

# The Polarization of Political Donors

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## Abstract

American politics has recently been defined by unprecedented levels of partisan polarization. Given the concurrent rise of the amount of money in politics, many have suggested a connection between money in politics and polarization, but it remains unclear if donors have become more polarized. Using political donation data from the Wisconsin Campaign Finance Information System (CFIS) and using the network science measure of modularity, this paper shows that political donor networks have polarized. This polarization is driven by new donors, large donors, and donors from geographic areas that are strong electorally for either party.

## Data

- 1.5m donations to Wisconsin gubernatorial and state legislative campaigns in the 2010, 2012, and 2014 election cycles were used to build networks
- Donors and campaigns as nodes
- Donations as edges

## Two measures of polarization

- Modularity:

Election Cycle	Modularity
2010	0.3987214
2012	0.4912365
2014	0.4797875

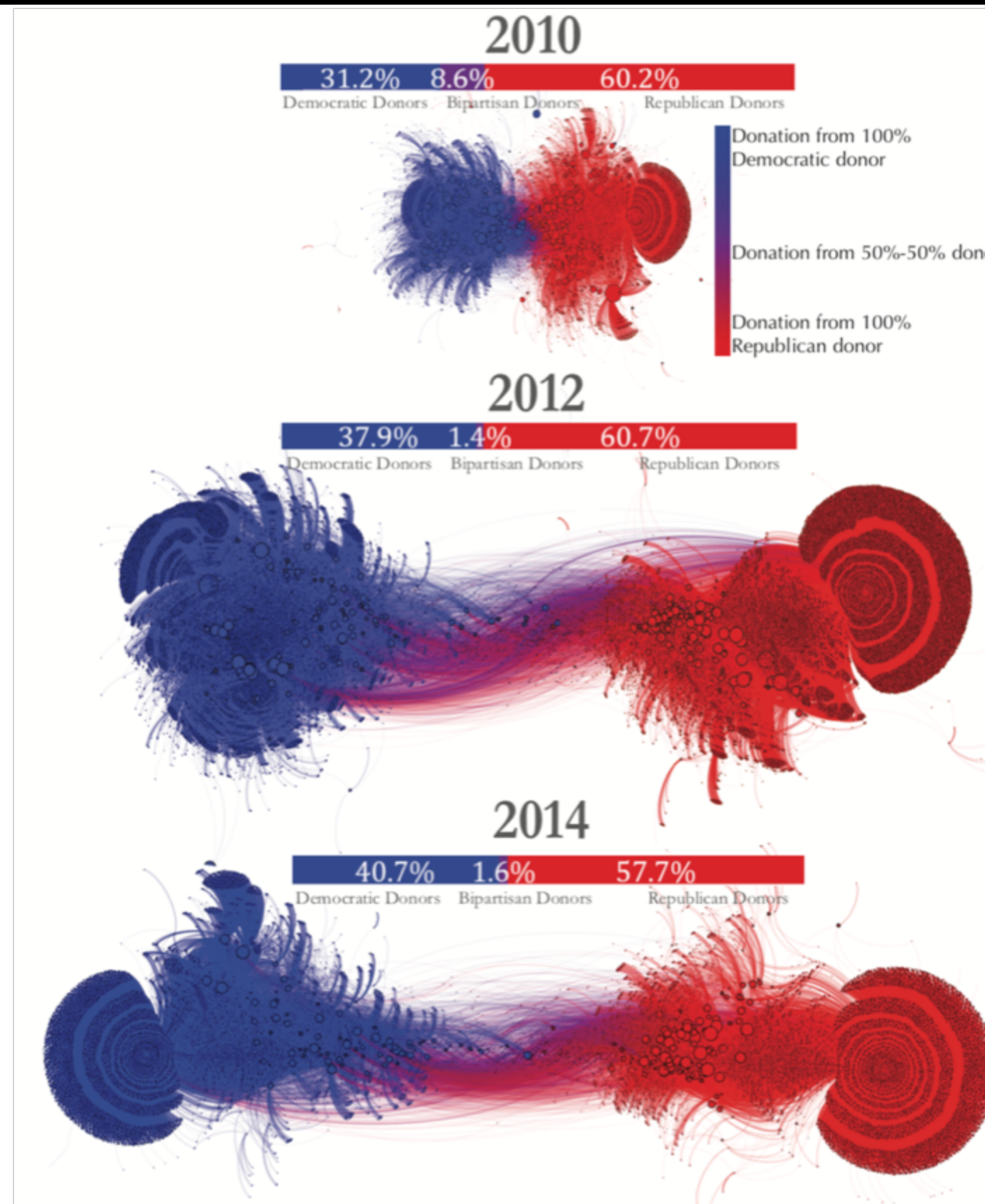
- Difference-in-means:

Election Cycle	T	CI	p
2012 compared to 2010	0.04211	0.04022-0.04395	<.001
2014 compared to 2012	-0.00029	-9e-04-0.00027	0.356

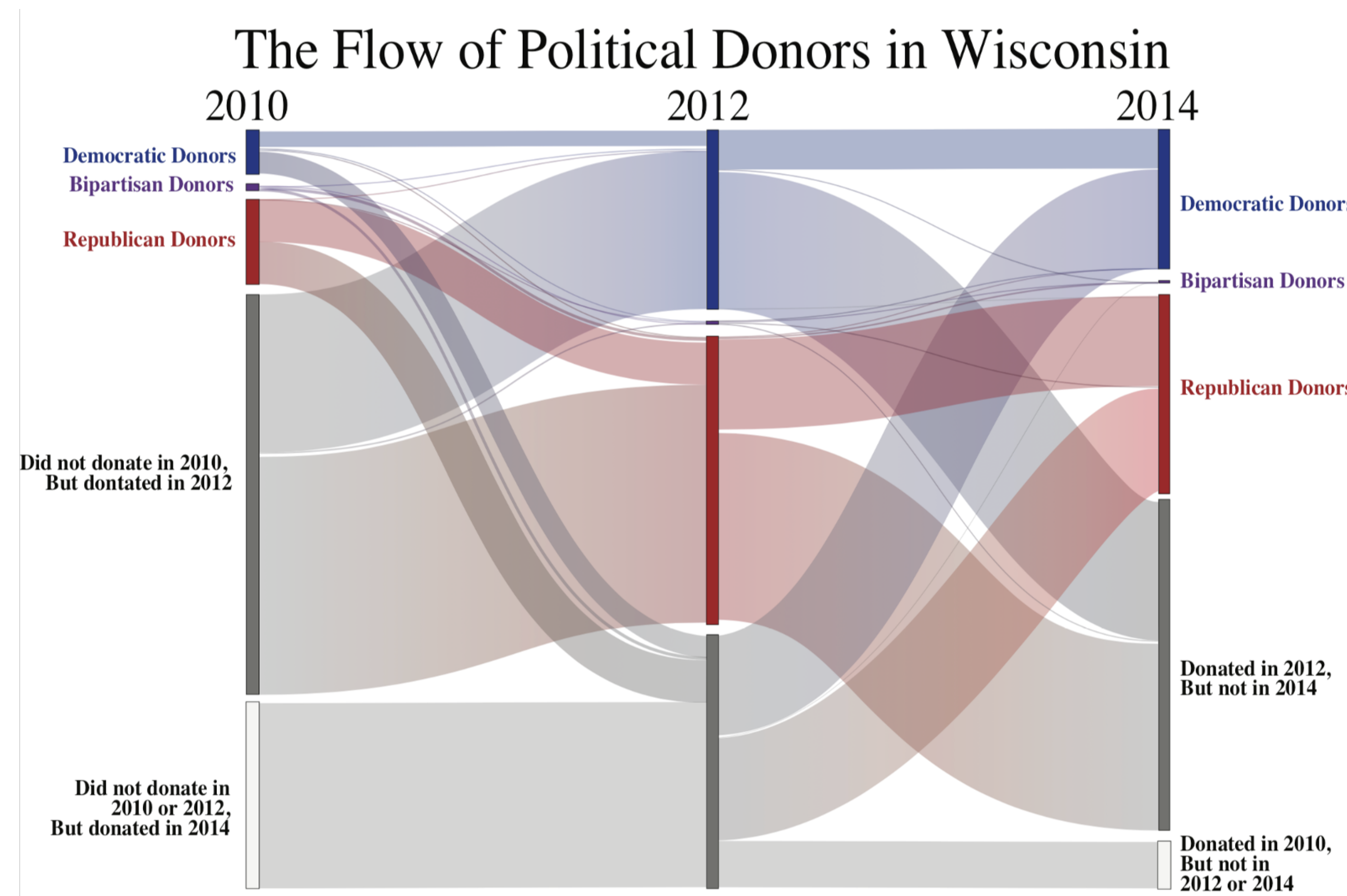
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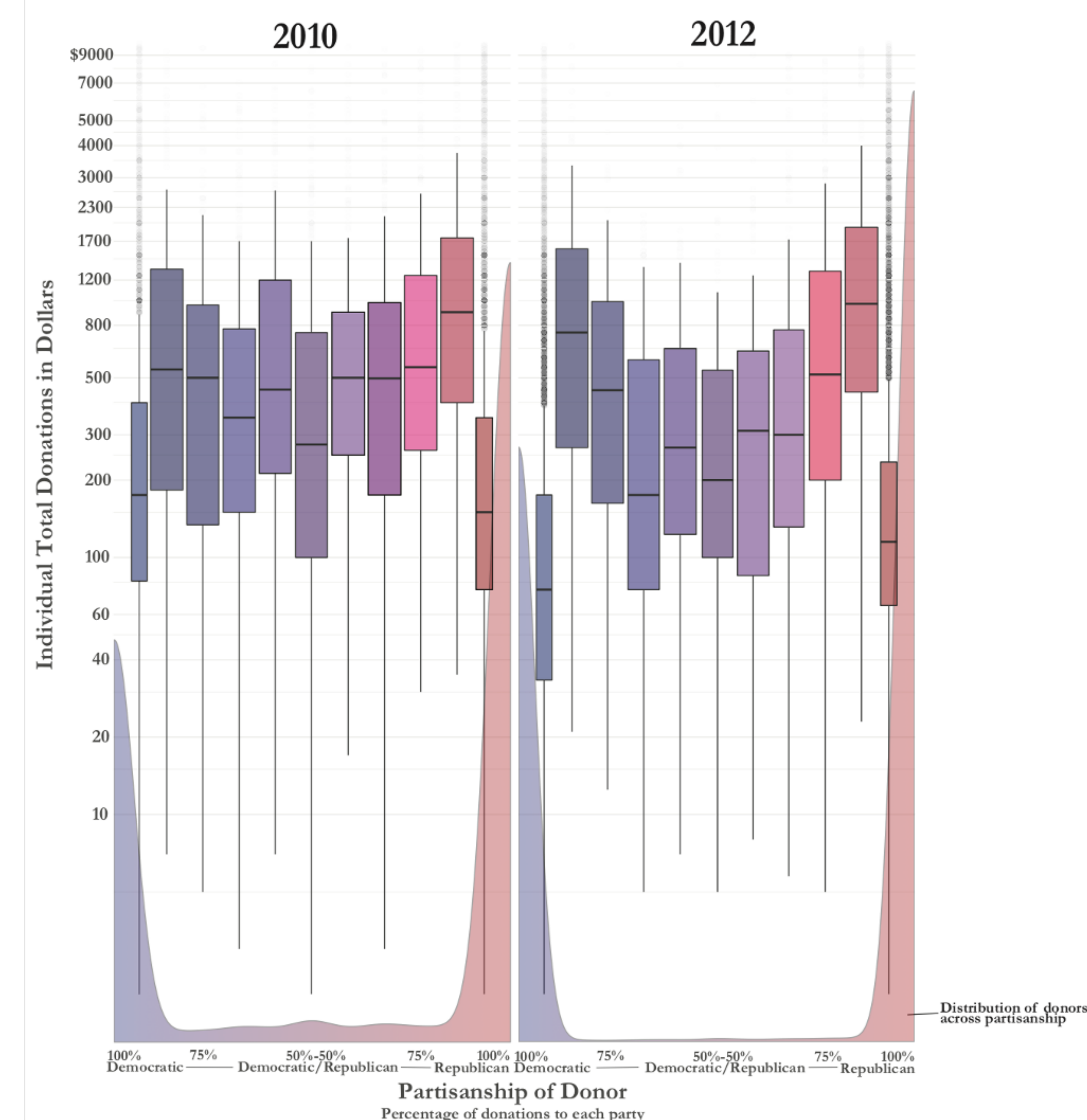
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