

The Relationship Between Marital Status and Opinion on Abortion

Restrictions as well as other Demographic Factors

Daisy DeGear, Quantitative Analysis Center, Wesleyan University



Research Question

What is the relationship between marital status and opinion on abortion restrictions? Is this relationship still significant after controlling for demographic factors of age, gender, and race?

Introduction

- Research indicates that unmarried white women are more likely to be pro-choice compared to married white women. Demographic factors like race and gender seemingly change the relationship between marital status and abortion opinion (Ruppanner et al., 2019).
- Studies have suggested that younger people are more likely to be pro-choice compared to older people (Rainey & Jackson, 2026).
- Studies assessing age and marital status together found that married, middle-aged women specifically are most likely to support abortion restrictions (Smith et al., 2021).
- The relationship between gender and abortion attitude is inconsistent and dependent on other demographic factors like gender-role attitudes and partnership status (Osborne et al., 2022).
- Previous research has discussed how a multitude of demographic factors impact abortion opinion without isolating marital status.

Methods

Sample

- The sample data is drawn from the 2024 American National Election Studies (ANES) data representing a population of voters in the United States and was collected before the 2024 presidential election.
- The sample I used includes 4,846 U.S. citizens, age 18 or older.

Measures

- Opinion on abortion was assessed on a 7 point scale that measured the extent of legal restrictions on abortion participants supported, from 1 meaning (Abortion should always be permitted with zero restrictions) to 7 (Abortion should be completely restricted).
- The following demographic variables were self-reported: Age (18-80), Marital Status ("Married", "Widowed", "Divorced", "Separated", "Domestic Partnership", and "Single"), Gender ("Male" or "Female"), and Race ("White", "Black", "Hispanic", "Asian/Pacific Islander", "Native American", and "Multiple Races").

Results

Bivariate

- Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test revealed a significant relationship between marital status and abortion opinion ($f=12.24$, and $p=8.12e-12^*$). Post hoc tests revealed significant differences in opinion between certain marital status groups including: Divorced-Married, Domestic Partnership-Married, Single-Married and Single-Widowed. While some other comparisons were statistically similar, these differences can be seen in Figure 1.

Multivariate

- After controlling for age, gender, and race demographics, the linear regression analysis revealed, in comparison to the majority of married people, the following marital status groups were still significantly, and negatively, associated with abortion opinion: Divorced (Beta=-0.26, $p=0.005$), Domestic Partnership (Beta=-0.57, $p=1.63e-07$), and Single (Beta=-0.27, $p=0.001$).
- The beta values indicate that compared to the majority of married people in the survey, those who are in domestic partnerships, divorced or single, are less likely to think abortion should have many restrictions.
- The demographic factors did not eliminate the significance of marital status. The most significantly related demographic factor to abortion restriction opinion was gender. See Figure 2.

Discussion

- Importantly, results indicate that in isolation some marital status groups do have a significant relationship with individuals' opinions on abortion restriction, and this relationship remains significant for some groups after controlling for factors of race, gender, and age.
- Notably, present findings are based on voting individuals and do not reflect non-voters' opinions on abortion restriction.
- Further research needs to be done to assess non-voters' relationship between abortion opinion and marital status and look into why certain marital statuses are correlated with opinions on abortion restriction.

References

- Smith, M. H., Turner, A. N., Chakraborty, P., Hood, R. B., Bessett, D., Gallo, M. F., & Norris, A. H. (2021). Opinions about abortion among Reproductive-Age women in Ohio. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 19(3), 909–921. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-021-00638-y>
- Ruppanner, L., Mikołajczak, G., Kretschmer, K., & Stout, C. T. (2019). Gender linked fate explains lower legal abortion support among white married women. *PLOS ONE*, 14(10), e0223271. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0223271>
- Rainey, C., & Jackson, R. A. (2026). Does support for the legal right to an abortion differ across generations in the United States? *PLoS ONE*, 21(3), e0341223–e0341223. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0341223>
- Osborne, D., Huang, Y., Overall, N. C., Sutton, R. M., Petterson, A., Douglas, K. M., Davies, P. G., & Sibley, C. G. (2022). Abortion Attitudes: An Overview of Demographic and Ideological Differences. *Political Psychology*, 43(1). <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12803>

Level of Abortion Restriction by Marital Status Groups

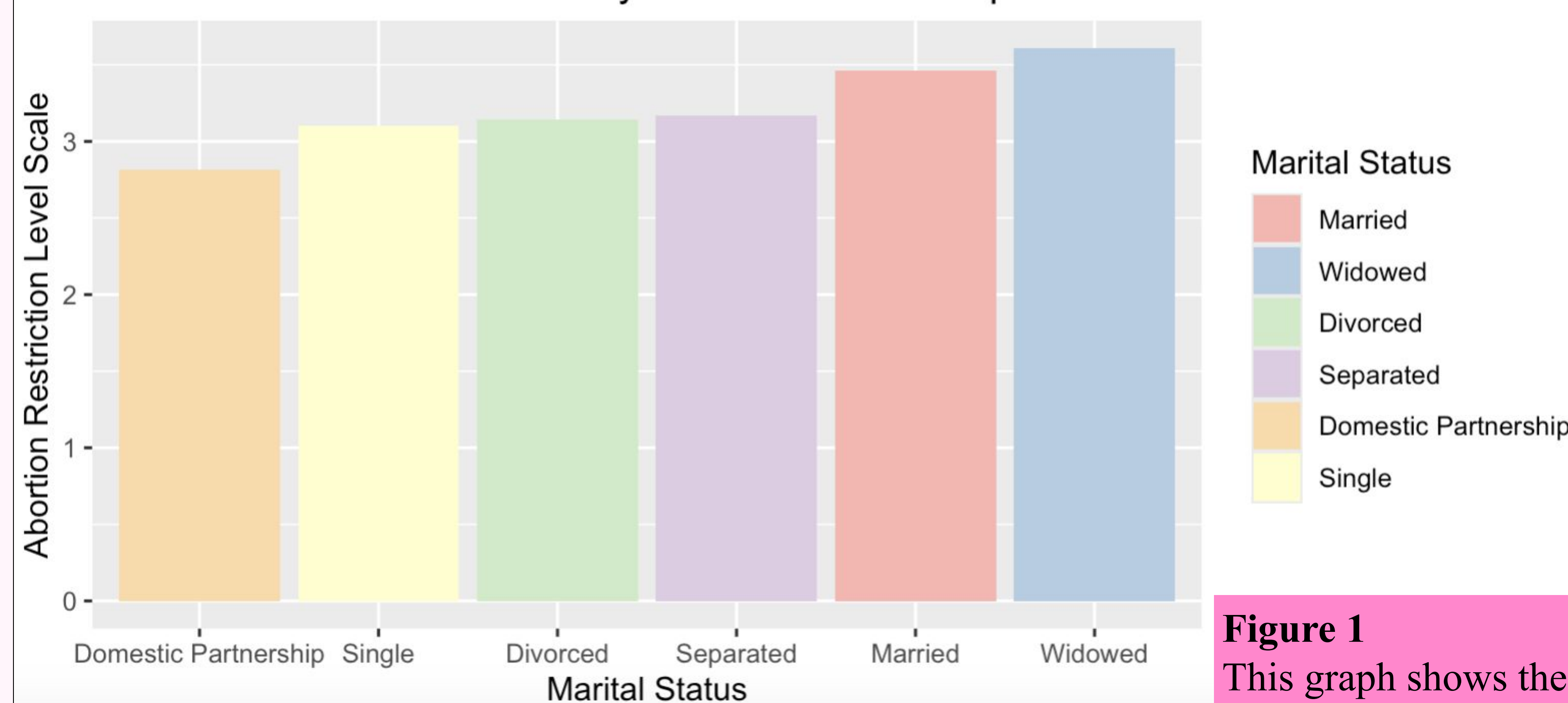


Figure 1

This graph shows the average abortion opinion of each marital status group.

Relationship between Marital Status and Abortion Restriction by Gender

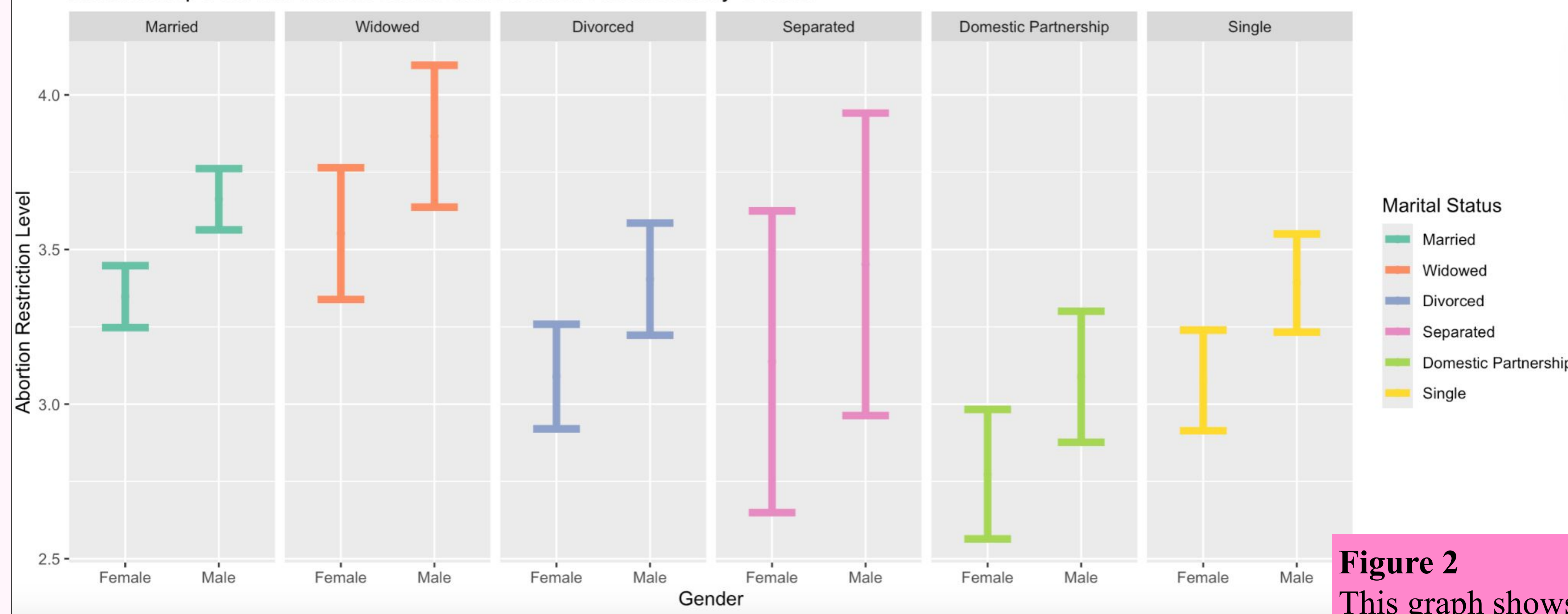


Figure 2

This graph shows the predicted abortion opinion of men and women in each marital status group.