



The Association Between Voter Preference in the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election and Perceived Levels of Corruption Since Donald Trump's First Term

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Introduction

- Evidence suggests that there are two distinct definitions of corruption that exist in the mainstream – one understanding corruption as lawbreaking, while the other understanding it as favoritism. These judgements about corruption are often correlated to a voter's economic background (Redlawsk & McCann, 2005).
- Perceptions about corruption are thought to be heavily influenced by the news cycle (Rizzica & Tonello, 2020).
- Citizens had less confidence in their belief that the government could solve problems when they perceived that the government was becoming more corrupt (Caillier, 2010).
- When corruption levels become perceived as high, voter consider ideology less in their voting decisions (Burlacu, 2018).
- Some studies suggest that perceptions about high corruption have a dampening effect on voter turnout – that is, belief in higher corruption levels leads to less voter participation in subsequent elections (Suzuki, 2017).

Methods

Sample

- A nationally representative sample of non-institutionalized U.S. citizens aged 18 or older living in the 50 US states or the District of Columbia (n=8,280) from pre-2020 election online or telephone interviews and surveys drawn from the American National Election Studies 2020 Time Series Study (ANES).

Measures

- Opinion on corruption was measured with the question “Has corruption increased or decreased since Trump?” The present study used a categorical variable to measure this, with the results being “increased,” “decreased,” or “stayed the same.”
- The variable for presidential candidate featured four candidates (Donald Trump, Joe Biden, Jo Jorgensen, and Howie Hawkins) as well as a value label for “other candidate.” This study primarily focuses on the results regarding Joe Biden and Donald Trump, as they were the Democratic and Republican nominees, respectively.
- Income was consolidated into five categorical bins: \$9,900-\$24,999, \$25,000-\$44,999, \$45,000-\$69,999, \$70,000-\$99,999, and \$100,000-\$174,999.

Research Questions

- Does voter preference in the 2020 U.S. Presidential election determine what individuals believe about corruption during President Donald Trump's first term?
- Does this relationship vary based upon demographic differences – i.e. gender, race, and income?

Results

Univariate

- 3,767 males participated in the study
- 4,450 females participated in the study

Bivariate

- Chi-square analysis showed that when examining the association between whom R voted for president and whether corruption has increased or decreased since the election of Donald Trump, among U.S. adults who voted for Joe Biden, **85% believe that corruption increased, 2.9% believed that it decreased, and 12% believed that it stayed the same** (figure 1).
- Among U.S. adults who voted for Donald Trump, **22% believe that corruption increased, 27% believed that corruption decreased, and 52% believe that it has stayed the same** $X^2=152.582$, 8 df, $p<.0001$ (figure 1).
- Further chi-square analysis for three demographic variables (gender, race, and income) revealed **significant results** as well $p<.001$ (figs. 2, 3, 4).

Multivariate

- A multivariate logistic regression reveals that the variable “**vote**” is **confounding**, as the variables gender, race, and income become insignificant after testing O.R. 0.62, CI 0.48-0.75 ($p<.001$).
- Gender, race, and income **are not significantly associated** with beliefs about corruption O.R. 0.62, CI 0.48-0.75.

Does Income Level Relate to Vote in the Presidential Election and Perceived Changes in Corruption

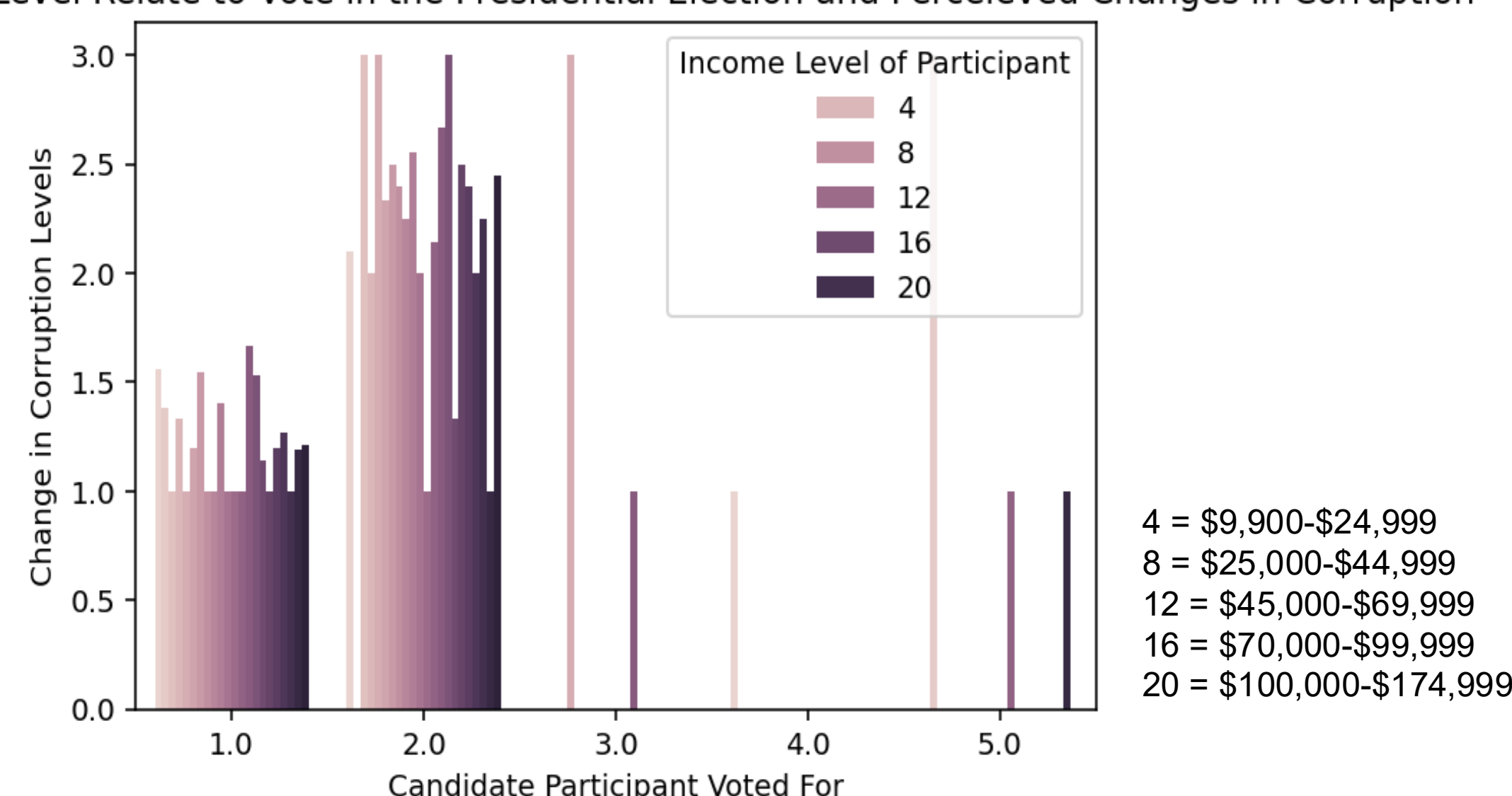


Figure 4: Belief in corruption based upon income and presidential vote

Is Presidential Vote and Belief About Corruption Level Related?

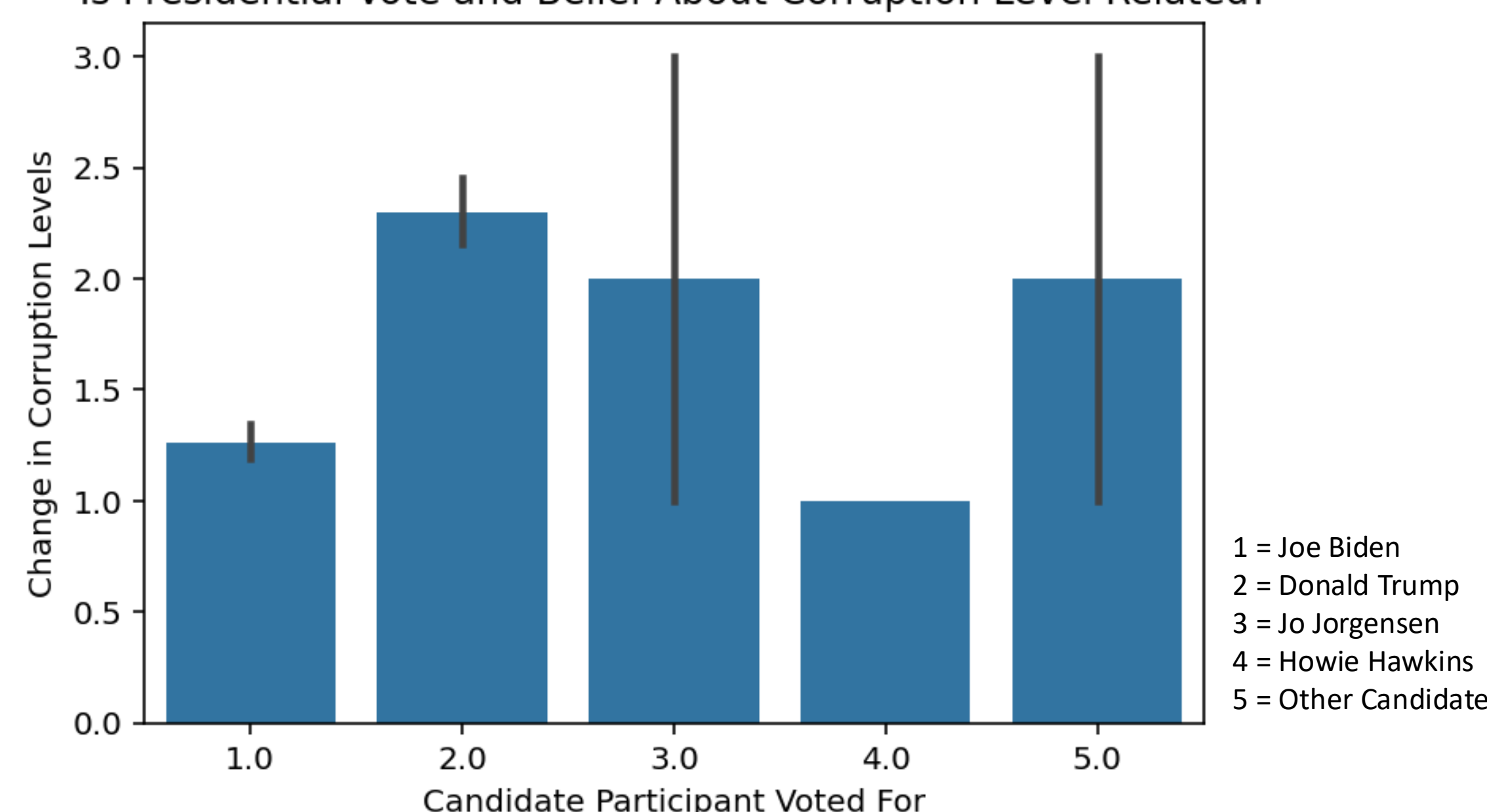


Figure 1. The relationship between Presidential vote and belief about corruption levels after Donald Trump's first term

Does Gender Relate to Vote in the Presidential Election and Perceived Changes in Corruption?

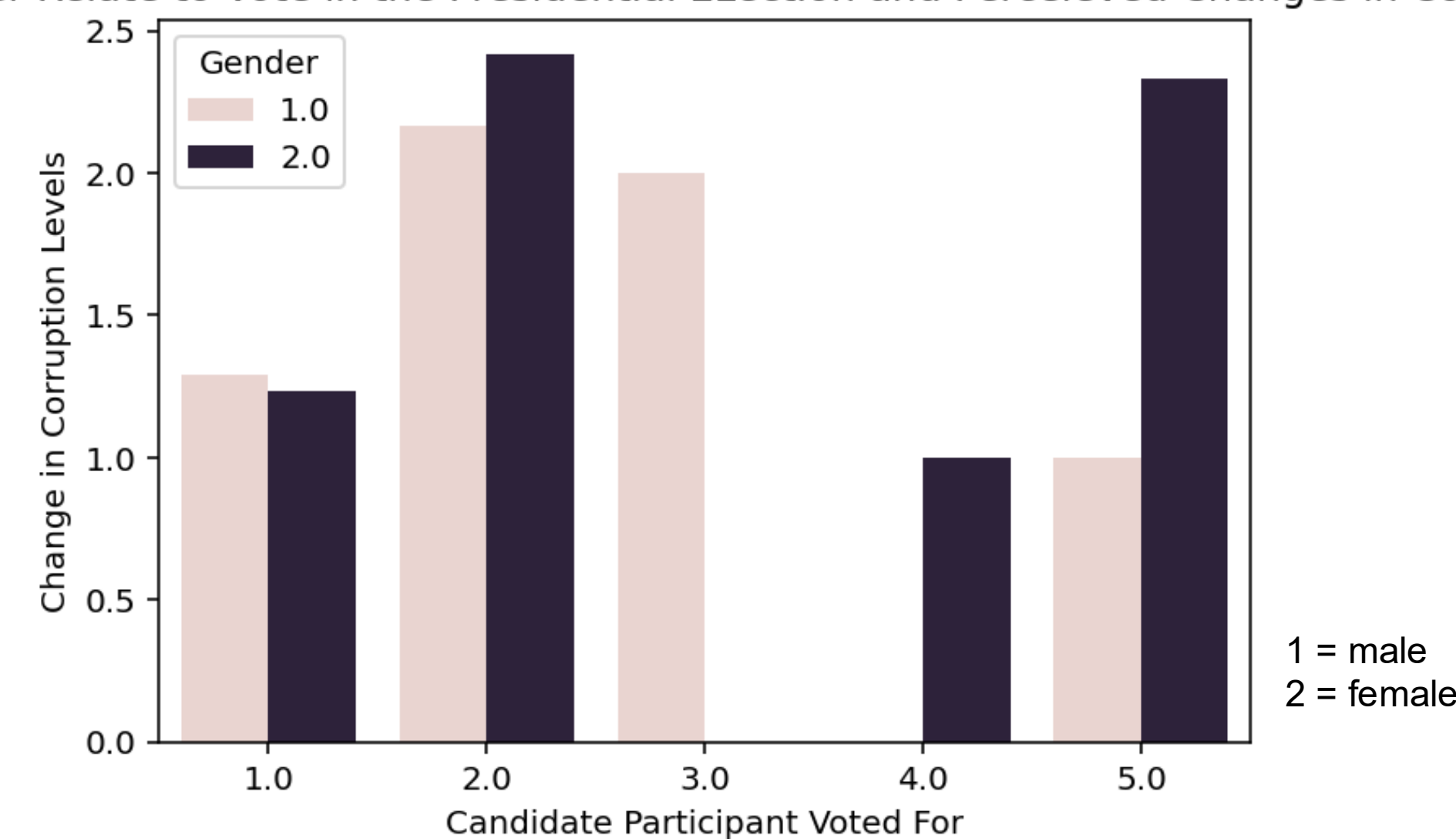


Figure 2: Belief in corruption based upon gender and presidential vote

Does Race Relate to Vote in the Presidential Election and Perceived Changes in Corruption?

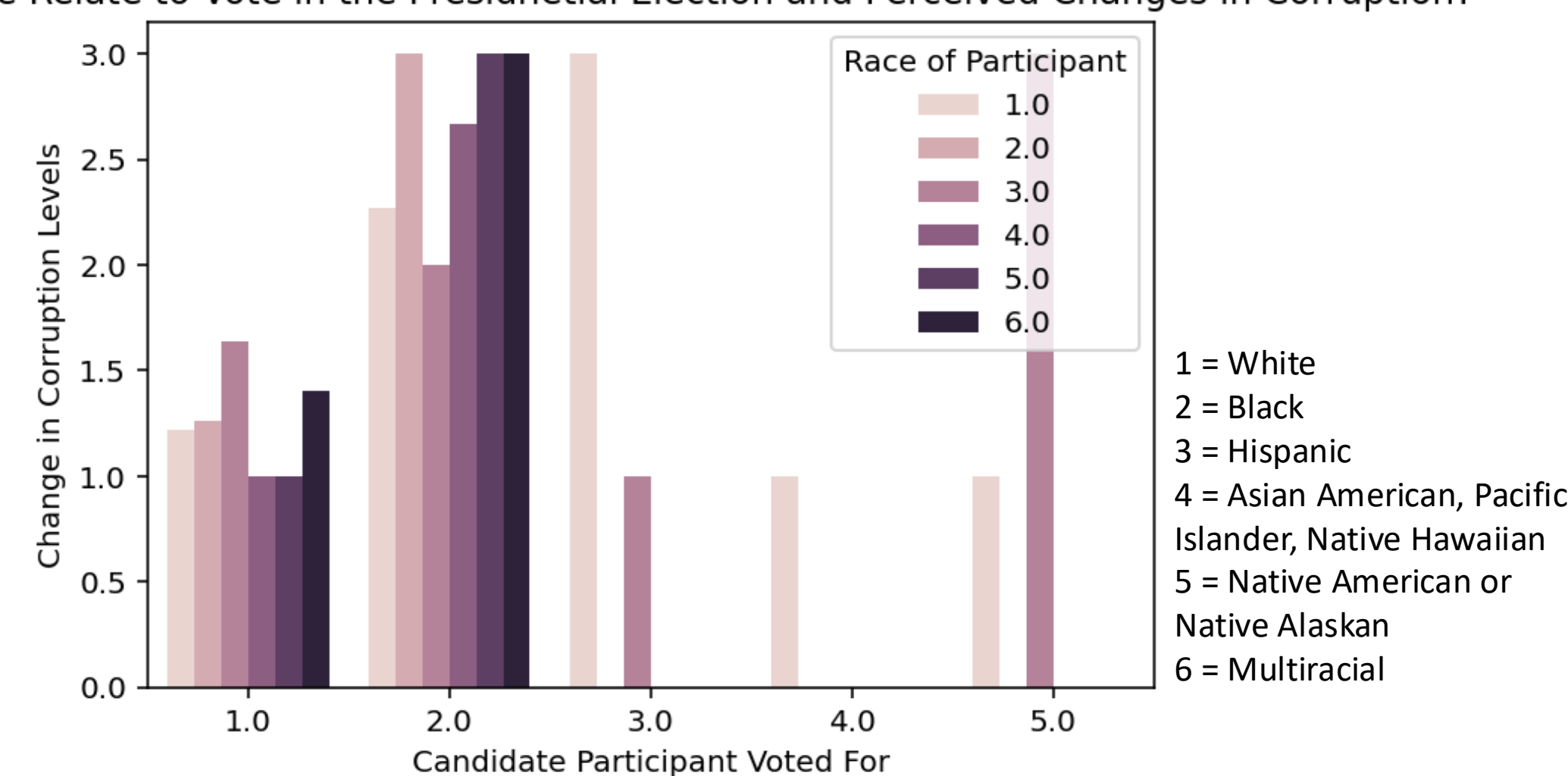


Figure 3: Belief in corruption based upon race and presidential vote

Discussion

- The majority of individuals in the study who voted for Joe Biden in the presidential election believe that corruption in the government has **increased** since Donald Trump, while the majority of individuals who voted for Donald Trump **believe that corruption stayed the same**.
- These beliefs about corruption may explain the results of the 2020 presidential election. Strong negative beliefs found in Biden voters about corruption may have led them to vote for him again in 2020. Belief that corruption remained unchanged in Trump voters may have led them to change their vote in the 2020 election.
- Demographic differences such as gender, race, and income become insignificant when moderating for vote, meaning that beliefs are not uniform through grouping individuals based upon certain qualities.
- One demographic that remained untested was age, as there was not a public variable available in the ANES codebook. More research may need to be done to see if opinion about corruption in government remains varied across age groups.

References

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