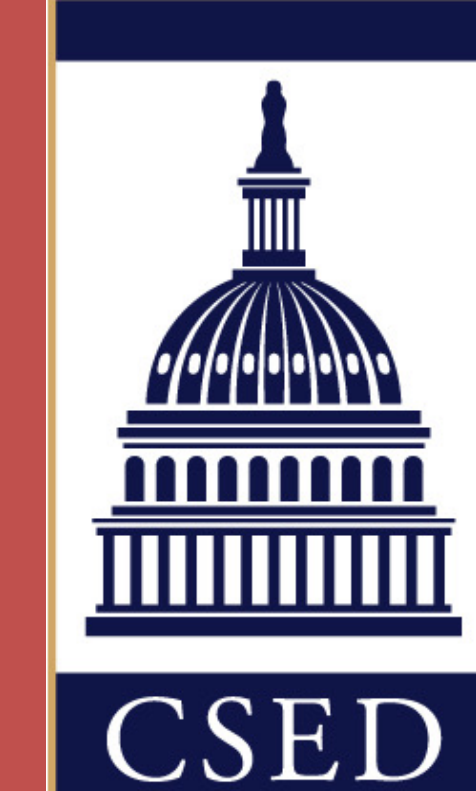


Ideologues in the Political Pipeline

Measuring the Ambition of Local Elected Officials

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- How much is polarization in government driven by the types of candidates that run?
- Does the prospect of higher office seem more attractive to local officials that are also strong ideologues?
- Danielle Thompson (2017) concluded that the polarization in Congress can be attributed to the fact that ideologically extreme state legislators are much more likely to run for Congress than their moderate colleagues.
- We were interested in examining whether the relationship between ideology and ambition is similar among local officials.

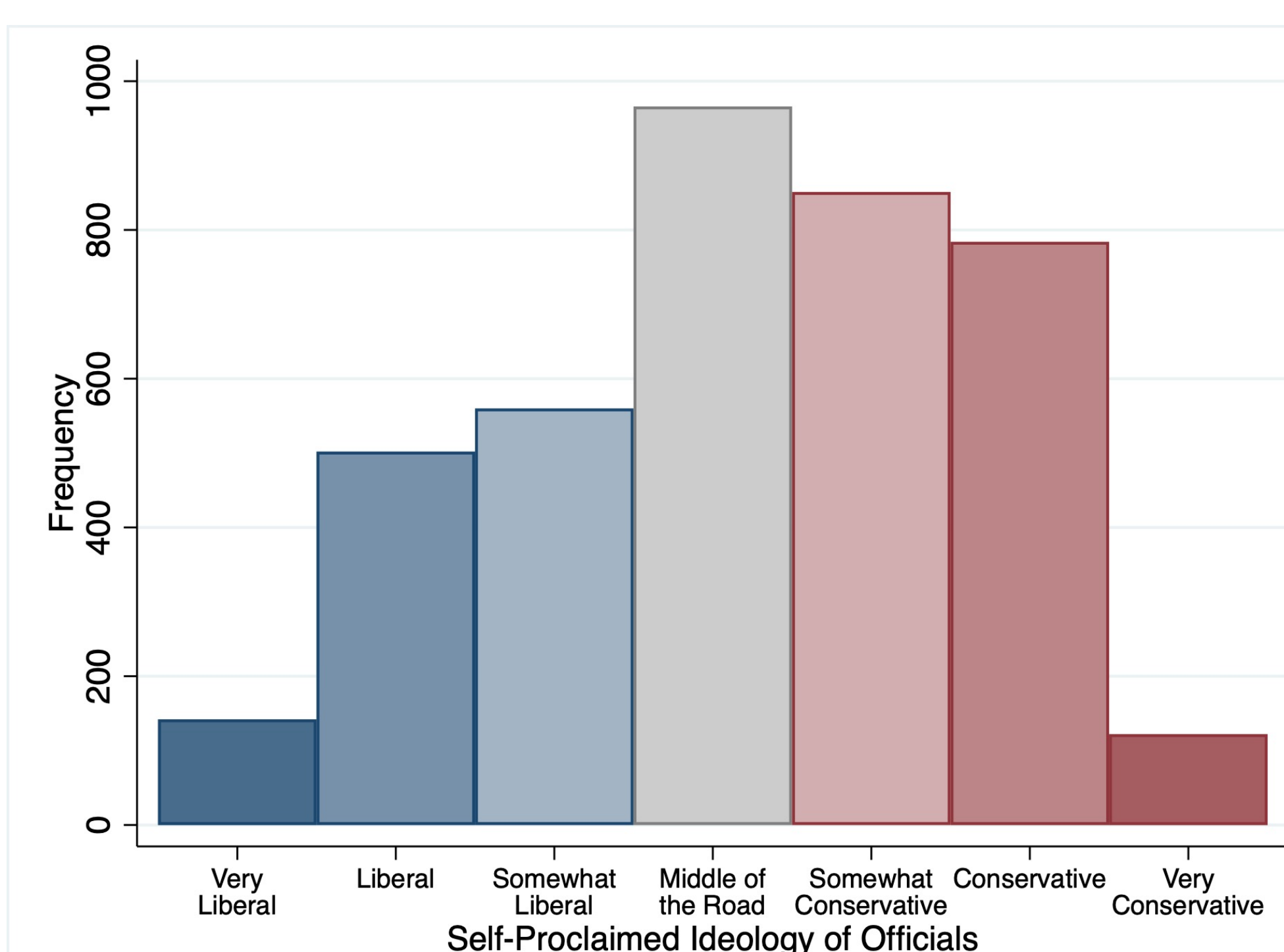
Hypotheses

- The ideological nature of state and national offices will lead strong ideologue local officials to be more willing to run for higher office.
- Local politics is typically non-ideological so ideological moderates should be more comfortable remaining in their positions.

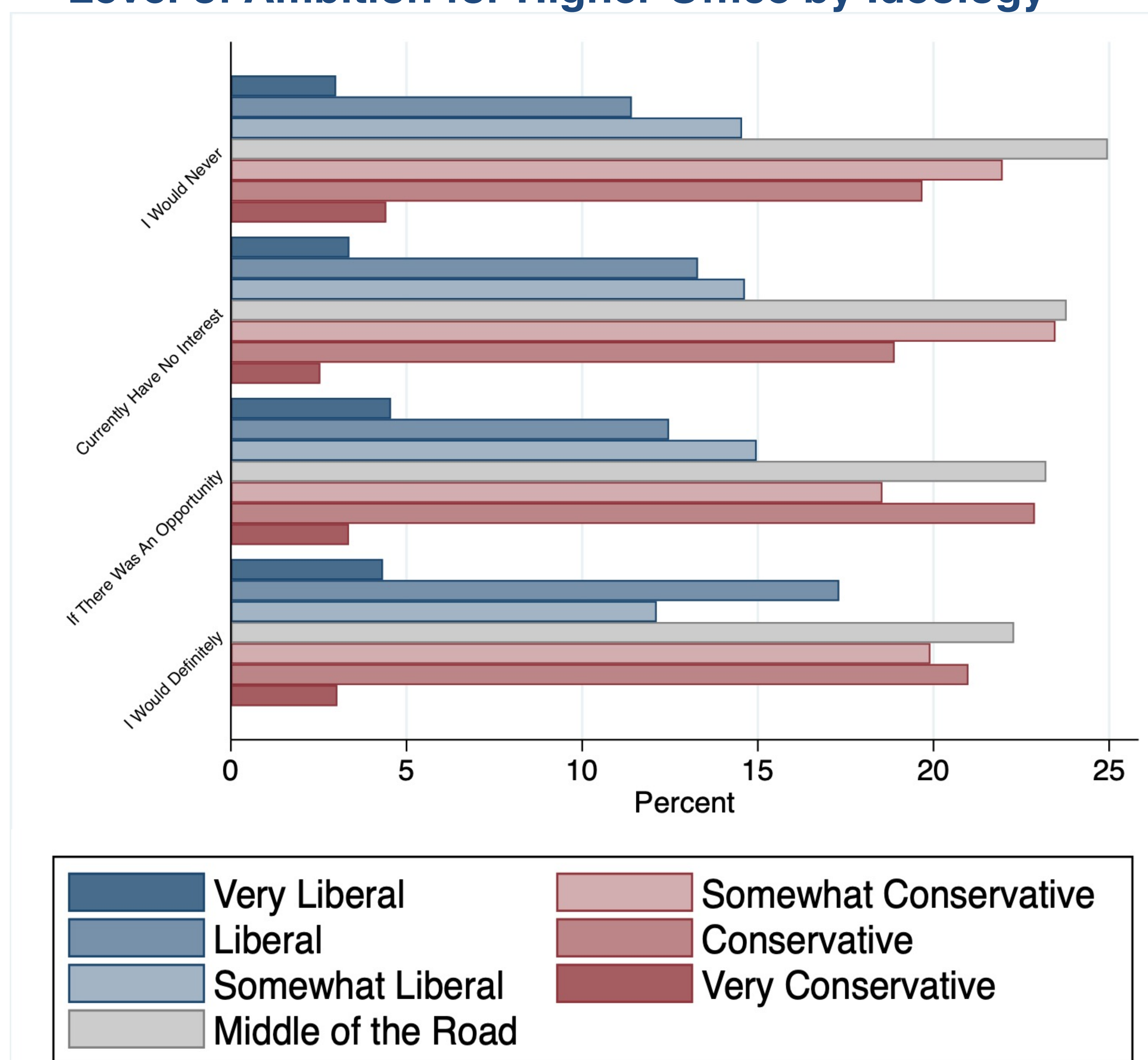
Data

- Data pulled from the 2016 wave of the American Municipal Official Survey (AMOS).
- The data represents a large sample of local government officials from municipalities nationwide (n = 3,927).

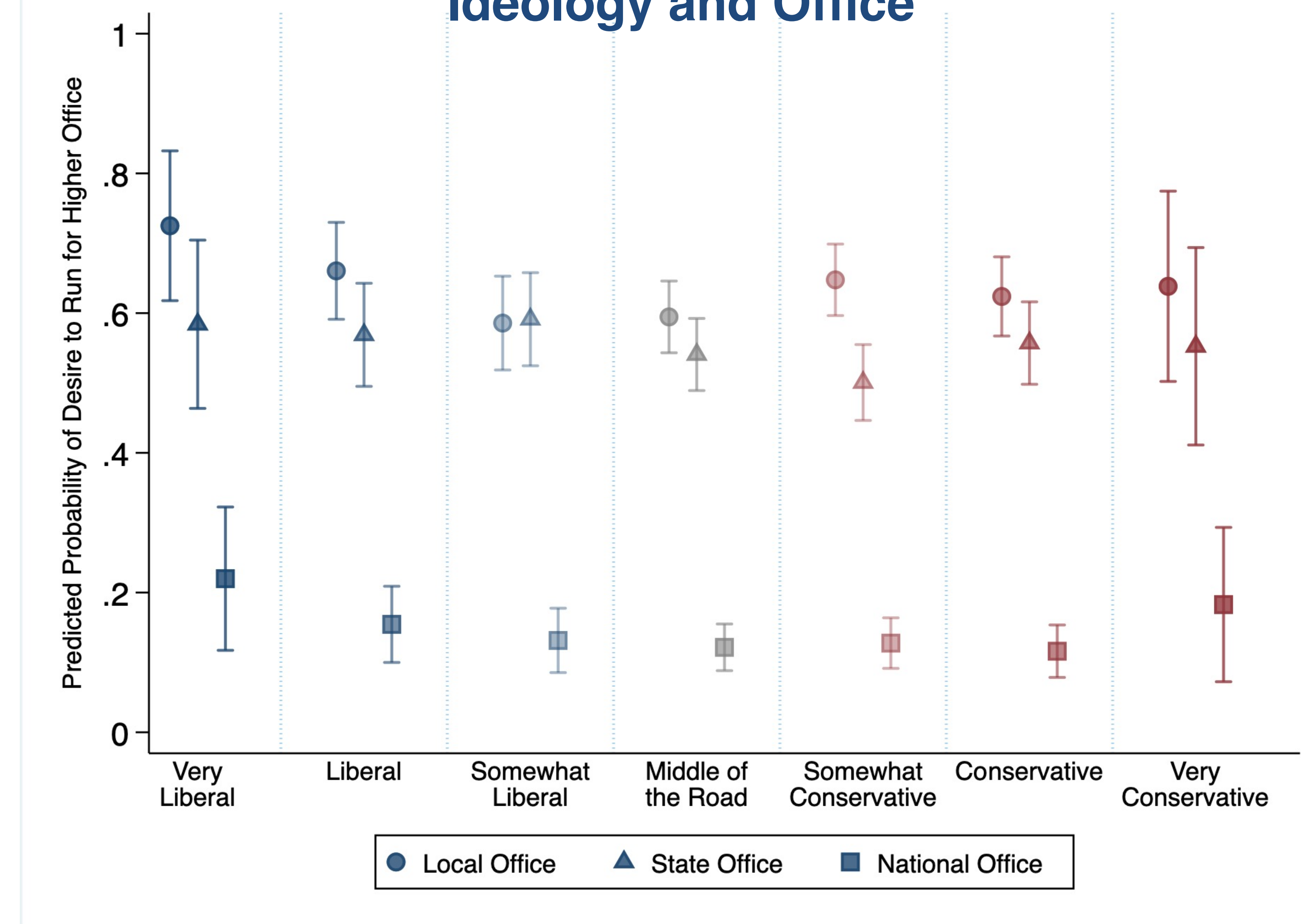
Distribution of Sample by Ideology



Level of Ambition for Higher Office by Ideology



Probability of a Desire to Run for Higher Office by Ideology and Office



Discussion

- A local official's ideology does not have much predictive power on their level of ambition for a higher office. There is some variation among ideologies, but no strong relationships.
- Higher local (i.e., Mayor or County office) and state offices are much more attractive to local officials than national offices, regardless of the official's ideology
 - But the very liberal and very conservative ideologies are statistically significant predictors of increased desire to run for national office when controlling for several other variables.*
- Local officials that consider themselves as Middle of the Road ideologically are much more fearful of enduring negative campaign ads and the negative career impact losing a campaign for higher office could bring.
- These results lead us to conclude that *this* part of the political pipeline is not polarized. Ambition among local officials does not spring from attachment to strong ideology.
 - This is different than what we have seen at the state and national level (Thompson 2017).
 - It still might be the case that strong ideologues are more likely to win elections for higher office, however.

*Predicted margins drawn from logit regression models that also control for party ID, election competitiveness, form of local government, city population and demographics, partisan elections, tenure, term limits, and the perceived probability that the respondent could win a campaign for higher office in their state.

Reasons not to Run for Higher Office by Ideology

