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Voter Mobilisation in a High-Turnout Context

**Get Out the Vote Experiments in
the 2017 Norwegian Parliamentary
Election**

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Norsk sammendrag

Valgdeltakelsen ved lokale valg i Norge er nokså lav og til dels fallende over tid. I 2015 stemte 60,2 prosent av de stemmeberettigede ved lokalvalget. Deltakelsen ved stortingsvalg er høyere, og den har holdt seg mer stabil over tid. I 2017 deltok 78,2 prosent av elektoratet – altså 18 prosentpoeng flere enn ved forrige lokalvalg. Likevel varierer valgdeltakelsen mellom grupper, også ved stortingsvalg (Bergh og Christensen 2017). Unge velgere, velgere med innvandrerbakgrunn og de uten høyere utdanning er mest tilbøyelige til å sitte hjemme. Det er i disse gruppene vi først og fremst finner de «permanente hjemmesitterne», altså de som lar være å stemme flere valg på rad (Bergh og Christensen 2017).

Lav deltakelse blant enkelte grupper kan være et problem, dels fordi disse gruppenes interesser og synspunkter ikke blir representert i politikken. I tillegg kan lav deltakelse over tid bidra til å svekke legitimiteten til politiske beslutninger, politikere og hele det politiske systemet.

Én mulig løsning for å få grupper som ellers ikke ville ha stemt til å delta i politiske valg er å gi dem en påminnelse, eller en liten dytt i retning av å stemme. Forskergruppen som står bak denne rapporten, gjennomførte slike tiltak, som eksperimenter, ved lokalvalget i 2015. I samarbeid med IMDi og KMD sendte vi ut SMS-er med en påminnelse og oppfordring om å stemme til tilfeldig utvalgte velgere. Velgere som ikke fikk SMS-ene, utgjorde kontrollgruppen i eksperimentet. I tillegg ble det sendt ut mer omfattende brev til velgere med innvandrerbakgrunn. Brevene inneholdt praktisk informasjon om stemmegivningen samt et avsnitt som varierte mellom tre ulike brev.

SMS-tiltakene som ble sendt ut i 2015 bidro til en økning i valgdeltakelsen blant alle velgere *uten* innvandrerbakgrunn, på 1,6 prosentpoeng. Effekten var betydelig større blant velgere under 30 år (også *uten* innvandrerbakgrunn); der økte deltakelsen med 4,6 prosentpoeng. Brevene ble sendt til to grupper: utenlandske statsborgere som fikk stemmerett for første gang ved lokalvalget 2015, samt andre velgere med innvandrerbakgrunn. Brevene hadde en betydelig effekt på valgdeltakelsen i gruppen av nylig ankomne innvandrere. Deltakelsen økte med 5,8 prosentpoeng fra det som var et veldig lavt nivå i kontrollgruppen:

20,9 prosent. Blant de resterende velgerne med innvandrerbakgrunn økte deltakelsen med 3,4 prosentpoeng.

Tiltakene som ble gjennomført i 2015 var vellykkede i den forstand at de hadde en dokumenterbar effekt på valgdeltakelsen (se Bergh mfl. 2016).

I forbindelse med stortingsvalget 2017 ble det satt i gang et nytt prosjekt for å undersøke om tiltak av denne typen også kan fungere ved stortingsvalg. Hovedformålet med prosjektet i 2017 var å replikere eksperimentene fra 2015. Ville disse tiltakene fungere ved et stortingsvalg, hvor deltakelsen i utgangspunktet er høyere? SMS-eksperimentet ble gjennomført på samme måte, med samme tekst, og med utvalg som var trukket på samme måte (riktignok var utvalgene større i 2017). Meldingene ble sendt til 178 206 tilfeldig uttrukne stemmeberettigede personer i løpet av de syv dagene frem til og med valgdagen, den 11. september 2017. I dagene før selve valgdagen lød meldingen som følger: «Hei! Dette er en vennlig påminnelse om stortingsvalget 11. september. Demokratiet har bruk for din stemme, så husk å delta i valget! Hilsen valg.no/Oslo kommune». På valgdagen ble denne meldingen brukt (med riktige tidspunkt for valglokalenes åpningstider): «Hei! Har du stemt? Hvis ikke, kan du ennå rekke det. Valglokale er åpne fra kl. XX til kl. XX i dag. Delta i valget! Hilsen valg.no/Oslo kommune».

Avsender for alle tekstmeldingene i 2015, og 156 027 av meldingene i 2017, var «valg.no», altså Valgdirektoratets webside om valget. I 2017 hadde forskningsprosjektet et samarbeid med Oslo kommune, så de resterende 22 227 meldingene hadde «Oslo kommune» som avsender.

Eksperimentet med brev til velgere med innvandrerbakgrunn ble så langt det var mulig, også gjennomført på samme måte i 2017 som i 2015. Brevene inneholdt praktisk informasjon om stemmegivningen, som ble oppdatert slik at informasjonen var korrekt for 2017-valget. De tre ulike budskapene – 1) Stemmegivningen er hemmelig, du kan trygt stemme i Norge, 2) Deltakelsen blant velgere med innvandrerbakgrunn er økende. Bidra til å sette ny rekord! og 3) Deltakelsen blant velgere med innvandrerbakgrunn er for lav. Bidra til å snu trenden! – fikk også noen mindre justeringer slik at informasjonen skulle være korrekt i 2017. I tillegg til de tre budskapene som ble brukt i 2015, sendte vi også ut et brev uten noe slikt budskap i 2017, altså et slags kontrollbrev med utelukkende den praktiske informasjonen om stemmegivning. Teksten i brevene, i sin helhet, ligger i appendikset.

Til tross for at budskapene er sammenliknbare, er det likevel en viktig forskjell mellom brev-eksperimentene i 2015 og 2017. Ved lokale valg har utenlandske statsborgere stemmerett; ved stortingsvalg har bare norske statsborgere stemmerett. Gruppene av velgere med innvandrerbakgrunn er derfor ikke direkte sammenliknbare. De som fikk stemmerett for første gang i 2015, er utenlandske statsborgere som har oversteget grensen for tre års botid siden forrige lokalvalg. Den tilsvarende gruppen i 2017 er de som har fått statsborgerskap siden forrige stortingsvalg.

I 2017 ble det også gjennomført et helt nytt eksperiment i samarbeid med Landsrådet for Norges barne- og ungdomsorganisasjoner (LNU). Formålet med eksperimentet var å undersøke om det ville ha en effekt på deltakelsen å ringe til førstegangselgere for å overbevise dem om å stemme. LNU samlet en gruppe unge voksne til å gjennomføre en slik «telefonbank». De ringte til førstegangselgere med en del standardisert informasjon – for eksempel om åpningstidene til nærmeste valglokale – samt et mer åpent og diskuterende forsøk på å overbevise førstegangselgerne om å delta i valget. Budskapet var apolitisk, så i den grad førstegangselgerne ønsket informasjon om partienes politikk etc., ble de henvist til steder hvor de kunne finne det. Det ble gjennomført 32 424 oppringninger, med 7 638 gjennomførte samtaler.

Resultatene av alle eksperimentene i 2015 og 2017 fremgår av tabellen under. Vi rapporterer såkalte «intention-to-treat» (ITT) effekter. Det vil si, effekten på alle som er trukket ut til å delta i eksperimentet. Noen av SMS-ene og brevene kom ikke frem til mottakeren, og flertallet av førstegangselgerne som var valgt ut til å motta en telefon, gjennomførte aldri en samtale. Det tar vi ikke hensyn til i denne analysen. Slike frafall vil oppstå i enhver iverksetting av denne typen tiltak. ITT-effekt er derfor det mest realistiske målet på utfallet av hvert av tiltakene. I rapporten presenterer vi også såkalte «complier average causal effects» (CACE), som er effekten på de som faktisk mottok tiltaket.

Effektene av hvert tiltak uttrykkes som endring i valgdeltakelse (i prosentpoeng) fra kontrollgruppen til eksperimentgruppen. For eksempel var valgdeltakelsen i kontrollgruppen blant alle norske velgere i 2017 hele 82,6 prosent. I eksperimentgruppen som fikk SMS, var deltakelsen 82,9 prosent, altså en forskjell på 0,3 prosentpoeng. Denne lille effekten er statistisk signifikant, mens den enda mindre effekten blant velgere under 30 år ikke er signifikant forskjellig fra 0. Blant velgere med innvandrerbakgrunn som har fått statsborgerskap siden forrige stortingsvalg, er det en effekt på 2,1 prosentpoeng. Blant andre velgere med innvandrerbakgrunn ser det ut til å være en negativ effekt, men det er trolig en tilfeldighet. Det er rimelig å anta at effekten er 0 i denne gruppen. I sum har

altså SMS-tiltakene – som virket ved valget i 2015 – veldig begrensede effekter i 2017.

Telefonbanken som ble gjennomført av LNU, hadde heller ingen effekt, til tross for at dette var et ressurskrevende tiltak som nådde frem til ungdommene på en direkte og personlig måte. Det fremgår også av tabellen at SMS til denne aldersgruppen heller ikke hadde noen effekt.

Brevene til velgere med innvandrerbakgrunn er det eneste tiltaket i 2017 som hadde en effekt av betydning. Vi viser bare effektene av brevene samlet, uten å skille mellom de ulike budskapene. En mer detaljert analyse av forskjellene mellom brevene tyder på at det bare er tilfeldige forskjeller mellom effektene av de ulike brev-typene. Brevene som ble sendt til nye statsborgere, bidro til å øke valgdeltakelsen med 2,2 prosentpoeng, mens blant andre velgere med innvandrerbakgrunn gikk deltakelsen opp 1,2 prosentpoeng.

Resultattabell: ITT-effekter av eksperimentene i 2015 og 2017

		SMS	Telefon- bank	Brev	Valgdeltakelse i kontrollgruppen	
2017	Velgere uten innvandrer- bakgrunn	Alle	0,3		82,6	
		Under 30 år	0,2		70,7	
		Førstegangselgere	0,1	0,3	69,4	
	Velgere med innvandrer- bakgrunn	Fikk stemmerett i 2017	2,1		2,2	58,1
		Andre	-0,8		1,2	55,5
2015	Velgere uten innvandrer- bakgrunn	Alle	1,6		68,9	
		Under 30 år	4,6		45,3	
	Velgere med innvandrer- bakgrunn	Fikk stemmerett i 2015	3,1		5,8	20,9
		Andre	2,3		3,4	40,1

De to rundene med eksperimenter i 2015 og 2017 gir grunn til å spørre: Hvorfor er effektene større ved det første valget? Det er mange forskjeller mellom de to valgene, så vi kan ikke med sikkerhet identifisere en forklaring. Den mest

sannsynlige forklaringen er likevel forskjellen i deltakelsesnivåene ved de to valgene. Ved et stortingsvalg er det færre velgere som kan mobiliseres av slike tiltak. De fleste personene som mottar et tiltak, ville ha stemt uansett. I lokalvalget 2015 var det nettopp i de gruppene med lav deltakelse, hvor under halvparten stemte, at tiltakene hadde størst effekt. Det gir grunn til å tro at det vil være mest å hente på å innføre tiltak av denne typen ved lokale valg.

English summary

Authors	Johannes Bergh Dag Arne Christensen Richard Matland
Title	Voter Mobilisation in a High-Turnout Context Get Out the Vote Experiments in the 2017 Norwegian Parliamentary Election
Summary	What can be done to increase voter participation in elections? One possibility is to contact voters individually and try to get them to the polls. This report contains results from several experiments with “Get Out the Vote” mobilisation techniques in the Norwegian local elections of 2015 and the parliamentary election of 2017. These experiments include letters in the post, SMS text messages and phone calls to voters. The general finding is that mobilisation drives such as these are more effective in local elections where turnout is lower than in parliamentary elections. SMS text messages and letters in the post can be quite effective in mobilising low-turnout groups, such as immigrants and young voters in local elections.
Index terms	Get Out the Vote; voter turnout; local elections; parliamentary elections; Norway.

Introduction

Field experimental scholarship has focused on how impersonal voter mobilisation contacts such as SMS text messaging and Get Out The Vote (GOTV) leaflets can increase turnout (Bergh, Christensen, & Matland, 2017; Dale & Strauss, 2009; Green & Gerber, 2015; Green, McGrath, & Aronow, 2013; Michelson, García Bedolla, & McConnell, 2009; Nickerson, 2007). However, in these cases, treatment effects are often measured in low-salience elections or so-called second-order elections. These elections, such as local elections, are characterised as second-order simply because they matter less than national (first-order) elections (Reif & Schmitt, 1980). Turnout is lower in second-order elections, which means there are more voters to mobilise compared to national elections. We have limited insight into how, if at all, impersonal GOTV contacts increase turnout in high-salience elections.

This report is the first to present results of impersonal GOTV contacts in a European national parliamentary election. We present results of three field experiments conducted in the 2017 parliamentary (Storting) election. The first replicates an SMS text message study from the 2015 municipal elections among native Norwegian voters that found strong mobilisation effects, especially among young voters. The question is if the mobilisation effects uncovered in 2015 are limited to local elections.

The second experiment tests the effect of live volunteer phone calls to (and from) young voters eligible to vote in their first election. This is, to our knowledge, the first study to test the effect of phone calls in a European context. The experiment was designed and planned by the Norwegian Children and Youth Council (LNU). The LNU had young voters call randomly selected other young voters, encouraging them to take part in the election. Phone calls are a much more personal (and expensive) form of voter mobilisation than SMS messages.

In the third experiment, we sent out letters to a random sample of immigrants, urging them to increase their political participation. Voter turnout among immigrants lags well behind that of the native populations in Western democracies, including Norway (Wüst et al. 2010). Norwegian citizenship is needed to vote in parliamentary elections. In local elections, foreign nationals

with at least three years of legal residency have voting rights. Our GOTV experiment in the 2015 local elections found strong effects on the turnout of especially newly enfranchised immigrants (Bergh, Christensen, & Matland, 2016). We tested whether such a GOTV letter campaign is equally effective among naturalised citizens in a parliamentary election.

Turnout in the 2017 parliamentary election was 78.2%, 18 percentage points higher than the 2015 municipal elections. This turnout level is typical for national elections. The electoral context is one with a high number of habitual voters. Four out of five voters participated in the election; the remaining one out of five may be harder to mobilise.

The baseline turnout of the immigrant-background target groups was also substantially higher in the 2017 case. Participation in the 2017 parliamentary elections among new citizens who were eligible to vote for the first time was 58.9%, among immigrants who have been long-term residents, it was 55.8% (newly naturalised immigrants excluded), while the percentage of native Norwegians who voted was just over 81%. Given that political equality is a fundamental premise of democracy, the relatively high number of non-voters among immigrants who have gone through the effort of acquiring Norwegian citizenship suggests democracy works less effectively for this group. Inequalities in turnout are likely to mean the views and interests of immigrants are not brought into the political process in representative numbers.

In the next section, we proceed to briefly describe the results of the experiments conducted in the 2015 Norwegian local elections. We then outline some expectations for the replication and expansion of those experiments in the 2017 parliamentary election. After describing messages, methods and the data used, we present the results. We conclude with a discussion and a comparison of the findings from 2015 and 2017.

Results from the 2015 study

We conducted the first study of GOTV messages in Norway in connection with the 2015 local election. Our aim was to test the effectiveness of SMS text messages directed at both immigrants and native voters in Norway, as well as postal mobilisation appeals among immigrants.

The first experiment was a test of the Noticeable Reminder Theory using SMS text messaging in the Norwegian local elections of 2015 (Bergh et al., 2017). The experiment found that text messages produced strong effects. The “intent to treat” (ITT) effect among native Norwegians below the age of 30 was 4.58 percentage points (with a baseline turnout of 45.3%). The text messages had an ITT effect of 0.96 percentage points among native Norwegian voters over the age of 30. These effects are substantially stronger than the effects found in the United States (US), and stronger than the effects found in one previous European study of text messages in the 2013 Danish local elections (Bhatti, Dahlgard, Hansen, & Hansen, 2017). Thus, the 2015 Norwegian study found that younger voters who were less engaged with the political process and who voted less frequently, responded strongly to the text messages. These results indicate that text messages can be an effective (and economical) tool for mobilising voters, especially those who tend to participate less than the average Norwegian voter.

The experiment group in the letter campaign in 2015 consisted of 19,500 individuals divided into three groups of 6,500; each group received a specific letter. The control group was made up of individuals selected for the sample but not pulled for treatments (141,625 individuals in all).

The three letters (treatments) have an introductory paragraph with a general appeal to participate in the election, followed by a second paragraph where the message varies, and a final paragraph with identical information about how to participate (see Appendix A). The first and third paragraphs are exactly the same in all three letters, and were included to add an extra reason why immigrants in all three groups should participate in the election. The second varied paragraphs start with a headline followed by a few lines of text. They are worded as follows:

1. Your vote is private!

In the polling station, you enter a booth where you are completely alone when voting. After deciding which party you will vote for, you put the ballot into a locked container with a lot of other ballots. Neither the election officials nor anyone else in the polling station are allowed to ask you who you voted for. You can be completely certain that your vote is private.

2. Participation among immigrants is increasing. Do your part and set a new voting record!

You do not have to be a Norwegian citizen to take part in the election. Anyone who has resided in Norway for three years or more has the right to vote. In the local election in 2011, more immigrants voted than ever before. Voter turnout in several immigrant groups was well above 50%. Do your part and contribute to even greater participation of immigrants in this year's election!

3. Participation among immigrants is too low. Help turn this trend around!

You do not have to be a Norwegian citizen to take part in the election. Anyone who has resided in Norway for three years or more has the right to vote. Unfortunately, immigrants took part at a much lower rate than the rest of the population in the local election in 2011. Voter turnout in several immigrant groups was well below 50%. You can contribute to turning this trend around and raising the turnout levels of immigrants by voting on September 14!

All letters were written in Norwegian, which for most immigrants is a second language. It seems likely that at least some of the recipients will have trouble reading and understanding the content, though we believe most will have lived in Norway long enough to be able to make sense of these messages.

The results show that GOTV mobilisation drives among immigrant communities can be quite effective. The same is true for GOTV campaigns directed at another low-turnout group: young voters. A summary of the results of all our experiments is shown in Table 1. The results are presented as ITT effects.

Table 1 Results of two sets of experiments in voter mobilisation in the Norwegian local election of 2015. Intention to treat effects (percentage point increase in voter turnout in treatment group)

	Natives		Immigrants	
	All	Below 30 Years of Age	First-Time Voters	Other Immigrants
SMS text messages	1.6	4.6	3.1	2.3
Letter: Privacy message			5.6	
Letter: Positive message			4.8	3.0
Letter: Negative message			7.0	3.7
Control group voter turnout	68.9	45.3	20.9	40.1

Sending an SMS text message reminder of the upcoming election was quite an effective tool in mobilising low-turnout groups in Norway in 2015. Young Norwegians and immigrants are mobilised by these messages. The text messages work, but the effects are not as strong as with high-turnout groups.

Text messaging is also effective in the group that has the lowest level of turnout: foreign nationals who received voting rights for the first time in 2015. However, the best tool to mobilise this group seems to be the more informative and extensive letters used in the other experiments. In addition to being a reminder of the upcoming election, the letters provided practical information about the voting process and normative arguments for why one should vote.

Looking at immigrants who were previously eligible to vote, the SMS and letter campaigns have about the same effect on turnout. When trying to mobilise immigrants who have had voting rights in Norway for at least one previous election, text messaging and letters in the post seem to produce similar results.

There are no significant differences in the effectiveness of the three letters. This suggests that the letters serve mostly to remind people of the election (with some useful information about how to vote), and that the different normative messages are fairly uniform in their effect.

Expectations in light of previous research

Not all GOTV methods are equally effective. Face-to-face mobilisation techniques get more voters to the polls than impersonal contact tactics such as emails, direct post, telephone calls and SMS messages (Arceneaux & Nickerson, 2009; Green & Gerber, 2015; Green et al., 2013; Matland & Murray, 2012; Michelson & Nickerson, 2011). While proponents of leaflets and text messages do not dispute this fact, they point to the vast savings in costs and labour that can be reaped by using mechanisms such as text messages and post. While text messages may not match canvassing in terms of increasing turnout, if one calculates effectiveness as costs per extra vote, leaflets, text messages and volunteer phone calls can be highly effective.

The Noticeable Reminder Theory suggests that a simple nudge in the form of an SMS text message is enough to mobilise voters. In proposing the theory, Dale and Strauss (2009) emphasise that voters in the US context have already shown themselves to be interested in voting by registering to vote. Hence, they do not need to be convinced to vote; they simply need to be reminded to vote. The Norwegian context differs. In Norway, all voters are automatically registered to vote. There is no need to physically register, and as such, the Norwegian case represents a tougher test for the theory. Dale and Strauss (2009) collected information from a sample of young people and people who recently had moved as they were registering to vote. These new registrants provided their mobile phone numbers and agreed to receive a text message reminding them to vote. The sample was randomly split into a control group and an experimental group, and individuals in the experimental group were sent a text message the day before the election reminding them to vote. Dale and Strauss (2009) found that SMS reminders produced a statistically significant positive ITT effect of 3.0 percentage points. In the second US test, Malhotra, Michelson, Rogers, and Valenzuela (2011) ran two tests during different elections, in which a sample of voters in a single California county were cold called by telephone (with no previous contact). They found modest but statistically significant effects: a 0.7 percentage point increase in the local election, and a 0.9 percentage point increase for the statewide election.

In addition to the Norwegian 2015 local election SMS experiment, a team of Danish researchers have done the only other study to test text messages outside the US (Bhatti et al., 2014, 2017). They ran three distinct text messaging campaigns during the 2013 local elections and a fourth experiment during the 2014 EU parliamentary elections. Three of the text messaging campaigns targeted young ethnic Danish voters below 30 years of age. A fourth study was conducted on a broad sample of Danish residents of all ages with an oversampling of immigrants. The Danish team tested a series of distinct messages and found no difference in effectiveness across message content. The three campaigns aimed at young voters produced a statistically insignificant 0.72 percentage point increase in turnout, a statistically significant effect of 0.63 percentage points with a larger sample, and finally, a quite strong turnout impact of a 1.8 percentage point increase in turnout. The fourth SMS experiment resulted in an insignificant 0.33 percentage point increase in turnout, although turnout among first generation immigrants increased by a significant 1.0 percentage point.

The 2015 Norwegian study found text messages to be more effective than in neighbouring Denmark (see above and Bergh et al., 2017). Turnout in the Danish local election (used for three of the experiments) was 12 percentage points higher than in the 2015 Norwegian local elections. In other words, there were more potential voters to mobilise in Norway. The design of the experiments also differed when it came to message content and the population pulled for the experiments (see Bergh et al., 2017).

Malhotra et al. (2011, p. 667) argue that the effect of text messaging depends on a combination of the salience of the election and individuals' voting histories. They find text messaging increases turnout only among habitual voters in the lowest salience elections and only among casual voters in more salient elections. Voters with low levels of participation were not mobilised. Following the argument in Malhorta et al. (2011), we tested if the effect of text messaging on similar groups (native Norwegian voters below and above the age of 30) varied with the salience of the election. Our study is the first to replicate a study among the same groups of voters and to test text messaging in a first-order competitive national parliamentary election. Even if Norwegian local elections are often referred to as "second order elections" (Mjelde, Folkestad, Aars, & Christensen, 2015), turnout in these elections is still high and vastly higher than the elections where US studies of mobilisation techniques have been fielded. The 2017 parliamentary election is an even tougher test of theory robustness.

Turning to our phone bank experiment, such GOTV contacts fall into three categories (Green et al., 2013): pre-recorded phone calls, live calls from commercial phone banks, and live calls from volunteer phone banks. Phone experiments are generally subject to contact problems, since citizens often fail to pick up the phone (Blackwell, 2016; Nickerson, 2006), and hence suffer from low rates of compliance. Therefore, phone experiments' effects are usually measured among those actually contacted, the so-called complier average causal effect (CACE). The design of our experiment falls in the category of live calls from volunteer organisations, and, according to previous field experiments, these calls should be the most effective. As described by Green et al. (2013, p. 33), "live interactions with human beings seem to vary in effectiveness depending on whether GOTV messages are delivered in a routinised way by a commercial phone bank or in a more authentic manner by a volunteer phone bank". The calls are personal and the subjects are actually talking to live callers with the overarching goal of making personal contact with the voter (Nickerson, 2006). A meta-analysis of 37 volunteer live calls shows an average CACE of 1.94 percentage points (Green et al., 2013, p. 33). Still, the effect of live phone call contacts has primarily been tested in low-salience elections and never in a European national parliamentary election.

We further tested GOTV letters, aimed at mobilising immigrants to exercise their legal right to vote. The theory behind this policy posits that if immigrants can be encouraged to increase participation through voting, this will both lead to greater acceptance of the existing institutions and greater integration into society (see e.g. Shineman, 2018).

The target group in the 2017 study was naturalised citizens (since foreign nationals do not have the right to vote in parliamentary elections). Naturalised citizens have a greater length of residency – seven years is required to be able to apply for naturalisation – which may have led to a greater understanding of Norwegian politics and greater integration into society in general. Furthermore, evidence from Hainmueller, Hangartner, and Pietrantuono (2015, 2017) suggests that naturalisation in itself leads to greater integration into society. Using a regression discontinuity design, they studied the unusual process of granting citizenship through referenda in Switzerland, and found positive effects on several measures of integration, including voter turnout. The actual granting of citizenship rights may, in other words, have a positive effect on voter turnout.

We know that our target group in 2017 had a higher rate of turnout than the non-naturalised immigrant voters targeted in 2015. A higher rate of turnout means that there are fewer potential voters that could be mobilised by a GOTV

campaign. However, the process of naturalisation may make people more receptive to a GOTV appeal. If that is the case, we would expect the strongest effect of the mobilisation drive among newly naturalised citizens; that is, those who are eligible to vote in a parliamentary election for the first time in 2017.

We are interested in testing whether sending GOTV letters to immigrants can prove to be an effective way to mobilise immigrant voters to participate in parliamentary elections. Finding an effect would suggest that a relatively simple public policy nudge could be widely adopted at little cost, and could contribute positively to dealing with the issue of improved integration of immigrants into society. There have been several hundred studies of GOTV techniques, especially leaflets, but the vast majority have taken place in the US context. Testing these theories in the Norwegian context provides an opportunity to test the robustness of these findings and to see if they travel well across the Atlantic.

Message content

Because we wanted to compare the SMS results from the 2017 national election experiment with those of the 2015 municipal elections, we used similarly phrased text messages. The text messages included a reminder of the upcoming election, with a short civic duty appeal (see below). Message content was developed in agreement with the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation (KMD). KMD has overall responsibility for all elections in Norway, and we used their election webpage address valg.no (election.no) as the sender of messages. To test if the sender of the messages had any impact on the results, we formulated a message that was used uniformly across these cases. However, 22,227 voters in Oslo were randomly selected to receive their messages identifying the municipality of Oslo [Oslo Kommune] as the sender, while 14,322 voters in Oslo received identical messages, but with valg.no (the national authority responsible for elections) as the sender of the message.

The live volunteer phone call experiment was designed and conducted by the LNU. LNU is an umbrella organisation of approximately 100 Norwegian children and youth organisations, and is primarily concerned with questions regarding youth participation. LNU ran a campaign called “Young Voices” during the election campaign, trying to mobilise young voters to take part in the election. In the experiment, LNU recruited 35 young voters to deliver the phone messages to voters of the same age, and they also marked whether they were compliers or not.

The design of these experiments captured contacts in a real-world setting. All of the contacts were “cold contacts” in which the receivers of the SMS and the phone calls had not given prior consent to receive them. This strengthens the external validity of our experiments (see Michelson & Nickerson, 2011, p. 235). The text messaging experiment thus studied the effect of “cold” text messaging (messages without prior consent) like those used by Malhotra et al. (2011), as opposed to the “warm” messages (messages with prior consent) used in the original Dale and Strauss (2009) study. Therefore, our results cannot be explained as unique to recipients who previously agreed to receive either texts or phone calls.

The text message experiment was conducted in the last week up to and including Election Day (From Monday 7 September to Monday 14 September). The number of daily text messages sent ranged from a minimum of 11,318 messages to a maximum of 24,980. These went out at 7 p.m. each night leading up to the election, totalling 113,221 messages. The second round of messages was sent on Election Day, starting at 8 a.m. and then every hour until 6 p.m.: 62,033 messages were sent on Election Day. The text messages were sent by a polling agency that had the technical equipment to send large numbers of text messages simultaneously. Furthermore, the firm kept track as to which messages were actually delivered. That enabled us to calculate precise treatment effects. The cost of the text messages used in this study was 0.70 kroner (8.5 U.S. cents) per message, so this is clearly an inexpensive way of contacting large groups of voters.

The text messages are listed below. SMS#1 was used for messages sent the week before the election. SMS#2 was used for messages sent the day of the election.

SMS#1: Hi! This is a friendly reminder concerning the local election on 14 September. Democracy needs your voice/vote, so remember to take part in the election! Regards valg.no. [Regards Oslo kommune]

SMS#2: Hi! Have you voted? If not, you can still make it. Polling stations are open from X to Y today. Take part in the election! Regards valg.no [Regards Oslo kommune]

We were interested in testing if SMS text messages increase turnout in both low- and high-salience elections. If the results were ineffective in high-salience elections, this could have implications for how turnout can be maximised in different types of elections. To do this, we compared the effect on similar groups of voters eligible to vote in both elections: native Norwegian voters under the age of 30 and native Norwegian voters above the age of 30.

The callers in the phone bank experiment had a script, but were encouraged to try to make a personal connection with the voters. The callers also had a list of answers to possible questions from the subjects. The treatments (scripts) were patterned after messages that have proven successful in previous work. This includes “social pressure” messages (two out of three use the right to vote on their first time; Gerber, Green, & Larimer, 2008), “voting plan” messages (“When and where do you intend to vote?”; Nickerson & Rogers, 2010), and

“gratitude” (“Thank you for voting”) messages (Panagopoulos, 2011B) in the voter mobilisation literature. The script had the following content:

“Hi! Am I speaking to [name]?”

“My name is [full name] and I’m calling from the campaign Young Voices. I’m calling because this year is the first time you and I are eligible to vote in the Starting election. Two out of three first-time voters use the right to vote, so I wonder.”

Question 1: “Do you intend to vote?”

If “yes”: “Great! When and where do you intend to vote? (Can I help you find your nearest polling station?)”

If “no”: “Can I ask why not?” (Reasons not to vote)

Question 2: “Are you wondering about something concerning the election that I can help with?”

If “yes”: Practical help concerning the election/reasons to vote

If “no”: “Great! If you have any questions, you can check out the webpage valg.no”

“Thank you for speaking with me, and thank you very much for using your voting rights”.

As noted, the content of the letters (the treatment) was based on existing literature and developed in connection with the 2015 experiments. We only revised the text in 2017 so that it would be meaningful and accurate with respect to that specific election. The letters contained practical information about voting, as well as a varying middle paragraph with a normative message. The varying messages remained the same as in 2015: 1) “Your vote is private!” 2) “Participation among immigrants is increasing. Do your part and set a new voting record!” 3) “Participation among immigrants is too low. Help turn this trend around!” In addition, we included a fourth letter without the varying middle paragraph to test if it was the practical information, rather than the varying message, that made a difference. The original text of the letters is in the Appendix.

The KMD sponsored the distribution of the letters and posted the letters to the subjects’ homes. To test if the sender of the letters had any impact on the results,

we randomly selected 5,308 voters in Oslo to receive identical letters with the municipality of Oslo [Oslo kommune] as the sender, while 5,342 immigrants in Oslo received identical letters but with the federal authority, the Norwegian Directorate of Elections, as the sender. The letters were posted in time to arrive at most households on Friday 8 September, three days prior to the election on Monday 11 September.

Data and experimental design

To design the experiments, we got access to the electoral rolls for approximately 3 million Norwegian voters living in 249 municipalities that have adopted electronic registration of turnout. Because practically all of Norway's larger towns and cities have electronic registration of turnout, our dataset includes the majority of Norway's eligible voters: 75%. The National Population Register [Folkeregisteret] provided information with respect to date of birth, gender, country of origin, and citizenship. Evry, a technology company, provided mobile phone numbers linked to the individual names in the voting registry. Of the approximately 3 million voters in the registry, they came up with just over 2.5 million mobile phone number matches (82%).

For the text message experiment, we began with about 2.3 million native Norwegians who were eligible to vote and for whom we had mobile phone numbers. We also used the subsample of this data with Oslo addresses for the phone experiment. For each group of voters, we randomly assigned individuals to the control or treatment groups. Table 2 displays the composition of the control and treatment groups. 23,383 native Norwegians under the age of 30 received a text message; the control group consisted of 348,669 individuals. 116,495 native Norwegians over the age of 30 received a text message; 1,790,977 remaining voters constituted the control group.

The design of the phone call experiment exclusively targeted young native Norwegian voters eligible to vote in their first election in Oslo. 32,424 youngsters were pulled to receive a call from the LNU while the remaining 63,368 young first-time voters were assigned to the control group.

Table 2 SMS text campaign/telephone campaign: Control and treatment groups

SMS Experiment Native Norwegians	Treatment	Control
Below the age of 30	23,383	348,669
Over the age of 30	116,495	1,790,977
SMS Experiment Immigrants	29,302	103,614
Telephone Experiments		
Young voters eligible to vote for the first time	32,424	63,368

Our study group for the letter campaign was first generation immigrants who met the citizenship requirements to vote in parliamentary elections and who have lived in Norway for less than 25 years (see Table 3). They constituted approximately 135,000 eligible voters. The immigrants mostly came from Asia. Labour immigration from European Union countries has gone up in recent years and has overtaken the other two main causes for immigration to Norway: refugee status and family reunification. However, labour migrants are less likely to acquire citizenship than other immigrant groups. The two largest groups of immigrants in our sample were from Pakistan and Iraq.

Table 3 Country of origin for the 20 largest immigrant groups in the sample

Country	Number of voters	Country	Number of voters
Pakistan	22,928	Bosnia-Herzegovina	7,458
Iraq	15,528	Sweden	6,439
Vietnam	15,068	Denmark	6,055
Somalia	13,735	Thailand	5,953
Yugoslavia	12,897	Morocco	5,920
Iran	11,993	India	5,895
Turkey	10,311	Russia	5,337
Sri Lanka	8,855	Poland	5,337
The Philippines	8,798	Ethiopia	4,795
Afghanistan	7,698	Chile	4,604

The letter emphasising privacy was sent exclusively to a randomised group of voters with immigrant backgrounds who were eligible to vote for the first time

in 2017 (newly naturalised citizens). The sample used for the second and third letters was randomly pulled from the total immigration population having lived in Norway for less than 25 years, irrespective of their previous voting eligibility.

This sampling process resulted in pulling 116,136 individuals. The experiment group consisted of 35,294 individuals divided into three groups of around 9,600, and a fourth group of 6,564 new citizens pulled to receive the privacy letter. The control group was made up of individuals selected for the sample but not pulled for treatments; 80,841 individuals in all. During the execution of the experiment, a number of small adjustments were made that led to slightly smaller totals for the experimental and control groups.

Results

The analyses of the Norwegian sample and the letter campaign among immigrants are based on simple bivariate analyses comparing the treatment groups (SMS, letters and phone calls) with the control groups. The sampling was done at the individual level for the Norwegian samples, which resulted in a few cases where more than one person in a household received a letter. When it comes to the SMS campaign among immigrants, the sample was drawn at the household level and only one person per household was selected to participate. The immigrant population is much smaller, and if we had sampled at the individual level, we would have had multiple letters delivered to a large proportion of multi-member households. By selecting only one person per household and then using inverse proportional weight (IPW), i.e. weighting by the number of people in the household, we can get an unbiased estimate without having to worry about spillover effects dominating the sample.

SMS text messages

The results of the SMS experiment are in Table 4. We begin with the whole sample of native Norwegians. The already high turnout among native Norwegians (82.6% in the control group) rises with a statistically significant 0.34 percentage points in the treatment group with a standard error of 0.1. Among Norwegians aged 30 and above, turnout increased by 0.42 percentage points (baseline turnout was 84.9%). Turning to native Norwegians below the age of 30, this group had a control group turnout of only 45.3% in the 2015 municipal election (Bergh et al., 2017), but in the 2017 parliamentary election, turnout in the control group was as high as 70.7%. Thus, turnout among young voters below the age 30 was 25.4 percentage points higher in the 2017 election compared to the second-order local elections in 2015. In 2017, text messaging insignificantly increased turnout by 0.24 percentage points among young voters (standard error 0.27). Hence, it seems that text messaging effectively mobilised young Norwegians in low-salience elections but not in high-salience national elections. However, using standard errors (or P values) to distinguish between “an effect” and “no effect” among these groups of voters is too simplistic. The sample of young voters is much smaller compared to older native Norwegian voters, and consequently, the standard errors are much larger. The confidence

interval surrounding the effect size for the portion of the sample 30 years and above (95% CI: 0.217 - 0.623) also includes the effect size among voters under the age of 30 (0.24), indicating that the effect size for the two groups of native Norwegians may be indistinguishable. Controlling for the contact rate, we found modest CACE effects ranging from 0.27 percentage points (under 30 years of age) to 0.48 (aged 30 and above).

Table 4 Experimental outcomes for the text messaging study

		Voted Control Group (%)	Voted Treatment Group (%)	ITT (s.e.)	CACE (s.e.)	N
Voters without immigrant backgrounds	Whole sample	82.56	82.90	0.34 (.10)	0.38 (.11)	2,273,126
	Age 30 and above	84.88	85.30	0.42 (.10)	0.48 (.12)	1,902,404
	Below age 30	70.67	70.91	0.24 (.29)	0.27 (.33)	370,722
Voters with immigrant backgrounds	Whole sample	60.22	59.73	-.49 (.36)	4.33 (.41)	132,813
	New citizens	58.58	60.66	2.08 (1.06)	6.20 (1.20)	16,287
	Others	60.45	59.65	-.80 (.39)	4.10 (.43)	116,526

The results for people with immigrant backgrounds reflect, in part, a lower contact rate, which produced a substantial gap between ITT and CACE effects. Only 63% of the text messages reached their intended recipients. The corresponding number for native Norwegians is 86%. Overall, the text messages had no significant (ITT) effect on the entire sample of immigrants selected to receive a message. The positive effect on new citizens, i.e. those who voted in a Norwegian parliamentary election for the first time in 2017, barely reached statistical significance ($p = .05$). However, there appeared to be a negative effect on the remaining group of immigrants (excluding new citizens). This effect was statistically significant ($p = .04$) but may, nonetheless, be the result of chance. The effects on immigrants who actually received the message (CACE) were more substantial. All effects were statistically significant. However, we would not put too much emphasis on these results as long as the ITT effects are negligible.

Turning to our test of whether the sender matters to message effectiveness, Table 5 depicts that among voters in Oslo randomly selected to receive the text from valg.no, turnout increased by 0.75 percentage points (standard error 0.34) compared to the control group. Those receiving the text with the municipality of Oslo as the sender did not differ significantly from the participation rate in the control group (baseline turnout was as high as 88% in Oslo). Thus, a text message from the official organiser of the election (Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation) seems to be more effective compared to receiving the text from the municipality responsible for conducting the election. However, the difference in effect size is not statistically significant. Therefore, we cannot draw the conclusion that one message is more effective than the other.

Table 5 Experimental outcomes for the message sender treatment in the municipality of Oslo (N = 290,994)

	Turnout	ITT (s.e.)	N
Voted control group (%)	88.01	-	271,412
Voted Oslo treatment (%)	87.77	-0.24 (0.33)	10,141
Voted valg.no treatment	88.77	0.75 (0.34)	9,391

A final issue is whether the effectiveness of the text messages is influenced by the time when the messages are sent. In the literature, the jury is still out concerning the ideal time to deliver GOTV appeals. Most of the literature supports the idea that the closer to the election, the more effective the messages are. Nickerson (2006), looking at the effectiveness of GOTV phone calls, argues that calls during the last week were effective, but calls made earlier than one week before do not have an impact. Murray and Matland (2014) found that GOTV postcards with voting records work one week or less prior to Election Day, but earlier leaflets have very limited impact. The one study arguing early contact can be just as effective is Panagopoulos (2011a). He argued that there is a primary effect, which results in the early delivery GOTV appeals having memory advantages, while the recency hypothesis argues that delivery closer to the election puts such appeals at the forefront of recipients' short-term memories when they have to make the decision to vote. Panagopoulos (2011a) found that appeals (to high-propensity voters) delivered four weeks prior to Election Day were more effective than appeals delivered two weeks prior. The Norwegian study from the 2015 municipal election showed that daily text messages had a positive effect on turnout among young native Norwegian voters, and on

Election Day, the study had the strongest impact in the middle of the day. Among Norwegian natives 30 and above (with a small overall effect), the study found little variance of effectiveness either in the daily experiment or in the hourly experiment on Election Day.

For our analysis, we use logistic regression. The regressions are used to calculate the marginal probabilities in turnout among members of the experimental groups, i.e. those who received a text message. The change in vote probability is presented graphically in Figures 1A and 1B for the whole sample of native Norwegian voters. Figure 1A shows the variations in the effectiveness of the text messages from seven days prior (Monday 4 September 2017) to Election Day (Monday 11 September 2017).

It is worth recalling that the overall effect reported in our regressions was small (0.42 percentage points). Both Figure 1A and Figure 1B reflect this, showing very stable variations with little variance in effectiveness compared to the control group. There is no clear chronological pattern; the effects do not get stronger (or weaker) over the space of the week. However, Monday, seven days before the election, shows the strongest and only significant effect ($p = 0.04$). Our hourly experiment on Election Day, displayed in Figure 1B, shows none of the 10 times of day effects to be significant. Given the small overall effect of the text messages, this supports the argument that Election Day text messages have little impact on voters in high-salience elections.

Figure 1 A Date of Delivery Effects with 95% CIs (whole sample, N = 2,221,925)

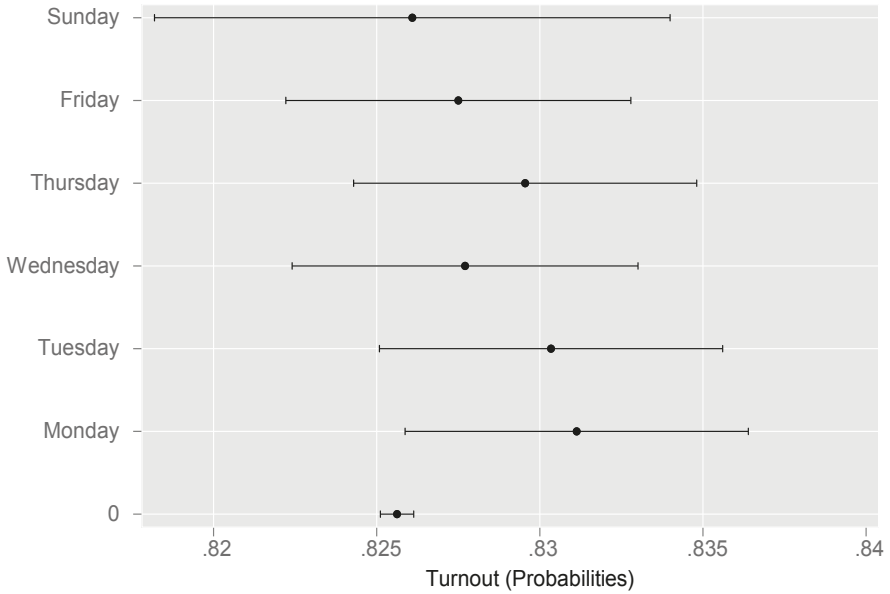
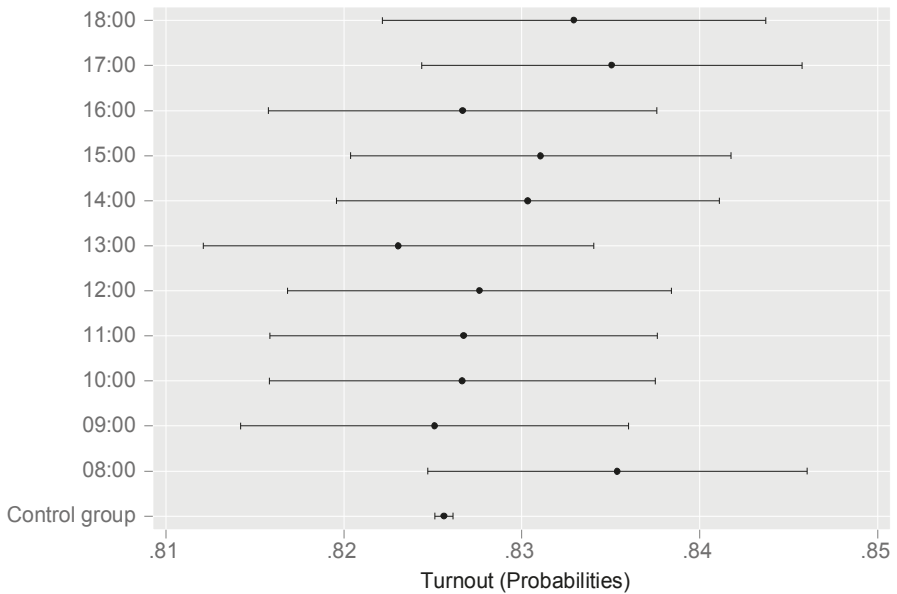


Figure 1 B Time of Delivery Effects with 95% CIs (whole sample, N = 2,221,925)



Overall, the core finding of our 2017 text messaging experiment is that the effect of text messages is modest in a high-salience election such as the 2017 Norwegian parliamentary election. With a baseline turnout as high as around 80%, SMS messages produce a slight increase in turnout.

The Letter Campaign

The empirical analysis is performed in two steps. We begin with a simple bivariate analysis comparing the four treatment groups with the control group. The analysis is done separately for newly naturalised immigrants eligible to vote for the first time and for immigrants who were previously eligible to vote. We expect the effects to differ because the baseline rates of participation captured by the control groups are different. For the second step, we test whether varying the letter content results in differences in impact. Table 6 displays the turnouts for the control groups as well as differences between the control groups and each of the treatment groups. These differences are labelled the ITT effect. The table also displays the CACE, which is the effect of the people actually receiving the letter. The analysis takes into account the 2,011 letters that were returned to the sender.

Table 6 shows there was a control group turnout rate of 58.1% among new citizens eligible to vote for the first time. Each group receiving a letter had a higher turnout rate, although only two of the four letters produced statistically significant higher turnouts. Newly naturalised immigrants receiving the privacy letter voted at a rate of 60.4%, a 2.3 percentage point increase in turnout. As predicted, the participation rate among those receiving the norm-consistent letter was higher (60.7%) than the turnout among first-time voters who received the norm-inconsistent letter (59.7%). The difference between the two, however, was not statistically significant. New citizens who received the placebo letter saw the turnout increase by 1.6 percentage points compared to the control group which received no treatment. Thus, among newly naturalised immigrants, both the privacy letter and the norm-consistent letter significantly increased turnout. The small difference between the two letters was not significant. The overall effect of all letters combined for this group was 2.1 percentage points. The effects of the letters on those who actually got them in the post was marginally larger at 2.3 percentage points.

The effects among first-time voting immigrants were quite strong. While they were smaller than the effects we found for the 2015 elections, effects over 2.0 percentage points for post when the baseline turnout was over 50% was stronger

than any leaflet effect we have seen in previous experiments in the US, the UK and Denmark. The results sharply diverge from the modest effects in previous GOTV experiments aimed at minority populations (see Chong & Junn, 2011). These results suggest that direct post may be a fruitful strategy to increase participation rates among new citizens without previous voting experience.

Table 6 Experimental results. Percentage points increase in voter turnout in treatment groups

<i>First-generation immigrants voting for the first time</i>						
	Turnout	ITT	(s.e.)	CACE	(s.e.)	N
Letter: Privacy message	60.39	2.32**	(.72)	2.50**	(.76)	6,564
Letter: Norm-Consistent	60.65	2.58**	(1.16)	2.77*	(1.23)	2,053
Letter: Norm-Inconsistent	59.65	1.58	(1.16)	1.70	(1.22)	2,022
Letter: Placebo	59.68	1.60	(1.15)	1.72	(1.21)	2,053
All letters combined	60.20	2.13**	(.57)	2.29**	(.61)	12,649
Control group voter turnout	58.07					16,956
<i>All other first-generation immigrants</i>						
	Turnout	ITT	(s.e.)	CACE	(s.e.)	N
Letter: Norm-Consistent	55.93	0.39	(.60)	0.41	(.64)	7,558
Letter: Norm-Inconsistent	57.63	2.09**	(.60)	2.21**	(.64)	7,557
Letter: Placebo	56.77	1.22**	(.60)	1.29*	(.64)	7,516
All letters combined	56.78	1.23**	(.38)	1.31**	(.41)	22,609
Control group voter turnout	55.54					63,885

We now move on to the immigrant population with less than 25 years of residency in Norway. With a minimum of four years of Norwegian citizenship, they, therefore, have previous voting rights, and we found smaller but still significant effects. Table 6 surprisingly shows that their initial propensity to vote was somewhat lower compared to newly naturalised citizens. Approximately

55.5% voted in the control group. Two of the three letters increased turnout. Immigrants receiving the norm-inconsistent letter voted at a rate of 57.6%, compared to 55.9% among those receiving the norm-consistent letter. Thus, the norm-inconsistent letter increased turnout by 2.1 percentage points, compared to an insignificant 0.4 percentage point increase for the norm-consistent letter. Immigrants who received the placebo letter significantly increased turnout by 1.2 percentage points compared to the control group. The combined effect of all the letters was 1.2 percentage points (a CACE of 1.3).

Table 7 shows the corresponding results for the municipality of Oslo where the letters had two different senders: the Municipality of Oslo and the Directorate of Elections. The results in the table are for all letters combined and for all immigrant groups combined. There were no statistically significant effects. The “N” was too small to achieve statistical significance, although the combined effect was close ($p = .051$). It is quite clear that the sender of the letters makes no difference.

Table 7 Experimental results for the municipality of Oslo by sender. Percentage points increase in voter turnout in treatment groups

	Turnout	ITT	(s.e.)	CACE	(s.e.)	N
Oslo municipality	60.62	1.11	(.74)	1.22	(.81)	5,305
Directorate of Elections	60.61	1.10	(.74)	1.21	(.81)	5,336
All letters combined	60.61	1.11	(.57)	1.21	(.62)	10,641
Control group turnout	59.50					24,437

Phone bank experiment

The phone call experiment was conducted by the LNU in the last two weeks before the election (From Monday 28 August to Monday 11 September). The 35 callers matched the targeted population in the sense that all were young voters eligible to vote in their first election. The callers were recruited from across the different organisations under the LNU umbrella, and many were active in key positions in their respective organisations. The callers managed to contact 32,469 young voters of the 40,000 pulled to receive a call. After deleting duplicate mobile phone numbers from the file from the LNU, we were left with 32,424 unique young voters in the treatment group. The remaining sample of

young first-time voters with a registered mobile phone number were previously allocated to the control group (N = 63,368). No calls were directed to this group.

The callers registered whether the call was received and how long the listener stayed on the line. The conversations with those successfully contacted lasted roughly 1.5 minutes on average (SD = 1.1 minute). 73% did not answer the phone, 3% of the conversations were not completed, while a successful completion of the script was achieved with 24% of the young voters.

Table 8 Experimental outcomes for the phone call study (N = 87,091)

	Turnout (%)	ITT (s.e.)	CACE (s.e.)
Voter Control group	69.48	-	-
Voter Treatment group	69.73	0.25 (.322)	1.05 (1.37)

Table 8 reports voter turnout rates for both the treatment and the control group. The table reports effects both for subjects randomly selected to receive the call (the ITT) and for those successfully contacted (the CACE). The turnout rates were 69.5% in the control group and 69.7% in the treatment group. Turnout in the treatment group was estimated to be 0.25 percentage points higher with a standard error of 0.32 compared to the control group. Thus, the difference is indistinguishable from zero. The experiment produced an insignificant CACE of one percentage point (standard error 1.37). Hence, the volunteer phone calls did not increase turnout among voters eligible to vote in their first election in 2017.

Conclusion and discussion

The broad message from the existing literature is that impersonal mobilisation tactics are generally ineffective or produce only small positive results (Green & Gerber, 2015). The data and analyses in Bergh et al. (2016), based on the SMS text message experiment conducted in the 2015 Norwegian local elections, challenged that suggestion. The data and analyses presented in this paper, based on a replication of the 2015 study in the 2017 Norwegian parliamentary election, shows that the mobilisation effects uncovered in 2015 were, for the most part, dependent on the salience of the election. The effect of text messaging in the 2017 parliamentary election among similar groups is modest, as in the 2015 local election. Thus, it is harder to mobilise voters in an election with many habitual votes and few episodic voters. Still, even with a baseline turnout of around 85%, text messaging increased turnout among voters aged 30 and above by 0.42 percentage points.

Compared to the simple nudge delivered by the SMS text campaign, the design of the volunteer live phone call experiment targeting young first-time voters involved personal contact. Not only did voters actually get to talk to a live person, the callers were recruited to perfectly match the targeted population. Young first-time voters called other young first-time voters, trying to make a personal connection with the person on the other end of the line, and encouraging them to take part in the election. Still, the calls increased turnout insignificantly by a modest 0.25 percentage points (CACE one percentage point) from a baseline turnout rate at 69.5%.

If voter mobilisation campaigns are effective, a reasonable argument could be made that GOTV efforts among immigrants should be used as one (of several) policies designed to further their general integration into European societies. Political participation, including voting, is in and of itself an element of being an integrated citizen. In addition, there is evidence in the literature to suggest that political participation has downstream positive effects, such as a higher interest in and knowledge about society (Shineman, 2018). In other words, getting immigrants to the polls is likely to have positive effects on integration, and there are no indications that there are negative drawbacks to such mobilisation. It may, therefore, be a worthwhile policy to adopt.

There are two core questions that this research aims to answer. Do GOTV leaflets work with an immigrant population? That is, does turnout increase among those who receive the GOTV leaflets? The second question is, does the content of the leaflets matter? Do we get higher turnout with one message rather than another?

To help answer the first question, we tested a GOTV letter campaign in two different contexts in Norway. First, in the Norwegian local election of 2015, we targeted foreign nationals with voting rights. The group with the lowest propensity to vote – foreign nationals who had received the right to vote for the first time in 2015 (after three years of residency) – were quite effectively mobilised by the GOTV letter campaign. The average ITT effect was 5.8 percentage points, with a control group turnout of 20.9%. In relative terms, the voting frequency of this group went up by 28%.

In this paper, we reported on the findings, testing the same GOTV leaflets for an experiment conducted in a different context: the Norwegian parliamentary election of 2017. The context is different for several reasons. Firstly, turnout in parliamentary elections is noticeably higher than in local elections; specifically, 60.2% of the entire electorate took part in 2015, whereas the corresponding result in 2017 was 78.2%. Secondly, the sample is different, as foreign nationals who are not Norwegian citizens are not allowed to vote in parliamentary elections, so the second sample only includes naturalised citizens.

Naturalised citizens have higher turnouts than non-naturalised foreign nationals who are eligible to vote in local elections, but the difference is especially stark when you compare foreign nationals in local elections to naturalised citizens in parliamentary elections. The difference in turnout may, in part, be due to the fact that naturalised citizens have resided in the country for a longer period of time than foreign nationals. The requirement for naturalisation applicants is a minimum of seven years of residency. In addition, the act of naturalisation may, in itself, have some positive benefits, as suggested by Hainmueller et al. (2015, 2017). Once applications for naturalisation are granted, people may become more politically engaged and integrated into society. Whatever the reason, turnout in our two control groups was quite high: 58.1% among newly naturalised citizens, and 55.5 among long-term naturalised citizens.

On average, the letters produced a slightly larger effect among newly naturalised citizens than among those who have been citizens for a longer period of time. This is somewhat surprising, given that control group turnout was also higher in the former category. It does indicate that the processes of

naturalisation and of gaining voting rights for the first time stimulate political participation. There may be a “first-time high” as a response to just gaining citizenship, which diminishes over time. Not only does this group have a reasonably high propensity to vote to begin with, but there is also an additional mobilisation potential that can be unleashed through a GOTV campaign. Three of the four letters had statistically significant effects, increasing turnout with newly enfranchised voters, and all of the estimates show a minimum effect of a 1.6 percentage point increase in turnout. Similar results were found with long-term voters where two of the three letters had statistically significant effects on long-term voters.

We found varying effects from one letter to the next, but none of the differences are stark with none of the differences across letters being statistically significant. While we hypothesised that norm-consistent messages would be more effective, and they were for new voters, the difference was not statistically significant. Furthermore, for long-term voters, the norm-inconsistent message was more powerful – the exact opposite of what was predicted.

A reasonable conclusion is, therefore, that GOTV letters are effective in mobilising naturalised citizens with immigrant backgrounds, and the varying effects are too small to place much weight on the text being used. Until further proof is found, the fluctuation can be largely viewed simply as random noise. Receiving a message matters; the content of the varying messages does not seem to make much of a difference.

In conclusion, GOTV letter campaigns are an effective tool to mobilise immigrants in a European context. Future research should look more closely at the downstream effect of such mobilisation drives. Does increased turnout lead to better integration in other areas of society? It is an issue that we aim to pursue based on data from our 2015 and 2017 experiments.

The core finding in this report is that the effects of impersonal GOTV contacts, such as the simple nudge involved in text messaging and live phone calls, depend on the saliency of the election. In the case of a low-saliency election, mobilising campaigns are trying to get episodic voters to go out and vote once again. While in a high-saliency election, such as the 2017 parliamentary election, campaigners are trying to mobilise people who have not voted and to start to consider themselves as voters. The latter is a tougher task since the number of habitual non-voters is a small group.

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Appendix

Letter 1

BRUK STEMMERETTEN DEN 11. SEPTEMBER

11. september er det stortingsvalg. Ved å delta i valget støtter du opp om demokratiet i Norge. Hvilket politisk parti og hvilke kandidater du stemmer på er selvsagt opp til deg. Det viktige er at du deltar.

Din stemme er hemmelig

I valglokalet går du inn i et eget avlukke der du er helt alene når du stemmer. Etter at du har bestemt deg for hvilket politisk parti du vil stemme på, legger du stemmeseddelen i en forseglet urne med mange andre stemmesedler. Hverken valgmedarbeidere eller andre i valglokalet har lov til å spørre deg hvem du har stemt på. Du kan være helt trygg på at din stemme er hemmelig.

Praktisk informasjon om valget.

Valgdagen er 11. september 2017, i noen kommuner er det også valg søndag 10. september. Du har tidligere fått tilsendt valgkort i posten, med informasjon om ditt valglokale og åpningstider. Husk å ta med legitimasjon som inneholder navn, fødselsdato og bilde. Har du praktiske spørsmål kan du kontakte din kommune.

Benytt sjansen til å bestemme hvordan politikken skal utformes i Norge.

Bruk stemmeretten!

Valgdirektoratet

SIGNATUR

Bjørn Berg
Direktør

Letter 2

BRUK STEMMERETTEN DEN 11. SEPTEMBER

11. september er det stortingsvalg. Ved å delta i valget støtter du opp om demokratiet i Norge. Hvilket politisk parti og hvilke kandidater du stemmer på er selvsagt opp til deg. Det viktige er at du deltar.

Deltakelsen blant velgere med innvandrerbakgrunn er økende. Bidra til å sette ny rekord!

Alle med norsk statsborgerskap har rett til å stemme ved valget. Ved stortingsvalget i 2013 økte valgdeltakelsen blant statsborgere med innvandrerbakgrunn. I flere grupper var deltakelsen godt over 60 prosent. Bidra til enda større deltakelse ved å stemme ved årets valg!

Praktisk informasjon om valget.

Valgdagen er 11. september 2017, i noen kommuner er det også valg søndag 10. september. Du har tidligere fått tilsendt valgkort i posten, med informasjon om ditt valglokale og åpningstider. Husk å ta med legitimasjon som inneholder navn, fødselsdato og bilde. Har du praktiske spørsmål kan du kontakte din kommune.

Benytt sjansen til å bestemme hvordan politikken skal utformes i Norge.

Bruk stemmeretten!

Valgdirektoratet

SIGNATUR

Bjørn Berg
Direktør

Letter 3

BRUK STEMMERETTEN DEN 11. SEPTEMBER

11. september er det stortingsvalg. Ved å delta i valget støtter du opp om demokratiet i Norge. Hvilket politisk parti og hvilke kandidater du stemmer på er selvsagt opp til deg. Det viktige er at du deltar.

Deltakelsen blant velgere med innvandrerbakgrunn er for lav.

Bidra til å snu trenden!

Alle med norsk statsborgerskap har rett til å stemme ved valget. Dessverre deltok velgere med innvandrerbakgrunn i langt mindre grad enn resten av befolkningen ved stortingsvalget i 2013. I flere innvandrergupper var deltakelsen godt under 50 prosent. Du kan bidra til å snu trenden ved å stemme ved stortingsvalget den 11. september!

Praktisk informasjon om valget.

Valgdagen er 11. september 2017, i noen kommuner er det også valg søndag 10. september. Du har tidligere fått tilsendt valgkort i posten, med informasjon om ditt valglokale og åpningstider. Husk å ta med legitimasjon som inneholder navn, fødselsdato og bilde. Har du praktiske spørsmål kan du kontakte din kommune.

Benytt sjansen til å bestemme hvordan politikken skal utformes i Norge.

Bruk stemmeretten!

Valgdirektoratet

SIGNATUR

Bjørn Berg
Direktør

Letter 4

BRUK STEMMERETTEN DEN 11. SEPTEMBER

11. september er det stortingsvalg. Ved å delta i valget støtter du opp om demokratiet i Norge. Hvilket politisk parti og hvilke kandidater du stemmer på er selvsagt opp til deg. Det viktige er at du deltar.

Praktisk informasjon om valget.

Valgdagen er 11. september 2017, i noen kommuner er det også valg søndag 10. september. Du har tidligere fått tilsendt valgkort i posten, med informasjon om ditt valglokale og åpningstider. Husk å ta med legitimasjon som inneholder navn, fødselsdato og bilde. Har du praktiske spørsmål kan du kontakte din kommune.

Benytt sjansen til å bestemme hvordan politikken skal utformes i Norge.

Bruk stemmeretten!

Valgdirektoratet

SIGNATUR

Bjørn Berg
Direktør

Voter Mobilisation in a High-Turnout Context

Get Out the Vote Experiments in the 2017 Norwegian Parliamentary Election

What can be done to increase voter participation in elections? One possibility is to contact voters individually and try to get them to the polls. This report contains results from several experiments with “Get Out the Vote” mobilisation techniques in the Norwegian local elections of 2015 and the parliamentary election of 2017. These experiments include letters in the post, SMS text messages and phone calls to voters. The general finding is that mobilisation drives such as these are more effective in local elections where turnout is lower than in parliamentary elections. SMS text messages and letters in the post can be quite effective in mobilising low-turnout groups, such as immigrants and young voters in local elections.

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