



## Department of Political Science

# Vad gör att vi röstar? **Voting is a social act**

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# Three types of findings pointing to the Social Act of Voting

- **Observational and descriptive**
  - Descriptive
  - Multivariate regressions
- **Quasi-experimental**
  - Regression Discontinuity Designs
- **Field experiments**
  - Random Controlled Trials (RCTs)



## The Danish Turnout Project (data)

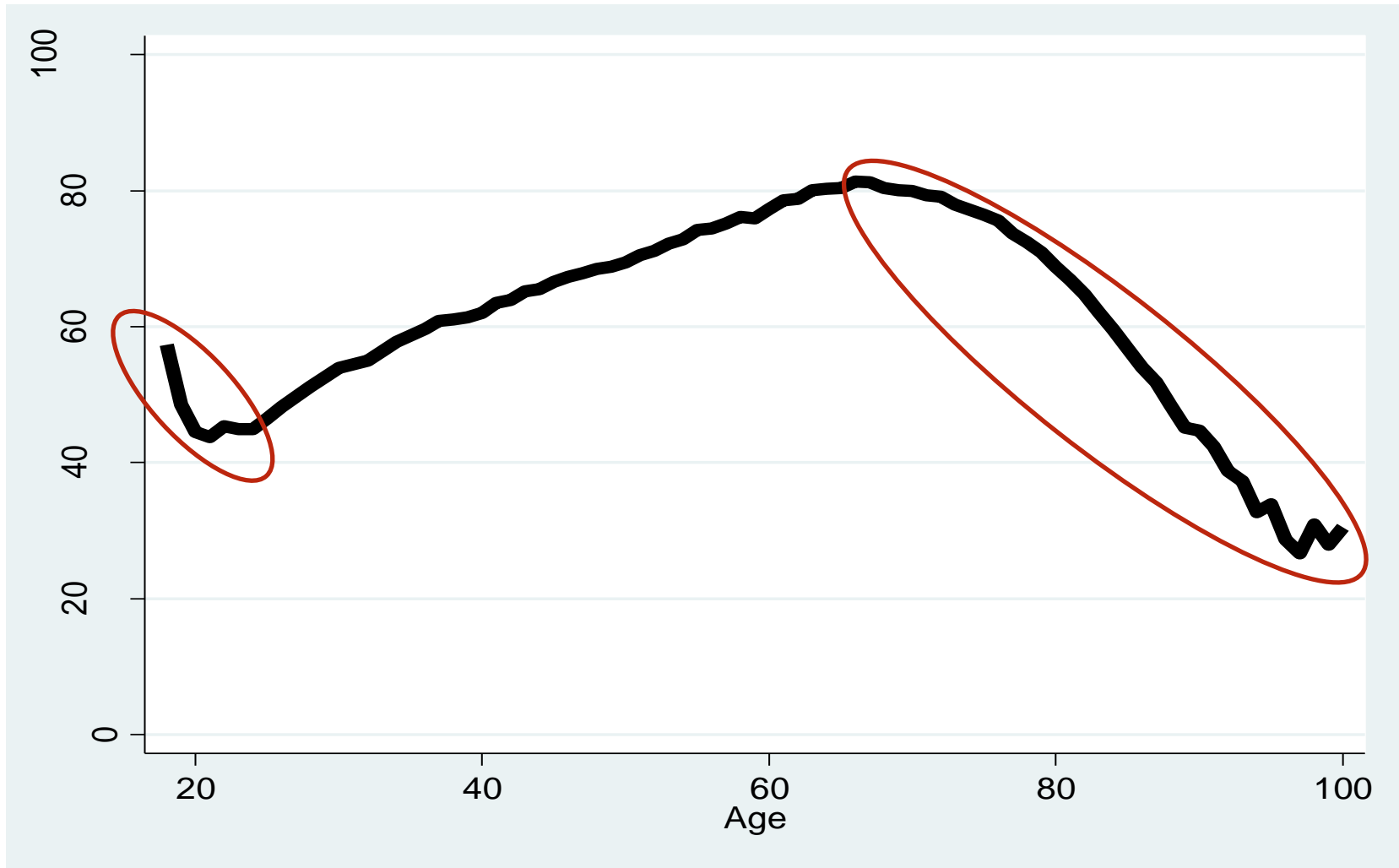
- Turnout is *not* part of the Statistic Denmark's registers and voter files are destroyed after election, but...
- In the 2009, 2013 and 2017 municipality elections, the European parliament election 2014 and the national parliament election 2015 the Government gave us an exception from the law allowing us to collect and digitalized the voting lists from each of the app. 1,400 polling stations across the country.
- The voting lists were checked and validated up against the official election results, link to the personal identification number and merged into the register of Statistic Denmark and anonymized.
- At the municipality election 2013 we managed to get access to 4,362,152 records corresponding to 99 percent of all voters' records. The one percent missing is due to system failures at specific polling stations or mistakes by polling officers.
- *No individual selection bias and no over-reporting*



# Observational finding



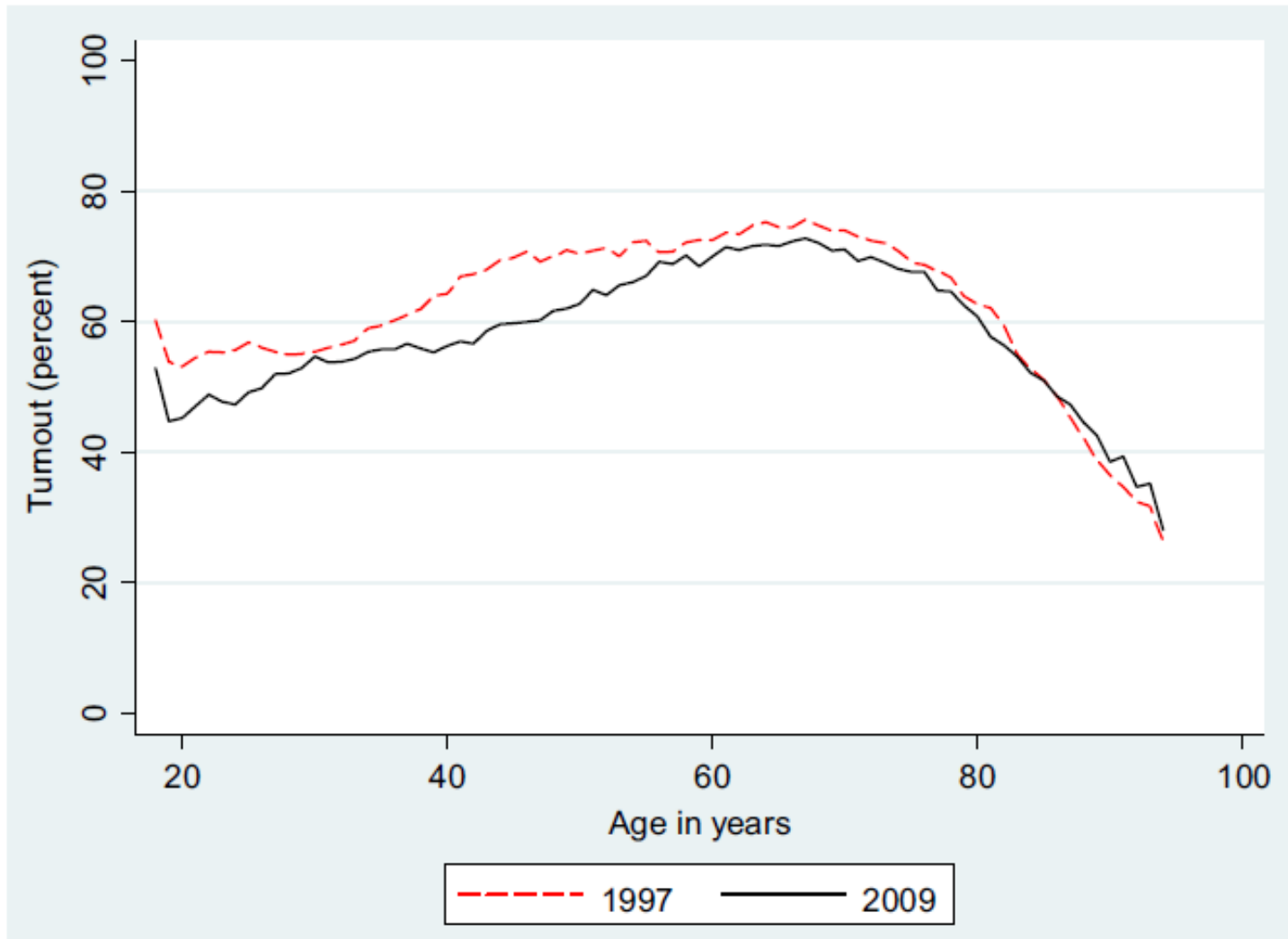
## The relationship between age and turnout: A roller-coaster ride



Bhatti, Y.; Hansen, K. M. & Wass, H. (2012) The relationship between age and turnout: A roller-coaster ride. *Electoral Studies*. 31(3):588-593.



## Turnout (Parliament elections, Finland)



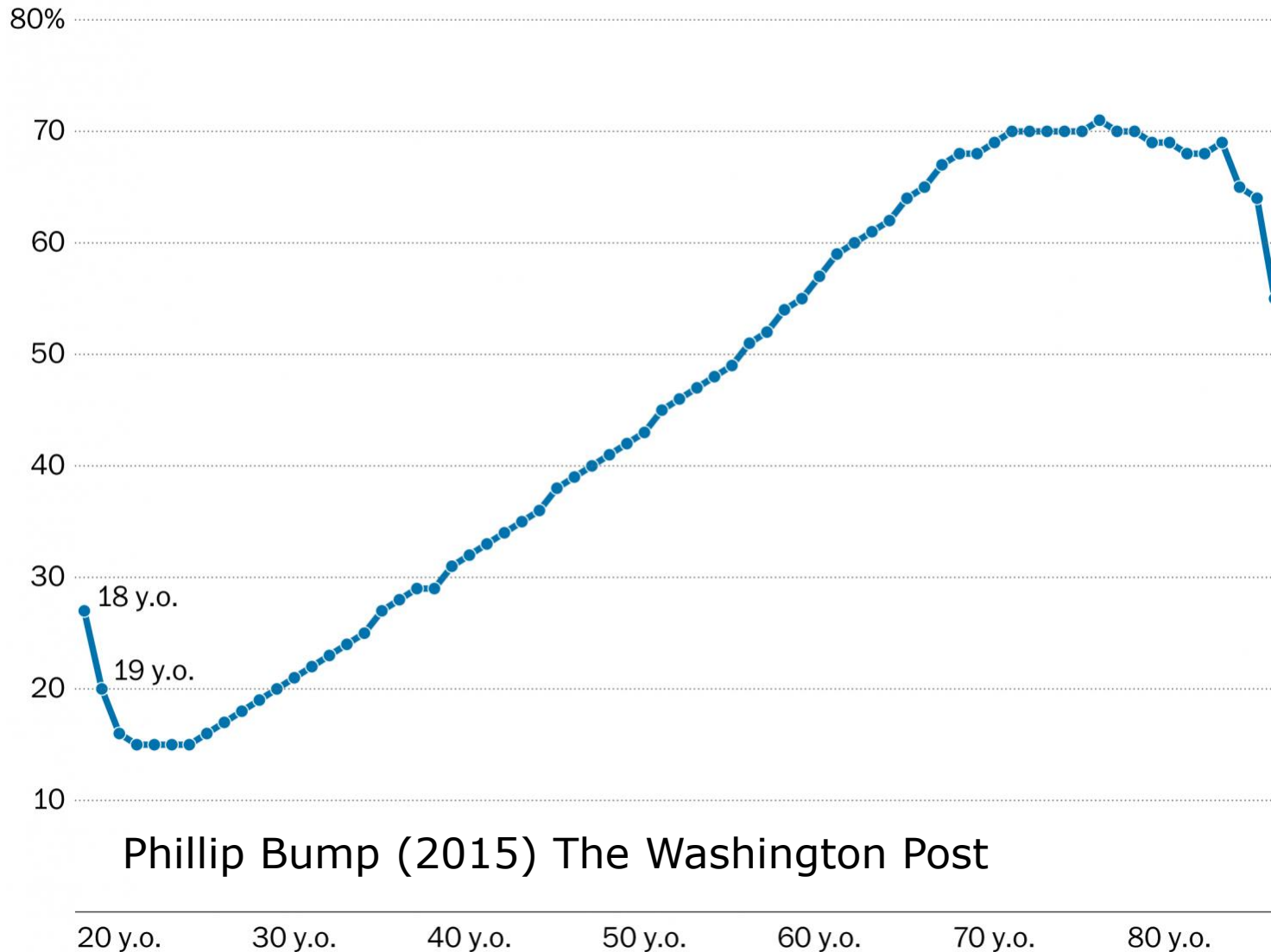
Bhatti, Y.; Hansen, K. M. & Wass, H. (2012) The relationship between age and turnout: A roller-coaster ride. *Electoral Studies*. 31(3):588-593.



# Turnout by age in California, November 2014

Data from Political Data, Inc.

Midterm election, registered voters

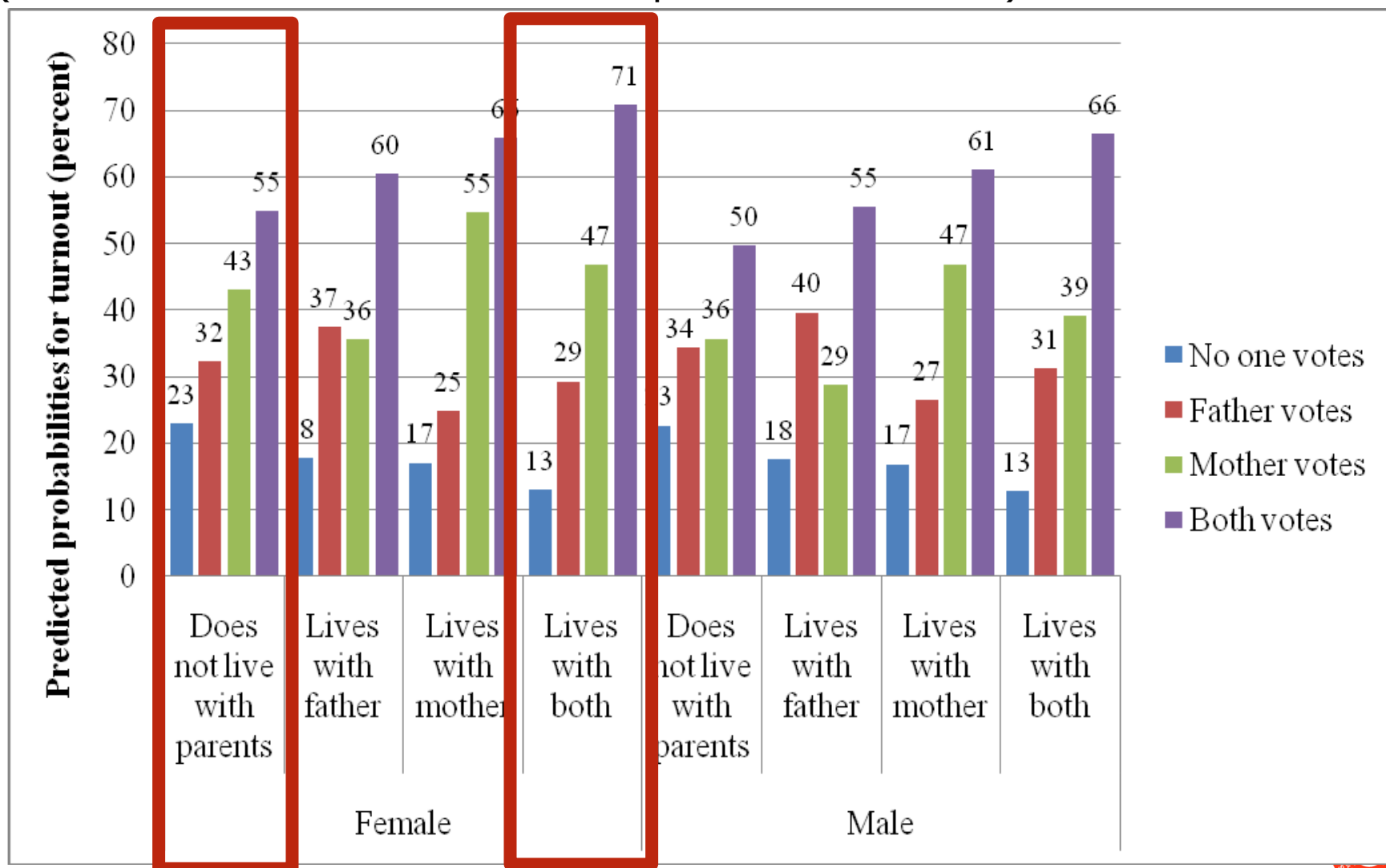


Phillip Bump (2015) The Washington Post



## Predicted probabilities for turnout

(First-time voters - Danish municipal elections 2009)



Bhatti, Y. & Hansen, K. M. (2012) Leaving the Nest and the Social Act of Voting: Turnout among First-Time Voters. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*. 22(4):380-406.



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

## Research question

- Do individuals sharing residence vote together and does it matter for turnout?

## A classic claim

- “The whole family should be viewed as a unit in which the participation behavior of each member is important in its effects on the others member” (Anderson 1943:424)
- “Voting turnout tends to be a joint household activity, with the members either voting or staying home as a unit” (Glaser 1959:569)
- Wolfinger & Rosenstone 1980; Stoker & Jennings 1995: 2005; Sinclair 2012; Campbell et al 1960)
- **=> voting is a social act**



## Time stamped polling card

Kommune- og Regionsrådsvalg  
19. november 2013

*Medbring kortet ved afstemningen*

Afstemningssted:

**Gadehaveskolen**

**Biblioteket**

**Gadehavegårdsvej 1, Taastrup**

**Valgbord: 2**

Vælger nr.: **06-03880**

Afstemningstid: **09.00 - 20.00**

572.652

06 - 03880



Afsender:

~~Høje-Taastrup Kommune  
Bygaden 2, Borgerservice  
2630 Taastrup~~

Modtager:

Hr. Chris Alban Hansen

## Voting mode for individuals in three Danish elections (voting file, percent)

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

**H1: most people vote together**



# Quasi-experimental findings



## Regression Discontinuity Design (RDD)

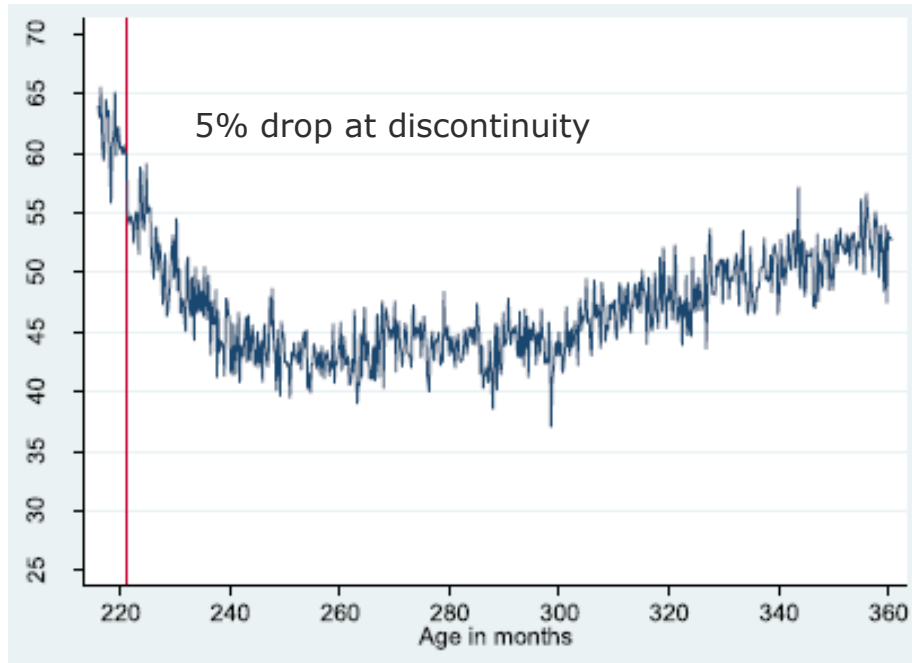
Worked on a number of discontinuities' effect on turnout

- **Becoming eligible in previous election**
  - **Becoming a parent**
  - **Living together**
  - Loose your job
  - Hospitalizations
  - Couples splitting up
  - Been victim of a crime
- 
- Comparing voters just before with just after the Election Day cut off. *As-if-random* whether it happen on one side or the other of Election Day.



## Becoming eligible to vote

First-time-voters      Second-time-voters



Turnout Danish municipality election (2009)

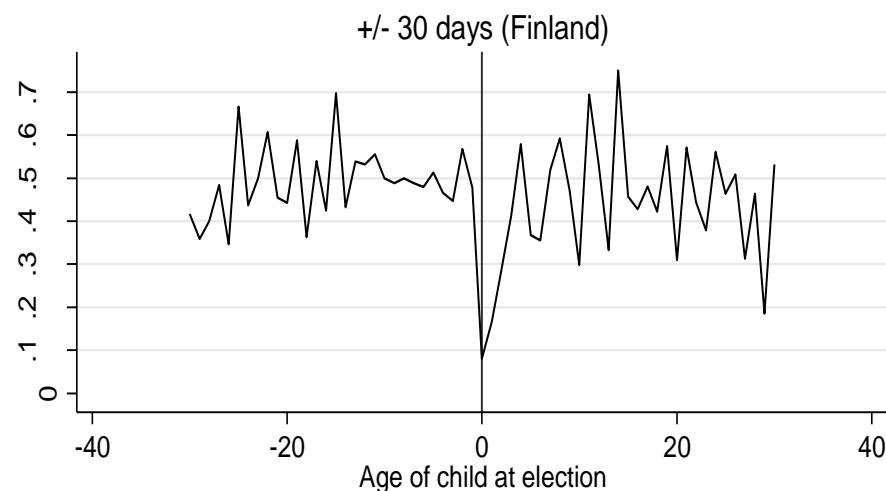
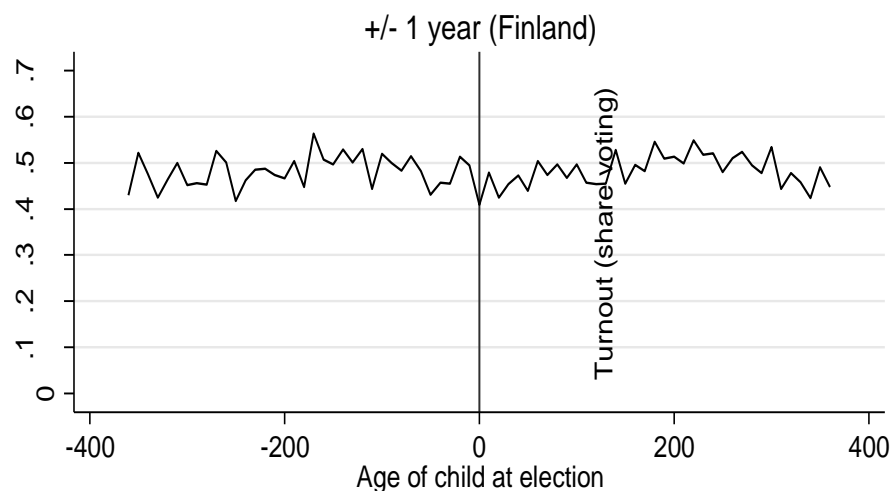
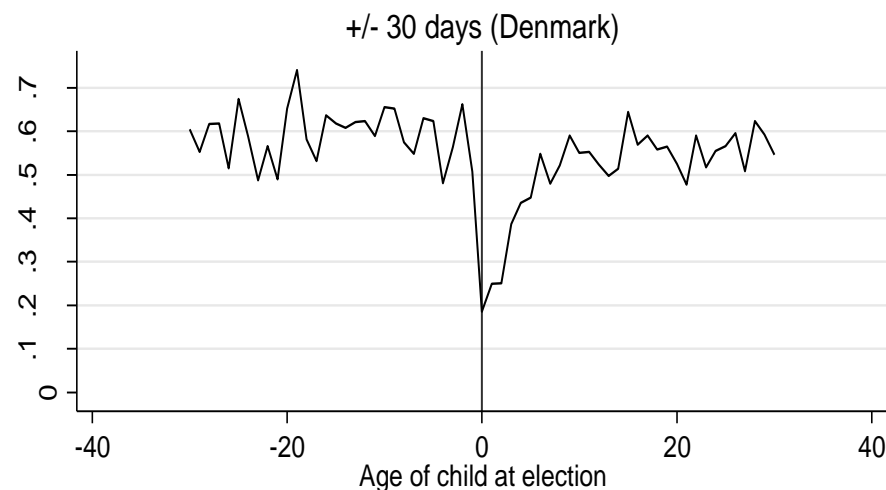
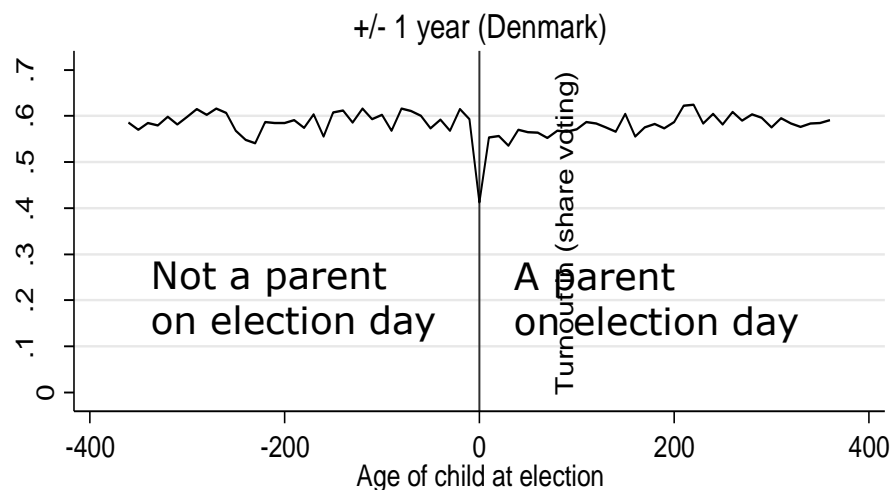
Vertical line: eligibility in previous election

First-time boost beats habit formation!

Bhatti, Y.; Hansen, K.M. & Wass, H. (2016) First-time boost beats experience: The effect of past eligibility on turnout. *Electoral Studies*. 41(2):151-158



## Becoming a parent on turnout

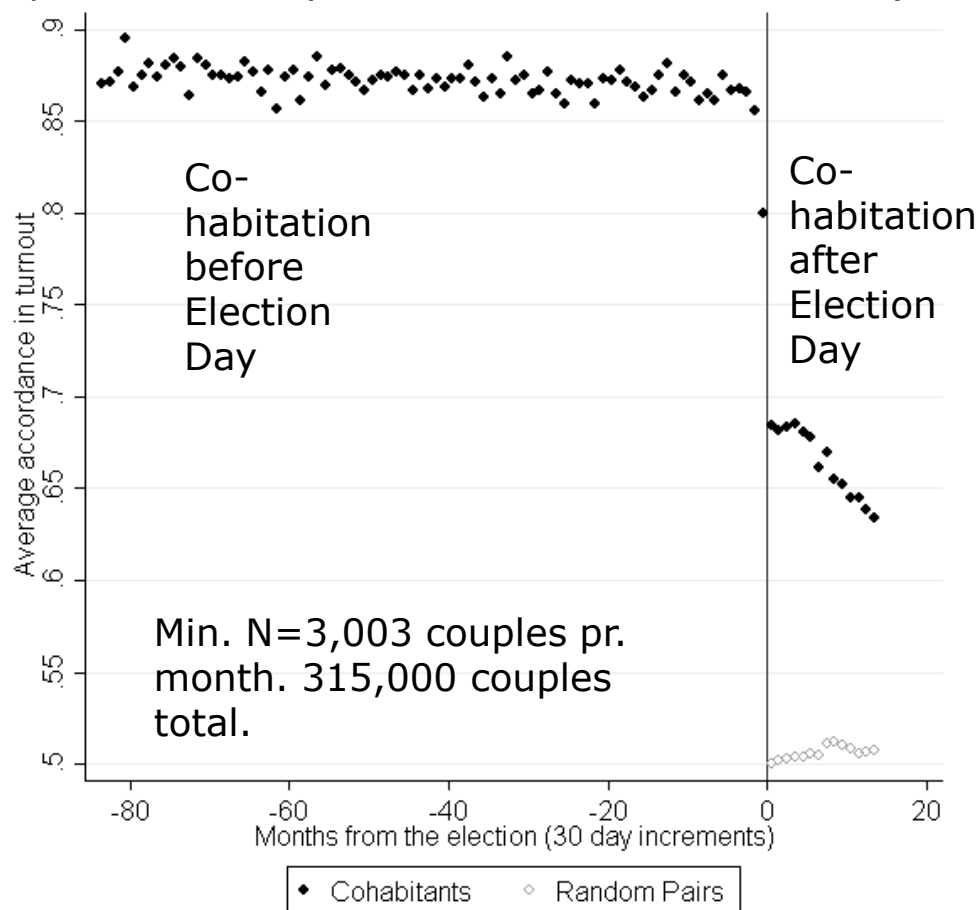


Bhatti, Y.; Hansen, K.M.; Naurin, E.; Stolle, D. & Wass, H. (2018) Can you deliver a baby and vote? The effect of the first stages of parenthood on voter turnout. *Journal of Election, Public Opinion and Parties*.



## Co-habitation on accordance in couples' turnout

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

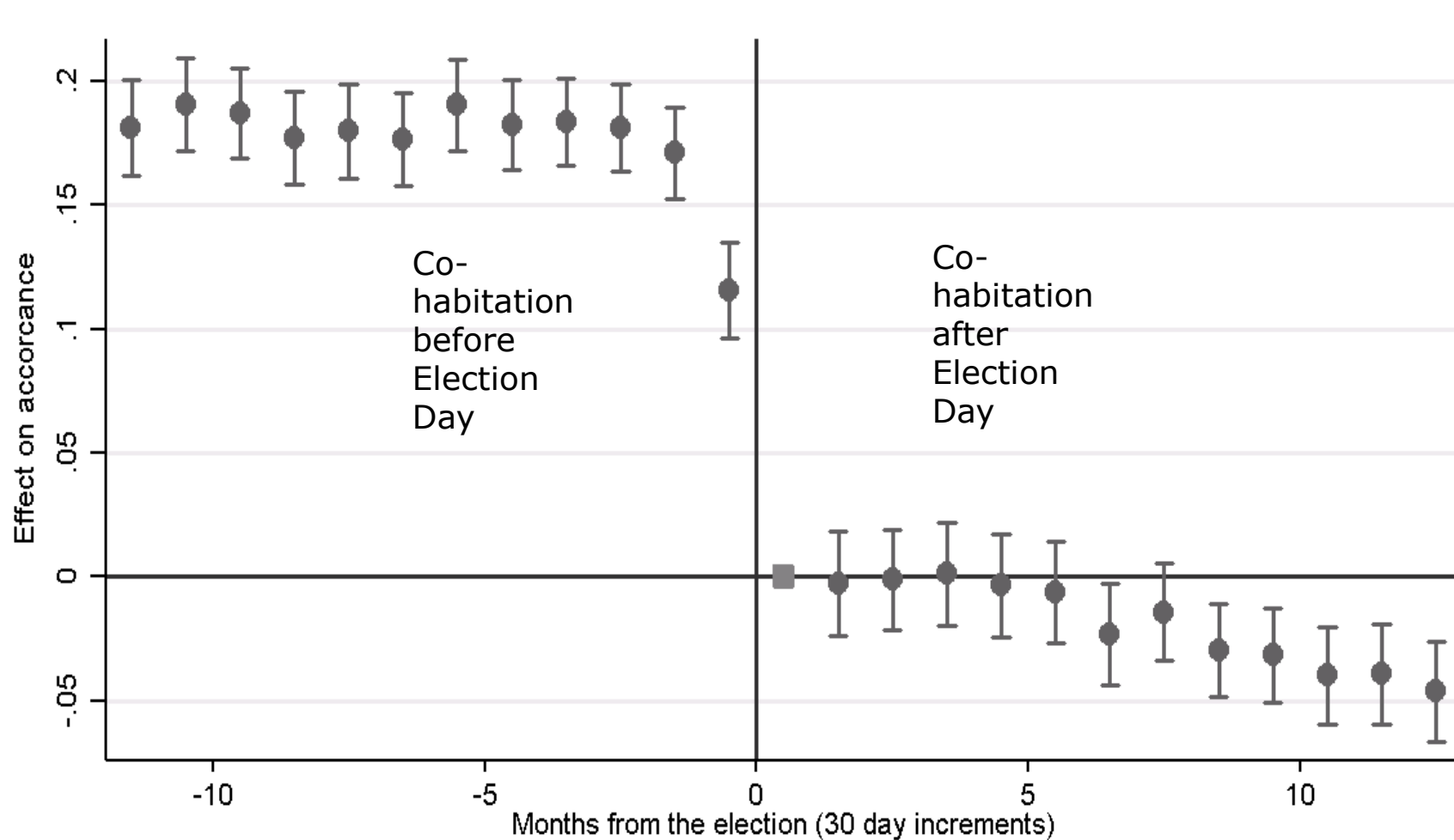


Bhatti, Y.; Dahlggaard, J. O.; Hansen, J. H. & Hansen, K.M. (2018) Living Together, Voting Together: Cohabitation Instantly Cause Concordance in Turnout Behavior and Increase Turnout. Under review.





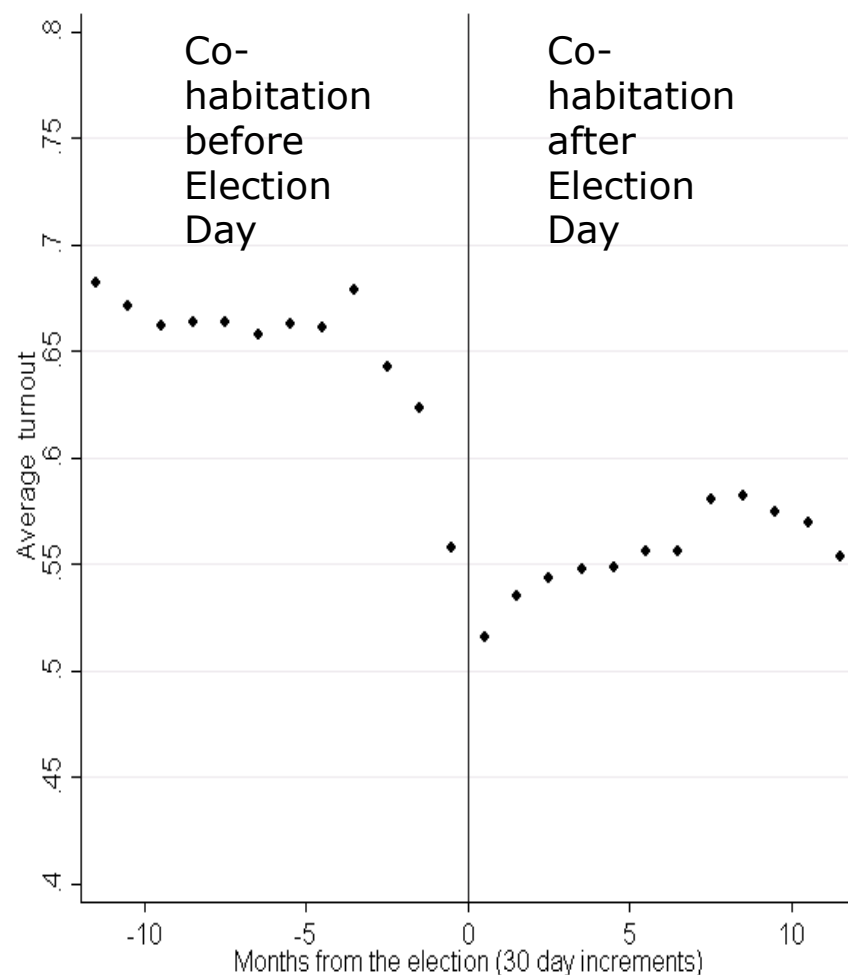
## Marginal effects on household accordance relative to baseline



Bhatti, Y.; Dahlgaard, J. O.; Hansen, J. H. & Hansen, K.M. (2018) Living Together, Voting Together: Cohabitation Instantly Cause Concordance in Turnout Behavior and Increase Turnout. Under review.



## Turnout by month of cohabitation



Bhatti, Y.; Dahlgaard, J. O.; Hansen, J. H. & Hansen, K.M. (2018) Living Together, Voting Together: Cohabitation Instantly Cause Concordance in Turnout Behavior and Increase Turnout. Under review.



## Field experiments findings



# Field experiments

**-Municipality election 2013 & 2017, EP-election 2014 and**

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



## Traditional letter from Parliament



www.ft.dk  
ft@ft.dk

*Wm. E. Felt*

Mogens Lykketoft  
Folketingets formand

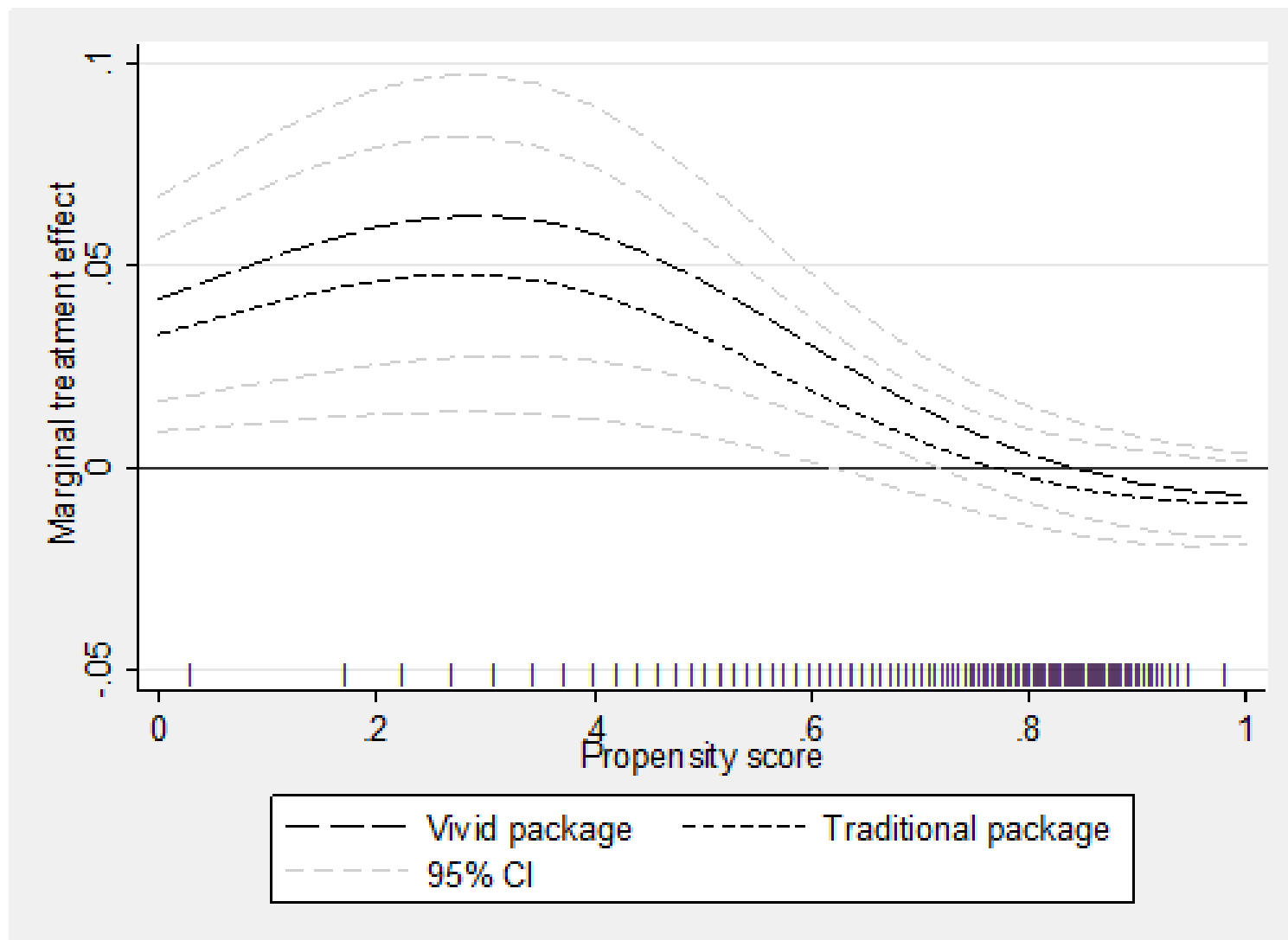


## The constitution to 18 years old voters

	Turnout (percent)	Difference	N
Control Group	72.5		9,475
Letter + constitution	73.2	0.6	9,046
Cartoon + constitution	74.1	1.6*	9,029

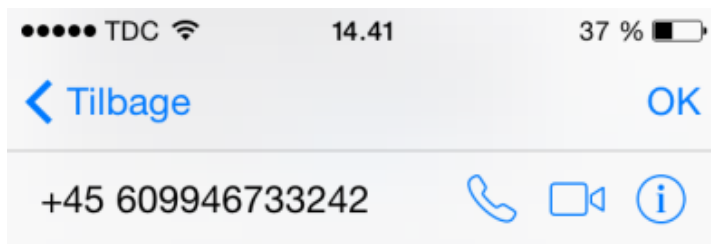


## Marginal effect across propensity to vote



## Text messages – treatments

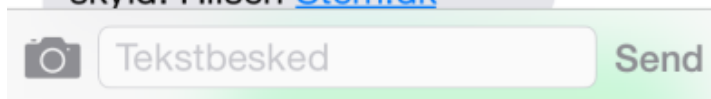
lør. 16. nov. 15.00



Kære Kaspergr6. Er du klar til EP-valg i morgen? For du skal vel stemme, ikke? For demokratiets skyld. Og din egen. Hilsen [Stem.dk](http://Stem.dk)

lørdag svar: ok så gør jeg det

Kære Kaspergr6. I morgen er der Europa-Parlamentsvalg og folkeafstemning. Valget er dit. Stem for demokratiets skyld. Hilsen [Stem.dk](http://Stem.dk)

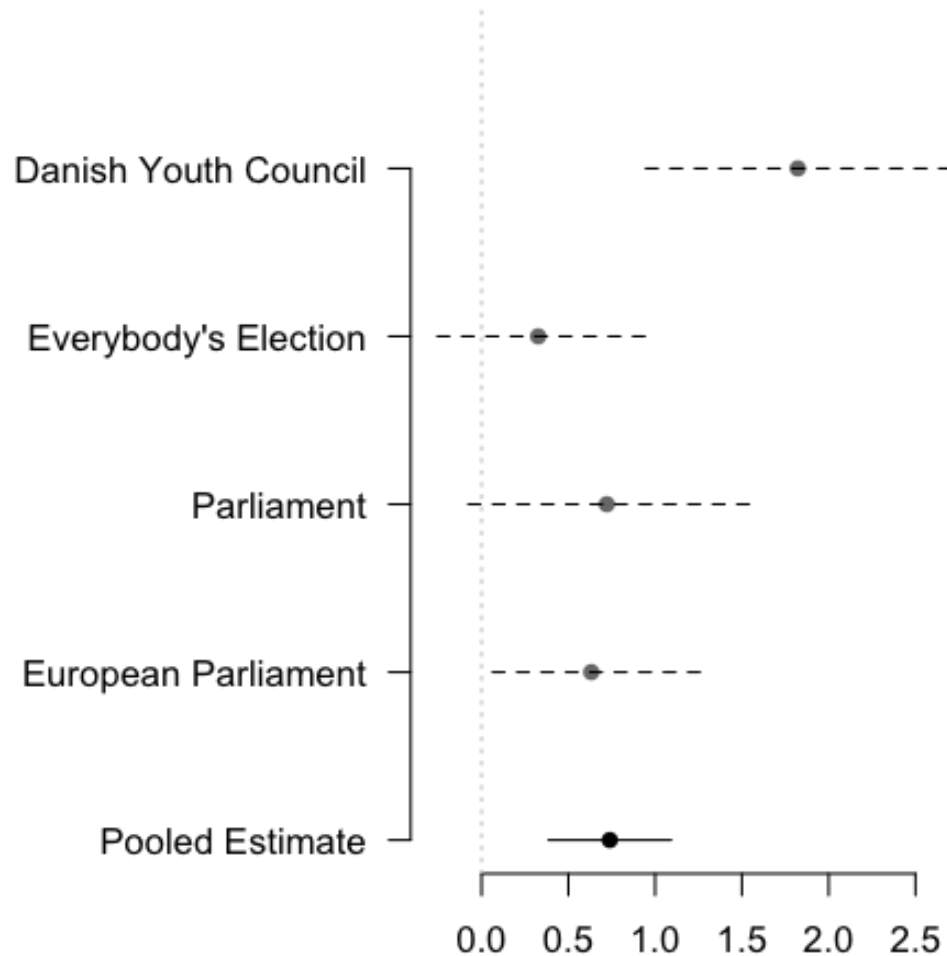


Hej Jonaslørdag. Dette er en venlig påmindelse om valget tirsdag den 19. november. Demokratiet har brug for dig, så husk at stemme!





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



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



## Conclusion – voting is a social act

### Observational

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

### Quasi-experimental

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

### Field experiments

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

### Theoretically

- Rethink political socialization:  $\text{parent} \Rightarrow \text{child} \longrightarrow \text{parent} \Leftrightarrow \text{child}$
- Rethink the calculus of voting:  $U > PB - C + D \longrightarrow U > S(PB - C + D)$



## 19 published articles in international journals from the project

1. Bhatti, Y.; Dahlgaard, J.O.; Hansen, J.H. & Hansen, K.M. (2018) Core and Peripheral Voters: Predictors of Turnout Across Three Types of Elections. *Political Studies*, Online early access.
2. Bhatti, Y.; Hansen, K.M.; Naurin, E.; Stolle, D. & Wass, H. (2018) Can you deliver a baby and vote? The effect of the first stages of parenthood on voter turnout. *Journal of Election, Public Opinion and Parties*. Online early access.
3. Bhatti, Y. (2017) Type of education and voter turnout e Evidence from a register-based panel. *Electoral Studies*. Online early access.
4. Dahlgaard, Jens Olav (2018) Trickle-Up Political Socialization: The Causal Effect on Turnout of Parenting a Newly Enfranchised Voter. *American Political Science Review*, online early access.
5. Bhatti, Y., Dahlgaard, J.O., Hansen, J.H. & Hansen, K.M. (2017) How Voter Mobilization from Short Text Messages Travels within Households and Families: Evidence from two Nationwide Field Experiments. *Electoral studies*. 50:39-46.
6. Bhatti, Y., Dahlgaard, J.O., Hansen, J.H. & Hansen, K.M. (2017) Can Governments Use Get Out The Vote Letters to Solve Europe's Turnout Crisis? Evidence from a Field Experiment West European Politics. 41(1):240-260.
7. Bhatti, Y.; Dahlgaard, J. O.; Hansen, J. H. & Hansen, K. M. (2017) Moving the Campaign From the Front Door To the Front Pocket: Field Experimental Evidence on the Effect of Phrasing and Timing of Text Messages on Voter Turnout. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*. 27(3):291-310.
8. Hansen, J.H. (2016) Residential Mobility and Turnout: The Relevance of Social Costs, Timing and Education. *Political Behavior*, 38(4):769-791.
9. Bhatti, Y.; Dahlgaard, J. O.; Hansen, J. H. & Hansen, K. M. (2016) Is door-to-door canvassing effective in Europe? Evidence from a meta-study across six European countries. *British Journal of Political Science*. Online early access.
10. Bhatti, Y.; Hansen, K.M. & Wass, H. (2016) First-time boost beats experience: The effect of past eligibility on turnout. *Electoral Studies*. 41(2):151-158.
11. Bhatti, Y., Danckert, B. & Hansen, K. M. (2017) The Context of Voting: Does Neighborhood Ethnic Diversity Affect Turnout? *Social Forces*. 95(3):1127-1154.
12. Bhatti, Y. & Hansen, K.M. (2016) The Effect of Residential Concentration on Voter Turnout among Ethnic Minorities. *International Migration Review*. 50(4):977-1004.
13. Bhatti, Y.; Dahlgaard, J. O.; Hansen, J. H. & Hansen, K. M. (2015) Getting Out the Vote With Evaluative Thinking. *American Journal of Evaluation*. 36(3): 389-400.
14. Bhatti, Y. & Hansen, K.M. (2013) Public employees lining up for the polls - the conditional effect of living and working in same district. *Public Choice*. 156 (3-4):611-629.
15. Hansen, K.M. (2012) Turnout – Socialization and Social Networks. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*. 22(4):377-379.
16. Bhatti, Y. & Hansen, K.M. (2012) Leaving the Nest and the Social Act of Voting: Turnout among First-Time Voters. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*. 22(4):380-406.
17. Bhatti, Y. & Hansen, K.M. (2012) Retiring from Voting: Turnout among Senior Voters. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*. 22(4):479-500.
18. Bhatti, Y.; Hansen, K.M. & Wass, H. (2012) The relationship between age and turnout: A roller-coaster ride. *Electoral Studies*. 31(3):588-593.
19. Bhatti, Y. & Hansen, K.M. (2012) The effect of generation and age on turnout to the European Parliament – How turnout will continue to decline in the future. *Electoral Studies*. 31(2): 262-272.



## 10 chapters in anthologies published from the project

1. Bhatti, Y., Dahlgaard, J.O., Hansen, J.H. & Hansen, K.M. (2017) "Valgdeltagelsen" pp. 131-150 in K.M. Hansen & R. Stubager (eds.) *Oprør fra udkanten. Folketingsvalget 2015*. København: DJØF forlag.
2. Hansen, J. H., Hansen, K. M. & Levinsen, K. (2017) "Valgdagen som socialt ritual" pp. 133-152 in J. Elklit, C. Elmelund-Præstekjær & U. Kjær (eds.) *KV13*. Odense: University of Southern Denmark Press.
3. Bhatti, Y., Dahlgaard, J.O., Hansen, J.H. & Hansen, K.M. (2017) "Kan mobiliseringskampagner øge valgdeltagelsen?" pp. 93-112 in J. Elklit, C. Elmelund-Præstekjær & U. Kjær (eds.) *KV13*. Odense: University of Southern Denmark Press.
4. Bhatti, Y., Dahlgaard, J.O., Elklit, J. & Hansen, K.M. (2017) "Hvorfor steg valgdeltagelsen." pp. 113-132 in J. Elklit, C. Elmelund-Præstekjær & U. Kjær (eds.) *KV13*. Odense: University of Southern Denmark Press.
5. Bhatti, Y., Hansen, K.M. & Kjær, U. (2017) "Ligner kommunalpolitikere deres vælgere?" pp. 221-248 in J. Elklit, C. Elmelund-Præstekjær & U. Kjær (eds.) *KV13*. Odense: University of Southern Denmark Press.
6. Bhatti, Y. & K.M. Hansen (2013) "Nydanskernes repræsentation i kommunalbestyrelserne". pp 339-396 in J. Elklit & U. Kjær (eds.) *KV09: Analyser af kommunalvalget 2009*. Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag.
7. Bhatti, Y. & K.M. Hansen (2013) "Nydanskernes valgdeltagelse: Effekten af familiestruktur og ghettoer." pp. 81-102 in J. Elklit & U. Kjær (eds.) *KV09: Analyser af kommunalvalget 2009*. Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag.
8. Bhatti, Y.; J. Elklit & K.M. Hansen (2013) "Hvorfor faldt valgdeltagelsen?" pp. 61-79 in J. Elklit & U. Kjær (eds.) *KV09: Analyser af kommunalvalget 2009*. Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag.
9. Hansen, K.M. & Hoff, J. (2013) "Gør den kommunale kampagne en forskel?" pp. 137-158 in J. Elklit & U. Kjær (eds.) *KV09: Analyser af kommunalvalget 2009*. Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag.
10. Bhatti, Y. & Hansen, K.M. (2011) "Valgdeltagelsen blandt danske unge". pp. 123-137 in Valgretskommissionens. *Demokrati for fremtiden – Valgretskommissionens betænkning om unges demokratiske engagement*. Copenhagen: DUF - The Danish Youth Council.



## 4 papers under the review in international journals

Bhatti, Y., Fieldhouse, E. & Hansen, K. M. (2018) It's a group thing: How voters go to the polls together. Paper presented at APSA 2016. R&R in *Political Behavior*.

Bhatti, Y., Dahlgaard, J.O., Hansen, J.H. & Hansen, K.M. (2018) Bias in self-reported voting and how it distorts turnout models: Disentangling non-response bias and over-reporting among Danish voters. R&R *Public Opinion Quarterly*.

Bhatti, Y., Dahlgaard, J.O., Hansen, J.H. & Hansen, K.M. (2018) Living Together, Voting Together: Cohabitation Instantly Cause Concordance in Turnout Behavior and Increase Turnout. Under review.

Bhatti, Y & Hansen, K. (2018) Municipal amalgamations and voter turnout – evidence from Denmark. Under review.



## Miscellaneous from the project

### 3 Danish journal articles (peer review)

- Bhatti, Y.; Dahlgaard, J.O.; Hansen, J.H., Hansen, K.M. & Olsen, M.M. (2016) Fra valgsted til indkøbscentre. Danskernes stigende brug af brevstemmer. *Politik*. 19(2):97-115.
- Bhatti, Y. & Hansen, K.M. (2010) Kommunalreformens betydning for den kommunale valgdeltagelse. *Politik*. 13(3):6-16.
- Bhatti, Y. & Hansen, K. M (2017) Valgdeltagelsen blandt ikke-vestlige indvandrere og efterkommere. *Politica*. 49(3):249-272

Three Ph.D.-thesis

7 white paper reports published in Danish

Feature articles in Danish and English

1000+ of media appearances

