as 'skin-colour' – White, Black, Brown and Yellow. It later evolved to include 'ethnicity' too. Expanded, it is stereotyping – "a tendency to assign people to 'coalition groups' and to use whatever cues are available, be they clothing, accent or skin colour, to slot individuals into such groups", says Robert Kurzban, evolutionary psychologist at the University of California. Sociologists Noël A. Cazenave suggests it is a culturally-sanctioned group-privilege system.

'Racism' in modern discourse, is a social construct that emerged from the mass-scale juxtaposition of distinct peoples – notably, the enslavement of African peoples by North America. There, in dominant groups' attempts to monopolise commerce, power, suffrage and culture, Racism is said to have been born. The modern notion of Racism, stemming from White Guilt, attempts to universalise, and compensate for, it. It mostly disregards regional and country contexts of caste, religion, ethnicity and tribes.

"Fisher and the Swedes picked this particular measure of intolerance because of their own cultural bias. Influenced by the expression of White Racism in the West, they assume that preferring a neighbour of your own race — i.e. not black, Latino, Asian et al — is an accurate barometer of prejudice," wrote Lakshmi Chaudhury and Sandip Roy on FirstPost.

In fact, in most Western countries Racism is so taboo that many people will hide their intolerant views and lie to the questioners. Bangladeshi respondents, without any knowledge or guilt of the West's ignominious history of Racism, perhaps felt no need to hide their neighbour preferences.

***

That 'Bangladesh is 2nd most racist' was ascertained through a single metric. The original data came from the respected World Values Survey (WVS). The part that Fisher relied on asked respondents in 80+ countries to identify kinds of people they would not want as neighbours. In fishing out race-related data, Fisher marked as 'red' those who chose "people of a different race" from the list that included 'drug addicts', 'homosexuals' and 'unmarried couples living together'. The more frequently people in a given country said they didn't want neighbours from other races, the more racist you could call it. And that put us at #2 with 71.8 percent declining a different-race neighbor!

"The WashPo graphic is interesting and provocative but not conclusive", says Steve Saideman, Paterson Chair in International Affairs, Carleton University. It's tough to gauge racial intolerance through just one metric. Other metrics (e.g. marrying children to persons of other race/ethnicity or hiring them at work) could've yielded very different results.

Even that single metric wasn't adequately researched. People congregate with their own folks because it's comforting and convenient. Similarly, when a typical Bangladeshi is asked about his/her preference of neighbours – it's only natural that (s)he would choose another Bangladeshi – even a co-religionist too. This doesn't make us racist – only eager to live in harmony with our own communities. A western frame of reference – familiar with a history of White Racism – often assumes the reluctance stems from a racist attitude.

***

The third aspect of Fisher's magic map is its methodology and this is where it gets interesting. Siddartha Mitter, an NY-based Journalist, wrote a damning critique on the Africa is a Country website: "the two caveats that Fisher offered in his post – first, that survey respondents might be lying about their racial views, and second, that the survey data are from different years, depending on the country – only scratch the surface of what is basically a crime against social science perpetrated in broad daylight".

To make things worse (for Fisher i.e.), Ashirul Amin, a Bangladeshi PhD candidate in Development Economics at The Fletcher School, Tufts, decided to examine the two-years' source data from the WVS. In his page, Ashirul wrote that he was baffled by the odd group of most racist countries and that Bangladesh being one of them, piqued his interest.

Ashirul Amin, a Bangladeshi, demonstrate that in the 2nd year of survey, "yes" and "no" got swapped. What this basically means is that actually 17.7 percent (and not 71.7 percent) Bangladeshis don't want different-race neighbours. The racial intolerance map was subsequently changed to reflect this.

Ashirul Amin, a Bangladeshi, demonstrate that in the 2nd year of survey, "yes" and "no" got swapped. What this basically means is that actually 17.7 percent (and not 71.7 percent) Bangladeshis don't want different-race neighbours. The racial intolerance map was subsequently changed to reflect this.