California Ballot Measures

Voting Patterns

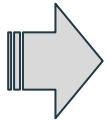
Motivation - A Herd Mentality?

Theoretical background

Penal populism: The politics

Public punitiveness: The ground level

- What do we learn from the ballot?



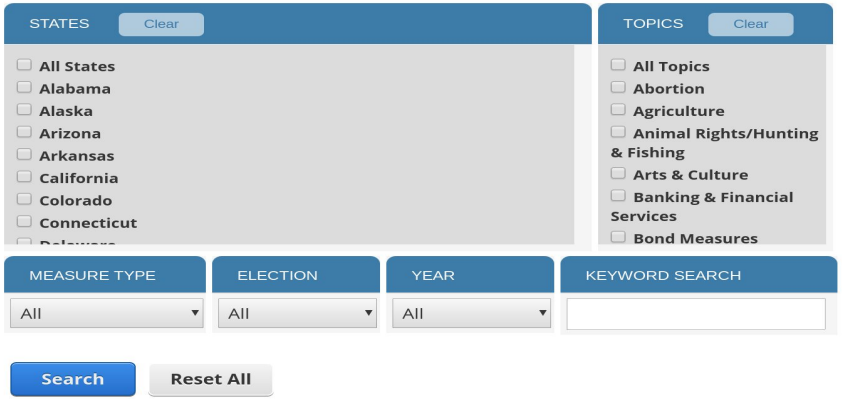
Are criminal justice ballot measures uniquely likely to succeed?

I examine the success rate of criminal justice ballot measures in California, both overall and across time.

In addition I compare these measures with all the other topic domains that came up to a public vote in California.

What's Available

NCSL



IPPSR

ballotid	st	state	stateno	state_fip	state_ic	year	ballotnar	ballotdes	type	electiont	passed	pctyesvo	unknowr	unofficia	topicarea
AL1	AL	Alabama	1	1	41	1992	Amendm	Forever	Legislat	General	1	9999847	0	0	Budgets
AL2	AL	Alabama	1	1	41	1992	Amendm	Pell City	Legislat	General	1	9999847	0	0	Educatio
AL3	AL	Alabama	1	1	41	1994	Amendm	Chambe	Legislat	Primary	0	0000153	1	0	Arts & C
AL4	AL	Alabama	1	1	41	1994	Amendm	Decatur	Legislat	Primary	0	9999847	1	0	Educatio
AL5	AL	Alabama	1	1	41	1994	Amendm	Dotham	Legislat	Primary	0	9999924	1	0	Educatio
AL6	AL	Alabama	1	1	41	1994	Amendm	Property	Legislat	Primary	0	9999847	1	0	Tax & R

Propositio	Recall Elec	Legislative	General	1	
Propositio	Increased	Initiative	General	1	
Propositio	Bail Excep	Legislative	General	1	
Propositio	Attorney-(	Initiative	General	0	25.6

NCSL => HTML

```
<div class="divRepeaterResults">
    <div class="divRepeaterTitle">
        1992 School Facilities Bond Act</div>
    <div class="divRepeaterID">
        Proposition 155
    </div>
    <div style="clear: both">
    </div>
    <div class="divRepeaterInternal">
        <strong>Election: </strong>
        General
        -
        1992
        <br />
        <strong>Type: </strong>
        Legislative Referendum
        <br />
        <strong>Status: <span style='color: green'>Pass</span></strong> (Yes votes: 51.8%)<br/>
        <strong>Topic Areas: </strong>
         Bond Measures | Education: PreK-12
        <br />
        <div id="divClickforSummary" class="clickForSummary">
            <strong>Summary: </strong><u>Click for Summary</u>
        </div>
        <div id="dnn_ctr78525_BallotMeasuresDB_repResults_ctl03_divSummary" class="summary">
            This act provides for a bond issue of nine hundred million dollars ($900,000,000) to provic
on or improvement of public schools.  Appropriates money from state General Fund to pay off bonds.<BR>
```

SingleFile

Offered by: gildas

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HTML => python => CSV

#1 create a list of all the propositions titles

```
titles = []
for tit in soup.find_all("div", class_="divRepeaterTitle"):
    titles.append(tit.text)
```

#2 create a list of lists with the details, then clean it

```
details = []
for elc in soup.find_all("div", class_="divRepeaterInternal"):
        details.append(elc.text.splitlines())

clean = []
for i in details:
    i = list(filter(None, i))
    while(" " in i):
        i.remove(" ")
    while(" -" in i):
        i.remove(" -")
    clean.append(i)
```

#3 Put the 2 lists into a dictionary; titles are keys. but some of titles repeat (and keys must be unique). => Use the “uniquify” function (thank you Rick):

```
def uniquify(seq, suffs = count(1)):
    """Make all the items unique by adding a suffix (1, 2, etc).
    `seq` is mutable sequence of strings.
    `suffs` is an optional alternative suffix iterable.
    """
```

#4 dictionary => csv:

```
cal_all_prop = dict(zip(copy, clean))

with open('cal_all_prop.csv', 'w') as csv_file:
    writer = csv.writer(csv_file)
    for key, value in cal_all_prop.items():
       writer.writerow([key] + cal_all_prop[key])
```

CSV => R => Clean

#1 status into binary; percent into numeric

```
cal_prop_all %<>%
  # Create binary variable for status
  mutate(status = ifelse(grepl("Pass", status), T, F)) %>%
  # Convert percent to numeric type (removing unofficial results)
  mutate(percent = str_remove(percent, "%")) %>%
  mutate(percent = as.numeric(percent)) %>%
```

#2 multiple topics => multiple measures

```
  # for every measure with more than 1 topic - duplicate for each topic
for (i in 1:nrow(cal_prop_all)) {
  for (j in 8:12) {
    if (!is.na(cal_prop_all[i,j])){
    cal_prop_all %<>%
      add_row(title = as.character(cal_prop_all[i,1]), election =
as.character(cal_prop_all[i,2]), year = as.numeric(cal_prop_all[i,3]), type =
as.character(cal_prop_all[i,4]), status = as.logical(cal_prop_all[i,5]), percent =
as.numeric(cal_prop_all[i,6]), topics = as.character(cal_prop_all[i,j]))
    }
  }
}
```

#3 add variables to measure levels of success

```
# Add "polar" variable to measure level of concesus
cal_prop_all %<>%
  mutate(polar = NA) %>%
  mutate(polar = ifelse(percent > 30 & percent < 70, "0", polar)) %>%
  mutate(polar = ifelse(percent <= 30, "1", polar)) %>%
  mutate(polar = ifelse(percent >= 70, "2", polar)) %>%
  mutate(polar = as.numeric(polar))

# Add "veryS" variable to indicate an overwhelmingly successful measure
cal_prop_all %<>%
  mutate(veryS = NA) %>%
  mutate(veryS = ifelse(percent >= 70, 1, veryS))

#Add "veryUnS" variable to indicate an overwhelmingly un-successful measure
cal_prop_all %<>%
  mutate(veryUnS = NA) %>%
  mutate(veryUnS = ifelse(percent <= 30, 1, veryUnS))
```

Some stats!

```
Skim summary statistics
 n obs: 1257
 n variables: 12
```

```
── Variable type:logical ──────────────────────────────────────────────────────
 variable missing complete    n mean                          count
   status       0     1257 1257 0.55 TRU: 695, FAL: 562, NA: 0
```

Criminal Justice 0.6933333

```
── Variable type:numeric ──────────────────────────────────────────────────────
 variable missing complete    n  mean    sd   p0   p25   p50   p75
  percent      79     1178 1257 52.82 15.55 13.3 41.02  52.4 64.47
```

Criminal Justice mean 57.83175

p50 57.000

	observations
Telecom & Info Technology	1
Abortion	3
Economic Development	3
Federal Government	5
Juvenile Justice	5
State-Tribal Relations	8
Term Limits	8
Elections-Initiative Process	15
Arts & Culture	17
Redistricting	19
Ethics/Lobbying/Campaign Finance	21
Criminal Justice	75
Natural Resources	91
Education: PreK-12	99
State Government	142
Local Government	144
Bond Measures	208
Tax & Revenue	259

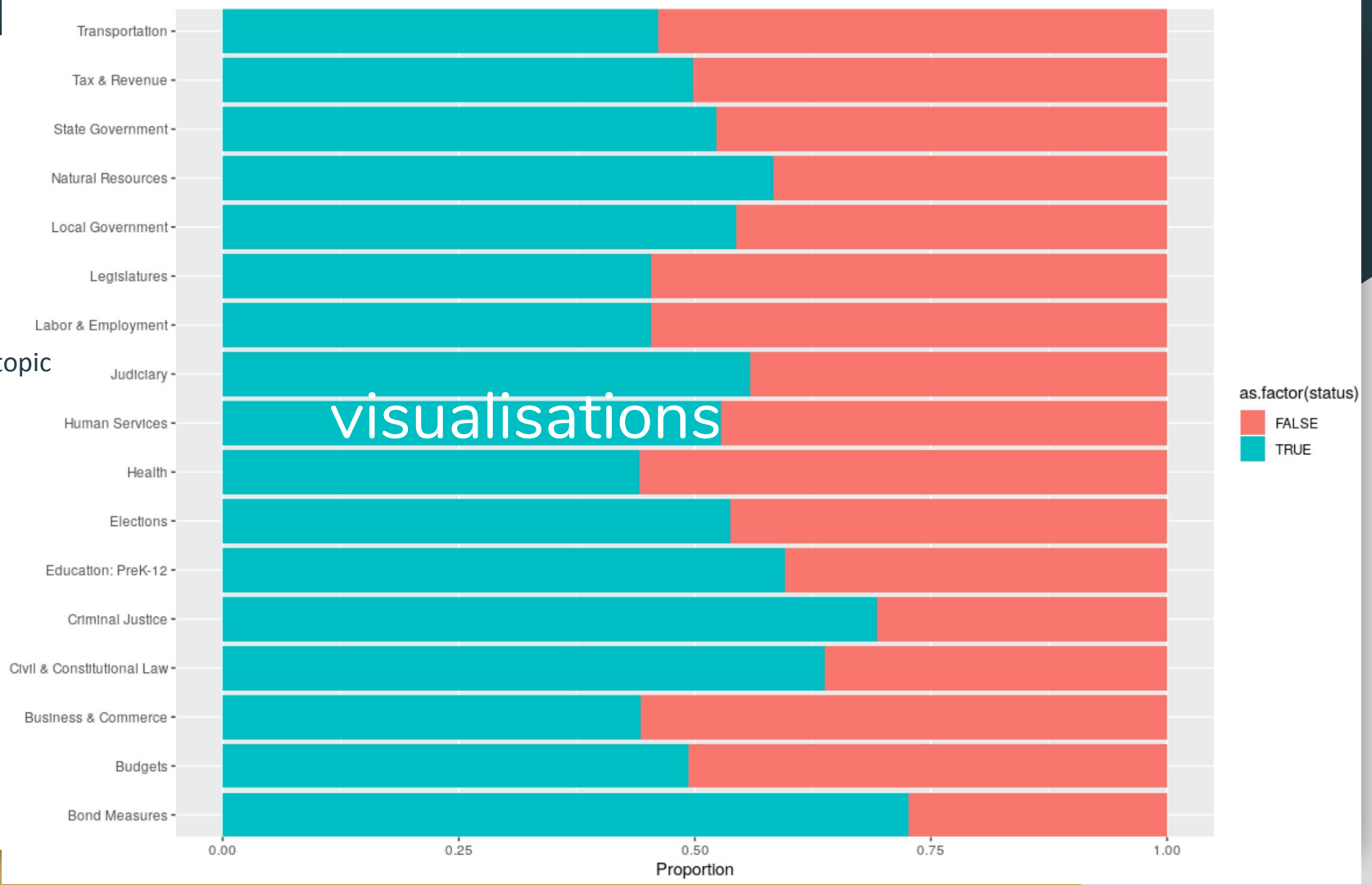
Because of the variation on observations - we need to ignore the low observations for the next steps

Removing low observations (<60)

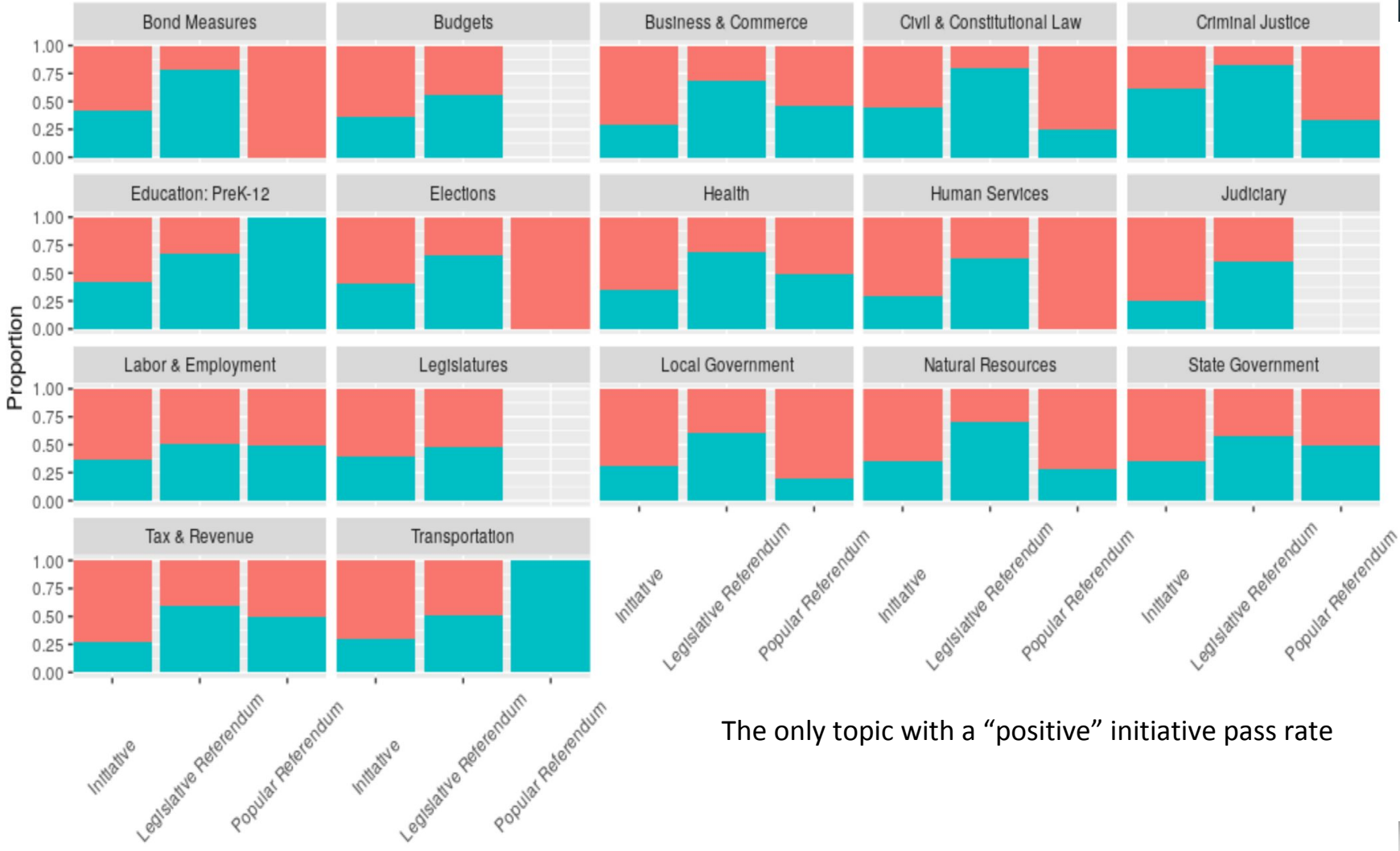
```
  #keep only topics with more than 60 observations
high_observations <- c()
for (k in 1:nrow(summary_stats)) {
  if (summary_stats[k,5] > 60) {
    high_observations <- c(high_observations,as.character(summary_stats[k,1]))
    k = k + 1
  }
}
# create a dataframe with only high observation topics
cal_prop_greater60 <- filter(cal_prop_all, topics %in% high_observations)
skim(cal_prop_greater60)
```

```
Skim summary statistics
 n obs: 1766
 n variables: 15

── Variable type:logical ─────────────────────────────────────────────────────
 variable missing complete    n mean                      count
   status       0     1766 1766 0.55 TRU: 972, FAL: 794, NA: 0

── Variable type:numeric ─────────────────────────────────────────────────────
 variable missing complete    n    mean    sd   p0   p25   p50   p75   p100
  percent     106     1660 1766   52.65 15.42   15  40.7  52.4  63.9   94.9
```

Rate of proposition success by topic



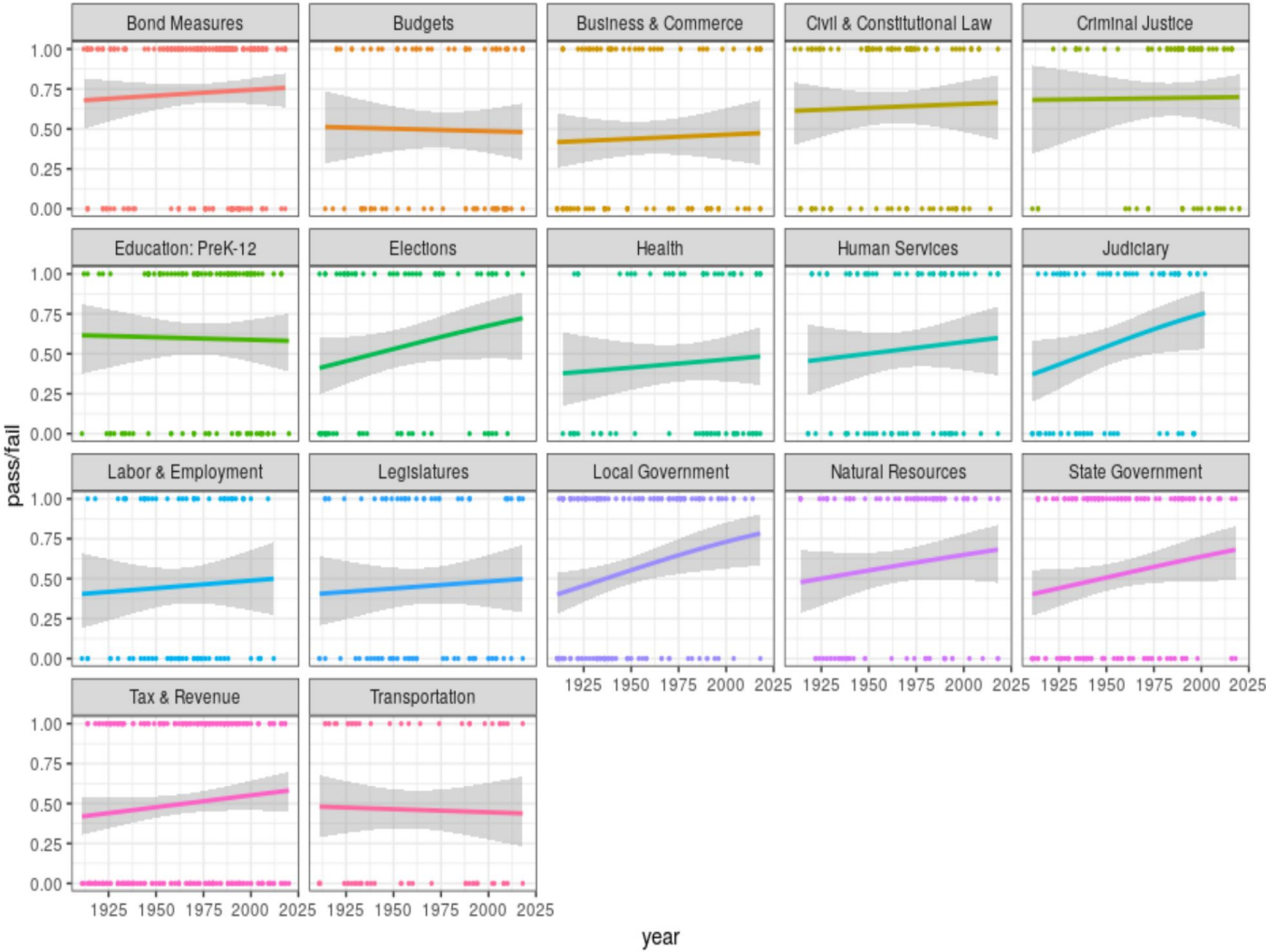
visualisations



The only topic with a “positive” initiative pass rate

How much did the pass rate changed over time?

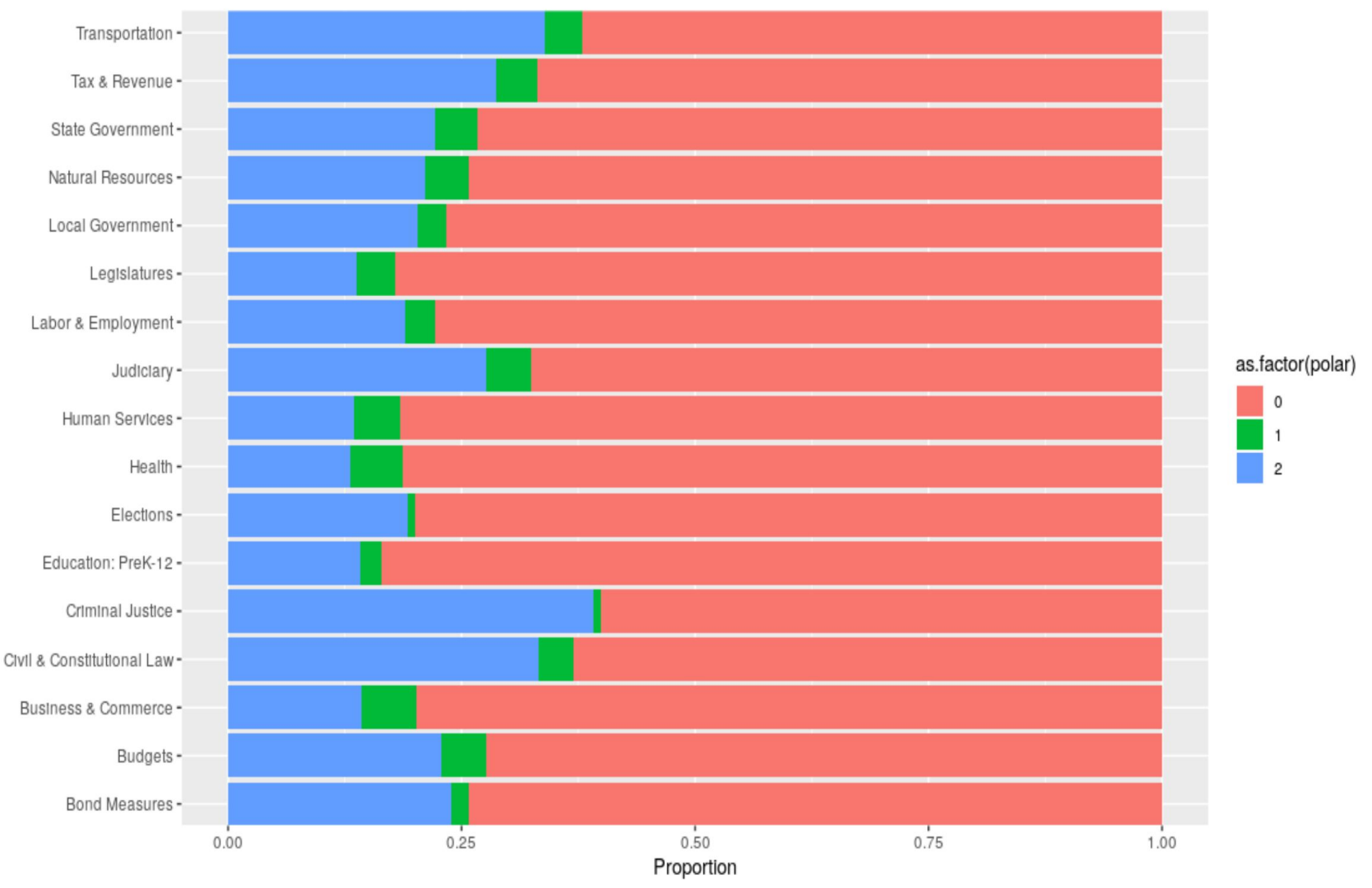
What is the future prediction?



0 = lower than 70 higher then 30

1= failed overwhelmingly

2= overwhelming success



Conclusions

- Criminal justice ballot measures are unique
- Criminal justice ballot measure are highly likely to succeed
  - With no significant difference between initiative/referendum
  - When they succeed, they are also likely to succeed overwhelmingly
  - The pattern is consistent from 1911 till today
- It is not about punitivism
  - 3 strikes vs. the reform
    - Prop 184 (1994) - 71.85%
    - Prop 36 (2012) - 69.3%
    - Prop 47 (2014) - 59.61%
  - Herd mentality?

California Proposition 184 (1994)		
Result	Votes	Percentage
✔ **Yes**	**5,906,268**	**71.85%**
No	2,314,548	28.15%

California Proposition 36 (2012)		
Result	Votes	Percentage
✔ **Yes**	**8,575,619**	**69.3%**
No	3,798,218	30.7%

California Proposition 47		
Result	Votes	Percentage
✔ **Yes**	**4,238,156**	**59.61%**
No	2,871,943	40.39%

Acknowledgements

Google and stackoverflow couldn't have done it without you