



The Effect of Watching Fox News on the Perceptions of Christianity Under Threat

Caitlyn K Cullen
University of Louisiana Monroe
Mentor: Dr. Larry Bartels



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Summary

In recent years, Right wing media increasingly portray Christianity and Christian values in the United States as under attack.

I assess differences in perceptions of Christianity “under assault” between Fox News viewers and non-viewers using **2020 UCLA Nationscape survey data**.

I find substantially higher levels of agreement that Christianity is under assault among **Fox News viewers**, even after statistically controlling for differences in partisanship, religion, evangelicalism, gender, age, and total media use.



Hypothesis

Fox News viewers will have a higher agreement with the statement overall because of the anxiety-inducing rhetoric present in their news coverage.

Research Question

How do Fox News viewers’ perceptions of the safety of Christianity differ from non-Fox viewers?

Methods

- **DV:** Perceptions of the safety of traditional Christian beliefs
- **IV:** Fox News viewership

Statement: **“Traditional Christian religious beliefs are under assault.”**

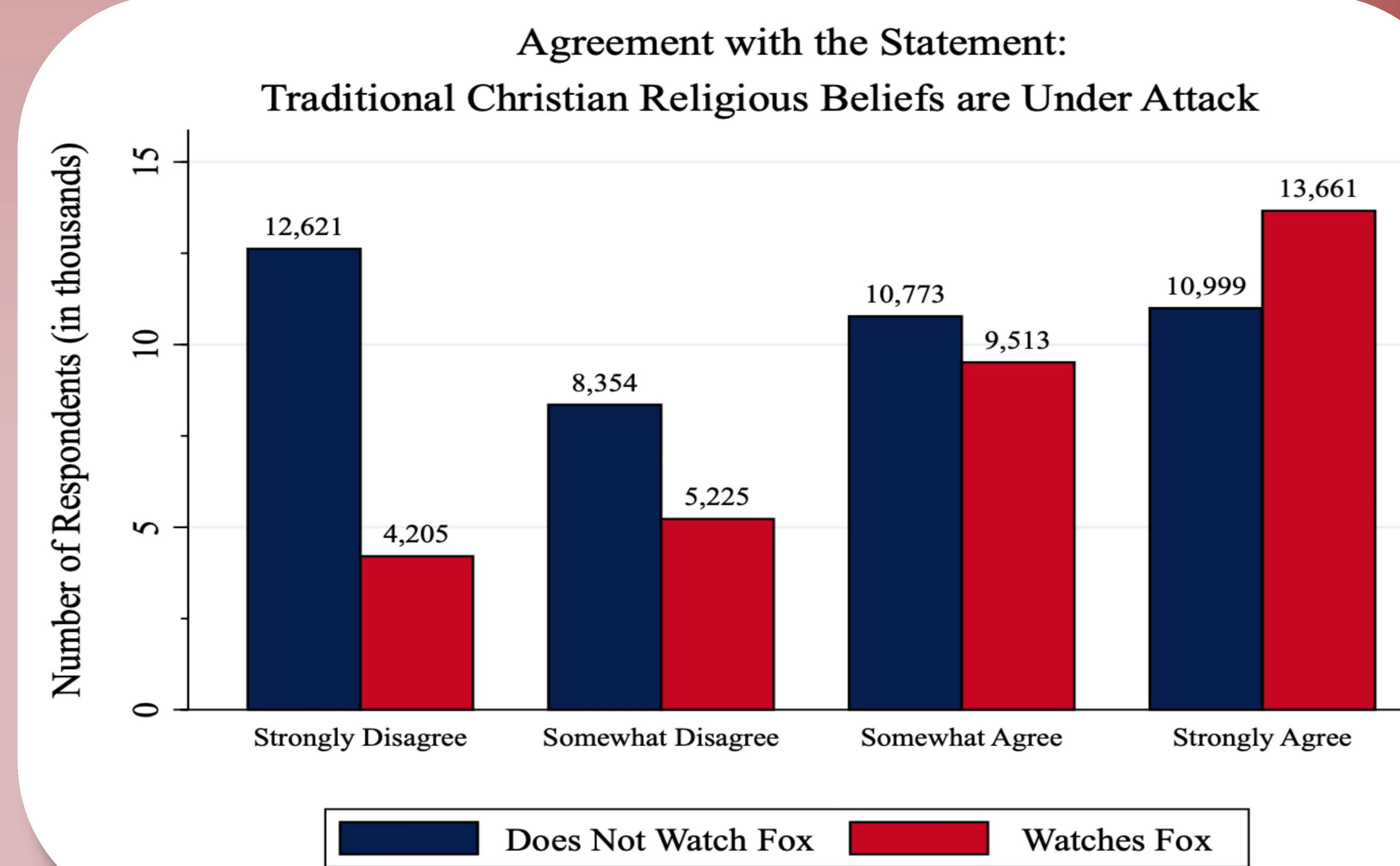
The statement was part of a rotating pool to gauge political attitudes, therefore not asked to every respondent. Analysis excludes “not sure” responses.

Range: September 2019 to January 2021
75,351 valid observations

Controls include partisanship, religion, evangelicalism, gender, age, and total media use.



FOX NEWS



Takeaways

In a bivariate analysis, **Fox viewers agree a half-point more strongly** with the statement than respondents who do not watch Fox News (0.55).

Controlling for respondents’ partisanship, total media use, age, and gender expression, **this effect remains high in significance** and magnitude (0.48).

Finally, though respondents’ **religious affiliation has a large influence** on their agreement with the statement that Christianity is under threat (0.42-0.56), Fox news viewers still are more likely to perceive that threat than viewers avoiding Fox News (0.38).

Future Directions

Future research should study the effect of Fox News on perceptions of threat for different groups or factors not measured in the Nationscape Survey data.