



The Association between Political Ideology and Political Engagement among Different Household Incomes

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Introduction

- Opposing parties commonly accuse one another of political ignorance. This has created a highly partisan society which has led, and will continue, to lead, to civil unrest (Feldman, Hart, Leiserowitz, Maibach, & Roser-Renouf, 2015; Rainie, Smith, Schlozman, Brady & Verba, 2012).
- The higher an individual's interest in politics, the stronger their political opinions and ideology (Keene, Shoenberger, Berke, & Bolls, 2017).
- Economic drivers have a positive correlation with an individual's access to media and other political minded individuals (Rohe & Stegman, 1994).
- There is evidence that moderate individuals often consume less media as a result of frustration with the lack of non-partisan news sources (Keene, Shoenberger, Berke, & Bolls, 2017).
- It is unclear whether media is driving an individual's ideology or whether it is the outcome of their beliefs and preferences (Galston, 2001).

Research Questions

- Are politically engaged individuals more likely to have a specific political ideology?
- Is that relationship consistent across different household income levels?

Methods

Sample

- Respondents (n=2,294) were drawn from the 2012 Outlook on Life Survey (OLS), a nationally representative sample of English-speaking, non-institutionalized adults in the U.S with access to a computer and an internet connection.

Measures

- Political engagement was assessed using the sum of two questions. The first response was coded on a scale of 1 to 8. The second response was coded on a scale of 1 to 5. Scores ranged from 2 (least engaged) to 13 (most engaged).
- Political ideology was assessed by individuals placing themselves on a scale. Scores ranged from 1 (extremely liberal) to 7 (extremely conservative).
- Household income was measured with the question "Household Income". The variable was then grouped into three categories as per the census.

Results

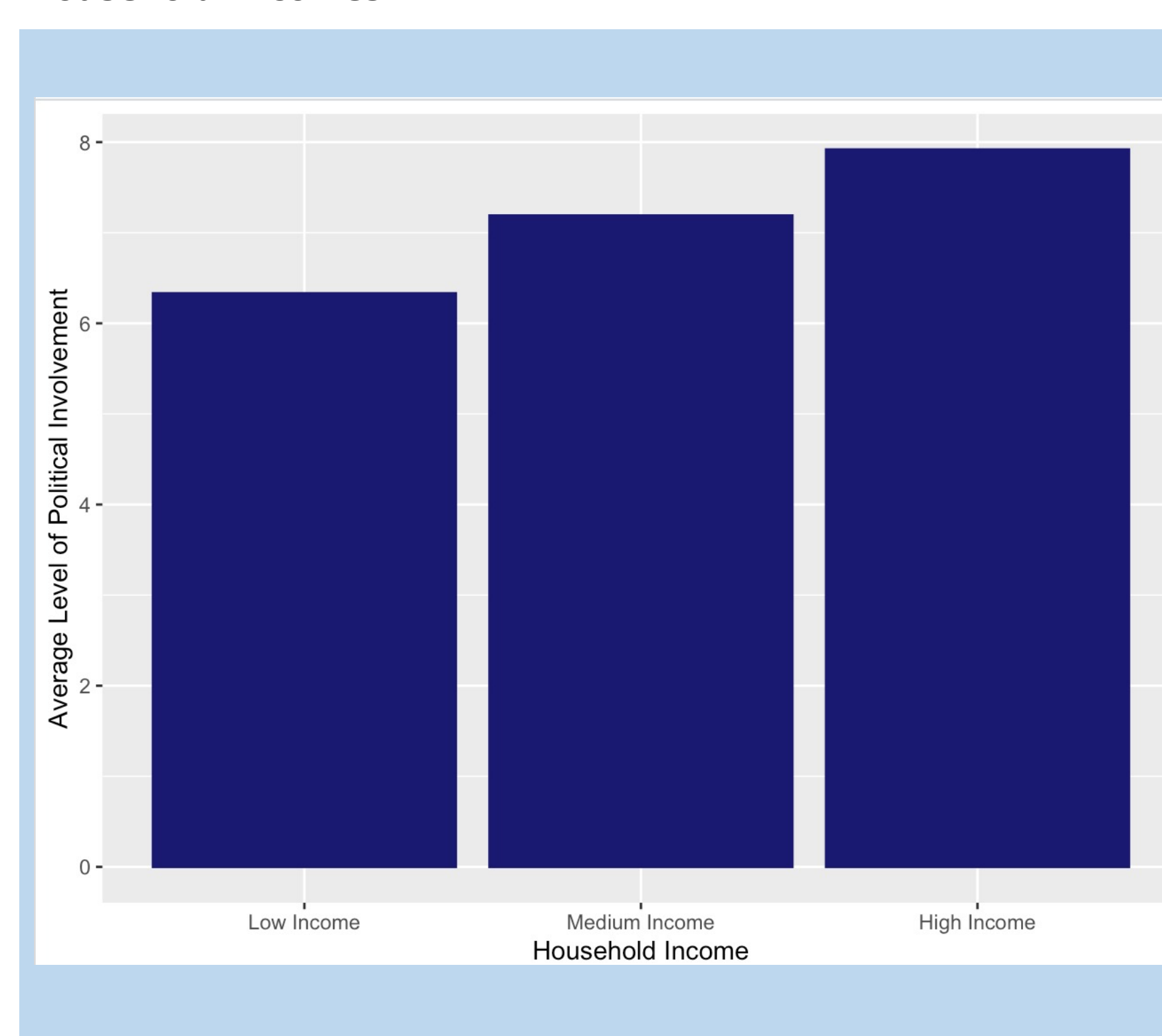
Univariate

- 57.33% of respondents have an engagement score less than 8
- 39.12% of respondents indicated that they are "moderates"

Bivariate

- ANOVA analysis showed that **political engagement** was not significantly associated with **political ideology** ($F(1,2215)=0.233$, $p=0.629$).
- ANOVA analysis showed that **household income** was not significantly associated with **political ideology** ($F(1,2232)=0.199$, $p=0.656$).

Figure 1. Average Level of Political Engagement for Various Household Incomes

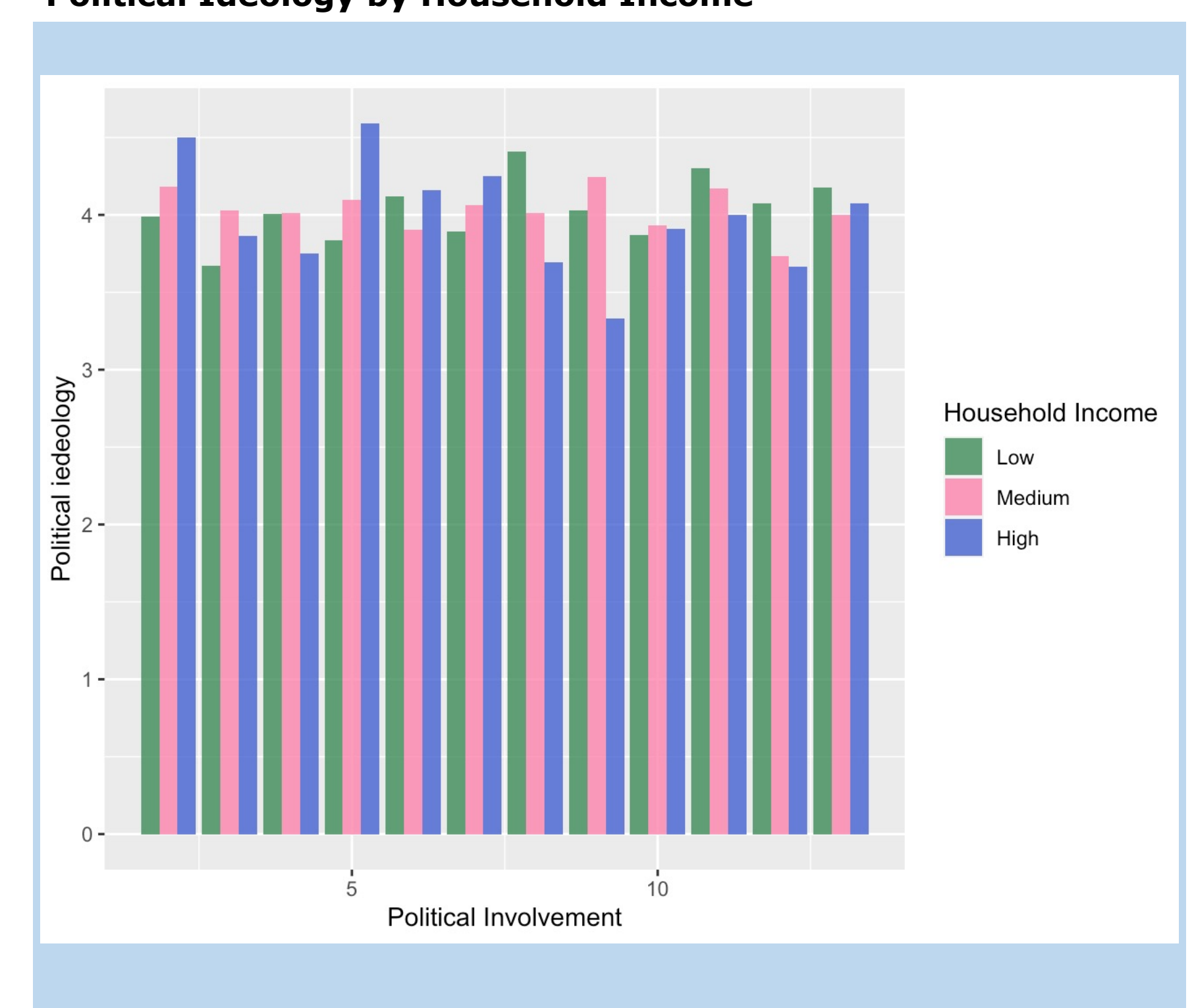


- ANOVA analysis showed that there is a significant association between **household income** and **political engagement** ($F(1,2269)=84.39$, $p<0.002$). Individuals with higher household incomes tended to have higher rates of political engagement (Figure 1). This is to be expected by the initial literature review.

Multivariate

- Household income does not appear to moderate the relationship between political ideology and engagement (Figure 2).
- After controlling for education, age, ethnicity, and region, engagement is still not significantly associated with political ideology ($B=-0.003$, $p=0.734$); however, there is a statistically significant relationship between education level and political ideology ($B=-0.063$, $p<0.003$) and between ethnicity and political ideology ($B=-0.192$, $p<0.002$).

Figure 2. The Association between Political Engagement and Political Ideology by Household Income



Discussion

- Political engagement most likely has no affect on an individual's political ideology
- This relationship, or lack thereof, is consistent across various household incomes
- Individuals and researchers should disseminate this information so that antagonistic rhetoric amongst opposing political parties is minimized
- In addition, there appears to be a statistically significant relationship between engagement and household income
- Since political engagement is an innate virtue, targeted programs to improve engagement in areas with low household incomes would be beneficial.
- There is also a relationship between education level and political ideology & between ethnicity and political ideology; further research is needed to explore this relationship.