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When Do Partisans Agree with Each Other?

The Influence of Individual Salience on Party-Ideological Sorting

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When Do Partisans Agree with Each Other?

The Influence of Individual Salience on Party-Ideological Sorting

Abstract

Existing studies of party-ideological sorting conceptualise the phenomenon as the extent to which partisans' attitudes align with their party's position. However, for tactical reasons, parties sometimes also blur their position or advocate positions that do not match their supporters' dominant opinions. Therefore, I reconceptualise party-ideological sorting to analyse how partisans align with each other rather than with their party. Based on previous findings and salience theories, I argue that salience should also be connected to sorting using this new definition. Drawing on AUTNES and GLES panel data, I test whether rising salience within individuals is connected to them contributing to higher levels of sorting. The hypothesis is supported in cases where there is a more extreme dominant position among partisans. By contrast, when the dominant position is centrist, increasing salience is associated with greater distance from this position. The results contribute to research on sorting and salience by showing that the relationship between the two variables depends on the location of the dominant partisan position.

*Studien zu party-ideological sorting definieren das Phänomen als das Ausmaß, zu dem Wähler*innenmeinungen mit der Position ihrer Partei übereinstimmen. Aus taktischen Gründen nehmen Parteien jedoch auch Positionen ein, die nicht mit jenen ihrer Unterstützer*innen übereinstimmen, oder versuchen ihre Position generell zu verwischen. Daher rekonzeptualisiere ich party-ideological sorting als die Übereinstimmung zwischen Wähler*innen derselben Partei anstelle der Übereinstimmung mit der Parteiposition. Basierend auf bisherigen Ergebnissen zu Sorting sowie auf Salienztheorien argumentiere ich, dass Salienz auch unter der Verwendung der neuen Definition mit Sorting zusammenhängt. Mithilfe von AUTNES- und GLES-Paneldaten teste ich, ob steigende Salienz innerhalb von Individuen damit einhergeht, dass diese das Ausmaß von party-ideological sorting erhöhen. Diese Hypothese wird unterstützt, wenn es eine von der Mitte abweichende dominante Wähler*innenposition gibt. Wenn die dominante Position unter Wähler*innen jedoch nahe der Mitte liegt, dann entfernen sich Wähler*innen bei steigender Salienz eher davon. Die Ergebnisse tragen zur Sorting- und Salienzliteratur bei, indem sie zeigen, dass die Beziehung zwischen den beiden Variablen davon abhängt, wo die dominante Wähler*innenposition liegt.*

In the US, the correlation between party identification and issue positions is highest with economic issues like health insurance or federal spending on government services. In contrast, positions on issues like federal spending on space are not at all aligned with partisanship (Baldassarri & Gelman, 2008, p. 424). Similarly, in multiparty systems, voters of the green party are generally expected to have similar opinions regarding the climate, yet people usually do not expect that they have similar opinions on issues such as the necessity of public service broadcasters. But why is this the case?

In an ideal world, a party would occupy the same position on *all* political issues as *all* of its voters. If this were true, the result would be perfect party-ideological sorting – the extent to which a party’s voters’ positions on a certain issue are aligned with each other – on all issues. So, no matter what political issue is considered, a party’s voters – hereafter referred to as partisans – would agree with each other all the time. In reality, though, scholars find that voters’ positions on issues are only loosely connected with each other (see for example Baldassarri & Gelman, 2008; Merkley, 2022). This means that voters who share an opinion on one issue do not necessarily agree on other issues as well. Although opinions are more correlated with each other among partisans (Merkley, 2022), there is still disagreement on issues in this narrower group. In the end, whether partisans agree with each other or not depends on the issue. Scholars have, for example, found high levels of party-ideological sorting for abortion (Robison, 2023), various economic issues (Baldassarri & Gelman, 2008) as well as the left-right dimension and, more recently, the issue of immigration (Jocker et al., 2025).

While some studies offer party-level explanations for why certain issues are more strongly sorted than others (for example Costello et al., 2021, using party emphases; Robison, 2023, using party disunity), research regarding individual-level explanations remains scarce. However, when it comes to salience, individual-level explanations are necessary to determine whether the relationship between salience and party-ideological sorting is driven by the

personal importance voters attribute to issues or by broader public salience surrounding these issues. Additionally, at the moment, the literature defines party-ideological sorting as the extent to which partisans' positions are close to their preferred party's position. What is still missing is an explanation for variation in party-ideological sorting that does not rely on proximity to party positions. Therefore, I adapt the current understanding of party-ideological sorting by conceptualising it as the extent to which partisans' positions align *with each other*, rather than with their party's position. Using this revised definition, I ask the following research question: How does individual salience explain variation in party-ideological sorting in Western European multiparty systems?

In this paper, I focus on individual salience – the importance that individual voters attribute to a specific political issue. Thus, drawing on relevant literature about vote-explaining theories, salience, party-ideological sorting and party-voter congruence, I argue that variation in individual salience is connected to variation in party-ideological sorting. In detail, I expect that the higher the salience that a voter attributes to an issue, the closer their opinion will be to the dominant (modal) position of their party's supporters, thereby contributing to higher levels of party-ideological sorting.

Giger and Lefkofridi (2014) raised a similar expectation, finding that “[o]n average, the distance between the preferred party and the individual voter is smaller [...] when the voter considers an issue important.” (p. 296). However, while Giger and Lefkofridi (2014) focus on the congruence between individual voters and their party, I focus on the congruence between partisans. Thus, my argument shifts the focus from party-voter congruence to congruence among partisans. Additionally, I will test the impact of within-individual changes in salience rather than between-individual variation. This reduces the risk that the relationship is merely driven by stable differences between individuals.

To test my argument, I use the Austrian National Election Study (AUTNES) and the German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES), which both offer panel data that include questions about individuals' party preference, their positions on various issues as well as questions about issue salience. These data allow me to test my argument, including the within-person effect, in the context of two Western European multiparty systems.

The findings suggest that my hypothesis only holds when there is a more extreme dominant position among partisans. In detail, rising salience within individuals is connected to greater proximity to the dominant partisan position only if this position is clearly located on either side of the policy position scale. For more centrist dominant positions, the inverse relationship appears, as higher salience is then connected to greater distance from the dominant position. Thus, rising salience is generally associated with more extreme individual positions, while the modal partisan position often remains centrist. This contributes to the literature on partisan sorting, as it shows that higher salience within individuals is not always connected to them contributing to higher levels of party-ideological sorting among partisans. Additionally, I contribute to our understanding of political attitudes by showing that the most common partisan position is off-centre only for a few party-issue combinations.

Moreover, while voters do not always move closer to the dominant partisan position once issues become more important to them, this does not mean that these voters are ideologically inconsistent. The results rather imply that voters for whom an issue is unimportant seem to hold centrist positions to such an extent that they even become the most common position among all partisans. Thus, partisans may sometimes share the most common partisan opinion without sharing positions either commonly associated with their preferred party or with partisans who find the issue more important.

I will now continue by showing the state of the art in partisan sorting, vote-explaining theories, party-voter congruence and the concept of salience to develop my theoretical argument. Then, I will discuss the data and methods that I use before showing the descriptive and inferential results of my analysis. I conclude by discussing the results and their implications, as well as the limitations of the study.

Partisan Sorting and Party-Ideological Sorting

The concept of sorting has been defined and used in various ways in the literature. Most prominently, Abrams and Fiorina (2015) have employed the concept of partisan sorting to disprove the widely adopted narrative that the American public has become increasingly polarised. According to them, polarisation refers to voters shifting from more moderate toward more extreme positions. In reality, though, the authors find that many voters still hold moderate positions. What has instead happened is that voters with more progressive positions have moved to the Democratic Party while voters with more conservative positions have moved to the Republican Party. So, while the overall distribution of opinions has remained similar, partisans have sorted into the party that better represents their opinions. The result of such a process is that the average positions of the two groups move further apart (Hetherington, 2009). To measure partisan sorting in the US, scholars mostly use the correlation between party identification and general ideology (a scale ranging from liberal to conservative) (Abrams & Fiorina, 2015).

For multiparty systems, this concept of sorting is less useful. This is because it effectively captures whether voters choose the party that best reflects their ideological orientation. But while in the US, the “ideologically right” party for a liberal voter would be the Democratic Party, there is no clear answer in common multiparty systems. Here, left-leaning voters can choose among various left-wing parties, such as a communist party, a social democratic party

and a green party. It is therefore difficult to say whether a voter who identifies as left sorts into the right party if they vote for the social democrats. Even if issue dimensions or single issues are considered, there is sometimes more than one ideologically close party to choose from. Therefore, Robison's (2023) concept of party-ideological sorting is more suitable for multiparty systems. This concept refers to "whether a person's issue attitudes are in alignment with their partisan loyalties" (p. 2). This way, it not only allows for examining whether voters are in alignment with their party on single issues rather than their overall ideology but also refrains from essentially basing the sorting concept on being in "the right party". Consequently, a voter favouring climate change mitigation policies will most likely be sorted both when voting for a social democratic and when voting for a green party.

Looking at party-ideological sorting, scholars have found different levels of sorting depending on the issue. For example, Baldassarri and Gelman (2008) find higher correlations between partisanship and positions on economic, as well as civil rights issues but a low correlation between partisanship and foreign policy attitudes in the US. Issues like new lifestyles, traditional values or abortion experienced the steepest increase regarding sorting levels, which means that citizens now also divide along moral issues. Regarding generational differences, Jocker et al. (2025) show that newer generations are more strongly aligned with their party on recently politicised issues like the environment or the EU.

Additionally, studies show that voters' positions on one issue do not necessarily result in similar opinions on other issues as well (see for example Merkley, 2022). Even if broad issue dimensions like the economy, civil rights and moral issues are analysed, issue alignment is not always high. In detail, moral issues cross-cut the other two dimensions, which means that voters who hold a certain position on economic and civil rights issues do not necessarily hold similar moral attitudes (Park, 2018). These studies show that issues are not highly aligned with each other and, thus, further suggest that partisans are not highly sorted across different issues.

Scholars have already found some explanations for the different levels of party-ideological sorting across issues. On the party level, disunity among candidates is associated with voters being less close to their party (Robison, 2023). Additionally, the closely related concept of party-voter congruence increases when a party attributes more salience to an issue (Costello et al., 2021). On the individual level, Jin and Jones (2026) find that party-ideological sorting is, on aggregate, higher for politically aware individuals and Giger and Lefkofridi (2014) show that voters are ideologically closer to their party on issues they deem important.

Moreover, while some studies have not directly focused on explanations for party-ideological sorting, they still imply that salience could explain some of the variation. For example, the fact that Jocker et al. (2025) find higher levels of sorting among younger generations for recently politicised issues suggests that this could be caused by young people finding these issues more important. Similarly, Chen et al. (2021) show that in Finland, alignment between positions on climate and positions on parties is particularly high for those parties that are most vocal in the debate about the climate. This suggests that sorting is high when parties place strong emphasis on an issue.

A comparable mechanism is visible in the case of abortion. Here, Ridenour et al. (2019) explain that “as party positions on abortion became clearly defined, Americans who cared deeply about this issue recognized which party best fit their views” (p. 153). Again, this suggests that voters who find an issue important tend to become more sorted. Ridenour et al. (2019) also mention that party positions became clearly defined before partisans started sorting. Regarding this, Abrams and Fiorina (2015) note that, in general, political elites not only sort earlier than the general public but also more thoroughly (see also Levendusky, 2010). As party positions usually become clearly defined when issues are important for a party, these findings collectively support the expectation that sorting is higher on more salient issues. At the same time, if an issue is important for a party, this does not necessarily mean that it is equally

important for all of its supporters, which may help explain why sorting among voters remains less pronounced than among political elites.

As salience is also central to my argument explaining variation in party-ideological sorting, I will now turn to salience theories in order to further establish my argument.

Salience, Attitudes and Vote Choice

“[T]he skills of political leaders who must maneuver for public support in a democracy consist partly in knowing what issue dimensions are salient to the electorate or can be made salient by suitable propaganda.” (Stokes, 1963, p. 372). This is a central point of Donald Stokes’ critique of the classical Downsian model of spatial party competition. While spatial models generally expect that voters support parties because they are ideologically close to each other (Adams et al., 2005), Stokes (1963) argues that voters mainly evaluate parties on salient issues rather than on a fixed structure of party competition. More recently, salience and issue ownership theories, which, as Budge (2015) explains, originate from Stokes’ critique of Downs, have prominently featured salience in their attempt to explain vote choice. Therefore, they help explain why salience may be associated with positional proximity among partisans.

In his seminal paper, Petrocik (1996) argues that candidates profit when they frame vote choice as a decision about which candidate is better able to deal with a certain problem and therefore is considered to “own” that issue. He then shows that candidates place emphasis on issues their party owns and that election outcomes indeed depend on how important voters deem issues that are owned by a party. This suggests that the expectations of issue ownership theory are twofold: The theory expects parties to emphasise issues they own and voters to choose parties whose issues dominate the campaign (Walgrave et al., 2015).

More recent studies on issue ownership yield mixed results regarding the role of salience. Walgrave et al. (2012) show that it is not the attribution of competence, but the association of

a party with a salient issue that affects vote choice, whereas Bélanger and Meguid (2008) find that competence issue ownership is connected to vote choice for salient issues. Similarly, Green and Hobolt (2008) show that the effect of competence issue ownership is significantly greater if an issue is also salient in a voter's mind.

But the attribution of issue ownership is not necessarily associated with positional proximity. Voters could, in principle, perceive parties as competent despite not sharing their views. Here, it is important to note that Petrocik (1996) makes the assumption that voters are "inclined to view elections as choices about collective goods and resolving problems, and not about the specifics of the resolution." (p. 830). Using the terms positional issues and valence issues (Stokes, 1963), this means that Petrocik (1996) exclusively focuses on valence issues. These are issues like crime, which are generally viewed in the same way, in this example negatively, by the whole electorate. However, as De Sio and Weber (2014) explain, the difference between valence and positional issues does not lie in some innate quality of an issue but is rather based on how policy preferences are distributed. For example, Lachat (2014) shows that valence issues can be framed as positional issues once it is asked how an issue should be solved. Voters may agree that the government should not pile up large debts (valence issue), yet it is likely that they disagree whether this should happen by introducing higher taxes or cutting back services (positional issue). While voters then may tend to think about those parties that emphasise the issue, it can be expected that they will only name a party that is also positionally close to their view. Likewise, Lachat (2014) also deduces that "a certain degree of positional agreement is likely to be a precondition for voters to attribute competence ownership of an issue." (p. 729-730).

Lachat (2014) goes on to show that associative issue ownership reinforces party-voter distances but finds mixed evidence for his argument that competence issue ownership reduces the connection between party-voter distances and vote probability. A possible reason for this could

be that competence issue ownership may only be awarded to ideologically close parties in the first place. This is underlined by Seeberg (2020), who shows that parties are awarded issue ownership if their position on an issue is close to the median voter. Additionally, Wagner and Zeglovits (2014) show that voters have an easier time when attributing competence on highly salient topics like immigration and sometimes even actively refer to positions to explain their attribution of competence. Similarly, Lefevere and colleagues (2017) find that measurements of competence issue ownership – the attribution of competence to a party on a certain issue – are, to a substantial extent, confounded by party choice and position. Taken together, this suggests that findings regarding competence issue ownership and vote choice could be explained by positional proximity, which supports the expectation that issue salience may increase the extent to which partisans align with each other on specific issues when they are close to their party's position.

Yet, this does not necessarily mean that voters' opinions are far away from each other on issues they deem unimportant. However, as Walgrave and Lefevere (2013) put it: "It does not bother voters to vote for a party that does not correspond with their positions when those positions are unimportant to them." (p. 463). Likewise, they show that voters' opinions are further away from their party's position if issues are less important to them, which means that their opinions are likely also further away from each other. Additionally, Carsey and Layman (2006) find that, while voters mainly adapt their party identification to match opinions on issues that are salient for them, they have to first be aware of party differences in order to align their opinion with their party identification on non-salient issues. As voters' knowledge of issues (Holbrook et al., 2005) and their perception of candidate differences (Krosnick, 1988) is also connected to the importance they attribute to them, voters, especially in multiparty systems with many different party positions, may be less likely to be aware of party differences regarding issues they do not

deeply care about. Consequently, they are also less likely to align their opinion with their party's position on those issues.

At the same time, it is possible that voters cannot even be aware of party differences, as parties do not always position themselves clearly on all issues. As Rovny (2012) shows, parties tend to blur their positions for tactical reasons on dimensions that are not primarily important for them and where they do not hold distinct positions. Moreover, they even try to reduce the salience of issues where they are internally divided (van de Wardt, 2014). Therefore, if issues are unimportant for voters, they are also unlikely to adapt their preferences and contribute to sorting on these issues.

Party-Ideological Sorting Beyond Party Positions

So far, studies examining explanatory factors for party-ideological sorting have defined the concept as the extent to which voters are close to their party's position. Yet, it is also possible that voters of a party share an opinion on an issue despite being far away from their party's position. As there is still no explanation for the different extents of sorting that does not rely on proximity to party positions, I adapt the current understanding of party-ideological sorting in this paper by conceptualising it as the extent to which partisans' positions align *with each other*, rather than with their party's position.

While the two definitions may yield similar results in some cases, they capture different aspects of sorting. In particular, defining sorting as alignment between partisans allows for a more thorough analysis of sorting. This is because partisans could theoretically be perfectly sorted on an issue under my definition but far away from their party's position. For example, voters of a social democratic party could share the opinion that stricter immigration laws are needed, yet the party could advocate more lenient immigration laws. While this would result in high

sorting levels using my definition, sorting defined as alignment between voters and their party would view such a scenario as a case of low sorting.

The main reason why I expect sorting to happen independently of party positions is that parties, for tactical reasons, do not always represent the preferences of their supporters. Possible mechanisms for this are that parties either actively position themselves differently than their voters or try to refrain from having a clear opinion at all.

It seems likely that parties actively hold a different opinion if the party remains confident that its voters will continue to vote for the party nonetheless. As Western European multiparty systems usually only consist of a handful of parties and do not offer parties with all possible combinations of policy positions, voters often face trade-offs because no party perfectly reflects their views on all issues. Krosnick's (1990) concept of issue publics helps explain this dynamic. Issue publics are groups of people who attach high importance to the same issue. Because these issues are particularly salient to them, members of issue publics tend to have more accessible attitudes and possess greater knowledge about them. As the opinions of issue public members are also linked to other opinions (Krosnick, 1990), they may support a party because most opinions align with their vote choice even if another attitude diverges from the party's position. Under these circumstances, these voters are not expected to adapt their position merely to align with their party, as this process is unlikely for important issues (Krosnick, 1990; Carsey & Layman, 2006).

Such a scenario is particularly likely if the party chooses an aggressive strategy and uses venture policies. These are policies that are supported by more people than there are party followers, yet unpopular within the party. Therefore, emphasising such policies is risky but also potentially beneficial (De Sio & Weber, 2014). The result would then be that, while voters sort on a specific issue, the party's position is not aligned with theirs. Under my definition, this

would constitute a high level of party-ideological sorting despite party-voter congruence being low.

As already mentioned, parties sometimes also blur their position on an issue (Rovny, 2012) or are internally divided (van de Wardt, 2014). While Robison (2023) already showed that disunity among candidates is associated with voters being less close to their party, which leads to lower levels of party-ideological sorting under the classical definition, this does not mean that voters also hold diverging opinions themselves. When parties start to blur their position or become divided and thus do not offer a clear position themselves, partisans could then start adjusting their position to the stance of fellow partisans instead, which makes the issue more party-ideologically sorted using my definition. However, this is only likely to happen if voters also care about the issue. Otherwise, they have little incentive to actively engage with the topic, making parties more likely to succeed in keeping the issue off the political agenda.

Taken together, I expect that partisans tend to sort on issues they find important, although this does not necessarily mean that they also sort near their party's position. This expected relationship can emerge through two mechanisms. First, as an issue becomes more important, the voter may change their opinion to match the dominant position of their fellow partisans more closely. Second, they may switch their preferred party to match the dominant position of their new party's voters more closely. The first mechanism is expected to be at play when the voter still agrees with their party on other important issues, while the second mechanism should matter more when a party's or voter's stances change more fundamentally.

In addition to the new definition of party-ideological sorting, I will also close a gap in the literature by testing how changing salience levels affect party-ideological sorting within rather than between individuals. This means that I will analyse how a change in the importance that an individual attributes to an issue affects that individual's subsequent level of sorting. This

reduces the risk that the relationship is merely driven by stable differences between individuals. Looking at individual rather than aggregate-level salience is also important to determine if the relationship is driven by the personal importance voters attribute to issues rather than the broader public salience surrounding these issues.

This leads to the following hypothesis:

The higher the individual salience that a voter attributes to an issue, the more likely this voter is to contribute to higher levels of party-ideological sorting on that issue.

Data and Methods

To test my argument, I draw on panel data from the Austrian National Election Study AUTNES (Partheymüller et al., 2024b) from 2017 to 2024 and the German Longitudinal Election Study GLES (Debus et al., 2025) from 2017 to 2025. Both datasets include questions about vote choice, positions on various issues and the salience of various issues for individual voters. As the analysis draws on data from two typical Western European multiparty systems, the findings may also be applicable to other Western European multiparty systems. This is because Austria and Germany share institutional and political characteristics common to many Western European democracies.

In the AUTNES study, respondents were recruited using representative quotas (Partheymüller et al., 2025). In total, AUTNES consists of data from 11,472 Austrian voters. Wave 1 consisted of 3,987 respondents, and until Wave 24 new respondents were invited for most waves to ensure approximately 3,000 participants per wave (Partheymüller et al., 2024a). In the waves relevant to this study, a total of 8,908 individuals participated. On average, these individuals participated in 2.5 out of 7 relevant waves, with 1,978 individuals participating in 4 or more waves. In summary, 22,323 responses across all relevant waves are available for the analysis. As the analysis only includes partisans (individuals who indicated a vote choice) from parties with

enough voters that a meaningful mode of the partisans' position can be used, a total of 7,955 cases had to be excluded, mainly due to not indicating a vote choice.

AUTNES measures salience with an item that asks respondents to name up to three domestic issues they find most important. Until Wave 7, individuals could choose among fifteen topics. Afterwards, more topics were included. Topics that were indicated are coded as 1, all other topics are coded as 0. Importantly, respondents are asked which issues they *personally* find important at the time of the survey. This is central because study participants' answers differ when asked what they personally find important and what they think is important in their country (Dennison, 2019).

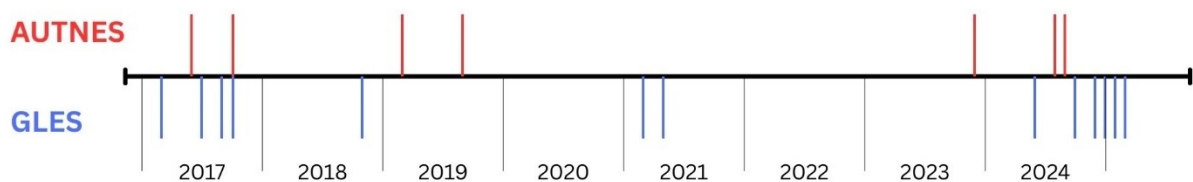


Figure 1: Overview of data collection times for the relevant AUTNES and GLES waves (each line represents one wave)

Additionally, the AUTNES questionnaire includes ten questions about voters' opinions on various political issues in Waves 1, 4, 7, 11, 16, 21 and 22, which are hereafter referred to as AUTNES Waves 1 to 7. Figure 1 provides an overview of the relevant AUTNES and GLES waves by showing when the respective data for each wave were collected. As the analysis requires variables with sufficient variance, opinion questions that were included in only a few AUTNES or GLES waves are excluded. Also, not all of the opinions can be matched with an issue from the salience item. As this is essential for the analysis, only those opinions that can be matched with an issue from the salience item are considered. Translated into English, opinions on the following statements are used. In parentheses, the matching issue(s) from the salience item are indicated:

- Unemployment should be reduced, even if this leads to high public debt. (job market and employment)
- The government should stay out of the economy. (economic policy)
- Police powers should be expanded to ensure law and order. (security and crime, terrorism)
- Immigration to Austria should only be allowed in exceptional cases. (immigration, asylum policy)
- The environment should be protected at all costs, even if this is expensive for individuals. (climate change, environmental protection)

Respondents can either state that they do not know the answer or provide their opinion using one of five answer options ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5).

GLES respondents were recruited using quota-based sampling of German voters from online panels (GLES, 2025). In the relevant waves for this study, a total of 29,742 individuals participated. Each wave consisted of approximately 10,000 responses. Thus, on average, each individual took part in 4.4 of 13 waves. In summary, 130,188 responses across all relevant waves are available for the analysis. Of these, 34,557 observations have to be excluded. This is because they either did not plan to vote for any party or indicated that they would vote for a small party for which no meaningful modal partisan position can be derived.

The GLES questionnaire includes questions about voters' opinions on various political issues in Waves 2, 4, 7, 8, 10, 15, 16, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 and 31, which are hereafter referred to as GLES Waves 1 to 13. Translated into English, respondents can choose between:

- Less taxes and less welfare state provisions – more welfare state provisions and more taxes
- Facilitate immigration of foreigners – restrict immigration of foreigners
- Prioritise combating climate change – prioritise economic growth

Respondents can select numbers between 1 and 7. 1 indicates full agreement with the left statement, 7 indicates full agreement with the right statement, while 4 indicates favouring the middle ground.

The use of AUTNES and GLES data allows for testing my argument using two different measures of salience. On the one hand, GLES measures salience more directly, as respondents are asked to state the personal importance they attribute to issues immediately after being asked about their position and, additionally, can indicate the importance they attribute to an issue on a five-point scale, allowing for a more granular analysis. On the other hand, the AUTNES data contain information on each individual's most salient issues overall.

Moving to the dependent variable, party-ideological sorting is usually measured at the party-level. My analysis, however, focuses on the individual level. This is because a party-level analysis cannot capture the impact of individual salience as thoroughly as an individual-level analysis can. Suppose party A's party-ideological sorting is high on an issue that most of party A's partisans find important and low on an issue that most partisans find unimportant. Here, the exact mechanism remains unclear. Do partisans sort because they, individually, attribute importance to an issue, or do they simply sort because they perceive the high importance this issue has for other partisans on aggregate? By conducting an individual-level analysis, however, it is possible to analyse how the salience individuals attribute to an issue affects the extent of party-ideological sorting. Therefore, I will use *contribution to party-ideological sorting* as the dependent variable. Contribution is defined as follows: The closer a partisan is to the dominant (modal) position among all partisans, the more this partisan contributes to party-ideological sorting. To recapitulate, I expect individuals to contribute to issues being party-ideologically sorted if the issue is important to them.

To give an example, suppose that party A has 10 voters. These voters are asked to state their opinions on police powers in Austria on a 5-point-scale from strongly against expanded powers (1) to strongly in favour of expanded powers (5). Table 1 shows the ordered responses to the question.

As most voters state that they are rather in favour of expanding police powers (number 4), the modal position among party A's voters is 4. Therefore, voters F, G, H and I contribute most to party-ideological sorting, as their distance to the modal opinion is 0. By contrast, voter A has the lowest contribution to party-ideological sorting, as their distance of 3 from the modal position is the largest. If my hypothesis regarding salience is correct, voters A, B and C should attribute lower importance to the issue of police powers, while voters D to J should, on average, find the issue more important.

Voter	Opinion
Voter A	1
Voter B	2
Voter C	2
Voter D	3
Voter E	3
Voter F	4
Voter G	4
Voter H	4
Voter I	4
Voter J	5

Table 1: Example of partisans' opinions

To illustrate the difference between the classical definition of party-ideological sorting and the definition used in this paper, suppose that the position of party A on the issue is 1. As only three voters hold the same or a similar position, while seven voters are further away from the party, the issue would be characterised by low sorting levels using the classical definition. Sorting defined as alignment among partisans, however, attributes a higher level of party-ideological

sorting to the issue, as seven out of ten voters hold the modal position of partisans or are close to it.

Measuring contribution to party-ideological sorting using the adapted definition involves three steps: First, a voter's preferred party needs to be identified. Then, the modal position of the supporters of this party needs to be identified. In the final step, the distance of the voter's opinion and this modal position has to be determined.

I use the modal position of opinions because, unlike the arithmetic mean or median, it represents the most common position among partisans. Other measures of central tendency could place many partisans far away from the reference point, as they could yield values that few or no partisans hold.

As partisans' modal position on an issue can change between waves, I will use a standardised distance measure in my main analysis and provide the results of the absolute distances in Appendix A. This is because the maximum distance to the modal position changes as the modal position changes. In the example above, the largest distance of a partisan's policy position to their party's modal position is 3. If, in the next wave, the modal position changes to 3, the maximum distance to the modal position would reduce to 2, as the two points that are furthest away on the five-point scale are 1 and 5. So, a partisan could theoretically be furthest away from the modal position in both waves, yet their distance to the modal position could change from 3 to 2. Standardised distance, however, always measures the distance to the modal position relative to the maximum distance. In the example above, every distance would consequently be divided by 3, while a wave later, the distances would be divided by 2. This way, a distance measure of 1 always signals the furthest possible distance. Consequently, an absolute distance to the modal position of 1 would equal a standardised distance of 0.33 in the example above and a distance of 0.5 in the next wave.

While the results do not change significantly using standardised measures, the main benefit is that it helps to interpret the coefficients of the used models more easily. The coefficient shows how an increase in salience affects the distance to the modal position. With the standardised measure, the coefficient can be interpreted relative to the maximum distance. A coefficient of -0.1 would then mean that an increase in salience is connected to the partisan being closer to the modal position by 10 % of the maximum distance. With absolute distances, the coefficient would show how much closer the partisan is on the 5-point scale. But depending on the previous position of the partisan, being 1 point closer to the modal position could either mean that the partisan is now really close or still far away from the modal position.

To test my argument, I will use fixed effects (FE) models (individual fixed-effects, time fixed-effects and both), with the main models including both individual and time fixed-effects. Such models focus on within-person variation, as they estimate how a within-individual change in salience correlates with a within-individual change in the distance to the dominant position of all fellow partisans. As Papke and Wooldridge (2023) describe, the “FE estimator removes unit-specific heterogeneity that can be arbitrarily correlated with the time-varying covariates. Including time effects accounts for secular aggregate changes that affect all units.” (p. 2683). Therefore, using both time and individual fixed effects strengthens the empirical leverage compared to cross-sectional approaches. Still, the possibility of confounding variables cannot be ruled out completely. Additionally, while reverse causality seems theoretically implausible¹, it cannot be excluded statistically. Thus, although a case for causality can be made, in comparison to experimental designs, the evidence still remains weaker and I will refrain from making causal claims in the following results section.

¹ It seems unlikely that a partisan would first change their opinion on an issue and then, as a consequence, find the issue more important. On the contrary, I expect that usually, an issue gains importance for a partisan first. As a result, they engage more deeply with the issue and change their opinion.

Results

I will now show some descriptive characteristics of my data before moving to the results of the fixed effects models. As AUTNES and GLES use different ways to measure opinions and salience, each country's results will be shown individually.

Regarding individual salience, it is important for the analysis that there is variation within individuals, as otherwise, no within-person effect of salience can be tested. Figure 2 gives an overview of the percentage of voters per party that have indicated that an issue is important for them for AUTNES Waves 1 and 7. It shows that the salience often changes significantly, sometimes even about 20 %, for voters of the different parties between 2017 (Wave 1) and 2024 (Wave 7). Other than that, the results are as expected. Voters of the right parties ÖVP and FPÖ find immigration most important, while the green party's voters (GRÜNE) view climate as the most important issue in both waves. The social democratic party (SPÖ) has the highest share of voters who attribute importance to the issue of unemployment regarding both waves.

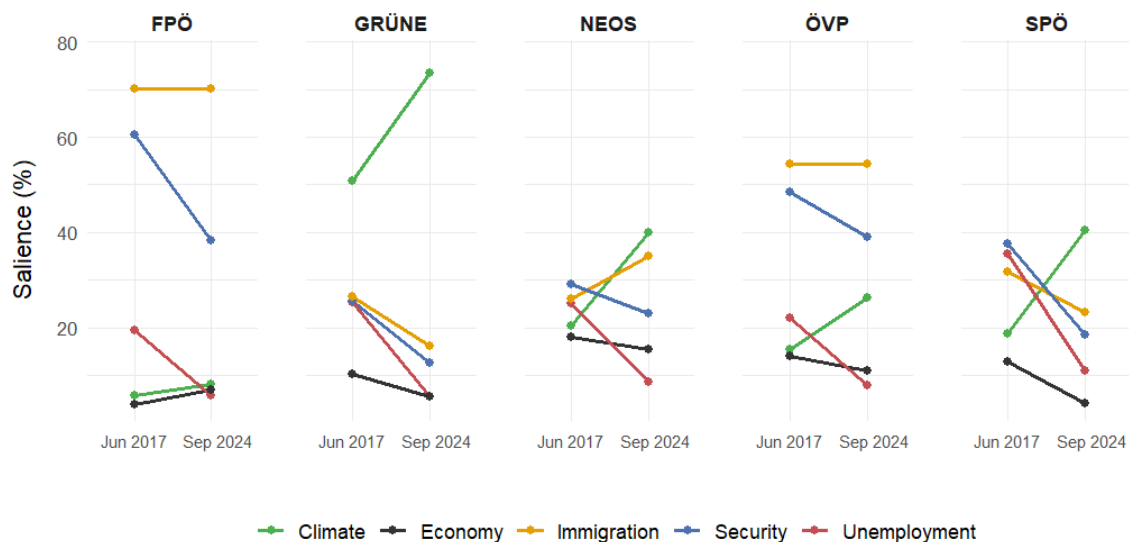


Figure 2: Percentage of voters who named an issue as one of the most important in 2017 and 2024 by party (AUTNES)

In Germany, salience is measured on a five-point scale. Figure 3 shows the mean salience of the three issues climate, immigration and taxes and social spendings per party and wave. Most

noticeably, for every wave and every party, the mean salience is never below 3, which suggests that voters tend to attribute at least some salience to all of these issues. However, it should be noted that these issues are currently salient in Western Europe in general and therefore expected to also be salient among many voters. While most of these findings are as expected, with voters of the green party (GRÜNE) finding the climate issue most important and voters of the left party (LINKE) attributing the most importance to taxes and social spendings, it is, at first sight, surprising that immigration and climate are similarly salient topics for AfD voters. Here, it is important to add that the GLES measurement of salience is based on the policy position item. For example, respondents are not asked to indicate their attribution of importance to the climate issue, but instead should indicate how important combating climate change *and* economic growth is for them, as they first had to express their opinion on a scale ranging from prioritising the combat of climate change to prioritising economic growth.

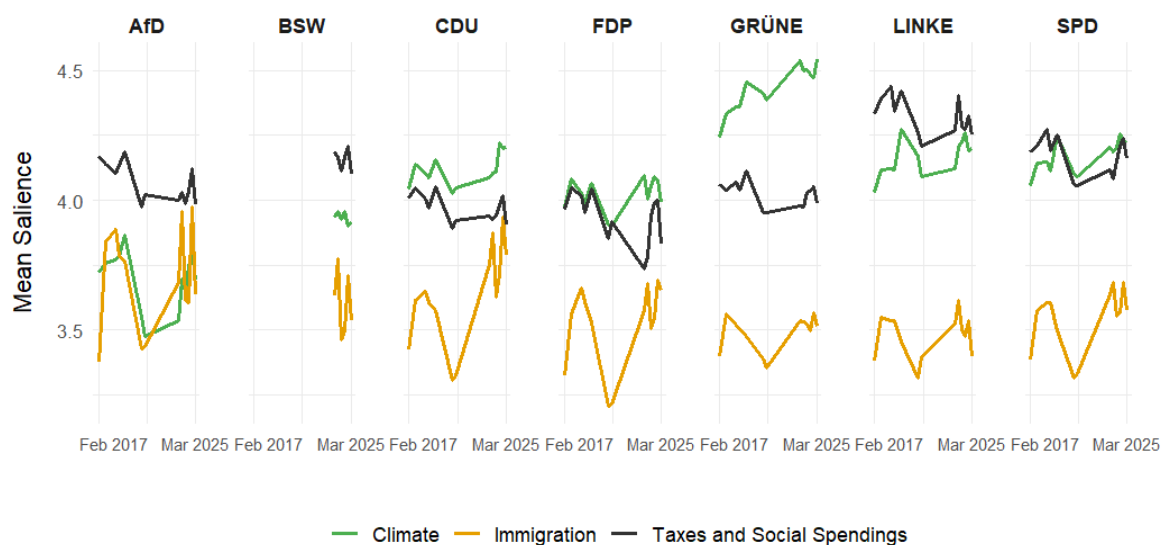


Figure 3: Mean salience of issues for voters between 2017 and 2025 by party (GLES)

Figures 4 and 5 show the modal position of partisans' positions per wave on all relevant issues. Here, it is striking that the modal position for most party-issue combinations is exactly in the middle of the respective scales. In Austria, most modal positions on the five-point scale are 3. This is most apparent for the issues of unemployment and economy, where there are only a few

deviations. The issues of climate and immigration show more variation. As expected, voters of the parties that are commonly referred to as left-leaning on the socio-cultural dimension tend to have dominant positions that are more in favour of environmental protection. Regarding the issue of immigration, the contrast between left-leaning and right-leaning parties is even starker. In Germany, the modal position of partisans' opinions is neither on one nor the other side regarding taxes and social spendings. Regarding the climate issue, partisans of the green, left and social democratic party have dominant positions that are more in favour of combating climate change, while other partisans rather favour prioritising economic growth. Moving to immigration, no dominant position of partisans is in favour of more lenient immigration laws, while most of the time, the common position of partisans leans more towards the restriction of immigration.

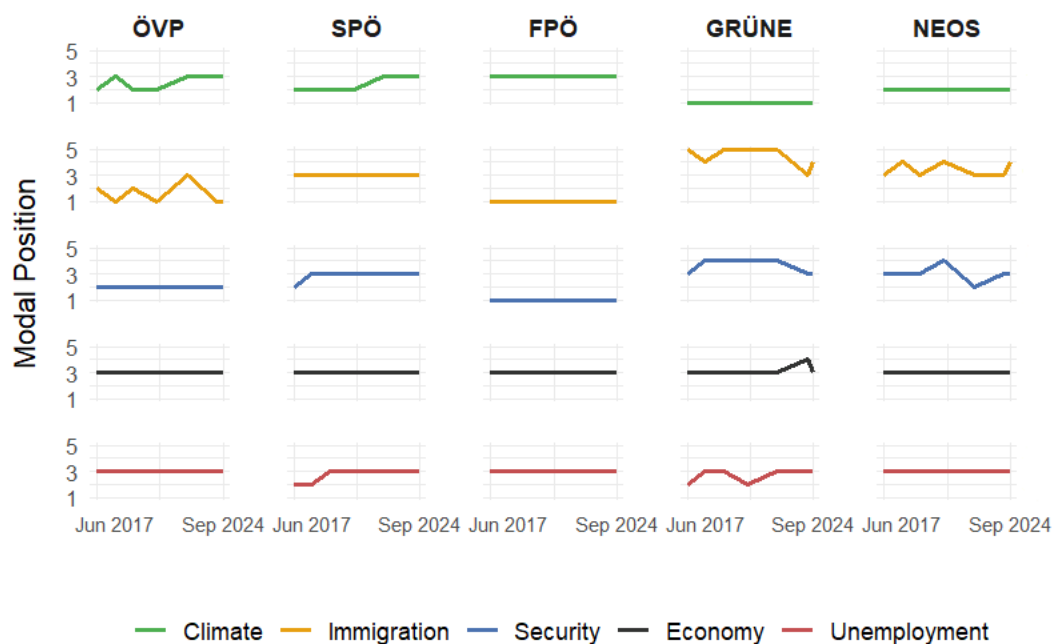


Figure 4: Modal position of partisans per issue between 2017 and 2024 (AUTNES)

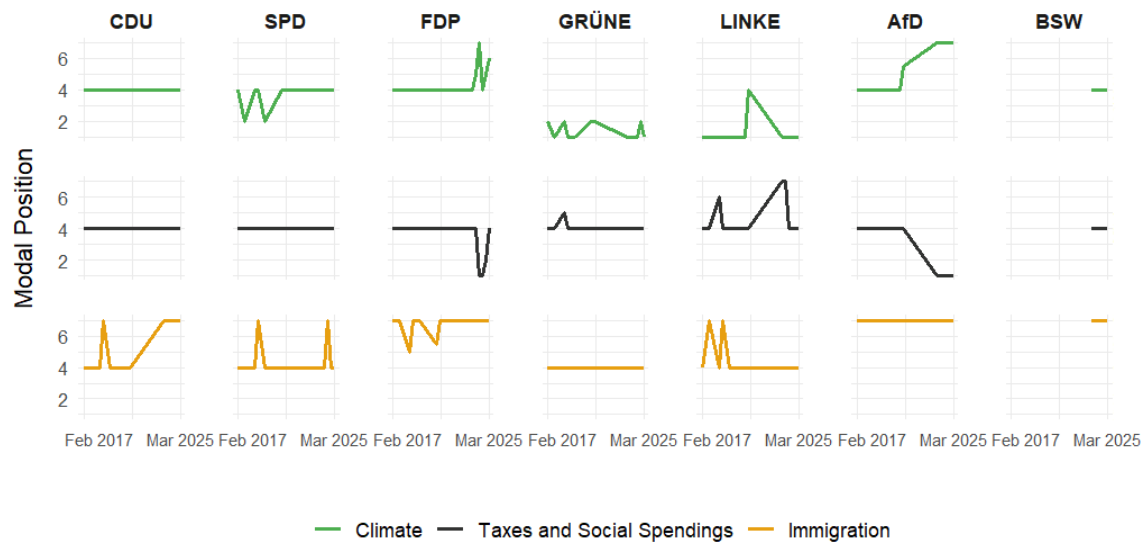


Figure 5: Modal position of partisans per issue between 2017 and 2025 (GLES)

I will now turn to the inferential results, which describe how an individual's change in salience affects their distance to the modal position of their fellow partisans. To recapitulate, I expect a negative relationship between salience and contribution to party-ideological sorting. This means that an individual's rising salience of an issue should lead to a shorter distance of this individual's position to the modal position of their fellow partisans on the same issue.

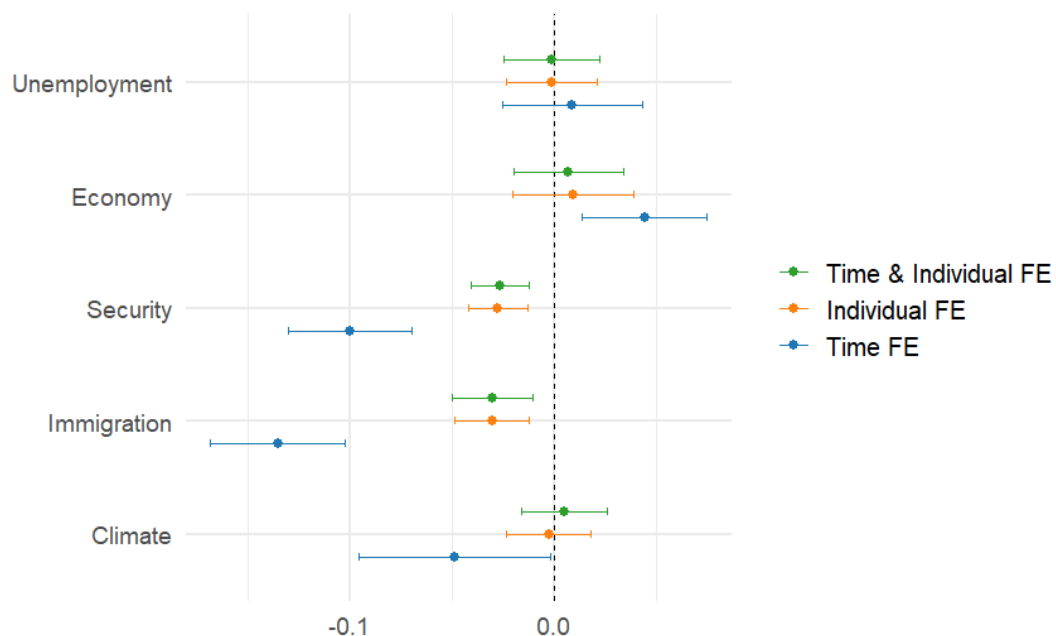


Figure 6: The effect of an issue becoming one of the most important issues on the distance to the modal position of partisans (AUTNES)

Regarding the AUTNES data, my hypothesis only receives partial support. The hypothesised relationship is backed by the issues of security and immigration, while the other three issues do not lend support to my hypothesis. The coefficient plot in Figure 6 shows the results in more detail. There is a -0.026 coefficient of the fixed effects model including both time and individual fixed effects (green) for the issue of security. This suggests that, when holding both individual and time-specific differences constant, a previously unimportant issue becoming important is connected to the individual becoming 2.6 % closer to the dominant position of fellow partisans relative to the maximum possible distance. The plot also shows the 95 % confidence interval, which, as the line does not cross 0, shows that the coefficient is also significant ($p = 0.006$). Similarly, there is a significant ($p = 0.008$) and negative relationship between salience and distance to the dominant position among partisans for the issue of immigration. Regarding unemployment, economy and climate, the models with both time and individual fixed effects are statistically insignificant.

Interestingly, when only holding wave-specific differences constant (time fixed effects), there is also a statistically significant negative relationship regarding the issue of climate and a far greater effect for security and immigration. This leads to the assumption that the hypothesised relationship is, to some extent, also due to stable differences between individuals. In detail, this suggests that individuals who attribute more salience to a topic are also closer to the modal position of fellow partisans compared to other individuals who attribute less salience to a topic. Regarding the economy, there is even a positive relationship between salience and distance to the modal position in the model with time fixed effects. This means that individuals who attribute importance to the economy tend to be further away from the dominant position of their fellow partisans than individuals who do not attribute importance to the issue.

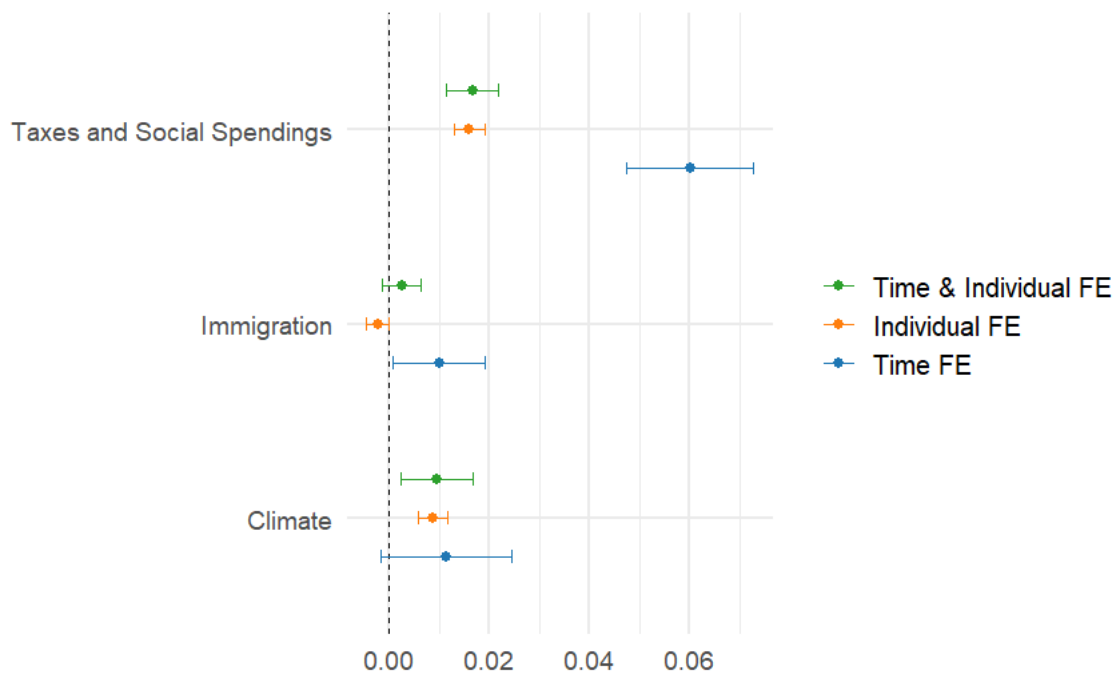


Figure 7: The effect of rising salience on the distance to the modal position of partisans (GLES)

Finally, Figure 7 shows the coefficient plot for the GLES data. According to these fixed-effects models, my hypothesis is not supported. In contrast, these models even lend support to the opposite relationship. For the climate and taxes and social spendings issue, the main models show that the distance between an individual's position and the dominant position of their fellow partisans rises significantly when they attribute more salience to the respective issue. For example, if a partisan's salience regarding the climate issue on the five-point scale rises by 1 from one wave to the next, this partisan is then estimated to be 1 % further away from the dominant position of other partisans relative to the maximum possible distance. While in general, all of these effects sound rather small, it is important to note that these effects occur while keeping all individual and wave-specific differences constant.

Explorative Analysis

Looking at the results of both datasets, it becomes apparent that the expected relationship tends to occur for those issues where the dominant partisan positions most clearly and most often diverge from the midpoint. In the Austrian election study, both the economy and unemployment

do not show the expected relationship and the dominant position of partisans on the five-point scale hardly diverges from 3 at all. The issues that support my hypothesis, however, show a lot more deviation from the midpoint regarding partisans' dominant positions. Regarding the German election study, the issue of immigration is the only issue where the model with both time and individual fixed effects does not support the opposite relationship to the one that was hypothesised. Again, this is the issue where the modal positions of partisans' opinions are most different from the midpoint of 4. This suggests that the expected relationship may only occur once there is a more extreme dominant position among partisans. Theoretically, this would make sense if many partisans who do not care strongly about an issue simply gravitate towards the midpoint of the respective scales. In such cases, a modal position located at the midpoint may not necessarily indicate a clear partisan consensus but could instead result from concentration of relatively indifferent respondents around the centre of the scale.

In order to test this new expectation, I will conduct an explorative analysis. Here, the variable *extremity* will function as a moderator variable. This variable will be coded as 0 if the modal position is in the middle of the respective scale (3 for AUTNES, 4 for GLES) and gets higher, the more the modal position deviates from the midpoint. This means that the extremity value takes on values from 0 to 2 for AUTNES and from 0 to 3 for GLES. In detail, I expect that the relationship between individual salience and contribution to party-ideological sorting is dependent on the level of extremity. The previously hypothesised relationship should occur for higher extremity values, while for lower extremity values there could even be a positive relationship.

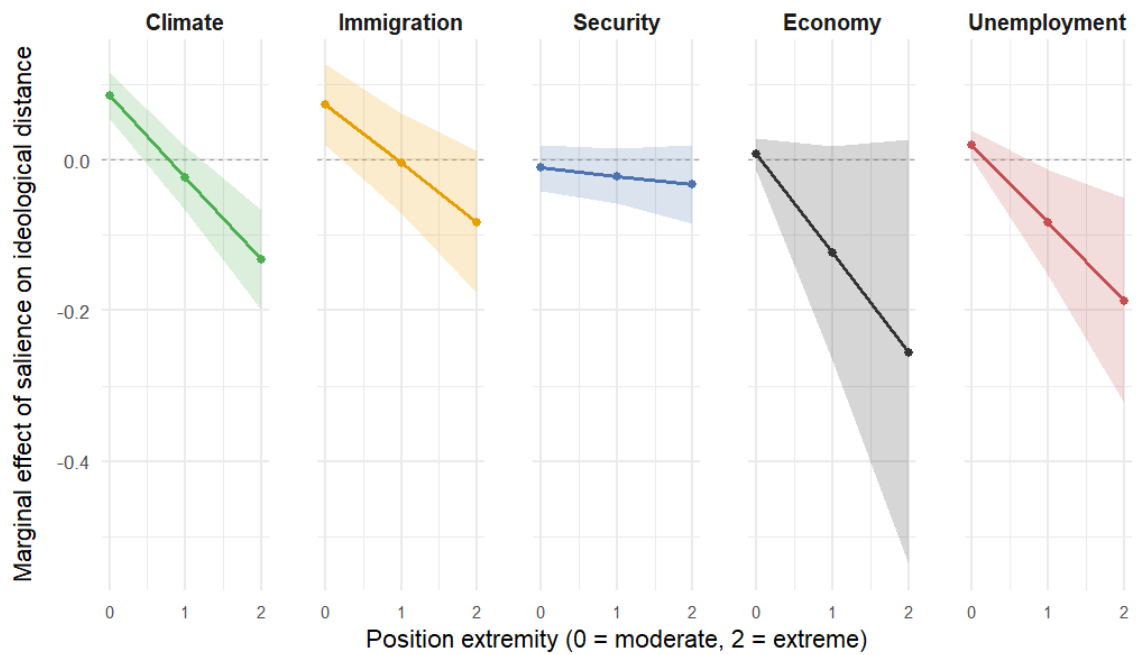


Figure 8: The effect of an issue becoming one of the most important issues on the distance to the modal position of partisans dependent on the extremity of the modal position of partisans (AUTNES)

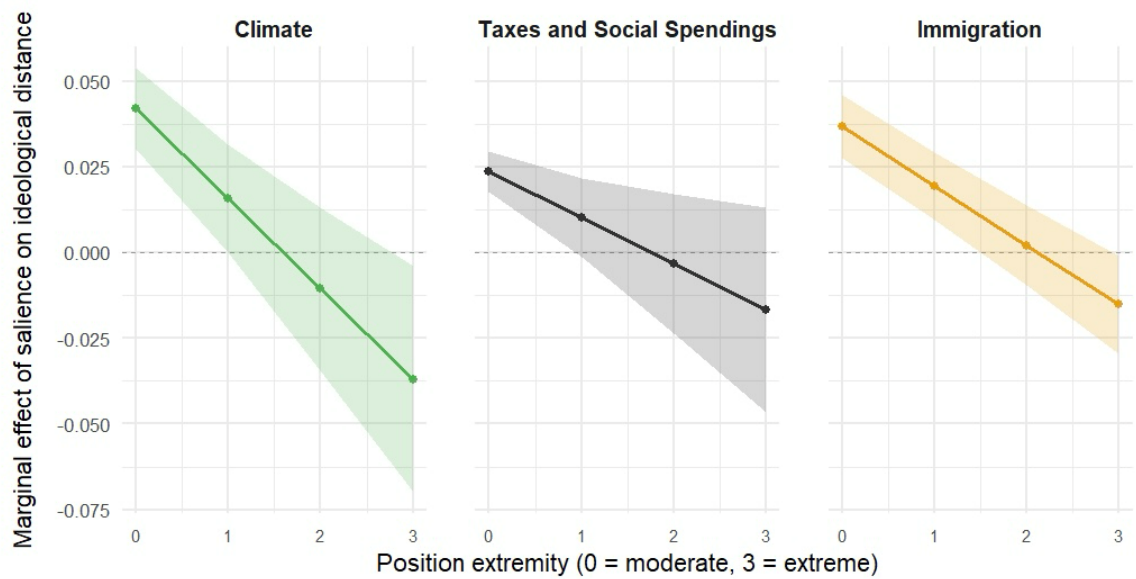


Figure 9: The effect of rising salience on the distance to the modal position of partisans dependent on the extremity of the modal position of partisans (GLES)

Figures 8 and 9 show the coefficient plots of the fixed effects models including time and individual fixed effects dependent on the extremity of the dominant partisan positions. This shows that extremity can indeed explain the inversion of the relationship. With an extremity of 0, rising salience levels are significantly connected to more distance to the modal position of

partisans for nearly all issues. Looking at the highest level of extremity instead, the relationship becomes negative for all issues and also significantly so for many issues. For some issues, the large confidence intervals at the more extreme modal positions are simply due to there only being few available cases. In the AUTNES data, an extremity level of 1 already produces negative coefficients for all issues and in the GLES dataset, the relationship becomes negative for two of three issues once the extremity level reaches 2.

One possible interpretation of these findings is that voters simply hold more extreme positions on more salient issues. However, such an explanation is unlikely for several reasons. Most importantly, as the results regarding more extreme modal positions show, rising salience is associated with movement towards the modal position among fellow partisans rather than movement towards any extreme. Furthermore, the descriptive analyses (Appendix B) only provide mixed evidence for a simple relationship between salience and extremity. On the one hand, for the five AUTNES issues, voters attributing salience to an issue tend to hold more extreme positions. However, the increase in average extremity is comparatively modest. On the other hand, the average extremity of voters attributing the least salience to an issue is, somewhat surprisingly, even higher than among voters attributing the highest level of salience for all analysed GLES issues. It should be noted, however, that only few respondents attribute the lowest possible salience to an issue.

To sum up, this means that for issues where the dominant position of partisans is in the middle of the scale, rising salience levels are connected to partisans being further away from the modal position of fellow partisans. Once the dominant position among partisans becomes more extreme by moving towards either side of the scale, rising salience levels within individuals are connected to the same individuals becoming closer to the dominant partisan position than they were before. This effect occurs even though time and individual fixed effects account for time and individual-specific differences.

Discussion

My main finding is that the hypothesised relationship mainly occurs if the modal position among partisans does not lie in the middle of the respective policy position scales, while the opposite relationship occurs for issues with central modal positions. Consequently, once there is a more extreme dominant position of partisans, an individual's rising salience is connected to the same individual becoming closer to the modal position of fellow partisans and, thus, contributes to party-ideological sorting for the issue at hand. A possible explanation for this pattern is that for issues where the most common position lies in the middle of the scale, there is simply no clear partisan consensus, but instead a concentration of more or less indifferent respondents. In the tradition of Converse (1964/2006), who famously stated that "large portions of an electorate do not have meaningful beliefs" (p. 51), this suggests that especially partisans for whom an issue is unimportant are more likely to engage in non-committal or centrist responding. Thus, in such cases, partisans who hold opinions that diverge from the midpoint of the scale do not contribute to party-ideological sorting using my definition but rather move further away from the dominant position of fellow partisans.

Keeping in mind that the dominant positions among partisans gravitate towards the middle for many issues, this effect of salience is in line with the issue publics literature. As rising salience is connected to more accessible attitudes, people for whom an issue becomes more important are potentially less likely to be indifferent or divided on an issue and rather hold opinions that clearly go into one direction on the policy position scale. After all, a social democratic voter who deeply cares about unemployment will most likely want unemployment rates to drop, even if this means that public debt rises. The reason why this voter could still show a negative contribution to party-ideological sorting is simply that other social democratic voters take a middle position on the issue, despite the fact that social democrats traditionally fight for low unemployment rates. This is underlined by the fact that issues with more extreme modal

positions do show the hypothesised relationship. Thus, when the most common position among partisans clearly leans toward one side of the policy scale, as is for example the case regarding green parties and the climate or far right parties and immigration or security, higher salience levels are indeed connected to a closer distance to this modal position.

Moving to a discussion of the main models without the interaction with extremity, the main surprising factor is the difference between the Austrian and German outcomes. While AUTNES data either supports the expected negative relationship or remains insignificant for issues where most partisans chose the midpoint on the position scale, two out of three GLES issues even support a positive relationship. A reason for this could be the different operationalisation of salience and policy positions. First of all, while AUTNES only involves an item asking for the three most important issues overall, GLES lets respondents decide the importance of each issue using a five-point scale. So, while a rising salience level of 1 means that an issue has become one of the three most important issues overall in the AUTNES dataset, it simply means that respondents find the issue a little more important in the GLES dataset. Additionally, the GLES policy position items tend to make the contrast between two poles larger. For example, while AUTNES respondents have to indicate if the environment should be protected at all costs, even if it is expensive for individuals, GLES juxtaposes combating climate change and economic growth. Thus, an Austrian panel participant only needs to accept the cost of environmental protection being expensive to be in favour of the statement, while a German panel participant also has to keep in mind that the overall economic growth is at stake.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to close two gaps in the literature. First, existing studies of party-ideological sorting have focused on partisans being close to their party's position. Yet, due to tactical reasons like position blurring or the endorsement of positions that are unfavourable

among the own party supporters, it also seems plausible that partisans sort on an issue despite not sharing their party's position. Thus, I followed a new definition of party-ideological sorting which is independent of party positions. Second, while salience has already played a big role in explanations for different extents of sorting, the use of individual salience as an explanatory variable has remained scarce and only featured in between-individual designs. Therefore, I used panel data to analyse the within-person relationship between changes in salience and party-ideological sorting. In detail, I drew on the Austrian and German election studies AUTNES and GLES to test whether increases in individual-level salience are associated with individuals moving closer to the most common position of their fellow partisans, thereby contributing to party-ideological sorting on the issue.

My main finding is that the hypothesised relationship holds under the condition of a non-centred dominant partisan position. Once the most common position of partisans moves clearly towards either pole of the policy position scale, an individual's rising salience level is connected to the same individual being closer to this modal position. However, if the partisans' modal position remains in the centre of the scale, a rising salience level is no longer associated with a contribution to party-ideological sorting, as partisans then tend to move towards the poles of the scale and consequently further away from the dominant position of partisans. More extreme modal positions are mainly found for parties that usually lean towards one side of an issue dimension significantly, such as green parties regarding the climate issue or far right parties regarding the issue of immigration.

The findings suggest that partisans may not hold strong opinions on many topics and therefore often resort to not moving towards any pole on policy position scales but instead select centrist response options. As, regarding many issues, only a few partisans, mostly those who find an issue important, take on a more extreme position, they represent the exception to the rule and therefore do not contribute to party-ideological sorting of the issue. Taken together, this extends

previous literature by showing that salience effects on party-ideological sorting defined as proximity between partisans are conditional on the structure of partisan opinion distributions.

While my analysis is only limited to Austria and Germany, there is little theoretical reason to expect that the main result is unique to these countries. After all, despite the different measurements used in the AUTNES and GLES studies and the difference between the countries, the conditional mechanism of extremity emerges in both cases. This suggests that a similar relationship could also be found in other Western European multiparty systems.

There are a few limitations to this study. First of all, there is the possibility that ceiling effects limit the effects found in this study. For example, voters of the far-right party could indicate that they are totally against more lenient immigration laws even if the issue is not of highest importance. If this is the case, rising salience levels cannot be associated with partisans moving closer to the most common position as they already are as close as they possibly can. Second, election studies usually only feature issues that are already highly salient in an electorate. Consequently, it was not possible to test my hypothesis for issues that are currently not on the political agenda. Third, as discussed in the Methods section, while I tried to limit the possibility of confounding variables as much as possible, the data do not allow me to fully claim a causal mechanism. Fourth, the datasets used in this study all used scales with odd numbers to measure policy positions, thus allowing for respondents to choose an answer exactly in the middle. As it turned out that these answers greatly affected the results, it would be an interesting avenue for future research to replicate this study's design using scales with an even number of options to choose from so that they do not allow respondents to pick a position in the middle. Additionally, future studies could use the difference between my definition and the traditional definition of party-ideological sorting and try to explicitly find issues that are sorted among partisans but far away from the party's position.

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Appendix A

AUTNES unemployment absolute distances

Dependent Var.:	Two-way FE dist_M3	Individual FE dist_M3	Time FE dist_M3
Salience (W3)	-0.004 (0.020)	0.007 (0.023)	0.026 (0.024)
Fixed-Effects:	-----	-----	-----
id	Yes	Yes	No
wave	Yes	No	Yes
S.E.: Clustered	by: id & wave	by: id	by: wave
Observations	11,253	11,253	14,079
R2	0.48950	0.48846	0.00182
Within R2	4.4e-6	1.22e-5	0.00016

Signif. codes:	0 '****' 0.001 '***' 0.01 '**' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1		

AUTNES unemployment standardised distances

Dependent Var.:	Two-way FE standdist_3	Individual FE standdist_3	Time FE standdist_3
Salience (W3)	-0.001 (0.010)	-0.001 (0.011)	0.009 (0.014)
Fixed-Effects:	-----	-----	-----
id	Yes	Yes	No
wave	Yes	No	Yes
S.E.: Clustered	by: id & wave	by: id	by: wave
Observations	11,253	11,253	14,079
R2	0.49611	0.49510	0.00032
Within R2	2.06e-6	1.57e-6	7.8e-5

Signif. codes:	0 '****' 0.001 '***' 0.01 '**' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1		

AUTNES economy absolute distances

Dependent Var.:	Two-way FE dist_M4	Individual FE dist_M4	Time FE dist_M4
Salience (W4)	0.013 (0.022)	0.018 (0.030)	0.087* (0.026)
Fixed-Effects:	-----	-----	-----
id	Yes	Yes	No
wave	Yes	No	Yes
S.E.: Clustered	by: id & wave	by: id	by: wave
Observations	11,181	11,181	13,973
R2	0.50991	0.50904	0.00196
Within R2	2.47e-5	4.37e-5	0.00101

Signif. codes:	0 '****' 0.001 '***' 0.01 '**' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1		

AUTNES economy standardised distances

Dependent Var.:	Two-way FE standdist_4	Individual FE standdist_4	Time FE standdist_4
Salience (W4)	0.007 (0.011)	0.009 (0.015)	0.044* (0.012)
Fixed-Effects:	-----	-----	-----

id	Yes	Yes	No
wave	Yes	No	Yes

S.E.: Clustered	by: id & wave	by: id	by: wave
Observations	11,181	11,181	13,973
R2	0.51044	0.50941	0.00204
Within R2	2.79e-5	4.74e-5	0.00106

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

AUTNES security absolute distances

Dependent Var.:	Two-way FE dist_M6	Individual FE dist_M6	Time FE dist_M6
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Salience (W6) -0.075** (0.019) -0.078*** (0.022) -0.202** (0.035)

Fixed-Effects: -----

id	Yes	Yes	No
wave	Yes	No	Yes

S.E.: Clustered	by: id & wave	by: id	by: wave
Observations	11,288	11,288	14,108
R2	0.56613	0.56458	0.01461
Within R2	0.00167	0.00184	0.01068

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

AUTNES security standardised distances

Dependent Var.:	Two-way FE standdist_6	Individual FE standdist_6	Time FE standdist_6
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Salience (W6) -0.026** (0.006) -0.028*** (0.007) -0.100*** (0.012)

Fixed-Effects: -----

id	Yes	Yes	No
wave	Yes	No	Yes

S.E.: Clustered	by: id & wave	by: id	by: wave
Observations	11,288	11,288	14,108
R2	0.55638	0.55495	0.02449
Within R2	0.00158	0.00178	0.02086

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

AUTNES immigration absolute distances

Dependent Var.:	Two-way FE dist_M7	Individual FE dist_M7	Time FE dist_M7
-----------------	-----------------------	--------------------------	--------------------

Salience (W7) -0.109** (0.023) -0.112*** (0.027) -0.322*** (0.035)

Fixed-Effects: -----

id	Yes	Yes	No
wave	Yes	No	Yes

S.E.: Clustered	by: id & wave	by: id	by: wave
Observations	11,341	11,341	14,155
R2	0.52405	0.52271	0.02995
Within R2	0.00250	0.00264	0.02782

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

AUTNES immigration standardised distances

Dependent Var.:	Two-way FE standdist_7	Individual FE standdist_7	Time FE standdist_7
Salience (W7)	-0.030** (0.008)	-0.030*** (0.009)	-0.135*** (0.013)
Fixed-Effects:	-----	-----	-----
id	Yes	Yes	No
wave	Yes	No	Yes
S.E.: Clustered	by: id & wave	by: id	by: wave
Observations	11,341	11,341	14,155
R2	0.54951	0.54800	0.04208
Within R2	0.00156	0.00160	0.03898

Signif. codes:	0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1		

AUTNES climate absolute distances

Dependent Var.:	Two-way FE dist_M8	Individual FE dist_M8	Time FE dist_M8
Salience (W8)	-0.004 (0.021)	-0.004 (0.024)	-0.075 (0.046)
Fixed-Effects:	-----	-----	-----
id	Yes	Yes	No
wave	Yes	No	Yes
S.E.: Clustered	by: id & wave	by: id	by: wave
Observations	11,314	11,314	14,156
R2	0.51796	0.51677	0.00774
Within R2	3.29e-6	3.57e-6	0.00166

Signif. codes:	0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1		

AUTNES climate standardised distances

Dependent Var.:	Two-way FE standdist_8	Individual FE standdist_8	Time FE standdist_8
Salience (W8)	0.005 (0.009)	-0.003 (0.010)	-0.049* (0.019)
Fixed-Effects:	-----	-----	-----
id	Yes	Yes	No
wave	Yes	No	Yes
S.E.: Clustered	by: id & wave	by: id	by: wave
Observations	11,314	11,314	14,156
R2	0.55070	0.54169	0.02852
Within R2	2.78e-5	9.44e-6	0.00359

Signif. codes:	0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1		

GLS climate absolute distances

Dependent Var.:	Two-way FE dist_climate	Individual FE dist_climate	Time FE dist_climate
Salience (climate)	0.011 (0.011)	0.013* (0.006)	-0.001 (0.018)
Fixed-Effects:	-----	-----	-----
lfdn	Yes	Yes	No

wave	Yes	No	Yes
S.E.: Clustered	by: lfdn & wave	by: lfdn	by: wave
Observations	123,158	123,158	128,562
R2	0.42988	0.42734	0.00381
Within R2	5.17e-5	7.49e-5	1.07e-6

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1			

GLS climate standardised distances

Dependent Var.:	Two-way FE standdist_climate	Individual FE standdist_climate	Time FE standdist_climate
Salience (climate)	0.010* (0.003)	0.009*** (0.002)	0.011. (0.006)
Fixed-Effects:	-----	-----	-----
lfdn	Yes	Yes	No
wave	Yes	No	Yes
S.E.: Clustered	by: lfdn & wave	by: lfdn	by: wave
Observations	121,451	121,451	127,051
R2	0.44980	0.44749	0.00344
Within R2	0.00055	0.00047	0.00099

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1			

GLS taxes and social spendings absolute distances

Dependent Var.:	Two-way FE dist_tax	Individual FE dist_tax	Time FE dist_tax
Salience (tax)	0.048*** (0.008)	0.044*** (0.005)	0.184*** (0.017)
Fixed-Effects:	-----	-----	-----
lfdn	Yes	Yes	No
wave	Yes	No	Yes
S.E.: Clustered	by: lfdn & wave	by: lfdn	by: wave
Observations	123,198	123,198	128,605
R2	0.51054	0.50630	0.02496
Within R2	0.00103	0.00089	0.01653

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1			

GLS taxes and social spendings standardised distances

Dependent Var.:	Two-way FE standdist_tax	Individual FE standdist_tax	Time FE standdist_tax
Salience (tax)	0.017*** (0.002)	0.016*** (0.002)	0.060*** (0.006)
Fixed-Effects:	-----	-----	-----
lfdn	Yes	Yes	No
wave	Yes	No	Yes
S.E.: Clustered	by: lfdn & wave	by: lfdn	by: wave
Observations	123,198	123,198	128,605
R2	0.51908	0.51672	0.02161
Within R2	0.00145	0.00136	0.01968

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1			

GLS immigration absolute distances

Dependent Var.:	Two-way FE dist_Zuzug	Individual FE dist_Zuzug	Time FE dist_Zuzug
Salience (immigration)	-0.005 (0.008)	-0.007. (0.004)	0.013 (0.016)
Fixed-Effects:	-----	-----	-----
lfdn	Yes	Yes	No
wave	Yes	No	Yes
S.E.: Clustered	by: lfdn & wave	by: lfdn	by: wave
Observations	122,997	122,997	128,398
R2	0.45875	0.44825	0.01547
Within R2	1.85e-5	3.85e-5	0.00013

Signif. codes:	0 '****' 0.001 '***' 0.01 '**' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1		

GLS immigration standardised distances

Dependent Var.:	Two-way FE standdist_Zuzug	Individual FE standdist_Zuzug	Time FE standdist_Zuzug
Salience (immigration)	0.003 (0.002)	-0.002. (0.001)	0.010* (0.004)
Fixed-Effects:	-----	-----	-----
lfdn	Yes	Yes	No
wave	Yes	No	Yes
S.E.: Clustered	by: lfdn & wave	by: lfdn	by: wave
Observations	121,807	121,807	127,346
R2	0.49928	0.48265	0.03351
Within R2	7.26e-5	5.21e-5	0.00120

Signif. codes:	0 '****' 0.001 '***' 0.01 '**' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1		

GLS with moderation of extremity, standardised distances

Dependent Var.:	Tax & Social Spendings standdist_tax	Climate standdist_climate	Immigra tion standdist_Z uzug
Salience	0.024*** (0.003)	0.042*** (0.006)	0.037*** (0.005)
Position extremity	-0.008 (0.018)	0.038. (0.020)	-0.016 (0.015)
Salience × Extremity	-0.013* (0.005)	-0.026*** (0.005)	-0.017*** (0.002)
Fixed-Effects:	-----	-----	-----
lfdn	Yes	Yes	
wave	Yes	Yes	
S.E.: Clustered	by: lfdn & wave	by: lfdn & wave	by: lfdn & wave
Observations	123,198	121,451	121,807

R2	0.53098	0.48808	0.5
3855			
Within R2	0.02614	0.07010	0.0
7848			

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

AUTNES with moderation of extremity, standardised distances

Immigration Dependent Var.: standdist_7	Unemployment standdist_3	Economy standdist_4	Security standdist_6
Salience	0.020. (0.010)	0.008 (0.011)	-0.011 (0.015)
0.074* (0.027)			
Position extremity	-0.135** (0.027)	-0.071. (0.036)	-0.112*** (0.014)
0.088*** (0.010)			
Salience × Extremity	-0.104* (0.034)	-0.132 (0.072)	-0.011 (0.011)
.078** (0.020)			
Fixed-Effects:	-----	-----	-----

id	Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes			
wave	Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes			

S.E.: Clustered	by: id & wave	by: id & wave	by: id & wave
by: id & wave			
Observations	11,253	11,181	11,288
11,341			
R2	0.50488	0.51073	0.57163
0.57973			
Within R2	0.01739	0.00062	0.03591
0.06853			

Dependent Var.: Climate standdist_8
Salience
0.085** (0.016)
Position extremity
-0.074** (0.020)
Salience × Extremity
-0.109*** (0.015)
Fixed-Effects:

id
Yes
wave
Yes

S.E.: Clustered	by: id & wave
Observations	11,314
R2	0.56416
Within R2	0.02998

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Appendix B

AUTNES average extremity level (0-2) per salience level (0/1), unemployment

0: 0.75 1: 0.84

AUTNES average extremity level (0-2) per salience level (0/1), economy

0: 0.76 1: 0.87

AUTNES average extremity level (0-2) per salience level (0/1), security

0: 0.99 1: 1.15

AUTNES average extremity level (0-2) per salience level (0/1), immigration

0: 1 1: 1.37

AUTNES average extremity level (0-2) per salience level (0/1), climate

0: 0.82 1: 1.21

GLES average extremity level (0-3) per salience level (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), taxes & social spendings

1: 2.12 2: 1.51 3: 0.98 4: 1.06 5: 1.56

GLES average extremity level (0-3) per salience level (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), immigration

1: 2.71 2: 1.49 3: 1.07 4: 1.6 5: 2.53

GLES average extremity level (0-3) per salience level (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), climate

1: 2.33 2: 1.52 3: 1.12 4: 1.28 5: 1.82