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Immigrant Political Participation across Western Europe: A Multi-level Comparative Analysis

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The journey that led to this thesis has been deeply meaningful and transformative, shaped by my own experiences navigating the complexities of living and studying abroad. My interest in the topic of migration did not emerge overnight but evolved gradually as I immersed myself in different cultures, confronted bureaucratic challenges, and experienced firsthand the diverse realities of global mobility.

My passion for understanding migration and its broader implications began to take root during my time as an Erasmus student in Leeds and Bilbao. These experiences were eye-opening, challenging my preconceived notions and expanding my worldview. The double-degree Master's program first in Current Democracies: Nationalism, Federalism, and Ethnic Diversity at Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona, and later in Political Science at Ludwig-Maximilians-Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München further deepened this interest. I was fortunate to engage in thought-provoking conversations with individuals from diverse backgrounds. These interactions enriched my understanding of the world and deepened my passion for the complexities of migration and political participation. Politics, after all, is a subject that touches every aspect of life, and I found it incredibly fulfilling to exchange ideas and perspectives with people who shared this interest, regardless of where they came from.

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Introduction

Migration has always been a fundamental part of human lives, and people have moved and will move whether in search of a better life or out of necessity. It has been a constant and influential force throughout Europe's history, shaping the continent in numerous ways. While its presence and significance for the continent cannot be overlooked, it is also true that the so-called migration and refugee crisis of 2015 has brought a great deal of attention to the issue itself. Today, migration has become and probably will remain one of the most salient issues in Europe[1].

Migration's salience is not only in demographic terms, but the issue stands out as a social and political phenomenon. Regarding the former, migrations' relevance for demographics is a multifaceted and critical topic of discussion. The statistics confirm that Europe is experiencing a demographic shift marked by ageing populations, declining mortality and birth rates (EUROSTAT, 2024). Several studies have focused on its consequences, such as increased dependency ratio (the ratio of retirees to the working-age population), burdens on public finances, healthcare services, labour shortages and decreasing economic growth (Johnson and Zimmermann, 1993; Rogers, Sánchez-Querubín and Kil, 2015) in Europe is a non-negligible trend, it is beyond the focus of this thesis.

What concerns this thesis is instead another major phenomenon shaping the European population structure. In particular, it is the fact that migration is adding another layer to the demographic shift in Europe, namely a population with growing ethnic diversity. The growing share of migrant populations in Europe is characterised by diverse cultural backgrounds, histories, and migration experiences, including 'guest workers' recruited after World War II, post-colonial migrants who migrated from countries that were former colonies, European migrants exercising freedom of movement and residence rights in another Member State and refugees who flee their countries of origin due to war and conflicts in regions such as Africa, the Middle East, and the former Yugoslavia to seek safety and protection (Geddes and Scholten, 2016). Today, several European countries, especially those in Western Europe are net immigration countries[2], and the presence of diverse ethnic communities marks their urban

[1] Most recently (by June 2023), the war in Ukraine has resulted in the largest and fastest displacement of people in post-war Europe, with over 6 million refugees leaving Ukraine.
[2] Based on the data from UN Desa (2023), Germany, the UK, France, Italy, and Spain are marked with positive net migration balances in 2023 as the number of people entering the

centres. To mention a few examples, the cities of London, Paris, Berlin, Amsterdam, Brussels, Stockholm and Madrid stand out as ethnically diverse cities of Europe, with significant populations from the Middle East, South Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, and other regions.

As mentioned, migration also stands out as a social and political phenomenon. As we are all aware, migration has provoked growing political attention over the decades across several European countries, and it has been a critical variable in explaining the rise of far-right parties (Halla, Wagner and Zweimüller, 2017). Significant electoral incentives have chosen migration as their key campaign subject. For instance, immigration was a key topic within the Leave campaign, asserting that Brexit would allow the UK to regain control over its borders and decrease immigration. In a similar vein, in the Netherlands, Geert Wilders' far-right party focused primarily on anti-immigration policies, advocating for the closure of borders to Muslim immigrants and the prohibition of Islamic symbols. On the other hand, the rise of the Green Party in Germany followed a different approach, focusing on humanitarian and inclusive policies towards migrants. Not only the national and local elections but also in the recent 2024 European elections political parties have placed migration and migration management at the centre of their party manifestos, emphasising their stances on these issues. All in all, the controversy over migration taps into several questions, from national identity to admission and integration policies. Contested issues over immigration are acknowledged to be part and emblematic of a new structuring divide in European societies and politics. This divide is acknowledged and described by various terms from 'integration-demarcation' (Kriesi et al., 2012), 'universalism-communitarianism' (Bornschier, 2010), 'cosmopolitanism-communitarianism' (de Wilde et al., 2019), 'cosmopolitanism-parochialism' (de Vries, 2018) to the 'transnational cleavage' (Hooghe and Marks, 2018).

As a matter of course and the parallel to its salience and prominent role in politics, there is a growing scholarly interest in migration. It represents a major subject of scholarly research, and the field progressively varied in terms of its links across various academic disciplines, including political science, sociology, economics, and anthropology. This interdisciplinary focus underscores the complexity and extensive impact of migration. Migration literature today is marked by an increased variety of methods employed (Zapata-Barrero and Yalaz, 2018) and

country (immigrants) exceeds the number of people leaving the country (emigrants). For further information please see Europe net migration by country 2023 | Statista

studied by scholars worldwide. Over the decades, this trend has coincided with a significant proliferation of articles, journals, and books dedicated to migration research. Established academic journals have already expanded their focus on covering migration themes, and new journals are specially dedicated to migration studies, thus indicating a robust academic interest. In addition, the expanding presence of migration-related courses, conferences, academic networks and research in the field is prominent and similarly highlights this growing scholarly interest. As a matter of course and the parallel to its salience and prominent role in politics, there is a growing scholarly interest in migration. It represents a major subject of scholarly research, and the field progressively varied in terms of its links across various academic disciplines, including political science, sociology, economics, and anthropology. This interdisciplinary focus underscores the complexity and extensive impact of migration. Migration literature today is marked by an increased variety of methods employed (Zapata-Barrero and Yalaz, 2018) and studied by scholars worldwide. Over the decades, this trend has coincided with a significant proliferation of articles, journals, and books dedicated to migration research. Established academic journals have already expanded their focus on covering migration themes, and new journals are specially dedicated to migration studies, thus indicating a robust academic interest. In addition, the expanding presence of migration-related courses, conferences, academic networks and research in the field is prominent and similarly highlights this growing scholarly interest.

Within this framework, integration is one of the many research themes and a growing concern in migration studies. It is as much a hot topic in political debates in Europe and European Union initiatives. Integration by definition, is ‘the process of becoming an accepted part of society’ (Pennix, 2005) and represents 'a two-way process of adaptation by migrants and host societies and implies consideration of the rights and obligations of migrants and host societies, of access to different kinds of services and the labour market, and of identification and respect for a core set of values that bind migrants and host communities in a common purpose’ (IOM, 2011). Referred as 'different fields' of integration, the process encompasses multiple dimensions, including socio-economic dimension, cultural dimension and legal and political dimension (Entzingerand Biezeveld, 2003).

This thesis argues that studying integration and its dimensions is highly important, especially in the context of rising anti-immigrant sentiments and misinformation. What we witness in many European countries is that migration is increasingly being criminalised, with individuals escaping persecution often depicted as morally inferior, socially corrupt, and a burden to the

country's economy and resources. The research question in this thesis intentionally goes beyond whether or how many migrants to accept and rather lies in the degree to which migrants participate in the political life of the country alongside their native counterparts, whether they are active participants, and under which circumstances.

More importantly, studying the political participation of migrant-origin individuals sheds light on an often-overlooked aspect of their agency. Indeed, in the literature, migrants are often predominantly depicted as workers. There is a growing scholarly concern about the fact that the role of migrants in society is reduced to the labour force and several other ways they become active agents who seek to shape their social environments are neglected (Smith and Favell, 2006; Schiller and Caglar, 2009). This limited perspective overlooks the multifaceted roles that migrants play beyond the labour market, thereby necessitating a broader understanding of their contributions to social, civic and political life. By shifting the focus to the political engagement of migrants, this research intends to uncover and demonstrate another vital dimension of their agency. It should be noted that despite a considerable body of literature on migration and political participation, research on political participation by migrant communities is a relatively recent and evolving field. As we may all know, there are several prominent political figures with migrant backgrounds in Europe, including the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Rishi Sunak; Mayor of Rotterdam, Ahmed Aboutaleb; French Minister of Culture, Rachida Dati; Member of the Bundestag and former Minister of State for Migration, Refugees, and Integration, Aydan Özoguz and Member of the Belgian Chamber of Representatives, Meyrem Almaci. While these figures exemplify the presence of immigrant-origin politicians in Europe, there is still a lack of equal participation and under-representation of the immigrant-origin population in several European countries.

This thesis shares the consideration by Ford and Jenning (2020: 302), who underscored the emergence of politically significant ethnic minority groups in Europe and argued that migrants 'have distinct ethnic identities and cultural traditions; they tend to cluster geographically and economically in struggling places and lower status, less secure parts of the labour market; and they have unique group political interests, in particular for recognition of their cultural traditions and political representation of their ethnic groups, and for protection from majority hostility and discrimination.' There is a growing recognition that migrants are not just passive recipients of policies but also active agents who can influence political processes and outcomes. Migrant communities have become increasingly visible in political debates, advocacy efforts, and grassroots organisations, emphasising the importance of studying their political agency and

participation. Similarly, other studies acknowledge migrant communities as a potential new electorate. They realise the significant and rising shares of the migrant population and the diversity of the electorate in European countries (Dancygier and Saunders, 2006; Caramani and Strijbis, 2011). The former authors state that immigrant political behaviour is largely unexplored, and its exploration is limited within the U.S. context. Thus, this thesis is also motivated by the fact that the political participation of immigrants in Europe deserves more scholarly attention and various calls for an extensive analysis of immigrant political behaviour from different theoretical and empirical points of view.

The political participation of migrants is a fundamental aspect of their integration into new societies, particularly given the growing number of immigrants and their descendants in Europe. The exclusion or abstention of migrant populations from political processes raises significant concerns about the quality of democracy, as their voices and perspectives are essential for truly representative governance. Migrant political participation is especially a prominent issue at the local level and in countries with older immigrant populations. Regarding the former, migrants have a stake in participating in the decision-making processes as decisions on housing, public services, and education shape their immediate area, thus influencing migrants' daily lives. With regards to the latter, 'older' countries of immigration are home to established migrant communities who have developed deep roots and made substantial contributions to society. In such countries, the migration experience has often shaped the policies and social perceptions in place. Much less is known about the migrants' participation pattern in national politics and in 'new' immigration countries. Moreover, despite its importance, political participation remains the weakest dimension of the integration process, scoring only 25 out of 100 on the MIPEX index (MIPEX, 2020). The exclusion or abstention of migrant populations from political processes raises significant concerns about the quality of democracy, as their voices and perspectives are essential for truly representative governance.

It should be remembered that democracy is founded on principles of equality, representation, and participation for all members of society. As of January 2022, the European Union was home to 23.8 million non-EU citizens, comprising 5.3% of the total population of 447 million across the 27 member states. The majority of these non-EU citizens, approximately three-quarters, are concentrated in Germany, Spain, France, and Italy. When considering individuals with EU citizenship who were born outside the EU, the total number of people living in the EU who were born outside the EU reaches 38 million, accounting for 8.5% of the population. Furthermore, if EU citizens are included, along with their mobility between EU countries, the

proportion of all foreign nationals residing in the bloc increases to 12.5% (UNRIC, 2023). Nevertheless, migrants, as residents or citizens of European countries, rarely have the same rights and opportunities to participate in political life as native citizens. Besides being a means of influencing decision-making, understanding the political participation and the inequalities in participation between native and migrant populations can provide valuable insights into the social inclusion and integration of migrant communities. As the share of the immigrant population rises and the 'participatory gap' between immigrants and natives remains pronounced, discussions over their political participation are likely to gain increased significance in national politics and the broader European agenda.

Despite a considerable body of literature acknowledging the prominence of immigrant political participation, existing studies suffer from certain shortcomings. First, there is a lack of consensus on the determinants of immigrant political participation. Different studies highlight a number of factors that might explaining migrants' participation including socio-economic determinants (Ramakrishnan & Espenshade, 2001; Vintila, 2015; Ortensi and Riniolo, 2020), disputations and attitudes (e.g. political interest, social and political trust) (Pilati, 2018; Giugni and Grasso, 2020) and the broader context, also referred as political opportunity structure (POS) (Koopmans 2004, Morales and Giugni, 2016). Some authors claim that public opinion towards immigrant might influence their decision to participate (Huddleston, 2017; Vintila and Morales, 2018). Yet, scholars admit that the potential effect of public opinion on ethnic political participation requires further investigation, as it remains uncertain whether hostility towards migrants activates minority mobilisation as a form of protest or rather discourages migrants from engaging in the political process in their new countries (Vintila and Martiniello, 2021). Despite several of these studies have served to identify important factors of migrant political behaviour and enriched our understanding of ethnic political participation, there is no agreement on which of these factors are most relevant or how they interact with each other. Importantly, it is acknowledged that some pieces of the puzzle and a comprehensive explanatory framework are still missing (Martinello, 2006). More attention should be paid to immigration specific factors (e.g. migrants' characteristics and status), socio-political context and the interaction of individual characteristics and national settings.

Second, there is a call for information about migrants' participation within broader political systems, especially at the national level (Vintila and Martiniello, 2021). Majority of scholarly work is studies of migrants' participation in specific cities, often highlighting the 'city level' as a more accessible platform for migrants to voice their political views and demands (Koopmans,

2004; Cinalli and Giugni, 2011; Nguyen Long, 2016). Yet, immigrants' practices are not merely towards cities or limited to the local level. Nevertheless, migrants' political engagement beyond the local level remains relatively unexplored, while the existing national studies are focused to specific countries. It is important to highlight that the goal of generalising future findings on migrant political participation requires extending the level of analysis and the range of counties studied. Thirdly, much of the research exclusively focuses on electoral participation, neglecting other forms of political engagement. However, while electoral participation is prominent, it represents one facet of the broader repertoire of political participation modes. This broader repertoire also includes 'non-electoral', 'unconventional', and 'extra-parliamentary' participation forms through which immigrants engage in the political process and express concerns beyond routine elections (Vintila and Martiniello, 2021). Lastly, there is a notable gap in quantitative research within the field. The majority of studies conducted in Europe face challenges due to the lack of wide-ranging and systematic data and research on migrant political behaviour strongly depends upon data availability[3].

Taking all these into consideration, the present thesis aims to provide academics, policymakers and general readers alike with a comprehensive and systematic study of immigrant political participation in 13 Western countries. It represents an ambiguous task in that despite studies of immigrant political participation are suffering from the lack of wide-ranging and systematic data, the thesis navigates to employ representative, high-quality data for its multilevel analysis. It introduces a comprehensive explanatory framework that acknowledges the significance of agency yet underscores the critical importance of contextual factors. The introduction of the 'new vs. old migration country' variable within the thesis' theoretical framework represents another novel contribution. As expected, this thesis's fundamental goal is to reveal which factors predict immigrant political participation in four political activities, namely voting in national elections, working in a political party or action group, trade union membership, and protest participation, in Western Europe. To answer this question, the thesis relies on the merged European Social Survey (ESS) data covering 13 democracies and performs a comparative multilevel analysis across these. It includes not only more typical countries of migration that

[3] PROMINSTAT (2010) report on the 'Quantitative Data on Immigrants' Political Participation in Europe' states that only a handful of countries systematically gather data on all five forms of immigrants' political participation, these forms being voting, political party membership, non-electoral participation, trade union membership and civic participation. They suggest that enhancing the European Social Survey's coverage and sampling of migrants could offer a viable compromise.

have been traditionally studied in immigrant political participation research (Germany, the United Kingdom, Belgium and the Netherlands) in Europe but also newer immigration countries where the political participation of ethnic minorities has usually been overlooked (Italy, Spain, Portugal, Ireland, Finland).

The thesis consists of this brief introduction, six main chapters and the conclusion. Chapter 1 presents the theoretical background and the hypothesis of this thesis. After outlining several conceptualisations used to define political participation and the diverse modes scholars have developed to study the forms of participation, the Chapter highlights the lack of consensus among researchers in this field and aims to provide a clearer and more precise understanding of political participation. Importantly, moving into the specific focus of the thesis, the Chapter introduces this new avenue of research on immigrant political participation. After thoroughly reviewing the literature dedicated to immigrant political participation, it ultimately proposes a framework for addressing immigrant political participation in the thesis. Specifically, it argues that the chances of immigrants' political participation are influenced by two main dimensions: a) individual characteristics, b) macro-contextual structures. These dimensions encompass various factors potentially leading to participation or abstention. The Chapter concludes by introducing the main hypotheses to be further explored in subsequent analytical chapters.

Chapter 2 presents the research design of the thesis. It presents the critical research questions that will guide the discussion and analysis through the thesis. It then delves into the measurement of the dependent variable, political participation, critically assessing prior measures in the literature and justifying the preferred measurement strategies for this study. The chapter also clarifies the spatial and temporal perspective of the research and explains the rationale behind the thesis's scope. Additionally, it introduces the data source, features and structure of the European Social Survey (ESS) dataset and outlines the methods employed for analysis. Furthermore, the chapter reveals how macro-institutional factors and individual-level determinants of immigrant political participation are operationalised and measured. It sets the stage for their detailed examination in subsequent analytical chapters.

Chapter 3 is the descriptive analysis chapter that serves as a crucial component of the thesis, providing foundational insights into the patterns of political participation among migrant and native populations. It identifies key gaps and variations in participation levels and lays the groundwork for further exploration and analysis in subsequent chapters. Moving forward, the chapter incorporates the temporal dimension to unveil any changes in participation patterns among migrant respondents. Subsequently, it compares participation levels across different

countries to identify potential variations and similarities. Lastly, the chapter explores inter-group variations within the migrant category, highlighting the diversity and heterogeneity among migrants based on migration-specific features. Descriptive analysis reveals differences and similarities in participation in four political activities, illustrating any deviation from the Pan-European average of participation.

After identifying key gaps and variations in participation levels between natives and migrants, amongst migrants and across countries, Chapter 4 shifts the focus to the explanatory framework and the factors under examination. The Chapter is organised to systematically investigate several macro-level predictors of political participation among immigrant respondents. Initially, it assesses the role of electoral rights for non-citizens as a potential determinant of migrant political activity. The analyses of citizenship regimes follow this to understand their influence on migrants' political engagement. The Chapter then delves into evaluating the impact of public opinion on political participation, particularly exploring the relationship between natives' attitudes towards migrants and the likelihood of immigrant political engagement. Lastly, it introduces a novel variable, distinguishing between "old" and "new" migration countries, to measure the role of a country's immigration experience and history on migrants' likelihood of political participation. This variable represents an original contribution to existing literature. Throughout the Chapter, logistic regression analysis is employed as the primary analytical tool, complemented by typologies to construct macro-level variables based on shared features.

Chapter 5 is devoted to assessing the impact of individual-level predictors on political participation among immigrants. After reviewing the relevant literature on the relationship between these variables and political participation, the chapter introduces traditional control variables such as age, gender, education, and income, alongside immigration-specific factors like length of stay, spending formative years in the host country, origin country, and citizenship status. It then explores the relationship between these individual characteristics and political participation across four political activities. Specifically, the chapter assesses the impact of a) political interest, b) political efficacy, c) perceived discrimination, and d) length of stay in the country and e) spending formative years in the country. Additionally, using a combined sample of migrants and natives, the chapter explores how the effects of SES variables (education and income), political attitudes (interest and efficacy) and perceived discrimination differ between the two groups. Specifically, it interacts migration background with these variables to determine whether the impact of these variables on political participation differs for migrants compared to natives. Finally, a comprehensive multivariate model is constructed to evaluate the collective

influence of these variables on the likelihood of immigrants' political participation in Western Europe.

Chapter 6, the multilevel analysis chapter, represents one of the pivotal sections of the thesis. It employs multilevel logistic regression models to explore the complex interplay between individual and macro-contextual factors in predicting immigrants' political engagement. Notably, this section introduces and rigorously tests interaction hypotheses, shedding light on how the effects of individual-level predictors may vary across different political contexts. In contexts characterized by inclusiveness, these individual factors may boost political participation, while in more closed settings, their influence could be markedly different. By examining cross-level interactions between individual-level predictors and macro-level indicators of the political opportunity structure, the analysis challenges simplified models that assume uniform effects across diverse settings. This nuanced approach not only deepens our understanding of the complex dynamics shaping immigrants' political engagement but also reinforces the value of employing a multilevel framework to capture the interplay between personal attributes and broader political contexts.

Conclusion, the final section of the thesis, summarises the main findings of the thesis and the related implications. It outlines potential avenues for future research. Emphasis is placed on the importance of cross-country variations in political participation, the significance of contextual factors, and the crucial role of immigration-specific variables.

Eventually, this thesis aims to respond to the inquiries of those interested in the political incorporation of different segments of society, especially those interested in a) understanding the political participation patterns of the immigrant population in Western Europe and b) the factors that make migrant individuals more likely to participate in political activities. Understanding the true nature of the participation gap between native and immigrant members of society and why migrants participate in politics or abstain from political processes in various national contexts can assist us in determining obstacles to their involvement and developing measures for promoting greater integration.

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Chapter 1

Theoretical background

This chapter puts forward the foundational theoretical framework of this research. It intends to outline the existing theories as well as the roadmap to be followed in the following chapters and in the empirical analysis. Throughout the chapter, the concept of political participation as it has been studied in the literature is reviewed, and the key aspects of the theory of political participation are addressed.

What is political participation? How is the phenomenon studied in the literature? What are the limits of previous studies on participation? Does political participation constitute an umbrella concept? Are there risks involved with the expansion of 'political participation' in contemporary research?

Answers to these questions are fundamental for a basic understanding of the state of research on political participation. However, these questions are broad in the sense that they do not exclusively concern participation among ethnic minorities. As this study is devoted to a systematic understanding of immigrant political participation in Europe, it is essential to review the scientific knowledge on the political participation of immigrants. Therefore, the chapter carefully reviews the relevant literature and addresses key theoretical aspects.

Is there a distinct theory of political participation for immigrants? How have scholars studied political participation among immigrant members of society? Why does this small but growing body of research have important implications? What are the gaps in the field that deserve to be addressed in this study?

These questions constitute the second set of issues that are addressed in this chapter. The chapter is structured as follows: The initial part, 'Political Participation: A Multidimensional Concept,' presents various conceptualisations employed to define this particular phenomenon, different modes scholars developed to distinguish participation forms, and the lack of consensus it has led among researchers of political participation. Eventually, it delivers a clearer and more precise understanding of political participation. The second part, 'Immigrant Political Participation', introduces a new yet promising line of research in the specific context of Europe. The third part, 'Is there a distinct theory of political participation for immigrants?' explores the most relevant theories of political participation, eventually providing the framework that this research chooses to adopt in addressing the issue of immigrant political participation. The

following section introduces the main hypotheses of the thesis, which will be explored in greater detail in the subsequent macro and individual-level analytical chapters. Finally, the last part, 'Limits of previous studies', provides a brief overview of earlier research conducted on the subject.

1.1 Political Participation: A Multidimensional Concept

The notion of 'political participation' is marked by numerous interpretations and a wide variety of definitions by scholarly works. Defined by Verba and his colleagues (1995) and widely acknowledged in the literature, political participation refers to 'activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action – either directly by affecting the making of implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make those policies'. A broader definition was later adopted by Brady (1999), who defined political participation as 'action by ordinary citizens directed toward influencing some political outcomes'. Whereas the two definitions of political participation highlight the presence of certain elements of the concept, such as action, private individuals vs elites, and influencing attempts, scholars still seem to lack consensus on what should count as political participation. As Wajzer (2015) emphasises, the lack of consensus on its 'content and scope' has eventually led the concept to become a catch-all term.

The study of political participation first originated in the American context during the 1950s and 1960s with an exclusive focus on elections (Lazersfeld et al. 1948, Campbell et al. 1960). By the 1970s, in the seminal work by Verba and Nie (1972), the authors moved the study of political participation beyond voting studies and campaigning. Its expansion reflects the changes of the times, such as the increasing relevance of societal groups and direct contact between citizens and politicians. In their empirical study, which has long dominated the literature, the concept of political participation has four principal dimensions: voting, campaign activity, communal activity and particularised contact. Research on political participation has continued to expand in the following years as the domain of the concept extended. Perhaps it was the inclusion of protest behaviour and civil disobedience into the definition of political participation which shifted an understanding of the concept based on 'conventional' activities towards a broader one. Again, the extension of what counts as political participation was a response to the societal changes in the era and a reflection of the so-called 'new social movements'. In words of Della Porta and Diani (1999), new social movements refer to 'the movements which had developed since the late 1960s on issues such as women's rights, gender relations, environmental protection, ethnicity and migration, peace and international solidarity

– with a strong (new) middle-class basis and a clear differentiation from the models of working-class or nationalist collective action that had historically preceded them. While there are surely continuities between those movements and the current wave of global justice campaigns, there are also many suggestions that the overall patterns of collective action they display is significantly different from those we had grown accustomed to' With the rise of 'new social movements' and the reorientation of political agenda towards postmaterialist issues, the definition and the conceptualisation by Verba and Nie (1972) have been considered as narrow in the sense that their scope of activity was restricted to the government. On this point, Barnes and Kaase (1984) have been critical of excluding protest activity from the domain of political participation and thus incorporated what they call 'protest potential' in their influential work *Political Action*. They expanded the definition of political participation as 'all voluntary activities by individual citizens intended to influence either directly or indirectly political choices at various levels of the political system'.

During the 1990s, more and more forms of activity are studied under the domain of political participation. Most notably, political participation and civic engagement have eventually become intertwined. Involvement in associations and voluntary work that were distinctly studied under the domain of civic participation (van Deth 1997) has been considered a new form of political participation. In other words, the civic-political divide has started to disappear in the subsequent studies of political participation (Putnam 2000, Norris 2001). Such incorporation of civic themes into the domain of political participation greatly reflects the Tocquevillian revival and rise of communitarian ideas in the era. As underlined by van Deth (2001), the expansion of what counts as political participation bears the risk of conceptual stretching and its studies becoming 'a theory of everything'. On the other hand, from an empirical point of view, it is unlikely and not desired for the study of political participation to remain restricted to voting and immune to political and societal changes.

However, the expansion of the domain of political participation does not mean the concept has infinite dimensions, nor does it merely absorb each emerging form of activity. On the contrary, the dimensions of political participation have been widely discussed in the field. Several studies aimed at discovering the latent structure of the concept, introduced several typologies of political participation and came up with various labels. The systematic study by Barnes and Kaase (1979) distinguished participation items as 'conventional' and 'unconventional' modes. Other scholars, such as Ekman and Amna (2012), have been critical of the term 'unconventional' political participation in the sense that these forms are not less common.

Instead, they distinguished between 'formal political participation' and 'extra-parliamentary political participation'. Later on, research on political participation draws several other criteria to distinguish between different modes of participation, such as legal vs illegal participation (Gavray et al. 2012, Dahl and Stattin 2015) and state vs non-state political participation (Zapata-Barrero, Gabrielli, Sánchez-Montijano & Jaulin, 2013). At first glance, different modes of political participation tend to characterise activities of voting, political party membership, electoral campaigning and contacting officials as 'conventional', 'formal' or 'legal', whereas protest activities and consumer participation as 'unconventional', 'extra-parliamentary' or 'informal' modes of participation. As far as the literature acknowledges that the concept exhibits meaningful dimensions, some scholars have contested these typologies of participation. Many authors emphasise that the earlier categorisations are 'outdated and need to be radically redefined' due to the rise of novel forms of political participation, and their mainstreaming (Lamprianou 2012). Others have formulated new modes of political participation. With the Internet and the rise of digital forms of participation, the studies of political participation and the debate on its conceptualisation are vivid. On this latter point, empirical work focusing on the sphere of political participation employed an 'online and 'offline' distinction for political activities (Di Gennaro and Dutton 2006, Ruess et al. 2023).

As it can be noticed, the study of political participation brings along a continuous expansion of the repertoire of political participation and the long-lasting debate on its conceptualization. In terms of this study, this has two important implications. First, political participation is a dynamic phenomenon with many layers and whose meaning changes over time. As emphasized by Hay (2007) 'those with the most restrictive and conventional conceptions of political participation identify a strong and consistent pattern of declining political participation and engagement over time, whilst those with a more inclusive conception discern instead a change in the mode of political participation'.

The study aligns closer with the latter approach. Participation has long expanded outside the institutional arenas. Beyond voting, a large number of activities are available to stand for political interests, influence the policy making or simply express their opinions about the issues of public matters. Hence, the choice of the concept of political participation in the study cares for the expansion of political activities. It seeks to provide a representative repertoire of political activities beyond. On the contrary, the goal of achieving an inclusive conception bear the risk of including 'non-political' activities under the domain political participation. Currently, the concept suffers from the disappearance of the line between what counts as political and non-

political. If intentions and goals are considered as the criteria, almost every form of behaviour will likely be considered political. Some of these instances can be regarded as forms of 'individualised collective action' (Micheletti 2003), rather than collective or organized action, and gradually include 'non-political activities used for political purposes' (van Deth 2014). Yet, the problem arising from such an approach is the conceptual stretching of political participation. Today, few scholars would object that participating in a party campaign or demonstration should count as political participation. Considering charity work or activity within a civil society organization as political participation, on the contrary, would raise more objections. Therefore, as challenging as it might be seen, we should differentiate the study of political participation from civic engagement. Ekman and Amna (2012) believe that there is 'a clear distinction between manifest political participation and 'latent' civic engagement'. Voluntary work, community help, and associational involvement are common instances of civic participation. Moreover, the target of civic engagement is considered to be the community and community affairs, while political participation targets the government policies and the outcomes of state institutions. Having said so, the conceptualisation this study aims to achieve is to include the new forms of political participation without falling into the trap of conceptual stretching.

Nevertheless, since it is empirically challenging to detect the source of stimuli, e.g. political or not, of each activity, this study chooses to adopt a rather pragmatic strategy. In this way, the discussion will avoid the trap of overstretching the understanding of political participation. This study adopts an 'operational' definition and defines political participation as *voluntary actions by the members of the society in the domain of government, politics or the state or targeted at the domain of government, politics or the state*. Second, throughout the study, a problem-oriented research perspective is adopted. It aligns with the argument of van Deth (2001) and his proposal of a rather substantive strategy. From this perspective, this study does not have an attempt to incorporate as many activities as possible nor relies on such a notion of political participation. Instead, political participation in the *selected forms* is understood as individuals' activities *in these processes* and each form is studied extensively. The rationale behind is to identify a range of activities that are relevant to immigrant individuals and that reflects the expansion of the concept beyond the institutional domain. As it is discussed through the research design of the thesis in Chapter 2, one of the limitations of the choice of participatory forms is that it does not include several other political acts. There are other political acts available to migrants and majority population which can be useful to investigate. Yet, what this

study adopts is an alternative, and hopefully superior, perspective to the studies that collapse various acts of participation into a single measure, as well as to others merging a bunch of activities under different the typologies of political participation. Instead, in this study, the choice of selected forms of political participation confirms the multidimensional nature of the concept itself. What this approach hopes to deliver is meaningful conclusions concerning the selected acts of participation.

In short, reaching meaningful conclusions regarding the political participation among immigrant members of society is a focal point in this study. It is concerned with addressing the issue of political participation among immigrants in comparison to native members of a polity both at the country and the European levels. The discussion will be structured separately for each *form* of activity and 'level' of immigrant political participation. In this way, it will be clear what the concept refers to in the specific context of the study.

Lastly, as it will be discussed under the research design, the different forms of activity are recognized as distinct dimensions of the overarching concept of political participation. This distinction is important because different forms of participation may be shaped by distinct underlying factors. Institutional constraints, political socialization, and individual resources play varying roles depending on the type of participation. For instance, voting behaviour is often tied to legal status and citizenship, making it inaccessible to many migrants (Wüst, 2004; Bauböck, 2006; Strijbis, 2021). Voting and party membership often require higher political literacy, language proficiency, and knowledge of host-country institutions (Doerschler & Jackson, 2010; Zapata-Barrero et al., 2013). In contrast, protest participation is less constrained by legal status and tends to be shaped by individual motivations and grievances (Dalton, Van Sickle & Weldon, 2010; Portos, 2021). Recognizing these variations allows for a more nuanced analysis of migrants' participatory behaviour and avoids treating participation as a homogenous phenomenon. Nevertheless, although analysed separately, the results will be presented side by side in the analytical chapters. This comparative approach highlights the interrelated nature of these dimensions and enables a clearer identification of which individual determinants are more relevant for each specific form of activity, as well as how these determinants may interact across different modes of participation

1.2 Immigrant Political Participation: A New Line of Research?

Immigrant members of society constitute the focal point of this study. In the specific context of immigrant political participation, the most developed and systematic contributions come from

the United States. This is unsurprising considering the fact that migration has been essential to the nation-building in the US. Several studies investigate issues related to the political participation of Latinos, African Americans and Asians in the US context (Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001, Stokes 2003, DeSipio 2011). Yet, much less is known about immigrant political participation in the European context. Most of the studies conducted on immigrants have been restricted to a single case study, often based on a few selected minority groups or a local sample. Moreover, cross-national surveys have yet to be fruitful in the sense that they usually include few immigrant individuals in their sample. Still, it is worth noting that influential single case studies such as those of Fennema and Tillie (1999, 2001) investigating the political integration of immigrants have inspired future comparative cross-national research in the field. Eventually, systematic studies of immigrant political participation in the European context have started to gain momentum (Morales and Giugni 2011, De Rooij 2012).

According to Martiniello (2006), immigrants for a long time were not regarded as potential citizens and their involvement in the country's political matters was not a topic of interest. Instead, they were considered to be *homo economicus*, whose role in the society was to work. This understanding no longer applies today, particularly in the European countries that have experienced several waves of migration. Issues of ethnic mobilisation, political participation and representation of migrants have become newsworthy for the political and academic agenda. Europe is home to a great number of migrants and their descendants, a changing and diversified composition of ethnic communities, and perhaps facing a crisis of European identity. As stated by Benhabib (2005), 'the EU is caught among contradictory currents which move it toward norms of cosmopolitan justice in the treatment of those who are within its boundaries, while leading it to act in accordance with outmoded Westphalian conceptions of unbridled sovereignty towards those who are on the outside'. The arrival of immigrants from diverse cultural, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds has triggered a profound reassessment of the national and European identity constructs. While immigration has historically been fundamental to the continent's cultural and economic composition, the scale and complexity of contemporary immigration flows have created new societal tensions and intensified the existing ones. Discussions surrounding multiculturalism, integration, and national identity have become increasingly polarised, reflecting deep-seated anxieties about social cohesion, cultural homogeneity, and national sovereignty. Additionally, the rise of populist and nationalist movements across the continent highlights the controversial state of migration discourse, with narratives often conflating immigration with security threats and economic competition. Subsequently, Europe finds itself at a critical juncture, navigating between its commitment to

humanitarian values and the imperative to safeguard cultural heritage and national identities in the face of unprecedented demographic shifts. And any debate that concerns the integration of immigrants would be incomplete if it neglected its political dimension.

The 1992 Council of Europe 'Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level' is considered an exemplary initiative seeking to improve immigrant political participation in EU member states. Some member states selectively adopted the Convention in the sense that they agreed to the provision concerning the EU immigrants' incorporation into political life. Today, EU nationals living in other member states have municipal voting rights. Whereas expanding voting rights to non-EU nationals is very rare at the national level, relatively frequent for regional elections, and becoming common for local elections. The different practices have motivated inevitable theoretical debate in the field. According to Caramani and Strijbis (2013), due to the difference between electoral and citizenship, we witness a shift between political and national communities and what the authors call the different types of 'discrepant electorates'. As follows from the general literature on political participation, most studies of migrant political participation are concentrated around electoral participation among voters with an immigration background. These studies address the issues of ethnic voting (Teney et al. 2010), turnout and voting patterns among immigrants in Europe (Chaudhary 2018, Bird, Saalfeed and Wüst 2011) and aim to explain migrant voter turnout with general and migration-specific theories (Spies et al. 2020). Additionally, most of the studies carried out in Europe suffer from the lack of wide-ranging and systematic data. Research on immigrant electoral participation strongly depends upon data availability, and studies on it are notably scarce in so-called 'new migration' countries such as Italy and Spain. This aspect of data scarcity in investigating immigrant political participation will be discussed extensively in Chapter 2.

As mentioned before, electoral participation is an established form of political participation and has long remained the point of focus in the studies of political participation. Nevertheless, the issue of electoral participation among immigrants has another implication for the understanding of immigrant political participation. As stated earlier, Hay (2007) points out, 'those with the most restrictive and conventional conceptions of political participation identify a strong and consistent pattern of declining political participation'. According to Martiniello (1997, 2006), the thesis of the political quiescence of immigrants is related to the absence of electoral rights for migrant workers. For some, they could not play a significant role in the politics of their country of residence, and their exclusion from the electoral process led to a situation of political

apathy. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, political participation is a multidimensional phenomenon, and its reduction to the electoral process is misleading in the sense that it misses other forms of political activities immigrants took relevant roles. Several studies show that migrants' involvement in trade unions (Marino et al. 2015, Alberti and Pero 2018) and protest movements (Atac et al. 2016) are established examples of their political engagement. Migrants have been visible actors in the case of the sans-papier workers movement (Tapia and Turner 2013), the cleaners' strike in the Netherlands, also known as the Dutch 'Justice for Janitors' (Connolly et al. 2017), Italian Migrants' Strike (Oliveri 2015) and the current global protests in response to the Israel-Palestine Conflict.

Nonetheless, immigrants' participation in politics does not always match of the autochthonous population. Rather it tends to fall behind the participation rates of natives. In some countries, migrants scarcely get involved in politics leading to a wide native-migrant 'participatory gap', while in some others this gap being relatively smaller, as the next Chapters show. The presence of an ethnic 'participatory gap' in political life is troubling for the functioning and the quality of democracy. As Ortensi and Riniolo (2020) effectively stated 'the lack of migrant voices and action in the political arena prevents the full implementation of democratic societies which require the equal participation of all residents who should be able to influence decisions affecting them and to have a stake in the community in which they live'. Thus, this study acknowledges the reality of migration in contemporary Europe, its increasingly diverse composition and the importance of equal political participation for all members. In light of this realisation, studying the determinants of immigrant political participation represent a necessary and promising line of research.

1.3 Is There a Distinct Theory of Political Participation for Immigrants?

In their influential contribution from both a theoretical and empirical framework on political participation, Brady et al. (1995) pose a relevant question for this study: 'Why do citizens participate in political life?'. Then, they reverse their question by proposing perhaps a more interesting puzzle for the focus of this study. That is why people don't participate in politics. They answer this question in their research through a resource model of political participation, also known as the theory of socio-economic status (SES). It suggests that as opposed to the rational choice model or psychological explanations of political participation, socioeconomic status (SES) determines the availability of resources for political engagement, the strength of political motivations (such as political interest, knowledge, efficacy, and partisan lines), and the probability of being mobilised (Brady et al.1995). As Milbrath and Goel (1977) state, SES

'is positively related to conventional and unconventional political participation', and as Mishler and Clarke (1995) pointed out, 'social status' and socio-economic factors are the principal forces structuring participation'.

The authors argue that one of the first-line answers to the puzzle above is that people cannot participate in politics *because they do not have the necessary resources*, namely time, money and civic skills, to engage with politics. Indeed, following Brady et al. (1995), a resource-based approach has its methodical and theoretical advantages. First, the authors believe that compared to a psychological model of participation, the measurement of resources vs attitudes tends to be more reliable. Moreover, they argue that the direction of the causal link between attitudes and political activity is not a precise one. Second, from a theoretical point of view, a resource model is believed to offer a more robust explanation of participation. The acquisition of resources happens prior to and independently of political participation. The authors further point out the two established intellectual traditions the SES models are based on: 'stratification theories from sociology' and 'individual choice perspectives from economics'. All in all, resource models are considered to perform greatly in predicting political participation. After highlighting its strength in explaining political participation, this section acknowledges that the basic principles of SES models are shared among natives and immigrants alike. As Adamson (2007) pointed out, immigrants do not represent different species, and their political participation can be explained through a 'general' theory of political participation.

Nevertheless, it also true that immigrants are born and raised in another country, that is another context, before they migrate into their current country of residence. This is the case at least for the first-generation immigrant living in Europe. As their socialisation take place in a different context than the residence country, they might not adopt the same patterns of participation with the natives. What shapes immigrant political behaviour and can provide a more powerful explanation can be different from studies of the majority population. Moreover, many scholars researching majority political participation cross-nationally detected a similar pattern across the countries under study (Verba et al. 1978, Teorell and Torcal 2007). Different socio-economic groups participate in different types of activities at different rates. If this is true, it is logical to expect migrants to adopt the same pattern of participation in their country of residence as natives. Yet, in some contexts, immigrants' pattern of participation resembles the majority population, whereas, in others, it is common to detect wide gaps in participation rates. A theory of socioeconomic status misses the relevant mechanisms linking social groups to participation.

Second, many migrants come from countries in which the participation patterns are not known in the above-mentioned studies of participation (De Rooij 2012).

More importantly, this study argues that a resource model has greater leverage in explaining political behaviour in an ideal polity in which its members' access to political life is not heavily dependent on institutional structures. On this basis, it has greater leverage in explaining the political behaviour of the majority population and less of immigrants. This study argues that immigrants' access to political life is pre-determined by factors such as citizenship regimes, political rights, and integration models, which shape their opportunities for participation. While SES models emphasize individual resources like time, money, and civic skills (Brady et al. 1995), they overlook the institutional and legal frameworks that regulate access to political participation. These constraints can create barriers even for immigrants who possess the necessary resources. Thus, an immediate answer to the question posed by Brady et al. (1995) in the specific context of immigrants can be the following: Immigrants may not participate in politics not only due to a lack of resources but also because institutional structures may prevent them from engaging in political activities.

The second answer Brady et al. (1995) give to their stimulating question is that *because people do not want to participate*. In fact, an answer stating immigrants do not participate in political life simply because they do not want to or do not care echoes the traces of the thesis of political quiesce and mainstream remarks. In the work of Brady et al. (1995), not wanting to participate is associated with a lack of psychological engagement. Highlighting the relevance of psychological variables in participation assumes that a sense of efficacy and interest in politics can explain political activity. Thus, according to this approach, attitudes predict behaviours. As much as this section agrees on the relevance of psychological variables which may develop into political activity, one should not neglect the mechanism linking the two. As stated by McBride (2012), 'an account of political participation which exalts the ideal of the engaged citizen, risks framing those who do not participate in negative ways'. This is, in particular, relevant to the studies of minorities. What might seem like a political lack of interest and a sense of inefficacy among immigrants, at a closer look, could actually be the consequence of structural factors. Or, in many cases, immigrants show interest in politics yet do not actually participate to the same extent as the majority population. When politically interested fail to engage in politics, it is particularly concerning for the understanding of political (in)activity. In such situations, their political inaction is not due to an absence of interest in politics but rather may indicate that avenues of participation are uneven and restricted.

The third, and the last answer, to Brady and his colleagues' question in understanding why people do not participate in politics is *because nobody asked them to do*. Their answer refers to the role of recruitment circles, which mobilise people into politics. The dimension of recruitment is defined as 'requests for participation that come to individuals at work, in church, or in organisation-especially those that come from friends, relatives, or acquaintances'. Brady et al. (1995), in their work, do not go any deeper into the role of recruitment. As far as this aspect is concerned, the composition of recruitment networks has to be considered a macro-phenomenon and has important implications for immigrant political participation. In Europe, as stated earlier, immigrants' role in society was to work and produce. They were not considered future citizens, let alone political actors, nor were they expected to intervene in the country's politics. In other words, there has been no demand for their political participation. As they were isolated from the mainstream recruitment networks, immigrants' path to political participation is characterised by further obstacles than those of the majority population. According to this section, a crucial aspect of the answer above *because nobody asked them to do* is a by-product of the broader structures in a polity. This approach moves beyond the role of recruitment and highlights the relevance of existing norms and expectations in society regarding migrants' participation in political life. In Europe, some member states extend the right to vote and stand as candidates to third-country nationals, or non-EU immigrants, at local elections. Inherently, these polities send a clear message to their non-national members that they are recognised as potential actors in political life. Thus, in such contexts, even before becoming citizens, non-national immigrants are expected to get familiar with politics. Similarly, knowing that they may have an impact, it is almost rational for the recruitment networks to approach immigrant communities and mobilise them into politics.

So far, the three questions and their answers by Brady et al. (1995) have guided the inquiry for a coherent theoretical approach in addressing immigrants' political participation. The section now focuses on the introduction of a solid theoretical framework that is frequently employed to address minority political participation, namely the *political opportunity structure theory*. A significant idea, developed originally for the study of social movement is defined by Tarrow (1996) as 'consistent but not necessarily formal, permanent, or national signals to social or political actors which either encourage or discourage them to use their internal resources to form social movements'. In the word of Koopmans (2004), opportunities are 'options for collective action, with chances and risks attached to them, which depend on factors outside the mobilizing group'. Initially considered as a general framework, several studies illustrated the

presence of specific opportunities available to different ethnic groups and their role in immigrants' political activities (Koopmans 2005, Morales and Giugni 2011). Within this study, political opportunity structure refers to the institutional incentives and disincentives specific to having a migration background and have the potential to explain immigrants' choices and strategies in participating in political activities. It does not imply that there exists a unified set of structures relevant to all immigrants nor shape all forms of political participation. On the contrary, the strength of political opportunity theory lies in its ability to care for variations: uneven grounds between native and immigrant populations, different structures for different political activities, and the varying conditions applied to a diverse category of immigrants. On this point, political opportunity structure is context sensitive. It provides favourable access to polity or generate adverse conditions. Similarly, it favours certain groups, discourses and policy-claims over other actors, expressions and demands.

This study carries the framework further and suggests that multiple opportunity structures are available in a polity, which in turn determine immigrants' participation in various forms of political participation. The institutional and discursive conditions for their involvement in one mode of participation can run counter to another mode of participation. Likewise, the present conditions for one mode of participation can channel immigrants' activities to other modes of participation. Therefore, any explanation of immigrant participation in political activities should acknowledge that there is not a set of structural features of the same importance for all political activities. While electoral rules, citizenship regimes and distribution of the right to vote shape migrants' participation in the electoral process, they may be less important in the case of migrants' involvement in trade unions. For the latter one, the role of unions in the country, special structures and union democracy can be more determinative. What may seem an obstacle to one form of political participation may indeed stimulate another political activity. Where access to so-called 'conventional' forms of participation is not possible or limited for immigrants, the expression of political opinions can be accomplished through 'extra-institutional' forms of participation such as public demonstrations. Acknowledging these variations and adopting a multifaced model, it is possible to improve the traditional view of political opportunities.

Clearly, opportunities for political participation are not distributed even across the society. It is not uniform across the majority population or immigrant population. People with higher income and better education are likely to have easier access to political circles, e.g. political parties and politicians, than low-status members of society (Brady et al. 1995). Likewise, regarding the

immigrant population, being a citizen in the country of residence, length of stay, proficiency of its native language, and country of origin, e.g. EU vs non-EU immigrants, further shape their path to political life. Although they may seem to be individual characteristics of immigrant residents, structures in a political system pre-determine whose access to political life is facilitated and who is expected to wait for more open opportunities. In Europe, political systems tend to offer greater opportunities for citizen-migrants over non-citizens and EU migrants over non-EU migrants. One should also acknowledge that there can be objective opportunities in place yet be neglected or not perceived. On this note, Gamson and Meyer (1996) remind us that "[a]n opportunity not recognized is no opportunity at all." Overall, the absence of opportunities or a 'closed' institutional structure are not desirable for equal participation and regarded in this study as potential precondition(s) for immigrant political inactivity. On the contrary, an 'open' opportunity structure, in which the immigrants can realize themselves as political actors, e.g., electorates through local elections even before they become citizens, is a precondition for immigrants to be engaged citizens. Thus, the context in which immigrants operate is crucial for understanding their political behaviour.

1.4 Hypotheses

The key explanatory variables in addressing the puzzle of immigrant political participation reflect the underlying theoretical framework of the thesis. As suggested earlier, immigrants' access to political life is pre-determined by certain characteristics of the institutional settings, such as citizenship regimes, political rights, integration models, and opinion climates.

Employing an ambitious and extensive design, the comparative study aims to highlight the importance of the context in shaping the participatory strategies of immigrant members of a polity. In doing so, it tests the established findings of the literature as well as the novel factors used in explaining the minority political behaviour. It aims to deliver a comprehensive understanding of the explanatory factors in a wide range of countries and for a significant sample of immigrant respondents. Importantly, it clarifies the dispute over the importance of individual vs structural determinants of political behaviour in the specific context of immigrant political participation. In addressing this novel line of research (particularly in the European context), the explanatory framework does not limit itself to the traditional determinants of political participation. Thus, the framework moves the contributions based on the SES models a step forward and includes new explanatory factors specific to the migration experience. It cares for the unexplored aspects of the immigrant category and addresses the political participation of underexplored groups such as EU migrants. Similarly, the analysis covers

countries under-researched for immigration political behaviour, such as Italy, Spain, and Portugal, and provides advanced measurements of most explanatory variables.

Research on immigrant political participation tends to ground itself either on the individual or the macro level. It investigates the issue by employing selected individual (Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001, Just and Anderson 2012, Li and Jones 2020) or macro-level (Bauböck et al. 2006, Pilati and Morales 2016) factors. It rarely links the individual and macro explanations and frequently neglects the relationship between its individual and macro-level explanations. In the specific context of immigrant political behaviour, the link between the two levels is too important to neglect. To put it more parsimoniously, the empirical contribution bridges the critical levels, focusing on two main clusters: (1) macro-contextual determinants and (2) individual level characteristics. The former block of variables can be grouped into (1) institutional setting and the rules, and (2) the opinion climates, also known as public opinion, whereas individual-level determinants can be separated into two important components: (1) general and (2) immigrant-specific factors of political participation.

Given the importance of political opportunity structures, and the context highlighted the theoretical framework, I have structured the presentation of the hypotheses to reflect this emphasis. Therefore, the macro-level determinants are presented first, followed by the individual-level factors. This ordering allows for a clearer understanding of the broader context within which individual-level factors operate. In the following chapters, this structure is maintained**:** first, the macro-level analysis is presented, followed by the individual-level analysis.

1.4.1 Macro-level Determinants

The initial block of variables focuses on the macro-level determinants of immigrants' political participation. Macro-level determinants include variables related to the structure of the political opportunities and constraints for immigrants. In particular, the thesis aims to examine the impact of four factors: political rights, citizenship regimes, opinion climates and the country's experience with migration, specifically whether it is a new or old country of immigration based on the recency of its immigration history. The first two variables are considered to be important indicators of institutional setting and the rules. The third variable, opinion climate, reflects the majority population's attitudes toward migration and immigrants. Although opinion climate is categorized as a macro-level characteristic, its effects on political participation are nuanced and contingent upon how individual immigrants perceive and experience it. This complexity

requires careful consideration of its status as a macro variable, with its influence mediated by personal perceptions. Finally, the fourth variable, the country's immigration history, has not been considered in prior research on migrant political behaviour, to the best of my knowledge, and represents an original contribution of this thesis.

The framework of political opportunity structure (POS) acknowledges that political rights are indispensable for migrant political integration. In fact, as stated by Fennema and Tillie (2001), the right to vote, perhaps one of the most relevant political rights for this study, is an 'initial opening of the political opportunity structures' which provides incentives for immigrants' participation in the political process. When immigrants enjoy equal voting rights with the native population, they show greater interest in political debates, identify easier with the polity they live in, and become familiar with the present political norms (Bauböck et al., 2006). Such a society in which an egalitarian distribution of political rights is achieved would indicate an open political opportunity structure for the framework of this thesis. Nevertheless, the distribution of political rights in Europe is characterised by a notable disparity. Comparable to the work by Bauböck (2005), who distinguishes between four perspectives on expansive electoral rights, Caramani and Strijbis (2013) differentiate between four types of electorates. Their concepts of *national electorate* and *resident electorate* are relevant to this thesis. Adopted to this study, with the exception of Britain and Ireland, no country grants the right to vote in national elections to their non-citizen members. The principle is solely based on membership. On the contrary, as Table 1.1 illustrates, currently, in a notable number of Western European countries, non-citizen resident migrants enjoy voting rights at the municipal elections. Thus, both membership and territorial principles are concerned. It includes nationals and resident non-national immigrants.

Table 1.1 Right to vote for third-country citizens

Country	National Legislative	Local Legislative
Austria	NO	NO
Belgium	NO	YES
Germany	NO	NO
Spain	NO	selected categories
Finland	NO	YES
France	NO	NO
Ireland	NO	YES
Italy	NO	NO
Netherlands	YES	YES
Portugal	selected categories	selected categories
Sweden	NO	YES
United Kingdom	selected categories	selected categories

Source: Author's elaboration

These different characterisations of voting rights are expected to indicate the obstacles and opportunities for immigrants' political participation. A similar thought is expressed by Hayduk (2006, 2015), who suggests that granting local voting rights to immigrant residents has the benefit of putting them on a 'pathway to citizenship'. Importantly, it can play a decisive role in deciding which participatory activities to engage. In the presence of municipal voting rights, immigrants can channel their political interests and opinions into institutionalised forms of participation. Similarly, protest participation can be a more frequently applied political activity in the absence of voting rights. However, the empirical findings on the role of the right to vote in predicting immigrant political participation are scarce and based on a few case studies. One of these studies, a Norwegian case study, points out the positive impact municipal voting rights exert on the following elections in which migrants participate. (Ferwerda, Finseraas, and Bergh 2017). Based on these considerations, the thesis expects the following:

> H1: The more political rights immigrants enjoy, the more likely they are to participate in politics, and vice versa.

The second indicator of the political opportunity structure is the citizenship regimes. In this study, citizenship regimes refer to 'institutionalised systems of formal and informal norms that define access to membership, as well as rights and duties associated with membership, within a polity' (Vink, 2017). Characteristics of the citizenship regime are potential factors in determining immigrants' access to rights, opportunities, and resources in their country of residence (Just and Anderson, 2012). Different citizenship policies represent certain constraints and opportunities for immigrant members of the polity. Europe in general, and the selected Western European countries in particular, exhibit very diverse citizenship regimes. The 'identity effect' of citizenship, risks and costs associated with participation, and the context of integration are considered to be distinct in restrictive citizenship regimes compared to more liberal ones. A vast majority of literature is devoted to categorising the diversity of citizenship policies and/or developing typologies (Joppke, 1999; Giugni and Passy, 2004). Meanwhile, empirical studies of participation offer substantive evidence on the role of citizenship regimes in shaping immigrant political behaviour (Bousetta, 2001; Gonzalez-Ferrer and Morales, 2013). Nevertheless, the evidence in the literature comes from either single case studies of immigrant political participation or draws on the comparison of a few cases. The relationship between the openness of the citizenship regimes and immigrants' participation in politics remains unexplored in a wide range of countries, a contribution this thesis aims to make. To account for this relevant factor, a variable indicating the openness of citizenship regimes is used. The data come from the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX). The choice of data source is explained in detail in the analytical Chapter 5. All things considered, the second macro-level hypothesis is as follows:

> H2: The more liberal citizenship regimes are, the more likely immigrants are to participate in politics, and vice versa.

The third and last variable concerns the opinion climates in which immigrants live. The influence of majority culture and discourse on political mobilisation is an established aspect in the general literature (Koopsman and Kriesi, 1997; Della Porta and Kriesi, 1999). Noelle-Neumann, in her famous work on the theory of public opinion, argues that individuals become more uncertain of themselves and less willing to express their opinions when they perceive themselves to be in the minority position in society. In line with this viewpoint, several studies show that electoral participation and turnout rates are sensitive to public opinion (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1994; Grosser and Schram, 2010, Hooghe et al., 2019). Nevertheless, in the specific context of minority political participation, the role of public opinion towards

immigrants remains relatively underexplored. The thesis conceptualises public opinion as a reflection of social construction. Differing from the political rights and citizenship regimes, public opinion represents informal characteristics of the opportunity structure in place. As Tarrow suggests (1998), political opportunity structures 'are consistent – but not necessarily formal or permanent – dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for collective action by affecting people's expectations for success or failure.' Thus, in the model of immigrant political participation developed in this thesis, public opinion connects immigrants' motivation to be politically active with the context in which participation occurs. The model suggests that public opinion (of the native population) can exhibit itself either in forms of hostility or openness towards the issue of immigration and immigrants. By creating distinct opinion climates, public opinion can influence the social costs and benefits of political activity (Just and Anderson 2014). Hostile opinion climates convey the message that immigrants are not desired in society and are placed in a stigmatised social position. In such contexts, participation's social and psychological costs are increased, and immigrants are discouraged from political participation. On the contrary, such costs are lower in more positive opinion climates, and the chances for immigrants to engage in politics are higher. While opinion climate is a macro-level characteristic, its effects depend on how individual immigrants perceive and experience it. In light of this**,** the thesis expects as the following:

> H3: The more positive public opinion towards immigrants in the country is, the more likely immigrants are to participate in politics, and vice versa.

Lastly, a key variable of interest is whether a migrant resides in a new or old country of migration. New countries of migration are those that have only recently experienced significant immigration inflows, while old countries of migration have a longer history of accommodating migrants. This classification is a novel contribution of this thesis and will be used to examine whether the recency of a country's immigration experience influences migrants' political participation. The dummy variable for new versus old migration countries can significantly impact migrants' likelihood to participate in politics. Migrants in new migration countries might face greater barriers to political participation due to less established integration policies, lower levels of social acceptance, and fewer opportunities for political engagement. Conversely, old migration countries might offer more supportive environments for political participation, given their longer experience with immigrant integration. The seminal work of Freeman (1995) employs this distinction. The distinction between old and new migration countries in Freeman's work highlights the varying capacities and approaches to managing immigration based on

historical experience and institutional development. Understanding these differences is crucial for analysing the effectiveness of immigration policies and the political dynamics surrounding immigration in different contexts. This framework helps explain why some countries might be better equipped to handle immigration and integration challenges than others, based on their historical and institutional context. All in all, the thesis expects that

> H4: Migrants living in new countries of migration are less likely to participate in politics compared to those living in old countries of migration, and vice versa.

Table 1.2 Summary of Hypotheses

Variable	Level	Category	Expected effect on participation
Political rights – Broader	Macro-level	Immigration-specific	Positive
Citizenship regime – Open	Macro-level	Immigration-specific	Positive
Opinion climate – Positive	Macro-level	Immigration-specific	Positive
New migration country	Macro-level	Immigration-specific	Negative
SES – Greater	Individual-level	General	Positive
Political Interest – Higher	Individual-level	General	Positive
Political efficacy – Higher	Individual-level	General	Positive
Perceived discrimination – Greater	Individual-level	Immigration-specific	Negative (institutionalised forms) Positive (non-institutional forms)
Length of stay – Longer	Individual-level	Immigration-specific	Positive
Spending formative years in the country – Yes	Individual-level	Immigration-specific	Positive

Source: Author's elaboration.

1.4.2 Individual-level Determinants

The second block of variables is about the individual-level characteristics of the respondents. Studies of political participation frequently use individual-level variables to explain the phenomenon of political participation, and the sample in this thesis differs not only in terms of its composition of native and immigrant-origin respondents but also in their individual characteristics (Brady, Verba and Schlozman 1995; Jacobs and Tillie 2004). For the sake of clarity, it is possible to distinguish these variables into two groups: general explanatory factors and immigration-specific factors. The former variables represent the most classical and well-established predictors of political behaviour, namely socioeconomic status (SES), political interest and political efficacy. These variables have often employed to predict and explain political participation. However, it is important to not only to identify their impact on immigrants' political participation but also to examine whether their impact differs from that on the native population.

As mentioned earlier, socioeconomic status (SES) has long been accepted as a crucial factor in shaping patterns of political participation (Verba and Nie 1972, Quintelier and Hooghe 2012). Highlighting the ways in which disparities in SES foster unequal representation and participation, factors such as income and education are suggested to display significant impact over individuals' likelihood of taking part in political activities. The rationale behind the relation between SES and political participation comes from numerous theoretical frameworks and empirical results. One well-known theoretical approach concerning the connection between socioeconomic status and political participation is the resource-based model. As indicated in earlier sections, the model suggests that individuals with higher socioeconomic status acquire more advanced resources, such as education, income, and social networks, which ease their engagement in political life. Another important theoretical framework for understanding the link between socioeconomic status and participation is based on the socialization approach. According to this viewpoint, those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to be raised within an environment where political discussions are common and engagement in political life is encouraged.

The explanatory power of the SES variables in the specific context of immigrant political participation is less straightforward and multifaced. Immigrants often experience unique challenges and opportunities when taking part in the political process. Several studies stressed that immigrants have a complicated relationship to the traditional SES model. As such, they

identified a weaker relationship between the SES levels and the political involvement of ethnic minorities (Jones-Correa 1998; Barreto and Munoz 2003; Tam Cho, Gimpel and Wu 2006; Atger 2009). As Jones-Correa (1998) noted in his study of Latin American immigrants, socioeconomic factors predict the political involvement of native-born (Mexican American) and citizen immigrants better than noncitizen immigrants. Furthermore, Tam (1995) found that Asian Americans show high socioeconomic levels but low participation ratios. Notably, these studies primarily focus on the U.S. context, leaving a gap in our understanding of SES's role in immigrant political activity in Europe. While SES is a well-established determinant of political engagement among native populations, its effect on immigrants may be moderated by factors such as political socialization, institutional barriers, differential access to political resources, and experiences of discrimination. One key distinction between natives and immigrants lies in their political socialization. Many first-generation immigrants are socialized in different political systems before migrating, often in contexts where democratic participation is restricted or political engagement is not encouraged (Lazarova, Saalfeld and Seifert 2024). This contrasts with natives, who are socialized into the political culture of their country from an early age, typically in an environment that promotes democratic participation. As a result, even when immigrants acquire key socioeconomic resources—such as higher education and stable income—they may still be less likely to engage in political participation compared to natives with similar SES backgrounds (Cho 1999). This suggests that the SES-political participation relationship may not be as strong or straightforward for immigrants as it is for the native population. Given these considerations, the empirical findings of this study aim to clarify whether SES is as powerful in explaining immigrant political activity as it has been in explaining majority political participation. Therefore, the first hypothesis is as follows:

> H5: The higher the socioeconomic status (SES) of immigrants, to be more likely they are to engage in political participation compared to those with lower SES.

Another traditional explanatory factor of political participation is undoubtedly political interest. Even advocates of the resource model have pointed out the power of political interest in explaining political participation (Brady et al., 1995; Verba et al. 1995). As Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) stated, 'What matters most for going to the polls is not the resources at voters' disposal but, rather, their civic orientations, especially their interest in politics.' Several studies have shown the positive associations between political interest and various forms of political participation, including its more traditional forms like voting, activity in political campaigns, and extra-institutional forms like protest activity (Norris 1999, Dalton 2006, Smets and Van

Ham 2013). Similarly, in studies of immigrant political behaviour, political interest has been used as a relevant determinant of political activity. Research on minority political participation at local and national levels has found a positive association between the variable political interest and immigrants' engagement in politics (Fennema and Tillie 1999, De Rooij, 2012). However, the extent to which political interest translates into actual participation may differ between immigrants and natives due to differences in political socialization, institutional barriers, and access to political networks.

Importantly, assessing the role of political interest in explaining immigrants' participation patterns has two implications for this thesis. First, as discussed earlier, the thesis of the political quiescence (Martiniello, 2006) assumes that immigrants are inherently not interested in politics. To challenge this assumption, the empirical investigation in this study aims to assess the degree of political interest amongst immigrant individuals and, followingly, to employ political interest as a relevant predictor of political participation. Second, it aims to reveal the extent to which this traditional determinant of participation translates into predicting immigrant political participation in the same way it does for natives. In line with previous studies in the literature, I consider political interest to be a relevant motivational aspect of immigrant political participation. In this vein, the thesis hypothesises that

> H6: As interest in politics increases, immigrants' participation in political activities should increase, and vice versa.

After having briefly discussed the two frequently employed explanatory factors, it is time to introduce the role of political efficacy. The variable is frequently used as an important determinant of political participation in general studies, yet it has been underexplored in research on immigrant political activity. From a theoretical point of view, leaving the efficacy factor out of the explanations of minority political participation is somewhat surprising. Social cognitive theory suggests that confidence in one's ability to understand and make a difference in the outcomes influences one's motivation to engage in politics (Bandura, 1986, 2001). Likewise, resource mobilization theorists (Weissberg, 1975; Wright, 1976) claim that political participation is increased by "inducing citizens to believe the government is responsive to their own needs and wishes" (Ginsberg, 1982, p. 182). Applied to this thesis, the role of political efficacy is particularly relevant to addressing the political participation gap. Immigrant and native individuals estimate their capabilities to take part in politics differently, and how they evaluate the political system can shape their decision to engage in the participatory process. Unlike natives, many immigrants do not immediately gain full political rights in their host

country. Even when immigrants become eligible to participate, these initial barriers may create a lasting perception that politics is "not for them", reducing their sense of efficacy. Because of factors such as political socialization, legal barriers, discrimination, and limited political knowledge, immigrants and natives often evaluate their capacity to participate differently. These differences in perceived political efficacy, in turn, contribute to distinct participation patterns. Immigrants with higher levels of efficacy can perceive the participatory channels in a polity as meaningful and effective means to express their demands and/or ideas. Similarly, high levels of efficacy can encourage minority groups to overcome structural barriers and to engage in politics effectively.

Political efficacy is often considered "the most immediate attitudinal explanation of political action" (Wolfsfeld, 1986, p. 108) and consists of two dimensions: internal and external efficacy. Internal efficacy refers to individuals' confidence in their own ability to understand and engage in politics, while external efficacy reflects their belief in the responsiveness of political institutions. The analytical Chapter 4 explores the two theoretical dimensions in depth. The following hypothesis is as follows:

> H7: As political efficacy increases, the levels of participation in political activities should increase, and vice versa.

The second set of explanatory variables is related to the phenomenon of immigration experience. These variables are immigration-specific and were not considered in studies of the majority population nor in studies adopting a 'general' theory of political participation in addressing minority political participation. It is argued in this study that the potential explanatory factors in this group are of particular importance for explaining minority groups' participation decisions and strategies. The first of immigration-specific factors is perceived discrimination. More specifically, the focus is devoted to the role of ethnicity, nationality, religion, colour or race-based discrimination in shaping immigrant political participation, which has received little empirical attention until recently. To the best of this study's knowledge, no systematic study in a wide range of countries investigates the role of discrimination in predicting immigrant political activity. Nevertheless, the few available studies on the topic have interesting findings. Perhaps in line with conventional wisdom, existing studies observe a negative relationship between the experience of discrimination and political activity (particularly voting) (Schildkraut, 2005; Hochman, 2011). On the other hand, some studies identified a positive relationship between perceived discrimination and non-electoral forms of participation. More explicitly, the experience of discrimination functions as a catalyst for

protest participation. Scholars sharing this assumption suggest that the higher the degree of discrimination by marginalised groups, the more likely these groups will protest (Salamon and Van Evera, 1973; Mattila and Papageorgiou 2017). All these empirical findings considered, this thesis argues that there is substantial reason to acknowledge discrimination as a factor that can simultaneously demobilise or mobilise immigrants to participate in political life. However, its effect depends on the different forms of political activities. Therefore, this thesis hypothesises that:

H8.1: As perceived discrimination increases, immigrants' participation in institutional forms should decrease, and vice versa.

H8.2: Whereas as perceived discrimination increases, the levels of participation in non-institutional forms should increase, and vice versa.

The second immigration-specific factor is the time spent in the country. To better understand how exposure to the host country's norms and adaptation to its political system shape political behaviour, it is essential to distinguish between two dimensions of time: length of stay and spending formative years in the country of residence. When first-generation immigrants are considered, the significance of time concerning integration into the host country is clear. They were born and spent most of their formative years in their country of origin. As their socialisation occurs in a different context than the residence country, they might not adopt the same patterns of participation as the natives. Therefore, the factors that shape immigrant political behaviour and provide a powerful explanation can differ from studies of the majority population.

The importance of time factors on political behaviour draws upon established theoretical approaches, which are explained in detail in the analytical Chapter 5. In brief, political socialisation theories emphasize the role of socialisation experiences in shaping future political behaviours (Schwarzer, 2011; Grasso et al. 2019). Immigrants who migrated to their current country of residence during their pre-adult years are considered to have attended school in the new country and developed peer networks, making adaptation to the country's norms and political system easier. On the contrary, theories of exposure consider time spent in the country as an important predictor of political behaviour, offering a more flexible perspective. Rather than focusing only on formative years, this perspective argues that migration is such a significant change that it can impact an adult's political behaviour as well, supporting the assumption that immigrant political integration is a gradual process. To understand how

exposure to the host country's norms and adaptation to its political system shape political participation, it is important to distinguish between these two dimensions of time. Length of stay refers to the overall time an individual has lived in the country, while spending formative years (before adulthood) in the country influences the degree to which an immigrant is politically integrated into the host society (Neundorf & Smets, 2017; Borkowska & Luthra, 2024).

Several studies on immigrant political behaviour demonstrate a positive relationship between years spent in the country and electoral participation. Scholars found that the longer immigrants live in their country of residence, the more likely they are to vote (Bevelander, 2015; Finn, 2020; Bevelander & Hutcheson, 2022), protest, and participate in political parties (Aleksynska, 2011). Moreover, the relationship between length of stay and political participation may be stronger for those who migrated at a younger age, as they have had more time to adapt and develop social networks in the host country. Therefore, the thesis hypothesises the following:

> H9.1: As the length of stay in the country of residence increases, levels of political participation should also increase, and vice versa.
>
> H9.2: Immigrants who arrived during their formative years (before adulthood) are expected to have higher political participation than those who migrated later, due to earlier exposure to the host country's political system and socialisation processes.

1.5 Limits of Previous Studies

While the study of immigrant political participation is well-established in the US literature, European scholars have increasingly recognized the need to address the under-explored dynamics of migrant political behaviour in Europe. Martinello (2006) acknowledges that 'certainly progress in this area has been quite dramatic over the past decade, but our knowledge remains fragmented and largely confined to specific national contexts'. Indeed, a majority of influential studies on migrant political incorporation in Europe are either single-case analyses or comparisons of a limited number of cases (e.g., Fennema & Tillie, 1999; Koopmans, 2004; Maxwell, 2010; Ortensi & Riniolo, 2020; Mügge et al., 2021). While these studies have provided valuable insights into political participation at the local or national level, systematic cross-national studies that examine broader European patterns remain scarce.

Moreover, at the case-study level, European research on migrant political participation has predominantly focused on urban settings, often analysing political engagement at the city level. Key contributions include studies on Amsterdam (Fennema & Tillie, 1999), Brussels (Jacobs

et al., 2002), Berlin (Berger et al., 2004), Zurich (Egert & Giugni, 2010), and Milan and Turin (Mezzetti & Ricucci, 2020). One of the most comprehensive and influential cross-city comparative studies was conducted within the LOCALMULTIDEM project, which enabled the first quantitative cross-national analysis of migrant political participation across eight European cities—Madrid, Barcelona, Zurich, Geneva, Stockholm, Lyon, Milan, and London (Morales et al., 2011). LOCALMULTIDEM made an important methodological contribution by providing comparative urban data, which has since been widely utilized in subsequent research (Cinalli & Giugni, 2011; Herman & Jacobs, 2015; Pilati & Morales, 2016; Chaudhary, 2018).

While these studies have significantly advanced our understanding of political participation at the local level, it remains uncertain whether immigrants' political engagement within cities reflects their participation in broader political systems at the national level. As Martiniello (2005) argues, 'it would be very stimulating to systematically analyse the immigrants' political participation by comparing the different immigrant groups in the same country but also by comparing different host societies'. This thesis answers that call by adopting a cross-national perspective, extending beyond city-level studies to examine migrant political participation across multiple European countries.

A key challenge in conducting systematic comparative studies of migrant political participation has been the lack of cross-national data that includes both significant migrant populations and indicators of political behaviour. While the European Social Survey (ESS) is not specifically focused on immigrants, it has been frequently employed in quantitative comparative research on migration in Europe (Maxwell, 2010; De Rooij, 2012; Just & Anderson, 2014; Helbling et al., 2016; Huddleston, 2017). However, much of the existing literature relies on earlier rounds of the ESS, which may not fully capture the evolving dynamics of migrant political engagement. This thesis seeks to address this gap by utilizing the most recent ESS rounds, thereby providing a contemporary and systematic analysis of migrant political participation across multiple European countries. In doing so, it offers an up-to-date perspective on the trends and patterns that shape migrant engagement in the political sphere today.

Another area with room for improvement in prior research that this thesis aims to address is the conceptualization of the migrant category. Many studies focus on specific ethnic groups or fail to fully capture the diversity within broader migrant populations. For example, studies using LOCALMULTIDEM data examine political participation across a limited number of selected ethnic groups—typically up to three—compared to the majority population. Migrants in these studies are pre-selected based on criteria such as nationality, religion, and immigration type

(Irene & Morales, 2013). This results in comparisons of political participation levels among specific ethnic groups, such as Italians, Turks, and Moroccans in Lyon; Moroccans and Filipinos in Milan; and Italians, Portuguese, and Turks in Geneva. While this approach works well for ensuring representativeness within a local context, it fails to capture the broader heterogeneity of migrant populations across Europe. This thesis addresses this gap by adopting a more inclusive definition of migrants, using country of birth as the primary indicator of migration background—an approach that is generally considered less biased than ethnicity-based classifications. Furthermore, building on studies that acknowledge migrant diversity (Maxwell, 2010; De Rooij, 2012), this thesis explicitly differentiates between migrant groups by examining variations in political participation across individuals from different countries of origin, religious backgrounds, and legal statuses. Recognizing that EU and non-EU migrants (third-country nationals) face distinct political opportunity structures, this study goes beyond comparing migrants to the native population and also investigates intra-migrant differences in political participation.

Importantly, this thesis aims to make a meaningful contribution by employing macro-micro interactions, which enables to which provide a deeper and more nuanced understanding of how macro-level policies influence individual political participation. While previous studies often focus on either macro-level factors (e.g., legal and institutional contexts) (Bauböck et al., 2006; Cinalli & Giugni, 2011; Chryssochoou & Barrett 2017; Tyrberg, 2020) or individual-level determinants (e.g. socioeconomic status, political interest) (Seif, 2011; De Rooij, 2012), this study goes beyond these separate approaches by integrating both macro and micro perspectives and exploring how cross-level interactions shape political engagement in a more dynamic way. Specifically, the thesis investigates how political rights for migrants interact with individual-level characteristics, such as income, political interest, EU versus non-EU migrant status, and citizenship status. The interaction between income and political rights, for example, examines whether economic resources condition the effect of political rights on participation, revealing the complex ways in which economic resources can mediate the influence of legal rights. Similarly, the interaction between political interest and political rights investigates whether political engagement is contingent on both individual interest and the institutional access provided by political rights.

Furthermore, the thesis explores how political rights influence participation differently for non-EU migrants compared to EU migrants, highlighting the varied political opportunity structures that shape their engagement. It also examines how citizenship status modifies the relationship

between rights and political engagement, providing insight into how the attainment of citizenship impacts migrant participation. By integrating these macro-micro interactions, this thesis moves beyond isolated analyses, offering a more comprehensive and dynamic understanding of the interplay between macro-level characteristics and individual-level factors.

In summary, this thesis aims to advance the field in several ways. First, it extends the scope of analysis from city-level studies to a comprehensive, cross-national examination of migrant political participation across Europe. Second, it utilizes recent ESS data to provide an up-to-date, systematic analysis. Third, it challenges homogeneous categorizations of migrants by considering their diverse national origins, legal statuses, religion. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it employs the macro-micro interactions in the analysis to highlight the complexity of migrant political participation and tries to offer a more nuanced understanding on how political participation is determined.

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Chapter 2
Research Design

This chapter serves as the gateway to the thesis's research design. The subsequent sections delve into the methodological framework of the research. Specifically, the operationalisation of the dependent variable, the spatial and temporal scope of the analysis, the data used in this study, and the methods of data analysis are discussed. Notably, the chapter lays out the principal questions that underpin this research, inviting the reader to engage with the study's objectives. The answers to these questions are found in the empirical parts of the thesis, which are in Chapter 3, which is dedicated to describing the political participation patterns for migrant and native populations, and in the three explanatory chapters that follow.

The present chapter is organised as follows: The initial section, 'Research questions: Assessing and explaining immigrant political participation,' presents the critical research questions that will guide the discussion and analysis through the thesis. The second section, 'Dependent variable: How is political participation measured?, presents the prior measures used in the literature. It critically reviews such measures and explains the preferred measurement strategies employed in this study. Followingly, the third section, 'Scope and Timeframe,' spells out the spatial and temporal perspective of this study. It explains the rationale for the scope of the thesis. The section on 'Data collection' introduces the data source used for the analysis and the rationale behind its selection. More specifically, it discusses the European Social Survey (ESS) data and, to a lesser extent, alternative data sources employed in this study. The following section, 'Methods', specifies the empirical approach adopted in the thesis and the method used to test the working analysis. Lastly, the section 'Independent variables' provides a brief description of macro-institutional factors and individual-level determinants of immigrant political participation. Their introduction remains brief in this chapter since these variables are examined and tested in detail through the following analytical Chapters (4-6) of the thesis.

2.1 Research Questions: Assessing and Explaining Immigrant Political Participation

The previous chapter pointed out the limits of earlier studies and the gaps in the literature that this research intends to address. As mentioned, according to Martiniello (2006), the political agency of migrant members of society has long been neglected, and the thesis of political quiescence of migrants characterised them as political apathy and passivity. Correspondingly, the European literature on political participation has been underdeveloped compared to the US context.

However, thanks to the impact of new social movements, the importance of integration, and the demographic impact of migration in Europe, the study of the political participation of immigrants in Europe has gained increasing attention. Having said that, the findings of earlier studies on immigrant political participation have significant shortcomings for three main reasons. Firstly, the majority of the studies carried out in Europe suffer from the lack of wide-ranging and systematic data. Research on migrant political participation is conducted by operationalising the form(s) of political activity in a limited range of cases, that is generally in a city or a country. Thus, it is hardly possible to extend the findings of such studies to other settings and the world at large.

Secondly, as stated in Chapter 1, the production of LOCALMULTIDEM data enables the most influential comparative studies of migrant political participation in the field. Yet, the data has a limited timeframe and does not cover beyond 2008. Therefore, unfortunately, it is not able to reflect the contemporary patterns of migrant political participation or provide for recent social and political changes that occurred in Europe over the last decade. For instance, the so-called 2015 refugee crisis, an increase in right-wing party support across Europe, discourse, and policy changes in several countries are relevant developments in assessing and explaining the political participation of migrants.

Furthermore, earlier studies may have obtained inconsistent results because of the challenges related to sampling the migrant population. That is, sampling strategies had to adapt to the scarcity of coherent and homogenous data. With good reason, a vast majority of studies on migrant political participation address immigrant-native disparities in political engagement. Their findings rely on comparing participation rates between the selected migrant group(s) and the natives. However, the methods used can be biased, and the research focuses extensively on the study of certain ethnic and religious groups (e.g. Turks in Germany and Moroccans in the Netherlands). The similarities and differences between the various categories of migrants tend to be neglected.

Thirdly, and lastly, as mentioned in Chapter 1, political participation is a multidimensional concept. Unlike earlier studies, it has moved beyond the arenes of electoral politics and includes several political activities. Centring its study on a single dimension can deliver a biased picture of migrant political participation. Studies with an excessive focus on voting tend to detect significant gaps in the turnout rates between migrants and the autochthonous population, thus portraying migrants as ‘disengaged’. On the contrary, the study of non-electoral forms of political participation has been conducted to counter such ‘disengagement’ on the basis that

several studies find similar patterns of participation between migrants and the autochthonous population. As Martiniello (2006) rightly stated, "migrants are not more passive than other citizens, but their involvement should also not be exaggerated by regarding them as the vanguard of the new global proletariat". Evidently, one-dimensional approaches cannot generate convincing clarifications of migrant political incorporation.

There are two research questions that will drive this thesis. The first aim is to answer a rather basic yet fundamental question. What are the political participation patterns for the immigrant population in Western Europe? Is there a participatory gap between the majority population and immigrant individuals? The presence of an 'ethnic' gap in political participation is highlighted by several studies (Just and Anderson, 2012; Morales and Giugni, 2016; Szulecki et al., 2021), and such a deficit has been a point of concern for those interested in integration and democratic norms. Hence, to address the question, the initial goal is to describe the political participation patterns for immigrant and native populations comparatively. This investigation is linked to the issue of revealing a participatory gap between the two populations. Assessing the rates at which immigrant and native individuals take part in various acts of participation may help to evaluate how wide the participation gap is in the respective country. In other words, one implicit contribution of this work is to test the 'level of integration' (De Rooij, 2012) in a broader range of European countries and to contribute to the debate around it.

The purpose of this work is not only to describe but also to explain the outcome, which brings us to the second research question. What are the best predictors of varying levels of political participation for immigrants and their national variations? Since it is empirically difficult to identify the definitive causes of political participation amongst the migrant population, this question can also be interpreted as the following: What are the factors that make migrant individuals more likely to participate in political activities? The thesis will search for a comprehensive explanation yielding valuable insight into the causes of ethnic political incorporation. At the same time, it will take into consideration the country-specific factors by adopting a 'comparative contextual approach'. Assuming that both socio-economic characteristics and macro-level factors are correlated with political participation rates, the ultimate step of the thesis will test whether these variables can predict different forms of political activities amongst the immigrant population.

2.2 Dependent Variable: How is Political Participation Measured?

Although the specific literature on ethnic political participation is at an early stage in Europe, political participation has been extensively studied as a central theme in political science. Accordingly, several studies have discussed how to measure the concept (Salisbury, 1975; Van Deth, 1986; Fox 2014).

As pointed out in Chapter 1, there is a wide variety of definitions of political participation. Perhaps one of the most cited ones belongs to Verba and his colleagues (1972, 1995). As discussed previously, they conceptualised political participation in four dimensions, namely voting, campaign activity, communal activity, and particularised contact. The subsequent scholarly works operationalised the participation concept by broadening the political activity indicators. As the political participation domain expanded, new types of participation have emerged in the literature. Political activities are distinguished along the modes, that is 'conventional' vs 'non-conventional' (Barnes and Kaase, 1984), 'formal' vs 'extra-parliamentary' (Ekman and Amna, 2012), 'legal' vs 'illegal' (Dahl and Stattin, 2015) and 'state' vs 'non-state' (Zapata Barrero et al., 2013). While the literature acknowledges that the concept itself demonstrates meaningful dimensions, some scholars are critical of the existing typologies and propose that they must be redefined (Lamprianou, 2013). It should also be noted that the existing typologies refer to the same phenomenon with different labels. The discussion around the use of different labels makes it difficult to identify the empirical contribution the research produces. This thesis argues that one easy solution to avoid such confusion is to measure the concept along clearly defined political actions.

Several studies of political participation employ political participation indexes. The researchers aggregate various participation activities into a single index and can create additive scales (Olsen, 1970; Wong et al., 2005; Just and Anderson, 2012). Although it has certain methodological advantages for other studies, a measure of political participation through indices is not desired in this study for an obvious reason. The impact of individual and macro-level factors varies with the specific form of participation act being addressed. This highlights the importance of not merging distinct political activities into a single metric, as it can obscure valuable information. Scholars often use the participation index to predict the level of respondents' political involvement. However, using a cumulative index could distort the true level of political participation. This is because individuals who frequently participate in one political act may appear less 'politically participatory' than others who participate less often, but engage in a wider range of activities when they do (Dylko, 2010). Therefore, the adoption

of a unidimensional conceptualisation seems conceptually problematic for this study, underscoring the need for a more nuanced approach.

Indeed, the current research on the topic is marked by an operational heterogeneity. There are several other studies that have chosen to investigate participation as a distinct dependent variable (Verba et al., 1995; Quintelier, 2007; Melo and Stockemer, 2014). Similar to these general studies, the thesis is concerned with explaining participation versus non-participation. It provides a comparison of different contexts and groups in society. It aims at addressing the differences between immigrants and the majority population. Hence, it is not desirable to adopt standard typologies of participation nor to view political acts as interchangeable. On the contrary, an operationalisation respecting the theoretical distinctiveness of each participation act has the advantage of providing a detailed picture of the participation patterns. By unfolding the question of how immigrants participate in distinct political acts, one can offer meaningful insights into the state of the integration process.

Chapter 1 addressed the question of how to identify acts of political participation. Considering the continuous expansion of the repertoire of political participation and the long-lasting debate on its conceptualisation, the discussion showed that it is an increasingly difficult question to answer. Nevertheless, it also demonstrated that adopting a rather pragmatic approach can serve to avoid the trap of overstretching the concept of political participation. As stated earlier, the study adopted an 'operational' definition and defined political participation as voluntary actions by the members of the society in the domain of government, politics or the state or targeted at the domain of government, politics or the state (see Chapter 1). This brings us to the second question of how this definition translates empirically. Following van Deth (2001), it adopts a substantive strategy and abstains from identifying as many activities as possible. Instead, political participation in the selected forms is understood as individuals' activities in these processes. In other words, there are four dependent variables in this research: (1) voting in national elections, (2) working in a political party or action group, (3) membership in trade unions, and (4) participation in public protests. One of the limitations of this choice is that it does not include several other political acts. In addition to the four forms of political participation included in this study, the ESS survey provides a broad set of indicators including online political activity, such as posting or sharing political content on social media, and other forms of civic engagement, such as working in non-political organizations or associations, boycotting certain products, and contacting politicians or government officials. The inclusion of online political activity was particularly compelling, given the growing prominence of digital

political participation (Vissers and Stolle, 2014). However, a nuanced distinction is present between political participation and political communication. While online political engagement has become an important form of interaction in the digital age, it is debated whether this constitutes genuine political participation or is more accurately categorized as political communication (Hoffman, 2012; Dayican, 2014). As such, the decision to exclude this indicator in this study was made to avoid conflating passive political expression with active participation. Similarly, the ESS item measuring involvement in 'another organisation or association' was excluded, as it does not specify whether the organization is political or more broadly focused on civic or voluntary engagement. This makes it challenging to classify the activity as strictly political participation. Likewise, other indicators such as boycotting certain products, contacting politicians or government officials and signing petitions represent important political activities that are often used in studies of political engagement (Van Deth, 2012; Dubrow, Tomescu-Dubrow and Lavrinenko, 2022). Including these would certainly provide additional insights into the political behaviour of migrants. However, their inclusion would substantially broaden the scope of the analysis.

Therefore, this study intentionally focuses on a narrower set of political acts, offering an alternative to approaches that either collapse various forms of participation into a single measure or separate them into subgroups. The selected forms of participation—voting, protest participation, trade union membership, and working in political parties or action groups—seek to provide a balanced representation of both traditional and extra-parliamentary forms of political engagement while maintaining a manageable scope. Eventually, this approach aims to meaningful conclusions concerning the selected acts of participation. As mentioned, 'voter turnout' has been the most typical indicator in the political participation literature. Then, in particular, from the 1960s on, protest participation emerged amongst the 'new set of political activities that has been added to the citizens' political repertoire' (Barnes et al., 1979) and transformed the research on political participation. As Della Porta and Diani (2006) state, protest activity has become an enduring part of Western democracies. Protest activities can no longer be characterized as 'unconventional', and it seems more likely that we are living in a 'movement society'. This form of political engagement has been especially pertinent in the context of migrant populations. Unlike voting, which is often restricted by legal status and institutional barriers, protests offer a more accessible and direct avenue for expressing political grievances or support. They serve as a crucial platform for voicing concerns on social and legal issues, including discrimination, labour rights, and citizenship (Pero, 2011; Caraus, 2018). The

third form of political participation, 'membership in trade unions' is under-researched. General studies of political participation consider union membership as social capital and study its impact on political engagement (Johnson, 2005; Kerrissey and Schofer, 2013). Such studies align with and reflect the conventional function of trade unions, which is to be an 'agent of labour market regulation'. Nevertheless, it is also true that trade unions historically not only represented the labour concerns of workers, but trade union activism has played an essential role in promoting social and political rights. In the case of immigrants, trade unions were involved in issues beyond labour conditions and increasingly addressed the social and legal status of immigrant workers (Marino, Penninx and Roosblad, 2017). In support of unions' empowering role for immigrants, Martiniello (2005) refers to union politics as 'the cradle of immigrants' political participation'. He highlights that irrespective of the citizenship and legal status of their members, trade unions grant intermediate political rights to their members, such as equal rights to vote and participate within the union. Moreover, it is surprising that although immigrants have been considered mainly 'labour' in Europe, empirical studies on their union involvement are remarkably scarce.

Furthermore, it is important to mention there is an increasing focus in both academic and trade union circles on the concept of 'community unionism'. These forms of labour activism—driven by worker centres, informal collectives, and social movements—are particularly relevant in sectors where migrants are employed under precarious conditions and face structural barriers to traditional union membership (Fine, 2005; Holgate, 2009; Milkman, 2011; Hyland 2015). These grassroots initiatives frequently focus on broader social justice issues, advocating not only for improved labour conditions but also for migrant rights and legal protections (Alberti, Holgate & Tapia, 2013). The literature highlights that given the limitations to workplace-based unionism, coalitions with community groups are strategic for unions, especially in migrant-rich industries with deep contractual fragmentation. Empirical research supports the significance of grassroots labour activism in mobilizing migrant workers. Case studies of migrant labour organizing in cities like London and the US show that many migrant workers, especially in the hospitality and domestic sectors, engage in union-related activism through coalitions with community groups rather than through formal union structures (Alberti, 2016; Holgate, 2015) emphasizing that migrant labour mobilization often occurs outside traditional union frameworks. Campaigns such as *Justice for Janitors* 'Justice for Janitors' in various US cities, and the *Living Wage Movement* in London illustrate how migrant workers have successfully leveraged grassroots organizing to advocate for labour rights (Alberti, 2016). Unfortunately,

these new organizing approaches are not captured by the ESS data, which primarily measures formal trade union membership. As a result, the analysis may underestimate the extent of migrant political participation through labour activism.

Along with the measures that specifically focus on political participation, it is possible to measure the selected items in different ways. As the 2017 IMISCOE report puts forward, participation can be measured as follows:

In many dimensions (i.e. active in a trade union, but not a political party)

- At the individual, group, and societal level;
- Within a certain context (local, regional, national, European, and international);
- Over time (not one moment or threshold but different stages);
- In many directions (moving towards or away from equal outcomes with nationals)

As stated, political participation will be measured along four distinct dimensions in this thesis. For the selected forms of political participation, voter participation rate, demographic representation on electoral lists, political party membership rate, trade union membership rate, demographic representation in internal trade union positions, and participation rate in public protests are some different indicators that can be used. At this stage, it is important to choose suitable indicators that account for the level of analysis. Since this research focuses on the political behaviour and decisions of people with and without a migration background, the demographic representation is of no use for this analysis. Instead, political participation is measured by asking respondents whether they have participated in the above-mentioned political activities in the last 12 months.

The four dependent variables are coded as binary variables. The first variable, voting, is operationalized using the ESS survey question: 'Some people don't vote nowadays for one reason or another. Did you vote in the last [country] national election in [month/year]?' The second variable, political party engagement, is measured through the following ESS item: 'There are different ways of trying to improve things in [country] or help prevent things from going wrong. During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following? Have you worked in a political party or action group?' The third variable, protest participation, is drawn from the same survey item and measured by the question: 'During the last 12 months, have you taken part in a public demonstration?' The fourth variable, trade union membership, is captured by the question: 'Are you or have you ever been a member of a trade union or similar organisation? IF YES, is that currently or previously?' For this analysis, only current membership is

considered, meaning the variable is coded as 1 if the respondent is currently a trade union member and 0 otherwise. This decision is based on the assumption that ongoing membership is a stronger indicator of sustained political engagement, as trade unions function not only as labour market institutions but also as key political actors in shaping workers' rights and policies. While past membership could provide insights into previous participation, it may not necessarily reflect an individual's present political involvement. Additionally, including both current and past membership would introduce challenges in distinguishing between those who remained engaged and those who disengaged from union activism over time.

A classic shortcoming of the measurements in the thesis relates to the so-called turnout bias. According to Sciarini and Goldberg (2016), the phenomenon has two causes: 'overrepresentation of actual voters among survey respondents and vote overreporting by actual non-voters'. In other words, it is argued that politically involved individuals are more likely to take part in a survey about politics and, as they may feel under pressure, they are more likely to state they voted even if they did not (Presser and Traugott, 1992; Bernstein et al., 2001). Thus, it is necessary to acknowledge the flows of self-reported participation. Unlike the general studies of political participation, it will not be possible to report the difference between sample turnout and official turnout for immigrants. Although official statistics on immigrant turnout at the municipal level are available (Bird et al., 2011; Wass et al., 2015), to my knowledge, such data at the national level does not exist. Still, the resulting bias does not necessarily hamper the findings since immigrants and the majority may overreport their participation. More importantly, the point of interest in the study is not the participation rates per se but to explain the participatory 'gaps' between the two populations.

2.3 Data Sources

The data in this dissertation primarily comes from the European Social Survey (ESS), which includes data from several rounds: Round 7 (2014), Round 8 (2016), Round 9 (2018), and Round 10 (2020-2022). Notably, data from Italy is unavailable for Round 7 (2014), so its observations do not include data for that year but instead rely on Round 8 (2016), Round 9 (2018), and Round 10 (2020-2022).

As acknowledged in the literature, the ESS adopts high standards, particularly 'in its questionnaire design, the cross-national equivalence of the instruments used and the sampling procedures applied' (Jowell et al., 2007; Kohler, 2007; 2008). It is a high-quality dataset where the sampling design approximates a simple random sample and has a relatively high response

rate. It covers a wide range of countries, and the data are representative of the total population. Its wide coverage represents an opportunity for cross-national studies not only because it allows the analysis of cross-country differences between participant countries but also because its design allows cross-national analyses by ensuring that the questions are understood in the same way by respondents in different countries using different languages. Moreover, by offering information on the context, namely the country the respondent resides in, the ESS enables the merging of individual-level data with contextual data. Hence, since its foundation in 2001, the survey has become one of the most frequently referred data sources in studies of a wide range of topics.

After starting the overall strength of the ESS project, it is useful to mention the underlying criteria for its selection for the purpose of this investigation. The basic idea has been to find available data which contains information on a wide range of political participation items. For this purpose, relying on electoral surveys would not be sufficient. 'Politics' is one of the core modules of the ESS project, and the questionnaire contains a wide repertoire of political participation items, from voting in national elections to participating in public protests. Thus, the focus of interest in the thesis finds correspondence with the available data the ESS contains on the specific topic of political participation. Second, it is crucial to test the different sets of working hypotheses and reach empirical findings. The ESS survey provides information on several factors that are highlighted in the theoretical framework of the thesis. To mention a few, it contains relevant information for the empirical analysis of political interest, citizenship, background and status (age, gender, education, religious denomination, and country of birth). The availability of robust individual-level data on these characteristics has been a priority for the goal of reaching meaningful empirical findings in this study. Since its foundation in 2001, the ESS stands as one of the most frequently referred data sources in studies studying the impact of the above-mentioned factors on political behaviour (Quintelier, 2007; Melo and Stockemer, 2014; Sloam, 2016). Third, the thesis aims to carry out a wide-ranging comparative investigation of migrant political participation. As mentioned earlier, its broad cross-national design distinguishes this research from the earlier studies on the topic, which were predominantly designed as single-country or cross-city studies. Moreover, one of the strengths of the ESS project is that it is conducted in 30 European countries. It caters to the needs of cross-national analysis and thus, for the purpose of this study, it is superior to the to single-country data sets. It allows us to address the question of whether cross-national differences concerning individual-level political participation are merely individual in nature or driven by

different features of the respective national contexts migrant and native respondents live in. It should also be noted that as acknowledged in some other studies of migrant political participation, the ESS is one of the very few cross-national data collection projects that survey non-citizens as participants and obtain responses on their country of birth, citizenship, the length of stay in the country together with the questions on political participation items (Just and Anderson, 2012).

As mentioned earlier, the ESS is stated to be representative of the national population. However, it is equally important that the survey is representative of the foreign-born population in the Western countries under this study. To check if it holds, the percentage of foreign-born individuals in the ESS sample is calculated and compared with external data provided by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. The correlation coefficient (Pearson's R) being equal to 0.98, a fairly close fit is observed between the two samples of the foreign-born populations. It should be noted that the immigrant sample in this study is composed of foreign-born respondents and those who were born in the country with two foreign-born parents (also known as second-generation migrants). It was not possible to check the representatives of the ESS regarding the share of the second-generation immigrant population. However, the investigation has proved that the ESS is of high standards regarding the representativeness of the foreign-born population in the selected national samples.

2.3.1 Limitations of the ESS

Despite its strengths, the ESS presents certain limitations that must be acknowledged, as they may impact the interpretability and scope of this study's findings. Most of these limitations stem from the fact that the ESS is not an immigrant-specific survey, which affects how—and to what extent—migrants are identified and included in the sample. To participate, respondents must be registered in their host country and proficient in the host country's language, which may result in the underrepresentation of certain migrant groups, particularly recent arrivals and those with limited language proficiency.

One primary constraint is the limited sample size for specific ethnic groups. While the ESS provides a cross-national perspective on migrant political participation, it does not include direct information on ethnicity, which limits the ability to examine variations both across and within ethnic groups. Although this study incorporates key migration-related variables such as citizenship status and differentiates between EU and non-EU migrants—using the respondent's country of origin for the first generation and parental country of origin for the second

generation—ethnic identity remains unobservable. As a result, potential differences in political participation that are shaped by ethnic background, rather than national origin, cannot be fully explored.

A second major limitation concerns the absence of key immigration-specific factors that are well established in the literature as critical to understanding migrant integration and political engagement. While this study accounts for length of stay, citizenship status, and religion—which are relevant in understanding political participation—it cannot directly capture the role of linguistic integration or migration motives, which should be considered when interpreting the findings (Jacobs & Tillie, 2004; Luthra, Platt, & Salamońska, 2018; Bonotti & Willoughby, 2022, Erdocia, 2023).

Additionally, the representation of second-generation migrants in the ESS is limited and varies considerably across countries. While the dataset allows for the identification of foreign-born individuals and, their descendants, the sample sizes for second-generation migrants vary considerably across countries and some countries include only a small proportion of second-generation migrants, which complicates efforts to draw meaningful comparisons across contexts. To address this issue, this study pools data from multiple ESS rounds and prioritizes countries with sufficiently large second-generation migrant samples. However, this approach necessitates the exclusion of countries with very small second-generation samples, thereby affecting the generalizability of the findings.

Unlike immigrant-specific surveys, the ESS does not contain a direct question on migration status, so there is no immediate indicator of the respondents' migration status. It does not ask the respondents 'What is your current migration status in this country?' Instead, it contains information on the respondents' country of birth, their parents' country (s) of birth, the time of arrival to the country, citizenship status and religious denominations. These pieces of information are crucial for identifying respondents with a migration background. Moreover, the ESS introduced an additional measure of socio-cultural origins in Round 7 (2014), which includes an item on ancestry. The operationalization of the migrant variable in this thesis will be discussed in the following Method section.

While these limitations should be considered when interpreting the results, the ESS remains a comprehensive and methodologically rigorous cross-national datasets for studying migrant political participation in Europe. By leveraging its strengths—such as high data quality, repeated survey rounds, and standardized measures—this study seeks to maximize its potential

while acknowledging its limitations. The potential of the ESS survey as a high-quality data source has been noticed by scholars working on issues of immigrant political participation. For instance, the influential work by De Rooij (2012) explores variations in political participation patterns between natives and migrants in Europe, and the work by Just and Anderson (2012) shows the impact of citizenship versus immigrant status on immigrant political participation. Another cross-national study by Just and Anderson (2014) analyses the impact of opinion climates on immigrant political action and, in a similar vein, Tyrberg (2020), using the ESS data, shows the impact of anti-immigrant public opinion on immigrants' electoral participation.

As mentioned at the beginning of the section, the data collection mainly relies on the ESS project. While this is the general case, there are some additional sources that were employed to gather information on the macro-level determinants of immigrant political participation. To put it more frankly, information regarding the political opportunity structure of the specific national contexts[4] such as the present citizenship regimes and integration modes, comes from alternative sources. These are the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) and European equality law review and integration reports by the European Commission. Detailed information on these data sources can be found in Chapter 5 on the Macro-Level determinants of immigrant political participation.

2.4 Scope and Timeframe

The thesis investigates individual responses that are grouped within countries. It covers thirteen national contexts, namely Western European countries with significant populations of immigrant inhabitants. These countries are Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Spain, Finland, France, the UK, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and Sweden. The number of cases serves to cover a wide range of countries. Considering that the existing research on migrant political incorporation is limited to the study of a handful of national cases, the choice of the scope in this work hopes to move the field forward and provide a meaningful empirical contribution.

Moreover, it should be noted that local studies seem to be more appealing within the literature on ethnic political participation. This is the case because such studies merge a large number of local characteristics with a broader knowledge regarding a higher level of territorial unit such as the country. However, there is a certain misperception of the promotion of local studies over higher levels of territorial units. As Bartolini (2000) discusses, 'the issue of the level at which

[4] For more details on the data collection for each country, see also Appendix.

we decide to study a given phenomenon has nothing to do with context sensitivity, historical specificity, or level of abstraction'. Therefore, a decision to study migrant political participation at the cross-country level rather than the local can equally respect the goal of explaining the variance in a specific, context-sensitive and accurate manner.

This thesis aims to study immigrant political participation with a focus on the specific context of Western Europe. It represents a geographical area in which migration is an issue of great importance, shaping both the domestic and foreign policy of its countries. Since 1980s, a vast majority of Western European countries have experienced different types of mass migration. Many decades later, the so-called 'guest workers' are referred to as immigrants or 'foreigners' (Fassmann and Münz, 1992). Other countries with shores on the Mediterranean (Italy, Spain and Portugal), which had long been emigration countries, have evolved into countries of immigration. The following Chapter 3 (Descriptive Analysis) and Chapter 4 (Macro-level Determinants) will provide a detailed insight into the migration trajectory in these thirteen Western European countries. It will demonstrate a certain degree of similarity in some groups of counties in this region and the diversity in their experience of the migration phenomenon. One reality of the region is that Western Europe has become an epicentre of transnational migration. As stated in the United Nations (UN) report, 'most countries in the region state a preference to maintain current levels of immigration and to increase the influx of skilled workers, despite anxiety about the impact of immigration on cultural identities and jobs and concern about illegal border crossings and links between immigrant communities and actual or alleged terrorist plots'. Indeed, the anxiety over the issue has been successfully exploited by the far-right parties often manifests itself in the electoral campaigns and national elections (Grande et al., 2019).

Beyond its political debates, migration is expected to have enduring demographic effects in Western Europe. Naumann and Hess (2021) identify migration and demographic ageing as the two dominant trends in Western Europe. Regarding the latter, the region has an ageing population. According to the UN Population Division statistic, 'more than 20 per cent of Western Europeans are over 60 years old, a higher ratio than in any other region'. Increasing life expectancy and low birth rates are considered to be the two main drivers of the rapidly ageing population. Population ageing has a specific impact on pensions and health care systems. In 2015, there were around three to five working-age individuals responsible for each pensionable individual; by 2040, this support ratio is expected to drop to 2:1 or even lower. The second demographic trend is related to the migration. In light of the slow population growth in

these countries, migration is acknowledged to be a key demographic element (Coleman, 2008; Marois et al., 2020). As summarised in Eurostat data, there is an increase in the share of foreign-born population across all countries in Western Europe. Several studies demonstrate that the presence of a migrant population has balanced the shrinking population trends in these countries (Bacci, 2018; UN Population Division, 2017; Bagavos, 2022). Also, the Eurostat data suggests that, compared to the natives, the migrant-origin population is younger, and they make up a larger share of relatively young working-age adults. In 2022, the median age of immigrants in member states was under 30, while the EU's overall population was 44.4 years old. As it has been in the past, migration is expected to influence the structure of the working population in Western Europe and, more generally, the composition of its population.

Unfortunately, this sample does not represent the entire universe of Western European countries. In fact, although considered part of this area, Luxemburg, Iceland, Norway, and Denmark are not included in the analysis due to methodological constraints. While these countries are home to various immigrant communities, the dataset does not include sufficient migrant respondents to run the analysis. Similarly, the reason to limit the study of migrant political participation to the context of Western European countries and exclude East Europe is due to methodological concerns. Operationalisation of the immigrant category, or in other words, the identification of immigrants in the sample, is more challenging in the context of East Europe. As state boundaries changed over the past 30 years[5] in the region and the consequent vagueness what a 'different' country of birth can mean to the respondents, I decided not to include immigrants from this geographical area. In fact, a closer look into the 'migrant' sample in the post-Soviet countries revealed that Russia was stated as the dominant response as the respondents' country of birth the respondents and the sample displayed a very low share of non-European origin (0-2%). Table 1 shows the final list of the 13 countries for which it was possible to identify a significant number of immigrant respondents.

Despite certain limitations, the 13 countries included in the study provide a diverse set of contexts. They differ significantly in terms of their historical migration patterns, political systems, and integration policies, which are considered to be critical in shaping migrant political participation. This variation is essential for testing the context-related hypotheses proposed in the thesis. First, these countries represent different stages and types of immigration, ranging from long-established immigrant populations (e.g., France, Germany) to more recent migration

[5] break-up of Czechoslovakia, the USSR or Yugoslavia

destinations (e.g., Spain, Italy, Portugal). A second aspect of these countries is the diversity in the way they grant political rights to migrants. For example, Sweden and the Netherlands allow migrants to vote in local elections, providing an important context to examine the impact of political rights on engagement. This contrasts with countries like France and Germany, where voting rights are restricted to citizens. By including both types of countries, this study is able to explore the ways in which the availability (or lack thereof) of political rights influences migrant political behavior. Third, the integration policies adopted by these countries vary considerably. For example, Sweden and the United Kingdom have adopted multicultural policies that encourage the preservation of migrants' cultural identities alongside their integration into society. In contrast, countries like France and Italy have faced criticism for more exclusionary or assimilationist approaches to integration. Similarly, the political climates and public discourses surrounding migration vary widely across these countries. In this vein, the diversity in these factors aims to provides a rich context for testing the context-related hypotheses of the thesis, while maintaining a sufficient sample of first- and second-generation migrants to conduct a robust analysis

Table 2.1 List of countries by immigrant status and sample size

Country	**Immigrant**
Austria	1,042
Belgium	1,146
Switzerland	1,929
Germany	2,157
Spain	769
France	1,117
United Kingdom	1,088
Ireland	1,176
Italy	639
Netherlands	688
Finland	317
Portugal	442
Sweden	1,026
N	13,536

Note: Data not weighted. Source: European Social Survey (ESS) Rounds 7-10.

Note 2: Round 7 (2014) is unavailable for Italy.

In order to keep the investigation up to date, the temporal span of the data covers from 2014 to 2022. The inclusion of the different rounds of the European Social Survey (ESS) has two implications for this thesis. First, it provides valuable insight into migrant political behaviour over the years and enables the identification of some changes in political participation patterns. Second, the choice of timespan reflects a methodological necessity. General population surveys, such as the ESS in this study, frequently use random sampling methods. However, as stated by Reichel and Morales (2017), 'for specific sub-populations these techniques usually do not pay off in terms of cost-effectiveness because the sampling process would take too long in order to find a large sample of the specific sub-groups. The smaller the size of the targeted sub-population, the less cost-effective these alternatives are, and immigrants are often a small sub-group in the overall population, especially once certain national origins are excluded from the target population'. For this study, the currentness of information is one of the priorities. For this reason, it does not refer to the waves dating before 2014. At the same time, focusing only on the most current wave, round 10 (2020-2022), would produce very few migrant respondents in many countries under study. Therefore, the choice to involve several rounds of ESS is not random but strategic. It serves to ensure an adequate number of immigrant respondents in the analysis.

2.5 Methods

As argued in the theoretical section, the two principal aims of this research are first to identify the gaps in three political participation items, namely voting in national elections, trade union membership, and participation in public demonstrations between the immigrant and autochthonous populations and eventually to explain these differences. Therefore, the research is carried out in two stages: descriptive and explanatory.

For the first stage, summary statistics is performed to get information on the basic statistics of the dependent variables. It enables us to understand the important characteristics of the three political participation items: voting in national elections, trade union membership and protest participation. In particular, the reported number of observations, mean value, and standard deviation for each participation item have been essential to understanding the distribution of the variables.

As mentioned earlier, the analysis is comparative in that it takes a cross-national approach, and the political participation of immigrant respondents is always reported alongside the native respondents. Thus, an independent-samples t-test is run to determine if the political

participation means of the immigrant sample are significantly different from the sample means from the native population. With regards to the cross-country differences in political participation, the descriptive statistics show the distribution of immigrants participating in the respective political acts for the thirteen countries under analysis. The frequency tables and visual charts are used to show the frequency distribution of immigrant political participation across the countries. As discussed earlier, one goal of this thesis is to assess the potential participatory 'gap' between the immigrant and native populations in the sample. In order to describe the participatory deficit', the analysis subtracted the participation rates of the immigrant sample from the rates of the autochthonous population. Finally, throughout the descriptive analyses, the cross-tabulations, also known as a contingency table, were used to describe the relationship between two or more variables. Through the crosstabulations, valuable insights were offered on the relationship between political participation items and the included variables. The accompanying Chi-squared tests provided valuable information on the question of whether a significant relationship exists and the strength of the relationship between the political participation items and the independent variables.

The second stage, which is at the heart of this thesis, is explanatory. The logistic regression analysis performed aimed to assess the effect of independent variables (explanans) on the dependent variable(s) (*explanandum).* The choice of logistic regression over the linear regression analysis is due to the fact that the dependent variables in this study are dichotomous (with two possibilities, such as '0' or '1'). In order words, the goal is to explain immigrant political participation versus non-participation rather than explaining more or less participation, which would be conceptualised as a continuous dependent variable. Although traditionally dichotomous dependent variables were addressed by ordinary least squares (OLS) regression this procedure is considered to be less than ideal for conceptual as well as technical reasons (Cox and Snell, 1989; Peng et al., 2002; Speelman, 2014). Attributable to its 'strict statistical assumptions such as linearity, normality, and continuity' the OLS regression was not regarded as ideal for testing hypotheses about a categorical outcome and one or more categorical or continuous predictor variables (Peng et al., 2002). Logistic regression models, starting from the 1970s, have become one of the most widely used binary models (Cox, 1969; Cramer, 2003). Currently, logistic regression models are acknowledged as one of the most relevant statistical practices in a wide range of disciplines, such as medicine, econometrics, and social science. As stated by Sperandei (2013), one of the greatest advantages of logistic regression is that 'it is easier to handle more than two explanatory variables simultaneously. Although apparently

trivial, this last characteristic is essential when we are interested in the impact of various explanatory variables on the response variable'.

Another reason why the study chose to perform logistic regression is due to technical reasons. First, when trying to fit a straight line, there is the risk of assigning impossible average proportions of political participation to some values of the predictor. When this only occurs for predictor values outside the range of our research interest, this may not hamper the results. If, however, this happens for predictor values inside the range of our research interest, that would very much change the quality and accountability of the findings. Second, the inherent inferential test in OLS is the assumption that the errors are normally distributed with mean zero and with a variance that does not change for the values of the explanatory variables. As illustrated by Speelman (2014), this assumption cannot be met since 'with two possible values, a normal distribution is impossible'. Similarly, equal variance across very different ratios of political participation becomes impossible. Thus, conducting logistic regression includes different assumptions.

Logistic regression uses an equation similar to linear regression, yet the output value can take a binary value rather than a numeric value. The logistic regression performed models the chance of participation in selected activities based on the predictors. Because chance is a ratio, what is modelled is the logarithm of the chance given by:

$$\log\left(\frac{P}{1-P}\right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \ldots \beta_m X_m$$

In summary, P represents the probability of immigrants affirming their participation in the political acts, β_i are the regression coefficients and the X_i the explanatory variables. When X_i equals 0, the intercept β_0 is the log of the odds of having the outcome, participating in the respective act. Alternatively, since the idea of log odds seems rather difficult to understand, the following formula, also known as the Sigmoid function, represents the relationship between the probability of 'having participated' in politics and the intercept β_0:

$$P = \frac{e^{\beta 0 + \beta 1 X}}{1 + e^{\beta 0 + \beta 1 X}}$$

The formula resembles linear regression; however, unlike linear regression, it applies the standard regression formula inside the logistic function of e^x / (1 + e^x). The logistic function enables to calculate the probability of political participation for every given value of X. Another

issue important to mention is the assessment of the model fit. There are different methods that can be used. The Pearson chi-square and residual deviance statistics are two of the most often used techniques for evaluating model fit. Both calculate the discrepancy between results as anticipated by the model and those observed. To ensure the measures are accurate, it is necessary to have a sufficient number of observations for various patterns of explanatory variables (Stoltzfus, 2011). Another commonly utilized metric for assessing model fit is the Hosmer-Lemeshow goodness-of-fit test. This method offers a more straightforward application and simple interpretation compared to others and thus, the method Hosmer-Lemeshow is employed through the analysis.

Given the inclusion of both individual-level and macro-level explanatory variables, a multilevel logistic regression model is applied. This method is necessary because respondents are clustered within countries, meaning that individuals within the same country share common contextual factors (e.g., political institutions, migration policies, citizenship regimes, and labour market conditions). Ignoring this hierarchical structure could lead to underestimated standard errors and incorrect inferences. By incorporating a multilevel approach, the analysis accounts for the nested structure of the data, adjusts for intra-country correlation, and enables a more accurate examination of how both individual and macro-level factors shape immigrant political participation across different contexts. The model is structured as follows:

> **Level 1 (Individual-level):** This level includes variables that capture socio-demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, citizenship status, country of origin), socio-economic status (e.g., education, income), political attitudes (e.g., political interest, political efficacy), perceived discrimination, length of stay, and whether the immigrant spent their formative years in the host country.
>
> **Level 2 (Macro-level):** This level includes country-level factors, such as the presence of electoral rights for non-nationals, citizenship regimes, public opinion towards migrants, and whether the country is classified as a new migration country.

Additionally, to explore whether the effects of individual-level variables differ across contexts, I incorporate interaction terms between individual-level and macro-level variables. This will help determine whether the impact of individual characteristics varies depending on the country context. Chapter 6 will discuss how this multilevel logistic regression will allow us to assess

whether the relationship between individual-level predictors and political participation is moderated by macro-level factors.

2.6 Independent Variables

As part of the main features of the research design, this last section briefly introduces the independent variables, namely the potential determinants of immigrant political participation in Western Europe. It is a brief introduction because the analytical chapters of the thesis carry out an extensive discussion of the macro-contextual and individual level determinants of immigrant political participation (see Chapters 3-5). Therefore, this section does not discuss the state of the art on these variables nor present the related working hypotheses.

In order to explain the political participation patterns of immigrants and reveal their national variations, the potential determinant factors can be grouped into two categories: macro-institutional determinants (also referred to as the factors related to the political opportunity structure (POS)) and individual determinants. As mentioned earlier, prior research provided evidence that individual characteristics shape political participation (Verba and Nie, 1972). Yet, limited research investigates the contribution of traditional variables in predicting immigrant political behaviour (Ramakrishnan, 2005; Dancygier, 2013). More importantly, their findings on the topic are not always consistent. The model in this thesis includes individual resources related to socioeconomic status, political efficacy and political interest. Their inclusion in this model is for two reasons. The former concerns their significance in the political participation literature, and the latter intends to provide an answer to the question of to what extent these standard variables of participation can predict immigrant political participation. In addition to these factors, the model draws attention to the importance of immigration-specific individual characteristics and attitudes, such as length of stay in the country and perceived discrimination based on ethnicity, nationality, religion, colour or race. Given the importance of immigrant-specific variables, I included citizenship status and country of origin as additional controls. These demographic characteristics can be of particular importance in accounting for the variation among immigrant groups in their participation patterns. This approach examines several factors related to immigration experience that have been ignored in previous studies of participation. Hence, the model of immigrant political participation in this thesis goes beyond the standard explanations of political behaviour.

Having said so, the goal of this thesis is to build a more complete model of political participation. For this reason, it is necessary to draw on the potential effects of macro-

institutional contexts. As mentioned earlier, the units of analysis in this study are individual respondents interviewed by the European Social Survey (ESS). Due to the design of the ESS, the respondents are nested within the participant countries. Cross-country variations in the political opportunity structures may systematically increase or undermine immigrants' ability and willingness to political incorporation. In this case, a multilevel regression modelling to analyse data is preferred. The model incorporates both individual characteristics and institutional settings to demonstrate how the two sets of factors can shape and predict immigrants' political participation across contexts. Immigrants in this study face various institutional settings which are likely to affect their ability or willingness to participate in political processes. Within the same institutional contexts, individual characteristics and traits may lead to differences in immigrants' political participation. However, comparing across institutional settings, electoral institutions, i.e. right to vote, citizenship regimes and opinion climates may shape immigrants' political participation. The distribution of some electoral rights is more egalitarian; citizenship regimes are more liberal, and opinion climates are more conducive to the political participation of immigrants in some countries than others. Thus, adopting a comparative contextual approach to the study of immigrant political behaviour is essential. Figure 2.1 summarises these dynamics.

The two sets of explanatory factors are introduced, operationalised and tested in the subsequent analytical Chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4 highlights the importance of macro-level predictors of immigrant political behaviour, whereas Chapter 5 is devoted to individual-level variables. Eventually, Chapter 6 demonstrates, through a multivariate logistic regression analysis, the importance and predictive power of various variables, thus displaying which factors have a significant role in predicting immigrant political participation and instead which others are not related to it.

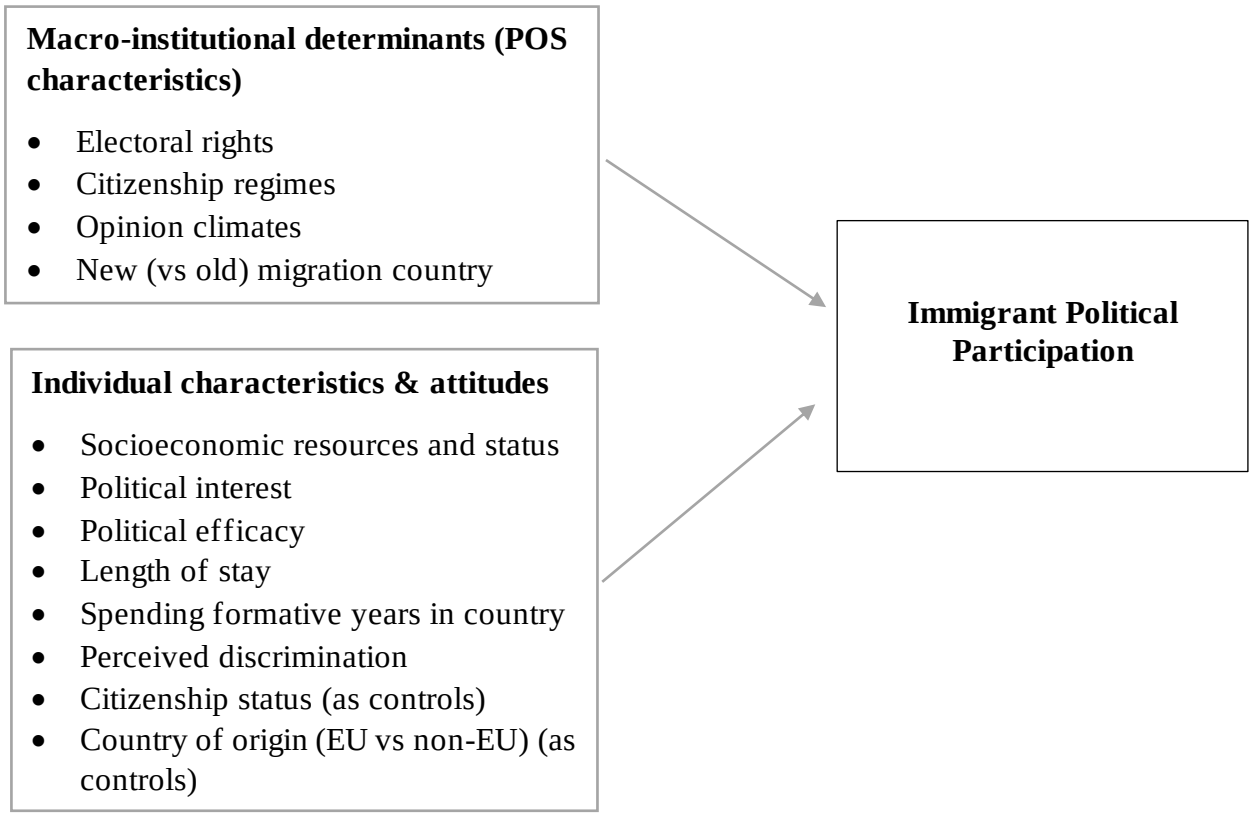

Figure 2.1 Main potential determinants of immigrant political participation in Western Europe

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Chapter 3

Political Participation Patterns

3.1 Describing 'A Participation Gap' Between Migrants and Natives

This chapter is devoted to the evaluation of the political participation amongst immigrant respondents based on the European Social Survey (ESS) data. It provides a detailed analysis of migrant political participation across countries and among different categories of migrants, offering insights into patterns of engagement and group-specific variations. More specifically, the chapter begins with a country-level comparison of political participation, examining the participation gap between migrants and natives. The aim is to determine the extent to which participation levels are similar across these two groups and to identify countries where a wider gap can be observed. This analysis focuses on three key forms of political participation: voter turnout, trade union membership, and protest participation. To systematically assess these differences, countries are ranked according to the size of the participation gap between natives and immigrants.

By doing so, this chapter addresses the questions posed in Chapter 1: To what extent do migrants engage in politics at similar rates as natives, or does a participatory deficit—such as the one suggested by Morales and Giugni (2011)—persist between majority populations and ethnic minorities in Europe? Moreover, can we identify cross-country variations that indicate distinct participation patterns and potentially different mechanisms shaping political engagement for these two populations? Are there cases where the migrant-native participatory gap is particularly pronounced, or, conversely, where such a gap is negligible or non-existent?

Followingly, the second part of the chapter, 'Inter-group Variations in Political Participation', explores the variations in political participation within the migrant population by disaggregating the broad 'migrant' category along several dimensions. Recognizing that migrants are far from being a homogenous group, this analysis differentiates between first- and second-generation migrants, EU and non-EU migrants, and citizens and non-citizens. To provide a more nuanced classification, non-citizen migrants are further divided into EU non-citizens and non-EU non-citizens, acknowledging that EU nationals—despite lacking host-country citizenship—often share similar socio-political characteristics with native-born citizens due to their legal rights and mobility privileges within the EU. In addition, religious affiliation is considered as a key inter-group characteristic, distinguishing among Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Muslim, and other religious groups. Rather than treating migrants as a monolithic category, this section

emphasizes the importance of recognizing their intra-group diversity. The descriptive analysis aims to highlight both commonalities and differences across subgroups, illustrating how migration-specific characteristics may shape patterns of political participation.

3.2 Cross-country Variations in Political Participation

3.2.1 Voter turnout

Figure 3.2 plots the cross-country variations of electoral participation for *citizen* migrant respondents and the native population in thirteen countries under study. The number of migrants per country is detailed earlier in Table 2.1, which provides a breakdown of the sample sizes by immigrant status and country. A first look at the turnout rates reveals interesting national variations.

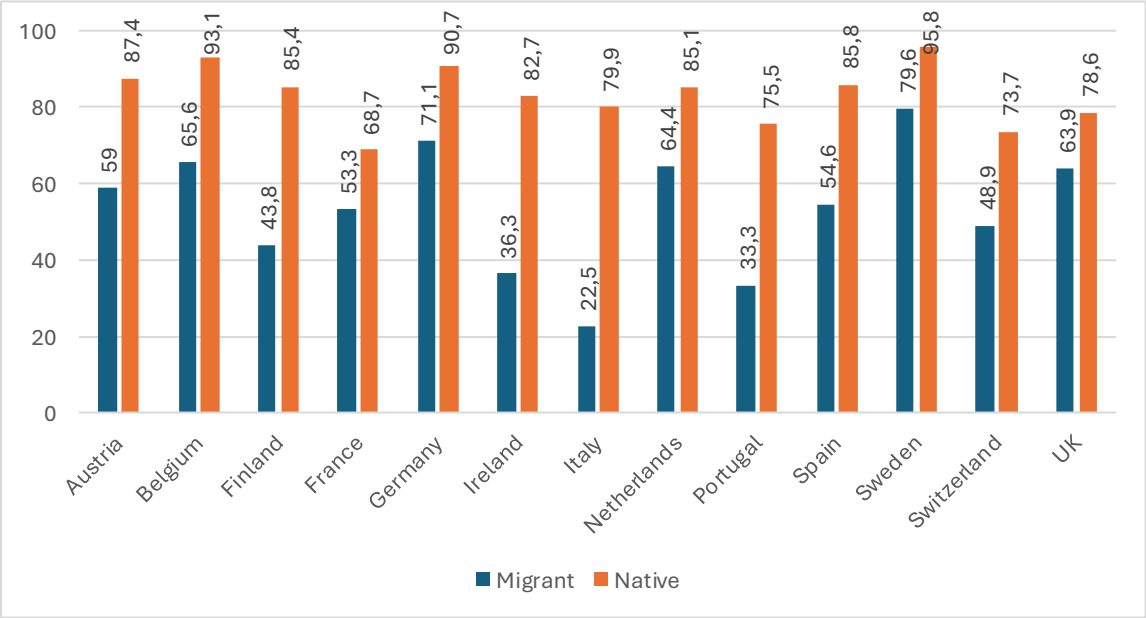

Figure 3.1 Percentage of voter turnout for migrant and native populations by country

As it can be seen in the Figure above, there is a remarkable variation across the countries analysed. On the one hand, evidence from Germany (71 per cent) and Sweden (79 per cent) display considerably high turnout rates for migrants, way above the Pan-European average (58 per cent). The two countries are followed by Belgium, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, displaying high levels of turnout among migrant respondents. To a lesser extent, and aligning with the European average, more than half of the migrant respondents in Austria, France and Spain reported their participation in the national elections. On the other hand, the other three countries, Portugal, Ireland, and Italy, are marked with the lowest turnout rates amongst migrant respondents.

Despite the disparity between migrants and natives is evident across all countries, the gap is more striking for some countries. In the case of Italy, migrants not only have the lowest turnout rates (22 per cent) in Europe but also the migrant-native gap in electoral participation is the widest (57 per cent). Such a remarkable gap points out the relevance of the institutional framework and particularly the highly constraining citizenship policies in Italy. The country is marked with one of Europe's most restrictive citizenship laws (MIPEX 2020)[6]. In particular, the path to citizenship is the longest for non-EU citizens, who must wait ten years before starting a highly discretional naturalisation procedure (Tintori, 2013). Beyond any doubt, the restrictive nature of the Italian institutional framework can contribute to the disparities between the immigrant and native populations in political life as well. Italy is followed by Ireland and Portugal, the two countries where a wide participation gap persists, yet to a lesser extent than the Italian case. On the other side of the spectrum, there are countries where turnout rates between migrant and native populations are more balanced. For instance, differences in voter turnout between the two populations in the United Kingdom, France, and Sweden are not as large as in other countries in Europe.

A detailed look into the initial evidence from the cross-country comparisons has another implication: the importance of reporting the migrant political participation levels in comparison to those of the natives. In other words, to have a detailed and more accurate understanding of migrants' electoral participation in each country, natives should be the reference category. For instance, the evidence suggests that turnout rates of migrants are highest in the Swedish case, yet it should be noted that natives in Sweden also display a record turnout rate (96 per cent). It should be mentioned that turnout responses are overreported in individual-level surveys. As a result of social pressure and/or to conform to group norms, respondents tend to declare they voted in the elections even if they did not (Presser and Traugott, 1992; Bernstein et al., 2001). Compared to the natives, the turnout difference between the two samples is 16 per cent, whereas there are other national contexts where the migrant-native differences in turnout are lower, such as in the United Kingdom. In the British case, while migrants seem to report a lower turnout rate (65 per cent), which is still above the Pan-European average, participation rates among natives are 78 per cent, indicating a smaller, even slight, migrant-native turnout difference (14 per cent) than the Swedish case.

[6] See also Access to Nationality | MIPEX 2020

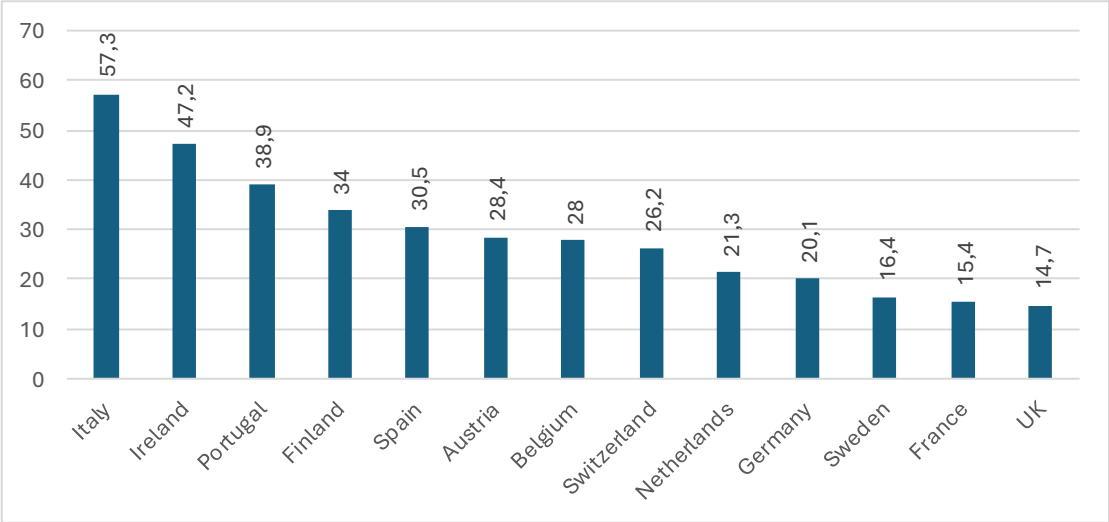

Figure 3.2 Percentage of migrant-native voter turnout gap by country

3.2.2 Trade Union Membership

Trade unions have historically played an important role in the political and economic incorporation of migrant workers. As Figure 3.4 illustrates, trade union membership among migrants varies greatly across the countries analysed. Some countries display notably high levels of migrant participation in unions, while others show low engagement, pointing to the role of distinct national labour market structures, union traditions, and integration policies.

In Sweden, Finland, and Belgium, trade union membership among migrants is particularly high. In Sweden (71.3 per cent), where trade unions play a central role in the labor market and social protection system, reported migrant membership reaches notably high levels. Finland (57.3 per cent) follows a similar pattern, likewise Belgium (45 per cent) exhibits a high degree of migrant incorporation in trade unions. Countries such as Austria, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands show moderate levels of migrant trade union membership. While migrants in these countries are involved in unions to a considerable extent, there are notable differences in the gap between native and migrant membership. In contrast, countries such as Ireland, France Switzerland and Spain display decreasing unionization scores. As the initial evidence suggests, migrant unionization rates are rather low in the Mediterranean countries of Portugal, Spain and Italy. In the Italian case, migrant trade union membership is the lowest, with only 7 per cent of the migrant sample declaring their participation in the union.

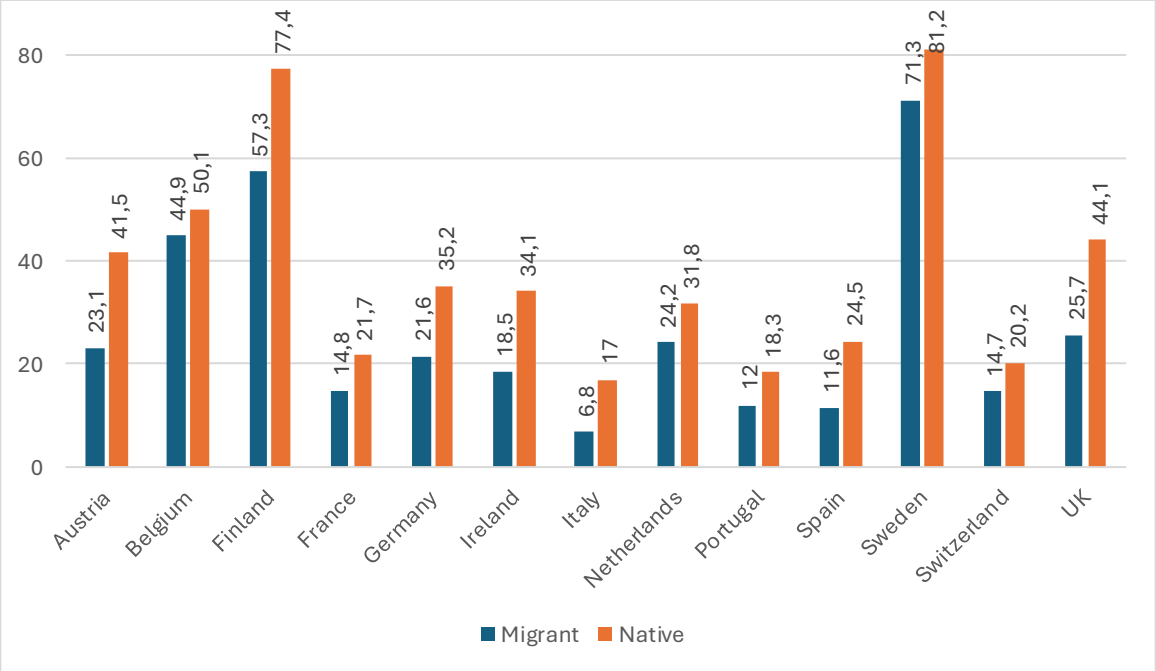

Figure 3.3 Percentage of trade union membership for migrant and native populations by country

However, these are simply average union membership scores per country for migrant respondents and do not reveal information on the presence of an ethnic gap in the unionization rates in these contexts. Figure 3.5, therefore, plots the difference between unionization rates for the migrant and native populations while enabling a description of a potential ethnic gap in each country. Even though the descriptive statistics in this section merely have the purpose of depicting a clear picture of political participation in Europe, some key differences between the thirteen countries can be identified. Firstly, based on the initial data, Belgium seems to be a favourable case for migrant unionisation. This is because, in the Belgian case, migrant trade union membership rates are one of the highest in Europe, but equally important, the migrant-native gap in unionization is quite low (5 per cent). Secondly, the findings on Austria and the United Kingdom are interesting. The two countries, previously, together with the Netherlands, constituted the block in which unionisation rates for migrants are similar to the overall average (25 per cent). However, the descriptives also reveal one of the highest native-migrant gaps in unionisation rates in these countries (18 per cent).

Meanwhile, natives have relatively lower unionisation rates in the Netherlands compared to the natives in the Austrian and British cases. Even though the migrants' unionisation rates are similar in the three countries, this produces a smaller ethnic gap in the Netherlands (7 per cent). Furthermore, illustrated in Figure 3, the evidence shows that Finland, after Sweden (71 per

cent), has a remarkably high trade union membership rate (58 per cent) among migrants. Yet, surprisingly, the analysis detects a noticeable difference between migrants and natives in two Nordic countries. Despite the average unionisation rates for immigrants are above the European average in both countries, native migrant difference translates into a of 20 per cent in the Finnish case.

Lastly, the Mediterranean countries of Portugal (12 per cent), Spain (11 per cent) and Italy (6 per cent) display low rates of unionization among migrant respondents. Yet even though the migrant unionisation rates are among the lowest, it is interesting to see that the migrant-native gap in union membership levels do not really exceed the overall average (12 per cent). To put it in other words, not only migrant respondents but also natives in these three countries have expressed low membership rates. Around 20 per cent of natives in the Portuguese case, 17 per cent in Italy, and 24 per cent in Spain declared to be trade union members. This suggests that low union participation in these countries may not merely an issue of migrant exclusion but rather reflects a broader decline in trade union influence within the labor market. In this regard, trade union membership in Europe not only displays an ethnic dimension but also the differences and similarities across countries point to the importance of the national culture in unionisation and the different organisational strategies in place.

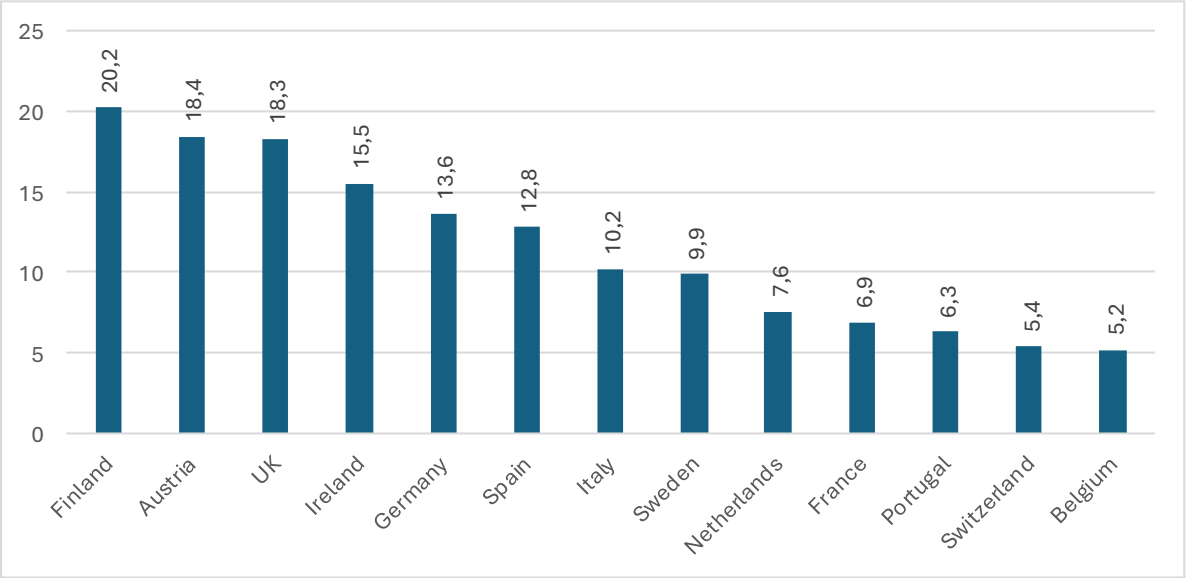

Figure 3.4 Percentage of migrant-native union membership gap by country

3.2.3 Involvement in Public Protests

A cross-country comparison of protest participation among migrant and native respondents reveals interesting findings. As the Figure 3.x shows, protest participation appears to be the

only item in the data, where participation rates of migrants exceeds those of natives in several countries. Sweden appears to be the country where migrant respondents have the highest participation level, 13 per cent. Participation levels in Sweden are followed by France, Spain, Germany and Austria. Meanwhile, differing from their Mediterranean companion Spain, migrants' participation in Italy and Portugal is low. Only 4 per cent of the migrant respondents declared their participation in public protests in the two countries.

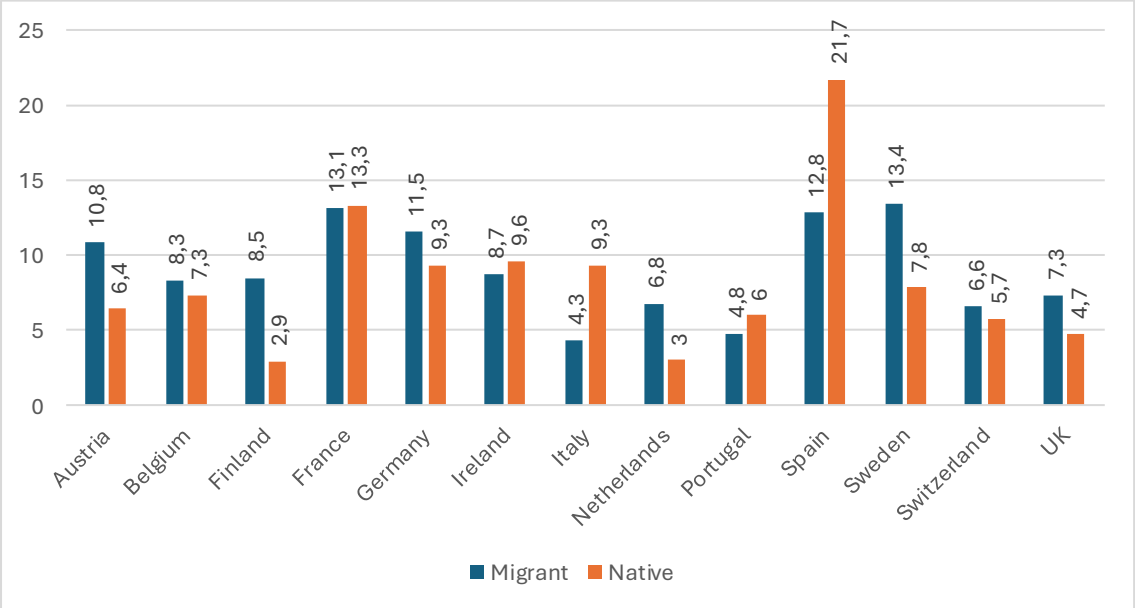

Figure 3.5 Percentage of protest participation for migrant and native populations by country

Even though some countries are associated with higher, and some have lower rates of protest participation by their migrant members, the migrant-native comparison reveals a more precise story. By taking into account cross-country variations across groups, Figure 3.7 presents some different patterns. First of all, it can be seen that, in some countries, protest participation rates amongst migrant respondents exceed those of natives. These cases are shown in the y-axis negative and are more evident in the cases of Austria (4.83 per cent), Netherlands (4.10), Finland (4.45 per cent), and Sweden (5.83 per cent). The two Scandinavian countries are marked with a high surpass in migrants' involvement in protests. Secondly, the initial evidence shows almost equal participation levels between migrant and native populations in some countries. Namely, in France, Belgium, Portugal, Ireland and Switzerland, the native-migrant gap is very small as respondents from the two samples in these countries declared matching participation rates in public protests. Finally, Italy and Spain appear to be two countries in which native respondents' participation levels exceed those of migrants. As seen in Figure 3.7, Spain, in particular, displays the widest native-migrant gap in protest participation, a gap of

almost 9 per cent. Nevertheless, the mechanisms that lead to this difference are important, and the present gap does not merely mean Spain provides a less favourable context for migrants' involvement in public demonstrations. On the contrary, migrant participation rates in Spain (12.83 per cent) are above the European average (9 per cent) and the third highest in Europe, after Sweden and France. The present native-migrant gap in the Spanish case seems to result from notably high participation rates of natives in the country. As can be seen in Figure 3.6, natives in the Spanish sample have a participation score of 21.6 per cent, way higher than other European countries.

The cross-country variations in protest involvement have other important implications.

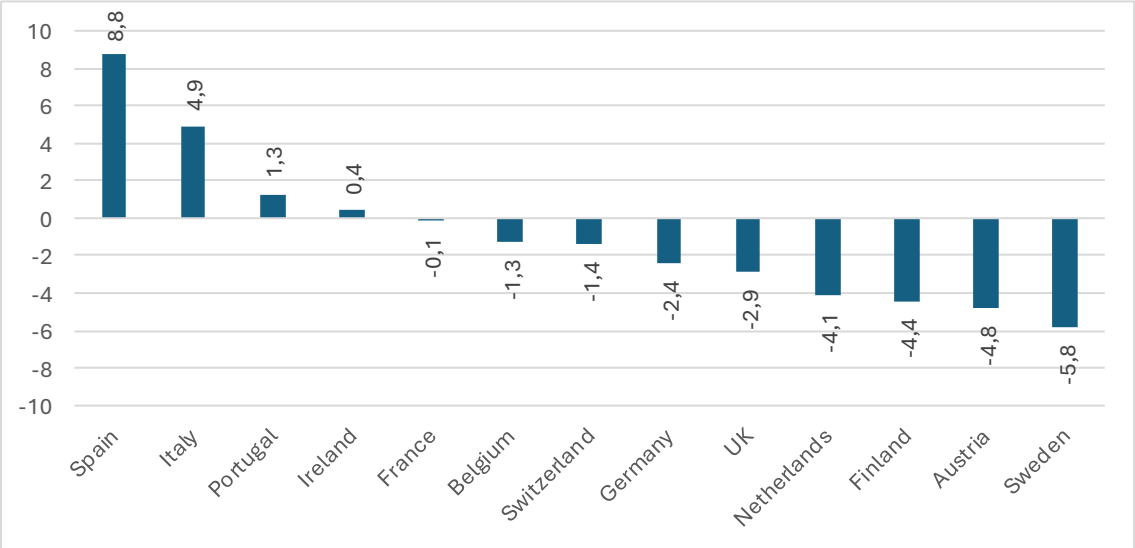

Figure 3.6 Percentage of migrant-native gap in protest participation by country

From a validity perspective, the measurement of protest involvement in surveys relies on self-reported participation on legal demonstrations, which may be influenced by social desirability bias, recall issues, or differences in the interpretation of what constitutes a protest event. For instance, in countries where protests are a common and accepted form of political expression, both migrants and natives may be more likely to report participation, whereas in contexts where protests are less frequent or carry higher risks, participation rates may be underreported. Similarly, migrants who engage in community-based activism (e.g., informal neighborhood organizing or advocacy work) may not recognize their actions as "public protests" or migrants who participate in unauthorized (e.g., workplace strikes without union approval, sit-ins, or undocumented migrants' protests) might not report them.

From a substantive perspective, the variations in protest participation suggest important structural and contextual differences. As stated in the theoretical Chapter 1, migrants'

participation in politics and decision-making is an important indicator of their incorporation into society and their willingness to be a part of it (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2013). As much as the low participation of minority groups in politics compared to natives signals problems in the inclusiveness of policies and the national context, so can migrants' higher engagement in protests. In this scenario, by choice or necessity, migrants may take part in public protests to make their opinions heard because other forms of participatory channels are either closed to them or more difficult to access.

This is particularly relevant for non-citizen migrants, who may lack access to formal electoral participation and thus rely on extra-institutional activism. In this context, protest participation could signal either exclusion from institutional politics or active mobilization and empowerment. The distinction between these two interpretations depends on the specific political opportunity structures, the role of civil society, and the degree to which migrants feel represented within mainstream political institutions.

Finally, the presence of countries where migrants and natives have similar participation levels suggests that structural factors—such as labour market conditions, union strength, and the role of grassroots organizations—may shape protest engagement in ways that go beyond simple ethnic divides. Understanding these mechanisms requires further examination of the political environments, legal frameworks, and mobilization opportunities available to migrants across different contexts.

3.3 Inter-group Variations in Political Participation

This chapter not only aims to discover the migrant-native differences and the cross-country variations in political participation, but it also has the objective to demonstrate the diversity within the migrant category. In other words, respondents with a migration background do not represent a homogenous group and studies, such as this one, aimed at analysing migrant populations should recognize the potential variations across migrant groups. Migrants come from a variety of countries and cultures, have different rights, including political rights and can belong to different generations, first and second-generation in this study. These migration-specific characteristics should be reflected in any research that prioritizes drawing a nuanced and more accurate picture of minority participation patterns.

Do different groups of migrants participate in politics at similar rates? Is there a homogeneous pattern in their participation levels? Or, on the contrary, can we detect inter-group variations in migrant respondents' participation rates in Europe? In order to achieve an assessment of

migrants' diversity, migrant respondents' citizenship status, generational status, religious denomination and country of origin are employed to build sub-groups of the migrant category. Proposing these sub-groups enables the identification of migrants who share similar characteristics. Certainly, there may be other migration-specific characteristics this study could employ to show the category's diversity. However, the current strategy enables the formation of the sub-groups without fragmenting the analysis too much or ending up with groups consisting of just a handful of respondents.

3.3.1 Citizenship Status and Political Participation

Just as migrant and native respondents seem to participate in a range of political activities at different rates, or as their participation converges in some cases, there is sufficient reason to expect varying participation patterns between citizen migrants and non-citizen migrants. As stated by Just and Anderson (2012), the key difference between the two groups, citizenship status, regulates preferences for particular forms of political activities. Non-citizen migrants tend to have a more risky or unstable legal and social position, which may make their participation unlikely in activities involving disputes and confrontations (Varsanyi, 2005; Lee, 2008). As Just and Anderson (2012) suggest that citizenship status is a legal and emotional remedy to participate in such activities as public demonstrations. As opposed to this argument, migrants who lack citizenship status tend to be excluded from political institutions. Their exclusion from the institutional forms of participation leads them to actions that are even costly or confrontational.

Importantly, to provide a more nuanced understanding of political participation among migrants, this section moves beyond the basic distinction between citizen and non-citizen migrants. While this broad categorization is useful, it may overlook important differences within the non-citizen group, particularly between EU nationals and third-country nationals (TCNs). As noted, EU nationals who, despite lacking citizenship of the country of settlement, often share similar socio-political characteristics with native-born citizens (Just & Anderson 2012; De Coninck, 2020). Acknowledging this, the second table offers a more detailed breakdown of migrant subgroups, allowing for a more refined analysis of how legal status intersects with political engagement.

To begin with, Table 3.1 reports the proportion of respondents with a migration background and possessing the citizenship of the country. According to the data, approximately 53 per cent of the respondents are 'citizen' migrants. As regards the national variations, there are interesting

variations in the composition of citizen and non-citizen migrants. Countries under study can be roughly separated into two groups, with those European countries having experienced migration after World War II and the 'new' countries of immigration. France, Belgium, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, and Switzerland were among the pioneers in Europe receiving large-scale migration through guestworker programs and post-colonial ties (Freeman, 1995). A distinctive characteristic of the five countries amongst are reflected in the descriptive data. That is, in France, Belgium, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Germany, migrant respondents who acquired the citizenship of the country are the majority in the sample. However, although Austria and Switzerland, both having experienced post-World War II labour migration flows, do not display a notable portion of 'citizen' migrants. Interestingly, their divergence from other 'old' migration countries and any *historical* expectations are in line with the citizenship policies in place in the two countries. In fact, Austria and Switzerland are the two countries in the sample characterized with the most difficult access to nationality in Europe[7] for the non-nationals.

Mediterranean countries like Italy, Spain, and Portugal became new destination countries only by the end of the 20th century (Arango, 2000). As stated in the seminal work by Freeman (1995) the countries have changed their position from being countries of emigration to countries of immigration. In Italy, net migration exceeded emigration data for the first time in 1972, in Spain in 1975, and in Portugal in 1981. Similarly, Ireland has a history of remarkable emigration. Unlike the initial group of countries that received labour migration during the post-World War II, a significant number of the Irish population emigrated during this era (Glynn, Einri and Kelly, 2015). According to the report by Ruhs and Quinn (2009), Ireland was the last country in the EU which had become a country of net immigration only in 1996. As shown in Table 3.2, the majority of migrant respondents from the aforementioned recent countries of immigration have not yet become citizens of their country of residence. Therefore, corresponding to the more recent record of immigration, non-citizen migrants in these countries constitute the majority of the (migrant) country sample.

Lastly, it is helpful to provide brief information on the Finnish case to understand better the composition of the migrant sample in the country. Finland, like Mediterranean countries and Ireland, and unlike its Scandinavian neighbour Sweden, has more recent experience of immigration. Only in the late 1980s Finland has become a country of immigration. Particularly

[7] MIPEX scores of (13/100) for Austria and (28/100) for Switzerland.

in the aftermath of the 2015 migration wave in Europe, the country received an unanticipated influx of asylum seekers (Sarvimaki, 2017). Given the relatively short immigration history in Finland, the finding that nearly half of the migrant sample (48.2 per cent) in the country is composed of 'citizen' migrants can seem counterintuitive. Yet, this finding seems to be consistent if two factors are considered. First, immigration to Finland in the 1990s predominantly arrived from the former Soviet Union and Sweden. Many migrants from these destinations were of Finnish origin, some known as return migrants (Korkiasaari and Söderling, 2016). Secondly, Finland has a considerably liberal citizenship regime, and according to the MIPEX data, it appears to be the fourth EU member state where access to nationality for non-nationals is most facilitated.

Table 3.1 Percentage of immigrant respondents with citizen status by country

Country	Percentage (%) with citizenship	*N* (Sample Size)
Austria	50.4	1,040
France	65.7	1,116
Belgium	53.3	1,146
UK	63	1,085
Netherlands	73.5	688
Portugal	49.1	442
Germany	59	2,150
Ireland	32.3	1,168
Italy	31.9	619
Spain	36.8	769
Switzerland	41	1,929
Finland	48.2	317
Sweden	76.8	1,025
N		13,494

The second table introduces a more nuanced classification, breaking down non-citizen migrants into EU national non-citizens and non-EU national migrants, also referred to as third-country nationals (TCNs), who are non-citizens. EU nationals—despite lacking local citizenship—often have mobility rights, residency advantages, and voting rights in municipal elections, making their socio-political status distinct from that of TCNs, who face more restrictions (Arrighi & Bauböck, 2017).

Table 3.2. Percentage of immigrant respondents with citizenship status (citizens, EU national non-citizens, and TCN non-citizens) by country

	Citizens (%)	EU national non-citizens (%)	TCN non-citizens (%)	*N* (Sample Size)
Austria	51.7	27.3	20.9	1,013
France	66.8	11.1	22	1,098
Belgium	55.8	26.6	17.5	1,095
UK	69.8	17.1	13	980
Netherlands	74.3	13.6	12	681
Portugal	47.2	6.9	45.7	332
Germany	62.1	16.5	21.3	2,045
Ireland	34.2	46	19.6	1,103
Italy	36.9	19.5	43.4	536
Spain	37.4	20.6	41.9	756
Switzerland	43.7	35.5	20.7	1,811
Finland	56.5	22.6	20.8	221
Sweden	77.7	11.4	10.8	1,014
N	55.5	22.7	21.6	12,685

Source: European Social Survey (ESS) Survey, authors' own calculations.

As seen in the table, higher proportions of EU national non-citizens are found in Ireland (46.%), Switzerland (35.5%), and Belgium (26.6%), indicating a significant presence of intra-EU migrants. Many EU migrants in these countries may not feel the need to naturalize because they already have extensive rights, including residence, employment, and in some cases, local voting rights. Countries with a larger share of TCN non-citizens include Portugal (45.78%), Italy (43.4%), and Spain (41.9%). Southern European countries have been key entry points for non-EU migrants, yet a significant portion of the non-citizen migrant population faces greater legal, political and bureaucratic obstacles to naturalisation. Germany and France, while having relatively high naturalization rates, still maintain a sizable proportion of TCN non-citizens (21.3% and 22%, respectively).

Although many countries have franchised co-citizens residing abroad, very few grant voting rights to non-citizens residents in the country. In Europe, as discussed in Chapter 1, participation in municipal elections by non-citizens is possible in many states. In particular, EU migrants can enjoy local voting rights across Europe following the 1992 Maastricht Treaty. Yet,

electoral rights at the national level continue to be linked to citizenship status. Therefore, a comparison between citizen migrants and non-citizen migrants would not mean much in the sense that only citizen migrants in Europe are eligible to vote at national elections[8]. Consequently, the descriptive statistics in Table 3.3 are present for two political participation items: membership in trade unions and involvement in public protests.

Table 3.3 Means/Proportions for political participation in Europe by citizenship status

	Citizen Migrant		EU national non-citizens		(TCN) non-citizens	
Political participation items	*N*	Proporsion 'yes'	*N*	Proporsion 'yes'	*N*	Proporsion 'yes'
Work in political party	7,026	.05 (.22)	2,874	.03 (.17)	2,718	.03 (.17)
Member of trade union	6,955	.38 (.48)	2,857	.24 (.42)	2,666	.14 (.35)
Protest participation	7,026	.09 (.28)	2,882	.09 (.28)	2,717	.08 (.28)

Note: Standard deviations appear in parentheses.

As seen in the Table, participation rates across political activities are higher among citizen migrant respondents compared to non-citizens. Differences between groups are significant, based on the t-tests, with the largest difference observed in trade union, where citizen migrants show a proportion of 38% compared to 24% for EU national non-citizens and 14% for third-country national (TCN) non-citizens. The differences between citizen and non-citizen migrants are smaller in the cases of working in a political party and protest participation.

Moreover, within the non-citizen group, EU national non-citizens report higher participation rates compared to TCN non-citizens. Specifically, EU national non-citizens show a higher proportion of participation in trade union membership (24%) and a similar rate of protest participation (9%) compared to TCN non-citizens, who report 14% and 8%, respectively. This suggests that EU national non-citizens, despite lacking citizenship, have participation rates that are closer to those of citizen migrants. The initial findings suggest that citizenship status may be less determinative in participation in protests, which tend to be more accessible to migrants

[8] The only exceptions to this statement are the cases of Ireland, the United Kingdom and Portugal. At the national elections, British citizens can vote in Ireland, Irish and Commonwealth citizens can vote in the UK and Brazilian citizens with the status of equal political rights can vote in Portugal.

regardless of their legal status. Yet, the lack of citizenship status seems to pose a barrier to non-citizen workers' equal incorporation into union branches. To examine political participation rates based on citizenship status across different national contexts, Figure 3.4 presents cross-country variations in the relationship between citizenship status and political participation. The tabulations of political participation rates by citizenship are based the distinction between citizen and non-citizen migrants. This approach was adopted because the differentiation between EU nationals and third-country nationals (TCNs) within the non-citizen group results in very small sample sizes in several countries, potentially undermining the robustness of the analysis.

Table 3.4 Percentage of political participation by citizenship status and country

	Work in political party (%)		Trade union membership (%)		Participation in protests (%)	
	Citizen migrant	Non-citizen migrant	Citizen migrant	Non-citizen migrant	Citizen migrant	Non-citizen migrant
Austria	5.5	5.1	29.1	16.9	11.5	10.2
France	3.8	2.8	15.9	12.6	13.3	12.8
Belgium	3.2	4.3	49.4	39.7	9.3	7.1
UK	4.2	3.2	30.5	17.7	7.8	6.2
Netherlands	4.3	2.2	25.6	20.2	6.7	7.2
Portugal	3.6	0.0	10.6	13.3	5.9	4
Germany	5.6	3.3	26.6	14.2	10.8	12.7
Ireland	4.2	2.2	17	19.3	10.3	7.8
Italy	0.5	0.7	8.2	6.5	3.6	4.5
Spain	7.1	5.8	13.3	10.6	11.7	13.4
Switzerland	6.8	2.4	14.0	15.3	7.5	5.9
Finland	2.6	4.8	69.2	46	7.8	6.1
Sweden	8	4.2	76.3	54.5	14.1	11
N	365	200	2,182	1,202	715	546

As reported in Table 3.4, overall, the percentage of immigrants engaged in political parties is low for both citizen and non-citizen migrants. This trend is consistent with findings for natives, although those results are not included in this table. Citizen migrants tend to participate more in political parties in most countries, except for exceptions like Belgium and Finland. In Switzerland, the involvement of citizen migrants in political parties is notably higher (6.8%)

than that of non-citizen migrants (2.4%). The particularly low involvement in Italy suggests specific barriers or disinterest that may warrant further investigation.

Followingly, the differences between the two groups are easier to detect for trade union membership rates. The cross-country comparisons reveal interesting findings. First of all, Belgium, Finland, Sweden, and, to a lesser extent, the Netherlands appear to be the countries where non-citizen workers are unionised at higher levels in Europe. Notably, for the two Scandinavian countries in the sample, more than half of the non-citizen migrants declared themselves as union members. Second, unionisation levels are higher for citizen migrant workers in almost all countries, yet the gap between the two groups varies across countries. Indeed, the citizen non-citizen difference varies from approximately 1 per cent in Switzerland to 21 per cent in Sweden. The resulting differences seem to reflect the legal and psychological importance of citizenship acquisitions in the country for migrant workers' involvement in union forces. Similarly, it may reflect different organisational structures, union initiatives to expand the membership base and strategies to recruit migrant workers in the country.

Moreover, Table 3.4 presents levels of involvement in public protests for citizen and non-citizen migrant respondents. The initial evidence has important implications on the limits and possibilities of citizenship. As Tyler stated, citizenship has developed into 'a vast and proliferating bureaucracy from which flow categories of people marginalized by, excluded or disqualified from citizenship and the rights which flow from this status' (Tyler, 2010). The findings on protest participation are notable because they challenge the divisionary structure of citizenship status. As can be seen, non-citizen migrants participate in public demonstrations and can raise demands through them on behalf of themselves or other groups. As reported earlier, the converging participatory rates between migrant and native populations apply to the levels between citizen and non-citizen migrant groups, indicating the need to reassess political activism beyond the framework of citizenship. The subsequent analysis further refines the distinction by examining inter-group variations based on migrants' country of origin.

3.3.2 Country of origin and Political Participation

This section highlights the diversity of the sample in terms of country of origin. This differentiation is crucial, as it captures the variations in political participation that are linked to migrants' geographical and socio-political backgrounds—factors which have been emphasized in the literature (Dinesen & Andersen, 2022; Lazarova, Saalfeld & Seifert, 2024). Migrant origins are operationalized through indicators of country of birth and parents' country of birth.

Research on migration focus on the presence of a 'source country effect' as a factor that can account for differences in migrants' engagement in politics based on their country of origin (Bueker, 2005; Zapata-Barrero et al., 2014). Additionally, country of origin serves as a useful proxy for detecting EU migrants, who tend to have easier access to citizenship and political rights, and visible minority groups, who are often more vulnerable to discriminatory practices that may affect their political engagement.

Based on the indicators of country of birth, immigrants might come from another EU member state or be third-country nationals (TCN, otherwise known as non-EU migrants). For a more detailed categorization, reflecting the role of origin, I use the following admittedly imperfect groupings: (1) EU/EEA countries plus Switzerland, (2) countries not presently EU member states in the Balkans and with post-communist heritage, (3) MENA and Central Asian countries, (4) countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, (5) South and East Asia, (6) Latin America, (7) Caribbean and (8) North America and Australasia. Unfortunately, the creation of country groups obscures information on the political participation patterns of individuals coming from specific countries. However, for methodological reasons, it was necessary to classify countries into broad groups as the migrant sample in ESS is highly diverse in terms of their country of origin, with respondents coming from more than a hundred different countries.

Table 3.5 demonstrates the composition of migrants in Europe based on six broader groups, thus providing some insight into the respondents' origins. As it can be seen, nearly half of the migrant sample is composed of EU migrants. Among the non-EU migrants, respondents born in North African, Middle Eastern, or Central Asian countries comprise the largest group.

Table 3.5 Percentage of migrant respondent in Europe by country of origin[9]

	Percentage (%)	*N*
EU member	47.52	5,415
Non-EU Europe	9.85	1,122
MENA & Central Asia	16.27	1,854
Sub-Saharan Africa	8.59	979
South/East Asia	8.27	942
Latin America	9.51	1,084
N		11,396

[9] The shares of immigrants arriving from Caribbean or North America and Australasia are very small (respectively 2.4% and 2.2%) and thus not included in the analysis.

Source: European Social Survey (ESS) Survey, authors' own calculations.

Across countries, broader groups of the country of origin vary greatly. As can be noted, EU migrants are a large segment in many countries. In Switzerland, among migrants in the sample, EU migrants make up 63 per cent of the country sample. The variations in the data also reflect the most common migration routes or source countries in place. For instance, France has a sizeable population of migrant respondents coming from the MENA region (42.22 per cent). In the United Kingdom, migrants from South/East Asian countries build numerous communities (32 per cent). Portugal, meanwhile, is marked by the presence of migrant groups from Sub-Saharan Africa (24 per cent) and Latin America (56.11 per cent). Similarly, in Spain, migrants originating from Latin America constitute the largest group (51.75 per cent). The Table portrays migrants from non-EU Balkan countries and Eastern Europe as a sizeable group in Italy, reflecting the real-world demographics of the country (ISTAT, 2016). Overall, the evidence shows that migrants originate from various countries, and it is worth assessing the similarities and differences in political engagement across different groups.

Table 3.6 Percentage of migrant respondent in Europe by origin and country

	EU	Non-EU Europe	MENA and Central Asia	Sub-Saharan Africa	South/East Asia	Latin America	*N*
Austria	54.2	22.2	17.6	1	3.4	1.4	786
France	26.2	3.3	42.2	19	5.7	3.3	713
Belgium	47.8	6.1	28	10.9	3.4	3.6	852
UK	45.7	2.5	4.1	13.4	32	2	586
Netherlands	30.3	7.8	30.5	9.6	15.4	6.3	396
Portugal	10.5	6.6	0.9	24	1.6	56.1	303
Germany	42.5	16.6	29.9	3.1	4.9	2.8	1,433
Ireland	66.8	1.8	2.9	8.5	13.6	6.1	953
Italy	28.6	27.5	15.6	5.7	11.1	11.3	486
Spain	24.3	3.5	13.7	3.3	3.3	51.7	715
Switzerland	63.1	14.3	7.1	4.1	5	6.1	1,464
Finland	42.6	33.7	5.9	5.9	10	1.7	169
Sweden	44	10	20.4	6.9	12	5.9	794

Source: European Social Survey (ESS) Survey, author's own calculations.

The descriptive analysis reveals that the potential relation between country of origin and political participation is not straightforward: turnout rates are higher amongst migrants belonging to some origin groups, while the differences across groups for political party engagement, union membership and protest participation rates are less pronounced. At first glance, the initial evidence on turnout rates across origin groups may seem counterintuitive. As it can be noted, migrants from MENA Central Asia and South/East Assia appear to constitute the most engaged groups in electoral participation. Indeed, migrants from Turkey, Morocco, India and Pakistan are assigned to the two groups, and the research studying the political behaviour of migrants from these countries reflects them as politically active communities in Western Europe (Michon and Vermeulan, 2013; Dancygier, 2013; Mügge et al., 2021). It is important to remember that the reported turnout rates reflect the participation of 'citizen' migrants, and factors such as residential concentration and political socialisation may affect the level of participation. The data at this stage is purely descriptive, with no reference to an explanatory model. However, this descriptive information is crucial to raise question marks and analyse the political participation patterns for different migrant groups. These differences and similarities across groups have important implications on the complexity of migrant political participation and, most importantly, the necessity to consider within-group variations. With these considerations in mind, the analysis so far first revealed different patterns in political participation between migrant and native populations and then discovered relevant inter-group differences (or similarities) amongst the migrant sample.

Table 3.7 Means/Proportions for political participation in Europe by country of origin

	Voted	*N*	Work in political party	*N*	Member of trade union	*N*	Participated in a protest	*N*
EU	.51 (.49)	2,298	.04 (.19)	4,327	.28 (.45)	4,299	.08 (.08)	4,332
Non-EU Europe	.48 (.50)	623	.02 (.14)	1,068	.24 (.43)	1,061	.06 (.23)	1,070
MENA &Central Asia	.61 (.48)	1,055	.04 (.19)	1,724	.24 (.42)	1,678	.11 (.31)	1,721
Sub-Saharan Africa	.53 (.49)	438	.04 (.19)	729	.19 (.39)	721	.09 (.28)	728

South/East Asia	.59 (.49)	496	.04 (.19)	817	.21 (.40)	805	.07 (.25)	817
Latin America	.51 (.50)	533	.05 (.21)	933	.19 (.39)	925	.11 (.31)	933

Note: Standard deviations appear in parentheses.

3.3.3 Generational Status (First-gen vs Second-gen) and Political Participation

Table 3.8 presents descriptive statistics for the generational status of migrant respondents. According to the definition, first-generation migrants are immigrants who were born outside of the country of residence with both parents of foreign descent. They constitute 80 per cent of the migrant sample. In comparison, second-generation migrants are descendants of first-generation migrants in the country[10]. Overall, ass can be seen in Table 3.8; first-generation migrants constitute the largest group in all countries under study. Interestingly, the relative composition of first-generation migrants in each country varies and well reflects the temporal patterns of immigration in the country. As expected, the initial evidence shows that 'old' immigration countries in Europe are already home to the second generation and, thus, reflecting higher portions of second-generation respondents in these countries. Though representing only 20 per cent of the overall migrant population, the share of second-generation is most prominent in France (33.66 per cent), Germany (27.68 per cent), and the Netherlands (26.45 per cent). The shares of second-generation migrants are very small in 'new' countries of immigration, which have more recent experience with immigration and issues of diversity. Accordingly, the demographics of 'new' immigration countries such as Italy, Spain, Portugal, Ireland and two Nordic countries, Finland and Sweden, are predominantly composed of first-generation and very new members of the second generation.

Table 3.8 Means/Proportions for first- and second-generation migrants in Europe

	Proportion	*N*
First-generation	.80 (.003)	10,849
Second-generation	.19 (.003)	2,687

Note: Standard deviations appear in parentheses.

[10] As stated earlier in the Research Design Chapter 2, the analysis does not include descendants of immigrants with only one foreign-born parent, also known as mixed-parentage second-generation (G2.5).

Table 3.9 Percentage of first- and second-generation migrants by country

	First-generation	Second-generation	*N*
Austria	78.02	21.98	1,042
France	66.34	33.66	1,117
Belgium	76.09	23.91	1,146
UK	79.69	20.31	1,088
Netherlands	73.55	26.45	688
Portugal	87.78	12.22	442
Germany	72.32	27.68	2,157
Ireland	93.79	6.21	1,176
Italy	94.05	5.95	639
Spain	94.15	5.85	769
Switzerland	79.94	20.06	1,929
Finland	93.69	6.31	317
Sweden	81.38	18.62	1,026
N	10,849	2,687	13,536

Moreover, a closer look at the temporal differences reveals that the share of second-generation migrants increases in recent waves. For the years 2020/22 the data showed a notable rise (6 per cent) in the share of children born to foreign parents, reflecting the growing presence of second-generation migrants in Western Europe.

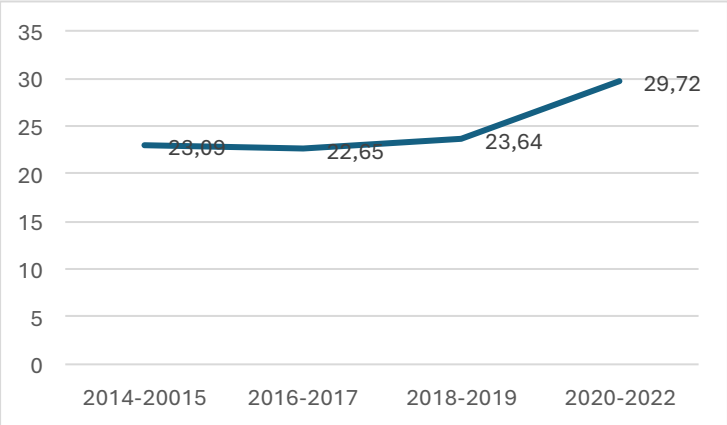

Figure 3.7 Share of second-generation migrants over Time (2014-2022)

Comparing not only migrants and natives but also discovering political participation patterns across migrant generations can offer important implications. Therefore, Table 3.10 reports the mean values of political participation by generational status. The descriptive results show that

children of migrants, second-generation declared higher rates of turnout in national elections than foreign-born migrants, first-generation. By itself, this is a rather vague discovery and subject to deeper investigation depending on the country and controlling for individual-level characteristics of the respondents. Nevertheless, this finding aligns with the scholarly work that argues the participatory gap between natives and the second-generation migrants is less than the difference between the two generations (Heath et al., 2013; Sanders et al., 2014, Rinioli and Ortensi 2021). Mainly, this can be the case if second-generation individuals are socialised along the same lines as natives and have similar opportunities with their peers.

Table 3.10 Means/Proportions for political participation in Europe by generation

	First-generation		Second-generation		Range	
Political Participation items	*N*	Proportion 'yes'	*N*	Proportion 'yes'	Min	Max
Voted in national elections	6,227	.54 (.49)	2,094	.70 (.45)	0	1
Work in a political party	10,784	.04 (.19)	2,678	.05 (.22)	0	1
Member of trade union	10,668	.25 (.43)	2,643	.26 (.43)	0	1
Protest participation	10,789	.08 (.28)	2,680	.12 (.32)	0	1

Note: Standard deviations appear in parentheses.

No notable difference is observed regarding the political party participation and unionisation rates across generations in Europe. On the other hand, there is a significant difference, based on the t-tests, between first- and second-generation individuals regarding migrants' involvement in protests. As can be noticed, involvement in protests is greater among the second-generation than the first-generation. It is evident in the literature that participation channels have been evolving, and young people are more active in protests (Norris, 2004; Dalton, 2011). The demographics also suggest that children of migrants, most of whose parents arrived in Europe as labour force, are still young (Eurostat, 2023). Therefore, for an accurate interpretation of the protest participation across generations, it is worth reflecting on the demographic composition of different generation groups.

Unlike earlier descriptives, this part restricts the presentation of descriptive data at the Pan-European level. It chooses not to demonstrate the means of political participation for two-

generation groups across countries. The reason behind this choice is due to methodological concerns. More clearly, the second-generation sample is composed of around 2,729 respondents, offering a sufficient number of observations. However, if fragmented across 13 countries, many country samples present a scarce number of observations to make meaningful interpretations.

3.3.4 Religious Denomination and Political Participation

Migrant individuals come with various religious affiliations, often different from the country's majority population. Despite the plenty of research focused on the study of Muslim migrants in Europe (Laurence, 2011; Statham and Tillie, 2018; Dancygier, 2018) there is little insight into the religious variation between migrants. Table 3.8 shows the descriptives for five religious denominations of migrant respondents. By taking into account various religious denominations (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Muslim, Eastern religions, other) this section can provide a comprehensive assessment of differences and similarities among migrants in their political participation patterns. Unlike earlier research, which neglects the diversity of the 'migrant' category or focuses on the study of migrants from a particular ethnic background, this section highlights the ethnic and religious diversity of the migrant population. It employs the religion indicator present in the ESS, asking 'Do you consider yourself as belonging to any religion or denomination? Which one?'. This results in a sample of 7,671 respondents from 151 origin countries and eight religious categories in 13 European countries. Although religion and ethnic background may become intertwined concepts, following the approach of Fennema and Tillie (2004), I opt for a distinction between religion and country of origin to better illustrate the differences and similarities amongst migrants that belong to the different segments.

Moreover, it should be noted that a substantial number of respondents do not belong to any religion. Religious affiliation is higher among migrant respondents: that is among natives, 57.19 per cent and among migrants, 64.68 per cent of the respondents declared their belonging to a particular religion or denomination. Although eight categories are included in the survey, the five most repeated answers are displayed for each country. This choice enables us to reflect the religious diversity of the migrants, specific to each country, in a detailed yet simplified manner. Table 3.11 reports the overall percentage of the most frequented religious denominations amongst the migrant respondents in Europe. As can be seen, Christian migrants make up the majority (58.91 per cent), while Islam is the second most reported religious affiliation in the sample (29.53 per cent).

Table 3.11 Percentage of migrant respondents by religious denominations

Religious denomination	Percentage (%)	*N*
Catholic	37.25	3,123
Protestant	12.58	1,055
Orthodox	9.08	761
Islam	29.53	2,476
Other[11]	11.56	970

The following analysis assesses the overall potential impact of religious affiliation on political participation. The descriptive results are reported in Table 3.12 and reveal interesting results. First of all, migrants display substantial inter-group variances regarding their participation levels in politics. What emerges is that Orthodox migrants have by far the lowest declared turnout rates at national elections. Meanwhile, in the sample, Catholic and Muslim migrants declared equal turnout rates of 58 per cent. This is rather unexpected considering some studies that associates Christianity with more positive outcomes regarding the integration process, whereas Islam as an obstacle to migrants' successful integration (Foner and Alba, 2008; Connor and Koenig, 2013). The initial evidence thus seems to suggest that Islam migrants are not exceptional in their electoral turnout. At the same time, it is possible to observe significant[12] differences in participatory patterns across the three categories of Christianity. Protestant migrants have declared greater turnout rates than Catholics and Orthodox migrants: 72 per cent of Protestant migrants reporting their participation in the last national elections. This variation across different churches is as interesting as it is, indeed in line with the statements by Verba et al. (1995). That is Verba et al. (1995) find that people belonging to different religious denominations, Catholics and Protestants, obtain different civic skills which in turn influence their political participation.

[11] Other: Other Christian denomination (5.25 per cent); Jewish (0.60 per cent); Eastern religions (4.07 per cent); Other non-Christian religions (1.66 per cent).

[12] A one-way ANOVA is conducted to determine if political participation is different for groups with different religious affiliations. Looking at the p-value, there is a statistically significant difference in participation between religion categories ($p = 0.000$).

Table 3.12 Means/Proportions for political participation by religious denomination

Religious denomination	Voted	*N*	Work in political party	*N*	Member of trade union	*N*	Participated in a protest	*N*
Catholic	.58	1,947	.03	3,012	.24	3,088	.07	3,111
	(.49)		(.17)		(.42)		(.25)	
Protestant	.72	717	.05	1,048	.32	1,032	.09	1,051
	(.44)		(.22)		(.47)		(.28)	
Orthodox	.43	391	.03	755	.20	751	.08	755
	(.49)		(.17)		(.40)		(.26)	
Islam	.58	1,435	.04	2,462	.20	2,427	.11	2,460
	(.49)		(.19)		(.40)		(.30)	
Eastern religions	.63	222	.03	341	.21	337	.05	341
	(.48)		(.16)		(.40)		(.22)	
N		5,046				8,144		8,235

Note: Standard deviations appear in parentheses.

An analysis of political party engagement across five religious denominations reveals remarkably similar proportions of involvement. As shown in the Table, the proportions range from .03 to .05. These findings indicate that political party engagement is relatively consistent across different religious groups, with no denomination showing markedly higher or lower levels of involvement. This suggests that factors other than religious affiliation may play a more significant role in determining political party engagement within the sample.

Another important indication based on the findings concerns trade union membership rates across migrant groups and religious affiliation. As far as this study is aware, no systematic research of unionisation through the lenes of migrants' religious affiliation exists in Europe. Therefore, the initial descriptives illustrated in this Chapter are original in the first place. As for the trade union memberships rates, the differences across religion categories are significant. Trade union membership rates are highest among Protestant migrants (32 per cent) and lowest for Orthodox and Muslim migrants. The initial evidence also indicates the difference in unionisation rates across the three religious' groups, namely Orthodox (20 per cent), Eastern religions (23 per cent) and Islam (20 per cent) are not really pronounced. Overall, relevant differences, and similarities, regarding the unionization rates across migrant groups from different religions are evident. Yet, the findings should be interpreted carefully. As mentioned earlier the concepts of religion and country of origin can be intertwined. In this sample, migrants who declared to be 'Protestant' are concentrated in certain countries such as Denmark, the

United Kingdom and Russia. In other words, the resulting rates of participation across migrant groups might reflect the origin of counties' participation culture in trade unions.

Finally, descriptive evidence can be drawn regarding migrants' involvement in public protests. Table 3.12 reports significant variation in participation rates across religion groups. Accordingly, Muslim migrants exhibit higher participation rates (11 per cent) in demonstrations than migrants belonging to other religious affiliations. It can be noted that the variation across certain religion categories is greater than it is for others. In other words, the gap in protest participation between Muslims and those belonging to Eastern religions are around 6 per cent, while the difference is much smaller between Muslim and Protestant groups. This initial evidence, perhaps in contrast with early ideas, finds correspondence in the case studies by Eggert and Giugni[13] (2011).

3.4. Concluding remarks

This chapter has presented a detailed descriptive account of political participation patterns among migrants in Europe, focusing on voter turnout, trade union membership, and protest involvement. By comparing migrants with natives and disaggregating the migrant population across key characteristics—such as citizenship status, generation, country of origin, and religious affiliation—the analysis offers insights into both cross-country and inter-group variations in political engagement. The observed patterns suggest that national contexts may be linked to differences in participation rates. Countries with more inclusive institutional and legal frameworks, such as Sweden and Belgium, tend to show narrower migrant-native gaps in participation, while countries with more restrictive frameworks, like Italy and Portugal, often exhibit wider disparities. These patterns point to potential contextual influences that merit further investigation. At the same time, the descriptive findings underscore the internal diversity of the migrant population. Variations in participation rates across different subgroups—such as higher reported turnout among second-generation migrants or lower union membership among third-country nationals—highlight the importance of considering individual-level characteristics when assessing political engagement. While this chapter did not aim to explain these patterns, the descriptive results offered a solid empirical foundation for understanding the complexity of migrant political participation in Europe.

[13] The authors assess the degree of involvement in protest activities by Christian and Muslim migrants in London, Milan, Zurich and Barcelona. They did not find a notable difference between the two religious groups within the cities.

The role of citizenship status and country of origin will be explored in detail in the following chapter and included in the multilevel logistic regression models in Chapter 6 to examine how they shape the likelihood of participation in voting, trade union membership, and protest activities. However, some variables, such as religious affiliation and second-generation status, will not be included in the regression models for further analysis. While religious affiliation showed some variation in political behaviour descriptively, it will not be pursued in future models. Similarly, second-generation migrants were included in the descriptive analysis but omitted from the multivariable regression models, as variables like length of stay and spending formative years in the host country are only applicable to first-generation migrants. Nevertheless, these variables—religious affiliation and second-generation status—provide valuable context for understanding how specific subgroups within the migrant population participate in political processes. This descriptive analysis sets the stage for deeper exploration into the factors shaping migrant political participation in the subsequent chapters. The following chapters by turning to explanatory models seeks to explore the mechanisms behind these variations.

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Chapter 4

The Macro-Level Determinants

There is a growing consensus in the literature that when it comes to explaining political (non) participation of immigrants, relying merely on individual characteristics do not suffice (Bass and Casper, 2001; Bloemrad, 2005; Vermeulen ,2005; Giugni and Morariu , 2007). This chapter, therefore, introduces the macro-level determinants —such as political rights, citizenship regimes, public opinion, and migration history—which are conceptualized as shaping the broader opportunity structures within which individuals make decisions about political engagement. The analysis thus aims to explore the relationship between the so-called political opportunity structure[14] characteristics and the likelihood of political participation among immigrants.

More specifically, the analysis examines four key macro-level factors: (1) political rights, such as local voting rights for non-nationals; (2) citizenship regimes, as measured by MIPEX indicators; (3) the country's migration history, distinguishing between 'old' and 'new' countries of immigration; and (4) public attitudes toward migrants and migration. These contextual variables are treated as elements of the structural and discursive environment in which migrants navigate opportunities for political engagement, potentially facilitating or constraining their participation. In the following section, I briefly review the literature concerning the role of these macro-level factors on participation. Then, I cautiously form the hypothesis that will be eventually tested in the multilevel analysis in Chapter 6.

This chapter does not include individual-level predictors in the current models. As such, the analysis does not aim to establish causal effects or disentangle compositional from contextual influences. Rather, it serves as an empirical mapping of cross-national variation, offering insights into macro-contextual patterns that inform participation outcomes. While explanatory analysis requires consideration of both macro- and micro-level variables, this chapter intentionally limits the scope to macro-level predictors to provide a preliminary mapping of

[14] Political opportunity structure (POS) approach primarily considers that available opportunities and constraints determine the chances individuals or collective groups can mobilise and be politically active. Beyond the social movements' literature, the concept has prompted the analysis of political participation of immigrants. Macro characteristics of a country's political system, *or the institutional dimension*, such as political rights and citizenship policies are considered to constitute the context which frames the participatory decisions and strategies of immigrants. The concept and its theory are extensively discussed in Chapter 1.

contextual variation. The multilevel nature of the data—individuals nested within countries—is addressed explicitly in Chapter 5, where individual-level characteristics are modelled, and in Chapter 6, where contextual effects and their interactions with individual-level factors are assessed using multilevel techniques. This sequencing enables a step-by-step buildup from descriptive context to explanatory analyses.

The chapter is organized as follows: First, it examines the impact of political rights on migrant political participation. Second, it assesses whether variation in citizenship regimes measured by MIPEX indicators shapes the degree of political incorporation. Third, it investigates the relationship between public opinion toward migrants and their political engagement. Lastly, the final section of this study aims to evaluate the significance of living in a country with a longer-standing history of immigration (an "old" migration country) versus a country that has only recently become a destination for immigrants (a "new" migration country). The dummy variable indicating the recency of the country's immigration experience, is introduced evaluate how a country's migration history may influence migrant participation. Notably, to the best of my knowledge, this variable has not been employed in prior studies on the topic, thus represents a novel contribution of the thesis. Throughout the chapter, logistic regression analysis is employed as the main tool of analysis. For categorical predictors (e.g., local voting rights), both odds ratios and marginal effects are reported to allow interpretation relative to a reference group. For continuous predictors (e.g., citizenship regime score), average marginal effects are presented to facilitate interpretation in terms of percentage point change in predicted probabilities. Moreover, typologies are used to construct macro-level variables on based on shared institutional or historical features.

Lastly, it should be highlighted that all regression models in Chapter 4 are estimated on a migrant-only sample, including both first- and second-generation individuals. The sample sizes reported in each table reflect variation due to item-specific non-response and eligibility criteria. That is, only migrants with citizenship are eligible to vote in national elections, which results in a smaller sample for the **vote** participation item compared to other forms of participation such as trade union membership or protest involvement.

4.1 Political Rights

In analysing the political opportunity structure (POS) the literature considers political rights granted to immigrants as an important dimension of political integration (Martiniello, 2005; Bauböck et al., 2006; Reis, Oliveria and Carvalhais, 2017). For instance, granting the right to vote for immigrants is referred as an 'initial opening of the political opportunity structures', which provides participation incentives and promising integrative effects (Fennema and Tillie 2001). Martiniello (2005) in fact, refers to political rights granted to immigrants as one of the four legs of political integration[15]. Bengtsson (2010) similarly studies political integration from the normative stance of 'proper' access to political rights. Holding an absolute view of political integration rather than comparing immigrants (and their political attitudes) to those of the native population, he argues in the absence of political rights, neither the society nor the minority groups are politically integrated. As regards to participation, Bauböck et al. (2006) emphasise the role of political rights on participation in politics by stating that 'the more rights immigrants enjoy, the more they identify with the society where they live, the more they share its political values and norms, and the more they participate and are represented in the political system, the better integrated they are'. Morales and Giugni (2011) acknowledge the role of full political rights on the degree of political efficacy and confidence among immigrant groups. According to them, it is unlikely to feel capable if one cannot entirely participate. It is similarly difficult to have trust towards the same institutions, which might exclude immigrant individuals from the majority political community.

As stressed by Arrighi and Bauböck (2016), political rights, although important to all members of society, are differently distributed. Whereas female suffrage in Europe has been achieved and African Americans in the United States are empowered in politics, countries self-determine whether to incorporate non-citizen residents (immigrants). As stated by Caramani and Strijbis (2013), this results in different categories of 'discrepant electorates'. Particularly non-EU citizens have few political rights, which limit their opportunities to influence policies closely concerning them. Hammar (1990) expresses the status of such members, who held social but not political rights, in the society as 'denizenship'. In a similar vein, the thesis of political quiescence in migration literature had long considered migrant workers a-political on the basis that they had no political right to vote nor be elected in elections (Martiniello, 2005). Their

[15] Other aspects of immigrants' political integration involve self-identification with the country of residence, internalisation of norms and values of the country, and participation into its political life.

exclusion from the ballot is thought to hinder any political role immigrant members could play in the country and lead to apathy. As Fung and Wright state (2001) individuals' capacities to deliberate and make public decisions atrophy when left unused'.

It is important to underline that political rights, just as political participation, cannot be reduced to voting. Other fundamental political rights such as right to hold public office, form and join a political party, participate in public demonstrations or protests and procedural fairness in law are relevant to all members of the society. Yet the issue of electoral power of immigrants has been a growing interest and is discussed in several countries under this analysis. Moreover, right to vote in elections form that pillar of political rights in Europe which is perhaps most difficult to access and restricted. During the past years, several scholars highlighted the role of voting rights on active inclusion and its spillover on other forms of political involvement (Munro, 2008; Bevelander and Pendakur, 2011; Ferwada, Finseraas and Bergh, 2018). A similar thought is expressed by Hayduk (2006, 2015) who argues that extending the local voting rights to immigrant residents has the benefit to put them on a 'pathway to citizenship' to that extent political participation may have informative and integrative effects on those who participate. However, some scholars held a different point regarding the relationship between voting rights accessed by immigrants and actual political participation. Unlike the Norwegian case study that found having the right to vote sooner[16] increases voter turnout in the following elections (Ferwerda, Finseraas, and Bergh, 2017), the analysis carried out by Mattias, Karl-Oskar and Olof (2018) suggests that having right to vote upon arrival has no effect on the likelihood that immigrants will vote in future elections.

In this context, it is essential to empirically assess the association between the right to vote and political participation. Voting rights are a fundamental part of the mechanisms that may link immigrant individuals to the political system. Yet, measuring the extent of voting rights for immigrants in Europe is rather complicated. One major challenge is to identify the target immigrant group. This is to say that non-citizen immigrants and citizens with migration background have different access to political rights. To avoid any confusion and for the sake of simplicity, this section focuses on voting rights component of the POS for non-citizen immigrants, while at the same time looking at its potential effects on citizens with a migrant background. Secondly, in the thirteen countries included in this research, voting rights at the

[16] In Norway, non-citizens are eligible to vote in local elections after three years of residency.

national elections are generally reserved for citizens of the country.[17] Meanwhile, we witness an expansion of local voting rights for immigrants. With the 1992 Maastrich Treaty, citizens of EU member states are granted the right to vote in local elections in other EU member states. Moreover, Sweden, Finland, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Ireland grant voting rights to non-EU citizens. Whereas, Spain and Portugal have bilateral agreements where they grant voting rights in local elections to some non-EU citizens[18]. These different characterizations of voting rights are expected to indicate the obstacles and opportunities for immigrants' political engagement. Based on a comparison of voting rights for non-citizens residents in the analysed thirteen countries, it is possible to observe three different distributions of these rights for non-EU migrants. Following the strategy of earlier research (Arrighi and Bauböck, 2016), the measurement is based on de jure regulations as specified in electoral laws[19].

0: No rights (Austria, Germany, France, Italy, Switzerland)

1: Local rights, restrictive (the UK, Portugal, Spain)

2: Local rights, unrestricted (Belgium, the Netherlands, Ireland, Sweden, Finland)

Based on the above considerations, the first hypothesis of the chapter is the following:

> H1: The more political rights immigrants enjoy, the more likely they are to engage in institutional forms of political participation such as voting, political party involvement and trade union membership; the relationship with protest activity is expected to be weaker or negative.

Table 4.1 presents the national variations of the right and opportunity to vote of non-citizens immigrants across the countries under analysis.

[17] In Ireland, Portugal and the UK, citizens of certain countries are franchised at the national elections (e.g. British citizens in Ireland, Irish and Commonwealth citizens in the UK, some Brazilian residents "with special status" in Portugal)

[18] Spain has bilateral agreements with Norway, Iceland, the UK, Bolivia, Cape Verde, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, New Zealand, Peru, Paraguay, South Korea and Trinidad y Tobago. Portugal has agreements with Brazil, Cape Verde, Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Iceland, Norway, New Zealand, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela, as well as with the UK for citizens who were living in the country before Brexit.

[19] ELECLAW indicators measuring the inclusiveness of electoral rights are available. For this chapter, I opted for more straightforward indicators that serve well enough for the purpose.

Table 4.1 Local voting rights for non-nationals in Europe*

	EU citizens	All non-EU citizens	Restricted to some non-EU citizens
Austria	✓		
Belgium	✓	✓	
Switzerland	✓		
Germany	✓		
Spain	✓		✓
Finland	✓	✓	
France	✓		
UK	✓		✓
Ireland	✓	✓	
Italy	✓		
Netherlands	✓	✓	
Portugal	✓		✓
Sweden	✓	✓	

Source: Author's elaboration* Each country has its own residency requirements.

Table 4.2 reports the results from logistic regression of political participation on non-citizen voting rights. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the sample size for voting models is smaller than for other forms of participation, due to legal eligibility constraints—only citizen migrants are entitled to vote in national elections. By contrast, participation in trade unions and protest activities is not subject to such citizenship restrictions. While this limits the direct comparability of results across participation types, it does not compromise the internal validity of each model.

As it can be seen, the association between right to vote and participation is significant for two items: voting at national elections and trade union membership. It is possible in political environments with unrestricted voting rights at local level, immigrants have higher chances to work in political parties or less likelihood to take part in protests. However, the data do not provide evidence to make such statements. Regarding marginal effect of right to vote on the probability of electoral participation, the average marginal effect is around 5 percentage points. Living in a political system which grants unrestricted voting rights at local elections thus increases the probability of voting at national elections by 5 percent points. It should be noted that the stated increase in national election turnout rate concerns citizens with a migration

background, as in the sample, non-citizens immigrants do not have voting rights at national elections. In addition, Figure 4.1 illustrates at the 95 per cent confidence intervals, the marginal effect of right to vote on electoral participation among immigrants. It appears that this marginal effect increases with the extension of voting rights. Interestingly, the effect of right to vote seems not to be restricted to electoral turnout. In the presence of unrestricted voting rights, compared to no rights, the probability of trade union membership is three times greater (OR=3.35 95% CI [3.07, 3.6]). Looking at the marginal effect, the probability that immigrants will involve in trade unions increases by 24 percent points. These preliminary findings seem to show the relevance of the voting rights accessed by non-EU migrants in the prediction of political participation.

Table 4.2 Logistic regression of political participation on voting rights by immigrants

	Vote		Work in political party		Trade union membership		Take part in protest	
Local voting rights for non-nationals	Odds ratio	dy/dx	Odds ratio	dy/dx	Odds ratio	dy/dx	Odds ratio	dy/dx
Restrictive	1.01	.003	1.08	.003	1.10	.014	.91	-.008
rights	(.063)	(.015)	(.13)	(.005)	(.07)	(.009)	(.07)	(.007)
Unrestricted	1.2***	.043***	1.06	.002	3.35***	.24***	.97	-.002
rights	(.059)	(.012)	(.10)	(.004)	(.15)	(.008)	(.06)	(.005)
Constant	1.31		.042		.210		.107	
Wald $\chi 2$	13.73		0.69		808.36		1.23	
N	8,219		13,284		13,133		13,291	

Note: standard errors appear in parentheses. Base level for right to vote variable is 'no rights for non-EU migrants at local level'. The sample for the voting model is restricted to migrant respondents with citizenship status, as only they are eligible to vote in national elections.
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

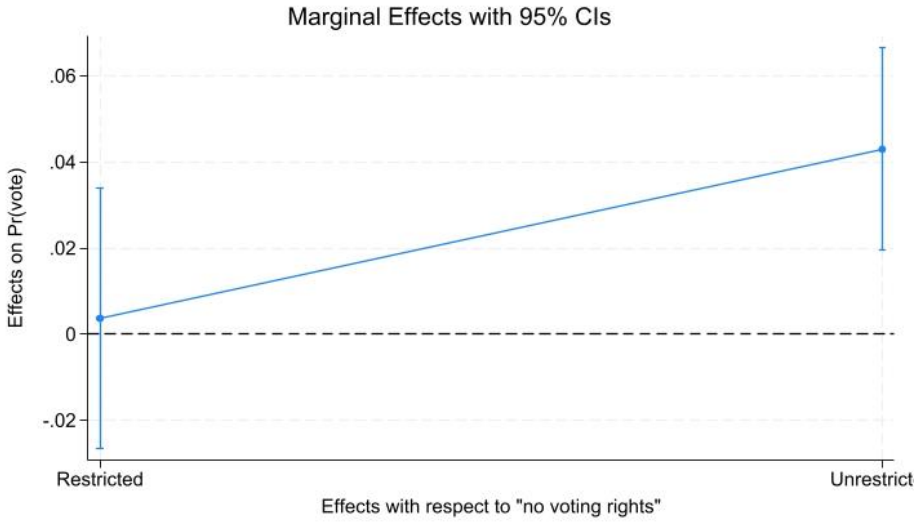


Figure 4.1 Average Marginal Effect of 'right to vote' on 'voting' among immigrant population

Nonetheless, although not a macro-level variable, the effect of right to vote on turnout may differ depending on the country of origin of the respondent. For instance, the *right to vote* accessed by non-EU citizens can influence the participation rates of non-EU immigrants more than, if any, it does for EU citizens. With this consideration in mind, Figure 4.2 displays marginal effects of right to vote on political participation for EU and Non-EU immigrants. As anticipated, the effect of right to vote on the probability to vote is different for three different categories: EU migrants, non-EU migrants from Europe and non-EU migrants outside Europe. The interpretation of the plot is rather interesting. For Non-EU migrants, the marginal effects reveal a clear positive impact of voting rights on the probability of voting, with unrestricted voting rights showing a marked increase in the likelihood of political participation. Interestingly, the second form of unrestricted voting rights (likely referring to a distinct legal provision) appears to diminish this effect, suggesting that while voting rights may enhance political participation, the particular form or scope of these rights can influence their impact. Non-EU migrants from Europe, on the other hand, show a similar but weaker positive effect for the first type of voting rights, indicating that this group, already familiar with European political structures, may be less responsive to changes in their voting rights compared to their counterparts from outside Europe.

For EU migrants, the graph demonstrates a smaller and, in some cases, statistically insignificant effect, suggesting that these migrants, who likely already enjoy voting rights within their home countries, are less affected by the extension of these rights in the host country. This finding underscores the complexity of political integration, where the influence of formal political

rights may vary not only between immigrants and natives but also within immigrant groups themselves. The data suggests that while non-EU migrants, particularly those from outside Europe, are more sensitive to the extension of voting rights, EU migrants show little to no increase in participation.

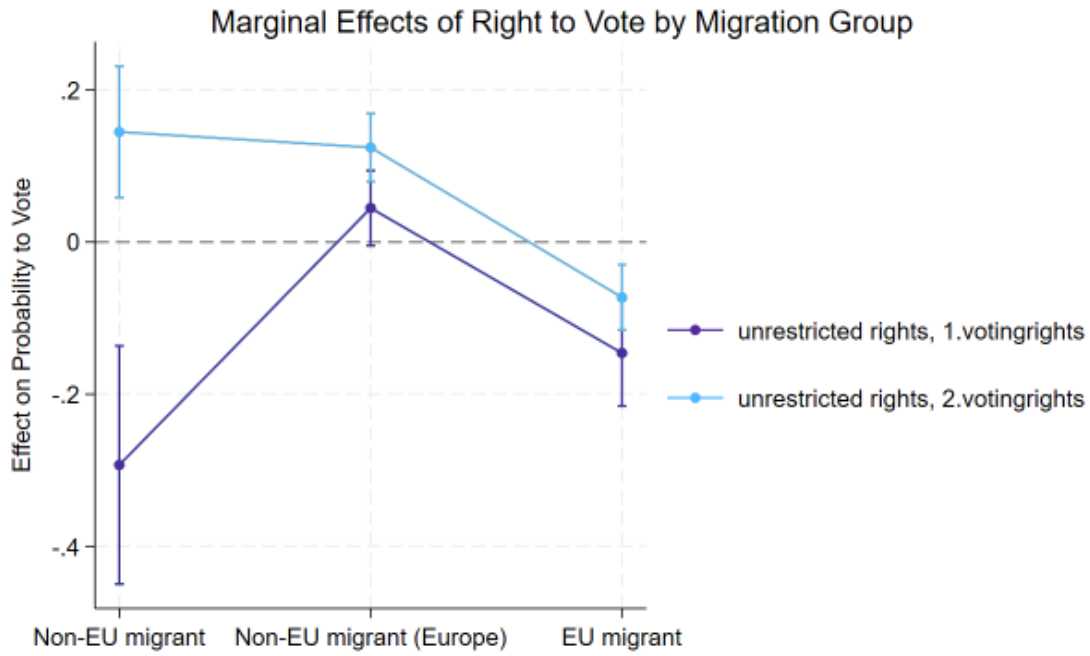


Figure 4.2 Average Marginal Effect of 'right to vote' of non-Eu migrants with interaction term 'origin'

4.2 Citizenship Regimes

Another important element of the political opportunity structure (POS), and a key factor to be considered in immigrant political incorporation is the citizenship regime. Whereas the nation can be considered as an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983), rooted in common knowledge and daily practice (Billig 1995), its institutionalised counterpart is citizenship. A set of naturalization policies, socialization procedures and formal and informal norms define citizenship regimes. They provide immigrants with certain constraints and opportunities. It is argued that citizenship should be acknowledged as a resource which can facilitates political participation. (Just and Anderson, 2011). In particular, instrumental and psychological aspects of citizenship are in high importance for political activity (Bloemraad, Korteweg and Yurdakul, 2008). This is to say that citizenship defines membership in the polity which reserves certain rights and privileges for its members, not shared by non-citizens. It functions both as a resource provided by the state and a protective shield that decrease the potential risks and costs associated with participation. Evidently, immigrants tend to acquire right to vote in elections after they

become citizens of the country. Nevertheless, citizenship influences political participation also beyond the electoral domain. While it is a formal precondition for voting at the national level, its absence can have a double-edged effect. On the one hand, not having citizenship excludes immigrants from institutional forms of participation like voting and party involvement, which may push some toward protest as an alternative means of political expression. On the other hand, engaging in protest without the protection of legal status can involve significant personal risk — such as deportation or losing eligibility for naturalization (Martinez, 2005; Andreouli and Howarth, 2013). As such, the role of citizenship in protest participation is more ambiguous: while exclusion may create incentives for protest, the lack of legal protection may simultaneously discourage it.

Moreover, the psychological role citizenship plays on political involvement is considered to be substantial. It serves to increase political engagement since it builds a social identity for immigrants. The 'identity effect' of citizenship comes from the requirements immigrants have to fulfil by learning about the rights, responsibilities and norms of the country (Just and Anderson, 2011). In this regard, citizenship is more than a legal status for immigrants. According to González-Ferrer and Morales (2013), 'citizenship regimes send signals about who "belongs to us" and is welcome [...] and who is not'; or for Bosniak (2007) citizenship 'within a political community stands for inclusion and universalism, but to outsiders, citizenship means exclusion'.

Following a political opportunity approach, studies shows that citizenship regimes influence political participation of immigrants. The study by Giugni and Passy (2004) shows that the civic-assimilationist conception of citizenship in France push immigrants to raise minority integration politics in the public sphere more than in Switzerland where an ethnic-assimilationist view of citizenship prevails. The authors argue that the Swiss citizenship regime is rather exclusive and defines immigrants along ethnic lines while the French one is more inclusive and based on a civic-based conception of citizenship which in turn influence the extend and the content of the political claims making by immigrants. Similarly, the empirical study comparing the citizenship regimes and political participation in France and the Netherlands by Bousettta (2010) highlights the role of citizenship frameworks in shaping the political opportunities. Bousetta (2010) finds significant differences at Moroccans' political participation in two contexts as Dutch and French citizenship effect their repertoire for collective participation making it more advantageous for Moroccans in the Netherlands. Similarly, Gonzalez-Ferrer and Morales (2013) demonstrate larger gaps in electoral

participation between immigrants and natives in countries where citizenship regimes are more restrictive.

Most of the comparative literature on citizenship regimes are based on typologies (Joppke, 1999; Giugni and Passy, 2004; Vink, 2017). Similarly, the use of citizenship indices is a common practice in the empirical studies which aims at capturing the restrictiveness of national citizenship models. The Citizenship Policy Index (CPI) by Howard (2009) and Barriers to Naturalization Index by Janoski (2010) are some of the tools which include indicators measuring the access to citizenship. Unfortunately, the CPI was not updated after 2008 and Barrier Index covers for the period 1970-2005. An alternative procedure is taken by using the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) which matches a solid approach to categorising citizenship regimes (Koopmans et al., 2005; Niessen et al., 2007; Dinesen and Hooghe, 2010; Huddleston and Niessen 2011). MIPEX data, encompassing 33 countries, are frequently utilized as an independent variable in multilevel analyses (Fleischmann and Dronkers, 2010; Dinesen and Hooghe, 2010) whereas the other indices can, nevertheless, only be partially employed for multivariate analyses. The widely used index is recognised for its wide coverage and the fact that it is an enduring project allows the database to be up to date. In fact, the UN's Draft Global Compact on Migration encouraged all member states to participate in MIPEX to help identifying challenges and share best practices. Moreover, the principal component analysis (PCA) and scale analysis by Ruedin (2011) confirm the consistent scale MIPEX has. Following the above-mentioned literature, MIPEX stands as a robust measurement tool which also allows for cross-time and cross-country comparisons. It measures 'access to citizenship' and provides a national aggregate score for the level of access available to immigrants. Immigrants' chances to become as citizens of the resident country are strongly influenced by the policies in place, especially eligibility requirements, conditions for acquisition, dual nationality, security of the status and subsequent procedures after the application. The maximum of 100 points is awarded when policies meet the highest standards[20] for equal treatment, whereas scores of 50 or 0 are attributed if these standards are only partially met, or not at all. Although the following statement is a conceptual stretch, the overall MIPEX scores can indicate the 'inclusiveness' and 'restrictiveness' of citizenship regimes. Accordingly, the second hypothesis to be tested is the following:

[20] The highest standards are drawn from Council of Europe Conventions or European Union Directives. Where only minimum standards exist at international level, European-wide policy recommendations are used from international research and NGOs.

H2: The more inclusive the citizenship regime, the more likely immigrants are to participate in institutional forms of politics, while the effect on protest activity is expected to be weaker or negative.

Table 4.3 shows MIPEX scores of 'access to citizenship' for the thirteen countries under this study.

Table 4.3 MIPEX scores for access to citizenship for immigrants

Country	MIPEX score (access to citizenship)
Austria	13
Belgium	65
Switzerland	28
Germany	42
Spain	30
Finland	74
France	70
UK	61
Ireland	79
Italy	40
Netherlands	55
Portugal	86
Sweden	83

Source: MIPEX (2020).

In order to test H2, Table 4.4 reports the results obtained by regressing the political participation items on the MIPEX access to nationality scores. The models include country-fixed effects to control for unobserved heterogeneity across national contexts. Even after accounting for country-level differences, access to citizenship remains significantly associated with several forms of political participation. It should be noted that access to citizenship is treated as continuous variable ranging from (1 "least favourable" to 13 "most favourable"). The interpretation of the results is quite interesting. In line with the expectation, easier access to nationality is significantly and positively associated with turnout, trade union engagement and protest participation. An increase in the inclusiveness score of citizenship regime, in other words more favourable citizenship policies, correspond with an increase in the probability of voting and trade union membership.

Table 4.4. Logistic regression of political participation on citizenship regimes

	Vote		Work in political party		Trade union membership		Take part in protest	
Access to citizenship	.006*** (.001)	.018*** (.002)	-.0001 (.000)	.001 (.000)	.03 *** (.001)	.04*** (.001)	.002** (.000)	.002* (.001)
Country fixed effect		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes
N	8,049		13,021		12,870		13,028	
Constant	.54	.57	.04	.05	.08	.18	.08	.11
Adjusted R^2	.0016	.0803	-.0001	.0037	.0518	.1481	.0005	.0078

Note Entries are Average Marginal Effects (AME) (dy/dx) from logistic regression models, with standard errors in parentheses. Adjusted R^2 and constant are taken from linear regression. All models are estimated on a migrant-only sample, including both first- and second-generation individuals. Sample sizes vary across participation items due to question-specific response rates and eligibility criteria (e.g., only citizen migrants are eligible to vote in national elections).
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Regarding the trade union membership, the marginal effect of easier access to citizenship is higher. The Table suggests a positive relationship between citizenship regime inclusiveness and unionisation, with a 3 per cent point increase in the chances of unionisation for each one-unit increase in inclusiveness. This relation is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Similarly, after controlling for country fixed effects, the findings indicate that a one-unit increase in the inclusiveness of the citizenship regime is associated with an increase in demonstration involvement by 0.2 per cent points. For all three participation items, the coefficient indicates a positive association between citizenship regime inclusiveness and participation, with the magnitude of the effect being small but meaningful. On the other hand, it can be stated that there is no strong evidence to suggest a meaningful relationship between citizenship regime inclusiveness and political party engagement.

These findings provide important insights into how institutional inclusion affects immigrant political behaviour. That easier access to citizenship is positively associated with voting and trade union membership aligns with the argument that citizenship functions both as a legal resource and a psychological motivator, enhancing individuals' sense of political efficacy and belonging. The association with protest participation may appear unexpected, as protest is often theorised as a response to exclusion. However, in more inclusive regimes, immigrants may feel empowered to express dissent safely and legitimately, especially in contexts where protest is culturally normalised or institutionally tolerated. Alternatively, these results could reflect a

broader climate of political openness in inclusive countries, encouraging diverse forms of engagement—both institutional and contentious.

Conversely, the lack of association between citizenship regime and party involvement may reflect the low rate of party membership in the sample overall. This "floor effect" limits variability and statistical leverage. Moreover, party activism may depend more heavily on meso-level dynamics—such as party recruitment strategies, ethnic outreach, or migrant representation in party structures—none of which are captured by national citizenship regimes. Finally, the absence of individual-level controls in the current models means we cannot account for personal characteristics such as education, political interest, or civic skills, which may be particularly important in explaining selective engagement like party work. These issues will be further explored in Chapter 5 through multilevel models that integrate both contextual and individual-level predictors.

4.3 Public Opinion

Public opinion towards immigrants can reflect another dimension of the opportunity structure in a given country. Whereas public opinion cannot be evaluated as part of the political opportunity structure, to do so would overstretch the concept, as Koopsman (1999) argues structural opportunities do not have to be political indeed. The question whether political opportunity structure is too broad or too narrow is the part or a broader discussion (Gamson and Meyer 1996, Goodwin and Jasper 2011). What emerges to be important from this discussion is that the concepts of a cultural or discursive opportunity structure enable us to analyse the influence of public opinion on migration and immigrants. According to the definition by McCammon (2013) 'discursive opportunity structure (DOS) identifies ideas in the broader political culture believed to be "sensible," "realistic," and "legitimate" and whose presence would thus facilitate reception of specific forms of collective action framing—forms, that is, that would align well with these pre-existing ideational elements'[21]. The differences in these can be materialised in immigration policies thus forming part of the opportunity structures.

For some scholars, such policies can be regarded as institutionalised norms about the desired role of immigrants in a country (Schlueter, Meuleman and Davidov, 2013). The influence of majority culture and discourse on political mobilization has a long tradition (Koopsman and Kriesi, 1997; Della Porta and Kriesi, 1999). The comparative analysis by Koopsman and Kriesi (1997) for instance argue that majority culture can be an important factor that shapes the

[21] For the original definition see Koopsman and Statham (1999).

mobilization and success of anti-immigrant movements. Again, to explain the success of far right in Germany and Italy, Koopsman and Statham (1999) assess the role of discursive opportunities. Similarly, Lahav (2004) highlights the correlation between attitudes towards immigration and policy outcomes. In another study, political participation is seen as an essential factor in predicting less hostile attitudes towards immigrants (Giorgi and Vitale, 2017), indicating the existence of a relationship between the two. Other scholars pointed out the demobilizing effect negative attitudes may have on political participation (Ansolabehere et al., 1994; Matthess, 2012). The study by Ansolabehere et al. (1994) finds that exposure to negative electoral campaigns decreased the voting intention amongst the American voters by 5%. Similarly, Noelle-Neumann, in her famous work 'spiral of silence' highlights the importance of public opinion. It is argued that individuals become more uncertain of themselves and less willing to express their opinions when they perceive themselves to be in the minority position in society. Neumann predicts that 'individuals who ... notice that their own personal opinion is spreading and is taken over by others, will voice this opinion self-confidently in public. On the other hand, individuals who notice that their own opinions are losing ground, will be inclined to adopt a more reserved attitude'.

In this context, the literature above provides robust evidence on the importance of public attitudes and opinion on political behaviour. Nevertheless, in the specific case of ethnic political participation, the role of public opinion towards immigrants remains unexplored in the literature. I believe, if taken seriously, public opinion can be used as a context-sensitive analytical tool in exploring participation of immigrant populations. This is because immigrants, like any other potential political actors, would look for 'signals' in their environment before choosing to make political claims (Meyer and Minkoff, 2004). Generally, a 'closed' opportunity structure refers to a context that is either hostile to immigrants or unreceptive to their claims and therefore may constrain their political action. Moreover, the preliminary results presented in Chapter 3 indicated a significant association between perceived discrimination and participation. This gives reason to assess how majority opinion towards immigrants is reflected in the relation with participation.

Public opinion towards migration and immigrants greatly varies across Europe. Yet, the majority tends to express rising negative feelings (Harell et al., 2012). In line with its earlier definitions (Gallup, 1939; Crespi, 2013), I identify public opinion in this section as the cumulative preferences of individuals identified as natives towards immigrant members of the society. The literature provides different strategies to measure public opinion. Variety of these

methods range from informal ways such as elections, media and protests to the formal quantitative and qualitative methods (Brooker and Schaefer 2015). In addition, several studies compute indices of public opinion for convenience (Card, Dustmann and Preston, 2005; Sides and Citrin, 2007) In this section, the ESS questionnaire serves as the primary source for evaluating natives' attitudes towards immigrants. It is possible measure some attitudes towards immigrants by using the responses to the following questions:

Public opinion indicators

• Is [country] made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?
• Would you say that [country]'s cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?
• Would you say it is generally bad or good for [country]'s economy that people come to live here from other countries?

The macro-level variable of public opinion is based on the three items measured a scale of 0 to 10. Higher values indicate that native respondent have a more positive view of immigrants. By summing the scores for each item, I build an index of public opinion to be used in the empirical analysis. The third hypothesis to be tested is the following:

> H3: The more positive public opinion toward immigrants, the more likely they are to engage in political participation, excluding protest; the more negative public opinion, the more likely they are to engage in protest activity.

Table 5 shows the mean attitudes to immigration and immigrants for the thirteen countries under study. Italy and Austrie exhibit the lowest mean values, thus the least favourable attitudes towards immigrants, while majority opinion in Finland and Sweden correspond to the highest mean values, thus more favourable attitudes towards migrants.

Table 4.5 Descriptive statistics of public opinion variable across Europe

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Austria	6,789	13.785	6.750484	0	30
Belgium	5,417	15.829	5.557791	0	30
Switzerland	4,024	17.534	5.244724	0	30
Germany	14,319	17.034	6.506738	0	30
Spain	6,461	17.470	6.632	0	30
Finland	6,952	18.277	5.585	0	30
France	6,616	15.059	6.561	0	30
UK	6,279	16.087	7.072	0	30
Ireland	7,579	17.243	6.722	0	30
Italy	6,969	13.069	7.008	0	30
Netherlands	5,758	16.956	4.771	0	30
Portugal	4,611	17.000	5.963	0	30
Sweden	5,942	18.299	6.525	0	30

Note: The mean value of public opinion across Europe is 16.427 Std. dev. 6.527.

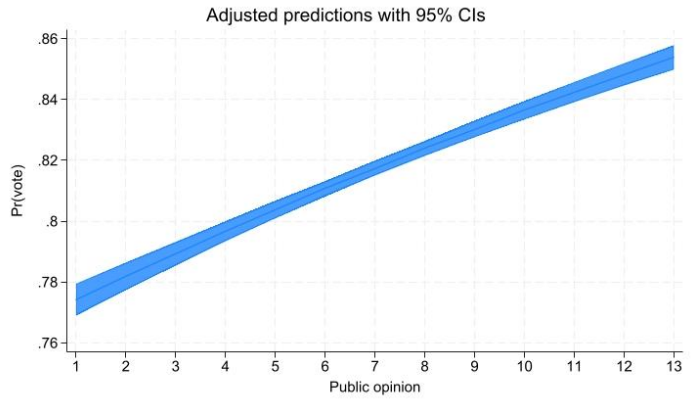
Table 4.6. Logistic regression of political participation on public opinion in Europe

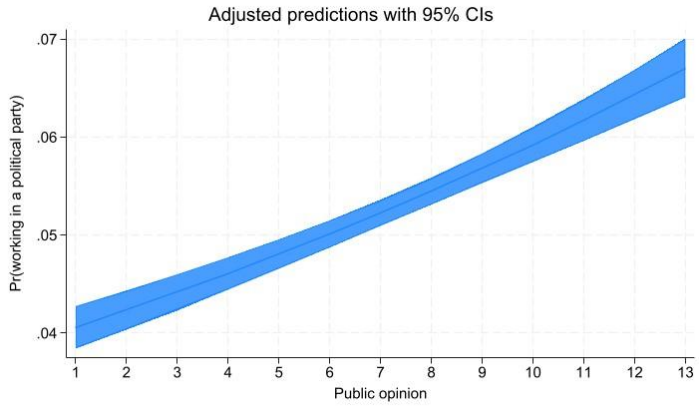
	Vote		Work in political party		Trade union membership		Take part in protest	
Public opinion	.009***	.018***	.002***	.001***	.015***	.044***	.001	.002*
	(.001)	(.002)	(.000)	(.001)	(.001)	(.002)	(.001)	(.001)
Country fixed effect		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes
N	8,321		13,462		13,311		13,469	
Constant	.51	.55	.028	.051	.15	.001	.087	.10
Adjusted R^2	.0042	.0844	.0011	0041	.0152	.1481	.0001	.0084

Note: Entries are Average Marginal Effects (AME) (dy/dx) from logistic regression models, with standard errors in parentheses. Estimated on a migrant-only sample, including both first- and second-generation individuals. Sample sizes vary across participation items due to question-specific response rates and eligibility criteria.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 4.6 shows marginal effects of public opinion on four forms of political participation among immigrants. As it can be seen, the association between public opinion and participation is positive and statistically significant for voting, political party activity and trade union membership at the highest level of confidence ($p < .001$). As expected, we find that public opinion seems to matter for immigrant individuals regarding these three items of participation. The probability to vote, work in a political or an action group, and trade union engagement increases as public opinion becomes more favourable towards immigrants. Regarding turnout rates of respondents with a migration background, a one-unit change in public opinion, as public opinion becomes more favourable is associated with a 1.8 per cent points increase in the probability to vote. Meanwhile, it is observed a positive relationship between more friendly opinion climes and the chances of unionisation, with a 4 per cent point increase in the odds of unionisation for each one-unit increase in public opinion. The coefficient value of political party membership is relatively smaller and implies a rather small increase in party membership for each one-unit increase in public opinion. Regarding the last participation item 'protest participation', unlike what it expected, initially, there is insufficient evidence to conclude that public opinion has an effect on protest activity. The relationship becomes statistically significant when accounting for country-specific factors, suggesting that within countries, a one-unit increase in public opinion is associated with a small but statistically significant increase in protest participation. To make the findings more accessible, predicted probabilities are plotted in Figure 5.3.





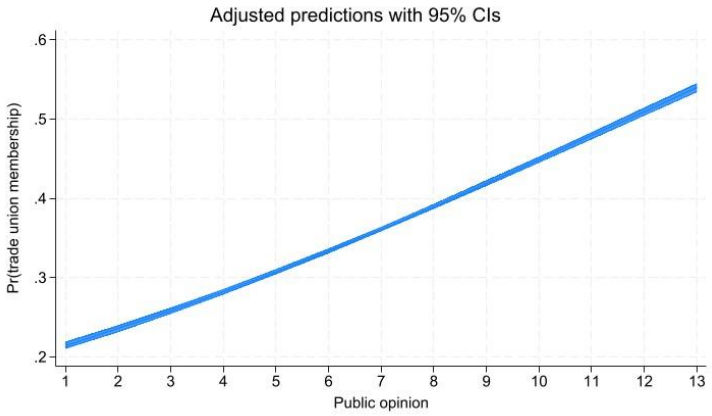


Figure 4.3 Predicted probabilities of political participation by public opinion

The consistent positive relationship between more favourable public opinion and higher rates of voting and trade union membership aligns with the idea that immigrants respond to signals of openness and inclusion in their broader environment. A more welcoming native public may increase immigrants' sense of political belonging and reduce the perceived risks or social stigma associated with participation. Additionally, positive public opinion may be associated with broader societal norms and institutional cultures that encourage engagement through mainstream, institutional channels. The effect on protest participation is more modest but still significant, suggesting that protest is not solely driven by exclusion and grievance. Rather, it highlights that a permissive public discourse can foster both institutional and non-institutional forms of participation.

The relatively weak effect of public opinion on party membership likely reflects the fact that party involvement is generally low across Europe—for both migrants and natives. Joining a party requires more time, motivation, and political interest than other forms of participation and depend more heavily on meso-level dynamics, such as party recruitment strategies, ethnic outreach in party structures——factors not captured by the model here. Some of these issues will be further explored in Chapter 6 through multilevel models that integrate both contextual and individual-level predictors.

4.4 Old vs New Immigration Countries

The seminal work of Freeman (1995) argues that there are important characteristics of immigration politics common to the liberal democracies, and contrary to scholarly consensus largely expansionist and inclusive. Nonetheless, Freeman (1995) admits that liberal democracies display significantly divergent immigration politics. This is as a result of their peculiar immigration histories. He distinguishes three sets of countries that exhibit distinct

modes of immigration policies. Two subsets of these states are composed of European countries marked with distinctive migration histories and studied within the scope of this study. The first group of countries are Western European countries which experienced large scale migration after World War II and started to host non-European minorities. It was due to labour migration in Europe as these countries sought to rebuild their war-torn economies. Most notably, Germany, France, United Kingdom, Switzerland and the Netherlands recruited foreign workers from Southern Europe (mostly Italians), North Africa (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia) and Turkey.

In the other group, there are Italy, Spain and Portugal that had long been emigration countries have become countries of immigration. This radical transition can be attributed to a combination of factors including "these countries' location along the external borders of Europe, the implementation, at times deferred, of EU border control systems, the demand for labour in sectors that cannot be delocalised (tourism, the restaurant business, fishing, agriculture, caring for the elderly, domestic services for nationals as well as for the elderly and European retirees), the existence of a "black" labour market, and the frequent recourse to "massive" regularisation to absorb a proportion of the illegal immigrants" (Wihtol de Wenden, 2013).

The distinction between being an old or new country of immigration was not taken into account in the studies of immigrant political behaviour. Yet, this section argues that this distinction can significantly impact the inclusiveness of migration policies and the institutional framework for migrants' political integration. Eventually, these elements collectively create an environment where influences the political participation of migrants and thus controlling for societies' first major immigration experiences is essential. The main differences among the two sets of countries under investigation are related to the timing and circumstances of their initial major immigration experiences, as well as the degree to which migration flows, politics, and policies have been institutionalised. The politics of immigration in Europe is becoming institutionalised, initially in post-guestworker countries and only recently in the newer societies of immigration. The absence of institutional readiness for substantial immigration, whether legal or illegal, and the lack of regulations for the admission or exclusion of migrants are evident in particular in Southern Europe. Unlike Northern Europe, these counties have recently been experienced mass migration and transited from being a sender to a receiver country. For instance, regarding Italy, Martiniello (1992) states: "Before 1986 no Italian immigration policy as such existed. The sole existing text regulating the entry of foreigners on Italian soil was a police decree of the thirties, under fascism, which gave the police the discretionary power to give or to refuse a sojoum permit." Additionally, considering the example of the guestworker experience, it is likely that

the new country of immigration is facing a steeper learning curve compared to older countries of migration. (Freeman 1995). In a nutshell, most West European counties with guest worker schemes have a longer history of managing immigration and tend to be developed more comprehensive and refined policies, institutions, and practices. By contrast, countries with less experience with immigration may display greater resistance or uncertainty towards foreigners. In these new counties of migration, newcomers might face more polarised political climates regarding migration. The lack of historical context and experience can lead to policies that are either overly restrictive or inadequately prepared to address the complexities of immigration and integration. This can result in less inclusive attitudes and policies, as the society and policymakers may need time to adapt to the new demographic realities. Overall, this thesis expects that divergent immigration histories and its timing affect the state of political and social integration policies. In this vein, the last hypothesis is as follows:

> H4: Immigrants living in older countries of immigration are more likely to participate into politics compared to those living in newer countries of immigration due to more established and inclusive political and social integration policies in the former, and vice versa.

The macro-level variable of old (vs new migration) country is a dummy variable and is based on the typology of Freeman (1995). The typology enables to categorise countries under investigation based on specific criteria that reflect their history and experience with migration. and in line with the related literature (Reyneri and Fullin 2011, Del Boca and Venturini 2016).

> Old countries of migration: France, Britain, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Belgium
>
> New countries of migration: Spain, Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Finland[22]

Table 4.7 shows the results of the logistic regression of political participation items on the dummy variable *old vs new migration country*.

[22] Ireland and Finland are not mentioned in the seminal work by Freeman (1995). Yet, these countries, although being distinct from Southern Europe experience, can be classified as new countries of immigration based on their timing of mass migration. According to European Website on Integration (2014), Ireland has traditionally been a country of emigration. However, the economic boom of the 1990s led to an increase in the number of migrants arriving in the country. The first year to record positive net migration was 1995. Since the 1980s net migration figures in Finland have been positive, with the number of immigrants consistently higher than the number of emigrants. However, while at first most immigrants were typically Finnish citizens returning from Sweden, in the early 1990s migration flows from third countries started to increase.

Table 4.7 Logistic regression of political participation on old (vs new) migration country

	Vote		Work in political party		Trade union membership		Take part in protest	
	Odds ratio	dy/dx	Odds ratio	dy/dx	Odds ratio	dy/dx	Odds ratio	dy/dx
New migration country	.34*** (.018)	-.26*** (.012)	.70*** (.07)	-.013*** (.005)	.55*** (.02)	-.10*** (.008)	.81*** (.05)	-.10*** (.007)
Constant	1.77		.047		.389		.108	
Wald $\chi 2$		390.89		10.60		139.19		7.75
N		8,321		13,462		13,311		13,469

Note: standard errors appear in parentheses. Reference category is "old migration country". Estimated on a migrant-only sample, including both first- and second-generation individuals. Sample sizes vary across participation items due to question-specific response rates and eligibility criteria (e.g., only citizen migrants are eligible to vote in national elections).
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

As expected, odds ratio less than 1 as in this case suggests that living in a new immigration country is associated with decreased odds of the political participation for all items. Regarding the first political participation item 'voting', a value of .34 indicates a substantial decrease in the odds of turnout for immigrants in new immigration countries compared to those living in old immigration countries. The negative marginal effect indicates a decrease in the probability of the political participation occurring for individuals living in a new immigration country. a marginal effect of -.26 suggests that living in a new immigration country is associated with a decrease of .26 in the probability of turnout. Finally, comparing the odds ratio and marginal effects for different variables provides insights into how living in a new immigration country affects these outcomes differently. As it can be seen, the odds ratio for protest participation is higher (.81) compared to the odds ratio for voting (.34), indicating that living in a new immigration country has a relatively weaker association with protest participation compared to voting. Moreover, the marginal effect for voting is higher in magnitude (-.26) compared to the marginal effect for protest participation (-.10), saying that living in a new immigration country has a stronger negative association with voting in elections compared to protest participation.

4.5 Multivariable Model

The multivariable model employs the so far discussed macro-level variables to forecast immigrants' participation in national elections, political parties or action groups, trade unions and public protests. It helps to simultaneously examine the impact of multiple macro-contextual determinants in the same model thus proposing a more detailed and comprehensive analysis.

The Model below captures a snapshot of interesting findings of this Chapter. Some of these findings are the following:

Table 4.8 Logistic regression of macro-level determinants on immigrant political participation

	Vote		Work in political party		Trade union membership		Take part in protest	
Political rights	.04***	-.016	.003	-.007	.098***	-.22***	-.03***	-.013
	(.008)	(.02)	(.000)	(.001)	(.006)	(.001)	(.008)	(.011)
Citizenship regime	.007**	.000	-.001	-.013	.012***	.114***	.005***	-.033*
	(.002)	(.007)	(.001)	(.001)	(.001)	(.018)	(.001)	(.012)
Public opinion	.01***	.02**	.002***	.016*	.009***	-.03	.001	.037**
	(.001)	(.006)	(.000)	(.001)	(.001)	(.016)	(.001)	(.011)
New migration country	-.22***	-.34***	-.014**	.007	-.184***	-.53***	-.013*	.07
	(.02)	(.03)	(.004)	(.027)	(.009)	(.05)	(.006)	(.039)
Country fixed effect		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes
N	7,145		13,021		12,870		13,028	
Constant	.50	.55	.03	.03	.07	.18	.07	.07
Adjusted R^2	.0423	.0655	.0016	.0037	.0984	.1481	.0019	.0078

Note: Entries are Average Marginal Effects (AME) (dy/dx) from logistic regression models, with standard errors in parentheses. Estimated on a migrant-only sample, including both first- and second-generation individuals. Sample sizes vary across participation items due to question-specific response rates and eligibility criteria (e.g., only citizen migrants are eligible to vote in national elections).

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

In the initial model for voting, all four variables (political rights, citizenship regimes, public opinion, new (vs old) migration country) significantly influence voting likelihood. Political rights (4 per cent points), citizenship regimes (0.7 per cent points), and public opinion (1 per cent point) display a positive impact whereas living in a new migration country has a negative impact (22 per cent points) on the likelihood of immigrant turnout. After accounting for country-specific factors, only public opinion and new migration country remain significant. With country fixed effects included, for each one-unit increase in public opinion towards migration and migrations, the likelihood of voting increases by 2 percentage points. This suggests that the effect of public opinion on voting behaviour is robust even after accounting

for country-specific factors. Secondly, living in a new migration country is associated with a 34-per cent point decrease in the likelihood of voting. These findings highlight the relevance of public opinion and the substantial negative impact of new migration country context on voting behaviour, even after controlling for country-specific factors.

Moving to second participation item 'working in a political party', the findings point out the importance of public opinion's positive effect on political party work, even after controlling for country-fixed effects, while the initial negative impact of being in a new migration country is no longer significant, suggesting the initial effect may be due to country-specific differences. With regards the migrants' likelihood to be union members, as it can be noticed, after accounting for country-specific factors, the variables of political rights, citizenship regimes, and new migration country remain significant. On the contrary, public opinion is no longer significant, suggesting the initial positive effect might be influenced by country-specific factors. Interestingly, the Table displays a much stronger negative effect (53 per cent points), highlighting a significant deterrent effect on trade union membership in new migration countries when controlling for country-specific factors. Lastly, political rights and new migration country context appeared to have significant effects, but these were not robust when controlling for country-specific factors. Instead, the effects of citizenship regimes and public opinion became more pronounced, indicating their crucial role in influencing protest participation across different countries.

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Chapter 5

Individual Determinants

This chapter introduces individual-level characteristics as explanatory factors of political participation. I aim to explore the impact of these individual characteristics on political participation for both immigrant and native-born populations. Individual characteristics are often studied to explain political participation (Brady, Verba and Schlozman 1995; Jacobs and Tillie 2004) and the sample under inquiry differs not only in terms of its composition of native and immigrant-origin respondents but also across key individual characteristics that may shape political involvement. As stated by Marien, Hooghe and Quintelier (2010), characteristics of socioeconomic status and demographic variables such education, income, age and gender are closely related to political participation. While individual-level determinants have long been central to participation research, this analysis responds to a key theoretical question raised earlier in the thesis: Do these individual-level factors affect political participation similarly across immigrant and non-immigrant groups?

Furthermore, given immigrant individuals may experience political life differently than their native counterparts, the analysis incorporates individual political predispositions including interest in politics, traits of self-efficacy and beliefs about the political system. As immigrants within European countries are of particular interest for this research, the analysis seeks to detect those variables which may be unique to immigration experience and therefore be of particular importance for explaining ethnic groups' participation patterns. These variables are the length of stay in the country of residence, perceived discrimination based on ethnicity, nationality, religion, colour or race, country of origin, and citizenship (citizen of country, EU non-citizens and TCN non-citizens).

The structure of the chapter is as follows: I begin with a brief review of the literature on individual-level predictors of political participation. The analysis starts with traditional socioeconomic and demographic variables—namely education, income, age, and gender—which are often regarded as baseline predictors of political engagement. Building on this, I introduce a model that includes both immigrants and native-born individuals to examine whether the effects of socioeconomic status (education and income) differ by migration background. This interaction model speaks directly to a central theoretical claim developed earlier in the thesis: that traditional SES-based models may not sufficiently explain political participation among immigrants, as structural and contextual factors are likely to play a more

decisive role. This argument is further examined in Chapter 6 through full multilevel models that incorporate both individual-level and macro-level predictors. This is followed by an examination of migration-specific demographics of country of origin and citizenship. The chapter then moves on to assess the role of well-established political predispositions—political interest, internal political efficacy, and external political efficacy—on political participation. The analyses are conducted with the combined sample incorporating interactions between political interest, political efficacy, and perceived discrimination, with migration background. Subsequently the role perceived discrimination, length of stay in the host country, and age at migration are assessed for the immigrant population to see whether they are successful in predicting migrant political behaviour.

Finally, I present a full multivariate model that combines these predictors to assess their joint effect on the likelihood of political participation among immigrants in Western Europe. These models include country fixed effects to account for unobserved national differences. Throughout the chapter, binary logistic regression is employed as the main analytical technique. Macro-level characteristics and cross-level interactions between individual and contextual variables are integrated in the subsequent chapter, Chapter 6.

5.1 Assessing the Role of Sociodemographic Characteristics

Substantial scholarly attention has been paid to the effects of age, gender, education and income levels on individuals' willingness and ability to participate in politics. Studies have shown these socio-economic and demographic factors are associated with immigration backgrounds and political engagement (Verba and Nie 1972; Richmond and Verma 1978; Lien, Collet, Wong and Ramakrishnan 2001). Many studies propose that higher socioeconomic status (SES) levels correspond with higher political participation. The underlying logic is that individuals with higher SES levels have the skills to learn and understand about politics better.

The SES model has been successful in explaining the variations in political participation between the native and immigrant population (Junn 1999). Nevertheless, the predictive power of SES variables in the specific case of immigrants are dubious. Several studies stressed immigrants have a complicated relationship to the traditional SES model. As such, they identified a weaker relationship between the SES levels and political involvement of ethnic minorities (Jones-Correa 1998; Barreto and Munoz 2003; Tam Cho, Gimpel and Wu 2006; Atger 2009). As Jones-Correa (1998) noted in his study of Latin American immigrant socio-economic factors, predict better the political involvement of native-born (Mexican American) and citizen immigrants than of noncitizen immigrants. Furthermore, Tam (1995) found that

Asian Americans show high socio-economic levels but low participation ratios. In a similar vein, Cho (1999) points that higher education levels amongst immigrants are not associated with increasing participation unless that education produces contact with mainstream politics and institutions in the country. In the present analysis, education is operationalised categorically using the ESS variable for highest level of education (ES-ISCED). Respondents are grouped into three levels—low, medium, and high education—based on international comparability standards. Whereas income variable measures the relative position of the respondent in the income distribution in the country. Income categories correspond to deciles between 1 (lowest income) and 10 (highest income). The empirical findings aim to shed light on the question of whether the traditional variable of socioeconomic status is as powerful in explaining immigrant political activity as it has been in explaining majority political participation. Therefore, the first individual-level hypothesis is as follows:

> H5: The higher the socioeconomic status (SES) of immigrants, to be more likely they are to engage in political participation compared to those with lower *SES;* however, the strength of this relationship is expected to be weaker for immigrants compared to natives.

Another usual determinant of political participation is gender. Scholarly work indicates that participation levels are slightly lower for women than they are for men (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Martin 2004; Dalton 2008). Yet, the gender dimension of immigrant political participation is understudied (Martiniello 2005; Zapata, Gabrielli, Sanchez-Montijano and Jaulin 2013). The role of gender is considered to be connected to immigrants' origin. In other words, minority women tend to experience their ethnic origin and gender simultaneously (Collins 1990, 1998; Brown 2014) and when this intersectional is taken into account participation gaps enlarge. As such, minority women are expected to participate at different levels to politics than men and native women. Moreover, according to Lien, Conway and Wong (2005) dictated gender roles in different cultures, inequalities in opportunities disadvantage some ethnic groups. As Hune (2002) states "among Asians, certain ethnic groups, such as Chinese-, Japanese-, and Korean-born women, may confront greater gender and generational hierarchies within their own households than other ethnic groups". Gender in this study is included as a dichotomous variable indicating the respondent is a female or male.

The literature has spoken of a curvilinear relationship between age and participation in more traditional forms of politics. Empirical studies frequently found that participation increases with

age, increases its peak, and after a steady phase it gradually decreases (Milbart 1965; Franklin, 2004; Pattie, Seyd and Whitley 2004). This trend, implying a 'habituation' voting, is used to explain the higher turnout rates amongst the elderly compared to the young (Goerres 2007). According to Marsh, O'Toole and Jones (2007), young people are not very much into politics but outside of the traditional institutionalized forms. In a similar note, Henn, Weinstein and Wring (2002) mark that lower turnout among the youth is more due to 'their engaged scepticism about formal politics' than the assumed political apathy. In order to determine the extent to which the patterns of political participation are explainable by demographic characteristics, age (in years) is included in the models.

To empirically assess the impact of SES variables on political participation, logistic regression models were estimated for four different types of political activity: voting, party work, trade union membership, and protest participation. Table 5.1 presents the results in two sets of models for each outcome: the first model (M1) includes only sociodemographic predictors (age, gender, education, income), while the second model (M2) introduces interaction terms between SES variables (education and income) and migrant background to assess whether their effects differ between immigrants and natives.

Table 5.1. Logistic Regression of Political Participation Outcomes with and without SES–Migrant Background Interactions

	Vote		Work in political party		Trade union membership		Take part in protests	
Variable	M1a	M1b	M2a	M2b	M3a	M3b	M4a	M4b
Migratory background (native vs migrant)								
Migrant	-1.29***	-.85***	-.28***	-.29***	-.36***	-.20**	.05	-.16
	(.031)	(.074)	(.050)	(.160)	(.025)	(.067)	(.036)	(.100)
Age	.03***	.03***	.01***	.007**	.031**	.031**	-.01***	-.01***
	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)	* (.000)	* (.000)	* (.000)	(.000)	(.000)
Gender (0=Male, 1=Female)								
Female	-.012	-.012	-.34***	-.34***	-.29***	-.29***	-.12***	-.12**
	(.020)	(.020)	(.030)	(.030)	(.004)	(.015)	(.024)	(.024)
Education (low, medium, high)								
Medium	.53***	.55***	.53***	.53***	.65***	.68***	.29***	.29***
	(.026)	(.028)	(.049)	(.051)	(.022)	(.023)	(.036)	(.039)

High	1.16***	1.29***	1.19***	1.16***	.70***	.75***	.85***	.88***
	(.030)	(.038)	(.052)	(.055)	(.025)	(.027)	(.039)	(.042)
Income	.12***	.12***	.02***	.03***	.04***	.04***	-.01**	-.02**
	(.000)	(.004)	(.006)	(.006)	(.003)	(.003)	(.004)	(.005)
Migrant # Medium Edu		-.17*		.05		-.25***		.07
		(.075)		(.166)		(.067)		(.102)
Migrant # High Edu		-.69***		.25		-.42***		-.13
		(.090)		(.169)		(.076)		(.110)
Migrant # Income		-.03**		-.02		.018		.04**
		(.011)		(.019)		(.009)		(.013)
Country fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	-.63	-.71	-3.22	-3.22	-2.19	-2.22	-1.96	-1.92
Pseudo R^2	0.1394	0.1408	0.0435	0.0437	0.1757	0.1760	0.0626	0.0628
N	78,382		85,327		85,290		85,315	

Note: Entries are logit coefficients. Standard errors in parentheses.
$p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$*

As expected, age and income are positively associated with voting likelihood, consistent with prior literature. Education also exerts a strong positive effect, especially for those with higher levels. However, the interaction terms in Model 2 show that the positive effect of SES on voting is weaker for immigrants. For instance, while native individuals with high education are significantly more likely to vote, the effect is significantly attenuated among migrants. This supports the argument that SES alone does not fully account for immigrant political participation.

For the second outcome—participation in a political party or action group—education continues to display a strong positive effect. Yet, the interaction with migrant background indicates that the benefit of higher education does not translate equally for immigrants. The coefficient for the migrant*high education interaction is small and statistically insignificant, suggesting a limited marginal return from higher education in fostering party engagement among immigrants.

Turning to Model 3a, income and education both positively influence trade union membership. However, Model 3b shows that these effects are significantly weaker for migrants. Even highly educated migrants appear less likely to participate in trade unions compared to their native counterparts with similar SES profiles. This points to the presence of structural or institutional barriers that may restrict access or inclusion for migrants within union spaces.

Lastly, the effects of SES on protest activity differ somewhat. While higher education and income are positively associated with protest participation among natives, these associations

are less consistent for migrants. The interaction terms are statistically insignificant, suggesting that SES may not be a key determinant of protest activity for immigrant populations. This aligns with theoretical perspectives which view protest not solely as a resource-driven act, but also as a response to exclusion and grievance.

These findings collectively indicate that while traditional SES indicators (education and income) strongly predict political engagement for natives, their effects are considerably muted for immigrant-origin populations. This adds empirical support to the theoretical argument advanced earlier in the thesis that SES-based models alone are insufficient for explaining ethnic political participation — and that contextual or structural barriers must be considered.

5.1.1 Migration-Specific Demographics within Immigrant Groups

Taken together, these models suggest that the SES-based model of political participation may not travel well across immigrant and native populations. To understand what drives political participation specifically among immigrants, it is important to turn to variables that capture the migration experience more directly. To this end, it is crucial not to treat the immigrant population as a homogenous group. Rather, immigrants differ significantly based on their generational status, country of origin, and citizenship, each of which may influence their opportunities and motivations for political participation. As shown in Table 5.1, there are notable sociodemographic differences between immigrant and native populations in the sample. These distinctions justify a closer examination of within-group variation among immigrants themselves.

On average, immigrants in this sample are younger and report lower income levels, which may reflect both labour market segmentation and recency of arrival. Educational attainment among immigrants shows a polarized pattern: while slightly fewer hold medium education levels compared to natives, they are also somewhat overrepresented in the high education category, possibly reflecting selection effects or educational upgrading post-migration.

Citizenship status represents a formal gateway to political involvement. In the absence of citizenship rights, immigrant political participation tends to remain restricted to non-conventional forms. Studies suggest that holding the citizenship of the country act as a stimulus for voting and other political activities (Martiniello 2005; Quintelier 2009; Zapata-Barrero et al. 2013). This can be because immigrants who acquired citizenship are likely feel more attached to the polity and their new society, less vulnerable while dealing with authorities than noncitizens (Bilodeau, 2008). Nevertheless, some studies of Latin immigrants indicate the

positive effect of citizenship is limited to voting and acquiring citizenship do not lead greater political engagement in other activities (Levin 2013; Barreto and Muñoz 2003). In this regard, it can be useful to assess whether citizens with an immigration background are more likely to participate in politics than those who are noncitizens, as prior studies speculated. Considering this, the citizenship status distribution further illustrates the diversity within the immigrant population. While 55.6% of immigrants hold citizenship in their country of residence, nearly 25% are EU non-citizens, who may have broad mobility and participation rights, and a similar share are TCNs, who often face more restrictive political and legal frameworks. This underscores the importance of considering various categories within the immigrant group, rather than a simplistic "citizen vs. non-citizen" dichotomy, when analysing political participation.

Furthermore, prior studies have shown that country of origin influences political participation (Chui et al. 1991; Zapata-Barrero 2013; Chaudhary 2017). As stressed by Uhlaner, Cain and Kiewiet (1989), African Americans registered at higher rates as voters in the US and were more likely to vote than both Latinos and Asian Americans. Jacobs *et al*. (2002) on the other hand did not find significant differences in *non-conventional participation* between Belgians, Moroccans and Turkish immigrants after controlling for socio-economic factors; yet female immigrants had lower participating levels. Fennema and Tillie (2001) similarly claim that different ethnic communities, Turks, Moroccans, Surinamers and Antilleans in their studies, tend to have varying levels of participation in Netherlands as a result of 'ethnic' social capital of the groups. Moreover, democratic culture of the origin country and exposure to democratic institutions before migration has been shown to foster higher political engagement in the host country (Dinesen and Andersen, 2022; Lazarova, Saalfeld and Seifert, 2023). To assess the origin country effect, I utilize the comprehensive questionnaire of the ESS which asks about the respondent' country of birth. Unfortunately, for the time being I limit the scope of this variable to the first-generation immigrants of whom represent 80%(N=10,849) of the immigrant population. To reflect the role of origin, I use the following admittedly imperfect groupings[23]: (1) MENA and Central Asian countries, (2) Sub-Saharan Africa, (3) South and East Asia, (4) Latin America, (5) EU/EEA countries plus Switzerland and (2) countries in Europe not presently EU member states (non-EU Europe).

[23] The shares of immigrants arriving from Caribbean or North America and Australasia are very small (respectively 2.4% and 2.2%) and thus not included in the analysis. On the contrary, nearly half (47.52 %) of the selected immigrant respondents come from EU Europe.

Table 5.2 Sociodemographic characteristics of immigrant and native populations

Variable	Immigrant	Native	Range
Age (M)	43.64	51.74	14-114
Gender			1-2
Female	52.71	51.82	
Education			1-3
Low	26.62	27.36	
Medium	44.39	48.29	
High	28.99	24.35	
Income (M)	5.07	5.54	1-10
N	13, 536	87,979	
Citizenship			1-3
Citizen of country	55.58	99.52	
EU non-citizens	22.79		
TCN non-citizens	21.63		
N	12,685	87,979	
Country of Origin			1-6
MENA and Central Asia	15.51		
Sub-Saharan Africa	8.19		
South/East Asia	7.88		
Latin America	9.07		
Non-EU Europe	9.39		
EU	45.31		
N	11,952		

Note. For categorical covariates I report the percentage corresponding to each category. For numerical variables I report the mean (M).

Taken together, these patterns highlight the importance of accounting for demographic and migration-specific diversity when analysing immigrant political participation. Accordingly, all variables presented here are included as controls in the multivariate regression models reported later in this chapter. Their inclusion allows for a more precise estimation of the effects of key theoretical predictors, while controlling for compositional differences within the immigrant population.

5.2 Political Interest

Political interest is acknowledged to be a common attitudinal aspect of political integration. As stated by Lupia and Philpot (2005) political interest can be defined as 'a citizen's willingness to pay attention to a political phenomenon at the possible expense of other topics' and by Van Deth (2000) as 'the degree to which politics arouses a citizen's curiosity'.

Including the seminal work of Campbel (1960) authors have continually pointed out the role of political interest in political participation literature. Research aiming to explain voting behaviour particularly took political interest into account as an important individual disposition towards politics and a motivation which favours electoral participation (Brady et. al 1995; Dalton 2006; Prior 2010). Even supporters of the resource model have admitted the relative power of political interest in explaining electoral participation (Brady et al. 1995; Verba et al. 1995). As Verba Schlozman and Brady (1995) asserted 'what matters most for going to the polls is not the resources at voters' disposal but, rather, their civic orientations, especially their interest in politics.' Additionally, according to Smets and Van Ham's (2013) research on voter turnout, it is referred as one of the eight most frequently used explanatory variables. Political interest is also found to be an important predictor of unconventional political participation (Schussman and Soule 2005). For instance, in her research on unconventional political participation, Norris (1999) found higher levels of political interest amongst protesters than non-protesters.

With a similar aim in mind, scholars have tried to explain political integration of immigrants. Studies of ethnic political engagement in local and national levels have found an important interplay between political interest and immigrants' political participation (Fennema and Tillie (1999); De Rooij 2012). However, there exists a slightly different perspective in the literature as well. Rather than having acknowledged as a potential explanatory factor for political participation, political interest is considered an element of political integration together with political participation. In other words, political interest and political participation are treated to be different aspects of political integration (Eggert and Giugni 2010; Berger, Galonska and Koopmans 2004). Berger et al. (2004) described political participation in their work as of political interest and engagement in various forms of political participation. Political interest constitutes the first type of political participation, and the authors consider talking about politics as a proxy for political interest. Other scholars state that "political interest is fairly highly correlated with political participation" (Jacobs, Phalet and Swyngeddouw 2004). Despite the high correlation previous studies might have found, it is useful to take into account what does

not count political participation and treat attitudes (political interest) and behaviours (political participation) accordingly. In other words, political interest does not necessarily translate into actual participation but represents a motivational aspect prior to participation. In the presence of structural barriers, disadvantaged groups although highly interested, may find it difficult to translate their interests into real actions.

Another different point raised concerns the direction of causality between political interest and political participation. If considered vastly stable over time, as Prior (2010) argues, political interest determines participation in political activities. At the same time, according to Verba et al. (1995), although political interest is likely to initiate political participation, the activity itself also increases political interest. This assumption of the reciprocal relation has received further support also in more recent studies (Wang 2007, Strömbäck and Shehata 2010).

Finally, Simonsen (2020) offers a critical argument by showing the limits of traditional concepts of political interest on the basis that they are founded immensely on the majority population's experience. Studying minority youths in the Danish political context, Simonsen (2020) argues that 'lower levels of political interest point first and foremost to characteristics of the political environment, not to individual dispositions'. In other words, according to Simonsen (2020), political (dis)interest does not imply an individual predisposition but is 'feedback on a political context experienced as hostile and treating them as a negative target'.

It is possible to say research in political participation confirms the importance of political interest. Different theories concerning the relationship between the two necessitates to find an accurate operationalisation of this individual-level variable. In the literature it is common to use proxies such as talking about politics, reading newspapers, political knowledge, and interest in local politics (Fennema and Tillie 1999; Berger et al. 2004; Jacobs et al. 2004; Rapeli 2022). Although some of these indicators are also present in the ESS source, the questionnaire contains a straightforward measure of political interests. Respondents are asked how interested they are in politics on a four-point scale[24]. The original variable is recoded as a dichotomous one with two categories, interested in politics ("quite" + "very") and not interested ("not at all" + "hardly"). Table 5.2 shows the degree of political interest between immigrant and native categories. The variation across categories is statistically significant. Natives are more interested in politics than immigrants. This finding of lower interest in the political processes

[24] Question wording: "How interested would you say you are in politics? Very interested, Quite interested, Hardly interested, Not at all interested".

amongst immigrants is in accordance with other finding in the literature (Diehl and Blohm 2010; Eggert and Giugni 2010). Therefore, a deficit in political interest prevails for immigrants which should be further addressed. At the same time, the results challenge the thesis of political quiescence of immigrants which assumes migrants are mainly homoeconomicus and not interested in politics. Despite the lower level of interest displayed by the migrant respondents, they do not represent a distinctly apathetic group.

Table 5.3. Degree of Political Interest (%)

	Immigrants	Natives
Not interested	53.73	45.58
Interested	46.27	54.42
N	13,326	91,749

Note. Pearson Chi square: 456.528; Cramer's V: 0.066

The next step is to assess the role of political interest on political participation. In line with previous studies in the literature I consider political interest can positively influence political participation levels of immigrants. Therefore, I cautiously hypothesize the following:

> H6: As interest in politics increases, immigrants' participation in political activities should increase, and vice versa.

Looking at the Table 5.4, predicted probability of participation is lower for immigrant respondents with no political interest. The expected participation rate in national elections for immigrants not interested in politics is .46. Compared to other forms of participation, having worked in a political party has the lowest probabilities. It is only .02 for immigrants who are not interested in politics and barely reaches to .7 point for the politically interested. This finding is noteworthy because even if the respondents declared interest in politics, their probability to engage with party politics or action groups remains only 7 per cent. This can be due to the empirical findings suggesting party membership has weakened in recent decades and is in decline (Dalton, 1984; Hooghe and Kern, 2015). As it was shown in a prior chapter on the descriptive statistics, the levels of political party involvement were very low for both immigrant (4%) and native (6%) populations.

Table 5.4 Predictive Margins[25] / Expected participation rates based on political interest

Political Interest	Vote	Worked in political party	Trade union member	Took part in protest
Not interested	. 46***	.02***	. 19***	.05***
	(.007)	(.001)	(.004)	(.002)
Interested	.75***	.07***	.32***	.14***
	(.007)	(.003)	(.006)	(.004)
Pseudo R^2	.0519	.0619	.0201	.0376
N	8,205	13,253	13,103	13,259

Note: Standard errors appear in parentheses. Reference category for dependent variables in all models are 'did not participate' in the respective political activity.
* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table 5.5 Logistic Regression Estimates for Political Participation with Migratory Background ×Political Interest Interaction

	Vote	Work in Party	Trade Union Member	Protest
Migrant (reference: native)	-1.21***	-.056	-.60***	.001
	(0.03)	(0.10)	(0.03)	(.057)
Interested in politics (reference: low)	1.44***	1.77***	.625***	.82***
	(0.02)	(.041)	(0.01)	(0.03)
Migrant × Interested	-.34***	-.147	.072	.27***
	(0.05)	(.115)	(0.04)	(0.07)
Constant	1.04***	-4.09***	-.83***	-2.88***
	(0.01)	(0.04)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Pseudo R^2	.0984	.0656	.0233	.0227
N	94,540	104,732	103,914	104,728

Note: Entries are logit coefficients standard errors appear in parentheses.
* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table 5.5 presents logistic regression results examining the relationship between migratory background, political interest, and various forms of political participation. The main effects show that, in isolation, for voting and trade union membership, migrants are significantly less likely to participate than natives, as shown by negative and highly significant coefficients (e.g., b =-1.21, p < .001 for voting). For protest and party involvement, however, no significant difference is observed between migrants and natives when political interest is low. Political

[25] The predictive margin for group *a* represents the average predicted response if everyone in the sample had been in group *a*.

interest itself is a strong and consistent predictor of participation across all domains. Those who express interest in politics are substantially more likely to engage in voting, party work, union membership, and protest—particularly in voting and party involvement.

Importantly, the interaction terms reveal that the influence of political interest varies by migrant status. In the case of voting, the negative interaction (b =-.34, $p < 0.001$) indicates that while political interest enhances turnout overall, its effect is weaker for migrants than for natives. Conversely, for protest participation, the positive and significant interaction (b =.27, $p < .001$) suggests that political interest boosts engagement more for migrants than for natives. No statistically significant interaction effects are found for party work or union membership, implying that political interest functions similarly across groups in those domains. The initial findings support the idea that structural barriers may dampen institutional participation (like voting) among migrants, even when they are politically interested. On the other hand, when migrants are politically engaged, they're more likely than natives to turn to protest. This suggests that non-institutional forms (like protest) may be more accessible or appealing for politically interested migrants.

5.3 Perceived Political Efficacy

While political efficacy is frequently referred as a major predictor of political participation in the literature, it has been rarely discussed in addressing migrants' political (non) participation. Initially, Campbell, Gurin and Miller (1954) defined political efficacy as a 'feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process, namely, that it is worthwhile to perform one's civic duties'. Shortly, the concept included individual perceptions one has about her abilities and capacities towards the political system. Scholars thus started to make a distinction between internal and external political efficacy (Gurin and Brim 1984; Zimmerman 1989; Beaumont 2011). According to Vecchione and Caprara (2009) internal efficacy concerns beliefs about one's ability and confidence to be part of the political domain and make an influence. Beliefs about the political system such as openness of institutions and responsiveness of the government on the other hand are considered to be part of external efficacy.

Scholars of political science and psychology jointly demonstrated that both internal and external political efficacy, as a motivational factor, have a positive effect on conventional and unconventional political participation (Almond and Verba 1963; Abraham and Aldrich 1982; Gallego and Oberski 2012). Abraham and Aldrich (1982) showed decreasing levels of external political efficacy were main predictors of lower voter turnout. Whereas research referred

internal efficacy as a robust predictor of protest participation (Gallego and Oberski 2012). Thus, acknowledging the role of political efficacy indicated a novel perspective in political behaviour literature going beyond the resource model. Within the social cognitive theory beliefs and individual traits such as perceived political efficacy shape one's actions (Bandura 1986). Surprisingly, little research conducted in the European context considers the role of political efficacy in the specific field of minority participation (De Rooij 2012; Zani and Barrett 2012). Applied to this research, the role political efficacy should be assessed to address the issue of political participation gap. Migrant and native individuals estimate their capabilities to take part in politics and how they perceive the systems' openness and finally choose to engage in the political life accordingly. Moreover, higher levels of confidence in engaging with politics and more positive beliefs about the political system can facilitate political participation of minority population.

In order to assess the impact of political efficacy on participation, it is important to consider two dimensions of the concept, self-efficacy (*internal efficacy*) and beliefs about the political system (*external efficacy*). One of the earliest and most influential measures of internal efficacy was adopted by Niemi, Craig, and Mattei (1991) though a four-item scale: 'I consider myself well qualified to participate in politics'; 'I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country'; 'I feel I could do as good a job in public office as most other people' and 'I think that I am better informed about politics and government than most people'. Whereas for external political efficacy a multiple item measurement developed by Niemi et al. (1991) has been utilised by other researchers (Geurkink, Zaslove, Sluiter and Jacobs 2020). Some of the statements used to measure beliefs about 'the responsiveness of governmental authorities and institutions' are: 'People like me don't have any say about what the government does'; 'I don't think public officials care much what people like me think' and 'Parties are only interested in people's votes but not in their opinions.' Yet, in the literature on political efficacy, the search to find better items to measure the two dimensions of the concept are ongoing. Particularly, the validity of the items to measure external efficacy are contentious (Chamberlain 2012).

What is crucial for this research is to find indicators that can accurately capture the two dimensions of political efficacy. The ESS questionnaire includes four items that serve this purpose enabling to measure political efficacy. The questions are as follows:

Internal efficacy indicators

- How able do you think you are to take an active role in a group involved with political issues?
- How confident are you in your own ability to participate in politics?

External efficacy indicators

- How much would you say the political system in your country allows people like you to have an influence on politics?
- How much would you say the political system in your country allows people like you to have a say in what the government does?

In line with earlier studies which measure political efficacy as an index created from numerous indicators (Balch, 1974; Campbell et al., 1954; Craig et al., 1990) I have created two indices of internal efficacy and external efficacy. The choice of using an index has the advantage of reducing measurement errors and better assessing complex factors such as efficacy (Morrell 2003). These indices are based on the above listed indicators that relate to external and internal dimensions of efficacy. To test whether these items truly capture the two dimensions of efficacy a confirmatory factor analysis is used. The results confirm the four items are organised into two dimensions ($\chi 2 = 4.280$; df = 6; $p > .01$; CFI =1.000; SRMR = .001).

Followingly, employing the two items related to internal efficacy an additive index is constructed. The same logic applies to the construction of the external efficacy index. The continuous index variables rage from 0 to 8 for *internal efficacy index* (M = 5.34; SD = 2.02; Cronbach's $\alpha = .81$) and *external efficacy index* (M = 5.34; SD = 1.74; Cronbach's $\alpha = .79$). Despite the two indices represent different dimensions of efficacy, the indicators are not completely unconnected as the covariance between the two dimensions is positive and statistically significant ($r = .41$ $p < .001$).

The efficacy hypothesis concerning immigrant political participation is the following:

> H7: As political efficacy increases, the levels of participation in political activities should increase, and vice versa.

Table 5.6 Logistic Regression Estimates of Political Participation with Migrant Background × Political Efficacy Interaction

	Vote	Work in Party	Trade Union Member	Protest
Migrant (ref: native)	-.979*** (.087)	-.046 (.184)	-.55*** (.073)	-.258* (0.118)
Internal efficacy	.194*** (.006)	.452*** (.007)	.088*** (.003)	.286*** (.006)
External efficacy	.129*** (.007)	.073*** (.008)	.04*** (.004)	-.061*** (.007)
Migrant × Internal	-.029* (.016)	-.034 (.024)	.017 (.012)	.02 (.016)
Migrant × External	-.058*** (.016)	.012 (.026)	-.021 (.012)	.06** (.019)
Constant	.29*** (.033)	-5.66*** (.06)	-1.07*** (.023)	-3.51*** (.042)
Pseudo R^2	.0616	.1143	.0133	.0440
N	84,086	92,445	91,704	92,432

Note: Entries are logit coefficients standard errors appear in parentheses.
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 5.6 presents logistic regression results examining the relationship between migrant background, political efficacy, and four forms of political participation. The models assess whether internal and external political efficacy influence participation differently for immigrants and natives.

The interaction terms reveal whether political efficacy influences participation differently for migrants than for natives. For voting, the interaction with internal efficacy is weakly significant and negative, while the interaction with external efficacy is clearly negative and significant. This suggests that although both forms of efficacy enhance voting overall, their impact is weaker for migrants, potentially due to structural or psychological barriers. For party work and union membership, none of the interaction effects are statistically significant. This indicates that political efficacy influences these forms of participation similarly for migrants and natives. For protest, the interaction between migrant status and external efficacy is positive and significant, suggesting that when migrants perceive institutions as unresponsive, they are more likely than natives to engage in protest activity. This aligns with the notion that protest can serve as an alternative outlet for political expression among those who feel excluded from formal channels.

These findings suggest that political efficacy—especially internal efficacy—is a strong and consistent driver of political participation, regardless of migrant status. However, migrants appear to benefit less from efficacy in institutional forms of participation like voting, possibly due to structural or contextual barriers. In contrast, external efficacy may actually increase migrants' protest participation, highlighting the complex ways in which perceived political (dis)empowerment shapes engagement across different groups.

5.4 Perceived Discrimination

The effect of ethnicity, nationality, religion, colour or race-based discrimination on political participation received little attention in the scholarly research until recently. Available research that related discrimination and political participation are concentrated on sexuality-based discrimination (Cole and Stewart 1996; Charles and Ikenna 2009; Page 2018), Latin Americans (Marsh and Ramirez 2019; Schildkraut 2005; Oskooii 2016) and the US context (Salamon and Van Evera 1973; Klandermans, Van Toorn and Van Stekelenburg 2008; Sawyer and Gampa, 2018).

The role of discrimination in political participation is two-sided. The experience of discrimination can motivate immigrants to take action and make their voice heard through political participation but may also limit their willingness to do so. As raised in the literature, it may have help or hinder engagement depending on the form of the political act. Firstly, several studies observe a negative relationship between the experience of discrimination and identification with the host country and trust in government (Ono 2002; Michelson 2003). Other studies point that Latin Americans who experienced discrimination are less likely to vote (Schildkraut 2005) and immigrants are less likely to naturalise (Portes and Curtis 1987; Hochman 2011).

On the other hand, other studies found a positive relationship between perceived discrimination and non-electoral political activities. Some of these scholars have highlighted the relationship between the experience of discrimination and protest behaviour (Rim 2009; Heath, Fisher, Rosenblatt, Sanders and Sobolewska 2013). Discrimination is employed to address the causes of protest participation amongst lower-class. Scholars suggest the higher the degree of discrimination by minority groups the more likely these disadvantaged groups will protest (Salamon and Van Evera 1973; Louis and Taylor 1999; Mattila and Papageorgiou 2017). If certain groups experience threat and discrimination within the political learning process, it may turn to be a motivation for those able to mobilise and participate. As posited by Della Porta (2019) 'daily discriminations fuel protest through a long process of empowerment in action'.

Therefore, there are reasons to acknowledge discrimination as a factor that can simultaneously demobilise or mobilise immigrants to participate in the political life, but in different forms of political activities. Experience of discrimination leads minority groups to be less engaged with conventional acts of political participation. This is to say discriminated groups often remain outside of the institutional political system whereas the majority population operates within it. In general, immigrants have less access to mainstream policy making and institutions (Pilati and Morales 2016; Zapata-Barrero 2017). Instead, participatory acts of protests, boycotts and petitions are easier to access by immigrants and therefore can become channels to make their resentments heard. Empirical findings seem to support this claim: immigrants and minority members are less likely to vote and more likely to take part in non-electoral political activities (Paulsen 1991; Melo and Stockemer 2014; Bilodeau 2017).

Based on earlier measures of perceived discrimination it is possible to operationalise the variable as a dichotomous variable (Maxwell 2010; Hochman 2011) or through a frequency scale (de Vroome, Coenders, van Tubergen and Verkuyten 2011; Oskooii 2020). Both strategies aim to conceive 'perceived' unequal treatment of individuals based on their ethnicity, nationality, religion, colour or race independently of objective reality. Perceived discrimination is operationalised through the ESS items *whether the respondent describe herself as being a member of a group that is discriminated against in this country* and *on what grounds respondents' group discriminated against.* I created an additive index which varies between 0 (no discrimination) to 4 (maximum discrimination). The index is the sum of the marked responses across four items: discrimination based on ethnicity, nationality, religion and colour or race. All in all, the hypothesis concerning immigrant political participation across selected countries is as follows:

> H8.1: As perceived discrimination increases, immigrants' participation in institutional forms should decrease, and vice versa.
>
> H8.2: Whereas as perceived discrimination increases, the levels of participation in non-institutional forms should increase, and vice versa.

Regarding perceived discrimination variable, an overwhelming portion of the sample did not declare exposure to discrimination based on ethnicity, nationality, religion and colour or race; 98% of native and 82% of immigrant sample. Of those respondents who declared discrimination, *N*=4,087, immigrants correspond to 56%.

Table 5.7 Descriptive statistics on discrimination variable

	Immigrants				Natives			
Discrimination	N	Mean	Std. dev.	Freq (%)	N	Mean	Std. dev.	Freq (%)
	13,358	.263	.661	87.31	91,905	.0245	.190	12.69

Table 5.8 Logistic Regression Estimates of Political Participation with Migrant Background × Discrimination Interaction

	Vote	Work in Party	Trade Union Member	Protest
Migrant (reference: native)	-1.33*** (.026)	-.384*** (.051)	-.583*** (.023)	.002 (.036)
Discrimination (reference: No)	-.485*** (.059)	.581*** (.081)	-.074 (.049)	.688*** (.066)
Migrant × Discrimination	.403*** (.083)	-.054 (.128)	-.029 (.073)	-.095 (.095)
Constant	1.68*** (.01)	-2.84*** (.014)	-.476*** (.006)	-2.38*** (.012)
Pseudo R^2	.0313	.0026	.0063	.0028
N	94,674	104,899	104,079	104,895

Note: Entries are logit coefficients. Standard errors appear in parentheses.
* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table 5.8 examines the relationship between migrants' experiences of discrimination and their political participation across four domains: voting, party work, trade union membership, and protest. The models include interaction terms to assess whether the effect of perceived discrimination differs for migrants compared to natives.

Starting with the main effect of migrant background, results show that migrants are significantly less likely than natives to vote (b = -1.33, p < .001), participate in political parties (b = -.384, p < .001), or be union members (b = -.583, p < .001). For protest participation, however, the migrant-native difference is not statistically significant

The main effect of discrimination indicates that those who report experiencing discrimination are less likely to vote (b = -.485, p < .001), but more likely to engage in party work (b = .581, p < .001) and protest activity (b = .688, p < .001). There is no significant effect on union membership. These patterns suggest that while discrimination may suppress engagement in institutionalized politics like voting, it can also serve as a political trigger, pushing individuals toward more expressive or activist forms of participation.

The interaction terms provide insight into whether the effects of discrimination differ for migrants and natives. For voting, the positive and significant interaction term ($b = .403$, $p < .001$) indicates that the negative effect of discrimination is weaker for migrants. In other words, although discrimination generally suppresses voting, migrants who report discrimination are somewhat *more* likely to vote than their non-discriminated migrant peers—possibly as an act of resistance or an assertion of political voice.

For other forms of participation (party work, union membership, and protest), the interaction terms are not statistically significant. This suggests that discrimination's effects on these activities do not vary meaningfully between migrants and natives. It may imply that both groups respond similarly in non-electoral contexts or that institutional constraints limit differentiated behavioural responses.

Taken together, these findings support the idea that discrimination is a politically activating force, particularly in the domain of protest, and for some migrants, even in voting. However, the results also show that the mobilizing effect of discrimination is selective and does not fully offset broader participation gaps—especially in institutional politics—between migrants and natives.

5.5 Length of Stay and Spending Formative Years in the Host Country

Unlike individual-level predictors such as age, gender, income and political interest (Verba et al. 1995), length of stay in the country of residence and age at the time of migration are considered to be factors specific to migration and thus immigrant population. Time is widely recognized as an important determinant of immigrant political participation, with many studies findings that longer residence in a host country corresponds with higher levels of political engagement (Bevelander 2015; Aleksynska 2011; Finn 2020; Ortensi and Riniolo, 2020; Bevelander and Hutcheson 2022).

The theoretical foundations of this relationship are multifaceted. Theories of exposure and resocialisation argue that political learning is an ongoing process. Because 'there is no single pathway to political learning', over time and through expose immigrants acquire language skills, become more familiar with the politics and political system of the country which in turn allowing them to change and adopt political preferences (White et al. 2008; De Rooij 2012). For immigrants, their settlement to the new country starts a process of political resocialisation. This view is actually in line with Sapiro's (1994) claim that "impressionable years" of forming political attitudes. Pre-adult years are acknowledged to be the phase individuals are most impressionable because various substantial changes in the structure of one's life also occurs

during these years. Locating impressionable years for immigrants is a more difficult task. It often requires going beyond typical frameworks for which native individuals are the reference point. This is to say migration is such a significant change that can happen after the adulthood, thus impressionable years does not have to exactly match the years one grows up. Recent studies on immigrant voting behaviour show a positive relationship between the years spent in the country and electoral participation. They found that the longer immigrants live in the country of residence, the more likely they will vote (Bevelander 2015; Finn 2020; Bevelander and Hutcheson, 2022) protest and participate in political parties (Aleksynska, 2011).

Alternatively, according to the theories of political socialisation immigrants who moved to the country of residence before adulthood are expected to be more likely to engage in politics than immigrants who moved the country in later ages. The underlying logic suggests that political preferences formed in earlier stages of life shape future political behaviour. These preferences formed during pre-adult years also become resistant to change (White et al. 2008). Therefore, adaptation to political system of the country is thought to be easier for immigrants who spent their formative years in the country of residence. Research by Li and Jones (2020) shows that immigrants who migrate at a young age participate in politics at similar levels to native-born citizens, whereas those who migrate as adults participate less. Studies point that the formation of social networks, political skills and knowledge over time ease migrants' engagement in political life (Highton and Burris 2002; White et. al 2008; Ortensi and Riniolo, 2020). This raises the question of whether "length of stay" and "spending formative years in the country of residence" capture different aspects of immigrant political adaptation.

To explore this, the analysis incorporates both variables. First, the ESS questionnaire includes a question about what year the respondent first came to live in the country. I used this item to see whether length of stay is a powerful predictor of immigrant participation in politics. Indeed, this item is also informative about the historical context one first moved to the country. Length of stay is measured by the number of years an immigrant has been in the country of residence. The variable is grouped by 2-5 years; 6–10 years; 11–20 years and 21 or more years.

"Spending formative years in the country of residence" is operationalised based on whether an immigrant arrived before the age of 12. This threshold aligns with existing literature that defines the so-called "1.5 generation"—immigrants who moved before adolescence and are thus more likely to be politically socialised in the host society (Rumbaut and Ima 1988; Heath et al. 2018; Garbinti and Wasmer 2022). Using the ESS variable for age at arrival, individuals who migrated at age 12 or younger are coded as having spent their formative years in the host country,

allowing a clearer distinction between those shaped primarily by their origin country and those more influenced by the political environment of their new residence.

These dual measures allow us to disentangle the effects of long-term exposure from early-life socialisation. The last hypothesis concerning immigrant political participation is therefore as follows:

> H9.1: As the length of stay in the country of residence increases, levels of political participation should also increase, and vice versa.
>
> H9.2: Immigrants who arrived during their formative years are expected to have higher political participation than those who migrated later, due to earlier exposure to the host country's political system and socialisation processes.

Table 5.9 Binary logistic regression of political participation on length of stay and spending formative years in the country (odds ratios)

Variable	Vote	Work in political party	Trade union membership	Take part in protest
Length of stay (ref: 2–5 years)				
6–10 years	2.62***	.972	1.55***	1.10
	(.437)	(.212)	(.159)	(.148)
11–20 years	5.76***	1.13	1.82***	1.20
	(.881)	(.217)	(.17)	(.145)
21+ years	15.22***	1.56**	3.88***	1.15
	(2.31)	(.284)	(.347)	(.138)
Formative years in country (ref: no)	1.16*	1.58***	.90*	1.41***
	(.072)	(.168)	(.046)	(.111)
Constant	.159	.029	.149	.081
Pseudo R^2	.1061	.0129	.0360	.0039
N	6,712	10,958	10,834	10,965

Note: standard errors appear in parentheses.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 5.10 Marginal effects of length of stay and spending the formative years in the country factors on the probability of political participation

Variable	Vote	Work in political party	Trade union membership	Take part in protest
Length of stay (ref: 2–5 years)				
6–10 years	.153***	.0005	.058***	.006
	(.024)	(.006)	(.013)	(.010)
11–20 years	.341***	.008	.083***	.013
	(.021)	(.005)	(.012)	(.009)
21 or more	.555***	.021***	.219***	.015
	(.019)	(.005)	(.012)	(.008)
Formative years in country (ref: no)				
Yes	.601***	.056***	.248***	.116***
	(.011)	(.005)	(.008)	(.007)

Note: Standard errors appear in parentheses. dy/dx for factor levels is the discrete change from the base level (2–5 years) or from not spending formative years in the country.
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Tables 5.9 and 5.10 present the results of binary logistic regressions and marginal effects estimating the impact of length of stay and spending formative years in the country of residence on different forms of political participation. Importantly, the sample is limited to first-generation immigrants, that is, individuals who were born abroad and migrated to their current country of residence. Additionally, at this stage the variables are assessed in isolation meaning that the models only include the two variables of interest, enabling a clear assessment of their independent effects without the influence of other covariates.

The findings offer compelling evidence that longer residence in the host country is strongly associated with higher odds of participation, particularly for voting and trade union membership. Compared to recent arrivals (2–5 years), immigrants who have lived in the host country for 21 years or more are over 15 times more likely to vote, nearly 4 times more likely to be trade union members, and significantly more likely to be involved in political parties. While the association with protest participation is positive, it is not statistically significant. These findings reinforce the notion that political integration is a cumulative process, whereby extended time in the host country facilitate participation (Ortensi and Riniolo, 2020; Bevelander and Hutcheson, 2022).

These results are mirrored in the marginal effects presented in Table 5.10. The probability of voting, for instance, increases by 55.5 percentage points for those with 21+ years of residence compared to the base category. Similarly, trade union membership sees a 22-percentage point increase, suggesting that time in the country allows immigrants to accumulate political knowledge, build networks, and gain trust in institutions that facilitate engagement.

Spending one's formative years in the host country, defined here as migrating before the age of 12, also plays a crucial role in shaping political behaviour. Immigrants who arrived during their childhood are significantly more likely to participate across all four domains. Specifically, the odds of working in a political party are 58% higher and voting likelihood is 16% higher than for those who arrived later in life. The marginal effects further confirm this trend, showing a 6-percentage point increase in party work, 11.6 points in protest, and 24.8 points in union membership for those socialized from a younger age in the host society. This aligns with earlier findings in the literature (Rumbaut, 2004; Li and Jones, 2020; Galli and Russo, 2023), which emphasize the critical role of early-life exposure to the host country's cultural and social environment in fostering convergence with the native-born population in terms of political and social attitudes.

These findings provide empirical support for political socialization theory, which posits that early-life exposure to a country's political culture lays a durable foundation for future participation. Meanwhile, the positive but distinct effects of length of stay are consistent with theories of political resocialization and exposure, which emphasize the cumulative opportunities for learning and integration over time, even for those who arrived later in life.

5.6 Multivariable Model

To investigate the individual-level predictors of political engagement among migrants, multivariable logistic regressions are estimated separately for each political participation outcome: voting, working in a political party or action group, trade union membership, and protest participation. These models incorporate the full range of theoretically and empirically relevant predictors identified in previous sections, including political attitudes (interest and efficacy), experiences of discrimination, temporal integration variables (length of stay, formative years), socioeconomic characteristics (education, income), demographic controls (age, gender), citizenship status, and country of origin. Importantly, the variables of length of stay and spending one's formative years in the host country—key indicators of temporal and developmental integration—can be meaningfully applied to migrants who were born in another

country (operationalised as first-generation migrants). While this approach enables a detailed understanding of how time and early-life exposure in the host society shape immigrant engagement, the thesis acknowledges that generational status remains a critical dimension of political integration. Future research should therefore explore these dynamics among second-generation individuals.

Table 5.11 Multivariable logistic regression for political participation (Odds ratios)

Variable	Vote[26]	Work in political party	Trade union membership	Take part in protest
Age	1.03***	1.00	1.03***	.981***
	(.139)	(.005)	(.002)	(.003)
Gender (Female)	1.34***	.776*	.794***	.85*
	(.085)	(.092)	(.047)	(.068)
Education				
Medium	1.23**	.995	1.59***	.992
	(.117)	(.187)	(.129)	(.113)
High	1.59***	2.08***	1.32**	1.39**
	(.175)	(.403)	(.122)	(.171)
Income	1.05**	.964	1.03**	.961*
	(.014)	(.022)	(.011)	(.015)
Political Interest (Interested)	2.07***	2.07***	1.27***	2.12***
	(.16)	(.322)	(.08)	(.199)
Political Efficacy	1.08***	1.21***	1.03**	1.11***
	(.014)	(.024)	(.01)	(.015)
Discrimination	.70***	1.92***	1.22*	1.56***
	(.069)	(.304)	(.10)	(.163)
Length of stay				
6–10 years	3.31***	1.33	1.41**	1.33
	(.789)	(.373)	(.195)	(.228)
11–20 years	7.11***	1.47	1.52**	1.64**
	(1.56)	(.389)	(.20)	(.264)
21+ years	11.12***	1.73*	1.84***	2.45 ***
	(2.56)	(.494)	(.265)	(.45)
Spending Formative Years (Yes)	1.81***	1.60**	1.21*	1.18
	(.166)	(.248)	(.094)	(.13)
Citizenship status				
EU non-Citizen		.815	.889	1.45**
		(.153)	(.08)	(.183)
TCN non-Citizen		1.26	.837	1.29*
		(.245)	(.08)	(.159)

[26] The voting model is limited to citizen migrants only, as only respondents with voting rights were asked about electoral participation. Other models include the broader first-generation immigrant sample. Each model is estimated using the maximum number of valid responses available for the respective outcome.

Country of Origin				
MENA &	1.83***	.662*	.879	1.02
Central Asia	(.205)	(.138)	(.092)	(.149)
Africa	1.63***	.805	.733*	.946
	(.219)	(.196)	(.095)	(.17)
South/East Asia	1.76***	1.02	.638**	.891
	(.25)	(.253)	(.082)	(.171)
Latin America	1.51**	.700	1.04	1.25
	(.233)	(.176)	(.142)	(.215)
non-EU Europe	.857	.34 ***	.935	.701*
	(108)	(.104)	(.111)	(.125)
Country fixed effect	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	4,624	7,355	7,355	7,358
LR chi2	1364.24	357.35	1584.83	406.98
Wald chi2	861.11	351.89	1221.04	375.60
Pseudo R2	.2070	.1330	.1782	.0833

Note: Standard errors appear in parentheses. Reference categories: Gender = Male, Education = Low, Period = 2–5 years, Formative years = No, Citizenship = Citizen migrants
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 5.11 presents the odds ratios from multivariate logistic regressions predicting four types of political participation among migrants. The models control for key sociodemographic characteristics, political orientations, and migration-specific variables, with country fixed effects included to account for cross-national heterogeneity. Political interest emerges as a powerful predictor of voting. Migrants who report being interested in politics are twice as likely to vote as those who are not (OR = 2.07, $p < .001$), highlighting the centrality of attitudinal engagement in electoral behaviour. Political efficacy is also positively associated with voting; for each one-unit increase in efficacy, the odds of voting increase by 8% (OR = 1.08, $p < .001$). This reinforces the idea that migrants who feel they can influence political outcomes are more inclined to participate.

Discrimination, on the other hand, significantly depresses the likelihood of voting (OR = .70, $p < .001$), suggesting a demobilizing effect. This aligns with theoretical expectations that exclusionary experiences may lead to political disengagement, particularly in institutionalized forms like voting. Among structural and background variables, age, gender, education, and income all show significant associations. Older migrants and those with higher education levels are more likely to vote, consistent with existing literature. Notably, female migrants are also more likely to vote than males (OR = 1.34, $p < .001$) Length of stay is a strong and consistent predictor of voting, with odds increasing markedly across residence durations. Migrants who have resided in the host country for 21+ years are over 11 times more likely to vote compared

to recent arrivals (ref: 2–5 years). Similarly, those who spent their formative years in the host country are significantly more likely to vote (OR = 1.81, $p < .001$), supporting political socialization theories.

Country of origin continues to matter even after controlling for all other variables. Migrants from MENA, Africa, South/East Asia, and Latin America are significantly more likely to vote than EU migrants (reference group), while those from non-EU Europe are less likely (OR = .857). The interpretation of the association between country of origin and voting is also perhaps contrary to one's initial assumptions. Yet, Bevelander and Pendakur's (2011) model on voting in Sweden reveal a similar pattern. They report that 'immigrants from Europe outside the EU and South Asia are less likely to vote, and those from Africa, the Middle East and East Asia are more likely to vote after controlling for the other variables in the model'. These results underscore the multifaceted nature of electoral participation among migrants, influenced by political, social, and demographic factors.

In the second model, interested migrants are over twice as likely to engage in party-related activities (OR = 2.07, $p < .001$), reinforcing the importance of internal political motivation. Political efficacy also has a strong effect (OR = 1.21, $p < .001$), while, intriguingly, discrimination has a mobilizing influence in this case—migrants who report discrimination are nearly twice as likely to work in political parties (OR = 1.92, $p < .001$). Spending formative years in the host country significantly increases party work odds (OR = 1.60, $p < .01$), while the effect of length of stay becomes significant only for migrants with 21+ years of residence (OR = 1.73, $p < .05$). Education is also positively related to participation, with higher-educated migrants more than twice as likely to work in a party (OR = 2.08, $p < .001$). Interestingly, country of origin shows distinct effects in this model: migrants from non-EU Europe are significantly less likely to participate in parties (OR = .34, $p < .001$), while no other origin group shows a statistically significant difference. Citizenship status does not significantly predict party involvement, implying that other forms of political integration may precede formal rights in this context.

In the trade union model, many of the earlier patterns persist. Political interest (OR = 1.27, $p < .001$), political efficacy (OR = 1.03, $p < .01$), and formative year exposure (OR = 1.21, $p < .05$) all positively influence union membership. Regarding the role of education, medium- and high-educated migrants are significantly more likely to be union members, suggesting that educational attainment facilitates integration into labour institutions. However, gender and citizenship show significant effects in the opposite direction. Female migrants are less likely to

be union members (OR = .794, p < .001), as are third-country nationals (OR = .79, p < .01). This may reflect both structural barriers and differential access to unionized sectors. Moreover, migrants from South/East Asia (OR = .638, p < .01) and Africa (OR = .733, p < .05) are also significantly less likely to be union members, pointing to possible forms of labour market segmentation or discrimination.

Lastly, protest activity presents a somewhat distinct profile. Political interest (OR = 2.12, p < .001) and efficacy (OR = 1.11, p < .001) are once again strong predictors, but discrimination emerges as the most striking factor. Migrants who experience discrimination are 56% more likely to protest (OR = 1.56, p < .001), confirming that perceived injustices may act as powerful mobilizing forces in non-institutionalized forms of participation. Notably, citizenship status here works in a reverse direction from voting: non-citizen migrants (both EU and TCN) are more likely to protest. This supports the idea that protests serve as alternative political outlets for those lacking formal rights or institutional access. Unlike other forms, age is negatively associated with protest activity (OR = .981, p < .001), indicating younger migrants are more likely to engage in protest. This result is in line with the earlier findings indicating that young people are more likely to protest (Dalton 2002, Schussman and Soule 2005).

The subsequent chapter builds on these findings by acknowledging the hierarchical nature of the data—individuals nested within countries—and extends the analytical framework through the use of multilevel modelling. This approach enables a more nuanced investigation into how national contexts condition individual political behaviour, revealing how institutional opportunities and structural constraints vary across countries. By incorporating key country-level variables—such as the availability of local voting rights for non-nationals, accessibility of citizenship, public opinion toward immigrants, and a country's classification as an established or recent migration destination—the analysis aims to provide a more comprehensive account of the cross-national dynamics that shape migrant political participation in Europe.

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Chapter 6

Explaining Immigrant Political Participation: A Multi-Level Analysis

The former two chapters have presented several factors that are relevant to immigrant political behaviour, and which enable to predict immigrant political participation in Western Europe. They tested the salience that individual and macro-level indicators have on the likelihood of voting, trade union membership and protest participation for immigrant participants. As mentioned, Chapter 4 focused merely on the characteristics of the macro-context and examined how different opportunity structures impact immigrants' likelihood to engage in various political activities. More explicitly, electoral rights, citizenship regimes and opinion climates are discussed as the macro-level constituents of immigrant political participation in Western Europe. Second, building on the literature, Chapter 5 looked into the individual level predictors of immigrant political participation. While classic socio-economic status (SES) indicators like education and income were found to be significant predictors, their explanatory power appeared more limited when examined in interaction with migration background. These interaction models revealed that SES variables do not operate uniformly across native and migrant populations These interaction models revealed that SES variables do not operate uniformly across native and migrant populations. Building on this, differing from general studies of political participation, the chapter highlighted the role of immigration-specific factors in accounting for minority political engagement. These potential determinants are presented following specific hypotheses on the expected effects of these factors and have been framed either in line with the existing studies or in the form of original assumptions based on persuasive theoretical viewpoints. In both cases, these assumptions were disentangled in the chapters dedicated to macro (Chapter 4) and individual-level (Chapter 5) determinants of immigrant political participation.

However, despite their significance, the findings in these chapters so far have revealed only part of the whole picture. To have a comprehensive understanding of immigrant political participation in Europe, macro-contextual and individual-level variables should be considered simultaneously. Moreover, the interaction effects between macro-contextual and individual-level variables are particularly important for this thesis' goal of providing a more complete picture of immigrant political participation. This is because, as mentioned earlier in the theoretical chapter (Chapter 1), the role of certain individual-level determinants in shaping immigrant political participation is expected to be context-sensitive. It is argued that, compared to natives, immigrants' decision to participate in the political process is strongly determined by

the institutional and social context in which they live. To put it more clearly, faced with restrictive rights or hostile public opinions, individual characteristics of (higher) social status and political interest may not translate into political action. The interaction effects enable us to assess whether immigrants in certain contexts are more likely to participate in politics and whether some individual characteristics are more effective in predicting immigrants' likelihood to engage in politics in certain opportunity settings. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to build a complete explanation of immigrant political participation in Europe.

This goal is achieved through the multilevel analysis in which macro-institutional and individual-level factors of immigrant political participation are combined. It should be highlighted that a two-level analysis of immigrant political participation in such a wide range of countries is rare, if not unique, as former studies of immigrant political behaviour have either focused on the individual (De Rooji, 2012; Pettinicchio and de Vries, 2017) or macro-level (Cinalli and Giugni, 2011; Pilati and Morales, 2016) determinants to explain the phenomenon. Finally, the analysis in this chapter is carried out using the multilevel logistic analysis. The method constitutes a suitable tool of analysis as the individuals are nested in countries, and the dependent variable(s) are dichotomous (participation versus non-participation). The multilevel structure of the analysis allows to consider the intra-class correlation and variance between the selected countries and provide correct standard errors (Snijders and Bosker, 1999).

The chapter is structured as follows: 'Hypotheses and Data' briefly reviews the hypotheses and the related independent variables employed in the empirical analysis in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. It summarizes the findings of the models used to test the hypotheses. The second section, 'Analysis' presents the multilevel logistic regression models, that are, the constellations of individual and macro-contextual factors predicting immigrants' voting in national elections and trade union membership. Importantly, interaction hypotheses are introduced and tested under this section. 'Differences in the strength of effects between political contexts: Voting in national elections' explores cross-level interactions between the individual-level variables and macro-level indicators of the political opportunity structure to detect if and how the effect of certain individual level predictors on voting behaviour varies depending on the level of a higher-level variable. Similarly, 'Differences in the strength of effects between political contexts: Trade union membership' gives account of evidence on whether immigrants in certain political systems are more likely to be part of trade unions and whether individual characteristics are more effective in predicting union membership in certain settings.

6.1 Hypotheses and Data

Before introducing the multilevel logistic models and presenting a comprehensive explanation of the factors predicting immigrant political participation, it is worthwhile to remember the hypothesis raised and tested in the earlier two chapters, namely Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. For this purpose, Table 6.1 summarises the nine hypotheses examined so far.

To begin with, Chapter 4, which discusses the macro-contextual determinants, illustrates that the presence of (local) electoral rights for non-nationals (H1) is an important predictor of immigrant turnout in national elections and trade union membership. Its predictive power is most strong regarding trade union membership among immigrants. Nevertheless, it is not a significant predictor of protest participation. Therefore, the presence of (local) electoral rights has shown the expected positive and significant effect on predicting the chances of immigrants' participation in national elections and trade unions, but not for the protest activity. Similarly, the public opinion variable (H3), measured through an index, has proved to be a relevant factor in predicting immigrant turnout and trade union membership. Yet, the lack of significance in the data has indicated that there is no evidence to suggest public opinion is a powerful predictor of immigrants' protest participation. On the other hand, the last macro-contextual variable is a dummy variable which indicates whether the country is acknowledged as an 'old' or 'new' immigration country in Europe. Based on the seminal work of Freeman (1995), it is argued that European states with postcolonial and guestworker migrations differ from the new countries of immigration in terms of migration regimes and policies. The effect of being a new country of immigration (H4) on the chances of immigrant political participation is negative, as expected, and is a powerful predictor of voting and trade union membership among immigrants and, to a lesser extent, of political participation.

Moving to the evaluation of individual-level determinants, analysed in detail in Chapter 5, some interesting findings have occurred. Firstly, the effect of socioeconomic status (H5) on immigrants' political participation, measured through the variables of education and income, is positive and significant, as anticipated, yet not as strong as the political participation literature tends to stress (Verba and Nie, 1978; Brady et al., 1995; Nevitte et al., 2009; Brown-Iannuzzi et al., 2017). This suggests that it is be necessary to rethink the relationship between socioeconomic status and political participation while studying immigrant groups. Secondly, the evidence has shown that political interest (H6) is a variable favouring, as expected, the chances of political participation. In fact, political interest appears to be the most relevant predictor of political activity. Moreover, political efficacy (H7), measured as an index, is a

positive and significant predictor of political participation, yet its predictive power is weak (OR close to the value 1).

Finally, the second set of individual-level variables is immigration-specific factors. It was found that the experience of discrimination (H8) had a significant but negative influence on voting, indicating a demobilizing effect in institutionalized forms of participation. Immigrants who reported experiences of discrimination were 30% less likely to vote, suggesting that exclusionary experiences may erode trust in the formal political system or reduce perceived responsiveness. In contrast, discrimination is positively associated with trade union membership and strongly associated with protest participation. These findings indicate that discrimination can also function as a mobilizing force, especially in less institutionalized or more expressive forms of political engagement. Moreover, the analysis performed in Chapter 5 has illustrated the powerful effect of length of stay in the country (H9.1) in predicting the chances of political participation. As expected, the period immigrants spent in the country proved to be an important factor in fostering their involvement in the political process. In addition to length of stay, the results also confirmed the significance of spending one's formative years in the host country (H9.2). Immigrants who spent their developmental years—defined up to 12 years old—in the destination country were significantly more likely to participate politically. Additionally, citizenship status emerges as a meaningful, albeit differentiated, predictor of political participation across forms of engagement. Notably, non-citizenship is associated with higher levels of protest participation, particularly among third-country nationals (TCNs) and EU non-citizens suggesting that lacking formal citizenship rights may channel political expression into more informal or non-institutionalized avenues such as protest. This finding aligns with theoretical expectations that protest serves as a compensatory mechanism for political voice among those excluded from conventional democratic channels. The variable is omitted from the models predicting voting since only immigrants who acquired citizenship are eligible to vote in national elections. The voting sample is thus restricted to citizen migrants.

Lastly, the inclusion of country of origin is guided by prior research showing that migrants' political engagement is shaped by the democratic norms and institutional experiences in their origin countries (Dinesen & Hooghe, 2010; Quaranta, 2022; Lazarova et al., 2023). Additionally, migrants from EU countries often share institutional norms and rights frameworks with the host countries. For this reason, migrants from EU countries are used as the reference group in the analysis, allowing for a systematic comparison with other regional groups, such as

those from MENA and Central Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, or Latin America. Followingly, the simplified EU/non-EU distinction in this chapter is opted to allow for clearer identification of structural-institutional effects in multilevel models. In the models, EU migrants are used as the reference group, facilitating a systematic comparison with non-EU migrants who are more likely to face legal exclusions, naturalization delays, and reduced political rights in the host society. This approach is consistent with earlier findings that political incorporation is closely tied to legal and institutional status (Bloemraad, 2006; Koopmans et al., 2005).

Table 6.1 Hypotheses, variables and expected effect on predicting immigrant political participation in Western Europe

Hypotheses	Variable	Expected effect on political participation
H1	Local voting rights for non-nationals	+
H2	Citizenship regime	+
H3	Public opinion	+
H4	New immigration country	-
H5	Socioeconomic status	+
H6	Political interest	+
H7	Political efficacy	+
H8	Discrimination	-
H9.1	Length of stay	+
H9.2	Spending formative years in the country	+
	Control variables	
	Citizenship status	
	Country of origin (EU vs non-EU status)	
	Gender	
	Age	

So far, the impact of aforementioned individual constituents and macro-contextual factors on immigrants' political participation has been evaluated separately. Few studies, nevertheless, investigate the interplay between individual and macro-level factors on immigrants' likelihood

to take part in political activities. Which individual-level and macro-contextual variables can better predict political participation? Why do some immigrants participate in the country's politics while others do not? To answer these questions is the main goal of the analysis in this chapter.

This study includes N=13,358 immigrants from 13 countries, representing 13,358 participants (level-1 units) nested in 13 clusters (level-2 units), thus reflecting a hierarchical data structure. However, it is important to address the variation in sample sizes across different models, as this could raise concerns regarding the comparability of results and the generalizability of the findings. The sample size varies because each model focuses on different dependent variables, which lead to varying exclusion criteria. For instance, the voting model includes only immigrants who have acquired citizenship, as only citizen migrants are eligible to vote in our sample. This exclusion of non-citizens reduces the sample size for voting-related analyses. Additionally, variables like length of stay and spending formative years in the host country apply specifically to first-generation migrants (immigrants who were born in another country), which further limits the sample when these factors are included. Furthermore, the country-of-origin variable was coded as missing for certain countries, such as those from the former USSR and former Czechoslovakia. Finally, missing data and non-responses also contribute to the reduction in sample sizes for some models. The discrepancies in sample size should be taken into account when interpreting the findings, as they may introduce limitations in terms of statistical power and comparability across models.

Differing from a standard regression model, the two-level model has two implications for the analysis: first, the odds can vary from one country to another, and the individual-level effect can also vary from one context to another. For the aim of this study, multilevel logistics regression is employed to test the influence of immigrants' individual characteristics and the openness of opportunity structures on the chances of political participation. Essentially, multilevel logistic regression will enable estimating the odds of immigrant political activity as a function of individual-level variables (e.g. education), macro-contextual variables (e.g. electoral rights), and the way they are interconnected (cross-level interactions). Overall, the main implication here is that the OLS assumption of homoscedasticity is violated in multilevel structures as errors tend to be heteroskedastic, namely correlated within panels (i.e., countries). As mentioned earlier, the odds speak for the possibility that immigrants participate in the selected political activities rather than they do not.

The results of the multi-level logistic regression model are presented in Table 6.2 Firstly, a null model, also known as the unconditional mean model (Wang, Xie and Fisher, 2011), is run to test for the between-group heterogeneity. To put it more simply, it was necessary to discover whether the chances of immigrants' political participation vary from one country to another. The null model provides important information on the model fit and the presence of clustering effects or contextual influences on the dependent variable. The chi-square test reveals that the difference between the present model and a standard logistic regression is significant, x^2 =668.23, p<.001 for the null model, Model M0 in Table 6.2. This indicates that incorporating the random intercepts represents a significant improvement in fit relative to the single-level model. Second, the intraclass correlation coefficient

(ICC) supports the choice of two-level modelling.

The standard formula for the ICC is

$$\rho = \tau^{00} / \tau^{00} + \sigma^2$$

in which σ^2 means the level-1 variance. In logistic models the level-1 variance by assumption is $\pi^2/3$, or about 3.29 (Snijders and Bosker 1999). Thus, in the multilevel logistic model the ICC is calculated as

$$\rho = \tau_{00} / \tau_{00} + (\pi^2/3)$$

As Heck et al. (2014) suggested, the minimum threshold required to indicate substantial evidence of clustering is .05. Thus, for the analysis in this study, carrying out a multi-level analysis is considered suitable. It should be highlighted that this requirement is met for the two political participation items: voting and trade union membership (ICC>.05). This indeed indicates that there is a difference between countries and country-specific factors play a crucial role in shaping immigrants' participation in the aforementioned activities. On the other hand, the low ICC value (ICC<.05) of protest participation suggests that individual-level characteristics play a more prominent role and that differences between macro-level characteristics contribute only slightly to predicting the protest activity. Thus, it is argued that conducting a two-level analysis of protest participation may not be ideal as the variance does not depend on cluster membership. Indeed, protest participation differs from the other political items under investigation in the sense that it represents a non-institutionalised form of political participation. Considering the distinguishing features protest activism may have, it makes sense

that the variance in protest participation is explained predominantly by individual-level factors and is less sensitive to the structural variations between countries.

Table 6.2 Intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) for political participation items

	ICC	95% CI
Vote	0.11	0.05-.0.20
Work in political party	0.07	0.03-0.16
Trade union membership	0.23	0.12-0.38
Take part in protest	0.03	0.01-0.08

6.2 Analyses

6.2.1 Voting in National Elections

The following model, Model 1, includes the main individual-level factors: gender, age, education and income. Looking at the variables of socioeconomic status, the findings show that immigrants with higher levels of education and higher household income are more likely to vote than immigrants with lower education and income levels. As shown earlier, such findings align with the literature findings (Verba et al., 1995; Quintelier and Hooghe, 2012). Yet, as observed in Chapter 5, *socioeconomic status* does not stand out as the most important predictor of immigrant turnout. Despite the emphasis on the importance of socioeconomic status in the explanation of voting, the evidence warns us there may be more relevant factors in explaining immigrant political activity.

In Model 2, attitudinal and migration-specific predictors are introduced. Political interest emerges as one of the most powerful predictors: immigrants who express interest in politics are significantly more likely to vote (b = .76, p < .001). Political efficacy is also positively associated with electoral participation. Furthermore, migration-related integration measures—namely, length of stay and spending formative years in the host country—exhibit strong effects. Compared to recent arrivals (2–5 years), the likelihood of voting increases consistently with longer residence, peaking among those who have lived in the country for more than 21 years (b= 2.44, p < .001). Similarly, having spent one's formative years (before age 12) in the country significantly boosts the probability of voting (b = .55, p < .001). These findings support the hypothesis that temporal exposure and early-life socialization in the host society enhance the likelihood of political incorporation among immigrants.

In Models 2 and 3, non-EU migrants exhibit a significantly higher likelihood of voting compared to EU migrants (b = .396, p < .001). This finding contradicts common assumptions that EU-origin migrants are more politically engaged and instead suggests that non-EU migrants may be more inclined to vote under certain conditions. However, when cross-level interactions are included in Model 4, this association is no longer statistically significant.

Model 3 introduces macro-level contextual characteristics representing the political opportunity structures (POS) migrants face. The presence of local voting rights for non-nationals has a statistically significant effect on national voting (b = .68, p < .01), indicating that inclusive legal frameworks at the local level may foster broader civic participation. Contrary to expectations, neither public opinion nor whether the country is a "new" versus "old" immigration country is statistically significant in this model. This partially challenges the assumptions drawn from prior studies about the macro-context's influence but suggests further nuance is needed.

Table 6.3 Explaining Immigrants' Participation in National Elections

Individual-level variables	Model 0	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
		B	*B*	*B*	*B*
Gender (Female)		.095	.265***	.265**	.271***
		(.054)	(.069)	(.069)	(.069)
Age		.037***	.030***	.030***	.030***
		(.001)	(.002)	(.003)	(.003)
Education					
Medium		.427***	. 24**	.246**	.600***
		(.072)	(.089)	(.086)	(.140)
High		.613***	.486***	.487***	1.04***
		(.082)	(.104)	(.104)	(.168)
Income		.08***	.046**	.045**	.046**
		(.011)	(.014)	(.013)	(.014)
Political interest			. 755***	.753***	1.09***
			(.074)	(.074)	(.114)
Political efficacy			.078***	.076***	.078***
			(.012)	(.012)	(.012)
Lenght of stay (ref: 2-5 years)					
6–10 years			1.16***	1.16***	1.15***
			(.224)	(.224)	(.223)
11–20 years			1.92***	1.92***	1.91***
			(.208)	(.208)	(.207)

21+ years			2.42***	2.43***	2.44***
			(.216)	(.216)	(.216)
Formative years in country (Yes)			.552***	.552***	.549***
			(.09)	(.09)	(.091)
Discrimination (Yes)			-.34**	-.339***	-.331**
			(.098)	(.098)	(.099)
Country of origin (Non-EU)			.396***	.395***	.120
			(.075)	(.075)	(.115)
Country-level variables					
Local voting rights for non-nationals (Yes)				.675**	1.28***
				(.259)	(.307)
Citizenship regime (MIPEX)				-.029	-.019
				(.031)	(.031)
Public opinion				.006	.001
				(.029)	(.029)
New migration country				-.232	-.186
				(.195)	(.195)
Cross-level interactions					
Education* Rights for non-citizens					
Medium* yes local voting rights					-.583**
					(.18)
High* yes local voting rights					-.89***
					(.204)
Interest* Rights for non-nationals					-.564***
					(.143)
Non-EU*Rights for non-nationals					.509**
					(.148)
Intercept		-2.39***	-5.44***	-5.59***	-5.93***
		(.225)	(.338)	(.412)	(.428)
Variance at country level	.452	.377	.184	.100	.101
	(.182)	(.155)	(.079)	(.045)	(.045)
Wald X^2		513.64***	798.56***	805.51***	841.81
LR Test (chibar^2)	655.63***	390.62***	129.01***	69.62***	64.94
N	8,219	6,708	4,894	4,894	4,894

Note: Entries are multilevel logistic regression estimates (*B*) with standard errors in parenthesis (SE). Coefficients indicate increase or decrease in the logit of the odds ratio of the dependent variable. For interaction terms, the reference group is the combination of the individual-level base category and the country group without local voting rights for non-citizens.
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Moreover, when macro-contextual characteristics are taken into account, the effect of individual-level variables has remained significant. After adding the independent variables, the ICC value of the empty model has been reduced. The models (Model 1 and Model 2) so far have served as a confirmation of earlier findings, and more importantly, the multilevel Model 3 with individual and country-level variables has enabled a comprehensive understanding of how both individual characteristics and macro-contextual factors contribute to the immigrant political activity, while appropriately accounting for the hierarchical structure of the data. On the other hand, what the analyses have yet to account for so far is the cross-level interactions. Beyond the direct effect exerted by each determinant on immigrant political participation, the use of interaction models is expected to disentangle the relationship among two-level variables and eventually allow us to see how cross-level interactions contribute to the explanation of the dependent variables.

6.2.1.1 Interaction Hypotheses

As stated, so far, the way individual-level factors and higher-level variables may be interrelated are not accounted for. In other words, the Models assumed that individual-level factors have the same effect on predicting voting and trade union membership in all countries under analysis. Nevertheless, this assumption is contestable given the wide range of countries and the political contexts present in the ESS data.

The interaction hypotheses are derived from the fact that the sample includes countries that are marked with different opportunity structures for immigrant political participation. In closed political systems, it may be less evident that immigrants with higher socioeconomic resources will indeed take part in the political process. As stated earlier in the theoretical Chapter 1, immigrants, even though they hold the necessary resources (e.g. time, money, and civic skills) (Brady et al., 1995), their path to political life does not follow the same patterns as the natives. As Tam (1995) found earlier, for instance, Asian Americans show high socioeconomic levels but low participation ratios. The interaction of individual-level characteristics and macro-level factors is expected to disentangle this puzzle and represent an added value of this thesis, a factor that has been widely neglected by the present literature so far.

This study assumes that the strength of certain individual-level characteristics in predicting immigrants' participation in politics varies based on the political context. Immigrants with higher socioeconomic status do not always participate in politics because institutional structures may prevent them from doing so. Thus, the first cross-level interaction hypothesis the multilevel model aims to address is the following:

Interaction Hypothesis 1: The relationship between the socioeconomic status and political participation is moderated by the presence of (local) political rights, such that the positive effect of education and income on (the log odds) political participation is stronger in countries with local voting rights for non-citizen migrants compared to those without local voting rights.

The second interaction hypothesis formulated is the following:

Interaction Hypothesis 2: The relationship between the political interest and political participation is moderated by the presence of (local) political rights, such that the positive effect of political interest on (the log odds) political participation is stronger in countries with local voting rights for non-citizen migrants compared to those without local voting rights.

The third, and the last, hypothesis assumes that:

Interaction Hypothesis 3: The relationship between the EU status and political participation is moderated by the presence of (local) political rights, such that the positive effect of non-EU status on political participation is stronger in countries with local voting rights for non-citizen immigrants compared to those without local voting rights.

Differences in the strength of effects between political contexts: Voting in national elections

Model 4 includes cross-level interactions between the individual variables of socioeconomic status and macro-level indicators of the political opportunity structure and the presence of local voting rights for non-nationals. The interaction term in the model allows us to capture how the effect of socioeconomic status on the log odds of immigrant turnout changes based on the presence of local voting rights for non-citizen migrants in a country. The results are highly interesting.

First, as expected, the effect of education level on the log odds of immigrant turnout is moderated by the presence of local voting rights for non-citizen migrants in the country ($p<.05$). However, the finding is opposite to the expectation raised by *Interaction Hypothesis 1*. The negative sign of the coefficient indicates that the effect of education level on turnout in national elections is weaker in countries with municipal voting rights for non-nationals. Each additional

unit of education is associated with a smaller increase (or a decrease) in the log odds of immigrant turnout compared to countries with limited rights. One can interpret this as such: while education level has a positive main effect on the likelihood of immigrant turnout, in countries with more political rights for non-nationals, such effect of education reaches a threshold and decreases as education level increases. Each additional unit of education makes a smaller marginal effect on increasing the chances of turnout in counties with more political rights. On the other hand, the interaction between income and (local) electoral rights is not significant. Thus, the presence of electoral rights for non-nationals does not significantly moderate the relationship between income and the immigrant turnout variable in this sample. For a better assessment of this relationship and, in general, of interaction effects the marginal effect plots are demonstrated below:

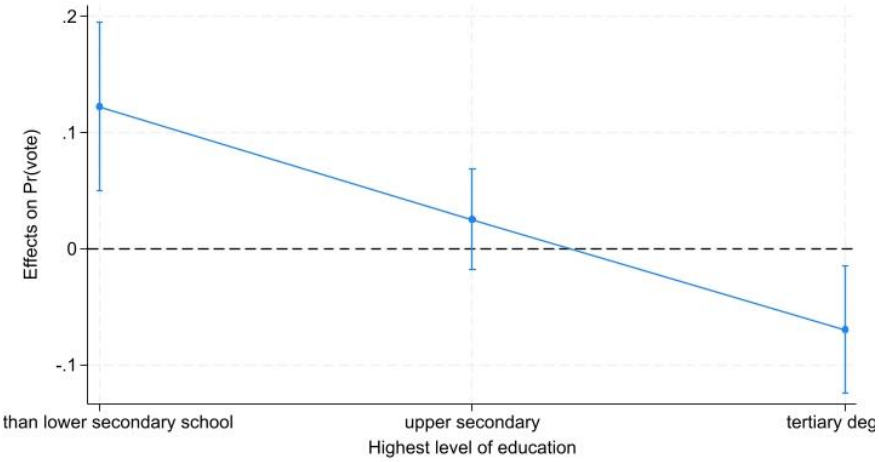

Figure 6.1 Average marginal effects of Rights for non-citizens with 95% CIs

The resulting relationship can be because in open political contexts, immigrants' access to the political process is easier, and the level of education becomes less of a barrier. Even individuals with lower education levels can have easier access to the electoral process. Thus, in such a context, education level may become less crucial for determining the probability of immigrant turnout. On the contrary, the effect of education becomes more prominent in closed political contexts. As access to the political process is more difficult, education becomes a more critical tool for mobilisation in such contexts. Immigrants with higher education may have a higher awareness of their rights and willingness to navigate challenges.

Second, looking at the interaction between political interest and the presence of municipal voting rights, Model 4 shows whether the effect of political interest on the log odds of immigrant turnout varies based on the state of political rights for non-nationals in the country.

As expected, (Interaction Hypothesis 2), the effect of political interest is moderated by the presence of local voting rights for non-nationals in the country. However, the direction of their relationship is different from what was expected. The negative coefficient indicates that the effect of political interest on the chances of voting is weaker in countries with local voting rights. Alternatively, the finding can be interpreted as the effect of being interested in politics on the likelihood of voting is stronger in contexts with no municipal voting rights for non-nationals compared to those with local voting rights. Institutional structures associated with more opportunities do not necessarily increase the likelihood of turnout among politically interested immigrants. This may indicate that in the presence of more political rights, the possibility of turnout becomes easier for everyone, and political interest becomes less crucial for the likelihood of turnout in such countries with more political rights.

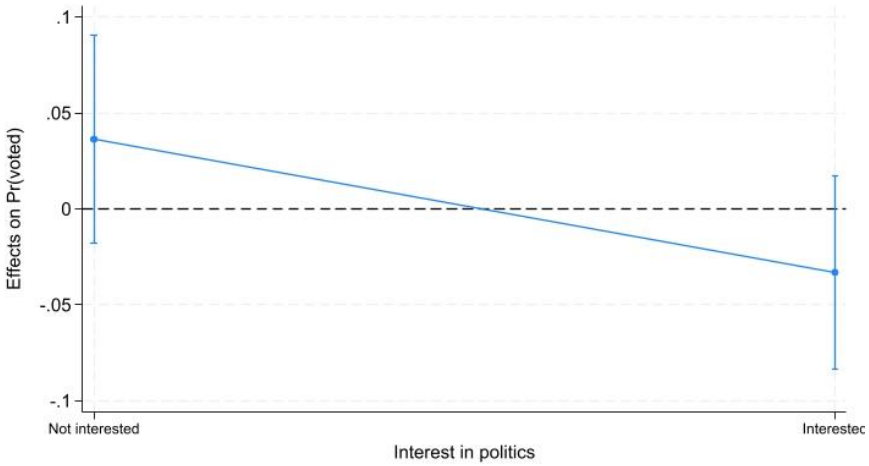

Figure 6.2 Average marginal effects of Rights for non-citizens with 95% CIs

Thirdly, the findings on the interaction between non-EU migrant status and the presence of municipal voting rights for non-nationals support the third interaction hypothesis (H11). The coefficient for the interaction term is positive and statistically significant (B = .509, $p < .01$), suggesting that the effect of being a non-EU migrant on the likelihood of voting is moderated by the presence of local voting rights. Specifically, the positive effect of being a non-EU migrant on the probability of voting becomes stronger in countries where non-nationals are granted municipal voting rights. In other words, non-EU migrants are more likely to participate in national elections when they reside in countries offering broader opportunities for political engagement, even at the local level. This supports the broader theoretical claim that inclusive political opportunity structures can compensate for the institutional barriers non-EU migrants often face.

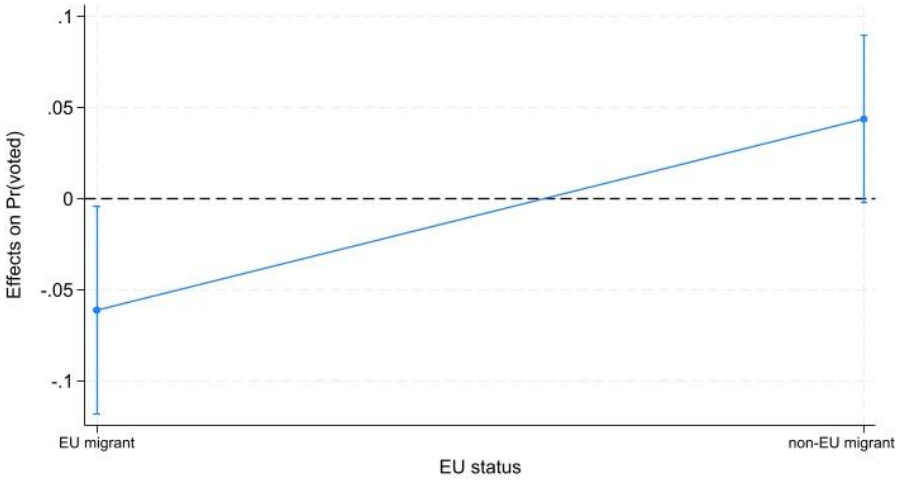

Figure 6.3 Average marginal effects of Rights for non-citizens with 95% CIs

It should be remembered that granting local voting rights to non-citizen migrants particularly targets the political incorporation of non-EU migrants. This is because EU migrants living in other EU member states have the right to vote and to stand as candidates in municipal elections held in that country. As EU nationals, EU immigrants vote in local elections under the same conditions as nationals of the country they live in. Thus, it is not surprising that the presence of local voting rights for non-citizens is relevant, in particular to non-EU immigrants. In countries where local voting rights are present, non-EU migrants are involved in the political process even before they become citizens. This may lead to non-EU migrants' political empowerment, greater familiarity with the political system and easier access to decision making. In the presence of local voting rights, non-EU immigrants find the opportunity to express their political choice in their early years in the country. Thus, once they become citizens in the country, they may feel better integrated into the political process and be more encouraged to vote in national elections. The positive interaction serves to confirm the importance of greater political rights for non-EU migrants.

The interaction effects so far have demonstrated an important aspect. They revealed that the relationship between the selected individual-level variables and the participation behaviour varies across different categories of the country-level variables, thus again pointing to the relevance of macro-contextual factors when assessing political participation in a two-level framework. To sum up, regardless of the presence of political rights, the level of education and political interest are important predictors of turnout among the migrant population. They exhibit a significant and positive main effect on the likelihood of immigrant turnout. In line with the cross-level hypotheses, their effect is moderated by the state of political rights for non-nationals in the country. In political contexts with greater rights, the individual variables appear to be not

as crucial for determining the chances of voting as they are in less favourable contexts with fewer/no rights. To put it differently, the positive effect of the level of education and political interest on the likelihood of turnout among immigrants is more pronounced in closed political systems. Furthermore, the interpretation of these findings requires a greater understanding of the socio-institutional dynamics of the countries in this research. Factors that are not accounted for in this study, such as cultural norms and other institutional structures and mechanisms, might affect, for instance, the relation between political interests and participation in different contexts. The weakened association between political interest and turnout in the presence of (local) voting rights for non-nationals may be due to such factors. Importantly, the interaction terms prove the complexity of immigrant political behaviour and highlight the importance of higher-level variables when examining the predictors of the phenomena of participation.

6.2.2 Working in a political party or action group

Table 6.4 examines the individual and contextual factors influencing the likelihood of immigrants' involvement in political party or action groups. Using a series of logistic regression models, it analyses the impact of various demographic, socio-economic, and contextual variables on the likelihood of working in a political party or action group. The models incrementally incorporate additional sets of predictors to assess their individual and combined effects.

Table 6.4 Explaining Immigrants' Participation in Political Party or Action Groups

Individual-level variables	Model 0	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
		B	*B*	*B*	*B*
Gender (Female)		-.434***	-.278*	-.274*	-.273*
		(.094)	(.116)	(.116)	(.116)
Age		.006*	.005	.005	.005
		(.002)	(.004)	(.004)	(.004)
Education					
Medium		.56***	.016	.011	-.176
		(.158)	(.183)	(.183)	(.277)
High		1.39***	.727***	.722***	.67*
		(.158)	(.182)	(.182)	(.277)
Income		.001	-.031	-.028	-.05
		(.017)	(.021)	(.021)	(.031)
Political interest			. 768***	.766***	1.16***
			(.148)	(.147)	(.24)
Political efficacy			.185***	.185***	.187***

	(.019)	(.019)	(.019)
Lenght of stay (ref: 2-5 years)			
6–10 years	.213	.207	.213
	(.268)	(.268)	(.269)
11–20 years	.286	.28	.292
	(.249)	(.249)	(.251)
21+ years	.417	.421	.449
	(.276)	(.276)	(.278)
Formative years in country (Yes)		.503**	.518**
		(.148)	(.149)
Discrimination (Yes)	.631***	.651***	.654***
	(.146)	(.147)	(.147)
Citizenship (ref: citizen migrants)			
EU non-Citizen	-.209	-.212	-.166
	(.182)	(.183)	(.248)
TCN non-Citizen	.205	.200	.371
	(.184)	(.184)	(.264)
Country of origin (non-EU)	-.32*	-.285	-.50*
	(.155)	(.156)	(.235)
Country-level variables			
Local voting rights for non-nationals (Yes)		.254	.285
		(.217)	(.496)
Citizenship regime (MIPEX)		-.051	-.05
		(.026)	(.026)
Public opinion		.031	. 029
		(.024)	(.0244)
New migration country		.214	.222
		(.176)	(.173)
Cross-level interactions			
Education*Rights for non-citizens			
Medium* yes local votinng rights			.306
			(.369)

High* yes local votinng rights					.046 (.365)
Income*Rights for non-citizens					1.15 (.24)
Interest*Rights for non-citizens					-.653 (.297)
Non-EU migrant*Rights for non-citizens					.371 (.306)
Citizen*Rights for non-citizens					
EU non-citizens*yes local voting rights					-.059 (.338)
TCN non-citizens*yes local voting rights					-.257 (.342)
Intercept	-3.21*** (.124)	-3.49*** (.265)	-5.92*** (.48)	-6.05*** (.535)	-6.17*** (.596)
Variance at country level	.158 (.088)	.096 (.056)	.094 (.055)	.036 (.033)	.033 (.032)
Wald X^2		140.55***	281.59***	287.77***	289.95***
LR Test (chibar^2)	30.23***	17.75***	11.94***	2.80***	2.40
N	13,284	10,557	7,702	7,702	7,702

Note: Entries are multilevel logistic regression estimates (*B*) with standard errors in parenthesis (SE). Coefficients indicate increase or decrease in the logit of the odds ratio of the dependent variable. For interaction terms, the reference group is the combination of the base category of the individual-level variable and countries without local voting rights for non-citizens.
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

The results indicate that political participation among immigrants is shaped by a combination of individual characteristics and broader contextual factors. *Gender*, while initially significant (Model 0: $b = -.434$, $p < .001$), becomes only marginally significant in later models (Model 4: $b = -.273$, $p < .05$). This suggests that gender differences in political participation may be moderated by other factors such as political interest and efficacy. Similarly, the positive effect of *age* is statistically significant in the initial model (Model 1: $b = .006$, $p < .05$) but remains small in magnitude and becomes non-significant after adding further controls.

Among individual-level predictors, *education* proves especially influential. Highly educated immigrants are significantly more likely to participate in political party or action groups across all models (Model 1: $b = 1.39$, $p < .001$; Model 4: $b = .67$, $p < .05$). However, medium education loses significance in the presence of additional controls. This underscores the stronger mobilizing effect of higher education in political engagement compared to intermediate qualifications. *Political interest* and ***efficacy*** are consistently robust predictors of political party participation. For example, politically interested immigrants are more than one logit unit more likely to participate (Model 4: $b = 1.16$, $p < .001$), while political efficacy also increases the likelihood of participation across all models (Model 4: $b = .187$, $p < .001$). These findings reinforce the importance of internal motivations and attitudes for political engagement.

While *length of stay* is positively associated with participation, none of the categories (6–10, 11–20, or 21+ years) reach statistical significance, suggesting the effect is weaker compared to voting. However, *spending one's formative years in the host country* is a significant predictor (Model 4: $b = .518$, $p < .01$), indicating that early-life exposure to the destination society plays a role in political integration. A particularly notable finding is the strong and significant effect of *perceived discrimination*, which increases the likelihood of participation in political parties (Model 4: $b = .654$, $p < .001$). This suggests that political involvement can be a channel for responding to exclusionary experiences—a pattern consistent with findings in earlier studies that link discrimination to political mobilization among minorities.

Different from what it is *expected*, none of the macro-level variables are significant, indicating that they do not directly influence the likelihood of political party engagement when individual-level factors are considered Additionally, none of the cross-level interactions included in Model 4 are statistically significant. One important consideration is the low number of participants who reported involvement in political parties or action groups[27]. This small sample size can impact the statistical power of the analyses, potentially leading to non-significant macro factors and interaction effects. The limited number of politically active respondents might also contribute to high standard errors and wide confidence intervals, making it more challenging to detect significant relationships at the macro level.

[27] 606 respondents with a migration background, nested in 13 Western European countries. Nevertheless, the distribution of engaged migrant participants varies from 100 respondents in Germany and to 5 respondents in Italy.

6.2.3 Trade union membership

Table 6.5 presents the results of the logistic regression analysis explaining immigrants' participation in trade unions. The table includes various models that progressively introduce individual-level variables, country-level variables, and cross-level interactions. The results in Table 6.5 suggest that both individual and contextual factors, as well as their interactions, play significant roles in explaining immigrants' participation in trade unions.

The base model with no predictors indicates the log-odds of trade union when all predictors are excluded from the model. As can be noted in null Model M0, the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) is .23. Notable here is that the ICC value in the null model stands higher than the null model ICC values of other political items. This means that countries under investigation differ more strongly from each other regarding immigrants' union membership rates than regarding voting and political party membership. The ICC value indicates substantial clustering (above .05, suggested by Heck et al. (2014)), and suggests that 23% of the variability in trade union membership is predicted by across country differences.

Model 1 involves basic individual-level variables: gender, age, education, income. Model 2 adds individual political attitudes and immigration-specific variables: political interest, efficacy, length of stay in the country, spending formative years in the country, perceived discrimination, citizenship status and EU-migrant status. Eventually, Model 3 incorporates individual-level variables and the country-level variables of (local) electoral rights for non-nationals, opinion climates, and whether the country is an 'old' or 'new' country of immigration. The results of the multilevel logistic model reveal interesting findings.

Table 6.5 Explaining Immigrants' Participation in Trade Unions

Individual-level variables	Model 0	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
		B	*B*	*B*	*B*
Gender (Female)		-.313***	-.221***	-.221***	-.218***
		(.049)	(.065)	(.057)	(.057)
Age		.036***	.028***	.028***	.028***
		(.001)	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)
Education					
Medium		.502***	.433***	.434***	.465***
		(.067)	(.078)	(.078)	(.125)
High		.413***	.263**	.262**	.088
		(.074)	(.088)	(.088)	(.146)

Income	.052***	.028*	.026*	.035*
	(.009)	(.012)	(.011)	(.016)
Political interest		.223***	.222***	.37***
		(.063)	(.063)	(.097)
Political efficacy		.034***	.034**	.036***
		(.009)	(.009)	(.009)
Lenght of stay (ref: 2-5 years)				
6–10 years		.359**	.36**	.357*
		(.132)	(.132)	(.132)
11–20 years		.417**	.419**	.421**
		(.124)	(.124)	(.124)
21+ years		.599***	.602***	.597***
		(.136)	(.602)	(.136)
Formative years in country (Yes)		.204**	.204**	.202**
		(.076)	(.076)	(.076)
Discrimination (Yes)		.176*	.177*	.181*
		(.082)	(.082)	(.082)
Citizenship (ref: citizen migrants)				
EU non-citizens		-.116	-.115	.14
		(.088)	(.088)	(.127)
TCN non-citizens		-.205*	-.202*	-.195
		(.092)	(.092)	(.139)
Counntry of origin				
Counntry of origin (non-EU)		-.138	.141	-.025
		(.08)	(.08)	(.122)
Country-level variables				
Local voting rights for non-nationals			.729***	1.11***
			(.514)	(.55)
Citizenship regime (MIPEX)			.043	.044
			(.063)	(.063)
Public opinion			.066	. 064
			(.058)	(.058)
New migration country			-.147	-.147
			(.386)	(.386)
Cross-level interactions				

Education* Rights for non-citizens					
Medium*yes local voting rights					-.061 (.16)
High*yes local voting rights					.278 (.181)
Income*Rights for non-citizens					-.014 (.022)
Interest*Rights for non-citizens					-.245* (.121)
Non-EU migrant*Rights for non-citizens					-.212 (.158)
Citizen*Rights for non-citizens					
EU non-citizens * yes local voting rights					-.45** (.164)
TCN non-citizens * yes local voting rights					-.002 (.176)
Intercept	-1.17*** (.261)	-2.83*** (.295)	-3.14*** (.342)	-4.29*** (.575)	-4.54*** (.59)
Variance at country level	.882	.921	.826	.455	.456
Wald X^2		637.24***	526.46***	535.06***	546.50***
LR Test (chibar²)	1696.47	1439.76	918.52	411.15	409.30
N	13,133	10,551	7,706	7,706	7,706

Note: Entries are multilevel logistic regression estimates (*B*) with standard errors in parenthesis (SE). Coefficients indicate increase or decrease in the logit of the odds ratio of the dependent variable. . For interaction terms, the reference group is the combination of the base category of the individual-level variable and countries without local voting rights for non-citizens.
* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Male immigrants are significantly more likely to be union members than female immigrants (*b* = -.313, p < .001), and older individuals are more likely to join unions (*b* = .036, p < .001). Education is a significant predictor: compared to low-educated immigrants, both medium (*b* = .502, p < .001) and highly educated individuals *(b* = .413, p < .001) are more likely to be

unionised. Additionally, higher household income is positively associated with union membership (b = .052, p < .001). These findings align with the standard SES model, where more advantaged individuals are more likely to participate in organised labour structures.

Model 2 adds political orientations and migration-related characteristics. Political interest (b = .223, p < .001) and political efficacy (b = .034, p < .01) are both significantly associated with trade union participation, reinforcing that union membership is not just resource-driven but also shaped by internal motivations. Notably, length of stay emerges as a strong predictor: compared to those with 2–5 years in the country, those who have lived in the host country for 6–10 years (b = .359, p < .01), 11–20 years (b = .417, p < .01), and 21+ years (b = .599, p < .001) are significantly more likely to be union members. This supports the hypothesis (H9.1) that time spent in the host society fosters institutional integration. Model 2 also supports H9.1: migrants who spent their formative years (before age 12) in the host country are significantly more likely to be trade union members than those who arrived later. This finding confirms the importance of early-life exposure to host country norms and institutions.

Additionally, perceived discrimination is associated with higher likelihood of union membership (b = .176, p < .05), suggesting that experiences of exclusion can act as a catalyst for collective organisation. The role of citizenship is mixed: third-country nationals (TCNs) are significantly less likely to be union members than citizen migrants (b = -.205, p < .05), while the coefficient for EU non-citizens is not statistically significant. Country of origin does not significantly predict union membership in this model. Although the regression models do not consistently show a statistically significant difference in union membership between non-EU and EU-origin migrants, previous research has suggested important contextual reasons why non-EU migrants may display higher engagement in unions under certain conditions. Specifically, non-EU migrants are often concentrated in sectors with stronger traditions of unionisation—such as manual labour, domestic work, or service occupations—where union presence is typically more established (Castles et al., 1998; Bauder, 2006). Furthermore, the greater vulnerability faced by third-country nationals due to their legal and economic precarity may increase their motivation to seek the protection and collective bargaining power offered by trade unions (Kahanec and Zaiceva, 2009; Nuti, 2018). While the current analysis does not reveal a robust average effect of non-EU status, these mechanisms may still operate in specific national or occupational contexts and warrant further exploration in future research.

Moving on the findings of Model 3, the most noteworthy finding is that he coefficient for local voting rights for non-nationals (b= .729, p < 0.001), suggests a positive association between

the presence of local voting rights for non-nationals and the likelihood of trade union membership among immigrants. These results underscore the importance of inclusive political institutions in promoting broader civic engagement, extending voting to encompass involvement in labour organizations. In contrast, the other contextual variables—public opinion, citizenship regime and immigration history—are not statistically significant, suggesting that their direct influence on union membership may be more limited when accounting for individual-level characteristics. It should be noted that countries where non-nationals are granted local voting rights are considered to exhibit more liberal political opportunity structures (POS). As the findings in Model 3 show, immigrants living in such countries are more willing to be a part of collective action by joining trade unions. The underlying logic can be the following: in the presence of (local) voting rights for non-nationals, immigrant communities benefit from better representation and advocacy for their labour rights and conditions. This, in turn, may encourage immigrants to engage in trade unions to address their interests and concerns. In addition, in countries with local electoral rights, social networks, organisation, and mobilisation efforts tend to be more inclusive of immigrant communities, thus making it easier for migrant workers to take part in union movements. Lastly, revealing the composition of countries with local rights for non-nationals is useful. As stated earlier in Chapter 4, Belgium, Ireland, Netherlands, Finland, Norway, and Sweden are the group of countries in which non-nationals have local electoral rights. At the same time, a vast majority of these countries are marked by notably high union density rates for the general population and the immigrant sample. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) data, despite Italy (32.5%) and Austria (26.2%) displaying high union density rates for the general population, the countries exhibit very low (the lowest rate is 7.62% in Italy) unionisation rates among immigrants. The two countries are characterised by restrictive political rights and a closed political system for immigrants. In order to account for the relative effect of local electoral rights and union density on union membership, I decided to include an additional control variable called *union density* in the model. However, despite including the variable in the regression, the presence of local voting rights for non-nationals remains the most important predictor for immigrant membership of trade unions.

Differences in the strength of effects between political contexts: Trade union membership

In Model 4, interaction effects were included in the analysis. The interactions between individual-level variables and higher-level characteristics enable us to assess whether immigrants in certain political systems are more likely to be part of trade unions and whether

individual characteristics are more effective in predicting union membership in certain settings. First, the interaction between socioeconomic status and the presence of (local) voting rights for non-nationals is tested, yet it was found that their effect was not significant. The interaction does not display the expected positive and significant effect (Interaction Hypothesis 1). It indicates that the relationship between socioeconomic status and union membership does not vary significantly depending on the presence of electoral rights for non-nationals. In other words, one can interpret such results as the relationship between socioeconomic status and union membership remains stable regardless of the state of electoral rights. Income, for instance, plays a similar role in predicting union membership for immigrants regardless of the level of electoral rights in the country.

Second, this model includes *citizenship status*, which was excluded from the voting models due to legal eligibility restrictions. Its omission was due to the fact that, for all the countries under investigation, immigrants are required to be citizens of the country to be eligible to vote. However, in this context, citizenship matters—especially for third-country nationals (TCNs), who are significantly less likely than citizen migrants to join trade unions (Model 2: $b = -.205$, $p < .05$). To delve deeper into the relationship between citizenship status and unionisation for immigrants, I introduced the 'interaction effect'. This effect, which is the combined effect of the two variables on the outcome, is expected to be an added value in this research. The interaction hypothesis expects the following:

Interaction Hypothesis 4: The relationship between citizenship status and trade union membership is moderated by the presence of local political rights for non-citizens. Specifically, the negative effect of lacking citizenship on union membership is expected to be weaker in countries that grant local voting rights to non-citizens, compared to those that do not.

This hypothesis receives support. The significant result suggests that, as expected (local), voting rights for non-nationals moderate the relationship between citizenship status and union membership. In other words, the effect of citizenship status on union membership differs depending on whether local voting rights are present or absent for non-nationals. It reveals that citizens with a migration background (or immigrants with the citizenship of the country) are more likely to be union members in countries with electoral rights for non-nationals. The interaction term between citizenship status and the presence of local voting rights for non-citizens is interpreted relative to the reference group: citizen migrants residing in countries without local electoral rights. A negative coefficient (e.g., $b = -.45$ for EU non-citizens × rights)

indicates that, compared to this reference group, EU non-citizens living in countries with local voting rights are less likely to be trade union members. The interaction effect stresses the importance of considering not only the citizenship status but also the broader socio-political context, such as the presence or absence of (local) electoral rights for non-nationals, when predicting unionisation decisions among immigrants.

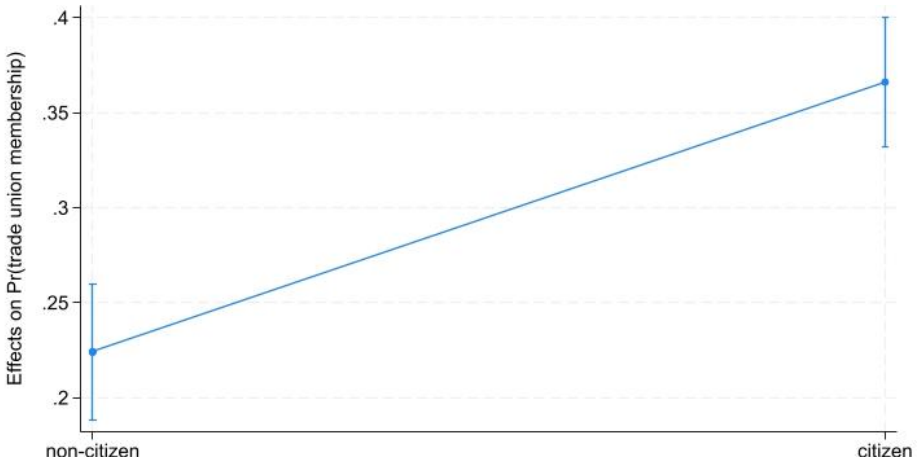

Figure 6.4 Average marginal effects of Rights for non-citizens with 95% CIs

Moving on to the interaction between political interests and the presence of voting rights for non-nationals in the country, as was the case in Model 4 on voting, the significant negative interaction term ($b = –.245$, $p < .05$) suggests that the joint effect has a diminishing effect on the likelihood of union membership among immigrant individuals. Contrary to the hypothesis raised earlier in the section (Interaction Hypothesis 2), politically interested immigrants living in countries with local voting rights for non-nationals are less likely to be trade union members compared to the reference group, that is, immigrants not interested in politics living in countries with no (local) electoral rights for non-nationals. There may be several potential explanations for the observed interaction effect between the two-level variables. Unfortunately, this thesis does not take the additional task of explaining such an effect. Several economic and institutional factors not included in the models may provide a better understanding of the relationship between political interest, electoral rights, and the decision to take part in unions for immigrants. Nevertheless, the findings highlight the presence of the complex dynamics shaping immigrants' participation in labour movements across different social and political contexts. Further research can unpack the mechanisms driving these patterns and their implications for migrant's decision to take part in labour movements.

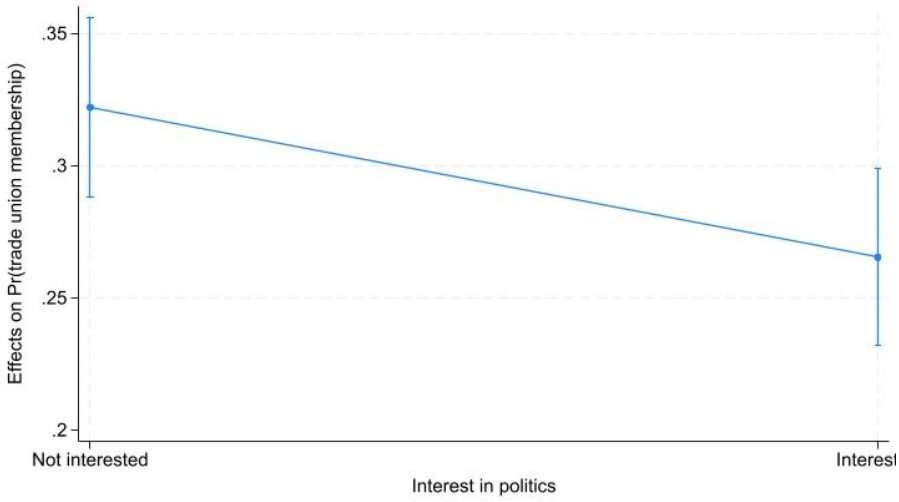

Figure 6.5 Average marginal effects of Rights for non-citizens with 95% CIs

Finally, the interaction between non-EU migrant origin and local electoral rights is statistically non-significant (B = –0.212, $p > .05$), as is the interaction for TCN non-citizens. Thus, there is no empirical support for Interaction Hypothesis 3, which suggested that the effect of non-EU status would vary by country-level rights. The main effect of non-EU origin is also non-significant in this model, indicating that differences in union participation cannot be attributed solely to migrants' regional origin once other variables are accounted for. It should be noted that although the interaction term is not significant, the main effects of the variables can have a significant impact on the likelihood of union membership.

6.3 A Comparison of Results Across Indicators

This chapter has examined the predictors of immigrant political participation across three key dimensions: voting in national elections, involvement in political parties or action groups, and trade union membership. These forms represent a spectrum from institutionalized to more mobilization-based participation, and the comparative analysis reveals both shared and distinct patterns across them.

Among contextual factors, local voting rights for non-nationals (H1) emerge as the most consistent and influential predictor. This variable significantly increases the likelihood of both voting and trade union membership, reinforcing the notion that institutional inclusiveness fosters broader political engagement. Its absence of effect on protest participation, however, highlights the informal and expressive nature of protest activity, which appears less responsive to formal rights frameworks.

The citizenship regime (H2) and public opinion climate (H3) did not show consistent or significant effects across indicators. This suggests that while these variables are important in theory, their influence may be more indirect or contingent on specific national contexts. The distinction between 'new' and 'old' migration countries provided a novel contribution to the thesis, extending the seminal work of Freeman (1995). In contrast, being in a 'new' immigration country (H4) such as Italy, Spain and Portugal had a modest yet notable negative effect on voting and union membership, pointing to the possibility that newer immigration destinations may lack the institutional experience or civic infrastructure to support immigrant engagement at similar levels to 'old' immigration countries.

Turning to individual-level predictors, socioeconomic status (H5)—measured through education and income—was more successful in predicting voting and union membership than it does for party work or protest. This pattern supports classical resource-based theories of participation (Verba et al., 1995), which hold that SES advantages increase participation in institutionalized politics. However, the absence of a consistent effect on protest and political party involvement highlights the limits of this model for understanding all forms of political engagement among immigrants. Notably, the earlier interaction models presented in Chapter 5 indicated that the effects of SES were significantly weaker for immigrants compared to natives, reinforcing the idea that structural and contextual barriers may constrain the translation of socioeconomic resources into political engagement for migrant-origin populations.

Both political interest (H6) and political efficacy (H7) emerge as consistent individual-level predictors across all forms of political participation. Political interest is strongly associated with increased participation in each domain, while political efficacy—though measured on a different scale—also shows a statistically significant and positive association. These findings underscore the importance of attitudinal orientations in shaping immigrants' political engagement.

Discrimination (H8) shows a differentiated influence across types of political participation. In the case of voting, perceived discrimination is negatively associated with participation. Immigrants who report experiencing discrimination are significantly less likely to vote. This suggests that feelings of exclusion or marginalisation may reduce the likelihood of engaging in formal, institutionalised political processes. However, discrimination appears to play a different role in other forms of political engagement. It is positively associated with both trade union membership. This implies that experiences of discrimination can also prompt individuals to seek collective forms of expression and support. Taken together, these findings highlight that

the outcome of perceived discrimination may depend on the type of engagement in question: while it may discourage involvement in institutionalised arenas like electoral politics, it can encourage participation in more advocacy-based activities.

Turning to migration-specific factors, length of stay in the country (H9.1) and spending formative years in the host society (H9.2) both significantly predict voting and union membership, but not party activity. These findings support the idea that temporal integration and early-life exposure to political norms enhance the likelihood of engagement. However, for party work—a rarer form of participation among both natives and migrants, as shown in Chapter 3—these variables were not as decisive.

Further exploration of how individual-level factors interact with country-level characteristics reveals significant insights. When examining the cross-level interactions, the analysis found that the presence of local voting rights for non-nationals interacted significantly with certain individual-level predictors, such as education and political interest. However, the expected positive moderation effect of local voting rights was not always observed, suggesting that the effect of certain individual characteristics (such as education and political interest) on participation may be less pronounced in contexts where migrants have more political rights. This could imply that in more politically open contexts, participation becomes easier for all, and thus, certain individual characteristics like education and political interest may become less crucial for determining participation outcomes. Conversely, in countries with restrictive political rights, such as those without local voting rights, immigrants' personal characteristics (such as SES or political interest) become more decisive in determining their likelihood of participating in political activities.

In conclusion, the comparison of results across indicators reveals that immigrant political participation is influenced by both individual-level characteristics and macro-contextual factors. While the presence of local voting rights and length of stay emerge as key drivers of engagement in formal political activities like voting and trade union membership, factors such as discrimination and political interest play a more significant role in informal or mobilization-based activities like protest participation. Moreover, the influence of socioeconomic status and citizenship status varies depending on the type of engagement, with citizenship being particularly important for union membership and socioeconomic status showing stronger effects in more institutionalized forms of participation. In summary, the findings of this chapter underscore the complexity of immigrant political participation, shaped by a combination of

individual characteristics and macro-contextual factors. By analysing participation items separately, future research can avoid diluting the effects of predictors that are relevant for one type of activity but not another. This can lead to refining existing theories and developing new frameworks that better capture the complexity of political behaviour.

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Conclusion

This thesis has provided a comprehensive account and explanation of immigrant political participation across 13 countries in Western Europe. A main focus of this research has been to identify the political participation patterns of migrant and native individuals. This approach enabled comparisons between the two groups, highlighting differences and similarities in political behaviour and engagement. Therefore, unlike studies focusing exclusively on either natives or migrants, this method provided valuable insights into the political integration process. As emphasised, the level of participation in national elections, political party or action groups, trade unions and protests exhibited significant variation across countries under analysis, as well as the participatory 'gap' between natives and immigrants.

In this way, the thesis addressed its first research question: What are the political participation patterns for the immigrant population in Western Europe? Is there a participatory gap between the majority population and immigrant individuals? It challenged a controversial assumption which assumes that migrants in Europe are interested in achieving economic goals with no interest in politics, thus considered to be apolitical or passive receivers of policies (Martiniello, 1997;2006). Notably, the findings tell us unlike the thesis of the political quiescence of migrants, migrant individuals are not always less active than natives, yet we cannot depict them as a rising political force. Individuals with a migratory background vote in national elections, participate in party ranks, become trade union members and raise their voices in public protests. Yet, a disparity is evident in the participation patterns. The disparity between native and migrant populations is more evident in some national contexts as well as for some political participation acts than for others. I believe this highlighted the significance of conducting cross-country comparisons and analysing different political acts in which migrants engage politically.

Nevertheless, assessing the participation gap between natives and migrants would not be sufficient for the extent of this thesis. Migrants are far from a homogenous population. I recognized the profound diversity within the migrant category and sought to uncover whether different groups of migrants participate in politics at similar rates. To grasp the within-group variations in the participatory behaviour of migrants, the analysis used information on the citizenship status, generational status, religious denomination and country of origin of individuals with a migratory background. Descriptive statistics indeed showed that the characteristics of the immigrant category in different countries vary significantly, reflecting each country's migration history and colonial past. Chapter 3 has provided a detailed account of within-group variation.

The second research question delves into the overarching explanation of immigrant political participation. Specifically, the thesis tried to detect the predictors of immigrant political participation in Western Europe -the factors that make migrant individuals more likely to participate in political activities- as well as its national variations. To be able to address these questions, a comparative analysis covering 13 European countries, by employing the European Social Survey (ESS) data, is carried out. Employing a framework that combines macro-institutional determinants (POS characteristics) with individual characteristics, the thesis has effectively synthesised these two distinct approaches into a cohesive analytical model. As emphasised in Chapter 1, this approach is considered to be superior to focusing solely on individual-level or macro-level factors because it provides a more holistic and nuanced understanding of political participation, particularly for migrants. It was argued, especially for migrants, that individual motivations and behaviours are shaped by larger systemic and contextual influences. All in all, in order to explain migrant political behaviour, integrating both levels of analysis enabled to capture the complex interplay between personal attributes and the broader political and institutional context in which migrants operate.

Empirical evidence has shown that migrants' political participation is influenced by the characteristics of the broader socio-political context in which they reside. These macro-level factors include the presence of local electoral rights for non-nationals, inclusiveness of citizenship regimes, the prevailing public opinion on migration, and whether the country is classified as an 'old' or 'new' immigration destination. As far as the legal provisions considered, Europe shows considerable variation regarding the ways nations attribute political rights and citizenship to immigrants. As illustrated in Chapter 1, it is becoming common for countries to extent the right to vote in local elections to third-country citizens, reflecting a more inclusive approach. Countries such as Belgium, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Sweden allow third-country citizens to vote in local elections. Sweden shows the highest level of inclusiveness by permitting non-EU migrants to vote in municipal elections after three years of residency (Waldrauch, 2003). On the other hand, other countries with significant migrant populations, such as Germany and Austria, do not extend this right to non-citizen residents, highlighting a more exclusive stance. Similarly, the numerous ways countries grant citizenship display contrasting philosophies about the relationship between nations and their members (Brubaker, 1992; Favell, 2001). Italy exhibits extreme characteristics of exclusiveness in that the country

has one of the most restrictive regimes, primarily through residence-based naturalization[28]. (Sredanovic, 2013; MIPEX, 2020). To qualify, an immigrant must have legally resided in Italy for a 'uninterrupted' ten years.

Notably, it was noteworthy to see that while these macro-level variables exhibit significant predictive power for voting behaviour and, to some extent, for trade union membership, they do not emerge as significant predictors of other forms of political participation when individual-level factors are incorporated into the analysis. Nevertheless, for predicting immigrant turnout, the empirical results suggested a positive relationship between the presence of voting rights for non-citizen residents, more favourable public opinion and the classification of the country as an 'old' migration country. These results corroborate with studies such as by Kayran and Nadler (2012), which argue that, focusing on Switzerland, non-citizen voting rights boost turnout among citizens with a migration background, but notwithstanding by the emphasis of Engdahl, Lindgren and Rosenqvist (2020). As mentioned earlier, the studies exploring the impact of public opinion on immigrant political participation are notably scarce. To the best of my knowledge, this study represents one of the few sources that directly address the impact of favourable public opinion on migrant political engagement. Similarly, the distinction between new and old countries of immigration has been overlooked in prior studies of immigrant political participation. However, the evidence presented in this research underscored its significance as a key predictor in understanding immigrant political engagement. Accounting for the time a country has experienced migration provided valuable insights arguing 'old' migration countries perform better in integrating their migrant residents to the political life of the country.

It was important to observe that these macro-level predictors do not consistently demonstrate significance in predicting other forms of participation. This observation suggests that while these contextual factors are relevant in predicting immigrants' voting behaviour, their impact may not extend uniformly across all types of political engagement. This implies that the dynamics driving different forms of political participation might be multifaceted and be other

[28] Under article 4 of Law no. 91/1992, children born in Italy to foreign parents and legally resided in the country without interruption until reaching the age of majority are entitled to ask for Italian citizenship by submitting a declaration within one year from their birthday. Unlike the previous legislation 555/1912, the requirement of 'residency without interruption' affects the applicant's ability to achieve citizenship in case of interruptions in the residence permit or late registration of the minor in the resident registry. The strict deadline for submitting the citizenship application before the candidate turns 19, if failed, further complicates the second-generation migrants' path to Italian citizenship.

contextual factors not captured by the macro-level predictors examined in this research. Moreover, the lack of significance for certain macro-level predictors in predicting other participation acts highlights the importance of considering the complexity and specificity of each form of political engagement. Chapter 4 provided detailed accounts of the relationship between each macro-level explanatory factor and the political participation item. Whereas Chapter 6 assessed the impact of each factor and also its interplay with the individual-level determinants.

Moving on to the individual-level determinants of political participation amongst migrants, traditional predictors of political participation derived from studies on the general population have proven valuable in understanding immigrant political engagement. Political interest emerged as a robust predictor of immigrant engagement across all participation items. This consistent finding underlined the central role of political interest in motivating immigrants to participate in various aspects of political life. This observation aligns with the broader literature on political participation (Brady et al., 1995; Verba et al. 1995) and resonates with the specific research line of ethnic political participation (Fennema and Tillie, 1999; De Rooij, 2012). However, a compelling inquiry has been to assess whether the same factors, such as political interest, political efficacy, and socioeconomic status, have similar effects on political participation for both immigrants and natives. This question was crucial as it provided support to the theoretical framework of the thesis, which argued that a single model of political participation would not be sufficient to predict participation behaviour for both groups. Instead, different mechanisms, shaped by migration-specific factors, are required to address migrants' political participation. In Chapter 5, the interaction between SES variables and migration background indeed revealed that the effect of SES was more pronounced for natives than for migrants, indicating that the political participation of immigrants is influenced by additional factors beyond socioeconomic status.

The thesis further proved that the experience of migration itself introduces unique and transformative factors that profoundly influence immigrants' political behaviour. Among these distinctive factors, the length of stay in the host country stood out as an important determinant of immigrant political participation. More extended periods of residence in the host country positively correlate with the increased likelihood of political engagement among immigrants. Unlike the theories of socialisation that argue migrants who moved to the country of residence before adulthood will be more likely to engage in politics, and preferences formed during pre-

adult years become resistant to change (White et al., 2008), the evidence proven theories of exposure are more valid, at least for this research. Confirming the assumptions of exposure theories, the finding has proved that immigrants can change and adopt political preferences over time. This finding aligns with other findings in the certain literature about the transformative effect of long-term residence on immigrants' attitudes and behaviours (Martinovic, Van Tubergen, and Maas, 2009; Gonnot and lo Polito, 2023). The common thread is that with prolonged exposure in the host society, migrants' preferences, and participation rates are likely to converge with those of native-born citizens, reflecting the ongoing process of integration and acculturation within diverse societies in Western Europe.

Similarly, obtaining citizenship marks a pivotal milestone in immigrants' integration process, and the findings show that it might serve as a key catalyst for political engagement. Furthermore, the distinction between EU and non-EU migrant backgrounds has underscored the diverse trajectories of the two immigrant groups in participating in political life. Yet, the observation that non-EU migrants are more likely to participate in politics challenges some initial assumptions, perhaps disproving conventional assumptions emphasised by public and political discourses. Interestingly, this finding aligns with previous research, such as Bevelander and Pendakur's (2011) model on voting behaviour in Sweden. Existing research on the relationship between country of origin and political participation among immigrants is scarce and can offer valuable insights. Thus, continued investigation is essential to uncovering the complexities of this phenomenon.

Another remarkable finding contradicting some established assumptions emphasised by the existing literature concerns the role of discrimination. Earlier, several studies observed a negative relationship between the experience of discrimination, identification with the host country, and trust in government (Ono, 2002; Michelson, 2003). Other studies point out that Latin Americans who experienced discrimination were less likely to vote (Schildkraut, 2005), and immigrants were less likely to naturalise (Portes and Curtis, 1987; Hochman, 2011). The findings in this thesis rather confirmed that the role of discrimination in political participation is two-sided. The evidence showed that discrimination increased the likelihood of participation in certain acts, such as protest participation and trade union membership, whereas its impact was negative for voting. This two-sided relationship highlighted the related yet distinct nature of these acts and emphasised the various ways through which discrimination might influence political behaviour among immigrants. The evidence in this thesis supports the argument that

the experience of discrimination may fuel feelings of injustice and mobilise immigrants to seek justice through collective action, leading to increased participation in protests and trade unions. In these contexts, immigrants may perceive political engagement as a means of voicing their grievances, asserting their rights, and challenging systemic inequalities. Conversely, discrimination may deter immigrants from participating in electoral politics, particularly if they perceive the political system as unresponsive to their concerns or if they face structural barriers. However, it should be noted that, when conducting a multi-level analysis in Chapter 6, the significance of discrimination as a predictor of voting has disappeared.

The last important finding is related to interaction effects. The interaction effects between macro-contextual and individual-level variables have played a pivotal role in fulfilling the overarching goal of this thesis. Neglected by earlier research in the field and recognised and outlined in Chapter 1, the influence of individual-level determinants on immigrant political behaviour is considered context-sensitive. Therefore, it was imperative to explore how these contextual factors interact with individual-level variables to influence immigrants' likelihood of engaging in politics. The analyses have presented several intriguing findings regarding the interaction effects. First, contrary to expectations, the impact of education level on immigrant turnout weakens in countries where municipal voting rights are extended to non-nationals. This unexpected finding suggested that the presence of local voting rights might mitigate the influence of education on political participation, possibly due to factors such as reduced perceived barriers to political engagement or a greater sense of inclusion among immigrants in municipalities where they can vote. Similarly, the effect of political interest on immigrant turnout was found to be weaker in countries with local voting rights for non-nationals, contrary to what was expected. The interaction between EU migrant status and local voting rights for non-nationals yields a significant result, indicating that the effect of being a non-EU migrant on the likelihood of turnout is stronger in countries where municipal voting rights are granted to non-citizens.

Despite the examination of various interaction effects, the analysis revealed that certain factors did not show a noticeable impact on union membership. The relationship between socioeconomic status and union membership remained consistent regardless of the presence of municipal voting rights, indicating that other factors may play a more vital role in shaping immigrants' decisions to join trade unions. The theoretical models should therefore consider the role of socioeconomic factors and possibly other dimensions like labour market conditions or

sector-specific dynamics. Similarly, the interaction between EU migrant status and local voting rights does not yield a significant effect on union membership. Chapter 6 has provided a detailed account of these interaction effects on the remaining participation items. In a nutshell, the findings underscored the complexity of immigrant political participation and highlighted the importance of considering both individual-level characteristics and macro-level contextual factors in understanding the dynamics of immigrant engagement in politics.

This thesis was an effort to represent a relevant, up-to-date, systematic, and wide-ranging study of immigrant political participation by addressing key gaps in existing research and providing comprehensive insights into the complexities of this phenomenon. Through meticulous examination of macro-level and individual factors, the thesis offered a nuanced understanding of the opportunities, barriers and motivations shaping immigrants' political engagement across Western Europe. Employing a rigorous methodology aimed at ensuring a thorough exploration of the subject matter, thereby making an original and significant contribution to the emerging European literature on migrant political behaviour. Moreover, understanding and addressing the 'participation gap' was a priority in this research, and I believe future research can enrich democratic systems by reflecting on and serving the entire population. I believe the assessment of inequalities in political engagement, as this thesis delivered, can provide us with valuable insights into the barriers faced by different segments of society and inform policymakers to develop measures to enhance their integration. Conversely, ignoring migrants' political agency not only overlooks a significant portion of society but also undermines efforts to ensure diverse viewpoints are considered in policymaking. Unfortunately, the presence of a significant portion of European society in political life remains less visible, and there is limited available information to explain this phenomenon, underscoring the timely contribution of this thesis and the need for future research to bridge this gap.

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Appendix

Appendix A. Explaining Immigrants' Participation in National Elections (odds ratios)

Individual-level variables	Model 0	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
		OR	*OR*	*OR*	*OR*
Gender (Female)		1.10	1.31***	1.30***	1.30***
		(.06)	(.09)	(.09)	(.095)
Age		1.04***	1.03***	1.03***	1.03***
		(.001)	(.003)	(.003)	(.003)
Education					
Medium		1.53***	1.27**	1.27**	1.58***
		(.11)	(.11)	(.114)	(.193)
High		1.84***	1.62***	1.62***	2.46***
		(.152)	(.158)	(.17)	(.36)
Income		1.08***	1.05**	1.046**	1.05**
		(.011)	(.014)	(.014)	(.015)
Political interest			2.13***	2.12***	2.77***
			(.158)	(.158)	(.286)
Political efficacy			1.08***	1.08***	1.07***
			(.013)	(.013)	(.014)
Lenght of stay (ref: 2-5 years)					
6–10 years			3.21***	3.19***	3.61***
			(.729)	(.718)	(.924)
11–20 years			6.84***	6.82***	8.11***
			(1.42)	(1.42)	(1.93)
21+ years			11.31***	11.32***	13.79***
			(2.45)	(2.45)	(3.38)
Formative years in country (Yes)			1.73***	1.73***	1.72***
			(.156)	(.156)1	(.161)
Discrimination (Yes)			.711**	.713***	.729**
			(.069)	(.07)	(.076)
Country of origin (Non-EU)			1.48***	1.49***	1.13
			(.111)	(.112)	(.119)
Country-level variables					
Local voting rights for non-nationals (Yes)				1.39**	2.01***
				(.216)	(.673)
Citizenship regime (MIPEX)				.980	1.00
				(.033)	(.036)
Public opinion				1.01	1.02
				(.031)	(.034)
New migration country				.784	.972
				(.179)	(.245)

Cross-level interactions					
Education* Rights for non-citizens					
Medium* yes local voting rights					.641** (.119)
High* yes local voting rights					.399*** (.082)
Interest* Rights for non-nationals					.624*** (.092)
Non-EU*Rights for non-nationals					1.93** (.299)
Intercept	1.17 (.220)	.091*** (.021)	.004*** (.002)	.003*** (.001)	.002*** (.064)
Variance at country level	.452 (.182)	.377 (.155)	.184 (.079)	.111 (.045)	.101 (.045)
Wald X^2		513.64***	798.56***	805.51***	841.81***
LR Test (chibar²)	655.63***	390.62***	129.01***	69.62***	64.94
N	8,219	6,708	4,894	4,894	4,894

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Appendix B. Explaining Immigrants' Participation in Political Party or Action Groups

Individual-level variables	Model 0	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
		OR	*OR*	*OR*	*OR*
Gender (Female)		.647***	.757*	.752*	.754*
		(.061)	(.087)	(.09)	(.091)
Age		1.01*	1.00	1.00	1.00
		(.002)	(.004)	(.005)	(.005)
Education					
Medium		1.75***	1.01	.991	1.09
		(.278)	(.186)	(.184)	(.257)
High		4.05***	2.07***	1.89***	2.20*
		(.643)	(.378)	(.353)	(.523)
Income		1.00	.969	.983	.954
		(.017)	(.021)	(.022)	(.026)
Political interest			2.15***	2.15***	2.53***
			(.319)	(.327)	(.485)
Political efficacy			1.20***	1.20***	1.20***
			(.023)	(.024)	(.024)
Lenght of stay (ref: 2-5 years)					
6–10 years			1.23	1.65	1.22
			(.332)	(.326)	(.335)
11–20 years			1.33	1.24	1.29
			(.332)	(.314)	(.33)
21+ years			1.51	1.38	1.45
			(.420)	(.390)	(.412)
Formative years in country (Yes)				1.65**	1.66**
				(.257)	(.259)
Discrimination (Yes)			1.88***	1.97***	1.96***
			(.275)	(.303)	(.301)
Citizenship (ref: citizen migrants)					
EU non-Citizen			.811	.805	.811
			(.148)	(.153)	(.189)
TCN non-Citizen			1.23	1.24	1.21
			(.226)	(.235)	(.267)
Country of origin (non-EU)			.725*	.740	.682*
			(.112)	(.121)	(.139)
Country-level variables					
Local voting rights for non-nationals (Yes)				.758	.757
				(.189)	(.395)

Citizenship regime (MIPEX)				.979 (.033)	.982 (.029)
Public opinion				1.03 (.029)	1.03 (.029)
New migration country				1.24 (.274)	1.31 (.284)
Cross-level interactions					
Education*Rights for non-citizens					
Medium* yes local voting rights					.723 (.279)
High* yes local votinng rights					.627 (.239)
Income*Rights for non-citizens					1.09 (.051)
Interest*Rights for non-citizens					.633 (.189)
Non-EU migrant*Rights for non-citizens					1.30 (.426)
Citizen*Rights for non-citizens					
EU non-citizens*yes local voting rights					.811 (.189)
TCN non-citizens*yes local voting rights					1.21 (.267)
Intercept	.040*** (.004)	.030*** (.008)	.003*** (.001)	.002*** (.001)	.002*** (.001)
Variance at country level	.158 (.088)	.096 (.056)	.094 (.055)	.036 (.033)	.033 (.032)

Wald X^2		140.55***	281.59***	287.77***	289.95***
LR Test (chibar²)	30.23***	17.75***	11.94***	2.80***	2.40
N	13,284	10,557	7,702	7,702	7,702

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Appendix C. Explaining Immigrants' Participation in Trade Unions

Individual-level variables	Model 0	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
		OR	*OR*	*OR*	*OR*
Gender (Female)		.731***	.802***	.815***	.819***
		(.035)	(.045)	(.048)	(.048)
Age		1.03***	1.02***	1.02***	1.02***
		(.001)	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)
Education					
Medium		1.65***	1.54***	1.52***	1.61***
		(.111)	(.12)	(.121)	(.18)
High		1.511***	1.30**	1.25**	1.21
		(.112)	(.114)	(.113)	(.156)
Income		1.05***	1.02*	1.02*	1.02*
		(.01)	(.011)	(.011)	(.015)
Political interest			1.25***	1.22***	1.47***
			(.078)	(.079)	(.130)
Political efficacy			1.03***	1.03**	1.03***
			(.01)	(.079)	(.01)
Lenght of stay (ref: 2-5 years)					
6–10 years			1.43**	1.52**	1.51*
			(.190)	(.210)	(.208)
11–20 years			1.51**	1.58**	1.58**
			(.188)	(.205)	(.205)
21+ years			1.82***	1.92***	1.92***
			(.248)	(.272)	(.272)
Formative years in country (Yes)			1.22**	1.23**	1.23**
			(.093)	(.097)	(.097)
Discrimination (Yes)			1.19*	1.19*	1.19*
			(.098)	(.103)	(.103)
Citizenship (ref: citizen migrants)					
EU non-citizens			.889	.891	1.09
			(.078)	(.081)	(.13)
TCN non-citizens			.814*	.816*	.82
			(.075)	(.77)	(.099)

Counntry of origin			
Counntry of origin (non-EU)	.870 (.069)	.871 (.073)	.786 (.128)
Country-level variables			
Local voting rights for non-nationals		3.76*** (1.42)	5.93*** (2.53)
Citizenship regime (MIPEX)		1.01 (.049)	1.01 (.049)
Public opinion		1.06 (.047)	1.06 (.046)
New migration country		.861 (.285)	.879 (.29)
Cross-level interactions			
Education* Rights for non-citizens			
Medium*yes local voting rights			.884 (.141)
High*yes local voting rights			1.07 (.192)
Income*Rights for non-citizens			1.00 (.023)
Interest*Rights for non-citizens			-678* (.083)
Non-EU migrant*Rights for non-citizens			.786 (.128)
Citizen*Rights for non-citizens			
EU non-citizens * yes local voting rights			.670** (.113)
TCN non-citizens * yes local voting rights			.998 (.180)

Intercept	.309*** (.081)	.731*** (.295)	.043*** (.015)	.015*** (.006)	.011*** (.005)
Variance at country level	.882	.921	.826	.455	.456
Wald X^2		637.24***	526.46***	535.06***	546.50***
LR Test (chibar^2)	1696.47	1439.76	918.52	411.15	409.30
N	13,133	10,551	7,706	7,706	7,706

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Appendix D. Variable codes and description of the operationalisation

Dependent variable(s)

Voted in national elections	'Some people don't vote nowadays for one reason or another. Did you vote in the last [country] national14 election in [month/year]?
Worked in a political party or action group	'There are different ways of trying to improve things in [country] or help prevent things from going wrong. During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following?' (i) worked in a political party or action group?
Member of trade union	'Are you or have you ever been a member of a trade union or similar organisation?'
Participated in protests	'There are different ways of trying to improve things in [country] or help prevent things from going wrong. During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following?' (i) taken part in a lawful public demonstration or (ii) participated in illegal protest activities

The dependent variables are dichotomous, coded as '1' if the respondent participated in the aforementioned political activity, and '0' if the respondent did not.

Independent variables

Immigrant	Those who were born in another country than the one they currently reside in, and who have at least one parent born on the same county as they were born
Non-immigrant	Those who were born in another country than the one they currently reside in, and who have at least one parent born on the same county as they were born

Gender	0=male; 1=female
Age	Age in years
Education	Highest level of education, ES – ISCED. Grouped as 1=low ; 2= medium; 3=high education
Income	Household's total net income, all sources. 1= J 1st decile; 2= R - 2nd decile; 3= C - 3rd decile; 4= M - 4th decile; 5= F - 5th decile; 6= S - 6th decile; 7= K - 7th decile; 8= P - 8th decile; 9= D - 9th decile ;10= H - 10th decile
Interested in politics	0 = not interested; 1 = interested
Internal efficacy	additive index ranging from 0 to 8
External efficacy	additive index ranging from 0 to 8
Perceived discrimination	0 = did not experienced; 1= experienced discrimination
Length of stay	1 = 2-5 years; 2 = 6–10 years; 3 = 11–20 years; 4 = 21 or more years
Spending formative years in the host country	0 = migrated to the host country after age 12; 1= migrated at age 12 or younger (spent their formative years in the host country)
Citizen of the country	0 = not a citizen; 1 = citizen
Citizen of the country_group	1= citizen; 2= EU non-citizen; 3= TCN (third country national) non-citizen
Born in an EU member state	0 = was not born in an EU member state; 1 = born in an EU member state
Local voting rights for non-nationals	0= no local voting rights; 1= yes local voting rights
Access to citizenship	MIPEX (2020) score for access to citizenship for non-nationals
Public opinion towards migrants	an additive index based on three items measured on a scale of 0 to 10
Old vs new migration country	0 = old migration country; 1 = new migration country

Country	(country name in alphabetical order) Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom