

Linking Voters, Parties, and Candidate Communication:  
Strategic Ambiguity in German Elections

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## Abstract

Ambiguity has long been recognized as an important feature of candidate position-taking. Numerous formal contributions have established that candidates can reap benefits from remaining vague and contradictory on their policy positions or from not addressing topics at all. The literature has been less successful in testing the propositions empirically for two main reasons. One, some of the propositions are difficult to operationalize and hence, their empirical accuracy has never been put to the test. Two, previous scholarship has frequently not outlined the specific conditions under which ambiguous candidate communication should be more or less likely.

The present volume seeks to rectify the shortcoming by analyzing a novel dataset on candidate position-taking in the 2013 German federal election campaign. Over the course of the project I investigate three principle factors that should influence the probability of ambiguous candidate statements – the policy preferences of party headquarters and the local electorate, the candidates' electoral context and the subject of candidate communication.

In a precursory step, I estimate the ideological orientation of the German electoral districts. Employing an extensive data collection on small-area policy priorities I conclude that district preferences are systematically clustered, both at the level of the mean district preference and at the level of sub-constituencies.

I go on to investigate how constituency and party preferences are related to candidate position-taking. I find that candidates are more likely to label themselves as undecided when party headquarters and district preferences diverge. Furthermore, candidates are more likely to take position-taking cues from their supporters than from the mean district preference. There is no evidence that the electoral context mediates the candidates' position-taking incentives. Candidates are most likely to take an ambiguous position if the principals' preferences diverge, regardless of their specific electoral circumstances.

Finally, to investigate the effects of the topical characteristics on ambiguous candidate position-taking a novel measure for issue ownership is introduced – the frequency with which party representatives are invited to political panel talk shows. I find that the probability of ambiguous candidate positions decreases significantly if an issue is associated with the candidates' parties, above and beyond the levels of ambiguity that are determined by the principals' preferences.





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# 1 Introduction

It is a central notion of modern political behavior that actors are strategic. Political actors – be they governments, parties, legislators, or interest groups – systematically react to pressures, generating non-random behavioral patterns. The fundamental claim of this volume is that this argument can be extended to political communication: Political communication is similarly subject to constraints that bring about observable implications. It is thus possible to predict the content of actor communication by studying the pressures that operate on political actors.

This proposition is investigated in the present research project by analyzing the content of candidate statements in an electoral campaign. To determine the most important pressures on candidate communication, it is necessary to assess whom candidates are accountable to – who are their principals. First and foremost, candidates are almost universally dependent on party headquarters (Carey, 2007, 93). Party headquarters exert pressure on candidates with their power to – depending on the specific electoral systems – nominate candidates and draft electoral lists. Moreover, parties shape the career trajectory of individual political actors by rewarding and sanctioning candidate behavior, for example, by withholding perks like parliamentary and party offices from unwieldy actors. Beside party headquarters, candidates are also subject to the preferences of voters. The fate of candidates in majoritarian electoral systems is associated with constituency preferences. The individual campaign communication and behavior will shape the electoral prospects of candidates if the campaigns of nominal candidates are linked to districts.

Therefore, candidates in majoritarian electoral systems should take position-taking cues from the preferences of both actors. Being subject to two principals can be challenging to candidates if the preferences of both principals conflict. Research on competing principals



asserts that there are systematic behavioral implications when the preferences of principals are not aligned (Carey, 2007, 2009; Sieberer, 2010, 2013). In past research, these implications have been outlined for legislative behavior to investigate MP reactions to conflicting policy preferences of party and electorate. Among the most important results, conflicting principals' preferences have been shown to influence legislative unity (Carey, 2007; Sieberer, 2010).

In this work, I suggest that insights from the literature on competing principals are applicable to other forms of position-taking beside legislative voting. The proposition also applies to more ordinary forms of political communication and position-taking more specifically. It is argued that candidates are more likely to obfuscate the content of their communication if the preferences of their principals are not aligned. They will remain ambiguous in order not to offend either of their two principals. The research questions of the present volume can be stated as follows – Why do candidates in an electoral competition choose to remain ambiguous on some of the issues? What are the conditions that make ambiguous candidate communication more likely?

Ambiguous political communication has been an interest of scholarly research for some time (e.g., Alesina and Cukierman, 1990; Bartels, 1986; Page, 1978; Shepsle, 1972). Numerous contributions have investigated the conditions that affect the clarity of position-taking, but empirical evidence has remained comparatively sparse. The relative sparsity of empirical research can be traced back to the difficulty of measuring ambiguous candidate or party communication.

To circumvent the measurement problem, most empirical research has relied on perceptions of ambiguous behavior rather than on active ambiguous messages (e.g., Bartels, 1986; Campbell, 1983*a,b*; Rovny, 2012; Somer-Topcu, 2013). The contributions have investigated the dispersion of party and candidate placements on more or less broad ideological scales by voters or experts. Such analyses assume that ambiguous political communication leads to a wider dispersion of the ideological placements as voters have less information to pinpoint the location of actors. There is, however, a wide conceptual gap between voter perceptions and the content of political communication. Specifically, studies relying on the dispersion of perceptions have difficulties to separate the effects of ambiguous communication from environmental factors (Tomz and Houweling, 2009, 86).

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There are only very few contributions that have attempted to estimate obfuscation in communication directly (Hayes et al., 2008; Milita, Ryan and Simas, 2013; Page, 1978). The present research thus makes several important contributions to the literature on candidate ambiguity. It provides empirical evidence on a concept that has predominantly been investigated with formal models. More specifically, the volume provides data on active ambiguous candidate position-taking, analyzing ambiguity as a quality of the sender rather than of the receiver. Applying a sender-based measurement of ambiguous behavior allows a clear and testable specification of the conditions for ambiguous behavior. Finally, the project investigates policy-specific ambiguity, i.e. ambiguity at the level of single issues, rather than ambiguity on broad ideological scales. This also allows a clearer specification of the conditions that drive candidate ambiguity.

The proposition that was introduced above is tested on a unique and extensive dataset on the preferences of candidates and voters in the German federal elections of 2013. Before introducing the data collection effort, it is important to point out some notable differences between the ideal-typical case of the cross-pressures from two principals on candidate position-taking that was outlined above and the specific electoral conditions of Germany.

Candidates in majoritarian electoral systems are tied to local constituencies. Their electoral fates depend on the support of voters, hence they need to align their position-taking with the preferences of the constituency. Compare this to the situation of candidates in closed-list systems. Candidates' position-taking can do comparatively little to change their electoral prospects. In principle, candidates with good list placements can voice policy positions that are completely at odds with voters and would still get elected to the assembly, as the electoral results of candidates are completely determined by the party result. Consequently, candidates in closed-list systems have little incentive to be mindful of the electorate – and should perceive party headquarters as the dominant principal.

The German electoral system is characterized by a mixture of proportional and majoritarian electoral rules (Shugart and Wattenberg, 2001a,b).<sup>1</sup> Candidates can get elected via a nominal tier and a district tier. They can also run dual candidacies. Mixed-member electoral sys-

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<sup>1</sup>For an account of the specific German electoral law that was applied during the federal election of 2013, see section 3.2.

tems thus generate considerable contamination effects between the two electoral tiers (Ferrara, Herron and Nishikawa, 2005). While nominal candidates in Germany are subject to the preferences of the local electorate, they need not be dependent on the constituency due to a high list placement on the *Länder* list. Therefore, to assess the pressures of the principals' preferences on candidate communication in an analysis of the German electoral system, it is necessary to account for the specific electoral context of the candidates.

The empirical evidence that is applied in the present research project stems from a public candidate survey, the *Kandidatencheck*. It was collected during the 2013 German federal election campaign by the website <http://www.abgeordnetenwatch.de>. The *Kandidatencheck* is a so-called vote advice application – a group of online tools that have become increasingly widespread over the past decade (Cedroni and Garzia, 2010). They are set up to provide easily accessible assistance to voters. Vote advice applications typically consist of a couple dozen statements on salient items in an electoral campaign. Political competitors are invited to participate in the public survey to offer voters a brief introduction to the available alternative in an electoral campaign. The response format is ordinary on a 3-5-point scale that provides a simple comparison between the voters' preference profiles and the preference profiles of the competitors.

In this specific case, there were three distinct options – Agree, Disagree, and Undecided. A candidate selection of the Undecided category was modeled as an explicit and strategic issue avoidance. Clearly, voicing or avoiding a policy position in this artificial communication environment differs from a policy position in ordinary communication like a campaign speech and possibly bears somewhat greater audience costs.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the advantage of the data source seem to outweigh the disadvantages.

For one, the data provides a fairly comprehensive coverage of the German candidates. Approximately 90% of the nominal candidates from the five parties with a parliamentary representation responded to the questionnaire during the 2013 electoral campaign. Two, the data offers the potential to assess candidate statements on specific policies. Three, candidate responses in the survey have both a structured and an unstructured component, meaning that

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<sup>2</sup>A more elaborate discussion of the differences between position-taking on vote-advice applications and ordinary political communication is provided in section 3.1.

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candidates supply their vote choice along with a short written explanation of the vote. Particularly the structured component makes the data greatly accessible for quantitative research. Four, candidate participation in the survey serves the specific purpose of communicating preferences to voters. Therefore, this type of structured candidate position-taking is ideally suited to investigate the effect of constituency preferences on candidate communication.

Scholars have begun to appreciate the benefits of vote advice applications to investigate the position-taking of parliamentary actors on the one hand (Ansolabehere, Snyder and Stewart, 2001; Debus and Faas, 2012; Gemenis, 2013; Peress, Richman and Battista, 2012; Schwarz, Schädel and Ladner, 2010; Talonen and Sulkava, 2011) and the electoral link of political communication on the other (Fivaz, Pianzola and Ladner, 2010; Ladner, 2012; Schultze, 2012; Schultze and Marshall, 2012a,b; Wagner, 2012; Walgrave, Aelst and Nuytemans, 2008). This work links to this research interest and proposes a further option to apply vote advice applications in scholarly research. In particular, it links the policy-specific position-taking of candidates, parties, and voters to analyze cross-pressures. It thus also speaks to the literature on common policy spaces (cf. Bailey, 2007; Bailey and Chang, 2001; Clinton et al., 2012).

The research project explores the potential of vote advice applications to allow large-n analyses of candidate communication that are typically not accessible to scholars of political communication. Turning to the users of the survey, the proposed research also explores the possibility to supplement ordinary measures of public opinion with a novel tool. Collecting the participants' responses to the vote advice application, it is possible to access the policy preferences of roughly half a million voters along with their geographic location.<sup>3</sup> The principal advantage of the selected data source is that collecting information on policy preferences from a similarly large number of respondents as investigated here would be prohibitively expensive if collected via telephone interviews. Tapping the geo-located policy preferences from voters is rendered possible by offering a cost-free added value to participants – information on the political alternatives in an election campaign.

The information from the users is applied to estimate the preferences of the German electoral districts and their influence on the position-taking of German nominal candidates. Besides collecting the preference entries to the *Kandidatencheck*, users were invited to participate

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<sup>3</sup>On potential biases due to the self-selection of respondents into the sample, see chapter 4.

in a supplemental survey, which collected additional information on the policy preferences and some sociodemographic information. Combining these pieces of information, it is possible to estimate the ideological orientation of the German electoral districts – both the mean district preference and the ideological orientation of sub-constituencies like party supporters.

As the policy preferences of the districts were collected on the same issues that candidates responded to, the data is ideally suited to investigate the pressures of constituency preferences on candidate communication during an electoral campaign. Nevertheless, the dataset on local policy preferences is a unique addition for research on voter preferences that is applicable in contexts well beyond the present analysis. We have recently witnessed a growing interest in small-area policy preferences (e.g., Enns and Koch, 2013; Kstellec, Lax and Phillips, 2010; Rodden, 2010; Selb and Munzert, 2011; Warshaw and Rodden, 2012). Therefore, one final and important contribution of the present work is a data set on the small-area preferences of the German electorate. Such fine-grained measures of local policy preferences is hardly available – neither in the US literature nor in the specific German case. Although the data was collected for the purpose outlined above, it can hopefully guide research in other areas, too. For instance, the data could be used to investigate the effect of small-area preferences on legislative behavior. Several studies have analyzed this question in the past and have frequently resorted to proxies such as previous electoral results (Fleisher, 1993; Glazer and Robbins, 1985; Leogrande and Jeydel, 1997). These results can be reconsidered with the data that is introduced here.

The remainder of this volume explores three sets of factors that should influence the position-taking of candidates, specifically the levels of ambiguity in candidate communication. The first factor are the principals' preferences – the preferences of party headquarters and the preferences of the local electorate. As the preferences of both principals increasingly diverge, the candidates will find it increasingly difficult to please them in their campaign communication and will thus be more likely to make an ambiguous statement. Two, the specific electoral context of the candidates – type of candidacy and probability of election on both electoral tiers – should condition their dependence on the two principals and consequently their position-taking behavior when faced with diverging principals. Three, the subject area of the candidate communication is expected to be a further mediating factor for the candidate position-taking.

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It is unlikely that the pressures which were introduced above apply identically across all issues. Instead, candidate responses should be conditional on the policy reputations – issue ownerships – of the party headquarters. If parties have greater stakes in specific issues, they should try to enforce a more coherent image in candidate communication. Therefore, candidates should be expected to be less ambiguous on issues that touch on the fundamental issues of the party platform.

One additional concern for candidates is their inability to know the preference configuration among their local electorate. Faced with such uncertainty, risk-averse candidates should tend to make ambiguous statements more frequently in order not to repel potential voters. Therefore, one additional factor that should be systematically related with the content of candidate communication is the political experience of candidates. It is argued that as candidates are more exposed to their local electorate, they should be better equipped to assess the policy preferences of their voters. This would lead politically experienced candidates to be less ambiguous on average as they would be less frequently ambiguous due to uncertainty.

Turning to the layout of the volume, chapter 2 elaborates the theoretical propositions in greater detail. After discussing some defining characteristics of ambiguity, the chapter briefly reviews previous scholarship on ambiguous candidate communication and the shortcomings in these accounts. In a second step, the chapter specifies the position-taking incentives of candidates in the German mixed-member electoral system (Massicotte and Blais, 1999; Scarrow, 2001; Shugart and Wattenberg, 2001a). The candidate status in a personalized proportional representation system is outlined and it is explored how the focus of past accounts in this field of research is linked to the interest of the present research project. I go on to present the determinants of ambiguous candidate communication.

Chapter 3 introduces the data that is employed to investigate the propositions. First, I explore the advantages and disadvantages of past measurement strategies in order to situate the proposed measurement. Before moving to the empirical evidence that is applied in this volume, I briefly digress to provide some context for the subsequent analysis by with an introduction to the main elements of the 2013 electoral campaign, focusing on the competitors, the electoral results and the specific German electoral law that governed the 2013 election. Next, I provide the central features of the empirical evidence – a collection of candidate pol-

icy positions that were gathered by the website <http://www.abgeordnetenwatch.de>. Subsequently, I introduce the operationalizations of the core variables that are employed. Finally, the chapter analyzes participation in the public candidate survey. It has been shown that the type of candidacy – nominal and/or list – influences the propensity of candidates to participate in certain campaign activities (Zittel and Gschwend, 2008). Consequently, the inferences from the models that explain ambiguous communication with the candidates' electoral context (electoral probability and type of candidacy) might be biased if the electoral condition affects the propensity of candidates to take part in the survey in the first place. This preliminary analysis serves to inspect the severity of this problem.

The small area preferences of the German voters are one of the key explanatory factors in the present research program. Chapter 4 introduces the systematic variation of preferences along geographical lines. I begin by providing some descriptive statistics of the data that is applied. Next, a model is introduced to correct for imbalances in the data regarding the district coverage and regarding the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents. Section 4.4 presents the results of the analysis – both at the level of the mean district preference and at the level of the party supporters.

Chapter 5 assesses the systematic effects of opposing principal preferences on candidate position-taking. It is also analyzed whether candidates take greater position-taking cues from the electorate as a whole or from a more narrow subset of voters, specifically of party supporters. Next, the chapter investigates the proposed effect that the electoral prospects of the candidates mediates the dependence on the two principals and by extension the position-taking incentives. In a final step, the full choice set of communication alternatives is considered. While the focus of the present research is on candidate ambiguity, i.e. the self-labeling of the candidate as undecided, the candidate actually has three alternatives to choose from – to agree with an item, to take a neutral position, or to disagree with an item. Thus, for the sake of completeness all alternatives are investigated in section 5.3.

The content of communication is the focus of chapter 6. The underlying argument in this chapter is that candidates are not equally adversely affected by diverging principals' preferences, but rather that the party policy profile structures patterns of ambiguity. This proposition is tested by coding the issues into topical categories and analyzing how party policy

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reputations condition candidate responses. As the concept of issue ownership is difficult to capture in a multi-party system, a novel measure for policy reputations is introduced in this chapter – the frequency with which parties are invited to German political panel talk shows. The shows were coded into the same topical categories as the content of the public candidate survey to assess how often a party was invited relative to the baseline probability based on a weighted random sample.

Chapter 7 concludes with a summary of the findings, an extended view of possible generalizations and limitations of the research and several propositions for future directions in research on ambiguous candidate behavior.





## 2 Ambiguity in electoral campaigns

The content of political communication is sensitive to pressures. Investigating candidate communication in an electoral campaign, I propose that prospective legislators are subject to two principals – the party leadership and the local constituency (Carey, 2007, 2009). Candidates have to take the preferences of both principals into account when voicing policy positions on the campaign trail with observable implications for the content of candidate communication.

For one, candidates are dependent on party headquarters. The party leadership is a crucial determinant of candidates' career prospects, primarily by virtue of their power to nominate candidates and to draft electoral lists. But even on a day-to-day basis, the party has mechanisms to sanction renegade parliamentarians (Hazan, 2003; Sieberer, 2006). In order to avoid falling out of favor with party headquarters, candidates should try to align their communication with party preferences. Depending on the particular electoral context, the constituency preferences are a second and fundamental point of reference for candidate position-taking. Candidates are electorally vulnerable if they advocate positions that are at odds with the preferences of the local electorate. Being an agent of two actors poses a challenge for candidate communication when both principals have opposing views on an issue. In such a situation, candidates cannot voice a policy preference without displeasing one of the principals. Faced with opposing principals' preferences, candidates should be more likely to remain ambiguous on an issue.

This volume considers the position-taking incentives of candidates in the German electoral system. Although the underlying mechanisms should also apply in other political systems (see section 7.2), there are some peculiarities of the German variant of the mixed-member electoral system. Due to the possibility of winning a mandate on the list tier, candidates are not uniformly dependent on their local constituency for a successful electoral bid. Some can-

didates have greater incentives to cultivate a personal vote (Bräuninger, Brunner and Däubler, 2012; Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina, 1984, 1987; Carey, 1995; Herrera and Yawn, 1999; Martin, 2011), while others should benefit most from aligning their communication with the preferences of party headquarters. Consequently, the specific electoral context should condition candidate position-taking.

Finally, the constraints on candidate communication should not apply indiscriminately across all issues. Instead, the willingness of candidates to make unambiguous policy statements should be linked to the subject area. Drawing on the concept of issue ownership (Brug, 2004; Petrocik, 1996; Petrocik, Benoit and Hansen, 2003), I argue that the content of candidate communication is mediated by the association between parties and policy areas. Specifically, I expect that parties are more likely to enforce coherent position-taking on core issues and that candidates therefore make more unambiguous statements on issues that their party owns.

This chapter serves to elaborate these notions and to specify the conditions that drive ambiguous candidate position-taking. The following section turns to the concept of ambiguity and provides a brief overview of the previous scholarship on the subject. Section 2.2 details the expected effects. First, I discuss the role of candidates in mixed-member electoral systems and the pressures they are subject to. Subsequently, three distinct effects on candidate communication are outlined – the principals' preferences, the candidates' electoral condition and the topic characteristics.

## 2.1 Ambiguity in the literature

This section begins by exploring the conceptual dimensions of ambiguity. This exercise helps to situate the interest of the present volume. In addition, outlining the various levels of ambiguity provides a benchmark for categorizing previous research on the topic. I go on to provide a brief summary of the evidence on ambiguity to carve out the gaps in the literature that the present volume attempts to fill.

### 2.1.1 Dimensions of ambiguity

Ambiguity is an ambiguous concept. It refers to remaining unclear on proposed policies, principally, but not exclusively during electoral campaigns. The literature frequently treats ambiguity as self-evident and invokes the term without clarifying what it entails. Ambiguity is in fact a heavily multi-dimensional concept that needs to be explicated. It is possible to differentiate at least three interdependent dimensions of ambiguity – the *form* of ambiguity, the *sender* of ambiguous statements and the *scope* of ambiguity.

Turning to the *form* first, ambiguity can come in the guise of a non-statement on a particular policy. Silence on an issue is often considered the quintessential form of ambiguous behavior as it leaves the voter with little to no information for making inferences on the candidate location in the ideological space. Nevertheless, ambiguity does not presuppose silence on the issues, but can also refer to vagueness. For example, political actors can make reference to an issue without providing any details on what goals they want to pursue or which measures they intend to take (Shepsle, 1972, 555). Making specific claims on both sides of an issue is yet another, distinct form of ambiguity. Political actors generate uncertainty in the electorate on their policy ideals by voicing mutually exclusive points of view (Chu and Niou, 2005, 282). The multiplicity of forms are nicely summarized by Campbell (1983a):

“[C]andidates can send ambiguous messages in a variety of ways. Besides the conventional approach of covering issue positions with a pile of prose, candidates can create ambiguity by deemphasizing issues, excessively qualifying statements, presenting issue positions that appear contradictory to voters, and perhaps even explaining issue positions in excessive detail.” (Campbell, 1983a, 288)

Ambiguity as mutually exclusive policy positions on one issue is linked to the concept's second dimension – the *sender* of ambiguous statements. Ambiguity can be an individual behavior or the trait of collective actors (Scharpf, 1997, 55). For instance, a party that consists of several intra-party factions might publicly promote opposing policy positions. Such behavior increases the uncertainty of voters on the location of the party in the ideological space. On this note, one can further add the distinction between intentional and unintentional ambiguous behavior. While single candidates will tend to not *accidentally* express opposing points of

view on the same issue, parties might exhibit ambiguous behavior with little preference to do so (Kam, 2009, ch. 2).

One last conceptual dimension of ambiguity is its *scope*. Past research on ambiguity has focused predominantly on broad, ideological scales (e.g., Alesina and Cukierman, 1990; Chu and Niou, 2005; Hayes et al., 2008; Laslier, 2006; Shepsle, 1972) which are a function of the receiver rather than of the sender. Put differently, candidates only remain ambiguous on single issues. This *specific ambiguity* translates into uncertainty in the minds of the voters about the candidate location in the ideological space. Distinguishing between ambiguity on specific statements and ambiguity on broad ideological scales, where the latter is a function of the former, illustrates the difficulty of past research to generate specific predictions on factors that condition the probability of ambiguous candidate statements. This point is elaborated upon in the next two sections where the existing literature is introduced. Throughout the remainder of the volume, I investigate the first form of ambiguity – ambiguity as issue avoidance by individual candidates. In terms of scope, I differ from most previous research by analyzing ambiguity at the level of specific issues.

### 2.1.2 Prior evidence

Ambiguity has long been recognized as an important feature of political communication. In his seminal work, Downs argues that it can be rational for political parties to take unclear stances in order to improve their electoral fortunes (Downs, 1957, 136). He suggests that there are conditions when keeping the voter guessing will raise a party's appeal by not alienating potential voters with unpopular positions. Relying on this insight in strategic non-position taking, much scholarly attention has been devoted to delineating these conditions. In line with the Downsian legacy, research on the topic has remained predominantly formal (e.g., Alesina and Cukierman, 1990; Aragonès and Postlewaite, 2002; Aragonès and Neeman, 2000; Callander and Wilson, 2008; Chu and Niou, 2005; Dellas and Koubi, 1994; Glazer, 1990; Laslier, 2006; Page, 1976; Shepsle, 1972).

The first such analysis was presented by Shepsle (1972). Building on Downs, Shepsle (1972) proposes a model of candidate communication that explains ambiguous behavior by the de-

gree to which voters accept uncertainty about the candidate location in the ideological space. The notion that public risk aversion influences candidate ambiguity has been widely accepted in the literature (e.g., Alesina and Cukierman, 1990). The argument is taken up by Tomz and Houweling (2009) who investigate the risk profile of voters in an experimental setting. They find that there are indeed conditions when the public prefers ambiguous to clear statements, providing incentives to candidates to blur their policy positions. A second factor that has often been suggested to influence candidate position-taking are public preference profiles. Several authors have argued that ambiguous behavior is related to candidate uncertainty about the distribution of preferences among the public (Alesina and Cukierman, 1990; Aragonès and Neeman, 2000; Chappell, 1994; Glazer, 1990; Meirowitz, 2005). If in doubt about the preference of the median voter, a candidate might be better off not to publicize a specific policy position to avoid promoting an unpopular position.

There are several shortfalls of the formal models on ambiguity – both in terms of accuracy and applicability. The models typically invoke a situation where candidates select a position on an ideological scale, along with some distribution to express the public's uncertainty associated with the position. Little can be derived from these accounts on the specific conditions that drive individual candidates to be more ambiguous than others. In fact, many of the theoretical models imply candidate behavior that is empirically inaccurate. Among the most important is the uniform applicability of the model predictions. Given a certain distribution of risk aversion in the electorate, we would expect similar levels of ambiguous behavior of the competitors. This is clearly not the case. In any given electoral campaign, there will be candidates that find it advantageous to propose policy positions on a range of issues where their opponents choose to shirk.

Many contributions remain vague in their conceptualization of ambiguity (see chapter 3). Lacking a proper definition of ambiguous behavior it is difficult to make the theoretical contribution applicable for empirical research. Moreover, modeling ambiguous behavior on broad ideological scales fails to generate predictions on the specific issues where ambiguous behavior is likely to occur. *General ambiguity* can never be directly observed. Uncertainty regarding the candidate location in the ideological space is a summary that is induced by statements on specific policies which can be more or less ambiguous – *specific ambiguity*. As the literature

has predominantly dealt with *general ambiguity*, there are barely any claims on the specific policy proposals where an ambiguous position is advantageous for candidates.<sup>1</sup>

Despite a long-standing interest in candidate ambiguity, the empirical evidence on the concept is few and far between. This sparsity of evidence can be traced back to measurement difficulties. Consider ambiguity as a lack of statements on a particular issue. It is more difficult to claim that candidates *have not* addressed an issue than that they *have*. Similarly, when defining ambiguity as a lack of precision on policy proposals, it requires subjective judgments of the researcher to label statements as more or less ambiguous. Given these difficulties, scholars have often resorted to measuring ambiguity via the perceptions of receivers (e.g., Bartels, 1986; Campbell, 1983*a,b*; Rovny, 2012; Somer-Topcu, 2013). In most empirical research, ambiguity is captured as the distribution of the perceived candidate locations in the ideological space. The underlying argument is that the more candidates exhibit ambiguous behavior, the more will voters fail to agree on their ideological location.

There are several, well-acknowledged shortcomings of this measurement strategy. One, in many of the works relying on perceived ideal points, the authors have an underdeveloped notion of ambiguity. It is frequently not addressed what causes a wider or smaller distribution of voter perceptions – non-statements, vague statements or contradicting statements. This question cannot be investigated with perceptual data. In fact, while several authors try to control for external factors, they cannot completely rule out that environmental factors influence the distributive properties of voter perceptions (Tomz and Houweling, 2009, 86).

Consider a challenger that takes clear stands on all of the issues, but is shunned by the media for reasons not related to her policy positions. Compare this to an incumbent that makes wildly ambiguous statements. Regardless of their individual position-taking, voters will only have a vague notion of the challenger's location in the ideological space, but might be able to infer the incumbent's policy positions simply from observed political behavior. Using voter perceptions of these two candidates as proxy for candidate ambiguity would overstate the ambiguous behavior of the former and understate the ambiguous behavior of the latter

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<sup>1</sup>An exception to this rule is the emphasis allocation theory of (Page, 1976, 1978). He suggests that candidates can only send a limited number of messages during an electoral campaign and that they should select those issues that are least likely to offend potential voters. These, he argues, are issues where voter preferences are strongly unimodal or non-policy issues.

(Manzoni, 2010, 88). Finally, in all of these studies we are confronted with the problem that the measurement of ambiguity is taken on aggregated scales such as ideological dimensions (Bartels, 1986; Somer-Topcu, 2013) or more or less abstract policy dimensions (Bartels, 1986; Campbell, 1983*a,b*; Rovny, 2012). All of these scales provide summaries, hence it is impossible to predict specific items where actors will find it preferable to remain vague.

Only a handful of studies have tried to measure sender ambiguity directly. Page (1978) provides evidence from an extensive hand coding of ambiguity in presidential candidate speeches (Page, 1978, ch. 6). Unfortunately, the author makes little systematic investigation into the causes of ambiguity but is rather interested in the overall pervasiveness of ambiguous behavior. Hayes et al. (2008) measure the ambiguity of presidential candidates by modeling the diversity of the language used on candidates' web appearances. They find no systematic effect of the frontrunner status, the candidate ideology, or the time until election. The only systematic effect they observe is the party affiliation of the candidates. As their ambiguity measure relies on the variability of word co-occurrences it is fairly remote from the concept of ambiguity, which might partially explain their non-findings.<sup>2</sup> Like Hayes and colleagues, Milita, Ryan and Simas (2013) analyze candidates' websites. The authors hand code all statements pertaining to two issue areas. They find that as the salience of an issue area increases, the probability of candidate ambiguity decreases. Furthermore, if candidates' policy preferences are aligned with their districts and if they have little chance of winning, they are less likely to be ambiguous.

The present research program investigates the determinants of ambiguous candidate position-taking on specific issues. One body of scholarship that clearly speaks to this research interest has considered abstentions in roll call voting (Brady and McDonald, 2007; Carson et al., 2004; Cohen and Noll, 1991; Kromer, 2005; Noury, 2004; Rothenberg and Sanders, 2000*a,b*; Thomas, 1991). While the primary function of position-taking in an electoral campaign is the strategic communication of policy positions to voters, legislative voting is inherently concerned with policy outcomes and therefore subject to numerous pressures that are largely absent in mere communication. Nevertheless, an abstention on a roll call vote is comparable

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<sup>2</sup>What is more, the observation that Democrats display more variability in their word usages than Republicans might be due to different party audiences. See section 3.1 for additional comments on the measurement of ambiguity.



to ambiguous communication in that it reflects the conscious decision of a legislator not to take a position on an issue.

Several authors have tried to associate non-participation in roll calls with vote margins and the probability of being the pivotal legislator (Brady and McDonald, 2007; Noury, 2004; Poole and Rosenthal, 1997, ch. 10; Scully, 1997). Such factors are difficult to relate to campaign communication. Other studies have explicitly linked abstentions to policy preferences and legislator re-election concerns. Cohen and Noll (1991) provide evidence that legislator ambiguity is conditional on whether or not they favor the content of a roll call vote. Jones (2003) connects constituency preferences and candidate vote abstentions. He differentiates issue avoidance from accidental abstentions by considering cases where US senators refuse to publicize a position on missed roll calls. The author finds a number of characteristics to be systematically related to legislator shirking. The ones that are most relatable to the present research are the distribution of preferences among the constituents and the electoral safety of the legislators. Jones finds both variables to be positively related to the frequency of issue avoidance. While the effect is plausible in the former case – more dispersed constituency preferences increase issue avoidance as an unambiguous position could offend a substantial part of the electorate –, the direction of the effect on electoral safety is more surprising. The author argues that electorally safe parliamentarians might consider position taking as less important.

## 2.2 Explaining candidate ambiguity

Having sketched the existing evidence on ambiguous position-taking, this section outlines the expected determinants of candidate ambiguity. I differ from most prior research by specifying item-wise predictions for individual ambiguous candidate behavior. Moreover, I investigate the effects of local constituency preferences on candidate communication. As a precursor for the discussion, I consider the status of candidates in the German mixed-member electoral system. This introduction illuminates the links between the interest of the present volume and past research on how the German electoral system conditions legislative behavior and candidate behavior in particular. Subsequently, I elaborate the specific factors that should influ-

ence candidate ambiguity – the principals' preferences, the electoral context and the subject area.

### 2.2.1 Candidates in mixed-member electoral systems

Analyses of legislative behavior in Western European political systems have predominantly focused on parties. The interest in individual behavior has been comparatively low as non-majoritarian electoral systems are dominated by parties. Some scholars have turned their attention to the behavior inside the black box in recent years and have begun to relax the assumption that parties are unitary actors (e.g., Bernauer and Bräuninger, 2009; Debus and Bräuninger, 2009; Druckman, 1996; Kato and Laver, 1998; Laver, 1999; Laver and Kato, 2001). These analyses are concerned with aspects such as party factionalism or decision-making within parties. Along with this trend we have witnessed an increasing interest in the behavior of individual parliamentarians or candidates for political office (Gschwend and Zittel, 2011; Moser and Scheiner, 2004; Pekkanen, Nyblade and Krauss, 2006; Sieberer, 2010; Stratmann and Baur, 2002; Zittel, 2009; Zittel and Gschwend, 2008). This section details some of the findings for the German political system.

There is a far-reaching consensus in the literature on electoral systems that behavioral incentives in proportional systems are markedly different from those in majoritarian systems (Gallagher and Mitchell, 2009; Grofman and Lijphart, 1994). The German electoral system is characterized by a mixture of majoritarian and proportional elements that is commonly labeled as a mixed-member electoral system (Scarrow, 2001; Shugart and Wattenberg, 2001*b*). The system consists of two tiers of electoral competition that allow candidates to compete for a nominal mandate and/or to run on a closed party list. Mixed-member systems thus offer the benefits of proportional representation while at the same time allowing for a personalization of the vote (cf. Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina, 1987).<sup>3</sup>

One question that has received some scholarly attention is whether the two electoral tiers bring about different actor behavior despite the fact that both mechanisms are confounded. The so-called “mandate divide” suggests that incentives for parliamentarians differ by their

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<sup>3</sup>For an extended introduction to the German variant of the mixed-member electoral system see section 3.2.

electoral method even within a common legislative body (Thames, 2005). One of the first such analyses for Germany was undertaken by Stratmann and Baur (2002). They find that nominally elected members are significantly more likely to be members of committees that allow them to serve their constituency via pork-barrel politics (cf. Stratmann, 2006).<sup>4</sup> Sieberer (2010) provides evidence that members of parliament who are elected via the district tier dissent from the party line in parliamentary votes more frequently. This finding is echoed in Sieberer (2013) where the author analyzes explanations of votes as a less costly method of showing dissent. Again, Sieberer district MPs are shown to be more likely to stray from the party position.

In line with the discussion on the mandate divide, some analyses have recently considered the differential incentives of candidates during electoral campaigns. For example, several studies have considered candidates' individual campaigning above and beyond the efforts of party headquarters (Giebler and Wüst, 2011; Gschwend and Zittel, 2011; Wüst et al., 2006; Zittel, 2009; Zittel and Gschwend, 2008). Individual campaigning has consistently been shown to be a function of the candidates' electoral prospects. Moreover, the degree to which candidates are willing to stress their individual policy profile is determined by the type of candidacy they are running (Zittel and Gschwend, 2008). Both effects provide indications that candidates react strategically to the incentives of the German electoral system. The present research is in some sense an extension of this literature as it investigates how the incentives of the German mixed-member systems influence the *content* of individual campaign messages.

### 2.2.2 Candidates, competing principals and the context of communication

Parties are the central actors in Western European democracies and the focus of political competition (Mair, 1999). As such, they are also the most important points of reference for candidates (Müller, 2000). Parties have numerous sanctioning mechanisms at their disposal to discipline renegade parliamentarians (Hazan, 2003; Sieberer, 2006). Primarily, the party au-

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<sup>4</sup>There is an extensive debate on the possibility of separating out the effects of the two electoral tiers (Cox and Schoppa, 2002; Ferrara and Herron, 2005; Ferrara, Herron and Nishikawa, 2005; Moser and Scheiner, 2004; Stoffel, 2012). For instance, more than 50% of candidates in the 2009 federal election competed on both tiers (Manow and Flemming, 2012), generating strong contamination effects. This is all the more true as double candidacies are not randomly distributed across the candidates but are rather awarded to the more promising candidates.

thority stems from their influence on candidate nominations generally and on the drafting of party lists in particular. Moreover, parties are able to sanction legislators in daily parliamentary business, for example by withholding prestigious offices from unwieldy parliamentarians. Candidates should thus align their communication with the preferences of party headquarters as an overly independent position-taking might backfire. From this perspective, the default for candidate communication should be to voice the policy positions of party headquarters. The second important point of reference for candidate communication are the constituents. The candidates that run in majoritarian election systems should be careful not to voice policy positions that conflict with their voters.

The observation that candidates are subject to multiple actors reflects the insights of the theory of competing principals (Carey, 2007, 2009). Carey argues that legislative behavior is a function of the cross-pressures that parliamentary actors are subject to, in this case the pressures from party headquarters and the electorate. The principal application of the theory is to explain legislative behavior (Carey, 2007; Faas, 2003; Hix, 2002; Lindstädt, Slapin and Wielen, 2011; Sieberer, 2010, 2013; Stoffel, 2013; Tavits, 2010), but the propositions apply more generally. German candidates that run for a nominal mandate are dependent on both types of actors and thus potentially face contradicting pressures when the preferences of both actors are not aligned. Consequently, I hypothesize that candidates are more likely to shirk in their position-taking in order to not upset either of the principals when faced with such cross-pressures.

*H1: An ambiguous candidate statement is more likely if the preferences of party headquarters and constituency diverge.*

One of the peculiarities of the German electoral system is its combination of majoritarian and proportional elements (Shugart and Wattenberg, 2001b). Candidates can run on a closed list, compete for a nominal mandate or both. The dependence of the candidates on the two principals in the two-tiered German electoral is therefore not uniform. The need to take the preferences of the voters into account is conditional on the candidate's specific electoral context. For instance, the electoral fortunes of candidates that run exclusively on the list tier are least dependent on the local electorate. Their individual communication behavior can do comparatively little to influence their electoral prospects. Consequently, they should be

least likely to take the voters' preferences into account in their position-taking (Carey, 2007, 93; Carey and Shugart, 1995; Shugart, Valdini and Suominen, 2005). Unfortunately, the dataset on candidate position-taking that is applied throughout this volume does not contain any information on candidates that ran pure list candidacies. We therefore lack an important control group for the proposed position-taking behavior. Absent any information on list-only candidates, I will not elaborate their incentives further.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the severe shortcoming of the empirical evidence, there is variation in the factual dependence of the nominal candidates on the two list tiers. In line with the competing principals theory I assume that all candidates in any electoral context should be mindful of the party preferences. Carey argues that “Party leaders are, nearly universally, important actors to whose demands legislators might respond. [...] Whether they are subject to pressure from other, competing principals depends on the institutional context in which they operate.” (Carey, 2007, 93). Conversely, political actors should be more responsive to voter preferences if they face an uncertain electoral fate (Ansolabehere, Snyder and Stewart, 2001; Mayhew, 1974). If few swing voters can decide the electoral race, candidates should be more worried about alienating potential voters and have a greater incentive to pay attention to constituency preferences. This leads to higher expected levels of ambiguity among candidates with uncertain electoral prospects. In sum, although all nominal candidates are dependent on the electorate as a second principal, their factual dependence is greatest when they are in a tight nominal race, thus increasing the probability of ambiguous statements.

Previous scholarship lends some support to this proposition. Manzoni (2010) shows that high candidate approval rates, reflecting greater re-election probabilities, are associated with smaller levels of ambiguity (Manzoni, 2010, 78). Milita, Ryan and Simas (2013), on the other hand, find that candidates with little chance of winning the electoral race are more risk-acceptant in their messaging and will therefore make more unambiguous statements. Finding that candidates who are certain of being elected exhibit similar levels of ambiguity as those candidates who are certain of *not* being elected is not necessarily contradicting. It is plausible that electoral uncertainty is linked to ambiguity in a non-linear fashion. The underlying causal mechanism is identical. If candidates can be certain of their electoral fate regardless of how

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<sup>5</sup>On the censoring of the data set, see also section 7.2.

well their expressed preferences are aligned with constituency preferences, they have little incentive to take the preferences of voters into account when making policy statements.

*H2: An ambiguous candidate statement is more likely when the candidate is in a tight race, conditional on diverging principals' preferences.*

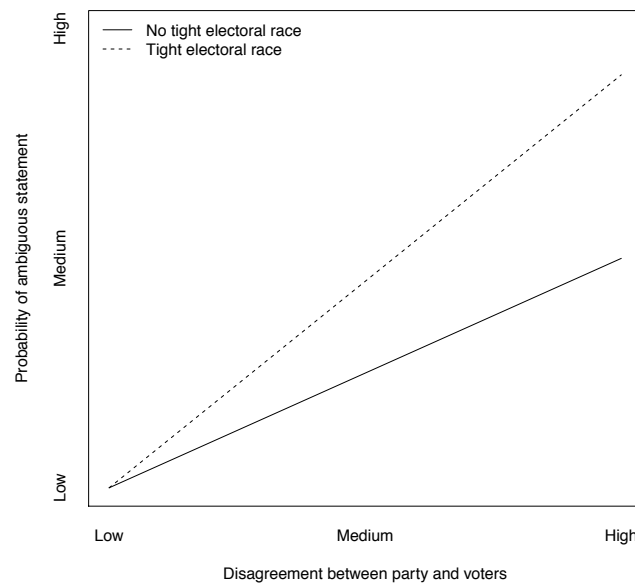


Figure 2.1: The figure displays the predicted probabilities of an ambiguous candidate statement across a range of disagreement values between the two principals. The dashed line displays the predicted probability of an ambiguous statement if the candidate is in a tight race. The solid line displays the predicted probability of an ambiguous statement if the candidate is not in a tight race.

The propositions of hypotheses 1 and 2 are visually summarized in figure 2.1. As candidates face increasing disagreement between their principals, they are more likely to take an ambiguous position. While this is true for all nominal candidates, candidates in tight electoral races should be even more likely to take an ambiguous position. Conversely, candidates have little incentive to make an ambiguous statement if the preferences of the principals align perfectly. The predicted levels of ambiguity do not differ by electoral context if the disagreement between the principals is low.

A nominal mandate is generally considered to be more prestigious than a list mandate (Patzelt, 1999, 37; Wüst et al., 2006, 422). It is therefore plausible that candidates should put effort into winning the nominal mandate whenever they have the chance. This is to say that candidates in tight nominal races should always be worried about offending potential voters

in their campaign communication. Nevertheless, many promising candidacies in the German federal election are in fact dual candidacies, where candidates can enter parliament both via the list and via the district tier. Candidates who are certain of being elected via the list tier should be less concerned with the constituency preferences overall and thus exhibit less ambiguous position-taking.

*H3: An ambiguous candidate statement is less likely as the probability of a list mandate increases.*

Campaign communication strategically reacts to constraints that are placed on the candidates by the principals' preferences and the electoral context. Nominal candidates are – to varying degrees – afraid of repelling potential voters by making statements that run counter to the preferences of their constituents. One additional problem for candidates is the uncertainty regarding the preference profile of their constituents. Risk-averse candidates that are uncertain of the voters' preferences should be more ambiguous as they always have to fear voicing the “wrong” policy position.

This problem should become less severe as candidates accumulate information on the district preferences. Such information is gathered by the candidates over time as they become familiar with a district. Quite clearly then, incumbents are better positioned to assess the distribution of district preferences on any given issue. This allows incumbents to tailor their policy positions to match voters' preferences. By the same token, regardless of whether a candidate has been representing a particular district as an incumbent, the general level of political experience should be instrumental for a candidate in voicing a policy position that aligns with the constituency. The notion that candidate uncertainty drives observed levels of ambiguity communication is a well-established proposition in formal models on the subject (Alesina and Cukierman, 1990; Aragonès and Neeman, 2000; Glazer, 1990; Meirowitz, 2005). It is empirically tested by Milta, Ryan and Simas (2013) who find that candidate history in elected office decreases observed levels of ambiguity.

*H4: Political experience decreases the probability of an ambiguous statement.*

Party behavior is not exhaustively described by party position-taking in an ideological space. Instead, parties selectively emphasize different policy areas. This notion of party-specific pol-

icy reputations has come to be labeled as issue ownership (e.g., Brug, 2004; Petrocik, 1996; Petrocik, Benoit and Hansen, 2003). It was implicitly assumed so far that the factors outlined in the previous paragraphs apply to a similar extent whenever candidates voice a policy position. It is unlikely, however, that the subject area of candidate communication should not mediate other cross-pressures. Candidates should be less likely to take an ambiguous stand on issues where their parties are considered issue owners.

There are three principal reasons for this. One, candidates' party memberships suggest that they agree with the fundamental values and principles of the party. They would thus be less likely to hide their position on core issues. Two, party headquarters should be more cautious to present coherent messages on those issues that are central to their platform. They should therefore try to enforce a consistent communication of their core messages by applying their various sanctioning mechanisms. Moreover, parties will tend to not select candidates that do not share the core elements of the parties' policy portfolio in the first place. Three, voters are likely to be aware of parties' issue reputations and will demand candidates to clearly communicate their stances on owned topics or will be puzzled if candidates take ambiguous positions on owned topics. In fact, candidates might have little to gain by hiding their position on owned issues as the party position on such issues should be reasonably well-known.

Evidence of this relationship is provided by Rovny (2012). He shows that in a multidimensional party competition, parties have incentives to blur their position on some of the issues while emphasizing it on others. The author finds that the more attached a party is to a particular dimension, the smaller the dispersion of voters' perceptions of the party position on that issue.

*H5: Candidates are less likely to be ambiguous on owned issues.*

## 2.3 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a theoretical frame for the remainder of the volume. It began by arguing that much of the previous research on the subject of ambiguity has suffered from an insufficiently specified concept of ambiguity. Past theoretical accounts have, for the most



part, considered ambiguous behavior on highly aggregated ideological dimensions. These approaches can only guide an analysis of the specific issues where candidates are more likely to remain ambiguous to a limited extent. What is more, the lack of clarity on what constitutes ambiguous behavior provides few pointers on how the findings can be applied in empirical research. The empirical evidence, on the other hand, has suffered from measurement difficulties. The dominant strategy has been to capture perceptions of ambiguity using the dispersion of candidate placements in the ideological space. This measurement has well-acknowledged shortcomings, primarily the difficulty of excluding confounding environmental factors.

The second half of the chapter outlined a number of theoretical predictions. I started out by exploring the status of candidates in the German electoral system. Previous research on individual political actors in the German political system has focused on systematic effects of the electoral system on legislative behavior and types of campaign communication. The present project is linked to such research by focusing on how the cross-pressures on candidates condition the *content* of campaign communication.

In terms of the predicted effects, I considered three groups of variables, one pertaining to the preferences of the candidates' principals, one pertaining to the electoral context of the candidates and one pertaining to the content of candidate communication. The next chapter turns to the measurement strategy for ambiguous behavior that is applied in this volume and the main sources of data.

## 3 Candidate ambiguity in the German federal election

This chapter serves to introduce the research design and the main data sources. The attempts to operationalize ambiguity in the literature and the ways in which they fall short of the concept they are trying to measure is the subject of the first section. It closes with a proposal for a more direct, sender-based measure of ambiguity. To provide some context for the analysis, section 3.2 gives a brief introduction to the most important aspects of the electoral campaign of 2013 with a specific look at actors, results, and the electoral law that was in place during the federal election. Section 3.3 introduces the data – policy positions from a public candidate survey. Subsequently, section 3.4 goes on to propose operationalizations for several determinants of candidate ambiguity that were elaborated in the previous chapter.

This work investigates patterns of position-taking in public candidate surveys as a structured measure for candidate ambiguity. One shortcoming of the data is the possibility of systematic non-participation of candidates in the survey. If the same factors that determine candidate position-taking also drive survey participation, this could result in biased inferences from the sample to the universe of candidates. To investigate the severity of this limitation, section 3.5 considers the problem of non-random candidate participation.

### 3.1 Measuring ambiguity

The literature has long struggled with the measurement of ambiguous candidate and party position-taking. There are several factors that complicate the study of ambiguity. One, an

electoral campaign is a messy research context where structured information on candidate issue positions is hard to come by. Two, tracing non-position-taking – a behavior that ambiguity is often equated with – is more difficult than making claims on positions candidates do take. Finally, even if researchers happen to have access to systematic evidence on candidate utterances, it is challenging to assess the level of ambiguity in candidate statements. This is true regardless of whether ambiguity is cast as the lack of a position, but possibly even more so if ambiguity is conceptualized as vague or contradictory issue positions. Particularly these latter two forms require highly subjective judgments on behalf of the researcher.

To circumvent the difficulty of measuring ambiguity as a property of the sender, most empirical studies have resorted to measuring ambiguity at the receiving end (see previous chapter). Recognizing the shortcomings in measuring ambiguity via voter perceptions, few authors have tried to measure candidate ambiguity more directly. The problem of such attempts are either that they do not scale well and require non-trivial judgments on whether a statement is ambiguous (Milita, Ryan and Simas, 2013; Page, 1978) or that they are fairly remote from the concept of ambiguity (Bartels, 1986; Campbell, 1983*a,b*; Gill, 2005; Hayes et al., 2008; Somer-Topcu, 2013).

Compared to measuring ambiguity in electoral campaigns, scholars have been more successful in capturing ambiguous behavior in legislative contexts. A number of analyses have investigated the determinants of abstentions in roll call voting. This scholarship relates to the ambiguity literature as non-position-taking is commonly considered one of the central dimensions of ambiguous behavior. The clear advantage of studying roll call votes is that the evidence is more structured and does not require the researcher to make subjective judgments in the coding of data. However, the evidence from legislative contexts does not transfer well to position-taking behavior in electoral campaigns as numerous conditioning factors are absent. Most prominently, legislative position-taking is concerned with policy outcomes whereas position-taking in an electoral campaign serves the purpose of strategic communication in a more strict sense.

In the present research project I apply a measurement strategy that integrates the advantages of structured information on ambiguous behavior in legislative contexts with the advantages of measuring ambiguity in the strategic communication environment of an electoral

campaign. It thus takes a middle ground between the two literatures. I propose to analyze position-taking in public candidate surveys that collect candidates' policy profiles on a range of proposals. The response format in such surveys is typically binary, where candidates can either agree or disagree to each proposal. Candidates are also provided with the option of taking an “undecided” position. This latter choice will be modeled as an ambiguous statement that refrains from clearly staking out a position on either side of an issue.

There are several advantages of this measurement strategy compared to past attempts. First and foremost, the information on candidate ambiguous behavior is highly structured – no hand coding introduces subjective judgements into the data. Candidates explicitly take an undecided position on a particular proposal. Moreover, past measures have often struggled with ambiguous behavior on an item-by-item basis. The proposed research strategy opens up the possibility of measuring ambiguity on specific policy proposals in a variety of topic areas. Finally, public candidate surveys are well suited to assess candidate position-taking in a strategic communication environment. There are considerable incentives for candidates to tailor their responses to voters as these surveys explicitly link candidates' policy profiles, public preferences and the eventual vote choice.

Regardless of its merits, the proposed measure is also subject to shortcomings. One, the measure covers but one form of ambiguous behavior, non-position-taking. This contrasts to the concept of ambiguous candidate behavior which has multiple dimensions and can also refer to vague or contradicting issue positions. However, this narrowness might in fact be considered an advantage of the proposed strategy as it is specific on the conceptualization of ambiguity, something that has not always been the case in prior research on the subject.

A second limitation of the proposed measurement is the fact that a public candidate survey forces candidates to take a position on an issue, making ambiguous behavior more visible relative to other campaign contexts where not addressing an issue might go unnoticed. This limitation is more severe. If the public did react adversely to candidate ambiguity (Alvarez, 1997; Bartels, 1986; Palmer and Garner, 2008; Shepsle, 1972; Somer-Topcu, 2013), then candidates might have to incur higher costs by choosing the “undecided” category as this form of ambiguity is easily traceable. I argue that the cost for selecting the undecided category on single items is outweighed by a substantially greater cost that candidates have to bear for staking out

an unpopular position. The inconsistency between the findings of previous scholarship regarding public preferences for unequivocal candidate policy positions and the present project can be traced back to the level of analysis. Past research has considered uncertainty on broad ideological scales whereas the present research considers ambiguous behavior on individual policy proposals. It is plausible that candidate shirking on single items is favorable to their electoral prospects. Nevertheless, it is clear that not addressing an issue in a public candidate survey is not as costless as not addressing an issue in a campaign speech. The proposed measure thus covers a middle ground between the nearly cost-free speech environment and a high-cost environment such as an abstention in a roll call vote. This is the price to pay for a large-n data collection on many candidates and a wide range of issues.

I argue that choosing the “undecided” category in a public candidate survey indicates a strategic candidate unwillingness to stake out a clear position on an issue. This assumption is in need of defense as there are other potential alternative frames for the choice. Most importantly, selecting the “undecided” category could signal that candidates in fact do not have a position on an issue, i.e. that they are truly undecided. While this is not impossible, there are several reasons why this should be rather the exception than the rule. Candidates for political office are more politically sophisticated than the average voter. Thus, even if they do not have a fully formed opinion on an item when they encounter it for the first time, they are well equipped to derive a response from their overall ideological predispositions. What is more, the items in public candidate surveys are selected by the curators of the surveys in order to reflect the most important issues in an electoral campaign. They are drafted in a way to be easily accessible to the general public. Both aspects should decrease the probability that candidates choose the “undecided” category for lack of a position. Finally, as I will elaborate in greater detail below, the candidates are provided with model responses from party headquarters. Therefore, even if candidates did not have a position on an issue they would be aware of the party position as a fallback option.

Before moving on to introduce the data collection in greater detail, I digress for a moment to introduce the central aspects of the German federal election campaign of 2013. The case was selected for the availability of a unique data set on expressed policy positions of candidates along with preferences of voters and parties. To provide some context for the analyses below,

the next section briefly outlines the historical background for the election, the central actors and results as well as the electoral law that was in place during the federal elections.

### 3.2 Setting the stage: The German federal election of 2013

The data was collected in the weeks prior to the federal elections for the 18<sup>th</sup> German *Bundestag* – the federal parliament – which took place on September 22, 2013.<sup>1</sup> The incumbent chancellor, Angela Merkel, ran for her third term. At the time of the election she governed a coalition of the Christian Democratic parties (CDU and CSU<sup>2</sup>) and the Free Democrats (FDP). The senior partner in the coalition had won 33.8 percent of the list vote in the 2009 election – its worst result in the history of the Federal Republic –, but held some 38 percent of the seats in the parliament due to the disproportionalities in the German electoral law (Manow, 2010a,b, see below). Conversely, the junior partner had collected 14.6 of the overall list vote and had thus achieved its best result in post-war Germany.

The competitor for the office of chancellorship was Peer Steinbrück of the Social Democratic party (SPD), who had previously served as finance minister under Angela Merkel in the years 2005-2009. With 23.0 percent of the list vote in the 2009 federal election, the SPD had also obtained its worst ever result in a federal election campaign. These comparatively bad results for the two major German parties can be traced back to the fact that both were partners in a Grand Coalition in the previous electoral cycle, which tends to be electorally advantageous for smaller and fringe parties (Seemann and Bukow, 2010, 20). The electoral results of the 2009 elections and the coalition of the Christian and Free Democrats are the backdrop for the 2013 electoral campaign.

German federal elections take place under the rules of the so-called mixed-member proportional system (Roberts, 1988; Saalfeld, 2009). In this two-tiered electoral system the voter has two separate votes – the nominal vote decides upon the fate of candidates in the 299 electoral districts. The receiver of the majority of votes enters the *Bundestag* directly. With the

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<sup>1</sup>This section relies heavily on journalistic sources rather than on scientific literature. At the time of writing – late 2013 to early 2014 – only few scientific accounts of the campaign events have been published.

<sup>2</sup>For historical reasons there are two distinct Christian Democratic parties in Germany – one in Bavaria (CSU) and one in the rest of Germany –, that form a common parliamentary party group in the federal parliament.

list vote, the voter selects a party list that governs the relative strength of the parties in the *Bundestag*. The list votes, which are assembled at the level of the German *Länder*, are thus the more important of the two votes. Up to the 2009 federal elections there was a notable element of disproportionality in the German election system that was introduced by the first vote and the resulting *Überhangmandate* (Andersen, 2013, 28-29). These excess mandates resulted when the number of nominally successful candidates was greater than the percentage of *Bundestag* mandates a party would otherwise be entitled to based on the list vote alone.

A verdict of the German Federal Constitutional Court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht*) in 2008 deemed one element of the federal electoral law associated with the *Überhangmandate* as unconstitutional. In rare situations it could happen that additional list votes lead to fewer seats in the *Bundestag* – the so-called negative voting weight (Andersen, 2013, 32; Behnke, 2010). A revision of the electoral law that was implemented with the votes of the Christian Democrats and the Free Democrats was struck down once more by the Federal Constitutional Court in 2012 (Andersen, 2013, 34). As a consequence, the electoral law had to be revised yet again. With the support of all parliamentary party groups except for Die Linke, the *Bundestag* adopted a revision that was first applied during the 2013 federal election. Without going into too much detail, the central element of the novel electoral rules states that excess mandates are balanced out by so-called *Ausgleichsmandate* that are awarded to parties that acquire a smaller percentage of mandates relative to their list vote baseline due to the *Überhangmandate* of other parties (Hertlein, 2013, 65-68).

One important consequence of this revision of the electoral law are the altered strategic incentives that it brought about. Under the pre-2013 electoral rules there were some party-level arrangements between the major parties and their preferred coalition partners to promote vote splitting among the voters (Gschwend, 2007; Gschwend, Johnston and Pattie, 2003). As long as *Überhangmandate* were a viable option to increase a parties' vote share in the federal parliament, it was strategically sound for two (potential) coalition partners to ask voters to cast the nominal vote for the major party and the list vote for the minor party, thus increasing the combined vote share in the *Bundestag*. Conversely, preferences might diverge between the party headquarters and the individual candidates under the novel electoral law. While such deals could be in the interest of party headquarters under the old electoral rules, the

new law makes this highly unattractive as the composition of the German *Bundestag* is strictly determined by the list vote. Therefore, any list vote that is awarded to the potential coalition partner decreases the relative strength of the senior partner. This is in fact why the Free Democrats' attempts to capture list votes from the Christian Democrats met fierce resistance from the CDU/CSU.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the altered behavioral rationale of party headquarters, the incentives of nominal candidates at the district level might diverge from party incentives, making an agreement between the potential coalition partners a viable option. Consider a Christian Democrat who is not secured via the party list – regardless of whether due to a pure nominal candidacy or due to a bad list placement – and a Free Democrat who is uncertain whether the seats assigned via the party list suffice to ensure a mandate. In this situation both candidates have an incentive to strike a deal at the local level to ask voters to cast the first vote for the CDU/CSU and the second vote for the FDP to ensure that the nominal mandate is awarded to the Christian Democrat and the Free Democrat candidate enters via the party list. As the nominal mandate is generally considered to be more prestigious for candidates relative to a list mandate, the Christian Democrat might even consider a deal if she is guaranteed a safe seat on the party list (Patzelt, 1999, 37; Wüst et al., 2006, 422). There were several instances of such deals during the 2013 electoral campaign and these were – in line with expectations – downplayed by party headquarters.<sup>4</sup>

The principal party political actors during the electoral campaign were the CDU/CSU and the FDP that both campaigned for a renewal of the incumbent coalition. The SPD and the Green party campaigned for a reprise of the red-green coalition that was in office from 1998 to 2005. The most obvious evidence of this common campaign effort was the appearance of the respective party leaders at the party meetings of the preferred coalition partner – Sigmar Gabriel speaking at the Green convention<sup>5</sup> and Claudia Roth speaking at the Social Democratic convention<sup>6</sup>. Faced with a potential left-wing majority by the SPD, Bündnis 90/Die

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<sup>3</sup><http://www.tagesschau.de/wahl/zweitstimmenkampagne100.html> (Last accessed December 10, 2013).

<sup>4</sup><http://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2013-09/fdp-zweitstimmen-cdu> (Last accessed December 10, 2013).

<sup>5</sup><http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/spd-chef-gabriel-spricht-auf-gruenen-parteitag-a-896922.html> (Last accessed December 11, 2013).

<sup>6</sup><http://www.n-tv.de/politik/Es-funkt-wieder-article10471106.html> (Last accessed December 11, 2013).



Grünen and Die Linke, the Social Democrats explicitly excluded the possibility of forming a red-red-green coalition (Decker, 2013, 56) – a promise heavily contended from the right-wing competitors during the electoral campaign<sup>7</sup>. One uncertain factor in the electoral race was the possible entry of the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD). There were intense debates throughout the electoral campaign whether the electoral potential of the newly founded party was high enough to cross the 5% threshold<sup>8</sup> and what consequences the AfD's entry might have on the outcome of the coalition bargaining. In contrast to that, it was considered unlikely that the Piratenpartei, which had been able to win mandates in several *Länder* assemblies in the years 2011 and 2012, would enter the *Bundestag* due to internal conflicts.<sup>9</sup>

The election resulted in strong gains for the Christian Democrats who ended up scoring 41.5 percent of the list vote, a plus of 7.7 percentage points relative to the 2009 outcome. The Social Democrats achieved only modest gains and won 25.7 percent of the second vote. Despite the gains, it was still the second worst result in a post-war election for the SPD. The coalition partner of the Christian Democrats lost 9.8 percentage points and went from its best ever result to its worst ever result of 4.8 percent, thus failing to enter the *Bundestag* altogether. The novel competitor, the AfD, scored only 0.1 percentage points less than the FDP and won 4.7 percent of the list vote – also not crossing the 5% threshold. Die Linke and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen lost 3.3 and 2.3 percentage points relative to their previous electoral results and entered the *Bundestag* with 8.6 and 8.4 percent respectively. The Piratenpartei failed to enter parliament with an overall result of 2.2 percent of the national vote. One of the biggest fears regarding the revised electoral law was its potential to greatly increase the size of the *Bundestag* due to the *Ausgleichsmandate*. By virtue of the strong CDU/CSU results this has not materialized in the 2013 election where the number of seats (631) was only modestly greater than in 2009 (622). The failure of the FDP to enter the *Bundestag* impeded the continuation of the incumbent government and forced the Christian Democrats to search for an alternative coalition partner. After deliberations with the Social Democrats and the Green party, a Grand Coalition with the SPD was formed with the office of chancellor going to Angela Merkel.

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<sup>7</sup><http://www.rundschau-online.de/bundestagswahl-2013/wahlkampf-union-warnt-vor-rot-rot-gruen,23797682,24246754.html> (Last accessed December 11, 2013).

<sup>8</sup><http://www.n-tv.de/politik/AfD-sieht-sich-beinahe-zweistellig-article11322861.html> (Last accessed December 11, 2013).

<sup>9</sup><http://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2013-01/piraten-partei-strategie> (Last accessed December 11, 2013).

### 3.3 Kandidatencheck: A public candidate survey

The main data source of the present volume stems from a public candidate survey that was assembled and publicized during the German federal electoral campaign of 2013. The collection effort was motivated by the idea that voters require easily accessible information on the candidates' political stances on the salient issues to make informed voting decisions. One common way to accomplish this task is to employ a so-called vote advice application. These systems were initially introduced in the mid-1990s in countries like Finland and the Netherlands (Wagner and Ruusuvirta, 2012, 400-401) and have since spread to many European countries (Cedroni and Garzia, 2010), recently culminating in a trans-European effort during the 2009 European elections.<sup>10</sup>

A vote advice application typically consists of several dichotomous items where parties are asked to indicate whether they favor or reject a policy proposal – or whether they are indifferent. In a second step, citizens are asked to indicate their own preferences on the same issues. The vote advice application then calculates and outputs the level of agreement with the various parties. In some instances citizens are also given the opportunity to weight items for the calculation of the agreement scores. The first such application in Germany – the *Wahl-O-Mat* – was introduced by the *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung* during the federal electoral campaign of 2002. Since then, the *Bundeszentrale* has assembled data on the parties' positions in the federal elections of 2005, 2009 and 2013 as well as for many of the *Länder* elections.

More recently, several organizations have turned to the policy profiles of individual candidates. One such effort is documented on the website <http://www.abgeordnetenwatch.de> that has been available since the mid-2000s. The primary aim of the website is to facilitate communication between voters and their parliamentary representatives. Starting in 2009, *Abgeordnetenwatch* began assembling short candidate surveys, so-called *Kandidatenchecks*, for the federal and most state elections. The project was established to help citizens gain structured information on candidates' policy preferences in order to make informed vote choices in the personalized proportional German voting system.<sup>11</sup> The issues are cast as binary choices,

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<sup>10</sup><http://www.votematch.net/>

<sup>11</sup>Only nominal candidates are asked to indicate their policy preferences due to the platform's focus on the link between candidates and their local constituency.

along with an indifferent category. In terms of substance, the issues in the surveys are typically collected by the platform's staffers in cooperation with editors of German news organizations – newspapers, magazines or broadcasting organizations – in the months prior to each election.<sup>12</sup> The survey questions are completed by the candidates using an online form. They are given the option to complement their vote choice with a short statement on their selection. The candidates can enter their preferences approximately two months prior to the election, the responses are published about one month before the election. Candidates that have not participated at the time of publication can still add their responses up to the election day. The overall participation rate in the 2013 electoral campaign has reached 91 percent – subject to some party-specific variation from 81 percent for the CDU/CSU to 98 percent for Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (see table 3.2). This figure provides a strong indication that candidates do perceive participation in the survey as a valuable addition to their campaign efforts.

Table 3.1: Summary of dependent variable

	%	Candidates			
		Mean	Min	Max	SD
CDU/CSU	.084	1.75	0	10	2.18
SPD	.040	.97	0	8	1.56
FDP	.073	1.45	0	13	1.90
Grüne	.040	.91	0	7	1.35
Die Linke	.017	.39	0	7	.88
Sum	.048	1.07	0	13	1.67

The table displays the relative frequency of “Undecided” responses, separated by party. Column 2 presents the percentage of undecided responses across all statements and candidates from one party. Columns 3-6 display some candidate-specific statistics, the mean number of undecided responses (column 3), the minimum number of undecided responses (column 4), the maximum number of undecided responses (column 5) and the standard deviation (column 6). The bottom row presents the summary statistics for all parties. The figures were calculated after discarding observations where the party position was estimated to be “Undecided” (see the next section on the estimation of the party position).

Table 3.1 provides a first impression of the prevalence of undecided responses in the *Kandidatencheck*. Column 2 displays the relative frequency of neutral statements, separated by party. Roughly 5% of all responses are undecided, subject to some party-specific variation. Candidates from right-wing parties have a somewhat greater tendency to label themselves as undecided relative to left-wing candidates. Columns 3-6 display several candidate-specific re-

<sup>12</sup>The information in this paragraph was collected through personal communication.

sponse statistics. Most importantly, candidates selected the undecided option on about one out of the 24 items on average.

There are some observations to be made about the data quality. Political actors are busy people and probably never more so than during campaign times. One might wonder whether candidates are willing to take the time to fill out the surveys themselves or whether they hand off the task to staffers. While this concern is not entirely unreasonable, it is not too worrisome in case of public surveys either. In an anonymous candidate study the candidate responses are largely inconsequential, hence candidates have no strong motivation to “get the responses right”. Conversely, in a public candidate survey a “wrong” answer might cost the candidate votes as voters are encouraged to compare their preferences to those of the candidates. Thus, candidates have an incentive not to go on record with an answer that contradicts their preferences, or – better yet – the voters' preferences. Candidates are also subject to a commitment problem in the long run. The public candidate surveys are kept online after the electoral contests. The public is able to refer back to them and to point out possible discrepancies between campaign statements and legislative behavior. The *Abgeordnetenwatch* platform is particularly well suited for this task. Its primary function is to enable voters to question legislators by collecting queries and relaying these to the legislators whose responses are published on the platform.

Consider as an example the issue of shutting down Germany's nuclear power plants. This issue has been a dominant topic on the government agenda since the early 2000s, when the red-green government decided to abandon nuclear power over a multi-annual period. The topic remained on the agenda as the right-wing parties campaigned for a prolongation of the remaining time that plants could stay on the grid. Consequently, one of the items on the 2009 *Kandidatencheck* was “Nuclear power plants have to be taken off the grid as soon as possible”.<sup>13</sup> The overwhelming majority of candidates from the right side of the political spectrum chose an opposing stance while the left-wing candidates agreed with the item. Among the FDP candidates in particular roughly 90 percent disagreed with the statement. Four candidates chose the “undecided” category, four candidates took an affirmative position. Among the candidates that agreed with the statement was Erik Schweickert, who went on to become a member

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<sup>13</sup>“Atomkraftwerke müssen möglichst schnell vom Netz genommen werden.” (Translation D.N.)

of the parliament in 2009 via the Baden-Württemberg list tier. After the liberal-conservative government was voted into office in 2009, the coalition agreement contained a provision to prolong the life cycle of the nuclear power plants.<sup>14</sup> A corresponding law was enacted in 2010 with the votes of CDU/CSU and FDP. Eight legislators of the governing parties cast dissenting votes, two abstained. Erik Schweickert was among the parliamentarians who voted in favor of the law. This discrepancy – along with others – was taken up by a user of the *Abgeordnetenwatch* platform, prompting the legislator to respond to the criticism.<sup>15</sup> Regardless of the merits of the criticism, this exemplifies that there is in fact a credibility problem that arises when making a pre-electoral commitment that differs from legislative behavior. Therefore, candidates should be expected to either fill out the survey themselves, or, at the very least, hand off the task to a staffer who is well acquainted with the candidates' positions.<sup>16</sup>

There is empirical evidence that vote advice applications do in fact guide vote choices (Fitzvaz, Pianzola and Ladner, 2010; Ladner, 2012; Walgrave, Aelst and Nuytemans, 2008). Besides stressing the need for candidates to get their responses right, there is an additional point to be taken away from such studies. Candidates can gain electoral support by being present on

<sup>14</sup><http://www.cdu.de/doc/pdfc/091026-koalitionsvertrag-cducsu-fdp.pdf> (Last accessed February 27, 2013)

<sup>15</sup>The relevant paragraph, which was published on May 16, 2011, reads “in the *Kandidatencheck* for the federal elections of 2009 you responded YES to the item 'Nuclear power plants have to be taken off the grid as soon as possible! How do you justify your voting behavior on 'Prolongation of nuclear power plants' life cycle', on which you voted YES? Do you confuse as soon as possible with as slowly as possible?”/“beim Kandidatencheck für die Bundestagswahl 2009 antworteten Sie auf die These 'Atomkraftwerke müssen möglichst schnell vom Netz genommen werden' mit JA! Wie begründen Sie Ihr Abstimmungsverhalten zum Thema 'Verlängerung von AKW-Laufzeiten', bei dem Sie mit JA gestimmt haben? Verwechseln Sie möglichst schnell mit möglichst langsam?” (Translation D.N.)

I wish to emphasize that the example should not be mistaken as a partisan stand of the author. Instead, there is an obvious government-opposition dynamic at work here. It is substantially easier for opposition parties to allow some of their members to stray from the party line some of the time. Government parties, on the other hand, will be less indulgent of potential renegades as losing parliamentary votes is widely considered an embarrassment. Hence, it is more likely that a member of a governing party group will face sufficiently strong party pressure to generate a discrepancy between pre-electoral commitments and post-electoral behavior (cf. Schwarz, Schädel and Ladner, 2010).

<sup>16</sup>There is some evidence that candidates take their responses to the *Kandidatencheck* serious. During the state-level election in *Niedersachsen* in 2013, an anonymous candidate survey was collected that contained several items on the use of the *Kandidatencheck*. Of all the candidates that declared to have participated in the *Kandidatencheck*, no fewer than 94% (142 respondents) claimed to have filled in the questionnaire themselves. Another 3% of candidates claimed that their staffers filled in the responses, but they double-checked the entries.

There is no doubt that state-level elections are not directly comparable to federal elections where candidates spend more time on campaign activities and also have more easy access to staffers. Moreover, candidates will probably tend to overstate their involvement in campaign activities to some degree. Nevertheless, these figures provide some evidence that candidates are generally involved in responding to the questionnaires that are sent out by *Abgeordnetenwatch*.

vote advice applications and should therefore consider them as one element of their online campaign activities. Moreover, there should be some mutual pressure between candidates to not miss out on the opportunity to make themselves known to the electorate. An indication of this effect are the extraordinarily high participation rates in the survey. These rates are only explicable if candidates view the platform as valuable to their individual campaign efforts and, by extension, they should try not to “miss the mark” when inputting their responses.

### 3.4 Operationalization of independent variables

Having introduced the dependent variable for the research project, this section provides an overview of the operationalization of three key independent variables that are used throughout the volume.

#### 3.4.1 Party position

Two conditioning factors for candidate position-taking are the policy preferences of the voters and those of the party headquarters. Both principals are crucial in deciding upon the fate of the candidates' career. Consequently, candidates are well advised to pay attention to the principals' preferences in their position-taking behavior. The estimation of the voters' preferences are the subject of chapter 4. In this section, I elaborate the estimation of the party position from the candidate positions on the public survey.

To infer the party position it is possible to make use of the fact that party headquarters draft model responses that they distribute as templates for the candidates. In addition to making the structured vote choice, candidates are also offered the possibility to explain their vote in a short comment. Party headquarters include drafts of the vote explanations in their recommendations. Some of the candidates simply copy the draft responses. Thus, observing numerous copies of one specific vote explanation, it can be assumed that this response was drafted by the party headquarters. The associated selection for these explanations is treated as the vote choice of the party leadership. Unfortunately, it is not possible to verify in every instance whether it is truly the federal party headquarters who draft the model responses. This

should, however, not weaken our confidence in the estimates as the estimated party positions coincide with the modal responses of the candidates.

### 3.4.2 Intensity of electoral competition

There is an extensive literature on the behavioral consequences of electoral vulnerability. For example, Mayhew (1974) finds in his seminal study that incumbents with an uncertain electoral fate are more likely to be responsive to the preferences of the electorate (cf. Ansolabehere, Brady and Fiorina, 1992; Ladewig, 2010; Sullivan and Uslander, 1978). To model the tightness of the electoral race, I calculate a binary indicator that takes on a value of one if a candidate's nominal vote share was within five percent of the winning vote share in the previous election – if at least two candidates in the district meet the condition.

Consider as an example the 2009 electoral race in the district of Mannheim. The CDU candidate, Egon Jüttner, won the district with 36.5 percent of the nominal vote. The SPD candidate, Stefan Rebmann, came in second with a share of 30.2 percent of the vote. The smaller parties achieved results of 12.6 percent (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) and lower. Thus, the difference between the first and second placed was 6.3 percentage points. Selecting the cut-off point for tight races at 5%, all candidates are assigned a value of zero. The cut-off percentage is varied to check the influence of setting an arbitrary value. In the alternative specification of tight races at 7.5%, the CDU and SPD are assigned values of one and all other candidates a value of zero. While the winning margin in the previous election is a common indicator for the electoral safety of candidates, Stoffel (2012) has recently proposed a non-constant measure for the electoral safety via the district tier. He calculates the predicted probabilities from a probit model that regresses the past district results on the probability of winning the nominal mandate. I opt for the simpler, binary measure as there is no theoretical argument why nominal election probabilities other than tight races should have an effect on candidate position-taking (see section 2.2.2).

Regardless of whether the electoral safety on the district tier is modeled as a binary indicator or as a continuous probability variable, the measure is relatively crude. Although the district results in the previous elections are a reasonably good indicator of the outcome in the cur-

rent election, the candidates have more accurate information regarding their vote prospects at their disposal – for example, based on survey data or more recent electoral results in lower-level elections. Combining such information yields more precise estimates of the district vote. About one month prior to the election date, *Spiegel Online* published a comprehensive summary of the most heavily contended districts, based on “results of previous elections”, “events and topics of the previous years and months” and “assessments of party headquarters on the most important districts”.<sup>17</sup> The information was assembled as a second indicator for tight electoral races that takes on a value of one if *Spiegel Online* has labeled a district contender as a promising candidate and zero if not.<sup>18</sup>

Not all candidates in the German two-tiered electoral system are dependent on winning a nominal mandate to enter the *Bundestag*. For all intents and purposes, it is impossible to vote many candidates out of office (Manow, 2008; Manow and Nistor, 2009; Matland and Studlar, 2004). Thus, to capture the full electoral certainty of German candidates a second measure is calculated – the candidate-specific probability of winning a list mandate. For the electoral probability on the list tier I follow the lead of Stoffel (2012) and run several probit models that regress the candidates' list placements on their success in winning a mandate and employ the models predicted probabilities as explanatory variables in the substantive analyses. Specifically, I calculate the probability that a given list placement has ensured a mandate in the past six elections.<sup>19</sup> The models are run for each party/*Land* combination separately. To explain this splitting, consider a candidate who is running on the tenth list position. While this might be considered a safe bet in North Rhine-Westphalia, the position is hopeless in Bremen. Similarly, a Social Democratic candidate is more likely to enter with the placement relative to a candidate from Bündnis 90/Die Grünen. Candidates that ran exclusively as nominal candidates are assigned a zero probability of winning the list mandate.

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<sup>17</sup><http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/bundestagswahl-die-umkaempften-wahlkreise-in-deutschland-a-914486.html> (Last accessed December 12, 2013).

<sup>18</sup>Measuring the association between the two binary variables using the phi coefficient yields values of .59 when estimating the association between the 5% tightness indicator and the predictions from *Spiegel Online* and .63 when choosing the cut-off point at 7.5%.

<sup>19</sup>I would like to acknowledge the help of Philip Manow in providing data on candidate (re-)elections.



### 3.4.3 Political experience

As a proxy for political experience I included a binary indicator that takes on a value of one if candidates have previously been members of the *Bundestag*. The incumbency status is included for its possible effect on the ability of candidates to familiarize themselves with the voters' preferences. It is not differentiated between the origin origin of the previous mandate – list mandate or nominal mandate – as there is no reason to assume that the type of mandate should have an effect on the ability of candidates to gain political experience.

## 3.5 Survey participation

Table 3.2: Participation rates in *Kandidatencheck*

	Candidates			Parliamentarians		
	Absolute	Replied	%	Absolute	Replied	%
CDU/CSU	299	242	.81	290	234	.81
SPD	299	291	.97	192	185	.97
FDP	298	253	.85	–	–	–
Grüne	299	293	.98	62	62	1.0
Die Linke	298	276	.93	61	60	.98
Sum	1493	1355	.91	605	541	.89

The table displays the participation rates in the *Abgeordnetenwatch* survey. Columns 2-4 display the participation rates among all nominal candidates, separated by party. Columns 5-7 display the participation rates among candidates that were successful in their electoral bids. Recall that the figures in column 5 are not identical to the sizes of the parliamentary party groups in the 18<sup>th</sup> *Bundestag* as the dataset only covers nominal candidates.

Legislators are busy people. Given time constraints, they have to decide which of their numerous duties to skip. Among the first obligations to dispense with would be those efforts that are least visible to the public. Taking this into account, it is remarkable that classical candidate surveys exhibit the participation rates they do. For example, the German candidate study had an overall participation rate of 44 percent in 2005 (Zittel and Gschwend, 2008, 988) and of 38 percent in the 2009 (Gschwend and Zittel, 2011, 377). Not surprisingly, the participation rates in the public candidate surveys are higher as candidates perceive these instruments as part of their personal campaigning efforts. Table 3.2 displays the participation rates in the *Kandidatencheck* among candidates and parliamentarians, i.e., candidates that do get elected, split up

by party. There is no pronounced difference between participation rates among candidates and legislators. There are some systematic differences in the participation rates between the parties, most prominently the comparatively low participation of the Christian Democratic candidates. Generally speaking, the overall participation rates are strikingly high with rates of approximately 90 percent. This signals that *Abgeordnetenwatch* is a well established platform and a known outlet for political candidates.

These preliminary observations indicate that candidate participation in the survey is not random but that there are systematic effects hidden in the data. In the remainder of the chapter I investigate the factors that are related to candidate participation. This is a necessary exercise in order to put the results of the main analyses into perspective. Specifically, some of the explanatory variables that were specified to condition candidate position-taking might also impact candidate participation in the first place. If this is the case, the inferences would only be valid for the subsample of candidates who choose to participate in the public candidate survey. Hence, to draw inferences on the entire candidate population it is necessary to investigate the possibility of such effects. I first specify several variables that might influence the participation propensity in the next section and present the results of the analysis in section 3.5.2.

### 3.5.1 Theoretical expectations

One factor that drives candidate participation was blatantly obvious from table 3.2 – the candidates' party affiliation. Conservative candidates exhibit a markedly lower propensity to participate in the survey. It is well established that candidates' campaigning behavior can be traced back to strategic incentives (Gschwend and Zittel, 2011; Zittel, 2009, 2010; Zittel and Gschwend, 2007). Candidates should therefore be expected to participate most in the online survey if it offers the possibility of reaching their electorate. The electorate of conservative parties is systematically less web-affine compared with the electorate of other parties, not least due to de-

mographic factors (Jungherr and Schoen, 2013, 58).<sup>20</sup> Consequently, representatives of these parties have least to gain by being present on such platforms.

It is evident from previous research that candidate behavior in electoral campaigns is determined by the type of candidacy (Klingemann and Wessels, 2001; Zittel, 2003, 2010). Candidates for a nominal mandate have a greater incentive than list candidates to stress their personal campaigning efforts and to communicate directly with their constituency in order to establish a personal vote (cf. Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina, 1984, 1987; Herrera and Yawn, 1999). As online campaigning is ideally suited for an unmediated campaign communication, it should be assumed that nominal candidates make the greatest efforts to be present in public candidate surveys and to present their individual policy profiles. Unfortunately, *Abgeordnetenwatch* only collects information from candidates that run in districts. It is therefore impossible to test any claims for candidates that run exclusively on a list.

Despite this severe shortcoming of the dataset, the image is not quite as bleak. Parties submit candidate lists that are substantially longer than they can ever hope to win seats. It is clear that while these candidates are nominated to represent party goals and values, they will not be expected to heavily invest in their campaigning efforts. Candidates with a hopeless list placement should therefore be expected to be less likely to participate. Similarly, if candidates have little chance of winning the nominal mandate, they should be less likely to participate in the public candidate survey as they have little to gain by establishing a direct relationship with the electorate. Regardless of the hopelessness of the candidature, however, nominal candidates might still benefit from an above-average district vote share in internal party power struggles. Thus, while a positive association of the probability of winning a district mandate and the probability of participating in the survey is hypothesized, the effect should be less pronounced compared to the effect of the probability of winning a list mandate.

Apart from modeling the relationship between the probability of a nominal mandate and the participation propensity I also investigate the effect of the intensity of the electoral competition in a district. Candidates who are close to, but uncertain of winning the district mandate should make the greatest campaigning efforts. Next to these substantive variables that could

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<sup>20</sup>One alternative, not mutually exclusive explanation for the observation might be that conservative candidates perceive the political orientation of the platforms' users as most unfavorable toward their policy profiles, thus driving them to shirk in somewhat elevated numbers.

drive both participation and ambiguity I control for the candidates' political experience, measured as the incumbency status.

### 3.5.2 Systematic non-participation

About one out of every ten nominal candidates from the five major parliamentary parties has decided not to participate in the *Kandidatencheck* for the 2013 German federal election. The present volume analyzes position-taking on the public candidate survey to capture candidate reactions to constituency preferences. One concern that can be leveled against the data source is the question whether the choice for a non-participation is driven by the same variables that explain position-taking. If this were the case, our inferences from the candidate sample to all candidates might be biased. To check the magnitude of this problem, the present section analyzes the degree to which the electoral certainty of the candidates is related to their propensity to participate in the survey.

Table 3.3 presents the results from two models that explain the participation probability with the structural factors that were outlined in the previous section. The party membership of the candidates is strongly associated with survey participation. Compared to the baseline probability for Christian Democratic candidates, candidates from all other parties are significantly more likely to participate in the survey – with members of the Social Democrats and the Green party being assigned the greatest difference relative to the CDU/CSU baseline.

Regarding the electoral probabilities, there is a consistently small, but significant positive association between the probability of winning a list mandate and the likelihood of participating in the survey. The better the placement of the candidates on the party list, the more likely they are to participate. Turning to the tightness of the district race, there is no significant effect. There is a positive but insignificant effect of a tight electoral race on the participation probability, regardless of the tightness definition, be it a 5% difference (model 1), a 7.5% difference (model 2), or the more comprehensive indicator that was assembled by *Speigel Online* (model 3; on the indicator see section 3.4). The incumbency status has no significant additional effect on the survey participation after controlling for the electoral probabilities.

Table 3.3: Logit models – Participation probability

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Survey participation		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Tight race (5%)	0.230 (0.306)		
Tight race (7.5%)		0.405 (0.285)	
Tight race ( <i>Spiegel</i> )			0.586 (0.379)
Probability of list mandate	0.596* (0.310)	0.558* (0.311)	0.570* (0.308)
Incumbent	−0.086 (0.230)	−0.078 (0.231)	−0.080 (0.229)
Die Linke	1.252*** (0.291)	1.303*** (0.294)	1.291*** (0.290)
FDP	0.426* (0.251)	0.500** (0.255)	0.465* (0.246)
Grüne	2.607*** (0.456)	2.676*** (0.458)	2.648*** (0.454)
SPD	2.123*** (0.395)	2.137*** (0.396)	2.136*** (0.395)
(Intercept)	1.211*** (0.221)	1.142*** (0.225)	1.174*** (0.216)
Observations	1,488	1,488	1,493
Log Likelihood	−414	−413	−413
Akaike Inf. Crit.	844	843	843

Note: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

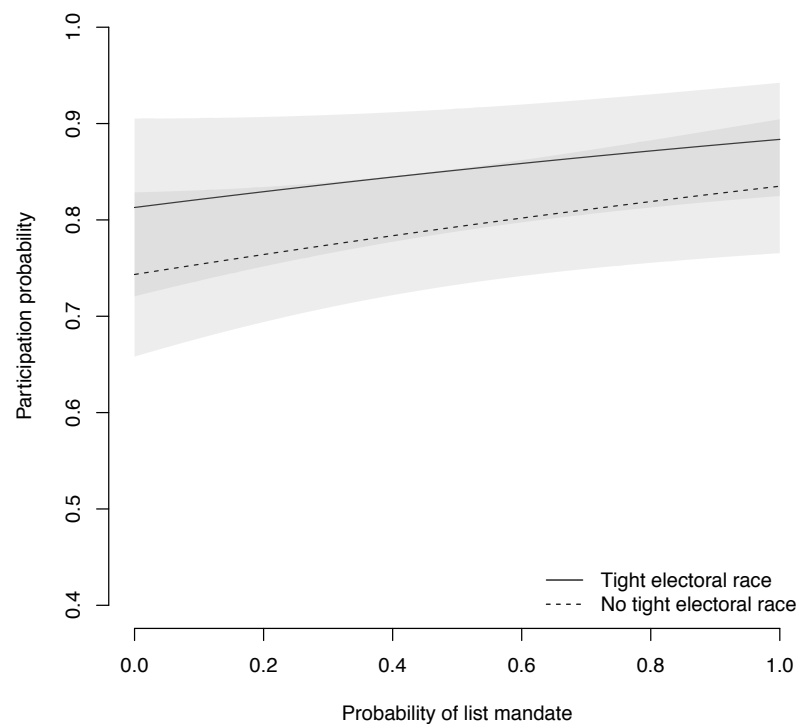


Figure 3.1: The figure displays the predicted probability of participation in the survey across a range of probabilities of winning a list mandate. The predictions are based on model 2 from table 3.3. The solid line displays the predicted probabilities if the candidate is in a tight race, the dashed line displays the predicted probabilities if the candidate is not in a tight race. The grey areas provide the 95% confidence intervals for the point predictions. Predictions were made for a non-incumbent Christian Democrat.

The predictions from model 2 are graphically investigated in figure 3.1. It displays the predicted probability of participating in the survey across a range of values in the probability of winning a list mandate. The predictions are made for a non-incumbent Christian Democratic candidate. The solid line displays the predictions when the candidate is in a tight race, the dashed line the participation probability when the candidate is not in a tight race. Candidates in a tight race have a somewhat elevated propensity of participating in the survey that is not statistically significant, however. Moreover, the participation probability increases a little as candidates are more likely to enter parliament via the list tier.

To summarize, there is a small, but systematic positive effect of the probability of winning a list mandate on the probability of participating in the survey. Candidates with low list election probabilities make a somewhat smaller effort during the electoral campaign. The tightness of the district race, on the other hand, is not significantly associated with the participation

probability. It was outlined in chapter 2 that the tightness of the nominal vote should be an important conditioning factor for candidate position-taking. Candidates in tight nominal electoral races have the greatest incentives to take local constituency preferences into account. As there is no strong evidence that the electoral safety on the district tier is systematically related to the overall participation propensity, it can be concluded that inferences on ambiguous position-taking from the candidate sample to all nominal candidates should not be biased due to systematic non-participation.

## 4 German small-area preferences

Political analysts have recently begun to employ vote advice applications to assess public position-taking of parties and candidates (e.g., Gemenis, 2013; Schwarz, Schädel and Ladner, 2010; Talonen and Sulkava, 2011). These efforts have been valuable for capturing position-taking in settings where structured observational data such as roll-call votes are largely absent. While the data is a welcome addition to our toolbox for the measurement of expressed actor preferences, one needs to be careful in interpreting the data. Position-taking on vote advice applications does not necessarily reflect the ideological preferences of position-takers as communication takes place in a heavily strategic communication environment. On the one hand, position-taking on vote advice applications is cheap compared to roll-call votes in that it is largely without policy consequences. On the other hand, position-taking on vote advice applications is expensive as candidates' electoral fortunes are contingent on their communication behavior.<sup>1</sup>

Consider the case of the *Wahl-O-Mat* that is published by the German *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*. The platform recorded more than 13 million uses during the 2013 federal electoral campaign <sup>2</sup>, thus reaching a sizable percentage of the electorate. It is crucial for political actors to pay attention to the public's preferences when making their policy positions publicly available on vote advice applications. Consequently, while candidate responses should reflect their true underlying policy preferences they should also be profoundly shaped by the electoral link. Both aspects – the costlessness in terms of legislative consequences and the

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<sup>1</sup>A number of researchers have tried to quantify the effects that vote advice applications have on electoral outcomes (e.g., Fivaz, Pianzola and Ladner, 2010; Ladner, 2012; Schultze, 2012; Schultze and Marschall, 2012a,b; Walgrave, Aelst and Nuytemans, 2008).

<sup>2</sup>[https://www.wahl-o-mat.de/bundestagswahl2013/popup\\_faq.php](https://www.wahl-o-mat.de/bundestagswahl2013/popup_faq.php) (Last accessed December 20, 2013).



expensiveness in terms of the audience costs – make public candidate surveys ideal cases to investigate the systematic distortions that candidate communication is subject to.

In order to investigate the effects of constituency preferences on candidate communication a large-scale data collection effort was undertaken. After using the *Kandidatencheck* for the 2013 German federal election, users of the platform were invited to participate in a supplemental survey and input information on their sociodemographic status and policy preferences. The resulting data is applied in the present volume to capture the small-area preferences of the German electoral districts. The present chapter serves to elaborate the contents of the voter survey and to correct for imbalances in the data to arrive at clean preference measures. The analysis thus yields a data source on small-area voter preferences that is applicable in areas well beyond the interest of the present research project.

The chapter sets out by introducing the details of the data collection. To assess the data validity in the unusual collection, section 4.2 considers the content of the data that is subject to well-known imbalances in online survey research (Faas and Schoen, 2006; Schoen and Faas, 2005). Section 4.3 elaborates the model that is used to correct for the two principal imbalances in the data – an imbalance regarding an uneven participation coverage in the electoral districts and an imbalance regarding the sociodemographic features of the participants. The results of this analysis are presented in section 4.4. As political actors in multi-party settings might be better served to direct their communication at subsets of the electorate rather than taking cues from the preferences of the electorate as a whole, I differentiate between mean district preferences and the preferences of party supporters.

## 4.1 Descriptive statistics

In the previous chapter I have introduced the fundamentals of the *Kandidatencheck* that was assembled by the curators of *Abgeordnetenwatch*. In the version for the 2013 federal election users were asked to participate in a short supplemental survey upon completion of the main questionnaire.<sup>3</sup> The additional survey collected information on users' overall political prefer-

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<sup>3</sup>I would like to express my gratitude toward Martin Reyher and Roman Ebener from *Abgeordnetenwatch* for agreeing to implement the additional questionnaire.

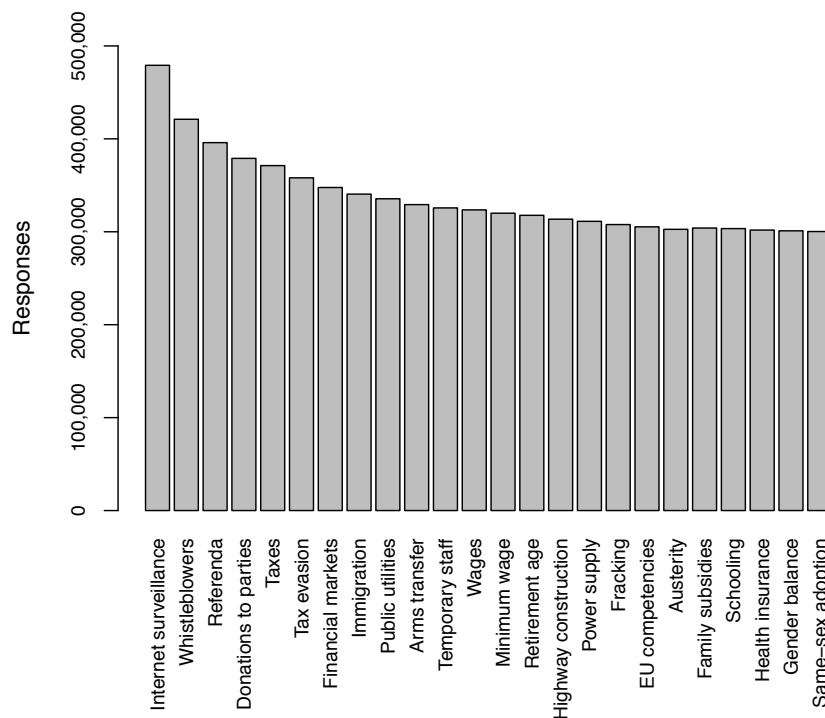


Figure 4.1: The figure displays the absolute participation figures by statement among all participants.

ences, their ideological predisposition and sociodemographic status. The platform recorded a little over 480,000 unique visits with at least one response. Of these, roughly 280,000 took the entire main questionnaire of 24 statements, i.e., an input was provided to all of the items in about 58% of the visits.<sup>4</sup>

Figure 4.1 provides an overview of the overall usage of the *Kandidatencheck* as well as on the drop-out rate throughout the survey more specifically. Not surprisingly, the greatest overall drop-out is between the first two questions with a difference of roughly 60,000 users between item 1 and item 2. Beside this over-time drop there are slight indications that in some instances

<sup>4</sup>The figures for non-complete questionnaires do not include observations where respondents selected the neutral response. Respondents that explicitly chose to skip a question or to drop out of the questionnaire entirely were counted as (partially) missing. It is important to point out that unique visits are not necessarily identical with unique visitors. A user key is generated when a user logs onto the website. The key remains valid during the entire visit. If a visitor leaves the page and logs back in at a later time a new value is generated. It is possible that some visitors have taken the survey multiple times, thus artificially inflating the number of respondents.

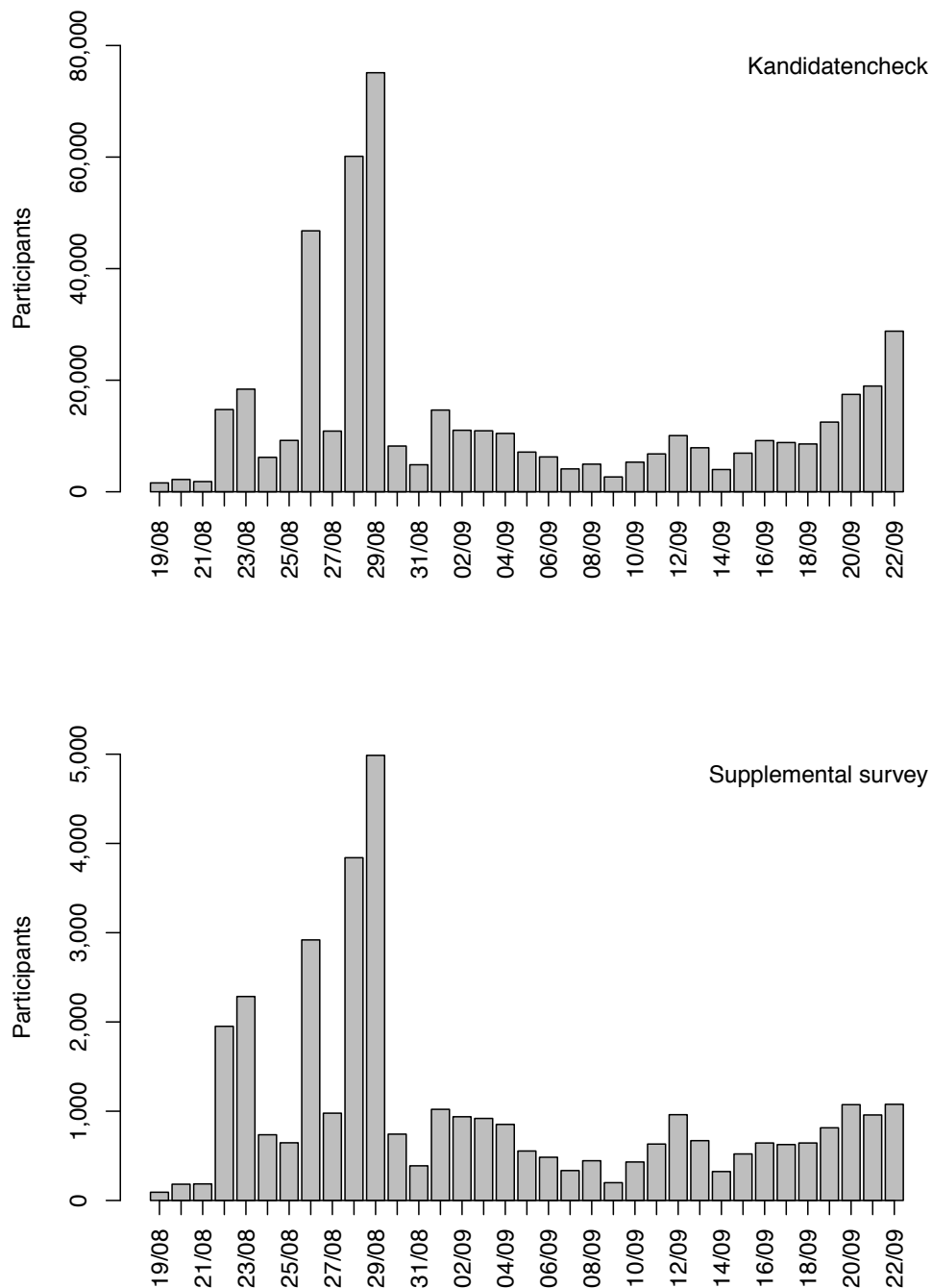


Figure 4.2: The figure displays the daily participation rates of *Kandidatencheck* users. The survey was accessible roughly one month prior to the election on September 22, 2013. The upper panel displays the participation counts in the *Kandidatencheck*. The lower panel displays the counts for those participants who also participated in the supplemental questionnaire that collected additional sociodemographic information and policy preferences.

users explicitly decided not to provide a response to an item. Consider statement 19 which deals with the austerity policy in Europe. There is a lower overall response count on item 19

relative to item 20, suggesting that several respondents explicitly skipped the question and continued with the questionnaire.<sup>5</sup>

The *Kandidatencheck* for the federal election campaign was published on August 22, 31 days prior to the date of the election on September 22. Figure 4.2 provides a summary of the user accesses to the website. The upper panel in the figure displays the absolute count of people that used the platform up to the election day.<sup>6</sup> The bottom panel displays the participation count in the supplemental survey. Of the approximately 480,000 unique visits that were recorded by the system log, a little over 36,000 participants decided to take the additional survey. About 26,000 respondents, or 73%, have provided a response to all of the questions. Thus, among all users who participated in the *Kandidatencheck* about 13% have begun responding to the supplemental questionnaire and about 9% have finished the entire questionnaire.

The absolute number of *Kandidatencheck* users might be somewhat inflated due to duplicates when participants used the platform multiple times. The fact that the upper and the lower panel in figure 4.2 mirror one another quite closely indicates that this is not a major concern. If users had indeed participated in the *Kandidatencheck* several times they would probably not have participated in the supplemental questionnaire more than once, thus decreasing the likeness of the two graphs. The two major differences between the two graphs are the initial spikes where disproportionately many participants filled out the additional questionnaire and the last few days where a greater percentage of users did not participate in the supplemental survey.

Regarding participation rates, there is a highly non-uniform distribution of participations across the collection period. There are several factors that help to illuminate the observable pattern. The initial spikes on August 22 and 23 are due to the public release of the platform. The publication was accompanied by a press conference of the platforms' operators in the presence of several members of the *Bundestag*. The release received some media attention and was heavily publicized on social networks. There is a second spike in the data toward the end of the period due to the proximity of the election on September 22.

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<sup>5</sup>The statements in the questionnaire are provided in the appendix (chapter 8).

<sup>6</sup>The *Kandidatencheck* was already accessible several days prior to the official launch on August 22. The link to the survey was published on social networks and a number of users have participated before the public release. There is no obvious reason to discard these observations.

Furthermore, participation spikes notably toward the end of August. This can be traced back to the publication of the survey on the websites of several large German news outlets. In an effort to raise awareness for the platform, *Abgeordnetenwatch* has established media cooperations with numerous media outlets such as *bild.de*, *Cicero*, *Focus online*, *Handelsblatt online*, *Spiegel Online*, *taz.de*, *welt.de* and *ZDF*. These partners have made the link to the survey publicly available at various times after the initial publication of the *Kandidatencheck*, thus producing the spikes in the data. Most outlets began publicizing the fact that they are partnered with the platform in the first couple of days after the initial release. Some have retained a link to the survey on their website throughout the entire electoral campaign, whereas other outlets have quickly pushed the link to their archive. For example, when *Spiegel Online* published the link on their website there was a tremendous surge in participation rates on August 28 and August 29. After these two days, there was a remarkable drop in participation from *Spiegel Online*, suggesting that the outlet has taken the link off its main pages.

It is possible to identify the website that linked users to the *Kandidatencheck* in our data. Figure 4.3 provides an indication of the relative prominence each website has had in supplying participants to the supplemental survey. The figure displays the absolute number with which a website has forwarded participants to the platform.<sup>7</sup> Apart from the *Abgeordnetenwatch* website itself, *Spiegel Online* and *bild.de* have been most successful in supplying participants to the survey. This is not necessarily an indication of how aggressively these platforms have pushed the survey but merely reflects the reach these two outlets have relative to other organizations in the sample.

One simple way to validate the content of the data is to consider whether the linking website is systematically related to the users' policy preferences. Figure 4.4 displays the relative frequencies of prospective vote choices, separated by linking website. The figure provides a plausible image of the readerships of German media. Readers of the *taz* take the most opposing stance toward the Christian Democrats and Liberals on average, whereas readers of *bild.de*, *Focus Online*, *Handelsblatt Online*, and *welt.de* display a somewhat more favorable opinion of the then governing parties.

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<sup>7</sup>To ensure accessibility of the graph, the height of the bars is visualized as the log of the absolute counts. Incidentally, the supplemental questionnaire was not implemented when users were forwarded from the *ZDF* due to legal restrictions.

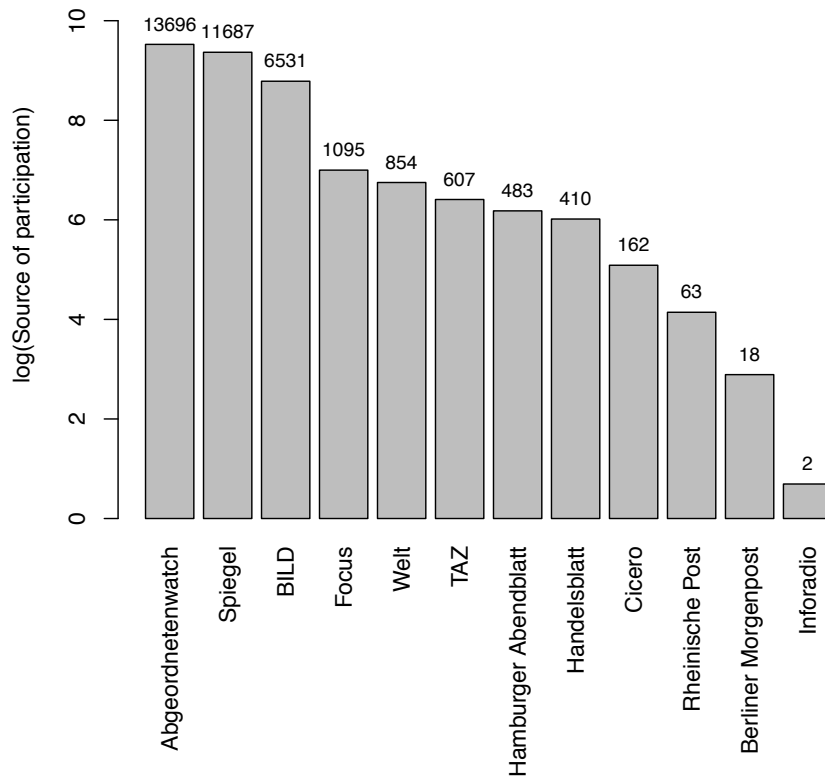


Figure 4.3: The figure displays how often particular websites forwarded participants to the supplemental survey. The media partners are displayed on the x-axis. A link from *Abgeordnetenwatch* means that participants did not come through one of the media partners but rather accessed the website directly. In order to ensure a better accessibility of the figure the height of the bars was calculated as log of the absolute values. The absolute counts are displayed on top of the bars for reference.

There is no doubt that part of this observation can be traced back to a different sociodemographic composition of the users coming to the survey through the various channels. Table 4.6 (appendix of the present chapter) provides the descriptive statistics for the variables in the supplemental survey, along with the federal baseline. The sample is biased on every variable. The sample is substantially more male (2 out of 3) and younger than the federal baseline.<sup>8</sup> Possibly the most obvious instance of a difference between the sample and the population baseline concerns the levels of schooling. Despite the platform's goal to provide an easy access to politics for all voters, the user base is heavily over-educated.

<sup>8</sup>Participants with ages below 18 were discarded in all subsequent analyses.

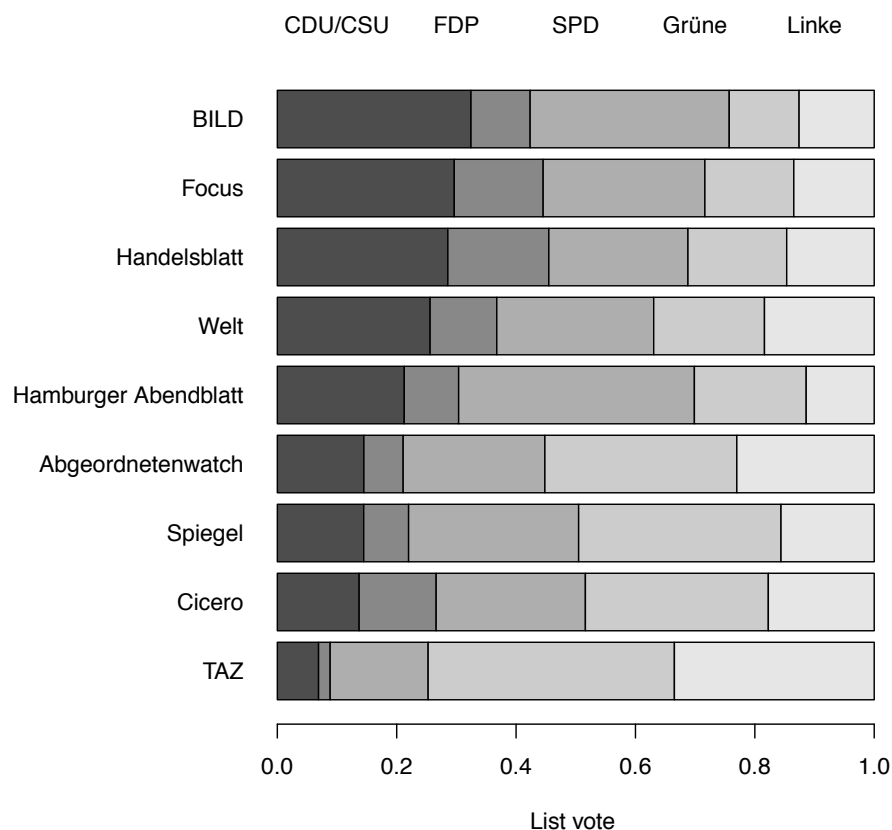


Figure 4.4: The figure displays the forwarding website and the relative frequency of respondents' prospective vote choices.

Regarding the political preferences in the survey, there is a similar imbalance relative to the federal baseline. The sample is strongly biased against Christian Democrats, but contains disproportionally many supporters of small and left-leaning parties. These imbalances are not independent of the sociodemographic markers, as younger, more educated voters tend to favor left leaning parties.<sup>9</sup> It is also important to emphasize that the measures for the prospective vote choices are somewhat contaminated by the sequence in which the survey is taken. Respondents are first asked to indicate their policy preferences and are provided with an overview of the candidates, ordered by the congruence with the users' preference profiles. Only after this step are respondents invited to take the additional survey and to indicate, *inter alia*, their prospective vote choices. Nevertheless, with a strong caveat regarding the sociode-

<sup>9</sup>[http://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/de/bundestagswahlen/BTW\\_BUND\\_09/veroeffentlichungen/repraesentative/tab4\\_2.xls](http://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/de/bundestagswahlen/BTW_BUND_09/veroeffentlichungen/repraesentative/tab4_2.xls) (Last accessed October 30, 2013).

mographic imbalances in the data, it is possible to pick up plausible rank-orderings of the political preferences among the news outlets' readers, providing some validity to the content of the unusual dataset.

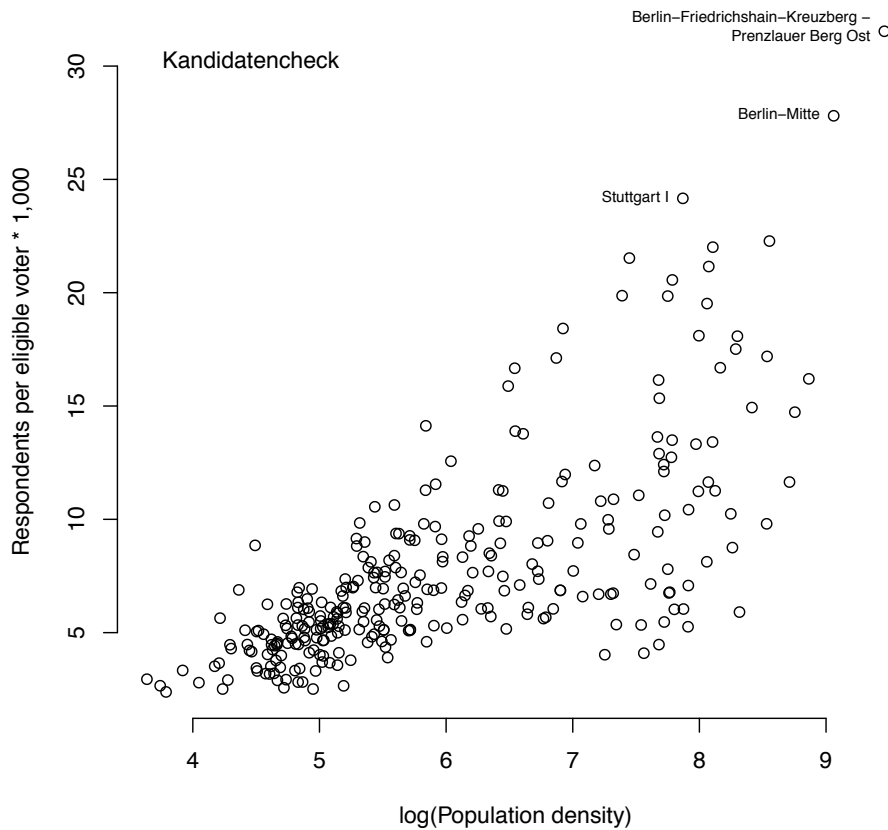


Figure 4.5: The figure displays the number of respondents in the full sample per eligible voters multiplied by 1,000 in the 299 electoral districts against the logged district population density.

Beside the sociodemographic imbalances in the data, there is also an imbalance regarding the district coverage. Figures 4.5 and 4.6 provide indications of this imbalance. Both figures display the number of participations per eligible voters (multiplied by 1,000) by the logged population density in the districts, both among all participants of the *Kandidatencheck* (figure 4.5) and among participants in the supplemental survey (figure 4.6). There is a strong and systematic positive relationship between the population density and the number of respondents – more urban districts tend to display a better coverage.



After these initial comments on the collection effort and the imbalances in the data, the next section turns to the content of the preferences in the *Kandidatencheck*.

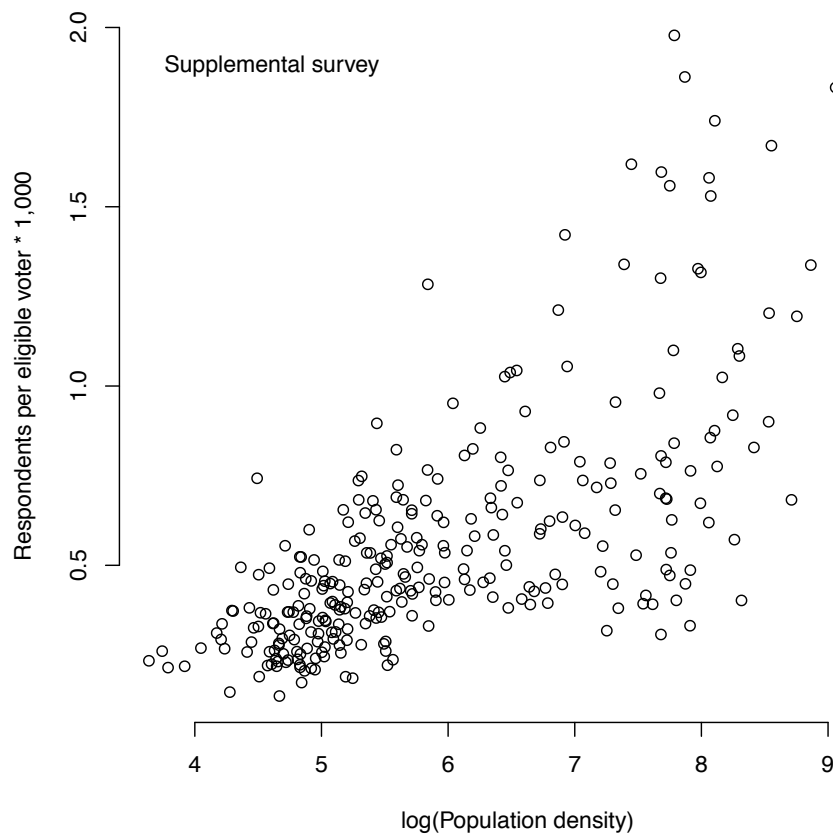


Figure 4.6: The figure displays the number of respondents in the supplemental survey per eligible voters multiplied by 1,000 in the 299 electoral districts against the logged district population density.

## 4.2 Voters' policy preferences

A first visual summary of the respondents' policy preferences is provided in figure 4.7. The figure displays the percentages of negative (black), neutral (grey) and positive (white) responses to the items among all 480,000 respondents. There is a wide range of agreements and disagreements in the data. Moreover, only a small percentage of respondents has chosen the neutral option on each item.<sup>10</sup> Figure 4.8 plots the mean agreement scores on the issues in

<sup>10</sup>There is some degree of variation regarding the neutral option. Consider the issue of “Fracking” which tends to be disfavored by the majority of test takers, but has also prompted about a fourth of respondents to select

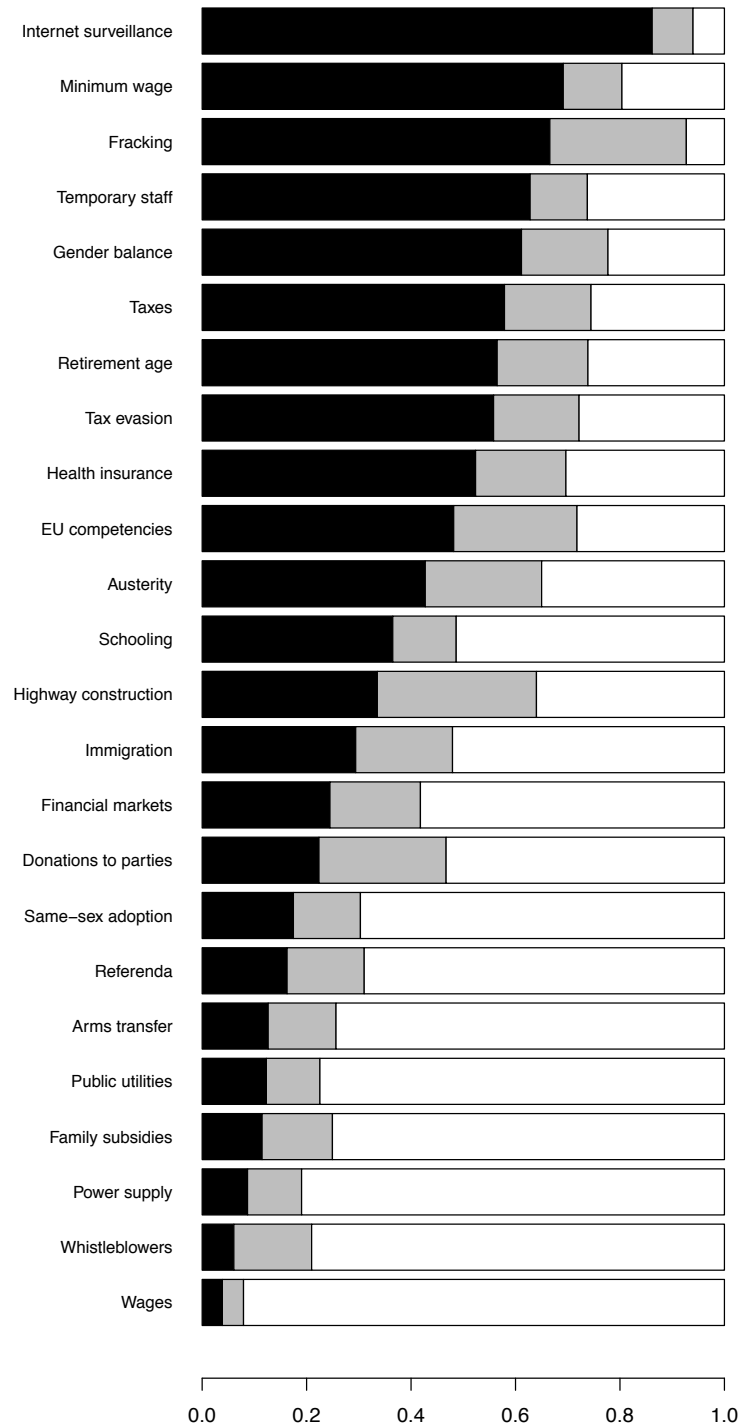


Figure 4.7: The figure displays the expressed policy preferences among all respondents on the 24 items. The black segments represent the “No” responses, the grey segments the “Neutral” responses and the white segments the “Yes” responses. The precise wording of the statements is provided in the appendix (chapter 8).

the full sample against the means in the subsample of those respondents that also took the supplemental survey. The mean values are closely scattered around the 45 degree line, hence there is little reason to suspect any systematic differences between the overall sample and the subset.

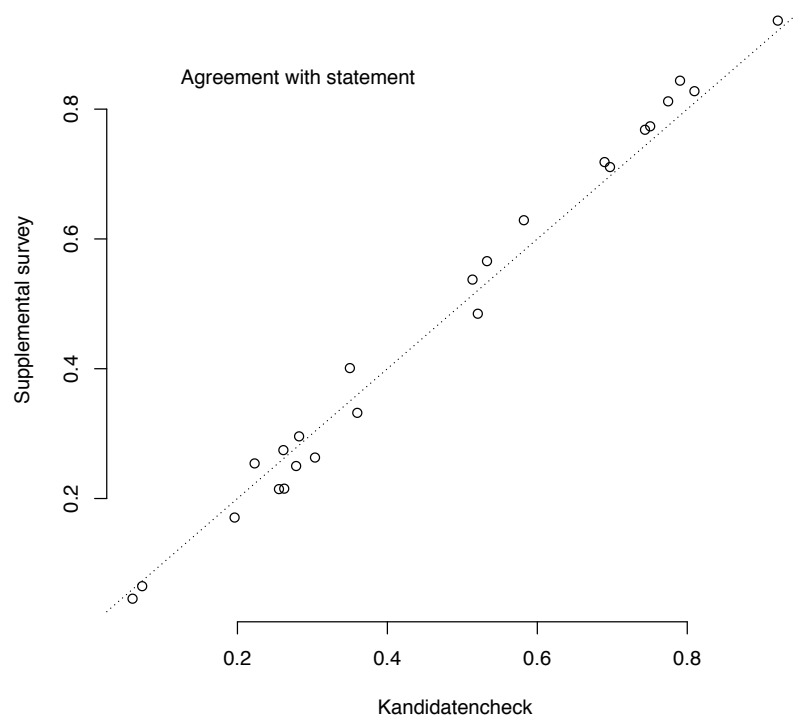


Figure 4.8: The figure displays the mean agreement values for the items in the full sample against the mean values in the subset that took the supplemental survey.

A different way of inspecting the data is to consider the geographical distribution of the policy preferences between electoral districts. This is the most natural application of the data, given the interest of the present research project in the variation of preferences across the districts and how they shape the position-taking of candidates.<sup>11</sup> Figure 4.9 provides a visual representation of the geographical distribution of the relative agreement of respondents to the schooling item in the full sample. The item states that “Children should attend the same

the neutral option. While some of these responses might truly reflect a neutral position toward the issue, there is little doubt that part of the neutral responses are due to an unfamiliarity with the issue.

<sup>11</sup>The geographical location of the respondent is available as they input their zip code so the platform can link the district candidates to the users.

# Schooling

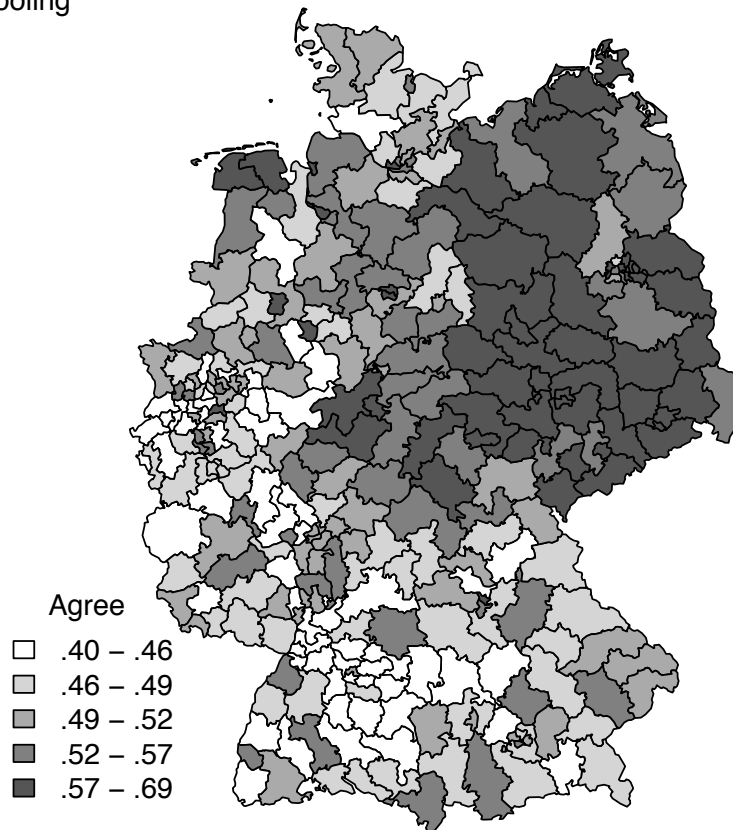


Figure 4.9: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the participants to the item “Children should attend the same school – regardless of origin and abilities” [“Kinder sollen grundsätzlich an einer Schule unterrichtet werden – unabhängig von ihrer Herkunft und ihren Fähigkeiten”; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

school – regardless of origin or abilities.”<sup>12</sup> The per district averages were split up into five equally spaced quantiles and assigned five shades of grey depending on the district membership. A darker colored district represents more agreement to the item among respondents.

East German districts belong overwhelmingly to the group with the greatest overall agreement. There is good reason to assume that this pattern is related to the socialist past of the East German education system which was characterized by more extensive common schooling (Geißler, 2005, 162). It is quite probable that this legacy is viewed positively among East German voters, leading them to agree to this item in greater numbers (Valtin and Rosenfeld, 2001, 843-44). The conclusions at this point must remain somewhat tentative due to the sociodemographic imbalances in the data. Nevertheless, the advantage of considering the raw means is that it is possible to make use of the entire data set of about 480,000 respondents rather than using the subset of those respondents that have taken the supplemental questionnaire.<sup>13</sup>

Suffice one more example for the purpose of exposition. Figure 4.10 displays the geographic distribution of responses to the item on highway construction. Respondents were asked whether they agree that “more money should be spent on highway construction”. As before, darker shaded districts had a greater tendency to respond affirmatively, whereas lighter shades indicate more disagreement. The overall pattern is not as clear in this case, but Western districts with low population densities tend to favor more highway construction, whereas Eastern districts tend to be less favorable. Urban electoral districts display substantially less support for the statement.

Not every one of the statements is subject to such pronounced clustering. Table 4.4 in the appendix of this chapter provides some evidence on the variability of preferences across the districts. It displays the grand mean values for the share of respondents that agreed and for the share of participants that selected the neutral option in the full sample. Column 5 displays the standard deviation of the mean values between the 299 districts. The distribution of preferences varies moderately between the districts.

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<sup>12</sup>“Kinder sollen grundsätzlich an einer Schule unterrichtet werden – unabhängig von ihrer Herkunft und ihren Fähigkeiten.”

<sup>13</sup>Recall, however, that there is considerable variation in participation coverage between the districts – ranging from about 400 respondents in the district “Altmark” to more than 7,000 respondents in the district “Berlin-Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg - Prenzlauer Berg Ost”.

### Highway construction

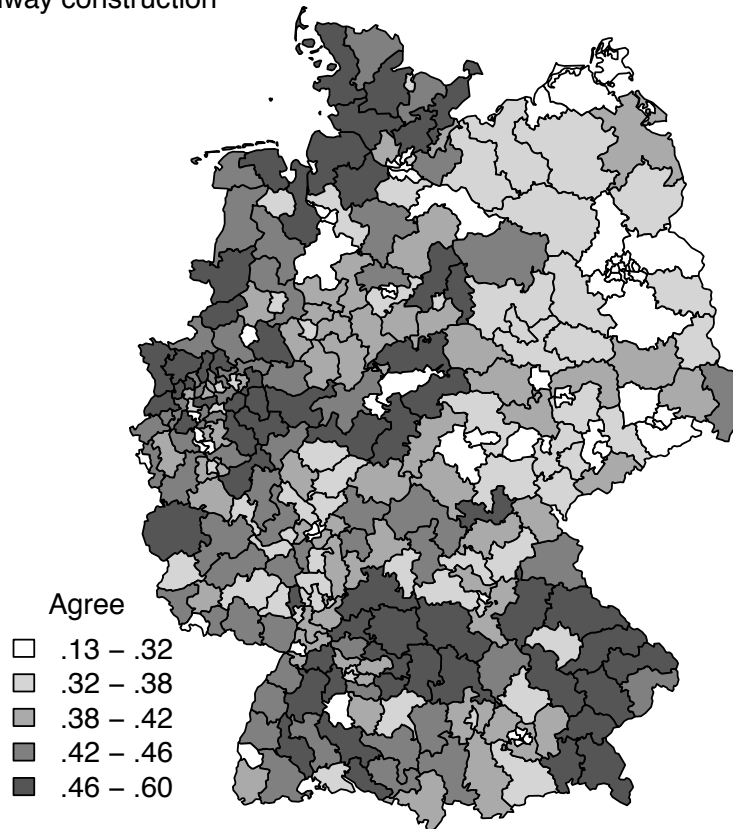


Figure 4.10: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the participants to the item “More money should be spent on highway construction” [“Es soll mehr Geld in den Ausbau von Autobahnen investiert werden”; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

In summary, the content of the policy preferences in the sample exhibit high degrees of face validity, even absent any controls. Evidence of this was provided using the ordering of respondents' political preferences coming through the various forwarding websites. Moreover, the geographical distribution of preferences was inspected for two items. These observations were far from full-fledged analyses but provide some initial indication of the data validity despite the unusual collection. Finally, there are strong imbalances in the data on two levels. First, urban districts are more heavily covered in the sample. Second, and more importantly, the sociodemographic makeup of the sample is strongly unbalanced relative to the federal baseline.<sup>14</sup> The subsequent section introduces a model to correct for these imbalances in order to arrive at more firm conclusions on the small-area policy preferences.

### 4.3 Modeling imbalances

In recent years we have witnessed a growing interest in estimating the policy preferences of subnational geographic units (e.g., Enns and Koch, 2013; Kastellec, Lax and Phillips, 2010; Rodden, 2010; Warshaw and Rodden, 2012), even though the idea of considering the element of geography to explain political outcomes is not new one by a long shot (Miller and Stokes, 1963). The central problem that analysts are faced with when dealing with subnational preference estimation is the rapidly growing data demand (Lax and Phillips, 2009, 109). Consider an ordinary survey of some 2,000 respondents. Running an analysis at the subnational level, one is confronted with small numbers of respondents per geographical unit – or even with non-coverage for some of the units. This problem is less severe in the present application as there is at least a three-digit coverage in each of the electoral districts in the full data set. Nevertheless, this data wealth quickly thins out if one cares to move to a more detailed analysis

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<sup>14</sup>Beside the imbalance regarding the sociodemographic status of the participants, there is an additional concern that can be leveled against the self-selected sample. The inferences on the local policy preferences might be biased due to a higher overall political interest of the users. This imbalance cannot be corrected with the methods that are introduced in the next section as there is no variable in the supplemental survey that would cover this aspect and that could be used to weight users. In fact, it would be difficult to apply political interest in a weighting scheme, as there is no readily available federal baseline of political interest in the population at large. Nevertheless, some of the problem should be taken care of by weighting the respondents according to the manifest sociodemographic indicators. What is more, if political interest was higher among all participants and this interest had the same distorting effect on the preferences of all users, this should lead to a linear transformation of all preference estimates. This issue will be taken up again in section 7.2 along with a discussion of potential remedies in future research.

that does not consider the mean district preference but rather the preference profile of specific party supporters. In extreme cases, there is not a single respondent in rural districts for some of the parties. Moreover, to be able to include information on the sociodemographic status of users, it is necessary to restrict the analysis to the subsample that has responded to the supplemental survey.

The most prominent model in the literature on small-area estimation of preferences is a multilevel regression model with post-stratification (Gelman and Little, 1997; Park, Gelman and Bafumi, 2004; Warshaw and Rodden, 2012). This two-step procedure tries to correct both of the imbalances that are evident in the data. In a first step, a hierarchical model is estimated to borrow strength from the better covered districts. In a second step, the model predictions are gathered for each synthetic combination of sociodemographic variables. The resulting dataset is weighted by the factual prominence of each synthetic type in the district. While the model has been shown to recover local political preferences reasonably well (Warshaw and Rodden, 2012), the downside of the model is that it discards lots of potentially useful information on the spatial distribution of the districts that could be included in an analysis.

In an effort to rectify this shortcoming, Selb and Munzert (2011) have introduced a multi-level model that explicitly includes information on spatial interdependencies between the geographic units. Taking a cue from previous models, Selb and Munzert propose to combine their model with the post-stratification procedure in order to correct for sociodemographic imbalances in the sample. The following paragraphs introduce their model which is applied in this volume. The probability of a “Yes” vote of respondent  $i$  in district  $j$  is modeled as

$$\Pr(y_i = \text{Yes}) = \text{logit}^{-1}(\alpha_{j[i]} + \phi_{j[i]}), \quad (4.1)$$

where  $\phi_j$  represents the constituency-specific deviation that is conditional on all other  $\phi_j$  in the immediate district neighborhood  $k \neq j$ .

$$\phi_j | \phi_k \sim N \left( \frac{\sum_{k \neq j} w_{jk} \phi_k}{\sum_{k \neq j} w_{jk}}, \frac{\sigma_\phi^2}{\sum_{k \neq j} w_{jk}} \right) \quad (4.2)$$



$w$  in the above equation represents a  $J \times J$  adjacency matrix that takes on a value of one if a district  $k$  is a neighbor of district  $j$ . The district level model consists of a constant  $\alpha^0$ , a parameter for the logged district population density as well as a parameter for districts that were part of the German Democratic Republic.  $v_j$  is a second, normally distributed district-level variance parameter that varies identically across all districts.

$$\alpha_j = \alpha^0 + \beta^{\text{density}} \log(\text{density}_j) + \beta^{\text{east}} \text{east}_j + v_j \quad (4.3)$$

$$v_j \sim N(0, \sigma_v^2) \quad (4.4)$$

As pointed out in the previous section, there is a distinct difference between Eastern and Western electoral districts on many of the items. Moreover, rural and urban districts also frequently exhibit differences in their preference profiles. In order to improve the preference estimates, both indicators are included in the model. The effect of the two additional parameters in the district level model is a more accurate estimate of the district preferences by allowing a down-weighting of the neighborhood relationship between urban and non-urban as well as between Western and Non-Western districts. Put differently, a neighborhood relationship between a Western and an Eastern district does not have the same meaning as the neighborhood of two districts from the same geographical region. I have opted for fixed effects and against a modification of the weight matrix  $w_{jk}$  as it seems implausible to set the weights to zero for neighboring districts from East and West. Similarly, there are no firm theoretical grounds to assign arbitrarily smaller weights for these neighborhood relationships relative to relationships between districts from the same region.

Regarding the dependent variable in the model, it is not obvious how to deal with neutral votes. While it would be simple to expand the above model to contain a multinomial or ordinal dependent variable for all three distinct values, it is not straightforward to include the resulting estimates in models that predict candidate position-taking from district preferences. It is unlikely that the position-taking calculus of candidates would be influenced by a small percentage of neutral votes of the electorate.

In order to perform the post-stratification I include several sociodemographic variables in the model, specifically sex, age, education, and prospective vote choice.<sup>15</sup> Stratifying with the prospective vote choice is not ideal as people are notoriously bad at providing their vote intentions in survey situations (Wright, 1993). In the present case, there is the additional shortcoming that the variable might be influenced by the candidate recommendation that respondents receive prior to taking the supplemental survey. Nevertheless, the survey is so skewed in terms of vote intentions that merely correcting for the sociodemographic information is not likely to correct this imbalance. Therefore, I suggest that the lesser of two evils is to include the prospective vote choice in the model and to post-stratify the variable according to the eventual election outcome. The individual vote choice in the equation is thus modeled as

$$\Pr(y_i = \text{Yes}) = \text{logit}^{-1}(a_{j[i]} + \beta^{\text{male}} \text{male}_i + \beta^{\text{age}} \text{age}_i + \beta^{\text{edu}} \text{edu}_i + \beta^{\text{vote}} \text{vote}_i + \phi_{j[i]}) \quad (4.5)$$

For the post-stratification of the estimates I calculate the predicted values for each combination of sociodemographic variables and weight these values with the relative frequency of the synthetic categories in the population. Unfortunately, the relative frequencies of the combinations are not provided by the *Bundeswahlleiter*. Instead, the agency provides access to the marginal frequencies in each district for the sociodemographic variables. An iterative proportional fitting is applied to estimate cell entries from marginal information (cf. Deville, Särndal and Sautory, 1993). The procedure is outlined in detail in (DeBell and Krosnick, 2009).

<sup>15</sup>The age variable is split up into the five age brackets set by the *Bundeswahlleiter* – 18-25, 25-35, 35-60, 60-75, and 75+, where the first is set as baseline category. Education is split into four categories – no education, *Hauptschulabschluss*, *Realschulabschluss*, and *Abitur*, where no education serves as the baseline.

## 4.4 Analysis

This section introduces the results from the estimation procedure. Section 4.4.1 considers the mean district preferences of the entire electorate. Section 4.4.2 turns to the policy preferences of sub-constituencies as there is good reason to assume that candidates do not consider the preferences of all potential voters in the district but rather take cues from voters on their side of the political spectrum.

### 4.4.1 District preferences

Figure 4.11 presents a first result from the model introduced in the previous section. The figure displays the predicted agreement with the item on common schooling, regardless of origin or ability. Darker shaded districts have a higher predicted mean agreement with the item. The substantive interpretation that was made with regard to figure 4.9 does not change. East German districts are still predominantly more likely to exhibit greater degrees of agreement with the item. Similarly, the range of the predicted mean agreements has not shifted dramatically and still lies somewhere between 40 to 70 percent. There is a certain degree of reordering among the Western districts which now come to lie more clearly in preference clusters. More generally, the introduction of the spatial dependencies into the model leads to a more probable distribution of the policy preferences – neighboring districts now display similar values. Consider as a second case the reordered plot for the item on highway construction in figure 4.12. Again, the above interpretation does not have to be recast. The predicted agreement to the item is higher in Western districts relative to the East and is least favored among urban districts.

Figure 4.13 displays the shift in the predicted district preferences between the analysis of mean values in the complete sample and the modeled data in the subsample with sociodemographic information. The rank-ordering of the districts remains, by and large, comparable. Districts that were more favorable of the item in the raw data continue to be so after the procedure. There is, however, a pronounced tendency for the districts to be more favorable toward the item overall. This shift is due to the post-stratification of the respondents which gives higher weights to female, older, less educated and more conservative respondents.

## Schooling

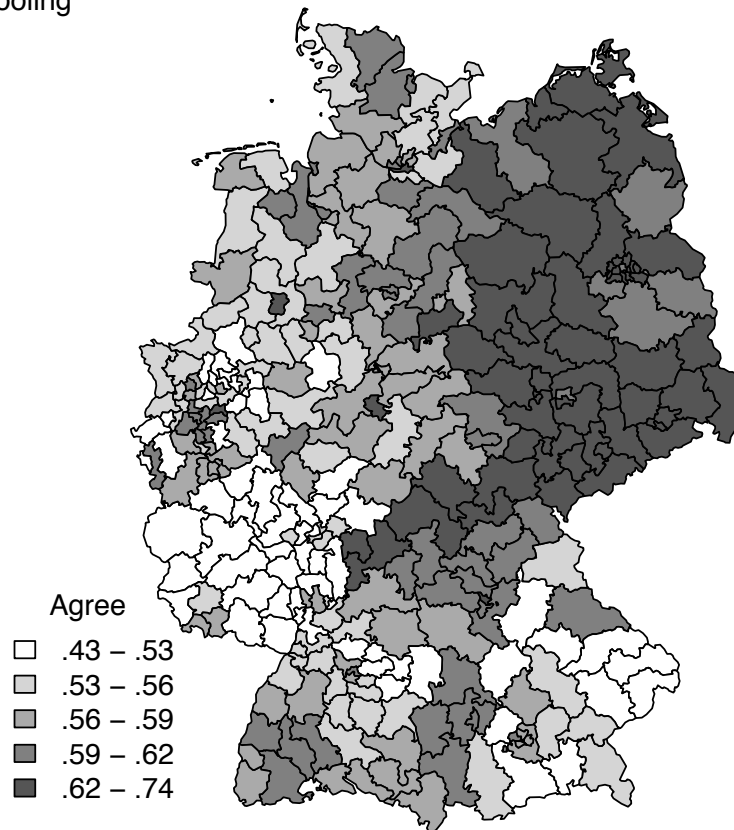


Figure 4.II: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the participants to the item “Children should attend a common school – regardless of their origin and abilities.” [“Kinder sollen grundsätzlich an einer gemeinsamen Schule unterrichtet werden – unabhängig von ihrer Herkunft und ihren Fähigkeiten.”; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

Highway construction

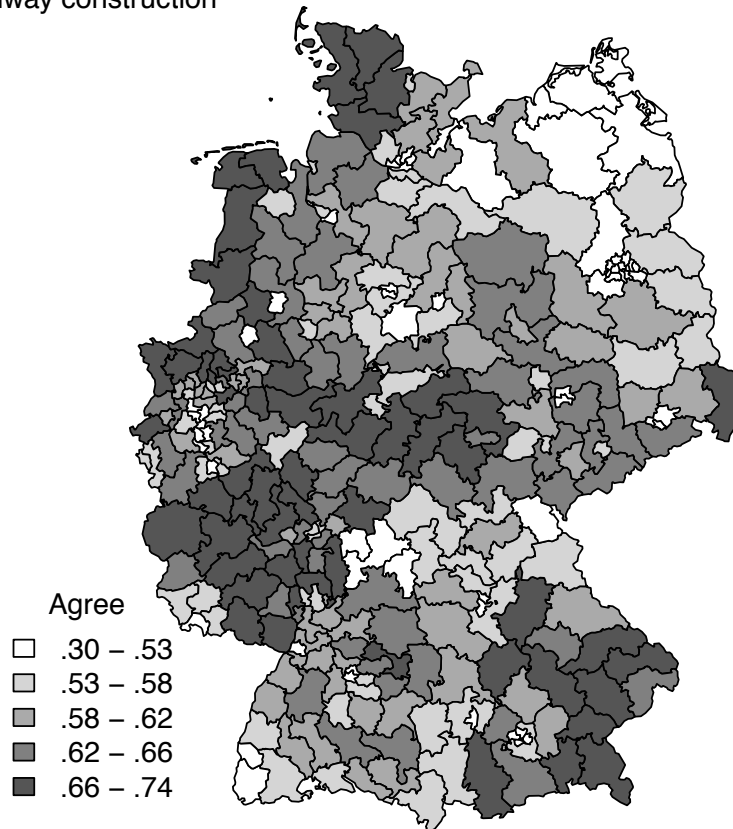


Figure 4.12: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the participants to the item “More money should be spent on highway constructions.” [“Es soll mehr Geld in den Ausbau von Autobahnen investiert werden.”; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

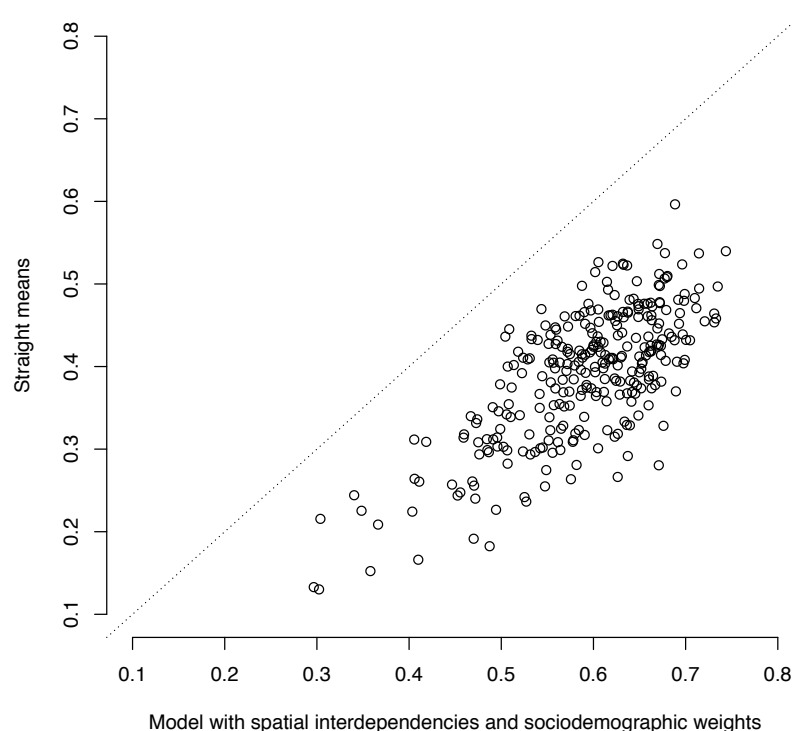


Figure 4.13: The figure displays the shift in the policy preferences of the electoral districts that is due to modeling the responses and weighting the predicted probabilities with the sociodemographic population parameters. The underlying data are the responses to the question on highway construction – “More money should be spent on highway constructions.” The x-axis displays the model predictions the y-axis displays the straight means from the complete data set.

There are controls in the model for East and West German districts. This modeling choice might drive to a certain extent the fact that it is possible to individuate the border of the former German Democratic Republic in many of the plots that are provided in section 8.1 of the appendix (chapter 8). It is unlikely, however, that this is a mere artifact of the proposed model for two reasons. One, the divide between Eastern and Western districts was visible even without any underlying model. Two, in many instances it is possible to clearly individuate the borders of the German *Länder* which are not contained in the model.

Consider the case of Rhineland-Palatinate and the Saarland in the plots of section 8.1. The border between these two states is visible in the district preferences more often than not. It is quite remarkable that the preference gap between the two states is so consistent. For an observer of German politics it might be somewhat counterintuitive that Rhineland-Palatinate should exhibit some of the most conservative district preferences on many of the policies.

There might be some concern that weighting the predicted district preferences with the actual election results might produce this effect. In fact, however, the electoral results in Rhineland-Palatinate should actually bias the preference estimates *against* conservatism. While the Christian Democrats were continuously in power in Rhineland-Palatinate from 1947 to 1987 – often with a comfortable majority –, allegiances shifted in 1991 to the Social Democrats which have been in government ever since. Therefore, weighting with strong electoral results of the Social Democrats should rather decrease the predicted conservatism than increase it. It must therefore be concluded that despite shifting party allegiances, the underlying policy preferences in the state have remained fairly conservative.

Historical borders are a second instance where borders coincide with preference splits. Consider figure 4.14 which displays the predicted district preferences in Bavaria for the issue on high income taxation. The item read “Top earners pay enough taxes”. As before, the darker shaded districts exhibit a greater predicted agreement with the statement relative to the lighter shades. The figure contains the historical borders for the Bavarian regions which serve as administrative units in modern Bavaria. It is possible to clearly distinguish a large degree of congruence between the district preferences and the historical borders. The South-Eastern districts in the regions of *Ober-* and *Niederbayern* are distinct from the regions *Ober-*, *Mittel-* and *Unterfranken* in the North and *Schwaben* in the West.<sup>16</sup> These observations suggest an interesting link to scholarly works that connect differences in policy outcomes to historic-cultural legacies (e.g., Acharya, Blackwell and Sen, 2014; Putnam, Leonardi and Nanetti, 1993).

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 present the model coefficients from the 24 district models. The results are based on 2,000 iterations, where every fifth iteration is kept for calculating the parameter values after a burn-in of 1,000 iterations. The 95% credible intervals are displayed in the square brackets below the model coefficients. Turning to the party coefficients first, the parameters for the prospective vote choice exhibit identical signs for parties from the same ideological camps – both for parties on the right and, to a little lesser degree, on the left. Moreover, the strength of the parameter is usually stronger for supporters of parties that are more extreme

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<sup>16</sup>The Bavarian regions were collected from [http://www.wahlen.bayern.de/kw/plz\\_frame2013.htm](http://www.wahlen.bayern.de/kw/plz_frame2013.htm) (Last accessed January 15, 2014).

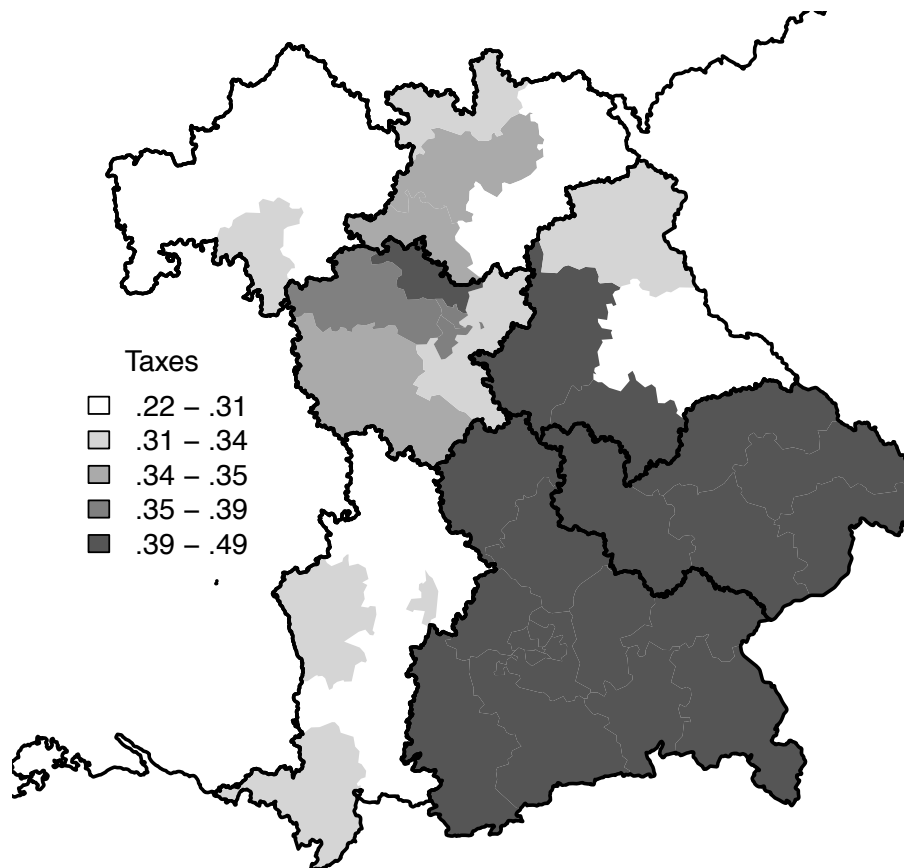


Figure 4.14: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses in the regions of Bavaria among the participants to the item “Top earners pay enough taxes.” [“Topverdiener zahlen derzeit ausreichend Steuern.”; translation D.N.]. The displayed electoral districts are a subset of an analysis with all 299 districts. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.



Table 4.1: Model coefficients from district preference models (*continued in next table*)

	Thesis	Constant	Density	East	Vote choice				
					CDU	SPD	FDP	Grüne	Linke
1	Internet surveillance	-2.48 [2.88,-2.07]	-0.07 [-.11,-.03]	-0.06 [-.22,.11]	1.47 [1.33,1.60]	-1.4 [-1.30,.02]	.76 [.57,.96]	-.65 [-.84,-.46]	-.96 [-1.22,-.74]
2	Whistleblowers	.295 [2.51,3.30]	.06 [.02,.11]	.16 [-.02,.35]	-1.61 [-1.73,-1.48]	-.45 [.35,.63]	-1.58 [-1.74,-1.41]	-.98 [-1.41,.19]	1.55 [.95,1.55]
3	Referenda	3.34 [3.05,3.60]	-.08 [-.12,-.04]	.15 [-.05,.33]	-.02 [-.213,-1.92]	-1.00 [-1.11,-.89]	-1.99 [-2.12,-1.86]	-.67 [-.79,-.56]	.52 [.36,.69]
4	Donations to parties	1.26 [1.03,1.51]	-.03 [-.07,-.01]	.15 [.01,.27]	-1.61 [-1.70,-1.52]	-.39 [-.47,-.30]	-2.16 [-2.29,-2.04]	.16 [.07,.25]	1.42 [1.26,1.56]
5	Taxes	-1.23 [-1.50,-.87]	.01 [-.03,.05]	-.16 [-.35,.04]	1.45 [1.37,1.54]	-1.10 [-1.21,-1.01]	2.34 [2.21,2.47]	-1.27 [-1.36,-1.17]	-2.16 [-2.33,-2.00]
6	Tax evasion	.30 [.07,.51]	-.02 [-.05,-.00]	.03 [-.07,.14]	.01 [-.07,.10]	-1.04 [-1.12,-.96]	.80 [.70,.91]	-.97 [-1.05,-.88]	-.92 [-1.01,-.82]
7	Financial market regulation	1.09 [.83,1.37]	-.03 [-.07,-.00]	-.02 [-.15,.11]	-.75 [-.85,-.67]	-.01 [-.09,.08]	-1.52 [-1.63,-1.41]	.08 [.00,.16]	.81 [.70,.92]
8	Immigration	.58 [-3.50,1.39]	-.03 [-.14,-.58]	.12 [-.22,1.46]	1.05 [.95,1.15]	-.34 [-.41,-.27]	1.30 [1.15,1.45]	-1.09 [-1.17,-1.01]	-1.29 [-1.38,-1.21]
9	Public utilities	2.25 [1.96,2.60]	.02 [-.03,.06]	.07 [-.13,.27]	-1.12 [-1.22,-1.01]	.15 [.04,.27]	-1.94 [-2.07,-1.82]	.41 [.39,.52]	1.24 [1.05,1.44]
10	Arms transfer	1.89 [1.62,2.18]	.03 [-.00,.06]	.26 [.12,.39]	-.94 [-1.03,-.84]	.54 [.45,.64]	-1.19 [-1.30,-1.06]	1.16 [1.04,1.29]	1.65 [1.46,1.84]
11	Temporary staff	-.92 [-1.22,-.73]	-.03 [-.06,-.00]	-.24 [-.36,-.13]	1.08 [.99,1.15]	-.34 [-.42,-.26]	1.68 [1.58,1.79]	-.48 [-.56,-.39]	-1.41 [-1.54,-1.29]
12	Wages	2.58 [2.11,3.00]	-.04 [-.09,.02]	.33 [.06,.57]	-.49 [-.69,-.30]	.55 [.33,.77]	-1.47 [-1.66,-1.29]	.63 [.42,.86]	1.00 [.71,1.32]
13	Minimum wage	-1.29 [-1.52,-.98]	-.05 [-.08,-.01]	-.03 [-.19,.11]	1.51 [1.43,1.60]	-1.23 [-1.34,-1.10]	2.26 [2.15,2.39]	-1.40 [-1.52,-1.28]	-2.15 [-2.34,-1.99]
14	Retirement age	-2.36 [-2.61,-2.12]	.10 [.07,.13]	-.17 [-.36,-.01]	.69 [.61,.77]	.17 [.09,.25]	1.19 [1.09,1.30]	.59 [.51,.66]	-1.10 [-1.21,-.99]
15	Highway construction	1.08 [.56,3.03]	-.22 [-.52,-.15]	-.14 [-.65,.09]	1.15 [1.05,1.24]	.09 [.00,.17]	1.29 [1.14,1.43]	-.13 [-.15,-.104]	-1.04 [-1.15,-.94]
16	Power supply	2.37 [1.98,2.69]	-.02 [-.05,.03]	-.01 [-.18,.17]	-.96 [-1.07,-.85]	.37 [.24,.50]	-1.47 [-1.60,-1.33]	1.19 [1.02,1.37]	1.58 [1.35,1.83]
17	Fracking	-2.16 [-2.51,-1.81]	-.08 [-.12,-.03]	.23 [.03,.44]	.93 [.80,1.04]	-.27 [-.41,-.13]	1.38 [1.44,1.72]	-1.48 [-1.69,-1.28]	-1.15 [-1.36,-.95]
18	EU competencies	-1.39 [-1.69,-.02]	.09 [-.12,.13]	-.02 [-.24,.13]	.09 [-.01,.8]	.83 [.75,.91]	.19 [.06,.31]	1.24 [1.15,1.32]	.42 [.33,.51]
19	Austerity	-1.61 [-.557,-.81]	.20 [.08,.31]	.28 [-.01,.25]	-1.13 [-1.23,-1.04]	.54 [.47,.62]	-1.29 [-1.42,-1.16]	.91 [.83,.99]	1.58 [1.48,1.67]
20	Family subsidies	1.47 [1.17,1.76]	.13 [.10,.16]	.37 [.25,.51]	-.75 [-.84,-.65]	.63 [.52,.74]	-.73 [-.86,-.60]	1.17 [1.04,1.31]	.88 [.74,1.02]
21	Schooling	.69 [-.55,5.67]	-.10 [-.88,.09]	.13 [-1.02,.90]	-.85 [-.94,-.77]	.69 [.62,.76]	-1.11 [-1.22,-.98]	.89 [.82,.97]	1.31 [1.22,1.40]
22	Health insurance	-.10 [-.31,.10]	-.06 [-.09,-.03]	-.36 [-.49,-.24]	1.30 [1.22,1.38]	-.24 [-.32,-.17]	1.70 [1.56,1.82]	-.60 [-.68,-.52]	-1.24 [-1.37,-1.13]
23	Gender balance	-.89 [-1.41,2.28]	.05 [-.44,.13]	-.08 [-.75,.15]	-.49 [-.60,-.38]	-.94 [.85,1.02]	-1.13 [-1.32,-.93]	1.37 [1.28,1.45]	1.26 [1.16,1.35]
24	Same-sex adoption	1.15 [.90,1.45]	.14 [.11,.17]	.12 [-.05,.33]	-.66 [-.74,-.58]	.80 [.71,.89]	-1.12 [-.25,-.00]	1.45 [1.34,1.56]	1.06 [.94,1.16]

The table displays the model parameters for the district models on the 24 policy items. The dependent variable is the individual “Yes” vote. District specific model terms are not displayed. Results are based on 2,000 iterations. The first 1,000 iterations were discarded as burn-in. Every fifth iteration was kept for calculating the model parameters. The complete statements are presented in the appendix (chapter 8). The baseline category for the vote choice are all other parties. The model coefficients are continued in table 4.1.

Table 4.2: Model coefficients from district preference models (*continued*)

Thesis	Male	Education				Age			
		Haupt- schule	Real- schule	Abi- tur	25- 35	35- 60	60- 75	75+	
1 Internet surveillance	.09 [-.03,-.21]	-.20 [-.50,-.12]	-.25 [-.50,-.04]	-.58 [-.82,-.33]	-.12 [-.30,-.08]	.11 [-.05,-.28]	.64 [.46,.83]	1.18 [.83,1.50]	
2 Whistleblowers	-.54 [-.66,-.42]	.37 [.02,.72]	-.28 [.01,.57]	.19 [-.06,.46]	-.09 [-.09,-.27]	-.03 [-.18,.13]	-.11 [-.31,-.09]	-.17 [-.55,-.24]	
3 Referenda	-.26 [-.33,-.19]	.82 [.53,1.09]	.60 [.40,.80]	-.39 [-.57,-.19]	.02 [-.08,-.12]	.10 [.01,.20]	.14 [.02,.27]	-.17 [-.44,-.10]	
4 Donations to parties	-.46 [-.52,-.39]	.66 [.45,.87]	.50 [.33,.65]	.06 [-.08,-.20]	.41 [.32,.51]	.57 [.47,.66]	.78 [.67,.89]	.74 [.48,1.02]	
5 Taxes	.17 [.10,.24]	-.47 [-.71,-.24]	-.49 [-.69,-.31]	.03 [-.15,-.20]	.09 [-.02,-.18]	.32 [.33,.42]	-.01 [-.14,-.12]	-.16 [-.45,-.14]	
6 Tax evasion	-.34 [-.40,-.28]	.05 [-.15,-.24]	.06 [-.10,-.22]	-.11 [-.25,-.03]	-.21 [-.29,-.12]	-.41 [-.49,-.33]	-.57 [-.68,-.48]	-.54 [-.79,-.32]	
7 Financial market regulation	.24 [.18,.29]	.35 [.14,.55]	.29 [.14,.46]	-.10 [-.25,-.06]	-.02 [-.07,-.10]	.24 [.17,.32]	.45 [.34,.55]	.43 [.19,.68]	
8 Immigration	.35 [.29,.41]	.64 [.45,.84]	.57 [.40,.72]	-.15 [-.29,-.02]	-.10 [-.18,-.02]	.15 [.07,.24]	.33 [.23,.44]	.55 [.29,.82]	
9 Public utilities	-.12 [-.21,-.05]	.16 [.09,.44]	.30 [.09,.53]	.16 [-.05,.36]	-.26 [-.38,-.14]	-.24 [-.35,-.13]	.16 [-.00,.33]	.28 [-.08,.66]	
10 Arms transfer	-.96 [-1.06,-.87]	.24 [.01,.49]	.17 [-.05,.36]	.19 [-.00,.37]	.15 [.04,.25]	.27 [.16,.37]	.49 [.37,.64]	.38 [.07,.70]	
11 Temporary staff	.31 [.25,.38]	-.45 [-.65,-.24]	-.09 [-.24,-.08]	-.01 [-.14,-.15]	-.21 [-.30,-.11]	-.19 [-.28,-.12]	-.47 [-.59,-.36]	-.67 [-.96,-.40]	
12 Wages	-.14 [-.29,-.00]	.59 [.21,.97]	.74 [.43,1.02]	.68 [.43,-.90]	.60 [.41,.77]	.67 [.52,.84]	.91 [.65,1.19]	.65 [.12,1.21]	
13 Minimum wage	.35 [.27,.42]	-.21 [-.43,-.02]	-.31 [-.50,-.14]	-.03 [-.19,-.12]	-.05 [-.06,-.16]	-.06 [-.16,-.04]	.27 [.15,.40]	.75 [.44,1.03]	
14 Retirement age	.61 [.56,.67]	-.12 [-.13,-.90]	-.76 [-.95,-.57]	.42 [.26,.58]	.15 [.06,.24]	.21 [.14,.29]	.60 [.50,.70]	1.32 [.109,1.56]	
15 Highway construction	.80 [.75,.87]	.48 [.30,.66]	.30 [.14,.45]	-.28 [-.40,-.14]	-.05 [-.14,-.04]	-.11 [-.19,-.03]	.09 [-.01,-.19]	.30 [.05,.55]	
16 Power supply	-.48 [-.58,-.39]	.56 [.27,.85]	.43 [.19,.65]	.10 [-.00,-.30]	.24 [.11,.37]	.34 [.21,.45]	.38 [.23,.54]	.11 [-.21,-.44]	
17 Fracking	.67 [.55,.80]	.13 [-.17,.44]	.02 [-.22,-.30]	-.16 [-.37,-.09]	-.24 [-.39,-.08]	-.31 [-.45,-.18]	-.08 [-.25,-.08]	.15 [-.17,-.51]	
18 EU competencies	.40 [.35,.46]	-.31 [-.47,-.14]	-.42 [-.56,-.29]	-.06 [-.19,-.06]	-.22 [-.31,-.14]	-.56 [-.64,-.49]	-.50 [-.61,-.41]	-.25 [-.48,-.01]	
19 Austerity	.10 [.05,.16]	-.17 [-.36,-.01]	-.25 [-.39,-.08]	.11 [-.02,-.26]	-.07 [-.16,-.02]	-.10 [-.17,-.02]	.31 [.22,.42]	.59 [.35,.83]	
20 Family subsidies	-.15 [-.22,-.06]	.01 [-.24,-.28]	-.07 [-.30,-.15]	.06 [-.18,-.26]	-.11 [-.24,-.01]	-.59 [-.70,-.48]	-.96 [-.109,-.83]	-.00 [.127,-.71]	
21 Schooling	-.05 [-.10,-.01]	.58 [.39,.76]	.22 [.07,.36]	-.04 [-.18,-.09]	.10 [.02,.18]	.01 [-.06,-.08]	.28 [.18,.38]	.26 [.04,.51]	
22 Health insurance	.01 [-.05,-.06]	-.03 [-.22,-.13]	.01 [-.15,-.15]	-.16 [-.30,-.04]	-.35 [-.44,-.26]	-.20 [-.29,-.12]	.15 [.05,.25]	.36 [.13,.58]	
23 Gender balance	-.126 [-.132,-.120]	-.17 [-.38,-.02]	-.49 [-.66,-.32]	-.18 [-.32,-.02]	.06 [-.03,.15]	.13 [.05,.22]	.42 [.32,.52]	.50 [.25,.74]	
24 Same-sex adoption	-.73 [-.80,-.66]	-.16 [-.36,-.03]	.07 [-.12,-.25]	.23 [.05,.40]	-.12 [-.24,-.00]	-.81 [-.91,-.71]	-.16 [-.174,-.150]	-.09 [-.233,-.188]	

The table displays the model parameters for the district models on the 24 policy items. The dependent variable is the individual "Yes" vote. District specific model terms are not displayed. Results are based on 2,000 iterations. The first 1,000 iterations were discarded as burn-in. Every fifth iteration was kept for calculating the model parameters. The complete statements are presented in the appendix (chapter 8). The baseline category for the education variable is no education, the baseline category for the age variable are respondents 18-25.

on the issue. This suggests that the predicted preferences of party supporters are generally well aligned with ideological camps.<sup>17</sup>

Turning to the model coefficients for age and education, most of the coefficients are rank-ordered plausibly. Consider model 24 that analyzes the preferences for the adoption of children by same-sex couples. The coefficient for respondents with a *Hauptschulabschluss* is negative on average, the coefficient for respondents with a *Realschulabschluss* is indistinguishable from zero, and respondents with the highest level of schooling are most likely to agree with the statement. The effect sizes are relatively small, however, particularly when compared to the parameter values for the age dummies. Again, the rank-ordering of the age coefficients are plausible. Opposition to the statement increases with each age group. The estimated coefficient for the age group of respondents 60 and older exhibit the greatest degree of opposition to the item.<sup>18</sup>

To summarize, the multilevel models have yielded plausible predictions for the mean district agreement on most of the items. The inclusion of the neighborhood matrix produces a smoother, more convincing geographical clustering of the preferences. It could also be shown that post-stratifying the model predictions leads to a substantial shift of the predicted district agreement relative to the unweighted mean predictions. Moreover, in many instances the German *Länder* borders are visible in the plots despite the fact that there are no model parameters containing this information. In discussing the example of Rhineland-Palatinate it was suggested that this observation cannot be a mere artifact of the post-stratification procedure as the electoral results of Rhineland-Palatinate should bias the results *against* conservatism, not in favor of it. Even historical borders are evident in the preference configurations, suggesting that political borders have lasting effects on small-area policy preferences. Finally,

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<sup>17</sup>For an exception to this general rule consider the retirement issue. The statement read “Since people live longer they should work longer.” The model parameters for supporters of the Green party and the Social Democrats are positive whereas supporters of Die Linke are less likely to agree with the statement relative to the baseline. The greater likelihood of non-identically signed model parameters for supporters of left parties can be taken as evidence that there is greater policy disagreement among the left compared to the right. In all fairness, one should add that it is more probable that three coefficients do not align compared to two. What is more, it is conceivable that the cleavages between left-wing party supporters are not greater than cleavages among right-wing supporters but rather that the content of the 24 items separates left party supporters better than right party supporters.

<sup>18</sup>Incidentally, the coefficient for the FDP supporters on the same-sex adoption item is slightly negative. This might indicate that support for the Free Democrats is not driven by their stance on moral policies but rather by their positions on economic issues.

I argued that the model coefficients align nicely with *a priori* expectations. Specifically, the coefficients for the prospective vote choices provide evidence of a bimodal structure of the German party supporters. After investigating the mean district preferences in some detail, I now turn to the policy preferences of sub-constituencies.

#### 4.4.2 Supporter preferences

Up to this point, the mean policy preferences of the districts were considered. It is not immediately clear that candidates are well advised to take position-taking cues from the mean voter in the district. The classical median voter theorem explicitly considers a two-competitor situation where the best option for both actors is to stake out positions that are identical to the median voter position (Downs, 1957). Translating this finding to a multi-party system has proven difficult and the optimal position remains elusive (cf. Schofield, 2003, 2004). In fact, there might be different position-taking incentives for competitors in a multi-party system. Niche parties might be more inclined to stake out positions close to a sub-constituency, whereas the two major competitors might orient themselves towards the median voter.

In order to test the effects of sub-constituencies on position-taking, this section subsets the respondents into party supporters. There are two obvious sub-constituencies that candidates might take position-taking incentives from – party supporters or supporters on the same side of the ideological spectrum. Estimating single party supporters' preferences is difficult from a technical point of view. Despite the size of the dataset, there is a considerable data sparsity when running such a fine-grained analysis. Consider the sample size of roughly 35,000 respondents. Out of these some 2,000 – or about 6% – have responded that they intend to cast their list vote for the FDP. Taking into account that there are 299 electoral districts in Germany, one is left with some 5-10 respondents per electoral district which is fairly little to base an estimate on. In fact, this figure paints an overly optimistic picture as the coverage across the electoral districts is far from uniform and the sociodemographic make-up of the sample is not nearly comparable to the population baseline. Thus, despite modeling neighborhood relationships, there is too little data for single party models.

One alternative to running a model with the subset of party supporters is to take the full model, as presented in tables 4.1 and 4.2, and get the predictions for the party supporters weighted by the prevalence of the different sociodemographic categories. It was pointed out in the previous section that the rank-ordering of the prospective vote choice coefficients are in line with prior expectations. Table 4.5 in the appendix of this chapter presents the post-stratified model predictions from the full models. The table presents the grand means for the preferences of party supporters and the standard deviations of the means across the electoral districts. The estimates clearly reflect the values of the vote choice parameters and thus yield a plausible image of the party supporters' preferences.

The downside of this analysis are, however, that predictions are generated from a model that contains information on respondents that explicitly label themselves as supporters of other parties. The alternative to such an analysis is to subset the data from the start and to run the model on the subset. The data sparsity problems that are associated with such an analysis have been commented on above. A middle ground between the two options is to include a broader subset of respondents in an analysis. From a theoretical point of view, this is not implausible. Candidates might not want to position themselves with respect to their core constituency but to make a somewhat broader appeal to potential voters, for example to voters from the same ideological camp.

There are several variables in the dataset that allow splitting voters into ideological camps. Most notably, there is the ideological self-placement, the party feeling thermometers and the prospective vote choices. While the former two variables offer interesting possibilities they are difficult to apply in practice as there is no readily available population baseline that can be accessed for a weighting of the respondents. Consequently, I rely on the prospective vote choice as before and create two subsets of the data – one with respondents whose prospective vote choice contains the FDP or the CDU/CSU and one which contains respondents with party preferences of SPD, Die Linke or Bündnis 90/Die Grünen.

One problem with such a binary subsetting of the respondents is that it reflects a one-dimensional view of the German political system where political preferences are structured along a single, overarching left-right scale. Several scholars have argued that the German political system is better conceptualized as two-dimensional, where the first dimension sep-

arates parties and voters along an economic dimension and the second dimension along a liberal-conservative divide (Bräuninger and Debus, 2012; Pappi and Brandenburg, 2009; Pappi and Shikano, 2005). Even in a two-dimensional world, the left-wing-parties SPD, Die Linke and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen fall on the same side of the political spectrum. It is more difficult, however, to maintain that CDU/CSU and FDP are on the same sides of these two dividing lines. Instead, both parties should be expected to take similar stances on economic issues, but differ distinctly on a moral policy scale where the FDP holds more liberal views compared to the Christian Democrats. While these remarks are generally valid, they seem to be less of a concern for the dataset that is employed here. Discussing the model parameters from tables 4.1 and 4.2, it was pointed out that the parameter values for the Christian Democrats and the FDP generally have the same sign, suggesting that supporters of the two parties fall on identical sides on most of the 24 issues in the survey.<sup>19</sup>

To summarize, supporter preferences cannot be estimated for each party separately as there is not enough information to run the models. Instead, supporter preferences are estimated in the two ideological camps. This is theoretically sound as candidates might want to broaden their appeal beyond their core constituents without trying to tailor their message to the district electorate as a whole. It was suggested that subsetting the respondents into the two ideological camps is not problematic as there seem to be coherent policy preferences within the two ideological camps. Finally, subsetting the respondents prior to running the model yields cleaner supporter preferences rather than generating values from the full model. The sample is split according to vote intention instead of the available alternatives such as the ideological self-placements as information on the true sociodemographic features of the party supporters is needed to post-stratify the estimates.

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<sup>19</sup>This congruence might very well be more indicative of the surveys' content rather than invalidate the concerns of the previous paragraph. In terms of substance, there are few moral policy items in the survey. Many of the issues have an economic core which suggests a similar stance of the two parties' supporters and some of the moral policy items are almost unanimous. Consider the item on prohibiting arms transfers to conflict regions. There is an overwhelming majority of respondents that agrees with the item such that the negative coefficients for the right-wing party supporters does not chip away much from the high agreement baseline. Above and beyond these remarks there is, however, some indication that the two-dimensionality of the German political systems plays a less prominent role for the allegiances of the party supporters in the sample. Consider the negative FDP coefficient on the issue of same-sex couples' adoption. While the size of the effect is small, it is an indication that the supporter base is less liberal on moral policies than party headquarters.

Schooling

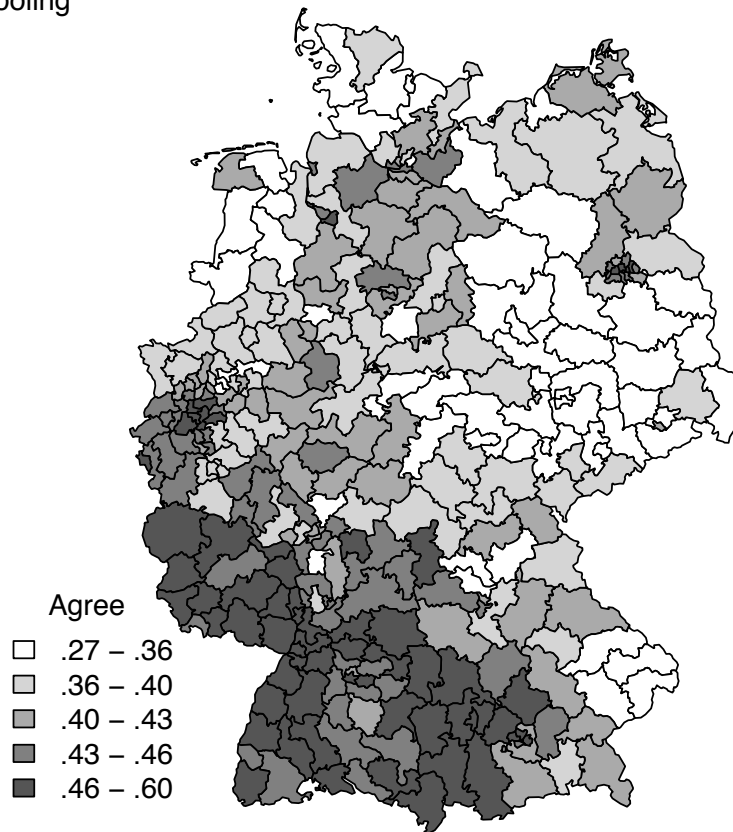


Figure 4.15: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the right-wing supporters to the item “Children should attend a common school – regardless of their origin and abilities.” [“Kinder sollen grundsätzlich an einer gemeinsamen Schule unterrichtet werden – unabhängig von ihrer Herkunft und ihren Fähigkeiten.”; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

## Schooling

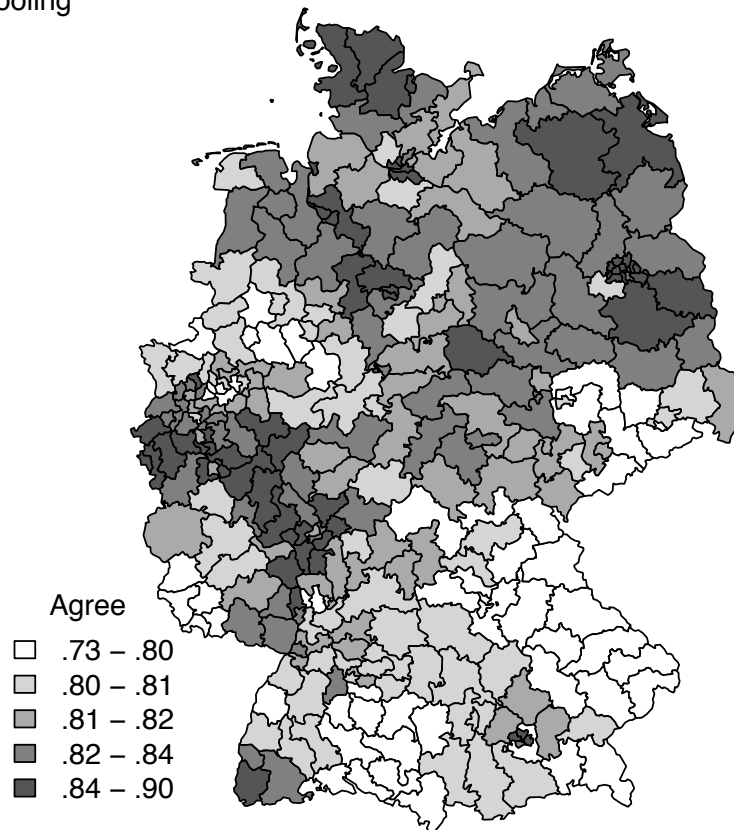


Figure 4.16: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the left-wing supporters to the item “Children should attend a common school – regardless of their origin and abilities.” [“Kinder sollen grundsätzlich an einer gemeinsamen Schule unterrichtet werden – unabhängig von ihrer Herkunft und ihren Fähigkeiten.”; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.



Figure 4.15 presents the geographic distribution of right-wing supporters on the issue of common schooling for all children.<sup>20</sup> As before, darker shaded electoral districts exhibit greater support for the statement that all children should be schooled together – regardless of origin or ability. Compared to the mean district preference that is displayed in figure 4.11, the overall support for the issue is smaller among right-wing party supporters and ranges somewhere between 30 and 60% compared to 40 and 70% in the full model. Notice further that subsetting the data has dramatically shifted the regions with strong support for the issue from the East to the South-West. In this case, it is predominantly the left-leaning voters in the Eastern districts that drive the mean policy orientation of the overall district preferences.

Compare these observations to figure 4.16 which displays the model for the same item with the subset of respondents that identify themselves as supporters of left-leaning parties. As expected, the mean agreement with the statement is greater on average. In fact, the predicted least district agreement for left-wing supporters is greater than the highest predicted value for the right-wing supporters. In terms of the geographic distribution, support for the item is greater in East and North German districts. There are also several predicted strongholds in West Germany. Conversely, the item shows least support among left-wing supporters in southern Germany. Interestingly, several districts in Saxony, close to the Czech border, are among the ones with the least amount of support for the item. It seems that the local smoothing has increased the predicted support in these districts in the full model.

## 4.5 Conclusion

It is notoriously difficult to estimate the effects of local public preferences on position-taking of candidates. The dataset introduced in this chapter provides a unique opportunity to researchers who care to analyze the electoral link of political communication. The data that was introduced in this and the previous chapter offer a number of features that are rarely available in research on candidate position-taking.

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<sup>20</sup>Again, a visual representation of the district preferences for all items divided by party supporters is provided in the appendix (chapter 8.)

Regarding candidates, there is structured information on publicly voiced positions of most candidates that ran in the election. Notably, unlike many indirect measures of position-taking, like roll-call votes, that are subject to pressures above and beyond the mere communication environment, the data at hand represents true position-taking. Furthermore, it is possible to capture candidate position-taking at the level of single policies rather than at the level of aggregate left-right scales. Regarding voters, the data provides access to preferences on identical issues that the candidates have positioned themselves on. The data set on voter preferences is large enough to allow a subsetting of the data in two important respects. It is possible to capture local variations in preference configurations and even among sub-constituencies.

This chapter served two principal purposes. One, it introduced the voter part of the survey, its content and validity. Two, a model was proposed to correct for two types of imbalances in the data – an uneven coverage in the electoral districts and a severely unbalanced sample regarding all ordinary sociodemographic variables. The model contained a multilevel component that provides a smoothing of preferences in the less covered districts. It explicitly includes information on local neighborhood relationships in order to improve the accuracy of the model output. In a second step the model predictions were post-stratified according to the population baseline to capture the district preferences as accurately as possible.

In the first part of the chapter it was suggested that despite the imbalances in the data, the preference clusters absent any controls are not implausible. The rank-ordering of the local policy preferences do not change dramatically after introducing the multilevel model. They do, however, exhibit some systematic linear shifts due to the weighting of the respondents according to population parameters. In a final step, sub-constituency preferences were introduced, specifically the policy preferences among respondents in the two ideological camps.

## 4.6 Appendix

Table 4.3: Sociodemographic content of voter survey

Variable	N	%	Baseline
Gender			
Male	23,484	.68	.49
Female	10,860	.32	.51
Age group			
18– <25	4,684	.14	.08
25– <35	8,954	.26	.12
35– <60	15,683	.45	.37
60– <75	4,531	.13	.17
75+	451	.01	.10
Schooling			
No degree	669	.02	.06
<i>Hauptschule</i>	1,762	.05	.19
<i>Realschule</i>	5,436	.16	.39
<i>Abitur</i>	26,586	.77	.37
Prospective list vote			
CDU/CSU	4,786	.15	.415
SPD	7,038	.21	.257
FDP	2,042	.06	.048
Grüne	7,137	.22	.084
Linke	4,606	.14	.086
Piraten	3,466	.11	.022
A different party	3,901	.12	.088

The federal baseline for the sociodemographic variables is provided by the *Bundeswahlleiter*. It can be accessed at [http://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/de/bundestagswahlen/BTW\\_BUND\\_13/strukturdaten/StruktBtwkr2013.csv](http://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/de/bundestagswahlen/BTW_BUND_13/strukturdaten/StruktBtwkr2013.csv) (Last accessed October 18, 2013). The baseline values for the prospective vote choices are the actual vote choices from the federal elections on September 22, 2013.

Table 4.4: Variability of policy preferences across districts

Thesis	Mean Yes	Mean Neutral	SD(Yes) across districts
Internet surveillance	.06	.08	.01
Fracking	.07	.26	.02
Minimum wage	.20	.11	.03
Gender balance	.22	.17	.04
Retirement age	.26	.17	.05
Temporary staff	.26	.11	.04
Taxes	.26	.17	.04
EU competencies	.28	.24	.03
Tax evasion	.28	.16	.03
Health insurance	.30	.17	.05
Austerity	.35	.22	.05
Highway construction	.36	.30	.08
Schooling	.51	.12	.06
Immigration	.52	.19	.07
Donations to parties	.53	.24	.03
Financial markets	.58	.17	.03
Referenda	.69	.15	.05
Same-sex adoption	.70	.13	.06
Arms transfer	.74	.13	.03
Family subsidies	.75	.13	.04
Public utilities	.77	.10	.04
Whistleblowers	.79	.15	.02
Power supply	.81	.10	.02
Wages	.92	.04	.02

The table displays the percentage of “Yes” and “Neutral” positions in the full sample. Column 4 displays the standard deviation of the mean values in the electoral districts for the “Yes” responses.

Table 4.5: Weighted model predictions for party supporters

	Issue	CDU		SPD		FDP		Grüne		Linke	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	Internet surveillance	.20	(.02)	.05	(.01)	.11	(.01)	.03	(.00)	.02	(.00)
2	Whistleblowers	.84	(.01)	.98	(.00)	.84	(.01)	.99	(.00)	.99	(.00)
3	Referenda	.72	(.05)	.87	(.03)	.73	(.04)	.90	(.02)	.97	(.01)
4	Donations to parties	.53	(.03)	.79	(.02)	.40	(.03)	.86	(.01)	.96	(.00)
5	Taxes	.56	(.04)	.09	(.02)	.75	(.03)	.08	(.01)	.04	(.01)
6	Tax evasion	.41	(.02)	.20	(.01)	.60	(.02)	.21	(.01)	.22	(.01)
7	Financial markets	.65	(.02)	.80	(.01)	.47	(.02)	.81	(.01)	.90	(.01)
8	Immigration	.88	(.03)	.67	(.06)	.91	(.02)	.50	(.06)	.45	(.06)
9	Public utilities	.78	(.04)	.93	(.01)	.61	(.05)	.94	(.01)	.97	(.01)
10	Arms transfer	.75	(.02)	.93	(.01)	.70	(.02)	.96	(.00)	.97	(.00)
11	Temporary staff	.42	(.03)	.15	(.01)	.57	(.03)	.13	(.01)	.06	(.01)
12	Wages	.96	(.01)	.98	(.00)	.89	(.01)	.99	(.00)	.99	(.00)
13	Minimum wage	.51	(.02)	.07	(.00)	.69	(.02)	.06	(.00)	.03	(.00)
14	Retirement age	.34	(.05)	.25	(.04)	.44	(.05)	.32	(.04)	.09	(.02)
15	Highway construction	.78	(.06)	.57	(.08)	.80	(.06)	.30	(.06)	.32	(.07)
16	Power supply	.83	(.01)	.95	(.00)	.75	(.02)	.98	(.00)	.98	(.00)
17	Fracking	.19	(.04)	.07	(.02)	.31	(.05)	.02	(.01)	.03	(.01)
18	EU competencies	.23	(.03)	.39	(.04)	.25	(.03)	.48	(.04)	.30	(.03)
19	Austerity	.19	(.03)	.55	(.04)	.17	(.03)	.63	(.04)	.77	(.03)
20	Family subsidies	.70	(.04)	.90	(.02)	.70	(.04)	.94	(.01)	.92	(.01)
21	Schooling	.39	(.06)	.75	(.04)	.34	(.05)	.78	(.04)	.84	(.03)
22	Health insurance	.65	(.04)	.29	(.03)	.74	(.03)	.23	(.03)	.13	(.02)
23	Gender balance	.16	(.03)	.42	(.04)	.09	(.02)	.51	(.05)	.49	(.05)
24	Same-sex adoption	.53	(.06)	.81	(.03)	.65	(.05)	.88	(.02)	.84	(.03)

The table displays the post-stratified model predictions from the full model for the party supports of the five major parties in the German *Bundestag*. The first columns present the grand mean across all districts. The values in parentheses display the standard deviation across the electoral districts.

## 5 Competing principals and candidate ambiguity

Preferences of German voters exhibit some notable regional clustering – on several policy dimensions even to a fairly substantial degree. The estimated district preferences bridge a gap of some 10 to 20 percentage points, occasionally even more. Furthermore, policy preferences in the ideological camps differ starkly from one another and consequently from the district mean. The preference shifts in the voter subsets are in line with expectations, i.e. right-wing party supporters are more conservative relative to the district mean and vice versa. The present chapter now turns to the question of how such small-area policy preferences are related to candidate position-taking.

It was elaborated in chapter 2 that candidates in the German electoral system are subject to two principals – the party and the voters. Party organizations are the dominant political actors in proportional systems. Using their influence on closed electoral lists, parties can make or break candidates' careers (Sieberer, 2013, 2). A good list placement is a virtual election guarantee, granting parties a substantial leverage over their candidates. Apart from this party dominance there is, however, a strong majoritarian component in the German two-tiered electoral system. Nominal candidates are not necessarily dependent on party headquarters but can run on the support of the local party organization (Patzelt, 1993, 96-99). Some candidates' campaign strategies might even make it a point to exhibit a certain degree of independence from party headquarters (Zittel and Gschwend, 2008). The electoral fortunes of nominal candidates are thus more strictly tied to the local electorate. Naturally, these are ideal-typical considerations and in practice candidates are subject to both principals, albeit to differing

degrees. This is not only true conceptually, but also as a practical matter: Most promising candidacies are dual candidacies.

The next section investigates how candidates react in their position-taking if both principals take opposing stances on an issue. I argue that candidates should be more likely to take an ambiguous position if they care to not upset either of the two principals. As it is possible to differentiate between policy preferences of the district at large and policy preferences of more narrow electorates, the section further inquires whether sub-constituencies generate more important position-taking cues for candidates.

The relative importance of the candidates' two principals for position-taking should be systematically related to their electoral prospects and their type of candidacy. As candidates become increasingly certain to be elected via the list tier, their individual electoral fortunes are less subject to the voters' whims. Consequently, candidates are under less pressure to take local preferences into account when staking out positions. Conversely, candidates in tight electoral races face high degrees of uncertainty regarding their electoral outcomes and should thus be most attentive to the voters' preferences. These propositions are analyzed in section 5.2.

Finally, besides agreeing with the party position or taking an ambiguous stand, candidates can stake out a position that explicitly contradicts the views of the party headquarters. Thus, a comprehensive view on candidate position-taking in the face of cross-pressures from the two principals is taken in section 5.3 where a model with the full choice set is analyzed.

## 5.1 District preferences and candidate ambiguity

The first evidence on candidate position-taking is provided in table 5.I. It displays the results of two hierarchical logit models that regress the party and district preferences on ambiguous candidate position-taking. The dependent variable is the individual candidate response which takes on a value of one if the candidates have labeled themselves as undecided on an issue and zero otherwise. In this and in the subsequent models, the responses are nested in candidates as the grouping factor. As all participating candidates provide an answer to all

Table 5.1: Hierarchical logit models – District preferences I (Group: candidate)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Ambiguous position	
	(1)	(2)
District preference	0.354*** (0.120)	1.921*** (0.178)
Party: Agree	0.062 (0.062)	1.753*** (0.155)
Incumbent	-1.041*** (0.119)	-1.033*** (0.118)
Party: Agree * District preference		-3.078*** (0.255)
(Intercept)	-2.528*** (0.135)	-3.531*** (0.164)
Observations	30,050	30,050
Log Likelihood	-5,228	-5,152
Akaike Inf. Crit.	10,473	10,324
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	10,548	10,407

Note:

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01  
Party fixed effects omitted from the table

24 questions there are in fact two natural grouping factors in the data – the candidate and the question. It is possible to estimate a cross-classified model where responses are grouped according to both factors. There are, however, only minor differences in the coefficients between the models presented here and the doubly grouped models. For reasons of simplicity, I therefore selected the model specification where responses are only nested in candidates. Moreover, I include party fixed effects in the models rather than nesting candidates in parties as there are only five unique groups. The first model includes the predicted district preference and a dummy for party agreement as covariates.<sup>1</sup> Recall that the district preference is the predicted agreement for each item in the electoral districts. It ranges from zero – no predicted agreement with the item in the district – to one – full agreement in the district.

<sup>1</sup>The party position is captured from the candidate data by selecting the choices with identical vote explanations. The dummy is set to one if the party position is “Agree”. See chapter 3 for a more detailed account of the measurement of the party positions.



Although the coefficient for the district preference is significant, the effect size is small.<sup>2</sup> Model 2 incorporates an interaction effect between the two variables. There is a strong and negative interaction between both variables. Thus, if both district preferences and party agreement take on high values – a high district preference score means a high degree of support for an issue –, the predicted ambiguity decreases by a substantial factor. A candidate is unlikely to voice an ambiguous position if both principals strongly agree with an item. Similarly, if both district preferences and the party dummy take on low values, the predicted ambiguity is also low: There is a small probability that candidates position themselves as undecided if both principals disagree with a statement. Conversely, the predicted ambiguity increases substantially if one of the two factors is high and one is low.<sup>3</sup>

I argued in chapter 2 that all candidates are afraid of repelling potential voters by voicing policy positions that differ from the constituency preferences. It was pointed out that politically experienced candidates are more likely to be aware of the electorates' preferences. In line with expectations, there is a significant and negative relationship between the probability of making an ambiguous statement and the candidate incumbency status above and beyond the district party preferences in both model specifications.

Table 5.2 presents the results of five models that are identical with model 2 in table 5.1 that were run on the subsets of candidates belonging to the five major parliamentary competitors. By and large, the conclusions remain valid. The incumbency status is negatively related to candidate ambiguity and in most cases the principals' preferences exhibit a positive association with ambiguous position-taking, whereas the interaction between party position and district preferences is significant and negative. The only exception to this rule are Christian Democrat candidates and to a lesser degree the FDP where the coefficient signs are partly insignificant but in the correct directions. I return to this observation when considering the difference between district and supporter preferences further below.

Having established that there is a systematic relationship between district preferences and candidate ambiguous position-taking, I now consider the question whether candidates take

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<sup>2</sup>Estimation of all hierarchical logistic regressions was performed using version 1.0-5 of the *lme4* package in R (Bates, 2005; R Core Team, 2013).

<sup>3</sup>This relationship is displayed in figure 5.1 for the estimates in table 5.3.

Table 5.2: Hierarchical logit models – District preferences II (Group: candidate)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>				
	Ambiguous position				
	CDU/CSU	SPD	FDP	GRÜNE	DIE LINKE
District preference	0.584** (0.248)	2.479*** (0.423)	1.949*** (0.365)	3.382*** (1.128)	4.249*** (0.867)
Party: Agree	−0.151 (0.276)	2.688*** (0.345)	0.204 (0.364)	4.450*** (0.521)	3.741*** (0.637)
Incumbent	−0.918*** (0.190)	−1.177*** (0.278)	−0.858*** (0.245)	−1.203*** (0.328)	−1.480** (0.594)
Party: Agree * District preference	−0.621 (0.494)	−4.333*** (0.564)	−0.399 (0.522)	−6.569*** (1.172)	−7.189*** (1.100)
(Intercept)	−2.445*** (0.204)	−4.964*** (0.269)	−4.053*** (0.274)	−5.851*** (0.499)	−6.577*** (0.487)
Observations	5,010	6,984	5,021	6,720	6,315
Log Likelihood	−1,330	−1,049	−1,206	−965	−483
Akaike Inf. Crit.	2,672	2,109	2,424	1,942	978
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	2,711	2,150	2,463	1,982	1,018

Note:

\*p&lt;0.1; \*\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*\*p&lt;0.01

greater cues from subsets of the electorate, i.e. whether candidate target their communication at the electorate at large or at a subset of voters on their side of ideological spectrum.

Column 2 of table 5.3 presents the results of a model that regresses supporter preferences on ambiguous position-taking. For the purposes of comparison, model 2 of table 5.1 is printed alongside the model in column 1. All coefficients are in the same direction, i.e. incumbency is negatively associated with ambiguity, whereas preferences and party agreement exhibit a positive association, but a negative interaction. The variables of interest display greater values in model 2 compared to model 1. Particularly the interaction effect between supporter preferences and party position is notably greater. Moreover, the model fit statistics suggest that the model containing the supporter preferences significantly outperforms the model with the mean district preferences.

Figure 5.1 presents a visual inspection of the model predictions. The solid line displays the predicted probability of an ambiguous statement for a non-incumbent Christian Democrat on an issue where the party agrees across a range of values of supporter agreement. As the

Table 5.3: Hierarchical logit models – Supporter preferences I (Group: candidate)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Ambiguous position	
	(1)	(2)
District preference	1.921*** (0.178)	
Supporter preference		2.202*** (0.156)
Party: Agree	1.753*** (0.155)	2.372*** (0.144)
Incumbent	-1.033*** (0.118)	-0.989*** (0.120)
Party: Agree * Supporter preference		-4.224*** (0.234)
Party: Agree * District preference	-3.078*** (0.255)	
(Intercept)	-3.531*** (0.164)	-3.653*** (0.151)
Observations	30,050	30,050
Log Likelihood	-5,152	-5,073
Akaike Inf. Crit.	10,324	10,167
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	10,407	10,250

Note:

\*  $p < 0.1$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ 

Party fixed effects omitted from the table

estimated district support for an issue increases, the predicted probability of an ambiguous statement decreases. Conversely, the dashed line displays the predicted probabilities for a candidate of identical status on an issue where the party disagrees. The predicted ambiguity goes up as the share of agreeing supporters increases.<sup>4</sup>

As before, table 5.4 presents an identical model that was run on the subsets of candidates belonging to the five parliamentary parties. In all five cases there is stronger relationship be-

<sup>4</sup>There might be some concern that the predictions are biased due to the highly skewed distribution of the dependent variable. The problem is not as severe compared to applications in the international relations where the prediction of rare events is a prominent concern (King and Zeng, 2001a,b). In the present application about 5% of the roughly 30,000 observations are “undecided”. To respond to such concerns, I re-ran a non-nested, but otherwise identical version of model 2 in table 5.1 in the rare events logistic regression framework as proposed by King and Zeng. The results were only marginally different from the results that are presented above.

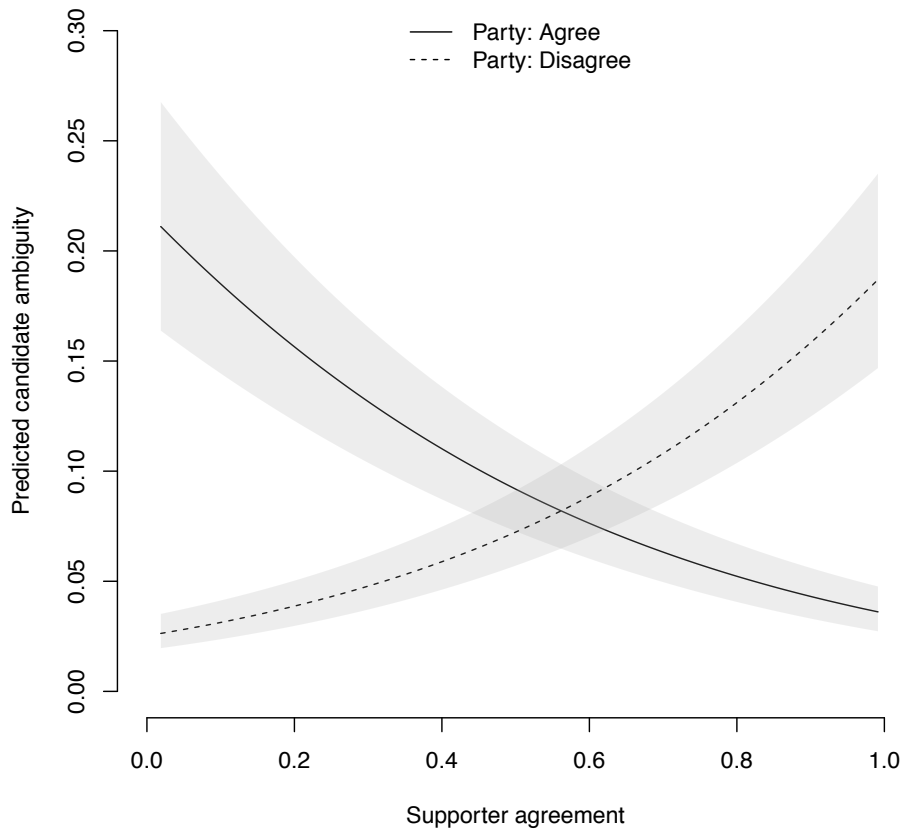


Figure 5.1: The figure displays the predicted ambiguous candidate position-taking from model 2 in table 5.3. The continuous line represents the predictions for candidate position-taking when the party agrees with a statement across a range of supporter preference values. Higher values mean greater agreement among supporters. The dashed line represents the predictions when the party disagrees. Both lines display the predictions for a non-incumbent Christian Democrat. The shaded areas represent the uncertainty around the point predictions. The uncertainty calculations only take into account the uncertainty of the fixed effects.

tween party supporters and candidate ambiguity relative to the models that include the district preferences (table 5.2). In this case, all model coefficients point in the expected direction and are significant for the most part. Moreover, the interactions are all negative and significantly different from zero. Similar to the results above, the relationship between small-area preferences and candidate ambiguity are stronger for left-wing parties compared to competitors from the right-wing of the political spectrum.

To summarize, supporter preferences are more important in determining candidate position-taking compared to preferences of the district mean. Greater attention is paid to supporter preferences rather than to mean district preferences by candidates from all five parties. This

Table 5.4: Hierarchical logit models – Supporter preferences II (Group: candidate)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>				
	Ambiguous position				
	CDU/CSU	SPD	FDP	GRÜNE	DIE LINKE
Supporter preference	0.893*** (0.282)	2.033*** (0.281)	2.473*** (0.395)	5.276*** (1.331)	4.942*** (0.923)
Party: Agree	0.343 (0.313)	3.338*** (0.294)	0.706* (0.405)	4.123*** (0.370)	4.201*** (0.712)
Incumbent	−0.924*** (0.191)	−1.212*** (0.287)	−0.859*** (0.245)	−1.245*** (0.330)	−1.527** (0.599)
Party: Agree * Supporter preference	−1.583*** (0.537)	−5.086*** (0.441)	−1.478** (0.602)	−7.973*** (1.354)	−8.691*** (1.218)
(Intercept)	−2.567*** (0.207)	−4.777*** (0.227)	−4.232*** (0.273)	−5.495*** (0.341)	−5.912*** (0.352)
Observations	5,010	6,984	5,021	6,720	6,315
Log Likelihood	−1,327	−1,005	−1,206	−961	−480
Akaike Inf. Crit.	2,666	2,022	2,425	1,935	973
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	2,705	2,063	2,464	1,975	1,013

Note:

\*  $p < 0.1$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ 

means that party status – catch-all party vs. niche party – does not alter the candidate calculus. Candidates from left-wing parties are more likely to react to diverging preferences between their principals by staking out an ambiguous position. This observation can likely be traced back to a government and opposition dynamic. In the electoral campaign of 2013, the Christian Democrats and the Free Democrats formed the governing coalition (see section 3.2). Absent any governing responsibilities, left-wing party headquarters should allow a little more leeway to candidate position-taking and straying from the party line (Sieberer, 2013, 4). Conversely, parties in governing functions should be more likely to enforce a coherent party image and should thus be less inclined to tolerate position-taking that is not consistent with the party position.

One interesting aspect of the observation that candidates are more likely to pay attention to the supporters' preferences compared to the overall district preferences – admittedly beyond the means of this research program – is the question whether this reflects true strategic considerations or candidate misperceptions. The central tenet of the present research holds

that candidates strategically target their communication at voters. Observing that supporters are the better predictor for candidate communication might, however, not reflect a strategic choice but rather be evidence of candidate errors in the perception of district preferences. Consider a candidate who regularly attends political events in her district. In these meetings she is more frequently exposed to the views of party supporters, but less frequently to the views of voters on the other side of the political spectrum. In a Bayesian updating framework, candidate perceptions of the mean district preferences should gradually shift toward the mean supporter. Thus, observing that candidate responses are more heavily tailored toward supporter preferences might in fact be strategic but based on false district perceptions. I will return to this caveat in chapter 7.

## 5.2 Electoral context and candidate ambiguity

Having found that candidates react to conflicting preferences of voters and party headquarters with a heightened probability of an ambiguous position-taking, this section goes on to analyze whether the electoral context of the candidates conditions their position-taking behavior. Based on the best performing model in the previous section, table 5.5 presents the results from several models that include a dummy variable for tight district races. It takes on a value of one for those candidates whose nominal vote share was within 5% (7.5%) percent of the winning share in the electoral race of 2009 – if at least two candidates meet the condition. Candidates have the greatest incentive to consider the electorate in their campaign communication if they have a chance of winning the nominal mandate, but are also uncertain of their district fortunes. Needless to say, however, that candidates are not uniformly dependent on winning the district mandate but are often guaranteed a safe seat via the list tier (Manow, 2007; Manow and Nistor, 2009). I therefore include the probability of winning a list mandate as a control variable.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>See chapter 3 on estimating the probability of a list mandate. Incidentally, it should not be assumed that candidates with a perfect electoral safety via the list placement do not care about the electoral result in the district. In the face of a tight electoral race, safe candidates should be expected to campaign nonetheless as the nominal mandate is considered more prestigious among candidates (Patzelt, 1999, 37; Wüst et al., 2006, 422). I therefore do not interact the list probability with the tightness of the electoral race. Furthermore, I include the probability of a list mandate as a straight indicator, but do not model the uncertainty of a list mandate, for example by including a squared term of the list vote probability, as candidates can only marginally improve their list vote safety with their individual campaign communication.

Table 5.5: Hierarchical logit models – Tight races I (Group: candidate)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>				
	Ambiguous position				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Supporter preference	2.173*** (0.156)	2.229*** (0.171)	2.161*** (0.157)	2.298*** (0.178)	2.202*** (0.156)
Party: Agree	2.303*** (0.145)	2.424*** (0.155)	2.350*** (0.145)	2.502*** (0.160)	2.372*** (0.144)
Tight race (5%)	−0.092 (0.166)	0.401 (0.282)			
Tight race (7.5%)			−0.094 (0.150)	0.489* (0.251)	
Probability of list mandate	−0.151 (0.166)	−0.134 (0.166)	−0.139 (0.166)	−0.161 (0.166)	
Incumbent	−0.989*** (0.134)	−0.918*** (0.133)	−0.971*** (0.133)	−0.954*** (0.133)	−0.989*** (0.120)
Supporter preference * Party: Agree	−4.105*** (0.235)	−4.227*** (0.251)	−4.163*** (0.235)	−4.325*** (0.259)	−4.224*** (0.234)
Supporter preference * Tight race (5%)		−0.573 (0.416)			
Party: Agree * Tight race (5%)		−0.777* (0.431)			
Supporter preference * Party: Agree * Tight race (5%)		0.737 (0.699)			
Supporter preference * Tight race (7.5%)				−0.662* (0.367)	
Party: Agree * Tight race (7.5%)				−0.859** (0.376)	
Supporter preference * Party: Agree * Tight race (7.5%)				0.800 (0.613)	
(Intercept)	−3.466*** (0.161)	−3.645*** (0.166)	−3.490*** (0.164)	−3.646*** (0.171)	−3.653*** (0.151)
Observations	29,935	29,935	29,935	29,935	30,050
Log Likelihood	−5,059	−5,055	−5,059	−5,053	−5,073
Akaike Inf. Crit.	10,142	10,140	10,142	10,136	10,167
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	10,241	10,265	10,242	10,261	10,250

Note:

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01  
Party fixed effects omitted from the table

Model 1 in table 5.5 includes the tightness of the electoral race (5%) and the likelihood of a list mandate in the best performing model from the previous section. The model is reprinted as model 5 for reference. Neither of the two variables has a significant effect on the probability of an ambiguous position-taking. Similarly, when interacting the tightness of the electoral race with the preferences of the two principals there is little systematic effect and no major improvement relative to the model with no information on the tightness of the electoral race.<sup>6</sup> Choosing the cut-off point at 7.5 percent (models 3 and 4), the substantive interpretation does not change. There are some marginally significant effects when interacting the 7.5 percent tightness of the electoral race and the principals' preferences but the effect sizes are substantively small. Thus, based on the results in table 5.5 it can be concluded that the position-taking incentives for candidates that are faced with diverging principals' preferences are applicable across the board. Candidates who are sure to win or to lose a district will pay similar attention to the principals' preferences relative to those who are electorally uncertain.

Although the nominal vote share in the previous election is a decent predictor of the result in the current election, candidates have additional information at their disposal to make inferences on their electoral fortunes at the district tier. Such supplemental information can come in a variety of forms, but candidates should be particularly aware of voter surveys and electoral results of more recent elections at lower levels of government. To include such additional information in a comprehensive indicator of tight electoral races, I collected information from an analysis that was published by *Spiegel Online* about one month prior to the election.<sup>7</sup> The analysis listed German electoral districts that were heavily contested by making use of additional information from party headquarters and current events and enumerated which candidates stood a chance of winning the district.

Table 5.6 presents the results from two models that include the alternative definition of tight races along with the probability of winning a list mandate. The baseline model is once more the best-performing model from section 5.1 that is presented as model 3 for reference. Again, neither tight races nor the probability of winning a list mandate has a significant individual effect on the probability of an ambiguous candidate statement. There are significant, but small

<sup>6</sup>Note that the indicators of model fit are not comparable due to the different sample sizes.

<sup>7</sup><http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/bundestagswahl-die-umkaempften-wahlkreise-in-deutschland-a-914486.html> (Last accessed December 12, 2013).



Table 5.6: Hierarchical logit models – Tight races II (Group: candidate)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Ambiguous position		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Supporter preference	2.140*** (0.156)	2.323*** (0.169)	2.202*** (0.156)
Party: Agree	2.297*** (0.145)	2.481*** (0.154)	2.372*** (0.144)
Tight race	−0.079 (0.178)	0.701** (0.294)	
Probability of list mandate	−0.198 (0.166)	−0.190 (0.166)	
Incumbent	−0.990*** (0.134)	−0.969*** (0.134)	−0.989*** (0.120)
Supporter preference * Party: Agree	−4.087*** (0.234)	−4.356*** (0.248)	−4.224*** (0.234)
Supporter preference * Tight race		−1.073** (0.450)	
Party: Agree * Tight race		−0.968** (0.455)	
Supporter preference * Party: Agree * Tight race		1.199 (0.752)	
(Intercept)	−3.434*** (0.159)	−3.616*** (0.164)	−3.653*** (0.151)
Observations	30,050	30,050	30,050
Log Likelihood	−5,072	−5,068	−5,073
Akaike Inf. Crit.	10,167	10,166	10,167
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	10,267	10,290	10,250

Note:

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01  
Party fixed effects omitted from the table

effects of tight electoral races on the probability of ambiguous position-taking if the variable is interacted with the preferences of the two principals. The signs of the coefficients are identical with the results from table 5.5. In terms of substance, the model predicts a higher baseline probability for an ambiguous statement in tight races that is outweighed by the interaction effect as the disagreement between the two principals increases.

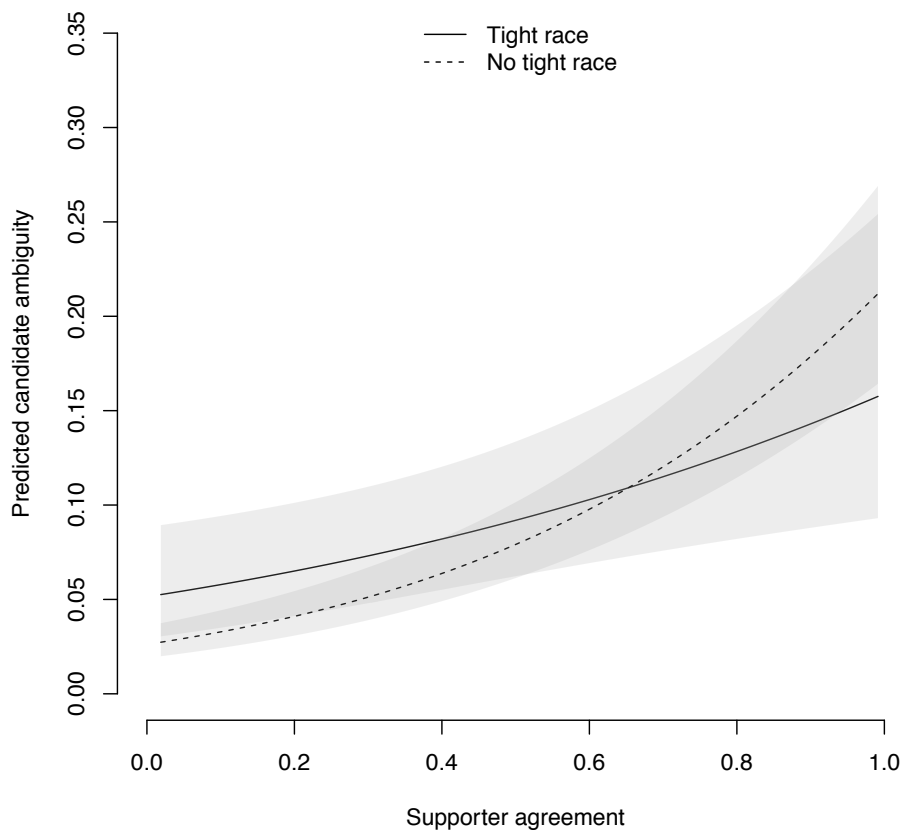


Figure 5.2: The figure displays the predicted ambiguous candidate position-taking from model 2 in table 5.6. The continuous line represents the predictions for position-taking of candidates in tight races across a range of supporter preference values. Higher values mean greater agreement. The dashed line represents the predictions for candidates in non-tight races. Both lines display the predictions for non-incumbent Christian Democrats when the party disagrees. The shaded areas represent the uncertainty around the point predictions. The uncertainty calculations only take into account the uncertainty of the fixed effects.

A visual inspection of the model is provided in figure 5.2. The solid line displays the predicted probability of an ambiguous candidate statement in tight electoral races across a range of supporter agreement values. The predictions are made for a non-incumbent Christian Democrat candidate on an issue where the party disagrees. The dashed line displays the predictions for candidates in the same conditions in non-tight races. The candidates exhibit a

higher baseline probability for making ambiguous statements that is outweighed by the interaction effect between the principals, leading to higher predicted candidate ambiguity if the principals strongly diverge. The gray areas display the uncertainty that is associated with the point predictions. For the most part the uncertainty of the predictions overlaps to a substantial degree, i.e. the tightness of the electoral race does not have a significant effect on the position-taking behavior of the candidates. In summary, the alternative specification of tight electoral races does not strongly suggest either that the electoral context is a systematic conditioning factor on candidate position-taking in the face of diverging principals.

One final way of conceptualizing the dependence of candidates on the local electorate is to subset candidates by the type of candidacy they are running. Recall that due to the focus of *Abgeordnetenwatch*, all candidates in the dataset are nominal candidates in one of the 299 electoral districts in the German federal election. Nevertheless, 1071 of the candidates in the sample run dual candidacies whereas the remaining 422 run exclusively in a district. Consequently, the latter should be more dependent and thus more mindful of the local electorate.

Table 5.7 presents three models that include information on the type of candidacy in addition to the baseline model presented in model 4. Yet again, there is little evidence of a systematic relationship between the type of candidacy and position-taking – neither in the simple additive model nor in the more complex models that include an interaction of the candidacy with the supporter preferences (model 2) or the party preferences and the three-way interaction (model 3).

I conclude that candidates are subject to the diverging preferences of their principals across the board, regardless of their factual dependence on the principals for their immediate career prospects. One potential explanation for this surprising finding is the fact that even candidates from the three minor parties can gain from a strong electoral result at the district level in intra-party power struggles. Above and beyond winning the nominal mandate, candidates gain reputation within the parliamentary party group if their nominal vote share beats the federal average. Thus, even candidates with no chance of winning the district still have an incentive to pay attention to the preferences of the local electorate in order to strengthen their electoral outcome.

Table 5.7: Hierarchical logit models – Type of candidacy (Group: candidate)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Ambiguous position			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Supporter preference	2.162*** (0.156)	2.271*** (0.233)	2.090*** (0.324)	2.202*** (0.156)
Party: Agree	2.305*** (0.145)	2.298*** (0.145)	2.286*** (0.277)	2.372*** (0.144)
Type of candidacy: List and district	−0.302** (0.118)	−0.182 (0.179)	−0.150 (0.221)	
Incumbent	−1.019*** (0.122)	−1.028*** (0.121)	−1.022*** (0.121)	−0.989*** (0.120)
Supporter preference * Party: Agree	−4.104*** (0.235)	−4.094*** (0.235)	−3.840*** (0.458)	−4.224*** (0.234)
Supporter preference * Type of candidacy: List and district		−0.183 (0.234)	0.025 (0.366)	
Party: Agree * Type of candidacy: List and district			0.004 (0.321)	
Supporter preference * Party: Agree * Type of candidacy: List and district			−0.314 (0.524)	
(Intercept)	−3.311*** (0.175)	−3.362*** (0.200)	−3.375*** (0.223)	−3.653*** (0.151)
Observations	30,050	30,050	30,050	30,050
Log Likelihood	−5,069	−5,069	−5,068	−5,073
Akaike Inf. Crit.	10,161	10,162	10,165	10,167
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	10,252	10,262	10,281	10,250

Note:

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01  
Party fixed effects omitted from the table

### 5.3 Modeling all alternatives

The focus of the present research project is on candidate ambiguity. To estimate the effects of the various contextual factors on ambiguous behavior in a large-N study I employ a dataset of structured candidate position-taking. The advantage of the large number of responses comes at the expense of having to make some simplifying assumptions regarding the position-taking behavior of candidates. Specifically, I have assumed thus far that faced with diverging preferences between their principals, candidates have a binary choice – to make a clear statement or to label themselves as undecided on an issue. This assumption effectively lumps together two distinct alternatives, the agreement and the disagreement to a statement. This section analyzes the full choice set of the candidates.

Table 5.8: Hierarchical ordinal model – All alternatives (Group: candidate)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Candidate position	
	(1)	(2)
Supporter preference	3.258*** (0.106)	
District preference		2.902*** (0.125)
Party: Agree	4.592*** (0.099)	5.666*** (0.108)
Incumbent	0.070 (0.044)	0.074* (0.044)
Supporter preference * Party: Agree	−0.409*** (0.728)	
District preference * Party: Agree		−1.405*** (0.174)
<i>Threshold coefficients</i>		
Disagree   Undecided	3.626*** (0.081)	3.747*** (0.096)
Undecided   Agree	4.376*** (0.083)	4.472*** (0.098)
Observations	30,050	30,050
Log Likelihood	−10,888	−11,430
Akaike Inf. Crit.	21,797	22,882

Note:

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01  
Party fixed effects omitted from the table

Table 5.8 presents the results from two multilevel ordinal models.<sup>8</sup> Once again, the responses are nested in candidates. The explanatory variables that are included in the models are the incumbency status of the candidates, the party fixed effects, the binary party preference and the supporter preference (model 1) or district preference (model 2) along with an interaction between the small-area preferences and the party position. There is a strong association between the small-area preference – regardless of the specific constituency included in the model – and candidate position-taking. There is also a negative interaction between the principals' preferences. The model fit is greater when including the preferences of the sup-

<sup>8</sup>Estimation of the hierarchical ordinal regressions was performed using version 2013.9-30 of the *ordinal* package in R (Christensen, 2013; R Core Team, 2013).

porters in the model compared to the model with district mean preferences. Finally, and in contrast to the previous observations, there is barely any effect of the candidates' incumbency status on their position-taking behavior.

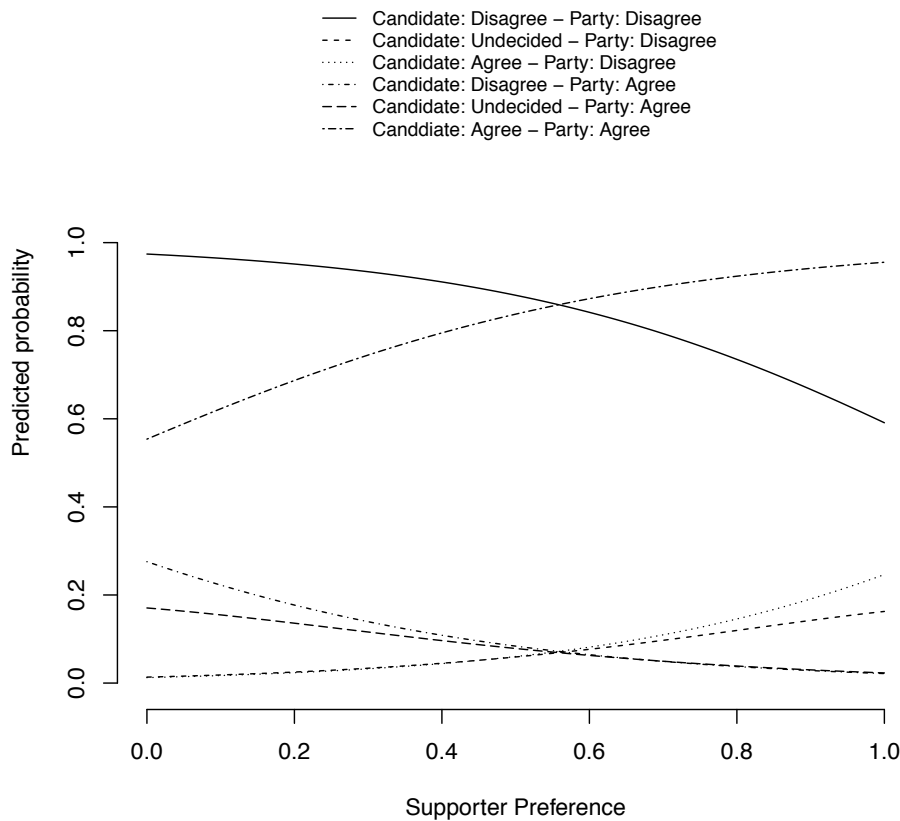


Figure 5.3: The figure displays the predicted candidate position-taking from model 2 in table 5.8. The figure displays the predicted candidate position-taking for various party positions across a range of supporter preference values. The predictions are made for a non-incumbent Christian Democrat. The uncertainty is not displayed for better accessibility of the figure.

Figure 5.3 provides a visual inspection of the predicted probabilities for the three statement alternatives from model 1 in table 5.8. The figure presents the predicted probabilities for various combinations of party preferences and candidate statements across a range of values of supporter preferences for a non-incumbent Christian Democrat candidate. As the disagreement between party and supporters is nearing zero the predicted probability of a candidate statement that conforms to the principals' preferences is nearing one. In the extreme case of a complete disagreement between supporters and party preferences, the model predicts an un-

decided statement with a probability of a little under 20 percent and a statement that agrees with the party supporters with a probability of a little over 20 percent.

Evidently, the party position is the dominant communication strategy for the candidates, even when faced with party supporters that are universally opposed. This observation is in line with theoretical expectations, as candidates are first and foremost dependent on party headquarters. It can further be concluded that as the divergence between the supporters and the party position increases, more candidates are predicted to stake out positions that diverge from the party position. Finally, if the gap between the party position and the supporters' preferences becomes sufficiently large, the supporters' preferences dominate ambiguity as a communication strategy.

## 5.4 Conclusion

The policy preferences of the German public are regionally clustered on core issues. The preferences of such local sub-publics are the fundamental electoral constraints for the fortunes of the nominal candidates in the German federal election. The present chapter has pursued three goals. One, I have assessed whether the nominal candidates in the federal election react to the small-area preferences in their public position-taking. Two, I have investigated how the preferences of the candidates' principals shape their position-taking, specifically their propensity to voice an ambiguous position on an issue. Three, the chapter analyzed whether the electoral context is a conditioning factor of candidate position-taking.

Evidence was provided that candidates do indeed take systematic cues from the policy preferences of their local electorates. Specifically, candidates were more likely to position themselves as undecided if party headquarters agreed with a statement and the local electorate was unfavorable and vice versa across a wide range of model specifications. Candidates also consistently took greater position-taking cues from supporters on their side of the political spectrum than from the mean district preference. Both observations hold – to varying degrees – for candidates of all five major competitors in the German electoral campaign of 2013.

Applying a variety of measurements and model specifications I have investigated the possibility that candidate position-taking is conditional on their electoral context. It was predicted that as the candidate mandate is increasingly safeguarded via the list tier, candidates are less dependent on the local electorate and therefore less likely to pay attention to the preferences of their constituency. Above and beyond the incumbency status of the candidate, the coefficient for the probability of winning a list mandate on ambiguous position-taking is indeed consistently negative, but also consistently not significant. Moreover, the tightness of the district race does not exhibit a systematic effect on candidate position-taking. It was concluded that the position-taking incentives work across the board – regardless of the immediate dependence of the candidates on the principals. This is to say that conditional on the preferences of the local electorate and the party position, candidates are expected to remain ambiguous to about the same degree.

In a final step the entire choice set was investigated to apply the data in models with fewer assumptions on candidate position-taking. The dominant candidate strategy is to align communication with the party position, irrespective of the public's preferences. This is not an unexpected observation. For one, candidates are provided with model responses from the party headquarters. Consequently, they should have little doubt regarding the party preferences. Conversely, candidates might only have a diffuse notion of the electorate's policy preferences. Moreover, candidates probably share a good deal of the positions that are held by the party headquarters. Thus, even absent the model responses the majority of candidates should be expected to choose as the party chooses. Beyond the dominant party position, it could be confirmed that diverging principals' preferences lead to greater ambiguity in candidate position-taking even in the hierarchical ordinal model. Furthermore, as the gap between the party position and the small-area preferences of the public becomes extreme, the public's preferences tend to dominate ambiguity as a communication strategy.

One concern that could not be addressed in the present chapter is the question whether the greater reliance of candidates on the preferences of supporters rather than on the mean district preference is truly a strategic choice. An alternative explanation posits that candidates are subject to a systematic misperception of the district preferences due to a greater exposure to supporters' views. A discussion of this issue will be relegated to chapter 7.





## 6 Topic characteristics and candidate ambiguity

The previous chapter has considered the interplay between constituency and party preferences and their effects on candidate position-taking. It has also investigated whether the electoral context of candidates mediates their communication. Underlying the analyses was the assumption that disadvantageous factors apply uniformly across all items, specifically that principals' preferences exert identical pressures on the candidates in all subject areas. This assumption is likely inaccurate. Instead, the strategic communication calculus of candidates should vary systematically with the issues. The present chapter serves to relax the assumption of uniform pressures across topics and to test the proposition that candidates are less likely to remain ambiguous on issues that their party is strongly associated with (see chapter 2).

The chapter starts by introducing a novel measure for capturing issue ownership from party appearances on political television talk shows. I argue that party representatives are disproportionately featured on shows that cover topics that their parties are associated with, i.e. that their party owns. The patterns of over- and underrepresentation can be recorded to capture issue ownership structures. Let me briefly sketch the underlying intuition. Party actors have a strong incentive to attend political panel talk shows to present their policy positions to a large audience. Consequently, they rarely decline invitations to the shows. Therefore, the shows' editors perform a gatekeeping function for showcasing parties. In an ordinary talk show, at most two to three seats are assigned to party actors as editorial staff wants to intersperse party actors with experts, celebrities and citizens to make the shows more interesting. Due to the sparsity of political seats, editors can choose which parties to invite to a debate. I suggest that they will systematically seek out actors who own an issue and thus overrepresent certain

parties relative to a random selection baseline. However, as the editors are under pressure to balance their invitation patterns in the long run and to feature all parties based on some fair criterion, they have to invite the same party on other issues less frequently. Such patterns of over- and underrepresentation can be investigated to measure parties' issue ownerships.

The underlying ideas for the measurement strategy are elaborated in greater detail in the next section. Section 6.2 presents some summary statistics of the data, followed by the analytical part in section 6.3. Subsequently, section 6.4 presents the results from the analysis of topic area on candidate position-taking. Section 6.5 concludes.

## 6.1 Issue ownership in a multi-party context

The most common measure of issue ownership is survey-based. It is typically collected in a two-step inquiry. The public is first asked to list what they perceive to be the most important political issue (Wlezien, 2005). In a second step, respondents indicate which party they believe to be most competent in dealing with the issues.<sup>1</sup> The concept of issue ownership originates in a two-party system (Petrocik, 1996; Petrocik, Benoit and Hansen, 2003) where the most important problem question yields clear ownership structures – each party is the owner of some of the issues – despite voters' party identifications.

Transferring this idea to a multi-party context has proven difficult. Consider estimating the policy reputation of one of the minor parties from an election survey such as the German Longitudinal Election Survey (GLES; Rattinger et al., 2012). The combined sample of the pre- and post-electoral cross-section for the federal election of 2009 contains a little over 4,000 respondents. Confronted with the most important problem question, there is a strong tendency among participants to mention economic matters and unemployment in particular. This prevalence of one category proves challenging as the absolute frequency of the less cited categories becomes small.

What is more, the German party system is electorally dominated by two parties. As the perception of party competence is strongly influenced by party preferences, the highly uneven

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<sup>1</sup>Occasionally, respondents are provided with a list of topics and are asked to indicate which party they perceive to be most competent to deal with a particular issue (e.g., Green and Jennings, 2012a,b).

distribution of voters' allegiances, favoring the CDU/CSU and the SPD, generates severe data sparsity problems. Some parties and some issues are cited so infrequently that it is impossible to make firm inferences on ownerships among the smaller parties. An alternative method for capturing issue ownership is party communication. Party press releases or party manifestos are applied in the literature to assess the emphasis that parties place on particular topics (Walgrave, Lefevere and Nuytemans, 2009; Walgrave and Swert, 2007). Like survey-based measures, party communication is determined by shared perceptions of topic salience, such that all parties tend to emphasize economic policies.

To circumvent these problems, the present chapter introduces a novel measure of party reputations that relies on party appearances on televised talk shows. Issue ownership is typically framed as a supply-driven process in which parties consciously and strategically pick policies and publicize their issue profiles in manifestos, media, parliamentary, and governing behavior. While the present chapter does not dispute this supply-driven process, it supplements such accounts of issue ownership with a demand-driven narrative. I suggest that parties' issue emphases create feedback loops where the media selectively seek out statements of parties that have a reputation advantage for a given topic, thus reinforcing the reputation surplus. To investigate the proposition, I have assembled data on the major German political panel talk shows that aired in the years 1999-2013. The dataset contains information on all guests along with their party affiliation and the shows' topics.

I argue that the media have a central gatekeeping function in showcasing parties' issue reputations (cf. Soroka, 2012). Applying this notion, I am able to investigate the policy areas that are associated with the various parties. There are several advantages of measuring issue ownership as proposed in this chapter. One, the measure creates a clear ownership pattern – both between and within parties. German political panel talk shows ordinarily assign two to three of the available chairs to representatives of political parties. Therefore, they have to make a selection in favor of some parties and against others. These differences can be used to investigate systematics in the invitation patterns given the topic in question. Beside this inter-party variation, the measure also generates intra-party variation. The political talk shows balance out their invitation patterns in the long run in order not to come under fire from disadvan-

tagged parties. This is reflected in the following statement from a member of the editorial staff of the show *Maybrit Illner* that was collected in an interview.

“At the level of the single show we only ask – where is the controversy? At the end of the year, however, we do check – did we get all of the parties. We have to give the stage to all of the parties, we are public broadcasters after all.” (Interview with member of editorial staff of *Maybrit Illner*, May 6, 2013; translation D.N.)<sup>2</sup>

This is to say that if a show systematically over-features a party on one topic, the editors will counterbalance this overrepresentation in the long run by inviting parties less frequently to other issues. Finally, talk show appearances capture a crucial dimension of party reputation as the measure is truly reflective of public discourse and public perceptions. As such, talk show appearances are important to political actors who attend them to communicate their policy ideals to the public. Asked whether politicians frequently decline to participate in the shows, a staffer of the show *hart aber fair* replied that “...it depends on the guest. With politicians that happens very rarely, in some senses it is their job.” (Interview with member of editorial staff of *hart aber fair*, August 28, 2013; translation D.N.)<sup>3</sup> This assertion provides evidence for the media's gatekeeping function in structuring public perceptions of issue ownership. If politicians rarely decline to participate in shows, then it effectively becomes the editors' choice whom to showcase in a given debate.

## 6.2 Modeling talk show appearances

I have assembled a dataset of all guests of the major German weekly political panel talk shows that were aired between 1999 and 2013. Table 6.1 presents an overview of the data. With few exceptions, the shows in the dataset aired on public broadcasting stations. Column 3 in the table displays the absolute counts of episodes from particular talk shows that are included in the dataset. Consider the two shows with the highest counts – *Sabine Christiansen* and *Berlin*

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<sup>2</sup>“Auf eine Sendung runtergebrochen fragen wir uns nur – wo ist die Kontroverse? Am Ende des Jahres wird schon geguckt, hatten wir alle dabei. Wir müssen allen Parteien den Raum bei uns bieten, wir sind ja öffentlich-rechtlich.”

<sup>3</sup>“Das hängt vom Gast ab. Bei einem Politiker sehr selten, das ist auch ein Stück weit ihr Job.”

<sup>4</sup>*Berlin Mitte* was renamed *Maybrit Illner* in 2007.

<sup>5</sup>Prior to being broadcast on ARD, *hart aber fair* ran on WDR until 2007.

Table 6.1: Shows in analysis

Show title	Station	N	Avg # of pol chairs
Sabine Christiansen	ARD	300	2.8
Berlin Mitte/Maybrit Illner <sup>4</sup>	ZDF	267/222	2.5/2.1
Menschen bei Maischberger	ARD	99	1.7
hart aber fair	WDR/ARD <sup>5</sup>	196	2.1
Anne Will	ARD	200	2.2
Günther Jauch	ARD	72	2.1
Unter den Linden	Phoenix	149	1.6
Studio Friedman	N24	132	1.8
Zwei + Leif	SWR	113	1.7
Das Duell	ntv	23	1.5
Eins gegen Eins	Sat.1	30	1.4
Overall	–	1,803	2.3

The table provides an overview of the shows in the analysis. The table contains only those shows that featured at least one member of a political party. Column 1 provides the name of the show, column 2 the broadcasting station. Column 3 displays the absolute counts of shows in the dataset. Column 4 provides a summary statistic of the average number of chairs that were assigned to political guests.

*Mitte/Maybrit Illner*. The dataset contains shows that were aired from 1999 to 2007 in the former case and shows from 1999 to 2013 in the latter case.<sup>6</sup> This long time period begs the question of how stable policy reputations are, i.e. whether the parties' issue ownerships were the same in 1999 as they were in 2013. While there is indeed some evidence that policy reputations have a dynamic component (Kim, 2011; Walgrave, Lefevere and Nuytemans, 2009), the broad lines of issue ownership are fairly stable and should not dramatically change over a 14-year period.

The advantage of using a relatively long period is that it cancels out potential biases due to governmental responsibilities. As talk shows frequently feature a topic's competent minister, the measure will pick up this ministerial bonus and assign a higher ownership value to the minister's party. While such ministerial bonus is probably driven by a true underlying ownership surplus, it makes sense to include a time period that spans several governments in order to ensure that the estimated policy reputations are stable across times of governmental responsibility and opposition. In addition to the possibility of systematic biases in the data there is also the problem that each show is broadcast at most 52 times a year. Including a longer time span guarantees a firmer inference on policy reputations.

<sup>6</sup>*Sabine Christiansen* began broadcasting in 1998. Due to imprecisions in the data, the shows' first year was discarded from the sample.

Column 4 in the table displays the average number of chairs in the shows that were assigned to representatives of political parties. There is an interesting observation hidden in the values of the major panel talk shows, ranging from *Sabine Christiansen* (1999 to 2007) to the latest addition *Günther Jauch* (first show in 2011). The average number of chairs assigned to political actors has decreased over time. This seems to be the case even within a show. Consider the example of *Berlin Mitte* and *Maybrit Illner*. The show, which has aired since 1999, was renamed in 2007. In the first eight years of the show an average of 2.5 chairs were assigned to political actors. After the change, only 2.1 invitations were extended to politicians. This may be taken as evidence that the editorial boards of the shows have broadened their scope of invitations over time. The values in the lower half of the table display averages smaller than 2. This can be explained by the fact that the shows *Unter den Linden*, *Studio Friedman*, *Zwei + Leif* and *Das Duell* ordinarily only invite two guests.

Along with the guests, their political affiliation and the description of the shows' content was collected. These single-line descriptions were coded according to the scheme of the Comparative Agendas Project (Baumgartner, Green-Pedersen and Jones, 2008), specifically according to an adapted coding scheme for media content.<sup>7</sup> In most cases the coding was fairly straightforward, but occasionally the topical coding was made impossible as no single topic was the center of attention. This problem usually occurred in the vicinity of elections where the topic tended to focus on party political conflict rather than on substance. Table 6.2 provides an overview of the frequency of the various topical categories. Most categories in the coding scheme have come up over the period of investigation, but several have been so rare that they were discarded for the analysis. It was decided to drop categories that were debated ten times or less.

The coding scheme of the Comparative Agendas Project consists of several overarching topical categories which are subdivided into smaller sub-topics. The coding scheme is fairly well established and useful. There is, however, a trade-off between accuracy and feasibility. On the one hand, using the overarching topical categories as proposed in this chapter means combining a number of topics that bear little inherent relation. Consider as an extreme case the

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<sup>7</sup>All hand coding of the TV shows and of the issues in the *Kandidatencheck* was performed independently by the author and two research assistants who were specifically trained for the task. I would like to take the opportunity and express my gratitude toward Sebastian Sternberg and Daniel Eckert for providing invaluable research support.

Table 6.2: Number of topical shows

Topic	N	Avg # of pol chairs
Agriculture	23	1.7
Churches	29	1.5
Civil rights, minority issues, and civil liberties	87	2.0
Defense	68	2.0
Domestic commerce, banking, and finance	48	1.9
Education	28	1.8
Energy	71	2.1
Environment	13	1.7
Government operations	77	2.3
Health	130	1.7
Human interest	25	1.5
International affairs and foreign aid	172	2.1
Labor, employment and immigration	74	1.9
Law, crime, and family issues	97	1.7
Macroeconomics	225	2.3
Party politics	380	2.7
Reunification	18	2.6
Social justice	63	2.1
Social welfare	116	2.2
Sports	17	1.5
Transportation	19	1.9
Values	23	2.2
Sum	1,803	2.2

The table displays the frequency of the topics in the period of investigation. Column 2 displays the absolute counts, column 3 displays the average number of seats that were assigned to members of political parties.

topic “International affairs”, which lumps together general international affairs, i.e. dealings with other countries and supranational actors, with foreign aid and terrorism. It is fairly obvious that invitations to shows in these policy areas do not necessarily overlap. On the other hand, using the more fine-grained sub-topic codes is difficult as this puts a lot of strain on a dataset that is already spread thin. Thus, for rather pragmatic reasons I have opted to analyze the overarching topics.

The most frequently debated topic is party politics, i.e. debates that revolve around the fortunes of parties, governments, coalitions and the like. There are also many debates on macroeconomics, international affairs, healthcare and social welfare. Column 3 in table 6.2 displays the average number of chairs that were allocated to political actors for the various top-



ics. There is no general pattern, but the average number of political chairs is notably greater in debates on party politics. This should not be surprising as these debates are frequently aired in the vicinity of elections and occasionally feature participants from all major competitors.

Table 6.7 in the appendix of the present chapter provides some evidence on how frequently the various parties were featured in the talk shows and in the entire dataset. The highest value can be observed for the CDU/CSU which was present in 72% of all the shows in the dataset. At the low end, Die Linke was invited to 20% of the shows. As the shows have different numbers of chairs allocated to political actors, the straight percentages do not compare across shows. Therefore, the figures in the gray columns correct for the mean number of chairs that were allocated to political actors. There are no major biases in any of the shows in the dataset for or against any of the five parties.

Clearly, the electoral strength of the parties is reflected in the frequency with which they are invited to shows. Thus, to analyze systematic over- and underrepresentation of the parties, it is necessary to come up with a baseline estimate on how often the parties *should* have participated in the shows. This is to say that issue ownership cannot be cast as the difference to non-presence but is rather the presence differential between the empirical presence and the expected presence given random selection. The fact that party invitations reflect party sizes in that larger parties are featured more often than smaller parties is emphasized by the staffer of *Maybrit Illner*.

“We take orientation from the strength of the parties in the *Bundestag*. If somebody wants to criticize us, we can point to that criterion. The proportionality in the *Bundestag* is our yardstick.” (Interview with member of editorial staff of *Maybrit Illner*, May 6, 2013; translation D.N.)<sup>8</sup>

To include this weighting scheme into the baseline selection, the results for the elections in the period under investigation were assembled. The weighted average of these results is taken as the selection probability, where the weights are calculated as the number of shows in the electoral cycle, i.e. an electoral period with more shows influences the selection probability more heavily. Table 6.3 presents the overall selection probabilities in the period of investi-

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<sup>8</sup>“Wir orientieren uns an der Stärke der Parteien im Bundestag. Wenn uns dann jemand kritisiert, dann können wir darauf verweisen. Der Proporz im Bundestag ist unser Maßstab.”

gation. The CDU/CSU has the highest overall selection probability while Bündnis 90/Die Grünen and Die Linke have the lowest overall selection probability.

Table 6.3: Election results – Selection probabilities

Party	1998-2002	2002-2005	2005-2009	2009-2013	Weighted select prob
CDU/CSU	.351	.385	.352	.338	.35
SPD	.409	.385	.342	.230	.30
FDP	.062	.074	.098	.146	.12
Grüne	.067	.086	.081	.119	.09
PDS/Die Linke	.051	.000 <sup>9</sup>	.087	.107	.09
Shows (Weights)	198	203	451	951	–

The table displays the election results for the four legislative periods between 1998 and 2013. The bottom row shows the number of talk shows in the dataset. The last column displays the mean election result as selection probability. The values are weighted by the number of shows in each period.

Next, the baseline selection should not select parties indiscriminately, but take political positions into account. Specifically, the editors should rarely select two members from the same ideological camp when debating an issue. This is reflected in a comment by the *hart aber fair* staffer.

“You have to create a discussion in the show. We try not to be biased. You have to make sure that both camps are present such that political responsibility faces the opposition. You also have to make sure to vary within the camps and not only invite SPD members, for example.” (Interview with member of editorial staff of *hart aber fair*, August 28, 2013; translation D.N.)<sup>10</sup>

One final problem in setting up the baseline selection is dealing with the CDU and CSU. Both are distinct parties with distinct electoral results, but they form a common parliamentary group in the *Bundestag*. Thus, it makes sense to model them as one unit rather than modeling the selection choices individually. Again, this reflects the comments by the staff member of *Maybrit Illner*.

<sup>9</sup>In the 2002 federal election, the PDS failed to cross the 5% list vote threshold. The party was present in the *Bundestag* with two representatives that had won nominal mandates. It is improbable that the party was excluded from the talk shows entirely in this electoral period but for consistency I report the estimates for a selection probability of zero. Due to the low count of shows in this period, i.e. the weighting factor, the zero probability does little to change the overall selection probability.

<sup>10</sup>“Man muss in einer Sendung auch Diskussionen erzeugen. Wir versuchen nicht einseitig zu sein. Man muss ein bisschen gucken, dass die Lager besetzt sind, dass etwa politische Verantwortung politischer Opposition gegenüber sitzt. Und dann muss man darauf achten, dass man innerhalb der Lager variiert, dass nicht man etwa nicht nur die SPD da sitzen hat.”

“Generally speaking, we treat the CDU/CSU as one unit. When we talk about state-level politics it might happen that we have a member of the CDU and one CSU representative in the same show.” (Interview with member of editorial staff of *Maybrit Illner*, May 6, 2013; translation D.N.)<sup>11</sup>

Summing up these intuitions, a baseline selection algorithm was specified that should hold if no issue ownerships were taken into account when performing the guest selections. The algorithm is represented in the appendix of the present chapter. It states that given the number of available political seats, the first participant in the show is drawn randomly from the five parties. The party size in the *Bundestag*, i.e. the selection weight from table 6.3, increases the selection probability for larger parties.<sup>12</sup> If two political chairs are available, the second participant is randomly selected from a party of the opposing ideological camp, subject to the selection probabilities. For example, if the first randomly selected representative is a member of the FDP, the second participant must be a member from one of the three left-wing parties. Next, for all chairs of the order greater than two, a member of one of the parties that has not previously been selected is chosen. The baseline algorithm is run 2,000 times for each show in the dataset to get an estimate of the distribution of party members absent any ownership considerations.

### 6.3 A measure of issue ownership

Before considering the topic-specific misrepresentations, we first turn to the overall participation rates to consider whether the algorithm proposed in the previous section is able to recover the general invitation patterns of the parties. The results from this analysis are presented in table 6.4. The table displays the empirical values of the party presence across all the shows in column 3. The values suggest that a member of either CDU or CSU was present in 72% of the shows. Conversely, a member of Die Linke was invited to 20% of the shows.<sup>13</sup> Columns

<sup>11</sup>“Die CDU/CSU wird bei uns als Einheit betrachtet. Bei Bundesratsthemen kann es natürlich sein, dass da auch mal ein CDU- und ein CSU-Vertreter sitzen.”

<sup>12</sup>The number of political seats in the shows – and the absolute number of chairs – is taken as given. This is a simplifying assumption for the purpose of capturing the baseline probability. In reality, this is a moving part that can be changed by the shows' editors where necessary. Another simplifying assumption is the independence of the selection for the political and non-political chairs.

<sup>13</sup>Based on theoretical considerations and supported by comments of the shows' staffers that were reproduced above, I assume that party members have a huge incentive to participate in the shows and rarely decline an invitation. Therefore, I equate the presence of a party member with an invitation.

4 and 5 present the 95% credible interval of 2,000 iterations of the algorithm presented in the previous section for each of the shows.

Table 6.4: Predicting overall invitations

Party	N	Observed	Predicted	
			2.5%	97.5%
CDU/CSU	1,803	.72	.69	.73
SPD	1,803	.59	.59	.63
FDP	1,803	.31	.30	.34
Grüne	1,803	.34	.24	.28
PDS/Die Linke	1,803	.20	.23	.27

The table displays the presence of the five parties across all 1,803 shows. The empirical presence is displayed in column 3. 2,000 iterations of the algorithm were run to compute the 95% credible interval. Column 4 and 5 display the extreme values in the interval.

The baseline random selection algorithm recovers the overall invitation patterns quite nicely. Despite the small margins of uncertainty, due to the high number of shows, the empirical values of the CDU/CSU, SPD and FDP all come to lie inside the margins of error. Bündnis 90/Die Grünen is a little overrepresented relative to the baseline, Die Linke appears a little less frequently than expected based on the comments of the shows' staffers. One possibility to explain the latter two observations might be that there are some systematic biases in the shows editorial boards that favor Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, but discriminate against Die Linke. This is not entirely impossible as evidenced by a comment of the *hart aber fair* staffer.

“We check the proportionality of our guests. In the long run we do not want to have a bias in our invitations. We are completely neutral, that is important to point out. It happens that parties complain, like the ”Linkspartei“ this spring. We do not explicitly count, but there are various media journalists who do that. We do take note when others do that.”(Interview with member of editorial staff of *hart aber fair*, August 28, 2013; translation D.N.)<sup>14</sup>

This would suggest that there might indeed be some kind of systematic imbalances in the invitation patterns that are being criticized by the political actors. A second possible explanation is the difference in governmental responsibilities between Bündnis 90/Die Grünen and

<sup>14</sup>“Wir achten schon auf den Proporz. Wir wollen keine langfristige Schieflage drin haben. Wir sind komplett neutral, das muss man auch sagen. Es kommt aber durchaus vor, dass Parteien sich beschweren, die ”Linkspartei“ etwa dieses Frühjahr. Wir zählen das nicht explizit aus, aber es gibt diverse Medienjournalisten, die das tun. Das nehmen wir zur Kenntnis, wenn andere das tun.”

Die Linke. A government function leads to a certain degree of overrepresentation relative to the *Bundestag* baseline because, among other things, the competent minister is featured more frequently. Thus, part of the explanation for the disproportional presence of the Green party might be that in two of the four electoral periods under investigation, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen was part of the federal government. Conversely, Die Linke has never held a federal government responsibility after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1990.

The results from the estimates of the party presence at the level of the topics are presented in figure 6.1. The point values display the empirical presence, whereas the lines represent the 95% credible interval based on 2,000 iterations of the baseline selection algorithm for each show. Note that the baseline predictions do not have the same mean values as the number of available chairs vary by topic (see table 6.2). The width of the uncertainty around the baseline estimates are driven by the number of shows in a particular category. If there are numerous shows in a particular category, say “Party politics”, the estimates on how often a party should have been present are less uncertain. As shows in this category are also the ones with most political chairs on average, the expected mean values for this topic are highest.

Consider as an example the values for the topic “Government operations” for the CDU/CSU. Shows in this topic deal with issues in the area of public administration and intergovernmental relations, among other things. Based on the baseline predictions, i.e., absent any topical considerations, the Christian Democrats would be expected to be invited to about 65 to 82 percent of the shows. Instead, the party was present in approximately 88 percent of the shows. Therefore, the overrepresentation is unlikely to have occurred by chance but is rather due to a systematic association of the CDU with questions of public administration. This coincides with *a priori* expectations of the CDU/CSU as one of the main German governing parties that has held the office of the federal chancellor most frequently in the post-war period.

The most extreme case of overrepresentation is the presence of Bündnis 90/Die Grünen on shows that have dealt with “Transportation”, “Energy”, “Agriculture”, “Environment”, “Churches”, and “Civil rights”. While the massive overrepresentation is partially driven by too low predictions of the baseline algorithm in case of the Green party, the general pattern is not implausible. The shows' invitations clearly favor the party on those issues where it has a strong policy reputation. It is perhaps less intuitive that the party would be overrepresented

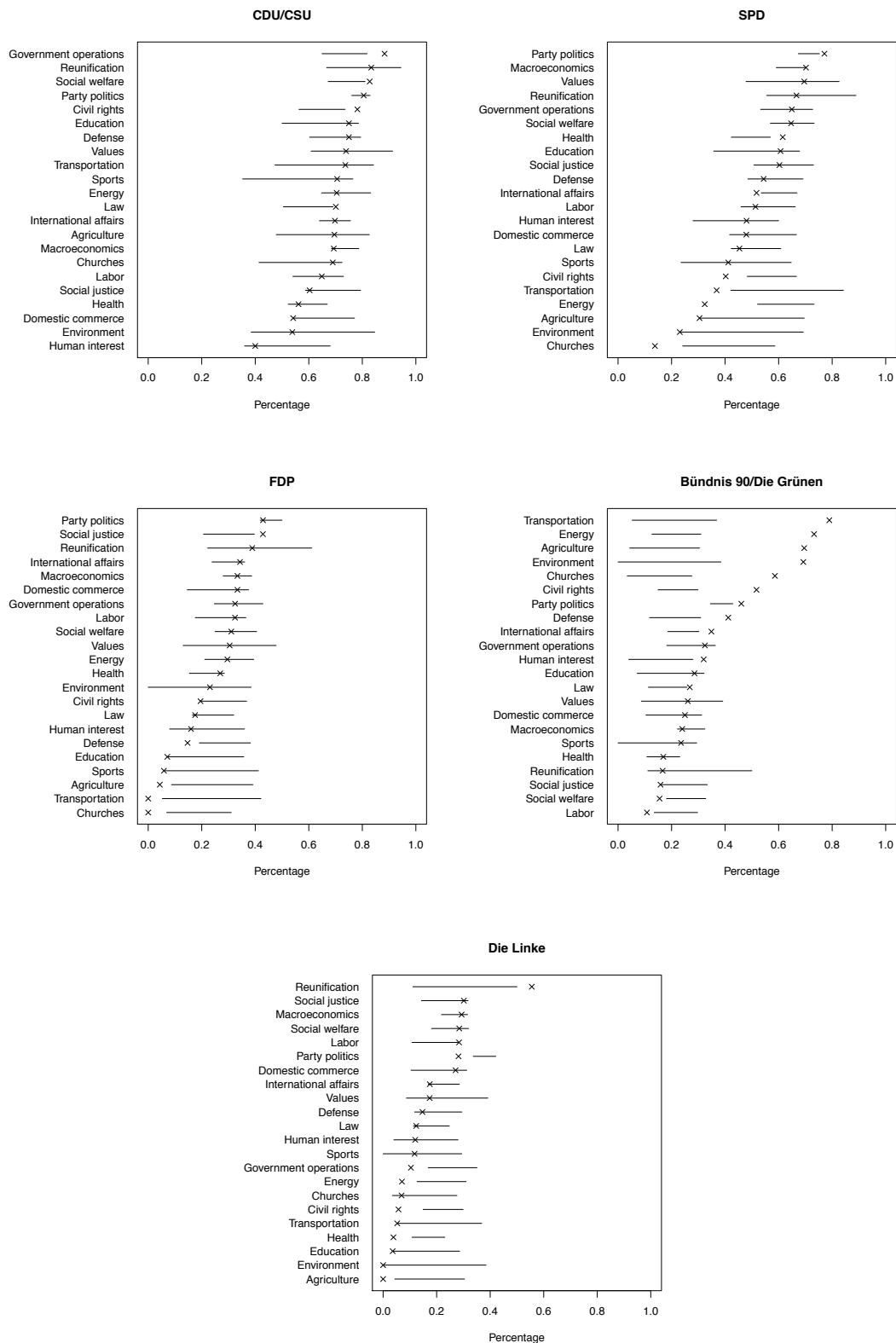


Figure 6.1: The figures display the estimated party issue ownerships in the topical categories. The cross represents the empirical presence of a party in the shows while the lines represent the predicted presence based on the algorithm outlined in the previous section. The varying width of the uncertainty is due to the varying number of shows in the topical categories. The varying mean is due to the number of political seats that were available in the shows.

on shows that have dealt with religious affairs. Consider, however, the data generation mechanism. The editors try to create a debate on the panel and therefore invite both supporters and opponents on any given topic. It is important to recall that “Churches” is simply the category label that covers two aspects – strongly positively associated with a topic and strongly negatively associated with a topic.

A second example for this pattern is the invitation frequency of the FDP to shows that have covered the issue of “Social justice”. Although the liberal party is not commonly perceived as a proponent of extensive social justice, they are nevertheless strongly associated with the issue. It is likely that they are invited to shows on “Social justice” in order to caution against extensive social justice for the macroeconomic costs such policies bear. I would argue that this conceptualization of issue ownership is reasonable as a strong negative association with a given topic should have the same position-taking effects as a strong positive association. If a party's reputation for an issue is high, it should be more inclined to enforce a consistent position-taking of their candidates – regardless of the direction of the reputation.

The editors try to balance out the party invitations in the long run. Consequently, an over-representation in one area requires an under-representation on other issues. This feature of the selected measurement yields interesting insights into systematic *non-ownership* structures. For example, Die Linke is significantly underrepresented on shows that have considered party politics. This is likely due to the non-involvement of the party in any of the federal governments in the post-1990 period. Representatives of Die Linke are not considered as important panelists by the shows' editorial staff.

Consider as a second example the Green party on the issues of “Social justice”, “Social welfare” and “Labor”. On all three of these issues the Green party is featured either significantly less than the baseline prediction or at the very low end of the predicted spectrum. This non-ownership is particularly interesting in light of the most recent electoral campaign. The party headquarters attempted to emphasize social welfare topics in the 2013 electoral campaign in order to broaden its electoral appeal. This was greeted with little public enthusiasm and toward the end of the electoral campaign the party headquarters even attempted to backtrack this effort and to re-emphasize more traditional Green topics such as energy and the envi-

ronment.<sup>15</sup> The observations in the dataset sheds some potential light on the difficulty of the Green party to establish an issue reputation for social welfare. Again, it is not surprising that Bündnis 90/Die Grünen are underrepresented on social issues. If the editors feature the Green party prominently on topics such as “Transportation”, “Energy” and “Agriculture”, but want to meet their standard of showcasing party representatives according to the relative strength of the parties in the *Bundestag*, the party must be invited less frequently on other issues – in this case social justice. Such balancing out of guests in the long run is a commendable feature of the measure as it creates systematic patterns of ownerships and non-ownerships.

There are instances where one might expect to find an issue ownership, but where the empirical invitation counts lie squarely in the middle of the expected values. This is the case with “Social welfare” and “Social justice” in case of the SPD or the invitation frequencies of the CDU/CSU and FDP for “Macroeconomics”. Several of these surprising non-findings are driven by the fact that the topic codes in the Comparative Agendas Project cover too broad categories and thus lump together shows that bear little relation to one another. For the same reason, I would argue that the very clear observation of issue ownerships for the Green party is partly due to the fact that they have strong issue reputations on issues where the Comparative Agendas topic codes covers quite narrow categories.

In summary, using a random selection algorithm based on the information gathered from the shows' staffers, it is possible to recover the overall party presence on German political panel talk shows reasonably well. Across all shows there are no strong systematic biases for or against any party – the patterns of presence and absence are nearly indistinguishable from a randomly selected sample. In a second step, the same algorithm was applied to each group of topical shows. There were clear and systematic patterns at the lower level. Representatives of parties that have an issue reputation for a given policy area are invited to shows more often, and vice versa. In the next section I turn to investigating how issue ownership is related to candidate communication.

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<sup>15</sup>“Ausgerechnet im Wahlkampf-Endspurt werden die Grünen selbstkritisch – Nabelschau zur falschen Zeit” *Nürnberger Zeitung*, September 9, 2013. “Mit dem Mut der Verzweiflung gegen das Umfragetief – Grüne geben sich zwei Wochen vor der Wahl kämpferisch” *Agence France Presse*, September 8, 2013.



The issue ownership variable is the key indicator of the models in the next section. It is operationalized as the difference between the empirical frequency with which the parties were present in the topical shows and the mean value of the predicted baseline presence.

## 6.4 Issue ownership and candidate ambiguity

Pressures on candidate communication are not uniform across all subject areas. The communicative act a candidate is willing to make should be inherently linked to the content of the communication. As the stakes for a party in a given topic rise, the candidates should be more likely to position themselves unambiguously. This notion is put to the test by including the novel ownership variable into the models that were elaborated in chapter 5 to arrive at a full model of candidate position-taking in the public survey.

Table 6.5: Topics in *Kandidatencheck*

Topic	N	as %
Agriculture	—	—
Churches	—	—
Civil rights, minority issues, and civil liberties	6	.25
Defense	1	.04
Domestic commerce, banking, and finance	1	.04
Education	1	.04
Energy	2	.08
Environment	—	—
Government operations	2	.08
Health	1	.04
Human interest	—	—
International affairs and foreign aid	2	.08
Labor, employment and immigration	3	.13
Law, crime, and family issues	1	.04
Macroeconomics	1	.04
Party politics	—	—
Reunification	—	—
Social justice	—	—
Social welfare	2	.08
Sports	—	—
Transportation	1	.04
Values	—	—

The entries provide the absolute count and percentage of items in a given category. Column 3 does not add up to 1.0 due to rounding imprecisions.

As a first step in the investigation I consider the content of the items. Like the television shows, the issues in the *Kandidatencheck* were coded according to the adapted media coding scheme of the Comparative Agendas Project (Baumgartner, Green-Pedersen and Jones, 2008). The results of the exercise are presented in table 6.5. With the exception of civil rights, the items are roughly equally distributed across the categories. Some categories do not have a single entry, which is to be expected as there are only 24 items in the entire dataset.<sup>16</sup>

Table 6.6 displays the results of six models that regress the issue ownership on the probability of an ambiguous candidate position using multilevel logit models. Recall that the issue ownership variable is calculated as the difference between the mean value of the baseline predictions and the empirically observed presence. Apart from the ownership variable, the models contain the district and party preferences – both individually and interacted. The first three models contain the variable for the supporter preferences, models 4-6 contain the mean district preferences. All models control for the incumbency status of the candidates and contain fixed effects for party memberships.

The models with the supporter preferences outperform the models containing the mean district preferences. The newly introduced ownership variable has the predicted negative effect in all model specifications – the more a party owns an issue, the less likely the candidates are to label themselves as undecided. All other baseline observations from chapter 5 hold, i.e. candidate incumbency is negatively related to ambiguous position-taking and the interaction between the small-area preferences and the party preference is strongly negative. As the disagreement between the two principals increases, candidates are significantly more likely to label themselves as undecided on the public candidate survey.

The candidates were included as a grouping factor in the multilevel logit models that were introduced in chapter 5. There is a second obvious grouping factor in the data – the items. I did not cross-classify the models for simplicity, but pointed out that there is no major difference between the models with a second grouping factor. In the present model I chose to include the statement as a grouping factor as the content of the statements is so central to the argument. Doing so, it is possible to control for the question-specific idiosyncrasies and capture only the effect of the ownership on position-taking.

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<sup>16</sup>A list of the items in the dataset is provided in the appendix (chapter 8.)

Table 6.6: Hierarchical logit models – Issue ownership (Group: candidate)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>					
	Ambiguous position					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Ownership	–1.206*** (0.265)	–1.124*** (0.287)	–1.170*** (0.275)	–1.451*** (0.261)	–1.551*** (0.279)	–1.531*** (0.266)
Supporter preference	2.149*** (0.154)	2.083*** (0.306)	2.185*** (0.252)			
District preference				1.979*** (0.176)	1.144 (0.704)	1.958*** (0.382)
Party: Agree	2.123*** (0.146)	1.872*** (0.182)	1.965*** (0.171)	1.772*** (0.154)	1.610*** (0.197)	1.661*** (0.183)
Incumbent	–1.011*** (0.121)	–1.056*** (0.123)	–1.040*** (0.117)	–0.966*** (0.119)	–1.070*** (0.122)	–1.089*** (0.116)
Supporter preference * Party: Agree	–3.917*** (0.234)	–3.703*** (0.293)	–3.825*** (0.275)			
District preference * Party: Agree				–3.168*** (0.254)	–3.123*** (0.326)	–3.182*** (0.304)
(Intercept)	–3.428*** (0.153)	–3.984*** (0.270)	–3.430*** (0.197)	–3.550*** (0.164)	–3.759*** (0.279)	–3.408*** (0.268)
Statement fixed effects	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	30,050	30,050	30,050	30,050	30,050	30,050
Log Likelihood	–5,062	–4,923	–4,980	–5,131	–4,959	–5,019
Akaike Inf. Crit.	10,146	9,915	9,984	10,285	9,986	10,062
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	10,237	10,197	10,084	10,376	10,269	10,162

Note:

\*p&lt;0.1; \*\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*\*p&lt;0.01

Party and statement fixed effects omitted from the table

Models 3 and 6 are grouped into candidate and statement

There are three different specifications in the models that are displayed in table 6.6. First, models 1 and 4 contain no grouping of the responses into the 24 statements for reference. They are equivalent to the models in chapter 5 with the added ownership variable. Models 2 and 5 contain statement fixed effects and models 3 and 6 contain the statement as a second grouping factor. There are only small overall differences between the effect sizes, the substantial interpretation is robust against the model specifications. All models that explicitly contain information on the statement perform better than models without and the best model fit is observed in the model specification that includes the information in the form of fixed effects rather than as a grouping factor.

Figure 6.2 reports the predicted probabilities from the best fitting model of table 6.6 – the model containing the supporter preferences and statement-specific fixed effects – across a range of variable combinations. Specifically, I vary the party position (agreement and disagreement), the supporter preferences (agreement, divided preferences, and disagreement) and the ownership variable (low ownership, medium ownership, and high ownership). Note that the model predictions in the combinations are ideal-typical as the party, incumbency and statement variable are fixed. By definition, the ownership variable does not vary for any given party-statement combination (see footnote 17 in the present chapter).

The predicted probabilities mirror the elaborations of the previous paragraphs. As the two principals increasingly take opposing stances on an issue, the probability that a candidate makes an ambiguous statement increases, regardless of the combination of the agreement/disagreement. Within any given combination of agreement and disagreement, the predicted ambiguity is consistently lower where the candidate responds to a statement that is owned by her party. Consider as an extreme case the predicted ambiguity where the supporters strongly agree with an item, but the party disagrees. As the issue ownership variable moves from the lowest empirical value to the highest empirical value, the predicted probability of an ambiguous statement decreases by almost 20 percentage points from 39% to 20%.

A second graphical representation of this observation is provided in figure 6.3. The figure displays the predicted candidate ambiguity on the same combination of variables that are

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<sup>17</sup>For simplicity of exposition I fix the party variable, the incumbency status and the statement. The predictions are thus ideal-typical as the ownership variable does not vary if the party and statement variables are fixed.

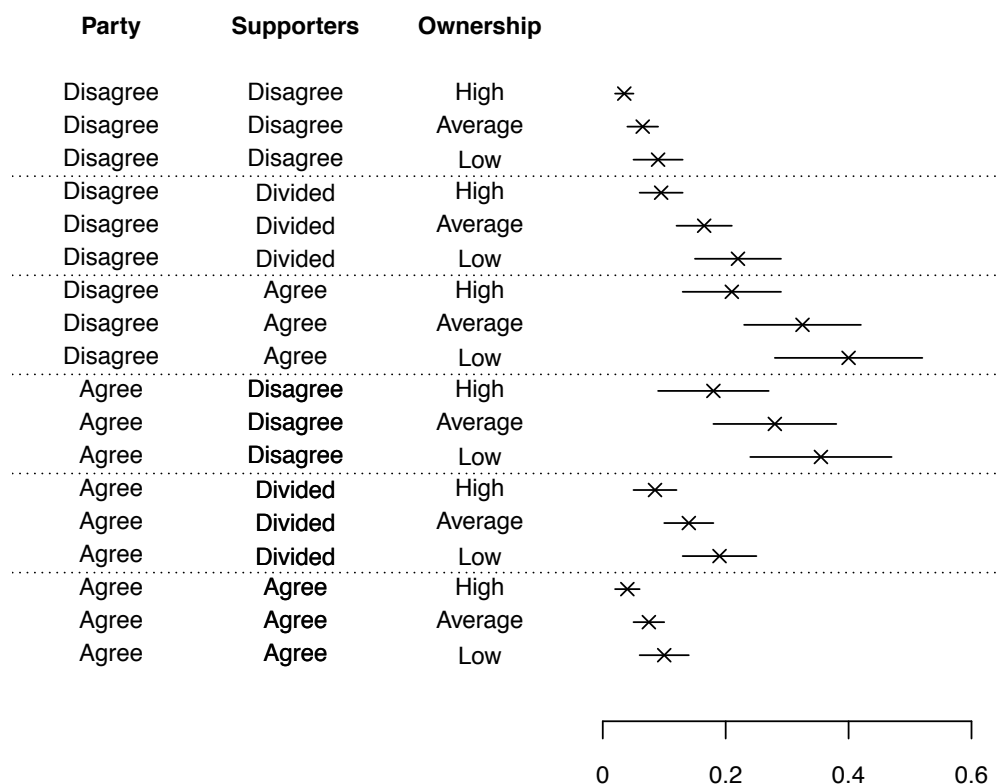


Figure 6.2: The figure displays the predicted probabilities from model 2 in table 6.6 across a range of combinations of the independent variables. All predictions are made for the response of a non-incumbent candidate of the CDU/CSU on the issue of same-sex adoption. The values for district supporter preferences are the minimum (agree), mean (divided) and maximum (disagree) values in the dataset: .99, .56, and .02 respectively. The ownership variable is coded as the difference between the empirical presence of the parties in the political talk shows and their mean predicted presence according to the random selection baseline. It takes on the minimum (low), mean (average) and maximum (high) values in the dataset: -.30, .00, and .58 respectively.<sup>17</sup> The uncertainties around the point predictions does not take variation in the grouping variable into account.

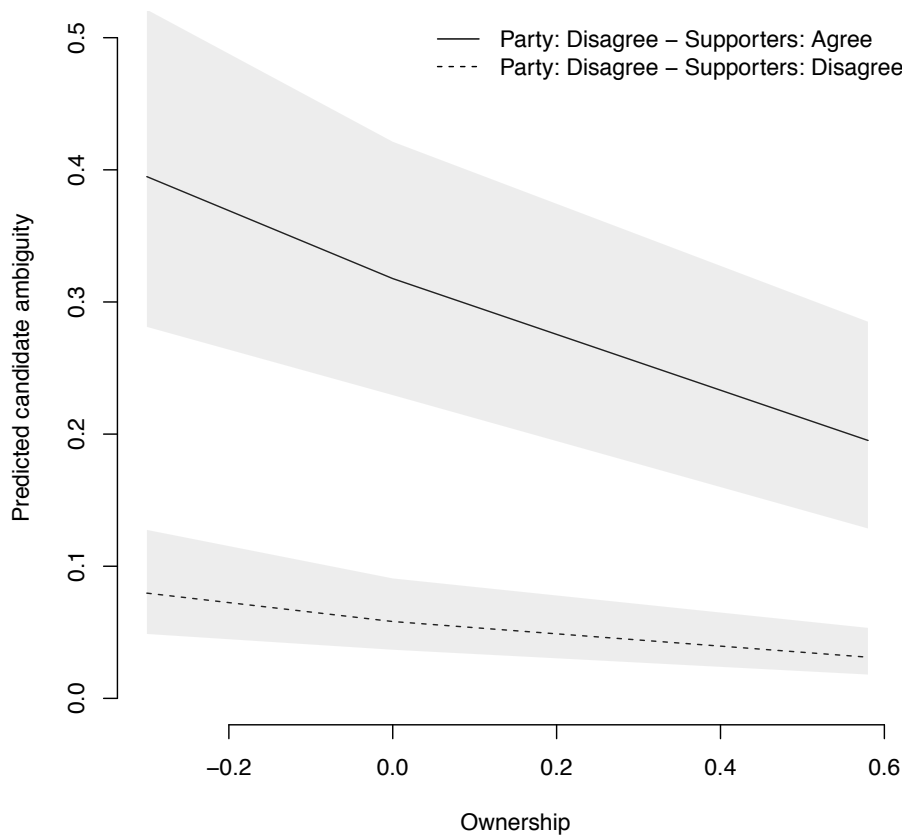


Figure 6.3: The figure displays the predicted ambiguous candidate position-taking from model 2 in table 6.6 across a range of values in issue ownership. The solid line displays the predicted candidate ambiguity when the party disagrees and the supporters agree. The dashed line displays the predictions for the case that both principals disagree on the statement. The predictions are made for a non-incumbent Christian Democrat on the issue of same-sex adoption. The uncertainties around the point predictions are visualized as the grey areas.

provided in figure 6.2. The dashed line displays the point predictions when the two principals agree, whereas the solid line show the estimates when the two principals disagree. The aforementioned consistent effect holds that as the ownership variable increases, the predicted candidate ambiguity decreases – due to the interaction between party and supporter preferences most prominently so, when the disagreement between the two principals is high.

## 6.5 Conclusion

Content matters in candidate communication. Some issues are closer to the core principles of parties and candidates than others. Such proximity should matter in candidate position-taking. Candidates share the fundamental values of their parties and should be more willing to take a stand if they feel strongly about an issue – irrespective of the electorates' preferences. Moreover, parties should be more likely to enforce the “correct” position-taking of candidates in order to provide a consistent image when it comes to fundamental party principles.

The close association of parties with issues, their issue ownership, is a well established concept in party behavior (Petrocik, 1996; Petrocik, Benoit and Hansen, 2003). It is more difficult to capture in a multi-party system compared to the two-party context where the concept originates. I argued that a measure of policy reputation should provide a clear ownership structure, i.e. if one party is the owner of an issue this should go at the expense of another party's ownership of the same issue. This characteristic is not provided in an analysis of party communication such as press releases or party manifestos as multiple parties can publish heavily on the same topic. In fact, a common emphasis in party communication is confounded with salience. Collecting issue ownership from survey data is similarly challenging as voters' ownership perceptions are driven by party preferences and also subject to considerations of issue salience, creating severe data sparsity problems.

In this chapter I proposed a novel way of estimating parties' policy reputations as the frequency with which parties are invited to political panel talk shows. This allows taking salience out of the equation by investigating the relative presence of the parties in the various shows. Issue salience determines the frequency with which an issue is debated but does not diminish the fact that more parties want to attend the shows than the shows want to feature party representatives. I proposed an algorithm to estimate the baseline selection probability for the various parties based on their electoral strength in the *Bundestag*. Applying this criterion to the selection patterns across all the shows, it was possible to recover the actual selection patterns nicely. At the level of the topical shows, however, parties are systematically over- and underrepresented along the expected lines of their policy reputations.

In a final step of the investigation, the novel measure – the difference between the actual party presence and the mean baseline selection probability – was applied to analyze the association of party issue ownership and candidate position-taking. Above and beyond the preferences of the two principals, candidates are systematically less likely to remain ambiguous when their party is owner of an issue. This observation holds across multiple model specifications. To conclude, issue ownership does indeed mediate the position-taking incentives that are exerted by the preferences of the candidates' principals.

The proposed ownership measure is a valuable addition for estimating party behavior. It has the attractive feature that it generates both inter- and intra-party variation in ownership structures. Moreover, the measure reflects public perceptions of policy reputations as it captures ownership directly from public discourse. Although it was not the concern of the present chapter, the new ownership variable should therefore be closely aligned with ownership perceptions that are collected in voter surveys. I would suggest that the measure is applicable in other research that is concerned with party policy reputations. While I have argued that the inter- and intra-party variation of the ownership measure is a commendable feature, it clearly depends on the specific research question whether other research wants to incorporate a measure that tries to take issue salience out of the equation. Moreover, future research might like to stick with a more immediate measure of issue ownership that is a feature of party communication.

Finally, given certain constraints, the measure should transfer to a comparative context. The most obvious constraint is that the procedure is fairly labor-intensive. All the data has to be hand coded and due to the small description snippets, it is difficult to automate the task using text classification. A second precondition for the application of the measure in a comparative context is the underlying fairness of the guest selection procedures. The proposed measure produces a pattern of over- and underrepresentation because the editorial staff tries to balance the guest selection according to a fair standard in the long run. If comparable shows in other media landscapes are fundamentally biased in favor of one party, this would not be the case. A final concern is the unusual German media landscape which has been labeled as a “talk republic” (Leif, 2012) to reflect the large number of political panel talk shows. Even with the high number of shows and the long time span, there were some data sparsity problems in



the analysis. Consequently, the measure should translate poorly to a media system where political panel talk shows play a less prominent role.

## 6.6 Appendix

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### Algorithm 1 Party random selection – Ideological alternation

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```

for i in PoliticalSeats do
  if i = 1 then
    Select participant from ["C", "S", "F", "G", "L"] with prob weight
  end if
  if i = 2 then
    if participant1 in ["C", "F"] then
      Select participant from ["S", "G", "L"] with prob weight
    end if
  else
    Select participant from ["C", "F"] with prob weight
  end if
  if i > 2 then
    Select participant from ["C", "S", "F", "G", "L"] with prob weight
    if Selection in participant1 or participant2 then Repeat
    end if
  end if
end for

```

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Table 6.7: Party invitations by show

Show title	CDU/CSU		SPD		FDP		Grüne		PDS/Die Linke	
	%	Corr.	%	Corr.	%	Corr.	%	Corr.	%	Corr.
Sabine Christiansen	.88	.31	.85	.31	.37	.13	.48	.17	.21	.07
Berlin Mitte/Maybrit Illner	.88/.72	.35/.34	.81/.52	.32/.24	.26/.35	.10/.16	.46/.33	.18/.16	.13/.22	.05/.10
Menschen bei Maischberger	.60	.35	.48	.28	.22	.13	.17	.10	.24	.14
hart aber fair	.72	.35	.59	.28	.29	.14	.31	.15	.17	.08
Anne Will	.70	.32	.60	.28	.34	.16	.27	.12	.26	.12
Günther Jauch	.67	.32	.56	.27	.35	.17	.28	.13	.22	.11
Unter den Linden	.56	.35	.32	.20	.21	.13	.30	.18	.23	.14
Studio Friedman	.57	.31	.29	.16	.39	.21	.33	.18	.23	.13
Zwei + Leif	.60	.36	.47	.28	.24	.14	.29	.17	.07	.04
Das Duell	.65	.43	.48	.31	.17	.11	.13	.09	.09	.06
Eins gegen Eins	.40	.29	.30	.21	.20	.14	.17	.12	.33	.24
Overall	.72	–	.59	–	.31	–	.34	–	.20	–

The table displays the relative number of shows that featured at least one party member. The first columns display the straight percentages. The alternate columns correct for the number of available political chairs in the shows.



## 7 Conclusion

The central message of the present volume is that the content of candidate communication follows predictable patterns – individual political actors systematically react to pressures in their environment. The electoral fortunes of candidates in the German political system are dependent on party headquarters, but they are also subject to the whims of the electorate. Candidates are well advised to consider the preferences of both actors when positioning themselves publicly. They are hard pressed to respond to the cross-pressures in their position-taking if both principals pull them in different directions. Under such circumstances, candidates have the greatest incentives to voice an ambiguous position.

A unique and extensive dataset on structured candidate statements during the 2013 German federal election campaign was employed to investigate this proposition. Candidate responses on the vote advice application *Kandidatencheck* were used to assess how they react to diverging principals' preferences and how such communication is mediated by the electoral context and the parties' policy reputations. It was argued that candidate statements on vote advice applications are ideal to investigate candidate communication in large-n studies. For one, the structured response format makes the candidate statements accessible to standard statistical tools without having to infer meaning from unstructured text. Two, the selected website in particular features an almost complete sample of nominal candidates for the *Bundestag*. The extensive sample ensures both firm conclusions due to the sheer number of participants and, more specifically, it also does away with concerns regarding systematic non-participation.

There is clearly some artificiality to this type of communication that sets it apart from ordinary political communication. Nevertheless, I would suggest that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. First and foremost, it is difficult to collect public candidate communication for all rank-and-file candidates in an electoral campaign. What is more, assessing levels

of ambiguity in ordinary candidate communication is not a trivial matter. The selected data source provides a transparent standard for labeling statements as ambiguous. Thus, it offers the possibility to easily trace the conditions that increase the likelihood of an ambiguous policy statement. Finally, the data even generates information on the preferences of voters and party headquarters that can be applied in a comprehensive research project.

This final chapter closes with some concluding remarks on the issues that have been covered. Section 7.1 starts by briefly sketching the central findings of the volume with a specific view on the hypotheses that were outlined in chapter 2. I go on to discuss the generalizability of the findings in section 7.2. The section also examines limitations of the research program and possible remedies for future research.

## 7.1 Summary of findings

Candidates have to please two principals in their communication – party headquarters and the local electorate. To capture candidate reactions to the principals' preferences it is necessary to get an estimate of the preferred policy alternative of party headquarters and the electorate. Thus, in a precursory step to the main analysis, I estimated the regional preferences of the German electorate. In a unique data collection, all user responses on the *Kandidatencheck* were stored, along with their geographic location. Users were also invited to participate in a supplemental survey to collect information on their sociodemographic status.

Applying a recently introduced model for estimating small-area preferences (Selb and Munzert, 2011), we were able to establish that the policy preferences of German voters vary systematically by region. There were clear differences in the preferences between Northern and Southern, Eastern and Western, urban and rural districts on many issues. For example, the border of the former German Democratic Republic, the borders of the German *Länder* and even historical borders structure preferences. Overall, the content of the estimated local policy preferences nicely aligned with *a priori* expectations of policy preferences in the German regions.

The findings on the variation of German small-area preferences are a valuable addition to the literature on public opinion as such analyses are rather uncommon due to data restrictions. Splitting up an ordinary dataset of voters into 299 electoral districts and subdividing further along other lines of political division and sociodemographic features typically puts too much strain on the data. Employing the user responses on vote advice applications allows collecting fine-grained estimates of local policy preferences on specific issues. We hope that the techniques presented here will inform future research on regional policy preferences. Similarly, we hope that the generated data on the local preferences of the German electorate will prove useful in other research projects that link local policy preferences and political outcomes (cf. Ardoin and Garand, 2003; Christensen and Florence, 2008; Rodden, 2010) – and possibly even for political practitioners, for example to improve micro-targeting of political campaigns.

Turning to the specific interest of this volume, it could be shown that as the preferences of the two principals diverge, the probability of an ambiguous candidate statement increases significantly. This finding holds true when analyzing all candidates, controlling for party membership, and almost consistently so when analyzing the candidates from the five major party competitors separately. There is strong evidence for hypothesis 1 – ambiguous candidate position-taking is more likely if party headquarters and the constituency have diverging preferences.

It was further shown that the better predictor of candidate communication are the supporters in the candidates' ideological camp rather than the mean district preferences – candidates take stronger cues from a subset of the local electorate than from the entire district. Again, this finding holds for candidates from all five parties that are investigated in the present volume. This is to say that the party status does not influence candidate position-taking. Candidates from catch-all parties exhibit the same patterns of communication as candidates from niche parties. Moreover, there is no difference between candidates with varying government functions, i.e. the position-taking of candidates from opposition parties mirrors position-taking of candidates from governing parties. It was suggested that observing candidates taking greater position-taking cues from the supporters rather than from the district mean might be due to candidate misperceptions of small-area preferences rather than due to strategic position-

taking behavior. This concern will be discussed more extensively in the next section, along with potential remedies for future research.

Candidates are afraid of repelling potential voters by staking out policy positions that are not aligned with constituency preferences. One problem that candidates face is an uncertainty regarding the preferences of the electorate. Such uncertainty should increase the likelihood of ambiguous candidate statements for risk-adverse candidates (Alesina and Cukierman, 1990; Aragonès and Neeman, 2000; Chappell, 1994; Glazer, 1990; Meirowitz, 2005). It was argued that political experience should equip candidates with a better intuition of local policy preferences, making them more confident in their assessments on when and when not to voice policy positions. It could be consistently shown that candidates are indeed less likely to be ambiguous when they have previously been a member of the *Bundestag*. Thus, the available evidence supports hypothesis 4 – political experience decreases ambiguous position-taking.

Above and beyond the mere incumbency status, it was proposed that the electoral context should condition candidate responses to diverging principals' preferences. Specifically, candidates should be dependent on the two principals to varying degrees, contingent on their electoral context. This proposition should have empirical implications for candidates that differ by the type of candidacy – nominal and/or list – and for candidates that differ by the tightness of the electoral race and the overall probability of winning a mandate. In contrast to expectations, there was little indication for the accuracy of this proposition across a wide range of model specifications. Neither tight electoral races, nor the probability of winning a list mandate or the type of candidacy substantially condition the candidate communication when faced with diverging principals' preferences. In sum, there is no strong evidence for hypotheses 2 or 3 which would suggest that the electoral context conditions the candidate reactions to the principals' preferences.

There is a serious caveat for the rejection of hypotheses 2 and 3. It is possible that the non-observation is due to the fact that no candidate in the investigated sample is a pure list candidate. As all nominal candidates can benefit from an above-average district result for their future career prospects, they should take the preferences of the local electorate into account when publishing positions on the issues. As it was assumed that all candidates are dependent on party headquarters – and should thus take party preferences into account –, this might

explain the observation that all candidates in the sample seem to be subject to the same systematic pressures on their position-taking.

It was finally proposed that the probability of an ambiguous candidate statement should be systematically related to the parties' policy reputations in an issue area. There are multiple reasons why candidates should be less ambiguous on issues that are owned by the parties they are members of. Principal among these is the greater probability of backlash against straying from the party line on core party issues. To investigate the effect of issue ownership I introduced a novel measure for the concept that is nicely applicable for research in a multi-party context – the patterns of party presence on political panel talk shows. The ensuing analysis provided consistent evidence for hypothesis 5 – candidates are indeed less likely to be ambiguous on owned issues.

## 7.2 Generalizations, limitations, and future research

Having provided systematic evidence that candidate communication follows predictable patterns, it is imperative to assess whether the results generalize beyond the particular context of the German federal election. The hypothesis that cross-pressures from multiple principals have empirically observable implications for candidate position-taking is derived from the theory of competing principals which was proposed and applied to explain variation in legislative behavior across countries (Carey, 2007, 2009). Given certain conditions, the proposed arguments for political communication should thus translate to other political contexts.

First and foremost, the theoretical propositions should hold in political systems that contain a majoritarian component or are pure majoritarian electoral systems altogether. Only if candidates can benefit electorally from paying attention to the voters' preferences would they occasionally face cross-pressures from principals of opposing minds. Conversely, candidates in closed-list systems can change their individual electoral fate comparatively little by taking constituency preferences into account. The dominant communication strategy in closed-list systems should therefore always be to align communication with the preferences of party



headquarters.<sup>1</sup> For the same reason, the relationship should be expected to be most evident in pure majoritarian electoral systems where candidates' fates are most intimately subject to the whims of the voters. If there is no safety net for the electoral fortunes of candidates, they should carefully take voters into account when voicing policy positions.

Regarding the other explanatory variables that have been considered in this volume, both political experience and issue ownership should translate to other political systems. Political experience should always allow candidates to learn about the preferences of the electorate, thus decreasing the fear of voicing an unfavorable policy position. Therefore, political experience or incumbency status should be consistently and negatively associated with the probability of making an ambiguous statement. Similarly, the relationship between issue ownership and candidate ambiguity is not specific to the German electoral system and should thus also generalize.

Turning to the limitations of the current research project, it was shown that the preferences of supporters are the better predictor of position-taking compared to the overall district mean. It cannot be decided with the available data whether this tailoring of responses to a subset of the electorate is a strategic choice or whether candidates are subject to a misperception of the voter preferences. It is possible that as candidates attend political gatherings in their districts, they are more frequently exposed to views of supporters than of non-supporters. This would lead candidates to gradually shift their perception of the mean voter preference in the district to a position closer to the preferences of their supporters. If this were the case, candidate communication would be no less strategic, but strategic and subject to systematic misperceptions.

Future research should try to assess whether the greater influence of supporter preferences on candidate position-taking is due to strategic considerations or due to systematic misperceptions. To investigate this, some of the items from the public candidate survey could be included in a private candidate survey, where candidates are invited to pinpoint the mean preference of the district and the mean preference of their supporters. Knowing the approx-

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<sup>1</sup>Hypothesizing no straying from the party line seems implausibly strict. There are other considerations besides strategic cultivation of a personal vote which might induce candidate communication that does not echo the party line such as intra-party power struggles.

imate location of the true values, this would allow researchers to estimate misperceptions in the candidates' minds.<sup>2</sup>

Evidence was provided that the specific electoral context of the candidates does not mediate their propensity to voice ambiguous positions when faced with cross-pressures from voters and party headquarters. However, as all candidates in the data set run either district-only or dual candidacies, a crucial control group for a comprehensive analysis is missing. Future efforts in collecting public candidate surveys should ensure that information from list-only candidates is collected in order to rule out the possibility that the systematic censoring of the data set drives the result that electoral context is not related to candidate position-taking.

A further concern that could not be sufficiently addressed is how much the data on voter preferences is biased due to the self-selected participation. In all likelihood, the sample is politically more interested than the general public, which might potentially bias the estimates. There is no suitable indicator in the supplemental survey to quantify the political interest of respondents and, regardless, there is no readily available baseline to assess the severity of the problem anyway. One potential remedy for this concern is to include some of the items in a general social survey in order to assess whether the estimates from the self-selected sample reflect the policy preferences in a more balanced sample. While the problem of more politically interested participants cannot be taken out of the equation in social surveys entirely, voter surveys can take greater care to recruit politically less interested and politically less sophisticated participants.

Previous research has focused predominantly on the receiving end of ambiguous candidate communication – ambiguity as perceived by voters and captured as the dispersion of ideological placements in surveys (see chapter 3). Conversely, this volume has investigated ambiguous communication from the point of view of the sender. It would be desirable to link the two aspects in the future. So far, perceptual data on the German candidates' policy positions is not available. Future variants of the German election studies could feature such questions in order to investigate whether sender and receiver ambiguity are systematically linked. However,

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<sup>2</sup>Incidentally, another interesting avenue for future research would be to investigate the degree to which the candidates' true policy preferences factor into their public and strategic communication on vote advice applications. Again, identical items on public and private candidate surveys might help to separate strategic from non-strategic considerations in the candidate responses, as candidates have fewer incentives to distort their policy preferences with regard to their principals in a private setting.

this research program might be somewhat difficult to implement in the German political system which is dominated by parties. There is good reason to believe that most voters will have trouble pinpointing the ideological position of candidates, or, if they do, their perceptions will be strictly dictated by the party position.

In a similar vein, much of the previous research on candidate and party ambiguity has focused on the electoral effects of ambiguity – ambiguity as independent variable (see chapter 2). The focus of the present research has been to investigate the strategic incentives that drive candidates to stake out ambiguous positions – ambiguity as dependent variable. It would be worthwhile to use the sender-based measure as proposed in this project and apply it in an analysis that investigates the electoral effects of ambiguous candidate position-taking. What are the individual electoral prospects of candidates that avoid issues when faced with cross-pressures from their principals relative to those that do not? What are the career trajectories of candidates that stray from the party line when the party drafts electoral lists in the subsequent electoral cycle?

Related to the idea of applying the sender-based measurement in an analysis of the electoral effects of ambiguity is the problem that the data under investigation stems from a circumscribed communicative context. It cannot be assumed that enough people participate in the *Kandidatencheck* such that strategic behavior on this platform influences candidates' electoral fortunes. Thus, if we were to find electoral effects of ambiguous behavior in this specific context, we could conclude that position-taking in the narrow context of a public candidate survey reflects candidate communication more generally.

Besides checking the validity of the data source by assessing its association with hypothesized effects, future research should also investigate more directly whether the proposed measure reflects candidate communication more broadly. The major impediment of measuring candidate communication is the difficulty of collecting structured information on the rank-and-file candidates of all parties in an electoral contest. What is more, even if we had access to an archive of communicative acts of the candidates, measuring ambiguity is extraordinarily difficult. A possible avenue in future research is the recent contribution by Milita, Ryan and Simas (2013). They collect the web appearances of candidates in an electoral campaign and capture the “missingness” of specific topics to model the conditions that drive these missings.

This idea could be transferred to the German electoral campaign in the next electoral cycle in order to compare the systematic relation of the proposed measure with a different measure of candidate ambiguity.

It was pointed out in the previous section that estimates of the German small-area policy preferences should be applicable in research projects beside the one that is presented here. Apart from applying the estimates of local policy preferences as independent variables to explain various legislative outcomes, future research should also go ahead and investigate the origins of variation in the small-area preferences. So far, district level variables like the border of the former German Democratic Republic and the population density were only introduced into the models to improve the accuracy of the preference estimates. However, it was shown that other political lines of division and even historical borders clearly exhibit splits in the preference estimates. This observation points toward exciting links to research that has considered historical legacies to explain contemporary political outcomes (Acharya, Blackwell and Sen, 2014; Putnam, Leonardi and Nanetti, 1993).

One final and interesting possibility is the application of factor analysis on the various single-item district figures to arrive at an aggregate estimate of the left-right position of the electoral districts. For example, some districts in Bavaria or Rhineland-Palatinate have consistently come to lie on the conservative side of the issues. This observation could be made applicable for future research by running a factor analysis, thus providing a comprehensive summary statistic of the ideological preferences of the German electoral districts.



## 8 Appendix

Table 8.1: Issues and short names of the *Kandidatencheck*

Short name	Issue
Internet surveillance	The state has to be able to access citizens' phone and internet records without specific suspicions. <i>Der Staat muss auch ohne konkreten Verdacht auf Telefon- und Internetdaten von Bürgerinnen und Bürgern zugreifen können.</i>
Whistleblowers	Whistleblowers, who point out deficiencies in companies or the administration should be legally protected. <i>Wer auf Missstände von allgemeinem Interesse in einem Unternehmen oder einer Behörde hinweist (sog. Whistleblower), beweist Zivilcourage und sollte rechtlich geschützt werden.</i>
Referenda	Citizens should be awarded greater authority via the introduction of federal referenda. <i>Durch Volksentscheide auf Bundesebene sollen Bürgerinnen und Bürger mehr Mitentscheidungsrechte bekommen.</i>
Donations to parties	Donations of companies and associations should be prohibited. <i>Parteispenden von Unternehmen und Verbänden sollen verboten werden.</i>
Taxes	Top earners pay enough taxes. <i>Topverdiener zahlen derzeit ausreichend Steuern.</i>
Tax evasion	The state should not buy stolen data on tax evaders. <i>Der Staat sollte keine Daten über Steuerhinterzieher kaufen dürfen, die gestohlen wurden.</i>
Financial market regulation	Germany should go ahead and regulate financial markets if necessary. <i>Deutschland soll notfalls auch im Alleingang die Finanzmärkte strenger regulieren.</i>
Immigration	Immigration should reflect the economic needs of Germany. <i>Zuwanderung soll sich stärker an ökonomischen Interessen Deutschlands orientieren.</i>

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Table 8.1 -- Kandidatencheck -- Continued from previous page

Short name	Issue
Public utilities	Public utilities like gas, water and garbage collection must not be privatized. <i>Aufgaben wie die Gas- und Wasserversorgung, Müllabfuhr und Abwasserbeseitigung sollen nicht privatisiert werden dürfen.</i>
Arms transfer	The federal government should not allow arms transfers to conflict regions. <i>Die Bundesregierung soll grundsätzlich keine Waffenlieferungen in Konfliktregionen genehmigen.</i>
Temporary staff	It is justifiable if temporary staff earn less than the permanent staff of a company. <i>Es ist grundsätzlich vertretbar, dass Leiharbeiter weniger verdienen als die Stammbesellschaft eines Unternehmens.</i>
Wages	A full-time earner should not have to rely on additional state subsidies to make a living. <i>Wer Vollzeit arbeitet, muss davon ohne staatliche Aufstockung leben können.</i>
Minimum wage	The state should not set a minimum wage. <i>Der Staat soll keinen gesetzlichen Mindestlohn festlegen.</i>
Retirement age	Since people live longer they should work longer. <i>Weil Menschen immer älter werden, sollen sie auch länger arbeiten.</i>
Highway construction	More money should be spent on highway constructions. <i>Es soll mehr Geld in den Ausbau von Autobahnen investiert werden.</i>
Power supply	Companies with high levels of energy consumption should pay more for the introduction of renewable energies. <i>Energieintensive Betriebe sollen stärker an den Kosten der Energiewende beteiligt werden.</i>
Fracking	The use of fracking to extract oil and gas is necessary. <i>Die Erdöl- und Erdgasförderung mit der Fracking-Methode ist notwendig.</i>
EU competencies	The EU member states should give more competencies to the European Parliament. <i>Die EU-Mitgliedstaaten sollen mehr nationale Kompetenzen an das Europäische Parlament abgeben.</i>
Austerity	The austerity measures for EU member states in financial distress should be relaxed in order to promote growth and employment. <i>Die Sparauflagen für in Not geratene EU-Länder müssen gelockert werden, damit diese für Wachstum und Beschäftigung sorgen können.</i>
Family subsidies	The state should subsidize children, not families.

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Table 8.1 -- Kandidatencheck -- Continued from previous page

Short name	Issue
Schooling	<p><i>Der Staat soll Kinder fördern, nicht Ehen (Familiensplitting).</i></p> <p>Children should attend a common school -- regardless of their origin and abilities.</p> <p><i>Kinder sollen grundsätzlich an einer gemeinsamen Schule unterrichtet werden -- unabhängig von ihrer Herkunft und ihren Fähigkeiten.</i></p>
Health insurance	<p>The current system of private and public health insurance providers should be kept intact.</p> <p><i>Das bestehende System aus privaten und gesetzlichen Krankenkassen soll in der bisherigen Form erhalten bleiben.</i></p>
Gender balance	<p>The percentage of women in leadership positions should be increased via a mandatory gender quota.</p> <p><i>Der Anteil von Frauen in Führungspositionen soll durch eine gesetzliche Quotenregelung erhöht werden.</i></p>
Same-sex adoption	<p>Same-sex couples should be allowed to adopt children.</p> <p><i>Eingetragene Lebenspartner sollen Kinder adoptieren können.</i></p>

The table displays the items in the *Kandidatencheck*. The first column displays the short name used throughout the document, while the second column displays the item phrasing in the original survey and a translation by the author.



## 8.1 Geographical distribution of district preferences

Internet surveillance

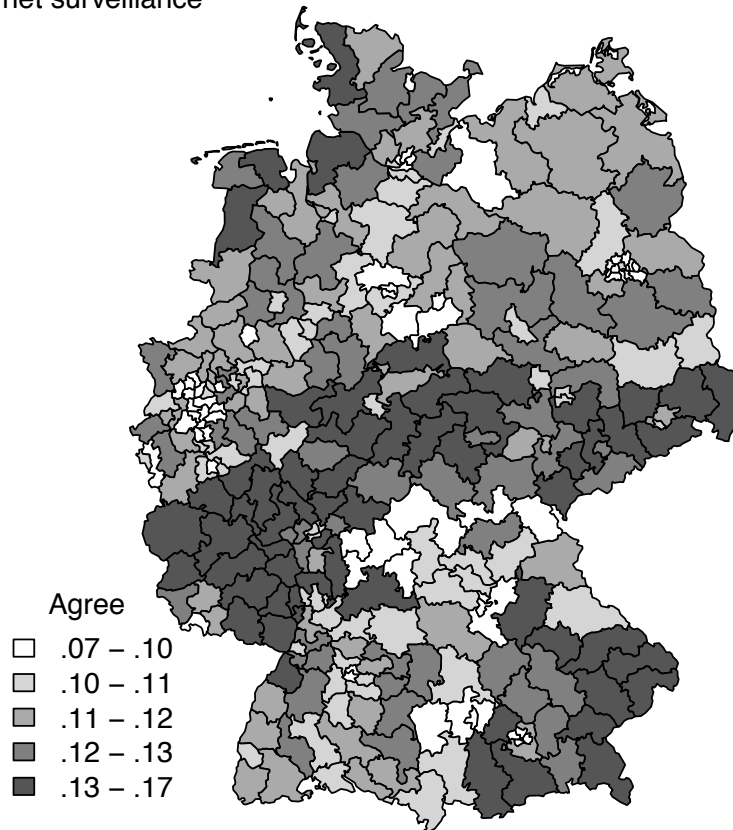


Figure 8.1: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the participants to the item “The state has to be able to access citizens' phone and internet records without specific suspicions.” [“Der Staat muss auch ohne konkreten Verdacht auf Telefon- und Internetdaten von Bürgerinnen zugreifen können.”; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

# Whistleblowers

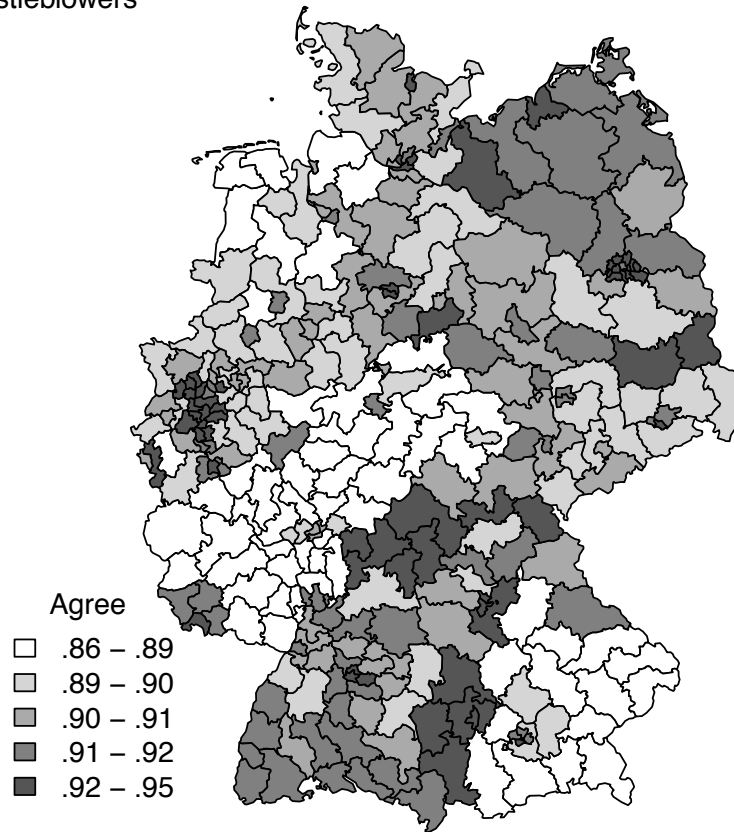


Figure 8.2: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the participants to the item “Whistleblowers, who point out deficiencies in companies or the administration should be legally protected.” [“Wer auf Missstände von allgemeinem Interesse in einem Unternehmen oder einer Behörde hinweist (sog. Whistleblower), beweist Zivilcourage und sollte rechtlich geschützt werden.”; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

## Referenda

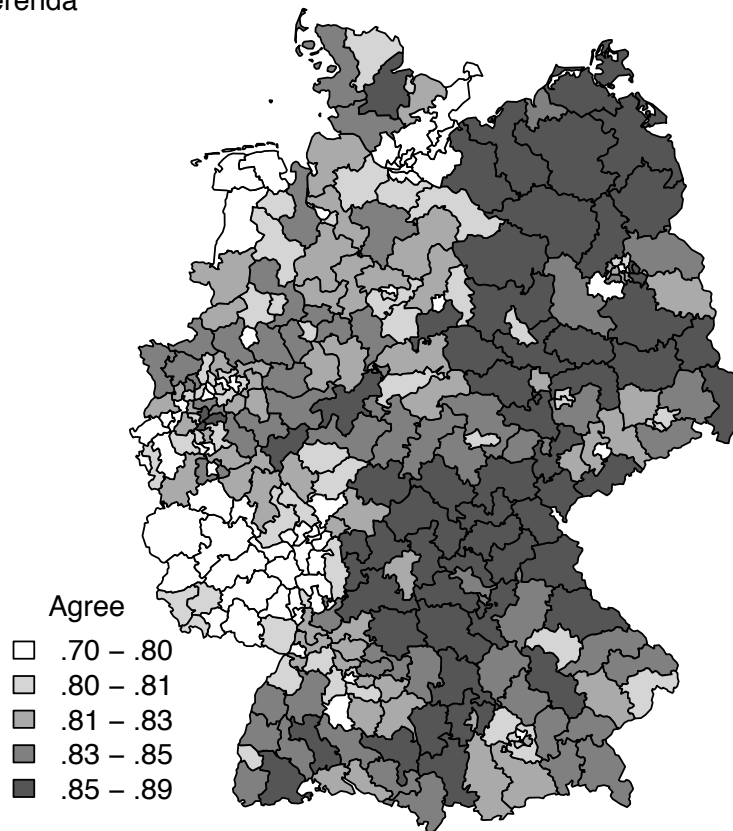


Figure 8.3: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the participants to the item "Citizens should be awarded greater authority via the introduction of federal referenda." ["Durch Volksentscheide auf Bundesebene sollen Bürgerinnen und Bürger mehr Mitentscheidungsrechte bekommen."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

### Donations to parties

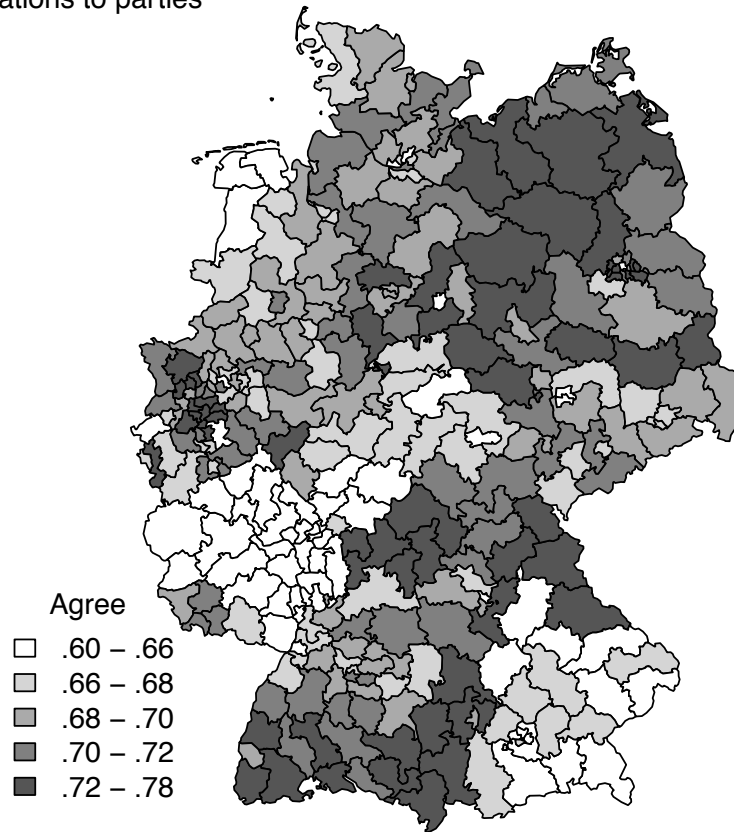


Figure 8.4: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the participants to the item “Donations of companies and associations should be prohibited.” [“Parteispenden von Unternehmen und Verbänden sollen verboten werden.”; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

# Taxes

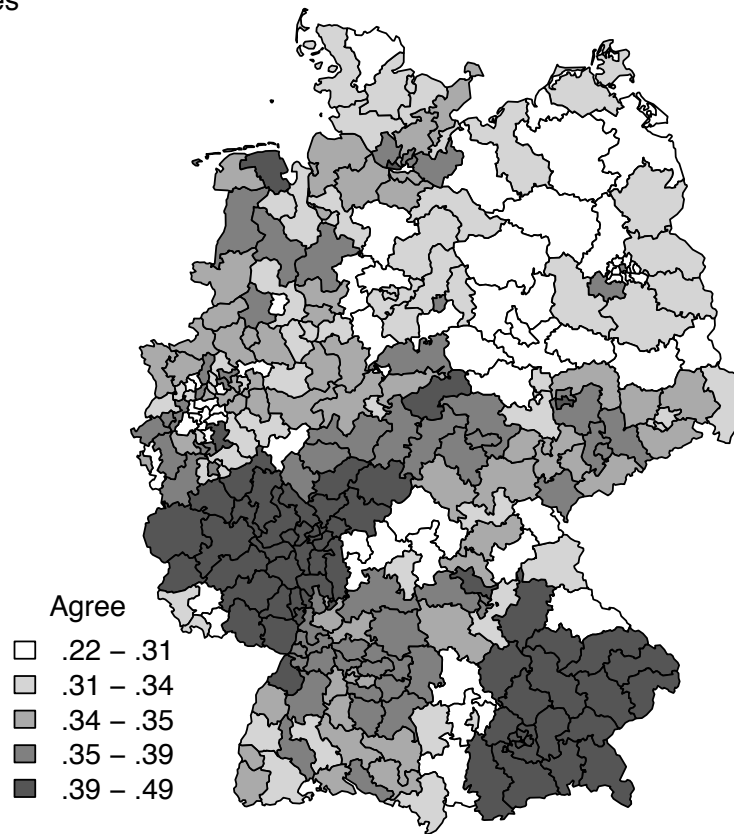


Figure 8.5: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the participants to the item “Top earners pay enough taxes.” [“Topverdiener zahlen derzeit ausreichend Steuern.”; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

Tax evasion

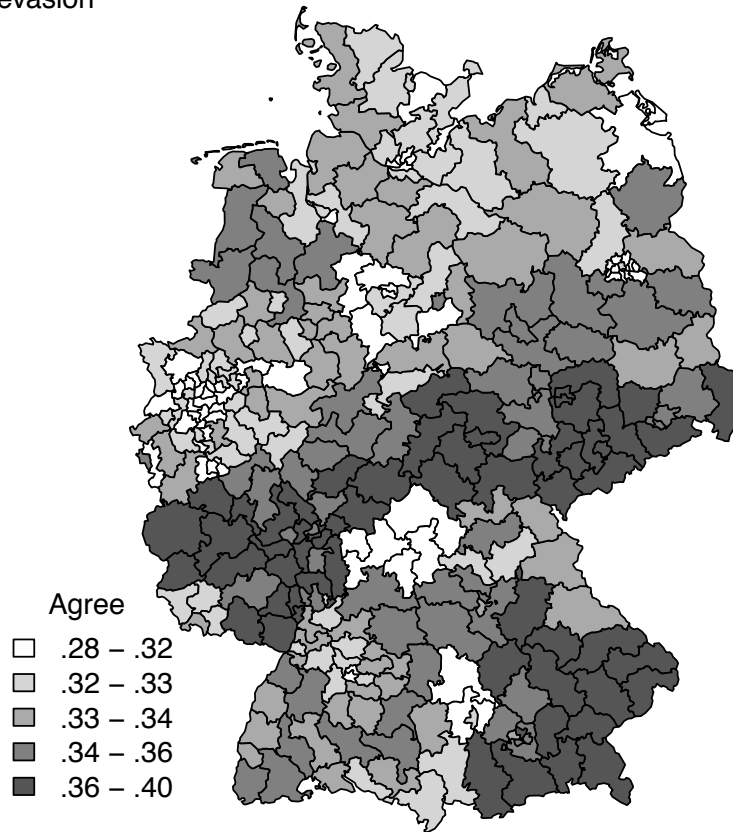


Figure 8.6: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the participants to the item "The state should not buy stolen data on tax evaders." ["Der Staat sollte keine Daten über Steuerhinterzieher kaufen dürfen, die gestohlen wurden."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

### Financial markets

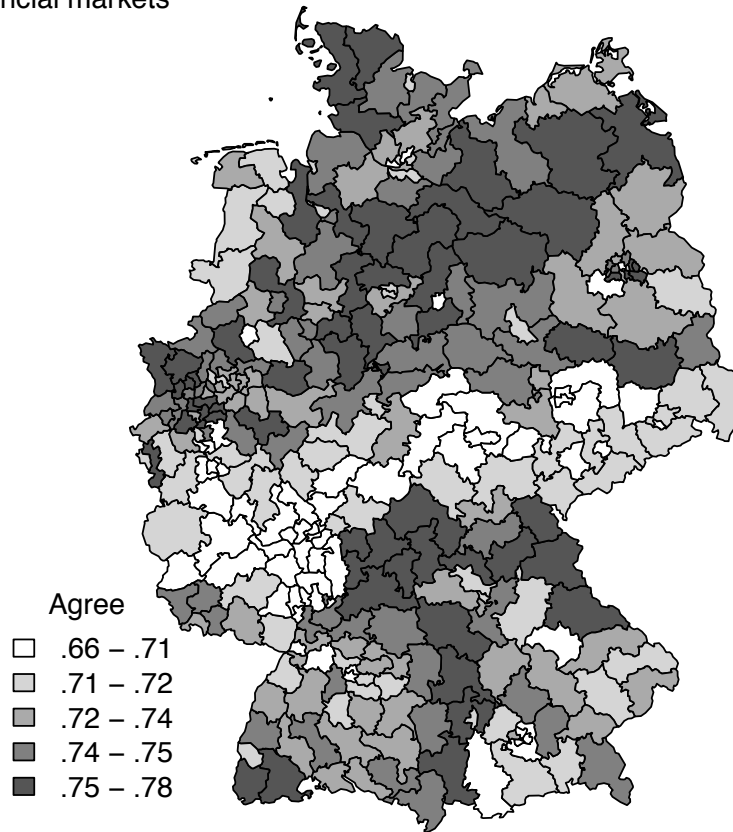


Figure 8.7: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the participants to the item “Germany should go ahead and regulate financial markets if necessary.” [“Deutschland soll notfalls auch im Alleingang die Finanzmärkte strenger regulieren.”; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

# Immigration

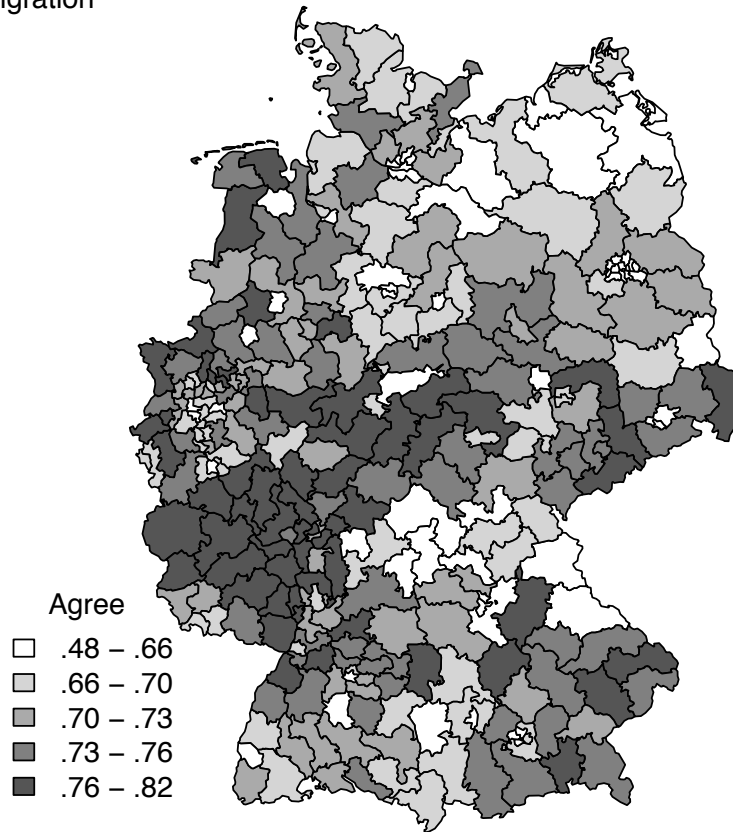


Figure 8.8: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the participants to the item "Immigration should reflect the economic needs of Germany." ["Zuwanderung soll sich stärker an ökonomischen Interessen Deutschlands orientieren."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.



Public utilities

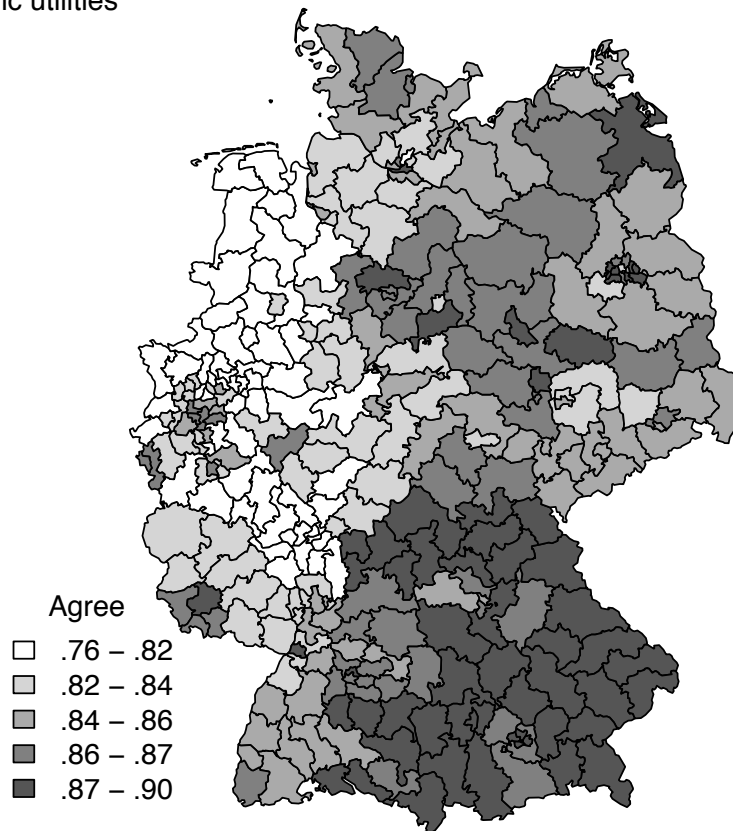


Figure 8.9: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the participants to the item “Public utilities like gas, water and garbage collection must not be privatized.” [“Aufgaben wie die Gas- und Wasserversorgung, Müllabfuhr und Abwasserbeseitigung sollen nicht privatisiert werden dürfen.”; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

Arms transfer

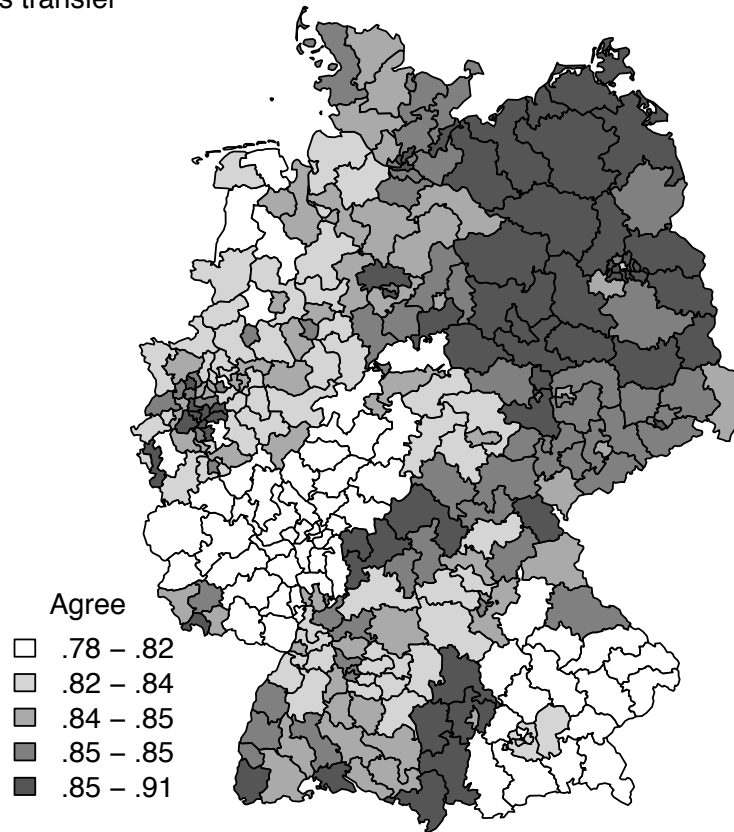


Figure 8.10: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the participants to the item "The federal government should not allow arms transfers to conflict regions." ["Die Bundesregierung soll grundsätzlich keine Waffenlieferungen in Konfliktregionen genehmigen."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

### Temporary staff

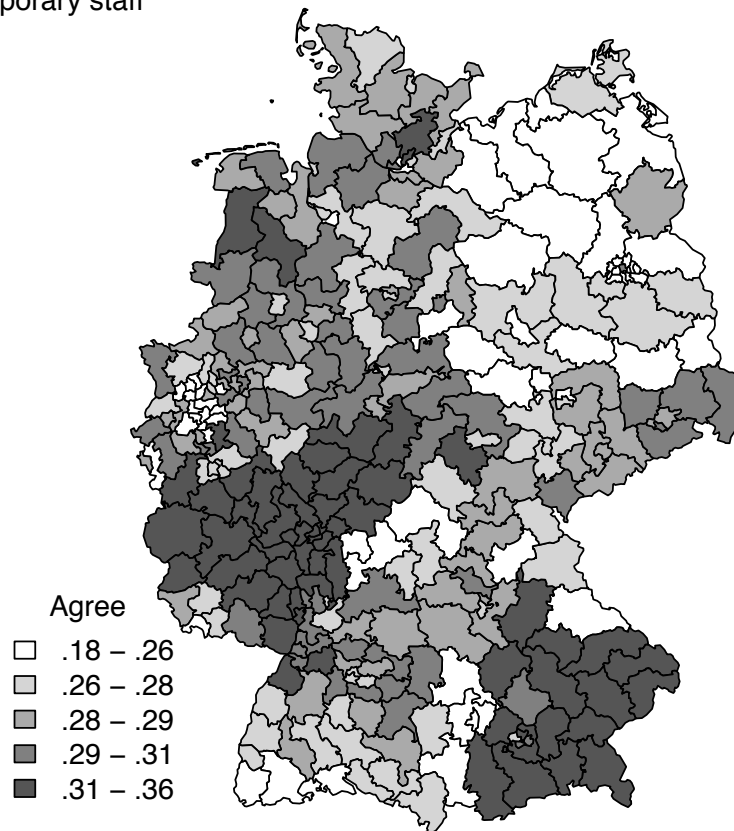


Figure 8.II: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the participants to the item "It is justifiable if temporary staff earns less than the permanent staff of a company." ["Es ist grundsätzlich vertretbar, dass Leiharbeiter weniger verdienen als die Stammbesellschaft eines Unternehmens.," translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

Wages

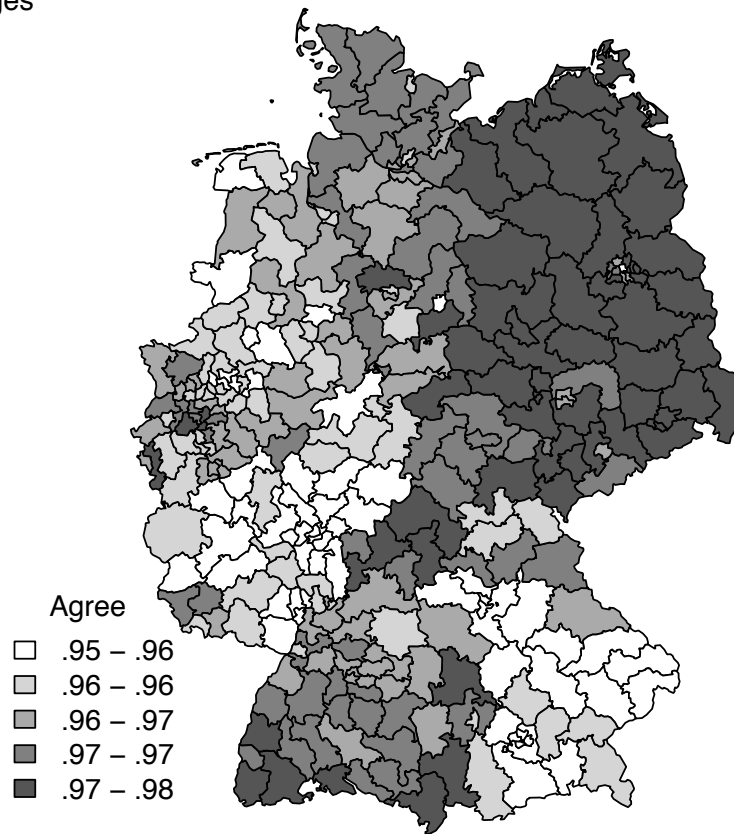


Figure 8.12: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the participants to the item "A full-time earner should not have to rely on additional state subsidies to make a living." ["Wer Vollzeit arbeitet, muss davon ohne staatliche Aufstockung leben können."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

### Minimum wage

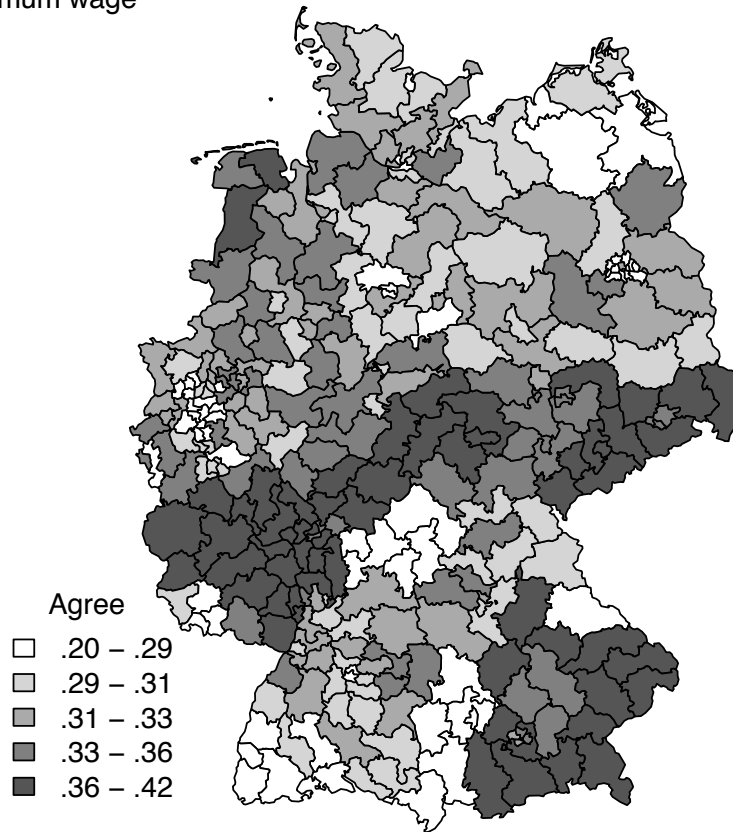


Figure 8.13: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the participants to the item “The state should not set a minimum wage.” [“Der Staat soll keinen gesetzlichen Mindestlohn festlegen.”; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

Retirement age

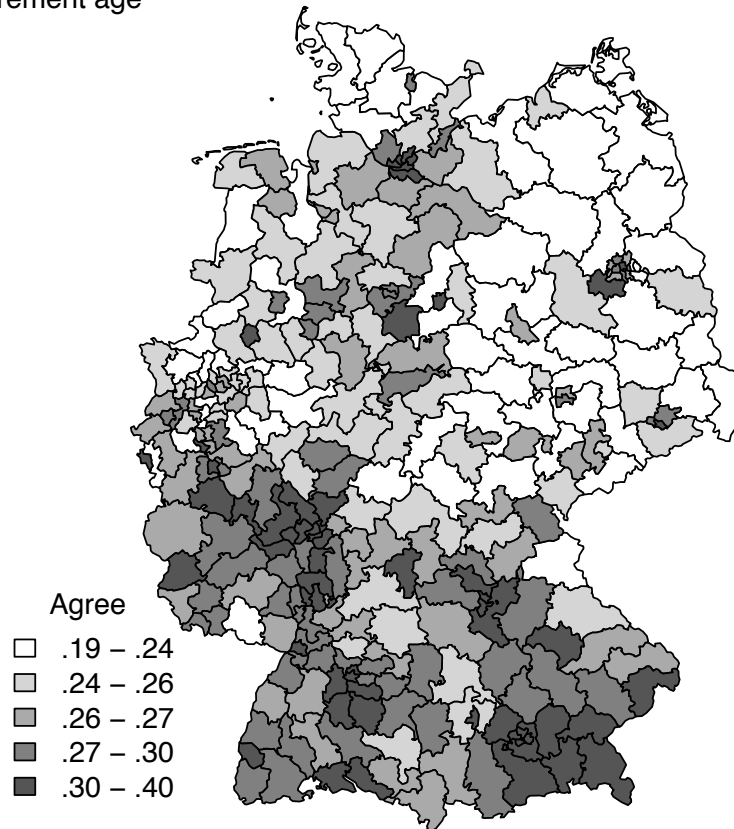


Figure 8.14: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the participants to the item "Since people live longer they should work longer." ["Weil Menschen immer älter werden, sollen sie auch länger arbeiten."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

Highway construction

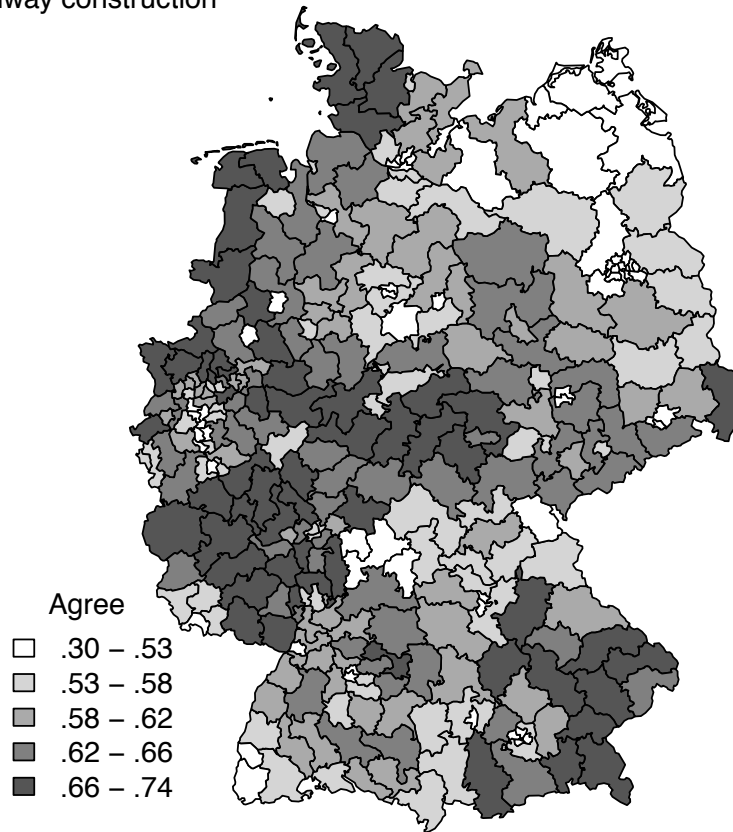


Figure 8.15: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the participants to the item “More money should be spent on highway constructions.” [“Es soll mehr Geld in den Ausbau von Autobahnen investiert werden.”; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

Power supply

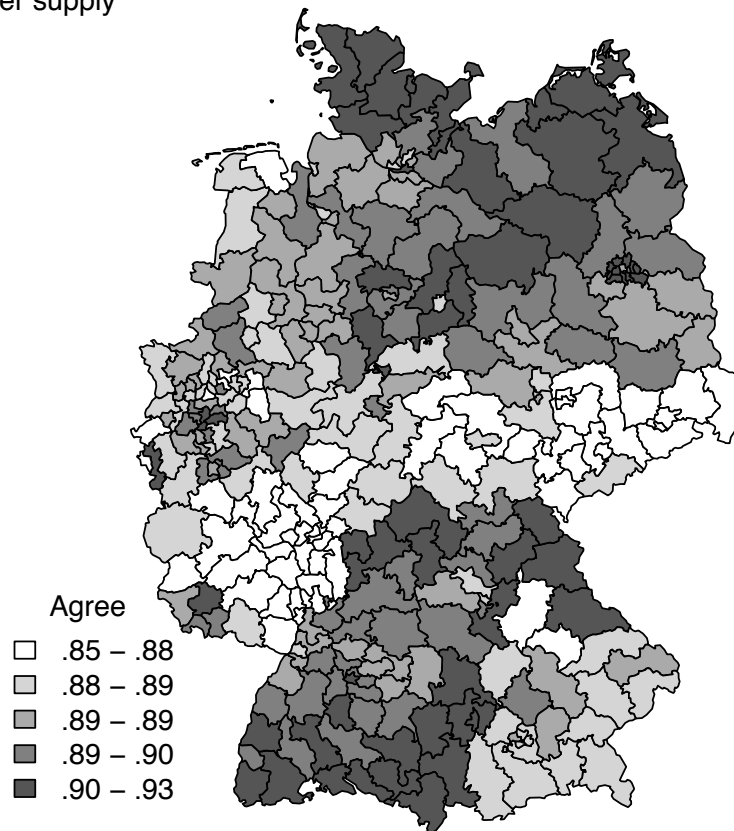


Figure 8.16: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the participants to the item “Companies with high levels of energy consumption should pay more for the introduction of renewable energies.” [“Energieintensive Betriebe sollen stärker an den Kosten der Energiewende beteiligt werden.”; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.



## Fracking

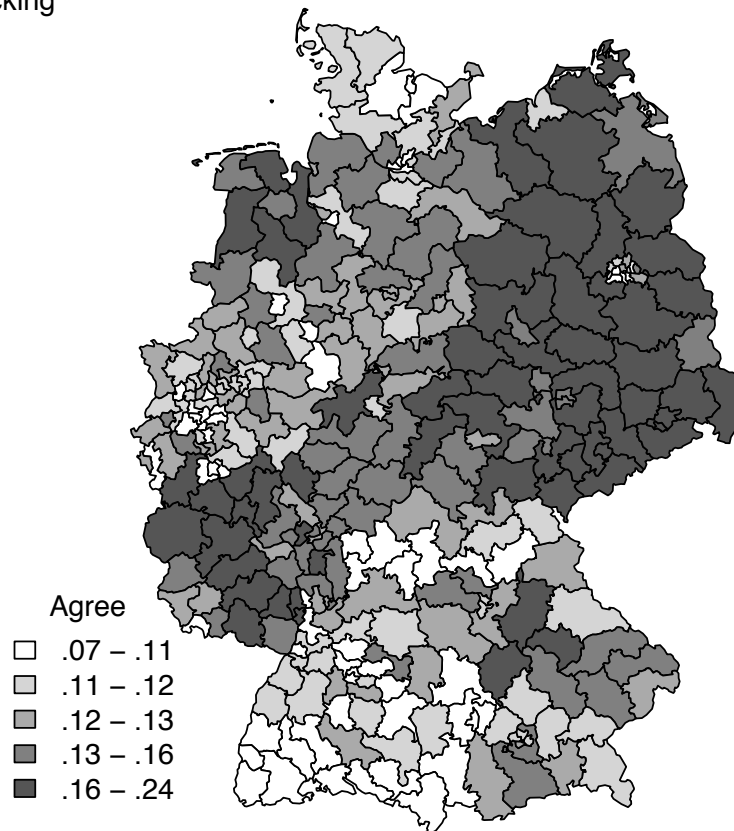


Figure 8.17: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the participants to the item “The use of fracking to extract oil and gas is necessary.” [“Die Erdöl- und Erdgasförderung mit der Fracking-Methode ist notwendig.”; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

### EU competencies

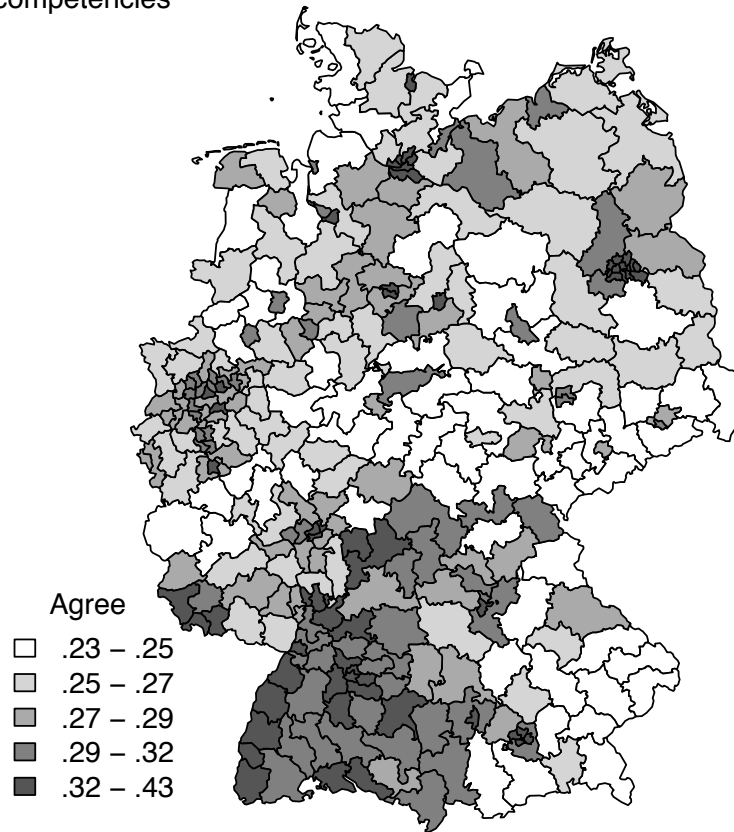


Figure 8.18: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the participants to the item ``The EU member states should give more competencies to the European Parliament." [ ``Die EU-Mitgliedstaaten sollen mehr nationale Kompetenzen an das Europäische Parlament abgeben."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

# Austerity

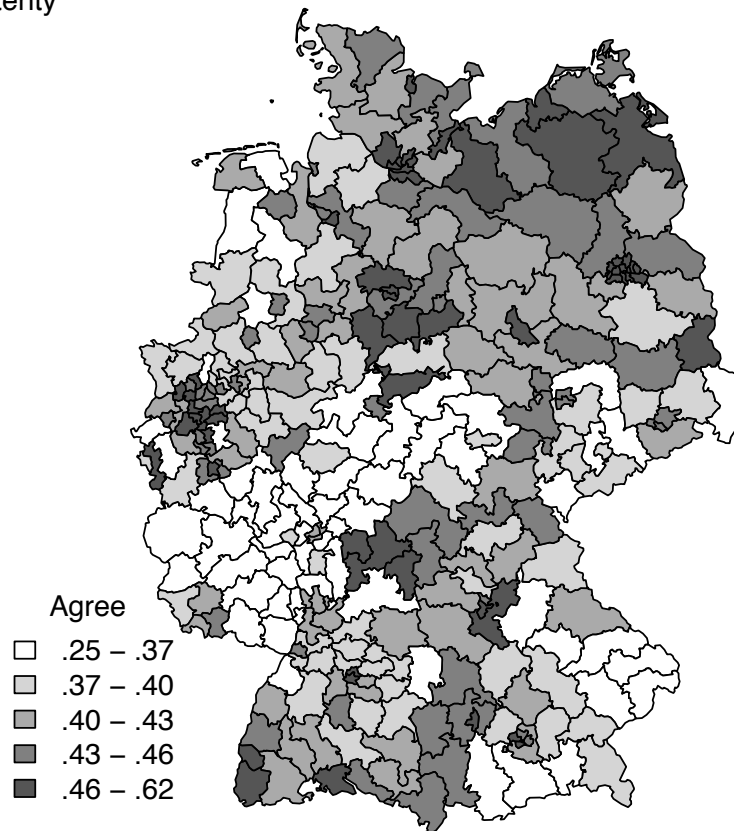


Figure 8.19: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the participants to the item ``The austerity measures for EU member states in financial distress should be relaxed in order to promote growth and employment." [ ``Die Sparauflagen für in Not geratene EU-Länder müssen gelockert werden, damit diese für Wachstum und Beschäftigung sorgen können."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

Family subsidies

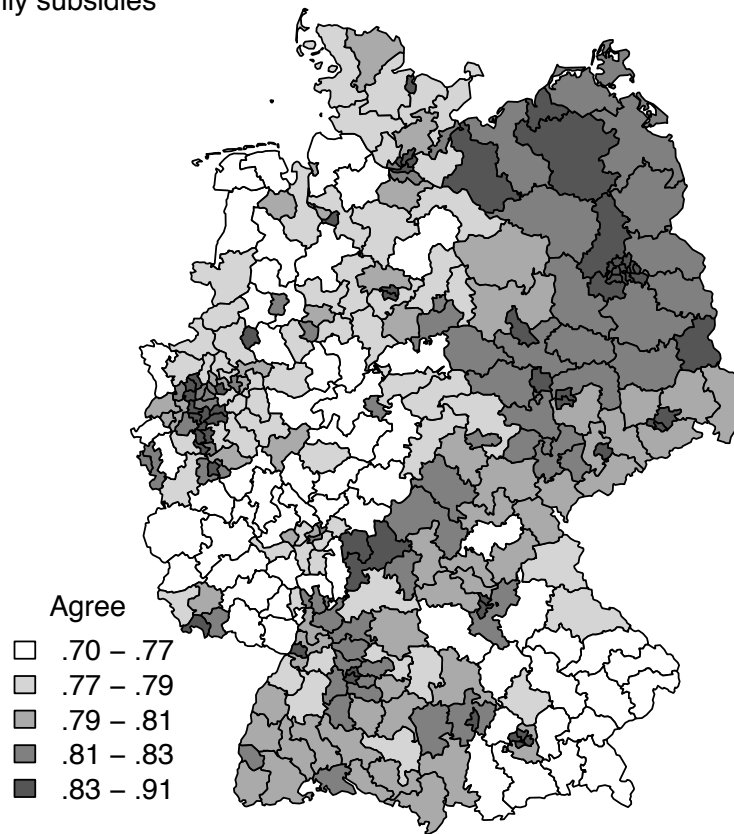


Figure 8.20: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the participants to the item "The state should subsidize children, not families." ["Der Staat soll Kinder fördern, nicht Ehen (Familiensplitting)."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

## Schooling

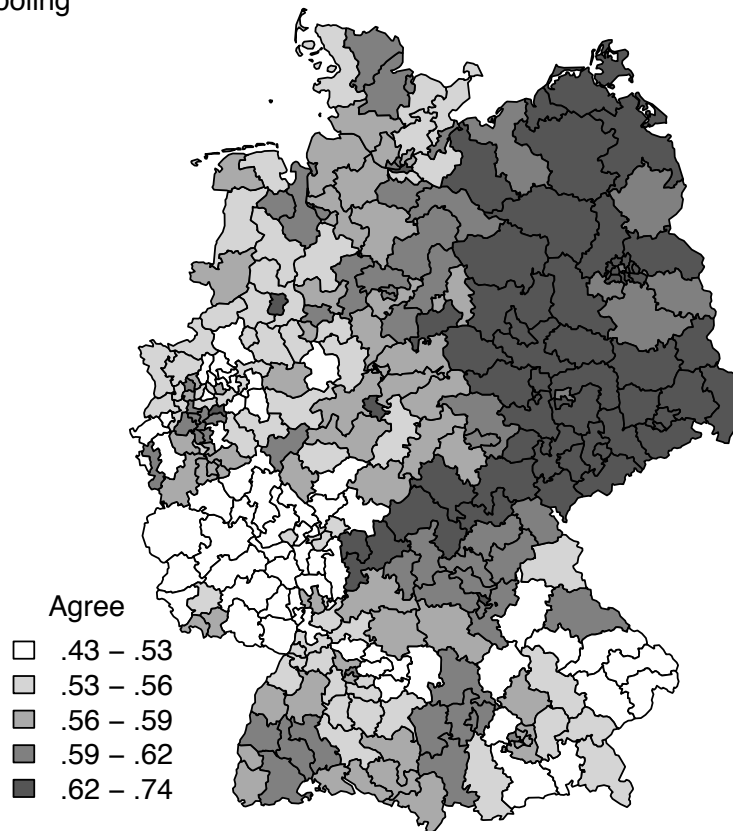


Figure 8.21: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the participants to the item “Children should attend a common school -- regardless of their origin and abilities.” [“Kinder sollen grundsätzlich an einer gemeinsamen Schule unterrichtet werden -- unabhängig von ihrer Herkunft und ihren Fähigkeiten.”; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

# Health insurance

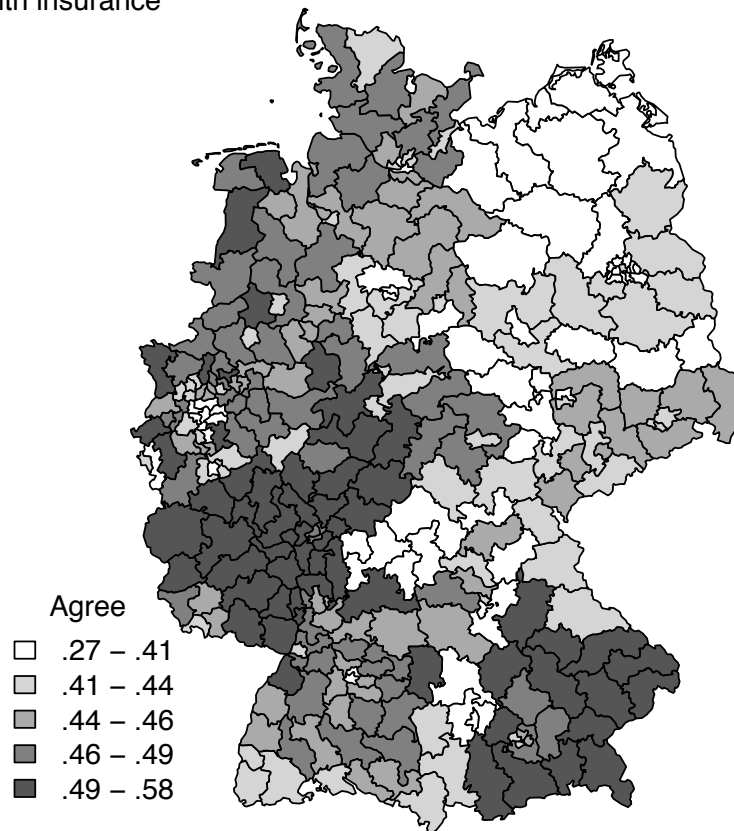


Figure 8.22: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the participants to the item "The current system of private and public health insurance providers should be kept intact." ["Das bestehende System aus privaten und gesetzlichen Krankenkassen soll in der bisherigen Form erhalten bleiben."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

### Gender balance

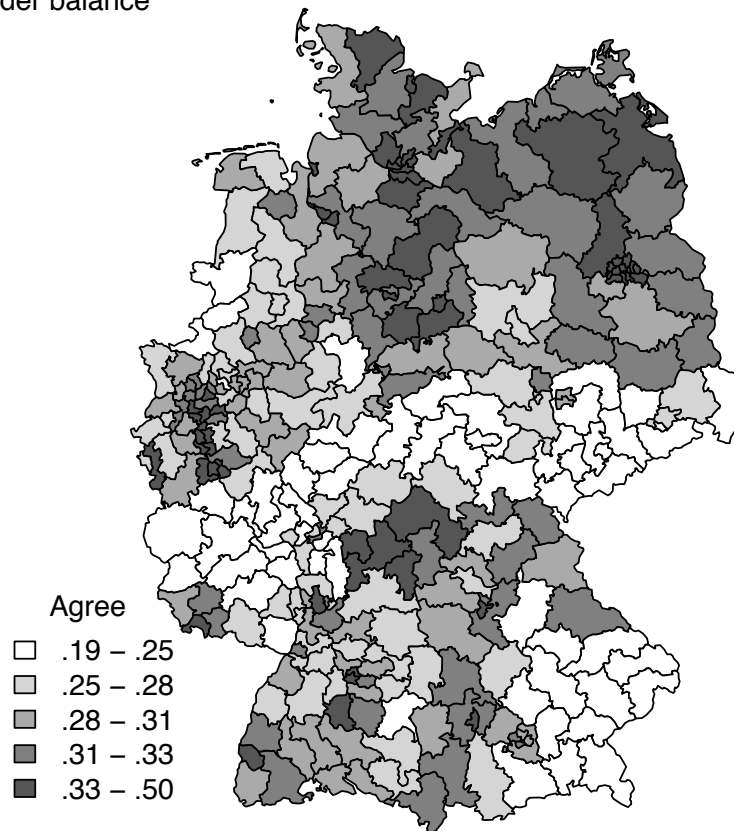


Figure 8.23: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the participants to the item “The percentage of women in leadership positions should be increased via a mandatory gender quota.” [“Der Anteil von Frauen in Führungspositionen soll durch eine gesetzliche Quotenregelung erhöht werden.”; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

Same-sex adoption

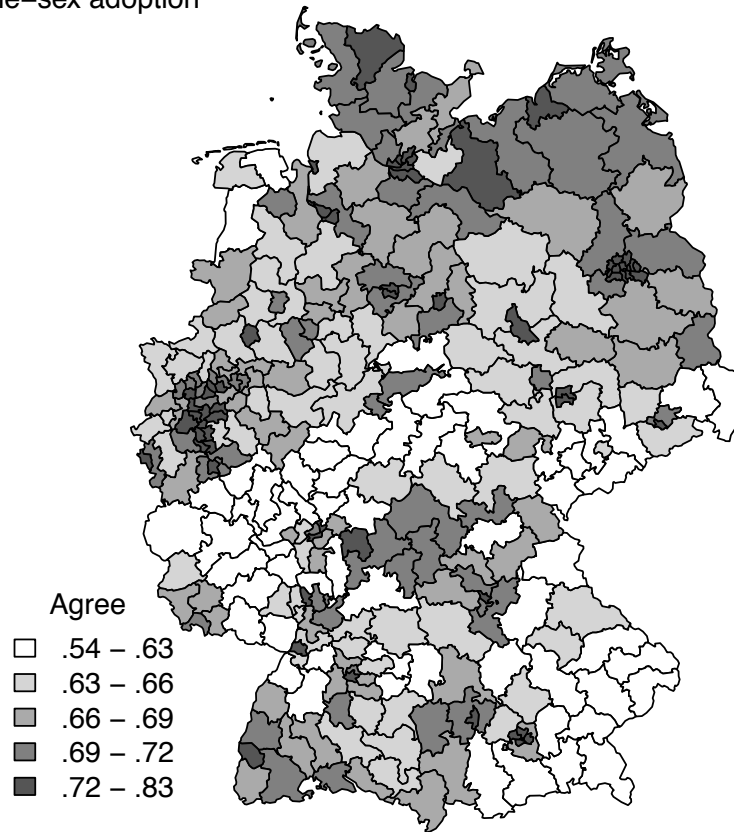


Figure 8.24: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the participants to the item "Same-sex couples should be allowed to adopt children." ["Eingetragene Lebenspartner sollen Kinder adoptieren können."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.



## 8.2 Geographical distribution of subconstituencies

### 8.2.1 Right-wing supporters

Internet surveillance

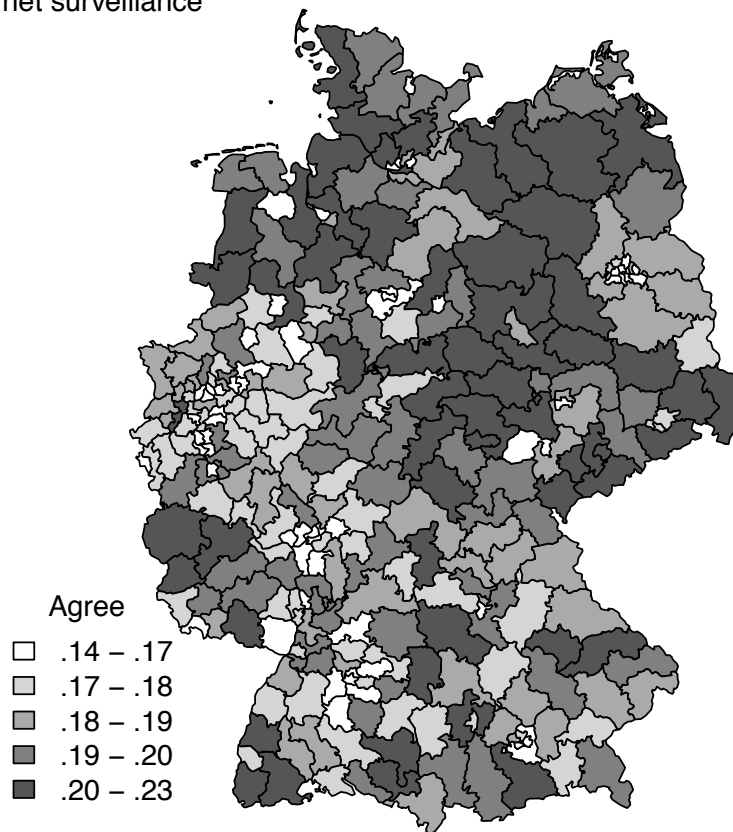


Figure 8.25: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the right-wing supporters to the item “The state has to be able to access citizens’ phone and internet records without specific suspicions.” [“Der Staat muss auch ohne konkreten Verdacht auf Telefon- und Internetdaten von Bürgerinnen zugreifen können.”; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

# Whistleblowers

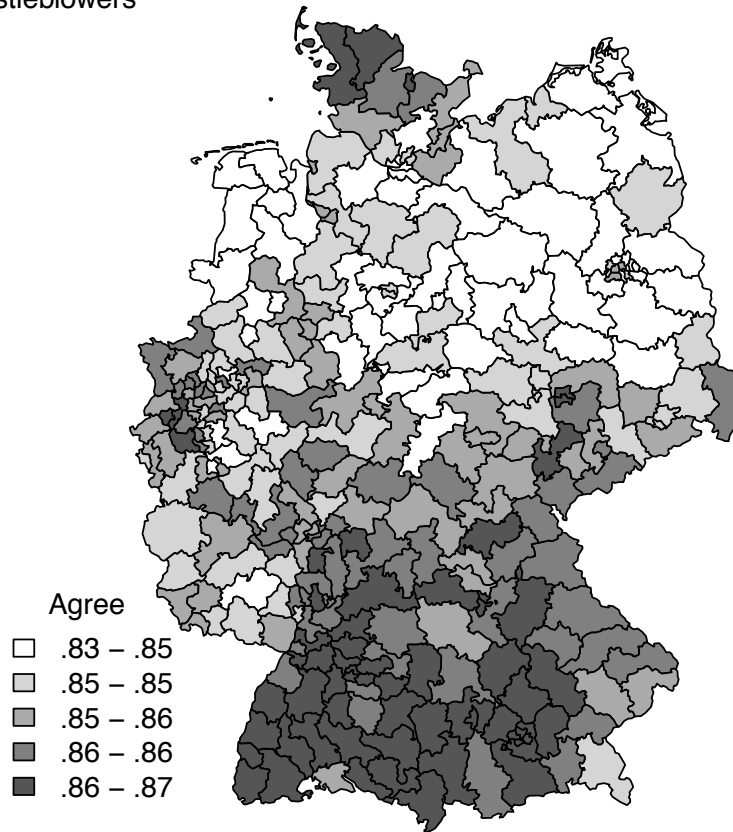


Figure 8.26: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the right-wing supporters to the item "Whistleblowers, who point out deficiencies in companies or the administration should be legally protected." ["Wer auf Missstände von allgemeinem Interesse in einem Unternehmen oder einer Behörde hinweist (sog. Whistleblower), beweist Zivilcourage und sollte rechtlich geschützt werden."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

## Referenda

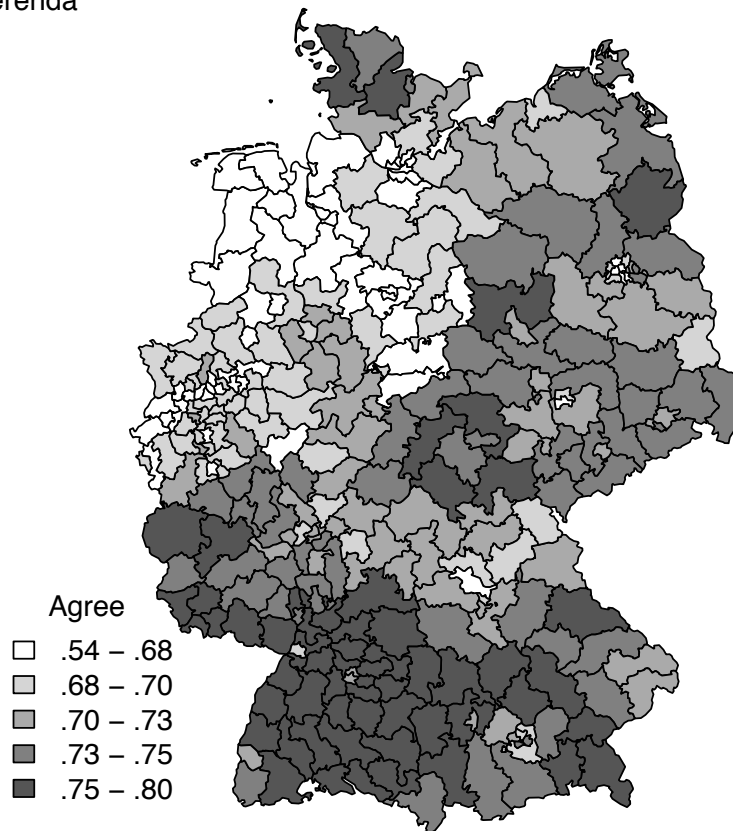


Figure 8.27: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the right-wing supporters to the item "Citizens should be awarded greater authority via the introduction of federal referenda." ["Durch Volksentscheide auf Bundesebene sollen Bürgerinnen und Bürger mehr Mitentscheidungsrechte bekommen."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

Donations to parties

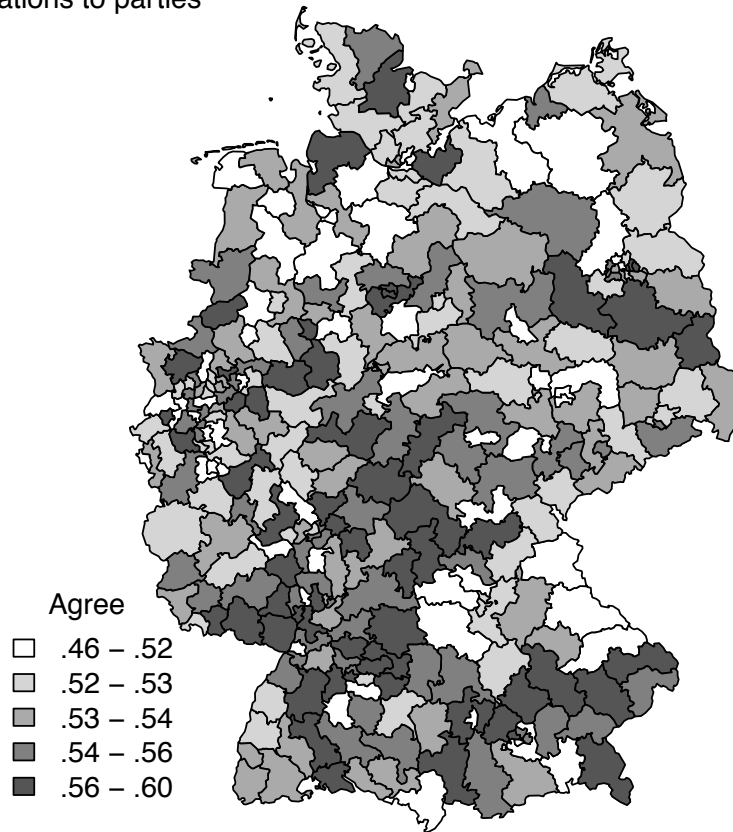


Figure 8.28: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the right-wing supporters to the item "Donations of companies and associations should be prohibited." ["Parteispenden von Unternehmen und Verbänden sollen verboten werden."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

## Taxes

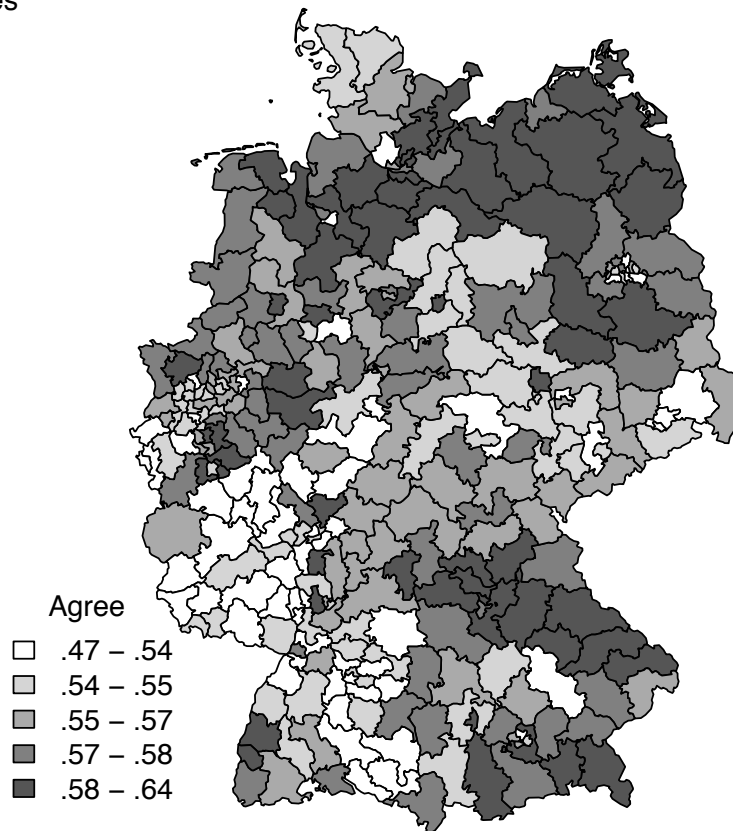


Figure 8.29: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the right-wing supporters to the item “Top earners pay enough taxes.” [“Topverdiener zahlen derzeit ausreichend Steuern.”; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

Tax evasion

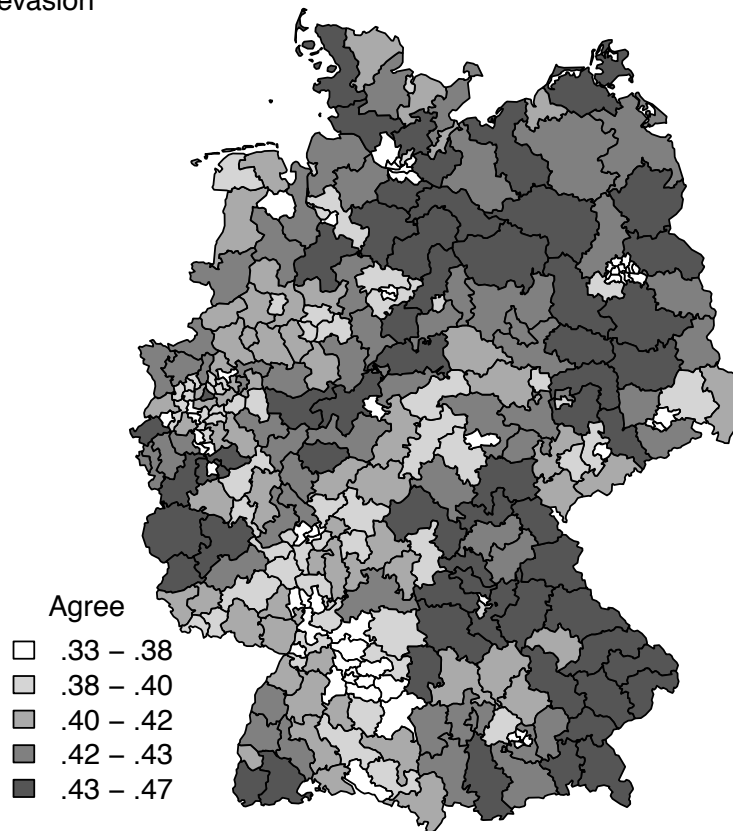


Figure 8.30: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the right-wing supporters to the item ``The state should not buy stolen data on tax evaders." [``Der Staat sollte keine Daten über Steuerhinterzieher kaufen dürfen, die gestohlen wurden."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

### Financial markets

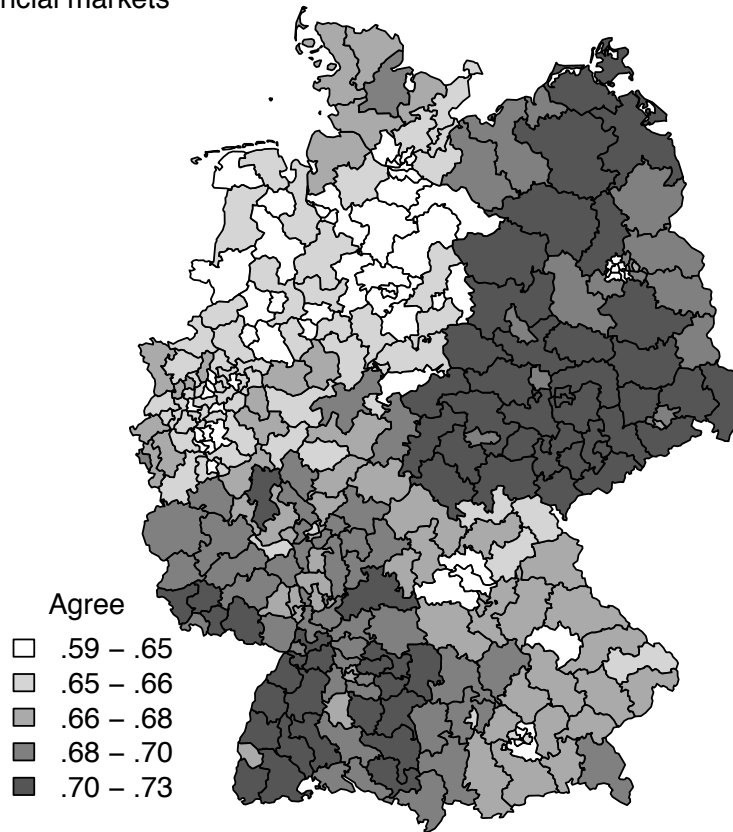


Figure 8.31: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the right-wing supporters to the item "Germany should go ahead and regulate financial markets if necessary." ["Deutschland soll notfalls auch im Alleingang die Finanzmärkte strenger regulieren."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

# Immigration

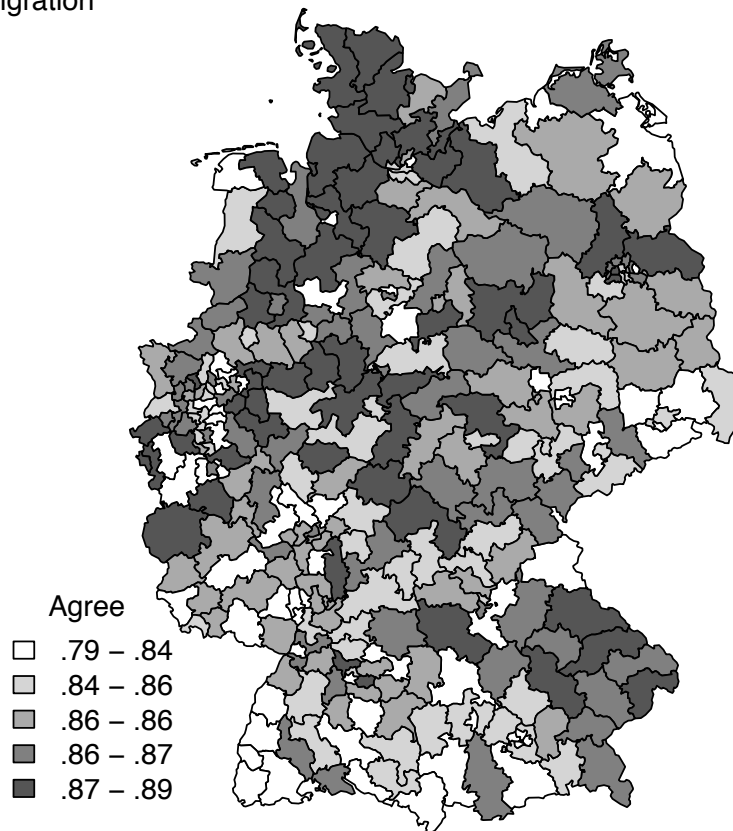


Figure 8.32: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the right-wing supporters to the item "Immigration should reflect the economic needs of Germany." ["Zuwanderung soll sich stärker an ökonomischen Interessen Deutschlands orientieren."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.



### Public utilities

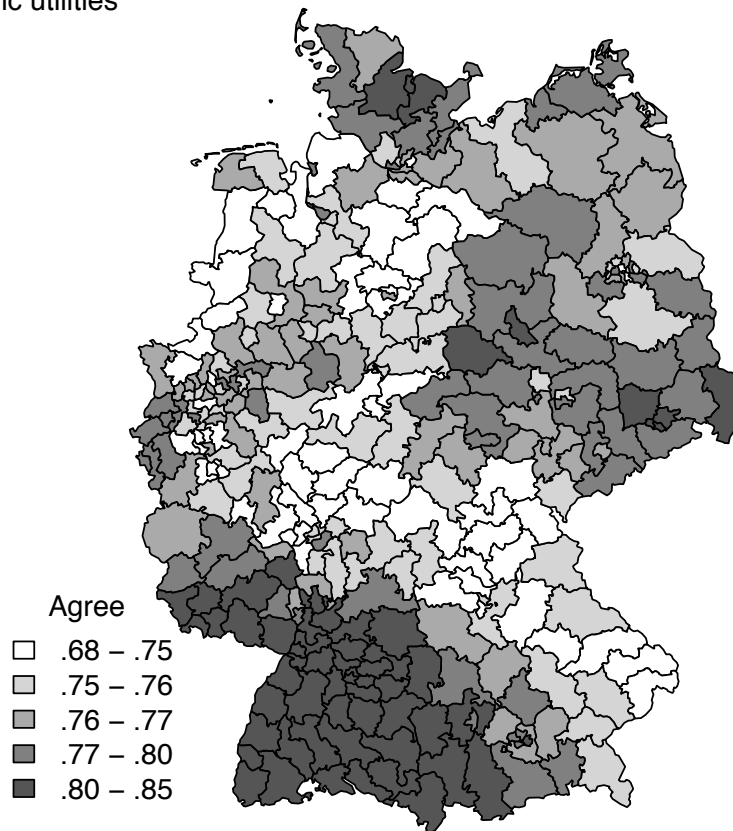


Figure 8.33: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the right-wing supporters to the item ``Public utilities like gas, water and garbage collection must not be privatized.'' [``Aufgaben wie die Gas- und Wasserversorgung, Müllabfuhr und Abwasserbeseitigung sollen nicht privatisiert werden dürfen.``; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

Arms transfer

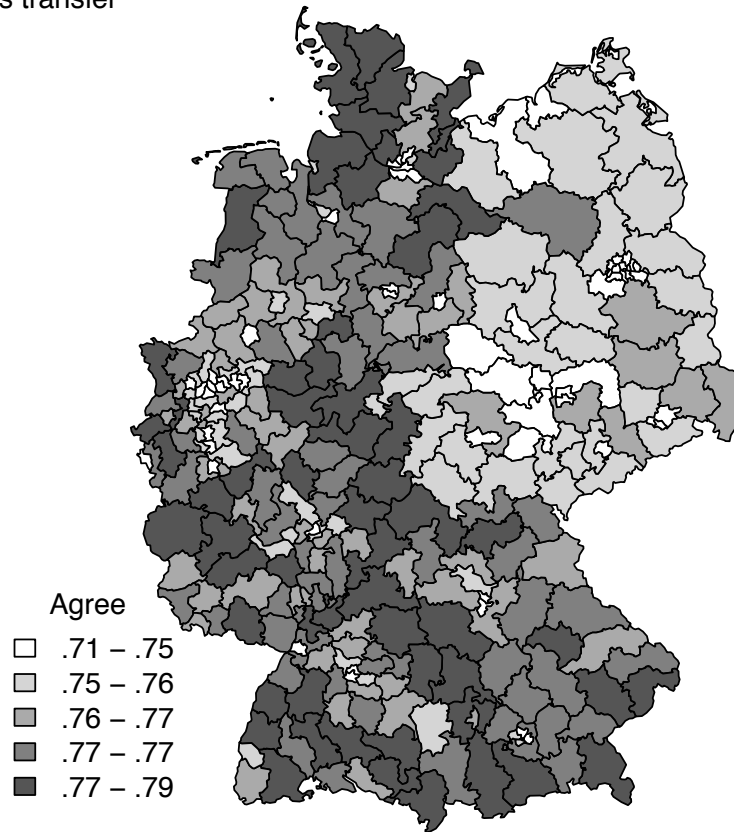


Figure 8.34: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the right-wing supporters to the item "The federal government should not allow arms transfers to conflict regions." ["Die Bundesregierung soll grundsätzlich keine Waffenlieferungen in Konfliktregionen genehmigen."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

Temporary staff

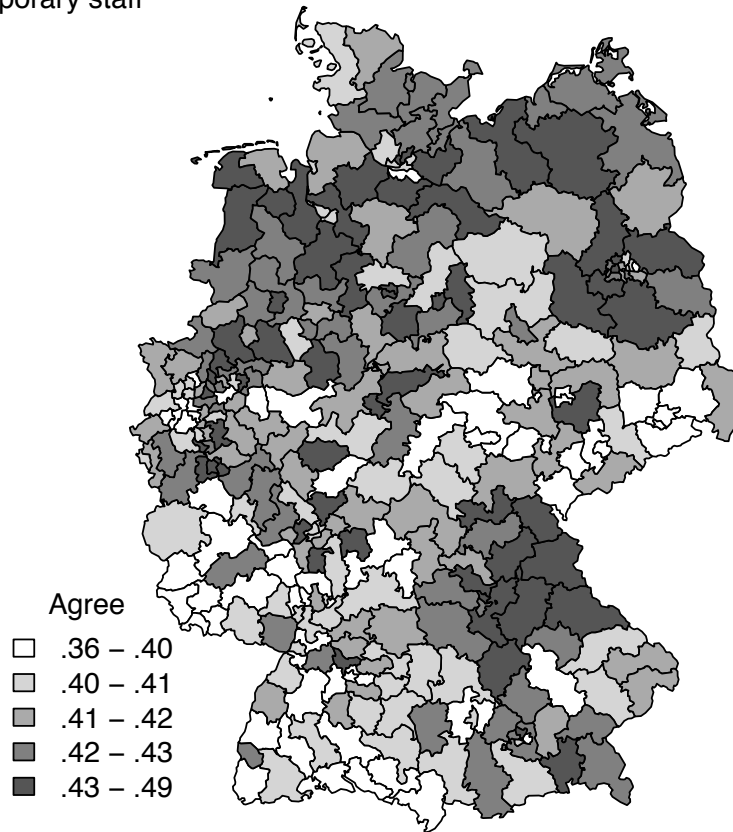


Figure 8.35: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the right-wing supporters to the item "It is justifiable if temporary staff earns less than the permanent staff of a company." ["Es ist grundsätzlich vertretbar, dass Leiharbeiter weniger verdienen als die Stammbesellschaft eines Unternehmens."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

Wages

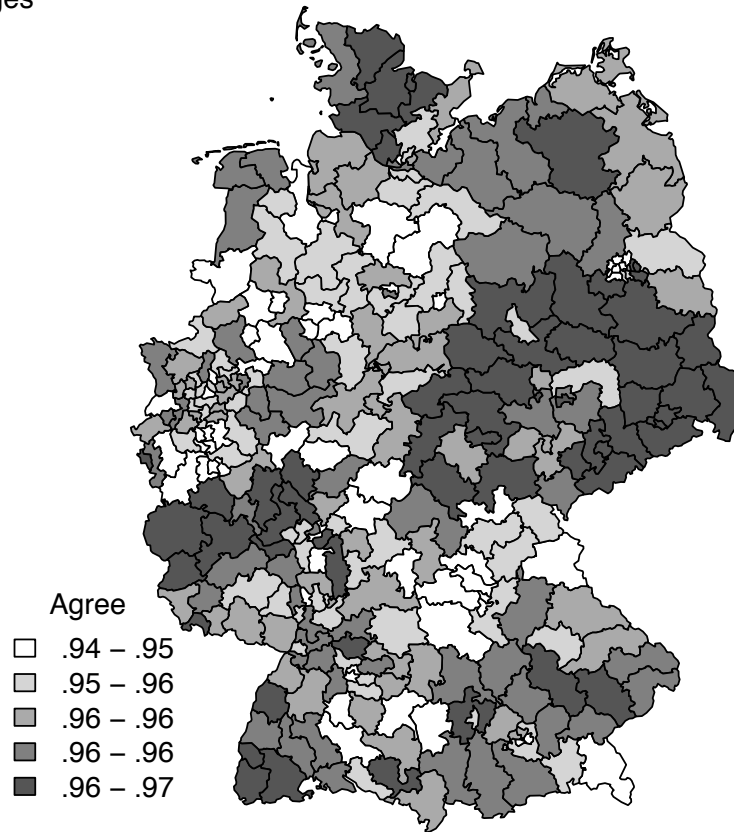


Figure 8.36: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the right-wing supporters to the item "A full-time earner should not have to rely on additional state subsidies to make a living." ["Wer Vollzeit arbeitet, muss davon ohne staatliche Aufstockung leben können."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

# Minimum wage

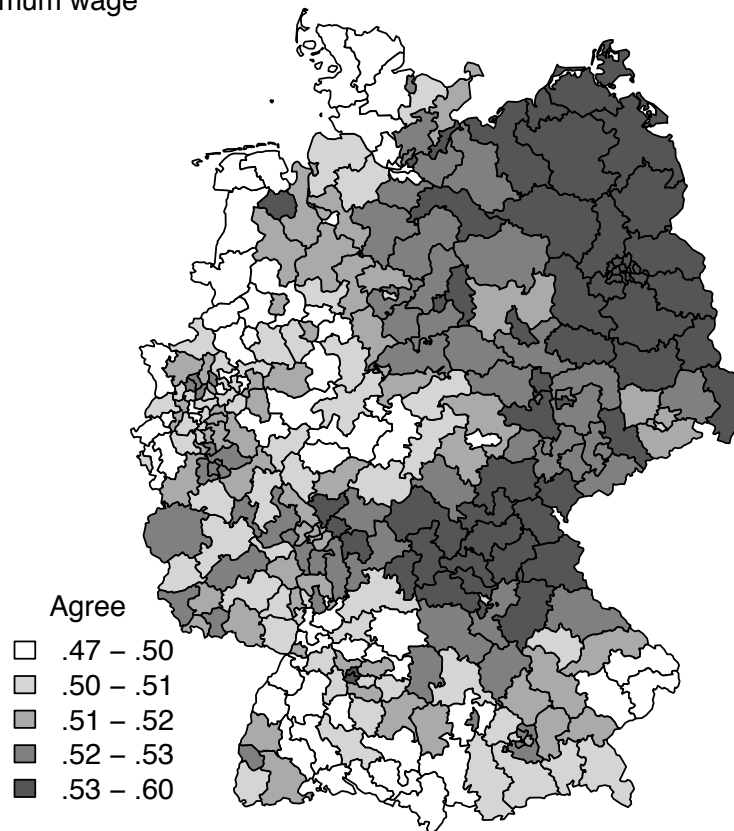


Figure 8.37: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the right-wing supporters to the item “The state should not set a minimum wage.” [“Der Staat soll keinen gesetzlichen Mindestlohn festlegen.”; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

Retirement age

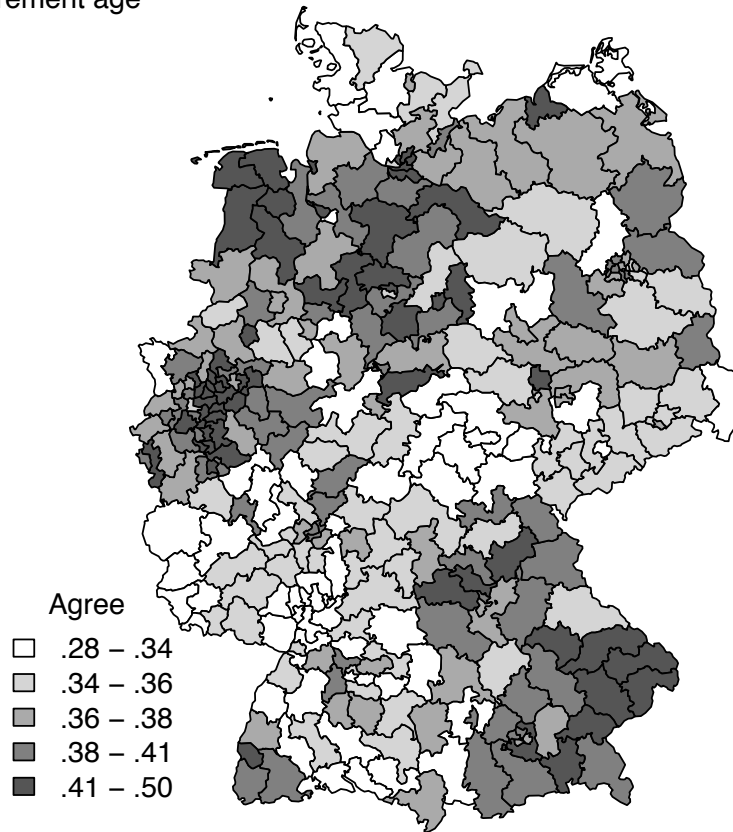


Figure 8.38: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the right-wing supporters to the item "Since people live longer they should work longer." ["Weil Menschen immer älter werden, sollen sie auch länger arbeiten."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

### Highway construction

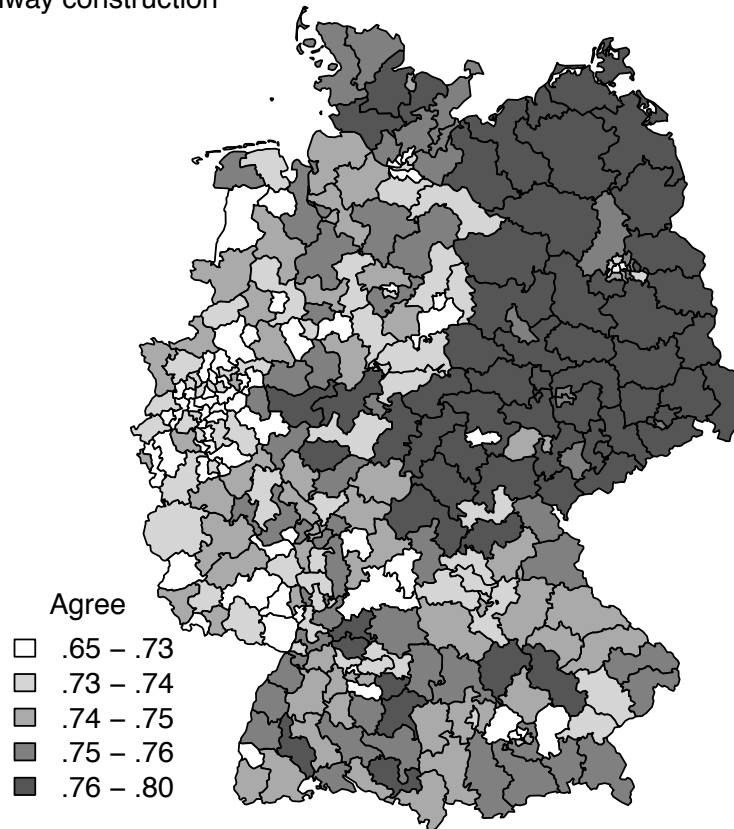


Figure 8.39: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the right-wing supporters to the item "More money should be spent on highway constructions." ["Es soll mehr Geld in den Ausbau von Autobahnen investiert werden."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

Power supply

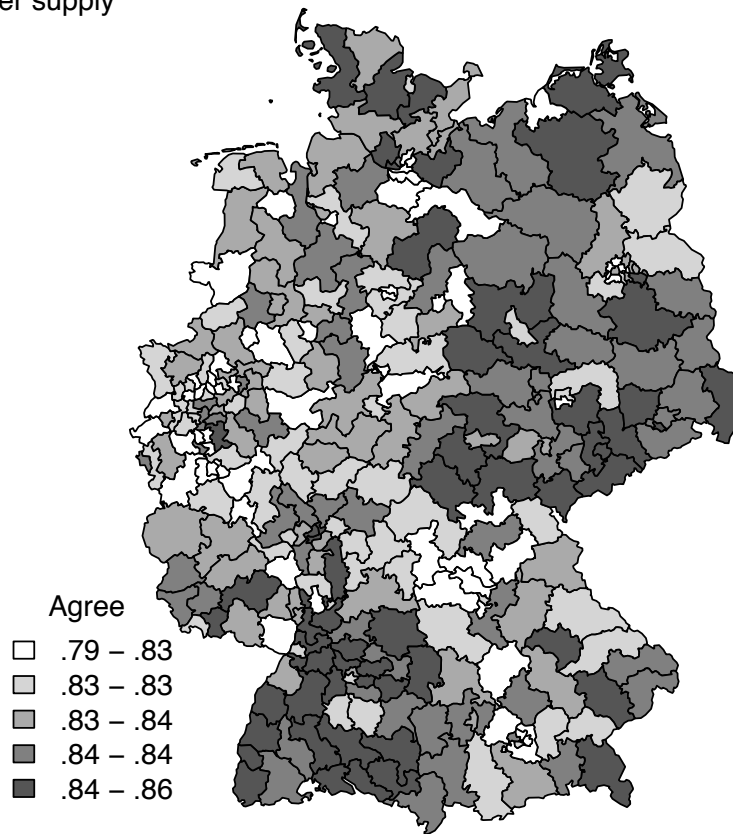


Figure 8.40: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the right-wing supporters to the item ``Companies with high levels of energy consumption should pay more for the introduction of renewable energies.'' [``Energieintensive Betriebe sollen stärker an den Kosten der Energiewende beteiligt werden.``; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.



# Fracking

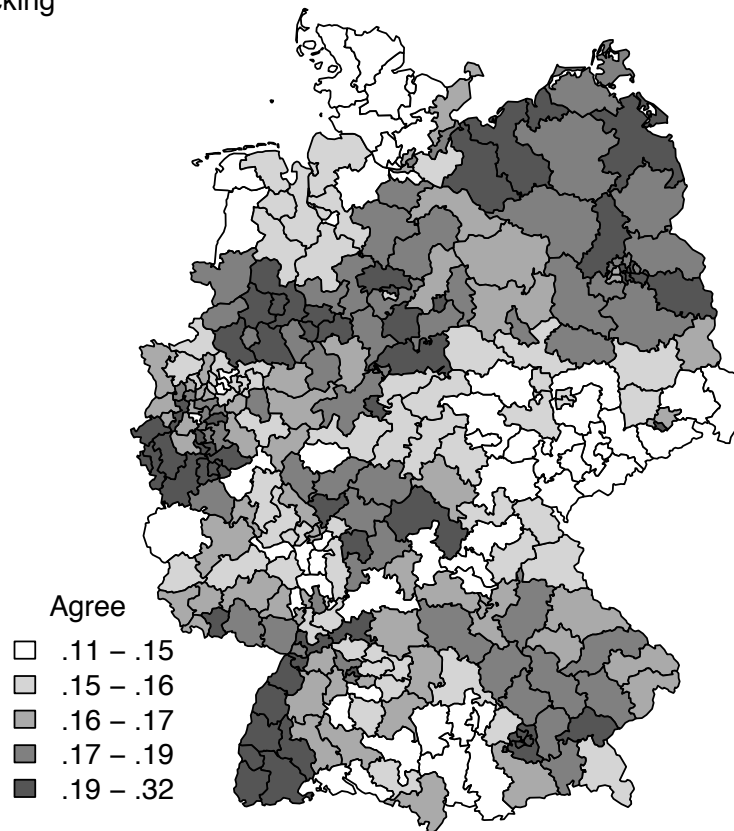


Figure 8.41: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the right-wing supporters to the item “The use of fracking to extract oil and gas is necessary.” [“Die Erdöl- und Erdgasförderung mit der Fracking-Methode ist notwendig.”; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

EU competencies

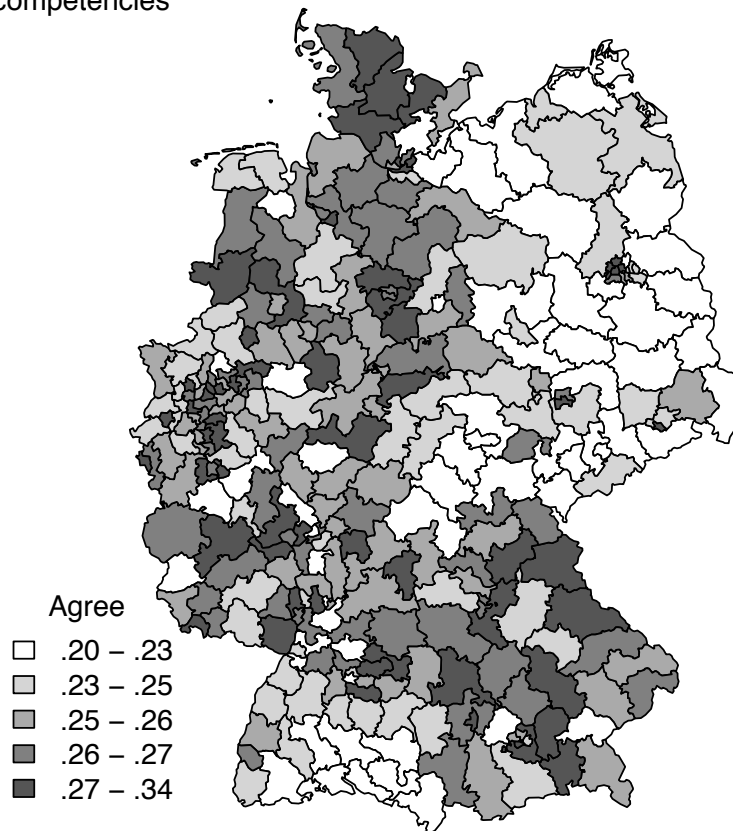


Figure 8.42: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the right-wing supporters to the item "The EU member states should give more competencies to the European Parliament." ["Die EU-Mitgliedstaaten sollen mehr nationale Kompetenzen an das Europäische Parlament abgeben."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

### Austerity

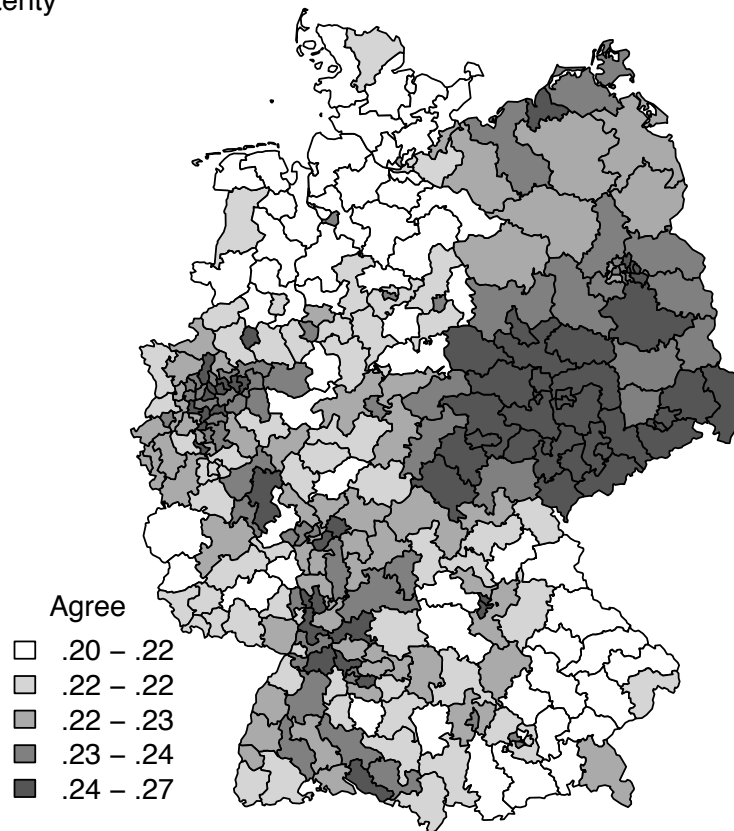


Figure 8.43: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the right-wing supporters to the item “The austerity measures for EU member states in financial distress should be relaxed in order to promote growth and employment.” [“Die Sparauflagen für in Not geratene EU-Länder müssen gelockert werden, damit diese für Wachstum und Beschäftigung sorgen können.”; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

Family subsidies

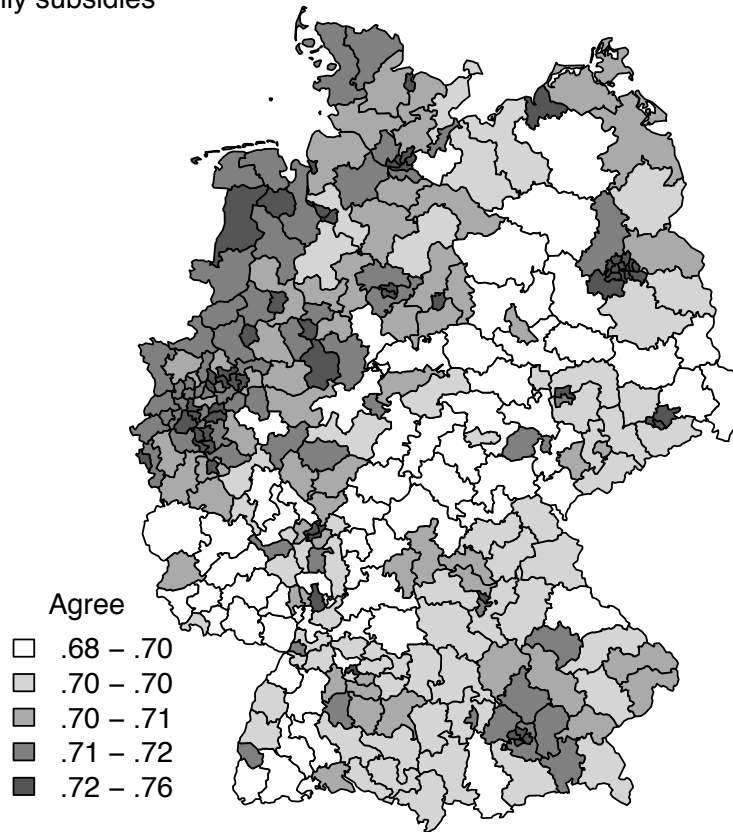


Figure 8.44: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the right-wing supporters to the item "The state should subsidize children, not families." ["Der Staat soll Kinder fördern, nicht Ehen (Familiensplitting)."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

# Schooling

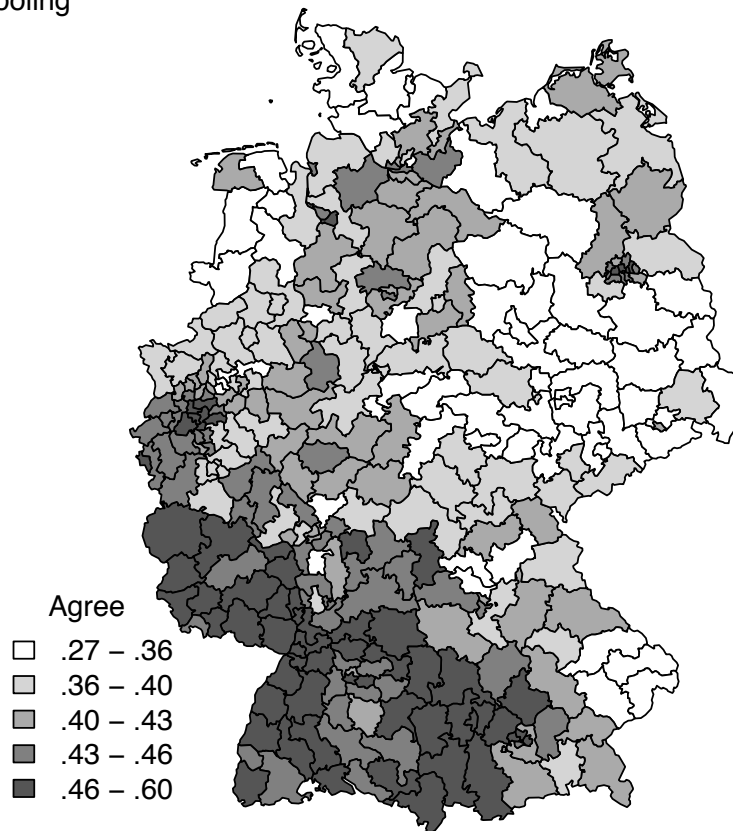


Figure 8.45: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the right-wing supporters to the item "Children should attend a common school -- regardless of their origin and abilities." ["Kinder sollen grundsätzlich an einer gemeinsamen Schule unterrichtet werden -- unabhängig von ihrer Herkunft und ihren Fähigkeiten."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

### Health insurance

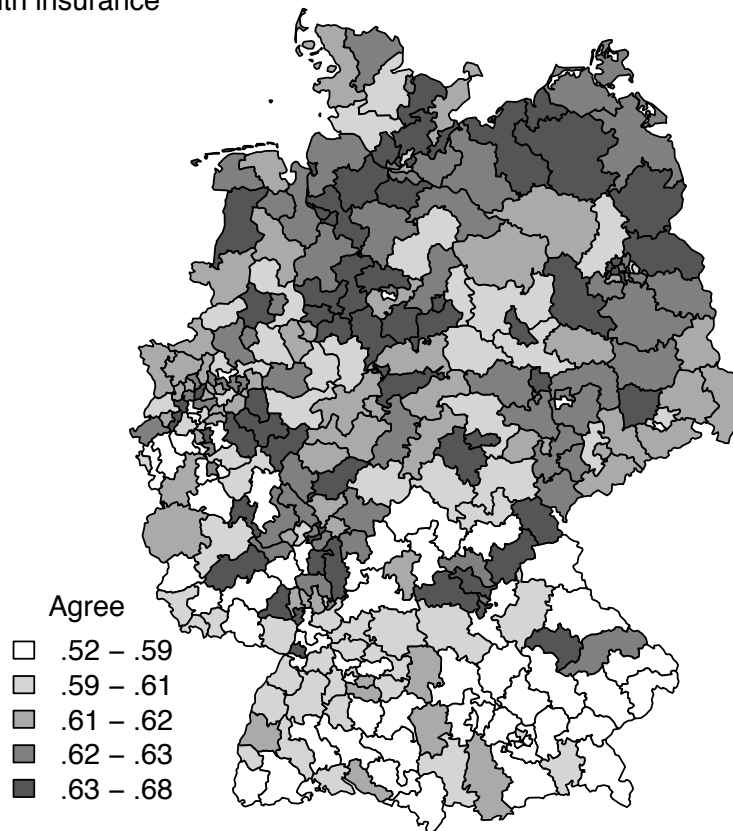


Figure 8.46: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the right-wing supporters to the item "The current system of private and public health insurance providers should be kept intact." ["Das bestehende System aus privaten und gesetzlichen Krankenkassen soll in der bisherigen Form erhalten bleiben."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

### Gender balance

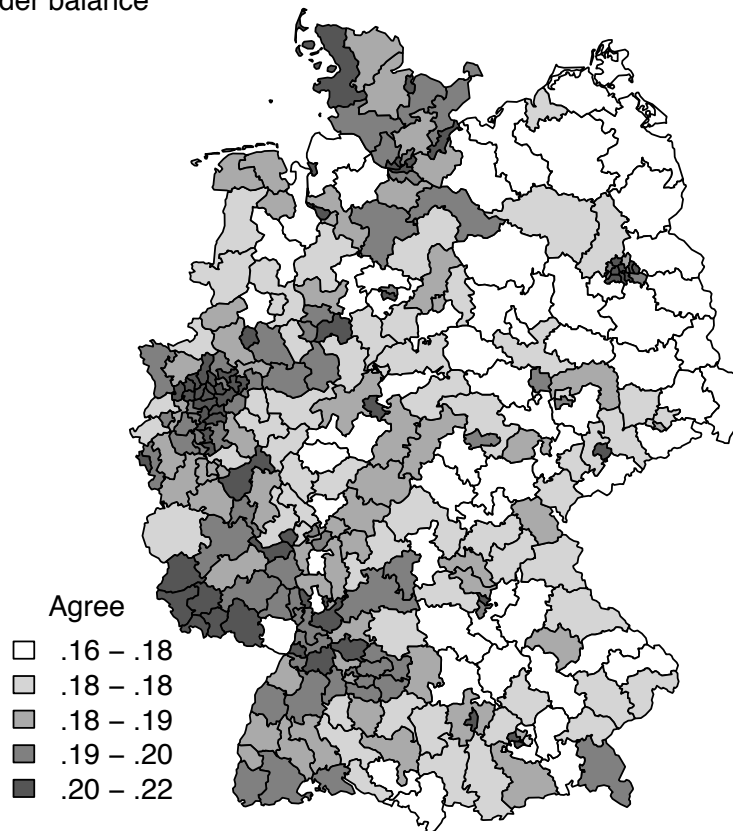


Figure 8.47: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the right-wing supporters to the item "The percentage of women in leadership positions should be increased via a mandatory gender quota." ["Der Anteil von Frauen in Führungspositionen soll durch eine gesetzliche Quotenregelung erhöht werden."; translation D.N.J.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

Same-sex adoption

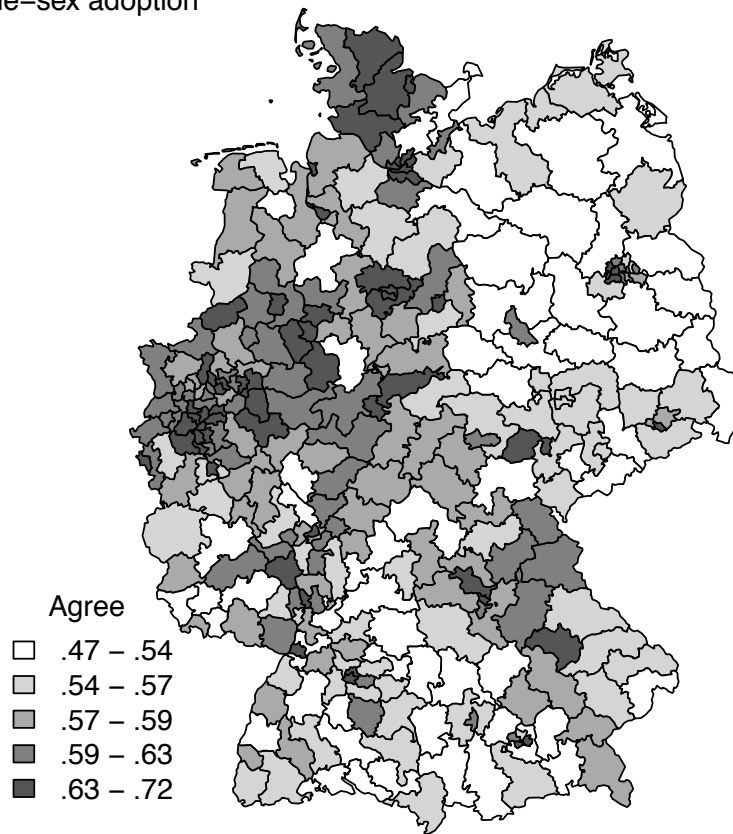


Figure 8.48: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the right-wing supporters to the item "Same-sex couples should be allowed to adopt children." ["Eingetragene Lebenspartner sollen Kinder adoptieren können."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.



## 8.2.2 Left-wing supporters

Internet surveillance

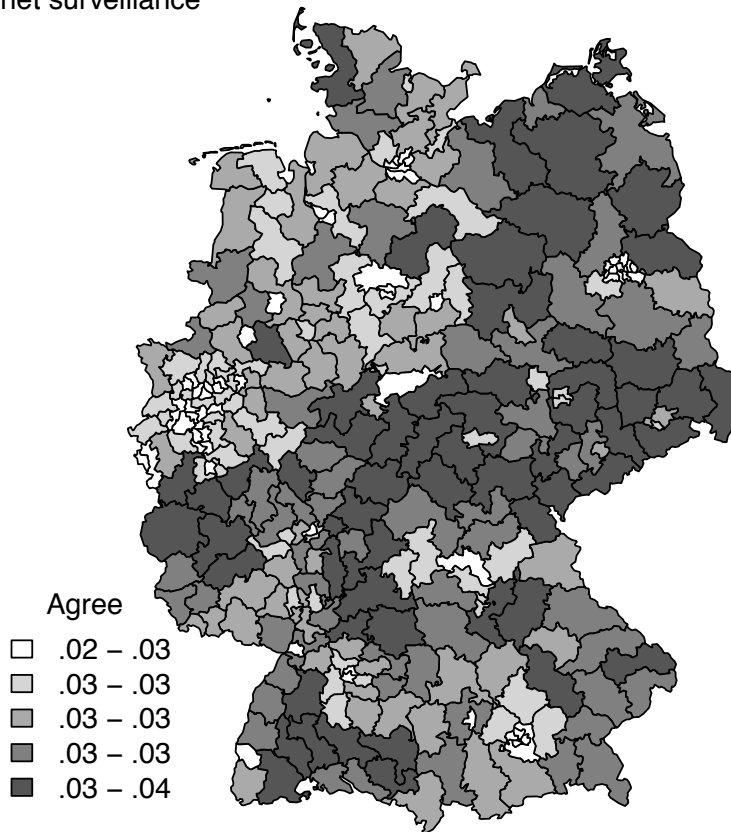


Figure 8.49: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the left-wing supporters to the item "The state has to be able to access citizens' phone and internet records without specific suspicions." ["Der Staat muss auch ohne konkreten Verdacht auf Telefon- und Internetdaten von Bürgerinnen zugreifen können."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

# Whistleblowers

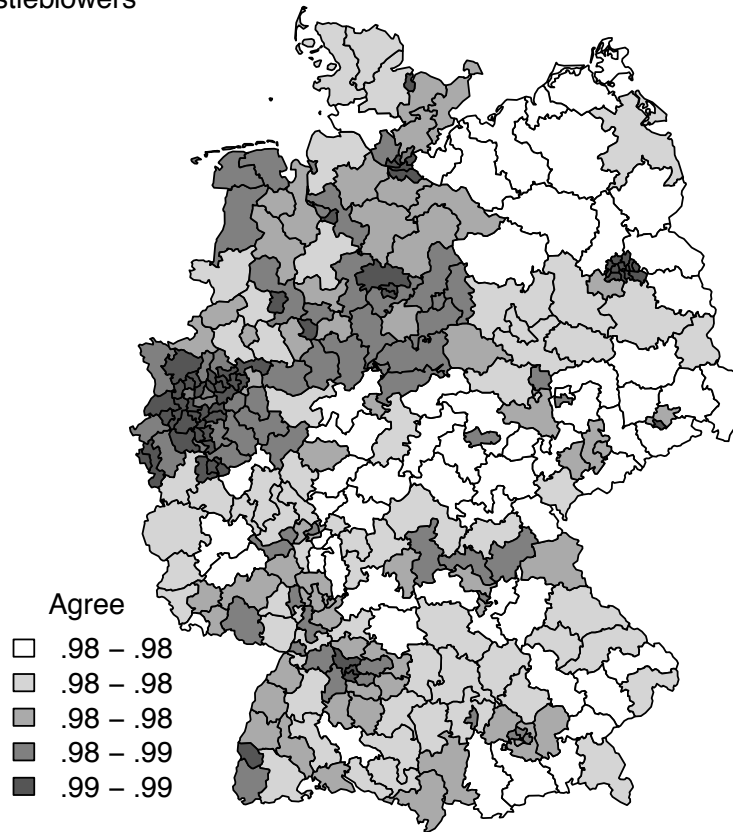


Figure 8.50: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the left-wing supporters to the item "Whistleblowers, who point out deficiencies in companies or the administration should be legally protected." ["Wer auf Missstände von allgemeinem Interesse in einem Unternehmen oder einer Behörde hinweist (sog. Whistleblower), beweist Zivilcourage und sollte rechtlich geschützt werden."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

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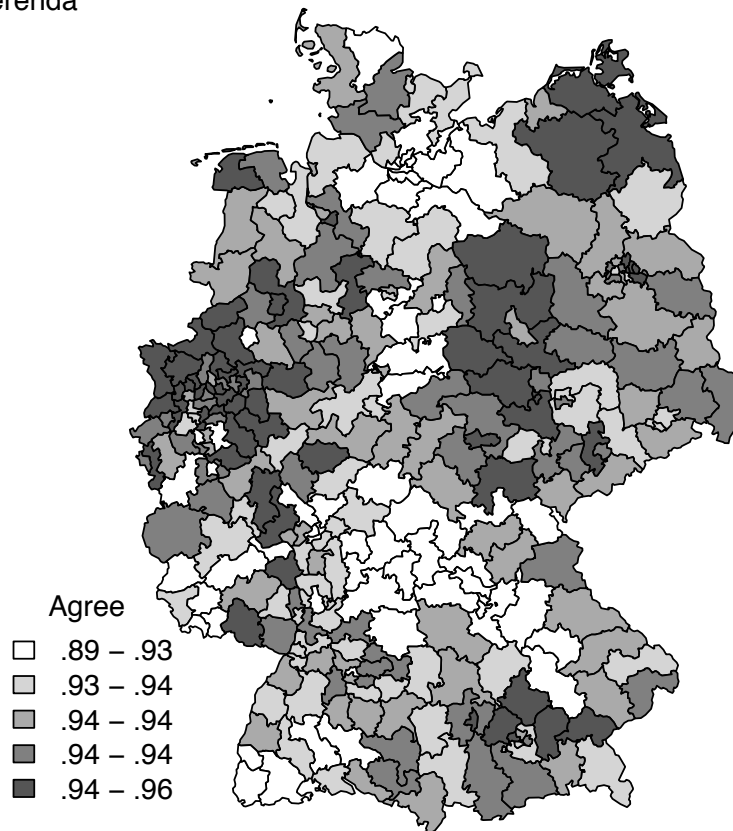


Figure 8.51: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the left-wing supporters to the item "Citizens should be awarded greater authority via the introduction of federal referenda." ["Durch Volksentscheide auf Bundesebene sollen Bürgerinnen und Bürger mehr Mitentscheidungsrechte bekommen."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

Donations to parties

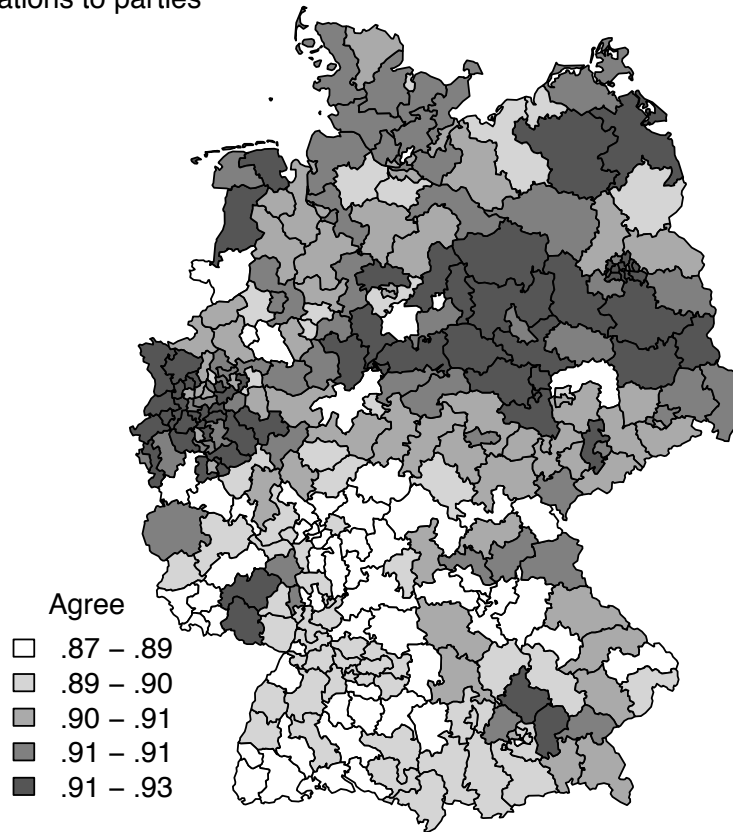


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## Taxes

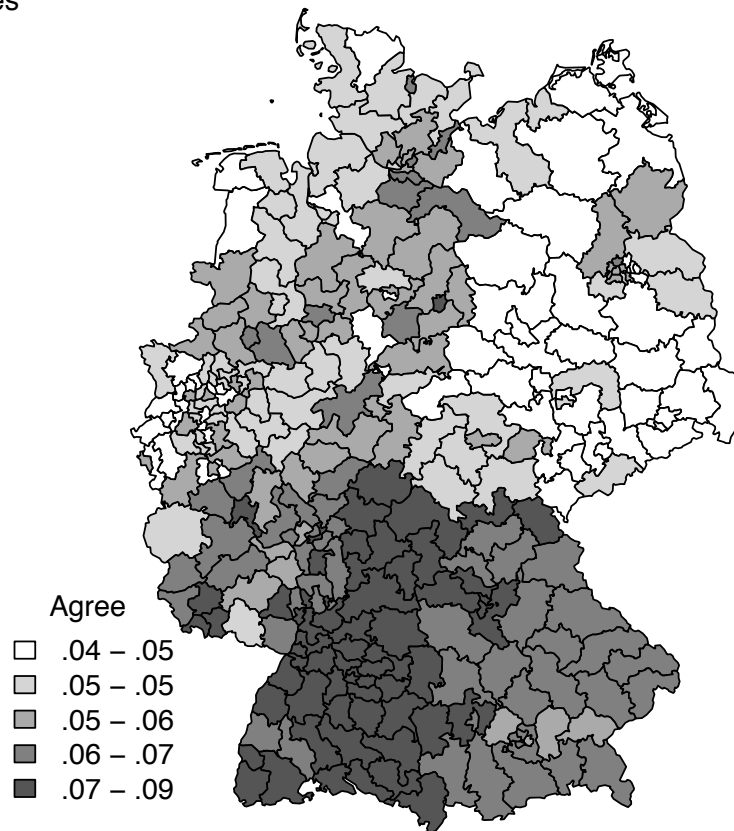


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Tax evasion

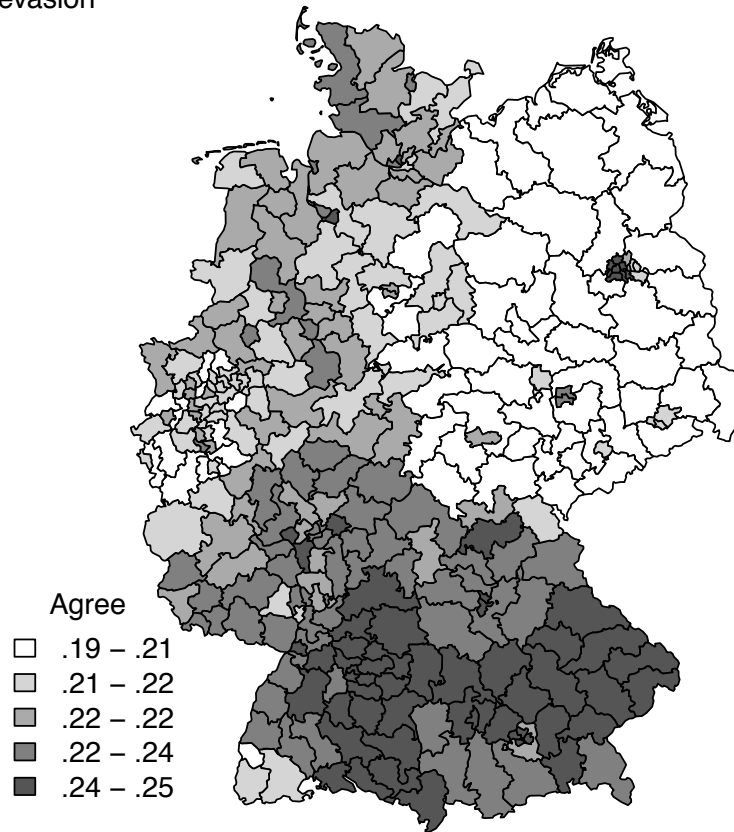


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### Financial markets

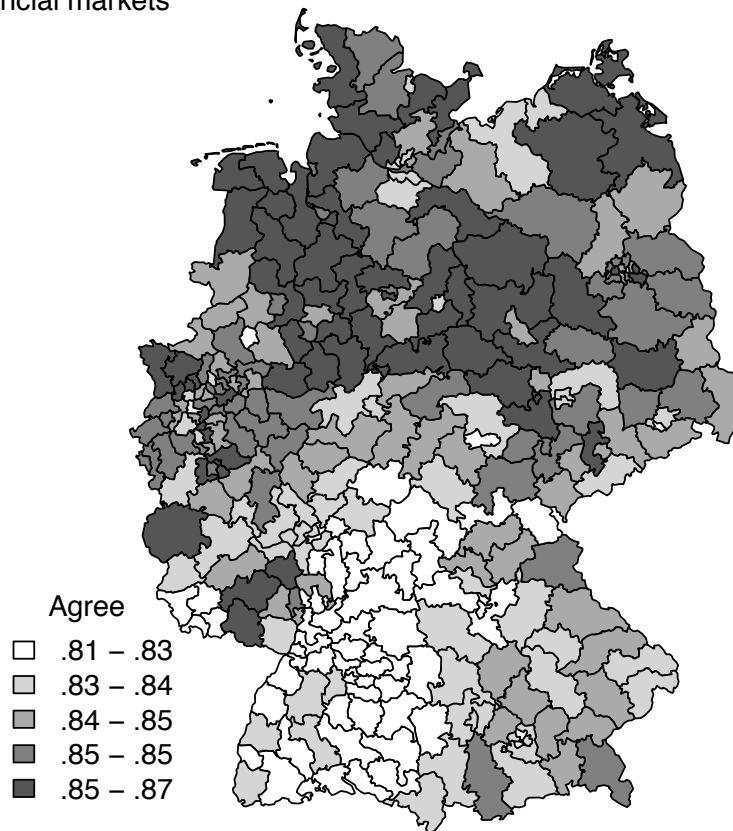


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## Immigration

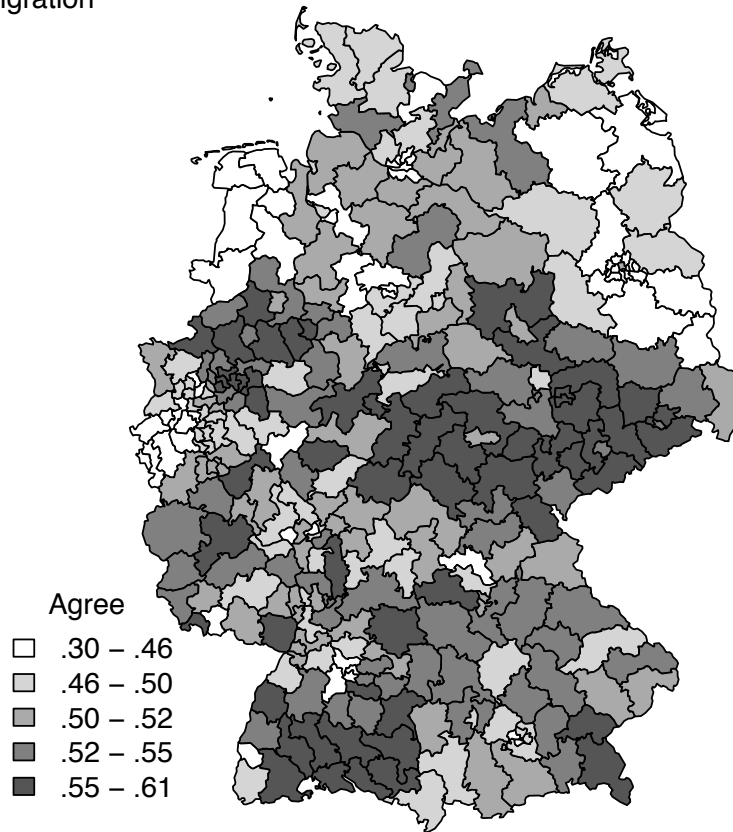


Figure 8.56: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the left-wing supporters to the item "Immigration should reflect the economic needs of Germany." ["Zuwanderung soll sich stärker an ökonomischen Interessen Deutschlands orientieren."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.



Public utilities

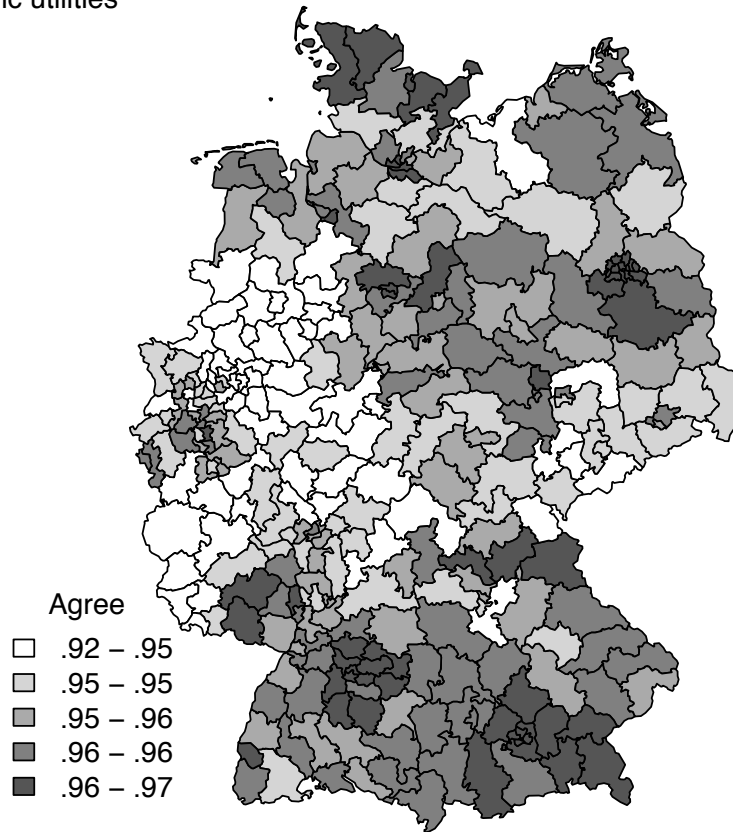


Figure 8.57: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the left-wing supporters to the item “Public utilities like gas, water and garbage collection must not be privatized.” [“Aufgaben wie die Gas- und Wasserversorgung, Müllabfuhr und Abwasserbeseitigung sollen nicht privatisiert werden dürfen.”; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

Arms transfer

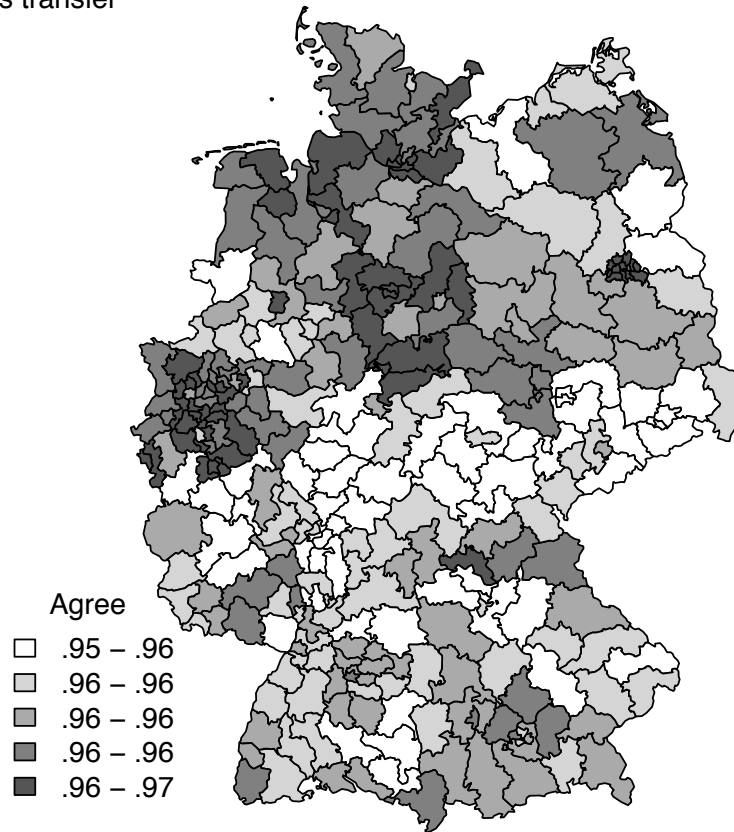


Figure 8.58: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the left-wing supporters to the item "The federal government should not allow arms transfers to conflict regions." ["Die Bundesregierung soll grundsätzlich keine Waffenlieferungen in Konfliktregionen genehmigen."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

Temporary staff

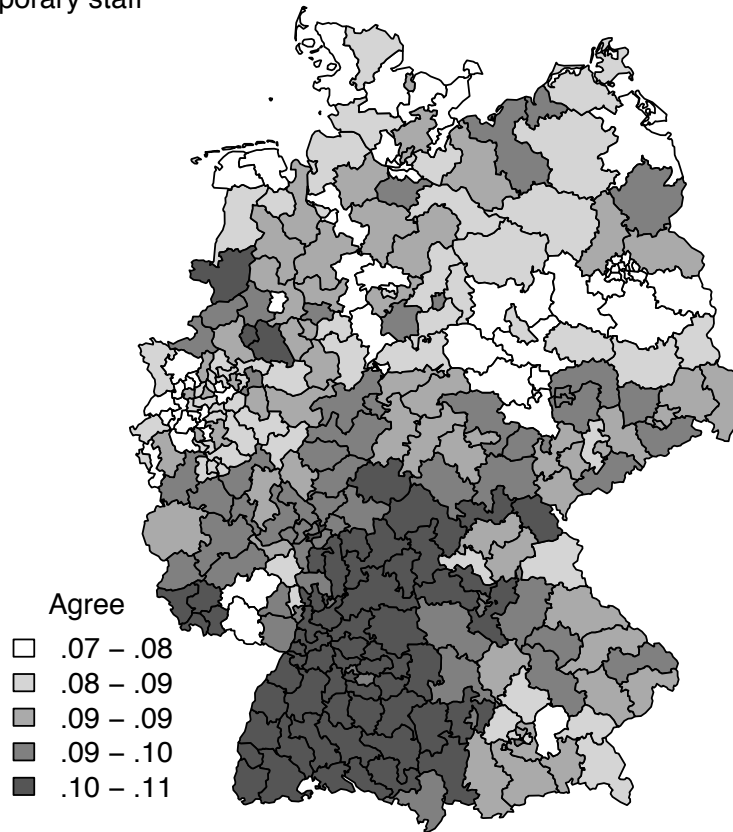


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## Wages

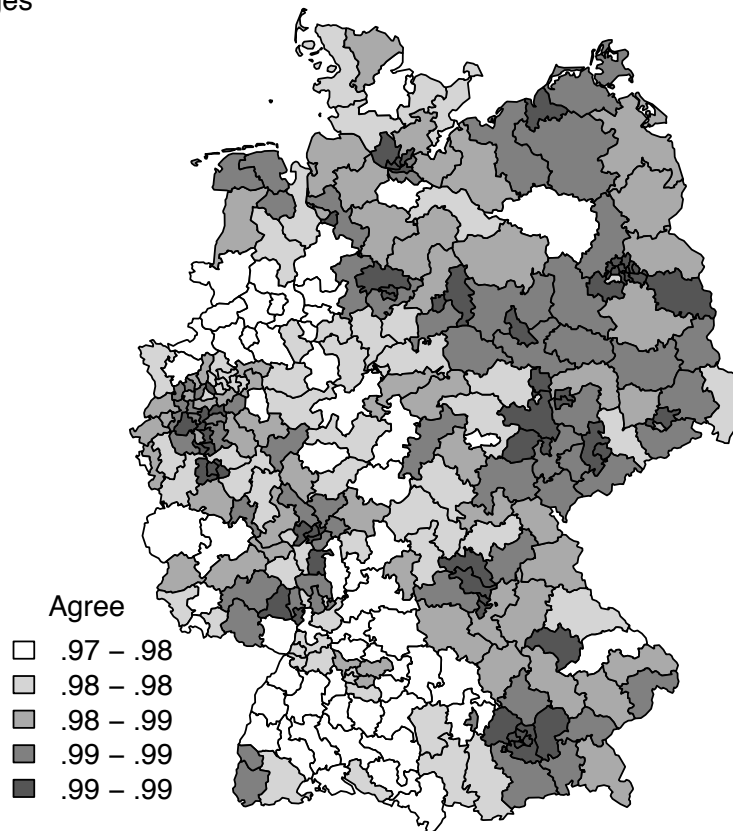


Figure 8.6o: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the left-wing supporters to the item "A full-time earner should not have to rely on additional state subsidies to make a living." ["Wer Vollzeit arbeitet, muss davon ohne staatliche Aufstockung leben können."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

# Minimum wage

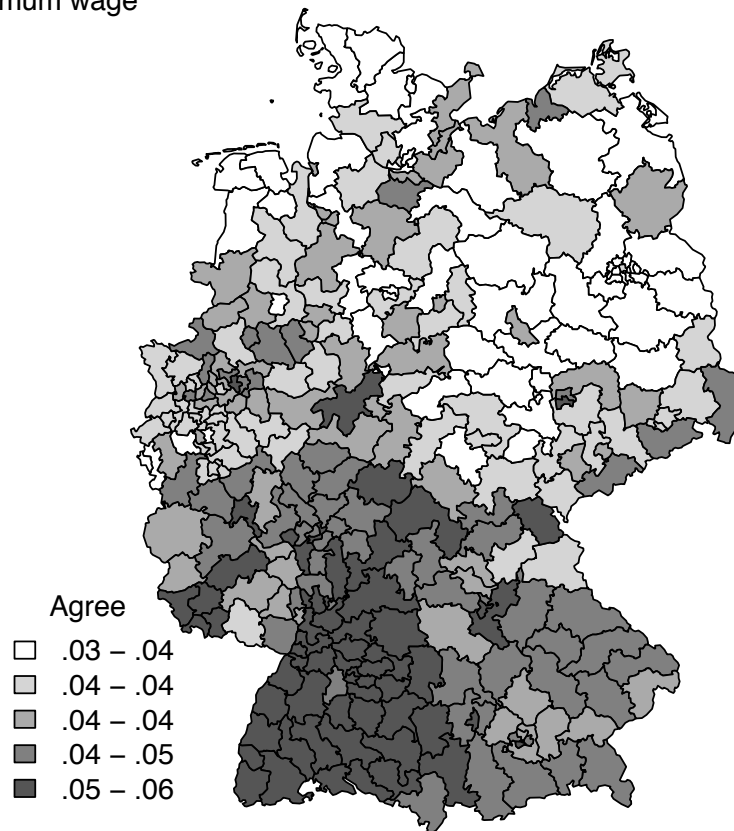


Figure 8.61: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the left-wing supporters to the item ``The state should not set a minimum wage." [ ``Der Staat soll keinen gesetzlichen Mindestlohn festlegen."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

Retirement age

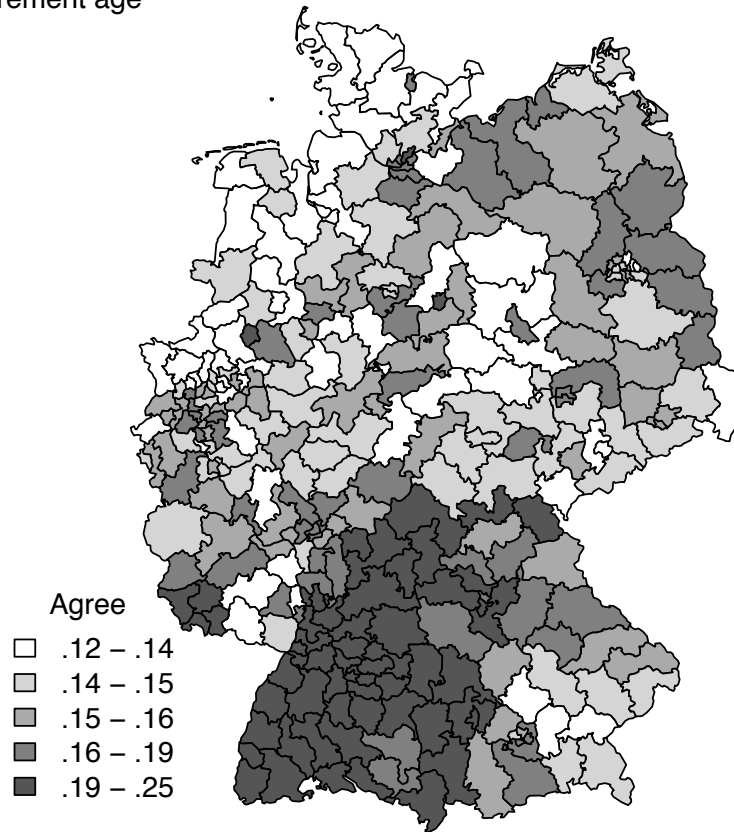


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### Highway construction

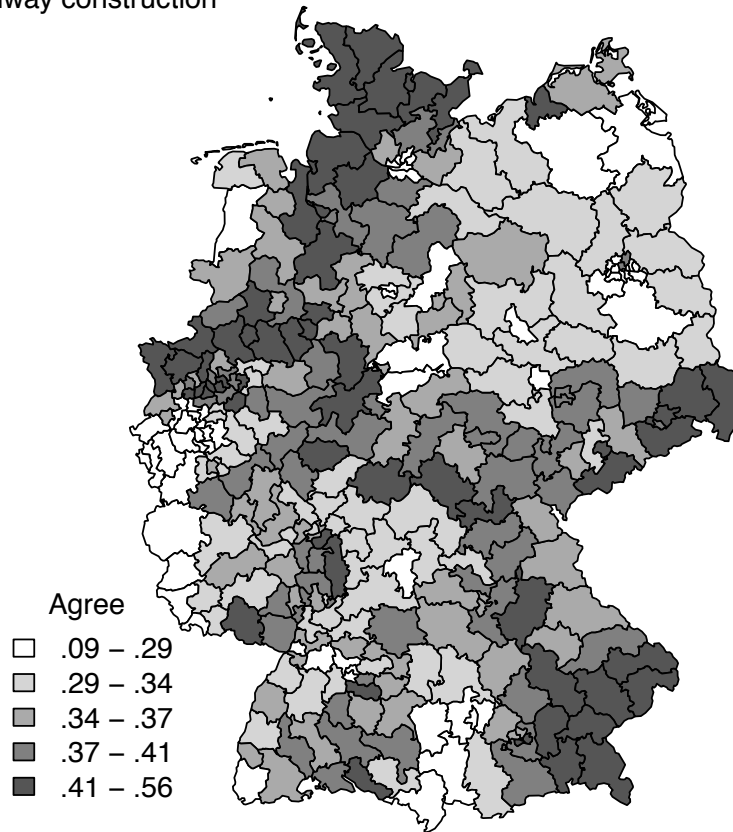


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Power supply

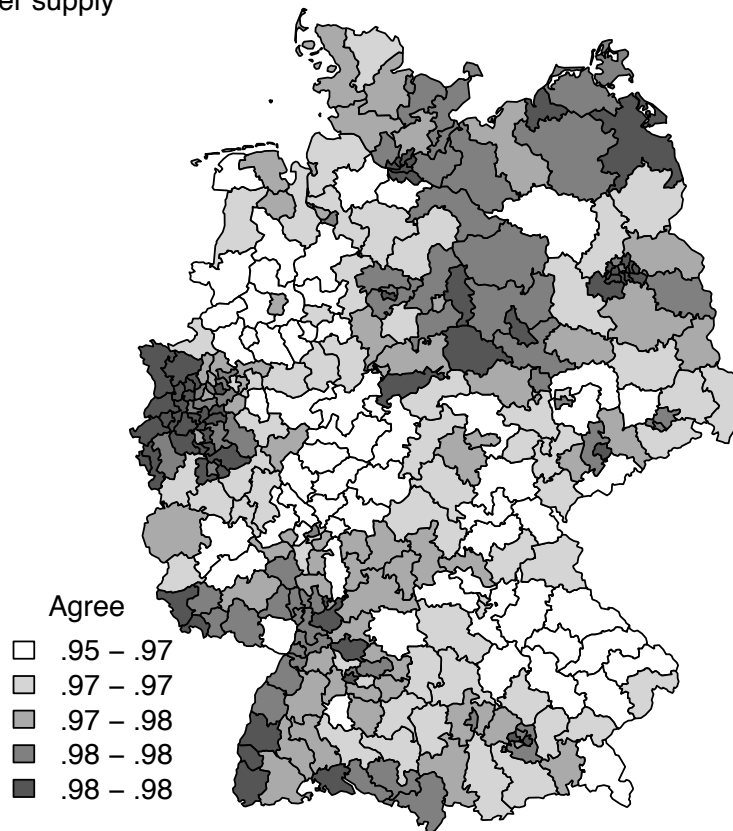


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## Fracking

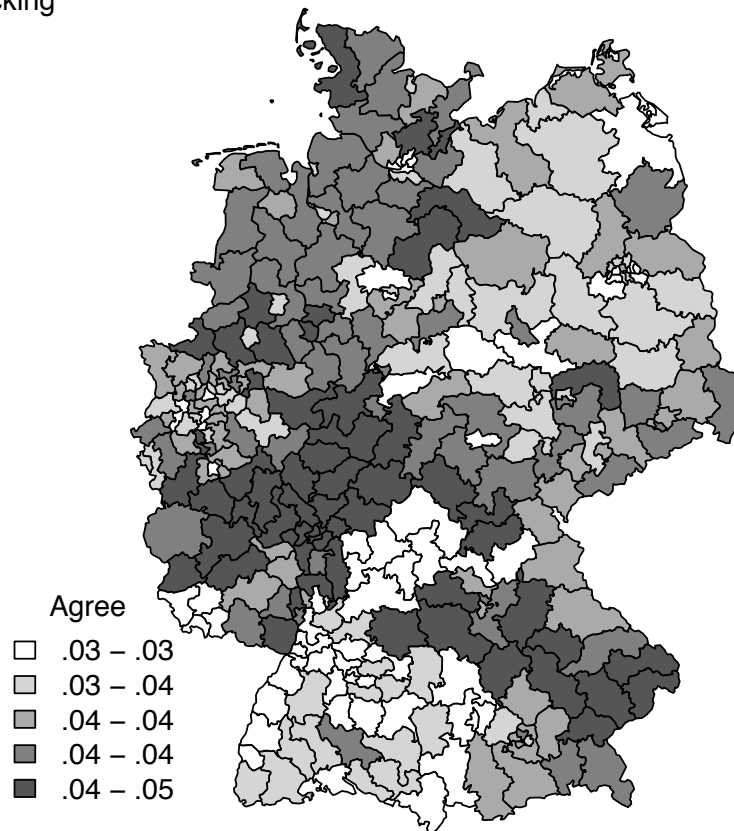


Figure 8.65: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the left-wing supporters to the item "The use of fracking to extract oil and gas is necessary." ["Die Erdöl- und Erdgasförderung mit der Fracking-Methode ist notwendig."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

EU competencies

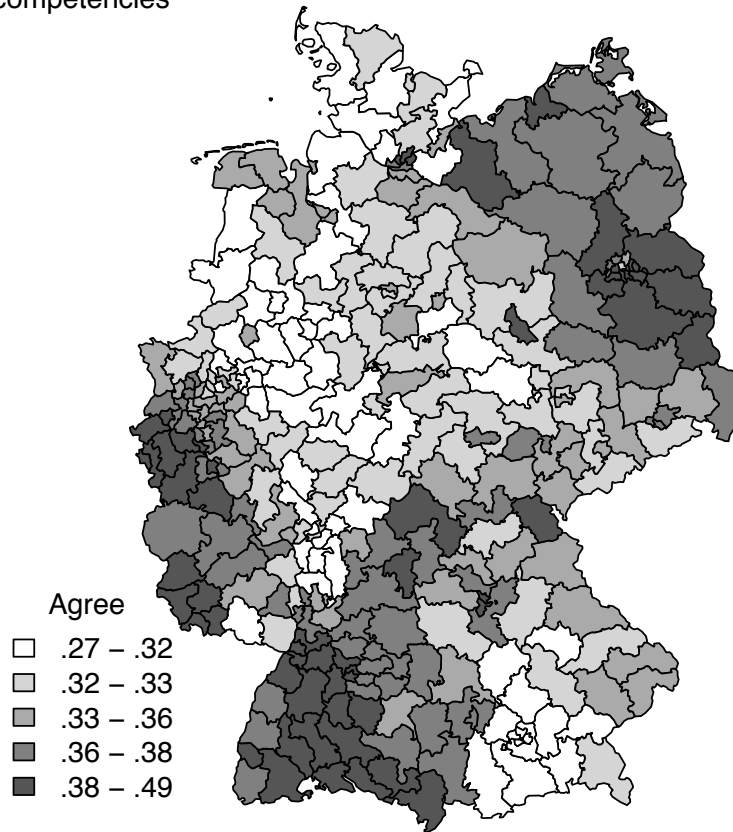


Figure 8.66: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the left-wing supporters to the item "The EU member states should give more competencies to the European Parliament." ["Die EU-Mitgliedstaaten sollen mehr nationale Kompetenzen an das Europäische Parlament abgeben."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

### Austerity

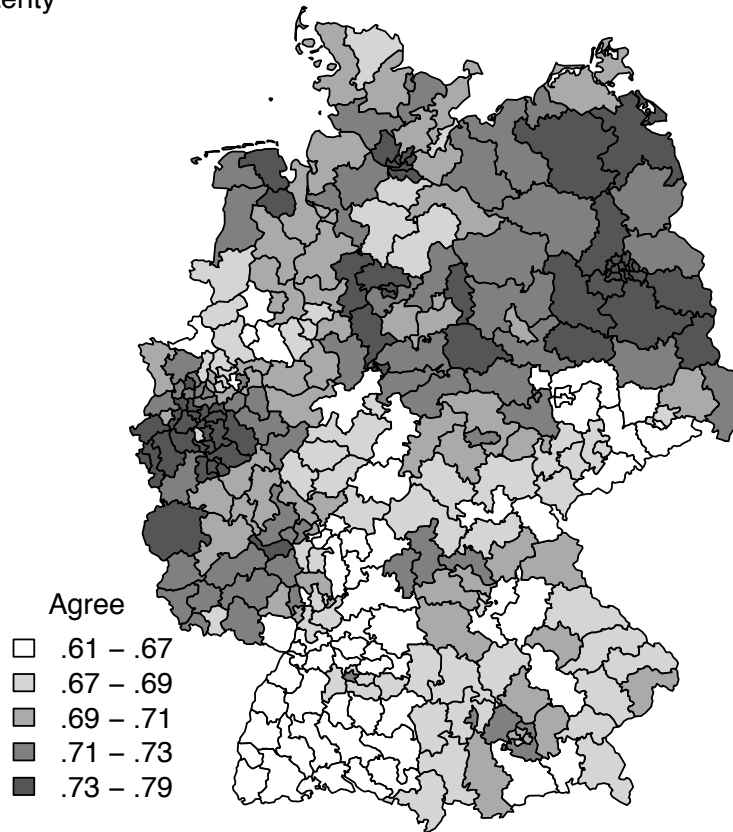


Figure 8.67: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the left-wing supporters to the item ``The austerity measures for EU member states in financial distress should be relaxed in order to promote growth and employment." [``Die Sparauflagen für in Not geratene EU-Länder müssen gelockert werden, damit diese für Wachstum und Beschäftigung sorgen können."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

Family subsidies

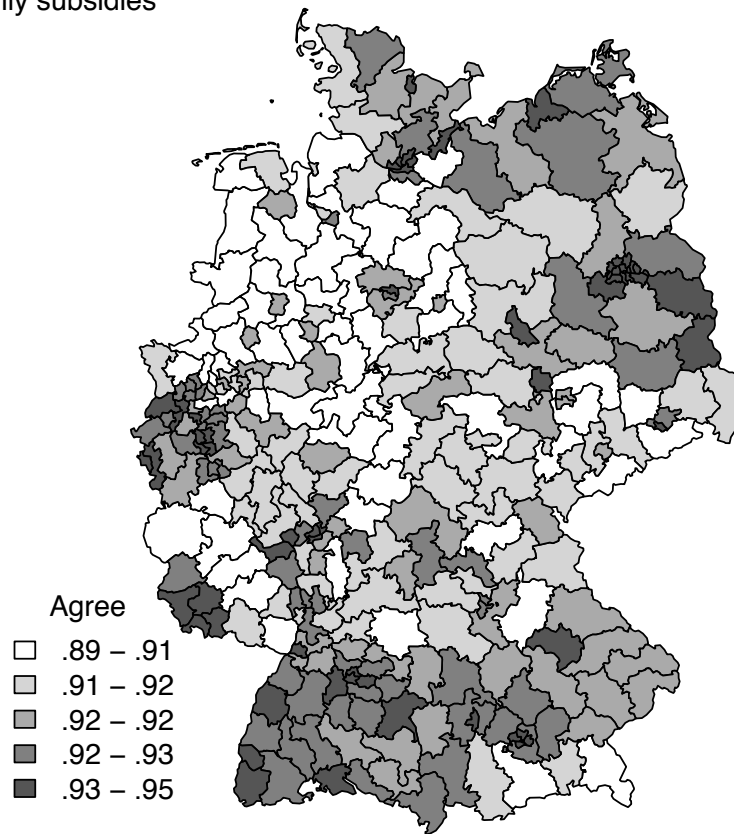


Figure 8.68: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the left-wing supporters to the item ``The state should subsidize children, not families." [ ``Der Staat soll Kinder fördern, nicht Ehen (Familiensplitting)."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

## Schooling

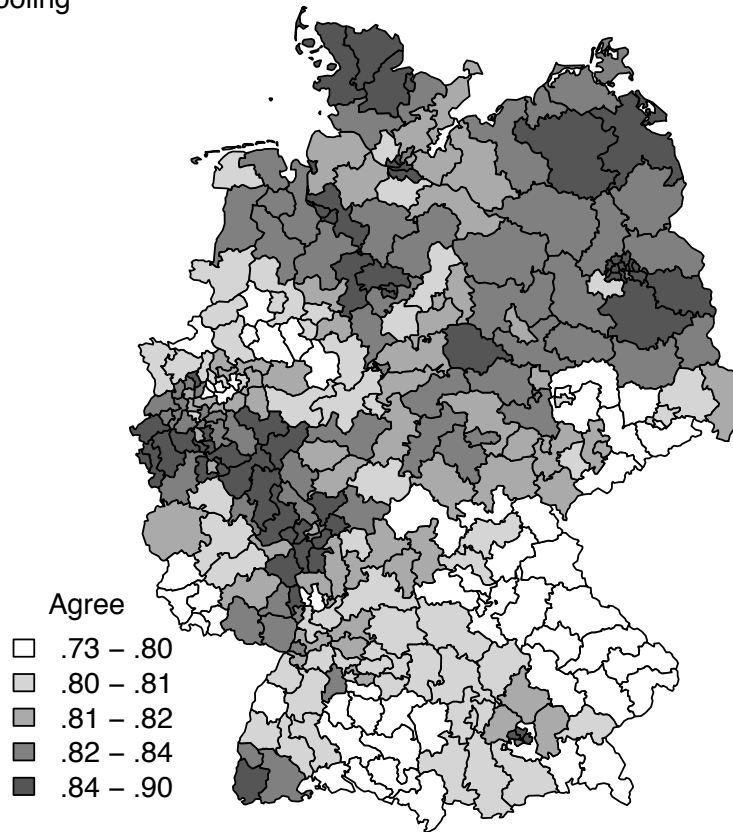


Figure 8.69: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the left-wing supporters to the item "Children should attend a common school -- regardless of their origin and abilities." ["Kinder sollen grundsätzlich an einer gemeinsamen Schule unterrichtet werden -- unabhängig von ihrer Herkunft und ihren Fähigkeiten."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

Health insurance

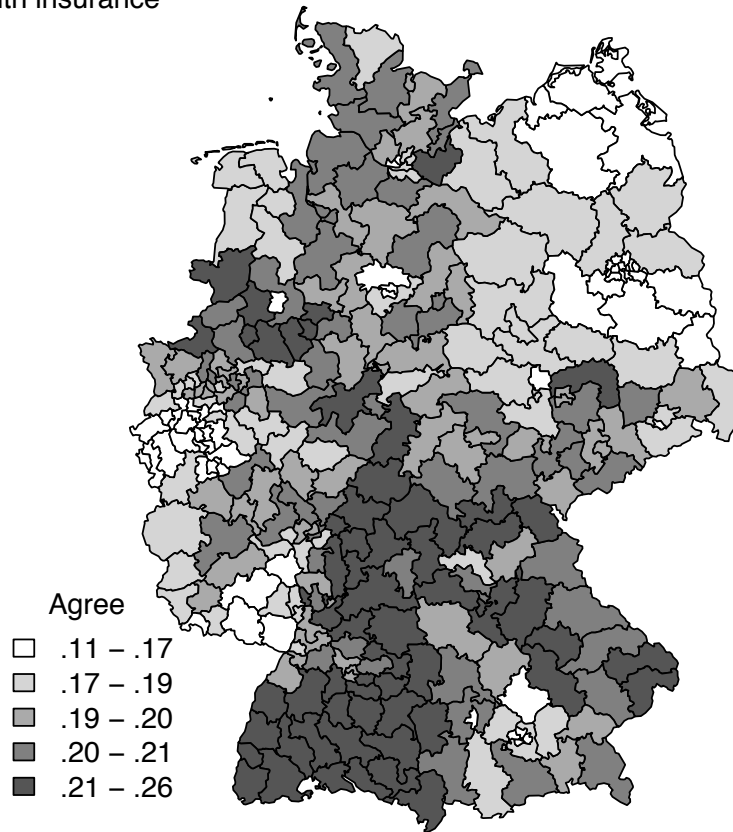


Figure 8.70: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the left-wing supporters to the item ``The current system of private and public health insurance providers should be kept intact." [ ``Das bestehende System aus privaten und gesetzlichen Krankenkassen soll in der bisherigen Form erhalten bleiben. "; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

Gender balance

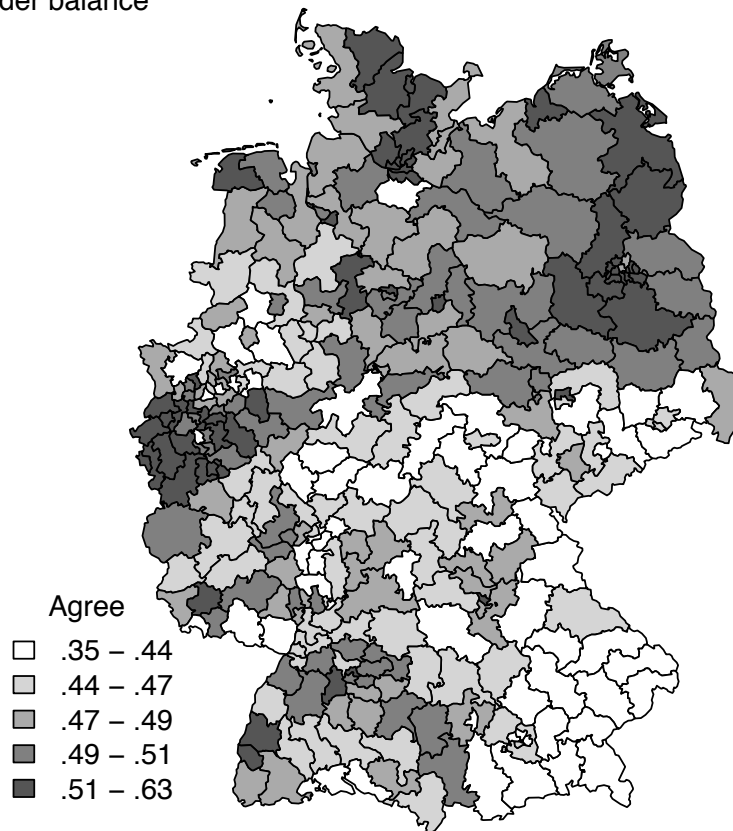


Figure 8.71: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the left-wing supporters to the item “The percentage of women in leadership positions should be increased via a mandatory gender quota.” [“Der Anteil von Frauen in Führungspositionen soll durch eine gesetzliche Quotenregelung erhöht werden.”; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.

Same-sex adoption

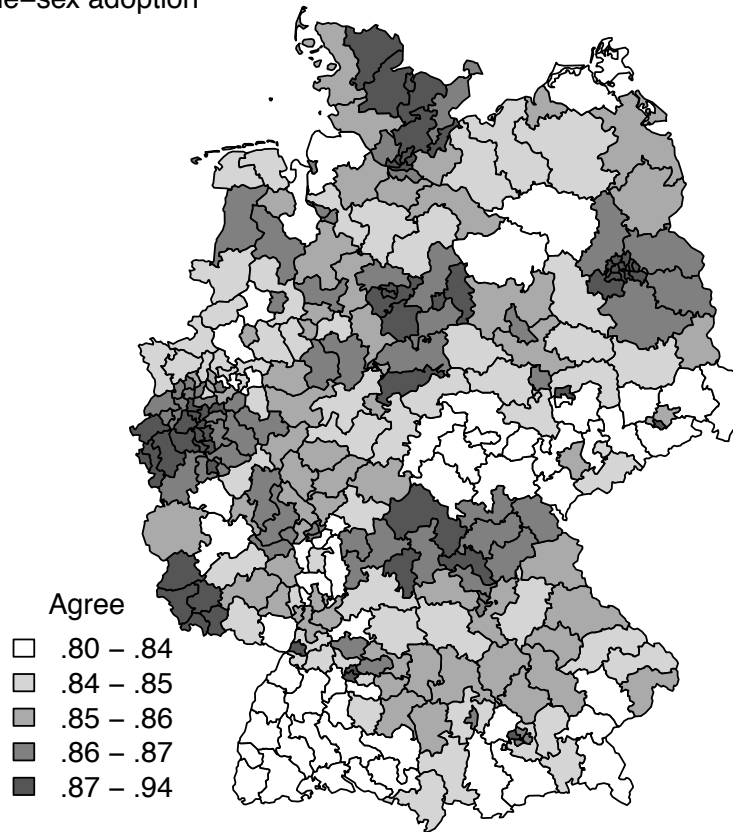


Figure 8.72: The figure displays the geographic distribution of responses among the left-wing supporters to the item "Same-sex couples should be allowed to adopt children." ["Eingetragene Lebenspartner sollen Kinder adoptieren können."; translation D.N.]. Darker shades represent greater agreement with the item. The shadings were computed by calculating the relative agreement to the statement in the districts. The 299 values were broken into five evenly sized quantiles and shaded by membership to the groups.





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