

TOWARDS A MORE “EUROPEAN” TOLERANCE? ATTITUDES  
ON CIVIL LIBERTIES USING THE GENERAL SOCIAL  
SURVEY, 1996-2016

Anna Boch  
PAPOR 2019

# Questions on civil liberties/political tolerance

## 6 Target Groups

- **Atheist:** "someone who is against all churches and religion"
- **Racist:** "someone who believes Blacks are genetically inferior"
- **Communist:** "a man who admits he is a communist"
- **Militarist** "someone who advocates doing away with elections and letting the military run the country"
- **Homosexual:** "a man who admits he is a homosexual"
- **Muslim extremist:** "a Muslim clergyman who preaches hatred of the United States"

## 3 Contexts

- **Teacher at a College:** "should such a person be allowed to teach in a college or university or not?"
- **Library:** "If some people in your community suggested that a book he wrote {about target group ideology} should be taken out of your public library, would you favor removing this book, or not?"
- **Speech:** "If such a person wanted to make a speech in your (city/town/community) about \_\_\_\_\_ should he be allowed to speak, or not?"

# How to measure political tolerance

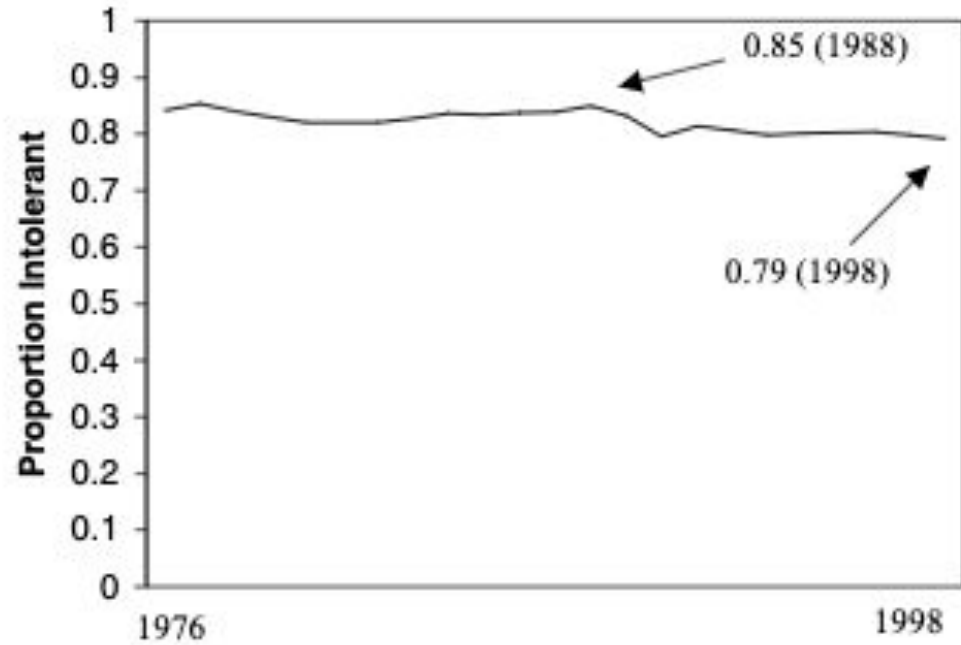
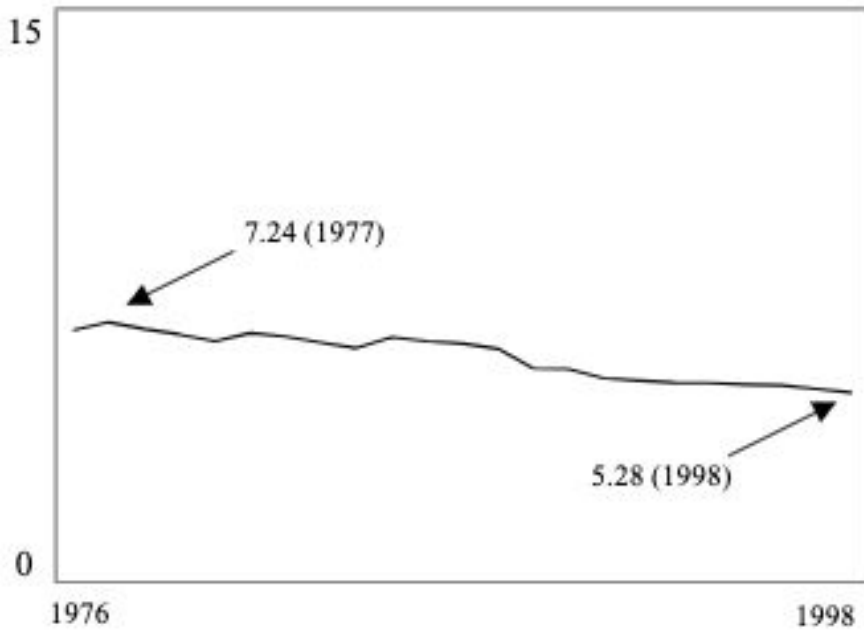
Index of civil liberties items

Dichotomous (all or nothing)

# Index

vs.

# Dichotomous

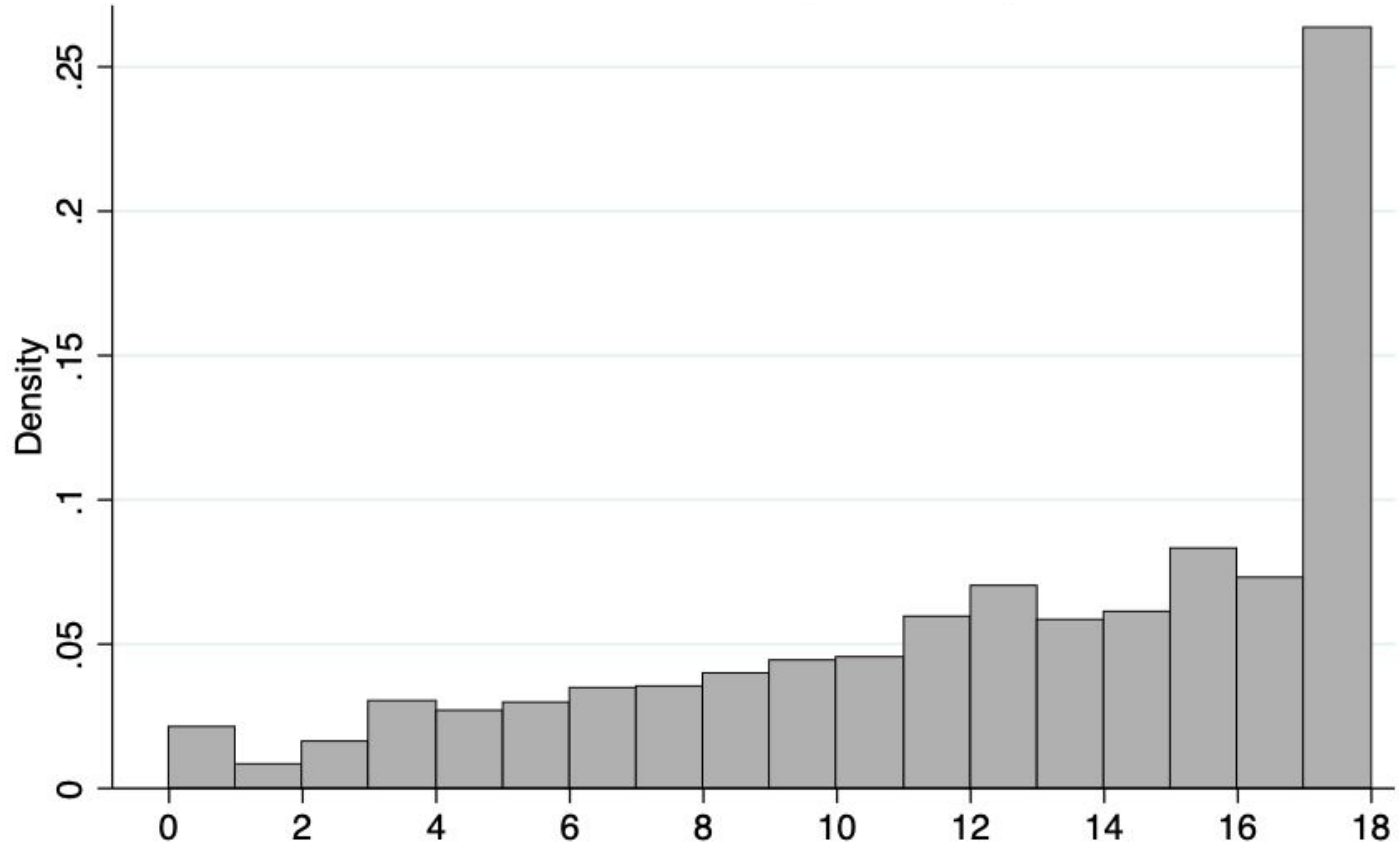


# New framework

Hate-speech-excluded dichotomous framework  
(excludes Racist and Muslim extremist)

*Contrafactual: If the United States had hate speech laws like nearly every other Western liberal democracy, this speech would be illegal.*

# Distribution of Total Number of 'Allow' Responses to GSS Civil Liberties Items, out of 18 possible



Source: General Social Survey, pooled 2016 and 2018

# What qualifies as hate speech?

Brigitte Bardot: "fed up with being under the thumb of this population [Muslims] which is destroying us, destroying our country and imposing its habits"

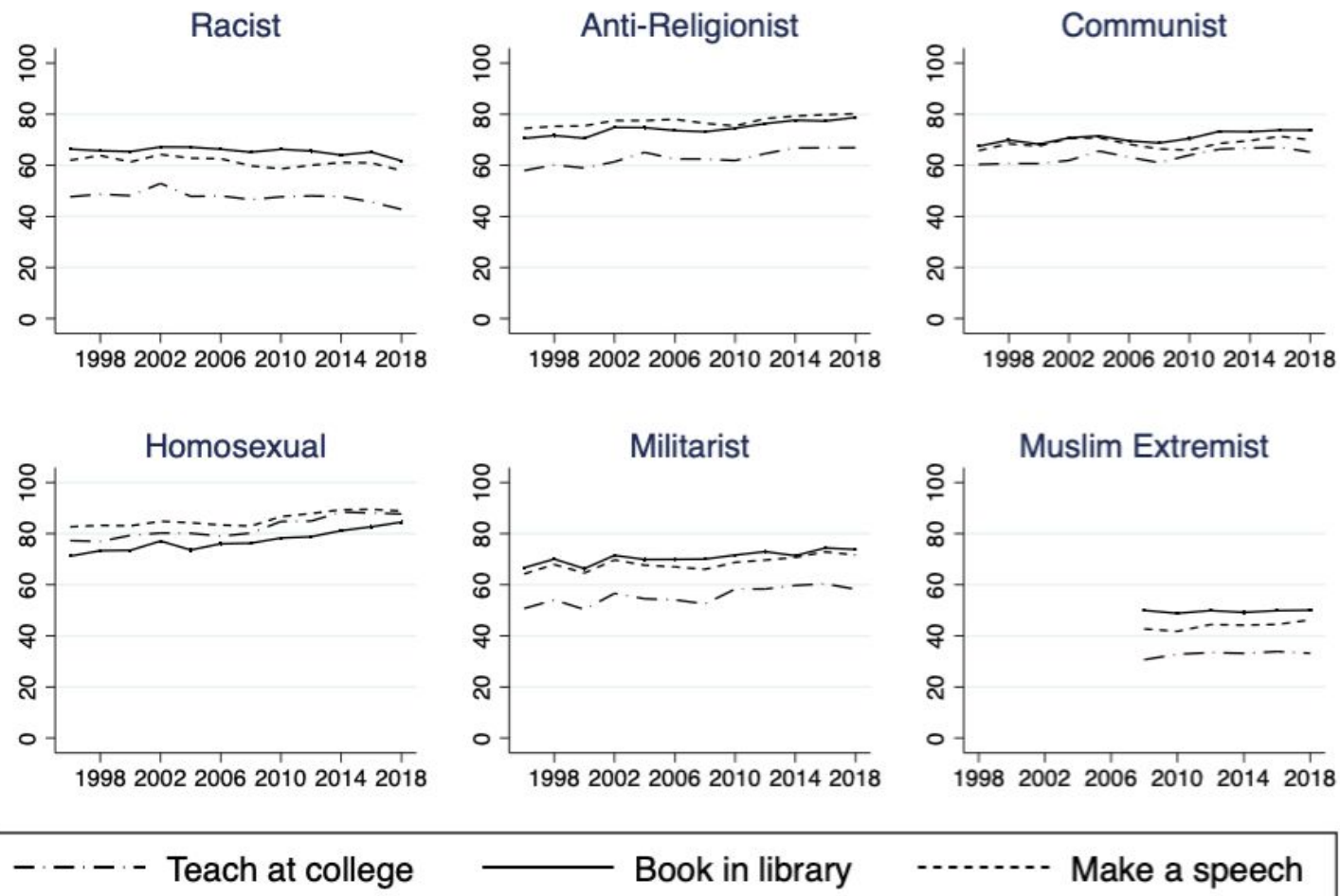
*Fined 15,000 euros*



# Results

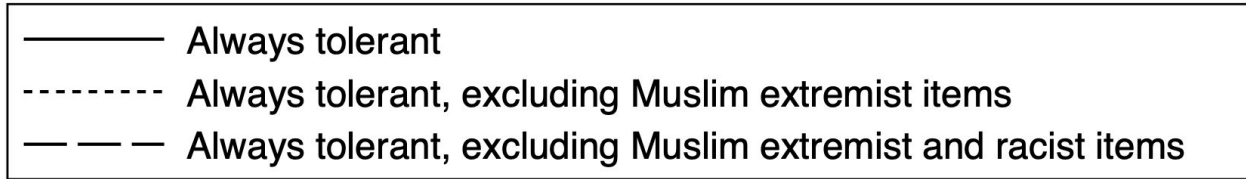
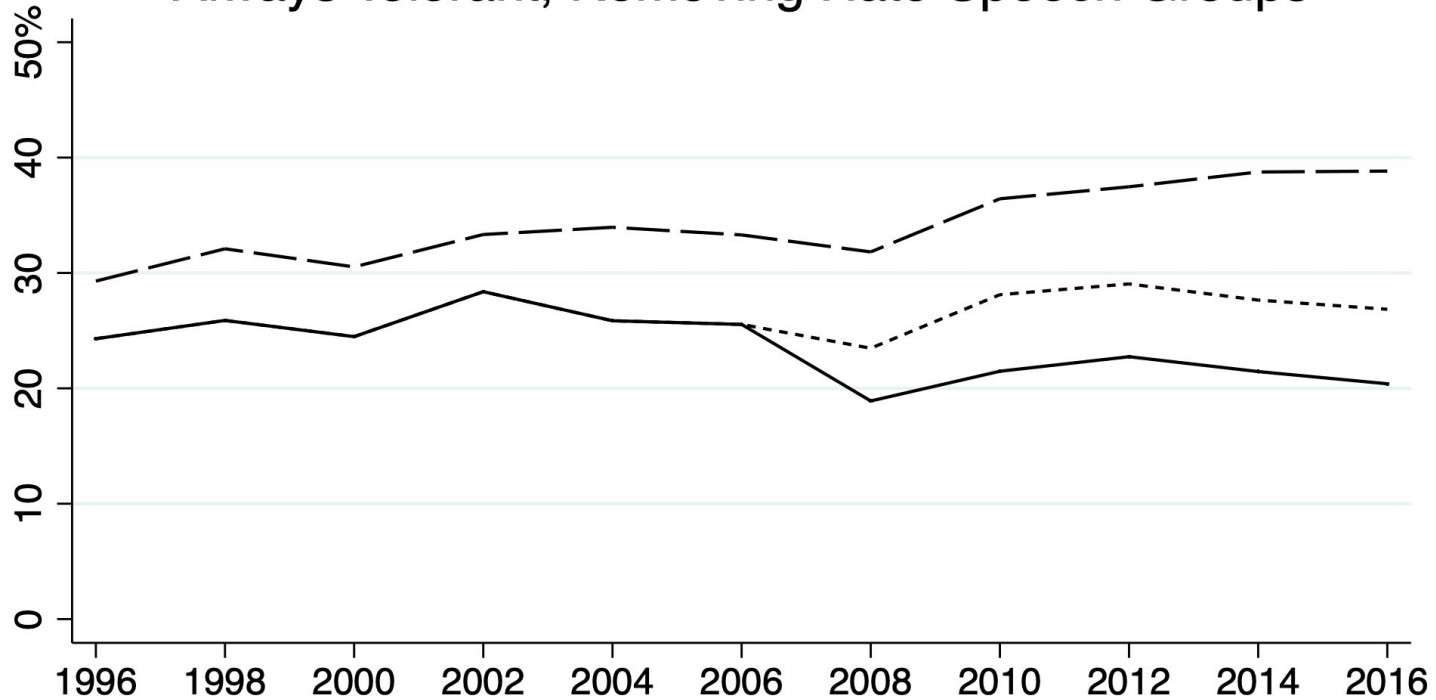


Figure 1: GSS Civil Liberties Items, % Should be allowed (1996-2018 cross-sectional)



# Hate Speech Framework

# Always Tolerant, Removing Hate Speech Groups



Source: General Social Survey

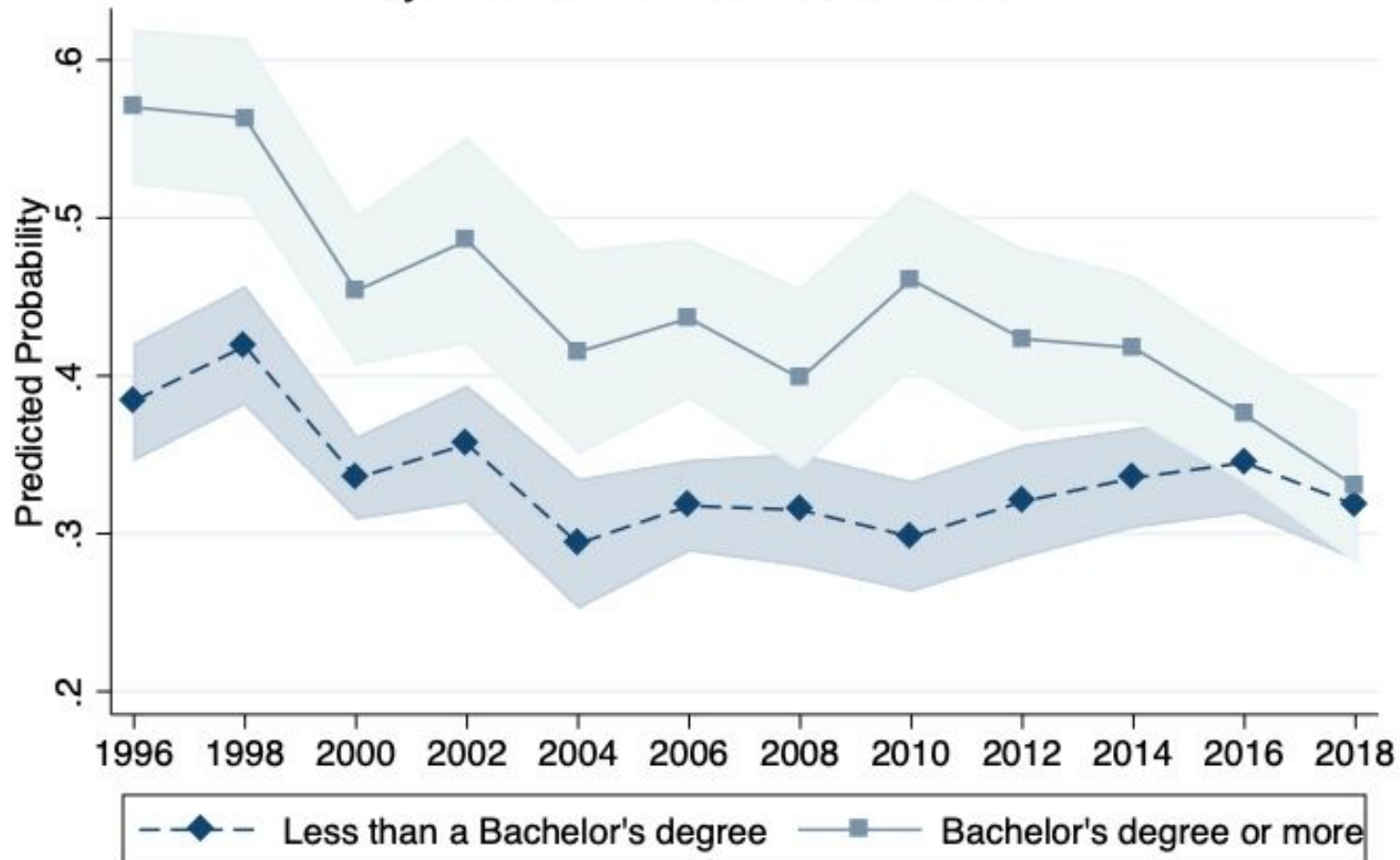
Predicted Probabilities of Being Tolerant of Racist (in all contexts: Teach, Give Speech, Write Book). Weighted. Presented as percentages.

	1996	2018
<i>Party ID</i>		
Democrats	37%	30%
Independents	39	37
Republicans	36	35
<i>Political ideology</i>		
Liberals	42	34
Moderates	35	31
Conservatives	35	35

Predicted Probabilities of Being Tolerant of Racist (in all contexts: Teach, Give Speech, Write Book). Weighted. Presented as percentages.

	1996	2018
<i>Sex</i>		
Male	42%	35%
Female	33	32
<i>Race</i>		
White	39	35
Black	30	36
<i>Education</i>		
Bachelor's +	51	36
Non-College	32	32

Figure 4: Predicted Probability Tolerant of Racist Target Group by Year and Education, 95% CIs



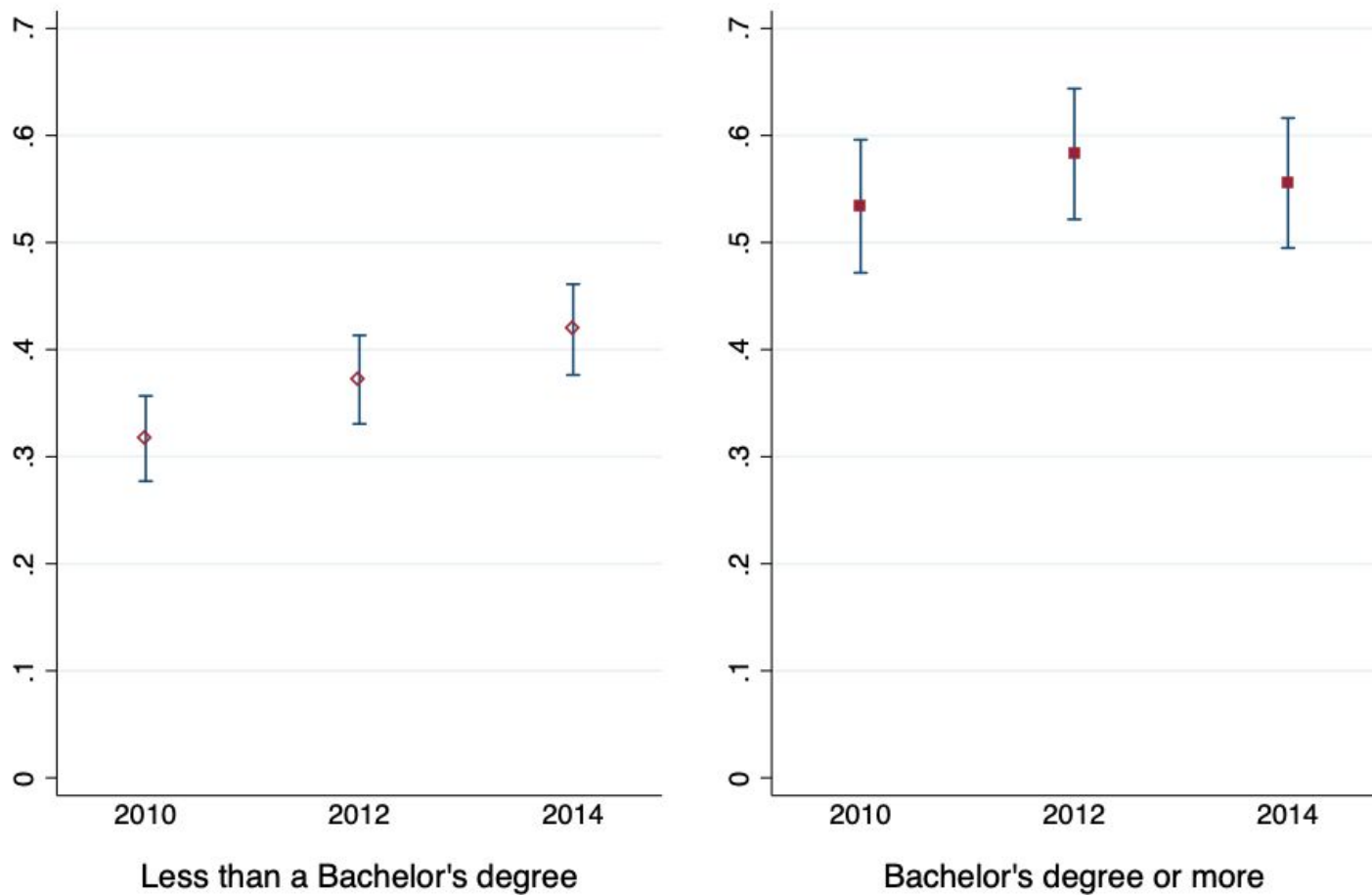
Who is going to college is changing

- More women, racial and ethnic minorities
- Cohort effect?

# GSS Panel Data, 2010-2014



Figure 5: Proportion Tolerant of Racist Target Group, GSS Panel 2010-2014



# Conclusions

- Proportion of Americans who are always tolerant of groups that do not use hate speech has increased by eight percentage points, from 29% to 37%, from 1996 to 2018
- Tolerance of groups that use hate speech has remained flat and even *decreased* among groups that historically were more tolerant of such groups, including the college educated, men, and liberals



Thank you.  
aeboch@stanford.edu