Crimes Against Politicians and the Descriptive Representation of Women in Local Politics

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Key Points

- Investigates heterogeneous deterring of potential candidates in local elections.
- Exposure to political crime does not reduce willingness to run for office among female and immigrant-background candidates.
- Some evidence for scarring of more risk-averse and consensus-oriented individuals.

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Why do we care?

Persistent gender gap in political representation.

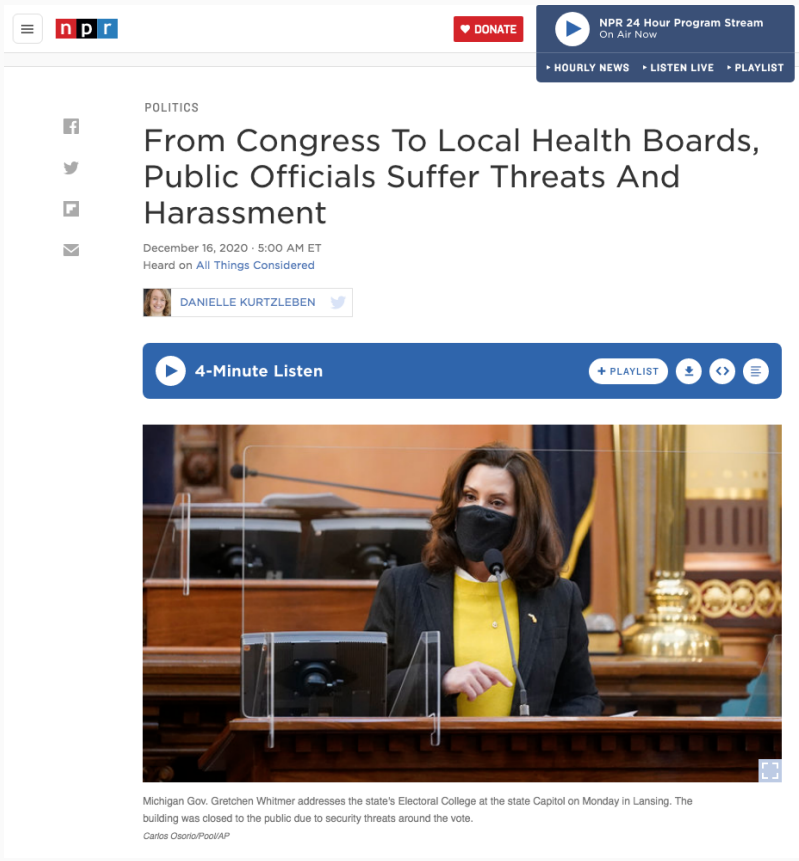
Rise in violence against politicians.

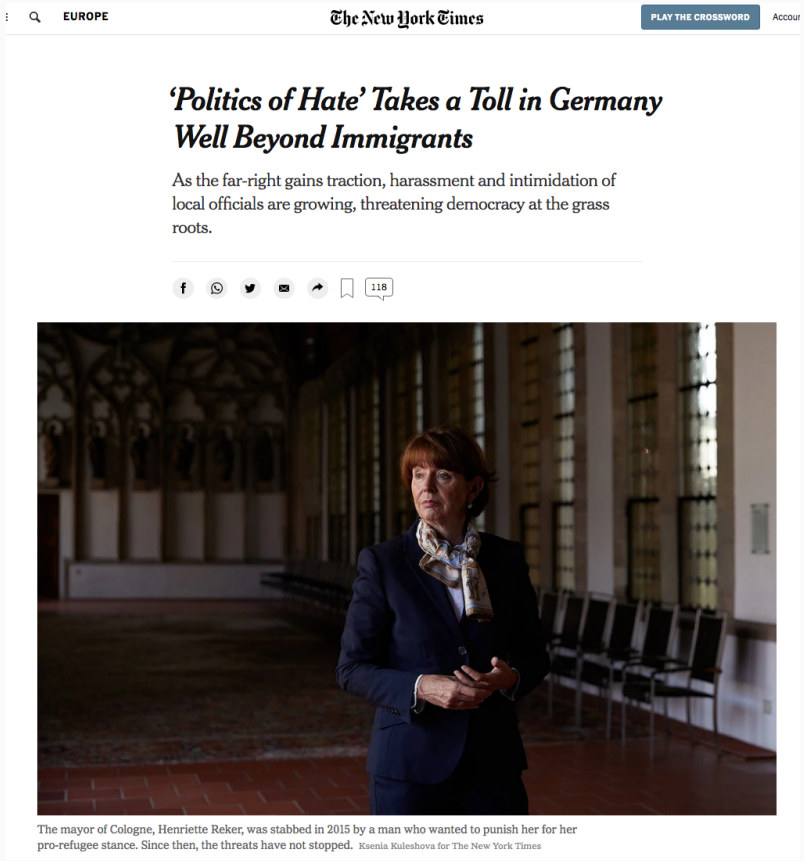
Overview

1. Context
2. Theory
3. Observational Strategy & Results
4. Experimental Strategy & Results
5. Conclusion

Context

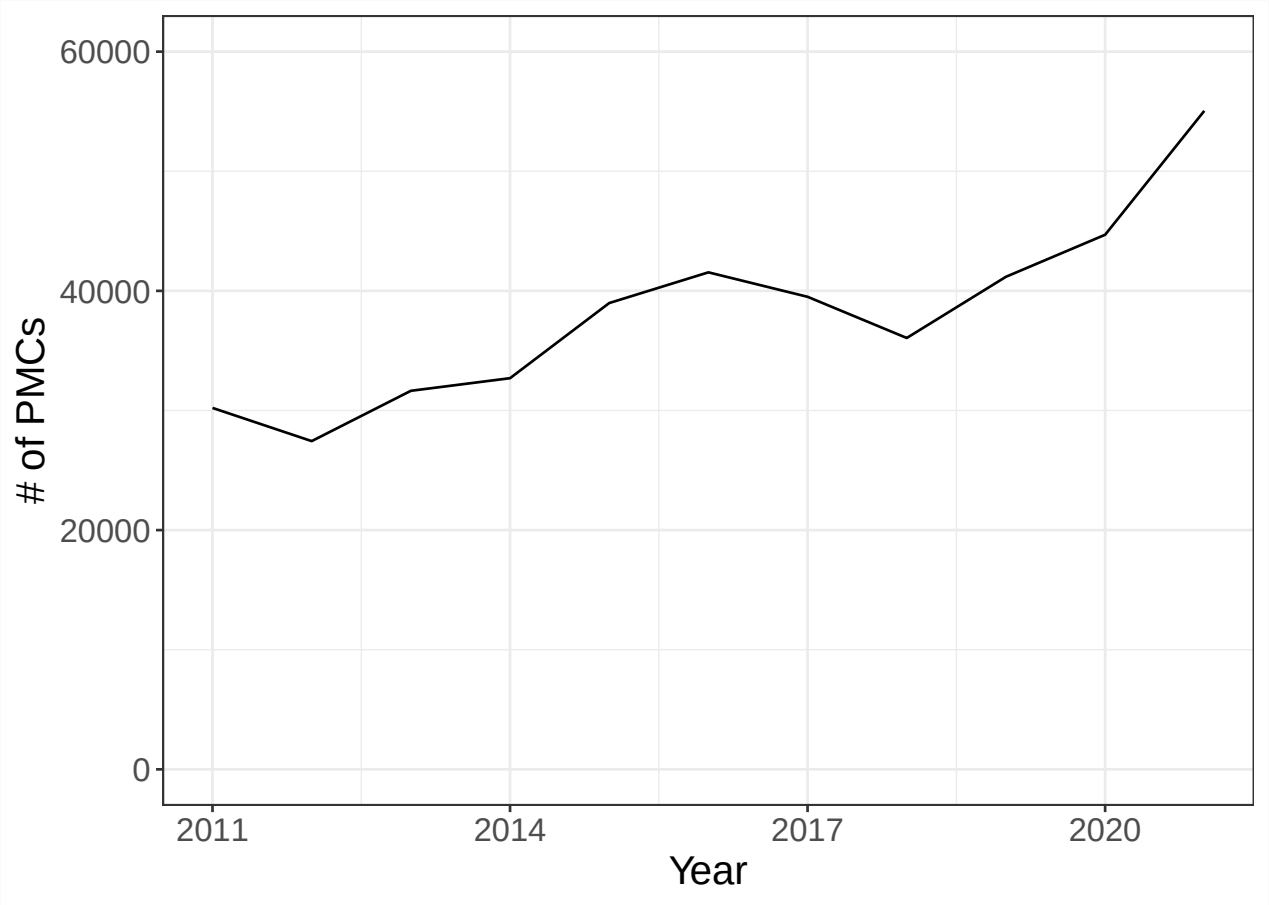
Politically motivated attacks on politicians





Examples of female representatives targeted by crime: Gov. Whitmer (Michigan) and Mayor Reker (Cologne)

Trends in politically motivated crime in Germany



Politically motivated crime (PMC) by year.

Source: German Federal Ministry of the Interior

Focus on German local politics

Why?

- Mayors and local councils have considerable power and leverage over local regulations and the adaption of national laws
- Strong gender imbalance
- Starting point of many political careers leading to higher office

Theory

Crimes against politicians and their effect on candidacy

How do crimes against politicians affect the gender composition of the local candidate pool?

Our argument: Crimes against politicians increase the gender gap in political candidacy on the local level

$\Longrightarrow$ Heterogeneous Deterring

Mechanisms:

1. Perceived costs of political candidacy
2. Contentious nature of politics

Perceived costs of political candidacy

- **Rational cost-benefit calculus:**
  - Individual will run for office if: benefits of holding office times the probability of winning $>$ costs of candidacy
- **Perceived likelihood of becoming a victim of political crime:**
  - Female politicians are more likely to become victims of political crimes (Collignon & Rüdig 2020; Håkansson 2021)
  - If anticipated, less participation
- **General risk aversity:**
  - Costs may be perceived as higher for individuals who are more risk averse
  - Women are, on average, more risk averse (Croson & Gneezy 2009) disputed by (Magalhães & Pereira 2022)

Contentious nature of politics

- Crimes against politicians may deter potential female candidates by shifting perception of the political environment
  1. Women might be less likely to run for office in an **contentious** political environment (Kanthak & Woon 2015)
     - Prevalence of crimes against politicians as sign of contentious nature
  2. Crimes against politicians might also discourage women from running by **shifting ideal traits** of a politician
     - Prevalence of crimes against politicians might render some traits more important (e.g. assertiveness, resilience)
     - If women perceive themselves as weaker on these traits $\Longrightarrow$ self-sorting

Observational Strategy & Results

What is political violence?

A crime that ...

- Influences democratic decision-making
- Undermines constitution or it's representatives
- Impedes international relations
- Targets an individual due to political affiliation, ideology, etc.

...and what it is not!

Observational Data

- # of crimes against politicians
  - unit of observation: party-municipality
  - source: official police records for 2019/2021 (before elections)
  - crimes targeted against political representatives and parties

  Inquiry Data | Distribution Crime

- Δ share of female candidates on party lists for municipal council election
  - unit of observation: party-municipality
  - data available for five states (BB, BW, MV, SN, HE)
  - change from 2014/2016 to 2019/2021 municipal elections

  Distribution of Data

Summary Stats

Table 1: Summary Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min	Max	Count
Crime Counts	0.098	1.288	0	89	10419
Δ Share of Fem. Candidates * 100	1.989	16.66	-100	100	4948
Share of local parties experiencing violence			3.69 %		

Table 2: Summary Statistics by Party

Variable	AfD	CDU	Die Linke	FDP	Greens	SPD
Crime Counts	4.78	0.11	0.23	0.08	0.15	0.1
Δ Share of Fem. Candidates * 100	4.72	1.52	2.87	1.62	3.13	1.83

Conditional on standing for office in both elections

Results

Table 3: Regression Results

	Dependent variable:							
	Δ Share of Fem. Candidates							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Crime	−0.025	−0.012**			−0.026	−0.026**		
	(0.016)	(0.004)			(0.016)	(0.010)		
Crime Against Politician			0.004	0.004			−0.005	−0.005
			(0.019)	(0.005)			(0.020)	(0.009)
Municipality Fixed Effect	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Party Fixed Effect		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Clustering	city	party	city	party	city	party	city	party
Observations	4,873	4,873	4,873	4,873	4,873	4,873	4,873	4,873
Adjusted R^2	−0.019	0.001	−0.020	0.001	−0.019	−0.019	−0.020	−0.020

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Experimental Strategy & Results

Experimental sample

- Sample
  - 1120 respondents - filtered by political interest
  - Representative w.r.t. German population (age, gender, state)
- Two rounds
  - First round with 813 respondents. But women heavily underrepresented.
  - Second round with 307 females.
  - Few immigrant-origin respondents (%15)

Balancing Test 1 Balancing Test 2 Balancing Test 3 Propensity Score Matching

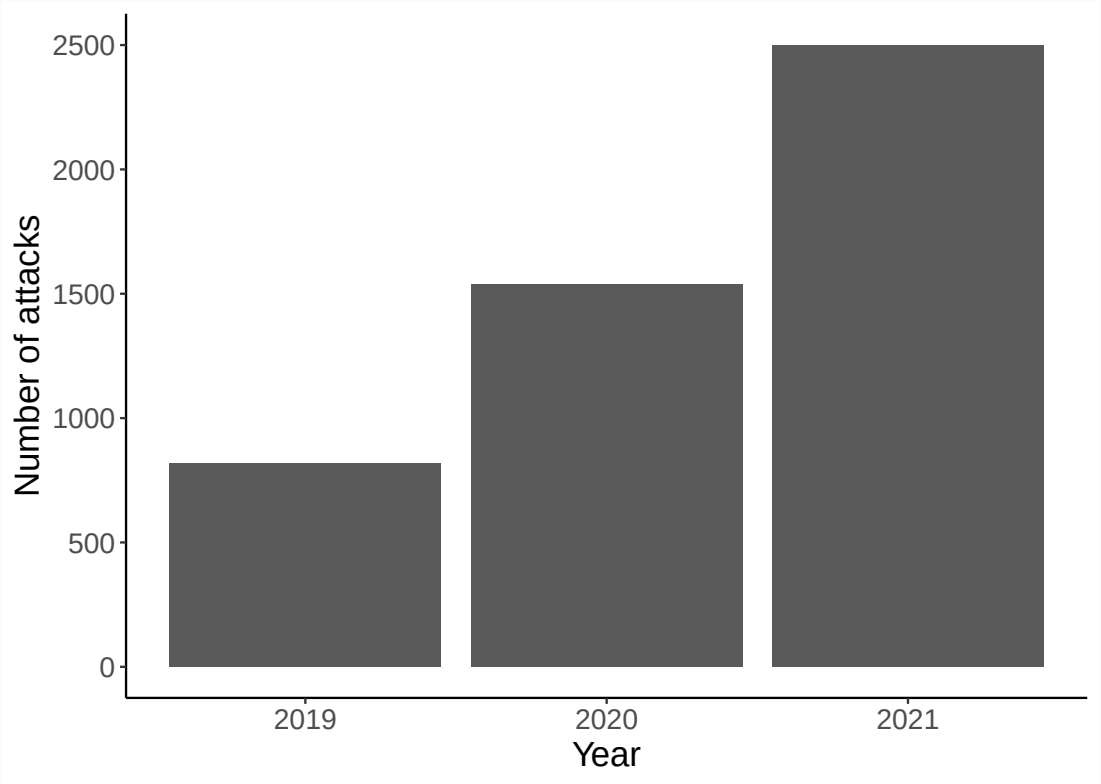
Control condition

"Local politicians are an important pillar for German democracy. They make decisions in a variety of topics such as public transport, internet infrastructure or city cleaning that affect our daily life. In general, they are close to the voters they represent and are therefore uniquely positioned to address local issues. Furthermore, local politicians are also often recruited for higher level office and many current top politicians have started their political career by holding political offices on the local level.

Information Treatment

"Local politicians ... local level. However, in the last years, local politicians increasingly become targets of politically motivated and sometimes violent attacks. In a recent poll, 79% of the surveyed local politicians indicated to have been targeted in some form. Every fifth politician even indicated to have been the victim of a physical attack. This is also reflected in the official statistics of politically motivated crimes that count attacks on politicians and party offices. The graph below shows that the number of attacks on politicians almost tripled between 2019 and 2021. This trend is not confined to a particular region in Germany but is found in every state."

Treatment graph



Source: German Federal Police (BKA)

Outcomes

- Willingness to run/engage (WTR, WTE)
  - Self-reported
  - Scale from 1-5
- Information outcome
  - We offer respondents information about the requirements of political candidacy in local politics
  - We measure whether respondents opt in to see this information (1/0)

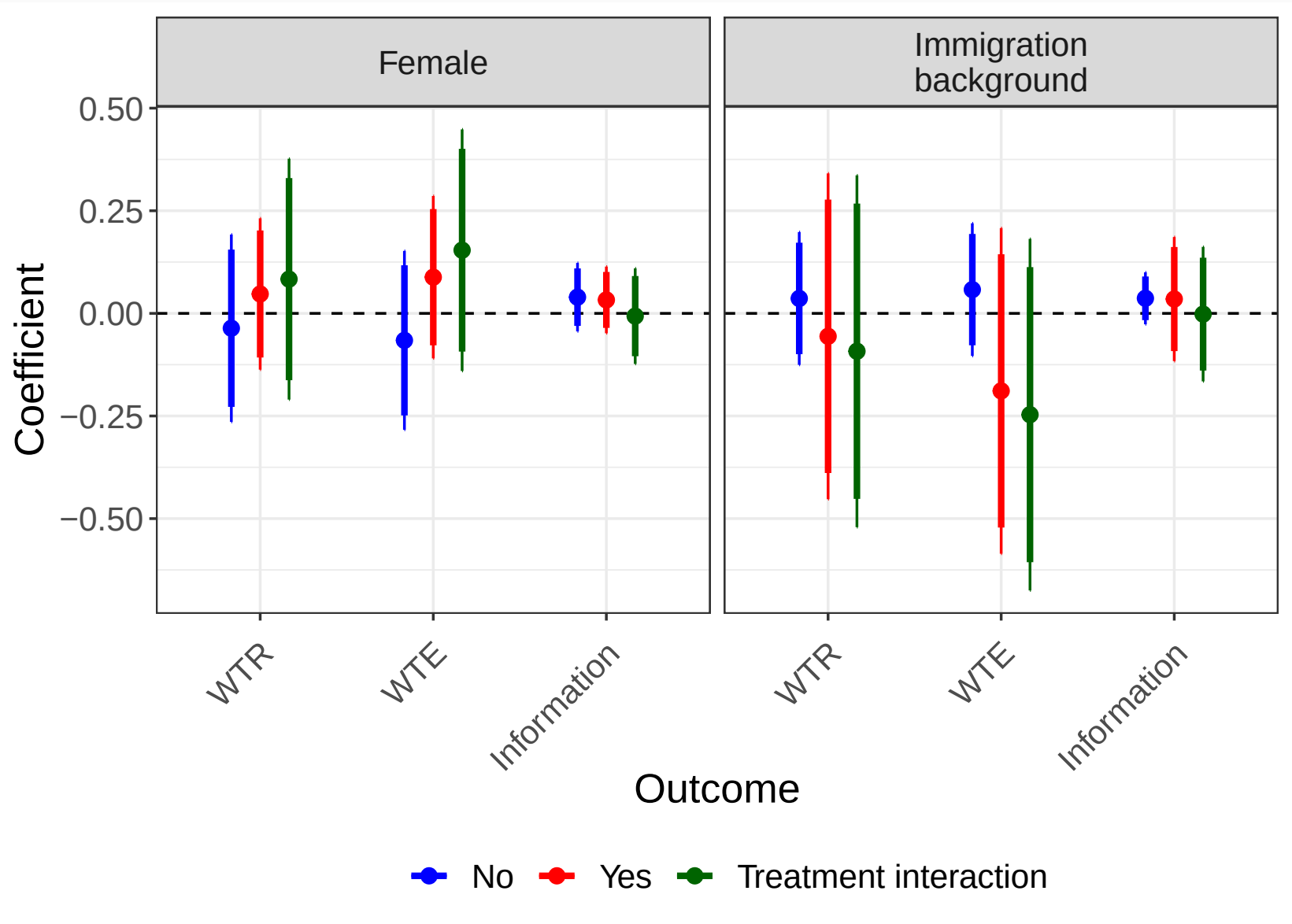
Secondary Outcomes

- Perceived risk of candidacy and political engagement
  - Scaled from 1-5 (5 highest risk)
- Nature of political competition (NPC)
  - How do respondents perceive the political environment in local politics?
  - Several items scaled from 1-5 (from less to more contentious)
- Important traits
  - Rank seven skills
  - Respondents classify the skills into “feminine“ and “masculine“

Pre-treatment covariates

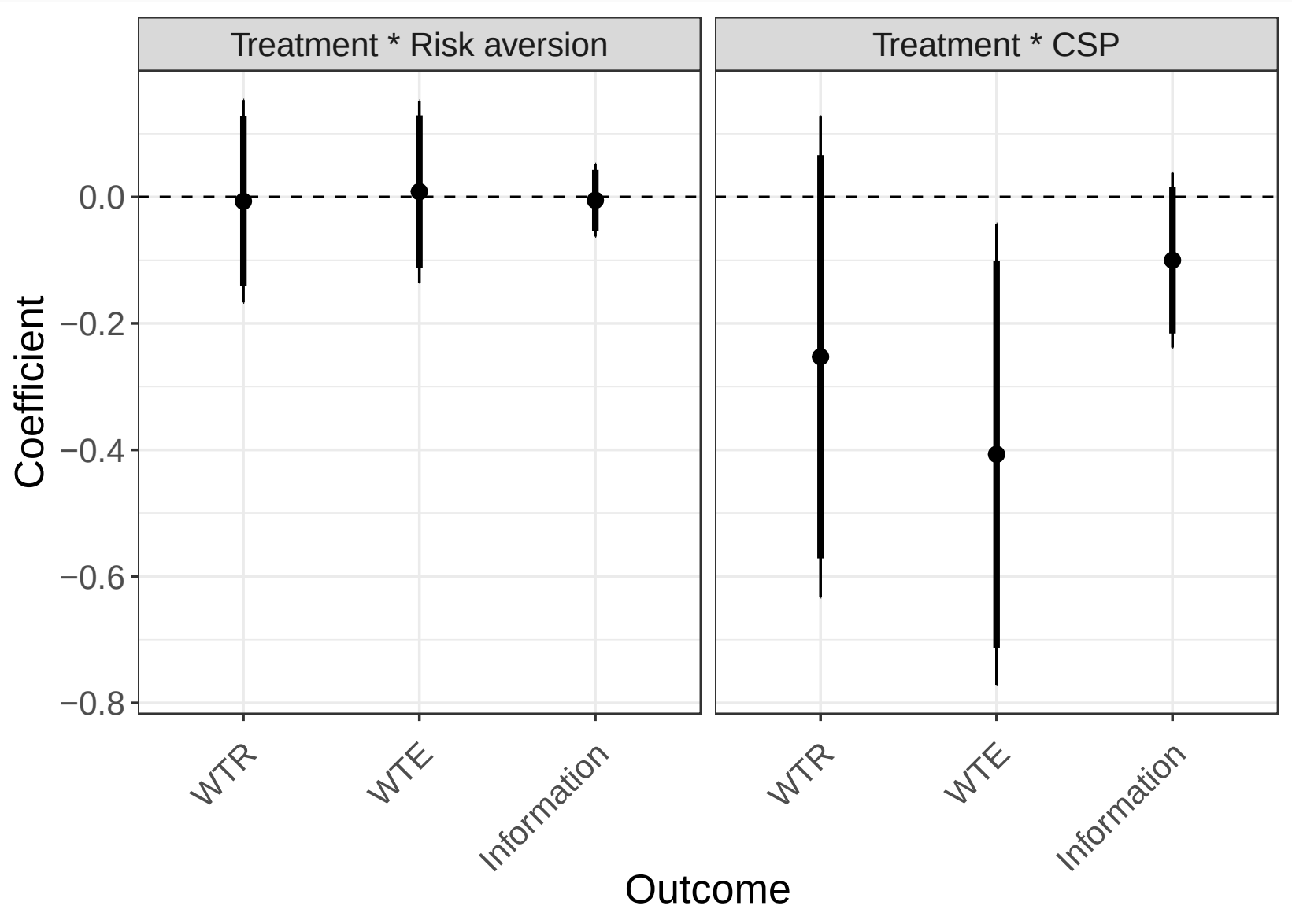
- Socio-demographic Characteristics
- Self-reported risk-aversity
  - 4 items
  - Scaled from 1-5, higher values less risk-aversion
- Preference for cooperative style in politics (CSP)
  - What do respondents deem more important for democratic politics?
    - Competition and conflict ($= 0$)
    - Cooperation and consensus-seeking ($= 1$)

Treatment Effects on Primary Outcomes



Note: OLS coefficients with 90% (thick bars) and 95% (thin bars) confidence

Treatment Interaction with Risk Aversion and CSP



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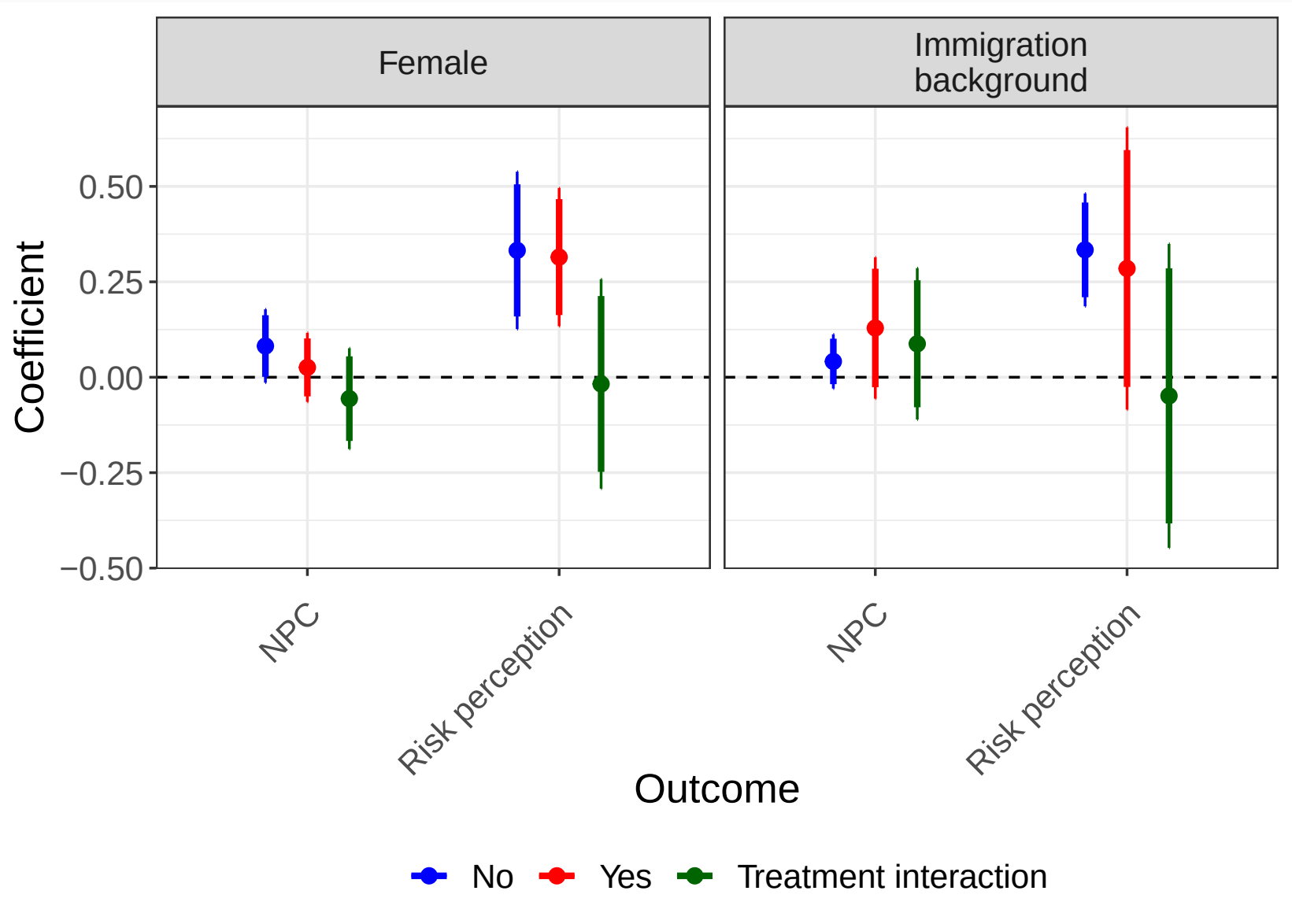
Treatment Effects on Risk Perception and NPC



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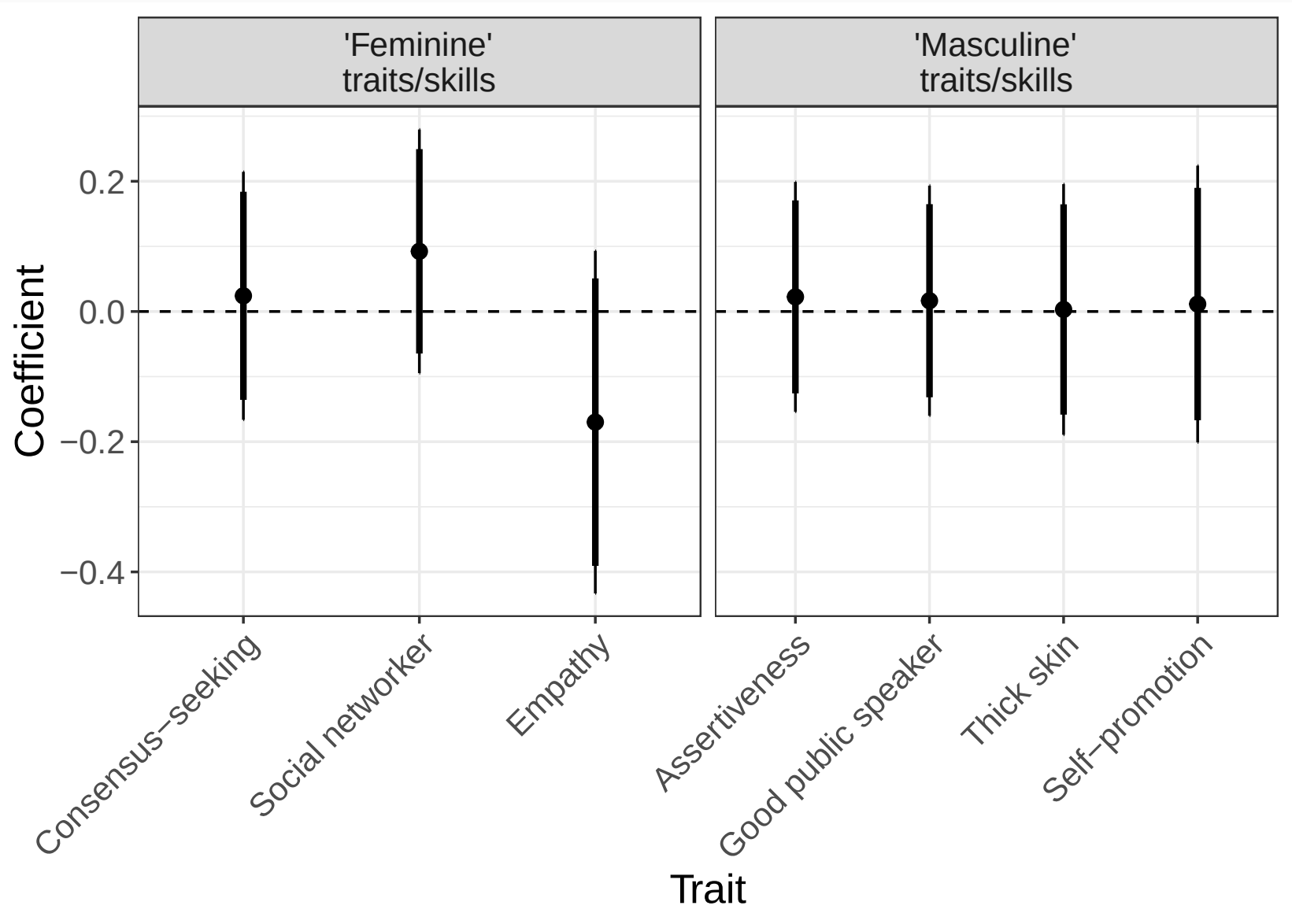
Treatment Effects on Traits



Note: OLS coefficients with 90% (thick bars) and 95% (thin bars) confidence

Conclusion

Summary

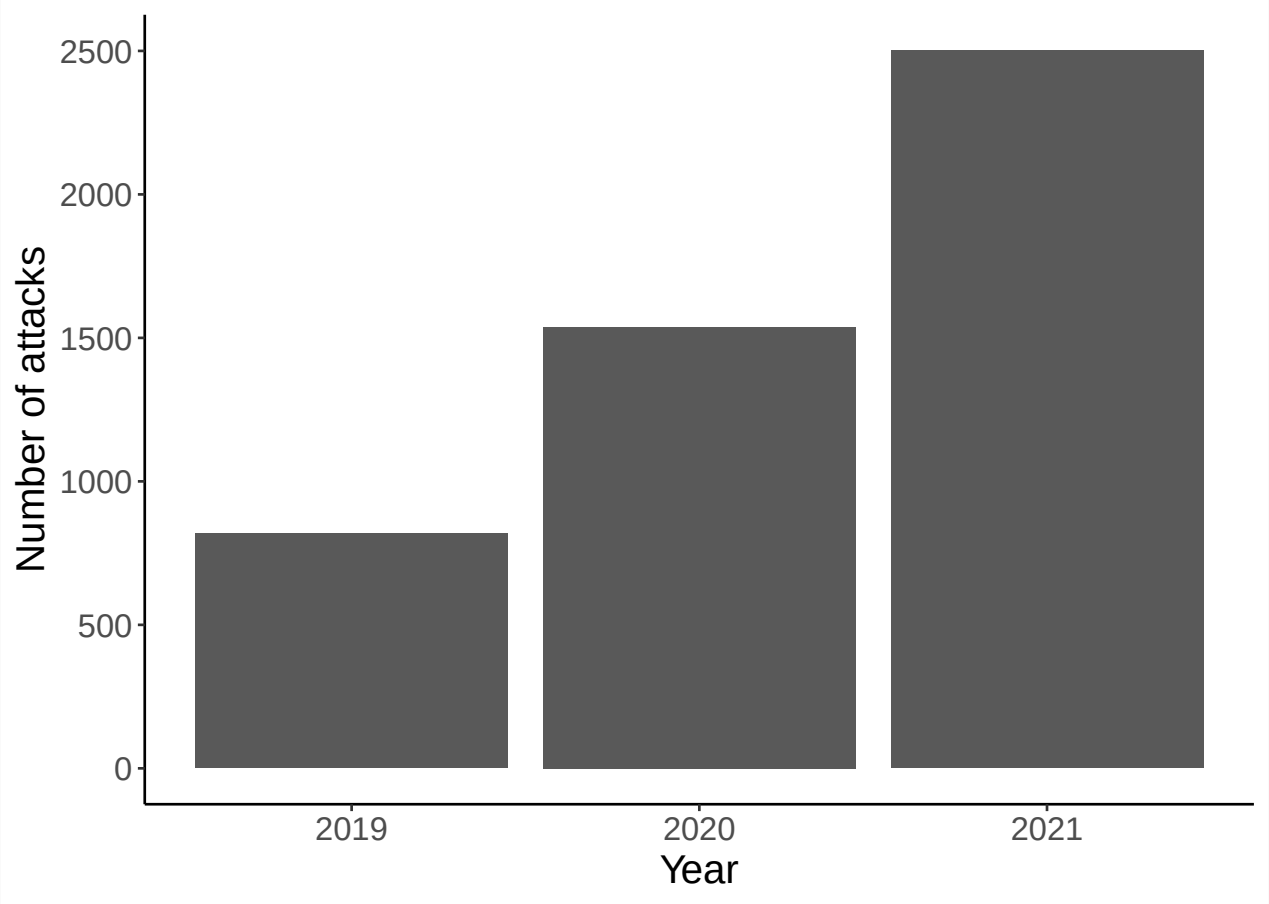
- Heterogeneous deterrence not primarily along gender lines.
- Some scarring of cooperative individuals
- Altered risk perception seems to have no consequences in the decision. Why?

Thank you for your attention

... and HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

Appendix

Trends in crimes against politicians in Germany



Graph shows the total number of crimes against politicians. Source: German Federal Police (BKA)

Back

Politically Motivated Crime in Germany

- 'PMK-Statistik' by German Federal Police Force (BKA)
  - **33%** annual increase of crimes against representatives & bureaucrats (2018→2019)
  - **107%** annual increase of **violent** crimes against representatives & bureaucrats (2018→2019)
- Event-level info necessary to answer most pressing questions
  - From parliamentary inquiries and state-level police departments
  - Classified by:
    - location
    - date
    - type of offence
    - motivation of perpetrator (left/right/other)

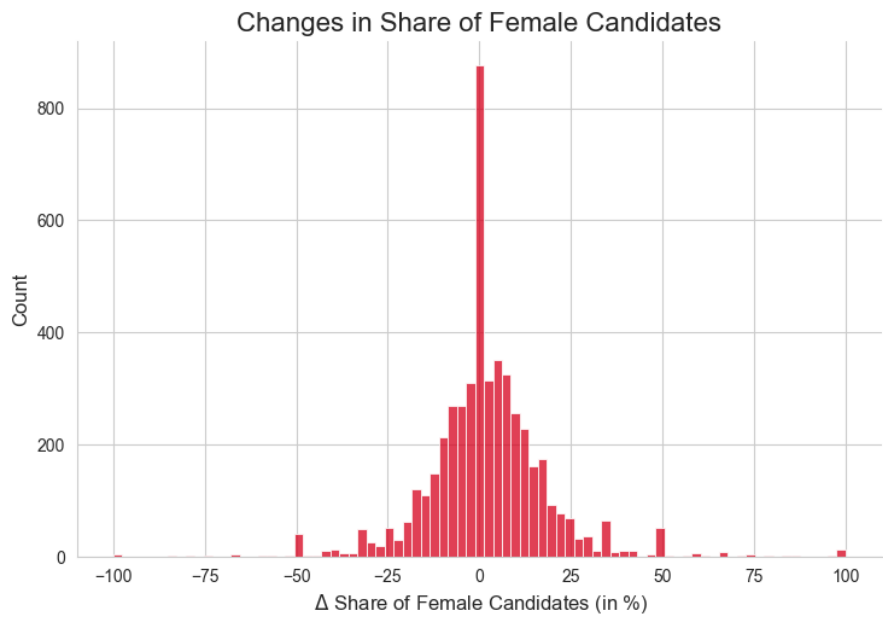
Anlage 1 - Angriffe auf Parteibüros und Politiker 2018

Lfd. Nr.	Tatzeit	Tatort	TV[1]	Phänomenbereich	Zähldelikt	Bezeichnung
167	15.03.2018	Dresden	0	Ausländische Ideologie	§ 303 StGB	Sachbeschädigung
168	16.03.2018	Tornesch	0	Nicht zuzuordnen	§ 303 StGB	Sachbeschädigung
169	17.03.2018	Heidenheim an der Brenz	0	Links	§ 303 StGB	Sachbeschädigung
170	17.03.2018	Friedberg	1	Nicht zuzuordnen	§ 130 StGB	Volksverhetzung
171	17.03.2018	Graal-Müritz	0	Nicht zuzuordnen	§ 303 StGB	Sachbeschädigung
172	17.03.2018	Eisfeld	0	Links	§ 86a StGB	Verwenden von Kennzeichen verfassungswidriger Organisationen
173	18.03.2018	München	0	Links	§ 303 StGB	Sachbeschädigung
174	18.03.2018	Northeim	0	Nicht zuzuordnen	§ 243 StGB	Besonders schwerer Fall des Diebstahls
175	18.03.2018	Kiel	0	Links	§ 188 StGB	Üble Nachrede und Verleumdung gegen Personen des politischen Lebens
176	18.03.2018	Zeulenroda	0	Links	§ 303 StGB	Sachbeschädigung
177	18.03.2018	Hildburghausen	0	Links	§ 303 StGB	Sachbeschädigung
178	18.03.2018	Eisfeld	1	Links	§ 303 StGB	Sachbeschädigung
179	19.03.2018	Bernau bei Berlin	0	Nicht zuzuordnen	§ 188 StGB	Üble Nachrede und Verleumdung gegen Personen des politischen Lebens
180	19.03.2018	Hamburg	0	Rechts	§ 303 StGB	Sachbeschädigung
181	19.03.2018	Wismar	0	Links	§ 303 StGB	Sachbeschädigung
182	19.03.2018	Neuhaus	0	Nicht zuzuordnen	§ 187 StGB	Verleumdung
183	20.03.2018	Wanzleben	0	Nicht zuzuordnen	§ 303 StGB	Sachbeschädigung
184	20.03.2018	München	1	Links	§ 123 StGB	Hausfriedensbruch
185	20.03.2018	München	1	Links	§ 123 StGB	Hausfriedensbruch
186	20.03.2018	München	1	Ausländische Ideologie	§ 123 StGB	Hausfriedensbruch
187	20.03.2018	München	1	Ausländische Ideologie	§ 123 StGB	Hausfriedensbruch
188	20.03.2018	München	1	Ausländische Ideologie	§ 123 StGB	Hausfriedensbruch
189	20.03.2018	München	1	Ausländische Ideologie	§ 123 StGB	Hausfriedensbruch

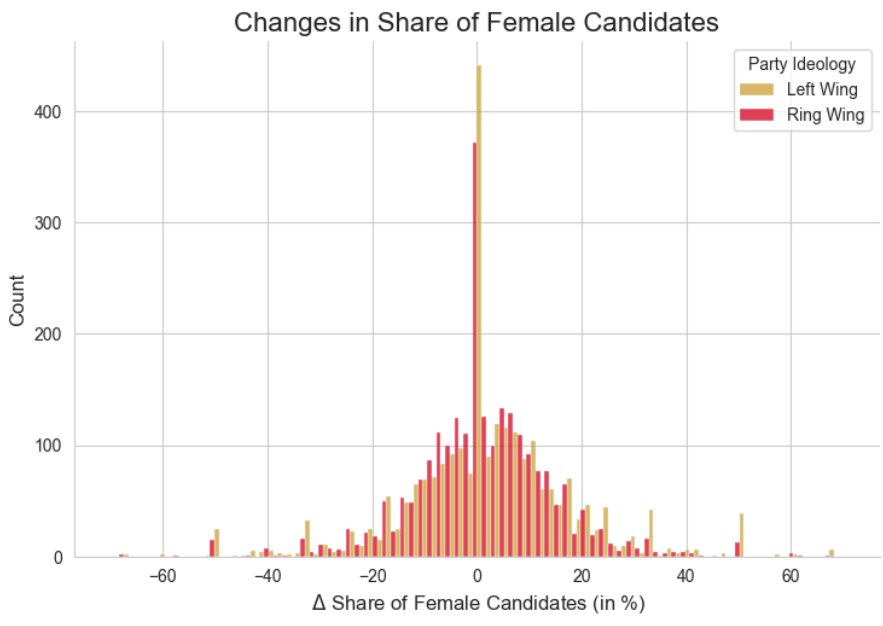
Example of parliamentary inquiry data

Back

Figure 2: Distribution of Election Data



(a) Overall



(b) By ideology

Back

Figure 4: Aggregated crime data on zip-code level

(a) Baden-Wuerttemberg

(b) Saxony

Back

Probestimmzettel Stadtratswahl 2020 Memmingen

Wahlvorschlag Nr. 01		Wahlvorschlag Nr. 02		Wahlvorschlag Nr. 04		Wahlvorschlag Nr. 05	
◯	Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern e.V. **CSU**	◯	BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN **GRÜNE**	◯	Alternative für Deutschland **AfD**	◯	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschla **SPD**
	101 Böckh Margareta		201 Villing Evelyn		401 Maier Christoph		501 Beer Petra
	102 Holetschek Klaus		202 Linse Joachim		Maier Christoph		502 Reßler Matthias
	103 Salger Isabella		203 Dr. phil. Schunk Monika		Maier Christoph		503 Friederich-Scheuerl Susanne
	104 Holas Horst		204 Prof. Dr.-Ing. Buchberger Dieter		402 Kühn Genovefa		504 Dr. rer.nat. Steiger Hans-Martin
	105 Prof. Dr. Schraut Veronika		205 Riedmiller Natalie		Kühn Genovefa		505 Gotzes Verena
	106 Baur Christoph		206 Pohl Sebastian		Kühn Genovefa		506 Spitz Rolf
	107 Rogg Sabine		207 Drosihn-Lodd Andrea		403 Wagenseil Thomas		507 Marx Susanne
	108 Prof. Dr. Schwarz Josef		208 Schütterle Meinhard sen.		Wagenseil Thomas		508 Holzinger Ivo
	109 Zettler Wolfgang		209 Keller Karin		Wagenseil Thomas		509 Leenders Regina
	110 Ruppert Michael		210 Tortiello Giovanni		404 Jurca Titus		510 Abate Francesco
	111 Pramschüfer Helge		211 Kühlmuß Jutta		Jurca Titus		511 Häring Rita
	112 Sonntag Markus		212 Reichert Tim		Jurca Titus		512 Nieder Fabian

Example of open list ballot

Willingness to Run (WTR)

How likely is it that you would...("1 very unlikely"-"5 very likely")

- run as a candidate for the municipality council in the place you currently live in?
- become active in local politics?
- recommend a friend to run for the municipality council?
- recommend a friend to become active in local politics?

Nature of political competition

To what extent do you agree to the following statement? [5 point scale: "1 completely disagree"-"5 fully agree"]

- Local politics is competitive
- Candidates who run for local political offices are treated fairly by their opponents and the media
- Local politicians can often reach a consensus since they all have the welfare of their community in mind
- Local politicians must often face backlash to their decision

Risk-aversion

To what extent do you agree with the following statement? [5 point scale: "1 completely disagree" - "5 fully agree"]

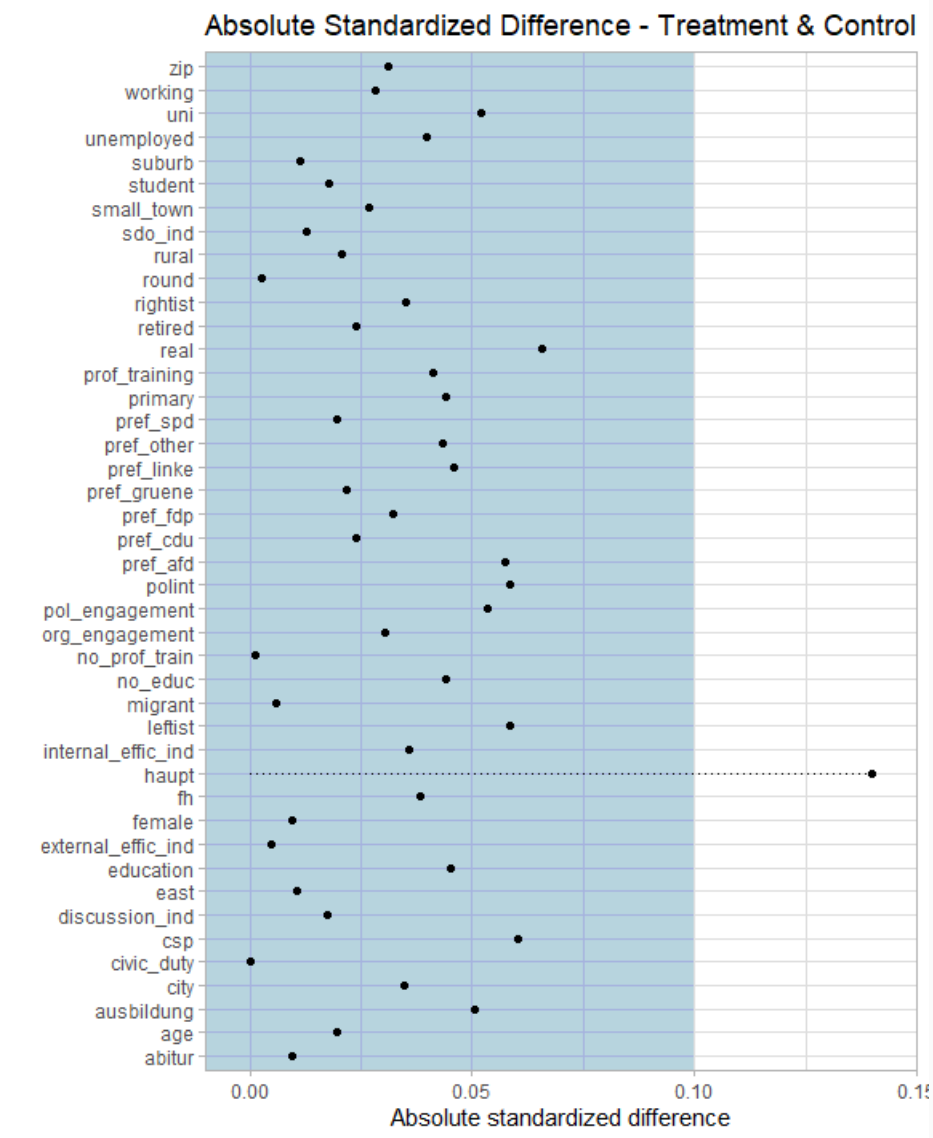
- I would take a risk even if it meant I might get hurt.
- Taking risks is an important part of my life.
- I commonly make risky decisions.
- I am a believer in taking chances.

Cooperative style of politics

Which do you think is more important for democratic politics?

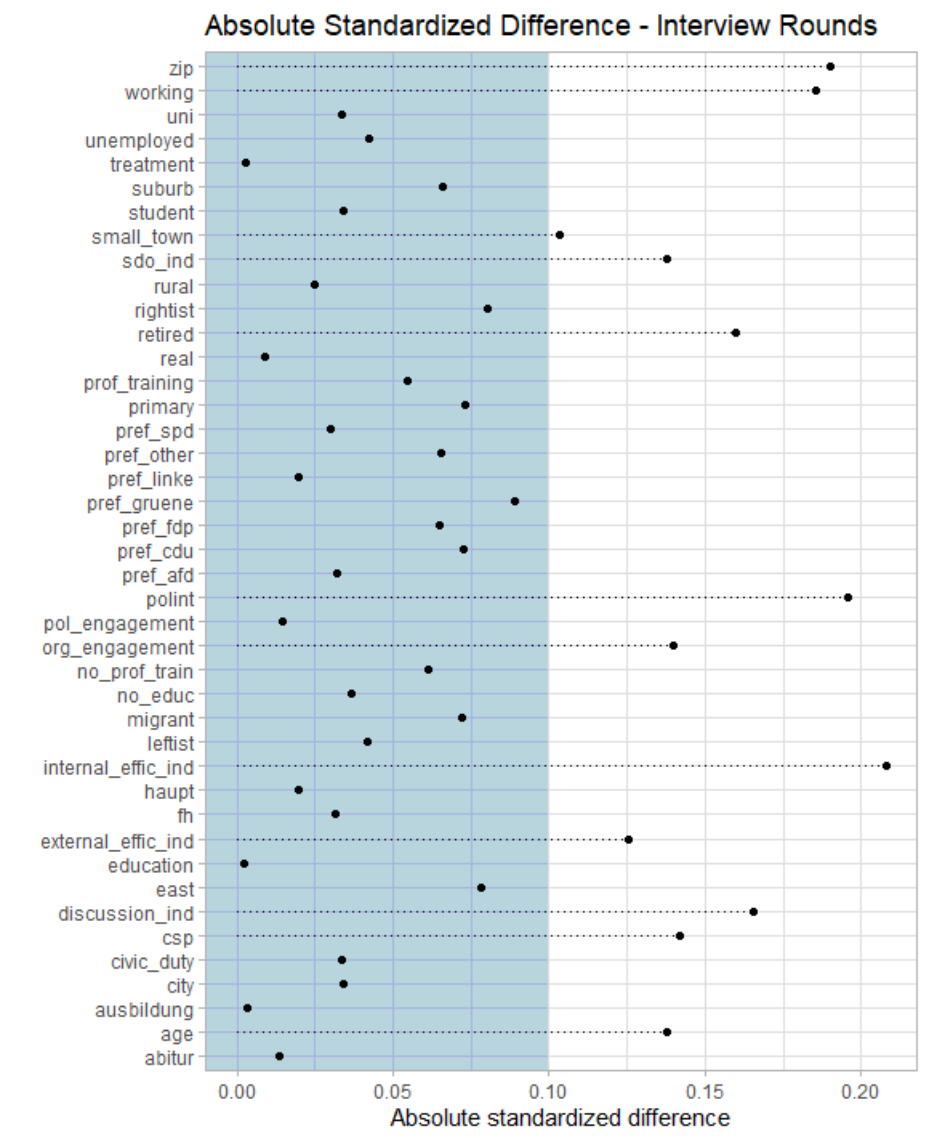
- Competition and conflict between parties and factions
- Cooperation and consensus-seeking between parties and factions

Absolute Standardized Difference



Back

Absolute Standardized Difference



Back

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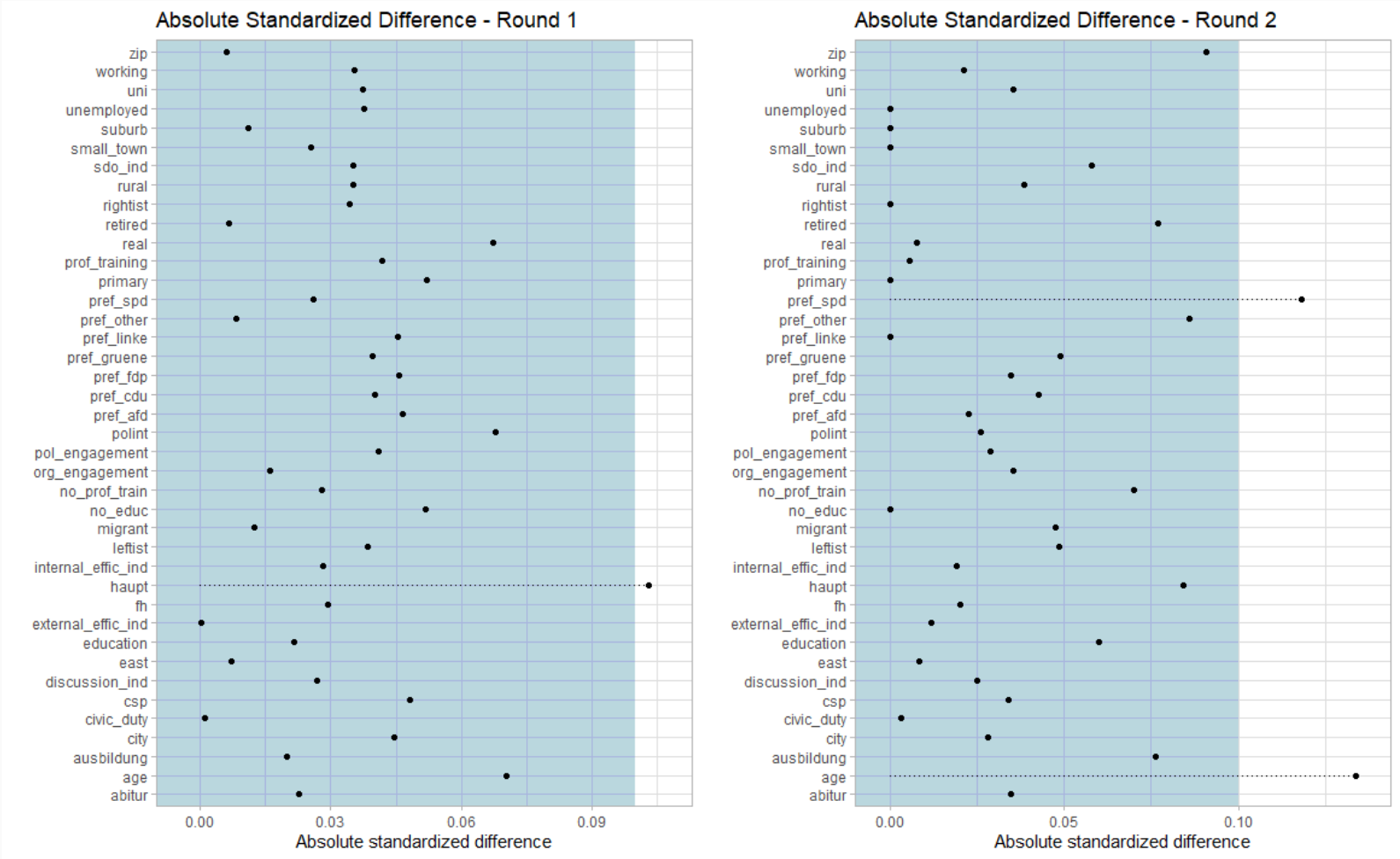
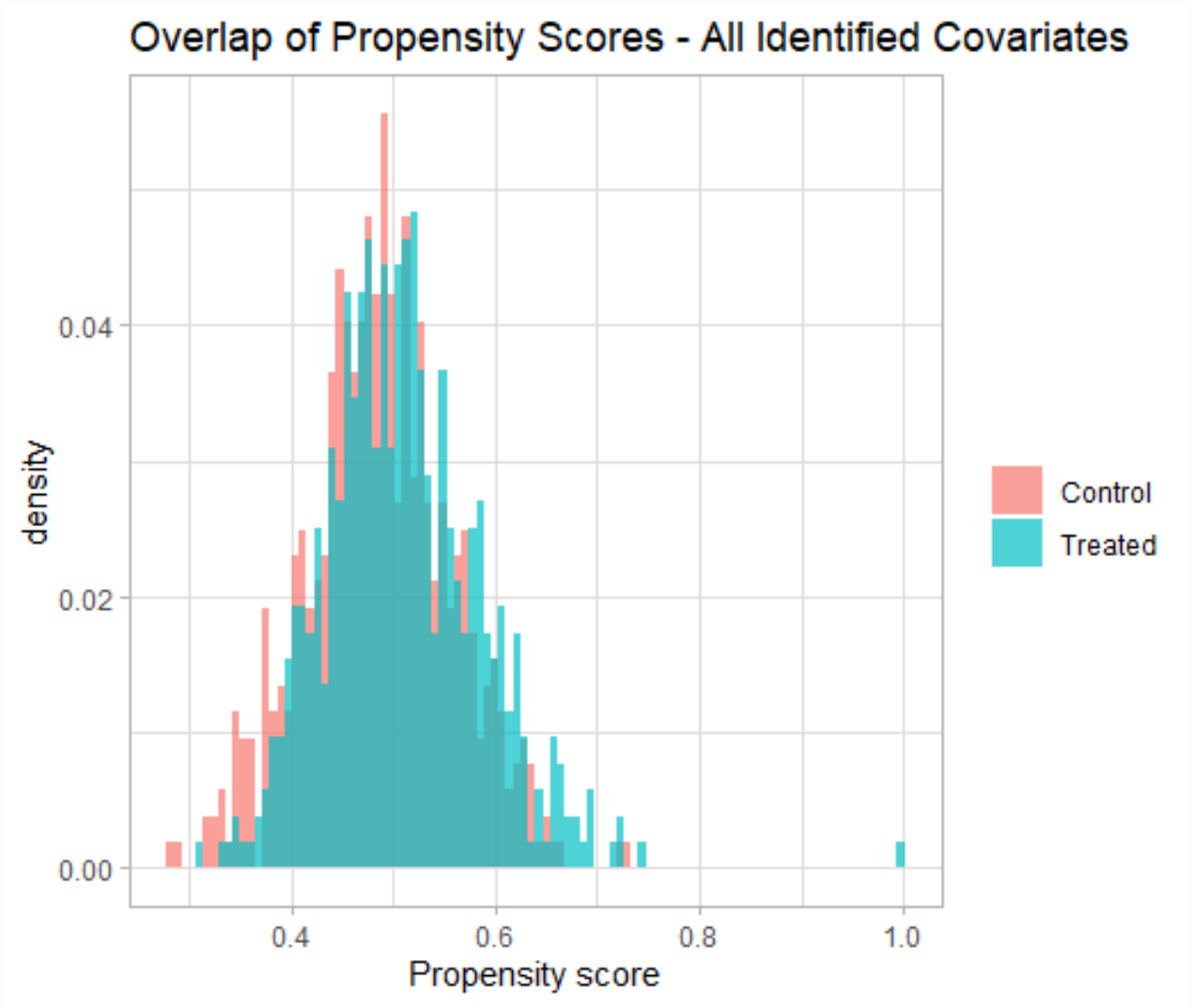


(a) Overall

(b) By ideology

Back

Propensity Score Matching



Back