

Race and the Death Penalty

Workshop

1. Several studies from the 1970s and 1980s looked at how race affects whether convicted murderers got the death penalty. Here is a two-way table showing data from 326 cases where the defendant was convicted of murder. It also shows the race of the defendant (black or white) and whether they got the death penalty.

	Black Defendant	White Defendant	Total
Death Penalty	17	19	36
Not	149	141	290
Total	166	160	326

- (a) What percent of black defendants got the death penalty?
- (b) What percent of white defendants got the death penalty?
- (c) What percent of people who got the death penalty were white?
2. Based on the data above, it looks like black defendants are less likely to get the death penalty. However, things look different if you take the race of the victim into account. Here is the same data, separated by the race of the victim.

	White Victim			Black Victim	
	Black Defendant	White Defendant		Black Defendant	White Defendant
Death	11	19	Death	6	0
Not	52	132	Not	97	9
Total	63	151	Total	103	9

- (a) Is the race of the defendant and whether or not they got the death penalty associated or independent in each of the two contingency tables above? If there is an association, describe it in words.
- (b) Is this an example of Simpson's paradox? Explain why or why not. Be sure to back up your answers with the relevant numbers.