

Mobilizing Identities: The Association between Race, Gender and Income with Protest Participation.



Jacey Henry, Applied Data Analysis, Wesleyan University

Introduction

- The relationship between race, sex and class with protesting may vary based on the specific social context.
 - Studying gender as a component of social background revealed the dominance of men in protests before the 1960s (Blocker, 1994).
 - A 2014 study on the socioeconomic stratification of protestors and non-protestors in Milwaukee's 1970 demonstrations indicated that for all standard indicators of socioeconomic status, protestors occupy a higher economic class than non-protestors (Petrie, 2010).
 - Data from the European Social Surveys between 2006 and 2014 revealed that the demographic differences in protesting may decrease in times of economic hardship (Rodon, 2018).
 - One of the main factors that has been correlated with political engagement is biographic availability. This refers to the freedom from constraints (such as finances or time) that allows someone to participate in political activities and can explain the social gap in protests (Chenoweth, 2022).
- Gaps in Literature:
 - The majority of research to date on protestor demographics has focused on specific historical periods around the 1960s and often looks at variables independently.

Methods

Sample

- The sample of 5,521 individuals has been selected from the 2024 American National Election Studies (ANES) database, which represents U.S. citizens over the age of 18 years living in the 50 States or Washington D.C.

Measures

- Race and Sex were self identified:
 - Race was recoded into a binary variable: White or Person of Color (POC)
 - Sex was self-reported by participants and coded dichotomously as Female or Male.
 - Protest participation was coded dichotomously in terms of having attended a protest in the past twelve months or not.
- Household income was used as a variable to reflect economic class. It was divided into three categories based on the Pew Research Center's range:
 - Annual income between \$60,000 and \$175,000 was classed as Middle Income and anything above that as High Income, or anything below that range as Low Income.

Research Questions

- Does the likelihood of participating in a protest differ based on race? Sex? Or household income?
- Does the association between protest participation and race vary based on sex?
- Does the relationship between race and protest participation vary based on household income?

Results

Univariate

- A total of 3.61% of the sample reported to having participated in a protest in the last year.

Bivariate

Does the likelihood of participating in a protest differ based on :

1. Race

- A Chi-Square test of independence revealed that among past year protestors, **those who are POC are more likely to have participated in a protest** (4.6%) compared to Whites (3.2%), $X^2 = 4.6366$, 1 df, p-value = 0.0313.

2. Household income

- A Chi-Square test of independence indicated that among past year protestors, **the household income does not have a significant impact on the likelihood of joining a protest.** $X^2 = 2.8212$, 2 df, p-value = 0.244.

3. Sex

- A Chi-Squared test of independence indicated that among past year protestors, the sex of the protestor does not have a significant impact on the likelihood of joining a protest. $X^2 = 1.7368$, 1 df, p-value = 0.1876.

Multivariate

Does the relationship between race and protest participation vary based on sex?

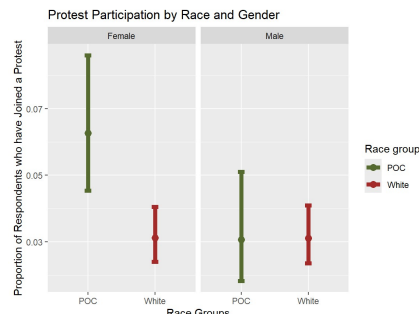


Figure 1: Proportion of Respondents Who Participated in a Protest Based on Race and Sex

- POC females are significantly more likely to participate in a protest than all other categories of people (Figure 1).
- Among females, Whites had a significantly lower odds of participation than POC females (OR= 0.48, CI=0.31-0.75, p-value = 0.001). White females have a 52% lower odds of joining a protest than POC females.
- Among POC individuals, males had lower odds than females (OR = 0.47, CI 0.24–0.87) of joining a protest.
- The gap between white males and females was not as large as that between POC males and females (OR= 2.11, CI=1.0-4.5).

Does the relationship between race and protest participation vary based on household income?

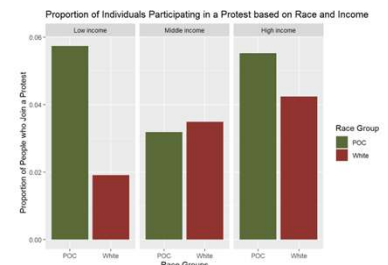


Figure 2: Proportion of Respondents who Participated in a Protest in the Past Year Based on Race and Household Income

- POC have a greater likelihood (insignificant) of participating in a protest compared to Whites except those in the middle-income category, where Whites and POC had similar odds of protest participation.
- Low income was (insignificantly) associated with lower protest participation among White respondents, but not among POC respondents. (OR = 0.42, p = 0.068).

Discussion

- Among past year protestors, **POC are more likely to have participated in a protest.**
- Sex by itself does not have a significant impact on the likelihood of joining a protest.
 - However, POC females are more likely to join a protest than any other group, including POC males.
- Income is not significantly associated with the likelihood of joining a protest.
 - Low income was associated with decreased protesting in White people and increased protesting in POC.
 - POC only had a lower likelihood of protesting in the middle-income category. This may be due to the need for either substantial wealth or cause (experienced by low-income people) that may motivate protesting (Chenoweth, 2022).
- Further studies may consider how the demographics of the protestors may impact the outcomes of the protest such as escalation.