

## Are American Voters Loyal to Political Parties?

The United States is a country whose federal government is deeply divided along partisan lines. In our final project, we looked at United States House and Presidential elections results from 1976 through 2022 to assess whether states consistently voted for the same party in federal elections, be it Democrat or Republican. The House and President were analyzed because the entire country votes for them in each of their elections, while the Senate was excluded because only  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the country votes for Senators each election, making comparison more difficult. We centered our project around three definitions of consistency for House and Presidential elections.

The first definition of consistency refers to whether, during general elections every 4 years, voters elect House majorities and Presidents of the same party. We awarded 1 point to each state every time they elected a House majority and President of the same party, and no points if there was a mismatch or tie in the House. In Figure 1, each state's score was displayed as a percentage out of the 12 general elections in this period. Most states were inconsistent; 4 were below 40%, only 8 exceeded 80%, and the rest were clustered between them. The results have two explanations. Either states with lower percentages are more divided along party lines, or voters in those states choose candidates regardless of party, which leads to members of different parties being elected to House than to President.

During midterm elections 2 years after every general election, a state that votes for a House majority of the same party that it voted for President in the previous general election fits the second definition of consistency. We awarded 1 point if this condition was met, and no points if there was a mismatch or tie in the House. Each state's score was again put as a percentage out of 12 in Figure 2. Some were more inconsistent, with 8 under 40% compared with 4 in the previous graph. Still, others were more consistent, with 9 states over 80% this time. We can infer

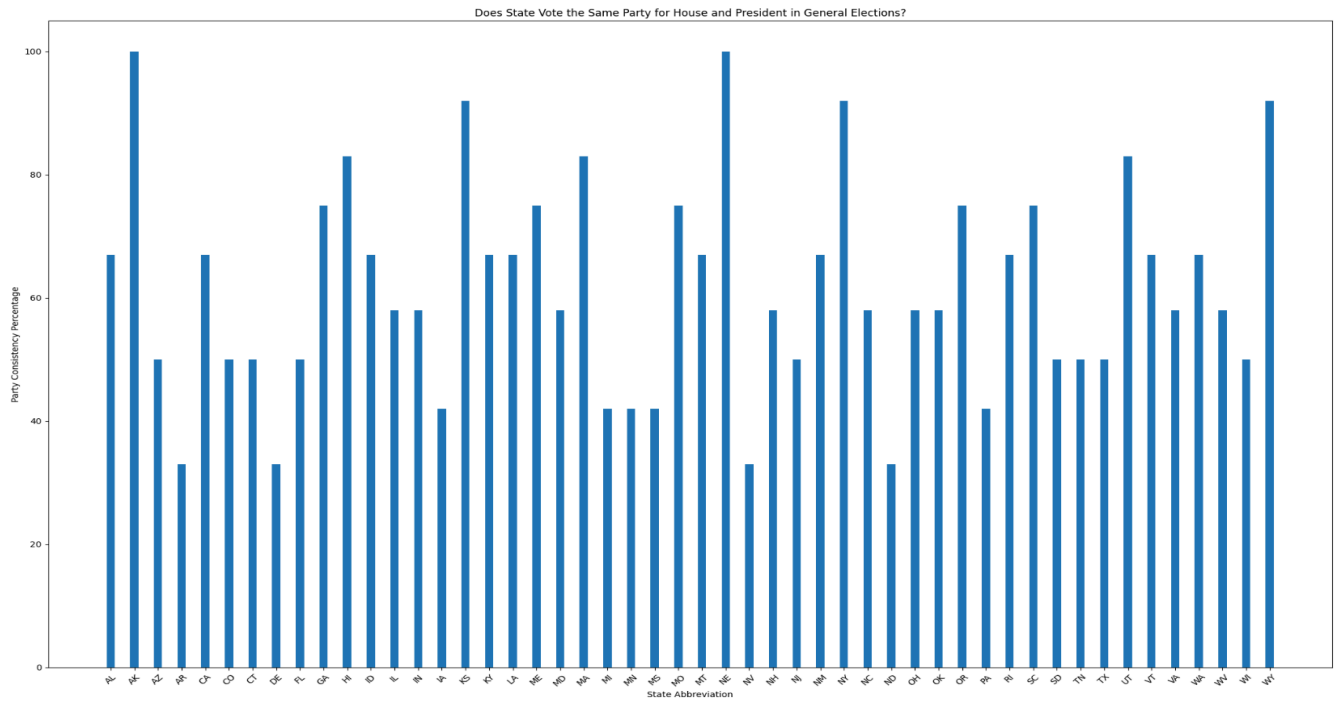


Figure 1: Definition 1

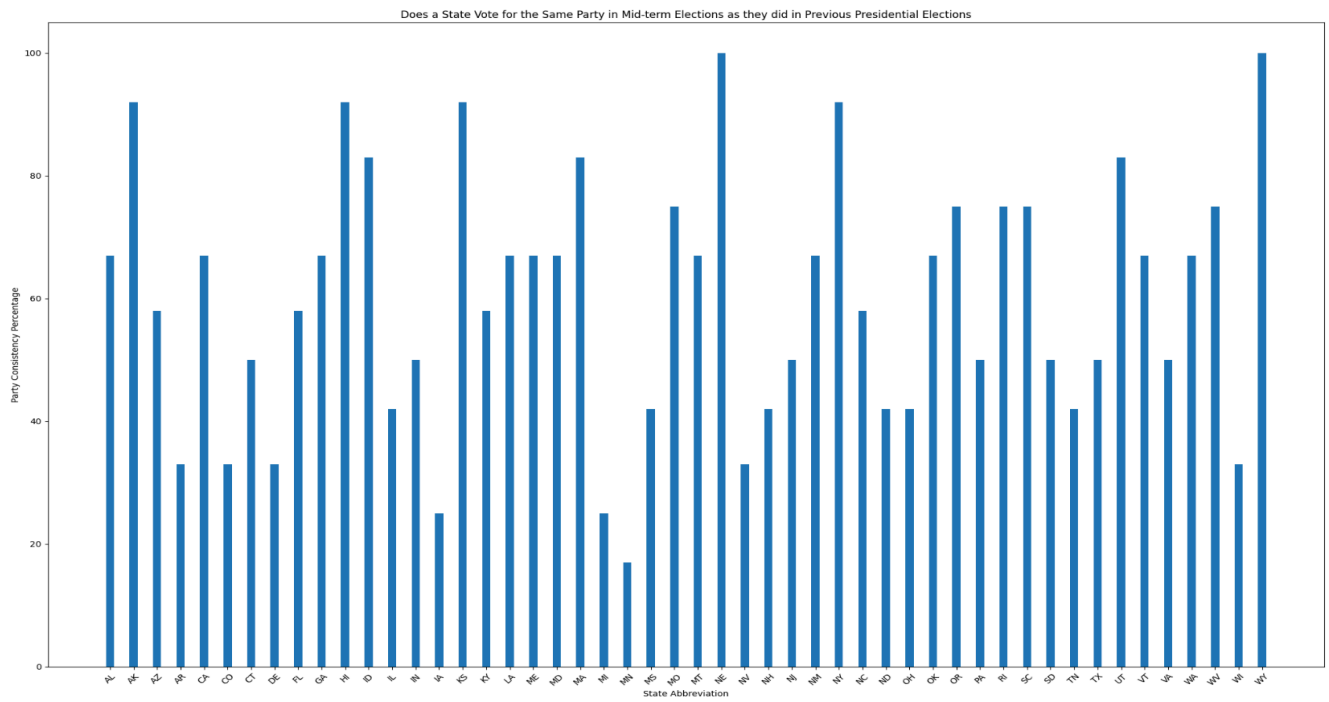
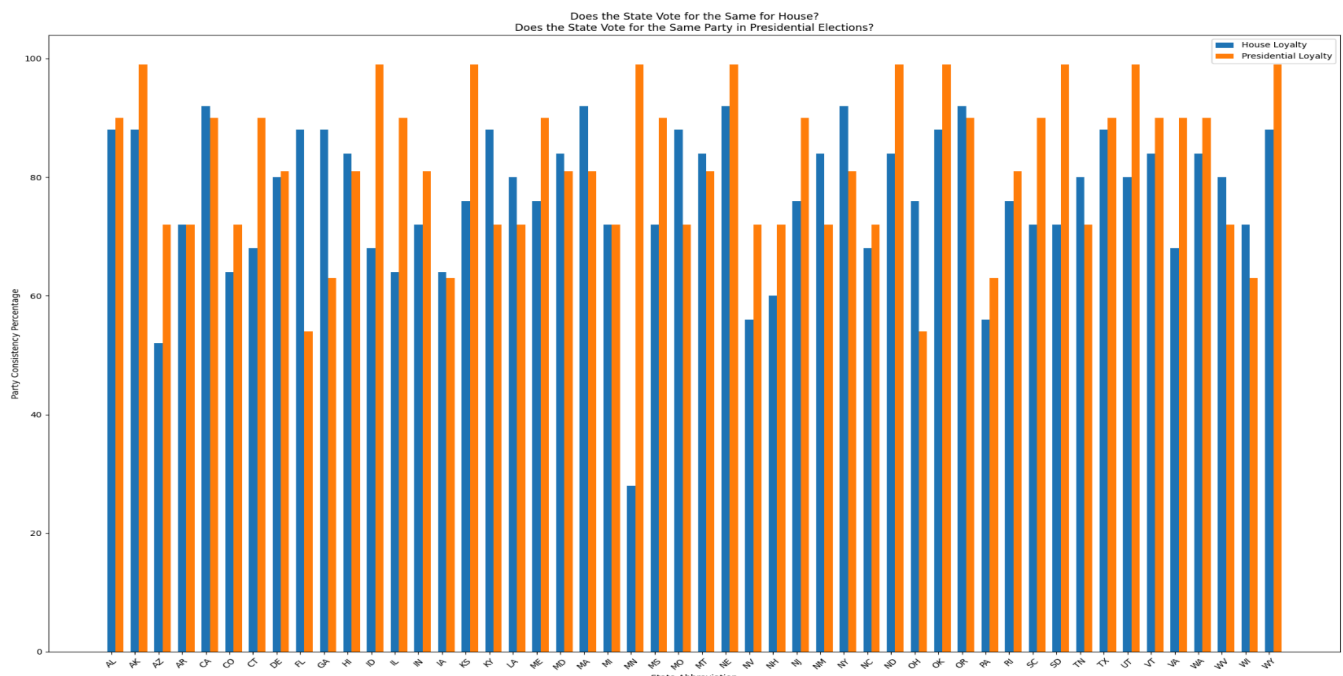


Figure 2: Definition 2

that the change reflects dissatisfaction with the political party that won the presidency 2 years prior in the general election. Either the states that elected the President experience his leadership and dislike it, or the states that did not elect him continue to oppose him.

As for the third definition, it tackles the question of how consistent states are in the long term for the House and President separately. We awarded 1 point out of 23 for every election in which a party retained the majority of the states' votes in the House in the next election. For every presidential election in which the state voted for a candidate of the same party as it had in the presidential election immediately prior, we gave 1 point out of 11 possible. 23 states in presidential elections were over 80% consistent as opposed to 21 states for House, 2 states in presidential elections were below 60% compared with 4 for House, and the rest were clustered between 60% and 80%. Thus it can be said that most states tended to have better consistency for presidential elections than House elections. Nevertheless, percentages for this type of consistency were much higher than previous graphs. Nearly every single state consistently voted for candidates of the same party to US House and President year after year in the long term. These results indicate that party affiliation influences voters in presidential elections more than in elections to the US House; still, in elections to both offices, party correlates to voting habits.



Overall, our findings demonstrate a weak correlation between states voting for US House and presidential candidates of the same party in general elections and that is even weaker in midterm elections. In the long run, however, states tend to vote for the same party as the election prior for US House and President. These findings obscure the fact that, in the past fifty years, Democrat and Republican party platforms have changed drastically. There has also been redistricting and migration to and from certain states that may make US House and/or Presidential elections easier to win for certain parties in a given state. Further research should include data on the US Senate, as well as conduct randomized experiments to prove loyalty to parties as causation for different voting trends.