The Relationship Between Perception of Income Inequality and Opinion of Income Distribution in the U.S.

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Introduction

- Traffic stops are the most common form of police-initiated contact in the United States and a key site for examining racial disparities in enforcement (BJS 2022).
- Prior research consistently finds that Black drivers are searched at higher rates than White drivers, with evidence suggesting race may influence stop and search outcomes (Pierson et al. 2020; Knowles & Lowenkamp 2017).
- Most studies rely on national or multi-state data, while fewer focus on state-level variation despite differences in enforcement practices across jurisdictions.

Research Questions

- To what extent does driver race predict the probability of a vehicle search during traffic stops in Connecticut?
- Does the time of day condition this association?

Methods

Sample

- Data were drawn from the Connecticut Traffic Stops – Racial Profiling Prohibition Project, which compiles stops reported under Public Act 12-74. Each observation represents a single traffic stop (N = 313,351). The analysis includes all cases with complete data on driver race and search outcome.

Measures

- Driver race was recorded by the reporting officer and categorized as White, Black, Asian, or American Indian.
- Vehicle search was measured as a binary indicator of whether a search occurred during the stop (search conducted vs. no search).
- Time of day was coded as daytime or nighttime, with daytime defined as hours ≥ 6 and ≤ 17 (5 PM).

Results

Bivariate

- Chi-Square Test of Independence shows a statistically significant association between driver race and vehicle searches ($\chi^2(2) = 638.57$, $p < .001$).
- Search rates differ by race: Black drivers (2.84%) are searched most often, followed by White drivers (1.46%), and drivers in the "Other" category (0.60%).
- These results indicate that the likelihood of a vehicle search is not evenly distributed across racial groups.

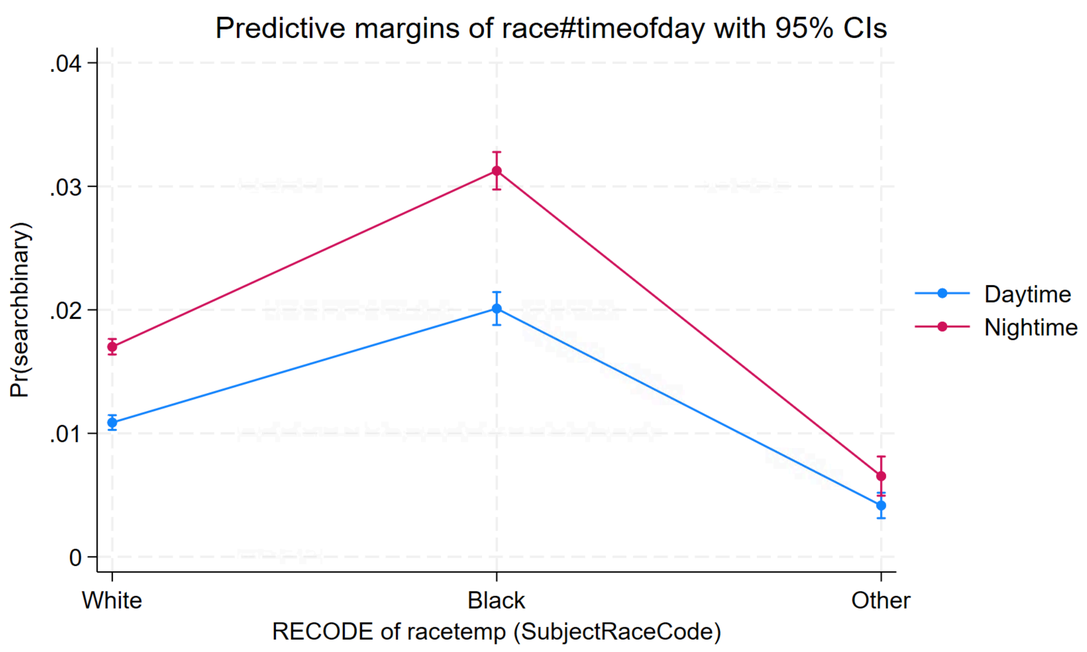

***Figure 1*: Predicted Probability of Vehicle Search by Driver Race and Time of Day**

Multivariate

- Logistic regression analyses show th Black drivers are significantly more likely to be searched than the reference group (O.R. = 1.87, p < .001), while drivers in the "Other" category are significantly less likely t be searched (O.R. = 0.38, p < .001).
- Male drivers are significantly more likely to be searched than female drivers (O.R. = 2.29, p < .001).
- Stops conducted at night are associated with higher likelihood of a search compared to daytime stops (O.R. = 1.57, p < .001).

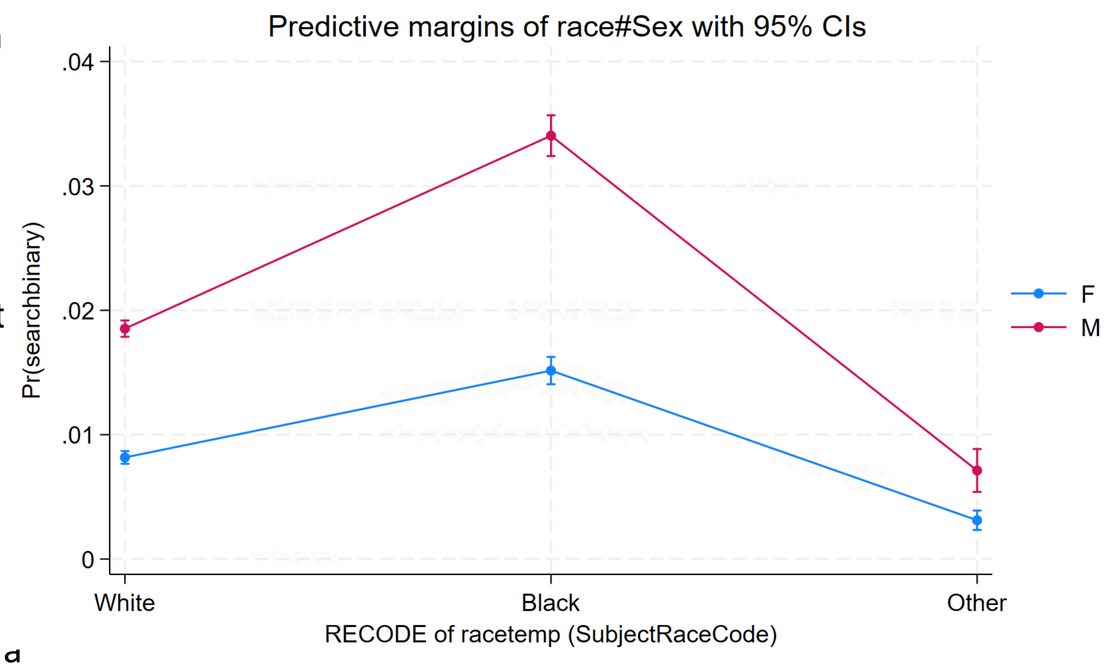

***Figure 2:* Predicted Probability of Vehicle Search by Driver Race and Sex**

Discussion

- Although vehicle searches are rare overall, they are not evenly distributed across racial groups, with Black drivers experiencing higher search rates than other groups.
- There is a statistically significant association between driver race and the likelihood of a vehicle search, indicating that search outcomes vary systematically by race.
- Vehicle searches occur more frequently during nighttime stops than daytime stops, suggesting that time of day also influences search likelihood.
- Future research should examine how race and time of day interact, as well as incorporate additional variables (e.g., location, reason for stop) to better understand the factors shaping search decisions.

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