



V-Dem Data Workshop

Kellogg Institute
Democratization Research Cluster

Varieties of Democracy Overview

The team, conceptual scheme, varieties and definitions, major trends, original surveys and specific indicators, and types of data

Historical V-Dem

While I'm talking, download v9 of the data (if you haven't already)

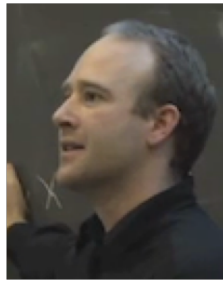
→ v-dem.net, Data, Data Version 9

Recommended:

Country-Year: V-Dem Full+Others

Brief History

- Conversations and planning began in 2007
- Principal Investigators came together
- Most Project Managers recruited by 2010; questions written
- Pilot Study in 2011, followed by data collection on a few countries
- 2011ff: Development of database and website
- Two institutional homes at Gothenburg and Kellogg Institute
- Various waves of data collection as funding came in for countries
- 2014-15: Partial data releases
- January 2016: First release of full dataset
- All data collection shifted to Gothenburg: “V-Dem Institute”
- 2018: Kellogg Institute designated “V-Dem Regional Center in North America”



Coppedge:
Deliberation & Media

Gerring:
Political Equality

Lindberg: Elections

Teorell: Executive

Knutsen: Historical

Skaaning:
Civil Liberties



McMann:
Subnational

Bernhard: Civil Society
Sovereignty

Fish: Legislatures

Paxton: Inclusion

Staton: Judiciary

Pemstein:
Measurement



Altman:
Direct Democracy

Hicken:
Political Parties

Seim: Experiments

Glynn: Methods

Wilson:
Computational
Infrastructure

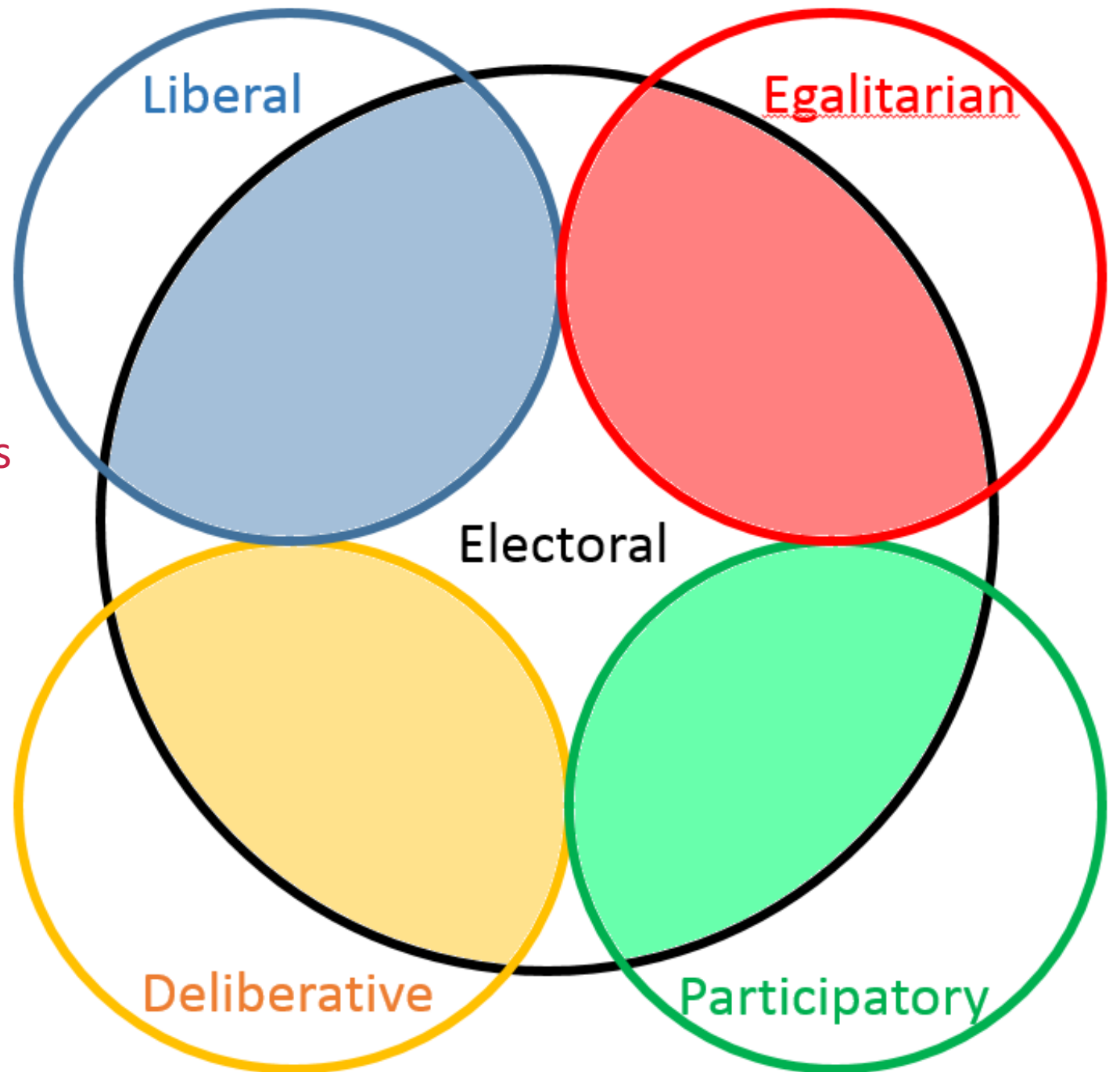
Sigman: Exclusion
& State Capacity

Morgan:
Forecasting

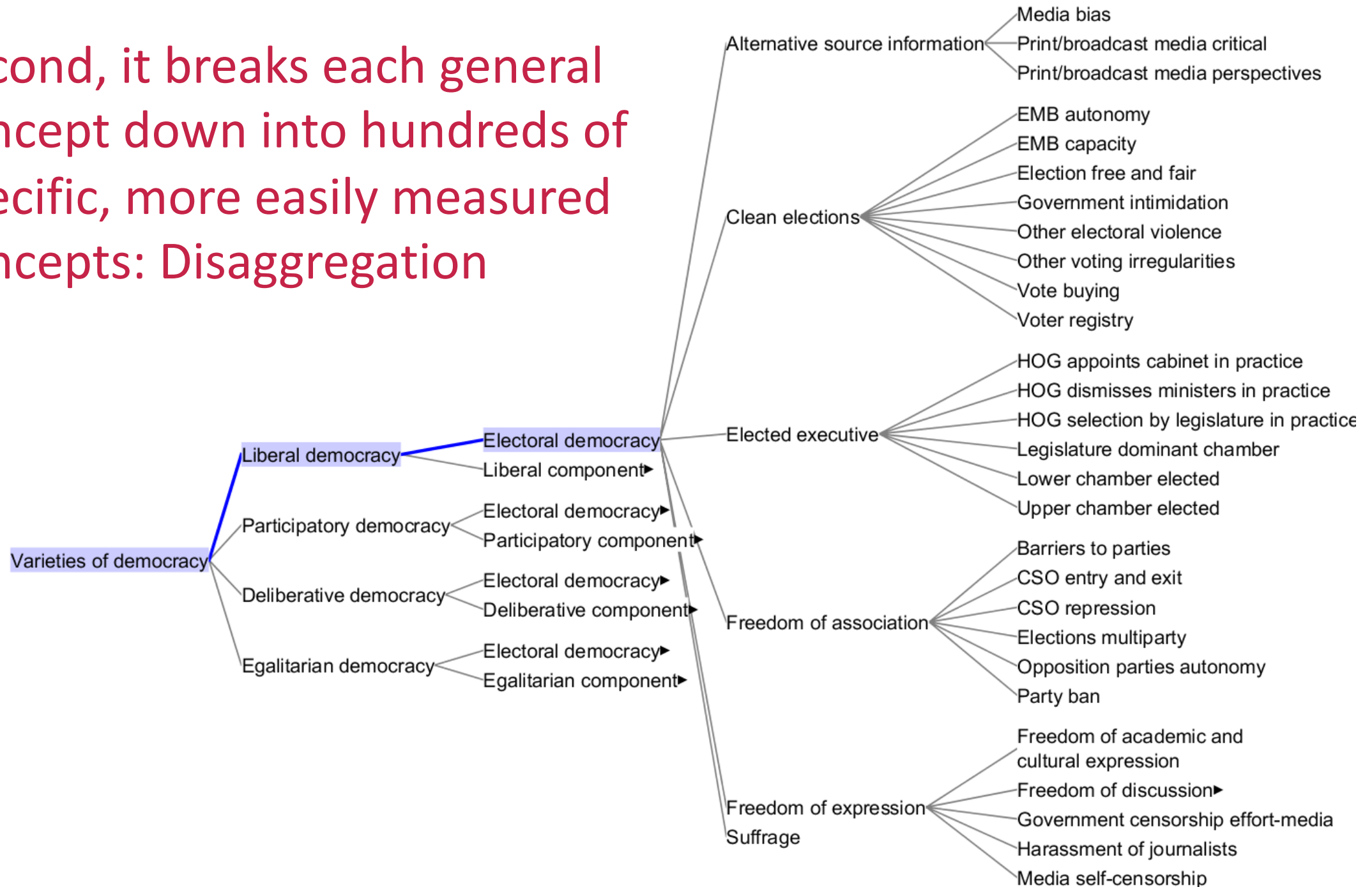
Who “We” Are (+5 program & data managers and 5 research fellows in Gothenburg)

What is distinctive about V-Dem data?

First, it captures multiple dimensions of democracy



Second, it breaks each general concept down into hundreds of specific, more easily measured concepts: Disaggregation



A sample question:

Election vote buying (C) (v2elvotbuy)

In this national election, was there evidence of vote and/or turnout buying?

Clarification: Vote and turnout buying refers to the distribution of money or gifts to individuals, families, or small groups in order to influence their decision to vote/not vote or whom to vote for. It does not include legislation targeted at specific constituencies, i.e., “porkbarrel” legislation.

- 0: Yes. There was systematic, widespread, and almost nationwide vote/turnout buying by almost all parties and candidates.
- 1: Yes, some. There were non-systematic but rather common vote-buying efforts, even if only in some parts of the country or by one or a few parties.
- 2: Restricted. Money and/or personal gifts were distributed by parties or candidates but these offerings were more about meeting an ‘entry-ticket’ expectation and less about actual vote choice or turnout, even if a smaller number of individuals may also be persuaded.
- 3: Almost none. There was limited use of money and personal gifts, or these attempts were limited to a few small areas of the country. In all, they probably affected less than a few percent of voters.
- 4: None. There was no evidence of vote/turnout buying.

Third, it taps the expertise of more than 3,200 experts in 180 countries around the world.

63 percent of the raw scores come from local experts.



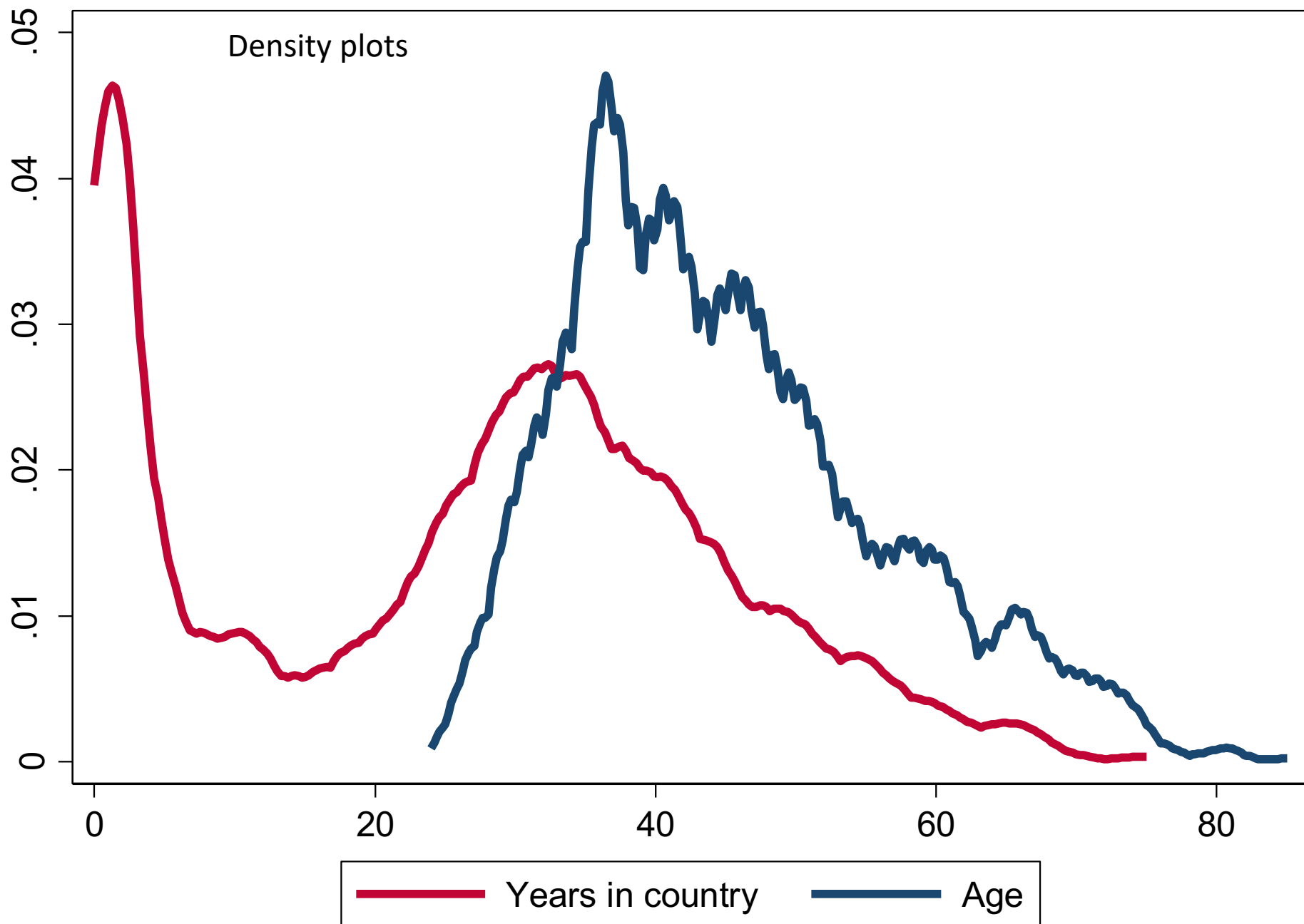
Who are the country experts?*

All are anonymous: identified only in administrative database that is separate from research database. But we can share summary information about them.

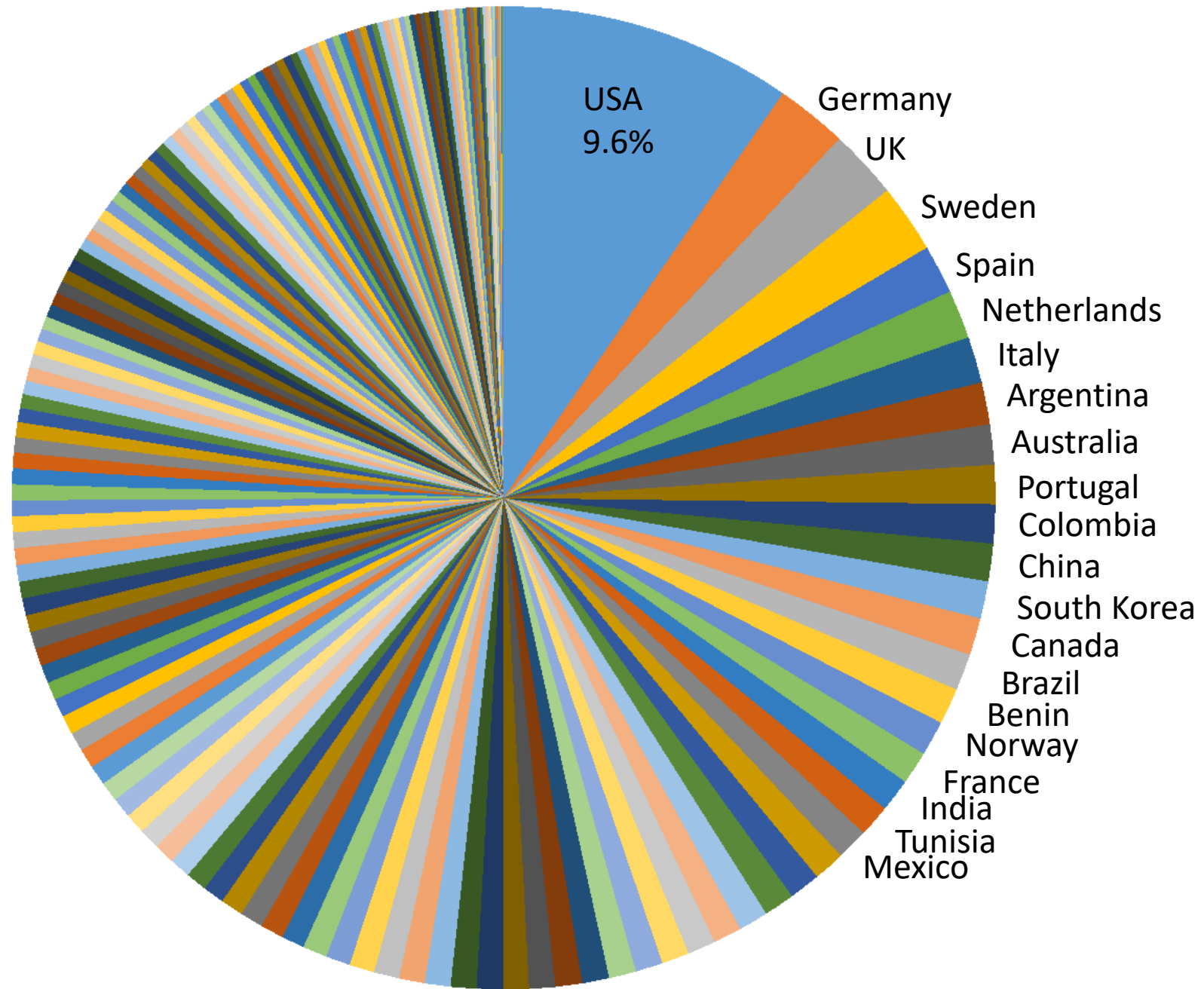
- 69% either born in or reside in the country they coded
- 67% not born in a Western country
- 94% have some graduate education
- 65% earned highest degree outside their country
- 64% academics, 23% private sector
- 27% women (v9)
- Hours spent on coding (v9): mean of 17, median of 10

*Based on v4 data, March 2015 unless otherwise noted

96.5% of the ratings are by people who have lived in the country they rated, usually for most of their lives.



Distribution of ratings by country of birth



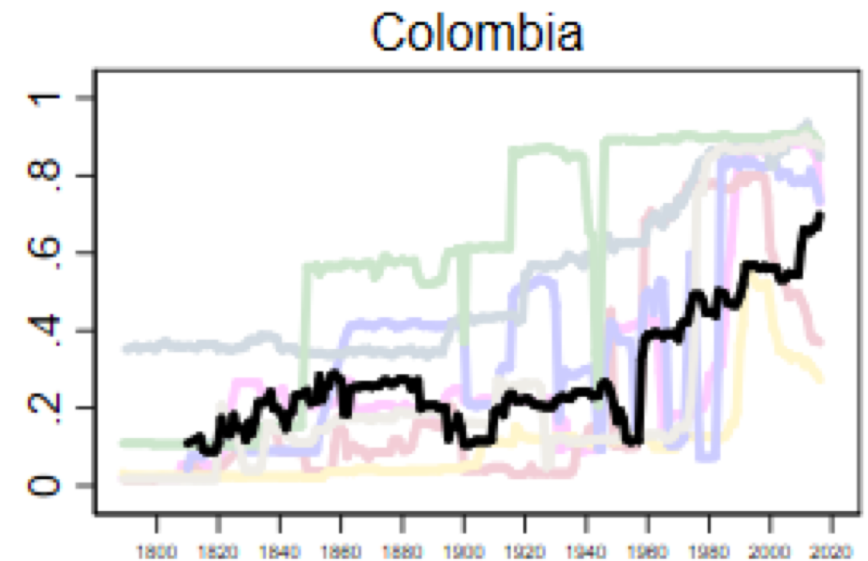
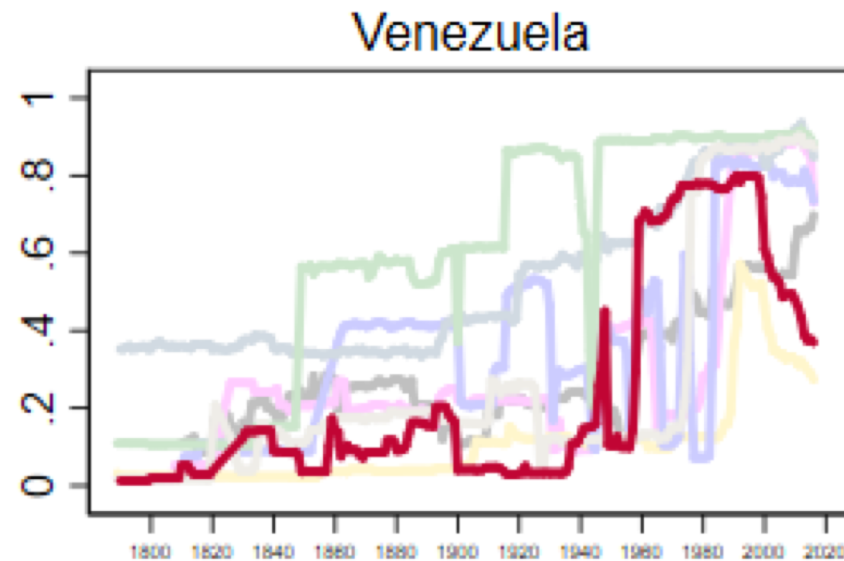
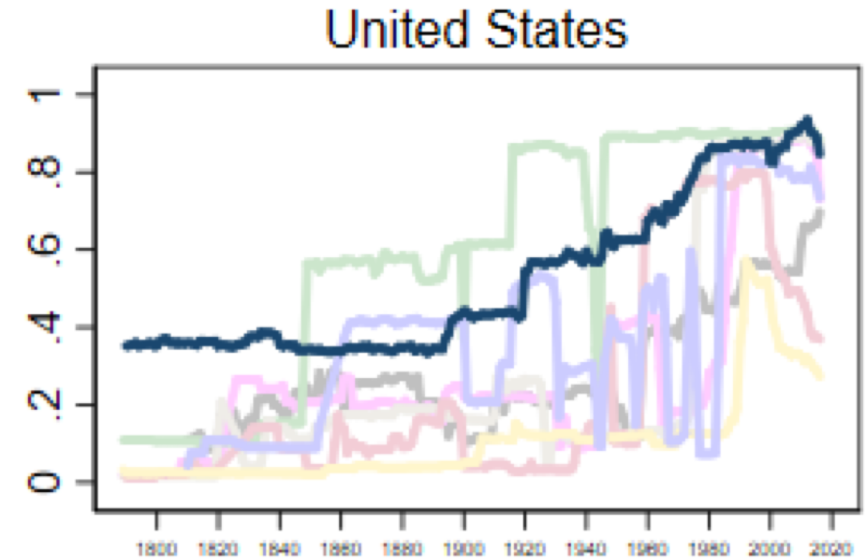
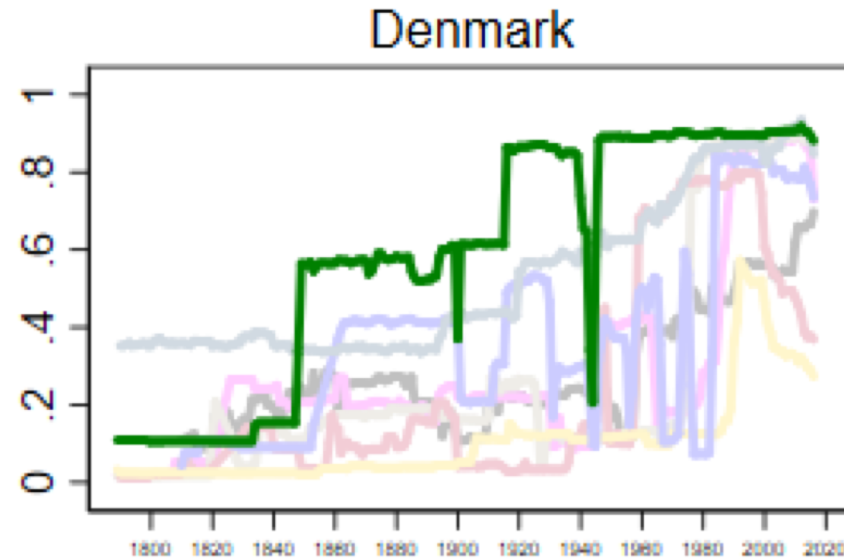
Fourth,

- Because we rely on the expertise of thousands of people from widely varying backgrounds,
- we go to great lengths to combine their scores in a way that maximizes comparability across countries and over time.*
- As a by-product of this process, we also provide estimates of measurement uncertainty – Bayesian confidence intervals.

*Kyle L. Marquardt and Daniel Pemstein. October 2018. “IRT Models for Expert-Coded Panel Data,” *Political Analysis*. DOI 0.1017/pan.2018.28

Fifth, V-Dem data now covers 1789-2018

Electoral
Democracy
Index



Thanks to our funders!



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Research
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Global Affairs
Canada

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Canada



Some Descriptive Trends

Mostly from Carl Henrik Knutsen and Svend-Erik Skaaning, “The Ups and Downs of Democracy, 1789-2017,” draft chapter for Coppedge and Lindberg, “What Have We Learned about Democratization after 230 Years?” (book manuscript in progress).

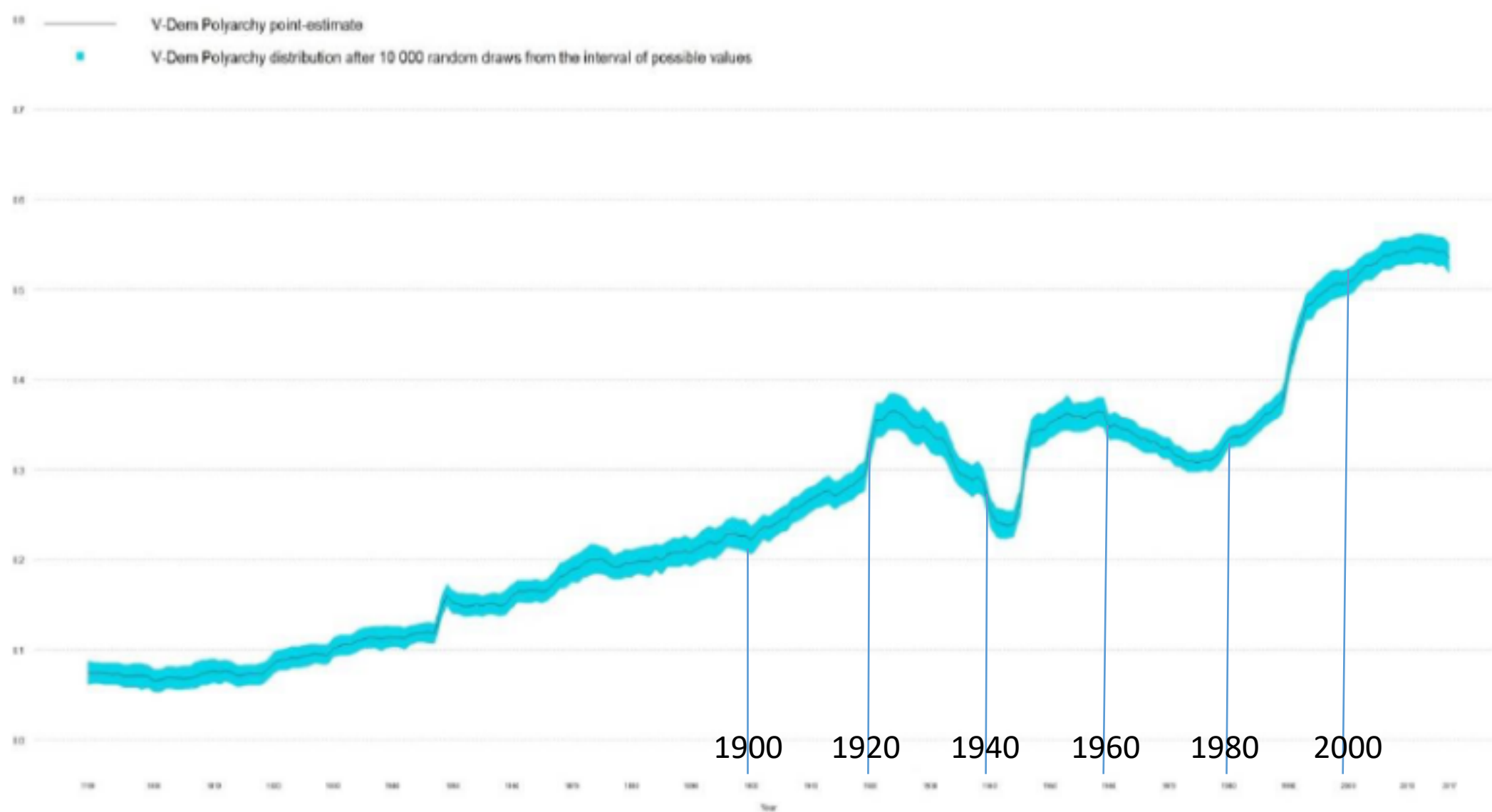


Figure 2 Global trend in Polyarchy from 1789-2017 for all independent countries

Notes: The black line represents best estimates and the blue uncertainty bounds incorporates global trends as calculated from 10,000 random draws from V-Dem dataset.

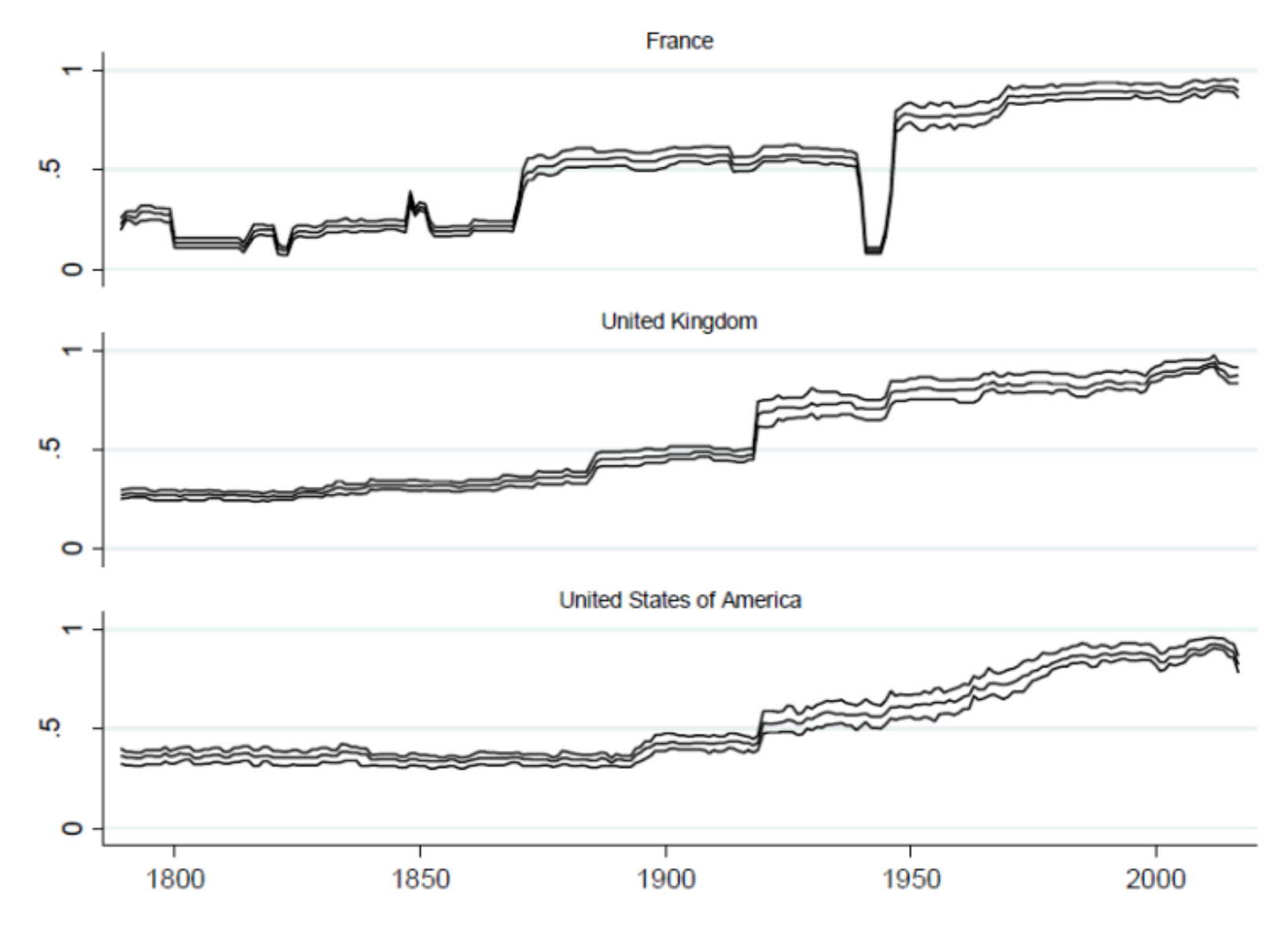
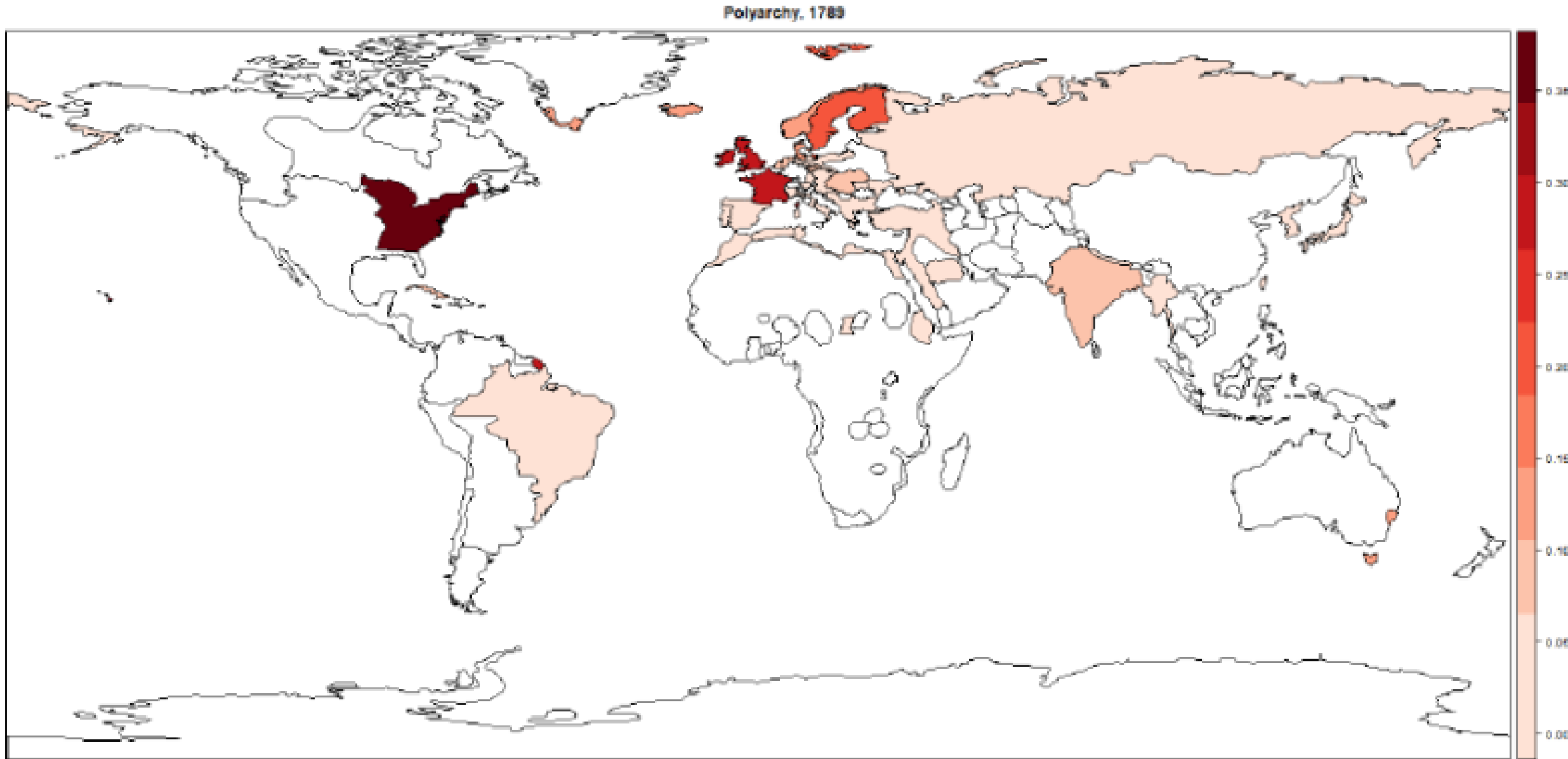
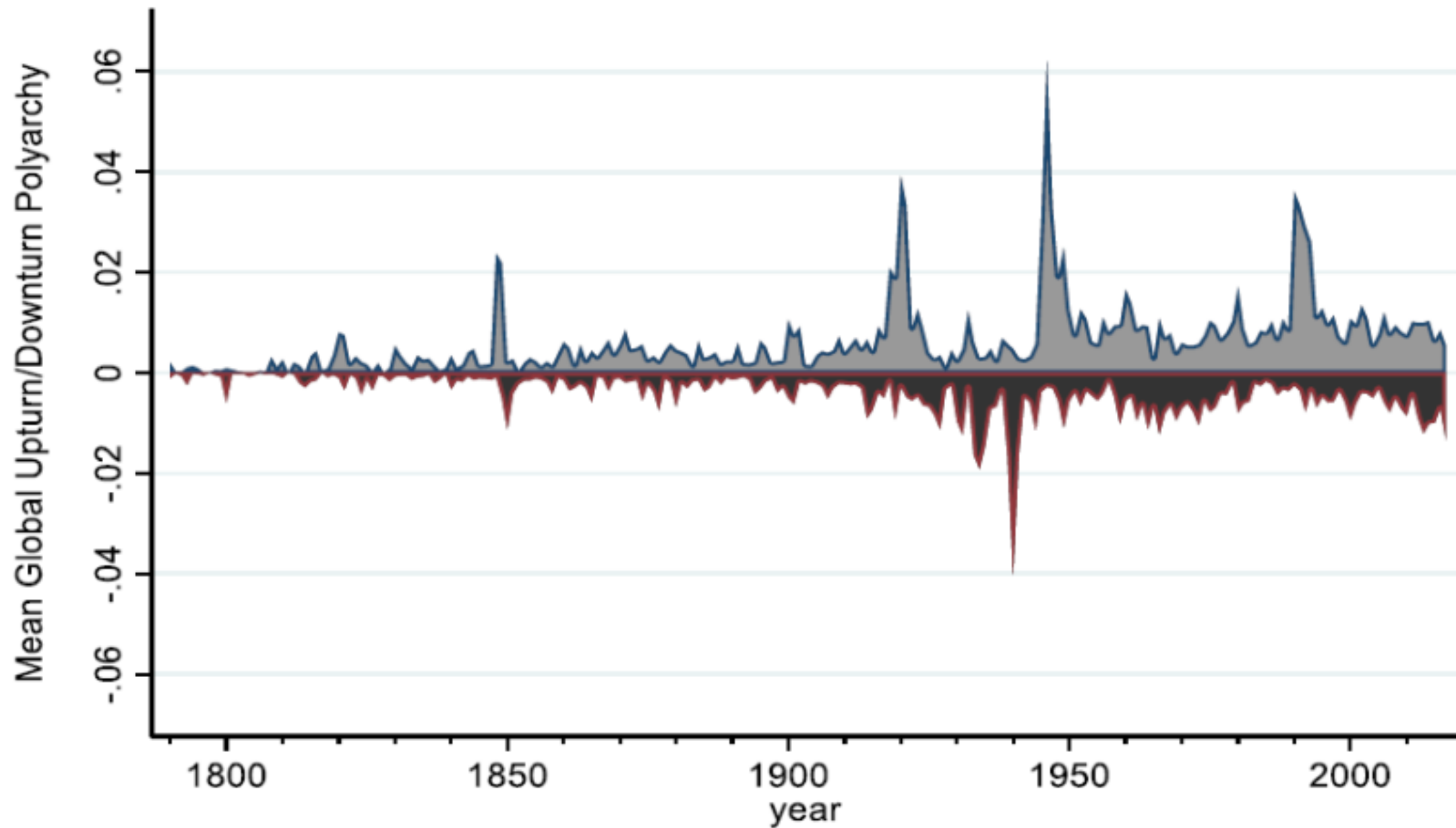


Figure 1: Polyarchy scores for France, UK, and USA.

Notes: The middle lines represents best estimates and upper/lower bounds represent scores that are located about \pm one standard deviation from the best estimates.

Figure 4: Global heat maps of electoral democracy: 1789 (maps of 1921 and 2017 TBA).





Mean Upturn Polyarchy, independent states
Mean Downturn Polyarchy, independent states

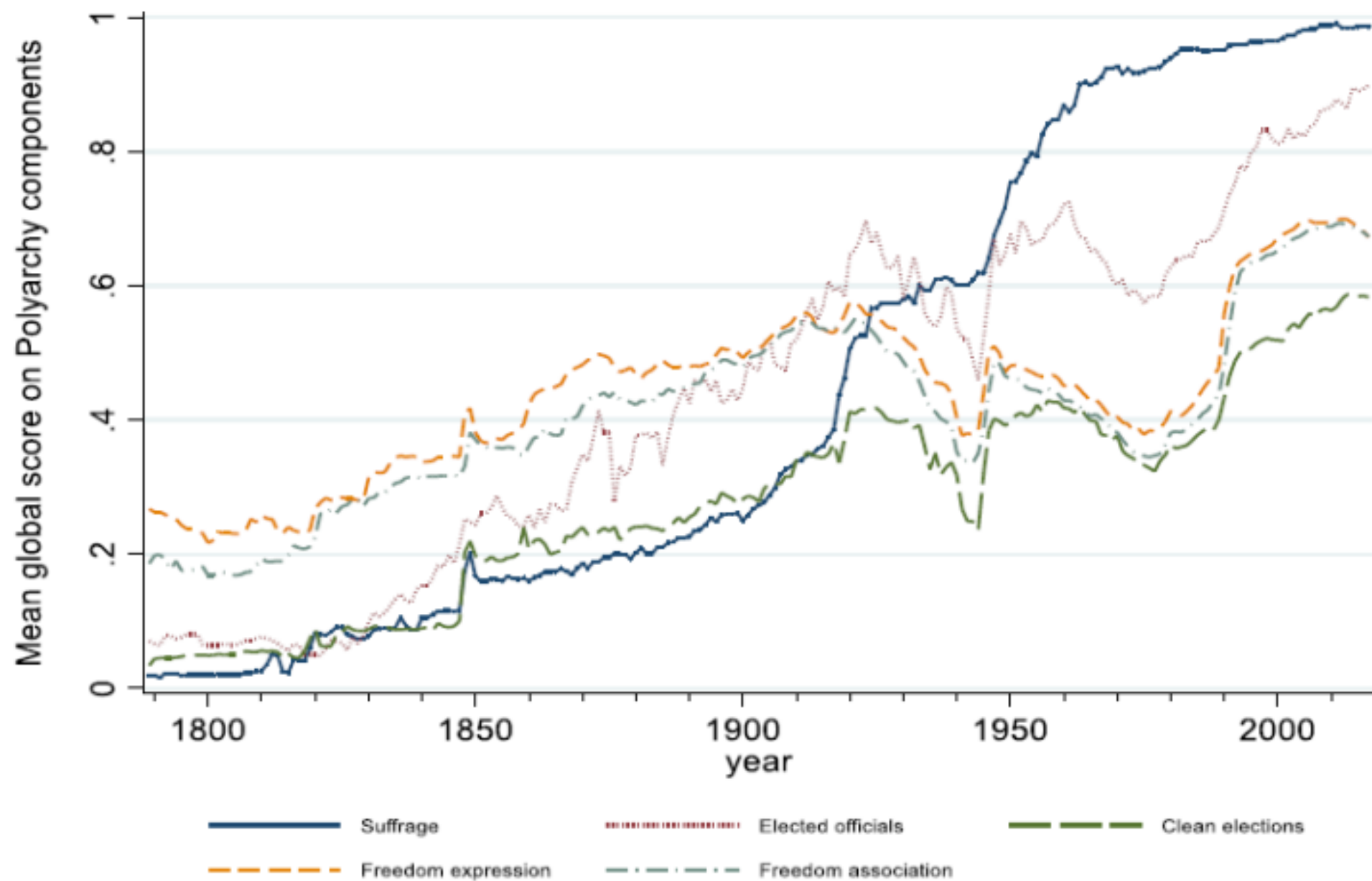
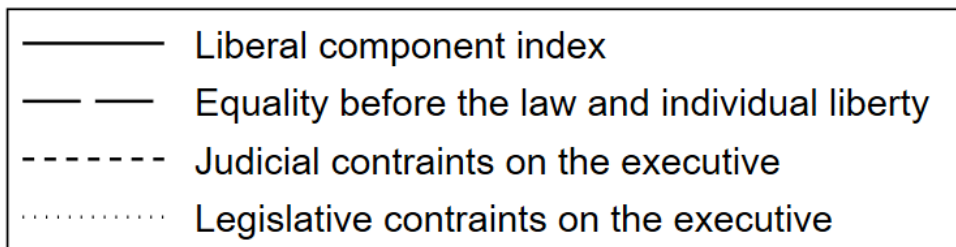
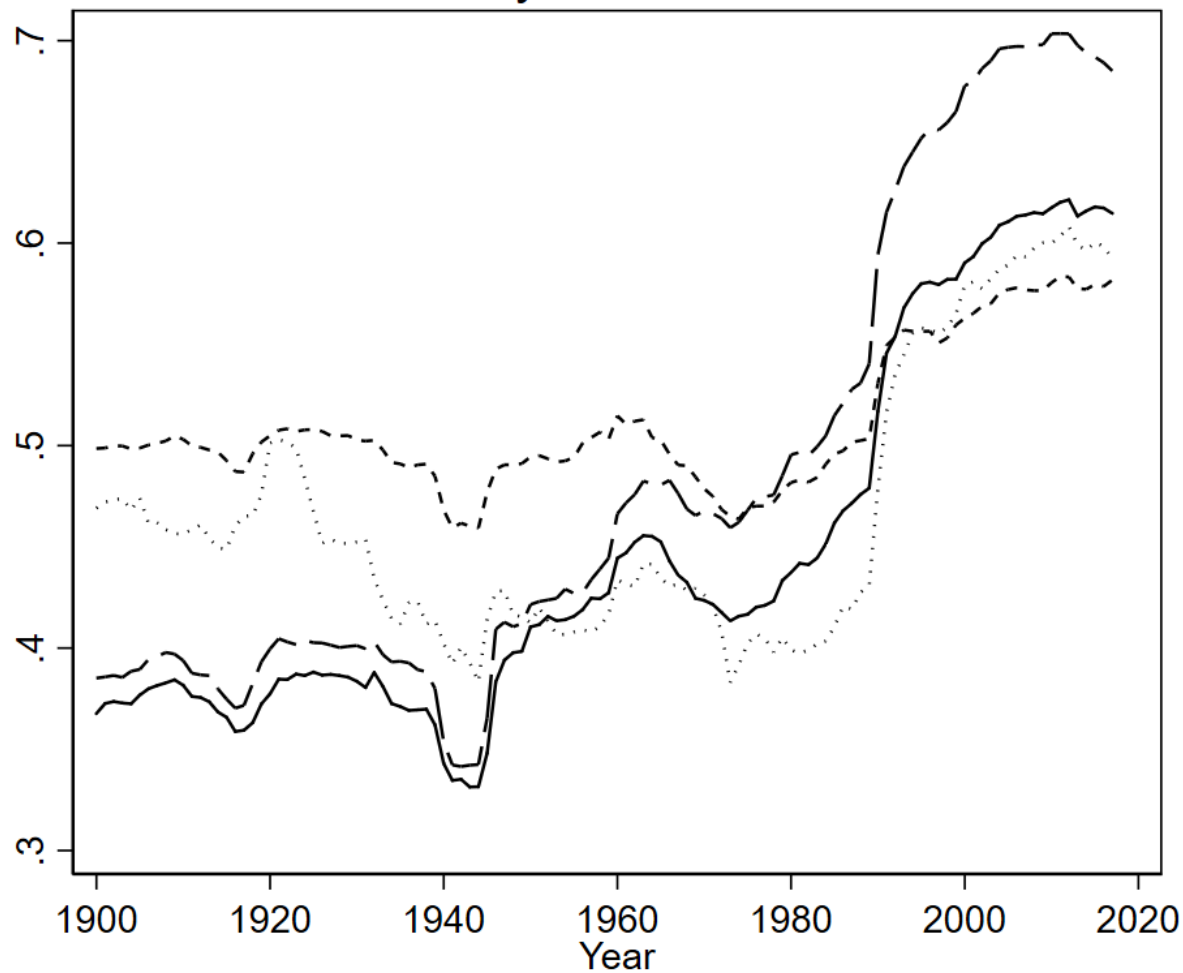
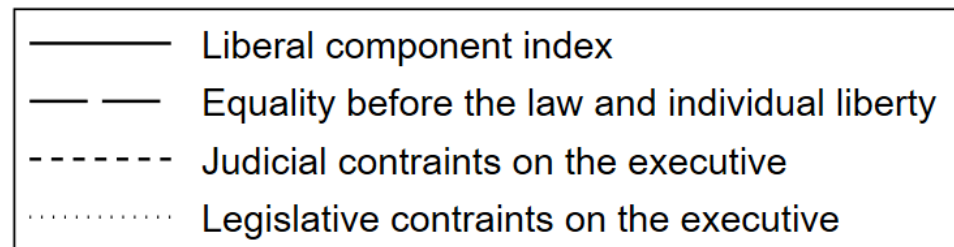
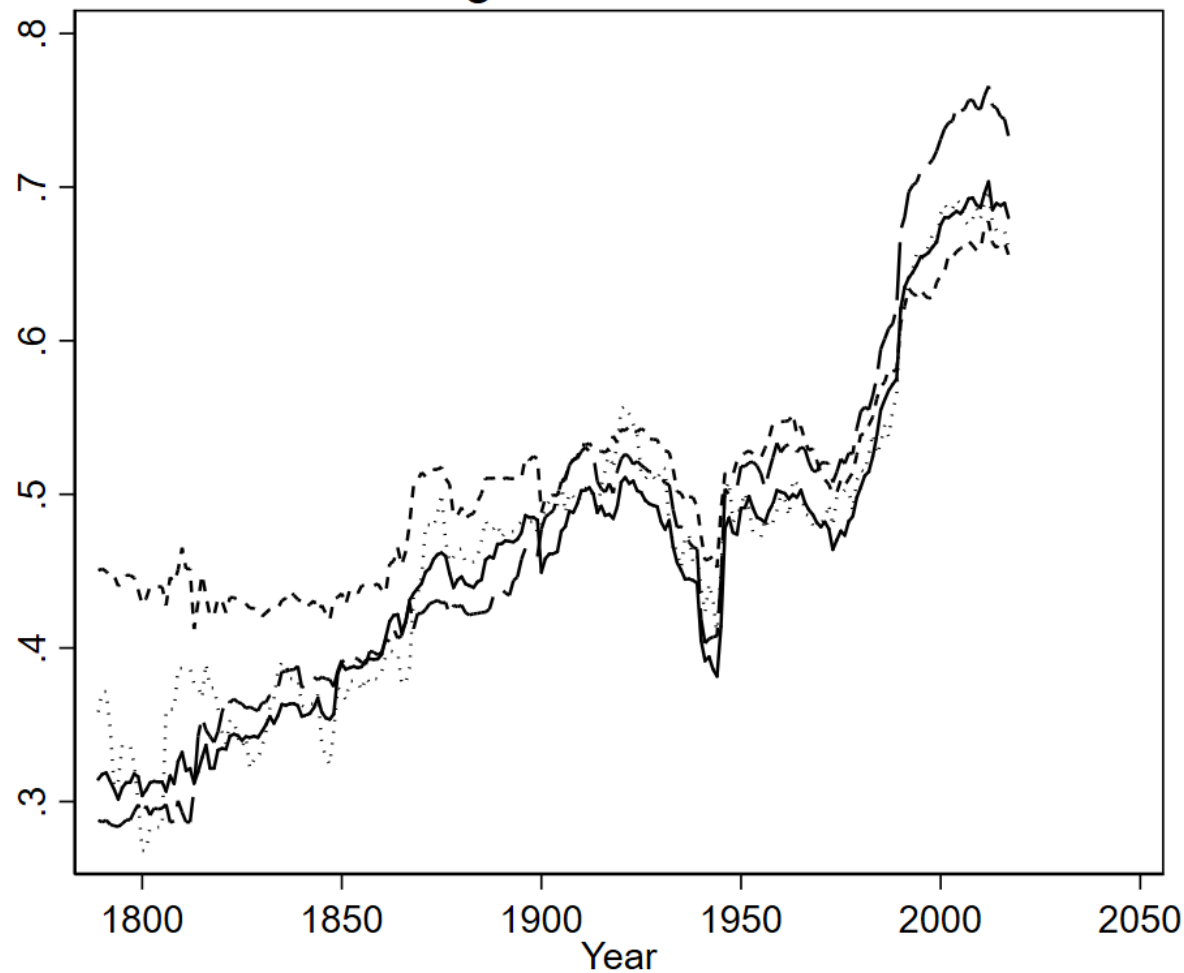


Figure 7: Mean Global Score of Polyarchy Components for all independent states

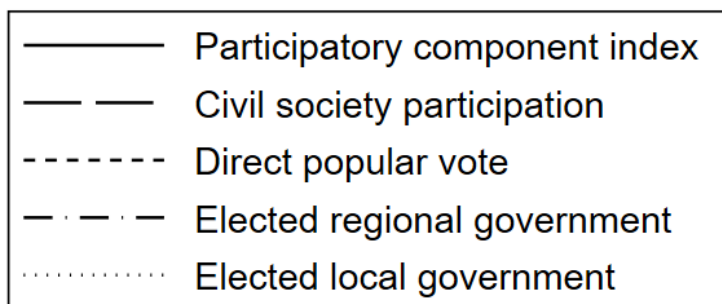
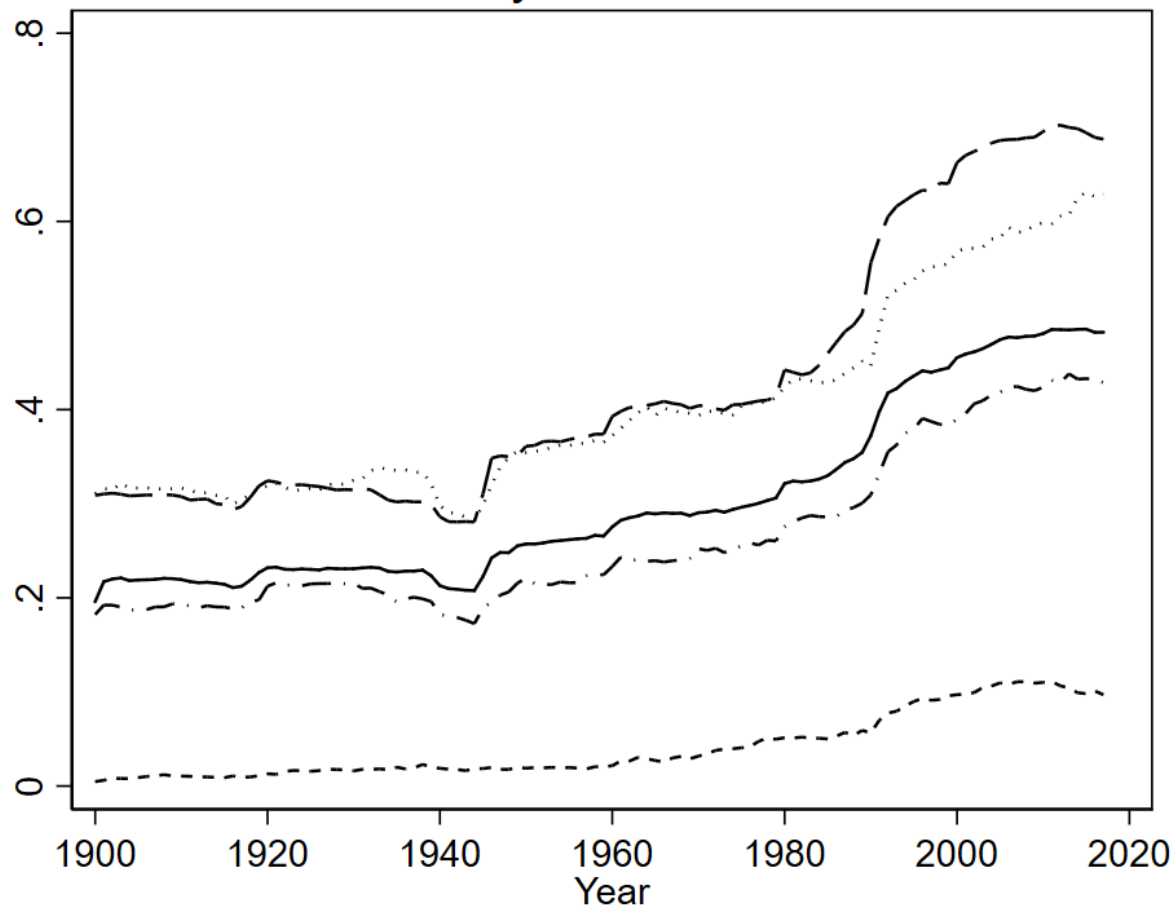
All country units since 1900



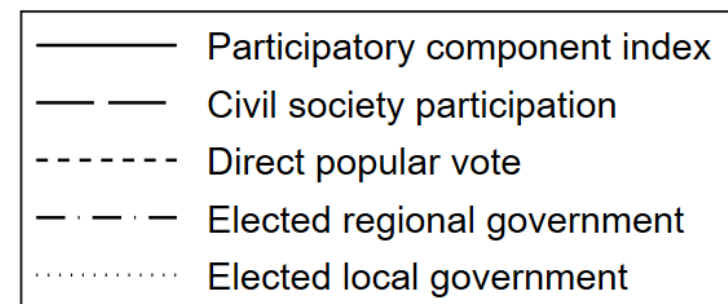
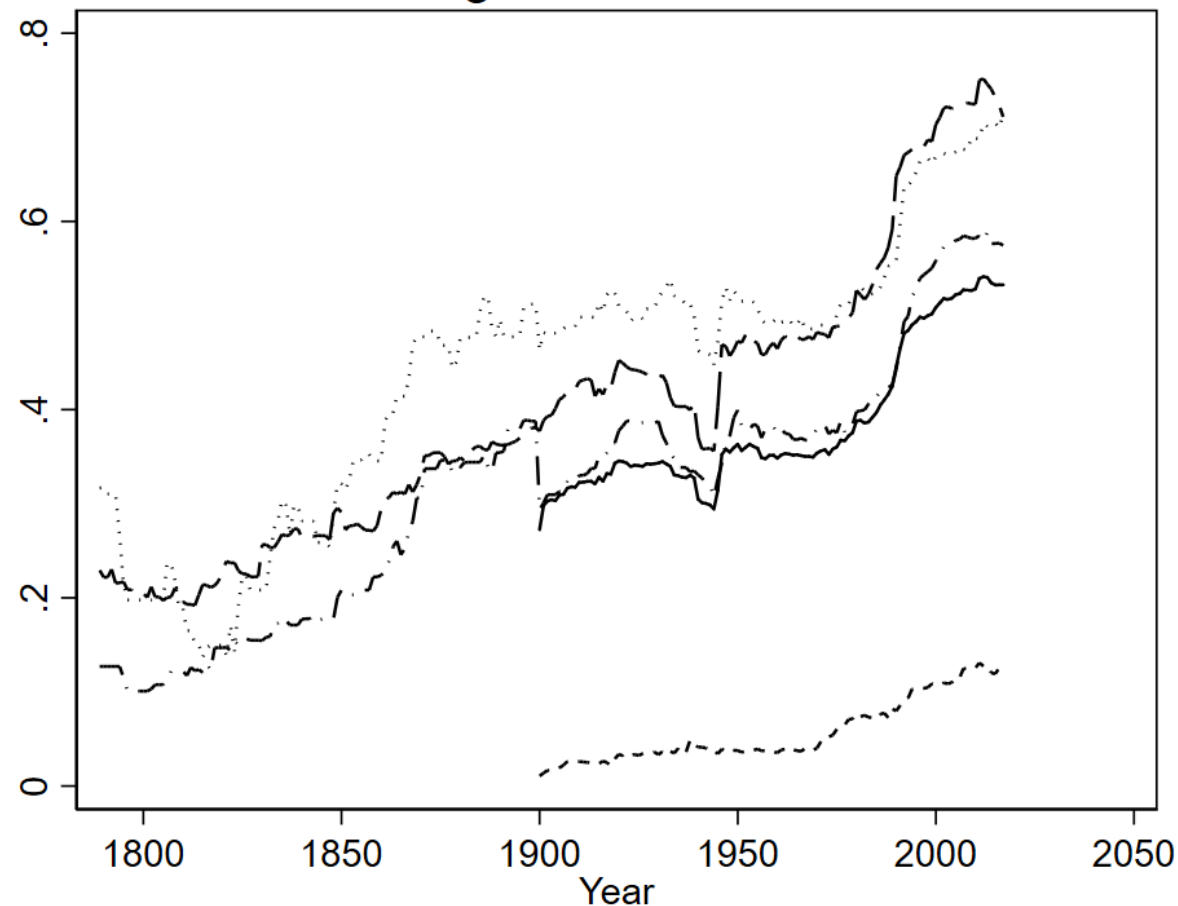
Sovereign states since 1789



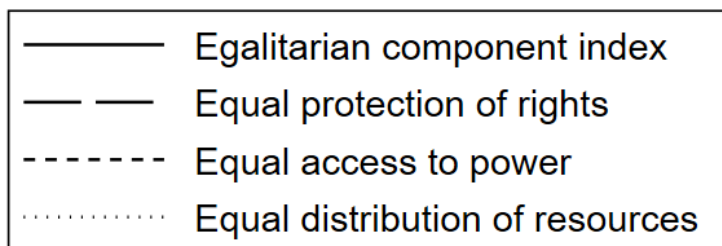
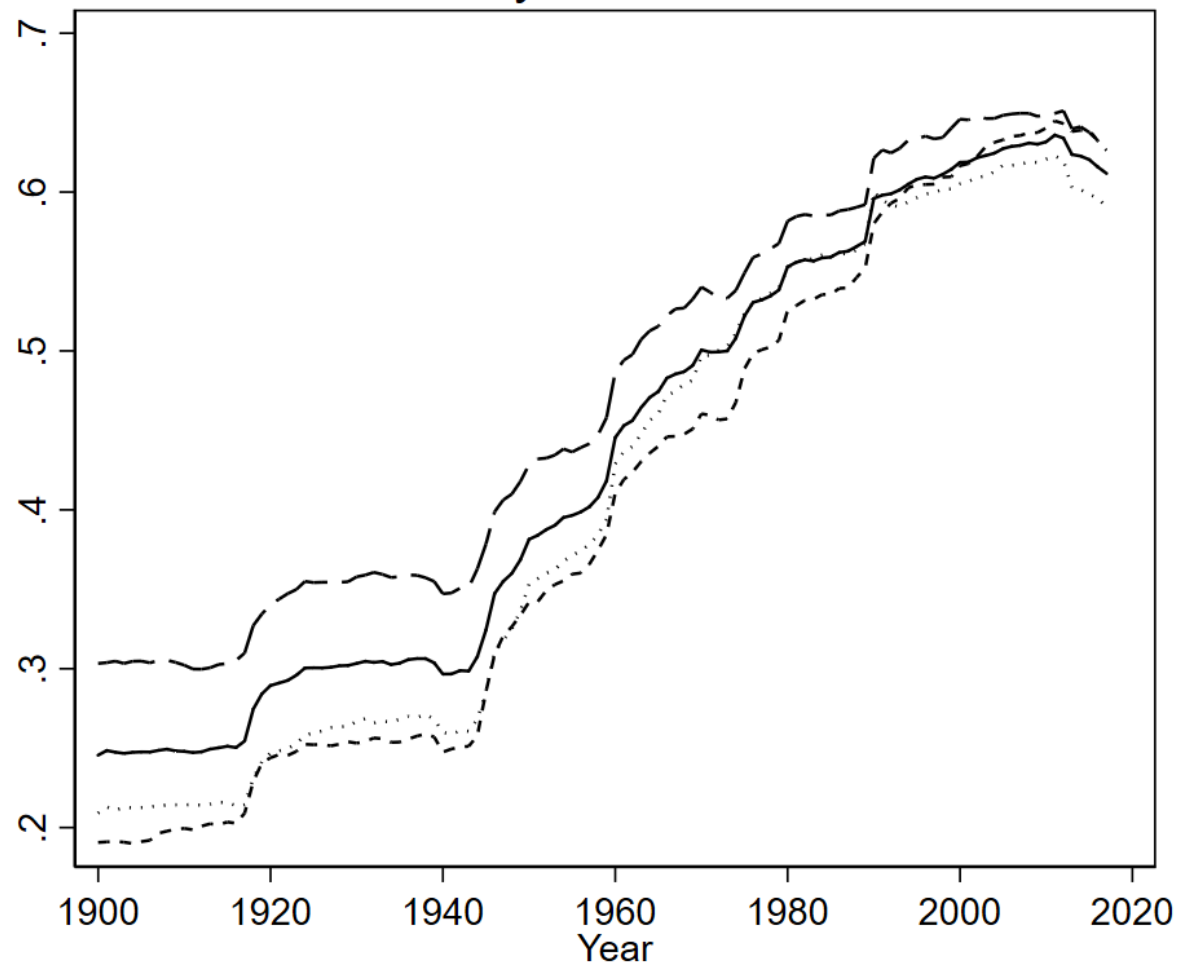
All country units since 1900



Sovereign states since 1789



All country units since 1900



Sovereign states since 1789

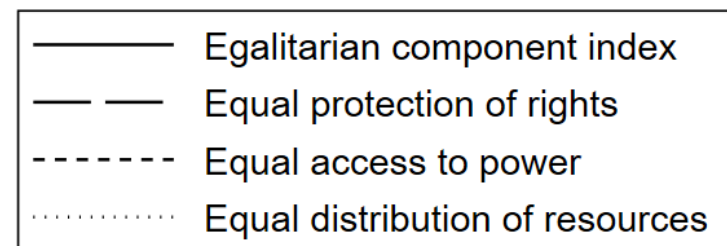
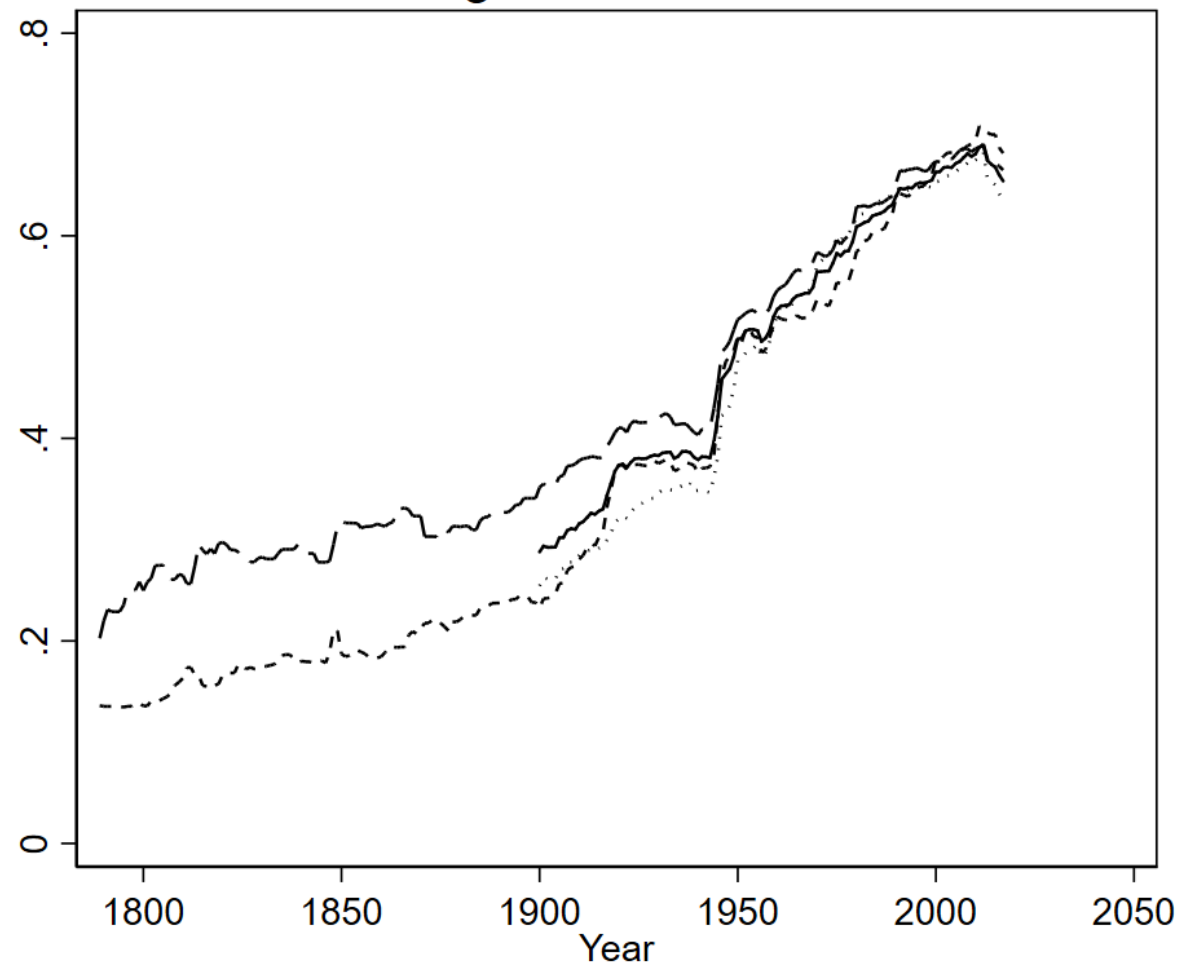
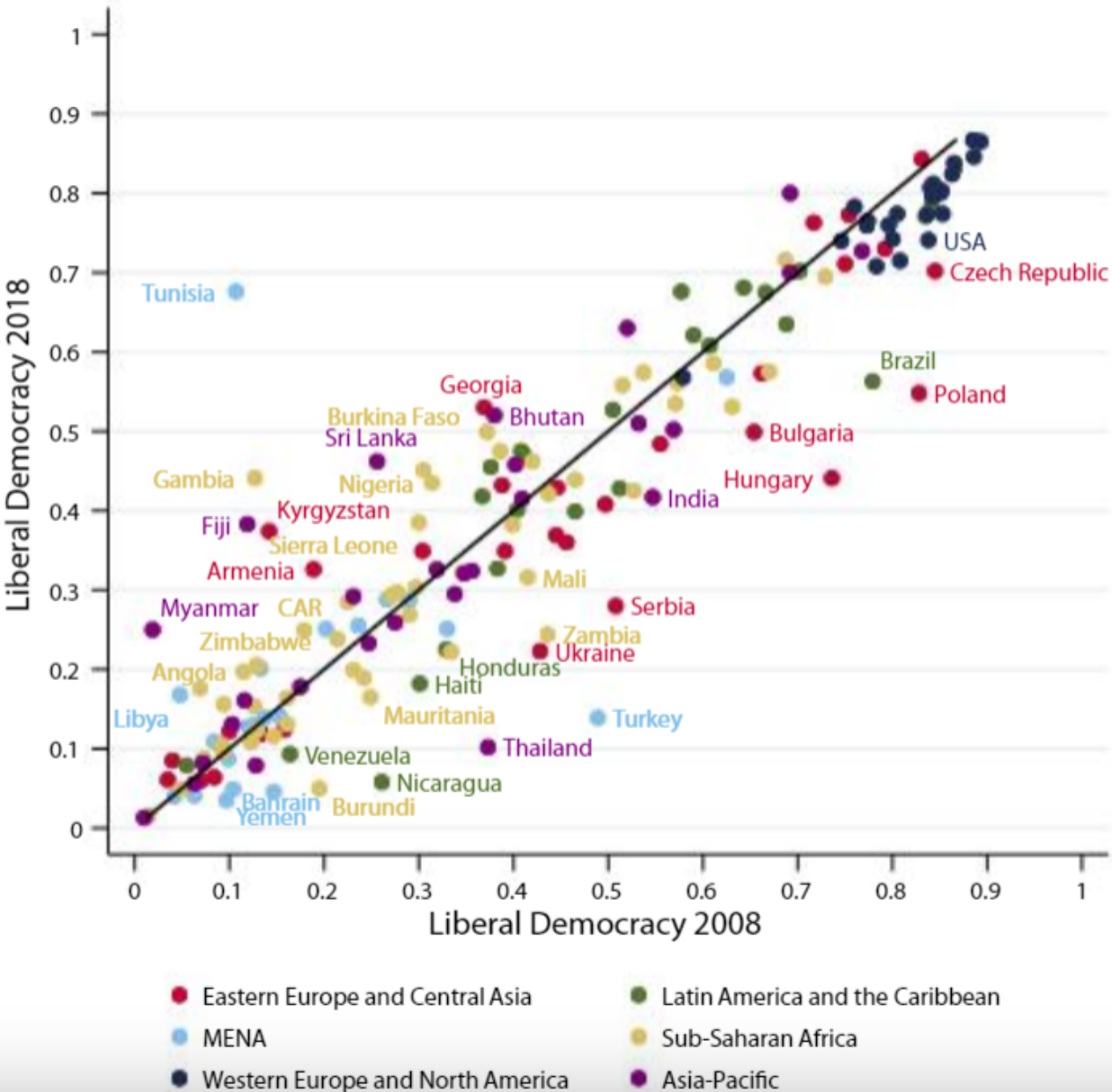


FIGURE 1.9: CHANGES IN THE LIBERAL DEMOCRACY INDEX, 2008-2018.



Source: V-Dem Democracy Report 2019

Alternative forms of the data

This would be a good time to open the dataset.

Relative scale

- Variables with no suffix: v2svinlaut, etc.
- The mean of many draws from the measurement model output
- Accompanied by *_codelow and *_codehigh bounds of the 70% highest posterior density (HPD) interval
- Best for most analyses: continuous, interval-level estimates

Ordinalized version

- Has the suffix `*_ord`
- The most probable original ordinal scale score (0, 1, 2, etc.) corresponding to the continuous MM estimates
- Includes `*_ord_codelow` and `*_ord_codehigh` HPD bounds, which are also integers.
- Appropriate if you need discrete indicators, for example for hazard rate models

Linearized Ordinal-Scale Posterior Prediction

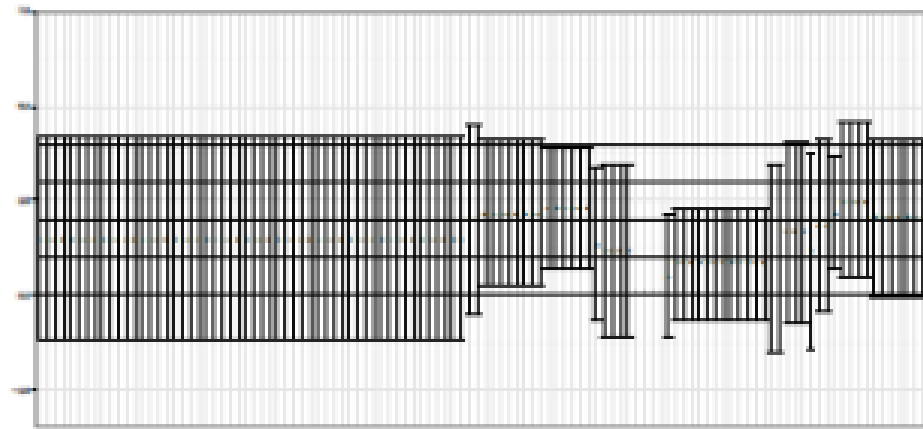
- Also called “original scale” on the website
- Has the suffix *_osp and includes upper and lower bounds
- Intended to be the MM estimates rescaled to the original scale, but with degrees of closeness
- Calculated as a weighted average of each original score, weighted by the probability of that score.
- In line graphs, makes it easier to match scores to coding criteria.
- *Do not use in analyses:* not equal intervals; not necessarily closest to the most likely score.

K-chotomy classifications

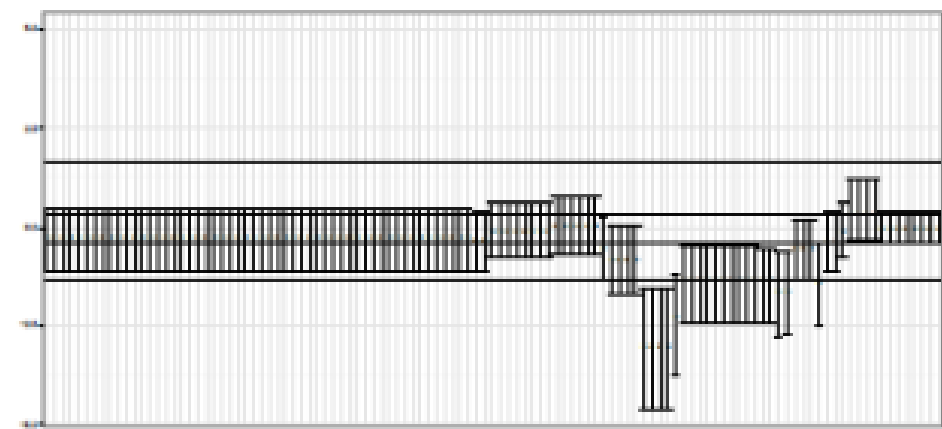
- Have suffixes *3C, *4C, or *5C
- The relative scale values divided into 3, 4, or 5 ordinal categories
- Requested by those who want all variables recoded into the same number of categories
- Not recommended for most purposes (if at all)

Four different versions

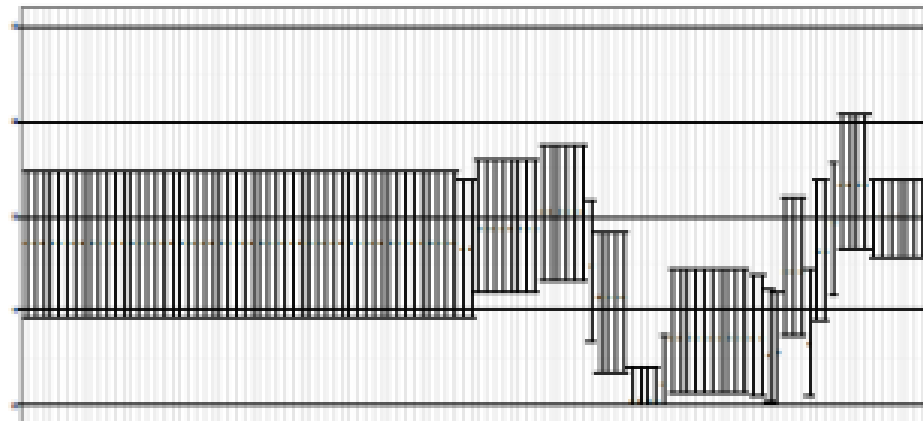
Figure 6: Longitudinal trends in freedom from political killings in Cambodia, 1900-2012



(a) Mean and standard deviation



(b) Measurement model output

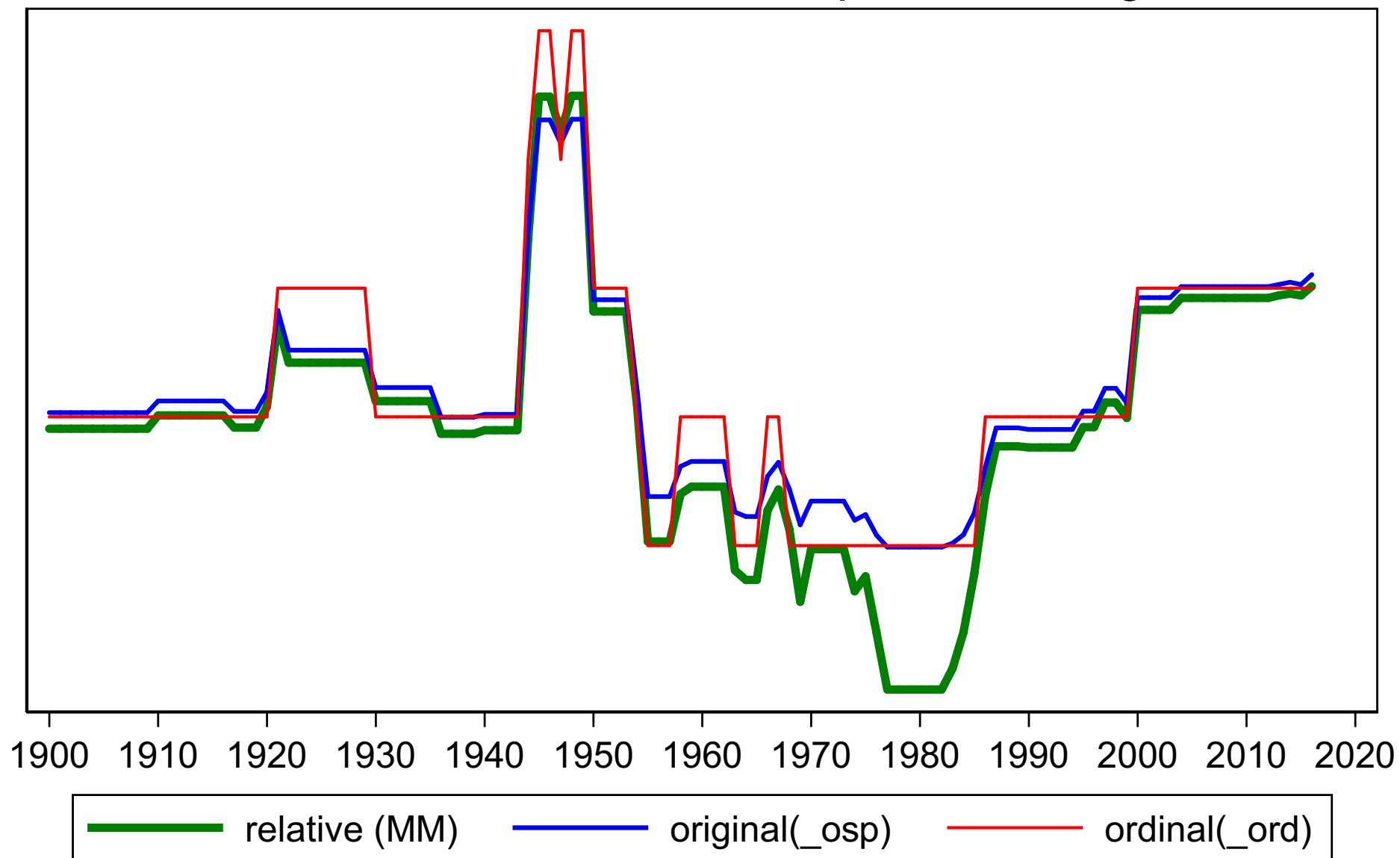


(c) Linearized original scale



(d) Ordinal scale

Guatemala: Freedom from political killings



Constants have been subtracted from original and ordinal scales to maximize overlaps.

New Surveys

Exclusion, Legitimation, V-Aut (political parties; civic and academic space):

Guest: Anna Lührmann, Deputy Director, V-Dem Institute

Digital Society Project

Guest: Daniel Pemstein, V-Dem Project Manager, measurement methods

Data Collection

Different modes of data collection

- 167 A indicators: centrally coded by PMs or RAs

Relatively objective and well documented by others

- David Altman: 38 direct democracy indicators
- Jeff Staton: 47 de jure judicial institutions
- Svend-Erik Skaaning: 1 suffrage indicator
- RAs in Sweden (81 variables):*
 - Recoding of NELDA, CCP, and other data
 - Original coding of certain characteristics of executives, legislatures, and elections
 - 9 of these are pre-coded before surveys go out

Different modes of data collection

- B data: coded by Country Coordinators
 - Relatively objective but hard to find
 - 27 indicators of characteristics of executives, legislators, and elections
 - A growing number of these are now being coded centrally
- D data: 86 indices or other variables calculated from V-Dem variables
- 24 Post-Survey Questions (coder characteristics, not public)
- E data: 179 indicators from other datasets (being reduced)

236 C indicators, from online surveys

These require subjective judgment

- 37 on Elections
 - 27 on Civil liberties
 - 24 on Executive
 - 15 on Political parties
 - 14 on Legislature
 - 13 on Judiciary
 - 11 on Media
 - 10 on Civil society
 - 7 on Political equality
 - 7 on Deliberation
 - 4 on Sovereignty
 - 4 on Regime Legitimation
 - 25 on Exclusion
 - 38 on Digital Society
- New!

+ 97 new indicators for Historical V-Dem

The Process

- In the first waves, we collected data in short waves throughout the year, as funding and technology permitted.
- Now we collect data once a year
 - “A” data updated mid-year
 - Coders recruited in the fall
 - All “C” ratings submitted in January
 - Measurement model run and cleaning done in February and March
 - Data released in April
 - Along with annual “Democracy Report”

The country experts

- We have multiple thematic “surveys”
- Most country experts do multiple surveys; few can do all of them
- We aim for at least 5 country experts per question for each country-year
- We don’t publish data based on fewer than 3 country experts
- All country experts are anonymous
- After the survey, they are invited to answer “vignette” questions
- We have sometimes done survey experiments, as with forecasting in v9.

The surveys

- Available in English, Spanish, French, Russian, Portuguese, and Arabic.
- In the initial waves (through 2012), country experts answered each question for each year, 1900 (or first year of existence) to 2012.
- However, most election questions are coded only for election years.
- The survey interface contains a grid of years by decade that makes it easy to code spans of years at a time.
- Country experts have to assign 0-100% confidence to each rating.
- They have opportunities to type in comments.
- Since 2012, for continuing questions, we have done updates. Updates go back 10-15 years to help link up with earlier data.
- New questions go back varying lengths of time.

2Civil_Liberties (Sweden)

1. Read Question. 2. Click & drag to select years. 3. Apply or Edit specific dates, if desired. 4. Apply or type response. 5. Rate Confidence. 6. Submit. 7. Repeat for remaining years. 8. Click "Next".

Undo

(Freedom of domestic movement for women) :

Do women enjoy freedom of movement within the country? Clarification: This indicator specifies the extent to which all men are able to move freely, in daytime and nighttime, in public thoroughfares, across regions within a country, and to establish permanent residency where they wish. Note that restrictions in movement might be imposed by the state and/or by informal norms and practices. Such restrictions sometimes fall on rural residents, on specific social groups, or on dissidents. This question does not ask you to assess the relative freedom of men and women. Thus, it is possible to assign the lowest possible score to a country even if men and women enjoy equal and extremely low freedom of movement. Do not consider restrictions in movement that are placed on ordinary (non-political) criminals. Do not consider restrictions in movement that result from crime or unrest.

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Min: 0 Max: 4

- ☐ (0) Virtually no women enjoy full freedom of movement (e.g., North Korea or Afghanistan under the Taliban).
- ☐ (1) Some women enjoy full freedom of movement, but most do not (e.g., Apartheid South Africa).
- ☐ (2) Most women enjoy some freedom of movement but a sizeable minority does not. Alternatively all women enjoy partial freedom of movement.
- ☐ (3) Most women enjoy full freedom of movement but a small minority does not.
- ☐ (4) Virtually all women enjoy full freedom of movement.

Confidence: 0%



I have no idea at all. (Any scores accompanied by a confidence level of zero will be treated as missing data.)

Submit

	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09
1900	1900	1901	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909
1910	1910	1911	1912	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919
1920	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929
1930	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
1940	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949
1950	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959
1960	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969
1970	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
1980	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
1990	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
2000	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
2010	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015				

Click and drag to select range of years, Ctrl-click (Command-click for Mac) to unselect.

Specific Dates:

New Date:

Add

Del

Edit

Legend

'▲': At least one date in this cell does not have an answer.

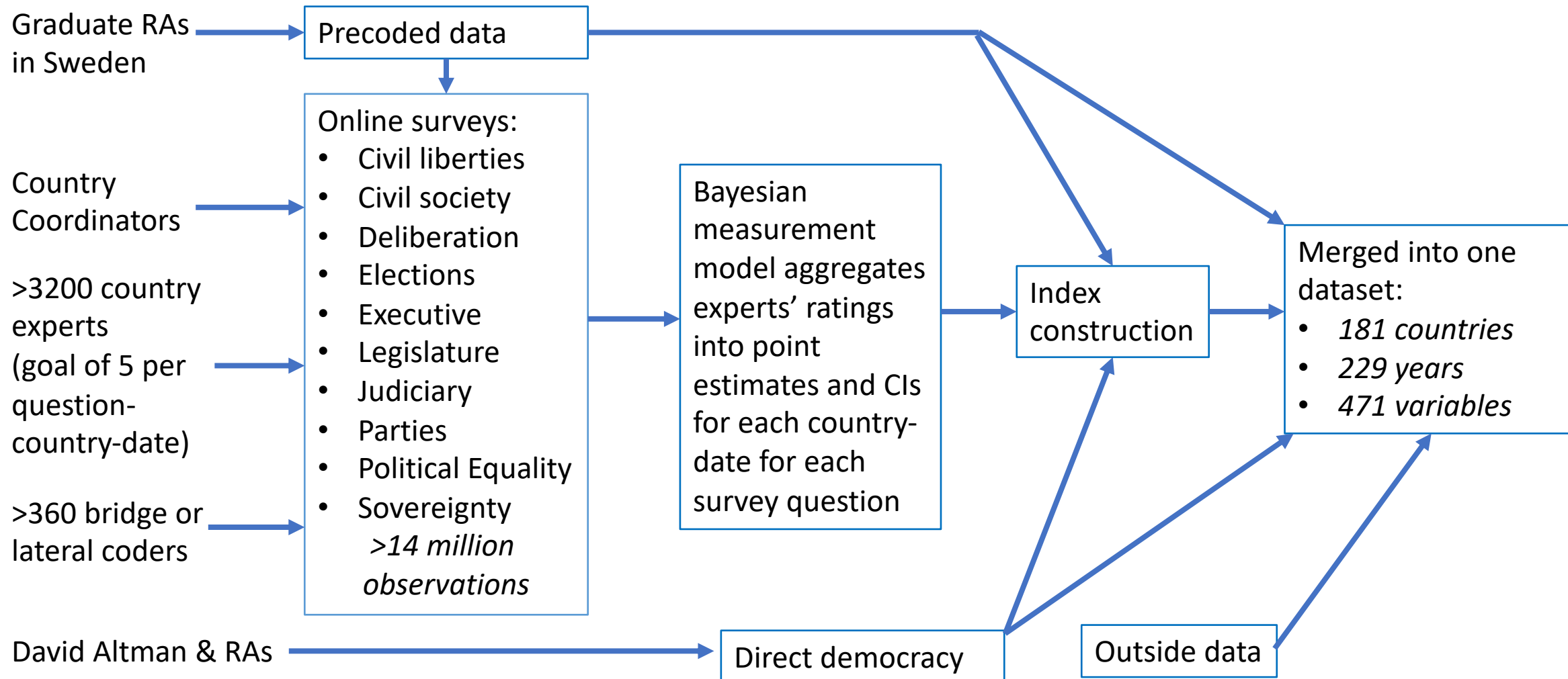
'⚠': All dates in this cell have an answer, but at least one does not have a confidence rating.

'✅': All dates in this cell have both an answer and a confidence rating.

Three kinds of coding

- Country experts
 - Typically code one country for 1900-present
 - They provide the within-country trends and much of the guidance about levels
- Lateral coders
 - Typically code several countries for one year (2012)
 - They improve the cross-national comparability
- Bridge coders
 - They code more than one country for the whole 1900-present period.
 - Most valuable but hard to recruit!

How do we generate V-Dem data?



Ongoing improvements

- More bridge coding
- Historical V-Dem (Teorell, Knutsen, Gerring, Skaaning, Ziblatt, Cornell)
 - Back to 1789 or 1800, wherever possible
 - One expert per country, chosen for historical expertise
- Vignettes (Seim, Glynn, Pemstein, Gerring)
 - The recommended way to anchor coder thresholds
 - This is being done for updates since 2016.
 - We have >50,000 vignette ratings so far.
 - It asks experts to rate a pair of hypothetical vignettes on several key variables in each survey they do.
 - It does not cover all past coders, but will help. Eventually we hope to have almost all past coders answer the vignettes.

Using the site: v-dem.net

Online analysis tools, downloading, archive, reference materials available online

Thirteen different analysis tools are now available online!

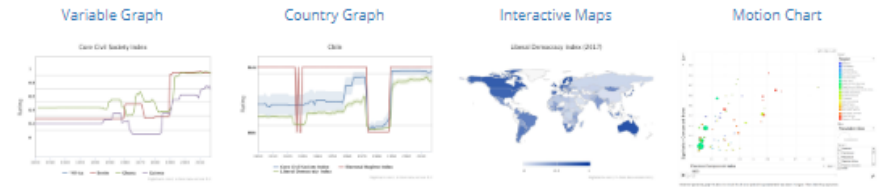
For a better (IMHO) motion chart, use one of the two at http://sites.nd.edu/michael-coppedge/?page_id=28
Includes one back to 1789!

V-Dem Graphing Tools

The V-Dem Graphing Tools is a new platform for data visualization. Here you find user-friendly tools specially designed to visualize V-Dem data in various forms depending on your needs and interest. Select one of the tools to start exploring the data!

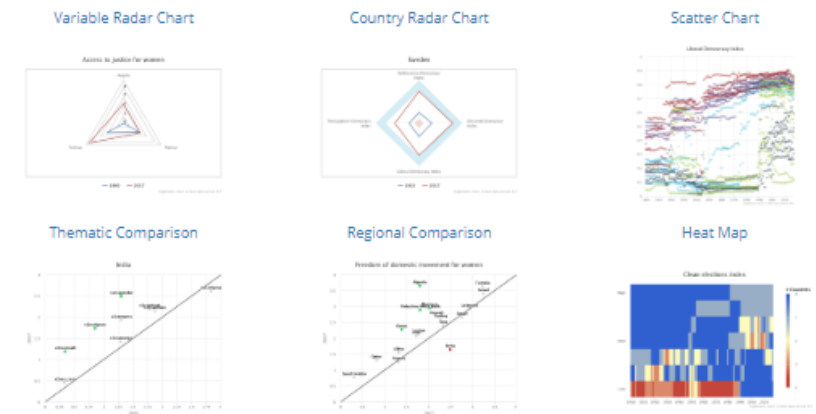
Featured Tools

We recommend that you start exploring data with our featured tools: variable and country graphs, interactive maps and motion chart. Simple and user-friendly interfaces allow you to explore 450 aspects of democracy for all countries in the world over the last 100 years.



Charts Tools

These brand-new tools make it possible to create even more detailed and nuanced charts, complex graphics and heat maps.



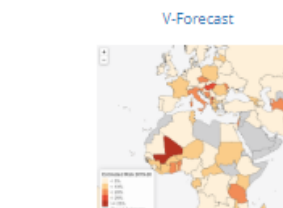
Sequence & Contingency Tools

These tools are recommended for advanced users who are keen to learn more about sequencing mechanisms and contingency conditions.



Forecasting Tool

This tool provides an interactive dashboard for the V-Forecast: Predicting Adverse Regime Transition project.



Measurement Model

Measurement model team

Current team members

- Daniel Pemstein, Project Manager
- Kyle L. Marquardt, Research Fellow
- Lisa Gastaldi, Data Manager
- Johannes von Römer, Data Manager
- Nina Ilchenko, Data Manager

Former team members

- Eitan Tzelgov, former Research Fellow
- Yi-ting Wang, former Research Fellow
- Joshua Krusell, Data Manager
- Farhad Miri, Data Manager

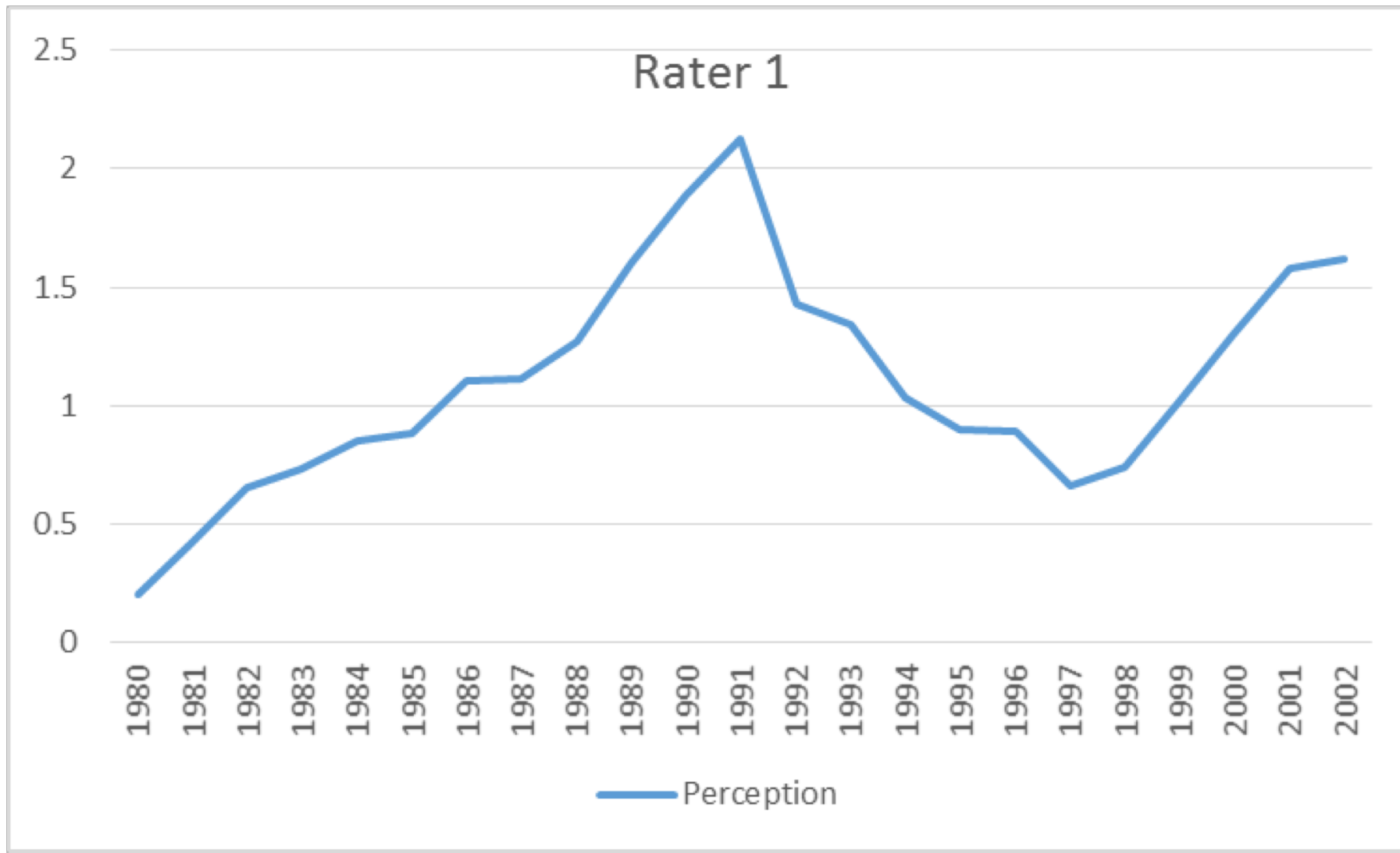
Typical expert-rating projects

- Assume that experts rate without error
 - All interpret ordinal thresholds the same way: your “2” is the same as my “2”
 - even if they are coding different countries.
 - All experts are either
 - Perfectly skillful (when there is one expert)
 - or equally skillful (when there are multiple experts)
- V-Dem knows these are not safe assumptions.

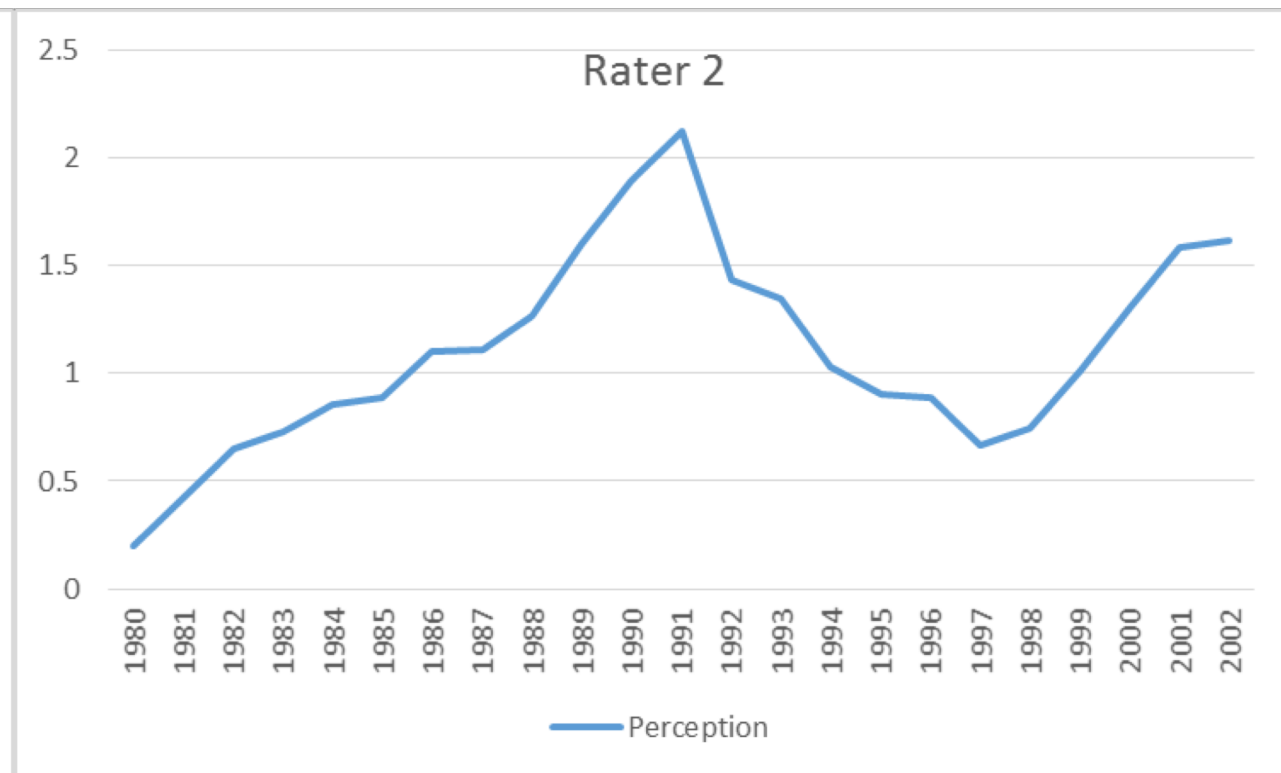
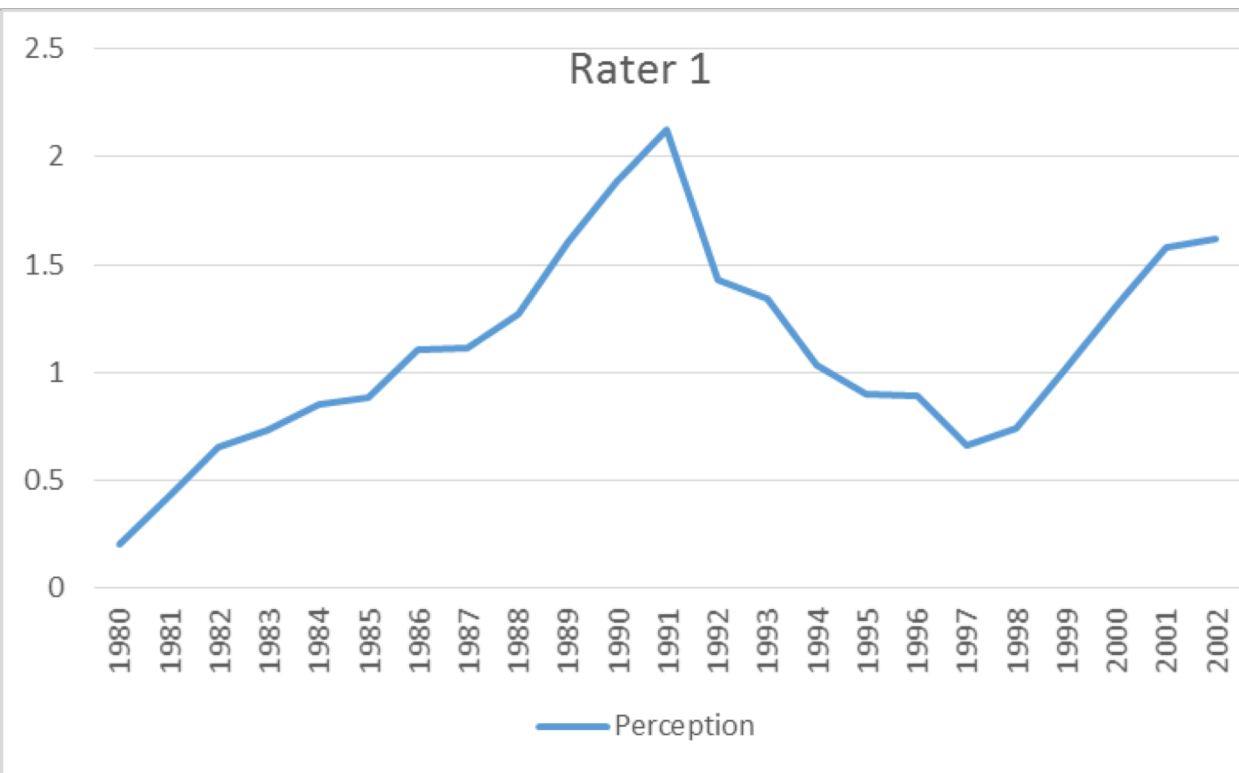
Measurement challenges

- Some coders are less reliable than others.
 - Differences in amount of knowledge
 - Differences in type of knowledge
 - Differences in diligence: time spent, care, precision
- Differential Item Functioning (DIF)
 - Which information is relevant for answering this question?
 - How should I interpret the thresholds between the ordinal scores?
- Coders of the same country interpret our ordinal scales differently.
- Coders of different countries may interpret the scales differently.

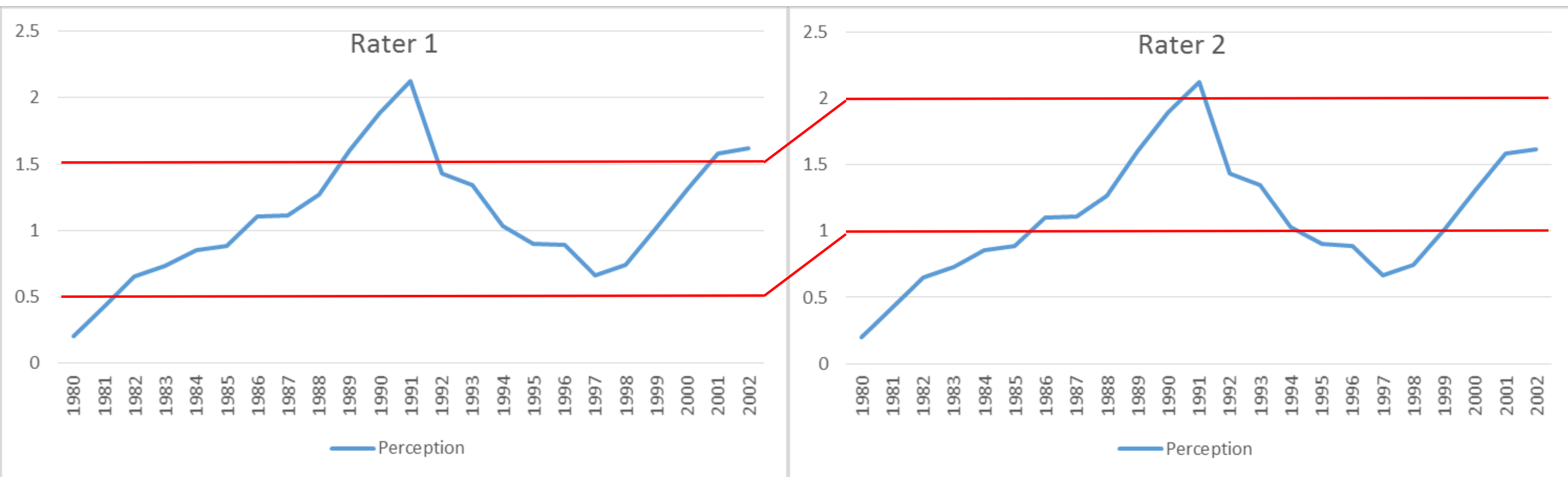
We assume that coders/raters *perceive* a *continuous* underlying reality.



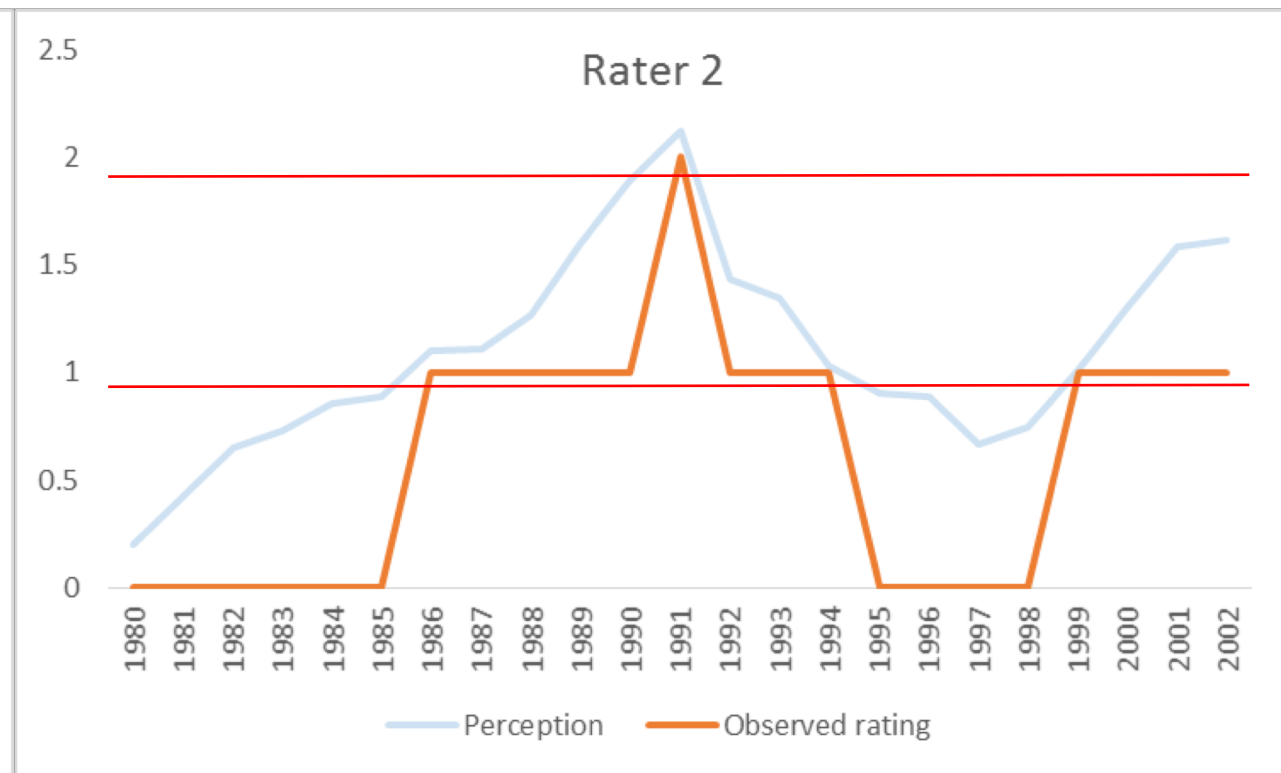
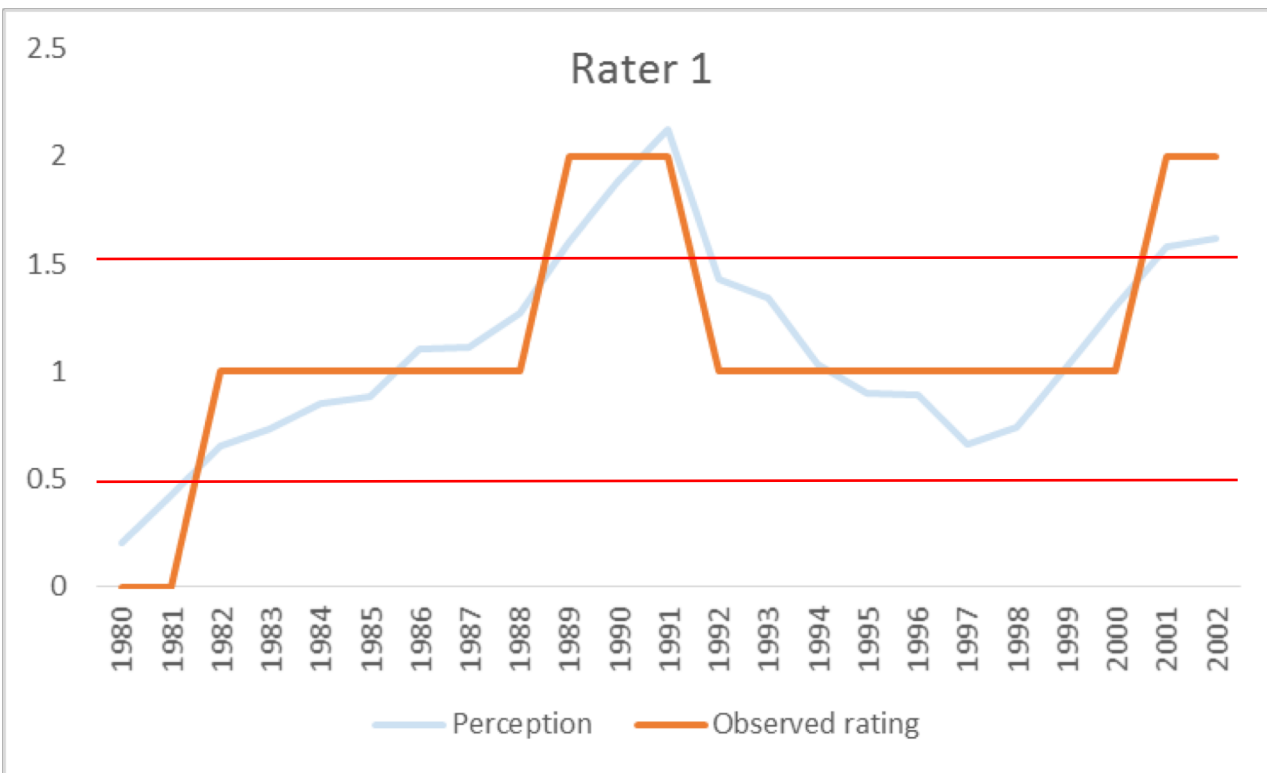
However, raters who perceive the same reality. . .



. . .but with different ordinal thresholds. . .



...can express their perceptions differently.



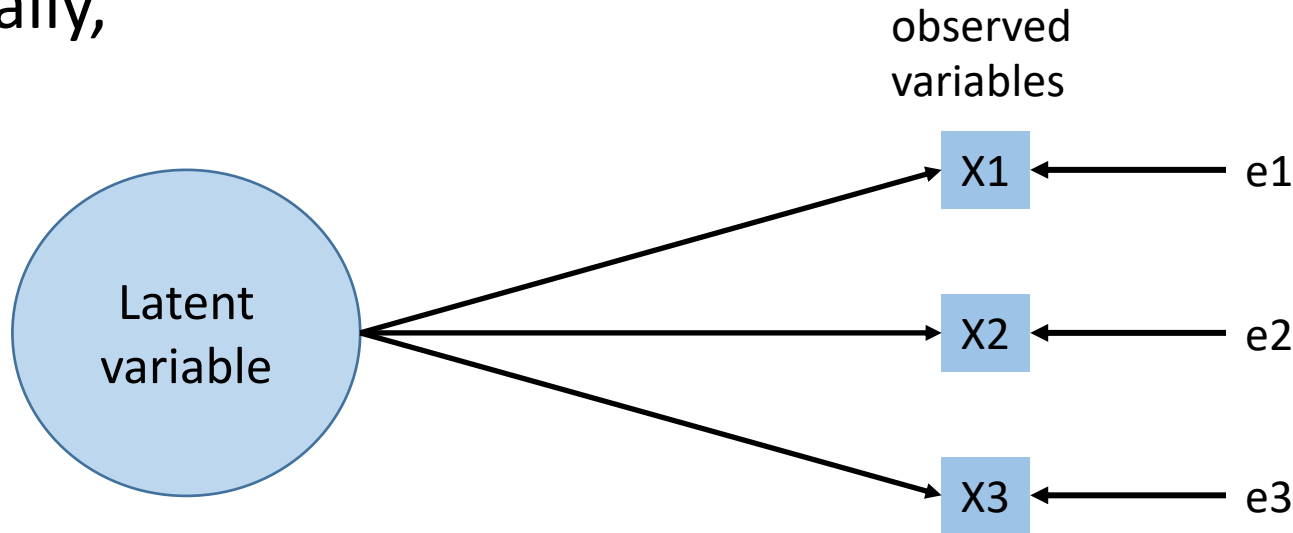
The result:



- It's also possible that raters who ***agree*** on their observed ratings perceive different realities!
- So it's very important to get good estimates of raters' thresholds on each indicator.
- Dan Pemstein custom-designed a Bayesian Ordinal IRT measurement model to estimate these and other parameters. It now incorporates innovations by Kyle Marquardt and others as well.

Latent variables

- These are a class of models in which only some variables are observed (or “manifest”); others are unobserved (or “latent”).
- E.g., factor analysis, principal components
- Typically,

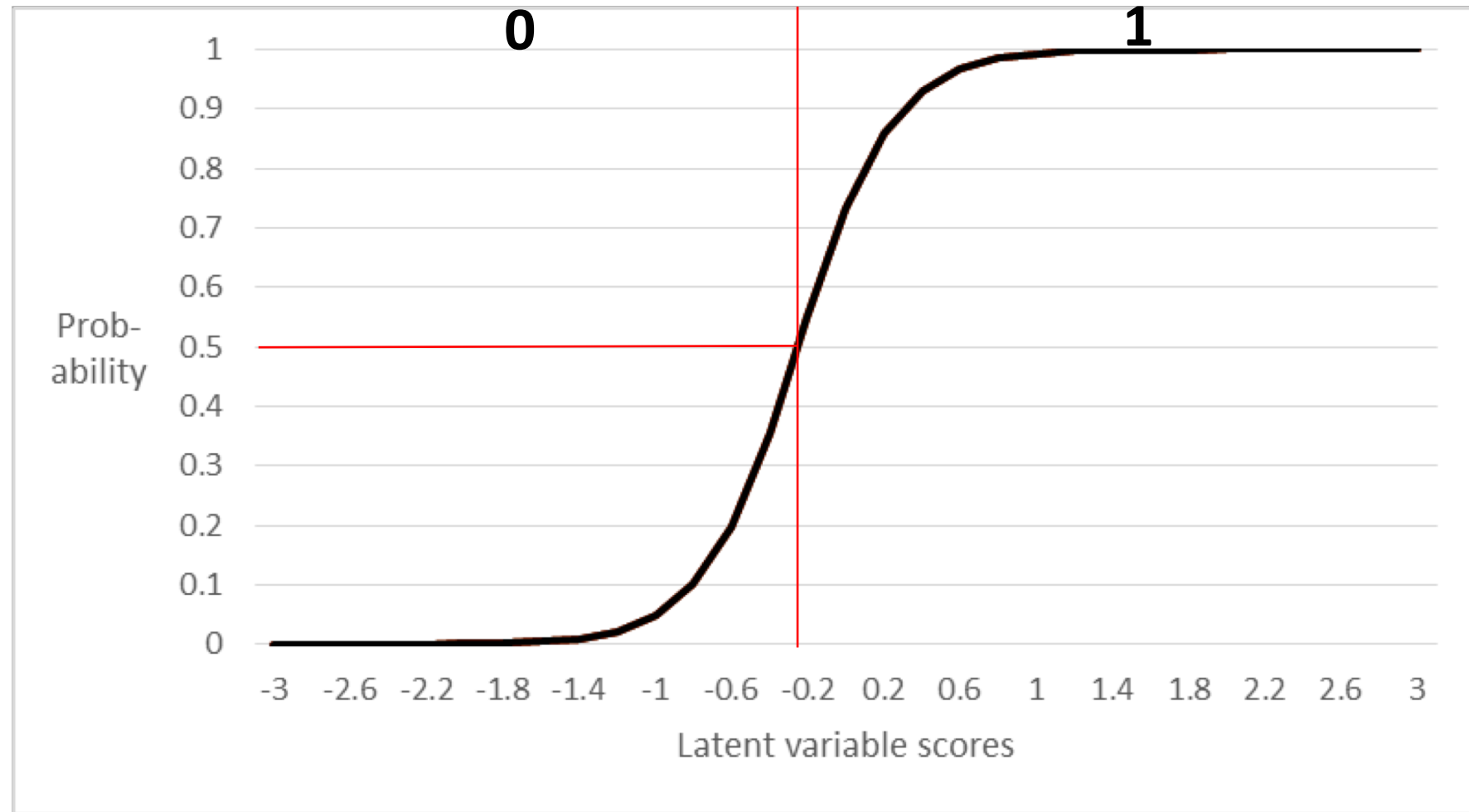


These can be estimated as a set of simultaneous equations: one for X1, one for X2, one for X3.

The Item-Response Theory (IRT) Framework: A special type of latent-variable model

We can understand observed ordinal scores as being above or below a threshold on a latent variable.

The higher the threshold, the more democratic the perceived reality must be to earn a higher ordinal score from the coder.



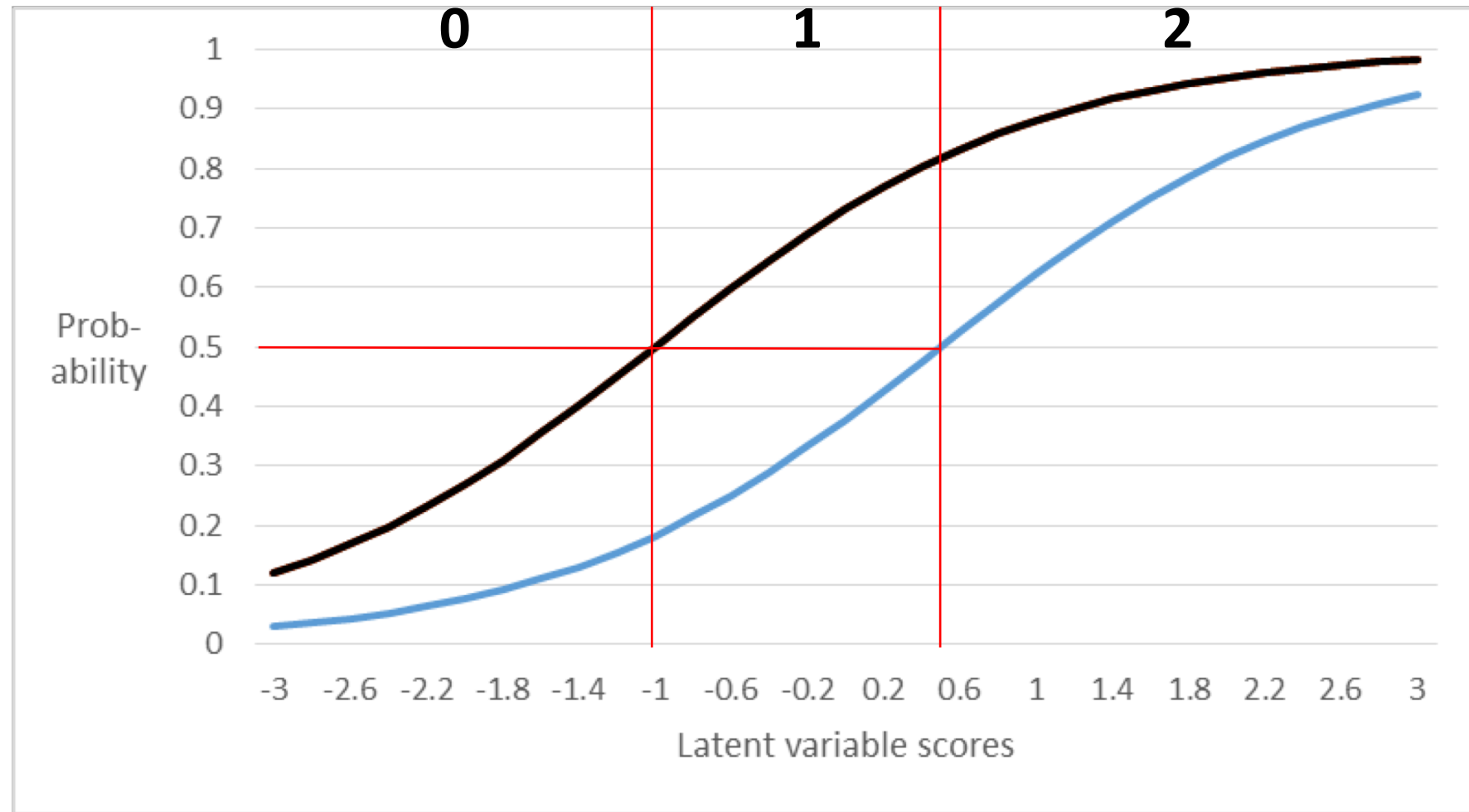
Ordinal IRT: 2 thresholds dividing 3 levels

Here there are ranges of the latent variable that correspond to each ordinal score:

0: less than -1

1: -1 to 0.6

2: greater than 0.6



Two parameters in ordinal IRT models

- ***Difficulty*** is estimated by the thresholds on the latent variable that separate ordinal scores. Each level of an indicator (minus one) has its own threshold.
- ***Discrimination*** is a coefficient estimating how crisply the coder distinguishes between ordinal scores. It determines the slope of the S-curve.
 - Coders whose scores are correlated best with other coders' scores are treated as being more “discriminating,” and therefore get more weight.
 - Less-discriminating coders get less weight.

[See IRT simulator]

Bayesian estimation

- In a country-year-coder*indicator dataset, most of the cells would be empty because experts code only a few surveys in one or a few countries.
- Bayesian estimation avoids making the heroic assumptions that would be necessary using frequentist methods with such a sparse dataset.
- It also – through the magic of resampling – gives us confidence bounds around our parameters, including the latent variable.

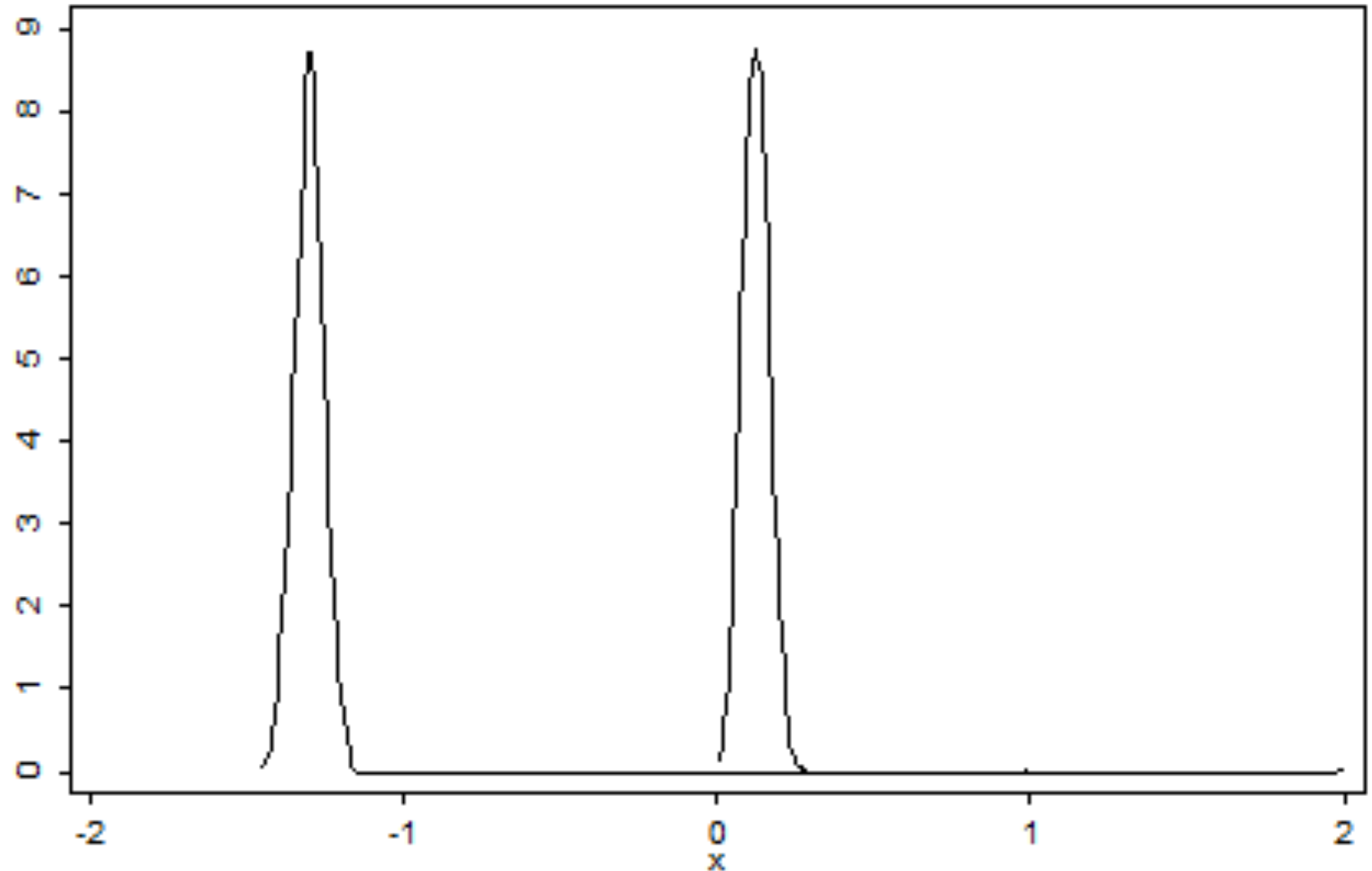
The model estimates difficulty thresholds, assuming

- Global mean thresholds are between -2 and 2 (uniformly distributed)
- The mean country thresholds are allowed to vary around the global thresholds, with a standard deviation of 0.2
- Coder thresholds are allowed to vary around their country's thresholds, with a standard deviation of 0.2

What this looks like:

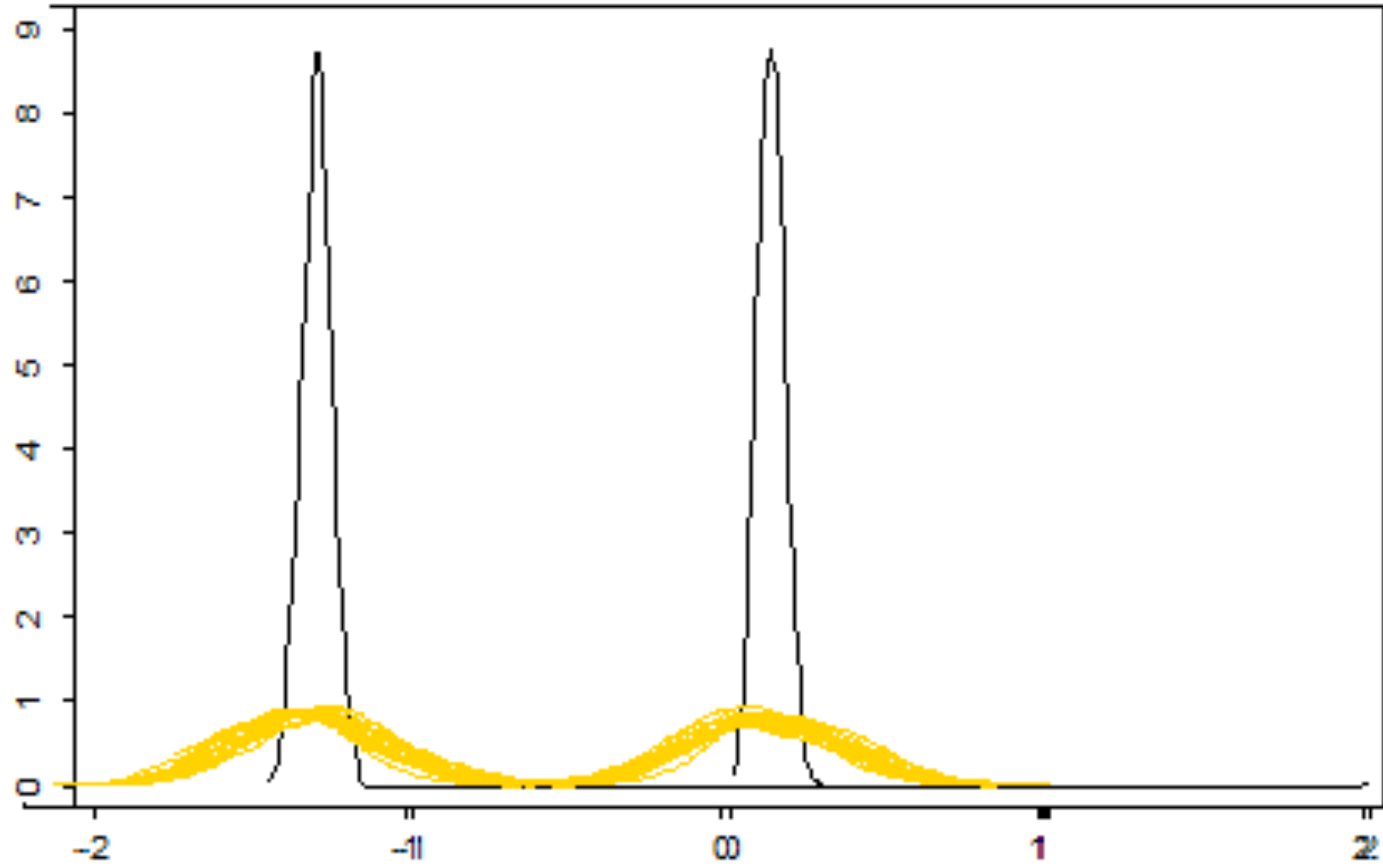
An example for v2svinlaut: International autonomy

Black: posteriors of global mean thresholds

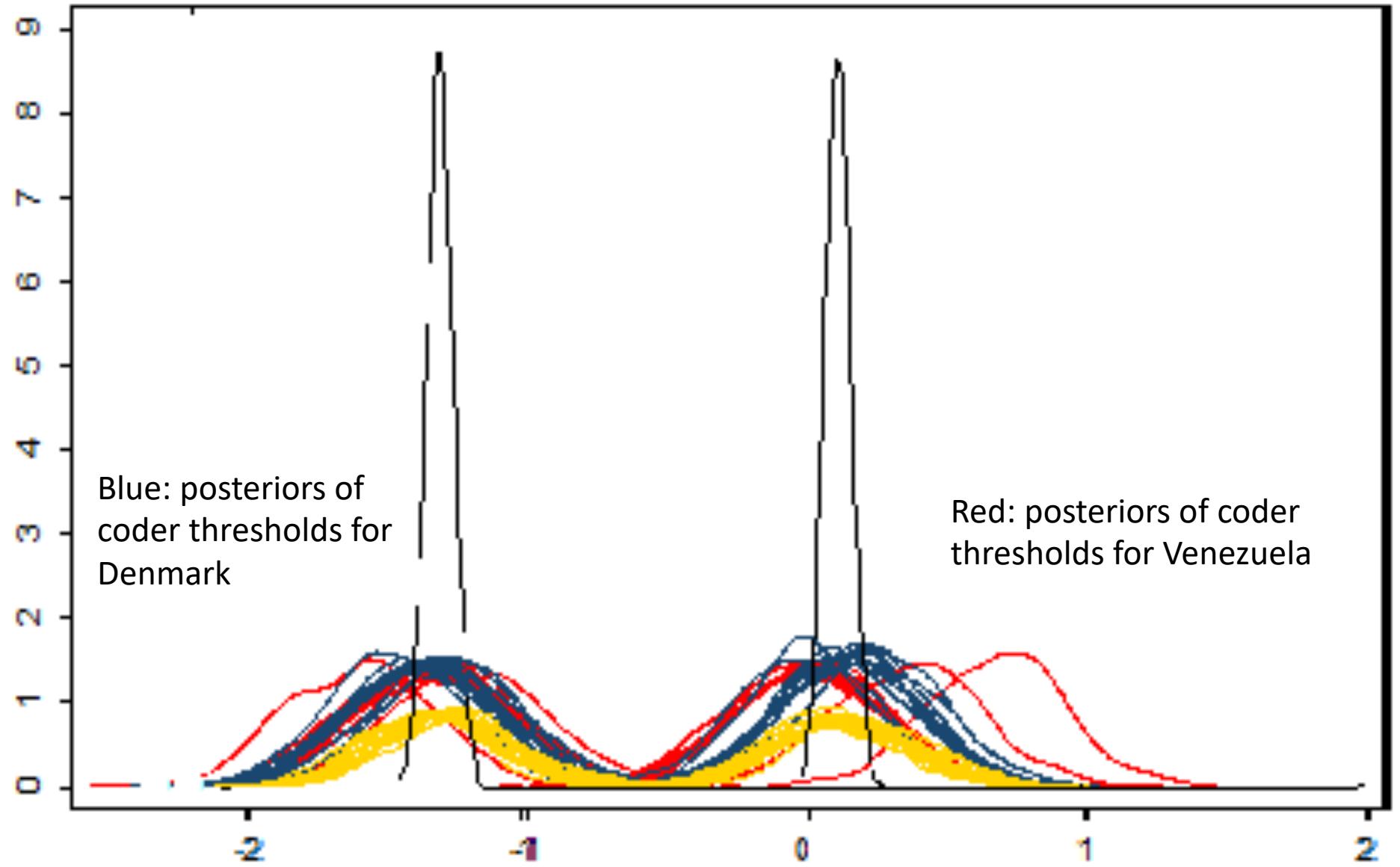


An example for v2svinlaut: International autonomy

Gold: 20 posteriors for
all country thresholds



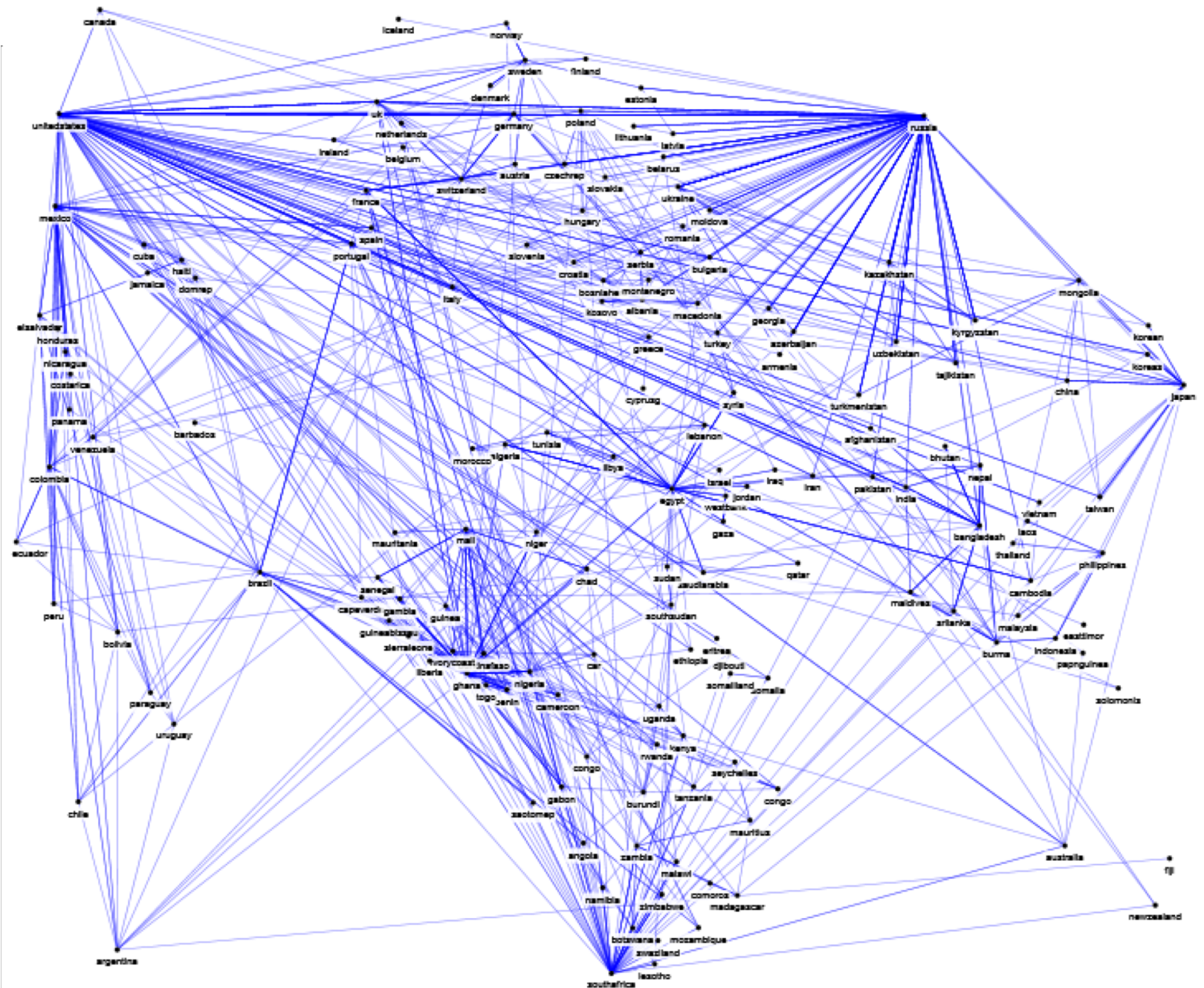
An example for v2svinlaut: International autonomy



Why these assumptions?

- It's a departure from the usual MCMC practice of weak priors, but much better than the typical expert-coding assumption that DIF is not an issue.
- It allows the lateral and bridge coding to help calibrate the thresholds.
- It helps especially with the countries that are not yet bridged, or not sufficiently bridged.
 - Ideally all countries would be connected, directly or indirectly, by a network of experts who have coded more than one country. This would enable us to compare a “3” in Gambia to a “3” in any other country.

This is the bridging as of March 2015 for the Elections survey. The bridging we need is nearly complete. Only 7 countries were not completely bridged. Now they all are. However, more would help.



Another issue

- Without a further assumption, latent variable estimates would be biased toward zero in some cases
 - Unbridged countries
 - Countries with invariant scores, which tell us nothing about what their coders' thresholds would be for other scores
- The result is that the Switzerlands of the world would be biased downward and the Saudi Arabias would be biased upward. The model just wouldn't "know" that a high score is really high and a low score is really low, so it would hedge its bets.

Fixed by an assumption about the latent variable:

- When the model does *not* have enough information about coders' thresholds for a country, the country gets an average of the coders' scores.*
- When the model *does* have enough information (which is most of the time!), this average is adjusted for the threshold estimates, as described above.

*Actually, the confidence-weighted average of the scores for all coders of that country-year, normalized with respect to scores for all country-years.

Temporal granularity

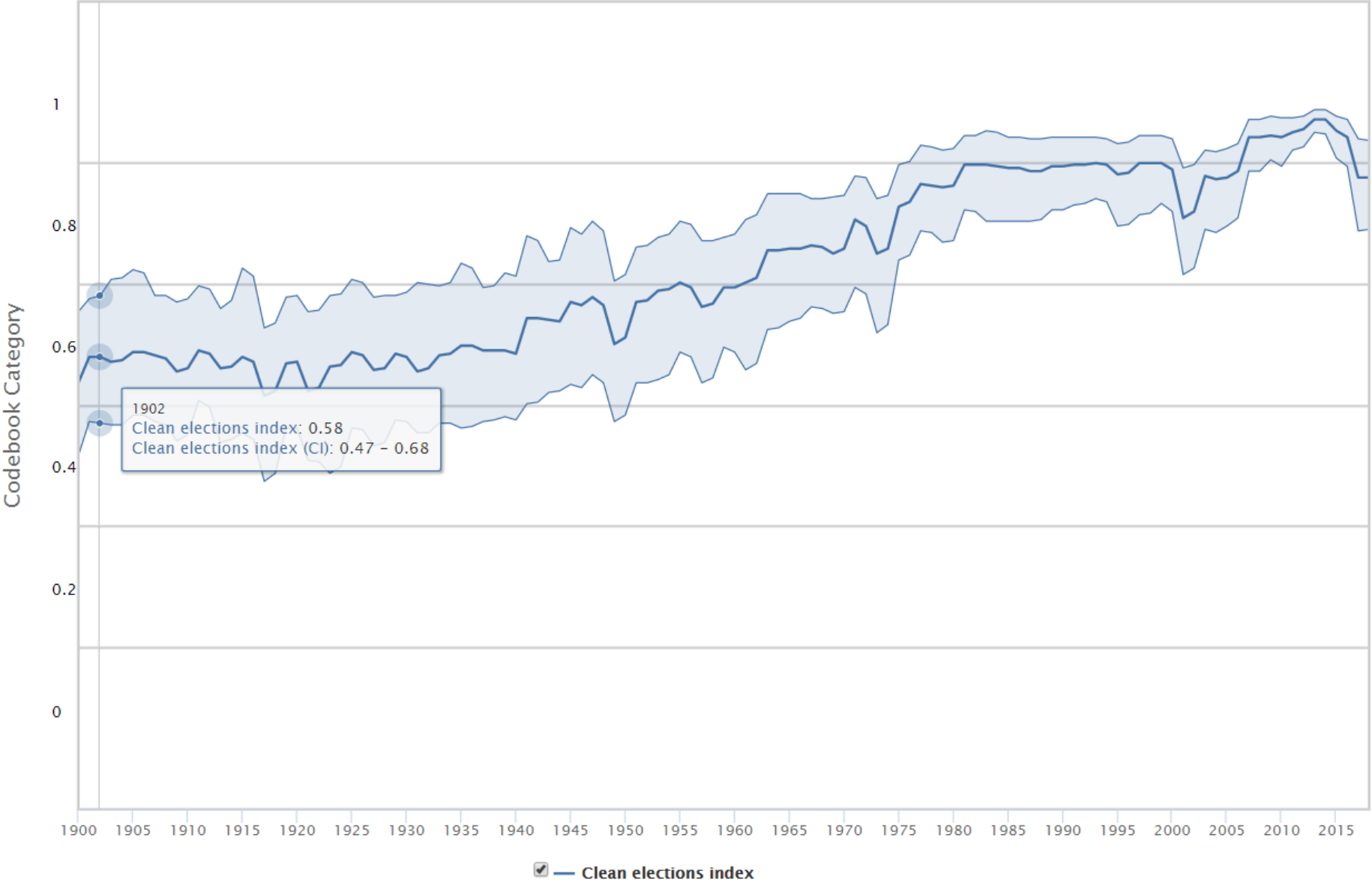
- Scores are not serially independent. However, the model does not assume that they are, so estimates are allowed to jump or fall suddenly when the data call for it.
- This falsely inflates the sample size, which would make us overconfident of the point estimates.
- Therefore, for the MM our observations are not country-years or country-days, but “regimes”: country-periods in which no coder changed his/her score or confidence for that country.
- This yields more conservative estimates.

Estimation

- Markov-chain Monte Carlo methods using Stan
- Iterative procedures identify the parameter estimates that best fit the observed data.
- We at first used high-performance computing hosted by the Center for Research Computing at Notre Dame, but now use machines in Sweden.
- Each variable is modeled separately. It takes 2 hours to several days for each variable; weeks to estimate all 156! (However, due to recent improvements in the code, soon it may take just a few days to run everything.)
- More detailed information is in Working Paper No. 21.

HPDs tend to be narrower in recent years.

United States of America



Reliability

Based on Brigitte Seim (lead author), “Data Validation,” in Coppedge & 23 coauthors, *Varieties of Democracy: Measuring Two Centuries of Political Change* (Cambridge UP, forthcoming 2020).

Validation strategies

- (I'm skipping over content validation and data generation assessment and am not reporting an interesting qualitative replication.)

- Convergent validity

- Correlation with other indicators of similar concepts
 - Predictors of deviations from other concepts
- Degree of convergence across coders
 - Predicted by coder traits?
 - Predicted by country traits?

Applied to

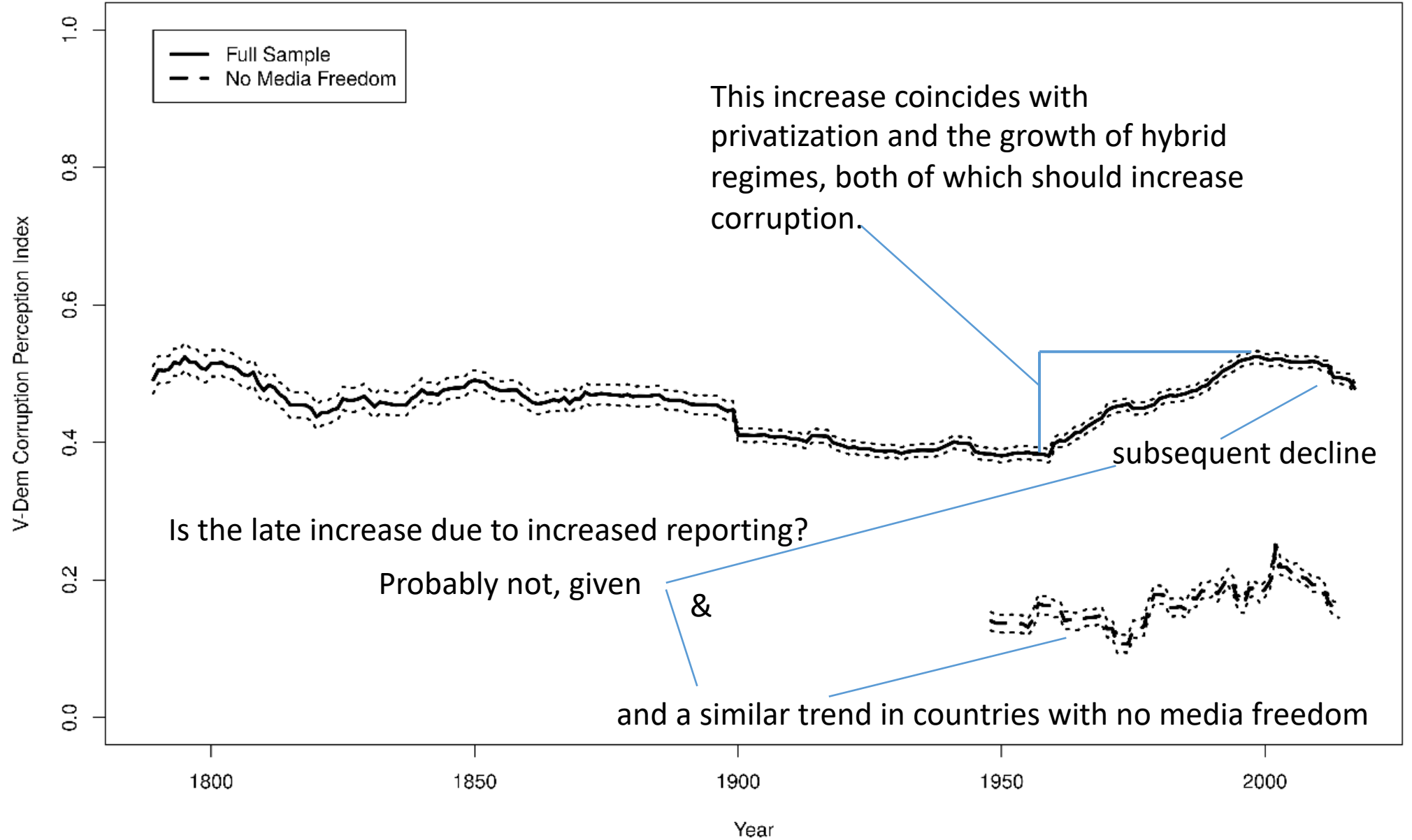
*Polyarchy

*Corruption

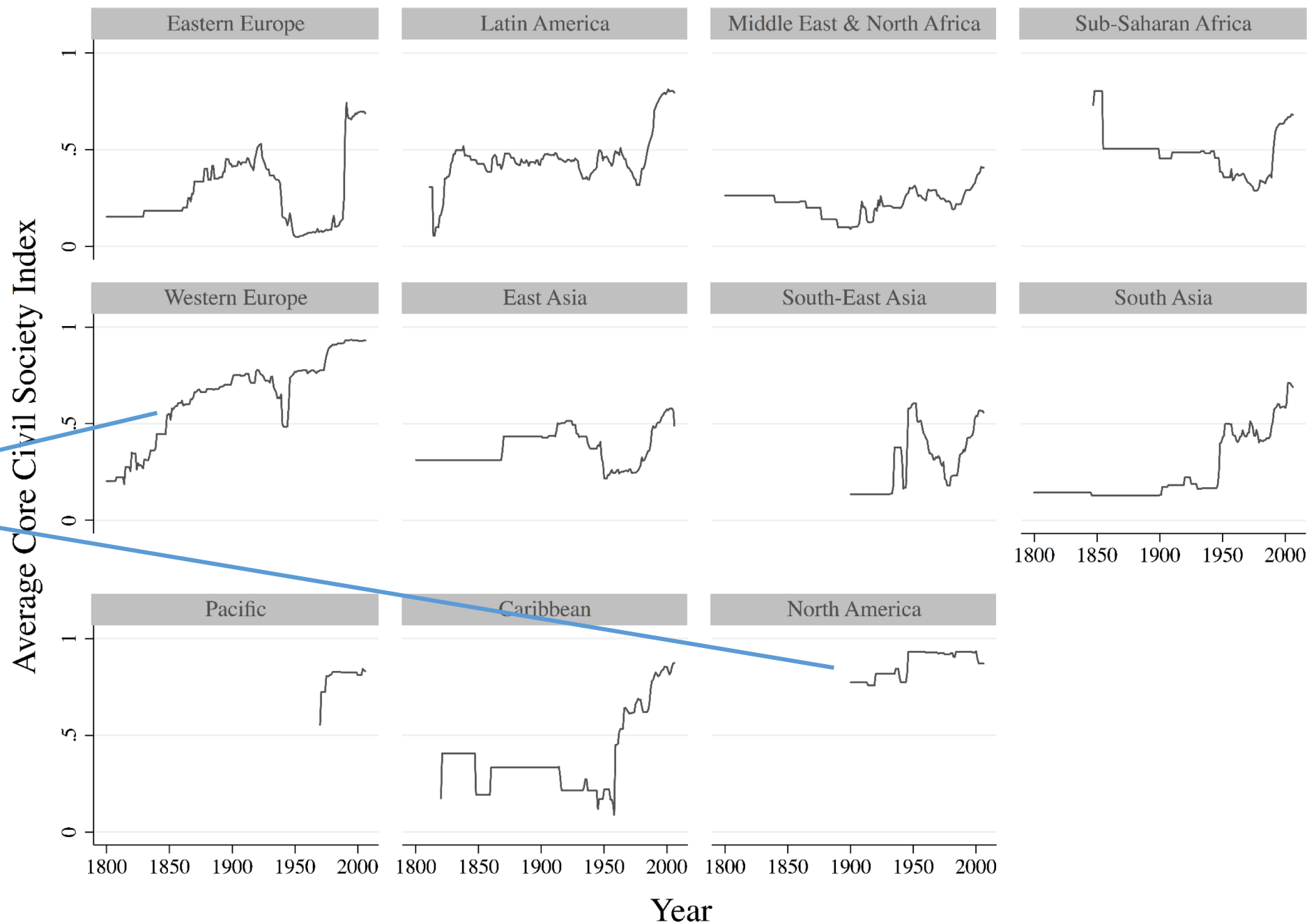
*Core Civil Society Index

Corruption Trends

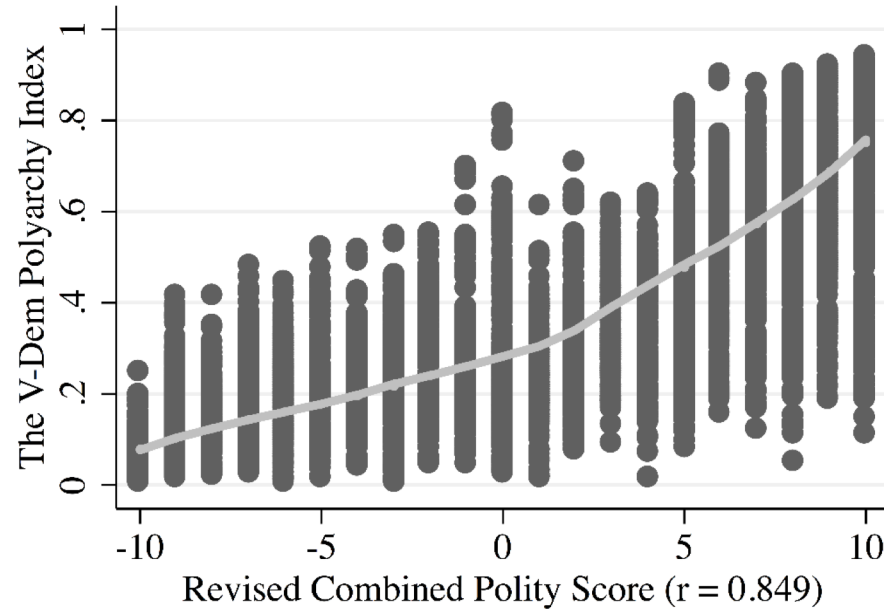
The long-term trend is very different from the dramatic increase we see in democracy.



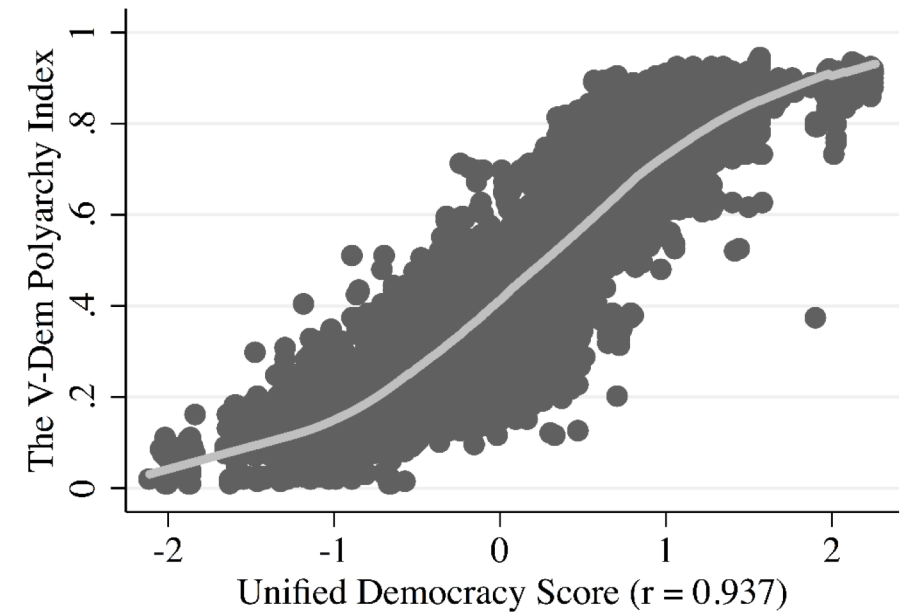
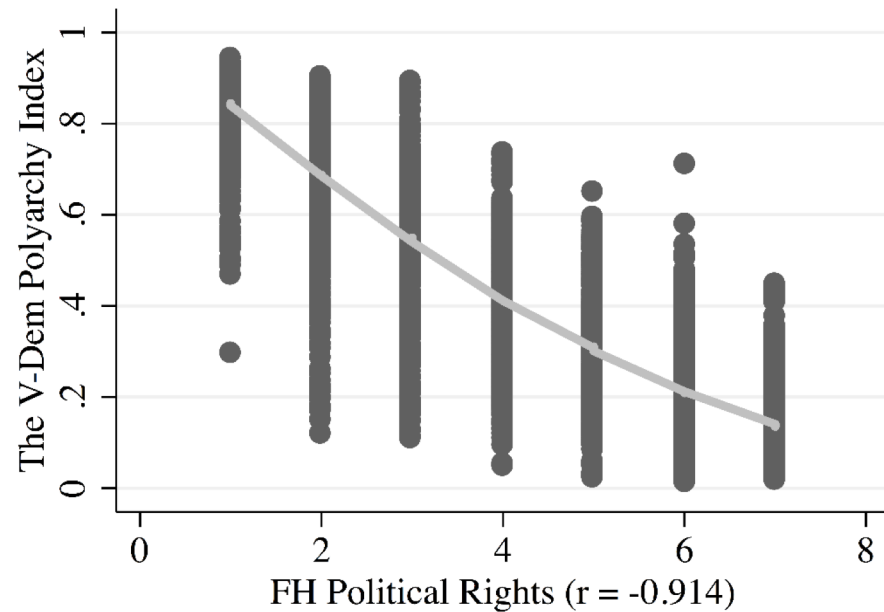
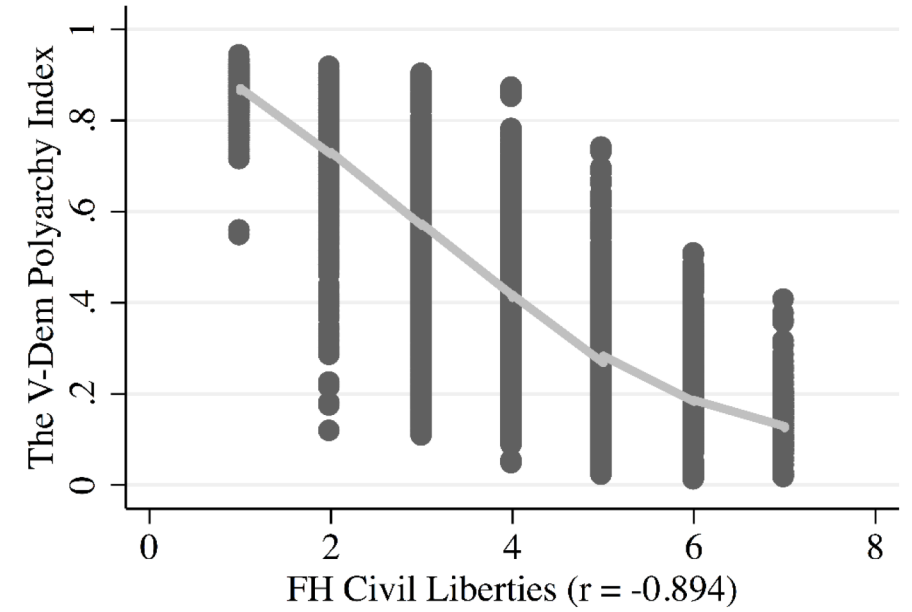
we strong civil societies to be prevalent in places like Western Europe and North America compared to other regions of the world



On average, V-Dem agrees with other familiar measures of democracy.



However, there are some real differences.



Do coder characteristics explain deviations from other democracy measures? Not really.

	Deviation from Polity	Deviation from Freedom House	Deviation from UDS
Share female coders	-0.084**	-0.047	-0.059
Average age of coders	0.009	-0.004	0.012
Average age ²	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000
Share of PhD coders	-0.060	-0.022	-0.047
Share of coders employed by government	-0.060	-0.066	-0.060
Share of coders born in country	0.068	0.054	0.061
Share of coders residing in country	-0.039	-0.110***	-0.053
Share of Western coders	0.048	0.009	0.031
Average free market support	0.004	-0.035**	-0.009
Average conventional understanding	-0.019	-0.007	-0.028
Average alternative understanding	-0.026	-0.003	-0.024
Coder disagreement (=hard to code countries)	0.223***	0.214***	0.250***
No. of coders	-0.002**	-0.003***	-0.006**
No. of lateral coders	-0.003	0.003	-0.008

Bear in mind: N=529,367 to 930,161!

Do coder characteristics explain deviations of V-Dem PCI from the WGI corruption measure?

Not really.

	Deviation from WGI
Share of female coders	0.052**
Average age of coders	-0.002
Average age of coders ²	0
Share of PhD coders	-0.084**
Share of coders employed by government	-0.068
Share of coders born in country	-0.009
Share of coders residing in country	0.01
Average free market support	0.006
Average electoral democracy support	0.001
Average liberal democracy support	-0.005
Mean coder discrimination (beta)	0.004
Coder disagreement	0.345**
No. of coders	-0.008**

N = 54,235

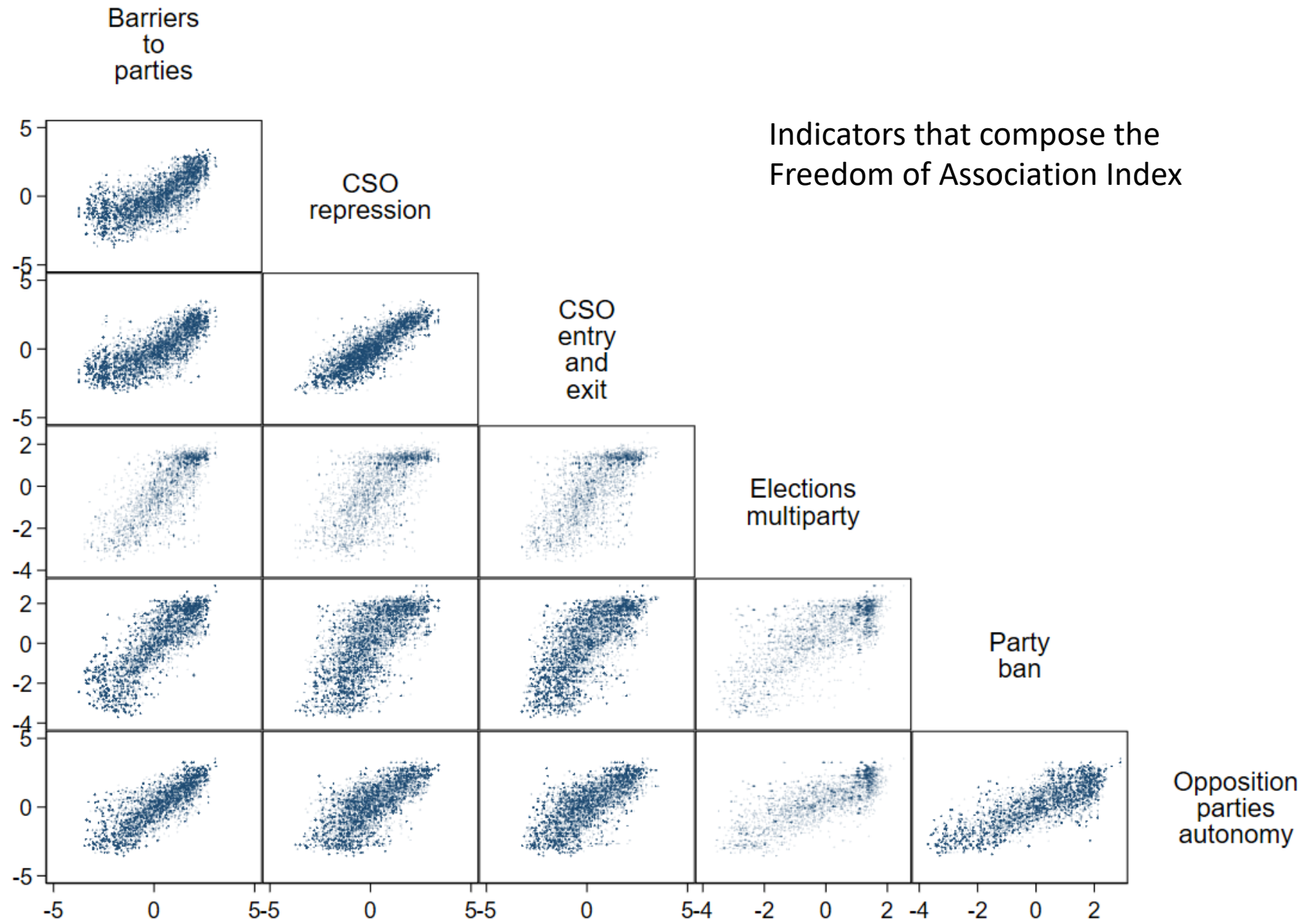
Conclusion about Validation

- V-Dem data appear to have few, if any, systematic biases compared with other measures of similar concepts.
- Any systematic biases are small.
- V-Dem measures are no worse than anyone else's.
- There are methodological reasons to expect that V-Dem's measures are more valid and reliable.

Index Construction

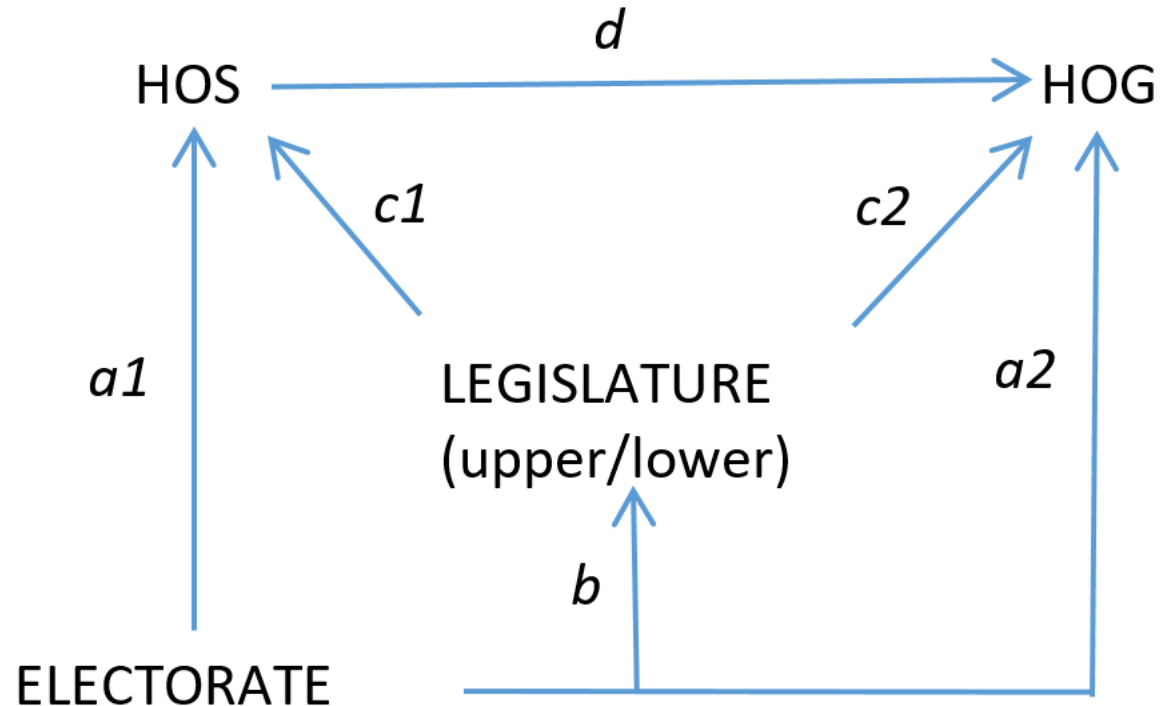
Some indices are based on factor analysis, when indicators are approximately unidimensional

We treat them as “substitutable” and “reflective” indicators.



A few indices are based on multidimensional indicators, which require more complex aggregation rules

For example, the
Elected Officials Index



Electoral Democracy Index

- Two versions are built from the same 5 indices or indicators

- One is additive

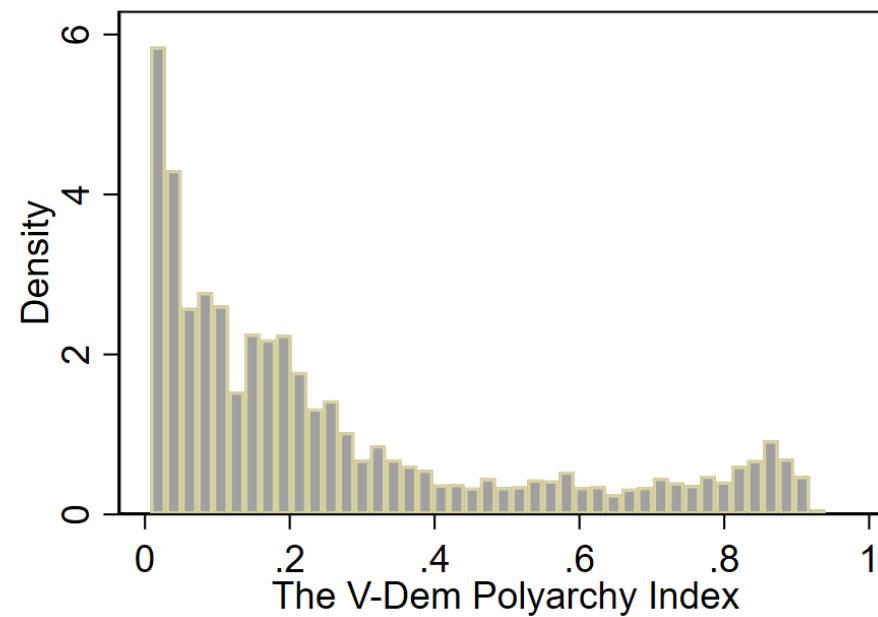
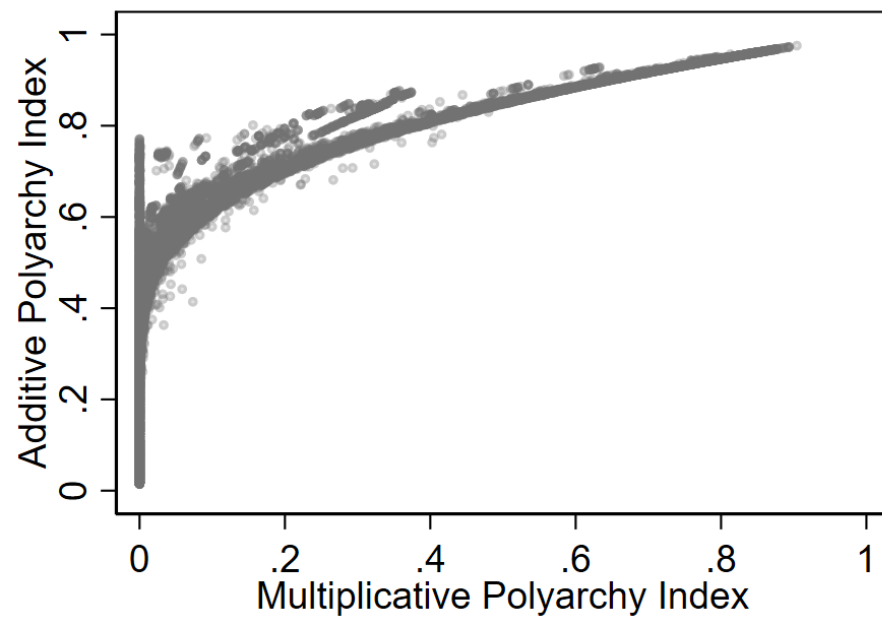
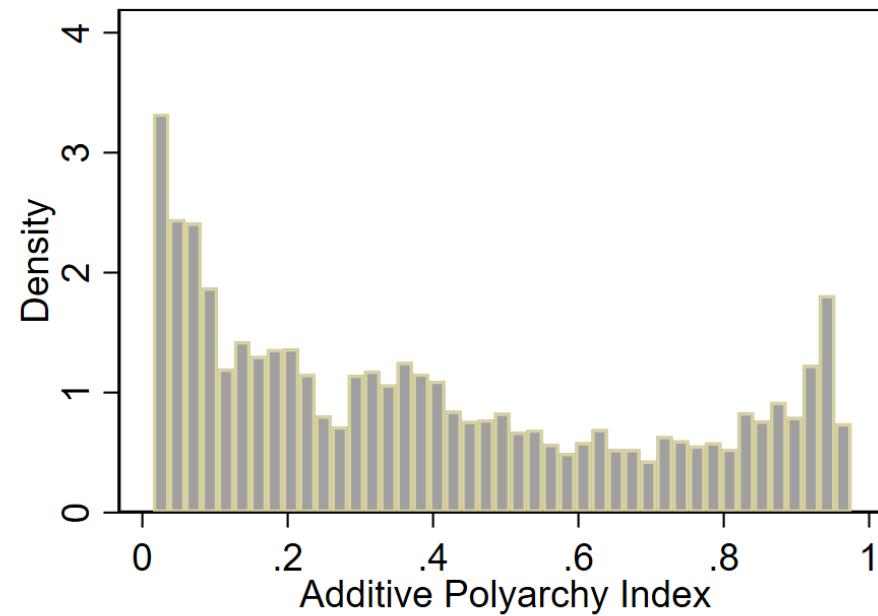
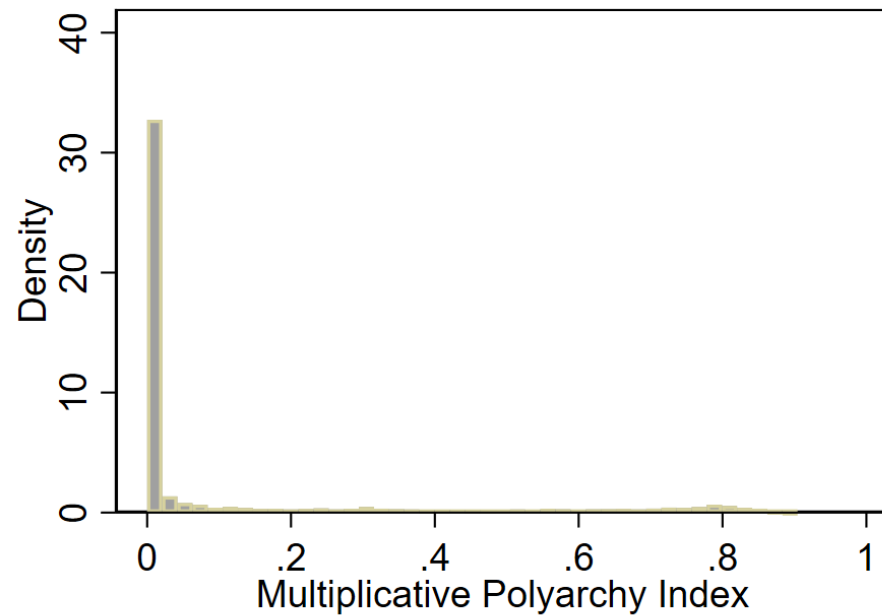
$$\text{API} = [(\text{Elected Officials} + \text{Suffrage}) + 2 * (\text{Clean Elections} + \text{Freedom of Association} + \text{Freedom of Expression and Alternative Information})]/8$$

- One is multiplicative

$$\text{MPI} = \text{Elected Officials} * \text{Clean Elections} * \text{Freedom of Association} * \text{Suffrage} * \text{Freedom of Expression and Alternative Sources of Information}.$$

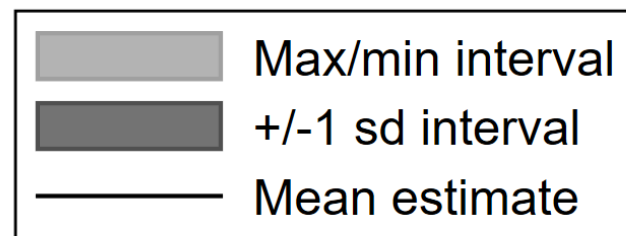
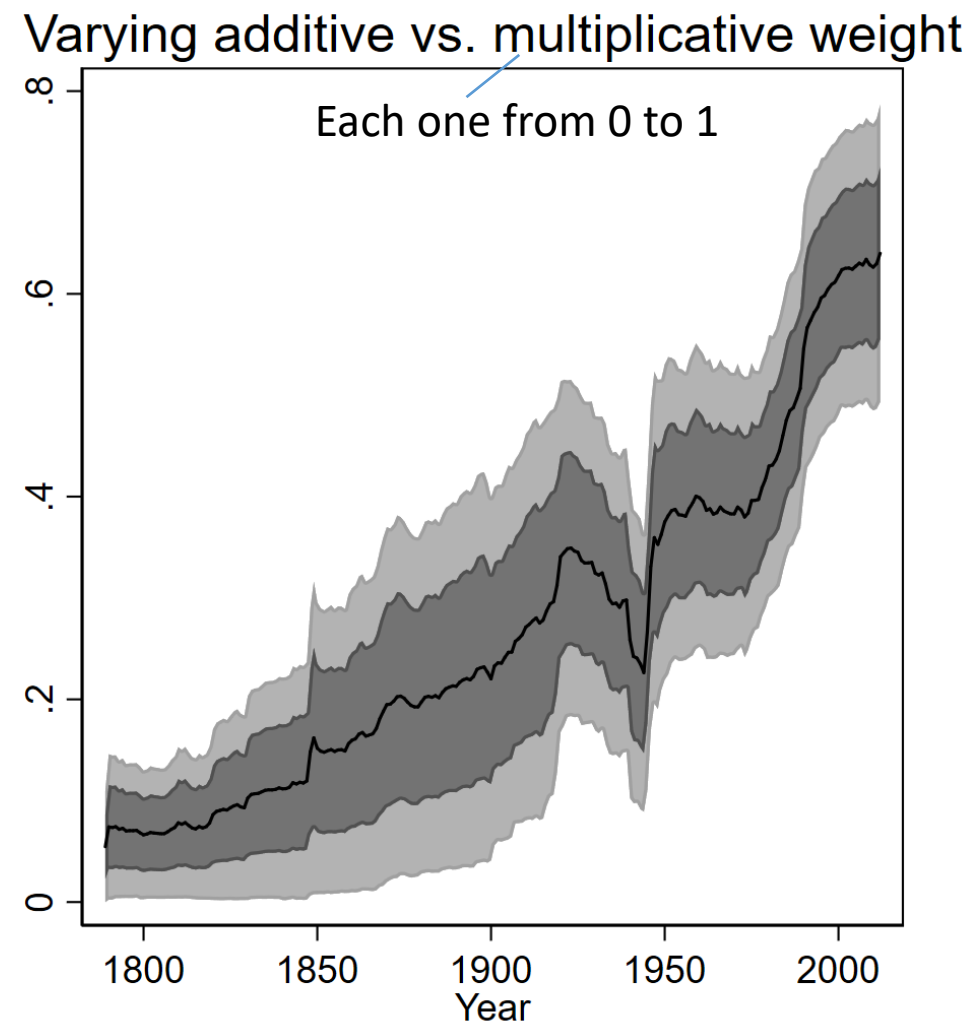
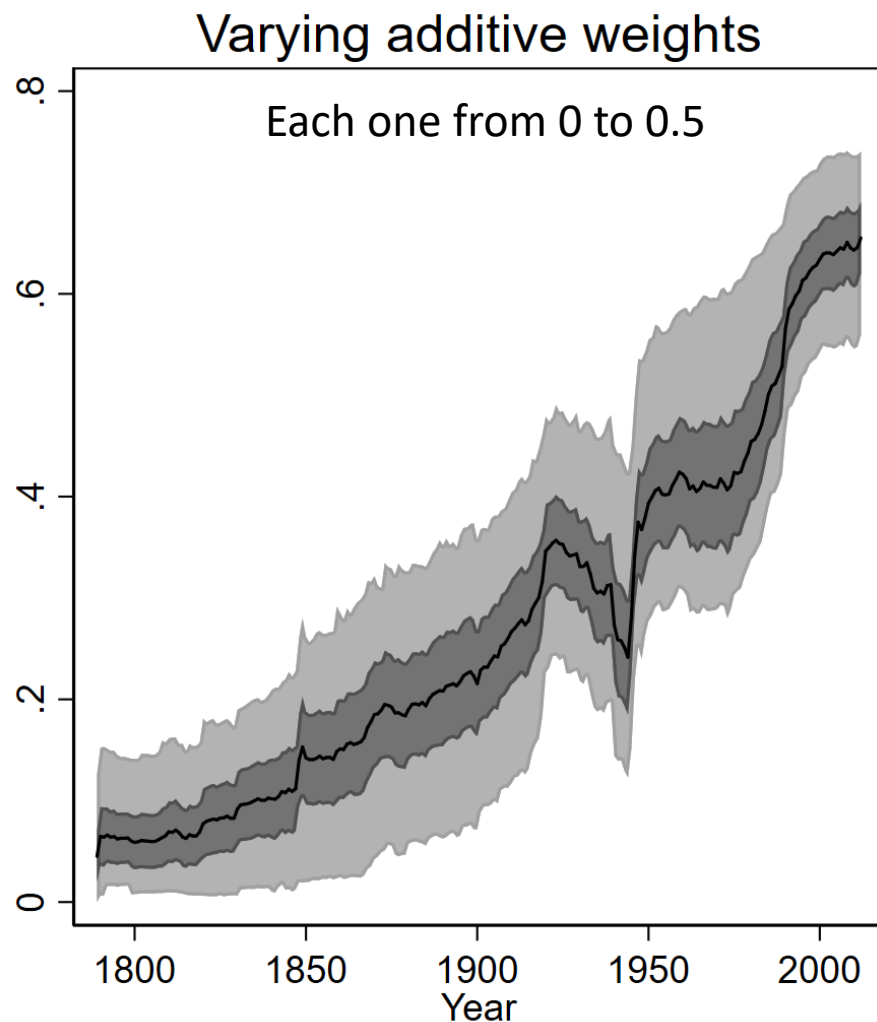
- The EDI (“Polyarchy”) is the average of these two:

$$\text{v2x_polyarchy} = (\text{API} + \text{MPI})/2$$



How robust is this formula to different additive and multiplicative weights?

These estimates are based on thousands of simulations.



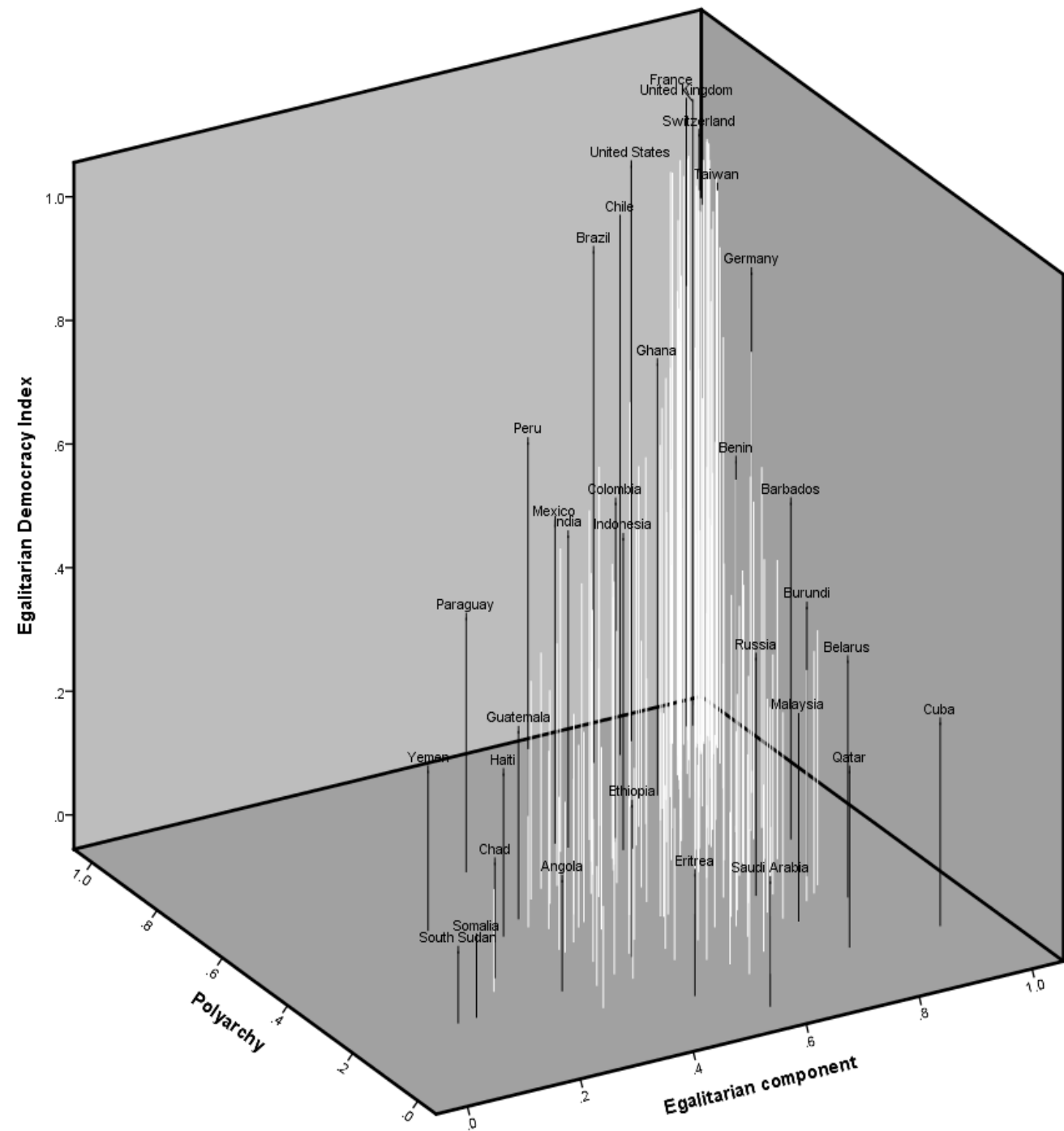
HLIs, e.g., the Liberal Democracy Index

$$\begin{aligned} &= .25 * \text{Polyarchy}^{1.6} \\ &+ .25 * \text{Liberal component} \\ &+ .5 * \text{Polyarchy}^{1.6} * \text{Liberal component} \end{aligned}$$

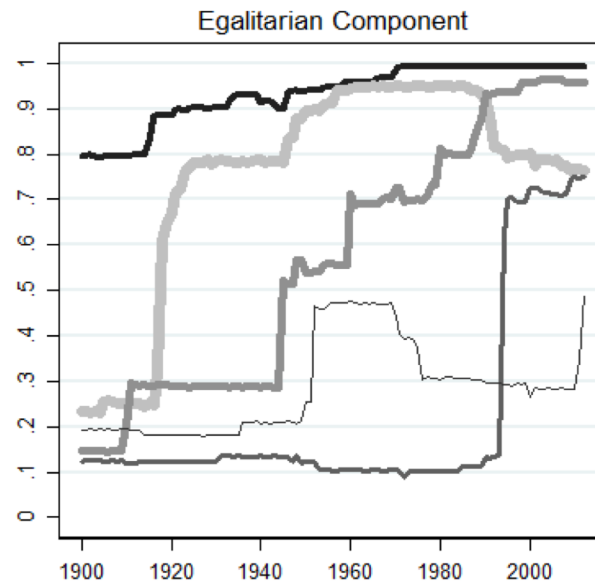
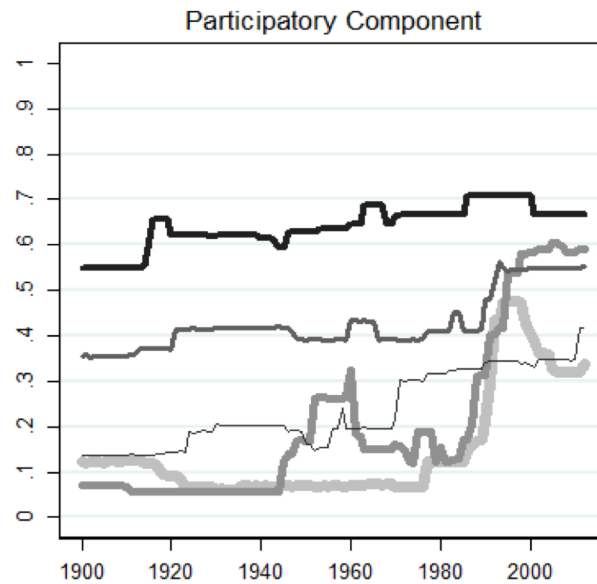
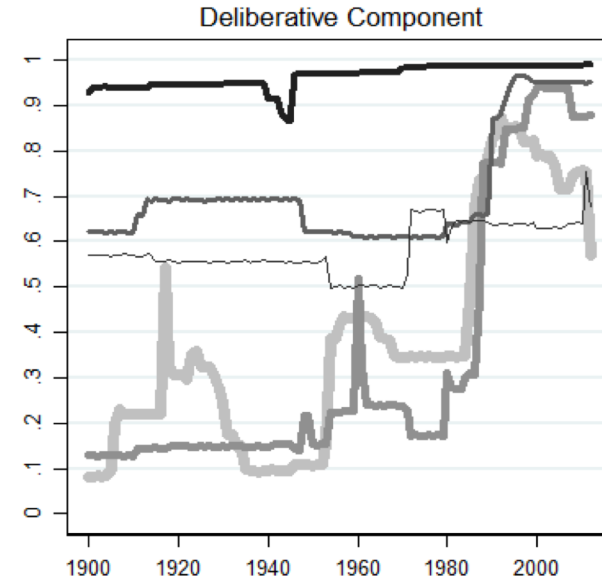
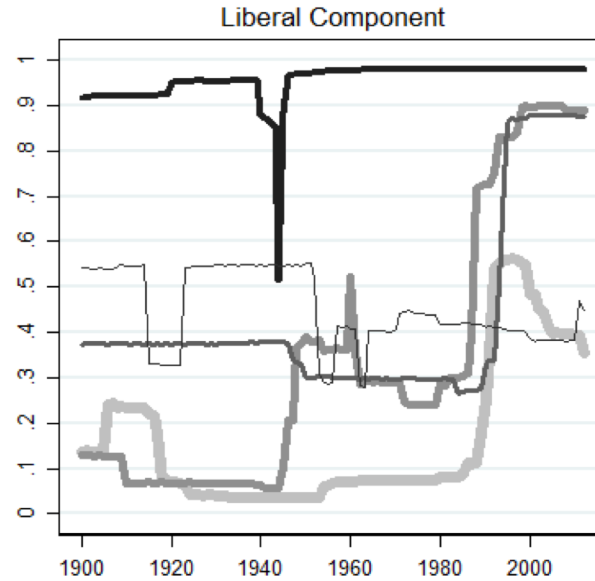
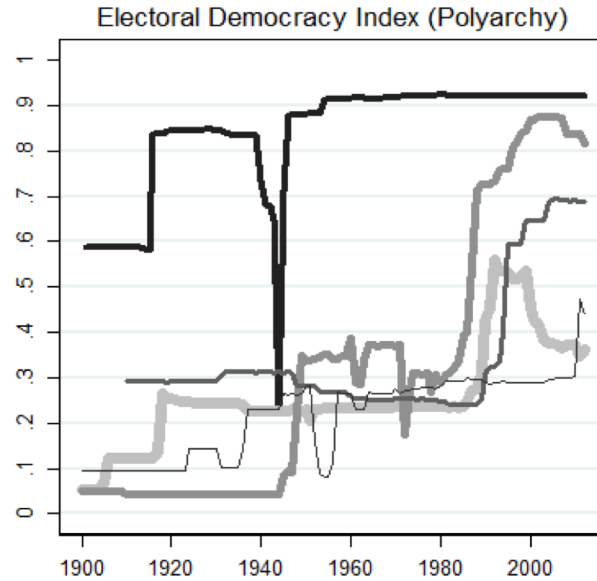
*The exponent of 1.6 makes the index=0.5 when
Polyarchy=0.5 and Liberal component=1.*

We use the same formula for the three other democracy indices, too.

What this formula does



Components by Benchmark Countries, 1900-2012



Getting the most out of V-Dem (beyond the usual quantitative advice)

Avoiding pitfalls, leveraging strengths, being involved in the project

Opportunities and challenges of these data

1. The large number of indicators
2. They include estimates of measurement uncertainty
3. The large number of years in the data set
4. The potential for spatial dependence

The main challenges

- The large number of variables make it easier to capitalize on chance
- It is possible that scores contain some bias associated with the characteristics of the experts who assigned them
- The long time series increases the need to model or rule out causal heterogeneity across historical periods.

The main advantages

- Having many disaggregated variables that make it possible to precisely test hypotheses and specific causal mechanisms
- And to perform robustness checks
- Being able to account for measurement uncertainty in any kind of analysis
- Leveraging large samples to obtain greater statistical power
- Reducing omitted variable bias
- Having less risk of Nickell bias in models with fixed effects and a lagged dependent variable.

Also,

Greater possibilities for designing

- Designing differences-in-differences tests
- Designing synthetic control type analyses
- Using the Generalized Method of Moments
- Testing complex models that can differentiate between true spatial dependence and other processes that generate similar patterns in the data.

The large number of variables

- With more possible independent variables, there are more opportunities to explore and test different causal mechanisms
 - E.g., are parties among the many institutions that increase economic growth? (Bizzarro et al. 2018).
- With more possible dependent variables, there are more opportunities for placebo tests: If X should cause Y but not Z, if X does not cause Z that increases our confidence in $X \rightarrow Y$.
- However, it also increases opportunities for fishing expeditions, p-hacking, capitalizing on chance, etc.

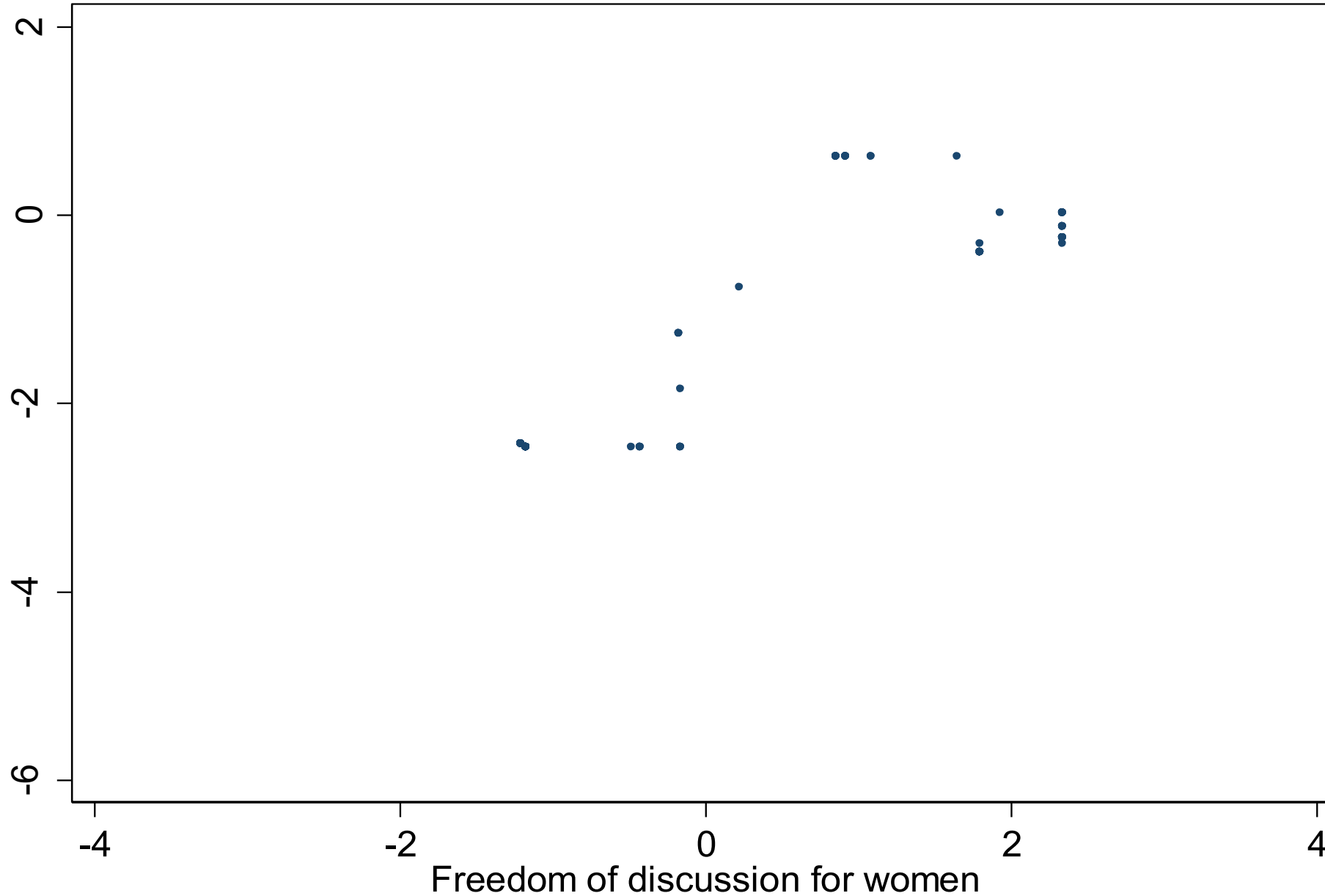
Estimates of measurement uncertainty

- Almost everyone has ignored how measurement uncertainty affects regression estimates.
- It's not as simple as "when it's in the independent variable, it biases coefficients toward zero, and therefore leads to conservative estimates."
- With V-Dem (C) data, we provide the whole distribution of estimates, so it's possible to do a proper test for the impact of measurement uncertainty using the Method of Composition.

Method of Composition

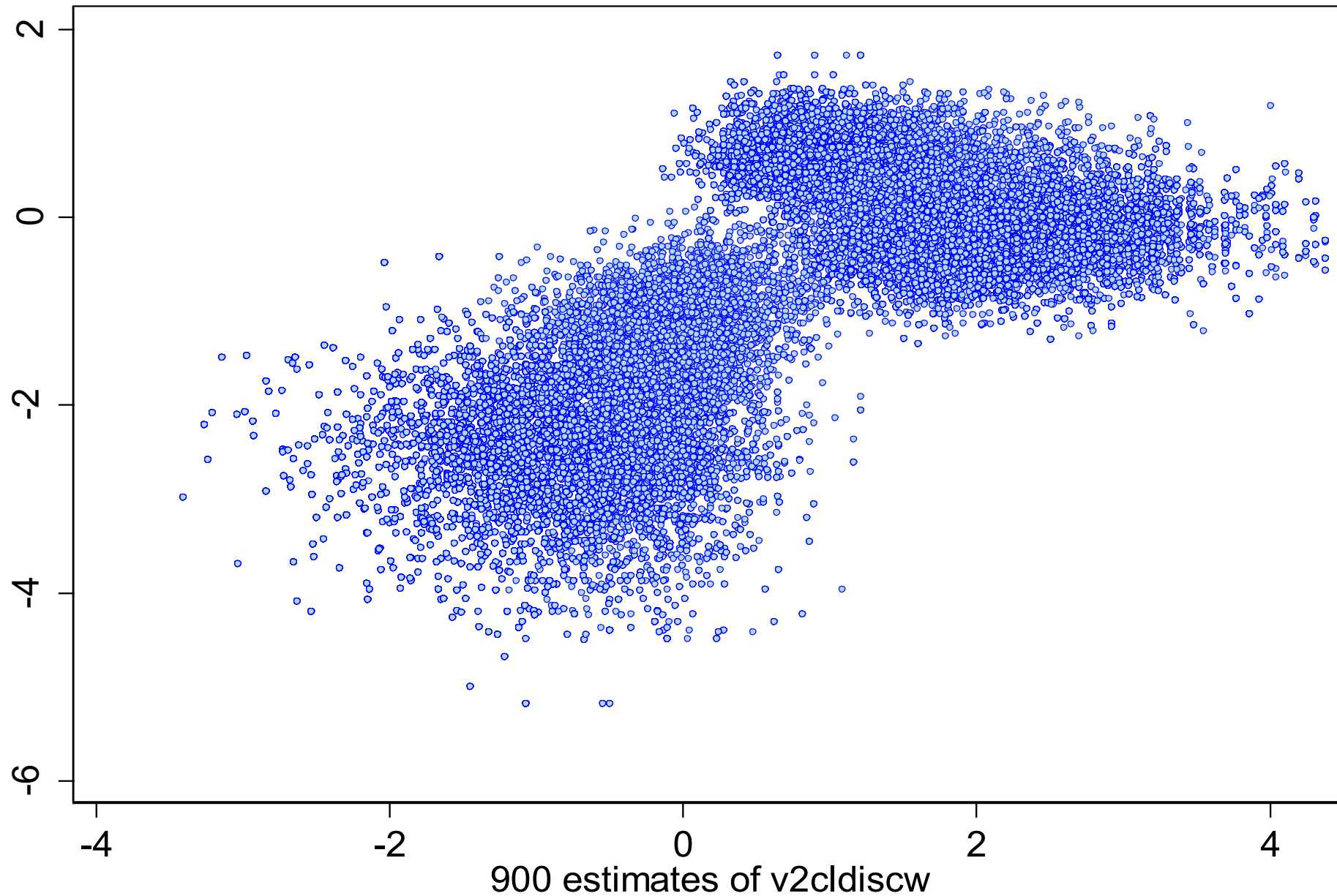
- Run your model 900 times, each time using a random draw from the different estimates
- Save your estimated coefficients
- The median coefficient becomes the new estimate
- The standard deviation of the 900 estimated coefficients becomes the new standard error.
- Better instructions at <https://kellogg.nd.edu/content/workshop-varieties-democracy-data-incorporating-measurement-error>

Venezuela



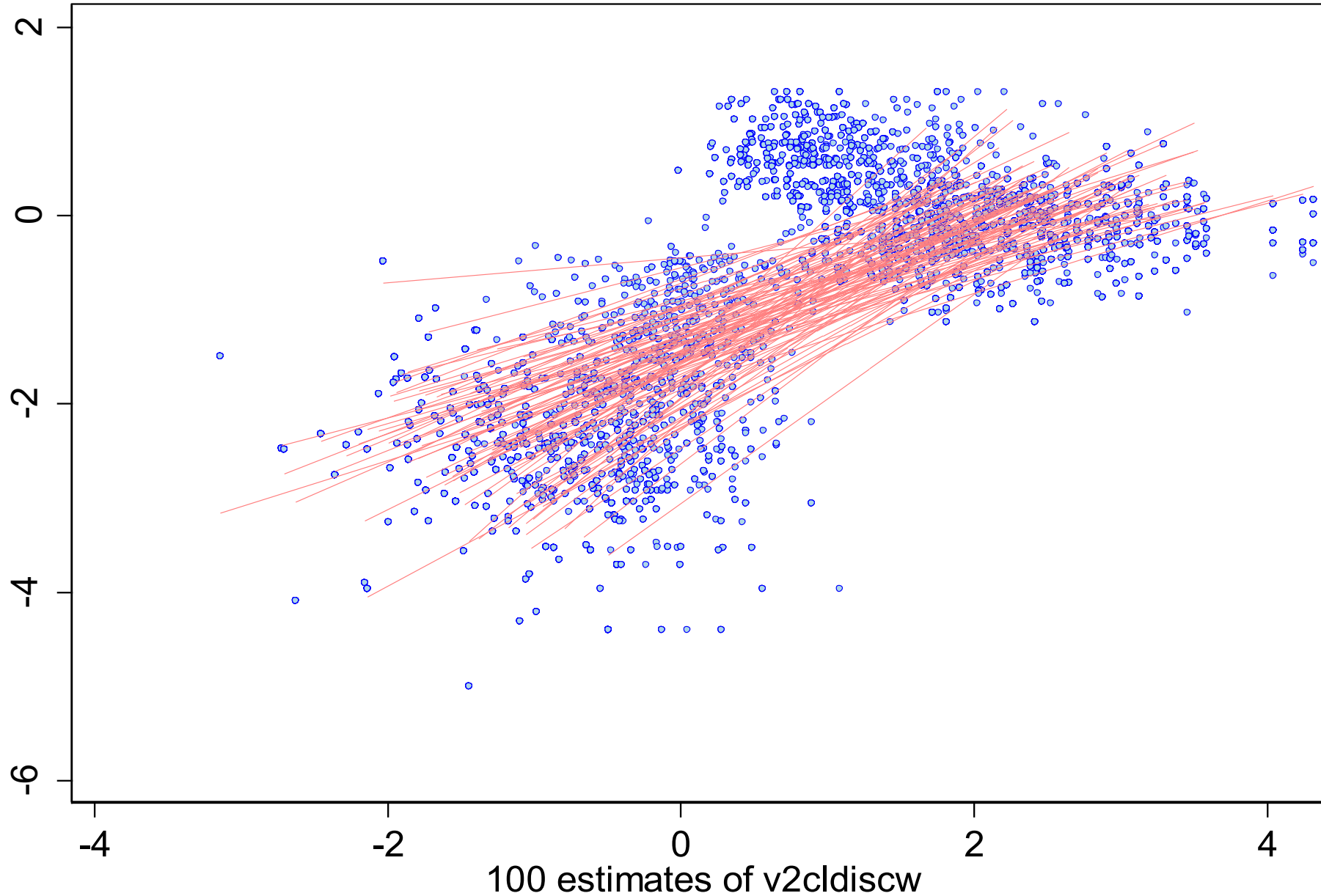
Here are point estimates for Venezuela, 1900-2012, on two variables. This relationship implies that there is no uncertainty about what these values are.

Venezuela



But if we look at 900 estimates of the true values, we get a more complete sense of what the relationship is.

Venezuela



The workshop materials explain how to estimate relationships many times for different draws from these distributions and then combine those estimates into summary estimates.

Posteriors are archived at CurateND

- (and soon also at the Swedish National Data Archive)

UNIVERSITY of NOTRE DAME

HESBURGH LIBRARIES

CurateND

ABOUTLOG INFAQ

Varieties of Democracy

Collection Details ▾

Full Record



Description

This is an archive of all versions of V-Dem data and associated documentation: aggregated and disaggregated data, codebook, citation instructions, variable labels, etc.

Subcollections

- [Varieties of Democracy v.7](#)
- [Varieties of Democracy v.5](#)
- [Varieties of Democracy v.6](#)

Search Varieties of Democracy

However

- Exercise caution when using V-Dem variables on both sides of the equation, because
- “To the extent that coders exhibit biases that are not consistent with DIF, relationships between V-Dem variables may represent those biases rather than actual relationships between measured concepts.”

Long Panel Structure

- Helps with established temporal priority
- However, opens the door to causal heterogeneity: The causal process is likely to evolve over different historical periods
- This can be modeled. It's an opportunity, too!
- Increased opportunities for diff-in-diff
- We recommend using lagged dependent variables
 - With panels this long, the risk of Nickell bias is reduced

Spatial Relationships

- The potential for confounding due to interference among units has always been present
- Having a (nearly) full set of countries, and long time series, makes it possible to model these relationships
- Stay tuned – new paper on this in the November 1 cluster workshop!