

# REPUTATIONAL CONCERNS IN COMMON VALUE ELECTIONS\*

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## Abstract

In common value elections, the act of voting signals a voter's level of information, as informed voters vote for the correct state whereas uninformed voters abstain, as established by Feddersen and Pesendorfer (1996). If voters have reputational concerns - they care to be perceived as informed - then informed voters still vote informatively and uninformed voters may be tempted to participate, ignoring the possible efficiency losses of doing so. A laboratory experiment provides strong empirical support for this mechanism. These results suggest that reputational concerns might be a plausible explanation for the relatively frequent victories of suboptimal alternatives in elections.

*Keywords:* Common value elections; Condorcet Jury Theorem; Swing voter's curse; Signaling; Reputation; Experiments

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# 1 Introduction

People vote for various reasons. They do so to influence the outcomes (Piketty, 2000), to express their preferences (Ali and Lin, 2013), or out of a sense of civic duty (Blais and Daoust, 2020). As recently established, they also vote just to be seen participating (Gerber et al., 2008). Indeed, a growing literature in political science and economics identifies the reputation gains of voting to be a major driving force of turnout decisions (see, e.g. Bufacchi, 2001 and Leighley and Nagler, 2014 in political science and Ali and Lin, 2013, Aytimur et al., 2014, Dellavigna et al., 2016, and Mattozzi and Nakaguma, 2023 in economics). Individuals gain respect by their fellow citizens when observed to participate in the elections, and attempt to reveal their type in a way that is similar to the classic signaling model (Spence, 1973). Most of these studies consider an election which aims to aggregate diverse and privately observed preferences, and show that the positive reputation effects of voting unambiguously improve the quality of electoral outcomes: turnout increases, the winner enjoys higher democratic legitimacy, and unpopular alternatives are less likely to win.

Our contribution departs sharply from this literature. Instead of assuming that reputation is shaped by publicly observing how individuals vote, we introduce a reputational channel based solely on whether individuals choose to participate. This distinction is fundamental: participation decisions contain strictly less information than vote choices, yet they can still operate as a signaling device. By revealing only who turns out we allow reputation to emerge indirectly, through turnout rather than through expressed preferences. To our knowledge, no existing work on elections has isolated this mechanism or examined its implications for information aggregation.

The mechanism we isolate is not confined to laboratory environments. Prior to the adoption of the secret ballot in the nineteenth century, many voting procedures were public or semi-public, making participation itself socially observable. In such settings, abstention could carry reputational costs independent of vote choice.

A historical illustration is the Great Council of the Republic of Venice. Although membership was hereditary after 1297, regular attendance and active participation were expected. The Council elected magistrates and ultimately the Doge was framed as serving the stability and continuity of the Republic. Disagreements largely concerned judgment and competence rather than competing ideological platforms. Within this relatively small elite, chronic non-participation was visible and could damage one's standing (Madden, 2012). Reputation therefore attached primarily to participation itself, not to the content of one's ballot. A similar phenomenon occurs in low-salience judicial elections in the United States. These contests are typically framed in terms of competence and impartiality rather than ideology. While ballots remain secret, individual turnout histories are publicly recorded in voter files, and mobilization campaigns routinely emphasize that par-

ticipation is observable. In such environments, the relevant social signal is often whether one voted at all rather than which candidate one supported. Reputation in elections does not require transparent ballots, it only requires observable participation. More broadly, our mechanism also relates to work showing that reputational concerns can suppress information transmission even when preferences are aligned (Morris, 2001).<sup>1</sup>

In this paper we focus on a common value collective choice problem—in the spirit of the Condorcet Jury Theorem (CJT)—in which voters share the same preferences and seek to aggregate their, possibly, conflicting information. In our setup, some voters are informed and some are uninformed: the latter ones are subject to the so-called swing voters’ curse: in many cases, they are strictly better off abstaining than taking part in the election, even when voting is costless. This is so because their vote is more likely to prevent the victory of the correct alternative than to help it win, as they have no information on which alternative is correct. As informed voters participate and uninformed abstain, the mere action of voting reveals the level of political information one holds. If one adds social reputation concerns—a desire to be perceived as informed as possible by the fellow citizens (see Wolton, 2024)—to this popular model of collective choice, would one get the same results as in the private-values case?<sup>2</sup>

Not quite. The benefits of being perceived as an informed voter should raise the turnout rate. This larger turnout, though, induces a decrease in the level of information that the average voter holds. Since, *ceteris paribus*, a) an increase in the number of voters has a positive effect on the probability of making the correct decision (see, e.g., original CJT), and b) a reduction in the average level of information that voters hold makes the election of the wrong alternative more likely, the overall effect of adding reputation concerns in the model involves a non-trivial trade-off. By treating the problem in a formal manner<sup>3</sup>, we show that the latter negative effect always dominates the positive one, and, hence, the net effect of reputation considerations in a common value election is strictly negative.

This observation is, to our knowledge, novel, but, importantly, not entirely robust to all plausible behavioral assumptions. The above result is built on the standard assumption that each voter is purely rational and self-interested, choosing the action that maximizes her own utility. If one assumed instead that voters are ethical à la Feddersen and Sandroni (2006a), Feddersen and Sandroni (2006b), or Levine and Mattozzi (2020)—that is, they

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<sup>1</sup> See also Hauk and Ortega (2025) for an analysis linking political correctness and elite prestige to conformity dynamics.

<sup>2</sup> There may be private gains from being perceived as an informed citizen, both in terms of the overall influence one has during a discussion/argument, and also in terms in a labor market context (Brannlund, 2021). The notion of reputation as applied here and in Wolton (2024) is closely related to the concept of “social standing” proposed by Gidron and Hall (2017), that is to “the level of social respect or esteem people believe is accorded to them within the social order.”

<sup>3</sup> In our analysis, a voter’s payoff depends on the beliefs of the other voters, akin to the literature on belief-dependent motivations on game-theory: see Battigalli and Dufwenberg (2022) for a review of the literature and Kishishita and Yamagishi (2021) for a paper on social learning and populism.

use the strategy that maximizes their collective welfare—the negative effects of adding reputation concerns would vanish.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, collective welfare is maximized only when the group of voters is the one that optimally participates in equilibrium when reputation concerns are absent, and hence ethical voting would predict no changes in behavior if one adds reputation gains to voting.

Given that aggregate turnout levels in costly voting environments better align with the predictions of ethical voting, rather than with those of own-utility maximization (see, for instance, Feddersen, 2004, Levine and Palfrey, 2007) the relevance of our formal argument in settings of applied interest is not obvious and an empirical investigation is warranted.<sup>5</sup>

Since observational data do not allow a priori to deduce the voters' reputational concerns, we test the relevance of this theoretical argument by the means of a laboratory experiment where voters take part in an election where the objective is to determine the state of nature. In this election, there are two types of voters: informed and uninformed. Types are assigned with i.i.d. draws from a known distribution: each voter learns her type but remains uncertain about the type of the others. After the election, there is a second stage in which each voter selects another participant to be rewarded. Selecting an informed voter is also rewarded, but failing to do so becomes costly. In the first treatment, a voter's decision to participate in the election is not observable. In contrast, in the second treatment, the individual turnout decisions are disclosed. In other words, after the election, a list is announced indicating the participation decision of each of the voters. Yet, this list does not disclose their individual votes (i.e. for which candidate each voter voted). As a result, the mere act of voting serves as a signaling device, indicating whether a voter is informed or uninformed (i.e., potentially raising reputation concerns), thereby making voting profitable.

Notice that the differences in the second step of these treatments do not impose an exogenous variation in the incentives to participate in the election: participation in the election might increase or decrease one's second step expected payoffs when participation decisions are observable compared to when they are not, depending on whether voters reward more frequently participating or non-participating voters in the former case, which is determined endogenously.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See, also, Coate and Conlin (2004), Herrera and Martinelli (2006), Ali and Lin (2013), Tsakas and Xefteris (2023), and references therein.

<sup>5</sup> In our paper, participation might still induce a private cost which, unlike the remaining literature, is negative (i.e. a gain) rather than positive.

<sup>6</sup> If voters expect that others will nominate them in the second step with higher probability when they participate in the election, then an informed voter clearly prefers to participate in the vote since she knows the state perfectly—her participation to the vote can only improve the likelihood of a correct decision—and also has to gain by increasing her chance to be selected/nominated by her peers. An uninformed voter faces the following dilemma: abstaining improves the quality of the collective decision, but taking part in the election increases the likelihood, that she will be nominated by her peers. On the other hand, if the voters expect that others will nominate them in the second step with higher probability

Our main results align with own-utility maximization, rather than with ethical voting: when the decision of a voter to participate is publicly observable, turnout is higher and the quality of the electoral outcome is worse compared to the case in which reputation concerns are absent. This is so because informed voters consistently vote under both experimental conditions, and hence voters consistently direct nominations in the second step to voters that participated in the election, when participation decisions are observable. This behavior generates reputational gains to non-abstainers when they credibly identify as such, leading more uninformed voters to participate, and thus increase the probability of a wrong decision in the election. That is, not only we find evidence that corroborates the main theoretical prediction of the own-utility maximization model (i.e. that reputation concerns should increase participation and deteriorate outcomes), but we also find support for the underlying mechanism that gives rise to this aggregate phenomenon.

These findings enhance our understanding regarding the reputational effects of voting in contexts of applied interest, in several ways. First, they establish that real subjects can endogenously coordinate to behaviors and beliefs that generate reputational gains from voting. Indeed, [Mattozzi and Nakaguma \(2023\)](#) test experimentally the case in which the mere act of voting delivers an exogenous increase in one's payoff on top of the outcome-related payoff. Our experiment complements their work, by endogenizing reputational concerns in an otherwise standard context of common value elections. Second, we demonstrate that such endogenous reputation mechanisms, apart from increasing turnout, also have the potential of deteriorating electoral outcomes. That is, an election designer who is aware of these effects and who cares to maximize welfare should possibly care to make participation decisions private (e.g. by switching to online voting), rather than public. Finally, we contribute to the discussion regarding the interplay of individualistic and ethical (i.e. group-oriented) considerations as determinants of voting decisions: when own-participation increases the winning probability of the preferred outcome and entails private costs, then ethical concerns seem to dominate, while when voting decreases the win probability of the preferred alternative (e.g. when an uninformed voter participates in a common value election) but entails personal gains, then own-utility maximization becomes salient.

In what follows, we first discuss the relevant literature (Section 2), and then develop the theoretical arguments to inform our laboratory study (Section 3). We describe our experimental setup and testable hypotheses (Section 4), present our results (Section 5), and, finally, conclude (Section 6).

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if they decide to abstain, then only informed voters, if any, might be incentivized to participate.

## 2 Literature review

The importance of reputational incentives in voting behavior is widely discussed in political science. For example, the contributions of [Posner \(1998\)](#), [Bufacchi \(2001\)](#) and [Leighley and Nagler \(2014\)](#) have found ample empirical support for the idea that the mere act of voting is related to the reputation it generates. In a field experiment, [Gerber et al. \(2008\)](#) consider a treatment where electors are informed by letter that their participation will be publicly revealed to their household or neighbors. This treatment affects significantly the turnout of the election.<sup>7</sup> [Funk \(2010\)](#) emphasizes that in Swiss cantons the use of postal voting, beyond the decrease of the voting cost, reduces participation. Some potential voters cannot perceive any social benefit from voting anymore, and then prefer to abstain. In a door-to-door field survey, [Dellavigna et al. \(2016\)](#) find that non-voters are less willing to participate when asked about their participation in recent elections. They highlight that, as people can ask each other if they voted, the cost of lying can increase voter’s participation.

All these results provided some theoretical foundations for a better understanding of policy investigations, but also to design laboratory experiments highlighting new evidence which cannot be determined through unframed field analysis. [Funk \(2004\)](#) analyzes how reputational concerns can balance the cost reduction of voting, in line with the empirical findings of [Funk \(2010\)](#). [Aytimur et al. \(2014\)](#) considered a two-step game where voters vote to influence the outcome and to signal their individual characteristics to others. They conclude that the volatility of the turnout rate differs across groups and mainly depends on the cost of social interactions. In a theoretical contribution, [Ali and Lin \(2013\)](#) provide a model where turnout depends positively on the closeness and importance of an election as well as on reputational concerns (observability and social rewards). In these three contributions, voters share the same information level, while in our context, the precision of information that voters are endowed with is the main distinction.<sup>8</sup>

[Battaglini et al. \(2010\)](#) led the first experimental test on the swing voter’s curse, and considered the presence of partisans, who vote for a specific outcome choice regardless how they are informed. Close to the theoretical predictions, uninformed voters do not participate and delegate their votes to informed voters. [Morton and Tyran \(2011\)](#) conducted another experiment with low and high informed voters rather than uninformed versus informed voters. Their environment leads to multiple pure strategy Nash equilibria, con-

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<sup>7</sup> Reputational concerns have also been analyzed in different contexts, showing how it can play in favor of vote transparency and mitigating information aggregation (see e.g., [Fehrler and Hughes \(2018\)](#) and [Swank and Visser \(2019\)](#)), or it leads to more acquisition information ([Gries, 2025](#)).

<sup>8</sup> Building on the swing voter’s curse ([Feddersen, 2004](#), [Battaglini et al., 2010](#)) and ethical-voter models ([Aytimur et al., 2014](#), [Ali and Lin, 2013](#)), [McMurray \(2013\)](#) provides a complementary perspective on how weighting high-precision signals (‘experts’) versus pooling all votes affects group accuracy. His results help pin down when reputational rewards for voting—by effectively elevating some voters’ information—improve or worsen aggregate outcomes.

tingent to the information gap among voters. Regardless of the asymmetric information, a significant level of abstention appears, despite the most efficient equilibrium ensuring full participation.

To evaluate how signaling affects turnout, we keep the simplest information design among participants (only informed and uninformed voters). This means that we do not look for phenomenon such as vote balancing, and then ignore partisans, contrary to Battaglini et al. (2010).

Finally, Mattozzi and Nakaguma (2023) consider a model of voters with career concerns—that is, voters who care to be perceived as competent—and compare public and secret voting. Our work differs from theirs in two main dimensions.<sup>9</sup> First, they focus on open voting (i.e. both the participation and the votes are observable), whereas we care only about the observability of the participation decision. Second, while in the theoretical part of their paper they allow for endogenous participation rewards (i.e. other voters form beliefs about each voter’s competence based on their participation decision, and on the alternative they supported), their experimental part focuses only on exogenous rewards from voting, that moreover depend on the alternative they support. Our experiment, on the contrary, endogenizes the potential personal gains/losses from voting and thus unboxes the reputation-building potential of the participation decision, in a context of secret elections (i.e when the alternative one supports is unobservable).

### 3 Theoretical Setting

We consider a two-stage game involving  $n$  agents who deliberate using majority rule (with  $n$  being odd). In the first step, the objective is to collectively determine the true state of nature, following the framework proposed in Battaglini et al. (2010). The second step focuses on each agents’ individual goal of identifying informed agents, regardless of their behavior in the first step. We employ the standard behavioral assumption of own-utility maximization to derive the results, and we then briefly explain the results under group-reasoning/ethical voting à la Feddersen and Sandroni (2006b).

As in Battaglini et al. (2010), informed agents always vote for the alternative matching their signal. Because votes remain secret in our setting, ballot choices are perfectly predictable and convey no information about agent types. An agent’s type can therefore

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<sup>9</sup> Several other theoretical papers have examined the role of reputational concerns through transparency in voting within committee decision-making. Unlike us, Gersbach and Hahn (2004) and Stasavage (2007) assume that individual bias affect reputational concerns. In their investigation, the signaling of career concerns is based on the perception of appearing unbiased with respect to reelection prospects. Another distinction with this literature is that reputational concerns can influence voting behavior either positively (Levy, 2007) or negatively (Gersbach and Hahn, 2008) without affecting voter turnout. See also Dal Bó (2007), Felgenhauer and Grüner (2008), and Seidmann (2011), among others, for discussions on the negative consequences of transparency within committees.

be inferred only from her decision to participate, making turnout the sole channel through which reputational concerns operate.

### 3.1 A common value model with belief-dependent payoffs

**Stage 1.** There are two alternatives  $A$  and  $B$  and two states of the world, also denoted  $A$  and  $B$ . agents have common values: in other words, each agent  $i$  has the same utility function  $u_i := u(x, \theta)$  with  $x \in \{A, B\}$  the implemented alternative and  $\theta$  the state of the world and:

$$u(A, A) = u(B, B) = 1, \quad u(A, B) = u(B, A) = 0.$$

The agents are uncertain about the state of the world, and the common prior probability over state  $A$  is equal to  $\frac{1}{2}$ . Each agent receives a signal, correlated with the true state of the world. The signal can take three values  $a$ ,  $b$  and  $\emptyset$  with:

$$Pr[a | A] = Pr[b | B] = p \text{ and } Pr[\emptyset | A] = Pr[\emptyset | B] = 1 - p.$$

An agent knows the state of the world with probability  $p$  (if she receives  $a$  or  $b$ ) and is uninformed with probability  $1 - p$  (if she receives  $\emptyset$ ). The parameter  $p$  measures the correlation between the signal and the true state of the world. We assume  $p \in (0, 1)$ , so that the signal is informative but not perfectly revealing to all voters.

In the following, we refer to agents with signals  $a$  or  $b$  as informed, denoted  $I$ , and to agents with signal  $\emptyset$  as uninformed, denoted  $\emptyset$ . After observing their signal, agents choose whether to vote or not vote. If they vote, they choose a ballot for  $A$  or  $B$ , otherwise they abstain. We denote these two participation actions by  $V$  (vote) and  $N$  (abstain). Votes are secret: individual ballots are never observed. Only participation decisions, i.e., whether an agent chooses  $V$  or  $N$ , are publicly disclosed after Stage 1.

**Stage 2.** Stage 1 yields a payoff  $u_i \in \{0, 1\}$  to each agent  $i$ , equal to 1 if the collective decision matches the true state and 0 otherwise. In addition, agents care about being perceived as informed. Let  $b_j(i)$  denote agent  $j$ 's posterior belief that agent  $i$  is informed, after observing the Stage 1 participation decisions. Reputational concerns enter linearly in utility. The total payoff of agent  $i$  is

$$U_i = \underbrace{u_i}_{\text{collective-decision payoff}} + \underbrace{\omega \sum_{j \neq i} b_j(i)}_{\text{reputational payoff}}, \quad (1)$$

where  $\omega \geq 0$  measures the strength of reputational concerns.

In the following we focus on symmetric Bayesian equilibria, that is, requiring that

agents with the same signal use the same strategy. Let us denote  $\sigma_I \in [0, 1]$  the probability that an informed agent participates, and  $\sigma_\emptyset \in [0, 1]$  the probability that an uninformed agent participates. Let  $\beta(V)$  (respectively  $\beta(N)$ ) denote the posterior belief induced by the observed participation decision, i.e., an agent is informed conditional on observing that she participates (respectively abstains):

$$\beta(V) := \Pr(I \mid V), \quad \beta(N) := \Pr(I \mid N)$$

In a symmetric equilibrium, any agent who takes action  $\alpha \in \{V, N\}$  is therefore perceived as informed with probability  $\beta(\alpha)$  by all other agents. Hence, the reputational payoff of agent  $i$  when she chooses action  $\alpha$  and holds the same beliefs is

$$w \sum_{j \neq i} b_j(i) = w(n-1)\beta(\alpha),$$

and her expected payoff of being a type  $t$  from action  $\alpha$  is given by

$$U_i(\alpha) = \mathbb{E}[u_i \mid t, \alpha] + (n-1)\omega\beta(\alpha) \text{ with } \alpha \in \{V, N\},$$

where  $\mathbb{E}[u_i \mid t, \alpha]$  denotes the expected outcome from the collective decision, conditional on  $i$  choosing action  $\alpha$ , given the  $i$ 's type  $t$  and on the symmetric behavior of other agents. In what follows, we condition an agent's expected payoff on her realized type.

## 3.2 Equilibrium analysis

In this section we determine the equilibria for different intensities of reputational concerns. Agents' ballot choices are perfectly predictable and reveal no information about their type. Since votes remain secret in our environment, an agents' type cannot be inferred from the content of her ballot, but only from her decision to participate. In common value elections, participation is therefore the sole channel through which reputational concerns can operate. Unlike previous works on common values, we show that sufficiently strong reputational incentives can induce participation by uninformed agents.

Before turning to the equilibrium analysis, we first characterize how participation decisions affect perceived informativeness and thus formalize the mechanism through which turnout generates reputational incentives. The equilibrium results (Propositions 2 and 3) rely only on extreme cases and bounds implied by expected payoffs, but Lemma 1 clarifies how participation can operate as a signal of being informed.

**Lemma 1** (Posterior beliefs). *Suppose that participation  $V$  and abstention  $N$  both occur with positive probability under symmetric strategies, where informed agents participate with probability  $\sigma_I$  and uninformed agents with probability  $\sigma_\emptyset$ . Then posterior beliefs*

satisfy

$$\beta(V) = \frac{p\sigma_I}{p\sigma_I + (1-p)\sigma_\emptyset} \text{ and } \beta(N) = \frac{p(1-\sigma_I)}{p(1-\sigma_I) + (1-p)(1-\sigma_\emptyset)}.$$

Moreover, the informativeness of participation about agent's type is as follows: if  $\sigma_I > \sigma_\emptyset$ , then  $\beta(V) > p > \beta(N)$ ; if  $\sigma_I < \sigma_\emptyset$ , then  $\beta(V) < p < \beta(N)$ ; and if  $\sigma_I = \sigma_\emptyset$ , then  $\beta(V) = \beta(N) = p$ .

Participation is perceived as a signal of being informed if and only if informed agents are more likely to turn out than uninformed agents.

We denote the expected payoff, i.e. ignoring reputation, of an agent of type  $t \in \{I, \emptyset\}$  from action  $\alpha \in \{V, N\}$  as  $v_t(\alpha) := \mathbb{E}[u_i | t, \alpha]$ . Note that  $v_t(\alpha)$  captures only the Stage 1 (outcome) component of payoffs. We then define the expected outcome payoff difference between participating and abstaining by

$$\Delta_t := v_t(V) - v_t(N).$$

In any equilibrium, the agents who receive an informative signal strictly prefer the state that matches their signal. That is, informed agents vote for the state suggested by their signal in any equilibrium, as in the existing literature. This allows us to focus on the participation decision of uninformed agents. The next result corresponds to the swing voter's curse established by [Battaglini et al. \(2010\)](#).

**Proposition 1** (Lack of reputational concerns). *If there are no reputational concerns ( $\omega = 0$ ), informed agents strictly prefer to participate,  $\Delta_I > 0$ , while uninformed agents strictly prefer to abstain,  $\Delta_\emptyset < 0$ . Moreover,  $|\Delta_t| \leq 1$  for both types.*

The behavior of uninformed agents remains to be clarified for any positive reputation concerns  $\omega$ . Voting for uninformed agents is costly, and they face a trade-off. On the one hand, participation reduces the probability of a correct collective decision, while, on the other hand, participation may generate reputational benefits.

**Proposition 2** (Small reputational concerns). *There exists  $\bar{\omega} = -\frac{\Delta_\emptyset}{n-1} > 0$  such that for all  $\omega < \bar{\omega}$ , the unique symmetric equilibrium features  $\sigma_I = 1$  and  $\sigma_\emptyset = 0$ .*

When reputational concerns are weak, outcome incentives dominate. In this case, informed agents strictly prefer to participate, while uninformed agents strictly prefer to abstain, leading to a unique symmetric equilibrium in which only informed agents turn out.

By contrast, equilibrium need not be unique when reputational concerns are strong. [Proposition 3](#) therefore provides a restriction that holds for any symmetric equilibrium

rather than a complete characterization. As reputation becomes sufficiently salient, participation becomes attractive for all agents and beliefs about turnout play a central role, giving rise to a continuum of symmetric equilibria that differ in the participation rate of uninformed agents.

**Proposition 3** (Large reputational concerns). *For all  $\omega > \underline{\omega} = \frac{1}{n-1}$ , in any symmetric equilibrium uninformed agents participate with strictly positive probability:  $\sigma_{\emptyset} > 0$ .*

When  $\omega$  is large,<sup>10</sup> (i) informed agents strictly prefer to participate because doing so both improves the likelihood of a correct collective decision and maximizes their reputational payoff, and (ii) uninformed agents optimally choose to participate with positive probability, trading off the loss in collective efficiency against the reputational gains from being perceived as informed. As a result, an increase in the strength of the reputational concerns induces both a larger turnout and a lower average informational quality of the electorate.

The reputational incentive captured by  $\omega$  depends exclusively on participation. This differs from models in which agents enhance reputation by choosing the correct alternative. Here, reputation depends only on turnout decisions, not on voting correctly, allowing us to isolate the pure effect of participation-based signaling.

The next result provides a sufficient condition for full participation by uninformed agents ( $\sigma_{\emptyset} = 1$ ). Because abstention occurs with zero probability in such an equilibrium, beliefs following abstention are not pinned down by Bayes rule. We therefore explicitly state an off-path belief.

**Proposition 4** (Full participation). *Assume the off-path belief that an observed abstainer is uninformed, i.e.,  $\beta(N) = 0$  whenever abstention is observed off path. If  $\omega > \frac{1}{(n-1)p}$ , then uninformed agents strictly prefer to participate, and full participation ( $\sigma_{\emptyset} = 1$ ) is sustainable in any symmetric equilibrium (along with  $\sigma_I = 1$ ).*

Proposition 4 highlights that full participation by uninformed agents depends on how abstention is interpreted off-path. When abstention occurs with zero probability in equilibrium, Bayes' rule does not restrict beliefs following abstention. Under the natural off-path belief that abstention signals being uninformed ( $\beta(N) = 0$ ), sufficiently strong reputational concerns make abstention strictly dominated for uninformed agents, so that full participation can be sustained. Alternative off-path beliefs may support different equilibrium outcomes, which is why Proposition 4 is stated as a sufficient condition rather than a general characterization.

That is, under the assumption of own-utility maximization, the equilibrium behavior with substantial reputational concerns (i.e. high  $\omega$ ) leads to higher turnout, lower average

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<sup>10</sup> Remark that as  $\Delta_{\emptyset} \geq -1$ , it follows that  $\bar{\omega} \leq \underline{\omega}$ .

competence, and lower probability of a correct majority decision.<sup>11</sup> However, under ethical voting (i.e. under the assumption that agents choose the strategy that maximizes collective welfare) the optimal behavior is independent of the size of  $\omega$ : informed agents participate and vote sincerely, and uninformed agents abstain. Notice that this behavior maximizes not only first step payoffs by preventing uninformed agents from overturning a correct decision when informed agents are present but also second step payoffs by distributing social appreciation in a targeted manner only to informed agents.

## 4 Experimental Design and Hypotheses

### 4.1 Experimental Design

The experiment was run at the Parisian Experimental Economics Laboratory (LEEP) at the Centre d’Economie de la Sorbonne in January and November 2021 and in February 2022. We employed a 2 factorial design varying (between subjects) the information about the outcome (winner and ratio of voters) in a committee, with or without the identity of the effective voters, communicated to the participants.

In each of the six sessions, 14 subjects were randomly and anonymously allocated in 2 fixed groups of 7 participants for 40 successive rounds.<sup>12</sup> A total of 84 undergraduate students were recruited through a public announcement using the online recruitment system ORSEE (Online Recruitment System for Economic Experiments; Greiner (2015)). Each subject participated in a single session, which lasted approximately 40 minutes. This included an initial reading of the instructions, the fictional step, and the Q&A time.

In the three treatments, we use an urn to represent the state of the world. There are two possible urns, the Red urn and the Blue urn. Each urn contains different balls. There are 6 white and 2 red balls in the Red urn and 6 white and 2 blue ones in the Blue one. This is equivalent to assuming that, for each treatment, the correlation  $p$  between the signal and the true state of the world equals  $\frac{1}{4}$ . At each period, one of the two urns was selected randomly by the computer.<sup>13</sup>

In the **Control treatment**, prior to the vote, each subject chooses one ball, the true color of which will be privately revealed to the participant. This implies that a subject who picks a red or a blue ball is informed (since they can infer the true urn from their observation) whereas they are deemed uninformed otherwise. Each subject has three possible actions at the voting stage: to vote either for the Red urn or for the Blue urn or

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<sup>11</sup> If there is no informed agent or if informed agents form a majority, the participation of uninformed agents does not affect the probability of the correct alternative winning. Otherwise, their participation reduces it, as uninformed votes are uncorrelated with the true state and may overturn a correct majority.

<sup>12</sup> Subjects do not know who is in their group and stay in the same group for the whole experiment. To avoid cooperation within rounds, we reshuffled the voters’ identities (i.e. their IDs) at each step.

<sup>13</sup> The same identical sequences of urn states and ball draws were coded into the zTree programs for each treatment, ensuring the same informational environment across treatments.

to abstain. Independently of their private action, if the correct urn gets a majority of the votes, each participant earns 1€. Otherwise, each participant obtains 0.10€. Ties were broken randomly with equal probability. The **Control** treatment replicates the session from Battaglini et al. (2010) with no partisans and equal common prior probability to  $\frac{1}{2}$ .

The **NoSignal treatment** proceeds in two steps. The first step is a replication of the **Control** treatment. After this step ends, the subjects are informed about the outcome of the vote, the winning urn and the candidates' scores. Each subject  $i$  selects one of the other participants (the list was publicly displayed with letters). If  $i$  selects an informed participant  $j$ , then both  $i$  and  $j$  obtain an additional payment of 1€. Otherwise  $i$  loses 1€ and  $j$  sees her payoff unchanged. Remark that subjects do not have any information about the ball observed by the other participants.

The **Signal treatment** has two steps, like the **NoSignal treatment**. The difference is that at the end of the first step, the subjects are informed about the outcome of the vote, the winning urn, the candidates' scores and the individual turnout decisions. This disclosure policy turns voting into a signaling device and can make voting profitable. Importantly, this signaling device operates through turnout only. Participants thus build reputation not by revealing what they chose, but merely by revealing that they chose. This design isolates a reputational mechanism that is strictly weaker than open voting yet powerful enough to alter strategic incentives among uninformed voters. The comparison between these two treatments measures the importance of the opinion from one participant to another during an electoral competition.

**Information.** Table 1 summarizes the three treatments of the experiment. The column "Information" refers to the information disclosed to the voters at the end of the election held in the first stage. In all treatments, the outcome is revealed: that is, the true state of the world, the winning urn and the total number of votes each urn received (aggregate turnout rate).

Treatment	Session	Feedback to all participants	Groups	Second Stage	Number of subjects
<b>Control</b>	#1	Vote totals, winning urn and true state	#1 – #2	None	14
	#2		#3 – #4		14
<b>NoSignal</b>	#3	Vote totals, winning urn and true state	#5 – #6	Nomination	14
	#4		#7 – #8		14
<b>Signal</b>	#5	Vote totals, winning urn and true state and individual turnout decisions	#9 – #10	Nomination	14
	#6		#11 – #12		14

Table 1: Experimental design

**Timeline.** Table 2 summarizes the timeline of the different treatments as well as the payoffs that subjects obtained.

Color allocation	The computer randomly determines the color of the urn.
Color revelation	Each of the 7 subjects independently picks one of the 8 balls and obtains its true color.
First step vote	A simultaneous vote takes place where voters can vote red, blue or abstain.
First step payoffs	Payoffs are allocated (+1 if urn color is correct and 0.1 otherwise)
Second step : <b>Control</b>	No second step
Second step : <b>NoSignal</b>	Each voter nominates without observing the individual turnout decisions.
Second step : <b>Signal</b>	Each voter nominates after observing the individual turnout decisions.
Second step payoffs	+1 if nominated voter is informed and -1 otherwise +1 per time the voter is nominated

Table 2: Sequence of events

The use of fixed groups (no re-matching) displays some important benefits, previously noticed by [Morton and Tyran \(2011\)](#) and [Bouton et al. \(2016\)](#). First, it provides independent observations among sessions and then a good design for a non-parametric analysis. Second, repeated interactions are profitable for subjects. They make participants more comfortable and acquainted with the voting environments suggested through the experiment. Repeated interactions allow to determine the time required for subjects to play with consistency, and highlight some potential coordination problems from signaling, in the second-step of the game. Therefore, we discern the first and the last 20 periods in our analysis. Finally, common values seem to be a favorable environment for fixed matching, as it might facilitate coordination on the equilibrium. Recent papers are based on the consistent results of [Ali et al. \(2008\)](#) about the Condorcet Jury Theorem. Our set-up allows us to easily check this statement for the general environment of the swing voter's curse in [Feddersen and Pesendorfer \(1996\)](#), thanks to our control treatment replicating [Battaglini et al. \(2010\)](#) with a fixed matching procedure.

The instructions for the **Signal** treatment are available in the Appendix.<sup>14</sup> Once received by the subjects, the instructions were read aloud. Before the start of the experiment, the participants played a fictional step and answered a test to check their understanding of the experimental protocol.

<sup>14</sup> The instructions of the other treatments are available upon request.

Payment consists of a show-up fee of 3€, plus the sum of the payoffs of 20 randomly chosen steps. In total, subjects earned payoffs ranging from 15.80€ to 41.40€. The average payoff (including the show-up fee) was 20.01€ in the **Control** treatment, 30.71€ in the **NoSignal** treatment, and 28.66€ in the **Signal** treatment.<sup>15</sup>

## 4.2 Hypotheses

The experiment is designed to test the hypotheses derived from our theoretical predictions. Table 3 sums up our theoretical predictions and contrasts them with the non-signaling swing voters’ curse of Battaglini et al. (2010).

<b>Control</b> Treatment	$\sigma_{\emptyset} = 0$
<b>NoSignal</b> Treatment	$\sigma_{\emptyset} = 0$
<b>Signal</b> Treatment	$\sigma_{\emptyset} > 0$

Table 3: Equilibrium strategies of the uninformed voters

Our theoretical analysis regarding participation and voting behavior, payoffs and outcomes, and the disclosure policy lead to the following predictions, serving as a guide to help readers navigate through the experimental results. We will inform our hypotheses following the own-utility maximization model, and we will also note which of them also align with ethical voting, and which do not.

As far as subjects’ behavior is concerned, both models—own-utility maximization and ethical voting—predict that, without reputational concerns, only informed voters should participate. However, when reputation concerns are present, only the own-utility maximization model predicts higher turnout. Therefore, following both models we expect H1 and H2a not to be rejected by the data, while ethical voting predicts that H2b will be rejected, whereas own-utility maximization prescribes the opposite prediction.

**Hypothesis 1** (Benchmark Participation and Voting Behavior). In the **Control** treatment, only informed voters participate in the election, and they vote sincerely.

**Hypothesis 2** (Comparative Participation and Voting Behavior).

<sup>15</sup> The maximal theoretical payoff consists of 3€ (show-up fee), 20€ from all correct collective choices in the first step, 20€ from consistently selecting a participant with a non-white ball in the second step, and 120€ from receiving nominations from all others in each round. This results in a maximum of 43€ in the **Control** treatment and 163€ in the other treatments. The minimal theoretical payoff includes 3€ (show-up fee), 2€ from consistently incorrect collective choices, -20€ from selecting a participant with a white ball in each round of the second step, and 0€ from receiving no nominations. This results in a minimum of 5€ in the **Control** treatment and -15€ in the other treatments.

**H2a** In the `NoSignal` treatment participation and voting behavior is no different than in the `Control` treatment.

**H2b** In the `Signal` treatment, voting behavior is identical (i.e. sincere) to the `Control` treatment, but participation is higher compared to the `NoSignal` and the `Control` treatments.

Similarly, as far as payoffs and outcomes are concerned the two models align with respect to H3 and H4a—predicting that they will not be rejected—while they disagree with respect to H4b: ethical voting predicts rejection, and own-utility maximization predicts the opposite.

**Hypothesis 3** (Benchmark Payoffs and Outcomes). In the `Control` treatment if there is at least one informed voter the correct alternative is collectively chosen and payoffs are maximized.<sup>16</sup>

**Hypothesis 4** (Outcome Efficiency).

**H4a** In the `NoSignal` treatment, first stage payoffs are no different than in the `Control` treatment.

**H4b** In the `Signal` treatment, first stage payoffs are lower compared to the `NoSignal` and the `Control` treatments.

## 5 Experimental Results

In this section, we present our experimental results. We compare participation and voting behavior across treatments in subsection 5.1, and then examine the impact on overall efficiency in subsection 5.2.

In terms of statistical analysis, two-sided Mann-Whitney U tests are employed in the case of non-parametric analysis, using groups as single observations. The parametric analyses are based on ordinary least-square regressions and probit can be found in the Appendix A.2, with standard errors clustered by group.

As previously discussed, the experimental design consist of 3 treatments. For each treatment, we recruited 4 groups of 7 voters, who participated in 40 rounds. This results in 1,120 observations per treatment and 3,360 observations in total. The urn color is randomly selected (blue and red with probability 1/2 each) with the distribution remaining consistent across groups in each treatment: the Red urn was drawn 45% of the observations in Group 1 and in 57.5% in Group 2 as shown by Table 4.

Subjects selected one of the eight available balls to obtain a signal about the state of the world. Figure 6 in the Appendix A.2 suggests that the draws were rather uniformly, with some tendency to avoid extremes, as one would expect.

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<sup>16</sup> There were 15% (72 of 480 rounds) without informed agents.

	Group 1		Group 2		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Red	756	45.00	966	57.50	1,722	51.25
Blue	924	55.00	714	42.50	1,638	48.75
Total	1,680	100	1,680	100	3,360	100

Table 4: Urn color by group

The share of informed and uninformed subjects is 24.38% and 75.62%, respectively, across all treatments (recall that 2 out of the 8 balls are colored). These proportions remain relatively stable across treatments, as shown in Table 5.

	Control		NoSignal		Signal		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Uninformed	838	74.82	848	75.71	855	76.34	2,541	75.62
Informed	282	25.18	272	24.29	265	23.66	819	24.38
Total	1,120	100	1,120	100	1,120	100	3,360	100

Table 5: Distribution of participant types per treatment

## 5.1 Participation

Our analysis first explores the effect of information revealed about the outcome (winner and share of participating voters) in a committee, either with or without communicating the identity of the actual voters to subjects.

Figure 1 presents the average abstention in each treatment (**Control**, **NoSignal**, **Signal**), conditional on whether voters were informed or uninformed. Figure 5, presented in the Appendix, shows the evolution over the 40 periods and indicates that time does not play a role in participation. Consistent with the existing experimental literature (see, for instance, Battaglini et al. (2010)), in the **Control** treatment, a large share of uninformed voters abstained (70%), while informed voters participated in 94% of the time.

In the **NoSignal** treatment, abstention among uninformed voters decreased by 10% compared to the **Control** treatment, although this difference is not statistically significant ( $p$ -value = 0.68). In contrast, abstention decreased significantly by 50% ( $p$ -value = 0.016) under the **Signal** treatment compared to the **Control** treatment. Furthermore, all informed voters participated in both the **Signal** and **NoSignal** treatments, with no significant difference compared to the **Control** treatment. This raises a relevant question:

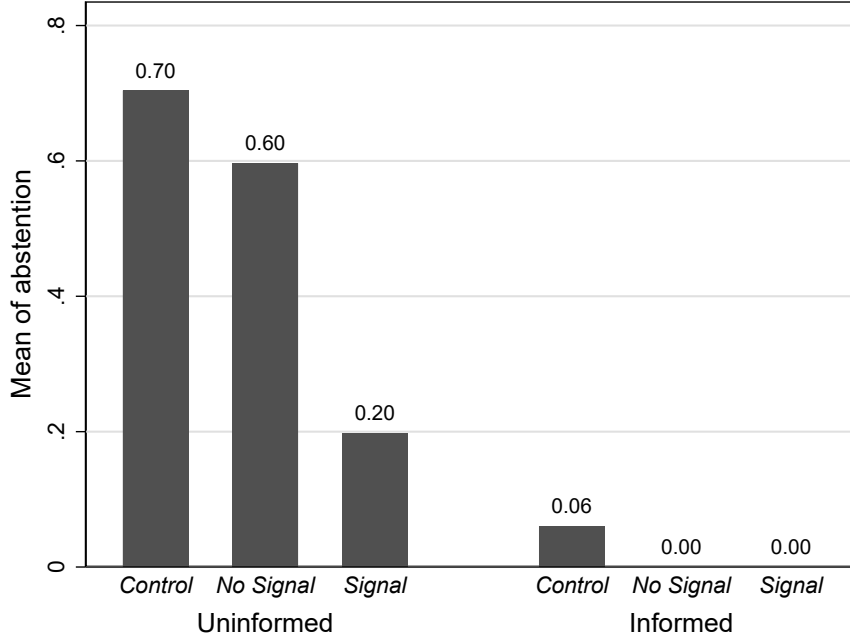


Figure 1: Abstention by treatment and information - Comparison of abstention shares by treatment and over time

do uninformed voters exhibit consistent behaviour, i.e., do they vote similarly regardless of the urn color and the group?

Figure 2 presents the shares of votes for each alternative by treatment depending on the color of the urn. The proportion of correct decisions is statistically consistent in each treatment across different urns, and with the previous findings on abstention. First, the distribution of votes is significantly equal in each group for informed and uninformed within the three treatments, which confirms the consistency of uninformed voters' behavior. Secondly, the proportion of uninformed voting increases in the same proportion across the group as a whole. Thirdly, the proportion of votes cast for the incorrect urn and abstention are not significantly different between groups for each treatment.<sup>17</sup>

A parametric analysis with an OLS regression, as established in Table 6, corroborates these findings.<sup>18</sup> Abstention appears to decrease in the **Signal** treatment by 39% in comparison to the **Control** treatment, and by 30% in comparison to the **NoSignal** treatment ( $p$ -value  $< 0.01$  for each), while the improvement in participation is not statistically significant in the **NoSignal** treatment. This is in line with the theoretical prediction stated in Proposition 3, and is consistent with Hypotheses 2 (H2a and H2b). The sharp difference between **NoSignal** and **Signal** confirms that reputational incentives arise only when participation is observable. Since vote choices remain secret, the only channel through which subjects can affect others' perceptions is the act of turning out. This provides

<sup>17</sup> Complementary results on abstention by information status and group are shown in Figure 7.

<sup>18</sup> These results are consistent with the probit regressions available in Table 10 in the Appendix.

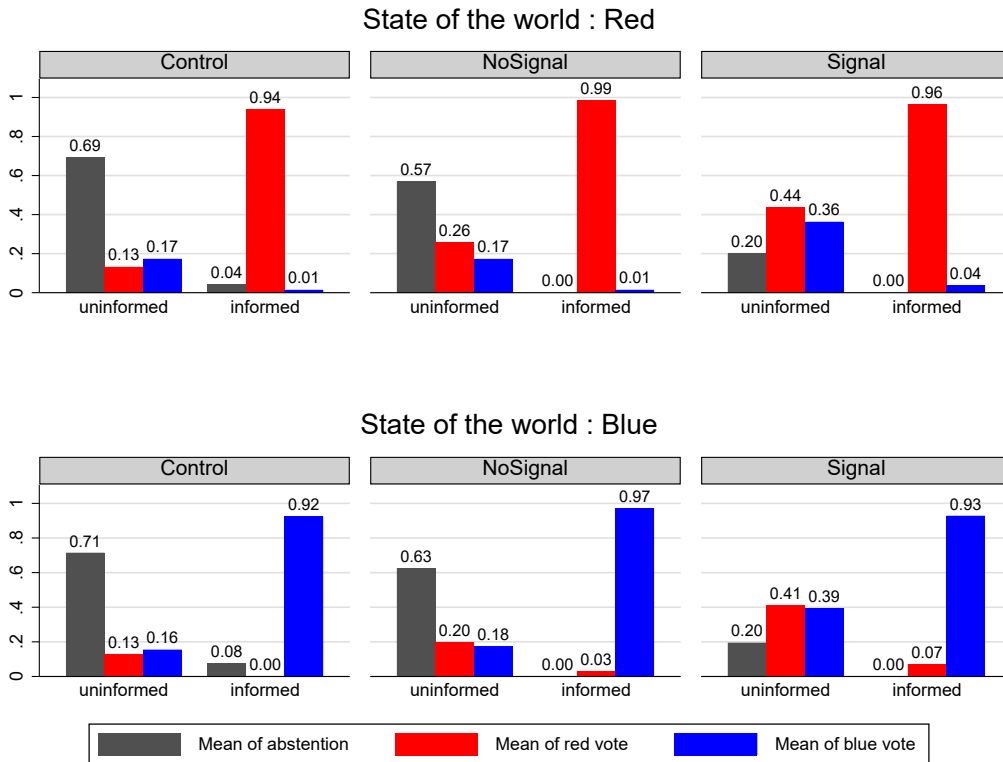


Figure 2: Share of votes by treatment and state of nature

clean evidence for the existence of participation based on reputation and distinct from the better-known reputation mechanisms linked to public voting.

Our regression specification exploits an additional feature of the experimental design. Consider a given session, a given group within that session, and a given period. This defines what we call a *cell*: for example, the first group in the first session in period one. By design, the **Control**, **NoSignal**, and **Signal** versions of that same cell all face exactly the same underlying parametrization. That is, they share the same realized state and the same full pattern of private information across group members. So if, in that cell, the draw is “Blue” and balls 1, 5, and 6 are blue while the others are white that exact realization is reproduced across the three treatments.

This allows us to compare treatments holding fixed the entire informational environment of the round. We therefore include cell fixed effects (i.e. session-group-period dummies) in all our regressions, so identification comes from comparing outcomes across **Control**, **NoSignal**, and **Signal** within the same draw and period, rather than from comparing observations generated by different draws that may lead intrinsically with higher or lower probability to the correct outcome. This is valid because treatment varies within draw by construction: the session-group-period dummies absorb only the common background conditions of the parametrization and the round, not the treatment variation of

interest. Table 6 reports the relevant estimates.<sup>19</sup>

Variables	Regressor (1)	Regressor (2)
NoSignal	-0.0902 (0.0595)	
Signal		-0.391*** (0.0351)
Constant	0.542*** (0.0421)	0.542*** (0.0248)
Observations	2,240	2,240
R-squared	0.115	0.249

Table 6: Abstention per treatment relative to **Control** treatment

Notes: Group-level clustered standard errors are in parentheses. **Control** is the reference treatment. **NoSignal** and **Signal** are dummy variables equal to 1 if and only if the observation involves treatments **NoSignal** and **Signal** respectively. As a robustness check, inference based on wild bootstrap yields  $p$ -values of 0.405 and 0.00280.  $*p < 0.1$ ,  $**p < 0.05$ ,  $***p < 0.01$ .

In summary, the increase of turnout with respect to the **Control** treatment is only significant for the **Signal** treatment. In the **NoSignal** treatment, voters face a non-informative disclosure policy. This policy does not provide incentives for the uninformed voters to participate, as each of them only considers the reward they might receive from other participants, with no risk of affecting the outcome by their vote and their own welfare. One potential explanation for the observed variation in the participation of the uninformed is the group dynamic driven by the individual reward. This behavior may be described as the *affective experience reward*: Being potentially rewarded may be a source of distraction, leading some participants to behave non-optimally in the first step. In the **Signal** treatment, each participant faces strong incentives to vote, as the identity of voters is perfectly observed by others.

Now, we summarize our main results regarding the participation decisions, and confront them with the corresponding hypotheses.

**Result 1.** In the **Control** treatment, most of all uninformed do not vote.

**Result 2.** In the **NoSignal** treatment, revealing the outcome the winning urn and the ratio of voters, does not increase the participation, as compared the **Control** treatment.

<sup>19</sup> For the regressions in Tables 6, 8, 9, 7, and 12, standard errors are clustered at the group level to account for within-group correlation. Wild cluster bootstrap  $p$ -values (Roodman et al., 2023) using Webb weights are reported at the Notes section of each table.

**Result 3.** In the **Signal** treatment, revealing the outcome and the voters' identity does increase the participation, as compared the **Control** and **NoSignal** treatments.

Contrary to Battaglini et al. (2010), we do not observe full participation of informed voters in the **Control** treatment. This is not surprising, given the very low level of abstention, which is not significantly different across treatments or urn colors. The behavior of voters thus aligns more closely with the predictions of the own-utility maximization model—reputational concerns give them extra incentive to vote—than with the normative prescriptions of ethical voting.

## 5.2 Efficiency

In this subsection, we analyse how reputation concerns might affect the outcome of the election by increasing voter turnout. We investigate the effect of additional uninformed voter participation on the outcome efficiency of the election. In other words, does a larger turnout negatively affect the expected outcome of informed citizens? To do so, we first analyze the outcome of the vote and then the change in payoffs at the first stage, before the reward of participation, and construct a measure for a parametric analysis. This perspective is completed by analyzing the payoffs in the second stage in order to ascertain the robustness of the reputational concern.

**Outcome of the vote.** We first deal with the collective choice made by the different groups under the different treatments, as summarized by Figure 3. In the full sample, under both the **Control** and the **NoSignal** treatments, 82% of the groups chose the correct color of the urn, while only 73% under the **Signal** treatment did so. Recall that only 15% of the groups did not have informed voters. Controlling for the existence of such voters has an impact on the quality of the collective choice. Indeed, without informed voters, the probability of choosing the correct urn are respectively equal 42% under **Control**, 52% with **Signal** and 58% with **NoSignal**. This means that the collective decision was close to being random as no voter has observed the true state. When we only consider groups with some informed voter, the situation is very different where all treatments having an average above 70%. In particular, we observe 89% under **Control**, 85% with **Signal** and 77% with **NoSignal**.

This implies a sharp decline in the quality of the collective choice whenever a vote is understood as a signaling device. Indeed, in the **Signal** treatment, individual turnout decisions are observable and thus subjects might want to signal themselves as informed to get a chance of being nominated (and thus obtain a reward). The rest of the analysis explores the reasons of such decline of the quality of the collective decision.

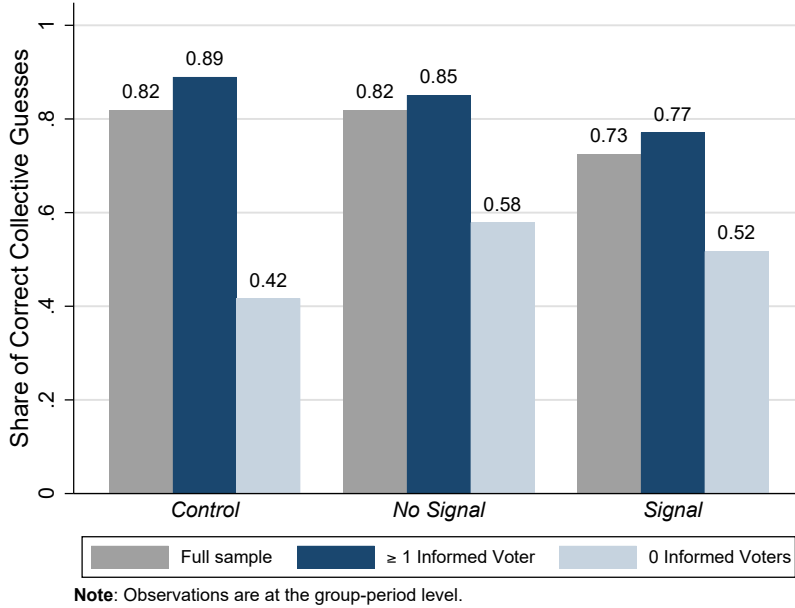


Figure 3: Share of correct collective vote by treatment status

Notes: Only Informed in red represents all groups where some voter was informed whereas the Uninformed (in blue) represents the groups where all voters were uninformed.

**Aggregate payoffs.** Table 7 shows the aggregate payoffs for each of the treatments (Control, NoSignal, Signal) and for all participants in both stages. Remark that the second step payoffs are almost identical for both NoSignal and Signal. Table 12 in the appendix discloses how these payoffs are built.

Therefore, the only clear difference that remains as far as efficiency is concerned is with respect of first step payoffs. In the Control and NoSignal treatments, the payoffs are not affected. It is lower in the Signal treatment, by 10.1%, with a  $p$ -value = 0.108 compared to the NoSignal treatment. This is to be expected as the additional uninformed participants in the Signal treatment vote blindly in the first stage. This lower payoff level in the Signal treatment raises an intermediate question: do voters have a consistent behavior regarding these errors, i.e. do they vote as wrongly regardless of urn color and group?

Treatment	First step	Second step
Control	33.475	
NoSignal	33.475	23.000
Signal	30.100	22.143

Table 7: Mean payoffs by treatment and step

Figure 4 presents the average payoffs for each group, by treatment (Control, NoSignal, Signal). A pairwise comparison per group confirms the previous findings for the Signal

Treatment. Despite showing the same level of aggregate payoffs, the treatments Control and NoSignal differ in their respective standard deviations, which are 3.47 and 1.85. This reflects a non-significant increase in turnout for both informed and uninformed voters in the NoSignal treatment, which does not significantly affect overall voter efficiency.

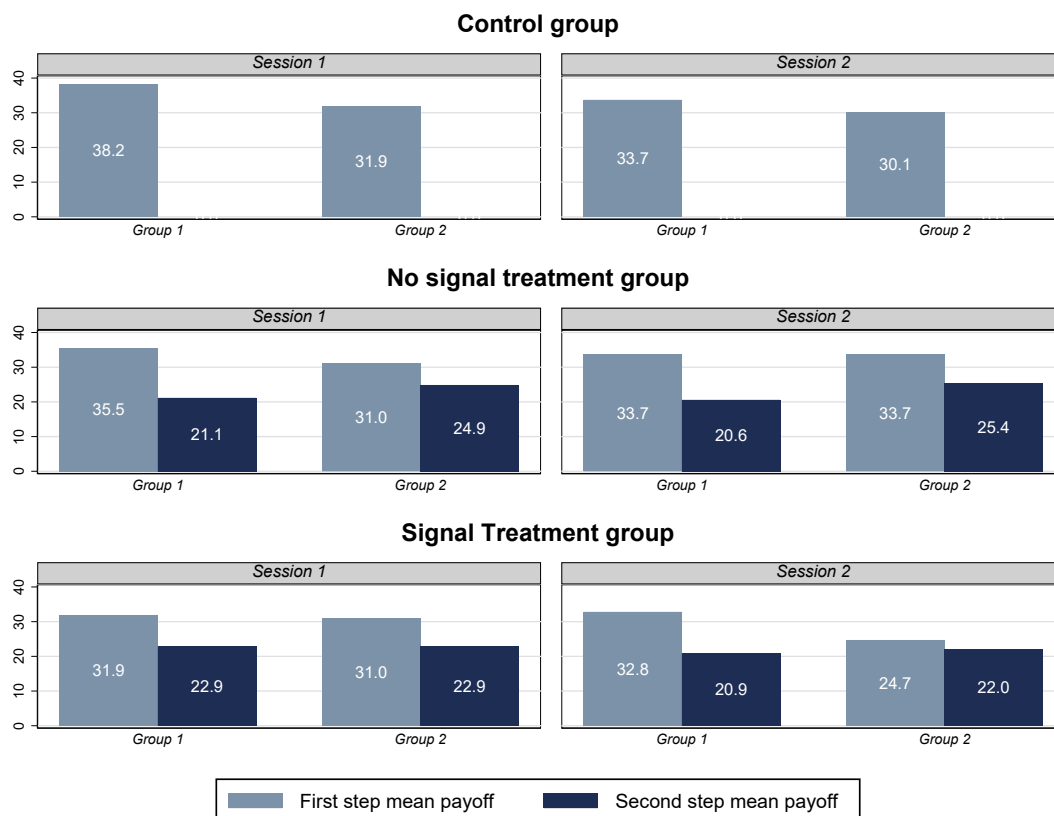


Figure 4: Average payoffs per group and session for each stage

A parametric analysis using our described regression specification confirms these findings (see Table 8).<sup>20</sup> To proceed, the dummy variable ‘Good Guess’ is constructed as a proxy to measure the quality of the outcome. This variable is equal to 1 if the collective choice in the first step was correct, i.e., the urn corresponding to the state of nature was chosen. This allows us to determine whether and to what extent the reputational concern, by increasing turnout of the uninformed voters, affects the outcome efficiency. The outcome in the **Signal** treatment is found to be 9.38% less efficient in comparison to the **Control** and **NoSignal** treatment ( $p$ -value  $< 0.05$  for each). This provides support for the hypotheses and validates Hypotheses 3 and 4.

Overall, our findings on efficiency (summarized below)—like our results on participation—lend stronger support to a own-utility maximization framework than to one grounded in ethical voting.

<sup>20</sup> Corresponding probit regressions are reported in Table 11 in the Appendix.

Variables	Regressor	Regressor
	(1)	(2)
NoSignal	0 (0.0341)	
Signal		-0.0938** (0.0371)
Constant	0.819*** (0.0241)	0.819** (0.0262)
Observations	320	320
R-Squared	0.495	0.471

Table 8: Regressions of ‘Good Guess’ per treatment relative to `Control` treatment

Notes: Standard errors clustered at the group level in parentheses. `Control` is the reference treatment. `NoSignal` and `Signal` are dummy variables equal to 1 if and only if the observation involves treatments `NoSignal` and `Signal` respectively. As a robustness check, inference based on wild bootstrap yields  $p$ -values of 0.996 and 0.0265. \* $p < 0.1$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

**Result 4.** In the `Control` treatment, full information payoff is reached.

**Result 5.** In the `NoSignal` treatment, revealing the outcome, the winning urn and, the ratio of voters does not affect the outcome efficiency.

**Result 6.** In the `Signal` treatment, revealing the outcome and the identity of the voters reduces the payoffs from voting, and increases the probability of a worse collective choice compared to the `Control` and `NoSignal` treatments.

However, while these results are compatible with the mechanism that we describe in the theoretical section (i.e. public observability of the turnout decision might create endogenous incentives for increased participation of uninformed voters, and thus deteriorate outcomes), they do not constitute direct evidence regarding the existence of the proposed underlying force. Given that public observability of turnout decisions can act as an incentive for turnout only if agents believe that turnout will be rewarded by their fellow citizens, and that reward decisions are endogenous, one needs to further check whether turnout affects reward reception.

To test the mechanism, two dummy variables are constructed, ‘Voting’ and ‘Reward Reception’. The former one takes the value of 1 if the participant votes while the latter one equals 1 only when she receives a reward in the second step. An OLS regression with ‘Reward Reception’ as the dependent variable allows us to assess both the existence and the extent of the mere act of voting being used as a reputational device (see Table 9). This indicates no relationship between social recognition and the act of voting in the `NoSignal` treatment. The coefficient, equal to zero, along with a high  $p$ -value (0.0530),

suggest the absence of a correlation. This aligns with the non-significant (minimal) increase in participation. In contrast, in the **Signal** treatment, a strong and positive correlation is observed between voting and the payoff for being perceived as an active voter. The coefficient for voting is substantial (0.592), indicating that participants who vote receive significantly higher payoffs ( $p$ -value =0.0994).

Variables	Regressor (1)	Regressor (2)
Vote in <b>NoSignal</b>	0 (0.0530)	
Vote in <b>Signal</b>		0.592*** (0.0994)
Constant	1*** (0.0291)	0.497*** (0.0690)
Observations	1,120	1,120
R-squared	0.000	0.051

Table 9: Regressions of the second step payoffs on the voting decision

Notes: Standard errors clustered at the group level in parentheses. The dependent variable, Reward Reception, is a dummy variable equal to 1 if the agent receives a reward in that step. Vote in **NoSignal** and Vote in **Signal** are dummy variables equal to 1 for the observed action of voting. As a robustness check, inference based on wild bootstrap yields  $p$ -values of 0.998 and 0.0169. \* $p < 0.1$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

We now state a new result as a direct consequence of our tested hypotheses:

**Result 7.** Reward reception is strongly correlated with participation in the **Signal** treatment but is not correlated in the **NoSignal** one.

Overall, we establish that the observability of turnout decisions gives rise to endogenous social recognition and rewards; this, in turn, leads to higher turnout among uninformed individuals and lower social welfare. This emphasizes that the private benefits generated for rational agents prevail over the maximization of social welfare.

## 6 Conclusion

We examine the impact of reputational concerns on voting behavior in settings of practical relevance. These concerns give rise to a fundamental trade-off: they increase turnout—thereby improving the likelihood of a correct group decision, holding average voter quality constant—but simultaneously lower the average level of voter information, which in turn hampers collective accuracy.

We demonstrate that participants can endogenously coordinate behaviors and beliefs that yield reputational benefits from voting. This novel analysis and its results complement those of [Mattozzi and Nakaguma \(2023\)](#) by endogenizing reputation concerns in common value elections. We demonstrate that while these endogenous reputation mechanisms enhance voter turnout, they can also compromise the quality of electoral outcomes. Indeed, voting can become a signaling device to demonstrate one’s role as a good citizen when reputational incentives are strong. In such cases, voting becomes the preferred choice, even when abstention might be the more socially-beneficial option for achieving the best democratic outcome.<sup>21</sup>

These findings contribute to the broad analysis of the interplay between individualistic and ethical considerations in voting behavior. When an individual’s participation increases the likelihood of their preferred outcome winning, ethical voting tends to dominate despite private costs. However, when voting diminishes the chances of the preferred outcome but yields personal benefits, self-interest and utility maximization prevail.

From a “getting-out-the-vote” perspective, [Gerber et al. \(2008\)](#) provide compelling evidence that informational cues and reputational incentives significantly enhance voter turnout. Similarly, [Nickerson \(2008\)](#) demonstrates that voter mobilization strategies leveraging interpersonal influence can effectively engage voters with limited political knowledge but strong sensitivity to social recognition. Our findings align with these insights, confirming that reputational gains are indeed powerful drivers of increased electoral participation.

A central conceptual contribution of our paper is that reputational incentives do not require vote transparency. Even when ballots are fully secret, the mere disclosure of who participates is sufficient to create a powerful signaling environment. This insight helps reinterpret a large body of work linking transparency to reputation. Participation observability alone can generate similar forces, even in the absence of any information about how citizens actually vote.

However, our work introduces a critical nuance to this literature. While increasing participation via individual incentives such as peer pressure or reputational concerns is equivalent to improving voter information from a purely turnout-oriented point of view, these mechanisms diverge significantly regarding electoral efficiency. Specifically, we demonstrate that incentivizing uninformed voters through reputational concerns leads to higher turnout at the expense of electoral outcomes, as these voters are more likely to cast ballots without adequate information.

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<sup>21</sup> [McMurray \(2013\)](#) determines in a setting in which participants receive continuous-quality information, that better information can actually reduce participation. This happens because, while the precision of his individual information makes him more willing to vote, the precision of his peers’ information makes him more inclined to abstain. Taking into account reputation concerns within this framework, which relies on continuous-quality information, and considering the two patterns identified in our analysis, we can conjecture that our findings are intuitively consistent and robust.

This distinction provides insights to the normative debates regarding participation in elections as a civic duty and as a means for improving outcomes, and underscores a fundamental trade-off that election design must carefully consider. Unlike conventional mobilization theories and normative arguments, which treat turnout as inherently beneficial, our results emphasize the paramount importance of voter information quality. Enhancing the dissemination of accurate information about candidates, their policy platforms, and past performance emerges as uniquely beneficial, as it increases turnout without the adverse effects associated with reputational motivations. Hence, democratic institutions aiming for optimal electoral outcomes should prioritize improving voters' information over merely targeting to maximize participation.

## A Appendix

### A.1 Proofs

*Proof of Lemma 1.* By assumption, strategies are symmetric: informed agents participate with probability  $\sigma_I \in [0, 1]$  and uninformed agents participate with probability  $\sigma_\emptyset \in [0, 1]$ . Assume that both actions  $V$  and  $N$  are selected with positive probability so that:

$$\Pr(V) = p\sigma_I + (1 - p)\sigma_\emptyset \in (0, 1), \quad \Pr(N) = 1 - \Pr(V) \in (0, 1).$$

By Bayes' rule, the posterior probability that an agent is informed conditional on selecting  $V$  equals:

$$\begin{aligned} \beta(V) = \Pr(I | V) &= \frac{\Pr(V | I) \Pr(I)}{\Pr(V | I) \Pr(I) + \Pr(V | \emptyset) \Pr(\emptyset)} \\ &= \frac{p\sigma_I}{p\sigma_I + (1 - p)\sigma_\emptyset}. \end{aligned} \tag{2}$$

Similarly, the posterior probability that an agent is informed conditional on selecting  $N$  is

$$\begin{aligned} \beta(N) = \Pr(I | N) &= \frac{\Pr(N | I) \Pr(I)}{\Pr(N | I) \Pr(I) + \Pr(N | \emptyset) \Pr(\emptyset)} \\ &= \frac{p(1 - \sigma_I)}{p(1 - \sigma_I) + (1 - p)(1 - \sigma_\emptyset)}. \end{aligned} \tag{3}$$

Building on (2) and (3), assume that  $\sigma_I > \sigma_\emptyset$  and consider first  $\beta(V)$ :

$$\begin{aligned}\beta(V) > p &\iff \frac{p\sigma_I}{p\sigma_I + (1-p)\sigma_\emptyset} > p \\ &\iff p\sigma_I > p^2\sigma_I + p(1-p)\sigma_\emptyset \\ &\iff p(1-p)\sigma_I > p(1-p)\sigma_\emptyset \iff \sigma_I > \sigma_\emptyset,\end{aligned}$$

where the equivalence holds as  $p\sigma_I + (1-p)\sigma_\emptyset > 0$ . As  $\sigma_I > \sigma_\emptyset$  holds by hypothesis, we obtain that  $\beta(V) > p$ . Next, consider  $\beta(N)$ :

$$\beta(N) < p \iff \frac{p(1-\sigma_I)}{p(1-\sigma_I) + (1-p)(1-\sigma_\emptyset)} < p \iff 1-\sigma_I < 1-\sigma_\emptyset.$$

This means that  $\sigma_I > \sigma_\emptyset$ , and therefore  $\beta(N) < p$ , as wanted.

If one assumes that  $\sigma_I < \sigma_\emptyset$ , the previous inequalities reverse by the same algebraic steps, yielding  $\beta(V) < p < \beta(N)$ .

Finally, when  $\sigma_I = \sigma_\emptyset = \sigma$ , we obtain that:

$$\beta(V) = \frac{p\sigma}{p\sigma + (1-p)\sigma} = p, \quad \beta(N) = \frac{p(1-\sigma)}{p(1-\sigma) + (1-p)(1-\sigma)} = p.$$

Hence participation does not change beliefs relative to the prior.  $\square$

*Proof of Proposition 1.* This proof establishes the sign of the expected payoff difference for uninformed agents in the benchmark common value voting environment without reputational concerns ( $\omega = 0$ ).<sup>22</sup>

Consider an uninformed agent. Let  $u_\theta$  denote the expected utility of voting for alternative  $\theta \in \{A, B\}$ , and let  $u_0$  denote the expected utility of abstaining. Because the uninformed signal  $\emptyset$  leaves an agent's posterior identical to the prior, we have  $\Pr(A \mid \emptyset) = \Pr(B \mid \emptyset) = 1/2$ . It follows that an uninformed agent is indifferent between voting  $A$  and  $B$ , implying  $u_A = u_B$ .

Let  $P_0$  denote the event in which the other agents are tied between  $A$  and  $B$ , and let  $P_\theta$ , for  $\theta \in \{A, B\}$ , denote the event in which alternative  $\theta$  is losing by one vote. These are the only events in which the uninformed agent can be pivotal.

By conditioning on these events, the expected payoff difference between voting and abstaining can be written as:

$$u_A - u_0 = \sum_{i \in \{0, A, B\}} \Pr[P_i] \mathbb{E}[u_A - u_0 \mid P_i].$$

One can establish that, conditional on any pivotal event, an uninformed agent's vote

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<sup>22</sup> The argument follows the swing voter pivotal events structure of Battaglini et al. (2010) and use other notations for simplicity.

is more likely to overturn a correct tentative majority than to create a correct one. As a result, for each pivotal event  $P_i$ , the conditional expected payoff difference  $\mathbb{E}[u_A - u_0 \mid P_i]$  is strictly negative. Since the probabilities  $\Pr[P_i]$  are nonnegative and sum to one over pivotal events, it follows that:

$$u_A - u_0 < 0. \quad (4)$$

Using the notation used in Section 3,  $u_A - u_0$  at  $\omega = 0$  corresponds to the uninformed-type outcome difference  $v_\emptyset(V) - v_\emptyset(N)$ , since an uninformed agent's ballot choice is *ex ante* uninformative about the true state and  $u_A = u_B$  by symmetry. Therefore the inequality (4) is equivalent to:

$$\Delta_\emptyset = v_\emptyset(V) - v_\emptyset(N) < 0,$$

establishing that, absent reputational concerns, uninformed agents strictly prefer to abstain. Finally, since the expected payoff satisfies  $u_i \in \{0, 1\}$ , the expected payoff difference is bounded, i.e.  $|\Delta_t| \leq 1$  for  $t \in \{I, \emptyset\}$ .  $\square$

*Proof of Proposition 2.* Fix  $\omega \geq 0$  and consider the strategy profile  $(\sigma_I = 1, \sigma_\emptyset = 0)$ . Under this profile, observing participation perfectly identifies an informed agent, so  $\beta(V) = 1$  and  $\beta(N) = 0$ .

For an uninformed agent,

$$U_\emptyset(V) - U_\emptyset(N) = \Delta_\emptyset + (n - 1)\omega(\beta(V) - \beta(N)) = \Delta_\emptyset + (n - 1)\omega.$$

By Proposition 1,  $\Delta_\emptyset < 0$ . Define:

$$\bar{\omega} := -\frac{\Delta_\emptyset}{n - 1} > 0.$$

Then, for all  $\omega \leq \bar{\omega}$ ,  $U_\emptyset(V) - U_\emptyset(N) \leq 0$ . Abstention is a best response for uninformed agents, with indifference at  $\omega = \bar{\omega}$ .

For an informed agent,

$$U_I(V) - U_I(N) = \Delta_I + (n - 1)\omega(\beta(V) - \beta(N)) = \Delta_I + (n - 1)\omega,$$

Since  $\Delta_I > 0$  by Proposition 1 and  $\omega \geq 0$ , we have  $U_I(V) - U_I(N) > 0$ . Hence, participation is a best response for informed agents for all  $\omega \geq 0$ .

Let us now establish the equilibrium uniqueness. We showed that  $(\sigma_I, \sigma_\emptyset) = (1, 0)$  is a symmetric equilibrium for all  $\omega \leq \bar{\omega}$ . Moreover, for all  $\omega < \bar{\omega}$  both types have a unique best response (informed agents strictly prefer participation while uninformed strictly prefer abstention), which implies that no other symmetric equilibrium can exist (any symmetric equilibrium must assign probability one to each type's strict best response).

Hence, the symmetric equilibrium is unique for  $\omega < \bar{\omega}$ .  $\square$

*Proof of Proposition 3.* Suppose by contradiction that there exists a symmetric equilibrium with  $\omega > \frac{1}{n-1}$  and  $\sigma_\emptyset = 0$ . In any symmetric equilibrium, informed agents participate with probability one (because  $\Delta_I > 0$  and the reputational component is weakly higher under participation), so that  $\sigma_I = 1$ . Then observing participation identifies an informed agent:  $\beta(V) = 1$  and  $\beta(N) = 0$ .

For an uninformed agent,

$$U_\emptyset(V) - U_\emptyset(N) = \Delta_\emptyset + (n-1)\omega.$$

Since  $\Delta_\emptyset \geq -1$  (because  $u_i \in \{0, 1\}$ ), we have

$$U_\emptyset(V) - U_\emptyset(N) \geq -1 + (n-1)\omega > 0.$$

So participation is a profitable deviation, contradicting equilibrium. Hence  $\sigma_\emptyset > 0$ .  $\square$

*Proof of Proposition 4.* Under the profile  $\sigma_I = 1$  and  $\sigma_\emptyset = 1$ , participation conveys no information, so the on-path beliefs satisfy:

$$\beta(V) = \Pr(I) = p.$$

Consider a deviation by an uninformed agent from participation to abstention. By the imposed off-path belief, an abstainer is believed to be uninformed, i.e.  $\beta(N) = 0$ . The deviation changes expected utility by:

$$\begin{aligned} U_\emptyset(N) - U_\emptyset(V) &= (v_\emptyset(N) - v_\emptyset(V)) + (n-1)\omega(\beta(N) - \beta(V)) \\ &= -\Delta_\emptyset + (n-1)\omega(0 - p). \end{aligned}$$

The expected payoff term satisfies  $-\Delta_\emptyset = v_\emptyset(N) - v_\emptyset(V) \leq 1$  because  $u_i \in \{0, 1\}$ . Hence:

$$U_\emptyset(N) - U_\emptyset(V) \leq 1 - (n-1)\omega p.$$

If  $\omega > \frac{1}{(n-1)p}$ , then the right-hand side is strictly negative, implying  $U_\emptyset(N) - U_\emptyset(V) < 0$ , so the deviation to abstention is not profitable. Therefore an uninformed agent strictly prefers to participate under the stated beliefs, and  $\sigma_\emptyset = 1$  is sustainable.  $\square$

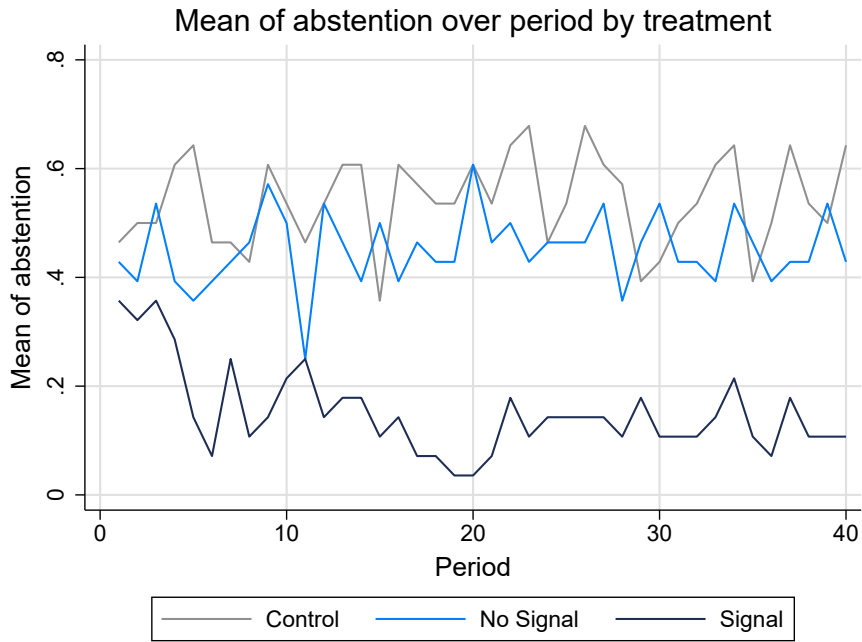


Figure 5: Abstention over the different periods — Comparison of abstention shares by treatment and over time

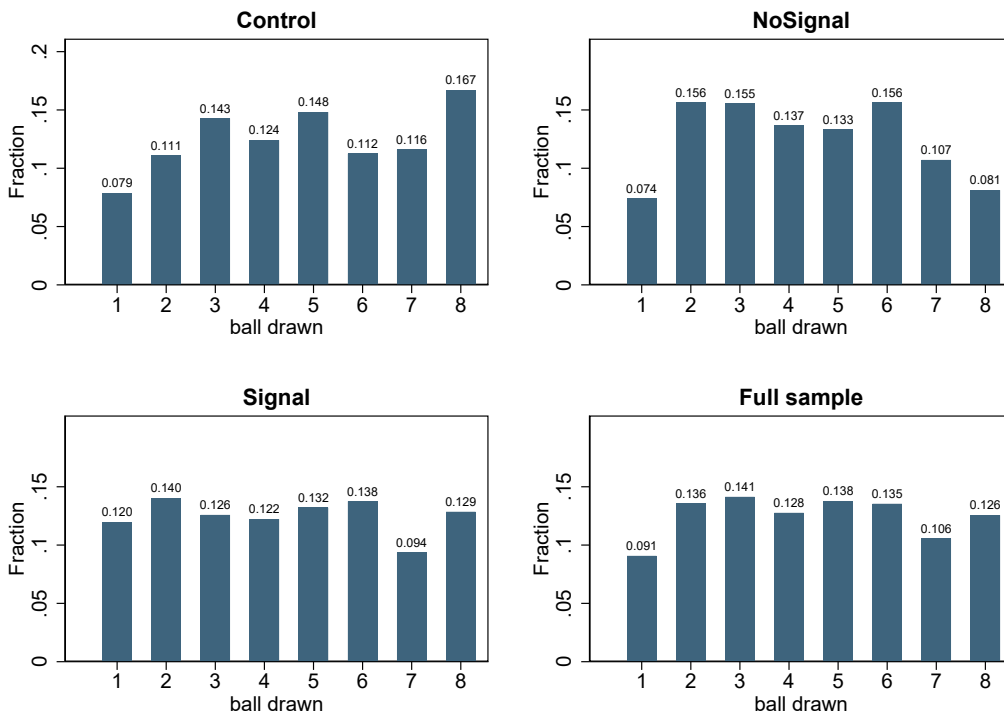


Figure 6: Frequency of the choice of balls.

Variables	Regressor	Regressor
	(1)	(2)
NoSignal	-0.229 (0.286)	
Signal		-1.158*** (0.280)
Constant	-0.0210 (0.174)	0.330 (0.290)
Observations	2,240	2,240

Table 10: Probit for abstention per treatment relative to **Control** treatment

Notes: Standard errors clustered at the group level in parentheses. **Control** is the reference treatment. **NoSignal** and **Signal** are dummy variables equal to 1 if and only if the observation involves treatments **NoSignal** and **Signal** respectively. As a robustness check, inference based on wild bootstrap yields  $p$ -values of 0.476 and 0.00150.  $*p < 0.1$ ,  $**p < 0.05$ ,  $***p < 0.01$ .

Variables	Regressor	Regressor
	(1)	(2)
NoSignal	0.00242 (0.209)	
Signal		-0.347 (0.237)
Constant	1.149* (0.650)	0.499 (0.512)
Observations	320	320

Table 11: Probit of the proxy ‘Good Guess’ per treatment relative to **Control** treatment

Notes: Standard errors clustered at the group level in parentheses. **Control** is the reference treatment. **NoSignal** and **Signal** are dummy variables equal to 1 if and only if the observation involves treatments **NoSignal** and **Signal** respectively. As a robustness check, inference based on wild bootstrap yields  $p$ -values of 0.991 and 0.221.  $*p < 0.1$ ,  $**p < 0.05$ ,  $***p < 0.01$ .

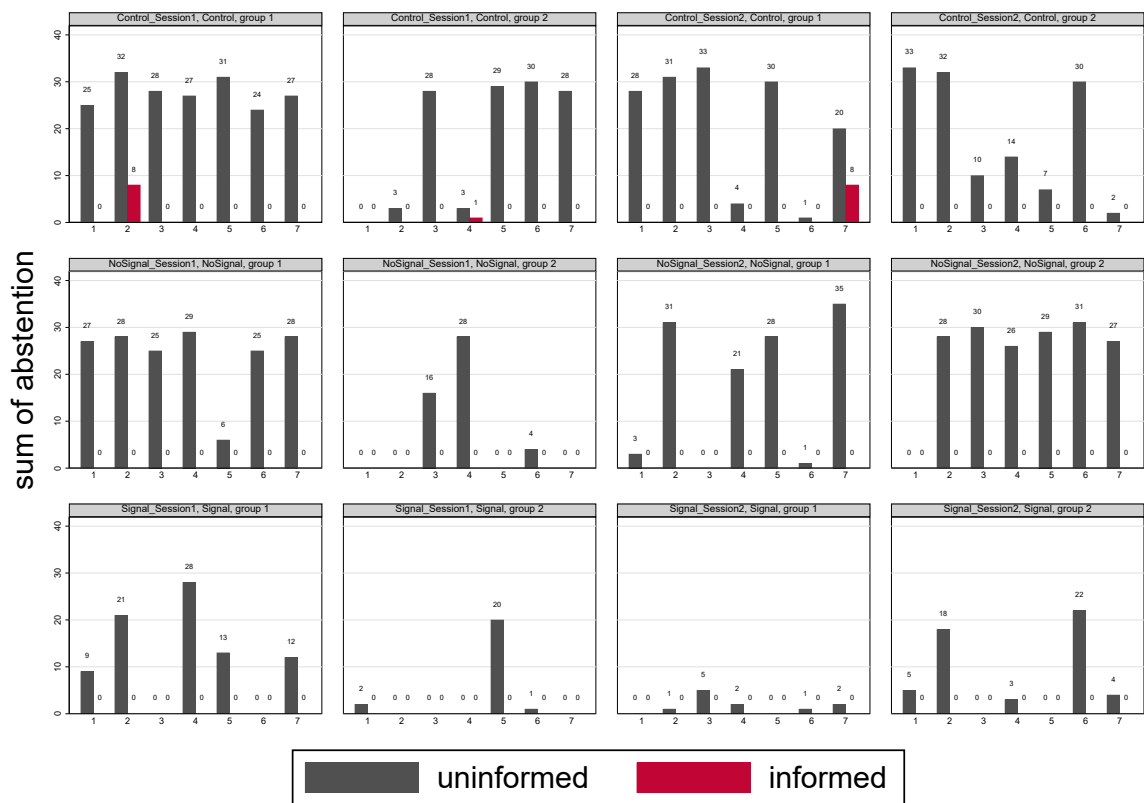


Figure 7: Number of abstentions by informational status

Payoff Type	Treatment	Information	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Nomination	NoSignal	Uninformed	848	-0.429	0.904	-1	1
Nomination	NoSignal	Informed	272	-0.412	0.913	-1	1
Nomination	Signal	Uninformed	855	-0.453	0.892	-1	1
Nomination	Signal	Informed	265	-0.426	0.906	-1	1
Nominee	NoSignal	Uninformed	848	1.004	0.902	0	4
Nominee	NoSignal	Informed	272	0.989	0.865	0	3
Nominee	Signal	Uninformed	855	0.986	0.952	0	4
Nominee	Signal	Informed	265	1.045	0.895	0	5

Table 12: Summary statistics of second steps by treatment and information status

## A.2 Tables and Figures

Table 12 discloses the payoffs obtained by subjects in the second step. Recall that in the second step, a subject gets a payoff by nominating some other voter (i.e. the nomination payoff) and also gets a payoff by being nominated (i.e. the nominee payoff). Both the nomination and the nominee payoff have the same effect independently of the treatment and the information status. The average payoff for the Nominee being at 1 is by design: every voter nominates one voter, and each nominee gets a payoff of 1. Thus, the average is 1. The average payoff for the nomination is more involved. Each voter is informed with probability  $1/4$  and uninformed with probability  $3/4$  (as balls were drawn uniformly). If the subject is uninformed, there are 2 informed and 4 uninformed subjects in her group. If the subject nominates uniformly, her expected payoff is  $1(2/6) + (-1)(4/6) = -2/6$ . If she is informed, there is 1 informed and 5 uninformed subjects in her group. If the subject nominates uniformly, her expected payoff is  $1(1/6) + (-1)(5/6) = -4/6$ . Her expected payoff equals  $(3/4)(-2/6) + (1/4)(-4/6) \simeq -0.416$ , in line with the mean payoffs. We conclude that the second steps were almost equivalent between both treatments.

## B Online Appendix

### B.1 Experimental Instructions

WELCOME You are about to participate in an economic experiment. The instructions are simple. If you follow them carefully, you may make a substantial amount of money. Your earnings will be paid to you in euros at the end of the experiment. This will be done confidentially, one participant at a time.

Earnings in the experiment will be denoted in euros (€). Your starting capital equals 3€.

These instructions consist of 7 pages like this. You may page back and forth by using

your mouse to click on ‘previous page’ or ‘next page’ at the bottom of your screen. At the bottom of your screen, you will see the button ‘ready’. You can click this when you have completely finished with all pages of the instructions. If you have any question during your reading, please raise your hand.

In today’s experiment, you will participate in a group decision making (electoral vote) experiment. In this electoral decision, you may either to vote for the correct group decision, for the incorrect group decision or to abstain. Second, you could vote to reward one of the group member for the quality of her participation. In the remainder of these instructions, we will explain the way in which the voting is organized and the rules you must follow.

---

## ROUNDS

Today’s experiment consists of 40 rounds. A vote will proceed at each step.

In the experiment, you will be member of one group (one exactly). This group consists of you and six other participants. It is unknown to you and to the other participants who is in which group. The seven group members remain in the same group throughout the experiment. Thus, you will meet the same six participants in each of the 40 rounds.

---

## CHOICE BETWEEN TWO URNS

Each member of your group will decide for one of two ‘urns’, the RED Urn and the BLUE Urn. Decisions are made by majority voting: the urn receiving the highest number of votes will be chosen, and ties will be broken randomly (1/2 chance for each).

Each urn contains 8 balls. The Red Urn contains 6 White Balls and 2 Red Balls. The Blue Urn contains 6 White Balls and 2 Blue Balls.

An urn is randomly selected by a computer drawing randomly a number:

- If the number 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 comes up, then the RED Urn is selected by the computer.
- If the number 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 then the BLUE Urn is selected by the computer.

This random draw and its outcome are independent for each step and each group.

Neither you nor any member of your group are informed which urn is selected. Yet each member of your group gets a private information:

- You will draw one ball from the urn and observe the color.
- You can observe a Red ball, a Blue ball or a White ball. Other members of your group observe a ball and its color among the 8 balls in the urn and get their own private information.

Using this private information, you will have the opportunity to either vote for the Red Urn, the Blue Urn or Abstain.

Once everybody in your group have voted or abstained, the correct urn, the urn who got the majority of votes, the proportion of voters for each urn and the identity of the voters are announced. The correct urn and the winning urn can be the same. By seeing the identity of the voters, you see who voted and who abstained.

---

#### FIRST STEP: EARNINGS FOR THE VOTERS

Your payoffs are depending on the result of votes.

If the majority of votes resulted to the correct Urn:

you earn €1 and every other member of the group also earn 1€.

If the majority of votes resulted to the incorrect Urn:

you earn 0.1€ and every other member of the group also earn 0.1€.

Ties are broken randomly. Following abstention, the result of votes could be for Red Urn and Blue Urn as 0-0, 1-1, 2-2, 3-3. For example, 3-3 means that 3 members voted for the Red Urn, 3 members voted for the Blue Urns, and one member abstained, which is a tied. In that case, the urn would be chosen randomly (1/2 chance for each).

---

#### SECOND STEP: CHOICE TO REWARD ONE TEAM MEMBER

As previously said, you are told the correct urn, the winning urn, the proportion of voters for each urn and the identity of the voters. This is a perfectly known information: all group members get exactly the same information at the same time. By seeing the identity of the voters, you see who voted and who abstained.

You now have to select one of the team members. This team member will get a reward of 1€. You cannot select yourself.

Keep in mind that if the correct urn is the Blue Urn, all team members got either a White Ball or a Blue Ball. If the correct urn is the Red Urn, all team members got either a White Ball or a Red Ball.

---

#### SECOND STEP: EARNINGS FOR REWARDED ONE TEAM MEMBER

Your payoff is contingent to the team member you vote.

If you select a group member who drew at the first step a Non-White Ball (this is a single color ball regarding of the correct urn):

- you earn 1€,
- and as said before the team member you chose is rewarded and earns 1€.

If you select a group member who drew at the first step a White Ball:

- you are losing and have to pay 1€,
- and as said before the team member you chose is rewarded and earns 1€.

If you are selected by a group member: you earn 1€.

## TOTAL EARNINGS

Sum up of your earning at the end is of this step.

At the first step:

- either 1€ if the group chooses the correct Urn.
- or 0.1€ if the group chooses the incorrect Urn.

At the second step:

- either 1€, if you vote and reward for a team member who drew at the first step a Non-White Ball.
- or -1€, if you vote and reward for a team member who drew at the first step a White Ball.
- If a team member vote for you at the second step, you earn 1€, independently of the color of the ball you drew at the first step.

Keep in mind you also have a participation of 3€ for the full experiment.

## B.2 Experiment Screenshots

The experiment was conducted in French; therefore, the screenshots are also in French. The various steps align with those outlined in the Experimental Instructions section (see Section B.1). For convenience and guidance some text is repeated verbatim.

### CHOICE BETWEEN TWO URNS

*Each urn contains 8 balls. The Red Urn contains 6 White Balls and 2 Red Balls. The Blue Urn contains 6 White Balls and 2 Blue Balls.*

*An urn is randomly selected by a computer drawing randomly a number [...]*

*[...] Neither you nor any member of your group are informed which urn is selected. Yet each member of your group gets a private information:*

- *You will draw one ball from the urn and observe the color. [...]*

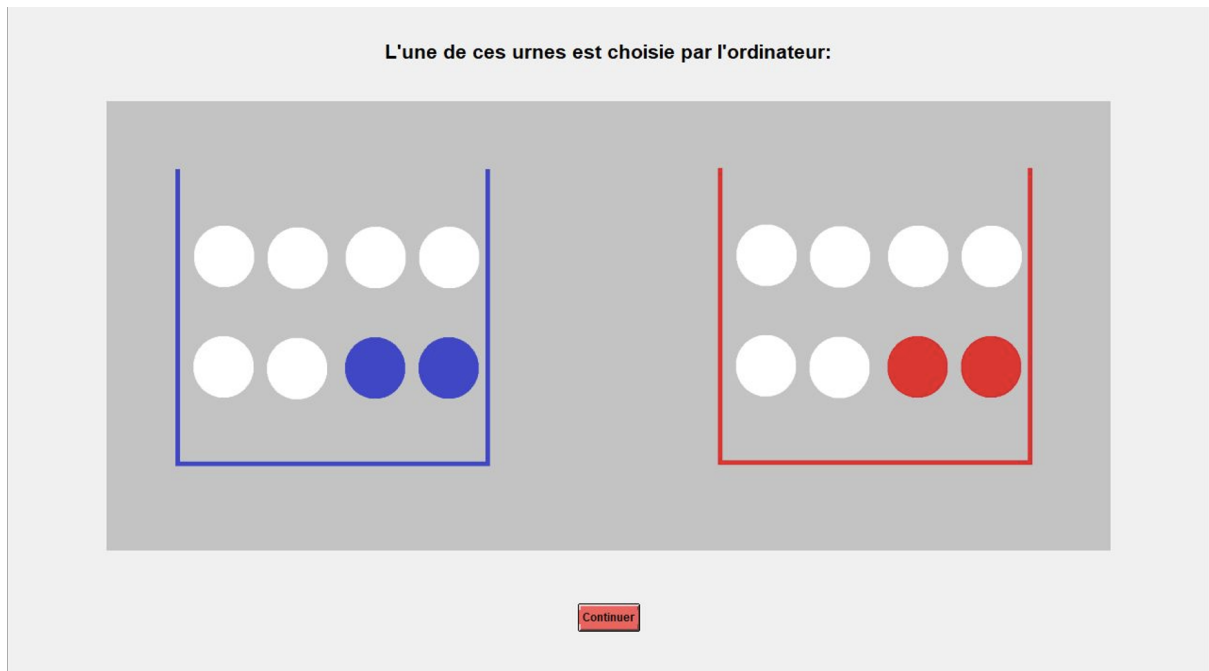


Figure 8: Red and Blue Urns Display

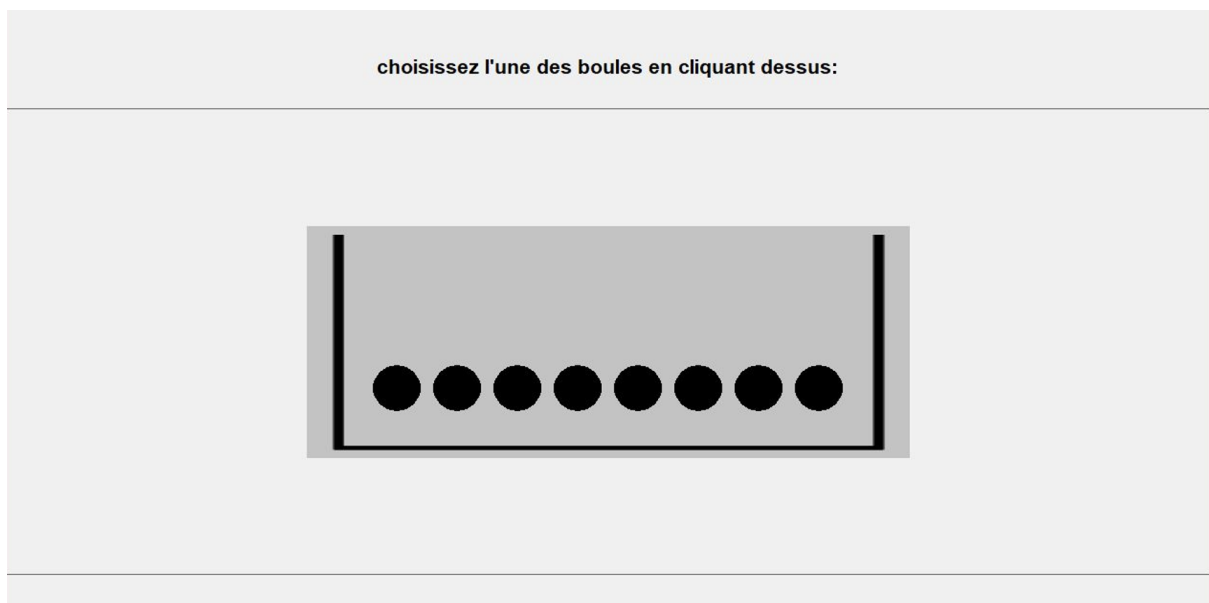


Figure 9: Ball drawn

*Using this private information, you will have the opportunity to either vote for the Red Urn, the Blue Urn or Abstain.*

---

#### FIRST STEP: EARNINGS FOR THE VOTERS

*Your payoffs are depending on the result of votes. [...] You now have to select one of the team members. This team member will get a reward of 1€. You cannot select*



Figure 10: Ball drawn

*yourself.*

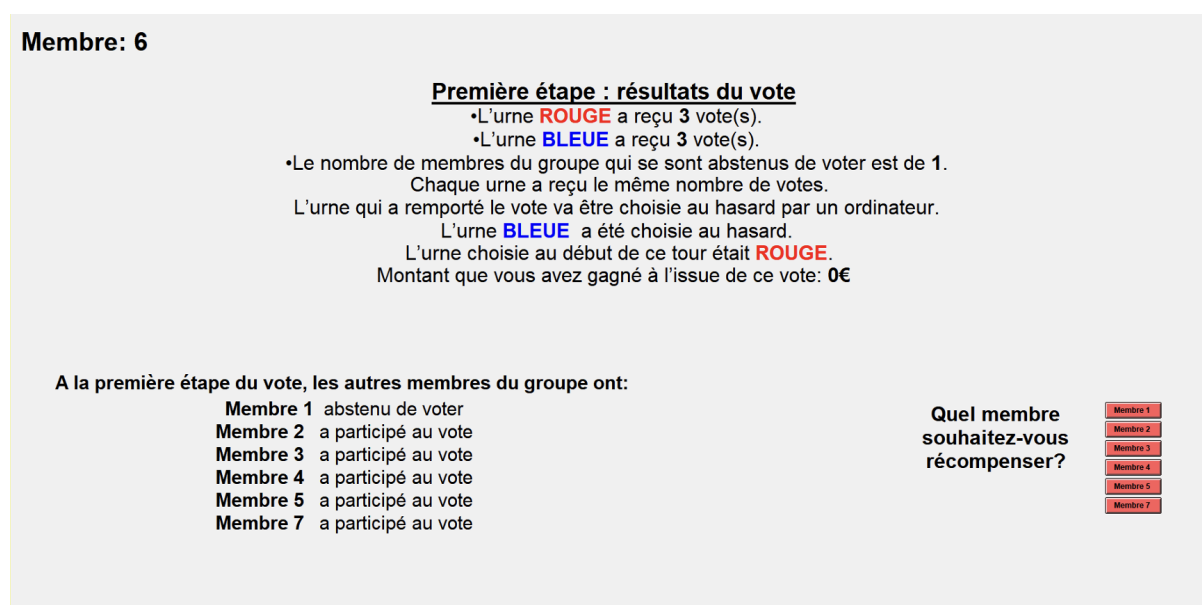


Figure 11: Earnings and the Choice to Reward a Team Member

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## SECOND STEP: EARNINGS FOR REWARDED ONE TEAM MEMBER

*Your payoff is contingent to the team member you vote. [...] If you are selected by a group member: you earn 1€.*

---

## TOTAL EARNINGS

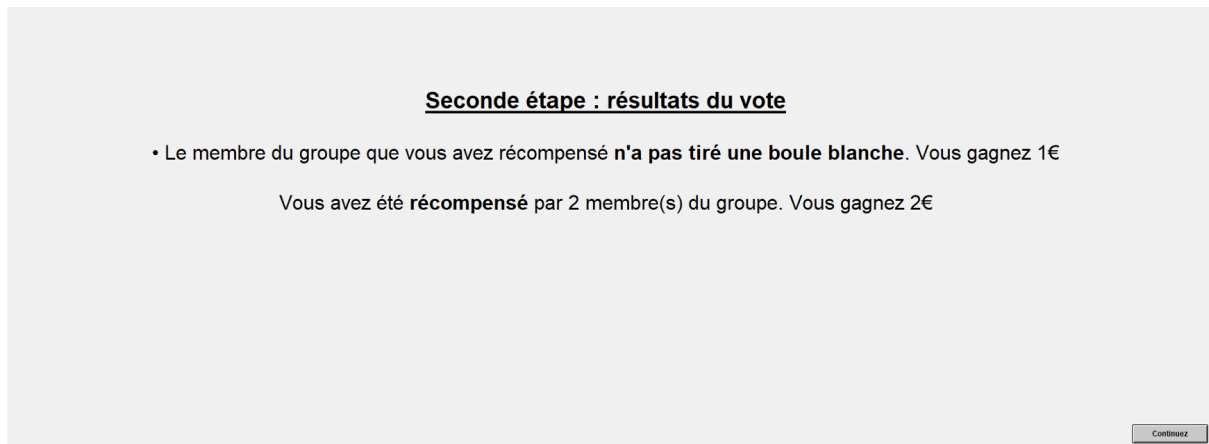


Figure 12: Earnings for Rewarding a Team Member and Being Rewarded

*Sum up of your earning at the end is of this step.*

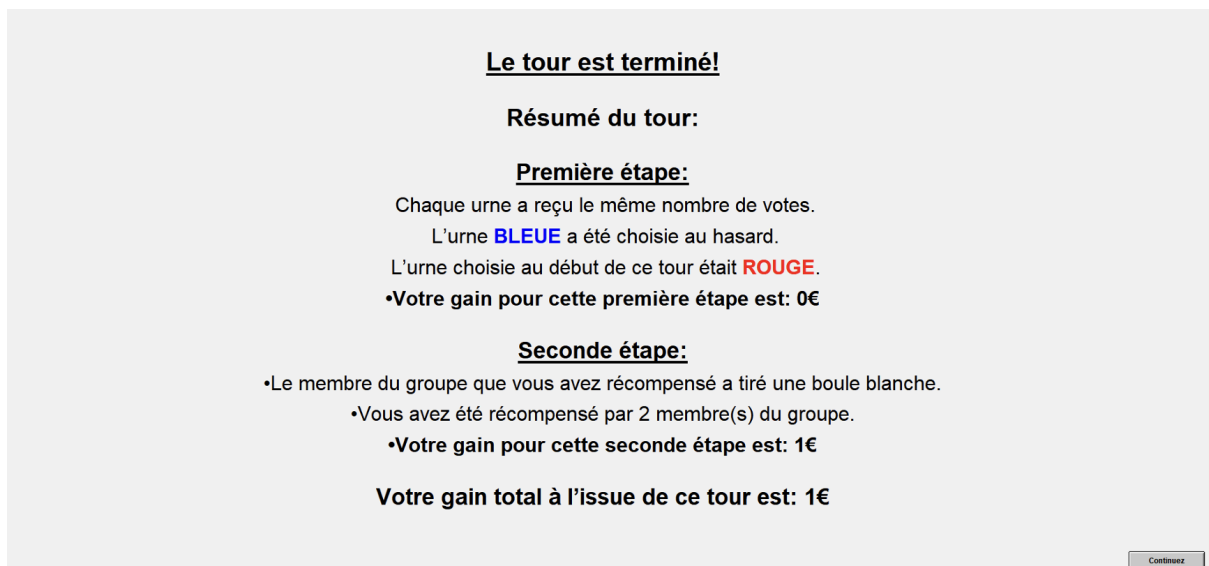


Figure 13: Final Screenshot of the step: Total Earnings

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