

# Political Cleavages and Inequality

Evidence from Electoral Democracies, 1950-2018

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Inequalities and Preference for Redistribution Seminar  
École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales  
March 19<sup>th</sup> 2019

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The logo for the World Inequality Lab is positioned in the bottom right corner. It features two overlapping teal circles. The text 'WORLD INEQUALITY LAB' is displayed in white, with 'WORLD' on the top line, 'INEQUALITY' in a larger font in the middle, and 'LAB' on the bottom line. To the right of the text is a vertical column of white dots of varying sizes, arranged in a pattern that suggests a staircase or a data visualization.

WORLD INEQUALITY LAB

# Introduction

- Income and wealth inequalities have been rising in most developed economies since the 1980s (Alvaredo et al. 2018).
- Yet, the political responses to these evolutions have been very diverse. European countries have been much more successful at containing inequality than the US (Piketty, Saez & Zucman 2018; Blanchet, Chancel & Gethin 2019).
- More recently, democratic countries seem to be moving away from distributive conflicts and turning towards identity-based politics (Le Pen, Trump, Bolsonaro, Modi...).
- ‘Why do the poor not expropriate the rich in democracies?’ (Roemer 1998)

- **Historical evolution of electoral behaviours in old democracies** (Lipset & Rokkan 1967; Evans et al. 2012, Evans & Rennwald 2014...)
- **Rise of 'populism' in Western democracies** (Moriconi et al. 2018, Becker & Fetzer 2017, Autor et al. 2017, Colantone & Stanig 2018, Rodrik 2018, Algan et al., 2018, Becker et al. 2017...)
- **Demand and supply for redistribution** (Pontusson & Rueda 2010, Iversen & Soskize 2015, Bonica et al. 2013, Tavits & Potter 2015, Roemer 1998, Roemer et al. 2007...)
- **Connecting cleavage structures to distributive politics** (Piketty 2018, Banerjee et al. 2019, Jenmana & Gethin 2019)

# This presentation

- A new database on the long-run evolution of electoral behaviours in advanced economies.
- Focus on the division between 'left-wing' and 'right-wing' parties which has historically structured party politics in a majority of old democracies → follow-up of Piketty's (2018) study on the emergence of multiple elites party systems in France, the UK and the US.
- Do top income earners still support 'right-wing' parties, and how has this changed over time? Do we observe a reversal of education-based voting patterns in all Western democracies?
- Disclaimer: very preliminary results. Suggestions welcome!
- Future work:
  - Political participation
  - Extreme voting
  - Links between supply and demand (party-level data)

# A new database on political cleavages in old democracies

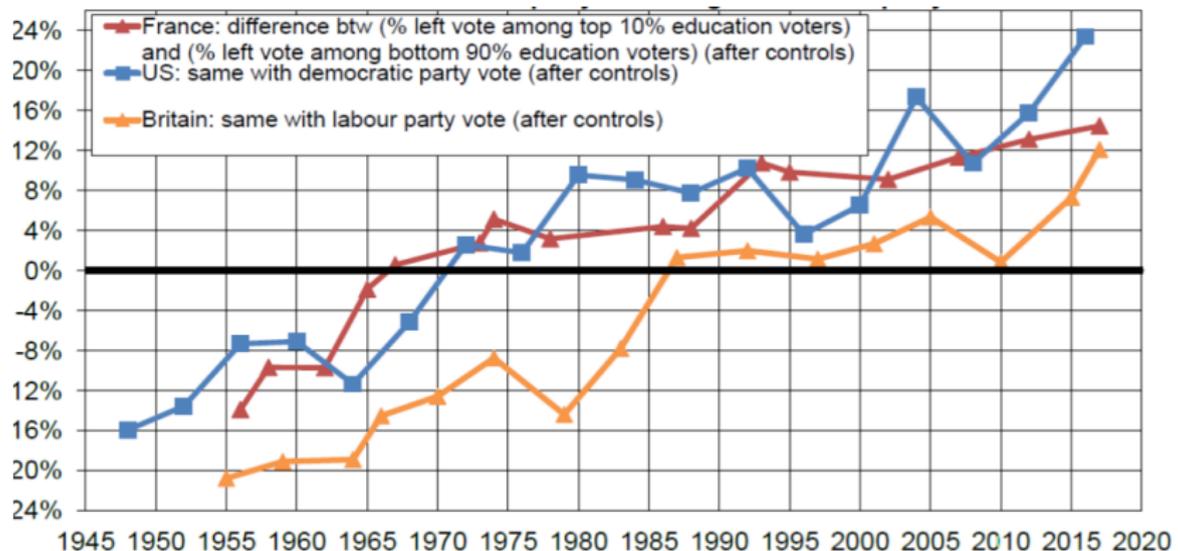
- Our objective is to harmonise pre- and post-electoral surveys for as many countries as possible, spanning from the 1950s until today.
- Surveys generally ask respondents about the party they supported in the last general election, and provide information on standard socio-demographic characteristics.
- Work in progress:
  - Fifteen countries harmonised: Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States.
  - About 150 surveys.
  - About half a million respondents.
  - Countries in the process of being harmonised: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, South Africa, Sweden.
- All results will be publicly available for further research.

**Table 1:** Coverage of data sources

Country	Coverage	Source	No.	Avg. sample
Australia	1963-2016	Australian Election Studies and others	17	2390
Brazil	1989-2018	Datafolha Institute	8	10220
Canada	1965-2015	Canadian Election Studies	15	3370
Iceland	1983-2013	Icelandic National Election Studies	9	1500
Italy	1968-2013	Italian National Election Studies	11	2120
Japan	1963-2014	Japan Election Studies and others	12	1990
Netherlands	1967-2012	Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies	15	1940
New Zealand	1990-2014	New Zealand Election Studies	9	3400
Norway	1957-2013	Norwegian Election Studies	12	1930
Portugal	1983-2015	Portuguese Election Studies and others	8	2030
Spain	1979-2016	Encuestas electorales	11	5170
Switzerland	1971-2015	Swiss Electoral Studies	11	3360

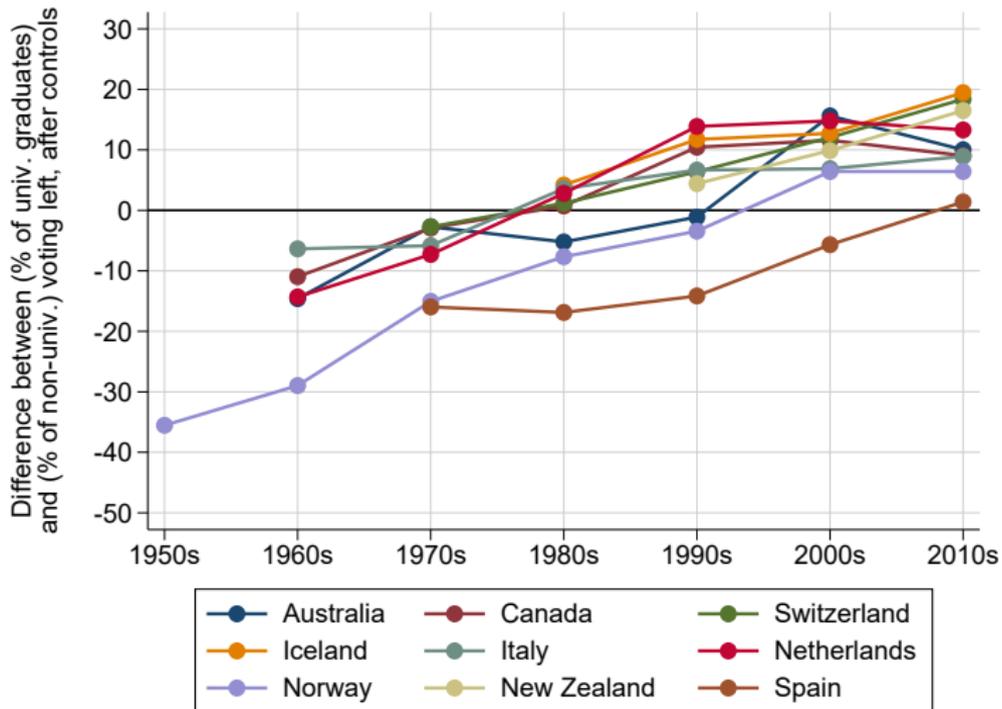
# Economic and value cleavages in Western democracies

- Piketty (2018) finding: reversal of support for left parties by education in France, UK and US. Does this hold for other Western countries?



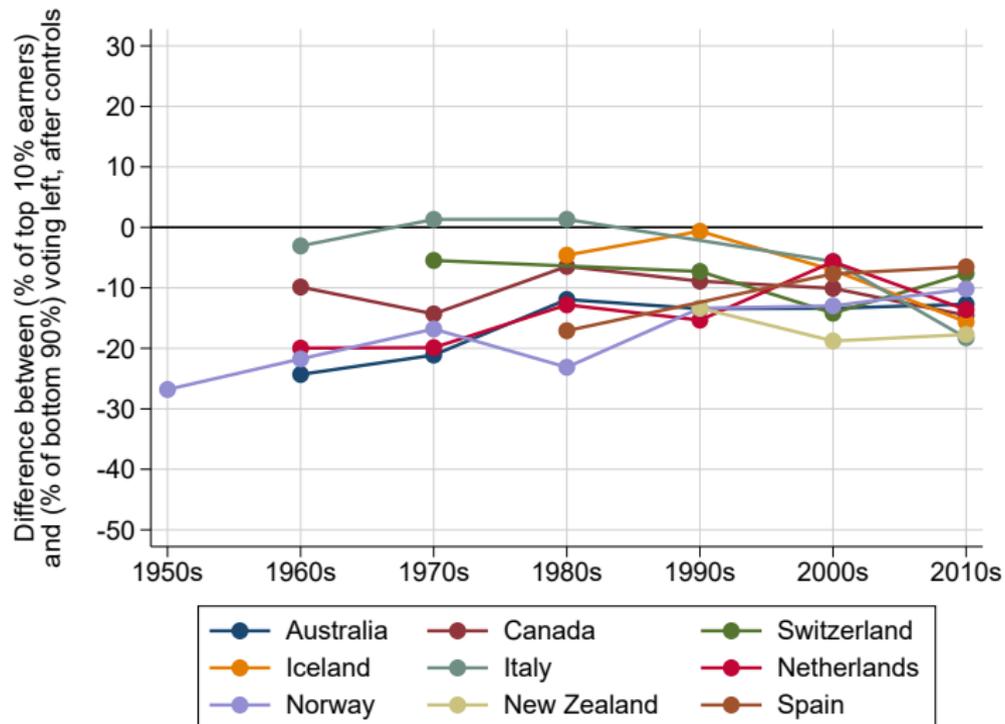
# Economic and value cleavages in Western democracies

Support for left-wing parties (socialist, social-democratic, communist, green) among university graduates, 1950s-2010s: after controls



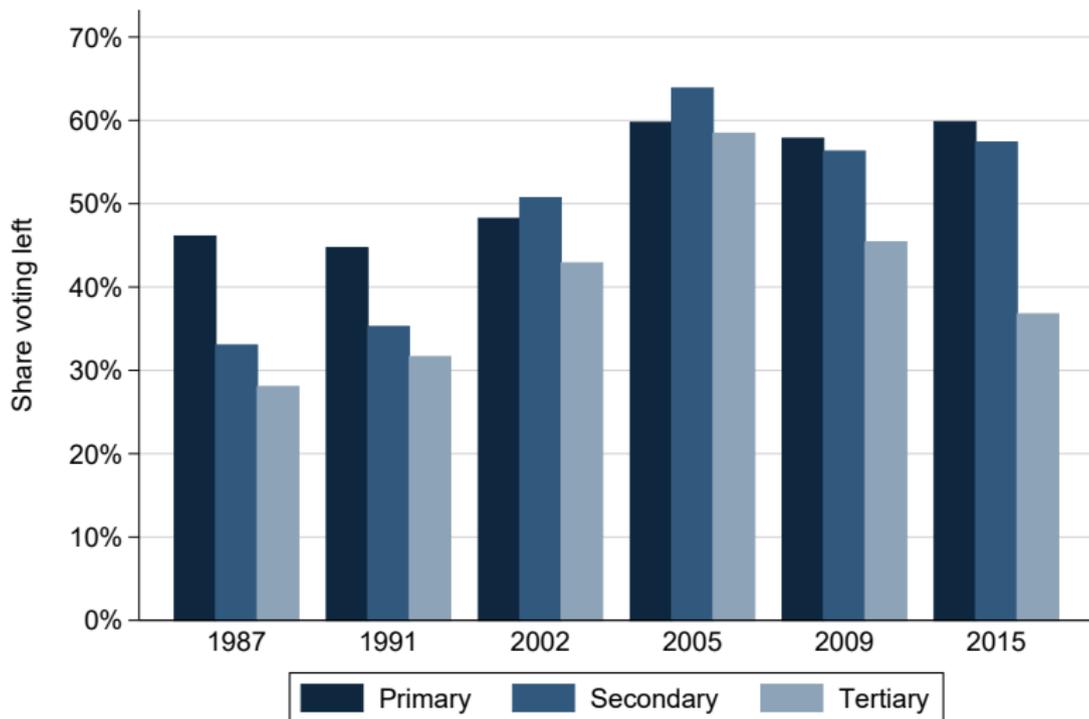
# Economic and value cleavages in Western democracies

Support for left-wing parties (socialist, social-democratic, communist, green) among top earners in 9 countries, 1950s-2010s: after controls

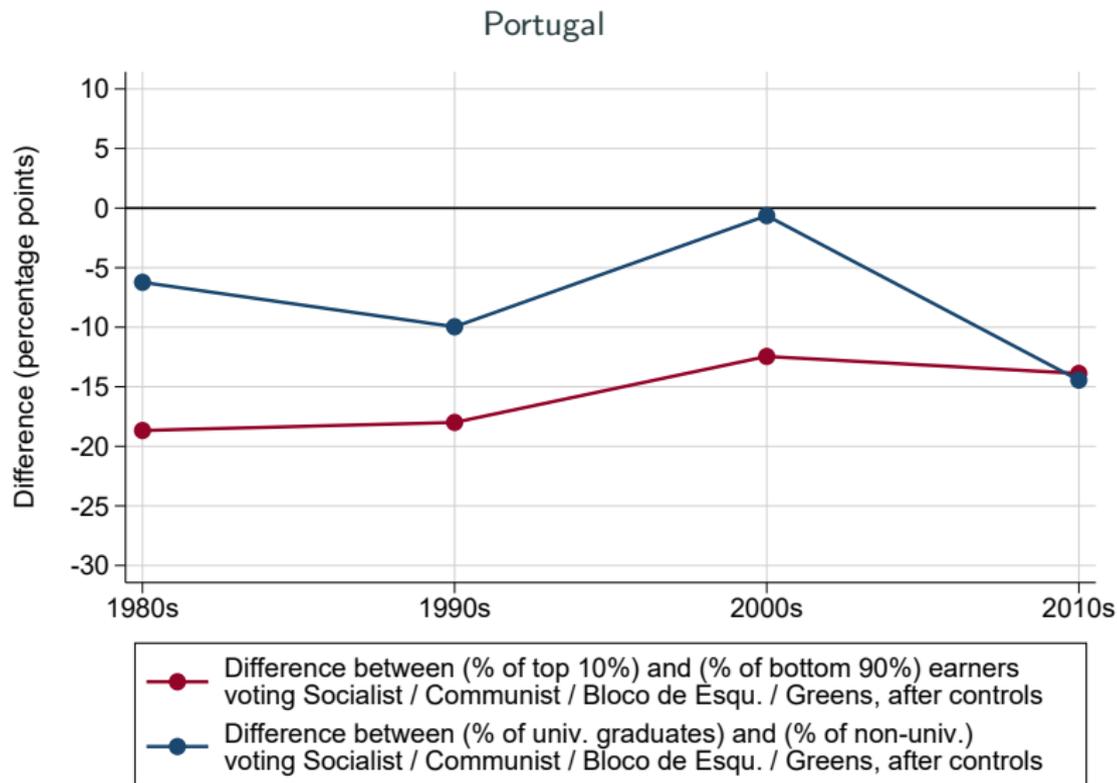


# A Portuguese exception?

Vote for CDU / PCTP / PS / Bloco de Esquerda by education, 1987-2015



# A Portuguese exception?

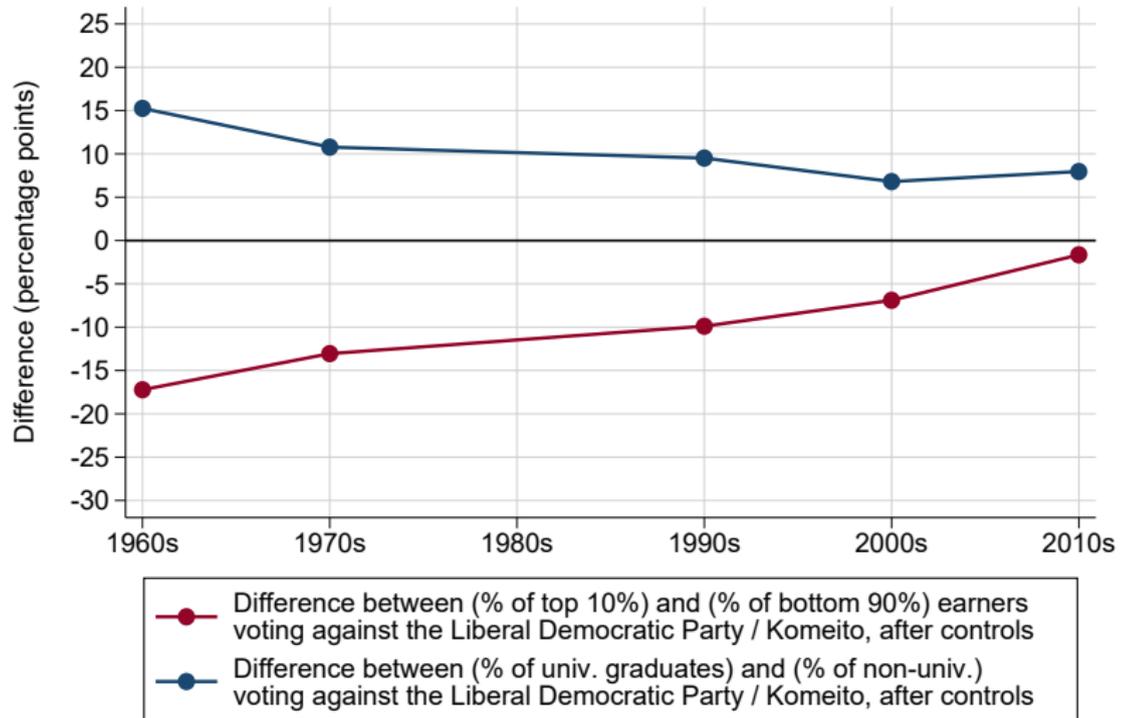


## Early value cleavages in an old democracy: the case of Japan

- Regular democratic elections have been held in Japan since the end of World War II. However, the divides which have structured party politics in Japan are dramatically different from those observed in the Western world.
- The Liberal Democratic Party has remained in power for most of Japan's post-war history thanks to support from voters living in poor rural areas, business elites and less educated citizens.
- These specificities led to an early, stable 'multiple elites party system'. Recent developments (rise of the Democratic Party of Japan, new right-wing parties) seem to have initiated the breakdown of these historical affiliations.

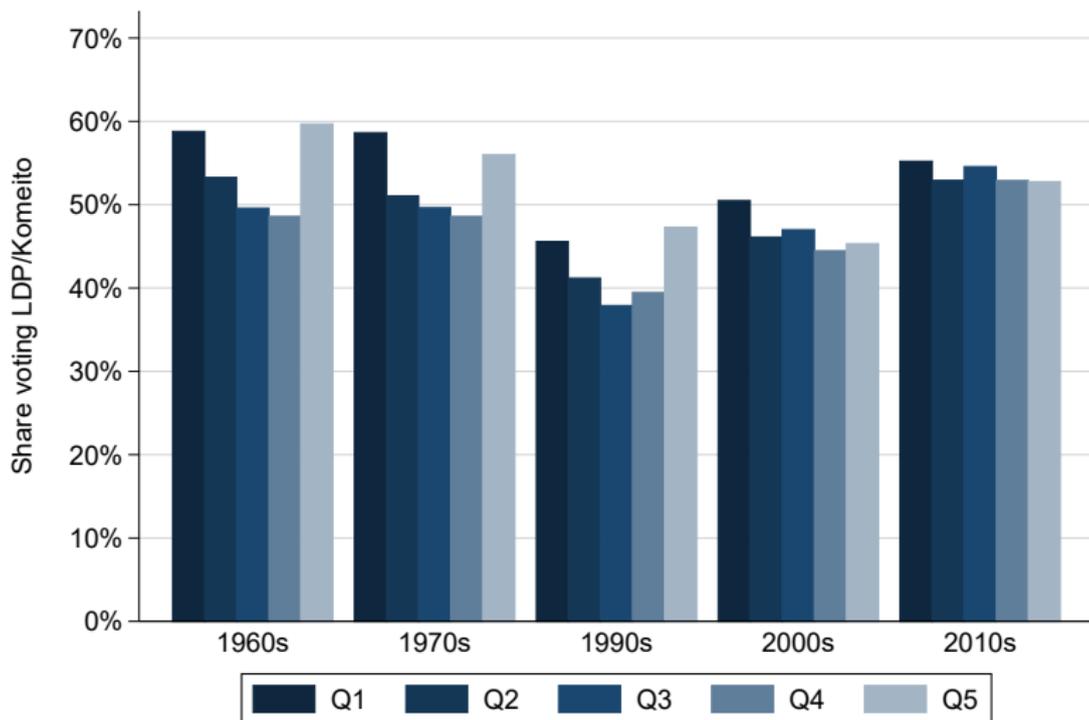
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Japan's early 'multiple elites party system', 1963-2014



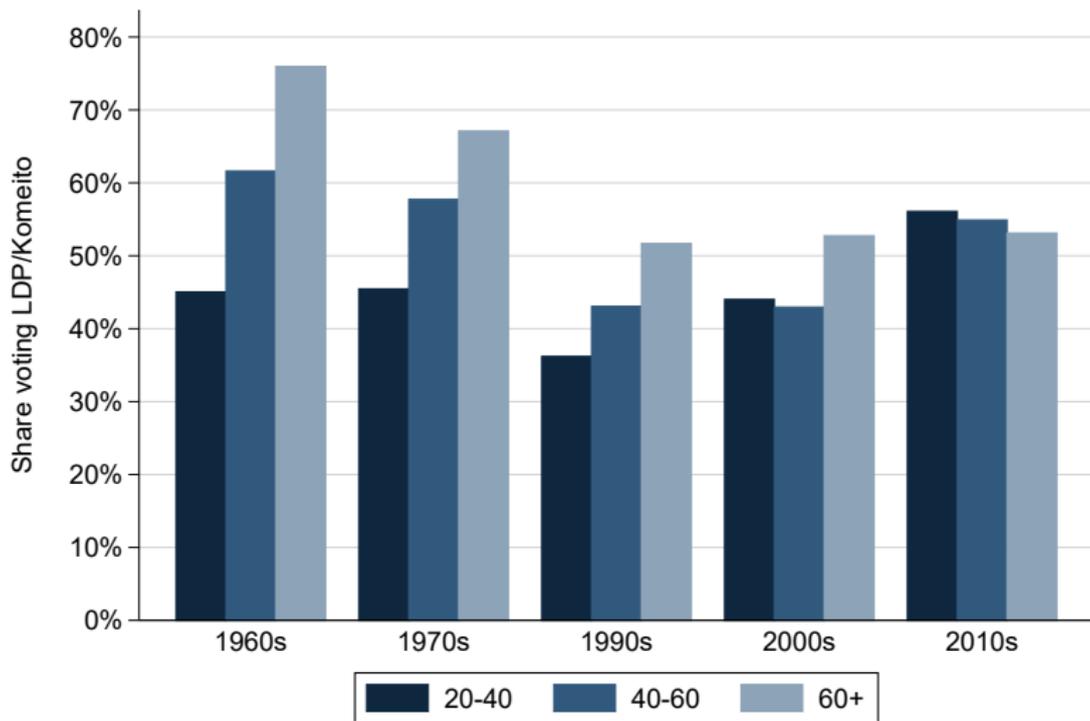
# Early value cleavages in an old democracy: the case of Japan

Vote for the Liberal Democratic Party / Komeito by income group, 1960s-2010s



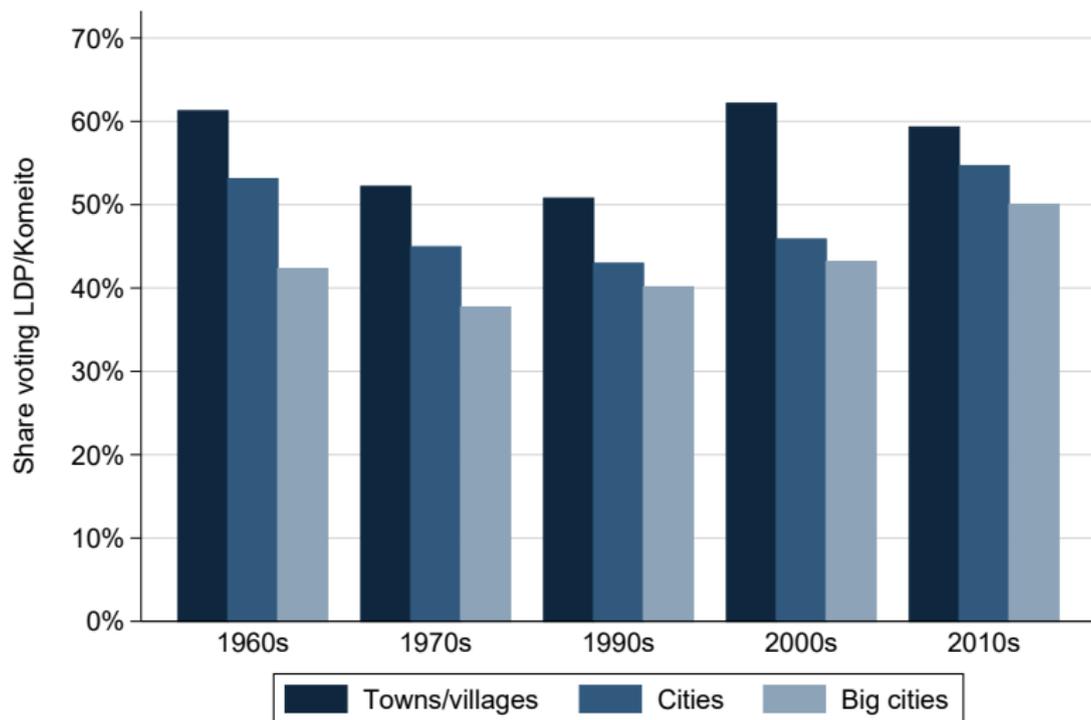
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Vote for the Liberal Democratic Party / Komeito by age group, 1960s-2010s



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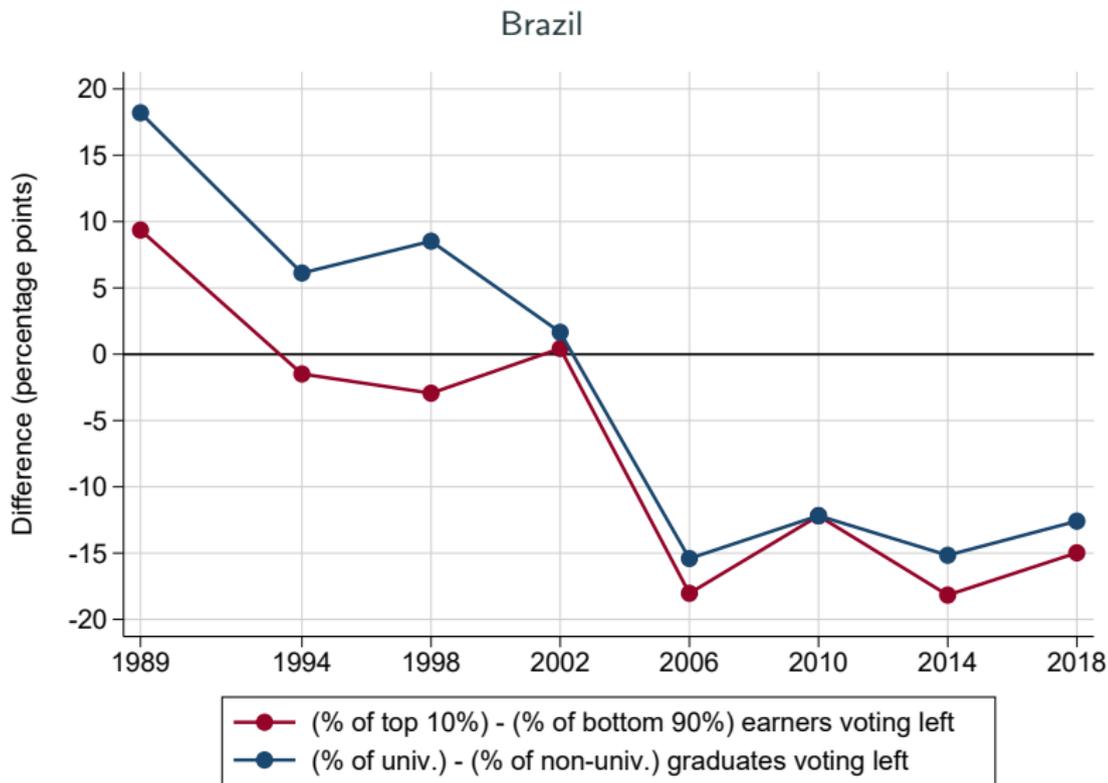
Vote for the Liberal Democratic Party / Komeito in rural areas, 1960s-2010s



## Politicizing inequality in a new democracy: the case of Brazil

- In the 1990s, Lula da Silva's Workers' Party (PT) was supported by a young, urban intellectual elite. The PT's success in fighting absolute poverty since 2002 went hand in hand with rising support among poorer and lower educated Brazilians.
- The 2018 Bolsonaro vote gathered those who were disappointed with the political system's corruption, as well as those who were appeased by his liberal economic program.
- These are essentially top income earners and *higher* educated voters. Contrary to what we observe in Europe or the US, right-wing populism in Brazil has grown from elite dissatisfaction, not from the lower educated or from the victims of globalisation.
- More in Gethin, A. and Morgan, M. (2018), 'Brazil Divided: Hintsights on the Growing Politicisation of Inequality', WID.world Issue Brief 2018/3.

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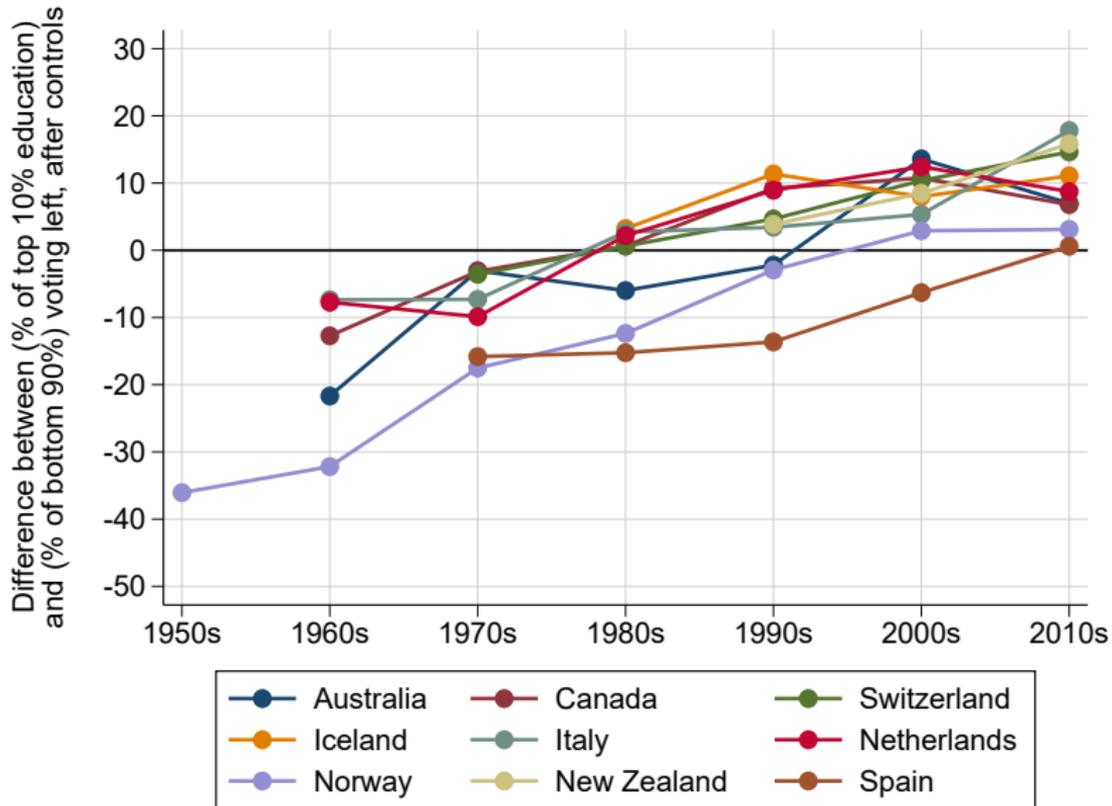


- In most Western democracies (except Portugal), higher educated voters have become increasingly likely to support socialist and social-democratic parties.
- This has given rise to 'multiple elites party systems', where economic redistribution and new social issues are progressively becoming cross-cutting dimensions of political conflict.
- Possible explanations
  - Globalisation and historical changes have played a role in shaping the preferences of the higher educated towards new social issues (gender equality, LGBT rights, environmental concerns, immigration...).
  - Left-wing parties have shifted their programmatic emphases towards new policies supported by the higher educated.

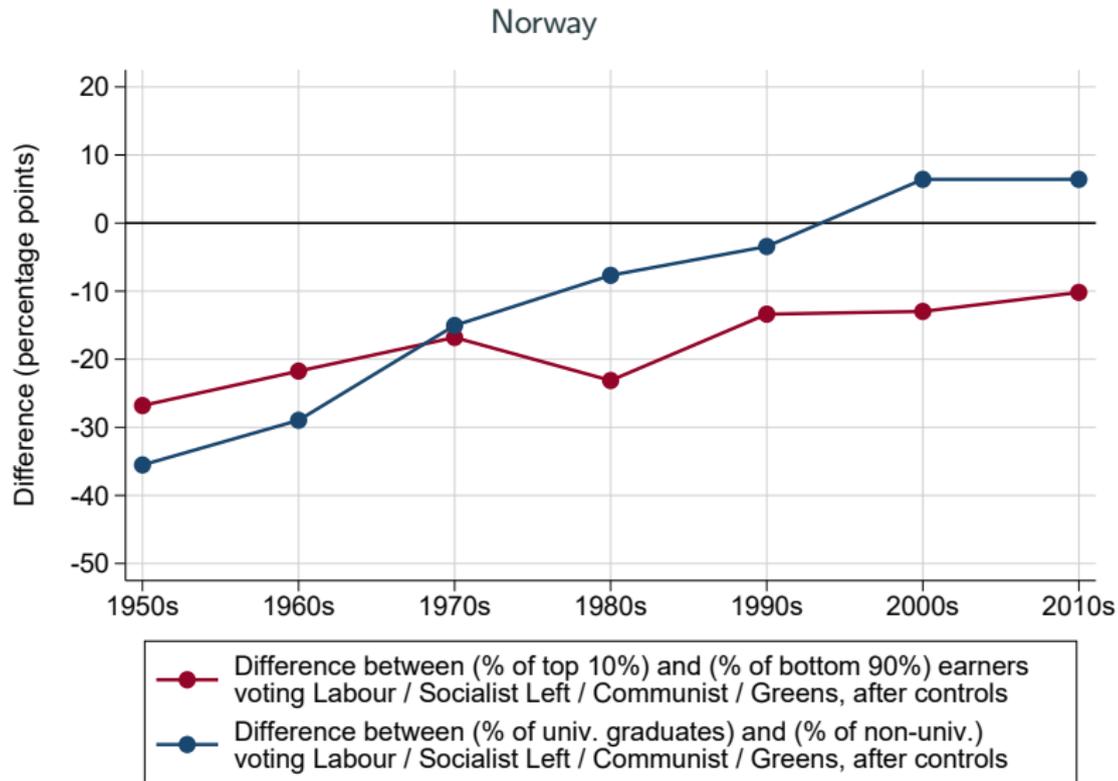
- Evidence from other old and new democracies (Portugal, Japan, Brazil) does suggest that these transitions are primarily linked to the way political parties *emphasise* these issues and are opposed on these different dimensions.
- Cleavage structures can have direct consequences on governments' responsiveness to rising inequalities.
- The mechanisms through which preferences for redistribution are *mediated* by party systems need to be further studied.

# Economic and value cleavages in Western democracies

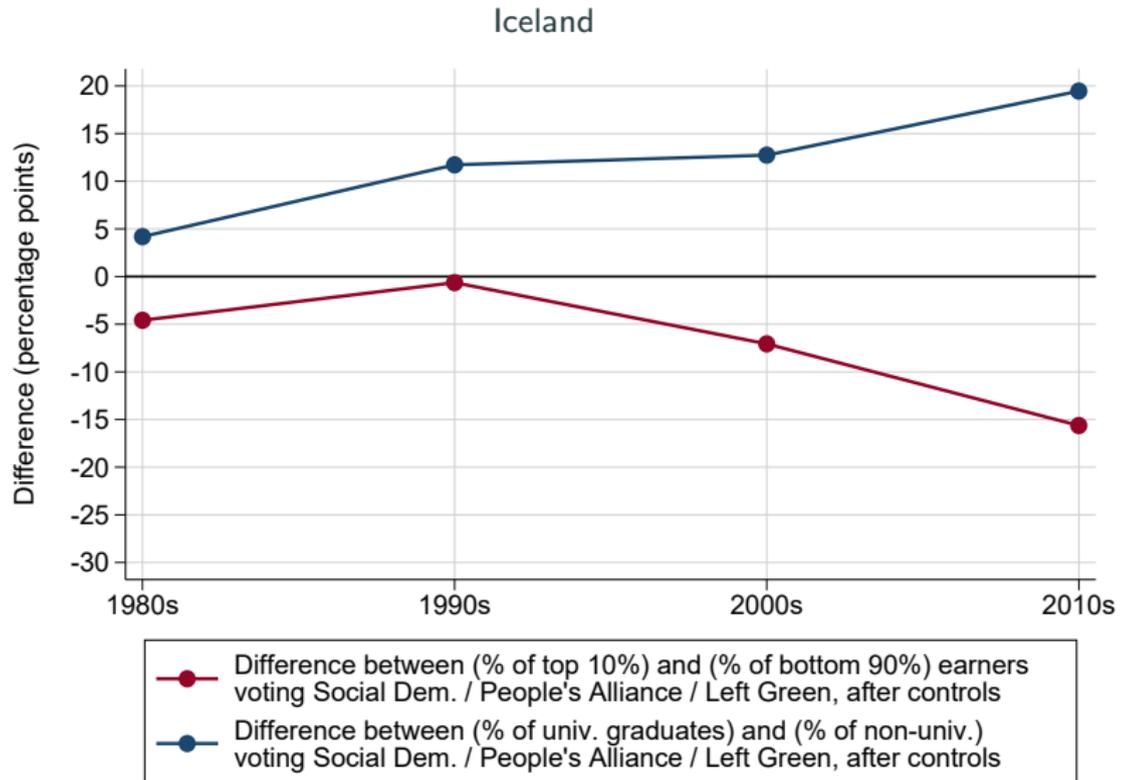
Support for left-wing parties among top 10% education voters, after controls



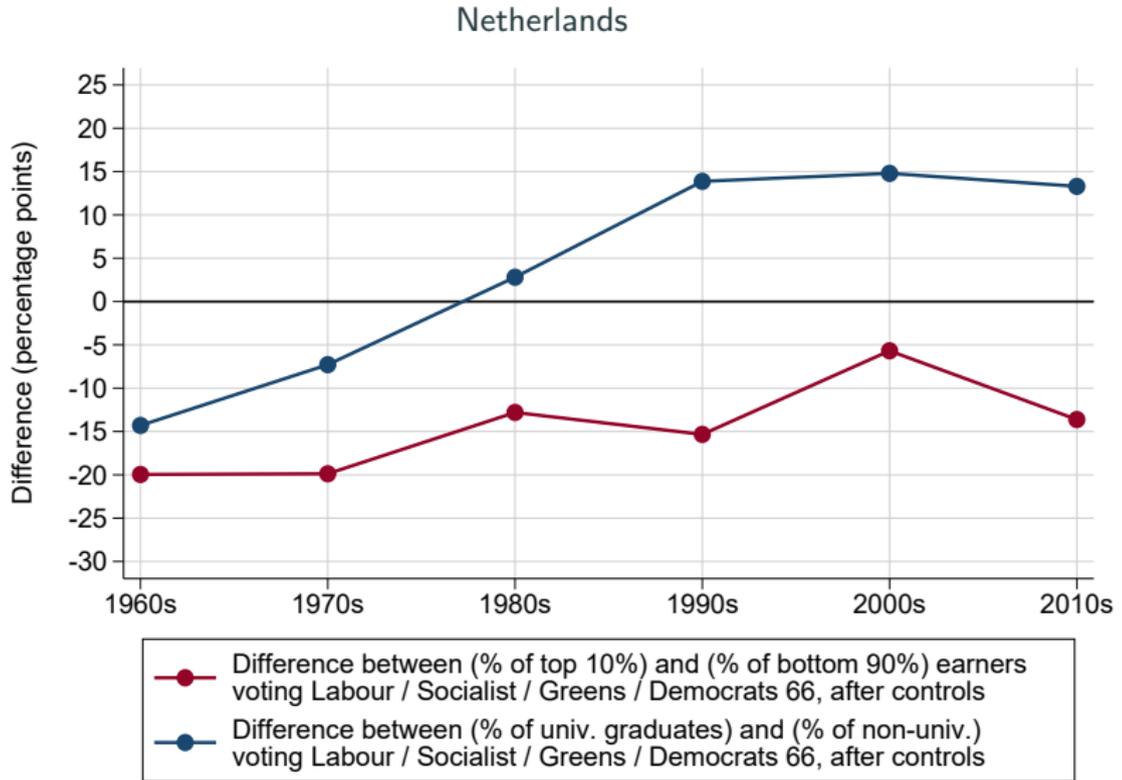
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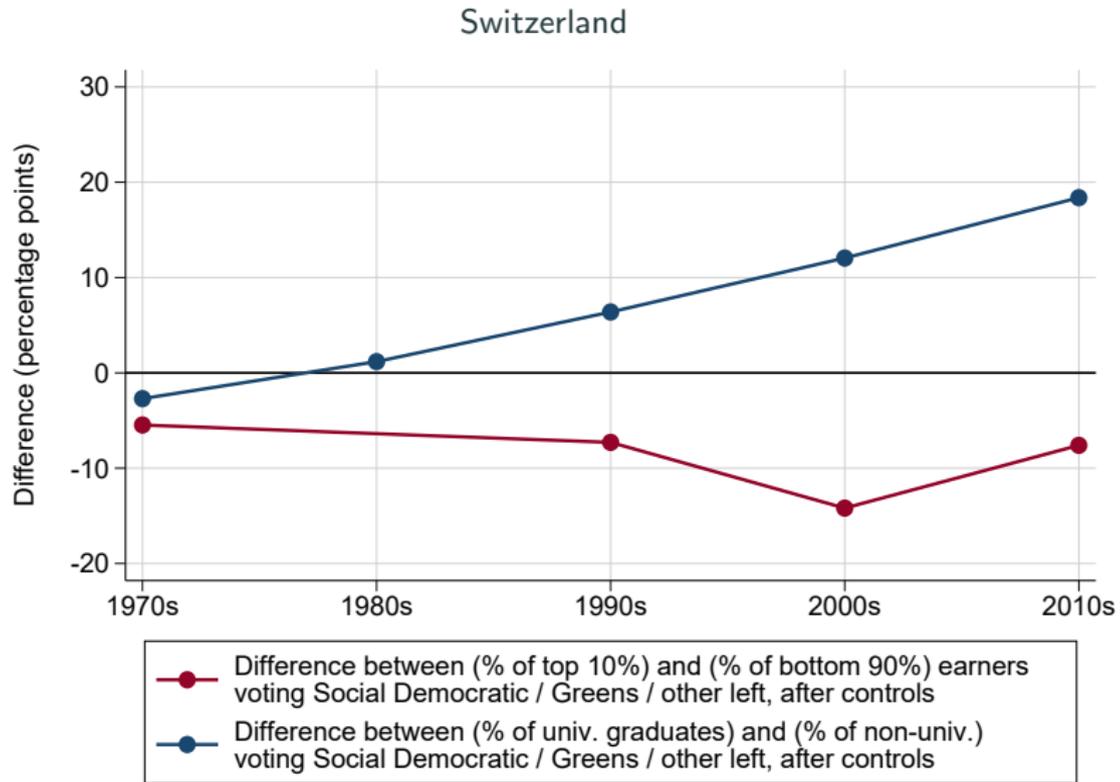
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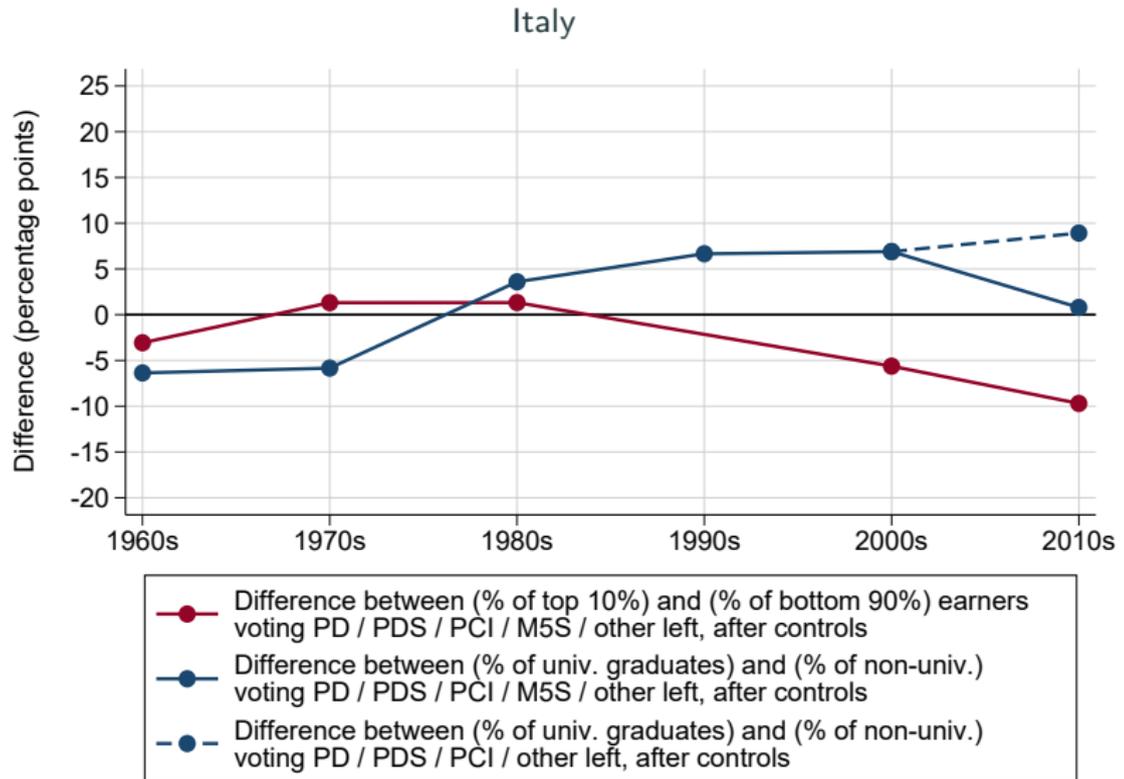
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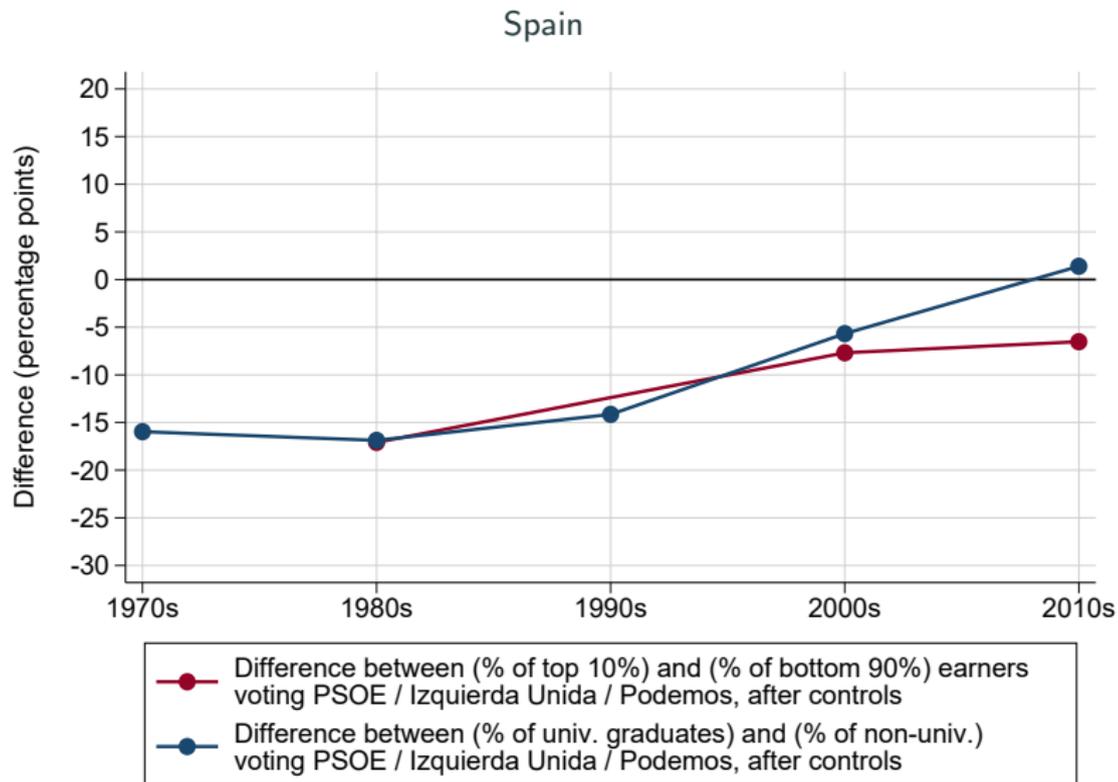
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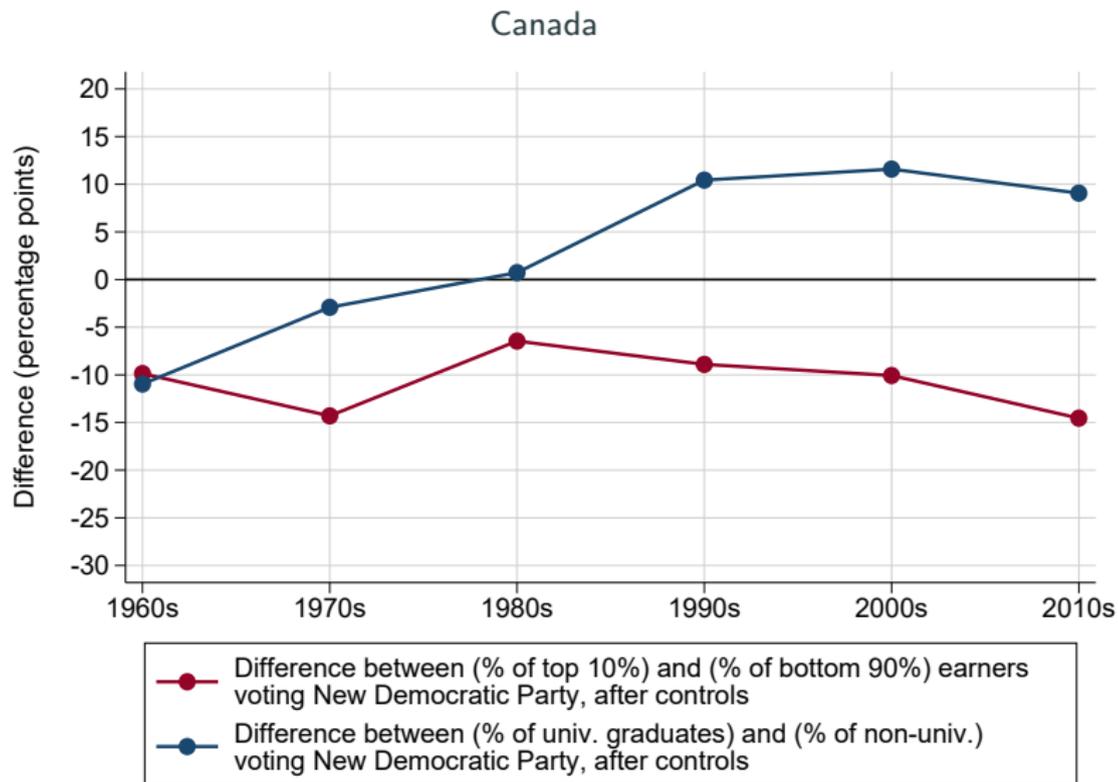
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