

Under Pressure

Group-Based Cross-Pressure and Voter Volatility

Ruth Dassonneville

Université de Montréal

REPRESENT Birmingham/Nottingham seminar
23 March 2023

OXFORD

Voters Under Pressure

Group-Based Cross-Pressure and
Electoral Volatility

Ruth Dassonneville

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

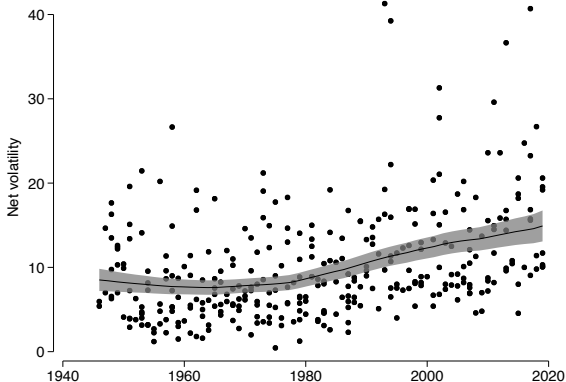


Outline for the talk

1. The puzzle.
2. The argument in brief.
3. Measurement and methods.
4. Results.
5. Conclusion.

The puzzle

Figure: Net volatility over time



Note: Dots are observations of net volatility in elections in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

The puzzle

- ▶ **Individual level data** show a same underlying trend.
 - ▶ Self-reported vote switching between elections. [results](#)
 - ▶ Late-deciding. [results](#)
- ▶ What explains this **increased uncertainty and volatility** in voters' electoral choices?
- ▶ How have voters' **decision making processes** changed to produce more volatility?

How previous work has explained change

How previous work has explained change

1. The effect of **sociodemographic variables** has weakened.

not much evidence

How previous work has explained change

1. The effect of **sociodemographic variables** has weakened.
not much evidence
2. Weaker **partisan attachments**. mixed evidence

How previous work has explained change

1. The effect of **sociodemographic variables** has weakened.
not much evidence
2. Weaker **partisan attachments**. mixed evidence
+ Then what causes partisan attachments to weaken?

How previous work has explained change

1. The effect of **sociodemographic variables** has weakened.
not much evidence
2. Weaker **partisan attachments**. mixed evidence
+ Then what causes partisan attachments to weaken?
3. Decline of long-term factors has been compensated by an increased importance of **short-term factors**. not much evidence

The argument: Intuition

“[C]itizens today no longer react as a group and are **no longer bound by structures**, but decide in an individual and volatile way about the fate of politicians whose job is more and more limited to gaining votes.”

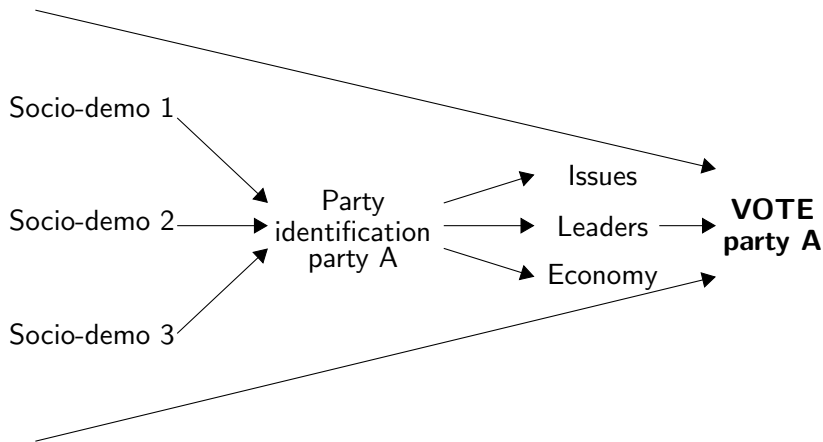
— Jean-Luc Dehaene, former Prime Minister of Belgium



©Stephan Vanfleteren

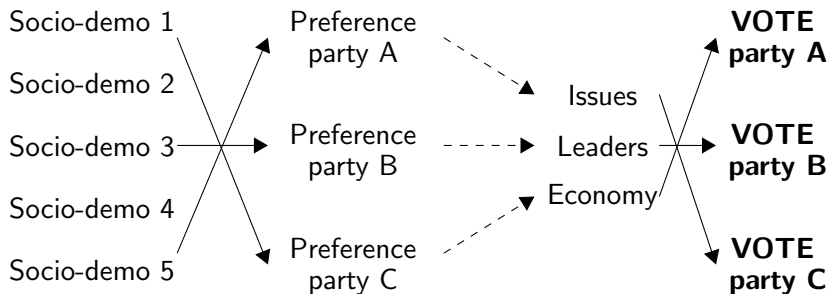
The argument: Group-based cross-pressures and unconstrained vote choices

Figure: A strongly constrained voting decision



The argument: Group-based cross-pressures and unconstrained vote choices

Figure: An unconstrained voting decision



The argument: Group-based cross-pressures and unconstrained vote choices

- ▶ How **constrained** a vote choice is, is crucially driven by what happens at the front-end of the funnel of causality.

The argument: Group-based cross-pressures and unconstrained vote choices

- ▶ How **constrained** a vote choice is, is crucially driven by what happens at the front-end of the funnel of causality.
- ▶ Socio-demographic characteristics and social identities matter.

The argument: Group-based cross-pressures and unconstrained vote choices

- ▶ How **constrained** a vote choice is, is crucially driven by what happens at the front-end of the funnel of causality.
- ▶ Socio-demographic characteristics and social identities matter.
- ▶ In particular how the effects of different socio-demographic determinants relate to each other.

The argument: Group-based cross-pressures and unconstrained vote choices

- ▶ How **constrained** a vote choice is, is crucially driven by what happens at the front-end of the funnel of causality.
- ▶ Socio-demographic characteristics and social identities matter.
- ▶ In particular how the effects of different socio-demographic determinants relate to each other.
- ▶ **Group-based cross-pressures** are key.

The argument: Group-based cross-pressures and unconstrained vote choices

- ▶ How **constrained** a vote choice is, is crucially driven by what happens at the front-end of the funnel of causality.
- ▶ Socio-demographic characteristics and social identities matter.
- ▶ In particular how the effects of different socio-demographic determinants relate to each other.
- ▶ **Group-based cross-pressures** are key.
- ▶ Group-based CP subsequently has **trickle-down effects** in the funnel of causality.

When do group-based cross-pressure increase?

- ▶ When voters are **no longer choosing based on a single group characteristic** or identity. As a consequence of depillarisation and a decline of parties' ancillary organizations (labor unions, church).
- ▶ When the **number of social identities** that is politically salient increases (education, gender, age, ethnicity, sexuality,...).



Source: www.liberas.eu

Expectations

1. Voters have become **more group-based cross-pressured over time**

Expectations

1. Voters have become **more group-based cross-pressured over time** (especially in countries where volatility has increased strongly).

Expectations

1. Voters have become **more group-based cross-pressured over time** (especially in countries where volatility has increased strongly).
2. Short-term factors *also* provide less guidance for the more cross-pressured.

Expectations

1. Voters have become **more group-based cross-pressured over time** (especially in countries where volatility has increased strongly).
2. Short-term factors *also* provide less guidance for the more cross-pressured.
3. Higher levels of group-based cross-pressure are associated with a **higher likelihood of vote switching**.

Measuring group-based cross-pressure

A focus on cross-pressures that arise from multiple **group memberships** (or cross-cutting cleavages, cf. Powell 1976).

Measuring group-based cross-pressure

A focus on cross-pressures that arise from multiple **group memberships** (or cross-cutting cleavages, cf. Powell 1976).

Measurement strategy:

- ▶ Brader, Tucker & Therriault (2014): 'individual-level measure of cumulative partisan pressures arising from social group memberships.'
- ▶ **Cross-pressure score.**
- ▶ Derived from voter survey data.
- ▶ Takes into account variation in predicted probabilities to support different parties based on social group memberships.
- ▶ Empirically, the measure correlates with ambivalence between parties – not so much alienation (dislike of all parties).

Measuring group-based cross-pressure

Table: Examples of respondents' socio-demographic profile and their CP score

Sex	Age	Income	Religious denomination	Education	South	Race	Vote choice	CP score
F	21	0 to 16 pct	Other and none	High school	0	Black	DEM	0.0008148
F	48	34 to 67 pct	Jewish	College	0	White	DEM	0.1859461
M	60	68 to 95 pct	Catholic	Some college	1	White	REP	0.5016213
M	38	34 to 67 pct	Protestant	Some college	1	White	REP	0.5019344
F	66	17 to 33 pct	Catholic	High school	1	White	DEM	0.9954302
M	46	68 to 95 pct	Protestant	Some college	1	Hispanic	REP	0.9959439

Data and outcome variables

Data

- ▶ Election survey data (repeated cross-sections) from Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Great-Britain, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United States.
- ▶ Multiple decades.

Data and outcome variables

Data

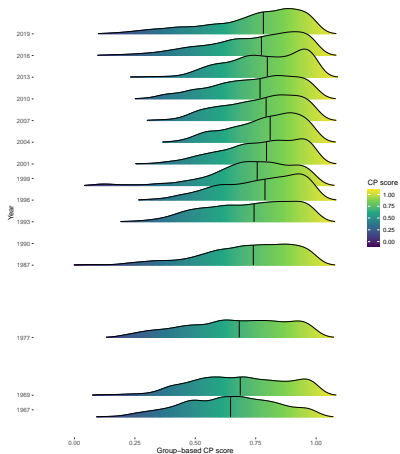
- ▶ Election survey data (repeated cross-sections) from Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Great-Britain, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United States.
- ▶ Multiple decades.

Outcome variables

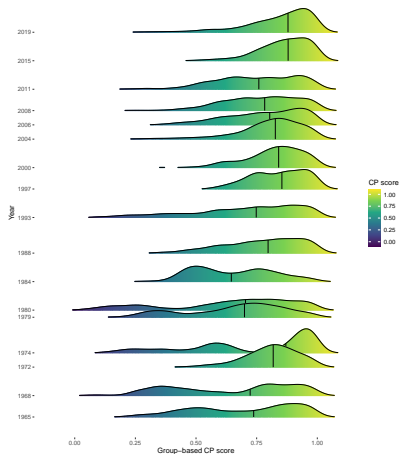
- ▶ Vote switching (current vote versus recalled vote, complemented with panel data).
- ▶ Self-reported timing of vote choice.

Results: Higher levels of group-based cross-pressure? Yes!

(a) Australia

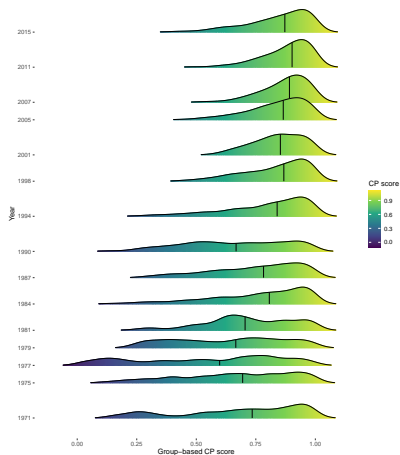


(b) Canada

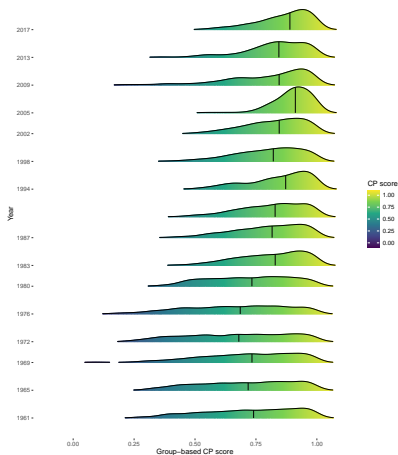


Results: Higher levels of group-based cross-pressure? Yes!

(c) Denmark

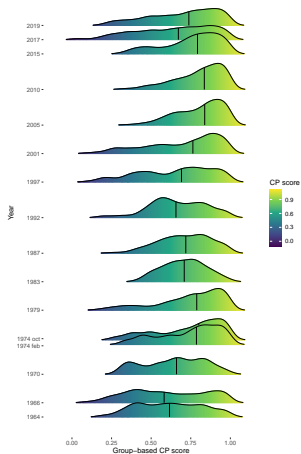


(d) Germany

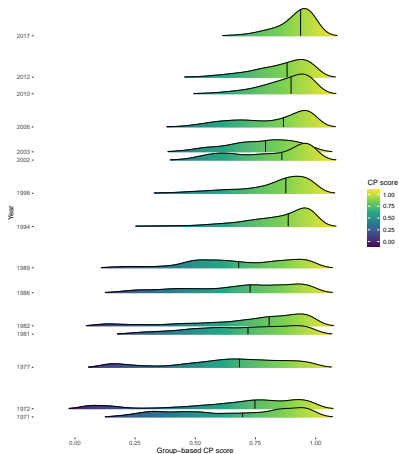


Results: Higher levels of group-based cross-pressure? Yes!

(e) Great-Britain

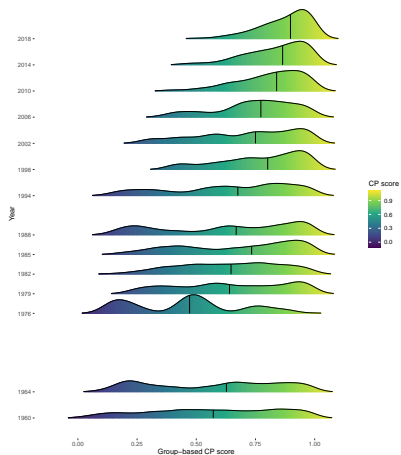


(f) The Netherlands

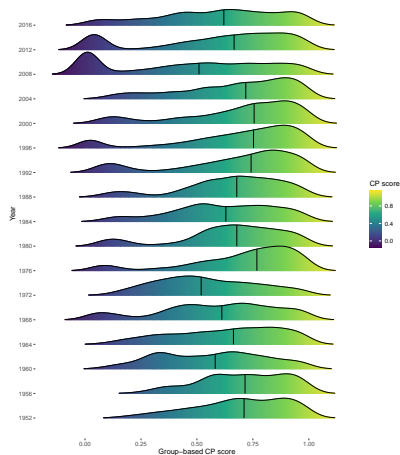


Results: Higher levels of group-based cross-pressure? Yes!

(g) Sweden



(h) United States



Results: Higher levels of group-based cross-pressure? Yes!

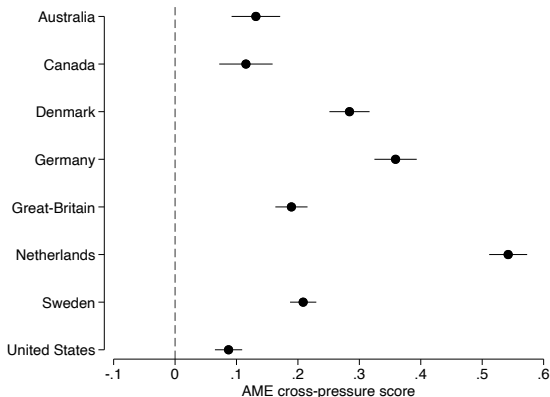
- ▶ Increase in group-based CP in all continental European countries.
- ▶ More moderate in Australia and Canada (also a more moderate increase in volatility).
- ▶ *No* increase in the United States (also maps trend in volatility in the US).

Results: Do group-based cross-pressured voters lack constraint? Yes!

- ▶ Less partisan. [results](#)
- ▶ Group-based CP is positively associated with CP based on short-term factors (leaders, economy). [results](#)

Results: Are group-based cross-pressured voters deciding later? Yes!

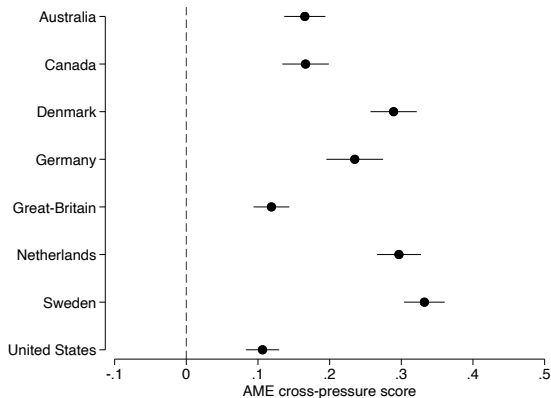
Figure: Marginal effect of cross-pressure on likelihood to decide late



Note: Marginal effect of shifting the cross-pressure score from the minimum (0) to the maximum (1) value on the likelihood of switching. Estimates from country-specific bivariate linear probability models.

Results: Are group-based cross-pressured voters switching more? Yes!

Figure: Marginal effect of cross-pressure on likelihood to switch parties



Note: Marginal effect of shifting the cross-pressure score from the minimum (0) to the maximum (1) value on the likelihood of switching. Estimates from country-specific bivariate linear probability models.

Results: Are group-based cross-pressured voters switching more? Yes!

Results are robust under large number of tests

- ▶ Controlling for time trend in volatility.
- ▶ Also holds within elections (election FE).
- ▶ Still an effect when controlling for partisanship.
- ▶ Stronger predictor of vote switching than other theories (cognitive mobilization, frustration).
- ▶ Also an association when using panel data.

Results: Are group-based cross-pressured voters switching more? Yes!

Table: Explaining party-switching in UK panel studies

	All panels		Excluding 2015–17	
Group-based CP score	0.093*** (0.015)	0.075*** (0.015)	0.093** (0.029)	0.083** (0.031)
Partisan		-0.150*** (0.009)		-0.163*** (0.030)
Panel FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
N	21541	20266	4913	4125
R ²	0.009	0.024	0.016	0.027

Robust standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Conclusion: Main findings

- ▶ Evidence that highlights the limitations of existing explanations of change.
- ▶ Group-based cross-pressures have **increased over time**, in countries where volatility has also increased.
- ▶ Suggestive evidence of **trickle-down effects** within the funnel of causality.
- ▶ Group-based cross-pressure is associated in expected ways with **late-deciding** and **vote switching**.

Limitations and future research directions

- ▶ Contextual variation, trends in the US contrast with those of other countries.

Limitations and future research directions

- ▶ Contextual variation, trends in the US contrast with those of other countries.
- ▶ Which characteristics, in particular, lead to feelings of cross-pressure?





Limitations and future research directions

- ▶ Contextual variation, trends in the US contrast with those of other countries.
- ▶ Which characteristics, in particular, lead to feelings of cross-pressure?
- ▶ Experimental work is needed to establish the causal connection between cross-pressure and vote switching more firmly.

Limitations and future research directions

- ▶ Contextual variation, trends in the US contrast with those of other countries.
- ▶ Which characteristics, in particular, lead to feelings of cross-pressure?
- ▶ Experimental work is needed to establish the causal connection between cross-pressure and vote switching more firmly.
- ▶ Can parties foster or soften cross-pressures through group appeals?



-  `ruth.dassonneville@umontreal.ca`
-  `@r_dassonneville`
-  `ruthdassonneville.netlify.app`
-  Order the book on OUP!

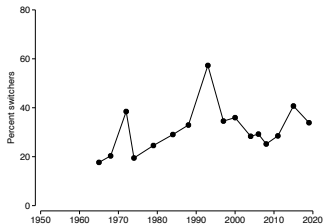
Additional slides

Trend in self-reported switching (1)

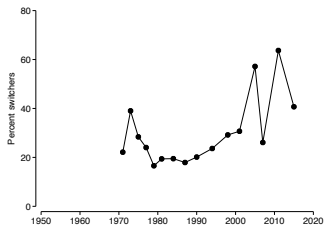
(a) Australia



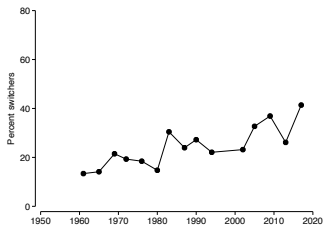
(b) Canada



(c) Denmark

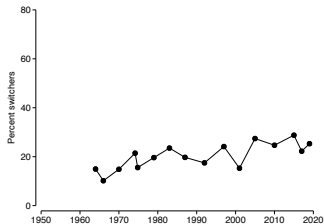


(d) Germany

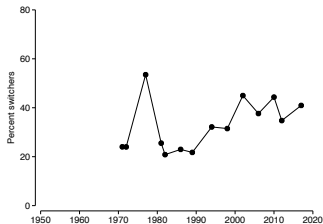


Trend in self-reported switching (2)

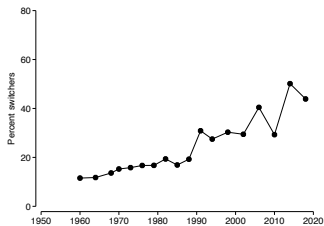
(e) Great-Britain



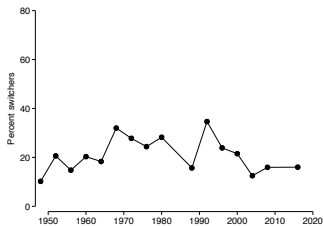
(f) The Netherlands



(g) Sweden



(h) United States



Campaign deciders per decade and country

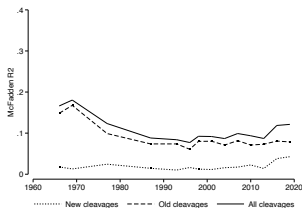
Table: Per cent of campaign deciders by decade and country

Country	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s
Australia						36.8	30.1	33.3
Canada			48.1	44.0	43.1	54.6	47.0	43.2
Denmark				24.6	24.0	25.8	35.8	47.3
Germany			8.6	8.0	12.5	11.8	27.0	33.0
Great-Britain			11.5	20.2	21.4	25.2	28.3	34.4
Netherlands				21.6	25.0	41.3	45.4	60.0
Sweden			20.6	45.7	19.7	30.7	35.1	36.6
United States	12.6	10.6	15.5	18.8	18.9	21.2	18.8	18.3

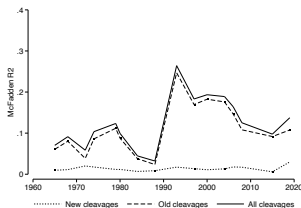
[go back](#)

Socio-demographics over time (1)

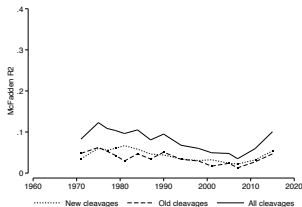
(a) Australia



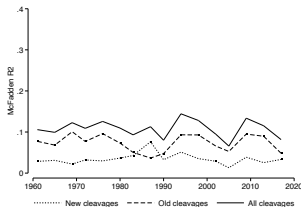
(b) Canada



(c) Denmark



(d) Germany

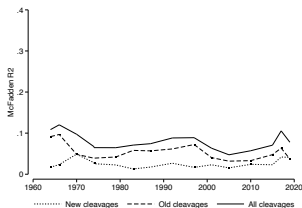


Note: Estimates from election specific vote choice models.

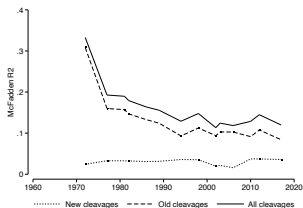
[go back](#)

Socio-demographics over time (2)

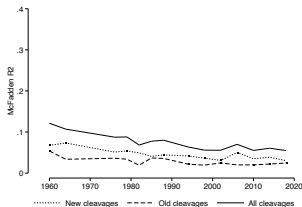
(e) Great-Britain



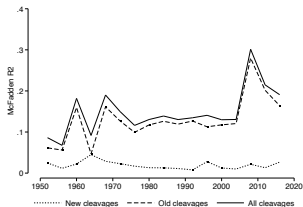
(f) The Netherlands



(g) Sweden



(h) The United States

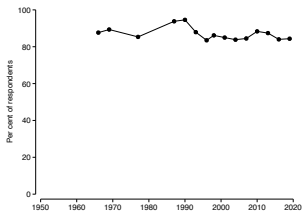


Note: Estimates from election specific vote choice models.

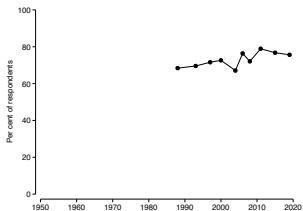
[go back](#)

Partisanship over time (1)

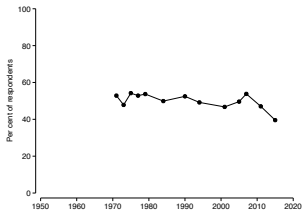
(a) Australia



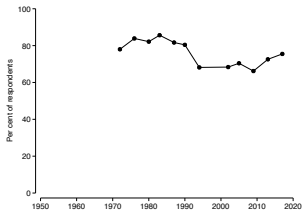
(b) Canada



(c) Denmark



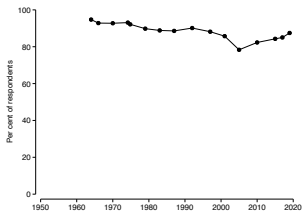
(d) Germany



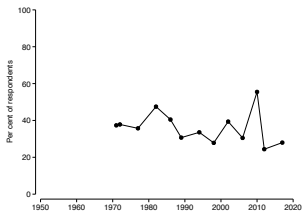
Note: Per cent of partisans in each election. [go back](#)

Partisanship over time (2)

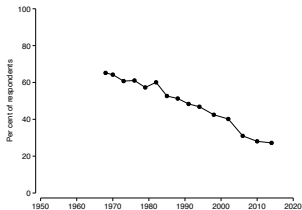
(e) Great-Britain



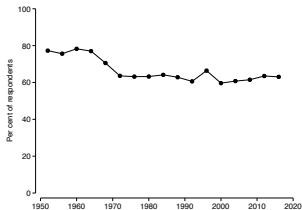
(f) The Netherlands



(g) Sweden



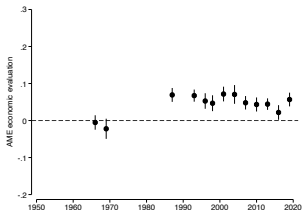
(h) The United States



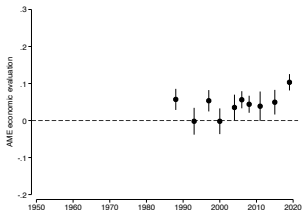
Note: Per cent of partisans in each election. [go back](#)

Economic vote over time (1)

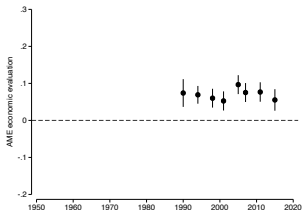
(a) Australia



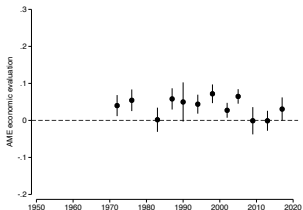
(b) Canada



(c) Denmark



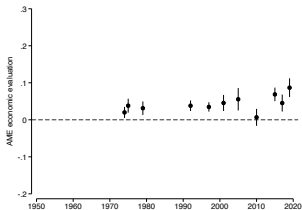
(d) Germany



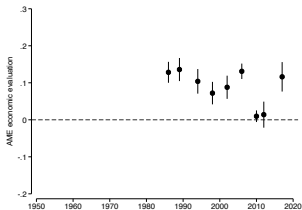
Note: Average marginal effect of retrospective sociotropic economic evaluation on voting for the incumbent. Estimates from election-specific models. [go back](#)

Economic vote over time (2)

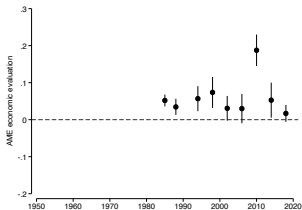
(e) Great-Britain



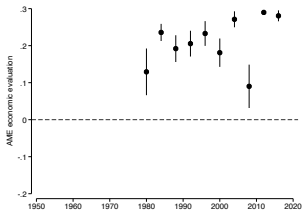
(f) The Netherlands



(g) Sweden



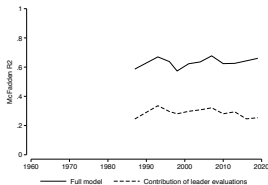
(h) The United States



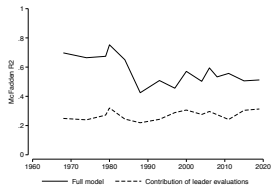
Note: Average marginal effect of retrospective sociotropic economic evaluation on voting for the incumbent. Estimates from election-specific models. [go back](#)

Leader effects over time (1)

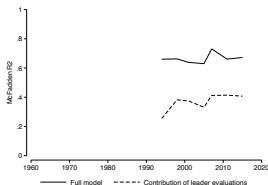
(a) Australia



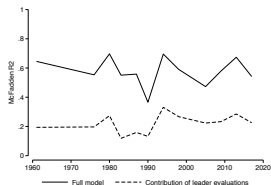
(b) Canada



(c) Denmark



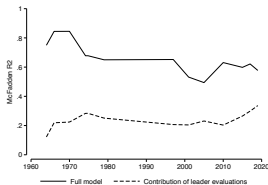
(d) Germany



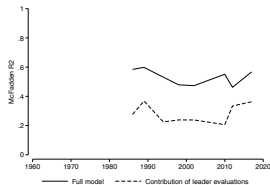
Note: Difference in the McFadden R2 statistic of a model with leader evaluations and socio-demographic variables versus a model with only socio-demographic variables and partisanship. [go back](#)

Leader effects over time (2)

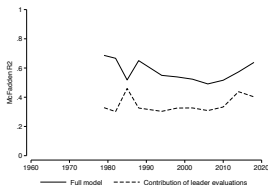
(e) Great-Britain



(f) The Netherlands



(g) Sweden



(h) The United States



Note: Difference in the McFadden R2 statistic of a model with leader evaluations and socio-demographic variables versus a model with only socio-demographic variables and partisanship. [go back](#)

Group-based CP and partisanship

Table: Levels of partisanship among the least and most cross-pressured

Country	CP score = 0	CP score = 1
Australia	94.3% (92.8% – 95.7%)	87.6% (86.9% – 88.3%)
Canada	87.1% (85.2% – 89.0%)	81.9% (81.1% – 82.7%)
Denmark	66.3% (62.9% – 49.7%)	48.8% (47.6% – 50.0%)
Germany	79.6% (76.2% – 82.9%)	77.1% (76.1% – 78.2%)
Great-Britain	95.8% (94.8% – 96.8%)	90.8% (90.2% – 91.3%)
Netherlands	51.7% (48.4% – 54.9%)	36.1% (34.9% – 37.2%)
Sweden	66.0% (64.1% – 67.8%)	44.9% (43.9% – 46.0%)
United States	79.6% (78.2% – 80.9%)	66.8% (65.7% – 67.8%)

Group-based CP and short-term CP

Table: Explaining short-term cross-pressure

	AUS	CAN	DNK	DEU	GBR	NLD	SWE	USA
Group-based cross-pressure	0.065*** (0.012)	0.164*** (0.022)	0.159*** (0.025)	0.233*** (0.016)	0.165*** (0.012)	0.345*** (0.020)	0.257*** (0.013)	0.021 (0.014)
Intercept	0.366*** (0.009)	0.357*** (0.018)	0.420*** (0.021)	0.327*** (0.013)	0.319*** (0.009)	0.352*** (0.016)	0.333*** (0.010)	0.237*** (0.010)
N	18430	10158	8744	11644	13877	7807	11116	6791
R ²	0.002	0.006	0.005	0.018	0.012	0.045	0.037	0.000

Robust standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered by election.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

[go back](#)