

# Strategic voting or measurement error?

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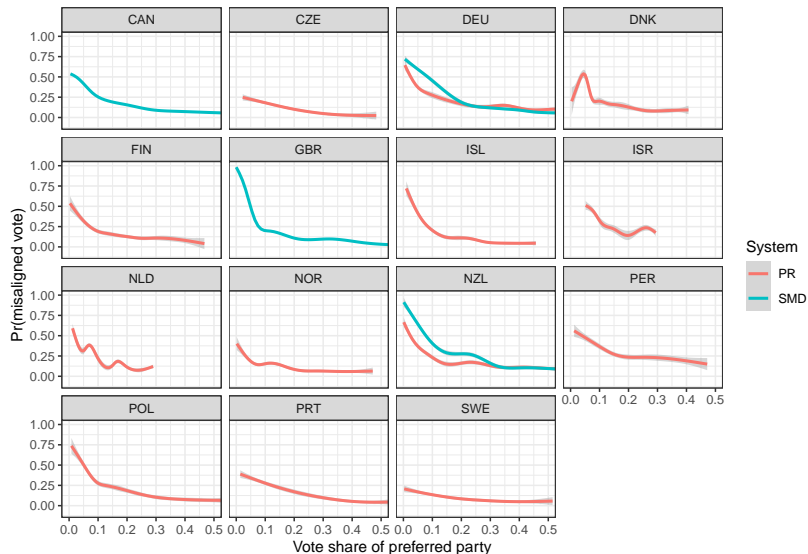
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## Motivation: a puzzling new consensus

*[P]atterns of strategic voting across FPTP and PR bear striking similarities. In every election, smaller parties tend to lose votes to major parties. Because there tend to be more small parties in PR systems, tactical voting is actually more common [i.e. misaligned voting rate is higher] under PR than under FPTP.*

— Abramson, Aldrich, Blais, Diamond, Diskin, Indridason, Lee & Levine (2010)

# Evidence from CSES, BES, CES



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But

- ▶ (except for 1) the same logic could lead to voting for a small party
- ▶ formateur considerations are relevant in e.g. Canada, UK too

## Measurement error as alternative explanation

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Less obviously, under reasonable assumptions a greater share will be wrong for smaller parties.

Sincere voting + measurement error  $\approx$  strategic defection of small parties



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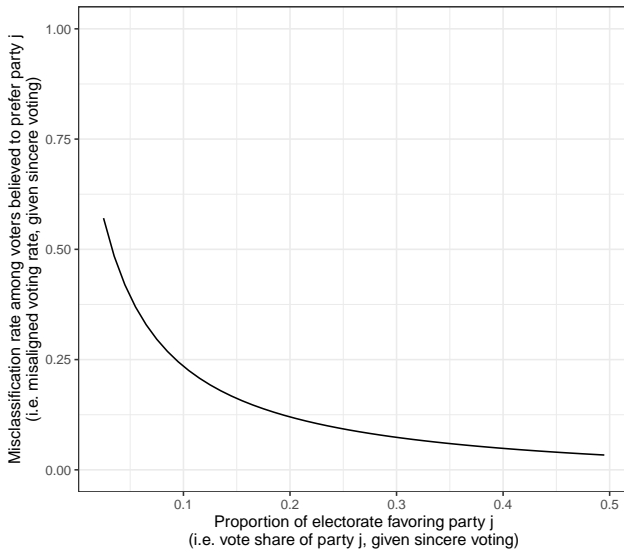
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Then

- ▶ share classified as preferring  $j$ :  $(1 - \varepsilon)\pi_j + \varepsilon/K$  (incr. in  $\pi_j$ )
- ▶ share **incorrectly** classified as preferring  $j$ :  $(1 - \pi_j)\varepsilon/K$  (decr. in  $\pi_j$ )
- ▶  $\implies$  misclassification rate higher for smaller parties

Misclassification rate for party  $j \equiv \Pr(\text{does not prefer } j \mid \text{classified as preferring } j)$

Assuming five parties and error rate of .15



## Evidence from Canada

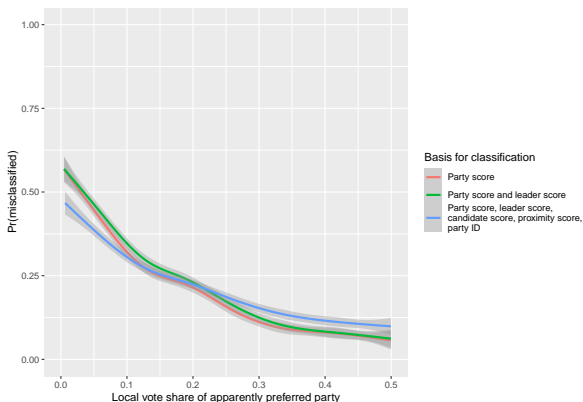
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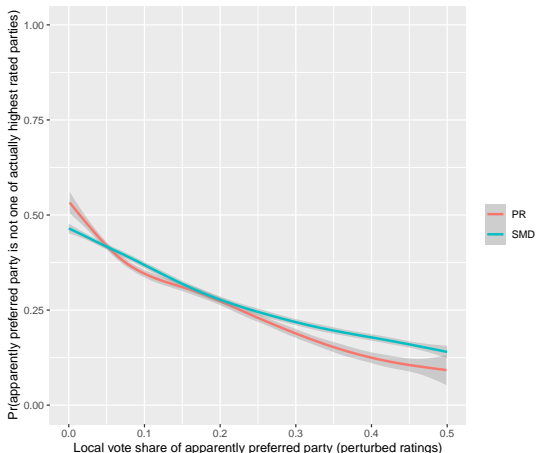
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What should we do about it?

- ▶ Use methods that don't rely on identifying preferred party
- ▶ Get direct preference measures for more surveys
- ▶ **Use surveys with direct preference measures (Canada) to adjust other estimates**

## Adjusting based on Canada survey

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**Procedure:** for each voter in every survey,

- ▶ use discrete choice model fit in Canadian data to get probability each party is the top choice
- ▶ call the maximum probability the *preference predictability*, and corresponding party is inferred to be top choice
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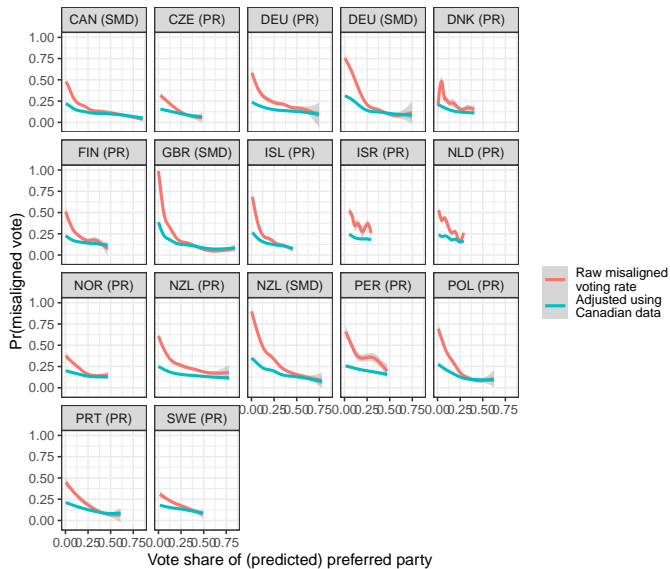
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**Conclusion:** much lower rate of “strategic defection” everywhere, but especially PR systems



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Correcting it will

- ▶ probably restore the previous conventional wisdom about strategic voting in PR vs FPTP
- ▶ reduce estimates of how much strategic voting goes on in FPTP (e.g. Kawai & Watanabe 2013, Eggers & Vivyan 2020)
- ▶ maybe change conclusions about who votes more strategically (e.g. Eggers & Vivyan 2020, Eggers Loewen Rubenson 2022)