### Abstract

In this study the theory on social capital has been linked to electoral participation. The theory has been tested among Russian, Estonian, Somali and Vietnamese immigrants in Finland. In the study social capital was measured through organisational involvement and active social contacts. The study is quantitative and regression analysis forms the central method of analysis. Social capital theory has in the literature been viewed as an interesting theory in immigrant and minority studies because it connects political participation with underlying social structures and questions of inclusion and discrimination. In the literature social capital has generally been viewed as a prerequisite for political participation. In the social capital theory it has however become a debated question whether all forms of social connections form resources. This debate is often addressed through the concepts bridging and bonding social capital. In the context of immigrants the question relates to the desirability of immigrant organisations and ethnic social networks and how they facilitate the integration process. The issue in a broader context relates to the question of whether the state should support multicultural policies. It has nevertheless been questioned whether the type of social membership actually matters, or if it is the amount of social connections that an individual holds which in fact is important. The results of the study support the hypothesis that social capital forms a resource for electoral participation. Among the immigrants who participate in civil society organisations and hold active social connections electoral participation is higher than amongst those that do not. The results also support the multicultural hypothesis that immigrant organisations in general are beneficial for political participation. One notable finding is that the amount of social participation seems to be a more important explanatory factor for electoral participation than the type of social connection. Based on earlier research it seems likely that the research findings can be generalized beyond voting to other more demanding forms of political participation.

### Literature


### Keywords

- immigrants
- social capital
- political participation
- social networks
- integration
- multiculturalism
- policies