Losers' Consent and Democratic Stability: Experimental Evidence from Chile and Estonia

Hector Bahamonde [1] Inga Saikkonen [2] Mart Trasberg [3]

Authors in alphabetical order. All contributed equally to this paper.

[1]University of Turku, Finland

[2]Åbo Akademi, Finland

[3]Tecnólogico de Monterrey, Mexico

Apr. 7th 2024

"Losers' Consent": A Weak Assumption

- Political elites in stable democracies typically accept electoral losses.

"Losers' Consent": A Weak Assumption

- Political elites in stable democracies typically accept electoral losses.
- Yet, actions by Trump's and Bolsonaro's supporters seriously questioned their acceptance of defeat.

"Losers' Consent": A Weak Assumption

- Political elites in stable democracies typically accept electoral losses.
- Yet, actions by Trump's and Bolsonaro's supporters seriously questioned their acceptance of defeat.
- Research has looked into "losers' consent," focusing on satisfaction, trust, and efficacy.

"Losers' Consent": A Weak Assumption

- Political elites in stable democracies typically accept electoral losses.
- Yet, actions by Trump's and Bolsonaro's supporters seriously questioned their acceptance of defeat.
- Research has looked into "losers' consent," focusing on satisfaction, trust, and efficacy.
- Still, **we know little about voters' "systemic support" when they lose elections** (Easton, 1965).

Voters' Commitment:

Electoral Losses and Institutional Heterogeneities

- We analyze the level of system support among electoral "losers" using novel data from a conjoint experiment in Chile (N=811) and Estonia (N=639).
- We exploit institutional heterogeneities in presidential and parliamentary systems.
- We pre-registered the following hypotheses: ▸ link
  - H1 Electoral "losers" favor candidates endorsing anti-systemic actions more than "winners."
  - H2 This tendency is stronger in presidential versus parliamentary systems.

Voters' Commitment:

Electoral Losses and Institutional Heterogeneities

- We analyze the level of system support among electoral "losers" using novel data from a conjoint experiment in Chile (N=811) and Estonia (N=639).
- We exploit institutional heterogeneities in presidential and parliamentary systems.
- We pre-registered the following hypotheses: ▸ link
  - H1 Election "losers" favor candidates endorsing anti-systemic actions more than "winners."
  - H2 This tendency is stronger in presidential versus parliamentary systems.

Voters' Commitment:

Electoral Losses and Institutional Heterogeneities

- We analyze the level of system support among electoral "losers" using novel data from a conjoint experiment in Chile (N=811) and Estonia (N=639).
- We exploit institutional heterogeneities in presidential and parliamentary systems.
- We pre-registered the following hypotheses: ▸ link
  - H1 Election "losers" favor candidates endorsing anti-systemic actions more than "winners."
  - H2 This tendency is stronger in presidential versus parliamentary systems.

Voters' Commitment:

Electoral Losses and Institutional Heterogeneities

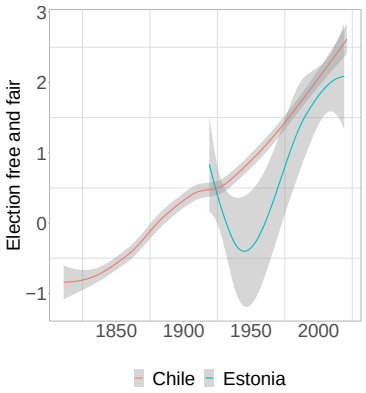
1. Social movements:
   - *"Angry" losers* might be more willing to support anti-systemic politicians. (Bowler, Donovan, and Karp 2007)
   - Winners should oppose politicians supporting anti-systemic actions.
2. Institutional literature: institutional setups affect differently the costs of losing an election (Lijphart, 2012).
   - **Presidential**: losers have little input outside of the electoral cycle.
   - **Parliamentary**: losers' interests can be represented through a variety of power sharing institutions.

Losers' Consent and Democratic Stability

- Collected novel data from Chile (N=811) and Estonia (N=639) with gender and party sample quotas.
- **Most dissimilar cases**: maximize variance regarding government system (Presidential and Parliamentary).
- **Most similar cases**: minimize variance regarding critical V-Dem variables.

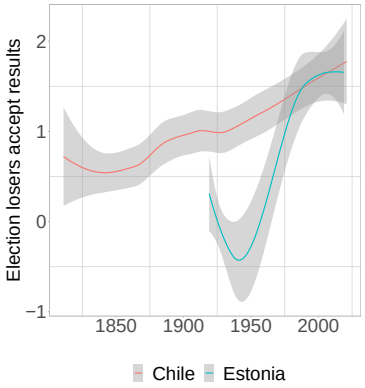
Losers' Consent and Democratic Stability

- Collected novel data from Chile (N=811) and Estonia (N=639) with gender and party sample quotas.
- **Most dissimilar cases**: maximize variance regarding government system (Presidential and Parliamentary).
- **Most similar cases**: minimize variance regarding critical V-Dem variables.



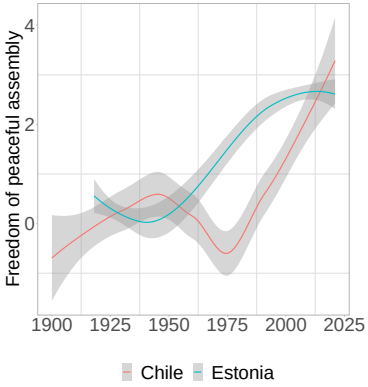
Losers' Consent and Democratic Stability

- Collected novel data from Chile (N=811) and Estonia (N=639) with gender and party sample quotas.
- **Most dissimilar cases**: maximize variance regarding government system (Presidential and Parliamentary).
- **Most similar cases**: minimize variance regarding critical V-Dem variables.



Losers' Consent and Democratic Stability

- Collected novel data from Chile (N=811) and Estonia (N=639) with gender and party sample quotas.
- **Most dissimilar cases**: maximize variance regarding government system (Presidential and Parliamentary).
- **Most similar cases**: minimize variance regarding critical V-Dem variables.



Conjoint Experiment

- Designed an unconstrained, fully randomized conjoint experiment.
- We depart from standard AMCE analyses (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014) and instead compute **subgroup marginal means** (Leeper, Hobolt, and Tilley 2020).

Dimension	Attribute Set
Gender	Male, Female.
Age	Younger than 35, Between 35-50, Over 50.
Protest	The candidate OPPOSES anti-government protest that will seek to de-destabilize the current government, The candidate SUPPORTS anti-government protest that will seek to de-destabilize the current government
Pensions	The candidate OPPOSES increases in pensions for the elderly, The candidate SUPPORTS increases in pensions for the elderly

Conjoint Experiment

- Designed an unconstrained, fully randomized conjoint experiment.
- We depart from standard AMCE analyses (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014) and instead compute **subgroup marginal means** (Leeper, Hobolt, and Tilley 2020).

Dimension	Attribute Set
Gender	Male, Female.
Age	Younger than 35, Between 35-50, Over 50.
Protest	The candidate OPPOSES anti-government protest that will seek to de-destabilize the current government, The candidate SUPPORTS anti-government protest that will seek to de-destabilize the current government
Pensions	The candidate OPPOSES increases in pensions for the elderly, The candidate SUPPORTS increases in pensions for the elderly

Conjoint Experiment

- Designed an unconstrained, fully randomized conjoint experiment.
- We depart from standard AMCE analyses (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014) and instead compute **subgroup marginal means** (Leeper, Hobolt, and Tilley 2020).

Dimension	Attribute Set
Gender	Male, Female.
Age	Younger than 35, Between 35-50, Over 50.
Protest	The candidate OPPOSES anti-government protest that will seek to de-destabilize the current government, The candidate SUPPORTS anti-government protest that will seek to de-destabilize the current government
Pensions	The candidate OPPOSES increases in pensions for the elderly, The candidate SUPPORTS increases in pensions for the elderly

Conjoint Experiment

- Designed an unconstrained, fully randomized conjoint experiment.
- We depart from standard AMCE analyses (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014) and instead compute **subgroup marginal means** (Leeper, Hobolt, and Tilley 2020).

Dimension	Attribute Set
Gender	Male, Female.
Age	Younger than 35, Between 35-50, Over 50.
Protest	The candidate OPPOSES anti-government protest that will seek to de-destabilize the current government, The candidate SUPPORTS anti-government protest that will seek to de-destabilize the current government
Pensions	The candidate OPPOSES increases in pensions for the elderly, The candidate SUPPORTS increases in pensions for the elderly

Conjoint Experiment

- Designed an unconstrained, fully randomized conjoint experiment.
- We depart from standard AMCE analyses (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014) and instead compute **subgroup marginal means** (Leeper, Hobolt, and Tilley 2020).

Dimension	Attribute Set
Gender	Male, Female.
Age	Younger than 35, Between 35-50, Over 50.
Protest	The candidate OPPOSES anti-government protest that will seek to de-destabilize the current government, The candidate SUPPORTS anti-government protest that will seek to de-destabilize the current government
Pensions	The candidate OPPOSES increases in pensions for the elderly, The candidate SUPPORTS increases in pensions for the elderly

Conjoint Experiment

- Designed an unconstrained, fully randomized conjoint experiment.
- We depart from standard AMCE analyses (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014) and instead compute **subgroup marginal means** (Leeper, Hobolt, and Tilley 2020).

Dimension	Attribute Set
Gender	Male, Female.
Age	Younger than 35, Between 35-50, Over 50.
Protest	The candidate OPPOSES anti-government protest that will seek to de-destabilize the current government, The candidate SUPPORTS anti-government protest that will seek to de-destabilize the current government
Pensions	The candidate OPPOSES increases in pensions for the elderly, The candidate SUPPORTS increases in pensions for the elderly

Conjoint Experiment

- Designed an unconstrained, fully randomized conjoint experiment.
- We depart from standard AMCE analyses (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014) and instead compute **subgroup marginal means** (Leeper, Hobolt, and Tilley 2020).

Dimension	Attribute Set
Gender	Male, Female.
Age	Younger than 35, Between 35-50, Over 50.
Protest	The candidate OPPOSES anti-government protest that will seek to de-destabilize the current government, The candidate SUPPORTS anti-government protest that will seek to de-destabilize the current government
Pensions	The candidate OPPOSES increases in pensions for the elderly, The candidate SUPPORTS increases in pensions for the elderly

Conjoint Experiment

- Designed an unconstrained, fully randomized conjoint experiment.
- We depart from standard AMCE analyses (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014) and instead compute **subgroup marginal means** (Leeper, Hobolt, and Tilley 2020).

Dimension	Attribute Set
Gender	Male, Female.
Age	Younger than 35, Between 35-50, Over 50.
Protest	The candidate OPPOSES anti-government protest that will seek to de-destabilize the current government, The candidate SUPPORTS anti-government protest that will seek to de-destabilize the current government
Pensions	The candidate OPPOSES increases in pensions for the elderly, The candidate SUPPORTS increases in pensions for the elderly

Conjoint Experiment

- Designed an unconstrained, fully randomized conjoint experiment.
- We depart from standard AMCE analyses (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014) and instead compute **subgroup marginal means** (Leeper, Hobolt, and Tilley 2020).

Dimension	Attribute Set
Gender	Male, Female.
Age	Younger than 35, Between 35-50, Over 50.
Protest	The candidate OPPOSES anti-government protest that will seek to de-destabilize the current government, The candidate SUPPORTS anti-government protest that will seek to de-destabilize the current government
Pensions	The candidate OPPOSES increases in pensions for the elderly, The candidate SUPPORTS increases in pensions for the elderly

Conjoint Experiment

- Designed an unconstrained, fully randomized conjoint experiment.
- We depart from standard AMCE analyses (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014) and instead compute **subgroup marginal means** (Leeper, Hobolt, and Tilley 2020).

Dimension	Attribute Set
Gender	Male, Female.
Age	Younger than 35, Between 35-50, Over 50.
Protest	The candidate OPPOSES anti-government protest that will seek to de-destabilize the current government, The candidate SUPPORTS anti-government protest that will seek to de-destabilize the current government
Pensions	The candidate OPPOSES increases in pensions for the elderly, The candidate SUPPORTS increases in pensions for the elderly

Additional Questions

- Included questions on socio-demographics and support for democracy.
- **Losers/Winners**: asked who respondents voted for.
  - **Chile**: "*Which candidate did you vote for in the 2nd round of the December 2021 presidential election?*"
    `Kast`, `Boric`, `Others` (`Blank/Spoiled`, `I did not vote`, `Prefer not to say`).
  - **Estonia**: "*Which political party did you vote for in the last elections?*"
    `List of Estonian political parties that participated in the March 2023 parliamentary election`.

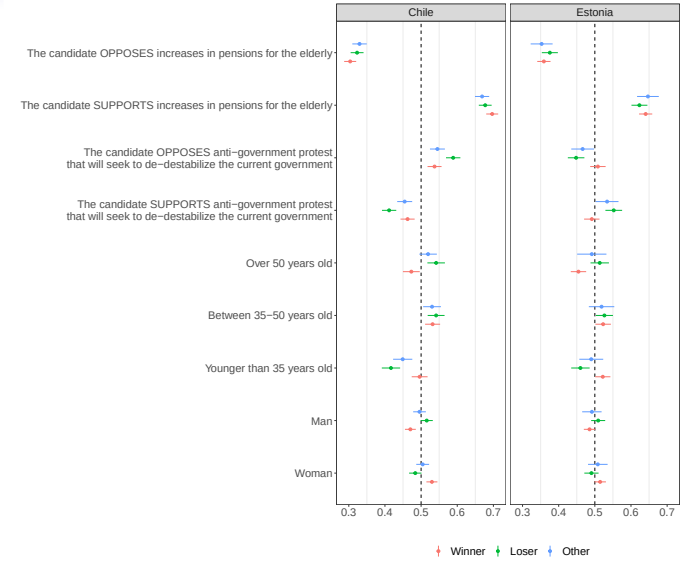
Additional Questions

- Included questions on socio-demographics and support for democracy.
- **Losers**/**Winners**: asked who respondents voted for.
  - **Chile**: "*Which candidate did you vote for in the 2nd round of the December 2021 presidential election?*"
    `Kast`, `Boric`, `Others` (`Blank/Spoiled`, `I did not vote`, `Prefer not to say`).
  - **Estonia**: "*Which political party did you vote for in the last elections?*"
    `List of Estonian political parties that participated in the March 2023 parliamentary election`.

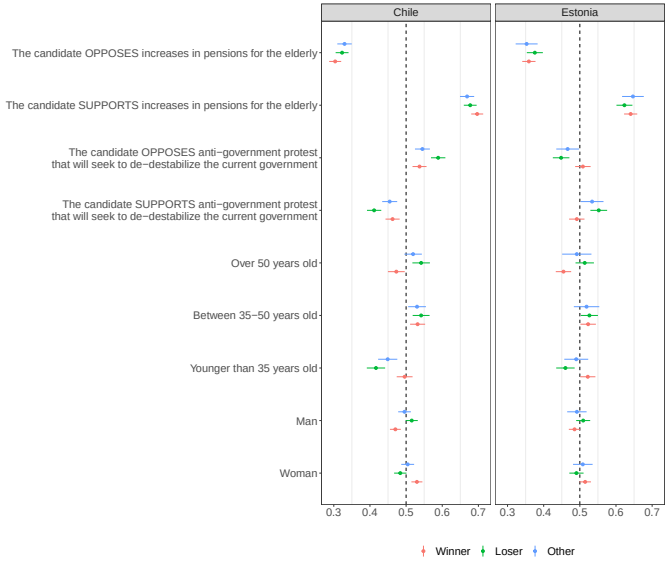
Additional Questions

- Included questions on socio-demographics and support for democracy.
- **Losers**/**Winners**: asked who respondents voted for.
  - **Chile**: "*Which candidate did you vote for in the 2nd round of the December 2021 presidential election?*"
    `Kast`, `Boric`, `Others` (`Blank/Spoiled`, `I did not vote`, `Prefer not to say`).
  - **Estonia**: "*Which political party did you vote for in the last elections?*"
    `List of Estonian political parties that participated in the March 2023 parliamentary election`.

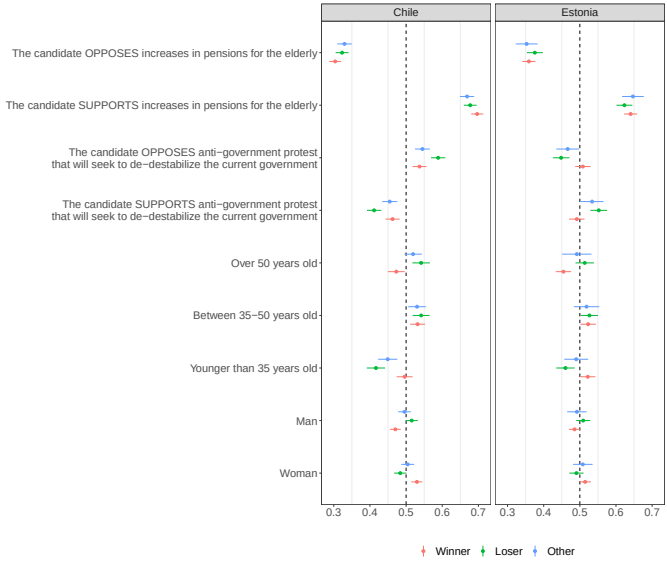
- Candidates favoring anti-systemic protests are systematically **rejected** by **both** winners and losers.
- **Losers (Kast)** show even **stronger disapproval** of such candidates.
- Effects might be driven by the legacies of the 2019-20 protests (*Estallido Social*)?
- **Estonia**: results support H1.



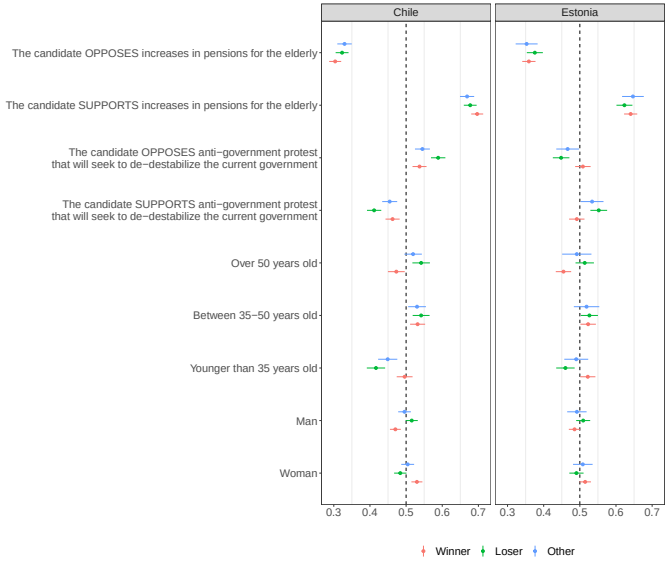
- Candidates favoring anti-systemic protests are systematically **rejected** by **both** winners and losers.
- **Losers (Kast)** show even **stronger disapproval** of such candidates.
- Effects might be driven by the legacies of the 2019-20 protests (*Estallido Social*)?
- **Estonia**: results support H1.



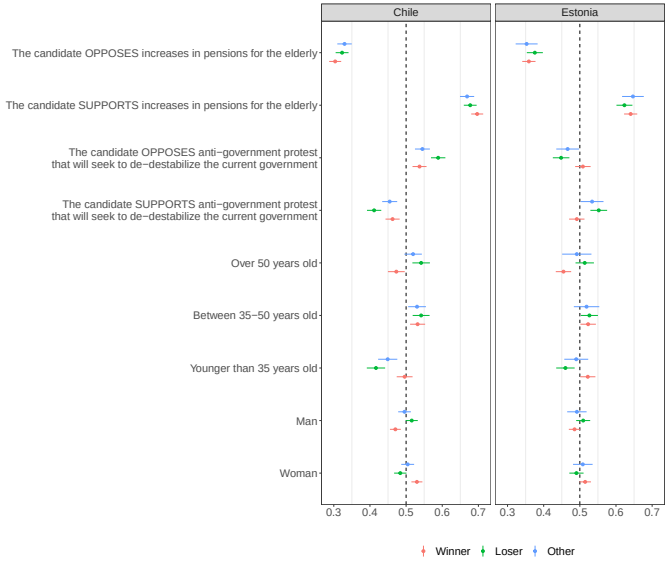
- Candidates favoring anti-systemic protests are systematically **rejected** by **both** winners and losers.
- **Losers (Kast)** show even **stronger disapproval** of such candidates.
- Effects might be driven by the legacies of the 2019-20 protests (*Estallido Social*)?
- **Estonia**: results support H1.



- Candidates favoring anti-systemic protests are systematically **rejected** by **both** winners and losers.
- **Losers (Kast)** show even **stronger disapproval** of such candidates.
- Effects might be driven by the legacies of the 2019-20 protests (*Estallido Social*)?
- **Estonia**: results support H1.

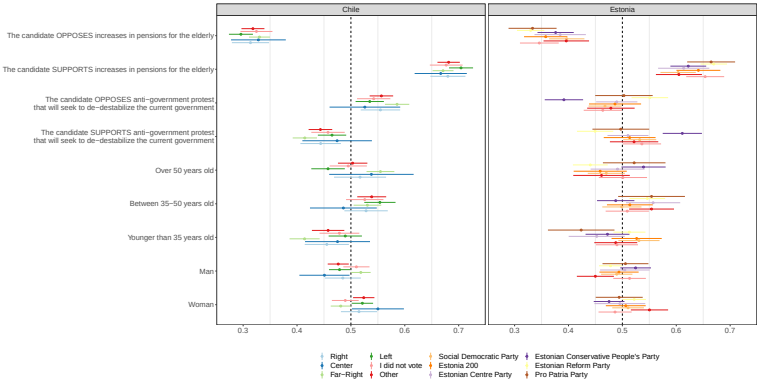


- Candidates favoring anti-systemic protests are systematically **rejected** by **both** winners and losers.
- **Losers (Kast)** show even **stronger disapproval** of such candidates.
- Effects might be driven by the legacies of the 2019-20 protests (*Estallido Social*)?
- **Estonia**: results support H1.

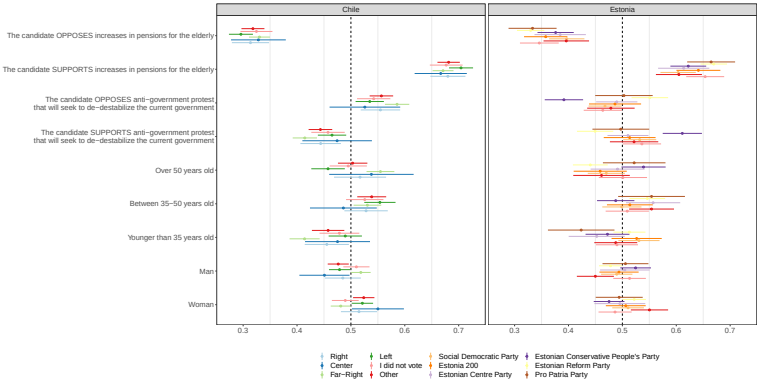


Subgroup Marginal Means (MM): Partisanship/Ideology

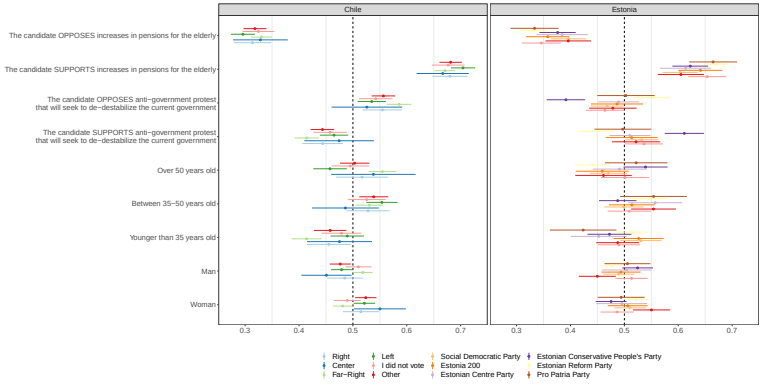
- Voters generally reject candidates favoring protests.
- Extreme right voters (*Rep. Party*) are especially likely to reject candidates associated with anti-systemic protest.
- **Estonia**: loser effects are largely driven by the extreme right.



- Voters generally reject candidates favoring protests.
- Extreme right voters (*Rep. Party*) are especially likely to reject candidates associated with anti-systemic protest.
- **Estonia**: loser effects are largely driven by the extreme right.

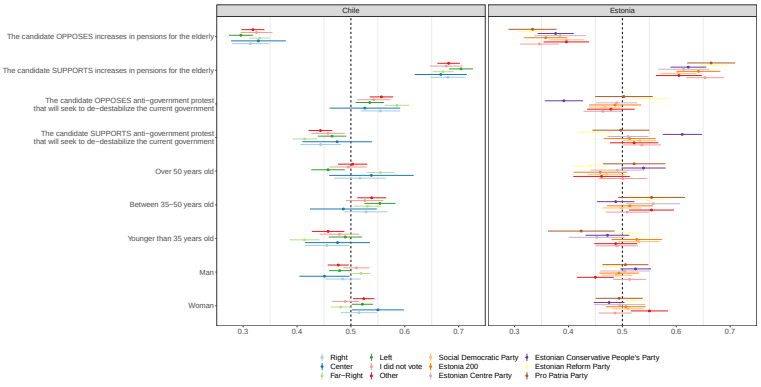


- Voters generally reject candidates favoring protests.
- Extreme right voters (*Rep. Party*) are especially likely to reject candidates associated with anti-systemic protest.
- **Estonia**: loser effects are largely driven by the extreme right.



Subgroup Marginal Means (MM): Partisanship/Ideology

- Voters generally reject candidates favoring protests.
- Extreme right voters (*Rep. Party*) are especially likely to reject candidates associated with anti-systemic protest.
- **Estonia**: loser effects are largely driven by the extreme right.



More Questions Than Answers

- We hypothesized (and pre-registered) that:
  - H1 *Electoral losers* were *more* willing to support anti-systemic protests.
  - H2 This effect would be *stronger* in Presidential systems
    (because of its zero-sum power sharing structure, **losses are more catastrophic**).
- While we did not find support in favor of our hypotheses, we still found some other interesting results.
  - **Chile**: Extreme-right supporters are less likely to support extreme anti-system protests.
  - **Estonia**: the loser effects are mainly driven by extreme-right supporters.

More Questions Than Answers

- We hypothesized (and pre-registered) that:
  - H1 *Electoral losers* were *more* willing to support anti-systemic protests.
  - H2 This effect would be *stronger* in Presidential systems
    (because of its zero-sum power sharing structure, **losses are more catastrophic**).
- While we did not find support in favor of our hypotheses, we still found some other interesting results.
  - **Chile**: Extreme-right supporters are less likely to support extreme anti-system protests.
  - **Estonia**: the loser effects are mainly driven by extreme-right supporters.

Motivating Questions for Q&A

Did we make a mistake to think that, **in Chile (!)**, right-wing losers were going to **protests** (!)? **Let me know what you think**.

Thank you

📷 to check updates on this project.