

**Multi-level abstention and
compulsory voting:
An analysis of real and potential
electoral participation in Belgium**

Min Reuchamps (UCL)

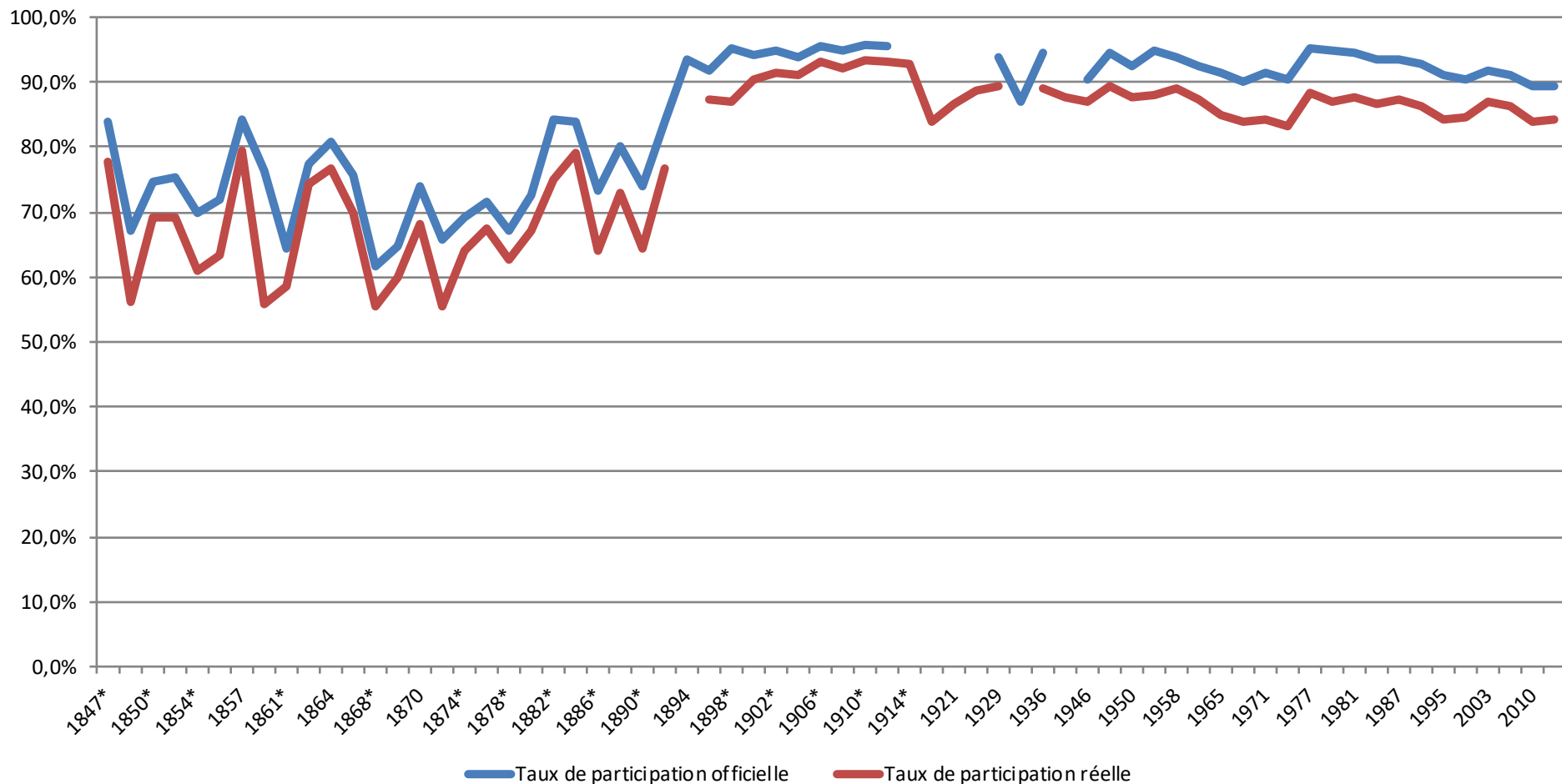
Didier Caluwaerts (VUB)

Lieven De Winter (UCL)

Vincent Jacquet (UCL)

Conrad Meulewaeter (UCL)

Official and real participation since 1847 for the legislative elections



Potential absenteeism: measure

- Measure: Question (ISPO/PIOP 1991-2010) =
- *"If voting for parliament was no longer obligatory in Belgium, would you then always, generally, sometimes, or never vote or don't you know for certain?"*
- Longitudinal analyses indicates stability over time
- partirepl survey makes distinction between european, federal, regional and local elections, indicating considerable differences between levels

Multilevel potential absenteeism

- Most previous studies on potential absenteeism have focused on the federal level (in e.g. = Chamber, not Senate), given the question was part of a national election study (exception IWEPS) (cfr problem of methodological nationalism (Jeffery, 2012))
- 2014 partirep survey shows large differences in potential absenteeism, apparently determined by «proximity» of legislative body to be elected

Multilevel potential absenteeism: results 2014

			Federal	Regional	Local
Valid	Always	European			
		41,6	48,9	51,3	59,7
	Most of the time	12,2	13,3	12,5	10,7
	Sometimes	14,5	11,4	10,6	8,2
	Never	31,7	26,5	25,6	21,4
	Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
Missing	DK/NA	,5	,2	,2	,1
n=2019					

Conclusions FL vs WALL

- Considerable « classic » differences between «always» scores in FL and WALL
- Note that Brussels region generally scores lowest in effective absenteeism (but no survey data available)

Determinants potential absenteeism

- Electoral participation is part of a larger propensity of political participation, hence we expect that 'classic' variables determining wider political participation will impact of potential absenteeism
- In this exploration we focus only on the federal level

Determinants potential absenteeism: socio-demos

	BEL		FL		WAL	
	Spearman rho	Êta ²	Spearman rho	Êta ²	Spearman rho	Êta ²
Sexe M>F		0,010***		0.018***		0.004*
Age (date of birth)	-0,044*		ns		ns	
Age 6 categories	-0,044*	0,015***	ns	ns	ns	ns
Profession (Indep+employees +stud > non/ex active+workers)		0.052***		0.057***		0.054***
Socio-professionnal status (work Y>N)		0,007***		ns		0.014***
Income	0,205***		0.198***			0.221***
Level of education H>M>L		0.119***		0.187***		0.099***

Determinants potential absenteeism: factors of belonging

	BEL		FL		WAL	
	Spearman rho	Êta ²	Spearman rho	Êta ²	Spearman rho	Êta ²
Type of religion		0.024***		0.036***		0.023**
Participation religious services	0,132***		0.095**		0.169***	
Church involvement	ns		ns		0.082*	
Party vote 2014 Chambre (see infra)		0.080***		0.100***		0.125***
Strength Party identification	0.250***		0.246***		0.254***	
List vs preference voting (Pref>List)		0.008***				ns
Decision to vote (early > late)	0.032***		??			
Party membership involvement	0,158***	0,030***	0.174***	0.037***	0.147**	0.030***

Determinants potential absenteeism: general political attitudes

	BEL	VL	WALL
	Spearman rho	Spearman rho	Spearman rho
Political interest	0,459**	0.526***	0.394***
Campaign activity aggregated	0,266***	0.227***	0.310***
Political knowledge	0,258***	0.345***	0.174***
Conventional political participation	ns	ns	ns
Soft unconventional political participation	-0,247***	-0.274***	-0.223***
Hard unconventional political participation	ns	ns	-0.078**
Internal political efficacy	0,243***	0.345***	0.152***
External political efficacy	0,364***	0.380***	0.363***

Determinants potential absenteeism: Trust

	BEL	VL	WALL
	Spearman rho	Spearman rho	Spearman rho
Trust pol actors/institutions	0,267***	0.198***	0.098***
Trust 11 actors/institutions	0.267***	0.252***	0.287***
Trust regional parliament	0,238***	0.301***	0.189***
Trust regional executive	0,212***	0.223***	0.218***
Trust federal parliament	0,278***	0.251***	0.306***
Trust federal executive	0,243***	0.205***	0.279***
Influence on daily life : political institutions	-0,297***	-0.315***	-0.276***

Policy outputs satisfaction

	BEL	VL	WALL
	Spearman rho	Spearman rho	Spearman rho
Satisfaction with democracy in B	0,181***	0.119***	0.239***
Satisfaction policies regional executive	0,112***	0.094**	0.146***
Satisfaction policies federal executive	0,094***	ns	0.158***
Satisfaction state of economy	0,030***	0.107**	-0.242***

Conclusions

- Confirmation of impact of 'classic' determinants of political participation
 - socio-demographics: age, education, income,
 - political attitudes: interest, knowlegde, trust, other forms of political participation, etc
- Supprises?: not really...
- Hardly any differences between FL <>Wall
- TO BE EXPLOREd: differences of effect of determinants between 4 levels

Multivariate analysis

- Four dependent variables
 - Local
 - Regional
 - Federal
 - EU
- Binary DPs
 - 1 : Always
 - 0 : Never – Sometimes - Often

Logistic regressions (1/2)

	Communal	Regional	Federal	EU
Intercept	-.227 (.75)	-1.73 (.84)*	-.728 (.79)	-2.34(.73)***
Sex (W)	.034 (.17)	-.012 (.16)	.005 (.16)	-.014 (.15)
Age	.176 (.056)**	.067 (.05)	.061 (.05)	.082 (.05)
Educ2	-.230 (.24)	-.435 (.24)	-.124 (.24)	-.396 (.24)*
Educ3	-.043 (.28)	-.035 (.27)	.275 (.28)	-.101 (.27)
Income	.086 (.035)*	.064 (.03)	.067 (.03)	.027 (.03)
Region (W)	.778 (.17)***	.799 (.16)***	.541 (.16)***	.575 (.16)***
StatutSP (N)	.111 (.18)	-.051 (.17)	.032 (.18)	-.044 (.17)
Church Inv	-.010 (.07)	-.114 (.07)	-.134 (.07)	.156 (.07)**
Party ID	-.04 (.11)	-.211 (.11)	-.192 (.11)	.280 (.11)**
Particip. Conv	-.06 (.07)	.048 (.07)	.086 (.07)	.059 (.07)
Particip. Soft	-.25 (.08)	-.229 (.08)	-.266 (.08)***	-.242 (.08)***
Particip. Hard	.038 (.07)	.050 (.07)	.008 (.07)	-.011 (.07)

Logistic regressions (2/2)

	Communal	Regional	Federal	EU
Pol. Interest	.210 (.03)	.206 (.03)***	.255 (.03)***	.209 (.04)***
Left-Right	-.029 (.04)	.014 (.04)	.023 (.04)	-.001 (.04)
Eff. Pol. Int.	-.002 (.10)	.018 (.09)	-.071 (.09)	-.163 (.09)
Eff.Pol. Ext.	.230 (.10)*	.395 (.09)***	.293 (.10)**	-.260 (.10)***
Satisf. Level	-.049 (.10)	.111 (.10)	-.139 (.10)	.179 (.09)
Trust	-.015 (.11)	-.075 (.11)	.048 (.11)	-.017 (.11)
Satis. Democracy	-.107 (.14)	-.071 (.13)	-.239 (.14)	-.058 (.13)
Influence - level	-.422 (.11)***	-.124 (.11)	-.283 (.10)**	-.295 (.08)***
Influence - CS	-.285 (.08)***	-.250 (.08)**	-.187 (.08)*	-.193 (.08)**
Moreno	-.019 (.07)	.091 (.06)	.110 (.07)	.076 (.07)
ID – level (Y)	.267 (.25)	.679 (.21)**	.059 (.16)	.201 (.28)
McFadden	.62	.59	.61	.59

European elections

	European elections		
	With CV	Without CV	Difference
CD&V	18,6	16,5	-2,1
Groen	12,0	12,6	+ ,6
N-VA	26,4	25,9	-,5
SP.A	11,9	10,5	-1,4
Vlaams Belang	3,1	2,4	-,7
Open VLD	22,3	23,8	+1,5
LDD	,3	,2	-,1
PvdA +	1,9	2,1	+ ,2
Blanc, invalid, other	3,5	6	+2,5
Total	100,0	100,0	

European elections

	European elections		
	With CV	Without CV	Difference
PS	30,0	25,9	-4,1
MR	23,7	26,3	+2,6
CDH	13,8	15,2	+1,4
ECOLO	12,1	15,2	+3,1
FDF	1,0	1,0	0
PTB-GO	6,9	6,3	-,6
PP (Parti Populaire)	6,2	5,1	-,9
PFF	,1	,2	+,1
Blanc, invalid, other	6,2	4,8	-1,4
Total	100,0	100,0	

Federal elections

	Federal elections		
	With CV	Without CV	Difference
CD&V	17,4	18,6	+1,2
Groen	9,7	9,4	-,3
N-VA	35,3	36,0	+ ,7
SP.A	13,5	12,9	-,6
Vlaams Belang	2,4	2,0	-,4
Open VLD	14,3	14,1	-,2
LDD	,5	,5	0
PvdA +	2,8	4,0	+1,2
Blanc, invalid, other	4,1	2,5	-1,7
Total	100,0	100,0	

Federal elections

	Federal elections		
	With CV	Without CV	Difference
PS	34,7	28,3	-6,4
MR	21,6	24,4	+2,8
CDH	17,2	19,4	+2,2
ECOLO	9,4	12,7	+3,3
FDF	1,6	1,7	-,1
PTB GO	7,1	7,2	+,1
PP (Parti Populaire)	4,7	5,0	+,3
Blanc, invalid, other	2,7	1,3	-1,4
Total	100,0	100,0	

Regional elections

	Regional elections		
	With CV	Without CV	Difference
CD&V	19,0	20,4	+1,4
Groen	11,1	10,4	-,7
N-VA	35,7	37,4	+1,7
SP.A	14,2	11,4	-2,8
Vlaams Belang	2,3	2,2	-,1
Open VLD	12,4	11,9	-,5
LDD	,4	,5	+,1
PvdA +	2,4	2,9	+,5
Blanc, invalid, other	2,5	5,8	+3,3
Total	100,0	100,0	

Regional elections

	Regional elections		
	With CV	Without CV	Difference
PS	28,7	25,5	-3,2
MR	25,5	25,5	0
CDH	18,5	20,2	+1,7
ECOLO	13,0	13,9	+ ,9
FDF	1,3	1,8	+ ,5
PTB-GO	5,4	6,3	+ ,9
PP (Parti Populaire)	4,1	4,5	+ ,4
Blanc, invalid, other	6,4	2,3	-4,1
Total	100,0	100,0	