Evidence for the Irrelevance of Irrelevant Events

Stefan Müller **Liam Kneafsey**

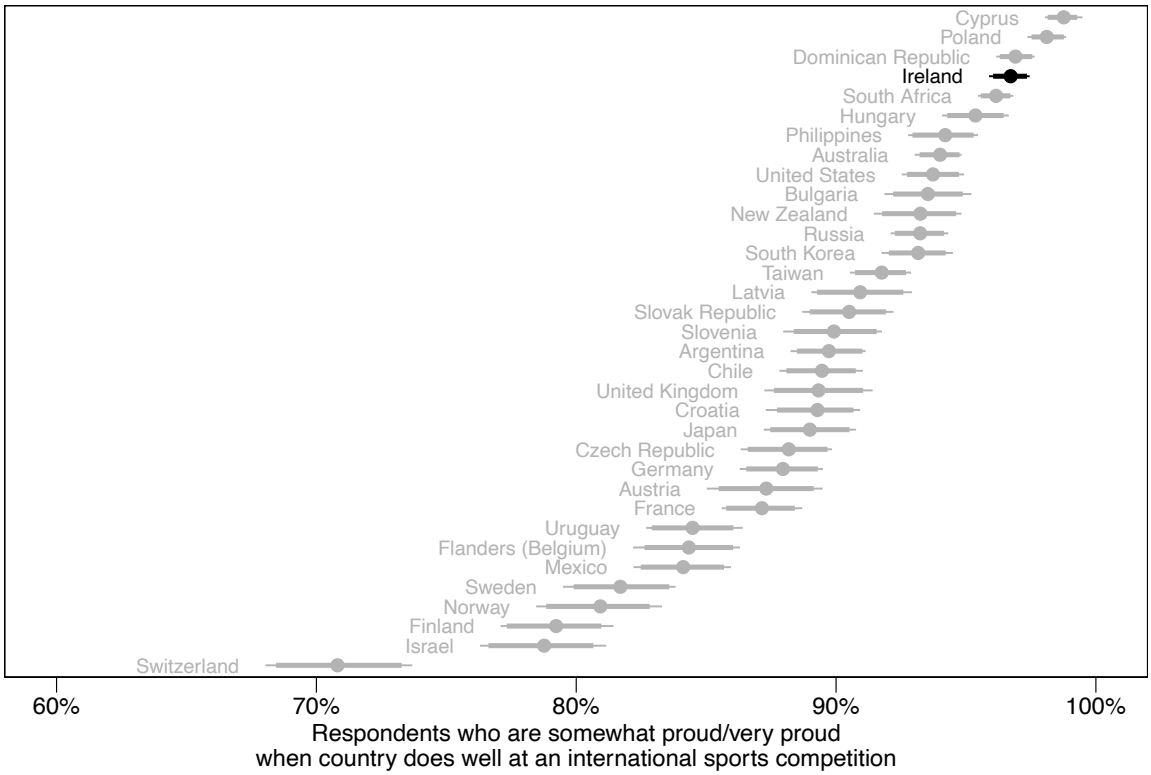
Political Science Research and Methods

Supporting Information

Table of Contents

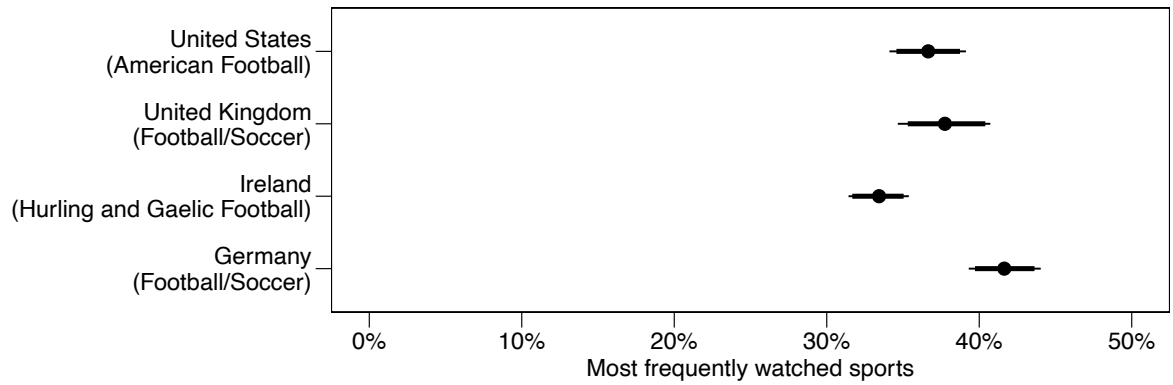
A Interest in Sports and Gaelic Games in the Republic of Ireland

Figure A 1: Comparison of levels of pride when country does well in an international sports competition



Note: Own visualization based on data in ISSP Research Group (2009). Horizontal bars display 90% and 95% confidence intervals.

Figure A 2: The popularity of Gaelic football and hurling in terms of TV consumption, compared to American football (US), and soccer (United Kingdom and Germany).



Note: Own visualization based on data in ISSP Research Group (2009). Horizontal bars display 90% and 95% confidence intervals.

B Existing Studies on Irrelevant Events and Political Opinions

Table A1 provides an overview of existing studies on irrelevant events. For each study, we extract the country, time period, type of irrelevant event, summarize the observed effect, and briefly outline the theorized mechanism put forward by the authors.

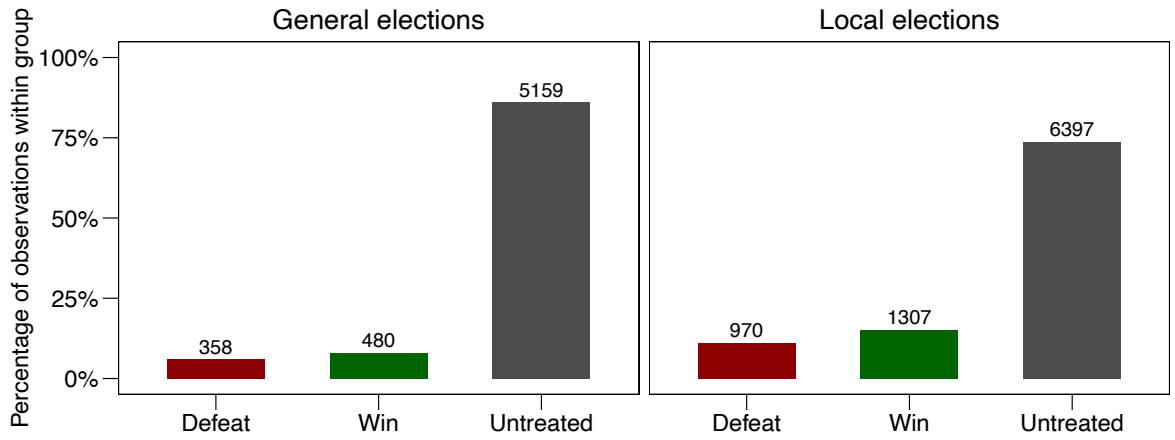
Table A 1: Overview of existing studies on irrelevant events

Study	**Country**	**Time Period**	**Irrelevant Event Type**	**Effect of Irrelevant events?**	**Theorised mechanism**
Achen and Bartels (2002; 2016)	United States (New Jersey)	1916	Shark attacks	Yes, substantial effects	'Blind retrospection' (p.7)
Achen and Bartels (2002; 2016)	United States	1896–2000	Droughts; floods	Yes, substantial effects	'Blind retrospection' (2016, p.118)
Achen and Bartels (2002)	United States	1918	Spanish Influenza Pandemic	No	Voters considered pandemic an 'act of God' and made no attribution (p. 34)
Huber *et al.* (2012)	United States	2011 and 2012	Lottery experiment	Yes, substantial effects	'Blind retrospection' (p. 738)
Heersink *et al.* (2017)	United States (American South)	1928	1927 Mississippi Flood	Yes, but qualified support	Qualified 'Blind retrospection' (p. 267)
Sances (2017)	United States (Massachusetts)	1992–2012	Property Tax Referendums	Yes, substantial effects	Voters do not effectively attribute blame for decisions that affect personal material well-being (p. 1300)
Bagues and Esteve-Volart (2016)	Spain	1986–2008	Spanish Christmas Lottery	Yes, substantial effects	Voters do not interrogate attribution of positive personal material well-being and reward incumbent subconsciously (pp.1270–1272)
Healy *et al*. (2010)	United States	1964–2008	College sports results	Yes, substantial effects	Personal mood transfers to judgements in other domains – positive mood favours incumbent (p.12804)
Miller (2013)	United States	1948–2009 Mayoral elections	Professional Sports records	Yes, substantial effects	Citizens assess performance based on own mood – "mood unconsciously affects evaluation, including political evaluation." (p. 61)

Busby *et al*. (2017)	United States	2015	College Football	Yes, substantial effects	"a change in mood in either a positive or negative direction" – the mood effect is contagious affecting irrelevant opinions (pp. 347–348)
Busby and Druckman (2018)	United States	2016	College Football	Mixed; effects for losing team but not for winning team	Sports results affect mood which impacts political attitudes but only under certain conditions(p. 9)
Goerres *et al*. (2019)	Germany	2013	Football (soccer)	Yes, small but significant effect	Government parties are rewarded or punished because responsibility is attributed for positive or negative emotions (p. 583)
Fowler and Montagnes (2015)	United States	1960–2012	College football and NFL games	Replicates Healy *et al*. and extends; extended results conflict with Healy *et al*.'s findings	Voters distinguish irrelevant effects effectively (p. 13803)
Fowler and Hall (2018)	United States	1872–2012; 1916	Shark attacks	No systematic evidence; inconclusive and substantively tiny	Voters distinguish irrelevant events effectively; positive irrelevant events findings are 'false positives' (p. 24)
Graham *et al*. (2020)	United States	Meta-analysis of irrelevant events studies	Droughts and floods (AB); sports events (HMM); tornadoes (HM)	Mixed; strongest results for sports events from Healy *et al*. (2010)	While not focused on mechanisms, authors argue sporting events are clearest irrelevant events and receive strongest support (p. 31)

C Descriptive Statistics and Summary of Data

Figure A 3: Summary of candidate-observations in Irish general and local elections for the treatment levels



Note: Numbers above the bars depict the number of observations in each group.

Figure A 4: Summary of candidate-observations in Irish general elections for the treatment levels, split by election

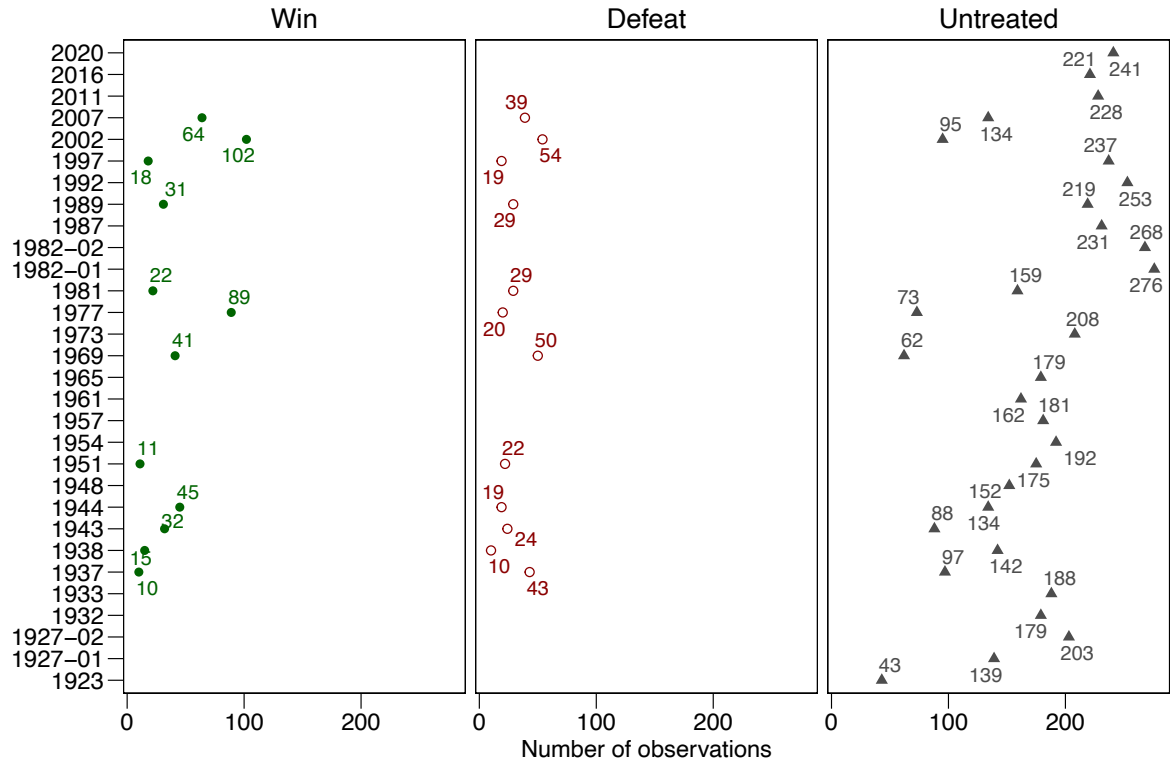


Figure A 5: Summary of candidate-observations in Irish local elections for the treatment levels, split by election

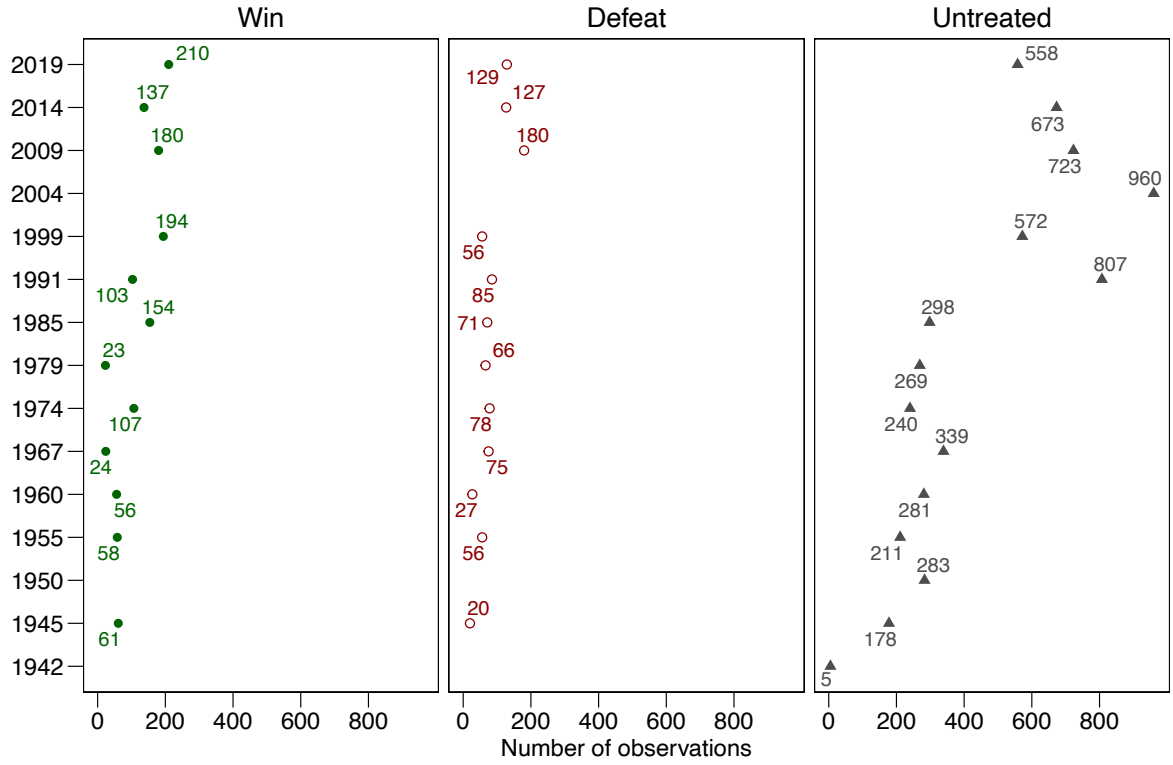
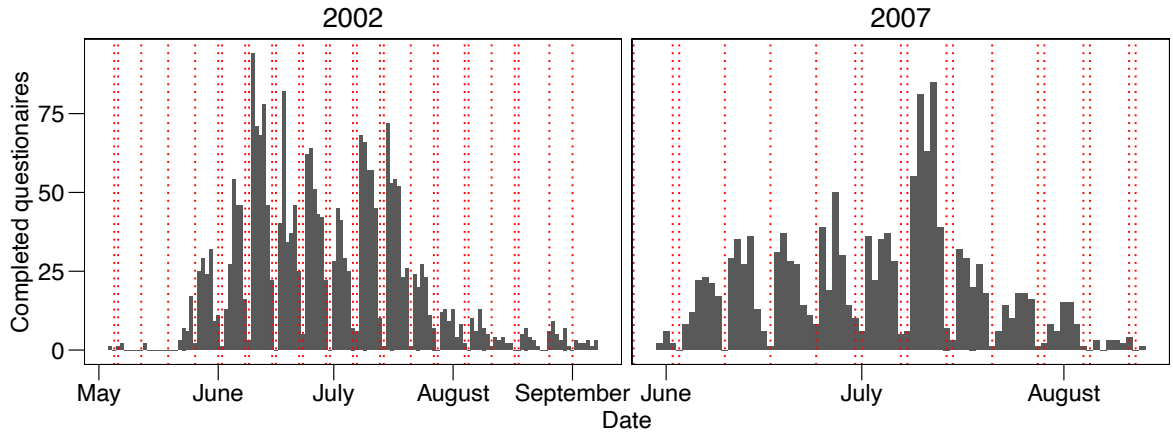


Figure A 6: Completion dates of questionnaires in the 2002 and 2007 Irish National Election Studies during the hurling and Gaelic football season

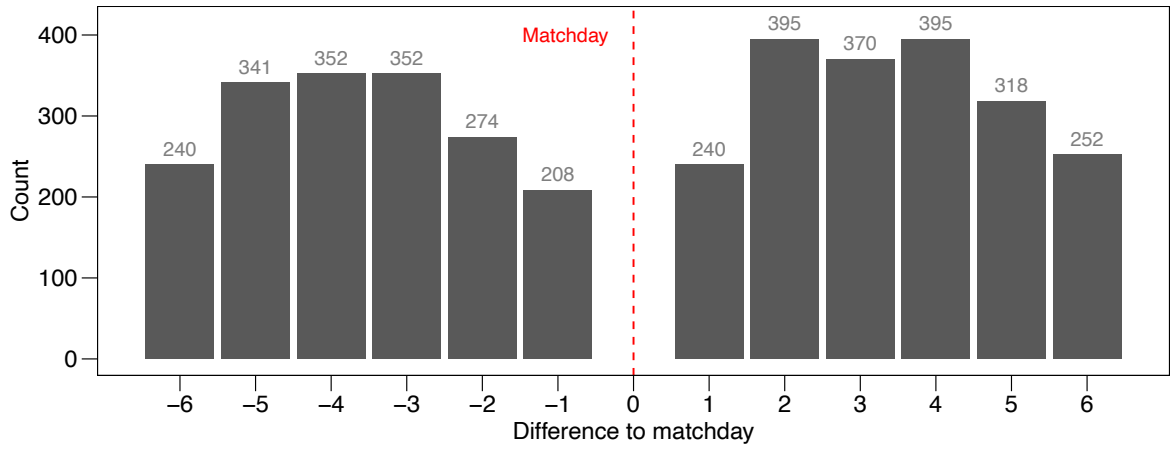


Note: Red vertical lines indicate that at least one match took place on a given date. Respondents who filled in the questionnaire on the day of the match of their local team are excluded from the plot and analysis.

Table A 2: Summary statistics of respondents whose county played within a window of ±6 days

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Pctl(25)	Pctl(75)	Max
Like/dislike Prime Minister	3,737	6.603	2.695	0.000	5.000	9.000	10.000
Like/dislike affiliated party	2,672	5.678	2.961	0.000	4.000	8.000	10.000
Difference from matchday	3,831	0.127	3.863	-6	-3	4	6

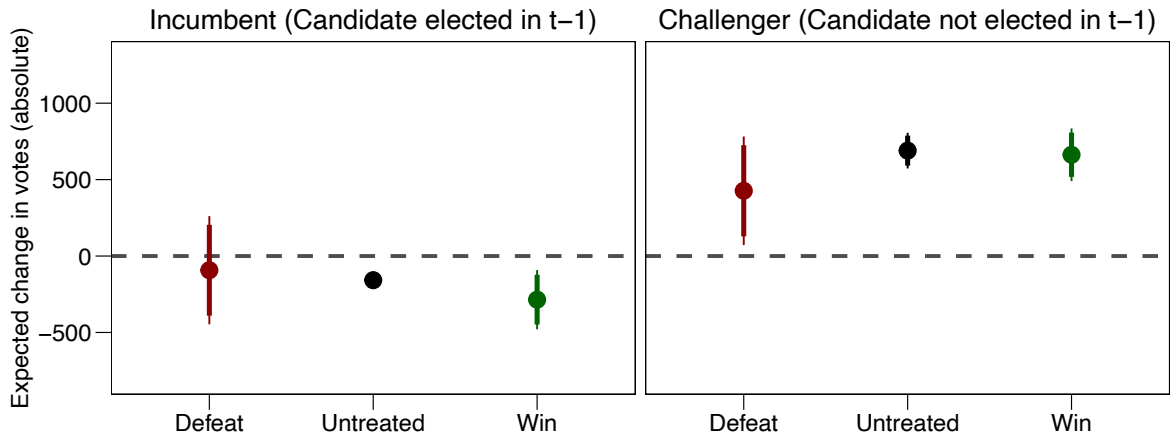
Figure A 7: Distribution of responses relative to the match date of the respondent's county match



Note: The plot only considers respondents (1) whose local team won or lost within margin of ±6 days and (2) who have answered the survey item on regarding their personal rating of the Taoiseach (Prime Minister). Grey numbers above the bars indicate the number of observations per day.

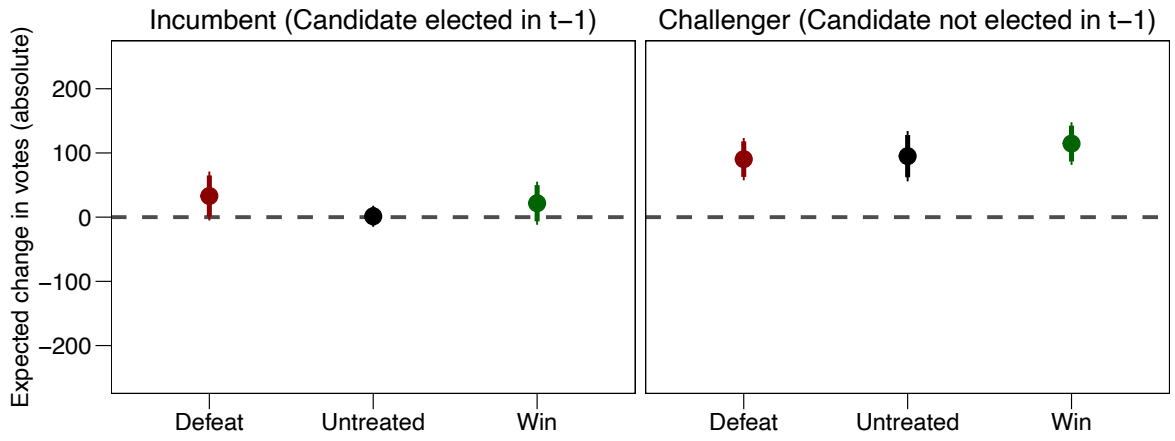
D Voting Behavior in Irish General and Local Elections: Additional Tables and Plots

Figure A 8: Expected values of absolute change in first-preference votes in general elections



Note: The plot shows expected values with 90% (thick line) and 95% (thin line) confidence intervals. The estimates are based on the interaction between the Treatment (matches) and Incumbency status in Model 1 of Table A 3.

Figure A 9: Expected values of absolute change in first-preference votes in local elections



Note: The plot shows expected values with 90% (thick line) and 95% (thin line) confidence intervals. The estimates are based on the interaction between the Treatment (matches) and Incumbency status in Model 3 of Table A 3.

Table A 3: Predicting changes in absolute number of first-preference votes in general and local elections

	M1: General elections (votes)	**M2: General elections (votes)**	**M3: Local elections (votes)**	**M4: Local elections (votes)**
Untreated (ref. = Defeat)	262.7	297.7	4.7	-20.0
	[-110.1, 635.6]	[-106.0, 701.4]	[-49.3, 58.7]	[-68.7, 28.8]
Win	235.6	14.9	24.3	20.4
	[-173.6, 644.9]	[-518.0, 547.8]	[-21.7, 70.3]	[-50.8, 91.7]
Candidate elected in t–1	-519.6*	-643.9*	-57.4***	-80.4***
	[-1003.4, -35.8]	[-1170.0, -117.7]	[-84.7, -30.0]	[-116.0, -44.8]
Untreated × Candidate elected in t–1	-328.0	-314.2	-36.3	-22.8
	[-836.0, 180.0]	[-855.7, 227.4]	[-98.1, 25.5]	[-82.3, 36.7]
Win × Candidate elected in t–1	-428.3	-377.7	-35.6	-23.0
	[-932.9, 76.2]	[-928.1, 172.6]	[-88.6, 17.4]	[-81.1, 35.0]
Election FE		✓		✓
Party FE		✓		✓
County FE		✓		✓
N	5997	5997	8674	8674
R^2	0.031	0.105	0.009	0.078
R^2 Adj.	0.030	0.094	0.009	0.071

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Note: Robust standard errors clustered at the county level. 95% confidence intervals in parentheses. Intercept omitted from table.

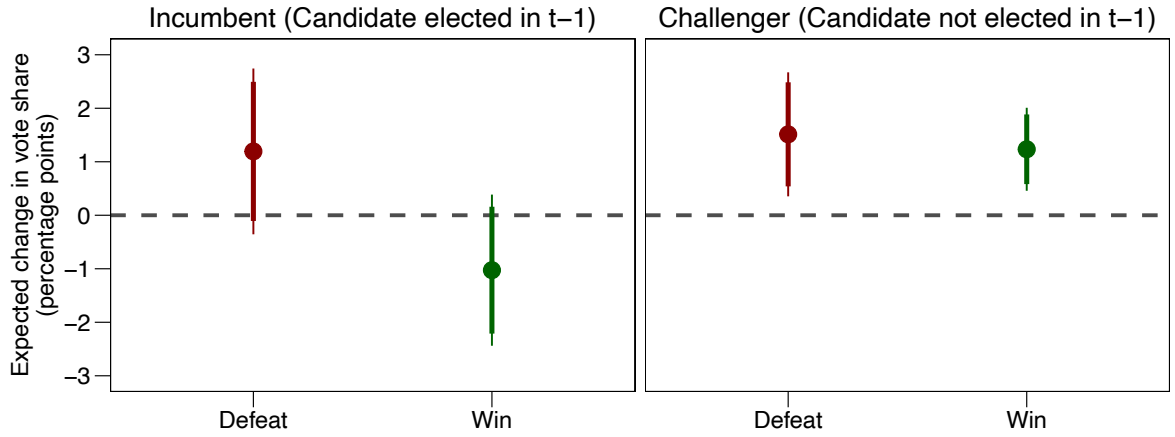
Table A 4: Predicting changes in first-preference vote shares for candidates in 'strongholds'

	M1: General elections (incumbency, strongholds)	**M2: General elections (incumbency, strongholds)**	**M3: Local elections (incumbency, strongholds)**	**M4: Local elections (incumbency, strongholds)**	**M5: General elections (government status, strongholds)**	**M6: General elections (government status, strongholds)**
Win (ref. = Defeat)	-0.28	1.57	-0.06	-0.47	-1.99*	-1.17
	[-1.80, 1.24]	[-1.17, 4.31]	[-0.93, 0.81]	[-1.59, 0.65]	[-3.65, -0.32]	[-3.86, 1.51]
Candidate elected in t–1	-0.32	-0.37	-1.06**	-1.60***		
	[-1.71, 1.07]	[-1.97, 1.23]	[-1.80, -0.32]	[-2.39, -0.81]		
Win × Candidate elected in t–1	-1.94*	-2.64**	-0.10	0.28		
	[-3.54, -0.34]	[-4.23, -1.05]	[-1.20, 1.00]	[-0.77, 1.34]		
Candidate's party in government					0.16	-0.54
					[-1.57, 1.90]	[-2.59, 1.51]
Win x Candidate's party in government					0.98	1.56
					[-1.30, 3.26]	[-1.43, 4.55]
Election FE		✓		✓		✓
Party FE		✓		✓		✓
County FE		✓		✓		✓
N	437	437	1838	1838	437	437
R^2	0.039	0.228	0.011	0.110	0.023	0.201
R^2 Adj.	0.032	0.141	0.010	0.086	0.017	0.111

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

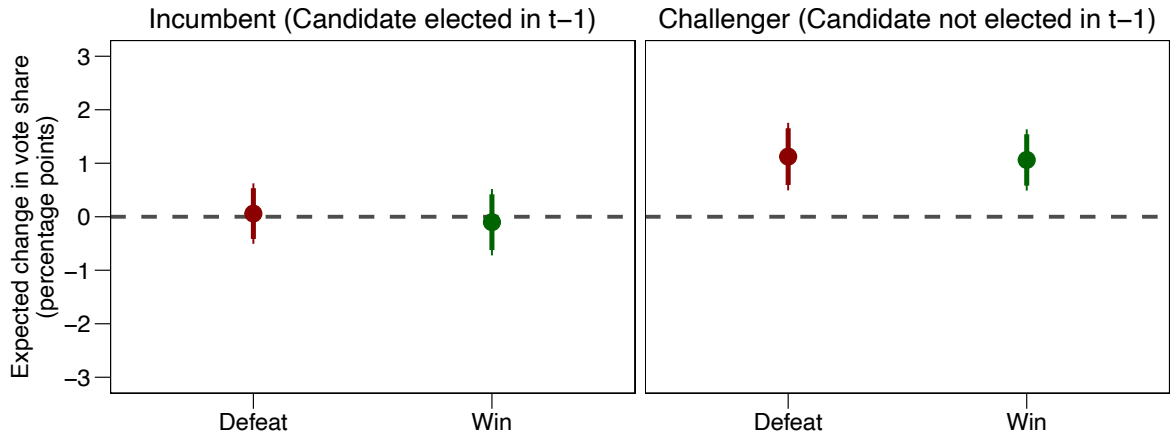
Note: Robust standard errors clustered at the county level. 95% confidence intervals in parentheses. The samples are limited to wins/defeats of local teams and to candidates from "strongholds". Intercept omitted from table.

Figure A 10: Predicting changes in vote shares of rerunning candidates in Irish general elections (only candidates from strongholds)



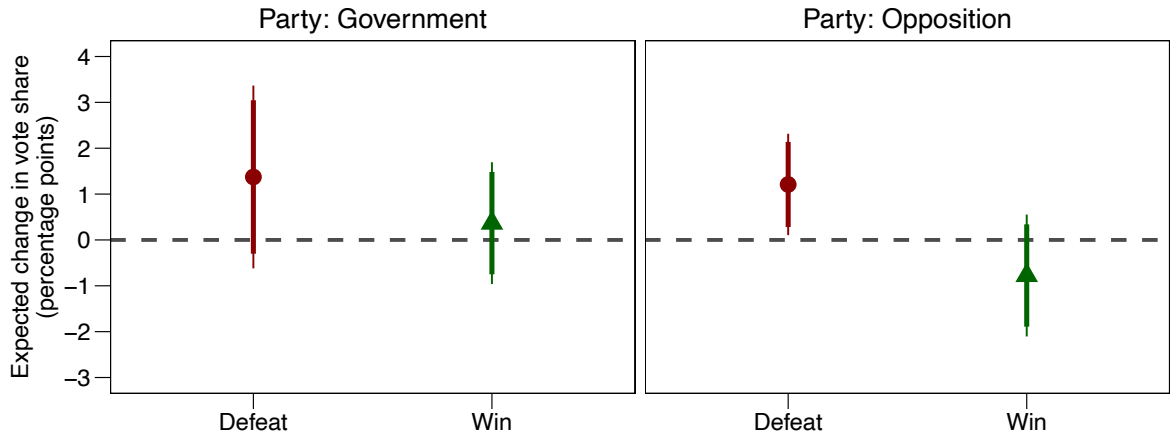
Note: The plot shows expected values with 90% (thick line) and 95% (thin line) confidence intervals. The estimates are based on the interaction between the Treatment (matches) and Incumbency status in Model 1 of Table A 4.

Figure A 11: Predicting changes in vote shares of rerunning candidates in Irish local elections (only candidates from strongholds)



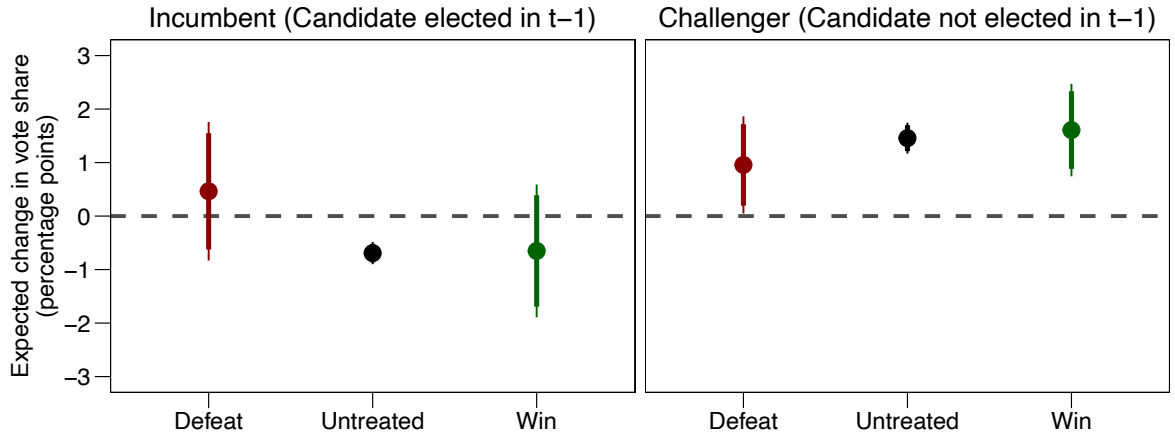
Note: The plot shows expected values with 90% (thick line) and 95% (thin line) confidence intervals. The estimates are based on the interaction between the Treatment (matches) and Incumbency status in Model 3 of Table A 4.

Figure A 12: Predicting changes in vote shares of rerunning candidates from incumbent government parties and opposition parties in Irish general elections (only candidates from strongholds)



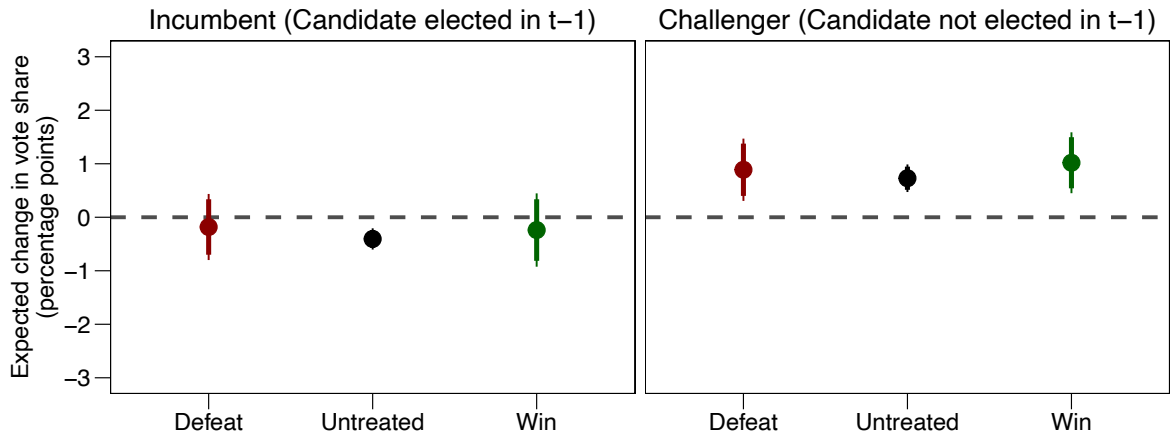
Note. The plot shows expected values with 90% (thick line) and 95% (thin line) confidence intervals. The estimates are based on the interaction between the Treatment (matches) and Incumbency status in Model 5 of Table A 4.

Figure A 13: Predicting changes in vote shares of rerunning candidates in Irish general elections for the sample of counties that can be matched unambiguously to the regional GAA team



Note: The plot shows expected values with 90% (thick line) and 95% (thin line) confidence intervals. The estimates are based on the interaction between the Treatment (matches) and Incumbency status in Model 1 of Table A5.

Figure A 14: Predicting changes in vote shares of rerunning candidates in Irish local elections for the sample of counties that can be matched unambiguously to the regional GAA team



Note: The plot shows expected values with 90% (thick line) and 95% (thin line) confidence intervals. The estimates are based on the interaction between the Treatment (matches) and Incumbency status in Model 3 of Table A5.

Table A 5: Predicting changes in first-preference vote shares for constituencies that can be match unambiguously to a single county

	M1: General elections (unambiguous)	**M2: General elections (unambiguous)**	**M3: Local elections (unambiguous)**	**M4: Local elections (unambiguous)**
Untreated (ref. = Defeat)	0.50	0.73	-0.16	-0.14
	[-0.50, 1.50]	[-0.20, 1.67]	[-0.88, 0.56]	[-0.86, 0.58]
Win	0.65	0.91	0.13	-0.43
	[-0.45, 1.75]	[-0.17, 1.99]	[-0.72, 0.98]	[-1.27, 0.42]
Candidate elected in t–1	-0.49	-0.93	-1.07**	-1.45***
	[-1.75, 0.77]	[-2.36, 0.50]	[-1.69, -0.45]	[-2.10, -0.80]
Untreated × Candidate elected in t–1	-1.66*	-1.53*	-0.06	0.05
	[-3.00, -0.31]	[-2.94, -0.13]	[-0.83, 0.70]	[-0.77, 0.88]
Win × Candidate elected in t–1	-1.77**	-1.76*	-0.19	0.07
	[-3.05, -0.49]	[-3.26, -0.25]	[-1.18, 0.81]	[-0.84, 0.98]
Election FE		✓		✓
Party FE		✓		✓
County FE		✓		✓
N	5923	5923	8620	8620
R^2	0.031	0.101	0.012	0.085
R^2 Adj.	0.030	0.090	0.012	0.078

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Note: Robust standard errors clustered at the county level. 95% confidence intervals in parentheses. Intercept omitted from table.

E Local and General Elections: Sensitivity Curves

To assess the robustness of the absence of a relationship between sports games and incumbent support, we conduct a specification curve analysis. Specification curves estimate the coefficient of interest for a variety of models with different sets of control variables. In what follows, we limit the sample to candidates who experienced either a win or a defeat. The specification curves report the coefficients and confidence intervals for a 'win' (the base category is 'defeat') for candidates elected in election *t–1* in general and local elections. We repeat the analysis for candidates from government parties and plots the coefficients for a win of the local county team.

In all three scenarios, we run all possible combinations between the covariates described below. All models include the win/defeat dummy, and the upper part of each graph shows the coefficients across the 128 model specifications.

- Winner: a binary variable indicating whether the candidate's local team lost or won the match taking place within a window of six days before an election
- Turnout: the level of turnout in the constituency of a candidate
- Stronghold: whether the candidate's local team could be considered as a "stronghold" during the respective season
- Sport: a binary variable indicating whether a hurling or Gaelic football match took place before the election
- Party: the party of a candidate
- Margin of result: the difference in points between the winning team and the losing team
- Election: fixed effects for the election
- County team: fixed effects for the county team

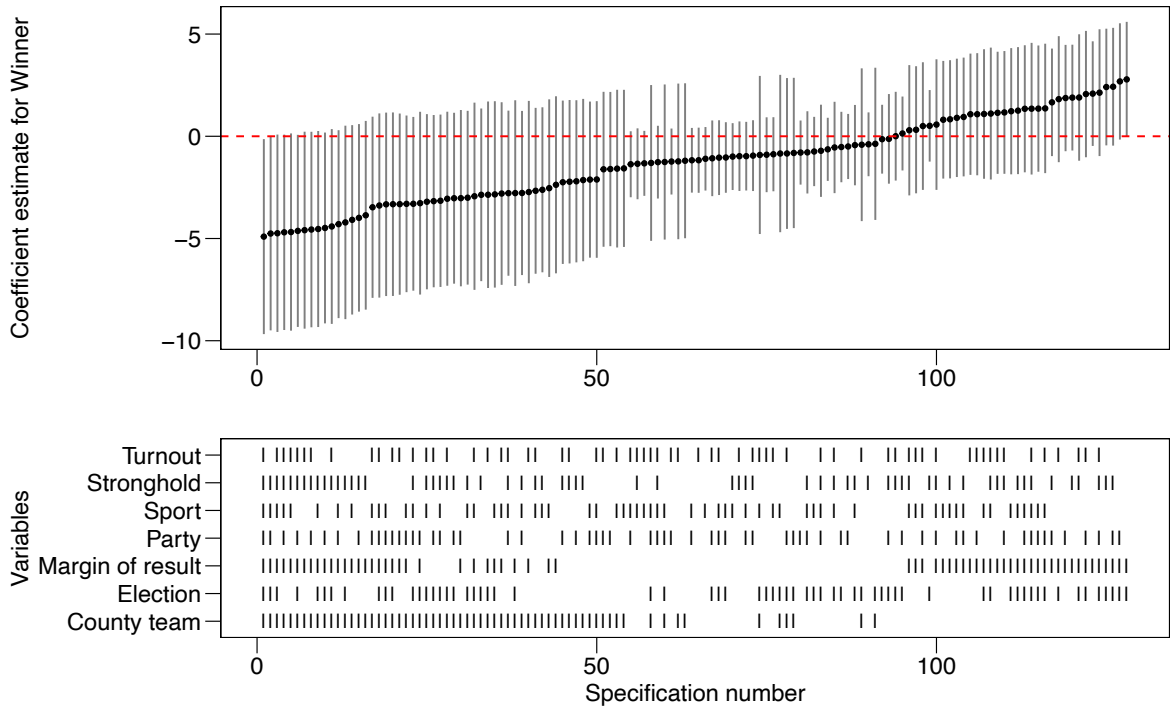
A coefficient larger than 0 implies that a candidate whose team experienced a win also increased her vote share compared to the previous election. The lower panel of each plot shows which variables are included in a given model specification.

Figure A15 plots the coefficient for a win on incumbent vote share for general elections. First, we observe that the vast majority of model specifications result in statistically insignificant results (the 95% confidence intervals cross zero). 91 of the 128 models have the (counter-intuitive) unexpected coefficients, and none of the 35 specifications with a positive coefficient is statistically significant at $p<0.05$.

Turning to local elections, we observe a very similar pattern (Figure A16). Not a single model specification returns a statistically significant and positive coefficient of a win for percentage point vote shares of candidates who were represented in the local council at the time of the election. 106 of the 128 coefficients are negative, with 22 coefficients being negative and statistically significant.

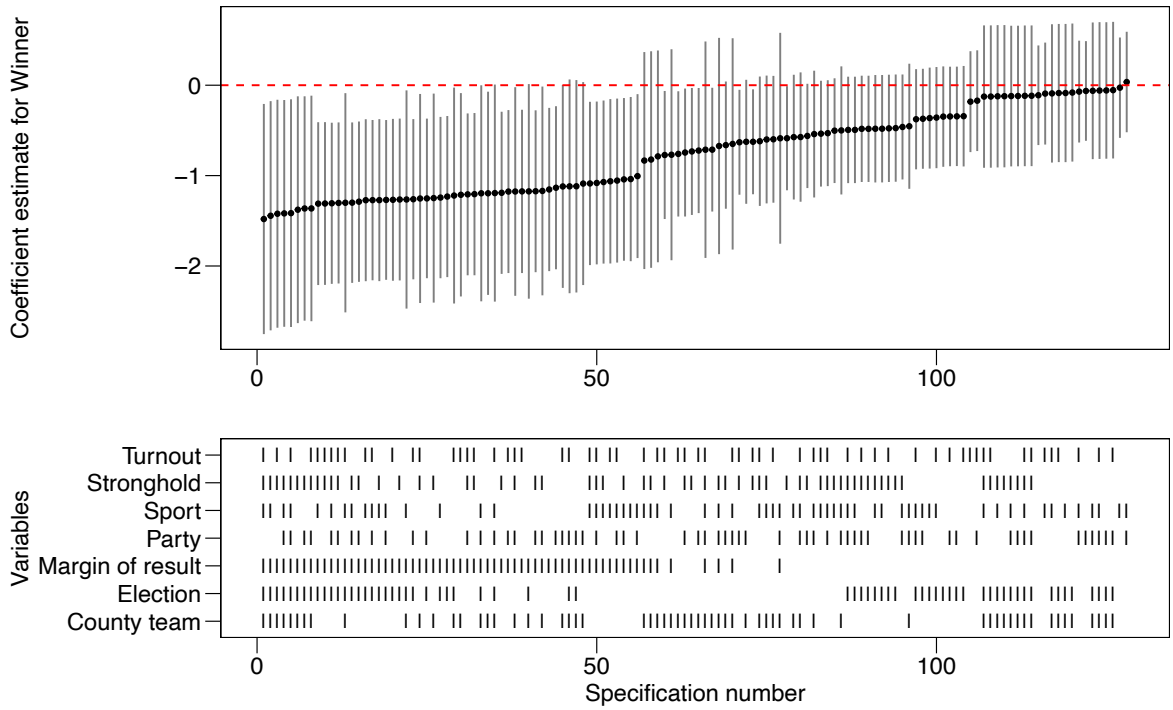
Finally, Figure A17 reports the coefficients for candidates whose party was in government at election time. 79 model specifications have a negative coefficient; 49 specifications have a positive coefficient, 7 of these coefficients being statistically significant at $p<0.05$. Even though the number of models with positive coefficients is larger than in the other two scenarios, the results are inconclusive and do not provide consistent support for H2. The sensitivity curves underscore that the results reported in the main paper do not depend on the inclusion or exclusion of additional covariates.

Figure A 15: Sensitivity curve for general elections



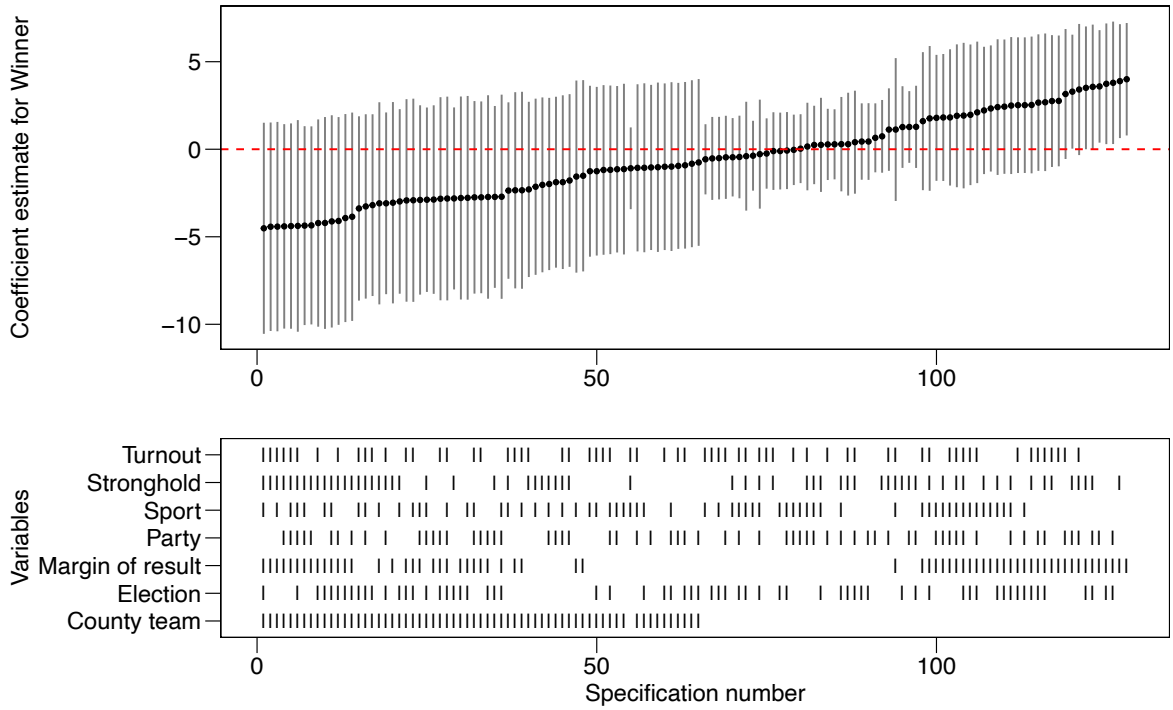
Note: Each point and errorbar in the upper panel shows the coefficient and confidence interval of a win of the local county team on changes in first-preference vote share for an incumbent candidate (i.e. a candidate who was elected in election t–1). The model is limited to incumbents whose teams either experienced a win or a defeat in the week before election day.

Figure A 16: Sensitivity curves for local elections



Note: Each point and errorbar in the upper panel shows the coefficient and confidence interval of a win of the local county team on changes in first-preference vote share for an incumbent candidate (i.e. a candidate who was elected in election t–1). The model is limited to incumbents whose teams either experienced a win or a defeat in the week before election day.

Figure A 17: Sensitivity curves for general elections, testing for the influence of the incumbency status of a candidate's party before the election



Note: Each point and errorbar in the upper panel shows the coefficient and confidence interval of a win of the local county team on changes in first-preference vote share for candidates from parties who were in government at the time of the election). The model is limited to candidates from incumbent parties whose teams either experienced a win or a defeat in the week before election day.

F Equivalence Tests

In this section, we report the results of equivalence tests. Equivalence tests help in assessing the absence of a meaningful effect. The null hypothesis of the equivalence test states that the substantive size of a coefficient is *not* equivalent to 0, meaning that the effect is larger than a given value. If the coefficient and confidence intervals fall *within* these boundaries, we reject *H0* and conclude that the effect is practically equivalent. If the coefficient falls into the boundaries, but the confidence intervals exceed the boundary, the decision of whether or not to reject *H0* is 'undecided' (Lüdecke *et al*., 2020). We follow the procedure described in Lakens *et al*. (2018) and use the implementation from the *parameters* R package (Lüdecke *et al*., 2020). More specifically, we apply the two one-sided test (TOST) approach. We exclude 'untreated' candidates from our samples and inspect the interaction between a win of the local team and the incumbency status of a candidate in general/local elections (*H1* in the paper), and the candidate's party government status at the time of the election (*H2* in the paper). We add fixed effects for parties, elections, and counties, mirroring the model specifications from the main analysis.

A critical question for the equivalence test is the width of the 'substantively inconsequential' equivalence range. We assume that an increase in vote shares by 0.3 standard deviations of the dependent variable for incumbents/candidates from government parties whose local team won would constitute a substantively meaningful effect. An increase of 0.3 standard deviations of the dependent variable would correspond to a change in vote shares of 1.6 percentage points in general elections and 1.4 percentage points in local elections. Such effect sizes would be similar to results reported in previous studies. Busby and Druckman (2018) report a maximum effect size of approximately 0.25 standard deviations. Healy *et al*. (2010) report that a win of the local football team increases incumbent

votes shares, on average, by 1.6 percentage points. Our equivalence boundaries closely mirror these effect sizes.

Figures A18–A20 report the results from the equivalence tests. The grey dotted lines show the hypothetical effect that corresponds to 30 percent of the dependent variable's standard deviation. In general elections, the coefficient is negative, implying that a win of the local team reduces support for the incumbent. The confidence intervals do not exceed the upper equivalence bound. In local elections, the coefficient is close to 0 and the confidence intervals fall entirely within the equivalence boundaries. In both cases, we reject *H0* of a meaningful effect and assume equivalence. For candidates from the government party the point estimate is positive, but still within the equivalence range. However, the confidence intervals exceed the upper equivalence bound. For this reason, we conclude that we are *undecided* about the equivalence of the effect (Lakens *et al.,* 2018). This conclusion mirrors the findings from the sensitivity curves (SI Section E). In almost all model specifications, the confidence intervals cross 0, and the effect sizes are small. In the next section, we further assess whether the nonsignificant and small effects are a function of imprecision.

Figure A 18: Equivalence test of the interaction between the incumbency status of a candidate and the match outcome in general elections. A positive coefficient implies that incumbents whose local teams won a match experience an increase in vote shares.

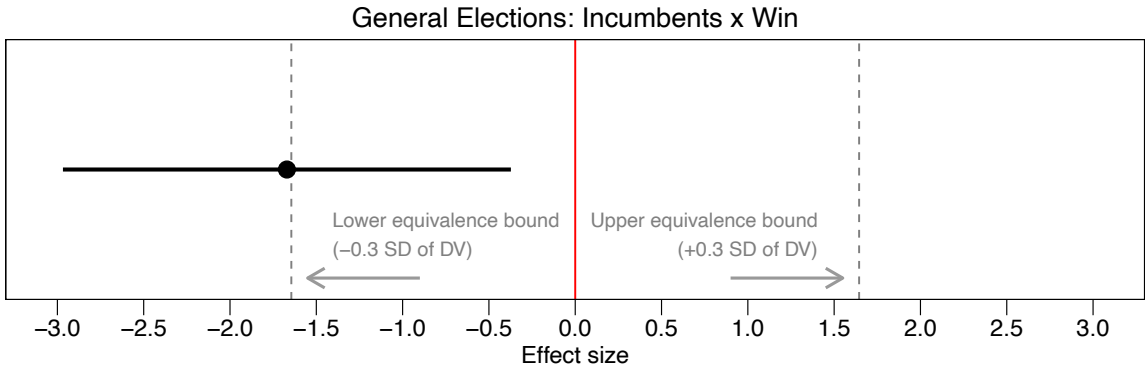


Figure A 19: Equivalence test the interaction coefficient between the incumbency status of a candidate and the match outcome in local elections. A positive coefficient implies that incumbents whose local teams won a match experience an increase in vote shares.

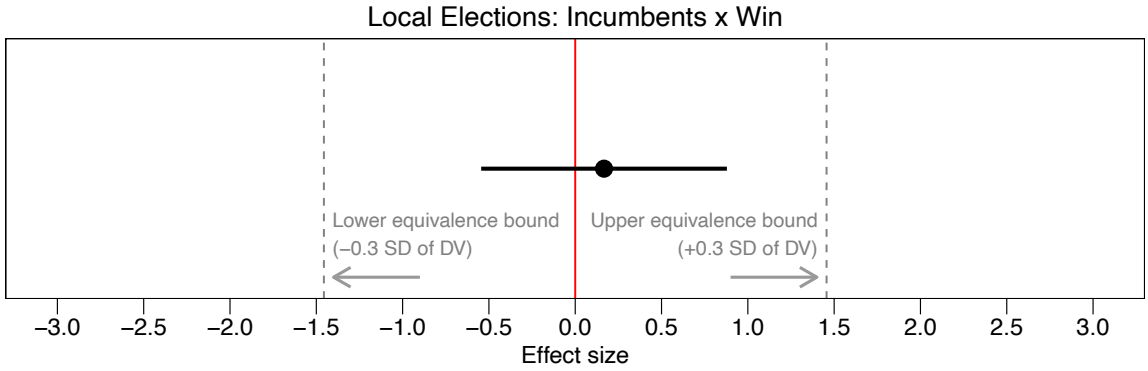
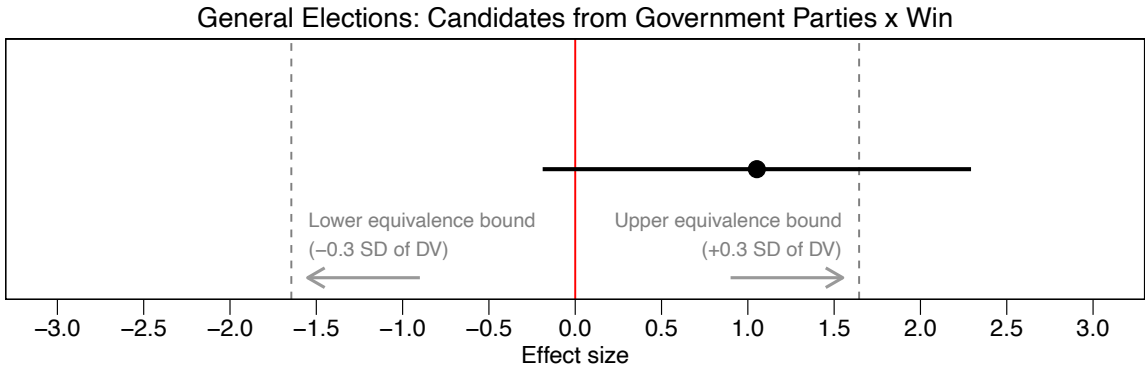


Figure A 20: Equivalence test of the interaction between the government status of a candidate's party and the match outcome in general elections. A positive coefficient implies that candidates whose party is in government at the time of the election experience an increase in vote shares.



G Local and General Elections: Permutation of Treatment Allocation

Permutation tests of the treatment allocation provide another way to assess whether the nonsignificant result of the paper is due to imprecision.[10] This robustness test compares the observed effect size of irrelevant events with effect sizes based on randomly allocated treatments. We perform a placebo-permutation exercise by holding the number of wins, defeats, and draws in each election constant, but randomly assign the match results across constituencies in each election. We then re-estimate the model using the randomly allocated match result as the independent variable and interact it with the incumbency status of a politician in general and local elections. We generate 1,000 of such permutation simulations and store the coefficient of interest, i.e. the interaction between the permutated match result and incumbency status. We repeat the same analysis for the government status of a candidate's party at the time of the election. The figures below show the 'true' coefficient using our observed data (vertical red line) and show the distribution of the 1,000 models that assign placebo treatments (Figures A20–A22). In all three cases, the observed coefficients lie within the range of placebo-permutations, which supports our conclusion that the observed coefficients and effect sizes are negligible and non-systematic.

[10] We thank one of the anonymous reviewers for this excellent suggestion.

Figure A 21: Permutation of treatment allocation and coefficients of interaction term between previously elected candidates and the treatment of a 'win': general elections

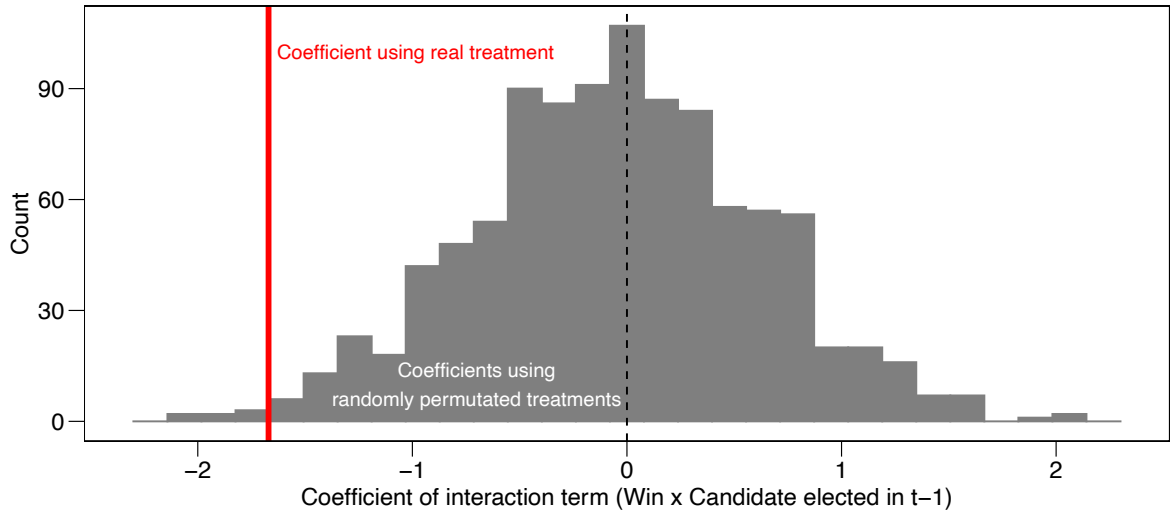


Figure A 22: Permutation of treatment allocation and coefficients of interaction term between previously elected candidates and the treatment of a 'win': local elections

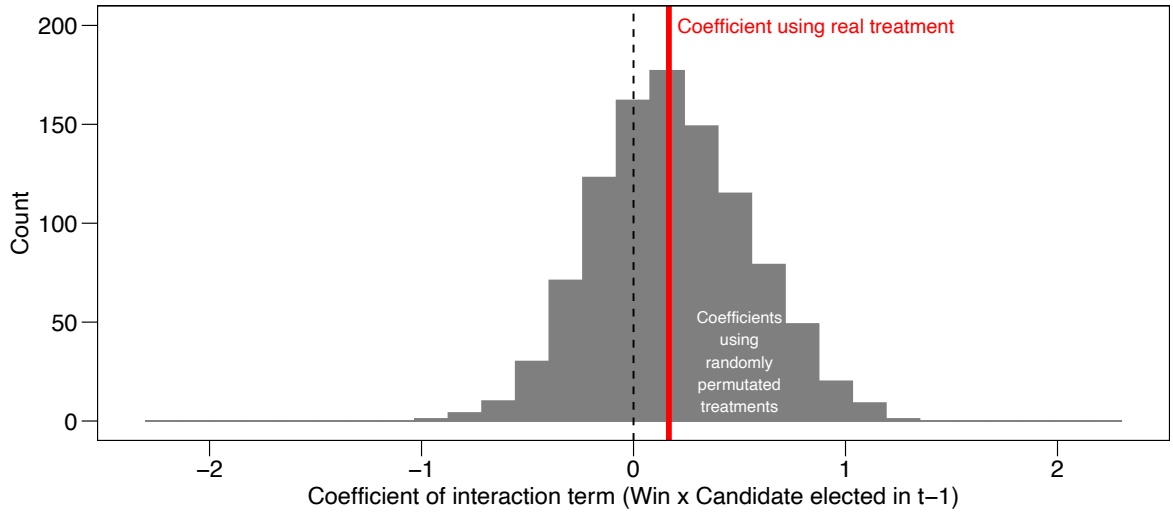
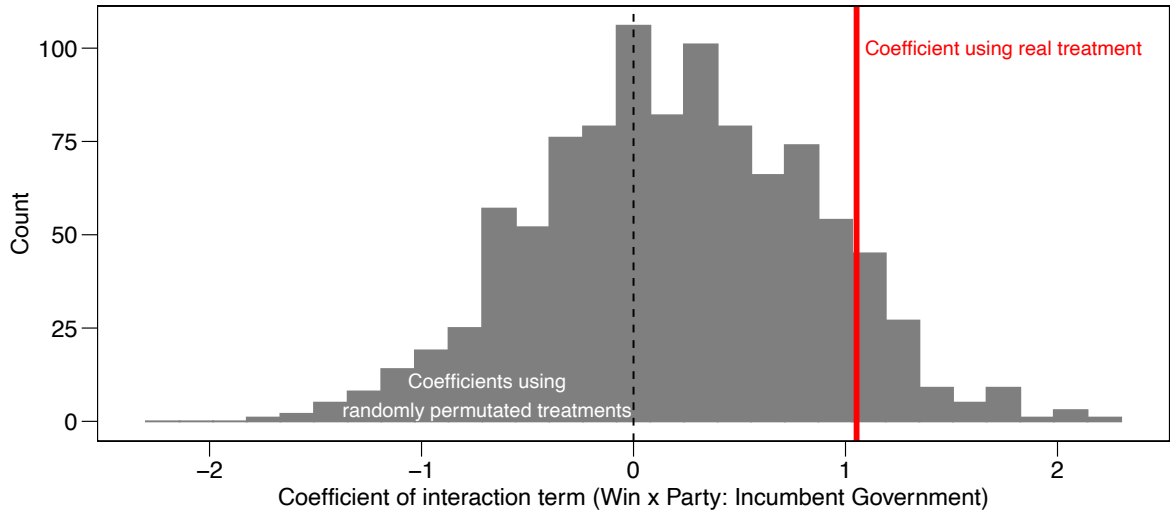
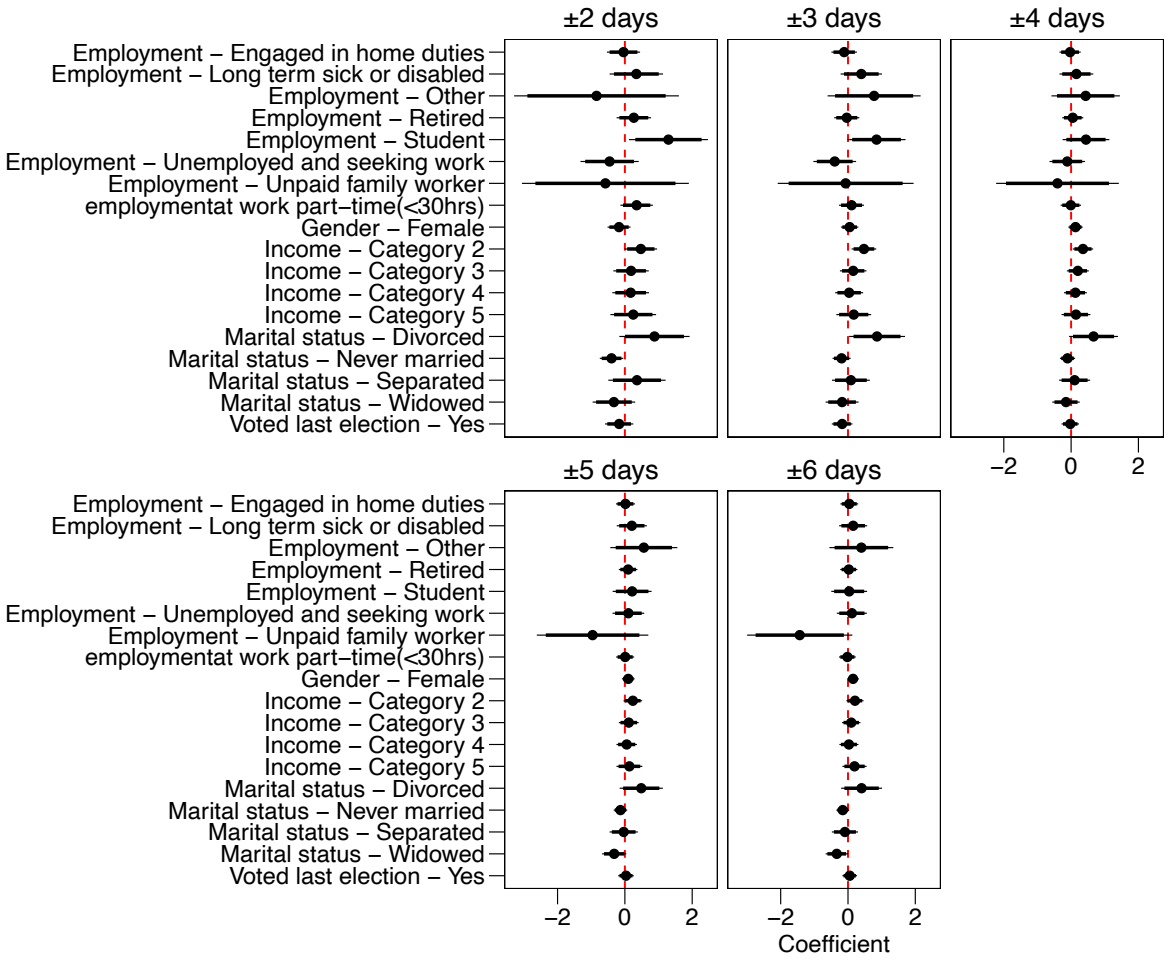


Figure A 23: Permutation of treatment allocation and coefficients of interaction term between candidates from government parties and the treatment of a 'win' (general elections)



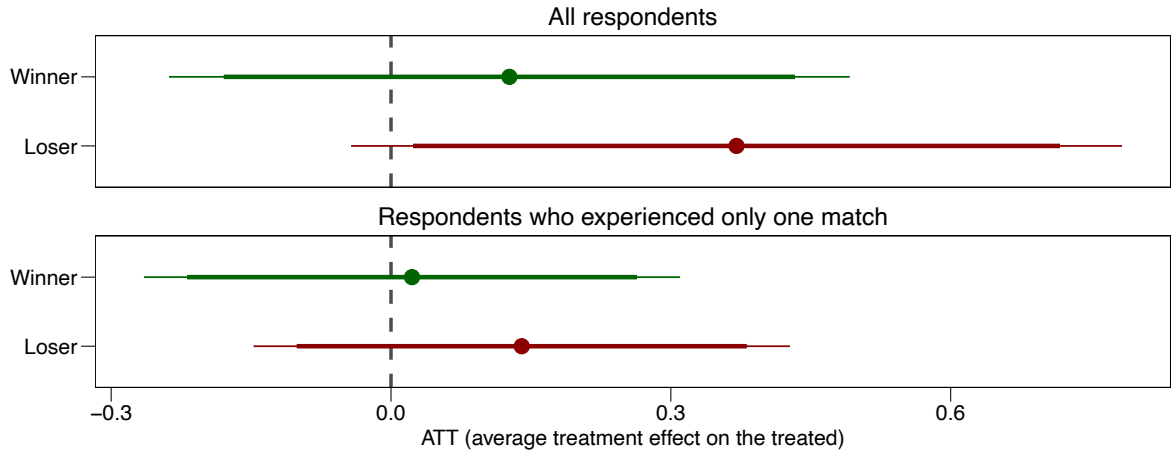
H Unexpected Events During Survey Design: The Irish National Election Studies 2002 and 2007

Figure A 24: Balance tests for respondents in the two groups (before/after match) for different windows of days before and after matches



Note: Plots show coefficients from multilevel logistic regressions with random effects for each county, predicting whether individual-level characteristics of respondents who answered the survey before or after a match differ significantly. If the 95% confidence intervals (displayed as the wider error bars) do not cross 0, respondents in the two groups do not show statistically significant differences.

Figure A 25: Treatment effects of unexpected events (win/defeat) on the rating of the Prime Minister for all respondents and respondents who were only "treated" by a single match in a window of ±6 days



Note: Points show the estimates from regressions after applying entropy balance weights. Horizontal bars indicate 90% (thick line) and 95% (thin line) confidence intervals.

Figure A 26: Comparing rating of the party a respondent feels affiliated to before and after wins/defeats

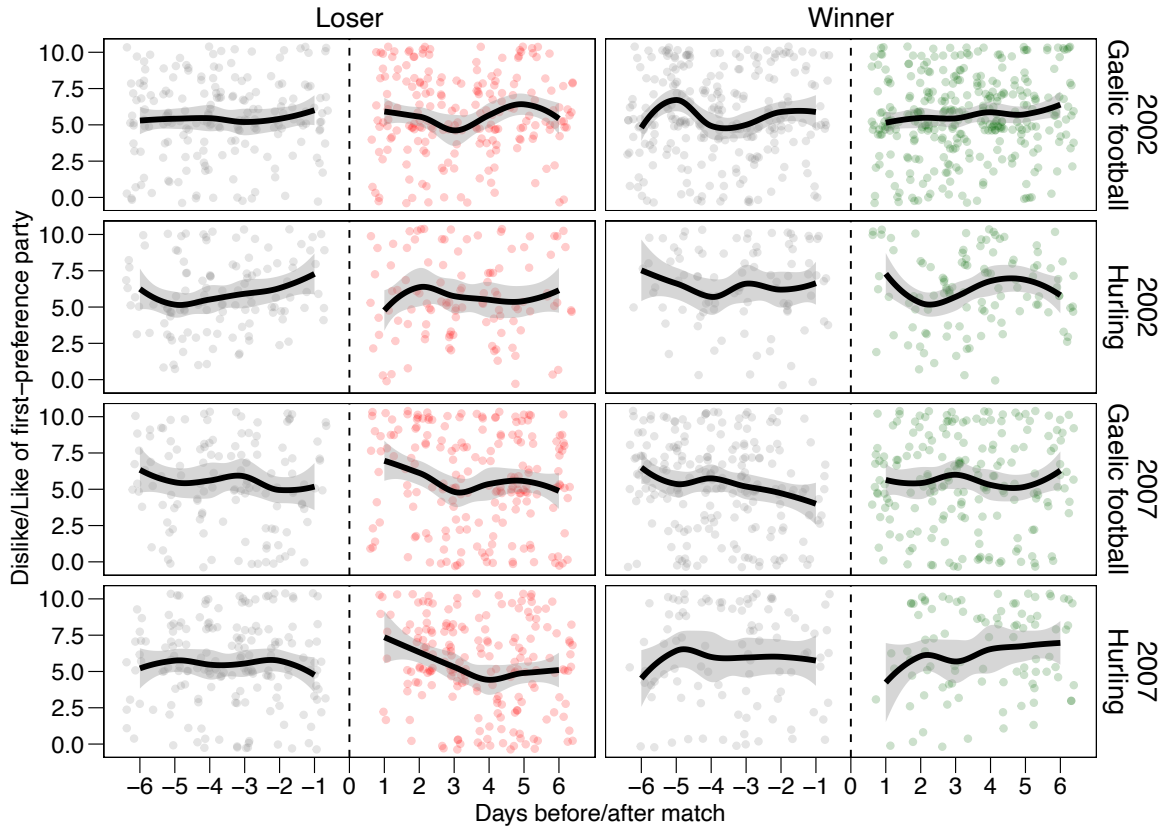


Figure A 27: Testing the difference in means of the rating of the party a respondent feels affiliated to for winners and losers, based on an increasing window of days

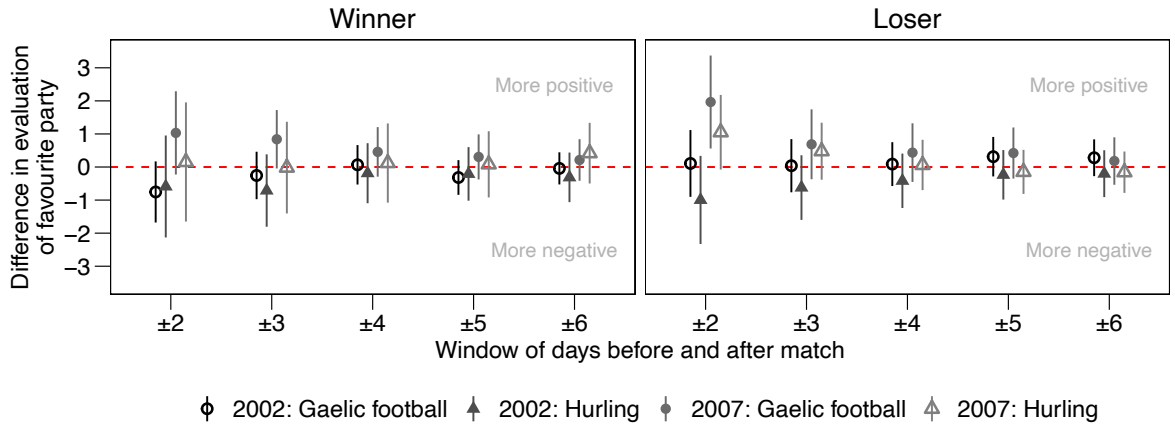


Figure A 28: Comparing rating of Irish Prime Minister before and after wins/defeats, GAA members only

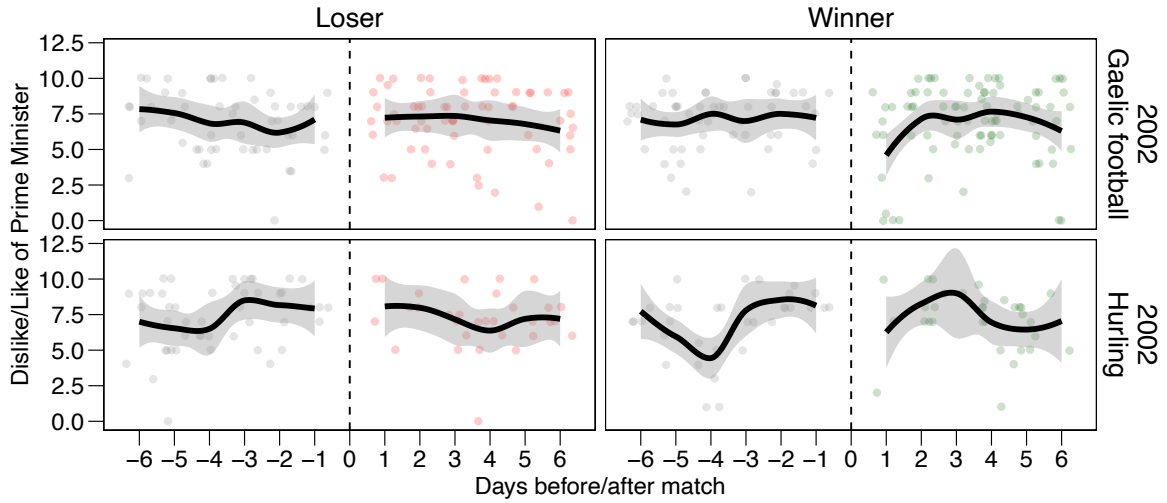
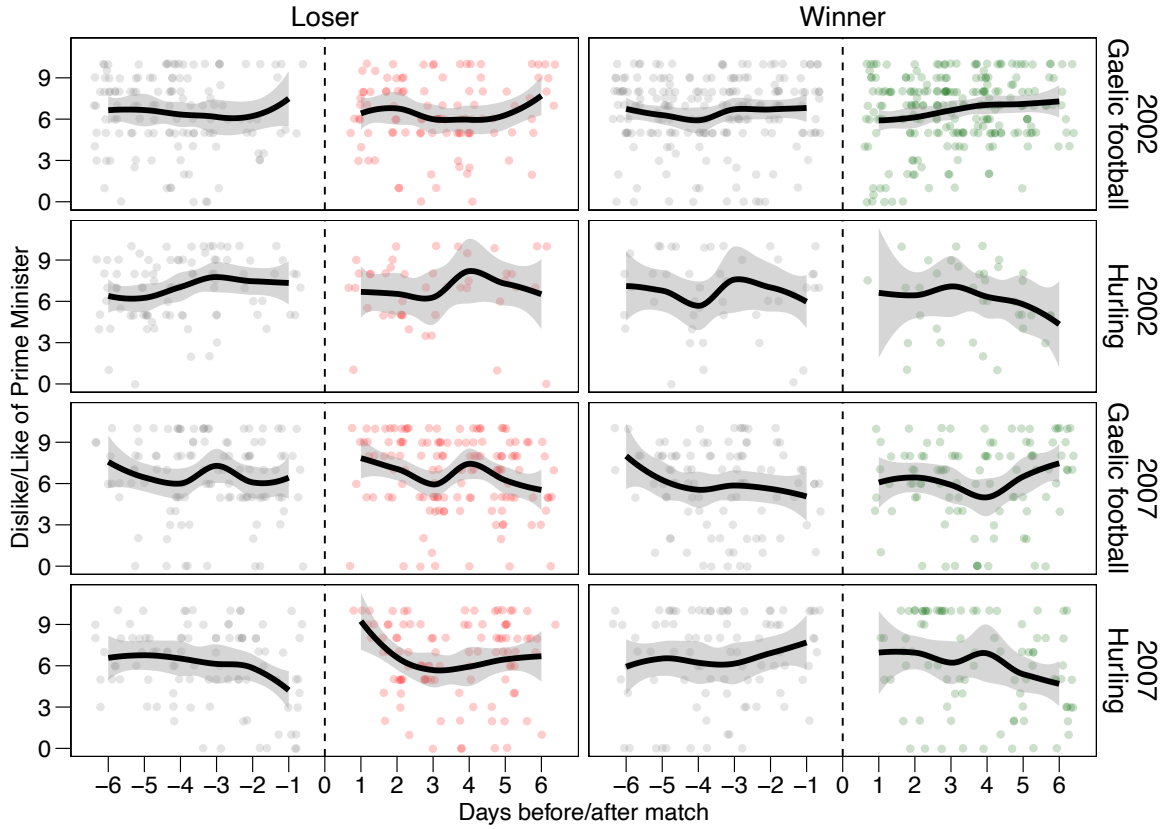


Figure A 29: Comparing rating of Irish Prime Minister before and after wins/defeats, only matches in July and August (later stages of the season)



I Coding of Gaelic Football or Hurling Strongholds

The following list defines our coding of "strongholds" (or "powerhouses") for hurling and Gaelic football teams in a given season.

1. 2002 and 2007 All-Ireland Championships General Elections and Survey Data
    a. First Criteria: Proximate Competitiveness
        i. Stronghold equals 'Yes' if the County Team contested a provincial final in the given code in the previous or subsequent 10 years
        ii. Stronghold equals 'Yes' if the County Team contested the All-Ireland series in the previous or subsequent 10 years
    b. Second Criteria: Evidence of Strong Tradition in the Sporting Code
        i. Stronghold equals 'Yes' if the County Team has a tradition of strong support and/or competitive success at provincial or national level in the specific code (hurling or football)
        ii. This is coded based on attendance data (if available), media reports, and historical records.
2. Historical Championship Results
    a. Criteria: Proximate Competitiveness
        i. Stronghold equals 'Yes' if the County Team contested a provincial final in the given code in the previous or subsequent 10 years

J Political Knowledge in Comparative Perspective

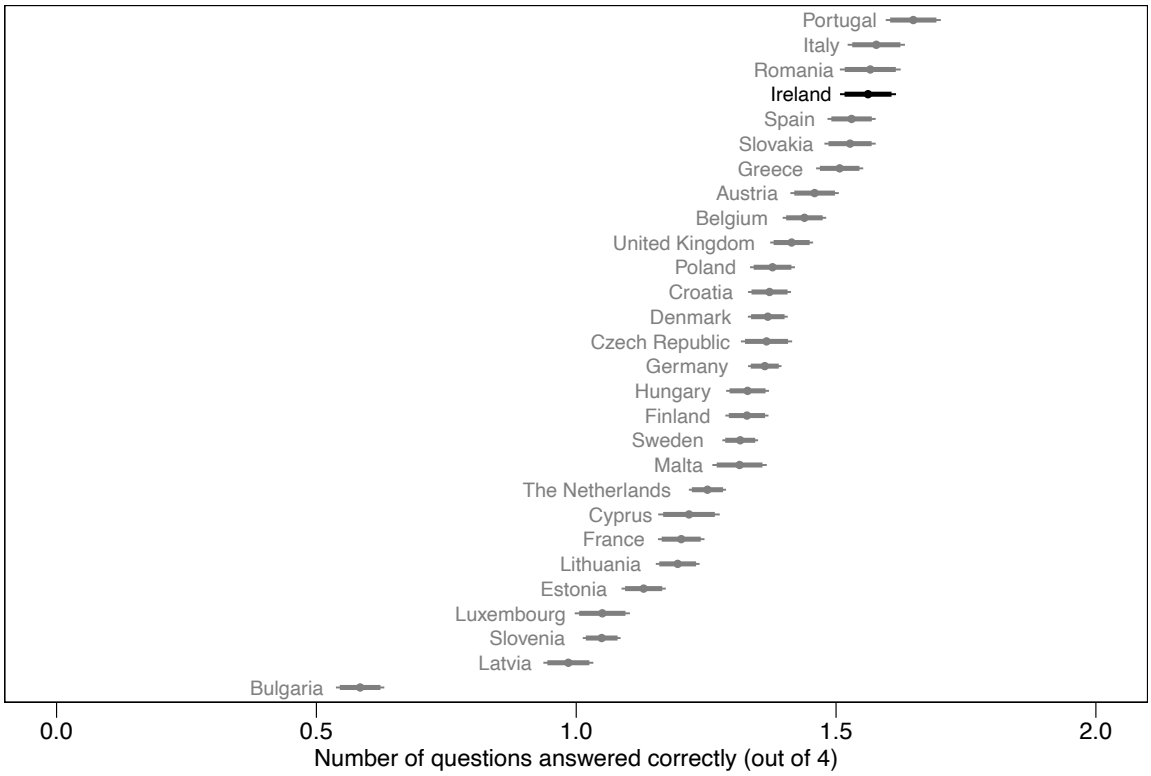
We argue that political knowledge may be a factor that could contribute to our statistically nonsignificant result. Prior work suggests that irrelevant events affect a person's mood, which – in turn – affects political opinions. Yet, if voters are more interested and knowledgeable about politics, they may seek out information beyond mood. Even though the Irish are very enthusiastic about sports in general and hurling and Gaelic football in particular, their voting decision or evaluation of political leaders may not be driven by the emotions triggered through events not related to politics. This, in turn, could help explain why findings differ from previous studies.

Harmonized and comparable cross-national survey data on political knowledge are rare. However, the 2014 European Election Study contains a battery of four questions on political knowledge (Schmitt *et al*., 2016). Over 30,000 voters living in 28 European member states were asked the same four questions that assess knowledge about politics. Two questions relate to European politics (Is Switzerland a member of the EU? Does each member state elect the same number of representatives to the European Parliament?); the remaining two questions consider domestic politics (How many members are in the lower house of the national parliament? What party does the head of the national government belong to?). Based on these data, we can compare political knowledge across European democracies.

Figure A30 compares the average number of correct answers by respondents in each of the 28 countries. The graph underlines that Irish respondents are among the most knowledgeable voters in Europe. Irish respondents, on average, answered 1.56 of the questions correctly, while the average across all other countries amounts to 1.32. 43 percent of Irish respondents answered at least two of the four questions correctly. Across the

remaining 27 countries, this number is 10 percentage points lower (31 percent of respondents answered two or more questions correctly).

Figure A 30: Comparing correct answers to four questions on political knowledge across respondents from 28 EU member states

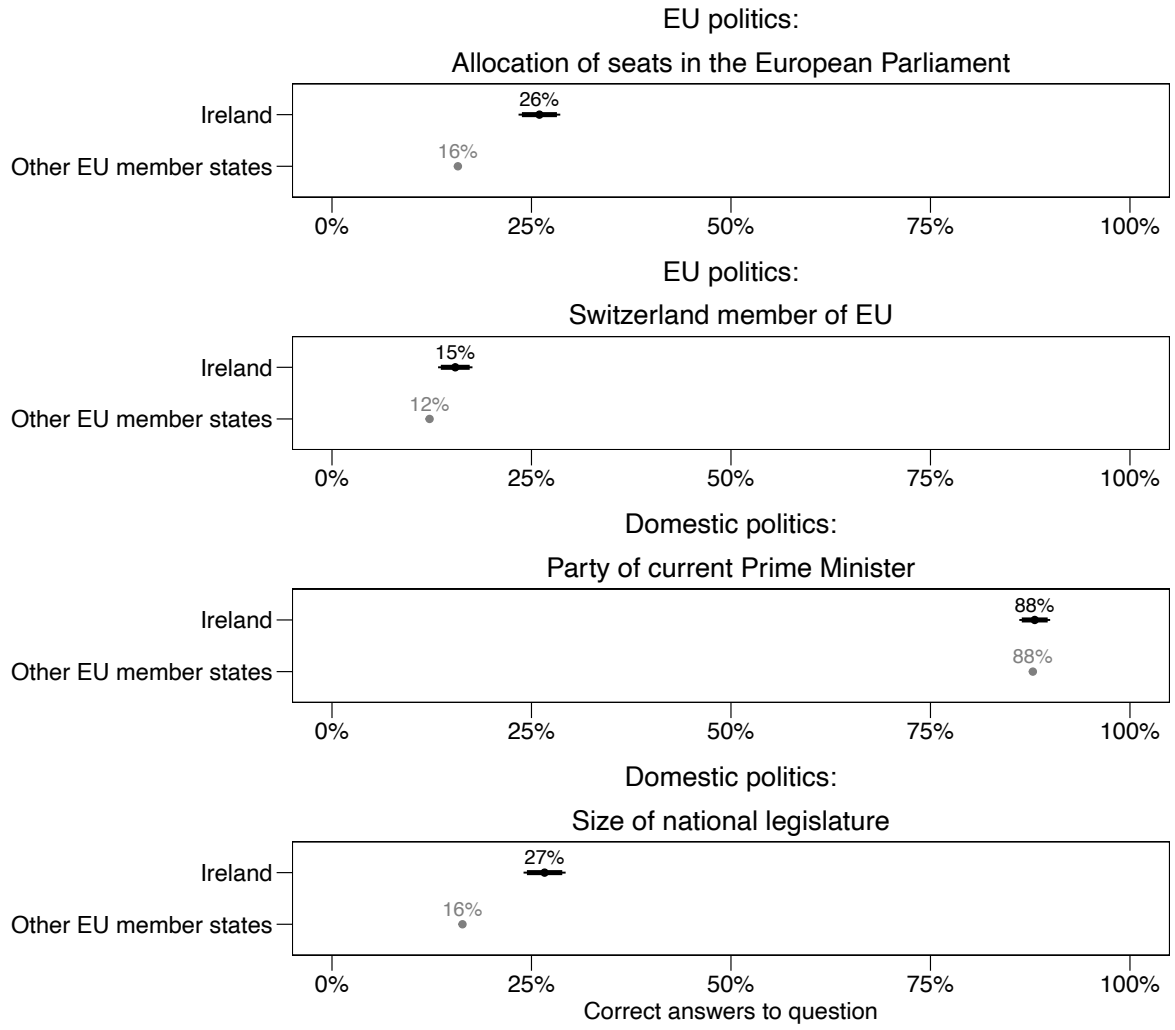


Note: Own visualization based on 2014 European Election Study (Schmitt et al., 2016). Horizontal bars display 90% and 95% confidence intervals.

Figure A31 shows the proportions of correct answers to the four questions, separately for respondents from Ireland and respondents from all other countries. 26 percent of Irish survey participants knew that the number of seats in the European Parliament is not identical for all member states. In comparison, only 16 percent of respondents from remaining EU countries answered this question correctly. Irish respondents were slightly more accurate in answering the question regarding Switzerland's EU membership (15 percent vs 12 percent). The levels of knowledge of the Prime Minister's party in the respondent's country are identical across Irish respondents and survey participants in the remaining countries (88

percent each). Finally, Irish respondents are much more accurate in determining the size of the national legislature than citizens from other EU member states (27 percent vs 16 percent).

Figure A 31: Proportion of correct answers to questions for Irish respondents and respondents from the remaining EU member states



Note: own visualization based on 2014 European Election Study (Schmitt et al., 2016). Horizontal bars display 90% and 95% confidence intervals.

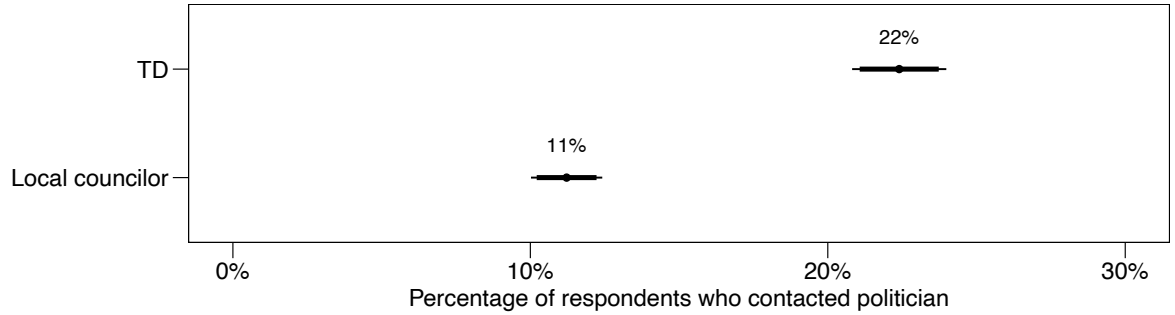
Overall, the survey evidence offers at least anecdotal evidence that Irish voters have reasonably high levels of political knowledge, outperforming voters from most EU member states. However, it is essential to note that our knowledge-based explanation of the nonsignificant results is only tentative. The research design of our study does not allow us to

test this potential mechanism. We hope that our findings and assumptions will be tested using a comparative approach and similar methods.

K The Close Connection Between Irish Politicians and Voters

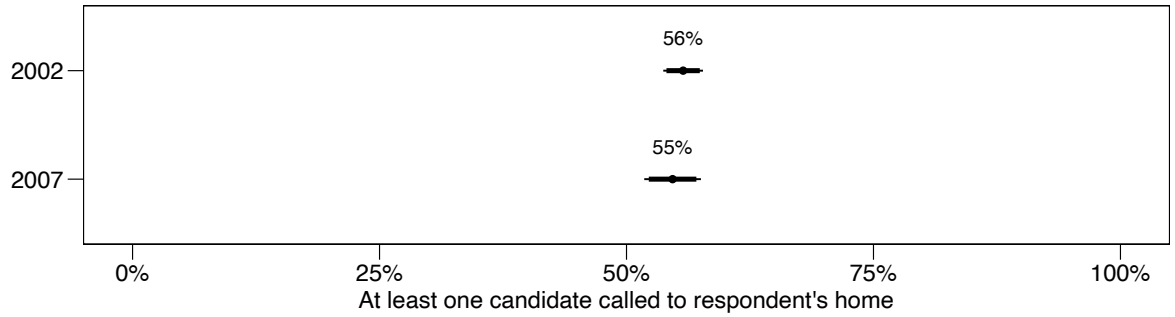
In the conclusion, we mention the connection between Irish voters and candidates. The descriptive graphs below (Figures A32–A33) are based on the 2002 and 2007 Irish National Election Studies and provide anecdotal evidence of the close links between voters and candidates (see also Marsh, 2004).

Figure A 32: The percentage of survey respondents who contacted a TD (politician in the national parliament) or local councillor in the last five years (2002 Irish National Election Study)



Note: Own visualization based on 2002 Irish National Election Study (Marsh and Sinnott, 2008). Horizontal bars display 90% and 95% confidence intervals.

Figure A 33: Percentage of respondents who reported that at least one candidate called to the respondent's home



Note: Own visualization based on 2002 and 2007 Irish National Election Study (Marsh and Sinnott, 2008). Horizontal bars display 90% and 95% confidence intervals.