



# The Association Between Pro-Life Abortion Views and Opposition to Assisted Suicide



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## Introduction

- Public debates about abortion and assisted suicide reflect broader questions about the value of human life and individual autonomy. Individuals who believe that life begins at conception are more likely to oppose abortion (Tamney, Johnson, & Burton, 1992), and those who endorse purity/sanctity moral foundations tend to hold stronger pro-life views (Lockhart, 2022). Using the General Social Survey (GSS), this study tests whether opposition to abortion predicts opposition to assisted suicide, while controlling for key social, religious, and demographic factors, to assess whether a broader life-ethic framework explains these attitudes.

## Research Questions

- Is opposition to abortion associated with opposition to assisted suicide in a nationally representative sample of U.S. adults?
- Does abortion attitude remain a significant predictor of assisted-suicide views after controlling for social, religious, and demographic factors?
- Do political and religious factors help explain the relationship between these two moral attitudes?

## Methods

### Sample

- Data was drawn from the 2021 General Social Survey (GSS), a nationally representative survey of U.S. adults ages 18 and older living in non-institutional housing. The full sample includes 4,032 respondents.

### Measures

- Abortion Attitudes - Participants answered: "If the woman wants it (an abortion) for any reason?" (1 = support, 2 = oppose).
- Assisted Suicide Attitudes - Participants answered: "Do you think a person has the right to end his or her own life if this person . . . Has an incurable disease?" (1 = support, 2 = oppose)
- Control Variables - The analysis included standard demographic and ideological controls:

- Religiosity: Catholic, Other, Non (collapsed)
- Age: continuous (years)
- Gender: female/male
- Marital Status: "married," "never married," "other." (collapsed)
- Party ID: Democrat, Independent, Republican

## Results

### Bivariate

- A Chi-Square Test showed a significant association between abortion attitudes and assisted suicide views ( $p < .001$ ) - Fig 1.
- Simple Logistic regression: People who oppose abortion were much more likely to oppose assisted suicide. 71.7% of abortion supporters endorsed assisted suicide, compared to only 28.3% of abortion opponents.

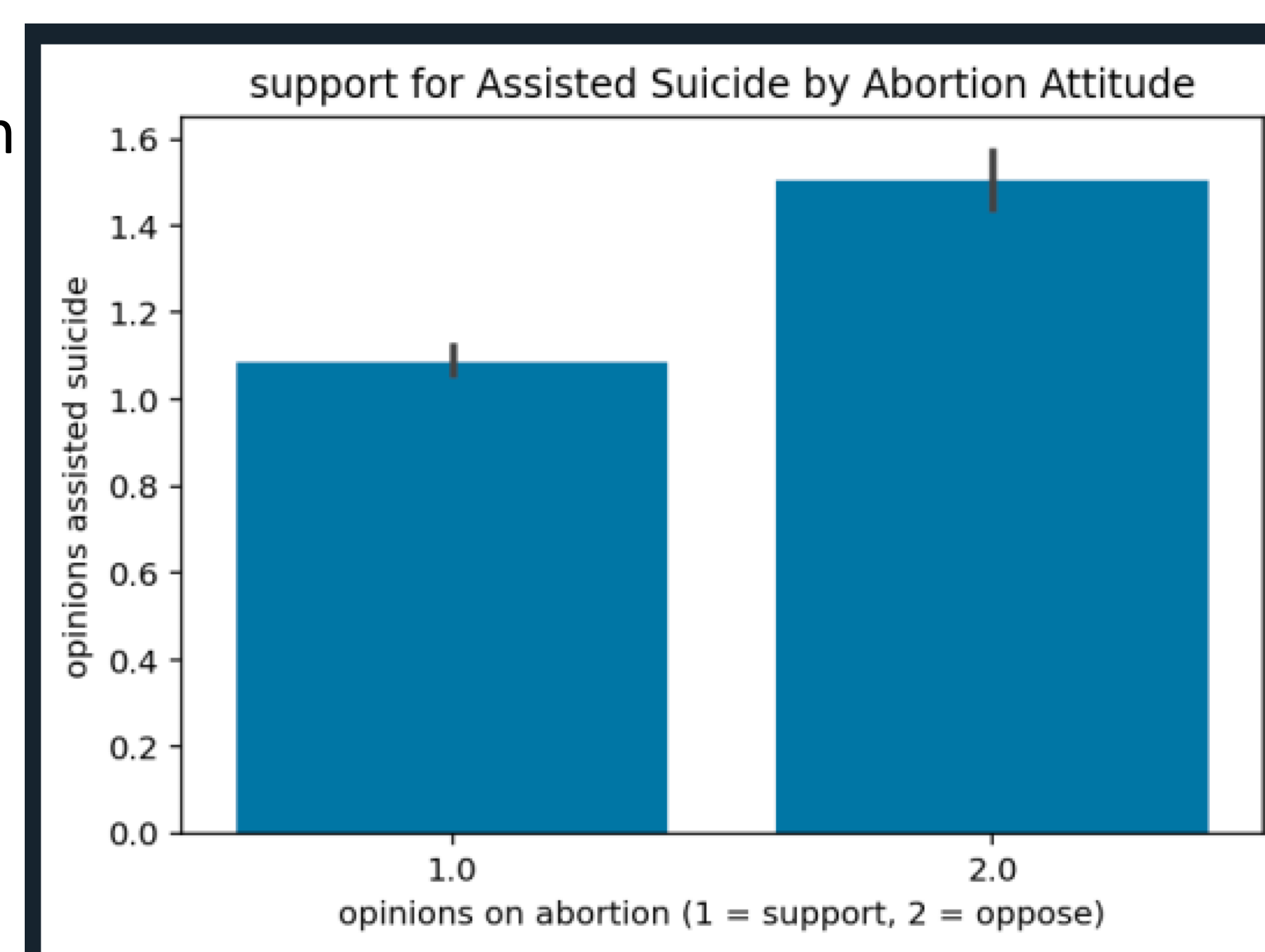


Figure 1: The average proportion of respondents who support assisted suicide, grouped by their attitudes toward abortion

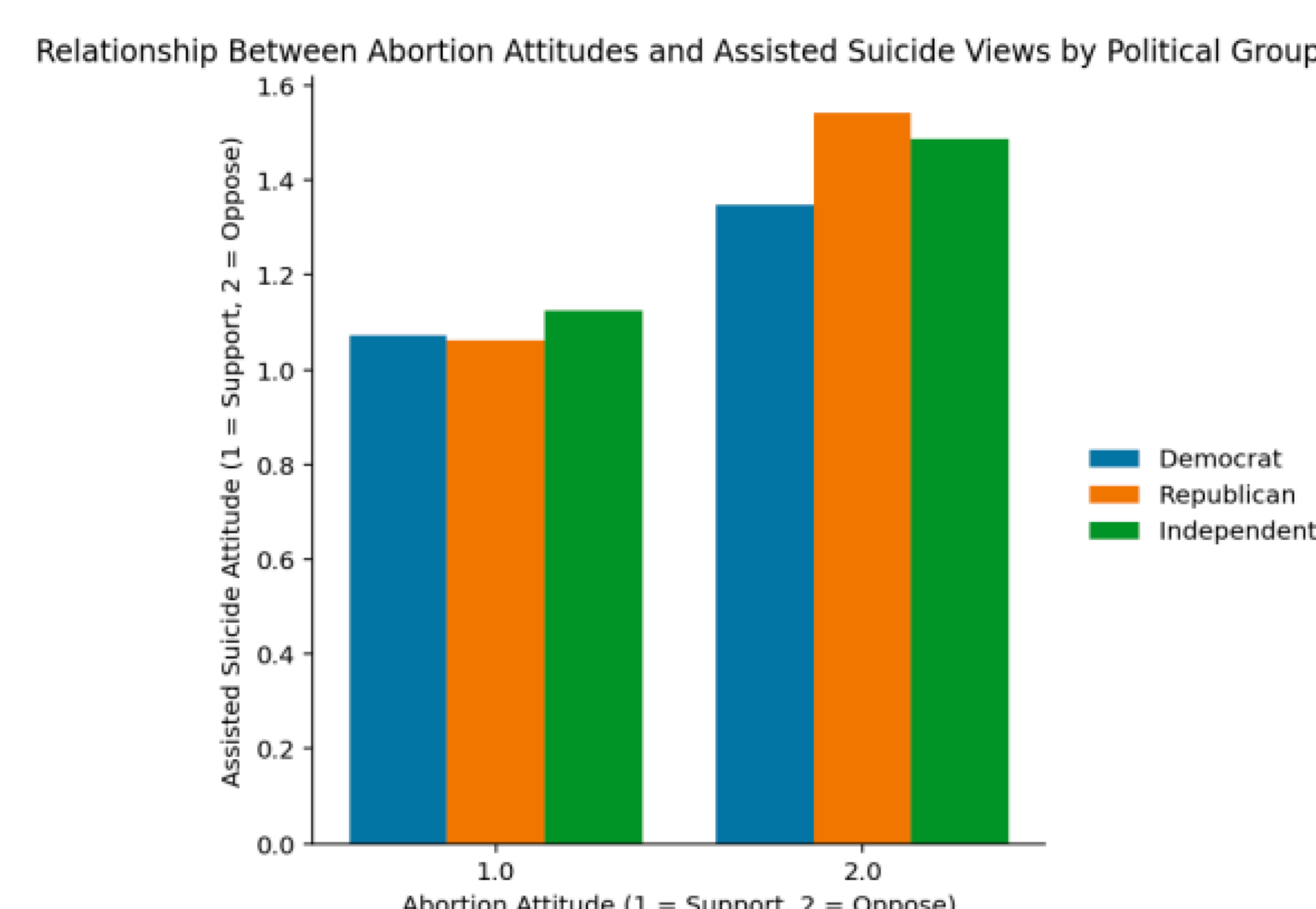


Figure 2: Cluster Bar Chart

## Discussion

- Abortion attitude strongly predicted opposition to assisted suicide, even after controlling for age, gender, marital status, religiosity, and political ideology.
- This suggests that these attitudes are shaped by a broader sanctity-of-life moral framework, rather than being isolated issue specific opinions.
- Political conservatism also predicted greater opposition to assisted suicide, consistent with prior research on moral and ideological values.
- Other demographic factors did not significantly influence attitudes, showing that moral beliefs may play a larger role than age or marital status.
- Implication: Understanding shared ethical foundations may help scholars and policymakers better address debates surrounding both reproductive rights and end-of-life decision-making.

## References

- Tamney, Joseph B., Stephen D. Johnson, and Ronald Burton. "The Abortion Controversy: Conflicting Beliefs and Values in American Society." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 31, no. 1 (1992): 32–46. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1386830>.
- Lockhart, Christopher, et al. "The sanctity of life: The role of purity in attitudes towards abortion and euthanasia." *International Journal of Psychology*, vol. 58, no. 1, 13 Sept. 2022, pp. 16–29, <https://doi.org/10.1002/ijop.12877>.

Figure 2:

- This clustered bar chart shows assisted-suicide attitudes by abortion stance and political party. Across all groups, those who oppose abortion show greater opposition to assisted suicide. Republicans show the highest opposition, Democrats the lowest, and Independents fall in between. This pattern suggests that both abortion views and political ideology shape attitudes toward assisted suicide.