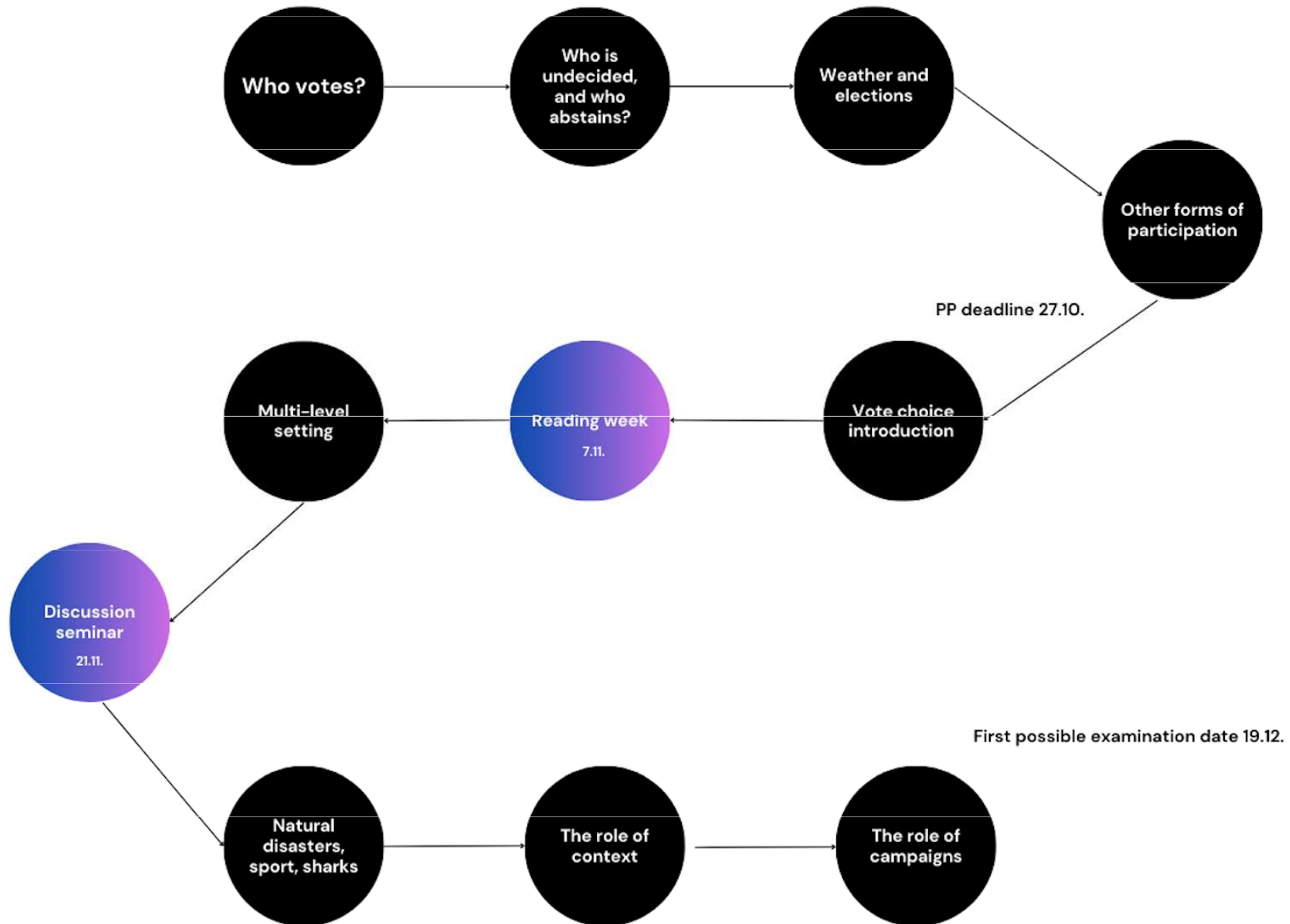


Elections and electoral behavior



M U N I
F S S

Voting in a multi-level electoral setting

Jakub Jusko

Multilevel dynamics of electoral politics

- The need for understanding differential behaviour between different levels of governance
- Especially relevant in federal states (e.g. Belgium, Canada, Germany, the US or Spain) -> the US as the starting point for the other research + shift of authority from the national to the subnational or supranational level (EU)
- **Turnout** -> similar discussion to the first lecture BUT how do factors work in different settings?
- **Vote choice** -> several theories of how voters behave and why they defect (fluctuate) in party voting in different settings

Turnout

Turnout

Why is turnout (usually) higher in one election type and lower in the other?

- Conventional wisdom -> participation is lower at the subnational (regional, local) or supranational (European) level
- There is less at stake in non-national elections -> “second-order election” theory
- Evidence:
 - 9 federations (2003-2006) -> less than 10 points difference between regional and national elections (but sometimes regional elections showed higher turnout)
 - 21 European countries (1990-2014) -> around 10 points difference between local and national elections (except France)

Table 1A. Comparison of national and EU elections turnout in member states

Country/Year	2004	2009	2014	2019	Mean diff.
Austria	42.43 (84.27)	45.97 (78.81)	45.39 (74.91)	59.80 (75.59)	30.00
Belgium	90.81 (91.63)	90.39 (89.22)	89.64 (89.37)	88.47 (88.38)	-0.18
Bulgaria	29.22 (55.76)	38.99 (60.64)	35.84 (51.05)	32.64 (53.85)	21.15
Croatia		20.84 (54.17)	25.24 (60.82)	29.85 (46.9)	21.49
Cyprus	72.50 (89.00)	59.40 (78.70)	43.97 (66.74)	44.99 (65.72)	19.83
Czech Republic	28.3 (57.95)	28.22 (62.6)	18.2 (59.48)	28.72 (60.84)	34.36
Denmark	47.89 (84.54)	59.54 (86.59)	56.32 (85.89)	66.08 (84.60)	27.95
Estonia	26.83 (58.24)	43.90 (61.91)	36.52 (64.23)	37.6 (63.67)	25.80
Finland	39.43 (66.71)	38.60 (65.02)	39.1 (66.85)	40.8 (68.73)	27.35
France	42.76 (60.32)	40.63 (59.98)	42.43 (57.22)	50.12 (48.7)	12.57
Germany	43.00 (77.65)	43.27 (70.78)	48.1 (71.53)	61.38 (76.15)	25.09
Greece	63.22 (76.62)	52.54 (70.92)	59.97 (63.94)	58.69 (57.78)	8.71
Hungary	38.50 (70.52)	36.31 (64.38)	28.97 (61.84)	43.36 (69.67)	29.82
Ireland	58.58 (62.57)	58.64 (67.03)	52.44 (65.09)	49.70 (62.77)	9.53
Italy	71.72 (83.62)	66.47 (80.54)	57.22 (75.19)	54.50 (72.93)	15.59
Latvia	41.34 (71.17)	53.70 (64.72)	30.24 (58.8)	33.53 (54.58)	22.62
Lithuania	48.38 (46.04)	20.98 (48.59)	47.35 (52.93)	53.48 (47.8)	6.29
Luxembourg	91.35 (91.68)	90.76 (90.93)	85.55 (91.15)	84.24 (89.66)	2.88
Malta	82.39 (95.70)	78.79 (93.30)	74.8 (92.95)	72.70 (92.06)	16.33
Netherlands	39.26 (80.04)	36.75 (75.40)	37.32 (74.56)	41.93 (81.93)	39.17
Poland	20.87 (40.57)	24.53 (53.88)	23.83 (50.92)	45.68 (61.74)	23.05
Portugal	38.60 (64.26)	36.77 (59.68)	33.67 (55.84)	30.75 (48.57)	22.14
Romania	29.47 (39.2)	27.67 (39.2)	32.44 (41.76)	51.20 (31.95)	2.83
Slovakia	16.97 (70.07)	19.64 (58.84)	13.05 (59.11)	22.74 (65.81)	45.36
Slovenia	28.35 (60.64)	28.37 (63.10)	24.55 (51.73)	28.89 (52.64)	29.49
Spain	45.14 (75.66)	44.87 (75.32)	43.81 (73.20)	60.73 (71.76)	25.35
Sweden	37.85 (80.11)	45.53 (84.63)	51.07 (85.81)	55.27 (87.18)	37.00
Average	46.74(70.56)	45.63(68.85)	43.59(66.77)	49.78(66.00)	21.54

Note: Romania and Bulgaria had their first EU elections in 2007, Croatia had their first EU elections in 2013. National elections turnout is shown in parenthesis and was obtained from the closest year of national elections to the EU election in a country. If there was a same distance between two national elections, the one preceding EU elections was chosen. Mean difference represents the overall difference in a country comparing national and EU elections between 2004 and 2019.

Source: EU election results, 2024; Parties and Elections, 2024.

Aggregate level

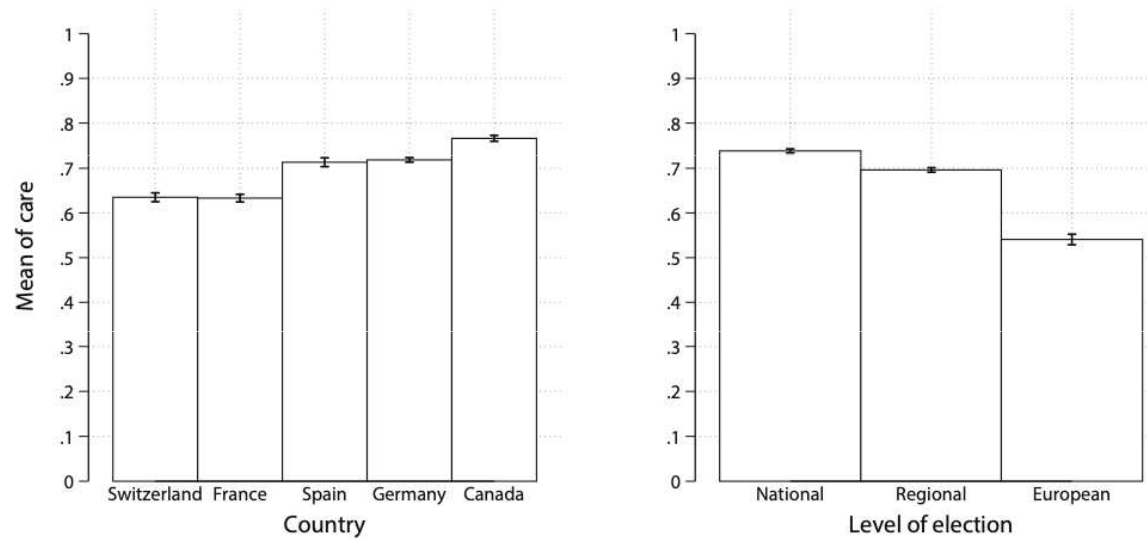
- Some aggregate level factors are affecting differently voter turnout:
 - Population size better explaining T at subnational level
 - Political factors (campaign expenditures) better explaining T at national level
 - Turnout gap smaller when there is more at stake (local autonomy index) -> not as significant as...
 - Synchronisation of electoral cycles
 - Compulsory voting and closeness (through interest) -> moderation effect is stronger in European elections compared to national
 - Decentralisation (in Spain and Canada) -> turnout in regional elections
- Some others are not:
 - Degree of (regional) authority
 - Revenues and spending of reg. entities (both turnout in national elections)

Individual level

- **Henderson and McEwen (2015)** – 29 regions (Canada, UK, Spain)
 - Regional identity
 - Perceived importance of the election => reg. elections turnout

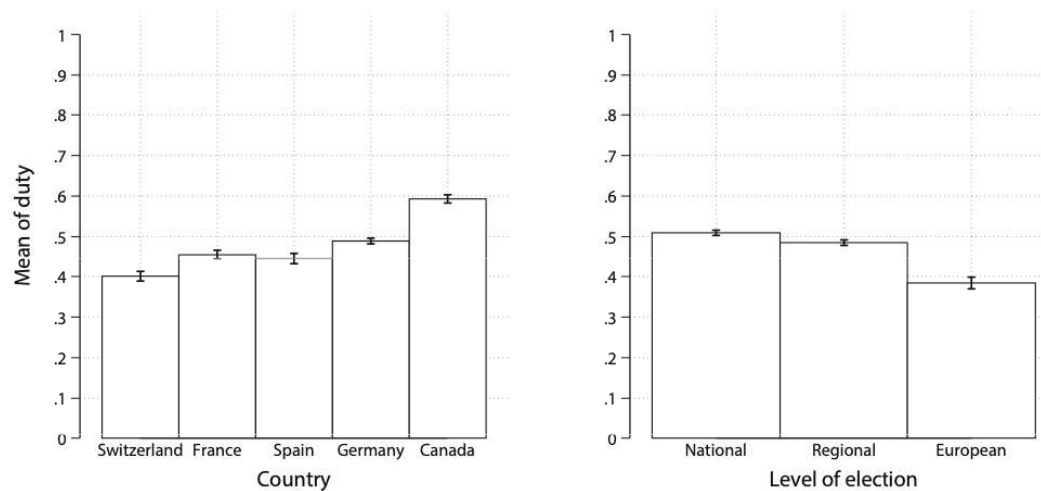
- **Blais and Daoust (2020)** – 2011-2015 - regional, national, subnational
 - Little variance in the means of predispositions for voting -> political interest, D, B, C (rational choice theory)
 - Exception -> D and B in European elections is smaller!

FIGURE 5.1 Care by country and level of election



Note: The 95% confidence intervals are included.

FIGURE 4.1 Duty by country and level of election



Note: The 95% confidence intervals are included.

Individual level

- **Franklin and Hobolt (2011):** elections as habitual activity
 - Those, who vote in EU elections have acquired a habit of voting at a previous occasion (national election mostly)
 - Potential problem when first elections of a voter are EU elections
- **Kostelka et al. (2019):** gender gap?
 - No gender gap in national elections
 - Women systematically vote less in supranational (EU)

Overall, supranational (EU) elections turnout more sensitive to changes in individual characteristics (regional less -> D or C almost the same)

Individual level

- Kostelka et al. (2019): gender gap?

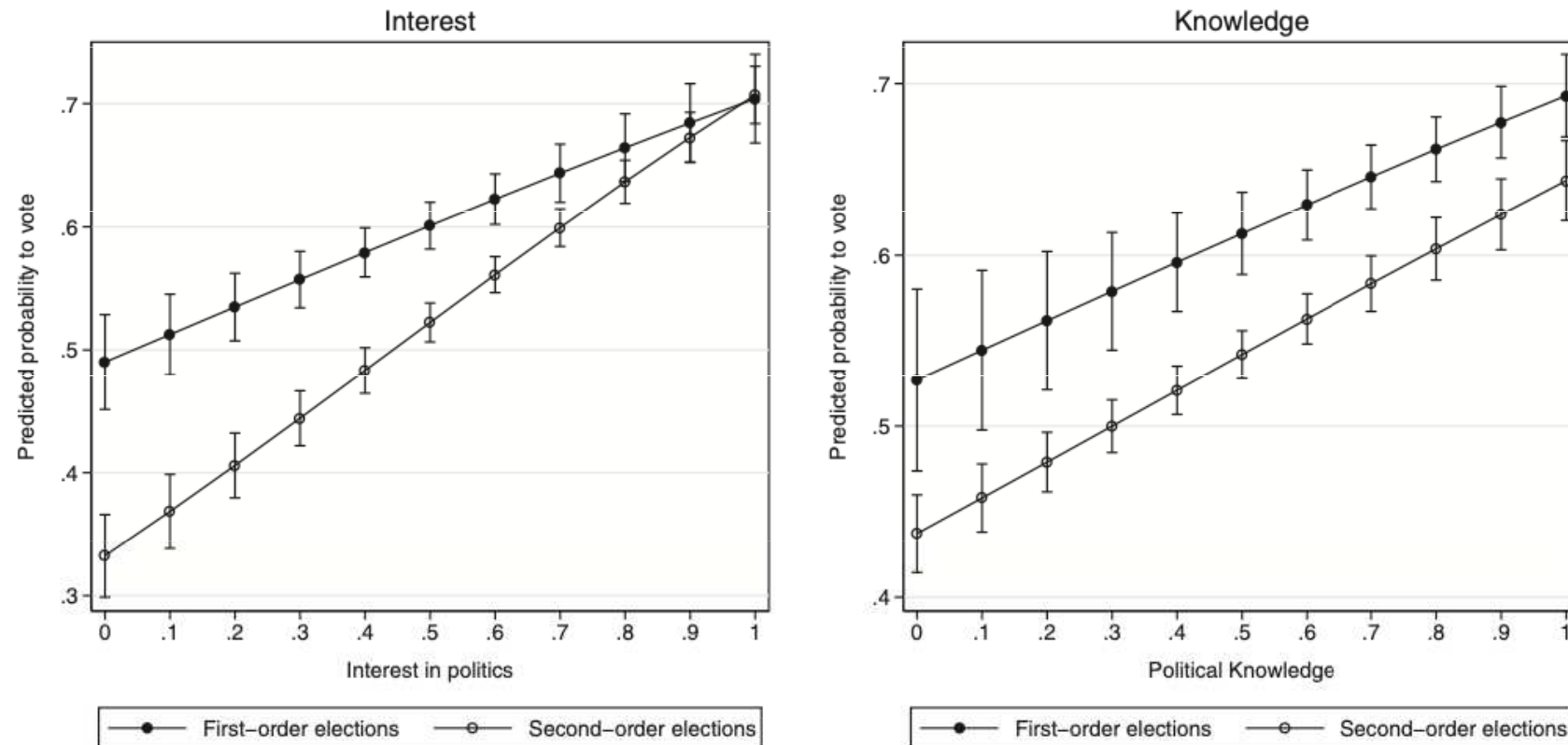


Figure 2. Effect of political interest and knowledge by election type.

Individual level

- Nonnemacher (2021): voter fatigue

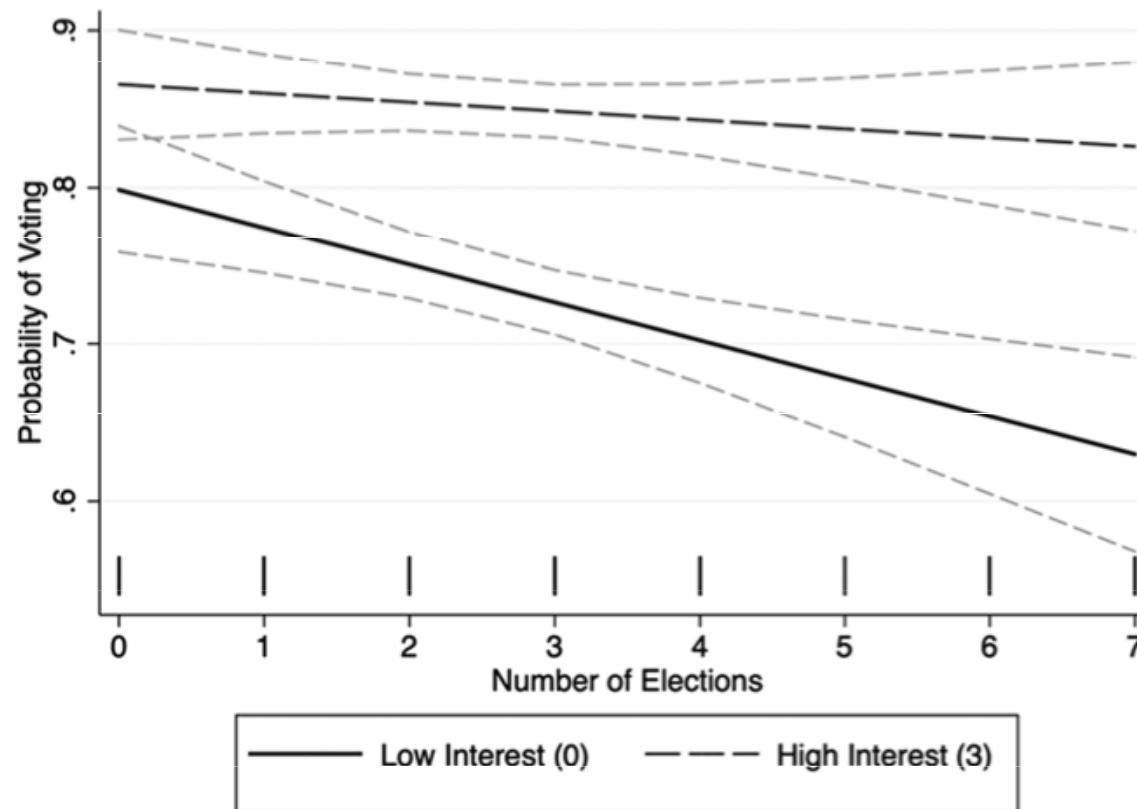


Figure 2. Effect of number of elections moderated by political interest.

Note: Shaded areas represent 90% confidence intervals.

Vote choice

Vote choice

- Start of the theory in the US -> comparison of general and mid-term elections
 - **Surge and decline theory**
 - **Referendum theory**
 - **Balancing theory**
- ➔ Difference in the US and European elections -> the role of the **electoral cycle + multiparty system**

The second-order theory by Reif and Schmitt (1980)

Surge and decline

- **A. Campbell (1960)**

- Reasons for mid-term loss of presidential party:

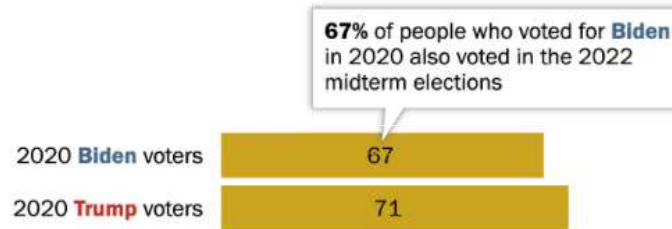
- level of political stimulation
- political interest
- party identification

⇒ Presidential elections important and “high stimulus” -> who is running the country

⇒ Normal vote vs. short-term deviation

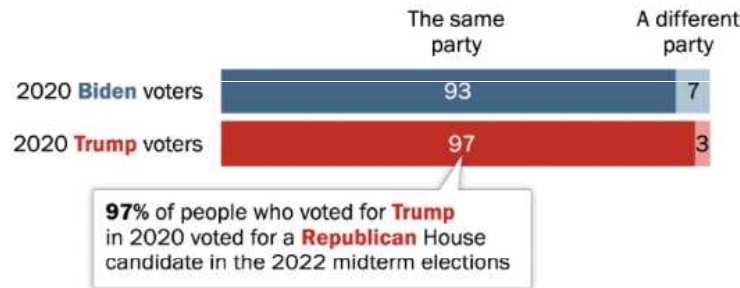
Republican House candidates benefited from a turnout advantage in 2022

Among 2020 voters, % who voted in the 2022 midterm elections



Small shares of partisan voters defected between 2020 and 2022

Among 2020 voters, % who voted for ___ in 2022

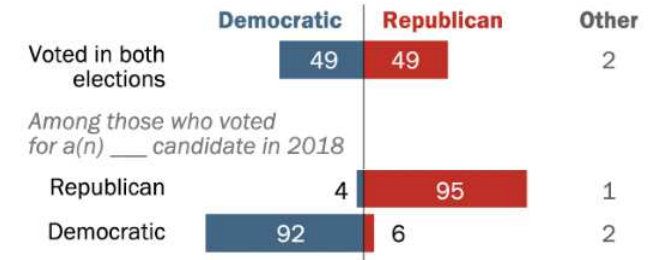


Notes: Based on 7,041 adult citizens who were ages 18 or older in 2018 and for whom reliable data on turnout and vote choice are available for the 2018, 2020, and 2022 general elections. Turnout was verified using official state election records. Vote choice for all years is from a post-election survey with additional data from panelist profile surveys. Source: Surveys of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 12-17, 2020, and Nov. 16-27, 2022, plus data from panelist profile surveys.

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Most vote choices for U.S. House in 2022 were consistent with 2018

Among those who voted in both the 2018 and 2022 midterms, % who voted for a(n) ___ candidate in 2022



Notes: Based on 7,041 adult citizens who were ages 18 or older in 2018 and for whom reliable data on turnout and vote choice are available for the 2018, 2020, and 2022 general elections. Turnout was verified using official state election records. Vote choice for all years is from a post-election survey with additional data from panelist profile surveys.

Source: Surveys of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 7-16, 2018, and Nov. 16-27, 2022, plus data from panelist profile surveys.

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Referendum and accountability

- **Tufte (1975)**
- Mid-term elections serving as a referendum:
 - Evaluation of the president's performance
 - Evaluation of the performance of the economy
- Accountability at the heart of a healthy democracy -> voters are aware which level is responsible for which domain -> reward/punish mechanisms
- Evidence from Canada, France, Germany, Spain (González-Sirois and Bélanger, 2019; Golder et al., 2017)
- Related to economic voting and pledges

Referendum and accountability

Duval and Pétry

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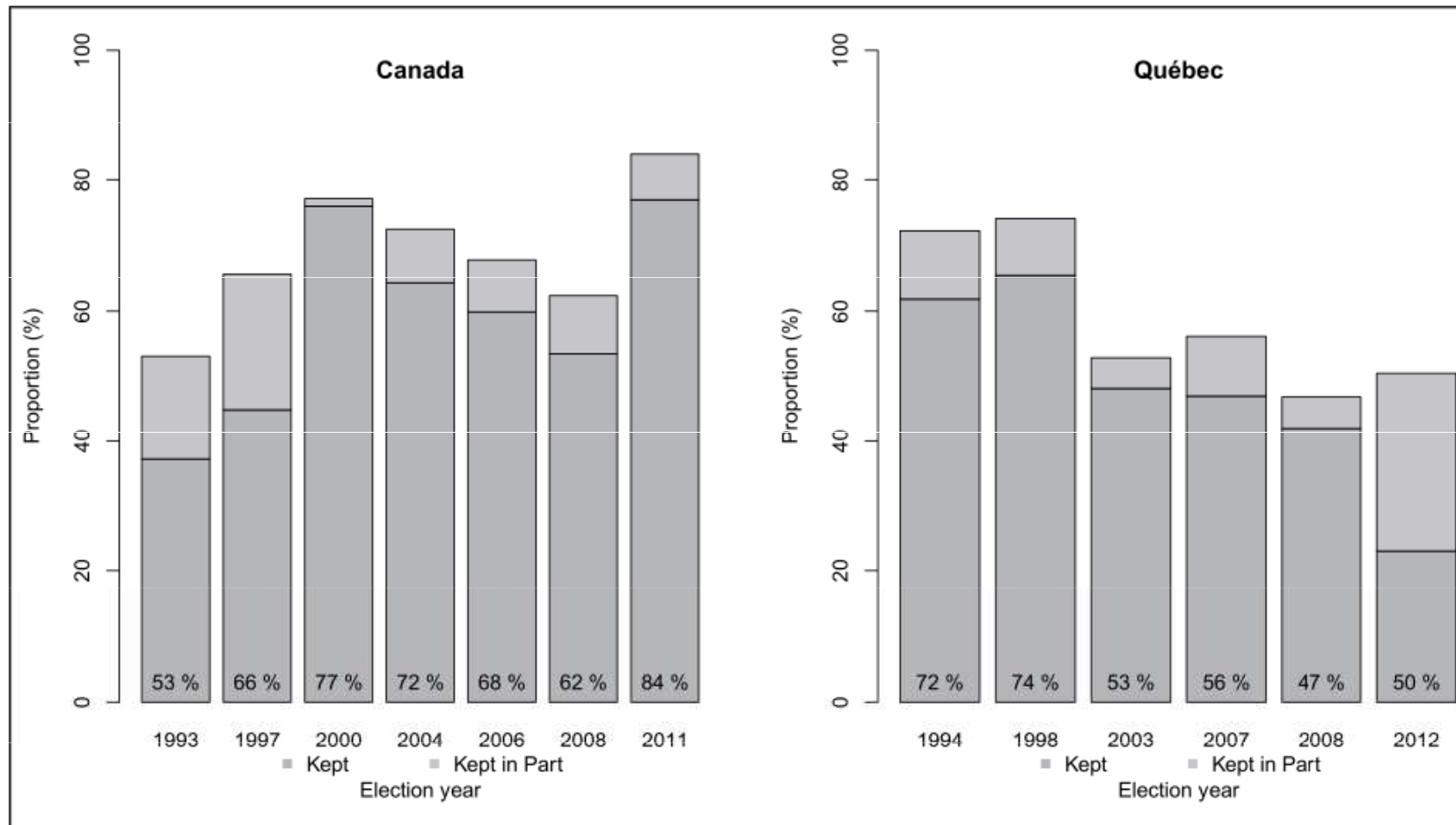


Figure 1. Histogram of the Fulfillment by Government.

Balancing

- **Alesina and Rosenthal 1989, 1995**
- Voters split their ticket between elections by supporting one party for the presidency and another one for the Congress -> aim for divided government
⇒ Promoting policy moderation, seeking "balance"
- Difficult to show the motivation but...
 - Kern and Hainmueller (2006) – midterm losses (in state elections) by national party more prevalent when they control lower and upper chambers
 - Canada (1935-1953) – five wins at national level but not always in provincial governments

Second-order election theory

- Low stimulus elections arguments developed in the US context generalised by **Reif and Schmitt (1980)** -> first EP elections in 1979
- Central idea: there is “less at stake” in SOE than in FOE (typically national parliamentary) -> for voters, media, parties
 - ⇒ Exposure to campaigns in SOE should be lower, mostly caused by inactivity of media and parties
 - ⇒ The vote in SOE is shaped by how people feel about national politics (the incumbent party at the national level) -> national level considerations prominent in other levels as well

Less important => room for all kinds of considerations not related with the policies representatives are responsible for (weather, ballot order,...)

Second-order election theory

- Main point of reference for the study of less important elections – local, regional, EU, by-elections, mid-term elections
- However, not all are equally **unimportant** -> the concept of local elections as “one and three-quarters order” (Heath et al., 1999)
- Other properties:
 - The role of electoral cycle
 - Multiparty setting – party size important -> government parties ↓
 - > big parties ↓
 - > smaller parties ↑
- Mechanisms: protest voting (voting with the boot), voting with the heart

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- **Mueller and Louwense (2020)**

- 171 cycles in 22 countries -> government parties lose support during the first half of the electoral cycle, but at most partially recover from their initial losses.
- Stronger effects with single-party governments
- Harder to recover since the 2000s

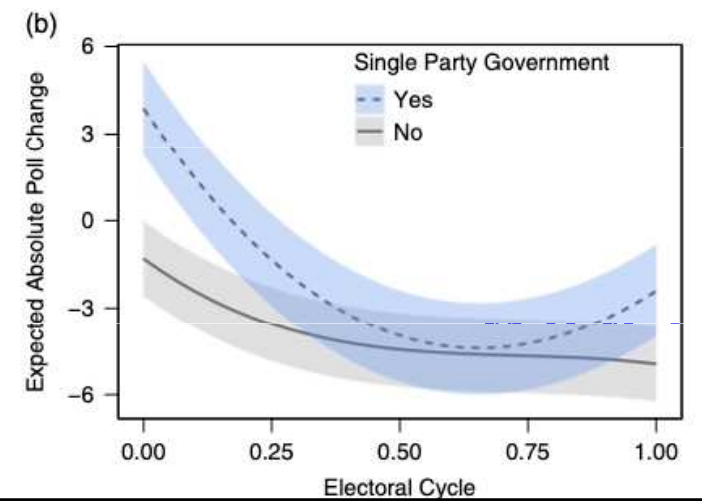
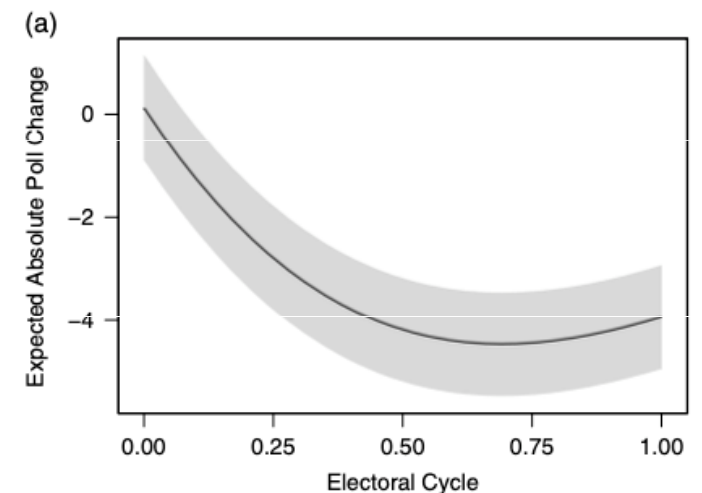
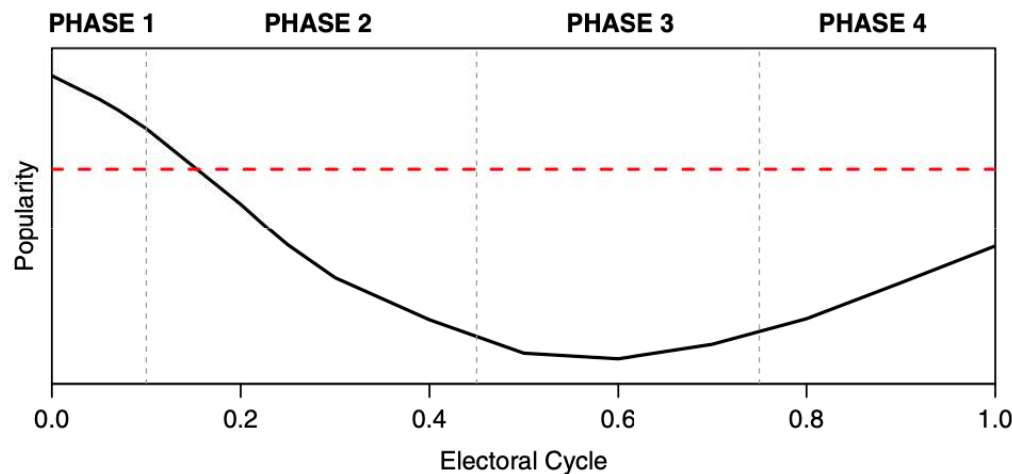
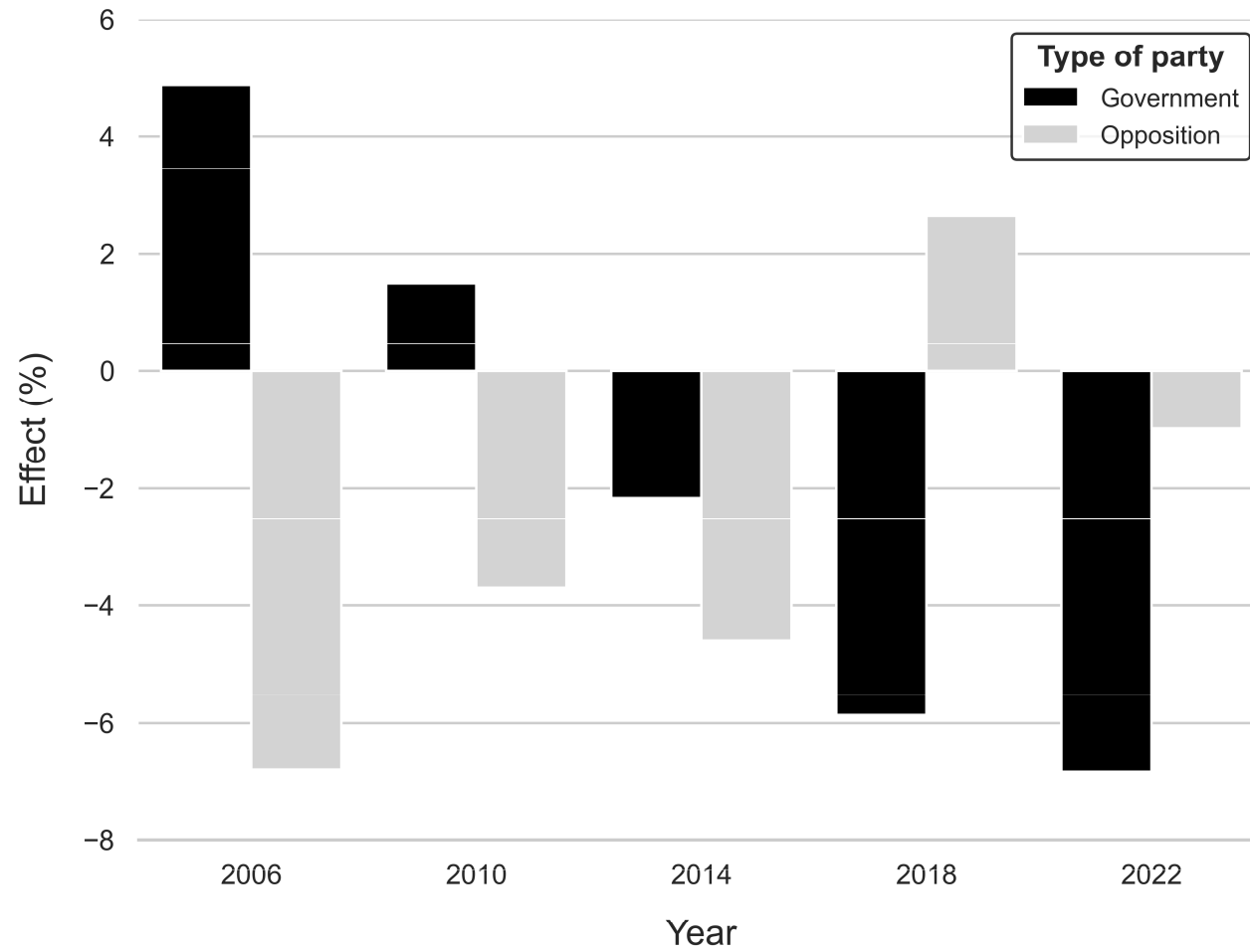


Figure 1. The expected popularity of government parties throughout an electoral cycle.
Note: The electoral cycle ranges from the government inauguration date to the next election date.



Second-order election theory

- A lots of evidence, but also exceptions -> 2004 EU elections, regional elections in some states,...
- **Consequences of SOE for FOE:**
 - SOE and impact on national party systems -> “midwife assisting in the birth of new parties” (FN, UKIP, green parties,...)
 - SOE and further depressing of turnout in FOE
 - Better chances for getting into the national parliament?
Hájek (2017) Multiple office holding
 - Positive effects -> plenary sessions, bills ↑
 - Negative effects -> committee meetings, addressed speeches ↓

Summary

- Multiple levels, different behaviours
- The role of SOE in the perceived importance by the voters and the need for participation
- Different theoretical foundations for explaining defection in SOE -> surge and decline, referendum, balance or general SOE theory
- Often important a particular context – media attention, time in electoral cycle, which type of SOE, which country,...

Next...



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