

Participation and tolerance

Lecture 6

Three forms of participation

- Voting
- Contentious politics
- Civil society

Election turnout

Paradox of voting

- You should vote if benefits $>$ costs
 - Costs = time and effort (C)
 - Benefits = money, job if party wins
 - p = probability of being decisive vote
 - Vote if $pB - C > 0$
- But $p = 0$, your vote is almost never decisive
- Therefore you rationally shouldn't vote

Do we learn anything from rational model?

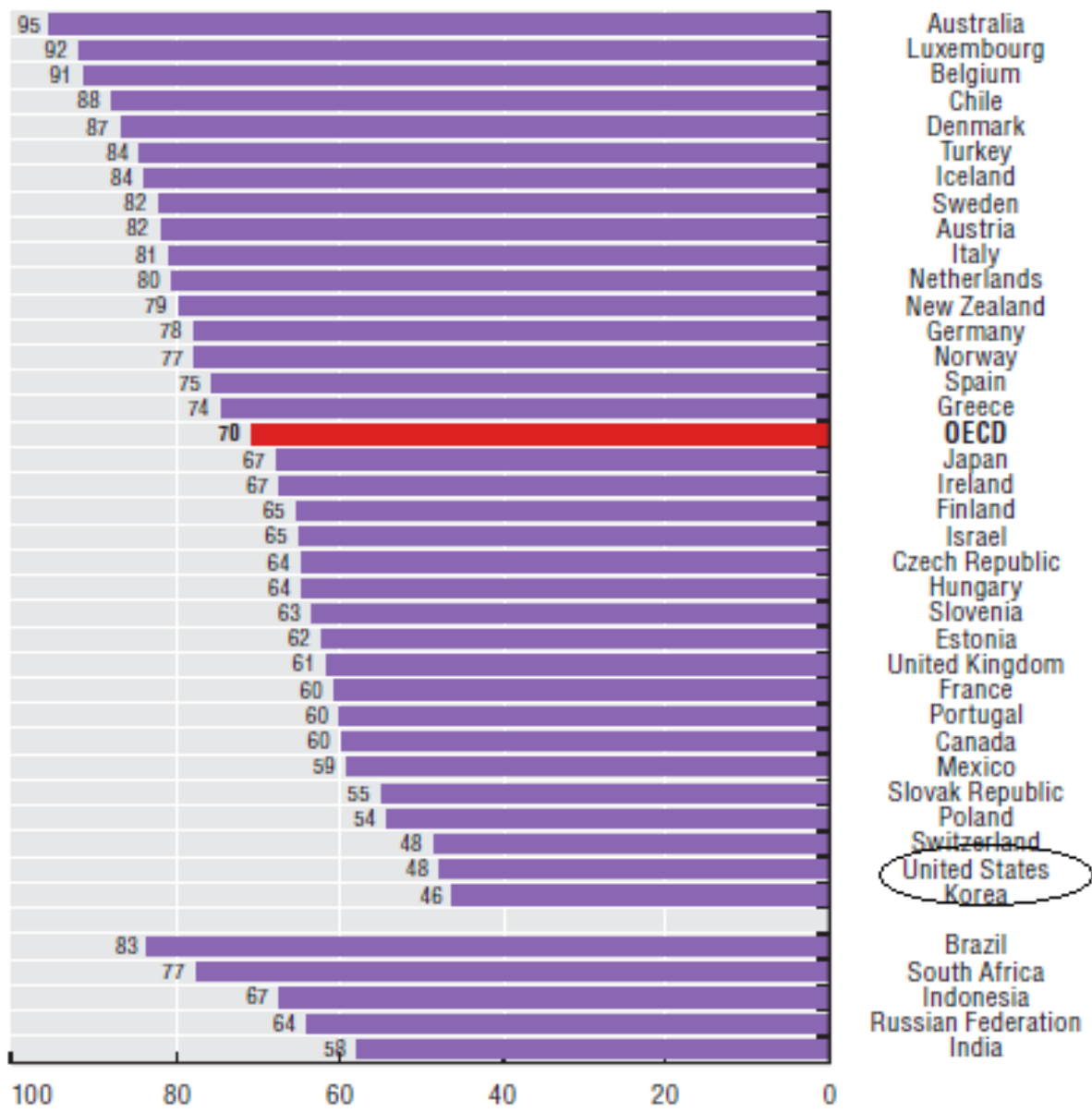
- Higher costs => lower turnout
 - Difficult registration or voting procedures
 - More frequent voting
- More competitive elections (higher p) => higher turnout
- But still no reason to vote
- How to think of benefits?
 - Can add an extra term: D for civic duty
 - Thus: $pB - C + D$

Another view of benefits

- Benefits not just personal
- If my candidate wins, it benefits many, many people
 - Let's say benefit = 5000 Kc and 5 million people benefit, then $B = 2,500,000,000$ Kc
- Voting decisions are usually motivated by beliefs about social benefits not individual
 - Sociotropic versus pocketbook voting

Turnout in advanced democracies

- Average level of 70%
- Declines from 80% in 1960s & 1970s to 60-70% today
- More declines among young people



Explanations for variation

- Lower stakes of elections
- Cultural shift?
- Compulsory voting in some countries
- Proportional representation
 - More choices
 - More opportunities to be decisive vote
 - But less clarity of results

Postcommunist turnout

- High turnout in first elections: >80%
- Declining turnout since: range from 40% to 80%

FIGURE 1 Over-time turnout change by election importance

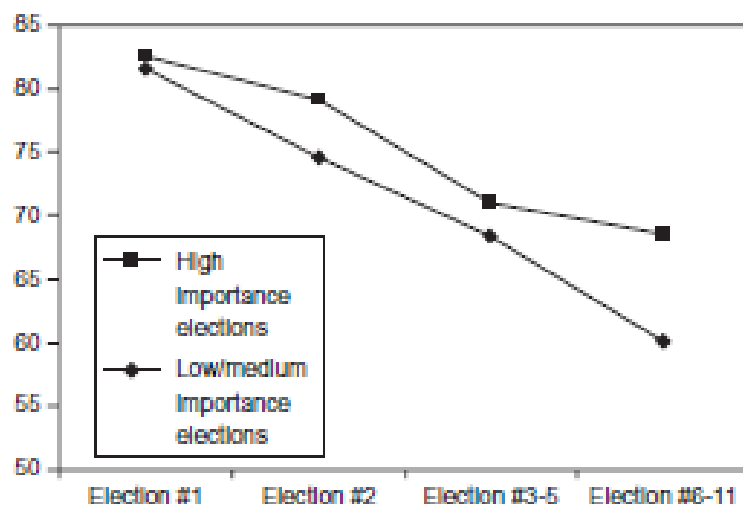
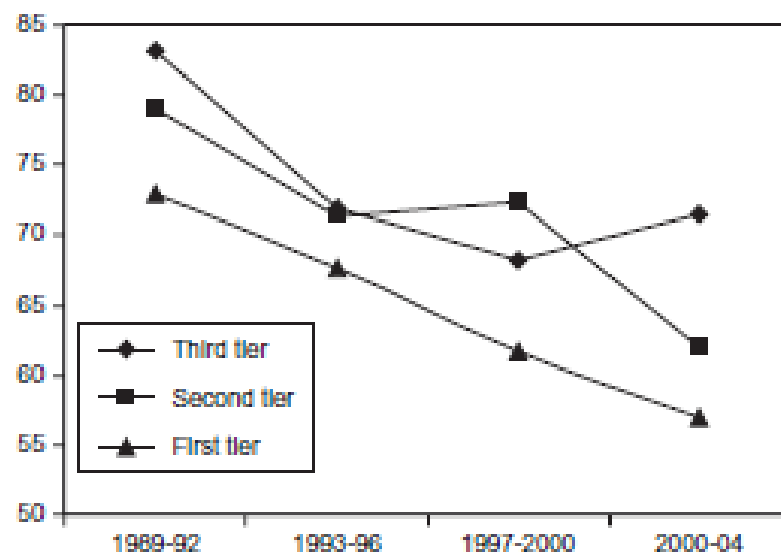
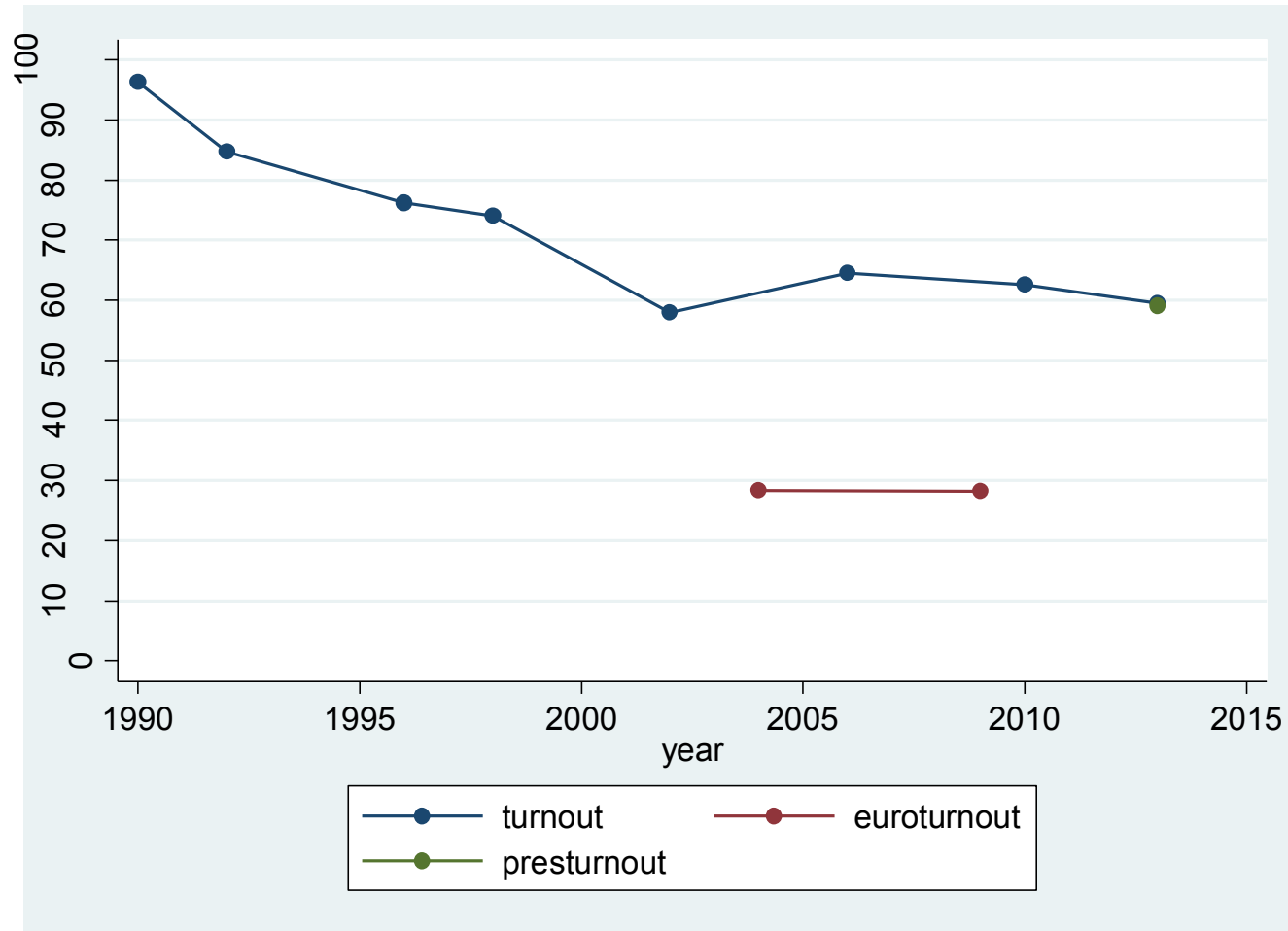


FIGURE 2 Over-time turnout change by EU integration tier



Czech turnout



Why? Did it matter?

- Has Czech politics stabilized at low level?
 - What changed in early 2000s?
 - Accession to EU
- What would energize voters?
- Who was helped and hurt?

Explanations for Czech turnout

- Disenchantment
 - Initially excitement, optimism
 - Now corruption, economic problems
- Importance of elections
 - Decline after entering EU
 - Higher for more important institutions
 - Increase when democratization

Ways you can increase turnout

Key is social environment

- Make voters feel wanted
 - Personal invitation, live conversation on phone
- Build on existing motivation
 - Call back those who are interested
- Show voters that others are watching
 - Remind them that there is a public record

What works and doesn't work

Works

- Door-to-door canvassing
- Telephone contact with live person

Doesn't work

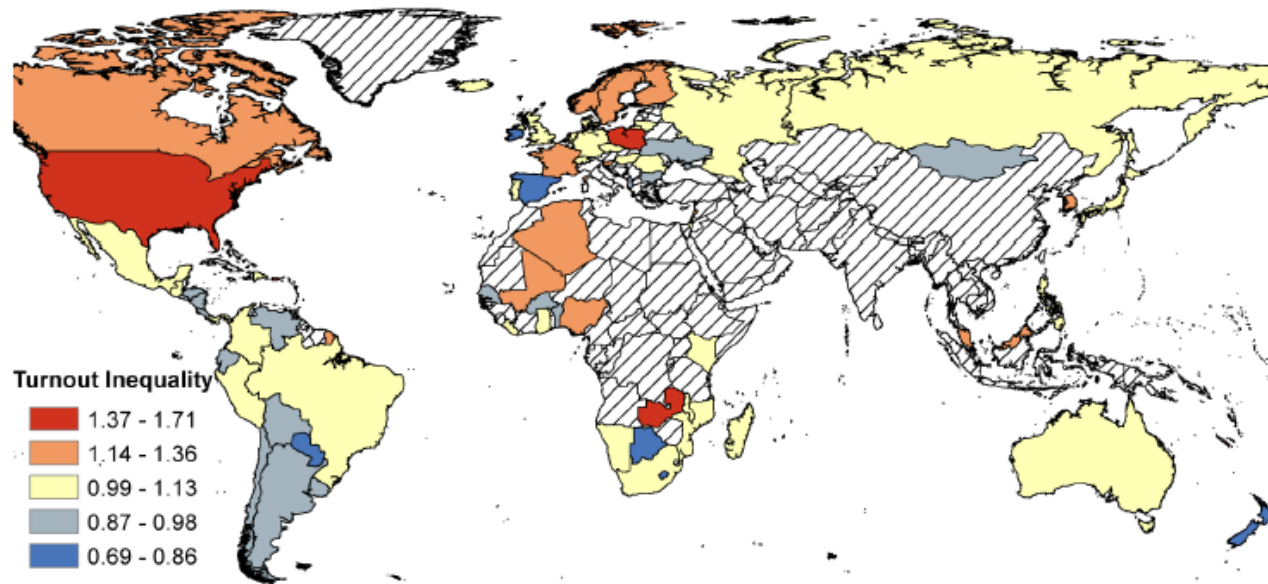
- Direct mail
- Leaflets
- Robocalls
- Email

Do we want to increase turnout?

- Who doesn't vote?
 - Uneducated
 - Uninformed
 - Young
 - Poor (except India – poor vote more)
- Will they improve our choices?
- But turnout as sign of legitimacy

Turnout inequalities

Figure 1: Turnout Inequality Across the World



Notes: Ratio of turnout amongst the top quintile to turnout amongst the bottom quintile on a wealth index. Data are missing for countries with a cross-hatch. The construction of the wealth index is described in Section 3.

Contentious politics

Contentious politics rising?

- Increase in percentage of people who:
 - Sign petitions
 - Participate in boycotts
 - Participate in demonstrations
- Why does this increase when voting declines?
- But still a small number

Why do people participate in contentious politics?

- Resources
 - Education, money, time
 - Sense of efficacy
- Mobilization by politicians and movements
 - Social networks

Postcommunist patience

- Big mystery is lack of protest given economic problems & corruption
 - Signed a petition: 21% versus 58% in West
 - Participated in boycott: 5% versus 12%
 - Participated in demonstration: 13% vs 19%
 - Compare Latin America: riots & demonstrations
- Why?
 - Older citizens
 - Alternative sources of income
 - Fewer urban poor

Civil society

Tocqueville's Argument

- Need voluntary groups for democracy to work
 - Worry that expanding bureaucracy will overwhelm atomized citizens
 - Groups enable citizens to defend themselves against government and limit what government needs to do

How does civil society help government work better?

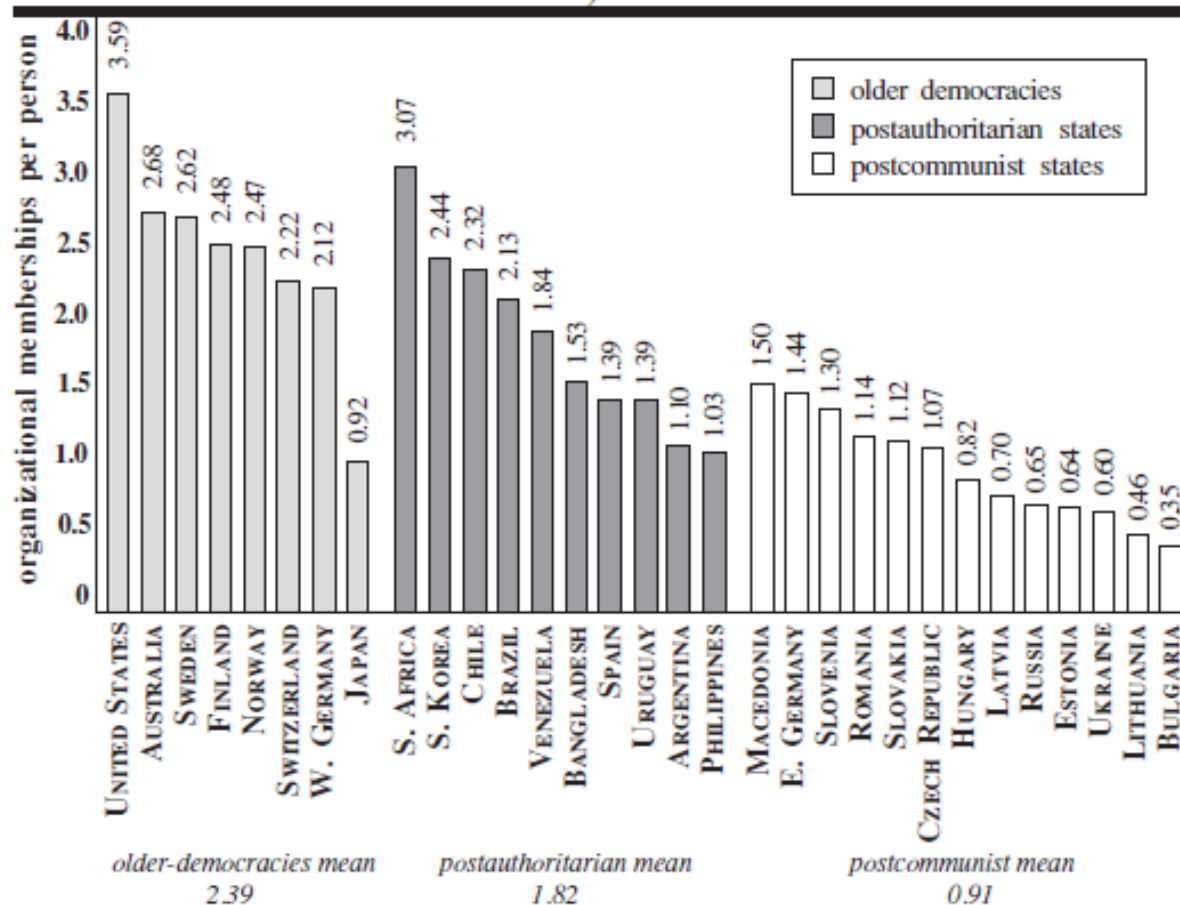
- Creates trust and cooperation among people
 - Government can work with light touch: efficiency
- People aware of public policy and able to express interests
 - Government can be more responsive
- Could there be tradeoffs?

Weakness of postcommunist civil society

- Average number of organizational memberships
 - Sports, church, unions, political party, environmental, professional, charitable
- Western Europe: 2.4 organizations/person
- Latin America: 1.8
- Postcommunist: 0.8

Civil society in postcommunist Europe

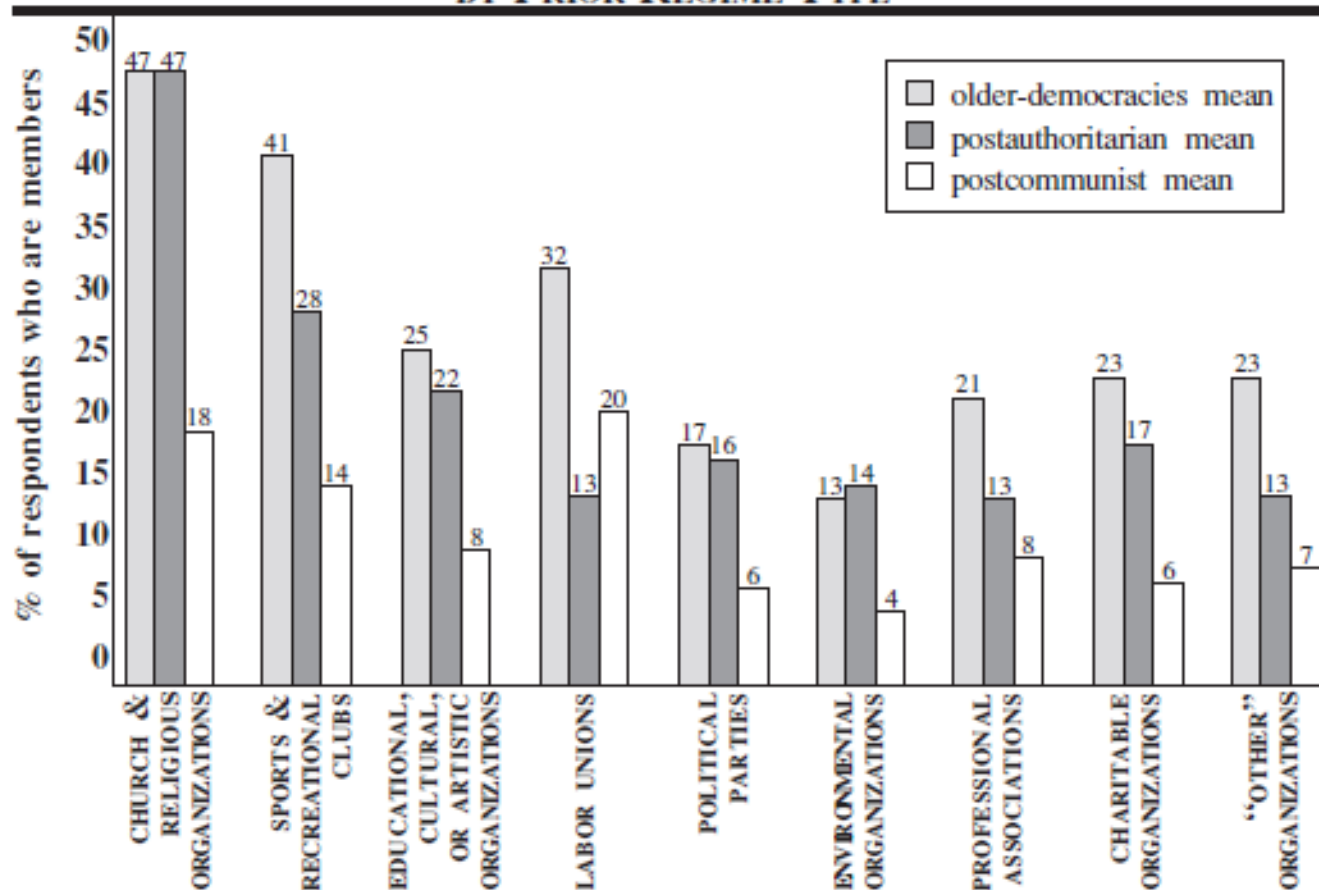
FIGURE 1—AVERAGE NUMBER OF ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERSHIPS PER PERSON, BY COUNTRY



Source: 1995–97 World Values Survey.

Types of organizations

FIGURE 2—MEMBERSHIP IN NINE TYPES OF ORGANIZATIONS,
BY PRIOR REGIME TYPE



Source: 1995–97 World Values Survey.

Why so weak?

- Marc Morje Howard: past experiences from communism
 - Lack of trust
 - Disappointment from transition
 - Persistence of friendship networks
- But shouldn't this disappear over time?
- Do you join clubs/organizations? Why? Why not?

How does civic community get started?

- Collective Action Problem: everyone benefits and individual contribution doesn't matter
- Social context key (social capital)
 - Where strong norms, networks, and trust, then civic community flourishes
- Virtuous circle versus vicious circle

Creative leadership?

- Antanas Mockus – mayor of Bogota
 - 7000 community security groups
 - Homicide down 70%
 - Traffic fatalities down 50%
 - Drinking water provision up from 79% to 100%





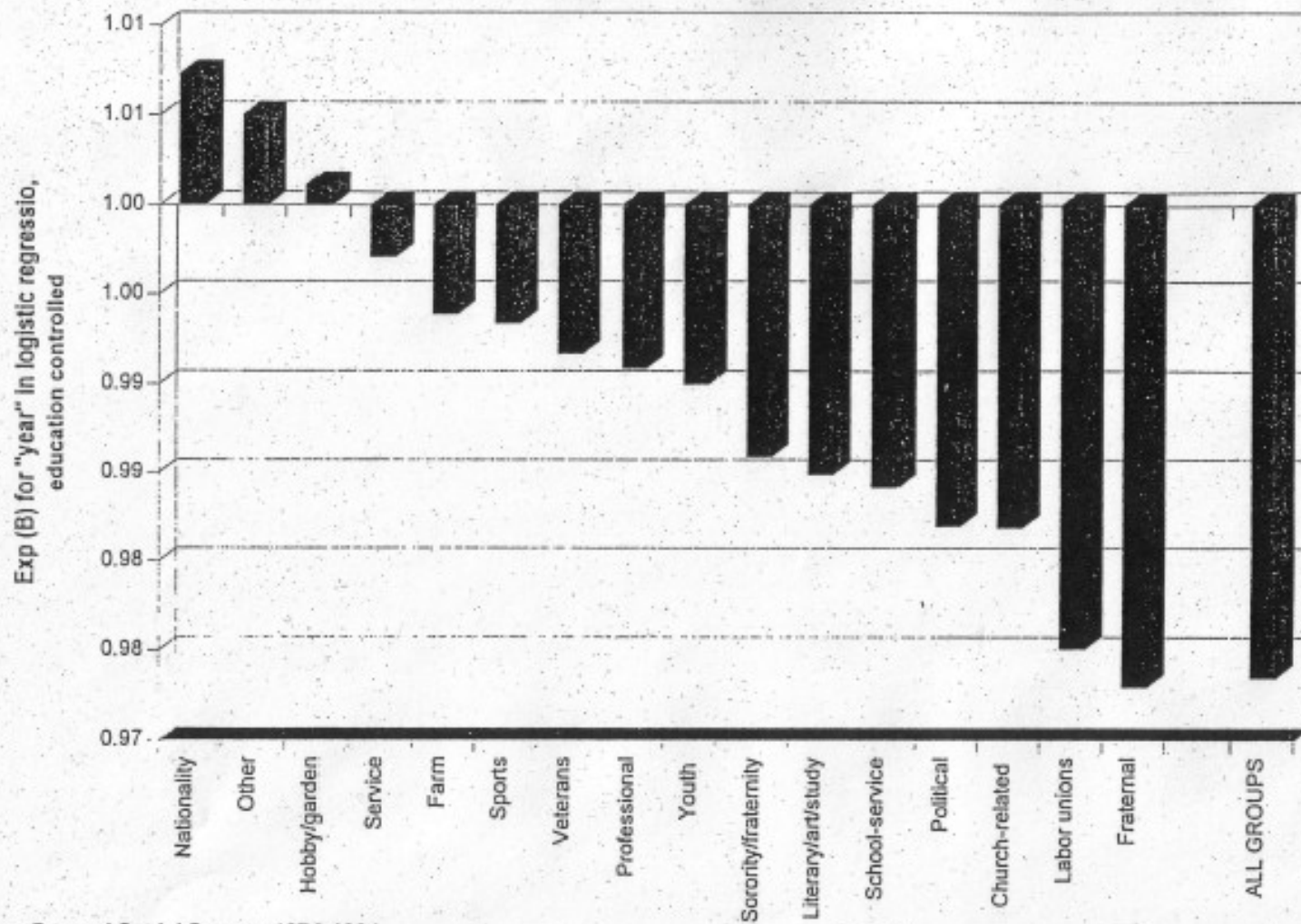




America the leader?

- Traditionally very strong associational life
- But large decline in last 50 years
- Do new organizations make up for this?
 - Contributing money versus attending a rally
- Bowling alone?

—Membership Trends (1974–1994) by Type of Group (education controlled)

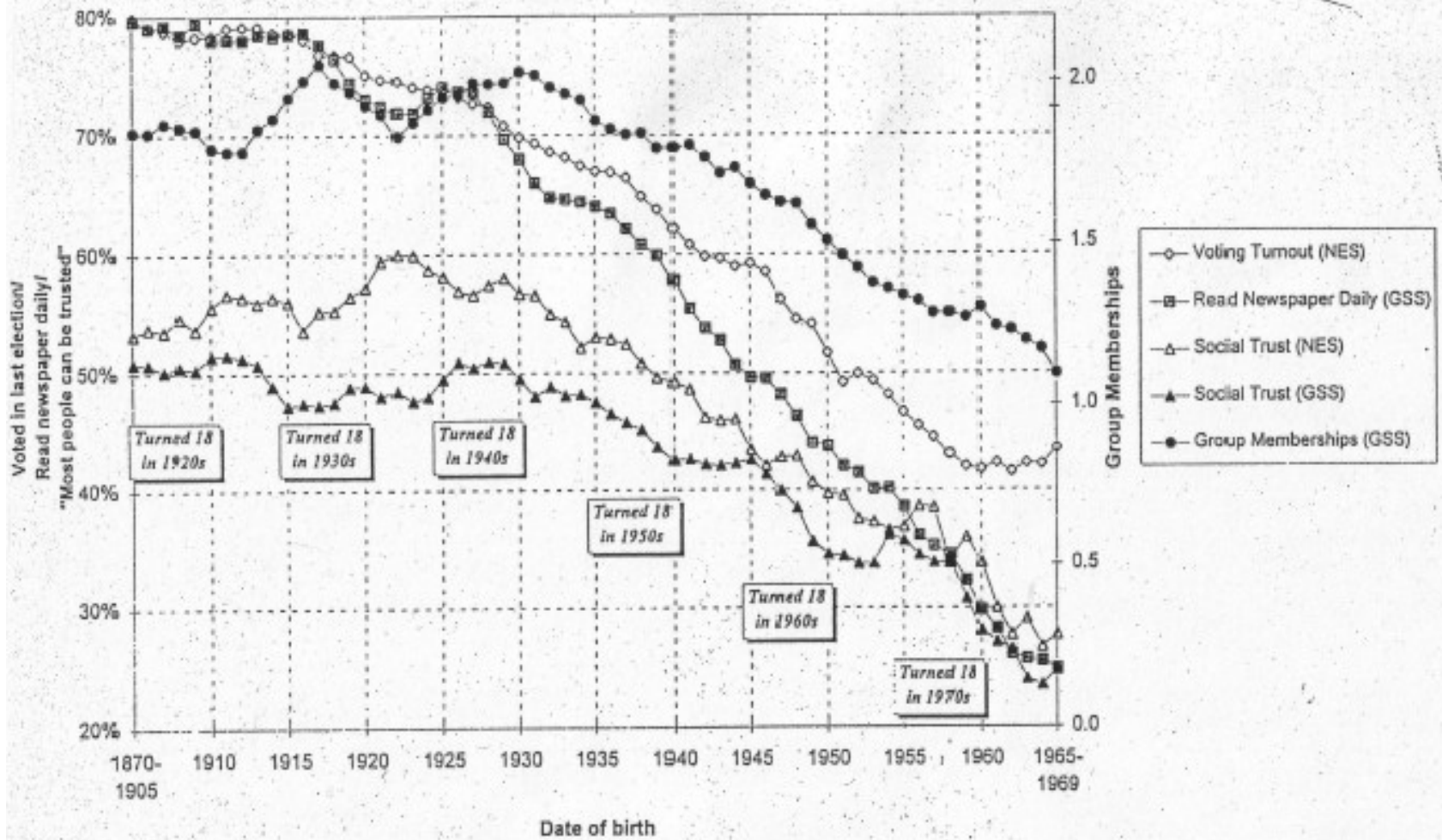


Source: General Social Survey, 1974-1994

Why has social capital declined in America?

- Time and money pressures?
- Mobility?
- Changing role of women?
- Eclipse of traditional family?
- Rise of welfare state?
- Generational effects
 - Yes, long civic generation born between 1910s and 1940s participates much more

FIGURE 5—Social Capital and Civic Engagement by Generation (education controlled)



What happened?

- Television
 - 1950: 10% of homes, 1959: 90% of homes
- TV viewing strongly and negatively correlated with trust and membership; destroys social capital
- When you are on your deathbed, are you going to say: “My one regret in life is that I didn’t watch more TV.”

What can you do?

- Surprise a neighbor by making a favorite dinner
- Help fix someone's flat tire
- Join an organization
- Sing in a choir
- Perform in a volunteer theater
- Attend parades
- Read the local news faithfully
- Pick it up even if you didn't drop it
- Buy a big hot tub
- Attend gallery openings
- More at www.bettertogether.org

Tolerance

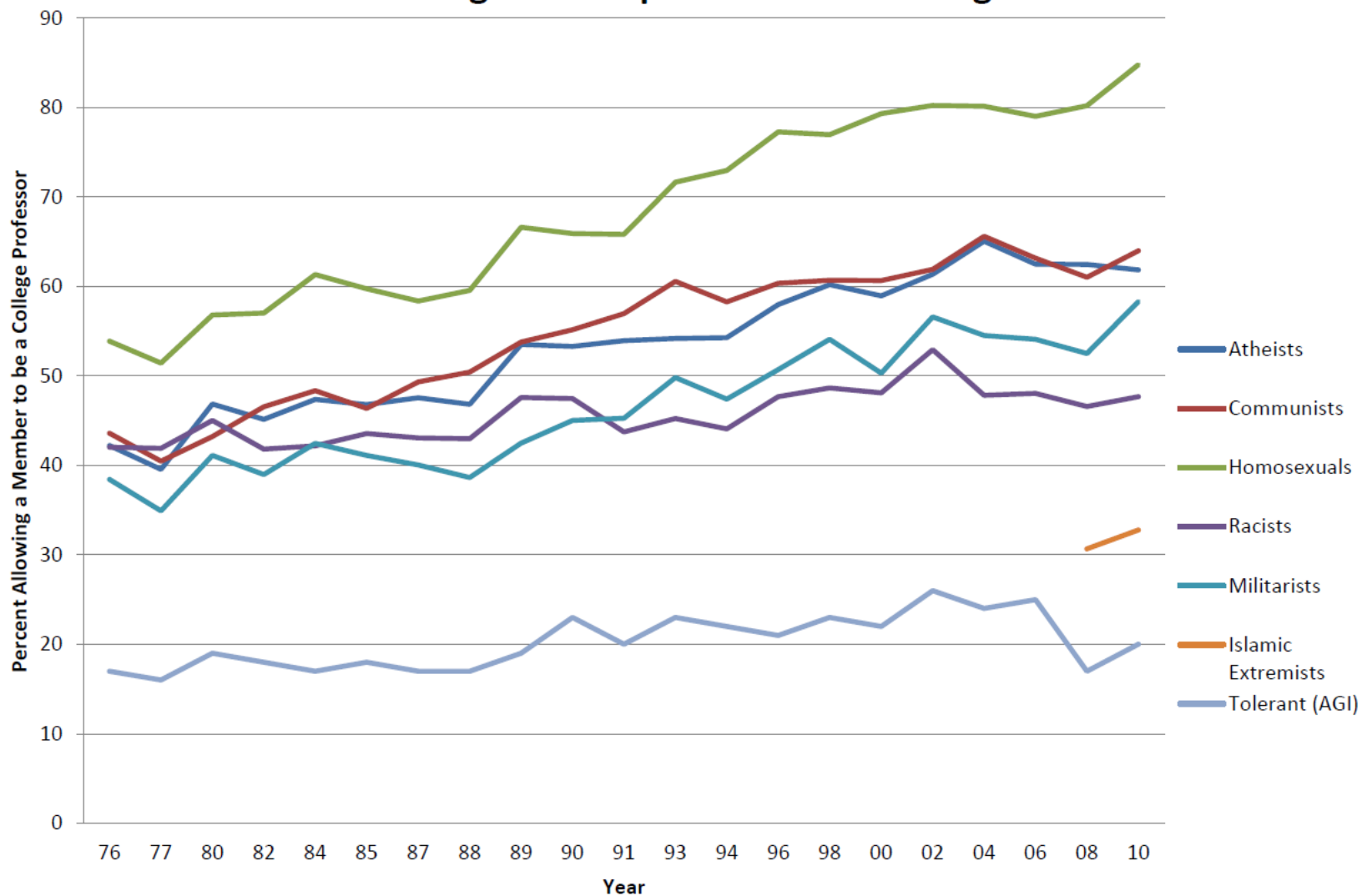
Measuring tolerance

- Abstract:
 - Do you agree with freedom of speech?
 - Do you support rights for minority?
- Least-liked group
 - Which group do you like least: communists, atheists, fascists, homosexuals, racists, etc.
 - Should this group be allowed to... hold a rally, run for office, give political speeches

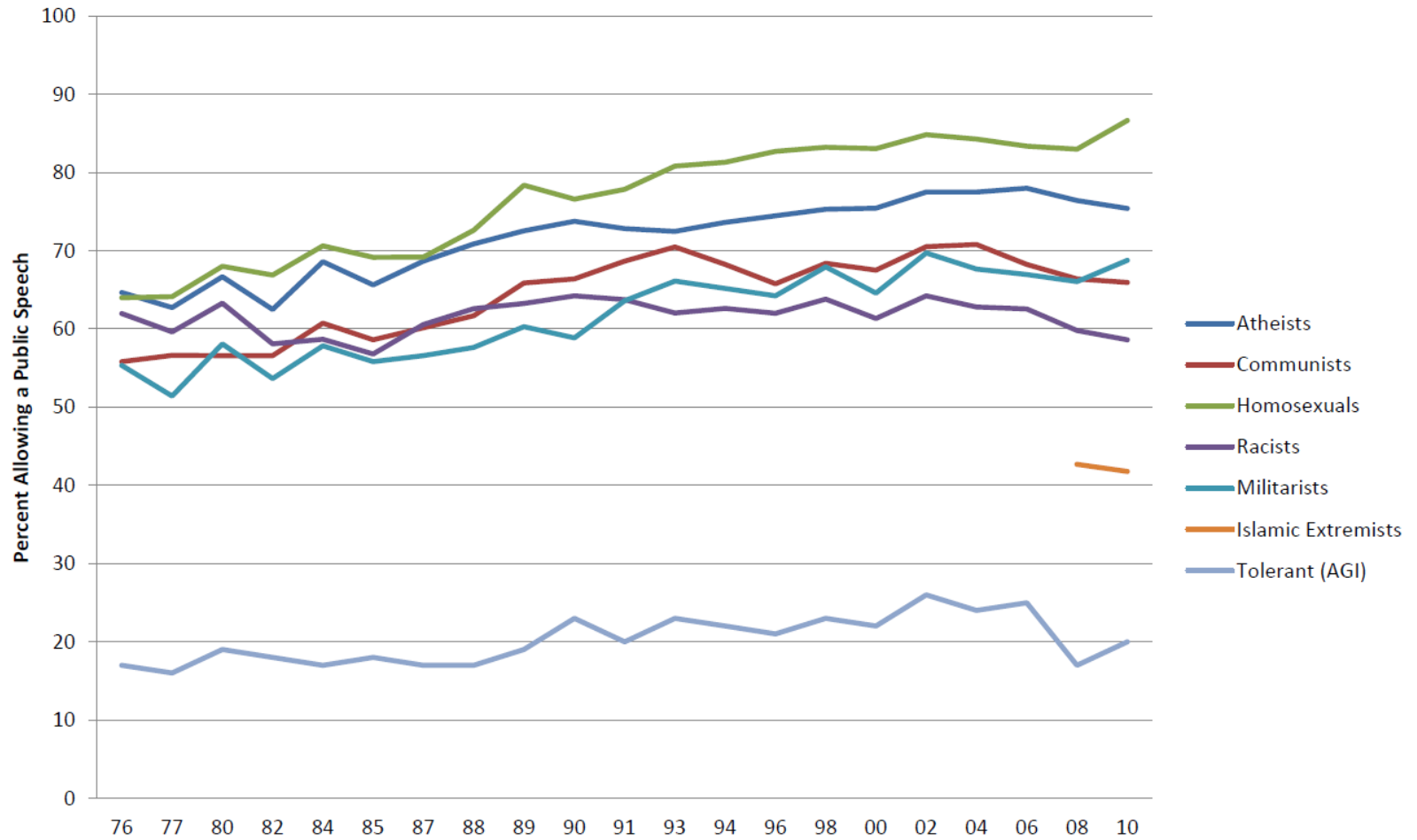
Levels of tolerance

- Initial studies: not as high as expected
- Despite abstract support for tolerance, less tolerance of disliked groups
- Trend over last 50 years is positive

Tolerance of Ideological Group Members as College Professors



Tolerance of Public Speeches by Ideological Groups



Determinants of tolerance

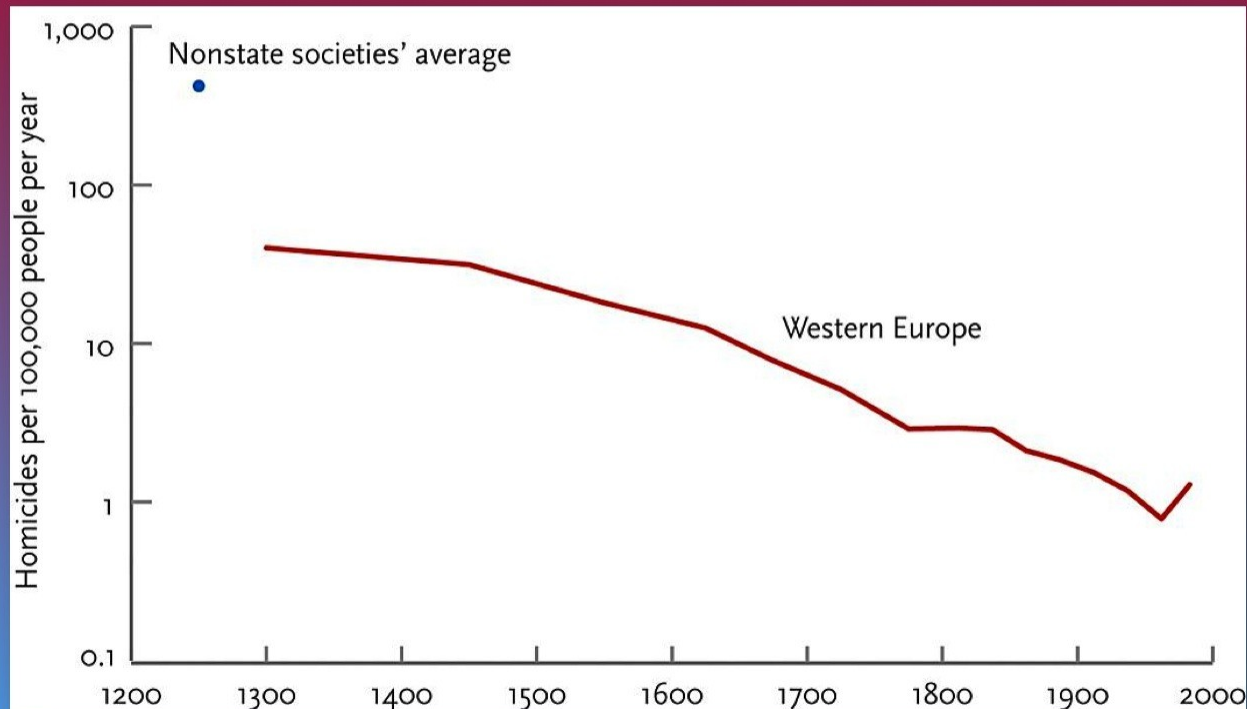
- Portrayal of group/ideas by media & elite – threatening or not
- Support for democratic norms
- Personality
 - Negative: insecurity, dogmatism, extroversion,
 - Positive: openness to experience, trust

Recent work by Putnam

- Finds that more diverse communities have
 - Less trust both between and within groups
 - Lower participation and volunteering
 - Less happiness and fewer friends
 - More time watching TV
- Contradicts both contact hypothesis and conflict hypothesis

But also long-term decline in violence

Homicide in Europe, 1300-2000



Source: Eisner, 2003

Why?

- Leviathan: power of state
- Commerce: mutual benefit
- Feminization: more respect for women
- Cosmopolitanism: literacy, media – see perspective of others
- Reason: come to see futility of violence