Seven Decades of Gender Differences in German Voting Behavior

Ansgar Hudde

Online-Anhang

Further Details on Methods and Data

Data: voting behavior. The samples for the representative election statistics are selected in three steps. First and separately within each federal state ("Bundesland"), the electoral districts are clustered based on the voting results from the previous election. Electoral districts are the smallest geographical unit of electoral organization and include less than 2,500 people eligible to vote (Der Bundeswahlleiter, 2015). In the 2021 election, there were around 80,000 electoral districts in Germany, 2,500 of which were sampled (Der Bundeswahlleiter, 2021). In the second step, electoral districts are randomly drawn from these clusters and, in the third step, all people eligible to vote from these electoral districts are selected. For all elections, the respective samples consisted of 1.5 to 4.0% of electoral districts (at least 3.0% in all elections since 1980). The samples are very large, above 500,000 people in all elections and above 1,000,000 people in all elections since 1976. In the election of 2021, around 1.9 of the 61.2 million people eligible to vote were included in the sample (Der Bundeswahlleiter, 2021).

In the German electoral system, voters can cast two votes, one for district candidates ("Erststimme") and one for a party list vote ("Zweitstimme"). I focus on the latter vote, which decides on the distribution of seats in parliament and thereby the distribution of power between the parties (Gschwend et al., 2022).

A limitation to the data is that the geographical coverage is not identical over time. In the first election of 1953, three federal states were not included (Bavaria, Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland), one of which was also not included in 1957 (Saarland) (Schoen, 1999). Most importantly, the geographical coverage changed with the reunification: all years before 1990 only include Western Germany.

The data includes information on all larger parties, smaller parties are summarized under "others". The share of "others" was above 10% in the 1950s elections (1953: 15.8%; 1957: 10.8%) and at or below 6% in all elections since. Between 1972 and 1983, the share was below 1%. For my analyses, I exclude these "others" and recode all vote shares so that the main parties' votes add up to 100%.

Table S1: Voting behavior by gender and year.

	PDS / The Left		The Greens		SPD		FDP		CDU/CSU		AfD	
	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀
1953					39.1%	32.4%	14.1%	12.2%	46.8%	55.4%		
1957					39.9%	32.2%	9.7%	8.2%	50.4%	59.6%		
1961					42.4%	34.7%	14.5%	12.9%	43.1%	52.4%		

Year												
1965					45.9%	37.3%	10.1%	9.5%	43.9%	53.2%		
1969					49.4%	42.0%	6.6%	5.5%	44.0%	52.5%		
1972					47.5%	46.0%	8.9%	7.7%	43.6%	46.3%		
1976					44.1%	43.3%	8.2%	7.6%	47.7%	49.0%		
1980			1.6%	1.2	43.4%	44.1%	10.6%	10.8%	44.5%	43.9%		
1983			5.9%	4.8	38.7%	39.5%	7.3%	6.3%	48.1%	49.3%		
1987			8.4%	7.8	39.1%	38.2%	9.3%	8.4%	43.1%	45.6%		
1990	3.0%	2.6%	3.9%	3.9	36.5%	35.3%	11.8%	11.1%	44.9%	47.1%		
2002	4.5%	3.8%	8.5%	9.1	38.0%	41.3%	8.4%	6.9%	40.6%	38.8%		
2005	10.4%	7.9%	7.7%	9.1	34.3%	36.8%	11.2%	9.3%	36.4%	36.8%		
2009	14.3%	11.1%	10.1%	12.6	24.8%	24.3%	17.3%	13.8%	33.4%	38.2%		
2013	9.8%	8.6%	7.8%	10.1	28.6%	26.4%	5.9%	4.3%	41.5%	46.8%	6.3%	3.8%
2017	10.2%	9.3%	8%	10.8	21.6%	21.6%	12.4%	10.2%	30.7%	38.4%	17.1%	9.7%
2021	5.4%	5.3%	14.7%	17.7	26.6%	29.7%	13.9%	11.3%	25.3%	27.4%	14.1%	8.6%

More detailed tests of potential survey bias concerning AfD

In each data set, the whole sample is analyzed and survey weights are applied. Confidence intervals for the standardized gender gap are calculated using bootstrapping.

ALLBUS asks about the current voting intention and not reported voting behavior, which is one potential source of difference in results. Further, the survey-timing of ALLBUS does not coincide with the timing of elections. However, results from the elections 2013, 2017, and 2019 suggest a fairly stable gender gap in AfD-voting.

In the figure, the horizontal reference line represents the average gender gap in the real ballots across the elections 2013, 2017, and 2021.
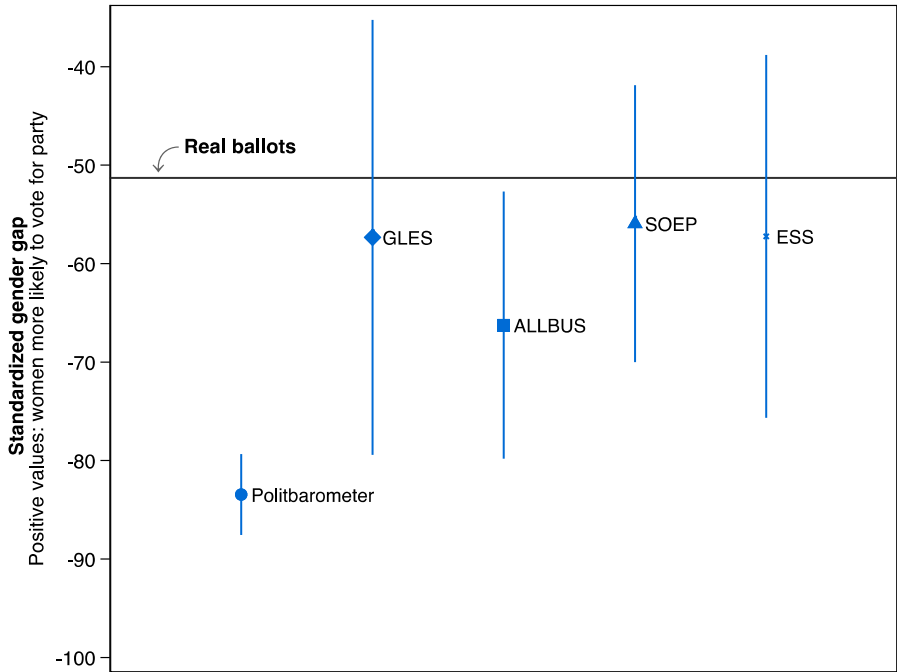

Figure S1: Comparing the standardized gender gap for the AfD as estimated by real ballot (black reference line) and five different surveys.

Additional References:

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