

**Supplementary Material for  
“Reassessing Support for Political Aggression and Violence in the United States”**

First author:

Scott Clifford, Associate Professor, Political Science Department, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX, US, 0000-0002-9401-7481

Second author:

Lucia Lopez, PhD Candidate, Political Science Department, University of Houston, Houston, TX, US, 0009-0007-5542-1012

Third Author:

Lucas Lothamer, PhD Candidate, Political Science Department, University of Houston, Houston, TX, US 0009-0006-3033-429X

Page 2. Sample Demographics  
Page 3. Further Detail on the Item Validation Study  
Page 8. Item Validation  
Page 12. Study 1 & 2 Question Wording  
Page 16. Description of the MTurk Pilot Study  
Page 19. Most Harmful Actors  
Page 21. Predictors of Providing a Valid Actor  
Page 22. Factor Structure of the MHA Scale  
Page 23. Study 1: Predictors of Political Violence  
Page 24. Pilot Study: Predictors of Political Violence  
Page 25. Predicting Differences Between Scales  
Page 26. How the Most Harmful Actor Selected Relates to Support for Aggression  
Page 27. Sensitivity to Assumptions About Insincere Respondents  
Page 30. Study 2: Support for Political Aggression and Violence by Target

## Sample Demographics

The table below shows sample demographics for all studies except for the item validation study, which did not include demographic measures. We show demographics for the full Study 1 sample as well as the sample after excluding respondents who did not provide a valid most harmful actor response. As is clear below, these exclusions do not meaningfully affect sample composition.

	Study 1 Pilot Mturk	Study 1 Bovitz	Study 1 - Exclusions Bovitz	Study 2 Mturk
Male	52%	50%	51%	55%
Median Age Category	35-44	45-54	45-54	35-44
Race				
White	76%	67%	67%	78%
Black	11%	14%	14%	8%
Hispanic	5%	10%	10%	8%
Asian	7%	5%	5%	5%
Other	1%	4%	4%	1%
Education				
No HS diploma	0%	3%	3%	0%
HS graduate	12%	23%	23%	10%
Some college	16%	29%	29%	15%
Associate degree	11%	12%	12%	11%
Bachelor's degree	43%	22%	23%	43%
Master's degree	15%	9%	8%	16%
Doctorate	3%	3%	3%	4%
Partisanship				
Democrat	49%	39%	39%	46%
Independent	21%	25%	24%	28%
Republican	29%	36%	37%	26%
Ideology				
Liberal	48%	37%	37%	-
Moderate/DK	15%	27%	26%	-
Conservative	36%	36%	38%	-
Observations	1001	1002	893	1035

## Further Detail on the Item Validation Study

For a more comprehensive look at potential political actions, we conducted a pilot test on Mechanical Turk. We recruited 150 respondents to complete the study on 12/18/2023 using the CloudResearch quality filter. All respondents were asked to evaluate 22 actions on several dimensions. We included five violent items that involved physical harm, such as punching or killing a politician. Another eight items involved aggression without direct physical harm, such as sending threats or cursing at a politician. To contrast these actions with more conventional forms of political behavior, we also included seven more acceptable actions, such as writing a letter or donating money to a campaign. Additionally, we included the two “placebo” items from Study 1.

Respondents were first asked to rate the acceptability of all 22 actions on a five-point scale ranging from completely unacceptable (0) to completely acceptable (4). Respondents were then asked to rate each of the items on five additional dimensions: the likelihood of causing the politician harm, causing the politician to fear for their safety, causing the politician to change their beliefs, causing the politician to fear being voted out of office, and the legality of the action.

The table below shows the full item wording and means for each dimension, all on a 0-4 scale. Means across all items are shown in the last row and item means that are above the grand mean are shown in bold. As expected, the violence items show much higher ratings of the likelihood of causing harm, including in comparison to the aggression items. However, the aggression items are perceived as causing fear of harm and are nearly on par, on average, with the violence items. In contrast, the conventional political actions are not perceived as causing harm or fear of harm. Instead, these conventional actions are seen as more likely – compared to the violence or aggression items – to change the politician’s beliefs or to make the politician concerned about re-election. These conventional actions are also seen, unsurprisingly, as much more acceptable than the other actions. The results suggest that there is a distinct class of political actions that are perceived to cause harm or fear of harm, rather than affecting politician’s behavior by changing beliefs or electoral incentives.

Label	Study 1	Best Set?	Acceptable	Harmful	Causes Fear	Changes Belief	Electoral Fear	Illegal
<b>Kill the politician</b>	Y	V	0.5	<b>2.2</b>	<b>2.2</b>	0.6	1.1	<b>2.6</b>
<b>Hit the politician with a car</b>	Y	V	0.5	<b>2.2</b>	<b>2.2</b>	0.7	1.1	<b>2.5</b>
<b>Punch the politician in the face</b>	Y	V	0.6	<b>2.3</b>	<b>2.1</b>	0.7	1.0	<b>2.5</b>

<b>Throw a brick through the politician's window</b>	Y		0.6	<b>1.5</b>	<b>2.1</b>	0.7	1.0	<b>2.4</b>
<b>Throw rocks and bottles at the politician</b>	Y	V	0.6	<b>2.1</b>	<b>2.3</b>	0.7	0.9	<b>2.5</b>
<b>Send threatening messages to the politician</b>	Y	A	0.6	1.0	<b>2.0</b>	0.8	1.0	<b>2.3</b>
<b>Throw eggs at the politician</b>			0.7	<b>1.6</b>	<b>1.8</b>	0.7	1.0	<b>2.2</b>
<b>Spray the politician with mace</b>		V	0.7	<b>2.3</b>	<b>2.2</b>	0.8	1.0	<b>2.4</b>
<b>Protest outside the politician's home while openly carrying weapons</b>	Y	A	0.9	1.3	<b>2.2</b>	0.9	1.2	<b>1.7</b>
<b>Shout at the politician in a restaurant until they leave</b>		A	0.9	0.9	<b>1.8</b>	0.9	1.2	1.3
<b>Publicly share the politician's home address</b>		A	1.0	1.3	<b>2.0</b>	0.8	1.1	<b>1.7</b>
<b>Curse in the politician's face</b>	Y	A	1.1	0.9	<b>1.7</b>	0.7	1.0	1.2

<b>Block the street in front of the politician's office</b>	Placebo		1.1	0.9	<b>1.7</b>	0.8	1.2	<b>1.8</b>
<b>Publicly share information about the politician's whereabouts</b>	Y	A	1.1	1.2	<b>1.9</b>	0.8	1.1	<b>1.5</b>
<b>Heckle the politician at a public event</b>	Placebo		<b>1.4</b>	0.9	1.4	0.9	<b>1.3</b>	1.1
<b>Call the politician's office to argue against their view</b>		C	<b>2.1</b>	0.8	1.0	<b>1.3</b>	<b>1.4</b>	0.7
<b>Put up signs opposing the politician</b>		C	<b>2.2</b>	0.7	0.9	<b>1.1</b>	<b>1.6</b>	0.7
<b>Donate money to the politician's opponent</b>		C	<b>2.3</b>	0.6	0.8	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.6</b>	0.6
<b>Campaign for the politician's opponent</b>		C	<b>2.4</b>	0.7	0.8	<b>1.2</b>	<b>1.7</b>	0.5
<b>Put up signs supporting the politician's opponent</b>		C	<b>2.4</b>	0.8	0.8	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.8</b>	0.6
<b>Write a letter to the local newspaper</b>		C	<b>2.4</b>	0.7	0.8	<b>1.4</b>	<b>1.7</b>	0.6

<b>explaining why the politician is wrong</b>								
<b>Write a letter to the politician arguing against their view</b>		C	2.4	0.8	0.8	1.4	1.5	0.6
<b>Average</b>			1.3	1.3	1.6	0.9	1.3	1.5

Note: In the Study 1 column, “Y” indicates the item was included, while “Placebo” indicates it was included as a placebo item. In the “Best Set” column, “V” indicates the item is among the best violence items, “A” indicates it is among the best aggression items, and “C” indicates it is among the conventional actions. Remaining columns display the mean rating for each evaluation (e.g., illegality) on a 0-4 scale.

Based on these results, we selected subsets of the items that best represent the three categories. These are shown in the “Best Set” column in the table above and include five violence items, six aggression items, and all seven conventional items. The average ratings for each set of items are shown for the four primary dimensions in the figure below. As is clear, the violence actions are perceived as causing substantially more harm than the other actions. The violence and aggression actions are perceived as causing similarly high levels of fear. Finally, the conventional items are seen as unlikely to cause harm or fear, but are seen as significantly more likely to change the politician’s beliefs and to increase concerns about electoral risk.

To further validate our item classifications, we conducted a series of exploratory factor analyses on each outcome variable using parallel analysis to determine the number of factors to retain. In all cases, we retain a two-factor structure. Although we posited three types of actions and only extracted two factors, the factor structure changes across outcomes in a way that largely supports our typology. For most outcomes, the first factor captures both violence and aggression items, while the second factor captures conventional actions. However, this factor structure differs for the outcome assessing physical harm. In this case, the first factor is defined by the violence items, while most of the aggression items load with the conventional items on the second factor. The two exceptions to this pattern are that the brick through a window item and egging a politician item load on the first factor with the violence items. Overall, this analysis largely supports our a priori classifications.

*Details on difference of means tests reported in the main text*

The manuscript reports a series of difference of means tests in the item validation study comparing items and ratings. All tests are paired *t*-tests. We report the details of each test here.

Violent actions are perceived as causing more harm than aggressive actions:  $t(142) = 10.32, p < .001$ .

Violent actions are perceived as causing more harm than conventional actions:  $t(145) = 10.84, p < .001$ .

Violent actions are perceived as causing more fear than aggressive actions:  $t(148) = 4.69, p < .001$ .

Violent actions are perceived as causing more fear than conventional actions:  $t(149) = 10.07, p < .001$ .

Conventional actions are perceived as causing more belief change than harmful actions:  $t(147) = 8.55, p < .001$ .

Conventional actions are perceived as causing more belief change than aggressive actions:  $t(146) = 7.01, p < .001$ .

Conventional actions are perceived as causing more electoral threat than harmful actions:  $t(143) = 6.49, p < .001$ .

Conventional actions are perceived as causing more electoral threat than aggressive actions:  $t(145) = 7.05, p < .001$ .

## Item Validation Question Wording

### *Acceptability*

How acceptable or unacceptable are each of the following actions as a way to express your disagreement with a politician?

- Completely acceptable
- Mostly acceptable
- Mostly unacceptable
- Completely unacceptable

### *Harm*

How likely is it that each of the following actions would cause the politician **physical harm**?

- Definitely would
- Probably would
- Probably would not
- Definitely would not

### *Fear*

How likely is it that each of the following actions would cause the politician to **fear for their safety**?

- Definitely would
- Probably would
- Probably would not
- Definitely would not

### *Beliefs*

How likely is it that each of the following actions would cause the politician to **change their beliefs about the topic**?

- Definitely would
- Probably would
- Probably would not
- Definitely would not

### *Electoral Fear*

How likely is it that each of the following actions would cause the politician to **worry about being voted out of office**?

- Definitely would
- Probably would

- Probably would not
- Definitely would not

*Legality*

Do you think each of the following actions are **legal or illegal**?

- Definitely legal
- Probably legal
- Probably illegal
- Definitely illegal

	A Priori Classification	Acceptability		Causes Harm		Causes Fear for Safety	
		1	2	1	2	1	2
Kill the politician	Violence	<b>0.81</b>	-0.09	-0.28	<b>0.83</b>	<b>0.75</b>	-0.35
Hit the politician with a car	Violence	<b>0.84</b>	-0.16	-0.16	<b>0.85</b>	<b>0.81</b>	-0.34
Throw rocks and bottles at the politician	Violence	<b>0.90</b>	-0.08	-0.08	<b>0.90</b>	<b>0.84</b>	-0.24
Punch the politician in the face	Violence	<b>0.89</b>	-0.08	-0.21	<b>0.81</b>	<b>0.82</b>	-0.23
Spray the politician with mace	Violence	<b>0.90</b>	-0.08	-0.17	<b>0.75</b>	<b>0.84</b>	-0.17
Throw a brick through the politician's window	Aggression	<b>0.88</b>	-0.10	0.22	<b>0.73</b>	<b>0.87</b>	-0.19
Throw eggs at the politician	Aggression	<b>0.91</b>	-0.04	0.18	<b>0.68</b>	<b>0.70</b>	0.18
Protest outside the politician's home while openly carrying weapons	Aggression	<b>0.84</b>	-0.05	<b>0.72</b>	0.29	<b>0.66</b>	-0.01
Curse in the politician's face	Aggression	<b>0.76</b>	0.19	<b>0.78</b>	0.12	<b>0.51</b>	0.31
Send threatening messages to the politician	Aggression	<b>0.91</b>	-0.08	<b>0.68</b>	0.10	<b>0.75</b>	-0.02
Publicly share the politician's home address	Aggression	<b>0.84</b>	-0.04	<b>0.75</b>	0.23	<b>0.63</b>	0.13
Publicly share information about the politician's whereabouts	Aggression	<b>0.69</b>	0.13	<b>0.68</b>	0.25	<b>0.55</b>	0.33
Shout at the politician in a restaurant until they leave	Aggression	<b>0.83</b>	0.16	<b>0.78</b>	-0.08	<b>0.61</b>	0.33
Block the street in front of the politician's office	Placebo/Uncivil	<b>0.73</b>	0.20	<b>0.79</b>	0.11	<b>0.51</b>	0.40
Heckle the politician at a public event	Placebo/Uncivil	<b>0.57</b>	<b>0.46</b>	<b>0.77</b>	0.07	0.27	<b>0.64</b>
Write a letter to the politician arguing against their view	Conventional	-0.02	<b>0.82</b>	<b>0.83</b>	-0.24	-0.17	<b>0.86</b>
Call the politician's office to argue against their view	Conventional	0.09	<b>0.72</b>	<b>0.81</b>	-0.26	-0.07	<b>0.84</b>
Write a letter to the local newspaper explaining why the politician is wrong	Conventional	-0.18	<b>0.67</b>	<b>0.81</b>	-0.26	-0.16	<b>0.86</b>
Donate money to the politician's opponent	Conventional	-0.08	<b>0.76</b>	<b>0.79</b>	-0.15	-0.07	<b>0.81</b>
Put up signs supporting the politician's opponent	Conventional	-0.05	<b>0.74</b>	<b>0.84</b>	-0.21	-0.20	<b>0.85</b>
Put up signs opposing the politician	Conventional	-0.05	<b>0.84</b>	<b>0.83</b>	-0.27	-0.12	<b>0.88</b>
Campaign for the politician's opponent	Conventional	-0.20	<b>0.68</b>	<b>0.82</b>	-0.22	-0.20	<b>0.83</b>

Note: the first column contains the full question wording for each item, while the second column displays the authors' expectations of how each item would be classified. Each pair of the remaining columns contains factor loadings from an exploratory factor analysis limited to two dimensions for each of three evaluations (e.g., acceptability). Factor loadings greater than 0.4 are shown in bold.

	A Priori Classification	Changes Beliefs		Electoral Threat		Illegal	
		1	2	1	2	1	2
Kill the politician	Violence	<b>0.84</b>	-0.21	<b>0.60</b>	-0.25	<b>0.80</b>	-0.17
Hit the politician with a car	Violence	<b>0.84</b>	0.03	<b>0.91</b>	-0.20	<b>0.79</b>	-0.17
Throw rocks and bottles at the politician	Violence	<b>0.85</b>	0.05	<b>0.84</b>	-0.13	<b>0.88</b>	-0.11
Punch the politician in the face	Violence	<b>0.79</b>	0.05	<b>0.88</b>	-0.07	<b>0.80</b>	-0.20
Spray the politician with mace	Violence	<b>0.74</b>	0.17	<b>0.85</b>	-0.09	<b>0.81</b>	-0.11
Throw a brick through the politician's window	Aggression	<b>0.92</b>	-0.09	<b>0.88</b>	-0.12	<b>0.86</b>	-0.12
Throw eggs at the politician	Aggression	<b>0.84</b>	0.04	<b>0.78</b>	0.07	<b>0.78</b>	-0.03
Protest outside the politician's home while openly carrying weapons	Aggression	<b>0.62</b>	0.27	<b>0.65</b>	0.13	<b>0.44</b>	0.22
Curse in the politician's face	Aggression	<b>0.85</b>	0.05	<b>0.77</b>	0.15	0.26	<b>0.64</b>
Send threatening messages to the politician	Aggression	<b>0.79</b>	0.09	<b>0.82</b>	0.02	<b>0.75</b>	-0.03
Publicly share the politician's home address	Aggression	<b>0.64</b>	0.29	<b>0.71</b>	0.01	<b>0.47</b>	<b>0.42</b>
Publicly share information about the politician's whereabouts	Aggression	<b>0.54</b>	0.38	<b>0.60</b>	0.25	<b>0.50</b>	0.37
Shout at the politician in a restaurant until they leave	Aggression	<b>0.67</b>	0.23	<b>0.69</b>	0.25	0.35	<b>0.48</b>
Block the street in front of the politician's office	Placebo/Uncivil	<b>0.60</b>	0.31	<b>0.62</b>	0.17	<b>0.63</b>	0.10
Heckle the politician at a public event	Placebo/Uncivil	<b>0.65</b>	0.22	<b>0.61</b>	0.28	0.03	<b>0.72</b>
Write a letter to the politician arguing against their view	Conventional	-0.02	<b>0.77</b>	0.03	<b>0.83</b>	-0.25	<b>0.79</b>
Call the politician's office to argue against their view	Conventional	0.03	<b>0.76</b>	0.17	<b>0.60</b>	-0.10	<b>0.80</b>
Write a letter to the local newspaper explaining why the politician is wrong	Conventional	0.03	<b>0.82</b>	0.03	<b>0.89</b>	-0.12	<b>0.87</b>
Donate money to the politician's opponent	Conventional	0.18	<b>0.68</b>	-0.02	<b>0.68</b>	-0.09	<b>0.80</b>
Put up signs supporting the politician's opponent	Conventional	0.10	<b>0.81</b>	-0.06	<b>0.91</b>	-0.12	<b>0.80</b>
Put up signs opposing the politician	Conventional	-0.01	<b>0.93</b>	-0.06	<b>0.91</b>	-0.21	<b>0.78</b>
Campaign for the politician's opponent	Conventional	0.07	<b>0.87</b>	-0.12	<b>0.91</b>	-0.13	<b>0.88</b>

Note: the first column contains the full question wording for each item, while the second column displays the authors' expectations of how each item would be classified. Each pair of the remaining columns contains factor loadings from an exploratory factor analysis limited to two dimensions for each of three evaluations (e.g., changes beliefs). Factor loadings greater than 0.4 are shown in bold.

## Study 1 & 2 Question Wording

Here we show the question wording for both the MTurk pilot study and the Study 1 fielded by Bovitz Forthright. The two studies were highly similar, so we do not repeat the questions, but note any differences between samples.

### *Most Harmful Actor*

Thinking about American politics today, which one person do you think is doing the most harm to the country?

<text box>

### *MHA: Aggressive and Violent Actions*

1. Kill [actor]
2. Hit [actor] with a car
3. Throw rocks and bottles at [actor]
4. Punch [actor] in the face
5. Throw a brick through [actor's] window
6. Protest outside [actor's] home while openly carrying weapons
7. Graffiti [actor's] car (asked of MTurk sample)
8. Send a package to [actor's] office that looks like a bomb (asked of Forthright sample)
9. Send threatening messages to [actor]
10. Publicly share information about [actor's] whereabouts
11. Curse in [actor's] face
12. Block the street in front of [actor's] office (asked of Mturk sample)
13. Heckle [actor] at a public event (asked of Mturk sample)
  - Strongly support
  - Somewhat support
  - Neither support nor oppose
  - Somewhat oppose
  - Strongly oppose

### *Abstract Violence*

How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

1. It is acceptable to use violence in advancing political goals these days.
2. Violence is sometimes an acceptable way for Americans to express their disagreement with the government.
3. Violence is justified if the members of the other side act violently first.
  - Strongly agree
  - Somewhat agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Somewhat disagree
  - Strongly disagree

### *Partisan Violence*

1. When, if ever, is it OK for [in-partisans] to send threatening and intimidating messages to [out-party] leaders?
2. When, if ever, is it OK for an ordinary [in-party] in the public to harass an ordinary [out-party] on the Internet, in a way that makes the target feel unsafe?
3. How much do you feel it is justified for [in-partisans] to use violence in advancing their political goals these days?
4. What if [out-partisans] win the 2024 presidential election? How much do you feel violence would be justified then?

### *Partisan Politician Specific Violence (Study 2 Only)*

How strongly would you support or oppose a person taking the following actions against a [out-party] politician?

1. Hit a [out-party] politician with a car
2. Throw rocks and bottles at a [out-party] politician
3. Punch a [out-party] politician in the face
4. Throw a brick through the window of a [out-party] politician's house
5. Send threatening messages to a [out-party] politician
6. Curse in a [out-party] politician's face
  - Strongly support
  - Somewhat support
  - Neither support nor oppose
  - Somewhat oppose
  - Strongly oppose

*Partisan Voter Specific Violence (Study 2 Only)*

How strongly would you support or oppose a person taking the following actions against a [out-party] voter?

1. Hit a [out-party] voter with a car
2. Throw rocks and bottles at a [out-party] voter
3. Punch a [out-party] voter in the face
4. Throw a brick through the window of a [out-party] voter's house
5. Send threatening messages to a [out-party] voter
6. Curse in a [out-party] voter's face
  - Strongly support
  - Somewhat support
  - Neither support nor oppose
  - Somewhat oppose
  - Strongly oppose

*Trait Aggression*

For each of the following statements, indicate whether the statement is true or false for you.

1. Given enough provocation, I may hit a person.
2. My friends say I'm somewhat argumentative.
3. I have trouble controlling my temper.
4. At times I feel I have gotten a raw deal out of life.
  - Completely true for me
  - Mostly true for me
  - Slightly true for me
  - Slightly false for me
  - Mostly false for me
  - Completely false for me

*Belief in Conspiracies*

How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

1. Much of our lives are being controlled by plots hatched in secret places.
2. Even though we live in a democracy, a few people will always run things anyway.
3. The people who really "run" the country are not known to the voters.
4. Big events like wars, recessions, and the outcomes of elections are controlled by small groups of people who are working in secret against the rest of us.
  - Strongly agree
  - Somewhat agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree

- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

### *Partisanship*

Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Democrat, Republican, Independent, or something else?

- Democrat
- Republican
- Independent
- Something else

Do you consider yourself a strong [Republican/Democrat] or not a strong [Republican/Democrat]?

- Strong [Republican/Democrat]
- Not a strong [Republican/Democrat]

Do you consider yourself closer to Democrats, closer to Republicans, or neither?

- Closer to Democrats
- Closer to Republicans
- Neither

### *Partisan Social Identity*

Thinking about the [Republicans/Democrats], to what extent do you experience the following situations?

1. When people criticize [Republicans/Democrats], it feels like a personal insult.
2. When I meet someone who supports [Republicans/Democrats], I feel connected with this person.
3. When I speak about [Republicans/Democrats], I refer to them as "my party."
4. When people praise [Republicans/Democrats], it makes me feel good.
  - Always
  - Often
  - Sometimes
  - Never

## Description of the MTurk Pilot Study

Respondents for our pilot study were recruited from Mechanical Turk using the CloudResearch platform on Sept. 14, 2023. Respondents were required to reside in the US, have completed at least 100 HITS, and have an approval rate of at least 95%. Additionally, we employed the CloudResearch quality filter to screen out fraudulent respondents.

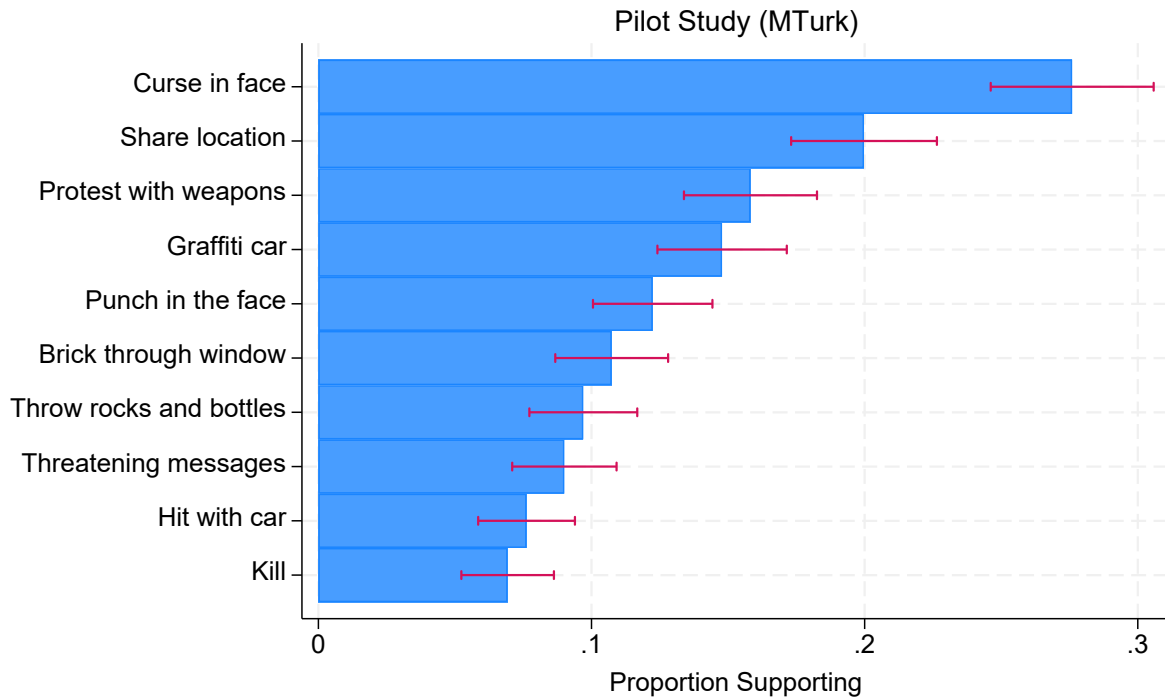
The study involved largely the same content and structure as the Forthright survey described in the text. However, we also included a four-item political knowledge battery (including a commitment to not look up answers; Clifford and Jerit 2016), which was excluded from Study 2 due to space constraints. Additionally, as the pilot study was run prior to the item validation study, we included a slightly different set of aggressive actions for the MHA measure. We also randomized the presence of two “placebo” items (items 11 and 12) that were intended to be uncivil, but not necessarily aggressive. The full text of these items is shown below.

1. Kill <actor>
2. Hit <actor> with a car
3. Throw rocks and bottles at <actor>
4. Punch <actor> in the face
5. Throw a brick through <actor>'s window
6. Protest outside <actor>'s home while openly carrying weapons
7. Graffiti <actor>'s car
8. Send threatening messages to <actor>
9. Publicly share information about <actor>'s whereabouts
10. Curse in <actor>'s face
11. Block the street in front of <actor>'s office
12. Heckle <actor> at a public event

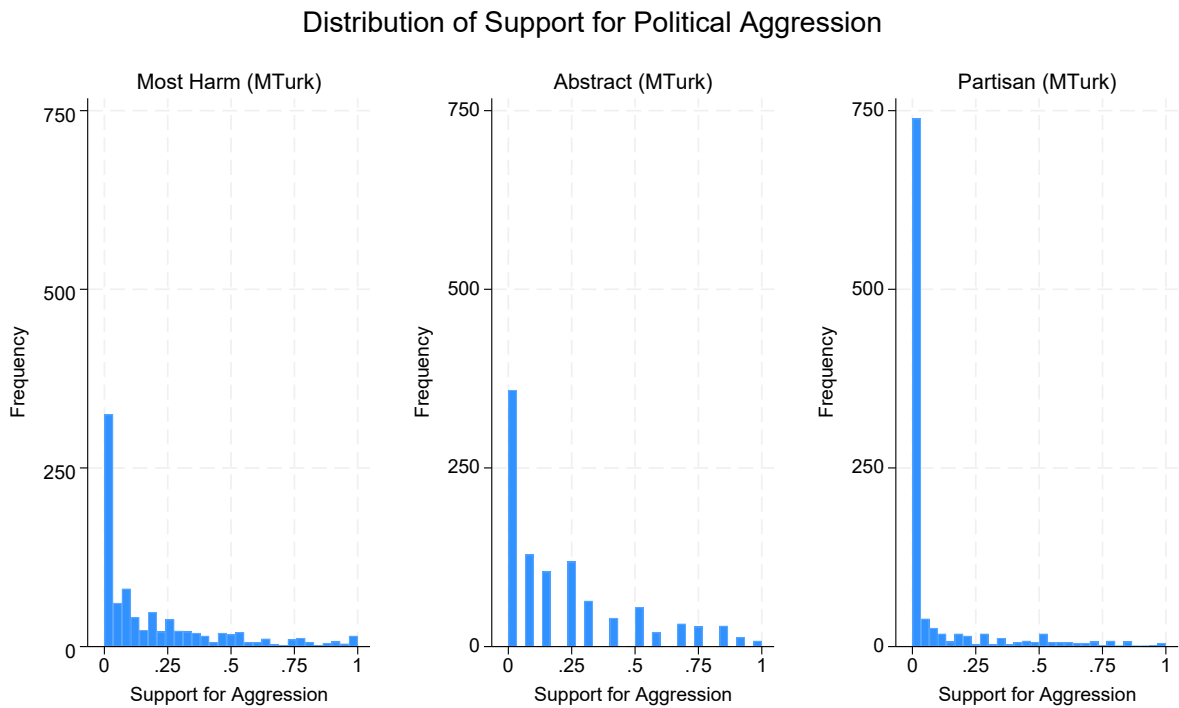
Previous work has included such placebo items to allow respondents to endorse some form of action without having to endorse violence out of concern that the lack of such options may inflate endorsement of violence. In the pilot study, we tested this concern by randomly assigning half of respondents to answer an additional two placebo items consisting of actions that are not considered aggressive or violent (e.g., heckling at a public event). Among those giving a valid most harmful actor, support for the primary 10 aggression items is highly similar across experimental conditions (0.20 vs. 0.20;  $p = 0.834$ ), suggesting no support for this concern.

We also display the descriptive statistics presented in the main text for both the MTurk and Forthright samples below. As is clear, the descriptive statistics are quite similar in spite of differences in sampling.

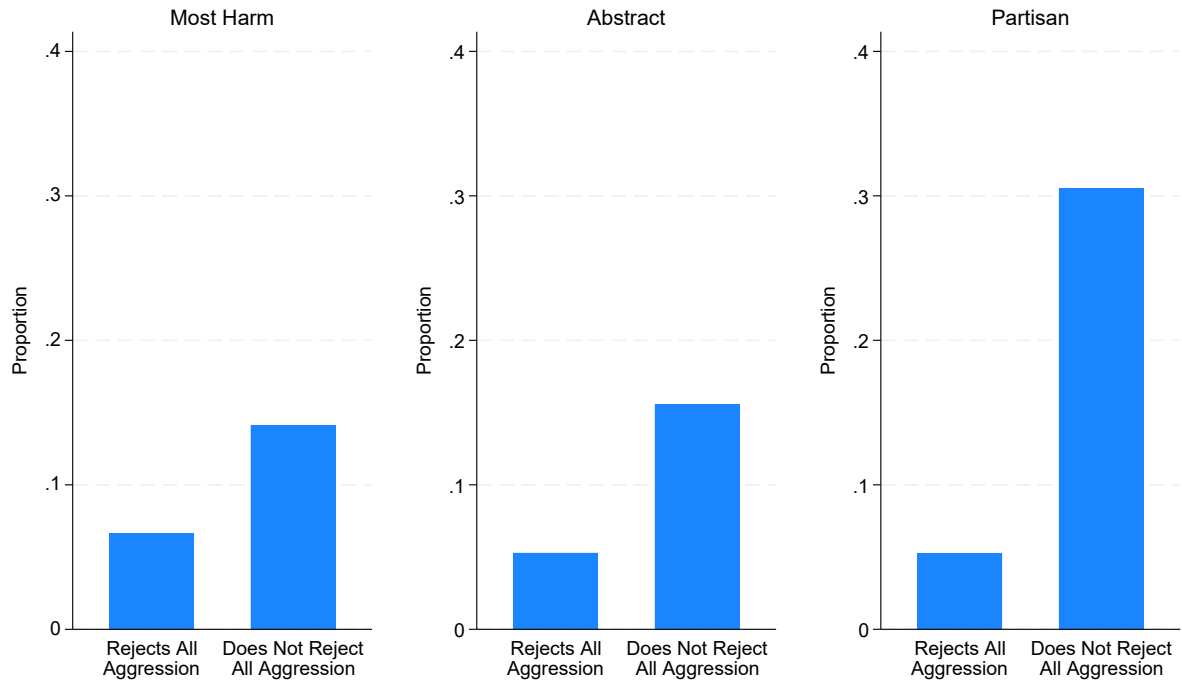
## Support for Aggressive and Violent Actions Against Most Harmful Actor (MTurk Pilot)



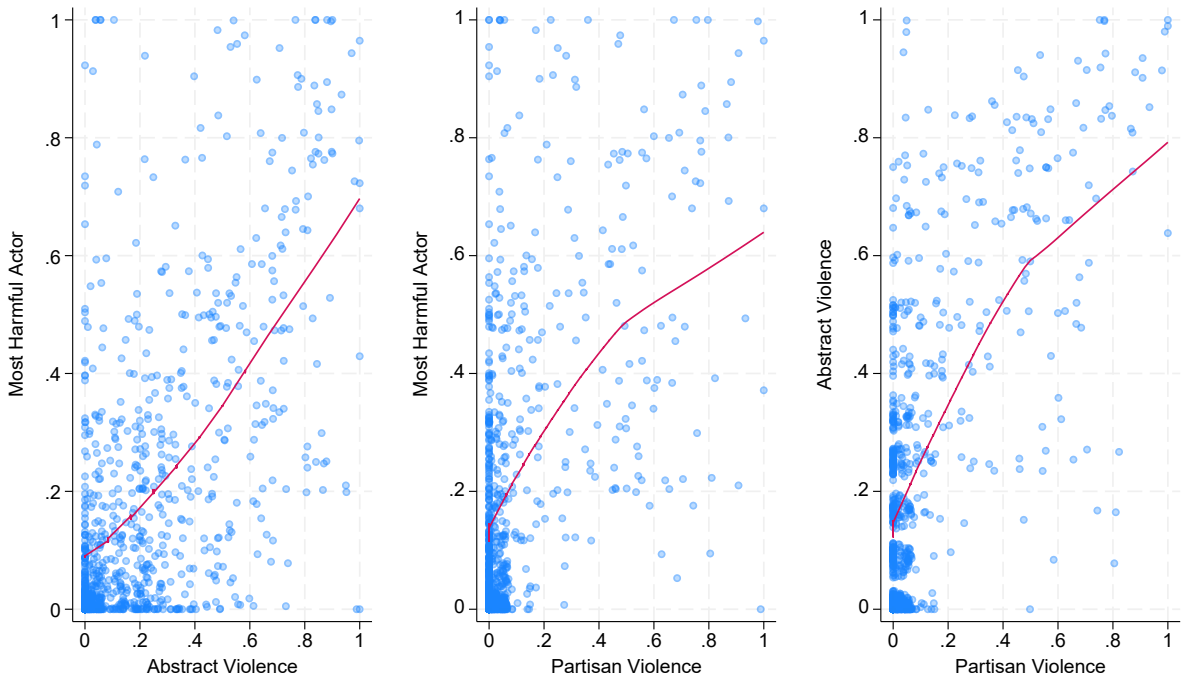
## Distribution of Support for Political Aggression by Scale Type (MTurk Pilot)



## Rate of Low-Quality Responding by Rejection of Aggression and Scale Type (MTurk Pilot)



## Relationships Between Measures of Political Aggression (MTurk Pilot)



## Most Harmful Actors

The table below shows the distribution of most harmful actors nominated in Study 1.

Most Harmful Actor	N	%
Alexandria Ocasio Cortez	3	0.3
Andrew Tate	1	0.1
Anthony Fauci	1	0.1
Barack Obama	18	1.81
Bernie Sanders	1	0.1
Bill Gates	2	0.2
Brett Kavanaugh	1	0.1
Charles Schwab	1	0.1
Chuck Schumer	1	0.1
Donald Trump	415	41.83
Elon Musk	2	0.2
Gavin Newsom	2	0.2
George Soros	8	0.81
Greg Abbott	1	0.1
Group	31	3.12
Jerry Springer	1	0.1
Jo Jorgensen	1	0.1
Joe Biden	412	41.53
Junk	6	0.6
Kamala Harris	3	0.3
Kevin McCarthy	1	0.1
Klaus Schwab	1	0.1
Letitia James	1	0.1
MLK	1	0.1
Mitch McConnell	3	0.3
NA	54	5.44
Nancy Pelosi	2	0.2
Policy	5	0.5
Randi Weingarten	1	0.1
Robert Kennedy Jr.	1	0.1
Ron DeSantis	3	0.3
Ronald Reagan	1	0.1
Rupert Murdoch	1	0.1
Sarah McBride	1	0.1
Satan	1	0.1
Steve Bannon	1	0.1

Ted Cruz	2	0.2
Warren Buffet	1	0.1

---

## Predictors of Providing a Valid Actor

In both studies, some respondents were unable or unwilling to name a single individual who they perceived to be causing the most harm in American politics. These individuals were excluded from analysis, which raises the question of whether those respondents systematically differ from those who did respond. To examine this possibility we modeled whether a respondent listed a single person (1) or not (0) using logistic regression. The results are shown below for both the MTurk and Forthright study. As is clear, the only consistently significant predictor of not providing a valid most harmful actor is satisficing. In the Forthright sample, we do find some evidence that younger respondents and women are slightly less likely to offer a valid response, though this did not replicate in the MTurk sample.

	MTurk	<i>p</i>	Forthright	<i>p</i>
Partisanship	0.01 (0.07)	0.938	0.33 (0.22)	0.123
Partisan Strength	-0.43 (0.66)	0.512	-0.04 (0.43)	0.921
Failed Attention Check	-1.99 (1.00)	0.046	-1.27 (0.28)	0.000
Trolling	1.39 (1.88)	0.463	-0.08 (0.36)	0.825
Political Knowledge	0.46 (0.58)	0.433	-	
Political Interest	-		0.01 (0.11)	0.940
Age	-0.13 (0.79)	0.868	0.22 (0.07)	0.001
White	-0.12 (0.40)	0.770	-0.13 (0.23)	0.581
Male	-0.39 (0.34)	0.249	0.52 (0.22)	0.019
Constant	3.40 (0.66)	0.000	1.12 (0.41)	0.000
pseudo $R^2$	0.02		0.07	
<i>N</i>	984		993	

Note: table shows coefficients from a logit model. Standard errors are in parentheses and *p*-values are shown to the right (two-tailed).

### Factor Structure of the MHA Scale

We conducted an exploratory factor analysis of the 10 actions making up MHA scale. Due to the ordinal nature of the data, we use polychoric correlations. The first factor accounted for 99% of the total variance in the Forthright sample and 97% of the total variance in the MTurk pilot, so we report the results of a single-factor model below. Factor loadings for each sample are shown below. As is clear, all 10 items load well.

	<b>Pilot (MTurk)</b>	<b>Study 1 (Forthright)</b>
Kill	.91	.91
Hit with car	.95	.94
Throw rocks and bottles	.95	.94
Punch in the face	.94	.91
Brick through window	.95	.95
Protest with weapons	.86	.87
Threatening package	.92	.91
Threatening messages	.93	.92
Share location	.77	.73
Curse in face	.79	.77

**Study 1 (Forthright): Predictors of Support for Political Aggression**

	MHA		Abstract		Partisan	
Partisan Identity	-0.09 (0.02)	0.000	0.07 (0.02)	0.001	0.06 (0.03)	0.072
Partisan Strength	0.09 (0.04)	0.023	0.04 (0.04)	0.329	0.39 (0.06)	0.000
Ideological Extremity	0.05 (0.03)	0.115	0.03 (0.03)	0.277	-0.07 (0.05)	0.142
Conspiratorial Predispositions	0.06 (0.04)	0.165	0.08 (0.04)	0.047	0.16 (0.07)	0.014
Trait Aggression	0.44 (0.05)	0.000	0.52 (0.05)	0.000	0.31 (0.08)	0.000
Satisficing	0.03 (0.04)	0.491	0.08 (0.04)	0.026	0.18 (0.05)	0.001
Insincere Responding	0.08 (0.04)	0.060	0.06 (0.04)	0.095	0.08 (0.05)	0.125
Age	-0.09 (0.04)	0.013	-0.15 (0.04)	0.000	-0.26 (0.06)	0.000
White	0.03 (0.02)	0.134	-0.03 (0.02)	0.180	-0.05 (0.03)	0.174
Male	0.04 (0.02)	0.078	0.08 (0.02)	0.000	0.11 (0.03)	0.000
Constant	-0.13 (0.04)	0.008	-0.04 (0.04)	0.747	-0.50 (0.07)	0.000
pseudo $R^2$	0.197		0.312		0.220	
$N$	883		883		883	

Note: table shows tobit coefficients. Standard errors are in parentheses and  $p$ -values are shown to the right of each coefficient.

**Pilot Study (MTurk): Predictors of Support for Political Aggression**

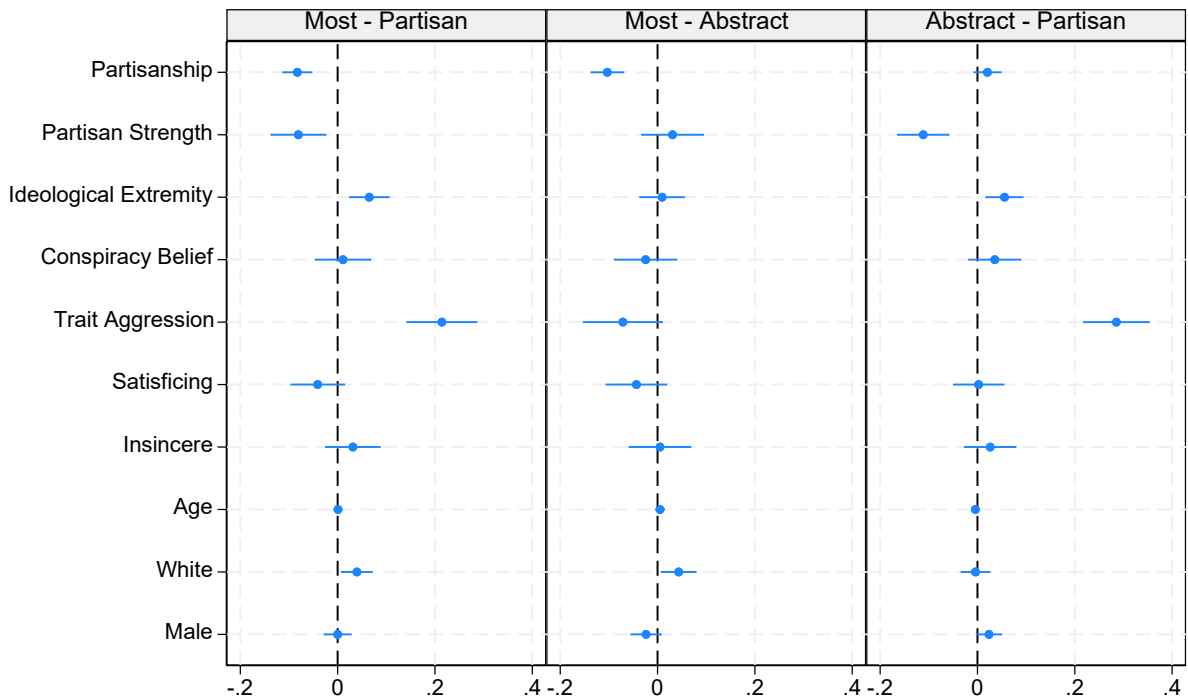
	MHA	<i>p</i>	Abstract	<i>p</i>	Partisan	<i>p</i>
Partisan Identity	-0.06 (0.03)	0.015	0.01 (0.03)	0.767	-0.02 (0.04)	0.583
Partisan Strength	0.06 (0.05)	0.218	0.09 (0.05)	0.083	0.27 (0.08)	0.001
Ideological Extremity	0.15 (0.04)	0.000	0.09 (0.04)	0.019	0.29 (0.06)	0.000
Conspiratorial Predispositions	0.11 (0.04)	0.003	0.18 (0.04)	0.000	0.25 (0.07)	0.000
Trait Aggression	0.39 (0.06)	0.000	0.63 (0.06)	0.000	0.65 (0.09)	0.000
Satisficing	0.05 (0.05)	0.262	0.10 (0.04)	0.028	0.33 (0.06)	0.000
Insincere Responding	0.18 (0.05)	0.001	0.19 (0.05)	0.000	0.41 (0.07)	0.000
Age	-0.17 (0.05)	0.001	-0.19 (0.05)	0.001	-0.35 (0.10)	0.000
White	0.01 (0.03)	0.598	-0.01 (0.03)	0.589	0.04 (0.04)	0.412
Male	0.04 (0.02)	0.045	0.03 (0.02)	0.152	0.02 (0.04)	0.582
Constant	-0.13 (0.04)	0.003	-0.16 (0.04)	0.000	-0.80 (0.09)	0.000
pseudo $R^2$	0.207		0.310		0.336	
<i>N</i>	849		849		849	

Table displays coefficients from two-limit tobit models predicting each measure of political violence. Standard errors are in parentheses and *p*-values are displayed to the right of each coefficient.

## Predicting Differences Between Scales

As a further test of the differences between measures, we created difference scores between pair of measures (e.g., subtracting a respondent's Partisan Violence score from their MHA score). We model each difference score using OLS and the same set of covariates as in the models above. The coefficients are displayed in the figure below.

The first panel shows the results for the difference between the MHA and Partisan measures such that positive values mean (relatively) higher scores on the Partisan measure. Consistent with the findings above, Republicans and strong partisans score relatively higher on the Partisan measure, while ideological extremists score relatively higher on the MHA measure. Respondents high in trait aggression also score relatively higher on the MHA measure. The middle panel shows the difference between the MHA and Abstract measures. The only finding that stands out is that Republicans score relatively lower on the MHA scale, which, as mentioned above, seems to be due to Democrats' support for aggression against Donald Trump. Finally, the last panel differences the Abstract and Partisan measures. Similar to the MHA measure, strong partisans tend to score relatively lower on the Abstract measure, while those high in trait aggression tend to score relatively higher. However, in contrast, the direction of partisan identity is unrelated to the difference score.



## How the Most Harmful Actor Selected Relates to Support for Aggression

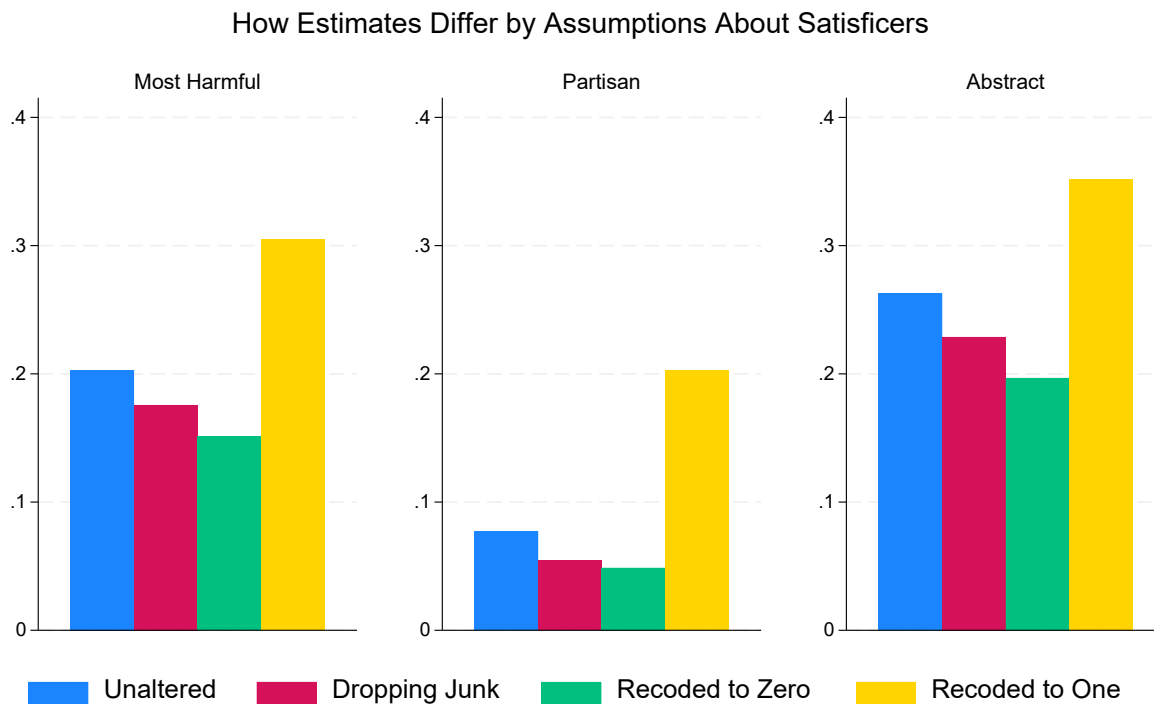
As reported in the main text, we found that respondents nominating Donald Trump as the most harmful actor were significantly more likely to endorse aggression and violence in the MHA scale. Further, this seems to explain why Democrats score higher than Republicans on the MHA scale, but not the other scales. We examine this finding in further detail here.

In Study 1, levels of support for aggression on the MHA scale were similar for those who endorsed neither Trump nor Biden ( $M = 0.14$ ) as it was for those selecting Biden ( $M = 0.17$ ). However, those selecting Trump scored significantly higher ( $M = 0.22$ ). Notably, these patterns differ for the other scales. Respondents nominating Trump scored *lower* on the Partisan scale ( $M = 0.05$ ) than those who selected Biden ( $M = 0.09$ ) or neither ( $M = 0.07$ ). Similarly, respondents nominating Trump scored *lower* on the abstract scale ( $M = 0.22$ ) than those selecting Biden ( $M = 0.28$ ) or neither ( $M = 0.28$ ).

To further interpret these findings, we extend our tobit models presented in the main text (Fig. 6) predicting the MHA scale. First, we add controls for the Partisan and Abstract scales. Second, we add dummy variables for selecting Trump and for selecting Biden. Thus, these indicators tell us whether there's anything unique about nominating these specific actors that drives support for aggression *above and beyond more general tendencies toward partisan and political violence*. The coefficient for selecting Biden is negative as well as small and not significantly different from zero ( $b = -0.01, p = .837$ ). In contrast, the coefficient for selecting Trump is positive, large, and statistically significant ( $b = 0.16, p < .001$ ). This suggests that people who select Trump are not especially prone to supporting political aggression generally – in fact, they seem *less* likely to support it. However, they are unusually likely to support it when targeted at Trump. Thus, many who generally oppose violence seem to believe that it is justified against Donald Trump.

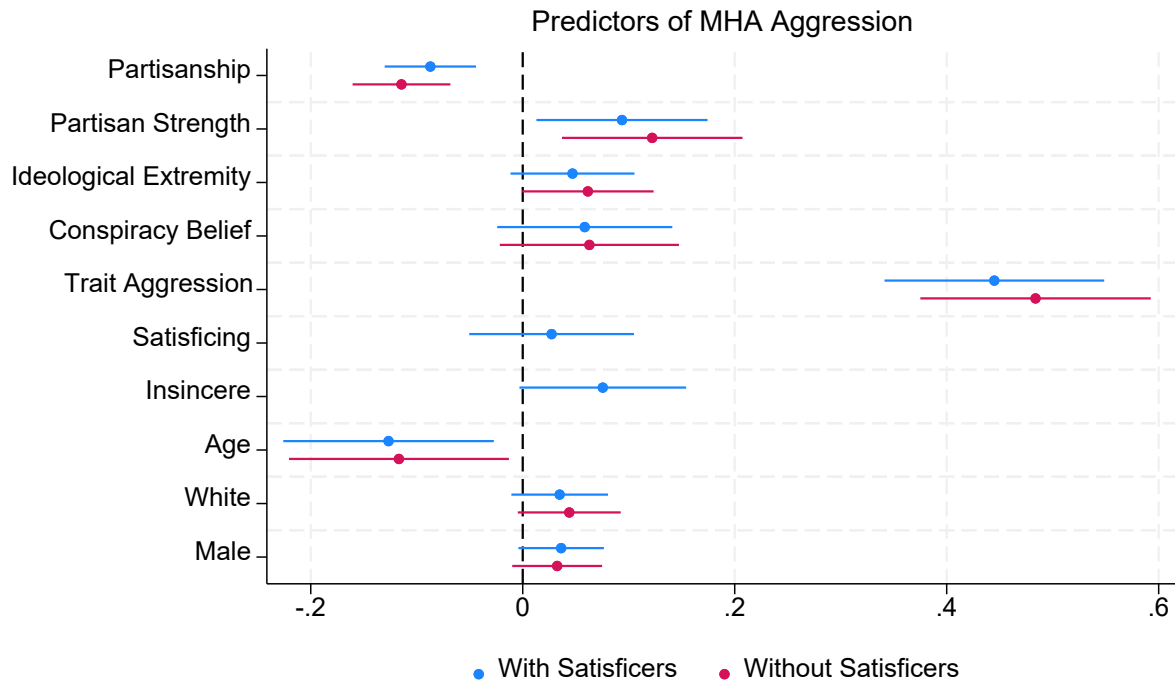
## Sensitivity to Assumptions About Insincere Respondents

We further examine the effects of inattentive and insincere respondents here, first by assessing how assumptions about these respondents affects estimates of the mean level of support for aggression. In the figure below, the blue bars show mean levels of support among the full sample (including satisficers, insincere respondents, and those who did not provide a valid most harmful actor) for each of the three measures. To examine how much insincere respondents might affect these estimates, we plot three alternative estimates of support for aggression that involve dropping all low-quality respondents, recoding them all to zero, and recoding them all to one. As shown by the red bars, dropping all low-quality respondents slightly reduces support for aggression, with shifts ranging from .02 to .03 on a 0-1 scale. When low-quality respondents are recoded to zero, shown in green, this reduces estimates of violence by about .03 to .07. When low-quality respondents are recoded to one, estimates shift upward by about .09 to .13. Of course, the primary concern is that inattentive respondents are inflating estimates of support for aggression. But our analysis here suggests that even the most extreme assumption – that all respondents with an inattentive or insincere response have a true score of zero – does not dramatically change estimates of support for aggression, at least in this sample.

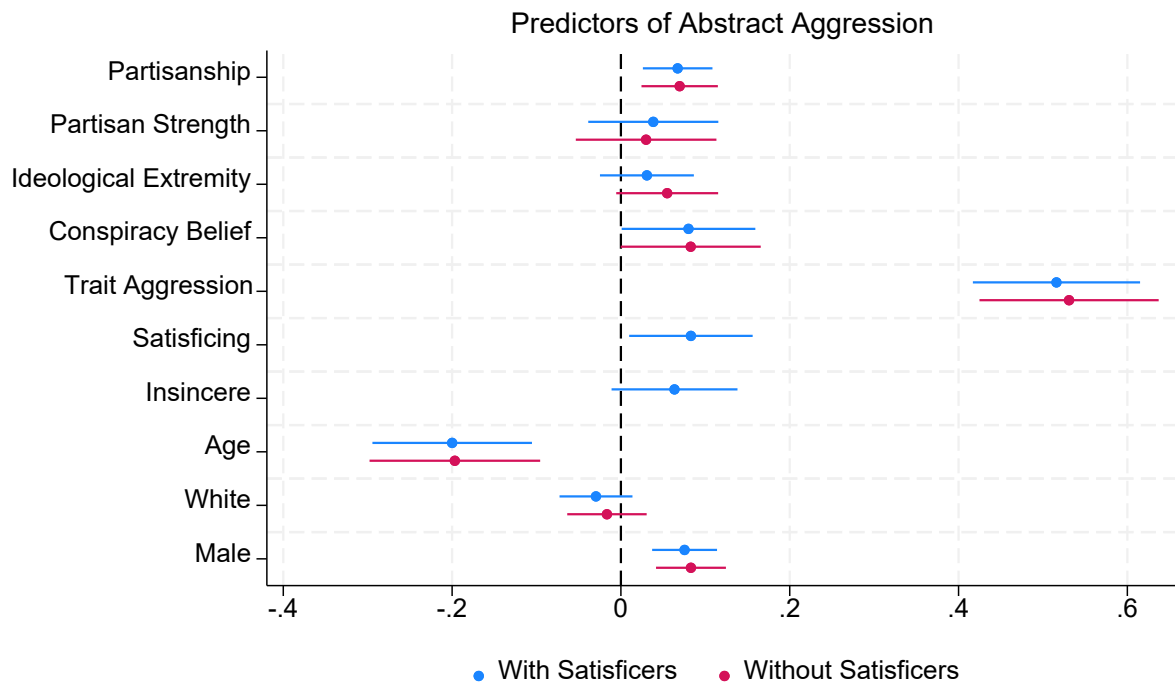


We also examined how the insincere respondents affect our regression estimates displayed in Figure 6 of the main text. The figures below displays two versions of these estimates – the original estimates and a re-analysis that excludes all respondents coded as giving an inattentive

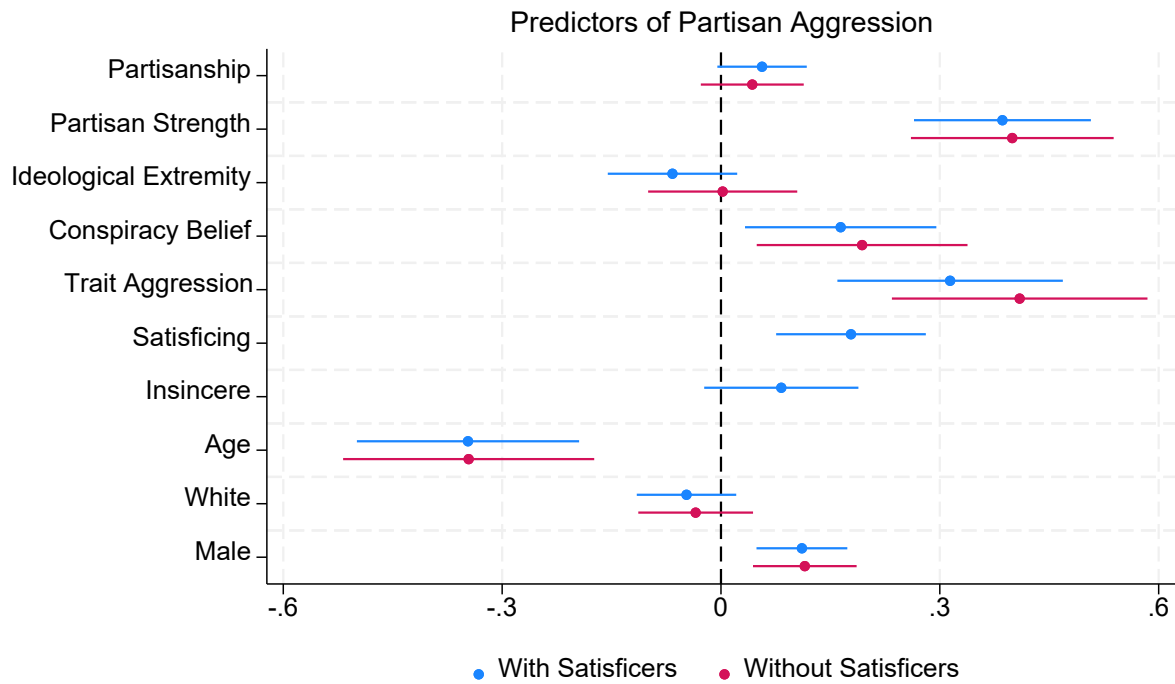
or insincere response. Starting with the MHA measure, the two sets of coefficients are almost identical and in no case is there a difference in sign or significance.



Turning to the Abstract measure, the results are similarly robust. The point estimates are extremely similar and there is no change in sign or significance.



Finally, we again find highly robust results for the Partisan Violence measure with no changes in sign or significance.



Overall, these analyses suggest that the results are highly robust to different assumptions about inattentive and insincere respondents.

## Study 2: Support for Political Aggression and Violence by Target

Model:	Tobit		Tobit		Tobit		Tobit		OLS		OLS	
Exclusions:	Invalid MH		None		Invalid MH, independents		Invalid MH		Invalid MH		Invalid MH	
Pre-registered:	Y		N		N		N		N		N	
Politician	0.40 (0.14)	0.003	0.38 (0.13)	0.005	0.40 (0.15)	0.006	0.44 (0.15)	0.003	0.11 (0.07)	0.115	0.08 (0.07)	0.245
Most Harmful	1.19 (0.13)	0.000	1.14 (0.13)	0.000	1.21 (0.14)	0.000	1.21 (0.15)	0.000	0.57 (0.07)	0.000	0.56 (0.07)	0.000
Partisan Strength	0.57 (0.16)	0.000	0.65 (0.16)	0.000	0.37 (0.23)	0.113					0.24 (0.08)	0.005
Trait Aggression	3.11 (0.27)	0.000	3.20 (0.26)	0.000	3.15 (0.29)	0.000					1.56 (0.14)	0.000
Survey Attention	-0.66 (0.31)	0.031	-0.74 (0.30)	0.013	-0.45 (0.34)	0.183					-0.52 (0.18)	0.003
Constant	-1.29 (0.36)	0.000	-1.24 (0.35)	0.000	-1.35 (0.42)	0.002	-0.65 (0.11)	0.000	0.34 (0.05)	0.000	0.24 (0.20)	0.234
Observations	973		1002		856		973		973		973	
$R^2$									0.06		0.20	
Pseudo $R^2$	0.10		0.10		0.09		0.03					

Table displays alternative model specifications. Standard errors in parentheses. "Invalid MH" refers to respondents who did not list the name of a single person who they believed to be causing the most harm in politics (measured pre-treatment).