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Henry McMaster
Governor

William H. Floyd, III
Executive Director

STATE INSTRUCTION NUMBER 25-14

To: Local Workforce Development Board Chairs
Local Workforce Area Signatory Officials
Local Workforce Area Administrators

Subject: Updated Federal Income Guidelines

Issuance Date: May 27, 2026

Effective Date: July 1, 2026

Purpose: To transmit updates to federal income guidelines used in establishing eligibility for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) participation and/or specific WIOA services.

References:

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Public Law, 113-128, §§ 3(36); 127(b)(2)(C); 132(b)(1)(B)(v)(IV); 134(c)(3)(A)
- 20 CFR Part 680; 20 CFR Part 681
- WIOA 2026 Lower Living Standard Income Level (LLSIL), Federal Register 21512 (April 22, 2026)
- Annual Update of the HHS Poverty Guidelines, Federal Register 1798 (January 15, 2026)

Background: Annually, the US Department of Labor (DOL) determines the LLSIL, which is used for several purposes under WIOA. Likewise, the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) updates the poverty guidelines annually. DOL uses these poverty-level guidelines to determine the annual LLSIL State formula allotments.

The term “low-income individual” is defined for eligibility purposes as one who qualifies under various criteria, including an individual who receives, or received for a prior six-month period, income that does not exceed the higher level of the poverty line or 70 percent of the LLSIL. The LLSIL is the income level (adjusted for regional, metropolitan, urban, and rural differences and family size) determined annually by DOL based on the most recent lower living family budget.

Policy: The guidance in this state instruction letter must be used to determine priority of service for programs that use economically disadvantaged or low-income status criteria.

Attachment A, *WIOA Family Income Guidelines*, incorporates the most recent updates to the 70 percent LLSIL and the HHS Poverty Guidelines. *WIOA Family Income Guidelines* applies when using income as the determining criteria for “low-income individuals”.

For an individual with a disability, income level for eligibility purposes is based on the individual’s own income rather than their family’s income. Only in-school youth (ISY) with a disability must be low-income to meet the eligibility requirements; out-of-school youth (OSY) with a disability are not required to be low-income.

Economic Self-Sufficiency

WIOA training services may be made available to employed and unemployed adults and dislocated workers who are determined:

- Unlikely or unable to obtain or retain employment through career services that leads to a) economic self-sufficiency or b) wages comparable to or higher than wages from previous employment
- In need of training services to obtain or retain employment leading to economic self-sufficiency or wages comparable to or higher than wages from previous employment
- Have the skills and qualifications to participate successfully in training services

Economic self-sufficiency is a measurement of income adequacy based on the costs of basic needs for working families, such as housing, child care, food, health care, transportation, and miscellaneous items, as well as the cost of taxes and the impact of tax credits. To determine economic self-sufficiency standards (i.e., the need for training services), LWDBs must develop a criteria using either of the following:

- The 100 percent LLSIL based on family size and income, represented on Attachment B, *100% Lower Living Standard Income Levels*.
- The Self-Sufficiency Standard (SSS) for South Carolina, from the Center for Women’s Welfare, found here: <https://findyourfuture.sc.gov/self-sufficiency-standard-south-carolina>.

NOTE: Self-sufficiency for dislocated workers may be defined in relation to a percentage of the layoff wage.

Attachment D, *Economic Self-Sufficiency Comparison*, is a PowerPoint presenting the comparison between the 100 percent LLSIL and the SSS for South Carolina. It displays the range of differences in metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas, as well as the range for income threshold and family size in each county. This comparison shows which model — 100 percent LLSIL or SSS for South

Carolina — has a higher threshold of self-sufficiency depending on family size, to articulate that both models should be consulted in the LWDB's development of a criteria for self-sufficiency standards.

Needs-Related Payments

Needs-related payments provide financial assistance to participants, enabling them to participate in training. To receive needs-related payments, the following eligibility requirements apply:

1. Adult Participants must:
 - a) Be unemployed
 - b) Not qualify for, or have ceased qualifying for, unemployment compensation (UC)
 - c) Be enrolled in training services under WIOA § 134 (c)(3)
2. Dislocated Worker Participants must:
 - a) Be unemployed and —
 - i. Have ceased to qualify for UC or trade readjustment allowances (TRA) under the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program
 - ii. Be enrolled in training under WIOA § 134(c)(3) by the end of the thirteenth week after the most recent layoff that resulted in a determination of the worker's eligibility as a dislocated worker, or, if later, by the end of the eighth week after the worker is informed that a short-term layoff will exceed six months
 - b) Be unemployed and did not qualify for UC or TRA under TAA and be enrolled in training services under WIOA § 134(c)

NOTE: LWDBs must include in their WIOA Supportive Services policy whether they provide needs-related payments.

Payment levels for Adult Participants must be established by each LWDB. For Dislocated Worker Participants, payments may not exceed the greater of either:

- The applicable weekly level of UC benefits for participants who were eligible for UC as a result of the qualifying dislocation.
- The poverty level for an equivalent period for participants who did not qualify for UC as a result of the qualifying layoff. The weekly payment level must be adjusted to reflect changes in total family income, as determined by LWDB policies.

Attachment C, *Poverty Level Guidelines*, represents the HHS poverty guidelines for use in determining needs-related payment amounts for dislocated workers.

Action: Please ensure that all appropriate staff receive and understand this policy.

- Recipients are responsible for the distribution and implementation of this policy guidance within their respective LWDA.
- Replace State Instruction Letter 24-11, *Updated Federal Income Guidelines*, with this State Instruction letter.
- Effective July 1, 2026, the attached guidelines is applicable to eligibility determinations under WIOA.

Inquiries: Questions may be directed to WorkforcePolicy@dew.sc.gov.

Nina Staggars

Nina Staggars, Assistant Executive Director
Workforce Development Division

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment A - WIOA Family Income Guidelines for South Carolina
- Attachment B - 100% Lower Living Standard Income Levels for South Carolina
- Attachment C - Poverty Level Guidelines for South Carolina
- Attachment D - Economic Self-Sufficiency Comparison

WIOA FAMILY INCOME GUIDELINES FOR SOUTH CAROLINA

<u>Family Size</u>	<u>Non-Metropolitan</u>	<u>Metropolitan*</u>
1	\$15,960	\$15,960
2	\$21,640	\$21,640
3	\$27,320	\$27,978
4	\$33,386	\$34,542
5	\$39,399	\$40,767
6	\$46,076	\$47,680
7	\$52,753	\$54,593
8	\$59,430	\$61,506
Over 8 Increments	\$6,677	\$6,913

*The metropolitan areas of South Carolina include the following counties: Aiken, Anderson, Beaufort, Berkeley, Calhoun, Charleston, Chester, Darlington, Dorchester, Edgefield, Fairfield, Florence, Greenville, Horry, Jasper, Kershaw, Lancaster, Laurens, Lexington, Pickens, Richland, Saluda, Spartanburg, Sumter, Union, and York.

These guidelines incorporate the latest 70 percent Lower Living Standard Income Level (LLSIL) from the Department of Labor (DOL) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Poverty Guidelines. The figure for a particular family size is the maximum household income an individual is permitted to qualify as low income under WIOA. This issuance supersedes all previously issued Family Income Guidelines as of the state instruction letter effective date.

The Family Income Guidelines are updated annually when federal guidelines change. It is important that the previous copies of the guidelines are kept and are not discarded. The older versions, for example, would be used to review income levels in effect at the time an individual originally applied for WIOA.

Use to determine low-income status for WIOA services.

100% LOWER LIVING STANDARD INCOME LEVELS FOR SOUTH CAROLINA

<u>Family Size</u>	<u>Non-Metropolitan</u>	<u>Metropolitan*</u>
1	\$17,184	\$17,773
2	\$28,150	\$29,120
3	\$38,637	\$39,969
4	\$47,695	\$49,345
5	\$56,284	\$58,239
6	\$65,823	\$68,114
7	\$75,362	\$77,989
8	\$84,901	\$87,864
Over 8 Increments	\$9,539	\$9,875

*The metropolitan areas of South Carolina include the following counties: Aiken, Anderson, Beaufort, Berkeley, Calhoun, Charleston, Chester, Darlington, Dorchester, Edgefield, Fairfield, Florence, Greenville, Horry, Jasper, Kershaw, Lancaster, Laurens, Lexington, Pickens, Richland, Saluda, Spartanburg, Sumter, Union, and York.

The 100 percent Lower Living Standard Income Level (LLSIL) from the Department of Labor (DOL) is updated annually when federal guidelines change. It is important that the previous copies of the guidelines are kept and are not discarded. The older versions, for example, would be used to review income levels in effect at the time an individual originally applied for WIOA training services.

May be used to determine economic self-sufficiency for WIOA training services.

POVERTY LEVEL GUIDELINES FOR SOUTH CAROLINA

<u>Family Size</u>	<u>Income</u>
1	\$15,960
2	\$21,640
3	\$27,320
4	\$33,000
5	\$38,680
6	\$44,360
7	\$50,040
8	\$55,720
Over 8 Increments	\$5,680

The poverty guidelines are used to determine eligibility for dislocated workers who are in need of financial assistance (Needs-Related Payments) to participate in training programs under WIOA.

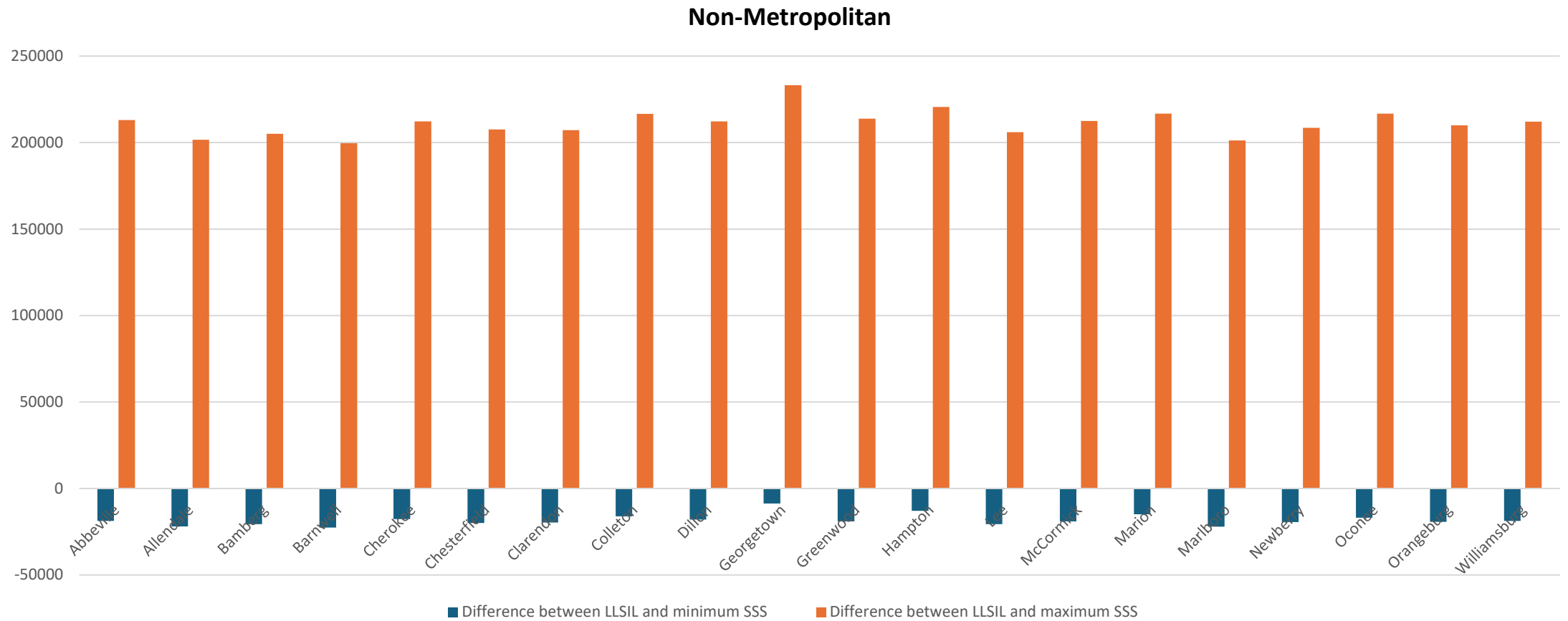
The poverty guidelines are issued each year by the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). It is important that the previous copies of the guidelines are kept and are not discarded. The older versions, for example, would be used to review income levels in effect at the time an individual was determined to be eligible to receive Needs-Related Payments under WIOA.

Use to determine needs-related payments for dislocated workers in WIOA.

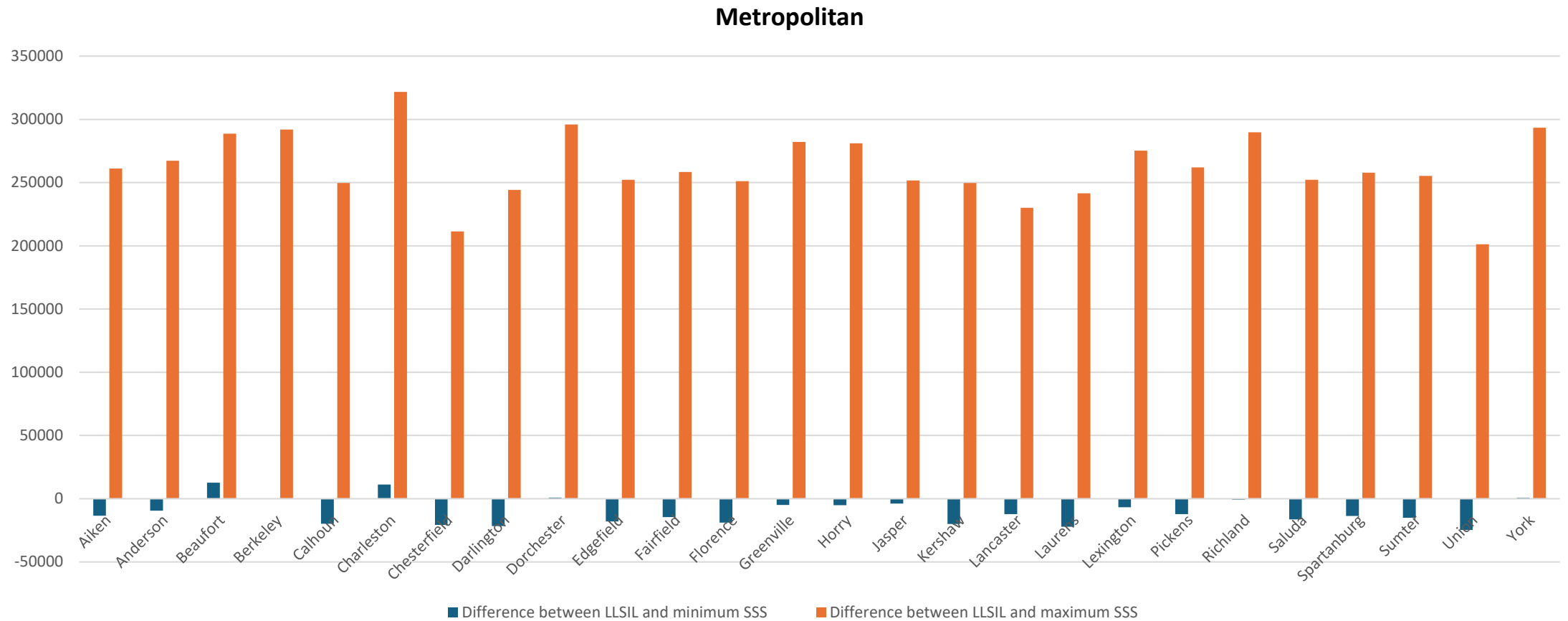
Economic Self-Sufficiency Comparison

This PowerPoint presents the comparison between the Lower Living Standard Income Level (LLSIL) from the Department of Labor (DOL) and the Self-Sufficiency Standard (SSS) for South Carolina from the Center for Women's Welfare organized by county.

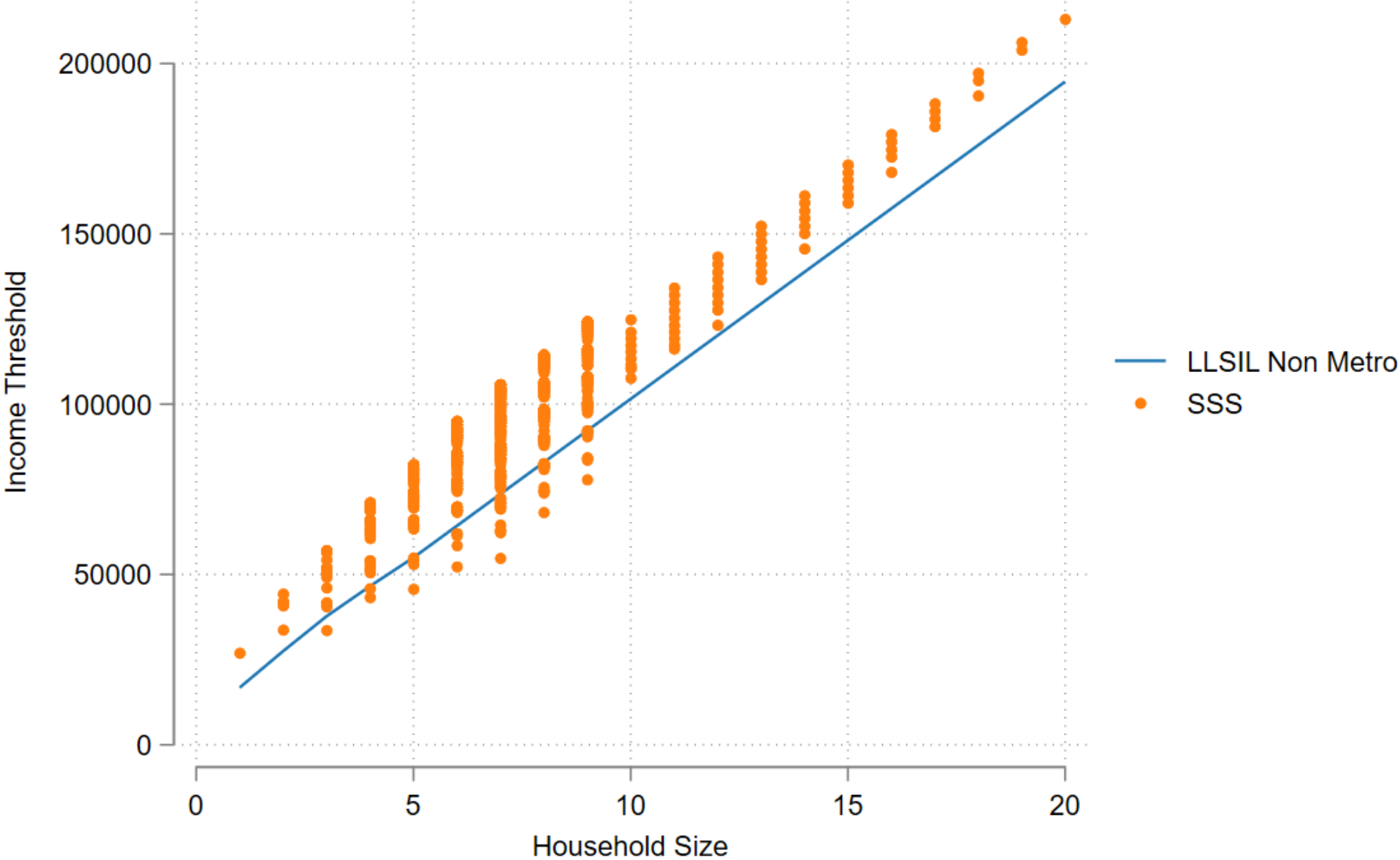
Range of difference between LLSIL and SSS



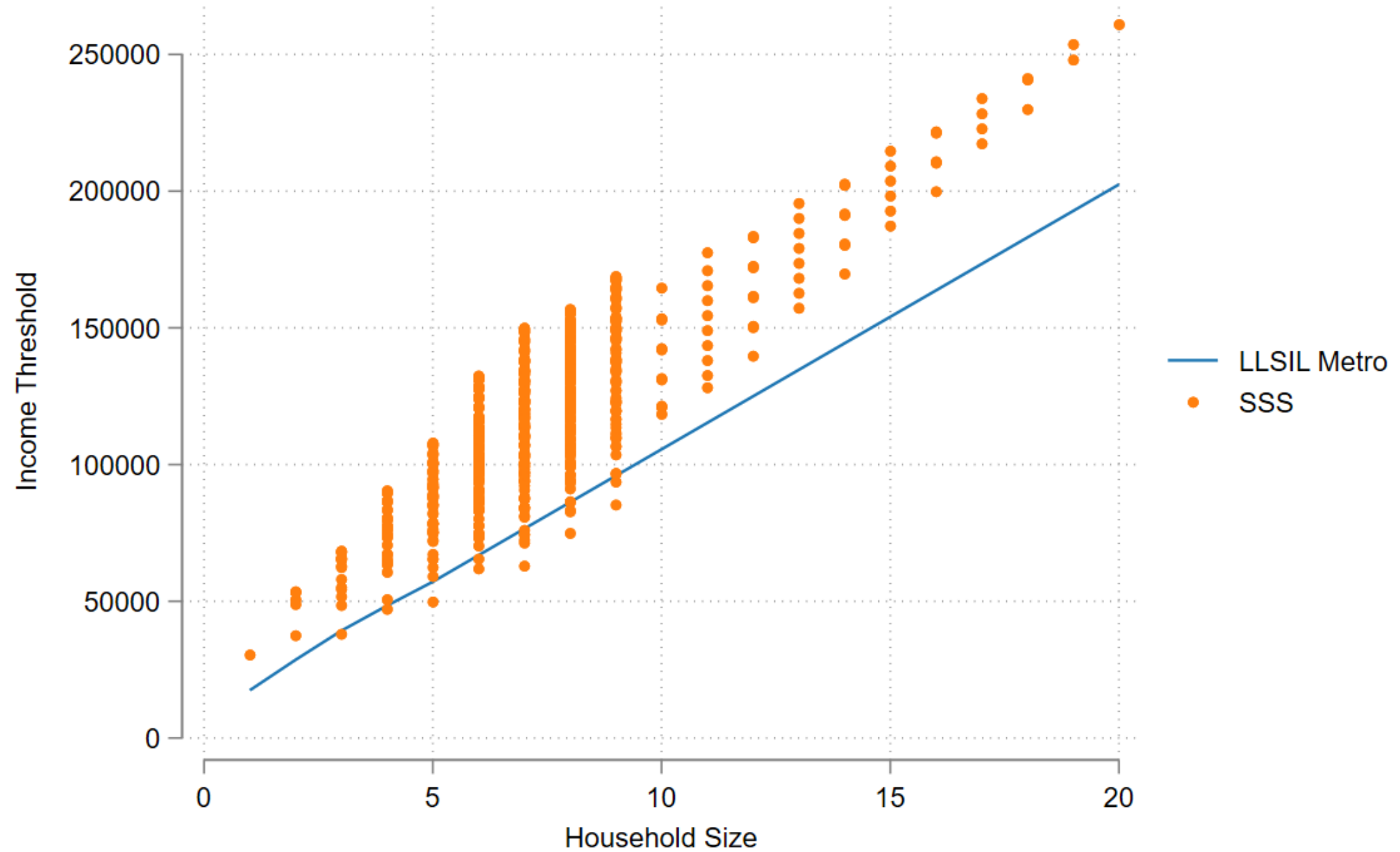
Range of difference between LLSIL and SSS



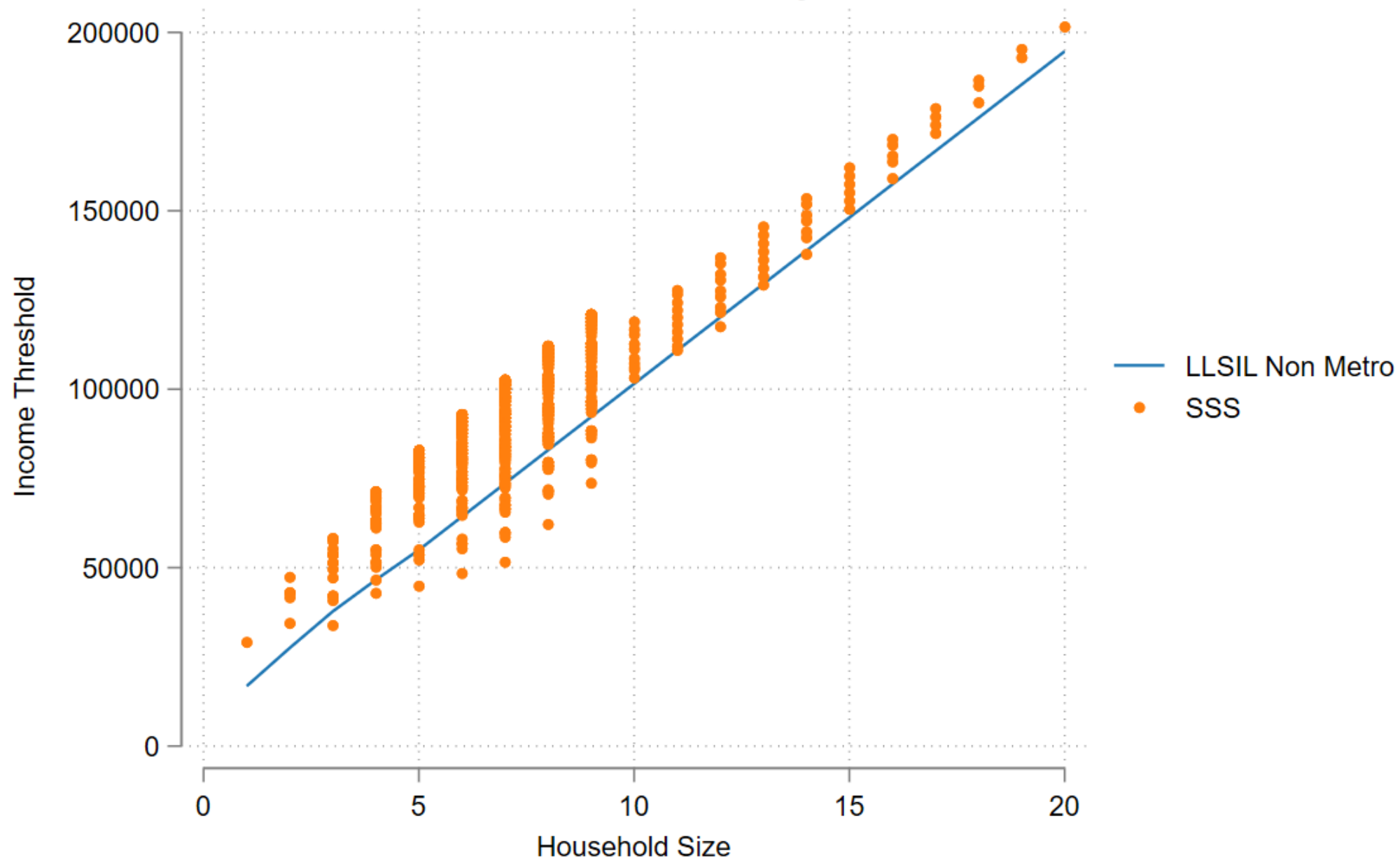
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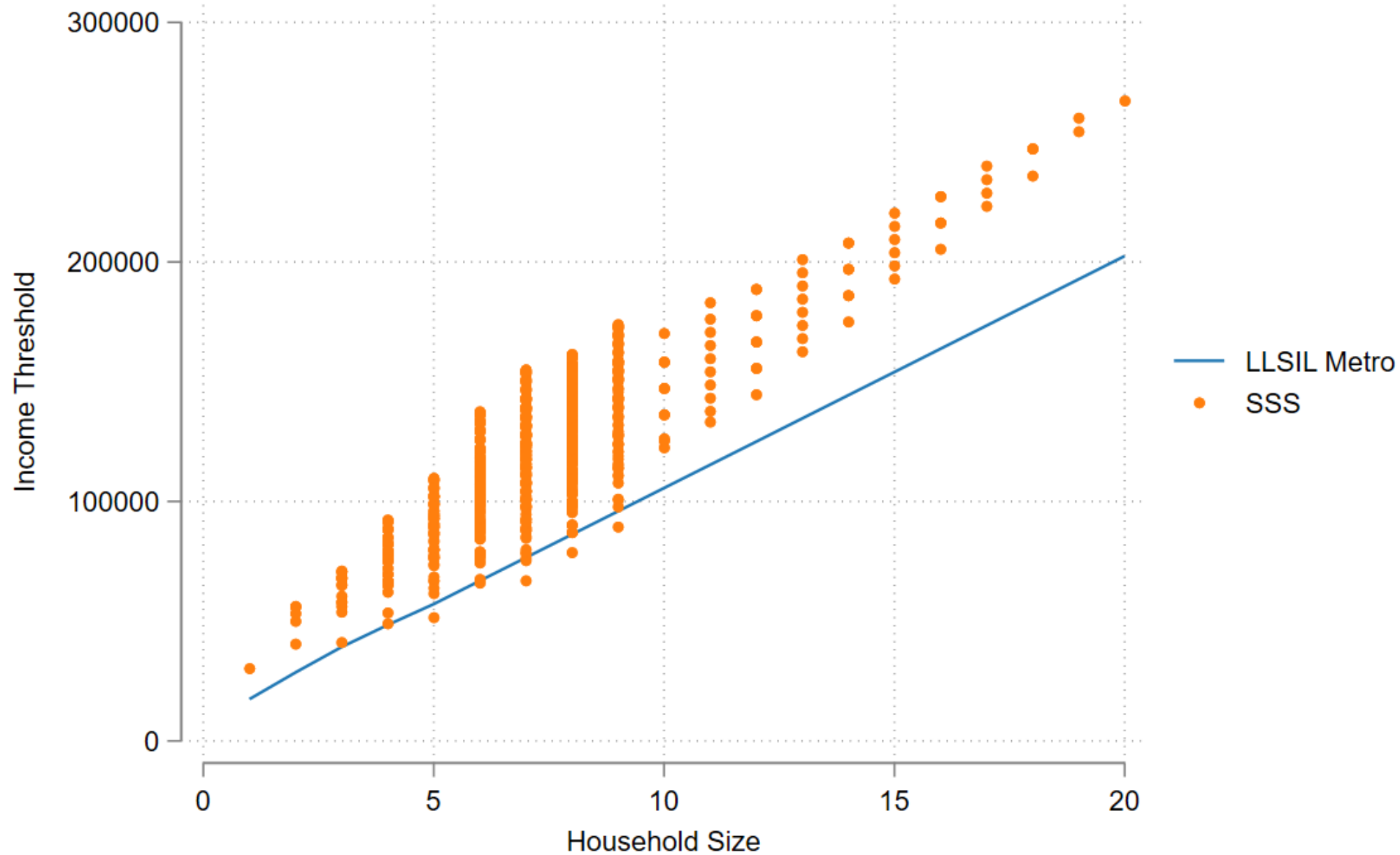
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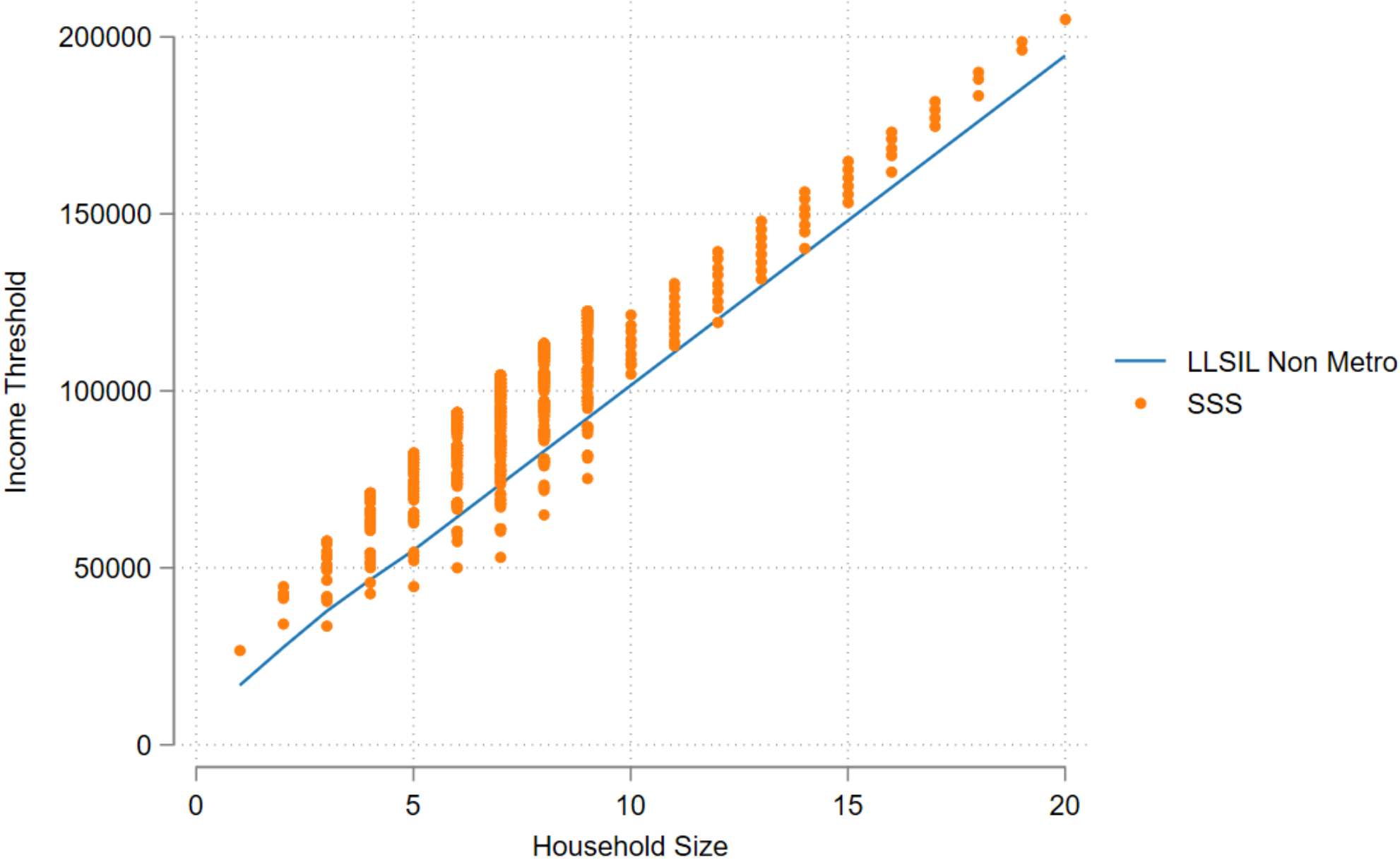
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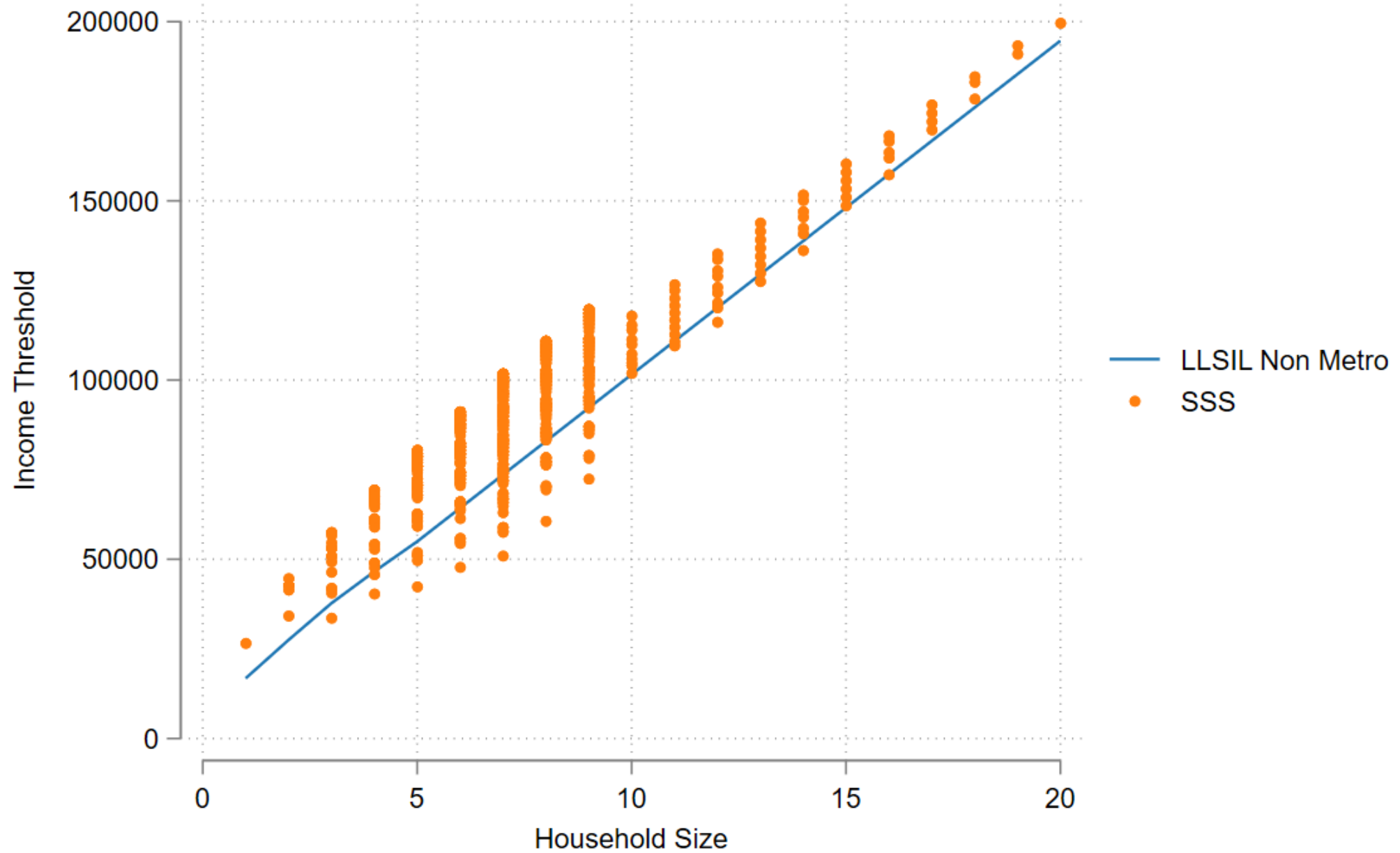
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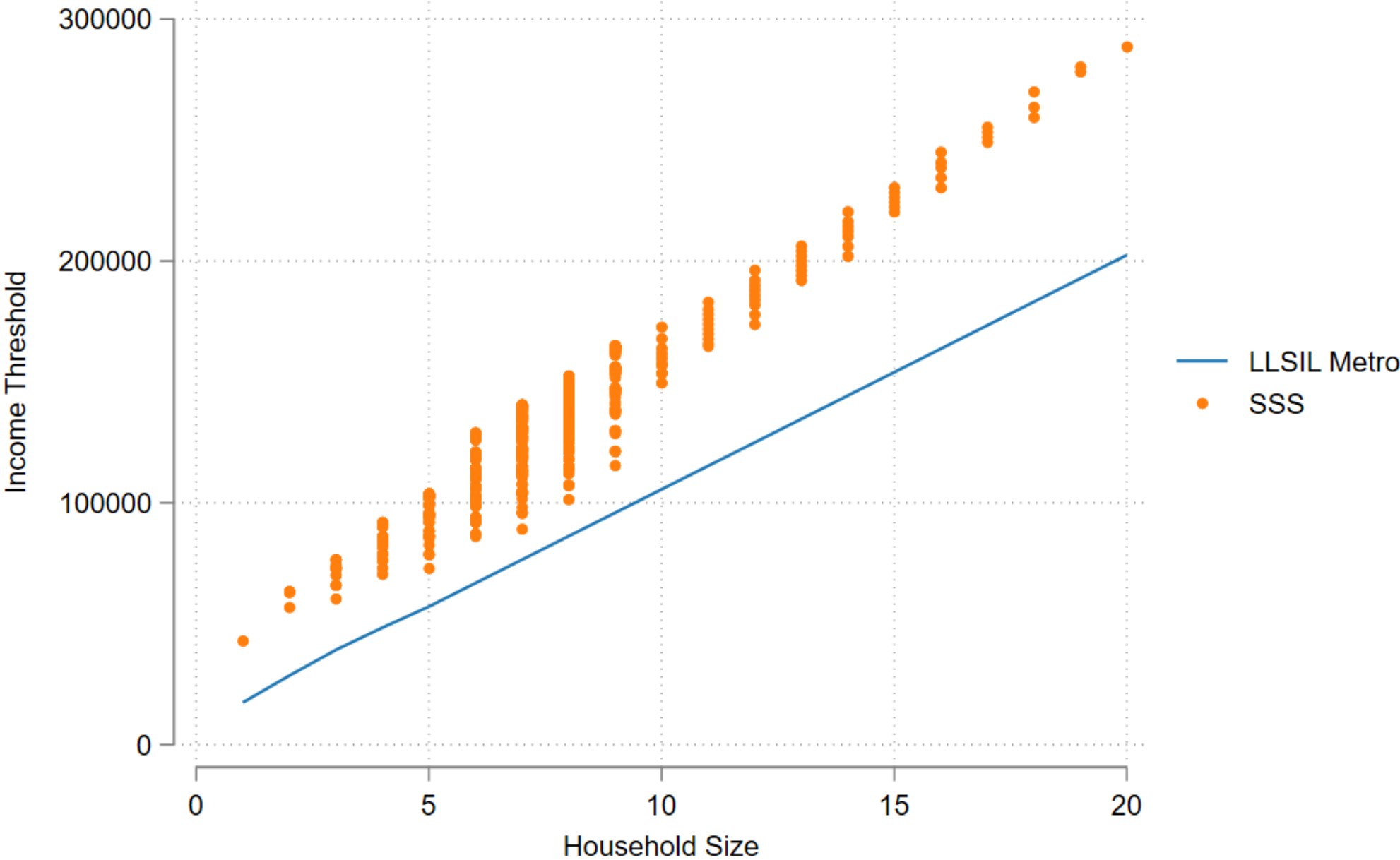
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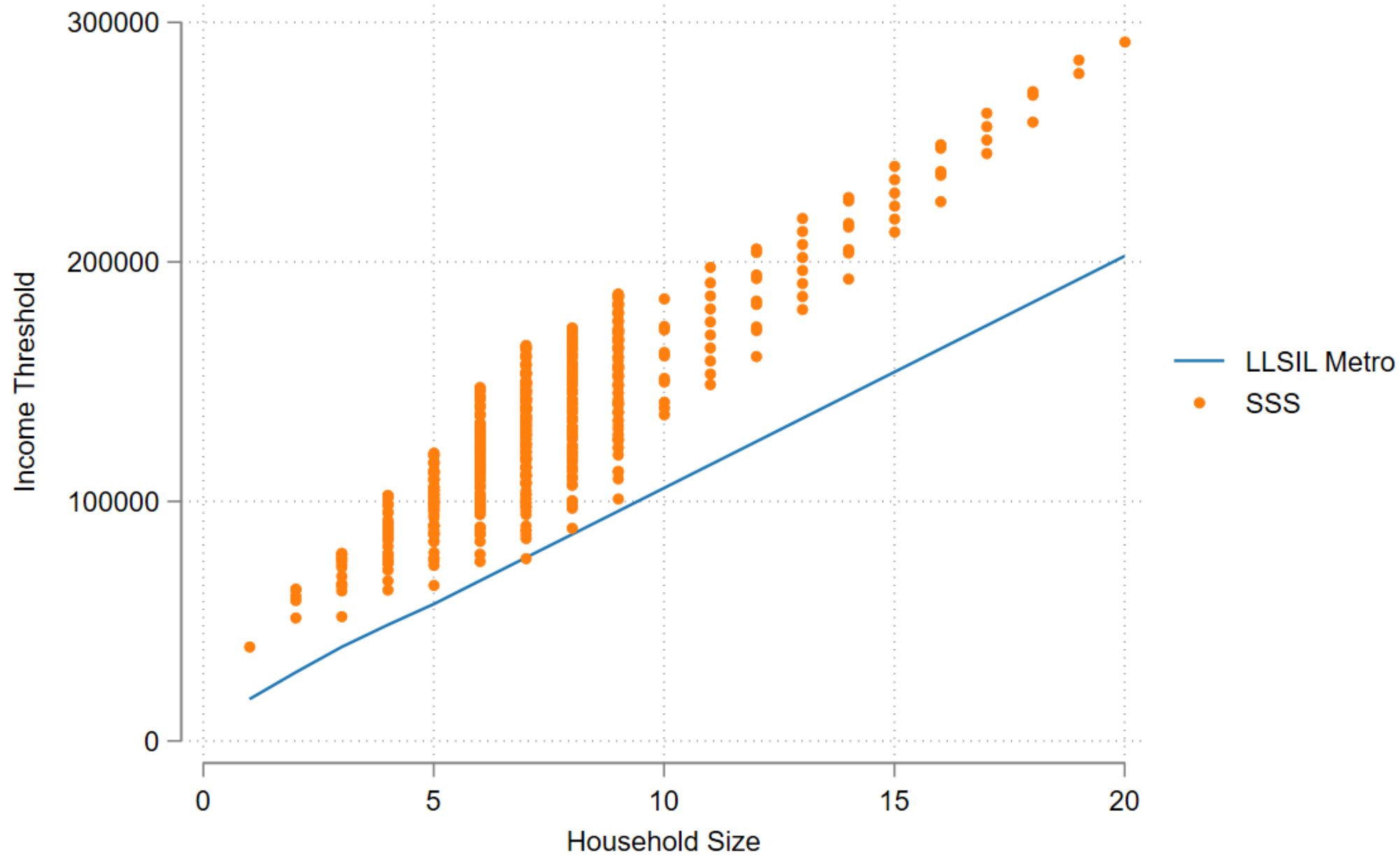
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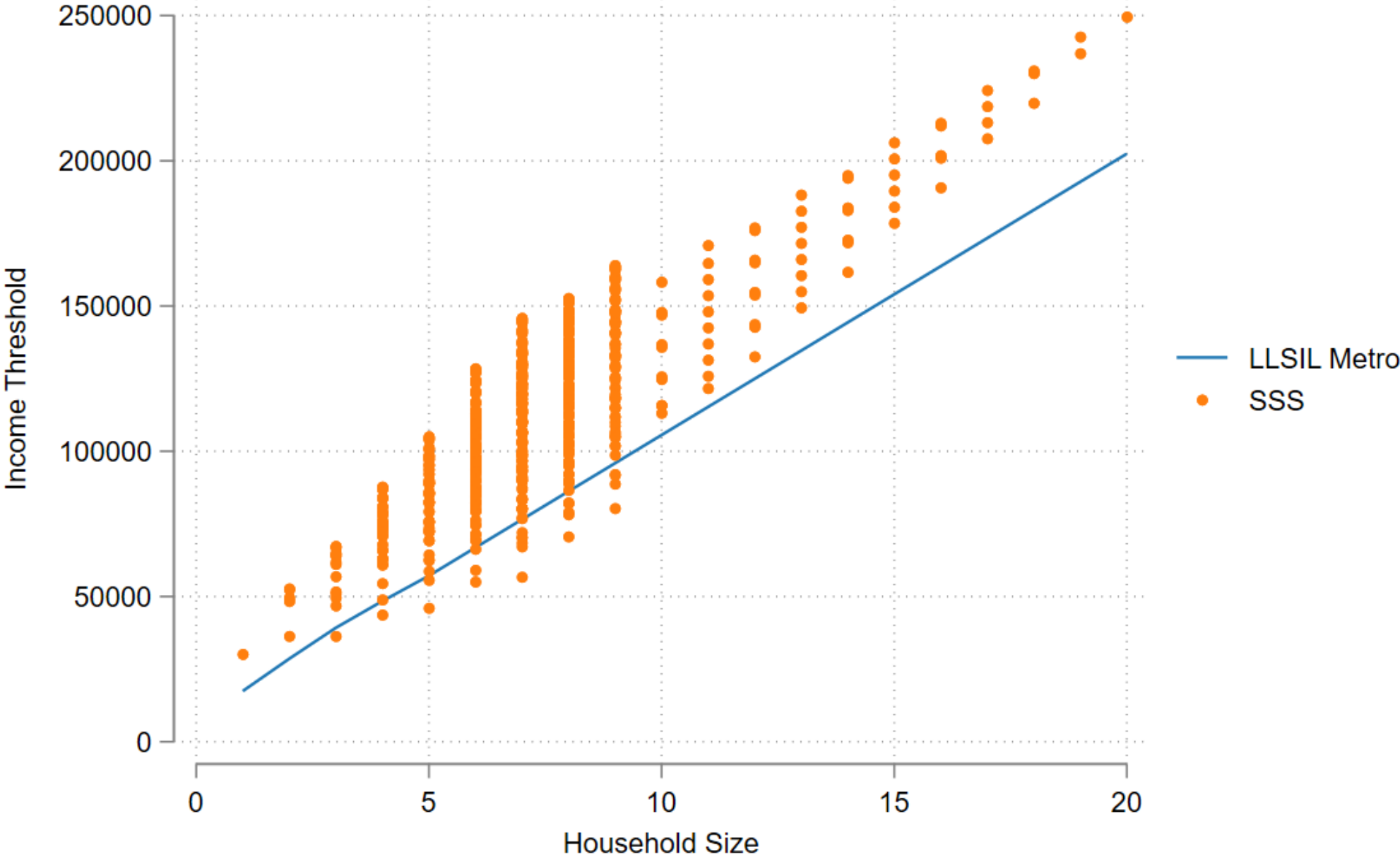
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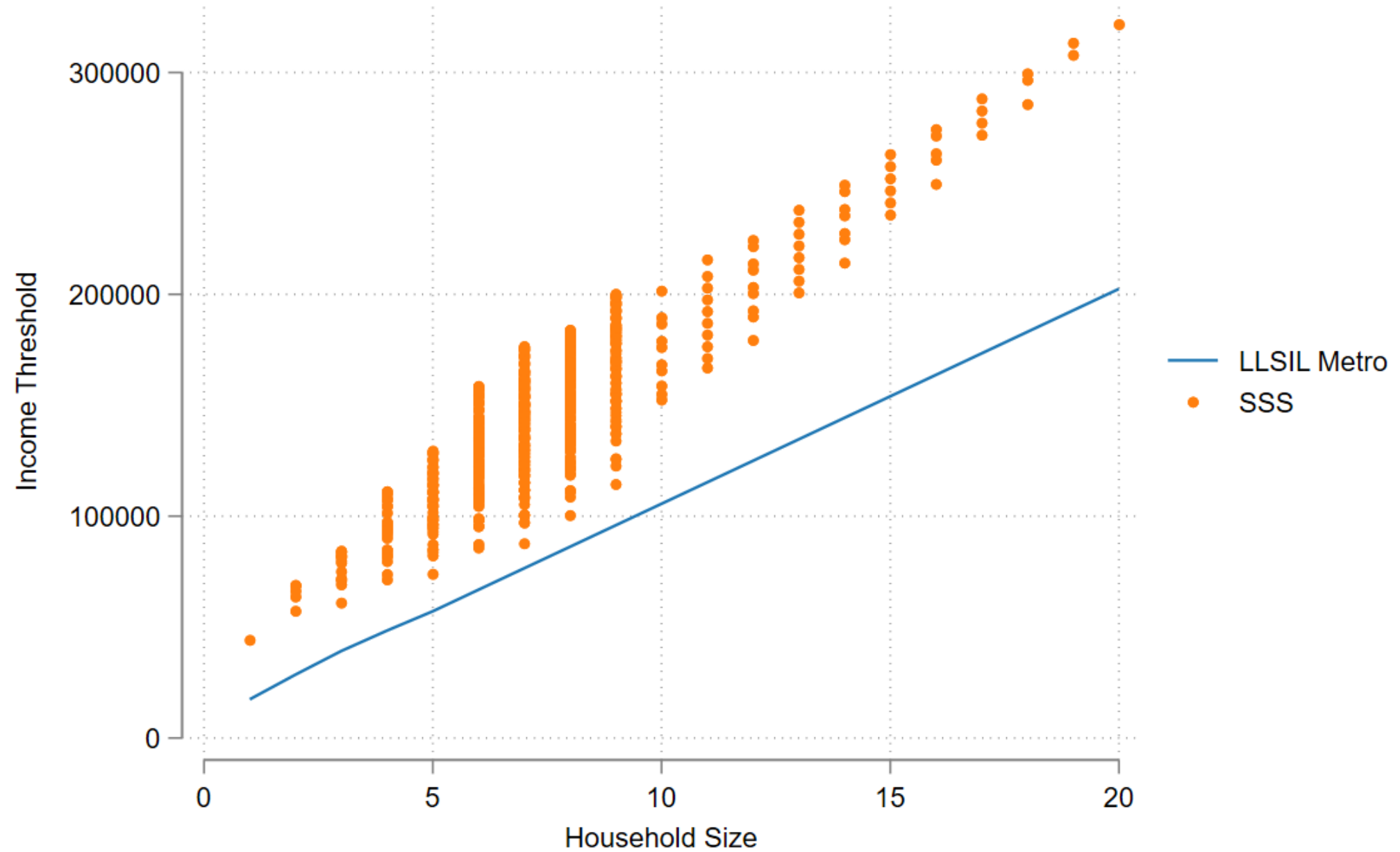
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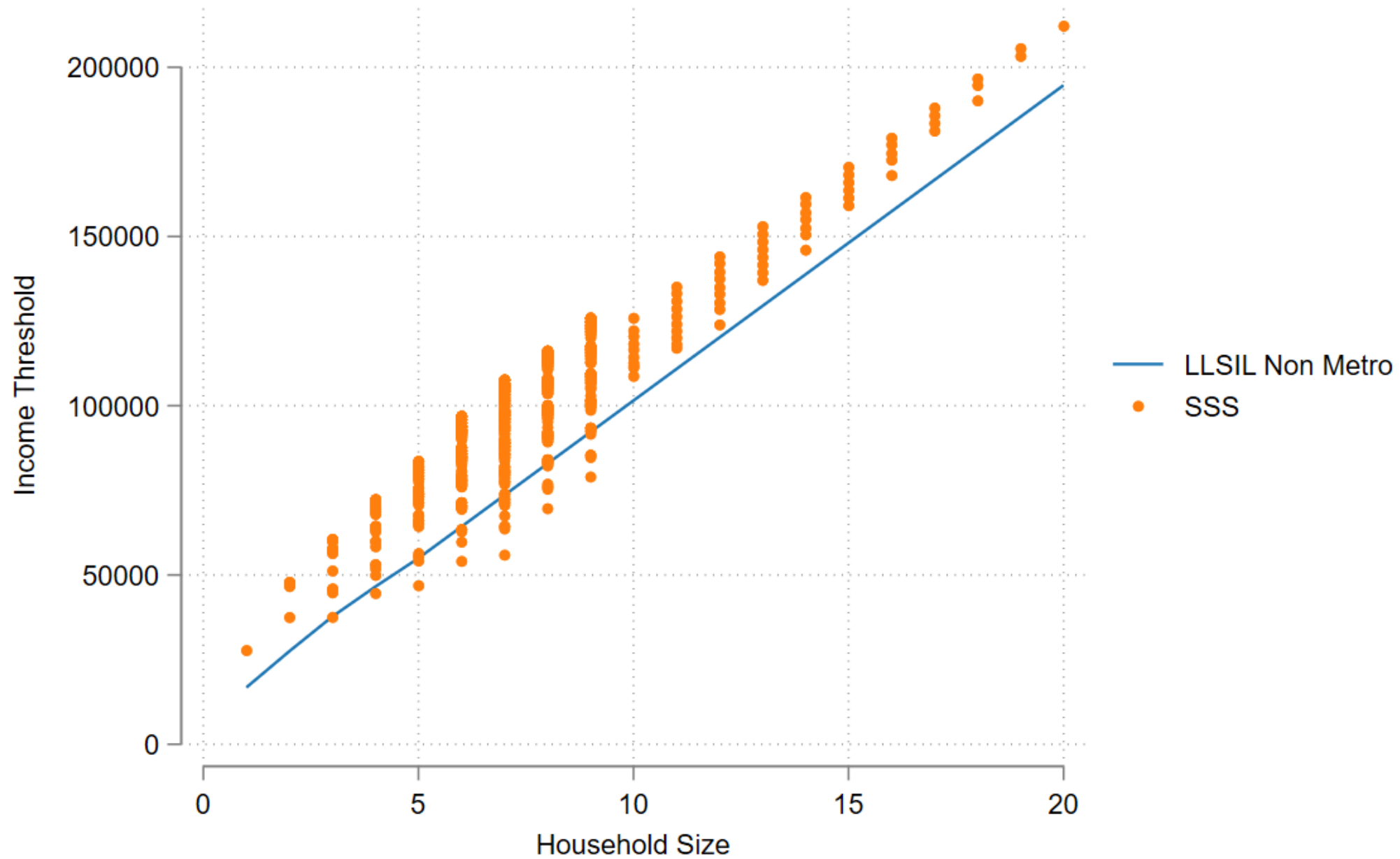
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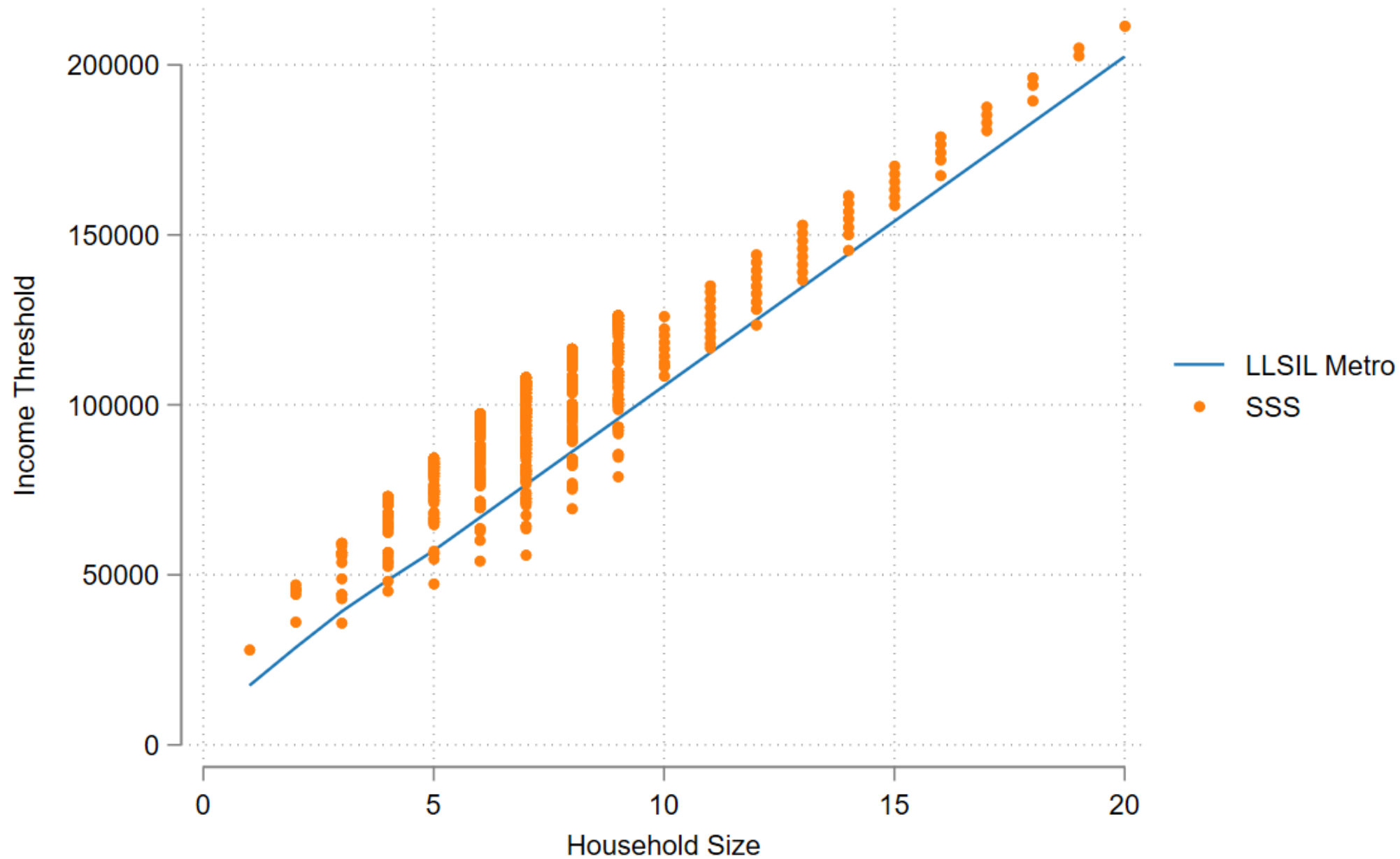
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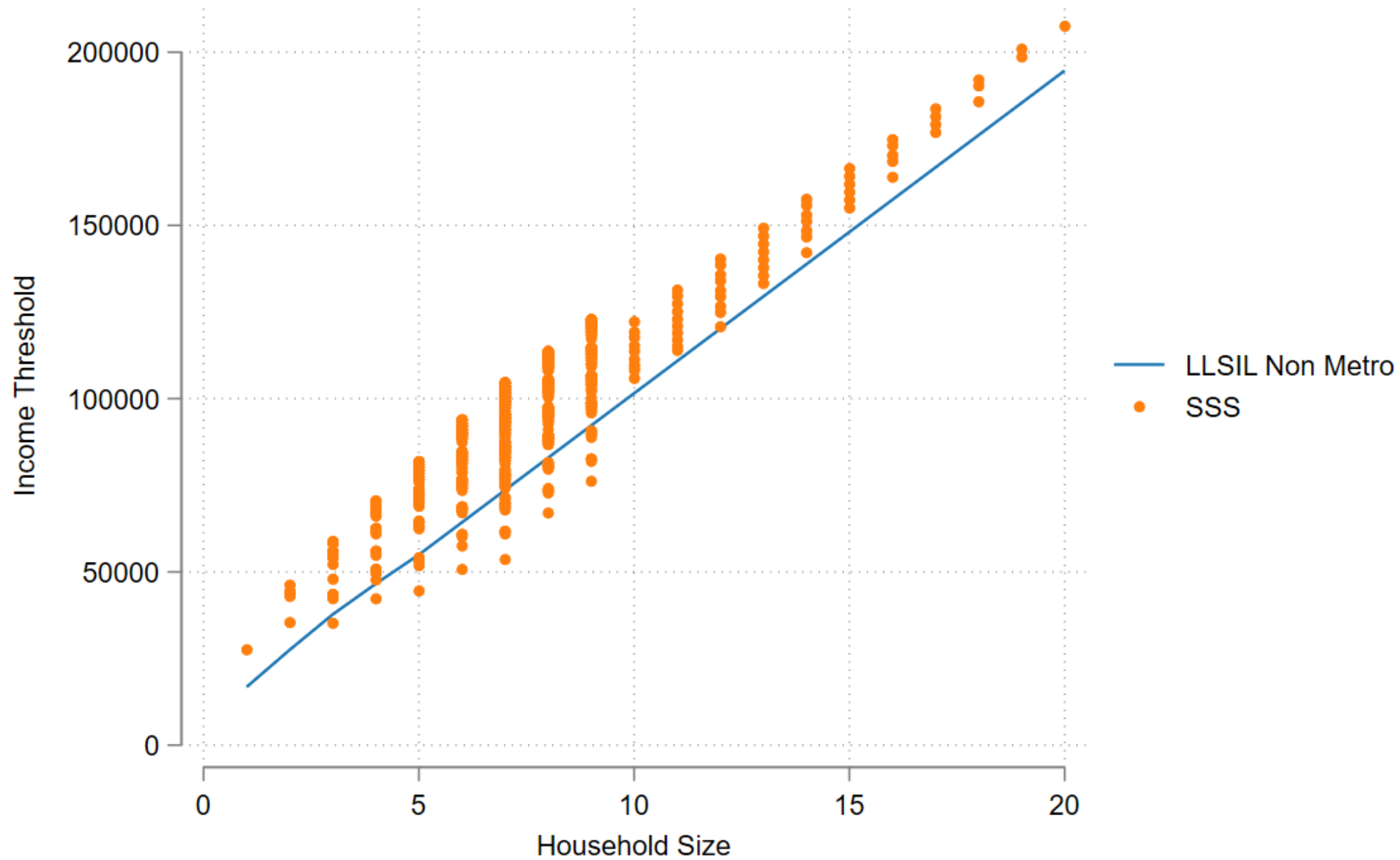
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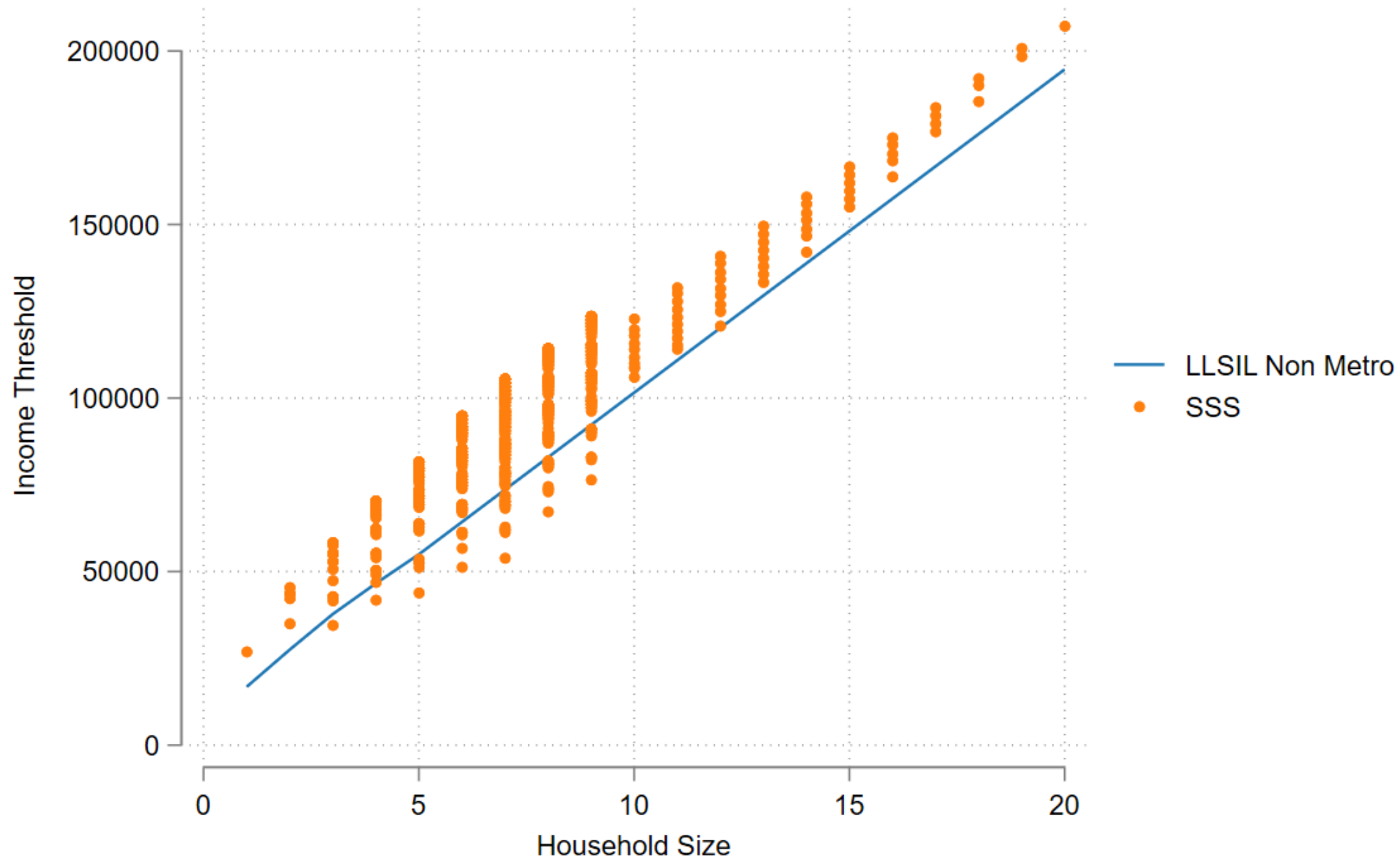
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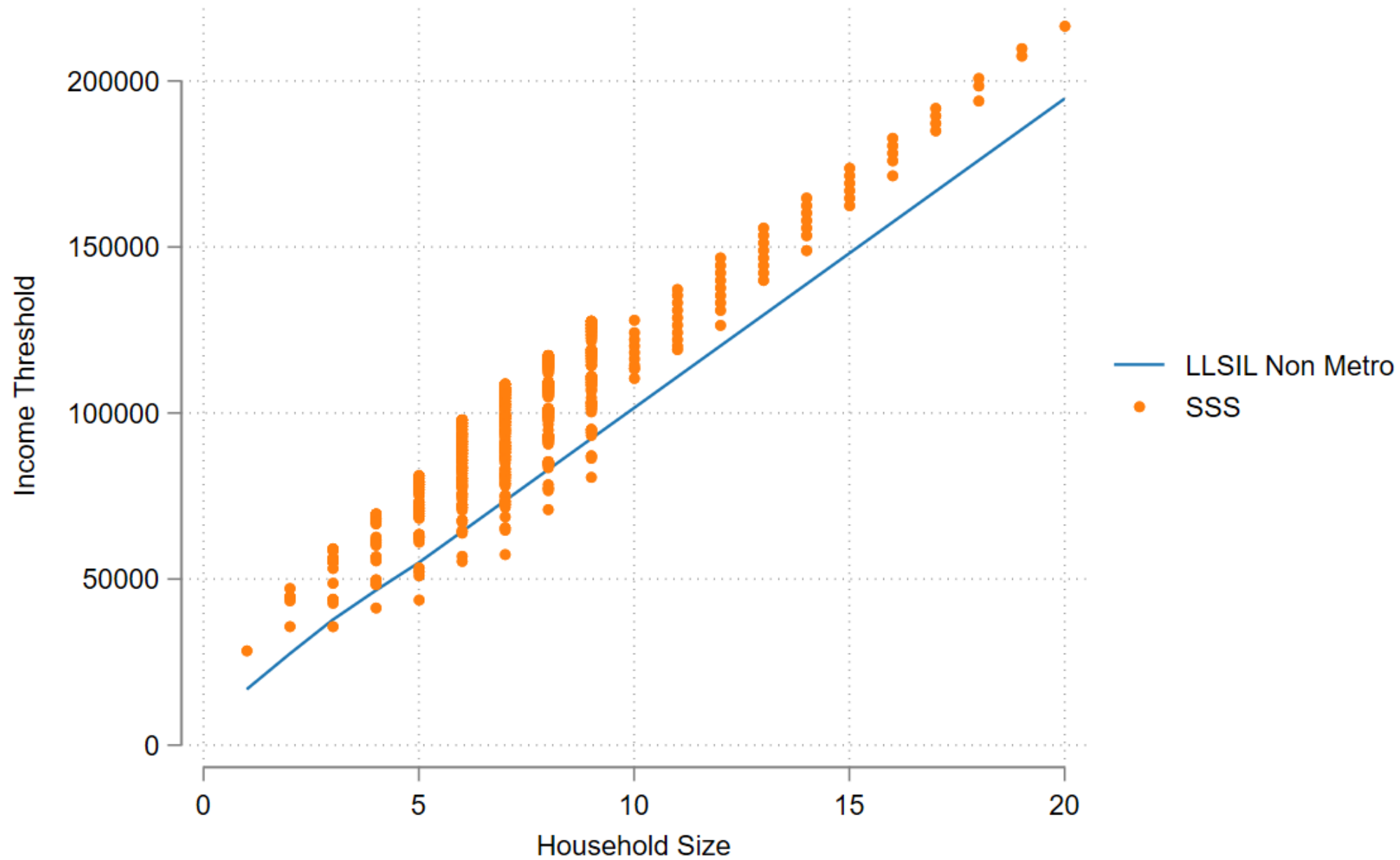
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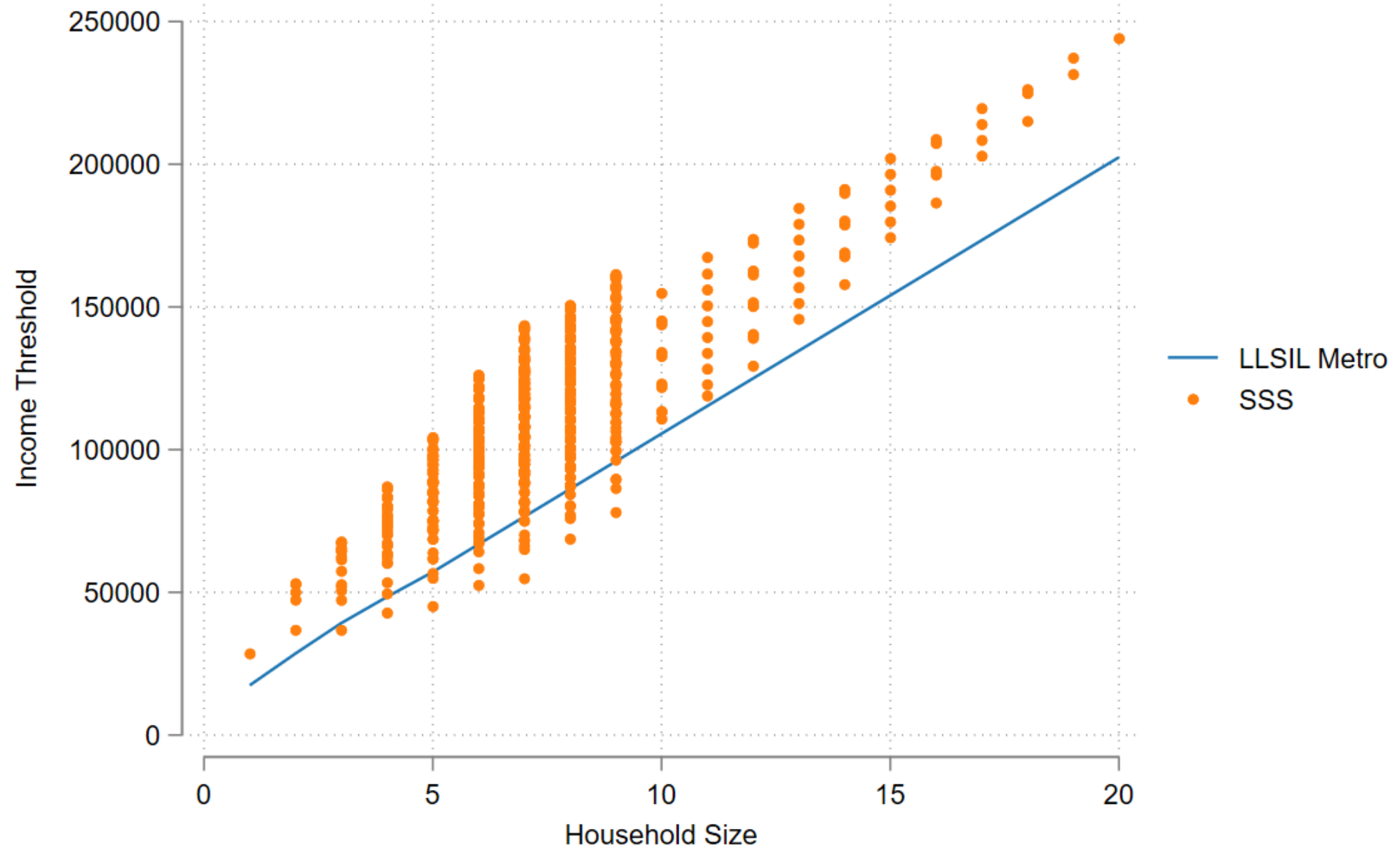
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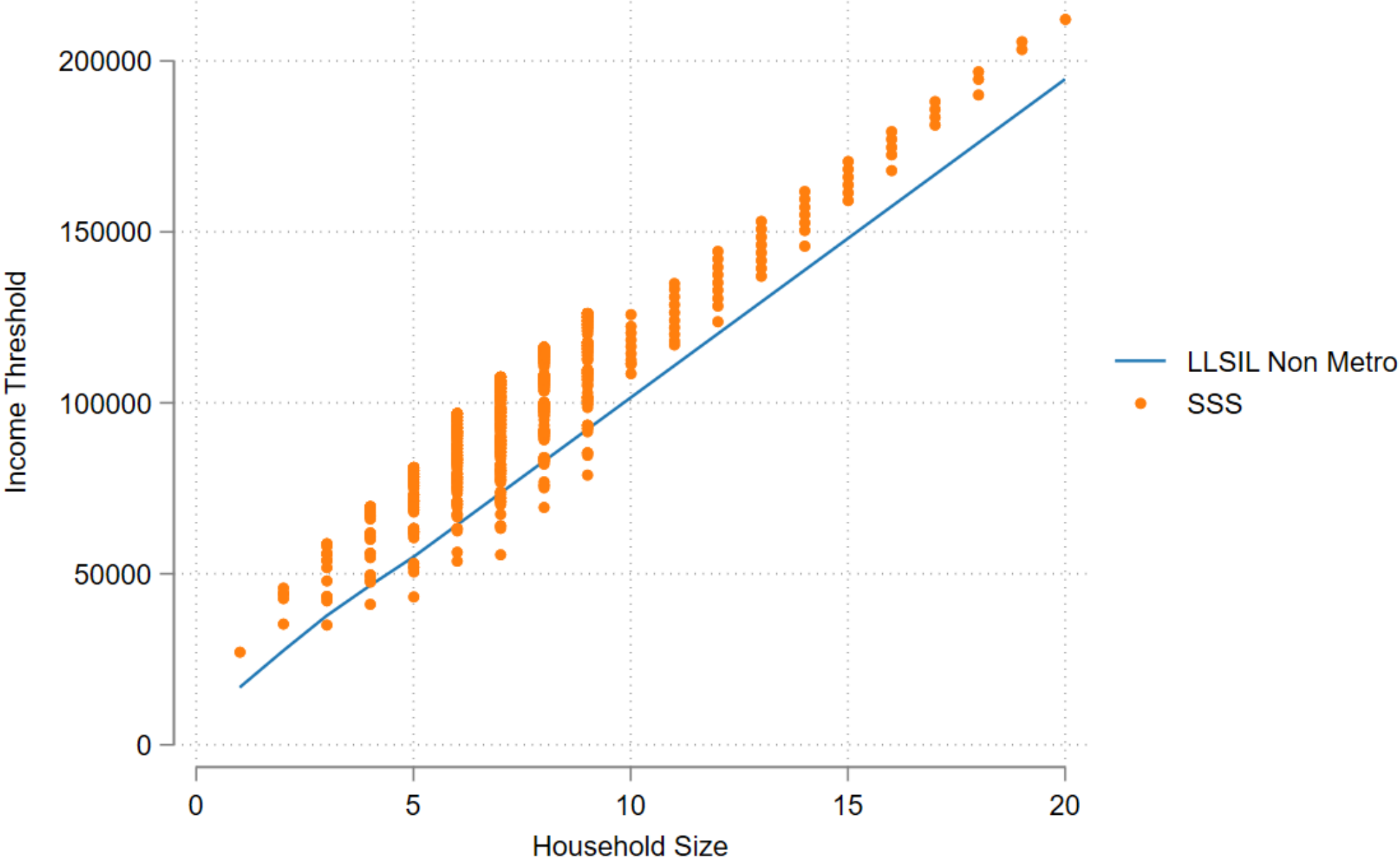
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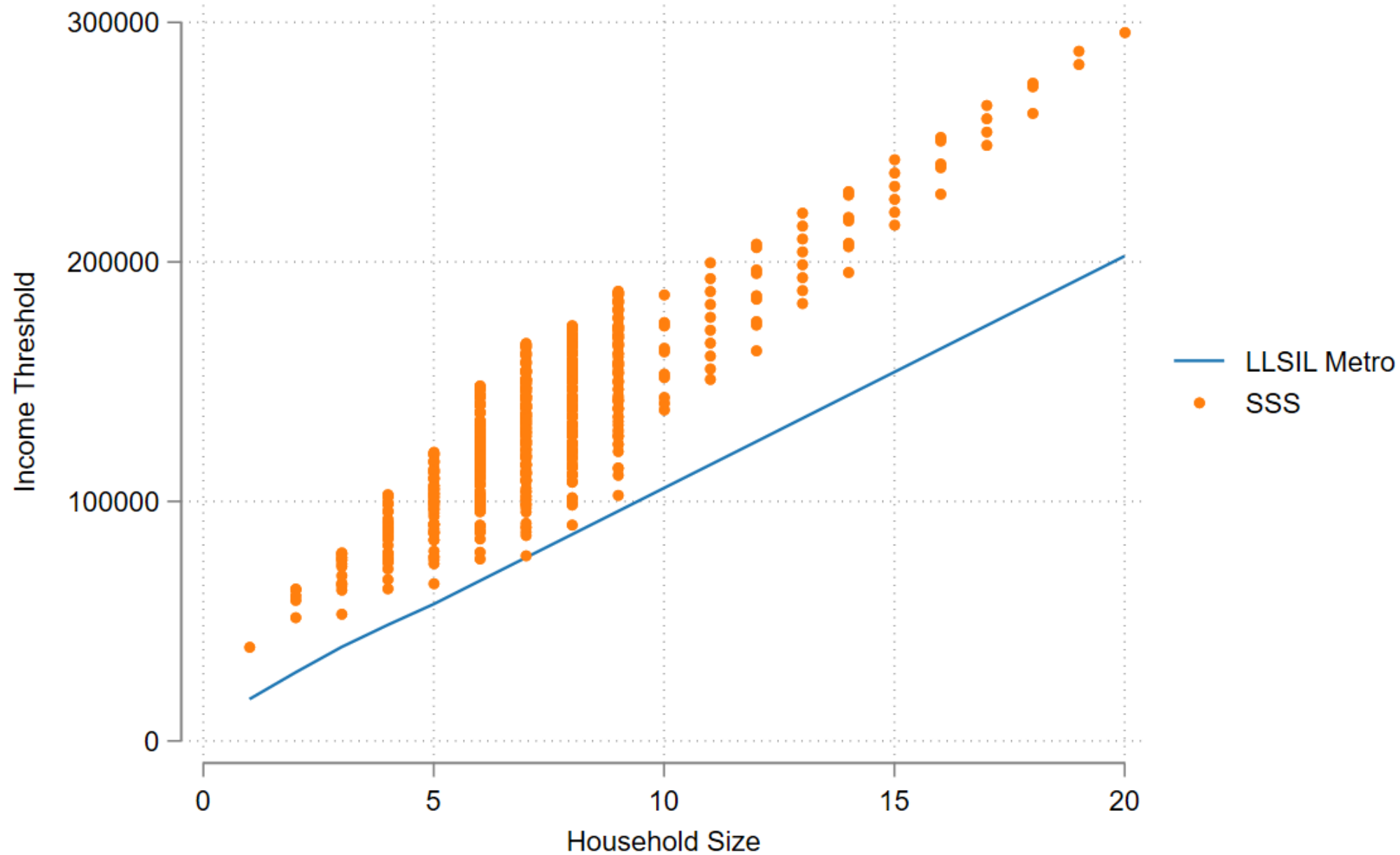
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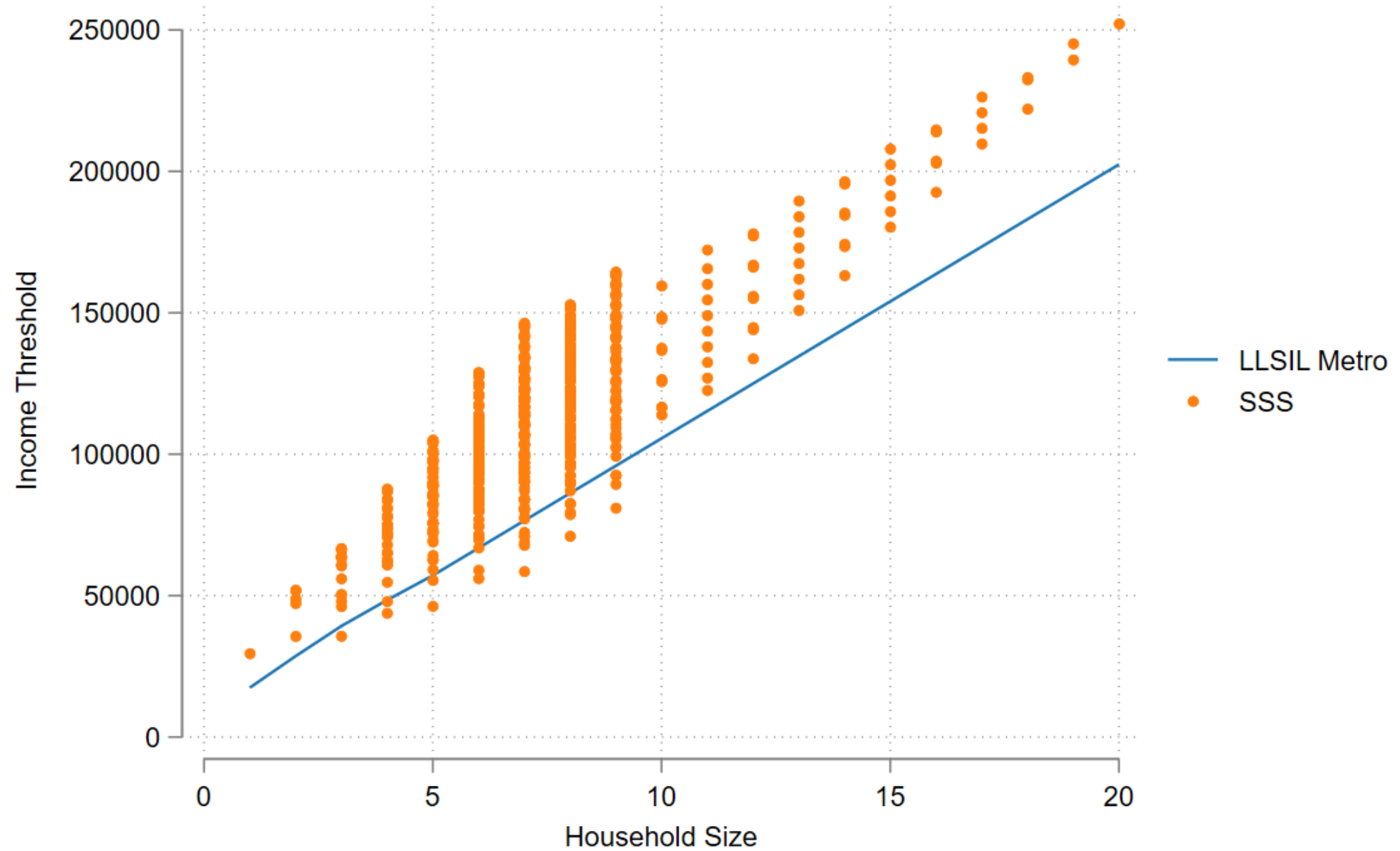
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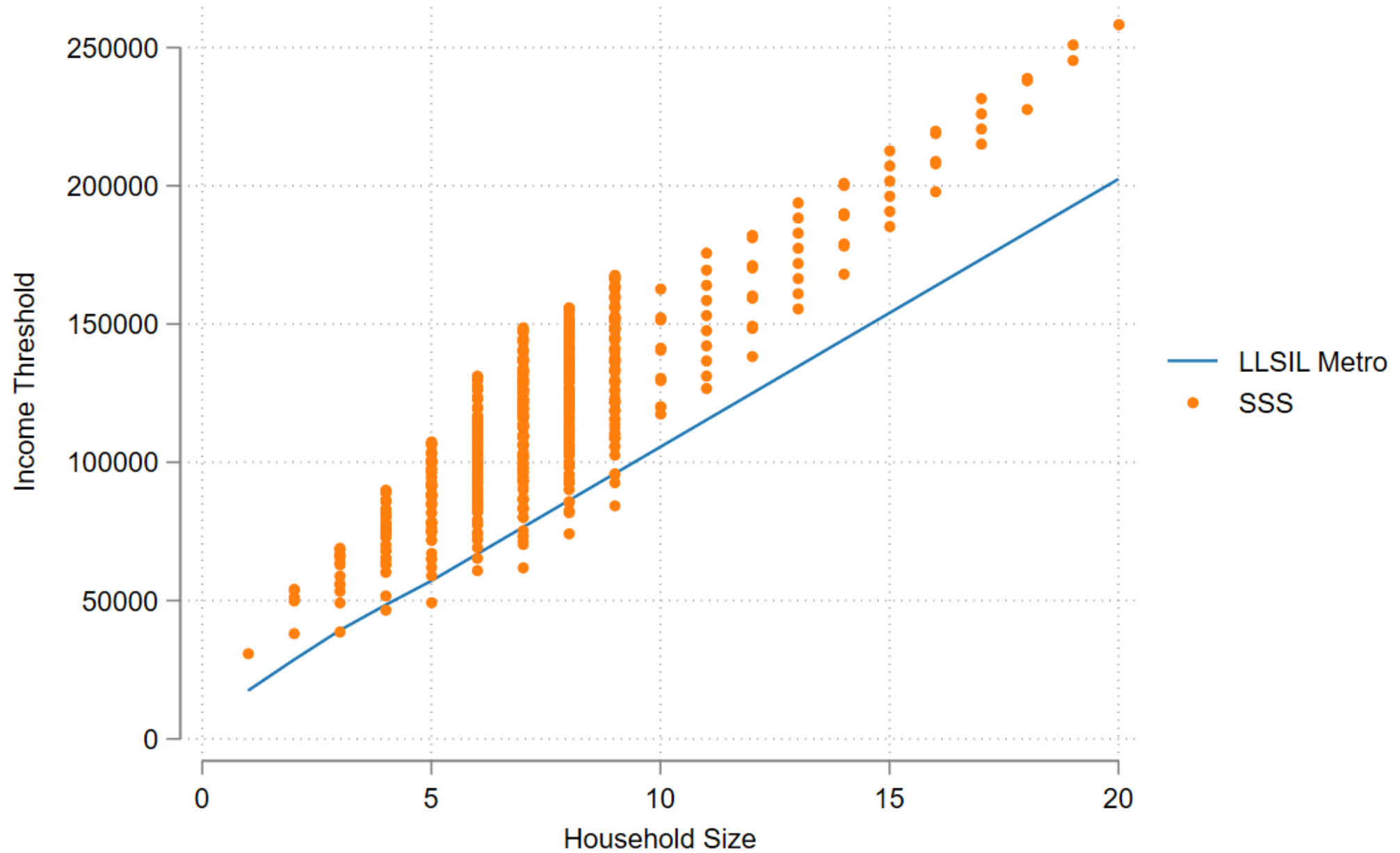
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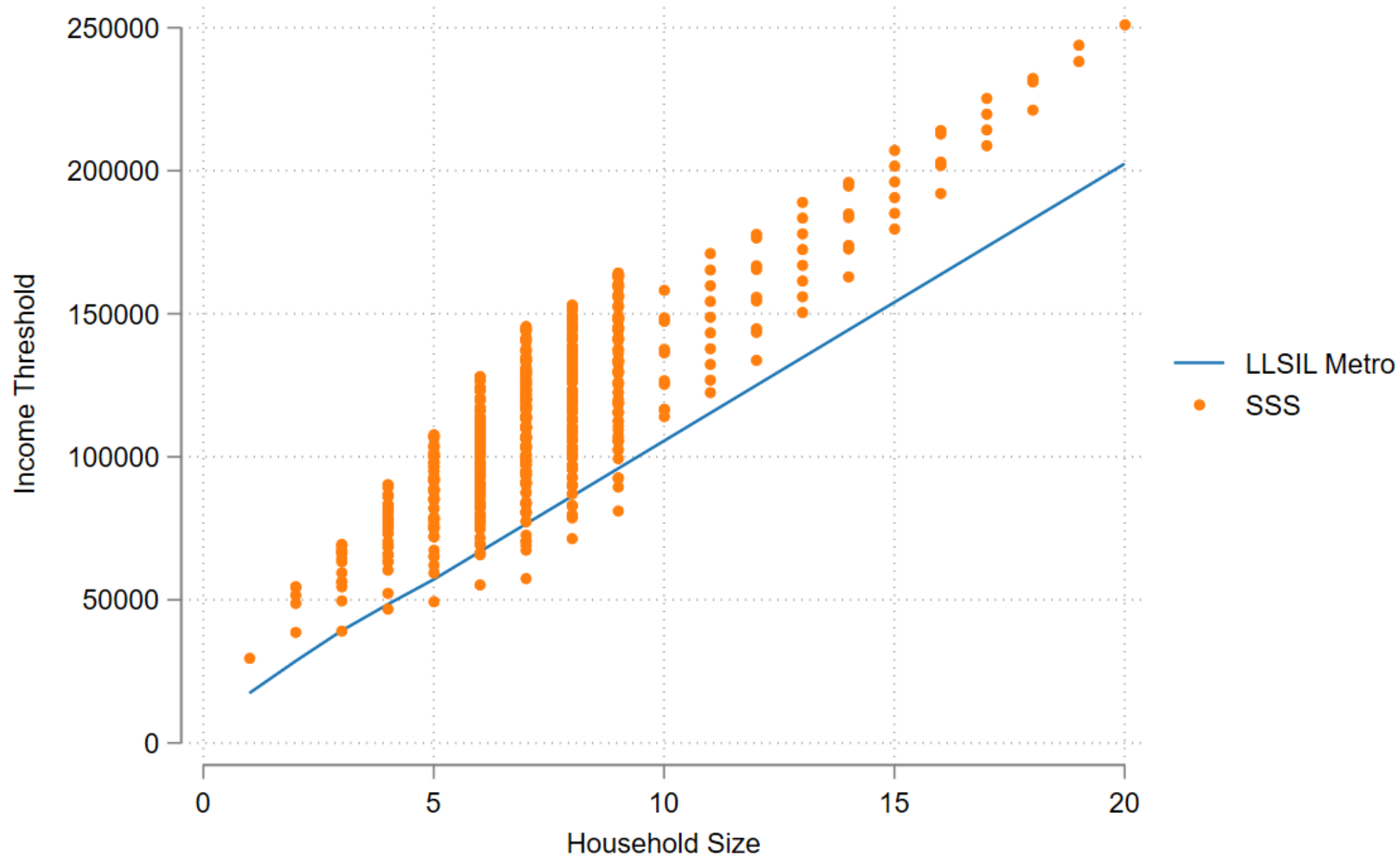
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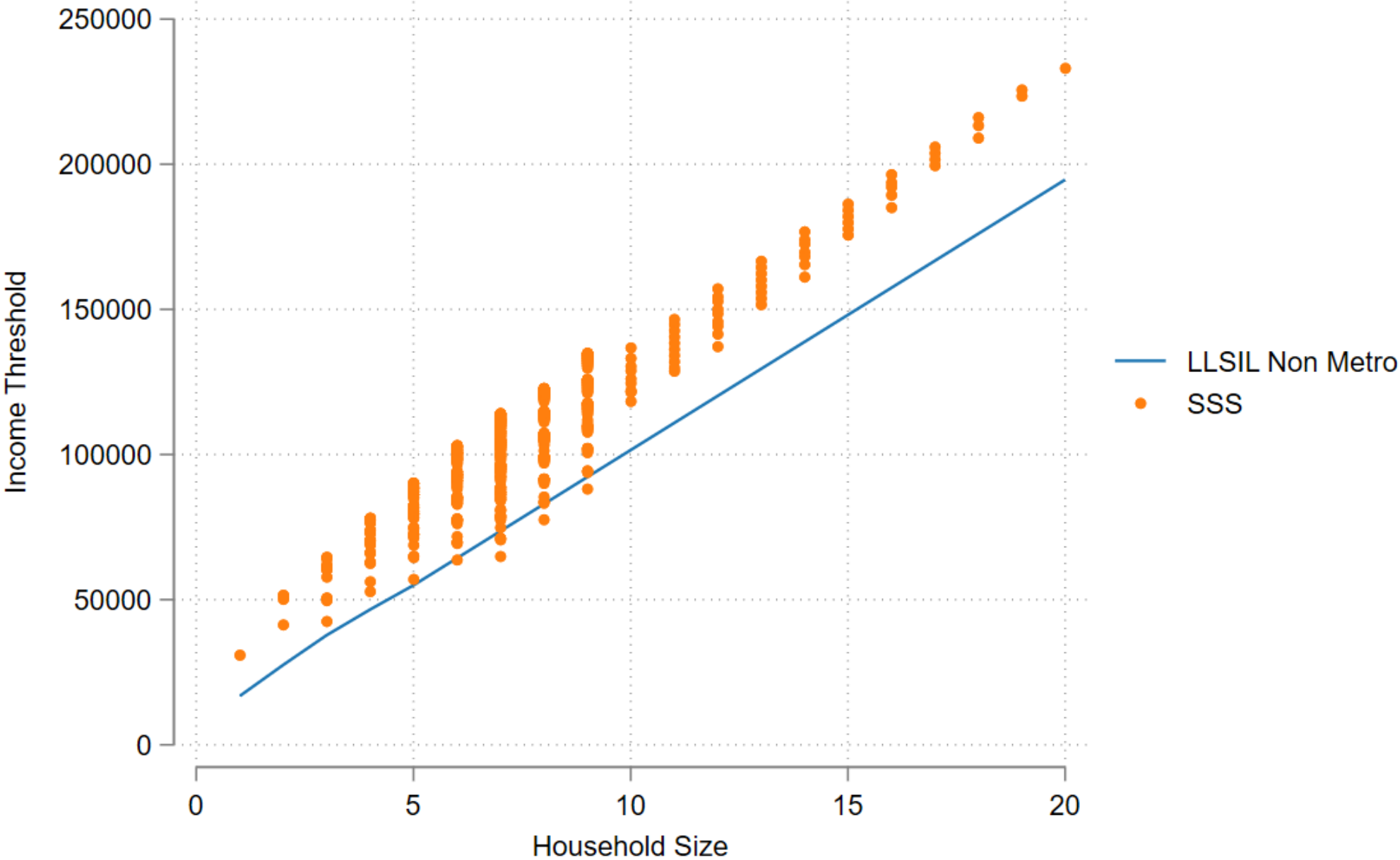
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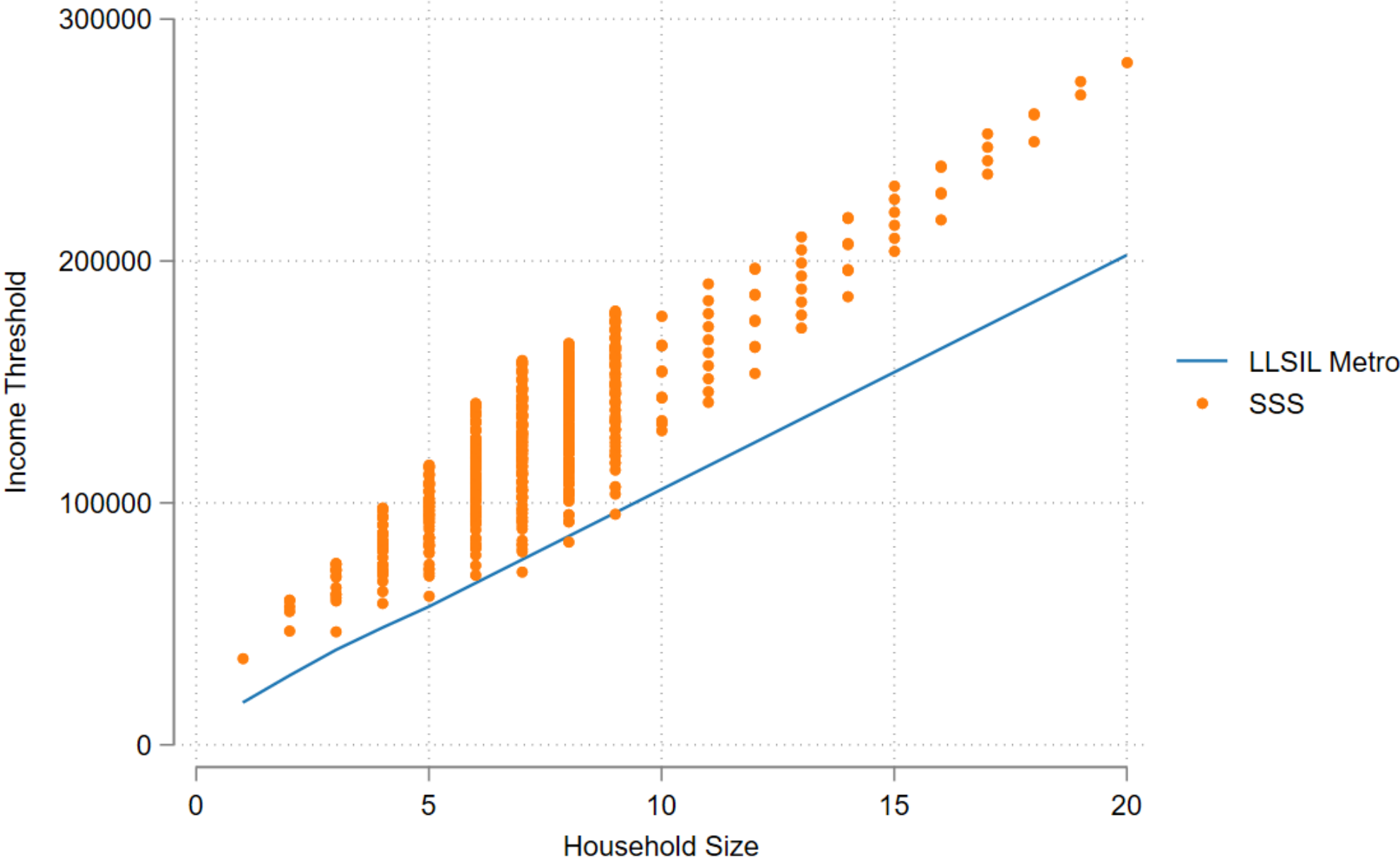
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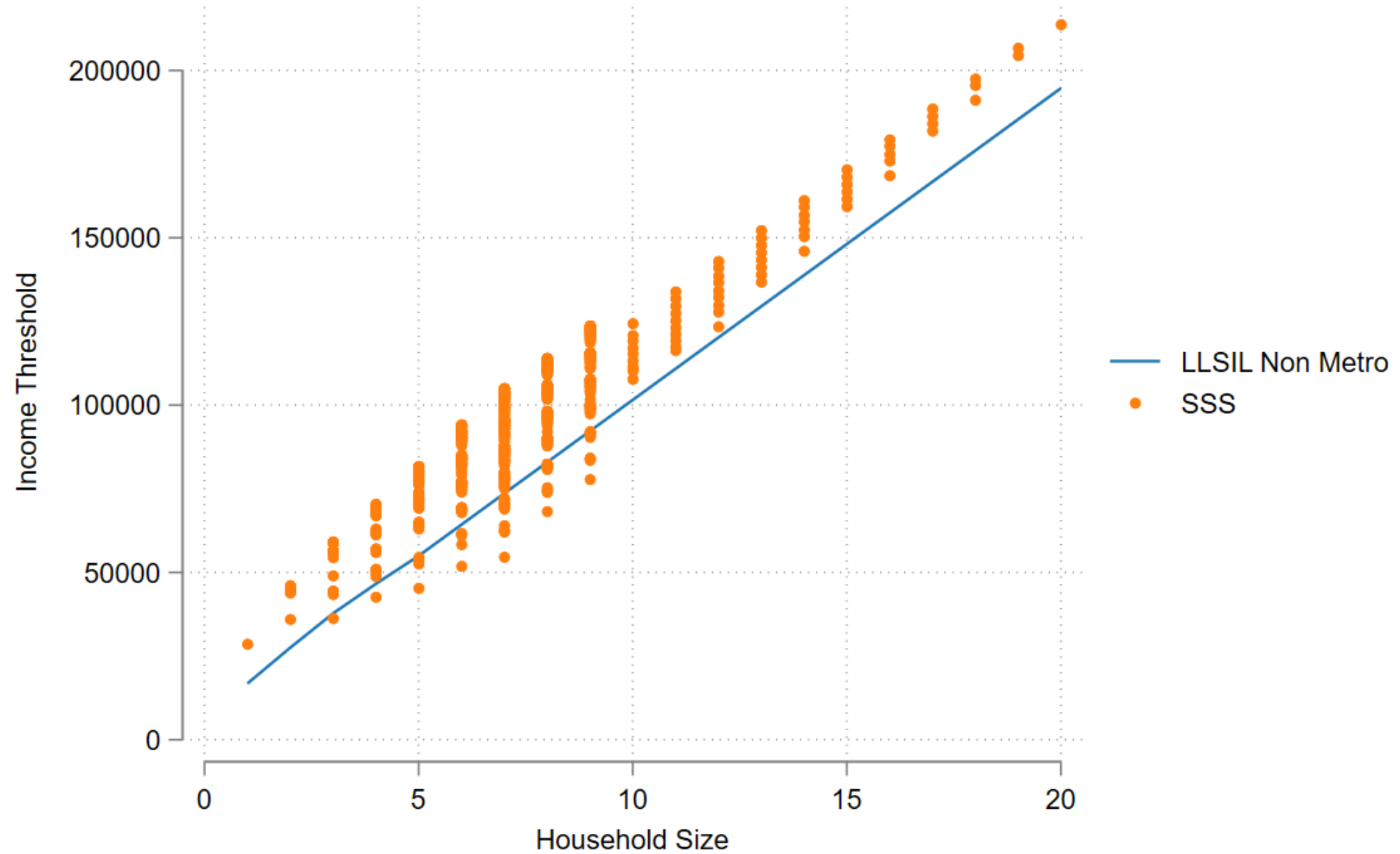
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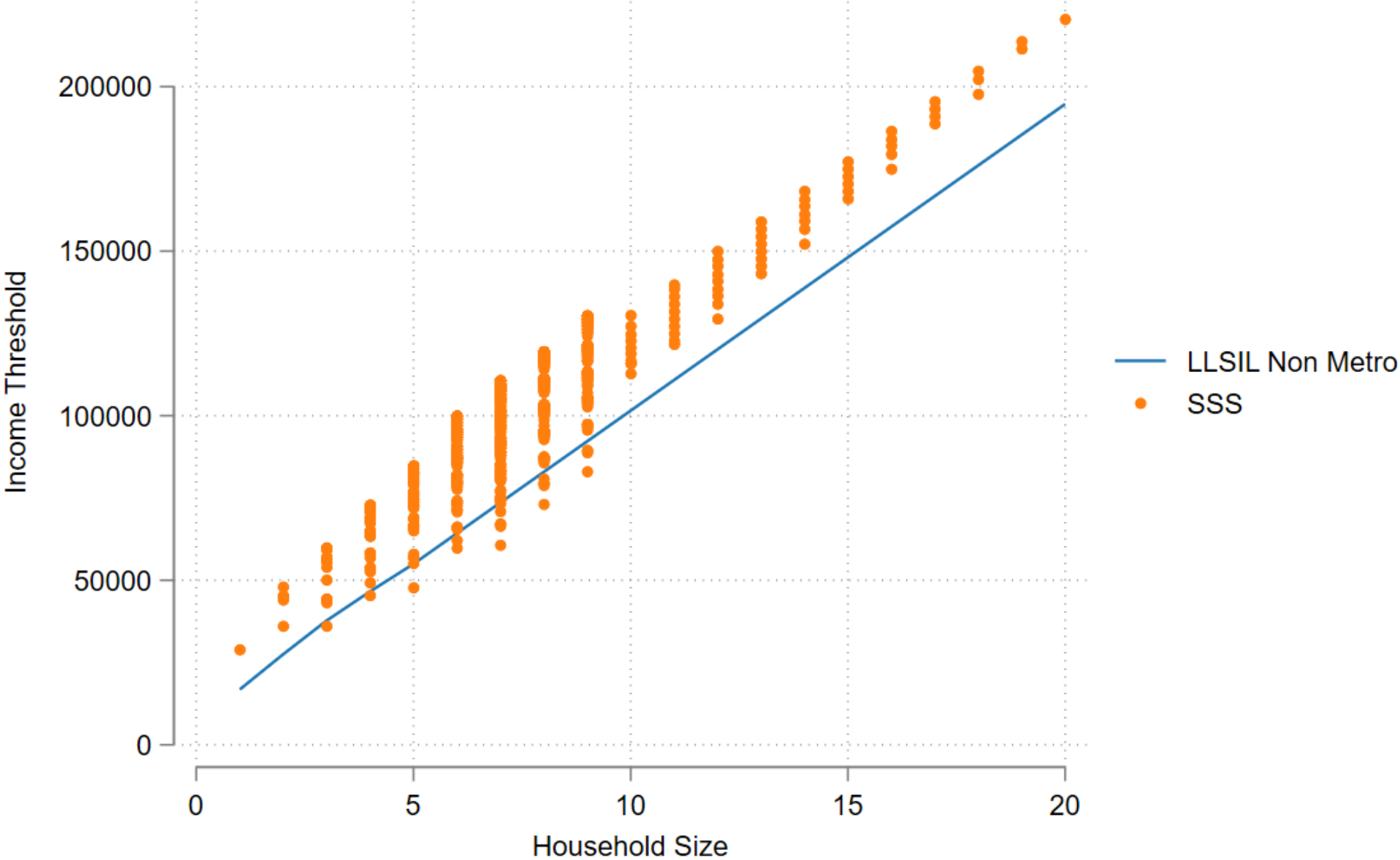
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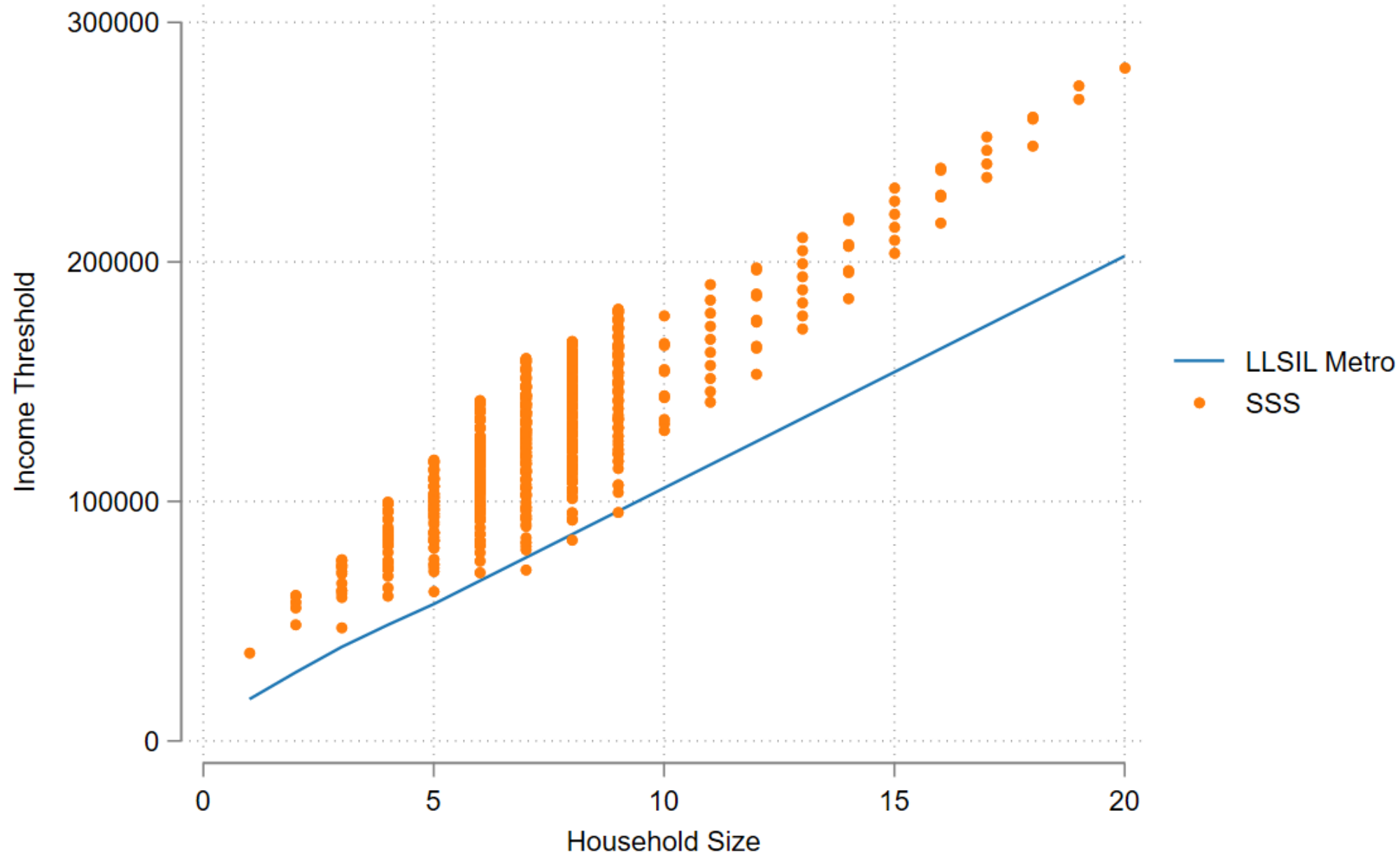
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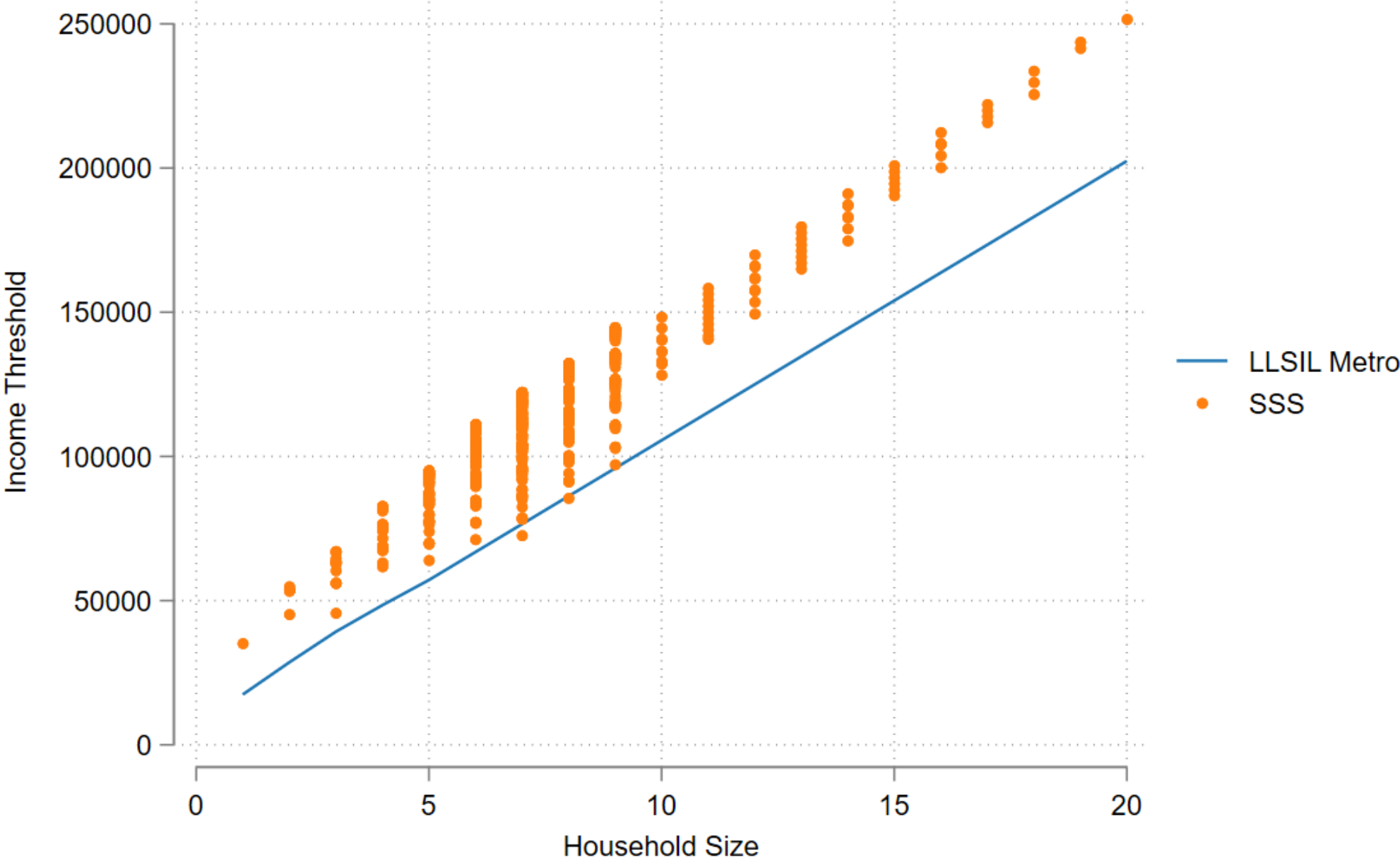
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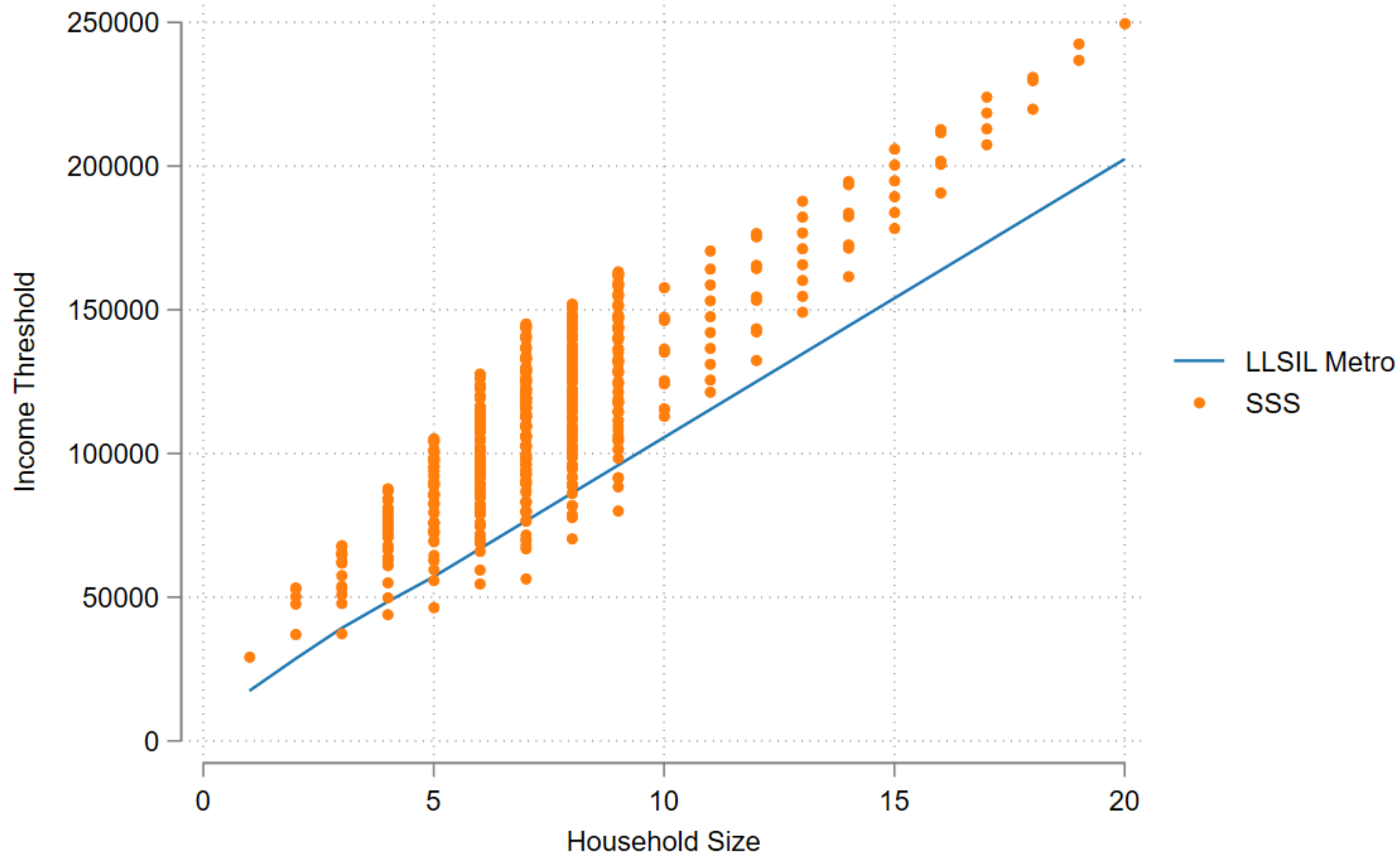
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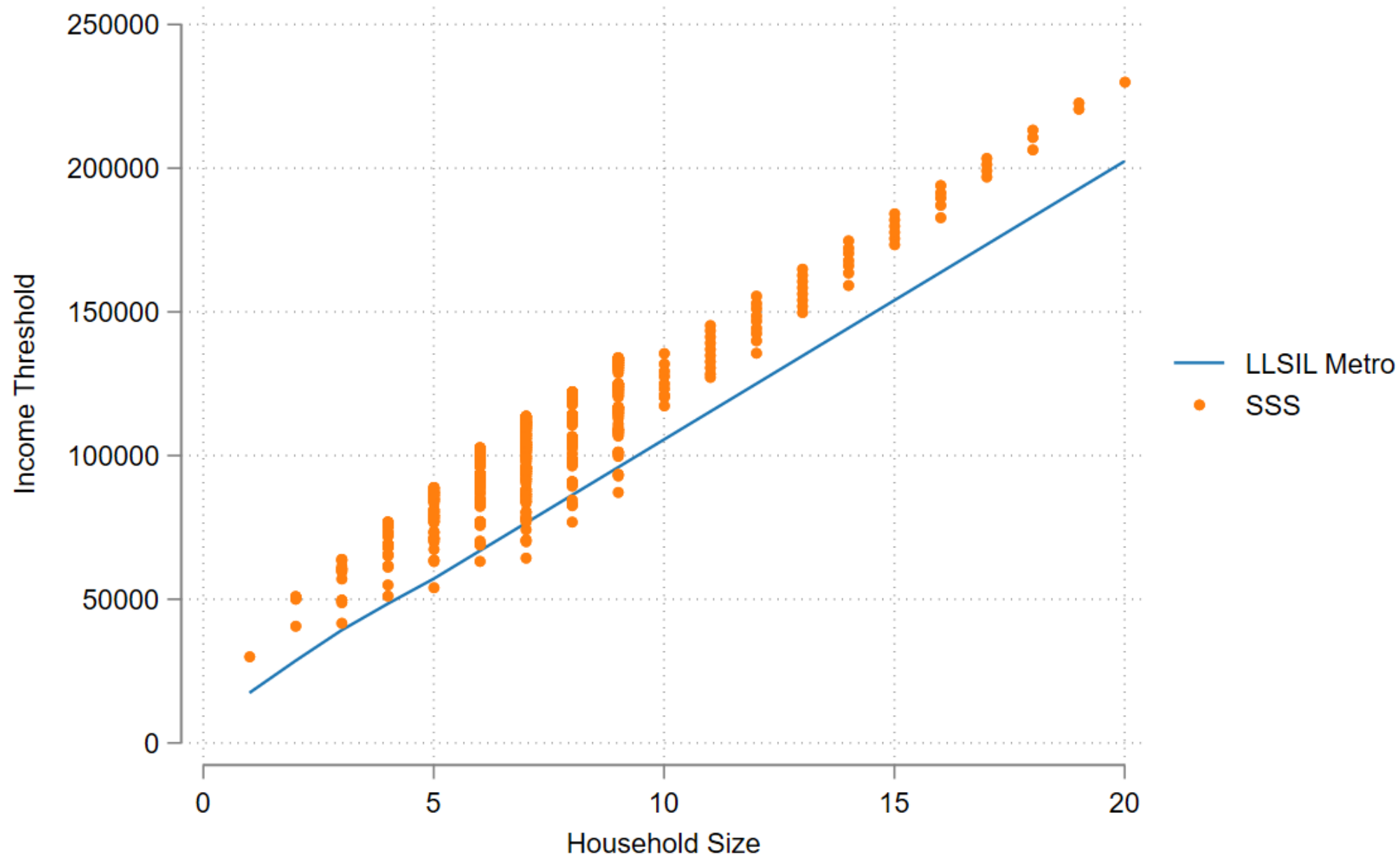
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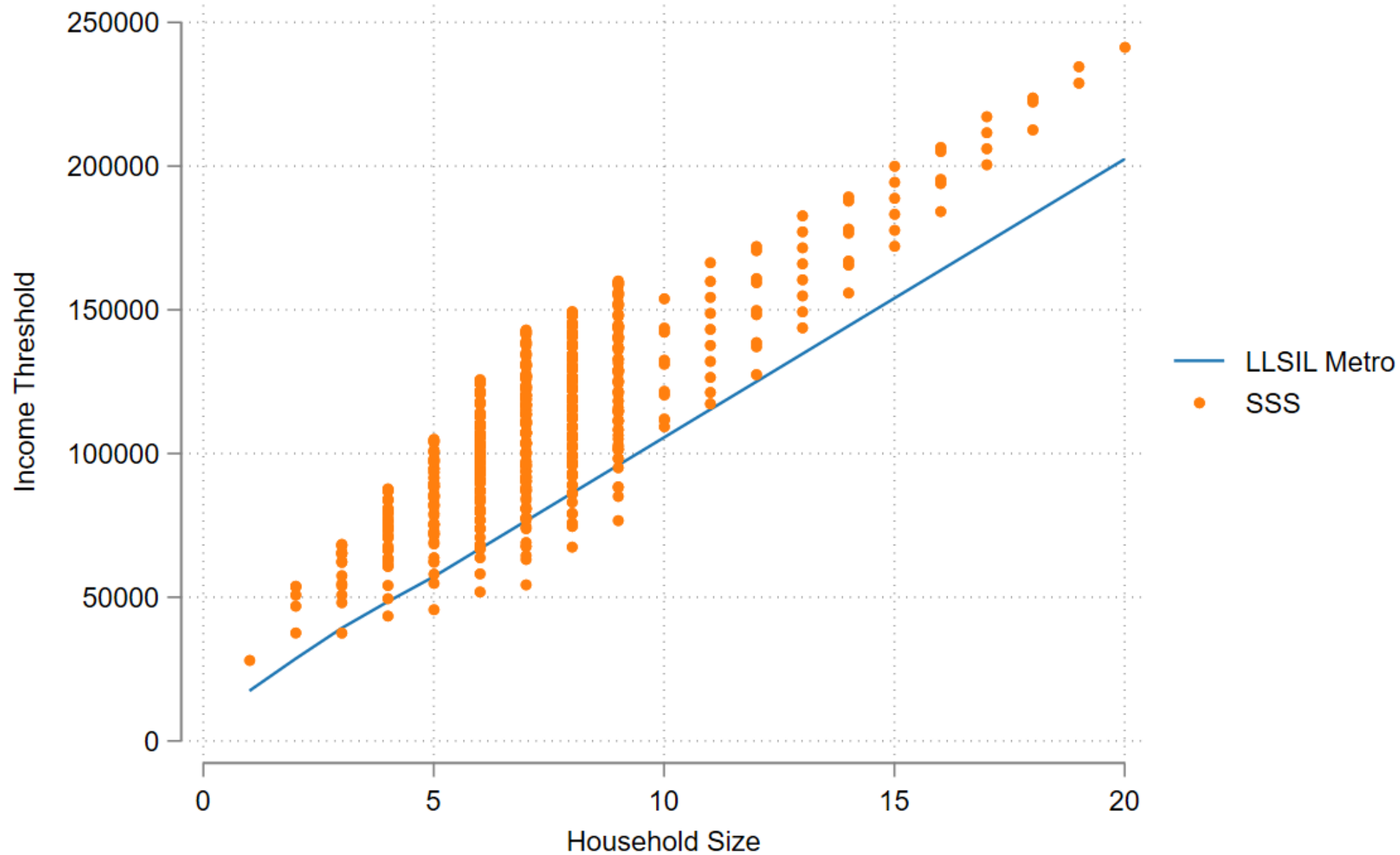
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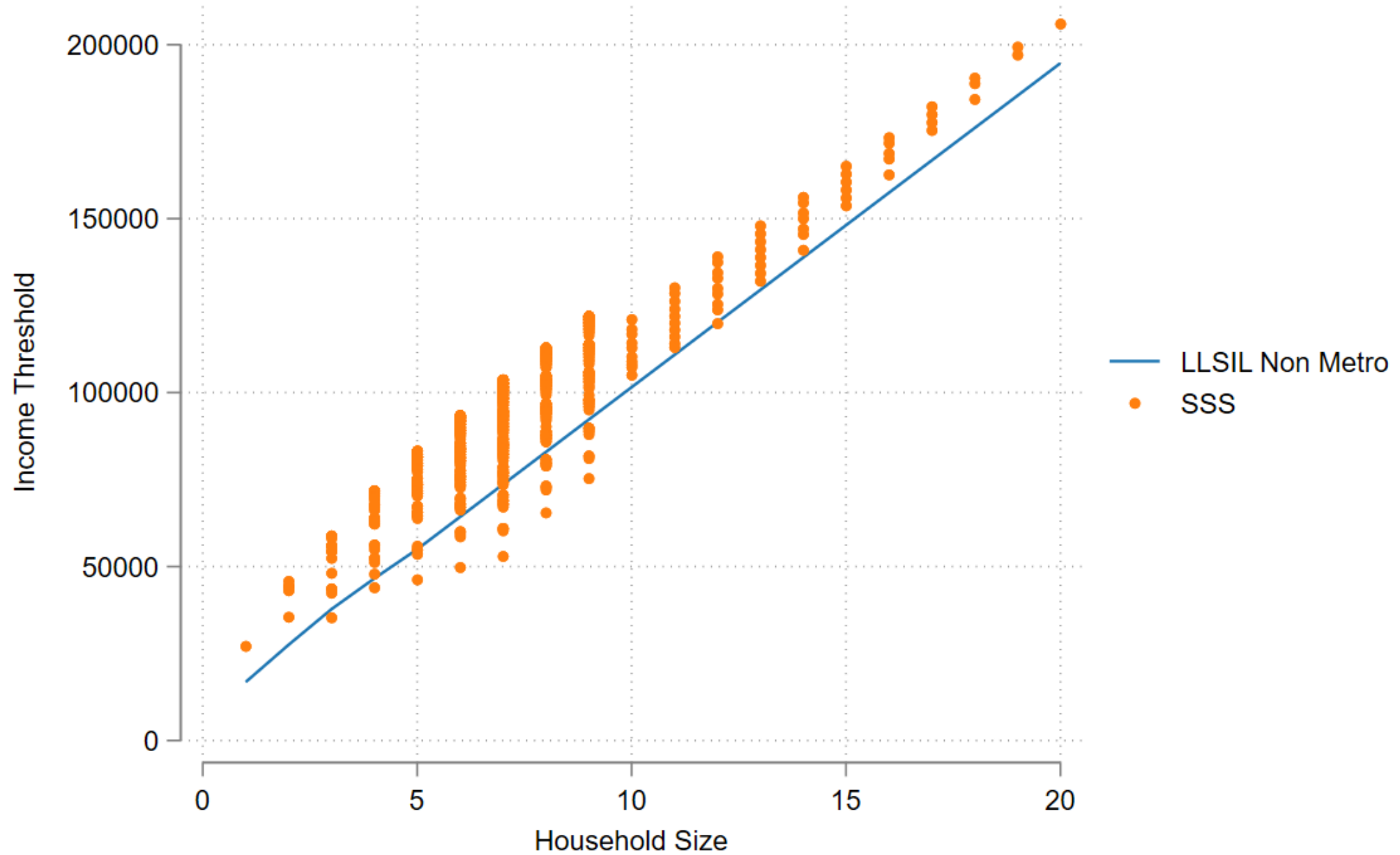
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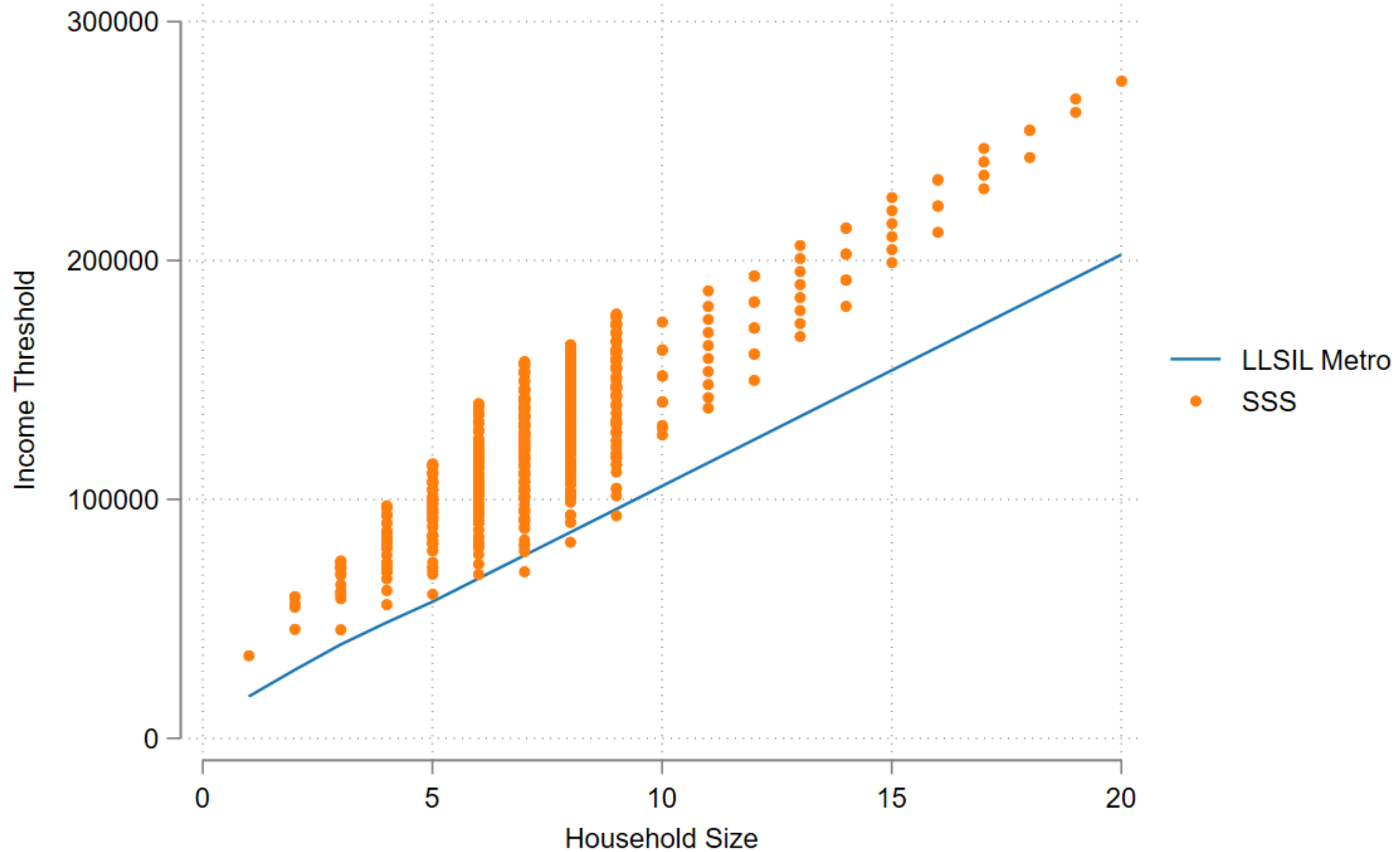
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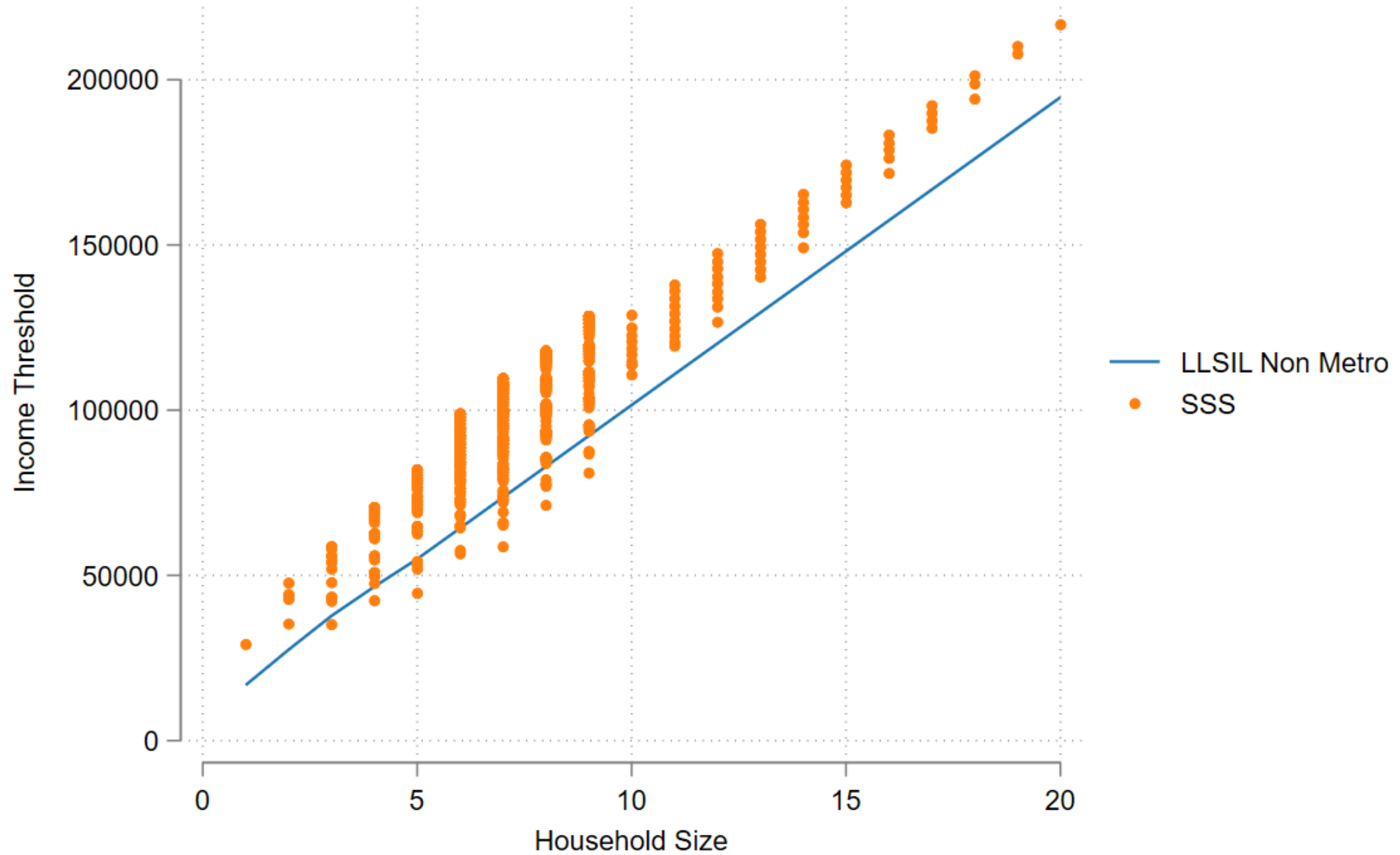
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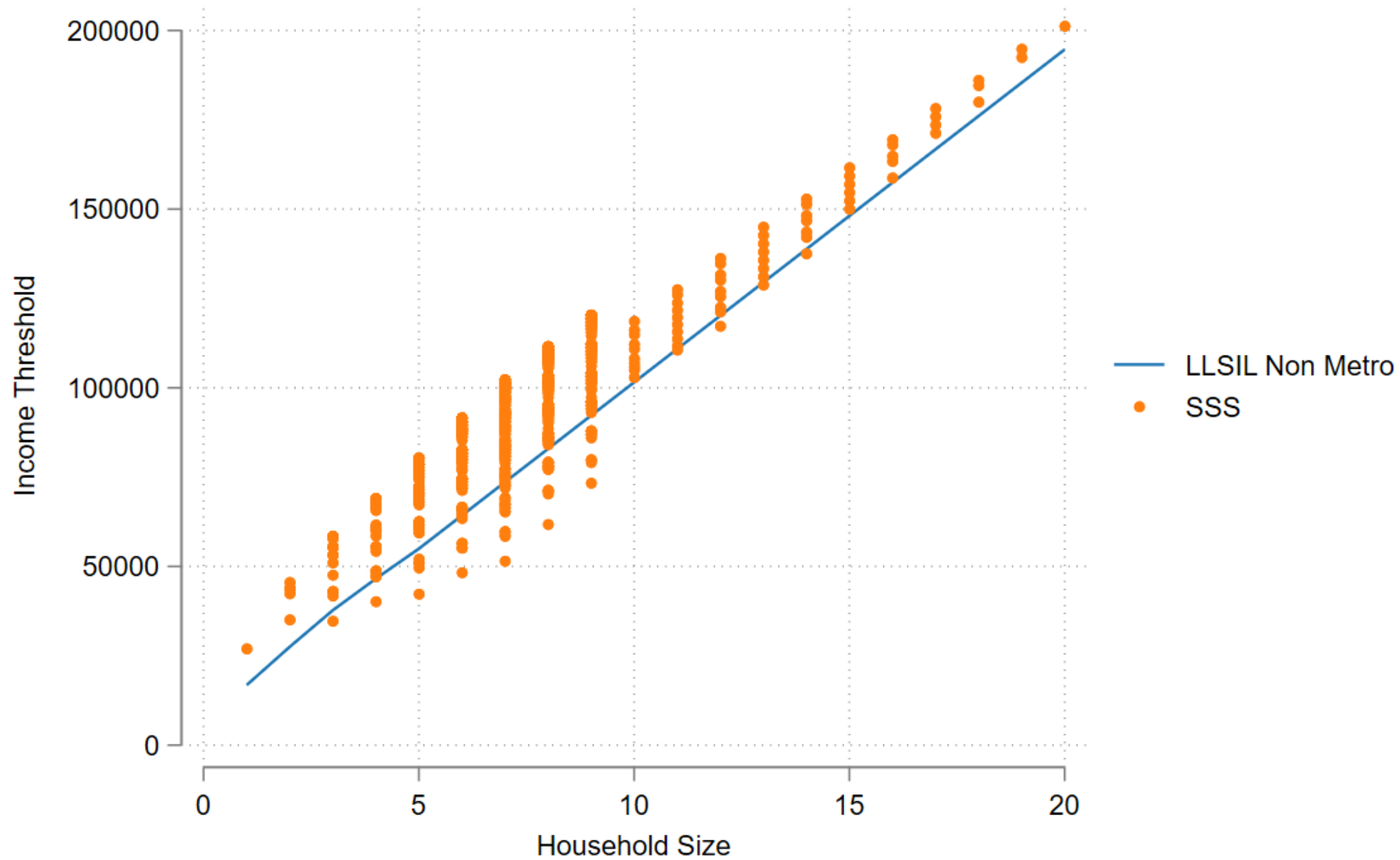
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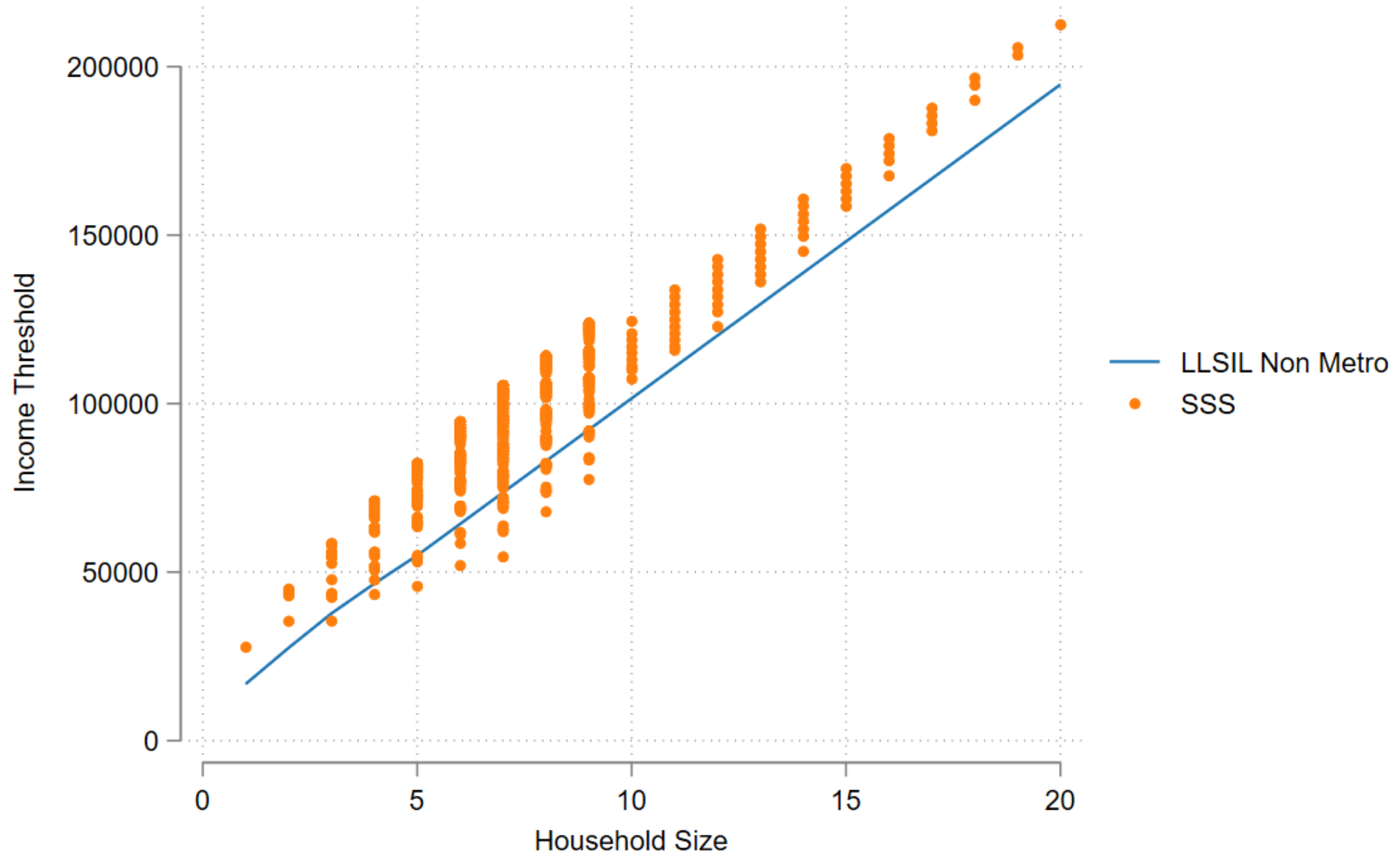
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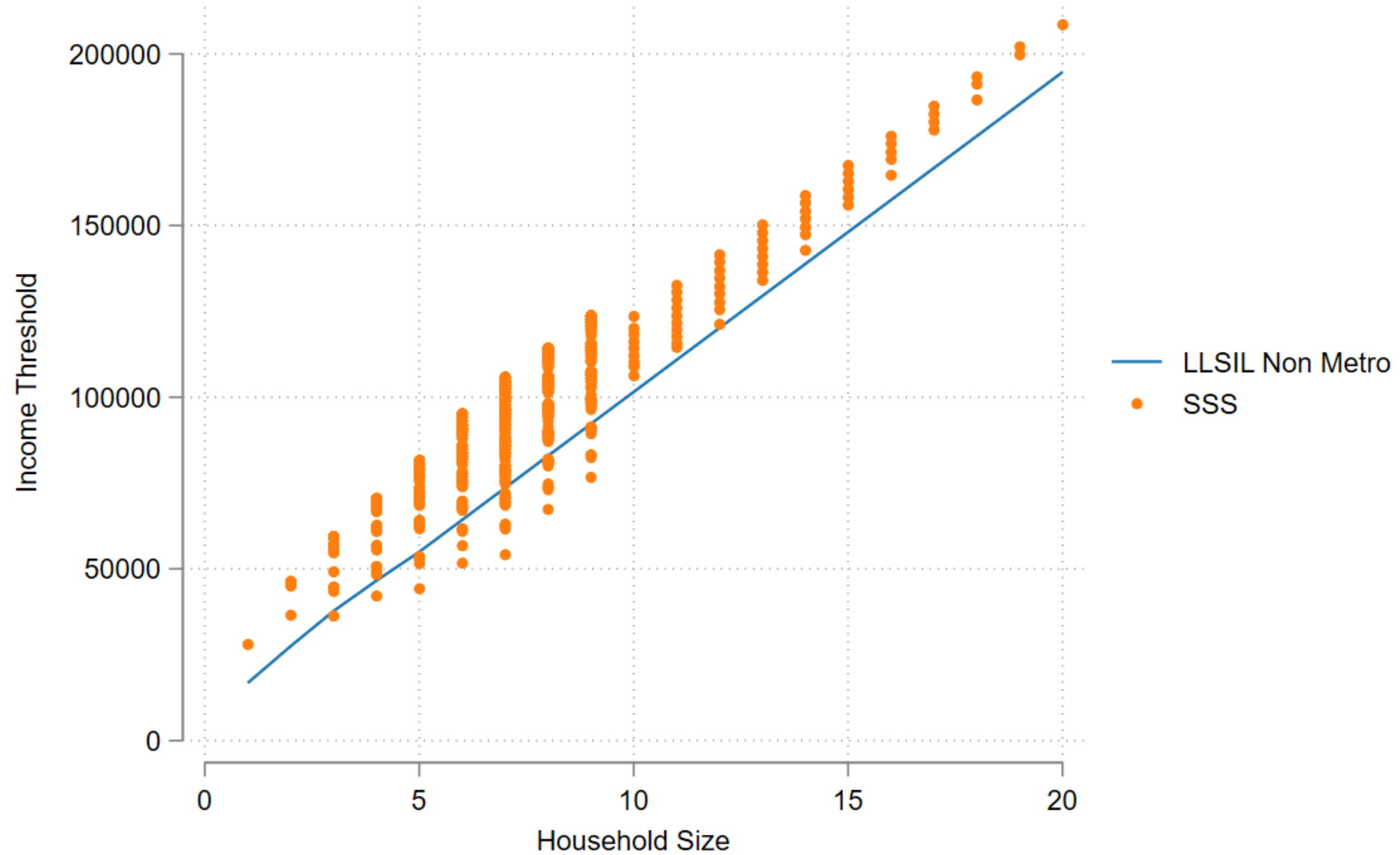
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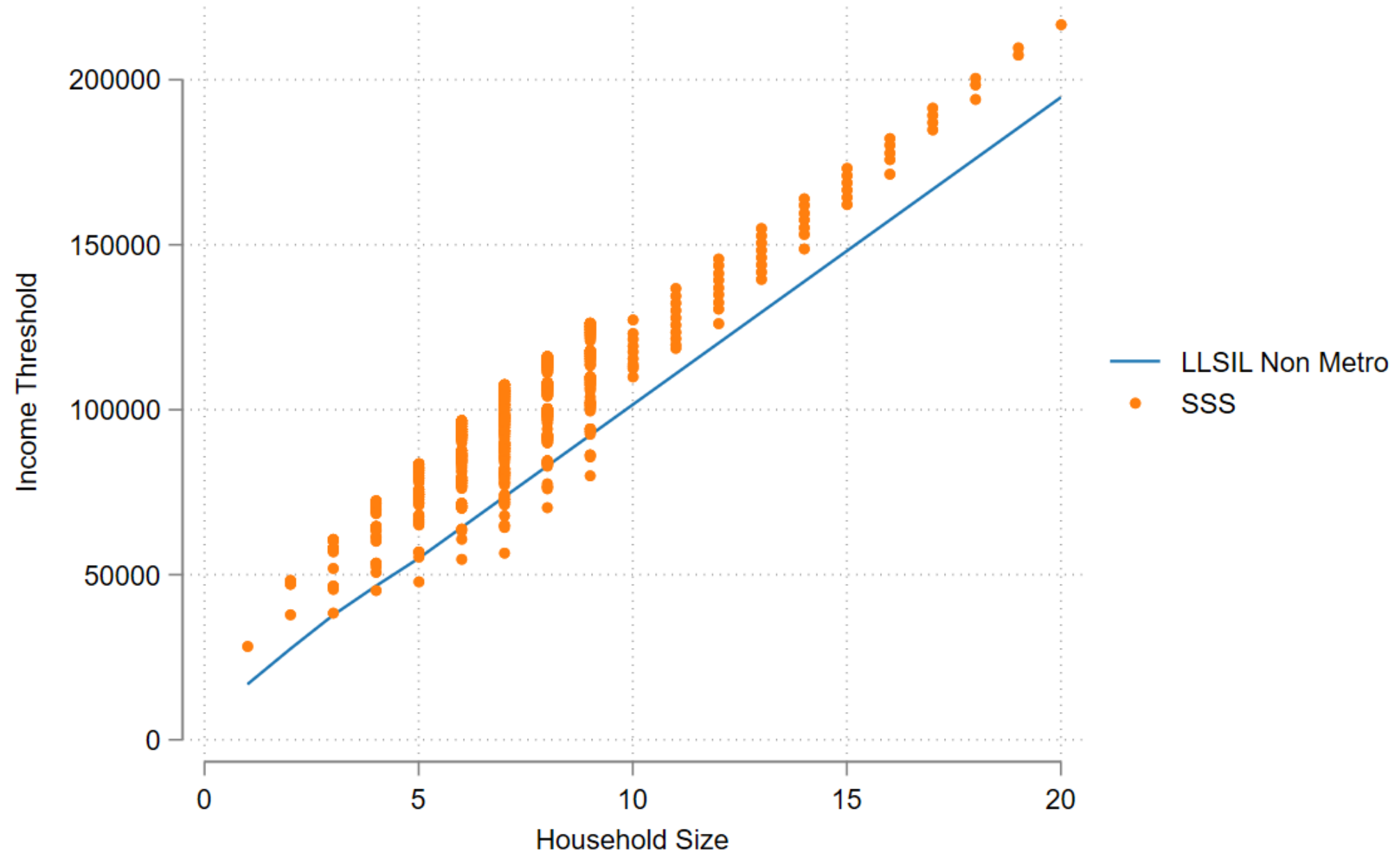
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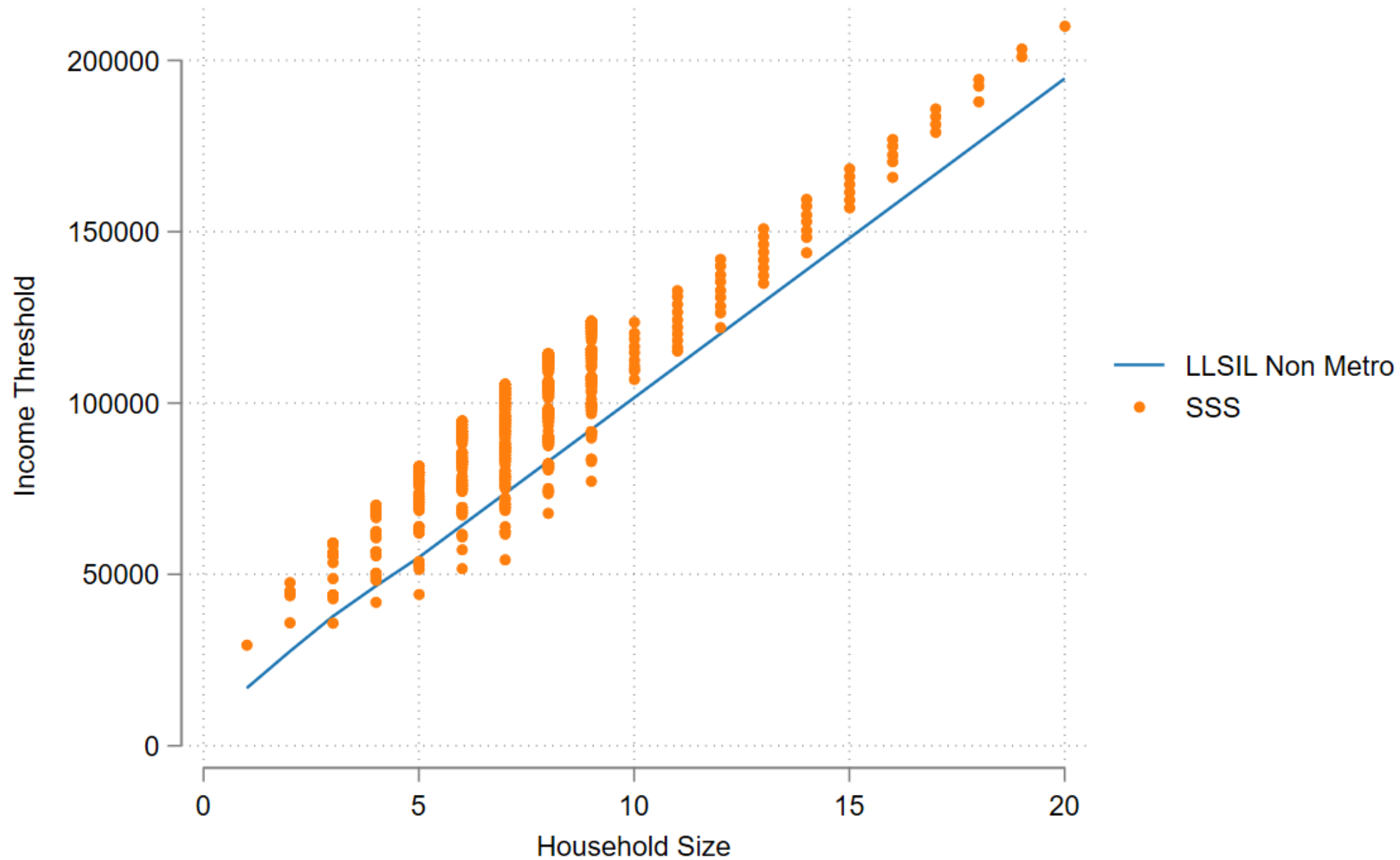
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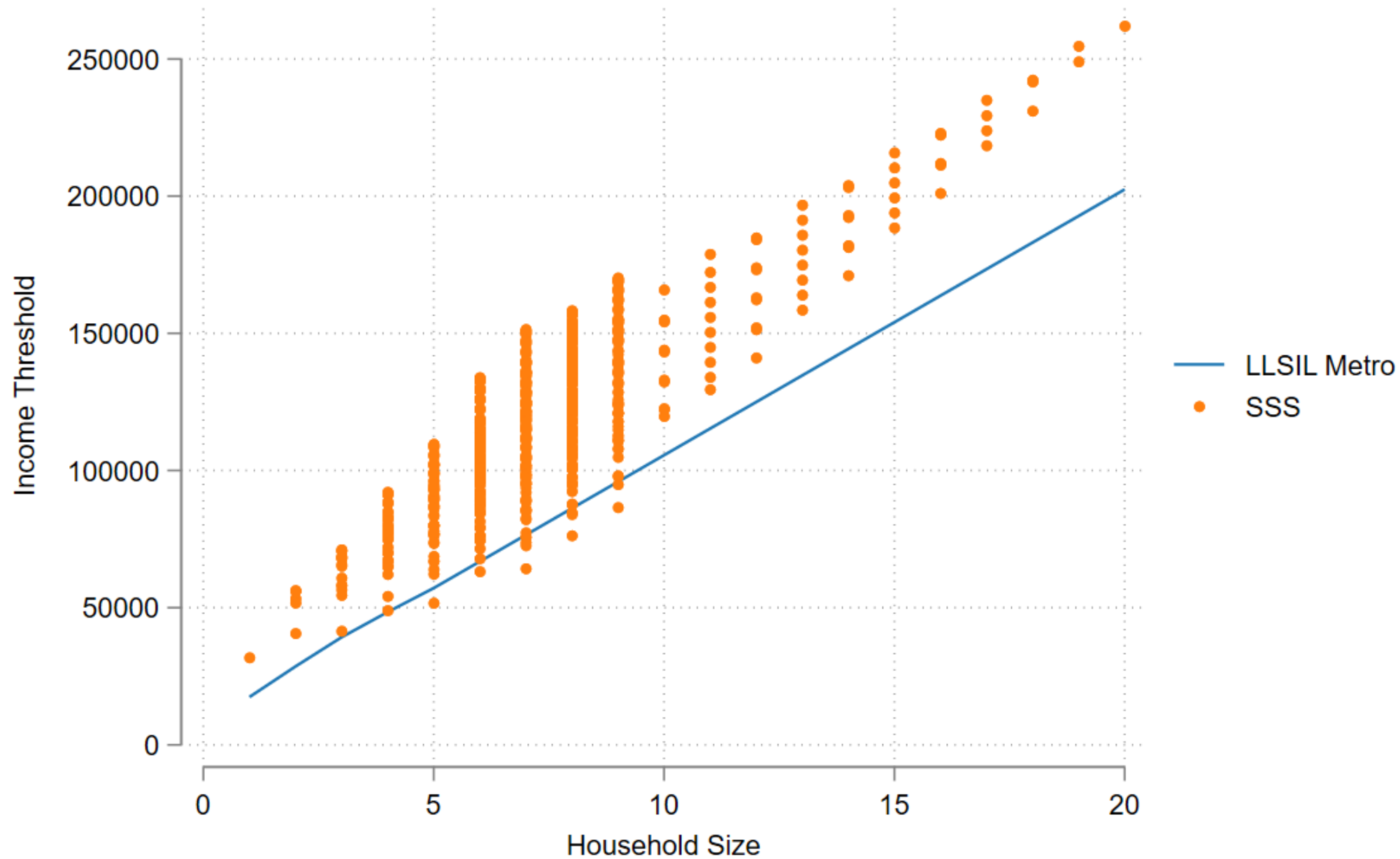
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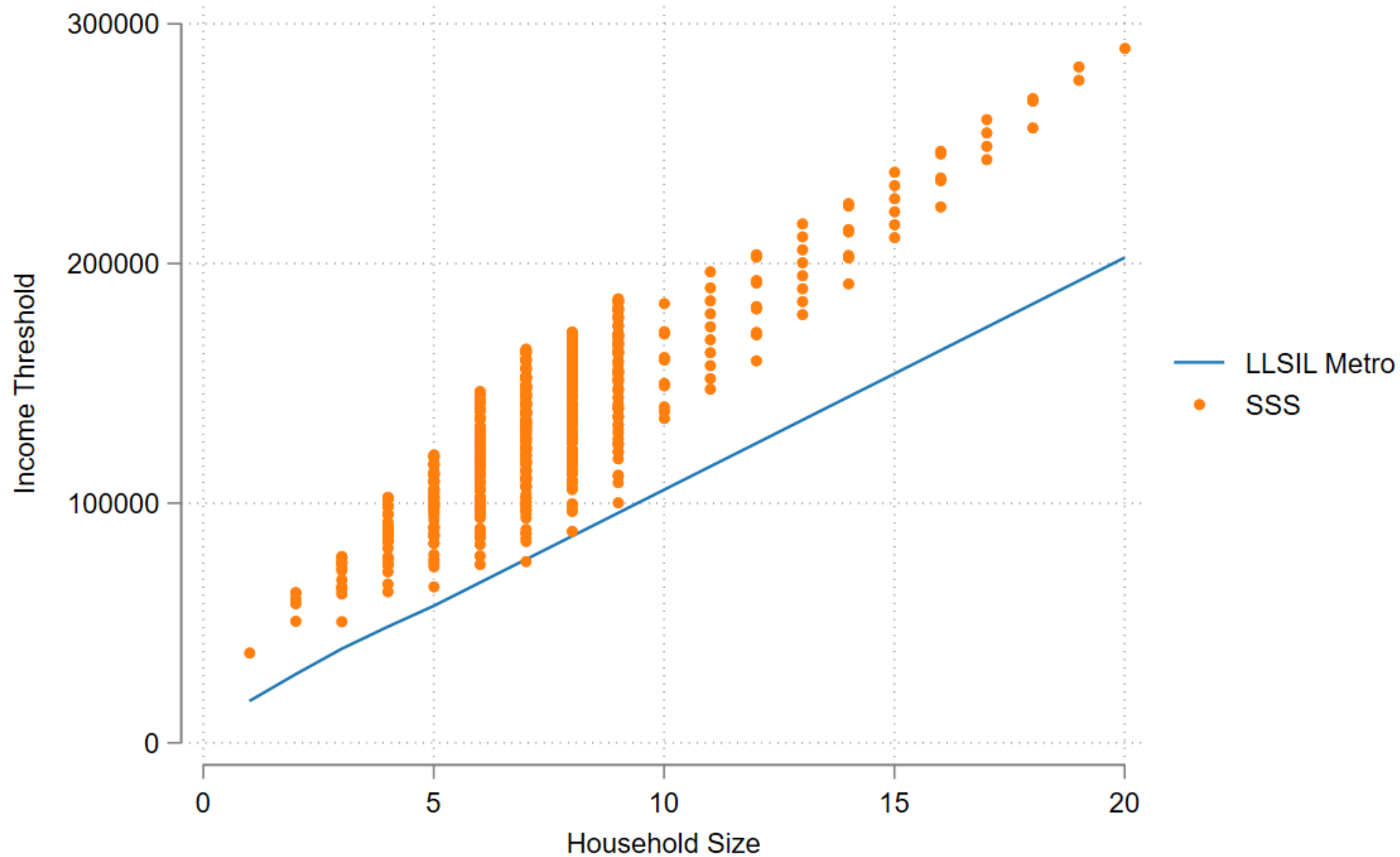
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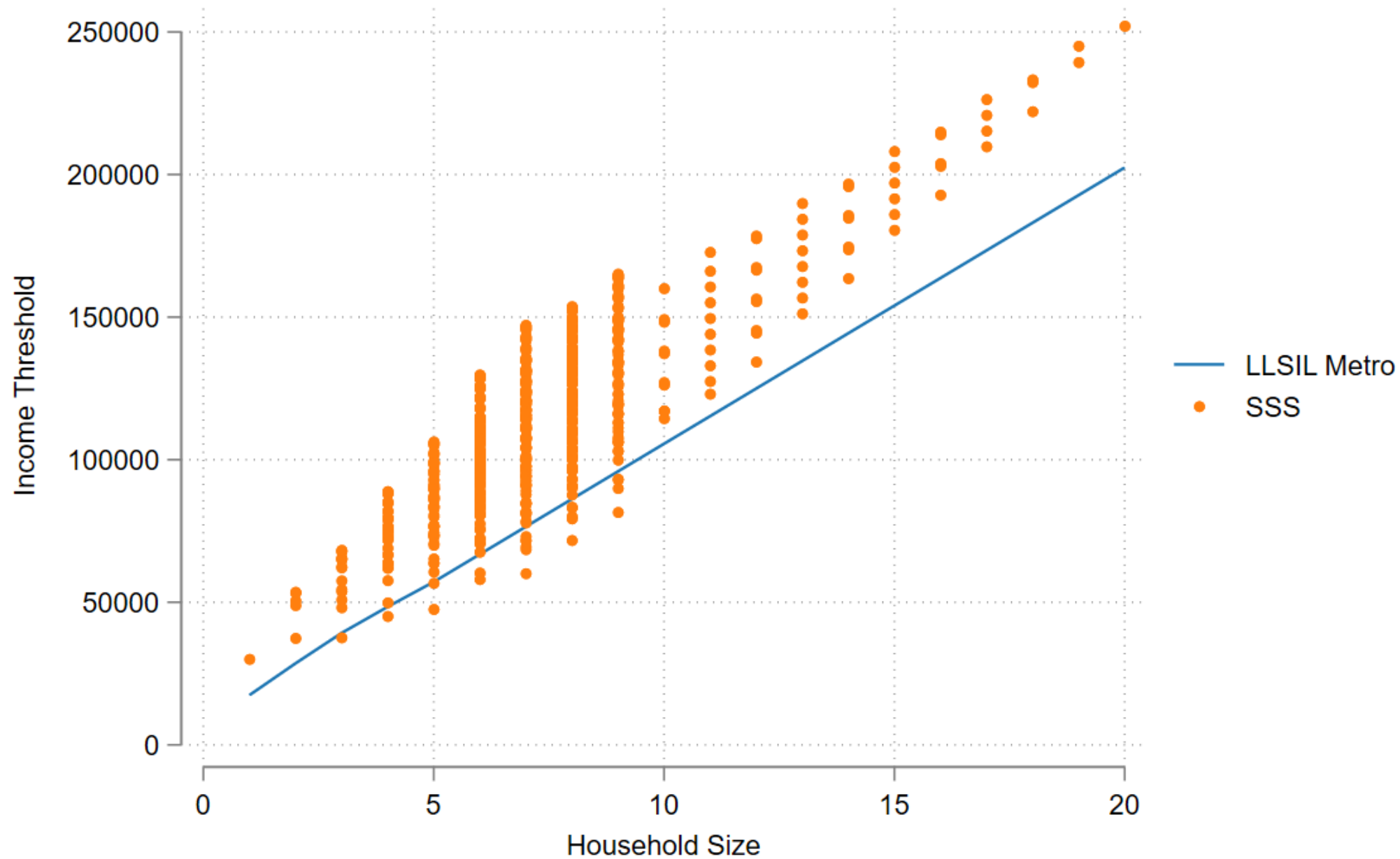
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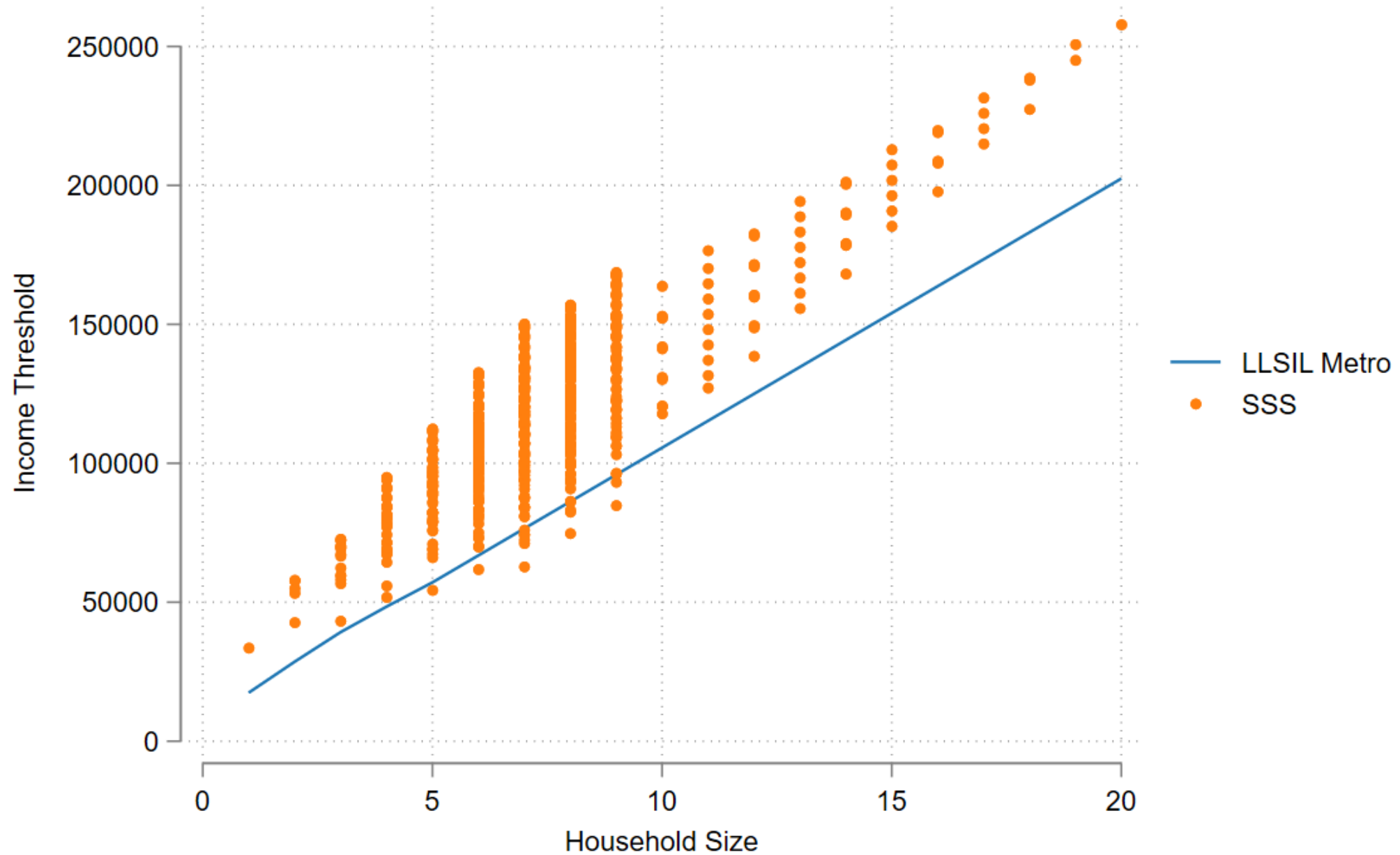
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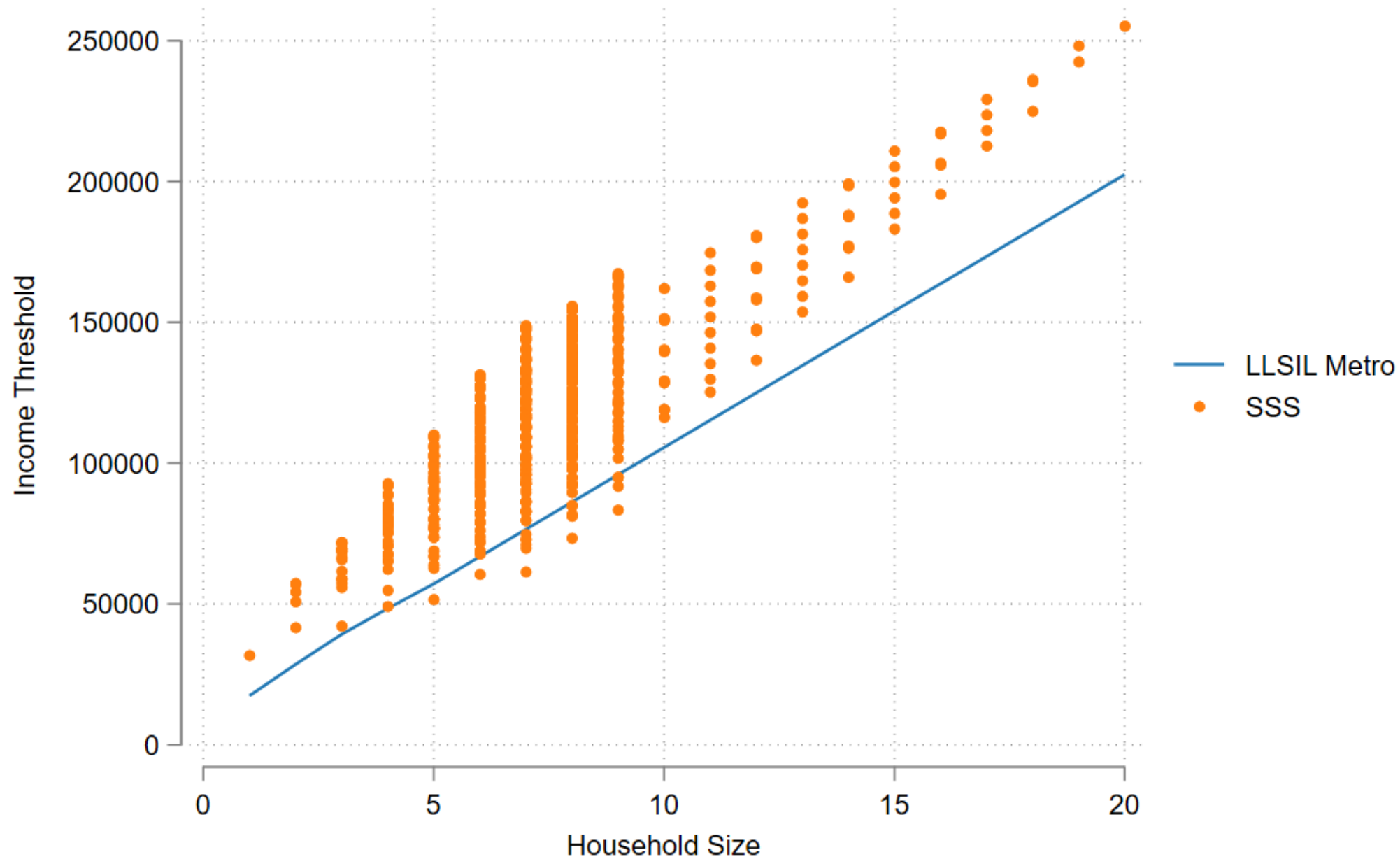
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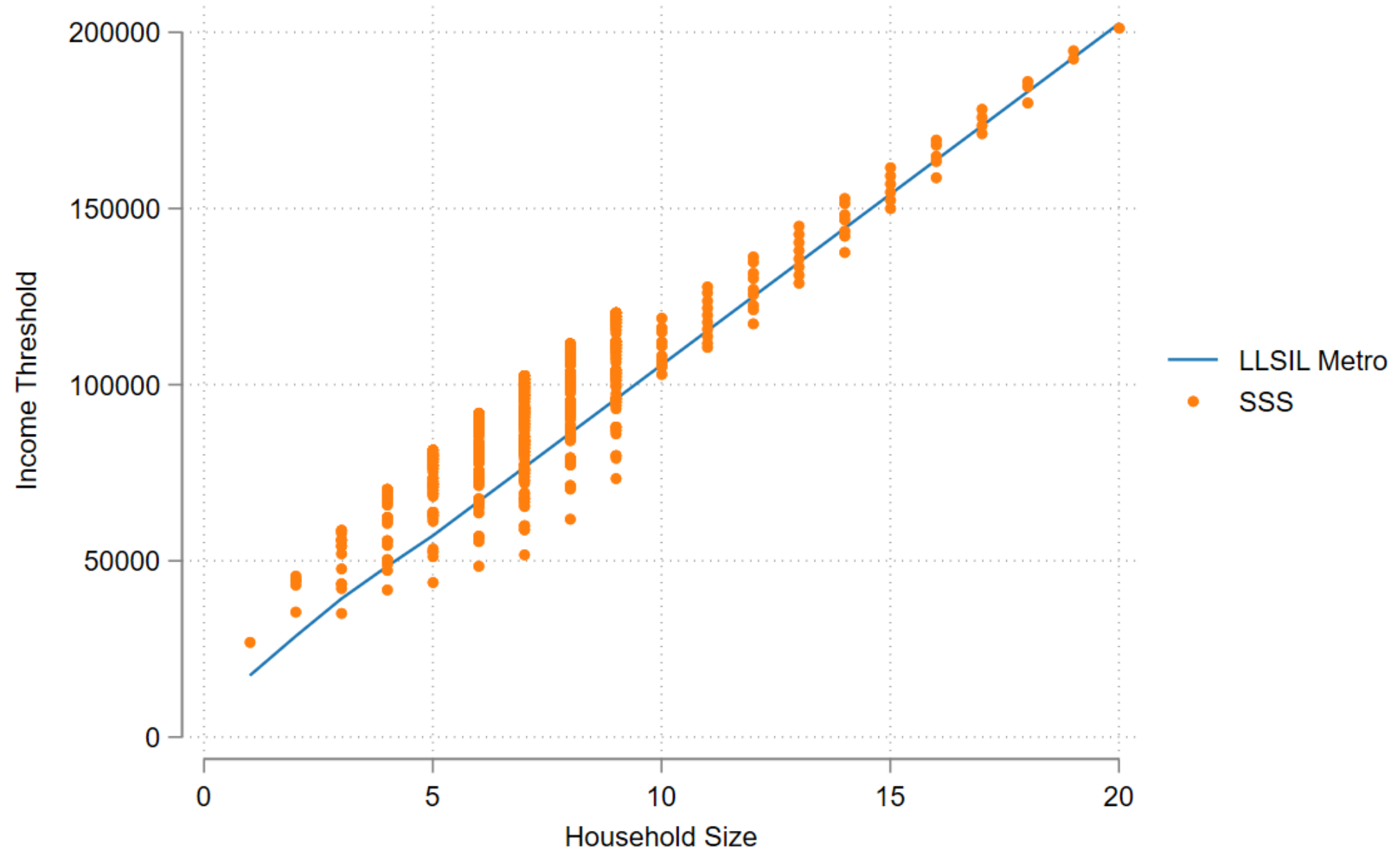
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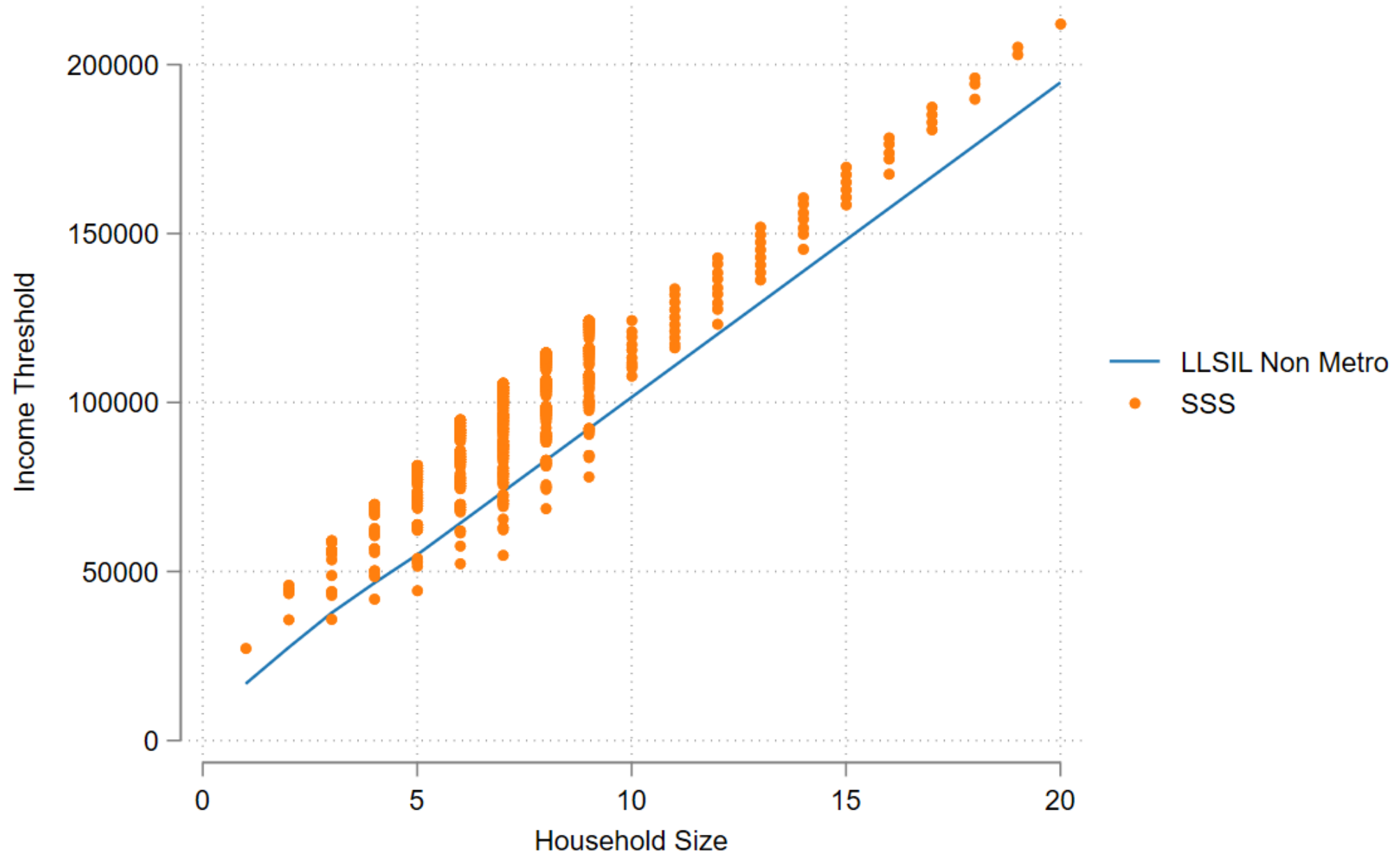
Sumter County



Union County



Williamsburg County



York County

