

EVIL DONE in the Age of “New Terrorism”: A Red-Team Study of U.S. Lone Actor Target Selection across Weapon Conditions

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Background of the Present Study

1. Starting in the early 2000s, the internet has played a larger role in all aspects of terrorist activities, creating the age of “New Terrorism”.
2. This has led to a more unstructured model of violence, allowing homegrown domestic lone actors to become the largest terrorist threat in America.
3. However, little research has been conducted on how this affects target selection decisions.

The Present Study

Building on prior lone actor–red team research (Romyn & Kebell, 2014; 2018), the present study uses a red team simulation to examine how lone actor target selection is influenced by weapon type and EVIL DONE vulnerability factors (Clarke & Newman, 2006).

Study Procedure

Pre-Screening Questionnaire

- A 13-question questionnaire aimed at preventing susceptible individuals from participating in the study.

Introduction to Simulation

- Participants are introduced to four target locations and one of three weapon conditions.

Online Reconnaissance Stage

- Participants conduct research on four locations, informing their ranked target preference.

Reporting on Target Preference

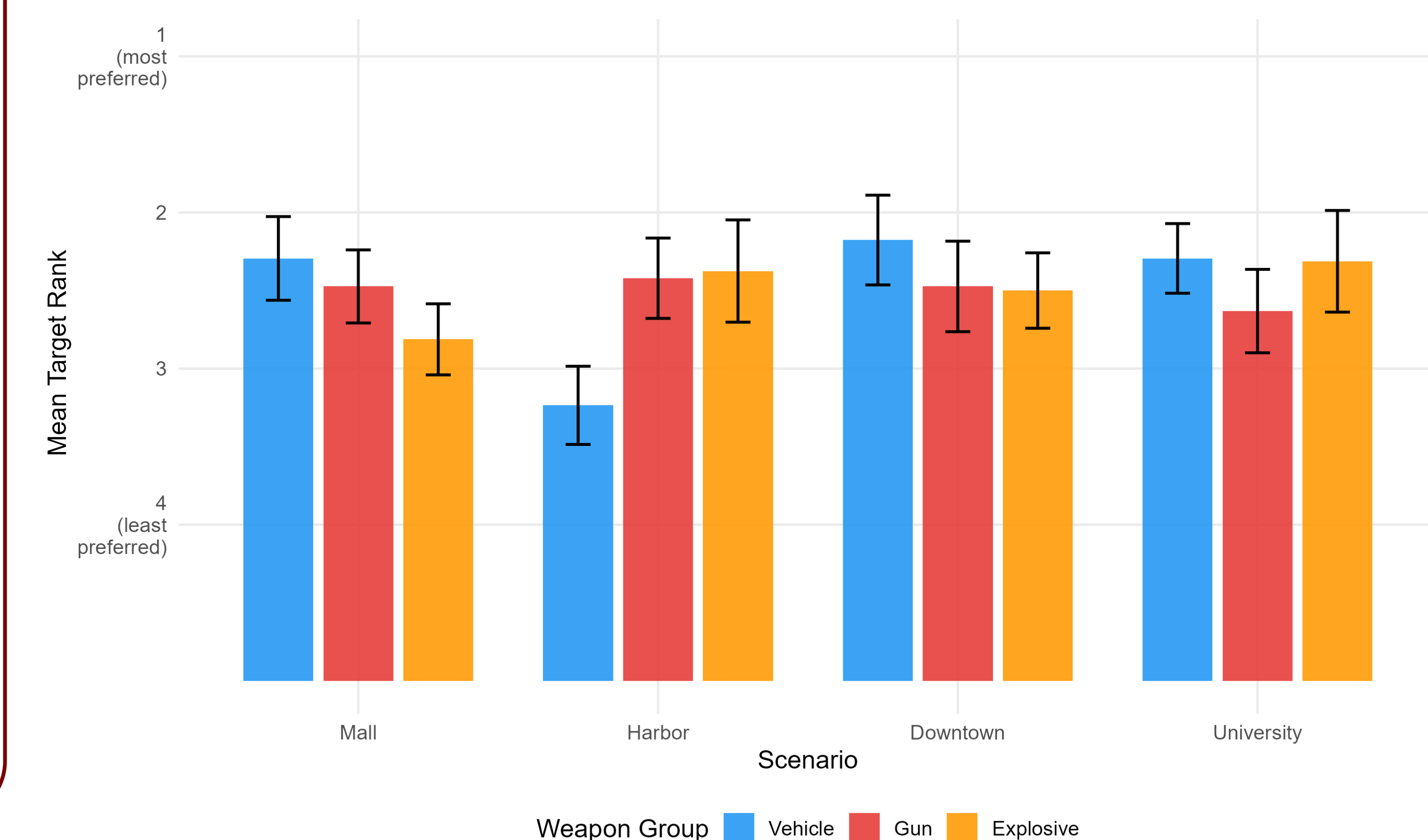
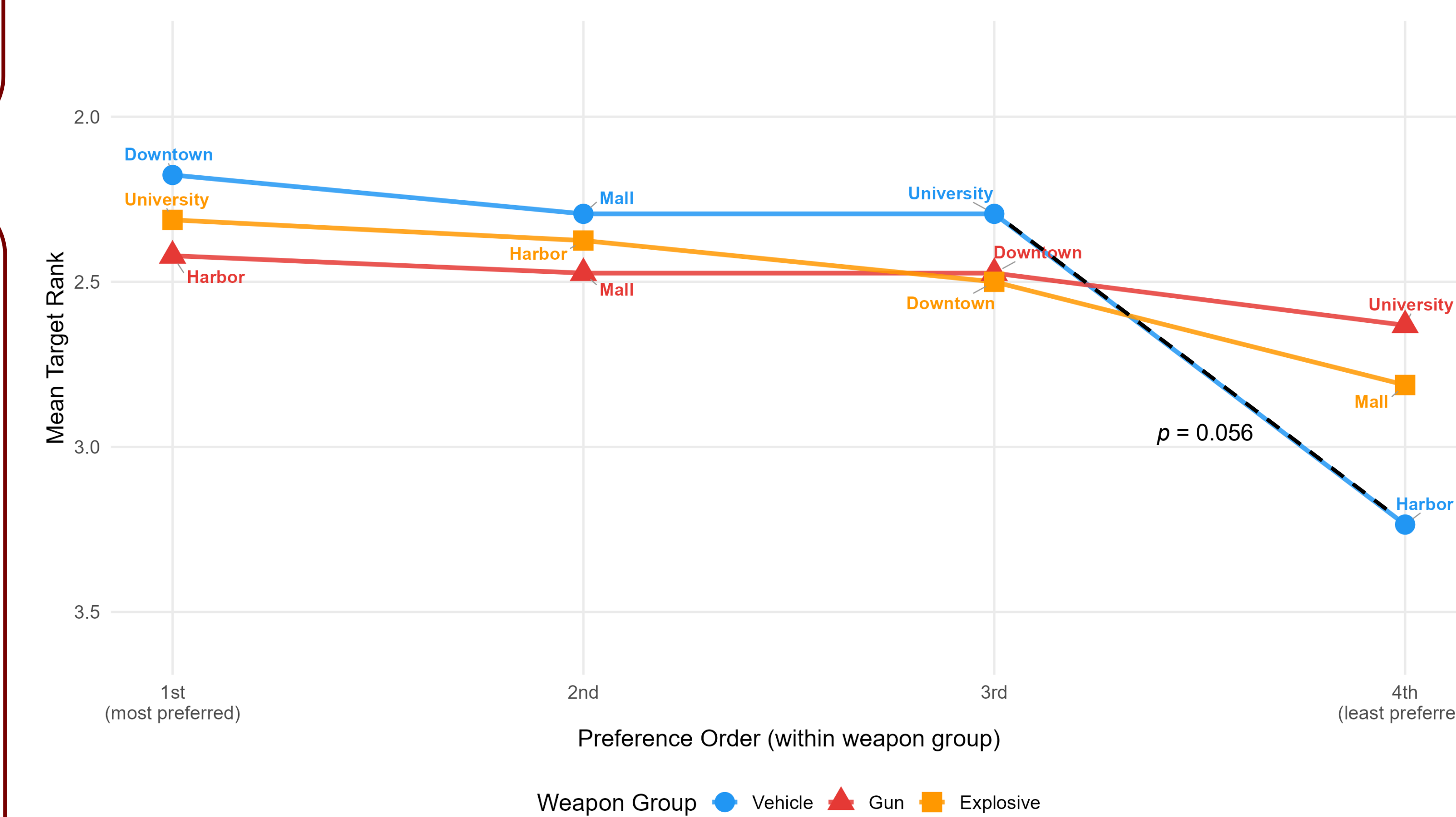
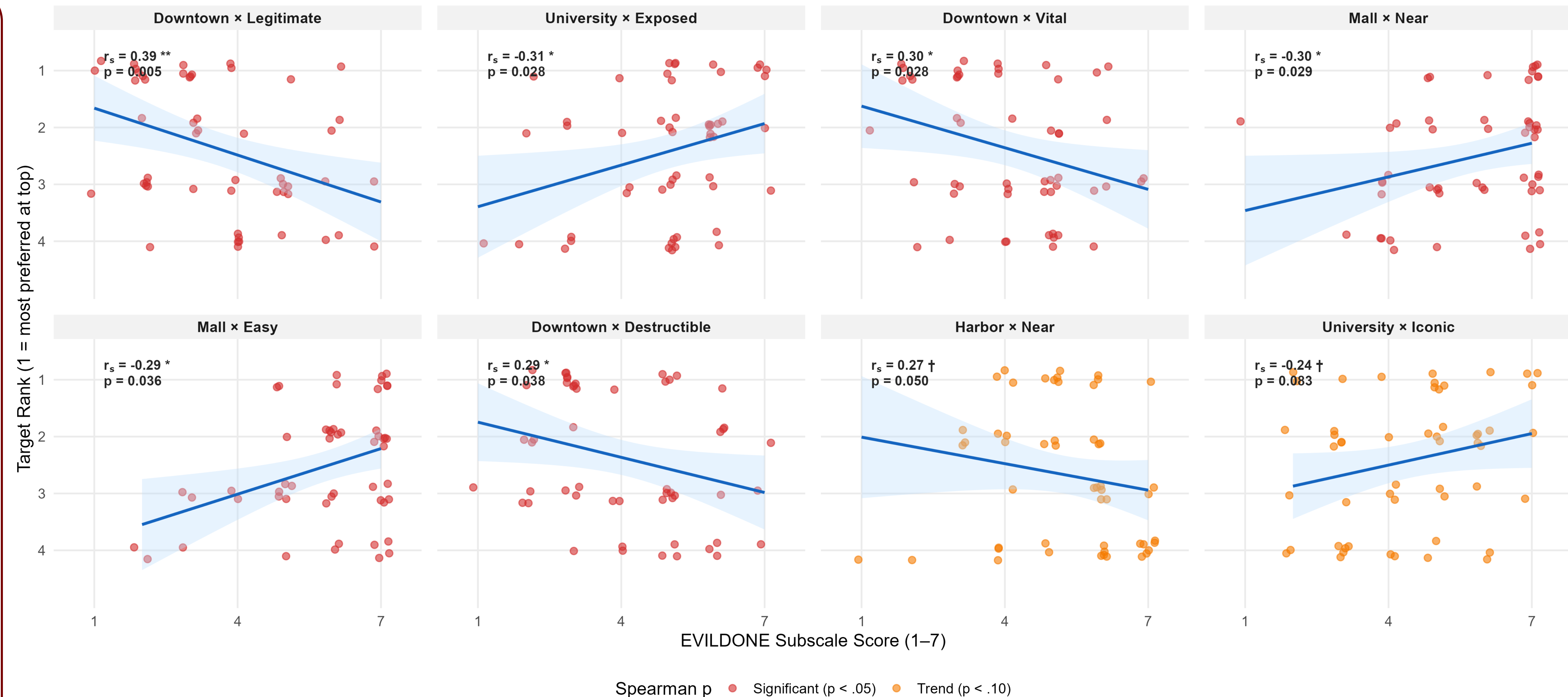
- Participants rank locations by attack preference and rate them across eight EVIL DONE attributes

Target Conditions (within-subjects):

- University, Marina, Downtown District, & Mall

Weapon Conditions (between-subjects):

- Vehicle, Firearm, Explosive



Discussion

1. The university was the most preferred, contrary to previous research (Romyn & Kebell, 2018). This preference could be due to familiarity with the area and accessibility for participants. Terrorists historically prefer more familiar, geographically proximate targets.
2. Each was influenced by different EVIL DONE subscales that influenced target preference. participants were more likely to prioritize the mall as a target when they perceived it as more exposed and more proximate.
3. Weapon selection did not influence target selection overall, aligning with previous research. Note, vehicle as a weapon did significantly different between harbor and all other conditions.
4. Lone actors have an increased preference towards vehicles as a weapon and prefer large gathering areas when using this weapon.