

THE EFFECT OF INCOME IN VOTER TURNOUT AND PARTY CHOICE



- Contributors

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- The connection of income and a decline in income with the party choice was examined in the 2011, 2015 and 2019 parliamentary elections. The study is based on regional level longitudinal register data about these elections, in addition to which a similar study was completed based on individual level survey data of the 2019 parliamentary election.
- Low income correlates with stronger support for the Left Alliance and weaker support for the National Coalition Party. The connection between low income and support for the Finns Party and the Greens remained more inconclusive.
- The link between the weakening of a voter's financial situation and support of a populist party, which has been observed in many other countries, can be seen in Finland, too.

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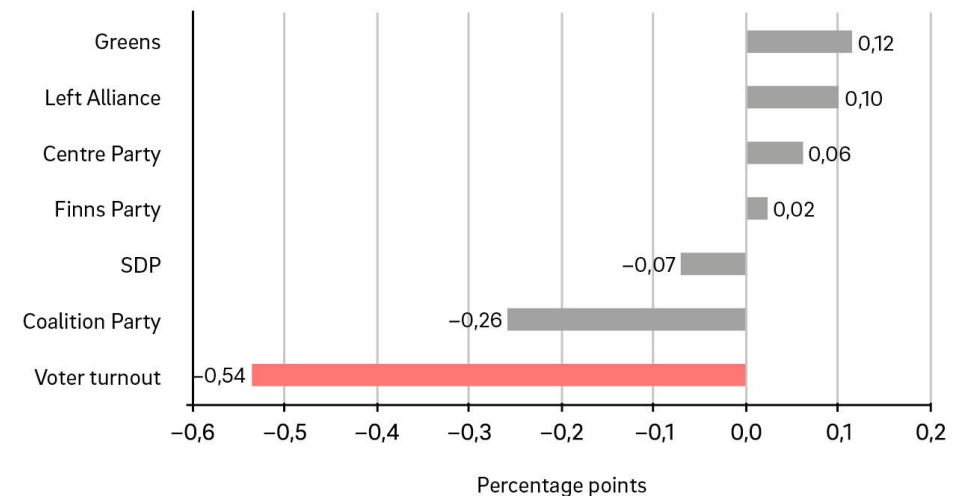
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- A larger share of people with low income predicts stronger support for the Greens and the Left Alliance. The connection between low income and support of the Finns Party, the Centre Party or the SDP is weak.

Figure 5.1 The connection of the share of those with low income with party support and voter turnout in the 2015 parliamentary election, accounting for electoral district, rurality and the shares of pensioners and Swedish-speakers (income concept: equivalised household disposable income).

a. How much higher a vote share does a one percentage point difference in the share of those with low income predict in the population aged 18 and over?



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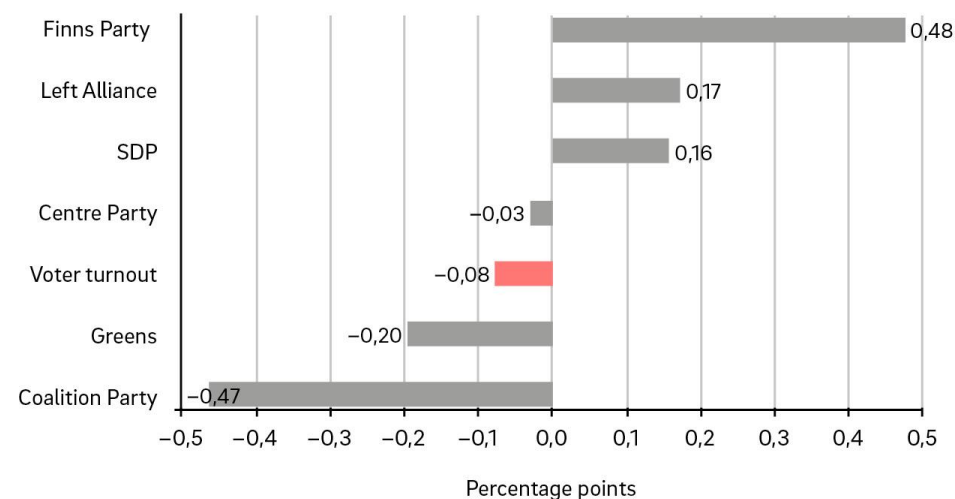
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- A decrease in earned income is linked with increased support for the Finns Party. There is a similar yet weaker connection for the Left Alliance and the SDP.

Figure 5.2 The connection of the share of those whose earned income status declined with party support and voter turnout in the 2015 parliamentary election, accounting for electoral district, rurality and the shares of pensioners and Swedish-speakers (income concept: earned and entrepreneurial income of a person in total).

a. How much higher a vote share does a one percentage point difference in the share of those whose earned income status has declined predict in the economically active population aged 18–66?



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- In towns, low income predicts stronger support for the Left Alliance and weaker for the National Coalition Party.
- In rural areas, low income predicts stronger support for the Centre Party and weaker for the SDP.
- For the Greens and the Finns Party, variation based on rurality is not as straight forward, but the connection between low income and support for the Greens is, to some extent, clearer in towns. For the Finns Party, this positive connection with the share of people with low income appears only on the outskirts of towns.

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- The effect of income in voter turnout is linear: the higher the income level, the greater the voter turnout.

Figure 5.4 Voter turnout in the 2019 parliamentary election by income decile (%). Source: Statistics Finland 2019b.



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- Conclusions and recommendations

- Financial, social and political power are intertwined: the better the status of a person is, the more likely they are to stand as a candidate and vote in elections. It has been observed that, compared to the size of their group, rich people have a lot of influence in decision-making. That is why political inequality is reduced by reducing inequalities related to income, education and employment status.
- It is important for democracy that parties claiming to represent those with low income or otherwise disadvantaged truly promote the cause of these groups. Research into how the promises of different parties relate to implemented policies from the point of view of inequality is needed in the future, too.