



## Political Activism and Other Predictors of Immigration-Status-Based Prejudice: Secondary Data Analysis of the World Values Survey

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### ABSTRACT

Political activism is motivated by the desire for equity in the distribution of social values, raising curiosity about how activism plays out in matters of prejudicial sentiments. Therefore, this work was designed to examine the prediction of immigration-status-based prejudice by activism in a cross-national data context. The data used are secondary data from Wave 7 of the 2017-2021 World Values Survey (N=76 897) and the 2017-2020 European Values Survey (N=58 103), which were conducted in 81 different countries. Binary logistic regression featuring the Adjusted Odds Ratio (AOR) and the 95% confidence interval (CI) were used to analyze data. Results show that 21.7% of respondents were prejudiced against immigrants while the mean±SD of political activism was 6.46±2.26 (min.=4, max.=12). Politically active respondents were significantly less likely to have prejudice against immigrants (AOR=0.861; 95% CI=0.855, 0.866; p<0.01). Political activism remains a backing for diversity, social inclusion and other elements of left-wing political orientation which align with democratic norms.

### 1. Introduction

Globalization engenders increased migration in varying directions thereby altering the configurations of the demographic landscape, especially the global north. Although legally pronounced politically liberal citizenship rights are granted to all migrants, there are prevailing mechanisms of the politics of identity towards immigrants' belongingness in their host countries (Yuval-Davis, 2007). In the name of the perceived threat of outsiders and other concerns (Miller, 2017), overzealous and ordinary people perpetrate prejudice and discrimination that signals categorizing dissimilar persons as "them" rather than "us" (Yuval-Davis, 2016: 368). This social-positioning-based politics of belonging, otherwise defined as the "dirty work of boundary maintenance" (Crowley, 1999: 30), is a clear hallmark of migrant-dense populations across the world. Xenophobic sentiments against immigrants rhetorics are growing in popularity (Bevelander and Wodak, 2020). Politicians take advantage of the situation by pervading anti-immigrant rhetorics to garner popularity and electoral support (Korol, Fietzer, Bevelander, and Pasichnyk, 2023). These endanger the cohesive integration of peoples and thwart the prospects of gaining the benefits accruable from having immigrants in the population.

More importantly, prejudice and discrimination are an affront to liberal political democracy, which respectfully defends individual rights. The primary tenet of tolerance is a precondition of democratic frameworks (Gibson, 2011). Classical scholarship is vast in its assumption of acceptance of minorities by majorities in democratic regimes (Miller and Davis, 2021). Equitability

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in power sharing and the allocation of goods and services characterizes democratic norms, making democracy a vanguard of social justice.

In the same vein, political activism derives its core motivation from the equitable distribution of social values (Ryan and Higginbottom, 2017). Politics is integral to activism, which questions socio-political intrigue that underlies inequities, such as racism, gender, class and immigration status. Activists take action against perceived or real injustices and work towards a just order. The strategies of activism can range from persuasion, protest, picketing, strikes, boycotts, occupations, etc. (Martin, 2007). Such strategies are geared towards gaining political attention and inciting widespread reactions. The locale of activism can range from educational settings to parliaments, in organizations, or on the streets. Activists are like gatekeepers or watchdog that brews hope for better societies across the world. Activists' passionate drive towards enthroning a better, changed future is indelible. Distinguished from voter turnout, activism promotes the functionality of democratic states (Skocpol 2003; Fung 2003). Several studies have indicated that the effect that activism and activists engender is usually heavier than the scope of activism or the population of activists (Baumgartner *et al.*, 2009). Further, they are influential in matters of the attitude and behaviour of people (Sinclair 2012; Bond *et al.* 2012). Han (2016) asserted that "*activists power American democracy and democracies around the world*".

Given the foregoing, it is logical to be curious about how activism plays out in matters of prejudicial social order. Taken that activism engenders commitment to social justice which is antithetical to prejudicial sentiments, it questioned whether systematic examination of empirical data will support this ideology. Perhaps, activists exhibit limitedness in their pursuit of social justice. For instance, in the literature on prejudice, varying theories like the social identity theory (Hogg, 2006) have asserted the natural need for people to maintain their identification with comparable others, and to recognize their ingroup as superior to outgroups such as migrants. Therefore, empirical data need to be systematically investigated. Scientific and social progress is hinged on continued knowledge expositions. The general research question of how activism reflects in the holding of prejudicial sentiment is worth it. Hence, this work was designed to generally aim at examining the prediction of immigration-status-based prejudice by activism in a cross-national data context. Other aims include the prediction of prejudice by sex, age and immigration status. The specific research questions that were answered include the following:

- To what extent are respondents culpable or aversive to immigration-status-based prejudice?
- How prevalent is political activism among respondents?
- Do sex, age, immigration status and political activism predict immigration-status-based prejudice?

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Data

This analysis employed amalgamated secondary data from the 2017–2021 Wave 7 World Values Survey (WVS) and the 2017–2020 European Values Survey (EVS). Participants of the WVS (N=76 897; 57%) and EVS (N=58 103; 43%) were drawn from 81 countries. Totalling 135 000, respondents were either 18 years old or older and were selected using a stratified random sample procedure. Face-to-face interviews were used to gather information from survey participants, who were either citizens or non-citizens of the countries in which they lived.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> More details about this can be obtained from the World Values Survey (2020) and Haerpfer, Inglehart and Moreno (2020).

## 2.2. Measurement of Variables

**Immigration-status-based prejudice:** Immigration-status-based prejudice was elicited nominally by asking respondents to choose from a list of groups of people that they “*would not like to have as neighbours*”, including “*immigrants/foreign workers*”. Respondents could therefore mention (scored 1) or refrain from mentioning immigrants/foreign workers (i.e., not mentioned, scored 0).

**Immigration status:** Respondents’ immigration status was assessed nominally by asking if respondents were born in the country they were resident in, or if they were immigrants to the country. Respondents were affirmative (1) or otherwise (2).

**Political activism:** Political activism was a continuous variable created through the addition of scores obtained from four items that probed respondents’ participation in political action, including “*signing of a petition*”, “*joining in boycotts*”, “*attending lawful/peaceful demonstrations*” and “*joining unofficial strikes*”. Response categories included “*have done*”, “*might do*” and “*would never do*”. These were re-coded from 3 to 1, respectively, such that a higher score implied greater political activism. The internal consistency of the items is evident given Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.80 obtained after a test of reliability.

**Sex and age:** The sex of respondents was observed inconspicuously and reported as either male (1) or female (2). Age was assessed using an unstructured item, and respondents were grouped into three: 15–29 years, 30–49 years, and 50 years and older.

**Hypotheses:** The null hypotheses that were tested include:

H<sub>01</sub>: There will be no significant prediction of immigration-status-based prejudice by sex and age.

H<sub>02</sub>: There will be no significant prediction of immigration-status-based prejudice by immigration status.

H<sub>03</sub>: There will be no significant prediction of immigration-status-based prejudice by political activism.

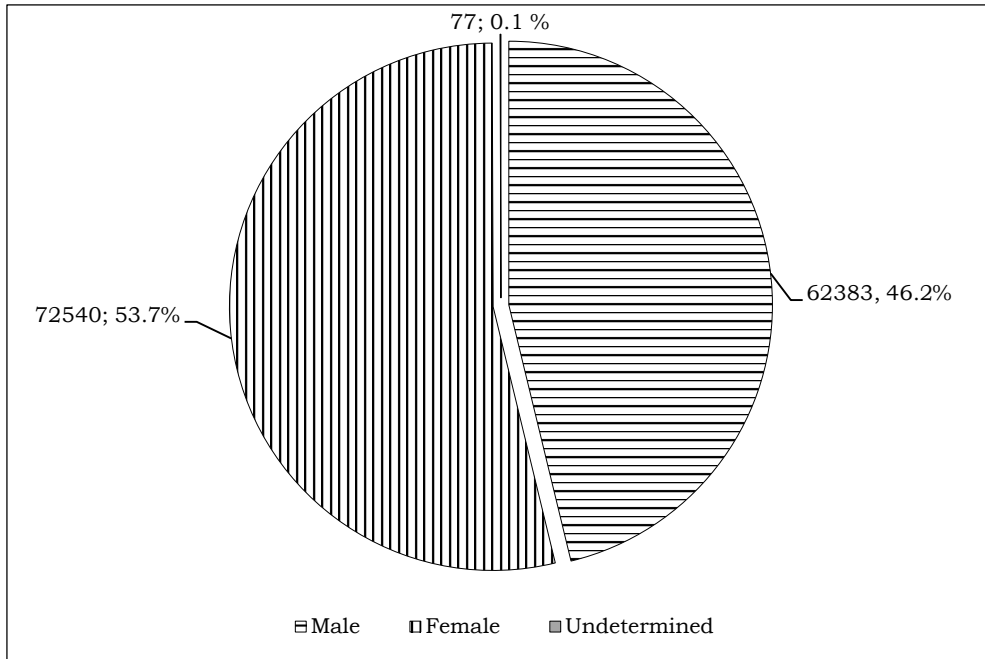
**Statistical analyses:** Simple percentile analysis was used to evaluate the distributions of variables, and pie charts were used to illustrate these distributions. Political activism was summarized using mean±SD. Bivariate analysis of data was achieved using binary logistic regression. Adjusted odds ratio (AOR) and the 95% confidence interval (CI) were used to assess the prediction of immigration-status-based prejudice by sex, age, immigration status and political activism. All statistical analyses were performed using IBM SPSS version 27 for Windows.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Univariate analysis of variables

**Sex, age and immigration status of respondents:** More of the respondents were female (53.7%) but the proportion of males (46.2%) was very close to females. The three sub-groups of age were well reflected in the study sample, though the proportion of representation increased with age such that the youngest age grouping (21.5%) was the least represented. An overwhelming majority of respondents were born in their country of residence (93.1%). Figures 1 to 3 are presentations and illustrations of the distributions of sex, age and immigration status of respondents.

**Figure 1: A Pie Chart Showing the Distribution of Respondent's Sex**



**Figure 2: A pie chart showing the distribution of respondents' age**

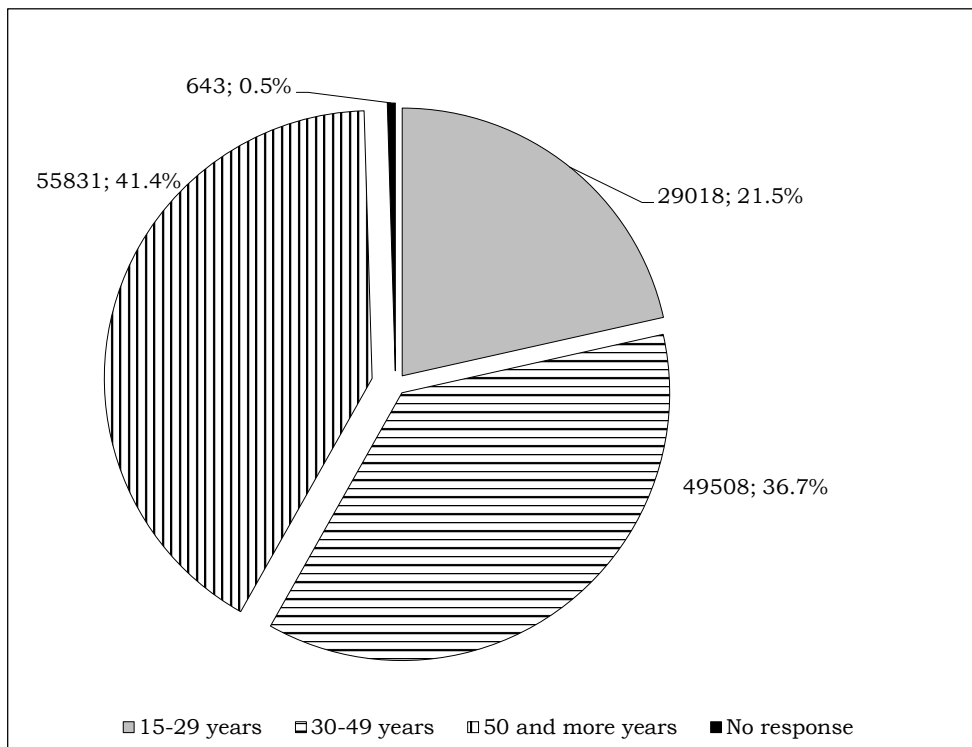
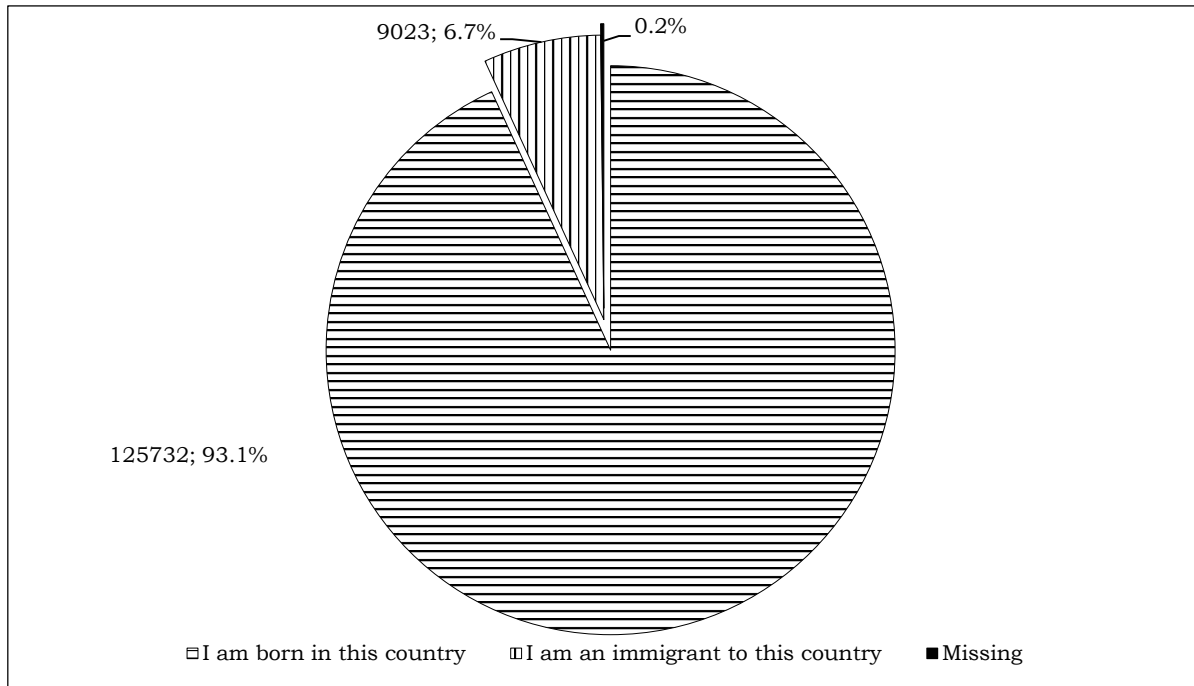
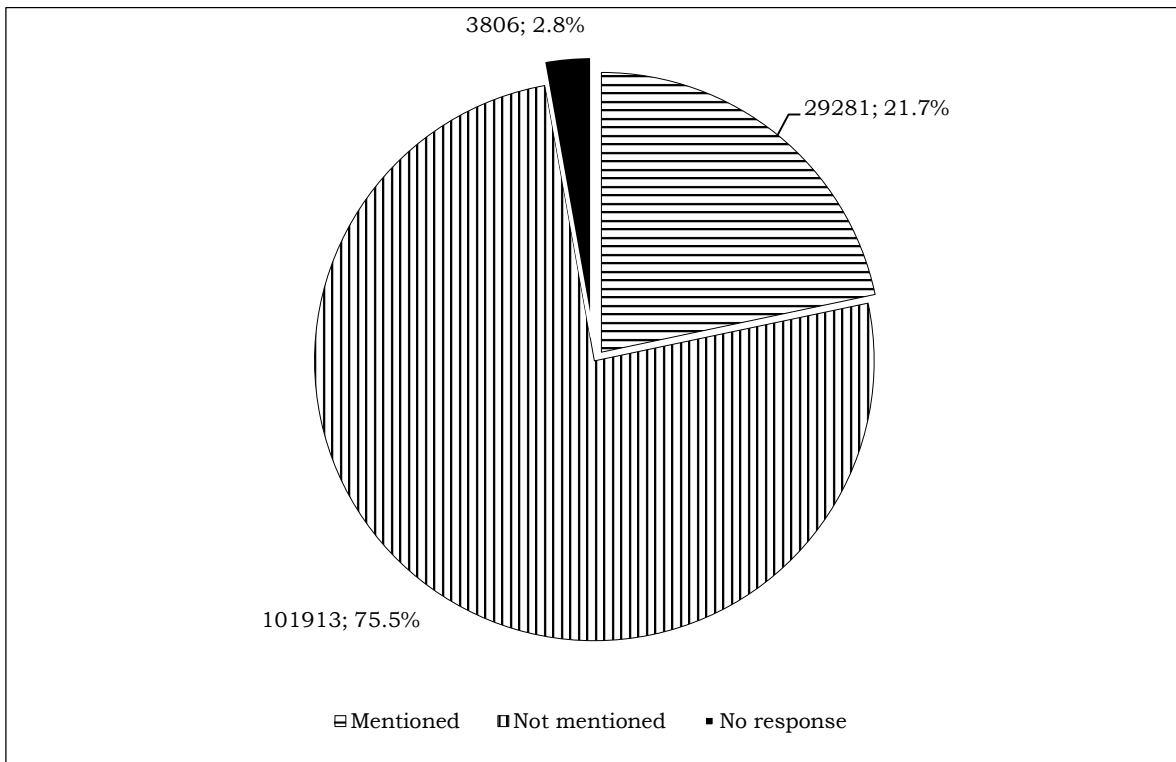


Figure 3: A Pie Chart Showing the Distribution of the Immigration Status of Respondents



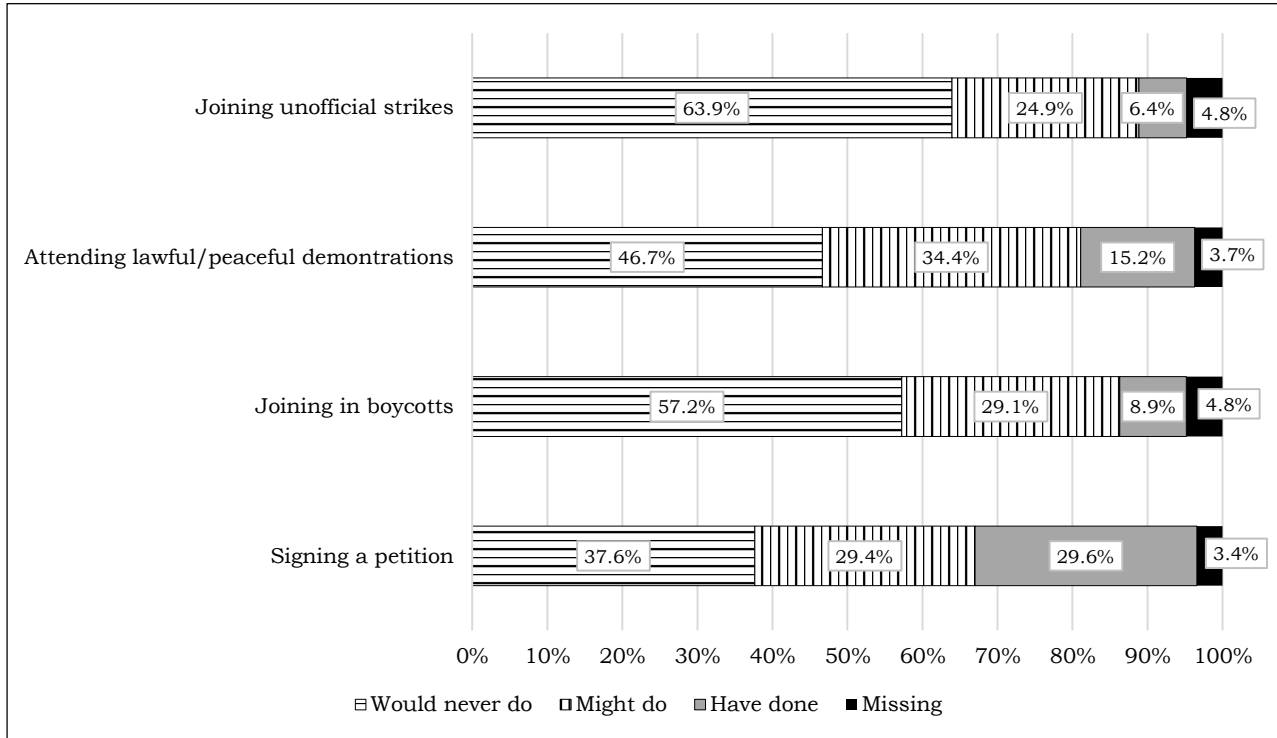
**Prejudice among respondents:** The majority of respondents (75.5%) were averse to prejudice on account of immigration status. As represented in Figure 4 however, the proportion of those who were ambivalent by refusing to provide relevant opinion about this form of prejudice was marginal but noticeable.

Figure 4: A Pie Chart Showing the Distribution of Respondents According to Immigration-Status-Based Prejudice



**Political activism among respondents:** The item analyses represented in Figure 5 indicate that a sizeable proportion of respondents have engaged in political actions in the past especially signing a petition (29.6%) and attending lawful/peaceful demonstrations (15.2%). Joining boycotts (8.9%) and unofficial strikes (6.4%) were far less popularly engaged by respondents. The proportion of respondents who opined that they would never engage in these sorts of political actions is wide. Taken together, political activism was averagely exhibited among respondents (mean±SD=6.46±2.26, min.= 4, max.= 12), as shown in Table 1.

**Figure 5: A Stacked Bar Chart Showing the Distribution of Responses to Items in The Scale of Political Activism**



**Table 1: Summary of Political Activism Exhibited Among Respondents**

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Political Activism	6.46	2.26	4	12

**3.2. Bivariate Analysis: Sex, Age, Immigration Status, Political Activism and Immigration-Status-Based Prejudice**

The results presented in Table 2 show that the proportion of females (53.9%) was higher than males (46.1%) among those who were culpable of immigration-status-based prejudice. Sex was a significant factor in predicting prejudice with male respondents being less likely to be culpable (AOR=0.954; 95%; CI=0.928, 0.981; p<0.05).

Respondents whose ages ranged from 15 to 29 years were the least represented (20.7%) among those who were culpable of immigration-status-based prejudice. The group is significantly less likely to be culpable of prejudice (AOR=0.918; 95%; CI=0.885, 0.953; p<0.001) when compared with those aged 50 and above. Meanwhile, those aged from 30 to 40, who constituted 37.3% of those culpable of prejudice, were not significantly prone to prejudice (AOR=1.003; 95%; CI=0.973, 1.035; p>0.05).

Respondents who are nationals of the countries of their residence were precariously dominant among those who were culpable of prejudice. Compared with immigrants, they were 2.4 times significantly more likely to be culpable of prejudice (AOR=2.403; 95%; CI=2.235, 2.583; p<0.001).

Politically active respondents are 0.86 times less likely to be culpable of immigration-status-based prejudice (AOR=0.861; 95%; CI=0.855, 0.866; p<0.01).

**Table 2: Prediction of Immigration-Status-Based Prejudice**

Variable	Sub-groups	Immigration-status-based prejudice		Adjusted Odds Ratio with 95% Confidence Interval	p-value
		Innocent	Culpable		
Sex	Male	47 189 (46.3%)	13 479 (46.1%)	0.954 (0.928, 0.981)	0.001
	Female	54 663 (53.7%)	15 791 (53.9%)	1	REF
Age	15-29 years	22 320 (22.0%)	6 007 (20.7%)	0.918 (0.885, 0.953)	0.000
	30-49 years	37 372 (36.8%)	10 858 (37.3%)	1.003 (0.973, 1.035)	0.839
	50 and more years	41 835 (41.2%)	12 211 (42.0%)	1	REF
Immigration Status	I am born in this country (1)	93 830 (92.2%)	28 284 (96.7%)	2.403 (2.235, 2.583)	0.000
	I am an immigrant in this country (2)	7 892 (7.8%)	961 (3.3%)	1	REF
Political Activism	-	-	-	0.861 (0.855, 0.866)	0.000

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusions

This work examined immigration-status-based prejudice and its predictors using cross-national, secondary data. Findings indicated that about one-fifth of respondents were culpable of immigration-status-based prejudice, implying that approximately 1 of 5 people across the world would mention “immigrants/foreign workers” as a group of people they would not like to have as neighbours. Using the 1981–2014 World Value/European value surveys comprised of about 500,000 respondents, Evans & Kelley (2019) similarly reported that the prevalence of prejudice against immigrants was 15% in the UK. The current prevalence of prejudice is rather high, and somewhat reflects the extent to which immigrants’ belongingness is frustrated in their host countries (Yuval-Davis, 2007). Such a high extent of prejudice is bound to rub off negatively against the sociocultural integration and belongingness of immigrants in their host societies (Christ *et al.*, 2015). It also stands to impel immigration policies towards punitiveness (Reyna, Dobria & Wetherell, 2013). The current prevalence of prejudice showcases the proportion of immigrants who suffer from the categorization of immigrants as “them” rather than “us” (Yuval-Davis, 2016). The thinning of the current prevalence of immigration-status-based prejudice stands to optimize positive intergroup relations cross-nationally.

Findings further indicated that signing a petition (29.6%), attending lawful/peaceful demonstrations (15.2%), joining boycotts (8.9%) and unofficial strikes (6.4%) are exhibited by people in their bid to be politically active, across the world. Signing petitions is the most popular tactic while partaking in lawful protests is more popular. The proportion of respondents who have engaged in protests is comparable with the proportion of individuals who participated in Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement of 2014, where about 18 to 20% of the people participated in street occupations (Cheng, 2016). On the whole, political activism was minimally exhibited among respondents. Mean activism, 6.46, places third/fourth on a string of the range of possible scores (4 to 12) which consists of 9 integers. The potential of political activism to drive social and policy changes, to increase awareness about germane public issues, to empower individuals and communities, etc., is therefore limited. Moreover, the population well-being accruable from political activism is also limited.



Activism symbolizes selflessness and engenders well-being (Klar & Kasser, 2009; Boehnke & Wong, 2011; Evripidou & Drury, 2013; Foster, 2015, 2019; Vestergren, Drury & Hammar Chiriatic, 2017, 2018). The cross-national limitedness of activism indicated in the current findings therefore signifies the limitedness of an evident source of well-being among individuals cross-nationally.

Current findings indicated that male respondents were significantly less likely to be culpable of prejudice when compared with female respondents. This is contrary to some findings in the literature: In their study among 162 university students in Italy, Cadinu, Latrofa & Carnaghi (2013) found that men exhibited significantly stronger out-group-stereotyping when compared with women. In their study of attitudes towards refugees among 261 university students in Australia, Schweitzer et al. (2005) found that male participants exhibited significantly higher general prejudice and realistic threat whereas female participants demonstrated significantly higher positive attitudes. Current findings therefore serve to favour rather than silence the ongoing controversy of general differentials in prejudice toward the outgroup. Moreover, the study by Croucher, Nguyen & Rahmani (2020) presents ambivalence that further fuels this controversy. The scholars conducted an online survey among 274 native-born Caucasian Americans which featured the examination of prejudice against Chinese Americans using intergroup anxiety and symbolic and realistic threat as indicators. Findings indicated that men exhibited significantly higher intergroup anxiety while women exhibited significantly higher symbolic and realistic threats. Hence, the role of gender in the culpability for prejudice remains controversial though current findings pervade the notion that men are significantly more averse to prejudice in comparison to women.

Current findings indicate that respondents who belonged to the 15 to 29 years age sub-group were significantly less likely to be culpable of prejudice. This finding demonstrates some similarity with the findings of Crocetti, Albarello, Prati, and Rubini (2021). The meta-analytic review of 26 studies bordering on prejudice against immigrants among adolescents (Crocetti et al., 2021) indicated that prejudice becomes stronger with age. Still, some findings in the literature are inconsistent with the current finding: The trend analysis undertaken by Janmaat and Keating (2019) shows that British younger persons are more accepting of traditionally marginalized groups such as homosexuals and non-dominant racial groups when compared with the attitude of their parent's and grandparent's generations. However, Janmaat and Keating (2019) concomitantly reported that a sizeable proportion of these youths are unaccepting of immigrants and are therefore less tolerant of this social group. Moreover, the study by Chasteen (2005) among 169 young and older adults in Canada shows that younger persons were more biased towards outgroups when compared with older adults. These suggest that the literature is still controversial about the role of age in the culpability of prejudice against immigrants. The current finding represents a pervasion of this controversy.

Respondents who are nationals of the countries of their residence were 2.4 times significantly more likely to be culpable of prejudice when compared with immigrants. This is a very intuitive finding which underscores the challenge of wholesome integration of immigrants.

Current findings indicate that immigration-status-based prejudice reduces significantly as activism increases. Politically active respondents were 0.86 times less likely to be culpable of immigration-status-based prejudice. This is intuitive and positively justifies the relevance of political activism in social equity cum the spread of social values (Ryan and Higginbottom, 2017). The finding signals the bearing of activism in the building of democratic norms (Han, 2016). Nevertheless, the weak value of the reported odds ratio suggests the significant but poor contribution of activism in the attenuation of prejudice against immigrants. Socio-political activism and activists vary along the left-right divide. According to Freire (2015: 44), "*the criterion most frequently used to distinguish between the left and the right is the attitude of real people in society to the ideal of equality*". Radical right thinkers are anti-immigration and opposed to integration. Typically, nativists and right-wing actors desire the prioritization of natives' rights and uphold that



non-natives are threats to the political state (Kokkonen and Linde, 2023). The empirical study of Kokkonen & Linde (2023) indicated that nativists underate the significance of democracy and are less supportive of democracy while preferring non-democratic alternatives. Perhaps then, the significant but weak influence of activism on prejudice is a reflection of right-wing ideology colouration within the measurement of political activism in this study since such measurement was not sensitive to the left-right divide.

Immigration-status-based prejudice is high and underscores the lingering challenge of belongingness in host societies. Political activism is a minimally exhibited attribute among people, thereby limiting its potential as a catalyst of socio-political activism change. Men, younger persons, and immigrants are significantly less likely to be culpable of prejudice. Political activism protects against the culpability of prejudice, thereby underscoring political activism as a social equity, diversity-borne phenomenon.

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**Conflict Declaration:** The author of the research does not declare any conflict of interest.

**Research and Publication Ethics Statement:** All rules specified in the "*Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive*" were followed at every stage of this research. None of the actions specified under the heading "*Actions Contrary to Scientific Research and Publication Ethics*" of the directive have been carried out. During the writing process of this study, citations were made in accordance with ethical rules and a bibliography was created. The work has been checked for plagiarism.

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