Making Sense of Citizens' Sense of Being Represented. A Novel Conceptualisation and Measure of Feeling Represented

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ABSTRACT

Although many studies point to the decaying relationship between citizens and their representatives, a proper conceptualisation and empirical measure of citizens' feeling of being represented is still missing from the literature. This study, first, offers a multidimensional conceptualisation of feeling represented, focused on feelings of being substantively represented. Specifically, a distinction is made between the representative behaviour that people might perceive (whether representatives listen, know, act or succeed) and between the representative actors performing this behaviour or not (some or most representatives). Second, a measure that takes into account these different aspects of feeling represented is developed and tested on two samples of Belgian citizens. Confirmatory factor analysis and correlations with citizens' vote intention and other indicators of political discontent demonstrate the validity of the novel measure. Also, the results point to the added value of the measure: not only may the different aspects of feeling represented be measured independently, they also lead to more nuanced insights into the current 'crisis of representation' than the currently available measures do.

Introduction

Representative democracy seems to be in distress. In many countries, electoral turnout is declining, populist parties are on the rise and popular distrust in politicians reaches all-time highs (Hosking, 2019; Kriesi & Schulte-Cloos, 2020). Although citizens generally still show quite high support for representative democracy as a form of government, they report to be a lot less satisfied with the performance of its representative actors (Inglehart & Norris, 2016). It seems that many people have the perception that they are not properly being represented by the politicians and parties they elect. These perceptions of being unheard and neglected by those who are supposed to be representing can form an important part and driver of more general negative attitudes towards politics and may, in the long run, erode support for democratic representation all together (Miller & Listhaug, 1990). Although the question of whether or not citizens perceive to be well-represented by their representatives is at the heart of representative democracy,

and representative democracy arguably no longer is a representative democracy if many of its citizens do not feel represented (Miller & Listhaug, 1990; Thomassen & Van Ham, 2017), we know surprisingly little about such feelings. So far, feeling represented has not been properly *conceptualised* nor *measured* in a systematic and thorough way.

First, little has been written on what it means to feel represented. Predominantly, representation scholars have been concerned with the meaning of political representation itself, contemplating on what political representation is (e.g., Pitkin, 1967), what possible forms it may take (e.g., Mansbridge, 2003), or how representatives should behave (e.g., as a delegate or trustee, Burke, 1854; Dovi, 2012). Although some authors have taken more subjective approaches to representation (e.g., Rehfeld, 2006; Saward, 2010; Wahlke, 1967), rarely have they defined or explained what 'feeling represented' then entails exactly. Yet, 'feeling represented' can be understood in various ways depending on the notion of representation one is thinking about; is it, for example, about descriptive representation? Or instead about substantive representation? And if so, what kind of substantive representation? This article, first, makes a *conceptual contribution* to the literature and offers a multidimensional conceptualisation of feeling represented, focused on feelings of being substantively represented.

Second – probably resulting from the absence of a proper conceptualisation – feeling represented has not been measured in a systematic and thorough fashion. Specifically, this study discerns two main problems with how feeling represented has been measured in the literature so far: (1) studies have tried to measure feeling represented with a unidimensional question, neglecting the complex and multidimensional nature of feeling represented (e.g., Blais, Singh, & Dumitrescu, 2014; Giger, Kissau, Lutz, & Rosset, 2009; Holmberg, 2020); or (2) they have measured only one or two aspects of feeling represented as part of concepts only partially and indirectly concerned with representation, such as 'external efficacy' or 'populist attitudes' (e.g., Akkerman, Mudde, & Zaslove, 2014; Craig, Niemi, & Silver, 1990; Miller & Listhaug, 1990). As a consequence, the available measures fall short in explaining what exactly is perceived by (some) citizens to be the problem in today's representational relationship. This article makes a *methodological contribution* to the literature by developing and testing an empirical measure that shifts focus to specifically these feelings, and thereby aids to better understand the contemporary 'crisis of representation'.

The article is build up as follows. First, building on Pitkin's (1967) definition of substantive representation, and on Norris' (1999) and Golder and Stramski's (2010) differentiation between political objects, I conceptualise feeling represented as the perception of being *substantively* represented, varying on two dimensions: the *representative behaviour* and the *representative actor*. The first dimension consists of the sort of substantive representation at stake: do citizens have the feeling that representatives are *listening* to them, *know* their interests, *act* in accordance to their interests, and *succeed* in translating their interests into policy? The second dimension has to do with who is perceived as enacting (or not enacting) this behaviour. I propose a distinction between feeling represented by *some* representatives and feeling represented by *most* representatives. Second, I explain why existing measures are not able to capture citizens' feeling of being represented, and develop a 16-item measure, taking into account the two theoretical dimensions. By testing this measure on two samples of Belgian citizens and doing Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and correlations with other variables, the validity

of the multidimensional measure is demonstrated. Lastly, I make a recommendation of how a shorter 6-item version of the scale may be used.

Conceptualising 'Feeling Represented'

The meaning of representation in representative democracy is contested and complex (Dovi, 2012) and consequently, so is the meaning of *feeling represented.* In probably the most influential contemporary text on political representation, Hanna Pitkin (1967) evaluates the various possible meanings of 'representation', and ultimately argues that the best way to think about representation is as a 'substantive acting for others', and that it is not just a matter of formal authorisation or accountability through elections, nor merely about 'standing for' the represented symbolically or descriptively. Representation is, above all, about 'acting in the interests of the represented, in a matter responsive to them' (p. 209). This way of looking at representation has inspired a large literature that has aimed to empirically assess the quality of representation – looking at whether or not people *are* represented – by examining whether representatives are acting in people's interests (e.g., Minta, 2009; Vega & Firestone, 1995) or are responsive to their preferences (e.g., Peress, 2013; Stimson, MacKuen, & Erikson, 1995).

Some prominent scholars have moved away from these 'objective' notions of representation though, shifting to a more subjective approach to evaluate (the quality of) representation. Saward (2006, 2010), for one, argues that in Pitkin's view of representation, the represented are taken as having clear and stable interests that can be represented, which neglects the crucial process of constructing the represented and their needs. In the real world, voters' interests are never just a given, something transparent that can be 'read off'. Rather, political actors 'read in' these interest. They make claims about people – e.g. as 'hard working', 'angry', 'worried' – and actively and creatively construct an image of 'the represented' and their interests. Consequently, as there is never just one acceptable interpretation of citizens' interests, the ultimate judge of whether representation is legitimate or not, are the citizens themselves – whether they *feel represented*. Similarly, Wahlke (1967) has argued that it is equally problematic to assume clear preferences to which representatives can be responsive as, a lot of the time, many citizens do not have clearly defined policy wishes or demands. He therefore also concludes that a more realistic standard for evaluating the representational relationship, is to conceive of it subjectively. Further recent subjective approaches to representation can be found in the work of Rehfeld (2006), who argues that political representation depends, in essence, on whether a relevant audience accepts it as such, or Disch (2015) who calls to understand representation from 'the citizen standpoint'.

Although these authors give a prominent role to citizens' feeling of being represented in their theory of representation, they ultimately do not define what such a feeling entails exactly. However, 'feeling represented' can be understood in various ways depending on the notion of representation one is thinking about. For instance, feeling represented may be understood in a purely descriptive manner. People may identify a politician as sharing their background and socio-demographic characteristics – e.g. a similar migration background – and feel represented in the sense that they recognize 'someone like them' as present in the political arena (Pitkin, 1967). Descriptive likeness (or the perception

thereof) could also illicit more symbolic aspects of feeling represented, such as feelings of pride, inclusion or belonging (Lombardo & Meier, 2018). Such feelings of being descriptively or symbolically represented have been shown to be of particular importance for woman and other marginalised groups (Lavi et al., 2021).

Alternatively, as the current article does, feeling represented may be understood in line with the notion of representation that Pitkin prioritises: as feeling substantively represented. This concerns perceptions about whether politicians and parties 'represent' your policy views and interests, for example, hold similar views, take stances or make decisions in line with your preferences and interests (Giger et al., 2009; Holmberg, 2020). But even then it is up for interpretation what 'representing one's views' means: is it about finding out about and knowing one's views? Or about actually acting in line with one's views? Or even about successfully acting? Although some empirical studies have recently focused specifically on such feelings of being 'substantively' represented – asking people whether a party 'represents their views' (e.g., Blais et al., 2014; Giger et al., 2009; Holmberg, 2020) – this has so far not led to a clear conceptualisation of these feelings.

A first contribution this article makes is conceptualising feeling represented as feeling *substantively* represented, varying on two dimensions: the *representative behaviour* and the *representative actor*. The first dimension refers to the kind of substantive representation that people perceive. Specifically, starting from Pitkin's (1967) definition of substantive representation as 'acting in the interests of the represented, in a manner responsive to them' (p. 209), we can deduce that feeling represented essentially concerns citizens' beliefs about whether representatives (1) take into account their preferences and interests, and (2) are acting on their behalf. As I will explain, these two aspects can be further split up, resulting in four elements: **listening** and **knowing** versus **acting** and **succeeding**.

First, the most obvious way in which people can sense that their preferences and interests are taken into account is when they believe that representatives are **listening.** Listening to your constituents and informing yourself of constituents' preferences is generally regarded as one of the most important aspects of a representative's job, both by representation scholars (Esaiasson, Kölln, & Turper, 2015) and by citizens (Lapinski, Levendusky, Winneg, & Jamieson, 2016). Alternatively, however, citizens may also feel that their preferences and interests are taken into account when they believe that a representative simply **knows** what they want and need. As Wahlke (1967) notes, many people do not voice clear policy demands. Rather than wanting a politician to listen, they want someone who simply knows what they need, for instance, because the representative is perceived intelligent and competent, or because he or she is perceived to be like them (perceiving that a politician knows your interests because of descriptive representation). This might be a lot more relevant for citizens in general, including the less politically interested, knowledgeable and attentive.

Third – besides perceiving that representatives listen or know – we can expect that citizens feel even better represented when they believe that representatives are also acting on their behalf. This concerns the belief that representatives are actually doing something to pursue what you find important. And, even though **acting** for the represented – e.g. defending one's (perceived) interests and preferences in parliament or submitting a bill to do so – does not necessarily lead to changing policy, 'knowledge

that efforts have been made … , in itself, helps to reduce frustrations and discontent' (Easton, 1965, p. 433). Nevertheless, we can expect that a politician or party who is also perceived to **succeed** in weighing in on the actual policy taps into even another (fourth) aspect of feeling represented: the feeling that your interests are successfully looked after. This is something which might differentiate people who support a party in government (governmental winners) from people who support a party that does not (governmental losers) (Singh, Karakoç, & Blais, 2012), the latter probably being less-satisfied about the extent to which 'their' party succeeds in weighing on policy.

Notice that there is a certain hierarchy between these elements. First, one cannot *act* for the represented without *listening* to the represented or *knowing* what their preferences are. Similarly, one cannot *succeed* in translating one's interests into policy without first *acting* for them. There is no hierarchical difference between listening and knowing, though. Instead, they should be seen as alternative and distinct ways of perceiving to have a political input; listening requires an actual activity on part of both the representative and the represented, while knowing is more passive, and the one will be more relevant for some citizens (e.g., politically interested vs. uninterested) than the other.

Besides distinguishing between what kind of *representative behaviour* is perceived by citizens, we should also take into account which *representative actors* are perceived as enacting (or not enacting) this behaviour. Making distinctions between the political objects at which political attitudes can be directed has long been suggested by theoretical scholars such as Almond and Verba (1963), Gamson (1968) and Easton (1965). Most notably, Easton (1965) distinguishes between three hierarchical objects of political support, namely the political community, the regime and the authorities. The reasoning behind such distinctions is that it is consistent for citizens to believe in democratic values, but at the same time to be critical of how democratic governments work in practice, or to have great trust in political institutions, but not in politicians. Norris (1999) built on the work of Easton and notes that citizens may make even further distinctions, for instance, 'to disparage *most politicians* but to continue to support *a particular leader*' [emphasis added] (pp. 7–8), and writes that if citizens can and do 'distinguish between different objects of support, our analysis needs to be aware of these distinctions' (pp. 7–8).

More recently, Golder and Stramski (2010) have made a similar point catered to political representation. Specifically, they argue that the amount of ideological congruence one finds between represented and representative depends on whether one is thinking about one or many representatives. This distinction between a dyadic (between a represented and a representative) and a more collective form of representation (between a represented and representatives as a class) is mostly blurred in both theoretical and empirical literature on feeling represented (Lavi et al., 2021). Yet, as some citizens might still feel represented by some representatives while believing that most representatives fail at their representative duties, it is – as Norris (1999) argued – important that our analysis is sensitive to this distinction.

Furthermore, the normative and functional implications for representative democracy also differ depending on whether or not people feel represented by respectively some or most representatives. Specifically, feeling represented by most representatives reflects ideas about the performance of 'politicians' and 'parties' more generally. It reveals something about how citizens judge the functionality and legitimacy of their representative democracy (Holmberg, 2020). Such feelings will probably be strongly related to (and

perhaps even a driver of) other general orientations towards politics such as political trust and satisfaction with democracy, which have been shown to be of significant importance for the working of democracy (Hooghe & Marien, 2013). It is, then, a positive when citizens perceive that most representatives look after their interests, and it could certainly be regarded as a negative when many citizens do not. However, not feeling represented by most representatives is not necessarily detrimental for representative democracy if one still feels represented by at least some of them, whom one can vote for and who might win in future elections. In contrast, if citizens do not even feel represented by some representatives, it is a much bigger problem. This can make people turn away from politics and exit political life completely (e.g., no longer vote, see Blais et al., 2014). Also, normatively, this situation is highly problematic; if many citizens in a representative democracy do not feel represented by any politicians or parties, one might argue that it is hardly still a representative democracy (Miller & Listhaug, 1990; Thomassen & Van Ham, 2017).

Therefore, in order to properly understand citizens' feeling of being represented and its implications (both normatively and functionally) for representative democracy, a conceptualisation of feeling represented requires disentangling citizens' feeling of being represented by most from their feeling of being represented by some.

Summarised, feeling represented should be conceptualised along two dimensions – the *representative behaviour* (listen vs. know vs. act vs. succeed) and the *representative actor* (some vs. most), which taken together result in eight 'cells' of feeling represented (see Table 1): the feeling that some representatives (1) listen, (2) know, (3) act and (4) succeed and the feeling that most representatives (5) listen, (6) know, (7) act, and (8) succeed. Combining the two dimensions (and its sub-elements) thereby leads to many different ways in which we can think about and examine citizens' feeling of being represented. For example, people may feel represented in the sense that some politicians are perceived to know what they want, and act for them, but at the same time feel very much unrepresented in the sense that these politicians are perceived unsuccessful in weighing on the actual policy. As said, we could expect this to be the case for so called 'governmental-losers' (Singh et al., 2012). Or some people might have the feeling that some politicians or parties do represent them very well, but at the same time believe that most representatives neglect their representative duties. This might be particular to perfervid partisans or some voters of populist parties. The combination of the two dimensions thereby offers a tool that allows to make more sophisticated analytical theoretical distinctions in the extent to which citizens feel represented, going beyond dichotomously classifying citizens as either feeling represented or not. In what follows, I first explain why current empirical measures do not allow to make these analytical distinctions and then offer a new measuring instrument that does.

Table 1. Dimensions and cells of feeling represented.

		Representative behaviour			
		Listen	Know	Act	Succeed
Representative actor	Some	Some listen	Some know	Some act	Some succeed
	Most	Most listen	Most know	Most act	Most succeed

Why Current Indicators Do Not Measure 'Feeling Represented'

How have these feelings of being substantively represented been measured so far? I discern two main problems: (1) studies have either tried to measure feeling represented with a general, unidimensional question, or (2) they have unsystematically measured only one or two aspects of feeling represented as part of broader or distinct concepts.

Concerning the first problem, there have been a handful of studies that have actually focused on measuring citizens' feeling of being represented. From 2001 to 2011, the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) asked people whether they feel any of the parties or party leaders 'represent their views reasonably well'. The question on the party level was also included in their latest module (2016–2021) and has been adopted by several other studies (e.g., Blais et al., 2014; Giger et al., 2009; Holmberg, 2020), including the influential American National Election Studies (ANES). The problem with these general unidimensional measures, however, is that they do not respond to the complexity and multidimensionality of the root-concept 'representation'. Specifically, the above measures do not explicate what 'representing' in 'representing your views' refers to. For instance, some people might interpret representing one's views as acting, or even successfully acting, in line with what one wants, while others might feel that a representative who simply holds similar opinions, too, 'represents their views'. By leaving up for the respondent to interpret the meaning of representation, we do not know what we are measuring exactly. Also, it does not allow researchers to make very precise predictions. For example, with this question, we are unable to distinguish people who feel completely unrepresented from people who might only be dissatisfied about the extent to which their representatives succeed in weighing on policy. Yet, this difference can be quite consequential for people's political behaviour.

Second, there have been many studies that have used more specific survey items that tap into one aspect or another of citizens' feeling of being represented. Yet, these items are scattered across studies and literatures, unsystematically measuring just one or two aspects of feeling represented as part of a broader or distinct concept, such as 'external efficacy', or 'populism attitudes' (e.g., Akkerman et al., 2014; Craig et al., 1990; Miller & Listhaug, 1990; Schulz et al., 2018). As a result, these concepts are also only able to reveal part of the puzzle.

The concept external efficacy, for example, deals with an individual's beliefs about the responsiveness of government authorities and institutions to citizen preferences (Chamberlain, 2012). Since 1988, the influential ANES have measured external efficacy with the items 'People like me don't have any say about what the government does' (NOSAY) and 'I don't think public officials care much what people like me think' (NOCARE). Although these items deal with aspects of feeling represented – 'responsiveness' is firmly anchored in representational theory (Eulau & Karps, 1977; Pitkin, 1967) – they deal with only a part of it. One could, for example, feel very well represented by representatives when believing that they succeed in dealing with societies most important problems, without necessarily perceiving to 'have a say'. Also, these items are quite ambiguous about the political object they concern – whether they tap attitudes towards some specific representatives (current incumbents) or government representatives more generally (Craig et al., 1990) – and are thereby unable to distinguish between citizens' perceptions about some and most

representatives. Yet, as I argued in the previous section, this distinction is key for examining citizens' feeling of being represented.

Similarly, a new stream of literature that deals with measuring so-called populist attitudes also deals with perceptions about representation. In these studies, populism is mostly defined in Mudde's (2004) terms as a thin-centred ideology according to which society can be divided into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups: 'the pure people' on the one hand, 'the corrupt elite' on the other. Central to these attitudes is the idea that the general will of the people is the highest principle, while the elites are conceived as neglecting this will (Castanho Silva, Jungkunz, Helbling, & & Littvay, 2020). In other words, populist attitudes per definition reflect ideas about representation and particularly, about the separation between representatives (the elite) and the people, with the first misrepresenting the latter. Consequently, studies on populist attitudes use statements such as 'Elected officials talk too much and take too little action' (Akkerman et al., 2014) or 'MPs in Parliament very quickly lose touch with ordinary people' (Schulz et al., 2018). These items tap into broader anti-establishment sentiment, only giving a general indication of whether one is or is not content with his or her representatives. Also, as populism conceives of the elites as a homogeneous entity, it makes sense to measure populist attitudes with items that all refer to diffuse political objects (e.g., 'Elected officials' or 'MP's'). Yet, we could imagine that voters who hold populist attitudes – and believe that 'politicians' are corrupt – might still feel very well-represented by a certain (perhaps populist) politician or party. From a representation standpoint, this is crucial to examine.

So, although citizens' feeling of being represented has been measured throughout time by one item or another, this has either been with an overly general, unidimensional question, or in fractured and unstructured form, as part of concepts only indirectly concerned with representation. These measures can only reveal so much about the extent to which citizens feel represented. In what follows, I offer an instrument that takes into account the two dimensions of feeling represented and test its validity.

Methods

A Measure of Feeling Represented

To measure the extent to which citizens feel represented along the two theoretical dimensions (the representative behaviour and the representative actor), I developed 16 survey items, to be measured on a five-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. To reduce fatigue of respondents and at the same time to emphasize the distinction between the different kinds of representative behaviour (listen vs. know vs. act vs. succeed), items were presented in four separate blocks of four items, each time concerned with one kind of representative behaviour. Per block, two items tapped into perceptions of representation by *some* representatives and two items concerned perceptions of representation by *most* representatives. The order of these items was randomised to avoid effects of question order. In addition, both positively and negatively phrased items were used to avoid acquiescence bias – the tendency of survey respondents to agree with questions presented to them (Castanho Silva et al., 2020). The 16 items are presented in Table 2 (see Table A1 in Appendix 1 for original question wording in Dutch and French).

Table 2. Sixteen-item measure of feeling represented.

Variables	Items
Listen_1 – Listen_4	**Now we would like to ask you some questions about the extent to which you feel represented by politicians and political parties. First, we would like to present a number of statements about the extent to which politicians and parties <u>listen</u> to you. Can you indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements?** 1. There is not a single politician or party who listens to people like me. 2. There are politicians and parties who take note of what people like me have to say. 3. Most politicians and parties ignore the opinions of people like me. 4. Most politicians and parties usually pay attention to the opinions of people like me.
Know_1 – Know_4	**Now, we present a number of statements about the extent to which politicians and political parties <u>know</u> your interests and preferences. Can you indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements?** 1. There is not a single politician or party who knows what goes on among people like me. 2. There are politicians and parties who are informed about what people like me want.* 3. Most politicians and parties do not have a clue about what is important for people like me.* 4. Most politicians and parties do know the interests and preferences of people like me.
Act_1 – Act_4	**Now, we present a number of statements about the extent to which politicians and political parties <u>act</u> in your interests and according to your preferences. Can you indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements?** 1. There is not a single politician or party who really takes action to defend to interests and preferences of people like me. 2. There are politicians and parties who do act in the interest and according to the preferences of people like me.* 3. Most politicians and parties neglect the interests and preferences of people like me when they take action. 4. Most politicians and parties do try to act in line with what is important for people like me.*
Succ_1 – Succ_4	**Lastly, we present a number of statements about the extent to which politicians and political parties also <u>succeed</u> in translating your interests and preferences into policy. Can you indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements?** 1. There is not a single politician or party who succeeds in realising the things that are important for people like me.* 2. There are politicians and parties who do manage to make policy reflect the preferences of people like me. 3. Most politicians fail to translate the preferences of people like me into policy. 4. Most politicians and parties generally succeed in making policy that addresses the issues that are important to people like me.*

Note: Items with an * are the items retained in the shortened six-item scale.

All feeling represented-items refer to both politicians and parties as political objects by which one could feel represented. The reasoning behind this is that in many countries (including the case under study, Belgium) it is not the politicians that are the primary representative actors, but the political parties (Werner, 2019). Furthermore, as both acting in line with citizens' *preferences* as well as acting in line with their *interests* are important aspects of political representation (Mansbridge, 2003; Pitkin, 1967), and we can expect that, in most cases, what citizens want will be consistent with what they perceive to be in their interests, items refer to both these aspects. Lastly, like the ANES efficacy items, all 16 items use the phrasing 'people like me' as the subject of representation, instead of its alternative 'me' or 'I'. This was done because, for some items, the alternative formulation would present the representative-represented relationship in

an unrealistically personal manner, e.g., asking whether representative are informed about what *I* want. The 'people like me' phrasing circumvents this problem.

Data and Procedure

In order to confirm the hypothesised multidimensionality of feeling represented, the 16-item measure was included in two surveys, conducted over the course of four months. Replication with multiple samples was done to demonstrate stability and robustness of the results (Schreiber, Nora, Stage, Barlow, & King, 2006). The first survey was conducted online in August 2021 among a sample of Flemish respondents that regularly participate in survey research of the University of Antwerp ($N = 3118$). This sample is not representative for the Flemish population (overrepresentation of men, the elderly, higher educated and politically interested), but is derived from a diverse and large pool of participants (over 40,000 participants). We could consider this sample to be a 'most-likely-case' to find evidence for the multidimensionality of feeling represented, as we might expect that politically interested citizens are more sensitive to distinctions between representatives' behaviour. To examine whether such distinctions are also made by citizens more generally, the measure was also included in a second survey which was conducted online in October/November 2021 among a representative sample of both Flemish and Walloon citizens ($N = 1825$). This survey was initiated by a consortium of five universities[1] and is representative for the Belgian population in terms of gender, age and level of education. Descriptive statistics of socio-demographic variables for both samples can be found in Appendix 2 (Tables A2 and A3).

Belgium makes a good case to analyse the dimensionality of feeling represented. First, Belgians (both in Flanders and Wallonia) show levels of political trust comparable to other Western European countries (ESS, Round 9). Second, Belgium has strong populist/radical parties (both a national left-wing and Flemish regional right-wing party) with rising support based on the most recent 2019 election results (Pilet, 2021). This also points to potential roots for low political support and signs of political discontent. Third, Belgium has a highly fragmentated multiparty system. Such a party system is especially suited to examine differences between the extent to which people feel represented by either some or most representatives, as an electoral system with many options increases the likelihood of someone feeling represented by at least some politician or party (Blais et al., 2014), though Holmberg (2020) did not find major differences between electoral systems when it comes to feeling represented by a party.

I evaluate the instrument to measure feeling represented in two ways. First, I evaluate the *internal structure* of the scale by doing confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in Mplus with both samples. Specifically, I test whether the 16 items load onto the two dimensions as they are theorised to – with eight factors, being the feeling that *some* representatives (1) *listen,* (2) *know,* (3) *act,* (4) *succeed,* and the feeling that *most* representatives (5) *listen,* (6) *know,* (7) *act,* (8) *succeed*. Second, I test the *construct validity* of the scale by examining whether the dimensions relate to other variables – other indicators of political discontent and voting intention – as they are theoretically expected to. For demonstrating construct validity, only the results of the representative sample are reported in the main text, while the non-representative sample is used as robustness test.

Results

Internal Structure

To test the hypothesis that there are two dimensions underlying feeling represented, CFA was conducted on both the non-representative and representative sample. As the observed variables are measured with Likert-type scales, weighed least squares estimation was used (Kline, 2015). Besides the hypothesised model with eight factors, a competing one-factor model (all 16 items loading on a single latent factor) was tested. To evaluate the internal structure, I first look at model fit statistics as a first indication of whether the eight-factor model fits the data better than the unidimensional model. Thereafter, I examine factor loadings and correlations between the different theoretical dimensions.

As suggested by Schreiber et al. (2006), three goodness of fit indices were used. The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is considered to indicate good fit of the model when the result is .06 or lower (Hu & Bentler, 1999), though Marsh, Hau, and Wen (2004) suggest that a result of .08 reflects acceptable fit. The comparative fit index (CFI) and the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) reflect acceptable fit when above .90 and good fit when above .95 (Matsunaga, 2010). Table 3 reports the model fit statistics. For the non-representative sample, the eight-factor model has acceptable to good fit on all statistics (RMSEA = .077; CFI = .988; TLI = .981), while the one-factor model does not meet the required cut-off in terms of RMSEA (RMSEA = .107; CFI = .968; TLI = .963). For the representative sample, the eight-factor model shows acceptable fit in terms of CFI and TLI, but not for RMSEA (RMSEA = .106; CFI = .910; TLI = .900), while the one-factor model has bad fit on all statistics (RMSEA = .116; CFI = .852; TLI = .830). Examining the output revealed some error covariance between the items that were positively phrased in the survey. By allowing covariances between the positively phrased items, model fit of the models improved. Specifically, the eight-factor model showed acceptable to good fit on all statistics for both the non-representative (RMSEA = .056; CFI = .995; TLI = .990) and representative sample (RMSEA = .078; CFI = .964; TLI = .922), while the one-factor model of both samples still did not show acceptable fit on at least one statistic. This result provides a first indication that, for both samples, the data fit the hypothesised eight factor model better than a unidimensional model.

Nevertheless, the eight-factor model does not fit the data perfectly. In order to rule out alternative solutions, four additional models were tested. Specifically, I ran a four-factor model with each behaviour (listen vs. know vs. act vs. succeed) on a separate factor; a two-factor model with an input factor (listen and know) and an output factor (act and succeed); a two-factor model distinguishing between a some-factor and most-factor;

Table 3. Model fit indices.

Sample	Model	RMSEA (<.08)	CFI (>.90)	TLI (>.90)
Regional (N = 3118)	One-factor	.107	.968	.963
	+ error covariance	.117	.970	.957
	Eight-factor	.077	.988	.981
	+ error covariance	.056	.995	.990
National (N = 1825)	One-factor	.116	.852	.830
	+ error covariance	.095	.921	.886
	Eight-factor	.106	.910	.900
	+ error covariance	.078	.964	.922

and lastly, a four-factor model distinguishing between 'some-input', 'some-output', 'most-input' and 'most-output'. Testing these alternative solutions provides further evidence that the eight-factor model fits the data best. That is, for both the non-representative and representative sample the alternative solutions all do not meet acceptable cut-off criteria in terms of RMSEA, while some also do not meet the criteria in terms of TLI. The results of these models are provided in Appendix 3.

I further examined the internal structure of the eight-factor model by looking at the standardised parameter estimates (factor loadings) (Tables A5 and A6 in Appendix 4). For both samples, all items load substantially (loadings higher than .66) on their hypothesised latent factors, providing further evidence that the measurement model supports the theory. Also, we are interested in how strongly these factors correlate with each other. Although we can expect (and would want) that different aspects of feeling represented correlate with each other to a certain extent, we do not want the factors to be overly correlated as this would suggest that the distinctions might not be very useful for empirical research. Table 4 gives an overview of the correlations between the latent factors for the non-representative sample (in bold) and the representative sample (in italics). The correlations range from .353 (between 'some know' and 'most succeed') to .757 (between 'most act' and 'most succeed'). Overall, correlations reflect the hypothesised theoretical relations. First, the lowest correlations are between factors that concern a different element of the 'representative actor' – between *some* and *most*. This indicates that citizens indeed make a strong distinction between feeling represented by some and most respectively. Also, I find logical differences between the elements of the 'representative behaviour': the perception that representatives *know* correlates strongest with whether they *listen* and *act*, and less with whether they *succeed*. *Succeeding*, in its turn, correlates strongly with *acting*. Also notable is that listening has strong correlations with acting, reflecting the behavioural component of the first. In other words, although the eight factors of feeling represented correlate with each other, they are at least partly independent and correlate in theoretically sound ways.

Construct Validity

Besides evaluating the internal consistency of a scale, a proper assessment of a scale also needs to take into account whether it displays construct validity – that is, it behaves in a way consistent with theoretical hypotheses. The question here is whether a scale 'works at predicting something that the given concept would most certainly predict' (Castanho Silva et al., 2020, p. 417). I test this by correlating the scale to (1) other indicators of

Table 4. Correlations among latent factors for representative and non-representative sample.

Factor	Some listen	Some know	Some act	Some succ.	Most listen	Most know	Most act	Most succ.
Some listen	1	**0.674**	**0.684**	**0.578**	**0.574**	**0.472**	**0.511**	**0.424**
Some know	*0.601*	1	**0.666**	**0.551**	**0.498**	**0.617**	**0.490**	**0.396**
Some act	*0.653*	*0.619*	1	**0.690**	**0.509**	**0.483**	**0.583**	**0.485**
Some succ.	*0.596*	*0.547*	*0.696*	1	**0.553**	**0.496**	**0.625**	**0.651**
Most listen	*0.571*	*0.399*	*0.512*	*0.552*	1	**0.664**	**0.747**	**0.653**
Most know	*0.465*	*0.612*	*0.485*	*0.515*	*0.551*	1	**0.661**	**0.560**
Most act	*0.496*	*0.410*	*0.581*	*0.602*	*0.694*	*0.554*	1	**0.757**
Most succ.	*0.389*	*0.353*	*0.469*	*0.597*	*0.605*	*0.487*	*0.655*	1

Note: Non-representative sample = bold; representative sample = italics; all loadings are significant at *p* < .01 level.

political discontent, and (2) citizens' voting intention. For clarity of the text, only the results of the representative sample are reported in the main text in this section. However, replication of these analyses with the non-representative sample indicates that the findings are robust (see Appendix 5).

Correlations with Established Measures of Political Discontent

The surveys contained a number of well-established measures of political discontent. First, external efficacy was measured using the NOCARE- and NOSAY-items of the American National Election Study (ANES)(Cronbach's alpha = .739). Political trust was measured as in the European Social Survey (ESS) by asking people on a scale from 0 to 10 how much they trust politicians, political parties, the federal parliament and the federal government (Cronbach's alpha = .955). Populist attitudes were measured using four statements proposed by Akkerman et al. (2014) and one statement from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) (Cronbach's alpha = .721). Lastly, the representative survey also included the question of the CSES about whether one feels a party 'represents their views'. This question was not included in the non-representative survey, though. Full question wording can be found in the Appendix 6.

First, the external efficacy scale has moderate positive correlations – between .29 and .47 – with the four factors measuring whether *some* representatives *listen*, *know*, *act* and *succeed* (Table 5). Correlations are more substantial for two factors: the perception that *most* representatives *listen* and *act*, with correlations above .53. This is in line with what we would expect. Specifically, the NOSAY-efficacy item deals with whether one believes to have an influence on – 'a say about' – representatives' actions, and thus relates to perceptions about whether or not representatives *listen*, but also about whether they will *act* accordingly. In parallel, the NOCARE-item also goes beyond perceptions about listening, as 'caring' about what someone thinks also implies that you find this opinion important or valuable (Esaiasson et al., 2015) and are motivated to act in line with this opinion (McDonald, 2021). Furthermore, as the items deal with rather general (or at least ambiguous) (Craig et al., 1990) political objects ('the government' and 'public officials') it is logical that it correlates more strongly to feeling represent by most than it does to feeling represented by some.

Similarly, we would expect the political trust scale to have stronger correlations with feeling represented by most than it does with feeling represented by some, as the scale concerns diffuse political actors and institutions ('politicians', 'parties', 'parliament' and 'government'). Yet, as Dunn (2015) previously demonstrated, political trust

Table 5. Bivariate correlations of dimensions of feeling represented with other indicators of political discontent (representative sample).

	External efficacy	Political trust	Populism	Feeling rep. CSES
Some listen	.340	.429	−.345	.422
Some know	.299	.350	−.321	.380
Some act	.419	.450	−.409	.424
Some succeed	.463	.500	−.464	.357
Most listen	.534	.553	−.518	.281
Most know	.364	.426	−.414	.257
Most act	.536	.576	−.518	.286
Most succeed	.492	.505	−.473	.200

Note: All correlations are significant at $p < .01$.

should also show positive (albeit weaker) correlations with feeling represented by some. The results in Table 5 reflect these expectations with correlations ranging between .42 and .58 for factors about feeling represented by most, and between .35 and .50 for feeling represented by some.

Third, as the populist attitudes-scale deals with the opposition between 'politicians' (as a class) and 'the people' (Castanho Silva et al., 2020), we would expect it to correlate negatively with feeling represented, and especially with perceptions about most representatives. I find that all eight factors are indeed negatively correlated with populist attitudes, with the factors about most representatives having the strongest correlations.

Lastly, while the previous indicators were all expected to correlate more strongly with feelings about most representatives, the question of the CSES specifically concerns whether or not *some* party is perceived to 'represent your views' and should therefore mainly correlate with the factors about some representatives. Indeed, the results in Table 5 indicate that the CSES-question has stronger correlations with the factors about some than those about most representatives. Moreover, the CSES-question predominantly correlates with listening and acting by some. Whether or not representatives are perceived to know one's interests or succeed in translating one's interests into policy has (slightly) weaker correlations, indicating that these aspects of representation are less top of mind when answering the general, unidimensional question.

Correlations with Voting Intention

Besides the relation to other indicators of political discontent, we can expect citizens' feeling of being represented to differ depending on their vote intention. For one, people who support a party in government (governmental winners) will probably feel better represented than people who support a party that does not (governmental losers) (Singh et al., 2012). Especially, the latter will be less satisfied about the extent to which the representatives they support *succeed* in weighing on the actual policy. Second, in line with Blais et al. (2014), I expect that people who do not feel represented by anyone will be more likely to vote blank or abstain, which in the Belgian context of compulsory voting could be seen as equivalent.

Respondents' voting behaviour was measured by asking respondents for which party they would vote if federal elections were held today. Looking at citizens' current vote intention was preferred over a retrospective question about the party one voted for during the last election, as the first provides the most current reflection of the party one supports. Responses to this question were recoded into three dummy variables. First, respondents who intended to vote for a party that, at the time of the survey, was part of either the federal government coalition or the regional government coalition (Flemish or Walloon government) were coded as government winners[2] ($N = 796$). People who intended to vote for a party not in government were coded as governmental losers ($N = 463$). In practice, due to the composition of the government coalitions, this category predominantly (85,7%) comprised voters of populist left-wing party PvdA-PTB and populist right-wing party Vlaams Belang. The last category contained respondents who indicated that they would vote blank or abstain ($N = 218$). 'Don't know' answers were coded as missing data.

Table 6. Bivariate correlations between dimensions of feeling represented, indicators of political discontent and voting intention (representative sample).

	Government vote	Opposition vote	Blank/no vote
Some listen	.199***	−.004	−.190***
Some know	.171***	.000	−.161***
Some act	.213***	−.043	−.193***
Some succeed	.237***	−.085**	−.168***
Most listen	.235***	−.168***	−.113***
Most know	.182***	−.098**	−.096***
Most act	.240***	−.172***	−.120***
Most succeed	.198***	−.158***	−.088**
External efficacy	.189***	−.156***	−.086***
Political trust	.381***	−.205***	−.218***
Populism	−.193***	.198***	.061**
Feeling rep. CSES	.235***	.129***	−.250***

Note: ***Correlation significant at < .001 level, **correlation significant at .01 level, *correlation significant at .05 level.

Table 6 shows that the different aspects of feeling represented relate to vote intention as we would theoretically expect. First, governmental winners positively correlate with all aspects of feeling represented. Governmental losers, in contrast, are negatively correlated with feeling represented by most representatives. This is in line with the 'winner-loser'-literature that finds that supporting the winning party leads to more positive attitudes towards politics, while supporting the losing party has the converse effect (Singh et al., 2012). Also, in line with my expectations, governmental losers negatively correlate with the extent to which some representatives are perceived to *succeed* in weighing on policy, while they do not correlate significantly with the other aspects of feeling represented by some. In other words, people who support a party that does not make it into government will generally feel less well-represented in terms of the effectiveness or success, but might still feel represented by a party or politician in other ways. Further, I find that voting blank/abstaining is negatively correlated with all aspects of feeling represented, with correlations being strongest for the factors about some representatives. Put differently, the better people feel represented by at least some politicians, the less likely they are to abstain.

When we compare this to how more established survey questions of political discontent relate to people's vote intention (see Table 6), the added value of the multidimensional measure of feeling represented becomes more apparent. Specifically, as political trust, external efficacy and populism all deal with diffuse political objects, they are unable to distinguish the dissatisfaction felt by blank voters from that of voters of opposition parties (governmental losers). Specifically, while both groups are dissatisfied with the way *most* representatives represent them, opposition voters are not significantly dissatisfied with the way *some* representatives listen, know and act. This is not picked up by traditional measures of political discontent. The unidimensional CSES question, in its turn, is unable to distinguish the feeling of being represented felt by governmental winners from that of governmental losers, as both groups have similar positive correlations with the question (after all, both groups may feel represented by at least some representatives). The main differentiating characteristic between governmental and opposition voters – the feeling that your preferred representatives do or do not *succeed* in weighing on policy – is not registered by the CSES question.

A 6-item Scale for Survey Research

Although the results support that feeling represented can and should be measured as a multidimensional construct, I do acknowledge that a 16-item measure is too demanding for regular use in often already full-packed surveys. Therefore, a shorter 6-item version of the scale may be used without losing too much information. Specifically, in the 16-item scale, both a positive- and a negative item was used for each of the eight combinations of the two dimensions. Considering the relatively high factors loadings, only one item per combination would suffice, already reducing the number of items by halve. Also, although the CFA confirms the analytical distinctions between the eight factors, the listening component does correlate quite heavily with both acting and knowing. I propose a battery consisting of the items Know 2 and 3, Act 2 and 4, and Succeed 1 and 4 (items with an asterisk in Table 2). Relating these items to the other indicators of political discontent and voting intention leads to similar results as the 16 item-measure (see Appendix 7, Tables A10 and A11).

Conclusion and Discussion

Although the question of whether or not citizens feel well-represented by their representatives is at the heart of representative democracy, surprisingly few studies have focused on conceptualising feeling represented, and rarely have these feelings been measured in a proper and systematic way. This article contributes to the literature in both respects. First, building on Pitkin's (1967) concept of substantive representation and Norris' (1999) and Golder and Stramski's (2010) differentiation between representatives, a multidimensional conceptualisation of feeling represented is offered. This conceptualisation distinguishes between the representative behaviour that citizens perceive: whether or not citizens have the feeling that politicians are *listening* to them, *know* their interests, *act* in accordance to their interests, and *succeed* in translating their interests into policy. In addition, it distinguishes between who is perceived as enacting (or not enacting) this behaviour, either *some* representatives or *most* representatives. Combining these two dimensions allows various ways to think about and analyse citizens' feeling of being represented, going beyond dichotomously classifying citizens as either feeling represented or not.

The second aim of this paper was to develop a measuring instrument that is able to measure these dimensions of feeling represented empirically. Concretely, I developed a 16-item measure of feeling represented and then tested this measure in two surveys with Belgian citizens. In a first step, the internal consistency of this measure was demonstrated by doing confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and examining factor loadings. Second, correlations of the measure with other indicators of political discontent and citizens' vote intention provided further evidence of construct validity. These analyses indicate that feeling represented can and should be measured as a multidimensional concept, as the two dimensions and its sub-elements are at least partly independent of each other and have differing relations with relevant variables such as vote intention and types of political discontent.

Furthermore, the results suggest that the multidimensional measure of feeling represented also has empirical value over existing indicators of political discontent (such

as external efficacy or populist attitudes) and the feeling represented question developed by the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES). As this article demonstrates, feeling represented is complex, and people who feel represented in one respect might feel unrepresented in another. However, because the existing indicators only partially tap into one or two aspects of feeling represented, they obscure some of the differences that can exist between relevant groups in society and which may explain their political behaviour. For instance, people can feel very badly represented by most politicians, yet still feel well-represented by some of them, which as this article shows is typical for supporters of populist parties and opposition parties (governmental losers). Traditional indicators are unable to distinguish these citizens from citizens who do not feel represented by any representatives. However, the latter's feeling of complete neglect leads them to vote blank or abstain, while the former *are* likely to vote. Similarly, the CSES question does not register what differentiates governmental winners from – losers in terms of feeling represented: while both groups might feel well-represented by some party in terms of listening, knowing or acting, the latter are much more dissatisfied with the extent to which their preferred representatives *succeed* in weighing on policy. This may again have consequences for citizens' political behaviour.

Although a more sophisticated analysis of how citizens may differ in terms of feeling represented an how it may predict different types of political behaviour is beyond the scope of this article, the multidimensional measure that is tested and validated in the article does allow to do such analyses in the future and can thereby help to better understand the current 'crisis of representation'.

The proposed multidimensional measure has some limitations, though. First, a 16-item scale is quite demanding for regular use in survey research. Therefore, an alternative 6-item version of the scale was proposed that taps into the most important distinctions. Second, the proposed measure is rather catered to a Belgian context in which both politicians and political parties are the main representative actors (Werner, 2019). Nevertheless, with small adaptations, the scale may easily be used beyond the Belgian context. Most importantly, depending on the political context (or one's research objectives), the type of representatives in the items can be altered (e.g., only politicians or only parties, party leaders, or even non-elected representatives such as civil society actors).

Notes

1. The RepResent Consortium is a collaboration between five Belgian universities (UA, KUL, UCLouvain, VUB, ULB). For more information, see URL (accessed 1 December, 2021): https://represent-project.be/
2. In the Belgian political system, determining whether a party is or is not in government is not entirely straight-forward, as federal and regional governments may differ in their composition. In this article, the least strict definition is applied: if a party is in either the federal or regional government, it is considered a government party. I redid the analysis applying a stricter definition (only federal government), and this led to similar results as only one party (N-VA) shifted from government to opposition.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Table A1. Original question wording of the 16 feeling represented items in Dutch and French.

Variable	Dutch version	French version
List_1 – List_4	Nu willen we u enkele vragen stellen over de mate waarin u zich vertegenwoordigd voelt door politici en politieke partijen. Eerst leggen we u een aantal stellingen voor over de mate waarin politici en partijen naar u **luisteren**. 1. Er is geen enkele politicus of partij die luistert naar mensen zoals ik. 2. Er zijn politici of partijen die aandacht hebben voor wat mensen zoals ik te zeggen hebben. 3. De meeste politici en partijen negeren de opinies van mensen zoals ik. 4. De meeste politici en partijen letten doorgaans op de meningen van mensen zoals ik.	A présent nous souhaiterions vous poser quelques questions sur la manière dont vous vous sentez représenté par les hommes et femmes politiques et par les partis politiques. D'abord, nous allons vous présenter une série d'affirmations sur la manière dont les hommes et femmes politiques et les partis politiques vous **écoutent**. 1. Il n'y a pas un seul homme ou femme politique ou parti politique qui écoute les gens comme moi. 2. Certains hommes et femmes politiques ou certains partis politiques tiennent compte de ce que les gens comme moi ont à dire. 3. La plupart des hommes et femmes politiques et des partis politiques ignorent les opinions des gens comme moi. 4. La plupart des hommes et femmes politiques et des partis politiques accordent de l'attention aux opinions des gens comme moi.
Know_1 – Know_4	Nu leggen we u een aantal stellingen voor over de mate waarin politici en partijen uw politieke belangen en voorkeuren **kennen**. 1. Er is geen enkele politicus of partij die weet wat er leeft onder mensen zoals ik. 2. Er zijn politici of partijen die effectief op de hoogte zijn van wat mensen zoals ik willen. 3. De meeste politici en partijen hebben geen idee van wat belangrijk is voor mensen zoals ik. 4. De meeste politici of partijen kennen wel degelijk de belangen en voorkeuren van mensen zoals ik.	A présent, nous allons vous présenter une série d'affirmations sur la manière dont les hommes et femmes politiques et les partis politiques **connaissent** vos priorités et préférences. 1. Il n'y a pas un seul homme ou femme politique ou parti politique qui soit au courant de ce qui se passe dans la vie de gens comme moi. 2. Certains hommes et femmes politiques ou certains partis politiques sont au courant de ce que les gens comme moi veulent. 3. La plupart des hommes et femmes politiques et des partis politiques n'ont aucune idée de ce qui est important pour des gens comme moi. 4. La plupart des hommes et femmes politiques et des partis politiques savent quelles sont les priorités et préférences des gens comme moi.
Act_1 – Act_4	Nu leggen we u een aantal stellingen voor over de mate waarin politici en partijen **handelen** in uw belang en volgens uw voorkeuren.	A présent, nous allons vous présenter une série d'affirmations sur la manière dont les hommes et femmes politiques et les partis politiques **agissent** dans votre intérêt et selon vos préférences.

(Continued)

Table A1. Continued.

Variable	Dutch version	French version
	1. Er is geen enkele politicus of partij die echt actie onderneemt om de belangen en voorkeuren van mensen zoals ik te verdedigen. 2. Er zijn wel degelijk politici of partijen die handelen in het belang en volgens de voorkeuren van mensen zoals ik. 3. De meeste politici en partijen verwaarlozen de belangen en voorkeuren van mensen zoals ik wanneer ze actie ondernemen. 4. De meeste politici en partijen proberen wel degelijk te handelen in lijn met wat belangrijk is voor mensen zoals ik.	1. Il n'y a pas un seul homme ou femme politique ou parti politique qui agisse pour défendre les intérêts et préférences des gens comme moi. 2. Certains hommes et femmes politiques ou certains partis politiques agissent dans l'intérêt et selon les préférences des gens comme moi. 3. La plupart des hommes et femmes politiques et des partis politiques négligent les intérêts et les préférences des gens comme moi lorsqu'ils agissent. 4. La plupart des hommes et femmes politiques et des partis politiques essaient d'agir dans l'intérêt et selon les préférences de gens comme moi.
Succ_1 – Succ_4	Tenslotte leggen we u een aantal stellingen voor over de mate waarin politici en partijen er ook echt in **slagen** om uw voorkeuren en belangen om te zetten in beleid. 1. Er is geen enkele politicus of partij die er in slaagt om de zaken te verwezenlijken die belangrijk zijn voor mensen zoals ik. 2. Er zijn wel degelijk politici of partijen die er voor zorgen dat de voorkeuren van mensen zoals ik ook echt in het beleid worden weerspiegeld. 3. De meeste politici of partijen falen om de voorkeuren van mensen zoals ik ook daadwerkelijk om te zetten in beleid. 4. Over het algemeen lukt het de meeste politici en partijen om beleid te maken dat de zaken aanpakt die belangrijk zijn voor mensen zoals ik.	Enfin, nous allons vous présenter une série d'affirmations sur la manière dont les hommes et femmes politiques et les partis politiques **parviennent** à traduire vos intérêts et préférences en décisions politiques. 1. Il n'y a pas un seul homme ou femme politique ou parti politique qui arrive à concrétiser des décisions sur ce qui est important pour les gens comme moi. 2. Certains hommes et femmes politiques ou certains partis politiques parviennent à concrétiser en décisions politiques les intérêts et préférences de gens comme moi. 3. La plupart des hommes et femmes politiques et des partis politiques ne parviennent pas à concrétiser les intérêts et préférences de gens comme moi en décisions politiques. 4. En général, la plupart des hommes et femmes politiques et des partis politiques réussissent à élaborer des politiques qui abordent les questions importantes pour les gens comme moi.

Appendix 2

Table A2. Descriptive statistics of socio-demographics for non-representative sample ($N = 3118$).

Variable	Category/mean	Percentage/std. deviation
Age	18–29	4.2%
	30–44	12.8%
	45–64	43.6%
	65+	39.4%
Gender	Man	71.0%
	Woman	28.7%
Education	No/primary/lower secondary education	6.4%
	Secondary education	21.9%
	Higher education	71.6%
Political interest	$M = 7.92$	Std. dev. = 1.69

Table A3. Descriptive statistics of socio-demographics for representative sample ($N = 1825$).

Variable	Category/mean	Percentage/ std. deviation
Age	18–29	15.6%
	30–44	21.5%
	45–64	35.7%
	65+	27.2%
Gender	Man	49.2%
	Woman	50.6%
Education	No/primary/lower secondary education	19.0%
	Secondary education	42.5%
	Higher education	38.5%
Political interest	$M = 5.29$	Std. dev. = 2.949

Appendix 3

Table A4. Model fit indices of the alternative models.

Sample	Model	RMSEA (<.08)	CFI (>.90)	TLI (>.90)
Regional ($N = 3118$)	Four-factor (behaviours)	.101	.974	.968
	+ error covariance	.103	.977	.967
	Two-factor (input/output)	.105	.970	.965
	+ error covariance	.111	.972	.961
	Two-factor (some/most)	.097	.975	.970
	+ error covariance	.102	.976	.967
	Four-factor (input/output & some/most)	.094	.977	.972
	+ error covariance	.097	.980	.970
National ($N = 1825$)	Four-factor (behaviours)	.114	.867	.837
	+ error covariance	.097	.919	.881
	Two-factor (input/output)	.111	.872	.843
	+ error covariance	.099	.910	.876
	Two-factor (some/most)	.111	.865	.843
	+ error covariance	.095	.917	.885
	Four-factor (input/output & some/most)	.085	.939	.906
	+ error covariance	.095	.922	.886

Appendix 4

Table A5. Standardised factor loadings for eight-factor model with unrepresentative sample ($N = 3118$).

Factor	Some listen	Some know	Some act	Some succ.	Most Listen	Most know	Most act	Most succ.
Item								
L_1	0.927							
L_2	−0.794							
K_1		0.938						
K_2		−0.774						
A_1			0.935					
A_2			−0.877					
S_1				0.913				
S_2				−0.888				
L_3					0.900			
L_4					−0.872			
K_3						0.956		
K_4						−0.823		
A_3							0.935	
A_4							−0.902	
S_3								0.919
S_4								−0.883

Note: All loadings are significant at $p < .001$ level.

Table A6. Standardised factor loadings for eight-factor model with representative sample ($N = 1825$).

Factor	Some listen	Some know	Some act	Some succ.	Most Listen	Most know	Most act	Most succ.
Item								
L_1	0.826							
L_2	−0.736							
K_1		0.847						
K_2		−0.661						
A_1			0.816					
A_2			−0.765					
S_1				0.799				
S_2				−0.757				
L_3					0.811			
L_4					−0.760			
K_3						0.800		
K_4						−0.675		
A_3							0.755	
A_4							−0.765	
S_3								0.663
S_4								−0.724

Note: All loadings are significant at $p < .001$ level.

Appendix 5

Table A7. Bivariate correlations of dimensions of feeling represented with other indicators of political discontent (non-representative sample).

	External efficacy	Political trust	Populism	Feeling rep. CSES
Some listen	.510	.470	−.408	*Not included*
Some know	.492	.444	−.443	
Some act	.504	.481	−.404	
Some succeed	.548	.524	−.433	
Most listen	.676	.609	−.552	
Most know	.568	.492	−.503	
Most act	.641	.611	−.516	
Most succeed	.587	.581	−.463	

Table A8. Bivariate correlations between dimensions of feeling represented, indicators of political discontent and voting intention (non-representative sample).

	Government vote	Opposition vote	Blank/no vote
Some listen	.242***	−.026	−.237***
Some know	.219***	−.012	−.165***
Some act	.227***	−.041*	−.216***
Some succeed	.291***	−.153***	−.165***
Most listen	.353***	−.303***	−.149***
Most know	.306***	−.256***	−.125***
Most act	.342***	−.286***	−.146***
Most succeed	.308***	−.247***	−.140***
External efficacy	.309***	−.248***	−.152***
Political trust	.370***	−.271***	−.199***
Populism	−.308***	.294***	.129***
Feeling rep. CSES	*Not included*		

Appendix 6

Table A9. Established measures of political discontent.

Variable	Items
External efficacy	**Can you indicate the extent to which you agree with the statements below? [1 = Totally disagree; 5 = Totally agree]** 1. People like me don't have any say about what the government does. 2. I don't think public officials care much what people like me think.
Political trust	**Can you indicate on a scale from 0 to 10 how much you personally trust each of the following institutions? [0 = No trust at all, 10 = Full trust]** 1. Political Parties 2. The Federal Parliament 3. The Federal Government 4. Politicians
Populist attitudes	**Can you indicate the extent to which you agree with the statements below? [1 = Totally disagree; 5 = Totally agree]** 1. Politicians in parliament must follow the advice of the people. 2. Political opposition is greater between elites and citizens than between citizens among themselves. 3. I would rather be represented by an ordinary citizen than by a professional politician. 4. What people call 'compromise' in politics is really just selling out on one's principles. 5. Most politicians do not care about the people
Feeling represented	**Would you say that any of the parties in Belgium represents your views reasonably well? [1 = yes; 2 = no; 3 = don't know]**

Appendix 7

Table A10. Correlation of six-item scale with indicators of political discontent.

	External efficacy	Political trust	Populism	Feeling rep. CSES
Non-representative sample				
Know 2	.359	.329	−.304	*Not included*
Act 2	.436	.421	−.332	
Succeed 1	.527	.500	−.430	
Know 3	.575	.503	−.537	
Act 4	.591	.579	−.459	
Succeed 4	.555	.565	−.426	
Representative sample				
Know 2	.165	.324	−.172	.350
Act 2	.334	.455	−.303	.427
Succeed 1	.429	.343	−.455	.246
Know 3	.361	.318	−.429	.151
Act 4	.432	.578	−.408	.284
Succeed 4	.409	.556	−.384	.243

Note: All correlations are significant at $p < .01$.

Table A11. Correlation of six-item scale with voting intention.

Item	Government vote	Opposition vote	Blank/no vote
Non-representative sample			
Know 2	.149***	−.019	−.155***
Act 2	.203***	−.026	−.211***
Succeed 1	.274***	−.164***	−.143***
Know 3	.314***	−.268***	−.113***
Act 4	.321***	−.273***	−.134***
Succeed 4	.292***	−.246***	−.128***

Table A11. Continued.

Item	Government vote	Opposition vote	Blank/no vote
Representative sample			
Know 2	.153***	.019	−.150***
Act 2	.222***	−.031	−.206***
Succeed 1	.170***	−.087***	−.092***
Know 3	.140***	−.096**	−.053*
Act 4	.259***	−.171***	−.129***
Succeed 4	.223***	−.135***	−.144**

***Correlation significant at <.001 level, **correlation significant at .01 level, *correlation significant at p .05 level.