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ARTICLE



A new way to serve democracy: recruiting poll workers and electoral participation

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ABSTRACT

Declining turnout rates and political disengagement have spurred many proposals to reform contemporary democracies. Some proposals aim at electoral participation, while others seek to create alternative non-voting forms of participation in politics. This article explores a third route, where elections are used to foster democratic non-voting engagement: that is, engagement in elections, but not as voters. We propose that society actively seek to engage citizens and resident non-citizens, who are either by choice or by law currently non-voters, to participate in the different administrative aspects of elections as poll workers. Our proposal concerns paid positions for which people volunteer, rather than unpaid positions into which people are drafted, whether they want to or not. Hence, this article proposes a novel form of electoral participation that is voluntary, open, and appropriate for those unable or not yet ready to vote.

KEYWORDS Non-voting; poll workers; inclusive administration; democracy; non-citizens; youngsters

Introduction: a new form of participation

Electoral participation, widely considered a cornerstone of democratic societies, is declining in many Western democracies. Whether or not this is inherently problematic, there are good reasons to worry when –as is the case– that decline occurs unevenly across social groups and affects the least wealthy and educated sections of society at a much greater rate than their more fortunate counterparts. One consequence is that the former’s needs, experiences, and preferences are inadequately considered in political decision-making (Rosset & Kurella, 2020; Schlozman et al., 2018). We may thus worry that, in a vicious circle, the people who benefit least from collective policies are most likely to abstain from voting, with the result that public policies are increasingly unlikely to take account of their needs and interests and to be justifiable in terms of the legitimate interests of all.

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A wide range of proposals have emerged in response to declining interest in electoral politics. Deliberative mini-publics, referendums, and sortition-based citizen's assemblies reflect the broad sentiment that society might gain something valuable from involving citizens in legislation or providing them with new ways of selecting legislators (Abizadeh, 2021; Caserta et al., 2021; el-Wakil, 2017, 2020; Jacquet & van der Does, 2021; Khan, 2005; Paulis et al., 2020; Smith, 2005). We can think of these as non-voting forms of political participation.

However, voting remains a core part of contemporary democratic politics, and citizens participate in elections primarily as voters rather than candidates. Hence, academic responses to low and uneven turnout include discussions of nudging (Green & Gerber, 2023) and compulsion (Chapman, 2019; Elliott, 2017; Hill, 2016; Umbers, 2020)¹ as well as of whether or not voting is a duty (Häggrot, 2021; Saunders, 2016, 2018). They also include reflections on the potential of electronic voting (Abu-Shanab et al., 2010; De Cock & Preneel, 2007; Vassil & Weber, 2011), paying voters (Saunders, 2009), lowering the voting age (Bergh, 2013; Chan & Clayton, 2006; Douglas, 2016) and technological remedies such as voting advice applications (Albertsen, 2020; Anderson & Fossen, 2014; Garzia & Marschall, 2019; Gemenis & Rosema, 2014; Germann & Gemenis, 2019; Manavopoulos et al., 2018; Munzert & Ramirez-Ruiz, 2021; Tromborg & Albertsen, 2023).

We can thus identify two types of responses to declining electoral participation. The one seeks to reconnect citizens to electoral democracy by increasing their engagement with elections *as voters*. The other accepts disenchantment with electoral democracy and responds by seeking *non-electoral* ways to increase political participation. However, this leaves a third possibility untouched: expanding citizen's options to participate in democratic elections even if they are unwilling or unable to vote. This article explores this third route by investigating the scope for engaging actual and potential citizens in the administrative, rather than the electoral, aspects of elections – although citizens could, and should, be encouraged to engage in electoral politics in other ways. Specifically, we propose that society seek to *engage citizens and resident non-citizens who, either by choice or by law, are currently non-voters, in the different administrative aspects of elections*. The positions in question are paid positions, for which people volunteer, as opposed to (un)paid positions into which people are drafted. In terms of terminology, we employ the common term poll workers here to cover any person who has a non-executive role at the polling station and is thus responsible for carrying out tasks in the administration of an election. While voting is pivotal to elections, for obvious reasons, that is no reason to ignore other ways in which people might take part in democratic elections whether or not they are entitled or willing to vote.

This article is thus a normative philosophical supplement to the growing literature on poll workers. The latter provides important empirical insights regarding who serves as poll workers and why they do so. In terms of who serves as poll workers, findings from various countries indicate that compared to the general population, poll workers are more likely to be female, have more education, and be older (Burden & Milyo, 2015; Clark & James, 2017; T. Hall & Moore, 2014; Jerhov & Högström, 2024). They are also often found to be less racially/ethnically diverse than the general population (T. Hall & Moore, 2014, p. 180; King & Barnes, 2019). In terms of motivation,² the findings are mixed and suggest the importance of it being considered a duty; pro-social attitudes and monetary considerations often matter too (Barsky, 2020, 2024; Clark & James, 2023; McAuliffe, 2009). A recurrent finding, important for our proposal, is that poll workers affect voters' experience of democracy (Atkeson & Saunders, 2007; Claassen et al., 2008; T. E. Hall et al., 2009). In the US, encountering electoral administrators of the same race/ethnicity increases the confidence in the election administration for Hispanics and African Americans (King & Barnes, 2019). The representativeness of poll workers may also affect participation (Rinfret & Barsky, 2020). Hence, we believe our proposal speaks to the scope for improving the diversity of poll workers and, with it, the experience of would-be voters and to efforts to encourage engagement with democratic elections amongst those who are least represented politically by the current electoral process.

This article is structured as follows. It first presents the tasks solved by poll workers during most elections. Laying out these details is important, because whether it is fitting or plausible to use those jobs as we propose depends partly on the nature of the tasks to be solved. The following section surveys current limitations across European countries regarding who can work as poll workers. Here, we draw on the survey results (summarized in Table 1) concerning the main requirements determining eligibility for service as poll workers in different European countries (Albertsen & Lever, 2023) and evaluate their current limitations. The latter part of the discussion examines some arguments for keeping the current limitations on who can serve as poll workers. The final concluding section highlights the similarities and differences between our proposal and the other two strategies.

Administering an election: an examination of tasks and requirements

Poll workers fulfil a variety of roles in democratic elections, and their powers and responsibilities differ.³ However, someone, or some small group of people, directs the polling station, holds overall responsibility for its work, and directs the work of others. This group of administrative workers have different names in different countries, and the precise

Table 1.

Country	Main requirement	Language	Training	Other	Not a candidate ⁶
Netherlands ⁷	Age 18		(x) ⁸		
Germany ⁹	Voter			Lived>3 months in Germany ¹⁰	
Spain ¹¹	Voters below 70	can read and write			
Sweden ¹²	(none) ¹³		X		
Romania ¹⁴	Citizens with a right to vote				X+ relatives of candidates
England ¹⁵	18 and working permit				X+ relatives+ those working for candidate
Scotland ¹⁶	18 and working permit				X+ relatives + those working for candidate
Northern Ireland ¹⁷	18 and working permit			must not have been convicted of an offence under electoral law	X + relative + those working for candidate. Must declare conflicts of interests
Denmark ¹⁸	Voters			Must live in municipality	Candidates cannot count votes of own party or assist voters in the voting both
Switzerland ¹⁹	Citizens 18+				
Portugal ²⁰	Voters	read and write Portuguese			
Italy ²¹	Voters				
Norway ²²					X
Belgium ²³	Voters				
Wales ²⁴	18				X + relative+ those working for candidate
Iceland ²⁵	(none)				X+ their spouses and closest relatives
Poland ²⁶	Citizen with the right to vote				X+ persons connected with them
Hungary ²⁷	Voters residing in the district				X, their relatives and members of organisations nominating candidates ²⁸
Croatia ²⁹	(none)				Chairperson and deputy cannot be party members

description of their tasks varies. However, the important point is that someone directs the polling station, has overall responsibility, and leads the work of others. Our proposal does not affect these but concerns the distribution of roles amongst those in the more mundane administrative positions that elections also require.

What are the typical tasks carried out by poll workers? The purpose here is not to point out country-specific differences but rather to indicate the kind of tasks solved and to have that in mind when the merits of our proposal are assessed. This summary is based on a wide range of descriptions from across Europe.⁴ Voting booths must be assembled before the election, and the polling station prepared with tables and necessary equipment. On Election Day, the poll workers must execute many minor and major responsibilities. Some of these responsibilities involve cordially welcoming voters to the electoral event. Throughout the day, it is crucial to ensure that voting is conducted in a peaceful and well-organized atmosphere. Furthermore, poll workers verify voters' identity by examining ID or posing questions to confirm the voter's identity. If a register of invalid polling cards exist, poll workers may also check this. They also receive the polling card, check its authenticity, hand out ballots, and note which voters have turned up.

Poll workers answer specific clarificatory questions that voters may have about the procedures for voting, such as where to tick the ballot, what pencil or pen to use, and where to place the filled ballot so it can be counted. They may be required to support those who, perhaps due to a disability, need special aid to vote (i.e. supporting those who need help walking from their car (or facilitating voting from the car)) and to determine whether minor children may enter the voting booth with their parents. Other tasks during Election Day are even more practical. The supply of ballots may need to be topped up, and new pencils might be required at polling stations or in the voting booth. When the last ballot has been cast, the polls are closed. Then, the votes are tallied. In some countries, such as the Netherlands and Ireland, counting is handled by a different group, but in others, this is another task for those who have served as poll workers during the day. Thus, to have a successful democratic election, poll workers must complete many small tasks. The tasks described above are relatively easy, and it seems a reasonable suggestion that many people would be able to carry out some, if not all, of them if provided with proper instructions and leadership.

Various rules and conventions determine who can serve as poll workers in Europe. [Table 1](#) reproduces the results from a survey of this (Albertsen & Lever, 2023).⁵ It is organized around 'the main requirements', as these provide the critical filter determining who is eligible to serve as poll workers. These vary across countries. We report them here because they tell an interesting story about the practicalities involved in our proposal. They provide an impression of what, if anything, would need to be changed to implement the kind of participation proposed in this article. Although electoral law and official materials describe the requirements for serving as poll workers, the survey employs a wider range of sources (Albertsen & Lever, 2023). An important source is data from ads employed to recruit poll workers, where such ads were available and accessible in terms of language. These are

preferable because they provide a clear guideline of the requirements listed in the electoral law and the more practical requirements that stem from other sources or reflect an institutional preference regarding who is called upon to serve as poll workers. Where such ads were unavailable (typically, when there were no upcoming election), we reported the requirement listed in electoral law. As descriptions based on ads may include more requirements than those based on the electoral law, subsequent comparisons should be read with that in mind. While the survey does not include every European country and is made from different data sources, it is sufficient for the purpose. This is the case because what we want to highlight here is the kind of limits in place to provide a proper understanding of the extent to which they conflict with our proposal.

Let us take a closer look at the most prevalent requirements. We can see how they affect the possibility of employing young people, non-citizen residents, and socially and politically marginalized adults (such as some long-term unemployed) as poll workers, and therefore of bridging some of the cognitive and social barriers that separate those who have no close contact with anyone who votes, and those who, conversely, are without much knowledge of the lives and world views of alienated non-voters.

Some European countries, such as Poland and Romania, require people to be citizens to serve as poll workers. Such a requirement stops immigrants who are not yet (or never will be) citizens from becoming poll workers. However, it poses no obstacle to the inclusion of young citizens who are not eligible to vote nor to disaffected non-voters or socially marginalized adults. Sometimes, it is necessary to be registered on the electoral roll in other countries, such as Hungary and Italy. This means that resident non-citizens will be ineligible to serve as poll workers in national elections if ineligible to vote, although they may be eligible to serve and vote in other elections. In any EU member country, a person can vote in the country where they currently reside for elections to the European Parliament and in local elections.³⁰ For the latter, non-EU citizens are often voters. So, for such elections, immigrants could be employed as poll workers.

While not all voters are citizens, not all citizens are eligible to vote. This is the case when a person has not reached the voting age, but also when a person has been disenfranchised.³¹ Several countries do not have a nationality requirement (or, as in Northern Ireland, allow many nationalities to become poll workers). However, the differences between a voter requirement and a citizenship requirement should be clear at this point. In general, if registering to vote is necessary to serve as a poll worker, this is likely to make serving as a poll worker (as well as voting) more difficult for the poor, those with no fixed accommodation, or who change accommodation regularly (as can happen for students, as well as non-student workers). Conversely, automatic registration will benefit these groups both as potential support staff

and as potential voters. In short, registration and citizenship requirements for service as poll workers can substantially affect people's ability to serve in these administrative electoral roles and affect their ability to involve citizens and resident aliens who are unable to take part in elections by voting.

Looking at the other requirements, we may say that the extent to which they filter out young citizens, resident non-citizens and marginalised adult citizens varies greatly. Competence in the local language, as required in Portugal, may make some immigrants – and even some citizens – ineligible to serve as poll workers. In some countries, such as England and Iceland, poll workers cannot be members of a political party; whereas in others, such as Northern Ireland, it is *working* for a candidate that renders one ineligible for service, rather than *membership* of a political party itself. These criteria of eligibility, of course, are less likely adversely to affect the young and politically/socially marginalised and, therefore, constrain those who are likely to vote more than those who are ineligible or unwilling to do so. So they are unlikely to pose a problem for our proposal. Finally, age requirements, both implicit and explicit, may make it impossible for some young people to serve as poll workers. However, Norway explicitly emphasizes that school pupils can be hired as poll workers even if they are not eligible to vote (valg.no, 2022). In fact, age requirements and the requirement to be a voter are often two sides of the same coin, although they do come apart. An age requirement affects young people, but not adult non-citizens.

In short, current rules and conventions governing access to positions as poll workers have differential effects on citizen non-voters, both adult and minor, and non-citizen adults, whether marginalised or not. Politically and socially marginalized citizens are not directly barred by any of the limitations—even if requirements to be a registered voter may be a de facto barrier here. It is worth noting, however, that in countries advertising for poll workers, the advertisements for these jobs send very different messages. In Italy, it is stressed that students and the unemployed are particularly welcome to apply. In Ireland, the officers responsible are required to ensure a recruitment process that 'encourages and welcomes applications' from those who are unemployed (INOU, 2020). In stark contrast, many UK postings advise potential applicants on benefits to first contact their local unemployment benefits office (bristol.gov.uk, 2020). This is likely to discourage those on unemployment benefits from applying, whether that is the intended effect or not.

Implementing our proposal, then, requires significant changes to the eligibility requirements for poll workers in many European countries. So, are its potential benefits sufficient to justify the effort? What if some of the restrictions we need to lift to make poll worker positions more widely known and accessible are, in fact, important? We now turn to these questions about the appeal and limitations of our proposal.

The great variation in current recruitment and selection practices for poll workers makes it unlikely that more inclusive practices would conflict with, or undermine important democratic norms. Put simply, nothing about democracy requires that those who serve as poll workers must themselves be eligible to vote – anymore than that those employed in non-religious functions in Churches and other religious establishments must qualify as believers in good standing (Rosenblum, 1998, 2000). On the contrary, considerations of equality of opportunity and the removal of unnecessary obstacles to social interaction amongst citizens who are divided by class, religion and politics speak in favour of more tolerant norms of recruitment.

However, if relaxing exclusionary rules for recruiting poll workers is unlikely to conflict with democratic norms of equality, freedom, and solidarity, it is likely that concerns for competence and trustworthiness motivate current restrictions related to age and, perhaps also, citizenship in access to poll worker positions. However, looking at the tasks outlined in the beginning, it is difficult to believe that many of the excluded would be unable to fulfill those tasks, nor that this is their intention. Most of these are not demanding tasks, even for youngsters – many of whom are likely to participate in voluntary or paid activities that require punctuality, courtesy, numeracy, literacy, and the ability to follow and transmit instructions. Hence, from the point of view of competence, many of these restrictions seem too strict and unfairly exclude people's ability to hold responsible (albeit low-level) positions in an event of national importance and to benefit financially and in terms of the respect and gratitude of others for a task well-done (Rawls, 1971, Part 1.14).

Something similar is true of these restrictions if we consider them to be motivated by concerns for trust and trustworthiness. As a general rule, there is no reason to believe that resident non-citizens are untrustworthy or unable to help in the conduct of some or all elections (e.g. of national, as distinct from local and European ones). They are, after all, likely to fulfill responsible duties as workers, family members, volunteers, and so on, just like their citizen counterparts. Nor would it be right to conclude that the refusal to become a citizen, once that opportunity becomes available, reflects indifference or hostility to the good of the country in which one is resident. Becoming a citizen is often a demanding and expensive process and sometimes requires relinquishing (or subordinating) citizenship in one's native country. It is, therefore, hard to see how concerns for competence or trustworthiness could justify some of the more blanket restrictions on resident non-citizens participating as poll workers. On the contrary, reasons to believe that an individual (or a coordinated group of) anti-democratic poll workers could use our proposal to undermine elections, would suggest that current rules provide inadequate security for elections.. It is better to address such fears, if justified, through

a suitable vetting process for applicants, rather than through rules that unfairly stigmatise a large, and often vulnerable, population.

However, suggesting that trust is part of the reason for excluding certain groups from poll worker positions underlines the symbolic and expressive dimensions of the way we formulate the requirements for these posts and advertise their availability. The youngster who is legally entitled to marry, have and care for children, and to serve in the armed forces may legitimately object to being excluded from such jobs, whether or not they object to being prevented from voting or standing for legislative office themselves. The same is likely to be true for resident non-citizens who are excluded from taking part in or helping in the conduct of a democratic election simply because they are not eligible to take part as voters. It should be noted that resident non-citizens are, in many places, a large, diverse, and substantial group. But also a group, which contains many physically and politically vulnerable individuals. It is important to note here that the expressive dimensions identified both with competence-based and trust-based justifications for limiting access to serving as poll worker are relevant far beyond those who would have served were the restrictions not in place – and the same goes for the positive expressive elements conveyed by our proposal.

Finally, age and registration requirements affect citizen non-voters' ability to participate in elections and serve their fellows in ways that are of collective benefit, even if they do not involve submitting a legally valid ballot. Payment for such work may be particularly important to some of them, just as it will be for unemployed citizens (see also (Barsky et al., 2023)). In these ways, the rules governing access to and remuneration of poll worker positions can reinforce people's sense of membership in a democratic society, even if they are not eligible members of the demos, and recognition of their capacities as actual or potential political agents. By contrast, as we have seen, these rules and conventions are often drawn in ways that are stigmatising and exclusive, thereby sending the message – whether intentionally or not – that democratic politics is not for people like them. That is not to say that all those who, we suggest, should be eligible to take part as poll-workers, will then want to become voters and some members of these groups may be too alienated from electoral politics to want to serve as poll workers.³² But many members of those who are currently unable to serve are not alienated in that way, and their exclusion, as we have seen, is neither necessary nor justified.

Conclusion

The administrative aspects of elections are an underexplored way of engaging people in elections in contemporary democracies, even if they are not

eligible to vote. Instead of relying on public servants, party members, and the most electorally enthusiastic to fulfill these tasks, greater effort could and should be made to involve those who are not yet eligible to vote, and also to include those who are not (yet) willing to exercise their right to vote. Elections have a ritualistic and symbolic aspect, in which people can take part even if they are not ready, or able to fulfil the roles of voter, of candidate or of political partisan and, thereby, to take part in elections as an important moment of collective political choice.³³ Our proposal mobilises the expressive, as well as the practical, aspects of democratic elections to foster a more inclusive conception of democratic elections – one that attends to their administration³⁴ – and to the ways that this can be opened to a wider number of participants.

Acting as a poll worker means taking part in elections in ways that are necessary, although under-recognised. At present, a large and growing number of people who are entitled to vote in elections, even in established democracies, appear to see voting as an alien activity unrelated to the things that they care about, or that people like them do. This state of affairs is a legitimate cause of moral and political concern. Opening poll worker positions to school-age citizens and to alienated voting age citizens is an imperfect proxy for a range of public policies that combat political subordination and alienation, and that undermine our ability to see each other as equal citizens. Nonetheless, removing arbitrary and unjustified barriers to such forms of electoral participation is valuable in its own right, and if the availability of such positions are adequately advertised, helps to send a message of inclusion, of welcome and of recognition. In its own right it is worth doing because it removes arbitrary restrictions on a public position, while opening up poll worker positions to resident non-citizens is a way to show that you do not need not be a member of the demos to share in one of the defining acts of a democracy, even if you are not (yet) eligible to vote. In principle, the position of poll-worker could also be extended to non-resident non-nationals, such as students or, even, asylum-seekers, as well as those who are non-resident holders of work permits. Although the position of poll-worker may seem menial and mundane, because the tasks involved are not especially onerous or complex, they are, nonetheless critical elements of a complex whole, through which people exercise their rights to choose those who will represent and govern them and to stand for positions of power and responsibility themselves. The fact that the work involved is simple, then, does not mean that it is menial or unimportant. The fact that current poll-workers are likely to be retired women, who are better-educated than the average hardly suggests that the work is demeaning, although the fact that some of them are motivated by money suggests that the effects of sexual inequality on access to well-paid work and benefits mean that the economic situation of some members of this group may be precarious

(Goldin, 1992; Pateman, 1988). Elections must be produced, not only consumed,³⁵ and the former may be utilized in a way that strengthens democracy and our abilities to relate as equals.

Fulfilling such tasks may not turn us into voters, let alone political partisans and candidates for office, anymore than helping at music festivals or marathons means that we must want to become musicians or runners. But in so far as these complex events enable us to rub shoulders with people we would otherwise never meet and, sometimes, to practice and work together with those who are different from us, they can teach us things about ourselves and others we would never have imagined, although their point is not, itself, educative. Hence, we believe that the administrative aspects of elections provide a relatively easy way in which democracies can demystify the practice of electoral democracy, and can do so in ways that are likely to be especially important for those who, otherwise, are least likely to see the point of democratic elections, and to doubt that all the fuss they involve can be relevant to, even appropriate for, people like themselves.

Compulsory voting seeks to boost electoral participation, based on the view that there are no ready substitutes for elections as 'instruments of democracy' (Bingham Powell, 2000); and that the legitimacy of their results depends on the number of citizens who take part, not just on the quality of candidates and of electoral debate. We are sympathetic to that perspective, though sceptical about the alleged benefits of compulsion, or the ability of elections, by themselves, to bear the weight of authorization, accountability, and legitimacy. We are therefore sympathetic to the second strategy's interest in creating additional forms of democratic participation, authorisation, and accountability, via referendums (from below and above) (el-Wakil, 2017), and more direct forms of participation in the workplace and in local politics (eg. Dugrand, 2020) and improved mechanisms of citizen consultation (Stone, 2021). However, we know that the people most likely to take part in such forms of non-electoral politics are drawn from groups who are most likely to take part in their electoral counterparts. That is not a reason to think them unimportant or undesirable, but it is a reason for scepticism about their ability to overcome the social and political divisions that make voting seem pointless or unattractive to many people. Our proposal is designed with these considerations in mind. On the one hand, it seeks to introduce people to electoral politics without supposing that they must be willing or able to vote. Given the importance of national, European, and local elections, there are many opportunities for people to become familiar with the way that elections work and to support these democratically significant moments of collective choice and authorisation without taking on the responsibility of contributing positively to those choices themselves. This is important, because voting is often a morally complicated, painful and, perhaps, compromising act of personal and political identification and requires a willingness to assess and

reassess one's hopes and fears for the future (Lever, 2017; Lever & Volacu, 2018). It is not a morally cheap act, and it is easy to understand why people who find politics intimidating or alienating might hesitate to exercise their rights as voters. On the other hand, our proposal shares the belief that new ways of participating in collective life, new avenues for exploring what it means to be a citizen, and new experiences of collective action and solidarity with others are necessary to improve the quality of electoral democracy nowadays, and valuable forms of mutuality as well. We recognise, however, that people alienated from electoral politics may not find new, time-consuming, and often intellectually demanding forms of participation attractive and may rightly be concerned with their ability to make money from their efforts. That is why our proposal aims to create opportunities for engagement with elections that are relatively easy – demanding little in the way of political knowledge or interest – and that are relatively low-skilled and therefore maximally accessible while meriting public recognition and remuneration. In short, while our proposal will not work unless time and money are spent to construct opportunities for administrative participation that are accessible and appealing to the young, to the unemployed, the disenchanting, and non-citizens,³⁶ it aims to build on the insights of alternative responses to democratic disenchantment and, with them, to create the more inclusive, appealing and solidaristic forms of politics that so many desire.

Notes

1. For critical discussions of compulsory voting, see (Lever, 2010; Lever & Volacu, 2018; Pedersen et al., 2024; Saunders, 2010; Singh, 2016; Thaysen & Albertsen, 2020; Thaysen et al., 2020; Volacu, 2020):
2. A range of system-level factors also matter, see (Cantú & Ley, 2017)
3. The presentation here draws on (Albertsen & Lever, 2023).
4. Such as (Arbetsgivarverket.se, 2022; bristol.gov.uk, 2020; Bundeswahlleiter.de, 2021; Council, 2022; Electoral Office for Northern Ireland, 2022, highland.gov.uk, 2021; Law Governing Elections to the Assembly of the Republic, 2015; legislatie.just.ro, 2015; News, 2020; Økonomi og Indenrigsministeriet, 2017, rijksoverheid.nl/, 2020; Riksdagsförvaltningen, 2005, swissinfo.ch, 2003; The Electoral Commission, 2019; valg.no, 2022; vasteras.se, 2022; villard-de-lans.fr, 2022; warrington.gov.uk, 2021).
5. The survey was originally conducted in (Albertsen & Lever, 2022), and later published as (Albertsen & Lever, 2023). We have added sources for Croatia and Italy here.
6. 'X' means that it is a requirement that you are not a candidate.
7. (rijksoverheid.nl/, 2020).
8. Mandatory online training.
9. (bundeswahlleiter.de, 2021).
10. and not longer than 25 years ago.
11. (legislatie.just.ro, 2015).
12. (Riksdagsförvaltningen, 2005)

13. Not by law, but adds asks for people over 18 and speak Swedish (Arbetsgivarverket.se, 2022; Vasteras.se, 2022).
14. (legislatie.just.ro, 2015).
15. (bristol.gov.uk, 2020; warrington.gov.uk, 2021).
16. (highland.gov.uk, 2021).
17. (Electoral Office for Northern Ireland, 2022)
18. (Økonomi og Indenrigsministeriet, 2017).
19. (swissinfo.ch, 2003).
20. (Law Governing Elections to the Assembly of the Republic, 2015)
21. (INO, 2020)
22. (valg.no, 2022)
23. (<https://elections.fgov.be/>, 2022)
24. (Polling Station Staff and Count Assistant Positions Closing Date, 2022)
25. (government.is, 2020).
26. (Aplikuj.pl, 2020).
27. (Act C of 1997 on Electoral Procedure, 2013)
28. It is also stated that a number of publica officials and public employees working with elections can't hold these positions.
29. (Croatia Parliamentary Elections Act 2003, 2015).
30. For recent discussion of citizenship requirements in Europe see (Carlsson, 2022; Jensen et al., 2021; Midtbøen et al., 2020),
31. For recent discussion see (Mauer, 2010; Poama & Theuns, 2019). In some instances, the reasons people are disenfranchised (i.e. lack of cognitive abilities or, in some countries, that they are in prison) make them unable to serve as ESS. But including these groups are not the focus here.
32. Those more narrowly focussed on recruitment typically suggest targeting other groups. See (Tran & Tran, D. S. Unrigging American Elections, 2019). The effort should be informed by knowledge of how to recruit best, see (Greenberger, 2024; Hostetter & Lebron, 2024).
33. We mean to employ the term carnivalesque in a non-sinister way. For a critique of such use, see Santarelli (Santarelli, 2017).
34. For a fascinating discussion of the difficulties of administering elections during the pandemic -- see <https://www.redem-h2020.eu/insights.html#penalopez>. The subject was also the topic of a panel at the REDEM conference in Barcelona, spring 2022. <https://www.redem-h2020.eu/ws-barcelona.html>.
35. We are grateful to an anonymous reviewer for the consumption-production distinction.
36. A reviewer points out that serving as ESS may also be a valuable learning experience for non-citizens who aspire to become citizens.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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