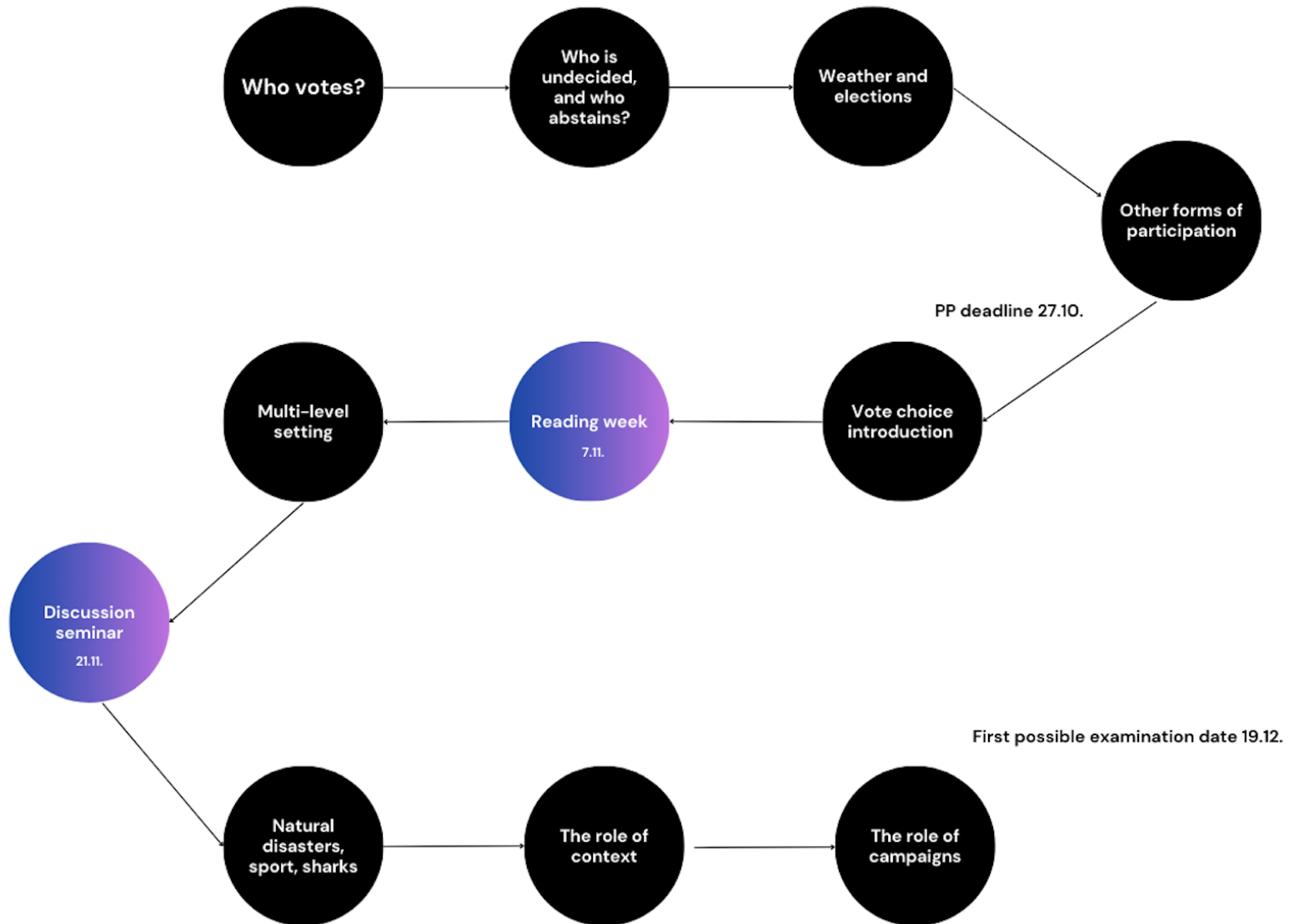


Elections and electoral behavior



M U N I
F S S

Who is undecided, and who abstains?
Determinants of turnout
Part II

Jakub Jusko

Undecided voters

Undecideds (late-decidors, floating voters)

- Increase in the proportion of voters who postpone their voting decision into the latter stages of a campaign (western democracies, last decades)

⇒ The role of the campaign ↑

⇒ The need for identification of a target group ↑

⇒ Possibility of surprise outcomes ↑

-In foreign research, the share of voters who made last-minute decisions ranged from 10 to 25 %, depending on the type and location of the election (cf. Gopoian and Hadjiharalambous 1994; Hayes and McAllister 1996; Brox and Giammo 2009)

-Slovakia 15% the day of elections (2016)

Factors


- Sociodemographic (age, gender)
- Partisanship
- Cross-pressures (ambivalence)
- Political sophistication
- Strategic considerations
- (Political disaffection)
- Contextual factors

Sociodemographic

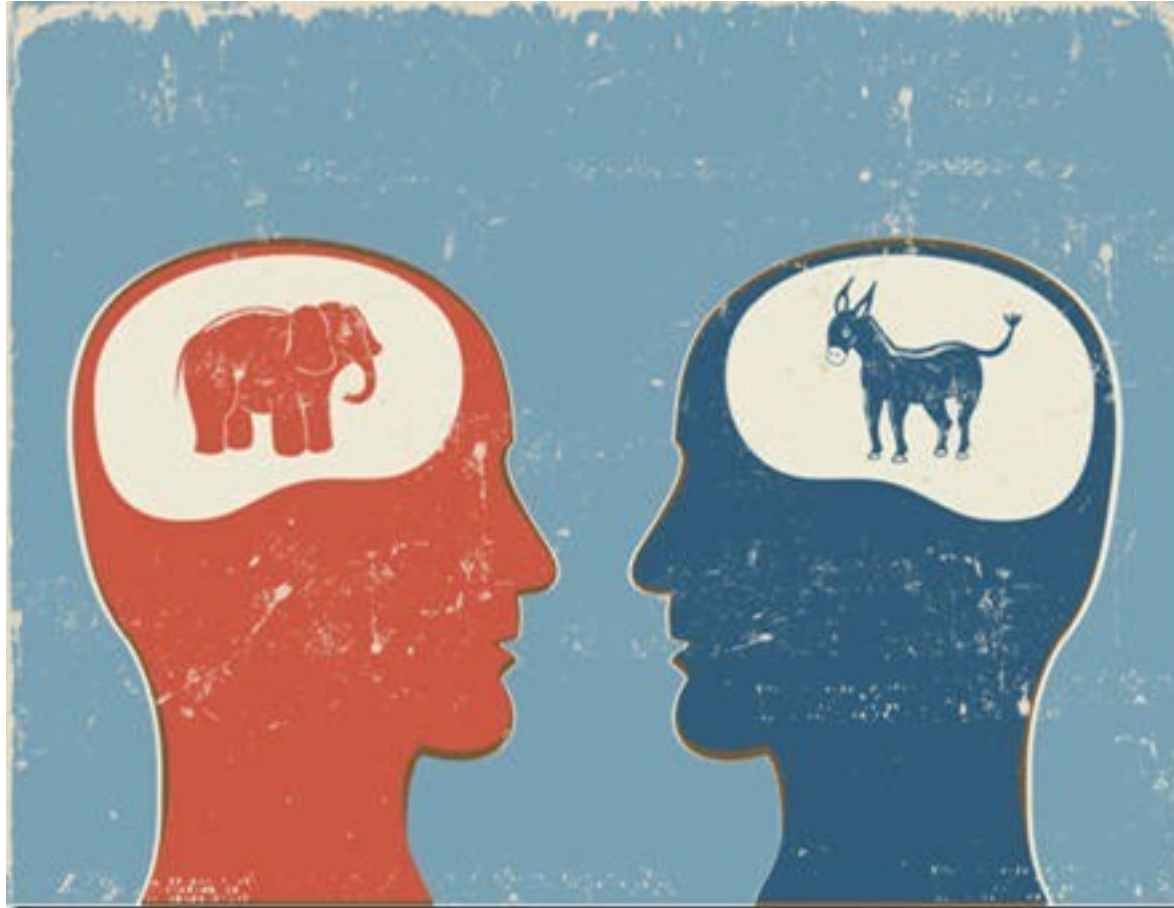


Possible consequence of the political socialization process

Sociodemographic

 <p>Tříděné tabulky z kvantitativního výzkumu, 20. 5. – 27. 5. 2024, n=1398, cílová skupina: obecná populace ČR 18+ (1026 se chce zúčastnit eurovoleb), reprezentativní vzorek podle pohlaví, věku, dosaženého vzdělání, kraje a velikosti obce bydliště. Data byla vážena s ohledem na volební preference v parlamentních volbách 2021.</p>		Total		Pohlaví		Věk				Vzdělání		
		Celkem	Muž	Žena	18–29 let	30–44 let	45–59 let	60+ let	Bez maturity	Maturita	VŠ	
												%
R01. Moje politické názory jsou zastoupeny alespoň jednou českou politickou stranou.	rozhodně souhlasím	22.4	27.3	17.6	14.7	15.8	22.6	30.6	22.0	24.1	20.5	
	spíše souhlasím	44.5	46.9	42.0	48.9	46.8	41.5	43.5	39.1	44.3	53.9	
	spíše nesouhlasím	14.6	13.6	15.6	17.7	16.7	15.5	10.8	13.9	14.7	15.5	
	rozhodně nesouhlasím	6.1	4.8	7.4	5.4	5.6	8.0	5.2	8.4	6.2	2.1	
	nevím	12.4	7.4	17.3	13.3	15.1	12.5	9.9	16.6	10.7	7.9	
	Total N	1398	702	696	203	337	399	459	551	523	324	
R02. Zvolení političtí zástupci se zajímají o to, co si lidé jako já myslí.	rozhodně souhlasím	4.7	5.4	4.0	3.3	3.7	5.2	5.7	6.9	3.8	2.5	
	spíše souhlasím	25.3	27.8	22.7	35.7	24.5	20.4	25.4	17.7	27.8	34.0	
	spíše nesouhlasím	39.4	39.4	39.3	37.1	37.7	43.3	38.2	37.9	40.6	39.9	
	rozhodně nesouhlasím	23.5	22.7	24.3	13.3	25.0	25.4	25.2	28.4	21.4	18.4	
	nevím	7.2	4.8	9.6	10.5	9.3	5.7	5.5	9.2	6.3	5.2	
	Total N	1398	702	696	203	337	399	459	551	523	324	

Partisanship

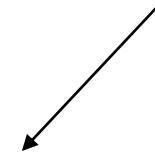
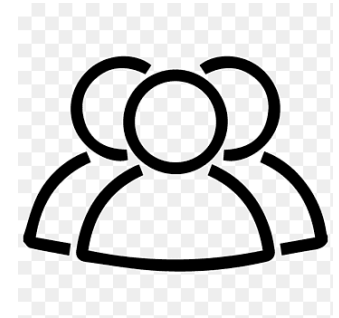


Cross-pressures

- A conflict (inconsistencies) between opposite pressures in the voter's environment => US context
⇒ Socioeconomic status (work, family, religion) + issue attitudes vs. valence
- Internal ambivalence -> 'individual's endorsement of competing considerations relevant to evaluating an attitude object' (Lavine, 2001).
- External ambivalence -> either "cross-cutting social network" or "network ambivalence"



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Political sophistication

Yarchi et al. (2021): Israel

- Politically sophisticated undecideds

vs.

- Less politically sophisticated undecideds

- Difference:

⇒ more privileged social background (education, income)

⇒ greater trust in traditional media

⇒ consumes more news to follow the campaign

⇒ more likely to carry out online discussions

⇒ more likely to base his or her decision on policy issues

⇒ more likely to debate between parties within the same ideological camp (internal floater)

13 ⇒ more likely to vote

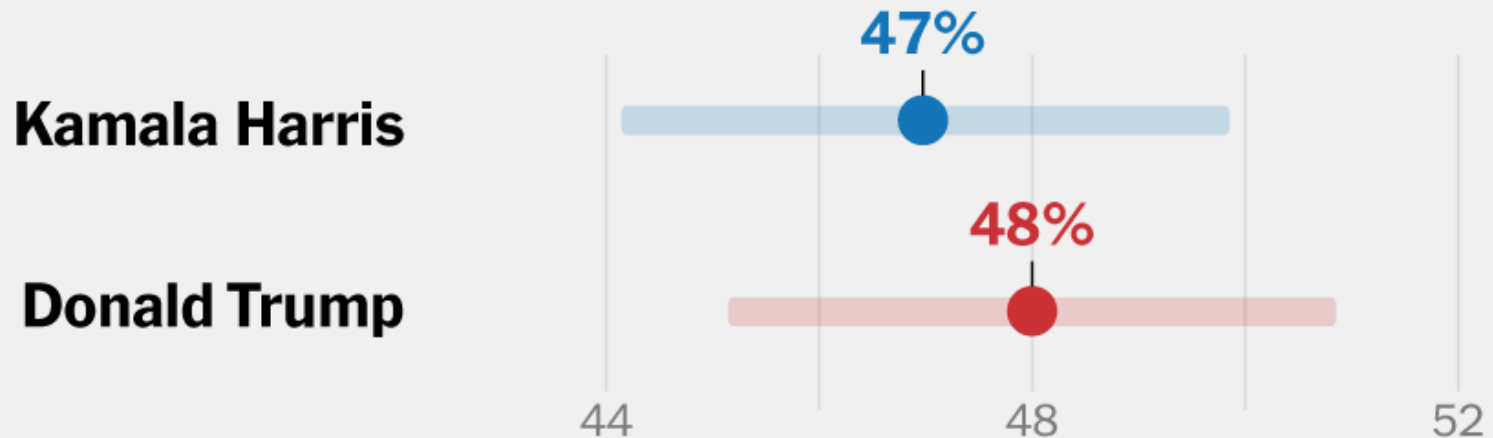
Proportion around 4.5 vs. 16 %

Strategic considerations

THE NEW YORK TIMES/SIENA COLLEGE POLL

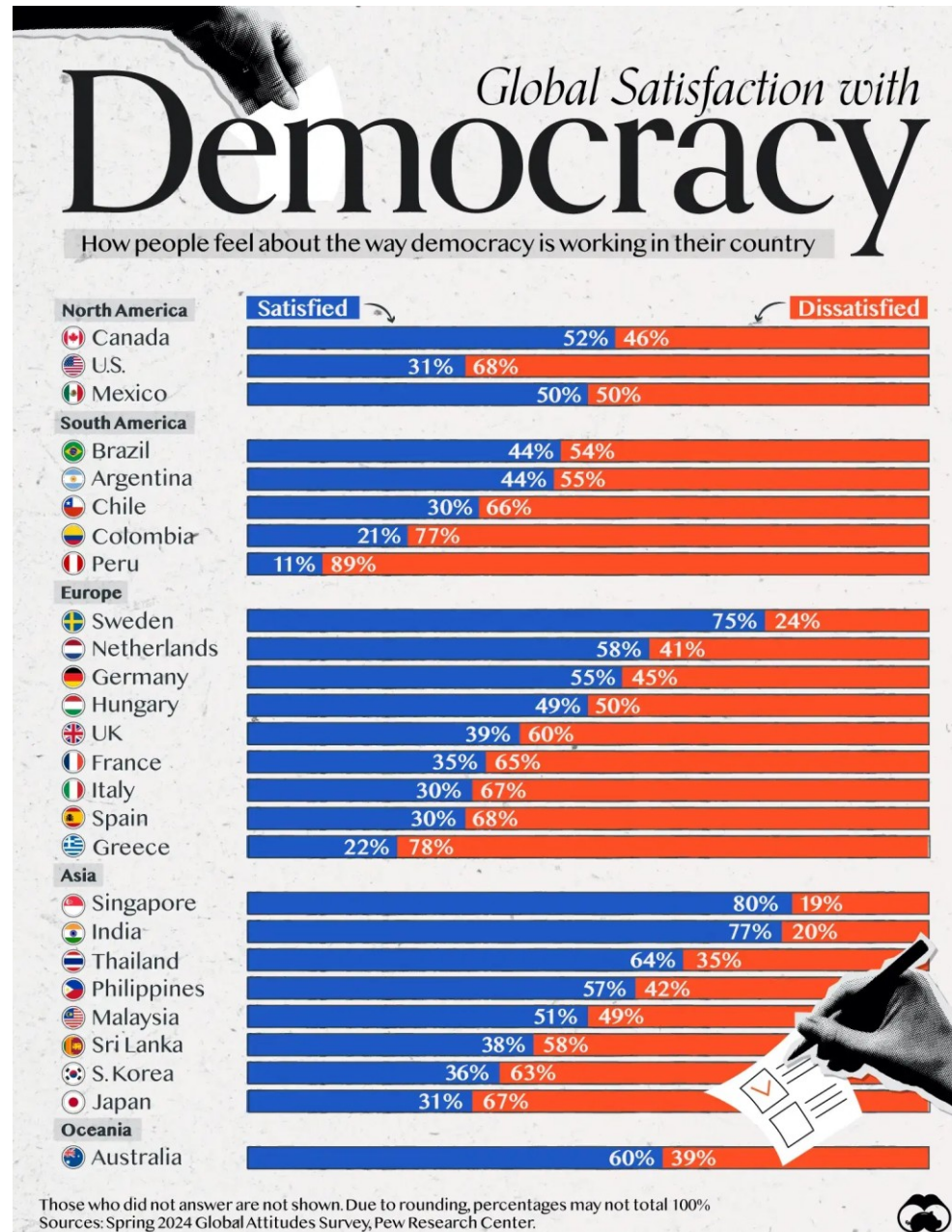
Sept. 3 to 6

If the 2024 presidential election were held today, who would you vote for if the candidates were **Kamala Harris** and **Donald Trump**?



Among likely voters. Shaded areas represent margins of error.

Political disaffection



Examples

- Sociodemographic (age, gender): Germany 2017
- Partisanship: United Kingdom 2019 (Conservatives)
- Cross-pressures (ambivalence): Brazil 2018 (Jair Bolsonaro)
- Political sophistication: India 2019
- Strategic considerations: Canada 2019 (Liberal Party)
- (Political disaffection): Spain 2015 (Podemos)

*party or candidate mentioned benefited from undecidedness

Contextual factors

- Long-standing stability?
- Type of office at stake, the number of candidates/parties
 - Importance (first-order vs. second-order?)
 - Competitiveness of the contest?
 - Implicit attitudes?

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Arcuri et al.

Table 1. Trial Blocks Used in the IAT Task (Study 1)

Block	Type of judgment	Left key	Right key	Number of trials
1 Learning block	Attribute categorization	Negative	Positive	12
2 Learning block	Concept categorization	Rutelli	Berlusconi	18
3 Critical block	Combined categorization	Negative or Rutelli	Positive or Berlusconi	66
4 Learning block	Revised concept categorization	Berlusconi	Rutelli	18
5 Critical block	Revised combined categorization	Negative or Berlusconi	Positive or Rutelli	66

Note. The order of the critical blocks 3 and 5, and accordingly of the learning tasks 2 and 4, was counterbalanced between participants.

Also...

- Less predictable in the last moments (Box-Steffensmeier et al. 2015)
 - Less likely to detect disinformation (Samuel-Azran 2022)
 - Less likely to consume media
- Intense campaigning matters (Henderson and Hillygus, 2016)

Division into three groups...

Abstainers

What reasons do Americans cite for not voting in the 2022 elections?

To what extent was the following a reason you did not vote in this year's congressional elections? (% of U.S. adult citizens who did not vote in the 2022 elections)

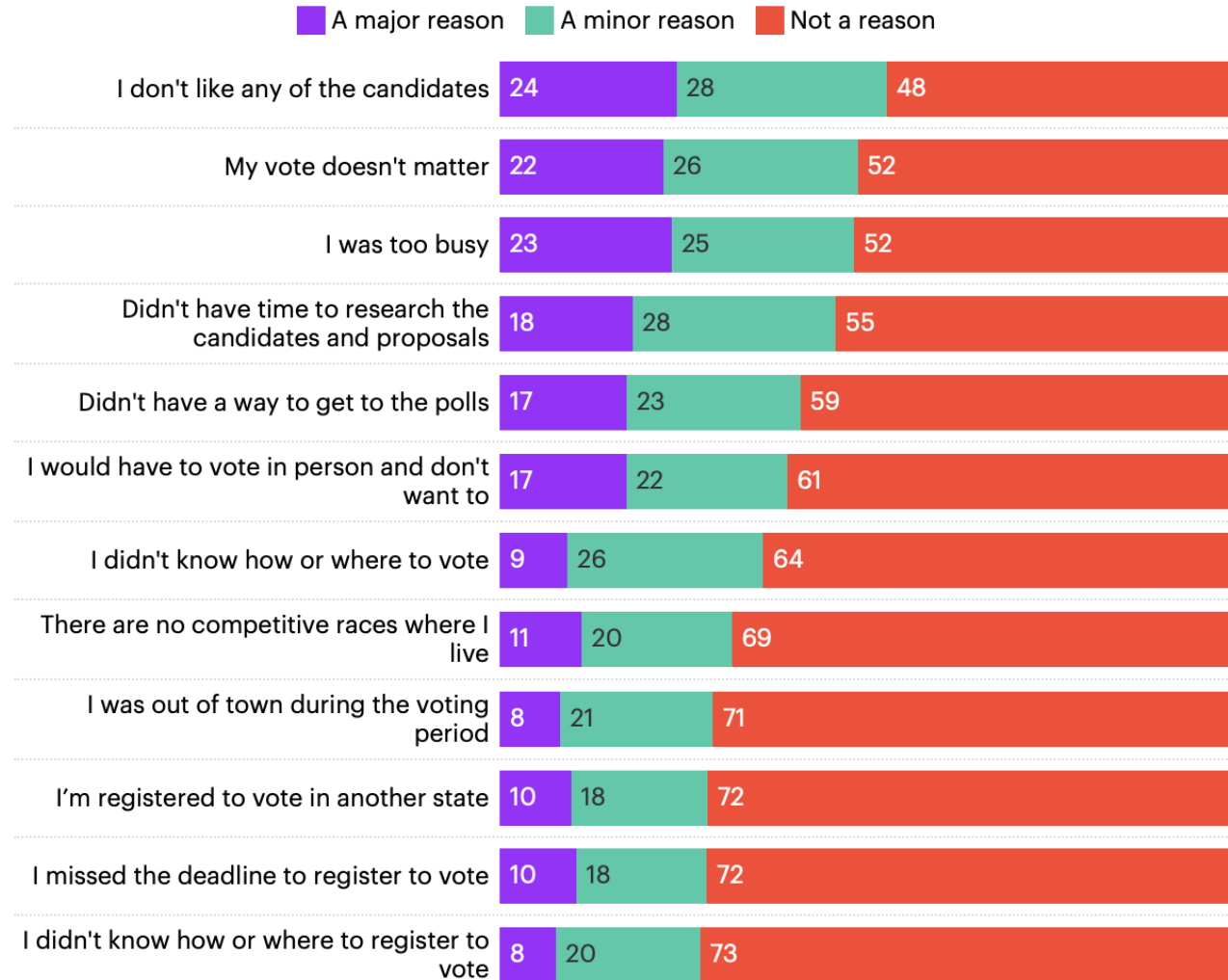


Table 12 Main Reasons for Not Voting, 2000 (Open-ended; multiple responses; percentage of respondents)

	Age Groups						Total
	65+	55-64	45-54	35-44	25-34	18-24	
Lack of interest							
Not interested; didn't care; apathy	14.8	29.0	18.3	19.7	27.3	28.0	25.0
Vote meaningless; doesn't count; election foregone conclusion	6.4	8.4	9.6	10.0	11.4	6.5	9.0
Forgot; unaware	4.2	0.0	0.0	1.2	2.0	3.9	2.3
Too complicated; confusing	0.0	0.0	2.3	2.5	0.7	0.0	0.9
	25.4	37.4	30.2	33.4	41.4	38.4	37.2
Negativity							
No appealing candidates/parties/issues	9.9	13.4	22.7	21.2	14.1	13.9	15.9
Lack of faith/confidence in candidates/parties/leaders	17.7	13.5	21.3	16.7	14.0	6.3	12.8
Lack of information about candidates/parties/issues	0.0	1.6	3.3	5.0	3.1	6.3	4.3
Regional discontent	0.0	3.0	3.0	2.8	0.5	0.8	1.4
	27.6	31.5	50.3	45.7	31.7	27.3	34.4
Personal/Administrative							
Too busy with work/school/family	5.0	3.4	3.1	11.9	13.7	22.6	14.3
Away from riding/province/country	20.3	23.0	9.3	8.0	10.9	7.9	10.4
Registration problems	4.0	3.0	6.7	2.7	5.2	7.4	5.5
Illness, health issues	19.5	5.8	7.7	1.9	2.0	0.4	2.9
Didn't know where or when; polling station problems; transportation	5.7	5.1	2.7	2.5	2.2	4.2	3.3
Moving-related problems	0.0	0.0	2.5	1.1	1.2	0.5	0.9
	54.5	40.3	32.0	28.1	35.2	43.0	37.3
Other							
Religious reasons	5.5	3.0	1.5	2.0	1.1	0.9	1.5
Other; unclassifiable; unclear; none	0.0	0.9	0.8	3.1	1.8	3.6	2.4
	5.5	3.9	2.3	5.1	2.9	4.5	3.9
N =	43	58	109	171	331	347	1 059

Relevance of abstention

- Two assumptions about abstainers:
 - 1) Abstention affects all alternatives in equal measure
 - 2) The voter's preferred alternative will be less likely to win if that voter abstains

Peripheral + core voters

No-Show Paradox (Fishburn and Brams, 1983)

Short-term reasons vs. global decline

- Two arguments for why recent generations are less prone to vote:
 - 1) **Context school** - the result of certain characteristics of elections that particularly affect new voters (less competition, lowering the voting age...) -> P+habit
 - 2) **Generation school** – larger cultural value change in generations (less interest, priorities, voting not perceived as a duty)

Blais and Rubenson (2013) – support for generation school -> young generation less inclined to vote because they are less prone to construct voting as a moral duty and are more sceptical about politicians' responsiveness to their concerns

↳ “People like me don't have any say about what the government does”

“I don't think public officials care much what people like me think.”

Abstainers vs. other groups

1) Abstainers vs. party switchers

⇒ common: political dissatisfaction (general OR with a party they voted for)

2) Abstainers vs. populist voters (Germany – Koch et al. 2023)

⇒ common: (dis)satisfaction with democracy + rejection of mainstream politics

⇒ different: expectations about democracy (as best system + tool), political trust, quality of political information

3) Abstainers vs. right-wing voters

⇒ different: lower in measures of social integration (union membership, self-reported social activity and interpersonal trust)

Satisfaction with the decision

*Party*Politics

Article

Was my decision to vote (or abstain) the right one?

Party Politics
2019, Vol. 25(3) 382–389
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Abstract

This article examines people's assessments, *ex post*, of whether their decision to vote or to abstain in a given election was the right one. We use 22 surveys conducted in 5 different countries (Canada, France, Germany, Spain and Switzerland) in national, supra-national and sub-national elections between 2011 and 2015. We find that the great majority of those who voted were satisfied with their decision to vote while non-voters were more doubtful about the wisdom of their decision to abstain. We also find that those who are interested in politics, who feel that they have a moral duty to vote in elections, and who feel close to a party are more prone to be satisfied with their decision to vote and to be dissatisfied if they chose to abstain.

Keywords

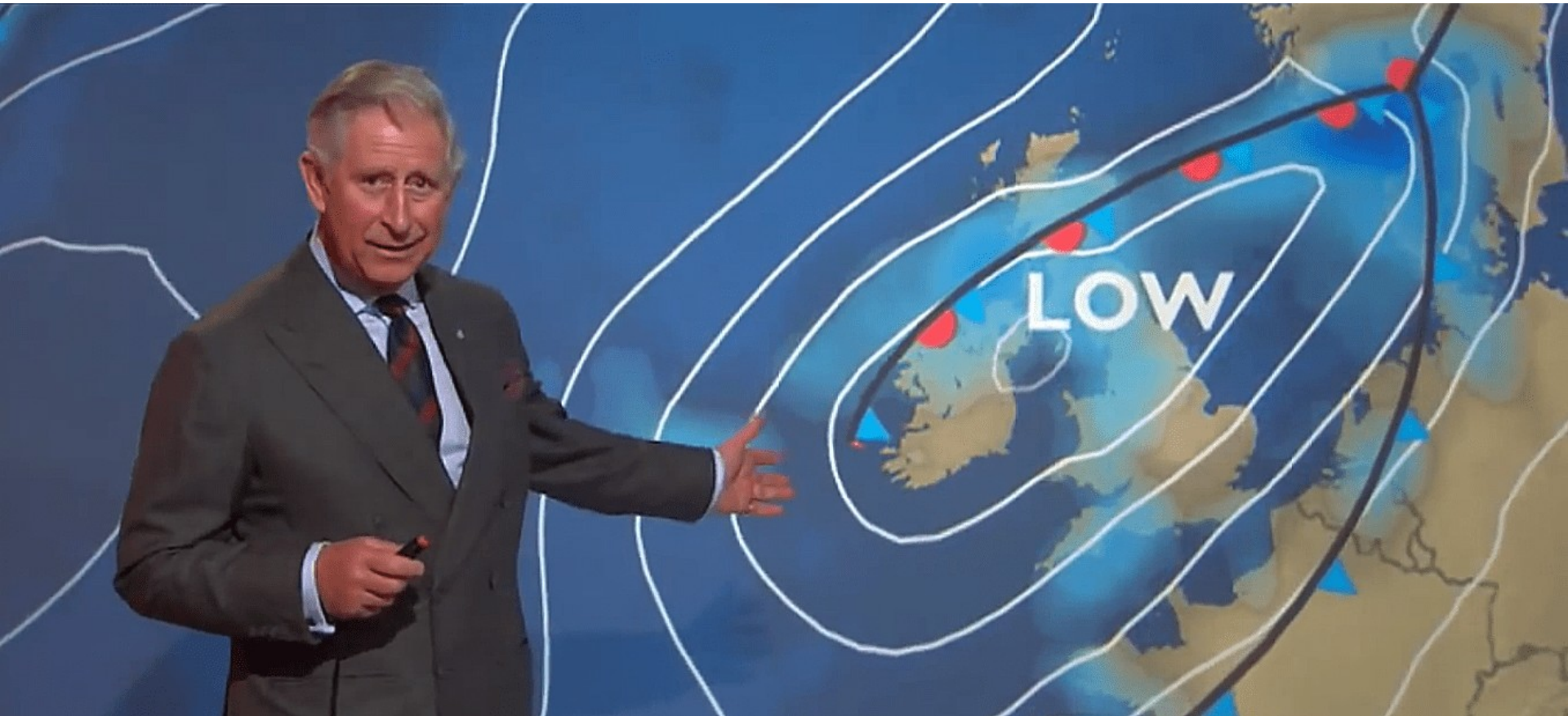
abstain, elections, right decision, turnout, vote

Conclusion

Key Points:

- Importance of understanding the behaviour of undecided voters and abstainers in shaping election outcomes.
- Undecided voters are influenced by multiple factors, from sociodemographic elements to implicit biases.
- The need for distinguishing between more and less-sophisticated undecideds
- Abstention weakens the democratic process, but there are solutions to address it.

Next...



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