

Statistical Overview of the North Carolina Death Penalty

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Research Question:

Regardless of how the death penalty is analyzed from an ethical standpoint, is the application of the death penalty in North Carolina *statistically* consistent across various cases, when looking at the race and gender of the offender, victim, or both the offender and victim?

Table 2. Summary of Odds Ratios for Race and Gender.

| Baseline | Comparison | Baseline Rate | Comparison Rate | Odds Ratio |
|---|-------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|------------|
| <i>By Offender Gender --</i> | | | | |
| Female Offender | Male Offender | 0.38 | 1.83 | 4.84 |
| <i>By Offender Race --</i> | | | | |
| Black Offender | White Offender | 1.29 | 2.18 | 1.69 |
| <i>By Victim Gender --</i> | | | | |
| Male Victim | Female Victim | 1.11 | 3.55 | 3.20 |
| <i>By Victim Race --</i> | | | | |
| Black Victim | White Victim | 0.88 | 2.82 | 3.20 |
| <i>By Victim Race and Gender --</i> | | | | |
| Black Male Victims | White Male Victims | 0.51 | 2.11 | 4.13 |
| Black Male Victims | Black Female Victims | 0.51 | 2.53 | 4.96 |
| Black Male Victims | White Female Victims | 0.51 | 4.66 | 9.12 |
| <i>By Offender-Victim Race --</i> | | | | |
| Black kills Black | White kills Black | 0.76 | 1.23 | 1.61 |
| Black kills Black | White kills White | 0.76 | 2.32 | 3.04 |
| Black kills Black | Black kills White | 0.76 | 4.26 | 5.58 |
| <i>Males kill males of same race --</i> | | | | |
| Black male kills black male | White male kills white male | 0.53 | 1.66 | 3.11 |
| <i>Males of different races kill white females --</i> | | | | |
| White male kills white female | Black male kills white female | 4.62 | 8.25 | 1.79 |
| <i>Black Males kill different victims --</i> | | | | |
| Black male kills black male | Black male kills white female | 0.53 | 8.25 | 15.47 |

RESULTS

As seen in **Table 2**, the cases in which a black individual has killed a white victim are more than **five** times more likely to receive death sentences than the cases in which a black individual has killed a black victim. More specifically, an individual is more than **nine** times more likely to be sentenced to death if they kill a white female compared to killing a black male. Furthermore, a black male who kills a white female is more than **fifteen** times more likely to be sentenced to death compared to cases in which a black male kills another black male.

The Importance of Racial Bias in Research:

These results conclude that death sentencing outcomes within the North Carolina capital punishment system are racially biased, with the highest odds of being sentenced to death revolving around the race and gender of the victim; specifically, capital punishment tends to be reserved for cases involving white victims. Researching the race and gender of the victim has proved to be just as important as researching the race and gender of the offender. The odds ratios calculated for North Carolina can also be done for every state that allows for death sentencing. Generally, whether we look at executions or death sentences, there is a powerful statistical pattern that the death penalty is much more likely to be used in some cases rather than others. It is important to understand how these statistical trends operate within North Carolina, so we can then place them next to trends that occur within other states. **Examination of racial bias is imperative in studies concerning capital punishment, as evidenced by the findings presented in Table 2.**

Calculating “odds ratios,” otherwise known as “risk factors,” is a widely used approach to show the influence of a specific attribute on the change of probability associated with a particular result. **Table 2** showcases comparisons made between various death sentencing rates. The comparisons made in **Table 2** were found to be the most statistically relevant. When we look at offender-victim combinations, we see even more powerful differences in rates.