

Economic Parameters vs Voting Behaviour in the Polish Presidential Election in 2020: Poviat level analysis¹

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Abstract: *Voting behaviour is affected by various factors and the effect varies in individual countries. Economic and geographic factors are among the major criteria taken into account in electorate segmentation. The present study analyses them in the case of the Polish presidential election in 2020, held under the circumstances of strong polarisation within the society and controversies surrounding the rule-of-law and democratic standards. The present study analyses voter turnout and results of the second round of the election, focusing on the subregional level of poviats (counties). The analysis considers macroeconomic factors (such as GDP per capita, unemployment rate, average remuneration), financial condition of the local government (measured by budgetary revenues) and urbanisation (comparing the biggest cities to other counties). The findings confirm correlation between the macroeconomic parameters of the subregion and voter turnout. In the case of voting results, the hypotheses concerning macroeconomic parameters and the status of the biggest cities are confirmed, but there's no evidence of correlation of the average remuneration on the poviat level and support for the centre-liberal candidate.*

Key words: *Poland, elections, segmentation, economic determinants, poviat, voting behaviour*

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I. Introduction

Democratic states nowadays, including Poland, face significant transformation of political and electoral competition (Norris – Inglehart 2019; Przybylski 2018; Schmitt et al. 2021). The changing communication between candidates and voters, development of new movements, as well as the progress of globalisation stimulated establishment of new political cleavages (Kriesi et al. 2012; de Vrees et al. 2018). In Poland, their significance is evidenced both by the increasing voter turnout (Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza), and marked increase of social involvement (CivicSpaceWatch). This corresponds to the discussion on social participation and its meaning in legitimising democratic political systems. Voting in elections is a major component of civic participation (Czeńnik 2007), which affects shaping a conscious public opinion, articulation of interests and effective representation (Sommerville 2011). These circumstances highlight the importance of research on political participation – including electoral participation.

Ideological and cultural issues have become key to modern cleavages, but this does not mean that no role is played by economic parameters whose effect on voting behaviour has been well documented (Lipset – Rokkan 1967; Kriesi 1998; Lewis-Beck – Stegmeier 2000; Markowski 2019). There are also studies concerning specific factors determining voters' decisions in individual countries, including Poland (Zarycki 2015). Scholars have analysed differences in voting behaviour between rural and urban areas in the Polish case, too (Zarycki – Nowak 2000). Recent elections allowed identification of cleavages associated with voters' education, job type and place of residence (towns/countryside, eastern/western regions) (Szymczak 2020). These observations must be referred to the long discussion of segmentation on the voter market and its criteria (Cichosz – Skrzypiński 2014).

The main focus of the present study was political participation in Poland. Poland is an important and interesting case as a country that underwent democratic transition in the 1990s and in the 2010s and 2020s became a leading example of illiberal transformation. The Polish society has become polarised on many issues. On the other hand, since 2015, Poland has witnessed a marked increase in political participation measured by electoral turnout. These changes and developments require exploration and verification of their relationship with characteristic of the Polish political life observed earlier.

The study concerned geographic and economic segmentation through identification of differentiating voter participation and behaviour on the level of poviats. It analysed voter turnout and results of the second round of the presidential election in Poland in 2020 set in the context of geographical nature and economy on the poviats level. Its objective was to verify existence of a correlation between the poviats' economic situation and location on one hand and voter turnout and results of the presidential elections on the other.

II. Significance of participation in democracy: Elections in Poland after the post-communist transformation

Citizen participation in the democratic processes is key for democracy. Competitive elections are the fundamental defining element of a democracy and voter turnout is listed among indicators of the quality of democratic systems (Kriesi – Müller 2013: 188). While the philosophical exploration has evolved to combine participation with deliberation (Florida 2017) and in the practice of decision-making there are diverse and changing forms of both participation and deliberation (Gastil – Knobloch 2020), elections remain the cornerstone of any democratic system. Elections serve to shape a connection between citizens' preferences and opinions on one hand, and public policies on the other, and therefore to ensure representation – a translation of voters' convictions and expectations into the composition of representative bodies – and accountability – the possibility to remove from power those who, in the voters' opinion, failed these expectations (Thomassen 2014: 1–2).

In Poland, there are direct elections of the Parliament and the president, as well as three tiers of the local and regional government (Ustawa 2011). Presidential elections are held every five years and a candidate can be re-elected only once. The elections are held in the majority system with a second round two weeks after the first one, if necessary. The universal election strengthens the president's legitimacy, which corresponds to important constitutional competencies the Polish head of state holds: legislative initiative, veto with respect to acts passed by the parliament, role in appointing the prime minister and international relations (Konstytucja 1997). However, in political practice after 1997, the Polish presidents were usually strongly associated with their political milieus or else they tried to act as mediators and neutral statesmen building the nation's unity. Other than Aleksander Kwaśniewski, president from 1995 until 2005, none attempted to gain a strong and independent political position.

The first post-WWII fully democratic presidential election in Poland took place in 1990 and it was also the first fully free national election. Despite its being held in the context of post-communist transition, it was a clash of two anti-communist candidates, Lech Wałęsa and Tadeusz Mazowiecki. However, Wałęsa's counter-candidate in the second round was the underdog, an unknown entrepreneur returning from emigration, Stanisław Tymiński. He surprisingly took the second spot in the first round, with a voter turnout of 60.6%. In the second round, with a turnout of 53.4%, Wałęsa won in a landslide. After five years of a quite contentious and controversial presidency (Nałęcz 2017), he stood for re-election, but lost by a very narrow margin to a former communist Aleksander Kwaśniewski – in the second round Kwaśniewski acquired 51.7% of votes against 48.3% for Wałęsa (Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza). Kwaśniewski's presidency was marked by historic events for Poland, including introduction of the new

constitution in 1997, admission to NATO in 1999 and then (during his second term) accession to the European Union in 2004, but also by the president's active involvement in parliamentary politics, both during the times of cohabitation with rightist governments and in periods when Kwaśniewski's political allies were in power (Kasińska-Metryka, 2005). Kwaśniewski was also the first president to be re-elected and his victory in 2000 was the only one achieved in the first round (Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza).

In the next election, in 2005, the post-communist division played a diminished role and the second round was a confrontation of two non-communist candidates. Lech Kaczyński, representative of the conservative and rightist Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS), prevailed over Donald Tusk of the centre-right and liberal Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska, PO) in the first big clash of what would become the key line of polarisation in Polish politics. Kaczyński's vision of the presidency was also quite proactive, as he was associated with the party he had created which was led by his twin brother Jarosław Kaczyński (Hartliński 2019). Lech Kaczyński did not serve his entire term. He announced his will to seek re-election despite discouraging opinion polls (Wądołowska 2010), but his death in the plane crash in Smolensk forced an election several months later than planned. The PiS' candidate was Jarosław Kaczyński, but he lost to Bronisław Komorowski of PO.

The 2005 presidential elections also coincided with the parliamentary campaign. Poland's bicameral Parliament is chosen by two separate elections organised together, however, on different terms. The lower chamber, the Sejm, is elected by proportional representation in 41 districts electing from 7 to 20 members of the Sejm each. Application of the d'Hondt method and the electoral thresholds (5% for party lists and 8% for coalitions) is designed to ensure a stable majority in the Parliament. The solution is efficient in terms of the number of candidate lists that win seats: six in 2019, six in 2015, six in 2011, five in 2007 (Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza). On the other hand, it was not uncommon for governments to lose majority support and operate as minority governments. The Senate is elected in plurality elections with each of the 100 senators elected in the separate district (Ustawa 2011).

The current polarising conflict is centred around two major parties: PiS and PO (the latter currently better known by the name of the coalition it operates in – Koalicja Obywatelska, Civic Coalition, KO). Initially both centre-right parties were formed based on the anti-communist tradition in opposition to the then governing post-communist and leftist Democratic Left Alliance (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej, SLD), though at the turn of the 21st century and in the 2005 parliamentary elections, they previewed a coalition government. However, the rivalry – both in the presidential and parliamentary contest – led to tensions that ultimately caused a failure of the coalition negotiations and PiS forming first a minority government and then a coalition with two smaller populist parties

of the League of Polish Families (Liga Polskich Rodzin, LPR) and Self-Defence (Samoobrona). It was in the elections of 2005 that PiS defined the new dividing line between 'liberalism' – assigned to PO, and social 'solidarity' – PiS identified with. However, PiS was unable to retain power with unpredictable allies and called an early election in 2007, in which PO's offer of progressivism, focus on economic development and liberalism prevailed. In almost a decade of PO's rule in coalition with the Polish Peasant Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe, PSL), PiS played the role of the most significant opposition force, presenting itself as the voice of the powerless, the poor and losers of the post-communist transformation in general. Its message became increasingly anti-elite and populist (Pytlas 2021).

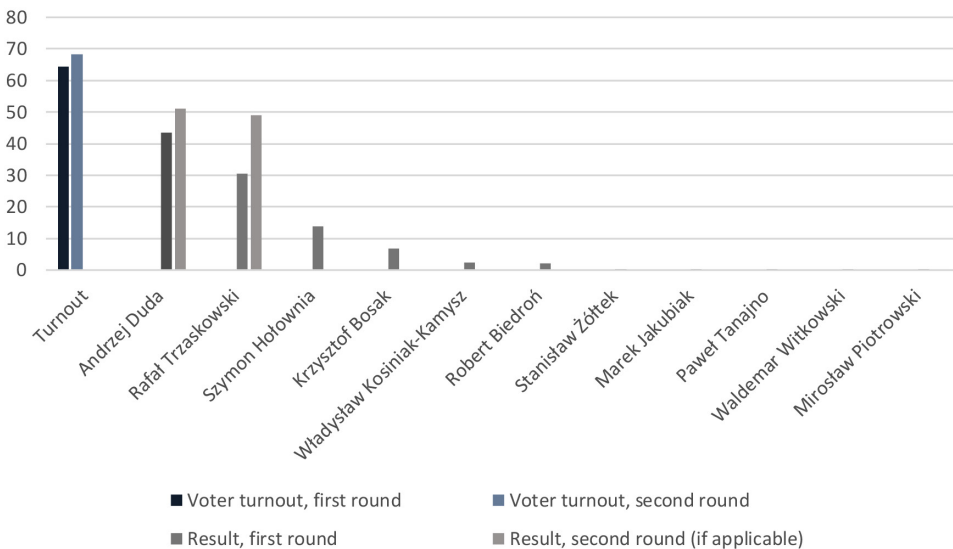
Law and Justice's campaigns succeeded in 2015. The party won 37.58% of votes; however, with a high proportion of votes won by committees below the thresholds (including a combined 11.17% for two leftist committees), this guaranteed a majority in the Sejm (Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza). The ruling coalition's efficiency was also conditioned by the fact that the presidency was held by a politician associated with PiS and its candidate in 2015, Andrzej Duda. Since 2015 Poland has been ruled by the government of the United Right, a coalition led by Law and Justice, frequently accused of breaking the rule of law and limiting Polish democracy (Ágh 2017: 21; Skrzypek 2021). This general tendency, as well as some of the ruling party's decisions (most notably, those restricting women's reproductive rights, including access to abortion) led to radicalisation of opinions both on the political arena and in the society. In many aspects, the 2015 election is perceived as a breaking point in the history of post-communist Poland (Jaskiernia 2017), as PiS won it based on an agenda of rightist, nationalist and religious rhetoric (Folvarčný – Kopeček 2020), combined with a strong pro-welfare economic programme.

While the opposition parties express their commitment to democratic and European values, they have not formed a uniform bloc. The dominating anti-PiS party is still the Civic Platform and despite repeated attempts at building new parties labelled as 'new' or 'third' option, the two main parties managed to enhance and keep their position, winning between them either a majority or a vast majority of votes in all parliamentary elections since 2005 (from 51.13% in 2005 to 73.62% in 2007; 69.07 in 2011; 61.67% in 2015; 70.99% in 2019) (Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza). On the other hand, newly established parties were able to gain momentum (Kosowska-Gąstoł – Sobolewska Myślik 2019), even if only in the perspective of one or two elections: Palikot Movement, Kukiz'15, Modern Party and possibly Poland 2050. This lasting duopoly with fluctuations in duration and relevance of smaller parties, especially new ones, has become an important feature of the Polish party scene since 2015 (Szczerbiak 2017). Poland has also become a prominent case of extreme political polarisation in the context of democratic backsliding (Tworzecki 2019), as confirmed by the

results of the 2019 parliamentary election: PiS maintained a majority in the Sejm by winning 44% of votes, while the opposition presented candidates for the Senate together and won 51% of the seats (Markowski 2020). However, the Senate’s position in the Polish political system does not provide it with tools to efficiently hamper a majority in Sejm, so the results ensured PiS the second term in power and an opportunity to continue its policies.

These circumstances of the presidential elections in 2020 also coincided with the organisational challenges due to the pandemic (Flis – Kamiński 2022; Sula et al. 2021). The health circumstances led to multiple legal changes, unpredictability and delays, but the presidential elections were held in June (first round) and July (second round) (Sula et al. 2021). In the first round, Andrzej Duda had the best result, gaining 43.5% of votes, followed by the candidate of the Civic Platform – the biggest opposition party, Rafał Trzaskowski who attracted the support of 30.5% of voters. Out of the other nine candidates, Szymon Hołownia was supported by 13.9%, Krzysztof Bosak by 6.8% and none of the rest exceeded 3%, as illustrated in Figure 1. It may be concluded that the first round of the presidential election confirmed the polarisation of the Polish society with two dominating parties, whose candidates later competed in the second round, won by Andrzej Duda by a narrow margin with 51.5% of the vote. The electoral campaign was very heated and controversial in many aspects, and it culminated in a record turnout of 64.5% in the first round and 68.2% in the second round.

Figure 1: Voter turnout and results of the presidential elections in Poland 2020



Source: Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza

Considering the role of the president in the Polish political system on one hand and emotions raised and voters' involvement on the other, it can be said that the presidential election in 2020 was a major event of significant consequences for the state and in the society.

III. Economic and geographic determinants of electoral results

In acquiring voters' support, political parties resort to various strategies (Mares – Young 2019: 48–49). The classic theory of cleavages referred to lasting divisions within societies that were based on shared interests and led to the formation of political parties in the process of articulating these interests: the economic status of the individual was among the characteristics that frequently led to permanent and politically relevant cleavages (Lipset – Rokkan 1967). Nowadays, in the changed conditions of the globalised economy, it is still widely quoted and analysed in the modern contexts (Kriesi et al. 2012). Modern evolutions of the impact of both economic and cultural factors on individual voters' decisions have been thoroughly discussed (Dalton 2019), but it has also been shown that the impact of specific voter's social and demographic characteristics can be mediated and changed by characteristics of the environment, including macroeconomic parameters (Schmitt et al. 2021). A particular voter's social condition is affected not only by individual features, but also by the social and economic situation of their environment, including the region and subregion. Therefore, the consequences of an individual's wealth, education, religious status etc. may differ – if not in the direction, then certainly in strength – depending on the voter's place of residence.

As these elements, among others, shape the voter's motivation and determination to participate in the elections (Gallego 2015: 37–40), the macroeconomic situation, characterised by the level of GDP per capita, GDP growth, unemployment rate, as well as resources available to the regional or subregional authorities may account for differences in voter turnout in different parts of the same country, as well as for voters' choices. Economic voting and its impact on electoral campaigning and candidates' decisions has been a mainstay of political science (Hart 2016: 5–6), as well as political marketing practice (Kriesi – Müller 2013: 364). The effects of GDP change, unemployment rate and unemployment change were studied on the general level (Becher – Donnelly 2013) and for individual countries (Goulas et al. 2019).

Undoubtedly, 'many phenomena of the social sciences exhibit spatial effects' (Chi – Zhu 2020: 3) and voting behaviour is certainly one of them. Geographic patterns of voting have been studied in multiple states over different continents (e.g. Mancosu 2014; Weaver 2015; Johnston et al. 2018; Rule 2018). Poland has also been known as an example of similar processes. There are two major aspects of geographic differentiation in the state: one being the urban/rural cleavage,

and the other the difference between the north-western and south-eastern part of the country. Urbanisation has been shown as a very strong predictor of voters' decisions in Poland, with rightist or conservative parties and groups gaining more supporters in rural areas and cities tending to side with the left or centre (Marcinkiewicz 2017: 711–712). Spatial determinants of voting behaviour were analysed in detail for the 2015 parliamentary elections (Grabowski 2019).

The regional differentiation in the case of Poland is usually associated with historic heritage related to the partitions period (Bański et al. 2013; Zarycki 2015: 345–349; Zagórski – Markowski 2020). However, it should be highlighted that western parts of Poland (formerly parts of Prussia/Germany and territories gained from Germany after WWII) are characterised by higher urbanisation, and when controlling for the post-partition divide, the urban-rural cleavage is still a very important factor in predicting election results in Poland (Marcinkiewicz 2017).

These tendencies also have a significant impact on the planning of electoral campaigns. Referring to the general findings of the science of marketing, political marketing research also confirms that 'political markets... have been segmented using geographical, behavioural, psychographic and demographic methods' (Baines et al. 2003). Therefore, identification of voter behavioural patterns is also of practical importance for politicians and analysts.

IV. Study objective and hypotheses

The objective of the study was to verify the existence of a correlation between the poviats' economic situation and location on one hand and voter turnout and results of the presidential elections on the other. The economic condition of the given poviats was defined by the GDP per capita, unemployment rate and average income, as well as the poviats' budgetary revenues, which on one hand depend on the taxes paid by the local residents (and thus indirectly reflect their level of wealth), and on the other determine the poviats' financial resources available for local investments and ensuring the expected quality of public services.

The study was designed to analyse the following hypotheses:

- there is no significant correlation between the level of revenue of the poviats and voter turnout (H1)
- poviats of higher unemployment rate have lower turnout than poviats of lower unemployment (H2) and the Law and Justice candidate Andrzej Duda gained higher support than on average (H4)
- poviats of higher average income have higher turnout than poviats of lower average income (H3) and Civic Platform candidate Rafał Trzaskowski gained above average support there (H5)

- in poviats located in subregions of lower GDP, support for Andrzej Duda was higher than average (H6)
- in subregions including voivodeship capitals support for Rafał Trzaskowski was higher than average (H7)

V. Material and methods

A database was developed based on publicly available data of the National Electoral Commission (Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza) and Statistics Poland (Główny Urząd Statystyczny). Poviats were selected as the analysis units for three reasons. Firstly, there were practical factors related to availability of data about poviats in Statistics Poland's databases. Secondly, the study responded to the identified gaps – most prior research concerned either communal (local) or voivodeship (regional) level, while studies about the supralocal level of poviats were missing in the case of the 2020 election, although it was analysed for parliamentary elections, yielding important results (Lasoń – Torój, 2019). Thirdly, poviats are more easily targeted in electoral campaigns than communes (considering the number of almost 2,500 communes in Poland) and allow more specific appeal than regions, therefore voter market segmentation on this level may have a practical impact.

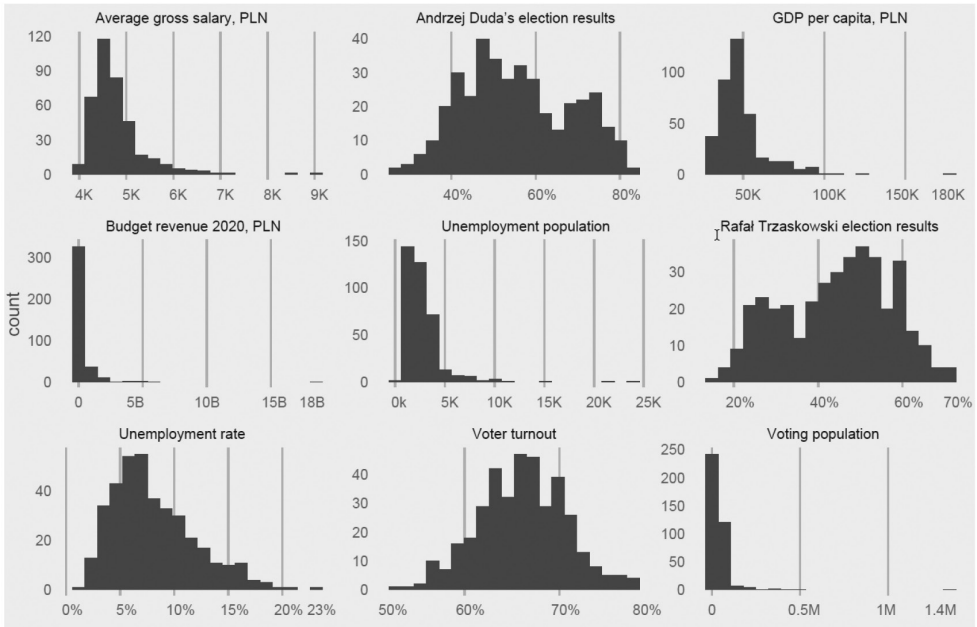
The database included the following parameters to characterise poviats:

- poviats' budget revenue
- unemployment rate in poviats
- average gross remuneration in poviats
- location in the region and subregion
- gross domestic product in poviats/subregions
- voter turnout in the second round of presidential elections in 2020 in poviats
- results achieved by each candidate in the second round of the presidential elections in poviats

The data are summarised in Figure 2.

This allowed for characterisation of particular poviats. It should be stressed that the selected parameters serve to describe the economic and political situation of the local government and territorial units, without allowing for de-aggregation of the data to analyse individual residents and their economic condition or political attitudes. Thus, the study results and conclusions cannot be projected on individual voter behaviour.

Figure 2: Distributions of the variables in Table 2 in the form of histograms (with 20 bins)



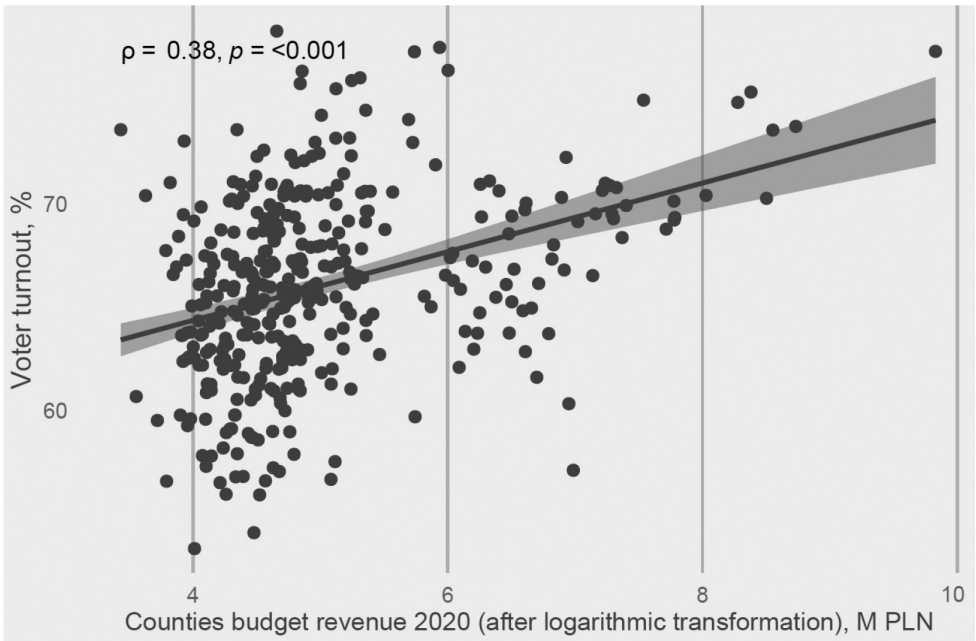
For hypothesis 1, concerning correlation between the poviats revenues and voter turnout, linear analysis was applied. Otherwise, as the hypotheses provided for comparing the characteristics between below- and above-average observations for the individual variables, the respective independent variable was used for grouping observation and then distribution in two groups was compared. The computations were performed with R software. For voter turnout analysis, tWelch test was applied with confidence interval = 95, and in the case of candidate support – one-sided t-test for a sample with normal distribution, confidence interval = 95.

VI. Findings: Voter turnout

H1. There is no significant correlation between the level of revenue of the poviats and voter turnout.

Considering the level of skewness of the budget revenue, this variable was subject to logarithmic transformation before further analysis. The results of the correlation analysis are shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: The scatterplot for Poviats Budget Revenue 2020 (after logarithmic transformation) and Voter turnout with linear fitted line with CI 95% and correlation results



The analyses revealed a highly significant large positive correlation between the studied variables, $\rho = 0.38$, $p < 0.001$. This means that as the *Poviats Budget Revenue 2020* increased, *Voter turnout* increased accordingly. Thus, the hypothesis of no correlation was falsified.

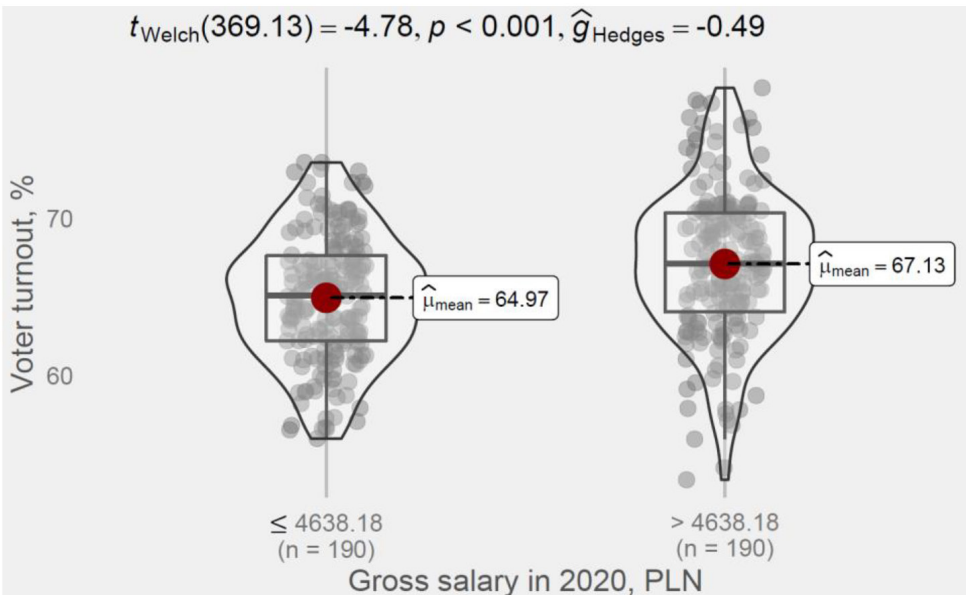
H2. Poviats of higher unemployment rate have lower turnout than poviats of lower unemployment.

For verification of this hypothesis, the unemployment rate variable was treated as a grouping variable, and therefore transformed into a dichotomous variable with a cut-off point at the median. Thus, the tests concerned two groups of poviats, those with unemployment rate $\leq 7.3\%$ and $> 7.3\%$. The data for those two groups were analysed with the t_{Welch} test ($(377.64) = 7.47$, $p < 0.001$, $\hat{g}_{\text{Hedges}} = 0.76$, $CI\ 95\%[0.56, 0.97]$, $n = 380$), which yielded the following results: in poviats with an average unemployment rate or less showed the voter turnout was significantly higher ($M = 67.55\%$, $SD = 4.21\%$) than in poviats with an above-average unemployment rate ($M = 64.41\%$, $SD = 4.26\%$). Therefore, hypothesis H2 was confirmed. For a graphical representation, see Figure 4.

Figure 4: Distribution of the voter turnout by groups of unemployment rate (with test results)



Figure 5: Distribution of the voter turnout by groups of average gross salary (with test results)



H3. Poviats of higher average income have higher turnout than poviats of lower average income.

In a similar way, the gross average income was treated as a grouping variable. For this purpose, it was transformed into a dichotomous variable with a cut-off point at the median (groups of “ ≤ 4638.18 PLN” and “ > 4638.18 PLN”).

Once again, t_{Welch} test was computed ($(369.13) = -4.78, p < 0.001, \hat{g}_{Hedges} = -0.49, CI\ 95\% [-0.69, -0.29], n = 380$) showing significantly lower voter turnout in poviats with an average gross salary or less ($M = 64.97\%, SD = 4.05\%$) were significantly lower than in poviats with above average gross salary ($M = 67.13\%, SD = 4.26\%$). Therefore, the hypothesis is confirmed, as it refers to the existence of a difference in voter turnout in correlation with the average gross salary. However, the strength of this relation does not ground further conclusions with reference to this connection, as the effect of average gross salary on average turnout was found to be ‘small’.

VII. Findings. Election results

For election results, two hypotheses concerned higher support for Andrzej Duda in poviats of lower macroeconomic parameters, and then one – on the opposite – referred to higher support for Rafał Trzaskowski in poviats of higher macroeconomic parameters.

H4. The Law and Justice candidate Andrzej Duda gained higher support than on average in poviats of higher unemployment rate.

In this case, too, the tests were based on application of grouping variables, where: μ – the presidential election 2020 results (51.03%), m – the election results for Andrzej Duda in poviats with an unemployment rate above the median ($> 7.3\%$).

A one-sided t -test for a sample with normal distribution, 95% CI [56.38, Inf], $t(187) = 7.61, p < 0.001, d = 0.56, 95\% CI [0.43, Inf]$ was applied to compare Andrzej Duda’s election results in poviats with unemployment rates ($m = 57.86\%, n = 188$) that are above his average election results ($\mu = 51.03\%$). As the former were significantly higher, the hypothesis was confirmed.

H5. Civic Platform candidate Rafał Trzaskowski gained above average support in poviats of higher average income.

The analysis was based on two grouping variables where: μ – the Rafał Trzaskowski’s election 2020 results (48.97%), m – the election results for Rafał Trzaskowski in poviats with above median gross salaries ($> 4,638.18$ PLN).

The results of a one-sided *t*-test for a sample with normal distribution, 95% CI [47.89, Inf], $t(187) = 0.35$, $p = 0.365$, $d = 0.03$, 95% CI [-0.09, Inf], showed that Rafał Trzaskowski's election results in poviats with above median gross salaries ($m = 49.26\%$, $n = 190$) were not significantly higher than his overall election results ($\mu = 48.97\%$). Along with its insignificance, the effect size was estimated to be 'very small'. Thus, the hypothesis was not confirmed.

H6. In poviats located in subregions of lower GDP, support for Andrzej Duda was higher than average.

The same approach was applied in the case of H5 with μ – the presidential election 2020 results (51.03%), m – the election results for Andrzej Duda in poviats with below-average GDP per capita (45 346 PLN).

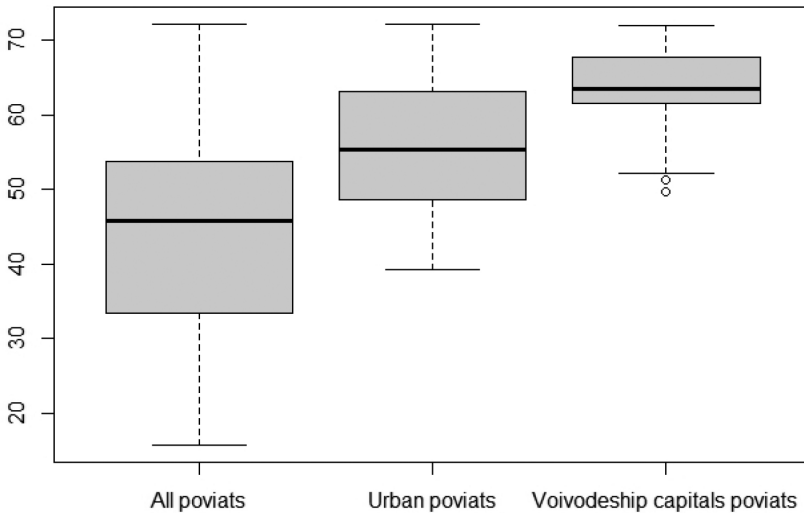
The results of a one-sided *t*-test for a sample with normal distribution, 95% CI [58.54, Inf], $t(187) = 7.61$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 0.72$, 95% CI [0.59, Inf], showed that Andrzej Duda's election results in poviats with below-average GDP per capita ($m = 60.04\%$, $n = 188$) were significantly higher than the average election results ($\mu = 51.03\%$). The effect size was estimated to be 'moderate'. The hypothesis was confirmed.

H7. In subregions including voivodeship capitals support for Rafał Trzaskowski was higher than average.

The final hypothesis referred to the type of poviat, analysing the level of support for contestants in the second round of the presidential election by comparing the main cities (regional capitals) with other poviats. Poland is divided into sixteen regions (voivodeships), and in two cases, the role of the regional capital is shared by two cities, thus in all there are eighteen regional capitals in Poland. All of them are classified as urban poviats, which means a poviat containing exactly one city with no neighbouring areas.

A comparison of Trzaskowski's results in those eighteen urban poviats to his results in all poviats shows the clear difference of the voter behavioural pattern. In all regional capitals Trzaskowski's result in the second round was higher than his total result, and in 17 of them he obtained more than 50% (in the final one, Rzeszów, his result was 49.68%). Fourteen of them were among the top 30 poviats with the highest support for Trzaskowski. The figure also shows the level of support in urban poviats, which comprise sixty-six bigger cities in Poland. In this case, the support for Trzaskowski is higher than on average in all poviats, but lower than in voivodeship capitals.

Figure 6: Support for Rafał Trzaskowski in poviats with voivodeship capitals and all urban poviats as compared to all poviats



VIII. Discussion. Voter turnout

The analysis provided consistent results showing that the economic status of the subregion can be used as a predictor of voter participation. This also corresponds to prior results, concerning the overall effect of economic condition on the decision to vote (Schmitt et al. 2021), as well as the impact of improved income levels on voter turnout (Markovich – White 2022) and negative impact of economic inequality on participation (Ehs – Zandonella 2021). Both better macroeconomic condition, measured by lower unemployment rate, and better financial condition of the subregional government, measured by its revenues, correlated with higher voter turnout. The same was found in the case of the indicator concerning the average income of the poviats’ inhabitants – subregions where residents earn more on average recorded a higher overall voter turnout. This latter result, concerning the poviats level may be associated with corresponding findings concerning the level of individual voters, showing that economic challenges may discourage voters from participation (Wilford 2020). This association may be an important field of future research.

In view of the significance of citizens’ involvement for legitimacy of democratic political systems, these results may also serve as support in pro-participation campaigns. Such initiatives are undertaken in Poland (Adamik-Szysiak 2014), as well as in other states (Ellis et al. 2006). The results confirm the need to address such campaigns especially to inhabitants of worse-off regions and subregions. Their geographic profiling and adaptation to the specific situation

of particular regions may have a positive impact on their effectiveness, considering the significant differences between regions of below- and above-average development parameters.

IX. Discussion. Election results

In the case of the results of the second round of the presidential election in 2020, the hypotheses concerning higher unemployment rate and lower GDP were confirmed. Both those parameters were found to correlate with higher support for the representative of Law and Justice, Andrzej Duda. This finding confirms that this party with its agenda and prior achievements, is more attractive in worse-off regions, while in those territorial units which achieve better macro-economic results, the more centrist and liberal Civic Platform is more popular, which reflects the division associated with partitions: eastern and south-eastern regions dominated by PiS and PO stronger in the western and north-western parts of Poland (Wilczyński 2019). On the other hand, the higher average income of residents did not translate into higher results of Rafał Trzaskowski. Even though it has been confirmed that he achieved better outcomes among higher-earning voters (Roguska 2020), this does not translate onto the poviats level, proving that the Civic Platform should address their agenda to chosen groups and remain more careful in geographic profiling.

The findings confirm the impact of macroeconomic parameters on voters' party preferences; however, importantly, they don't match the incumbency pattern. Residents of better-off regions tend to support the centrist and liberal Civic Platform, which is currently in opposition, and thus the ruling Law and Justice is not rewarded by them for the economic success.

The hypothesis concerning the urban-rural cleavage was confirmed, too. The voivodeship capitals displayed significantly higher levels of support for the representative of the centrist-liberal opposition than in all poviats. This conforms to prior published findings, evidencing the Civic Platform's strong stance in big urban centres (Biskup 2020: 298). Thus, the Civic Platform has so far built and enhanced a lasting relationship with voters in these specific constituencies; however, it needs to develop a further strategy of attracting residents of other types of poviats. It is worth noting that this potential may involve other urban poviats, i.e. medium towns, where support for Trzaskowski was lower than in the voivodeship capital, but higher than in poviats comprising small towns and countryside.

X. Conclusion

The presented study confirmed that macroeconomic parameters affect voting behaviours and that voting decisions display characteristic patterns on the poviats level. This level of analysis is important in terms of development of po-

litical agendas and electoral campaigns, as well as building lasting party-voter relations. The Law and Justice party effectively attracts voters in poviats of below-average development, while its effectiveness in vote gaining is lesser in regions where residents have more reasons to be satisfied and hopeful about the local economy. The centrist opposition, on the other hand, fares much worse in worse-off subregions, and thus it should face its image of representatives of the financial elite.

The findings are also important in terms of promoting participation and voter turnout. Residents of regions of below-average development are at risk of social exclusion (Faura-Martínez et al. 2020) and lower sense of agency. It is especially important to construct pro-participation measures and campaigns so as to encourage them to take part in key elections.

Finally, the study opens perspectives for further analyses, especially concerning comparison between different levels of analysis and the intercorrelation between the economy of the region of residence and the individual voters' situation. Another important area should concern temporal series, comparing situation in repeated presidential elections. This would allow for verification whether this type of cleavage is lasting in Poland or is still volatile with voters more willing to change their party affiliations election by election. A comparison between different types of elections (especially parliamentary, presidential and European Parliament elections) and juxtaposing the current findings with similar analyses concerning the first round of presidential votes would also provide insight valuable both in terms of understanding the mechanics of voter behaviour in Poland and in terms of exploring the framework of building voter-party relations.

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