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Closing the Ethnic Turnout Gap? Inclusive Enfranchisement and Political Participation of Immigrants in Advanced Democracies

Elif Naz Kayran (Leiden University)
e.n.kayran.meier@fgga.leidenuniv.nl

Anna-Lena Nadler (University of Geneva)
anna-lena.nadler@unige.ch



ABSTRACT:

Can inclusive voting rights laws close the turnout gap between immigrant and native voters? While increasingly common, there are few studies on the political consequences of alien enfranchisement. Here, we examine the impact of electoral inclusivity on the political incorporation and participation of ethnic voters. Focusing on Switzerland, we use high-quality household panel data (SHP) from 1999 to 2015 leveraging both longitudinal and municipal level variation of enfranchisement laws. In the first part, we investigate whether ethnic voters constitute a distinct political group with systematically different attitudes towards sharing rights with non-citizens. In the second part, we show that naturalised immigrants turn out at higher rates if they live in municipalities where alien enfranchisement laws are introduced. We link this participation boost to closure of ethnic turnout gaps in the affected municipalities. Our analysis adds significantly to existing theoretical explanations and empirical evidence on electoral participation in multi-ethnic diverse democratic societies.

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1. Introduction

Successful integration of immigrants ranks among the top priorities in Western democracies. Importantly, politicians, citizens, and academics alike are increasingly divided over how and to what extent immigrant-origin citizens can be politically incorporated. Current cross-national trends of lower electoral participation rates and subsequent weaker political representation of such minority groups further polarise opinions on these policy areas (Bird et al. 2011). On the one hand, a large ethnic turnout gap is cause for concern since political participation is a vital element of successful integration and incorporation (Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001; Bueker 2005). On the other hand, this difference in participation implies a systematic unequal political representation between citizens based on immigration background, raising questions over democratic principles and governance legitimacy (Blatter et al. 2017).

Despite growing academic interest on the political consequences of immigration (Just and Anderson 2012; Kolbe and Crepaz 2016; Bird et al. 2011; Bergh and Bjorklund 2011; Dancygier and Saunders 2006; Ferwerda et al. 2020), we still know little about how electoral institutions in host societies shape the political incorporation of an expanding group of citizens with an immigration background. Specifically, while an increasingly common electoral practice worldwide, non-citizen enfranchisement has not been well-understood as a critical democratic institution that can transform participation dynamics. A burgeoning area of study in recent years, scholars have investigated the timing, types, and characteristics of non-citizen enfranchisement (Kayran and Erdilmen 2020; Schmid et al. 2016; Stutzer and Slotwinski 2020). Yet, the political and electoral consequences of alien enfranchisement seem to have been largely overlooked. Therefore, here, we identify two research areas where we aim to make contributions: one relates to the study of alien enfranchisement and the other concerns the literature on political participation and incorporation of immigrants. We primarily focus on institutional political involvement in the form of voting in elections or polls rather than taking part in the civil society or non-institutional forms of political participation such as demonstrations, petitions, strikes.¹

In this paper, we argue that alien enfranchisement alters political participation of citizens – natives and naturalised immigrants – even if they do not directly benefit from such policies in terms of adding to their existing citizenship rights. Our theoretical argument is two-fold. In the first part, we posit that naturalised citizens constitute a distinct electoral group due to having an inherited minority group identity as well as having acquired the rights and privileges at the receiving society rather than being born with them. This idea, we propose, is key in understanding how and to what extent contexts with wider enfranchisement will have a particularly activating effect on them. In the second part, we argue that residing in contexts, where inclusive electoral institutions allow non-citizens to vote, will have a particularly heightening impact on the political participation of naturalised citizens, more so than natives. Taking stock of previous work (Dawson 1995; Derks et al. 2015), we suggest two potential logics to explain this outcome. Either through a mechanism of power-dilution threat when faced with a non-citizen electoral supply shock (Stutzer and Slotwinski 2020), or through a solidaristic view of enhanced representation, naturalised immigrants are more likely to turnout in municipalities where non-citizens have access to political rights.

¹ For a comprehensive account of immigrants' political activity in Europe, see for instance the edited volume by Morales and Giugni (2011).

To assess the effect of non-citizen enfranchisement policies on the participation dynamics amongst citizens, we focus on Switzerland, which hosts one of the largest foreign-born population. The Swiss case is particularly fitting because of both temporal and geographical variation concerning electoral rules and regulations at the local level. This natural within-country and over time variation allows us to have a research design suited to rule out country-level idiosyncrasies that can confound the relationships we are interested in studying. Empirically, we rely on high-quality Swiss Household Panel (SHP) data from 1999 to 2015. We also collect local level longitudinal data on the timing alien enfranchisement across Switzerland and match this with the SHP data at the household level using municipal registry codes. We complement our analysis with data from the Measurement and Observation of Social Attitudes in Switzerland (MOSAiCH) survey on attitudes towards sharing political rights strengthening the validity of our measures and results.

Following our two-step theoretical framework, we begin by demonstrating naturalised immigrants as a distinct group when it comes to their position towards sharing rights and opportunities with non-citizens using a series of binary logistic panel estimations. Our results support the argument that naturalised immigrants are indeed more tolerant compared to natives when it comes to sharing citizenship privileges. Yet, they are still more restrictive compared to resident immigrant groups who are not naturalised when it comes to expanding rights to non-citizens. Concerning the second part, our analyses demonstrate that the turnout gap between immigrant and native voters closes where there are inclusive voting rights. While giving non-citizens the right to vote boosts participation across all citizens, naturalised immigrants are more reactive to the positive effect of alien enfranchisement on turnout. This finding adds another layer to our knowledge of what types of policies and institutions may nurture electoral participation and political integration. Importantly, we add to the scarce literature on the consequences of alien enfranchisement focusing on the outcomes rather than determinants of voting rights reforms. Finally, our novel theoretical contribution suggests two logics for how alien enfranchisement may be enhancing participation amongst citizens with an immigration background and could be instrumental in improving political incorporation of ethnic voters in advanced democratic societies.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. The next section provides an overview of the current debates and fundamental ideas in the study of alien enfranchisement and immigrant turnout. Following this, we detail our theoretical framework linking these literatures and state our hypotheses. We, then, turn to a discussion of the Swiss case, justify our case selection, and describe the data we use. This section is followed by the presentation of our empirical findings, robustness checks, as well as the limitations of our study. We conclude with the implications of our findings and areas where further research is needed.

2. Alien Enfranchisement and Political Participation of Naturalised Immigrants in the Literature

Given growing concern for the democratic accountability and representation in increasingly diverse democracies (Blatter et al. 2017), there has been a rich empirical debate on exploring the determinants and characteristics of electoral inclusiveness, more specifically, the enfranchisement of non-citizens, predominantly at the local electoral level (Kayran and Erdilmen 2020; Earnest 2015; Schmid et al. 2016; Stutzer and Slotwinski 2020). While these accounts have added greatly to what we know about the timing and conditions of such

inclusiveness, there is relatively scant attention paid to the political consequences of such rules. Notable exceptions to this have been work focusing on the effect of local alien enfranchisement on social spending (Vernby 2013; Ferwerda 2019) and whether early access to voting rights foster political integration of non-naturalised immigrants (Ferwerda et al. 2020; Engdahl et al. 2020). Importantly, even though previous work has demonstrated that non-citizens tend to not participate in elections even if they are enfranchised (Ruedin 2018), the passing of such non-citizen voting rights can have indirect externalities affecting turnout amongst citizens. However, existing research so far has not yet studied how such electoral inclusion of non-citizens at the local level may influence politics of the host societies more broadly.

Next, turning to the literature on immigrant incorporation, even though the precise mechanisms at both individual and contextual levels are still debated, there seems to be a well-evidenced turnout gap between native and naturalised voters (Ruedin 2018; Bird et al. 2011; Simonsen 2020). Previous scholarly efforts make sense of such divergence using two broad approaches. On the one hand, studies focusing on individual resources emphasised that primarily non-immigration related factors such as education level, employment status, or income are most useful for explaining the variation of political participation amongst naturalised immigrants (Cho 1999; Bevelander and Pendakur 2009). On the other hand, many authors have sustained that the turnout gap between immigrants and natives is better understood if, instead, variation within immigrant groups are considered such as their roots in the host country, language proficiency, and personal networks (André et al. 2014; Ruedin 2018).

In this respect, the country of origin of naturalised immigrants, for instance, emerges as an instrumental factor relevant for both turnout and vote choices (Bass and Casper 2001; Bueker 2005). Crucially, prolonged exposure to non-democratic political institutions in the sending society depresses participation amongst naturalised immigrants, whereas more extended stay in a democratic host country increases participation (Wass et al. 2015; Jones-Correa 2001). Despite these significant contributions, such cross-sectional analyses comparing voters at a given time point do not lend themselves to explaining changing participation trends over time and investigating the ethnic turnout gap from a dynamic perspective. The former limitation is particularly concerning when considering how prolonged exposure and residence in democratic host societies is a robust predictor of higher and, potentially, increasing political incorporation.

Nevertheless, even when all relevant citizen-level characteristics are considered, we also still do not know why such turnout gaps look differently within and between countries. For instance, some studies report that certain ethnic voters turnout at comparable rates to natives in elections such as in Canada and Denmark (Bevelander and Pendakur 2009; Togeby 1999). Conversely, many others demonstrate quite large electoral participation gaps between ethnic and native voters (Wass et al. 2015; Jones-Correa 2001; Bird et al. 2011). After decades of research on the topic, however, only a few studies have addressed the role of the immigration context as a determining factor on political incorporation (Jones-Correa 2001; Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001). This is a notable gap because while most advanced host countries have been steadily enhancing their policies concerning economic integration, non-discrimination, and legal status security, improvement efforts in political integration have been lacklustre (Solano and Huddleston 2020). Even though naturalisation policy and acquisition of citizenship makes a remarkable difference in the political integration amongst immigrants (Just and Anderson 2015; Bevelander 2015; Hainmueller et al. 2015), little is understood as to how other contextual factors can hinder or heighten this process.

Despite such gaps in our knowledge, there is strong evidence demonstrating that living in a society with overall higher turnout seems to boost the participation amongst citizens with

an immigration background as well (Voicu and Comsa 2014). Likewise, electoral rule differences between states in the USA, such as laws regarding registration, poll closures etc., seem to be related to the minority turnout rates (Jones-Correa 2001; Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001). However, such electoral rules are relatively homogenous within countries and voter registration, a vital issue, is automatic in most Western immigration countries, notably in Europe. Therefore, further research is required focusing on contextual factors outside of the Northern American cases.

Concentrating on the activating role of inclusive political contexts, evidence from studies on Vienna and Germany (both at the neighbourhood level) shows that a higher share of electorally excluded non-citizens has a dampening effect on overall turnout (Stadlmair 2020; Förster 2008). While this finding points to a link between inclusive electoral institutions in boosting participation, they focus on negative rather than positive cases of electoral inclusion, i.e., lack of widespread voting rights for non-citizen immigrants. Moreover, extant works do not attribute specific attention to voters with an immigration background. Yet, the different identification mechanisms between home and host society identities and subsequent socialisation processes set naturalised immigrant voters apart from native citizens (Politi et al. 2020; Hainmueller et al. 2015; Cho 1999). Therefore, understanding the turnout gap between ethnic and native voters necessitate taking such identification processes and relevant electoral institutions both into careful consideration.

3. Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

To what extent, then, inclusive electoral institutions shape political participation patterns amongst naturalised and native voters? To answer this question, we suggest that it is crucial to first understand citizens with an immigration background as a distinct electoral group with a specific set of interests, motivations, and group identities. Thus, we develop a theoretical argument in two interrelated parts. In one part, we focus on the position of naturalised citizens as an electoral group with two potentially competing identifications. In another part, we suggest that, precisely due to this characteristic, in contexts where political rights are shared with non-citizens, naturalised immigrants will be more politically active.

3.1 Self-group distancing and ethnic linked fate: Naturalised citizens as a distinct electoral group

Naturalisation acts as a turning point in the integration and self-identification of immigrants (Hainmueller et al. 2015; Just and Anderson 2012). Immigrants go from being outsiders to a position of privileged insiders once they become naturalised, altering how they see themselves *vis-à-vis* the sending and receiving societies (Sarrasin et al. 2018). Subsequently, obtaining host country citizenship cross-pressures these individuals between their identifications with the minority (*immigrant*) or majority (*native*) groups (Kolbe and Crepaz 2016; Strijbis and Polavieja 2018). Several studies have documented that naturalisation increases identification with the host community promoting social integration (Kulich et al. 2015; Hainmueller et al. 2015) and that dual citizens report equal, if not more, allegiance to the host societies when compared with natives (Schlenker 2016; Simonsen 2017). This means that naturalised immigrants may converge towards the attitudes of natives and become more restrictive

concerning immigration-related policy issues such as the new admission of immigrants and rights for newcomers (Kolbe and Crepaz 2016; Strijbis and Polavieja 2018).²

Self-group distancing theory, from the social psychology literature, suggests that in the conditions of social mobility, members who successfully moved upward, are likely to shift their identification further away from their previous fellow group members (Derks et al. 2015). Kulich and co-authors illustrate this point by showing that Spanish immigrants in Switzerland who acquired Swiss citizenship expressed more negative attitudes towards fellow Spanish immigrants than non-citizen immigrants (2015). Thus, increasing identification with the host country distinguishes naturalised immigrants from non-naturalised immigrants that did not choose to or have not been able to naturalise.³

Yet, despite such acquisition of the host country identity amongst naturalised immigrants, there is also counterevidence suggesting that these groups, nonetheless are attitudinally different from natives and remain closely aligned with the interests of non-citizens. This idea of linked fate amongst ethnic groups (Dawson 1995) suggests that even though naturalised immigrants are not personally affected from policies concerning immigration and immigrants directly, the minority identity and attachment shape their political responses in solidarity with immigrant groups (Donnelly 2020). For instance, when compared to natives, voters with an immigration background report less critical attitudes about new waves of immigration (Politi et al. 2020) and are more positive towards the expansion of social (Sarrasin et al. 2018) and political (Michel and Blatter 2020) rights to non-citizens. Moreover, voters with an immigrant background are evidenced to turnout more when the rights of non-citizens and newcomers are under threat even if such policies do not directly concern them (White 2016).

What do both these two approaches of self-group distancing or linked fate imply for the attitudes of naturalised immigrants towards sharing rights with non-citizens? The inherited and acquired identity complexity among naturalised immigrants make them a distinct political group with a particular set of interests, motivations, and preferences different from both non-citizens and natives (Strijbis 2014). Based on our discussion above, we expect naturalised immigrants to be more inclusive than natives but still more protective of acquired voting rights when compared with the non-citizen immigrant residents, who are the net beneficiaries. Thus, our first set of hypotheses are formulated as follows.

Hypothesis 1a: Compared to native citizens, i.e., those who are Swiss from birth, naturalised immigrants will be more inclusive in sharing political rights with non-naturalised immigrants.

Hypothesis 1b: Compared to non-naturalised immigrants, naturalised immigrants will be more exclusive in sharing political rights with other non-naturalised immigrants.

² For instance, Dancygier and Saunders demonstrate that there are no attitudinal gaps between native and immigrant voters when it comes to preferences for social spending and redistribution (2006).

³ Immigrants who naturalise are distinct from non-naturalized immigrants independent of the process naturalization itself (Hainmüller et al. 2015). This means that immigrants for whom the acquisition of citizenship is profoundly important and accessible can decide to start the costly naturalization procedures.

3.2 Consequences of alien enfranchisement on political participation

Having established the position of naturalised immigrants as a distinct electoral group, we turn to the question on the impact of enfranchising non-citizens on turnout and ethnic participation gaps. Keeping with earlier evidence (Stadlmair 2020; Förster 2008), we expect lower turnout in areas where there is an electoral exclusion of non-citizen immigrant residents. Breaking with earlier work, however, our novel contribution in this paper is to suggest that where there is inclusive enfranchisement extending voting rights to non-citizens, this should, in turn, lead to higher turnout rates amongst all voters; either native or naturalised. We add that such an effect will be much more prominent for naturalised voters than native voters. While our goal here is to investigate whether such expectations hold empirically, we also propose two potential mechanisms as to why we expect these outcomes. We suggest that be it through a competitive representation mechanism or a more solidaristic view of shared minority identification and representation, universal enfranchisement will boost the political participation of voters with an immigrant background more so than native voters.

One way of thinking as to why contexts with alien enfranchisement may boost political participation, in general, is from the perspective of competitiveness for representation. From this point of view, an increase in participation equals citizens' attempt at a counter-balancing a rising voter supply, where voting serves as a mechanism to preserve their electoral voice. This seems to be quite a plausible explanation, particularly when considering the evidence from the studies on the timing of alien enfranchisement reforms (Kayran and Erdilmen 2020; Stutzer and Slotwinski 2020). In contexts with larger stocks of non-naturalised immigrant populations, such as in most Western immigration countries, the introduction of alien enfranchisement constitutes quite a sizeable electoral shock making it difficult and politically risky legislation to pass. Through such a logic of preventing an electoral power-dilution, voters have indeed been more likely to oppose their introduction (Stutzer and Slotwinski 2020). Overall, this may explain why naturalised immigrants and natives may be reactive to alien enfranchisement in general.

Why, then, such competition perceptions for electoral representation enhance naturalised immigrants' political participation when compared to natives? To make sense of this, we turn again to the idea of self-group distancing. One of the primary implications of the self-group distancing theory is that individuals with upwards mobility are particularly prone to perceiving unfairness when their hard-acquired rights are shared with those who did not have to through the same hardship (Derks et al. 2015; Kulich et al. 2015). The costly acquisition of citizenship can be perceived as an investment by immigrants to obtain political rights. We contend that such grievances towards sharing of political rights, therefore, may be particularly salient amongst naturalised immigrants who have acquired these rights, unlike native voters who inherited such privilege of formal participation by birth automatically.

However, such a threat-based competitive representation logic may, in fact, not be the only potential driver behind the turnout boost when non-citizens are enfranchised. Importantly, the local contagion mechanism of participation proposed by Stadlmair suggests that in the presence of electoral exclusion of a sizeable number of immigrant populations, citizens living in such areas who are eligible to vote may, in fact, participate less in elections from a logic of spatial interaction and non-engagement (2020, 10). Going in this direction, electoral inclusiveness, namely local alien enfranchisement policies, then may create environments conducive to higher turnout amongst all citizens. Next, concerning the ethnic turnout activation when non-citizens are enfranchised, there is also evidence countering the idea of a self-group distancing logic. Recent work reports that residents with dual citizenship, hence an immigration background, report more favourable attitudes towards sharing political rights with non-citizens when compared to citizens without dual citizenship (Michel and Blatter 2020). Such evidence points to a potential solidaristic mechanism in support of the

inclusion of non-citizens in the *demos* fostering higher overall turnout and boosting political incorporation amongst ethnic voters.

When looking at the ethnic turnout gaps in Australia, Bilodeau finds that immigrant voters participate more in elections if they live in constituencies with higher ethnic heterogeneity (Bilodeau 2009). He suggests that in addition to improved political socialisation amongst minorities in these contexts, such a high turnout may also be attributed to political entrepreneurship effects. By nominating more candidates with a minority origin or through the promotion of specific immigrant-related issues, political parties may cater precisely to such ethnic voter constituency raising their political engagement for potential electoral gains (2009, 155). Indeed, there is evidence demonstrating that political parties pay more attention to the ethnic descriptive representativeness and immigration issues when there are favourable opportunity structures, such as non-citizen enfranchisement, to do so (Nadler 2020; Togeby 1999). Overall, the turnout gap between naturalised and native citizens may narrow in universally enfranchised contexts due to higher engagement as well as improved perceived minority representation in host country politics.

In sum, we argue that political participation increases in municipalities where foreigners are enfranchised and that this particularly affects citizens with an immigration background. We propose two potential explanations to understand such differences in electoral turnout boost: one focusing on a logic of countering electoral representation threats and another emphasising a logic of increased political engagement and minority representation in the host country. Overall, our second set of hypotheses focus on the effect of non-citizen voting rights at the local level on boosting the political participation of naturalised citizens differently and significantly higher when compared to native citizens.

Hypothesis 2a: In municipalities where non-citizens have the right to vote, political participation of naturalised immigrants and natives will, overall, be higher.

Hypothesis 2b: Being in a municipality where non-citizens have the right to vote boosts political participation of naturalised immigrants more strongly than native voters.

4. Data and the Swiss Case

For our empirical analyses, we primarily use the Swiss Household Panel (SHP) data from 1999 to 2015. The SHP is a high-quality longitudinal panel study of households residing in Switzerland which surveys samples of native Swiss citizens, as well as naturalised and non-naturalised immigrants. Given our theoretical focus, we distinguish between these three groups of respondents as:

- 1) Natives (N): Respondents with Swiss citizenship from birth.
- 2) Naturalised Immigrants (NI): Respondents with Swiss citizenship with an immigration background who acquired citizenship through naturalisation.
- 3) Non-naturalised Immigrants (NNI): Respondents without Swiss citizenship.

To test our hypotheses, first, we investigate differences in political attitudes between these three groups towards the extension of equal rights to non-citizens. Then, we focus on the political participation of natives and naturalised immigrants in municipalities

(*communes/Gemeinde*) with and without alien enfranchisement. We match our individual-level respondent data with information on households' residential location at the municipal level. Using this municipal level codes, we match SHP with our coding of Swiss municipalities as positive or negative cases of alien enfranchisement over time.

As of now, out of the twenty-six Swiss cantons, eight have adopted some degree of local non-citizen voting rights. According to Article 39 of the Swiss federal constitution, the cantons regulate the exercise of political rights at cantonal and communal matters. While regulations over acquiring national citizenship are adopted and implemented on the federal level, the legislation and implementation of rules over the acquisition of cantonal and municipal citizenship and opting in for alien enfranchisement are the responsibility of the corresponding canton and municipality. Thus, federal institutional structures in Switzerland allow for a variation of alien enfranchisement policies both between and within cantons. This makes it a particularly fitting case for isolating the impact of alien enfranchisement policies across cantons and municipalities. Moreover, since most of these laws have passed in the 2000s, the temporal scope of our study covers the legislation periods of these electoral reforms with the exceptions of Neuchâtel and Jura. Further details of the alien enfranchisement legislation and reform efforts in Switzerland are presented in Table A3 in the appendix.⁴

Alien enfranchisement efforts have been quite successful in the French-speaking cantons, such as in Geneva, Vaud, and Jura. In contrast, the reforms have had difficulties in passing parliamentary votes and popular referendums in German-speaking cantons such as in Bern and Zurich (Adler et al. 2015; Stutzer and Slotwinski 2020). Nevertheless, alien enfranchisement is present in both German and French-speaking municipalities, see Figure A1 visualising the distribution of alien enfranchisement across Switzerland. Two cantons, Jura and Neuchâtel, enfranchise NNIs both at the municipal and cantonal levels, whereas most other cantons transfer only municipal voting rights.⁵ NNIs have the right to vote on the municipal level polls in the cantons of Neuchâtel (since 1849), Jura (1979), Vaud (2002), Geneva (2006) and Fribourg (2006), conditioned on the duration of the residency.⁶ Similarly, the cantons of Appenzell-Auserrhoden (1995) and Grisons (2004) have adopted legislation allowing municipalities to opt in to enable alien enfranchisement for local elections.

Eligibility conditions for such political rights also vary across cantons. While few cantons have particularly liberal rules of less than five years of residence condition, such as Neuchâtel, most cantons require similarly strict rules between five to ten years of residence in Switzerland. Parts of such conditions are further tightened with requirements to live in the relevant canton where voting is concerned. For instance, in Vaud, out of ten years residence required, three must be in Vaud, and five years are needed for voting rights in Appenzell-Ausserrhoden.⁷

Table 1 below displays the number of municipalities enfranchised by each cantonal electoral reform, including those that extend these rights to all municipalities and those who do not. As of now, 559 municipalities in Switzerland out of 2205 have extended voting rights

⁴ All supplementary material is available upon request.

⁵ Few cantons allow both the right to vote and the right to stand for election such as Neuchâtel and Vaud. While worthwhile to explore, keeping with recent work, our analysis focuses on the presence or absence of voting rights as the more commonly practiced and debated issue in Switzerland and elsewhere.

⁶ Years in parentheses display the year of legislation.

⁷ In this study, however, we are interested in the presence or absence of enfranchisement as a marker of inclusiveness rather than the degrees to which such inclusiveness is implemented

to non-citizen residents. In 2018, the total share of foreigners in Switzerland was about 25.1 per cent. Table 1 displays that, taken together, municipalities with alien enfranchisement have a somewhat above-average percentage of foreign residents, about 33.6 per cent. Yet, there is quite a wide variation concerning the demographic heterogeneity across these municipalities as well. Rural cantons such as Jura have less than average foreign-born residents, whereas Geneva and Vaud host well above the national average. Many other urban areas with high ethnic heterogeneity such as Zurich or Basel, however, do not extend political rights to non-citizens. Thus, we confirm that, in the Swiss case, residential heterogeneity itself alone cannot be a primary driver that determines the alien enfranchisement reforms at the municipal level.

Table 1: Number of Swiss municipalities with alien enfranchisement and share of the foreign population in 2018

Canton	# of municipalities with alien enfranchisement/ <i>total</i>	Foreign population in the canton as share %
Fribourg	134 municipalities <i>out of 134</i>	29.4
Vaud	309 municipalities <i>out of 309</i>	49.7
Neuchatel	31 municipalities <i>out of 31</i>	33.8
Geneva	45 municipalities <i>out of 45</i>	66.7
Jura	53 municipalities <i>out of 53</i>	17.2
Grisons	23 municipalities <i>out of 105</i>	22.9
Appenzell-Ausserrhoden	4 municipalities <i>out of 20</i>	19.5
Total (Switzerland)	599 municipalities <i>out of 2205</i>	33.6 %

Source: Swiss Federal Statistical Office. Authors' own calculations.

Studying the Swiss context is advantageous for several other reasons. *First*, naturalisation policies in Switzerland are strict in comparison to other European countries, requiring at least 10 of residency with costly application processes and formal tests. Therefore, in the Swiss context, resident immigrants who have lived for a substantial period with normative claims to participation in local politics often may not have yet become eligible for regular naturalisation. Importantly, even facilitated naturalisation conditions, such as through marriage with a Swiss citizen, is considerably more difficult when compared with other Western immigration countries, still requiring at least five years of residency and formal integration tests. Hence, such difficulty in citizenship law renders alien enfranchisement politically consequential.

Second, the Swiss case is distinct from other EU member states where EU migrants gain municipal voting rights based on the reciprocity rule in the Maastricht Treaty. Yet, in Switzerland, such electoral rules are determined exclusively by Swiss law. This creates more homogenous rules of electoral inclusiveness amongst non-citizens regardless of whether they come from EU or non-EU countries. This characteristic also makes Switzerland a particularly appropriate context to isolate the implications of national enfranchisement reforms empirically. Swiss regulations are the sole non-citizen voting rights without specific preferential treatment agreements that may confound the relationship that we are interested in.

Third, one potential challenge that arises when studying the effect of alien enfranchisement is the extent to which citizens have an interest and knowledge on the topic. We argued that changes in political participation are reactive to the introduction of alien enfranchisement. Voters, therefore, need to be aware of such policy changes. In this respect, the Swiss context is particularly fitting precisely because the issue is frequently vocalised at both cantonal and municipal levels. Based on Swiss direct democracy rules, expansion of voting rights to non-citizens requires a constitutional amendment which is automatically subject to a popular vote. Between 1977 and 2015, citizens voted on 31 cantonal initiatives aiming at introducing some type of electoral rights for non-citizens (Adler et al. 2015). Moreover, the debates over the introduction of alien enfranchisement is an ongoing political issue in Swiss municipalities. In January 2020, the cantonal parliament of Zurich adopted a preliminary initiative to allow its municipalities to introduce non-citizen voting rights if they wish so. Similarly, in Basel-City, such an initiative passed at the cantonal parliament in December 2019, and a popular vote on the introduction of non-citizen voting rights is expected for 2021. In short, public debates on recurring attempts to introduce foreign enfranchisement combined with direct democracy imply that Swiss citizens are aware of the issue.

Finally, Table 2 below displays the distribution of Ns, NIs, and NNIs across municipalities with or without enfranchisement policies in 2015 in the SHP sample (percentages in parentheses). Table 2 reveals that the share of respondents with an immigrant background are comparatively higher in municipalities with alien enfranchisement as corroborated by the federal register statistics. However, the presence or absence of alien enfranchisement is unlikely to mitigate immigrants' decision on choosing their municipality of residence. Even if we consider the fact that immigrants who make the costly investment of going through naturalisation may be assumed to have a higher interest in the politics of Switzerland, this will operate the same way across all NIs in the country independent of alien enfranchisement rules. There is no evidence suggesting that immigrants with exceptionally high political interest self-select into municipalities with alien enfranchisement in Switzerland. Most immigrants arriving in Switzerland report economic, professional, and family reasons for their move (Steiner et al. 2018). The larger share of immigrant populations in these enfranchised municipalities can be explained by their location near large urban areas around Geneva and Lausanne and distribution along the lines of existing immigration networks and language proficiency.

Table 2: Distribution of groups across Swiss municipalities with and without alien enfranchisement in 2015

Living in a municipality...	...without alien enfranchisement	...with alien enfranchisement	Total
Native Citizens (N)	7,974 (80.98)	2,152 (71.83)	10,126 (78.84)
Naturalised Immigrants (NI)	794 (8.06)	378 (12.62)	1,172 (9.13)
Non-naturalised Immigrants (NNI)	1,079 (10.96)	466 (15.55)	1,545 (12.03)
Total	9,847 (100.00)	2,996 (100.00)	12,843 (100.00)

Source: SHP 2015 wave. Authors' own calculations.

When looking at the origin characteristics of the immigrant population in Switzerland, neighbouring countries France, Germany, and Italy report the highest share of foreign-born residents in Switzerland. Portugal and Turkey are also amongst the highest share immigrant groups due in great part to the guest-worker programmes from Southern and Southern-Eastern European immigrants (Zufferey and Wanner 2020), see pp. 7-8 in the appendix for further details on the immigrant populations across Switzerland. Notably, checking the distribution of residents across municipalities with or without alien enfranchisement in our sample shows no systematic differences along the lines of sending countries that can potentially raise concerns for our research design, see Table A5.

5. Empirical Findings

5.1 Heterogeneity of attitudes towards sharing rights with non-citizens

We begin our analysis by evaluating our first set of hypotheses (1a and 1b) where we expected NIs to be situated in between Ns and NNIs when it comes to attitudes towards sharing rights with non-citizens. If NIs constitute a distinct political group, we should find that their attitudes are significantly different from Ns and NNIs.

For our dependent variable, we use an SHP survey item focusing on having a more egalitarian or nativist position towards sharing rights with non-citizens. The question asked respondents whether they are in favour of Switzerland offering foreigners the same opportunities as those provided to Swiss citizens or whether they favour better opportunities for Swiss citizens. The response categories consist of three options: 'in favour of equal opportunities for foreigners', 'neither of them', and 'in favour of better opportunities for Swiss citizens'. The item is available all SHP waves, except for 2011 and 2015, and uniquely suits the purpose of our study. We acknowledge that the question does not specify whether these opportunities refer to socio-economic, civic, or political rights. Yet, we sustain that without informing on such distinct dimensions, the indicator still captures which citizens are egalitarian when it comes to sharing rights and opportunities with those who do not have Swiss citizenship. We recode the responses indicating favouring better opportunities for Swiss citizens as '1' and the other two options as '0' binarising the item.⁸

For our estimation strategy, we use a series of binary logistic random-effects models. This choice is due to our theoretical focus on between-individual differences in attitudes towards sharing rights due to citizenship or foreign-born status rather than individual changes over time. Thus, we keep both between-individual and over-time variation rather than the fixed-effects approach which focuses only on within-individual changes. While more consistent when it comes to accounting for confounding factors, taking away such between-individual variation makes it impossible for us to estimate differences between N, NI, and

⁸ In addition to facilitating model estimation and interpretation, we binarise this item due to the ambiguous middle category. While two options clearly indicate preferences for or against equal treatment, it is difficult to attribute preferences to the middle category. Thus, we do not treat this variable as ordinal. We ensure that our results are not dependent on our binarisation approach by recoding our dependent variable, see Table A8.

NNI groups as such statuses are largely time-constant. Instead, we include exogenous theoretically relevant individual-level factors such as socio-demographic characteristics of sex, age, education (in years), and yearly net personal income (in deciles)⁹ that may predict such attitudinal differences. We also apply individual clustered standard errors accounting for heteroskedasticity and year fixed effects suitable for the structure of our repeated observation data. Summary statistics and details of variables used in our analyses are available in Table A1 and Table A2 in the appendix.

Table 3 displays the results of model estimations.¹⁰ The coefficients presented are log-odds of being less willing to share rights with non-citizens. The left panel (models 1-3) in Table 3 reports estimation results from the full sample, i.e., N, NI, and NNI all included in the analysis, stepwise adding control variables. Across the board, we find that NIs are more positive towards sharing equal rights when compared to Ns but are less tolerant when compared with NNIs (at $p < 0.001$ level). These results suggest that NIs significantly differ in their attitudes towards sharing rights and opportunities with foreigners as predicted by our hypotheses 1a and 1b.

Table 3: Attitudes towards sharing rights and opportunities with non-citizens

	Full Sample			Immigrant sample		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Reference:						
<i>Natives (N)</i>						
<i>Naturalized immigrant (NI)</i>	-0.90*** (0.108)	-0.78*** (0.106)	-0.81*** (0.110)			
<i>Non-naturalized immigrant (NNI)</i>	-1.46*** (0.090)	-1.42*** (0.089)	-1.33*** (0.094)			
Swiss citizenship				1.26*** (0.092)	1.28*** (0.092)	1.17*** (0.096)
Female	0.30*** (0.058)	0.12* (0.057)	0.07 (0.062)	0.14t (0.080)	-0.02 (0.079)	-0.13 (0.089)
Age	0.01*** (0.001)	0.02*** (0.001)	0.02*** (0.002)	0.02*** (0.002)	0.02*** (0.002)	0.02*** (0.002)
Education		-0.17*** (0.009)	-0.17*** (0.010)		-0.17*** (0.013)	-0.16*** (0.015)
Income			-0.02t (0.009)			-0.03t (0.016)
Constant	-2.46*** (0.125)	-0.26 (0.162)	-0.23 (0.171)	-3.23*** (0.179)	-1.03*** (0.226)	-0.75** (0.241)
Year dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations (<i>N</i>)	74,494	74,493	65,122	24,375	24,374	20,344
# of individuals	13,179	13,179	12,555	6,874	6,874	6,240
Log-likelihood	-32420	-32206	-28249	-11228	-11140	-9322

Note: Log-odds coefficients are displayed. Robust individual clustered standard

⁹ Our results do not change if we instead use household income, see Table A17.

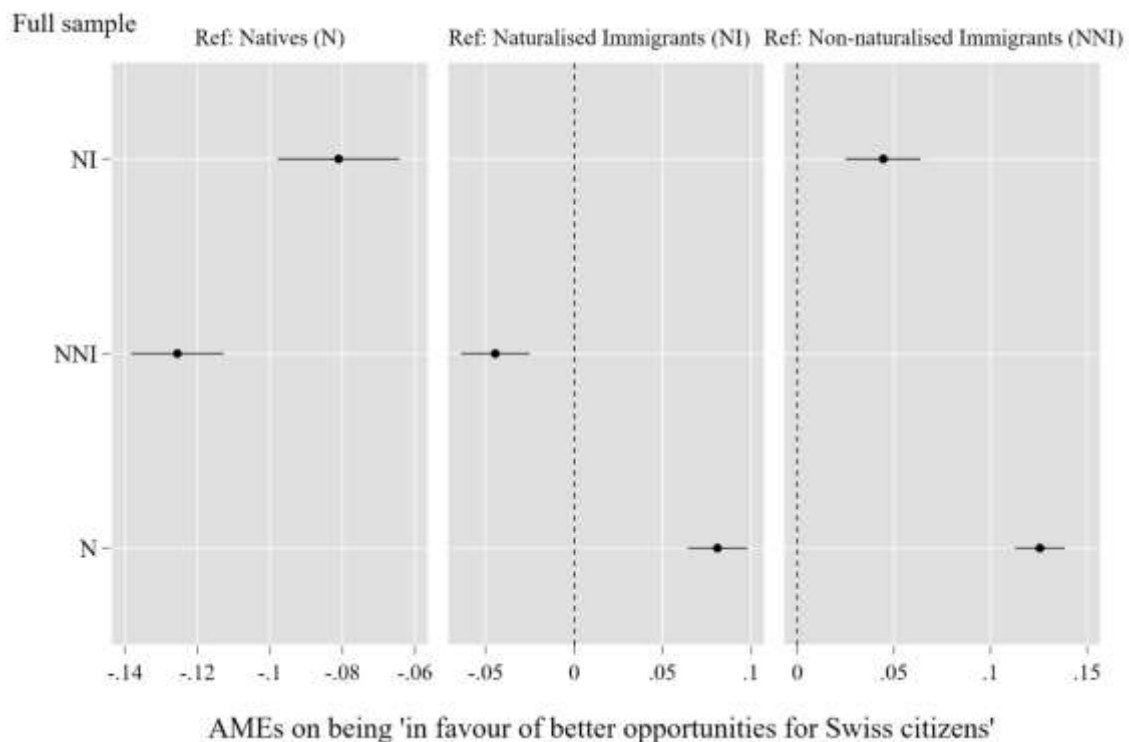
¹⁰ Linear specifications of the models reveal substantively the same results, see Table A8.

errors in parentheses. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, t $p < 0.1$

Next, the right panel (models 4-6) in Table 3 reports the estimation results from a subset of the sample, i.e., NI and NNI respondents only, isolating the effect of citizenship on attitudes amongst the foreign-born population. When looking at models 4-6, we find further evidence that foreigners who have acquired Swiss citizenship as opposed to those who have not are more sceptical towards sharing citizenship privileges with non-citizens. Turning to other covariates in our models, as expected, older respondents are more likely to have favour better opportunities for Swiss citizens. In contrast, respondents with more education and higher income seem to hold more egalitarian attitudes when it comes to sharing opportunities with non-citizens.

To inspect the substantive importance of estimated differences in our full sample, we predict the average marginal effects (AMEs) of belonging in one of these three groups on attitudes using our specification in Model 3. Figure 1 visualises that being an NI as opposed to N is negatively related to the likelihood of having non-egalitarian attitudes by about 8 percentage points. As expected, being an NNI compared to an N is negatively correlated to agreeing that immigrants should not have the same rights as the Swiss by about 12 percentage points. Notably, such predicted differences between NI vs N and NNI vs N are also significantly different.

Figure 1: AMEs on predicting attitudes in favour of better attitudes for citizens by groups, 90% CIs



We also calculate and report, using our foreign-born sub-sample, that the substantive effect of citizenship on predicting more exclusivity demands is about 11 percentage points ($p < 0.001$), see also Figure A2 visualising this relationship. Overall, naturalisation seems to be a marker of differing attitude formation amongst foreign-born population congruent with

earlier evidence (Just and Anderson 2012; Kolbe and Crepaz 2016; Hainmueller et al. 2015). Our results suggest strong evidence for the argument that NIs have attitudes towards sharing rights with non-citizens that are neither entirely aligned with Ns nor with NNIs.

While the results from Table 3 and Figure 1 provide evidence consistent with hypotheses 1a and 1ab, several issues deserve further attention. First, when it comes to attitudes towards sharing rights, the canton of residence may be a crucial determinant driving attitudinal differences. Thus, there may be a potential confounding variable since there is demonstrable variation between Swiss cantons concerning more permissive or sceptical attitudes towards immigration (Ackerman and Freitag 2015). To rule this out, we replicate our models by adding a variable for the canton of residence and report that our results do not change, see Table A6.

Next, since we have not used a fixed-effects strategy best suited to remove unobserved confounding factors, we include additional variables that may be potentially predictive of favouring better opportunities for Swiss citizens. Notably, we add two immigrant-related variables. First, we take into account how long an immigrant has been in Switzerland and, second, the region of sending country origin. These estimations rule out the possibility that the citizenship effect is confounded by the length of stay or home country factors. To avoid losing statistical power and small cell sizes, we use clusters of 12 regional groups as to where immigrants come from indicative of their places of origin. The level of disaggregation we use is based on SHP's post-coded variable created using respondents' answers as of country of origin categorised into 12 regions. The 12 different region clusters we consider are Northern, Eastern, Central, Western, South-West, Southern, and South-East Europe, Africa, Latin America, Northern America, Asia, and Oceania. Next, we further condition our models by relevant socio-economic, civic, and political variables, i.e. work-force status, union membership, religiosity, and subjective placement on the left-right scale, that are revealed as relevant in the study of attitudes towards immigrant rights (Michel and Blatter 2020; Kolbe and Crepaz 2016). We report that no substantive changes in our results when such additional factors are considered, see Table A7.

Lastly, while we sustain that our question item from SHP captures attitudes towards sharing rights with non-citizens, it does not specify political or voting rights. Instead, it leaves this potentially important distinction open to respondents' perceptions. To alleviate concerns of internal validity, we replicate our results from the SHP with another data set. For this purpose, we turn to the Measurement and Observation of Social Attitudes in Switzerland (MOSAiCH) survey (Stähli et al. 2015), see Table A9 for details of the variables used.

In its 2015 wave, the survey project included a question on attitudes towards granting long-term resident immigrants in Switzerland the right to participate in elections. The question is as follows: 'There are different opinions about people's rights in a democracy. On a scale of 1 to 7 going from 'being not at all important' to 'very important', how important is that long-term residents of a country, who are not citizens, have the right to vote in that country's national elections.' Using this question, we achieve better internal validity to the concept of sharing political rights and triangulate our results, finding strong robustness across these different data sources. Table A10 in the appendix displays the results of a simple linear regression with canton-clustered standard errors replicating our main model specifications.

5.2 Does alien enfranchisement close the gap of participation between naturalised and native citizens?

Next, we are interested in (a) whether there are differences of turnout between municipalities predicted by the presence or absence of non-citizen voting rights at the local level and (b)

whether the effect of such enfranchisement rules significantly heighten the political participation of naturalised citizens when compared to native citizens. In this analysis, we restrict our sample to Swiss citizens who are eligible to vote and can participate in elections everywhere in the country and at all geographic levels.

To measure electoral participation, we use the following SHP item: 'Let us suppose that there are ten federal polls in a year. How many do you usually take part in?' The answer options are on a continuous scale from 0 to 10.¹¹ This formulation of turnout empirically fits our research as it neither refers to political choices that are ideologically motivated. Importantly, participation in Swiss federal polls is far less partisan, arguably, making it a more direct measure of turnout and political incorporation. The item focuses on *federal* elections rather than the local or cantonal levels. This puts it at a different level than the enfranchisement laws we study here. However, there is no comparable question item specifically referring to sub-national level elections or polls in Switzerland.

Nevertheless, in Switzerland, political interest and participation at the local level are reported as strongly correlated with that of at the national level (Baglione 2007). Therefore, we sustain that the question adequately captures our interest in operationalising participation, not least because federal and local polls in Switzerland are almost always held at the same moment. In the appendix pp. 15-16, we further discuss our measurement strategy in terms of theoretical and empirical justification as well as measurement validity.

Table 4 presents a series of linear random effects models estimating the differences of political participation amongst citizens based on alien enfranchisement and immigrant background. We specify our political participation models with exogenous socio-demographic variables, as well as the subjective placement of respondents on a left-right scale to account for potential differences in political participation due to partisanship (White 2016). Model 1 presents our baseline model with only the two dummy variables: local non-citizen voting rights and being an NI *versus* a native citizen. Taken together, the results provide evidence for our hypothesis 2a. Overall turnout is higher in municipalities where there is alien enfranchisement corroborating evidence positively linking electoral inclusiveness and political participation (Stadlmair 2020; Förster 2008). We also find that NIs participate less in federal polls compared to native citizens in line with much of earlier work (Simonsen 2020; Bird et al. 2011; Jones-Correa 2001). The findings are robust to adding socio-demographic covariates in Model 2 and the subjective self-placement of individuals in Model 3.

Table 4: Frequency of political participation and alien enfranchisement, citizen sample

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Alien enfranchisement (AE)	0.26*** (0.054)	0.25*** (0.055)	0.23*** (0.054)	0.20*** (0.057)	0.26*** (0.072)
Naturalised immigrant (NI)	-0.47*** (0.103)	-0.61*** (0.101)	-0.52*** (0.102)	-0.61*** (0.111)	-0.62*** (0.112)
AE*NI				0.33t (0.168)	0.31t (0.169)

¹¹ The question is repeated in every wave since 1999 except for 2006, 2010, 2012, 2013, and 2015.

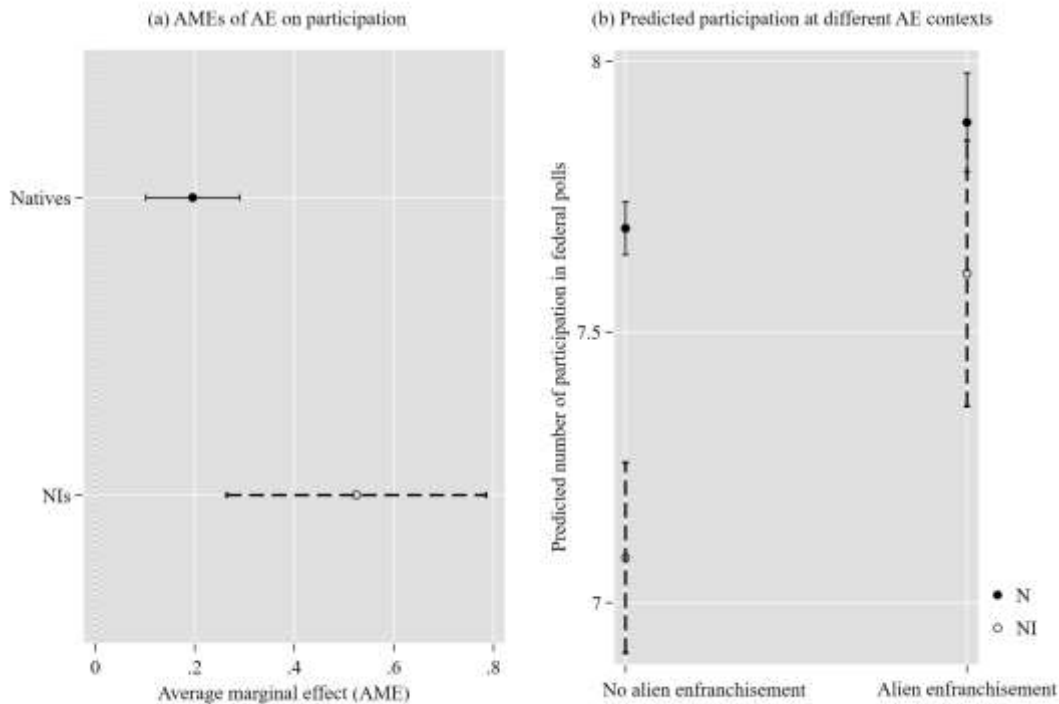
Age		0.03***	0.04***	0.04***	0.03***
		(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Female		-0.53***	-0.41***	-0.41***	-0.41***
		(0.057)	(0.057)	(0.057)	(0.057)
Education		0.08***	0.06***	0.06***	0.06***
		(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Income		-0.02***	-0.03***	-0.03***	-0.03***
		(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Left-right placement			-0.00	-0.00	-0.00
			(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Constant	7.06***	5.72***	5.95***	5.95***	5.85***
	(0.047)	(0.164)	(0.169)	(0.169)	(0.186)
Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Canton Fixed Effects	No	No	No	No	Yes
Observations (<i>N</i>)	58,856	51,260	46,378	46,378	46,378
# of individuals	10,783	10,262	9,805	9,805	9,805
RMSE	1.567	1.549	1.462	1.462	1.462

Note: Linear regression coefficients are displayed. Robust individual clustered standard errors in parentheses. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, t $p < 0.1$

Moving forward, we argued that the participation boosting effect of alien enfranchisement would be particularly important for NIs. If this hypothesis can be held, we should see a statistically significant interaction term between being an NI and living in a municipality with alien enfranchisement. Model 4 seem to find evidence of just this proposition at $p < 0.1$ level. To substantively interpret this interaction effect, we predict the AMEs of alien enfranchisement on the political participation of Ns and NIs using Model 4 and present in the left panel (a) in Figure 2. When looking at Figure 2a, we see that residing in contexts with electoral inclusiveness, on average, is correlated with about an additional 0.2 points of participation for Ns and by about 0.5 points for NIs.¹² Considering the scale of our outcome variable is from 0 to 10, these differences are nevertheless substantively important and non-negligible in boosting turnout. Second, keeping with our hypothesis 2b, we confirm that such a positive relationship between AE and higher participation is significantly more decisive for the NIs when compared to its effect on Ns. NIs are far more responsive to the introduction of alien enfranchisement than native citizens.

Figure 2: Political participation and alien enfranchisement by naturalised *versus* native voter status, 90% CIs

¹² The wider confidence intervals for NIs are due to their relatively smaller sample size and heterogeneity as a group. In this respect, our analysis is a conservative test for this effect considering the variation and the number of observations.



What does this more substantial effect of AE on NIs imply politically? To answer this, we turn to Figure 2b. First, in our sample, the reported overall mean participation in federal is about 7.5 times. When looking at the predicted participation rates between Ns and NIs in contexts without alien enfranchisement, Figure 2b demonstrates the well-evidenced gap of participation between Ns and NIs. Yet, when looking at such average participation differences between Ns and NIs in municipalities with alien enfranchisement, remarkably, we see that the turnout differences between these groups are not statistically significant. The electoral boost effect of AE for NIs seem to beget comparable turnout rates reported by Ns and NIs in municipalities with inclusive enfranchisement rules.

Checking the robustness of our results, we rule out the possibility that the AE effect is sensitive to systematic differences based on the canton of residence. Reported in Table 4, Model 5 adds canton dummies, ensuring that the results are not confounded by unobserved variances at the cantonal level. We further confirm that the interaction effect between AE and NI is consistent and robust even when all between-respondent differences are taken out, removing confounding factors at the individual level. Our conservative fixed-effects estimations isolating only within-individual political participation change provide strong evidence for the role of AE in increasing turnout, particularly amongst the NI voters, see Table A12. Given that our data is longitudinal, to capture the dynamics of increasing political participation and to remove potential autocorrelation in our models, we also replicate our models using a lagged dependent variable strategy, see Table A13.¹³

In addition to the covariates presented here, we add other variables in our models to check for potential confounding factors due to alternative explanations. The first set of factors we consider are related to the differences due to sending country (Cho 1999; André et al. 2014), where we add the region of origin country, as discussed above, in our models. Next, despite the lack of credible threats to inference in our case, if NIs with systematically higher political interest and ambition choose to settle in municipalities with alien enfranchisement,

¹³ We replicate our results with one-year lagged and leading effects of alien enfranchisement relaxing the assumptions concerning when the impact should be observed, see Table A14.

this can bias our estimations. Therefore, as a conservative estimate of our coefficients, we add overall political interest of respondents in our models – even though political interest and participation in nationwide polls both theoretically and empirically correlate meaningfully. Lastly, we control for the frequency of going to religious meetings in Switzerland, union membership, and employment status of respondents as established predictors of engagement of the civic and political life in democratic societies. We report no substantive change in our results when such theoretically relevant factors are considered, see Table A15 and A16.¹⁴

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This article has examined the link between alien enfranchisement and electoral participation in Swiss federal elections, providing first empirical evidence for the impact of immigrant-inclusive electoral policies on turnout. Our study has important implications for broader political participation, representation, and integration debates in advanced multi-ethnic societies.

First, the paper demonstrates that alien enfranchisement boosts overall electoral participation. In particular, the political incorporation of naturalised immigrants benefits from policies that grant political rights to non-naturalised immigrants. While naturalisation enhances immigrant political integration (Hainmueller et al. 2015; Just and Anderson 2012), our analysis reveals that it is indispensable to consider contextual factors at the host society when studying ethnic vote and immigrant participation. This finding emphasises the determining role of inclusive or exclusive institutions when it comes to turnout amongst immigrant voters similar to several earlier studies (Jones-Correa 2001; Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001). Furthermore, adding to growing evidence recent studies (Simonsen 2020; Stockemer 2017), we cast doubt on the applicability of solely immigrant-based explanations as to why these groups participate less in host country politics. Overall, our analysis article points to the need for more systematic research on the institutional and policy determinants at the local and country levels when it comes to the political integration of minority citizens.

Another implication of our study concerns the debates on whether citizens with an immigration background keep their minority identity allegiances or if they converge with the native population when it comes to political attitudes (Politi et al. 2020; Kolbe and Crepez 2016; Simonsen 2017; Dancygier and Saunders 2006). Our results highlight the necessity to avoid sweeping statements concerning such dynamics. Indeed, while some authors have reported no attitudinal differences when it comes to social policy (Dancygier and Saunders 2006; Kolbe and Crepez 2016), citizens with an immigration background are also found to be more liberal when it comes to immigration and immigrant rights policies (Michel and Blatter 2020; White 2016). Our analyses from the SHP and MOSAiCH data portray naturalised immigrants as more lenient than natives when it comes to sharing equal opportunities and rights with non-citizens. While the debates over naturalised citizens' position concerning socio-economic rights or immigration policy remain to be settled, our results support a more favourable view from ethnic voters when it comes to political rights, corroborating recent evidence (Michel and Blatter 2020).

Our empirical analysis also points to certain limitations in existing data and charts avenues for further research. When it comes to measuring national identification of

¹⁴ Unsurprisingly, higher political interest, civic engagement, i.e., union membership and active participation in religious events, are positively correlated with political participation.

immigrants and attitudes towards policy issues concerning immigrant rights, data seems to be lacking. Therefore, in this study, we were unable to untangle which potential explanatory mechanism we speculated drives higher ethnic voter turnout in inclusive municipalities. Future research should address which mechanisms at the individual level are more important in explaining such rises in turnout by collecting new data. Moreover, further research is needed to pay closer attention to how countries of origin, socio-economic status, and ideological partisanship may differently condition which mechanisms are relevant for whom.

Without going into normative debates concerning democratic legitimacy and stakeholder concerns when it comes to deciding who to include in the *demos* (Blatter et al. 2017), our findings showed that in increasingly heterogeneous societies, implementation of alien enfranchisement could be a fruitful policy tool for both incorporating citizens with an immigration background and increasing overall turnout. This is a particularly relevant finding, as declining turnout and consequent loss of democratic legitimacy is a common concern across Western democracies.

Lastly, our results imply that alien enfranchisement could, in fact, be characterised as an indirect way of improving the political representation of minority populations. While these policies enfranchise non-citizens and do not directly give any rights to citizens, they are nevertheless relevant in creating opportunity structures and a political environment conducive to ethnic voter engagement and incorporation. Earlier research pointed to the political entrepreneurs seizing such opportunities for mobilising voters (Nadler 2020; Bergh and Bjorklund 2011; Bilodeau 2009). Our results also suggest that, indeed, political mobilisation of immigrant-origin voters becomes more likely in contexts with alien enfranchisement. Hence, future research could examine precisely how the presence of alien enfranchisement policies boost immigrant political representation by the actions and strategies of political parties.

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