



# Exploring Partisan Attitudes of Crime Threat Perception and Federal Spending in the 2022 Midterm Election

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## Introduction

- Given the intense polarization and politicization of issues in election cycles, understanding how citizens use their party identification and other demographic factors as a heuristic to align or diverge on social issues is essential to understanding how voters form opinions and perceive threats and their causes.
- Research on the American prison system has demonstrated a steady increase in incarceration rates, and individuals punitiveness (Enns, 2014).
- Public perception of crime is integral to how state's allocate funding, and what issues political elites message on. Literature on crime demonstrates that policy-makers respond to the public's opinions on crime and the general opinions of their constituents (Erikson, MacKuen, Stimson 2002; Page and Shapiro 1983).
- Understanding what demographic factors influence Republican and Democrats perception of crime and stance on spending will create a more holistic image of how voters understand issues, and ultimately vote on them.

## Research Question

- Do party perceptions of threat correlate with stances on federal spending, by race or other demographic factors?

## Methods

### Sample

- Respondents (n=1500) were drawn from the YouGov Pre-Election national sample from August to September 2022.

### Measures

- Two survey questions were used as the **dependent variables**.
  - Respondents were asked: What is the most important problem facing the country? They were given seventeen choices, including Crime/Violence. To examine respondents who say Crime is the Most Important Problem, responses were recoded into a binary response variable of Yes, Most Important Problem and No, Other.
  - Respondents were asked, "Should federal spending on dealing with crime be Increased, Decreased or Kept the Same?" Responses were recoded into an ordered format of 1. Decreased, 2. Kept the Same 3. Increased for the ordered logistic regression.
- Questions such as Income, Race and Party were the **independent variables** and were data managed into simpler responses.
  - Income was collapsed into Less than 50k, 50-100k and 100k+.
  - Race was collapsed into White, Black, Hispanic and Other
  - Pid7 was collapsed into the partisan scale of just Democrat, Republican and Independent.

### Hypothesis

- H1: There is a distinct difference between level of crime concern between Republicans and Democrats. Republicans are more worried about crime and advocate for more spending.
- H2: White respondents will perceive crime as a greater threat and advocate for increased spending.

I ran a survey weighted logit regression predicting whether a respondent says crime is the most important issue and a survey weighted ordered logit predicting stance on federal spending on crime.

## Descriptive Statistics

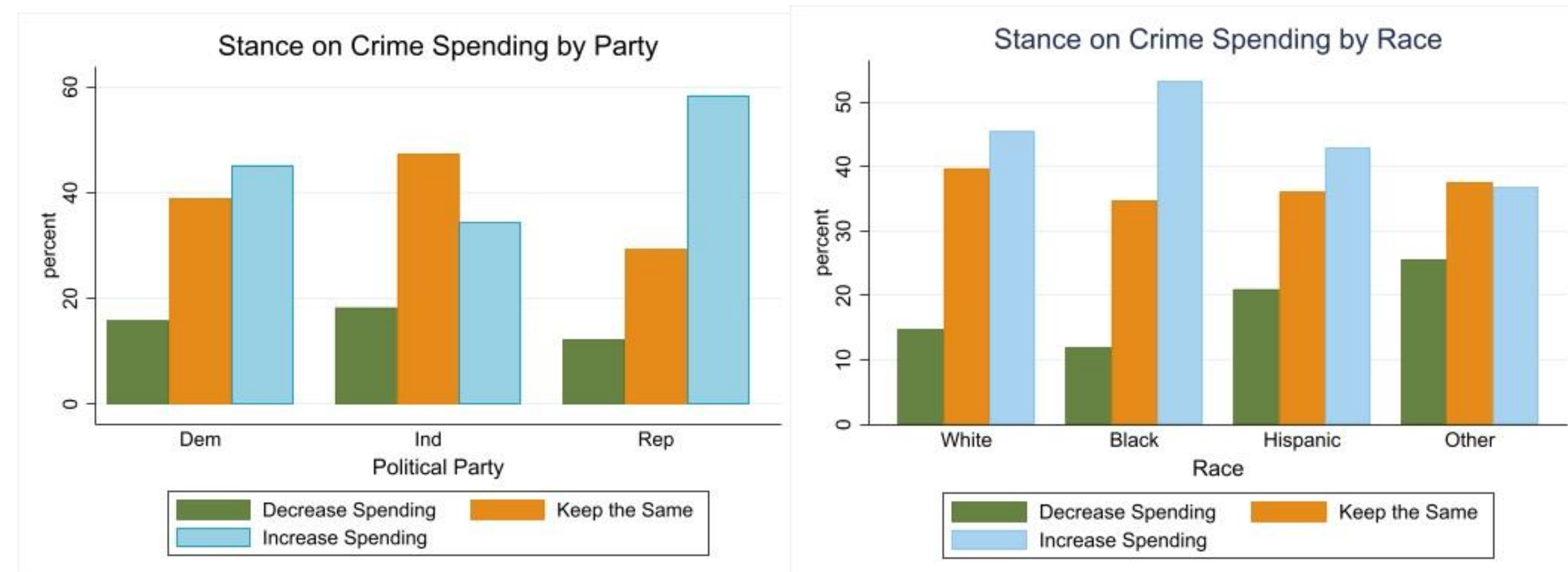


Figure 1. Stance on Crime Spending by Party

Figure 1 demonstrates that **Republicans and Democrats choose to Increase Spending**. Independents prefer status quo.

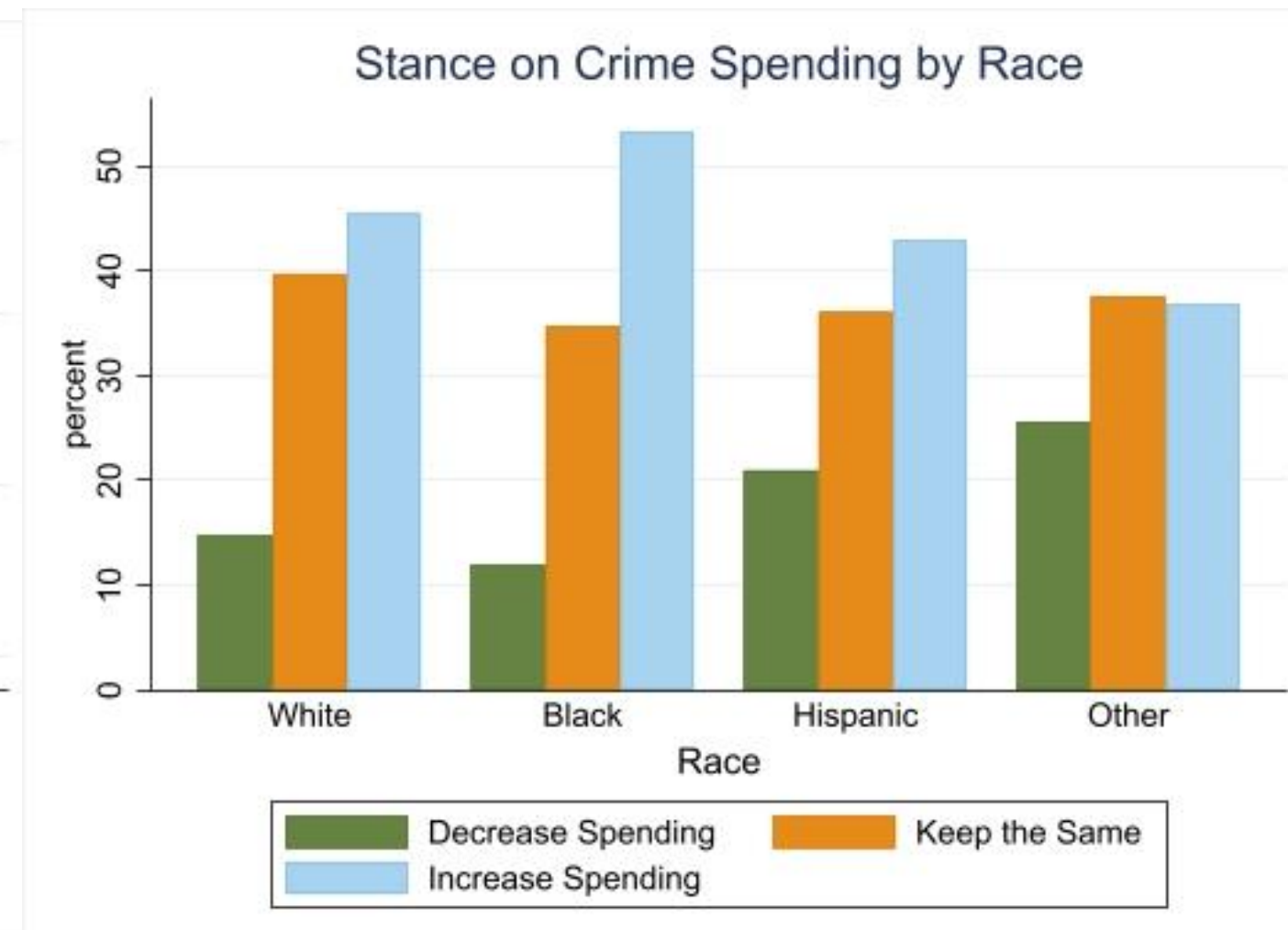


Figure 2. Stance on Crime Spending by Race

Figure 2 demonstrates that Black, White and Hispanic respondents **choose Increase Spending the most**.

## Multivariate Models

Figure 3. Predicted Probability of Stance on Crime Spending Given Choosing Crime as the MIP

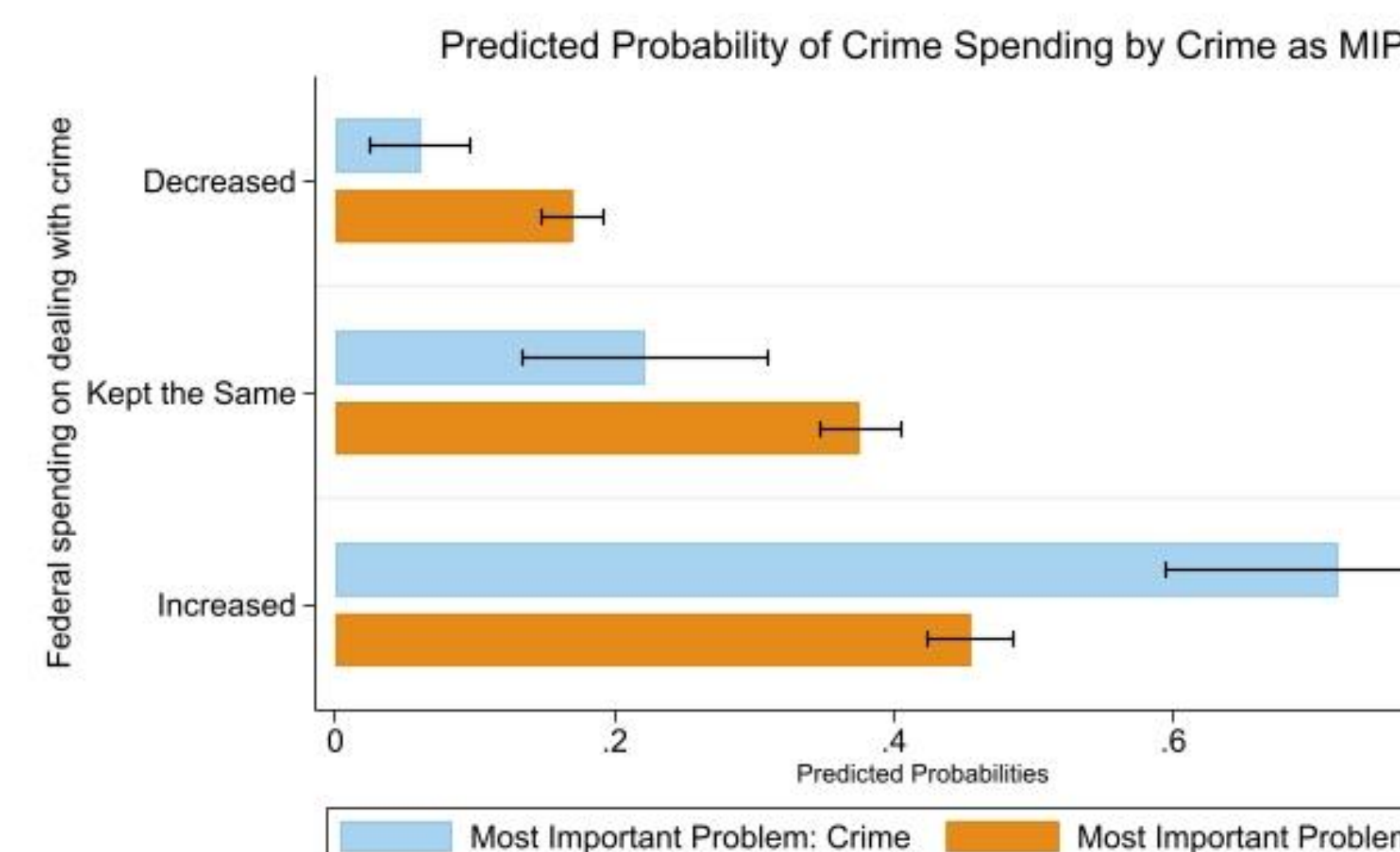


Figure 4. Predicted Probability of Crime Spending by Party

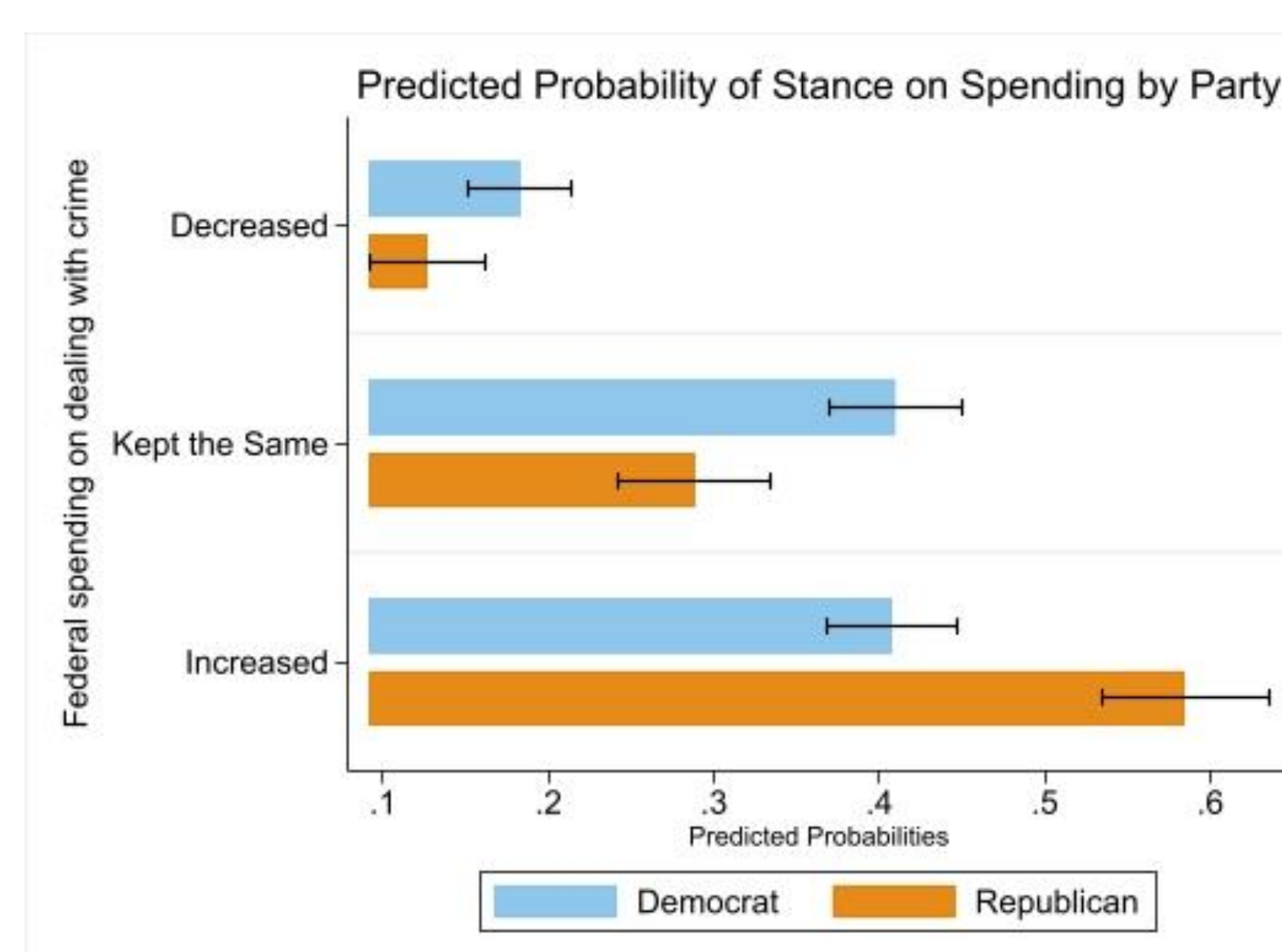


Figure 4 indicates that **Republicans** are most likely to say **spending should be Increased** compared to **Democrats**.

Figure 3 shows respondents who think **crime** is the **most important issue** are more likely to think spending should be **increased**.

Table 1. Coefficient Values of Crime MIP Survey Question

	Coefficient	S.E.
Independent	0.22	(0.49)
Republican	0.89**	(0.41)
Black	1.13***	(0.43)
Hispanic	-0.06	(0.49)
Other	0.85	(0.53)
High school graduate	0.40	(0.74)
Some college	-0.02	(0.81)
2-year	-0.19	(0.95)
4-year	0.48	(0.92)
Post-grad	-0.21	(1.04)
Female	0.57*	(0.33)
50-100k	-0.11	(0.36)
100k+	-0.41	(0.60)

Table 2. Coefficient Values of Federal Spending Survey Question

	(1)	S.E.
	Federal spending on dealing with crime (Increase, Stay the same, Decrease)	
	Coefficient	
Crime MIP	1.30***	(0.39)
Independent	-0.28	(0.19)
Republican	0.67***	(0.15)
Black	0.14	(0.21)
Hispanic	-0.07	(0.19)
Other	-0.34	(0.28)
High school graduate	0.19	(0.33)
Some college	-0.28	(0.34)
2-year	-0.17	(0.36)
4-year	-0.56*	(0.34)
Post-grad	-0.54	(0.35)
Female	0.19	(0.13)
50-100k	0.04	(0.15)
100k+	0.11	(0.18)

Standard errors in parentheses  
 \* p < 0.1, \*\* p < 0.05, \*\*\* p < 0.01

## Discussion

- As expected, Republicans are more likely than Democrats to think crime is important and to say that spending should be increased (H1 is supported).
- Contrary to H2, Blacks are more likely to think crime is the most important issue compared to Whites, but we find no statistically significant difference between Whites and Blacks or Whites and Hispanics in attitudes about spending on crime (H2 is not supported)
- Respondents who think crime is the most important issue are more likely to think that there should be more spending on crime even after controlling for other demographics.

Enns, Peter K. "The Public's Increasing Punitiveness and Its Influence on Mass Incarceration in the United States." American Journal of Political Science, vol. 58, no. 4, 2014, pp. 857-72. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24363530>. Accessed 24 July 2023.  
 Erikson, Robert S., Michael B. MacKuen, and James A. Stimson. 2002. The Macro Polity, New York: Cambridge University Press