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# **Should Sortition Be Introduced in Parliament? A First Empirical Analysis of what Belgian Citizens and Parliamentarians Think**

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## **Introduction**

Until recently, random selection to choose public officials could sound as a strange and fantasist idea. This procedure of political selection was mainly known by historians of antiquity and the Middle Ages (Hansen, 1991; Headlam, 1933). But since the development of democratic innovations at the end of the 20th century (Sintomer, 2010; Smith, 2009), the use of sortition (or random selection) has reappeared as a potential and meaningful option in advanced democracies. An increasing number of scholars, activists, and even elected politicians argue for the use of random selection in the current representative democracies, notably to select (some of the) members of the parliament. This article analyzes the elites' and mass's support for such a proposal by answering the following research questions: How do citizens and elected representative react to this idea? Are some scenarios preferred to other ones? In addition, who are those that support or oppose it?

This article draws on two original surveys conducted with a representation sample of the population and members of parliaments in Belgium. This country witnessed a growing debate about the institutionalization of random selection. Several political leaders have publicly defended the transformation of the second chamber into a sortitioned chamber. This makes this country particularly fruitful area to study the support of random selection.

The article is structured as follows. We first present the idea of sortition, its history and the issues it raises for the future of advanced representative democracies. The following section develops the main hypotheses related to the citizens' and MP's support for the use of random selection in politics both at aggregate and individual levels. The Belgian context and its relevance for the research are afterwards described. The next section presents the main results of the analysis.

## **1. The return of sortition?**

Sortition in politics has a long history (Sintomer, 2010). It was used in Athens in the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. to select some citizen for public offices (Dowlen, 2008; Manin, 1997). Sortition was attached to the ideal of equality among citizens and was perceived as a more democratic

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selection procedure than voting (Aristotle, 1984). It was used to organize rotation in office and avoid professionalization of politics. In the Italian republic of the Middle Ages, notably in Firenze and Venice, sortition was also used to organize power among the main factions and families. It disappears from the democratic thought through the modern revolution, except for the use of jury in the judicial sphere (Sintomer, 2011).

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the idea of sortition reappeared in the political realm in two ways. Firstly, it is connected to the development of opinion polls and more specifically the survey respondents selection (Blondiaux, 1998; Gallup, 1939). Random sampling has the statistical potential to create a descriptive representation of the people at large. Secondly, random selection is used to select participants in a growing number of democratic innovations known as 'minipublics' (Fung, 2007). Initially imagined by Robert Dahl (1970), these forums gather together from 12 to 1000 lay citizens to discuss salient political issues. After having heard testimonies from experts and stakeholders, they deliberate on the issue at stake and make a series of recommendations for decision makers. The random selection of participants is supposed to increase the diversity of the point of view exchanged in the deliberation (Landmore, 2013). Minipublics have been organized in most representative democracies, from the local to the international level (for an overview of such practices, see Grönlund, Bächtiger, and Setälä (2014)). The most standardized forms are citizens' juries, consensus conferences, deliberative polling and citizens' assemblies (Smith, 2009). These practical experiences have shown that citizens are able to deliberate on complex issues, and make meaningful proposals (Curato, Dryzek, Ercan, Hendriks, & Niemeyer, 2017).

Some peoples want to go further these consultative citizens' forums and ambition to challenge the power of elected representatives. The basic idea is to give an assembly of randomly selected citizens a decision-making power. Some concrete proposals have emerged in the United States (Callenbach & Phillips, 1985), in the United Kingdom (Barnett & Carty, 1998; Sutherland, 2008), in France (Sintomer, 2007), or in the European Union (Buchstein & Hein, 2009). Their arguments are diverse and located in different traditions, but they all share the willingness to reinvigorate democracy by empowering an assembly of lay citizens. The new type of parliamentarians are supposed to be more descriptively representative of the wider population than the current elected representatives notably in terms of gender, race, level of education and income. This diversity of experience as well as the absence of party affiliation should pave the way for an authentic and fruitful deliberation.

The introduction of the randomly selected citizens in politics can take various forms. The most discussed scenario consist of establishing a new randomly selected assembly in addition to the current elected assemblies (Gastil & Wright, 2018). This constitutes a reinterpretation of the old bicameral logic. However, this is not the only option. In the light of the Irish Constitutional Convention organized between 2012 and 2014, it is also possible to imagine a mixed chamber composed of elected and randomly selected citizens (Suiter, Farrell, & Harris, 2016). The aim is to create a room for fruitful dialogue between both types of parliamentarians who could exchange from different backgrounds. Also, the debate is often situated at the national level. But the introduction of random selection can also be made in local assemblies.

Democratic theorists currently argue about the pro and con of the use of random selection and the best ways to implement them. These proposals nevertheless raises the following research questions: *How do citizens and elected representative react to this idea? Are some scenarios preferred to other ones? Moreover, who are those that support or oppose it?*

## **2. Hypotheses**

### *Aggregated support*

The support of both elected representatives and citizens is indeed crucial for the development of a randomly selected chamber.

Elected representatives are the key actors in current political regimes. In most political regimes, they are in charge of deciding on new constitutional arrangements as the introduction of a new randomly selected chamber. Even in countries where citizens can initiate a referendum on constitutional matters, the role of the political elites is important. The role of the political elite is then crucial for the chance to implement such a reform. However, random selection fundamentally challenges their position because it is based on a different legitimacy (Vandamme, 2018). By definition, current representatives have succeeded in acquiring power through the electoral procedure. One can then expect that the majority of MPs will not support the development of an alternative mode of selection such as random selection.

The support of citizens is equally important. Randomly selected assemblies are usually presented as a way to narrow the gap between citizens and politics. In a context characterized by a growing distrust towards politics and decreasing level of conventional political participation (Dalton, 2017; Norris, 1999), the use of sortition is supposed to offer solutions to the current democratic malaise. However, the popular demand for such kind of democratic innovations is uncertain (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002; Neblo, Esterling, Kennedy, Lazer, & Sokhey, 2010). A sortitioned chamber exists nowhere, but there are an increasing number of consultative minipublics conducted by public authorities. In these cases, people are contacted via phone or letter to participate in a citizen's forum lasting a couple of days. In most of them, the majority of citizens decline to participate, between 1% to 30% (Jacquet, 2017). We should then study the potential support, or lack thereof, of a randomly selected assembly of the population.

### *Differences among citizens*

Beyond the aggregated support for a randomly selected assembly, we can look at which groups of society could support them. Three sets of hypothesis could explain differences among citizens. There are connected to the attitudes towards the current electoral system, the belief in citizens' capacity and the social status.

First, random selection is based on the principle that every citizen is 'equally capable of political judgement and equally responsible for the public good' (Barber, 1984, p. 294). Each member of the community has the same chance to be involved and to serve as a parliamentarian. This principle challenges the logic of the election according to which citizens vote for the candidates that best represent them, regardless of the criteria they use to make this judgement (Manin, 1997). Supporting random selection supposes therefore to consider that citizens are able to meaningfully deliberate and vote in the assembly. That is the reason we expect that the more citizens think that the average Belgian citizen is capable of participating in public decisions, the more likely they are to support the different uses of sortition in politics.

Second, the proponents of random selection argue that it can counterbalance the pathologies of elected legislature as the biased in MPs' profiles, decreasing levels of trust and weak level of deliberation (Gastil & Wright, 2018; Van Reybrouck, 2016). The demand for a randomly selected assembly is connected to the dissatisfaction with the current representative institutions and its actors. The dislike for the current system could create appeal for alternative modes of governance. One can therefore expect that the popular dissatisfaction with the current functioning of election drives support for the use of random selection in democracy. The more citizens think that the act of voting makes no sense; the more likely they are to support the different uses of sortition in politics.

Third, there is a debate about the relation between popular support for democratic innovations and social status in terms of level of education and income (Webb, 2013).

According to the first view, people with lower social status support more democratic innovations (Neblo et al., 2010). The less privileged by the current political system has more incentives to support alternative modes of decision that could make them better off. One can then expect that citizens with lower levels of education and income will support more random selection in politics. According to the second view, democratic innovations are more attractive for the most advantaged group of society (Dalton, 2014). They dislike more traditional and hierarchical forms of politics and favor models in which lay citizens are more directly associated with the decision-making (Inglehart & Catterberg, 2002; Norris, 2011). This led to the opposite hypothesis: the higher the level of income and education of citizens, the more likely they are to support the different uses of sortition in politics.

### *Differences among politicians*

In order to explain the differences between members of the parliaments, two types of hypothesis can be examined. They are connected with the degree of professionalization and political party's orientation.

First, the support for an alternative mode of decision in politics is usually supported by less professionalized politicians (Niessen et al, 2018). This is connected to the fact that political reforms are encouraged by newcomers. On the contrary, the ones that have long experiences in the political system have less chance to support alternatives. In the current contexts, elected representatives with long experience in this assembly have less chance to support the use of sortition. One can then expect that the longer the political career of an MP, the more likely s/he is to support the different uses of sortition in politics.

Secondly, the type of political parties can be analyzed. Left-wing political parties are usually presented as more in favor of democratic innovations. This is for instance the case at the local level. Participatory Budget has been more organized by municipalities with a left majority (Sintomer, Röcke, & Herzberg, 2016). Equally, the political elites that expressed interest in the institutionalization of random selection mainly comes from left-wing parties (ref). That is the reason why we test the following hypothesis: when an MP belongs to a party with a leftist political orientation, s/he is more likely to support the different uses of sortition in politics.

### **3. Belgium, a land of democratic innovations**

Based on this set of hypotheses, the purpose of this paper is to empirically assess the views of citizens and MPs towards such a proposal with data collected in Belgium. While in most Western democracies the idea of a sortition assembly is typically known by a limited number of activists, the question is increasingly debated in the Belgian public sphere. Several political leaders have indeed publicly defended the transformation of the second chamber into a sortition chamber.

Belgium has always been a land of democratic innovations. Back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Belgium was one of the first countries in the world to introduce the ballot for elections ensuring secret voting, or the principle of compulsory voting in general elections. One of its mathematicians, Victor D'Hondt, had a lasting impact on proportional voting when drafting in 1878 a method for allocating seats based on the highest averages that is still in use today in several countries. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Belgium is back at the fore front of democratic innovations. While this country remains among the few still experiencing compulsory voting, it is in particular on the deliberative democracy front that innovations take place. In the 2000s, several citizen panels were organized, some of them in a multi-level approach. In 2010-2011, the country went through a long period of political instability which was the ground for one of the

largest citizen-led deliberative experiment with the so-called G1000 (Reuchamps et al., 2017). In this wake, the idea of deliberative democracy has grown within the society (Caluwaerts & Reuchamps, 2018). For instance, all of – seven – Belgian parliaments have used minipublics to foster their legislative process and in her smallest substate, the German-speaking Community, there is a proposal to establish a permanent randomly selected assembly that would have the right to initiate citizens' assemblies whose results would then be presented to the elected parliament.

But in this ongoing debate about introducing deliberative democracy, the most frequent idea over the past few years has been to reform the Belgian Senate (Vandamme, Jacquet, Niessen, Pitseys, & Reuchamps, 2018). Belgium has been from her beginning in 1830 a bicameral state, with an upper chamber, the Senate, that was progressively democratized in light of both who could vote and who could be elected. The quite radical federalization of the state since the 1970s finally led to its transformation to a chamber of dialogue between the substates mainly composed of their representatives (Dandoy, Dodeigne, Reuchamps, & Vandeleene, 2015). While discussions were held about the future of the Senate, voices started to be heard about another potential way to transform it: a sortitioned assembly, next to the elected House of representatives, the lower chamber. The promoters of the G1000, a citizens-led deliberative experiment held in 2011 and 2012, came to this proposal in their final recommendations (G1000, 2012). One of its most visible leaders, writer David Van Reybrouck, refined this proposal in a book that was largely echoed in the public sphere, *Against Elections: The Case for Democracy* (2016).

What's more such idea has been discussed by elected politicians themselves. Prominent MPs, and even former ministers, have jumped into this debate and supported a sortitioned Senate, even if disclaiming this would not be easy business to reform the existing one because of super-majority rules. On the left, the Flemish socialist Peter Vanvelthoven and the Francophone socialist Laurette Onkelinx have made public proposals. The liberal MP Richard Miller has also given credit to this idea, and the same can be said for Hamza Fassi-Fihri, a Brussels-based Christian-democrat politician. Participation is often considered to be the DNA of green leaders and, in this debate, the Dutch-speaking and the French-speaking ecologists have made a joined proposal for the use of sortition in the parliament. The most prominent, and according to them the most feasible without a major state reform, proposal was to establish a joint commission, made of elected politicians and sortitioned citizens, within the House of representatives. At the local level, while sortition has been practiced in several citizen panels, some proposals have gone further in using random selection to compose municipal councils. One of them is the proposal to take into account, which is not the case in the existing electoral system, of blank and possibly null votes to proportionally randomly select councillors instead of not counting them for the distribution of seats among elected lists. None of these proposals has come to life so far.

Nonetheless, because there is an ongoing debate in both political and public sphere, Belgium therefore provides an interesting place where to investigate our research question, drawing on two original surveys: one with a representative sample of the population and another with current MPs.

#### **4. Citizen and MP Surveys**

In this country, we have collected original data in order to answer our twofold research question. To do so, we used survey data that was collected among a sample of 1000 randomly selected Belgian citizens and among 124 members of the Belgian federal and regional parliaments (MPs). Since the objective of this paper is to assess the support of both groups, collecting

quantitative survey data is the most useful technique. For the citizens, the survey company *iVox* collected an online sample of citizens ( $n = 1000$ ), representative for language (Dutch and French), gender, age and education. For MPs, data were collected via online and paper questionnaires from June to August 2017, with a response rate of 26 percent ( $n = 124$ ). Appendix 1 shows the response rates to the MP survey. In these surveys, several questions were asked to capture citizens' and MPs' support for sortition and several explanatory factors.

Respondents' degree of support for sortition was measured vis-à-vis four different uses of random selection in politics. First, for composing a legislative assembly. Secondly, for composing a mixed assembly in which both sortitioned and elected representatives seat. Thirdly, for composing a municipal council. Fourthly, for composing a sortitioned citizen panel. One should note that the first two are concerned with the national level, while the latter two focus more on the local or consultative use. More importantly, sortition has been used for composing citizen panels at various policy levels in Belgium, but never for composing a legislative chamber (mixed or not) or a municipal council. The former can hence be regarded as a kind of benchmark against which the others can be evaluated. We evaluated them on five-point scales:

Q1 preamble: On the national level, one sometimes discusses that legislative chambers could be composed by random selection. Do you agree or disagree with the following propositions?

- Q1a: The institution of a legislative chamber that is composed of randomly selected citizens would be a good thing.  
*[Fully agreeing, rather agreeing, neutral, rather disagreeing, fully disagreeing.]*
- Q1b: The institution of a mixed legislative chamber that is composed of both elected and randomly selected citizens would be a good thing.  
*[Fully agreeing, rather agreeing, neutral, rather disagreeing, fully disagreeing.]*

Q2 preamble: One sometimes proposes to adapt the functioning of our local democracy. To which extent do you consider the following reforms to be desirable or undesirable – independently of whether they have been introduced in your municipality?

- Q2a: Composing the municipal council by random selection.  
*[Highly desirable, desirable, neutral, rather undesirable, highly undesirable.]*
- Q2b: Composing a participatory citizen panel by random selection.  
*[Highly desirable, desirable, neutral, rather undesirable, highly undesirable.]*

As for what might explain respondents' support for the different uses of sortition, they were asked to which extent they agreed (on a five-point scale again) that “the average Belgian citizen is capable of participating in public decisions” and that “voting has no sense because parties do anyway what they want”. For all these questions, both citizens and MPs received this exact same wording.

In addition, MPs were asked to indicate how many years they served in federal or regional legislative and executive office, to which party they belonged, how old they were, what their gender is, and which language they spoke in the first place (MPs from the three language groups responded to the survey). Citizens, in turn, were asked to indicate their level of education (on three categories), their income (on three categories), their age (on three categories), and which

language they spoke in the first place (citizens from the two main language groups were included in the sample).

Beyond our interest in the raw support that citizens and MPs have for the different uses of sortition, we test different potential associations to understand which type of citizens and MPs are more or less likely to support them. Our hypotheses read as follows:

*H<sub>1</sub>: The more citizens' think that the average Belgian citizen is capable of participating in public decisions, the more likely they are to support the different uses of sortition in politics.*

*H<sub>2</sub>: The more citizens' think that the act of voting makes no sense, the more likely they are to support the different uses of sortition in politics.*

*H<sub>3</sub>: The lower the level of education of citizens, the more likely they are to support the different uses of sortition in politics.*

*H<sub>4</sub>: The lower the level of income of citizens, the more likely they are to support the different uses of sortition in politics.*

*H<sub>5</sub>: The longer the political career of an MP, the more likely s-he is to support the different uses of sortition in politics.*

*H<sub>6</sub>: When an MP belongs to a party with a leftist political orientation, s-he is more likely to support the different uses of sortition in politics.*

After considering citizens' and MPs' raw support for the different uses of sortition, we test the aforementioned hypotheses with *Ordered Logistic Regression* analyses – one for each possible use of sortition, and for both citizens and MPs.<sup>4</sup> In order to do so, the response variables (respondents' support for the four uses of sortition) have been translated from five into three categories (supporting – being neutral – opposing). In the regression analyses of citizens' opinion, we added explanatory variables accounting for their view of average citizens' political capacity (five-point scale), of the (non)sense of elections (five-point scale), of their level of education (three categories) and income (three categories). Moreover, we added their age (three categories), gender (two categories) and language group (two categories) as control variables. In the regression analyses for MPs' opinion, we added explanatory variables accounting for their degree of professionalization (equalling the sum of years they served in federal and regional legislatures and executives) and the political position of their party on the left-right scale.<sup>5</sup> To allow a direct comparison with citizens, we also added variables accounting for their view of average citizens' political capacity (five-point scale) and of the (non)sense of elections (five-point scale).<sup>6</sup> Moreover, we added their age (continuous), gender (two categories) and language group (three categories) as control variables. Table 1 hereunder provides an overview

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<sup>4</sup> The analysis was done in R 3.4.3 (R Core Team, 2017).

<sup>5</sup> We considered the socialist (sp.a, PS, SP), green (Groen, Ecolo) and far-left (PVdA, PTB) parties as leftist, and the liberal (OpenVLD, MR) and Flemish nationalist (N-VA, VB) parties as rightist. In order to avoid any confusions, we refrained from classifying the christian-democratic (CD&V, cdh) and other (Défi, unaffiliated) parties.

<sup>6</sup> One should note that, while MPs opinion on citizen capacity was somewhat diverse (25 against, 31 neutral, 69 in favor), only 9/125 thought elections to make no sense.

of measurement, use and directional expectations for all the different variables that are included in the analyses.

**Table 1.** Overview on the measurement, use and directional expectations for the variables included in the analyses

Variable	Citizens			MPs		
	<i>Measurement</i>	<i>Use</i>	<i>Expectation</i>	<i>Measurement</i>	<i>Use</i>	<i>Expectation</i>
Opinion on sortitioned chamber	3 categ. (based on 5)	RV	-	3 categ. (based on 5)	RV	-
Opinion on mixed chamber	3 categ. (based on 5)	RV	-	3 categ. (based on 5)	RV	-
Opinion on sortit. municipal council	3 categ. (based on 5)	RV	-	3 categ. (based on 5)	RV	-
Opinion on sortitioned citizen panel	3 categ. (based on 5)	RV	-	3 categ. (based on 5)	RV	-
Professionalization	-	-	-	continuous	EV	neg. rel.
Leftist vs. rightist party (left = 1)	-	-	-	2 categories	EV	pos. rel.
View of citizens' political capacity	5 categories	EV	pos. rel.	5 categories	EV	control
View of the (non)sense of elections	5 categories	EV	pos. rel.	5 categories	EV	control
Education	3 categories	EV	neg. rel.	-	-	-
Income	3 categories	EV	neg. rel.	-	-	-
Age	3 categories	EV	control	continuous	EV	control
Gender	2 categories	EV	control	2 categories	EV	control
Language	2 categories	EV	control	3 categories	EV	control

\* RV = response variables. EV = explanatory variable.

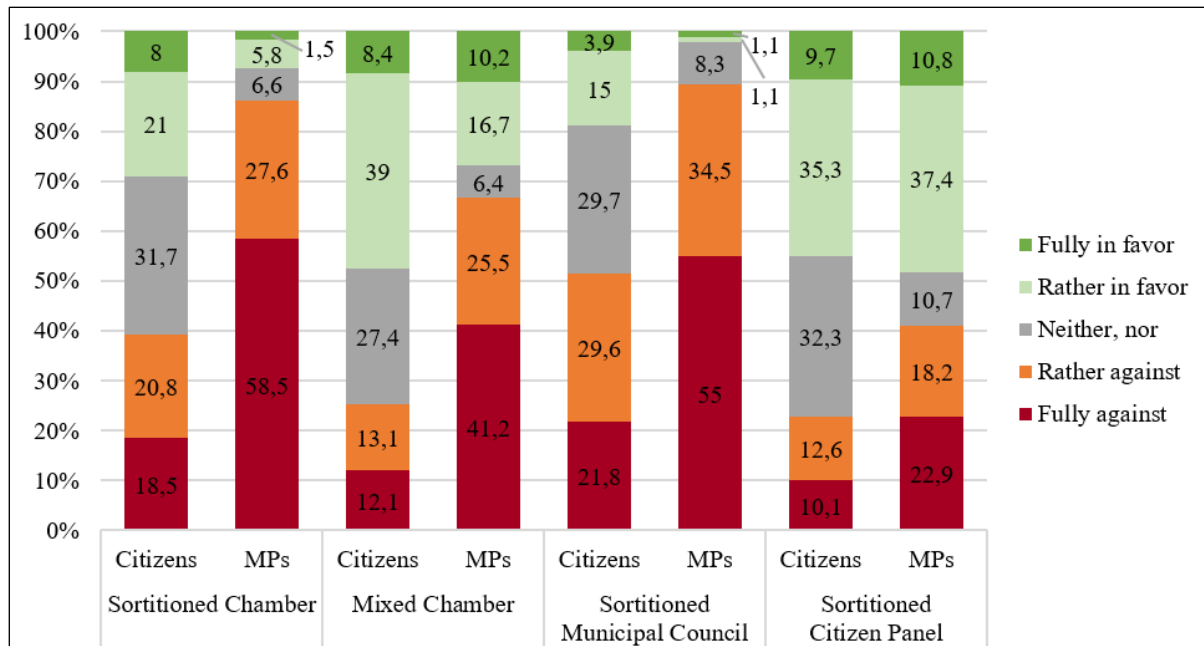
## 5. Citizens' and MPs' Opinion on the Use of Random Selection in Politics

The results of our analyses show that the different uses of sortition in politics receive quite varying degrees of support and that citizens and MPs have different opinions about them. Moreover, while citizens' opinion is heavily influenced by their view of average citizens' political capacity, their view of elections' sense and, at least indirectly, by their societal background, only a few factors allow distinguishing between MP attitudes.

### a) What Citizens and MPs Think of Sortition ? Which scenario is preferred?

At the aggregated level, the results of our analysis suggest that the use of random selection in politics is received critically by both citizens and MPs – at least when decision-making power is concerned and/or when it is the sole mode of designation. A glance at citizens' and MPs' raw support for the different uses under investigation, illustrated in Figure 1 hereunder, is interesting in four regards.

**Figure 1.** Citizens' and MPs' opinion on the four different uses of sortition (in percentages)



\*The results for MPs were weighted based on gender and party affiliation.

First, it appears that citizens are far less critical than MPs. MPs’ opposition scores are indeed higher for each of the four different uses of sortition they were questioned on. Citizens’, in turn, have a higher approval rate for all – except for a sortitioned citizen panel where MPs score slightly higher (3.2%). Also, one should note that citizens have higher neutrality scores for each of the uses of sortition that almost reach a third of the sample (27.4%-32.3%). Most probably, this is the case because they are less familiar with the topic than politicians.

Secondly, a sortitioned municipal council receives by far the lowest approval and the highest opposition rates – from both citizens (51.4% are against) and MPs (89.5% are against). At first, this might be surprising when one considers that it corresponds to the lowest and least politicized level of political power which is said to be ‘closest’ to citizens’. However, these might at the same time be the very reasons for why both citizens and MPs do not consider sortition to be a necessary democratic reform. Moreover, it is the political institution where sortition can be perceived as the most encompassing, i.e. whose composition would be perceived as solely relying on sortition whereas a sortitioned and a mixed chamber could still be imagined in a bicameral setting.

Thirdly, the mixed chamber is substantively preferred over an exclusively sortitioned chamber. While this is the case for both citizens and MPs, the latter remain comparably critical (66.7% are against). For citizens, however, it even gathers a relative majority of support (47.4 being in favor, 27.4 being neutral). This is comparable (and even slightly higher) than their support for a sortitioned citizen panel. Which is noteworthy given that the latter has much less political power and has even known some real political experience in Belgium.

Finally, another relative majority of support can be observed for elites on the use of sortition in citizen panels (48.2% are in favor, 10.7% are neutral). While we are talking about a body whose political decision-making power is at its best consultative, it is still noteworthy for political elites whose everyday job relies on a totally different rationale of decision-making. It can be expected to come, amongst others, with the increasing use of such citizen panels in the last twenty years in Belgium.

### b) Who Supports and Who Opposes Sortition?

Knowing what citizens and MPs think of different uses of sortition at an aggregated level is one thing, knowing who are those who support and who oppose it is quite another. While some interesting distinctions can be made for citizens' attitudes, the task is more difficult for MPs. We present both separately.

#### Citizens

We tested the differences in support for sortition among citizens with an *Ordered Logistic Regression* whose results are summarized in Table 2 hereunder. The results indicate with at least 99% of confidence that citizens' support for the four different uses of sortition has a statistically significant positive association with their view of citizens' political capacity and their view of the (non-)sense of elections. We can thus confirm  $H_1$  and  $H_2$  and conclude that the use of sortition in politics is above all supported by citizens that see other citizens as capable of participating in politics and have a critical view of the sense of elections. As for the citizens socio-economic background, the results indicate with at least 99.9% of confidence that holding a Master degree lowers citizens likelihood for supporting the introduction of a sortitioned chamber. For other uses and all comparisons concerned with income, however, no association is statistically significant and we thus have to reject  $H_3$  and  $H_4$ . A glance at the control variables shows that, with at least 99% of confidence, older citizens are less likely to support all the different uses of sortition, while Flemish-speaking citizens are less likely to support a sortitioned or mixed chamber and a sortitioned citizen panel. No significant differences are observed between genders.

**Table 2.** Ordered Logistic Regression results for citizens' opinion on the different uses of sortition

	<i>Model 1:</i>		<i>Model 2:</i>		<i>Model 3:</i>		<i>Model 4:</i>	
	Sortition Chamber		Mixed Chamber		Sortitioned Municipal Council		Sortitioned Citizen Panel	
	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>SE</i>
View of citizen pol. cap.	0.41 ***	0.07	0.36 ***	0.07	0.27 ***	0.07	0.36 ***	0.07
View of elections' sense	0.31 ***	0.05	0.17 ***	0.05	0.29 ***	0.05	0.14 **	0.05
Education (second. max)								
Bachelor	-0.26	0.18	0.16	0.18	-0.05	0.18	0.10	0.18
Master	-0.82 ***	0.23	-0.01	0.22	-0.25	0.22	0.27	0.22
Income (...-2000€)								
2000€-4000€	-0.13	0.16	0.19	0.16	0.23	0.16	-0.01	0.16
4000€-...	-0.01	0.27	0.17	0.27	-0.29	0.29	-0.01	0.26
Age (-34)								
35-54	-0.47 **	0.18	-0.53 **	0.19	-0.30	0.18	-0.50 **	0.19
55+	-0.52 **	0.19	-0.52 **	0.19	-0.64 ***	0.19	-0.88 ***	0.19
Gender (female = 1)	0.06	0.14	0.20	0.14	0.25	0.14	0.13	0.14
Language (French = 1)	0.42 **	0.15	0.56 ***	0.15	0.30	0.15	0.45 **	0.15
Intercept								
Oppose - Neutral	1.34 ***	0.32	0.49	0.32	1.70 ***	0.33	0.01	0.31

Neutral - Support	2.77 ***	0.34	1.71 ***	0.33	3.12 ***	0.34	1.48 ***	0.32
Akaike inform. criterion	1601.46		1598.18		1557.65		1619.42	

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

While the regression analysis showed no real association between citizens' socio-economic background and their support for sortition, we found it worth investigating whether this absence was due to issues of collinearity or indirect association.<sup>7</sup> We tested a potential individual association between citizens' support for the degrees of sortition and their level of education and income with chi-square tests of independence (*cf.* detailed results in appendices 2 and 3). We found statistically significant associations with at least 95% of confidence for both variables, indicating that citizens with a higher degree of education and income are less likely to support the use of sortition in politics (except for the support for a mixed chamber and a sortitioned citizen panel when education is concerned). Which indicates that the absence of significant results in the regression might be due to issues of collinearity – under the condition that a correlation with another significant variable is found.

When testing the potential correlation between citizens' level of education and income, and their view of citizens' political capacity and the (non-)sense of elections with chi-square tests of independence (*cf.* appendix 4 for the detailed results),<sup>8</sup> we found statistically significant correlations with at least 99% of confidence for both pairs of variables. Our results indicate that citizens with a lower degree of education and income are more likely to a positive view of citizens' capacity and a negative one of the sense of elections. This confirms the hypothesis of collinearity and even provides a further potential explanation. It may well be that the association is an indirect one. I.e. that citizens' socio-economic background is associated with their opinion on citizens' political capacity and the (non-)sense of elections, which in turn determine their degree of support for sortition. While this is theoretically plausible, it is statistically not determinable. However, whatever the causal mechanism, citizens' socio-economic background proves relevant for their opinion on the use of sortition in politics – directly or indirectly.

## MPs

When investigating the differences in support for sortition among MPs, one should keep in mind that the aggregated results (Figure 1) had previously pointed out limited variability in their opinion – at least for the sortitioned chamber and the sortitioned municipal council, which almost all MPs opposed. Which means by definition that it will be difficult to discriminate between them. Hence, before proceeding to the *Ordered Regression Analysis*, a glance at the raw distribution of the variables of interest is important (*cf.* Table 3 hereunder). When directly comparing MPs' degree of support for the different uses of sortition and their average number of years in legislative or executive office, only little mean difference appears. As for the comparison with the position of MPs' party on the left-right axis, interesting differences exist

<sup>7</sup> The former would be the case if the statistical effect exists in individual association but is cancelled out by other correlated variables when analyzed jointly. The latter would be the case if socio-demographic characteristics are correlated to other variables which have a significant association with the degree of support for sortition. Both can also occur together, in which case one cannot say whether the association is direct or indirect.

<sup>8</sup> For that purpose, we transformed the view of citizens' political capacity and of the (non-)sense of elections from five into three categories.

for MPs’ opinion on the mixed chamber which is opposed by most rightist MPs but largely divides leftist MPs (of which more than the half (55.56%) are in favor). Regarding MPs’ opinion on the sortitioned citizen panel, most leftist MPs are in favor while rightist MPs are divided (more than the half (55.00%) opposing it). The two other uses of sortition are largely opposed by members of both camps – confirming the previously identified limits of variability. The *Ordered Regression Analysis* hence has to be interpreted cautiously for model 1 (sortitioned chamber) and 3 (sortitioned municipal council).

**Table 3.** MPs’ support for the uses of sortition by degree of professionalization and left-right party

Use of sortition	Degree of support	Professionalization		Left vs. Right	
		Mean	Std. dev.	Left (%)	Right (%)
Sortitioned Chamber	Support	12.72	7.10	8.89	2.50
	Neutral	13.44	6.06	13.33	2.50
	Oppose	12.69	10.39	77.78	95.00
Mixed Chamber	Support	11.79	8.47	55.56	2.50
	Neutral	12.62	8.80	4.44	10.00
	Oppose	13.09	10.55	40.00	87.50
Sortitioned Municipal Council	Support	11.00	6.98	2.22	0.00
	Neutral	12.83	9.91	20.00	2.50
	Oppose	12.81	10.03	77.78	95.00
Sortitioned Citizen Panel	Support	12.26	9.28	75.56	30.00
	Neutral	16.87	14.93	8.89	12.50
	Oppose	11.86	8.11	15.56	55.00

\* Distribution of professionalization: min = 1, max = 33, mean = 12.75, standard deviation = 9.85.

\*\* Distribution of left vs. right: left = 45, right = 40.

The results of the analysis, summarized in Table 4 hereunder, indicate that MPs’ degree of professionalization is only associated to their opinion on a sortitioned citizen panel with 95% of confidence. However, the association contradicts our expectation in that it is positive. Which means that MPs who have spent more time in office are significantly more likely to support the introduction of a sortitioned citizen panel. This leads us to reject  $H_3$  for model 1, 2 and 3, and to reverse it for model 4. As for the position of MPs’ party on the left-right axis, it appears to be associated with MPs opinion on the mixed chamber and on a sortitioned citizen panel with at least 95% of confidence. This means that leftist MPs are significantly more likely to support these two options than rightist MPs. Which leads us to confirm  $H_4$  for model 2 and 4 and to reject it for model 1 and 3. A glance at the control variables shows that MPs how think of elections as sensual are more likely to support a sortitioned citizen panel. Which is again a bit counterintuitive but one should remember the limited variability of MPs on this question (cf. footnote 3). Female MPs, in turn, appear to be more supportive towards a sortitioned chamber and a sortitioned citizen panel than their male counterparts. German-speaking MPs are more supportive towards a sortitioned chamber, a sortitioned municipal council and a sortitioned citizen panel than are Flemish-speaking MPs. So are French-speaking MPs concerning a sortitioned citizen panel.

**Table 4.** Ordered Logistic Regression results for MPs’ opinion on the different uses of sortition

	<i>Model 1:</i>	<i>Model 2:</i>	<i>Model 3:</i>	<i>Model 4:</i>
	Sortition Chamber	Mixed Chamber	Sortitioned Municipal Council	Sortitioned Citizen Panel

	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>SE</i>
Professionalization	0.01	0.04	-0.03	0.02	-0.02	0.04	0.07 *	0.03
Left vs. right (left = 1)	0.91	0.91	2.30 ***	0.62	2.10	1.16	1.36 *	0.61
View of citizen capacity	0.35	0.39	0.33	0.30	0.96	0.52	0.02	0.36
View of elections' sense	0.32	0.31	-0.08	0.31	-0.40	0.52	-0.98 *	0.41
Age	-0.02	0.04	0.02	0.03	0.01	0.04	-0.03	0.03
Gender (female = 1)	1.70 *	0.78	0.53	0.56	0.73	0.78	2.57 ***	0.77
Language (Flemish)								
French	0.67	0.75	0.61	0.56	-1.13	0.77	3.64 ***	0.85
German	14.04 ***	0.01	1.10	1.48	15.20 ***	0.01	3.34 *	1.49
Intercept								
Oppose - Neutral	4.54	2.47	4.18 *	1.92	6.60 *	2.93	0.36	2.20
Neutral - Support	5.64 *	2.53	4.64 *	1.94	9.49 **	3.19	1.23	2.21
Akaike inform. criterion	91.97		132.66		73.67		120.59	

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

## Conclusion

In this paper, we examined how a recent proposal of democratic innovation, randomly selecting a legislative assembly, is received by both citizens and MPs in Belgium where the use of deliberative sortitioned citizen panels has already somewhat matured. Drawing on original survey data containing the views of 1000 citizens and 125 MPs, we investigate their support for four different uses of sortition: a sortitioned chamber, a mixed chamber, a sortitioned municipal council and a sortitioned citizen panel. Our results show that none of these uses obtains an absolute majority of support – neither from citizens nor from MPs. Relative majorities of supports, however, exist among citizens for introducing a mixed chamber and among MPs for introducing sortitioned citizens panels. That being said, the question is far from making unanimity.

This especially true for citizens among which many differences exist. Their opinion on citizens' political capacity and the sense of elections prove to be significantly associated with their opinion on sortition. Which shows that supporting sortition comes with both their disillusion about the current functioning of (electoral) representative democracy, and to their trust in citizens to constitute a viable alternative. Given that their support is much higher for a mixed chamber than for a purely sortitioned chamber or a sortitioned municipal council, this does not mean that this alternative is necessarily seen as exclusionary or as to replace elections altogether. It seems indeed plausible based on these results that sortition is rather envisioned as a complement to elections. Very interesting in this respect is the fact that citizens with a lower degree of education and income are more likely to see citizens as politically capable and elections as of limited sense. Thereby, they are also more likely to support the different uses of sortition in politics. While it remains unclear how exactly the causal mechanism behind this association plays out, it shows that supporting sortition is not a claim limited to intellectual elites or the most advantaged citizens. On the contrary, it appears to be backed above all by those who struggle to make ends meet every month.

As for MPs, some interesting differences were observed between leftist MPs being less critical towards a mixed chamber and a sortitioned citizen panel than rightist MPs. However, more striking is the absence of differences in most other respects and the overall high levels of

opposition towards the use of sortition in politics – certainly in comparison to citizens. This is not to say that we would not have expected opposition. It certainly reflects the important power dynamics that undermine the question. And yet there seems to be some room manoeuvre when sortition is used for composing citizen panels. Which can be expected to have gained their relative support (48.2%) amongst others due to their constant proliferation in Belgium in the last twenty years. And which, despite remaining at best consultative, start to initiate and contribute to a debate in the political sphere about how political decisions ought to be taken and by whom. This provides ground for expecting forthcoming changes in attitudes.

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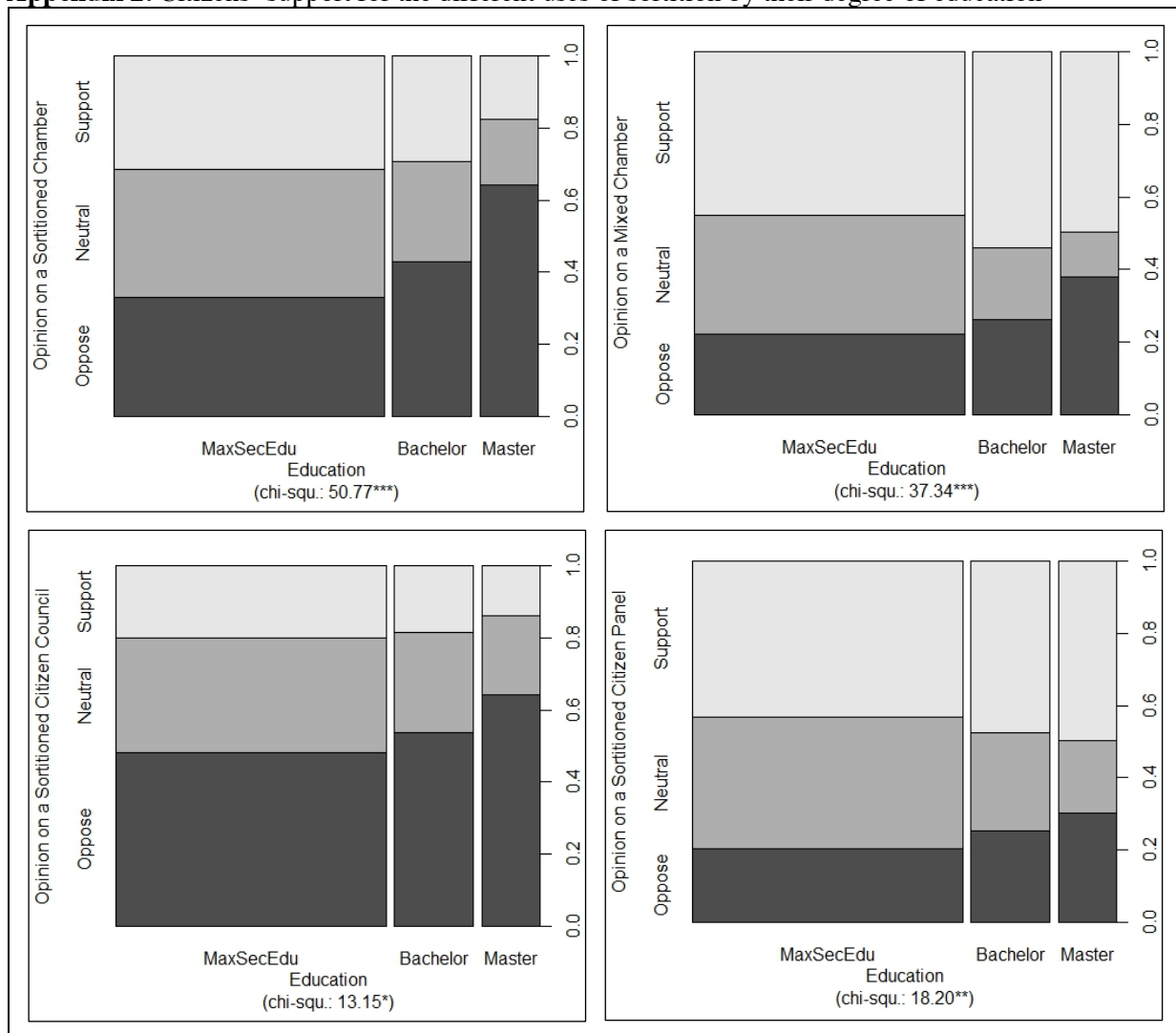


## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Response rates for the MP survey

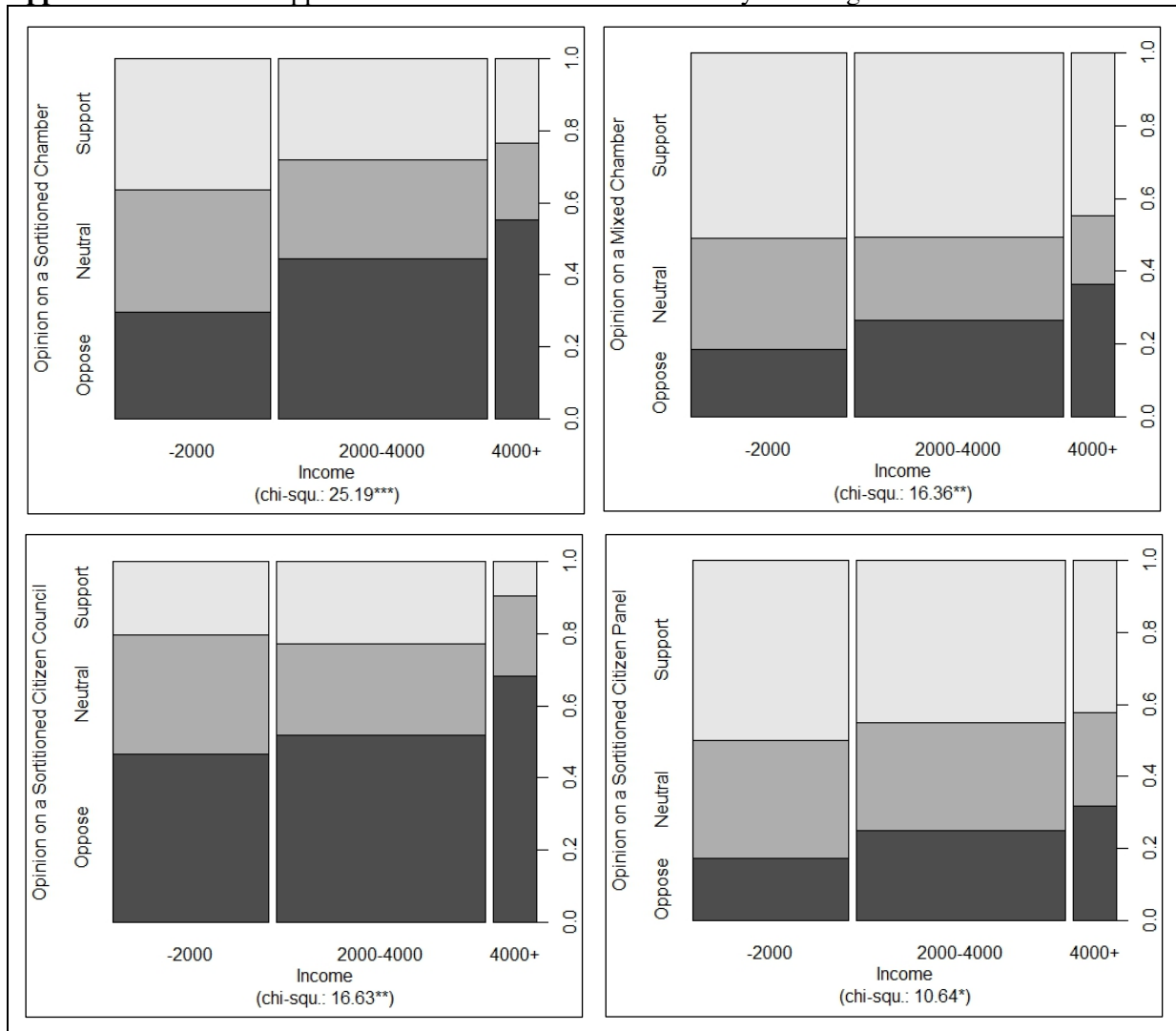
	Sample	Population	Response rate
Total	124	473	26 %
Men	79	283	28 %
Women	45	190	24 %
Dutch-speakers	56	234	24 %
French-speakers	56	214	26 %
German-speakers	12	25	48 %
Christian-democrats	29	85	34 %
Greens	14	40	35 %
Liberals	28	106	26 %
Socialists	30	115	26 %
Nationalists	13	87	15 %
Other	10	40	25 %

### Appendix 2. Citizens' support for the different uses of sortition by their degree of education



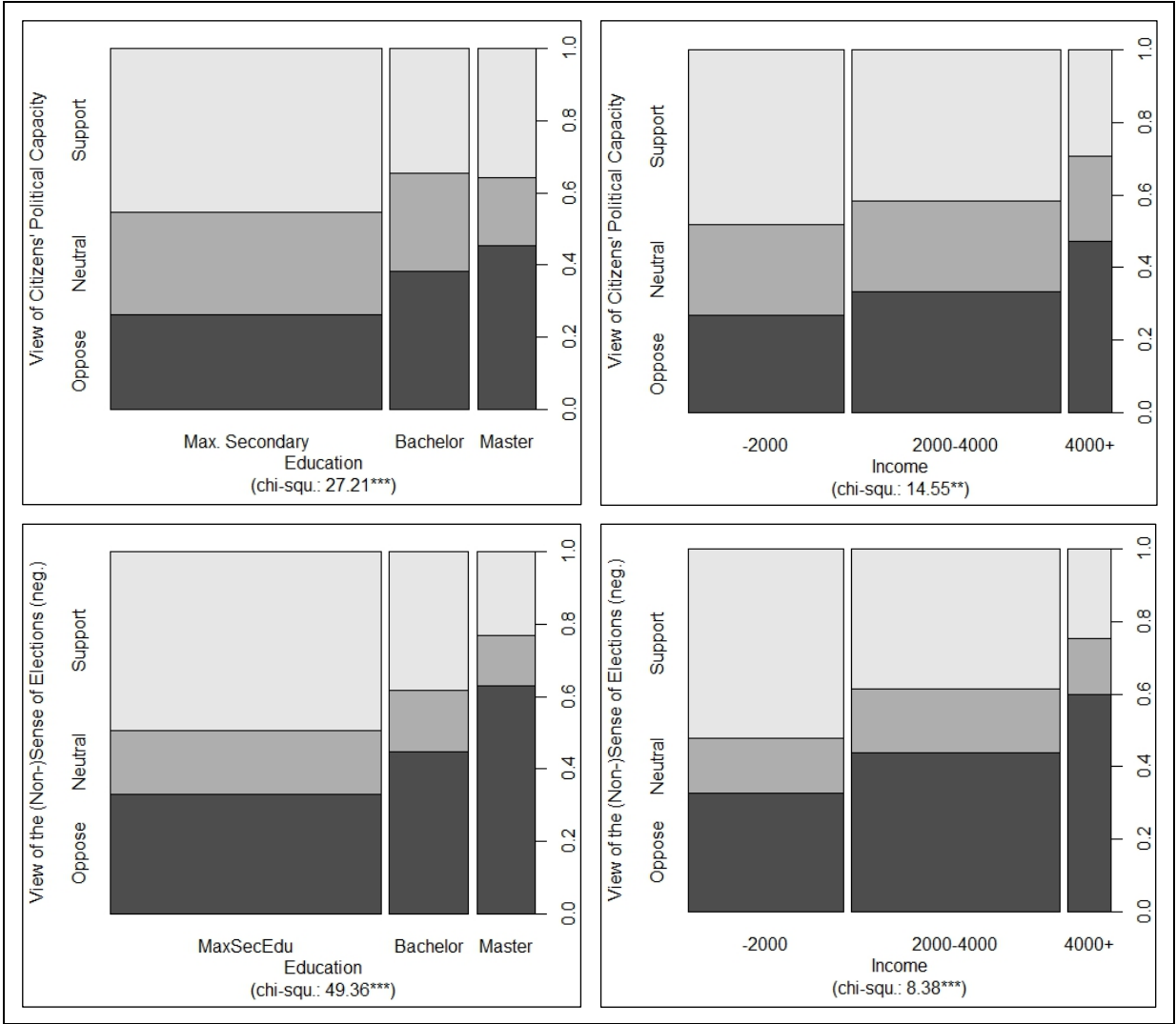
\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

**Appendix 3.** Citizens' support for the different uses of sortition by their degree of income



\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

**Appendix 4.** Citizens' view of citizens' political capacity and the (non-)sense of elections (neg.) by education and income



\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .