Comparative Political Behavior

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What IS comparative political behavior?

- Political behavior focuses on the actions and attitudes of individuals, rather than the study of rules, institutions, or other aggregate factors

- Generally studied empirically, often through opinion surveys or analyses of voting behavior

- Comparative political behavior refers to the study of political behavior outside of the US context

What IS comparative political behavior?

- Often looks at how behavioral outcomes vary by different institutional and contextual factors
  - E.g., How does voter turnout differ in proportional representation vs single member district electoral systems?
  - E.g., How does the presence of coalition governments influence voters' perception of political parties' ideological position?
  - E.g., Do legislative gender quotas increase voters' feelings of representation and political involvement?
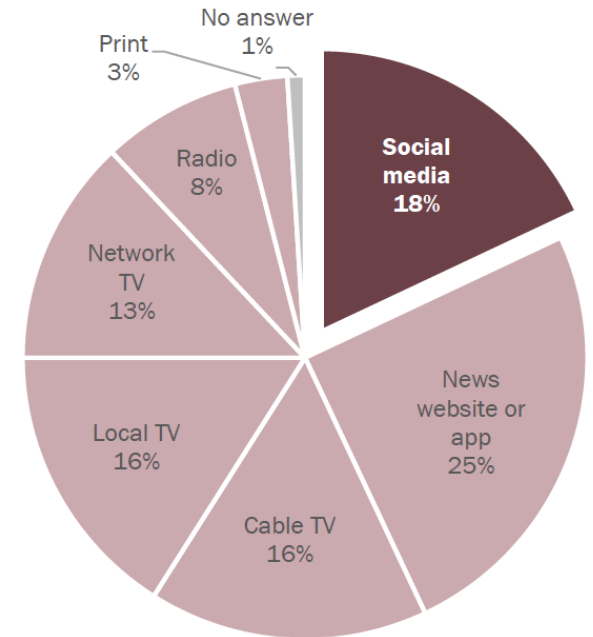
Step 1: Information Acquisition

Information Acquisition

1. Voters are **exposed** to political information through media, social interactions, campaigns, and personal experiences

2. Voters then **perceive** and interpret this information based on their existing psychological disposition, including beliefs, values, and cognitive biases
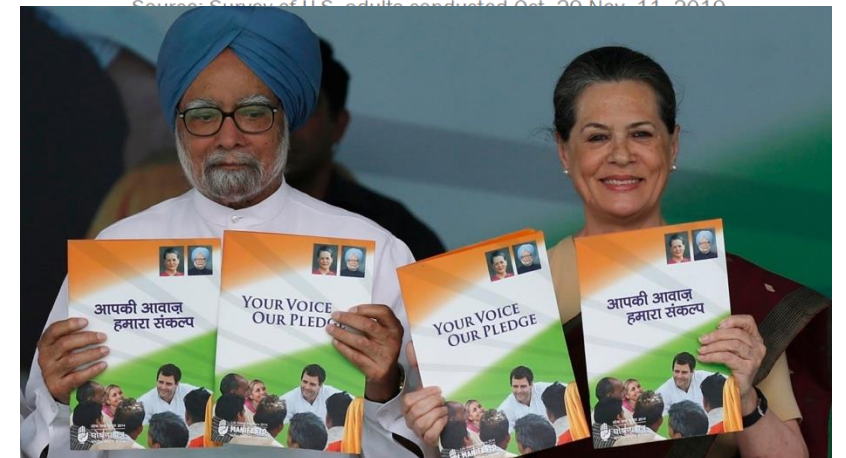
Exposure and perception/interpretation may be influenced <u>by political interest and knowledge</u>

About one-in-five U.S. adults say they get their political news primarily through social media

% of U.S. adults who say the most common way they get political and election news is …

- No answer 1%
- Print 3%
- Radio 8%
- Network TV 13%
- Local TV 16%
- Cable TV 16%
- News website or app 25%
- Social media 18%

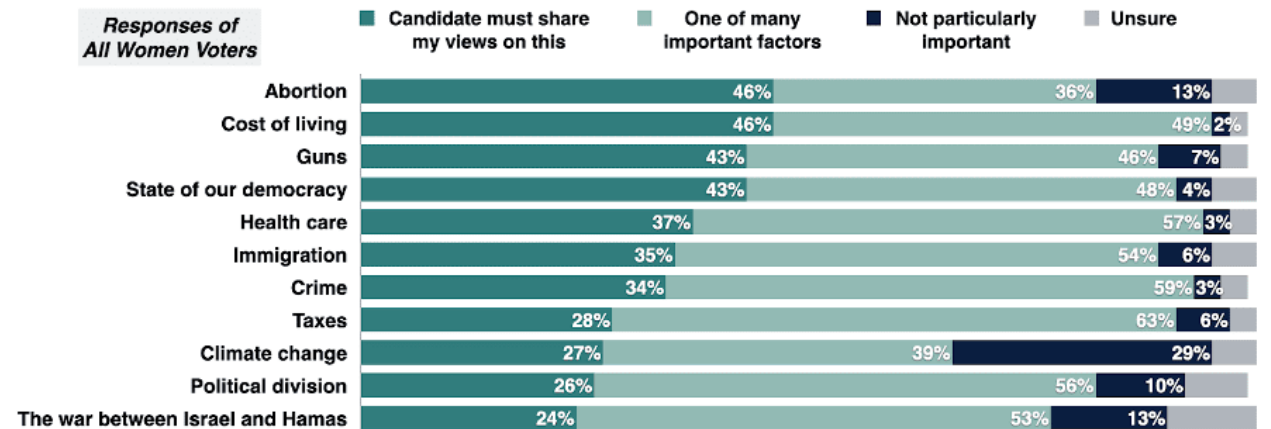Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 29-Nov. 11, 2019

Step 2: Evaluation of Information

Evaluation of Information

1. Voters identify the most important issues to them (**issue salience**)
    1. Not all issues matter equally to voters
    2. You might have an *opinion* tax policy, but do you prioritize it compared to other issues?
2. Voters then **assess candidates and parties based** on their positions on these salient issues, as well as competence, integrity, past performance, and campaign promises
   1. Includes Retrospective and Prospective considerations

November 2023

Abortion, cost of living, guns remain top issues for 2024, state of our democracy rises in importance

Responses of All Women Voters

	Candidate must share my views on this	One of many important factors	Not particularly important	Unsure
Abortion	46%	36%	13%	
Cost of living	46%	49%	2%	
Guns	43%	46%	7%	
State of our democracy	43%	48%	4%	
Health care	37%	57%	3%	
Immigration	35%	54%	6%	
Crime	34%	59%	3%	
Taxes	28%	63%	6%	
Climate change	27%	39%	29%	
Political division	26%	56%	10%	
The war between Israel and Hamas	24%	53%	13%	

ECHELON INSIGHTS   all in TOGETHER® women leading change

Q. Thinking about how each of the following issues might affect your vote in the 2024 elections, please indicate if you would say a candidate must share your views on the issue to get your vote, if you would consider a candidate's position on the issue as just one of many important factors, or if you would not see the issue as particularly important when deciding which candidate to support

Step 3: Comparing Options
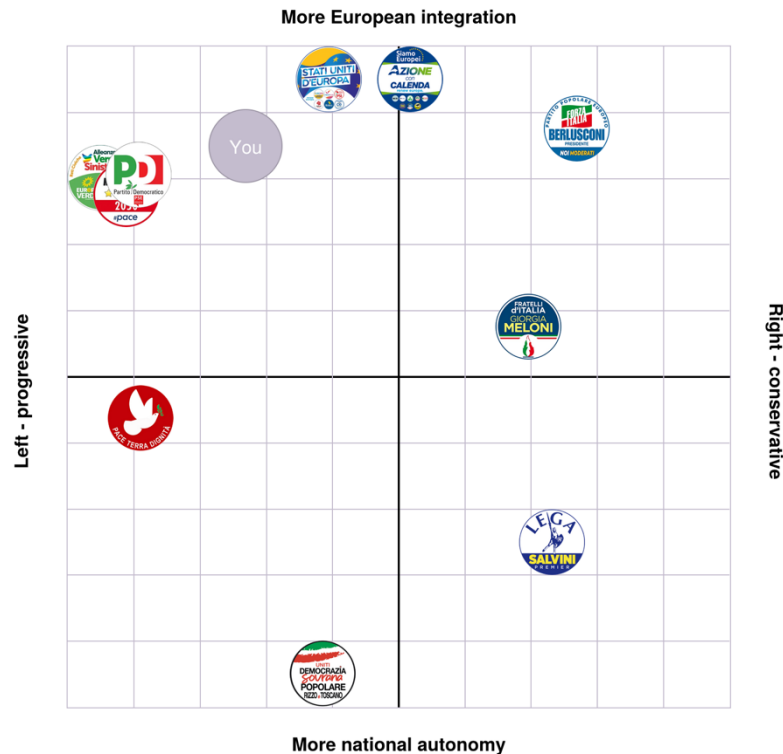
Comparing Options

1. How close is this party to me ideologically?
   - Proximity Voting, also known as Spatial Voting
2. How competent and likely to succeed is this candidate?
   - Valence Voting
3. Does this party's proposed policy changes move in my desired direction?
   - Directional Voting

Click here to see which party is closest to you!

Step 4: Heuristics and Other Influences

Heuristics and Other Information Shortcuts

Heuristics are cognitive or information shortcuts that simplify complex decision making processes

1. Party identification and Partisanship: Strongly identifying with a political party can significantly influence voting decisions
   1. Graph: Bittner (2021)
2. Social factors: Voters are influenced by their social environments, including friends, family, community, and other social networks
3. Endorsements by interest groups or other political/non-political actors
4. Candidate characteristics

Why heuristics?

Political information is complex and most voters have limited knowledge and time!

Strength of Partisanship Across Countries Over Time
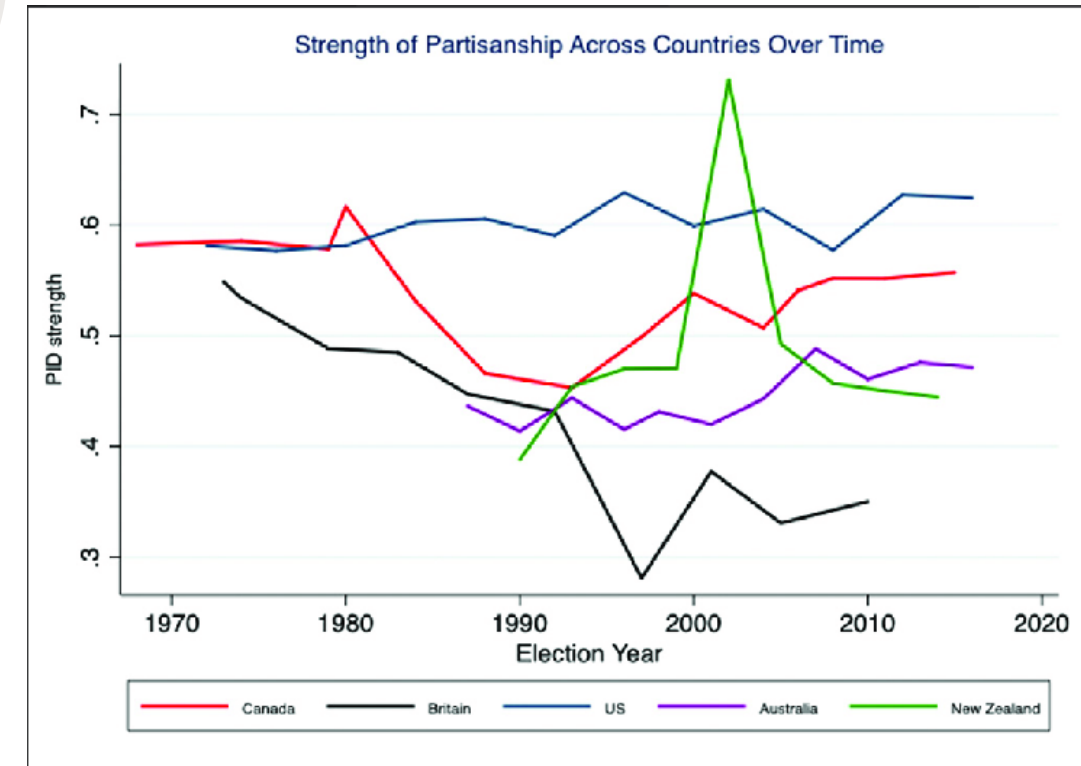
Vote switching (voting for one party in one election and another party in another) is more common in UK than US!
Reflects weaker party attachments

How do those who voted Leave at the EU referendum and also voted in the 2017 general election intend to vote in 2019?
Figures shown are as a % of people who voted Leave at the EU referendum who also voted at the 2017 general election who intend to vote at the 2019 general election

2017 vote

19% of Con+Leave voters now intend to vote for the Brexit Party

2019 voting intention

Con

Labour

UKIP

Other

Con

Brexit Party

Labour

Lib Dem

Other

Only 43% of Lab+Leave voters still intend to vote for the party

YouGov

17-28 October 2019
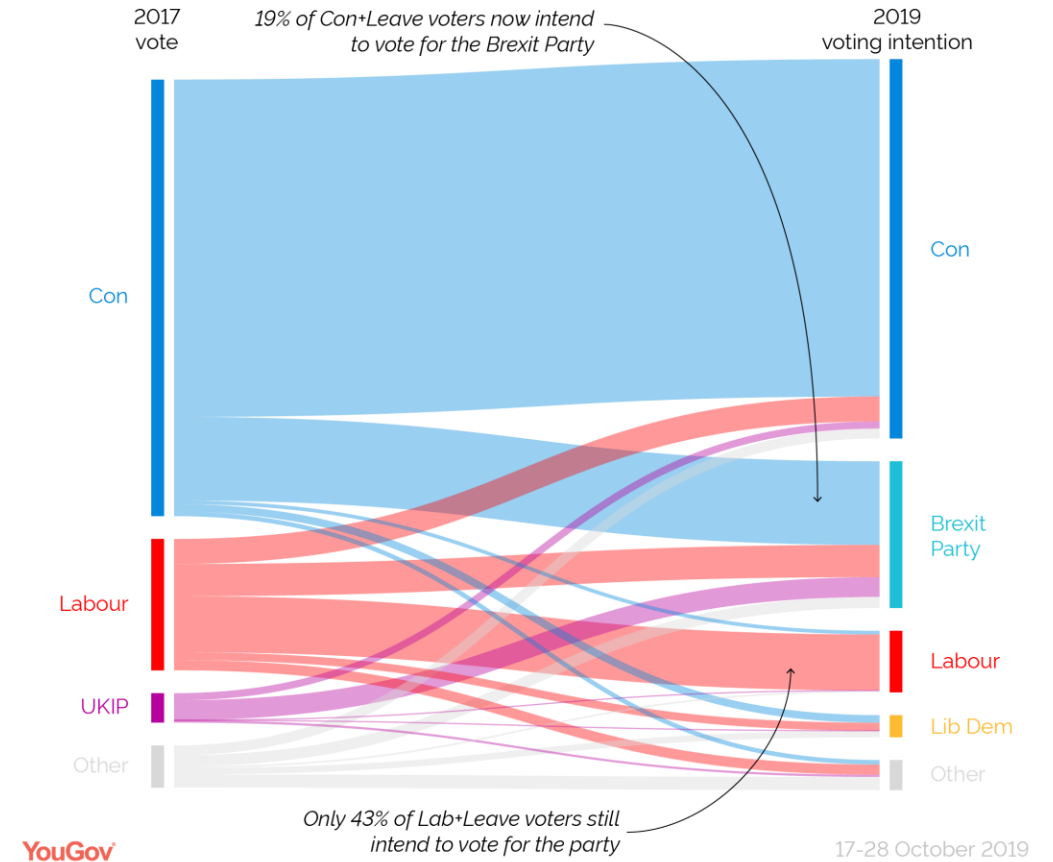
Step 5: Decision, Monitoring, and Adjustment

Decision, Monitoring, and Adjustment

1. After considering the options, voters come to a **final decision** on which candidate or party to support
2. After the election they may **monitor** the performance of the elected candidates and adjust their future voting accordingly
   1. Retrospective Voting

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                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │    Universal set    │
                    │  of political parties│
                    └─────────────────────┘
                              │
                              ▼
                    ╭─────────────────────╮
                    │    Awareness set    │           ⎫
                    │  of political parties│           ⎬  consideration
                    ╰─────────────────────╯           ⎭  stage
                              │
  ┌ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ┐        ▼
  │ External factors │      ╭─────────────────────╮
  │ (e.g. political  │─ ─ ─>│   Consideration set  │    ⎫
  │ knowledge, cleavage│    │  of political parties│    ⎬
  │ structure, partisan│    ╰─────────────────────╯    ⎬
  │ identities, ideology,│          │                  ⎬  choice
  │ policy issues, leader│          ▼                  ⎬  stage
  │ evaluations)     │─ ─ ─>    ╭────────╮             ⎭
  └ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ┘          │  Vote  │
                               │ Choice │
                               ╰────────╯
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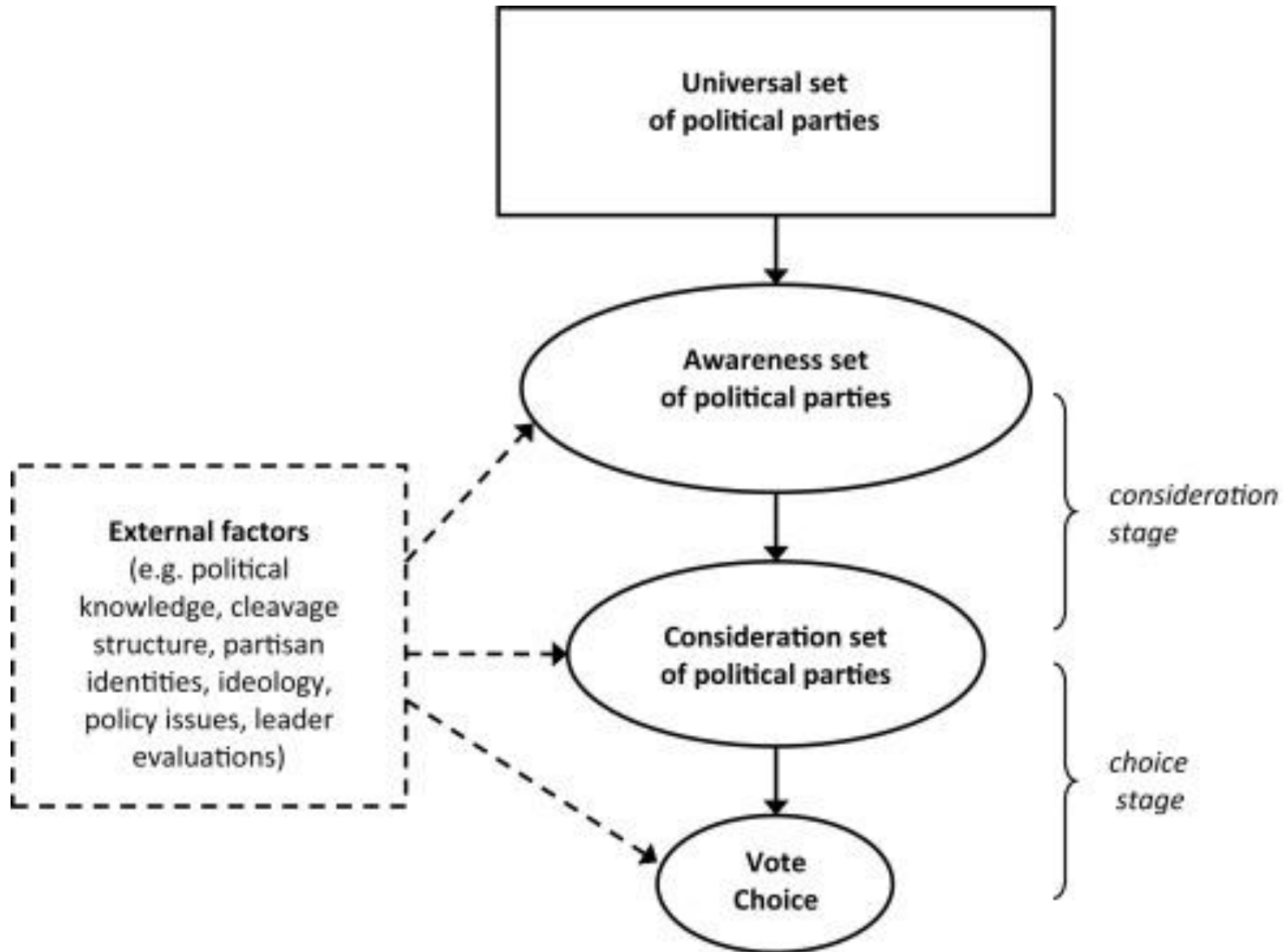
Some Theories of Voting Behavior

- **Retrospective Voting**: Voting is based on the performance of the incumbent politicians or parties
  - Perceived as having done well? Rewarded by voting for incumbent
  - Perceived as having done poorly? Punished by voting for opposition
- **Prospective Voting**: Voting is based on anticipated future performance of candidates or parties
  - Consider the policy promises made and choose the one they align with most
- **Issue Voting**: Voting is based on specific political issues (policies) that the individual prioritizes
  - If you prioritize environmental policy, you will choose the candidate with the strongest environmental platform
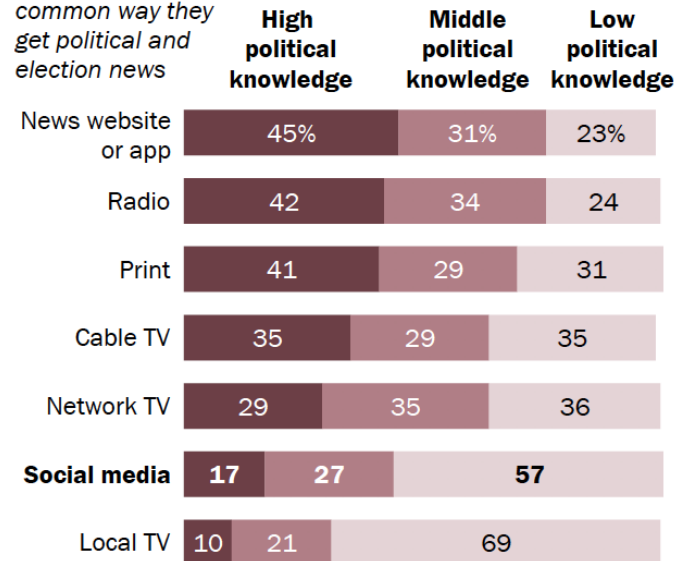
Some complications: News Sources

- Where people get their political news from matters!
- Those who rely on social media for political news followed the 2020 presidential candidates less closely, less aware of political storylines
- Also less likely to very closely follow news about the COVID-19 outbreak

Those who depend on social media for political news have lower political knowledge than most other groups

% of U.S. adults who have ____, according to an index of nine knowledge questions

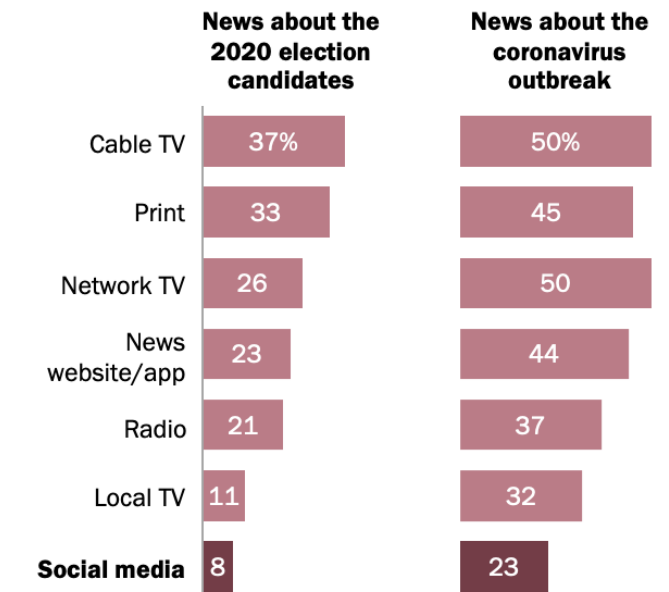| Among those who say ___ is the most common way they get political and election news	High political knowledge	Middle political knowledge	Low political knowledge
News website or app	45%	31%	23%
Radio	42	34	24
Print	41	29	31
Cable TV	35	29	35
Network TV	29	35	36
Social media	**17**	**27**	**57**
Local TV	10	21	69

Note: Knowledge index created from nine political knowledge questions. High political knowledge includes those who answered eight or nine questions correctly, middle knowledge includes those who answered six or seven questions correctly, and low knowledge includes those who answered five or fewer questions correctly. Answers correct as of November 2019.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 29-Nov. 11, 2019.

Fewer Americans who turned to social media for election news followed coverage of candidates, COVID-19 closely

Of those who get most of their political news on each platform, % of U.S. adults who said in June 2020 that they were following ____ very closely
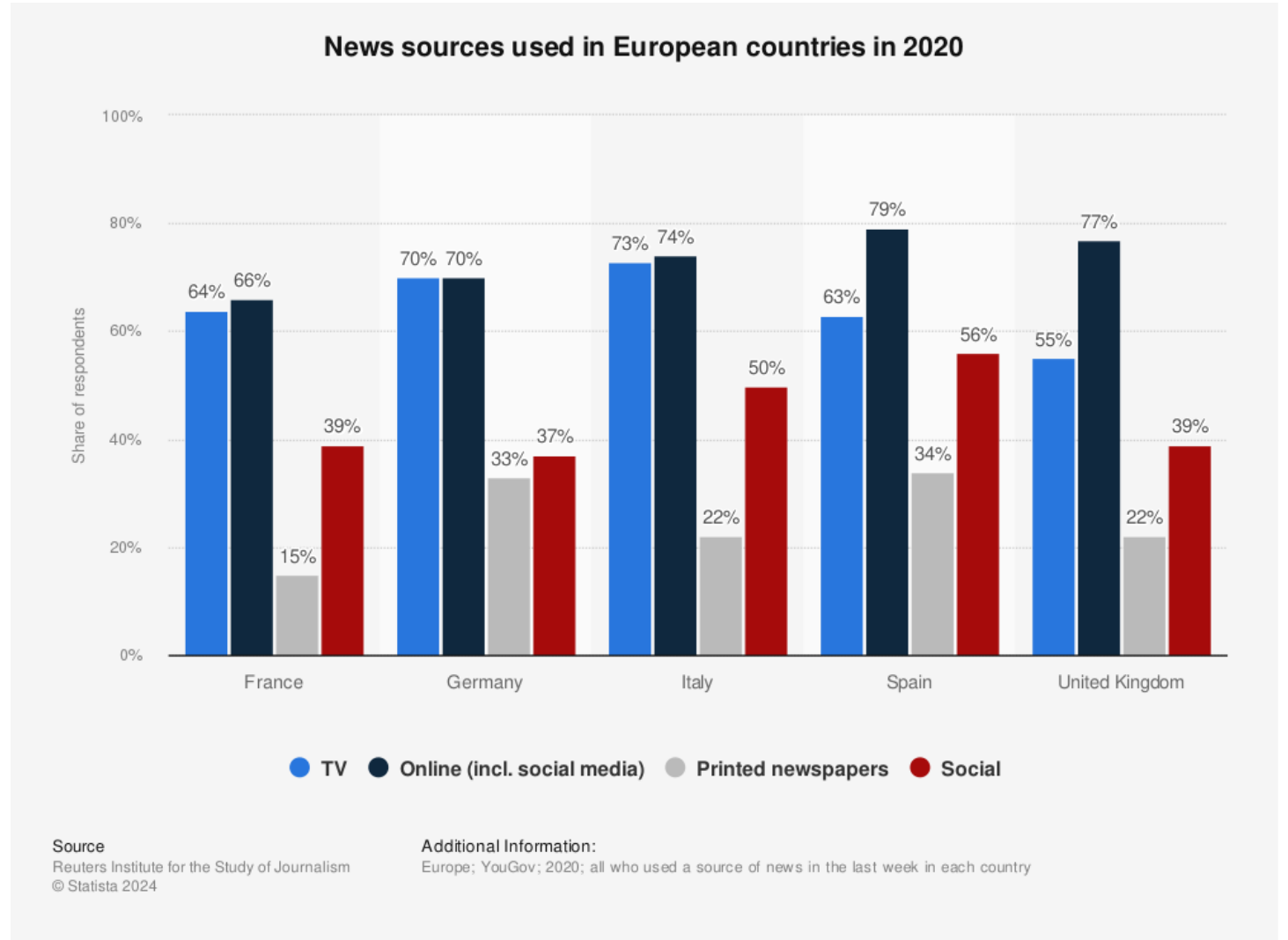
	News about the 2020 election candidates	News about the coronavirus outbreak
Cable TV	37%	50%
Print	33	45
Network TV	26	50
News website/app	23	44
Radio	21	37
Local TV	11	32
Social media	**8**	**23**

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 4-10, 2020.
"How Americans Navigated the News in 2020: A Tumultuous Year in Review"

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Some complications: News Sources

- Where people get their political news from matters!
- Those who rely on social media for political news followed the 2020 presidential candidates less closely, less aware of political storylines

News sources used in European countries in 2020

Share of respondents

Country	TV	Online (incl. social media)	Printed newspapers	Social
France	64%	66%	15%	39%
Germany	70%	70%	33%	37%
Italy	73%	74%	22%	50%
Spain	63%	79%	34%	56%
United Kingdom	55%	77%	22%	39%

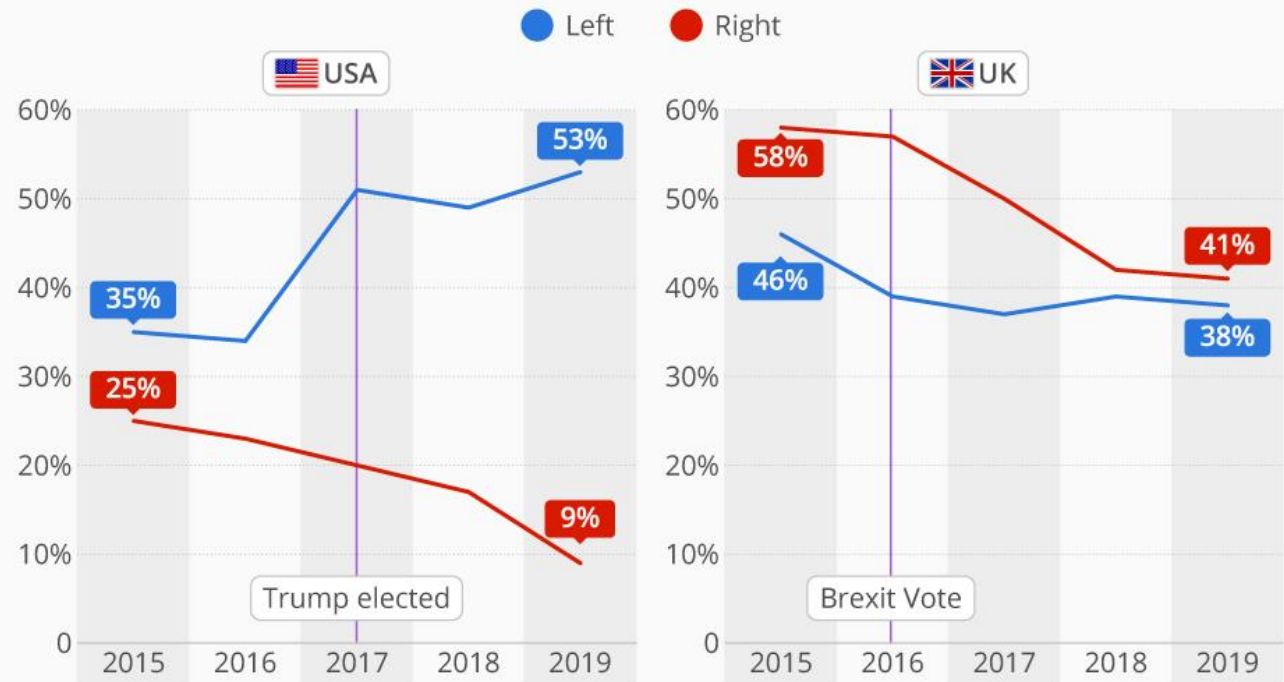● TV ● Online (incl. social media) ● Printed newspapers ● Social

Some complications: News Sources

- Trust in news also matters and varies considerably across contexts!
- US is deeply polarized on trust in news, with only 9% of right-leaning respondents saying they trust most news most of the time
- Compared to UK, where 41% of right-leaning respondents trust most news most of the time
- Self perpetuating cycle, exacerbates polarization

Is News Polarization An American Problem?
Share of respondents that trust most news most of the time by partisanship

● Left   ● Right

🇺🇸 USA

60%
50%
40% — 35%
30% — 25%
20%
10%
0
2015 2016 2017 2018 2019

53%
9%
Trump elected

🇬🇧 UK

60%
50%
40% — 46%
30%
20%
10%
0
2015 2016 2017 2018 2019

58%
41%
38%
Brexit Vote

1,000 U.S. adults were interviewed for this survey, while 800 UK respondents were interviewed between the end of January to the beginning of February 2019.
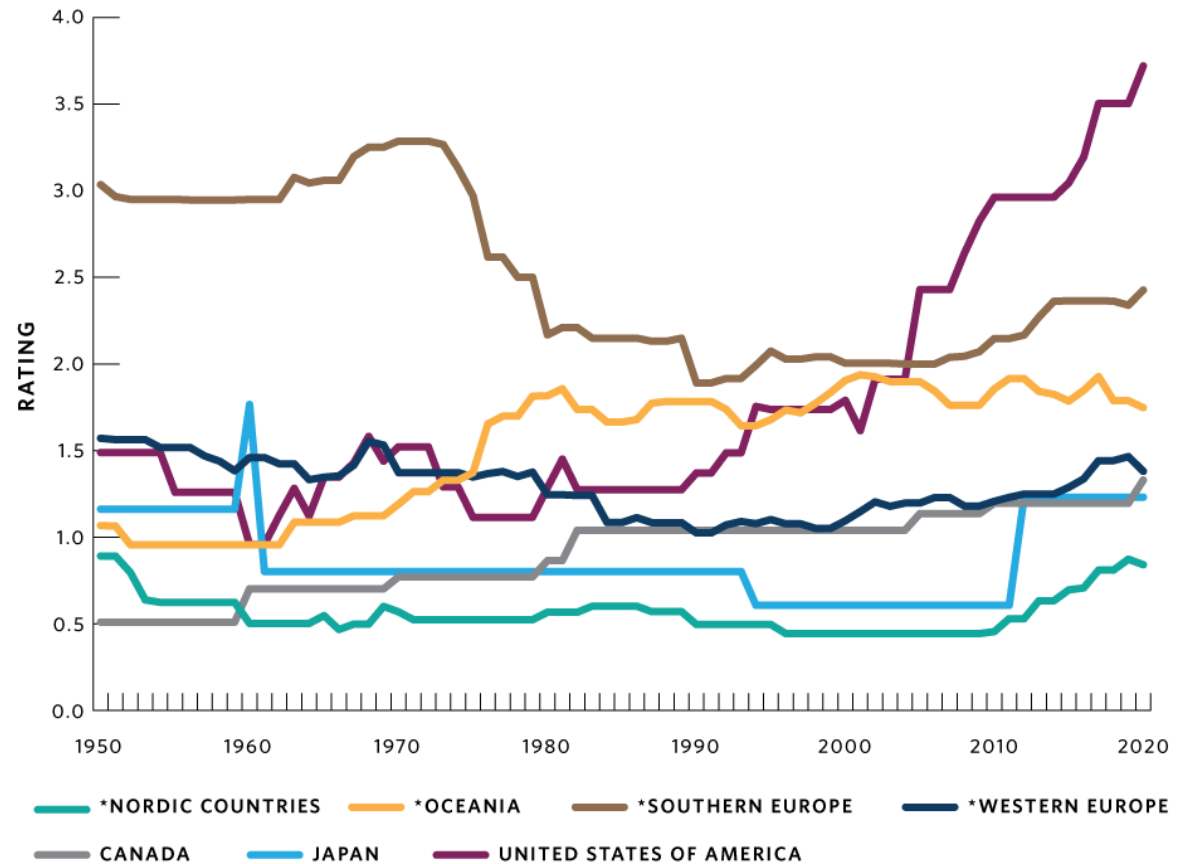@StatistaCharts Source: Reuters Institute Digital News Report

statista ✒

Some complications: Polarization

- Political polarization can affect the voting calculus, especially by strengthening partisan divides
- Political polarization in the United States reflects a three-decade-old trend of partisan sorting
  - The two parties reinforce urban-rural, religious-secular, and racial-ethnic cleavages rather than promote cross-cutting cleavages
  - Regardless of ideological similarity, "us vs them" makes it consider other options
  - Especially when only a binary choice

FIGURE 1
Political Polarization in East Asia, Europe, North America, and Oceania

Legend:
- *NORDIC COUNTRIES
- *OCEANIA
- *SOUTHERN EUROPE
- *WESTERN EUROPE
- CANADA
- JAPAN
- UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Source: Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) index, version 11.1, March 2021, accessed at https://www.v-dem.net/vdemds.html.

Some complications: Shark Attacks & Voting?

- Achen and Bartels (2002)
- New Jersey beach communities affected by shark attacks during the summer of 1916 had 10 percentage points fewer votes for Woodrow Wilson compared to communities without shark attacks
- Challenges retrospective voting: only works if voters can distinguish between changes in life circumstances that are <u>caused</u> by politicians
  - But can they?
  - Wilson did not order sharks to attack people...

I demand the shark community increase their attacks immediately!

Let's talk about measurement!

Measuring issue salience

Let's say a researcher is interested in how the prioritization of certain issues over others affects voting behavior? Where do they get data on issue priorities?
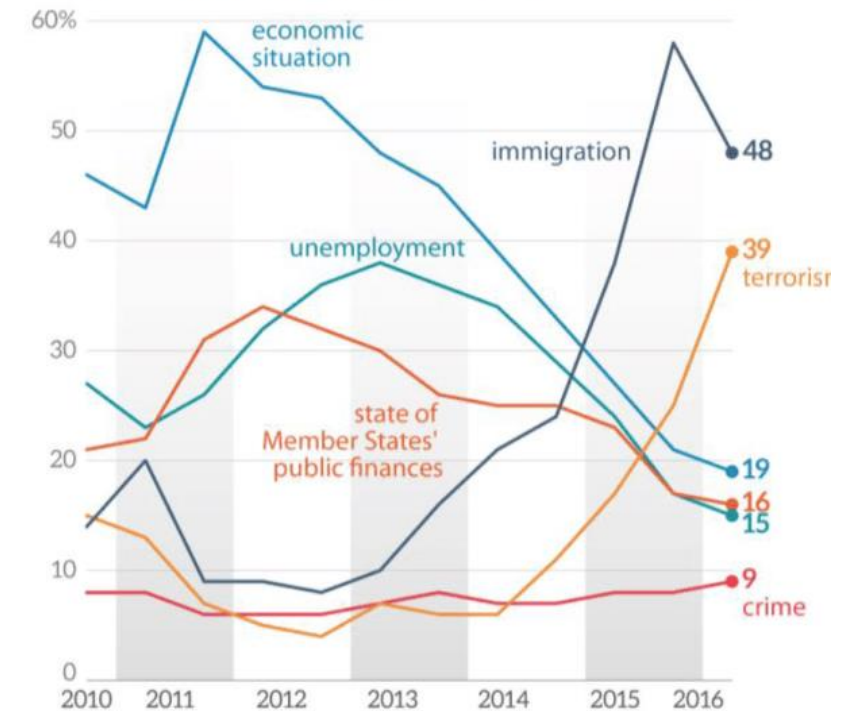
E.g., Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES)
1. What has been the most important issue to you personally in this election?
2. What do you think is the most important political problem facing [your country] today?

E.g., Eurobarometer
1. What do you think are the two most important issues facing [your country/EU] at the moment?
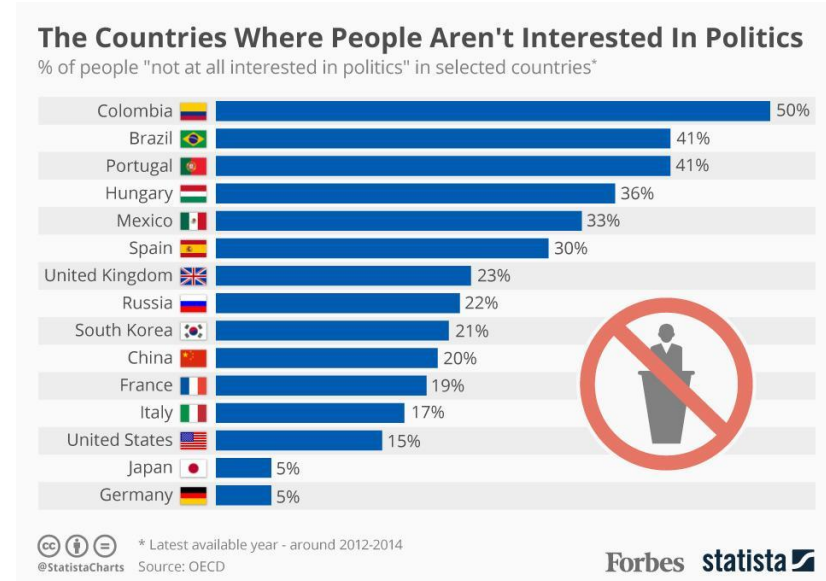

Graph 1: Most important issues for EU citizens

Source: Eurobarometer 85 (July 2016)

Measuring political interest

Let's say a researcher is interested in how an individual's political interest affects how they vote and engage with politics. Where do we get data on this?
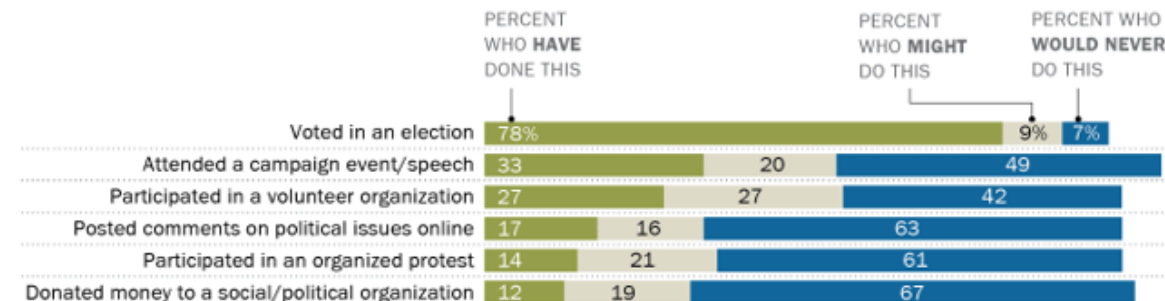
E.g., Eurobarometer
1. To what extent would you say you are interested in politics?
   1. A great deal, to some extent, not much, not at all
2. In general, do you pay attention to news about each of the following?
   1. Politics, Foreign policy/international affairs, Education, Health care, Poverty, The European Union, The Economy, Sport, The Environment, Culture

The Countries Where People Aren't Interested In Politics
% of people "not at all interested in politics" in selected countries*

Country	%
Colombia	50%
Brazil	41%
Portugal	41%
Hungary	36%
Mexico	33%
Spain	30%
United Kingdom	23%
Russia	22%
South Korea	21%
China	20%
France	19%
Italy	17%
United States	15%
Japan	5%
Germany	5%

* Latest available year - around 2012-2014
@StatistaCharts   Source: OECD
Forbes statista

Beyond voting, political participation relatively low
Median across 14 countries

	PERCENT WHO HAVE DONE THIS	PERCENT WHO MIGHT DO THIS	PERCENT WHO WOULD NEVER DO THIS
Voted in an election	78%	9%	7%
Attended a campaign event/speech	33	20	49
Participated in a volunteer organization	27	27	42
Posted comments on political issues online	17	16	63
Participated in an organized protest	14	21	61
Donated money to a social/political organization	12	19	67

Source: Spring 2018 Global Attitudes Survey. Q63a-f.

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Measuring parties' policy positions

Many of us in comparative political behavior need data on parties, their platforms, and promises across elections and countries. Where can we get this data?

Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP)/MARPOR
1. Goal is to measure policy positions of all relevant parties competing in any democratic election in post WWII period
2. Data for OECD, EU members, Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America, and South East Asia
3. What is a manifesto?
   1. It is the election program by the party.
   2. The text published by a political parties in order to compete for votes in an election
4. Why use manifestos?
   1. They contain a party's only authoritative policy statements
   2. Are indicators of parties' policy preferences at a given point in time
   3. Allow us to compute valid and reliable measurements of party policy position
5. Party's position is measured as the difference in the % of right-wing associated text mentions and left-associated text mentions

CMP **LEFT-RIGHT** SCALE

Table 1

The components of the CMP left-right scale

Left categories	Right categories
103 Anti-imperialism	104 Military: positive
105 Military: negative	201 Freedom and human rights
106 Peace	203 Constitutionalism: positive
107 Internationalism: positive	305 Political authority
202 Democracy	401 Free enterprise
403 Market regulation	402 Incentives
404 Economic planning	407 Protectionism: negative
406 Protectionism: positive	414 Economic orthodoxy
412 Controlled economy	505 Welfare state limitation
413 Nationalisation	601 National way of life: positive
504 Welfare state expansion	603 Traditional morality: positive
506 Education expansion	605 Law and order
701 Labour groups: positive	606 Social harmony

Source: Budge et al. (2001), Mapping Policy Preferences, Appendix
III. Left-right score = proportion (right − left) × 100.

Measuring parties' policy positions

Many of us in comparative political behavior need data on parties, their platforms, and promises across elections and countries. Where can we get this data?

Chapel Hill Expert Survey

- Estimates party positioning on ideology and policy issues, and international relations for national parties in countries across the world
- CHES-Europe, 6 waves, 1999-2019, 32 countries, including all EU member states
- CHES-Latin America, new in 2020, 112 national parties in twelve Latin American countries

Class Activity

For participation, I would like you to answer the following discussion question in groups of up to 4 people. Upload your answer to Canvas with all group members' names at the top

How can theories of political behavior help us understand the rise of populist parties in response to the European refugee crisis of 2015 in countries like Germany and Sweden?

Consider factors such as: the perception of certain groups by voters, what policies parties offer voters, media framing and coverage, social identity, and salience (importance) of the certain events.