

MIGRANT INTEGRATION AND ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION: LOCAL ELECTION 2019 IN DUBLIN, IRELAND

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Abstract: This article provides insight into political participation among migrant communities in Dublin, Ireland at the 2019 Local Elections. Evaluations of migrant integration in the European Union, often based on the categories included in the Zaragoza Indicators (European Commission, 2010), or in subsequent studies that expand on these select indicators, place a focus on political life as an important consideration to overall integration and active citizenship. This article examines voter turnout levels among migrant voters in Dublin, in order to evaluate whether trends of low voter participation are linked to a lack of political integration, which may have negative implications for migrant communities; communities that may have distinct legislative needs. The application of correlation testing using R statistics packages and spatial analysis using ArcGIS software facilitates investigation of trends. Interviews with political representatives highlight the scope for improved information, education, and integration among migrant communities at a time a newly established Electoral Commission in the Republic of Ireland has the potential to address such concerns.

Keywords: Electoral Geography; Voter Turnout; Migrant Integration; Active Citizenship; Reduced Inequalities; Irish Politics.

INTEGRAÇÃO DE MIGRANTES E PARTICIPAÇÃO ELEITORAL: ELEIÇÃO LOCAL DE 2019 EM DUBLIN, IRLANDA

Resumo: Este artigo oferece uma visão sobre a participação política entre comunidades migrantes em Dublin, Irlanda, durante as eleições locais de 2019. As avaliações sobre a integração de migrantes na União Europeia, frequentemente baseadas nas categorias incluídas nos Indicadores de Zaragoza (Comissão Europeia, 2010) ou em estudos que expandem esses indicadores selecionados, enfatizam a vida política como um aspecto fundamental para a integração geral e a cidadania ativa. Este artigo analisa os níveis de comparecimento às urnas entre eleitores migrantes em Dublin, com o objetivo de avaliar se as tendências de baixa participação eleitoral estão relacionadas à falta de integração política, o que pode ter implicações negativas para as comunidades migrantes, que podem ter necessidades legislativas específicas. A aplicação de testes de correlação usando pacotes estatísticos em R e análise espacial por meio do software ArcGIS permite a investigação dessas tendências. Além disso, entrevistas com representantes políticos destacam a necessidade de melhoria na disseminação de informações, na educação e na integração das comunidades migrantes, especialmente em um momento em que a recém-criada Comissão Eleitoral da República da Irlanda tem o potencial de abordar essas questões.

Palavras-chave: Geografia Eleitoral; Comparecimento Eleitoral; Integração de Migrantes; Cidadania Ativa; Redução das Desigualdades; Política Irlandesa

L'INTÉGRATION DES MIGRANTS ET PARTICIPATION ELECTORALE : ELECTIONS LOCALES DE 2019 A DUBLIN, IRLANDE

Résumé: Cet article offre un aperçu de la participation politique des communautés migrantes à Dublin, en Irlande, lors des élections locales de 2019. Les évaluations de l'intégration des migrants dans l'Union européenne, souvent basées sur les catégories incluses dans les Indicateurs de Saragosse (Commission européenne, 2010) ou dans des études ultérieures qui élargissent ces indicateurs sélectionnés, mettent l'accent sur la vie politique comme un élément clé de l'intégration globale et de la citoyenneté active.

Cet article examine les taux de participation électorale des électeurs migrants à Dublin afin d'évaluer si les tendances de faible participation électorale sont liées à un manque d'intégration politique, ce qui pourrait avoir des implications négatives pour les communautés migrantes – des communautés qui peuvent avoir des besoins législatifs spécifiques. L'application de tests de corrélation à l'aide des packages statistiques en R et de l'analyse spatiale via le logiciel ArcGIS permet d'examiner ces tendances. En outre, des entretiens avec des représentants politiques mettent en évidence la nécessité d'améliorer l'accès à l'information, l'éducation et l'intégration des communautés migrantes, à un moment où la récente création d'une Commission électorale en République d'Irlande offre un potentiel pour répondre à ces préoccupations.

Mots-clés: Géographie électorale ; Participation électorale ; Intégration des migrants ; Citoyenneté active ; Réduction des inégalités ; politique irlandaise.

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Abbreviations and definitions

'E' Voters - EU citizens, excluding Irish (and formerly UK) citizens, who are normally residents of the state and are eligible to vote only in local and European elections.

'L' Voters - Non-EU citizens who are normally residents of the state and eligible to vote only in local elections.

'Local Authority' – The lowest level of administrative government in the Republic of Ireland. Primary functions include planning, development, social housing allocation, road and amenity management within their functional area.

'Local Elections' – Elections held every five years in the Republic of Ireland to elect the 949 members of the 31 City and County Councils.

Councillor – The title held by elected members of the various Local Authorities (county and city councils) in the Republic of Ireland. Councillors are normally elected in local election contests in their corresponding LEA.

ED: Electoral Division - A small spatial unit commonly used for administrative purposes, such as census data aggregation and the construction of election constituencies in the Republic of Ireland.

EU – European Union

LEA: Local Electoral Area – Constituency units in which local representatives are elected to the associated Local Authority in the Republic of Ireland.

Taoiseach and Tánaiste – The Head and Deputy Head of Government in the Republic of Ireland, respectively.

TD: Teachta Dála – The title held by elected members of the lower house of parliament and primary legislators in the Republic of Ireland. TDs are normally elected in general election contests in their corresponding constituencies.

1. Introduction

Migrant integration is a broad topic that considers how migrants interact with their various communities and societies. Gilmartin and Dagg (2021) outline multiple broad considerations that existing works have examined, with specific focus on the Zaragoza Indicators as a means of quantifying the extent of migrant integration across various contexts (European Commission, 2010; Huddleston et al., 2013). The Zaragoza Indicators consider aspects of 'active citizenship', including factors related to civic participation, such as voter turnout levels for migrant groups (Huddleston et al., 2013). Given the key role of government in shaping immigrant integration, integration policies, integration outcomes, and settlement services (Gilmartin and Dagg, 2022), a greater deal of engagement in government formation processes and participatory democracy may be viewed as a key concern. In this respect, while local elections are considered an opportunity to examine immigrant participation in more detail due to the wider voting eligibility criteria, the functions of local government in the Republic of Ireland do not render them directly relevant to national policy formation. Local authorities play a notable role in relation to overall integration, however, when considering their roles in the provision and administration of local social services for communities. Local representatives play a key role as the direct link between the service providers and service users in this respect, but

also frequently have access to many informal networks within political parties and government structures that allow engagement with wider national issues and policies. In this respect, increased engagement with local politics has the potential to further inform and create progressive policy measures that address concerns and issues with immigrant integration more broadly. This important step in the integration process potentially provides an opportunity for migrant communities to move beyond the process of making place 'for' via top-down prescribed accommodations to a more inclusive and holistic process of making place 'with' (Gilmartin and Dagg, 2023), incorporating decision-making for the communities involved and allowing communities to play a more active role in shaping the places in which they live their day-to-day lives. The objectives of this paper are to outline the extent of migrant participation within the case study area in Local Election 2019 and identify areas of interest that may be suited to targeted government intervention to better address the underrepresentation of migrant communities in the Republic of Ireland.

1.1 Elections and Government in the Republic of Ireland

In the Republic of Ireland, the types of elections that take place include Presidential elections, General elections, By-elections, Senate elections, European elections and local elections. Presidential elections take place at least every seven years and serve to elect the President of Ireland. This role is largely ceremonial in practice, with the majority of functions dependent on approval from the lower house of parliament. The lower house of parliament (Dáil Éireann) is the primary legislative body within the state and currently has 160 members (TDs). Members are elected at least every five years in a general election and a by-election may be placed to replace any member that vacates their seat in the interim period. Senate elections take place to elect 60 members of the upper house of parliament (Seanad Éireann) following each general election, with members serving in a secondary legislative role. As a member state of the European Union, European elections are also held every five years to elect member of the European Parliament. Local elections take place every five years to elect 949 local City and County Councillors across all 31 local authorities in the country. Since 1999 these elections have coincided with European elections, in part as a means of ensuring higher turnout levels. Local authorities are the lowest level of government in the country, and their function consists of the local administration and management of housing services, amenities, transport networks, planning and development.

While most other English-speaking states employ some form of majoritarian electoral system, the Republic of Ireland uses the Proportional Representation by Single Transferrable Vote (PR-STV) system (Gudgin and Taylor, 2012). Under this system, eligible voters cast their ballots for candidates running in their constituency (which varies depending on election type) by assigning a numerical order of preference for each individual candidate. Once first-preference votes are counted, and a suitable quota to be deemed elected is calculated, the candidates with the lowest votes are eliminated from the race across a series of subsequent counts, and their votes are redistributed among remaining candidates based on the next-highest preference until all seats are filled.

1.2. Local Elections in The Republic of Ireland

In the Republic of Ireland, local elections are the most relevant contests in which to explore the topic of migrant engagement. Unlike elections to national representative bodies, local government elections allow for the participation of all individuals who are ordinarily resident in the state, regardless of their citizenship. Enshrined in the Electoral Act of 1992 (Government of Ireland, 1992), the potential offered to non-citizens to contest, and vote, in Irish (local) elections, is viewed as one of the most inclusive electoral rules in the EU (Pszczółkowska and Lesińska, 2022). Given the inclusive nature of contests, City and County Council local elections in the Republic of Ireland provide a unique opportunity to consider the topic of migrant inclusion in political processes in more detail (AkiDwA, 2018). This study considers migrant integration in Dublin, Ireland by examining the geography of voter turnout among migrant groups based on data from the 2019 Local Elections, which coincided with the 2019 European Elections, taking place on May 24th, 2019.

1.3. Voter Participation and Nationality

Various authors have argued that the given nationality or ethnicity of an individual voter has a notable impact on political behaviour. (Fisher et al., 2015; Adebayo, 2016). Depending on the specific context, ethnicity can influence political support patterns within a state when specific ethnic groupings have a clear political preference (McAllister and Kelly, 1982; White, 2015). Ethnicity has also been identified as playing a notable role in shaping voter turnout levels. Ethnic minorities may face a number of barriers to participation, and as a result, experience the consequences of potential under-representation (Hajnal and Trounstein, 2005; Fieldhouse and Cutts, 2008; Hershey, 2009). In the Republic of Ireland, voter participation specifically among migrant and ethnic communities is a topic that is rarely examined in detail and often lacks a high level of 'political salience' (Coutts et al., 2021). Ireland has one of the lowest participation rates for migrants among OECD countries examined, ranked in the lowest four countries in 2018 and 2023 based on self-reported migrant turnout figures. (OECD, 2018; OECD 2023) In this respect, while migrants tend to engage in national elections to a lesser extent across all OECD countries examined, the gap is most pronounced in countries such as Ireland, with this gap also reported as widening in the past decade.

2. Data & Methods

In order to conduct this investigation, participation figures for migrant communities are generated directly from an analysis of the Marked Electoral Register. The Marked Electoral Register consists of the official hard-copy list of registered voters at each polling station on Election Day. This process of analysing the Marked Electoral Register allows each individual on the register to be classed as either a voter or non-voter for a specific electoral contest.

Working with Marked Electoral Register data requires the need to mitigate for potential inaccuracies which have been documented in various previous commentaries (O'Malley, 2001; Kavanagh et al., 2006; Downing 2016; Oireachtas, 2016; O'Riordan, 2020; Durkan, 2021). In this respect, the use of Census data alongside the information drawn from the register analysis, as well as the sizable case study area, allows for a more reliable analysis to be conducted into the topic at hand, based on a resource that is still, despite inaccuracies, the most accurate record of voting practices available within the country and one which allows historical comparison at a range of scales. Marked

Electoral Register analysis facilitates the aggregation of turnout data at various geographical scales, which are much smaller than that at the constituency level.

In the case of this study, Dublin is utilised as a case study area, with data primarily analysed at the Electoral Division level; the second-smallest geographical area at which Census data is made available, with 322 of the 3,409 Electoral Divisions within the Republic of Ireland located within the Dublin region (Central Statistics Office, 2016). This study relies on Census 2016 data to examine the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the electorate. The potential for significant change in populations over the three years from 2016 to 2019 must be considered, especially given the relatively small scale of analysis and the notable level of higher-than-average mobility levels across some communities examined in this research. Nevertheless, the size of the overall case study area and the use of various methods of qualitative and quantitative analysis allow for more robust analysis.

The primary statistical analyses conducted utilise various R statistics packages to explore the extent of potential relationships between voter turnout levels and different socio-economic and demographic characteristics. This primarily includes the examination of various Pearson correlation coefficients and their associated p-values. Individual correlations are considered 'significant' if they achieve a p-value of less than 0.05, and a false positive risk value of less than 5 percent. (Colquhoun, 2017; Longstaff and Colquhoun, 2023). Throughout the analysis, various geographies are explored via the use of ArcGIS Pro software, including the representation of clusters and outliers in the data, based on the Local Indicators of Spatial Association (LISA) method (Anselin, 1995). This method serves to identify areas of high value clustering (high-high), low value clustering (low-low), outliers that present significantly lower values than surrounding areas (low-high), and outliers that present significantly higher values than surrounding areas (high-low).

This report also includes excerpts from 30 semi-structured interviews conducted with members of parliament, local authority members, and parliamentary staff in the 2019-2020 period. (Durkan, 2021). Interview excerpts from political representatives across various political groupings are utilised to contextualise and expand upon the statistical analyses conducted. A mixed-methods approach aims to better account for the myriad of cultural and social factors that may shape electoral trends, and provide a more holistic understanding of influential factors in the case study area (Zolnik, 2009).

3. The Geography of Nationality in Dublin

It is important to note that large immigration levels into the Republic of Ireland is a relatively new phenomenon, dating back to the mid-1990s and the "Celtic Tiger" period of rapid economic expansion, with a spike in levels following the accession of ten new European Union member states in 2004, which led to an influx of migrants from East European states, such as Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia. In the wake of the "Economic Crash" of 2008, levels dropped and remained relatively low for the following years, but the late 2010s saw a recovery in immigration levels and the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in 2022 saw a further spike in levels, as outlined in Figure 1. Based on these trends, it can be highlighted that "New Irish" communities are relatively new groupings, especially when compared with migrant communities in other Western states.

Previous research has highlighted that while the foreign-born population in Ireland tends to be primarily located in urban areas, there is also a high degree of clustering, with half of all foreign-born individuals located in 159 of the 3,409 Electoral Divisions nationally (Fahey et al., 2019: 18). The geography of nationality in the case study area is outlined in Figure 2, highlighting several areas where

there is a high level of foreign nationals, and significant clustering. This includes the Dublin Inner City and western parts of the Dublin region, which have the highest levels of population growth. There are notably lower populations in areas that tend to have more settled, middle-class, or rural communities. Previous research has highlighted the North Inner City specifically as an area of high concentration of foreign-born individuals, with this area having ten out of twelve EDs with the highest share of foreign-born populations in the state, while clusters in areas near third-level educational facilities also suggest the significant presence of foreign students (Fahey et al., 2019: 27-30). Table 3 subsequently highlights not only the geography of foreign-born individuals, but also the associated geography of registered voters with 'L' or 'E' voting status. The geography of nationality will be considered alongside the geography of voter turnout in Local Election 2019 in Dublin to further examine the level of political participation among migrant communities.

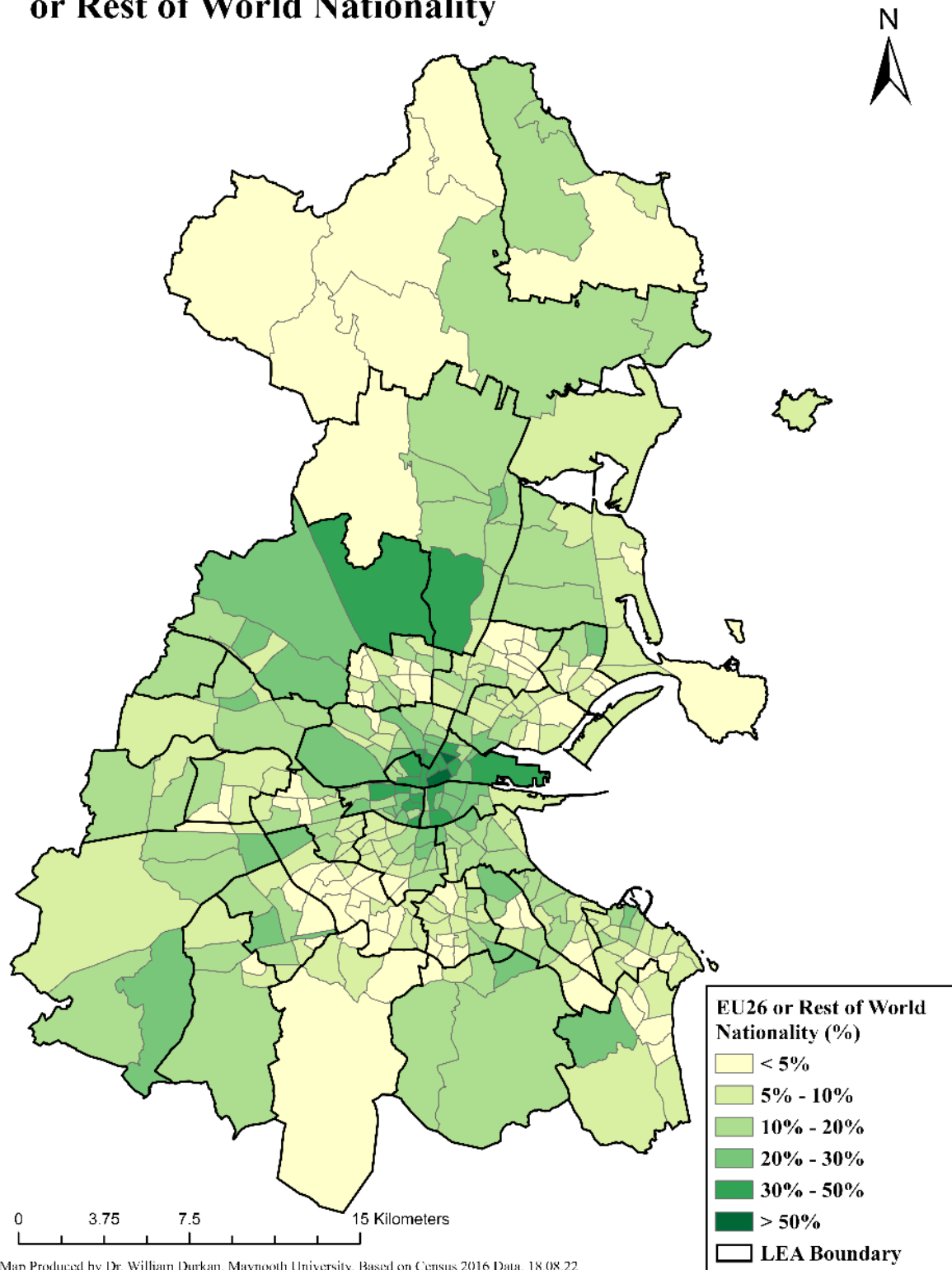
Figure 1 - Immigration levels into the Republic of Ireland between 1987 and 2022



Source: Based on Figures from the Central Statistics Office, 2022.

Figure 2 - Proportion of the Population with 'EU26' or 'Rest of World Nationality within Dublin

Proportion of the Population with EU26 or Rest of World Nationality



4. Voter Turnout Trends in Local Election 2019

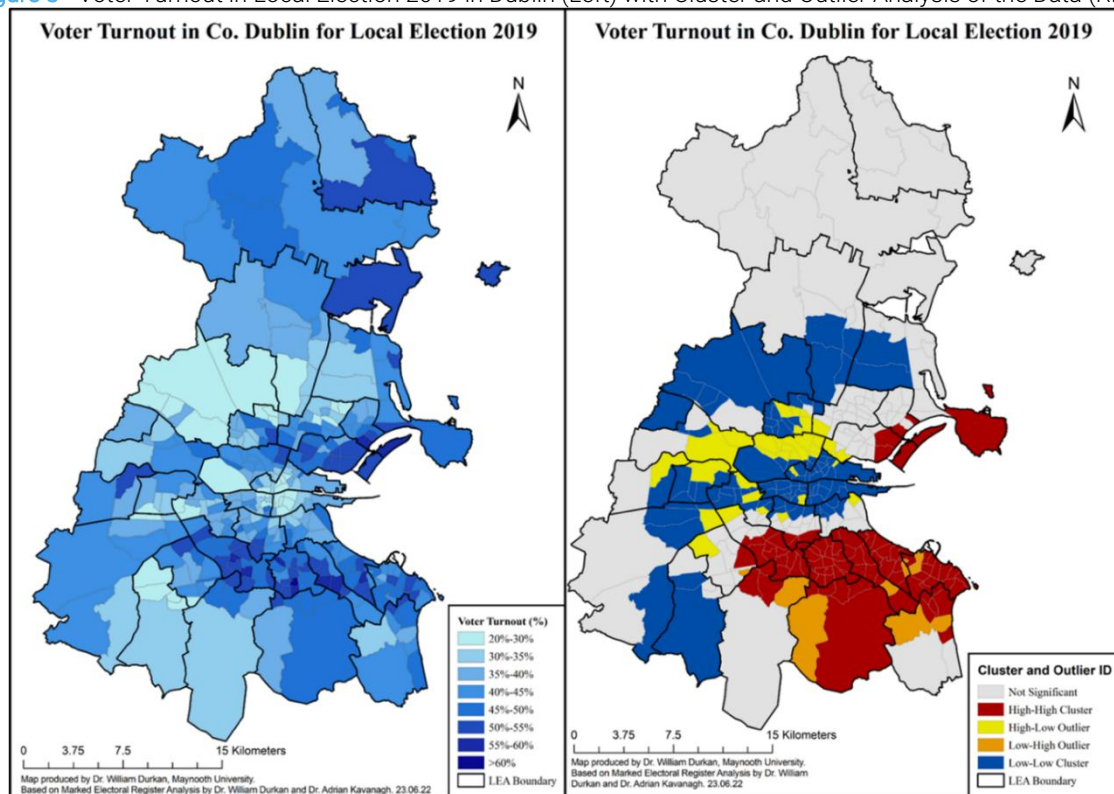
Prior to examining the level of voter turnout among migrant groups specifically, it is important to consider the overall voter turnout trends in the Dublin for Local Election 2019. Figure 3 outlines the geography of voter turnout at the Electoral Division level. As previous investigations into the geography of Irish voter turnout have outlined, voter participation tends to be lower in urban centres, although urban-rural turnout differentials have narrowed over the past two decades (Kavanagh, 2002; Durkan, 2021). This can be observed in the Dublin Inner City area, which displayed some of the lowest overall participation rates in the state at the 2019 Local Elections, as had been the case across all of the elections held during the 2000s (Kavanagh, Mills and Sinnott, 2004). Dublin had a low overall turnout rate of just 41.5 percent for this election (as compared with a national turnout level of 50.2 percent), but some Electoral Divisions in the south of the city recorded notably higher levels. The identification and mapping of clusters and outlier values using the Local Indicators of Spatial Association (LISA) method (Anselin, 1995) clearly highlights geographical divides in terms of overall turnout levels. As displayed in Figure 3, high values tend to be clustered in the south and some coastal areas in the north, with much lower levels seen in the Dublin Inner City and western suburban areas.

Further to examining the geography of voter turnout levels, the compilation of figures at the Electoral Division scale allows comparison with Census 2016 figures which portray a range of socio-economic and demographic variables that may be considered alongside voter turnout. As outlined in Table 1, there are several potential associations observed. Voter turnout is positively associated with areas of higher residential stability, higher education, a larger retired population, and better employment conditions. These findings support insights from previous works examining socio-economic and demographic factors that are associated with Irish voter turnout trends (Kavanagh, 2002; Durkan, 2021). Further to traditionally observed associations, both the proportion of the population born outside of the EU or UK and the proportion of the population that records their nationality as outside of these areas display notable negative associations with voter turnout levels recorded in Local Election 2019.

Table 1 - Pearson Correlation with Voter Turnout in Local Election 2019, Census 2016 Variables, and Pobal Deprivation Index Values

Local Election 2019 Voter Turnout		
Variable	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	P-Value
Birthplace: Outside of EU 27 and UK	-0.4508764	1.58E-17
Nationality: Outside of EU 27 and UK	-0.4550388	7.32E-18
Ethnicity: Black or Asian	-0.5197139	1.13E-23
Pobal Index (Rel)	0.3681074	9.06E-12
High Education	0.3803274	1.60E-12
Unemployment	-0.6916238	3.88E-47
Retired	0.6729714	8.15E-44
Employment: Category One	0.6543645	9.80E-41
Housing: Owner Occupied	0.7538608	2.51E-60
Housing: Rented	-0.7462444	1.65E-58

Figure 3 - Voter Turnout in Local Election 2019 in Dublin (Left) with Cluster and Outlier Analysis of the Data (Right)



Source: Central Statistics Office, 2016; Haase & Pratschke, 2017

5. 'L' and 'E' Voter Turnout

The level of political participation among migrant communities is an important factor to examine in the context of wider societal integration. Many foreign-born individuals and communities may face challenges that are unique to them and may demand targeted policy responses. In this respect, various members of parliament note their responsibility to effectively engage with migrant communities in order to better address specific community needs. Deputy Robert Troy (2019) outlines the need 'to be a voice' for such communities, as many are 'very vulnerable' and 'coming from a very bad situation', while Deputy Bernard Durkan (2020) notes that engagement with various communities provides 'an opportunity to examine their particular situation, how they fit into our society and how society affected them'.

Looking at registration and voting trends for 'L' and 'E' voters in the Dublin region over the past two decades, as outlined in Table 2, it is clear that the number of these voters on the register is higher now than it was in the early 2000s, although there was not a notable increase in registration levels during the 2010s, which does tally somewhat with the overall reduction in immigration levels during this period, corresponding with the period of economic recession in the late 2000s and early 2010s.

Turnout levels however have not improved significantly for this group. Indeed, as Table 2 shows, more people in this group turned out to vote in the 2009 City and County Council elections than turned out to vote ten years later, with the percentage turnout level falling by 8.3 percent between 2004 and 2019. It may be the case that some of the members of this group who voted in 2004 and 2009 became Irish citizens over the following years and were, hence, no longer classed as 'L' or 'E' voters, while some of the voters from 2009 may have decided to leave Ireland, especially during the unpromising economic conditions of the early 2010s.

Studying trends at the 2019 Local Election in the Dublin region in greater depth, some interesting variations between the different local authority areas are seen to emerge. The Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown local authority area is seen to have the highest (percentage) turnout levels, but it has the lowest registration levels. In turn, 'L' and 'E' voters account for a higher proportion of the electorates in South Dublin County, Dublin City, and particularly Fingal, but these areas have lower turnout levels for New Irish voters. However, 'L' and 'E' voters account for a much higher proportion of the number of voters on the supplementary register, which covers those voters who were added to the register in the months immediately leading up to the election (Table 3). Turnout levels for 'L' and 'E' voters on the supplement tend to be relatively high, and indeed are on a par with supplement turnout levels for Irish citizens. The overall turnout level in Dublin for people who were on the supplement in 2019 was 62.4 percent, which was only marginally higher (1.4 percent) than the average turnout level for 'L' and 'E' voters who were on the supplement. This hints at the impact that residential mobility might have on potential migrant turnout levels.

Table 2 - Registration and voter turnout trends for 'L' and 'E' voters in the Dublin region at select electoral contests between 2002 and 2019, based on marked register analyses of these contests. * *Incomplete or partially missing data*

Election	Registered (<i>percentage of total electorate</i>)	Turnout (<i>percentage turnout</i>)
Local Elections 2019	42,862 (4.8)	6,464 (15.1)
General Election 2016	38,540 (4.4)	NA
Local Elections 2014	39,677 (4.7)	5,183 (13.1)
Local Elections 2009	37,937 (4.7) *	7,033 (18.5)
General Election 2007	32,922 (4.0)	NA
Local Elections 2004	13,272 (2.1) *	3,108 (23.4)
General Election 2002	12,766 (1.5)	NA

Table 3 - Registration and voter turnout figures (%) for 'L' and 'E' voters in the Dublin region by local authority area, including registration/turnout details for 'L' and 'E' voters on the supplement to the register

Local Authority	Electorate	Voter Turnout	Supplement	Supplement Turnout
Dublin City	4.5	15.8	26.2	58.8
Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown	2.8	22.5	16.8	61.7
Fingal	6.8	13.5	13.6	66.8
South Dublin	4.5	12.4	16.1	64.3
Dublin Region	4.8	15.1	20.4	61.0

For the 2019 Local Elections in Dublin, examining the number of registered 'L' and 'E' voters in comparison to the eligible population provides some insight into levels of political engagement among these communities. The geography of potential registration levels outlined in Figure 4 highlights several key trends. In the first instance, the data suggests a very low level of registration among both eligible 'L' and 'E' voters in many areas, with this trend most pronounced in Dublin Inner City. Low registration levels for 'E' voters can also be seen in west Dublin, while there is significant potential for low registration of 'L' voters in south Dublin.

Overall, 'L' and 'E' voter turnout is notably lower throughout the case study area when compared with overall voter turnout levels, apart from the aforementioned exceptions. Most Electoral Divisions have turnout levels of under 30 percent for 'L' and 'E' voters, and very few have values of over 40 percent. This turnout difference is notably pronounced, with many areas having a difference of greater than 20 percent, and only three electoral divisions having higher turnout among 'L' and 'E' voters than turnout rates for the overall electorate. Figure 5 outlines the geography of where potential voters are located and the engagement levels recorded. The observed trends suggest that recorded voter turnout levels among 'L' and 'E' groups tends to be lowest in areas where they make up a significant proportion

of the electorate. Areas such as Dublin's Inner City and western suburbs have some of the largest shares of 'L' and 'E' voters on the register, but also some of the lowest engagement levels among these groups. The converse trend is observed in areas with low migrant populations, but high turnout among these groups.

In terms of potential causal factors in relation to low levels of 'L' and 'E' engagement, many political representatives highlight potential issues which stem from a lack of awareness, both in terms of eligibility and of process. Cllr. Joanna Tuffy (2020) outlines that constituents are often of the opinion that 'I don't have a vote', and while general awareness of voting eligibility may have improved in recent years, potential voters are 'not mobilised around it'. While various areas are highlighted as areas of interest in terms of migrant political participation, the North Inner City is one area that has traditionally been noted as an area of particularly low voter turnout (Kavanagh, 2002) and also has a sizable foreign-born community. Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan (2019) points to the presence of local informal 'meet the candidates' events aimed at foreign-born communities, as a means of fostering increased engagement in some communities, with former Mayor Alan Farrell (2019) noting that he often attended many such events, often brining voter registration forms.

While the geography of participation among migrant groups may be influenced by specific mobilisation efforts by political representatives, the geography of engagement may also be shaped by the various socio-economic and demographic associations observed in Table 4. In this instance, the tendency for 'L' and 'E' turnout to be highest in areas with overall high turnout is again highlighted. This suggests a neighbourhood effect may be at play here – migrants who move to high or low turnout areas may well be socialised into voting, or not voting, dependent on the characteristics of the places they move to. Given this, it is unsurprising that the variables associated with overall turnout are also associated with turnout levels among 'L' and 'E' voters specifically, albeit to a lesser extent. In this case, the strongest trends highlight the tendency for 'L' and 'E' turnout to be negatively associated with high levels of rented accommodation.

Figure 4 - Percentage of 'E' (Left) and 'L' (Right) Voters Registered in Local Election 2019 in Dublin based on accompanying Census 2016 figures

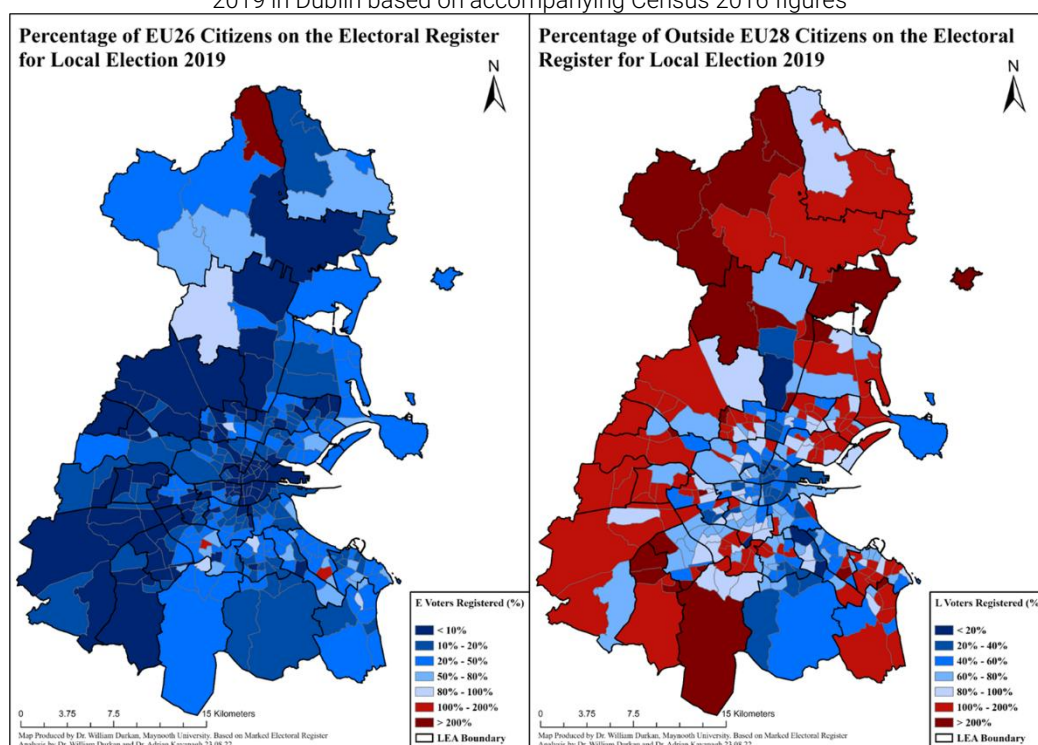


Figure 5 - 'L' and 'E' Voters (Top) and 'L' and 'E' Voter Turnout (Bottom) in Dublin for Local Election 2019

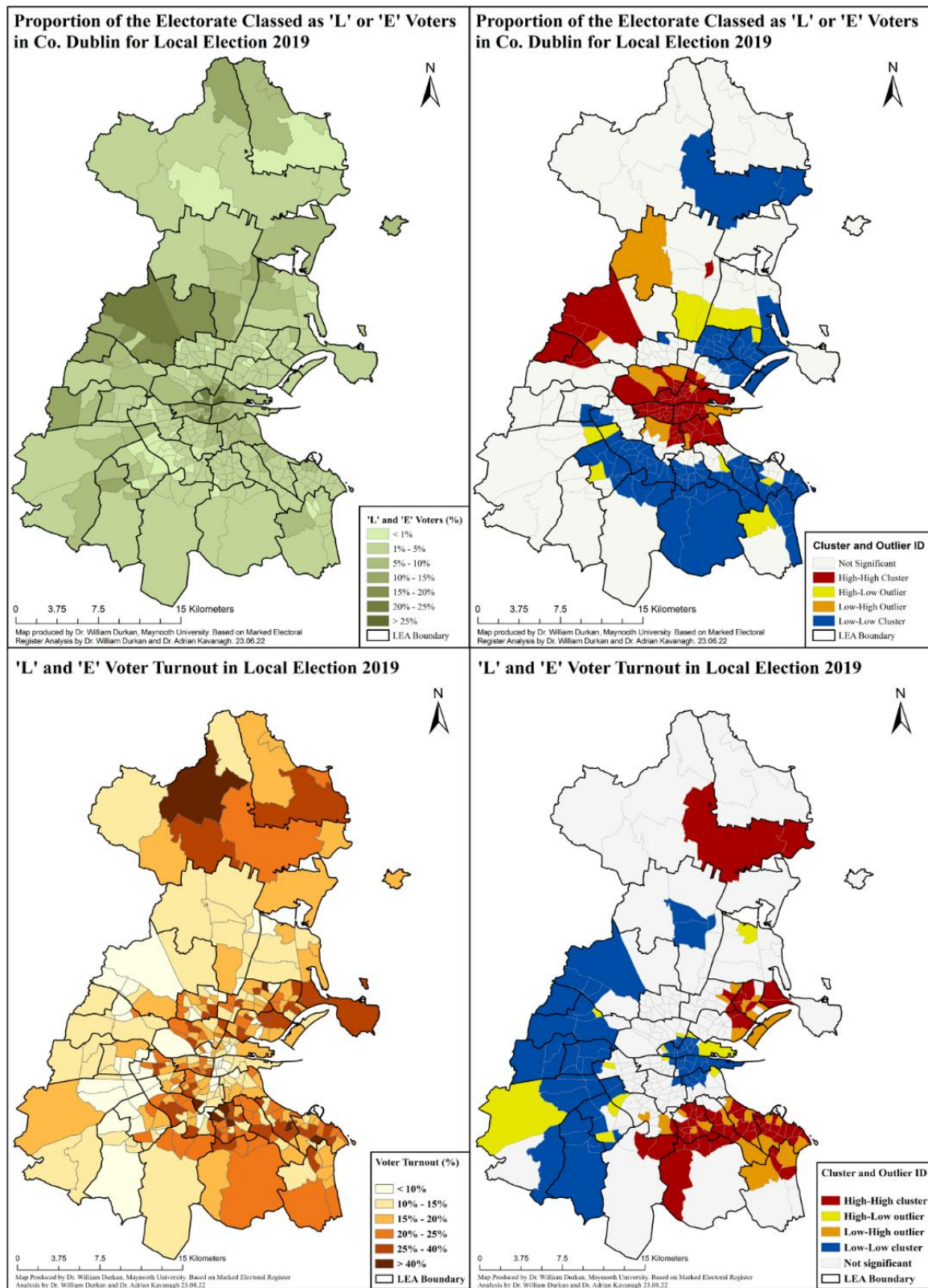


Table 4 - Pearson Correlations of a Selection of Electoral, Socio-Economic, and Demographic Variables Considered

L & E Voter Turnout in Local Election 2019		
Variable	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	P-Value
Local Election 2019 Voter Turnout	0.442419	7.27E-17
Birthplace: Outside of EU 27 and UK	-0.2591931	2.43E-06
Nationality: Outside of EU 27 and UK	-0.232492	2.51E-05
Ethnicity: Black or Asian	-0.2925603	8.95E-08
Retired	0.3412765	3.17E-10
Employment: Category One	0.2203852	6.65E-05
Housing: Owner Occupied	0.3811426	1.42E-12
Housing: Rented	-0.3818691	1.28E-12

The high level of mobility among migrants is well documented in the Irish context, with recent research highlighting the tendency for migrants to be more likely to avail of private-rented housing and apartment accommodation than Irish nationals, as private rented accommodation tends to have less barriers for migrants. (McGinnity et al., 2022; Gilmartin & Dagg 2021; Fahey et al., 2019; Pillinger, 2009). McGinnity et al. (2022) further note the potential for reliance on private rented accommodation to have associated consequences for overall integration, with this also likely in terms of political integration. Previous research has highlighted the notable trend of areas with high levels of renters tending to have low voter turnout. Potential causal factors suggested including registration issues, a lack of community engagement, a lack of connection to the area, and a lack of accessibility for canvassers and political candidates (Kavanagh, 2002; Durkan, 2021). O'Boyle et al. (2016) point to past studies such as Koopmans and Statham (1999) to highlight the importance of traits such as residential stability in fostering political participation among migrant groups, noting the potential of this trend to disrupt 'network' formation among migrant communities. The tendency for housing *tenure* to influence overall integration, including political integration is noted by Deputy Eamon Ryan (2020), who suggests that longer housing tenure and a greater sense of the connection to an area is a key part of *political* participation. When homeownership and a greater degree of stability are considered as key factors in supporting political participation and wider integration, it may be expected that migrant communities will have increased potential to be politically engaged as they become more settled in an area. Deputy Darragh O'Brien (2019) highlights the increased uptake in homeownership among new-Irish communities in recent years, as migrant groups become more integrated in wider society. This is supported by Cllr. Joanna Tuffy (2020), who notes low engagement among new-Irish communities in the Adamstown area but suggests a recent change as many are becoming 'very much mobilised about being integrated into the community'.

Overall, the level of political participation in Dublin among migrant groups is observed as being far below that of the general population in Local Election 2019. Whatever the specific causal factors may be, lower voter turnout among a select cohort in society potentially leads to a compounding effect, where these groups are not actively represented, or exposed to mobilisation, to the same extent as others. Groups who do not engage as frequently with political representatives are potentially at risk of being excluded from important legislative decisions, with European Union Special Representative

for Human Rights and former Tánaiste Eamon Gilmore (2019) noting that politics can often be ‘a cruel business’ and often ‘areas and components of the population who vote get more attention’. While a close examination of the geography of migrant communities and low political engagement highlights many areas where there exists a potential ‘democratic deficit’ (Berry, 2014: 722) which may hinder the wider integration of groups and reduce the level of representation for issues that are of key importance to select communities, there are signs that many such communities are perhaps showing potential for increased engagement, perhaps supported by greater levels of key factors such as increased residential stability.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this research explores the level of political engagement among migrant groups in the Republic of Ireland, utilising Local Election 2019 in Co. Dublin as a case study. This approach aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the spatialization of migrant integration (Gilmartin and Dagg, 2021) and aid in gaining deeper insight into the various small-scale processes that shape the everyday lived experiences (Agnew, 2002) and political behaviours of select cohorts of our society. Political engagement of migrant groups is an important aspect of Active Citizenship, with this widely recognised as a key process to successful and meaningful integration. (European Commission, 2010). This case study focuses on local election engagement due to the more inclusive eligibility criteria and utilises small-scale data to assess voter participation in key areas.

The data suggests that under registration and lack of engagement are issues that impact significant proportions of migrant communities. In this respect, we see many areas in which traits such as high levels of residential mobility may contribute to political detachment and disengagement among individuals, with this notably pronounced in areas with large migrant communities.

While successful instances of engagement from top-down structures and many community-led bottom-up influences have demonstrated that improved mobilisation is indeed an achievable aim, migrant communities may be considered as a significantly underrepresented cohort in Irish society (Pszczółkowska and Lesińska, 2022; Lima, 2019). This points towards a need for supportive policy to ensure widespread instances of increased political engagement and integration. As other authors have noted, barriers such as the need to engage with members of the police, cumbersome registration processes, inaccurate registers, unstable housing tenure for migrants, and a lack of information all have a role to play in stymying greater engagement levels. (Coutts et al., 2021). The recently formed Electoral Commission in the Republic of Ireland has the potential to address many issues arising here. In addition to the reformation of the electoral register, the Electoral Commission has an opportunity to address issues of electoral disengagement; an issue which should be considered as a serious cause for concern. This research considers select groups within society and select spaces that demonstrate pronounced and/or growing levels of electoral disengagement in many instances. In this respect, a newly established Commission has an opportunity to examine areas in which action may be taken through encouraging and informing targeted cohorts and communities within our society. In this respect, many barriers face various groups in terms of electoral knowledge and the voter registration process. Some potential groups which face specific barriers are foreign-born members of the community who may be unaware of voter rights. This is an important consideration, as this a select cohort who may have unique legislative needs, with increased political engagement a legitimate pathway to meet these needs while fostering a wider sense of meaningful integration in broader society.

Ethical Statement

Fieldwork received ethical approval from the Maynooth University Ethics Committee in association with the research project: Political Disengagement and Spaces of Neglect in the Current Political System (GOIPG201859, 2018-2020). Interview participants have provided written consent to be named in any disseminated materials.

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Declaration of Interests

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

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