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The electoral effects of Electronic Voting

Vander Weyden, Patrick - Ghent University, Belgium, patrick.vanderweyden@ugent.be

Since the end of the eighties and the beginning of the nineties, some Belgian voters are obliged to vote by using computers in the polling booth. First explorative research is indicating that the system has an effect on the preferential voting for candidates as a consequence of some socio-demographic variables. Less educated and older people don't know how to manage the new voting procedures. Another side effect of electronic voting is the legitimacy of the election results are quite often contested. Although we will take the Belgian voting procedures as a starting point, we want to explore in this paper the effects of different kinds of electronic voting (touch screens, digital pens, screen lay-out,...) on electoral results (party vote totals, candidate vote totals,...) in different kind of electoral systems (close list systems, open list systems, first past the post). We will use quantitative (survey-research) as well as qualitative research (interviews and focusgroups. We will also introduce a third method to explore the consequences of electronic voting, namely the experimental design.