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Language Proficiency, Immigrants and Civic Participation

Monica Boyd, University of Toronto, Canada

Four reasons exist for on-going interest in the civic participation of immigrants. The first derives from studies of voluntary association membership, one indicator of civic participation. As discussed by Baer (2008) in his seminal work, although Canada has one of the world's highest rates of voluntary association participation, secularization and immigration may mean declining engagement in the future. A second reason is that similarities between the Canadian born and the foreign born in rates of civic participation can be viewed as indicating integration. Just as convergence, usually over time, in economic indicators of the foreign born compared to the Canadian born is thought to represent economic integration, the convergence of behaviors regarding civic participation of immigrants *vis-à-vis* the Canadian born is an aspect of civic integration. Third, to the extent that it is a form of participation in social life, civic participation fosters social cohesion and social networks (McGarvey 2005; Putnam 2000). In turn, such networks may offer social support that assists in the immigrant integration process. Fourth, the absence of civic participation, particularly political engagement, by immigrants may indicate barriers to full participation in the destination society (Pero & Solomos, 2010; Stoll & Wong, 2007).

To date, mixed results exist regarding the relationship between nativity and civic participation in Canada. As also observed in American research (Stoll & Wong, 2007), new immigrants participate less in civic and social activities than non-immigrants (Baer, 2008; Couton & Gaudet, 2008; Nakhaie, 2008). In addition, important differences appear between and within immigrant groups along ethnic and gender lines (Baer, 2008; Couton & Gaudet, 2008; also see Foster-Bey, 2008; Stoll & Wong, 2007 for the US). However, other Canadian research suggests little difference in civic participation between immigrant and non-immigrant groups. Moreover, this gap closes with increased time in Canada (Black, 1991; Scott, Selbee & Reid, 2006). These studies all use diverse indicators to measure civic participation such as volunteering, political activism, voting, and acquisition of citizenship (Baer, 2008; Bevelander & Pendakur, 2009; Nakhaie, 2007; Tossutti, 2007).

At the moment there is no ready explanation for the different research findings regarding the levels of civic participation between immigrants and native-born Canadians, or among immigrant groups. But knowing (or not knowing) the language(s) of the host country emerges as an important determinant of immigrant civic participation. Many North American studies find a positive and direct relationship between language proficiency in the official language(s) and civic participation among immigrants, particularly for new immigrants (Baer, 2008; Dudley, 2007; Nakhaie, 2008; Stoll & Wong, 2007; Torney-Purta et al., 2007; Tossutti, 2007). Language proficiency/ability in these studies usually is measured by whether individuals speak only the Canadian official languages of English and/or French or another language, or whether English/French is spoken at home.

American and European studies confirm that language skills are related to various measures of civic participation (van Londen, Phalet & Hagendoorn, 2007; Stoll & Wong, 2007). That language proficiency in the host country language is associated with higher levels of civic participation is hardly surprising – as a complex bundle of symbols, language is essential for communicating thoughts and ideas and for undertaking tasks. Those with limited language skills have trouble communicating with the majority population and find it difficult to inform themselves about opportunities to become involved politically and socially in their new countries (Baer, 2008; Dudley, 2007; Nakhaie, 2008; Stoll & Wong, 2007; Tossutti, 2007). This could hinder volunteering or participating in non-ethnic organizations. Furthermore, because civic participation enables groups to exercise the right to full citizenship, enjoying the civil, political, and social rights given to members of society (Marshall, 1950), low levels of host country language proficiency could curtail inclusion in decision-making processes and diminish access to rights and entitlements.

Although researchers find a positive relationship between host country language proficiency and civic participation, language *per se* is not the focus of their studies. However, because all major migrant receiving countries now have large foreign-born populations from countries where the destination country language is not commonly used or learned, the relationship between language proficiency and civic participation has important implications in on-going discussions of migrant inclusion, integration, and societal inequality.

Two core questions exist with respect to the language skill-civic participation nexus. First, what are the relationships between language knowledge and the level and type of civic participation within the immigrant population? More specifically, does knowledge and use of the destination country language(s) increase the likelihood of civic engagement by migrants? Second, do migrants, particularly those with low levels of proficiency differ from the native born in the type of civic participation chosen?

In this paper, I address these questions with data from the 2002 Canadian Ethnic Diversity Survey (EDS), emphasizing the relationship between levels of official language proficiency and the level and type of civic participation observed for the Canadian born and the foreign born. Multivariate logistic

regression analysis of two types of civic participation (membership in groups or organizations and voting) confirms that differences exist between the Canadian born and the foreign born in the extent and type of civic participation. Further, the type of civic engagement reflects language proficiency, measured as a three category typology of language first learned and current home language use.

Data and Methods

The Ethnic Diversity Survey (EDS) was conducted jointly by Statistics Canada and the Department of Canadian Heritage in 2002 and released in September 2003. Its aim was to advance understanding of the social, political, and economic integration of Canadians with diverse ethnic backgrounds. In total, 42,476 respondents participated, achieving a 76 percent response rate and representing a population of 23,092,643. Participants were selected on the basis of their answers to questions on the 2001 Census of Canada, with a target population of persons aged 15 and older living in private dwellings in Canada's ten provinces who were legal (permanent) residents of Canada either by birth or immigration status. Because teenagers and young adults are still in the transition to adulthood, the analysis in this paper is based on a sub-sample of EDS participants aged 25 and older. Because of interest in the integration aspect of civic participation, the paper presents information only for those immigrants who legally immigrated as adults, notably at age 25 or later.

The EDS has a civic participation module asking respondents to indicate their participation in various types of organizations and groups. Respondents were asked: 'Are you a member of, or have you taken part in the activities of, any groups or organizations at anytime in the past 12 months? For example, a sports team, a hobby club, a community organization, an ethnic association, etc?' These questions provided information on the membership or participation overall (yes/no) and the overall number of groups or organizations in which an individual participated. As noted elsewhere (see Stoll & Wong, 2007), deriving frequencies of participation from survey questions that emphasize type of organization may underestimate participation when multiple memberships exist within an organization type (for example, when a person belongs to several different sport clubs or associations), but the EDS did not ask for this additional information.

For those respondents who indicate their participation in some organization or group in the 12 months preceding the survey, the EDS collected data on their participation in the following groups and organizations (in alphabetical order): art, dance, cultural groups; business or job related groups; community organizations; ethnic or immigrant associations; hobby or social clubs or seniors' groups; religious affiliated groups; sports clubs or teams; service clubs, agencies or charitable organizations; and youth organizations or children's groups. The questionnaire contained detailed instruction to the interviewer as to what groups were included under each label.

For example, 'art, dance or cultural group' includes responses indicating participation in groups or organizations whose main purpose or activity is visual or graphic arts, dance, theatre, music, or any other type of art: writing, craft, painting, photography, film, music, and drama clubs or classes; choirs (except church choirs); dance troupes; high school bands; music and dance festivals; etc. This also includes parental participation in children's cultural and arts groups (responses such as 'child's dance classes').

In addition to membership and activities in groups and organizations, voting is considered a form of participation in civil life. Accordingly, a voting module asks respondents if they voted in the last federal, provincial, or municipal election and inquires about their eligibility to vote. Respondents who indicate they are not citizens and thus ineligible to vote are excluded from the analysis of voting rates.

The EDS also asks about languages learned and used. Following previous investigations into civic participation, a three-part typology of official language proficiency and use is selected: type 1, the first language learned in childhood is English and/or French, and the language used mostly in the home is English and/or French; type 2, the first language learned in childhood is a language other than English and/or French and the language used mostly in the home is English and/or French; type 3, the first language learned in childhood is a language other than English and/or French and the language used mostly in the home is not English and/or French. This typology is combined with nativity to produce five groups of interest: 1) the Canadian born with high (type 1) proficiency in at least one of Canada's two official languages; 2) the Canadian born with mixed (type 2) proficiency; 3) foreign-born permanent residents with high proficiency (type 1); 4) foreign-born permanent residents with mixed proficiency (type 2); 5) foreign-born permanent residents with low proficiency (type 3).

Civic participation is influenced by other characteristics, including age, sex, city size or place of residence, education, employment status, and household income (Baer, 2998; van Londen, Phalet & Hagendoorn, 2007; Stoll & Wong, 2007), and, in turn, these characteristics are associated with linguistic proficiency. For example, education is positively associated with higher levels of civic participation and with higher levels of language proficiency. As a result, variations in civic participation by levels of language knowledge and use may reflect the effects of education. Multivariate analysis adjusts for these inter-related influences. Because the EDS measures of civic participation are coded as bivariate (yes/no) and have skewed distributions, ordinary least squares (OLS) regression is not suitable. Instead, logistic regression (Liao, 1994) controls for the co-related effects of age, sex, city size or place of residence, education, employment status, and household income on various indicators of civic participation. In the interests of space, the logits (logged odds) for the analysis are not presented. Instead, the hypothetical probabilities of civic participation by language proficiency (adjusted for the correlation of language with other individual characteristics) are calculated, using a standard population for groups defined by nativity and language.

Investigations into the civic participation of migrants find country of origin variations in civic participation. However, sample numbers prevent origins from being included in this analysis. Although the EDS is large by Canadian standards, country-specific numbers are small for the foreign born and smaller still when cross-classified by the language typology used here. Even when major regions (US-UK, other Europe, Asia, etc.) are cross-classified with language, small numbers remain for some combinations (for example, few US-UK-born respondents display type 3). These small numbers and empty cells prevent the use of logistic regression analysis.

Studies into the civic participation of migrants observe that the recently arrived are less likely to engage in forms of civic engagement than those who have been in the destination country for a longer period. Length of time in the host country is positively associated with participation partly because of the acquisition of destination country language(s); possibly, immigrants become more familiar over time with organizations, and experience increases opportunities to become involved (Stoll & Wong, 2007). The analysis therefore pays attention to the role of time on the civic participation of immigrants. However, the time-of-arrival variable available on the EDS data is crude, distinguishing only between those arriving before 1991 and those arriving in 1991 or later.

Language Proficiency and Membership in Groups and Organizations

As noted previously, respondents to the EDS are asked about their participation in a number of groups or organizations (Appendix A). The overall profile created shows that associational participation is enhanced when people are proficient in English and/or French (Table 1, Panel 1). Stated in reverse, the percentage that are members of, or participate in, one or more groups or organizations is depressed for those with mixed or low levels of English and/or French proficiency. This pattern changes very little when adjustments are made for differences between the five nativity-language proficiency groups for age, sex, city size or place of residence, education, employment status, and household income (Table 1, Panel 2, and Figure 1),¹ suggesting that while such characteristics are important determinants of participating in at least one group or organization, the variations by nativity and language skills are robust, changing little when adjusted for inter-correlations with demographic, social, and economic variables.

¹These hypothetical percentages are calculated by weighting the logits for each independent variable, excluding the five language-nativity groups. The weights are the proportions in each category of each independent variable holding for the overall population used in the (listwise) logistic regression. For each nativity-language group, the logit for the *i*th category of age is multiplied by the proportion of the total population age 25 and over in the *i*th age category. These cross-products are summed up along with the logit for the specific nativity-language group; the result is transformed into a probability and multiplied by 100 to obtain the 'hypothetical' percentage.

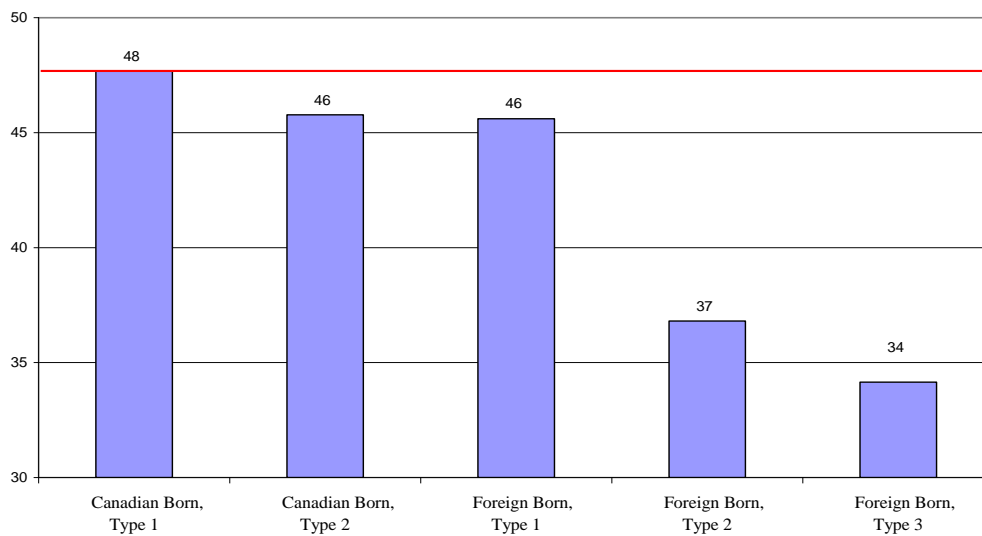
Table 1 Membership or Participation in a Group or Organization and the Number of Groups or Organizations by Nativity and Language Proficiency, Canada, 2002

		Canadian Born, Type 1 ^(a)	Canadian Born, Type 2 ^(b)	Foreign Born, Type 1 ^(a)	Foreign Born, Type 2 ^(b)	Foreign Born, Type 3 ^(c)
Actual Percentages^(d)						
Do you Belong? ^(e)	Total	100	100	100	100	100
	Yes	48	47	48	39	32
	No	52	53	52	61	68
If yes, more than one?	Total	100	100	100	100	100
	Yes	24	25	27	18	18
	No	76	75	73	82	82
Adjusted Probability ^(f)						
Do you Belong? ^(e)	Total	100	100	100	100	100
	Yes	48	46	46	37	34
	No	52	54	54	63	66
If yes, more than one?	Total	100	100	100	100	100
	Yes	22	23	24	16	19
	No	78	77	76	84	81

- (a) English and/or French first language learned, English and/or French spoken most often at home.
- (b) Other non-English, non-French is first language learned, English and/or French spoken most often at home.
- (c) Other non-English, non-French is first language learned and spoken most often at home.
- (d) Percents calculated for the population used in the listwise logistic regression.
- (e) Are you a member of, or have you taken part in the activities of, any groups or organizations at anytime in the past 12 months? For example, a sports team, a hobby club, a community organization, an ethnic association, etc.
- (f) Adjusted for gender, age, CMA residence, highest level of education achieved, main activity, household income.

Source: 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey, Public Use File.

Figure 1 Percent Having Membership/Participation in a Group or Organization by Nativity and Language Proficiency, Net of Demographic, Social and Economic factors, Ages 25 plus, Canadian born and Foreign born who Immigrated at Age 25 or Later, Canada 2002



Frequency of involvement is conditional on the level of language proficiency in the destination language. Compared to the Canadian born or to immigrants with high levels of official language proficiency, adult arrivals with medium or low levels of language skill are the most likely to belong to only one group or organization; specifically, four out of five with a non-English-French mother tongue (type 2 and type 3) show this tendency (Table 1, last row).

For immigrants, low levels of language proficiency most frequently characterize recent arrivals. This association raises the possibility that the nativity-language proficiency patterns observed in the incidence and frequency of civic participation simply capture the impacts of duration. The inclusion of period of arrival in the logistic regression analysis indicates that for immigrants with low levels of English/French proficiency, recent arrivals are less likely to belong to any group or organization, and when they do, they belong to only one (Table 2) . However, regardless of when they arrived, immigrants who do not have English/French as a first language (type 1 and type 3) are not as likely to participate and are more likely to participate in only one organization. The exception is those foreign born arriving before 1991 who did not first learn English and French, and who speak another language at home. Over one-quarter of this group participate in more than one group or organization (Table 2, Figures 2 and 3)

Table 2 Membership or Participation in a Group or Organization and the Number of Groups or Organizations by Nativity and Language Proficiency, Canada, 2002

	Canadian Born, Type 1 ^(a)	Canadian Born, Type 2 ^(b)	Foreign Born, Arrived <'91, Type 1 ^(a)	Foreign Born, Arrived <'91, Type 2 ^(b)	Foreign Born, Arrived <'91, Type 3 ^(c)	Foreign Born, Arrived '91-'01, Type 1 ^(a)	Foreign Born, Arrived '91-'01, Type 2 ^(b)	Foreign Born, Arrived '91-'01, Type 3 ^(c)
Actual Percentages ^(d)								
Do You Belong? ^(e)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Yes	48	47	48	40	37	48	37	28
No	52	53	52	60	63	52	63	72
If yes, more than one?	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Yes	24	25	26	20	24	30	13	12
No	76	75	74	80	76	70	87	88
Adjusted Probability ^(f)								
Do You Belong? ^(e)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Yes	48	46	46	37	40	46	36	29
No	52	54	54	63	60	54	64	71
If yes, more than one?	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Yes	22	23	23	17	28	28	12	11
No	78	77	77	83	72	72	88	89

(a) English and/or French first language learned, English and/or French spoken most often at home.

(b) Other non-English, non-French is first language learned, English and/or French spoken most often at home.

(c) Other non-English, non-French is first language learned and spoken most often at home.

(d) Percents calculated for the population used in the listwise logistic regression.

(e) Are you a member of, or have you taken part in the activities of, any groups or organizations at anytime in the past 12 months? For example, a sports team, a hobby club, a community organization, an ethnic association, etc.

(f) Adjusted for gender, age, CMA residence, highest level of education achieved, main activity, and household income.

Source: 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey, Public Use File.

Figure 2 Hypothetical Percentages with Membership or Participation in at Least One Group or Organization, Net of Demographic, Social and Economic factors by Nativity and Language Proficiency, Canada, 2002

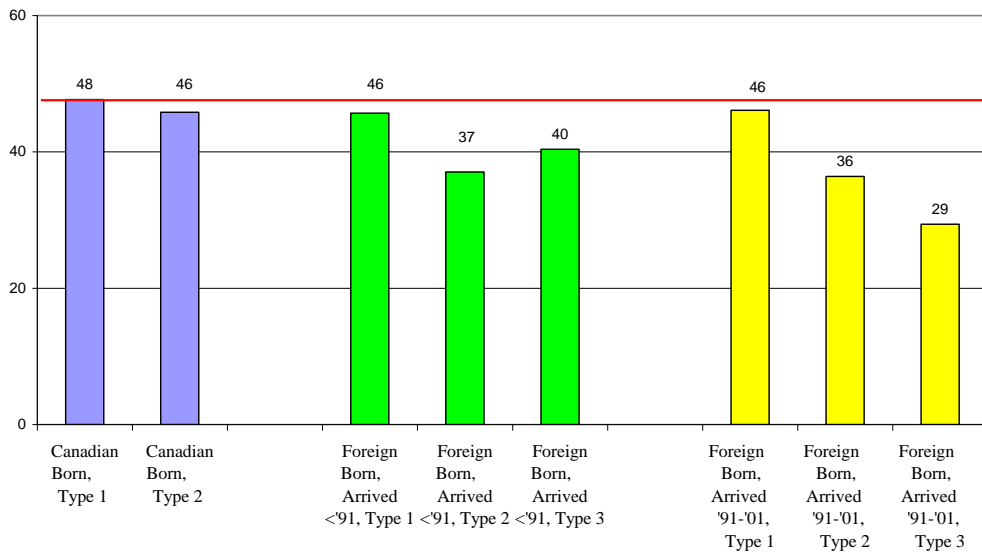
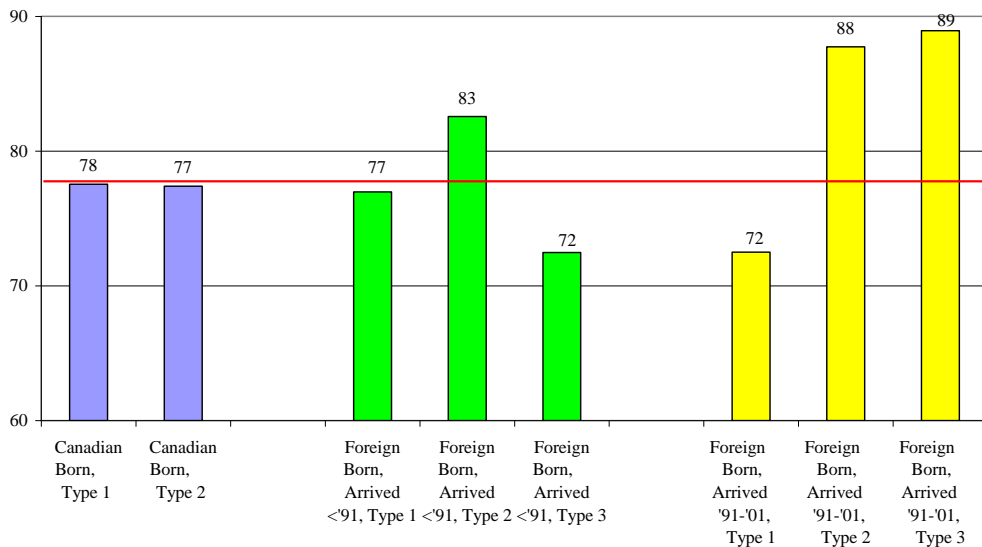


Figure 3 Of Those Participating, Hypothetical Percentages Belonging to Only One Group or Organization, Net of Demographic, Social and Economic factors, Ages 25 plus, Canadian born and Foreign born who Immigrated at Age 25 or Later, Canada 2002



Participation in Specific Types of Groups and Organization

Do people vary in their levels of participation depending on the specific organizations or groups and do variations exist by language proficiency? The answer to both questions is yes. Actual percentages, not presented in the tables, indicate that the entire population age 25 and older has low percentages (between four and ten percent) participating in ethnic or immigrant associations, business associations, art, cultural and dance groups, and children’s and youth groups or organizations. Approximately one in six participate in community groups or organizations, in hobby or social clubs or

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seniors' groups, in religious affiliated groups and/or service clubs, agencies, or charitable organizations. Sports clubs or teams are the most popular mode of civic participation, with two out of five engaged in such associations.

Table 3 Type of Group(s) or Organization(s) for Those Reporting Membership or Participation by Nativity and Language Proficiency, Canada, 2002

Type of Group or Organization	Canadian Born, Type 1 ^(a)	Canadian Born, Type 2 ^(b)	Foreign Born, Type 1 ^(a)	Foreign Born, Type 2 ^(b)	Foreign Born, Type 3 ^(c)
Actual Percentages^(d)					
Art, Dance or Cultural Group(s)	7	10	13	13	13
Community Organization(s)	18	14	17	21	15
Ethnic or Immigrant Association(s)	2	9	8	22	28
Religious Affiliated Group(s)	12	23	22	22	27
Service Club or Agency or Charitable Organization(s)	15	14	13	6	5
Sports Club or Team(s)	46	40	33	19	18
Youth Organizations or Children's School Groups(s)	6	5	5	3	3
Other Organizations	5	6	5	5	5
Adjusted Probability^(e)					
Art, Dance or Cultural Group(s)	6	9	10	10	11
Community Organization(s)	17	14	15	20	13
Ethnic or Immigrant Association(s)	1	7	6	16	22
Religious Affiliated Group(s)	11	20	18	19	25
Service Club or Agency or Charitable Organization(s)	14	14	11	6	4
Sports Club or Team(s)	44	37	36	19	18
Youth Organizations or Children's School Groups(s)	3	3	4	2	2
Other Organizations	4	6	4	4	4

(a) English and/or French first language learned, English and/or French spoken most often at home.

(b) Other non-English, non-French is first language learned, English and/or French spoken most often at home.

(c) Other non-English, non-French is first language learned and spoken most often at home.

(d) Percentages are for the listwise population used in the logistic regressions. For example, for the Canadian born with Type 1 language proficiency, 7 percent belong to art, dancing or cultural groups. By implication, 93 percent do not belong to these types of groups or organizations. See Appendix A for definitions.

(e) Adjusted for gender, age, CMA residence, highest level of education achieved, main activity, household income. For example, net of these variables, 6 percent of the Canadian born with Type 1 language proficiency belong to art, dancing or cultural groups.

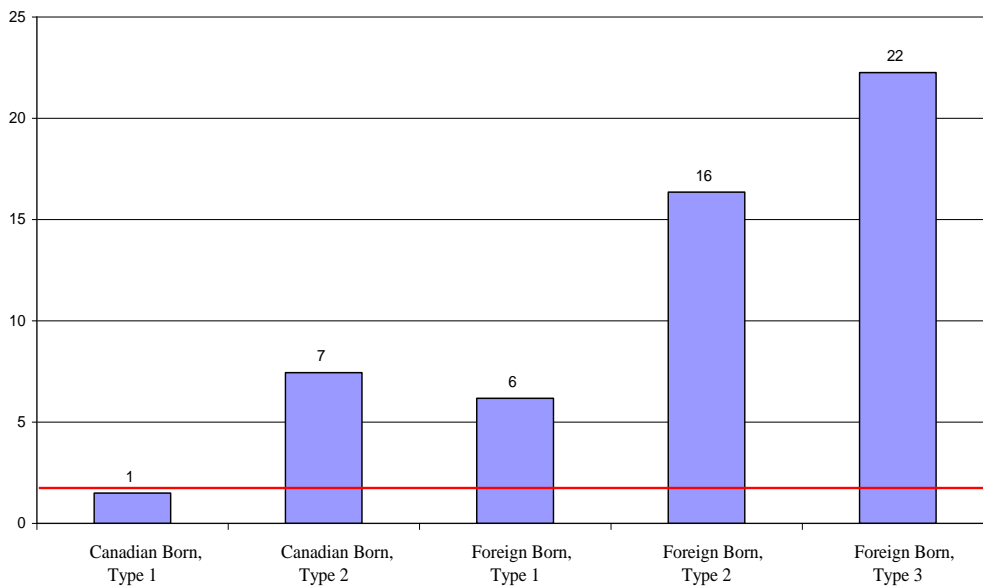
Source: 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey, Public Use File.

That said, considerable differences by nativity and language proficiency exist in participation level in groups and organizations (Table 3). Two countervailing patterns exist by nativity and language skills. First, participation in hobby or social clubs, seniors' groups, service agencies, charitable organizations, or sports clubs or teams is substantially higher for the Canadian born with high official language proficiency than for other groups, especially the foreign born whose mother tongue and most-used home language is neither

English nor French. Second, the reverse is found for membership in religious affiliated groups, ethnic or immigrant associations, and, to a lesser extent in art, dance, or cultural groups. Once adjustments are made for the associations between language proficiency and socio-demographic and economic variables, the participation and membership rate of the Canadian born whose mother tongue is English and/or French and who most often use another language at home is similar to that of the foreign born whose mother tongue and home language is English and/or French. Many of the Canadian born who mostly speak another language at home are second generation and/or have foreign-born partners.

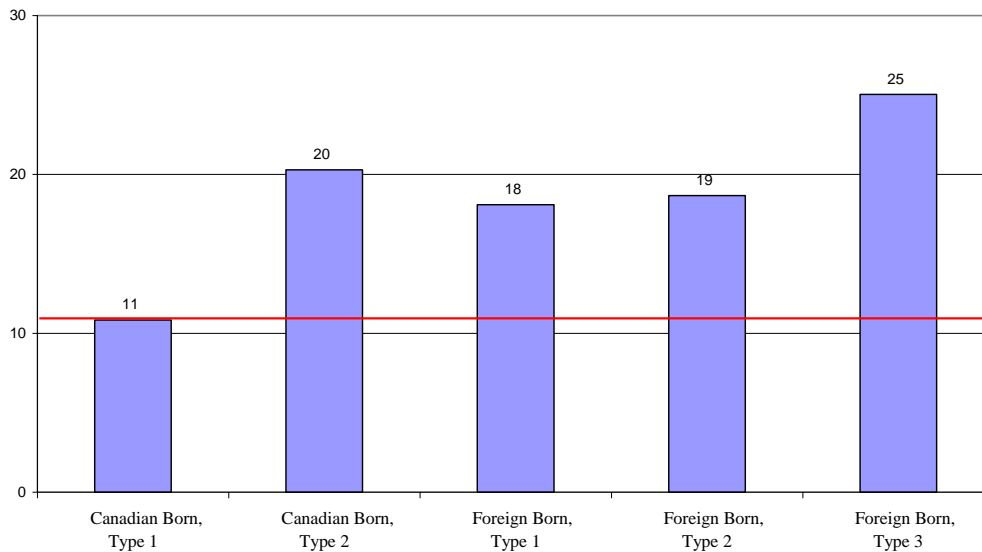
Earlier discussion observed that immigrants with low destination country language skills are not likely to be able to participate in groups or organizations where destination languages are the primary modes of communication. As a result, such individuals may be more likely to join ethnic country of origin based associations where other languages are employed; they also may be more likely to participate in religious affiliated groups where they understand the activities and religious litany. Certainly, the foreign born with low levels of language skills are the most likely to have participated in ethnic groups or associations or in religious affiliated groups during the 12 months preceding the survey. Over one in four immigrants arriving at age 25 and older and who have low levels of official language proficiency participate in, or are members of, ethnic and/or immigrant associations. Similar results hold for religious participation: one-quarter of the foreign born with low language skills belong to religious affiliated groups compared with only one in ten of the Canadian born fluent in English and/or French (Table 3, Figures 4 and 5).

Figure 4 *Of Those Participating, Hypothetical Percentages Belonging to Ethnic or Immigrant Association(s), Net of Demographic, Social and Economic factors, Ages 25 plus, Canadian born and Foreign born who Immigrated at Age 25 or Later, Canada 2002*



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Figure 5 Of Those Participating, Hypothetical Percentages Belonging to Religious Affiliated Group(s), Net of Demographic, Social and Economic factors, Ages 25 plus, Canadian born and Foreign born who Immigrated at Age 25 or Later, Canada 2002



These results hold when duration is held constant for the foreign born. In fact, compared to recent immigrants with low levels of language skills, participation in ethnic organizations or religious affiliated groups is higher for immigrants who have been in Canada for ten years or more (Table 4, Figures 6 and 7). Arguably, as recent arrivals are busy getting settled, they have less time for participation in groups and organizations.

Table 4 Type of Group(s) or Organization(s) for Those Reporting Membership or Participation by Nativity and Language Proficiency, Canada, 2002

Type of Group or Organization	Canadian Born		Foreign Born, Arrived <91			Foreign Born, Arrived '91-'01		
	Type 1 ^(a)	Type 2 ^(b)	Type 1 ^(a)	Type 2 ^(b)	Type 3 ^(c)	Type 1 ^(a)	Type 2 ^(b)	Type 3 ^(c)
Actual Probability								
Ethnic or Immigrant Association(s)	2	9	9	24	31	9	19	26
Religious Affiliated Group(s)	12	23	25	20	31	14	27	24
Adjusted Probability^(e)								
Ethnic or Immigrant Association(s)	1	7	7	18	24	6	13	20
Religious Affiliated Group(s)	11	20	19	15	29	14	27	21

(a) English and/or French first language learned, English and/or French spoken most often at home.

(b) Other non-English, non-French is first language learned, English and/or French spoken most often at home.

(c) Other non-English, non-French is first language learned and spoken most often at home.

(d) Percents calculated for the population used in the listwise logistic regression.

(e) Adjusted for gender, age, CMA residence, highest level of education achieved, main activity, household income.

Source: 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey, Public Use File.

Figure 6 Of Those Participating, Hypothetical Percentages Belonging to Ethnic or Immigrant Association(s), Net of Demographic, Social and Economic factors, Ages 25 plus, Canadian born and Foreign born who Immigrated at Age 25 or Later, Canada 2002

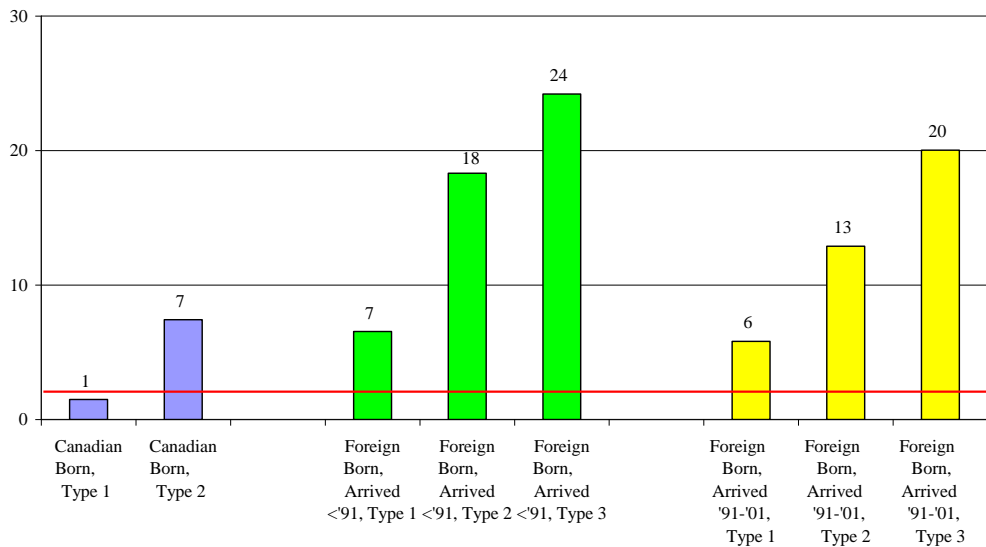
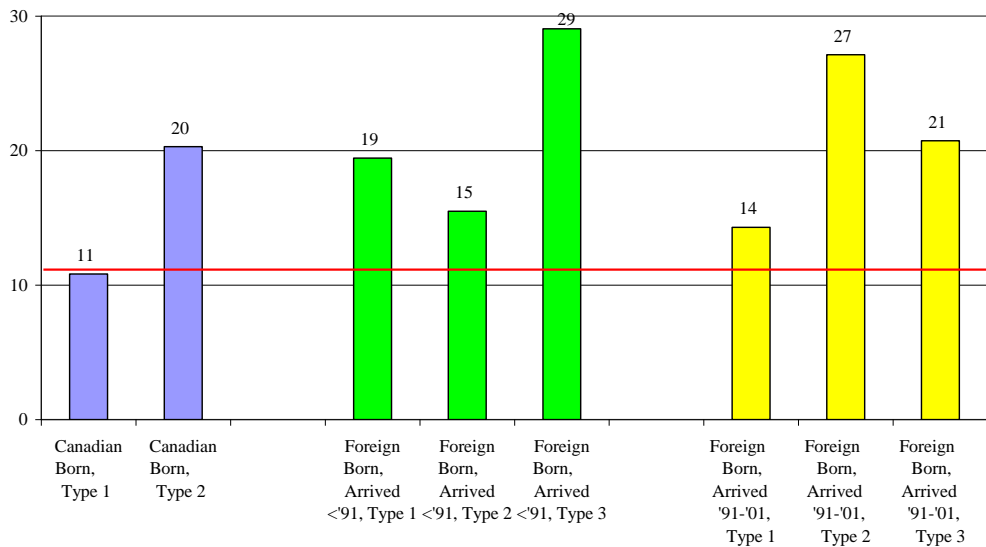


Figure 7 Of Those Participating, Hypothetical Percentages Belonging to Religious Affiliated Group(s), Net of Demographic, Social and Economic factors, Ages 25 plus, Canadian born and Foreign born who Immigrated at Age 25 or Later, Canada 2002



Language Proficiency and Voting

As nations experience large 21st century migrant inflows, the derivative focus on integration is accompanied by a keen interest in the political participation of migrants (Bevelander & Pendakur, 2008). In addition to the acquisition of citizenship, voting is viewed by scholars as a key indicator of the civic engagement of newcomers. Elections represent the operation of democratic government and are an important mechanism whereby groups make their views and voices heard, thereby exercising the rights of legal citizenship. But individuals lacking proficiency in destination country language(s) may be

less likely to vote for individual and structural reasons. Limited language skills may depress knowledge about issues, candidates, and the necessary steps (such as voter registration) which accompany the act of voting. Structural barriers may play a role, including naturalization requirements (for example, host country language fluency), anti-immigrant sentiment, and political practices of exclusion based on race or ethnicity (Mollenkopf & Hochschild, 2010).

Table 5 *Voting in Types of Elections For Canadian Citizens by Language Proficiency, Canada, 2002*

Type of Election	Canadian Born, Type 1 ^(a)	Canadian Born, Type 2 ^(b)	Foreign Born, Type 1 ^(a)	Foreign Born, Type 2 ^(b)	Foreign Born, Type 3 ^(c)
Actual Percentages ^(d)					
Federal Election					
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Yes	83	86	88	85	71
No	17	14	12	15	29
Provincial Election					
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Yes	82	86	84	82	69
No	18	14	16	18	31
Municipal Election					
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Yes	68	70	75	67	61
No	32	30	25	33	39
Adjusted Probability ^(e)					
Federal Election					
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Yes	86	87	81	80	70
No	14	13	19	20	30
Provincial Election					
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Yes	86	87	77	78	69
No	14	13	23	22	31
Municipal Election					
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Yes	69	71	67	62	62
No	31	29	33	38	38

(a) English and/or French first language learned, English and/or French spoken most often at home.

(b) Other non-English, non-French is first language learned, English and/or French spoken most often at home.

(c) Other non-English, non-French is first language learned and spoken most often at home.

(d) Percents calculated for the population used in the listwise logistic regression.

(e) Adjusted for gender, age, CMA residence, highest level of education achieved, main activity, household income.

Source: 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey, Public Use File.

The 2002 EDS asks respondents if they voted in the last federal, provincial, and municipal elections and if they were eligible to vote. The latter question permits the exclusion of non-citizens from the analysis, as only citizens are legal voters in Canada. Voter participation among all Canadians has been declining in recent years; engagement is highest in federal elections and lowest at the municipal level. EDS data analysis confirms these electoral variations. It also shows that immigrants who arrived at age 25 or older and

who have low levels of official language proficiency are the least likely of all groups to have voted in the last federal, provincial or municipal elections (Table 5).

Dividing immigrants into those arriving before 1991 and those arriving in 1991 or later (Table 6) generates two additional conclusions. First, those who immigrated to Canada within the ten years before the survey are less likely to vote than earlier arrivals, regardless of language proficiency. As a result, recent arrivals with low language skills (type 3) have the lowest percentages voting in federal, provincial, and municipal elections. Second, within each arrival cohort, those with low English/French language skills have the lowest percentages voting. However, there are two exceptions to these general conclusions. For one thing, immigrants with low levels of language proficiency and who arrived before 1991 have slightly higher percentages who voted in municipal elections than the Canadian born or immigrants with greater proficiency in English and/or French (Figure 8). For another, immigrants arriving after 1990 and who are highly proficient in Canada's official languages are the least likely of all groups to vote in provincial elections. As there is no ready explanation for these findings, further analysis is needed.

Table 6 Voting in Types of Elections For Those Who Voted by Nativity and Language Proficiency, Canada, 2002

Type of Election	Canadian Born, Type 1 ^(a)	Canadian Born, Type 2 ^(b)	Foreign Born, Arrived <'91, Type 1 ^(a)	Foreign Born, Arrived <'91, Type 2 ^(b)	Foreign Born, Arrived <'91, Type 3 ^(c)	Foreign Born, Arrived '91-'01, Type 1 ^(a)	Foreign Born, Arrived '91-'01, Type 2 ^(b)	Foreign Born, Arrived '91-'01, Type 3 ^(c)
Actual Percentages ^(d)								
Federal Election								
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Yes	83	86	91	91	80	64	61	55
No	17	14	9	9	20	36	39	45
Provincial Election								
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Yes	82	86	88	88	77	52	60	55
No	18	14	12	12	23	48	40	45
Municipal Election								
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Yes	68	70	78	72	74	53	48	41
No	32	30	22	28	26	47	52	59
Adjusted Probability ^(e)								
Federal Election								
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Yes	86	87	85	87	78	60	64	57
No	14	13	15	13	22	40	36	43
Provincial Election								
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Yes	85	87	82	83	75	47	63	60
No	15	13	18	17	25	53	37	40
Municipal Election								
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Yes	69	71	69	65	72	53	54	47
No	31	29	31	35	28	47	46	53

(a) English and/or French first language learned, English and/or French spoken most often at home.

(b) Other non-English, non-French is first language learned, English and/or French spoken most often at home.

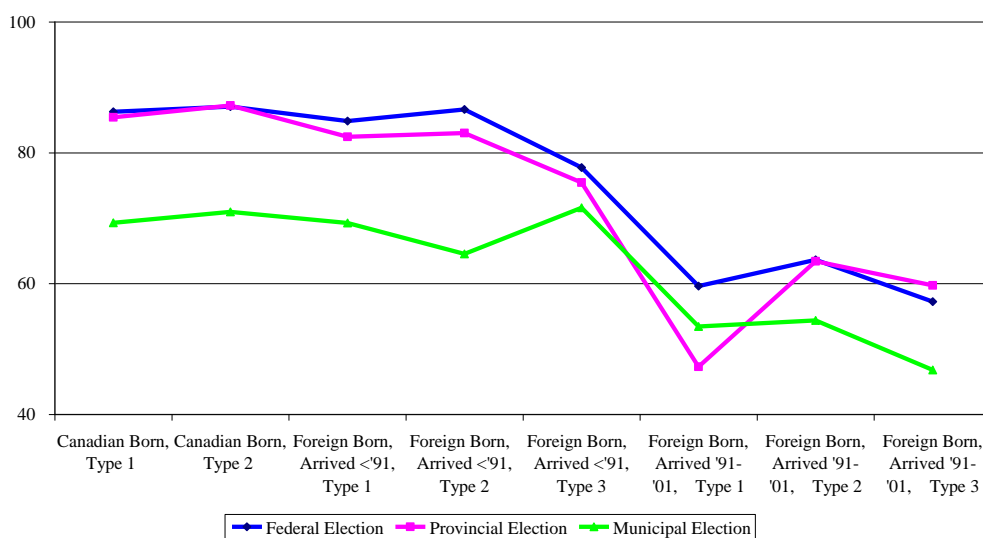
(c) Other non-English, non-French is first language learned and spoken most often at home.

(d) Percents calculated for the population used in the listwise logistic regression.

(e) Adjusted for gender, age, CMA residence, highest level of education achieved, main activity, household income.

Source: 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey, Public Use File.

Figure 8 Hypothetical Percentages Voting in Elections for Canadian Citizens by Nativity and Language Proficiency, Net of Demographic, Social and Economic factors, Ages 25 plus, Canadian born and Foreign born who Immigrated at Age 25 or Later, Canada 2002



Conclusion

Analysis of the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey confirms that levels of proficiency in Canada's official languages are correlated with civic participation. Compared to the Canadian born or to the foreign born with English and/or French mother tongues, among those immigrants arriving at age 25 or older and who first learned a language other than English or French, a lower percentage has membership or participates in a group or organization. Even when they are members or do participate, immigrants with low official language proficiency are more likely than the Canadian born or those immigrants with high English/French proficiency to participate in only one group or organization.

Canadians participate in a variety of groups and organizations, but immigrants with low levels of official language skills have the lowest percentages of all groups in belonging to sports clubs or teams and participating in service clubs, service agencies, or charitable organizations. They also have lower percentages voting in federal, provincial, and municipal elections. However, they have the highest percentages of all groups participating in, or belonging to, ethnic or immigrant associations and religious affiliated groups. However, immigrants with low levels of official language proficiency have the highest percentages of all groups participating in, or belonging to, ethnic or immigrant associations and religious affiliated groups.

These results go beyond confirming the relationship between language proficiency and civic participation, particularly for adult arrivals. Building on a large literature that emphasizes the development of social capital and trust through civic engagement, the results suggest that low proficiency in

destination country language(s) can limit the growth of bridging mechanisms that help integrate newcomers into society. To be sure, immigrants with low language proficiency have higher percentages belonging to ethnic or religious groups than do other nativity-language groups. However, the consequences of this remain to be investigated and country-specific contexts are likely to be important factors. The higher involvement in ethnic/religious groups could act to maintain or intensify existing bonds within ethnic or religious groups; they also might encapsulate those migrants with low destination country language skills in ethnic enclaves or religious institutions. Alternatively in countries where ethnic and religious associations are active in the public arena and receive funding as non-governmental organizations to provide services that facilitate immigrant integration, such participation may be a precursor to language learning and to great civic and political participation in the years to come.

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