



# The Association Between Political Ideology and Sympathy for Political Violence among Voters in the U.S.



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## Introduction

- Recent years have seen a dramatic increase in lone-wolf acts of political violence, some of which have been driven by left-wing sympathies; this is unprecedented, as lone wolves are historically motivated by mostly far-right ideologies (Williams 2025, Becker 2014).
- Following the Charlie Kirk and Brian Thompson assassinations, polling found that sympathy for political violence among self-identified Democrats more than doubled (Marist 2025).
- While lone wolves are still predominantly right-wing, Kirk and Thompson's assassinations may have changed the ideological dimensions of support for violence (Vargui & Nai 2025).

## Research Questions

- Was there an ideological shift in support for political violence prior to the Thompson and Kirk assassinations?
- Does political affiliation more strongly predict opposition to political violence than race or religiosity?

## Methods

### Sample

- Respondents (n=5,552) were drawn from the American National Election Studies Survey of 2024, a nationally representative sample of voters conducted before and after the 2024 election.

### Measures

- Sympathy for political violence was measured using the question "How much do you feel it is justified for people to use violence to pursue their political goals in this country?" Possible responses ranged from 1 (not at all) to 5 (a great deal).
- Religiosity was measured with the question "How important is religion in your life?" Possible responses ranged from 1 (extremely important) to 5 (not important at all).

- Participants were asked to choose from a list of options for Party ID (Democratic, Republican, Independent/None, Other) and race (White, Black, Hispanic, Other).

## Results

### Bivariate

- Chi-Square analysis showed that among voters in 2024, there was a significant relationship between party ID and sympathy for political violence ( $\chi^2 = 22.256, 12 \text{ df}, p=0.035$ ).
- A post-hoc test revealed no significant difference in sympathy for violence across party ID, suggesting the need for multivariate analysis.

### Multivariate

- Logistic regression analyses showed that Republicans were significantly less likely than Democrats to sympathize with political violence (OR 0.72,  $p=0.018$ ).
- When controlling for race and religiosity, Party ID becomes insignificant, suggesting that race confounds the partisan difference in support for violence.
- White voters were 68% less likely than Black voters to sympathize with political violence (OR 0.32,  $p<0.001$ ). Highly religious Americans were 38% less likely to sympathize with political violence (OR 0.62,  $p=0.012$ ).

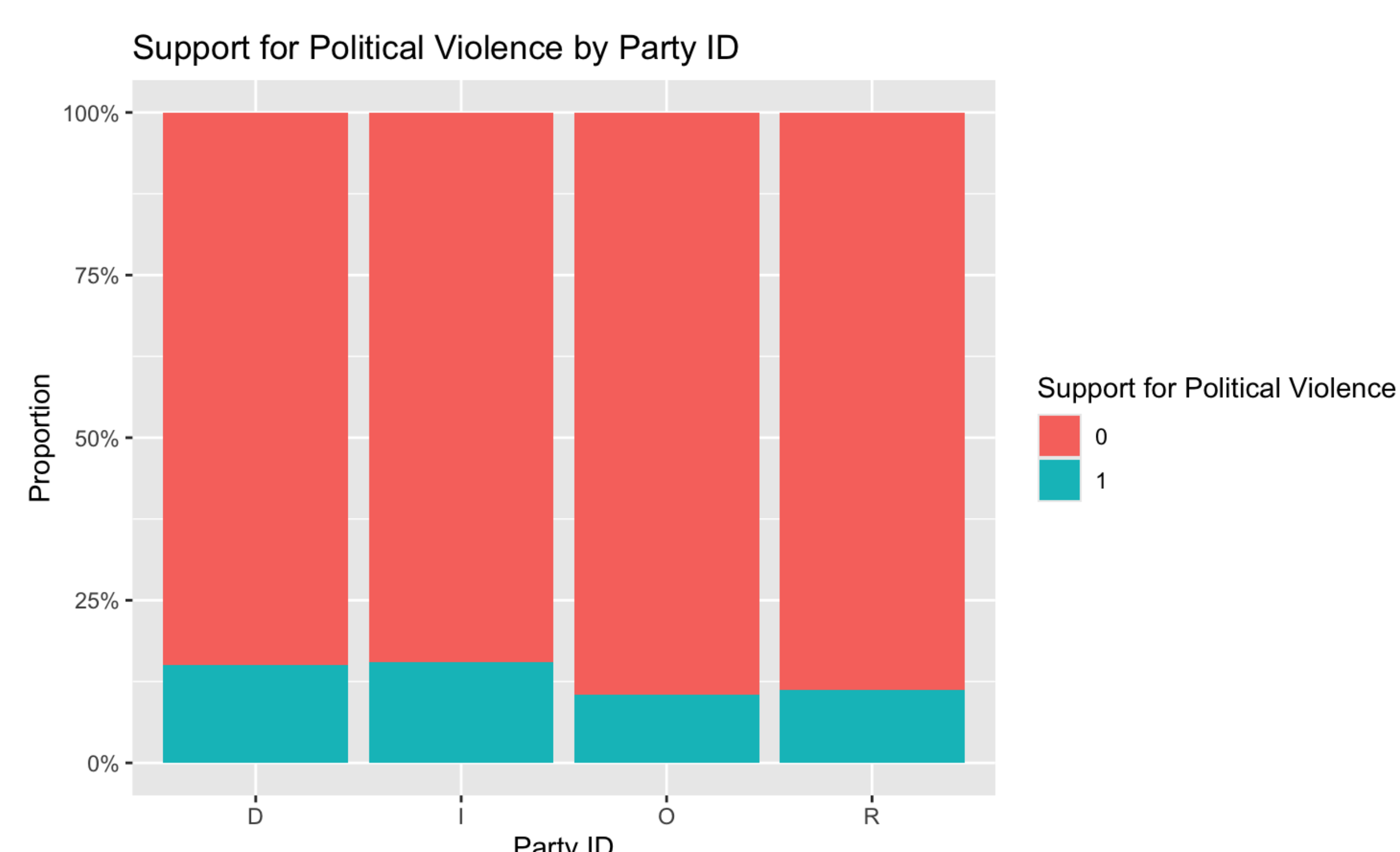


Figure 1: The Proportion of Sympathy for Political Violence by Party ID

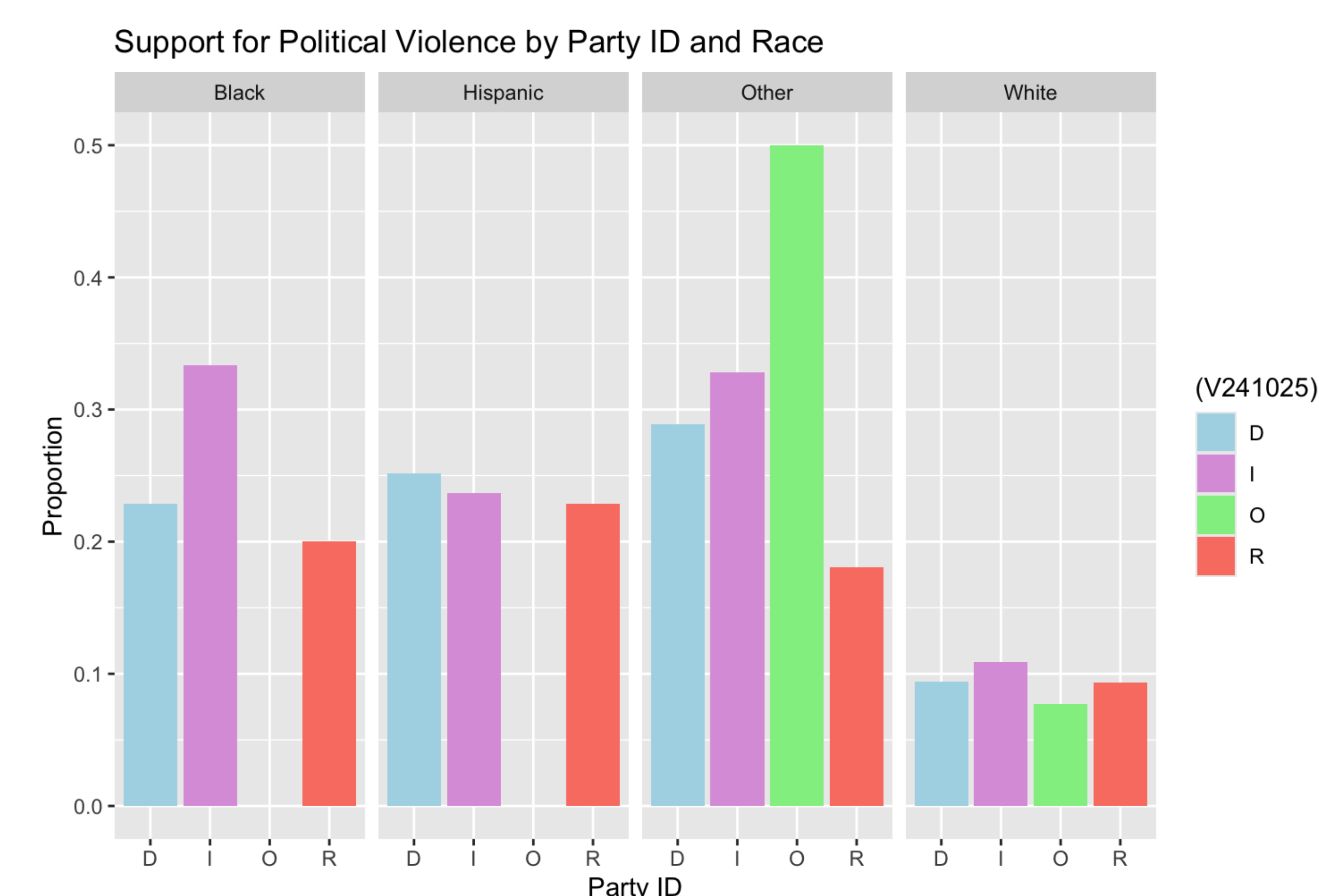


Figure 2: Sympathy for Political Violence by Party ID and Race

## Discussion

- White and highly religious voters were significantly less likely to sympathize with political violence. When controlling for race and religiosity, party ID lost significance.
- These findings suggest that race may have been more significant than partisan identity in driving differences in sympathy for political violence in the 2024 election.
- Further research is needed to determine the role of other covariates such as age and income level.

## References

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