

Who values liberal democracy? Exploring individual differences in the willingness to trade off democratic principles

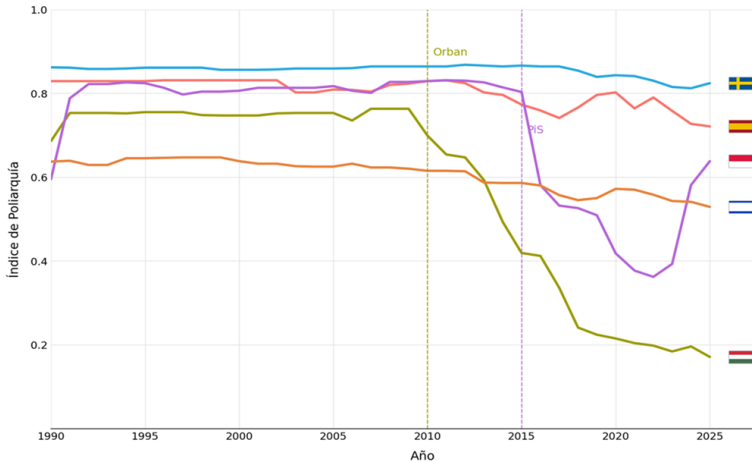
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Backsliding in a comparative perspective

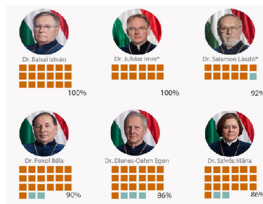


Motivation

Lack of consent



Executive
aggrandizement



Constraints on
individual freedoms

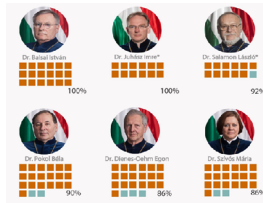


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To what extent are citizens committed to democracy?

Citizens' commitment to democracy: two opposing visions

According to the literature on democratic erosion...

- Citizens are **willing to accept backsliding** as long as they obtain policy benefits in exchange (Graham & Svolik, 2020).

Citizens' commitment to democracy: two opposing visions

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According to the literature on democratic support...

- Most Europeans **support democracy** (Wuttke et al., 2022).
- Citizens are not willing to trade off democracy for other socially desirable outcomes such as economic prosperity (Adserà et al., 2023) or security (Neundorff et al., 2023).

Puzzle

- Why are some democracies experiencing backsliding in spite of the high commitment to democracy among its citizens?
- Are citizens really committed to “liberal” democracy? Can we find significant differences among them?

Expectations

- Citizens will value “free and fair elections” more than other liberal elements, such as freedom of speech, rule of law, and horizontal accountability.

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- Citizens will value “free and fair elections” more than other liberal elements, such as freedom of speech, rule of law, and horizontal accountability.
- Citizens are more likely to forgo liberal principles than to relinquish free elections

Design

Paired conjoint experiment

- UK, Israel, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden
- Intro: “Countries may have different characteristics: income you would enjoy in each country, the extent to which some rights and freedoms are guaranteed etc.”
- 5 tasks by respondent
- Outcomes:
 - Country choice
 - Country rating (0-10 very bad - very good scale)

Attributes and levels



Elections

- Free and fair elections
- Elections are held, but they are not free nor fair



Media

- Free to criticize
- Those who criticize are censored



Protests

- Opposition free to demonstrate
- Restrictions on demonstrations



Laws

- Gov. follows the law
- Gov. bends the law



Parliament

- Gov always subject to control
- Gov bypasses parliamentary control



Judges

- Gov. abides by court rulings
- Gov. ignores court rulings



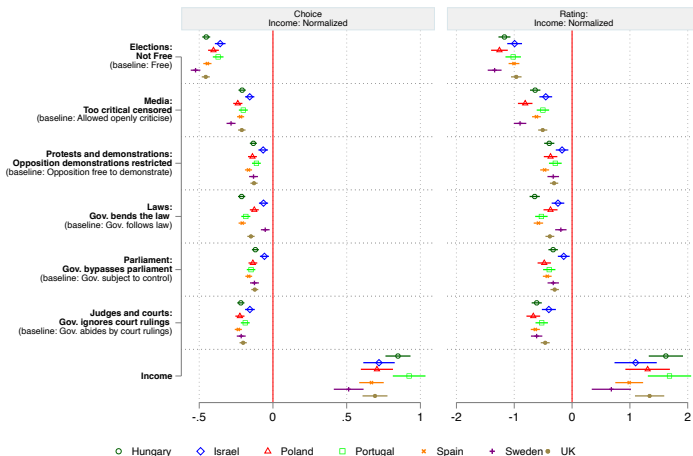
Income

- Monthly income

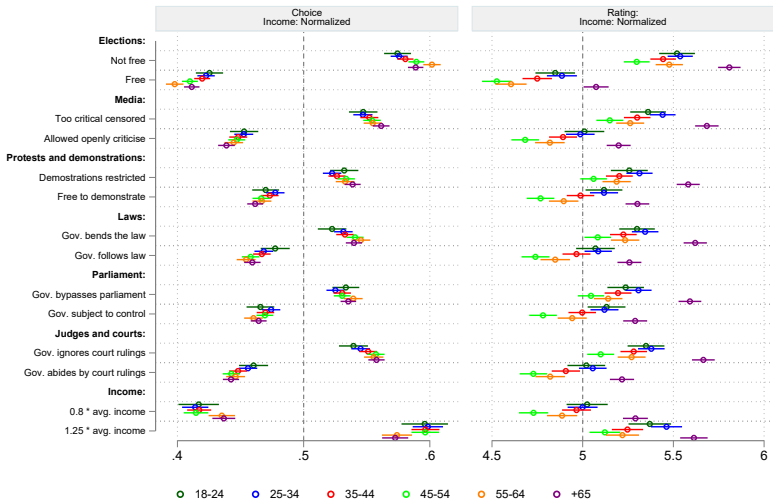
Task example

	País A	País B
Elecciones	La ciudadanía elige a sus dirigentes mediante elecciones libres y justas	La ciudadanía acude a las urnas, pero las elecciones no son ni libres ni justas
Medios de comunicación	El gobierno censura a los medios de comunicación que son demasiado críticos	Los medios de comunicación pueden criticar abiertamente al gobierno
Protestas y manifestaciones	Las organizaciones que se oponen a las políticas del gobierno pueden manifestarse sin ninguna restricción	El gobierno restringe las manifestaciones promovidas por organizaciones que se oponen a sus políticas
Jueces y tribunales	El gobierno ignora las resoluciones judiciales que van en contra de sus intereses	El gobierno acata las resoluciones judiciales incluso cuando van en contra de sus intereses
Parlamento	Las decisiones del gobierno están siempre sujetas al control del parlamento del país	Cuando es necesario tomar decisiones rápidamente, el gobierno elude al parlamento del país
Leyes	El gobierno flexibiliza la aplicación de la ley para resolver problemas sociales y políticos urgentes	El gobierno cumple la ley, incluso cuando se enfrenta a problemas sociales y políticos urgentes
Tus ingresos mensuales	2700 €	2200 €

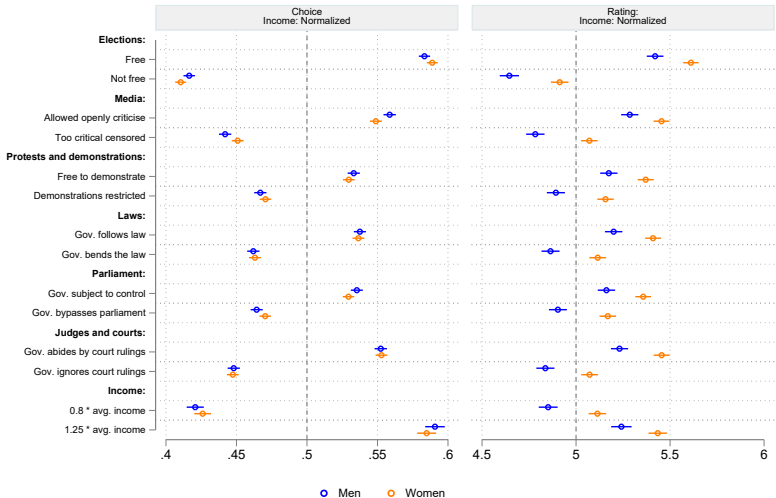
Results (baseline): Which democratic principles do citizens value most?



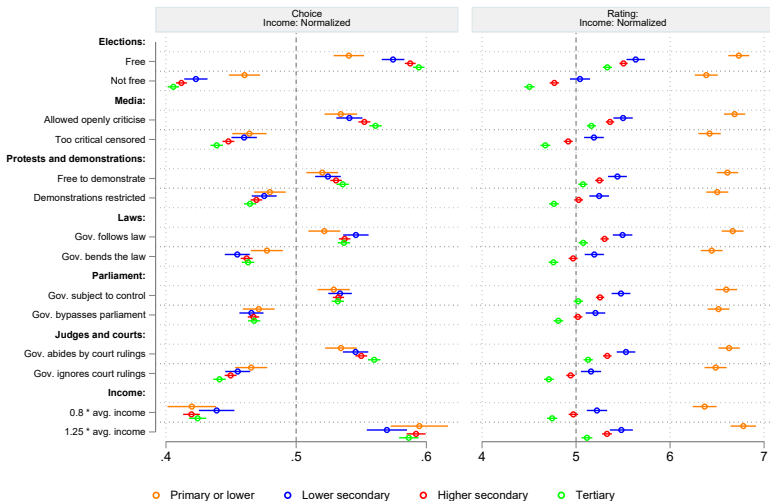
Who values liberal democracy? Age



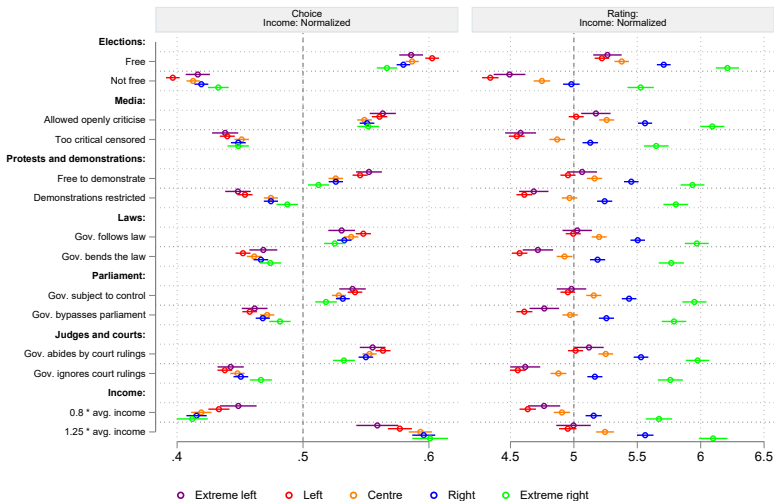
Who values liberal democracy? Gender



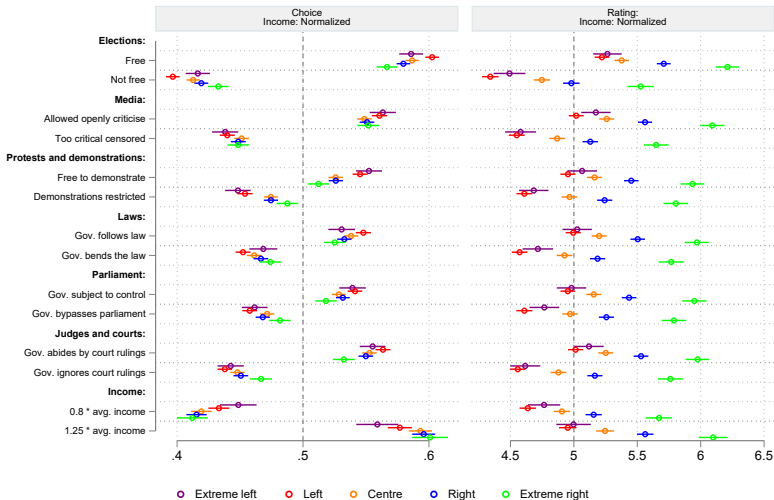
Who values liberal democracy? Education



Who values liberal democracy? Ideology



Who values liberal democracy? Ideology



Take aways

- “Free and fair elections” is the principle citizens value the most in a democracy
- Prioritization across countries is fairly similar, but value of democratic principles differs significantly

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- “Free and fair elections” is the principle citizens value the most in a democracy
- Prioritization across countries is fairly similar, but value of democratic principles differs significantly
- Some of the differences, based on sociodemographic characteristics
 - Young people, Far right, Less educated are more tolerant of democratic erosion
 - Gender differences are less evident

Next steps

- This paper is clearly a follow-up of the *EJPR* paper

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 - Need to compute *Willingess to Pay*
 - So far, a purely descriptive approach has been privileged
 - What do you think about it? Should we go hypothesis testing?
 - Are we missing any variable of paramount importance?
- ... all suggestions will be much appreciated!

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