

Why you might be more likely to turn up to a protest if others do

Submitted by: BlueSky Education

Tuesday, 12 October 2021

The expected number of participants at a rally is the deciding factor in people's willingness to participate in a protest, concludes new research from the University of Cologne.

Professor Christopher Roth found that contrary to common opinion, it is not the fact that opposing political groups incite each other at demonstrations that leads to an increased turnout.

For left-wing activists, they are 5.8% more likely to participate in a demonstration if there is an expected high turnout. This is because left-wing activists have stronger networks and are more likely to enjoy the event. They regard a protest as 'fun'.

For right-wing activists, they are 6.1% more likely to participate in a demonstration if there is an expected small turnout.

This helps us to understand why it is that fringe groups gain power and why some fringe groups, for example right-wing ones, never die out.

'People react differently depending on the political camp,' Professor Roth says. 'However, people's willingness to demonstrate does not depend on how many people from the opposing side take to the streets.'

The study was based on two rallies in May 2018 and 2019 where researchers recruited 1,464 participants and interviewed them on their willingness to demonstrate. The study will appear in the American Political Science Review and is part of a series of publications.

For more information, a copy of the paper, or to speak to Professor Roth, contact Ariella Durban at BlueSky Education on ariella@bluesky-PR.com or call +44 (0)1582 790 706.