

## **Child Support Orders and Payments: Do Lower Orders Result in Higher Payments?**

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## **Child Support Orders and Payments: Do Lower Orders Result in Higher Payments?**

In 1984, each state was required to establish a mathematical formula that could be used in setting child support order amounts. Since 1987, the formula has been presumptive, that is, it must be used to set orders unless there are compelling reasons not to use it. Nearly every state selected a formula that included as elements both the number of children (more children lead to higher orders) and the income of the obligor (higher incomes lead to higher orders).

Although the principle that obligors with higher incomes should be ordered to pay higher amounts is generally not controversial, the precise level of child support orders *is*. If orders are too high, some obligors may be discouraged and may not pay. If orders are too low, some children will have lower levels of support than they would otherwise.

The formula for child support orders could be informed by several criteria, including equity, ability to pay, and need. We do not address these here; instead, we provide information with a more pragmatic focus: is there evidence that setting lower orders will lead to higher amounts collected?

Researchers at IRP have examined related questions in the past. New research is needed, however, because the prior work focused on the relationship between orders and *compliance* (the amount paid divided by the amount due) rather than between the amount owed and the amount paid or received, and used information from 1980–1992, now quite out of date.

In this report, we first review the prior research (Part I), then provide information on the data used in this analysis (Part II), present a variety of information on the relationship between the amount due and the amount paid (Part III), and summarize our findings (Part IV).

### **I. Prior Research**

Several empirical tests of the relationship between compliance with child support orders and order levels (typically defined as the amount due divided by income, or the “burden” of the order) have

been conducted using Wisconsin data. Bartfeld and Meyer (1994) began this research, examining paternity cases from the 1980s. Meyer and Bartfeld (1996) conducted a similar examination for divorce cases, and Meyer (1999) updated this line of research with data through 1992 and explicitly compared paternity and divorce cases.

Bartfeld and Meyer (1994) conducted a multivariate analysis of variables associated with compliance in the first calendar year after the child support order began among paternity cases. In their multivariate results, they found that compliance was lower among cases in which the order was above 20 percent of the father's income. For moderate-income fathers, there was no difference in compliance between those with orders that were 15–20 percent of their income and those with orders that were less than 15 percent of their income. However, for low-income fathers, those with orders that were less than 15 percent of their income had higher compliance than those with orders that were 15–20 percent of their income.

The analysis of divorce cases (Meyer and Bartfeld, 1996) produced somewhat different results. Among these cases, those with orders that were more than 30 percent of income had lower compliance rates than other cases; those with the lowest orders had the same rates of compliance as those with orders in the 31–35 percent range.

In the most recent analysis (Meyer, 1999), divorce and paternity cases were examined together, and more recent data were used. In general, orders that were a higher percentage of income were associated with lower compliance rates. Estimates of the relationship differed for paternity and divorce cases. For paternity cases, orders that were between 0 and 20 percent of the obligor's income had roughly comparable compliance rates, once other factors were considered; for divorce cases, orders that were between 0 and 30 percent of income had roughly comparable compliance rates.

Looking at this research as a whole, researchers have found no evidence that orders lower than the amounts required by the Wisconsin guidelines (17 percent for one child, 25 percent for two, etc.)

were associated with higher compliance for most fathers. However, the Bartfeld and Meyer research (1994) suggested that low-income paternity fathers may differ from this general pattern: among these cases, the compliance rate may be higher when the amount ordered is less than 15 percent of income.

Prior research has also examined the relationship between the amount owed and the amount received. These analyses have typically found that more is received when more is due. For example, in a national analysis, Beller and Graham (1993) found that, among mothers receiving child support between 1978 and 1985, the amount due was by far the most important predictor of the amount received. In a multivariate analysis, an estimated \$81 was received for each \$100 ordered, all else equal.

In contrast to the quantitative work, more recent qualitative interviews with low-income mothers and fathers suggest that some fathers become quite discouraged by high orders (see, for example, Pate, 2002); this may contribute to their paying less support or dropping out of the formal economy.

Because the quantitative work is dated and contrasts with inferences from the recent qualitative work, a new analysis of the relationship between orders and payments is needed.

## **II. Data and Methods**

### *Data and Sample*

In this study, we draw our analysis sample from two data sets, the Wisconsin Court Record Database (WCRD) and the Kids Information Data System (KIDS). We supplement these data sources with earnings information from the state's Unemployment Insurance Wage Record system (UI), maintained by the Division of Unemployment Insurance within the Department of Workforce Development.

In the WCRD, we examine cohorts 17–18, which include cases that entered the courts from July 1996 to June 1998, and consider the first 12 months of a child support order following establishment of

paternity or the final divorce judgment. In KIDS, we examine cases in which a first child support order was set in 2000, and consider the first 12 months of that order.<sup>1</sup> These two data sets are related but have some differences:

- WCRD covers only 21 counties, and KIDS includes cases from all counties in Wisconsin.
- WCRD includes randomly selected cases within these counties (Brown and Wimer, 2002), but KIDS covers all cases available in the administrative data.
- KIDS data do not contain detailed information about living arrangements. As a consequence, it is hard to differentiate shared- or split-custody cases from sole-custody cases, a task that is easier in the WCRD.

Cohorts 17–18 of the WCRD include 856 paternity and 1,005 divorce cases with father obligors who have been ordered to pay child support for 12 consecutive months. To clarify the financial burdens of child support payers, we deleted families with serial family obligations (69 paternity and 58 divorce cases), and those in which the custodial and noncustodial parent were still living together at the time of data collection (78 paternity cases and one divorce case). We also eliminated split-custody cases (17 divorce cases) and cases for which custodial information was missing (32 cases paternity cases and one divorce case). Finally, to investigate the effects of financial burdens on child support payment, we do not include cases without income information in the main portion of this report (192 paternity and 135 divorce cases). This leaves a main WCRD sample of 485 paternity cases and 793 divorce cases.

KIDS has 9,217 paternity and 6,541 divorce cases with father obligors who had a first child support order in 2000 and who owe support for 12 consecutive months. We deleted cases with serial family payers (2,462 paternity and 381 divorce cases). For our main analyses, we also eliminated cases without income information (1,565 paternity and 1,148 divorce cases). Our main analysis sample from KIDS includes 5,190 paternity cases and 5,012 divorce cases.

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<sup>1</sup>All information from the WCRD has been adjusted for inflation, putting it into 2000 dollars using the CPI, to match the KIDS analysis.

The main analyses below therefore cover 57 percent of the paternity cases and 79 percent of the divorce cases that have orders for a full year in WCRD cohorts 17 and 18. Similarly, we examine 56 percent of the paternity cases and 77 percent of the divorce cases that have orders for one year in the KIDS data, with their first order in 2000. Deleting cases with no information about income might result in some selection problems; we implement selected sensitivity tests to try to estimate the effect of these missing cases in our analyses.

### *Methods and Variables*

One of the main purposes of this study is to examine the relationship between the amount due and the amount paid among fathers of different income levels. First, we explore the relationships between the payment and burden level among different income groups by using simple descriptive analyses and graphs. Second, we examine factors associated with the amount paid with a multivariate descriptive regression, focusing on the relationship between the amount due (expressed as a percentage of income) and the amount paid. We use ordinary least squares (OLS) analysis to control for other variables that may be associated with the amount of child support paid, such as the father's income, the mother's income, the number of children, the age of the youngest child, type of order, divorce/paternity, and county. Third, we analyze low-income fathers separately, since previous research suggests that there might be a nonlinear relationship between the amount due and the amount paid (Meyer, 1999). Fourth, we use OLS analysis to reexamine the relationship studied in previous research, that is, whether cases with higher burdens have lower compliance rates. Finally, we conduct a sensitivity test to estimate the changes to our conclusions if we were to include the cases for which income is missing.

In this study we are primarily interested in the total amount of child support paid by fathers within one year from the month after the first child support order. In our analysis of the WCRD data, information about income comes from the court record, when available; when it is not, the information is

taken from the UI file. Similarly, in the KIDS analysis, income information comes first from KIDS, then, if it is not available there, from the UI file.<sup>2</sup> For both data sets, the information about child support amounts paid and owed is based on the KIDS monthly data. The amount paid is relatively straightforward: we sum amounts paid for child support and family support (we do not include amounts paid for interest or fees, or toward lying-in payments, etc.). When a child support order is expressed as an actual dollar amount, the amount owed is simply the sum of the monthly amounts owed. When the order is expressed as a percentage of the noncustodial parent's income, we simply multiply the percentage by the noncustodial parent's income. The amount owed is more complicated when the order has two parts; these two-part orders are nearly always cases in which the amount due is the greater of a fixed-dollar amount or an amount based on a fixed percentage of income. For two-part orders, we first calculate the amount due based on the fixed portion, then calculate the amount based on the percentage portion (multiplying the percentage by income), and select the larger amount as the effective child support order.

Having calculated the amount of income, the amount owed, and the amount paid, we then also calculate the compliance rate (amount paid divided by amount owed) and the "burden" level. The burden

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<sup>2</sup>Our income estimates contain two main simplifications. First, earnings data from UI will not present a complete picture of income if workers are self-employed, employed by the federal government, in organizations which are exempted from reporting, or by multistate companies that do not report wage records to Wisconsin. A related analysis by Rothe and Hu (2002) found that 58 percent of sole-custody cases had similar incomes in UI and WCRD (a ratio of UI to WCRD income between 75 and 125 percent). Estimates of income from UI and KIDS are less comparable: 31 percent of cases had similar income in these two sources. Although the income records based on the UI data are not always equivalent to those based on the WCRD or KIDS data, UI is used as a proxy of income when the income information from WCRD or from KIDS data is missing. As a result, for 42 percent of WCRD and 82 percent of KIDS records, we relied on UI to estimate income. In our multivariate analyses, we add a dummy variable that reflects the source of income information; this will partially control for potential biases that may result from our imputation. In nearly all analyses of the WCRD, these indicator variables are not statistically significant; in the KIDS analyses, they often are statistically significant, generally denoting higher payments and compliance in cases in which we imputed income from UI rather than taking it from KIDS.

Second, the timing of income differs slightly. For cases from the WCRD, we use the income estimated in the month of final judgment or paternity adjudication; for cases based on KIDS, we use the month with the first child support order. This difference in timing within the WCRD between our income measure and the period in which we analyze the order and payments affects relatively few cases: in 79 WCRD cases the child support order is implemented three months after the final judgment or paternity adjudication. Again, in the multivariate analyses we use a dummy variable to reflect these 79 cases; we found that these cases do not generally have a statistically different relationship.

level is defined as the amount owed divided by the father's yearly income. Six equally distanced burden levels—less than 15, 15–19, 20–24, 25–29, 30–34, and 35 percent or more—are analyzed. These burden groups correspond roughly to the standard guideline percentages of income in Wisconsin for one, two, three, four, and five or more children (17, 25, 29, 31, and 34 percent, respectively).

### *Selected Limitations of the Analyses*

Our analyses have a limited focus. For example, we consider only the first year of payments. If one effect of high orders is that some fathers try to pay them initially, but cannot sustain payments over time, a longer-term examination of this question could show a stronger negative relationship between orders and payments.<sup>3</sup> Another limitation is that we focus only on fathers who owe support. Some previous research has suggested that mothers who owe child support are less likely to pay (e.g., Meyer and Garasky, 1993), but little is known from the prior research about the relationship of the amount of the order and payments among mothers. This analysis is also limited to those fathers with a single child support order. It is likely that fathers who owe child support to multiple families owe a total amount that is a higher proportion of their income than do fathers who owe to only one family, but little is known about the relationship between orders and payments for this population.

Our focus here is on the *typical* child support case, in which fathers owe a single order. We believe that longer-term analysis, analysis of other types of child support cases, and analysis using data from another state would all be useful additions to this analysis.

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<sup>3</sup>Relatively little is known about the patterns of child support payments over time. For an important exception using Wisconsin data, see Meyer and Bartfeld (1998). They examine compliance (defined as the amount paid divided by the amount due) over the first five years of an order and show a very small decline in the average compliance rate, from 67 percent of the order in the first year to 64 percent in the fifth. That analysis did not examine whether the relationship between order levels and payments or compliance changed over time.



### III. Results

#### *Descriptive Analysis*

Table 1 shows the median amounts of our key variables: child support order, child support payment, fathers' income, burden level, and compliance rate for the cases in WCRD and KIDS. Because the income levels, orders, and payments are so different for paternity and divorce cases, we show separate figures. The paternity numbers are roughly comparable between the two data sources: median orders are \$2,200–\$2,500, payments are about \$1,300–\$1,500, and income is about \$14,000–\$15,000. Each of these numbers is substantially higher for divorce cases. In contrast to the paternity numbers, the WCRD figures for divorce cases are somewhat higher than KIDS. The median burden level in both data sets is 17 percent for paternity cases and 19 percent for divorce cases. The average compliance rate for the paternity cases of WCRD is 64 percent, very similar to the 65 percent found among the paternity cases of KIDS. The compliance rate is a little higher in WCRD than in KIDS data among divorce cases, 99 percent vs. 91 percent.

The amount of child support ordered differs by the type of order. On average, percentage-expressed orders are highest, followed by fixed-dollar orders and two-part orders. We estimate that cases with percentage-expressed and two-part orders have a higher payment and compliance rate than the cases with fixed-dollar orders.

Figures 1 (WCRD) and 2 (KIDS) examine the relationship between orders and payments. We divide fathers into income groups, with higher-income groups to the right. In both figures, fathers with higher income levels pay more support. Within income groups, we examine different levels of burden, shown by the cluster of bars within the income groups. Within all income groups except those in which the father's income is less than \$10,000 per year, child support payment increases by the burden level, suggesting that higher orders result in higher payments. In contrast, among the lowest-income fathers, the

dollar amount paid is not strongly related to the amount of burden. For example, among the WCRD cases, the lowest amount paid is not among father with the lowest burden, but among fathers who owe 30–34 percent of their income. Among KIDS cases, the highest amount paid is among those with relatively low orders (15–19 percent of income), with the second highest those with the highest orders (35 percent of their income or more). Moreover, the amount paid is relatively similar across categories, differing by \$850–\$1,100, compared to a much larger “spread” of over \$3,000 in the other income groups.

Figures 3 (WCRD) and 4 (KIDS) examine the relationship between the likelihood of paying the full amount and the income and burden groups. In general, fathers with higher income are more likely to pay the full amount due. There does not seem to be a general relationship between the burden levels and compliance levels: within each income group, about the same percentage pay the full order, regardless of burden. However, these figures show that low-income fathers with higher burden levels are somewhat less likely to pay the full amount due. For example, among fathers with incomes under \$10,000, 21–26 percent of those with the lowest burdens paid the full amount due, compared to 11–17 percent of those with the highest burdens. The relationship is not consistent, however, as those least likely to pay the full amount due are those who owe between 30 and 34 percent of their income. To understand the relationships more fully, we now turn to multivariate analysis to control for other variables, which may clarify the relationships between amounts owed and paid.

### *Multivariate Analysis*

In Table 2 we examine factors related to the amount of child support paid within the first year after child support is ordered. In general, the results across the two data sources are similar. The annual amount paid is related to both the burden level and father’s annual income. Fathers with higher income pay more child support. After controlling for father’s income, higher amounts are paid when the burden

(amount owed divided by income) is higher. For example, in the WCRD sample, fathers with a burden level of between 15 and 19 percent of income pay \$1,480 more in support than fathers with burden level of under 15 percent, all else equal. Fathers with a burden level above 35 percent pay \$6,865 more in child support.<sup>4</sup> The analysis using KIDS data also shows that higher amounts are paid when the burden is higher, even after controlling for income. Other variables associated with payment of higher amounts include living outside Milwaukee County, having more children, and having older children. Less is paid to mothers with higher income (WCRD only) and in cases with a fixed-dollar order (KIDS only).

Does this relationship still hold if we focus only on the 198 WCRD fathers and the 2,330 KIDS fathers with annual incomes below \$10,000? In Table 3, the WCRD sample does not show any association between child support paid and the burden of orders. The results from KIDS, however, are more similar to our other results: those who owe 15 percent of income or more pay *higher* amounts than those who owe less than 15 percent. For example, those who owe 35 percent or more of their income pay \$577 more than those who owe less than 15 percent, all else equal. The relationship is not a gradual increase, however; those who owe between 15 and 19 percent of their income pay about the same amount as those who owe more than this, all else equal.<sup>5</sup>

Table 4 examines compliance, rather than the dollar amount paid. We define compliance as the amount paid divided by the amount of child support owed within the first year after child support was ordered, capped at 125 percent. The previous research has tended to show that those with high “burdens”

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<sup>4</sup>This type of model allows one to see the relationship between payments and any burden category, not merely the comparison category, by simply comparing the coefficients. Thus, although the base comparison group is those who owe less than 15 percent of their income, the coefficients in the other groups can be compared. For example, using the WCRD column, those who owe 20–24 percent of their income are estimated to pay \$799 more than those who owe 15–19 percent of their income (calculated from \$2,279–\$1,480).

<sup>5</sup>The other control variables tend to show relationships similar to the previous table, with two notable exceptions. Low-income divorce cases pay higher amounts than low-income paternity cases, all else equal; no statistically significant difference was found among fathers of all income levels. Second, the relationship between payment and mothers’ incomes differs, not only between Table 2 and Table 3, but within Table 3, between the data sources. The unusual finding in the WCRD sample may be related to the fairly small sample (198 cases).

pay a lower share of what is due. Similarly, Table 4 shows that those who owe 35 percent or more of their income pay a lower proportion of their order (have lower compliance) than those who owe less than 15 percent. Again similar to previous research, those with higher incomes have higher compliance rates.<sup>6</sup>

Table 5 repeats the analysis among fathers within incomes less than \$10,000. It also shows that fathers with high burdens (those who owe 35 percent of their income or more) pay a lower share of their order than those with the lowest-burden orders.<sup>7</sup>

### *Sensitivity Tests*

As described in Section II, the exclusion of cases with missing income information raises questions about the representativeness of the data we use. If cases without income information involve fathers more likely to have lower or unstable income, then they might also have lower payments, higher burdens, and lower compliance rates than cases in which father's income is known. For cases in which income is missing, we do know the amount paid; if the order is expressed as a fixed-dollar amount, we know the amount due, and therefore the compliance rate. If we limit our analysis to father-obligor cases with fixed-dollar orders for 12 consecutive months, we find:

- In the WCRD, fathers paid zero child support in 66 percent of paternity cases and 17 percent of divorce cases without income information, compared to 17 percent of paternity cases and 1 percent of divorce cases with income information.
- In KIDS, fathers paid zero child support in 48 percent of paternity and 18 percent of divorce cases without income information, compared to 11 percent of paternity cases and 3 percent of divorce cases with income information.

Therefore, excluding the cases without income information in our study could lead to problems.

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<sup>6</sup>The control variables show somewhat different relationships than those shown in Table 2. Compliance in Milwaukee is lower, but the number of children and the child's age is not statistically related to compliance. Fathers pay a higher proportion of their income when mothers have higher incomes (KIDS only). Fathers with fixed-dollar orders pay a lower share of their order than those with percentage-expressed orders, and those with two-part orders pay an even higher share (KIDS only).

<sup>7</sup>Control variables show similar relationships to those shown in Table 4, with one exception. Among KIDS cases in which the father has low income, two-part orders have lower compliance than percentage-expressed orders.

To test the robustness of our models, we first assume that any case without income information had only \$500/year in income. We are confident this is an underestimate, and thus it should provide an outer limit of how serious the problem may be.

This change in the data results in more cases with high burden levels. In our base numbers from KIDS, for example, 23 percent of the paternity cases and 12 percent of the divorce cases have burdens 35 percent or higher. If we add back the cases we had eliminated in the base results, assuming the worst-case scenario for their incomes, the proportion with high-burden orders increases to 36 percent and 26 percent, respectively. In the WCRD, the percentage with high-burden orders also doubles when we add in the missing-income cases.

Do our main conclusions change if we add the worst-case assumption about these fathers to our multivariate analyses? Table 6 repeats the analysis of Table 2, but adding in the fathers with missing income and assuming that they have only \$500/year of income. The top panel shows the key results for the relationship between the burden of the order and the amount paid. Similar to Table 2, the first panel of Table 6 shows that for both WCRD and KIDS, orders that are a higher percentage of income result in higher payments. For example, in Table 6, those with the highest burden levels pay about \$4,200–\$4,600 more than those with the lowest burden levels, all else equal. The direction of the relationship is the same, but this difference is somewhat less than the comparable numbers from Table 2 (our base results), which are \$5,400–\$6,900. In summary, making worst-case assumptions about the income levels of fathers with missing incomes leads to the same conclusion as in our base results: fathers with higher burdens pay more, all else equal.

The second panel of Table 6 focuses on fathers with incomes less than \$10,000. The analysis is the same as Table 3, except that we have used the same “worst-case assumption” imputation as the top panel, assuming that fathers with missing income have only \$500/year in income. Even with this assumptions, the KIDS results show that orders above 20 percent of income are associated with

collection of significantly higher amounts of support than orders below 15 percent of income (or orders of 15–19 percent). As in our base results in Table 3, there are no significant relationships between child support paid and the burden level among low-income fathers in the WCRD, perhaps because the sample size is relatively small. Both panels of Table 6 confirm our base results, that fathers with higher burdens tend to pay more, all else equal, and this is true of low-income fathers as well as higher-income fathers (KIDS results only).

#### IV. Conclusions

Some observers have asserted that orders that are too high will discourage those who owe child support, and will result in lower payments. In this research, we find *no* evidence for this assertion.

For the vast majority of cases in our data, fathers with *higher* orders make higher payments. This holds even after controlling for income. Orders above 35 percent of income are associated with *lower compliance*, which makes for a more active (and potentially more expensive) enforcement system, but the average *amounts that are paid are higher*. These results are generally consistent with a child support system in which most discretion has been taken away from those who owe support. For a father in the formal employment system, the amount of support is routinely and immediately withheld from his paycheck; if he changes jobs, it is likely that this will be reported to the New Hires database, and the withholding order will change to his new employer. In this context, most fathers tend to pay what they owe.

The largest area of difficulty, then, is fathers outside the formal employment system, including those who are self-employed, those who work for cash, and those who participate in illegal activities. For some of these fathers, orders may not be paid, no matter how low or high they are. For others, a lower order may encourage them to participate in the formal employment system, and a higher order may

discourage them from the formal system. How often do fathers opt in or drop out of the formal employment system? Unfortunately, there is little empirical information on how often this occurs. Our finding, that those whose income we know (generally those in the formal employment system) typically pay more support if they are ordered to pay it, is perhaps not too surprising. The lack of income information for other cases limits our confidence in our findings. Still, the sensitivity analyses, in which we assume that all fathers with unknown income actually have incomes of \$500/year, suggest that our basic findings hold even under this “worst-case” scenario—fathers who are asked to pay more, typically do, at least in the first year.

We examine the relationship between orders and payments only in the first year of the child support order. It is possible that only over time do fathers get discouraged if they are ordered to pay amounts that are too “high,” and that only over time, after arrears mount, do fathers begin to drop out. An analysis with later data may provide a different conclusion or additional insight.

Finally, our analysis does not allow us to make a causal inference. Although we find that those with higher orders pay more, that does not necessarily mean that raising an individual father’s order would result in higher payments. Fathers who are thought to be responsible (or who are very connected to their children, or some other factor that we have not measured) may have both higher orders and higher payments. In this scenario, merely increasing orders would not necessarily lead to higher payments.

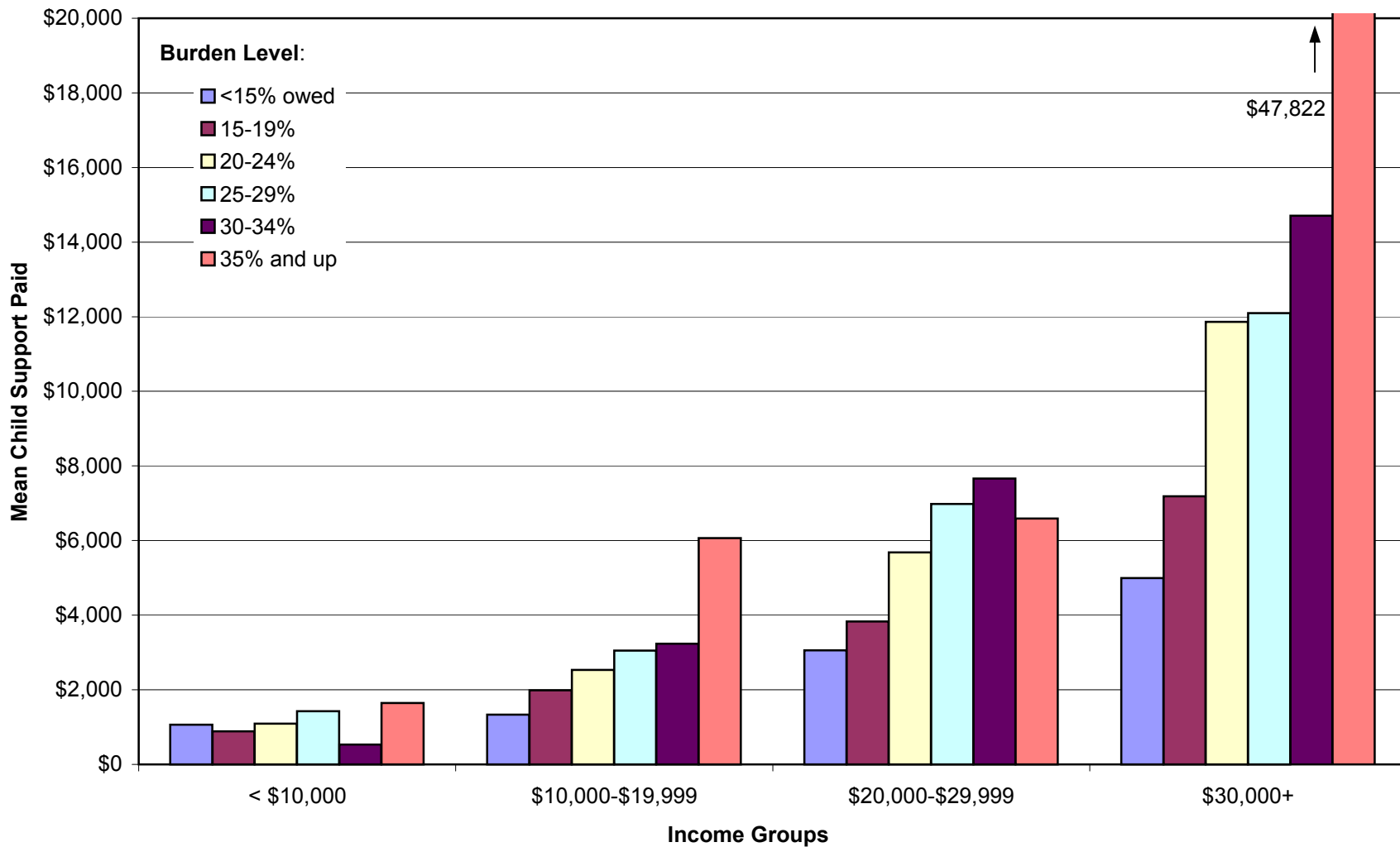
This analysis has focused only on a pragmatic issue: if more is ordered, is more paid or is less paid? We find that in general, more is paid in the first year. Does this mean that more *should* be ordered? This is a more difficult issue, one that we believe should be made after considering the needs of children, the ability of obligors to pay, and a host of other factors, in addition to the more pragmatic concern about whether orders will be paid.

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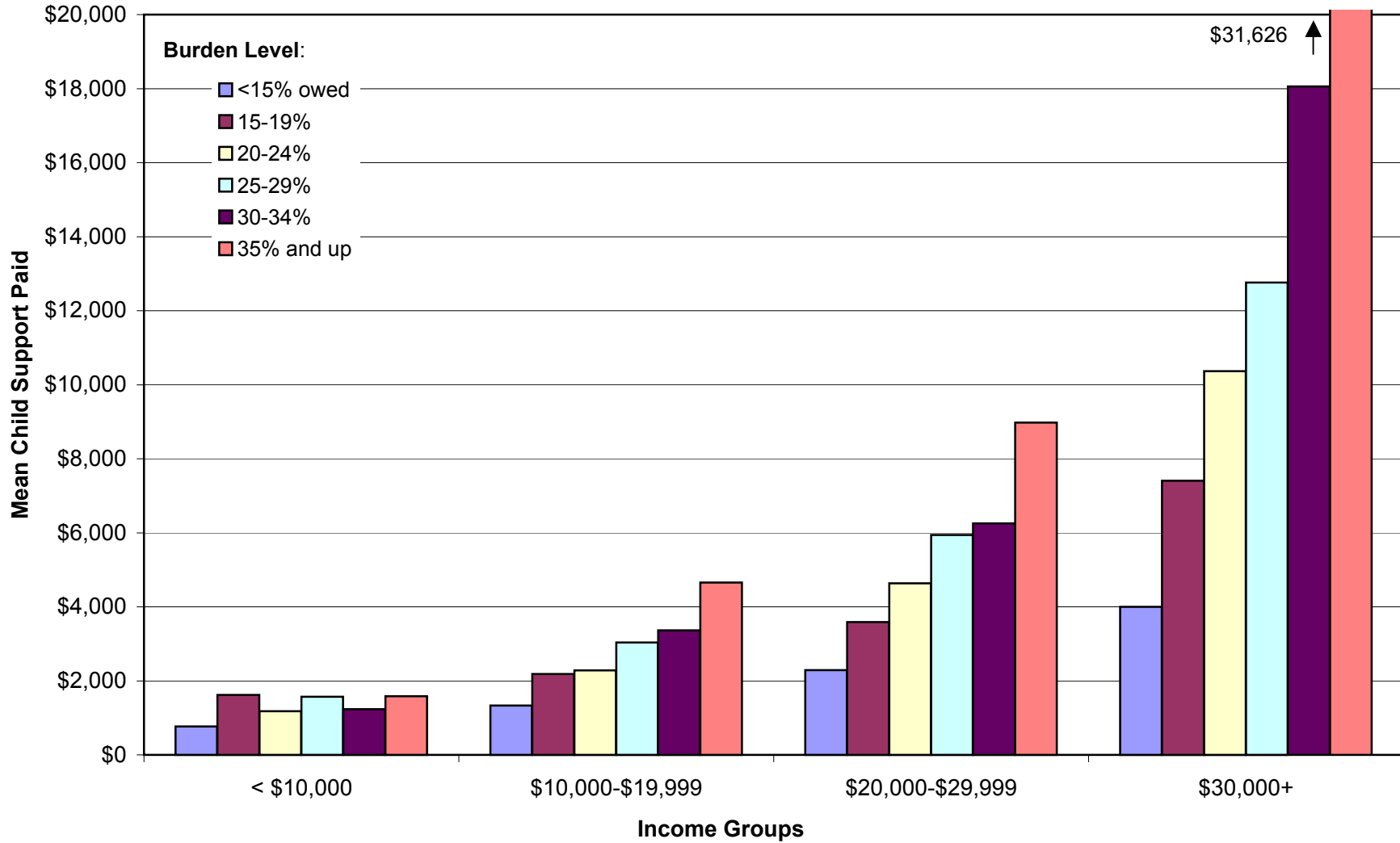
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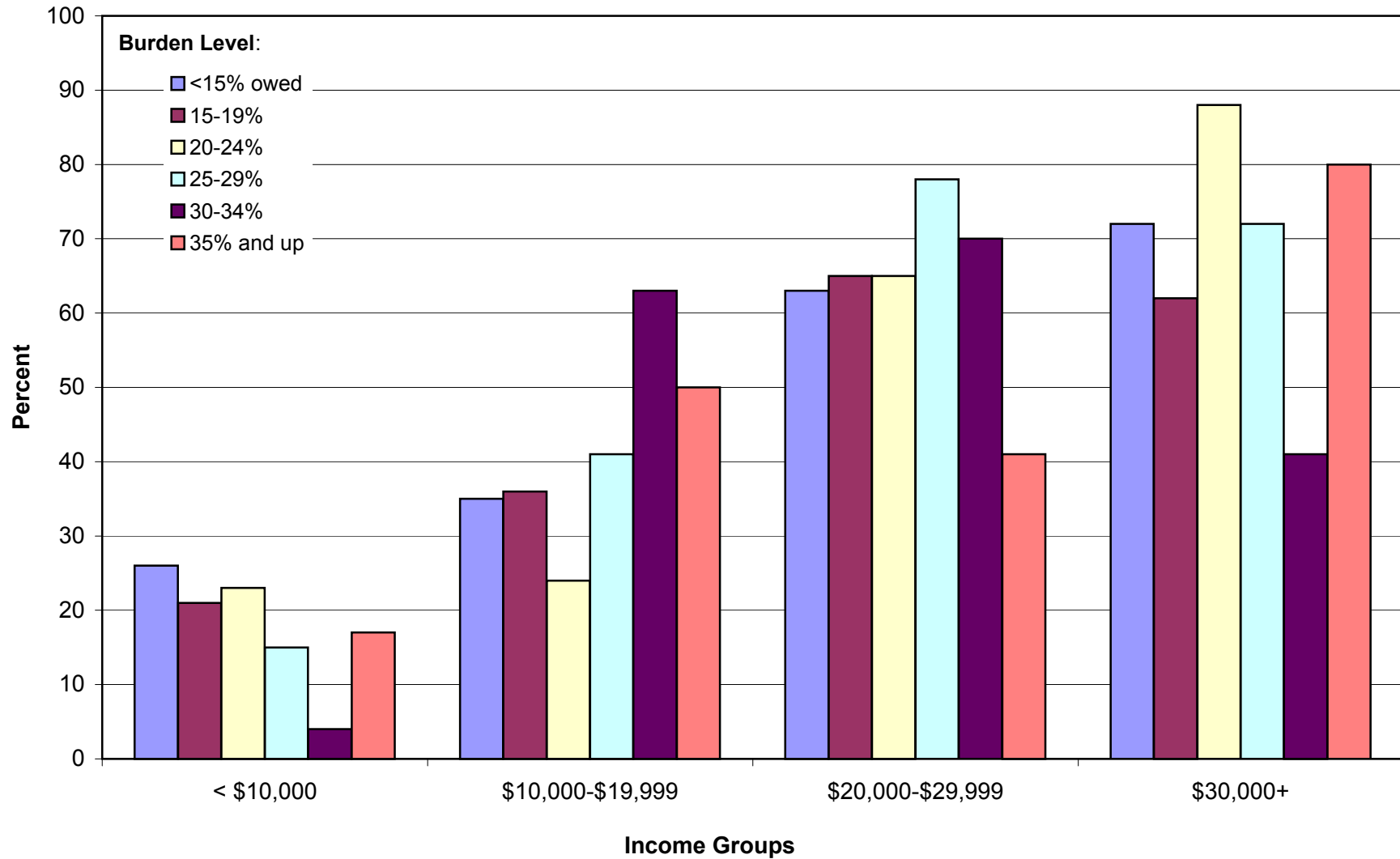
**Figure 1**  
**Mean Child Support Paid, When Something Is Paid**  
**WCRD Data**



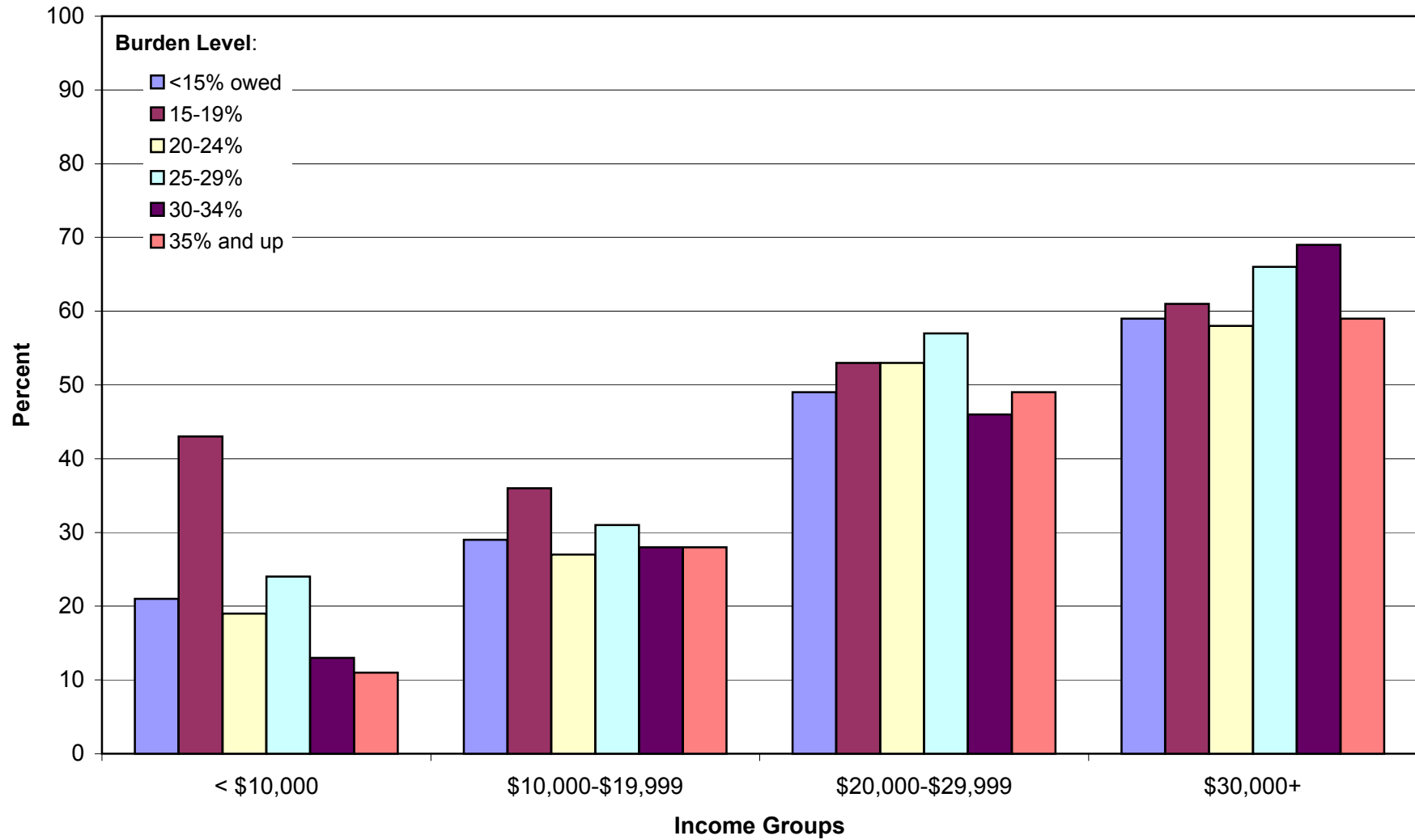
**Figure 2**  
**Mean Child Support Paid, When Something is Paid**  
**KIDS Data**



**Figure 3**  
**Percentage Paying Full Amount**  
**WCRD Data**



**Figure 4**  
**Percentage Paying Full Amount**  
**KIDS Data**



**Table 1**  
**Median Amounts of Key Variables**

	WCRD		KIDS	
	Paternity	Divorce	Paternity	Divorce
Sample Size	485	793	5190	5012
Child Support Order	\$2,181	\$6,372	\$2,496	\$5,200
Child Support Payment	\$1,280	\$5,896	\$1,497	\$4,500
Obligor's Income	\$14,111	\$34,051	\$15,168	\$30,500
Burden Level (Order/Income)	17%	19%	17%	19%
Compliance Rate (Payment/Order)	64%	99%	65%	91%
<b>Fixed-Dollar Order</b>				
Child Support Order	\$2,119	\$6,120	\$2,652	\$4,800
Child Support Payment	\$1,096	\$5,555	\$1,440	\$3,695
<b>Percentage-Expressed Order</b>				
Child Support Order	\$2,343	\$6,973	\$2,645	\$7,123
Child Support Payment	\$1,857	\$6,939	\$1,859	\$6,908
<b>Two-Part Order</b>				
Child Support Order	\$2,324	\$5,947	\$1,824	\$4,056
Child Support Payment	\$1,680	\$5,356	\$1,531	\$4,238

**Table 2**  
**Relationship between Child Support Payments and Burden Levels**

	WCRD		KIDS	
	Coeff.	S.E.	Coeff.	S.E.
Burden Level (compared to owing < 15% of income)				
Owe 15–19%	1480**	521	2112**	135
Owe 20–24%	2279**	764	3246**	185
Owe 25–29%	2255**	812	4248**	185
Owe 30–34%	5035**	1186	5248**	270
Owe 35% and more	6865**	933	5414**	197
Father's Annual Income (compared to < \$10,000)				
\$10,000–19,999	3618**	795	3353**	174
\$20,000–29,999	5465**	840	5034**	194
\$30,000 or more	10199**	827	8576**	195
Divorce (compared to paternity)	-354	611	166	136
Counties (compared to rural)				
Milwaukee	-1005*	497	-148	134
Other urban	-1042	735	250*	112
Number of Children (compared to 1 child)				
2 children	2581**	645	668**	137
3 or more children	4081**	854	1710**	192
Youngest Child's Age (compared to < 2 years old)				
3–5	809	565	-65	131
6–8	1452*	615	449**	167
>8	1464*	615	772**	151
Mother's Annual Income (compared to < \$10,000)				
\$10,000–\$19,999	-959	533	-103	106
\$20,000 and more	-1775**	563	-253	139
Type of Child Support Order (compared to percentage-expressed)				
Fixed-Dollar Order	-838	539	-1346**	140
Two-Part Order	14	527	-251	186
Constant	-2548*	1051	-3145**	408
N		1278		10202
R-squared		.298		.311

\* p < .05

\*\* p < .01

Model also includes dummy variables for missing income and missing child age, for income source, and for whether the order starts more than three months after paternity adjudication or final judgment. S.E. (standard error) is a measure of the preciseness of the coefficient.

**Table 3**  
**Relationship between Child Support Payment and Burden Levels**  
**among Low-Income Fathers**

	WCRD		KIDS	
	Coeff.	S.E.	Coeff.	S.E.
Burden Level (compared to owing < 15% of income)				
Owe 15–19%	-58	555	504*	214
Owe 20–24%	-74	660	572*	231
Owe 25–29%	221	651	471*	217
Owe 30–34%	-302	683	512*	237
Owe 35% and more	351	540	577**	191
Divorce (compared to paternity)	1642**	407	1059**	119
Counties (compared to rural)				
Milwaukee	-611*	297	-777**	105
Other urban	16	409	-40	96
Number of Children (compared to one child)				
2 children	443	434	635**	119
3 or more children	386	556	501**	180
Youngest Child's Age (compared to <2 years old)				
3–5	-961*	461	97	95
6–8	-364	605	323*	156
>8	363	500	175	139
Mother's Annual Income (compared to < \$10,000)				
\$10,000–\$19,999	-184	317	-100	95
\$20,000 and more	954*	412	-386**	125
Type of Child Support Order (compared to percentage-expressed)				
Fixed-Dollar Order	32	420	-453**	146
Two-Part Order	-58	371	-578**	143
Constant	-2548**	1051	640*	332
N		198		2330
R-squared		.324		.195

\* p < .05

\*\* p < .01

Model also includes dummy variables for missing income and missing child age, for income source, and for whether the order starts more than three months after paternity adjudication or final judgment. S.E. (standard error) is a measure of the preciseness of the coefficient.

**Table 4**  
**Relationship between Compliance and Burden Levels**

	WCRD		KIDS	
	Coeff.	S.E.	Coeff.	S.E.
Burden Level (compared to owing < 15% of income)				
Owe 15–19%	-0.03	0.03	0.03**	0.01
Owe 20–24%	-0.05	0.04	-0.02	0.01
Owe 25–29%	-0.05	0.04	-0.01	0.01
Owe 30–34%	-0.07	0.06	-0.02	0.02
Owe 35% and more	-0.16**	0.05	-0.14**	0.01
Father's Annual Income (compared to < \$10,000)				
\$10,000–19,999	0.11**	0.04	0.14**	0.01
\$20,000–29,999	0.23**	0.04	0.27**	0.01
\$30,000 or more	0.26**	0.04	0.30**	0.01
Divorce (compared to paternity)	0.02	0.03	0.06**	0.01
Counties (compared to rural)				
Milwaukee	-0.19**	0.02	-0.16**	0.01
Other urban	0.01	0.04	-0.05**	0.01
Number of Children (compared to 1 child)				
2 children	0.03	0.03	0.00	0.01
3 or more children	0.00	0.04	-0.01	0.01
Youngest Child's Age (compared to < 2 years old)				
3–5	0.04	0.03	-0.00	0.01
6–8	0.02	0.03	0.01	0.01
>8	-0.00	0.03	-0.01	0.01
Mother's Annual Income (compared to < \$10,000)				
\$10,000–19,999	0.01	0.03	0.03**	0.01
\$20,000 and more	0.01	0.03	0.05**	0.01
Type of Child Support Order (compared to percentage-expressed)				
Fixed-Dollar Order	-0.08**	0.03	-0.10**	0.01
Two-Part Order	-0.04	0.03	0.05**	0.01
Constant	0.76**	0.05	0.52**	0.03
N		1278		10202
R-squared		.239		.344

\* p < .05, \*\* p < .01

Model also includes dummy variables for missing income and missing child age, for income source, and for whether the order starts more than three months after paternity adjudication or final judgment.

**Note:** Compliance is defined as the amount paid by the amount owed, capped at 125 percent.

S.E. (standard error) is a measure of the preciseness of the coefficient.



**Table 5**  
**Relationship between Compliance and Burden Levels**  
**among Low-Income Fathers**

	WCRD		KIDS	
	Coeff.	S.E.	Coeff.	S.E.
Burden Level (compared to owing < 15% of income)				
Owe 15–19%	-0.20	0.14	0.11*	0.04
Owe 20–24%	-0.22	0.17	0.07	0.05
Owe 25–29%	-0.12	0.17	0.05	0.04
Owe 30–34%	0.27	0.18	0.03	0.05
Owe 35% and more	-0.29*	0.14	-0.08*	0.04
Divorce (compared to paternity)	0.37**	0.11	0.13**	0.02
Counties (compared to rural)				
Milwaukee	-0.31**	0.08	-0.29**	0.02
Other urban	0.03	0.11	-0.09**	0.02
Number of Children (compared to one child)				
2 children	-0.16	0.11	0.01	0.02
3 or more children	-0.21	0.15	-0.03	0.04
Youngest Child's Age (compared to <2 years old)				
3–5	-0.14	0.12	0.01	0.02
6–8	-0.05	0.16	0.03	0.03
>8	-0.13	0.13	0.02	0.03
Mother's Annual Income (compared to < \$10,000)				
\$10,000–19,999	-0.10	0.08	-0.00	0.02
\$20,000 and more	0.16	0.11	0.08**	0.02
Type of Child Support Order (compared to percentage-expressed)				
Fixed-Dollar Order	-0.11	0.11	-0.23**	0.03
Two-Part Order	-0.12	0.10	-0.16**	0.03
Constant	1.05**	0.17	0.64**	0.06
N		198		2330
R-squared		.325		.273

\* p < .05

\*\* p < .01

Model also includes dummy variables for missing income and missing child age, for income source, and for whether the order starts more than three months after paternity adjudication or final judgment.

**Note:** Compliance is defined as the amount paid by the amount owed, capped at 125 percent.

S.E. (standard error) is a measure of the preciseness of the coefficient.

**Table 6**  
**Sensitivity Tests: The Relationship between Child Support Payments and Burden Levels**

	WCRD		KIDS	
	Coeff.	S.E.	Coeff.	S.E.
Burden Level (compared to owing < 15% of income)				
Owe 15–19%	1686**	474	1914**	134
Owe 20–24%	2141**	681	2841**	183
Owe 25–29%	2153**	705	3819**	179
Owe 30–34%	4607**	1051	4610**	266
Owe 35% and more	4232**	691	4609**	174
N		1605		12905
R-squared		.298		.306
<b>Among Low-Income Fathers</b>				
Burden Level (compared to owing < 15% of income)				
Owe 15–19%	868	770	299	346
Owe 20–24%	1246	1009	1215**	428
Owe 25–29%	729	912	1655**	377
Owe 30–34%	644	1006	1213**	446
Owe 35% and more	428	765	1238**	334
N		525		5043
R-squared		.290		.182

\* p < .05

\*\* p < .01

Models also includes all variables in the base multivariate model.

S.E. (standard error) is a measure of the preciseness of the coefficient.