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Has Party Identification Changed in Utah?

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Has Party Identification Changed In Utah?

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An Analysis of Utah Party Identification from 2012 to 2016

Introduction

Three weeks before the 2016 election, Utah was labeled as a swing state by most main-stream media outlets. The offensive rhetoric from both the Trump and Clinton campaigns and the rise of a popular independent candidate increased the potential for changes in the party identity of the Utah electorate. My research question is as follows:

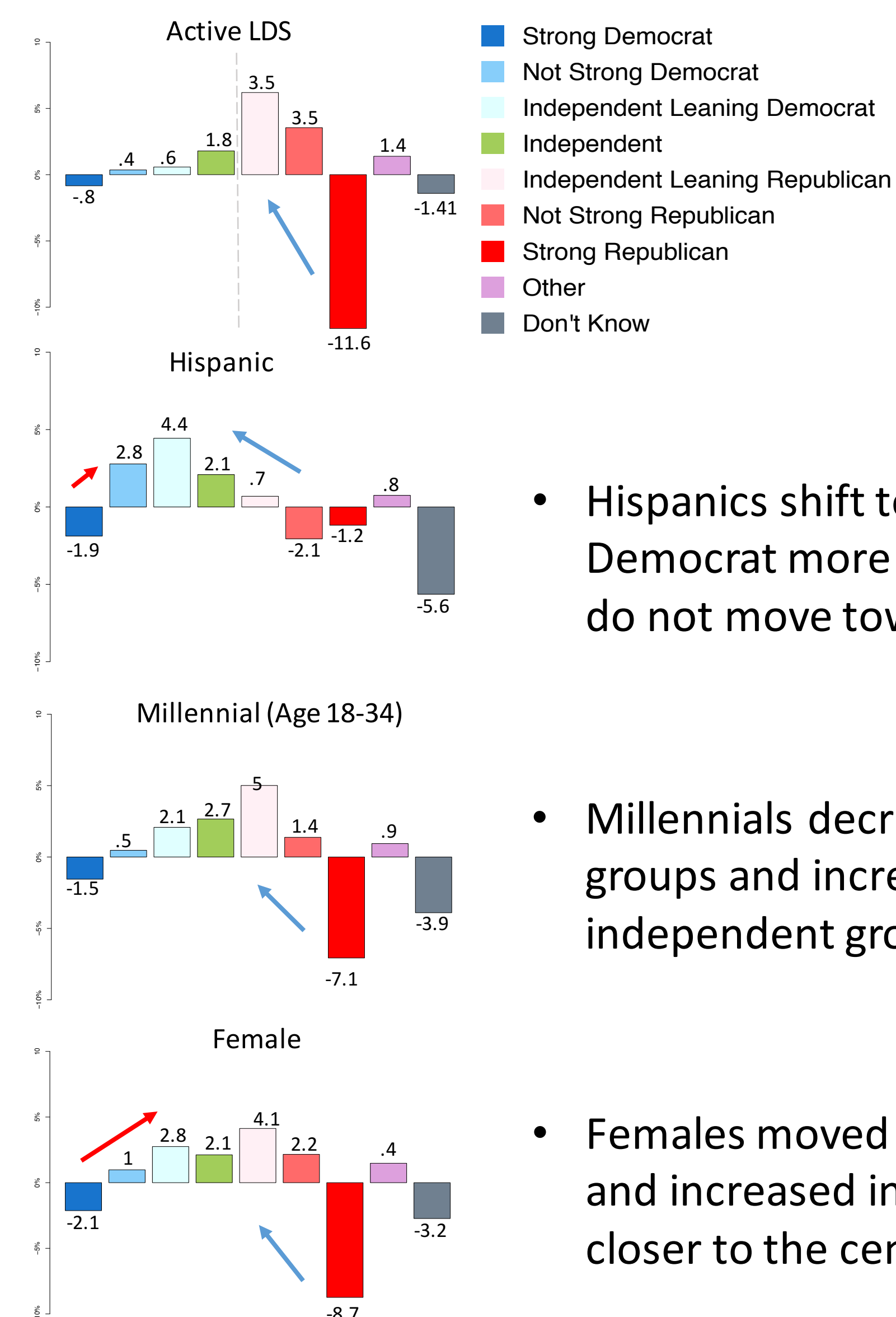
How has party identification changed in the state of Utah between the 2012 and 2016 elections?

Data and Methods

While working with a group called the Utah Colleges Exit Poll, I helped organize and implement a survey of approximately 29,000 Utah voters in the 2016 election. Each voter responded with a self-assessment question about their current and past party identification. They also responded to a variety of opinion and demographic questions. These voter responses provide the basis for this analysis.

Changes By Demographic

Percent Change by Party ID 2012 to 2016



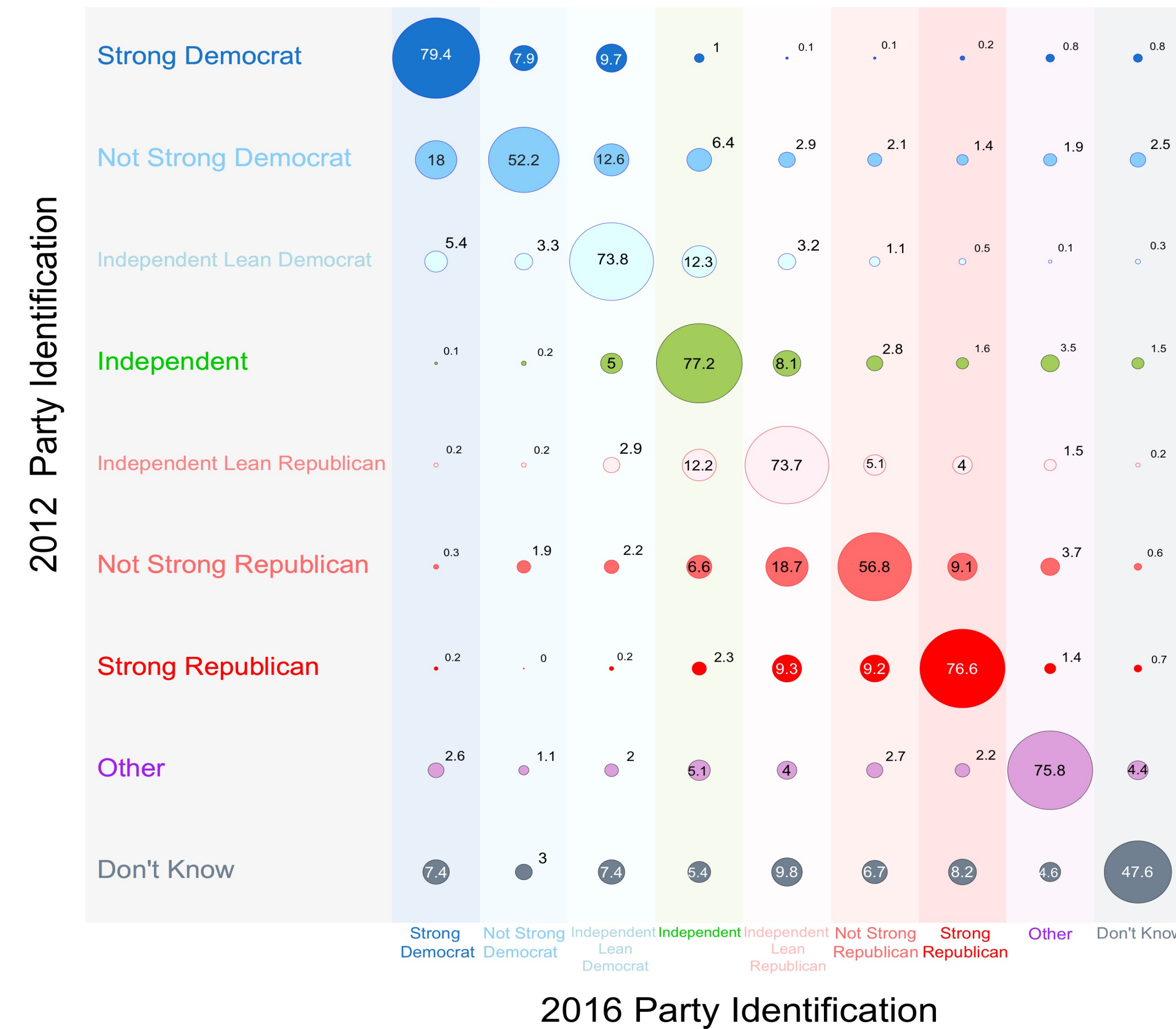
- Active LDS Republicans drop significantly in 2016; however, most people move toward independent lean Republican instead of a Democratic identity

- Hispanics shift toward independent lean Democrat more than any other group. They do not move toward conservative identities

- Millennials decrease in the strong partisan groups and increase significantly in the independent groups

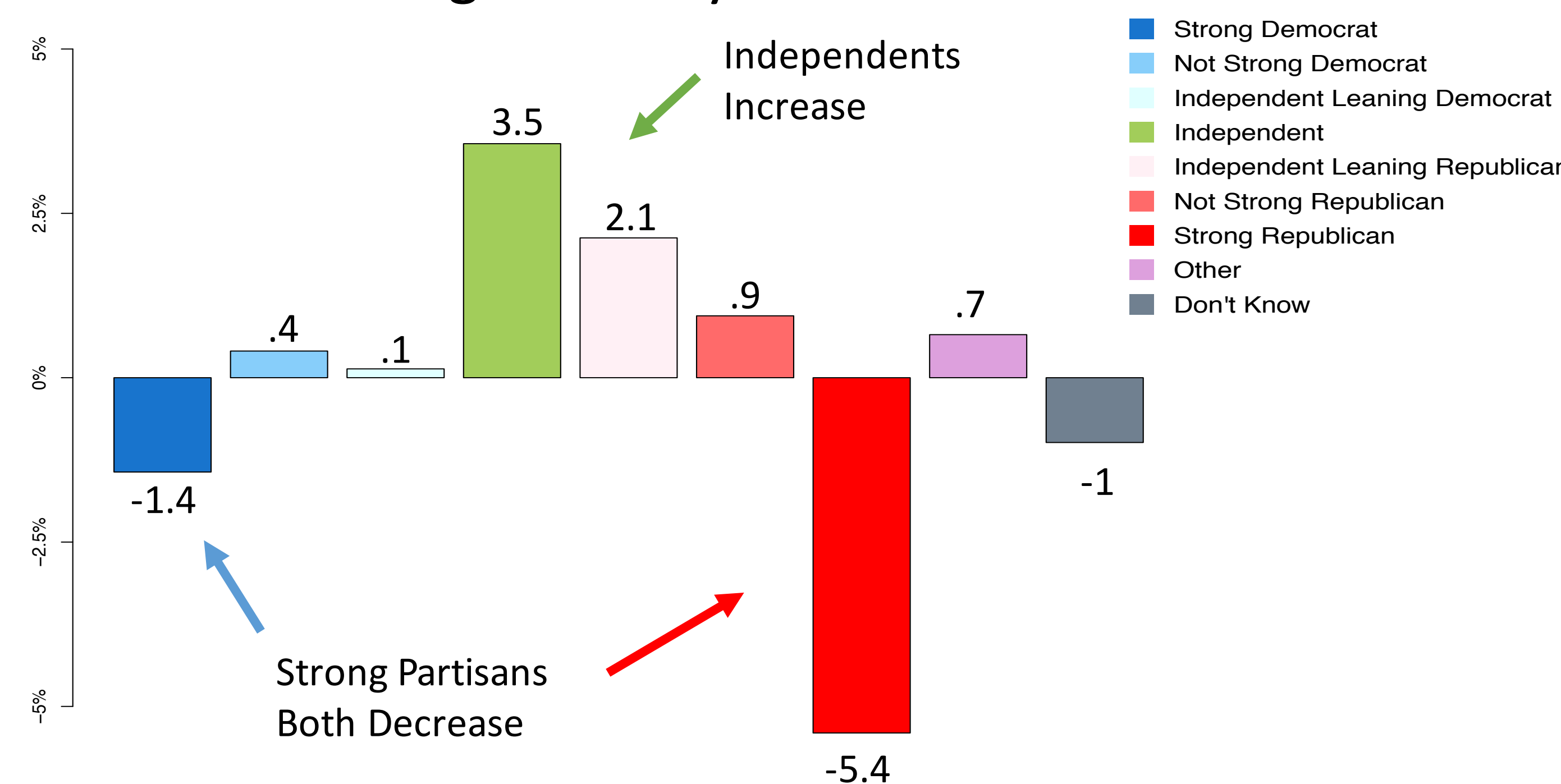
- Females moved from the strong partisans and increased in identification groups closer to the center

How has each 2012 party ID group changed in 2016?



The above graph shows each 2012 party ID group and the percentage of people who either remained in that same group or shifted to another group in 2016. Strong partisans generally retained their party identification with only about a 20% dispersion into other identifications. Weak partisans were more prone to shifting than strong partisans or pure independents. In total, 29% of voters changed identity from 2012 to 2016. As is shown below, the aggregate shift is much less; however, it is skewed demonstrating a larger shift away from Republican identities toward more moderate ones.

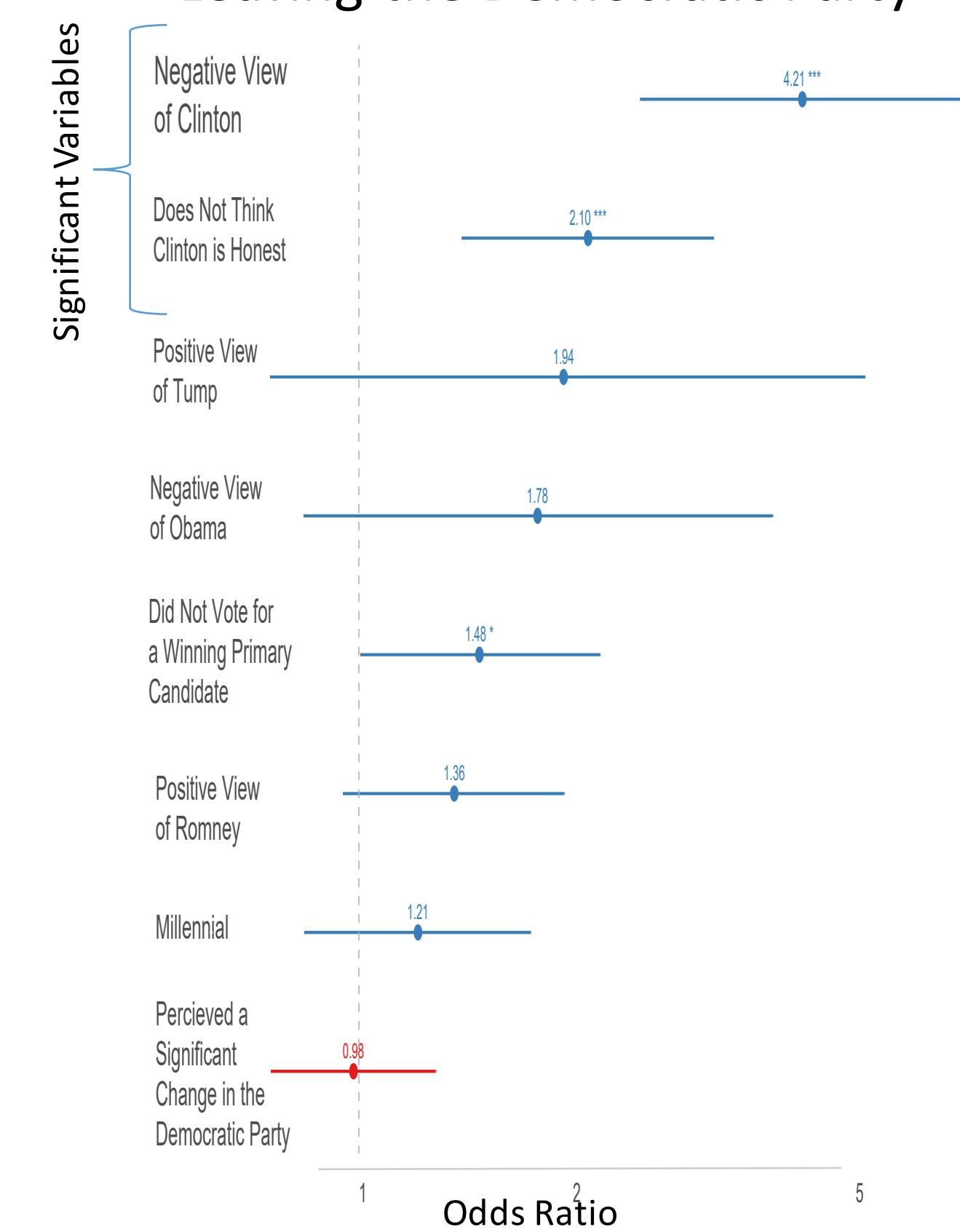
Total Change in Party ID from 2012 to 2016



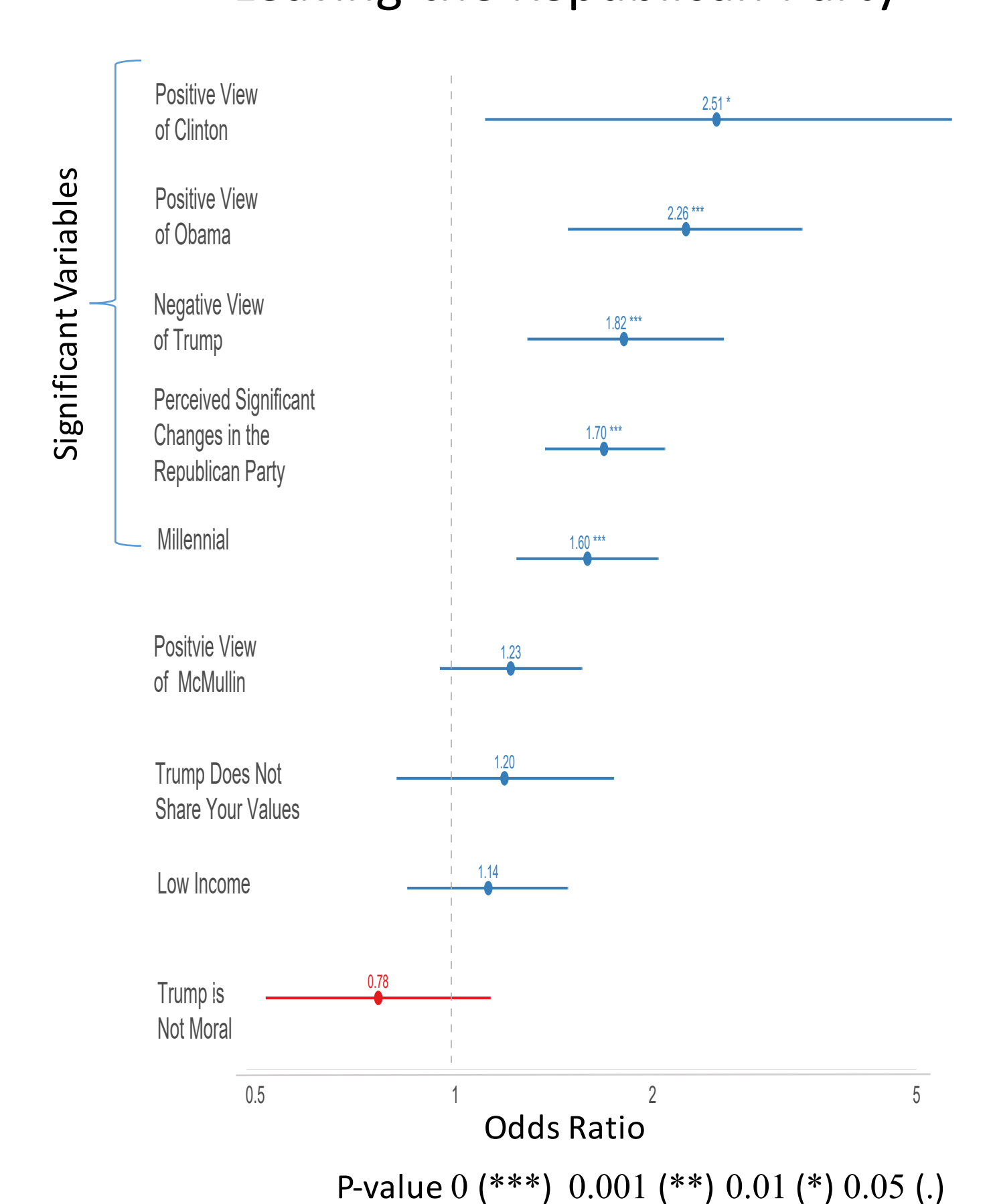
Why did some people leave their 2012 party?

- Republicans left their party because of a poor view of Trump or a positive view of Clinton, and Obama
- Millennials were more likely to leave the Republican Party
- McMullin had no effect on leaving either party
- Democrats left their party mainly because of a negative view of Clinton
- The logit Analysis below explains the details of why some people left their party.
- The binary dependent variable is whether or not someone left their 2012 party
- Independent leaners are included in the party

Factors Correlated with an Individual Leaving the Democratic Party



Factors Correlated with an Individual Leaving the Republican Party



Conclusion and Limitations

- Utah voters are shifting away from strong partisan identities toward independent identities
- Many Utah voters were dissatisfied with the 2016 candidates and may have shifted party ID as a result

Limitations

- Small shifts in party identification do not signify a permanent adjustment or realignment
- This analysis is prone to bias because of the self-assessment question measuring party ID in 2012
- Permanent shifts are difficult to discover without future data

Data Source: Utah Colleges Exit Poll 2016