

Social Information and Uninformed Voting Behavior

Delegating or Bandwagoning?

Gento Kato
gkato@ucdavis.edu

77th Annual Midwest Political Science Association Conference
April 6, 2019



Motivation

Data

Results

Discussion

The conventional view of uninformed voting

Previous studies suggest **Uninformed = Unexplainable**:

Random Guessing



Incorrect Preference



The conventional view of uninformed voting

Previous studies suggest **Uninformed = Unexplainable**:

Random Guessing



Incorrect Preference



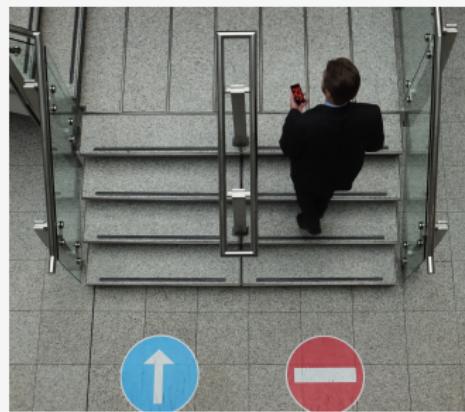
The conventional view of uninformed voting

Previous studies suggest **Uninformed = Unexplainable**:

Random Guessing



Incorrect Preference



The explanation of uninformed voting

This study argues that **uninformed voters** ...

1. Do **not** rely on (**incorrect**) individual **preference/evaluation**, but their decisions are **not random**.
2. Use **social information** in making voting decisions.

social information: *The distribution of preferences (expected voting patterns) in the society.*

How do uninformed voters utilize social information?

The explanation of uninformed voting

This study argues that **uninformed voters** ...

1. Do **not** rely on (**incorrect**) individual **preference/evaluation**, but their decisions are **not random**.
2. Use **social information** in making voting decisions.

social information: *The distribution of preferences (expected voting patterns) in the society.*

How do uninformed voters utilize social information?

The explanation of uninformed voting

This study argues that **uninformed voters** ...

1. Do **not** rely on (**incorrect**) individual **preference/evaluation**, but their decisions are **not random**.
2. Use **social information** in making voting decisions.

social information: *The distribution of preferences (expected voting patterns) in the society.*

How do uninformed voters utilize social information?

The explanation of uninformed voting

This study argues that **uninformed voters** ...

1. Do **not** rely on (**incorrect**) individual **preference/evaluation**, but their decisions are **not random**.
2. Use **social information** in making voting decisions.

social information: *The distribution of preferences (expected voting patterns) in the society.*

How do uninformed voters utilize social information?

The explanation of uninformed voting

This study argues that **uninformed voters** ...

1. Do **not** rely on (**incorrect**) individual **preference/evaluation**, but their decisions are **not random**.
2. Use **social information** in making voting decisions.

social information: *The distribution of preferences (expected voting patterns) in the society.*

How do uninformed voters utilize social information?

Social information and uninformed voting

1. **Delegation:** Balancing against the majority social preference so that moderate informed voters can determine the electoral outcome
(e.g., Feddersen and Pesendorfer, 1996).
2. **Bandwagon:** Voting with the majority social preference to gain extra expressive benefit
(e.g., Bischoff and Egbert, 2013).

Both imply that the clearer (i.e., larger majority advantage) the society is, the stronger the tendency.

Social information and uninformed voting

1. **Delegation:** Balancing against the majority social preference so that moderate informed voters can determine the electoral outcome
(e.g., Feddersen and Pesendorfer, 1996).
2. **Bandwagon:** Voting with the majority social preference to gain extra expressive benefit
(e.g., Bischoff and Egbert, 2013).

Both imply that the clearer (i.e., larger majority advantage) the society is, the stronger the tendency.

Social information and uninformed voting

1. **Delegation:** Balancing against the majority social preference so that moderate informed voters can determine the electoral outcome
(e.g., Feddersen and Pesendorfer, 1996).
2. **Bandwagon:** Voting with the majority social preference to gain extra expressive benefit
(e.g., Bischoff and Egbert, 2013).

Both imply that the clearer (i.e., larger majority advantage) the society is, the stronger the tendency.

Social information and uninformed voting

1. **Delegation:** Balancing against the majority social preference so that moderate informed voters can determine the electoral outcome
(e.g., Feddersen and Pesendorfer, 1996).
2. **Bandwagon:** Voting with the majority social preference to gain extra expressive benefit
(e.g., Bischoff and Egbert, 2013).

Both imply that the clearer (i.e., larger majority advantage) the society is, the stronger the tendency.

Motivation

Data

Results

Discussion

Data and estimation strategy

Dataset: Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES)
2008 and 2016 (open seat elections).

DV: Presidential vote choice (Rep. = 1, Dem. = 0).

**Those who voted others or abstained are excluded from analysis.*

Knowledge: Correct answers to 8 factual questions (0-1).

Estimation Strategy:

- Estimated by logistic regression
(Cluster robust SE by states, population weights).
- All predictors × knowledge (Bartels, 1996).
⇒ Separate coef. for informed & uninformed.

Data and estimation strategy

Dataset: Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES)
2008 and 2016 (open seat elections).

DV: Presidential vote choice (Rep. = 1, Dem. = 0).

**Those who voted others or abstained are excluded from analysis.*

Knowledge: Correct answers to 8 factual questions (0-1).

Estimation Strategy:

- Estimated by logistic regression
(Cluster robust SE by states, population weights).
- All predictors × knowledge (Bartels, 1996).
⇒ Separate coef. for informed & uninformed.

Data and estimation strategy

Dataset: Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES)
2008 and 2016 (open seat elections).

DV: Presidential vote choice (Rep. = 1, Dem. = 0).

**Those who voted others or abstained are excluded from analysis.*

Knowledge: Correct answers to 8 factual questions (0-1).

Estimation Strategy:

- Estimated by logistic regression
(Cluster robust SE by states, population weights).
- All predictors × knowledge (Bartels, 1996).
⇒ Separate coef. for informed & uninformed.

Data and estimation strategy

Dataset: Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES)
2008 and 2016 (open seat elections).

DV: Presidential vote choice (Rep. = 1, Dem. = 0).

**Those who voted others or abstained are excluded from analysis.*

Knowledge: Correct answers to 8 factual questions (0-1).

Estimation Strategy:

- Estimated by **logistic regression**
(Cluster robust SE by states, population weights).
- All **predictors × knowledge** (Bartels, 1996).
⇒ Separate coef. for informed & uninformed.

Predictors of vote choice

Individual preference:

- Ideological proximity to Republican candidate (-6:6).
- (Republican) Party identity (-3:3).
- Retrospective economic evaluation (-2:2).

Demographics (control):

- Female
- Age
- Race
- Education
- Born-again Christian

Measuring social information

Social information as **aggregate level partisan voting patterns in previous elections**.

- **State PVI** (partisan voter index): State **deviation from national trend** in two party vote share (average from 2 previous elections).
- **County PVI**: County **deviation from state trend** in two party vote share (average from 2 previous elections).

Interpretation:

- $+$ \Rightarrow *Republican advantage by % points.*
- 0 \Rightarrow *Identical to national/state trend.*
- $-$ \Rightarrow *Democratic advantage by % points.*

Measuring social information

Social information as aggregate level partisan voting patterns in previous elections.

- **State PVI** (partisan voter index): State **deviation from national trend** in two party vote share (average from 2 previous elections).
- **County PVI**: County **deviation from state trend** in two party vote share (average from 2 previous elections).

Interpretation:

- + ⇒ *Republican advantage by % points.*
- 0 ⇒ *Identical to national/state trend.*
- - ⇒ *Democratic advantage by % points.*

Measuring social information

Social information as aggregate level partisan voting patterns in previous elections.

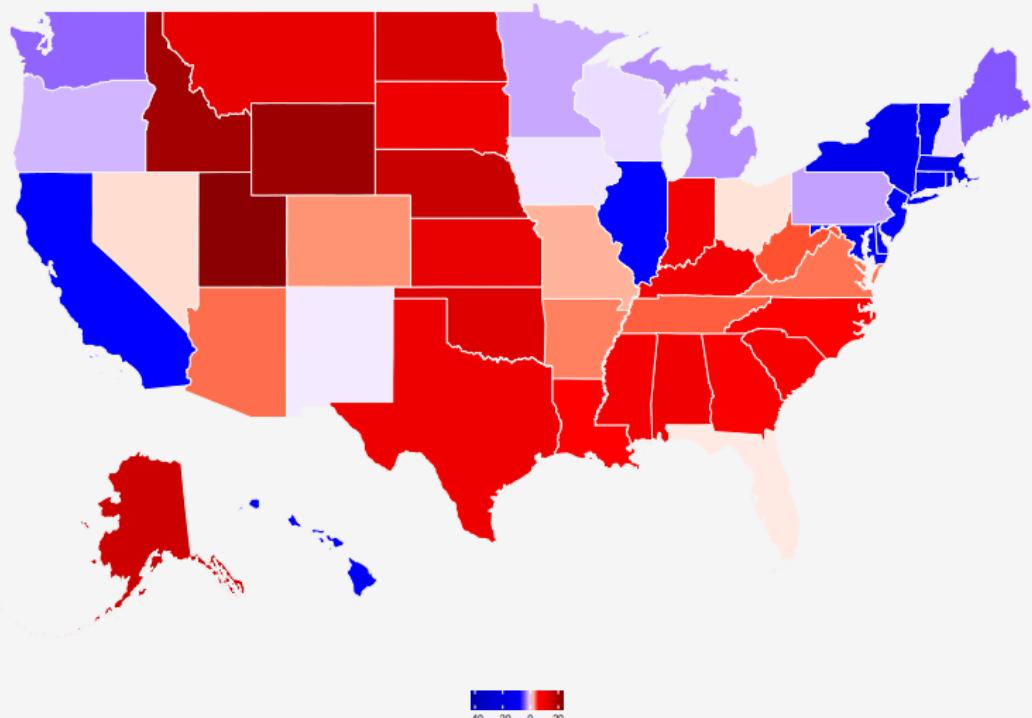
- **State PVI** (partisan voter index): State **deviation from national trend** in two party vote share (average from 2 previous elections).
- **County PVI**: County **deviation from state trend** in two party vote share (average from 2 previous elections).

Interpretation:

- $+$ \Rightarrow Republican advantage by % points.
- 0 \Rightarrow Identical to national/state trend.
- $-$ \Rightarrow Democratic advantage by % points.

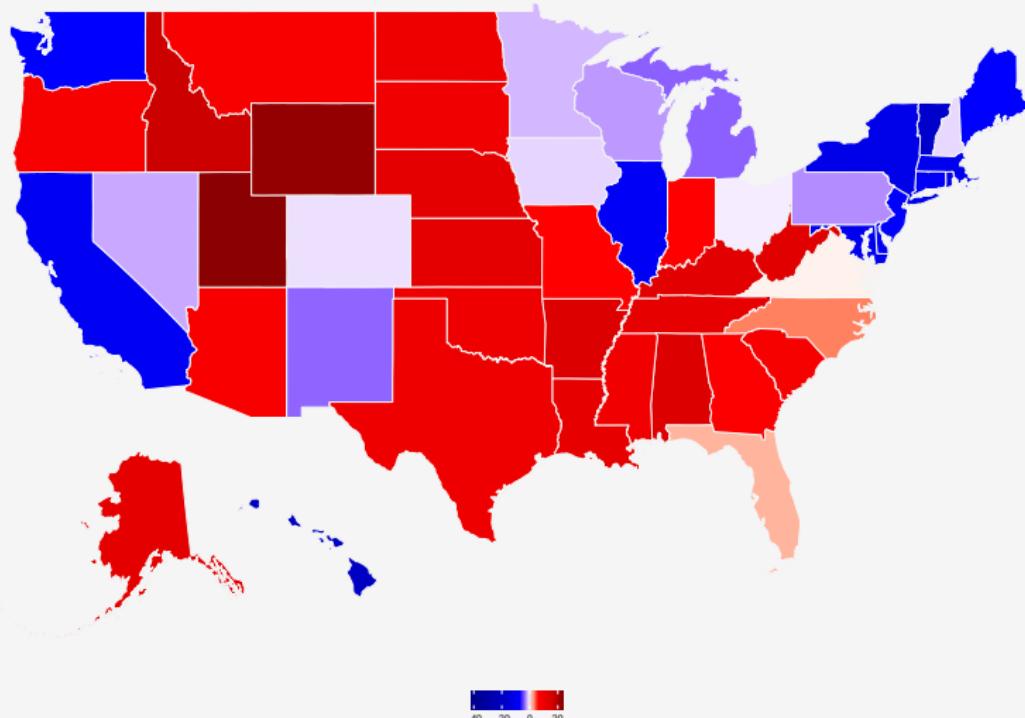
The distribution of social information

State PVI (2008)



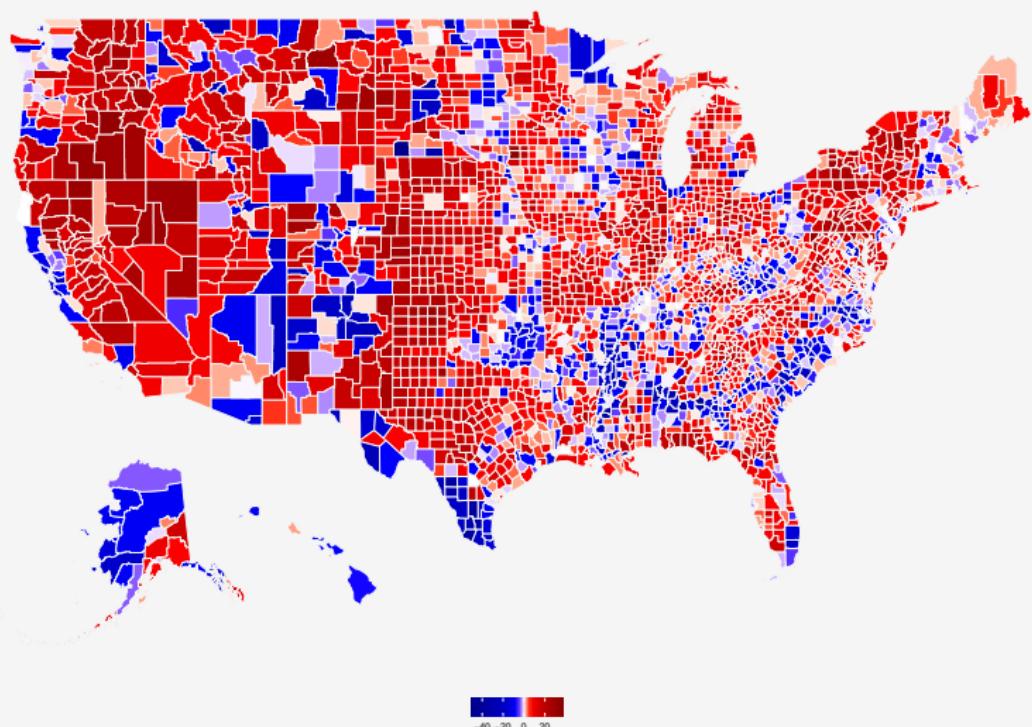
The distribution of social information

State PVI (2016)



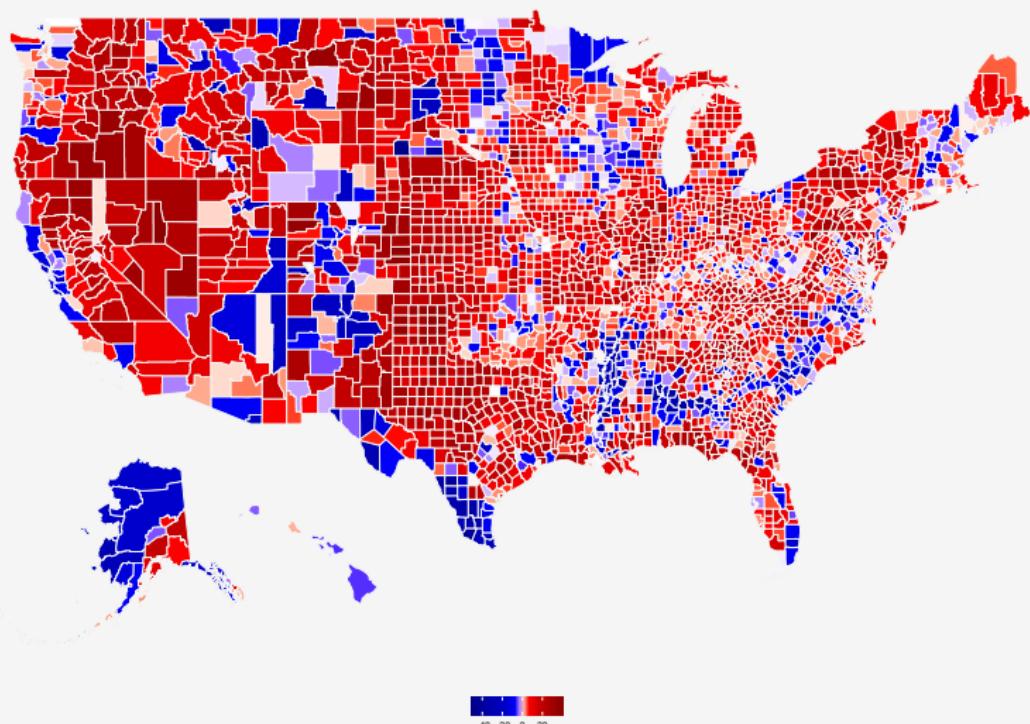
The distribution of social information

County PVI (2008)



The distribution of social information

County PVI (2016)



Motivation

Data

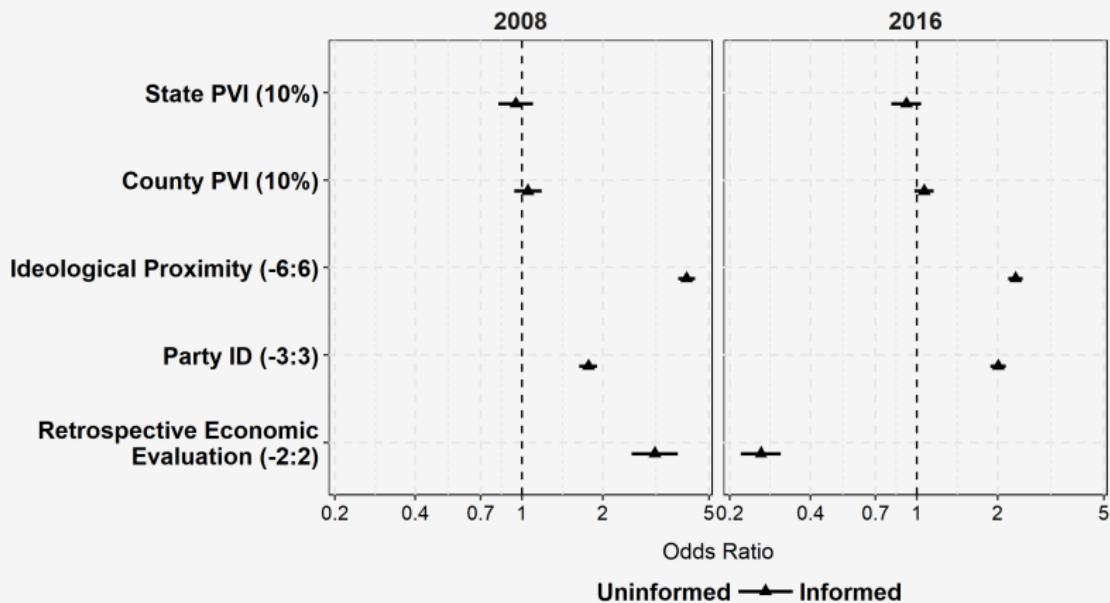
Results

Discussion

Information effects in presidential vote choice

Conditional Odds Ratio from Logistic Regression

*Demographic controls and intercept are omitted from the table.

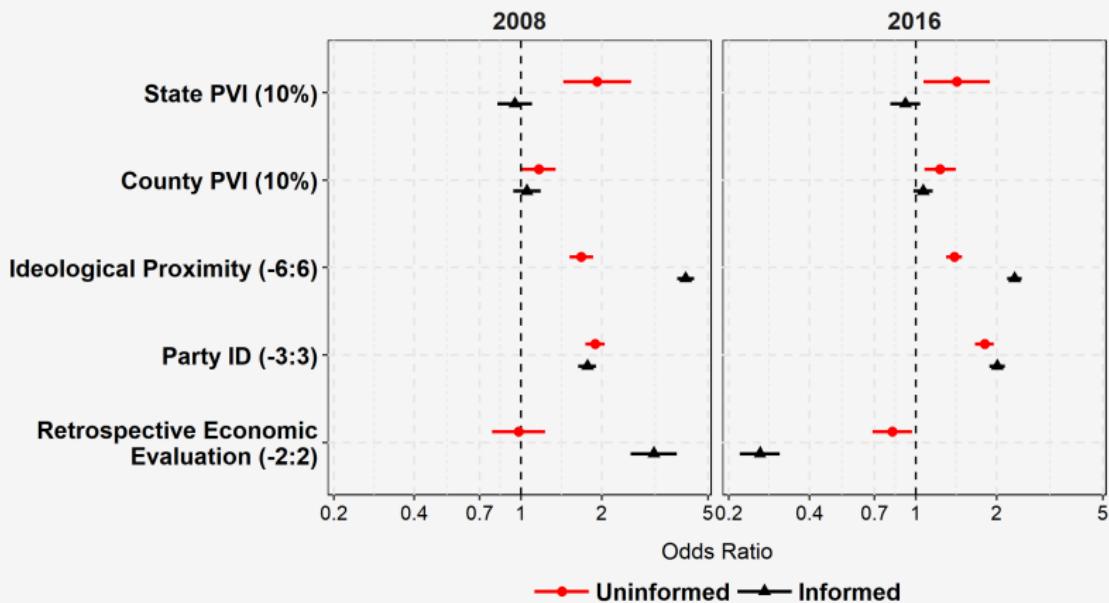


Higher values indicate Republican advantage except for retrospective evaluation.
N = 23477 in 2008 and N = 40078 in 2016.

Information effects in presidential vote choice

Conditional Odds Ratio from Logistic Regression

*Demographic controls and intercept are omitted from the table.

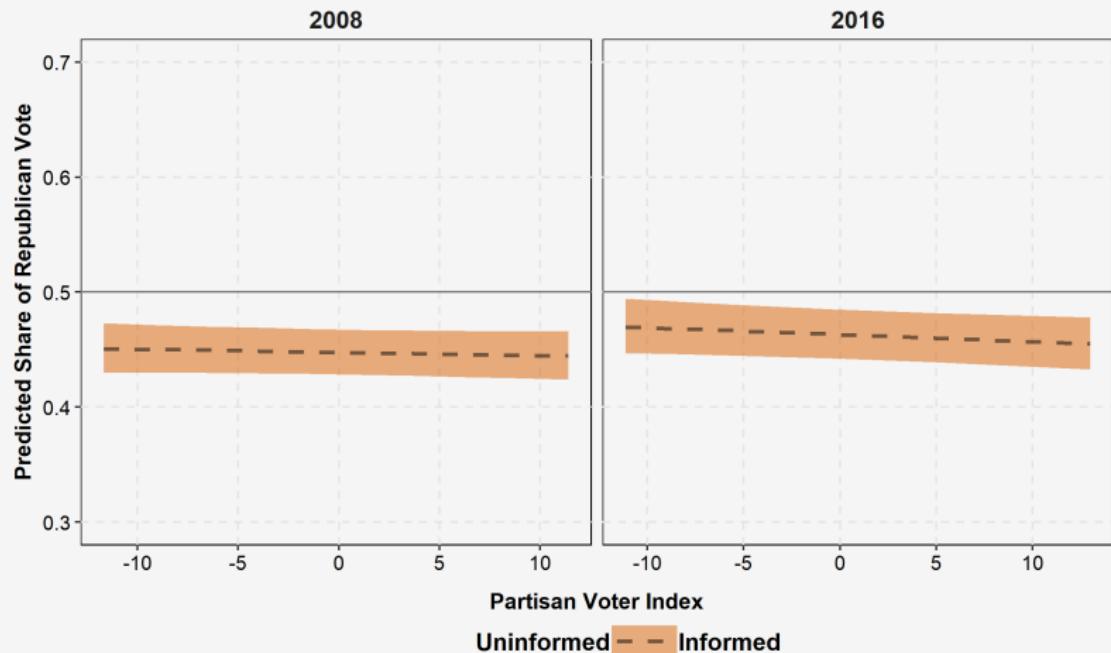


Higher values indicate Republican advantage except for retrospective evaluation.
N = 23477 in 2008 and N = 40078 in 2016.

The impact of social information (states)

Simulated share of Republican vote

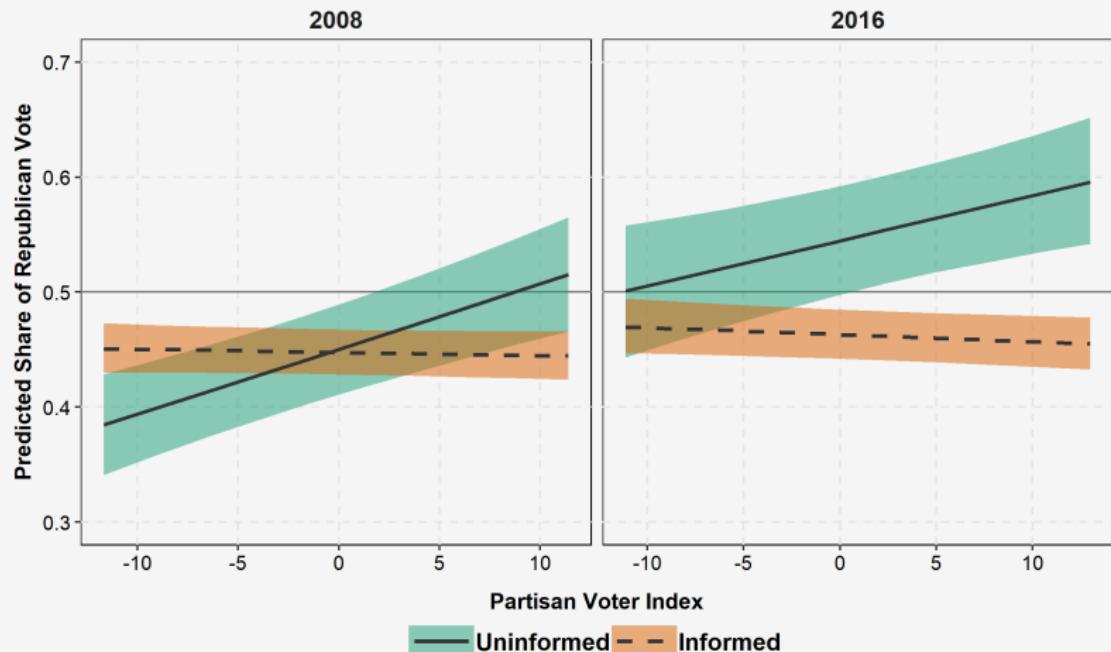
*Weighted average of predicted probabilities from Monte Carlo simulation.



The impact of social information (states)

Simulated share of Republican vote

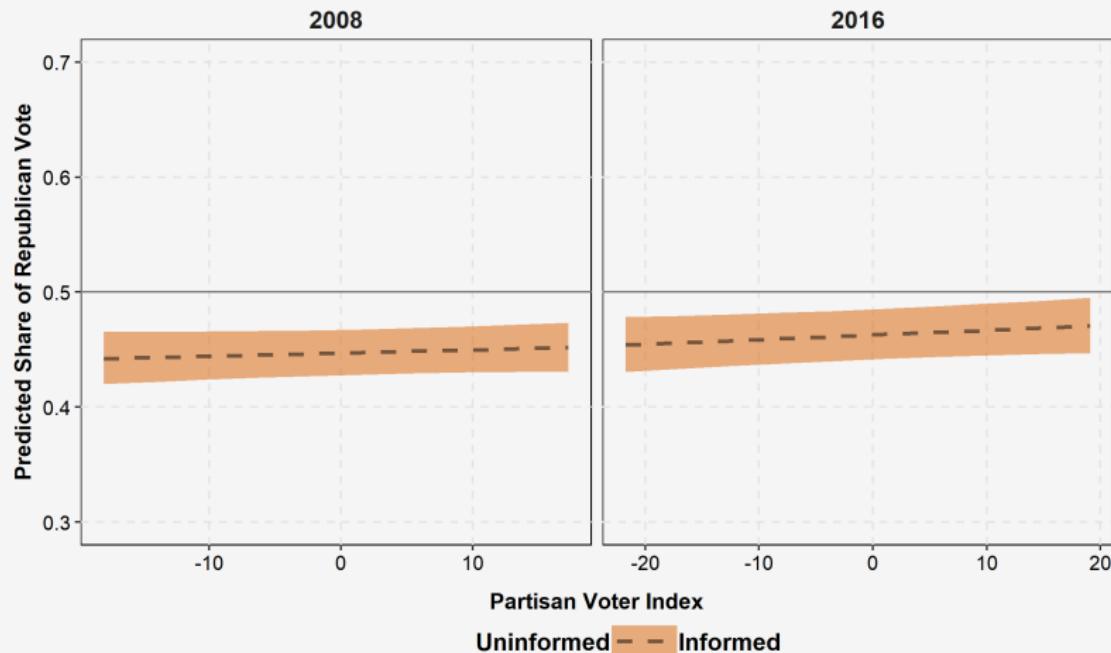
*Weighted average of predicted probabilities from Monte Carlo simulation.



The impact of social information (counties)

Simulated share of Republican vote

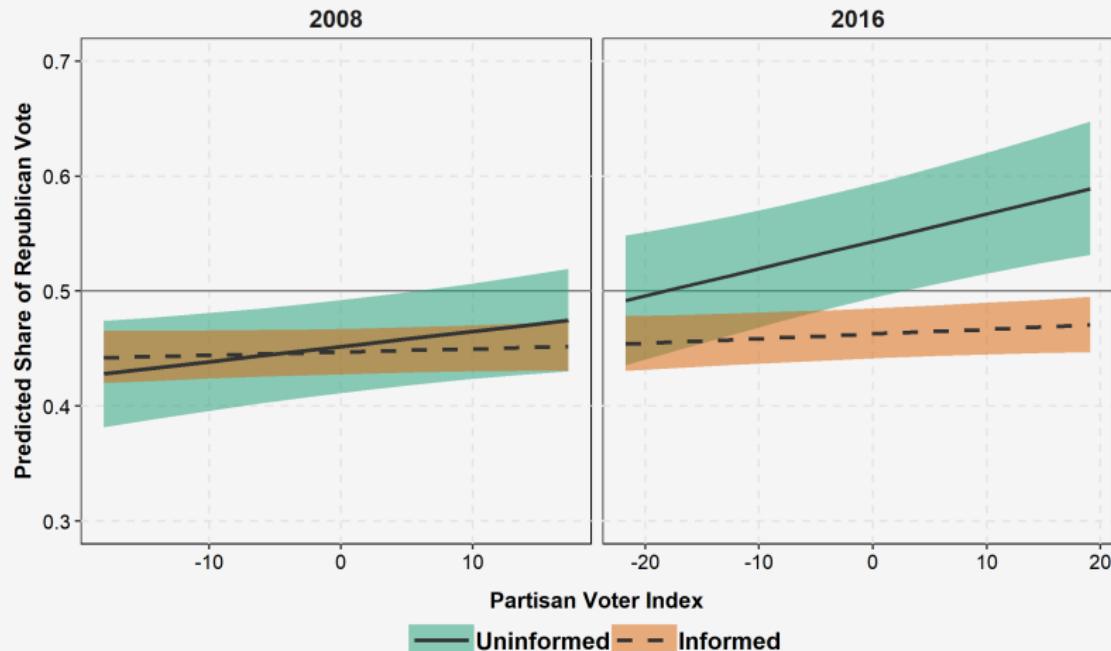
*Weighted average of predicted probabilities from Monte Carlo simulation.



The impact of social information (counties)

Simulated share of Republican vote

*Weighted average of predicted probabilities from Monte Carlo simulation.



Motivation

Data

Results

Discussion

Social information explains uninformed voting

Different factors explain informed and uninformed voting:

- Individual preference \Rightarrow uninformed < informed.
- **Social information** \Rightarrow **uninformed > informed**.

Uninformed voters **bandwagon** with **state** and **county** majority partisan.

No delegation behavior at the vote choice level.
Participation?

Social information explains uninformed voting

Different factors explain informed and uninformed voting:

- Individual preference \Rightarrow uninformed < informed.
- Social information \Rightarrow uninformed > informed.

Uninformed voters **bandwagon** with **state** and **county** majority partisan.

No delegation behavior at the vote choice level.
Participation?

Social information explains uninformed voting

Different factors explain informed and uninformed voting:

- Individual preference \Rightarrow uninformed < informed.
- Social information \Rightarrow uninformed > informed.

Uninformed voters bandwagon with state and county majority partisan.

No delegation behavior at the vote choice level.
Participation?

Caveats and extensions

Questions:

- Do voters **observe social** information directly, or transmitted through **social networks**?
- **Delegation** behavior at **national** level? Uninformed voters, without clear social information, vote more Democratic in 2008, vote more Republican in 2016.

Empirical extensions:

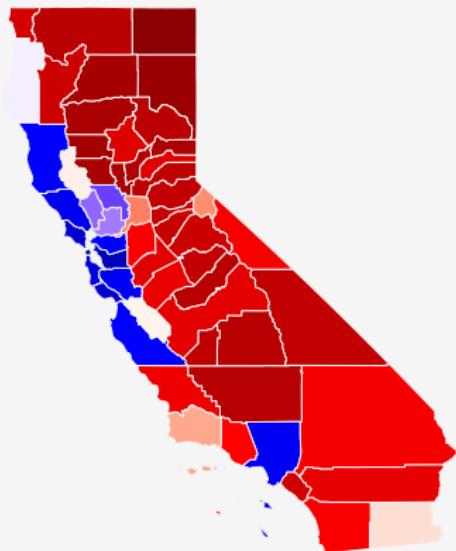
- **National level swing votes** and uninformed delegation.
- **Different elections** (I find similar but weaker evidence in congressional elections).

Thank you for listening!

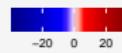
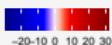
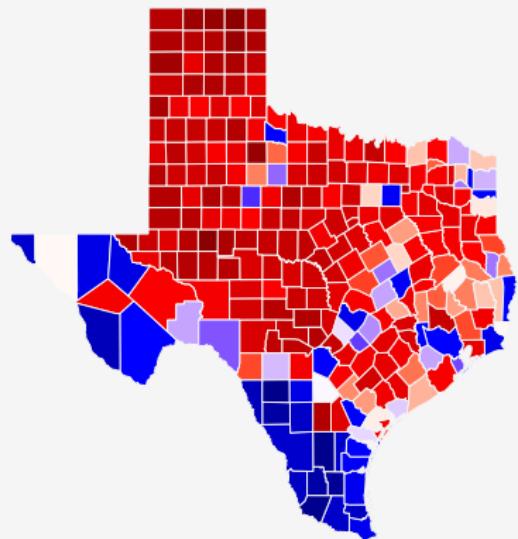
- Bartels, Larry M. 1996. "Uninformed Votes: Information Effects in Presidential Elections." *American Journal of Political Science* 40(1):pp. 194–230.
- Bischoff, Ivo and Henrik Egbert. 2013. "Social Information and Bandwagon Behavior in Voting: An Economic Experiment." *Journal of Economic Psychology* 34:270–284.
- Feddersen, Timothy and Wolfgang Pesendorfer. 1996. "The Swing Voter's Curse." *The American Economic Review* 86(3):pp. 408–424.

The distribution of social information (within state)

California
(2008)

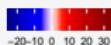
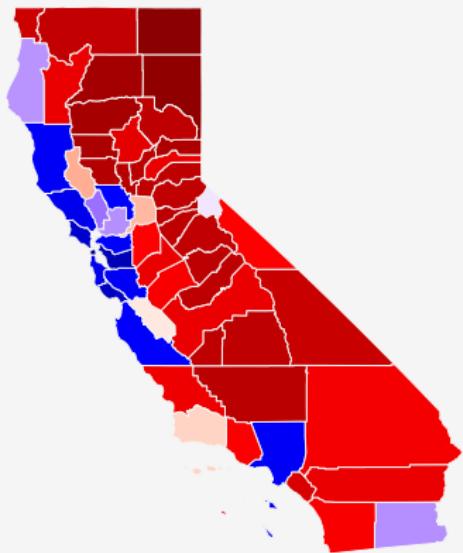


Texas
(2008)

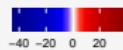
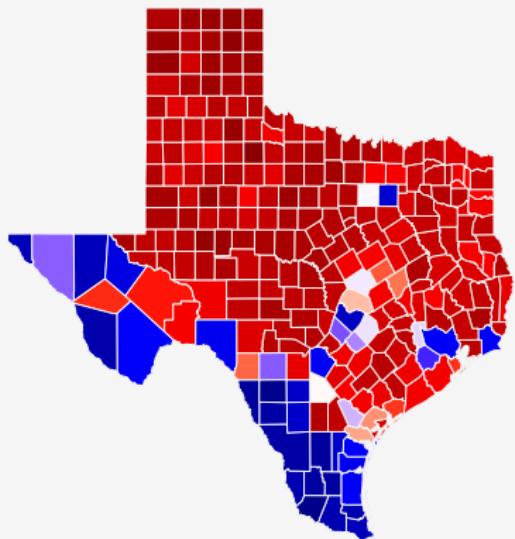


The distribution of social information (within state)

California
(2016)

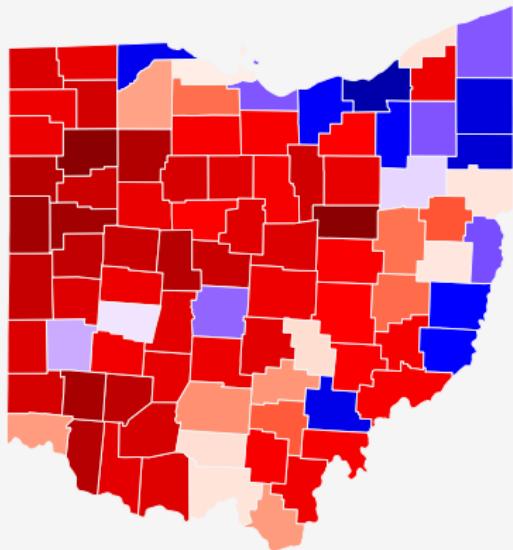


Texas
(2016)

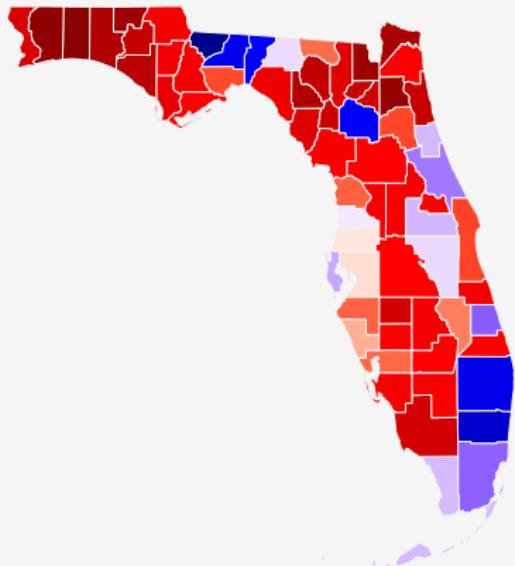


The distribution of social information (within state)

Ohio
(2008)

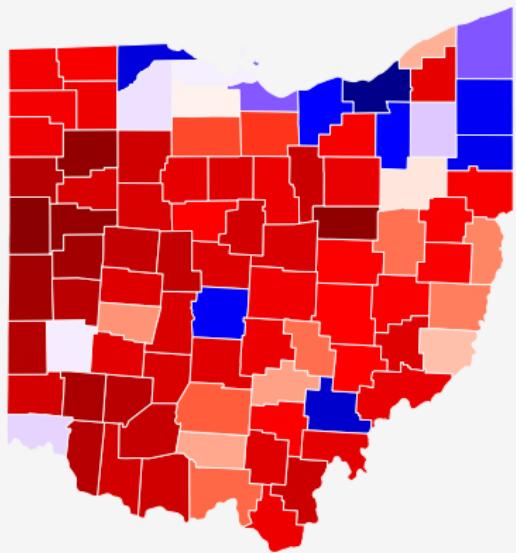


Florida
(2008)

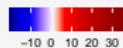
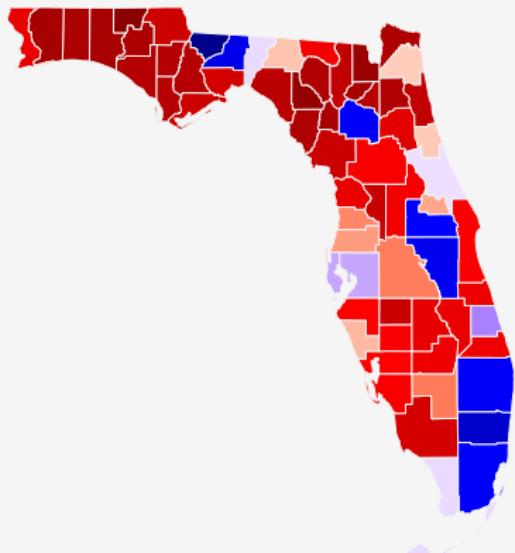


The distribution of social information (within state)

Ohio
(2016)



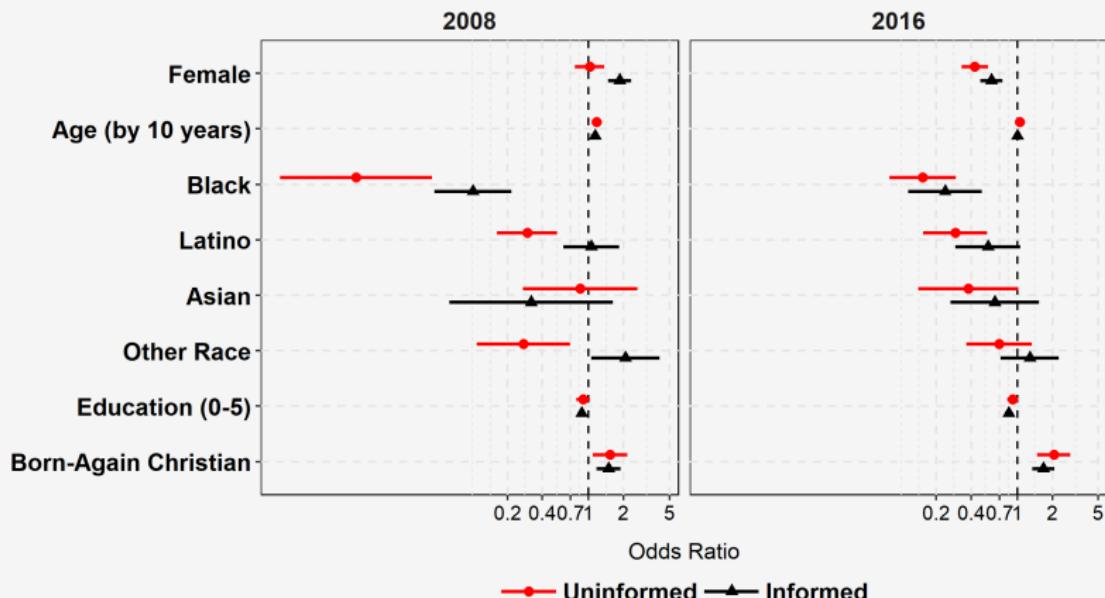
Florida
(2016)



Information effects in presidential vote choice (demographic)

Conditional Odds Ratio from Logistic Regression

*Other variables are omitted from the table.

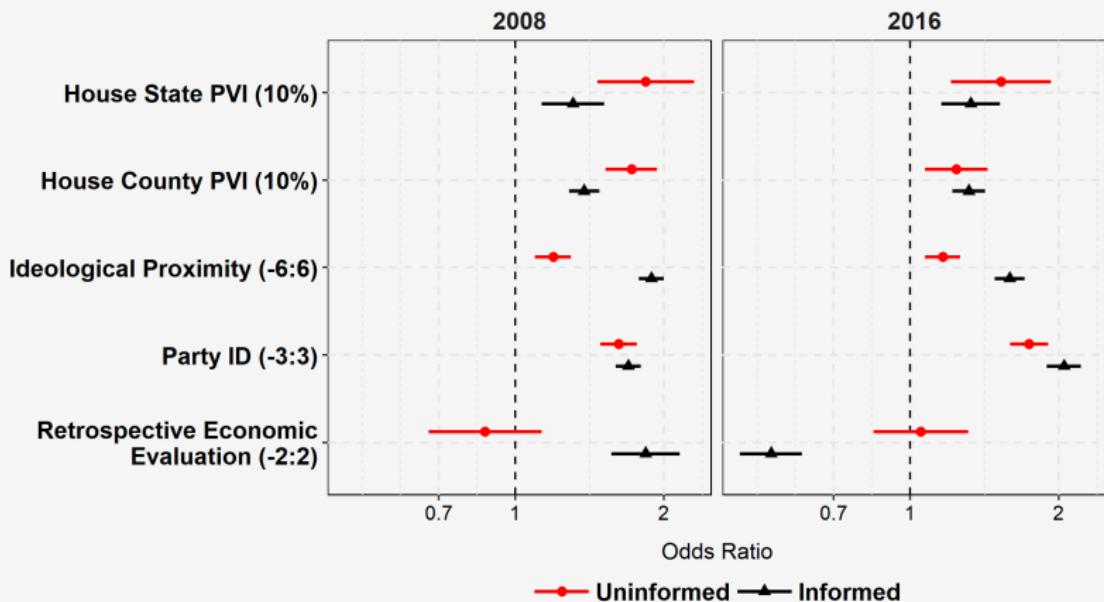


Higher values indicate Republican advantage except for retrospective evaluation.
N = 23477 in 2008 and N = 40078 in 2016.

Information effects in House vote choice

Conditional Odds Ratio from Logistic Regression

*Demographic controls and intercept are omitted from the table.

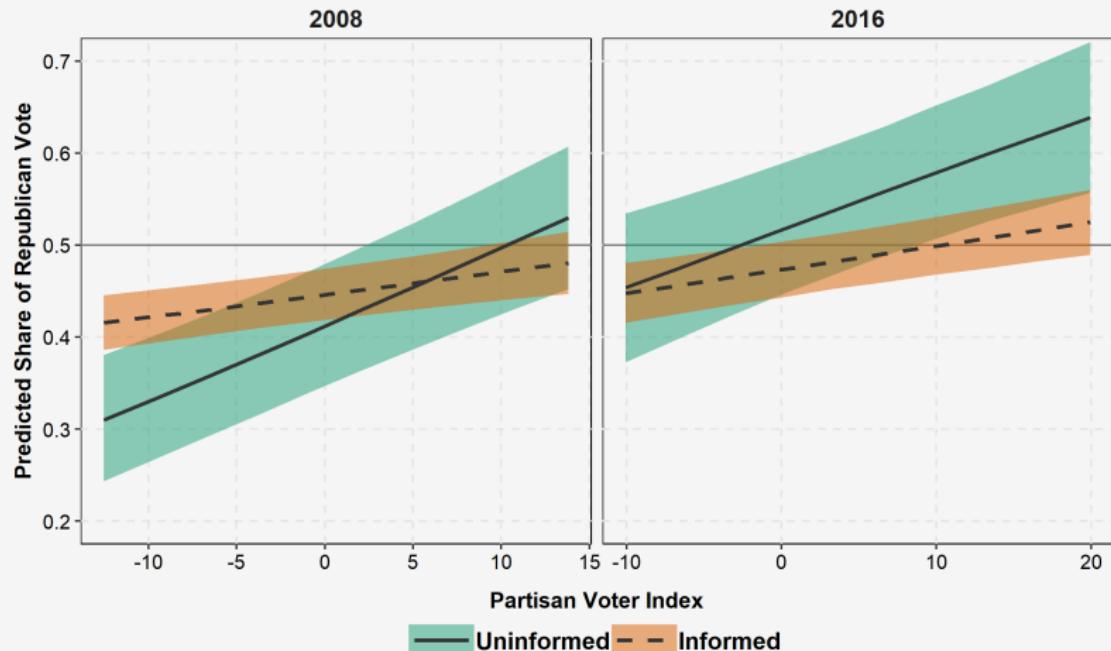


Higher values indicate Republican advantage except for retrospective evaluation.
N = 15244 in 2008 and N = 28878 in 2016.

The impact of social information (states)

Simulated share of Republican vote

*Weighted average of predicted probabilities from Monte Carlo simulation.



The impact of social information (counties)

Simulated share of Republican vote

*Weighted average of predicted probabilities from Monte Carlo simulation.

