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### Rain falls on all of us (but some manage to get more wet than others) : political context and electoral participation

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Why do we see high turnout in one election, and low turnout in the next? What influences whether people will participate in some elections, but not in others? We know that individual characteristics determine to a large degree why individuals vote or not. However, individual characteristics do not explain everything: the characteristics of the election also determine whether potential voters become definite voters, and explain why some elections see higher turnout than others.

To give an account of individual behavior being affected by context is not new. However, this study shows that it is too simple to assume, as is often the case, that context is of equal significance to all individuals. In short, the influence of contextual characteristics is dependent on individual characteristics. To illustrate this, empirical work undertaken in this study examined the specific effect of the closeness of the election on individual voters. This work shows that although the closeness of the election is identical for all voters, its effect is not equal for all. If the rains start to fall, not all of us get wet.



**Marcel van Egmond** received a degree in political science from the University of Amsterdam. The present study was conducted at the Interuniversity Center for Social Science Research and Methodology (ICS) in Nijmegen, and at the Amsterdam School for Communication Research (ASCoR) at the University of Amsterdam. The research was sponsored by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO), and the European Union TMR network on Political Representation in Europe.

