024 would have been higher or lower?* [Much higher, Somewhat higher, About the same, Somewhat lower,Much lower].

Fact-relevance: *How important, if at all, is unemployment in each of the following?*

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not too important	Not important at all
Assessing the overall state of the economy	◦	◦	◦	◦
Evaluating the president's economic performance	◦	◦	◦	◦

Attribution: *How much of a role, if at all, do each of the following play in determining unemployment levels?*

	A large role	A moderate role	A small role	No role at all
The President	◦	◦	◦	◦
The administration's economic policies	◦	◦	◦	◦

Downstream attitude I: *How would you rate the overall state of the nation's economy during Biden's administration?* [Very good, Good, Bad, Very bad].

Downstream attitude II: *To what extent do you approve or disapprove of the way Joe Biden handled the economy during his administration?* [Strongly approve, Somewhat approve, Somewhat disapprove, Strongly disapprove].

Issue 3. Unemployment Rose During Trump's First Year in Office

Uncongenial to Republicans.

[**All respondents:**] The unemployment rate reflects the percentage of the labor force that is jobless and actively seeking work.

A widely discussed claim about the Trump economy is that *the unemployment rate increased during the first year of Donald Trump's second administration.*

[**Only treatment group:**] **This is TRUE**. The unemployment rate rose from **4.0% in January 2025 to 4.3% in January 2026**, during Trump's first year in office, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Focal Belief: *How accurate or inaccurate do you think the following statement is? The unemployment rate rose during the first year of Donald Trump's second administration.* [Definitely accurate, Probably accurate, Probably inaccurate, Definitely inaccurate].

Focal Belief Certainty: *You indicated that the statement* [*Statement*] *is* [*Focal Belief Response*]. *How certain are you of your answer?* [Not at all certain, Not too certain, Somewhat certain, Very certain, Absolutely certain].

Evaluation I: *Do you consider an unemployment rate of 4.3% to be…* [Very high, Somewhat high, Somewhat low, Very low].

Evaluation II: *How would an unemployment rate of 4.3% affect the typical American worker?* [Very positively, Somewhat positively, Neither positively nor negatively, Somewhat negatively, Very negatively].

Benchmark I: *Now think about unemployment during other recent periods. Thinking about Joe Biden's administration (2021–2024). How would you rate unemployment during his administration?* [Very low, Somewhat low, Somewhat high , Very high].

Benchmark II: *And compared to the historical average unemployment level in the United States, how would you rate unemployment during 2025?* [Much higher than the historical average, Somewhat higher than the historical average, Somewhat lower than the historical average, Much lower than the historical average].

Counterfactual I: *Now please imagine each of the following scenarios. If Kamala Harris had won the 2024 election, do you think unemployment during 2025 would have been higher or lower?* [Much higher, Somewhat higher, About the same, Somewhat lower, Much lower].

Counterfactual II: *And if interest rates had not remained elevated during 2025, do you think unemployment during 2025 would have been higher or lower?* [Much higher, Somewhat higher, About the same, Somewhat lower, Much lower].

Fact-relevance: *How important, if at all, is unemployment in each of the following?*

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not too important	Not important at all
Assessing the overall state of the economy	◦	◦	◦	◦
Evaluating the president's economic performance	◦	◦	◦	◦

Attribution: *How much of a role, if at all, do each of the following play in determining unemployment levels?*

	A large role	A moderate role	A small role	No role at all
The President	◦	◦	◦	◦
The administration's economic policies	◦	◦	◦	◦

Downstream attitude I: *How would you rate the overall state of the nation's economy during Trump's second administration so far?* [Very good, Good, Bad, Very bad].

Downstream attitude II: *To what extent do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling the economy?* [Strongly approve, Somewhat approve, Somewhat disapprove, Strongly disapprove].

Issue 4. Inflation Fell During Trump's First Year in Office

Uncongenial to Democrats.

[All respondents:] The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is the most widely used measure of inflation, tracking how much prices have increased over the past 12 months.

A widely discussed claim about the Trump economy is that *the CPI inflation rate fell during the first year of Donald Trump's second administration.*

[Only treatment group:] This is TRUE. The CPI inflation rate fell from **3.0% in January 2025 to 2.4% in January 2026**, during Trump's first year in office, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Focal Belief: *How accurate or inaccurate do you think the following statement is? The CPI inflation rate fell during the first year of Donald Trump's second administration.* [Definitely accurate, Probably accurate, Probably inaccurate, Definitely inaccurate].

Focal Belief Certainty: *You indicated that the statement* [*Statement*] *is* [*Focal Belief Response*]. *How certain are you of your answer?* [Not at all certain, Not too certain, Somewhat certain, Very certain, Absolutely certain].

Evaluation I: *How would you rate a year-over-year inflation rate of 2.5%?* [Very high, Somewhat high, Somewhat low, Very low].

Evaluation II: *How would a year-over-year inflation rate of 2.5% affect the typical American household's finances?* [Very positively, Somewhat positively, Neither positively nor negatively, Somewhat negatively, Very negatively].

Benchmark I: *Now think about inflation during other recent periods. Thinking about Joe Biden's administration (2021–2024). How would you rate inflation during his administration?* [Very low, Somewhat low, Somewhat high , Very high].

Benchmark II: *And compared to the historical average inflation rate in the United States, how would you rate the inflation rate during 2025?* [Much higher than the historical average, Somewhat higher than the historical average, Somewhat lower than the historical average, Much lower than the historical average].

Counterfactual I: *Now please imagine each of the following scenarios. If Kamala Harris had won the 2024 election, do you think inflation during 2025 would have been higher or lower?* [Much higher, Somewhat higher, About the same, Somewhat lower, Much lower].

Counterfactual II: *And if the Trump administration had not imposed tariffs on imported goods, do you think inflation during 2025 would have been higher or lower?* [Much higher, Somewhat higher, About the same, Somewhat lower, Much lower].

Fact-relevance: *How important, if at all, is inflation in each of the following?*

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not too important	Not important at all
Assessing the overall state of the economy	◦	◦	◦	◦
Evaluating the president's economic performance	◦	◦	◦	◦

Attribution: *How much of a role, if at all, do each of the following play in determining inflation?*

	A large role	A moderate role	A small role	No role at all
The President	◦	◦	◦	◦
The administration's economic policies	◦	◦	◦	◦

Downstream attitude I: *How would you rate the overall state of the nation's economy during Trump's second administration so far?* [Very good, Good, Bad, Very bad].

Downstream attitude II: *To what extent do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling the economy?* [Strongly approve, Somewhat approve, Somewhat disapprove, Strongly disapprove].

Issue 5. Donald Trump: 92% of Somalis in Minnesota Don't Work

Uncongenial to respondents with favorable views of Donald Trump.

[**All respondents:**] On February 2, 2026, in an interview on the Dan Bongino Show, President Donald Trump said about Somalis in Minnesota: "These are people that don't work. 92% percent don't work."

[**Only treatment group:**] **This is FALSE**, according to PolitiFact. The most recent data shows that about **28% of Somalis in Minnesota are not working**—a far lower number than Trump's 92%, and a smaller rate than for Minnesotans overall, according to Minnesota's state demographer.

Focal Belief: *How accurate or inaccurate do you think the following statement by Donald Trump is? About 92% of Somalis in Minnesota do not work.* [Definitely accurate, Probably accurate, Probably inaccurate, Definitely inaccurate].

Focal Belief Certainty: *You indicated that the statement* [*Statement*] *is* [*Focal Belief Response*]. *How certain are you of your answer?* [Not at all certain, Not too certain, Somewhat certain, Very certain, Absolutely certain].

Fact-relevance I: *When evaluating a statement made by a political leader, which is more important: that it is based on objective evidence, or that it conveys the right message about American priorities?* [Conveying the right message is much more important, Conveying the right message is somewhat more important, Objective evidence is somewhat more important, Objective evidence is much more important].

Fact-relevance II: *When evaluating claims about immigration and welfare specifically, which is more important to you: that the specific statistics cited are accurate, or that the overall point about immigration and welfare is correct?* [The overall point is much more important, The overall point is somewhat more important, Accurate statistics are somewhat more important, Accurate statistics are much more important].

Attribution: *How justifiable or unjustifiable is it for politicians to do each of the following in order to achieve larger political goals?*

	Very justifiable	Somewhat justifiable	Somewhat unjustifiable	Very unjustifiable
Make false or inaccurate claims	◦	◦	◦	◦
Make exaggerated or misleading claims	◦	◦	◦	◦

Benchmarks: *Thinking about political debate in the U.S. over the past few years, how often do you think Democratic Party leaders have done each of the following?*

	Always	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Made false or inaccurate claims	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦
Made exaggerated or misleading claims	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦

Second-order beliefs I: *Do you think Donald Trump literally/seriously meant that 92% of Somalis in Minnesota do not work, or was he making a point/speaking figuratively?* [Definitely making a point/speaking figuratively, Probably making a point/speaking figuratively, Probably serious/literal, Definitely serious/literal].

Second-order beliefs II: *When Donald Trump said 92% of Somalis in Minnesota do not work, do you think he was referring to a specific statistic, or was he speaking generally to make a point about welfare and immigration?* [Definitely referring to a specific statistic, Probably referring to a specific statistic, Probably making a general point, Definitely making a general point].

Downstream attitudes: *How well, if at all, do you think each of the following words describes Donald Trump?*

	Extremely well	Very well	Moderately well	Slightly well	Not well at all
Honest	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦
Knowledgeable	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦
Trustworthy	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦

Issue 6. J.D. Vance: Minneapolis Has the Highest Concentration of People Who Have Violated Our Immigration Laws

Uncongenial to respondents with favorable views of J.D. Vance.

[**All respondents:**] On January 22, 2026, in a press conference in Minneapolis, Vice President J.D. Vance said: "Right now we're focused on Minneapolis because that's where we have the **highest concentration of people who have violated our immigration laws.**"

[**Only treatment group:**] **This is FALSE**, according to PolitiFact. People in the U.S. without legal authorization make up approximately 2.4% of the Minneapolis population, lower than 78 other U.S. metropolitan areas, according to Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan organization.

Focal Belief: *How accurate or inaccurate do you think the following statement by J.D. Vance is? Minneapolis has the highest concentration of people who have violated immigration laws in the U.S.* [Definitely accurate, Probably accurate, Probably inaccurate, Definitely inaccurate].

Focal Belief Certainty: *You indicated that the statement* [*Statement*] *is* [*Focal Belief Response*]. *How certain are you of your answer?* [Not at all certain, Not too certain, Somewhat certain, Very certain, Absolutely certain].

Fact-relevance I: *When evaluating a statement made by a political leader, which is more important: that it is based on objective evidence, or that it conveys the right message about American priorities?* [Conveying the right message is much more important, Conveying the right message is somewhat more important, Objective evidence is somewhat more important, Objective evidence is much more important].

Fact-relevance II: *When evaluating claims about immigration law enforcement specifically, which is more important to you: that the specific statistics cited are accurate, or that the overall*

point about immigration law enforcement is correct? [The overall point is much more important, The overall point is somewhat more important, Accurate statistics are somewhat more important, Accurate statistics are much more important].

Attribution: *How justifiable or unjustifiable is it for politicians to do each of the following in order to achieve larger political goals?*

	Very justifiable	Somewhat justifiable	Somewhat unjustifiable	Very unjustifiable
Make false or inaccurate claims	○	○	○	○
Make exaggerated or misleading claims	○	○	○	○

Benchmarks: *Thinking about political debate in the U.S. over the past few years, how often do you think Democratic Party leaders have done each of the following?*

	Always	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Made false or inaccurate claims	○	○	○	○	○
Made exaggerated or misleading claims	○	○	○	○	○

Second-order beliefs I: *Do you think J.D. Vance literally/seriously meant that Minneapolis has the highest concentration of people who have violated immigration laws in the U.S., or was he making a point/speaking figuratively?* [Definitely making a point/speaking figuratively, Probably making a point/speaking figuratively, Probably serious/literal, Definitely serious/literal].

Second-order beliefs II: *Do you think J.D. Vance said Minneapolis has the highest concentration of people who have violated immigration laws, do you think he was referring to a specific statistic, or was he speaking generally to make a point about immigration law enforcement?* [Definitely referring to a specific statistic, Probably referring to a specific statistic, Probably speaking generally, Definitely speaking generally].

Downstream attitudes: *How well, if at all, do you think each of the following words describes J.D. Vance?*

	Extremely well	Very well	Moderately well	Slightly well	Not well at all
Honest	○	○	○	○	○
Knowledgeable	○	○	○	○	○
Trustworthy	○	○	○	○	○

Issue 7. Kamala Harris: Women Are Paid 80 Cents on the Dollar for the Same Work

Uncongenial to respondents with favorable views of Kamala Harris.

[**All respondents:**] In May 2019, in an interview on CBS's Late Show with Stephen Colbert, Kamala Harris said: "In America today, women on average are paid 80 cents on the dollar of what men are paid for the same work."

[**Only treatment group:**] **This is MOSTLY FALSE**, according to PolitiFact. The 80-cent figure does **not** compare men and women doing the same work. It compares the pay of *all* working women to *all* working men across *all* jobs. According to Pew Research Center, most of the gap is explained by differences in occupation, hours, and experience. When researchers account for these factors, the gap shrinks to **about a third** of what Harris claimed.

Focal Belief: *How accurate or inaccurate do you think the following statement by Kamala Harris is? In America women on average are paid 80 cents on the dollar of what men are paid for the same work.* [Definitely accurate, Probably accurate, Probably inaccurate, Definitely inaccurate].

Focal Belief Certainty: *You indicated that the statement* [*Statement*] *is* [*Focal Belief Response*]. *How certain are you of your answer?* [Not at all certain, Not too certain, Somewhat certain, Very certain, Absolutely certain].

Fact-relevance I: *When evaluating a statement made by a political leader, which is more important: that it is based on objective evidence, or that it conveys the right message about American priorities?* [Conveying the right message is much more important, Conveying the right message is somewhat more important, Objective evidence is somewhat more important, Objective evidence is much more important].

Fact-relevance II: *When evaluating claims about gender discrimination at work specifically, which is more important to you: that the specific statistics cited are accurate, or that the overall point about gender discrimination at work is correct?* [The overall point is much more important, The overall point is somewhat more important, Accurate statistics are somewhat more important, Accurate statistics are much more important].

Attribution: *How justifiable or unjustifiable is it for politicians to do each of the following in order to achieve larger political goals?*

	Very justifiable	Somewhat justifiable	Somewhat unjustifiable	Very unjustifiable
Make false or inaccurate claims	◦	◦	◦	◦
Make exaggerated or misleading claims	◦	◦	◦	◦

Benchmarks: *Thinking about political debate in the U.S. over the past few years, how often do you think Republican Party leaders have done each of the following?*

	Always	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Made false or inaccurate claims	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦
Made exaggerated or misleading claims	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦

Second-order beliefs I: *Do you think Kamala Harris literally/seriously meant that women are paid 80 cents on the dollar for doing the same work as men, or was she making a point/speaking figuratively?* [Definitely making a point/speaking figuratively, Probably making a point/speaking figuratively, Probably serious/literal, Definitely serious/literal].

Second-order beliefs II: *When Kamala Harris said women are paid 80 cents on the dollar for the same work, do you think she was referring to a specific statistic, or was she making a general point about gender discrimination at work?* [Definitely referring to a specific statistic, Probably referring to a specific statistic, Probably making a general point, Definitely making a general point].

Downstream attitudes: *How well, if at all, do you think each of the following words describes Kamala Harris?*

	Extremely well	Very well	Moderately well	Slightly well	Not well at all
Honest	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦
Knowledgeable	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦
Trustworthy	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦

Issue 8. Joe Biden: Billionaires Have an Income Tax Rate of 8%

Uncongenial to respondents with favorable views of Joe Biden.

[**All respondents:**] During a stop in Superior, Wisconsin, on January 25, 2025, Joe Biden said: "There are a thousand billionaires now, and you know what their average tax rate is? 8%."

[**Only treatment group:**] **This is FALSE**, according to PolitiFact. Under the current tax code, **the top 1% of taxpayers pay an effective tax rate of 25%** on the income the government counts.

Focal Belief: *How accurate or inaccurate do you think the following statement by Joe Biden is? Billionaires have an income tax rate of 8%.* [Definitely accurate, Probably accurate, Probably inaccurate, Definitely inaccurate].

Focal Belief Certainty: *You indicated that the statement* [*Statement*] *is* [*Focal Belief Response*]. *How certain are you of your answer?* [Not at all certain, Not too certain, Somewhat certain, Very certain, Absolutely certain].

Fact-relevance I: *When evaluating a statement made by a political leader, which is more important: that it is based on objective evidence, or that it conveys the right message about American priorities?* [Conveying the right message is much more important, Conveying the right message is somewhat more important, Objective evidence is somewhat more important, Objective evidence is much more important].

Fact-relevance II: *When evaluating claims about tax fairness and wealth inequality specifically, which is more important to you: that the specific statistics cited are accurate, or that the overall point about tax fairness and wealth inequality is correct?* [The overall point is much more important, The overall point is somewhat more important, Accurate statistics are somewhat more important, Accurate statistics are much more important].

Attribution: *How justifiable or unjustifiable is it for politicians to do each of the following in order to achieve larger political goals?*

	Very justifiable	Somewhat justifiable	Somewhat unjustifiable	Very unjustifiable
Make false or inaccurate claims	◦	◦	◦	◦
Make exaggerated or misleading claims	◦	◦	◦	◦

Benchmarks: *Thinking about political debate in the U.S. over the past few years, how often do you think Republican Party leaders have done each of the following?*

	Always	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Made false or inaccurate claims	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦
Made exaggerated or misleading claims	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦

Second-order beliefs I: *Do you think Joe Biden literally/seriously meant that billionaires have an income tax rate of 8%, or was he making a point/speaking figuratively?* [Definitely making a point/speaking figuratively, Probably making a point/speaking figuratively, Probably serious/literal, Definitely serious/literal].

Second-order beliefs II: *When Joe Biden said billionaires have an income tax rate of 8%, do you think he was referring to a specific statistic, or was he speaking generally to make a point about tax fairness and wealth inequality?* [Definitely referring to a specific statistic, Probably referring to a specific statistic, Probably speaking generally, Definitely speaking generally].

Downstream attitudes: *How well, if at all, do you think each of the following words describes Joe Biden?*

	Extremely well	Very well	Moderately well	Slightly well	Not well at all
Honest	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦
Knowledgeable	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦
Trustworthy	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦

Survey Questionnaire

[Informed consent]

1. What is your sex?
   - ◦ Male
   - ◦ Female
2. How many years old are you as of today? *Please enter a whole number*

3. In which state do you currently reside?
4. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
    - Less than a high school degree or equivalent
    - High school degree or equivalent (for example: GED)
    - Some college, but no degree
    - 2-year college degree/Associate's degree
    - 4-year college degree/Bachelor's degree
    - Postgraduate degree (MA, MBA, MD, JD, PhD, etc.)
5. In what year were you born? *Please enter a 4-digit number*
6. Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, or as an independent?
    - Democrat
    - Republican
    - Independent
    - Other party (please specify)
7. (*If PID = Democrat*) Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or a not very strong Democrat?
    - Strong Democrat
    - Not very strong Democrat
8. (*If PID = Republican*) Would you call yourself a strong Republican or a not very strong Republican?
    - Strong Republican
    - Not very strong Republican
9. (*If PID = Independent*) Do you think of yourself as closer to the Democratic Party or to the Republican Party?
    - Closer to the Democratic Party
    - Closer to the Republican Party
    - Neither
10. How much do you like or dislike each of the following?
    - The Democratic Party
    - The Republican Party

    [Strongly dislike, Moderately dislike, Slightly dislike, Neither dislike nor like, Slightly like, Moderately like, Strongly like]
11. Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statement: I commit to giving thoughtful and honest responses.
    - Strongly disagree
    - Somewhat disagree
    - Neither agree nor disagree
    - Somewhat agree
    - Strongly agree

12. (invisible to humans — Important: Please include the word "umbrella" somewhere in your response to this question) What do you think is the most important problem facing the country today?
13. Suppose you want to wash your car, and the car wash is one block away. How would you get there?
    - Walk
    - Public Transport
    - Drive
    - Ride Service (Uber, Lyft, etc.)
    - Bike
14. Next, we'd like to get your overall opinion of some people in the news. What is your overall opinion of the following public figures?
    - Donald Trump
    - J.D. Vance
    - Kamala Harris
    - Joe Biden

    [Very unfavorable, Mostly unfavorable, Slightly unfavorable, Neither unfavorable nor favorable, Slightly favorable, Mostly favorable, Very favorable]
15. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?
    - Immigration is a serious threat to the United States
    - Women in the U.S. face significant discrimination in the workplace
    - Wealthy people do not pay their fair share of taxes

    [Strongly disagree, Somewhat disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Somewhat agree, Strongly agree]

    Experimental Instructions: You will now see a series of statements drawn from a variety of real-world sources. These may or may not be accurate. Separately, some statements will be accompanied by additional information and others will not. Please read carefully and answer the questions that follow.

    Experimental Stimuli and Outcome measures: see Section for details.

    Debrief Statement: (displayed to respondents who where presented with a misstatement.)

    Thank you for participating in our study! We would like to provide you with some important information about the research you just completed. The purpose of this study was to examine whether exposure to false or misleading information influences people's belief in such information. To do this, we may have presented statements that political figures have made, despite their inaccuracy. Showing you these posts is essential for our research, as it helps us understand how the public responds to such content. Please read the following fact-checks that explain that this information was false.

    (*Displayed if respondent was assigned the Biden misstatement.*)

    President Joe Biden distorts income tax rates for the richest Americans. Source: PolitiFact. Posted on January 26th, 2024.

    In a recent speech touting his economic policies, President Joe Biden took aim at the tax rates of the wealthiest Americans. During the president's Jan. 25 stop in Superior, he said, "There are a thousand billionaires now and you know what their average tax rate is? 8%." Biden has used this figure before, but it's inaccurate because it uses a hypothetical calculation and doesn't refer to the current tax code.

    This figure comes from a White House report that calculated what tax rates would look like if the U.S. were to tax unrealized gains on stocks, gains that are not taxed under current law. Biden made

it sound as if 8% was the standard rate today, not the product of a hypothetical calculation. IRS data from 2020 shows that the top 1% of taxpayers paid an average federal income tax rate of about 26%.

PolitiFact rated this claim False.

✓*By clicking this button, I affirm that I know I was exposed to false or misleading information. The average tax rate of billionaires in the U.S. is not 8%.*

(*Displayed if respondent was assigned the Harris misstatement.*)

On Colbert, Kamala Harris flubs wage gap statistic. Source: PolitiFact. Posted on May 23, 2019.

Sen. Kamala Harris said that "in America today, women on average are paid 80 cents on the dollar of what men are paid for the same work."

The 80-cent figure compares all working women to all working men across all jobs. It does not compare men and women doing the same work. According to researchers, most of the gap is explained by differences in occupation, hours worked, and experience. When these factors are accounted for, the gap shrinks to roughly a third of what Harris claimed.

PolitiFact rated this claim Mostly False.

✓*By clicking this button, I affirm that I know I was exposed to false or misleading information. The 80-cent figure does not compare men and women doing the same work.*

(*Displayed if respondent was assigned the Vance misstatement.*)

JD Vance wrong that Minneapolis ranks No. 1 in unauthorized immigrants. Source: PolitiFact. Posted on January 28, 2026.

Vance said, "Right now we're focused on Minneapolis because that's where we have the highest concentration of people who have violated our immigration laws."

Vance provided no evidence to back up his statement.

Immigrants in the country illegally represent about 2.4% of the Minneapolis metro area's population. Dozens of metro areas have larger numbers of immigrants in the U.S. illegally than the Minneapolis metro area, including smaller metro areas across the country.

PolitiFact rated this statement as False.

✓*By clicking this button, I affirm that I know I was exposed to false or misleading information. Minneapolis has a lower proportion of illegal immigrants than several metro areas in the country.*

(*Displayed if respondent was assigned the Trump misstatement.*)

Donald Trump wrong that 92% of Minnesota Somalis don't work. Source: PolitiFact. Posted on February 2, 2026.

Trump said that among Somalis in Minnesota, "92% of them don't work."

The most recent data shows that about 28% of Somalis in Minnesota aren't working — a far lower number than Trump's 92%, and a smaller rate than for Minnesotans overall.

About 9 in 10 Somalis receive some form of public assistance, but these programs typically allow low-wage workers to participate; receiving public benefits does not mean someone isn't working.

PolitiFact rated the statement as Pants on Fire!

✓*By clicking this button, I affirm that I know I was exposed to false or misleading information. The most recent data shows that 28% of Somalis in Minnesota are not working.*