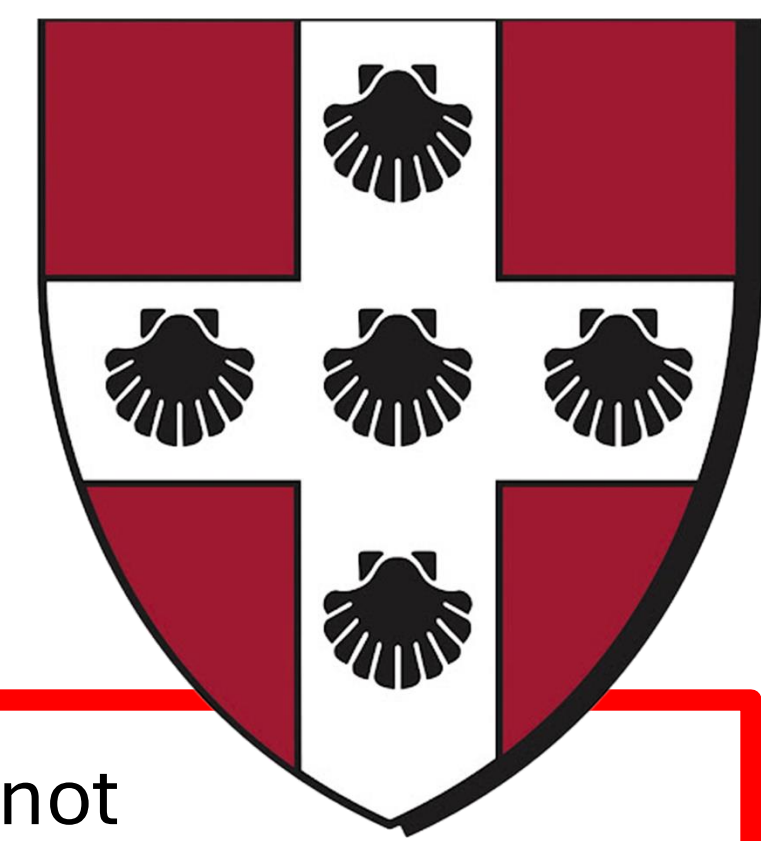




The association between political leaning and voter turnout.

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Introduction

- A crucial component of political participation is voter registration, for it is a foundational step in the democratic process. Registration serves as a gateway into participation in elections. Since individuals cannot cast a vote without being registered first, so the factors influencing registration are essential to explain the overall patterns of civil engagement.
- Most of the literature is related to registration barriers and their influence on the political engagement. In the United states specifically, the most significant barrier to turnout is voter registration requirements, as registration tends to be a better predictor of political participation than just political interest (Highton, 2004).
- Political participation is very different in democracies across the world, and previous research suggests that both structural and psychological factors are key in shaping voter behavior. Comparative studies show that voter turnout is influenced by party polarization and registration design (Crepaz, 1990).
- Party polarization in the U.S. is very high as of late, and this would go to show a higher voter turnout due to the drastic differences between candidates. Which may show a relation between political leaning and voter registration.

Research Questions

- To what extent is political leaning related to 2020 voter registration, and what happens to this relationship once 2016 registration status and family income level are included in the model?
- Does being registered to vote in the 2016 presidential election statistically impact the odds of being registered in the 2020 election and would this change if compared to other socioeconomic factors.

Methods

Sample

- U.S. adults that are eligible to vote in the 2020 presidential election who reported their own political leaning, family income, if they were registered to vote or not, and if they were registered to vote in 2016 (n=8,280). The data was drawn from the American National Election Studies
- ANES is a nationally representative sample of able to vote individuals in the U.S.

Measures

- Voter registration outcomes in 2020 and 2016 were measured by an on-paper interview before the election, with the question, “Does R intend to register to vote?” .
- Political leaning was measured on a self ranking scale of 1-7 with 1 being very liberal, 7 being very conservative, and 4 being neutral, which was then changed into only 3 outcomes of just liberal, neutral, and conservative.
- Family income was measured in the paper interview in a self-reported scale that was simplified into 4 groups, each 25% of the total.

Results

Univariate

- A total of 53% of participants in the interview were not planning to register to vote, and 47% were planning on it.
- Only a quarter, 25.77% of participants reported they were neutral, 35.39% reported they were liberal, and 38.85 reported that they were conservative.

Bivariate

- Chi-square analysis showed that the political leaning of an individual does not significantly impact the chance to be registered. $X^2 = 3.7022$, $p = 0.157$.
- As expected, the chi-square analysis of the variable, voted in 2016 found that there was a significant relationship to registration to vote in the 2020 election. $X^2 = 18.2119$, and $p = 0.000$.

Multivariate

- When entered into a multivariate logistic regression, political ideology and family income remained insignificantly related to the response variable, voter registration.
 - After controlling for family income and registration in 2016, political leaning did meaningfully change the chance of being registered. (Figure 1).
 - Family income did show some small descriptive differences by income level, but it did not urn out to be a significant relationship.
- The most significant predictor of voter registration in this analysis would be previous registration. In a predicted probabilities regression, it was found that individuals who were registered to vote in 2016 were much more likely to be registered in 2020. (Figure 2).

Figure 1:

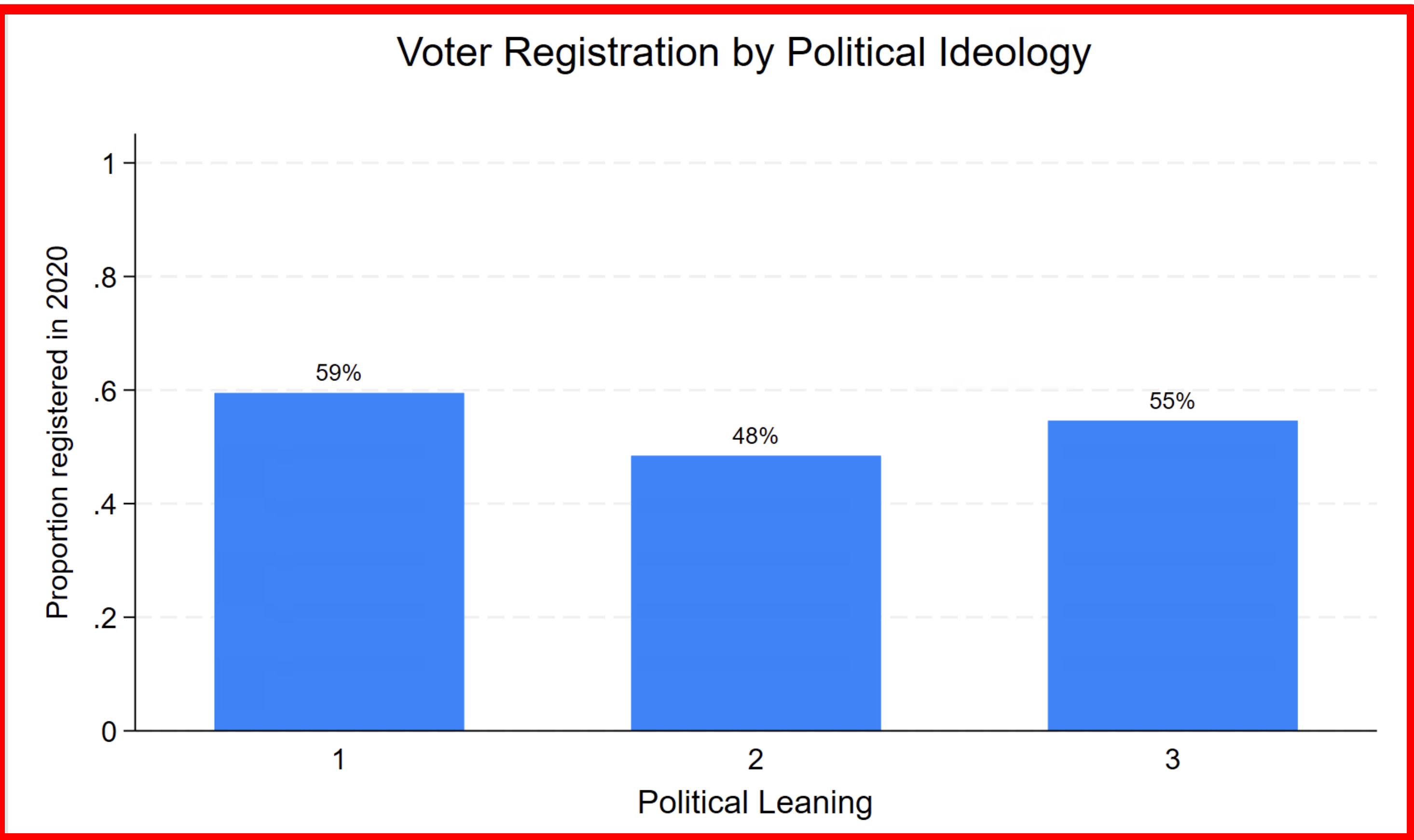
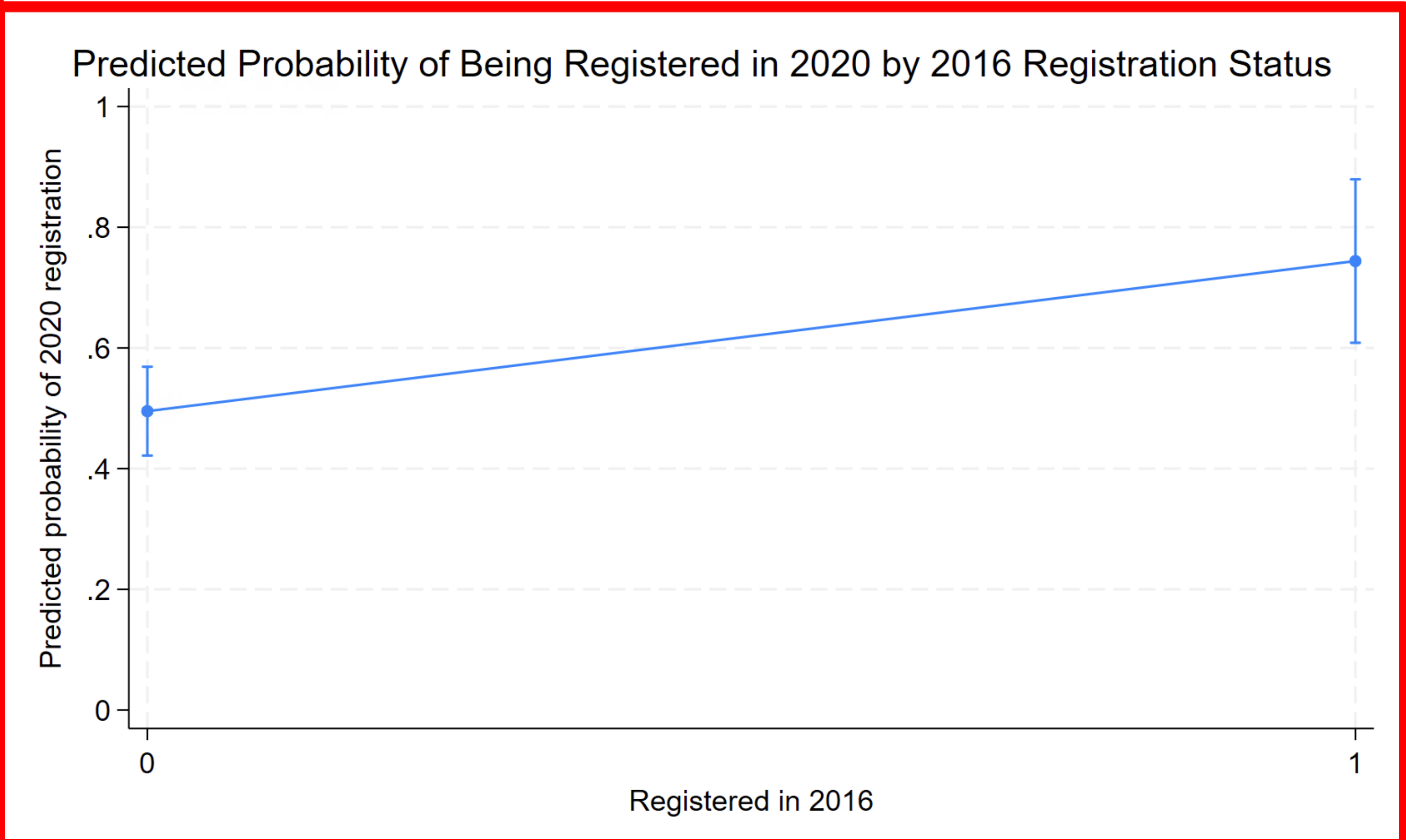


Figure 2:



Discussion

- Political ideology and income do not contribute to the chances of being registered to vote in 2020.
- The strongest predictive value in this study was the variable voted in 2016, suggesting that voting habits are relatively stable across at least this election cycle.
- Ideologically extreme individuals may seem to be more engaged politically, but this relationship is not meaningful statistically.
- Future research could be conducted to examine whether these patterns extend to actual voter turnout, rather than just registration. On top of this, the effects of access to resources or information can cancel out some of the effects of income or ideology.

References

- Crepaz, M. M. (1990). The impact of party polarization and postmaterialism on voter turnout: A comparative study of 16 industrial democracies. *European Journal of Political Research*, 18(2), 183-205.
- Highton, B. (2004). Voter Registration and Turnout in the United States. *Perspectives on Politics*, 2(3), 507-515. doi:10.1017/S1537592704040307