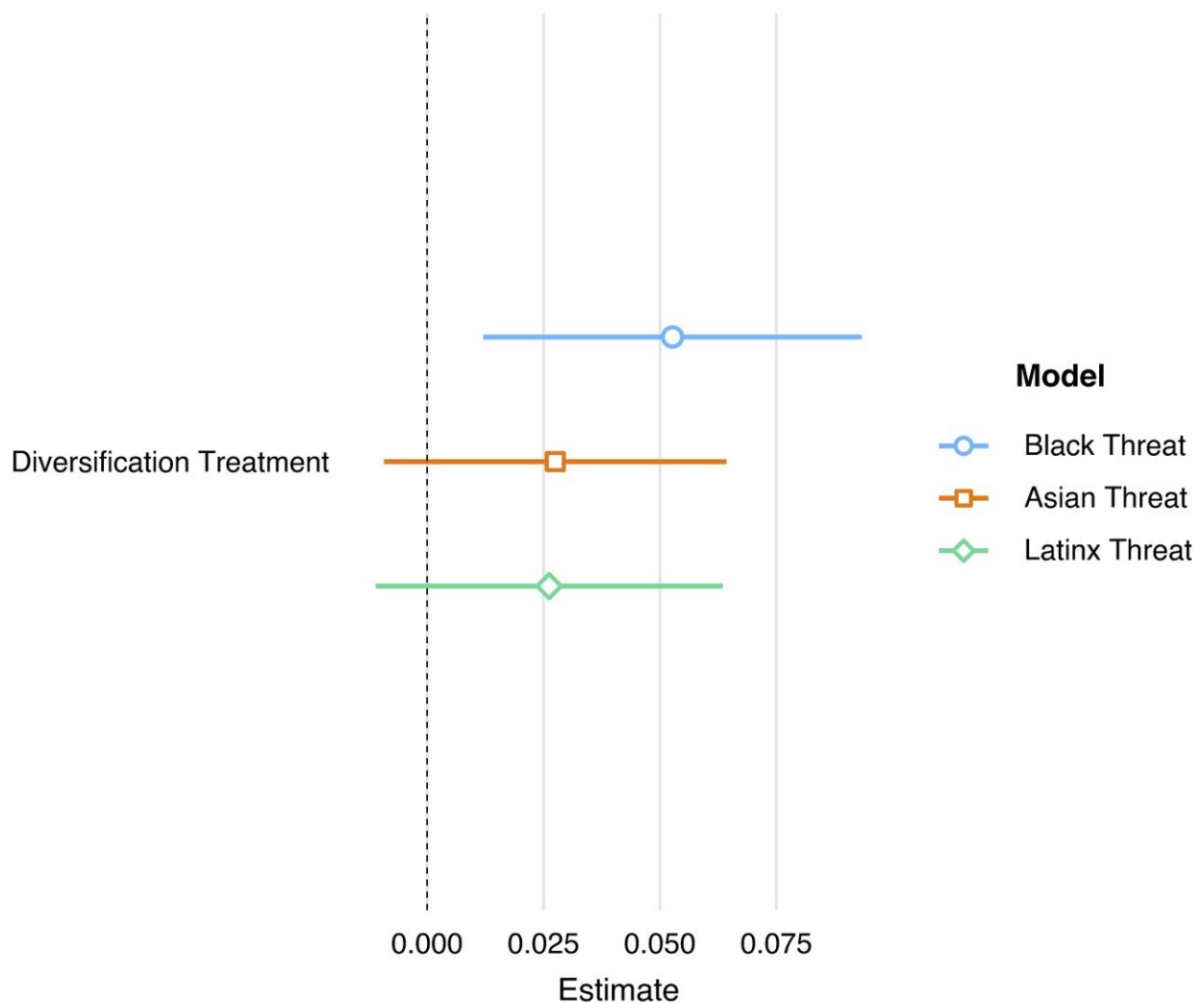


Study finds link between anti-Black sentiment and broad support for political violence in the US

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Comparing expressions of threat. Credit: *Perspectives on Politics* (2024). DOI: 10.1017/S1537592724000045

Support for anti-Black violence has a long historical arc in American politics dating back to slavery. A George Washington University research team led by Assistant Professor of Political Science Andrew Thompson conducted an experiment to try to tap into top-of-mind ideas about the changing demographics in the United States.

The team tested how Americans think of the changing country using multiple national surveys. The team randomly asked Americans what comes to mind when they think of U.S. racial diversification. When investigating the responses, the team found that the American public by and large identified Black Americans as a threat more than any other [racial group](#).

These views causally drive more support for violence across the multiple studies conducted by the team. On the whole, the researchers found that anti-Black senses of threat are key drivers in support for violence across Americans. The paper, "Anti-Black Political Violence and the Historical Legacy of the Great Replacement Conspiracy," was [published](#) in *Perspectives in Politics*.

According to the authors, perceptions about Black Americans' growing political and economic power persist in spite of the fact that [their population is not the fastest growing](#) in the United States, nor have Black Americans made sizable gains in their socioeconomic status. The perception of Black threat is an important driver of democratic backsliding and political violence that deserves additional attention.

"When ordinary Americans think about how the country is changing, regardless of the groups who are growing and changing, they think about and feel threatened by Black Americans," Thompson said. "These ideas make them expressively more supportive of violence.

"So, we need to give further attention and build more safeguards for Black Americans when we think about who is in harm's way as [political rhetoric](#) and content about the changing country is put forth. Events like the Buffalo shooting in 2022 are not flashes in the pan, but instead connect deeply to how many others are thinking."

The study's findings reveal a concerning pattern when discussing the overall diversification of white Americans, when presented with this topic, disproportionately associate it with Black Americans and frequently express heightened anti-Black sentiment, surpassing their reactions to other non-white groups. Across all three studies, Black Americans were referenced 51% of the time, while Latinx and Hispanic Americans were mentioned 33%, and Asian Americans 15%.

Moreover, ordinary citizens exhibit increased [support](#) for violence when prompted to contemplate the country's diversification, highlighting a troubling correlation between thoughts of demographic change and a rise in endorsement for [political violence](#). These intertwined dynamics underscore the complex intersection of racial perceptions and attitudes toward violence in shaping public opinion.

More information: Andrew Ifedapo Thompson et al, Anti-Black Political Violence and the Historical Legacy of the Great Replacement Conspiracy, *Perspectives on Politics* (2024). [DOI: 10.1017/S1537592724000045](#)

Provided by George Washington University

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