

Game performance of immigrant NBA players might suffer in context of far-right political support

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During the 2020–2021 season of the National Basketball Association (NBA), which took place during Donald Trump's failed bid at re-

election, immigrant players for teams in regions with stronger far-right political sentiments were more likely to make game errors—highlighting the possible detrimental effects of such views on immigrant workplace performance.

Benjamin Korman and Florian Kunze of the University of Konstanz, Germany, presented these findings in the open-access journal *PLOS ONE* on November 1.

Prior research has shown that, in regions with strong support for far-right political parties, immigrants face more prejudice and discrimination. Evidence also suggests that being exposed to anti-immigrant propaganda may hinder immigrants' performance on various tasks, and exposure to [negative stereotypes](#) about a certain group of people might boost the performance of people outside that group.

On the basis of such prior research and related psychological theory, Korman and colleagues propose that living in areas with far-right views might increase immigrants' awareness of the possibility of being judged negatively as immigrants, disrupting their attention and causing them to make more workplace errors.

To investigate that hypothesis, they analyzed data on all 522 US-based NBA players' game performance following the failed 2020 election bid of polarizing far-right politician Donald Trump.

The researchers found that immigrant players for teams based in regions with a higher percentage of presidential votes for Trump were more likely to make performance errors than immigrant players in regions with less Trump support. In contrast, the opposite was found for native players in the far-right regions. These results held true after statistically accounting for other factors that could impact performance, such as age, position, ball-possession time, number of possessions, salary and minutes

of play time.

While this study does not confirm a cause-effect relationship, it provides some initial real-world support for the researchers' hypothesis. On the basis of their findings, the researchers suggest that organizations might consider steps to insulate employees from regional far-right views by, for instance, banning employees from wearing politically charged clothing and fostering inclusive environments.

The researchers also note that their study addresses gaps in management research, which has typically ignored immigrant employees—especially those who are highly skilled—and the influence of the external political environment.

The authors add, "Using data on NBA players, this study highlights how the political environment external to organizations may seep into them, differentially affecting their [immigrant](#) and native members."

More information: Political context and immigrants' work-related performance errors: Insights from the National Basketball Association, *PLoS ONE* (2023). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0289019](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0289019). [journals.plos.org/plosone/arti ... journal.pone.0289019](https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0289019)

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