

Race, Gender, and Attitudes Towards Police

Use of Violence

Stephanie Spehar sspehar@bgsu.edu
 Department of Sociology
 Bowling Green State University

Research Questions

- Does gender of the respondents have an effect on how they view police violence?
- Is there a difference in race on different policing attitudes?

Significance

- Today, the United States makes up about 5% of the world's population and has 21% of the world's prisoners.
- In 2011, about 62.9 million people had contact with the police.
- If African Americans and Hispanics were incarcerated at the same rates as whites, prison and jail populations would decline by almost 40%.

<http://www.naacp.org/criminal-justice-fact-sheet/>

<https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/pbtss11.pdf>

Background

- Police officers have power to carry out duties to protect society. Laws place limits on how far police can go in doing so.
- Tamir Rice was shot playing with a toy gun.
- African Americans are more likely to be targeted by law enforcement.

Hypothesis: (1) Males will have a more positive attitude for police violence. (2) African American males will have a negative attitude.

Data and Sample

- General Social Survey
 - Specifically 2016 Ballot C
 - Monitors trends in attitudes, behaviors, and attributes.
 - N=979

Dependent Measure

- Attitudes on Police Violence
 - "Are there any situations you can imagine in which you would approve of a policeman striking an adult male citizen?"
 - ❖ Had said vulgar and obscene things to the policeman
 - ❖ Was attempting to escape from custody
 - ❖ Was being questioned as a suspect in a murder case
 - ❖ Was attacking the policeman with his fists

Independent Measure

- Gender

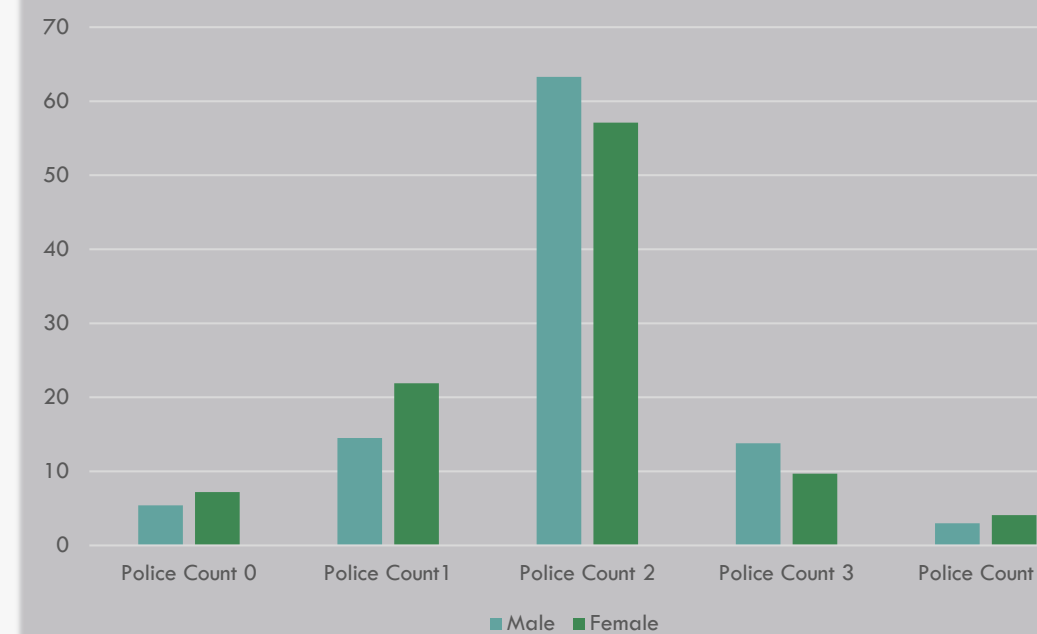
Control Measure

- Race

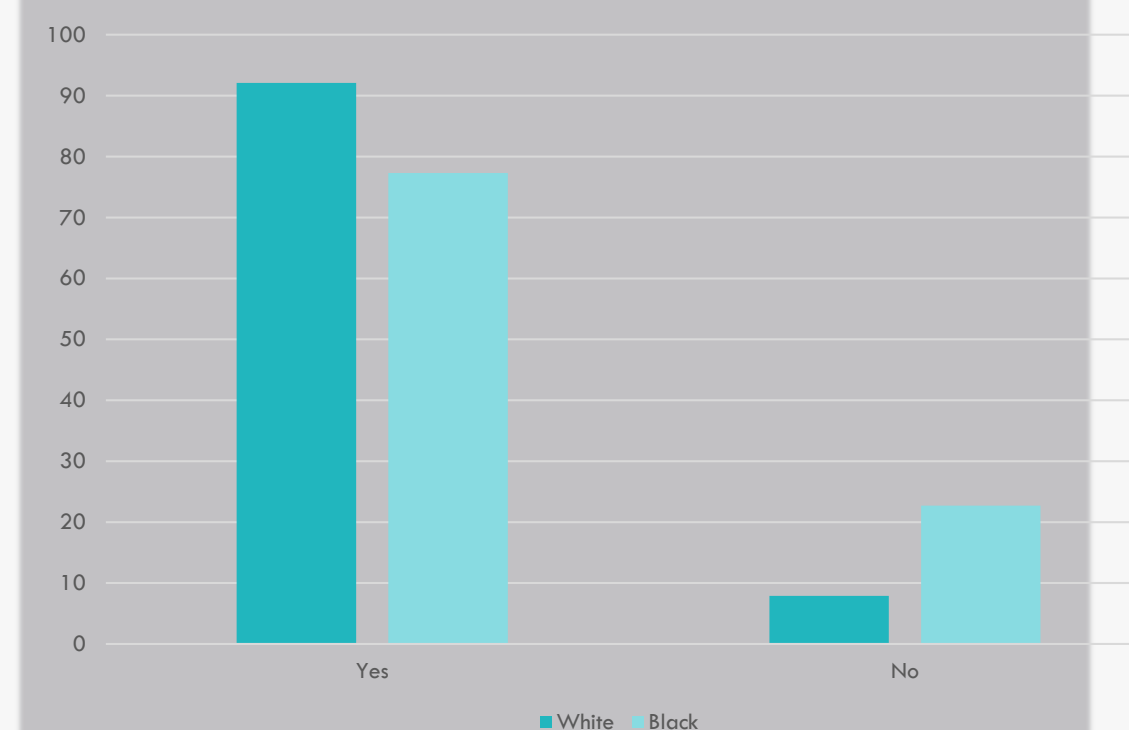
Analysis

- Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)
- Cross Tabulation

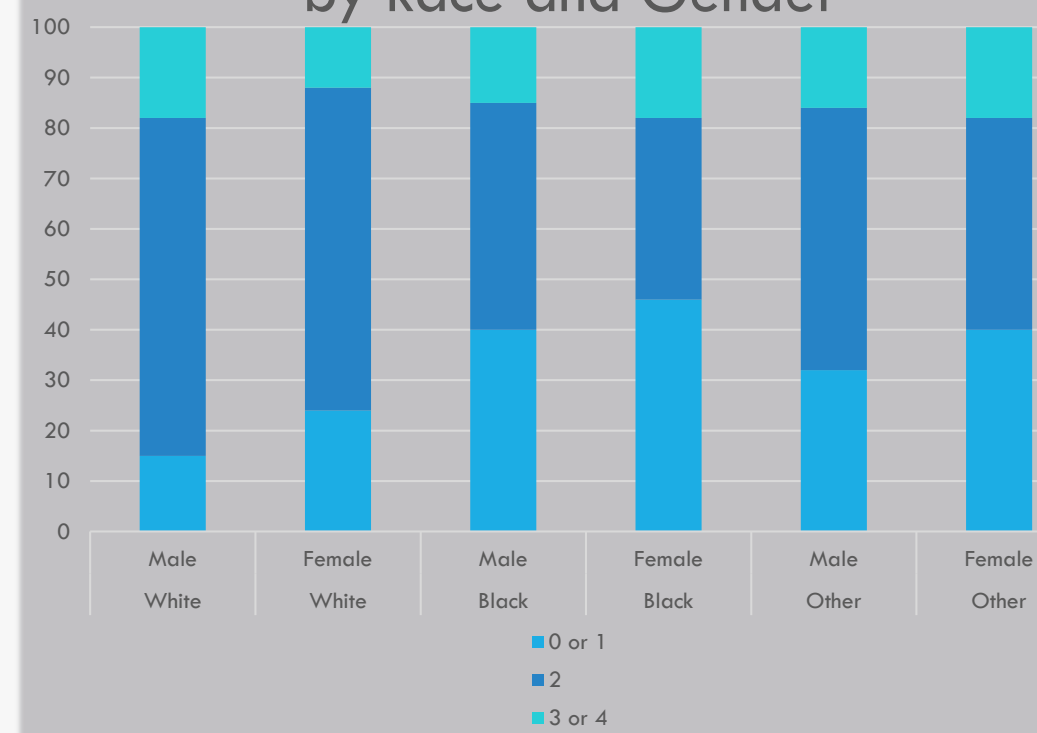
Gender on Police Violence



Race on Attacking Police



Endorsement of Police Violence by Race and Gender



Summary of Findings

- When looking at race, black males tend to agree that using violence is okay at a higher rate for 0-1 indicators of violence. Black females rates are even higher than of black males.
- Using the same indicators, whites have a higher agree rate for 2 indicators of violence.

Discussion

There may be other factors that contribute to findings, for example, gun ownership, SES, and/or education level of respondents. This was limited to only the 2016 C Ballot of the GSS.

The data presented in the first graph shows that males have a higher agree rate with an indicator of 2 and 3 of violence.

The second graph shows specially the acceptance of a policeman using violence do to a citizen attacking the officer with his fists. It is shown that whites agree that this is acceptable.

The last graph shows the endorsement of police violence by race and gender. Black men and women, along with specified others agree that using violence is okay with 0-1 indicators of violence.