

The Revival of Group Voting: Explaining the Voting Preferences of Immigrants in Norway

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Studies of the electoral behaviour of immigrants in Western Europe and North America have revealed a remarkably coherent cross-national voting pattern. Immigrants from the non-Western world hold a strong preference for left-of-centre parties. This unusual expression of group voting is so stable over time that it has been referred to as an 'iron law'. There is, however, a dearth of scholarly research on this phenomenon. This article tests two explanations for the left-of-centre preferences of immigrants in Norway. The first is that the ideological and socio-economic composition of the immigrant electorate explains the preference for left-of-centre parties. If so, these voters' ethnic or immigrant background is not in itself decisive on Election Day. The second hypothesis is that immigrant voters engage in group voting, in which one's ethnic or immigrant background is significant and trumps other concerns when voting. This would express itself in a coherent voting pattern that cannot be explained by other factors. We also expect those who engage in group voting to favour candidates with similar ethnic backgrounds as themselves. The group voting hypothesis finds the strongest support. The immigrant vote appears to be driven by group adherence, rather than by ideology or social background.

Norwegian voters with non-Western immigrant backgrounds are strong supporters of left-of-centre parties. In the 2007 local elections, three out of four immigrant voters supported a party on the left (see Table 1). More than half of this part of the electorate voted for the Labour party.

Such massive support for left-of-centre parties among non-Western immigrants is not unique to Norway or to this election. Previous Norwegian studies, and studies from other countries, have documented similar patterns (Anwar, 2001; Bjørklund and Kval, 2001; Cain *et al.*, 1991; De la Garza and Cortina, 2007; Michon *et al.*, 2007; Saggar, 2000; Wüst, 2000). Immigrants from the non-Western world, who have settled in Western countries, tend to vote for left-of-centre parties. This article aims to explain why.

Due to a lack of data that compare native voting to that of minority voters, previous research has rarely tried to explain this phenomenon. We have access to such data from the 2007 Norwegian local elections. The data are analysed through a test of two explanations. We start with the premise that minorities' voting choices are not fundamentally different from those of other voters. The first explanation is based on the idea that immigrant and native voters are motivated by the same considerations when voting. Immigrant voters, in this line of thinking, happen to have the typical characteristics of a left-of-centre voter, which results in a consistent left-wing voting pattern. Perhaps the most convincing part of that argument is the fact that minorities, on average, have lower socio-economic status than other voters, and that low socio-economic status is still connected to support for parties on

Table 1: Voting among Immigrants and All Voters in the Norwegian Local Election of 2007 (%)

	<i>Immigrant voters</i>	<i>All voters</i>
Red Electoral Alliance	2.9	1.9
Socialist Left	18.2	6.2
Labour	52.2	29.6
All left-of-centre parties	73.3	37.7
Centre party	1.7	8.0
Christian People's party	2.8	6.4
Liberals	3.1	5.9
Conservatives	11.2	19.3
Progress party	5.1	17.5
Others	2.7	5.3
Total	99.9	100.1
N	412	2,209,739

Sources: *The survey of Norwegian immigrant voters in 2007, and official election results.*

the left. We test whether social background can explain at least parts of the voting differences between natives and immigrants. In the same vein, we test an 'ideology hypothesis', which says that immigrant voters are like the average left-of-centre voter in terms of political ideology.

The second explanation states that immigrant voters are unlike other voters, and that they engage in group voting. This would lead to a coherent voting pattern in which social background and ideology has a minimal effect on voting. Voters who are most clearly identified as immigrants should vote most coherently. We also expect group voting to lead to support for ethnic minority political candidates, and we test for this in our analysis. Most minority candidates are on left-of-centre party ballots, which could explain why minority voters support these parties.

The next section is a brief introduction to the Norwegian case. What characterises Norwegian immigration, in comparison to other countries? This is followed by a literature review and a more detailed outline of our hypotheses. We then discuss our data and methods before presenting the results. Finally, we sum up our findings in the concluding section.

Context: Immigration and Voting Rights in Norway

Norway used to be a country of emigration, supplying immigrants mostly to the United States. In relation to the size of the population, Norway was only exceeded by Ireland as an emigrant country to the US. However, even in the years of substantial overseas emigration, some foreigners settled in Norway; first of all they were people from neighbouring Sweden

(Kjeldstadli, 2003). At the beginning of the 1960s, the balance between immigration and emigration tipped towards net immigration for the first time.

Until recent times, Norway was regarded as a homogeneous society as regards ethnicity, religion and language. With the exception of the indigenous Sami people, Norway has been a monocultural society. As a consequence of recent immigration, this characterisation no longer fits.

In order to identify the extent to which Norway has become a heterogeneous society, one has to measure the size of the minority population, which leads to the issue of definitions. According to Statistics Norway, whose data we rely on in this article, the immigrant population is defined as those who are born abroad (first generation), and native-born Norwegians whose parents immigrated (second generation). Furthermore, we identify people as minorities in our data if they have a non-Western immigrant background, meaning a background in Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa or Latin America.¹

Before 1930, the numbers of non-Western immigrants did not exceed 2,500, and up to 1950 they were below 4,000. At the end of the 1960s the first immigrants from Pakistan, Turkey and Morocco arrived, but at a modest level. In 1970 there were 9,320 immigrants from non-Western countries in Norway. The rise of non-Western immigrants paradoxically started after the 1975 ban on immigration.² The year 1987 appears to be a tipping point, and the start of a period of substantial annual immigration. According to our most recent data, from 2008, the number of immigrants from the non-Western world has risen to 346,594, which amounts to 7.3 per cent of the population. Oslo, the main place of residence for immigrants in Norway, has seen the largest growth in the minority population. One in five of the inhabitants of Oslo (20.6 per cent in 2008) are now non-Western immigrants compared with an insignificant proportion in 1970.

If these numbers are to be compared to other countries, one invariably meets the problem of differing definitions. A report on the foreign-born populations of Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries (Dumont and Lemaître, 2005), however, provides some comparable statistics. In it, Norway is close to the average for OECD countries in recent years, in terms of both the overall foreign-born population and the non-Western foreign-born population.³ It seems clear though that the rise in the immigrant population started at a later point in Norway than in most OECD countries.

Minorities constitute a smaller part of the Norwegian electorate than of the entire Norwegian population. Immigrants are on average younger than the rest of the population, leaving a large part of the minority population too young to vote. Second, enfranchisement in local elections is dependent on naturalisation or three years of legal residence.⁴ Non-naturalised immigrants with a shorter period of residence do not have the right to vote. In sum, 180,968 non-Western immigrants had voting rights in the 2007 local elections, which is 5.0 per cent of the electorate. The numbers for Oslo are 66,575 immigrants with voting rights, or 15.1 per cent of the electorate. Electoral participation in this group in the country as a whole was at 34 per cent in 2007. Most of those who did vote supported a left-of-centre party.

An 'Iron Law'

Studies of the voting behaviour of immigrants have been more prevalent in the United States than in Europe. Most such studies are descriptive; they document the voting patterns of the immigrant electorate, but make little or no effort to account for these voting patterns. We aim to address that deficiency in the literature through our analyses in this article.

The findings from the descriptive studies of voting behaviour are remarkably consistent cross-nationally and over time. Shamit Saggar (2000) calls this the 'iron law' of immigrant voting. In his summary of the voting patterns of ethnic minorities in Britain, approximately four out of five voters support the Labour party, while a small minority are Tory voters. Muhammad Anwar (2001) makes similar discoveries, and breaks them down by ethnic groups. British Pakistanis, for unknown reasons, are more supportive of the Conservative party than the electorate at large. With that exception though, immigrants support the Labour party at an average rate of about 80 per cent (Anwar, 2001). This pattern of centre-left voting repeats itself in studies from other countries.

Immigrant groups in the United States⁵ vote in large majorities for the Democratic party. Latinos constitute the largest immigrant group in the US. With the exception of Cuban Americans, who tend to vote for the Republican party, about three out of four Latino voters support the Democrats (Cain *et al.*, 1991; De la Garza, 2004; De la Garza and Cortina, 2007; DeSipio and Uhlaner, 2007; Leal *et al.*, 2008; Nuño, 2007). There is a popular perception that Latinos are 'swing voters', with conservative views on many issues, and thus that they could switch their allegiance to the Republican party. Several studies have found this to be untrue. Rodolfo De la Garza and Jeronimo Cortina (2007), in an article entitled 'Are Latinos Republicans but Just Don't Know It?', find that the Latino attachment to the Democratic party is strong and not likely to change. Nathan Kelly and Jana Morgan (2008) find that while Latinos are more religiously traditional than the average for other Americans, this traditionalism does not translate into support for the Republican party, as it does for Anglo-Americans.

Studies of other immigrant groups in the US reveal a similar pattern of Democratic voting. Asian Americans support the Democratic party in large numbers, though there is substantial variation in party identification and voting within this large group of immigrants (Cain *et al.*, 1991; Collet, 2005; Lien, 1998; Lim *et al.*, 2006). Although they are not an immigrant group, African Americans in the US have been a reliable source of votes for the Democratic party (see, e.g., Dawson, 1994).

Canada, another large country of immigrants, has conducted fewer studies of the voting patterns of its immigrants. The published studies that we have come across indicate that most of the immigrant vote goes to the Liberal party and the New Democratic party (NDP) (Landa *et al.*, 1995; White *et al.*, 2006). The Liberal party is a centre party, and the largest party in Canada, while the NDP is left of centre.

Studies of the voting behaviour of immigrants in continental Europe are few and far between. Dutch scholars have, however, extensively documented the voting patterns of

immigrants since the 1980s. Laurie Michon *et al.* (2007) provide an overview of these data, most of which are at the local level, while some come from national surveys. They find substantial variation between groups and from one election to the next, which may be explained by small survey samples. The overall findings are, nevertheless, described as a 'rule': immigrant voters support the Labour party and other left-of-centre parties at a rate of about twice that of the rest of the population. The Conservative party and the Christian Democrats receive little support from immigrant voters.

In a German study, Andreas Wüst (2000) finds that immigrants from Turkey overwhelmingly support the Social Democratic party (SPD). The so-called *Aussiedler*, ethnic Germans from the former Soviet Union and some other Eastern European countries that have settled in Germany, tend to vote for the Christian Democratic party (CDU). This support for right-of-centre parties among voters from former communist states may have a parallel in Cuban Americans' support for the Republican party in the US. Both are deviations from the pattern of support for left-of-centre parties among immigrants, and both groups have a troubled history with respect to left-wing politics.

Although there are extensive studies into the electoral participation and political representation of immigrants in the Scandinavian countries (see, e.g., Bäck and Soininen, 1998; Bjørklund and Bergh, 2005; Rogstad, 2007; Togeby, 2003), there are few studies of voting in the sense of party choice. Jørgen Goul Andersen and Jens Hoff (2001, p. 235) find a pattern of support for 'working-class parties' among immigrants in Sweden. Tor Bjørklund and Karl-Eirik Kval (2001) document the familiar pattern of support for left-of-centre parties among non-Western foreign nationals in Norway from 1987 to 1999.

Explaining Left-of-Centre Preferences: Two Hypotheses

Any attempt at explaining these voting patterns needs to take into account the political preferences of the native population. What makes the minority vote unique is the extent to which it deviates from that of other voters in a country. In all the studies cited above, minorities have higher rates of support for parties on the left than other voters. The most intuitive explanation for that is that minority voters have the characteristics of an average left-of-centre voter, and therefore support left-of-centre parties. We know, for instance, that minorities have lower average socio-economic status than other voters. Although the link between social cleavages and voting may not be as strong as it once was (Brooks *et al.*, 2006), it seems reasonable to hypothesise that lower than average socio-economic status could cause higher than average support for parties on the left. Previous studies have found limited support for this hypothesis (Forrest, 1988; Saggar, 2000), but we still find a general test of the effect of social background variables to be a natural point of departure.

If minorities are like other left-of-centre voters, that should also be reflected in their political ideology. Some studies have found contradictory evidence in this respect, in the sense that immigrant voters often hold conservative attitudes on many issues, yet they vote for left-of-centre parties (Dancygier and Saunders, 2006; De la Garza and Cortina, 2007; Kelly and Morgan, 2008). Maria Sobolewska (2005) finds that the political views of minority voters in Britain are too diverse to be able to explain group voting in favour of

the Labour party. Still, we aim to test whether immigrants hold left-wing political views, and if that explains support for left-of-centre parties.

In sum, our first hypothesis is that the voting gap between minorities and natives can be explained by differences in social background and ideology. This two-part hypothesis may be tested in empirical analyses:

H_{1A}. The composition of the immigrant population, in terms of social background, explains the high levels of support for left-of-centre parties in this group.

H_{1B}. The immigrant population holds more left-wing political or ideological views than the rest of the population, and this explains their support for left-of-centre parties.

A number of studies of minority voting find evidence of 'group voting'. This concept is a central part of research on African American voting in the United States. According to Michael Dawson (1994), African Americans have had a more communal approach to politics than other voters. In an early study of voting among ethnic minorities, Raymond Wolfinger (1965) finds a pattern of support for the Democratic party, which is common to African Americans as well as other ethnic minorities. Similar results have been found for immigrant groups. Bruce Cain *et al.* (1991) find support for the hypothesis that immigrants' political preferences are shaped by their 'minority group status'. The fact that one belongs to a minority group shapes political preferences, even if one's own experiences are untypical of that minority group. Group voting benefits left-of-centre parties because these parties are perceived as looking after the interests of minority groups (Collet, 2005; De la Garza and Cortina, 2007; Jamal, 2005; Kelly and Morgan, 2008; Leal *et al.*, 2008). Group voting among minorities goes against the grain of an established finding in electoral research: that group loyalties are declining and that political preferences are becoming individualised (see, e.g., Van der Eijk *et al.*, 1992).

Group voting among Norwegian minority voters would manifest itself in a rejection of H_{1A} and H_{1B}. If minorities vote as a group, based on group interests, then individual-level characteristics will have minor effects.

We further expect group voting to result in what is sometimes referred to as 'ethnic voting': support for political candidates based on ethnic background. Several studies have found evidence for this. Janet Landa *et al.* (1995), in a noteworthy non-US study, found that the ethnicity of candidates in local elections in Toronto, Canada, had a significant effect on 'ethnic voting'. Christian Collet (2005) found similar effects in the voting patterns of Asian Americans in 'Little Saigon', in Orange County, California. Bergh and Bjørklund (2003) suggested the existence of this type of immigrant preferential voting in local elections in Oslo and Copenhagen, as did Michon *et al.* (2007) in an analysis of Dutch data.

Most minority political candidates are on left-of-centre party ballots. If minority voters tend to support minority candidates, this could explain the tendency towards left-of-centre voting.

H_{2A}. Immigrant voters engage in ethnic voting in favour of candidates with the same ethnic background as themselves. This explains their support for left-of-centre parties.

In order to test further the concept of group voting, we look for differences between immigrants who recently arrived in the country, and those who have stayed for a significant period of time. If immigrants act as a group on Election Day, this may manifest itself most clearly among those who are closest to the 'immigration experience', that is, those with the shortest period of residence. The time spent in a new country of residence is closely related to other factors that may influence voting, such as socio-economic status. The test of the following hypothesis should therefore be statistically controlled for the other explanatory variables we have outlined.

H_{2B}. 'Group voting' in favour of left-of-centre parties explains immigrants' political preferences, and this manifests itself most strongly among those who have recently immigrated.

Data and Methods

In order to test our hypotheses, we need data that compare minority voters to native voters. The Norwegian Local Election Survey from 2007 provides data on native voters, while a small survey of immigrant voters from the same election provides a means of comparison. Data for both surveys were collected through phone interviewing by Statistics Norway after the September 2007 local elections. The Local Election Survey is a representative sample of Norwegian voters, and has an N of 2,639, of which 1,859 respondents provided a party choice, thus being part of our analyses. A handful of minority voters in this file were excluded, so that the data represent native Norwegian voters only in our analyses.

The immigrant survey had an innovative method of respondent selection, based on the Norwegian electoral rolls. Statistics Norway is able to identify minority voters in these rolls, as well as to gather information about individual electoral participation. Based on this information, they performed a random selection of minority voters whom they knew had taken part in the election.⁶ This survey has an N of 437.

A number of the variables in the two surveys are identical, thus providing an opportunity for merging the two files into a single data set that can be used to test our hypotheses. We then add information about minority candidates to this data set. Statistics Norway provided data about all candidates in the 2007 local elections, which include information about the candidates' minority background. This enables us to identify (in our voter data) people who supported ballots with minority candidates. We may even identify minority voters who voted for a ballot with minority candidates of the same ethnic (national) background as themselves. This is used in the test of H_{2A}.

The hypotheses are first tested individually, in what may be seen as bivariate analyses, before we conduct a regression analysis to test the relative impact of each explanation or hypothesis.

First, we look for an effect of social background variables. We include gender, age, income, education and place of residence in this analysis. The composition of the immigrant population differs from the rest of the Norwegian population on all of these variables. This could explain left-of-centre voting.

According to H_{1B}, immigrants adhere to more left-wing political views and ideology than the rest of the population, and this explains differences in voting. We are not able to measure

attitudes on a range of political issues, which would have been preferable. However, we have included the often used 10-point left–right scale in both surveys, in which respondents are asked to place themselves on a scale from 1 (left) to 10 (right).⁷ This self-placement scale can be used as a proxy for ideological beliefs in our test of H_{1B} .

We employ the data on candidates in testing H_{2A} . This enables us to identify those who voted for ballots with non-Western immigrant candidates. We also distinguish immigrant voters who supported a ballot with a candidate of their own national background. This information is used to test the extent of ethnic voting.

Finally, we test for an effect of time spent in Norway. We measure that by the proportion of a person's life that he or she has spent in Norway. For natives, this variable has the value 1.0, while it varies between 0.03 (3 per cent) and 1.0 (100 per cent) among the minorities. This variable is introduced in the final logistic regression analysis.

Results

Social Background

The first part of our first hypothesis (H_{1A}) states that the social background composition of the immigrant electorate leads to a left-wing voting pattern. Minorities are on average younger than the rest of the population; there are somewhat more female minority voters than there are men; minorities generally have lower income and educational levels than the rest of the population; and minorities tend to reside disproportionately in the city of Oslo. These background variables (gender, age, income, education and place of residence) are often related to voting, and could potentially explain minority support for left-of-centre parties. If so, we would expect the differences in voting between natives and minorities to be reduced when controlled for these variables.

Table 2 displays left-of-centre voting among natives and minorities, by social background. The differences between the groups are in the final column. The overall difference in support for left-of-centre parties between immigrants and natives is 35 per cent. If the social background variables can account for this, the controlled differences should be smaller.

Gender differences in voting in Western countries in recent years tend to follow the pattern that women are more supportive of left-of-centre parties than men. This is also true in our data of native Norwegian voters in the 2007 local elections. Among immigrants, on the other hand, men are the most supportive of left-of-centre parties. There are somewhat more female than male immigrant voters, which indicates that gender differences in voting are not the source of the differences in voting between immigrants and natives.

The age variable displays limited variation, but the oldest age group among immigrants is not as uniformly left wing as the younger generations. Since this age group is under-represented in the immigrant electorate, this finding is suggestive of a small age effect.

The controlled differences for the highest categories of the socio-economic status variables (high income/university or college education) are smaller than the other differences in the table. This suggests that minorities with high socio-economic status have a voting pattern

Table 2: Support for Left-of-Centre Parties in the 2007 Norwegian Local Elections among Natives and Immigrants, by Social Background (%)

	<i>Immigrants</i>	<i>Natives</i>	<i>Difference</i>
All	73	38	35
Men	76	36	40
Women	70	42	28
Younger than 35 years	75	37	38
35 to 54 years	73	41	32
55 years or older	67	38	29
Low income	77	43	34
Median income	75	41	34
High income	46	34	12
Primary education, or none	74	43	31
Secondary education	80	36	44
University/college education	65	43	22
Resides in Oslo	68	38	30
Resides elsewhere	81	47	34

that is closer to native voters. This is also a small effect, but it indicates that differences in socio-economic status account for some of the voting differences between natives and immigrants.

Finally, there are significant differences in voting by place of residence, but these cannot account for the general differences between natives and immigrants.

For the most part, the differences in voting between natives and immigrants remain when controlling for the social background variables. There are effects of some of these variables, and there may be a substantial combined effect of all social background variables (which we test for in the final analysis), but these variables cannot be the main cause of the voting gap between natives and immigrants.

Ideology

Given the consistent support for left-of-centre parties from immigrants, it seems reasonable to expect these voters to have left-wing political or ideological views. This could be seen as an explanation for immigrant voting patterns: immigrants adhere to an ideological position that is typical of left-of-centre voters. Previous research provides a reason for scepticism towards this hypothesis (Dancygier and Saunders, 2006; Kelly and Morgan, 2008), in that immigrants often seem to hold conservative political views but nonetheless vote for left-of-centre parties.

Table 3 displays mean scores on the left-to-right ideology scale among the general Norwegian electorate, and among immigrant voters, by political party. The bottom row shows the mean values for all voters in the two surveys, and it provides some initial support for H_{1B} , since immigrant voters have a lower average score than other voters. However, the differences between the two groups as a whole are not statistically significant. Both groups and especially immigrant voters are close to what is probably considered the neutral middle score of 5 on this scale. Hence, there are no significant differences between immigrants and other voters in this respect.

About one-third of the immigrant voters (compared to one in five natives) choose the middle category of 5. This suggests that immigrants find the scale irrelevant or perhaps some are not familiar with the concepts of left and right as ideological positions. Whatever the reason, these findings are indicative of a lack of ideological motivation for voting.

The political parties in Table 3 are ordered, in a standard manner for Norwegian political parties, from left (top) to right (bottom). The 'others' category is a collection of several parties, and is not ordered as such. The mean scores on the left-to-right scale do, as one would expect, change from low values on the top to the highest values for right-of-centre parties. This pattern is evident both for immigrant voters and all voters. However, immigrant voters are generally closer to the centre of the scale than are other voters. That is especially clear when looking at the three parties that immigrants vote for in the largest numbers: the Socialist Left party, the Labour party and the Conservatives. The N s for these parties are at a level that allows some generalisation. Socialist Left voters with an immigrant background are close to the 'neutral' value of 5, and are clearly distinct from the other supporters of this party. On the other side of the political spectrum, Conservative party

Table 3: Mean Scores on Left–Right Ideology Scale, among All Voters and Immigrants, by Political Party

	<i>All voters*</i>	<i>Immigrant voters</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>
Socialist Left	2.8	4.5	75	68
Labour	4.1	4.3	392	157
The three centre parties†	5.3	4.7	259	27
Conservatives	7.7	6.0	253	45
Progress party	7.8	7.0	180	17
Others	4.8	4.2	98	16
Total	5.6	4.8	1,258	331

Note: Survey question: 'In politics people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you generally place yourself on this scale (from 1 to 10)?'

*The original scale is from 0 to 10, but we have recoded it to a scale from 1 to 10 by switching '0' to '1'.

†The three centre parties are the Centre party, Christian People's party and the Liberal party.

Sources: The Norwegian Local Election survey of 2007, and the survey of Norwegian immigrant voters in 2007.

voters who are immigrants adhere to a distinctly less right-wing ideology than other such voters.

In sum, these findings confirm our initial scepticism toward H_{1B} . The left-to-right scale may statistically explain some of the immigrant voting patterns since there is a correlation between party choice and placement on the scale. But Table 3 suggests that immigrants are not motivated by ideology when they cast their vote, at least not to the extent that natives are.

Ethnic Voting

Our test of hypotheses H_{1A} and H_{1B} may be seen as a test of traditional explanations of voting in electoral research. Social background and ideology are commonly held to be the main factors that affect voting. Our hypothesis is that social background composition and ideological predispositions of minority voters lead to large-scale left-of-centre voting. The tests of this hypothesis in 'bivariate' analyses yielded limited results. While these variables go some way towards explaining the immigrant vote, clearly they are not enough.

This leads us to consider our second hypothesis that immigrant voters engage in 'group voting', in which group adherence overshadows other concerns on Election Day. Minority voters who vote for political candidates with the same ethnic background would be an expression of that. We hypothesise that immigrant voters choose political parties on the basis of the ethnicity of candidates on the ballot. Since there are more candidates with immigrant backgrounds on left-of-centre ballots, this could provide an explanation for immigrant voting patterns. However, the distribution of candidates with non-Western immigrant backgrounds is not as distinctly left wing as that of the immigrant vote. Fifty-seven per cent of candidates with non-Western immigrant backgrounds ran on a left-of-centre ballot. A third ran on centre-party or right-of-centre party ballots, while the remaining candidates ran on local ballots or parties that are not easily categorised as left or right. Even the right-wing anti-immigrant Progress party had a total of 55 candidates with backgrounds in non-Western countries. If ethnic voting was the only motivator for immigrants on Election Day, we would see a less distinct left-of-centre vote.

Nevertheless, ethnic voting could be a partial explanation of immigrant voting in Norway. There is no equivalent to ethnic voting among ethnic Norwegians, because all ballots have a majority of candidates with Norwegian backgrounds.⁸

In order to measure the extent of ethnic voting among immigrants in the 2007 election, we have to control for the fact that the act of voting for a ballot with an immigrant candidate may not be intended as support for that candidate. In the municipality of Oslo, most parties have immigrant candidates, while in some smaller rural municipalities none of the ballots have such candidates. Thus a voter in Oslo may find it difficult not to support an immigrant through ballot choice, while it may be impossible to support an immigrant in other municipalities. Close to half of the immigrant voting population resides in Oslo, so one would naturally expect these voters to support ballots with immigrants to a higher degree than other voters.

To control for this we weight the data for native voters to approximate the situation for immigrant voters. The data are weighted by the number of candidates with non-Western immigrant backgrounds in the municipality. Voters in municipalities with no such candidates are excluded from the analysis. All other native voters are weighted so that the number of possible immigrant background candidates to vote for is identical for immigrant voters and for others. This generally means weighting up those who live in Oslo and other municipalities with a large number of immigrant candidates and weighting down those with access to few such candidates.

The results of this are that most voters, irrespective of background, support ballots with immigrant candidates (see Table 4). Still, immigrant voters do so to a greater extent than other voters (86 per cent compared to 75 per cent for all voters).

The electoral system for local elections allows for preferential voting for candidates in addition to the vote for a party ballot. Voters can provide preferential votes for any number of candidates on their ballot of choice or on any other ballot. We would expect voters who engage in 'ethnic voting' not just to support ballots with immigrant candidates, but also to provide preferential votes for those candidates and possibly for minority candidates on other ballots. Both the general election survey and the immigrant survey asked about preferential voting.

Table 4 contains a variety of data relevant for measuring and interpreting the degree of ethnic voting. The first row suggests that immigrant voters do support ballots with immigrant candidates to a large degree, and more so than other voters. Furthermore, a majority (62 per cent) of immigrant voters, who had the opportunity to do so, voted for a ballot with a candidate of their own ethnic background. These numbers point towards a preference for ethnic voting.

This is further explored in the second row, which shows the percentage of the above categories that provided a preferential vote. Immigrant voters are much more active than others in this respect. Among the general voting population, those who voted for ballots with immigrant candidates provided fewer preferential votes than those who did not vote for such ballots. The reverse is true among immigrants. Those who voted for a ballot with immigrant candidates provided somewhat more preferential votes than those who did not. This share is largest among those who supported a ballot with a candidate of their own ethnic background. One has to remember, though, that those who did not support a ballot with immigrant candidates could still support an immigrant candidate on another ballot through preferential voting.⁹

Immigrant voters appear to support immigrant candidates generally, although these voters may hold a special preference for candidates with the same national background as themselves. In sum, these numbers seem to support the 'ethnic voting' hypothesis. Indications are that ethnic voting is a significant factor in the voting patterns of Norwegian immigrants, which is a possible explanation for left-of-centre voting.

The third and final row shows the support for left-of-centre parties among those who voted for a ballot with immigrant candidates and those who did not. As expected, a majority of

Table 4: Support for Candidates with Immigrant Backgrounds, among All Voters and Voters with an Immigrant Background

	All voters, weighted*		Immigrant voters			
	<i>Chose a ballot with immigrant candidate(s)</i>	<i>Chose another ballot</i>	<i>Chose a ballot with immigrant candidate(s)</i>	<i>Chose another ballot</i>	<i>Chose a ballot with candidates from native country†</i>	<i>Chose another ballot‡</i>
Total percentage	75	25	86	14	62	38
Percentage who cast a preferential vote	36	42	65	61	76	58
Percentage supporting one of the three left-wing parties§	51	14	79	36	84	78
N	1,519		392		190	

*The data for all voters are weighted so that the supply of immigrant candidates on the ballot is identical to that of immigrant voters. Votes in municipalities with no immigrant candidates are excluded from the analysis.

†Only includes voters who could vote for a candidate from their native country; i.e. there was a candidate in their municipality with the same country background as themselves.

‡This question was not asked in the Local Election Survey of 2007.

§Left-wing parties are: the Red Electoral Alliance, the Socialist Left party and the Labour party.

Sources: The Norwegian Local Election survey of 2007 and the survey of Norwegian immigrant voters in 2007.

those who supported ballots with immigrant candidates also voted left wing, since most of these candidates are on left-of-centre ballots. However, immigrants consistently voted more for left-of-centre parties than other voters. This is true of immigrants who voted for ballots with immigrant candidates and those who did not; this is also the case for those who voted for a ballot with a candidate of their own national background and those who did not. In other words, immigrant voters do hold a preference for ballots with immigrant candidates, but these voters are still more left wing than others even after controlling for 'ethnic voting'. Again, we are at a partial but not a complete explanation for left-of-centre voting among immigrants in Norway.

Group Voting: Multivariate Analysis

Previous research has indicated that immigrants engage in group voting; they vote for parties that they perceive as looking after the interests of their group, even if an individual's beliefs and interests are untypical of that group. If this phenomenon occurs in the Norwegian immigrant electorate, social background and ideology should have a limited impact on immigrants' voting choices. Our tests of H_{1A} and H_{1B} seem to confirm that, although this needs further testing in multivariate analyses.

Ethnically based group voting may manifest itself in support for ethnic minority candidates. If so, the voting gap between immigrants and natives should be reduced with the introduction of a dummy that measures support for a ballot with one or several minority candidates. This dummy is introduced after controlling for social background and ideology. Thus we aim to control for a possible spurious effect, in which the ideological and/or socio-economic composition of the minority population leads to both minority candidates and minority voters favouring parties on the left.

Furthermore, we expect group voting to be more prevalent among people who are close to the 'immigration experience' than among people who have lived in Norway for most of their lives. Group voting should then be most visible among those who recently immigrated, while people who have spent most of their lives in Norway should be closer to a typical Norwegian voter. We test this through a variable measuring the proportion of their life a person has spent in Norway.

The dependent variable in the logistic regression analysis in Table 5 is left-of-centre voting.¹⁰ The first bivariate model illustrates the differences between natives and immigrants in support for these parties. The results in model 1 reflect a 31.5 percentage point difference between immigrants and others in support for left-wing parties¹¹. We expect the coefficient for the key variable (immigrants or natives) to shrink as we introduce additional variables.

Model 2 introduces the social background variables that are also used in Table 2: age, gender, income, education and place of residence. The introduction of the social background variables in Table 5 reduces the effect of the immigrant/native variable, as we would expect given the findings in Table 2. However, just two of the variables in the model have significant effects on party choice: income and the Oslo dummy. Also, there remains a large difference between immigrants and others in model 2.

Table 5: Logistic Regression Analysis of Support for Left-of-Centre Parties; Regression Coefficients

	<i>Model 1</i>		<i>Model 2</i>		<i>Model 3</i>		<i>Model 4</i>		<i>Model 5</i>	
	<i>B</i>	<i>(SE)</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>(SE)</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>(SE)</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>(SE)</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>(SE)</i>
Regression constant	−0.44**	(0.06)	0.22	(0.29)	2.77**	(0.37)	2.26**	(0.39)	3.53**	(0.68)
Immigrants (= 1) or natives (= 0)	1.32**	(0.13)	1.09**	(0.15)	1.11**	(0.17)	0.81**	(0.18)	0.10	(0.35)
Gender (male = 1; female = 0)			0.04	(0.11)	0.15	(0.13)	0.10	(0.14)	0.10	(0.14)
Age (number of years)			0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)
Income (six categories; low = 1, high = 6)			−0.20**	(0.05)	−0.10	(0.06)	−0.13*	(0.06)	−0.14*	(0.06)
Education (three categories)			0.07	(0.09)	−0.08	(0.10)	−0.16	(0.11)	−0.15	(0.11)
Resides in Oslo (= 1); others (= 0)			0.37*	(0.15)	0.39*	(0.17)	−0.24	(0.18)	−0.19	(0.18)
Left (= 1) to right (= 10) ideology scale					−0.53**	(0.03)	−0.55**	(0.03)	−0.55**	(0.03)
Voted for a ballot that included non-Western immigrant candidates							1.69**	(0.15)	1.69**	(0.15)
Share of one's life spent in Norway									−1.23*	(0.54)

Note: $n = 1,538$.

*Significant at the 5% level; **significant at the 1% level.

Sources: The Norwegian Local Election survey of 2007 and the survey of Norwegian immigrant voters in 2007.

In the third model we test H_{1B} by introducing just one variable: the 10-point left-to-right scale. The main variable, in bold, does not change from model 2 to model 3. There is no evidence that ideological self-placement can explain voting differences between immigrants and natives, after controlling for social background variables. While the left-to-right scale is strongly correlated to support for parties on the left, it cannot account for the voting differences between natives and immigrants.

Model 3 displays a somewhat reduced effect of our key variable (immigrants or natives), but this variable remains strong and significant. Immigrants continue to be more likely to vote for left-of-centre parties after controlling for social background and ideology. This is suggestive of a pattern of group voting in which ideology and other concerns are not as significant as group adherence.

Indications are that we need to move beyond traditional explanations of voting, such as social background and ideology, in accounting for immigrants' voting patterns. First, we look at voting for minority candidates. This phenomenon is measured by a dummy that

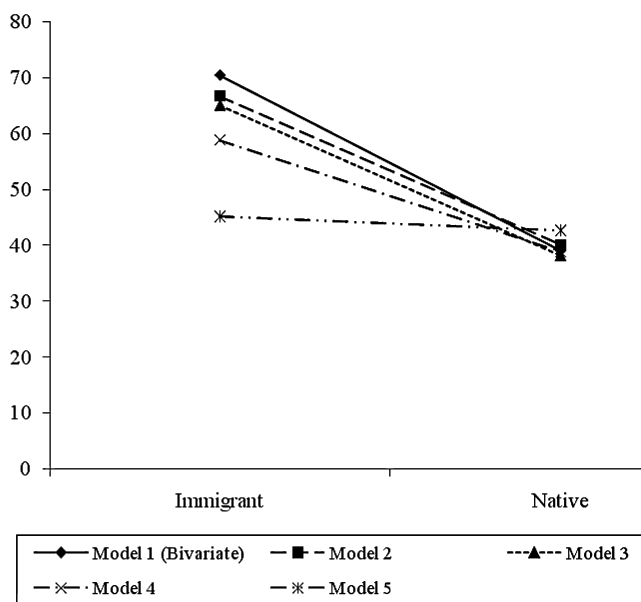
measures whether or not a respondent supports a ballot with an immigrant background candidate.¹²

The results for the candidate dummy (model 4) are, unsurprisingly, that it has a strong effect on left-of-centre vote. It also reduces the effect of our main variable (immigrants or natives), and thus contributes to explaining immigrant voting behaviour. Immigrants do, even after the control for social background and ideology, engage in 'ethnic voting' in favour of ethnic minority candidates.

The final model (model 5) introduces the measure of the amount of time an individual has spent in Norway. It is related to left-of-centre voting and, more importantly, it removes the remaining differences between immigrants and natives in support for these parties. That means that the differences in voting between natives and immigrants is in large part a result of a uniform voting pattern among people who recently immigrated. People who have spent most of their lives in Norway are less inclined towards group voting.

Figure 1 summarises the findings by illustrating the average differences in native and minority left-of-centre voting in the five models (based on average values of all other independent variables). The largest bivariate difference in model 1 is reduced somewhat after controlling for social background in model 2. Controlling for political ideology in model 3 does not change the difference in any substantial way. Controlling for ethnic voting

Figure 1: Modelled Support for Left-of-Centre Parties among Immigrants and Natives in the 2007 Norwegian Local Elections (%)



and period of residence, does, however, have a major impact, and leads to no major difference between immigrants and natives in model 5.

These findings are suggestive of a pattern of group voting among immigrants; ethnicity and group adherence are more important on Election Day than ideology and social background.

Discussion

Previous research on the voting behaviour of immigrants has suffered from the lack of data that enable comparison between immigrants and the native population. This research has documented the strong support for left-of-centre parties among immigrant voters (Anwar, 2001; Bjørklund and Kval, 2001; Cain *et al.*, 1991; De la Garza and Cortina, 2007; DeSipio and Uhlander, 2007; Goul Andersen and Hoff, 2001; Leal *et al.*, 2008; Lien, 1998; Lim *et al.*, 2006; Michon *et al.*, 2007; Nuño, 2007; Wüst, 2000). However, few studies have been able to perform a direct test of what accounts for this difference in voting between natives and the immigrant electorate.¹³

Our survey data of both native and immigrant voters enable such a test. We find limited support for the idea that immigrant voters are like other left-of-centre voters in terms of social background and ideology. Immigrants do not support these parties for ideological reasons. Socio-economic status or social background are not the main source of this coherent voting pattern either, although some of the uniqueness of the immigrant vote is explained by such factors.

One factor that does have a significant impact on the immigrant vote is what we have called 'ethnic voting'. Immigrant voters engage in ethnic voting in the sense that they support candidates who have the same ethnicity as themselves. Most minority candidates are on left-of-centre party ballots, so this contributes to immigrants voting for these parties.

We also find that recently arrived immigrants have an especially coherent left-of-centre voting pattern. In sum, these findings point towards a pattern of group voting among immigrants. Ideology and social background have a limited effect on the immigrant vote, while group adherence is more significant.

A main finding in general electoral research over the last few decades is a diversification of group loyalties. In post-industrial society a voter has many social roles, and a social position implies many identities. Consequently, political orientations may go in different directions and the number of incoherent group loyalties can be numerous. Cees Van der Eijk, Mark Franklin, Tom Mackie and Henry Valen (1992) use the term 'the particularisation of voting choice'. The collective voting patterns of immigrants in Norway, and those of other countries, reveals an opposite trend. This fairly new voting bloc does engage in group voting, and therefore provides an interesting case for continued electoral research.

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Notes

- 1 The most questionable part of this definition of non-Western is probably the status of Eastern Europe: should this part of the world be included at all, and if so, what countries are in it? According to Statistics Norway, Eastern Europe consists of the following countries: Albania, Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine.
- 2 The 1975 law put a general stop to labour immigration, but immigration of refugees, of asylum seekers and of family members of those already in the country created the growth in the immigrant population.
- 3 The report was based on census data with reference to country of birth and the percentage of foreign born was singled out in 28 OECD countries, one of them Norway. Referring to the year 2003 the weighted average for all these countries was 7.8 per cent foreign born. Norway was not far from the mean, a little below, at 7.3 per cent. In all the OECD countries 71 per cent of the foreign born were from non-Western countries, using our definition. The corresponding Norwegian figure is 76 per cent.
- 4 Voting rights in parliamentary elections, on the other hand, require naturalised citizenship.
- 5 Since the US is sometimes referred to as a 'nation of immigrants', a more specific definition of who is an immigrant seems in order. These studies usually refer to immigrants as people who have themselves immigrated. Sometimes, second and third generations are included.
- 6 This method of sampling respondents who actually took part in the election has several advantages, compared to the more traditional method of sampling from all eligible voters. First, voters tend to have lower levels of refusal when asked to take part in a survey than non-voters. The response rate was 59 per cent, which is unusually high for this type of survey. Second, we had a small sample size due to budget restrictions, but were still able to analyse voting choice since all respondents had actually voted. Third, we avoided the common problem in election surveys of voters saying they had voted when in fact they had not. For more information about the survey, see Bergh *et al.* (2008) or contact the authors.
- 7 Unfortunately, due to an error in the creation of the questionnaire, the survey of all voters has a scale from 0 to 10, while the scale in the survey of immigrants goes from 1 to 10. We have recoded the first of these to a scale from 1 to 10, by switching all who said '0' to '1'. We believe respondents interpret the scale similarly, with 5 as a middle value in both cases, so the best recoding is done by changing the lowest value and keeping the others the same. The most frequent response to this question in both surveys is '5'. An alternative strategy would be to rescale one of the variables across the entire scale so that it fits the other variable. We have done that in an alternative analysis not presented here, and this does not significantly change our results.
- 8 There is one exception from that: the Immigrant party in Oslo, which gained very little support in 2007 (0.1 per cent of the votes).
- 9 In local elections in Norway, voters can provide several preferential votes for candidates on other ballots than the one they voted for.
- 10 The three left-of-centre parties are coded as 1, all other parties as 0 (see Table 1). Some see the anti-immigrant Progress party as different from other non-left parties in this context, since it may be especially unpopular among people who are themselves immigrants. Table 1 reveals that minority support for the Progress party is low, but not nonexistent. In fact, the Centre party has a lower share of minority voters than the Progress party does. However, we have performed another multivariate analysis that excludes the Progress party. Our findings in that analysis are, for all practical purposes, identical to those reported in Table 5. In

fact, none of the coefficients in the analysis without the Progress party was statistically different from those in Table 5. Thus, our findings are generalisable to all non-left parties, and not just to the Progress party.

- 11 The model predicts that native voters will support left-of-centre parties at a rate of 39.1 per cent, while the corresponding prediction for immigrant background voters is 70.6 per cent (see Figure 1).
- 12 Since immigrants generally live in municipalities with more immigrant candidates, we considered introducing a control variable that controlled for the number of such candidates in the respondent's municipality. However, this control variable is highly correlated with the previously introduced Oslo dummy. Pearson's r is 0.95, in a correlation analysis of respondent-level data. Thus, such a control is superfluous, and it is also unwarranted since it would produce multicollinearity.
- 13 For an exception, see Dancygier and Saunders, 2006.

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