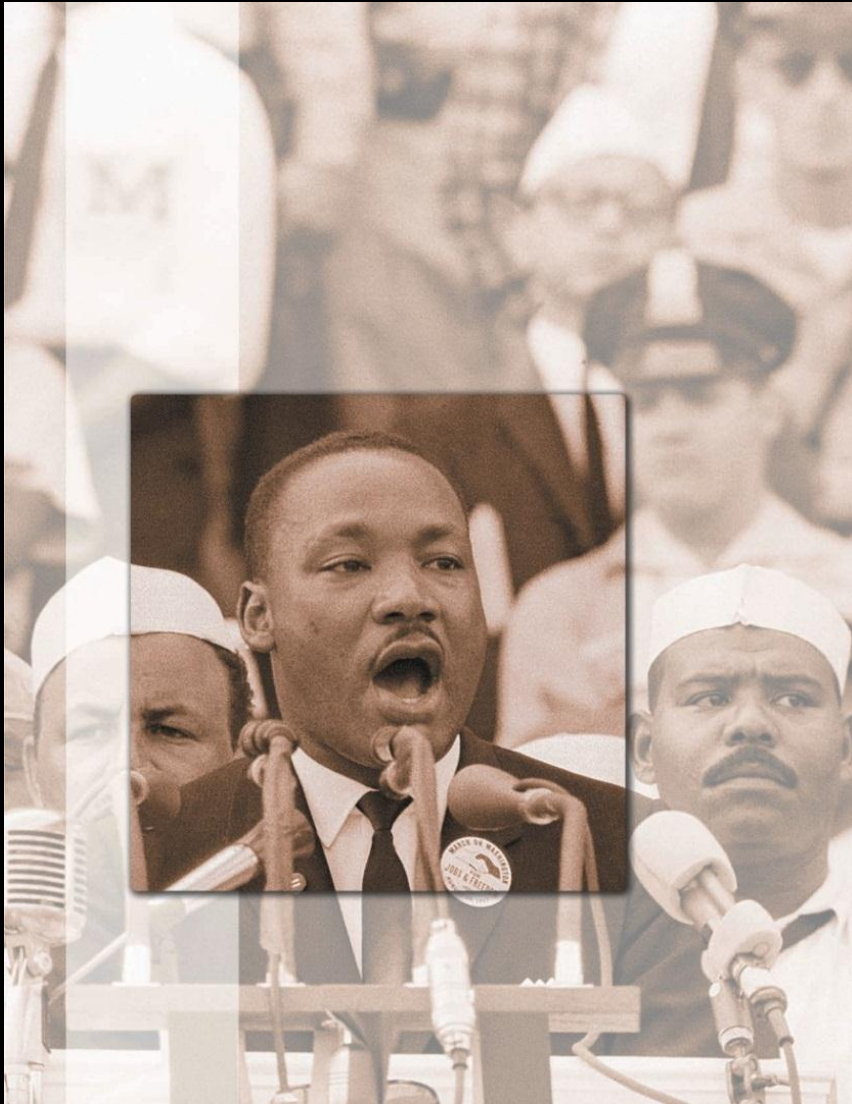


Political Culture and Ideology



- Defining the American Political Culture
- Political Ideology and Attitudes Toward Government
- Political Ideology and the American People

Defining the American Political Culture

- Many American citizens' first experience with democracy is a school election, sometimes as early as in elementary school.
- Political scientists use the term political culture to refer to the widely shared beliefs, values, and norms citizens hold about their relationship to government and to one another.
- American political culture centers on democratic values.

Defining the American Political Culture

Shared Values

- Before the American and French Revolutions discussions about individual liberty, freedom, equality, private property, limited government, and popular consent were rare.
- The founders of our nation claimed that individuals have certain **natural rights**.
- During this same period the economic system was changing from a *mercantile system* to a *free market system*.

Defining the American Political Culture

Shared Values

- Liberty
- Equality
- Individualism
- Respect for the Common Person
- Democratic Consensus
- Justice and the Rule of Law
- Patriotism, Optimism, and Idealism

Defining the American Political

Where We Learn the American Political Culture

- Family
- Public schools
- Colleges and universities
- Churches

Defining the American Political Culture

The American Dream

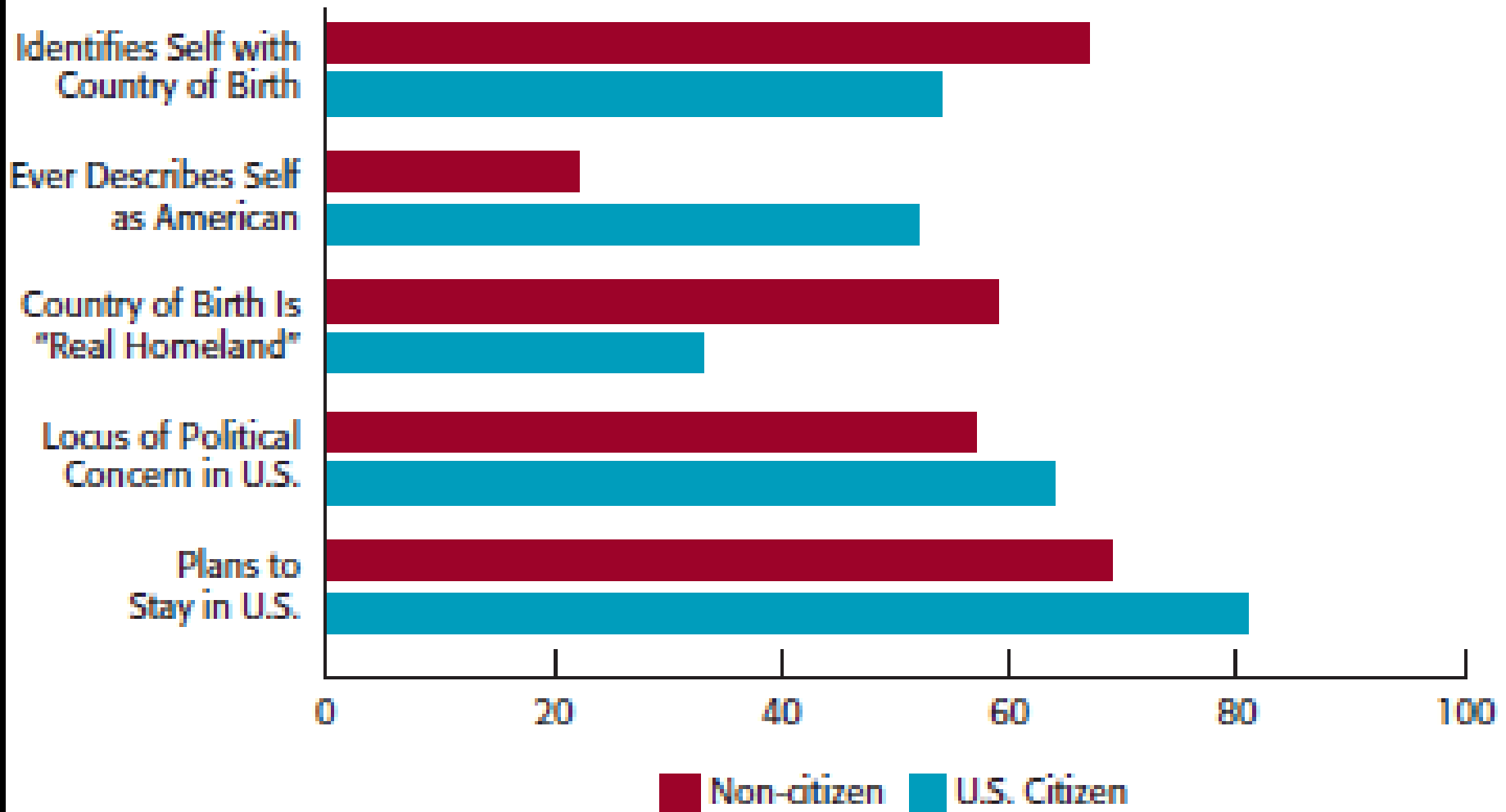
- Many of our political values come together in the **American dream**.
- The right to private property is only one of the economic incentives that cement our support for capitalism and fuel the American dream.
- Values can be in conflict.
- As important as the American dream is as an aspiration, it remains unfulfilled.

Defining the American Political Culture

Political and Economic Change

- The Industrial Transformation
- The Great Depression and the New Deal

Identity and Citizenship Status (Percent Foreign-Born Latinos)



SOURCE: Used by permission of The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press.

Political Ideology and Attitudes Toward Government

- **Political ideology:** a consistent pattern of ideas or beliefs about political values and the role of government
- Major ideologies that dominate American politics:
 - **Liberalism**
 - **Conservatism**
- Other ideologies in American politics:
 - **Socialism**
 - **Communism**
 - **Libertarianism**

Political Ideology and Attitudes Toward Government

Liberalism and Conservatism



- **Liberalism:** a belief that government should achieve justice and equality of opportunity
- **Conservatism:** a belief that limited government ensures order, competitive markets, and personal opportunity

Political Ideology and Attitudes Toward Government

Liberalism and Conservatism (cont.)

- **Traditional conservatives:** emphatically pro-business
- **Social conservatives:** focus less on economics and more on morality and lifestyle

Political Ideology and Attitudes Toward Government

Criticisms of Liberalism

- It relies too much on government, higher taxes, and bureaucracy to solve the nation's problems.
- Reliance on government can destroy individualism.

Political Ideology and Attitudes Toward Government

Criticisms of Conservatism

- Focus on deregulation has not always worked: economic collapse in 2008.
- Conservatives favor more government action on their issues but not on the issues of others.
- Some conservatives fail to endorse policies that deal with racism and sexism.

Political Ideology and Attitudes Toward Government

Socialism and Communism

- **Socialism:** An economic and governmental system based on public ownership of the means of production and exchange.
- **Communism:** A political, social, and economic system in which land and capital are collectively owned and political power is exercised by the masses.

Political Ideology and Attitudes Toward Government

Libertarianism

- **Libertarianism:** cherishes individual liberty, minimal government, a free market economy, noninterventionist foreign policy, and an absence of regulation in moral, economic, and social life.



TABLE

4-3 Differences in Political Ideology

	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal	Don't Know/Haven't Thought About It
Sex				
Male	39%	23%	20%	18%
Female	31	24	22	23
Race				
White	39	24	21	17
Black	18	21	22	39
Asian	20	26	36	18
Hispanic	22	25	20	32
Age				
18-34	26	24	28	23
35-45	36	26	17	20
46-55	37	23	19	20
56-64	38	21	26	15
Religion				
Protestant	45	18	16	15
Catholic	31	28	18	23
Jewish	26	12	63	0
Education				
Less than high school	25	20	14	42
High school diploma	29	27	11	33
Some college	38	25	22	15
Bachelor's degree	42	21	32	5
Advanced degree	45	14	39	3
Party				
Democrat	13	27	37	23
Independent	14	35	11	40
Republican	70	15	5	11

This table displays how ideology is correlated to sex, race, age, religion, education, and political party. ■ *In which factors do you see the strongest and weakest correlations, and how might you account for that?*

SOURCE: Center for Political Studies, University of Michigan, 2008 American National Election Study Guide to Public Opinion and Electoral Behavior.

TABLE**4-2 Attitudes About Business and Labor**

	Percentage Agreeing
There is too much power concentrated in the hands of a few big companies.	77%
The strength of this country is mostly based on the success of American business.	76
Labor unions are necessary to protect the working person.	61
Government regulation of business usually does more harm than good.	54
Business corporations generally strike a fair balance between making profits and serving the public interest.	37

■ *In what ways do you see these views being reflected in specific public policies or current policy debates in the news?*

SOURCE: Used by permission of The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. *Trends in Political Values and Core Attitudes: 1987–2009; and INDEPENDENTS TAKE CENTER STAGE IN OBAMA ERA*, May 21, 2009, <http://people-press.org/report/517/political-values-and-core-attitudes> (accessed December 4, 2009).

Political Ideology and Attitudes Toward Government

A Word of Caution

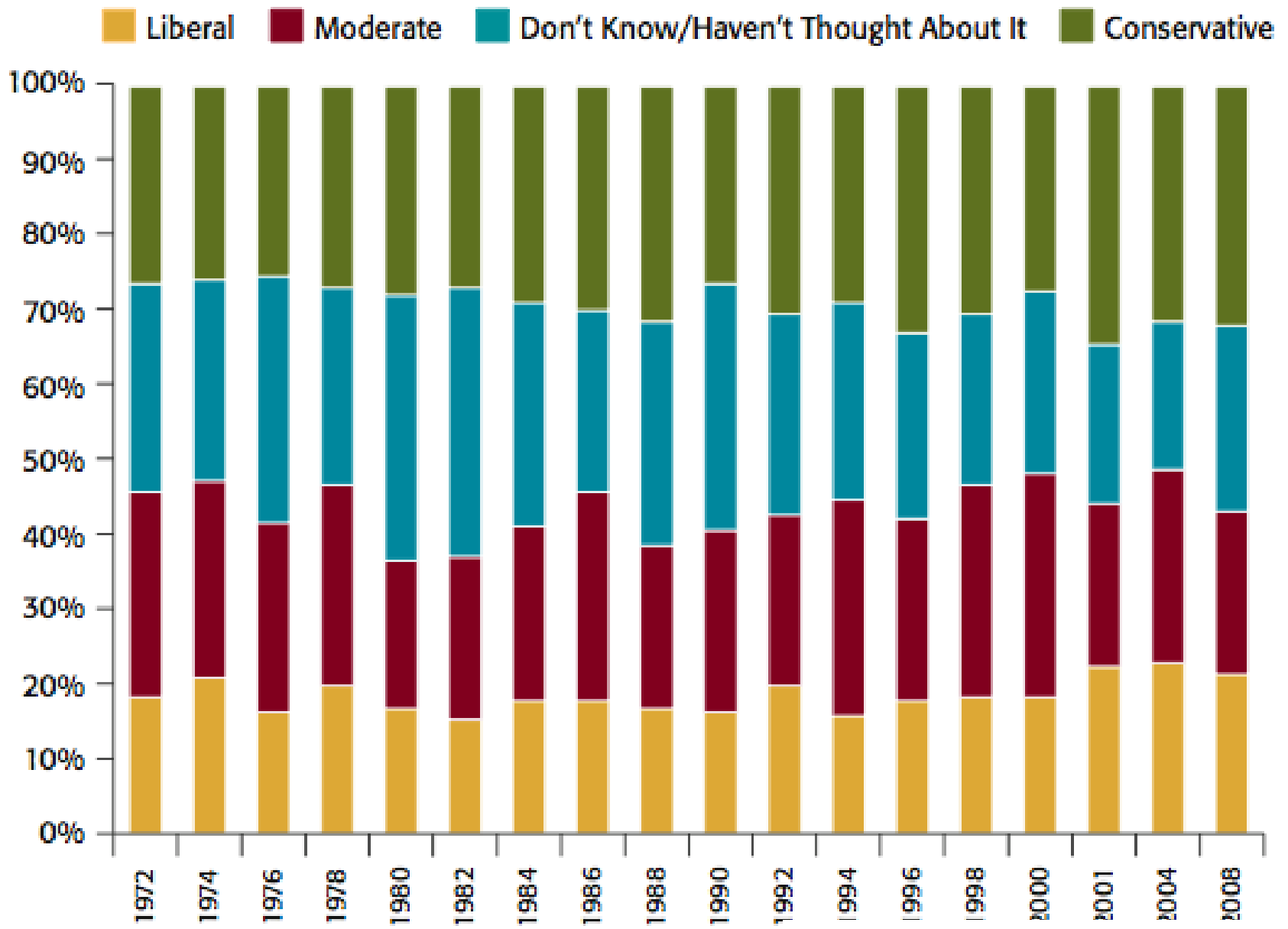
- Political labels have different meanings.
- Ideology both causes events and is affected by them.
- Unlike in 2000 and 2004, the 2008 election produced a winner with a large enough majority in the popular vote and electoral college to claim a mandate.

Political Ideology and the American People

- Ideology has economic, social/lifestyle, environmental, civil rights/civil liberties, and foreign/defense policy dimensions.
- In the United States, most people are moderates or report not knowing whether they are liberal or conservative.
- The absence of widespread and solidified liberal and conservative positions in the United States makes for politics and policymaking processes that are markedly different from those in most nations.

Political Ideology and the American People

- Policy making in this country is characterized more by ad hoc coalitions than by fixed alignments that pit one set of ideologies against another.
- This does not mean that policies or ideas are not important in American politics.
- Ideologies have consequences.



SOURCE: Center for Political Studies, University of Michigan, 2008 American National Election Study.

FIGURE 4-2 Ideology over Time.

What factors might account for the stability in Americans' ideology over time?

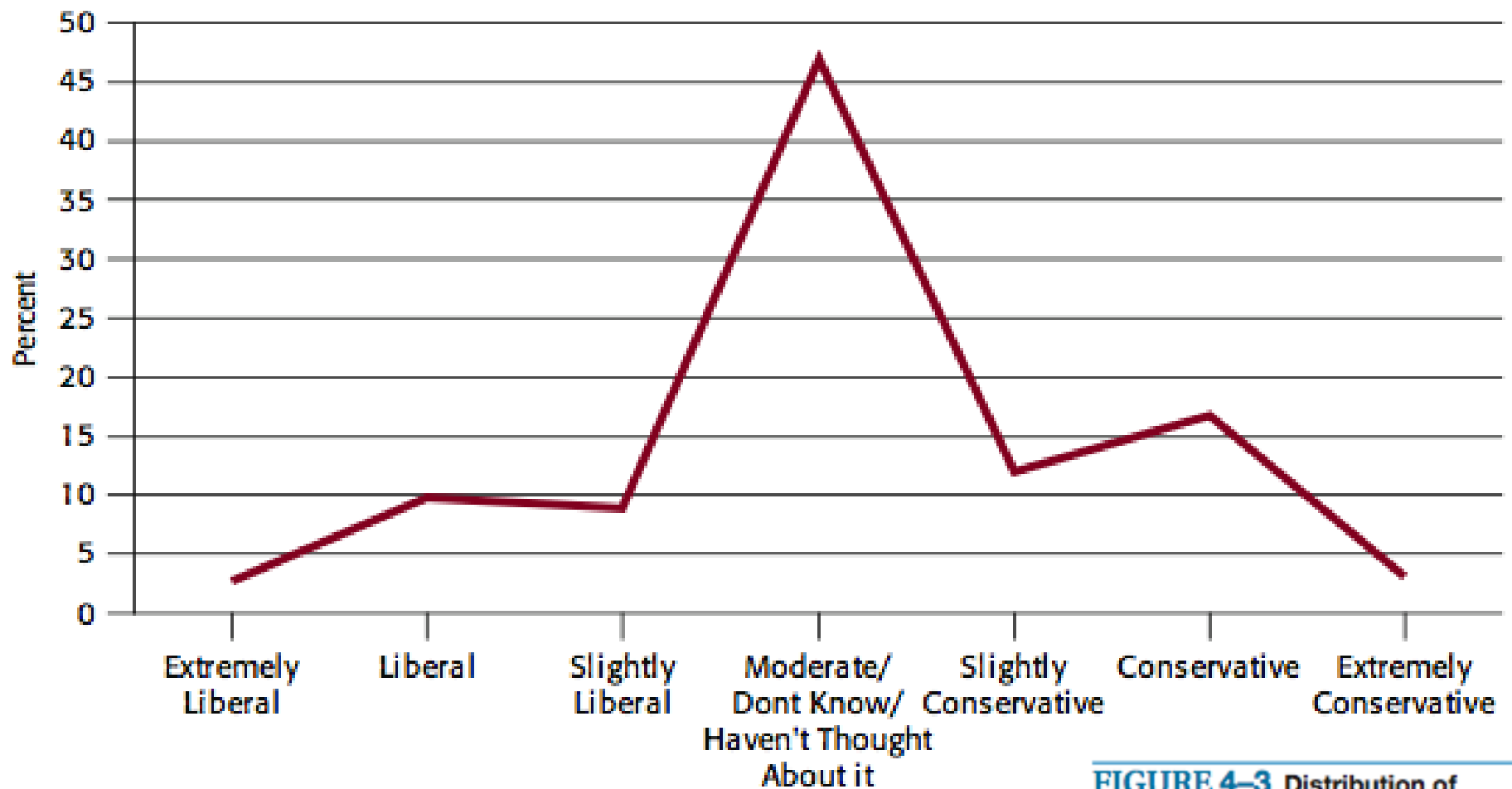


FIGURE 4-3 Distribution of Ideology in the United States.

■ How does the ideology of the American people compare to that of American politicians and pundits? In what ways might this difference matter?

SOURCE: Center for Political Studies, University of Michigan, 2008 American National Election Study.