

Do Minorities Feel Welcome in Politics? A Cross-Cultural Study of the United States and Sweden

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Abstract

Racial and ethnic minorities are underrepresented in most Western democracies. This article investigates one potential root cause behind this pattern: minority and majority citizens might differentially expect to feel discriminated against if they were to enter politics. Using data from three large-scale surveys, we find that minorities in both the U.S. and Sweden are less likely to expect to feel welcome than the majority population. These discrepancies in expected discrimination persist, even after controlling for other factors. Moreover, expected discrimination is not without political consequence: those who expect to feel less welcome are less likely to indicate interest in running for political office. Finally, these results do not differ for politically engaged citizens who constitute a more realistic pool of potential candidates. We conclude by discussing what expectations of discrimination can tell us about the fairness of the political system and how these attitudes could shape political ambition among minorities.

Across Western democracies, studies evaluating political discrimination have documented racial bias not only in politicians’ responsiveness to citizens (Costa 2017; Mendez and Grose 2018; Alizade and Ellger 2022; White et al. 2015), but also in the actual selection of new politicians (Brouard and Tiberj 2010; Dancygier et al. 2021; Kalla et al. 2018; Tolley 2019; Eriksson and Vernby 2021; Soininen 2011). Together, this body of research points to an important problem: the political system signals to minorities that it is not inclusive of their voices and that it does not welcome diversity, posing challenges to democratic legitimacy.

A way to offset this would be with greater descriptive representation of marginalized groups among the political class (Stout et al. 2021; Geese 2022; Hayes and Hibbing 2017). Nonetheless, research consistently finds that minority underrepresentation begins with a lack of “supply” of minority candidates. That is, minorities are underrepresented not at the election stage, but because they are not running for elected office in the first place (Shah 2014; Gonzalez Juenke and Shah 2015; Scott 2018; Shah et al. 2019; Shah et al. 2022).¹

But, when racial and ethnic minorities do hold elected office, tangible outcomes that

¹This is not necessarily due to a lack of political ambition among these groups. It is important to note that scholarship has found that racialized individuals, and especially Black Americans, have high levels of political ambition (Shah 2014, 2015). This is especially the case with Black women, whose longtime exclusion from politics, development of nontraditional forms of engagement, and sense of community leads them to engage in political work (Dowe 2020; Dowe 2022; Darcy and Hadley 1988; Scott 2018; Dickinson 2023). Work by Tolley (2023) confirms this pattern; they find similar levels of aspiration between racialized and White women in Canada, but observe discrepancies emerge between them throughout the legislative process (see Figure 2). Specifically, racialized Canadians aspire to politics at rates that roughly match their presence in the population, but unlike white women, who experience an elevation during candidate selection, racialized women face consistent disadvantages and bottlenecks beginning throughout the recruitment process, e.g. with party selectorates (Tolley 2023). Our discussion here is not about an absence of aspiration or nascent political ambition (e.g. Fox and Lawless 2005), but rather about the unique barriers and considerations that might deter individuals from pursuing actual political candidacies.

improve the day-to-day lives of these groups are generated. For example, relationships between law enforcement and communities of color ease (Christiani et al. 2021; Aneja and Ritadhi 2022), political knowledge and participation increase among minority constituents (Wolak and Juenke 2021; Griffin and Keane 2006; Fisher et al. 2015), and voters evaluate governmental responsiveness more positively (Banducci et al. 2004; Arnesen and Peters 2018). Indeed, several studies have shown that experiences of discrimination and the desire to improve public policy in this regard can motivate members of underrepresented groups to take political action (Pantoja et al. 2001; Oskooii 2020; Besco et al. 2022).

Before entering politics, however, one primary consideration a potential candidate weighs is the non-monetary “costs” of entry. For racial and ethnic minorities, who are often aware of the backlash they face by majority populations (e.g., Lu 2020; André and Dronkers 2017), they weigh the extent to which they would face discrimination if they were to enter politics (Brown and Lemi 2021; Phillips 2021). Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s experience is an illustrative example of the costs minorities incur when entering politics. As a young Latina Member of Congress who assumed office without any prior political experience, she reflected in a GQ interview, “Others may see a person who is admired, but my everyday lived experience here is as a person who is despised ... Imagine working a job and your bosses don’t like you and folks on your team are suspicious of you. And then the competing company is trying to kill you.”² Ocasio-Cortez’s comments demonstrate how unwelcome she feels in politics, not just by political opponents, but also by senior members of her own party. While Ocasio-Cortez provides a vivid example of the non-monetary ‘costs’ of entry, underrepresented groups may also be the target of subtler behaviors that result in

²<https://www.gq.com/story/alexandria-ocasio-cortez-october-cover-profile>

feeling unwelcome. Experimental research in the United States has found that chairs from both major parties perceived Latinx and Black candidates as less viable and substantially less likely to win, and therefore strategically chose to recruit and support other candidates (Doherty et al. 2019). In the Swedish system, where parties control nominations, an interview study has confirmed that immigrant politicians experienced discrimination already at the nomination stage (Blomqvist 2005, 90). Larger studies using administrative data have also confirmed that immigrants are underrepresented in Swedish politics, in large part due to party elites at the nomination stage (Dancygier et al. 2015), which is key to candidate recruitment into politics (Soininen 2010). In Soininen and Qvists’s (2021, 568, 570) interviews with members of nomination committees, respondents opine that immigrants “stand out” when they “don’t speak exactly like we do” and “must be able to create contacts with other parts of a relatively white, established [...] political culture” to succeed.

In this article, we descriptively assess whether members of minoritized groups *expect* to face discrimination if they were to enter politics. We introduce a new measure of *expected discrimination* that captures how welcome citizens would expect to feel among other politicians if they themselves were elected to office.³ The basic logic underlying our measure is the assumption, drawn from the theory of ethnic homophily, that members of an ethnic group tend to prefer interacting with members of their own group. From this, it follows

³Others have developed measures to gauge expected discrimination and belonging. Dancygier et al. (2021), for example, use the measure from the 2017 survey in a composite index of expected discrimination. Similarly, Ocampo (2018)’s “political belonging” measure examines whether respondents believed elected officials perceived them as valuable members of society, saw them as true Americans, paid attention to their demands, and cared enough to help members of their group succeed (p. 37). Our measure instead aims to focus on potential candidacies of minority groups. It intentionally builds on these two concepts – expected discrimination in politics and belonging – to evaluate whether members of these groups would feel welcome if they were to serve as elected officials.

that if members of the ethnic majority are overrepresented in politics, we might expect non-majority groups to feel less welcome in their midst. This, in turn, could exacerbate adverse consequences on the “supply side” of minority representation.

We draw on three large-scale public opinion surveys fielded in the U.S. and Sweden, where respondents answered similar questions about whether they, or members of their group, would anticipate feeling welcome among other politicians if they were to enter politics. While the political systems of the U.S. and Sweden differ in many respects, they are both cases where questions of descriptive representation are normatively pressing, given the large shares of minorities living in each country, and rapidly changing population demographics.⁴ In Sweden, 26.3% of the population is either foreign-born or has two parents who are foreign born as of 2021, a rise from 19% in 2010 (Statistics Sweden 2022), while the U.S. non-Hispanic White population fell from 72.4% in 2010 to 61.6% in 2020 (U.S. Census 2021).

What’s more, racial/ethnic minorities are underrepresented in politics across both country contexts. The literature on the underrepresentation of immigrant-origin people in Sweden finds that exclusion is not due to dearth of resources or political interest, but is rather driven by party gatekeepers who exclude immigrants from higher office (e.g., Dahlstedt and Hertzberg 2007; Lindgren et al. 2021; Dancygier et al. 2015; Dancygier et al. 2021; Lindgren and Österman 2022; Adman and Strömblad 2015). Similarly, the U.S. race and ethnic politics literature finds that minority candidates emerge at lower rates than whites (Fraga et al. 2020), and that party elites disproportionately assist White over minority candidates (Fraga and Hassell 2021).

⁴Note that while the U.S. literature has focused on racial and ethnic minorities, the European literature instead has examined immigrant status and background.

Across both country contexts, racial/ethnic minorities are less likely than their majority citizen counterparts to indicate they would feel welcome among other politicians. These results persist for each minority group examined. We also extend our analysis in a number of ways. First, we replicate the results by adding controls for socioeconomic status, demographics, and political interest to examine if minority status per se makes minorities feel less welcome, or if some potential correlate of minority status, such as education, is driving the observed effect. After adding controls, the Swedish results hardly change at all, and the U.S. results remain statistically significant, though are somewhat weakened. Second, we use a unique feature of the Swedish survey from 2021 to cross-validate the perceptions of minority and majority groups. We find that members of the majority group agree that minorities are less likely to feel welcome in politics. We then explore the connection between expectations of feeling welcome and interest in running for office. In two out of three surveys, there is indeed a strong relationship between the two, attesting to the relevance of expected discrimination for political candidacy.⁵ Using the U.S. survey, we are also able to show that when controlling for measure that tap into past experiences of discrimination and that are positively associated with interest in running for office, the impact of our new measure of expected discrimination remains virtually unchanged. Finally, we replicate our main analysis by restricting the sample to only include those with high political engagement, measured by their high level of political interest and involvement in civil society organizations. The results are substantively similar to the main results, suggesting that divergent perceptions of the inclusiveness of politics are also present for individuals who are a realistic part of the candidate pool.

⁵In the 2021 Swedish survey, the results are less clear, but this may be due to the fact that the question about feeling welcome asked about whether members of a list of groups, rather than the respondent themselves, could expect to feel welcome.

Cases, Data and Methods

Our analysis draws on three surveys: one that was fielded in the U.S. in 2021 and two that were conducted in Sweden in 2017 and 2021.⁶ Comparative politics scholars studying minority politics have long recognized that conceptualizations of minority status should be attentive to context, and have struggled with valid cross-national measures to distinguish minorities from non-minorities (Bloemraad 2013). We construct our ‘minority’ variables differently across space and time, taking into account the unique contexts of each of our cases. Therefore, how a ‘minority’ is classified differs between our two country-cases. While no established definition exists, American politics scholars have for historical (and practical) reasons focused on ‘visible’ minorities, whereas European scholars have, for similar reasons, focused on migration background. We follow in these traditions depending on the country context being examined; our analyses in the Swedish surveys focus on migration background, and examine racial background in the U.S. context. Sweden and the U.S. are ‘most different systems’ in terms of their electoral systems and immigration histories, and if minorities in both countries expect to face discrimination if they were to enter politics, this suggests that our results may generalize to other cases as well.

The U.S. data comes from the 2020 Comparative Multiracial Post-Election Survey (CMPS). The CMPS was fielded between April–August 2021, and intentionally oversampled racial and ethnic minorities. Our analyses include 3,749 Whites, 3,121 Asians, 4,363 Blacks, and 3,071 Latinos. CMPS respondents were asked “Imagine you are a new politician in the area where you live, would you feel welcome at meetings with other politicians?” Response

⁶An important reason for including both Swedish surveys is that they have lower number of respondents than the U.S. survey.

options ranged from “Yes, absolutely”, “Maybe”, “No, probably not” and “No, absolutely not.”⁷ Given the ordinal nature of the data, we will in our main analysis focus on the share answering “Yes, absolutely” in response to the above statement.⁸

The first Swedish survey was conducted between May–September 2017. Similar surveys were sent to both politicians and eligible voters. Ours only relies on the latter sample since we are interested in potential (rather than actual) candidates. This sample includes 1,948 individuals who mainly grew up in Sweden, and 646 individuals who mainly grew up outside Sweden. Respondents were asked “Imagine you are a new politician in the municipal council, do you think you would feel welcome?” The response options were “Yes, absolutely”, “Yes, maybe”, “No, probably not” and “No, absolutely not.”

The second Swedish survey was conducted between September–December 2021, and included the question: “Thinking about the municipality where you live, do you think that a newly elected politician would feel welcome in meetings with other politicians if the newly elected politician...” followed by the prompts “Mainly grew up in Sweden”, “Mainly grew up in Europe” and “Mainly grew up outside Europe.” Here, too, the response options were “Yes, absolutely”, “Yes, maybe”, “No, probably not” and “No, absolutely not.” We then match this to information about where the respondents themselves mainly grew up. This allows us to create a measure that reflects the extent to which respondents believe members of their own group would feel welcome among other politicians. The survey data analyzed

⁷Our measures across the U.S. and Swedish surveys direct respondents to either think of the “area” (U.S.) or “municipality” (Sweden) where they live. We chose to structure the question and lead respondents to focus on a more local context because barriers to entering national politics are high in both country contexts, and many newcomer politicians enter politics at the local level (e.g. Bose 2021; Berg 2020).

⁸In Appendix A.4, we show that our main analyses are robust to using the full range of the response variable by estimating ordered probit models.

here comprises of 1,292 individuals who mainly grew up in Sweden, and 102 individuals who mainly grew up outside of Sweden.

As is clear, all three surveys posed questions that measured respondents' expectations about *who* is welcome in politics. While the surveys used slightly different question wordings, and therefore cannot be directly compared, they enable us to assess whether there exists a general pattern in how welcome minorities feel in politics across cultural and political contexts.⁹ Appendix A.1 provides more details about each survey.

Main Results

[Figure 1 about here.]

[Figure 2 about here.]

Figure 1 displays the proportion of respondents who expect that they, or members of their ethnic group, would feel welcome among other politicians if they were elected to office. In the U.S., around 25% of White survey respondents indicate that they would feel welcome, whereas the corresponding figures for Latinos, Blacks and Asians are 21%, 21% and 20%, respectively. Turning to the 2017 Swedish survey, 25% of respondents who grew up in Sweden report that they would feel welcome, whereas the corresponding figures for respondents who grew up in Europe and outside Europe are 18% and 14%, respectively. In the 2021 Swedish survey, we instead asked respondents whether members of their own group (rather than they themselves) would feel welcome among other politicians. With this alternative question

⁹All subsequent analyses use survey weights when available. Note, that the 2021 Swedish survey does not provide weights.

wording, the ethnic gap in expected discrimination is even larger.¹⁰ The share who grew up in Sweden who think that members of their own group would feel welcome is over 60%, whereas the corresponding figures for the respondents who grew up in Europe and outside Europe are 27% and 28%.

It is clear from these results that in both the American and Swedish contexts, minorities expect more discrimination from fellow politicians than the majority group, if they were to enter politics. Figure 2, in which we have regressed our measures of feeling welcome on our indicators of minority status, further reinforces this finding. All estimates are negative and statistically significant. Moreover, many group differences are quite substantial. In the U.S., Blacks are 16% less likely to say they expect to feel welcome than are Whites, and the corresponding figures for Latinos and Asians are similar.¹¹ In the 2017 Swedish survey, respondents who grew up in Europe and outside Europe are 25% and 44% less likely to feel welcome than the majority group. And, finally, the likelihood of feeling welcome is more than halved when comparing respondents who mainly grew up outside Sweden to the majority group in the 2021 Swedish survey.

Extensions: Potential roots and effects of expected discrimination

Next, we examine potential roots and effects of expected discrimination in politics. We first explore the possibility that the relationship between minority status and feeling welcome

¹⁰At the same time, members of all groups are more optimistic, highlighting an interesting avenue worthy of exploration in future research.

¹¹The size of the majority/minority gaps in feeling welcome in the U.S. survey are close to that observed between women and men. See Table A.5. Note also that the magnitudes of the effects persist when we run these models as ordered probits. See Tables A.11, A.12 and A.13.

observed in Figure 2 is mediated by socioeconomic status, demographic attributes or political interest. We control for these additional covariates because when citizens form expectations about whether or not they would feel welcome among other politicians these additional factors, which tend to correlate with minority status, may also play a part. For example, it could be that it is not minority status per se, but low socioeconomic status, that makes minorities feel less welcome. Appendix Figure A.2 displays these results. Overall, they mirror those in Figure 2 insofar as all coefficient estimates are negative and statistically significant. For the Swedish case, the estimates in Figure A.2 are nearly identical to the ones in Figure 2, though these estimates are relatively smaller for the U.S. survey. This is suggestive evidence that minority status exerts an independent effect in shaping expectations of discrimination.

Second, the 2021 Swedish survey not only asked if respondents expected members of their own group to feel welcome in politics, but also whether members of other groups could be expected to feel welcome. This feature allows us to infer whether it is only minorities themselves who think that they are less welcome in politics, or if there is broader agreement that norms of exclusion exist in politics. As Appendix Table A.4 shows, individuals who grew up in Sweden agree with those who grew up in the rest of Europe and outside Europe about how welcome new politicians from different groups are expected to feel ($p > .10$ for all group-wise comparisons). This is further suggestive evidence that the results in Figure 2 are a reflection of minorities picking up on signals that the political system does not always welcome diversity; signals that are also evident to non-minorities.

Third, we analyze how expected discrimination shapes office-seeking ambitions. So far, our results have shown that minority citizens across these two country contexts expect discrimination if they were to enter politics. Do these perceptions affect office seeking

ambitions? Scholarship has shown that the decision to enter politics is likely to be shaped by voter discrimination (Shah 2014).¹² We argue that expectations of discrimination may play an important and overlooked role in also shaping minority descriptive representation.¹³ This is largely confirmed by our data. Appendix Table A.3 reveals a strong negative relationship between expected discrimination and interest in running for office in the U.S. survey and the 2017 Swedish survey. In the U.S. case, the probability of expressing an interest in running for office increases by 20%-points when a respondent expects to feel welcome among other politicians. The corresponding figures in the 2017 and 2021 Swedish surveys are 18%-points and 9%-points.¹⁴

In addition, previous literature has shown that past experiences of discrimination may increase political participation (Pantoja et al. 2001; Oskooii 2020; Besco et al. 2022). At first glance, our result that expectations of discrimination dampen interest in running for office may appear to run counter to these previous findings. This contradiction is only apparent, however. Conceptually, it is likely that in many cases experiences of discrimination have the potential to mobilize those affected by it, but that this depends on how welcoming they perceive the political system to be. Most importantly, we can show empirically that when we control for experiences of discrimination (Oskooii 2020), which have a positive impact on interest in running for office, the positive relationship between feeling welcome and interest in running for office hardly changes at all (see Table A.6), suggesting the importance of

¹²For a discussion of expected discrimination and political engagement and public space avoidance, see Oskooii 2020 and Hobbs and Lajevardi (2019).

¹³Note that minorities are not necessarily less interested in running for office than majority-citizens (Dancygier et al. 2021). Our results simply suggest that they are less interested than they would have been without expected discrimination.

¹⁴The coefficient is smaller and insignificant ($p > 0.05$) in the 2021 Swedish survey when controls are included.

“feeling welcome” as an independent and important variable that on its own also contributes to shaping the supply of candidates.¹⁵

Finally, we re-run the our main analysis taking into account for the fact that only the most politically interested and engaged are likely to overcome the hurdles associated with running for—and winning—political office. Most people are thus never a realistic part of the actual candidate pool. Appendix Tables A.1 and A.2 therefore interact race/ethnicity with political engagement, as measured by high levels of political interest and involvement in civil society. Overall, these analyses do not alter our conclusions and show that both among the more and the less realistic pools of candidates, minorities feel less welcome than members of the majority population.

Conclusion

Our study turns to the underrepresentation of minorities in politics, and examines a key consideration that potential candidates likely weigh when deciding whether to run for political office: expected discrimination. Our findings suggest that the underrepresentation of minority candidates might stem from a reluctance to even contend in the first place. We illuminate that the perceived unwelcomeness in politics, grounded in anticipated discrimination, acts as a potent deterrent for potential minority candidates and shapes the “supply side” of minority candidacies. The results demonstrate that minorities who comprise large and ever-growing segments of the population expect to face discrimination if they were to ever enter politics. We find that minorities in the U.S. and Sweden anticipate feeling less welcome in politics

¹⁵While neither of the Swedish surveys include questions about experiences of discrimination, the 2021 CMPS does. This analysis therefore relies only on the U.S. survey.

compared to majority citizens. These expectations persist even when controlling for potential correlates of minority status, like education. We also find that expected discrimination has political repercussions: those who do not anticipate feeling welcome among other politicians are less interested in running for office, all else equal. Together, our findings underscore the consequential role these perceptions play in discouraging minorities from pursuing political office, thereby challenging the conventional wisdom that heightened awareness or experience of discrimination invariably galvanizes political participation. That we uncover similar dynamics across two very different country contexts speaks to the potential generalizability of our findings.

These findings challenge the legitimacy of the democratic process, as they undermine the fundamental notion that every citizen seeking redress for societal injustices should have equal access to the political arena. Moreover, our results suggest that there is a vicious cycle, where minority underrepresentation signals that the political system does not welcome diversity, which in turn dissuades some potential candidates from running for political office. Parties interested in attracting a diverse roster of candidates should therefore highlight the ways in which they are welcoming minorities into politics.

Data Availability Statement

The materials required to verify the computational reproducibility of the results, procedures, and analyses in this article are available on the British Journal of Political Science Dataverse within the Harvard Dataverse Network, at: <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/WF51RQ>

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Competing Interests

None.

Ethical Standards

This research includes the use of third-party survey data. The US 2021 results draw on the Collaborative Multiracial Post-election Survey (CMPS). The principal Investigators of the CMPS acquired ethical approval prior to fielding the survey. The Swedish 2021 results draw on a survey conducted by the SOM Institute. The principal investigators of the SOM-survey acquired ethical approval prior to fielding the survey. The Swedish 2017 data was collected for the research project “The Underrepresentation of Immigrants in Politics.” The principal investigators of this survey acquired ethical approval prior to fielding the survey.

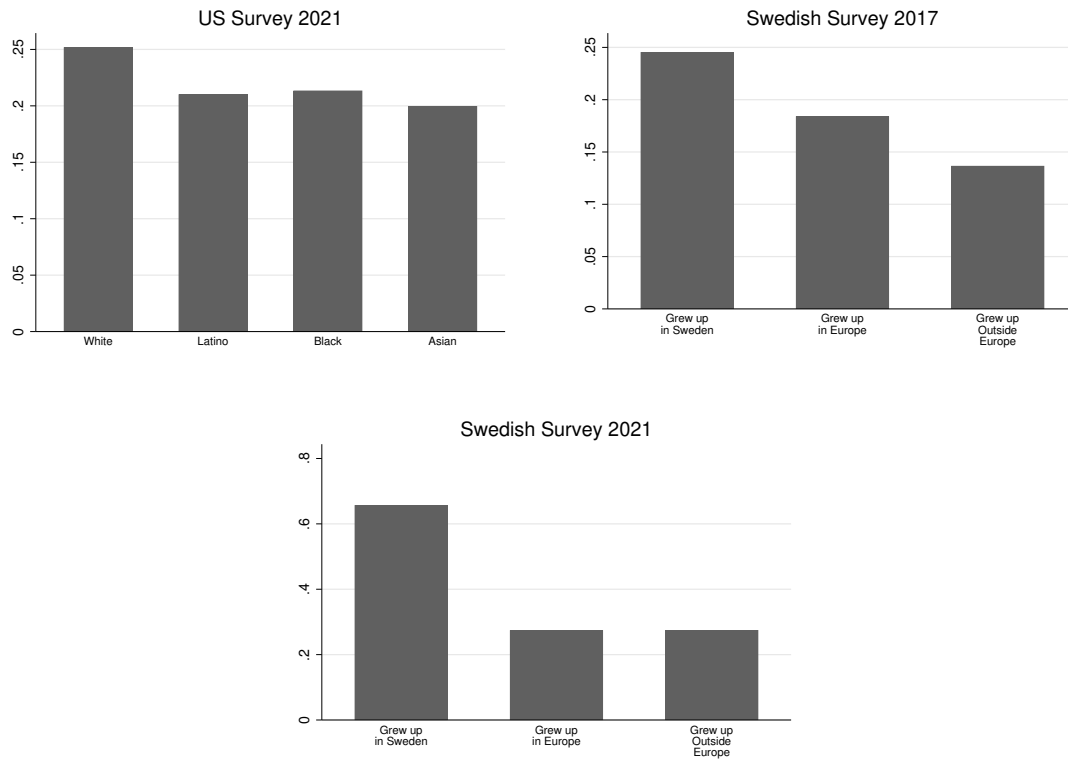
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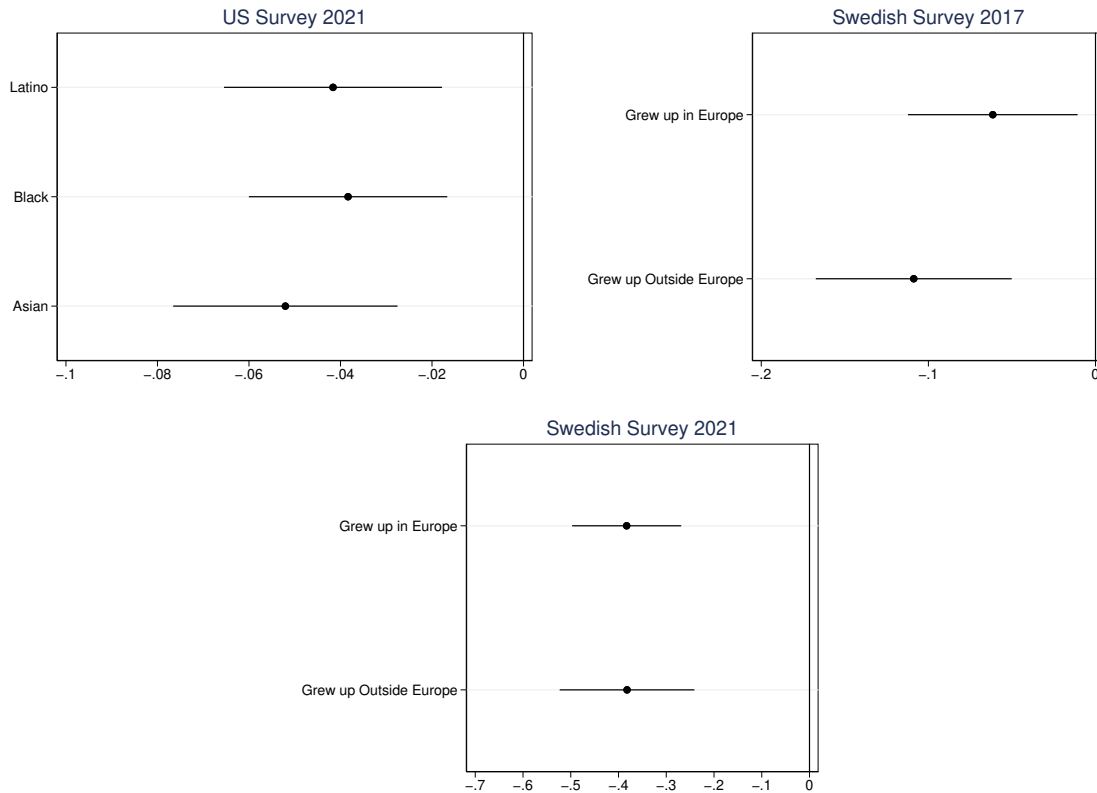
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Note: The number of observations is $N = 14,395$ (U.S. Survey), $N = 2,594$ (Swedish Survey 2017) and $N = 1,394$ (Swedish Survey 2021).

Figure 1: The share who indicate that they (U.S. Survey 1 and Swedish Survey 1) or members of their ethnic group (Swedish Survey 2) would feel welcome among other politicians, by minority status



Note: Plots display coefficient estimates with 95% confidence intervals from models that regress expectations of feeling welcome on race/ethnicity in the three surveys. The reference category in the upper left plot is “White.” The reference category in the upper right and lower plot is “Grew up in Sweden.” The number of observations is $N = 14,395$ (U.S. Survey), $N = 2,594$ (Swedish Survey 2017) and $N = 1,394$ (Swedish Survey 2021). Confidence intervals are based on robust standard errors.

Figure 2: Group differences in the share who say they (U.S. Survey 1 and Swedish Survey 1) or members of their ethnic group (Swedish Survey 2) would feel welcome among other politicians

Online Appendix of “Do Minorities Feel Welcome in Politics? A Cross-Cultural Study of the United States and Sweden”

A.1 Details on Surveys and Measurement

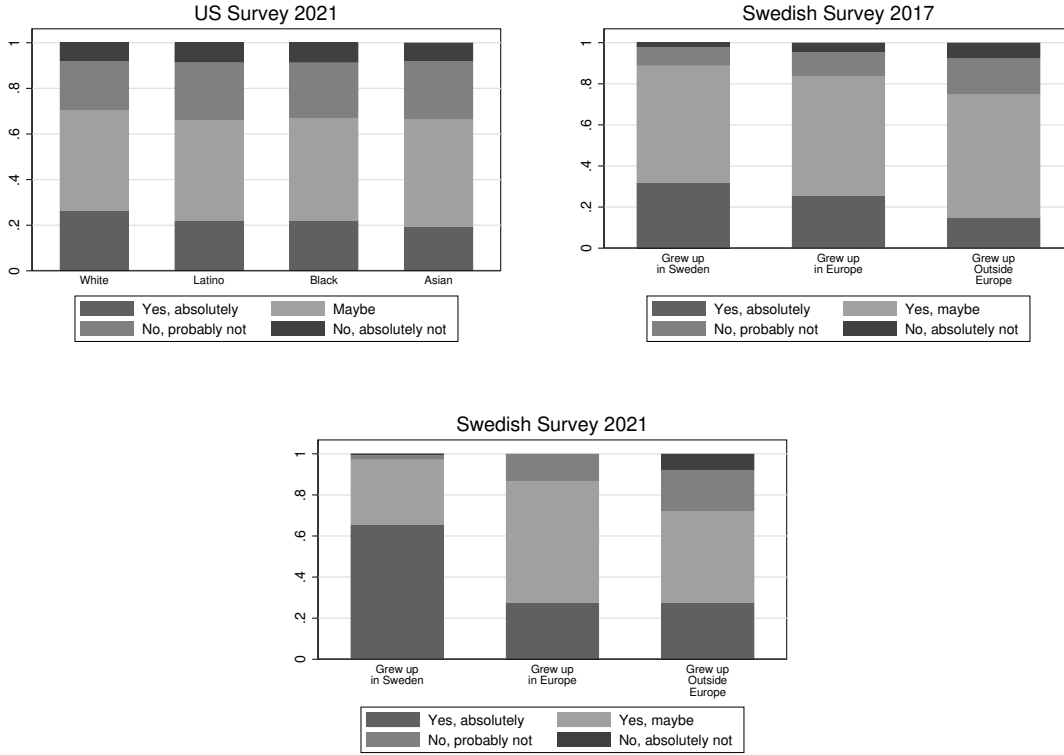
We included a question about feeling welcome among other politicians in following three surveys:

U.S. Survey 2021. The 2020 CMPS survey was fielded between April–August 2021 on oversamples ethnic/racial minorities. Our analysis include all survey respondents who identify as either White, Black, Latino or Asian. The standard CMPS sample was augmented with respondents from the youth sample (16–18 year olds). For reasons explained below, only respondents who were 18 years old were included from the youth sample. We included the following question in the CMPS: “Imagine you are a new politician in the area where you live, would you feel welcome at meetings with other politicians?” Response options ranged from “Yes, absolutely”, “Maybe”, “No, probably not” and “No, absolutely not.” Like with the 2016 CMPS (Barreto et al. 2018), the 2020 CMPS also employed best practices for reaching a representative sample of marginalized groups. More information about the 2020 CMPS methodology and procedures can be found at: <https://cmpsurvey.org/2020-survey/>.

Swedish Survey 2017. The survey was fielded between May–September 2017 and originally included a large sample of politicians alongside non-politicians. Here we only use the sample of non-politicians. The survey oversampled immigrants and individuals with an immigrant background. The question used in the present paper is the following: “Imagine you are a new politician in the municipal council, do you think you would feel welcome?” The response options were “Yes, absolutely”, “Yes, maybe”, “No, probably not” and “No, absolutely not.” More details on this survey, as well as an extensive analysis validating it against government registry data as well as the SOM institutes annual survey is undertaken in Dancygier et al. (2021).

Swedish Survey 2021. The survey was conducted between September–December 2021 as part of the Swedish SOM-institutes annual survey. The survey includes no oversample of minorities and does not provide survey weights. However, it the most long-going and well-known Swedish public opinion survey, and has been fielded annually since 1986. The 2021 edition included the question: “Thinking about the municipality where you live, do you think that a newly elected politician would feel welcome in meetings with other politicians if the newly elected politician...” followed by the prompts “Mainly grew up in Sweden”, “Mainly grew up in Europe” and “Mainly grew up outside Europe.” The response options were “Yes, absolutely”, “Yes, maybe”, “No, probably not” and “No, absolutely not.” More information about the 2021 SOM methodology and procedures can be found in Weissenbilder (2022).

Sample Restrictions. For purposes of comparison, we restricted our samples to include



Note: The number of observations is $N = 14,395$ (U.S. Survey), $N = 2,594$ (Swedish Survey 2017) and $N = 1,394$ (Swedish Survey 2021).

Figure A.1: Response distributions for the questions measuring whether respondents would feel welcome among other politicians, by minority status

respondents 18+ and thereby eligible to vote and, most importantly, stand for office. In Sweden, non-citizens are allowed to vote and stand for office in local and regional elections, but in the U.S. we excluded non-citizens since they are not permitted to do so.

Full Response Distributions for the Dependent Variables. As discussed in the main paper, our dependent variable (feeling welcome) is ordinal. For the purposes of our analyses, we therefore recode *feeling welcome* into a dummy variable. Figure A.1 visualizes the entire by-survey response distribution of this variable. As can be seen, the general pattern uncovered in our paper—that minorities expect to feel less welcome in politics—remain when studying the full distribution of responses.

A.2 Additional Analyses

In this appendix, we perform a number of additional analyses and robustness checks. First, and to further explore the roots of expected discrimination in politics, we analyze whether the

relationship between minority status and expected discrimination is mediated by socio-economic status, demographics or political interest.

To measure socio-economic status we include educational attainment and employment status. In the U.S. survey, we include dummies for the highest level of education the respondent has completed. This variable has seven categories: Grades 1–8, Some High School, High School, Associates Degree, Bachelors Degree, and Post-graduate Degree. In the Swedish survey from 2017, education is measured by years of education, which should be strongly correlated with educational attainment. In the Swedish Survey from 2021 we use a four-step categorization and include dummies for each. It measures the highest level of educational attainment as follows: Completed Grades 1–9 or less, High School, Post High-School, and University Degree. To measure unemployment we used an identical approach across all three surveys: we constructed a measure that takes on the value of 1 if the respondent is currently unemployed and 0 otherwise. Respondent demographics were captured by including their age and age squared, as well as their gender.¹

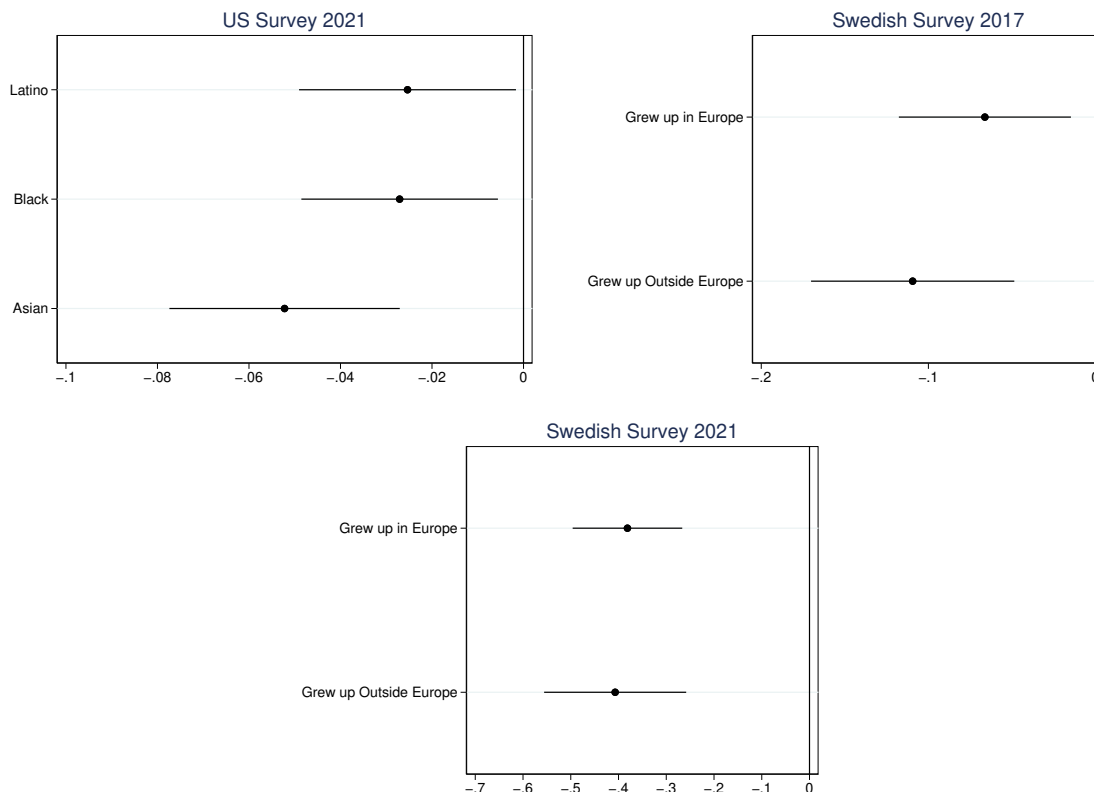
Finally, we also controlled for political interest. In the U.S. survey, the prompt was “Some people are very interested in politics while other people can’t stand politics, how about you? Are you...” followed by the following alternatives: “Very interested”, “Somewhat interested”, “Not that interested in politics” and “Not at all interested in politics.” The question in both Swedish Surveys was “Generally speaking, how interested are you in politics?” and it had the following four response options: “Very interested”, “Somewhat interested”, “Not particularly interested” and “Not at all interested.”

The results of regressing our measures of feeling welcome on our indicators of minority status when including the aforementioned controls are in Figure A.2. As can be seen, all estimates remain negative and statistically significant. In comparison with the results in Figure 2, the coefficient estimates for the two Swedish surveys hardly change at all. For the U.S. sample, the coefficients for Latinos and Blacks are somewhat smaller. Our results thus suggest that minority status in and of itself plays a part in shaping expectations of discrimination.

Next, we perform a number of analyses that interact the variables measuring race/ethnicity with dummy variables measuring (1) high interest (2) membership in civil society organizations and (3) active membership in civil society organizations (e.g. holding a position). The objective of this analysis is to test whether the negative effect of race/ethnicity on differs for these more realistic pools of candidates.

To create the political interest dummy, we code respondents as 1 if they indicate that they are “Very interested” and 0 otherwise. To create dummies for membership and active membership in civil society organizations, we had to rely on slightly different strategies for the Swedish studies, on the one hand, and the US study on the other. Beginning with the

¹A very small number of observations were dropped because we only included individuals identifying as either male or female where in the analysis.



Note: Plots show coefficient estimates with 95% confidence intervals from models that regress expectations of feeling welcome on race/ethnicity for three different surveys. Each analysis includes controls for age, age squared, gender, education, unemployment status and political interest. The reference category in the upper left plot is “White.” The reference category in the upper right and lower plot is “Grew up in Sweden”. The number of observations is $N = 14,273$ (U.S. Survey), $N=2,594$ (Swedish Survey 2017) and $N = 1,394$ (Swedish Survey 2021). Confidence intervals are based on robust standard errors.

Figure A.2: Group differences in the share that say they, or members of their ethnic group, would feel welcome among other politicians. Controlling for SES, Demographics, and Political interest.

Swedish surveys, they both include questions about whether the respondent is a member of a civil society organization and also whether they have an official position within a civil society organization. In the US survey, unfortunately, the respondents were not asked about whether they belonged to a civil society organization. Instead, we proxy membership using the question “Since January 2020, have you attended a meeting to discuss issues facing the community?” To proxy active membership, we use the follow up question which asks “Did you speak or post a comment at the meeting?” Both questions had the response options “Yes” and “No.”

The results are in Tables A.1 and A.2 of this memo. Significant positive effects of the interactions between our various dummy variables and race/ethnicity would indicate

Table A.1: Do the effects of race/ethnicity differ for a more realistic pool of candidates, US Survey 2021

	US Survey 2021		
Latino	-0.0271** (0.0134)	-0.0427*** (0.0126)	-0.0410*** (0.0123)
Black	-0.0358*** (0.0121)	-0.0443*** (0.0114)	-0.0410*** (0.0112)
Asian	-0.0313** (0.0136)	-0.0475*** (0.0129)	-0.0474*** (0.0126)
Very Interested	0.163*** (0.0204)		
Civil Society Member		0.183*** (0.0300)	
Civil Society Active			0.269*** (0.0398)
Latino×Very Interested	-0.0217 (0.0299)		
Black×Very Interested	0.00926 (0.0268)		
Asian×Very Interested	-0.0218 (0.0327)		
Latino×Civil Society Member		-0.00652 (0.0427)	
Black×Civil Society Member		0.0240 (0.0388)	
Asian×Civil Society Member		-0.00601 (0.0474)	
Latino×Civil Society Active			-0.0431 (0.0577)
Black×Civil Society Active			-0.0170 (0.0511)
Asian×Civil Society Active			-0.0330 (0.0639)
Constant	0.205*** (0.00944)	0.233*** (0.00884)	0.237*** (0.00863)
Observations	14,395	14,395	14,395
R-squared	0.029	0.022	0.023

Note: Entries are OLS-coefficients. Reference category is “White.” Standard errors are robust. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table A.2: Do the effects of race/ethnicity differ for a more realistic pool of candidates, Swedish Surveys 2017 and 2021

	Swedish Survey 2017		Swedish Survey 2021	
Grew up in Europe	-0.0660** (0.0272)	-0.0365 (0.0448)	-0.0527* (0.0284)	-0.414*** (0.0615)
Grew up Outside Europe	-0.0984*** (0.0323)	-0.0832* (0.0450)	-0.0862*** (0.0323)	-0.390*** (0.0762)
Very Interested	0.113*** (0.0406)		0.114*** (0.0330)	(0.0819) (0.0730)
Civil Society Member		0.0646** (0.0275)		0.0519* (0.0266)
Civil Society Active			0.0769** (0.0312)	0.0254 (0.0381)
Grew up in Europe × Very Interested	0.0549 (0.0866)			0.123 (0.154)
Grew up Outside Europe × Very Interested	-0.0941 (0.0861)			-0.142 (0.232)
Grew up in Europe × Civil Society Member		-0.0243 (0.0549)		0.249** (0.124)
Grew up outside Europe × Civil Society Member		-0.0218 (0.0609)		0.00671 (0.168)
Grew up in Europe × Civil Society Active			-0.0366 (0.0694)	0.400 (0.281)
Grew up Outside Europe × Civil Society Active			-0.161*** (0.0608)	-0.289*** (0.0811)
Constant	0.232*** (0.0125)	0.196*** (0.0237)	0.230*** (0.0132)	0.632*** (0.0147)
Observations	2,594	2,594	2,594	1,381
R-squared	0.012	0.008	0.009	0.052

Note: Entries are OLS-coefficients. Reference category is “Grew Up in Sweden.” Standard errors are robust.
 * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table A.3: Is feeling welcome correlated with interest in running for office?

	US Survey 2021		Swedish Survey 2017		Swedish Survey 20121	
Feeling Welcome	0.195*** (0.0104)	0.179*** (0.0101)	0.178*** (0.0280)	0.113*** (0.0277)	0.0944*** (0.0258)	0.0271 (0.0244)
Constant	0.0934*** (0.00344)	0.227*** (0.0592)	0.284*** (0.0124)	0.0721 (0.119)	0.283*** (0.0199)	-0.114 (0.101)
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	14,395	14,273	2,908	2,908	1,386	1,386
R-squared	0.056	0.127	0.026	0.169	0.009	0.171

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Note: Entries are OLS-coefficients. Standard errors are robust.
 * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

that minorities who belong to the realistic candidate pool, feel more welcome than the less politically engaged in their minority group. If anything, however, our results lean in the opposite direction. 21 out of 27 interactions are negative, suggesting that tendency for minorities to feel less welcome is more pronounced among the highly interested and organizationally active. Most of these negative interaction effects, however, are not statistically significant at conventional levels. A notable exception to this pattern is the interaction between having grown up outside Europe and being active in a civil society organization in both Swedish surveys. Here, the results show, among those who are active in civil society organizations, individuals who grew up outside of Europe feel even significantly less welcome than corresponding individuals among those who are not active. By contrast, only 6 out of 27 interaction effects are positive, and only one significantly so.²

Overall, these results point to the importance of expected discrimination, as the general pattern of minorities feeling less welcome are just as prevalent among those who are the most likely to at some point consider running for office: the politically engaged.

To further probe the potential significance of expected discrimination, we regress respondents' interest in running for office on our measure of feeling welcome. In the U.S. survey, interest in running for office is captured by the following item: "If offered the opportunity, would you consider running for political office to further the issues that you care about most?" The response options were "Yes, would do this", "No, would not do this" and "Not sure." In the Swedish surveys, we asked: "Imagine that you are a new politician in the local council. Do you think that you would feel welcome?" The response options were: "Yes, absolutely",

²The significant positive interaction refers to Grew up in Europe \times Civil Society Member. The marginal effect $(-0.478 + 0.249 = -0.229)$ is however still negative, and significantly so ($p < 0.05$).

Table A.4: Share of respondents who think that newly elected politicians from different groups would feel welcome, Swedish Survey 2021

Respondent Group:	New Politician who grew up in:		
	Sweden	Europe	Outside Europe
Grew up in Sweden	0.66	0.35	0.21
Grew up in Europe	0.58	0.27	0.16
Grew up Outside Europe	0.52	0.26	0.28

Note: The number of observations is $N = 1,394$. None of the pairwise comparisons between respondent groups are statistically significant ($p > 0.10$).

“Maybe”, “No, probably not” and “No, absolutely not.” In all three surveys, we have coded positive answers as 1 and others as 0.

The results in Table A.3 indicate that for two out of three surveys, there is a substantively strong relationship between expected discrimination and interest in running for office.³ In the US case, feeling welcome is associated with an increase of almost 20%-points in the probability of being interested in running for office. In the Swedish survey from 2017, the corresponding figure is close to 18%-points. In the case of the Swedish survey from 2021, where the survey asks respondents about which groups they anticipate feeling welcome, rather whether they themselves would, the coefficient estimate for the bivariate regression is statistically significant but somewhat smaller. When including controls it is still positive, but no longer significant at conventional levels ($p > 0.05$). One potential explanation for the weaker effects found in the Swedish survey from 2021 is the alternative question-wording, where we instead asked respondents whether members of their own group (rather than they themselves) would feel welcome among other politicians. It is possible that respondents do not equate to the discrimination they expect to face with the discrimination they expect members of their group would experience.

Several important and relatively recent works show that there is a positive link between experiences of perceived discrimination and political mobilization. This might, at first glance, seem partially inconsistent with our finding that feeling welcome (expected discrimination) correlates negatively with interest in running for office. To analyze whether this is the case, we rely on the US Survey. This is because none of the Swedish surveys include questions about experiences of discrimination, whereas the 2021 CMPS does. Specifically, it includes the question “In the past four years, have you experienced discrimination or exclusion because you are S2 in any of the following settings? Please check all that apply,” which is followed by a list of settings. We try to keep as close as possible to Oskooii (2020) and construct two

³We have performed the analyses both with, and without, controls. The set of controls is the same as the one used in Figure A.2.

Table A.5: Detailed Regression Results Underlying Figures 2 and A.5, US Survey 2021

	(1)	(3)
Latino	-0.0416*** (0.0122)	-0.0254** (0.0121)
Black	-0.0383*** (0.0111)	-0.0271** (0.0110)
Asian	-0.0520*** (0.0125)	-0.0522*** (0.0128)
Woman		-0.0513*** (0.00841)
Age		-0.00159 (0.00141)
Age Squared		2.96e-05** (1.48e-05)
Some High School		-0.0721 (0.0637)
High School		-0.0517 (0.0609)
Some College		-0.0450 (0.0611)
Associates Degree		-0.0454 (0.0615)
Bachelors Degree		-0.0436 (0.0612)
Post-graduate Degree		-0.0174 (0.0617)
Unemployment		-0.0425*** (0.0115)
Political Interest		0.210*** (0.0133)
Constant	0.252*** (0.00853)	0.250*** (0.0687)
Observations	14,395	14,273
R-squared	0.002	0.045

Note: Entries are OLS-coefficients. Standard errors are robust. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

indices of perceived discrimination. The first is similar to his index of *political* discrimination and includes the following settings: 1. In dealings with police and 2. In dealings with immigration officers. The second is similar to his index of *societal* discrimination and includes the following: 1. At your place of work, 2. In a restaurant, theater, or other place of

Table A.6: The Impact of Feeling Welcome when Controlling for Experiences of Discrimination, US Survey 2021

US Survey 2021			
Expectations:			
Feeling Welcome	0.195*** (0.0104)	0.196*** (0.0102)	0.179*** (0.0100)
Experiences:			
Political Discrimination		0.259*** (0.0205)	0.186*** (0.0205)
Societal Discrimination		0.0953*** (0.0153)	0.0751*** (0.0153)
Constant	0.0934*** (0.00344)	0.0539*** (0.00383)	0.150*** (0.0567)
Observations	14,395	14,395	14,273
R-squared	0.056	0.104	0.153
Controls	No	No	Yes

Note: Entries are OLS-coefficients. Standard errors are robust.

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

entertainment, 3. In a store and 4. From other people. Both indices are normalized to run from 0 to 1. We then perform new analyses that are modeled on those we included in Table A.3, this time adding our measures of political and societal discrimination.

The results are in Table A.6. As can be seen, the coefficient estimate for Feeling Welcome hardly changes at all when we include variables that control for experiences of discrimination. Turning to experiences of discrimination, the coefficient estimate for political discrimination is about five times as large as that for societal discrimination. Our results are in line with Oskooii's (2020) broader contention: that experiences of political discrimination are more mobilizing than experiences of societal discrimination. Our empirical results are thus consistent with a theoretical account of political engagement where *past experiences of discrimination* can mobilize, whereas *expectations of discrimination when engaging with the political sphere* can demobilize

Finally, the alternative question in the 2021 Swedish survey also enables us to cross-validate perceptions of discrimination across groups. In Table A.4, we show how the three different groups of respondents evaluate how welcome their own, as well as the other groups, would be in politics. As can be seen a majority of respondents in all respondent groups think that new politicians who grew up in Sweden would feel welcome. Between one fourth and one third of respondents in each group think that a new politician who grew up in Europe would

Table A.7: Detailed Regression Results Underlying Figures 2 and A.2, Swedish Survey 2017

	(1)	(2)
Grew Up in Europe	-0.0614** (0.0259)	-0.0662** (0.0263)
Grew Up Outside Europe	-0.109*** (0.0299)	-0.109*** (0.0310)
Woman		0.0166 (0.0210)
Age		0.0148*** (0.00437)
Age Squared		-0.000156*** (4.39e-05)
Years of Education		0.00799** (0.00393)
Unemployment		0.0401 (0.0716)
Political Interest		0.219*** (0.0396)
Constant	0.245*** (0.0120)	-0.312*** (0.109)
Observations	2,594	2,594
R-squared	0.004	0.039

Note: Entries are OLS-coefficients. Standard errors are robust. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

feel welcome whereas the corresponding figures for a new politicians from outside Europe lie between one fifth and one fourth. In sum, it is not only minorities themselves who think that they are less welcome in politics. Rather there is broader agreement, also among non-minorities, that norms of exclusion exist in politics.

A.3 Detailed Regression Results

This section presents the full regression results underlying Figure 2 in the main text, and Figure A.2 from this Appendix. The results from the US Survey are in Table A.5, while the results for the Swedish surveys are in Tables A.7 and A.8.

Table A.8: Detailed Regression Results Underlying Figures 2 and A.2, Swedish Survey 2021

	(1)	(2)
Grew Up in Europe	-0.383*** (0.0582)	-0.381*** (0.0585)
Grew Up Outside Europe	-0.382*** (0.0719)	-0.407*** (0.0758)
Woman		-0.0931*** (0.0256)
Age		-0.00220 (0.00395)
Age Squared		-4.64e-06 (3.90e-05)
High School		0.0475 (0.0443)
Post High-School		-0.0116 (0.0473)
University Degree		0.111** (0.0458)
Unemployment		-0.00777 (0.0836)
Political Interest		0.334*** (0.0673)
Constant	0.657*** (0.0132)	0.649*** (0.102)
Observations	1,394	1,394
R-squared	0.043	0.091

Note: Entries are OLS-coefficients. Standard errors are robust. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table A.9: Regressing the four-step measure of feeling welcome on race/ethnicity using ordered probit, US Survey 2021

US Survey 2021		
Latino	-0.120*** (0.0319)	-0.0568* (0.0325)
Black	-0.0984*** (0.0291)	-0.0606** (0.0295)
Asian	-0.0998*** (0.0331)	-0.113*** (0.0352)
Observations	14,395	14,273
Controls	No	Yes

Note: Entries are ordered probit coefficients. Reference category is “White.” Standard errors are robust.
* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table A.10: Regressing the four-step measure of feeling welcome on race/ethnicity using ordered probit, Swedish Surveys

	Swedish Survey 2017		Swedish Survey 2021	
Grew Up in Europe	-0.267*** (0.0902)	-0.294*** (0.0919)	-0.894*** (0.131)	-0.938*** (0.139)
Grew Up Outside Europe	-0.549*** (0.113)	-0.539*** (0.119)	-1.174*** (0.199)	-1.277*** (0.210)
Observations	2,057	2,057	1,394	1,394
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes

Note: Entries are ordered probit coefficients. Reference category is “Grew Up in Sweden.” Standard errors are robust.
* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

A.4 Ordered Probit Results

In this section, we present results for re-estimating our main results using the full four-step measure of feeling welcome. Since this variable is ordinal, we analyze these data using ordered probit.

It is not possible to interpret the coefficients’ magnitude directly but, as can be seen in Tables A.9 and A.10, their sign and significance show that our results are robust to using the four-step ordinal dependent variable instead of the dichotomized version that we rely on in the main paper. In all analyses, the significant negative coefficient estimates show that

Table A.11: Marginal effects of race/ethnicity on ordinal measure of feeling welcome, US Survey 2021

Outcome:	Without Controls:			With Controls:		
	Latino	Black	Asian	Latino	Black	Asian
No, absolutely not	.019*** (.0052)	.016*** (.0046)	.016*** (.0053)	.008* (.0047)	.009** (.0043)	.017*** (.0055)
No, probably not	.024*** (.0064)	.02*** (.0059)	.02*** (.0066)	.012* (.0069)	.013** (.0063)	.024*** (.0074)
Yes, maybe	-.007 (.0022)	-.006*** (.0017)	-.006*** (.0021)	-.003 (.002)	-.004** (.0018)	-.008*** (.0028)
Yes, absolutely	-.036*** (.0095)	-.03*** (.0088)	-.03*** (.01)	-.017* (.0096)	-.018** (.0087)	-.033*** (.0101)

Note: Based on Table A.9.. Entries are marginal effects of race/ethnicity on outcomes. Reference category is “White.” Standard errors are robust.

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

racial/ethnic minorities in both the US and Sweden feel less welcome in politics.

To evaluate substantive effect sizes, we turn to the marginal effects for different values of the outcome variable. These are shown in Tables A.11, A.12 and A.8. As expected, the general pattern across cases conforms to our expectations. Minorities are more likely to respond that they would not feel welcome in politics and less likely to answer that they would feel welcome. As for substantive effect sizes they are comparable to those found in the analysis featuring the dichotomized dependent variable. For example, compare the effect sizes in the A.7 to those in A.12 . In OLS regression with controls, the probability that someone who has grown up outside Europe answer that they would feel welcome (“Yes, absolutely”) is 11 %-points lower than that of someone who grew up in Sweden. The corresponding figure for the ordered probit results is 16%-points.

Table A.12: Marginal effects of race/ethnicity on ordinal measure of feeling welcome, Swedish Survey 2017

Outcome:	Without Controls:		With Controls:	
	Grew Up in Europe	Grew Up Outside Europe	Grew Up in Europe	Grew Up Outside Europe
No, absolutely not	.018** (.0077)	.05*** (.0154)	.02** (.0078)	.046*** (.015)
No, probably not	.041*** (.0151)	.091*** (.0214)	.046*** (.0157)	.09*** (.0226)
Yes, maybe	.028*** (.0069)	.021* (.0112)	.029*** (.0066)	.023** (.0108)
Yes, absolutely	-.087*** (.0277)	-.162*** (.0277)	-.095*** (.0276)	-.159*** (.0291)

Note: Based on Table A.10. Entries are marginal effects of race/ethnicity on outcomes. Reference category is “Grew Up in Sweden.” Standard errors are robust.
* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table A.13: Marginal effects of race/ethnicity on ordinal measure of feeling welcome, Swedish Survey 2021

Outcome:	Without Controls:		With Controls:	
	Grew Up in Europe	Grew Up Outside Europe	Grew Up in Europe	Grew Up Outside Europe
No, absolutely not	.029*** (.0107)	.054** (.0249)	.026** (.0104)	.056** (.0262)
No, probably not	.094*** (.0235)	.143*** (.04)	.095*** (.0247)	.155*** (.0431)
Yes, maybe	.222*** (.0222)	.239*** (.0169)	.24*** (.0235)	.256*** (.0188)
Yes, absolutely	-.345*** (.0464)	-.436*** (.0595)	-.36*** (.0487)	-.467*** (.0587)

Note: Based on Table A.10. Entries are marginal effects of race/ethnicity on outcomes. Reference category is “Grew Up in Sweden.” Standard errors are robust.
* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

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