

# The Association Between Religiosity and A Person's View on Capital Punishment

## Research Questions

- How does religiosity relate to people's attitudes favoring capital punishment for crimes like murder?
- Does the association vary by gender?

## Significance

- Capital punishment is authorized in 31 states in the United States (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2018).
- In 2015, support for the death penalty is the lowest it's been in the past 40 years (Pew Research Center, 2015).

## Background

- Capital punishment is only used in the most serious of offenses (ACLU, 2018).
- A country's predominant religion has a significant affect on if the death penalty would be abolished (Mathias, 2013).
- People who are religious are more likely to favor the death penalty in the U.S. (Rade & Desmarais, 2017).
- Religiosity can shape a person's views on the death penalty (Miller & Hayward, 2008).
- Men are more likely than women to support death penalty (Miller & Hayward, 2008).

## Hypothesis

- Religiosity will be related to a person favoring capital punishment for a person who committed murder.
- Men will be more likely than women to favor the death penalty.
- The effects of religion on people's views on the death penalty will be similar for men and women.

## Data and Sample

- 2016 General Social Survey (N=2,674).
- Representative sample of U.S. Adults 18 and older.

## Dependent Measure

*Opinion of death penalty for murder*

- "Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?"
  - Favoring the Death Penalty 60.9%
  - Opposing the Death Penalty 39.1%

## Independent Measures

*The Religiosity of a Person*

- "To what extent do you consider yourself a religious person?"
  - Religious 77.5% (very/moderate/slightly religious)
  - Not Religious 22.5%

## Control Measure

*Gender of Respondent*

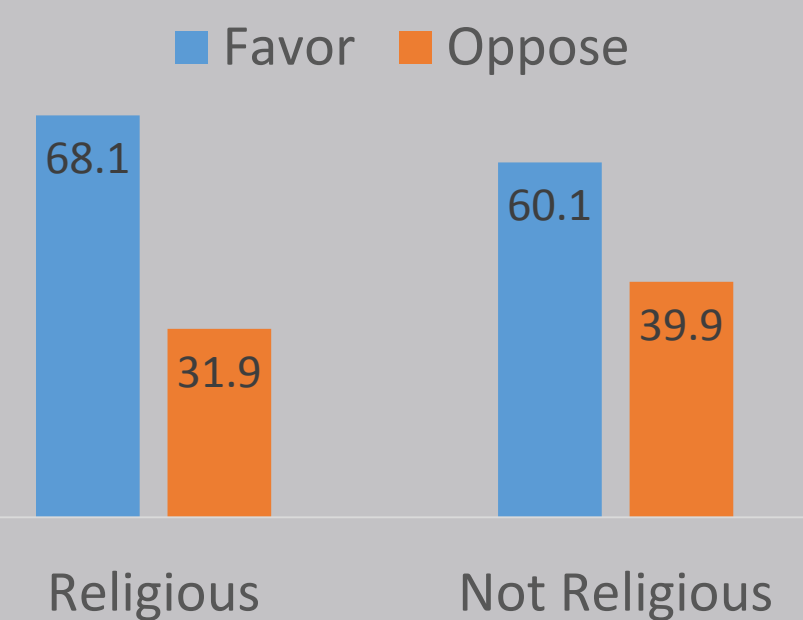
- Male 45.2%
- Female 54.8%

## Analysis

- Cross tabulation and Chi-square test using SPSS

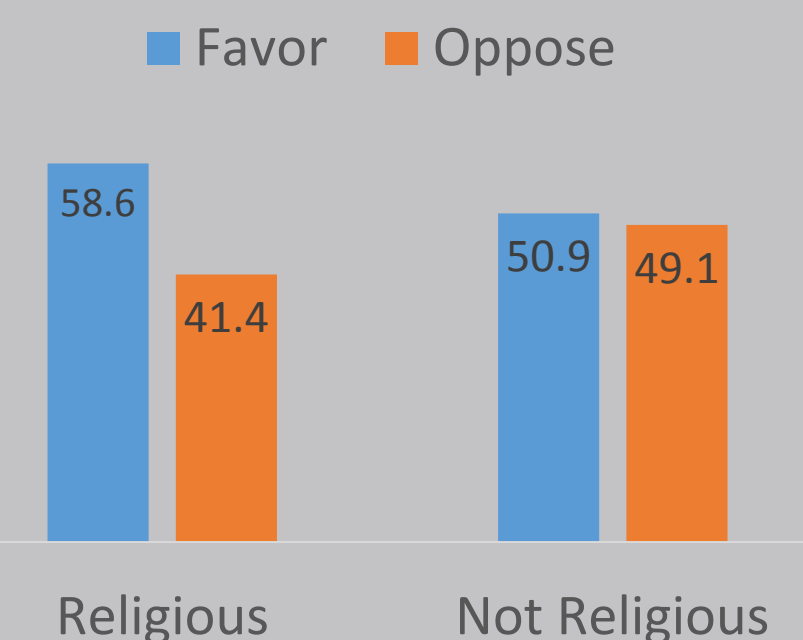
## Results

Figure 1. % Distributions of opinion of death penalty by Religiosity of a person for U.S. Men: GSS 2016 (N=1,235)



- The Chi-square test suggests that these differences are statistically significant at  $p < .01$  level for men.

Figure 2. % Distributions of opinions of death penalty by Religiosity of a person for U.S. Women: GSS 2016 (N=1,439)



- The Chi-square test suggests that these differences are statistically significant at  $p < .05$  level for women.

## Summary of Findings

- People who consider themselves religious are more likely to favor the death penalty for people who commit murder.
- Men are more likely than women to favor the death penalty for people who commit murder.
- The effects of religiosity on the view of the death penalty are similar for men and women.

## Implications

- Religiosity increases the chances of a person favoring capital punishment.
- Religiosity should be considered in the selection of jury members for the case that involves the death penalty for people who commit murder.

## References

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