



The Relationship Between Class and Support for Violent Policing Methods in the United States

Silas Cash, Applied Data Analysis, Wesleyan University



Introduction

- Within the last decade, American domestic policing has undergone an alarming reconceptualization as immense quantities of decommissioned or surplus military equipment makes its way into the civilian world (Ramey, 2019).
- Militarized LEAs (Law Enforcement Agencies) adopt more aggressive policies toward citizens with negligible improvements in domestic security (Burkhardt and Baker, 2019).
- **Gap in Literature:** Existing scholarship has focused on race and political affiliation as primary indicators of support for violent policing, neglecting the role of class (Johnson, 2009; Welch et al., 2023; Kappmeier and Fahey, 2022).

Research Questions

- Are wealthier Americans more likely to support more aggressive policing than those who are less wealthy?
- Does this relationship differ between those with different political beliefs?

Methods

Sample

- Respondents (n=4,032) were drawn from the General Social Survey (GSS) of 2021, a nationally representative sample of non-institutionalized adults in the U.S. who speak either English or Spanish.

Measures

- Participants' total family income was measured with the question "In which of these groups did your total [pre-tax] family income, from all sources, fall last year?" Participants' total family incomes were rated on a scale of 1 (under \$1000) to 27 (over \$170,000)
- Participants' support for violent policing methods was measured dichotomously with the question "Are there any situations you can imagine in which you would approve of a police officer striking an adult male citizen"

Results

Bivariate

- Chi-Square analysis showed that support for abusive policing **was** significantly associated with summarized 27 economic ratings independently ($p < 0.001$).
- Respondents making \$170,000 or more were most supportive of aggressive policing methods (Fig. 1).

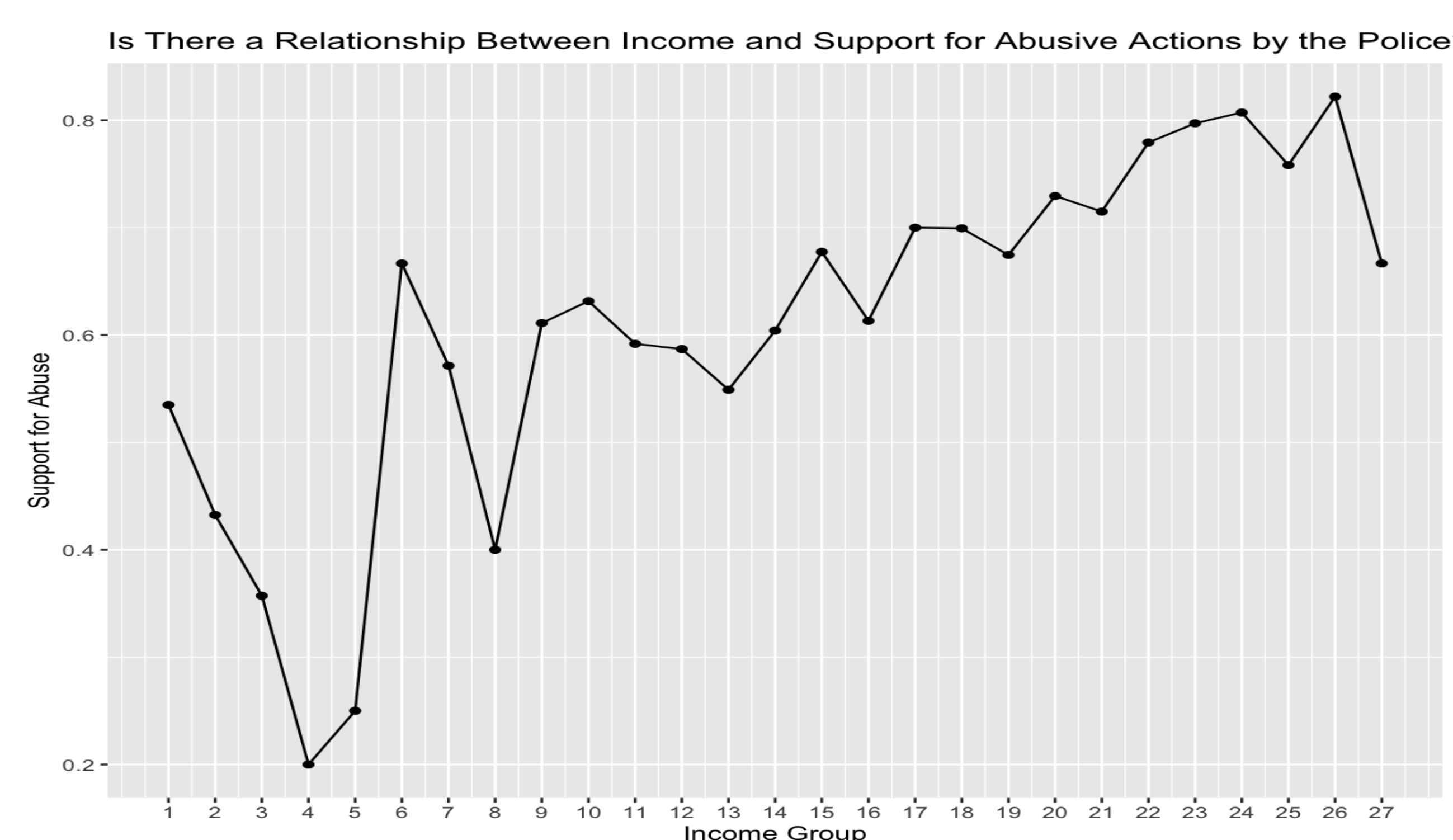


Figure 1: The Proportion of Support for Violent Policing in Each Income Group

Support for Violent Policing Methods by Income and Political Views

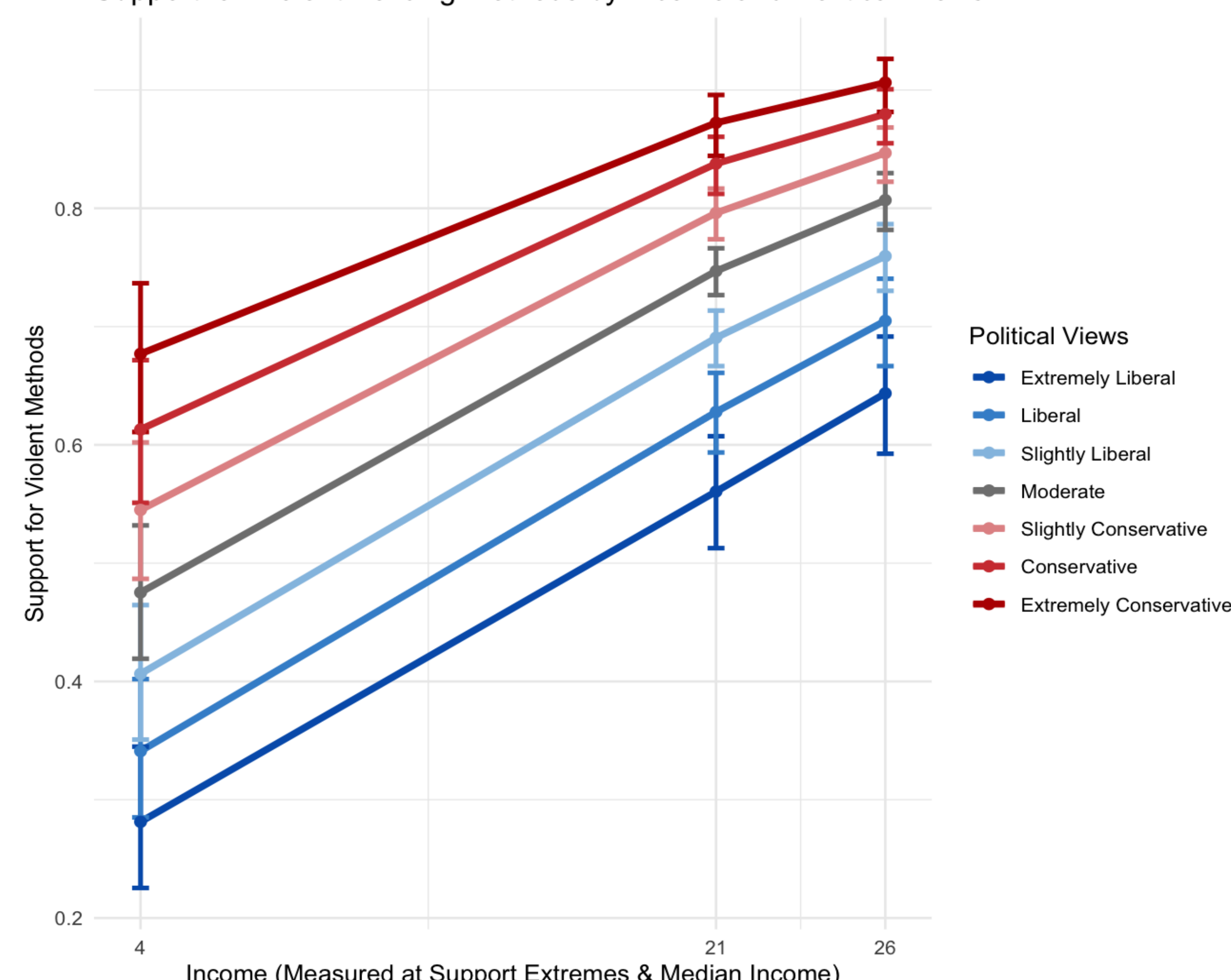


Figure 2: Likelihood of Support for Violent Policing by Political Group Based On Total Family Income

Multivariate

- Logistic regression analyses reveal that higher total family income (OR 1.07; CI: 1.056-1.088) and more conservative political views (OR 1.323; CI: 1.244-1.407) were associated with support for aggressive policing methods.
- For every incremental shift toward extreme conservatism, the odds of a respondent supporting violent policing methods.
- In the absence of a significant moderating effect, a respondent's political beliefs has a stronger positive effect (OR: 1.323) than income (OR: 1.07)

- Participants rated their political belief on a scale of 1 (extremely liberal) to 7 (extremely conservative)

Discussion

- As total family income increases, likelihood of support for violent policing methods increases across all political orientations.
- Conservatives are more likely, however, to support such policies than liberals.
- These findings may contribute to political science research on American attitudes about law enforcement issues.
- Further studies must include a larger sample size and collect precise income data beyond \$170,000.

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