



Inequality

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Political Equality: What is it and why does it matter?

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Political equality: what is it and why does it matter?

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Abstract

Our focus in this paper is on 'equal consideration' as an ideal for political equality in democratic settings. Political inequality is a distinctive type of inequality and cannot be reduced to the factors that routinely go into thinking about economic inequalities or inequalities of power. Its currency is performative, not distributive, and is fundamentally about the nature and quality of social relations; politics is intrinsically process-oriented, comprising various 'political transactions' across citizens, representatives and interest groups, among others. Thus, to understand political equality, we need to appreciate how individuals relate to one another through the democratic process. We argue that there are two core dimensions that can usefully be studied to bring these ideas to life empirically: patterns of political participation and political representation. Studying these reinforces the idea that, even in advanced democracies, politics is an elite activity concentrated among the educated and those with material and ideological resources. We then unpack when this is damaging to achieving equal consideration, and we discuss a range of reforms throughout history that have been proposed to promote political equality through this lens.

'[...] no society can genuinely humanize its institutions save as it becomes a community of equals.'
(Harold Laski, 1928, p. 31)

Introduction

In the grand scheme of human history, the emergence of institutions approximating modern democracy with universal suffrage, the rule of law, open contests for power, and constraints on executive authority is an extraordinarily recent phenomenon. If all of history were condensed into just 24 hours, institutions approximating modern democracy would begin to arrive at only about 0.09 seconds before midnight. The related ideal of 'political equality' is at the heart of these developments, but their instantiation is also incredibly new to the human experience. To illustrate, Figure 1 uses data from the Varieties of Democracy project (V-Dem),² where the top panel transposes these 0.09 seconds of human history into just under 200 years, illustrating the extension of the franchise as one part of this change. Across 47 countries with consistent data, only 20% of adult citizens had the right to vote in 1850, with the electorate comprised mainly of a narrow landed elite of propertied, and almost exclusively, white men. Today, that percentage now stands at 100%.

Beyond these formal changes in rules and institutions, political equality within democracies requires changes in both principles and practices: even if citizens can be politically equal *de jure*, this does not necessarily correspond to political equality *de facto*.³ Participation and representation, despite being

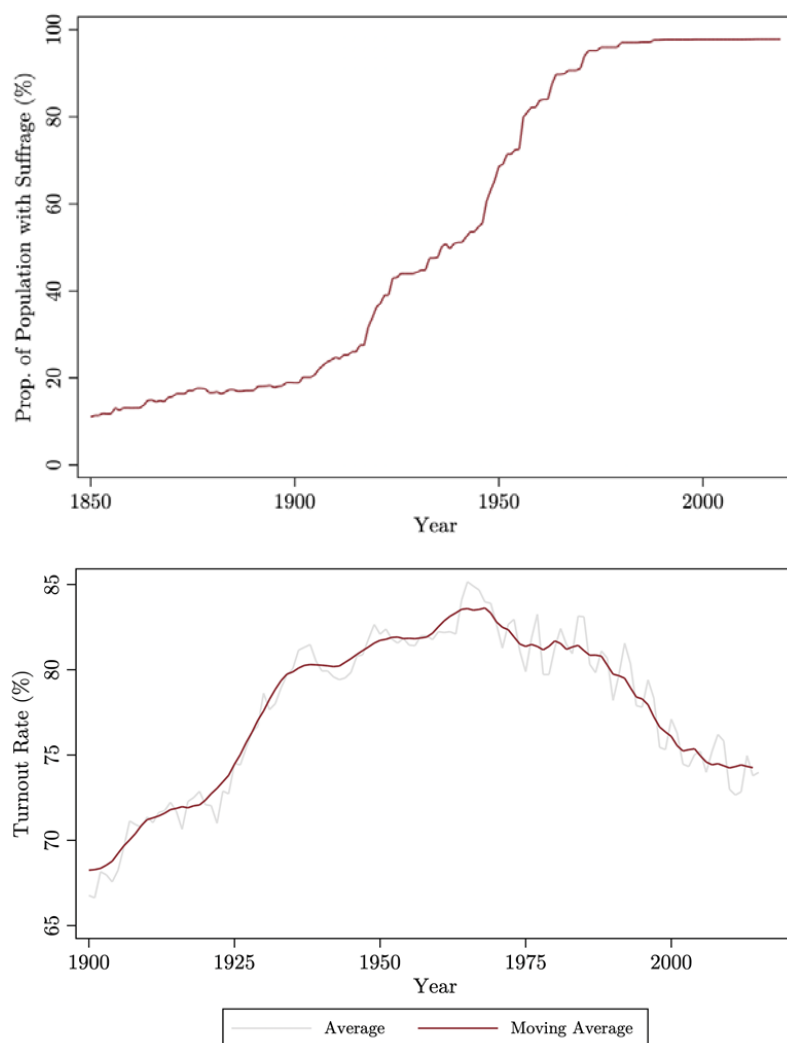
¹ This is a perspectives piece written as a background paper for the IFS Deaton Review of Inequalities. The authors are grateful to Chris Dann and Matthew Zheng for excellent research assistance, and to Angus Deaton, Debra Satz, Pavithra Suryanarayan and participants in the Workshop on the Political Economy of Inequality (jointly organised by the IFS Deaton Review and the LSE in November 2020) for insightful comments.

² See <https://www.v-dem.net/project.html>.

³ 'One person, one vote' has been contentious from the moment the first modern democracy was institutionalised. The United States initially restricted the vote to white men with property; women, slaves, and the unpropertied were excluded. Suffrage extension has been spotty in most countries. Moreover, even those who have the vote may be inhibited from exercising it, as Figure 1 conveys. In *Midnight's Children*, Salmon Rushdie recounts the awful punishments wreaked on peasants when they went to the polls against the express wishes of the local feudal lord. The US has a similarly appalling and violent history of suppressing the vote.

democratic rights, take place within a framework of laws and regulations. These could include, for example, literacy tests and poll taxes used in many US states before they were struck down as unconstitutional. High costs of registration and harassment or lack of cooperation by polling authorities can also result in such formal rights not being realised. The bottom panel of Figure 1 conveys this point, showing the rise and fall of voter turnout in national elections over the last 100 years.⁴ From a peak in the 1960s of around 85%, turnout – as the most rudimentary act of political participation and the minimal requirement for effective representation – has steadily fallen across even the most advanced democracies. Thus, the study of political equality requires a richer analysis to understand how and why citizens use their political rights and relate to one another, over and above the description of formal structures. For us, process is as important as outcomes in assessing political inequality.

Figure 1. *De jure* versus *de facto* political equality



Note: The data come from the V-Dem dataset using the following variables: for the top panel, *v2elsuffrage*, which codes the percentage of adult citizens (as defined by statute) with the legal right to vote in national elections; for the bottom panel, *v2eltrnout*, which codes the percentage of all adult voters who cast a vote according to official results (turnout rates between elections are held constant). In the top panel, the line represents the yearly average across a sample of 47 countries with consistent non-missing data from 1850–2019 (see the Appendix for a list of these 47 countries). In the bottom panel, the grey line represents the yearly average across all countries and the red line represents a 10-year moving average. The countries used in this sample are 17 advanced capitalist democracies: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and United States. Elections refer to national elections for both legislative and executive branches. Averages across both panels are not weighted by countries' populations.

⁴ There is a similar chart in Cagé (2020, p. 5).

Studies of inequality, both theoretically and empirically, generally use a distributional framework. In economics, the focus has mainly been on differences in income and wealth, thus putting front and centre the distribution of utility or welfare and its dependence on material factors. This has motivated much statistical work on the measurement of inequality, such as changes in the Gini coefficient or ratios of resource ownership between groups (e.g. 90:10 ratios). In political philosophy and political science, the emphasis has been on political inequality by analysing the skewed distribution of power and/or influence in society, although no parallel literature on measurement has emerged to date. This, too, is consequently a study of distribution, thereby creating a common thread across the social sciences.⁵

This paper argues that political inequality is a distinctive type of inequality. First, although affected by the factors that routinely go into thinking about social, economic and power inequality, it cannot be reduced to those factors. Second, its currency is performative, not distributive. Although from first principles many economic models of inequality are built on ideas of autonomous agents that do not relate to each other, politics is inherently an interactive, participatory activity. Thus, even though the study of political inequality does, to a significant degree, concern the allocation of resources required to exercise power, political equality is also an effect of 'the nature and quality of social relations [...] A society enjoys "equality" when its social relations are free of unaccountable power, stigma or grovelling' (Satz and White, 2022). As such, rather than adopting a distributional approach in this paper, we see political equality as being fundamentally *relational*.

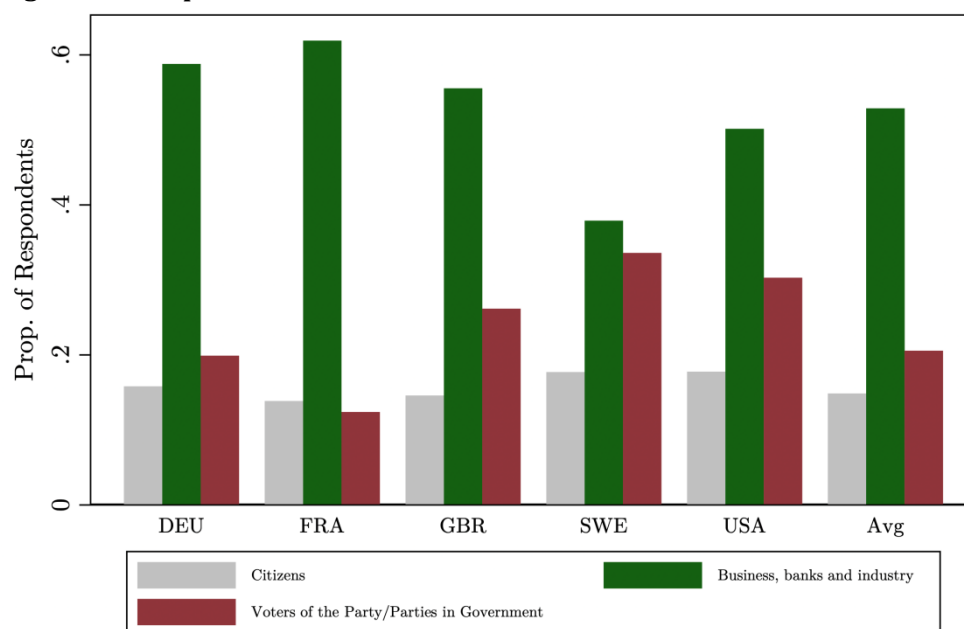
This approach recognises that politics is intrinsically process-oriented, comprising various 'political transactions' across citizens, representatives and interest groups, among others. Thus, to understand political equality, we need to appreciate how individuals relate to one another through the democratic process. Although our primary purpose is to understand what constitutes political equality, there is a link to contributions in moral and political philosophy that view democratic equality as an ideal. Our approach builds on the groundbreaking work of Anderson (1999), which tries to move away from thinking about inequality in terms of 'equality over what' and towards studying 'equality among whom'. Inequality, on this view, is not about the distribution of goods (or any distributable object, such as power) but is about 'principles and processes that express [equal] respect for all' (Anderson, 1999, p. 314). Her conception has political equality rooted in a form of 'democratic equality', which guarantees access to effective engagement in civic life, leading to all citizens being treated and respected as an equal by others.

This approach relates to important work in political science that sees political equality as concerning the principle of 'equal consideration', which has been notably advocated for by the likes of Robert Dahl (1991) and Sidney Verba (2001). Although this principle is to some degree a normative benchmark, equal consideration is primarily defined as the scenario whereby 'voices are equally expressed and given an equal hearing' (Verba, 2003, p. 677). Thus, in order for one's interests to be respected fairly and treated equally in the political process, this cannot be reduced to a distribution of *influence* over outcomes, however defined. Equal voice is a matter of process and how people relate to each other in politics; it should not necessarily be envisaged as comprising, or being derivative of, some distribution.

Although measurement of these ideas is a huge challenge, Figure 2 provides some empirical evidence suggesting people indeed do not feel there is equal consideration in politics. Using data from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP),⁶ the chart conveys that individuals truly do not feel they have much say on political outcomes, relative to parties in government and especially big business, banks and industry. This suggests there is a perception that large businesses, and those that control them, have stronger voices, which is at odds with a principle of equal consideration.

⁵ Earlier structural theories of power have even gone so far as to suppose the distribution of power (i.e. political inequality) is largely derivative of the distribution of resources (i.e. economic inequality), whether it be through accumulating wealth or controlling the assets that provide access to public resources, elected office and government policy (Dahl, 1991; Acemoglu and Robinson, 2006).

⁶ See <http://www.issp.org/about-issp/>.

Figure 2. Perceptions of influence

Note: The data come from the ISSP 2016 – Role of Government V survey. Respondents were asked to list people/organisations they believe have the first or second most influence over government actions. See the ISSP for outstanding categories. The 'Avg' bars are an overall average across 14 advanced capitalist democracies with available data: Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and United States.

Yet, despite such suggestive evidence, assessing whether there is equal consideration in practice is far from straightforward. In this paper, we focus on two broad dimensions of this concept: participation and representation. Although both points of view have large literatures, influential commentators on political equality such as Verba (2003) have tended to focus more or less exclusively on political participation. This way of looking at equal consideration stresses the need to give all citizens an equal and fair hearing, with inequalities in participation being a key limitation. Yet, while such an approach is important, this focus needs supplementing with considerations of who is represented. Even if, by choice, citizens do not actively partake in democratic processes, the proceedings of representation can still ensure their views achieve equal consideration; it is also the fundamental role of representative democracy to delegate policymaking.

Focusing on participation and representation ultimately provides a way into entering debates about political equality as equal consideration, as some key aspects are measurable and therefore tangible. This further helps identify more precisely which interventions (i.e. policy reforms and/or institutions) increase or decrease political equality by affecting the participatory or representative aspects of a democratic system.⁷

The paper is organised as follows. In the next section, we discuss the ideal of political equality and its intellectual roots in writings of political scientists and political philosophers. Then, we begin to discuss the core dimensions of political equality and we illustrate some of the ideas empirically, focusing on descriptive representation and effective engagement in advanced democracies. Finally, we discuss policy and institutional changes that can influence political equality.

⁷ Note that, in this paper, we focus primarily on advanced capitalist democracies, in terms of both discussion and empirics.

Political equality as an ideal

The idea of political equality is bound up with debates about the value and nature of democracy, which has two distinct traditions. The first, more associated with economic approaches, asserts that democracy is valuable because of its instrumental benefits.⁸ So, for example, a system that enfranchises the poor may increase social welfare, defined as a function of utilities, because it will lead to greater income redistribution (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2006). Equal consideration as an ideal has had little or no influence on this way of thinking.

The second approach, more associated with political science and political philosophy, sees the case for democracy as an intrinsic feature of human agency. This approach is motivated by placing an emphasis on 'capabilities', as pioneered by Sen (1999b) and Nussbaum (2011). Capabilities are what individuals can do and achieve; that is, how they function that enables them to live free and autonomous lives (e.g. study at university, sign petitions, watch sports, meet friends, etc.). As such, democracy facilitates capabilities specific to empowerment through participation, freedom of expression, voice (both individual and collective) and influence. This relates to what Sen (1999b) terms more broadly as 'political freedoms'.⁹ This approach has greatly informed the philosophical literature on *relational egalitarianism*, a state of affairs in which people treat each other with respect, listen to each other, and tolerate no domination of one by another; see Anderson (1999), Pettit (2014), Scanlon (2018), Allen and Somanathan (2020), and also see Satz and White (2022). Achieving relational equality requires that all have adequate resources for the development of capabilities but also necessitates avoiding the dependences that produce unequal relations and influence.¹⁰

A capability perspective, particularly as elaborated by the theorists of relational equality, sees political equality as intrinsically valuable. Political equality not only empowers people to have their needs appreciated, but it also provides a learning forum in which a society can establish common values and priorities (Sen, 1999a). This is also consistent with Thomas Dewey's conceptualisation of democracy with civil society as a collective problem-solving endeavor and democracy as the form of self-governance that 'affords the greatest possible scope to the social intelligence of problem solving and the flourishing of individual character as its condition and product' (Sabel, 2012, p. 35; also see Knight and Johnson, 2011).

This way of looking at the value of democracy provides a natural bridge between political philosophy and political science where Robert Dahl *defined* democracy as a set of procedures guided by the principle of equal consideration. This is the notion that: '[i]n cases of binding collective decision, to be considered as an equal is to have one's interests taken equally into consideration by the process of decision-making' (Dahl, 1991, p. 87). Other scholars have similarly advocated for this approach, especially the work of Verba (2003, p. 677) who states that, '[e]qual consideration just means that citizen voices are equally expressed and given an equal hearing, even if some receive a more beneficial response'. Hence, the principle of equal consideration does not necessarily imply 'equal treatment', or that all get their preferred outcomes. It is more concerned with 'equal voice' amongst citizens, combined with institutional arrangements that ensure the potential for winning on occasion (Przeworski, 1991, 2010).

Following on from this, we argue that members of a political community are deemed politically equal if the rules, norms and procedures that govern the community afford equal consideration to all members. This defines an ideal but leaves open the task of fleshing out the meaning of this in practice; a principal task of this paper is to explore measurable dimensions of this concept empirically and to explore its correlates. Through this, we seek tangible insights into how political equality can be moved towards the democratic ideal of equal consideration.

Much existing work on equal consideration has focused on political participation. This has led to influential contributions, such as Verba, Nie and Kim (1978) and Brady, Verba and Scholzman (1995). Based on this approach, participation is the primary method by which citizens' preferences can be

⁸ See, also the discussion in Van Parijs (2021).

⁹ The Rawlsian theory of justice (Rawls, 1971, 1993) also argues that a political culture of a democratic society must have citizens who are free and equal (see also Brighouse, 1997).

¹⁰ For a discussion of the connection between relational political equality and distributional approaches to inequality, see Lippert-Rasmussen (2018).

relayed through to representatives; inequalities in participation make some voices louder than others, thus violating equal consideration. Hence, Verba (2001, p. 2) states that '[e]qual activity is crucial for equal consideration since political activity is the means by which citizens inform governing elites of their needs and preferences and induce them to be responsive'. However, despite deepening our understanding of political equality, proponents of this perspective place the burden of political equality far too strictly on the shoulders of citizens. As Achen and Bartels (2016) argue in their recent critique of previous lines of thinking in democratic theory, citizens are naturally preoccupied with daily life, amongst other things, and so we cannot expect politics to be a priority for most. Yet, whilst this is not to say that an apolitical mass is conducive to political equality, it is hard to argue that, for example, disabled individuals, who are impeded from full political participation, should have their interests ignored by policymakers on the grounds of inactivity.

This means looking beyond participation to also consider *representation* where, in order for equal consideration to be achieved, representatives ensure that all preferences and points of view of their constituents are treated in a fair manner. How this can best be achieved is open to debate. For example, whether only women can faithfully represent the interests of women has been much discussed in the literature on gender bias in political representation and the same goes for the representation of ethnic groups (Mansbridge, 1999).

An approach based on an ideal of equal consideration is *not* the same as one based on an equal distribution of power.¹¹ Representative democracy has a built-in asymmetric distribution of political power, an asymmetry in what Dworkin (1987) terms the 'vertical' dimension of power between citizens and elected officials, but this does not have to be inconsistent with equal consideration. Citizens, through periodic elections, can choose their representatives who subsequently derive legitimacy from their electoral mandate. In this formulation, legitimately authorised and accountable hierarchical power – such as resides in elected legislators and executives, in courts, and in government agencies – does not automatically violate political equality, legitimacy or fairness. What matters is how power is acquired and exercised (see, e.g., Tyler, 1990).

We have already stressed that an ideal of political equality as equal consideration has a strong link to the growing literature in political philosophy on relational egalitarianism. Relational egalitarians, as articulated in Anderson (1999), eschew thinking about inequality in purely distributional terms, whether the currency of this is comprised of material resources, primary goods or utilities. But that is not to say that distributions, either of material goods or as a metaphorical application of non-material goods, such as power, do not matter at all. For relational egalitarians, it is less about focusing solely on some distribution of interest for its own sake than on the distribution of resources that support an environment where people are treated as 'social equals' (Scheffler, 2015, p. 22). This means asymmetries in accountable political power (e.g. by elected representatives or appointed bureaucrats) can be consistent with treating all as standing on an equal footing and having their interests considered legitimate by elected representatives.

Relational egalitarians hence place much more emphasis on *process* as opposed to outcomes. Thus, Anderson's theory of relational (democratic) equality entails that '[t]o stand as an equal before others in discussion means that one is entitled to participate, that others recognise an obligation to listen respectfully [...] that no one bow and scrape before others' (Anderson, 1999, p. 313). For a community to be politically equal, there should also exist open opportunities for all members of a political community to participate actively so that barriers preventing participation, such as voter suppression, are antithetical to political inequality. Representation is also important, and Anderson (2010, p. 2) notes that 'democratic political institutions should be equally responsive to the interests and concerns of, and equally accountable to, all citizens'.

¹¹ However, there is a large literature that has adopted this perspective. For example, Miller (1978, p. 3) argues that the 'notion of democracy includes a number of elements [...] the crucial element is political equality' and that 'each member of the society whose political institutions are in question is to have an equal share in political power'. Some have equated this with 'one person, one vote' (Ranney and Kendall, 1956; Sartori, 1965). Although there are some aspects of power equality that relate to equality of consideration, it is not a compelling foundation for understanding political equality in modern democracies, given their extensive reliance on delegated power structures to reap the benefits from the division of labour.

Thus, in summary, we believe that an approach to political equality based on equal consideration fits in with important traditions across both normative political philosophy and political science. Achieving political equality corresponds to the notion of an idealised polity whose outcomes should be judged on the quality of its decision-making processes rather than the outcomes that it achieves. But this is unlikely to constitute a complete divorce from looking at a range of outcomes as a basis for studying political equality. We are not arguing that a system of government that achieves a more equal consideration is the *only* criterion on which the quality of government should be judged. It is possible that having a system without political equality, such as the idealised social planner that some economists invoke as a model of good government, could perform better than one with greater political equality. Our point is simply that process is an important dimension of equality that cannot be subsumed into debates about policy outcomes.

Political inequality in practice

The measurement of political inequality lags behind that of economic inequality.¹² Here we focus on two key measurable dimensions of political inequality: participation and representation, illustrating some relevant core facts and relating them to ongoing discussions in the relevant literatures in economics and political science.

The unit of analysis for this exercise is the *demos*, the political community in which participation and representation occur. The structure of rights within the *demos* underpins political action: who has what rights to participate in what activities and to represent the community in any structures, formal or informal, that exist. Although members of any group that is excluded from the *demos* are denied equal consideration,¹³ formal inclusion does not guarantee political equality. That depends on how the voices of included groups are heard within the political system.

Throughout history, ascriptive characteristics of groups, such as race, gender, identity, caste, immigrant status and region of residence, have defined the basis of inclusion. Legal and constitutional restrictions were enforced by traditional elites who ruled by force and/or acceptance of hereditary practices. Even at its dawn, in ancient Athens, democracy was based on a narrow conception of the political elite (Ober, 2015), and franchise restrictions were common place in liberal democracies until the period after World War II. These restrictions were reinforced by asymmetric implementation of bureaucratic provisions or criminal justice, even in a context of formal constitutional equality (Stevenson, 2015).

There is political equality among members of a *demos* if the rules, norms and procedures that govern the community afford equal consideration to all members. This implies that no subgroup risks life or limb for trying to shape collective decisions, and that the material costs of participating are relatively balanced with rules that are designed to neither mute nor magnify the influence of specific subgroups. As we shall discuss further below, equal consideration may be difficult to achieve without all groups having access to sufficient resources to participate and have their interests be fairly and equally considered by representatives.

Participation

Equal consideration requires not only that citizens should have equal rights to participate as members of a *demos* but that they also have equal capacity to use these opportunities. Defining formal rights to participation, such as the right to vote, protest or speak out, is straightforward. However, assessing capacities is harder, as this is a reflection of the political behaviour of citizens. One way of looking at this is by studying who participates.¹⁴ However, it is necessary to think about participation decisions in a complex way, factoring in norms and opportunity sets beyond formal rights. An important strand of the

¹² This is in part because the empirical study of the second (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962, 1970) and third (Lukes, 1974; Gaventa, 1980) faces of power reached a momentary dead end in the 1980s.

¹³ Even in the most extreme conditions, such as slavery or serfdom, there are possibilities for political pressure, sometimes individually and sometimes collectively (see Scott, 1985).

¹⁴ Verba and Orren (1985, p. 15) note that 'political equality cannot be gauged in the same way as economic equality. There is no metric such as money, no statistic such as the Gini index, and no body of data comparing countries. There are, however, relevant data on political participation' (cited in Bartels, 2008).

existing literature on political equality has focused on inequalities in political participation (Verba, 2003; Dalton, 2017), and a range of empirical regularities has emerged, which we now discuss.

One issue to be addressed is how wide to cast the net when studying political participation. There is a large range of possibilities, such as voting, running for office, protesting, lobbying and signing petitions. In their classic contribution, Verba et al. (1978, p. 1) define participation as 'those legal acts by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions that they take'. However, in addition to overtly political acts, a relational egalitarian approach would also include apparently private acts that are political in motivation, such as refusing to buy certain products. Taking part in such boycotts could, however, be viewed as a form of political participation.

Fewer barriers to participation, across the broad range of possible political activities, promote the ideal of equal consideration, as this will ensure that all individuals are unimpeded if they choose to partake in political life. Thus, making it costly or difficult for people to register and vote, even when they have the right to do so, is likely to reduce participation among those who are affected.

If there are inequalities in participation, then this seems *prima facie* to violate equal consideration as some voices are likely to be heard more loudly than others. However, because political participation is a public act rather than a purely private one, there is a need to embed this in a model of political participation. For example, voting is the most rudimentary of political acts. Yet, even in the best of conditions, the vote – and other forms of political action – implies a personal cost while any benefits that accrue are diffuse. Many economists and even some political scientists therefore profess puzzlement why it is rational for *anyone* to vote in mass elections. But the fact that voters do should therefore leave us to set aside motives based on narrow cost-benefit calculations (Aytaç and Stokes, 2019). For those willing and able to pay the cost, they may do so from a range of motivations. Some act out of a sense of civic duty (Riker and Ordeshook, 1968), some because of bribes or side payments that overcome the costs (see, e.g., Stokes et al., 2013; Nichter, 2018), some from intense pro-social preferences. Politics is a mission-oriented activity that appeals to motivated agents with motivation reflecting family, education and/or membership of social networks, which instil certain norms of behaviour. Motivation to participate can also be enhanced by a sense of efficacy: individuals have to believe that they can make a difference by engaging politically whether as voters, activists or political representatives.

How turnout translates into equal consideration is not straightforward and involves some understanding of how political competition works. Consider, for example, the classic Downsian model of political competition (Downs, 1957) where parties opportunistically compete for votes. Applied to income redistribution policies, as in Meltzer and Richard (1981), this can lead to the policy preferred by the median voter. Suppose that there is full turnout, then one could argue that this is consistent with equal consideration as the parties could consider whether to respond to any subgroup of voters; it is only the logic of competition that leads to median-voter favouritism, not an intrinsic advantage in their access to political leaders. However, we know that voter turnout differs enormously across countries and tends to be higher among higher-income and highly educated groups. If lower-income citizens do not vote, then the income of the median voter will tend to be higher than the income of the median citizen, resulting in less redistribution (Larcinese, 2007). Increasing turnout among lower-income voters is then likely to lead to greater income redistribution. To square this with our conception of political equality, we would stress that that, in such situations, the views of those who do not vote are unlikely to be considered in the political process.

The political science literature stresses that voting is not purely individualistic with parties and social movements playing a role in mobilising citizens.¹⁵ Unions have also traditionally been a pillar for political representation (Becher and Stegmueller, 2020). Such efforts foster engagement by generating an expanded community of fate (Ahlquist and Levi, 2013; Levi, 2020) that links the destinies of a group of citizens with others – including possibly non-citizens – beyond their immediate networks of identity. Parties engage with voters both through providing information and by trying to persuade groups to vote. When parties ignore specific groups of citizens in their mobilisation efforts, these groups are less likely to vote. In some countries, this has been successfully countered by organised actors, oftentimes labour

¹⁵ See Cox (2015) for a review.

unions or social democratic parties, seeking better economic and political representation for workers (e.g. Levi, 2003; Becher and Stegmueller, 2019), and by efforts to mobilise and empower non-participants. A case in point is the success in Georgia of the group founded by Stacey Abrams in the recent US national election and in the selection of senators. The impact of organisations depends on the context and rules under which they operate: unions and left-wing political organisations have a harder time pushing their agenda in large, decentralised labour markets compared with systems that have coordinated wage bargaining. Traditionally, social democrat parties have played a role in mobilising lower-income citizens, although populist radical-right parties have more recently been an important force for doing so.

Although there have been setbacks and enduring concerns, the achievements of the past 150 years in extending the franchise and making electoral participation easier are largely positive, as the top panel of Figure 1 shows. However, there are strong incentives for political elites to make voting more difficult for those who are unlikely to support them. Voter suppression and manipulation of the geographical institutions of representation are examples of this, with consequences for patterns of participation as well as for policy.¹⁶

Similar considerations apply to a wider range of political influences, for example participation in protest or writing to elected representatives. The success of protest activity is much debated; Pasarelli and Tabellini (2017) argue that protest is more effective at shaping policy among groups that are more radical and homogeneous. In their study of political participation, Verba et al. (1978) do not explore protest activities. However, it is striking just how much protest has increased over the past decade, making it important to consider it as a form of political participation and to understand its drivers (Besley, 2021). One interesting issue is how far protest gives voice to those who feel marginalised from mainstream politics or those who feel that their views are being ignored. A case in point is the concern about climate change where standard modes of political representation have lacked the urgency that climate activists have advocated. That said, it is hard to judge whether overall protest is conducive to equal consideration.

To look at correlates of participation, we use survey data from two sources: the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) and European Social Survey (ESS). In Table A.1 in the Appendix, we construct a measure of political participation based on a nine-point scale across 17 advanced capitalist democracies in the ISSP and 13 countries in the ESS.¹⁷ Our core independent variable is the sum of nine discrete political actions that a respondent may have engaged in over the previous year. Although slightly different across the ISSP and ESS, both surveys include questions on whether respondents voted in the last national election, boycotted a product for political purposes, contacted a politician, signed a petition, partook in a protest and/or possess membership to a political party.¹⁸ In Table A.2 in the Appendix, we use a single categorical variable that is equal to one if a respondent reports participating in *any* of the activities.¹⁹ We look at within-country variation as well as some patterns across countries, correlating participation with individual variables such as income, education, gender, age and occupation. We also explore how participation is correlated with a composite measure that we call 'political efficacy', which is constructed by combining four underlying survey questions indicating: (i) satisfaction with democracy; (ii) interest in politics; (iii) influence over government actions; and (iv) trust in politicians.²⁰ This allows us to see whether lack of political participation is generally concentrated among those who lack contentment with the political system; this also taps into whether people *feel* empowered beyond just levels of participation.²¹

Although a useful descriptive exercise, the kinds of regression findings that we report, and that are reported in the literature, offer little insight into the social processes that shape participation as they stress individual motives and their drivers.²² Brady et al. (1995) have emphasised three kinds of factors

¹⁶ See, for example, Singh (2015), Beramendi (2012), Beramendi and Anderson (2008) and Díaz-Cayeros (2006).

¹⁷ The ISSP and ESS samples are comparable except that the ESS excludes Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the US.

¹⁸ See the notes to Table A.1 for details.

¹⁹ In this case, the coefficients represent changes in the probability of engaging in any form of political participation.

²⁰ This is something Verba et al. (1978, p. 47) deliberately omit from their analysis – 'sense of efficacy [and] civic norms' – but that we try to cover in this paper.

²¹ Formally, we use the first principal component from these four measures as our indicator of political efficacy.

²² See, for example, Verba et al. (1978), Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980), Gallego (2007, 2015), Scholzman, Verba and Brady (2012), Campante and Chor (2012) and Leighley and Nagler (2007). For a meta-analysis, see Smets and van Ham (2013).

that shape political participation: whether an individual has the time and resources, whether they are motivated to participate, and whether they are encouraged to participate by others. They subsequently emphasise time, money, civic skills and organisational capacities as part of the mechanism(s) that facilitates participation.²³

The findings from the ISSP and ESS confirm well-known empirical regularities. First, individuals with higher incomes and more education participate more. Older age cohorts also participate more than younger age cohorts do. However, we do not find any robust pattern linking gender and participation. We also look at how political participation varies with occupation, which ties the findings to studies of social class. Here, we find that professional workers (blue collar) are more (less) likely to participate, reinforcing the idea that political participation is an elite activity.

We also find a correlation between participation and our measure of political efficacy, even after controlling for other individual characteristics; that is, those who participate in politics do appear to believe they have more impact over government actions, a greater interest in politics and/or trust/satisfaction in government. This goes against the idea that those who do not participate do so out of a sense of contentment.

Our results on education and political efficacy suggest that lack of political knowledge could limit the capacity for political participation. Community groups and labour unions have traditionally been a source of information and are a locus for challenging and interpreting the facts provided by the media and politicians (Ahlquist and Levi, 2013; Levi, 2017). The last few years have seen increasing attention to the ways in which media and other sources of information influence political thinking and behaviour.²⁴ Whether the increasing use of social media has expanded or diminished inequalities in such political knowledge is widely debated. On the one hand, it has surely lowered the cost of acquiring such knowledge but, on the other, it has also increased the channels for manipulation (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017).²⁵

The concentration of political participation among those with greater education and higher incomes links political participation to inequalities in wealth, income and human capital. Figure 3 shows that there is a negative relationship between political participation, conditional on income and education measured using the ISSP data, and the distribution of income, measured either by the Gini coefficient or by the share of (pre-tax) income accruing to the top 1% of earners.²⁶ The fact that we control for income and education means that this is picking up something about the way that societal income inequality relates to participation. One reason could be that economic inequality shapes incentives to mobilise low-income voters in political campaigns. For example, Barth, Finseraas and Moene (2015) argue that economic inequality alters intra- and inter-party bargaining.²⁷ Rising economic inequality will tend to shift the platforms of both left- and right-wing parties to the right.

Income inequality can also matter for political participation if it undermines forms of collective action traditionally associated with working classes and lower-income citizens. For example, it could affect the role that trade unions play in wage coordination, wage equality and welfare development (Barth and Moene, 2016). Rising economic inequality can increase unions' internal heterogeneity and thereby undermine their external bargaining capacity. Hausermann, Kemmerling and Rueda (2020) review a range of arguments and evidence around how heterogeneity among workers, precipitated by

²³ They base their study on a bespoke survey of the voluntary activities of US citizens.

²⁴ See Zhuravskaya, Petrova and Enikolopov (2020) for a review.

²⁵ Fergusson and Molina (2019) provide convincing empirical evidence that Facebook, as one of the largest social media platforms, has increased protests and other forms of collective action since its inception by increasing information access and lowering coordination costs.

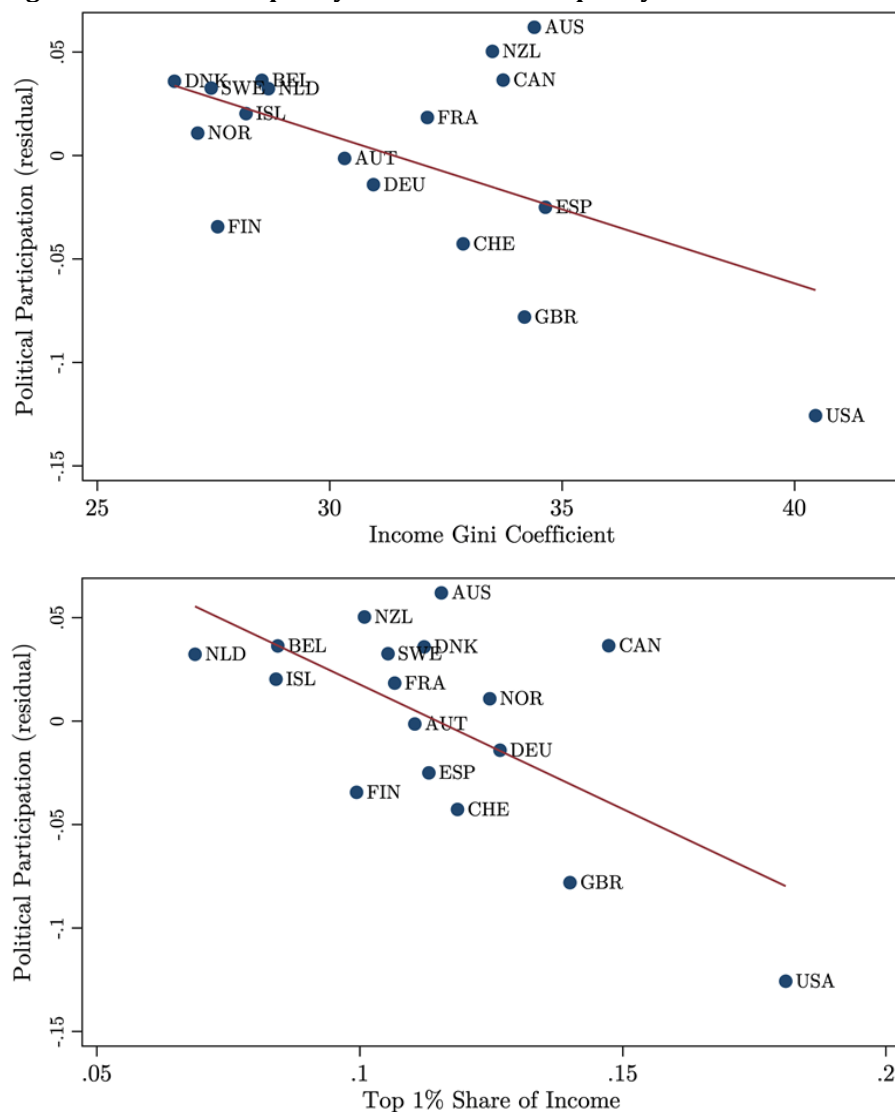
²⁶ Solt (2008) finds a similar relationship with voter turnout but without conditioning on individual income and education, so part of the relationship he discovers could be due to how income and education are distributed.

²⁷ They conclude that 'left parties are less efficient guardians of welfare spending whenever inequality rises without much growth in average incomes [...] Thus, the protection offered by the welfare state can be weakened by the same economic and social forces that it was meant to protect against' (Barth et al., 2015, p. 576). By contrast, in high-inequality, low-capacity contexts, for instance, the use of targeted spending and clientelism allow elites to capture the vote of large sectors of the population, turning a device for political equality into a guarantee for uneven power structures (Amat and Beramendi, 2020). Shifting coalitions within parties can generally be important in shaping party policy.

technological change and globalisation, have fragmented traditional worker interests and opened up new forms of inequality among the working classes.

Notwithstanding cross-country correlations, unpacking the specific mechanisms that elucidate how economic inequality interacts with political inequality remains an important area of research. Studies of voting that serves a common good rather than personal interests, so-called 'sociotropic' (Kinder and Kiewiet, 1981) and identity-based (Fukuyama, 2018) voting, suggest that voters often take the interests

Figure 3. Political inequality and economic inequality



Note: The data for political participation come from the ISSP 2004 – Citizenship I and ISSP 2014 – Citizenship II surveys. Data for income Gini coefficients (top panel) come from the World Bank (data were missing for New Zealand so the OECD Income Distribution Database was used for this observation only). Data for the top 1% income share (bottom panel) come from the World Inequality Database (WID), and refer to the share of pre-tax national income held by the 99th percentile of earners. Both variables represent 2004–14 pooled averages for years with non-missing data. Data on participation were only available for 2004 for Canada, New Zealand and the UK, and for 2014 for Iceland. The trend line is robust to the removal of the USA. Individual political participation is purged of household income, a dummy for tertiary education and survey-year fixed effects. Country averages of fitted residuals were then taken. Political participation is simply a dummy for whether respondents partake in at least one type of political activity.

of the larger polity or a relevant reference group into account, even when it is not compatible with their narrow self-interest.²⁸ Both economic and political inequality may increase the incentives of majority ethnic groups to mobilise along ethnic, rather than income, lines. Roemer (1998) and Roemer, Lee and Van Der Straeten (2007) explore aspects of multi-dimensional politics in general and how multiple political cleavages based on ethnicity and religion can reduce incentives for income redistribution. Hence, even if there is a high level of political participation among lower-income groups, this may not translate into pro-poor redistribution, even where income inequality is high.

Higher political participation may also influence policy outcomes that have an impact on distribution. The standard mechanism that we have discussed above is that greater participation is associated with the median voter being located further down the income distribution. This is consistent with the findings in Aidt, Dutta and Loukoianova (2006), who suggest that there was an increase in spending associated with franchise extension in Europe. In a similar vein, Lott and Kenny (1999) argue that increased enfranchisement of women was associated with increases in transfer spending across US states; Aidt and Dallah (2008) find similar correlations for Western Europe. This view is corroborated by the fact that political participation, conditional on income and education, is positively correlated with the extent to which governments redistribute income as measured by the proportional reduction in the Gini coefficient from market to disposable income inequality (see Figure A.1 in the Appendix). This is consistent with the idea that countries with higher levels of participation also have more redistribution (see, e.g., Kasara and Suryanarayan, 2015).

The political science literature on political equality, such as Verba (2003), has mainly focused on participation as the sole means by which citizen voice is expressed. We now turn to the actions and characteristics of representatives/elites as a key dimension of political equality. Even if some citizens do not, and in some cases cannot, participate to their fullest extent, representation of their views is still possible.

Representation

Representative democracies delegate power to elites. It therefore matters who governs, who legislates and who implements policy, making the processes for the selection and reproduction of political elites a key dimension of political inequality as it concerns equal consideration. This ultimately affects whose interests are represented and the extent to which these interests are skewed towards specific groups. These asymmetries in the distribution of political power are consistent with political equality if those in charge consider the perspectives of all citizens.

Mansbridge (1999, 2003) suggests two approaches to representation: substantive and descriptive.²⁹ These can be considered in models of political competition that stress the importance of the selection process for politicians, such as the citizen-candidate approach of Osborne and Slivinski (1996) and Besley and Coate (1997). Substantive *representation* stresses a lack of congruence between elite policy preferences and (average) citizen policy preferences (i.e. 'public opinion'). Thus, a representative who implements the policy preferences of, say, their campaign donors at the expense of their constituents would be a clear violation of political equality as it concerns equal consideration. The second approach, *descriptive representation*, focuses on the background characteristics of representatives. These characteristics can make a group of people feel more or less empowered (Bobo and Gilliam, 1990; Gilliam and Kaufmann, 1998; Mansbridge, 1999).³⁰

How far representatives can rise above their own personal interests and represent others is a key issue. Such considerations fuel debates about whether the social and economic backgrounds, as well as lived experiences of public officials, matter to the way they discharge their duties. Even with universal suffrage with high voter turnout, we may have a legislature comprised exclusively of individuals with 'elitist' traits, drawn from a narrow segment of the populace. Even if well intentioned, when elites are perceived

²⁸ Huber and Suryanarayan (2015) take the analysis one step further and show how the interaction between ethnic polarisation and economic inequality determines the relative salience of class versus identity in party competition.

²⁹ Some political scientists equally refer to substantive representation as 'responsiveness' (i.e. whether policymakers are 'responsive' to public opinion).

³⁰ It is debatable how far franchise extension, and increased participation, changed the composition of the legislature descriptively. For example, Berlinski, Dewan and Van Coppenolle (2014) find that the Second and Third Great Reforms Acts in the UK did not alter the heavily aristocratic make-up of the House of Commons in the 19th century.

as remote from 'the people', or indifferent to their needs, this can undermine legitimacy and trust of officials. People have a propensity to trust those whom they feel have their interests at heart and are demonstrably acting on those interests (Levi, 2019; Levi and Stoker, 2000).

While we focus on elected representatives, it is important to bear in mind that political elites constitute a much broader category than those that achieve electoral success. Correspondingly, there is growing interest in how the ideological and socio-economic backgrounds of key actors, from judges to bureaucrats as well as elected representatives at all levels, matter.³¹ The selection process can serve as an important channel through which economic advantage translates into acquiring political office, thus demonstrating another area by which economic and political inequality interact. Hence, the background distribution of wealth and socio-economic characteristics can not only affect participation, as discussed previously, but can also penetrate the selection of political elites through a range of channels. Also, although strict hereditary selection has all but disappeared in political systems, the UK House of Lords being a notable exception, this does not mean that family and social connectedness play a limited role in determining who gains positions of influence.

One illustrative example concerns whether individuals have attended elite universities. As a window on this, Figure 4 tracks the elite educational background of legislators in the US and UK, beginning in the 19th century. For the US, we look at the proportion of serving representatives and senators in any given year attending an Ivy League College or the 'Big Three' universities as a subset; for the UK, we look at the proportion of MPs in a given year having attended Oxford or Cambridge. As shown, the US saw a dramatic fall throughout the 19th century, but it has stabilised since, with around 10% of representatives and senators combined stemming from this highly elite educational background. In the UK, the proportion of MPs having an Oxbridge education rose in the 19th century as tertiary education in general became more important among British elites. This was fairly stable over the 20th century and declined from the 1960s onwards, although it is still just less than 10% for Oxford and Cambridge. Of course, one cannot infer a lot from such data except to reinforce the notion that changes in formal political rights have not made ruling elites (descriptively) representative of the population as a whole, even when looking at compositions of legislatures today. The US and UK are interesting case studies due to highly selective tertiary educational institutions.^{32,33}

Although only a single dimension of elite selection, this pattern highlights the importance of considering the fact that how far political elites differ from the people they represent affects the way in which they do fulfil their role. There is a fair amount of evidence that there are elite-citizen differences in policy preferences. For example, Page and Gilens (2017) show that the policy preferences of economic elites in the US are much better represented substantively by legislators. Although this specific study has been critiqued (e.g. Enns, 2015), others have made similar contributions in different country contexts (Wlezien and Soroka, 2012; Rasmussen, Reher and Toshkov, 2018; Lupu and Warner, 2022). This need not imply that they always act on their personal preferences when making policy. We have stressed throughout that political equality is not just about preference aggregation; what matters is the deliberative process, how different views are weighed, and who sets the agenda. There is an important question about how far descriptive representation builds trust in political processes by making it more credible that a wide variety of perspectives will be heard.

The emerging literature investigating who becomes a politician uses micro-datasets to examine the backgrounds of elites with regards to the composition of the populace (Dal Bó et al., 2017; Bell et al., 2019; Thompson et al., 2019).³⁴ However, the data required to do this in detail are rarely available and it is surprisingly difficult to find comparable and reliable data across countries and over time to establish the basic facts of political selection.³⁵ Here, we use some available data, reported in Table 1, to formulate

³¹ Owners of media outlets are also interesting, given the influence that their positions grant them.

³² We have not been able to find similar data for other countries, even for France, despite its highly elite educational institutions in the so-called *Grandes École*.

³³ See Michelman, Price and Zimmerman (2021) and Reeves et al. (2017) for evidence on the connection between elite educational institutions and the formation of elite 'old boys' clubs' in the US and UK, respectively, which has further implications for political selection.

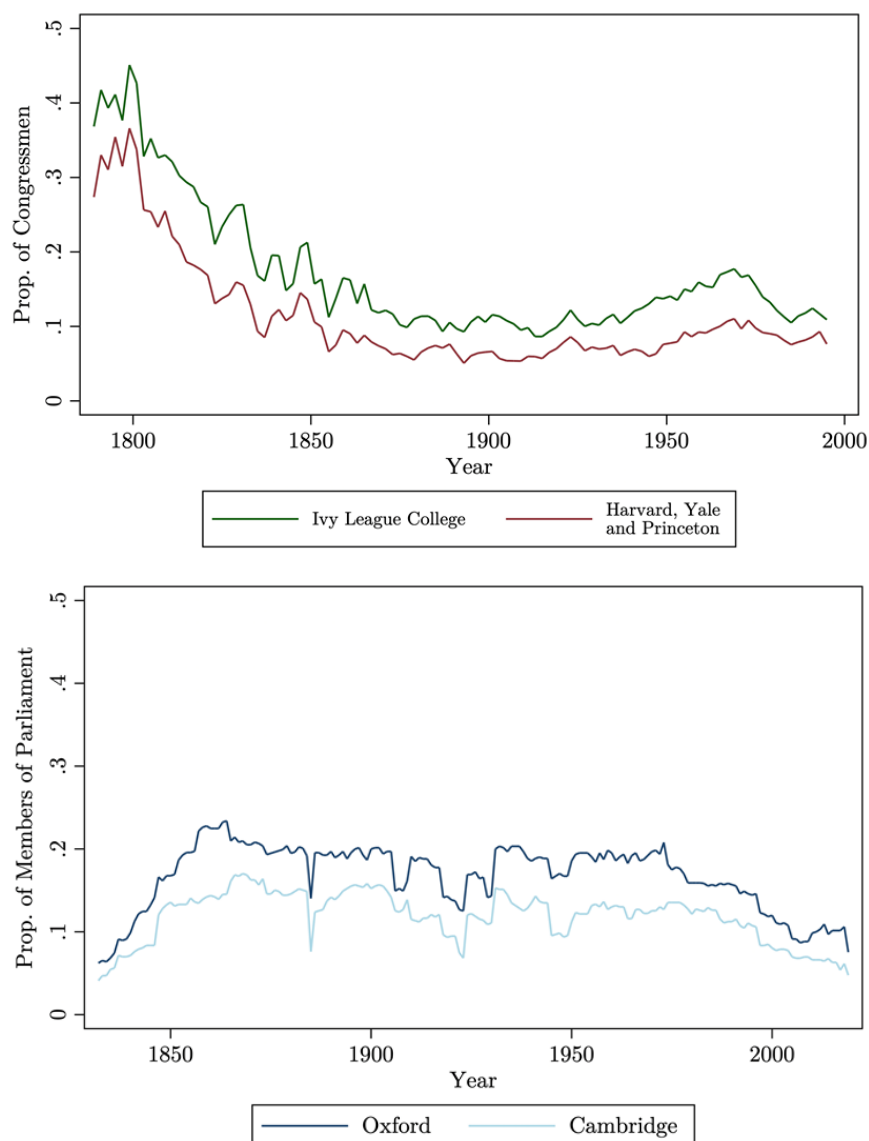
³⁴ See Laski (1928) for one of the first studies on the descriptive representation of UK cabinet members covering 1801–1924.

³⁵ For recent contributions on the US and Latin America, see Carnes (2018) and Carnes and Lupu (2014).

three basic conjectures covering a small range of countries. We find that elected representatives are generally more educated, more likely to be male and are older than the average citizen, mirroring patterns found for political participation.

When it comes to education, the elected representatives in our sample are much more likely to possess tertiary education. While we might expect returns to knowledge and training in politics, as in any sphere of life, it remains unknown just how great these returns are to generating competence in politics. But it creates distance between the educational and life experiences of those who they represent. Moreover, many representatives are educated in highly elite institutions, and this also grants access to advantageous social networks, as just illustrated above (Bovens and Wille, 2017).

Figure 4. Political elites as educational elites in the US and UK since the 19th century



Note: In the top panel, the dark green line represents the proportion of all congressmen and congresswomen whose last university attended was an Ivy League college. The red line represents the same trend but restricting the sample to just alumni of Harvard, Yale and Princeton. Last university attended refers to the college from which a congressman or congresswoman received their highest tertiary education. Observations are by congressional year. 1996 is the last year of available data. The data come from the ICPSR 7803 Roster of United States Congressional Officeholders and Biographical Characteristics of Members of the United States Congress, 1789–1996. In the bottom panel, the data come from the History of Parliament Trust, developed by Michael Rush. The dark blue and light blue lines represent the proportion of MPs who attended Oxford University and Cambridge University, respectively. Years cover both general elections and by-elections.

Table 1. Composition of legislature versus population

Country	Legislators			Population	
	Percentage with tertiary education	Percentage male	Median age	Percentage with tertiary education	Median age
Austria	94.6	59.4	48	10.8	46.5
Canada	97.1	75.0	51	26.1	45.7
Finland	95.7	54.6	47	12.9	47.9
France	92.9	59.6	50	11.7	47.3
Germany	95.7	68.5	50	14.8	47.6
Iceland	96.8	56.7	47	20.1	45.0
Spain	98.9	53.3	49	18.0	46.7
Sweden	95.6	54.6	44	17.3	47.3
United Kingdom	91.2	67.0	51	17.0	46.5
United States	98.7	79.8	59	27.5	45.3

Note: The data on legislators come from the 'WikiProject Every Politician' (for details, see Besley, Chikkareddy and Dann, 2021). Legislators are those who serve in the lower house of the national legislature (all legislators if the parliament is unicameral). For each country, we use a country-specific parliamentary term using the data on the population of serving legislators for 2010–21; see the Appendix for legislative terms and years covered in each country. The proportion of legislators with tertiary education is calculated as the proportion of those with non-missing data. Across the population columns, there is no 'percentage male' column as we assume a constant of 50% across all countries. Data on the percentage of the population with (completed) tertiary education come from Barro and Lee (2013) and are a cross-section for 2010, the last year of available data (although this statistic refers to the working-age population, aged 15–64, only). Data on median age come from the World Bank, which uses a uniform distribution to calculate the median from 15–64 and 64+ age bands (i.e., the working-age population), and a pooled 2015–19 average of these medians is taken. The countries chosen were the widest sample possible of advanced capitalist democracies that are comparable with the sample used in previous (following) charts.

Table 1 also shows that women are generally under-represented in elected office, a striking finding given the length of time for which men and women have enjoyed equal voting rights.³⁶ It is notable that many of the changes in economic rights, such as equal-pay legislation and other measures to combat discrimination in the workplace, are of similar vintage. However, it is difficult to know whether representation in the legislature is a causal factor, especially as shifts in norms are also likely to have played a key role. In the following section, we discuss a range of measures directly targeted at expanding the representation of women.

There are two core features of the institutional environment that affect selection of politicians. One is the behaviour of parties, by far the most important entry ladder for political elites, even in this populist era with multiple examples of candidates bypassing the normal channels. The second is how the electoral system represents voters.

Parties in parliamentary systems vet candidates, and list systems give senior party officials a huge amount of power in picking candidates. Even more decentralised systems, where local party organisations play a role, concentrate power among an unrepresentative party elite. Even though they were opposed by the founders of the American democracy (Rosenblum, 2008), parties are significant

³⁶ Figure A.2 in the Appendix looks at how this has changed over time by plotting the proportion of women in legislatures since 1900 (illustrated for 17 advanced capitalist democracies). It shows that there was a striking increase in descriptive representation from the 1970s onwards, although parity has yet to be achieved.

players in both determining policy and channelling influence. Parties have evolved over time and, in some countries, have played a conscious role in opening up access to under-represented groups. They have also experimented with open primaries and other selection mechanisms to diminish the power of insiders. Once established, party elites also exercise considerable control over policy.

When parties are choosing platforms and candidates, they do so in a strategic context where they have to compete for office. Political influence means translating votes first into seats and then into policy. Any given voter is unlikely to be pivotal in this process. However, the rules around representation including the size and shape of electoral districts and constituencies do affect how aggregate votes translate into representation. Idealised models of democratic political competition envisage a balance of power between competing parties. But political competition is often lopsided, with long periods of dominance for a particular party. Even in nominally competitive systems, individual districts can be effective monopolies for one party. The idea that not all votes aggregate in the same way is a particular criticism of majoritarian political systems. People vote for a bundle of policies, and there is typically a limited menu of possibilities on offer in elections. Proportional systems can encourage substantive political representation of niche interests, as we have seen in the entry of green parties. And, although there is evidence that different constitutional arrangements are strongly correlated with public spending (see Persson and Tabellini, 2003), there is less consensus as to whether those arrangements promote engagement in politics among lower-income groups or change the types of elected representatives who hold office. Representational inequality is an important issue within countries as rules and districts interact to shape effective political representation (Kedar, Harsgor and Sheinerman, 2015). While some authors have argued that proportional representation systems benefit the left (Iversen and Soskice, 2006), a growing body of evidence suggests that the biases come through many channels and work, potentially, in multiple directions.

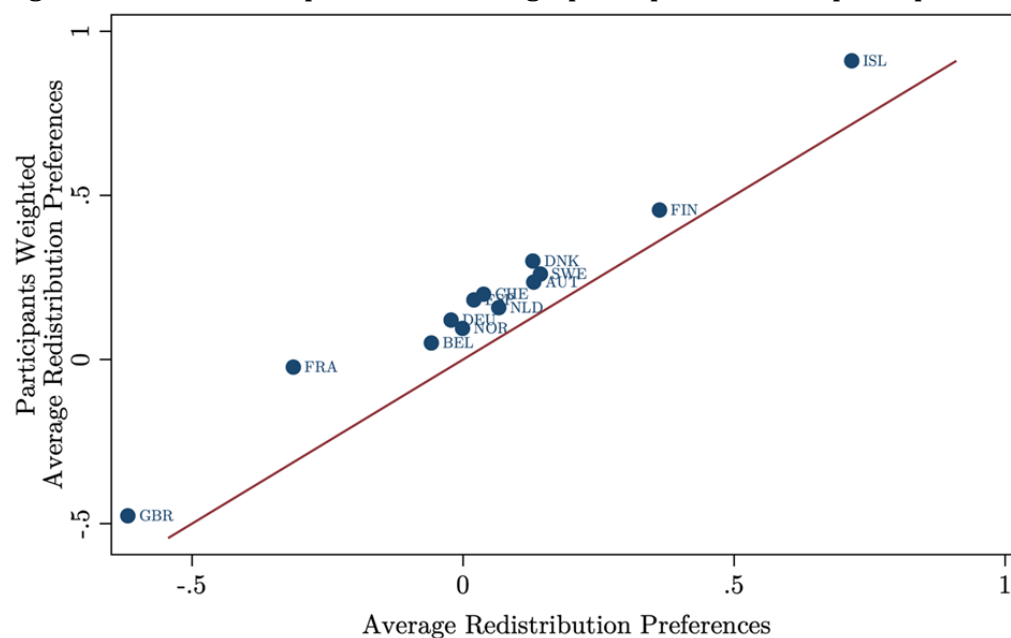
The participation–representation nexus

We now discuss how participation and representation combine to promote equal consideration. For example, greater levels of participation encourage more substantive and descriptive representation, and greater representation can encourage citizen engagement (e.g. Bobo and Gilliam, 1990). In this subsection, we correlate our measures of participation and representation to shed further light on the links between the two.

We begin by using our survey data to correlate levels of participation with various measures of policy preferences. As Verba (2001, 2003) argues, participation is the primary means by which citizens voice their interests to policymakers. Hence, if it is the case that those who participate more frequently have differing policy preferences to those who abstain from the political process, then a direct implication is a potential imbalance in substantive representation if some voices are louder than others. This would consequently be a clear manifestation of unequal consideration as it concerns political equality. Exploring this correlation is also a more direct analysis of the claim by Verba (2001, 2003) that unequal voice via participation inequalities affects policy outputs in an unequal way. In previous work, studies documenting inequalities in participation have mostly implied that unequal voice distorts the substantive representation of all citizens if policy only caters to the interests of the active (Verba, 2001, 2003; Dalton, 2017). Yet, the direct connection of unequal participation, beyond just voting, to the substantive representation of preferences lacks much empirical evidence.

Figure 5 uses the ESS data to plot the policy preferences of participants versus non-participants concerning issues related to redistribution.³⁷ Specifically, we take the first principal component of whether respondents agree/disagree with the following statements: (i) social benefits/services place too great a strain on the economy; (ii) social benefits/services make people lazy; and (iii) large differences in income are acceptable to reward talents and efforts. A higher value means individuals more strongly disagree with the three aforementioned statements. We develop a weighted average measure of redistribution preferences across countries and pooled over all available years for participants based on sample size, and we plot this against the overall country-wide average across both participants and non-participants. If preferences between those who participate and those who don't are perfectly congruent, then all scatter points should lie directly on the 45° line.

³⁷ The ISSP does not have data on policy preferences and participation for the same respondents, so we are limited to using the ESS.

Figure 5. Redistribution preferences amongst participants and non-participants

Note: The data come from the ESS. Participants are defined as individuals who participate in at least one type of political activity across our nine different types. Redistribution preferences are measured using the first principal component of three questions: (i) social benefits/services place too great a strain on the economy; (ii) social benefits/services make people lazy; (iii) large differences in income are acceptable to reward talents and efforts. Higher values mean respondents disagree more with the statements. The 45° line represents congruence in policy preferences between participants and the country-wide average, which includes non-participants.

As Figure 5 illustrates, participants indeed have slightly dissimilar policy preferences to those who are inactive in politics and, regarding redistribution, tend to disagree more with the aforementioned statements. Indeed, it is somewhat puzzling to see why those who participate actually have stronger preferences for redistribution. As we saw in the previous subsection, those who participate are generally high-educated, high-income individuals, and so one would naturally expect preferences for *less* redistribution if following standard economic models (e.g. Meltzer and Richard, 1981). Notwithstanding this, it is still clear that citizens who actively participate in politics do have different preferences, on average, to those who abstain. Moreover, although the differences may not be sharp, and there is large cross-country heterogeneity, perhaps what is more striking is how systematic this trend is across all countries in our sample, given that all scatter points lie above the 45° line. This result, albeit descriptive, therefore has clear implications for unequal consideration as it relates to the interactions between participation and representation.

These correlations further raise questions about how policy preferences are formed. The translation of citizens' experiences with the political system into actual preferences is mediated by perceptions, something Figure 2 briefly illustrates. This is especially true when it comes to economic inequality, where survey research has shown that voters vary in how much they know. Many citizens, for example, appear to have misperceptions about the level of income inequality (Gimpelson and Treisman, 2018). Individuals also err in predicting their positions in the national income distribution and these misperceptions can affect their preferences over tax policies.³⁸ Researchers have found that individuals also misperceive their local economic conditions. Ansell and Cansunar (2020) argue that less secure households and individuals have a more accurate grasp of local economic conditions than the relatively privileged, who see their local environment through 'rose-colored glasses'. As economic inequality increases, citizens' views about the fairness in the allocation of who gets what and their own ability to change such an allocation may also be affected. Recent studies in both developed (Beramendi and Rehm, 2016) and developing (Holland, 2017) country contexts show how citizens' demands for redistribution can respond to the design of welfare and

³⁸ See, for example, Cruces, Perez-Truglia, and Tetaz (2013) and Cansunar (2021).

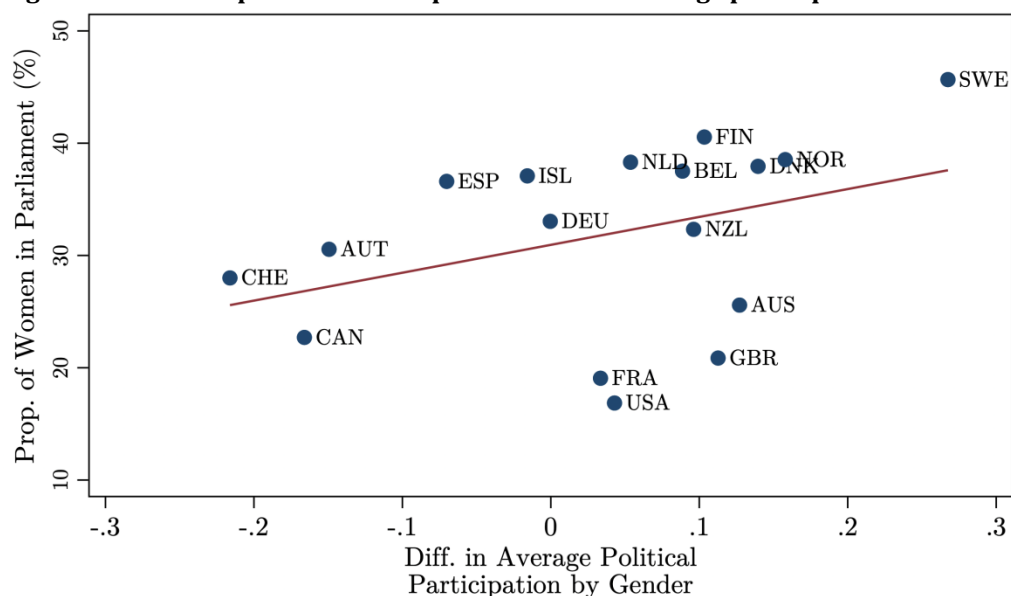
insurance systems; if citizens perceive that the system is not sufficiently progressive (i.e. capable of effective redistribution), support for redistribution declines. This may help to explain the pattern found in Figure 5 if non-participants perceive the welfare system to be unfair.

Misperceptions can be important for three reasons. First, people's views about fairness and, to a lesser extent, politics tend to co-vary with their perceived relative position within their distributions of reference. This applies to both perceptions of equality (Alesina, Miano and Stantcheva, 2020; Hvidberg, Kreiner and Stantcheva, 2020) and perceptions of mobility and positions about equality of opportunity (Piketty, 1995; Alesina, Stantcheva and Teso, 2018). Second, misperceptions are sometimes concentrated at the bottom of the distribution, leading to overestimation of the citizen's relative position, reducing the demand for redistribution. Third, misperceptions seem to be only partially responsive to informational treatments. Thus, Kuziemko et al. (2015) show a strong elasticity in the case of estate tax but much weaker results across all other policy realms. They also find that the informational treatments are weaker where trust in government is low, reinforcing perceptions of government ineffectiveness and scepticism about potential pro-equality interventions.

If citizens perceive the marginal value of their input into civic life to be low, they have a weaker incentive to engage in politics. The influence of money on politics – be it through political campaigns (Gilens, 2012; Page and Gilens, 2017; Cagé, 2020), or because policies are more responsive to lobbying (Przeworski, 2010) – undermines the sense of political efficacy among the less well-off. This can reinforce disaffection and reduce engagement; misperceptions of participation and representation is an emerging area of research (see Pontusson et al., 2020).

A second way to explore the participation–representation link is to examine how levels of participation correlate with indicators of descriptive representation, such as those in Table 1. Political selection itself ties directly into participation and representation, especially in terms of studying the incentive structures that encourage citizens to run for office (Osborne and Slivinski, 1996; Besley and Coate, 1997). Moreover, as highlighted previously, evidence suggests descriptive representation of disadvantaged groups can empower under-represented citizens to become more politically engaged (Bobo and Gilliam, 1990; Mansbridge, 1999). Not only does this have symbolic components, in conveying to voters that their representatives 'look like them', but it can also act as a potential commitment device that representatives will credibly cater to the interests of those with similar backgrounds – 'shared' experiences (Mansbridge, 1999, p. 629). Of course, this may not always be the case in practice and may not be a generalisable phenomenon based on country context and the possible confounding effects of norms and values. Yet, notwithstanding the various channels representation can work through, we should plausibly expect a direct link between politics where politicians themselves stem from a wide, representative cross-section of society's varied groups and aggregate levels of participation.

As a first pass, Figure 6 links political participation to descriptive representation of women, looking at the average levels of political participation on the nine-point scale from the ISSP differentiated by gender. The positive (negative) region of the x-axis indicates women (men) participating more than men (women), on average. While the average differences in political participation across genders are not stark for these 17 advanced capitalist democracies, there is a positive correlation between high female participation, relative to males, and the proportion of women elected to parliament. However, this does not imply a causal relationship as there are likely to be common omitted factors, such as gender norms, influencing both participation and representation.

Figure 6. Female representation in parliament and average participation

Note: The data for political participation come from the ISSP 2004 – Citizenship I and ISSP 2014 – Citizenship II surveys. Data for the proportion of women in parliament are from the V-Dem dataset using the variable v2lgfemleg. The difference in political participation by gender is calculated by subtracting average overall political participation for men from the average overall political participation by women per country. The positive part of the x -axis thus represents the fact that women participate more than men, on average. The negative part of the x -axis thus means that men participate more than women, on average. Data for the proportion of women in parliament are a pooled 2004–14 average, and refer to the percentage of women in either the lower house of the legislature or the percentage of women in a unicameral legislature. Data on political participation are also a pooled average over 2004–14 (except for Canada, New Zealand and the UK, where data are only available for 2004, and for Iceland, where only 2014 is non-missing).

Interventions affecting political equality

The previous subsection explored how political inequality manifests itself in the world through the dimensions of participation and representation, including their interactions. Now we discuss a range of ways in which the domain of political equality is expanded through changing policies and institutions. Regarding our definition of political equality, this consequently relates to studying whether the 'rules, norms and procedures' that govern a political community afford equal consideration of interests to all members. Whether these interventions do indeed have their desired impact is much debated. Here, we discuss six different types of interventions.

Participation

One of the main historical changes over history has been expanding membership of political communities. Since the enfranchisement of women, the primary concern has been two issues: the treatment of immigrants and age qualifications. The latter relates to potential tensions across age cohort; these are largely unresolved issues fuelling political debate as life expectancy grows, meaning labour market opportunities and wealth accumulation become segmented across generations. In the UK, for example, the voting age was reduced to 18 in 1969, and there is now an active debate about whether it should be reduced to 16. And there have also been occasional proposals for extra votes to be given to the parents of children under the age of 18 so that the longer-term interests of their children can be represented. Regardless of how these issues are resolved across democracies, all share a common challenge: for formal political equality to be translated into more equality in whose views are considered, this requires turning formal rights into effective participation.

Political attention, access to relevant information, and knowledge about what is at issue are important in motivating people to participate and engage in politics; and, as is well documented, access to such

information is stratified by income, wealth and social background. We focus on three potential areas of interventions.

The first one is via investment in human capital. In addition to material returns to education, there is a well-established empirical link between civic engagement and education (see, e.g., Dee, 2004; Milligan, Moretti and Oreopoulos, 2004). Moreover, there has been discussion of having a greater focus on civic engagement in educational curricula with attempts to infuse citizens with a sense of purpose and motivation to participate in political life.³⁹ This responds to the concern that lack of access to information is often cited as a limiting factor in political participation. People may not know their political rights, how to register, how to vote, etc.

The second intervention exploits the taxation–spending–representation link, where there is an argument that redistributive spending and tax policies promote not only distributional equality but also political equality by increasing citizen interest in, and engagement in, politics (Gottlieb and Hollenbach, 2019). There is also evidence of heterogeneous effects of spending strategies on electoral participation (Amat and Beramendi, 2020). But direct evidence of whether transfer programmes also have benefits in these terms is scarce. Proponents of citizens' income programmes and basic income (Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017) often discuss these as enabling participation among recipients, but the beneficial effects of such interventions are a matter of conjecture rather than firmly established claims. There is an interesting question of how far state programmes help to mobilise citizens and engage them in policy. The fact that when COVID-19 hit there were unprecedented state interventions to support citizens who would not have drawn on state support in normal times is a case in point. The COVID-19 pandemic has generated salient long-standing debates about the level of support for universal health care, but how far this fuels engagement in politics and political participation remains to be seen. The fact that there are benefits targeted to older income groups not only reflects but also sustains their engagement in the political process. To the extent that older voters turn out more, then there is a potential link between participation and protection of state transfers to these groups.

A third set of interventions concern the media, a backbone of political knowledge about issues and candidates. Countries differ enormously in the way that news media are organised, the extent of concentration in ownership and state funding. The kind of knowledge that people have and the extent to which this promotes political equality is potentially important. And there are studies suggesting that news slants can influence outcomes (e.g. DellaVigna and Kaplan, 2007). Access to traditional news media depends on literacy, but the advent of radio and television news does not. Throughout much of history, there were significant inequalities in access to sources of political knowledge by location and income. This limited the extent to which political campaigns could mobilise some voters.

However, there are new debates around political knowledge in the era of social media, despite there being little consensus on which groups it has advantaged. That said, Dalton (2017) argues that younger generations use these newer forms of political participation to engage in politics even if they shun more traditional means of participation, such as voting. On the one hand, the costs of organisation and entry appear much lower than with traditional forms of communication. On the other hand, the scope for fake and unsubstantiated news to spread is greater. There is little doubt that access to social media is heterogeneous across countries and groups of voters. Given the echo chambers in which many voters find themselves, media that promotes participation may also lead to increased polarisation (Mutz, 2006; Bartels, 2008; Achen and Bartels, 2016).

When it comes to modern media platforms, there are many reasons for caring about digital inequality in general. Whether there should be policies that guarantee equal access to news media to ensure a level playing field in terms of political knowledge is only one aspect of this. Some of the large public service broadcasters, such as the BBC, have a public service mandate and a commitment to political balance as well as being freely accessible. However, this is not the case everywhere. In terms of content, there are questions about regulation that have yet to be resolved, even in democracies. Democracies generally have strong cultures for protecting press freedom and ensuring open political debate. When it comes to funding, public service broadcasting can create more equal access to unbiased political knowledge. And

³⁹ See Fuentes-Moreno, Sabariego-Puig and Ambros-Pallarés (2020). Satz (2007) and Allen (2016) argue that educational equality is key to civic equality.

even commercially funded broadcasters can have strong incentives, sometimes in the form of licensing regulation, for breaking important news stories.

Beyond generalised media activity, there can be specific policies for facilitating engagement during election campaigns. An emerging body of evidence, mainly focused on the United States, has examined the kinds of interventions that can influence voter participation. For example, Green and Gerber (2015) discuss a range of academic studies that examine the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of measures intended to increase turnout. Among those considered are door-to-door canvassing, email and direct mail campaigns as well as telephoning potential voters. They discuss different ways of messaging as well as measures to increase registration as an effort to overcome existing procedural barriers to engagement.

Factors that make it easier to register to vote and to cast their votes may play a role beyond having a formal right to vote. The general presumption is that this promotes political equality via participation, as costs are likely to loom larger in the eyes of poorer and less-educated voters. Policy measures that outlaw physical intimidation and coercive practices have been historically important in allowing people to exercise their rights effectively.⁴⁰

Even if election practices conform to norms of being 'free and fair', impediments, bolstered by laws, can remain. Things which inhibit the ability of voters to 'arrive' at the ballot box itself through intimidation is a case in point. There are many historical studies of the consequences of this. For example, Perez (2021) looks at the effect of personal registration laws in the US between 1880 and 1916, adopted at varying times across states, and finds that these laws decreased turnout by as much as 6 percentage points on average. Such practices can also work informally; Butler and Broockman (2011) have conducted an experiment where they randomly email representatives in the US regarding voter registration issues using fake 'black' and 'white' sounding aliases, and they find politicians are much more responsive to white aliases. This consequently speaks to the role of norms that foster political inequality.

Some measures have explicitly been introduced to increase voter turnout. For example, Fujiwara (2015) explores the impact of electronic voting in Brazil, finding that it increased political participation among poorer voters and shifted spending towards health care. However, recent evidence (Thompson et al., 2020) on mail voting in the US suggests that this has little impact on turnout or partisanship. There is also discussion of compulsory voting. Fowler (2013) looks at the implementation of compulsory voting laws in Australia going back to the late 19th to early 20th centuries, when different states adopted such laws in different years. He finds that turnout increased by 24 percentage points; in particular, Labour party vote shares also increased by 7–10 percentage points, suggesting that the impact is not politically neutral. Yet, the effects appear to be much weaker, and even counter-productive, in less-developed contexts, so the positive effects of compulsory voting laws may be limited in scope (Cepaluni and Hidalgo, 2016).

Organised political mobilisation can also be important in encouraging participation. Historically, organised labour movements have played a significant role in lowering the costs of political participation through get-out-the-vote campaigns and providing information about candidates, particularly on issues that are salient to their members. The 1960s civil rights movement in the US not only used these strategies but famously fought to improve voter rights, desegregate schools and the workforce, and lower the barriers to voting and running for office. The result was major federal legislation and court-supported actions. Other organisations, such as GetUp! in Australia or Green parties in multiple countries, are generating not only new voters but also new political leaders and political pressures. Unions and activist groups also act as lobby groups on behalf of their constituents, thus amplifying their voice and influence.

In many instances, mass movements are and continue to be confederations of groups and organisations. This was true of the anti-nuclear, anti-Vietnam war, civil rights, feminist and anti-globalisation movements that characterised the last half of the 20th century. It is equally true of the contemporary

⁴⁰ France, for example, pioneered the secret ballot, introducing it in the constitution of 1795; it was not until the Electoral Act of 1856 in the once Colony of Victoria in Australia and the Ballot Act of 1872 in the UK that the secret ballot was further codified abroad (Crook and Crook, 2007). Secret ballots are meant to serve multiple fronts, curbing vote buying and voter intimidation via anonymity at the ballot box. Moreover, vote buying is typically outlawed through criminal/penal codes and electoral codes going back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries for various European countries, such as Belgium's Electoral Code of 1894 and Switzerland's Criminal Code of 1937 (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2020). In 1883, vote buying was banned in the UK via the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Act.

movements for racial, LGBT+ and environmental justice today, and even for the range of movements labelled as 'populist'. This makes such movements heterogenous in terms of tactics and strategies, and even targets. The effect is that movements are hard to control and predict, whether it be via their internal leadership, political elites or governments. Such organisations are formalised, with membership structures, dues and donations that are facilitated by laws, tax breaks and regulations. However, their treatment differs across countries; for example, Amnesty International is viewed as philanthropy in some places and as a political pressure group in others. There are also questions about the status of labour unions that collect and use donations for political purposes and are often subject to governmental regulation but seldom, if ever counted, as charities. Many civil rights and environmental organisations, at least in the US, create two separate entities: the first is a charity to whom donations earn tax relief, and the second is a political lobbying arm to whom donations cannot be deducted from taxes.

The framework regulating how unions are able to collect and donate funds on behalf of their members has been much debated throughout the world. In the UK, for example, this affects the political levy in trade unions affiliated to the Labour Party. One of the main points of contention is whether this should be levied on an 'opt in' or 'opt out' basis for union members. In 2015, a law change was introduced to make this paid only on an 'opt in' basis.⁴¹ This arguably made it more difficult for the Labour Party to raise funding via unions, the membership of which is far greater than that of the party itself. The argument was not whether such funding is legitimate at all but the manner of funding. There were also arguments based on the extensive literature on nudging that confirms the idea that defaults can matter.

Representation

Campaign finance

Campaign finance has become an increasingly discussed topic in both political science and economics. Landmark supreme court rulings, such as *Citizens United v. FEC* in the US in 2010, have made this area of debate much more salient over the last decade. The ability of wealthy individuals to capture the interests of politicians through campaign donations has become increasingly discussed in light of larger debates that surround growing economic inequalities (Piketty, 2014; Cagé, 2020). With regards to representation, policy capture is clearly a violation of the equal consideration of interests if politicians cater narrowly towards their donors rather than working for the public good of their constituents. In this respect, campaign finance mostly concerns the substantive versus descriptive component of representation, although who wins elections can have consequences for the latter. There is now a vast literature on the effectiveness of campaigns and hence whether intervening in this sphere is likely to make a difference to election outcomes. Elections typically take place within a whole range of legal restrictions on funding, who can contribute and how much.

Differential abilities to finance campaigns are a route by which inequalities in wealth can increase political inequality by amplifying the voices of the rich. Rich individuals may even choose to run for office themselves using their personal wealth to fund campaigns. Kalla and Broockman (2016) find experimental evidence that US representatives are substantially more likely to agree to meetings with political organisations when said organisations have contributed to their campaigns in the past. Relatedly, there are also concerns surrounding the power of corporations to win favours in exchange for campaign funding.

While countries regulate many aspects of campaign finance, the institutional rules and implementation details vary significantly. To illustrate this, Table A.3 in the Appendix summarises information from the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA). The table gives a 'bird's-eye view' of the regulatory environment in place.

Governments possess a plethora of means to regulate political finance tailored to their institutional context. For example, in countries such as the UK, much more emphasis is placed on limiting campaign *expenditure* as opposed to campaign donations. This approach to regulating campaign finance in the UK stems from the Political Parties Elections and Referendums Act (PPERA) 2000. Fundraising for political parties prior to this act was completely unregulated, and so PPERA aimed to increase transparency in

⁴¹ For an overview of this system and its history, see the House of Lords Report, Select Committee on Trade Union Political Funds and Political Party Funding, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201516/ldselect/ldtupf/106/10603.htm>.

donations and impose spending limits but without completely inhibiting private donations (Law Library of Congress, 2009). In fact, currently, there are no limits on the amount of donations parties can receive; the only real regulation concerning donations is simply transparency. One of the only real bans with regards to donors is that of 'foreign donors' who do not count as 'permissible donors' in the PPERA.

As a polar opposite to the UK, Germany exclusively focuses on *donations* and has no subsequent limits on campaign expenditure. Disclosure also applies to donations above a certain threshold. Cross-nationally, a major aspect of regulations also concerns who the key actors are in campaigns. For example, although Germany has no explicit regulations for donations and expenditures for candidates, this is because political parties are tight-knit organisations where candidates themselves play very minor roles (Law Library of Congress, 2009). This is why campaign finance regulation is so different to the US, because *all* emphasis is placed on parties in federal elections; the US, however, focuses mostly on candidates rather than parties. Accordingly, in the US context, although there are genuine limits and caps on donations and expenditures, set by the Federal Election Commission (FEC), a key loophole has to do with 'independent expenditures'. These are campaign expenditures that can support or oppose candidates, so long as they are made completely independent such that there is no coordination with a candidate's campaign or with political parties.

Beyond restrictions on campaign expenditures and donations, a key institutional decision is in the level of public (financial) support. Some have even advocated that there should be direct public funding of politics as a means of promoting political equality. The last major review of political party funding in the UK in 2007 included in its recommendations that public support to the political parties should be increased, with funds depending on the number of votes secured in the previous election, at the rate of around £3.00 a vote in Westminster elections, and that income tax relief, analogous to Gift Aid, should also be available on donations of up to £1,000 and on membership fees to political parties.⁴² However, these recommendations were not implemented, suggesting that there is little appetite in the UK for greater public funding.

Other reforms have also been proposed in the literature, such as 'democracy vouchers', which give all citizens the ability to finance the party of their choice through public money, thus 'crowding out' the private element of campaign donations (Lessig, 2015; Cagé, 2020). To the best of our knowledge, only the city of Seattle, WA, in the US has implemented such a proposal for municipal elections, although the effects remain unclear (Henderson and Han, 2020).⁴³ Some policymakers have also looked favourably upon this proposal, such as 2020 presidential candidate Andrew Yang proposing 'democracy dollars' and even Representative Ro Khanna introducing the Democracy Dollars Act in 2017.

Finally, campaign finance is also another interesting area to contemplate the importance of norms and their interaction with laws. A positive correlation exists between income inequality and political finance stringency and also between average participation and stringency, with relatively egalitarian countries actually regulating *less*.⁴⁴ Either this may be because less regulation is thought to be needed when societies are equal or it could reflect a preference for promoting political equality by changing norms rather than passing laws.

Changing power structures

One way to enhance citizen power directly is to introduce forms of 'direct democracy' such as initiatives and referenda. This corresponds to a democratic ideal of 'citizens as legislators' (see Bowler, Donovan and Tolbert, 1998). However, there are also good reasons to be sceptical of their efficacy in achieving equal consideration. One concern is that political elites generally control the wordings of the questions and are able to fund campaigns during the period of voting. Of equal concern is the fact that referenda do not always incorporate respect for diverse perspectives and nuances by turning complex issues into up or down votes. So even when the vote represents a shift in the balance of power towards rank-and-file

⁴² See Committee on Standards in Public Life (2011), Political Party Finance: Ending the Big Donor Culture, Cm 8208, p. 9, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/228646/8208.pdf.

⁴³ See <http://www.seattle.gov/democracyvoucher>.

⁴⁴ See Figure A.3 in the Appendix, where we plot an index of the stringency of campaign finance regulations against the share of (pre-tax) income accruing to the top 1% and the average of the political participation dummy for 17 advanced capitalist democracies.

citizens (which is far from clear), it is a process that is seldom based on relational equality. Discussions of the UK Brexit referendum are a case in point, where its supporters portrayed it as a victory over political elites by the citizens because the vast majority of Parliament was in favour of remaining in the European Union (EU). Opponents voice concerns that citizens lack the policy expertise needed to vote on specific issues.

A weaker form of citizen power is allowing citizens to influence directly the agenda of the legislature. The UK has a petition system, which mandates that a parliamentary debate should take place if 100,000 citizens demand it.⁴⁵ Not surprisingly, such events are rare.⁴⁶ Between 2015 and 2018, the two most successful petitions were attempts to have a second EU referendum (4,150,263 signatures) and to prevent President Donald Trump from making a state visit (1,863,709 signatures). These forms of empowerment may also pull in groups who rarely participate in politics. But in terms of ultimate empowerment over political elites or ensuring political equality, they probably have a limited role. That said, there does appear to be an increasing fondness by many members of the polity for deliberative assemblies as a means of expanding 'voice' in policymaking, thus affecting both participation and representation. A notable example was in Ireland before the change in the law on gay marriage. Indeed, deliberative experiments are quite widespread, and data from the OECD show that they have become much more popular over time.⁴⁷

Quotas and reservations

Quotas and reservations can change substantive and descriptive representation. The most common form of quota is for women, but there have also been initiatives to offset historic economic disadvantages, as with caste-based quotas in India. Quota systems may be mandated by the state or could be adopted voluntarily by political parties. An example of the latter is a quota for women by the Social Democratic Party in Sweden, which implemented a 'zipper' quota on the party list to ensure gender parity in party lists. In the UK, the Labour party has adopted all-women short lists for some seats. In some countries, this has been enshrined in law.

Table A.4 in the Appendix gives another bird's-eye view of gender quotas using data from the IDEA's website. It differentiates between three different types of quotas: reserved seats (constitutional and/or legislative), legal candidate quotas (constitutional and/or legislative) and political party quotas (voluntary). Reserved seats are dedicated to regulating the number of women elected to the national legislature, whereas legal candidate and party quotas set a minimum proportion of women that must appear on candidate lists during elections. This can be driven by either legal statute or internal party statute. Depending on the electoral system (mainly party-list proportional representation), there can also be rules regulating the order in which female candidates appear on open candidate lists, ensuring, say, they can't all be left at the 'bottom of the pile'.

Reservations across countries can be either nationally codified via constitutional provisions or electoral law, to which all political parties are subject, or enforced by parties autonomously on a voluntary basis. As Table A.4 shows, most countries have voluntary gender quotas enforced by parties independently, and very few have nationwide quotas (not to mention with 'strong' sanctions for non-compliance by parties).

Almost all parties that implement such quotas, with very few exceptions (e.g. the Austrian People's Party), are more left-leaning, such as socialist, social democratic and/or green parties. The majority of these parties also enforced these quotas mostly in the 1990s or early 2000s, so in the grand scheme of democracy's existence this is a very new phenomenon, relative to even campaign finance. Additionally, most parties' quotas in Table A.4 range from between about a third of female representation on candidate lists to absolute 50% gender parity.

Sanctions can also play an important role in ensuring that quotas positively affect representation of women in legislatures. As Bjarnegård and Zetterberg (2019) highlight, parties may simply not comply with quota laws. Sanctions also vary significantly: France, for example, has a financial penalty in terms of

⁴⁵ See <https://petition.parliament.uk/help>.

⁴⁶ See <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/online-petitions-and-parliamentary-debate-how-do-uk-parliamentary-petitions-grow-over-time/>.

⁴⁷ See <https://www.oecd.org/gov/innovative-citizen-participation.htm>.

a reduction in public funding for parties, whereas Portugal has a reduction in public funding proportional to the level of gender inequality on a given party list.

As argued by Besley et al. (2017), quotas can also change party dynamics, leading to groups of individuals who can challenge party elites, and can also alter political recruitment and/or selection, with the onus being on party recruiters versus women themselves in seeking out female candidates. In theory, this should lower the 'cost' of running for office if competition simply to become a candidate and contend for a parliamentary seat is decreased. With regards to descriptive representation, provisions such as seat reservations in the legislature itself are meant to guarantee a minimum level of representation in politics.

More politically equal societies, in terms of participation, tend to have higher female representation in national legislatures (at least the lower house). But, of course, the causal logic behind this needs to be unpacked carefully (see Figure A.4 in the Appendix). For example, the Nordic countries *at most* have voluntary gender quotas amongst political parties but still have very high female representation in parliament. Neither Denmark nor Finland have parties with voluntary quotas, and also have no statutory quota. With the exception of Belgium, the more politically unequal countries have legal quotas and lower levels of female representation, on average. Even if in place, quotas do not translate into equal representation of women if men are privileged on party lists or are chosen to represent more winnable electoral districts.

Although gender has been the main focus, quotas can also affect other dimensions of political representation. For example, since 1867, when New Zealand ratified the Maori Representation Act, four seats in the House of Representatives are reserved for Maoris. Other examples of ethnic quotas are Kosovo and Romania, but they appear to have been disproportionately implemented in the Global South (Bird, 2014). It is surprising how little discussion takes place over quotas to address socio-economic disadvantage directly in spite of the commentary that underlines how a country such as the UK puts a premium on people with wealth and time in seeking office (see Hardman, 2018). Given continuing concerns about representation, both substantively and descriptively, this does seem like an issue that merits further debate.

Two main factors are often cited to doubt the efficacy of quotas. First, although there is often selection on the specified characteristic, it can lead to negative selection on others, such as when women who benefit from quotas have more elite educational backgrounds than the men that they displace. Second, there is a risk that someone who has succeeded by benefitting from a quota is under-valued on the basis that they only achieved their position *because* of the quota, and this can mean that they are taken less seriously in office (Coate and Loury, 1993; Beaman et al., 2009). Hence, increased descriptive representation through quotas could even backfire on substantive representation of interests.

Relatedly, it is less obvious than it may seem that increasing descriptive representation makes a difference to policy outcomes, given that women and other groups that benefit from quotas already have voting rights as a means of representing their views. However, political campaigns neglect some issues, particularly those that are less salient to some voters. Having more women and minority groups involved at this stage can therefore make a difference to policy choices (Mansbridge, 1999).

Overall, assessing whether quotas make a difference is not straightforward, as such measures are often adopted when norms are changing. This makes it hard to disentangle the effect of the quota from the shift in sentiments. It is also difficult to know which dimensions of policies to focus on. There is, however, persuasive evidence from India and Africa that seat reservations did change policy in these contexts (Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004; Clayton, 2014, 2015; Clayton, Josefsson and Wang, 2014, 2017).

Conclusion

In historical perspective, the past 250 years have witnessed dramatic changes in political equality, moving away from systems of political power monopolised by a largely hereditary, male and wealthy elite towards those that recognise the benefits of mass mobilisation and some openness of political office to a wider group. This process reflects changes in both norms and institutions. However, even where democratic values and institutions are broadly entrenched, pursuing the ideal of political equality

remains a work in progress. The racial justice protests in the summer of 2020 and the attempts at voter suppression during and after the US presidential election reveal that the struggle for equal consideration is ongoing. Related concerns include the disproportionate influence of donors or lobbyists on the outcome of elections and the fact that restricted access to social networks increases the influence of “insiders”. The composition of legislatures also rarely mirrors the composition of the electorate in income, education or ascriptive characteristics, with women, ethnic minorities and less-wealthy citizens under-represented. We still find it remarkable when a woman becomes head of state in such established democracies as Germany, New Zealand and the UK, or when an indigenous person achieves that position in Bolivia.

At the present time, governments around the world are rolling out a programme of COVID-19 vaccines. For the most part, the vaccine is being provided for free, funded through general taxation. The standard economic approach would be to think about this as an allocation problem where the endpoint is who gets vaccinated and the value associated with each vaccination. An equitable solution could naturally be one where everyone who wishes to is able to get vaccinated. But there is the additional question of ensuring the well-being of the whole community, leading to proposals for vaccine mandates to compel the unvaccinated to get the vaccine. The vaccine and other such decisions are embedded in a political process involving citizen engagement and expression of views through voting, writing to elected representatives, protesting and blogging, amongst others, combined with oversight and deliberation by elected representatives. If we make these decisions using ‘equal consideration’ as our standard, then the views of all citizens are given weight, even those of so-called anti-vaxxers as well as medical experts. Adding the standard of relational equality requires, in addition, respectful listening. Equal consideration may ensure a voice but not necessarily mutual respect.

This example brings into sharp relief the issues dealt with in this paper. Political equality is distinct from economic equality and has parallels to discussions of relational equality. The focus on participation, representation and process suggests good reasons why political, social and economic inequality are related and reveals both their promise and limits. Nonetheless, political equality is a distinct form of inequality and is an intrinsic good integral to the ideals of a democratic society.

Appendix

List of countries in the top panel of Figure 1

Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, Cuba, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Guatemala, Haiti, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Libya, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States, Uzbekistan, Venezuela and Yemen.

List of parliamentary terms and years covered for Table 1

- Austria: 27th National Council (2019–present)
- Canada: 41st Parliament (2011–15)
- Finland: 38th Parliament (2019–present)
- France: 15th legislature of the 5th French Republic (2017–present)
- Germany: 19th German Bundestag (2017–21)
- Iceland: Althing (2013–16)
- Spain: 14th Congress of Deputies (2019–present)
- Sweden: Swedish Riksdag (2014–18)
- United Kingdom: 57th Parliament (2017–19)
- United States: 116th Congress (2019–21)

Table A.1. Regression results for individual characteristics and political participation

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Household income	0.142*** (0.046)	0.103** (0.036)	0.083** (0.031)	0.167*** (0.023)	0.118*** (0.016)	0.138*** (0.026)
Tertiary education	0.752*** (0.063)	0.557*** (0.042)	0.509*** (0.039)	0.724*** (0.022)	0.457*** (0.023)	0.413*** (0.046)
Male	-0.073** (0.026)	-0.037 (0.028)	-0.080** (0.028)	0.016 (0.032)	0.063* (0.032)	0.032 (0.037)
Under 30	-0.102 (0.079)	-0.114 (0.075)	-0.070 (0.079)	-0.272*** (0.067)	-0.202** (0.072)	-0.281*** (0.072)
Age 30–39	0.035 (0.069)	0.030 (0.061)	0.054 (0.065)	-0.070 (0.068)	-0.070 (0.066)	-0.116 (0.083)
Age 40–49	0.112* (0.062)	0.118** (0.055)	0.140** (0.054)	0.111** (0.046)	0.105** (0.044)	0.036 (0.053)
Age 50–59	0.162*** (0.046)	0.169*** (0.044)	0.172*** (0.042)	0.177*** (0.035)	0.171*** (0.023)	0.146*** (0.036)
Professional		0.271*** (0.035)	0.242*** (0.037)		0.288*** (0.023)	0.243*** (0.026)
Blue-collar worker		-0.345*** (0.054)	-0.311*** (0.049)		-0.412*** (0.027)	-0.361*** (0.023)
Political efficacy			0.131*** (0.021)			0.149*** (0.016)
Country fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Survey-year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of countries	17	17	17	13	13	13
Observations	26,964	25,126	23,615	167,749	158,106	35,766
Dataset	ISSP	ISSP	ISSP	ESS	ESS	ESS

Note: The dependent variable is political participation (nine-point scale). *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. Robust standard errors, clustered by country, are given in parentheses. Political participation in the ISSP refers to the summation of dummy variables concerning whether respondents had, in the past year, (i) signed a petition, (ii) boycotted a product, (iii) partook in a demonstration, (iv) attended a political rally, (v) contacted a politician, (vi) donated money or raised funds for a political campaign, (vii) contacted the media to express a political opinion, (viii) been a member of a political party, and (ix) voted in the last national election. Political participation in the ESS refers to the summation of dummy variables concerning whether respondents had, in the past year, (i) voted in the last national election, (ii) contacted a politician, (iii) worked for a political party, (iv) worked for other civic organisation(s), (v) worn a campaign badge/sticker, (vi) signed a petition, (vii) partook in a protest, (viii) been a member of a political party, and (ix) boycotted a product. The dependent variable thus ranges from 0 to 9. Household income refers to the natural logarithm of household income, normalised across countries using purchasing power parity (PPP) in international USD (details on how this variable was constructed are available from the authors upon request). 'Political efficacy' refers to the first

principal component of four questions in the ESS and ISSP pertaining to: (i) satisfaction with democracy, (ii) interest in politics, (iii) influence over government actions, and (iv) trust in politicians. Although ISCO codes are slightly different pre- and post-2008, we harmonise across ISCO-88 and ISCO-08 major occupation groups, whereby 'Professional' refers to a dummy for managers and professionals, and 'Blue-collar worker' refers to a dummy for craft and related trades workers, plant and machine operators and assemblers, and elementary occupations. The base occupation group is thus all other occupations according to the ISCO. This is a similar coding schema to Dalton (2017). The base age group for the decadal age dummies is respondents who are 60 years old or over. ISSP data are available only for 2004 and 2014. ESS data are available in two-year intervals from 2002 to 2016 for columns 4 and 5, and are available only for 2014–16 for column 6. The countries used in the ISSP are Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK and the US. The countries used in the ESS are the same excluding Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the US. Data in the ISSP for Canada, New Zealand and the UK are only available for 2004, and only for 2014 for Iceland.

Table A.2. Results for individual characteristics and political participation (dummy)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Household income	0.020** (0.009)	0.017** (0.008)	0.013* (0.007)	0.034*** (0.006)	0.026*** (0.005)	0.041*** (0.004)
Tertiary education	0.047*** (0.012)	0.035*** (0.009)	0.028*** (0.008)	0.075*** (0.007)	0.036*** (0.006)	0.021*** (0.006)
Male	-0.006 (0.004)	0.001 (0.004)	-0.004 (0.004)	0.001 (0.003)	0.012*** (0.004)	0.009* (0.005)
Under 30	-0.080*** (0.016)	-0.082*** (0.017)	-0.069*** (0.018)	-0.156*** (0.019)	-0.129*** (0.020)	-0.126*** (0.019)
Age 30–39	-0.041*** (0.013)	-0.042*** (0.013)	-0.036** (0.014)	-0.079*** (0.014)	-0.077*** (0.014)	-0.084*** (0.011)
Age 40–49	-0.030** (0.010)	-0.031*** (0.010)	-0.027** (0.009)	-0.040*** (0.008)	-0.040*** (0.008)	-0.047*** (0.006)
Age 50–59	-0.011 (0.008)	-0.011 (0.007)	-0.010 (0.007)	-0.019*** (0.006)	-0.019*** (0.005)	-0.027*** (0.004)
Professional		0.008* (0.004)	0.004 (0.004)		0.025*** (0.004)	0.021*** (0.006)
Blue-collar worker		-0.043*** (0.012)	-0.037*** (0.011)		-0.076*** (0.008)	-0.067*** (0.006)
Political efficacy			0.019*** (0.003)			0.020*** (0.005)
Country fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Survey-year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of countries	17	17	17	13	13	13
Observations	26,964	25,126	23,615	167,749	158,106	35,766
Dataset	ISSP	ISSP	ISSP	ESS	ESS	ESS

Note: The dependent variable is a political participation, a dummy variable for whether respondents participate in at least one type of political activity. All columns thus refer to linear probability models, with regression coefficients representing predicted probabilities. The dependent variable thus ranges from 0 to 1. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. Robust standard errors, clustered by country, are given in parentheses. Household income refers to the natural logarithm of household income, normalised across countries using PPP in international USD (details on how this variable was constructed are available from the authors upon request). 'Political efficacy' refers to the first principal component of four questions in the ESS and ISSP pertaining to (i) satisfaction with democracy, (ii) interest in politics, (iii) influence over government actions and (iv) trust in politicians. Although ISCO codes are slightly different pre- and post-2008, we harmonise across ISCO-88 and ISCO-08 major occupation groups, whereby 'Professional' refers to a dummy for managers and professionals, and 'Blue-collar worker' refers to a dummy for craft and related trades workers, plant and machine operators and assemblers, and elementary occupations. The base occupation group is thus all other occupations according to the ISCO. This is a similar coding schema to Dalton (2017). The base age group for the decadal age dummies is

respondents who are 60 years old or over. ISSP data are available only for 2004 and 2014. ESS data are available in two-year intervals from 2002 to 2016 for columns 4 and 5, and are available only for 2014–16 for column 6. The countries used in the ISSP are Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK and the US. The countries used in the ESS are the same excluding Australia, Canada and New Zealand and the US. Data in the ISSP for Canada, New Zealand and the UK are only available for 2004, and only for 2014 for Iceland.

Table A.3. The (contemporary) landscape of campaign finance regulation across advanced capitalist democracies

Country	Key pieces of legislation		Donations		Expenditure	
	Act/Bill	Amendments	Political parties	Candidates	Political parties	Candidates
Australia	Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918	2018	Only ban is for foreign donations > AUD 1,000. Disclosure requirements at certain donation thresholds for all other donor entities.	Only ban is for foreign donations > AUD 1,000. Disclosure requirements at certain donation thresholds for all other donors.	No limits on campaign expenditure.	No limits on campaign expenditure.
Austria	Political Parties Act 2012 Federal Act on Federal Support of Political Parties 2012	- -	Limit of €2,500 on foreign donations. Limit of €1,000 for anonymous donations.	Limits of €2,500 on foreign donations. Limit of €1,000 for anonymous donations.	Limit of €7 million, including all candidate expenditures.	Theoretical limit of €7 million due to spending limit for parties.
Belgium	Act of 4 July 1989 on the Limitation and Control of Election Expenses	2015	Only natural, not legal, persons can donate, with €2,000 donation limit. A single party can receive max. €500 from a donor. Limit of €125 for anonymous donations.	Only natural, not legal, persons can donate, with €2,000 donation limit. A candidate can receive max. €500 from a donor. Limit of €125 for anonymous donations.	Limit of €1 million.	Limit of €8,700 plus €0.035 times number of registered voters in previous election per district.
Canada	Canada Elections Act 2000	2019	Only natural persons (Canadian citizens, permanent residents or refugees) can donate, limited to CAD 1,500 per year to a single party. Limit of CAD 20 for anonymous donations.	Only natural persons (Canadian citizens, permanent residents or refugees) can donate, limited to CAD 1,500 per year to a single party. Limit of CAD 20 for anonymous donations. Candidates limited to CAD 5,000 donations to themselves.	Limit per electoral district, based on CAD 0.735 times the number of names on lists of electors.	Limit based on formula per electoral district according to number of registered names on lists of electors.

Table A.3. Continued

Country	Key pieces of legislation		Donations		Expenditure	
	Act/Bill	Amendments	Political parties	Candidates	Political parties	Candidates
Denmark	-	-	There are no bans on donations. Limit of DKK 20,000 for anonymous donations before identity must be published.	There are no bans on donations. Limit of DKK 20,000 for anonymous donations before identity must be published.	There are no limits on expenditure.	There are no limits on expenditure.
Finland	Act on Political Parties 1969 Act on Candidate's Election Funding 2009	2010 2015	Limit for both natural and legal persons of €30,000 per year. Ban on foreign donations.	Limit for both natural and legal persons of €6,000 per year. Ban on foreign donations.	There are no explicit limits on expenditure.	There are no explicit limits on expenditure.
France	Law n°88-227 of 11 March 1988 relating to the financial transparency of political life Electoral Code	2017 2017	Bans on donations from legal persons. Limit of €150 for anonymous donations. Limit of €7,500 for donation from natural persons per year.	Bans on donations from legal persons. Limit of €150 for anonymous donations. Limit of €4,600 for donation from natural persons per year.	There are no explicit limits on expenditure.	Expenses capped according to different formulas.
Germany	Political Parties Act 1967 Federal Elections Act 1993	2018 2019	Limit of €1,000 on foreign donations. Limit of €500 on anonymous donations. Main ban is on corporate donations, except those enterprises where 50% of shares are German owned.	No explicit prohibitions on donations to candidates.	There are no explicit limits on expenditure.	There are no explicit limits on expenditure.
Iceland	Act on the Finances of Political Organisations and their Information Disclosure 2006	2011	Ban on foreign and anonymous donations. Limit on donations from natural and legal persons of ISK 400,000 per year.	Ban on foreign and anonymous donations. Limit on donations from natural and legal persons of ISK 400,000 per year.	No limits on expenditure.	Limit of ISK 1 million per candidate, with surplus based on number of voters per constituency.

Table A.3. Continued

Country	Key pieces of legislation		Donations		Expenditure	
	Act/Bill	Amendments	Political parties	Candidates	Political parties	Candidates
Netherlands	Political Parties Financing Act 2013	2019	There are no bans on donations, and they are unlimited across natural and legal persons. Only limit is anonymous donations at €1,000.	There are no bans on donations, and they are unlimited across natural and legal persons. Only limit is anonymous donations at €1,000.	No limits on expenditure.	No limits on expenditure.
New Zealand	Electoral Act 1993	2020	Limit of NZD 50 for foreign donations. Limit of NZD 1,500 for corporate donations.	Limit of NZD 50 for foreign donations.	Limit of NZD 1,169,000 for total election expenses.	Limit of NZD 27,500 during general elections Limit of NZD 54,900 during by-elections.
Norway	Political Parties Act 2005	2013	Only ban on anonymous donations.	No explicit bans or limits on donations to candidates.	No limits on expenditure.	No limits on expenditure.
Spain	Organic Law 5/1985, of 19 June, of the General Electoral Regime Organic Law 8/2007, of 4 July, on Financing of Political Parties	- 2015	Ban on foreign and anonymous donations, plus donations from legal persons. Limit of €50,000 from natural persons per year. Limit of €6,000 from natural persons specifically for election campaigns.	Present legislation only covers bans/limits on donations to parties, not candidates.	Limit of €0.24 times the number of residents per electoral district a party is contending.	N/A
Sweden	Act on Transparency of Party Financing 2018	-	Only ban on anonymous donations.	Only ban on anonymous donations.	No expenditure limits.	No expenditure limits.
Switzerland	-	-	No limit on donations from any source.	No limit on donations from any source.	No expenditure limits.	No expenditure limits.

Table A.3. Continued

Country	Key pieces of legislation		Donations		Expenditure	
	Act/Bill	Amendments	Political parties	Candidates	Political parties	Candidates
United Kingdom	Political Parties and Referendums Act 2000	–	Ban on foreign and anonymous donations. Strong regulation concerning disclosure requirements for donations above certain thresholds.	Ban on foreign and anonymous donations. Strong regulation concerning disclosure requirements for donations above certain thresholds.	Baseline £30,000 times number of constituencies contested in appropriate region of the UK. If greater, limit of £810,000 for England, £120,000 for Scotland, and £60,000 for Wales.	Baseline £7,150 plus (i) 7p for every registered voter in a county constituency or (ii) 5p for every registered voter in a borough constituency.
United States	United States Code, Title 2, The Congress	–	Bans on corporate and foreign donations. Limit of USD 50 on anonymous donations. Limits on donations depending on ‘type’ of donor (e.g. USD 2,700 for natural persons to candidate committees).	Limit of USD 50 on anonymous donations. Limits on donations depending on ‘type’ of donor (e.g. USD 2,700 for natural persons to candidate committees).	Limit of 2 cents times the voting age population of the State. No limit on ‘independent expenditures’.	No limit on ‘independent expenditures’. Limit of USD 10 million plus cost of living adjustment (COLA) for primaries. Limit of USD 200,000 plus COLA per state.

Note: This table outlines the key governing pieces of legislation that regulate campaign finance across advanced capitalist democracies today. The ‘Amendments’ column refers solely to years where pieces of legislation have been updated/reformed that form campaign finance regulation today. Limit refers to the ‘maximum’ amount that can be donated/expended, where applicable. For descriptive and analytical brevity, this table only focuses on campaign expenditure and donations, and does not encompass regulations that, say, curb political finance relating to patronage. This table also does not discuss loans to political parties/candidates. Most limits increase in line with inflation per election year. The table also primarily focuses on campaign finance regulations pertinent to general/domestic elections, where otherwise stated, and not to other elections (e.g. for the European Parliament). The table also only focuses on fiduciary, ‘hard’ contributions as opposed to in-kind contributions. Pieces of legislation have also been translated into English where they were provided on the IDEA database in the domestic language.

Table A.4. The landscape of gender quotas across advanced capitalist democracies

Country	Legal gender quotas (lower house or unicameral)			Voluntary party gender quotas			
	(Current) quota description	Year implemented	Sanction description	Political party	Year first implemented	(Current) electoral list quota size	Fraction of parties
Australia	-	-	-	Australian Labour Party	1994	40%	1/6
Austria	-	-	-	The Greens-Green Alternative	1993	50%	3/5
				Austrian People's Party	1995	33.3%	
				Social Democratic Party of Austria	1985	40%	
Belgium	50% parity + top two positions on electoral list cannot be same sex	2002	Election committee outright rejects the electoral list†	-	-	-	-
Canada	-	-	-	New Democratic Party	1985	50%	2/5
				Liberal Party of Canada	1993	25%	
Denmark	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Finland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
France	Max. 2% diff. in male and female candidates fielded	2000	Public funding penalty according to proportionality rule	Socialist Party	1990	50%	1/9

Table A.4. Continued

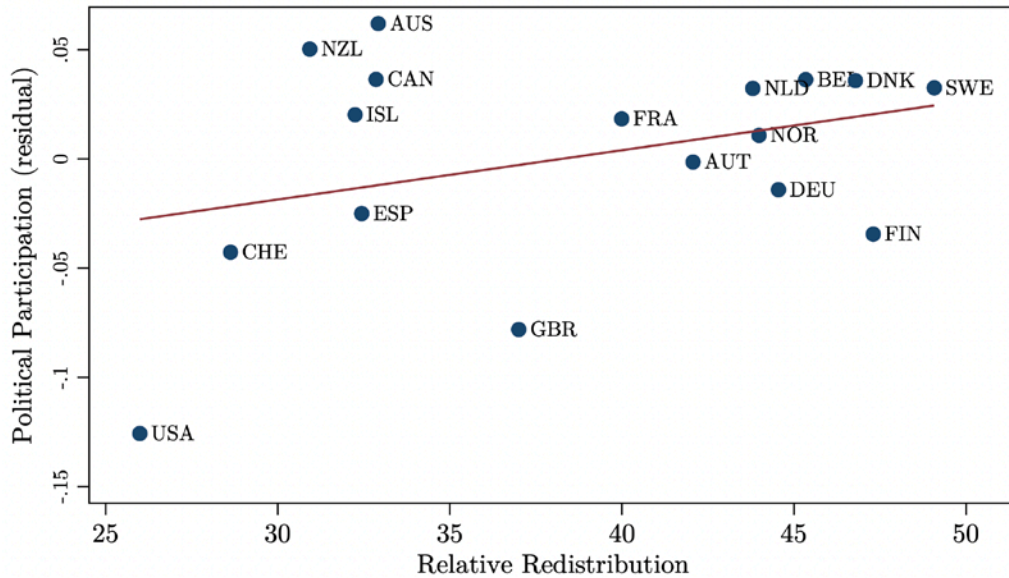
Country	Legal gender quotas (lower house or unicameral)			Voluntary party gender quotas			
	(Current) quota description	Year implemented	Sanction description	Political party	Year first implemented	(Current) electoral list quota size	Fraction of parties
Germany	-	-	-	Social Democratic Party of Germany	N/A	40% min.	4/9
				The Left Party	N/A	List rule	
				Alliance 90/The Greens	1986	50%	
				Christian Democratic Union	1996	33.3%	
Iceland	-	-	-	The Social Democratic Alliance	1999	40% min. (both sexes)	4/8
				The Left-Green Movement	1999	50%	
				Progressive Party (Centre Party)	2005	40% min. (both sexes)	
				The Women's Party	1982	N/A	
Netherlands	-	-	-	Labour Party	1987	List rule	2/14
				Green Left	N/A	N/A	
New Zealand	-	-	-	The Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand	N/A	50% (cabinet members)	2/5
				Labour	N/A	50% min.	
Norway	-	-	-	Socialist Left Party	1975	40% min. (both sexes)	4/9
				Norwegian Labour Party	1983	50%	
				Centre Part	1989	40% min. (both sexes)	
				Christian People's Party	1993	40% min. (both sexes)	
Spain	40% min. and 60% max. for both sexes	2007	Short period to amend list, otherwise it is rejected outright†	Spanish Socialist Worker's Party	1997	40% min. (both sexes)	7/20
				United Left	1997	40% min. (both sexes)	
				Socialist Party of Catalonia	1982	40% min. (both sexes)	
				Initiative for Catalonia-Green	1991	40% min. (both sexes)	
				Republican Left of Catalonia	2004	40% min. (both sexes)	
				Nationalist Galician Block	2002	40% min. (both sexes)	
				Canarian Coalition	2000	40% min. (both sexes)	

Table A.4. Continued

Country	Legal gender quotas (lower house or unicameral)			Voluntary party gender quotas			
	(Current) quota description	Year implemented	Sanction description	Political party	Year first implemented	(Current) electoral list quota size	Fraction of parties
Sweden	-	-	-	Social Democratic Party Left Party Green Party Moderate Party	1978 1978 1981 2009	N/A (zipper system) 50% 50% List rule	4/8
Switzerland	-	-	-	Social Democratic Party of Switzerland	N/A	40%	1/11
United Kingdom	-	-	-	Liberal Democrats Labour Party	2018 1994	40% min. (both sexes) 50%	2/10
United States	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

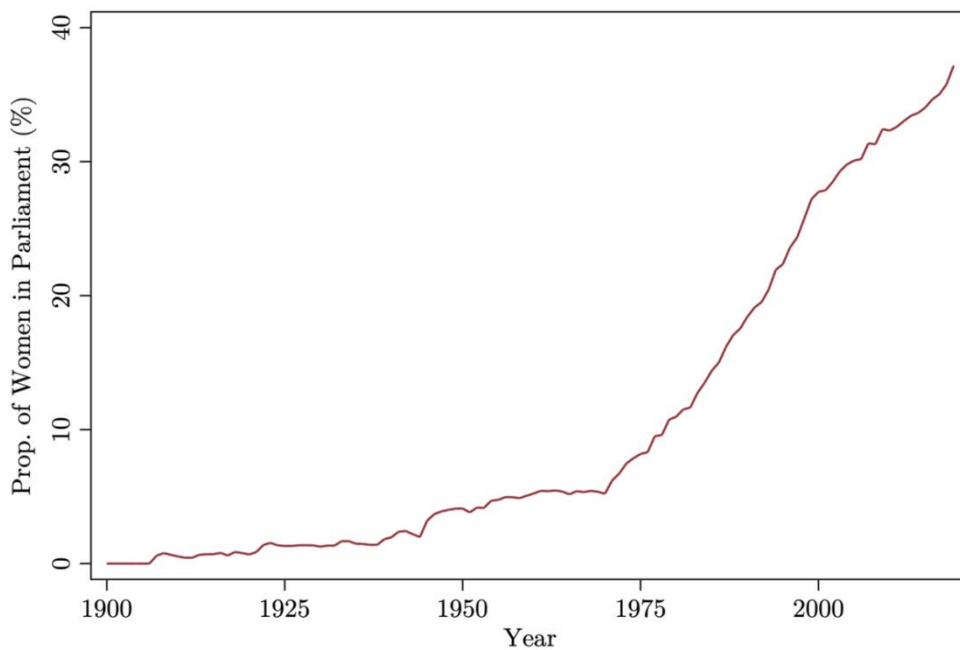
Note: The data are from the IDEA Quotas database. A ‘-’ means a country has not yet implemented or enacted any legislation and/or there are no political parties with voluntary quotas. † means statutory quotas for the lower (or unicameral) part of the legislature have ‘strong’ sanctions for non-compliance of parties, according to the V-Dem dataset’s v2lgqugen variable (originally sourced from the QAROT database). ‘(Current) quota description’ column refers to the current regulation with corresponding year of implementation. Countries that have voluntary party gender quotas and also legal quotas for the lower house of the legislature refer to those parties whose internal voluntary quota rule exceeds the national legal threshold either before or after the legal implementation of a national quota. ‘Year first implemented’ column outlines the year a voluntary quota was first adopted, given such quotas have typically been strengthened over time (N/A means no year was provided by the IDEA database). Parties listed with voluntary quotas are only those parties holding seats in the legislature. The ‘(Current) electoral list quota size’ outlines the proportion of women that must be nominated as candidates, with ‘List rule’ entries meaning the party has no quota but only regulations on the position of female candidates on electoral lists. The ‘Fraction of parties’ column refers to the number of parties with voluntary quotas relative to all parties in the lower house of the legislature (excluding politicians identifying as ‘independent’), based on the most recent general election results (data were collected manually). The denominator counts parties versus official political alliances between multiple parties.

Figure A.1. Political inequality and redistribution



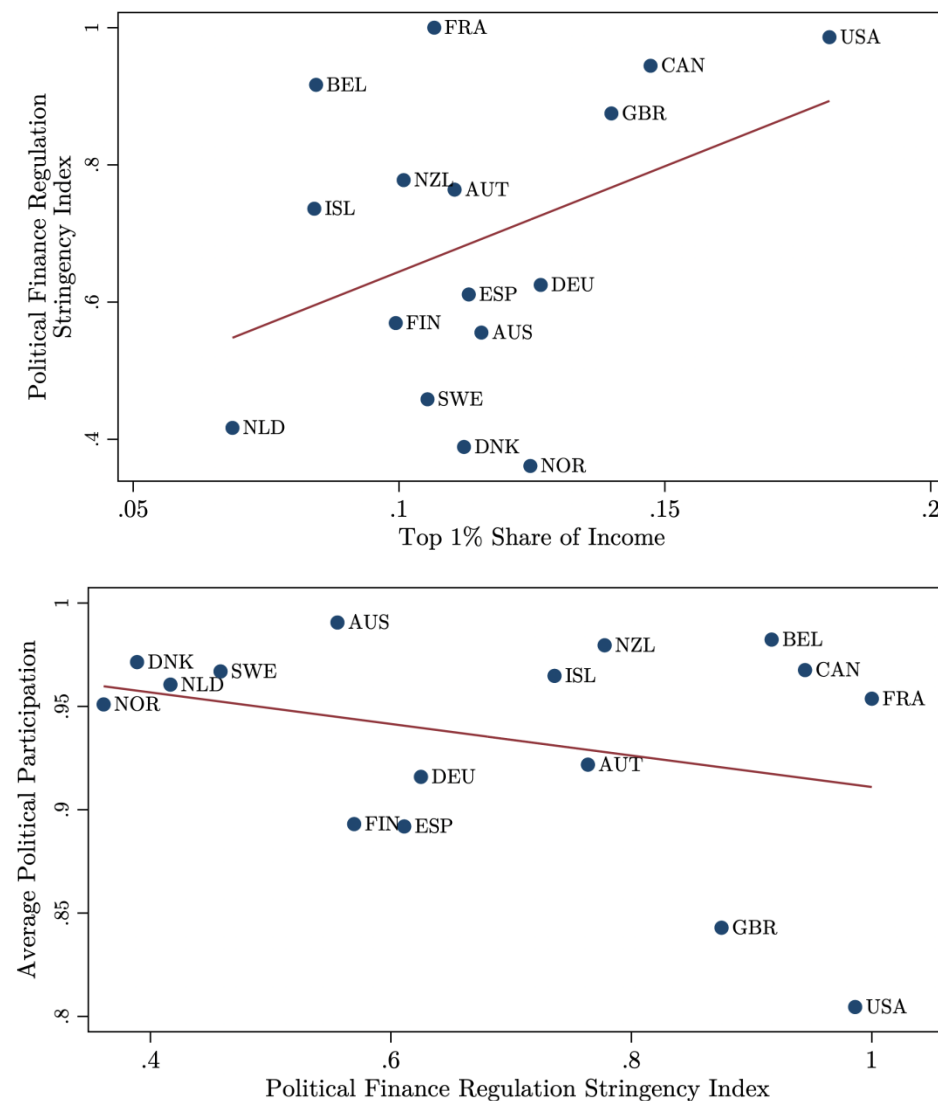
Note: The data for political participation come from the ISSP 2004 – Citizenship I and ISSP 2014 – Citizenship II surveys. Data for redistribution are from the Standardized World Income Inequality Database (SWIID). Both variables are pooled averages over 2004–14 (except for political participation for Canada, New Zealand and the UK, where data were only available for 2004, and only for 2014 for Iceland). Relative redistribution refers to the difference between market-income and disposable-income Gini coefficients divided by the market-income Gini times 100. The market-income Gini is the distribution of income before taxes and transfers are taken into account, representing the level of pre-government inequality. The disposable-income Gini is the distribution of income after all direct taxes and government transfers are taken into account. Individual political participation is purged of household income, a dummy for tertiary education, and survey-year fixed effects. Country averages of fitted residuals were then taken. Political participation is simply a dummy for whether respondents partake in at least one type of political activity

Figure A.2. Female representation since 1900



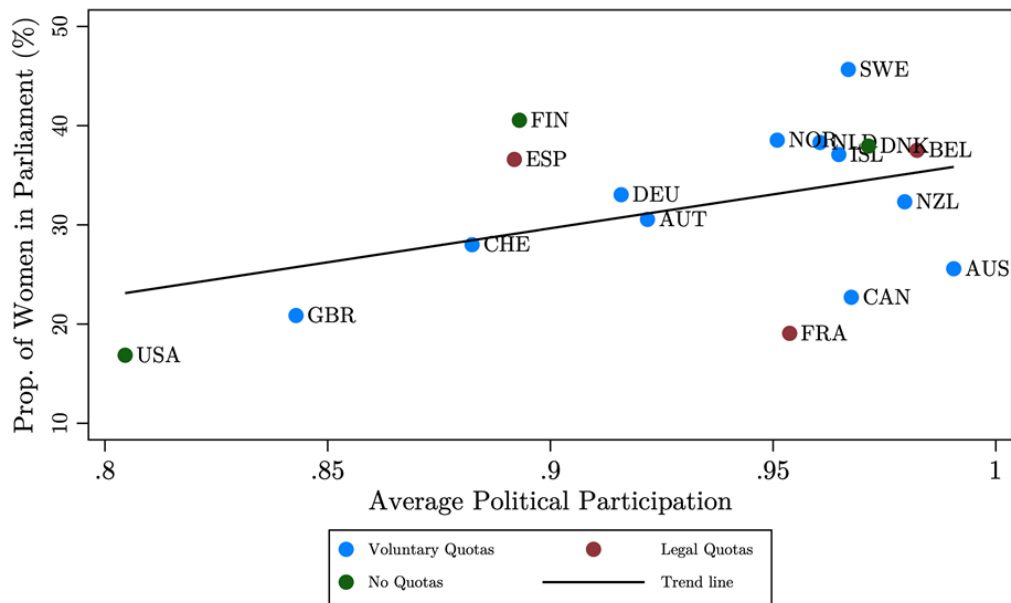
Note: The data come from the V-Dem dataset using the variable v2lgfemleg. This codes the percentage of women comprising the lower house (or unicameral) body of the legislature. The line represents the yearly average across a sample of 17 advanced capitalist democracies. The average is not adjusted for countries' populations.

Figure A.3. Income inequality, political inequality and campaign finance regulation



Note: The data for political finance stringency come from the European Public Accountability Mechanisms (EuroPAM) group and the IDEA Political Finance database. Data on the top 1% share of national income (top panel) come from the World Inequality Database (WID), which represents the share of pre-tax national income of the 99th percentile of earners and is averaged over 2004–14. Data on political participation (bottom panel) are from the ISSP 2004 – Citizenship I and ISSP 2014 – Citizenship II surveys. Political Finance Regulation Stringency reflects an average score of four sub-indices: (i) bans and limits on private income; (ii) public funding (of parties and candidates); (iii) regulations on spending; and (iv) reporting, oversight and sanctions. See EuroPAM for details. A higher score reflects greater regulation on political finance. The stringency scores represent the most up-to-date regulation on political finance, and are normalised using min-max normalisation. Switzerland is omitted as an extreme outlier, but in the top panel the trend line is robust to its inclusion. The trend line is also robust to the removal of the US. Data on political participation are a pooled average over 2004–14 (except for Canada, New Zealand and the UK, where data are only available for 2004, and for Iceland where only 2014 is non-missing). Average political participation is the average of a dummy variable for whether survey respondents participate in at least one type of political activity.

Figure A.4. Female representation, average participation and quotas: laws versus norms



Note: The data for political participation come from the ISSP 2004 – Citizenship I and ISSP 2014 – Citizenship II surveys. Data for the proportion of women in parliament come from the V-Dem dataset using the variable v2lqfemleg. Data on quotas comes from the IDEA Quotas database and represent the most up-to-date landscape of quotas across the above 17 advanced capitalist democracies as of 2014. The proportion of women in parliament is a pooled 2004–14 average. Data on political participation are also a pooled average over 2004–14 (except for Canada, New Zealand and the UK, where data are only available for 2004, and for Iceland, where only 2014 is non-missing). Average political participation is the average of a dummy variable for whether survey respondents participate in at least one type of political activity.

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