Political Studies

Political Studies Association

POLITICAL STUDIES: 2010 VOL 58, 187–213

doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9248.2009.00801.x

Inequalities in Non-institutionalised Forms of Political Participation: A Multi-level Analysis of 25 countries

Sofie Marien, Marc Hooghe and Ellen Quintelier

Catholic University of Leuven

Various studies suggest that while institutionalised and electoral forms of political participation are in decline in Western societies, non-institutionalised forms of participation (like demonstrating, political consumerism or signing petitions) are on the rise. However, this expansion of the political action repertoire of citizens also entails the question of equal participation opportunities. It can be argued that contemporary ideals of democratic participation assume an equal representation of citizens' interests. In this article we analyse the equality of participation patterns using comparative data from the 2004 ISSP survey. Our results suggest that non-institutionalised forms of participation increase patterns of inequality due to education but strongly reduce or even reverse gender and age inequalities. As such, both institutionalised and non-institutionalised forms of participation have specific (dis)advantages from the perspective of preserving equal access to democratic decision-making procedures.

The ways in which citizens express themselves in the political realm have changed dramatically in recent decades. Whereas voter turnout, party membership and other more institutionalised forms of political engagement are caught in a downward spiral, innovative ways of civic engagement seem to be on the rise in most liberal democracies (Dalton, 2008; Inglehart and Catterberg, 2002; Klingemann and Fuchs, 1995; Norris, 2002; Pattie *et al.*, 2004). 'The observed increase in non-institutionalized participation in practically all countries' was labelled by Hans-Dieter Klingemann and Dieter Fuchs (1995, p. 431) as 'the most unambiguous finding' in the study of the changing relationship between citizens and the state. In effect, participatory acts like political consumerism, demonstrations and internet activism have become important channels of public voice and participation in contemporary democracies (Norris, 2001; Norris *et al.*, 2005; Stolle *et al.*, 2005).

Further, it can be observed that traditional, mass membership-based civil society organisations are rapidly being transformed into professionally managed groups which are seeking financial contributions rather than volunteers. Partly as a result of these structural changes, civic engagement in voluntary associations becomes more sporadic while financial contributions tend to replace voluntary engagement (Skocpol, 2003, p. 127; Wollebaek and Selle, 2003). In short, participation acts that are focused on the electoral process are losing ground, while other forms of participation are apparently still expanding (Kriesi, 2008).

It is not always possible to make a clear distinction on theoretical grounds between traditional and new forms of political participation. Various authors have pointed out that petitions and consumer boycotts are not a new phenomenon: these participation acts

© 2009 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2009 Political Studies Association

already existed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Friedman, 1999). Chronology therefore is not a good criterion to distinguish 'old' from 'new' forms of participation. In line with the classic distinction between conventional and non-conventional forms of participation, the distinction should rather revolve on the issue of institutionalisation (Barnes and Kaase, 1979). Traditional – or conventional – forms of participation are all closely related to the electoral process. Party membership, voting and contacting politicians are all part of the electoral process or they involve officials who have been appointed as a result of the electoral process. This is not so for acts like political consumerism, participating in demonstrations or signing petitions: while these acts may be directed towards elected officials, this is not necessarily the case. Participants in more traditional political activities, such as attending a political meeting or joining a political party, become 'part of the political system' and they try to influence the political system directly, while participants in non-institutionalised forms of political participation keep some distance from the political system by trying to have an indirect impact on political decision making or by circumventing the political system altogether. A campaign to boycott products from multinational companies that invest in dictatorial regimes might serve as an example in this respect.

Scholars have suggested that these non-institutionalised forms of political participation are more easily compatible with the demands of a new generation of citizens that has been characterised as 'monitorial', 'post-materialist' and 'critical' (Inglehart, 1997; Norris, 1999; Schudson, 1999). Monitorial citizens, for instance, are still interested in politics and they will participate in political life if they consider this to be necessary; however they will refrain from joining traditional political organisations (Hooghe and Dejaeghere, 2007; Schudson, 1999). Henrik P. Bang and Eva Sørensen (2001) have claimed that the new generation of politically engaged citizens should be seen as 'everyday makers': while they integrate elements of political deliberation in their everyday lifestyle decisions, they tend to refrain from participating in formal political institutions (Li and Marsh, 2008). In a similar manner, the post-materialist thesis states that rather than engaging in formal fixed membership structures, post-materialist citizens prefer more individualised ways to become engaged in the political sphere, carefully avoiding enforced commitments and any reference to party politics (Inglehart, 1997). Post-materialist citizens often want to spend money rather than time. A related account in the literature argues that citizens are still – and even more than before – supportive of democracy but that they have become more critical of the way democracy is currently functioning. As a result, citizens still want to engage in politics, but not in traditional party politics (Norris, 1999; 2002). Within the literature, there is an intensive debate on the question of whether these non-institutionalised forms of participation can also be considered to be less demanding in terms of time, commitment, risk or energy. Although it is difficult to make general statements about an entire group of participation acts, some authors have claimed that non-institutionalised forms of political participation require less commitment, as participation is often sporadic and opting out is rather easy (Li and Marsh, 2008; Trechsel, 2007). Other authors, however, have pointed out that taking part in a demonstration, for example, can be just as demanding as more institutionalised forms of political participation (Norris *et al.*, 2005).

© 2009 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2009 Political Studies Association

In the context of the proliferation of non-institutionalised forms of political participation, the question arises as to whether these participatory acts are characterised by the same patterns of inequality as institutionalised forms of political participation. An important question in this respect is to determine by whom these non-institutionalised forms of political engagement are performed. One of the most striking and enduring findings in political participation research is the unequal nature of institutionalised political participation. The international literature demonstrates abundantly that education, class, gender and age strongly correlate with political participation (Parry *et al.*, 1992; Teorell *et al.*, 2007a; Verba *et al.*, 1995). While we know that these inequalities tend to be persistent with regard to institutionalised political participation, there is less research available on patterns of inequality in non-institutionalised participation. The aim of the present article therefore is to explore our main research question: do these forms of participation lead to more equality in the substantive representation of policy issues and preferences, or do they simply reproduce, or even reinforce, already existing patterns of inequality in favour of privileged groups within the population? First, the concept and importance of political equality are briefly reviewed, followed by a discussion of the most important sources of inequality addressed in the participation literature. Subsequently, the data and methods are discussed. Finally, the results of our analyses are presented and discussed followed by concluding remarks.

The Problem of Inequality

The question of inequality in political participation has preoccupied many social scientists over the past decades. Equality, indeed, is at the core of the democratic ideal and Ronald Dworkin (2000) even labelled it as the 'sovereign virtue'. An inclusive society, where the interests of all citizens receive *equal consideration* in the political process, serves as an important normative ideal for social scientists and policy makers. This requirement does not imply that every citizen is entitled to obtain an equal share of government output; the requirement does mean that the interests and reasonable claims of all citizens should be considered on an equal footing without any structural inequalities or forms of exclusion (Barry, 2001). The ideal of an inclusive society is not reached if a political system places more emphasis on the interests of the middle class than on the interests of poor citizens (Dahl, 1989). Rejecting the principle of equal consideration of interests is, as Robert Dahl (1989, p. 86) states, 'to assert, in effect, that some people ought to be regarded and treated as *intrinsically* privileged ... To justify such a claim is a formidable task that no one, to my knowledge, has accomplished'. Basically this amounts to the requirement that all groups within the citizenry receive equal opportunities towards undistorted substantial representation of their political interests (Hero and Tolbert, 1995; Hooghe, 1999).

Political participation plays a crucial role in the establishment of this normative ideal. It is through their participation in politics that citizens can make their voices heard and exert pressure on the powers that be to consider their interests on an equal footing with those of other groups in society (Dahl, 1989, p. 109; Verba *et al.*, 1995, pp. 10–34; Warren, 2002, pp. 678–9). Therefore, political participation should be considered not only 'as a moral requirement or a developmental opportunity but as a strategic necessity' (Warren, 2002,

© 2009 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2009 Political Studies Association

p. 678). The underlying assumption for this claim is that politically inactive citizens are unable to defend their interests and that therefore they are rendered invisible in the political process. All individuals who are likely to be affected by the consequences of a political decision should have an equal opportunity to influence that decision (Dworkin, 2000). Self-evidently, citizens can still opt not to use their right to participate, but this choice should be voluntary and not based on external restraints (Dahl, 1989, p. 115; Verba *et al.*, 1995, pp. 26–7).

The principle of political equality is reflected in the concept of 'one person, one vote'. Equal voting rights, however, are only a minimal requirement and political equality is also important in other modes of political participation that are not legally limited in use. On a formal level, political equality exists in most contemporary democracies as the basic democratic requirements such as free elections and the rule of law are implemented. In practice, however, the opportunities to participate are unevenly distributed across the population and inactivity is often not a free choice (Dahl, 1989; Verba *et al.*, 1995; Young, 2000, pp. 11–4). If citizens do not have sufficient resources to employ their capacities for civic action, this should be considered a form of structural inequality (Sen, 2005). As Russell J. Dalton *et al.* (2003, p. 263) note, 'the law treats everyone equally when it comes to opportunity, but it is in the use of opportunities that real inequalities exist'. Exercising one's right to participate in civic life requires resources such as money and political knowledge. Therefore, underprivileged groups in the population are confronted with constraints that others do not face, with, as a result, strong differences in the likelihood that one will participate in political life. Moreover, advantaged groups will use their privileged position to preserve the social *status quo* so that marginalised groups within the population are confronted with an uphill battle if they want to have their voices heard (Young, 2000, p. 17). These inequalities can be considered to be structural as they are usually the result of ascribed characteristics that are beyond the control of the individual (Young, 2000, pp. 92–9). What further complicates the issue is that privileged citizens are not only more likely to participate in the first place, but they will also participate more often and in a more intensive manner (Verba *et al.*, 1995). In most of the existing research, respondents are only asked about whether they have ever, for example, signed a petition or taken part in a demonstration. The difference between those who have participated once and those who participate on a regular basis gets lost in this question, despite the fact that we can assume that those who participate more often will have a better chance of getting their voice heard.

Within the normative literature there will be a strong consensus on the fact that one should not insist on complete social equality with regard to political participation. A complex system of equality can be accepted, as long as the inequalities within one sphere of life do not spill over into inequalities in different spheres (Walzer, 1983; Warren, 2002, pp. 697–8). In this case inequalities with regard to the economic distribution of resources should not have an effect on the capacity to act in a political manner.

The central aim of this article is to explore the extent to which contemporary societies live up to the ideal of political equality, in light of the increasing importance of non-institutionalised forms of political participation. Does the expansion of the possibilities to engage in politics go hand in hand with an expansion of the number of voices that are heard

© 2009 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2009 Political Studies Association

in the political decision-making process? Have these non-institutionalised forms of participation the potential to mobilise a more heterogeneous proportion of the population, thereby providing formerly excluded citizens with a say in the way society is being run?

Basically, three different scenarios can offer an answer to these questions. First, the rosy view might be that non-institutionalised forms of participation are accessible to all groups in society, resulting in less inequality with regard to political participation. Often, non-institutionalised forms of political participation are less demanding given that participants have to make few (long-term) commitments. Therefore it is often argued that the costs of participation are lower in these non-institutionalised forms than in institutionalised forms of participation (Li and Marsh, 2008; Micheletti, 2004; Trechsel, 2007). A case in point is protest as a 'weapon of the weak' that is open to anyone. Some authors have stated that the same logic applies to internet-based forms of participation: information and communication technologies (ICT) applications offer a relatively cheap and easy way to mobilise for and engage in political action (Jennings and Andersen, 2003; Norris, 2006). On this optimistic view, groups that are less likely to participate in institutionalised forms of participation will become engaged more often in non-institutionalised political participation, resulting in a more inclusive form of politics.

The second possible scenario is that the introduction of 'new' forms of participation does not have all that much effect. Since the 1970s we know that exactly the same kind of people tend to participate, both in institutionalised and in non-institutionalised forms of participation (Barnes and Kaase, 1979). Such a cumulative pattern implies that inequalities simply persist, with a stable pattern of inclusion and exclusion (Lusoli *et al.*, 2006). In that case, changes in the political action repertoire of Western citizens would not have any effect on the social distribution of political influence.

Third, departing from the idea of a 'participation paradox', some scholars claim that non-institutionalised forms are more demanding than institutionalised forms as they require more cognitive skills, thus rendering them accessible only to the more privileged groups within society. 'Nearly all can vote, and most do. But very few citizens can (or do) file a lawsuit, make requests under a Freedom of Information Act, attend an Environmental Impact Review hearing, or attend local planning meetings' (Dalton *et al.*, 2003, p. 262). In effect, the more intensive in terms of skills, time, energy and resources the participation act is, the more unequal it will be (Skocpol, 2003; Verba *et al.*, 1995). Proponents of this view will argue that participation in demonstrations is open to anyone but that mobilisation is skewed in favour of the highly educated. Moreover, knowledge about the issues underlying the demonstration is needed. With regard to internet-based forms of participation, proponents of this view argue that the introduction of internet-based forms of participation has exactly the opposite effects to those argued by the first, optimistic scenario. They will point to the fact that access to the internet remains unequally spread both within and between societies. Furthermore, the political use of the internet is heavily dominated by those with high educational credentials (Lusoli *et al.*, 2006; Vissers and Hooghe, 2009).

In this article, our goal is to determine empirically the impact of non-institutionalised forms of political participation on the ideal of political equality. This will allow us to ascertain

© 2009 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2009 Political Studies Association

which one of these three scenarios is most plausible. We will compare citizens who participate in non-institutionalised forms of politics with those who are involved in institutionalised forms of politics. It has to be acknowledged here that our study remains limited to the characteristics of those who participate. We do not know what kind of ideas or demands those participants (want to) convey to political decision makers, since this information is not included in the survey that we will use for the analysis. As such, we only study the 'politics of presence' and not the 'politics of ideas' (Phillips, 1995). However, we can assume that the two will be strongly related: 'it is in the relationship between ideas and presence that we can best hope to find a fairer system of representation' (Phillips, 1995, p. 25). Or to put it differently: if there is not some form of equal access to the decision-making system, we can be quite confident that not all relevant ideas within society will be included in the decision-making process. Furthermore, it should be noted that our ambition is *not* to develop an overall analysis of patterns of political (in)equality, as this would also imply an analysis of the interaction between citizens and the output side of the political system. The current analysis remains limited to the classical question: who participates in what kind of political participation?

Sources of Inequality

Five decades of research in political participation point quite clearly to the occurrence of structural forms of inequality with regard to the level of participation among the population. Three elements stand out as sources of inequality: education level, gender and age (Pacheco and Plutzer, 2008; Parry *et al.*, 1992; Verba *et al.*, 1995). In this section we will briefly review these sources of inequality.

Education is the single most important determinant of political participation: it is a constant finding in the literature that higher-educated citizens participate more intensively in politics than those with fewer educational credentials (Milbrath and Goel, 1977; Nie *et al.*, 1996; Parry *et al.*, 1992; Teorell *et al.*, 2007a; Verba *et al.*, 1995). Through their education citizens acquire civic skills, are more likely to end up with a higher income and are more likely to be targeted by the mobilisation efforts of civil society organisations (Verba *et al.*, 1995, pp. 433–7). There is some controversy within the literature about the question of whether non-institutionalised forms of participation, too, are plagued by this perennial form of inequality. Charles Pattie *et al.* (2004, p. 85) state that different kinds of participants engage in different kinds of participatory activities but that 'the highly educated person is common among all of them'. On the other hand, Stephen Macedo *et al.* (2005, pp. 90–7) cite evidence that non-institutionalised political engagement between elections can mobilise lower-educated citizens. Other research demonstrated that the likelihood of demonstrating is only weakly related to education level, and the inequality with regard to education is more limited than is the case in institutionalised forms of politics (Van Aelst and Walgrave, 2001). The internet is often praised for its potential to mobilise excluded groups: it can lower the barriers for lower-educated citizens to become engaged in politics. Empirical research, however, suggests strongly that online participation requires a substantial amount of resources and cognitive skills. Higher-educated citizens more often have access to the internet and they also use the

© 2009 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2009 Political Studies Association

internet more often in a socially and politically relevant manner than lower-educated citizens. Moreover, cognitive skills are essential in order to deal with the bulk of political information on the internet (Norris, 2001). Even participation in political activities like signing petitions or political consumerism requires considerable resources and skills. Through their education, citizens gain an insight into the political issues and problems underlying boycotts, petitions and demonstrations. Moreover, political consumerism not only requires political knowledge, as citizens have to know what to buy or what not to buy, it also requires money to buy politically correct goods and services effectively (Stolle *et al.*, 2005). Dalton *et al.* (2003, p. 262) find substantial inequalities with regard to education level for signing a petition, participation in a lawful demonstration and participation in a citizen action group.

Gender too can be considered to be a stable form of political inequality (Burns *et al.*, 2001). Research among adolescents indicates that gender differences in participation are present even at an early stage of life (Easton and Dennis, 1969; Hess and Torney, 1970; Hooghe and Stolle, 2004; Hyman, 1959). Although in general gender disparity is being reduced in Western societies, gender remains an important determinant of political participation (Burns *et al.*, 2001). However, research seems to reveal another participation pattern for non-institutionalised forms of participation (Micheletti, 2004; Stolle and Hooghe, 2005). Some features of non-institutionalised participation make this kind of participation more attractive for women than institutionalised forms of participation. Non-institutionalised participation takes part outside political institutions, beyond party politics, and it is less dominated by men and is often not even labelled as political by its participants (Eliasoph, 1998). Second, non-institutionalised participation is less focused on the national level and more closely related to everyday life, thus providing women with more opportunities to intertwine these activities with their daily routines. Third, most of these forms are less time consuming and they entail fewer commitments than institutionalised participation, rendering it easier for women to combine them with family care (Burns *et al.*, 2001, pp. 307–33). Therefore, non-institutionalised participation has the potential to mobilise women more effectively in the political process, especially in comparison to electoral politics and participation in political parties (Stolle and Hooghe, 2005).

Age too is often found to be a source of inequality: young people increasingly refrain from taking part in political life (Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000; Verba *et al.*, 1995; Wattenberg, 2007; Zukin *et al.*, 2006). This effect is strongly present with regard to institutionalised forms of politics, and various authors have argued that non-institutionalised forms of participation are important to mobilise young citizens (Norris, 2002; Zukin *et al.*, 2006). Younger age cohorts are more frequently involved in internet-based forms of participation, as they discuss on internet fora or sign email petitions, etc. (Norris, 2001). Also other participatory acts that are taking place beyond party politics like protest acts (demonstrations, petitions, boycotts, etc.) have the potential to engage younger citizens in politics (Teorell *et al.*, 2007a). A number of studies, however, have also highlighted what is called the 'ageing of the protest generation'. It is argued that these forms of protest are specific for one cohort, which might have been young two decades ago but is now typically in the 35–50 age bracket. This cohort has remained very active in social life, outperforming younger and

© 2009 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2009 Political Studies Association

later age groups (Jennings, 1987). Given these contradictory findings, we consider it useful to test whether these three structural forms of inequality are also present in non-institutionalised forms of political participation, and if so, to what extent.

Data and Methods

For the analysis, we will rely on data from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) 2004.[1] The ISSP is an annual programme of cross-national collaboration on surveys covering topics that are considered to be important for social science research. We will use the 2004 ISSP data set because the core module for that year focused on 'Citizenship', including a substantial number of questions on political involvement and awareness. The response rate of the survey (completed questionnaires/eligible respondents) ranges quite substantially from 15 per cent in France to 100 per cent in Chile (see Appendix). Since some countries have an unacceptably low response rate, one might question the validity of the data from these countries (Groves and Heeringa, 2006). The response rate is one way to determine the quality of a survey since 'the higher the proportion of its target respondents who participate, the more reliable are its results likely to be' (Billiet *et al.*, 2007, p. 113). Especially in cross-national research, response rates determine the validity of the comparisons between countries, as non-response often leads to bias in the estimates. In high-quality comparative surveys, like the European Social Survey, it has therefore become customary not to include data from countries that do not reach a sufficiently high response rate (Billiet *et al.*, 2007, p. 115). In line with this practice, we opted not to include data from countries in the ISSP data set that are plagued by a low response rate of below 50 per cent, as this might endanger the validity of the data for these countries. Other countries with a dubious quality of data, too, were removed from our analysis.[2] This selection process led to the inclusion of 26 countries, with an average response rate of 69 per cent. Given the nested structure of the data (respondents were sampled in 26 different countries), we will rely on multi-level analysis. Multi-level analysis allows taking the intra-class correlation and the variance between countries into account and yields correct standard errors (Snijders and Bosker, 1999).

In the ISSP questionnaire, political participation was questioned by providing respondents with a list of seven different forms of political and social action that people can participate in. For every activity, respondents could indicate whether they had participated in any of these activities in the past year, in the more distant past, whether they have not done it but might do it or whether they have not done it and would never, under any circumstances, do it. For the analysis the participation of the respondents during the past year was used. All political activities were recoded therefore into dummies: if a participant had participated in the activity during the past year, these acts were scored as 1; if they had not participated, these were coded 0 (even if they claimed to have participated in the more distant past). These forms of participation include: signing a petition, boycotting or deliberately buying products for political, ethical or environmental reasons, taking part in a demonstration, attending a political meeting or rally, contacting a politician to express one's views, donating money or raising funds for a social or political activity and joining an internet forum or discussion group.

© 2009 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2009 Political Studies Association

Party membership was also included in the ISSP questionnaire: respondents could indicate whether they are a member of and/or actively participate in a political party. All party members (both active and passive members) received a score of 1, all non-members a score of 0 (also if they had been a member in the distant past). Finally, respondents were asked if they had voted in the last election (1 = yes, 0 = no). In our analysis, we excluded respondents who were not eligible to vote during these elections, for reasons of age or citizenship status.

In total, that means we have information on nine different forms of political participation. All questions were asked in all countries, with the sole exception of the internet and party membership questions which did not appear in the South African questionnaires. Since it was impossible to impute these data, we opted for the safe solution of removing South Africa completely from the multilevel analyses. The questions and frequencies of the variables are presented in the Appendix. As independent variables we include the background variables that have a strong impact on patterns of inequality: education level, gender and age. We also know from previous research, however, that political interest and political efficacy are crucial determinants of political participation (Verba *et al.*, 1995). These elements too were included in the analysis, in order to arrive at a fully specified model.

As already mentioned, the ISSP data set includes respondents from 25 countries (also excluding South Africa), each with their specific country background. On the country level, we include gross domestic product (GDP) per capita as an independent variable in order to take the differences in political participation between low- and high-income countries into account (Teorell *et al.*, 2007b, pp. 350–1). We derived these data from the International Monetary Fund (2008). The ISSP data set also includes countries that are usually not considered to be full democracies. In these more authoritarian countries, democratic participation might be less self-evident. In order to take this effect into account, we also include the 2004 score of that country in the Freedom House Index (Freedom House, 2004). The Freedom House Index includes measurements on political rights and basic civil liberties. One could, for instance, expect that people are more likely to participate in democratic regimes than under authoritarian regimes. Adding both leads to a composed scale ranging from 2 to 14 with low values indicating high degrees of freedom in a country.

Presentation of the Data

Before we start with the analysis, it is useful to have a closer look at the figures (Table 1). First, it should be noted that voting remains by far the most widely spread act of political participation, with 77 per cent of all respondents indicating that they had participated in the most recent elections in their country. Compared to actual turnout figures this is probably an overestimation, as is usually the case in this kind of research. Not only is there an effect of social desirability; the same characteristics that are associated with voter turnout usually also increase the likelihood that one will participate in survey research. Signing petitions, donating money and boycotting products, however, are also quite widely spread among the research population. It has to be noted in this respect that these three participation acts can be considered as non-institutionalised.

© 2009 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2009 Political Studies Association

Table 1: Occurrence of Participation Acts

Activity	*%*
Voting	77.2
Signing a petition	20.8
Donating money	20.3
Boycotting products	15.4
Party member	11.7
Attending a political meeting or rally	9.0
Contacting a politician	7.9
Demonstrating	6.9
Joining an Internet forum	2.7

Source: ISSP 2004, all countries. Entries are percentages of respondents indicating they have participated in this act during the past year.

Subsequently, we also provide an overview of the inequalities that we already discussed. We do so by presenting bivariate tables for political participation, and by calculating ratios between various groups in society. We also offer a Pearson correlation between the various background characteristics (i.e. education, gender and age) and the specific participation act. In Table 2 we first present data on education. In order to visualise the inequalities as clearly as possible, we divided respondents into three broad categories: those with no formal education or only basic education; those having obtained secondary education; and finally a group who achieved higher or post-secondary education. The figures in Table 2 present a very strong relation: the higher the education level, the more likely that one will participate in various political acts. The differences between low- and high-educated groups are especially strong with regard to joining an internet forum, boycotting products for political reasons and contacting politicians. Voting, on the other hand, proves to be the most democratic form of participation, with a difference of only ten percentage points between the lowest and highest categories. This first look at the figures therefore already suggests that inequalities based on education also persist among non-institutionalised forms of political participation.

As expected, women are more active in non-institutionalised forms of participation (Table 3): they are more likely to sign a petition, donate money and boycott products. Although the differences are small, this is an exceptional finding in light of the older literature in which men tended to dominate all forms of participation (Campbell and Miller, 1964, pp. 483–93; Verba and Nie, 1972). On the other hand, demonstrating and joining an internet forum are clearly more popular among men. Men also outnumber women with regard to joining a political party, attending a political meeting and contacting a politician, while there is no correlation between gender and voting.

For age too, differences are quite remarkable. As might be predicted, the oldest age group is more likely to vote and to be a member of a political party (Table 4). This should not be

© 2009 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2009 Political Studies Association

Table 2: Participation According to Level of Educational Attainment

	Education level			Ratio	Pearson
	Low	Medium	High	high/low	correlation
Voting	75.2	74.5	83.0	1.10	0.075***
Party member	10.0	10.3	15.0	1.50	0.060***
Attending a political meeting or rally	7.2	8.1	12.0	1.68	0.059***
Contacting a politician	4.4	6.4	13.6	3.12	0.127***
Signing a petition	10.5	19.9	31.1	2.97	0.180***
Donating money	11.3	19.2	30.1	2.65	0.175***
Boycotting products	6.5	13.2	26.3	4.03	0.201***
Demonstrating	4.6	6.6	9.6	2.07	0.076***
Joining an internet forum	0.9	2.0	5.0	5.82	0.103***
N	8,752	15,778	9,802		

Notes: Low education: no/lowest formal education; medium education: above lowest qualification, higher secondary completed; high education: above higher secondary level. Entries are column percentages of respondents participating in this act during the past year, ratio between the third and the first group, and correlation between education and that participation act.

Source: ISSP 2004, 26 countries.

****p < 0.001; **p < 0.01; *p < 0.05.*

Table 3: Participation According to Gender

	Gender		Ratio	Pearson
	Men	Women	men/women	correlation
Voting	77.4	77.0	1.00	–0.004
Party member	13.7	9.9	1.38	–0.058***
Attending a political meeting or rally	10.8	7.4	1.46	–0.059***
Contacting a politician	9.8	6.4	1.53	–0.062***
Signing a petition	20.2	21.3	0.95	0.013*
Donating money	19.8	20.8	0.95	0.013*
Boycotting products	14.7	16.0	0.92	0.019***
Demonstrating	7.7	6.3	1.21	–0.027***
Joining an internet forum	3.6	2.0	1.82	–0.049***
N	15,904	18,661		

Note: Entries are percentages of respondents participating in this act during the past year, ratio between the first and the second group, and correlation between gender and that participation act.

Source: ISSP 2004, 26 countries.

****p < 0.001; **p < 0.01; *p < 0.05.*

© 2009 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2009 Political Studies Association

Table 4: Participation According to Age

	Age Groups			Ratio	Pearson
	18–36 y	*37–53 y*	*54+ y*	*54+/18–36*	*correlation*
Voting	64.1	82.4	86.4	1.35	0.243***
Party member	8.4	12.8	13.9	1.65	0.068***
Attending a political meeting or rally	9.1	9.8	8.1	0.88	–0.020***
Contacting a politician	6.4	9.9	7.7	1.22	0.015**
Signing a petition	22.3	23.3	16.6	0.75	–0.062***
Donating money	19.1	21.8	20.2	1.06	0.012*
Boycotting products	16.8	17.3	11.9	0.71	–0.056***
Demonstrating	9.0	7.1	4.5	0.50	–0.082***
Joining an internet forum	4.5	2.4	1.2	0.26	–0.089***
N	12,343	10,863	11,360		

Note: Entries are percentages of respondents participating in this act during the past year, ratio between the third and the first group, and correlation between age and that participation act.

Source: ISSP 2004, 26 countries.

****p < 0.001; **p < 0.01; *p < 0.05.*

taken to imply, however, that the younger age cohorts are indifferent towards the political process. Young people are far more active in joining an internet forum, in demonstrating and in signing petitions.

After presenting these data, we can now move on to multivariate analysis. In this analysis we will no longer rely on individual items, but on two separate scales. First we measure institutionalised participation by adding the score of being a party member, attending a political meeting and contacting a politician. We selected these acts as they are described in the literature as the most typical representations of institutionalised participation. This scale therefore ranges from 0 (not a single activity) to 3 (having performed all three acts) (Cronbach's alpha: 0.613). Since voting is a very frequent activity and therefore an exception on some indicators, we will leave this out for further analysis. The extremely high number of respondents who participated in elections would overshadow all other information that is available in the data. A second scale summarises all non-institutionalised participation acts: signing a petition, donating money, boycotting products, demonstrating and joining an internet forum. This scale ranges from 0 (no activity) to 5 (all five acts) (Cronbach's alpha: 0.751).

A central question in this kind of research is to determine whether both types of participation correlate, and if so, to what extent. We can observe a moderate correlation (0.39, $p < 0.001$) between the two types of participation, indicating that those who participate in the institutionalised forms of participation are also more likely to participate in the non-institutionalised forms of participation. A correlation of 0.39 is satisfactory, as it allows us to state that both forms can actually be distinguished on an empirical basis.

© 2009 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2009 Political Studies Association

Results of the Multi-level Model

First, we will investigate inequalities with regard to the participation in institutionalised forms of participation (Table 5). Because we analyse data from different political systems, we use multi-level analysis using the program MLwIN, with individual-level and country-level data. The first model (Model 0) estimates the mean number of activities people participate in and the variance at level 2 (the country). Seven per cent of the variance in institutionalised political participation is due to country differences. In Model

Table 5: Explaining Institutionalised Political Participation

	Institutionalised forms			
	Model 0	*Model 1*	*Model 2*	*Model 3*
Individual-level variables				
Gender (male = 0)		–0.130***	–0.057***	–0.038***
		(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.009)
Age		0.003***	0.002***	0.002***
		(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Education		0.059***	0.023***	0.007*
		(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)
Political interest			0.194***	0.150***
			(0.004)	(0.007)
Political efficacy			0.018***	0.015***
			(0.002)	(0.002)
Discuss politics				0.082***
				(0.006)
Watch political news				–0.002ns
				(0.004)
Country-level variables				
GDP/capita (in US$10,000)			0.015ns	–0.057**
			(0.017)	(0.020)
Freedom House Index (FHI)			–0.021ns	–0.328***
			(0.031)	(0.085)
Intercept	0.288	0.045	–0.501	0.470
	(0.034)	(0.037)	(0.126)	(0.243)
Variance at country level (in %)	6.88	7.27	6.23	3.08
Number of cases	30,437	30,163	28,956	15,427
IGLS deviance	56,949.630	55,683.230	51,550.200	26,007.170

Note: Entries are parameter estimates and standard errors (between brackets) of a multi-level OLS regression.

Source: ISSP 2004, 25 countries.

****p < 0.001; **p < 0.01; *p < 0.05; ns: not significant.*

© 2009 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2009 Political Studies Association

1 (Table 5) we entered basic individual-level variables: gender, age and education. The results confirm earlier studies: men participate more often than women, and we find a significant relation between political participation on the one hand and education level and age on the other. Model 2 includes individual political attitudes (political interest and efficacy) and the country-level variables GDP per capita and the Freedom House Index (FHI). Political interest is, as expected, an important indicator of institutionalised political participation. Political efficacy also adds slightly to the explanation of institutionalised participation. Entering GDP per capita and the Freedom House Index as country-level variables does not lead to new insights, as these variables are not significantly related to institutionalised forms of political participation. Finally, in Model 3 we also take the effect of political discussion and watching political news into account. Political discussion and political interest are clearly the most important determinants of political participation. To summarise: participation in institutionalised forms of politics remains strongly skewed. Men and older people participate more intensely than women or younger people. At first sight, education level is a very strong determinant of institutionalised participation, but most of this effect can be explained by higher levels of political interest and more intensive political discussion among highly educated groups of the population.

In order to explain the participation in non-institutionalised forms of politics we proceed in exactly the same manner (Table 6). Striking here is that the intra-class correlation in the null model stands at 0.13, compared to 0.07 in the previous model. This indicates that countries differ more strongly from one another with regard to non-institutionalised participation than with regard to institutionalised participation. The results already indicate a remarkable difference between the two forms of participation: whereas men are significantly more involved in institutionalised participation, this gender difference is reversed for non-institutionalised forms that are being practised more often by women. This difference is clear, and it remains persistent if we develop our model further. Obviously, non-institutionalised forms of political participation are much more successful in attracting female participants than are conventional forms. For age, we encounter the same phenomenon: while older respondents participate more often in institutionalised forms, younger people participate more intensively in non-institutionalised forms of politics. For the education variable, however, the results are in line with the model for institutionalised forms of participation. Here too more highly educated respondents participate more actively, and the parameters are even stronger than for institutionalised forms of participation. This could indicate that education is a more important predictor for non-institutionalised than institutionalised forms of participation. In Model 2 (Table 6) we can again observe that the GDP per capita level of the country has no influence on the participation level. The score on the Freedom House Index, however, does have a strong effect: there is more non-institutionalised participation in fully democratic regimes. Political interest, political efficacy and discussing politics have a clear positive relation with non-institutionalised participation (Model 3). It has to be noted, however, that even taking all these control variables into account the effect of education level remains strongly significant, which was not the case in our analysis of institutionalised forms of politics.

© 2009 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2009 Political Studies Association

Table 6: Explaining Non-institutionalised Political Participation

	Non-institutionalised forms			
	Model 0	*Model 1*	*Model 2*	*Model 3*
Individual-level variables				
Gender (male = 0)		0.035***	0.090***	0.144***
		(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.015)
Age		–0.004***	–0.005***	–0.005***
		(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Education		0.155***	0.114***	0.096***
		(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.006)
Political interest			0.209***	0.147***
			(0.007)	(0.011)
Political efficacy			0.031***	0.024***
			(0.003)	(0.004)
Discuss politics				0.176***
				(0.010)
Watch political news				0.007ns
				(0.007)
Country level-variables				
GDP/capita (in US$10,000)			0.082ns	0.424ns
			(0.030)	(0.480)
Freedom House Index			–0.041**	–0.482*
			(0.054)	(0.200)
Intercept	0.689	0.399	–0.270	0.719
	(0.072)	(0.075)	(0.220)	(0.575)
Variance at country level (in %)	12.89	13.49	8.21	6.44
Number of cases	28,799	28,545	27,508	14,452
IGLS deviance	78,103.380	75,514.550	71,827.990	37,819.060

Note: Entries are parameter estimates and standard errors (between brackets) of a multi-level OLS regression.

Source: ISSP 2004, 25 countries.

****p < 0.001; **p < 0.01; *p < 0.05; ns: not significant.*

Further Analysis

The models thus far assume a linear relation: it is expected that individual characteristics will have the same effect on political participation for all countries under consideration. This assumption is not self-evident, given the wide range of political systems represented in the ISSP data set. The fact that our sample also includes authoritarian regimes might especially have an effect in this regard: in less democratic regimes it might be less self-evident that those who are high on resources will indeed participate in forms of political participation. In Table 7 we therefore also include cross-level interactions between individual-level characteristics and the Freedom House Index score of that

© 2009 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2009 Political Studies Association

Table 7: Explaining Participation with Cross-Level Interactions

	Institutionalised		*Non-institutionalised*	
	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 1*	*Model 2*
Individual-level variables				
Gender (male = 0)	–0.057***	–0.056***	0.088***	0.092***
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.011)	(0.011)
Age	0.002***	0.002***	–0.005***	–0.005***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Education	0.030***	0.023***	0.167***	0.112***
	(0.006)	(0.003)	(0.010)	(0.004)
Political interest	0.194***	0.226***	0.208***	0.325***
	(0.004)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.015)
Political efficacy	0.018***	0.018***	0.030***	0.030***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Country-level variables				
GDP/capita (in US$10,000)	0.015ns	0.015ns	0.079**	0.080**
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.030)	(0.030)
Freedom House Index (FHI)	0.026ns	0.046ns	0.001ns	0.051ns
	(0.031)	(0.031)	(0.054)	(0.054)
Cross-level interactions				
Education*FHI	–0.002ns		–0.019***	
	(0.002)		(0.003)	
Political Interest*FHI		–0.011***		–0.040***
		(0.003)		(0.004)
Intercept	–0.514***	–0.568***	–0.381ns	–0.381*
	(0.126)	(0.126)	(0.220)	(0.220)
Variance at country level (in %)	6.23	6.23	8.11	8.11
Number of cases	28,548	28,956	27,508	27,508
IGLS deviance	51,548.980	51,535.730	71,792.510	71,792.510

Note: Entries are parameter estimates and standard errors (between brackets) of a multi-level OLS regression.

Source: ISSP 2004, 25 countries.

****p < 0.001; **p < 0.01; *p < 0.05; ns: not significant.*

country.[3] Including these interactions did not reduce our primary effects in a substantial manner. Again we had to build different models, since it proved impossible to build stable models including two interaction effects simultaneously. Both for education and for political interest, however, we notice that the interaction effects are much stronger for non-institutionalised political participation than for institutionalised forms. Authoritarian regimes (with a high FHI score) therefore seem to have a stronger discouraging effect on non-institutionalised forms of participation than on institutionalised forms. Indeed, even in authoritarian regimes elections and party membership will have a role as a support

© 2009 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2009 Political Studies Association

mechanism for the regime, while it is less likely that the regime will encourage participation in non-institutionalised forms of politics.

One will remember that our main research question was to determine whether non-institutionalised forms of participation are *more* unequal than institutionalised forms. Thus far, we tried to solve this question by comparing on sight the regression coefficients in two distinct models. This comparison seems to indicate that the two forms of participation behave differently with regard to age and gender. For education both analyses suggest that highly educated respondents participate more intensively than low-educated respondents, but the education effect seems even stronger for non-institutionalised forms of politics. However, one should proceed with caution if one simply compares regression coefficients from two different models. To ascertain whether equalities actually are stronger in one specific form of participation, a more stringent test is necessary. Given the correlation of 0.39 at the individual level between both forms of participation, this comparison requires a specific form of analysis, since it is impossible to include both dependent variables simultaneously in one analysis. Therefore we developed a more direct comparison by contrasting those who participate in non-institutionalised forms of politics with those who participate in institutionalised forms. In order to be as clear as possible, respondents who do not participate at all, or who spread their energies into both forms of participation, are left out of the analysis (Table 8).

In order to develop this analysis, we proceeded through a number of steps. First we standardised both forms of participation to a 0–1 range. Subsequently we calculated in

Table 8: Predicting Institutionalised Political Participation (vs. Non-institutionalised)

	Odds ratios
Gender (male = 0)	0.573*** (0.039)
Age	1.002* (0.001)
Education	0.821*** (0.015)
Political interest	1.372*** (0.025)
Political efficacy	1.006ns (0.010)
GDP/capita	–0.944ns (0.078)
Freedom House Index	0.927*** (0.138)
DIC	16,054.43
Number of cases	13,333

Notes: Entries are the odds ratios and significance level. Dependent variable: preference for institutionalised (= 1) compared to a preference for non-institutionalised (= 0) forms of participation.

Source: ISSP 2004, 25 countries.

****p < 0.001; **p < 0.01; *p < 0.05; ns: not significant.*

© 2009 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2009 Political Studies Association

which form respondents participated most: institutionalised or non-institutionalised forms of participation (see Appendix). Basically we measure whether a respondent tends to specialise in one specific form of participation. Those who obtained a higher score for non-institutionalised participation received a score of 1, those who were more intensively involved in institutionalised participation received a score of 0. In the table in the Appendix these groups can be distinguished by a darker (= 1) and a lighter (= 0) shade of grey. This implies that we had to delete respondents who did not participate at all (and therefore could not specialise in one form, $n = 14{,}400$), and a limited number of respondents ($n = 30$) who obtained equal maximal scores on both scales. Respondents with missing answers also had to be removed from the analysis. The result is that we obtain a new variable, indicating the extent to which a respondent is likely to specialise in institutionalised politics (maximum score), vs. those who tend to specialise in non-institutionalised politics (minimal score). This allows for a direct comparison between participation in both, opposing forms of political participation.

The results of the regression analysis (Table 8) indeed show marked differences. Men are much more likely to specialise in institutionalised forms of politics than are women. Controlling for the various background characteristics, age is only weakly significant: older respondents tend to be more engaged in institutionalised politics. Education level is a strong predictor of non-institutionalised participation in comparison to institutionalised forms of political behaviour. Political interest is more successful in explaining institutionalised forms and finally we can also observe that in full democratic systems, non-institutionalised participation is practised more often. If we return to our initial question about inequality with regard to gender, age and education, it does become clear that both forms of participation operate in a different manner. Basically this direct comparison therefore confirms our initial findings, based on a comparison between the various regressions reported in earlier tables.

Conclusion

The legitimacy of a democratic political system depends partly on the extent to which all citizens who will be affected by the decisions made by the political system have had an opportunity to have their voices heard in the decision-making process (Young, 2000, pp. 5–6). Given the increasing importance of non-institutionalised participation, in this article we wanted to determine whether these forms of participation contribute to achieving this ideal of a more inclusive political community. We did so by examining inequality at the input side of the political system, and in this specific analysis we focussed only on the background characteristics of participants. We realise that we do not include information about the motivation or the ideas of these participants (Phillips, 1995, p. 25) and this is something that needs to be taken up in future research.

The results of our analysis indicate that non-institutionalised forms of politics are indeed successful in counterbalancing some traditional sources of inequality among the citizenry. First, non-institutionalised forms stand in sharp opposition to the historical dominance of men in politics: while almost all previous studies on political participation demonstrate

© 2009 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2009 Political Studies Association

that men participate more intensively than women, for non-institutionalised forms this is exactly the other way around. Gender differences remain significant, even after including various control variables. Theoretically this is an interesting finding, because it sheds new light on the ongoing debate about why women are less active in politics (especially in party politics) than men are. Apparently this is not a matter of a lack of political interest or efficacy, since otherwise women would not participate in a non-institutionalised manner either. Therefore, reasons for the under-representation of women in electoral politics clearly should be sought in the way these structures and institutions operate. Given the fact that the low participation rates of women have been such a stable feature of political participation research for decades, the importance of this finding should not be underestimated. What exactly explains why women seem more strongly attracted towards non-institutionalised forms compared to institutional forms remains a topic for further research. In line with earlier research, we can only assume that non-institutionalised forms of political participation correspond more clearly to the notion of 'lifestyle politics', allowing citizens to give a political meaning to day-to-day activities. This widening of the concept of the political apparently has strong consequences for the gender balance of those who participate in the decision-making process.

For age, too, a similar logic can be constructed. In most of the ongoing debate about the lack of electoral participation among younger age groups, a lack of interest is often cited as a cause for these declining participation levels. Again, it is difficult to see how this alleged lack of interest could be combined with the high participation levels in non-institutionalised forms of participation. Self-evidently, young age groups might opt for non-institutionalised forms of participation because these are less intensive and less demanding, but since we do not have any data available on intensity of participation, we cannot really elaborate on this claim.

Non-institutionalised forms of politics therefore clearly lead to a more inclusive political society: women and young people tend to use these forms to get their voices heard in the political arena. Although the data do not allow us to provide insights on what specific demands they voice towards the political system, we can assume that an increasing diversity of the 'democratic choir', as Robert Dahl labelled it, almost inevitably will also have an impact on the kind of demands that are voiced towards the political system.

However, there is also a downside to our findings. Non-institutionalised forms of participation tend to strengthen inequalities based on education. For institutionalised forms of participation we already observe a strong pattern of inequality as the highly educated are far more active in this kind of politics. But even when comparing both forms of participation, the only possible conclusion is that access to non-institutionalised forms is even more strongly biased. The current analysis does not allow us to determine why this is the case. Signing a petition or joining an internet forum might indeed require more cognitive skills, so these acts are not accessible to others. Donating money or political consumerism, on the other hand, requires material resources and it is more likely that the highly educated can dispose of this resource more abundantly. Part of the effect that we

© 2009 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2009 Political Studies Association

ascribe to education level therefore might in reality be due to income differences. Given the insurmountable challenge of measuring income levels in a uniform manner across 25 countries, data limitations do not allow us to test this assumption in a more direct manner.

No matter what exact causal mechanism is involved, however, we can note that the strong disparities based on education should be a reason for concern. Research has demonstrated quite convincingly that the highly educated have distinct political preferences in comparison to low-educated groups in society. If these highly educated groups are more active in getting their voices heard in politics, it is more likely that their interests and preferences will receive more weight in the political decision-making process. In recent years, a number of authors have argued that low-educated groups within the population grow increasingly alienated from the political process, which could lead to extremist voting behaviour or to not taking part in elections at all. The current analysis suggests that non-institutionalised forms of political participation, like demonstrations, petitions or political consumerism, do not provide an effective mechanism to get low-educated groups within the population involved in politics. If the political system wants to reach out more successfully to these groups, clearly other mechanisms will have to be explored.

In some of the normative literature we can observe a sharp conflict between authors highlighting the democratic potential of non-institutionalised forms of politics vs. those who want to keep standards high with regard to institutionalised forms of participation. The results of the current analysis, however, do not allow us to choose sides in this drawn-out debate in an unequivocal manner. Rather it seems that this is not an 'either/or' story: both forms of participation attract a different audience, and a plurality of participation acts might therefore be able to entice the greatest proportion of citizens into the political decision-making process. The challenge for political systems is that they are well equipped with ways to integrate institutionalised forms of participation, and to accommodate the input provided by these acts. There is far less experience, however, with ways to include the input received by means of non-institutionalised forms of political participation. One of the perennial concerns with regard to this form of participation is whether it can be considered to be truly representative of public opinion. The current analysis, however, demonstrates that, especially for younger age cohorts and for women, non-institutionalised forms of participation might be the preferred mechanism to get their voices heard in the political decision-making process. Combining various acts should allow for meaningful participation of women and men, young and old citizens. On the question of how to engage citizens with low educational credentials, however, the current analysis does not provide any specific solutions.

© 2009 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2009 Political Studies Association

Appendix: Data and Variables

International Social Survey Programme, ISSP 2004 Survey

	Eligible participants	*Completed questionnaires*	*Response rate*
Used in the analysis			
Spain	2,544	2,481	97.5
Venezuela	1,294	1,199	92.7
South Africa	3,382	2,775	82.1
Uruguay	1,389	1,108	79.8
Japan	1,735	1,343	77.4
Cyprus	1,300	1,000	76.9
Slovakia	1,395	1,072	76.9
Bulgaria	1,565	1,121	71.6
Philippines	1,730	1,200	69.4
Slovenia	1,521	1,052	69.2
Mexico	1,741	1,201	69.0
Poland	1,902	1,277	67.1
South Korea	1,969	1,312	66.6
United States	2,224	1,472	66.2
Ireland	1,614	1,065	66.0
Sweden	1,973	1,295	65.6
New Zealand	2,253	1,370	60.8
Austria	1,669	1,006	60.3
Denmark	1,967	1,180	60.0
Belgium	2,341	1,398	59.7
Norway	2,400	1,404	58.5
Israel	1,769	1,034	58.5
Portugal	2,808	1,602	57.1
Latvia	1,785	1,000	56.0
Finland	2,490	1,354	54.4
Switzerland	2,154	1,078	50.0
Not used in the analysis			
(because of response rate)			
Chile	1,505	1,505	100.0 [*sic*]
Czech Republic	2,821	1,322	46.9
Hungary	2,233	1,035	46.4
Taiwan	3,859	1,781	46.2
Great Britain	1,878	853	45.4
Canada	2,874	1,228	42.7
Netherlands	4,399	1,823	41.4
Germany	3,252	1,332	41.0
Australia	4,996	1,914	38.3
Russia	6,082	1,800	29.6
France	9,948	1,475	14.8
Brazil	n.a.	2,000	??
Mean response rate (in %): 61.1 (entire sample), 69.2 (countries used in the analysis)			

Note: All countries with a response rate lower than 50 per cent were excluded from the analysis. Chile (response rate: 100 per cent) was also excluded from the analysis.

Source: Scholz et al. 2008.

n.a., data not available.

© 2009 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2009 Political Studies Association

Variables Used in the Analysis

	Missing cases	Mean	Std. dev	Minimum	Maximum
Institutionalised political participation	4,129	0.29	0.64	0	3
Non-institutionalised political participation	5,767	0.70	1.00	0	5
Gender (male = 0)	1	0.54	0.50	0	1
Age	126	45.29	17.24	15	98
Education	234	2.63	1.50	0	5
GDP per capita (in US$10,000)	0	2.8066	2.1272	0.1625	8.3922
Freedom House Index	0	2.74	1.14	2	14
Political interest	584	2.40	0.90	1	4
Political efficacy	1,421	5.25	2.18	2	10
Discuss politics	340	2.39	0.94	1	4
Watch political news	14,593	3.76	1.41	1	5

Specialising in Institutionalised Forms of Participation

		Standardised institutionalised forms of participation				
		0.0	0.3	0.7	1.0	Total
Standardised non-institutionalised forms of participation	0.0	14,400	1,589	240	55	16,284
	0.2	5,032	1,194	311	120	6,657
	0.4	2,137	748	289	127	3,301
	0.6	680	413	242	138	1,473
	0.8	120	98	119	77	414
	1.0	11	20	39	30	100
Total	22,380	4,062	1,240	547	28,229	

= *Respondents participate more in institutionalised forms of participation (n = 4,382).*

= *Respondents participate more in non-institutionalised forms of participation (n = 9,017).*

= *Respondents not included in this analysis (n = 14,430).*

Questions Used from ISSP 2004

Education

What is your highest education level?

1. No formal qualification
2. Lowest formal qualification
3. Above lowest qualification
4. Higher secondary completed
5. Above higher secondary level, other education
6. University degree completed

© 2009 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2009 Political Studies Association

Political interest

How interested would you say you personally are in politics?

Not at all interested
Not very interested
Fairly interested
Very interested

Political efficacy

Sum scale of: (explained variance: 53%; Cronbach's alpha 0.658)

1. People like me don't have any say about what the government does
2. I don't think the government cares much what people like me think

Strongly agree
Agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Disagree
Strongly disagree

Discuss politics

When you get together with your friends, relatives or fellow workers, how often do you discuss politics?

Never
Rarely
Sometimes
Often

Watch political news

On average, how often do you watch political news on television?

Never
Fewer than 1–2 days a week
1–2 days a week
3–4 days a week
Every day

Political participation

Here are some different forms of political and social action that people can take. Please indicate if you have:

1. Signed a petition
2. Boycotted, or deliberately bought, certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons
3. Taken part in a demonstration
4. Attended a political meeting or rally
5. Contacted, or attempted to contact, a politician or a civil servant to express your views
6. Donated money or raised funds for a social or political activity
7. Joined an internet political forum or discussion group

© 2009 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2009 Political Studies Association

Please indicate, for each one,
whether you have done any of these things in the past year
whether you have done it in the more distant past
whether you have not done it but might do it
or have not done it and would never, under any circumstances, do it.
People sometimes belong to different kinds of groups or associations: ...
A political party
Please indicate whether you
belong and actively participate
belong but don't actively participate
used to belong but do not anymore
or have never belonged to one.
Did you vote in the last election? (Question wording depends on the country, e.g., in Austria: 'Did you vote in the Federal Election in October, 2004?')
Yes
No
Not eligible to vote

(*Accepted*: 2 December 2008)

About the Authors

Sofie Marien joined the Centre for Political Research at the Catholic University of Leuven in 2007. She is a member of the PartiRep research network, a collaboration between several international and Belgian universities (http://www.partirep.eu) and a member of the Centre for Citizenship and Democracy (http://www.kuleuven.be/citizenship). Her research interests include political trust, political participation and political representation. She is currently working on a PhD thesis on the importance of political trust in European societies.

Sofie Marien, Department of Political Science, Catholic University of Leuven, Parkstreet 45,3602, B-3000 Leuven, Belgium; email: *sofie.marien@soc.kuleuven.be*

Marc Hooghe is Professor of Political Science at the Catholic University of Leuven (Belgium) and a Visiting Professor at the University of Lille (France). He holds PhDs in Sociology and Political Science. His research deals mainly with social capital and political participation and recently his work has appeared in the *European Journal of Political Research*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *Scandinavian Political Studies* and the *Canadian Journal of Political Science*.

Marc Hooghe, Department of Political Science, Catholic University of Leuven, Parkstreet 45,3602, B-3000 Leuven, Belgium; email: *marc.hooghe@soc.kuleuven.be*

Ellen Quintelier is a PhD student finishing her thesis on youth and political participation in Belgium. In her PhD she seeks to determine which groups are active in politics and which political socialisation agents (school, family, peers, youth organisations, etc.) stimulate the level of political participation of young people over time. Previously, she has published on youth political participation and political socialisation in *European Union Politics*, the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* and *Social Science Computer Review*.

Ellen Quintelier, Department of Political Science, Catholic University of Leuven, Parkstreet 45,3602, B-3000 Leuven, Belgium; email: *ellen.quintelier@soc.kuleuven.be*

Notes

This research project was funded by the Belgian Federal Science Agency, Inter-University Attraction Pole 'Participation and Representation' (http://www.partirep.eu). An earlier version of this article was presented at the conference on 'Normative Implications of New Forms of Participation for Democratic Policy Processes' at Grythyttan (Sweden) in May 2008. We are grateful for the comments of the participants at that conference and for the comments of three anonymous referees for *Political Studies*.

© 2009 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2009 Political Studies Association

1 http://zacat.gesis.org/webview/index.jsp?object=http://zacat.gesis.org/obj/fStudy/ZA3950

2 We realise this is a conservative way to proceed, but we wanted to be confident about the quality of the data we are dealing with. However, in the end our selection process did not lead to substantial differences. An analysis on the entire ISSP data set, including countries with low response rates, did not lead to different results in the analysis.

3 In an additional analysis, we also included cross-level interactions with GDP per capita, but these did not lead to any strong or substantial effects.

References

Bang, H. and Sørensen, E. (2001) 'The Everyday Maker: Building Political rather than Social Capital', in P. Dekker and E. Uslaner (eds), *Social Capital and Participation in Everyday Life*. London: Routledge, pp. 148–61.

Barnes, S. and Kaase, M. (1979) *Political Action: Mass Participation in Five Western Democracies*. Beverley Hills CA: Sage.

Barry, B. (2001) *Culture and Equality: An Egalitarian Critique of Multiculturalism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Billiet, J., Koch, A. and Philippens, M. (2007) 'Understanding and Improving Response Rates', in R. Jowell, C. Roberts, R. Fitzgerald and E. Gillian (eds.), *Measuring Attitudes Cross-Nationally: Lessons from the European Social Survey*. London: Sage, pp. 113–37.

Burns, N., Schlozman, K. L. and Verba, S. (2001) *The Private Roots of Public Action: Gender, Equality, and Political Participation*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Campbell, A. and Miller, W. E. (1964) *The American Voter*. New York: Wiley.

Dahl, R. (1989) *Democracy and Its Critics*. New Haven CT: Yale University Press.

Dalton, R. (2008) 'Citizenship Norms and the Expansion Of Political Participation', *Political Studies*, 56 (1), 76–98.

Dalton, R. and Wattenberg, M. (2000) *Parties without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dalton, R. J., Cain, B. E. and Scarrow, S. E. (2003) 'Democratic Publics and Democratic Institutions', in B. E. Cain, R. J. Dalton and S. E. Scarrow (eds), *Democracy Transformed? Expanding Political Opportunities in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 250–75.

Dworkin, R. (2000) *Sovereign Virtue: The Theory and Practice of Equality*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Easton, D. and Dennis, J. (1969) *Children in the Political System: Origins of Political Legitimacy*. New York: MacGraw-Hill.

Eliasoph, N. (1998) *Avoiding Politics: How Americans Produce Apathy in Everyday Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Freedom House (2004) *Freedomhouse Index* [online]. Available from: http://www.freedomhouse.org. [Accessed 25 April 2008].

Friedman, M. (1999) *Consumer Boycotts*. New York: Routledge.

Groves, R. M. and Heeringa, S. G. (2006) 'Responsive Design for Household Surveys: Tools for Actively Controlling Survey Errors and Costs', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 169 (3), 439–57.

Hero, R. and Tolbert, C. (1995) 'Latinos and Substantive Representation in the US House of Representatives: Direct, Indirect, or Nonexistent?', *American Journal of Political Science*, 39 (3), 640–52.

Hess, R. D. and Torney, J. V. (1970) *The Development of Political Attitudes in Children*. Chicago IL: Aldine.

Hooghe, M. (1999) 'The Rebuke of Thersites: Deliberative Democracy under Conditions of Inequality', *Acta Politica*, 34 (4), 287–301.

Hooghe, M. and Dejaeghere, Y. (2007) 'Does the "Monitorial Citizen" Exist? An Empirical Investigation into the Occurrence of Postmodern Forms of Citizenship in the Nordic Countries', *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 30 (2), 249–71.

Hooghe, M. and Stolle, D. (2004) 'Good Girls Go to the Polling Booth, Bad Boys Go Everywhere: Gender Differences in Anticipated Political Participation among American Fourteen-Year-Olds', *Women and Politics*, 26 (3–4), 1–23.

Hyman, H. H. (1959) *Political Socialization: A Study in the Psychology of Political Behavior*. New York: Free Press.

Inglehart, R. (1997) *Modernization and Postmodernization*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.

Inglehart, R. and Catterberg, G. (2002) 'Trends in Political Action: The Developmental Trend and the Post-Honeymoon Decline', *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 43 (3–5), 300–16.

International Monetary Fund (2008) World Economic Outlook Database 2008 [online]. Available from: http://www.imf.org/external/data.htm. [Accessed 13 April 2008].

© 2009 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2009 Political Studies Association

Jennings, M. (1987) 'Residues of a Movement: The Aging of the American Protest Generation', *American Political Science Review*, 81 (2), 367–82.

Jennings, M. and Andersen, E. (2003) 'The Importance of Social and Political Context: The Case of AIDS Activism', *Political Behavior*, 25 (2), 177–99.

Klingemann, H.-D. and Fuchs, D. (1995) *Citizens and the State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kriesi, H. (2008) 'Political Mobilization, Political Participation and the Power of the Vote', *West European Politics*, 31 (1), 147–68.

Li, Y. and Marsh, D. (2008) 'New Forms of Political Participation: Searching for Expert Citizens and Everyday Makers', *British Journal of Political Science*, 38 (2), 247–72.

Lusoli, W., Ward, S. and Gibson, R. (2006) '(Re)connecting Politics? Parliament, the Public and the Internet', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 59 (1), 24–42.

Macedo, S., *et al*. (eds) (2005) *Democracy at Risk: How Political Choices Undermine Citizen Participation and What We Can Do about It*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press.

Micheletti, M. (2004) *Politics, Products, and Markets: Exploring Political Consumerism, Past and Present*. New Brunswick: Transaction.

Milbrath, L. W. and Goel, M. L. (1977) *Political Participation: Why and How Do People Get Involved in Politics*. Chicago IL: Rand McNally.

Nie, N., Junn, J. and Stehlik-Barry, K. (1996) *Education and Democratic Citizenship in America*. Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press.

Norris, P. (ed.) (1999) *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Government*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Norris, P. (2001) *Digital Divide: Civic Engagement, Information Poverty and the Internet Worldwide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Norris, P. (2002) *Democratic Phoenix: Reinventing Political Activism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Norris, P. (2006) 'Did the Media Matter? Agenda-Setting, Persuasion, and Mobilization Effects in the British General Election Campaign', *British Politics*, 1 (2), 195–221.

Norris, P., Walgrave, S. and Van Aelst, P. (2005) 'Who Demonstrates? Antistate Rebels, Conventional Participants, or Everyone?', *Comparative Politics*, 37 (2), 189–206.

Pacheco, J. and Plutzer, E. (2008) 'Political Participation and Cumulative Disadvantage: The Impact of Economic and Social Hardship on Young Citizens', *Journal of Social Issues*, 64 (3), 571–93.

Parry, G., Moyser, G. and Day, N. (1992) *Political Participation and Democracy in Britain*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pattie, C., Seyd, P. and Whiteley, P. (2004) *Citizenship in Britain: Values, Participation and Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Phillips, A. (1995) *The Politics of Presence*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Scholz, E., Harkness, J. and Faass, T. (2008) *ISSP Study Monitoring 2004. Report to the ISSP General Assembly on Monitoring Work Undertaken for the ISSP by GESIS-ZUMA, Germany. GESIS-Methodenberichte Nr. 2/2008*. GESIS-ZUMA, Mannheim.

Schudson, M. (1999) *The Good Citizen: A History of American Civic Life*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Sen, A. (2005) 'Human Rights and Capabilities', *Journal of Human Development*, 6 (2), 151–66.

Skocpol, T. (2003) *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life*. Norman OK: University of Oklahoma Press.

Snijders, T. and Bosker, R. (1999) *Multilevel Analysis: An Introduction to Basic and Advanced Multilevel Modelling*. London: Sage.

Stolle, D. and Hooghe, M. (2005) 'Shifting Inequalities? Patterns of Exclusion and Inclusion in Emerging Forms of Political Participation'. Paper presented at the 101st Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington DC, 1–4 September.

Stolle, D., Hooghe, M. and Micheletti, M. (2005) 'Politics in the Supermarket: Political Consumerism as a Form of Political Participation', *International Political Science Review*, 26 (3), 245–69.

Teorell, J., Sum, P. and Tobiasen, M. (2007a) 'Participation and Political Equality: An Assessment of Large-Scale Democracy', in J. W. van Deth, J. R. Montero and A. Westholm (eds), *Citizenship and Involvement in European Democracies: A Comparative Analysis*. New York: Routledge, pp. 384–414.

© 2009 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2009 Political Studies Association

Teorell, J., Torcal, M. and Montero, J. R. (2007b) 'Political Participation: Mapping the Terrain', in J. W. van Deth, J. R. Montero and A. Westholm (eds), *Citizenship and Involvement in European Democracies: A Comparative Analysis*. New York: Routledge, pp. 334–57.

Trechsel, A. (2007) 'Inclusiveness of Old and New Forms of Citizens' Electoral Participation', *Representation*, 43 (2), 111–21.

Van Aelst, P. and Walgrave, S. (2001) 'Who is that (Wo)man in the Street? From the Normalisation of Protest to the Normalisation of the Protester', *European Journal of Political Research*, 39 (4), 461–86.

Verba, S. and Nie, N. (1972) *Participation in America*. New York: Harper & Row.

Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L. and Brady, H. E. (1995) *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Vissers, S. and Hooghe, M. (2009) 'Reaching Out or Reaching In? The Use of Party Websites during the 2006 Electoral Campaign in Belgium', *Information, Communication and Society*, 12 (5) in press.

Walzer, M. (1983) *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality*. New York: Basic Books.

Warren, M. (2002) 'What Can Democratic Participation Mean Today?', *Political Theory*, 30 (5), 677–701.

Wattenberg, M. (2007) *Is Voting for Young People?* New York: Pearson/Longman.

Wollebaek, D. and Selle, P. (2003) 'The Importance of Passive Membership', in M. Hooghe and D. Stolle (eds), *Generating Social Capital*. New York: Palgrave, pp. 67–88.

Young, I. M. (2000) *Inclusion and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Zukin, C., Keeter, S., Andolina, M., Jenkins, K. and Delli Carpini, M. X. (2006) *A New Engagement? Political Participation, Civic Life, and the Changing American Citizen*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

© 2009 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2009 Political Studies Association

Copyright of Political Studies is the property of Blackwell Publishing Limited and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.