

Anti-immigrant Contexts and Political Participation of Noncitizen Immigrant Minorities: Evidence from Belgium

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Motivation

- Political integration of non-Western immigrants
- Variation in the electoral registration of non-citizen non-Western immigrant minorities across municipalities in 2006, the first time third-country nationals participated in the municipal elections in Belgium.

Research Question

We explore the determinants of variation in the electoral registration of nonwestern immigrants across municipalities in Belgium in 2006. In particular we examine how 'hostile' socio-political environments may affect the political participation, and thus political integration, of nonwestern immigrants.

Background

- Studies of political behavior of voters of immigrant origin find that discrimination influences their voting choice (Otjes and Krouwel 2019; Cain, Kiewiet, and Ulhaner 1991; Lim, Barry-Goodman, and Branham 2006), political interest (Moutselos 2015), welfare state support (Galle et al. 2020), and political participation.
- Most studies are conducted in the U.S. and show that the connection between immigrant perceptions of discrimination and their political participation is conditioned by several factors; prior to consideration of conditioning factors, this connection is often found to be negative or nonsignificant.
- Conditioning factors include individual identity (host-country's, national origin, or pan-ethnic), and group consciousness.
- Generally, the effects of hostile contexts on immigrants' political participation vary across immigrant groups and localities with distinct characteristics, social, political, and institutional, and are conditioned by immigrant identity and group consciousness.

Background (cont.)

- Analyses of **European cases** are scant (see Kranendok, Vermeulen, and Heelsum 2018; Moutselos 2015).
- Research on the political participation of immigrant-origin minorities in European democracies notes the importance of anti-immigrant contexts as potentially depressing immigrant voting participation, but there is **little systematic study of this association** with the exceptions of Myrberg and Rogstad (2011), Gonzalez-Ferrer (2011) Saggar (2000), Maxwell (2010) and Moutselos (2015).
- In the few studies with a European focus, **findings** on the effects of (1) perceptions of discrimination, and (2) presence of anti-immigrant parties on the political participation of minorities **are mixed**.

Main Hypotheses

- Electoral support for anti-immigrant parties is negatively related with the political participation of noncitizen, nonwestern immigrants
- In contexts with an *ethnic* type of citizenship regime noncitizen nonwestern immigrants will be less likely to participate than in contexts with a non-ethnic type of citizenship regime.

Dependent Variable

Political participation of nonwestern immigrants is the percent of eligible immigrants that registered to vote in the 2006 municipality elections in Belgium.

Main Independent Variables

- ***Anti-immigrant vote***: vote share for radical anti-immigrant parties across municipalities in Belgium in the 2004 Regional Elections, Vlaams Belang (in Flanders) and Front National (in Wallonia).
- ***Citizenship regime***
 - *Ethnic* (Flanders)
 - Non-ethnic, *civic* (Wallonia)

Control Variables and Expected Effects

- *Percent radical seats on Council* in the 2000 municipality elections (-)
- *Percent Social Democratic seats on Council* in the 2000 municipality elections (+)
- *Log immigrant population, African, Asian, and Turkish* (+)
- *Log total eligibles in the municipality* (+)

Control Variables and Expected Effects

- *Unemployment Change* b/n 3rd and 1st quarters (-)
- *Economic Inequality* (-)
- *Median income* (+)
- *Education* (Percent with Primary Education) (-)
- *Total number of candidates of nonwestern origin nominated on party lists* (+)

Model

Regression with robust errors. Fitting a linear model with the dependent variable as *the square root* of percent of eligible nonwestern immigrants that registered to vote in the 2006 municipal elections. Transformation applied to the dependent variable due to distributional limitations.

Model

We estimate political participation models for different immigrant groups

- **Model 1:** All nonwestern immigrants
- **Module 2:** Moroccan immigrants
- **Module 3:** Turkish immigrants

2006 Municipal Elections in Belgium

communes, arrondissements, provinces et régions avec écritures et une légende



Data

- Total 589 municipalities:
 - 308 in the Flemish region,
 - 262 in the Walloon region, and
 - 19 in the Brussels-capital region
- Brussels is not included in the analysis

Average % Registered of Eligible Immigrants in the 2006 municipal elections

<u>Country of Origin</u>	Brussels	Flanders	Wallonia
	Percent Registered		
Total	16.4 (19)	14.3 (110)	50.8 (128)
Africa	18.3 (19)	14.0 (278)	51.1 (231)
Congo	27.4 (19)	16.9 (110)	54.0 (128)
North Africa	14.3 (19)	11.4 (246)	47.8 (198)
Morocco	14.9 (19)	11.0 (212)	47.6 (165)
Asia	13.3 (19)	14.1 (292)	48.7 (203)
Turkey	14.4 (19)	12.0 (156)	42.3 (106)

Table 1. Estimates of the effects of social, political, and economic factors on the participation of noncitizen nonwestern immigrants in Belgium. 2006 Local Elections. Regression coefficients. Robust errors.

	All nonwestern immigrants	Moroccan	Turkish
Cultural Citizenship (Flanders=1)	-2.488*** (.636)	-1.870** (.924)	-.581 (1.148)
Proportion of Radical Right Vote (2004 Regional Election)	-8.831** (4.073)	-12.786** (5.903)	-19.48*** (7.261)

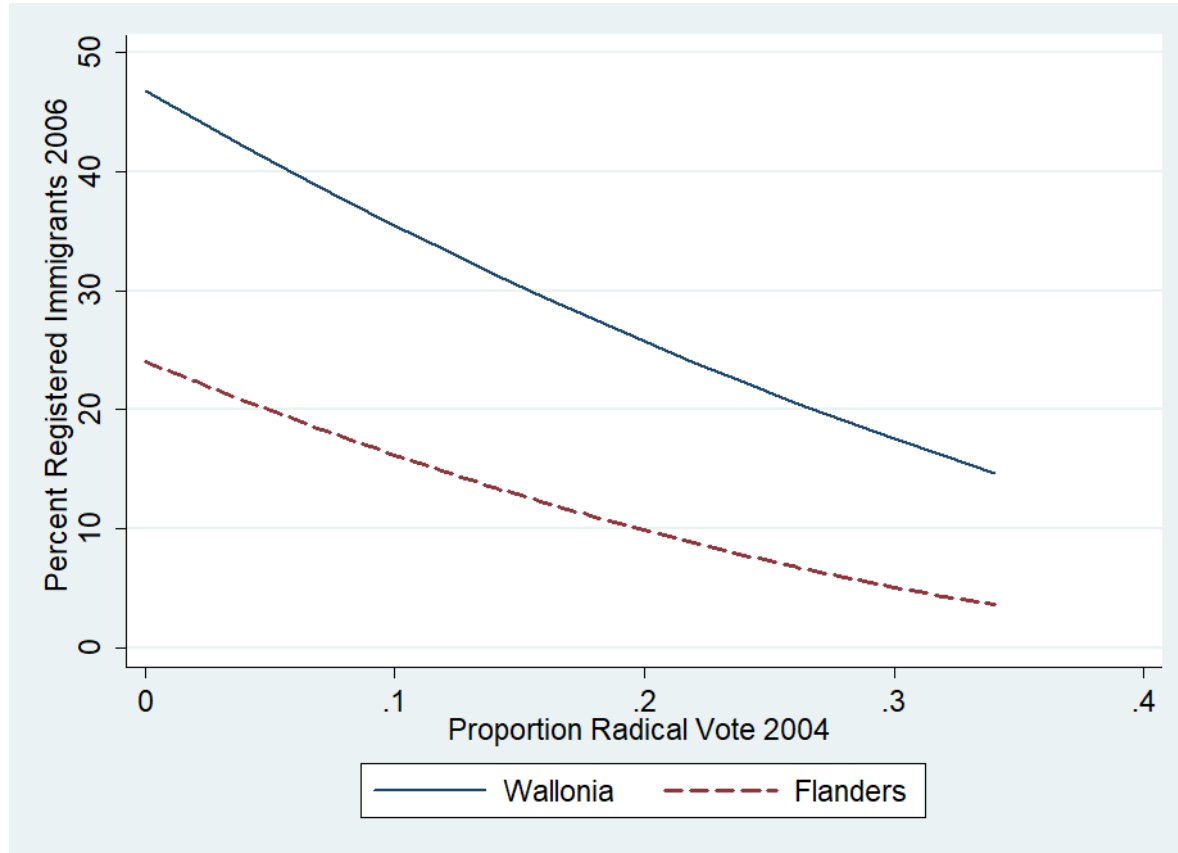
	All nonwestern immigrants	Moroccan	Turkish
Unemployment change	-40.946** (17.766)	-69.606** (27.793)	-14.514 (31.296)
Economic inequality (gini)	-5.953 (4.849)	-15.802** (6.999)	-4.79 (8.501)
Median income	0.0002** (0.0001)	-.00003 (.0001)	.0002 (.0002)
Log (Nonwestern Immigrant Population)	.184 (.1997)		
Log(Moroccan Immigrant Population)		.317 (.1682)	
Log(Turkish Immigrant Population)			.5248*** (.1699)

Notes: **p≤.05 ***p≤.01
Robust Standard Errors in Parentheses.

Findings

- **Percent of anti-immigrant vote** has the anticipated negative effect on immigrant political participation across all three immigrant groups. The respective effect in each of the models is best described graphically:

Figure 1a: Predicted effects of proportion of radical vote in 2004 on percent registered immigrants in the 2006 Municipal elections in Belgium across regions, Wallonia and Flanders. Municipalities in Wallonia and Flanders. N=541



Findings (cont.)

- **Citizenship effects**
 - Ethnic citizenship regime has the negative effect anticipated on the political participation of all immigrants and Moroccan immigrants, but not Turkish immigrants. After controls, in Flanders the percent of all registered immigrants is 2.5% lower than in Wallonia and the percent of registered Moroccan immigrants is 1.9% lower in Flanders than in Wallonia. The effect on percent registered Turkish immigrants is in the expected direction but not significant.

Findings (cont.)

- Our expectations on the effects of **unemployment change** and **economic inequality** on political participation are confirmed in the case of all immigrants and Moroccan immigrants but not Turkish immigrants
- **Median income** has a positive effect on the political participation of all immigrants only but its substantive effect is very small.

Conclusions

- Our analysis confirms the hypothesized contextual effects on the political participation of nonwestern immigrants in the 2006 local elections in Belgium
- The **vote share for anti-immigrant parties** has a negative effect on nonwestern immigrant political participation.
- Participation of nonwestern immigrants and Moroccan immigrants is lower in the **ethnic citizenship context** of Flanders compared to the republican context in Wallonia. However, this **effect is not significant in the case of immigrants of Turkish origin** suggesting that the effects of citizenship regime may vary across immigrant groups.

Conclusions (cont.)

- The findings on the political participation of Turkish immigrants suggest that **perceptions of immigrants in ethnic citizenship contexts may vary across different immigrant groups** depending on the group's organizational, cultural, and historical characteristics.
- Our analysis shows that it is **the political participation of Moroccan immigrants that is mostly influenced negatively** by hostile socio-political contexts and economic and social factors such as economic inequality and unemployment at the level of the municipality.