The Association between Place of Residence and Support for Government Spending on Cities

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Introduction

- Government spending is a central and contested issue in American politics, shaping policy outcomes and political behavior (Jacoby, 2000; Faricy & Ellis, 2013).
- Place of residence is associated with differences in political attitudes, with rural residents generally less supportive of government involvement than urban residents (Fudge, 2020; Glenn & Hill, 1977).
- Geographic context has been shown to influence political preferences even after accounting for socioeconomic factors (Walks, 2004).
- However, less research examines support for specific spending domains, such as cities.
- This study examines whether support for government spending on cities differs by place of residence and whether this relationship persists after accounting for political ideology and income.

Methods

Sample

- Data comes from the 2024 General Social Survey (GSS), a nationally representative sample of U.S. adults.
- Analytic sample includes respondents with valid data on city spending attitudes and residence (n=1,591).
- However, the analyses use listwise deletion, so the sample size varies across models due to missing data.

Measures

- **Place of residence:** Urban/Suburban vs. Small town/Rural (collapsed from size-of-place variable).
- **Support for city spending:** Binary indicator where support = respondents who say government spends "too little" on cities (coded as 1), and all other responses ("about right" and "too much") are coded as 0.
- **Controls:** Political ideology (liberal/moderate/conservative) and household income

Research Questions

- Is there an association between place of residence and support for increased government spending on cities?
- Does this association persist after accounting for political ideology and income?

Results

Univariate

- 51.8% of respondents live in urban/ suburban areas
- 48.2% of respondents live in small town/ rural areas
- 27.8% of respondents support increased city spending.
- 52.3% support increased road spending

Bivariate (Figure 1)

- A chi-square test shows that **63.6%** of urban/suburban respondents support increased city spending compared to **51.2%** of small town/rural respondents
- This relationship is statistically significant, **$\chi^2 = 24.73$, $p < .001$**.

Multivariate (Figure 2)

- Logistic regression shows that residence type significantly predicts support for increased city spending.
- Respondents in small town/rural areas have lower odds of supporting increased city spending (**OR = 0.63, p < .001**).
- Moderates (**OR = 0.74, p = .030**) and conservatives (**OR = 0.54, p < .001**) are less likely than liberals to support increased city spending.
- Household income is not a significant predictor (**p = .613**).

Figure 1. Support for Increased City Spending by Residence Type (proportion supporting and not supporting)

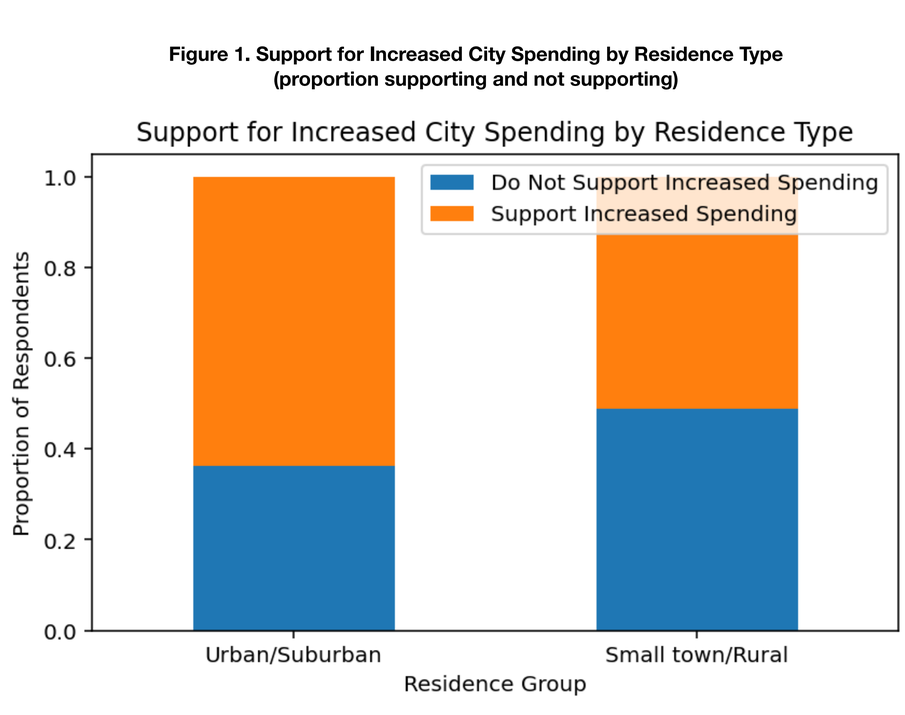
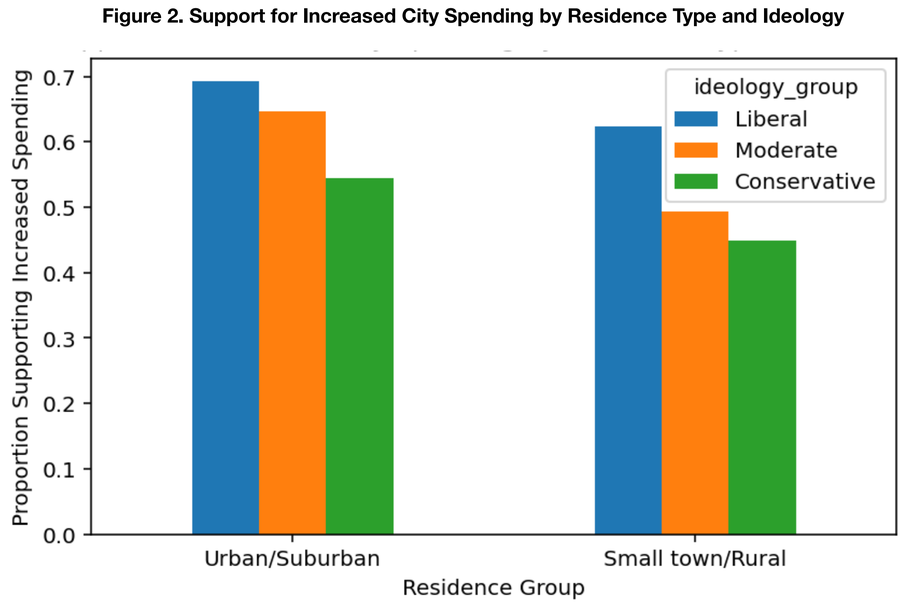


Figure 2. Support for Increased City Spending by Residence Type and Ideology



Discussion

- **Place of residence** is significantly associated with **support for government spending on cities**, with urban and suburban respondents **more supportive** than those in small towns or rural areas
- This relationship **remains significant after accounting for political ideology and income**, suggesting that geographic context independently shapes policy preferences.
- Support for increased city spending is **highest among liberals and lowest among conservatives** across both residence types, consistent with the regression findings.
- One possible explanation is that individuals in urban areas are more directly exposed to city infrastructure and public services.
- A limitation of this analysis is the high proportion of missing responses for the city spending variable.
- Although the model is statistically significant, the low pseudo R^2 (0.024) indicates that it explains only a small portion of the variation in support for city spending.
- Future research could examine whether similar patterns exist in other types of government spending.

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