



The Association Between Socioeconomic Status, Education Level, and Opinions on Gun Legislation in the U.S.



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Introduction

- Gun ownership and gun control are some of the most heavily debated sociopolitical issues in America (Celinska, 2007).
- Individuals with higher levels of education and income are more likely to support federal gun control legislation (Baranauskas, 2021; Borkowski, n.d.; Oraka et al., 2019).
- It has been found that a majority of Americans support stricter gun control legislation, especially in the wake of tragic mass shootings (Borkowski, n.d.; Newman & Hartman, 2019; Oraka et al., 2019; Wolfson et al., 2017).

Research Questions

- Do attitudes towards gun control significantly vary across socioeconomic classes?
- Does this relationship differ based on education level?

Methods

Sample

- Respondents (n=8,280) were drawn from the American National Election Survey (ANES) of 2020, a nationally representative, cross-sectional sample of voters in the U.S.

Measures

- Respondents' opinion on gun legislation was dichotomized into either a desire for stricter laws to make purchasing a gun more difficult or a desire to keep the laws the same/make the laws more lenient to make purchasing a gun easier.
- Participants' socioeconomic status was a self-reported measure of 3 class levels: lower class, middle class, and upper class.

- Participants self-reported their education levels which included less than high school, GED, some college, associate degree, BA, and post-grad degree (ex: MD, JD, etc).

Results

Opinion on Stricter Federal Legislation based on Socioeconomic Class

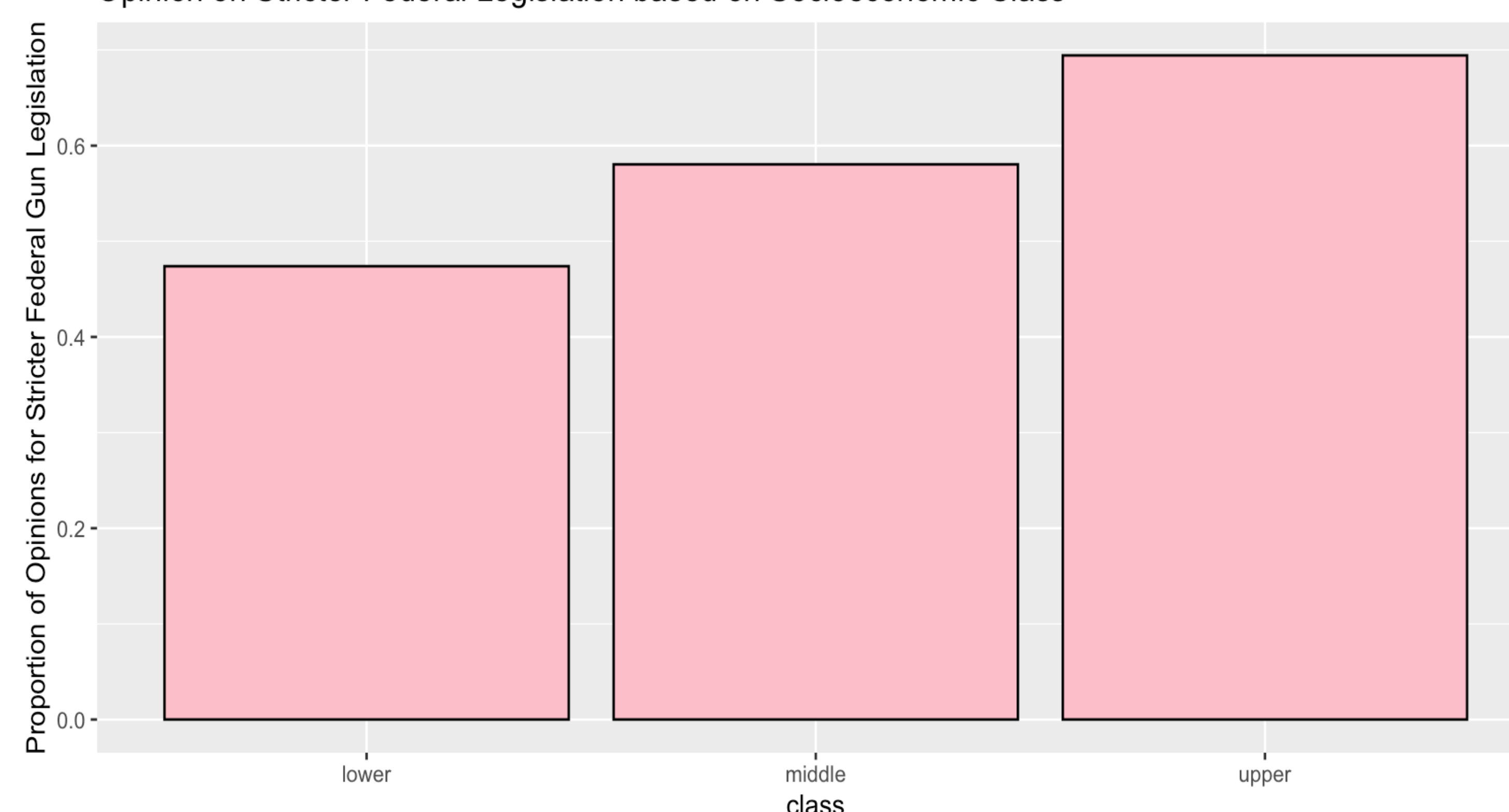


Figure 1: The Proportion of Stricter Opinion in Each Socioeconomic Status

Opinion on Federal Legislation based on Socioeconomic Status and Education Levels

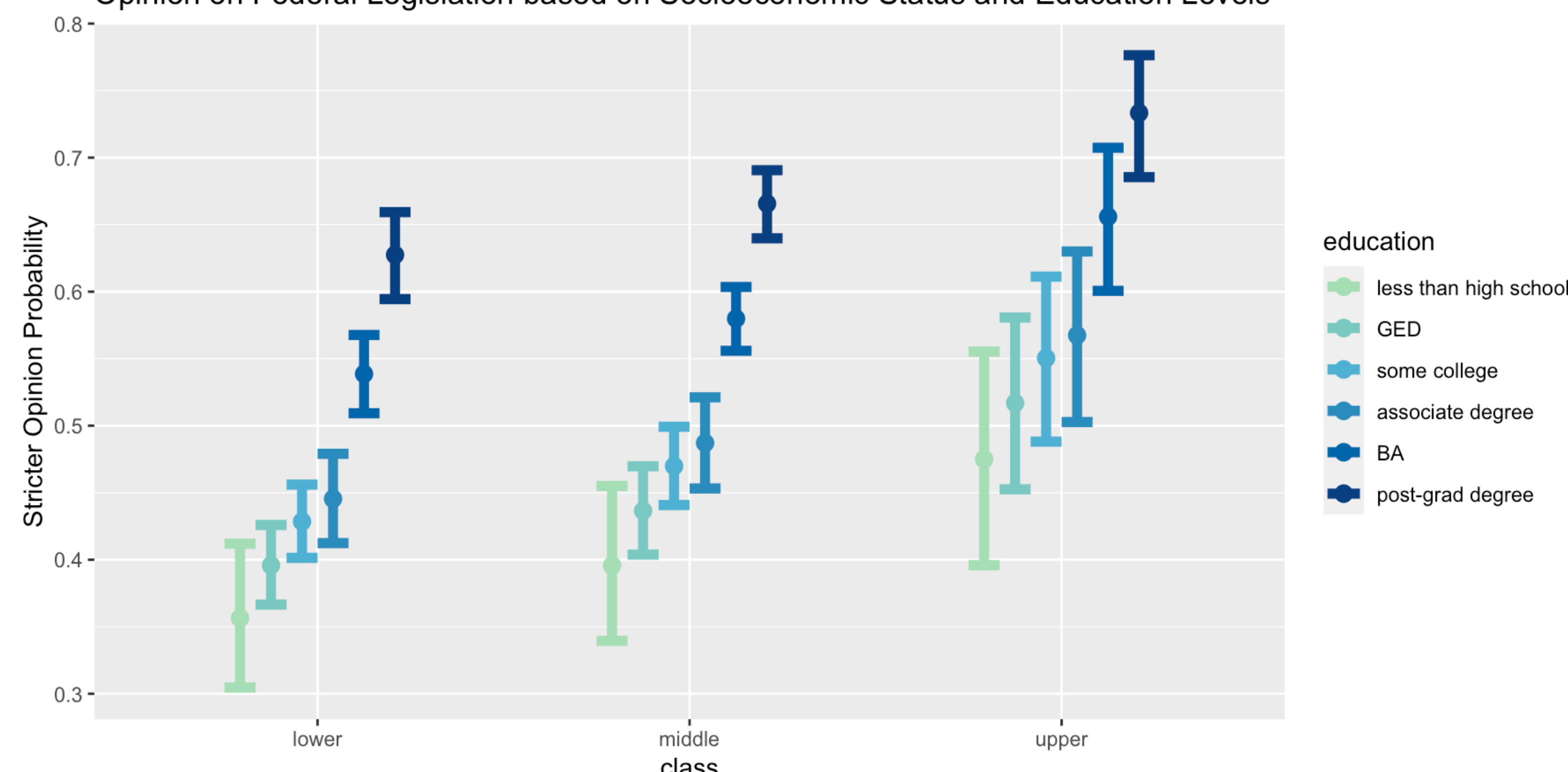


Figure 2: Predicted Probability of Stricter Opinion by Socioeconomic Status Based On Level of Education

- Those in the upper class with a post-grad degree are the most likely to desire stricter laws whereas those in the lower class with less than a GED are least likely to want stricter laws.

Discussion

- This analysis reveals that education level, SES, and opinions on federal gun legislation are significant predictors of one another, suggesting a complex interplay between these variables.
- These findings may contribute to political science research, lobbying tactics, and policy making in regards to American public opinion on gun control.
- Future research may include testing for more moderators such as political party or other demographic features.

References

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Bivariate

- Chi-Square analysis showed that stricter opinion was significantly associated with socioeconomic status (p= 2.2e-16).
- Logistic regression with SES revealed that the upper class is 2.52 times more likely than the lower class to want stricter laws (p= 1.06e-13).
- Logistic regression with education revealed post-grad is 3.4 times more likely than less than high school to want stricter laws (p= 2e-16).

Multivariate

- Logistic regression analyses with education as a moderator showed that education is not a moderating variable for all levels; however, both SES and education are significant predictors of opinion.
- As level of education increases, there is an upward trend in the likelihood of desiring stricter gun laws in the lower, middle, and upper class.