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Cultural Diversity and Civic Engagement Among Immigrant Communities: Assessing the Role of Migration Background, Language Accessibility, and Political Participation

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ABSTRACT

Cultural diversity and civic engagement are important aspects of social inclusion among immigrant communities. This study focused on understanding relationship between migration background, language accessibility and political involvement among immigrants in the United States and perceived influence of neighbourhood. A quantitative, cross-sectional research design was used, based on survey data from a sample of 3,199 respondents with various countries of birth. Descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, Spearman correlation analysis, and logistic regression were used to analyse demographic characteristics, migration experiences, language accessibility and civic participation indicators. Results showed that there were significant differences between the immigrant groups in perceptions of improvements in their neighbourhood ($p<0.001$). The neighbourhood improvement scores for respondents from the Philippines and Mexico were relatively high, and relatively low for respondents from Vietnam. There was a strong association between language accessibility and perceived influence on the neighbourhood ($p < 0.001$) and voter registration among eligible respondents. Logistic regression showed that perceived neighbourhood influence was positively associated with the variables: language accessibility (aOR = 1.132), political interest (aOR = 1.256), voting likelihood (aOR = 1.118) and educational attainment (aOR = 1.149). The associations were, however, generally weak and the regression model had little explanatory power. The results point to the need to invest in political information for immigrants and opportunities for civic involvement that are accessible to all. Additional studies with direct measures of community participation and institutional trust are suggested to gain insights into immigrant civic inclusion.

Keywords: *Cultural Diversity; Civic Engagement; Immigrant Communities; Language Accessibility; Political Participation.*

1. Introduction

Cultural diversity has become an important characteristic of contemporary societies due to increasing migration, globalization, and interactions among populations with different cultural backgrounds. Immigrant communities have a positive impact on social, economic and cultural development and face issues of social inclusion, institutional access and public life participation. Migration-related diversity needs governance strategies that consider the differences in cultural practices, social experiences, and opportunities to participate (Huddleston & Scholten, 2022). Another challenge in multiethnic societies is to achieve equal democratic engagement among immigrants, especially where citizenship status and institutional frameworks affect civic opportunities (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2022). Cultural institutions and community organizations can foster contact between migrants and the host community by providing spaces for cultural expression, recognition, and shared engagement (Giglitto et al., 2022).

Civic engagement is the act of individuals and groups to advance communities, public decisions and social development through their actions. For immigrants, civic involvement can range from neighbourhood improvement to community volunteering, political consciousness, and voting in the election. Refugee research in Germany has focussed on the interconnection between civic engagement and social integration and the need for participation opportunities in the receiving societies (Barreto et al., 2022). The extent of community engagement also affects migrants' social connections and engagement in urban environments, which can vary depending on the individual or institutional context (Zhang et al., 2023). By leveraging community mobilisation and existing skills, resources, and social networks, community development approaches can further enhance participation and resilience of refugee and migrant populations (Lester et al., 2023).

When exploring civic engagement in the context of culturally diverse groups, migration background and language accessibility are important issues to consider. The country of origin, migration experiences and period of stay may have an impact on knowledge and awareness of political institutions and opportunities to participate. The language barriers linked to citizenship and political processes may present further difficulties for people to meaningfully engage with political processes (Bonotti & Willoughby, 2022). However, access to sources of public information and participation opportunities can also be limited among people of migrant origin due to language and cultural barriers (Erdocia, 2023). Studies on the Vietnamese community reveal the impact of ethnicity and cultural background on political communication and information environments (Nguyễn et al., 2023). Moreover, cultural values and social norms can shape political attitudes and behaviours, imploeying that civic engagement needs to be analysed in the context of broader sociocultural factors (Touseef et al., 2023).

While there is prior research on immigrant inclusion, civic education and political engagement, the latter are often studied distinctively. Social inclusion and exclusion also emerged as key issues in need of attention to structural and social factors in a critical review of immigrant and refugee women's experiences (Crawford et al., 2023). Likewise, discrimination has been considered as one of the correlates of civic involvement among immigrants in Western societies (Müssig & Okrug, 2024). The research on civic and citizenship education has highlighted the significance of knowing what factors are linked to civic knowledge and civic involvement (Myoung & Liou, 2022). Additionally, evidence from ethnic studies indicates that there is a relationship between identity development, multicultural attitudes, and civic engagement (Gillespie et al., 2025). Civic education has also been identified as a possible route to more inclusive societies via social and political engagement (Borhan, 2025). But more studies are needed to understand the relationships between migration background, availability of political information in favourite languages and civic involvement among immigrant groups. An investigation of these relationships may yield enlightening information for creating inclusive community programs and designing ways to enhance access to democratic participation.

The present study aims to examine cultural diversity and civic engagement among immigrant communities, focusing on migration background, language accessibility, and political participation. Specifically, the study seeks to examine demographic and migration-related differences in neighbourhood engagement and political participation, assess the association between accessibility of election information in preferred languages and civic participation indicators, and identify demographic and migration-related factors associated with neighbourhood engagement, political interest, and electoral participation among immigrant respondents.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Study Design and Data Source

The design of this study is quantitative and cross-sectional to analyse the linkages between the migration background and language access to civic engagement and political participation among the immigrant population in the U.S. The study used secondary data gathered by the Making a Difference in the Community survey conducted by Ziebarth (2020). These surveys include variables such as demographics, migration experience, neighbourhood involvement, access to political information and political participation. The cross-sectional research design allowed analysing relationships among these variables and finding the differences in civic engagement among immigrants without establishing any causal links.

2.2. Study Population and Sample Selection

The study population consisted of immigrant respondents from different countries of origin and migration experiences. The principal merged data file included around 3,200 respondents' records, which consisted of people born in countries like Somalia, Ethiopia, Vietnam, China, and Mexico. Respondents were selected for analysis based on the availability of pertinent information regarding their demographic characteristics, migration experiences, and civic activities. Those records lacking data or having invalid entries for certain variables were omitted from the analysis of those variables. For civic engagement analyses in general, the total sample was used, but voting-related analyses used only those eligible to vote.

2.3. Study Variables and Measurements

In this study, migration background, language accessibility, and political participation were studied through variables that were available in the survey. Migration background was measured through the country of birth and year of migration to the U.S. Language accessibility was measured based on how easily the respondent could access information related to presidential elections in his/her preferred language. Civic participation was assessed based on the neighbourhood improvement variable, and political participation was measured based on presidential elections interest, eligibility for voting, voter registration, and intention of voting. Age at birth, gender, and education level were also included as demographic variables.

2.4. Data Preparation and Management

The data from the merged questionnaire were examined for missing values, inconsistent data, and discrepancies in coding of variables. Variables that pertained to demographics and migration status were examined for completeness of data while categorical variables were looked at for consistency in the analysis. The coding for country of birth variable was retained as is or was grouped if needed for comparison purposes. Year of migration variable was utilized for description of migration status, and variables that pertained to voting were analyzed considering the eligibility of the respondent.

2.5. Statistical Analysis

The following analysis techniques will be used to describe demographic variables, migration history, language availability, neighbourhood involvement, and political participation. For the categorical variables, frequencies and percentages will be determined. On the other hand, means and standard deviations will be computed for relevant numerical variables. Chi-square test will be applied in examining the association between categorical variables, including migration history, language availability, and civic participation variables. If necessary, Pearson or Spearman correlation will be performed depending on the scale of measurement and distribution. Simple logistic regression will be performed in examining the association between certain independent variables and binary variables of civic participation.

2.6. Ethical Considerations

In conducting the analysis, previously collected data from research sources was used, which was publicly available from the research repository. There was no involvement of recruitment, intervention or interaction with the respondents. The analysis involved use of research variables without any attempt to identify the respondents. Confidentiality and privacy of the respondents was kept in mind while handling and interpreting the data related to the immigrant population. The study did not present associations as causations.

3. Results

The uploaded survey files were examined, and the main combined file was analysed to evaluate demographic characteristics, migration background, language accessibility, political participation, and perceived ability to improve local communities.

3.1. Demographic and Migration Characteristics of Respondents

The total number of respondents in this study is 3,199. Out of these, 1,612 (50.4%) were women, and 1,587 (49.6%) were men. The average year of birth is 1972.60±15.05, whereas the average year of migration into the USA is 1999.48±11.18. The respondents came from 121 countries of origin, which implies that there was a great deal of diversity regarding migration background. In total, 2,345 respondents (73.3%) had the right to vote, and 854 (26.7%) did not. Out of those who could vote, 1,950 (83.2%) were registered voters. Demographic and Migration Variables are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic and Migration Characteristics of Respondents (N = 3,199)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	1,612	50.4
	Male	1,587	49.6
Birth year	Mean ± SD	1972.60 ± 15.05	—
Year moved to US	Mean ± SD	1999.48 ± 11.18	—
Voting eligibility	Eligible	2,345	73.3
	Not eligible	854	26.7
Registration among eligible voters	Registered	1,950	83.2
	Not registered	395	16.8

Note: Registration percentages use the 2,345 eligible voters as the denominator. SD = standard deviation.

3.2. Cultural Diversity and Migration Background

The respondents came from different countries, with the highest number of respondents coming from Somalia (714; 22.3%), followed by Ethiopia (398; 12.4%), Vietnam (305; 9.5%), China (281; 8.8%), and Mexico (257; 8.0%). There were variations regarding the ability of neighbourhoods to improve as perceived by country-of-birth group. Individuals born in the Philippines and Mexico showed high mean scores of 1.93 and 1.90, respectively, relative to 0.93 mean scores for individuals who were born in Vietnam. There was a significant relationship between country-of-birth group and respondents who thought that there was a moderate or big potential difference in the ability of the neighbourhood to improve ($\chi^2 = 182.93$, $p < 0.001$). The distribution of countries of birth is illustrated in Figure 1, while Table 2 summarizes selected group differences.

Table 2. Migration Background and Perceived neighbourhood Improvement

Country of birth	Respondents (n)	Mean neighbourhood score (0–3)	Moderate/big difference (%)
Somalia	714	1.22	37.4
Ethiopia	398	1.78	58.5
Vietnam	305	0.93	23.0
China	281	1.41	51.6
Mexico	257	1.90	61.1
Philippines	200	1.93	65.5
Iraq	114	1.16	35.1

Note: Neighborhood scores range from 0 (no difference) to 3 (big difference). The country comparison used these seven groups plus an Other category; $\chi^2(7) = 182.93$, $p < 0.001$.

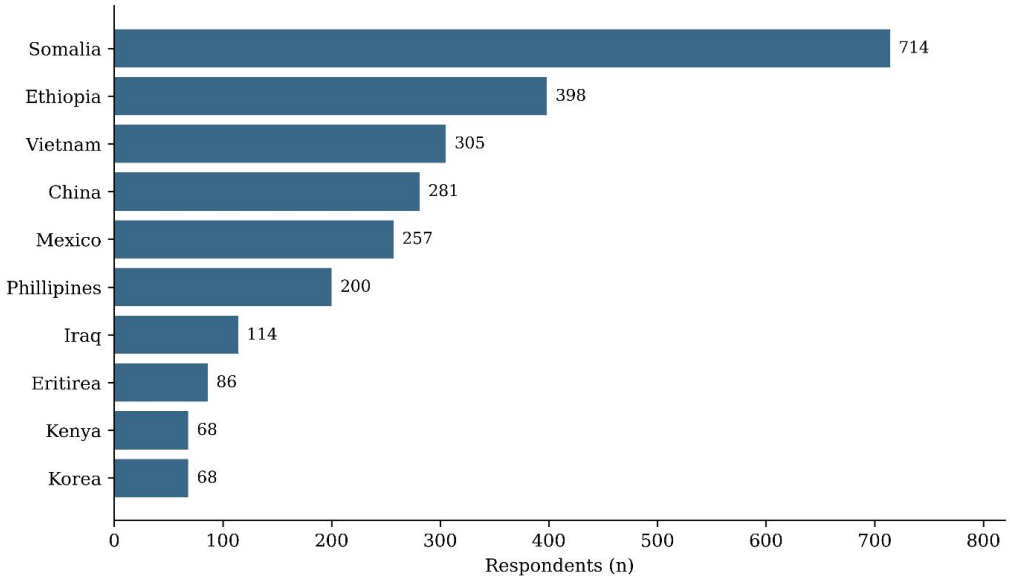


Figure 1. Distribution of Respondents by Country of Birth

3.3. Language Accessibility and Civic Participation

Access to language differed across the respondents. In total, 1,331 (41.6%) found access to election information in their language very easy, whereas 784 (24.5%) found it somewhat easy. On the contrary, 773 (24.2%) found it difficult to do so, and 311 (9.7%) found no information in their preferred language. Language access was positively correlated with the neighbourhood improvement capacity of perception ($\chi^2 = 286.73$, $p < 0.001$). A weak correlation was found in this respect ($\rho = 0.133$, $p < 0.001$). The frequency distribution of language accessibility is displayed in Figure 2, and the relationship with civic participation measures can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Associations Between Language Accessibility and Civic Participation Indicators

Civic participation indicator	Statistical test	Statistic	p-value
Perceived neighborhood improvement	Chi-square	$\chi^2 = 286.73$	<0.001
Perceived neighborhood improvement	Spearman correlation	$\rho = 0.133$	<0.001
Voter registration among eligible respondents	Chi-square	$\chi^2 = 125.63$	<0.001

Note: The chi-square tests compare categorical responses. The correlation evaluates the ordinal association between language accessibility and perceived neighbourhood improvement. Registration analysis is restricted to eligible voters (n = 2,345).

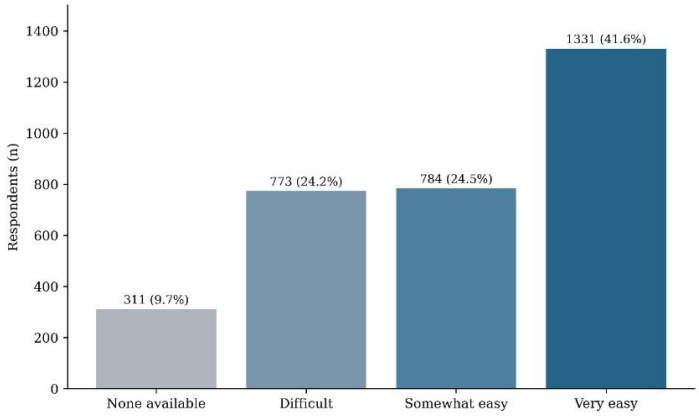


Figure 2. Accessibility of Election Information in Preferred Languages

3.4. Neighbourhood Engagement and Political Participation

Perception of neighbourhood change was uneven among the participants. Out of the total respondents, 932 (29.1%) perceived that they could make a slight impact in their neighbourhoods, while 815 (25.5%) felt that they could make a great impact. On the other hand, 709 (22.2%) reported making a moderate change, whereas 743 (23.2%) thought they could make no change at all. This is clearly indicated in Figure 3 below.

Political interest and likelihood to vote had significant relationships with perception of neighbourhood change (both $p < 0.001$). Voting ability and voter registration had significant relationships as well. The results are presented in Table 4 below. Figure 4 illustrates the proportion of respondents who reported moderate or great neighbourhood influence according to language accessibility categories.

Table 4. Associations Between Political Participation and Perceived Neighbourhood Improvement

Political participation indicator	Chi-square (χ^2)	Spearman ρ	p-value (χ^2)
Presidential election interest	82.36	0.110	<0.001
Presidential election voting likelihood	75.46	0.090	<0.001
Voting eligibility	32.98	−0.049	<0.001
Voter registration among eligible respondents	21.39	0.079	<0.001

Note: The chi-square tests assess associations across neighbourhood response categories. Spearman coefficients indicate weak monotonic relationships. Registration analysis includes eligible voters only. These results do not establish causal effects.

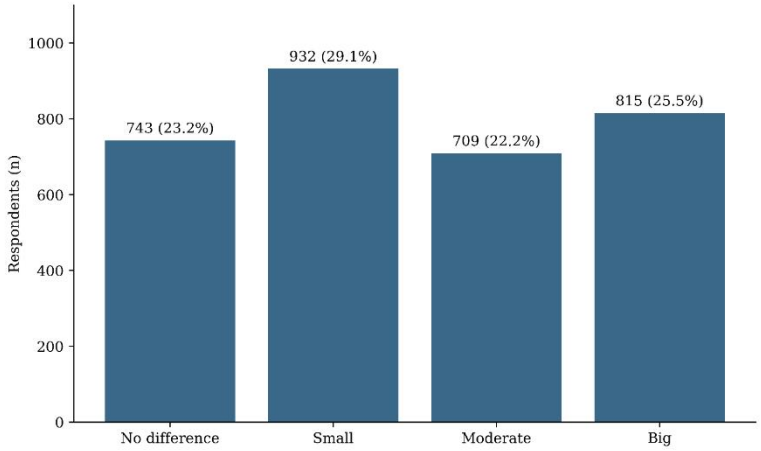


Figure 3. Perceived Ability to Improve Neighbourhood Conditions

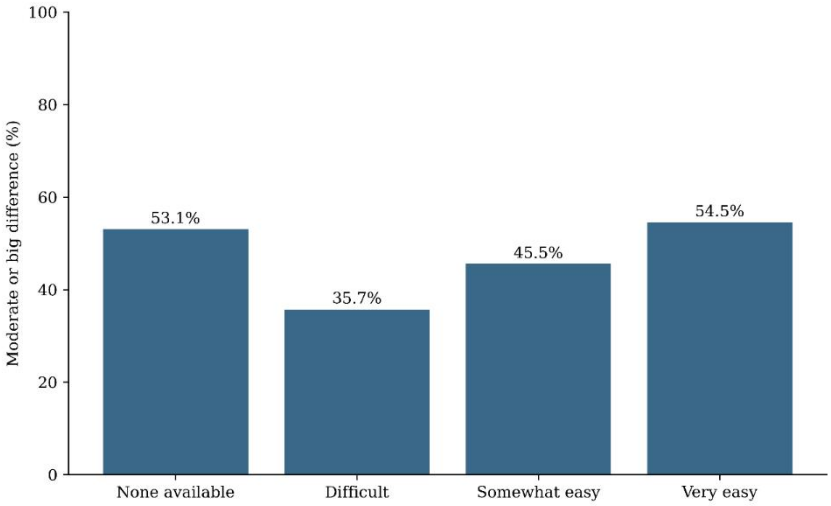


Figure 4. Perceived Neighbourhood Influence Across Language Accessibility Categories

3.5. Factors Associated with Civic Engagement

Binary logistic regression was carried out to analyse variables that relate to the perception of improvement in the neighbourhood. The variable was categorized based on respondents reporting a medium or large difference as opposed to those who reported a small or no difference. The greater availability of election information in preferred languages positively correlated with the variable (adjusted odds ratio [aOR] = 1.132, 95% confidence interval: 1.053-1.217, p = 0.001). Interest in the presidential election (aOR = 1.256, p < 0.001), voting probability (aOR = 1.118, p = 0.031), and education levels (aOR = 1.149, p < 0.001) were significant predictors. Year of birth and year of migration had statistically significant relationships, while gender was insignificant (p = 0.791). The regression findings are presented in Table 5 and illustrated in Figure 5.

Table 5. Logistic Regression Analysis of Factors Associated with Perceived Neighbourhood Improvement (N = 3,199)

Explanatory variable	Adjusted OR	95% CI	p-value
Language accessibility	1.132	1.053–1.217	0.001
Presidential election interest	1.256	1.105–1.427	<0.001
Voting likelihood	1.118	1.010–1.237	0.031
Educational attainment	1.149	1.101–1.200	<0.001
Birth year (per 10 years)	1.069	1.012–1.128	0.017
Year moved to US (per 10 years)	1.102	1.021–1.189	0.012
Gender (male vs. female)	1.019	0.885–1.174	0.791

Note: OR = odds ratio; CI = confidence interval. The outcome was coded 1 for moderate/big perceived neighborhood difference and 0 for no/small difference. All listed predictors were included simultaneously. The model's McFadden pseudo-R^2 was 0.025. Country of birth was not included as an adjustment variable.

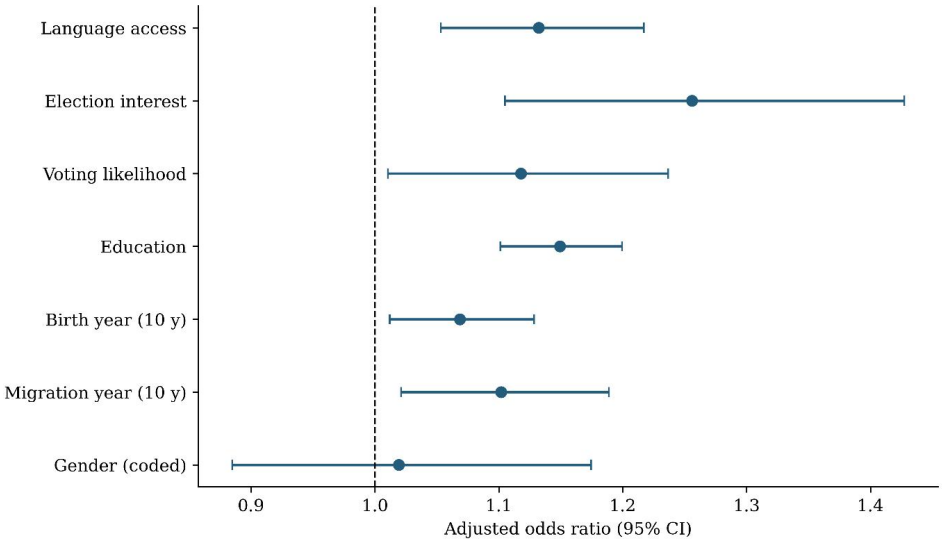


Figure 5. Adjusted Odds Ratios for Perceived Neighbourhood Improvement

Results showed large discrepancies in perceived neighbourhood influence among immigrant groups. Variables such as migration history, access to election information in one's language of preference, political interest, voting probability, and education levels were correlated with perceived influence on the ability to improve one's neighbourhood. In addition, language access was correlated with voter registration. Nevertheless, the correlations found were low, and the regression model accounted for only a small portion of variation in outcomes. These results indicate that civic engagement and community influence differ by immigrant groups, but causality cannot be determined from a cross-sectional study design.

4. Discussion

The current study explores the relationships between migration history, language access, and political participation in relation to perceived neighbourhood influence of immigrants in the United States. The results of the study show significant differences in civic engagement measures among different migration histories, with language access, political interest, likelihood to vote, and education level being positively correlated with neighbourhood improvement perception. These results prove the importance of institutional access and political knowledge for the analysis of civic engagement in culturally diverse communities. The previous literature focuses on the connection between civic education and political activity, claiming that political knowledge might promote active civic engagement (Al-Ansari et al., 2025). In addition, research on voting rights in Switzerland proves the relevance of institutional structure for the analysis of political participation, even though this research is conducted in a different national setting (Kayran & Nadler, 2022).

Neighbourhood engagement variations between country-of-birth categories imply the existence of possible links between migration experiences and social contexts with the sense of opportunities to participate in the community life. Respondents born in the Philippines and Mexico had rather high neighbourhood improvement scores compared to those of Vietnamese respondents. It is necessary to interpret the differences carefully since country of birth is not a direct indicator of one's cultural identity and experience of integration. Studies in Europe dedicated to refugee education pay attention to safety, sense of belonging, and supportive environments as crucial factors in terms of inclusion (Aleghfeli et al., 2025). Moreover, studies conducted among migrant families in Spain underscored the role of inclusive environments as the main factor in the process of inclusion (Onsès-Segarra et al., 2023; Aibangbee et al., 2023).

The availability of language became an important factor linked to the level of neighbourhood influence and voter registration. Those individuals who indicated easier access to the election-related information in their mother tongue tended to have better civic participation indicators. Nevertheless, the low correlation suggests that language availability is not sufficient to account for differences in the level of perceived community influence. Language diversity-oriented educational programs stress the necessity of communicative inclusion and intercultural competence (Duarte et al., 2024). Studies of multilingual public health communication provide evidence that accessible information is crucial for culturally diverse communities (Sadia et al., 2024). In addition, culturally sensitive services may help to overcome communication barriers (Theodosopoulos et al., 2024).

A positive correlation existed between political interest and voting and the perception of improvement in the neighbourhood suggesting a connection between political activity and civic efficacy. However, these correlations cannot determine whether political activity contributes to neighbourhood engagement. Participatory research conducted with migrants and refugees has shown the significance of treating community members as active participants in decision-making processes (Hearn et al., 2022). The issue of vaccine hesitancy among immigrants has shown how issues related to communication, trust, and institutions can affect their participation in institutions, but this is in healthcare not political participation (Wong et al., 2024).

These results have policy implications regarding increasing institutional accessibility and civic participation amongst immigrants. There is evidence to suggest that there are structural, and communication barriers related to the use of institutional mental health services among immigrants (Bilican et al., 2025). It has also been shown that barriers are present at individual, organizational and institutional levels (Forray et al., 2024). Furthermore, migration policy has been associated with healthcare equity across European countries (Hübner et al., 2023). Therefore, concepts such as accessibility, acceptability, quality, and trust may provide generalizable lessons for inclusive public services (Savas et al., 2024).

However, these results cannot be generalized to voter behaviour. The current study had certain limitations including the use of a cross-sectional design, self-reporting, and indirect measure of civic participation through perceived neighbourhood influence. The results of the regression analysis also showed low variability of the outcome variable. Future research should include more direct measures of community participation, language ability, discrimination, and institutional trust.

5. Conclusion

This current study looked at cultural diversity and civic engagement within immigrant communities in the

United States and involved migration experience, language access, and political participation. The results showed significant differences in perceived neighbourhood influence across immigrants based on their migration and demographic profile. Immigrants from the Philippines and Mexico showed relatively high levels of perceived neighbourhood improvement compared to those from Vietnam who were lower. This shows the need to consider differences across immigrants when studying community involvement. Language access was positively related to perceived neighbourhood influence and voter registration which means that language access to elections could be important in the study of civic engagement. Political interest, voting intention, and education showed positive correlation with perceived neighbourhood influence. Nonetheless, the weak correlations and poor predictive performance of the regression models suggest that there might be other social and institutional variables involved in explaining these associations. These results highlight the possible significance of the availability of political information, the use of communication channels, and civic participation for immigrant groups. Policymakers and civic organizations need to consider the variations in migration history and linguistic needs when designing programs of civic engagement. However, due to the cross-sectional design and self-reports of the measurements, there is a difficulty in drawing causal conclusions from the data. In future research, it will be important to use direct measurements of civic engagement, social integration, discrimination, and institutional trust.

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