

# Political Awareness and the Distribution of Other Social Resources: The Case of Norway\*

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## 1. Introduction

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Relationships between legal, organizational, ecological, and economic opportunities and political participation are described to a certain extent.<sup>2</sup> In this paper I shall primarily be concerned with voters' motivation for political activity, and show how their social background may affect their participation in political life.

Efficient use of citizens' political rights – the right to vote and to organize, freedom of speech, and so on – requires a certain interest in political problems, knowledge of political processes and issues, and some ability to articulate points of view and personal demands.<sup>3</sup> A person's understanding of political decision-making in society, and connected feelings of trust or distrust, will depend upon the extent to which he can meet the above requirements. In turn, his feeling of being a competent participant will have an effect on his interest, his search for information, and his activity as a citizen who has the right to demand his share of society's goods and services by using political means.

Political information, interest, opinionation, trust, efficacy, and competence vis-a-vis political authorities on all system levels may be regarded as *political resources*.

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\* The data on which the article is based were collected in a nation-wide survey of Norwegian votes in connection with the parliamentary election in 1965. The survey is part of the long-term Norwegian program of electoral research developed by Professor Stein Rokkan, the University of Bergen, and by Professor Henry Valen, the University of Oslo. I am indebted to Henry Valen for his critical reading of an earlier draft of the paper.

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Conscious efforts to direct one's own life situation, by demanding social and political rights, by actively supporting a particular political program, or by defending oneself against unjust decisions, depend on the degree to which resources of this kind are available to the individual. In this paper I shall analyse the cognitive aspect of people's ability to participate effectively in political life, by indicating that a subset of motivational requirements for political participation may be organized along a dimension of 'political awareness', and by examining the distribution of this awareness between different social groupings.<sup>4</sup>

The article, in other words, has two intentions:

1. To show that political interest, information, and ability to express opinions vary strongly among voters, and that as indicators of political awareness or competence they are interrelated.
2. To describe how differences in level of interest, knowledge, and ability to articulate opinions vary between different social groupings, i.e. to show how political awareness is distributed among Norwegian citizens.

At the end of the paper I shall indicate how the level of political awareness varies systematically with availability of other types of political resources, particularly with voters' feelings of political competence and with political participation.

The conclusions of the article are based on voters' statements about their political interest, their search for information, their efficacy or subjective competence, and on their answers to questions concerning various political facts, as well as their opinions on several political issues.<sup>5</sup> A nation-wide cross-section of 2000 Norwegian voters were interviewed before and after the parliamentary election in 1965. Answers to our interview questions therefore give a general picture of the distribution of political awareness in the population of voters at this point in time. The results naturally say nothing about the actual political influence of different groups in Norwegian society, but probably something about their *potential* influence on political decisions.

## 2. Interest, Opiniation, and Information as Resource Components

How involved are Norwegian voters in politics, and how ready are they to list their political demands? To what degree do they have standpoints on important political issues, and what knowledge do they have of local and national political life?

First, let us take a look at the distribution of answers to two questions which aimed at measuring a general *political interest*:

- In general, would you say you are *very interested in politics, somewhat interested, or don't you pay much attention to it?*
- How regularly do you follow what is going on in current affairs - would you say you keep up with it *all the time, some of the time, or just now and again?*

The cross-tabulation of answers to these two questions are presented in Table I.

*Table I. Political interest among Norwegian voters*  
*Percentages*

Keep up with current affairs	Evaluation of own political interest			All voters
	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Don't pay much attention	
All the time	61	24	7	20
Some of the time	26	39	18	29
Now and again	13	37	75	51
Total	100	100	100	100
Number of cases	140	807	676	1623

The above measures of political interest show a high correlation, indicating that they tap the same underlying dimension. A total of 61 percent who, before the election, say they are "very interested" in politics, after the election state that they follow what is going on in current affairs "all the time". Only 7 percent of the category who do not pay much attention to politics claim to keep up with current affairs all the time, and three fourths in this category follow political affairs only now and again.

We may note that half of the Norwegian voters follow political affairs only now and then, while 20 percent follow them regularly. As shown in Table II, 41 percent do not pay much attention to politics, while only 9 percent of the voters claim to be very interested.

However, political interest may fluctuate with what goes on in political life, and particular decisions may be regarded as being important by a greater part of the voters than those who are more stably interested in day-to-day politics. The parliamentary election in 1965 seems to have been such an event, and may be classified as a "surge" election. When asked whether they personally "cared a good deal about which parties win or lose the election," only 18 percent said it did not matter much, whereas 50 percent cared a great deal. These figures indicate that the election in 1965 was particularly important to Norwegian voters, and this impression is confirmed by a very high turnout in the election.<sup>6</sup>

A methodological problem is that answers to our questions about general political interest may be contaminated by the specific political situation. In other words, our questions may measure both the voters' involvement in one particular election and their more stable political interest. This assumption gains some support from the figures of Table II, which show a pronounced relationship between general political interest and a perception of the 1965 election as being important, a fact which suggests, moreover, that the actual level of general interest in political affairs may be lower than that presented in Table I. It is difficult to say, however, how much a perceived importance of this particular political event causes a certain proportion of voters to declare themselves as politically "very interested" and to follow current affairs closely.

Table II. General political interest and perceived importance of the 1965 election  
Percentages

Evaluation of own political interest	Degree to which respondent cares about who win or lose the election:			All voters
	Cares a great deal	Cares somewhat	Doesn't care much	
Very interested	16	2	1	9
Somewhat interested	60	49	22	50
Don't pay much attention	24	49	77	41
Total	100	100	100	100
Number of cases	829	565	357	1751

Voters who personally "care a great deal" which parties win or lose regard themselves more frequently than others as "very interested" or at least "somewhat interested" in politics, whereas 77 percent of voters who "don't care very much" are not as interested.

The answer to our three interview questions discussed so far were combined in a simple *index for political interest*. Values indicating a high interest ("very interested", "keep up with current affairs all the time", "care a great deal which parties win or lose") were given a score of 2, answers indicating a low political interest were given a score of 0, while responses "in between" were given a score of 1. Adding scores for our three questions, each voter gets an index value between 6 (high political interest) and 0 (low political interest).<sup>7</sup> Only 5 percent of the voters got a value of 6, while 12 percent scored 0 on this index.

Table II showed that almost half the voters think the result of the election is important to themselves personally. We may ask whether one reason might be that these voters would like the new government to take care of a number of specific problems, the solution of which depends on which party or coalition of parties win. We therefore asked the following question:

- Can you mention one important problem you personally think the new Parliament should try to take care of?<sup>8</sup>

Each respondent was given the opportunity to mention three problems, but only one fourth of our sample mentioned that many, while 30 percent could not think of any problem at all.

There is a pronounced relationship between perception of the election as important and the ability to think of concrete political or social problems. Of voters who "don't care much" about the outcome of the election, 45 percent cannot mention any problem, and only 14 percent of them can think of three problems. On the other hand, of the people who care very much about who shall win or lose, 35 percent mention three problems, while only 18 percent cannot think of any political problem in need of solution.

Now the question is this: when so many voters are unable to think of problems

that may be solved by political means, how many of them have opinions on different political issues at all? To what degree *do voters have* a standpoint when they are confronted with current social problems, and in *what types of issues* do people develop clear and specific opinions?

To answer such questions several political issues were presented to the voters during the interview.<sup>9</sup> The distribution of opinions of Norwegian voters concerning these issues is indicated elsewhere.<sup>10</sup> Here we shall take a closer look at the percentage of respondents who have an opinion at all, and see how this proportion varies from issue to issue, and how it is dependent upon voters' political interest. To make Table III below readable, we have included only the middle and the extreme categories of the index for political interest.

The average proportion of voters with an opinion varies between 40 and 92 percent. Dividing voters according to political interest gives a variation of 84 percentage points, between 15 and 99 percent. People who are very interested almost always have an opinion on *all* issues, while there is a wide variation in opinionation for people with a low political interest.

The interview questions seem to fall into three categories when we examine voters' willingness to take a stand on them. In the category where more than three fourths of the voters – regardless of political interest – have an opinion, we find the problems of social insurance, progressive income taxation, aid to developing countries, and religious instruction in primary schools. Differences between voters with high and low political interest are less than 20 percentage points for this group of political issues.

Table III. Proportion of voters with an opinion about some political issues, by political interest Percentages

Percent with an opinion about the issue of:	Political interest			All voters
	High 6	Medium 3	Low 0	
Social insurance	99	96	82	92
Progressive income taxation	97	94	75	88
Aid to developing countries	97	93	78	88
Religious instruction in primary school	95	89	78	87
Development of the two Norwegian languages	87	75	53	72
District development	85	71	48	69
Norwegian membership in NATO	94	65	29	62
Norwegian membership in EEC	81	44	15	42
Handling of moral questions on radio and on television	71	40	20	40
Number of cases	79	326	201	1623

In the next category of issues, comprising district development and language politics, a majority of both politically interested as well as uninterested voters have an opinion, but the difference between them is greater – about 35 percent. This percentage increases when we look at the third group of issues, where we find the problems of Norway's membership in NATO and EEC, and the handling of moral issues in the state-owned Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation. The distance in opinion between politically very interested voters and uninterested voters – measured in percentage points – is 65, 66, and 51 for the three issues. Only in the most interested group have more than half of the voters taken a stand.

Explanations of the fact that voters to a great extent have an opinion on some issues and not on others probably lie in the distance to or the flow of information about each particular issue, but differences may also be attributed to difficulties in associating concrete consequences with different standpoints. In our first category of issues different solutions can easily be implied and can just as easily be seen to have consequences for the individual. It is not equally easy when looking at policies for district development and handling of language problems. Taking a stand on issues about Norway's membership in NATO and EEC probably requires a broad political and ideological overview. In other words, developing an opinion on problems where decisions have indirect and long-term consequences requires a certain ability of abstraction and derivation of effects, which in turn presupposes both high political interest and considerable information. At least this interpretation is confirmed by a very wide distance between highly interested voters and uninterested voters for this group of issues.<sup>11</sup>

On the basis of the above findings it seems important to learn something about the level of political *information* which is underlying voters' opinions on different issues. Regardless of whether the observed differences may be explained by differing capabilities of abstraction and deductive thinking or by a perception of consequences affecting people's self-interests, a minimal level of information about decision-making processes and political bodies must exist.

We shall indicate differences in voters' knowledge of political life in Norway by an index composed on the basis of three interview questions. These questions concern what party or parties had a governmental majority before the election in 1965, how many candidates each respondent could remember from the list on which he voted, and what parties took part in the two-week coalition government in 1963. Index values were found by adding the number of correct answers for each voter, with the following result: 11 percent had three correct answers, 33 percent had two correct answers, 35 percent had one correct answer, and 21 percent of the voters had no correct answer.<sup>12</sup>

It seems reasonable to expect a certain correlation between political interest and political information. Table IV confirms our expectation. To increase readability we use the midpoint and extreme categories of the index for political interest in this Table too.

We see that the higher a person's interest in politics, the higher his level of political information. The important question in this connection is whether or not

Table IV. Political information among Norwegian voters, by political interest  
Percentages

Political information	Political interest			All voters
	High 6	Medium 3	Low 0	
Three correct answers	33	10	4	11
Two correct answers	38	35	13	33
One correct answer	25	40	32	35
No correct answer	4	15	51	21
Total	100	100	100	100
Number of cases	79	326	201	1623

the above – not so surprising – relationship between interest and knowledge has an effect upon voters' ability to suggest problems which the authorities ought to take up and solve in specified ways. Investigating the interrelations between the three variables we find that among politically disinterested voters ability to suggest important political problems increases with increasing information. Among politically interested voters we do not find a similar increase in ability to mention problems with increasing political knowledge, however.

When we turn to voters' opinionation on specific issues the tendency is the same: the higher a person's political interest and information, the higher the probability that he will have opinions on various questions. The proportion which has "no opinion" is extremely high among voters who are both uninterested in politics and lack information about political affairs.

It seems reasonable to conclude this part of our analysis by stating that Norwegian voters may be ordered along a dimension which I propose calling "political awareness". There is a strong tendency that the more politically interested a person is, the higher is his level of political information, and the greater his ability to express political opinions. In the light of these relationships we may ask two basic questions: *who* – what social groupings – are the politically aware and less aware ones, and are there any *effects* of the observed variation in the level of political awareness for the voter and for the political process?

Both questions need extensive specifications. We shall concentrate on the first one here, and study the distribution of political awareness among Norwegian citizens. Towards the end of the paper I will suggest answers to the question of whether the politically aware voters *make use of* this resource. Do they participate more actively in decision-making processes, by joining political parties, visiting campaign meetings and nomination congresses, voting, trying to influence less aware friends, etc.?



### 3. Political Awareness and Social Background

The following analysis will be confined to three indicators of political awareness, all of them described in the previous section of the paper:

1. The index for *political interest*, based on questions about how regularly the voter follows political affairs, how important he thinks the election outcome is to himself, and his self-evaluation regarding political interest.<sup>13</sup>
2. *Number of political problems* the voter is able to suggest as needing solution by political means.
3. The index for *political information*.<sup>14</sup>

To improve readability and simplicity of interpretation of Figures and Tables we will show the percentage of voters scoring "high" on each of the above indicators.<sup>15</sup>

Social categories may be distinguished by a great number of criteria. We shall here concentrate on a few, partly because they have been found to be important in earlier studies of similar problems.<sup>16</sup> We particularly want to show what differences exist between groupings with an unequal amount of other resources, such as education, income, and occupational prestige. Other possible differentiating variables are age and sex, and we shall begin our analysis by clarifying their effects.

Our main hypothesis is that the distribution of political awareness is patterned

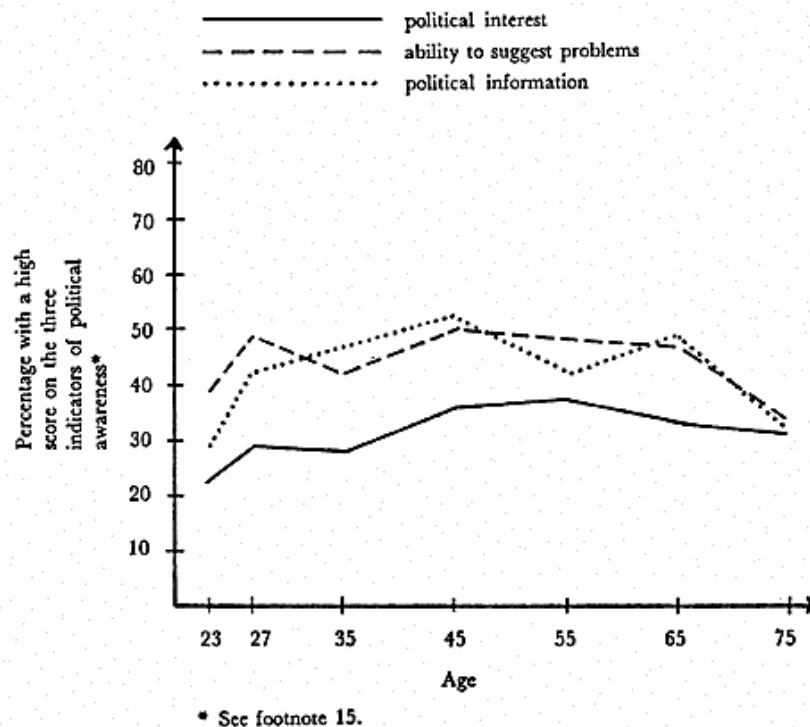


Fig. 1. Political awareness by age.

and is dependent upon the amount of material, intellectual and organizational resources which the individual has at his disposition.<sup>17</sup> People in "established" age groups will be more politically aware than the younger and older ones; men will be more aware than women, persons with a higher education will be more aware than others, persons in leading or independent positions in the occupational structure will be more aware than blue- and white-collar workers, people with higher incomes will be more aware than those who earn less, and so on.<sup>18</sup> Explanations of such differences between persons in different social groups and categories may be more or less complicated, and there will often be interactions between variables of the kind we have mentioned above. Our purpose here is mainly descriptive: we want to show the distribution of political awareness in relation to the distribution of a few other resources in society.

Figure 1 shows political awareness in relation to age. The tendency is as expected, but we must note that age differences are relatively small. Only political interest increases markedly from the age category of 21-25 years to the following age groups.

The figures suggest that political awareness reaches a certain level *before* people are eligible to vote, and increases slightly until the age of 50-60, where it starts declining again.<sup>19</sup>

Differences between men and women are much more pronounced, both in the case of political interest (percentage difference = 23), ability to suggest problems which the government should take care of (percentage difference = 13), and political information (percentage difference = 20). Studying different age groups separately for the two sexes, we get the result shown in Table V.

For both sexes, political interest increases with age. Young men suggest political problems to be handled more often than others. Political information is highest in the age group of 31-50 years, both among men and women. Young women are especially uninterested in politics. In all age categories men are more politically aware than women.

Table V. Political awareness in different age groups, by sex  
Percentages

Political awareness	Men				Women			
	21-30 years	31-50 years	Over 50 years	All men	21-30 years	31-50 years	Over 50 years	All women
High political interest	36	46	45	44	16	19	24	21
Suggest two or more problems	57	52	48	52	30	42	41	39
High political information	43	60	53	54	28	40	29	34
Number of cases	166	357	362	885	165	367	334	866

In other words, sex and age affect the development of political awareness. We know that there exists a relationship between these two variables and education, income, and occupation, and we shall try to control the effects of this relationship when we now turn to differences in the level of political awareness between different educational, occupational, and income groupings.<sup>20</sup>

As we might expect, voters' education is one of the most important factors differentiating political awareness.<sup>21</sup> First, let us study a Figure showing how the proportion of voters scoring high on our indicators increases with years of education beyond primary school.

The tendency is quite pronounced: the proportion of voters with a high level of awareness is doubled from the lowest to the highest educational category. The tendency also holds when men and women are studied separately. Differences in political awareness between the sexes decrease when educational level increases, however.

Studying effects of education in two age categories, we get a result as shown in Table VI. For simplicity we use three educational groupings in this table: primary education only, less than 3½ years of education beyond primary school, and more than 3½ years of additional education.

It is obvious that education has a far greater effect on political awareness than age has, but we may observe a certain cumulative effect of the variables both on interest, opinion, and information. In the age group of 40 years or less, there seems to be

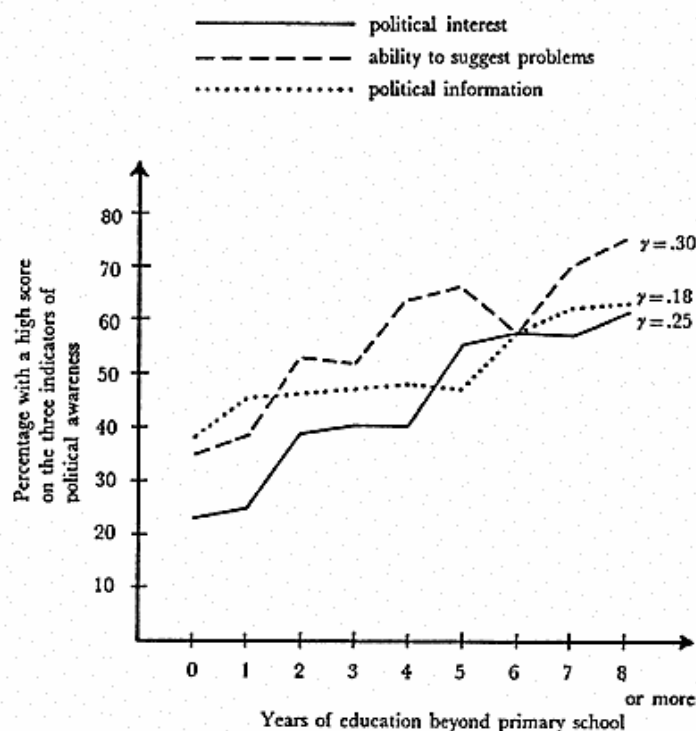


Fig. 2. Political awareness by education.

Table VI. Political awareness and education, by age  
Percentages

Political awareness	Age 21-40 years			Age 41 years and over		
	Primary school	Less than 3½ years more	More than 3½ years more	Primary school	Less than 3½ years more	More than 3½ years more
High political interest	14	18	50	26	42	55
Suggest two or more problems	34	34	64	35	53	70
High political information	37	37	52	39	53	56
Number of cases	148	260	171	548	322	174

no difference in political awareness between the two lowest educational levels. Education of more than 3½ years beyond primary school is obviously necessary in order to increase political awareness among younger voters. For persons over 40 years of age, however, political awareness increases more evenly with an increasing level of education.

Considering the well-known interrelations between education, occupation, and income in our society it is now reasonable to expect certain variations in political awareness between occupational and income groupings.<sup>22</sup> Respondents were classified in five occupational categories on the basis of their own present occupation. Persons without an occupation were classified according to their provider's occupation, while retired voters were placed in the occupational category suggested by their last occupation. Our five occupational groupings, which are naturally rather heterogeneous, are the following:

1. *Workers*, i.e. apprentices, unskilled and skilled blue-collar workers, and foremen.
2. *Lower white-collar*, which includes white-collar workers on lower and middle levels, and self-employed craftsmen without hired help.
3. *Independents*, which includes higher white-collar employees, owners with hired help, and professionals.
4. *Smallholders and fishermen*, and combinations of the two occupations.
5. *Farmers*.

Table VII indicates an answer to the question of how political awareness is distributed in relation to occupational category. Differences between occupational groups are fairly small, but we notice that independents and self-employed persons are more politically aware than others. Smallholders, fishermen, and farmers are less interested in politics than people in other occupations, but they are equally well informed.

The observed differences between occupational categories are somewhat reduced

Table VII. Political awareness by occupation  
Percentages

Political awareness	Occupation					
	Workers	Lower white-collar	Independents	Smallholders and fishermen	Farmers	All voters
High political interest	30	33	47	21	23	33
Suggest two or more problems	41	46	63	33	41	45
High political information	39	46	49	48	49	44
Number of cases	696	265	333	139	165	1623

when studied on separate levels of education. On the other hand, differences in level of awareness between educational groupings remain. We find the same pattern when looking at income instead of occupation. For the whole sample a high score on political interest increases from 22 percent in the lowest income group to 44 percent in the highest. We can observe a similar distribution of opinion and information. These correlations are considerably reduced, however, when studied separately for

Table VIII. Political awareness and income, by occupation  
Percentages

Political awareness	Workers				White-collar employees, owners, and professionals				Farmers, smallholders, and fishermen			
	Income: 1000 Norwegian Kroner											
	0-10	10-20	20-30	30 and over	0-10	10-20	20-30	30 and over	0-10	10-20	20-30	30 and over
High political interest	21	29	31	51	29	35	43	44	18	23	34	(25)
Suggest two or more problems	30	40	44	49	58	40	57	61	31	39	44	(35)
High political information	32	36	44	50	33	46	47	52	45	55	47	(50)
Number of cases	116	251	297	72	45	127	231	205	105	126	43	20

different educational levels. Again our data confirm that education has the greatest and most direct effect on the development of political awareness.

We shall now study the effects of differences in income within three major occupational groupings: workers, white-collar employees, and independents, and farmers, smallholders, and fishermen. Table VIII shows the distribution of political awareness in relation to income and occupation.

Among workers political interest, opinionation, and information increase with increasing income. A similar but not so pronounced increase of interest and information may be observed among white-collar employees, owners, and professionals. Among farmers, smallholders, and fishermen only political interest increases with increasing income. In this occupational category the relatively high information level observed in Table VII is present on all levels of income.

Of other social background characteristics which might affect the level of political awareness we may mention urbanization and social mobility. We find a marked difference between voters living in urban areas and voters in rural areas. However, such differences may, to a great extent, be explained by different levels of education in city and country. Looking at geographical and social mobility we find only minor differences in political awareness between mobile and more stable voters.

In summary, our description of relationships between major social background characteristics and political awareness has shown that education, income, and occupation play a marked role for development of this motivational resource. Level of education is the most important determinant, but there seems to be a certain cumu-

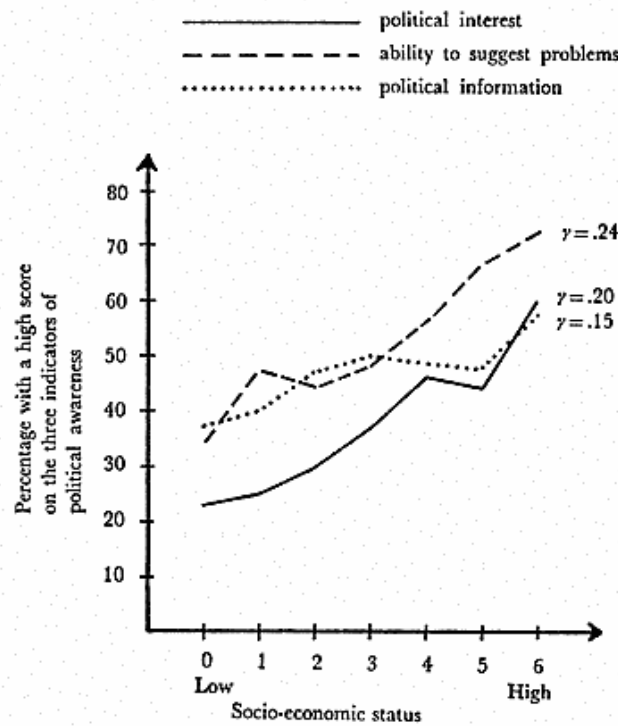


Fig. 3. Political awareness by socio-economic status.

lative effect of the three variables. An index of socio-economic status, based on length of education, level of income, and occupational status shows a clear correlation with political awareness, as we can see from Figure 3.<sup>23</sup>

Political awareness among Norwegian voters increases with increasing socio-economic status.<sup>24</sup> We find the highest correlation in the case of political interest, and the relation between socio-economic status and political information is smallest. Let us repeat that we do *not* interpret the relationship to include actual political influence, because both compensating, as well as intensifying, mechanisms probably are at work.<sup>25</sup>

#### 4. Political Awareness and Other Motivational Resources

So far our analysis has been restricted to variations in voters' evaluations and knowledge. Political awareness is, however, only one motivational resource which is likely to induce a citizen to take political action. To complete the picture we shall turn to two other resources: *affective orientation* towards the political system (how people experience their own roles in the political process), and *behavioral orientation* (to what degree are citizens actually willing to participate in political activities). In other words, we want to raise the question of what interrelations there are between the level of political awareness and people's feelings about their own ability to influence decisions, as well as their manifest efforts to do so by political participation. Both questions will be treated fully in ensuing publications. Here I shall indicate a general direction of answers to questions along this line.

To measure citizens' feelings of being competent participants and having a real say in political life, we composed a scale for "political alienation".<sup>26</sup> The scale is based on voters' agreement or disagreement with various statements about different aspects of political processes. The statements were constructed to get an impression of voters' feelings of whether it is of any use trying to influence political decisions, whether political discussions, campaigns, and elections are of any importance for their own daily life situation, and whether political struggle creates so much bitterness and so many extreme positions that it does more harm than good.<sup>27</sup>

Looking at the behavioral component of political motivation, we hypothesize that political activity, such as voting, participation in political meetings and political discussions, and so on, will increase with increasing political awareness. To measure the level of political activity we composed two simple indices, one for *informal political participation*, based on the respondent's voting in this and previous elections, workers, friends, and members of the family before the election, and one index for *political participation*, based on respondent's voting in this and previous elections, his participation in campaign meetings and other campaign activities, and his membership in political organizations.<sup>28</sup>

The question now is: is there any observable relationship between variations in political alienation and political awareness? And does the level of political awareness have an effect on citizens' political activity? We choose to express the degree of cor-

Table IX. Political alienation and political activity, by political awareness  
Gamma coefficients

	Political interest	Ability to suggest problems	Political information
Political alienation	— .29	— .19	— .26
Political activity:			
Participation	.47	.31	.36
Informal communication	.43	.33	.28

relation between the above indices and indicators of political awareness by presenting gamma coefficients, and the result is shown in Table IX.

Our two questions above are confirmed by the Table. The higher the voters' political interest, opinion, and information, the lower their political alienation. The relationship is of moderate strength, but the tendency is clear.

Political awareness and political activity show a more pronounced relationship. As we could expect, political *interest* has the strongest effect, both on political participation and on informal communication.

The results of Table IX call for a broader analysis of relationships between political awareness and actual influence on political decisions in our society, al-

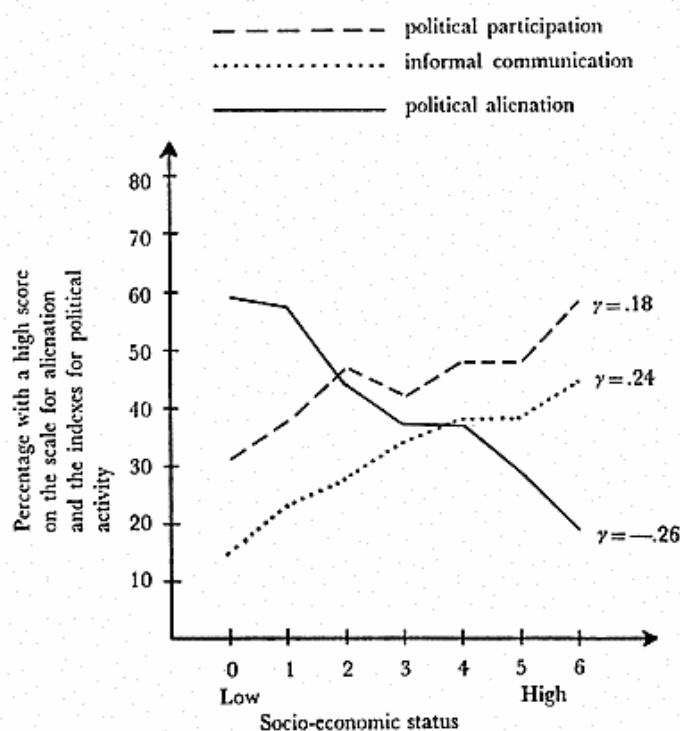


Fig. 4. Political alienation and activity by socio-economic status.



though direct participation and informal communication are only two of many ways of influencing politics. One set of sub-questions would concern the social groupings in which the politically active voters as well as the politically alienated citizens are to be found. Figure 4 indicates that the two resources are unequally distributed between socio-economic categories. The feeling of being a competent citizen increases with increasing socio-economic status as does the disposition to political activity.<sup>30</sup>

## 5. Social Inequality and Political Resources

In this article I have described differences in political awareness between social groupings, and indicated that variations in political interest, opinionation, and information are closely related to similar variations in political activity and in the absence of political alienation. Degrees of political interest, opinionation, information, participation, informal communication, and subjective competence are inter-related, and increase with increasing socio-economic status.

In other words, *citizens' opportunities to make use of their political rights* seem to be unequal. Influencing definitions of problems and policies of politicians and public authorities on all system levels requires adequate and detailed articulation of demands and supports, as well as ability to defend oneself against decisions perceived as being unjust. Ability to do so presupposes that individuals or groups with similar interests possess various resources like time, money, knowledge, social relations, solidarity, physical and psychic energy, personal autonomy, etc. Individuals or groups totally lacking in such resources may be regarded as being politically poor. In a more detailed analysis of citizens' opportunities to make use of their political rights we have to take such a broad range of political resources into consideration.

Limitations on citizens' opportunities to influence political decisions are directly related to their place in the stratification structure. Blue-collar workers, for example, have both less time for political activity and less economic resources for hiring experts of various kinds, travelling to civic centers to talk to politicians or officials, giving economic aid to political campaigns, and so on. Moreover, they have fewer social contacts among decision-makers than others, and therefore limited possibilities to state opinions and demands via informal communication channels. We also know that the general level of education and information is low among blue-collar workers. Knowledge of rights and duties and of techniques to reach the right office with justified demands is often lacking in lower socio-economic strata.<sup>31</sup>

However, socio-economic position not only restricts a person's opportunity to influence decisions. In addition both capability of political activity as well as motivation for political participation depend upon citizens' social status. On the foregoing pages we have seen that political awareness is lowest among voters with low education, income, and occupational status. As indicated in Figure 4 this also seems to

hold good when looking at citizens' subjective competence vis-a-vis public and political authorities. We will probably find the same tendency when analysing voters' confidence in the political system as a just and well-functioning one. Motivation to act politically in order to direct one's own life situation therefore tends to be fairly weak among lower socio-economic groupings.<sup>32</sup>

For such reasons access to political resources may be analysed as an aspect of social stratification. Because politics to a great extent determine the distribution of a wide range of both material and cultural resources, the unequal distribution of *political* resources becomes an important mechanism for the preservation of the existing stratification system. Further research is needed to specify how such mechanisms work.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See for instance Rokkan, S., ed., "Citizen Participation in Political Life", *Int. Soc. Sci. J.*, 12 (1), 1960, pp. 7-99, especially S. Rokkan and A. Campbell, "Norway and the United States of America", pp. 69-99. See also S. Rokkan and H. Valen, "The Mobilization of the Periphery: Data on Turnout, Party Membership and Candidate Recruitment in Norway", in Rokkan, S., ed., *Approaches to the Study of Political Participation*, Bergen, Chr. Michelsens Institutt, 1962, pp. 111-158. A summary of American data is given in Robert E. Lane, *Political Life*, New York, The Free Press, 1958.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Rokkan, S., "Mass Suffrage, Secret Voting and Political Participation", *Archives européennes de sociologie* 2 (1), 1961, pp. 132-152. Rokkan, S., "Norway: Numerical Democracy and Corporate Pluralism", in R. A. Dahl, ed., *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1966, pp. 70-115.

<sup>3</sup> Knut Dahl Jacobsen, "Politisk fattigdom" (Political Poverty), *Kontrast*, b. 3, no. 1, Oslo, 1967.

<sup>4</sup> This question is extensively analysed in G. A. Almond and S. Verba, *The Civic Culture*, Little, Brown and Company, 1965, especially chapters I, VI and XI.

<sup>5</sup> A more detailed description of the survey is found in H. Valen, "Partiforskyvninger ved Stortingsvalget 1965", *Tidsskrift for Samfunnsforskning*, vol. 8, nos. 2-3, Oslo, 1967. The Norwegian program for electoral research is described in H. Valen and S. Rokkan, "The Norwegian Program of Electoral Research", in *Scandinavian Political Studies*, vol. 2, 1967, distributed by Universitetsforlaget, Oslo, and Columbia University Press, New York and London.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. H. Valen and P. Torsvik, "Økningen i valgdeltakelsen ved kommunevalget i 1963 og stortingsvalget i 1965" (The Increase in Turnout at the Commune Election in 1963 and the Storting Election in 1965), *Tidsskrift for Samfunnsforskning*, vol. 8, nos. 2-3, Oslo, 1967.

<sup>7</sup> This index as well as the index for political information, the index for socio-economic status, the index for informal political communication, the index for political participation, and the scale for political alienation used in the paper, are all constructed by H. Valen.

<sup>8</sup> The following is the full formulation of this questions: As you well know, the Government faces many serious problems in this country and in other parts of the world. The question is: *What should be done about them?* We would like to know if there are any problems on which you think the Storting and Government should make a decision during the coming four-year period. We are interested in your *personal* opinion. Firstly, can you mention one important problem you personally think the new Parliament should try to take care of?

<sup>9</sup> As an example of the way of posing questions about issues we shall cite question number three in the series: Then there is the question of our *social insurance*. A lot of people feel that we have acquired more than enough pensions and that we should try to curtail them in the future, while others think we should maintain the insurance arrangements we now have and, if necessary, extend them even further. Is this a question on which you have tried to reach an opinion? (IF "YES"): What is your opinion, should there in the future be *fewer pensions*, should they be *maintained as they are at the moment*, or should they be *extended even further?*

<sup>10</sup> Willy Martinussen, "Velgerne og de politiske stridsspørsmål" (The Voters and the Political Issues), *Tidsskrift for Samfunnsforskning*, vol. 8, nos. 2-3, Oslo 1967.

<sup>11</sup> See for instance M. Kent Jennings, "Pre-Adult Orientations to Multiple Systems of Government", *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, vol. B., no. 3, August 1967, especially Table 3.

<sup>12</sup> As "correct" answer to the question of mentioning candidates from the list on which each person voted we set three correct names or more. The index for political information ranges from 0 (low information) to 3 (high information).

<sup>13</sup> See comments to Table II, and footnote 7.

<sup>14</sup> See comments to Table IV, and footnote 12.

<sup>15</sup> As a "high" score we decided on the following: Score 4, 5, or 6 of the index for political interest. Score 2 or 3 (two or three problems mentioned) for opinionation. Score 2 or 3 of the index for political information.

<sup>16</sup> Robert E. Lane, *op. cit.*, chapters 12-16.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, and G. A. Almond and S. Verba, *op. cit.*

<sup>18</sup> See S. M. Lipset, *Political Man*, Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1960, chapter VI. A more theoretical approach is found in A. Campbell, "The Passive Citizen", *Acta Sociologica*, vol. 6, fasc. 1-2, Copenhagen, Munksgaard, 1962.

<sup>19</sup> R. E. Lane and D. O. Sears, *Public Opinion*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964, chapter 3.

<sup>20</sup> We here refer to the notion of sex roles, and to the fact that the general level of education has increased from year to year in our country for the last fifty years or more.

<sup>21</sup> See G. A. Almond and S. Verba, *op. cit.*, chapter XI.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> The index is based on a tripartition of each of the variables education, income, and occupational status, from 0 to 2, and the score for each voter is found by adding his scores for each of the original variables.

<sup>24</sup> R. E. Lane, *op. cit.*, chapter 16.

<sup>25</sup> See for instance R. A. Dahl, *Who Governs?*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961.

<sup>26</sup> An almost identical concept is *subjective political competence* as it is defined by G. A. Almond and S. Verba, *op. cit.*, chapter VI.

<sup>27</sup> Voters were asked to agree or disagree with the following statements:

People should keep their political opinions to themselves – it only makes for difficulties if you let everyone know where you stand.

You can't expect ordinary people to take the trouble to acquire knowledge about public and political affairs – that is what we have politicians for.

Political parties are indispensable – they perform a useful and absolutely necessary task in society.

It would be much better if people stopped talking about the cleavages between political parties and instead stressed all they agree on.

Election campaigns create so much unnecessary bitterness that there is reason to ask whether they do not create more harm than good.

The answer pattern for the questions forms a Guttman scale from 0 to 5 with  $R = .92$ .

<sup>28</sup> The index for informal communication has seven values (0-6), and the index for political participation has six values (0-5). Both are constructed by adding number of activities each voter mentioned when asked about political discussions and various forms of political participation.

<sup>29</sup> See Goodman and Kruskal, "Measures of Association for Cross-Classifications", *Journ. Am. Stat. Assn.*, vol. 49, 1954, 732-764.

<sup>30</sup> As "high" alienation we decided on scores 0-2 of the scale, cf. footnote 27. As "high" activity we set score 2-5 for political participation and score 4-6 for informal communication, cf. footnote 28.

<sup>31</sup> A summary of such findings is given by Melvin M. Tumin, *Social Stratification*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1967, chapters 7-8.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* See also M. Kohn, *Class and Conformity*, Homewood, Ill.: The Dorsey Press, 1969.