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Political Participation in France among Non-European-Origin Migrants: Segregation or Integration?

Rahsaan Maxwell

This article examines the political incorporation of minority migrant groups in Western Europe by analysing voting rates. I present the first quantitative data that compare turnout rates among multiple minority migrant groups in France and show that non-European-origin migrant groups have lower turnout rates than native French metropolitans. I claim neighbourhood effects can explain these turnout differences, suggesting that the underlying determinants of minority migrant voting behaviour in France are similar to those of native metropolitans. However, because non-European-origin migrants are more likely than native metropolitans to live in disadvantaged urban areas they have lower turnout rates.

Keywords: Political Incorporation; Migration; Segregation; Voting Behaviour; France

Introduction

In recent years, members of non-European-origin migrant groups have participated in several high-profile examples of violent terrorism and urban unrest in Western Europe. These events have raised important questions about the extent to which migrant groups are successfully integrated in European societies. In addition, the dramatic nature of these events questions the degree to which minorities are able to access mainstream political channels and whether some migrant groups feel that anti-systemic violence is the only option.

This article addresses the debate about the degree to which non-European-origin migrant groups in Western Europe are involved in mainstream political channels by analysing data on voting rates in three 2004 French elections. I make several contributions to the literature on political participation and minority group voting
behaviour. The first contribution is empirical, as the article presents the first quantitative data that compare turnout rates among different migrant groups in France. The data show that migrant-origin minorities consistently have lower voting rates than native French metropolitans across each 2004 election. In addition, these data allow the first regression analysis of minority voting patterns in France. Second, the conventional wisdom of socio-economic disadvantage as the explanation for low migrant minority turnout is critiqued as the minority/native turnout difference is statistically significant even when controlling for a number of demographic and political context variables. Third, I argue that neighbourhood effects are important, as the migrant/native turnout difference is no longer statistically significant once a series of geographic variables are included in the analysis. Fourth, I suggest that the underlying determinants of non-European-origin migrant voting behaviour in France are similar to those of native metropolitans but, because the former are more likely than the latter to live in disadvantaged urban areas they have lower overall turnout. Finally, I build on recent research from other European countries that identifies neighbourhood and community effects as being important for migrant political participation. However, this article suggests that neighbourhood and community effects may operate differently across national contexts.

This article has seven parts. The first presents a brief background of migration and political incorporation in France. The second section reviews the existing literature on minority voting behaviour and demonstrates that current explanations do not account for low turnout among minority migrant groups in France. Then I develop the framework for analysing the importance of neighbourhood effects, before presenting the data, measures and methods used to analyse voting behaviour in France. Regression analysis results are then reported which show that neighbourhood effects are the key variables explaining why non-European-origin migrant turnout is lower than that of the native French. The sixth section discusses the implications of these results and the final section concludes.

Background on Migration and Political Incorporation in France

From the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, the majority of migrants in France were Southern and Eastern Europeans who worked in the growing industrial economy (Weil 2004). In the years following World War Two, a diverse range of migrants from the Caribbean, the Maghreb, Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia migrated to France. By the 1980s, Europeans made up less than half of France’s foreign population and, by 1999, first-generation non-European migrants were 3.5 per cent of the total population of metropolitan France (Maxwell 2008a). This new migration was largely a response to labour shortages in France as well as high unemployment and economic and political instability in the sending countries. Many new migrants were relatively low-skilled and worked in low-wage jobs upon arrival in metropolitan France. By the late twentieth century, Southern and Eastern European migrant groups had been relatively successful at assimilating into the mainstream
French population. However, later migrant groups continued to face economic difficulties as the recessions of the 1970s and 1980s led to rising unemployment rates, especially among the non-European-origin population (Tribalat 1991: 173–255; Weil 2004: 128–35).

Political incorporation for all migrants in France has been slow, as most groups arrived as foreigners without the right to vote, which excluded them from much of formal French political life. Political incorporation has been slower for non-European-origin compared to European-origin migrants, as research suggests that the former group has been more likely to suffer from discrimination and delays during the long-stay visa and citizenship acquisition process (Spire 2005). In addition, France’s dominant republican discourse encourages migrants to assimilate and considers minority identities to be an illegitimate basis for political claims-making. It is important to note that French republican discourse contains several internal divisions over the precise form which migrant assimilation, integration or insertion should take, and the degree to which cultural and religious differences are acceptable in different contexts (Favell 2001). However, despite these divisions, the French republican framework has tended to limit the extent to which political entrepreneurs can mobilise around migrant and homeland-based identities. This structural limitation has been particularly salient for non-European-origin migrants, who have been less successful than their European-origin counterparts at accessing mainstream political channels as integrated French citizens (Geisser 1997).

In the 1980s, minority migrant political participation became an increasingly visible public issue as second-generation migrants from the Maghreb used their citizenship status to push for greater inclusion in French society. This new mobilisation encouraged mainstream political parties to court the votes of the rising non-European-origin electorate (Garbaye 2005: 70–86), although critics claim that this increased attention in the 1980s and 1990s has been more symbolic than substantive. Non-European-origin groups remain severely under-represented among elected officials across all levels of government, and political parties have often been reluctant to openly support minority migrant issues out of fear of alienating mainstream voters (Garbaye 2005: 207–8, Maxwell 2008a). Furthermore, due to the general assumption in French political life that non-European-origin groups have lower registration and voting rates than those of the native metropolitan French, many mainstream politicians have found it easy to ignore the non-European-origin electorate (Richard 1999, 2004).

There is a wide range of non-European-origin migrant groups in France, but this study focuses on Caribbeans and Maghrebians. The main reason for this comparison is that the data do not provide large enough samples of other non-European-origin migrant groups. However, this research design has the benefit of facilitating an exploration of how variation in race, ethnicity and colonial experiences may be related to political participation dynamics.

Caribbeans are primarily black and are a racial minority in France. Maghrebians are primarily Arab and Muslim, and are an ethnic and religious minority in France.
Prior to migration, Caribbeans and Maghrebians had very different experiences with French colonisation. Caribbeans have been exposed to French culture since the beginning of colonialism in the seventeenth century. In 1946, the Caribbean territories of Guadeloupe, Guiana and Martinique became French departments whose inhabitants had full French citizenship rights and where laws and public services were to be applied exactly as in metropolitan France (Anselin 1990). In comparison, French colonialism came to the Maghreb only in the nineteenth century. Maghrebian migrants are less likely than Caribbeans to be familiar with the French language or with French religious and cultural practices (Maxwell 2008a). In addition, they are primarily Muslim and are more likely than Caribbeans to suffer stigmatisation as the ‘culturally unassimilable other’ in French society (Geisser 2003).

If one of these groups were more likely to vote than the other, one might assume that either racial or ethnic and religious differences were more salient in France, or that different colonial experiences could explain group tendencies towards political participation. However, low levels of turnout among both Caribbeans and Maghrebians suggest that the oppositions of racial versus ethnic differences or of different colonial experiences cannot fully account for political participation dynamics in contemporary France.

**Literature Review**

Non-European-origin migrant groups in France are often assumed to have lower voting rates than the native metropolitan population but there are very few data that actually document turnout rates across groups. The same republican discourse that encourages migrants to assimilate and considers minority identities to be an illegitimate basis for political claims also considers those identities an illegitimate basis for scientific inquiry in France. Therefore, there are few surveys with variables that can be used to analyse minority group voting behaviour. The literature tends to focus on qualitative analysis of citizenship acquisition patterns (Richard 2004; Sayad 1999; Weil 2002), government policies (Bleich 2003; Wihtol de Wenden 1988), or patterns of protest politics (Jazouli 1986).

Only recently have academics been able to design their own surveys or access the limited number of government datasets that allow them to conduct quantitative analyses of minority migrant voting behaviour. One of the first—by Jean-Luc Richard in the late 1990s—compared voting rates for naturalised immigrants according to country of origin, and the children of immigrants with those of native French citizens (1998; 1999; 2004). However, because of small sample sizes, Richard could not distinguish between European and non-European-origin migrants. This article adds to Richard’s analysis by focusing explicitly on group turnout differences across migrant groups. More recently, Brouard and Tiberj (2006) conducted a large survey that focused on political attitudes among first- and second-generation immigrants from Africa and Turkey. However, while their work contributes to our knowledge of
migrant political attitudes in France it does not specifically address the issue of turnout rates, a gap this article seeks to fill.

Research on minority migrant voting behaviour in France may be relatively limited, but general academic literature offers several explanations for turnout rates including demographic variables, individual attitudes and political context. I claim below that none of these arguments can explain why non-European-origin migrant groups are less likely to vote than native French metropolitans in the three 2004 elections.

**Demographic Variables**

Two common sets of demographic variables used to explain turnout variation are socio-economic status and age. Research consistently shows that individuals with higher levels of education and more socio-economic resources are more likely to vote because they are more comfortable dealing with public institutions and feel empowered to engage the political process (Verba et al. 1995). This is a plausible explanation for low minority migrant turnout in France, as many non-European-origin groups are more likely than native metropolitans to suffer from socio-economic disadvantages (poor educational qualifications, low-level jobs, high unemployment rates). Furthermore, some authors focus on the tendency among non-European-origin groups in France to eschew voting in favour of informal political mobilisation via community organisations. According to this argument, migrant socio-economic disadvantages create the need for immediate results that are easier to obtain through community organisations than through voting. However, regression analysis shows that minority migrant/native metropolitan turnout differences remain statistically significant even with the inclusion of socio-economic control variables. This suggests that socio-economic status cannot fully account for turnout differences across groups.

Age is another common predictor of turnout rates, and research suggests that turnout increases as individuals get older, before peaking in late-middle age and declining among the elderly (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). This is a plausible explanation for low minority migrant turnout in France, as Caribbeans and Maghrébians have populations that are disproportionately young in comparison to native French metropolitans. However, regression analysis shows that the differences remain statistically significant even with the inclusion of a control variable for age, suggesting that age cannot fully account for turnout differences across groups.

**Individual Attitudes**

Individual attitudes are a second general explanation for turnout rates. In particular, high abstention rates are often linked with high levels of alienation in the general population because, as individuals feel they cannot trust politicians and cannot influence political affairs, they will be less likely to vote (Blais 2000). In
addition, research in Britain shows that migrant groups experience an even stronger form of alienation due to their experiences with discrimination, which helps to explain why their voting rates are lower than those of the native population (Saggar 2000: 105–6). In the French case, authors argue that minorities who do not feel accepted by mainstream society are likely to avoid formal politics (i.e. voting) and instead engage in violent rioting as a way of venting their frustration (Garton Ash 2005).

However, while minorities in France undoubtedly suffer from a number of frustrations related to discrimination, it is not clear that this should automatically lead to lower turnout. In fact, research on African-Americans shows that high levels of cynicism and distrust of mainstream politicians can increase turnout as a way of fighting corruption and forcing politicians to be more accountable (Shingles 1981). A 2005 survey in France found that, on a number of measures of political distrust and alienation, minorities had roughly the same responses as the general French population. In addition, a 2006 survey of Muslims across Europe finds that Muslims in France were the most likely to identify with the nation as opposed to with their religion (Pew Research Center 2006: 3). Therefore, while alienation may influence political behaviour, it is not likely to account for the low turnout among non-European-origin migrants in France in comparison to native metropolitans.

Political Contexts

A third explanation is that political contexts can account for turnout rates. In France, existing research suggests that the local strength of the far-right-wing political party, the National Front (FN), is a significant predictor of minority migrant turnout. In particular, migrant-origin voters in cities where the FN receives high levels of support are more likely to vote than migrant-origin voters who live in cities where the FN receives less support. The logic behind this argument is that minority migrants who live in areas where the FN is strong need to vote as a way of combating their perceived political enemies (Richard 1999: 130–1; 2004: 90–1). However, my regression analysis shows that migrant/native turnout differences remain statistically significant even with the inclusion of a control variable for strength of the FN, suggesting that the political context of the strength of the FN cannot account for turnout differences across groups.

In summary, socio-economic status, age, alienation and political context are highlighted by the existing academic literature as potential explanations for low minority turnout rates. This article claims that, while each factor is important for general turnout rates, none is sufficient for explaining why non-European-origin migrant groups have lower turnout rates than native metropolitans in France. Instead, I build on a recent branch of literature that uses neighbourhood and community effects to explain political participation.
Neighbourhood Effects

Observers in Britain have long struggled to explain why South Asian voters tend to have higher turnout rates than those of the native white population. Recent research has demonstrated that turnout among the highly segregated South Asian population is highest in neighbourhoods with high percentages of co-ethnics and local mobilisation networks (Cutts et al. 2007; Dancygier 2007; Maxwell 2008a). Similar research from Denmark and the Netherlands has argued that higher levels of organisational density and community-based social capital are associated with higher levels of turnout and political participation among migrant groups (Fennema and Tillie 1999; Tillie 2004; Togeby 1999; van Heelsum 2005).

This literature on neighbourhood effects has mostly emphasised the ability of ethnic and community cohesion to overcome socio-economic disadvantages. In fact, many of the relationships between migrant group density and higher levels of participation suggest that turnout may be higher in areas of socio-economic disadvantage.

However, there is evidence that neighbourhood effects may operate differently in France. For example, Pan Ké Shon (2004) argues that levels of electoral registration are lower in neighbourhoods with high levels of socio-economic distress. Similarly, I argue here that non-European-origin migrants in France are less likely to vote than native metropolitans because they are more likely to live in economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods and in dense urban areas. This builds on the recent neighbourhood and community effects literature, but suggests that neighbourhood effects are not even across national contexts.

Data, Measures and Methods

There are limited data on voting behaviour among groups with migrant origins in France because ethnicity is not a category used in most public and private surveys. Most datasets identify the origins of only first-generation migrants but do not allow analysis of the children or grandchildren of those migrants according to their national or ethnic origins. The data for this analysis come from the 2003 Permanent Demographic Sample (EDP) and the 2004 Electoral Participation Study (EPS), both of which included detailed personal information and required special permission from the French government statistical agency INSEE (Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques) to access under limited conditions in its Paris office.

The EDP started in 1968 with a longitudinal sample of 1 per cent of French citizens born in the first days of October, and was followed by an extensive demographic survey each year of the general population census. The key variables in the EDP that allowed me to analyse migrant origins were place of birth, nationality at birth, place of birth of parents, and nationality at birth of parents. I identified three sub-samples: Maghrebians, Caribbeans and native French metropolitans. The Maghrebian sample was identified in two steps. First-generation Maghrebians were identified if they were
born in Algeria, Morocco or Tunisia with the nationality of one of those three countries, allowing me to exclude the children of French colonial administrators who may have been born in the Maghreb but would have had French citizenship. Second-generation Maghrebian were identified if they were born in France to at least one parent from the first-generation Maghrebian sample. Similarly, respondents were classified as Caribbean if they were either born in Guadeloupe, Guiana or Martinique with French citizenship or if they were born in metropolitan France with at least one parent who was born in Guadeloupe, Guiana or Martinique with French citizenship. Respondents whose parents were born in France with French citizenship were coded as ‘native French metropolitans’. It is important to note that this analysis is fundamentally geographic and this category might include small numbers of third-generation minority migrants whose parents were born in metropolitan France as French citizens. Furthermore, the ‘Caribbean’ category might include small numbers of French ‘metropolitans’ born in the Caribbean. However, despite the probability of this small measurement error, these data are not necessarily any less reliable than ethnic auto-identification, which is used in the US and Britain and has been found to include slight measurement error (Perlmann and Waters 2002; Rodriguez 2000).

To analyse minority migrant voting behaviour, it was necessary to merge the 2003 EDP with the 2004 Electoral Participation Study (EPS). The EPS is a report of voter turnout from each precinct across the country and shows whether each registered French citizen voted or not. A personal identification number identified the subjects in both surveys and allowed me to merge the EDP variables with the vote data from the EPS. While the EDP has been available since the 1960s, the EDP and EPS personal identification numbers have only been compatible since the late 1990s, which is why no analysis of minority migrant voting behaviour was possible for earlier elections.

I will now briefly discuss the EDP and EPS measures for the central variables, set out in Table 1. The dependent variable ‘voter turnout’ is coded ‘0–No, 1–Yes’. To test the statistical significance of different voting rates across groups, I constructed three dummy variables. One was for the ‘Caribbean–native French metropolitan’ difference, the second for the ‘Maghrebian–native French metropolitan’ difference and the third for the ‘Caribbean–Maghrebian’ difference.

To test for the importance of socio-economic status, I included three control variables for employment status, occupation and educational attainment. An ‘age’ variable was constructed for five age groups.

To test for the importance of political context, I included two control variables for the percentage of votes received by far-right and left-wing political parties. ‘National Front’ measures the percentage of votes received by the FN in the second round of the 2004 regional elections in the respondent’s department of residence. This was included to reproduce the analysis conducted by Richard (2004) for the 1995 election in which minority migrant turnout was found to be higher in districts where the FN received more than 16 per cent of the vote. A variable for the percentage of votes received by left-wing parties was also included, as research suggests that non-European-origin minorities in France generally support left-wing parties (Brouard...
and Tiberj 2007). Therefore, it is possible that minority migrants could be motivated to vote according to the strength of their preferred left-wing candidates. The variable ‘left-wing’ measures the percentage of votes received by left-wing parties in the second round of the 2004 regional elections in the respondent’s department of residence.

The two variables for neighbourhood effects measure the urban population density and the neighbourhood’s status as a governmentally classified disadvantaged area. ‘Urban’ measures the population size in the respondent’s city or commune of residence. ‘ZUS’ indicates whether or not the respondent lives in one of the 751 neighbourhoods designated by the French government as ‘Sensitive Urban Zones’ (socio-economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods eligible for a series of special subsidies and tax breaks) and is coded ‘0—No, 1—Yes’. A control variable for gender was also included.10

To analyse the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable for turnout, a series of logistic regressions were conducted—appropriate when the dependent variable is dichotomous. The regression coefficients reported measure the relationships between the independent variables and the likelihood of voting.

**Results and Analysis**

Table 2 presents turnout results from the 2004 European Parliament elections on 13 June and the two rounds of elections for regional councillors on 21 and 28 March.
Each group has the lowest turnout rate in the European election and the highest turnout rate in the second round of the regional election. In each election, native French metropolitans have the largest turnout, followed by Maghrebians then Caribbeans. Although there is consistent turnout variation across the three groups, for each election, native metropolitans have turnout rates roughly 15 percentage points higher than Maghrebians and roughly 20 percentage points higher than Caribbeans, while the gap between Maghrebians and Caribbeans is only three to five percentage points.

For a further comparison, Table 3 presents turnout rates across the three 2004 French elections for four European-origin migrant groups. Each group has turnout rates that are slightly lower than those of native French metropolitans but slightly higher than those of non-European-origin groups. The group differences are again consistent across elections, with the highest turnout rates among Spanish-origin migrants, followed by Italian, Polish and Portuguese. These results suggest that non-European-origin migrants may occupy a unique position, with the lowest turnout rates among registered citizens in contemporary French society.

Table 4 presents a series of bivariate logistic regression results with group dummy variables that allow us to test for the statistical significance of the turnout gaps among non-European-origin migrant groups and native French metropolitans. For each model, the dependent variable is turnout in the second round of the regional elections.\footnote{11} The first column shows that the dummy variable measuring Caribbean and Maghrebian turnout differences is not statistically significant, which suggests that the relatively small turnout gaps between the two non-European-origin groups do not imply significant differences in political participation behaviour. However, the second and third columns show that the dummy variables for Caribbean–native

**Table 2.** Voter turnout among registered citizens in three 2004 French Elections (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Native Metropolitan</th>
<th>Maghrebian</th>
<th>Caribbean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European Parliament</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Election Round 1</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Election Round 2</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>21,476</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: 2003 Permanent Demographic Sample; 2004 Electoral Participation Study.*

**Table 3.** Voter turnout among registered citizens in three 2004 French Elections (European Parliament, French Regional Elections Rounds 1 and 2) (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Native Metropol.</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>Italian</th>
<th>Polish</th>
<th>Portuguese</th>
<th>Maghreb.</th>
<th>Caribbean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Euro</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 1</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 2</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>21,476</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: 2004 Electoral Participation Study; 2003 Longitudinal Demographic Study.*
metropolitan and Maghrebian–native metropolitan turnout differences are statistically significant at \( p < .001 \), revealing different patterns of political participation behaviour that may have important substantive implications.

Table 5 provides logistic regression results where models A and B include age, socio-economic and political-context control variables, which test explanations found in the political participation literature. If these variables could explain the turnout difference between minority migrants and native metropolitans, we would expect the group dummy variables to no longer be significant once the controls are added to the regression model.

Models A and B in Table 5 indicate that Caribbean/native metropolitan and Maghrebian/native metropolitan differences are both statistically significant predictors of turnout at \( p < .01 \) in round two of the regional elections even with the

| Table 4. Bivariate logistic regression results for turnout (0: No vote, 1: vote) among registered citizens in the 2004 French Regional Elections Round 2 |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Group dummy variable            | Caribbean/      | Caribbean/      |
|                                 | Maghrebian      | Native Metropolitan |
| Constant                        | 0.14 (0.13)     | 0.14 (0.13)     |
| N                               | 599             | 21,706          |
| AIC*N                           | 828,711         | 26,615,594      |

| Table 5. Logistic regression results for turnout (0: No vote, 1: vote) among registered citizens in the 2004 French Regional Elections Round 2 |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| A                               | B               | C               | D               |
| Caribbean/Native Metropolitan   | 0.38** (0.14)   | 0.25 (0.14)     |
| Maghrebian/Native Metropolitan  | 0.29** (0.11)   |                 |
| Education                       | 0.14*** (0.02)  | 0.16*** (0.02)  | 0.16*** (0.02)  |
| Occupation                      | 0.04*** (0.01)  | 0.05*** (0.01)  | 0.04*** (0.01)  |
| Employment                      | -0.22*** (0.04) | -0.19*** (0.04) | -0.13*** (0.04) |
| National Front                  | -0.08*** (0.02) | -0.08*** (0.02) | -0.07*** (0.02) |
| Left Wing                       | 0.00 (0.01)     | 0.01 (0.01)     | 0.01 (0.01)     |
| Gender                          | 0.00 (0.03)     | 0.03 (0.03)     | 0.03 (0.03)     |
| Age                             | 0.32*** (0.02)  | 0.32*** (0.02)  | 0.26*** (0.02)  |
| ZUS                             | -0.19* (0.08)   | -0.12 (0.08)    |
| Urban                           | -0.04*** (0.08) | -0.04*** (0.01) |
| Constant                        | -0.36* (0.16)   | -0.16 (0.16)    | 0.17 (0.14)     |
| N                               | 21,706          | 21,845          | 21,706          |
| AIC*N                           | 26,010,300      | 25,909,945      | 25,936,470      | 25,856,242 |
inclusion of age, socio-economic and political control variables. All three socio-economic variables were statistically significant predictors of turnout at $p < .001$. This suggests that individuals with higher levels of educational qualification are more likely to vote than those with lower levels, individuals with higher occupational attainment are more likely to vote than those with lower levels, and employed individuals are more likely to vote than the unemployed, all of which supports the general literature on political participation. Age is statistically significant at $p < .001$, suggesting that, in the main, older individuals are more likely than younger individuals to vote, which also supports the literature on political participation. However, the fact that Caribbean/metropolitan and Maghrebian/metropolitan dummy variables were statistically significant at $p < .01$ suggests that age and socio-economic variation cannot explain group turnout differences.

The variable for left-wing parties was not statistically significant in models A and B, suggesting that the level of support for left-wing parties does not necessarily influence the overall level of turnout. The variable for FN support is statistically significant at $p < .001$ in models A and B. However, unlike the positive effect on turnout observed by Richard (1999), in this case individuals who live in departments with high levels of support for the FN are less likely to vote. Furthermore, although not reported in Table 5, logistic regression analysis for individual group samples shows that the variable for FN support is consistently negative and statistically significant at $p < .001$ across all three elections for the native metropolitan sample, but is consistently not statistically significant for Caribbeans and Maghrebians.12

These results suggest that native French metropolitans are less likely to vote when living in departments with higher levels of support for the FN, but that the level of support for the FN does not necessarily influence minority turnout.13 One possible explanation for the divergence between my results and those of Richard is that his measure for FN strength was at the city level while my variables are measured at the departmental level and are less precise. However, Richard’s analysis was based on cross-tabulations, while I use multiple regression analysis that controls for several other factors and may be more robust. Finally, both my and Richard’s analysis are limited to only one year—though not the same year. To systematically determine if and when the level of support for the FN (or for left-wing parties) influences minority turnout, more analysis of future elections is needed. Nonetheless, models A and B suggest that, while socio-economic, demographic and political context variables may be important for predicting participation rates, they do not explain why non-European-origin minorities have lower turnout rates than native metropolitans.

To test for the importance of neighbourhood effects, models C and D included additional control variables for residence in a deprived urban neighbourhood (ZUS) and the level of urban density. These two variables are potentially important because non-European-origin minorities are much more likely than native metropolitans to live in such areas. For example, in the 2004 EPS, 20 per cent of Maghrebians and 17 per cent of Caribbeans lived in a ZUS neighbourhood compared to only 5 per cent of native metropolitans.14 If neighbourhood effects are indeed important for explaining
group turnout differences, we would expect the group dummy variables to no longer be statistically significant once the new variables are added to the model.

Models C and D in Table 5 show that both the Caribbean–native metropolitan variable and the Maghrebian–native metropolitan variable are no longer statistically significant. In addition, model C shows that the variable ‘ZUS’ is statistically significant at p < .05 while, in both models, the variable ‘Urban’ is statistically significant at p < .001. This suggests that, generally, individuals who live in deprived urban neighbourhoods and areas with higher levels of urban density will be less likely to vote. In addition, models C and D suggest that, while minority migrant turnout differences were still statistically significant after controlling for socio-economic, demographic and political context variables, once variation in the likelihood of living in deprived urban neighbourhoods and the level of urban density are controlled for, minority migrants have the same probability of voting as native metropolitans.

Discussion: Neighbourhood Context

The results in Table 5 suggest that neighbourhood effects are an essential part of the explanation for lower turnout rates among non-European-origin migrants in comparison to native French metropolitans. This builds on recent research that has found neighbourhood and community effects to be important factors for minority migrant participation in other European countries (Cutts et al. 2007; Dancygier 2007; Fennema and Tillie 1999; Tillie 2004; Togeby 1999; van Heelsum 2005). Much of this research suggests that minority migrant communities can use tight networks to participate at rates that are higher than the socio-economic resources of their neighbourhood might predict. However, my results suggest that, in France, residence in socio-economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods reduces turnout for minority migrants.

The fact that neighbourhood effects appear to operate differently in France suggests that cross-national variation remains significant for understanding participation dynamics. This finding builds on literature that focuses on how national and local institutions influence participation among minority migrant groups. The logic behind this literature is that, as institutions are more open to political mobilisation around migrant-based identities, there should be higher levels of minority participation (Boussetta 2000; Garbaye 2005; Maxwell 2008b; Vermeulen and Berger 2008), which may explain why neighbourhood effects appear to operate differently in France as opposed to other European countries. As mentioned earlier, the French republican framework discourages political mobilisation around minority migrant-based identities. In this context, minority groups may have fewer opportunities to build networks that can mobilise participation despite socio-economic disadvantages. Therefore, non-European-origin groups in France may be more vulnerable to the demobilising effects of socio-economic spatial segregation than in other European countries.
In France, analysts of social segregation argue that residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods suffer from a severe lack of social, economic and political resources. For example, an address in one of these neighbourhoods can reduce the chances of getting a job regardless of educational qualifications, and one of the most important predictors of minority unemployment was residence in one of these disfavoured urban neighbourhoods (Richard 2007). Furthermore, even residents of disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods who are academically successful face declining levels of access to the preparatory schools and other educational outlets that prepare the future elite of French society. In fact, these disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods have in many ways become symbols of the outcasts of French society who live in separate communities that even the police refuse to enter (Weil 2005).

Frustration at the multiple forms of disadvantage that come with living in France’s urban neighbourhoods erupted in Autumn 2005 when young—primarily non-European-origin—people engaged in violent unrest that shocked the country and sparked a new public debate over the negative effects of spatial segregation (see Koff and Duprez 2009). Some of the subsequent attention on geographic isolation focused on the alternative cultures being developed in these disadvantaged neighbourhoods and the potential for residents to adhere to dysfunctional codes for survival that would not prepare them for participation in mainstream society. My results support this analysis to a certain extent, as they show that neighbourhood effects, above and beyond the effects of socio-economic status, are an important explanation for low minority turnout in comparison to native French metropolitans.

However, it is important to note that in many respects migrants are culturally integrated and consider themselves to be part of mainstream French society. A recent Pew Research Center (2006) survey found that French Muslims were more likely than Muslims in other European countries to identify with their European home, and a recent survey by Brouard and Tiberj (2005: 121–34) found no evidence that levels of minority political trust were different from those of native French metropolitans. In addition, they found no evidence of significant anti-mainstream identities among minorities, as 85 per cent of Maghrebian-, African- and Turkish-origin respondents felt close to other French people (compared to 84 per cent of the overall French sample) and 56 per cent felt close to residents of other European countries (compared to 59 per cent of the overall French sample). Similarly, a recent survey of Caribbean attitudes found that 74 per cent of respondents identified primarily as French compared to fewer than 30 per cent for a number of possible Caribbean-based identities, while over half felt that anti-mainstream identities were dangerous for society (CIFORDOM 2006). This suggests that migrants feel assimilated in French society and should not be considered cultural outsiders. Instead, it is more useful to understand minority migrants as economic and political outsiders who suffer from limited incorporation prospects in part because of spatial segregation.

The data in this article are limited to the 2004 elections, but there is evidence from more recent elections that the disadvantages of living in poor urban neighbourhoods continue to demobilise potential minority migrant voters. There was a surge of voter
registration in disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods for the 2007 presidential election, which was largely considered to be a form of protest against the presidential candidate Nicolas Sarkozy. Many felt that Sarkozy had been a repressive Interior Minister who unfairly stigmatised the migrant-origin residents of disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods as criminals and delinquents. Voting against Sarkozy was an opportunity for disadvantaged minority voters to seize a political voice (Lichfield 2007). However, Sarkozy was convincingly elected with 53 per cent of the second-round vote and post-election analysis suggests that many minority residents of disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods who recently registered may not have actually voted. For example, anecdotal evidence from journalists reveals how some of the most vehement anti-Sarkozy activists had actually abstained, and were more familiar with dramatic public protests than the act of voting (Le Monde 2007). In addition, residents in the areas the most affected by urban violence have been the most difficult to reach for politicians seeking to increase turnout (Equy 2007). Moreover, recent research suggests that the emergence of a coherent immigrant-origin voting constituency is limited by the diversity of migrant-origin communities and the increasing rejection of multiculturalism by mainstream French voters (Tiberj 2007, 2008).

Conclusion

This article has presented evidence on political participation rates in France from one of the few surveys that allows a comparison of migrant minority and native metropolitan French turnout rates. The data were from three 2004 elections and showed that Caribbeans and Maghrebians consistently had turnout rates that were 15 to 20 percentage points lower than those of native metropolitans. Logistic regression analysis suggested that the turnout gaps between non-European-origin minorities and native metropolitans could not be explained by socio-economic or age differences among the groups or as a result of specific political contexts. However, once variables for neighbourhood effects were added to the model, the group turnout differences were no longer statistically significant. I then argued that low turnout rates among Caribbeans and Maghrebians in France are primarily the result of their tendency to live in disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods that suffer from a number of constraints on full participation in mainstream society.

It is important to note that this article has focused on turnout gaps among registered citizens. However, there is evidence that non-European-origin migrants are less likely than native French metropolitans to be registered voters, suggesting that the total political participation gaps between minority migrants and the native population are larger than the percentages presented here.

My results suggest that there are significant structural social inequalities in France with implications for minority groups’ political incorporation. For example, minorities continue to suffer from the perception that they will not vote at the same level as native metropolitans, and migrant-origin candidates continue to face significant obstacles.
It is likely that non-European-origin minority migrants in France will continue to face difficulties in fully accessing mainstream political channels and the problems of living in disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods will most likely remain salient for the near future.

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Notes
[1] Prominent examples include the 2001 race riots in the British cities of Bradford, Burnley and Oldham, the 2002 assassination of Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn and the 2004 murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh by Muslim extremists, the Madrid train bombings of 2004, the urban unrest across French suburbs in Autumn 2005, and the multiple terrorist attacks in Britain since July 2005.
[2] The issue of granting foreigners the right to vote in French elections (particularly on the local level) has surfaced from time to time in French politics (Wihtol de Wenden 1988: 209–13).
[5] According to the 1999 Population Census, 25 per cent of Caribbeans and 26 per cent of Maghrebians had no educational qualifications compared to only 16 per cent of native metropolitan. In addition, among employed individuals, 11 per cent of native metropolitan were professionals compared to 6 per cent for Caribbeans and 9 per cent for Maghrebians, while 72 per cent of Caribbeans and 66 per cent of Maghrebians were manual labourers or low-level employees compared to only 55 per cent of native metropolitan. Finally, the unemployment rate for native metropolitan was 11.5 per cent, compared to 15.2 for Caribbeans and 16.7 for Maghrebians. For more on minority group socio-economic outcomes see Maxwell (2008a, 2009).
[6] According to recent data, among registered citizens 44 per cent of Caribbeans and 22 per cent of Maghrebians were under 30 years old, in comparison to 5 per cent of native French metropolitan (2003 Permanent Demographic Sample and the 2004 Electoral Participation Study).
[7] The questions in this CEVIPOF research centre survey—Relation to Politics of the French People of Immigrant Origin—covered interest in politics, belief that democracy works well, politicians take care of people, it would matter to abolish political parties or the National Assembly, and that they can change the country, and positive feelings for the Republic (Brouard and Tiberj 2007).
Sample sizes were not large enough to include East Asians, Turks or sub-Saharan Africans in a statistical analysis.

From 1848 to 1962, Algeria was officially part of France. Muslim inhabitants of Algeria were French subjects with limited rights, while metropolitan colonists and Sephardic Jewish inhabitants of Algeria were full French citizens. The percentage of Muslims in Algeria with French citizenship was tiny (Weil 2002: 227–34). Therefore, the likelihood of measurement error in my analysis, due to Maghrebian Muslim respondents being coded as ‘native French metropolitan’, is quite small.

Due to the lack of questions on attitudes, it was not possible to include variables to test the alienation explanation developed in the literature on political participation.

Results were consistent across each election but, in the interest of space, this paper only presents those for the second round of the regional elections, where turnout was the highest across all three groups.

The only exception is for the Caribbean sample in the second round of the regional election, where the variable for strength of the FN is statistically significant with a number of demographic, socio-economic and geographic-context control variables.

There is no consensus in the existing literature on how the FN affects turnout levels among the general French population. Mayer (2002) suggests that the FN attracts voters from multiple demographics and for multiple ideological reasons. It is likely that the department-level FN variable used my analysis will not be able to address these fine-grained issues.

Neighbourhoods were classified as 'ZUS' areas by the government because of their socio-economic characteristics. But, 'ZUS' areas were established in the 1980s as part of a broader public policy trend to respond to minority migrant political mobilisation by improving conditions in the disadvantaged neighbourhoods where minorities were concentrated (Calvès 2004: 221).

For more on registration dynamics in France see Hérän (2007); Richard (1998, 2004). For example see the special issue of Libération, 4 June 2007, dedicated to the difficulties of ethnic minority candidates in the 2007 legislative elections.

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