

How Bundling Climate Policy is Backfiring

A comprehensive analysis of the effects of bundling decarbonization policies found that this strategy does not promote support for climate policy and may lead to further polarization.

Based on-Marshall, R., Anderson, S.E., Van Boven, L. *et al.* Neutral and negative effects of policy bundling on support for decarbonization. *Climatic Change* 177, 61 (2024).
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The Policy Problem

The strategy of 'bundling' two policies together to gain support for climate legislation is often used in hopes of building support for climate policies that typically have low support with conservatives. Strategists often capitalize on unrelated new policies as an opportunity to approve new climate legislation, sometimes targeting the less supportive party. A recent comprehensive review analyzed whether this bundling method is effective in increasing support for decarbonization policy. It also investigated whether bundling policy increased polarization amongst parties, by driving conservative players away from supporting climate legislation and viewing climate change as a political issue.

Key Findings and Proposed Solutions:

- In the survey, bundled climate policies never increased support and often reduced support
- The survey found that bundled policies either made issues more polarizing or decreased support for climate policy
- Even if a policy bundling strategy increases support, it might still make decarbonization policies more polarizing
- Bundling policy should be used cautiously and after preliminary measures to determine its potential to be effective amongst the specific voting population

What We Found

We found that bundling a decarbonization policy with another policy had no impact or decreased overall policy support across the four treatments. A policy bundle that included an EPA regulation pause, resulted in decreased support for the decarbonization policy; which liberals liked less when bundled with EPA cuts. With this sample bundle, polarization did decrease, as liberal support went down, and conservative support did not significantly improve. A policy bundled with a social justice policy also resulted in decreased support, as conservatives didn't support this measure. Polarization increased as support for the policy decreased from the right side. Two other policies which bundled decarbonization policy with economic redistribution and infrastructure, showed no relevant change in support or polarization. In summary, those who did support the policy despite their party's views, were cancelled out by those at the other end of the political spectrum who were skeptical of the new framing of the policy.

What We Did

We created four mock decarbonization policies, which were modeled after real, well-known policies. A survey tested the support for each policy by U.S. adults across the political spectrum. The four policies included, consumer-level incentives for investing in renewable energy technology research and development, subsidies for new energy technologies, an economy-wide tax on carbon, and a carbon-free electricity standard. These policies were labeled as social justice, economic redistribution, infrastructure, and pausing EPA regulations. The EPA pause policy was created with the intention of gaining conservative support, the Infrastructure policy for moderate support, and the social justice and economic redistribution policies were both crafted as liberal-appealing policies. A control group answered questions about their support of the policies presented alone, while the other groups were asked questions about the same policies coupled with another policy. Respondents specified their level of support for each policy on a scale of strongly oppose to strongly support, with four options.

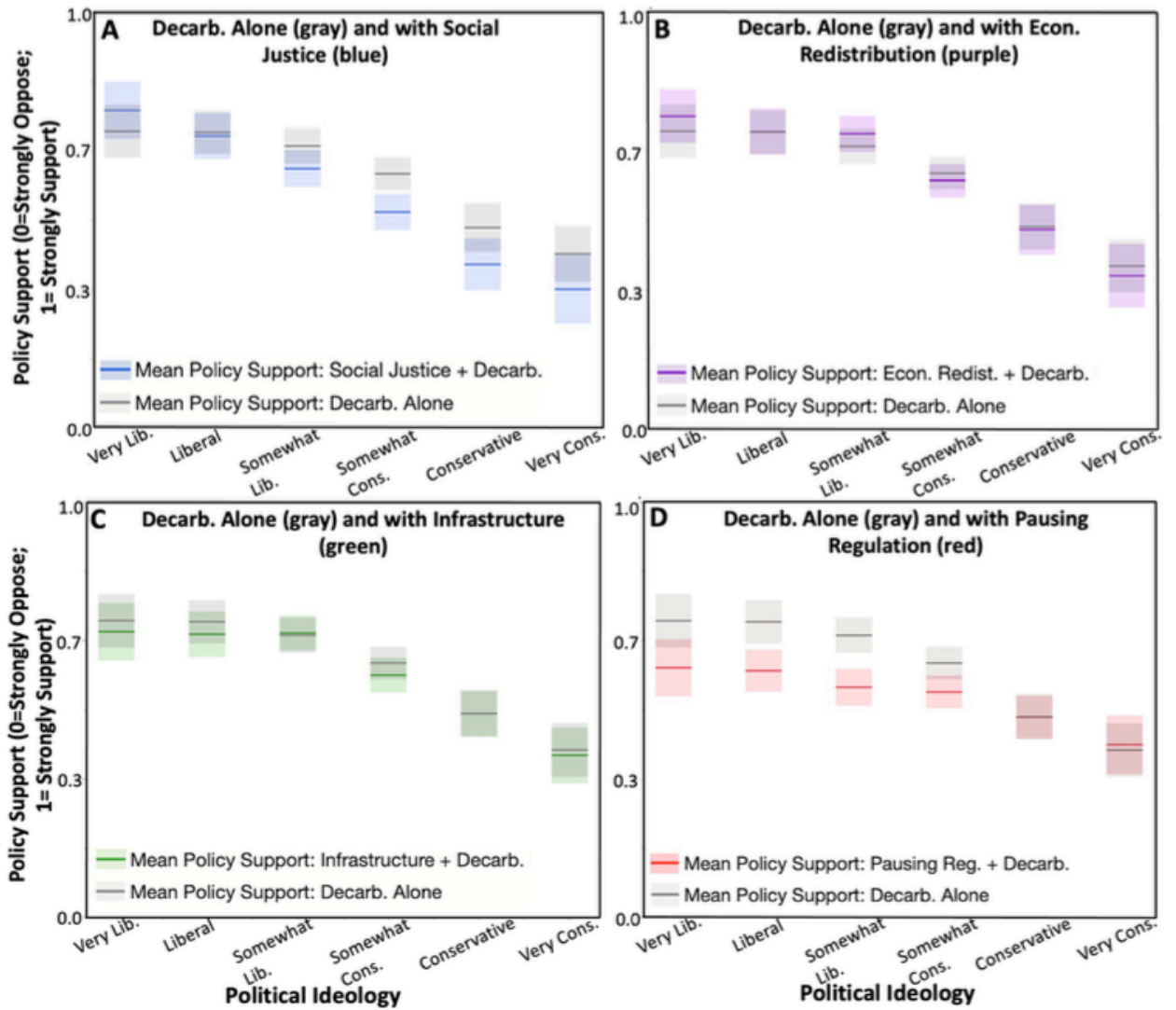


Fig. 1. Policy support for decarbonization policies presented alone in comparison to bundled. Support levels are shown on the y-axis as a scale with four levels ranging from strongly oppose (0) to strongly support(1). The x-axis displays the political range of the respondents. The bolded lines represent the mean support levels among each political party, and the shaded areas represent the 95% confidence intervals.

AI Disclosure: Grammarly spell and grammar check used