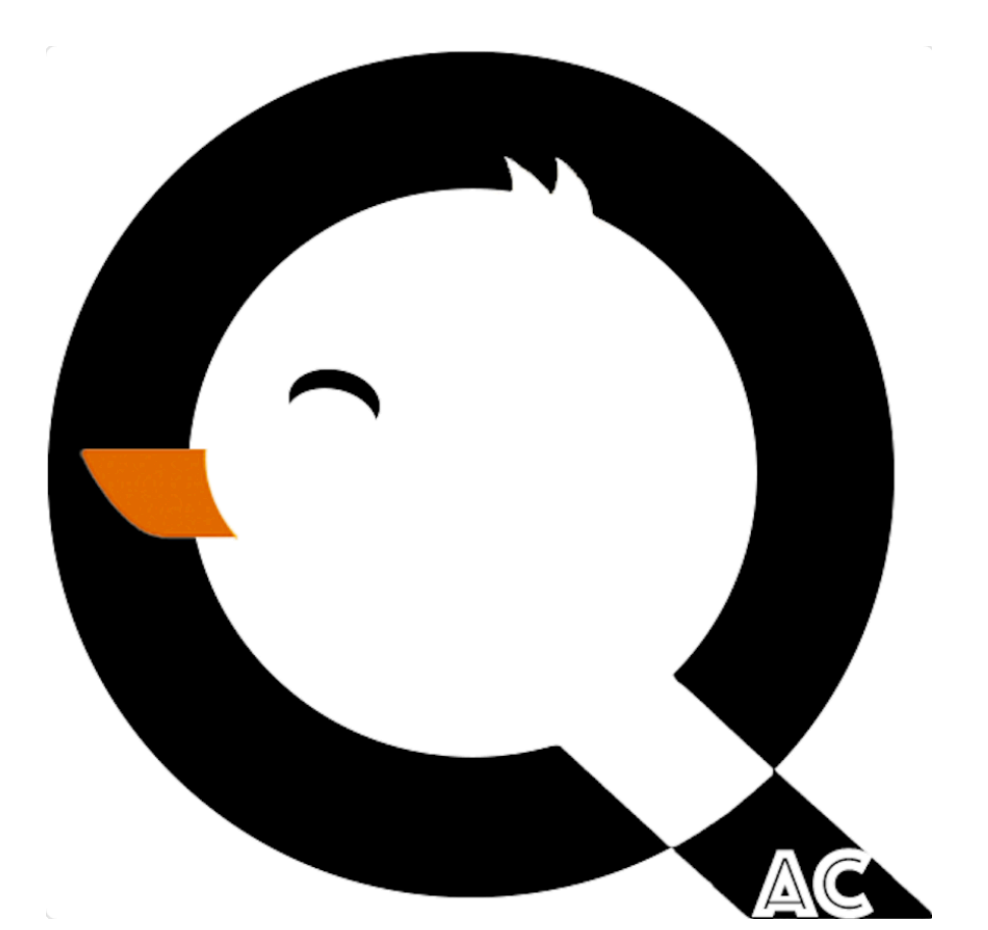




The Association between Gender and Support for the Death Penalty across Racial Groups

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Introduction

- Support for the death penalty remains a central issue in the U.S., with 53% of Americans favoring it for those convicted of murder (Brenan, 2023).
- Prior research shows that gender is a strong predictor of death penalty attitudes, with men more likely than women to support the death penalty (Cochran & Sanders, 2009; Whitehead & Blankenship, 2000).
- Race is also consistently associated with death penalty support, with Black Americans reporting lower levels of support than White Americans, even after controlling for other factors (Cochran & Chamlin, 2006; Johnson, 2008).
- Public opinion on the death penalty plays an important role in shaping criminal justice policy, political discourse, and legal decision-making (Death Penalty Information Center, 2024).

Methods

Sample

- Data from the 2024 General Social Survey (GSS) were used, including only respondents with complete information on gender, race, and death penalty support (N = 1,956).
- The GSS is a nationally representative sample of non-institutionalized adults in the U.S., with one adult randomly selected from each household.

Measures

- Death penalty support was assessed using the question, "Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?" Responses were coded dichotomously (favor vs. oppose).
- Gender was measured using respondents' self-reported sex (male, female).
- Race was measured using respondents' self-identified racial category and collapsed into four groups (White, Black, Hispanic, Other) for analysis.

Research Questions

- Are gender and race associated with support for the death penalty?
- Does the relationship between gender and support for the death penalty differ across racial groups?

Results

Univariate

- 60.3% of respondents favored the death penalty, while 39.7% opposed it.
- The sample included 54.0% female and 46.0% male respondents. The majority of respondents were White (70.9%), followed by Black (16.8%), Other (7.2%), and Hispanic (5.1%).

Bivariate

- Chi-Square analysis showed that men were significantly more likely to favor the death penalty (64.2%) compared to women (57.0%), $\chi^2 = 10.04$, 1 df, $p = 0.0015$. Conversely, women were more likely than men to oppose the death penalty (42.9% vs. 35.8%).
- The proportion of respondents who favor the death penalty is higher among men than women (Figure 1).
- This pattern suggests a gender gap in death penalty attitudes, with men consistently more likely to support the death penalty.

Multivariate

- Logistic regression analysis showed that men were about 1.35 times more likely than women to support the death penalty ($p = 0.0013$).
- Compared to Black respondents, White respondents were about 2.45 times more likely to support the death penalty ($p < 0.001$), Hispanic respondents were about 1.99 times more likely ($p = 0.044$), and respondents in the "Other" category were about 3.30 times more likely ($p < 0.001$).
- However, when race was included in the model, gender was no longer a statistically significant predictor of death penalty support ($p = 0.34$), suggesting that differences in support between men and women may be partly explained by racial differences.
- Support for the death penalty varies across racial groups, and within every group other than "Other", men show higher levels of support than women (Figure 2).
- The interaction between gender and race was not statistically significant (all p -values > 0.05), indicating that the gender difference in death penalty support does not vary meaningfully across racial groups.

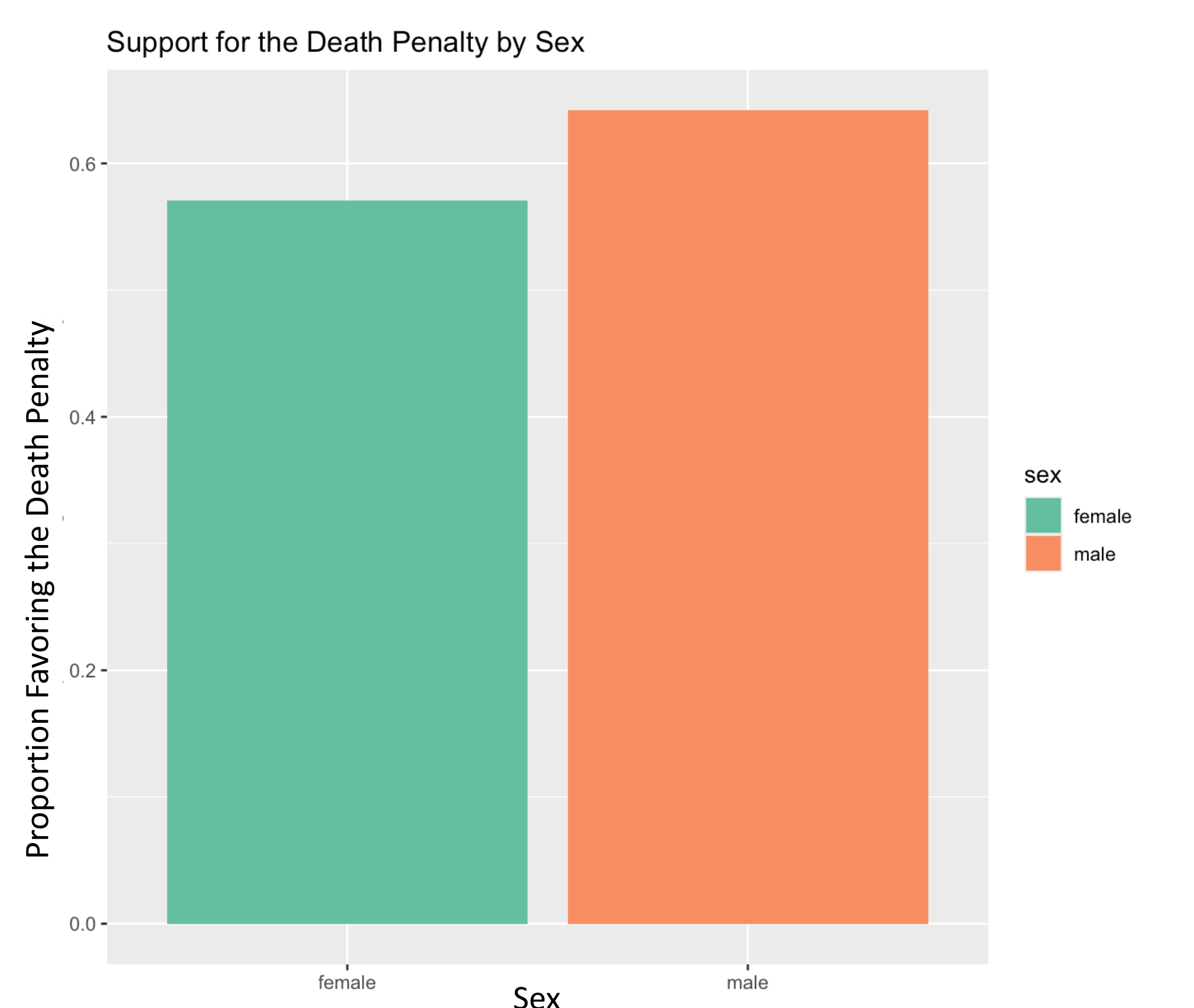


Figure 1: Support for the Death Penalty by Gender. Proportion of respondents who favor the death penalty among men and women.

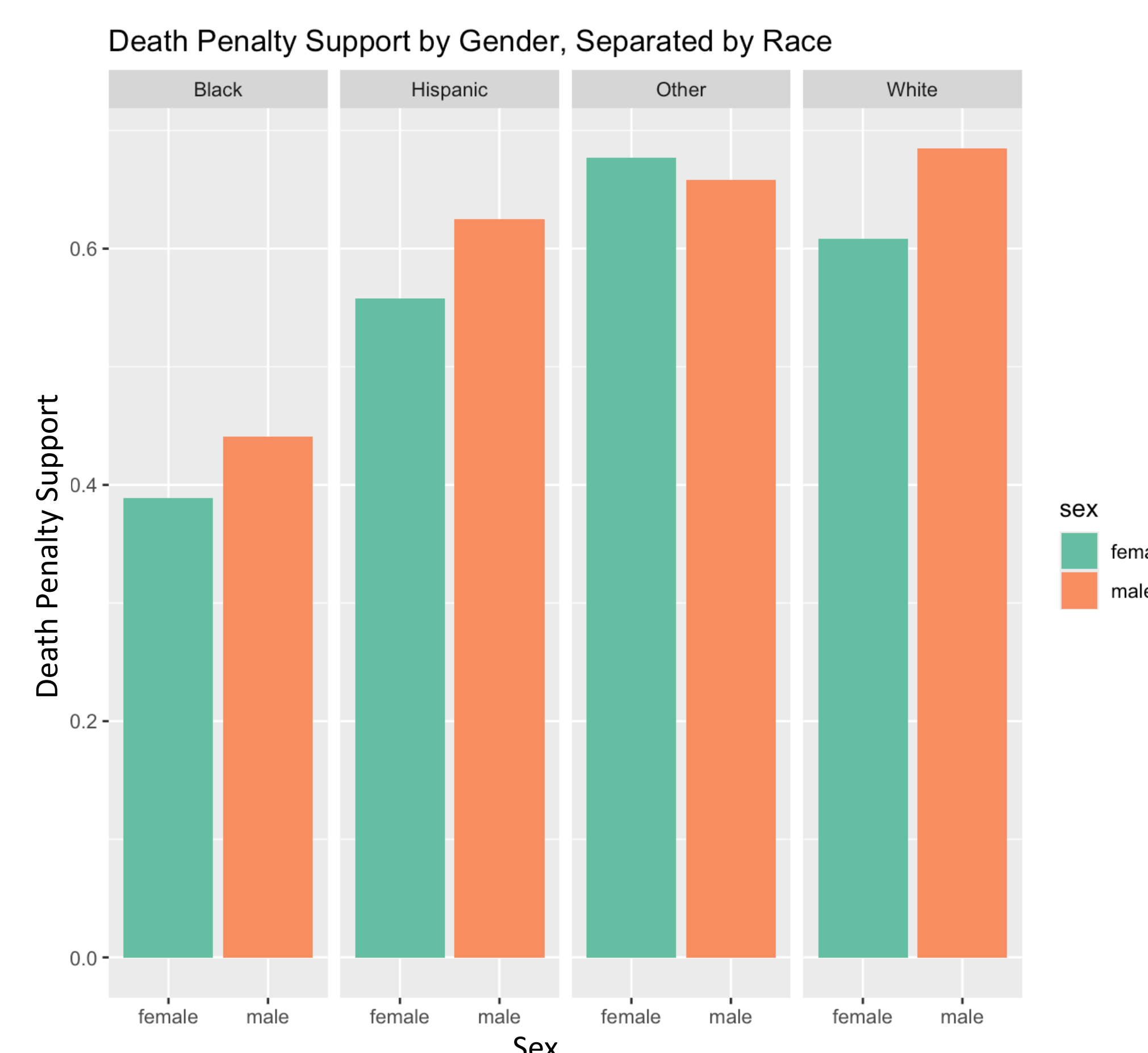


Figure 2: Support for the Death Penalty by Gender, Separated by Race. Proportion of respondents who favor the death penalty across racial groups (White, Black, Hispanic, Other), shown separately for men and women.

Discussion

- Men were more likely than women to support the death penalty, although this difference was no longer statistically significant after accounting for race, suggesting that racial differences may help explain the observed gender gap.
- Strong racial differences in death penalty attitudes were observed, with White, Hispanic, and "Other" respondents showing higher levels of support compared to Black respondents. These findings are consistent with prior research on racial differences in perceptions of the criminal justice system.
- These findings suggest that lower levels of support among Black respondents may reflect greater concern about fairness and bias within the criminal justice system, particularly given the disproportionate impact of the death penalty on Black communities.
- Although gender differences were visible within most racial groups, the interaction between gender and race was not statistically significant, suggesting that the gender gap in support for the death penalty remains relatively consistent across racial groups.
- These findings are based on cross-sectional survey data and therefore cannot establish causal relationships between demographic characteristics and death penalty attitudes.
- Future research should examine how additional factors, such as political ideology, personal experiences with the criminal justice system, and perceptions of fairness, influence support for the death penalty.
- Longitudinal research would be useful in determining how attitudes toward the death penalty change over time and what factors contribute to those changes.

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