

Abstract

This thesis examines the impact of local socioeconomic factors on voter turnout in national elections by utilizing Norwegian register data. These studies seek to contribute to research on the broader implications of rising economic inequality on democratic governance by exploring the relationships between individual and contextual factors, with a particular focus on how disparities in economic resources affect electoral participation.

In addition to the introduction, the thesis comprises four empirical studies. The first article investigates how various neighborhood socioeconomic compositions impact voter turnout. The second article examines the effect of neighborhood income inequality on participation, and the third article expands these perspectives by exploring how individuals' economic status relative to the average levels in their surroundings affects the relationship. The fourth article integrates wealth data into the inequality measure, providing additional insight into the visible economic conditions in the residential areas.

The results consistently suggest that local conditions shape individuals' decisions to participate in elections. A key finding across the articles is the detrimental effect of rising economic inequality on the decision to take part in elections among low-resource individuals. These results highlight the need to promote equality in local environments to enhance democratic practices, calling for further research and policy focus on the micro-contextual dynamics that shape political behavior. Addressing economic disparities can help create more cohesive neighborhoods, where political participation is encouraged across socioeconomic strata.