Vad gör att vi röstar?

Voting is a social act

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Three types of findings pointing to the Social Act of Voting

- **Observational and descriptive**
  - Descriptive
  - Multivariate regressions

- **Quasi-experimental**
  - Regression Discontinuity Designs

- **Field experiments**
  - Random Controlled Trials (RCTs)
The Danish Turnout Project (data)

- Turnout is *not* part of the Statistic Denmark’s registers and voter files are destroyed after election, but...

- In the 2009, 2013 and 2017 municipality elections, the European parliament election 2014 and the national parliament election 2015 the Government gave us an exception from the law allowing us to collect and digitalized the voting lists from each of the app. 1,400 poling stations across the country.

- The voting lists where checked and validated up against the official election results, link to the personal identification number and merged into the register of Statistic Denmark and anonymized.

- At the municipality election 2013 we managed to get access to 4,362,152 records corresponding to 99 percent of all voters’ records. The one percent missing is due to system failures at specific polling stations or mistakes by polling officers.

- *No individual selection bias and no over-reporting*
Observational finding
The relationship between age and turnout: A roller-coaster ride

Turnout by age in California, November 2014

Data from Political Data, Inc.

Midterm election, registered voters

Predicted probabilities for turnout

(First-time voters - Danish municipal elections 2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Does not live with parents</th>
<th>Lives with father</th>
<th>Lives with mother</th>
<th>Lives with both</th>
<th>No one votes</th>
<th>Father votes</th>
<th>Mother votes</th>
<th>Both votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
<td>61</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It’s a group thing:
How voters go to the polls together

Research question
• Do individuals sharing residence vote together and does it matter for turnout?

A classic claim
• “The whole family should be viewed as a unit in which the participation behavior of each member is important in its effects on the others member” (Anderson 1943:424)

• “Voting turnout tends to be a joint household activity, with the members either voting or staying home as a unit” (Glaser 1959:569)

• => voting is a social act
Time stamped polling card

Kommune- og Regionsrådsevalg
19. november 2013
Medbring kortet ved afstemningen

Afstemningssted:
Gadehaveskolen
Biblioteket
Gadehavegårdsvej 1, Taastrup

Valgbord: 2
Vælgernr.: 06-03880
Afstemningstid: 09.00 - 20.00

Hr. Chris Alban Hansen

Høje-Taastrup Kommune
Bygaden 2, Borgerservice
2630 Taastrup
### Voting mode for individuals in three Danish elections (voting file, percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EP</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>General</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-voters</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted alone (not with HH-members)</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>50.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted with another HH-members</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>35.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pct. of voters voting w. others</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>41.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pct. of voters voting w. others (in 2+ HH)</td>
<td><strong>56</strong></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
<td><strong>69</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>2,338,384</td>
<td>2,393,936</td>
<td>2,496,099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnout official statistics</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>71.9</td>
<td>85.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**H1: most people vote together**
Quasi-experimental findings
Regression Discontinuity Design (RDD)

Worked on a number of discontinuities’ effect on turnout

- **Becoming eligible in previous election**
- **Becoming a parent**
- **Living together**
- Loose your job
- Hospitalizations
- Couples splitting up
- Been victim of a crime

- Comparing voters just before with just after the Election Day cut off. *As-if-random* whether it happen on one side or the other of Election Day.
Becoming eligible to vote

First-time voters
Second-time voters

Turnout Danish municipality election (2009)
Vertical line: eligibility in previous election

First-time boost beats habit formation!

Co-habitation on accordance in couples’ turnout

“joint voting and joint nonvoting occur more often than they would if husbands and wives acted independently. Many cases of split turnout should occur if husbands and wives behave as random pairs, but many fewer instances materialize” (Glaser 1959:564).

Min. N=3,003 couples pr. month. 315,000 couples total.

Marginal effects on household accordance relative to baseline

Turnout by month of cohabitation

Field experiments findings
Field experiments
- Municipality election 2013 & 2017, EP-election 2014 and

- Constitutions to 18 years old (18,075 received it)
  - pooled effect 1.1 %-points*
- 131,556 received personal text messages (+ 262,000 for EP-election)
  - pooled effect 1.8 %-points*
- 125,246 received Get-Out-The-Vote letter
  - pooled effect 0.4 %-points*
- 27,962 e-mails
  - pooled effect -0.4 %-points
- 3,200 households Door-to-Door, classic Get-Out-The-Vote message
  - pooled effect -0.8 %-points
- Political debates on 40 colleges across the country
  - pooled effect -9.5 %-points
- Poster and flyer to social housing
  - pooled effect -0.3 %-points
- Drawing completions for kids
  - pooled effect -0.4 %-points
Cartoon from Parliament

Traditional letter from Parliament

Tillykke


Med venlig hilsen

Mogens Lykketoft
Folketingets formand
The constitution to 18 years old voters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Turnout (percent)</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>9,475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter + constitution</td>
<td>73.2</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>9,046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartoon + constitution</td>
<td>74.1</td>
<td>1.6*</td>
<td>9,029</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Marginal effect across propensity to vote
Hej Jonaslørdag. Dette er en venlig påmindelse om valget tirsdag den 19. november. Demokratiet har brug for dig, så husk at stemme!

lør. 16. nov. 15.00


lørdag svar: ok så gør jeg det

The effect of Get-Out-The-Vote text messages on turnout

- Nationwide field experiment in Municipality elections 2013 and European elections 2014
- Random assignment to receiving a text message or not
- Measuring the effect on actual turnout data
- 30 percent of the effect spills over to other household members
Conclusion – voting is a social act

Observational
• 18-19 years old have higher turnout than 20-27 years old.
  • Consistence across political system (regardless of auto-registration or not, high turnout or not)
  • Suggesting that moving out from home decrease turnout in the short run

Quasi-experimental
• Hype of first election beats habit
• Surprising little negative effect of becoming a parent
• Co-habitation increases accordance turnout and turnout in general

Field experiments
• You can decrease the turnout gap with mobilization efforts
• Upstream spill-over: Rare example of upstream socialization!

Theoretically
• Rethink political socialization: parent=>child  parent <-> child
• Rethink the calculus of voting: U>PB-C+D  U>S(PB-C+D)
19 published articles in international journals from the project


10 chapters in anthologies published from the project


Miscellaneous from the project

3 Danish journal articles (peer review)

Three Ph.D.-thesis

7 white paper reports published in Danish

Feature articles in Danish and English

1000+ of media appearances