

# **Public Support for Citizens' Assemblies Selected through Sortition: Survey and Experimental Evidence from 15 Countries**

Jean-Benoit Pilet\*, Damien Bol\*\*, Emilien Paulis\*, Davide Vittori\*, and Sophie Panel\*

\*Université libre de Bruxelles

\*\*King's College London

## **Abstract**

As representative democracies are increasingly criticized, a new institution is becoming popular in academic circles and real-life politics: asking a group of citizens selected by lot to deliberate and formulate policy recommendations on some contentious issues. Although there is much research on the functioning of such citizens' assemblies, there are only few about how the population perceives them. We explore the sources of citizens' attitudes towards this institution using a unique representative survey from 15 European countries. We find that those who are less educated, as well as those with a low sense of political competence and an anti-elite sentiment, are more supportive of it. Support thus comes from the 'enraged', rather than the 'engaged'. Further, we use a survey experiment to show that support for citizens' assemblies increases when respondents know that their fellow citizens share the same opinion than them on some issues.

*Keywords:* Citizens' assemblies; Sortition; Western Europe; Survey experiment; Democracy

## **Introduction**

Although international surveys show that citizens of the world believe that democracy is the best system of collective governance (Anderson, Bol, and Ananda 2020; Norris 2011), the functioning of representative democracy is increasingly criticized. In particular, there is growing public distrust against politicians and parties (Cain, Dalton, and Scarrow 2003; Putnam 2000; Van der Meer 2017), which many consider as a cause of the recent surge in populism and a threat to the survival of the regime as a whole (Haskel 2000; Norris and Inglehart 2019; Rosanvallon 2008). Facing this challenge, a natural solution is to introduce instruments that facilitate the direct involvement of citizens in policymaking (Bedock 2017; Dalton 2004).

Many democratic governments have increased the frequency of referendums these last decades (Morel and Qvortrup 2017). Yet, referendums are no panacea, as they create additional problems regarding political representation (Leeman and Wasserfalle 2016). For example, when turnout and mobilization are low, they can lead to situations in which the power is in the hand of an extremist minority (Hainmueller and Hangartner 2019) or captured by corporate interests (Gerber 1999). Other times, they can lead to subpar outcomes when the issue at stake has complex ramifications and when voters do not have sufficient (reliable) information to make an informed decision. This was for example the case during the 2016 Brexit referendum, where neither Leave nor Remain voters had fully understood the implications of leaving the European Union (Carl, Richards, and Heath 2019).

Another way to more directly involve into policymaking is to ask a group of randomly-selected citizens to convene and to deliberate on some issues. These citizens' assemblies selected by lot are based on the logic of deliberative democracy. They are supposed to address some of the

problems of referendums, insofar they let citizens the time to learn about the issue at stakes, discuss together and then agree on what is the most optimal decision (Luskin, Fishkin and Jowell 2002). This idea is by no mean new (Fishkin 1991). Yet, it has been gaining recent popularity in academic circles (Curato and Böker 2016; Dowlen 2017; Landa and Pevnik 2020), and beyond.

Several of the longest established democracies have over the last 20 years attempted some form of citizens' assemblies selected through sortition in real-life these the recent years. Some prominent examples include two Canadian provinces (Ontario and British Columbia) that in the mid-2000s organized citizens' assemblies to propose new political institutions and revitalize representative democracy. The Dutch government followed this example in 2006. But sortition really started to spread across European democracies over the last decade. In 2012, the Irish government launched a constitutional convention, which gathered 33 politicians and 66 citizens selected by lot, with a similar goal. In 2019, the French national government randomly selected 150 citizens to discuss policies that can put in place to tackle climate change. Shortly after, the British and German governments took the same initiative. At time of writing this line, the POLITICIZE Project identified 127 citizens' assemblies (at the national and regional level) across Europe since 2000 (Paulis et al 2020).<sup>1</sup> Other examples are found in the United States (Fishkin et al 2015) and Australia (Kim, Fishkin and Luskin 2018).

A consolidated literature has developed around the functioning of citizens' assemblies. It has studied the way discussions are organized, how decisions are finally reached, how (non-) participants perceive the decisions and whether they change their opinion about the issues at

---

<sup>1</sup> For an updated list, see <http://politicize.eu/inventory-dmps/>. Note that this list only includes citizens' assemblies selected through sortition that are organized by national or regional parliament or governments. There are many more citizens' assemblies at the local level.

stake in the process (Beauvais and Warren 2019; Boulianne 2018; Curato and Suiter 2021; Dryzek 2009; Farrar et al 2010; Farrell et al 2019; Grönlund, Bächtiger and Setälä 2014; Ingham and Levin 2018; Jacobs and Kaufmann 2019; Jacquet 2017; Reuchamps and Suiter 2016; Setälä 2017). Yet, we still know very little about the way citizens who are not directly involved in the institution perceive it. This is of tremendous importance because only a few of them are, by design, invited to participate in citizens' assemblies. Yet, for the institution to work, it is crucial that the rest of the population perceives it as desirable and legitimate, and would eventually accept its decisions (Böker 2017; Christensen, Himmelroos and Setälä 2019; Parkinson 2006). Furthermore, a recent trend in established democracies is to involve citizens in major institutional reforms (Bedock 2017; Renwick 2010). Hence, if citizens' assemblies have to be adopted as permanent institutions, this would first need to be approved by the population as a whole.

Building upon these premises, we conducted an original survey with representative samples of the populations of 15 established democracies in Western Europe. We asked respondents whether they support the creation of citizens' assemblies selected through sortition in general and for some specific policy issues (European integration, social benefits, and immigration).<sup>2</sup> To our knowledge this is the first time such questions are included in a cross-national survey. We believe the case of Western European countries is particularly informative for at least two reasons. First, these countries have a long tradition of representative democracy, which means that citizens have had the opportunity to experience it, and identify its advantages and limits. Second, to this date, most citizens' assemblies selected through sortition that have been set up at national level have been attempted in these countries, which means that people there are more

---

<sup>2</sup> We selected these three issues because we wanted to cover a diversity of issues of a minimal salience to maintain respondents' attention. We expected these some issues to be more polarizing (immigration) than others (European integration, social benefits). We kept the number of covered issues at three to minimize fatigue.

familiar with the institution than in other countries and that responses to questions about it are more likely to be meaningful because they refer to something that it is not entirely new to them.

Our findings are threefold. First, we find that the general public is not particularly favourable to citizens' assemblies selected through sortition. The average support is slightly below the midpoint of the 0-10 scale (where 0 means 'very bad idea' and 10 'very good idea'). Furthermore, we find that citizens are slightly more positive about the institution when it is about legislating on redistribution of social benefits than on European integration and immigration. Second, we find large heterogeneity between citizens: those that have a lower education level are more supportive of the institution, as well as those who have a low sense of political competence and a negative evaluation of elites. In that sense, supporters of citizens' assemblies seem to be 'enraged' rather than 'engaged' (Bowler, Donovan and Karp 2007). To our surprise, we also find that they tend to be leaning to the right rather than the left. Interestingly, these correlates are the same in virtually all the countries and all policy issues covered in the study. Third, we show that preference for citizens' assemblies selected through sortition is at least partly instrumental and driven by self-interest. In our survey experiment, we exposed at random half of the respondents to the level of support for the three policy issues among their fellow citizens (real support from latest wave of *European Social Survey*, no deception). We find that once they know that their position aligned with the rest the population, they are more supportive of the institution.

## **2. Literature review and hypotheses**

Four studies only have been looking at public support for citizens' assemblies (Bedock and Pilet 2020a; Bedock and Pilet 2020b; Christensen 2020; Rojon, Rijken and Klandermans 2019).

They are narrower than ours in at least three ways. First, they are based on data from a single country (France, Belgium, Finland, and the United States, respectively). Second, they only explore support for citizens' assemblies in general without specifying the policy issues these assemblies would address (except Christensen 2020). Third, they are exclusively observational in the sense that they identify the correlates of support for citizen's assemblies. In this paper, on top of doing that, we also use an experiment embedded in the survey to elicit the conditions under which such support can increase.

Nevertheless, we can build our theoretical expectations building on insights from this thin literature on public support for citizens' assemblies. We can also learn from the much thicker literature on public support for referendums and direct democracy in general. The few previous studies on support for the institution show that there are many similarities in correlates of support for referendums and for citizens' assemblies (Bedock and Pilet 2020a; Bedock and Pilet 2020b). Such similarities probably come from the fact that the two models – deliberative and direct democracy – have in common that they constitute an empowerment of citizens compared to a strict representative logic.

### ***2.1. Who support citizens' assemblies?***

Building on the above-mentioned literatures, it appears that two central theories compete in explaining who would support citizens' assemblies composed by sortition: those who are politically 'engaged' and those who are politically 'enraged' (following the expression of Bowler, Donovan and Karp 2007).

The first group of citizens that are said to be particularly supportive of a greater role of citizens in policy-making are those who are very interested in politics, and thus politically active and willing to participate because they feel competent to do so. They are no longer satisfied with the simple act of voting in elections. They want more opportunities to voice their concerns. Bowler, Donovan and Karp (2007) refer to them as ‘engaged’, Norris (2011) as ‘critical’, and Dalton and Welzel (2014) as ‘assertive citizens’ (see also Schuck and de Vreese 2015). Some studies even claim that engaged citizens could be more positive about deliberative democracy instruments than about referendums (Bedock and Pilet, 2020a; Anderson and Goodyear-Grant 2010).

The ‘engaged citizens’ model can be captured directly by looking at citizens’ political interest and sense of political efficacy. It can also be approached indirectly in the logic of the ‘resources model of political participation’, which postulates that citizens with higher levels of education and income tend to be more political engaged (Almond and Verba 1963; Brady et al 1995; Dalton 2017). Hence, some studies observe a positive correlation between socioeconomic status and support for the direct involvement of citizens in policymaking (Coffé and Michels 2014; Dalton and Welzel 2014; del Río, Navarro and Font 2016; Vandamme et al 2018; Webb 2013).

A second group of citizens seem supportive of direct democracy: the enraged. These are those who are dissatisfied with representative democracy and want citizens to be more directly involved in policymaking as to regenerate the system (Bengtsson and Mattila 2009; Bowler, Donovan and Karp 2007; del Río, Navarro and Font 2016; Coffé and Michels 2014; Webb 2013). This dissatisfaction can originate from a negative evaluation of the way political institutions work or from a negative judgment of the main actors involved in them, i.e., parties and politicians (Gherghina and Geissel 2019; Schuck and de Vreese 2015). Yet, regardless of

the source of dissatisfaction, the enraged should be more supportive of institutions that give more space to citizens in the policymaking process.

We build on the theory of engaged and enraged citizens to formulate the following two hypotheses:

H1a (engaged hypothesis): Support for citizens' assemblies selected through sortition is higher among engaged citizens

H1b (indirect engaged hypothesis): Support for citizens' assemblies selected through sortition is higher among citizens who are better off in terms of education and income

H2 (enraged hypothesis): Support for citizens' assemblies selected through sortition is higher among enraged citizens

Finally, we have some expectations regarding the correlation between support for citizens' assemblies selected through sortition and ideology. Yet, these expectations are not coming from a theory *per se*; they are coming from some empirical regularities found in the literature. Webb (2013) finds that British citizens who are supportive of a greater involvement of citizens in policymaking are more left-wing than those who are not. Del Rio, Navarro and Font (2016) find the same pattern in Spain, Bengtsson and Mattila (2009) in Finland, and Bedock and Pilet (2020a) in France. It is not clear whether this pattern is due to something unique to the left-wing ideology (for example an anti-elite sentiment), or something more contextual that has to do with which the perception of which ideology is dominant among political elites. Nevertheless, we formulate a third hypothesis along these lines:



H3: (ideology) Support for citizens' assemblies selected through sortition is higher among left-wing citizens.

## ***2.2. Under which conditions can support for citizens' assemblies increase?***

In the previous section, we refer to earlier studies about public support for greater citizens' participation in policymaking. What these studies have in common is that they share an assumption that individual support is unconditional, or in other words that citizens who are in favour of such an evolution are always in favour of it, and vice versa for those who are against it. However, it is reasonable to think that support for direct democracy and citizens' assemblies selected through sortition can be contingent. For example, Bedock and Pilet (2020b), Rojon, Rijken, and Klandermans (2019) and Christensen (2020) show that the public is more supportive of some versions of it, like a consultative rather than binding version. It seems that this is one condition under which support for the institution can increase. Identifying other relevant conditions is crucial because of its practical implications: if one wants to introduce citizens' assemblies, a strategy would be to make sure that these conditions are met.

In this paper, we reflect upon the literature on endogenous institutions, which states that new institutions emerge when it is in the interest of those in charge to adopt them (Aghion, Alesina, and Trebbi 2004). According to this idea, political actors, being politicians, political parties, or citizens, push for institutions when they know that these institutions will help advance their interests. There is already evidence that citizens prefer the electoral system that gives an advantage to their preferred party or candidate (Aldrich, Reiffel, and Munger 2014; Banducci and Karp 1999). Similarly, there is evidence that they are keener on organizing a referendum

on certain policy issues when they know that their position on these issue is the one shared by the majority of their fellow citizens (Werner 2020) or when they recently won a referendum on a related issue (Brummel 2020) The explanation is that, in this context, they know that their position will most likely win if a referendum on these issues is organized (although of course the position of the population might still change during the campaign).

We apply this logic to the conditions under which the public should support for citizens' assemblies selected through sortition. We expect this support to increase when citizens know that their fellow citizens have a position similar to them on the policy issue to be tackled by the assembly. In other words, we expect them to be instrumentally motivated in their perception of the institution. The hypothesis is the following:

H4 (instrumental motivation): Support for citizens' assemblies selected through sortition is higher when citizens know that their position on a certain issue is shared by their fellow citizens

Note that in order to test this hypothesis, it is crucial to evaluate support for citizens' assemblies selected through sortition across several policy issues. One can indeed have a position that is aligned with the rest of the population on one issue, and not on another. This is why we asked in our survey respondents to report their support for three different policy issues (European integration, social benefits, and immigration). At random, we then we provide actual figures about the position of their fellow citizens on each of these issues (see below for a description of the research design).

### **3. Research Design**

#### ***3.1. Data***

We conducted a web-based survey between the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March and the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April 2020, for which we interviewed 15,406 adults across 15 Western European countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom.<sup>3</sup> The respondents were recruited by the survey company DyNata, which used age, gender, education, and region quotas to ensure that each national sample is representative of the population of the corresponding country on these socio-demographic characteristics. The survey took about 15 minutes to complete and included questions about political attitudes and preferences.

### ***3.2. Dependent variables***

Throughout the middle of the survey, we introduced respondents to the idea of citizens' assemblies selected through sortition with a short message: "People sometimes talk about the possibility of letting a group of citizens decide instead of politicians. These citizens will be selected by lot within the population and would then gather and deliberate for several days in order to make policy decisions, like politicians do in parliament." Obviously, this is a simplification of the institution. Yet, with this kind of web-based survey interface, written instructions need to be short and simple as to maximize readability and understanding. Moreover, the short description covers two of the main characteristics of the institution: composed of citizens selected by lot, convened to deliberate on policy issues.

---

<sup>3</sup> The exact sample size per country is: Austria N=976, Belgium N=1,845, Denmark N=997, Finland N=977, France N=977, Germany N=934, Greece N=787, Italy N=990, Ireland N=989, Netherlands N=973, Norway N=992, Portugal N=1,003, Spain N=991, Sweden N=1,001, and United Kingdom N=974.

After this message, we asked respondents the following three questions (same screen): “Here is a list of policy issues. Could you, for each of them, indicate whether you think that is a good idea to let a group of randomly selected make decisions instead of politicians on 0 (very bad idea) to 10 (very good idea)? European integration, social benefits, and immigration.” On the following screen, we asked one extra question: “Overall, do you think it is a good idea to let a group of randomly-selected citizens make decisions instead of politicians on a scale going from 0 (very bad idea) to 10 (very good idea)?” We use the answers to these four questions as dependent variables in this paper after removing respondents who declined to answer (around 5 per cent of the respondents).

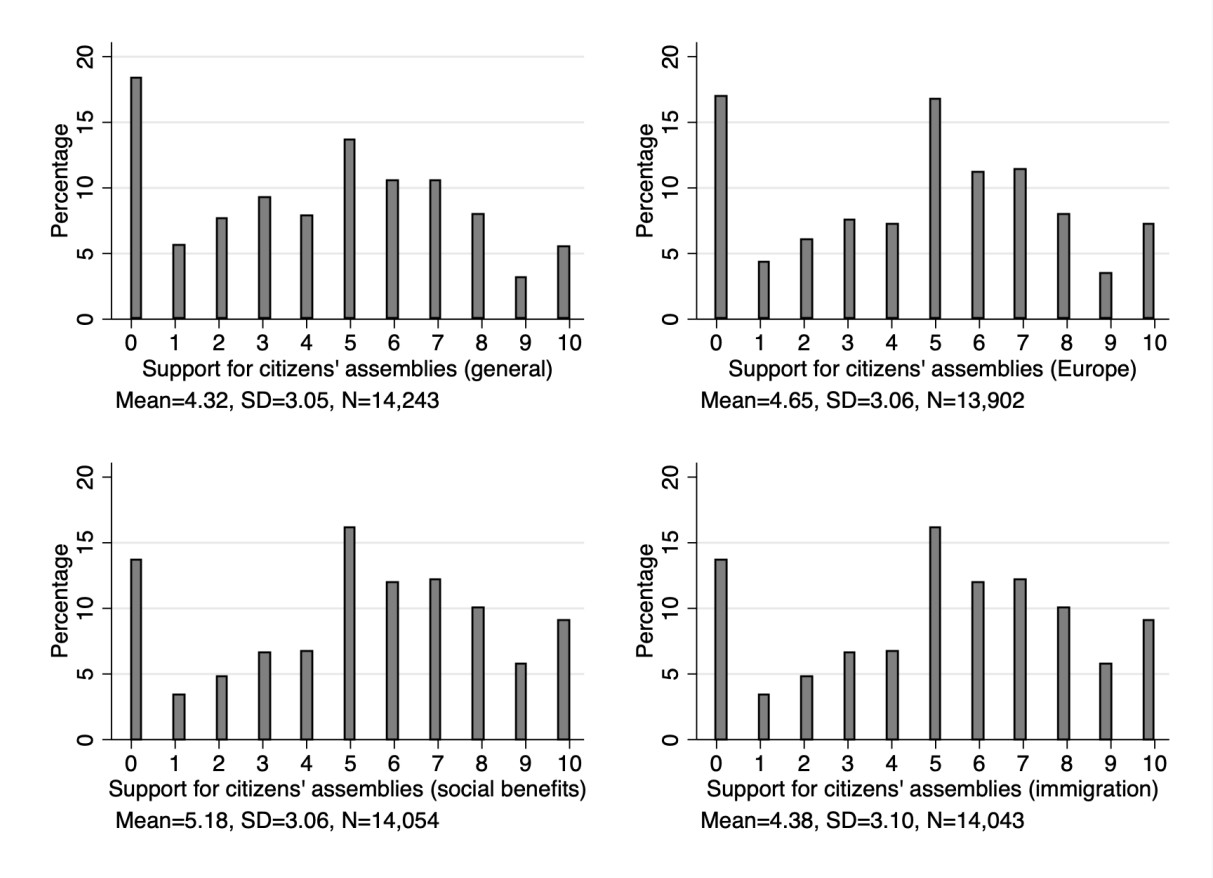
Figure 1 reports the distribution of answers to these four questions.<sup>4</sup> It reveals that support for citizens’ assemblies selected through sortition is (1) not particularly high, and (2) rather dispersed. First, in three instances, the mean is below the midpoint of the 0-10 response scale (between 4.23 and 4.68). Interestingly, the lowest level of support is for the institution in general, meaning the question in which we do not specify any policy issue. Respondents only seem to be slightly positive about the institution when it is used to decide upon the distribution of social benefits (mean = 5.18). Second, we observe large standard deviations in all four distributions, between 3.05 and 3.10. This high dispersion seems to be main driven by the high proportion of respondents who think that citizens’ assemblies selected through sortition are a ‘very bad idea’ (0 on the 0-10 scale). Between 13 and 20 per cent are fully negative about them. By contrast, between 5 and 10 per cent think that the institution is a ‘very good idea’ (10 on the 0-10 scale). There is thus a rather high polarization on the topic, although there are always between 13 and 17 per cent who seem to be indifferent (5 on the 0-10 scale). Finally, it is

---

<sup>4</sup> As explained below, there is an experiment embedded in this set of questions, which could affect the overall distribution of answers. Appendix A reproduces Figure 1 but in only keeping the respondents who were in the control group. The distributions are sensibly similar.

important to note that averages and standard deviations are stable across countries (see Appendix B).<sup>5</sup>

**Figure 1. Distribution of dependent variables.**



**3.3. Independent variables<sup>6</sup>**

The questions aimed at testing H1a, H1b, H2 and H3 were asked before questions relative to citizens’ assemblies. In order to test H1a, we use two well-known indicators of political engagement: self-reported political interest (1 not interested at all, 4 very interested) and self-

<sup>5</sup> Appendix B reports the mean support for citizens’ assemblies selected through sortition per country. It reveals some differences, with support being systematically lower in Denmark and Norway, and slightly larger in Spain and (French-speaking) Belgium. Explaining the differences between countries falls beyond the scope of this paper, especially since the survey only covers 15 countries and does not give us a lot of variations in terms of relevant macro variables (like quality of democracy and political representation). Note however that we systematically reproduced the analysis of this paper in each country separately to show that they are not solely driven by a few countries (see Appendix H).

<sup>6</sup> The descriptive statistics of all these extra variables are in Appendix C.

reported political competence (politics is too complicated for people like me, 1 strongly agree, 4 strongly disagree). This last survey question is usually used to measure internal political efficacy (Craig and Maggiotto 1982). We believe that it is a good indicator of how much respondents are politically engaged. In order, to test H1b, we use highest education attainment (for the sake of comparison between countries we use three levels, 0 no secondary degree, 1 secondary degree, 2 university degree) and feeling of income security (how you feel about your household's income nowadays? 1 find it difficult very difficult to live, 4 living comfortably). This subjective income variable has the advantage to have fewer missing values than one about objective income (because of respondents refusing to answer). It is also more comparable across countries with different cost of living. As per H1a and H1b, we expect these four variables to be positively correlated with support for citizens' assemblies selected through sortition.

In order to test H2, we use two survey questions to measure political enragement. First, we use who satisfaction with the way democracy works in the country (0 extremely dissatisfied, 10 extremely satisfied). Second, we use a more recent set of questions that is coming from the literature on populism and anti-elite sentiment (Castanho Silva et al 2020). We asked respondent to give their degree of agreement (1 strongly agree, 4 strongly disagree) with the following two statements: "the government is run by a few big interests looking out for themselves" and "government officials use their power to try to improve people's lives". After inverting the answers relative to the second statement, we calculate the sum that we then divide by two (Cronbach Alpha = 0.47). The variable thus measures the respondent's evaluation of elites, and ranges from 1 (very negative) to 4 (very positive). As per H2, we expect a negative correlation between these two variables and support for citizens' assemblies selected through sortition.

In order to test H3, we use self-reported left-right position (0 extreme left, 10 extreme-right) that we expect to be negatively correlated with the dependent variable. Finally, we also use a few control variables in our regression: age, gender (0 male, 1 female), urbanization (1 living in a farm or home in countryside, 5 living in a big city), and voting (0 not voted at last election, 1 voted).

### ***3.4. Experimental design***

The test of H4 is more complex because it involves several survey questions and an experimental manipulation in the form of a vignette presented to a half of respondents at random. Before the questions relative to citizens' assemblies, the survey contained a few other questions about political preferences. Among these, we included three questions from the *European Social Survey* about European integration, social benefits, and immigration. These questions were: "Could you tell us how much you agree/disagree with the following statements" (1 strongly disagree, 5 strongly agree): "the country has overall benefited from being a member of the EU", "social benefits and services in [country] lead to a more equal society", "immigrants have overall a positive impact on the national economy".

We then included a vignette in the part about citizens' assemblies. It consisted in exposing a random sample of respondents to some information about the proportion of citizens of their country who (strongly) agree with the three policy statements about European integration, social benefits and immigration regardless of their own position on these issues. This vignette included real figures from the latest wave of the *European Social Survey* (from 2018 or 2016 depending on country and data availability). It took the following form: "a recent study shows that [NUMBER] per cent of the population in [COUNTRY] says that the country has overall

benefited from being a member of the EU". Right after it, we then asked respondents (same screen) to report their support for citizens' assemblies selected through sortition to tackle issue related to European integration. We then repeated the same operation for the two other policy issues one after the other.

In order to test H4, we use two variables calculated separately for all three policy issues. The first one is simply a binary variable capturing whether the respondent saw the vignette or not (0 control group, 1 treatment group). The second one is a construct variable that captures whether their position on the three policy issues is shared by their fellow citizens, and by what margin. It builds on the share of population in the country that supports the issue according to the latest wave of *European Social Survey*, and whether the respondent supports the issue (agree or strongly agree with the statement) or not (disagree or strongly disagree). Formally speaking, it is:

(For respondents in favour of policy issue)

Share of population aligned with respondent = Support for issue in population – 0.50

(For respondents against policy issue)

Share of population aligned with respondent = – (Support for issue in population – 0.50)

The variable thus can go from -0.5 to +0.5.<sup>7</sup> A negative value means that the respondent's position is not supported by a majority of their fellow citizens, and a positive value means that it is. 0 means that there is exactly 50 per cent of citizens in the country in favour of the policy issue. Note that for respondents that are indifferent to the policy issues (neither agree, nor

---

<sup>7</sup> Appendix B reports the descriptive statistics.



disagree with the policy statements) are also assigned to 0 on this variable. Our core expectation in line with H4 is that for those respondents that have received the information about population attitudes towards social benefits, immigration and EU integration, the variable ‘share of population aligned with respondent’ would be positively correlated with support for citizens’ assemblies selected through sortition. In our regression, it will be tested with an interaction term between this variable and the binary indicating that the respondent has received the experimental treatment. We also control for the direct effect of the variable ‘share of population aligned with respondent’. A positive correlation with this variable would indicate that at least a few respondents are able to correctly anticipate whether their position is shared by their fellow citizens even without seeing the treatment.

Note that our experimental design has some key advantages compared to surveys in which respondents are asked to report their perception of where the rest of the population stands on some issues (like Werner 2020). First, in providing them with this piece of information, we aim to reduce the interference of uncertainty and ‘wishful thinking’ (i.e., one’s propensity to exaggerate the proportion of fellow citizens having a position similar to them). Second, we introduce exogenous variations in this variable in order to give a more causal identification of the relationship between the two variables that is less sensitive to confounding effects. Finally, using real figures from the *European Social Survey*, we do not deceive respondents, which would be ethical questionable (Bol 2019).<sup>8</sup>

### ***3.5. Balance test and manipulation check***

---

<sup>8</sup> We received ethical clearance from [redacted] prior conducting the experiment.

We report a few tests providing evidence that the experiment was correctly executed and induced the right response among respondents. First, in Appendix D, we report the result of a balance test that shows that treatment assignment is unrelated to pre-treatment co-variates. In particular, we show that there is no correlation between belonging to the treatment or control group and any of the independent and control variables presented above.

Second, Appendix E reports the result of a manipulation check, which shows that the treatment indeed made respondents update their beliefs about what their fellow citizens think. Right after being exposed to the vignette (or not), we asked them to guess what is the share of the population that supports a slightly different yet related issue.<sup>9</sup> The *raison d'être* of this question was simply to make sure that they noticed the treatment and updated their beliefs accordingly. We did not ask exactly the same question than the one in the treatment because we feared it would seem redundant to respondents.

Appendix E shows that the correlation between actual and perceived share of the population supporting the policy issue is always positive, suggesting that respondents are able to correctly estimate whether their position is shared by their fellow citizens. Yet, this correlation is stronger in the treatment group than in the control group, which confirms that they updated their belief in view of the figures appearing on the treatment.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> The wording of the questions was: (European integration) “In your opinion, what share of the population of [COUNTRY] thinks that the country should remain in the European Union?” (social benefit) “In your opinion, what share of the population of [COUNTRY] thinks social benefits should be increased.” (immigration) “In your opinion, what share of the population of [COUNTRY] thinks that the country should not accept new migrants.”

<sup>10</sup> Note that the positive correlation is not stronger in the treatment group for one policy issue, i.e. immigration. We attribute this to the question itself. The one asking respondents about their perception of the share of their fellow citizens supporting the policy issue was asked the other way around compared to treatment (share of population thinking that the country should NOT accept new migrants vs share of population thinking that immigrants are economically beneficial for the country) Yet, we do believe that this treatment, just like others, make respondents update their beliefs about the share of population with position aligned to them.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. *Who supports citizens' assemblies?*

Table 1 reports the results of two OLS regressions predicting generic support for citizens' assemblies selected through sortition. In the first one, we only include the socio-demographic variables presented above as predictors. In the second, we also include those capturing political attitudes. The reason for having two separate regressions comes from the possibility that political attitudes are the products of socio-demographic characteristics. In including both as predictors, the coefficient estimates relative to socio-demographic characteristics can thus be altered by post-treatment bias. In each of these two regressions, we use country fixed effect to account for differences between countries.

We find little evidence confirming H1a and H1b. We do not observe stronger support among more politically engaged citizens. The only independent variables measuring the concept that is correlated in the expected direction with the dependent is political interest ( $p < 0.01$ ). Given the scale of the variable, going from the minimum to the maximum of the variable (1-4) increases support for citizens' assemblies by 0.90, that is less than a third of the standard deviation of the variable. This 'full effect' is not unsubstantial but is the only one that confirms H1a and H1b. By contrast, political competence on the hand, and education and income on the other are all negatively associated to the dependent variable ( $p < 0.01$ ). The correlations are actually stronger than the one of political interest. The full effect is around -1.00 and -1.40 for income and education, and -1.90 for political competence. This last effect corresponds to a reduction of 60 per cent of the standard deviation of the variable. In other words, the main effects that we observe point in the direction of stronger support for citizens' assemblies composed via sortition among less rather than more politically engaged Europeans.

**Table 1. Regressions about who support citizens' assemblies.**

	(1)	(2)
Gender	-0.17*** (0.05)	-0.14** (0.06)
Education	-0.35*** (0.04)	-0.26*** (0.05)
Age	-0.02*** (0.00)	-0.02*** (0.00)
Income	-0.26*** (0.03)	-0.18*** (0.03)
Urbanization	0.03 (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)
Political competence		-0.62*** (0.03)
Political interest		0.23*** (0.04)
Satisfaction with democracy		0.02* (0.01)
Left-right placement		0.11*** (0.01)
Evaluation of elites		-0.68*** (0.05)
Voting		0.06 (0.09)
Country FE	YES	YES
Constant	6.08*** (0.17)	7.97*** (0.24)
Observations	13,988	10,848
R-squared	0.05	0.12

Note: Entries are coefficient estimates from OLS regressions predicting support for citizens' assemblies selected through sortition (general). Standard errors are in parentheses. \*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$  (two-tailed).

We find more evidence for H2. Although, contrary to this hypothesis, satisfaction with democracy seems to be positively correlated with support for citizens' assemblies selected through sortition, this effect is small (full effect = + 0.20) and barely statistically significant ( $p < 0.1$ ) despite the sample size of more than 10,000 respondents. By contrast, there is a strong correlation between the evaluation of elites and the dependent variable. The full effect is -2.72 ( $p < 0.01$ ), which is huge as it corresponds to a decrease of 90 per cent of the standard deviation.

Such an effect concurs to argue that support for citizens' assemblies composed via sortition is clearly stronger among 'enraged citizens' who are especially negative towards elected politicians.

Regarding H3, what we observe goes in the opposite direction to what earlier studies had found. Left-right placement is positively associated with the dependent variable, meaning that it is among right-leaning and not left-leaning respondents that we observe greater support citizens' assemblies selected through sortition (full effect = + 1.10,  $p < 0.01$ ).

We conducted in addition a set of robustness tests. First, since the question used as dependent variable was asked after the exposure to the treatment, we reproduce the analysis of Table 1 for the control group only. Appendix F shows that results are very similar. Second, we reproduce the analysis in using a multinomial logit regression predicting a negative sentiment towards citizens' assemblies (0-3 on the original 0-10 scale), relative neutral one (4-6), or a positive one (7-10). This extra analysis is useful to check whether the effects presented above are asymmetric or not. Results in Appendix F show that these results are symmetric for most variables: those that have a positive effect on positive evaluations of citizens' assemblies have a negative effect on negative evaluations, and the other way around. However, the effect does not seem to be symmetric for political interest. The variable is positively correlated with both a positive and negative evaluations of citizens' assemblies (this is because respondents with low political interest are mostly indifferent to the institution). This is an important nuance. Political interest was the single variable for which our regressions brought some support for the 'engaged citizens' hypotheses. These findings are however contradicted by our robustness checks. Supporters of citizens' assemblies are not particularly more politically interested than

the rest of the population. There are also many opponents to the institution among the most politically interested citizens.

Finally, we evaluate the stability of our results across context. First, we reproduce the analysis in replacing the dependent variable (general support for citizens' assemblies selected through sortition) by the dependent variables measuring specific support for the institution for each of the three policy issues covered in the survey (Appendix G). Second, we reproduce the analysis for each of the 15 countries covered in the survey (Appendix H). We find that the negative correlation between the dependent variable and education, political competence, and evaluation of politicians are very robust: they exist across all three policy issues, and in virtually all countries. The same is true regarding the right-wing tendencies of supporters of citizens' assemblies. By contrast, the positive correlation of political interest and the negative correlation of income seem to be more sensitive to the context. The sign and the strength of the relationship vary across countries and policy issues.

Overall, we find evidence in favour of H2, but not for hypotheses H1a, H1b, and H3. Supporters of citizens' assemblies selected through sortition seem to be rather disengaged and enraged politically: they have a low education levels, a negative opinion about elites, do not feel competent politically speaking. Also, we find that they tend to be leaning to the right rather than the left.

#### ***4.2. Under which conditions can support for citizens' assemblies increase?***

Table 2 reports the results of a series of OLS regressions predicting support for citizens' assemblies selected through sortition for the three policy issues included in the survey. The

main predictors are the two variables described above: (1) the treatment variable (0 control group, 1 treatment group), and (2) the variable capturing the share of the population of the respondent’s country with a position than aligned with them according to the latest wave of the *European Social Survey* (see above). We also include an interaction term between the two. Note that, for each policy issue, we present the results with and without control variables. Although the test is based on an experimental design, which does not require any control variable to be analysed, the randomized treatment is not the only variable of importance. The variable ‘Share of population aligned with respondent’ is not randomized. Hence, the inclusion of control variables is important. For the same reason, we also include country fixed effects.

Table 2 shows that the coefficient associated to the variable ‘Population share aligned with respondent’ is null and not statistically significant in most regressions. This suggests that respondents in the control group are unable to estimate where their fellow citizens stand on this issue, and hence the dependent variable is not affected by this variable. An important exception is social benefit. For this particular policy issue, the coefficient is positive and large ( $p < 0.01$ ). This means that even if they are in the control group, respondent who have a position that aligns with the rest of the population are more supportive of citizens’ assemblies selected through sortition. As the variable goes from -0.19 to +0.19, the full effect is of more around + 2.10 (around 70 per cent of the standard deviation). Second, Table 2 shows that the interaction term is positive and statistically significant (at least at  $p < 0.1$ ), except for social benefits for which it is negative.

**Table 2. Regressions about the conditions under which support can increase.**

	Europe	Europe	Social benefits	Social benefits	Immigration	Immigration
Pop. share aligned with resp.	-0.11 (0.20)	-0.04 (0.20)	5.55*** (0.39)	5.47*** (0.40)	-0.02 (0.36)	-0.04 (0.36)

Treatment	-0.11*	-0.10*	-0.08	-0.07	0.06	0.06
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Pop. share aligned with resp *	0.58**	0.51*	-1.92***	-2.01***	0.88*	0.92*
Treatment	(0.27)	(0.27)	(0.54)	(0.54)	(0.50)	(0.50)
Control variables	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Country FE	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Constant	4.60***	5.25***	5.15***	6.85***	4.12***	4.77***
	(0.10)	(0.18)	(0.10)	(0.18)	(0.11)	(0.19)
Observations	13,031	12,803	13,152	12,916	13,147	12,911
R-squared	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.06	0.01	0.02

Note: Entries are coefficient estimates from OLS regressions predicting support for citizens' assemblies selected through sortition (European integration, social benefits, immigration). Standard errors are in parentheses. Control variables are age, gender, education, income, and urbanization. \*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$  (two-tailed).

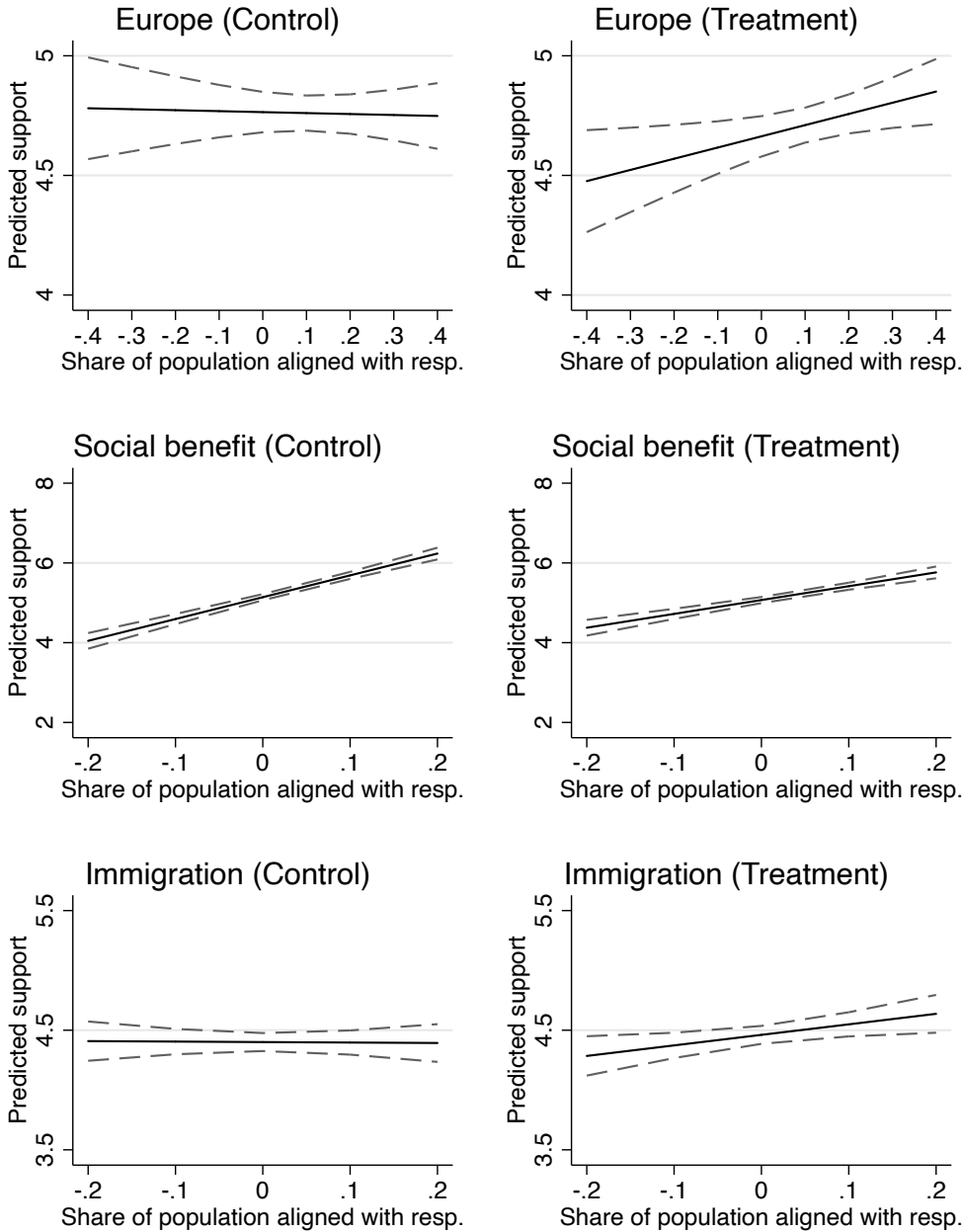
To facilitate the interpretation of the interaction term, we plot the predicted values and 95 per cent confidence intervals in Figure 2 in separating the control and treatment groups. We observe a flat line in the control group, which confirms that that respondents' support for citizens' assemblies selected through sortition is not affected by the share of their fellow citizens that have a position that aligns with them (probably because they cannot anticipate it), except for the policy issue relative to the distribution of social benefits. Yet, in the treatment group, we observe an increasing line for all three policy issues, which means that when respondents know the position of their fellow citizens on the policy issue, they are positively affected by it.<sup>11</sup> The full effect goes from + 0.35 for immigration to + 1.38 for social benefits (respectively, 11 and 45 per cent of the standard deviation of the dependent variable). This confirms H4: respondents are more supportive of citizens' assemblies selected through sortition when they know that their position is shared by their fellow citizens. In other words, their support for the institution is at least partially instrumentally motivated.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Although the interaction term between the variable 'Share of population aligned with respondent' and the treatment is negative in the case of social benefits (Table 2), the effect of the variable remains strongly positive in the treatment group (Figure 2), which confirms H4. The negative effect of the interaction term is most likely due to respondents in the control group being able to correctly anticipate where their fellow citizens stands on this issue, which explains the positive slope of the variable even in the control group (Figure 2).

<sup>12</sup> Note that we do not have enough variation to reproduce the analysis by country. In each country, the vignette that the respondents saw in the experiment was the same (real figures from latest wave of the *European Social*



**Figure 2. Predictive support for citizens’ assemblies as treatment varies**



Note: Lines are predicted values from OLS regressions in Table 2 (with control variables). Dashed lines are 95 per cent-confidence intervals.

---

*Survey*). Hence, within a given country, there is little variation in the variable ‘Share of population aligned with respondent’.

## 5. Discussion

Amid declining trust in politicians and institutions of representative democracy (Cain, Dalton, and Scarrow 2003; Dalton 2004), citizens' assemblies selected through sortition have recently gained some popularity in academic circles and in real life (Paulis et al., 2020). Nevertheless, if we want to introduce this institution in the hope to revitalize established democracies, we need to make sure that the public is on board. In this paper, we report the results of a unique survey that is the first one to gauge citizens' support for citizens' assemblies in 15 Western European countries.

First, we find that citizens are not particularly supportive of this innovation. The average support is below the midpoint of the 0-10 survey scale. It seems however that they are keener about the institution when it aims at addressing issues related to redistribution of social benefits. Yet, it is clear that a generalization of the institution to all policy issues does not seem to be supported by a majority of citizens in the countries covered in the study.

Furthermore, we find that support for citizens' assemblies for sortition comes first and foremost from citizens who can be qualified as politically 'enraged'. Supporters of the institution do not feel politically competent and hold very negative views about elites. They also tend to come from a low-education background. Finally, we use an experiment embedded in the survey to show that support for citizens' assemblies increases when one knows that their position on a certain issue is shared by their fellow citizens. In that sense, we show that support for the institution is not stable and can change depending on instrumental considerations.

Overall, this paper brings an important nuance to the literature on citizens' assemblies selected through sortition. Although there is a vast literature that shows that the institution is promising in the sense that it can work effectively and lead to desirable outcomes (Beauvais and Warren 2019; Caluwaerts & Reuchamps 2016; Landa and Pevnik 2020), it seems that the public is not quite on board with it yet. At this time, it seems that only the most politically disillusioned citizens are truly supportive of it. Yet, our paper also shows that citizens' preferences for the institution are not stable and can change, for example when they realize that it can help them advance their interests.

### **Data Availability Statement**

All the data and syntaxes useful to replicate the findings will be made available on Harvard Dataverse.

**Funding:** The study has received financial support from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No. 772695).

### **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest related to this article.

## References

- Aghion P, Alesina A and Trebbi F (2004) Endogenous Political Institutions. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 119(2), 565-611.
- Aldrich J, Reifler J and Munger MC (2014). Sophisticated and Myopic? Citizen Preferences for Electoral College Reform. *Public Choice* 158(3-4): 541-558.
- Almond G and Verba S (1963) *The Civic Culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Anderson C, Bol D and Ananda A (2020) Humanity's Attitudes About Democracy and Political Leaders: Patterns and Trends. *APSA Preprints*. doi: 10.33774/apsa-2020-knx72.
- Anderson C and Goodyear-Grant E (2010) Why are highly informed citizens sceptical of referenda? *Electoral Studies* 29(2), 227-238.
- Banducci SA and Karp JA (1999) Perceptions of Fairness and Support for Proportional Representation. *Political Behavior* 21(3), 217-238.
- Beauvais E and Warren E (2019) What can deliberative mini-publics contribute to democratic systems? *European Journal of Political Research* 58(3), 893-914.
- Bedock C (2017) *Reforming Democracy: Institutional Engineering in Western Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bedock C and Pilet J-B (2020a) Who supports citizens selected by lot to be the main policymakers? A study of French citizens. *Government and Opposition*, 1-20. Doi: [10.1017/gov.2020.1](https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2020.1)

Bedock C and Pilet J-B (2020b) Enraged, Engaged, or Both? A Study of the Determinants of Support for Consultative vs. Binding Mini-Publics. *Representation*. Early View. Doi: 10.1080/00344893.2020.1778511.

Bengtsson A and Mattila M (2009) Direct Democracy and its Critics: Support for Direct Democracy and ‘Stealth’ Democracy in Finland. *West European Politics* 32(5), 1031-1048.

Böker M (2017) Justification, critique and deliberative legitimacy: The limits of mini-publics. *Contemporary Political Theory* 16(1), 19-40.

Bol D (2019) Putting Politics in the Lab: A Review of Lab Experiments in Political Science. *Government & Opposition* 54(1), 167-190.

Boulianne S (2018) Mini-Publics and Public Opinion: two survey-based experiments. *Political Studies* 66(1), 119-136.

Bowler S, Donovan T and Karp JA (2007) Enraged or engaged? Preferences for direct citizen participation in affluent democracies. *Political Research Quarterly* 60(3), 351-362.

Brady HE, Verba S and Scholzman KL (1995) Beyond SES: a resource model of political participation. *American Political Science Review* 89(2), 271-294.

Brummel L (2020) 'You Can't Always Get What You Want': The effects of winning and losing in a referendum on citizens' referendum support. *Electoral Studies* 65, 102-155.

Cain BE, Dalton RJ and Scarrow SE (2003) *Democracy Transformed? Expanding Political Opportunities in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Caluwaerts D and Reuchamps M (2016) Generating Democratic Legitimacy through Deliberative Innovations: The Role of Embeddedness and Disruptiveness. *Representation* 52(1), 13-27.

Carl N, Richards L and Heath A (2019) Preference for realistic art predicts support for Brexit. *The British Journal of Sociology* 70(4), 1128-1134.

Castanho Silva B, Jungkunz S, Hebling M et al (2020) An Empirical Comparison of Seven Populist Attitudes Scales. *Political Research Quarterly* 73(2), 409-424.

Ceka B and Magalhaes PC (2019) Do the Rich and the Poor Have Different Conceptions of Democracy? Socioeconomic Status, Inequality, and the Political Status Quo. *Comparative Politics*. Early View. Doi: 10.5129/001041520X15670823829196.

Christensen HS, Himmelroos S and Setälä M (2019) A Matter of Life or Death: A Survey Experiment on the Perceived Legitimacy of Political Decision-Making on Euthanasia. *Parliamentary Affairs* 73(3), 627-650.

Christensen HS (2020) How citizens evaluate participatory processes: a conjoint analysis. *European Political Science Review* 12(2), 239-253.

Coffé H and Michels A (2014) Education and support for representative, direct and stealth democracy. *Electoral Studies* 35, 1-11.

Craig S and Maggiotto M (1982) Measuring Political Efficacy. *Political Methodology* 8(3), 85-109.

Curato N and Böker M (2016) Linking mini-publics to the deliberative system: a research agenda. *Policy Sciences* 49, 173-190.

Curato N and Suiter J (eds) (2021) *Deliberative Mini-Publics : Core Design Features*. Bristol : Bristol University Press.

Dalton RJ (2004) *Democratic Challenges, Democratic Choices: The Erosion of Political Support in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dalton RJ (2017) *The Participation Gap: Social Status and Political Inequality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dalton RJ and Welzel C (2014) *The Civic Culture Transformed: From Allegiant to Assertive Citizens*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

del Rio A, Navarro CJ and Font J (2016). Citizens, politicians and experts in political decision-making: The importance of perceptions of the qualities of political actors. *Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas* 154, 83-102.

Dowlen, O. (2017) *The Political Potential of Sortition: A Study of the Random Selection of Citizens for Public Office*. Exeter: Andrews UK.

Dryzek JS (2009) Democratization as Deliberative Capacity Building. *Comparative Political Studies* 42(11), 1379-1402.

Easton D (1965) *A System Analysis of Political Life*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Farrar C, Fishkin JS, Green DP List, C. et al. (2010) Disaggregating Deliberation's Effects: An Experiment within a Deliberative Poll. *British Journal of Political Science* 40(2), 333-347.

Farrell DM, Suiter J and Harris C (2019) 'Systematizing' Constitutional Deliberation: The 2016–18 Citizens' Assembly in Ireland. *Irish Political Studies* 34(1), 113-123.

Fishkin JS (1991) *Democracy and Deliberation: New Directions for Democratic Reform*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Fishkin J, Kousser T, Luskin RC et al. (2015) Deliberative agenda Setting: Piloting Reform of Direct Democracy in California. *Perspectives on Politics* 13(4), 1030-42.



Font, J., Wojcieszak, M., & Navarro, C. J. (2015). Participation, representation and expertise: Citizen preferences for political decision-making processes. *Political Studies*, 63(S1), 153–172.

Gerber E (1999) *The Populist Paradox: Interest Group Influence and the Promise of Direct Legislation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Gherghina S and Geissel B (2019). An alternative to representation: Explaining preferences for citizens as political decision-makers. *Political Studies Review* 17(3), 224–238.

Grönlund K, Bächtiger A and Setälä M (eds) (2014) *Deliberative Mini-Publics: Involving Citizens in the Democratic Process*. Colchester: ECPR Press.

Hainmueller J and Hangartner D (2019) Does Direct Democracy Hurt Immigrant Minorities? Evidence from Naturalization Decisions in Switzerland. *American Journal of Political Science* 63(3), 530-547.

Haskell, J. (2000). *Direct Democracy or Representative Government? Dispelling the Populist Myth*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Ingham S and Levin I (2018) Can Deliberative Minipublics Influence Public Opinion? Theory and Experimental Evidence. *Political Research Quarterly* 71(3), 654-667.

Jacobs D and Kaufmann W (2019) The right kind of participation? The effect of a deliberative mini-public on the perceived legitimacy of public decision-making. *Public Management Review*. Open Access. Doi:10.1080/14719037.2019.1668468.

Jacquet V (2017) Explaining non-participation in deliberative mini-publics. *European Journal of Political Research* 56(3), 640-659.

Landa D and Pevnick R (2020) Is Random Selection a Cure for the Ills of Electoral Representation? *Journal of Political Philosophy*. Early View, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jopp.12219>

Kim N, Fishkin JS and Luskin RC (2018) Intergroup Contact in Deliberative Contexts: Evidence From Deliberative Polls. *Journal of Communication* 68(6): 1029-1051.

Leeman L and Wasserfallen F (2016). The Democratic Effect of Direct Democracy. *American Political Science Review* 110(4), 750-762.

Luskin RC, Fishkin JS and Jowell R (2002) Considered Opinions: Deliberative Polling in Britain. *British Journal of Political Science* 32(3), 455-487

Morel L and Qvortrup M (2017) *The Routledge Handbook to Referendums and Direct Democracy*. London: Routledge.

Norris P (2011) *Democratic Deficit: Critical Citizens Revisited*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Norris P and Inglehart R (2019) *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit and Authoritarian Populism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Parkinson J (2006) *Deliberating in the Real World: Problems of Legitimacy in Deliberative Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Paulis E, Pilet J-B, Panel S et al. (2020) The POLITICIZE dataset: an inventory of deliberative mini-publics (DMPs) in Europe. *European Political Science*. Early View. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41304-020-00284-9>.

Putnam RD (2000) *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New-York: Simon & Schuster.

Renwick A (2010) *The Politics of Electoral Reform*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Reuchamps M and Suiter J (eds) (2016) *Constitutional Deliberative Democracy in Europe*. Colchester: ECPR Press.

Rojon S, Rijken AJ and Klandermans B (2019). A survey experiment on citizens' preferences for 'vote-centric' vs. 'talk-centric' democratic innovations with advisory vs. binding outcomes. *Politics and Governance* 7(2), 213-226.

Rosanvallon P (2008) *Counter-Democracy: Politics in an Age of Distrust*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Setälä M (2017) Connecting Deliberative Mini-Publics to Representative Decision-Making. *European Journal of Political Research* 56(4), 846-863.

Schuck ART and de Vreese CH (2015). Public support for referendums in Europe: A cross-national comparison in 21 countries. *Electoral Studies* 38, 149-158.

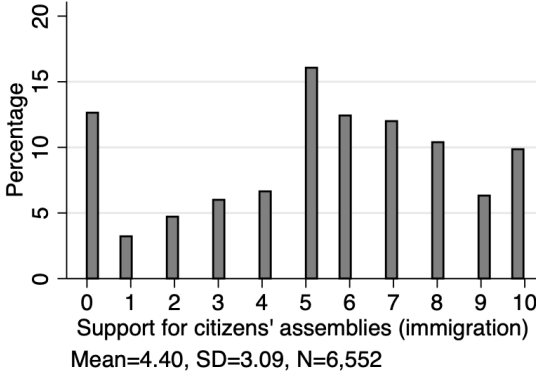
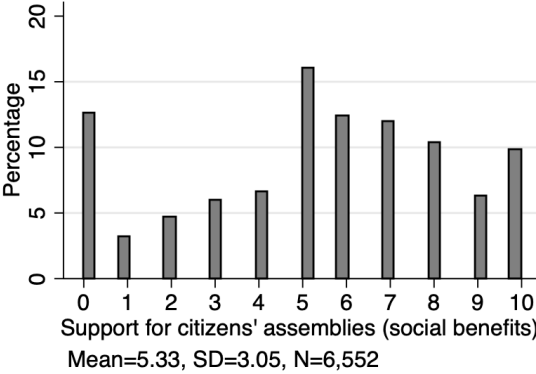
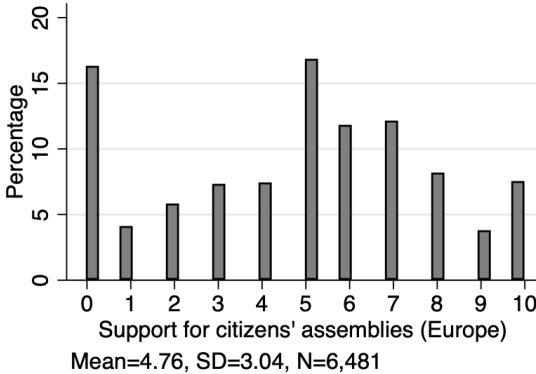
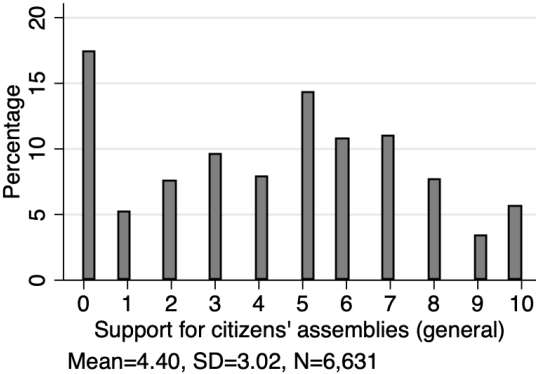
Vandamme P-E, Jacquet V, Niessen C et al. (2018) Intercameral Relations in a Bicameral Elected and Sortition Legislature. *Politics & Society* 46(3), 381-400.

Van der Meer T (2017) Political Trust and the ‘Crisis of Democracy’. *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Politics*, Published Online, DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013

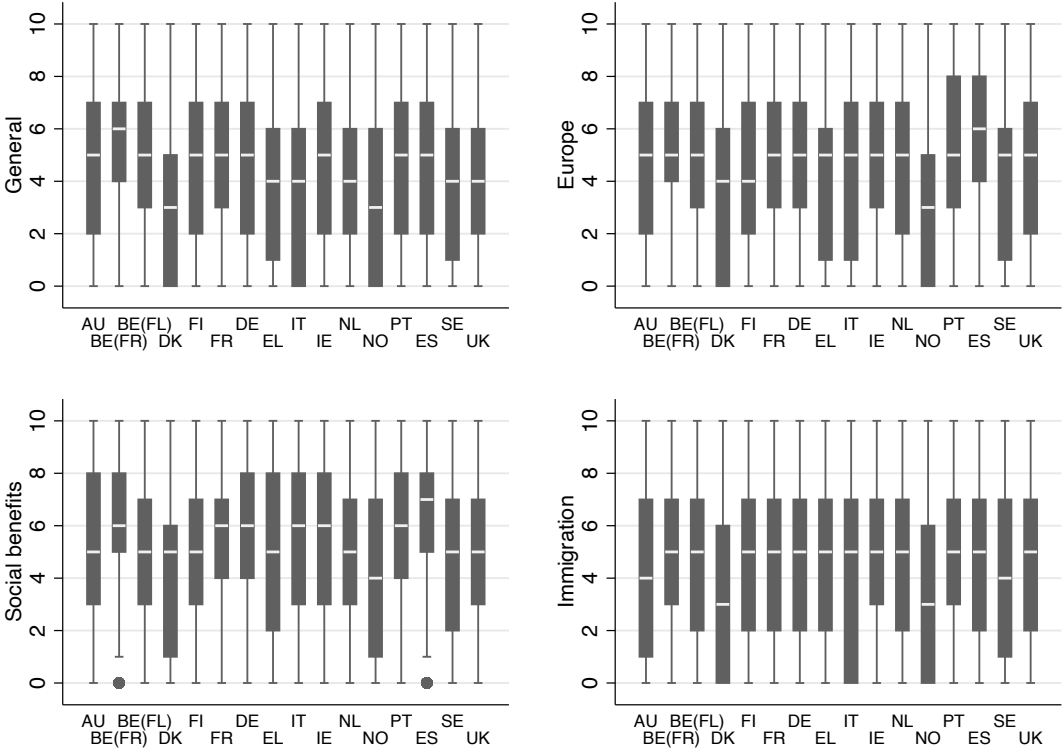
Webb P (2013) Who is willing to participate? Dissatisfied democrats, stealth democrats and populists in the United Kingdom. *European Journal of Political Research*, 52(6), 747–772.

Werner H (2020) If I'll win it, I want it: The role of instrumental considerations in explaining public support for referendums. *European Journal of Political Research* 59, 312-330.

**Appendix A. Distributions of dependent variables (control group only).**



**Appendix B. Description of dependent variables (per country).**



### Appendix C. Descriptive statistics of independent and control variables.

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>	<b>N</b>
Gender	0.52	0.50	0	1	15,389
Education	1.28	0.64	0	2	15,390
Age	45.83	15.71	18	99	15,392
Income	2.78	0.89	1	4	15,064
Urbanization	3.48	1.22	1	5	15,327
Political competence	3.10	0.93	1	4	14,415
Political interest	2.75	0.88	1	4	15,190
Satisfaction with democracy	5.34	2.70	0	10	14,840
Left-right placement	5.30	2.57	0	10	13,424
Evaluation of elites	2.19	0.73	1	4	13,700
Voting	0.84	0.37	0	1	14,479
Share of population aligned with respondent (Europe)	0.11	0.19	-0.42	0.42	14,522
Share of population aligned with respondent (social benefit)	0.04	0.10	-0.19	0.19	15,406
Share of population aligned with respondent (immigration)	0.00	0.10	-0.22	0.22	15,406

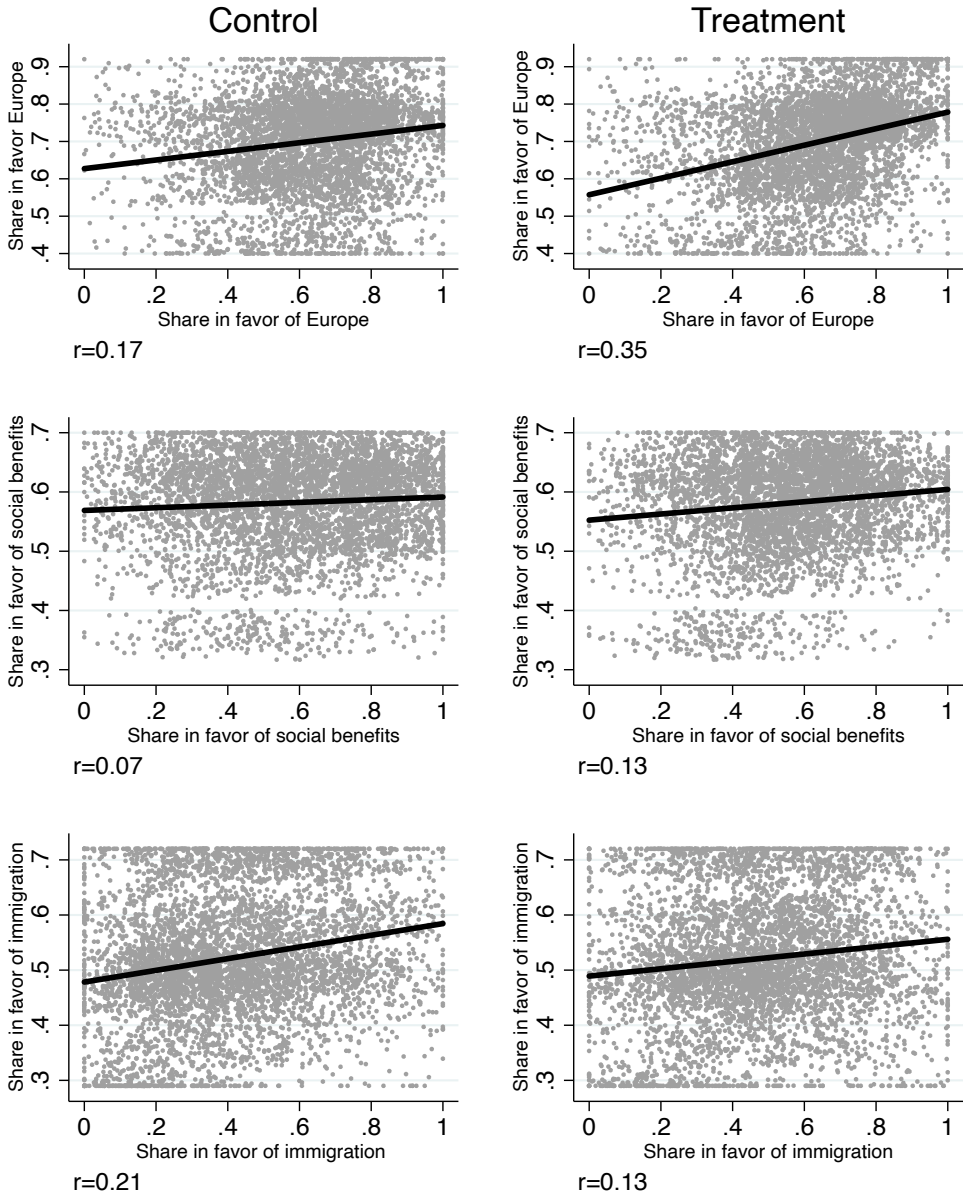
## Appendix D. Balance test.

	Treatment group
Gender	0.00 (0.01)
Education	0.00 (0.01)
Age	0.00 (0.00)
Income	0.01 (0.01)
Urbanization	0.00 (0.00)
Political competence	-0.00 (0.01)
Political interest	0.00 (0.01)
Satisfaction with democracy	0.00* (0.00)
Left-right placement	0.00 (0.00)
Evaluation of political elites	-0.00 (0.01)
Voting	-0.01 (0.02)
Country FE	YES
Observations	10,473

Note: Entries are marginal effects from logit regressions predicting treatment assignment. Standard errors are in parentheses. \*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .



Appendix E. Manipulation check



x-axes are perceptions y-axes are real figures from ESS

## Appendix F. Regressions about who supports citizens' assemblies (robustness tests)

	Multinomial logit regression		Control group
	Negative evaluation	Positive evaluation	
Gender	1.02 (0.05)	0.87*** (0.05)	-0.13 (0.08)
Education	1.18*** (0.05)	0.94 (0.04)	-0.25*** (0.07)
Age	1.01*** (0.00)	1.00 (0.00)	-0.01*** (0.00)
Income	1.14*** (0.03)	1.01 (0.03)	-0.14*** (0.05)
Urbanization	0.96** (0.02)	0.98 (0.02)	0.06* (0.04)
Political competence	1.33*** (0.04)	0.81*** (0.02)	-0.70*** (0.05)
Political interest	1.10*** (0.04)	1.38*** (0.05)	0.32*** (0.05)
Satisfaction with democracy	1.02 (0.01)	1.05*** (0.01)	0.01 (0.02)
Left-right placement	0.97*** (0.01)	1.07*** (0.01)	0.12*** (0.02)
Evaluation of political elites	1.26*** (0.05)	0.69*** (0.03)	-0.69*** (0.07)
Voting	0.93 (0.07)	0.99 (0.09)	-0.08 (0.14)
Country FE	YES	YES	YES
Constant	0.08*** (0.02)	0.86 (0.19)	7.77*** (0.36)
Observations	10,848	10,848	5,017

Note: Entries are odds ratios (two first columns) from multinomial regression predicting evaluation of citizens' assemblies selected through sortition (0-3 negative, 4-6 neutral, 7-10 positive). Entries are coefficient estimates (last column) from OLS regression with respondents from the control group. Standard errors are in parentheses. \*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

## Appendix G. Regression about who supports citizens' assemblies (per policy)

	Europe	Social benefits	Immigration
Gender	-0.20*** (0.06)	-0.10* (0.06)	-0.15** (0.06)
Education	-0.20*** (0.05)	-0.34*** (0.05)	-0.14*** (0.05)
Age	-0.02*** (0.00)	-0.02*** (0.00)	-0.01*** (0.00)
Income	-0.06* (0.04)	-0.26*** (0.04)	-0.03 (0.04)
Urbanization	0.09*** (0.02)	0.04 (0.02)	0.01 (0.03)
Political competence	-0.43*** (0.03)	-0.44*** (0.03)	-0.41*** (0.03)
Political interest	0.20*** (0.04)	0.18*** (0.04)	0.21*** (0.04)
Satisfaction with democracy	0.08*** (0.01)	0.03** (0.01)	0.07*** (0.01)
Left-right placement	0.07*** (0.01)	0.03** (0.01)	0.07*** (0.01)
Evaluation of political elites	-0.41*** (0.05)	-0.43*** (0.05)	-0.41*** (0.05)
Voting	0.03 (0.10)	0.02 (0.10)	0.00 (0.10)
Country FE	YES	YES	YES
Constant	6.31*** (0.25)	8.68*** (0.25)	5.99*** (0.26)
Observations	10,700	10,743	10,736
R-squared	0.09	0.08	0.05

Note: Entries are coefficient estimates from OLS regressions predicting support for citizens' assemblies selected through sortition (per policy). Standard errors are in parentheses. \*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$  (two-tailed).

## Appendix H. Regressions about who supports citizens' assemblies (per country).

	AT	BE(FR)	BE(FL)	DK	FI	FR	DE	EL	IT	IE	NL	NO	PO	ES	SE	UK
Gender	0.32 (0.24)	-0.22 (0.21)	0.53** (0.23)	-0.02 (0.21)	-0.40* (0.23)	-0.05 (0.21)	0.04 (0.24)	-0.24 (0.24)	0.24 (0.23)	-0.09 (0.22)	-0.69*** (0.23)	-0.47** (0.23)	-0.16 (0.21)	-0.17 (0.23)	-0.42* (0.22)	-0.02 (0.22)
Education	-0.57** (0.24)	-0.36** (0.15)	-0.68*** (0.18)	0.13 (0.18)	-0.15 (0.15)	-0.34* (0.17)	-0.15 (0.28)	0.05 (0.21)	-0.51** (0.20)	-0.13 (0.19)	-0.20 (0.21)	-0.58*** (0.21)	-0.02 (0.15)	-0.31 (0.20)	-0.34** (0.17)	0.06 (0.22)
Age	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01* (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.02*** (0.01)	0.01* (0.01)	-0.04*** (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.02*** (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.04*** (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.03*** (0.01)	-0.02*** (0.01)	-0.04*** (0.01)
Income	0.01 (0.15)	0.14 (0.12)	-0.11 (0.14)	-0.31** (0.13)	-0.04 (0.14)	-0.35*** (0.13)	-0.25 (0.16)	-0.23 (0.15)	-0.16 (0.15)	0.06 (0.14)	-0.33** (0.16)	-0.50*** (0.13)	-0.04 (0.12)	-0.14 (0.14)	-0.08 (0.12)	-0.09 (0.13)
Urbanization	0.01 (0.09)	0.22** (0.09)	-0.04 (0.10)	0.03 (0.09)	-0.11 (0.09)	0.02 (0.09)	-0.07 (0.11)	-0.25 (0.14)	0.16 (0.10)	0.04 (0.09)	0.01 (0.09)	0.02 (0.08)	0.01 (0.10)	-0.03 (0.11)	0.01 (0.09)	0.19* (0.11)
Political competence	-0.36*** (0.14)	-0.55*** (0.12)	-0.35*** (0.13)	-0.60*** (0.13)	-0.53*** (0.15)	-0.49*** (0.11)	-0.71*** (0.15)	-0.46** (0.16)	-0.64*** (0.14)	-0.61*** (0.13)	-0.53*** (0.13)	-0.75*** (0.14)	-0.69*** (0.12)	-0.75*** (0.12)	-0.75*** (0.13)	-0.61*** (0.13)
Political interest	-0.19 (0.15)	0.24* (0.13)	-0.15 (0.15)	0.27* (0.15)	-0.02 (0.15)	0.65*** (0.14)	0.30* (0.16)	-0.09 (0.17)	0.38** (0.17)	0.33* (0.16)	0.32** (0.16)	0.28 (0.17)	0.43*** (0.15)	0.48*** (0.15)	0.14 (0.14)	0.38** (0.16)
Satisfaction with democracy	-0.06 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.05)	0.14*** (0.05)	-0.11** (0.06)	-0.03 (0.06)	0.09* (0.05)	0.05 (0.06)	0.01 (0.06)	0.17*** (0.05)	0.11* (0.05)	-0.03 (0.05)	-0.11** (0.05)	0.09* (0.05)	-0.00 (0.05)	0.01 (0.05)	0.09 (0.06)
Left-right placement	0.13** (0.06)	0.05 (0.04)	0.17*** (0.04)	0.05 (0.04)	0.07 (0.05)	0.07* (0.04)	0.12** (0.06)	0.07 (0.06)	0.20*** (0.04)	0.13** (0.05)	0.27*** (0.05)	0.20*** (0.04)	0.16*** (0.04)	-0.01 (0.04)	0.11*** (0.04)	0.03 (0.05)
Evaluation of political elites	-0.59*** (0.22)	-0.72*** (0.17)	-0.31 (0.20)	-0.84*** (0.17)	-1.01*** (0.23)	-0.62*** (0.17)	-1.02*** (0.20)	-0.30 (0.24)	0.15 (0.20)	-1.23*** (0.18)	-0.76*** (0.19)	-0.70*** (0.19)	-0.68*** (0.17)	-0.34* (0.20)	-0.74*** (0.18)	-0.79*** (0.18)
Voting	-0.34 (0.41)	0.32 (0.37)	0.64 (0.57)	0.52 (0.44)	0.39 (0.29)	-0.21 (0.37)	-0.60 (0.45)	0.87* (0.37)	0.81* (0.47)	-0.33 (0.32)	0.01 (0.40)	0.29 (0.38)	-0.51* (0.29)	0.15 (0.41)	0.05 (0.44)	-0.33 (0.38)
Constant	8.37*** (1.06)	7.38*** (0.78)	6.14*** (1.09)	8.32*** (0.81)	8.16*** (0.87)	8.42*** (0.81)	9.91*** (0.97)	6.60*** (1.08)	3.08*** (1.05)	7.71*** (0.84)	7.24*** (0.98)	10.48*** (0.85)	5.76*** (0.86)	8.60*** (0.91)	8.83*** (0.86)	7.82*** (0.88)
Observations	664	641	604	699	631	650	670	599	691	680	655	693	831	762	708	670
R-squared	0.07	0.09	0.10	0.15	0.10	0.13	0.11	0.05	0.12	0.12	0.14	0.21	0.09	0.08	0.14	0.16

