

THE Internet GENERATION



HENRY
MILNER

Engaged
Citizens
or
Political
Dropouts

The Internet as Obstacle to and Means of Educating Young Citizens

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INTRODUCTION

Citizens lacking the minimum level of knowledge needed to make sense of the political world are termed *political dropouts*. A society with a relatively high proportion of political dropouts is termed low in civic literacy (See Milner 2002).

The question posed here is thus: is low civic literacy a state of affairs that can be avoided or reversed. Does this generation's apparently low level of political attentiveness foretell a continuing decline in civic literacy? And, if so, what indications are there that even the high civic-literacy countries to meet this challenge?

PART ONE

The charts and tables in this section tell the following story:

Turnout and other forms of conventional political participation are low and have been declining.

Unconventional forms of political participation are not replacing conventional ones.

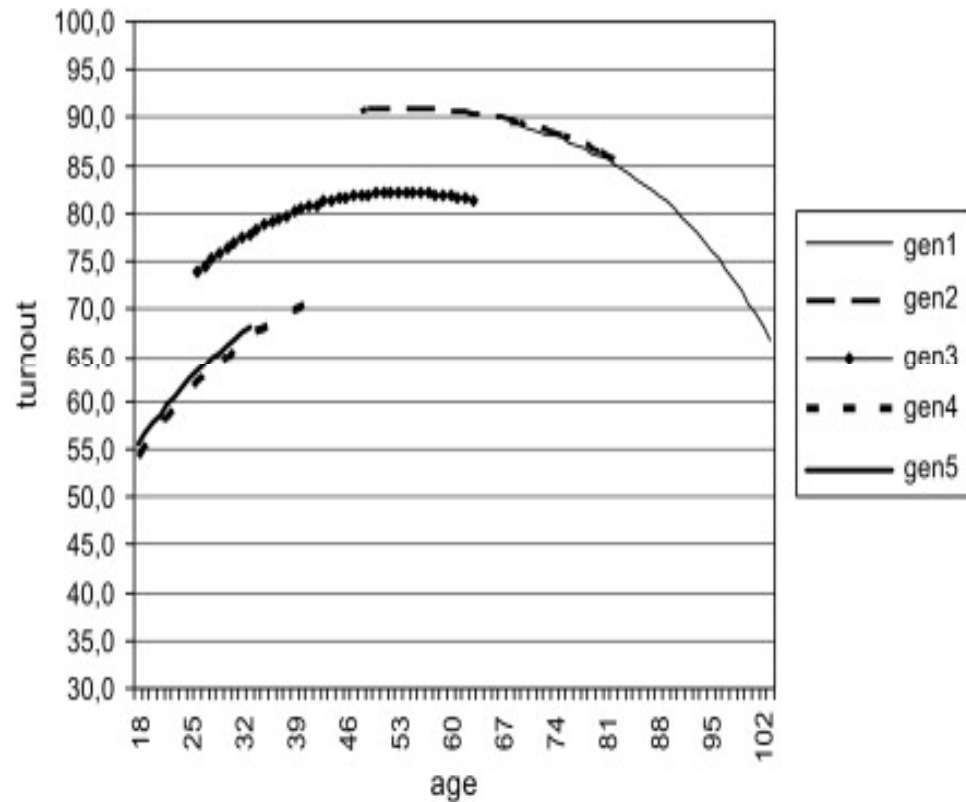
Levels of political knowledge are low and declining.

There is an important generational aspect to this double decline, an aspect that is especially characteristic of the low civic-literacy countries.

Reported Turnout in European National Elections [ESS round 1]

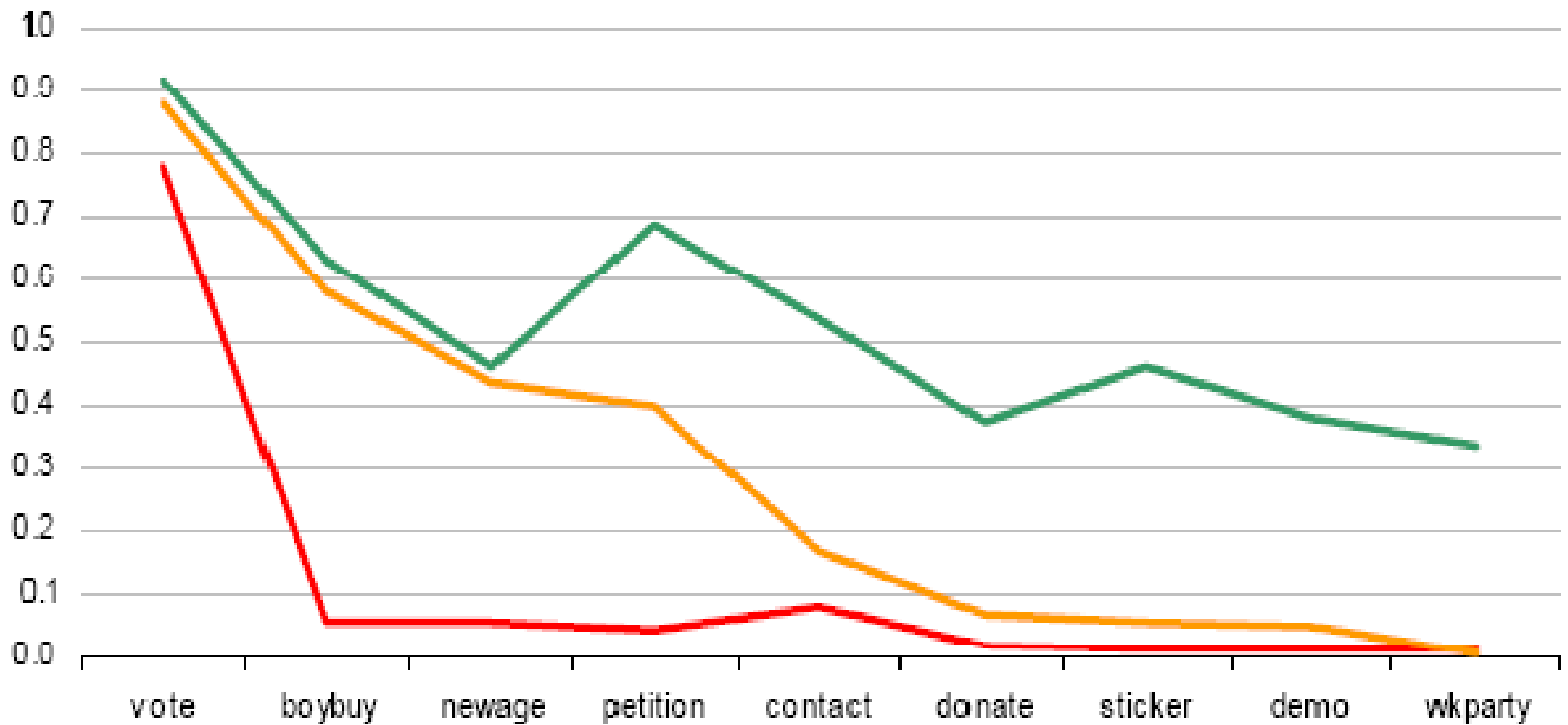
	Born since 1980	All
Sweden	81	87
Denmark	79	94
Netherlands	75	86
Germany	73	85
Austria	75	89
Italy	76	89
Hungary	69	81
Greece	60	90
Finland	55	82
Belgium	54	85
Norway	50	84
Ireland	42	76
Portugal	41	72
UK	41	72
Spain	27	78
Switzerland	18	69

TURNOUT BY GENERATION IN FINLAND FROM 1987 TO 2003 (Wass 2008)



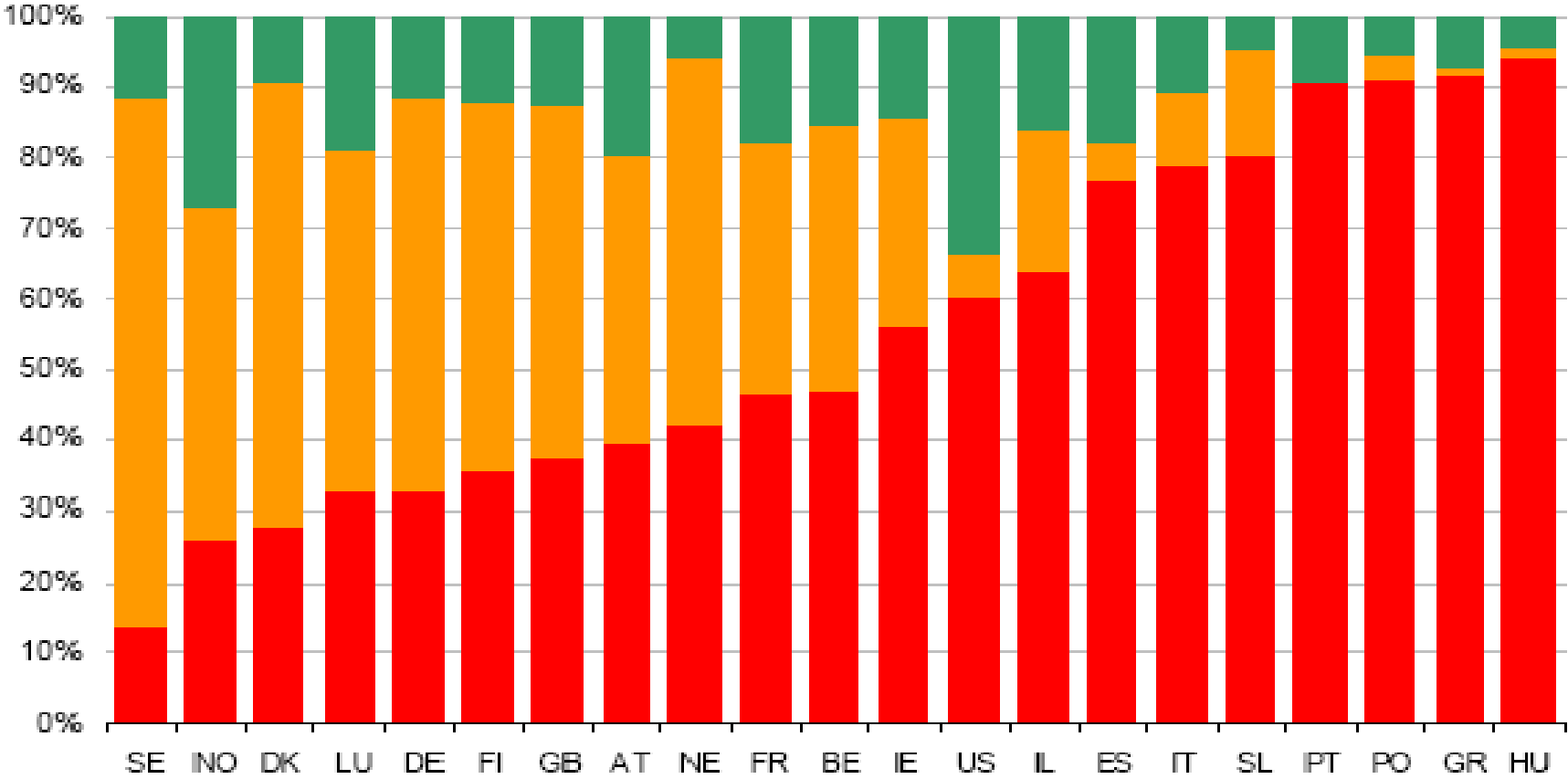
TYPES OF PARTICIPATION: EUROPE: (Oser 2010)

Disengaged 55% Engaged 32% Active 13%



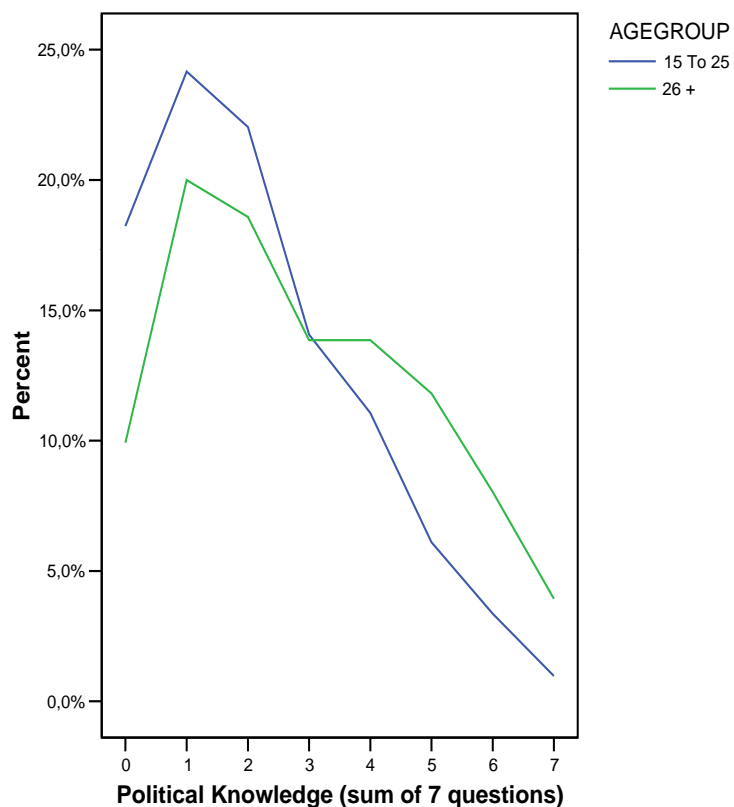
TYPES OF PARTICIPATION IN EUROPE: BY COUNTRY

Disengaged 55% Engaged 32% Active 13%



Political knowledge: Correct Answers; United States, 2006 (Milner 2010)

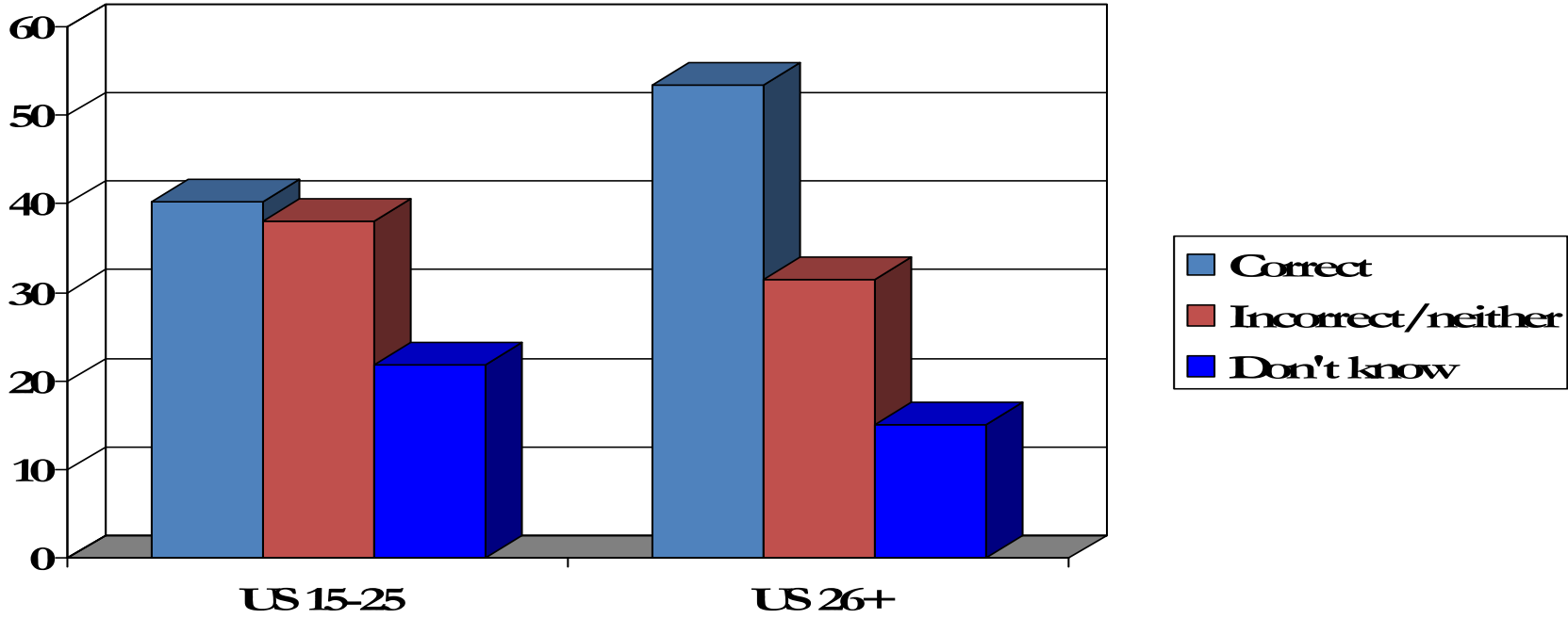
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POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE QUESTIONS

- As far as you know, does the federal government spend more on Social Security [old aid pensions] or on foreign aid?
- Would you say that one of the [major] parties is more conservative [more to the right] than the other on the national level? If yes: Which party is more to the right?
- Which of the following best describes who is entitled to vote in federal elections?
 - Residents
 - Taxpayers
 - Legal residents
 - Citizens
- Please name two members of the President's [Federal] Cabinet and identify the department they represent [are in charge of]:
- Five countries have permanent seats on the Security Council of the United Nations. Which of these countries can you name?

ABILITY TO IDENTIFY WHICH U.S. PARTY IS MORE CONSERVATIVE (%)



National Geographic-Roper Global Geographic Literacy Survey 2002 (age:18-24)

Overall Quiz Performance

Average Number of Correct Answers (out of 56)

Country	Number
• Sweden	40
• Germany	38
• Italy	38
• France	34
• Japan	31
• Great Britain	28
• Canada	27
• U.S.	23
• Mexico	21

Changes In Civic Content Knowledge between 1999 and 2009 (ICCES)

In 2009, 140 000 grade 8 students, 5000 schools, in 38 countries surveyed.

Initial findings include:

Fifteen of these countries took part in a previous IEA study of civic education in 1999.

In seven there has been a significant decline in civic content knowledge since 1999. In only one (Slovenia) has there been a significant increase.

Country	Mean Scale Score 2009	Mean Scale Score 1999	Differences between 1999 and 2009
Finland	109	108	1
Slovenia	104	102	3
Chile	89	89	0
Estonia	95	94	1
Lithuania	94	94	0
Italy	100	101	-1
Switzerland	94	95	-2
Latvia	91	92	-1
Colombia	85	89	-4
Norway	97	103	-5
Greece	102	109	-7
Poland	103	112	-9
Slovak Rep.	97	107	-10
Czech Rep.	93	103	-10
Bulgaria	88	99	-11
Sweden	98	97	-6
England	90	96	0

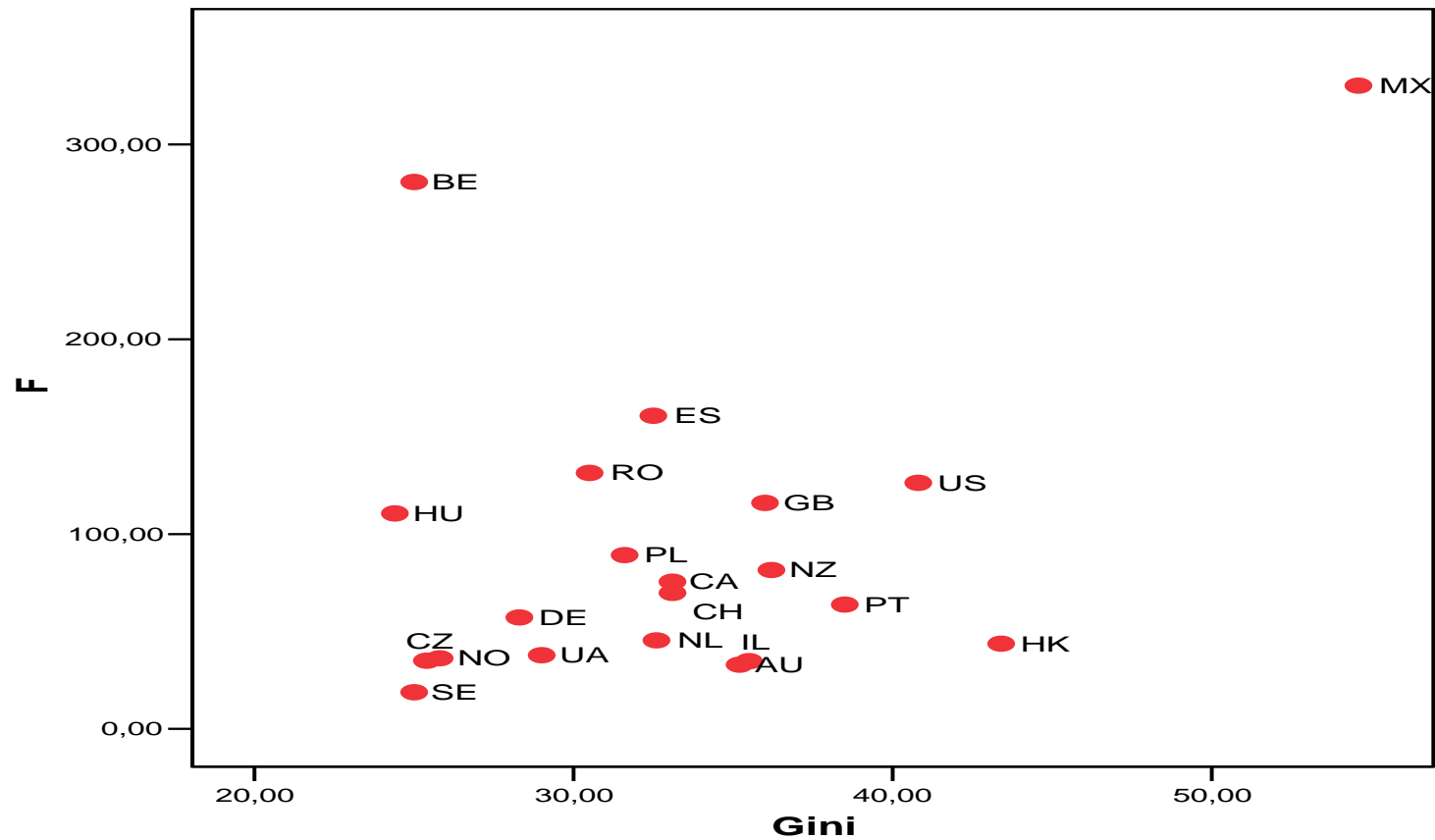
PART TWO

The Effect of Changing Information Media Use: From the Remote Control Device to the Internet

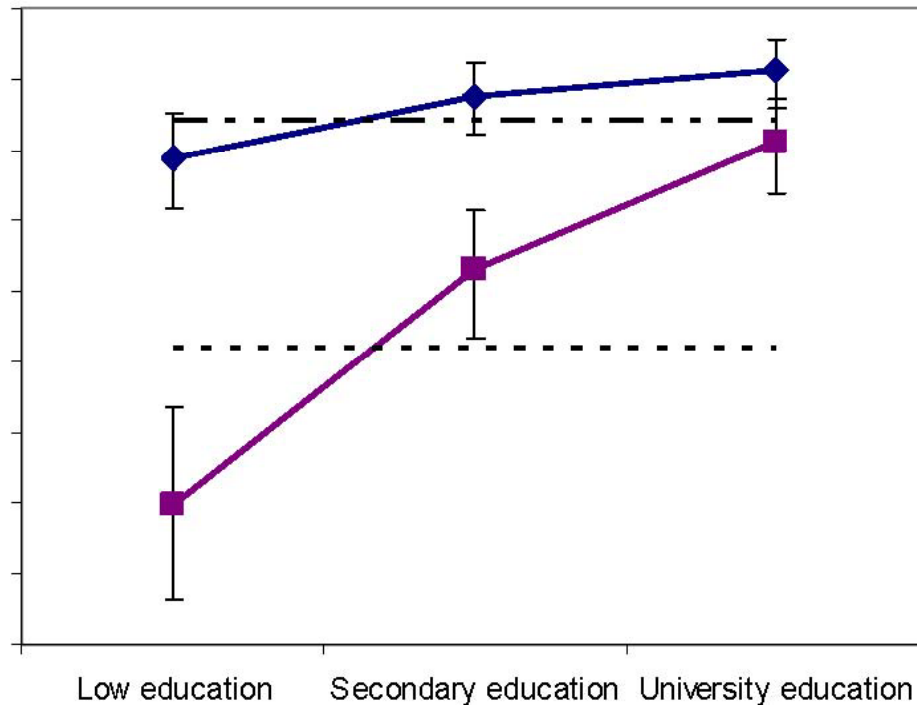
The high civic literacy countries are characterized by higher levels of political attentiveness through the media.

Political knowledge is higher, especially among those with low levels of education in the high civic literacy countries

Gini Indices Scattered against (the F-value of) the Effect of Education on (CSES) Political Knowledge (Gronlund and Milner 2006)



Expected value for voting by education group and labor market type

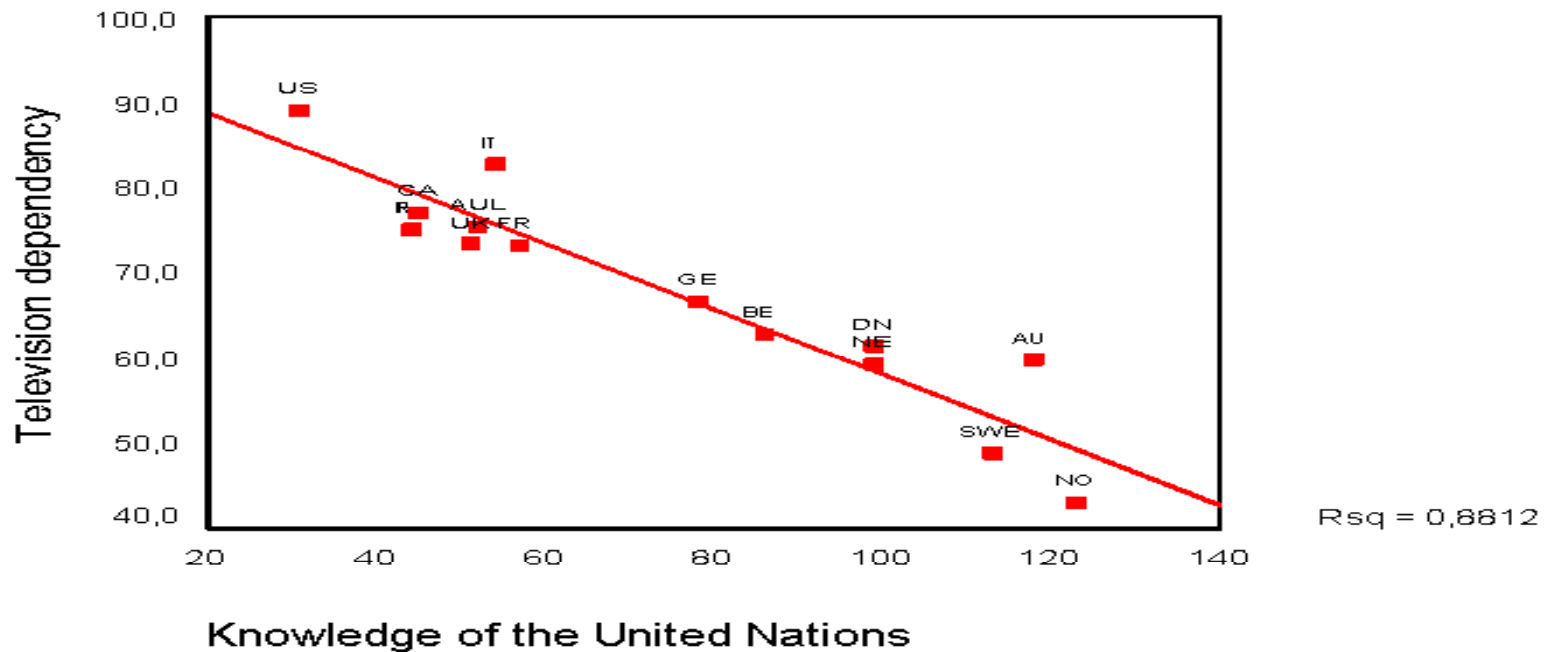


AGE STRUCTURE OF SELF-REPORTED DAILY NEWSPAPER READERSHIP (2000)

COUNTRY	REACH (YOUTH)	AGE	REACH (ADULTS)
Norway	81.0	13-19	86.0
Sweden	77.0	15-24	88.0
Denmark	76.6	16-24	79.7
Finland	72.0	15-24	87.0
Austria	69.5	14-29	75.2
Switzerland	68.1	16-24	74.8
Netherlands	58.0	15-24	71.4
Germany	53.6	14-19	76.2
Belgium	50.7	15-24	47.4
Canada	44.9	18-24	54.1
Spain	41.7	16-24	39.7
Italy	40.2	18-24	39.3
United States	40.0	18-24	54.0
France	36.3	14-19	45.3
UK	35.7	15-24	32.8

Political Knowledge and Type of Media Use (Milner 2002)

FIGURE 7-5



$F = 89.02469$; $\text{Signif [F]} = .0000^{***}$

* = $\text{Signif [F]} = .01$; ** = $\text{Signif [F]} = .005$; *** = $\text{Signif [F]} = .001$

Umea airport 2001



FROM TELEVISION TO THE INTERNET

The Internet's arrival signals a simultaneous, integrated transformation of the nature of the content (text, pictures, video, sound, graphics - combined, in much higher resolution). Its effect can be compared to television, but only with the arrival of the remote control device (RCD), cable* and satellite transmission. Henceforth viewers, with minimal effort, could avoid political news. The result was a deeper political knowledge gap between those following news and those avoiding it, a gap that could only grow with the Internet.

In the US, the biggest single-decade drop in reported regular newspaper reading was not in TV's heyday, but in the decade the Internet emerged, the 1990s, when it dropped from about 50 to 40%.

During the presidential primary season in 2008, 40 percent of American adults stated that they looked for political information on the Internet, up 9 points from 2004; by campaign's end, the Internet had displaced newspapers as second source—after television—for national and international news. Among young people, the Internet had pulled equal with television (Pew Research Center 31/10, 2008).

For most of the 126 students in an Ohio University intro US politics course, mean age 19 (Miller 2010) the Internet is primary news source. Each has a cellular phone; all but 5 an active Facebook account (average use one hour a day, half the time spent on the Internet). While 79% could name no Supreme Court justice, 77% could identify 3 American Idol judges, and 68% could identify no news anchors (Brian Williams, Katie Couric, and Charlie Gibson).

*Prior (2007) found no link between the political knowledge of respondents without access to cable or Internet and their degree of preference for entertainment, but "for those with access to cable television...moving from low to high entertainment preference corresponds to a 20 percent drop in political knowledge."

PERCENTAGE WITH HOME INTERNET ACCESS, 2008 (EUROSTAT)

Iceland	88		
Netherlands	86		
Norway	84		
Sweden	84		
Denmark	82		
Luxembourg	80		
Germany	75		
Finland	72		
United Kingdom	71		
Austria	69		
Belgium	64		
Ireland	63		
France	62		
Slovenia	59		
Estonia	58		
Slovakia	58		
Latvia	53		
Lithuania	51		
		Spain	51
		Hungary	48
		Poland	48
		Italy	47
		Czech Republic	46
		Portugal	46
		Greece	31
		Romania	30
		Bulgaria	25

FROM PASSIVE TO INTERACTIVE COMMUNICATION

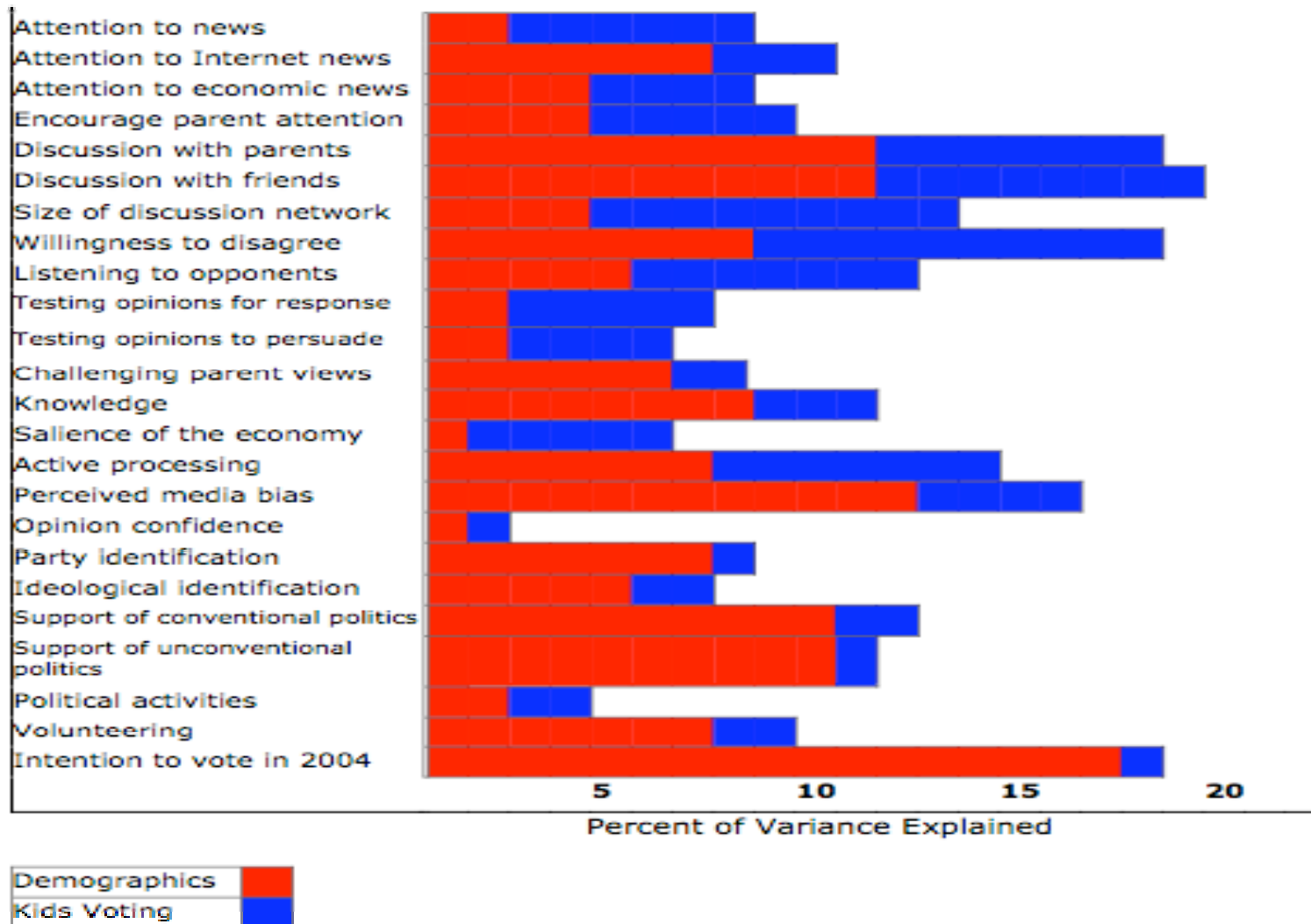
The externally imposed order of the old media gives way to one where the content is internally selected, ordered and, potentially, created. Power shifts from institutions to networks and from bordered territories to cyberspace, transcending geographical and hierarchical restrictions, allowing for more direct communication between citizens and elected representatives. Faster information gathering enhances political engagement for the digitally sophisticated but widens the digital divide between them and others.** Will transparent online interaction make politicians accountable, and, more profoundly, will social media will create a more participative or individualized political culture?

**Using administrative data on North Carolina students, Vigdor and Ladd (2010) corroborate earlier findings of broad racial and socioeconomic gaps in home computer access and use. The introduction of home computer technology is associated with modest but statistically significant and persistent negative impacts on student math and reading test scores. Moreover, providing universal access to home computers and high-speed internet access would likely broaden, rather than narrow, math and reading achievement gaps.

**The possible exception to the failure of the Internet to level political participation is "social networking ... 78 percent of those under twenty-five are social networkers. [However], many forms of political engagement on these venues do not fall squarely under the rubric of a definition of political participation.... A social *networking site like Facebook is more a forum for political talk than for organized political effort... "Friending" a candidate is not the same as working in a campaign.... Among those who are politically engaged on social networking sites, 44 percent are students... The educational component of their eventual SES will, by definition, rise; their earning power will probably also increase. Thus, we consider it premature to conclude... that interactive forms of online political participation hold the key to unlocking the association between political participation and socio-economic status "(Smith Schlozman, Verba and Brady 2009).*

Part 3: Policy Responses: Simulations

A: Election Simulations are held in many countries: e.g. Kids Voting USA



B: OTHER EXAMPLES

Secondary Education Simulation Programs (ICONS) designs and delivers dynamic role-play simulations for students and educators.

Simulation U.S. Senate: Illuminates the workings of committee politics, casting students as Senators sitting on several committees. Students learn about the compromises necessary to create legislation as they consider, amend, and vote. (Fifteen senators assigned to five committees, considering 15 bills. The content is frequently updated to reflect changes and shifting priorities within the U.S. Senate.)

Specific cases. Role playing by 650 students from 25 high schools of “delegates” to 2004 presidential conventions, building and proposing “planks” in the national party platform, and nominating presidential candidates. Pace University students worked with them to draft convention rules and procedures for committee chairs, ran mock committee hearings, and prepared documentation and scheduling for the 3-day event. On day 1 of the convention, the delegates divided into committees and debated and drafted platforms on the 8 issues. Two high-school delegates presented each plank to the entire caucus for discussion, amendment, and vote.

C: SIMULATIONS IN NORWAY

The Norwegian *Skolevalg* has been running mock elections since 1989 for parliamentary and local elections, and the 1994 EU referendum on. It also carries out a survey of students, with a similar survey among a representative population sample before the election. Approximately 70 percent of all high-school students participate in the mock election, and 30 percent in the election survey, (which allows for longitudinal comparison of age differences in attitudes). Overall results are reported online, while school results are distributed to the schools, so students can compare their choices with those of their peers.

Both the mock and real elections are well integrated into Norwegian civic education. Students study political parties and their programs, visit them, make projects where they present party platforms in class, role play as representatives of political parties. The courses are structured so the section on elections and parties can coincide with the campaigns. This is complemented by the textbooks, which stress forms of political participation, from membership in the parties or interest groups to street marches and demonstrations (Borhaug 2009).

The ***Minitinget*** is located next to the Parliament in Oslo. Each of about 25 students is assigned the role of an individual legislator and party, and placed on a committee mandated to deal with one of two issues. Once assigned their committee, the students go to their parties' caucus rooms, where they work out a position on the issue. They are guided in their deliberations by instructions on a computer screen in the booth, with access to relevant newspaper articles and excerpts from TV and radio coverage. Deliberations are interrupted by calls and computer screen messages from lobbyists, constituents, and party leaders. They then go to committee rooms where they carve out compromises to try to win majority support. The bills then come to the plenary in a mock session of Parliament, with speeches for and against each measure, and a vote is taken. Finally, the students vote again, this time based on their own views, and to reflect on how these evolved during the simulation.

The simulations are not targeted at the already politically aware but at all, including potential political dropouts. With three civics classes visiting daily, most 15-16 year old Norwegians are able to participate in the Minitinget.

The *MiniTinget*

► Om MiniTinget

► Praktisk Informasjon

► Rapport fra skoleklasser

► Før besøket

► Etter besøket

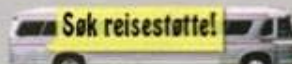
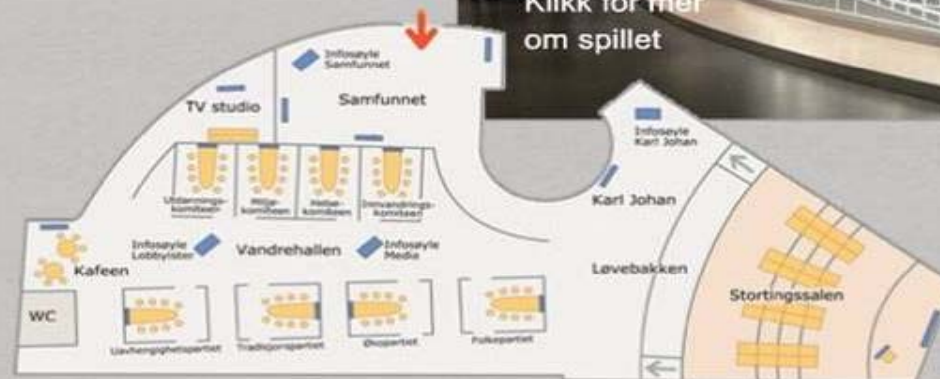


Se video om MiniTinget

MiniTinget



Klikk for mer om spillet



In contact with the party leader



Contacted by lobbyists



CIVIC EDUCATION IN NORWAY

TEACHING HOURS: *Primary (Years 1 to 7): 385. Lower secondary (Years 8 to 10): 256. Upper Secondary (Vg 1 and 2): 84 hours each.*

SUBJECT AREAS

Primary/lower secondary: sociology, geography and history.

Upper secondary : the individual and society, working and business life, politics and democracy, culture, and international relations.

International relations: cooperation, terrorism, conflicts, conflict resolution, globalization, distribution of resources and sustainable development, and Norway's role on the international stage.

Individual and society: socialization, personal finances, forms of cohabitation, criminality, influences upon youth

Working and business life: companies, trade unions, wage setting, unemployment, and career choices.

Culture: role of religion, indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, anti-racism.

Politics and democracy:

Objectives: The pupil completing the courses shall be able to:

- elaborate on how one can participate in and influence the political system and discuss what can threaten to democracy
- discuss the relationship among government, law and human rights
- elaborate on the type of government, the main political bodies, and the place of indigenous peoples and minorities
- identify basic differences between the parties and argue from different political viewpoints
- elaborate on key features of Norwegian economic policy
- explain the basis of the welfare state and the challenges it faces

The 2006 General Election

Age group				ROC
Born between January 1, 1985 and January 23, 1988	18 - 20.1	40.8 (± 2.6)	41.8 (± 4.3)	40.2 (± 3.4)
Born between January 1, 1981 and December 31, 1984	20.1-25.1	42.5 (± 4.2)	46.8 (± 8.9)	40.0 (± 4.2)

The 2004 General Election

Age group				ROC
Born between January 1, 1985 and June 28, 1986	18 - 19.5	37.5 (± 3.4)	38.2 (± 7.9)	37.1 (± 2.5)
Born between January 1, 1983 and December 31, 1984	19.5 - 21.5	36.1 (± 3.1)	38.8 (± 6.8)	34.5 (± 2.9)

Initiatives in the Netherlands:

The IPP: The Dutch Centre for Political Participation

The *Instituut voor Publiek en Politiek* is an independent, non-partisan body that promotes political and social participation in the Netherlands and abroad. Some of its projects are subsidized by the central government; a substantial part of its revenue is derived from commissions from provincial and municipal and other government agencies, and NGOs. Its primary mission is to organize debates, meetings and conferences on topical political issues, design and implement projects for citizen participation in decision-making, and to inform Dutch citizens through, e.g. www.brusselstemt.nl : a website on the voting behaviour of members of the European Parliament .

The IPP is involved in diverse educational projects targeted at youth participation, working with social studies teachers and local authorities, including:

Student elections: Since 1994 the IPP has been organizing shadow elections for secondary school students in the two days before the actual election day.

Simulations in political participation to help citizens to become active in local politics. Participants are given a behind-the-scene look at the city or town hall and the chance to experience being politically active and governing a municipality. The IPP also organises *Wegwijs op het Gemeentehuis* in which young people fill the role of a member of the municipal council for a day, and *De Haagse Tribune*, which offers secondary school students the opportunity to spend a day to become familiar with how a parliamentary democracy functions. All programmes involve a visit to the Lower House.

The StemWijzer: the Dutch Voter Advice Application (VAA)

Voter Advice Applications (VAAs)

The *StemWijzer* is an online instrument to test voters' political preferences. Visitors are asked to give their opinions on about thirty propositions. The site calculates which party program most corresponds to their answers, and provides information about the positions held by the political parties. In addition:

StemmenTracker: looks at the actual voting behaviour of political parties in Parliament. *ReferendumWijzer*: examines the advantages and disadvantages of the various options in a referendum. *ProgramVergelijking*: gives a concise overview of the standpoint of political parties on issues such as health care, the economy, and education, and *Stemexamen*: tests election knowledge.

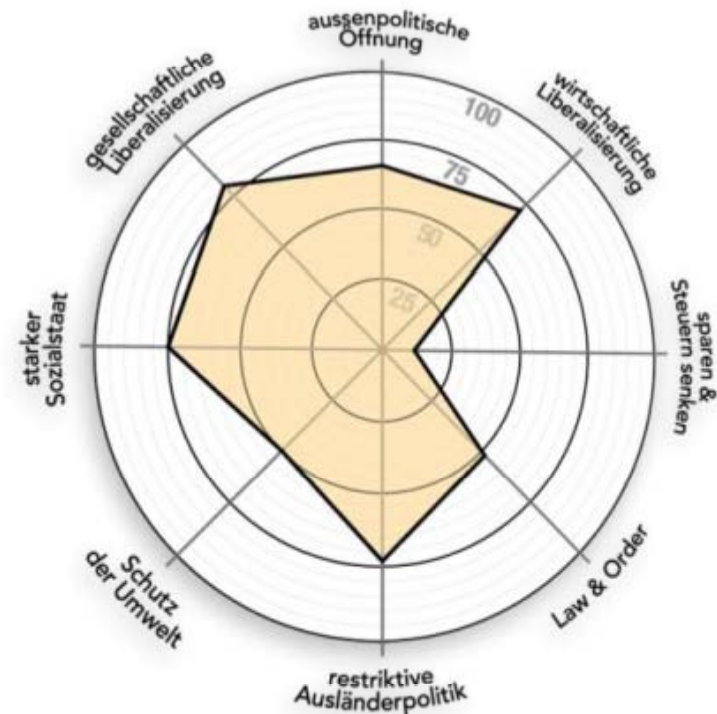
A recent survey (Ruusuvirta and Rosema 2009) found that 75 % of Dutch citizens 18-24 used VAAs in the 2006 election.

A Partial List of European VAAs

- Austria [Politkabine](#)
- Bulgaria [Glasovoditel](#)
- Belgium [Kieskompas](#)
- Czech Republic [Kohovolit CZ](#)
- France: [MonVoteAMoi](#)
- Germany [Wahl-O-Mat](#)
- Hungary [Választási Iránytű](#)
- Ireland [Vote Match IE](#)
- Italy [Cabine Electorale](#)
- Netherlands [StemWijzer](#)
- Poland [Latarnik Wyborczy](#)
- Romania [Testeaza-ti votul!](#)
- Slovakia [Kohovolit SK](#)
- Switzerland [Smartvote](#)
- United Kingdom [Vote Match UK](#)
- [Vote Match Europe](#)

- *Smartvote* VAA in Switzerland operates independently of government, as opposed to some others, e.g. *Wahlomat* in Germany, which is operated by the BPB (*Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*), the federal agency responsible for civic education materials. Understandably, thus, young voters are a priority of the *Wahlomat*. In the 2009 election, in cooperation with local educational authorities, the BPB organized public question-and-answer assemblies in a score of upper-secondary schools in Saarland and Rhineland-Palatinate.
- The Swiss VAA *Smartvote* too has sought to reach out to the young, with a shorter, more simply worded version known as *Myvote*. To spread the word, its designers collaborated with a textbook publisher, and provided a training course to give teachers an overview and explain how the site could be used for civic education. To reach out of school, first-time voters, *Myvote* joined forces with *20 Minuten*, Switzerland's most widely read free daily newspaper, and owner of the largest Swiss online community information platform targeted at those under 35. A survey by Nadig and Fivaz (2009) found that the majority of *Smartvote* users reported being positively influenced to engage in political discussion and seek more political information.

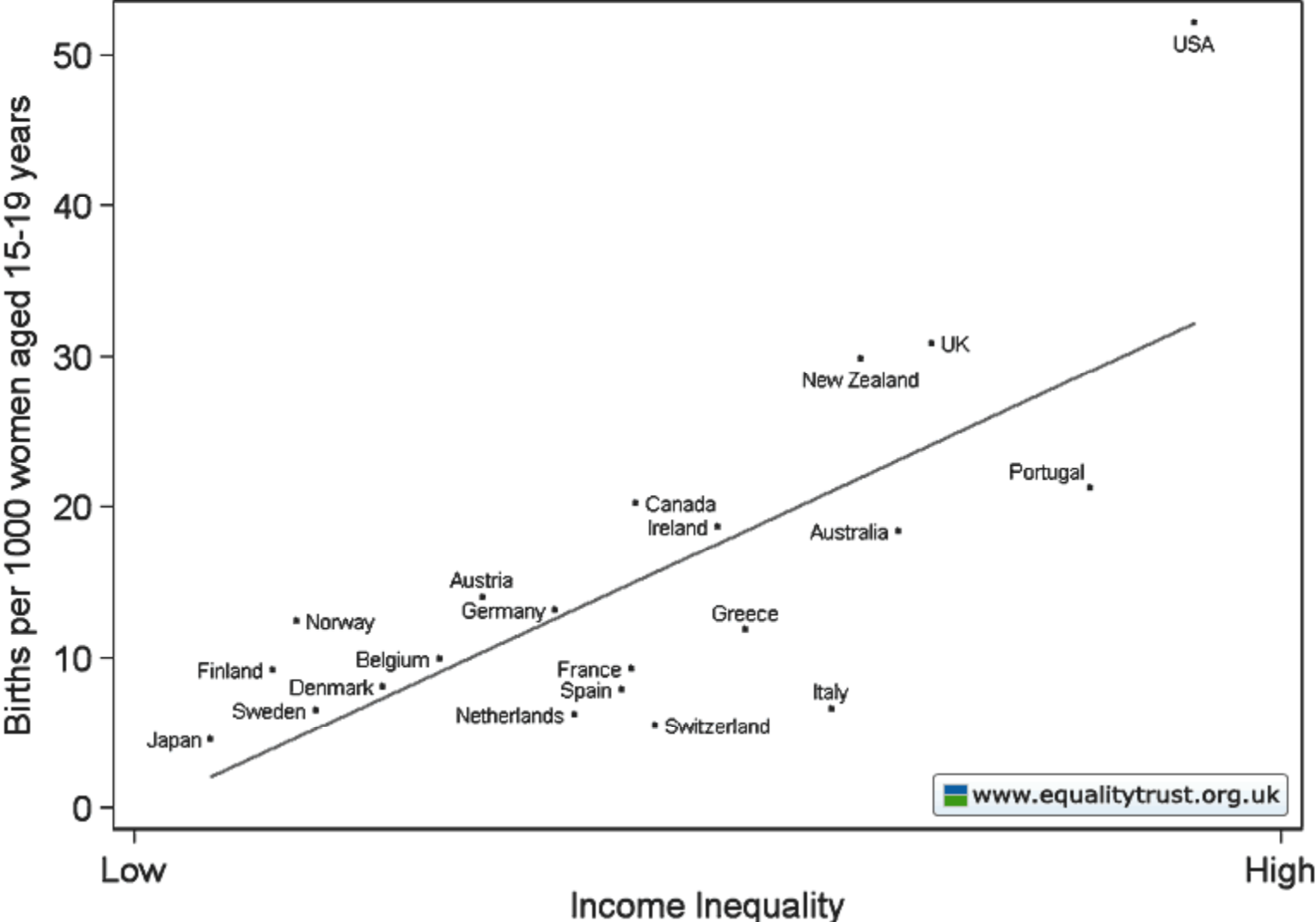
The Smartvote “Spider”



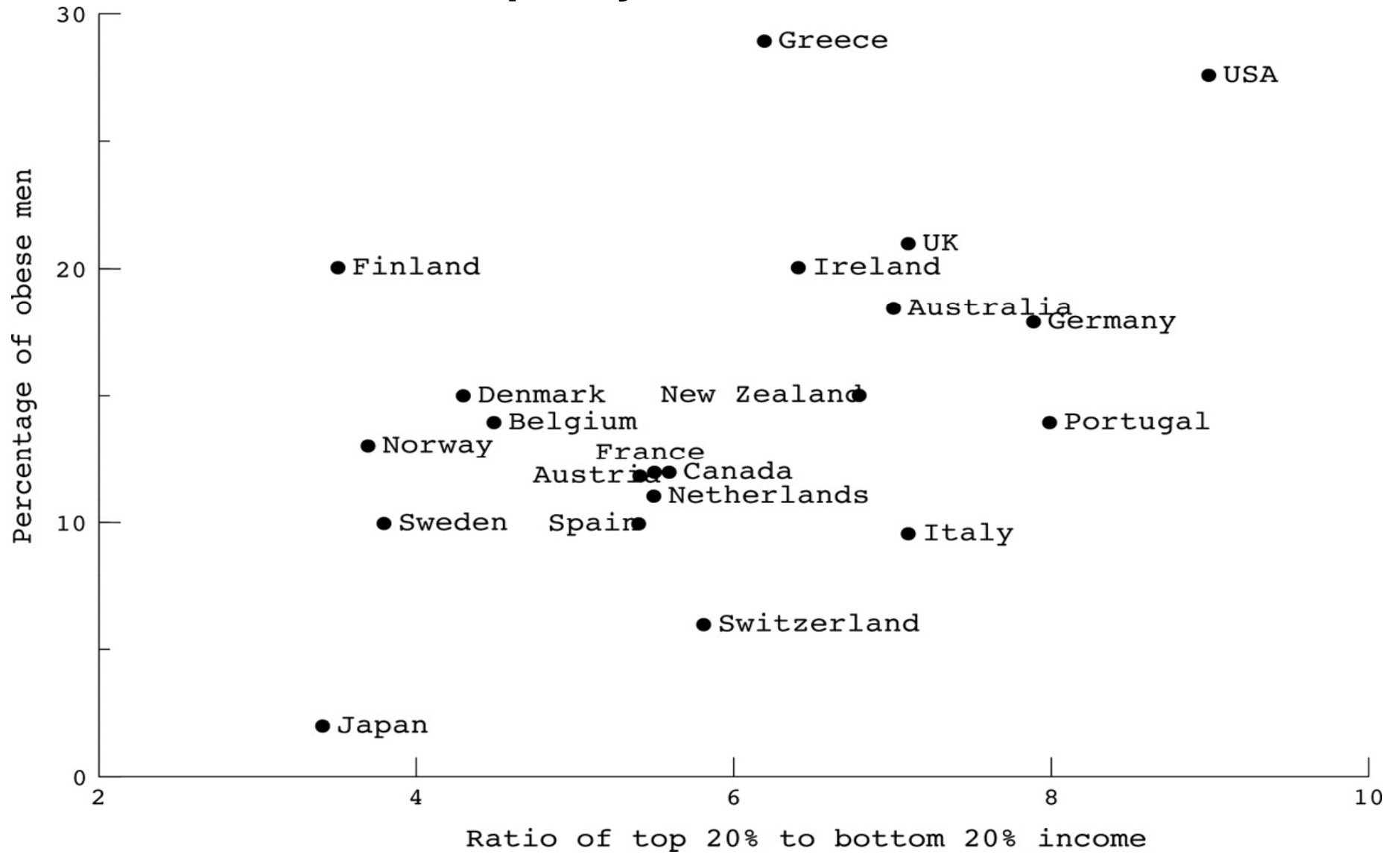
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From Wilkinson and Pickett



The relation between male obesity and income inequality in 21 rich countries



“I can no longer file a story in our computer system without filling out a box, a small gray square that may well determine the future of serious journalism. The box is supposed to contain words and phrases that will help me reel you in. Search has become a journalistic obsession on the Web, and with good reason. Most people don't read publications online, patiently turning from national news to Metro to Style to the sports section. They hunt for subjects, and people, in which they're interested.

Our mission -- and we have no choice but to accept it -- is to grab some of that traffic that could otherwise end up at hundreds of other places, even blogs riffing off the reporting that your own publication has done. If you appease the Google gods with the right keywords, you are blessed with more readers. So carried to a hypothetical extreme, an ideal headline would be, ‘Sarah Palin rips non-Muslim Obama over mosque while Lady Gaga remains silent.’”

Every newsroom in the country grapples with these questions, and The Washington Post is no exception.

*Howard Kurtz, “Appeasing the Google Gods”
Washington Post, Sept 7, 2010*