

Title: Electoral participation as a measure of social inclusion for natives, immigrants and descendants in Sweden

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Research Question: The aim of this paper is to explore the determinants of voting within the context of social inclusion by comparing immigrants, their descendants and native citizens in Sweden while controlling for a range of socio-economic, demographic characteristics and contextual factors.

Importance: Voting in free elections is often viewed as the most basic and important form of political participation. As such, the level of participation can be seen as an indicator of how well democracy is faring.

Findings: We find that after controlling for demographic, socio-economic and contextual characteristics, acquisition of citizenship makes a real difference to the odds of voting and is therefore, a likely and powerful indicator of social inclusion. Immigrants who obtain citizenship are far more likely to vote than those who do not. Arguably, some of this may be attributed to the number of years of residency in the country. However, even non-citizens born in Sweden have substantially lower odds of voting. Somewhat surprisingly, age at immigration does not make a substantial difference to the odds of voting.

Implications: At a time when States in North America and Europe are looking to restrict citizenship, it is worthwhile noting that the act of granting citizenship has substantive implications for the ability to build social inclusion.