Political Sociology Lectures: Electoral Turnout

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- The calculus of voting
- Factors associated with turnout
  - Institutional factors
  - Cultural factors
  - Resources
  - Networks and Mobilization
- Turnout decline
- Turnout change in the UK
- Compulsory voting as a remedy

The Calculus of Voting (Riker and Ordeshook:1968)

Vote iff BP-C+D > 0

B is the difference in utility depending on the outcome.
P is the probability that the vote will be pivotal.
C is the cost of voting.
D is utility gained from voting that is unrelated to the outcome.

- Since P is miniscule the prediction from this model without D is zero turnout (the paradox of voting).
- Moreover, if the D term does the main work in explaining turnout then socio-psychological variables are likely to be more relevant than institutional ones and the peculiarly 'rational choice' part of the model. However, ...
- there may still be successful prediction at the margin, e.g. turnout varies according to the closeness of the election and population size (Geys 2006).
- the equation forms a useful framework through which to understand turnout, and other forms of collective action.

Institutional factors: the electoral system I

Although evidence is not unequivocal (e.g. Blais and Dobryzynska, 1998), turnout tends to be higher in PR systems than majoritarian systems.

- But it is not clear why (Blais 2008).

Although there are lots of uncompetitive seats in majortiarian systems, there is limited evidence that turnout is very sensitive to marginality at the constituency level. E.g. pattern in Britain ...

	% Voting	N
Margin of Victory		
0 to 10	82.2	529
10 to 20	83.4	633
20 to 30	84.6	350
30 plus	78.6	663

Source: 1997 BES

Institutional factors: the electoral system II

- Not only is this pattern weak, but it only holds for Labour seats.
  - Most likely because the traditional working class have disproportionately become less likely to vote since the advent of New Labour.
  - In Conservative seats, turnout is slightly higher in the safest seats.
- Relationship between district marginality and turnout is even weaker in the US and Canada, i.e. the P term doesn't seem that relevant.

Another possibility is that PR systems have more parties and so more choice.

- However, most studies find a negative correlation between the number of parties and turnout.
  - This is perhaps because fewer parties mean fewer coalitions, greater clarity of government responsibility and decisiveness of the election, but this is disputed (e.g. Blais 2006).

Institutional factors: the electoral system III

Since plurality systems are more likely to have just two main parties, the median voter theorem tells us there is more likely to be ideological convergence, which would affect the B term.

Consider the difference between approval ratings given to a voter's favourite and most disliked party on the following question:
Please chose a phrase from this card to say how you feel about the (Conservative Party/Labour Party/Liberal Democrats/...)?

1. *Strongly in favour*
2. *In favour*
3. *Neither in favour nor against*
4. *Against*
5. *Strongly against*

Institutional factors: the electoral system IV

Relative Strength of Preference (1st over 3rd)	% Voting	% of population
0	46	29
1	78	53
2	85	16
3	88	2
4	99	0.4

Source: BES 1997, England only

While this is perhaps the strongest predictor of turnout at the individual level, there is still a difference between electoral systems in turnout after controlling for relative strength-of-preference between parties.

Note that those with less knowledge or interest in politics are more likely to perceive little difference between the parties and so have less reason to vote.

Further institutional factors I

Rational choice theories often emphasize the importance of institutions in shaping incentives (in this case to vote) and the following be understood most clearly thorough the calculus of voting.

- *Compulsory voting* - guaranteed to raise turnout if it is strongly enforced.
  - Compare Belgium and Australia with Brazil, Mexico and other Latin American countries.
- *Concurrent elections* - concurrent local elections improve turnout in European Parliament elections in UK
- *Postal voting* - experiments so far suggest only all-postal ballots make a difference
- *Supermarket/electronic voting* - makes no difference
- *Weekend voting* - probably makes no difference
- *Media attention; leadership debates* - seem to increase interest in US, but maybe people wait for the debates before engaging.

Further institutional factors II

- *Unicameralism* should make elections more decisive, but the evidence is mixed.
- *More MPs per voter* should make it easier for politicians to mobilize people, but we find the contact from elected politicians tends to be greatest in some of the countries where there are fewer MPs per person, e.g. Japan and US, perhaps because of the electoral system.
- *Lowering the voting age* - would probably reduce turnout by increasing the chances of someone becoming an habitual non-voter (c.f. Plutzer, 2002).

If these are to be considered as policy prescriptions, most have political implications that are far more important than their impact on turnout.

Cultural factors I

Perhaps the strongest 'cultural' predictor of turnout is a sense of duty to vote, but estimating the true effect is difficult.

- Survey respondents who have just told you they didn't vote might wish to avoid saying that they think there is a duty to vote.

Political trust, satisfaction with democracy and efficacy also seem to be relevant ...

Cultural factors II

	% Voting	% of population
Trust Gov to put nation above party?		
Just about always	90	3
Most of the time	88	30
Only some of the time	80	52
Almost never	72	12
Satisfied with way GB democracy works		
Satisfied	91	16
Fairly satisfied	83	57
Not very satisfied	79	21
Not at all satisfied	67	4
People like me have no say in gov actions		
Agree strongly	77	15
Agree	83	42
Neither	81	20
Disagree	88	19
Disagree strongly	95	2

Source: BES 1997

Note that it is debatable how well we can measure these factors and whether they are purely cultural or have their origins in the nature of institutions.

Civic Resources I

A classic theory of political participation states that resouces which aid civic engagement generally, such as education and income, are positively correlated with turnout, presumably by reducing the costs (C term) of voting.

- Richer countries tend to have higher turnout than poorer ones.
- Resource differences might be one of the reasons why class and age are associated with turnout.
  - Note that this has important implications for the representativeness of election outcomes, perhaps most importantly when there is low social mobility and socio-economic status is highly correlated with ethnicity (c.f. Lijphart APSR 1997).

Class based turnout in Britain

- Working class have been consistently less likely to vote than the middle class but the gap was small in the 1960s, around 10 points from 1970-2001, but widened substantially since.

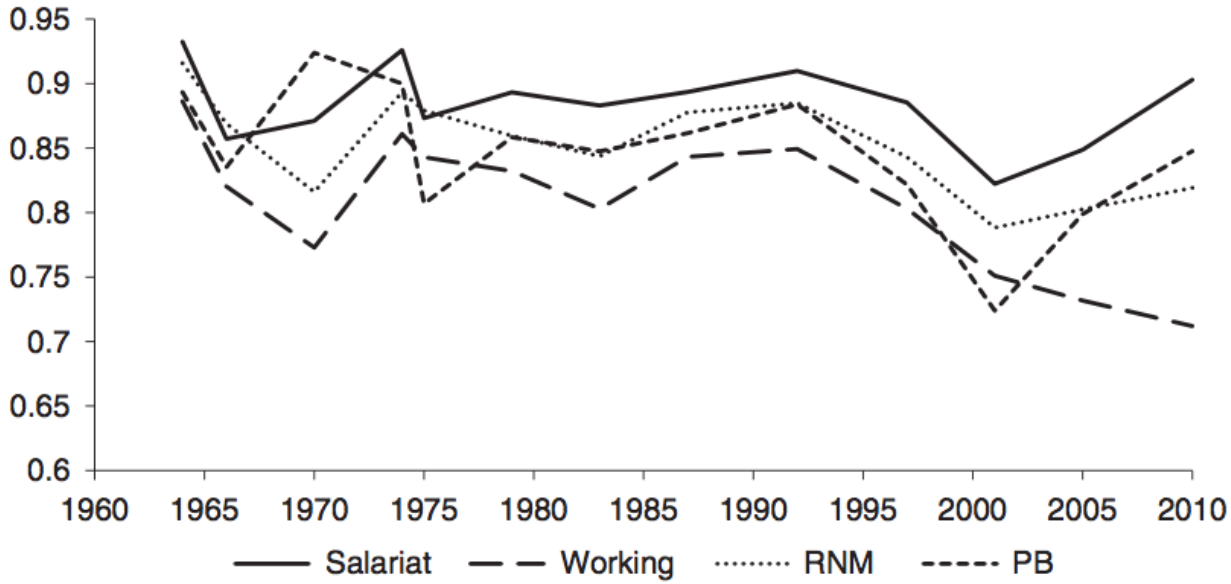


Fig. 1. Reported turnout by class, 1964–2010
Source: BES 1964–2010.

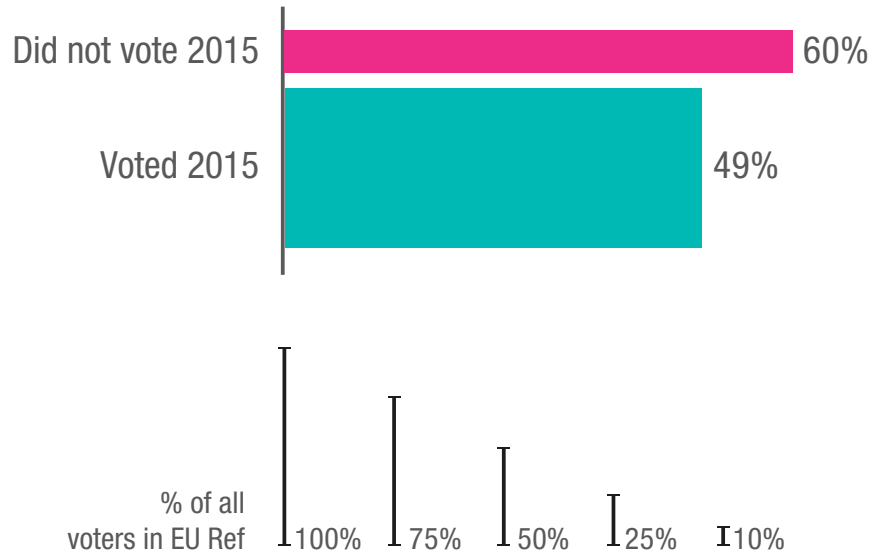
Source: Heath(BJPS, 2016)

- Not a pattern that fits with changes in the distribution of civic resources.
- Heath (BJPS, 2016) argues this is due to the decline in the number of working class Labour candidates.

Class turnout differential narrowed at the Brexit Referendum

- Those who did not vote in the 2015 general election were disproportionately low education and working class Leave supporters. Many of them turned out in the Brexit referendum because they cared about the outcome.

Figure 12. Leave vote by voting history in 2015 General Election



Base: all adults who voted in the EU referendum aged 18+ NatCen Panel September 2016 survey

Source: Swales (NatCen, 2016)

Inequality reduces turnout only when party policies are very close together

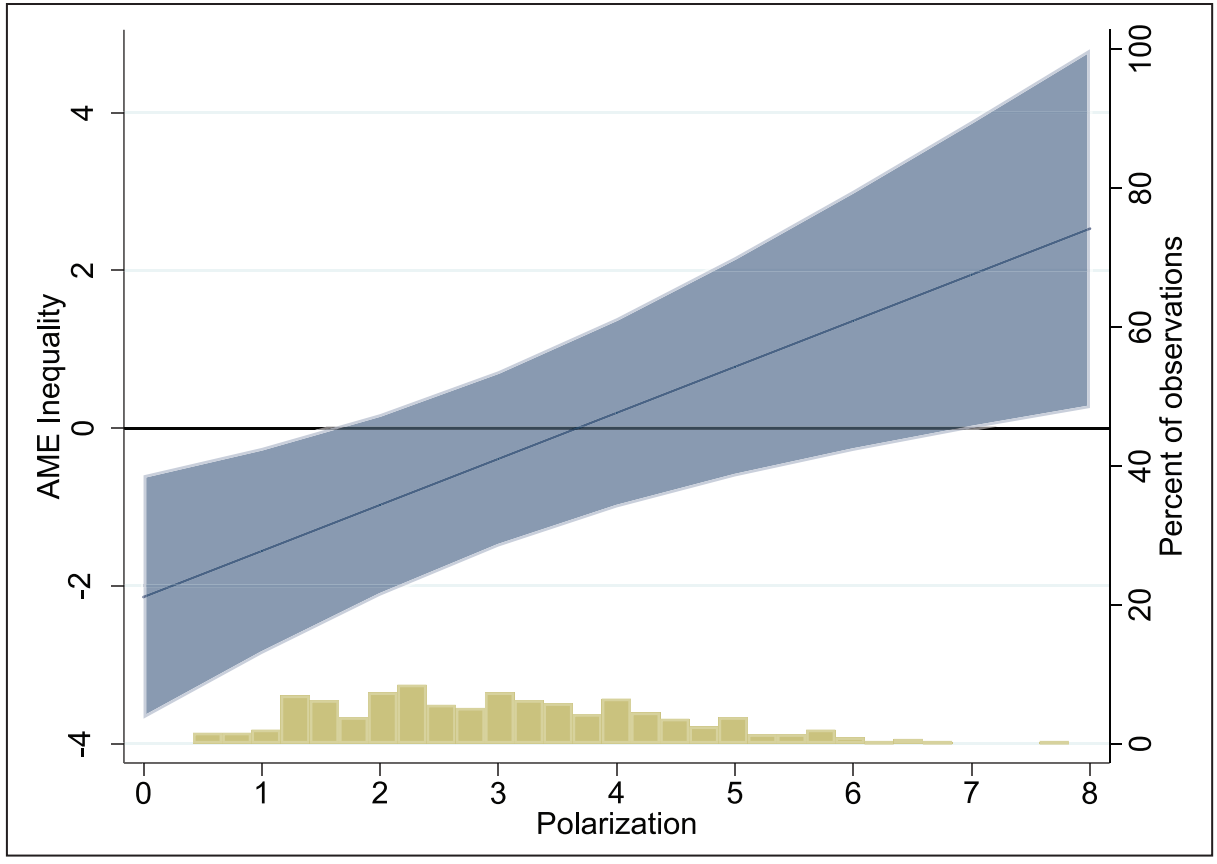
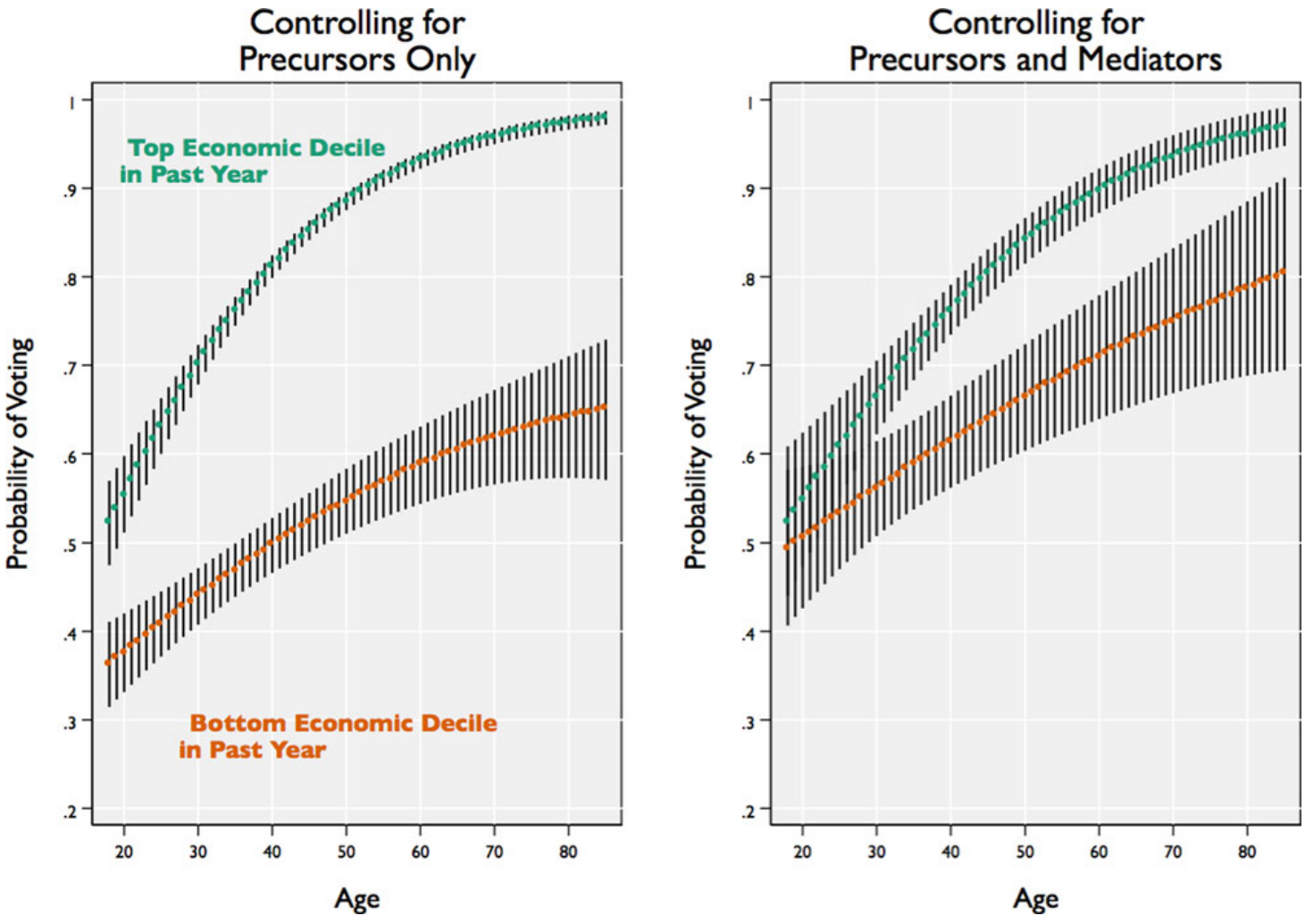


Figure 2. Marginal Effects of Inequality on Turnout by Polarization.

Source: Polacko (PolStud, 2020)

Current income gaps in turnout increase with age

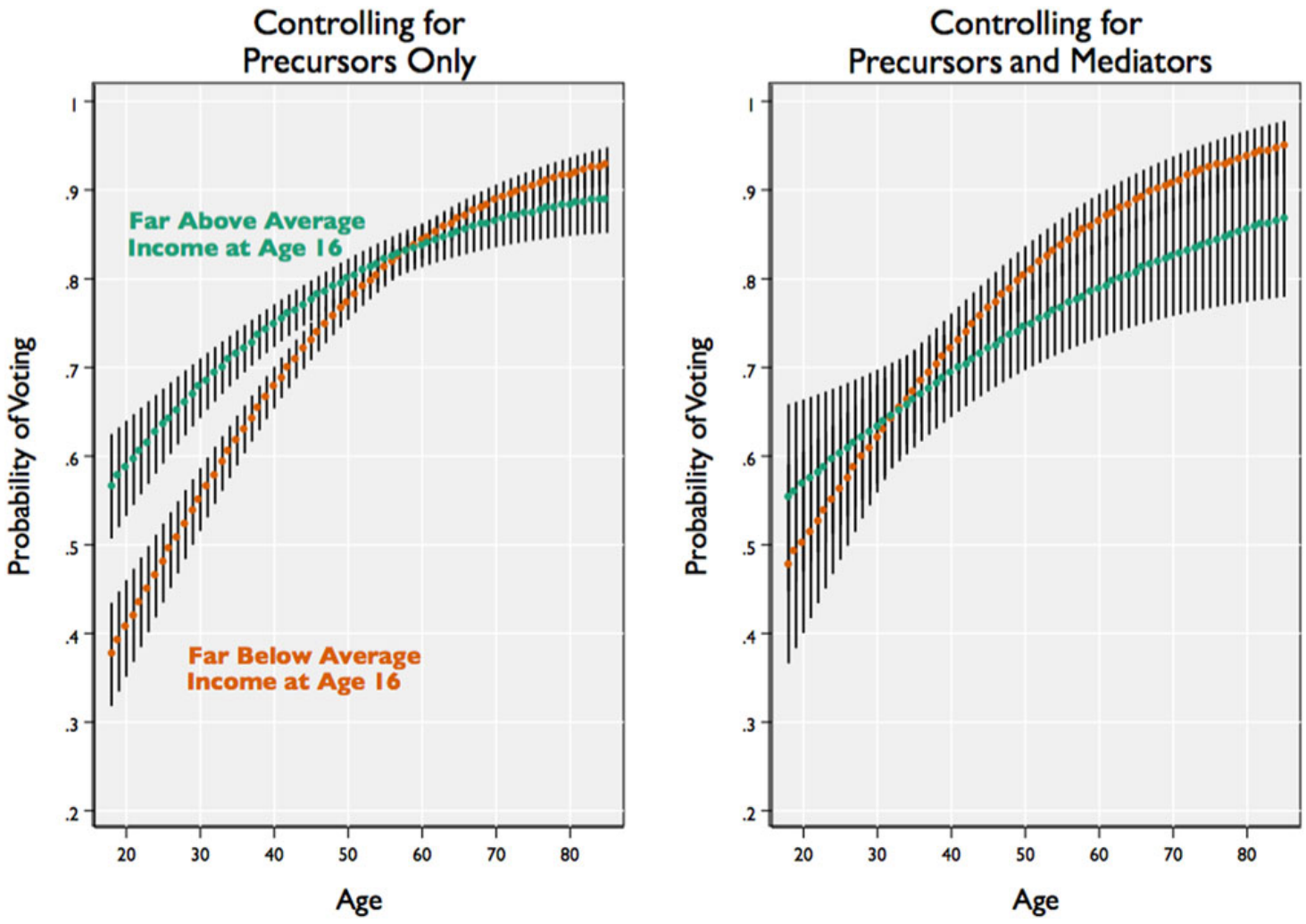
FIGURE 4 The Effect of Current Economic Status on Voter Turnout Grows over the Life Course (GSS)



Source: Ojeda (AJPS, 2018)

Childhood income gaps in turnout decline with age

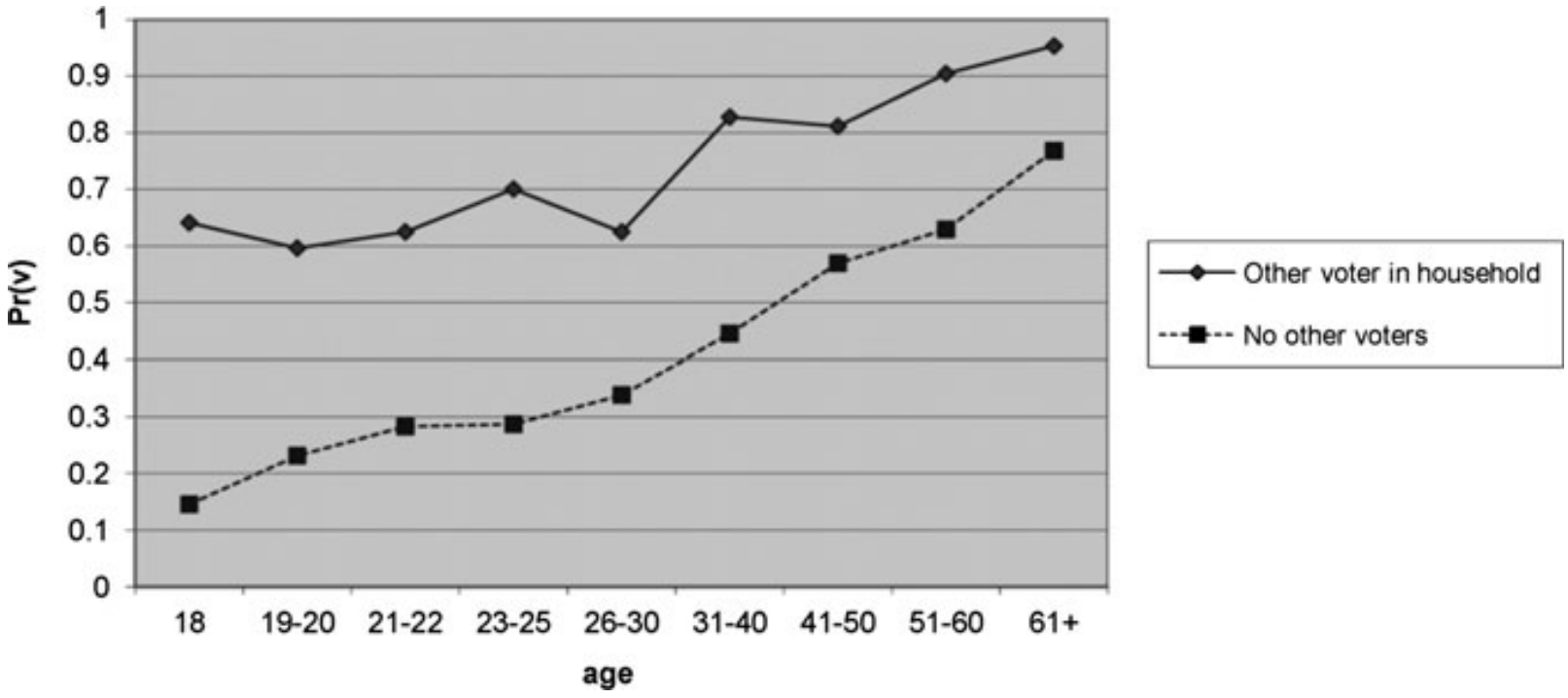
FIGURE 5 The Effect of Economic History on Voter Turnout Shrinks over the Life Course (GSS)



Source: Ojeda (AJPS, 2018)

Networks and Households I

- Social engagement in the community and duration of residence are positively associated with turnout.
- Fieldhouse and Cutts (JOP, 2012) show that living with someone who votes increases turnout, especially for young people, arguably because of within household mobilization.



Networks and Households II

- Dahlgaard (APSR 2018) using a regression discontinuity analysis of Danish local elections finds that parents are more likely to vote (by 2.8 points, c.f. average turnout of 75%) if their child has become recently eligible to vote compared with if their child was only slightly to young to vote.
- This only works if the child still lives with their parents.

Mobilization

- Those who report having been contacted by parties or are members of organizations that might mobilize them (e.g. trade unions) are more likely to vote.
- But there is possible selection bias in our measurement here.
  - Parties are more likely to contact people who are more likely vote for them.

Mobilization crossnationally: Karp et al. BJPS 2008 I

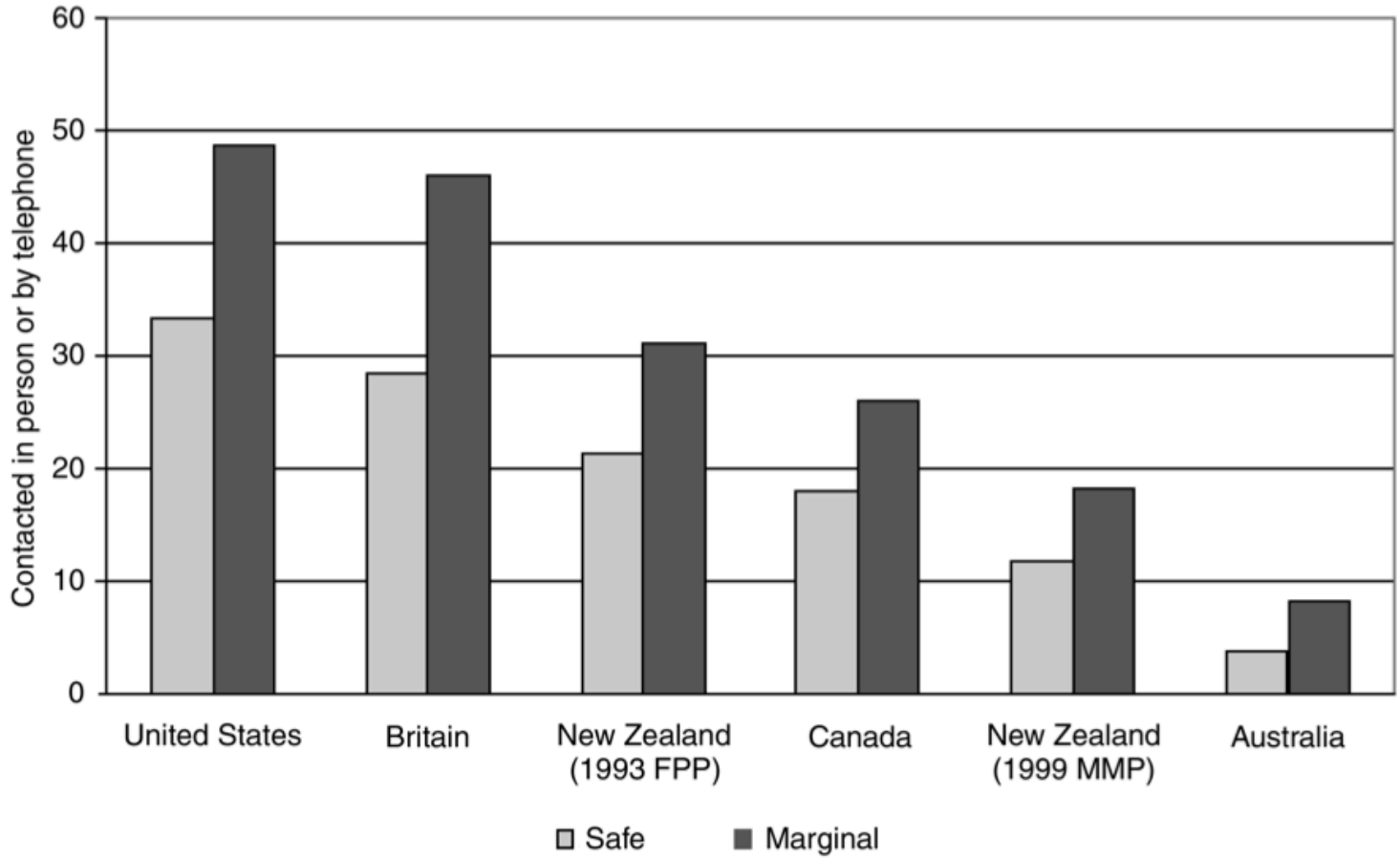


Fig. 2. Reported party contact by safe and marginal seats

Contact is greater in more candidate centred systems, and especially in marginal seats.

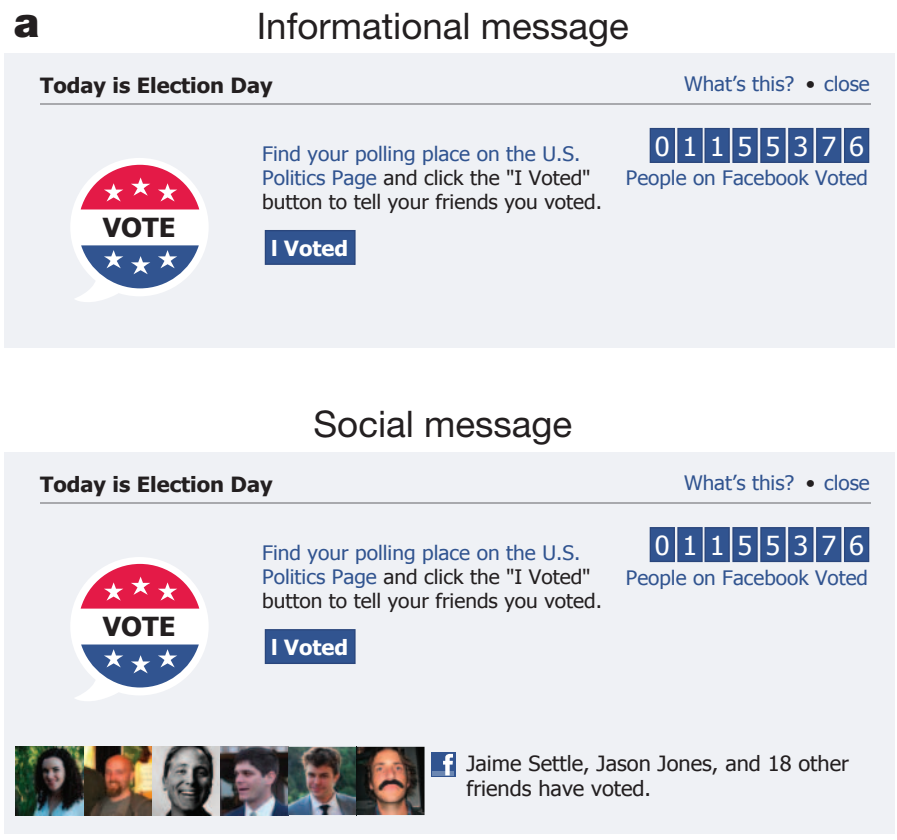
Mobilization crossnationally: Karp et al. BJPS 2008 II

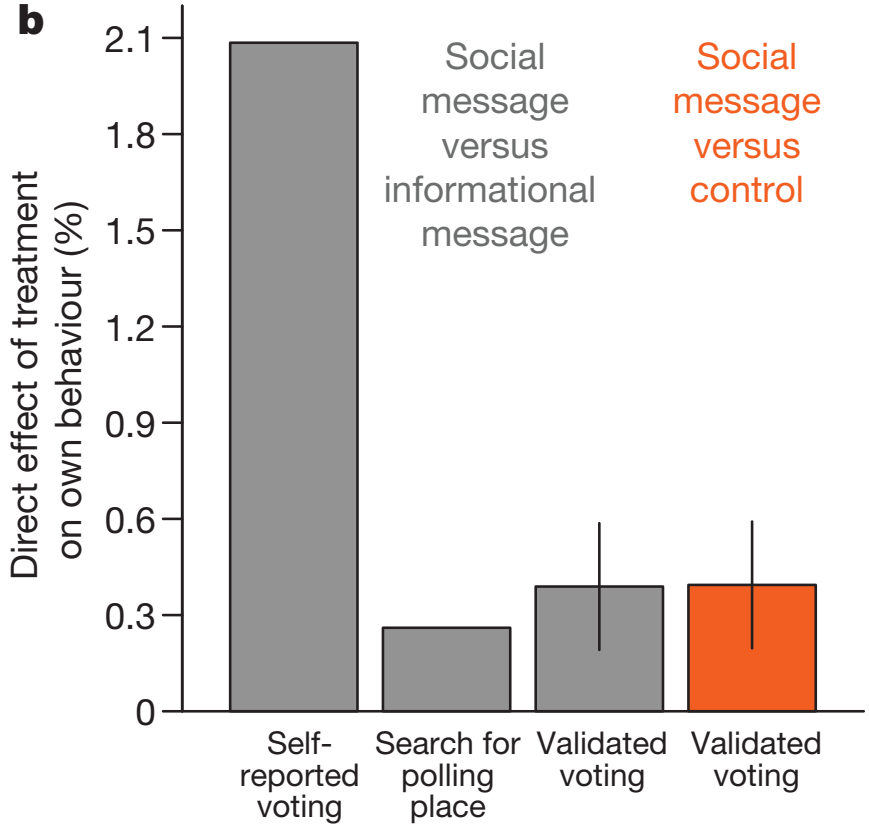
TABLE 5 *Voter Participation: Pooled Model*

Variable	Coef.	Robust S.E.	Max.
Party contact	0.48***	(0.16)	0.04
Education	0.43***	(0.10)	0.11
Age	0.01**	(0.01)	0.08
Female	−0.05	(0.08)	0.00
Union	0.06	(0.06)	0.00
Activity	2.83**	(1.13)	0.14
Previous voter	1.47***	(0.21)	0.18
Party strength	0.87***	(0.20)	0.07
Compulsory voting	3.31***	(0.20)	0.12
SMD system	−1.41***	(0.21)	−0.10
Constant	−0.32	(0.24)	
n	16,957		
Pseudo R^2	0.24		
PRE	0.12		

Note: The table shows logit coefficients. Robust standard errors that adjust for clustering on country are in parentheses. 'Max.' refers to the maximum change in probability holding all other variables constant at the mean. ***$p < 0.01$; **$p < 0.05$.

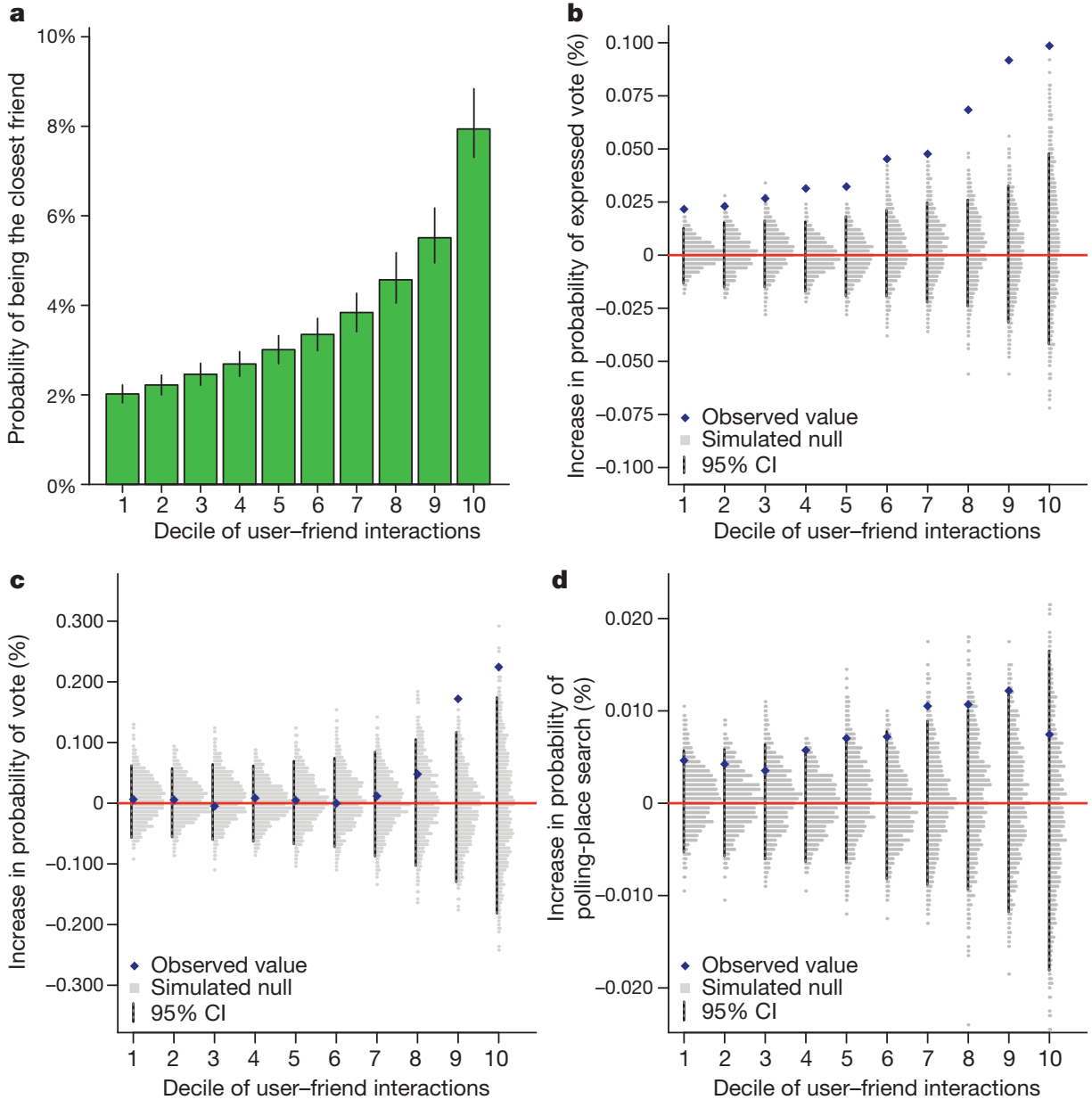
Mobilization on Facebook. (Bond et al. Nature 2012)





Similarity of the two left hand columns means no information only effect.

Social Network Effect. (Bond et al. Nature 2012)



Mobilisation efforts over time (Green and Schwam-Baird 2015, Party Politics)

- Numerous randomised field experiments have established causal efficacy of mobilisation efforts, including social network magnification
- Not all interventions work but those which emphasise duty and public goods work particularly well

- Authors argue that the increase in mobilisation efforts post 2000 in the US might therefore have led to rise of turnout.
  - But they do not provide a regression analysis that links the pattern in the graph below to turnout levels.

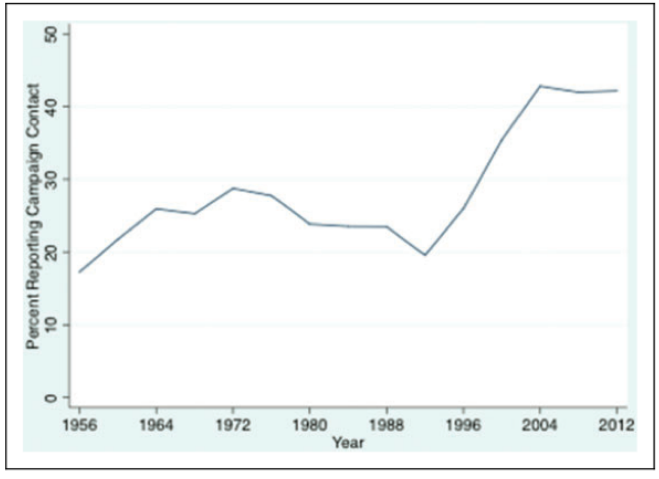


Figure 1. Percent of respondents reporting campaign contact in presidential election years.

  - In 2016 Trump apparently increased turnout substantially among some groups with little mobilization effort.

Meta analysis of individual-level turnout models (Smets and van Ham, ElecStud 2013)

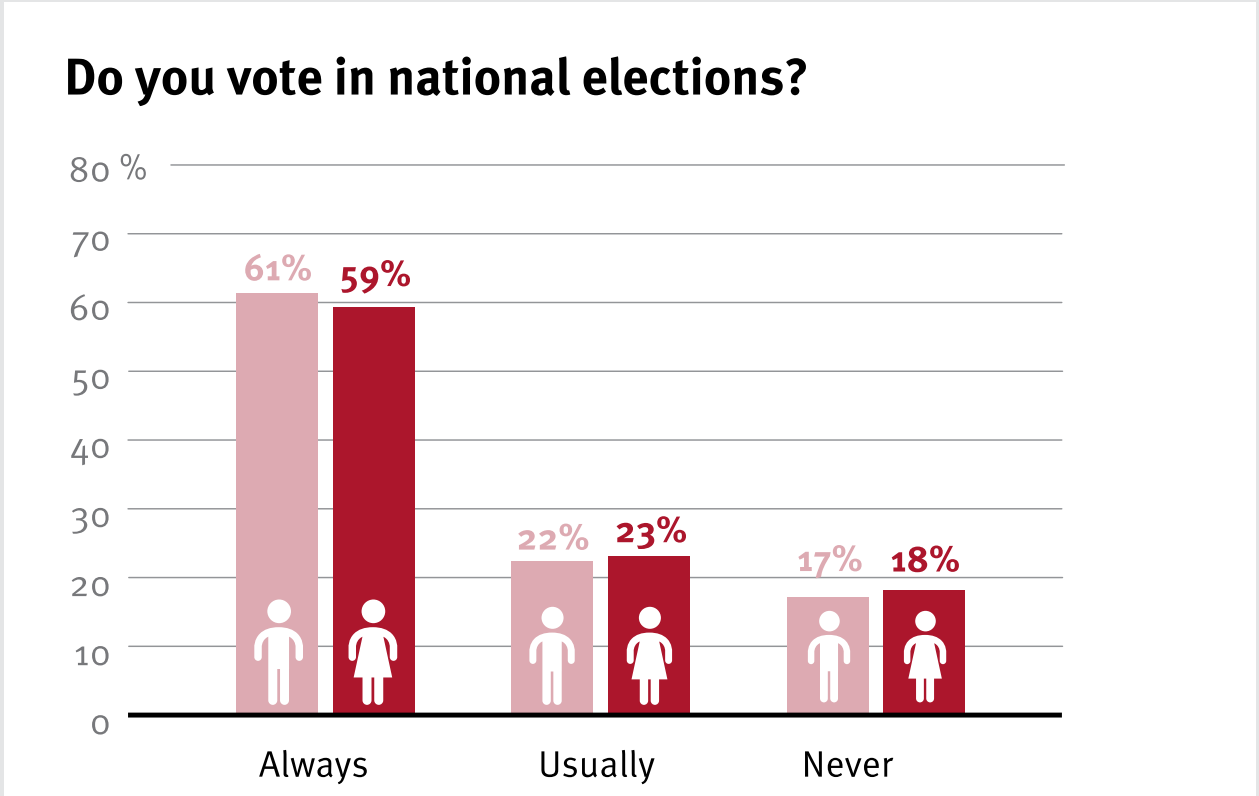
- Review of 90 articles from 10 top journals 2000-10
- 170 independent variables but only 8 in more than a quarter of the studies.
- 68% from US. Rest mainly cross-national W Europe. No new democracies.
- "The variables that we found to have a consistent effect on turnout in 10% or more of studies are: age and age squared, education, residential mobility, region, media exposure, mobilization (partisan and non-partisan), vote in previous election, party identification, political interest, and political knowledge.
- "Variables consistently found to have no effect on turnout in 10% or more of studies are: gender, race, occupational status and type, citizenship, union membership, trust in institutions, and the closeness of elections."
- Macro and broader cross-national results differ (e.g. Geys 2006) and study did not look at subgroup effects . . .

Correlates of national-level turnout: Frank and Martinez i Coma (PolBehavior, 2021)

- Meta analysis limited by sample and not good at identifying robust correlates
- Systematic analysis of 44 articles on turnout from 1986 to 2017
- 127 potential predictors, of which 70 used
- 15m regressions 579 elections in 80 democracies from 1945 to 2014
- "Overall, 22 variables are robustly associated with voter turnout, including compulsory voting, concurrent elections, competitive elections, inflation, previous turnout, and economic globalization."
- Note the study is not testing various nuanced theories, including interaction effects.

No gender gap in turnout overall

Figure 9. Difference in voter turnout between women and men

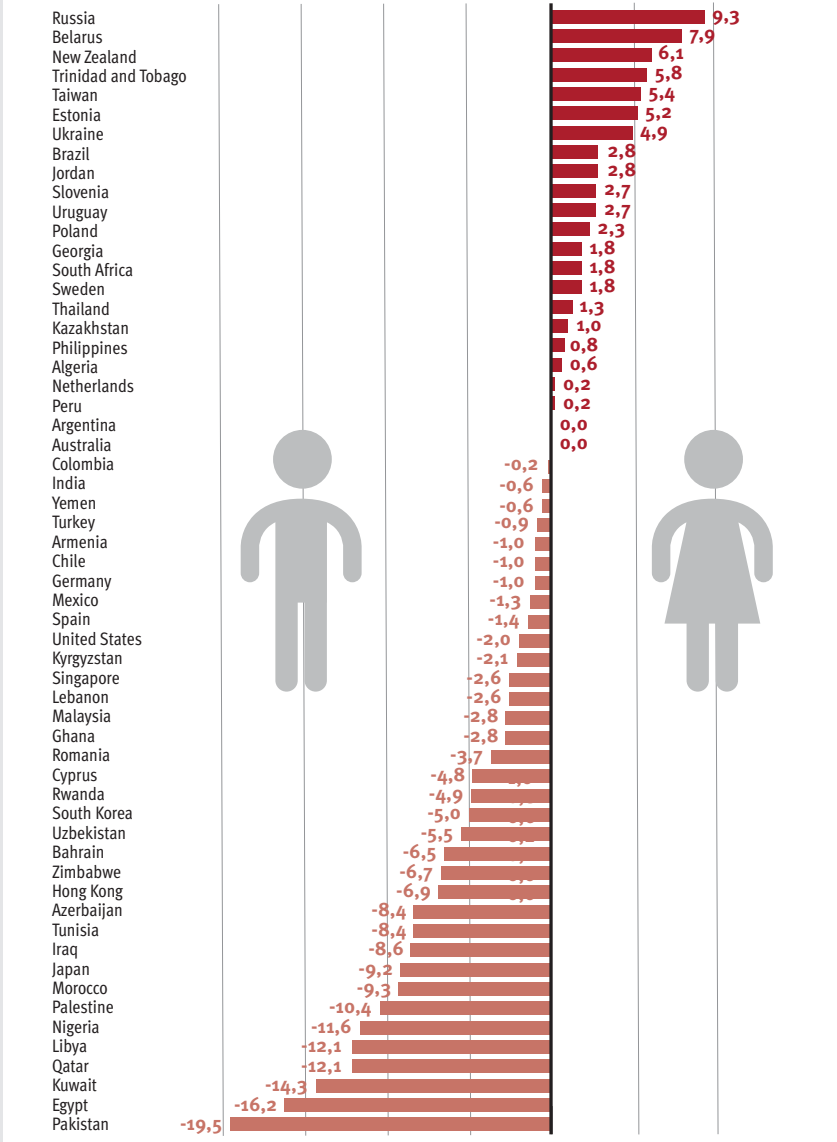


Source: World Values Survey, Sixth wave (2010–14). Data were collected from 59 countries.

Source: Solijonov (International IDEA, 2016)

But big cross-national variation in gender turnout gap

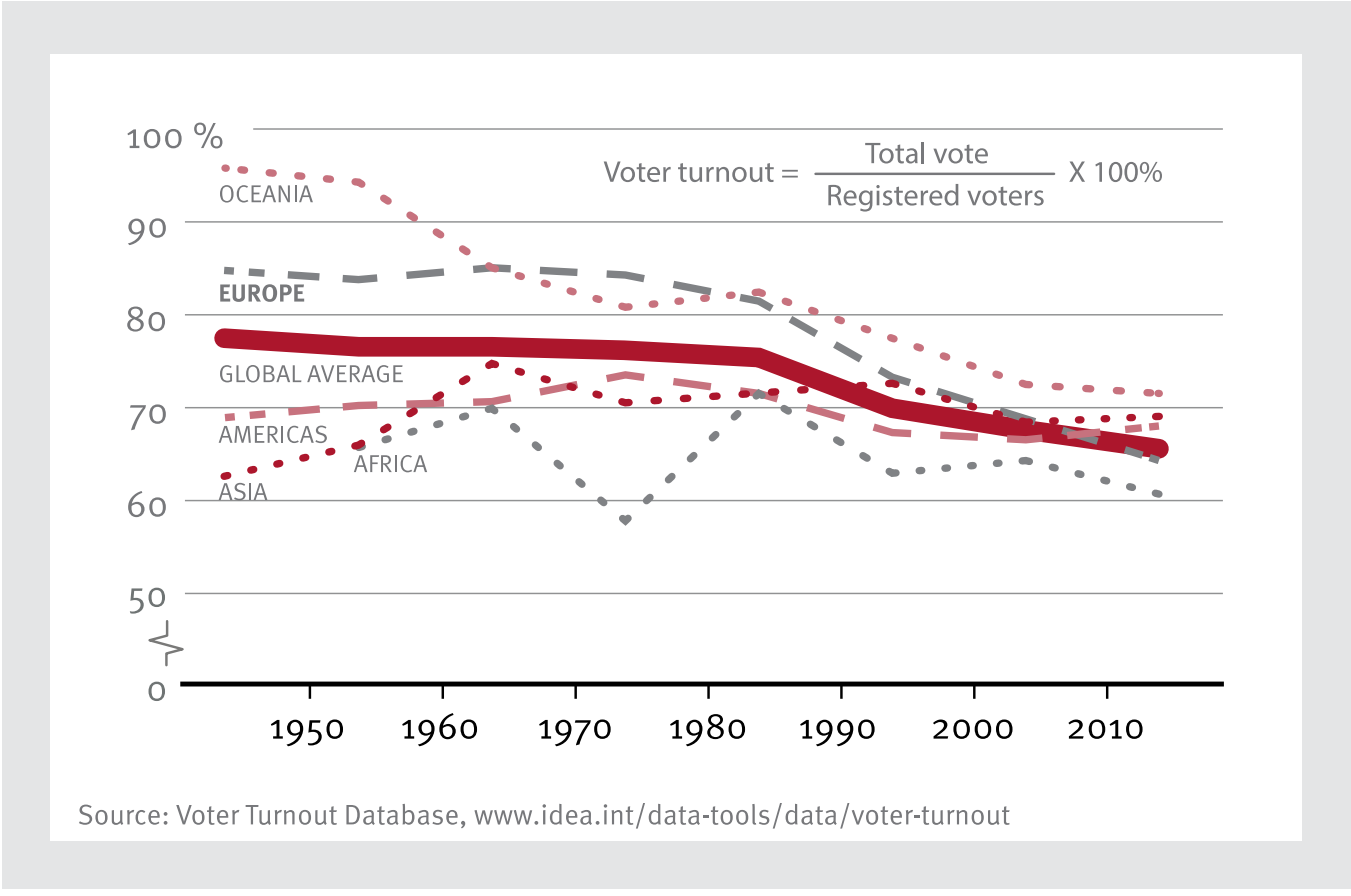
Figure 10. Difference in voter turnout between women and men by country



Source: World Values Survey, Sixth wave (2010–14)

Turnout decline globally

Figure 4. Global voter turnout by region, 1945–2015

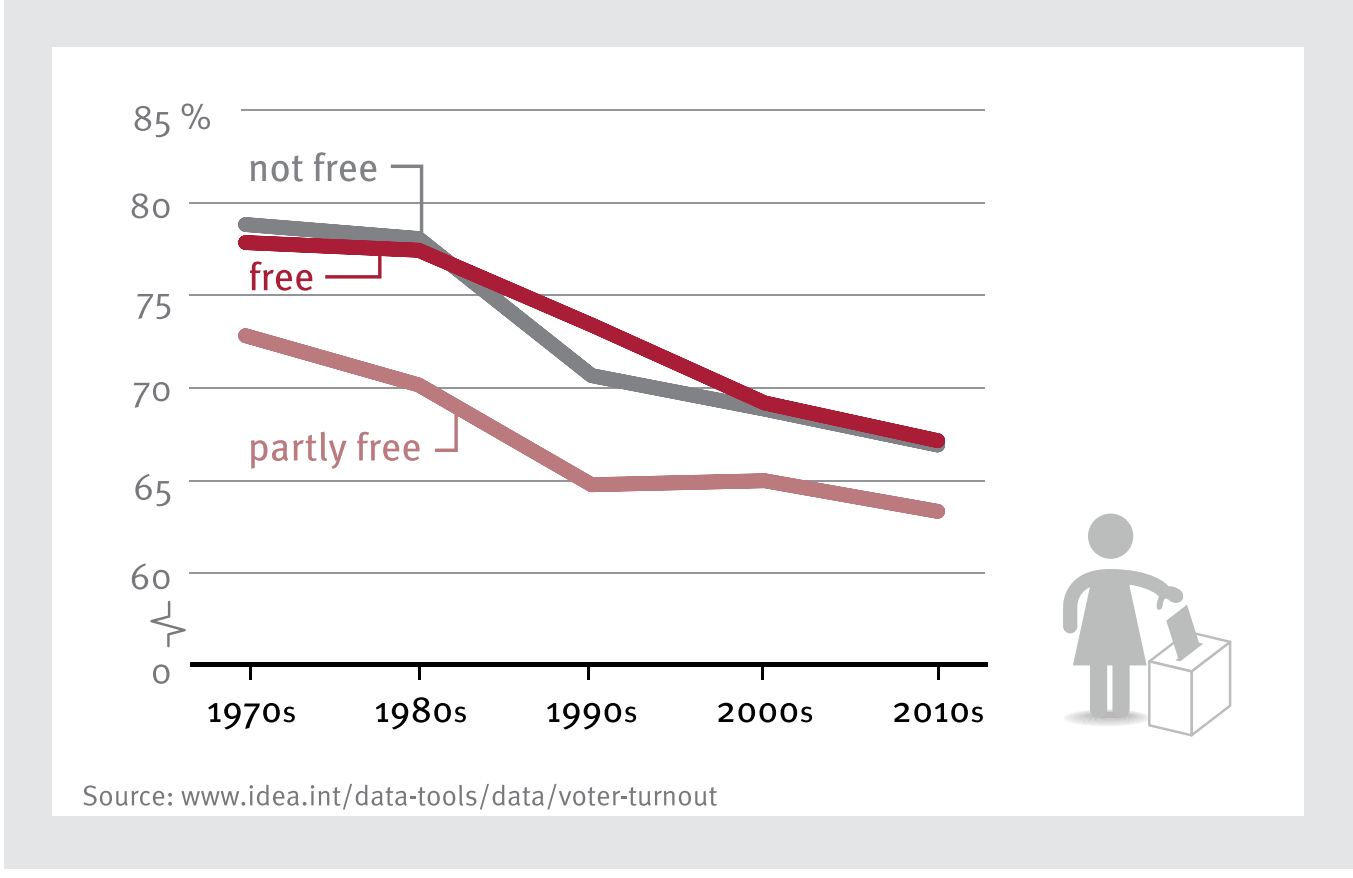


Notes: Data is for Legislative (Lower House) Elections that took place across the globe since 1945 and covers 1,833 elections in total.

Source: Solijonov (International IDEA, 2016)

Decline regardless of the level of democracy

Figure 7. Voter Turnout trends based on level of democracy

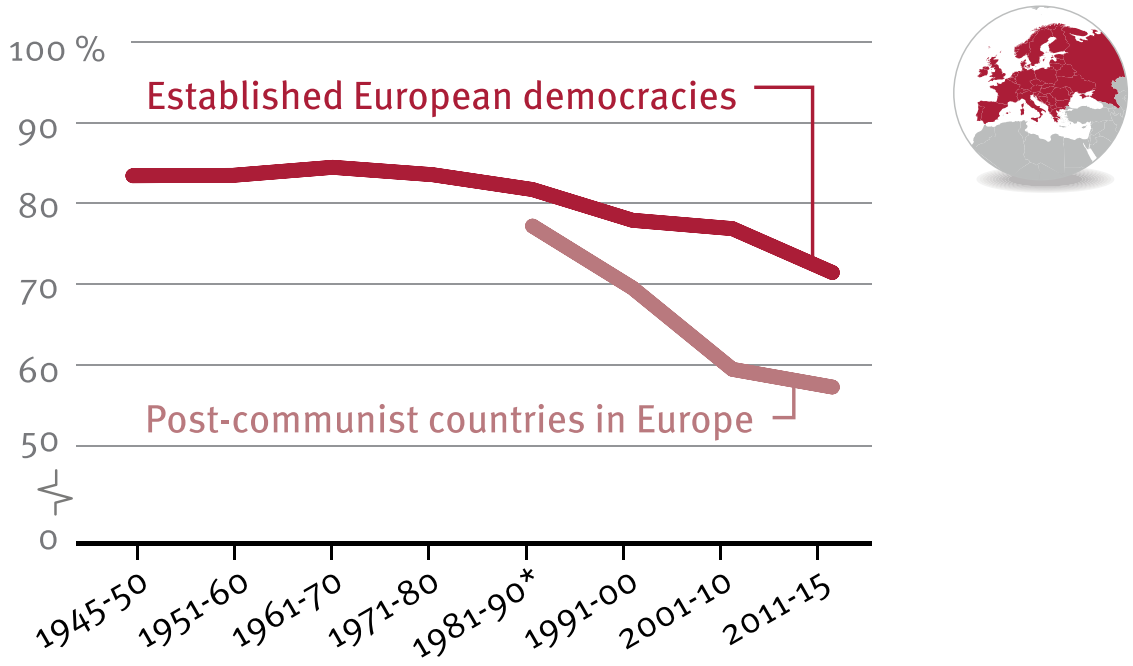


Notes: Freedom House indicators have been used to group countries as free, partly free and not free.
Freedom House data are available from the 1970s until 2015.

Source: Solijonov (International IDEA, 2016)

Decline faster in Eastern than Western Europe

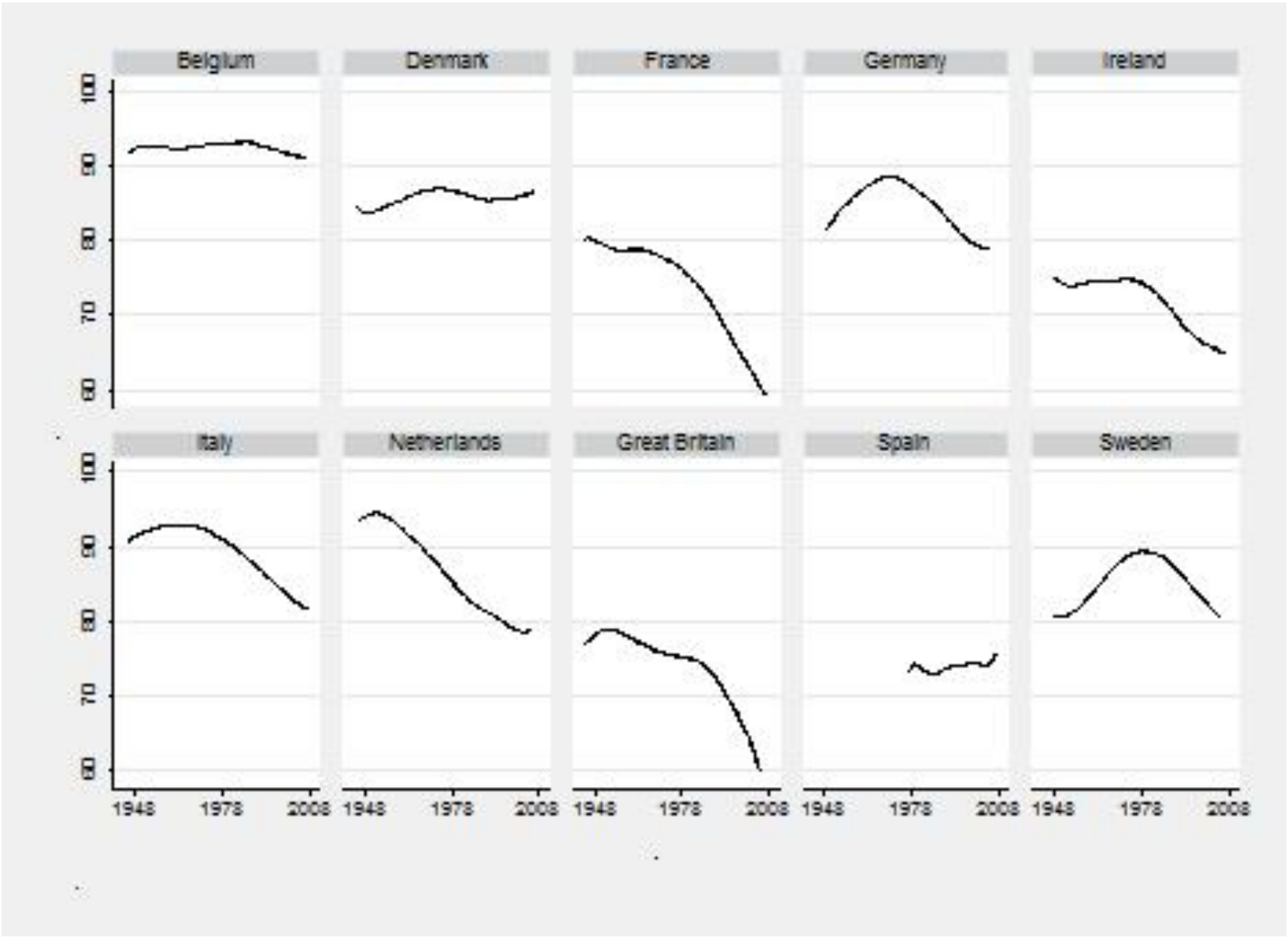
Figure 5. Voter turnout in Europe, 1945–2015



Source: Voter Turnout Database, www.idea.int/data-tools/data/voter-turnout

Source: Solijonov (International IDEA, 2016)

Decline not consistent within Western Europe



Sources: Mackie and Rose (1991) and IDEA (2008). Figure compiled by Maria Grasso.

Explanations for Turnout Decline

- Partisan dealignment (Dalton) + context (Heath 2007).
- Institutional changes:
  - e.g. lowering of the voting age from 21 to 18, that reduce the chances of people becoming habitual voters. The effect of the institutional change then appears as a step change followed by a gradual decline until all the cohorts that came of age before the institutional change have died (Franklin, 2004).
  - Blais (2006) argues the evidence for this is weak.
- Lower levels of union membership and hence union mobilization (Gray and Caul 2000)
- Although party convergence has been mooted, there is mixed evidence for this cross-nationally.
- Replacement of more civically minded cohorts with ones that are less so (Blais et al 2004).

Turnout decline from Globalization. Marshall and Fisher (BJPS, 2014)

- Economic globalization (especially capital mobility) reduces power of governments
- So it matters less who controls government
- So there is less reason to vote
- Insufficient evidence that international trade leads to compensation by governments and in turn higher turnout.
- Capital mobility reduces government spending which further reduces turnout.
- Analysis deals with the spurious correlation problem with trending variables.
- Results suggest that increased foreign ownership, especially the most mobile capital flows, can explain up to two-thirds of the large declines in turnout over recent decades.

Marshall and Fisher (BJPS, 2014) continued I

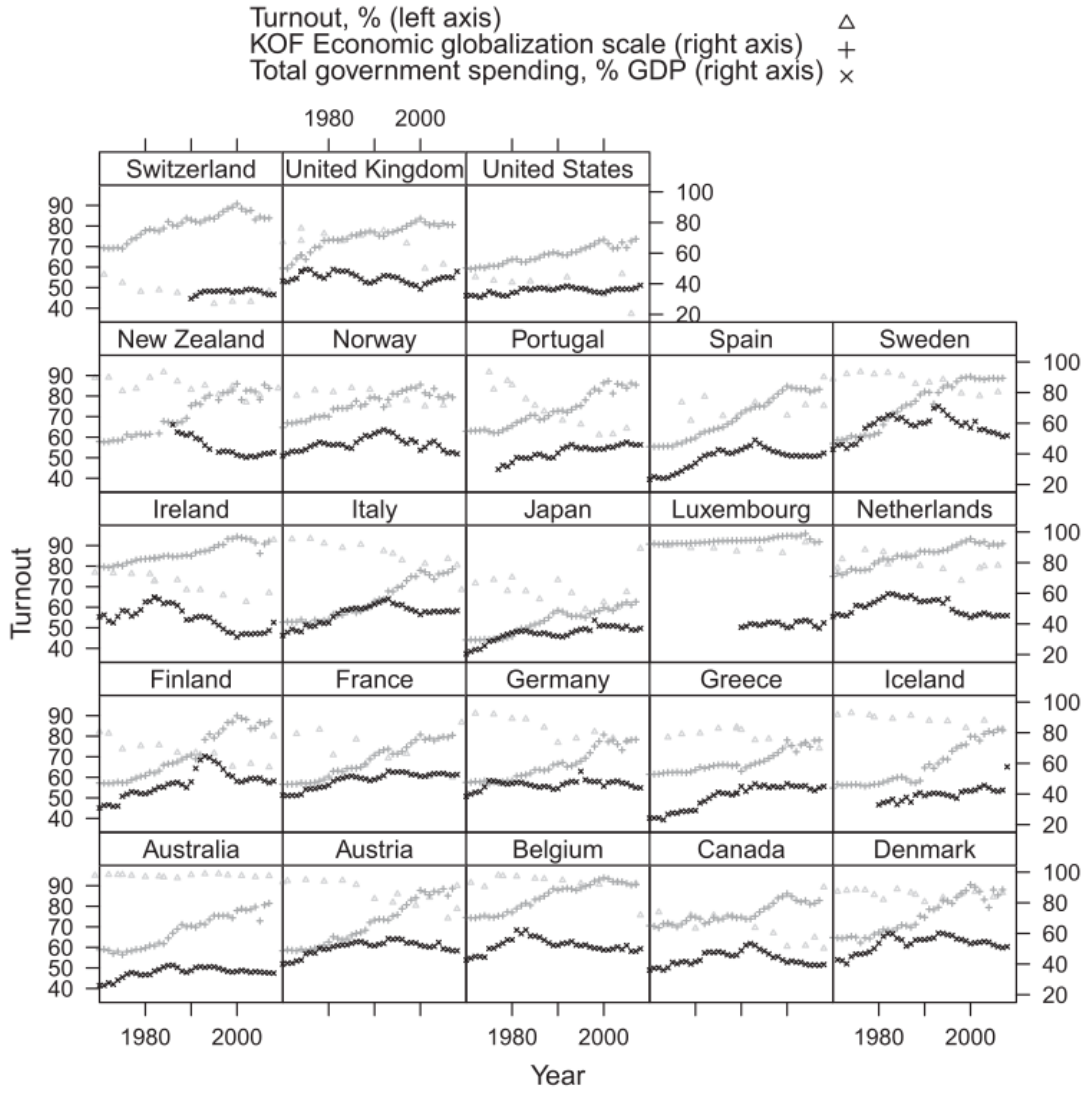


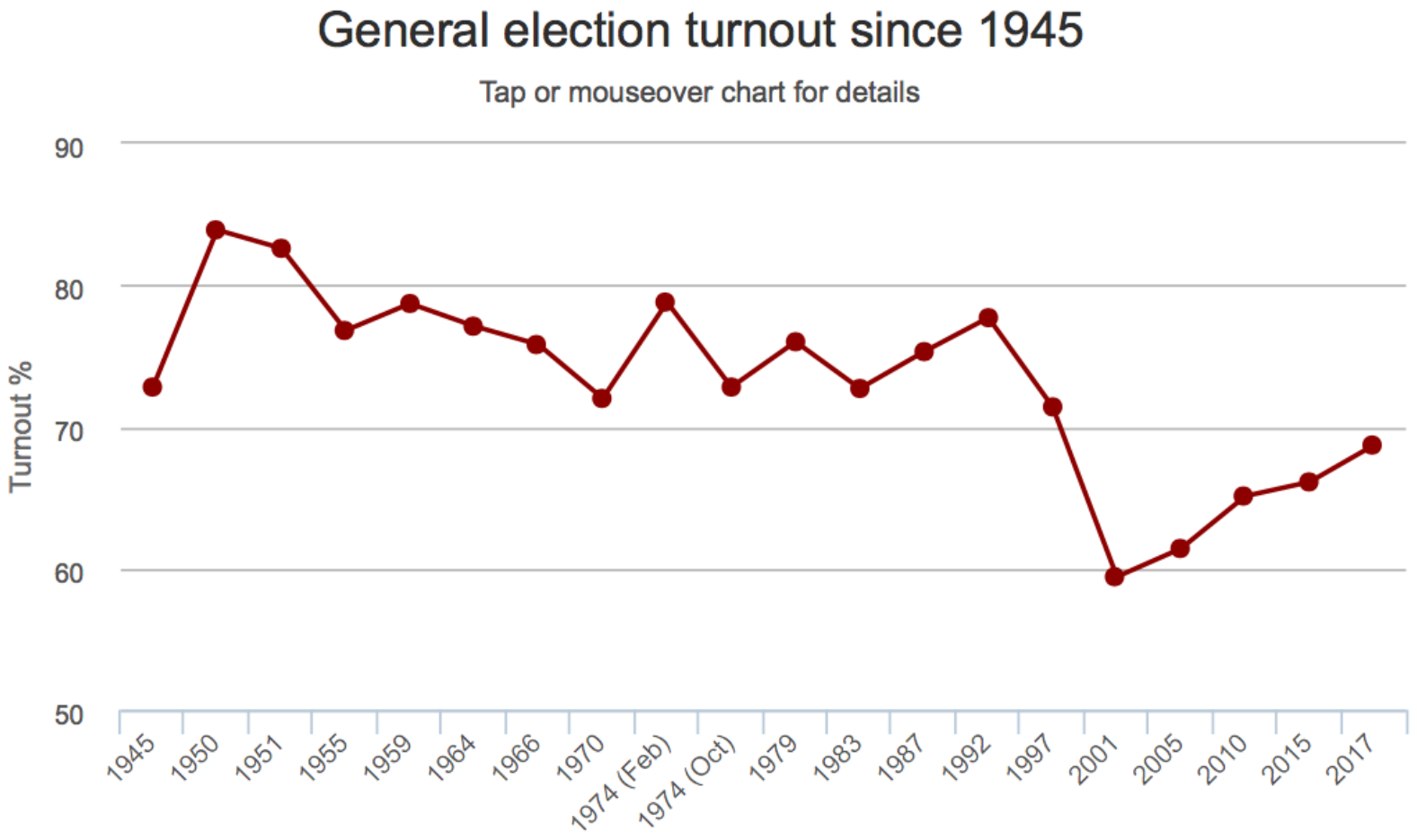
Fig. 1. Turnout, total government spending and economic globalization, 1970–2007
Note: left axis: Δ indicates turnout; right axis: + indicates KOF economic globalization scale, × indicates total government spending (as % GDP).

Marshall and Fisher (BJPS, 2014) continued II

TABLE 2 *Economic Globalization and Aggregate Turnout*

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10
LDV	−0.164	−0.163	−0.199	−0.187	−0.229	−0.168	−0.235	−0.224	−0.243	−0.226
	(0.115)	(0.081)**	(0.096)**	(0.077)**	(0.072)***	(0.116)	(0.078)***	(0.097)**	(0.086)***	(0.103)**
Registered Voters (log)	−20.207	−22.528	−22.139	−22.734	−25.956	−20.171	−17.053	−19.400	−17.475	−19.367
	(7.073)***	(7.750)***	(10.352)**	(6.361)***	(10.215)**	(7.186)***	(11.239)	(7.741)**	(10.875)	(7.679)**
%VAP, 30–69	0.140	0.181	0.208	0.54	0.212	0.146	0.198	0.224	0.200	0.226
	(0.117)	(0.116)	(0.118)*	(0.091)***	(0.108)*	(0.119)	(0.114)*	(0.093)**	(0.123)	(0.093)**
Years Since Last Election	0.387	0.409	0.512	0.463	0.507	0.387	0.563	0.513	0.578	0.515
	(0.218)*	(0.219)*	(0.211)**	(0.218)**	(0.212)**	(0.218)*	(0.211)***	(0.222)**	(0.210)***	(0.222)**
US Mid-term	−13.511	−13.725	−13.333	−13.482	−13.194	−13.438	−12.400	−12.700	−12.279	−12.662
	(1.632)***	(1.146)***	(1.393)***	(1.078)***	(1.091)***	(1.683)***	(1.372)***	(1.507)***	(1.493)***	(1.600)**
Compulsory Voting	−2.775	−1.344	−3.498	−1.546	−2.334	−2.754	−2.712	−2.001	−2.725	−1.985
	(1.107)**	(0.949)	(1.125)***	(0.795)*	(0.756)***	(1.072)***	(1.071)**	(0.973)**	(0.972)***	(0.999)**
Mixed System	−0.344	0.801	−0.219	0.762	0.076	−0.359	−0.528	5.268	0.012	5.253
	(1.113)	(1.880)	(1.075)	(1.018)	(1.014)	(1.121)	(1.965)	(1.351)***	(1.832)	(1.343)**
PR System	2.953	3.429	4.046	2.547	3.094	2.967	3.936	7.244	3.364	7.209
	(1.435)**	(2.021)*	(1.428)***	(1.1160)**	(1.212)**	(1.363)**	(2.184)*	(1.661)***	(2.036)*	(1.640)**
Disproportionality	−12.423	−13.551	−14.742	−14.566	−15.200	−12.356	−14.547	−13.343	−14.179	−13.289
	(3.510)***	(3.453)***	(3.551)***	(3.248)***	(3.415)***	(3.623)***	(3.197)***	(3.356)***	(3.385)***	(3.455)**
ENPS	−0.718	−0.765	−0.994	−0.765	−1.092	−0.703	−1.032	−0.611	−0.944	−0.596
	(0.509)	(0.554)	(0.594)*	(0.507)	(0.601)*	(0.517)	(0.607)*	(0.523)	(0.615)	(0.530)
Margin	−0.028	−0.032	−0.009	−0.044	−0.014	−0.028	−0.039	−0.048	−0.041	−0.049
	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.049)	(0.046)	(0.051)	(0.044)	(0.050)	(0.049)	(0.049)	(0.048)
FDI Stock (log)		−1.811								
		(0.865)**								
FDI Flows (log)			−2.030				−1.529		−1.719	
			(0.610)***				(0.630)**		(0.601)***	
Portfolio Stock (log)				−2.396				−1.880		−1.888
				(0.524)***				(0.443)***		(0.442)**
Ownership Scale					−3.519					
					(0.938)***					
Trade (log)						0.505			2.678	0.433
						(2.754)			(2.172)	(2.270)
Government Spending							0.193	0.201	0.189	0.201
							(0.076)**	(0.078)***	(0.081)**	(0.079)**

The UK experience



Source: UKpolitical.info

Turnout 67% in 2019. The 2001 election was the most boring since 1865, which was basically a referendum on Palmerston (McLean).

Interest in politics is a strong driver of turnout in Britain

- Turnout dropped most in 2001 among those least interested.

Table 6 Political interest and electoral participation, 1997-2015

% who voted	1997	2001	2005	2010	2015
Interest in politics					
Great deal/quite a lot	87	81	82	86	87
Some	81	72	72	71	77
Not much/None at all	67	51	52	53	45

Source: Curtice (BSA 2016)

- Likewise for strength of party ID since the 1980s.

Turnout change driven by changing interest in politics?

- Interest in politics has risen in recent years, but generally not much change

Table 1 Levels of interest in politics, 1991–2017

	1991	1994	1996	1998	2000	2001	2004	2005
How much interest in politics	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Great deal/quite a lot	32	32	31	29	32	31	31	33
Some	31	35	33	36	33	35	34	35
Not much/none at all	36	33	37	35	35	34	36	31
Base	*1445*	*2302*	*3620*	*3146*	*2293*	*3287*	*3199*	*4268*

	2008	2009	2010	2013	2015	2016	2017
How much interest in politics	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Great deal/quite a lot	35	31	31	32	36	42	43
Some	32	36	34	32	33	32	30
Not much/none at all	32	33	34	37	32	26	27
Base	*1128*	*1143*	*1081*	*1063*	*4328*	2942	3988

Source: Curtice and Simpson (BSA 2018)

Turnout strongly correlated with duty to vote

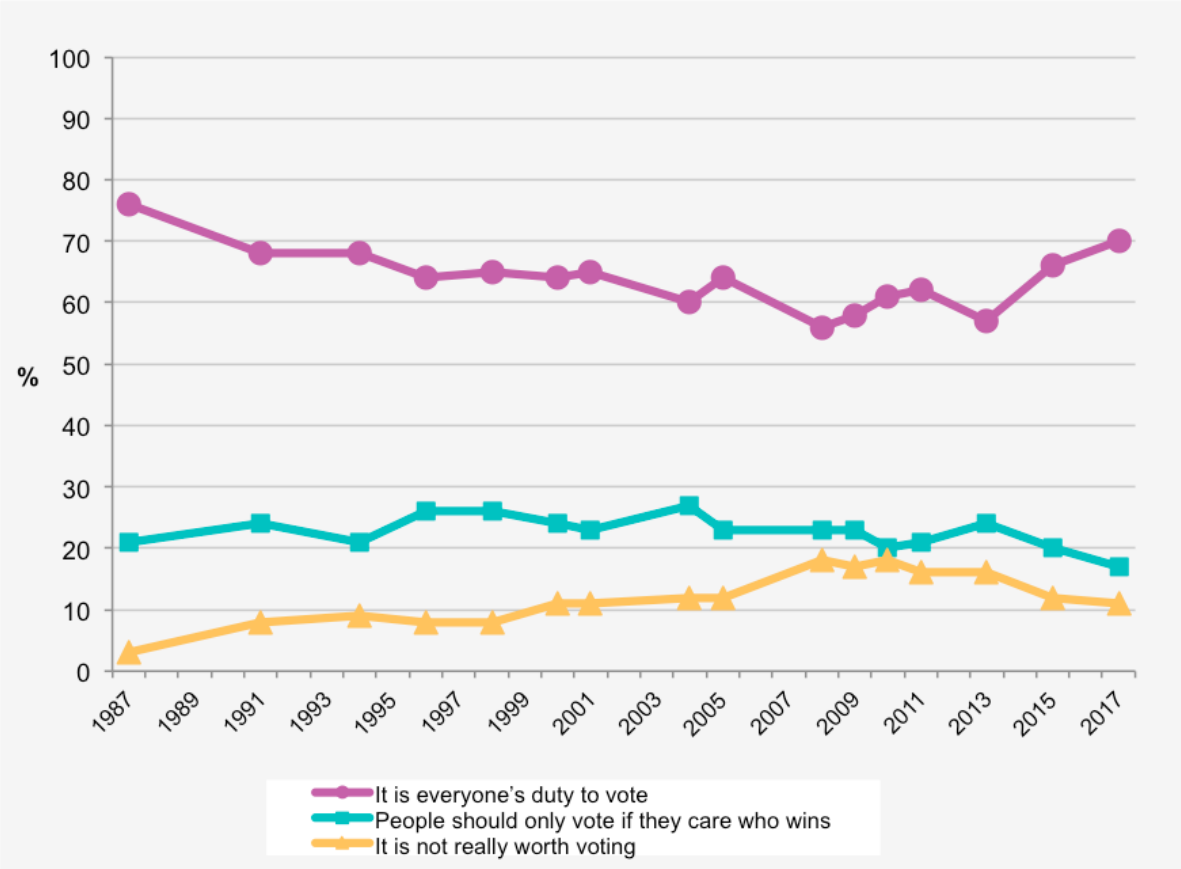
Table 7 Turnout, by civic duty, 1987-2015

% who voted	1987	2001	2005	2010	2015
It's not really worth voting	37	24	24	31	24
People should only vote if they care who wins	75	49	50	60	54
It's everyone's duty to vote	92	85	85	86	84

Source: Curtice (BSA 2016)

Turnout change driven by changing duty to vote?

Figure 1 Duty to vote, 1987-2017



Source: Curtice and Simpson (BSA 2018)

The recent uptick might help explain the rises in turnout in 2015 and 2017.

Table 2 Perceived difference between the parties, 1964-2017

	1964	1966	1970	Feb 1974	Oct 1974	1979	1983	1987
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Great difference	48	44	33	34	40	48	88	85
Some	25	27	28	30	30	30	10	11
Not much	27	29	39	36	30	22	7	5
Base	*1699*	*1804*	*1780*	*2391*	*2332*	*1826*	*3893*	*3776*

	1992	1997	2001	2005	2010	2015	2017
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Great difference	56	33	17	13	23	27	45
Some	32	43	39	43	43	42	35
Not much	12	24	44	44	34	31	20
Base	*1794*	*2836*	*1076*	*1049*	*1035*	*2056*	*2854*

Source: 1964-1997: British Election Study. Figures for 1964-1992 as quoted in Crewe et al (1995). Respondents saying "don't know' or who refused to answer have been excluded. Between 1964 and October 1974 the question read, *'Considering everything the parties stand for would you say there is a good deal of difference between them, some difference or not much difference?'*

Source: Curtice and Simpson (BSA 2018)

"83% of those who thought there was a big difference between the parties voted in the election, while 74% of those who felt there was some difference did so, and only 59% of those who felt there was none."

Perceptions of parties changed most among young people in 2017

Table 5 Perceived Difference between the Parties by age group, 2015 and 2017

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
	%	%	%	%	%	%
2015						
Great	22	26	25	22	29	34
Some	56	45	47	39	32	36
Not much	21	28	28	39	38	29
Base	*125*	*290*	*348*	*381*	*337*	*570*
2017						
Great	47	40	38	43	48	51
Some	39	44	39	34	31	29
Not much	14	16	22	23	21	20
Base	*148*	*415*	*452*	*516*	*471*	*849*
Change 2015-17						
Great	+25	+14	+13	+21	+19	+17
Some	-17	-1	-8	-5	-1	-7
Not Much	-7	-12	-6	-16	-17	-9

Source: Curtice and Simpson (BSA 2018)

Turnout did not increase especially among young people between 2015 and 2017, but it did between 2001 and 2017

Table 6 Turnout by Age, 1997-2017

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Voted in						
1997	61	68	78	85	89	87
2001	42	55	65	77	74	82
2005	40	56	66	76	80	85
2010	45	49	68	75	85	89
2015	56	55	64	75	80	84
2016 (EU referendum)	66	63	70	82	88	89
2017	61	57	65	79	79	87
Change						
2001-17	+19	+2	0	+2	+5	+5
2015-17	+5	+2	+1	+4	-1	+3

Source: Curtice and Simpson (BSA 2018)

Also worth perusing the table for what it says about cohort effects and voting as a habit.

Rise in turnout in 2017 was not because Labour were much better at mobilising their supporters

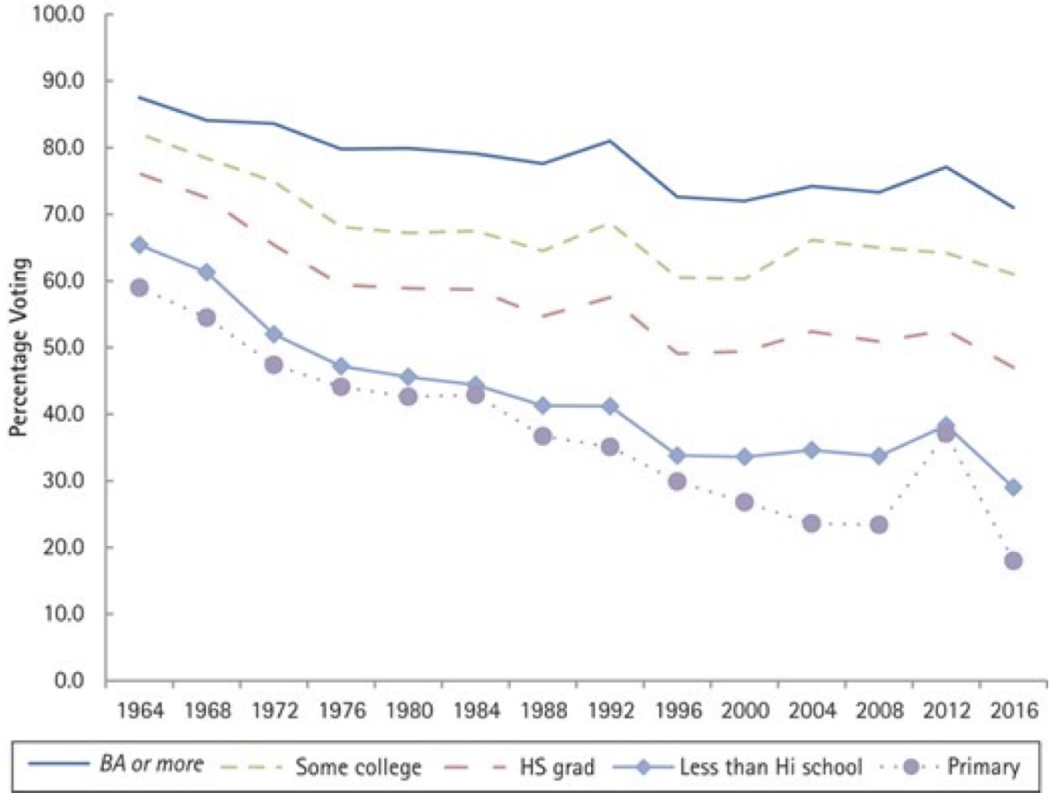
Table 7 Turnout Amongst Conservative and Labour Identifiers 2001-2017

	2001	2005	2010	2015	2017
	%	%	%	%	%
Party ID					
Con	77	84	82	86	88
Base	*743*	*1055*	*298*	*1416*	*933*
Lab	74	73	77	76	80
Base	*1480*	*1718*	*311*	*1246*	*1104*

Source: Curtice and Simpson (BSA 2018)

Rising educational turnout inequality in the US

Figure 52.2



Educational Trends in US Turnout

Note: The figure presents the percentage voting among citizens, even if not registered.

Source: Current Population Surveys, U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Source: Dalton (2022)

Polarization increases turnout in W Europe. (Ellger, CompPolStud, 2023) I

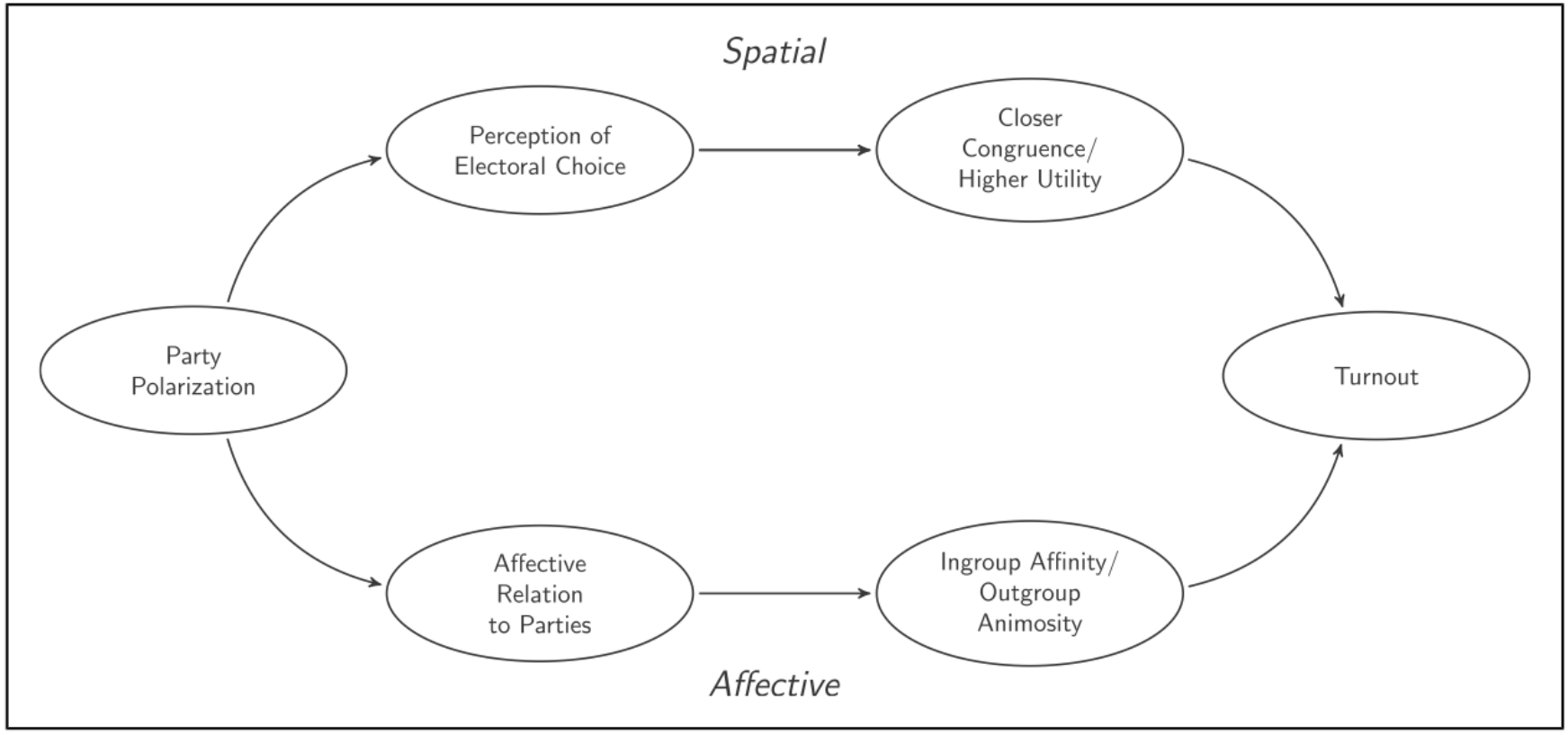


Figure 1. Illustration of theoretical argument.

Polarization increases turnout in W Europe. (Ellger, CompPolStud, 2023) II

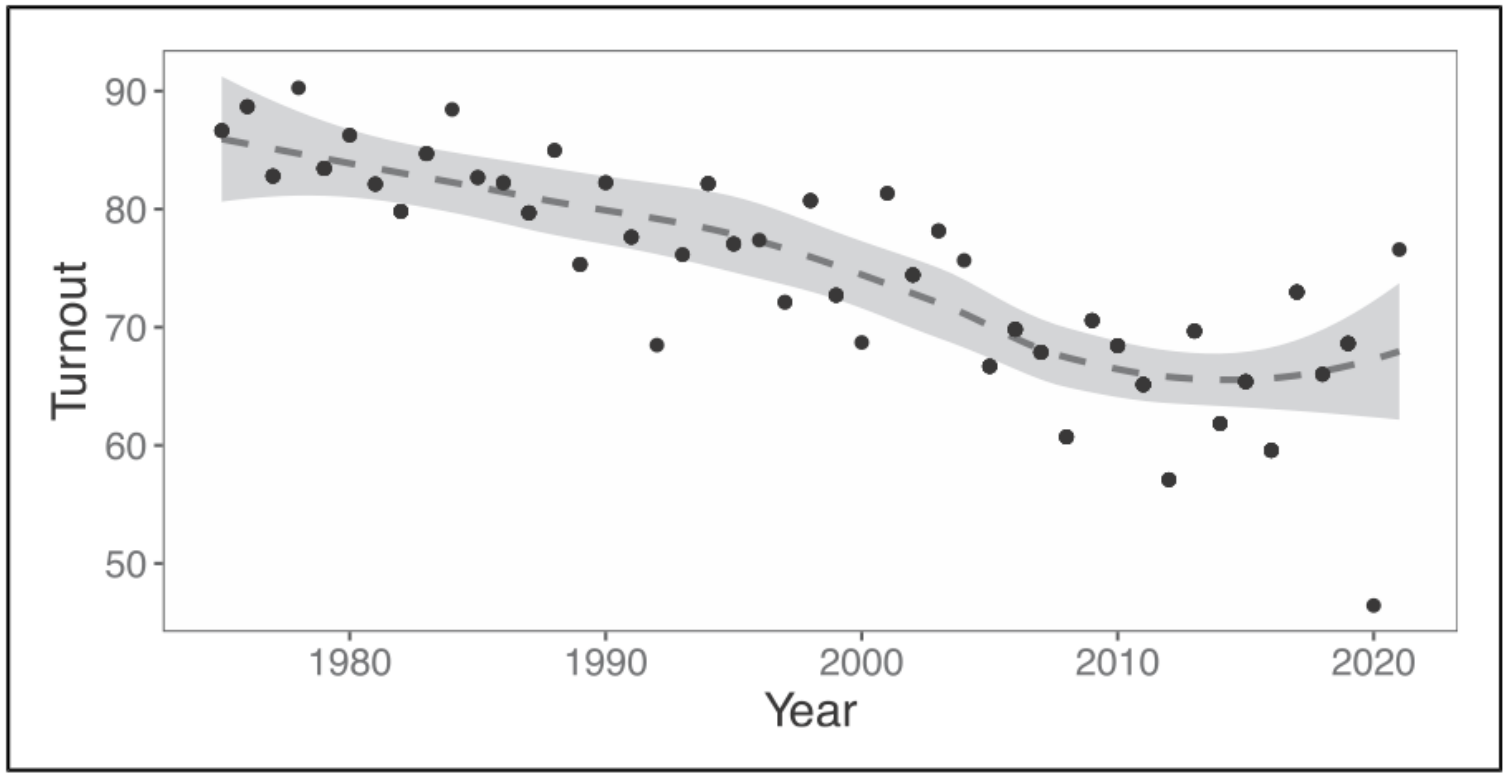


Figure 2. Trends of turnout in 22 countries.

Polarization increases turnout in W Europe. (Ellger, CompPolStud, 2023) III

Table 1. Regressing Turnout on Polarization in 22 European Countries.

	Dependent Variable	
	Turnout	
	(1)	(2)
$\text{Polarization}_{t-1}$	.331** (.149)	.115** (.046)
$\text{Disproportionality}_{t-1}$	−2.202*** (.460)	.027 (.269)
ENP_{t-1}	−.780 (.955)	−.200 (.504)
Fixed effects	Year	Country + Year
Observations	192	192
Adjusted R^2	.516	.894

Note. *$p < .1$; **$p < .05$; ***$p < .01$.

Compulsory voting as a remedy to decline and inequality in turnout. (Lijphart, APSR, 1997)

- Low turnout means unequal turnout, biased against less well-to-do citizens
  - E.g. Britain 2015, turnout for routine and semi-routine occupations was 60%, but 80% for professionals and managers. But policy preferences of non-voters similar to voters. (Curtice, 2016)
  - Also note age gap above and ethnicity gaps in some countries.
- Problem can be solved by enforced compulsory voting
- It may also increase other political participation, reduce the role of money in politics, and discourage attack advertising (which mainly depress opposition turnout).
- It is illiberal, but you can still cast a blank or spoilt ballot.
- Far from as onerous as jury service, taxes, school attendance, and other legal obligations.

Conclusion

- Rational Choice provides a useful framework for thinking about turnout decisions.
- Although there are lots of interesting and sensible hypotheses, the empirical evidence for many are mixed or problematic, partly because of complicating circumstances.
- How much difference voters see between the parties seems to be a powerful predictor for who votes and changes over time at the aggregate level, and increasingly with fewer partisans
- To the extent that turnout has declined due to cohort replacement, it is unlikely to recover quickly and there are implications for intergenerational and other inequalities in representation and government legitimacy.
- Enforced compulsory voting is an effective practical solution.