

# Democracy

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## Voting together

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**T**raditionally, in political science literature, turning out to vote has been analyzed as a cost-benefit calculation. Do the benefits exceed the costs? Is your vote pivotal? What is to be gained from one political party beating another? And what about the cost of engaging in politics, the cost of transport and time spent on going to the polling station? As the likelihood of one person's vote being pivotal is microscopic, the cost, even small, will exceed the benefit; we should stay at home and not vote. But we do vote, many of us with much joy.

Previous research has shown that we vote because of a strong sense of duty – an obligation. It is the norm that we should vote and so we do vote. Nevertheless, we have not really explained why we vote – where does the duty come from? In my research I find a missing link in the calculus of voting – the social aspect. Voting is indeed a social act.

Once we leave our parents' home our turnout decreases dramatically. Our parents are no longer in a position to remind us that we should vote. When we find someone to live with our turnout increases again. Now there are two of us to remind each other to vote, and most of us in fact go to the polls together. If we get divorced or widowed our turnout decreases, we lose our voting companion and someone to remind us that voting is important.

All in all, we need to change the way we look at turning out to vote and emphasize the social aspect of voting.

The research is based on actual turnout data for Danes over the last 10 years combined with rich sociodemographic data from "Statistics Denmark". In addition, field experiments have been carried out to understand how mobilization is possible and how it spreads in (family and) social networks.



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