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# YOU SAID YOU'D NEVER COMPROMISE: THE WINNER-LOSER GAP AND PERCEPTIONS OF SYSTEM RESPONSIVENESS IN PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEMS

LEONARDO GILL CORREIA SANTOS

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2023

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Tese apresentada ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Ciência Política da Universidade Federal de Pernambuco como requisito parcial à obtenção do título de Doutor em Ciência Política, sob orientação do Prof. Dr. Marcus André Melo.

Orientador: Marcus André Barreto Campelo de Melo

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Leonardo Gill Correia Santos

**TÍTULO DO TRABALHO: You Said You'd Never Compromise: The Winner-Loser Gap and Perceptions of System Responsiveness in Parliamentary System**

Tese apresentada ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Ciência Política da Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, na área de concentração de Democracia e Instituições, como requisito para a obtenção do título de Doutor em Ciência Política.

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**BANCA EXAMINADORA**

_____

Profº. Dr. Marcus André Melo (Orientador)
Universidade Federal de Pernambuco

_____

Profª. Dr. Nara Pavão (Examinador Interno)
Universidade Federal de Pernambuco

_____

Profº. Dr. Ricardo Borges (Examinador Interno)
Universidade Federal de Pernambuco

_____

Profº. Dr. George Avelino (Examinador Externo)
Fundação Getúlio Vargas

_____

Profº. Dr. Carlos Pereira (Examinador Externo)
Fundação Getúlio Vargas

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2023

Para Francisco, Iara, e Natália

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You said you'd never compromise
With the mystery tramp, but now you realize
He's not selling any alibis
As you stare into the vacuum of his eyes
And ask him do you want to make a deal?

How does it feel
To be on your own
With no direction home
Like a complete unknown
Like a rolling stone? (Dylan, 1965)

## ABSTRACT

Does voting for a junior cabinet party influence voters' perception of system responsiveness? Existent literature on electoral behavior suggests that voters of parties in government perceive higher levels of system responsiveness (external efficacy) compared to voters of opposition parties. This winner-loser gap tends to narrow in coalition governments, which is associated with winners' negative views of party compromise within coalition governments. However, it is unclear if these dynamics apply to all voters of the winning majority. This study fills this gap by analyzing the influence of the electoral behavior of winning voters on the perception of system responsiveness. I argue that winners' external efficacy is affected by the perception of how compromising the party they voted for is with the winning coalition. Formateur parties' voters, which appoint the prime minister, are expected to have higher levels of perceived responsiveness compared to voters of junior cabinet parties. Furthermore, the perceived responsiveness is also expected to be influenced by the relative size of junior cabinet parties within the coalition, with voters of medium-sized parties exhibiting lower increases in external efficacy as compared to voters of smaller parties. To test these hypotheses, I employ two research designs. First, I conduct a cross-national analysis using survey data of the CSES dataset. This analysis covers 14 election studies in 7 countries with coalition governments, resulting in 23,657 individual observations. To test the hypotheses, I use multilevel logistic regressions combined with a pre-post design, wherein I compare voters before and after cabinet announcements. The findings show that voters of junior cabinet parties feel less efficacious than voters of formateur parties before cabinet announcements, but their perception increases after the government makeup is made public. The effect is driven by the reaction of smaller cabinet-party voters. Voters of medium-sized cabinet parties are less influenced by cabinet announcements. Secondly, the argument is further explored through a case-study of the coalition formation process after the 2017 Bundestag Elections in Germany, which witnessed the announcement of two different coalitions: a failed Jamaica Coalition (CDU-CSU, FDP, and Greens) in October and a successful Grand Coalition (CDU-CSU and SPD) in January. The GESIS survey panel dataset is employed for a detailed analysis during the coalition talks period using weighted logistic regressions and panel regression, and an event history model using difference-in-differences design, comparing formateur parties' voters to voters of the two different coalitions after their respective coalition announcements. The findings indicate that SPD voters' perception of responsiveness increased when the party announced they were joining the opposition, but

decreased when the party joined the government. However, no significant variation was observed for voters of FDP and Greens, who exhibited relatively stable levels of external efficacy during the period. This research sheds light on unexplored aspects of how electoral behavior influences citizens' attitudes. Moreover, as the sheer number of coalition governments continues to escalate, understanding how people perceive them becomes increasingly important in the research agenda on the field of comparative politics.

Key words: external efficacy; electoral behavior; winner-loser gap; coalition governments; parliamentary systems

## RESUMO

Votar em partidos júniores da coalizão de governo influencia a percepção de responsividade de autoridades eleitas? A literatura sobre comportamento eleitoral indica que eleitores dos partidos do governo percebem maiores níveis de responsividade por parte das autoridades em comparação a eleitores da oposição. A distância entre perdedores e vencedores diminui quando eleições produzem governos de coalizão, associado a uma visão negativa que os vencedores têm das concessões feitas pelos partidos da coalizão. No entanto, não se sabe se isso vale para todos os eleitores da maioria vencedora. Este estudo busca preencher essa lacuna ao analisar a influência do comportamento eleitoral de apoiadores dos partidos vencedores na percepção de responsividade. ;umento que a eficácia externa é impactada pela percepção dos eleitores sobre as concessões de seu partido com a coalizão de governo. Espera-se que eleitores do partido formateur, do primeiro-ministro, percebam mais responsividade do que eleitores de partidos júniores. O tamanho relativo do partido na coalizão também deve influenciar a percepção de responsividade, e espera-se que eleitores de partidos médios demonstrem incrementos de eficácia externa menores do que eleitores de partidos menores. Para testar essas hipóteses, recorre-se a dois desenhos de pesquisa. No primeiro, faz-se uma análise comparativa entre países usando a base de dados do CSES. O estudo cobre 14 eleições em 7 países com coalizões de governo, com 23.657 observações individuais. Para testar as hipóteses, utiliza-se regressões logísticas multiníveis combinadas com um desenho *Pre-Post*, em que se compara eleitores antes e depois do anúncio da coalizão. Os achados sinalizam que eleitores de partidos júniores se sentem menos eficazes do que eleitores do partido formateur antes do anúncio da coalizão, mas as percepções aumentam após o anúncio público da composição de governo. O efeito é significativamente influenciado pela reação de eleitores de partidos menores. Eleitores de partidos médios no governo são menos influenciados pelo anúncio da coalizão. No segundo, aborda-se um estudo de caso sobre a formação de governo após a eleição para o Bundestag em 2017, em que houve o anúncio de duas coalizões: uma fracassada Coalizão Jamaica (CDU-CSU, FDP e Verdes) em outubro e uma exitosa Grande Coalizão (CDU-CSU e SPD) em janeiro. Os dados de eleitores do painel GESIS são utilizados para realizar uma análise detalhada da formação de governo, utilizando regressões logísticas ponderadas para cada período, regressão de dados em painel, e um modelo de estudo de evento com um desenho de diferença em diferenças, comparando eleitores do formateur com eleitores das duas coalizões após o anúncio respectivo de cada coalizão. Os achados sugerem que a eficácia externa dos eleitores do SPD cresceu após o

partido ir para a oposição, mas caiu quando se juntou ao governo. Concomitantemente, não houve variação significativa de eleitores do FDP e dos Verdes. O presente estudo traz avanços sobre aspectos ainda inexplorados de como o comportamento eleitoral pode influenciar atitudes. À medida que o número de governos de coalizão aumenta, entender como cidadãos percebem tais governos torna-se cada vez mais importante na agenda da política comparada.

Palavras-chave: eficácia externa; comportamento eleitoral; distância do vencedor; governos de coalizão; sistemas parlamentaristas

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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **AfD** | Alternative for Germany | *Alternative für Deutschland* |
| **ALLBUS** | German General Social Survey | *Allgemeine Bevölkerungsumfrage der Sozialwissenschaften* |
| **CDU** | Christian Democratic Union of Germany | *Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands* |
| **CSU** | Christian Social Union in Bavaria | *Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern* |
| **CDU-CSU** | Union Parties | *Unionsparteien* |
| **Die Linke** | The Left | *Die Linke* |
| **DP** | German Party | *Deutsch Partei* |
| **FDP** | Free Democratic Party | *Freie Demokratische Partei* |
| **GESIS** | Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences | *Leibniz-Institut für Sozialwissenschafte* |
| **Greens** | Alliance 90/The Greens | *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* |
| **GroKo** | Grand Coalition | *Große Koalition* |
| **SPD** | Social Democratic Party of Germany | *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* |
| **ATT** | Average Treatment on the Treated | |
| **CSES** | Comparative Study of Electoral Systems | |
| **PPEG** | Database Political Parties, Presidents, Elections, and Governments | |
| **WLG** | Winner-Loser Gap | |

[1] A list of extended names of all parties in Chapter 3 can be found in Table 13.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Citizens have the power to influence the outcome of elections. They vote and choose representatives who will support their interests in the executive or legislative branches. In this sense, voters are critical to electoral results and the well-being of democracy. However, citizens can also be affected by the outcomes of elections. In turn, these outcomes, specially who will become government, have an influence on voters' attitudes and behavior. This implies that winning voters hold different attitudes as compared to losing voters.

The existence of a winner-loser gap that affects voters' attitudes has been extensively studied (Anderson & Guillory, 1997; Anderson et al., 2005). Research has found that winners tend to have more positive views of those in power, have more trust in the political process, and are more satisfied with democracy (Anderson & Guillory, 1997; Anderson et al., 2005; Listhaug et al., 2009; Singh et al., 2011). However, democratic theory emphasizes that the attitudes and behaviors of the losers are crucial for the stability of the regime (Riker, 1983; Przeworski, 2003). Losing voters are expected to accept the defeat to avoid perpetuating conflict and to allow for the peaceful transition of power. Therefore, understanding the gap between the attitudes of winners and losers is critical for the study of democracy.

Some authors have investigated the psychological aspects of winning and losing (Thaler, 1994; Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Singh, 2014; Alesina & Passarelli, 2019; Martin, 2021), while others have explored the institutional and contextual predictors of the attitudinal gap (Anderson et al., 2005; Singh & Thornton, 2016; Singh et al., 2012; Curini et al., 2011; Halliez & Thornton, 2022). Along with cognitive and emotional factors, electoral institutions also play a significant role in shaping the winner-loser gap. In majoritarian electoral systems, the difference between losers' and winners' perceptions of democratic performance tends to widen, while proportional representation systems reduce the gap (Anderson & Guillory, 1997; Aarts and Thomassen, 2008; Farrer & Zingher, 2019). However, this mechanism works better in consolidated Western European democracies than in other democracies (Farrer & Zingher, 2019).

Most authors assume that winners are those who voted for the parties in government (Singh & Thornton, 2016; Anderson et al., 2005; Singh et al., 2012). However, some authors have explored the different aspects of winning and losing, recognizing that these are distinct experiences that voters face differently (Singh, 2014; Singh et al., 2012; Curini et al., 2011; Stiers et al., 2018). In this research, I investigate the effect of coalition government announcements, which determine

winning and losing voters of the majority, and their impact on external political efficacy, a key element of the perception of democratic performance. Political efficacy refers to the belief that individual action is meaningful (Campbell et al., 1954). More specifically, external political efficacy refers to how citizens perceive the political system's responsiveness to their demands (Craig et al., 1990; Caprara & Vecchione, 2013; Esaiasson et al., 2015), and is an important indicator of the overall health of the democratic feeling (Campbell et al., 1954; Craig et al., 1990). Several studies have examined the different levels of external political efficacy among winners and losers (Anderson et al., 2005; Craig et al., 2006; Davis, 2014; Davis & Hitt, 2017), based on the idea that winners perceive governments as more responsive than losers do.

Efficacious citizens feel they can exert control over the political process, which means they can understand how political procedures work and that their participation matters to produce political outcomes (Campbell et al., 1954; Craig et al, 1990; Vowles, 2016; Esaiasson et al, 2015). Casting a vote for a winning party does increase the feeling that voting is important and can influence the political process (Anderson et al, 2005; Karp & Banducci, 2008; Singh & Thornton, 2016). In sum, winning citizens more easily perceive their role of principal and that political authorities are agents of their interests. But what if the winning prize is divided with other parties? Do winning voters of different parties have the same perception of responsiveness from who is in power? What does it mean for voters when winners do not take all? Why does the winner-loser gap decrease in proportional representation systems in what refers to voters' external efficacy?

One possible answer may lie in the different structures of cabinets. In most proportional representation systems (and some majoritarian systems as well), different parties can share cabinet portfolios to form coalition governments (Strøm et al, 2008; Lijphart, 1999). Many studies have examined the various aspects that arise from variations in the structure of cabinets, including their composition and dynamics (Laver & Shepsle, 1994; Strøm et al, 2008; Martin & Vanberg, 2014). Two dimensions of coalition cabinets of a comparative institutional approach are particularly relevant here: 1) the varying vote share levels of cabinet members, which have implications for the distribution of seats in the legislature, the allocation of portfolios in cabinets, and public policy outcomes (Martin & Vanberg, 2014); 2) the party of the head of government, commonly known as the formateur party or the party of the prime minister, which may have certain policy advantages over other party members in the cabinet (Ansolabehere et al, 2005; Warwick & Druckman, 2006).

I argue that the internal power imbalance of coalition governments has varying influence on voters' feelings of external political efficacy. If winning and losing matters for external efficacy, and what defines who is a winner and a loser is who is in power, then there should be a relation between who is in power and perceptions of system responsiveness. The decrease observed in the winner-loser gap in proportional representation systems may be related to the fact that such systems are more likely to generate coalition governments, and coalition governments indicate a heterogeneous type of winning voter. Some citizens vote for the formateur party, and others vote for junior cabinet parties. Given that the formateur party has several advantages over government policies (Ansolabehere et al, 2005), voters of the prime minister's party are expected to feel more efficacious than voters of junior cabinet parties. In addition, junior cabinet parties have less exposure than the formateur party in the media (Poguntke & Webb, 2005; Fortunato & Adams, 2015), and voters seem to perceive junior parties as more compromising than formateurs, which means that they feel coalition partner parties are more prone to giving up on issue positions in favor of joining the governmental coalition[2] (Fortunato, 2017). Additionally, the winning perception is not the same within the cabinet (Stiers et al, 2018). Voters of larger junior partners may express lower efficacy levels than voters of smaller parties within the cabinet.

However, comparing the attitudes of voters based on different coalition government structures is not an easy task. Institutional variables take time to change, and winning/losing voters maintain their status during the length of the Legislature, which poses a challenge for comparative purposes. Moreover, change can take time to occur in cabinets. In most parliamentary systems, formateur parties can remain in government and adjust cabinet partners after elections if successful. Finding variation in coalition structure within a country can be challenging, and resorting to cross-country comparisons may be a solution. While comparing different electoral contexts can be insightful, it also has limitations, such as internal factors that may be influencing the perceptions of voters in each context.

Curiously, as noted by Davis (2014), most studies of post-electoral external efficacy focus on either institutional predictors (Karp & Banducci, 2008; Kittilson & Anderson, 2011) or electoral outcomes (Anderson et al, 2005; Singh & Thornton, 2016). Davis (2014) combines these two approaches and identifies interesting insights on voters' average external efficacy in higher levels

[2] Fortunato (2017) recommends taking these findings carefully due to of the data available, but it is in line with Fortunato & Adams (2015).

of disproportionality. However, to my knowledge, no study has yet linked perceptions of system responsiveness to the composition of the government, which defines voters as winners or losers. Cabinet announcements are events that indicate – but do not ensure – which parties will be in the cabinet; they signal to citizens that parties have started to negotiate coalition agreements and the distribution of cabinet portfolios (De Winter & Dumont, 2008; Mitchell & Nyblade, 2008; Bassi, 2013). Usually, cabinet partners have already sorted out macro issues – compromises – before the announcement, and it is rare that these agreements do not result in a cabinet government. Exceptional situations, when cabinet partners' elites do not agree on specific topics after the announcement, may lead to a new cabinet composition with different party partners. The important thing for research purposes regarding cabinet announcements is that they indicate who the members of the government will be after the elections. For the winner-loser gap theory, the announcement of coalition talks' initiation corresponds to the first moment that winning and losing voters discover if they have indeed voted for a party in government or not, or a party that will be in the majority or not. According to Stiers et al. (2018), some voters may already assume they are winners or losers after the electoral results, but only cabinet announcements – which may take some days or even weeks after the elections – confirm with whom the negotiation has started. Measuring variations in voters' external efficacy before and after cabinet announcements can reveal interesting findings as to the winner-loser gap. If cabinet announcements matter, one hypothesis is that voters should express different levels of external efficacy before and after news coverage.

For this purpose, I use two survey datasets and make use of exogenous events resulting from electoral results for comparative purposes – cabinet announcements. The Comparative Study of Electoral System (CSES, 2020, 2022) has a comprehensive coverage of surveys conducted in several democracies. Field interviews are conducted a few days after elections. Given that coalition talks may take time to start, some citizens are interviewed before cabinet announcements; in other scenarios, the electoral results already reveal which parties will be in power, and the coalition announcement concurs with the publishing of ballot results. I search for the date of coalition announcements in elections available in waves 2, 3, 4, and 5 of the CSES dataset (2002-2022) to check in which participants had been interviewed before and after the coalition announcement. It's crucial to have a varied cross-national dataset at the level of the cabinet structure, especially the size of the cabinet which is known to influence citizens' political efficacy (Karp & Banducci, 2008). In total, 29,501 participants were eligible for the analysis, covering 19 elections in 8

countries – 14 ended-up in coalition governments with 23,657 participants – therefore allowing comparison of voters' attitudes in single-party cabinets and multiparty governments. The governments in the sample have a maximum of four parties. One significant advantage of this dataset is that the survey has a common question on external political efficacy that has consistently been asked in all elections. The question pertains to the perception of external control over the political system. I have gained interesting insights when comparing voters of large parties with those of smaller parties within the cabinet. The results indicate a notable increase for the latter and no significant variation for the former. The findings also suggest a clear reduction in the winner-loser gap for multiparty governments, particularly after the coalition announcement.

To compare the voting behavior of different junior cabinet members, I checked available panel surveys conducted in parliamentary systems with larger cabinets in recent years. The GESIS panel (2022) has been interviewing citizens in Germany since May 2013 and gives special attention to political efficacy (*Politische Wirksamkeit*). Given the Mixed-Member Proportional electoral system in Germany, single-party cabinets are theoretically possible (Gschwend et al, 2016), and voters consider the coalitional structure of the cabinet in their voting strategies (Gschwend et al, 2016; Bahnsen et al, 2020). There are not many coalitional combinations that can hold, and the Christian Democrats (the CSU-CDU Union) and the Social Democrats (SPD) have been the main parties taking the lead in government since 1949 (Campbell, 2015). They can be in government together in what is commonly known as the Grand Coalition (*Große Koalition – GroKo*), which means that the two largest parties are together in government.

After the results of the 2017 Federal Election, held on the 24th of September, the SPD decided to withdraw from coalition talks, and the CDU-CSU started negotiations to form a "Jamaica Coalition" – named after the color of each party member: black (CDU-CSU), yellow (Free Democratic Party-FDP), and the Greens (Wüst, 2019). However, the coalition talks failed on November 19 after the FDP renounced the terms of the government agreement[3]. Two possible solutions were on the table: to either call new elections or pursue talks to form a minority single-party cabinet[4]. However, in mid-December 2017, SPD members agreed to start exploratory talks

[3] https://www.dw.com/en/german-election-preliminary-coalition-talks-collapse-after-fdp-walks-out/a-41445987, accessed on June 13, 2023.
[4] https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2017/12/19/the-2017-federal-election-was-a-potential-turning-point-in-german-politics/

aiming to form a new Grand Coalition[5], officially announced at a party convention on January 21, 2018 (Wüst, 2019). Eventually, the new agreement was finished in February[6], the SPD members approved the agreement by early March[7], and the Bundestag reelected Chancellor Angela Merkel on March 14 for a fourth mandate.

I took advantage of the fact that there were two very different coalition proposals in the 171 days between the elections and the government inauguration to examine citizens' levels of external political efficacy at different times. The German General Social Survey asked similar questions during the electoral and post-electoral periods using GESIS participants. Therefore, I conducted a panel analysis and separate regressions for the period of the election to examine voters' level of external efficacy of different coalitions in different months of the year. The wave conducted during the talks of the Jamaica Coalition indicated an increase in the system responsiveness levels of SPD voters to the same level as FDP and Green voters, indicating that SPD voters felt more efficacious in the opposition. With the failure of the first coalition attempt, the average external efficacy level of SPD voters started dropping to the same level as opposition voters (and even lower when compared to the levels of voters of FDP and the Greens).

However, this could also be a result of dissatisfaction with the coalition talks' process and length, rather than specifically about being a junior partner in the coalition. In fact, there is a general drop in external efficacy that affects all voters interviewed in April 2018 proportionally. Therefore, I conducted a second analysis using the framework proposed by Callaway & Sant'Anna (2021) for differences-in-differences for intervention to compare voters' external efficacy over time (from 2013 to 2021[8]). The treatment in this analysis is joining the coalition, and the SPD has been the junior partner of the CDU-CSU since October 2013, continuously for two mandates. The Callaway & Sant'Anna (2021) framework determines the average treatment on the treated (ATT), but I use it here to extract the heterogenous effect (contrasting SPD voters) and check for differences with voters of the Jamaica Coalition. The main advantage of this approach is that it allows to test the parallel trend assumption in this design in a time-series with fixed-effects for each period. The SPD

[5] https://www.france24.com/en/20171215-germanys-spd-agrees-exploratory-govt-talks-with-merkel, accessed on June 12, 2023.
[6] https://www.cnbc.com/2018/02/07/german-coalition-deal-reached-between-merkel-and-spd.html, accessed on June 12, 2023.
[7] https://www.dw.com/en/germanys-spd-members-approve-coalition-with-angela-merkels-conservatives/a-42803601, accessed on June 12, 2023.
[8] Unfortunately, the data on the 2021 elections, when the SPD finally becomes the formateur of the Traffic Light Coalition, is not available yet.

onboarding into the coalition reduced the external efficacy level of SPD voters by 23% overall (33% in April 2018) and kept it negative relative to formateur voters (CDU-CSU) and to other Jamaica Coalition voters during the fourth cabinet of Chancellor Angela Merkel, but the effect faded over time. This could be due to policy outcomes of the mandate or expectations about the 2021 elections. Moreover, external efficacy gap between losers and winners is expected to reduce in time (Davis and Hitt, 2017). Overall, my analysis shows a clear decrease in the external political efficacy of junior partners' voters, which does not occur in voters of other parties that can be associated with the SPD being in the coalition. More importantly, it does not seem to influence other parties that had started coalition talks previously.

The research examines the intersection between institutions, context, and attitudes. Past research has investigated the impact of different government structures on voters' external efficacy, but there are still gaps in the field, particularly regarding the distance between winner-loser, and the attitudes of voters of junior cabinet parties, who are also winners, but who do not always feel as such. Previous studies have also overlooked the impact of government announcements. To fill these gaps, I propose considering the government announcement as a quasi-random event, as survey participants are interviewed before and after cabinet announcements, and the observed differences are noteworthy. However, this is an observational design rather than an experimental or quasi-experimental design. Therefore, I attempt to verify whether the participants after government formation are similar to those interviewed before cabinet announcements. In other words, I perform balance checks on control variables at the individual level and compare significant differences between the "treatment group" and "control group". The results are promising and encourage further research using the government announcement as the treatment group.

Coalition governments are on the rise, and recent evidence suggests that modern democracies are experiencing heterogeneous but steady increases in party and legislative fragmentation (De Winter & Dumont, 2008; Samuels & Shugart, 2010, 2014; Chaisty et al., 2018). While not a new trend, the reasons for this movement have yet to be defined; Chaisty et al. (2018) mention the inclusion of underrepresented minorities, political decentralization, and personalistic ambitions as possible causes (p.1-2). However, they are also more interested in the effects than the causes of this fragmentation. Candidates and parties are increasingly having to deal with pluralized legislatures, and there is evidence of a recent increase in the likelihood of government formation deadlocks (Albalate & Gel, 2020) due to higher levels of party fragmentation. De Winter &

Dumont (2008) investigated this phenomenon in the past and attributed it to the increase in the complexity of portfolio allocation. There seems to be no consensus as to the reasons for the increase in party fragmentation. However, researchers in political science are discussing the increase in complexity of elections related to the rise in party fragmentation. On the institutionalist front, concerns are framed from the perspective of complex equilibria within governments of different nature (Chaisty et al., 2018). Public opinion research, on the other hand, is more concerned with how different electoral results will affect individuals' attitudes and behaviors towards democracy. An increased number of options can make voting decisions more complex and, in turn, lower internal political efficacy (Russo, 2018). Here, I take a closer look at the aftermath of elections and the composition of the resulting government.

In the next chapter (Chapter 2), I will explore the theoretical aspects introduced here, particularly the concept of external efficacy and why there is a winner-loser gap (WLG) in perceptions of system responsiveness. Additionally, I will delve into how the government announcement can and should influence the perception of external efficacy among voters, and why we should expect heterogeneous effects based on who people vote for. Therefore, the discussion will touch on the coalition formation literature.

In Chapters 3 and 4, I test empirically, the arguments and hypotheses raised in the discussion. In Chapter 3 I examine the existence of a WLG in relation to external political efficacy using a cross-national design, and I assess the influence of cabinet announcements on this relationship. I balance the groups before and after cabinet announcements to identify any features that may need to be included in the regression. The timing of announcement has a significant effect on coalition governments, but negligible effects for single-party cabinets. I then examine variations based on whether voters voted for the formateur or junior cabinet parties. While I cannot identify major differences in the average levels of formateur's and junior cabinet partners' voters, I observe a negative effect on the latter group relative to the former. Additionally, the effect becomes more pronounced as the number of parties in the cabinet increases.

In Chapter 4, I take a closer look at what happened during the government formation process in Germany after the Bundestag election of September 2017, given that there were two coalition attempts and only one succeeded. With this, I aim to gain a deeper understanding of the effects of being in a coalition for the voters of junior cabinet partners. The panel analysis reveals a heterogeneous effect among voters of different coalitions, which shows inconsistencies in the

WLG, with losers expressing higher feelings of external efficacy than junior cabinet partners' voters. This explanation seems to be associated with being a large party and a junior cabinet partner. Moreover, as explained briefly before, the panel analysis shows a general drop in external efficacy. Therefore, I conduct a robustness analysis to examine average levels over time, and observe a different trend among SPD voters just after the coalition's inauguration, indicating that these voters may have more difficulty establishing a link of responsiveness with elected authorities, even if they have voted for them.

In chapter 5, I conclude the findings and comment on the results obtained considering the hypotheses and the argument. I also discuss some limitations and present potential future agenda using the same approach and methodologies employed in this research.

# 2 EXTERNAL EFFICACY AND VOTING BEHAVIOR

In this chapter, I conduct a brief literature review to examine what has been explored in the literature on external efficacy and the winner-loser gap. In the first part (2.1), I conceptualize what is understood as external efficacy, highlight the importance of election fairness for system responsiveness, and discuss how political conflict can influence voters' feelings of efficacy. In section 2.2, I address the winner-loser gap (WLG), its existence, and why it has also been found for external efficacy. Importantly, the WLG for external efficacy has been found to vary based on election disproportionality, meaning that losers and winners are closer in more consensual systems. Finally, in section 2.3, I discuss how government announcements can also be associated with the external efficacy WLG and can be a useful tool to compare different groups of voters. This chapter concludes with three hypotheses to be tested in the empirical part.

## 2.1 EXTERNAL EFFICACY, SYSTEM RESPONSIVENESS, AND CABINET CONFLICT

The concept of political efficacy is "the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process, i.e., that it is worthwhile to perform one's civic duties. It is the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change." (Campbell et al., 1954, p.187). It is usually associated with the belief in individual self-efficacy, which comes from the field of social psychology, or the feeling that people can control their actions and external events (Bandura, 1997; Sulitzeanu-Kenan & Halperin, 2013).

In the political realm, Bandura (1997) states "perceived political efficacy involves people's belief that they can influence the political system" (p. 483). The sense of political efficacy refers to the control citizens believe they can exert over the political order. Political science researchers typically distinguish between two inter-related dimensions of political efficacy. Internal political efficacy, or personal efficacy (Bandura, 1997), refers to the beliefs individuals hold about their understanding of the political system and their own capacity to engage in politics (Craig et al., 1990; Niemi et al., 1991; Caprara & Vecchione, 2013; Russo, 2017; Bandura, 1997). External political efficacy, on the other hand, concerns how citizens perceive the system's responsiveness to their needs in a broader sense (Craig et al., 1990; Caprara & Vecchione, 2013; Esaiasson et al., 2015). While internal efficacy depends on citizens' actions, such as voting and expressing opinions, external efficacy is more about how citizens perceive the system's responsiveness to their demands.

Political efficacy is an important predictor of voter turnout (Karp & Banducci, 2008; Kittilson & Anderson, 2011; Russo, 2017), overall satisfaction with the democratic system (Singh & Thornton, 2016), and is considered a crucial measurement to evaluate the general health of the democratic system (Craig et al., 1990; Anderson et al., 2005; Esaiasson et al., 2015).

From the description above, individuals' perception of the political process is closely associated with their perception of responsiveness. The belief in external efficacy is therefore a good measure of citizens' views on the system that produces political outcomes. More efficacious citizens are those who view the system as more responsive to their demands. What would a responsive system for ordinary citizens look like? It is important for people to be able to associate their (collective or individual) achievements with the intricacies of the political system.

Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2001, 2002) have conducted many studies on attitudes towards the political system and, more recently, have been reassessing their findings (Hibbing et al., 2021). According to them, people prefer procedural clarity, low political conflict, and being unbothered about the way decisions are made. They enjoy being called upon occasionally to vote and decide who their representatives are. In their findings they emphasize how strongly citizens dislike political conflict in the sense that they do not like the fact that politicians must compromise to get things done. In summary, citizens do not like to be exposed to the political process that produces political outcomes.

The political system has various ways to reduce and manage the effects of political conflicts, but it cannot avoid them entirely. In a way, the role of the democratic political system is to administer the different, and sometimes conflicting set of interests of societies. Przeworski (2003) summarizes this argument succinctly: "If the everyday life of democracy consists of perpetual bickering among quarrelsome politicians, it is because interests are at stake, and interests are often in conflict" (p.31). Within the political system, different arenas internalize conflicts in different ways. However, it is the government that citizens tend to direct their attention and dissatisfaction with the system toward (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002). Moreover, the comparative institutional agenda also points to the cabinet as an arena for conflict management, especially when the government is of a coalitional nature (Andeweg & Timmermans, 2008; Strøm et al., 2008), and the degree of conflict varies according to the number of actors (parties) involved in the government (De Winter & Dumont, 2008). Since parties in cabinet represent different interests, the cabinet composition and the number of parties in cabinet are indicators of intra-

governmental conflict (Karp & Banducci, 2008; Martin & Vanberg, 2014; Plescia & Kritzinger, 2022) and are perceived by voters. Therefore, varying levels of cabinet conflict can influence citizens' perceptions of system responsiveness in different ways.

## 2.2 THE WINNER-LOSER GAP AND EXTERNAL EFFICACY

Anderson et al. (2005) found evidence of a winner-loser gap (WLG) in perceived responsiveness, which shows that electoral losers tend to view the system as less responsive to their demands. However, this finding was only explored a few years later by Davis (2014). There is now an entire agenda approaching the different attitudes of losers and winners. After the seminal work of Anderson and Guillory (1997), Anderson et al. (2005) summarized several findings showing an attitudinal distance between losers and winners in elections. The research draws attention to a critical premise of democratic theory that gives an essential role to losers for the stability of democracy. Losers are expected to accept the electoral results (Riker, 1983; Przeworski, 2003), but they tend to have a worse perception of the democratic process and are influenced by the electoral outcome (Anderson et al., 2005).

Some studies have explored the WLG relative to voters' satisfaction with democracy and its implications for democratic stability. They found that the differences in perceptions vary significantly in stable democracies (Farrer & Zingher, 2018; Moehler & Lindberg, 2009), and institutions may have a say in this relation (Anderson & Guillory, 1997; Aarts & Thomassen, 2008; Bernauer & Vatter, 2012). Consensual institutions reduce the average distance between losers and winners by decreasing the satisfaction with democracy of winners, and by increasing losers' satisfaction (Aarts & Thomassen, 2008; Moehler & Lindberg, 2009; Martin & Quaranta, 2019). Some authors have deepened these findings and discovered that the context may also influence the distance between winners and losers, such as victory margins (Nadeau et al., 2021; Howell & Justwan, 2013) or the quality of government and institutional outcomes (Dahlberg & Linde, 2016).

Do variations of the WLG hold for external efficacy? Is the perception of responsiveness of losers in majoritarian systems different from losers in proportional representation systems? What would be the reasons for different average levels between them?

Briefly, there are three main explanations for why winners and losers perceive the world differently. First, the rational choice theory, also known as the utilitarian perspective, suggests that winning individuals perceive the gains from being on the winning side more than they perceive

losses (Anderson et al., 2005). Research shows that individuals tend to weigh their losses more heavily than their wins (Thaler, 1994; Anderson et al., 2005), and loss aversion can strongly impact individuals' decisions and attitudes (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). During pre-electoral periods, loss aversion can influence voting decisions and strategic voting under certain circumstances (Alesina & Passarelli, 2019). Voters may switch their vote for contenders with higher chances of winning if they believe their preferred candidate or party may lose elections, and this can reduce their satisfaction with democracy if the candidate they voted for ends up being a "sub-optimal" winner (Singh, 2014).

The second mechanism is related to emotions. Winners tend to experience happiness and euphoria after elections, while losers may feel disillusionment and anger (Anderson et al., 2005; Singh and Thornton, 2016; Pinto et al., 2021). These affective demonstrations have been found to be related to satisfaction with democracy (Anderson et al., 2005; Singh et al., 2012). There is a broader approach that links individuals' emotions to their political evaluations in general, such as support for governments (Pinto et al., 2021) and support for democracy (Singh et al., 2012; Tilley and Hobolt, 2023).

The third mechanism highlights aspects of individuals' cognition processes in their evaluations of the system and the government. Studies on cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957) indicate that individuals seek attitude consistency with prior behavior. When exposed to new events citizens tend to adapt their attitudes to preserve consistency with their behavior (Anderson et al., 2005; Singh, 2014).

The three mechanisms described above explain the existence of WLG for satisfaction with democracy. For the perception of system responsiveness, some studies have also indicated the existence of a WLG (Anderson et al., 2005; Craig et al., 2006; Davis, 2014). After Anderson et al. (2005) identified the WLG in external efficacy, the initial agenda in comparative politics for external efficacy covered institutional and contextual factors of perceived responsiveness (Karp & Banducci, 2008; Kittilson & Anderson, 2011) and their mediating effect on voter turnout. The works initially take the findings of the influential works of Lijphart (1999) and Powell (2000), which suggest that proportional representation electoral systems improve representation and reduce the distance between the median voter and the government. Among contextual predictors, electoral

disproportionality is found to reduce the perception of responsiveness (Karp & Banducci, 2008), but no relation was found with the electoral supply[9] (Kittilson & Anderson, 2011).

Moving on to electoral outcomes, the WLG for external efficacy was initially discovered in the context of American politics agenda (Craig et al, 2006), and the primary mechanism found to drive the divide between winners and losers was the perceived fairness of electoral procedures. Losers were more skeptical than winners about the responsiveness of the system, in part because they expected the newly elected government to be uninterested in the opinions of ordinary people. Davis (2014) explores the integration of electoral outcomes and institutional context and identifies a similar finding to the WLG for satisfaction with democracy: more consensual systems (where electoral disproportionality is lower) tend to increase losers' perceptions of system responsiveness, while winners are more likely to express lower levels of average external efficacy.

## 2.3 WINNERS, LOSERS, AND WHO IS IN POWER

What is striking about these studies is that governments and those in power were found to only matter in a few instances for the perception of responsiveness. Merolla et al. (2013) found that the election of Barack Obama in 2008 increased the external efficacy of African American voters, which could be associated with descriptive representation. However, they were not able to isolate the effect from partisanship – and in American politics, partisanship is highly linked to the winner-loser agenda. Apart from descriptive representation in a specific (and rigid) bipartisan electoral context, most studies either do not explore the possible association between who is in power and system responsiveness perception, or fail to find any association. Nonetheless, the government composition is important for the very definition of winning. According to Anderson et al. (2005), winners are voters who cast a ballot for a party in government, while losers voted for parties in the opposition[10] (Anderson et al., 2005; Singh & Thornton, 2016; Singh et al., 2012; Singh, 2014; Davis, 2014). Voters may not feel they won the election (Stiers et al., 2018), but it is their participation in the government that marks their attachment to the majority and is strongly tied to

[9] The authors explore several contextual variables that are the results of institutional designs affecting the supply of party choices, such as the effective number of electoral parties, party system polarization (Dalton, 2008). Although no effect of contextual variables has been found on external efficacy, they find that the party system polarization has heterogenous effects on voting turnout conditioned on the individual's level of external efficacy.

[10] "Those whose vote choice matches parties in power are categorized as being in the majority (winner)." – Anderson et al (2005), p. 34.

the feeling of winning an election (Stiers et al., 2018; Plescia, 2019). Therefore, if governments matter to the very definition of winning, and there is evidence of an external efficacy WLG, then there must be an association between government composition and perceptions of system responsiveness.

A number of studies have associated voters' attitudes with governments and those who are in power. An entire research program has explored governments' coalitional structures as a heuristic (Fortunato et al., 2021; Fortunato & Stevenson, 2013; Duch et al., 2015; Hjermitslev, 2023), meaning that who is in power is an accessible cue that citizens can use to build cognitions and beliefs. Heuristics are cognitive shortcuts that individuals mostly use implicitly to form opinions about a topic, allowing them to avoid the cognitive effort of gathering more details about a topic[11]. According to Hjermitslev (2023), "a party's status as either a coalition government or opposition member is a cheap and widely available piece of information" (p. 327). Citizens use party membership in coalition governments to infer the position of parties in the left-right spectrum, so they do not need to assess party manifestos for doing so (Fortunato & Stevenson, 2013). Voters also assess coalition government participation and electorally punish parties that compromise with the governing coalition (Fortunato, 2017; Klüver & Spoon, 2020; Plescia et al, 2022a). These findings are aligned with Hibbing & Theiss-Morse's (2002) claim that voters perceive political conflict in a negative key, and compromise is perceived "as selling out one's principles" (p. 136 – also mentioned in Fortunato, 2017, p.61). In this sense, citizens use "coalition heuristics" and this means that the government composition can influence people's attitudes and behaviors. Moreover, Plescia and Kritzinger (2022) provide evidence that citizens perceive intra-coalition conflicts between the members, and this can have electoral effects in the following election, conditioned on poor economic performances. On the behavioral side, many studies have also explored how coalition signals can stir strategic voting to favour voting decisions for smaller parties (Gschwend et al, 2016; Gschwend et al, 2017; Bahnsen et al, 2020), indicating that voters anticipate the coalition membership and express preferences for different structures.

The composition of parties in the cabinet also affects voters' perceptions of winning. Several studies have examined what factors contribute to citizens feeling like winners, recognizing that winning is a subjective experience (Plescia, 2019). Voting for the party with the highest vote

[11] The definition is derived from Fortunato et al (2017): "[heuristics are] a simple rule that maps a set of (limited) informational inputs into relatively complex inferences" (p.1212).

share (Stiers et al., 2018) and supporting a party that enters the cabinet (Stiers et al., 2018; Plescia, 2019) are critical factors that contribute to an individual's feeling that the party they voted for has won the election. The interpretation of whether or not a party has won an election can also influence voters' attitudes. These findings highlight the subjective nature of the perception of winning elections. Some studies have shown that winners may have varying levels of satisfaction with democracy, depending on factors such as strategic voting (Singh, 2014), winning at different levels of elections (Singh et al., 2012; Stiers et al., 2018), ambivalence towards other parties in coalition cabinets (Singh & Thornton, 2016), past electoral performance experiences (Curini et al., 2011; Stiers et al., 2018), and margins of victory (Howell & Justwan, 2013; Stiers et al., 2018). The heterogeneity of the experience of victory (Plescia, 2019) is well-documented for satisfaction with democracy. However, for external efficacy WLG, only winner-loser comparisons have been explored (Davis, 2014; Davis & Hitt, 2017).

Given the heterogeneous effects of the winning experience and the likely effect of governments on the perception of system responsiveness, who people vote for within the coalition may influence citizens' external political efficacy. In multiparty systems, coalition governments are quite common for several reasons, mostly institutional (Lijphart, 1999). Voters in such systems are those who voted for the largest party within the government, which is the formateur party responsible for indicating the head of government[12] and those who voted for junior partners in the cabinet supporting the formateur party. This contrast has barely been assessed in studies that explore the WLG, but many studies in other areas indicate that voters differentiate coalition members from one another (Fortunato et al., 2016; Fortunato & Adams, 2015; Duch et al., 2015). For instance, citizens discount the policy outcomes of governments heterogeneously. The prime minister's party, or the formateur party, has more weight in citizens' perceptions of the government than its junior cabinet partners. Voters project the left-right policy position of the prime minister onto the position of the coalition junior partners, but do not do so reciprocally (Fortunato & Adams, 2015). Furthermore, citizens are more inclined to attribute responsibility for collective decision-making to the prime minister and their party (Duch et al., 2015) and perceive the prime minister's party as more influential than junior cabinet partners (Fortunato et al., 2021). Considering electoral behaviours, voters of junior cabinet partners are more likely to punish their party in the following

[12] *Formateur* parties that are not the largest party are quite common in presidential systems given the voting structure that segregates voting for different branches of power (Cheibub, 2006). Such systems also allow the formation of coalition governments (Chaisty et al, 2018), but I could not explore given the research design.

elections because voters perceive such parties as less capable of delivering campaign policies[13] (Klüver & Spoon, 2020). This is in line with findings indicating a negative perception of compromise (Fortunato, 2017).

However, there are no indications of the effects of voting for the different members of the cabinet in the feeling of external efficacy. Given that voters of junior cabinet partners are considered winners (Anderson et al, 2005) and feel like winners (Plescia, 2019), but electorally punish their party (Klüver & Spoon, 2020) for compromising (Fortunato, 2017) and for bad economic performance (Plescia and Kritzinger, 2022), one of the reasons may be because they feel the system is less responsive to their demands because their party compromises with other parties – and compromise means giving-up on critical policies (Fortunato, 2017), in spite of also stimulating conflictive feelings as to who is in power (Plescia & Kritzinger, 2022 ). This argument is sustained by the fact that citizens' beliefs are influenced by "government heuristics" or "coalition heuristics" rather than by government performance.

Previous studies suggest that losers in an election are likely to express lower levels of external efficacy as compared to winners, which is a defining feature of the WLG for the perception of responsiveness (Davis, 2014). However, it is unclear how voters of parties that compromise perceive their external efficacy levels, and how these levels vary once their party enters the cabinet. Additionally, the effects of having more members within the cabinet are not well understood. Junior cabinet partners' voters tend to have less exposure and prestige than voters of the formateur party, and they often have fewer policies enacted once in power (Ansolabehere et al., 2005; Poguntke & Webb, 2005; Fortunato & Adams, 2015). It is therefore plausible to hypothesize that voters of junior cabinet partners may express lower levels of external efficacy as compared to voters of formateur parties.

**H1: voters of junior cabinet parties' show lower levels of external efficacy than voters of the *formateur* party.**

What we do not yet know is whether voters of junior cabinet partners are influenced by their party's entry into the cabinet or solely by their electoral performance. In theory, electoral results inform individuals about their party's status, whether they have won or lost seats in the legislature, and whether any party has achieved a successful electoral outcome to form a single-

[13] The authors do not test this mechanism, they verify the variation of electoral performance.

party cabinet[14] (Strøm et al, 2008; Stiers, 2018). However, voters do not know for certain which parties will be in the cabinet, and only a formal announcement confirms which parties will be negotiating portfolios, defining who the winners are (in government) and who the losers are (in opposition). Voters may take educated guesses because some coalitions are more likely than others (Gschwend et al, 2017), but the announcement formalizes which parties will be in power. Two important things to note in this regard: firstly, since it is the party that receives the largest vote share or the party with less cost to form a coalition, voters of the formateur party assume they are winners after elections (Stiers et al, 2018). Thus, they can serve as a reference group for comparison purposes. Secondly, if cabinet announcements establish who will be winners and losers, both losers and junior cabinet party voters are expected to be influenced by the announcement, but how they are influenced remains unknown.

Based on the analysis of the effects of electoral results on external efficacy (Davis, 2014), combined with the subjective perception of winning (Stiers et al., 2018; Plescia, 2019), we can hypothesize that junior cabinet parties' voters are expected to have a better perception of system responsiveness than losers, but not a higher perception than formateur voters. However, the effect of cabinet announcements may be heterogeneous for both groups of losers and voters of cabinet parties based on their electoral performance. Prior to cabinet announcements, voters of smaller parties within the cabinet have the electoral performance of their party as a reference. Thus, they may find themselves as losers before cabinet announcements, but their perception of system responsiveness may increase after their party joins the cabinet. This leads us to a second hypothesis that the increase in external efficacy for joining the cabinet is expected to be larger for voters of smaller parties than for voters of bigger parties in the cabinet.

**H2: voters of smaller parties in the cabinet demonstrate a greater increase in external efficacy following the government announcement.**

Previous research has found that the size of the cabinet negatively affects citizens' external efficacy (Karp & Banducci, 2008), but does not have a significant impact on whether voters are winners or losers (Davis, 2014). However, according to the WLG rationalist explanation, losers are expected to react positively to a divided governing majority (Riker, 1983; Anderson et al., 2005). In terms of perceptions of system responsiveness, it is possible that variations in the size of the

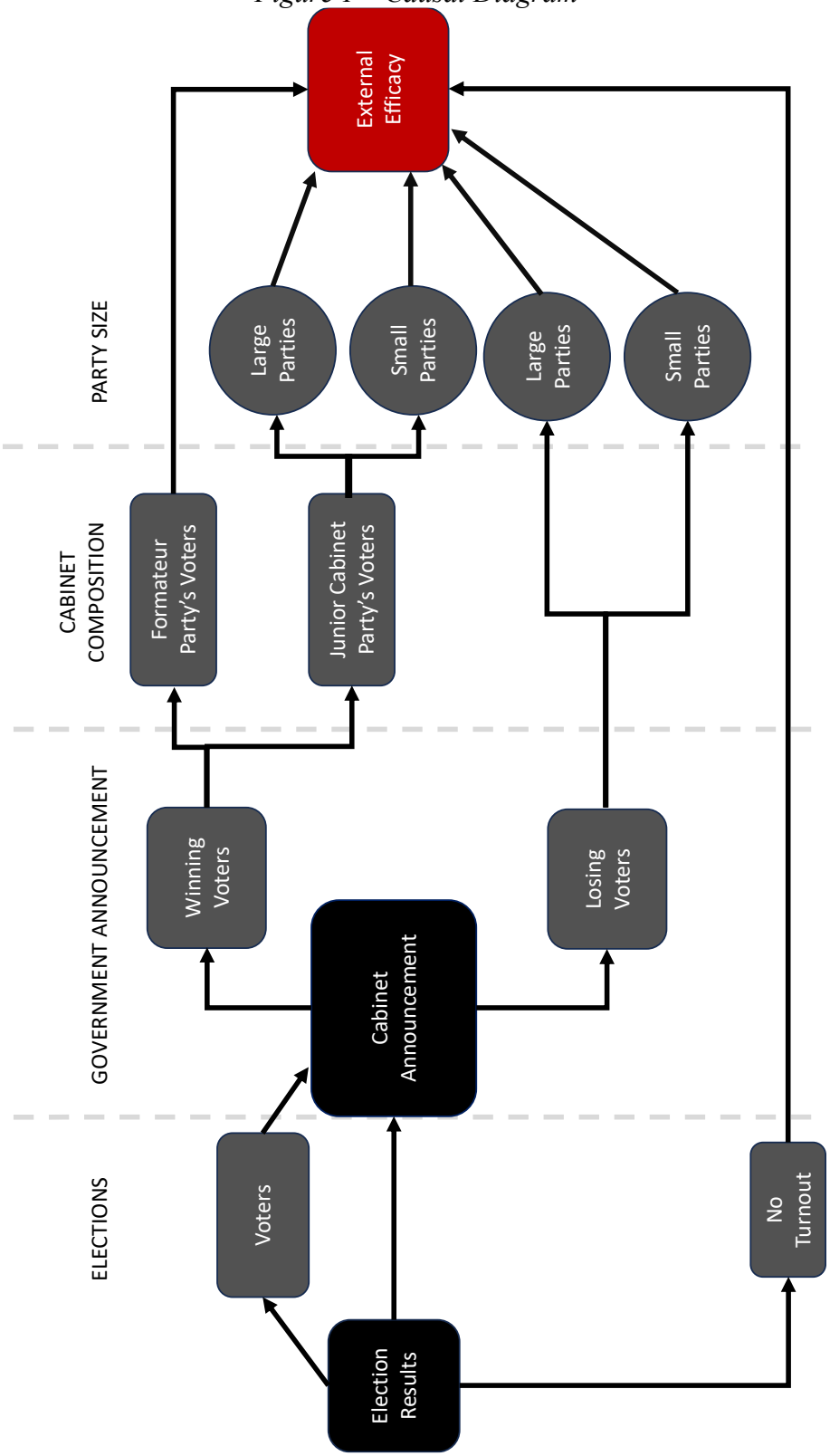
[14] It does not mean that one party has reached the quota to form by itself. Minority governments are possible as well as confidence and supply agreements with parties in the Legislative.

cabinet may affect voters of smaller parties in the cabinet differently than voters of the formateur party. This is because voters of smaller parties may place greater weight on the composition of the cabinet (Ansolabehere et al., 2005; Fortunato & Adams, 2015). Larger cabinets with more parties in government may make it more difficult to establish responsiveness links with those in power, as there are more actors and interests involved. However, this is unlikely to have a negative influence on voters of the formateur party. The size of the cabinet is typically established after cabinet announcements, so before the official announcement, it is the electoral outcome that influences citizens' external efficacy. Large cabinets may be associated with a divided electoral outcome, with no clarity of who will form the governing majority.

**H3: as the number of parties in the cabinet increases, voters of junior cabinet parties exhibit lower levels of external efficacy.**

In In the next chapters, I will test these three hypotheses using two survey datasets. I will conduct some previous checks before, especially relative to the external efficacy WLG to check if it does really exist and if there is a real decrease when we compare coalitional systems and single-party cabinets.

*Figure 1 – Causal Diagram*




Source: Own work, 2023

# 3 CABINET ANNOUNCEMENTS AND EXTERNAL EFFICACY IN 17 COUNTRIES

To my knowledge, cabinet announcements have not previously been utilized to assess voters' electoral attitudes. In this chapter, I argue that the disclosure of government members can be employed to compare voters' external efficacy, as it provides crucial information about the winners and losers of the election. In section 3.1, I discuss the significance of cabinet announcements and explain why it can be used to examine electoral attitudes. In section 3.2, I describe how I utilized the CSES dataset, including the selection of cases, and provide an overview of the main variables used in the regressions. Of particular importance, in section 3.2.2.3, I present the *Pre-Post* variable and conduct balance checks to ensure comparability between voter groups before and after the moment of announcement. In section 3.3, I present the regression results and summarize the main findings in section 3.4, highlighting key points for discussion.

## 3.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF CABINET ANNOUNCEMENTS

Cabinet announcements mark the moment when voters learn whether the party they voted for will be in government or in opposition. It is increasingly recognized that elections alone may not be enough to inform individuals whether they have won or lost, especially in proportional representation systems (Plescia, 2019; Stiers et al, 2018). However, studies examining the attitudes of voters whose preferred party enters the cabinet, the most common definition of winning voters, have produced divergent findings. Stiers et al (2018) found that voters place greater emphasis on parties' electoral performance than on whether the party enters the government in determining whether their party has won or lost the election. In contrast, Plescia (2019) found that "[a] party entering the government unequivocally augments perceptions that the supported party has won the election" (p. 798), although the study also suggests that parties' electoral performance remains an important factor. This debate highlights the importance of the government announcement in the mechanism linking electoral results to the perception of system responsiveness.

The moment of announcement differs from that of cabinet inauguration. Typically, after elections, parties begin coalition bargaining, but take some time before announcing which members will be involved in the cabinet formation process. The length of the bargaining period depends on institutional design and contextual factors, such as potential member parties' conflicting preferences, incumbency, and leadership strength (Ecker & Meyer, 2020). Conceptually, cabinet announcements mark the first step of the bargaining process that ultimately leads to the formal

government inauguration. Since bargaining party elites must mobilize their bases to secure a better deal (Ecker & Meyer, 2020), the announcement's purpose is to signal which parties will be involved in coalition talks. While coalition formation may fail, once announced, I assume that failures and dropouts are costly for the parties involved[15]. As a result, the announcement creates attrition and agency costs if the members involved fail to deliver the cabinet.

When discussing successful coalitions, the announcement is the moment when voters discover the parties that are potentially entering the government. If winning is related to increased levels of external efficacy (Craig et al, 2006), then cabinet announcements must influence the average perception of system responsiveness, and heterogeneity must appear between losers and winners. However, we also know that more consensual systems decrease the WLG of external efficacy (Davis, 2014). Cabinets with coalitional structures, therefore, must show smaller gaps between winners and losers. However, to test this hypothesis, cross-national data would be necessary to allow for comparison of voters with different cabinet structures.

The dataset from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES, 2020, 2022) is well-suited for this purpose. The CSES dataset has many advantages for cross-national comparative studies that use contextual variables and participant data, particularly because it allows for the comparison of institutional data with small within-country variations. The interviewing teams are hired locally and deployed to the field a few days after election day in selected countries[16]. Participants are approached when the elections are still fresh in their minds. In some countries, participants are interviewed before the announcement of the government and only have the electoral results as a signal of which party will be in power. Other participants are enrolled when they already know which party will be in the government, either because electoral results have already indicated the result or because parties have already started the coalition formation process. I take advantage of cases where cabinet announcements take place in the middle of the data collection process, when the teams are deployed in the field. In such cases, I have two groups that are interesting to compare: 1) citizens who were interviewed before the announcement of the government membership and therefore do not know which parties will be bargaining portfolios

[15] Unlike the case study employed in the next chapter, in the cross-national sample I use only successful cabinets' composition, so there are no coalition bargain failures.

[16] I did not find any orientation about the timing of interviews on the CSES web page, but I conducted tests using the IMD dataset (CSES, 2020) that confirmed the teams are deployed in the aftermath of elections in each participating country.

during the coalition formation process, and 2) citizens who were interviewed after the announcement of which parties will be at the table in coalition talks and are aware of which parties are involved in coalition talks.

Two assumptions are crucial for this mechanism to work properly: (1) citizens must follow the news, and (2) the announcement must have an immediate influence on their level of system responsiveness. With regard to the first premise, I assume that the government announcement is an important event that attracts the attention of major media outlets and is widely shared among citizens. As for the second premise, there may be some stickiness, and the fact that some voters may heard about the coalition composition some days later is to be taken into account.

Turning to the profiles identified and discussed in the previous chapter, there are two major winning voter profiles in terms of the size of the cabinet: 1) voters of the party of the prime minister or formateur party, and 2) voters of junior cabinet parties. The first group is associated with the party that received the largest vote share in the cabinet, while the second group comprises voters of the remaining parties in the cabinet, whose size varies. The main difference between these two groups of winning voters is that members of the first group usually know they will be in the government before the government announcement. Stiers et al. (2018) and Plescia (2019) have reached similar conclusions about how voters feel they have won the election when they vote for the most popular party and the party is in the cabinet. In other words, this party does not need to announce that it will form the government. Therefore, I will use voters of the formateur party as the reference group for the regressions, but I do not assume that voters of the largest party are not influenced by cabinet announcements.

## 3.2 DATA TREATMENT

### 3.2.1 Case Selection

*Table 1 – Cases, Cabinet Announcement Date, and Sources*

| Country | Date | Source |
|---|---|---|
| Australia | 2004-10-22 | https://www.abc.net.au/news/2004-10-22/howard-unveils-new-cabinet/571978?pfmredir=sm&pfm=ms |
| Australia | 2013-09-16 | https://www.news24.com/fin24/australias-new-prime-minister-unveils-cabinet-20130916 |
| Denmark | 2019-06-25 | https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jun/26/denmarks-youngest-prime-minister-leads-new-leftist-government |
| Finland | 2007-04-18 | https://yle.fi/a/3-5781295 |
| Finland | 2015-05-28 | https://yle.fi/news/3-8026174 |
| Germany | 2009-10-24 | https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/oct/24/germany-coalition-merkel |
| Germany | 2013-10-20 | https://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-coalition-idUSBRE99J07X20131020 |
| Iceland | 2003-05-23 | https://www.stjornarradid.is/efst-a-baugi/frettir/stok-frett/2003/05/23/Fjorda-raduneyti-Davids-Oddssonar/ |
| Iceland | 2013-05-17 | https://www.ruv.is/frettir/innlent/skiptingu-raduneyta-gaeti-lokid-i-dag |
| Iceland | 2017-11-30 | https://www.icelandreview.com/news/five-women-six-men-new-cabinet/ |
| New Zealand | 2008-11-16 | https://web.archive.org/web/20131019130530/http://www.nbr.co.nz/article/key-announces-shape-new-national-led-government-37836 |
| New Zealand | 2011-12-05 | https://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PA1112/S00032/national-act-agreement-announced.htm |
| New Zealand | 2014-09-29 | https://www.parliament.nz/media/1460/2014-act-party-confidence-and-supply-agreement.pdf |
| New Zealand | 2017-10-19 | https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/19/jacinda-ardern-new-zealand-prime-minister-labour-coalition-deal-winston-peters |
| New Zealand | 2020-10-31 | https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/politics/labour-greens-jacinda-ardern-kelvin-davis-james-shaw-and-marama-davidson-to-ink-co-operation-deal/IVCFP5G25EV7KAH6AQ5GNREE44/ |
| Norway | 2009-10-20 | https://spravy.pravda.sk/svet/clanok/230999-norsky-premier-vybral-19-ministrov-ale-na-oficialnej-fotografii-ich-mal-20/ |
| Norway | 2013-10-16 | https://www.newsinenglish.no/2013/10/16/heres-norways-new-government/ |
| Sweden | 2002-10-02 | https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regeringen_Persson#Misstroendeomröstning_2002[17] https://edoc.hu-berlin.de/bitstream/handle/18452/8451/forsgard.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y https://www.riksdagen.se/en/how-the-riksdag-works/what-does-the-riksdag-do/examines-the-work-of-the-government/ |
| Sweden | 2014-10-02 | https://www.svt.se/nyheter/val2014/sa-vill-stefan-lofven-styra-sverige |

Source: Own work, 2023

The CSES dataset has released 216 election studies in 5 waves between 1996 and 2021. However, the first wave (1996-2001) is considered a first effort and has many differences from the subsequent studies on the platform. For example, there are no data on voters of smaller parties

[17] The Social Democrat Party had been in power since 1996 with Prime Minister Göran Persson ahead of the cabinet. It was a minority cabinet surviving with the support of the Green Party and the Left Party. Both parties retrieved their support before the general election of 2002. The Social Democrat Party increased the seat share after the election, but it was still below the minimum required to form a cabinet, and the Green and the Left refrained from joining the government and refused to sign a confidence and supply deal. The leader of Moderate Party, Bo Lundgren, called for a vote of no confidence after the election on September 29. The vote was held on the October 2nd 2002, and the Green Party did not vote allowing the Social Democrat Party to remain in power as a minority government.

within each country. Hence, I excluded studies from the first wave from the analysis. The CSES dataset provides information about the electoral performance of parties, which is critical to knowing which party is in government and which is not, as well as to understanding voters' attitudes towards these parties. This data is also important to check whether voters were winners or losers, and for which party within the cabinet they voted for. When there was no data available for most parties or there were inconsistencies in the results (e.g., parties not in order of most voted to least voted), I removed the study[18]. After applying these filters, I had 116 studies of elections from waves 2 to 5 of the CSES dataset (2001-2021).

I first searched for the dates of government formation for the remaining studies and matched them with the Political Parties, Presidents, Elections, and Governments dataset (PPEG, 2023) to check if the dates I was using occurred before the official government formation. If the government announcement date was later than the government inauguration, I double-checked the date of the announcement and information to discard any mistakes[19]. Once I had a solid government formation date, I ran a code to identify the studies in which participants were interviewed before and after government formation. Initially, I considered establishing a minimum threshold of observations before and after government formation within each study. However, following Gelman & Hill's (2006) recommendations for multilevel models, it is important to maximize the number of observations for the study and within each study – the important thing is to keep fixed effects to enable comparison standards[20]. In any case, the smallest group had 4.66% observations before the announcement. Finally, I had to carefully review each study to remove cases that did not correspond to a post-electoral coalition announcement. For example, the study conducted in Sweden after the 2006 general election had to be removed because the Alliance for Sweden coalition was composed of four center-right and right-wing parties[21] that had established a pre-

[18] This is the case of the study conducted in France in 2012. The teams interviewed participants about the presidential election, but not about the Legislative elections that were going to be held a few days later, a well-known particularity of the French institutional design. Therefore, participants may have voted for presidential candidates of the parties that will be in the later coalition, but we do not know about the lower house votes of participants. Therefore, I opt to remove the case.

[19] I have 7 cases where the inauguration date is the same as the government announcement date. For the 2008 national election in New Zealand, I assume that the PPEG has a mistake given that the inauguration date informed is the same as the election date for this election.

[20] "Even two observations per group are enough to fit a multilevel model. It is even acceptable to have one observation in many of the groups. When groups have few observations, their $\alpha j$'s won't be estimated precisely, but they can still provide partial information that allows estimation of the coefficients and variance parameters of the individual- and group-level regressions." (Gelman & Hill, 2006, p. 276).

[21] The Moderate Party, the Center Party, the Liberal People's Party, and the Christian Democrats.

electoral coalition agreement. Voters already knew they were going to compose a coalition after the election results, and if one party member had decided to leave the Alliance or if their electoral results had been higher, leading to an oversized coalition cabinet, a new agreement would most likely have been drafted after the elections. However, since the pre-electoral conditions remained the same, I removed the study from the cases. The sources indicating the dates of government announcements can be found in Table 1.

In sum, I have 19 studies of elections conducted in 8 countries, which covers 29,501 individual-level observations with complete information on the main variables, which is the dependent variable (external efficacy), who the participant has voted for, and when they are interviewed. Of this selection, 14 ended up in coalition governments, which corresponds to 23,657 individual observations with complete data.

### 3.2.2 Data Description

#### 3.2.2.1 The Dependent Variable

For the dependent variable, I use a measure of external efficacy that is widely employed in cross-national studies (Anderson et al, 2005; Listhaug et al, 2009; Kittilson and Anderson, 2011; Costa Lobo & Razzuoli, 2017; Vowles, 2016):

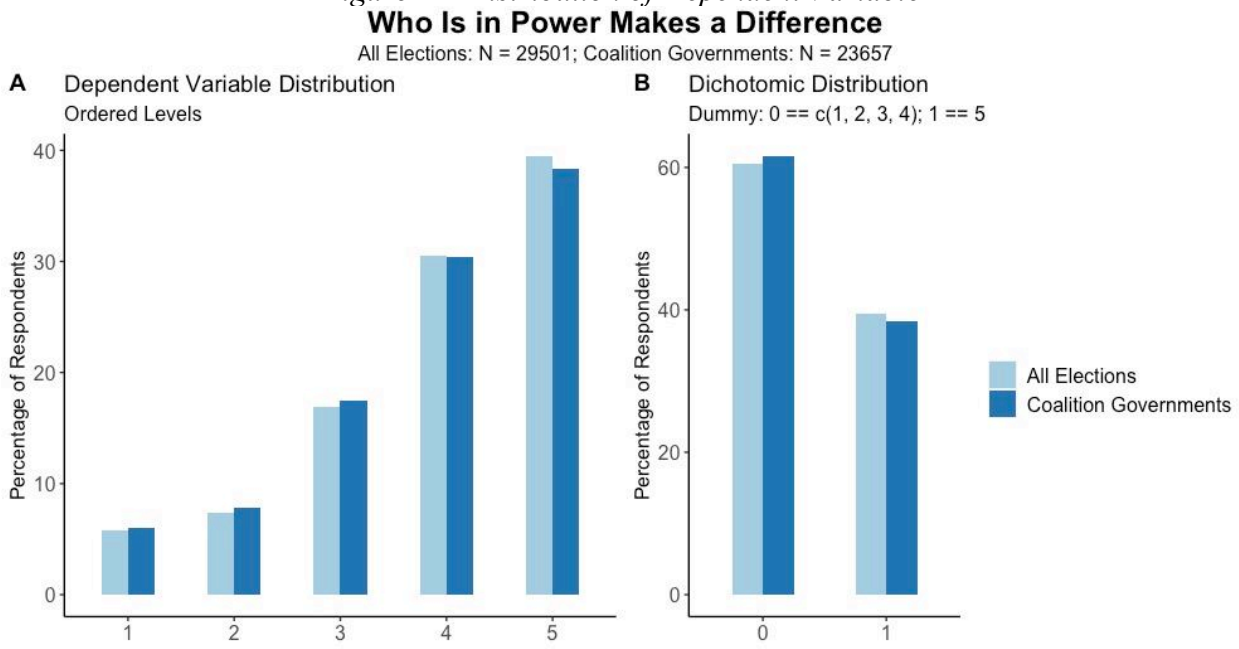
> *Some people say that it doesn't make any difference who is in power. Others say that it makes a big difference who is in power. Using the scale on this card, (where ONE means that it doesn't make any difference who is in power and FIVE means that it makes a big difference who is in power), where would you place yourself?*[22]

Some authors have used this question as an alternative dimension of representation or support, such as leaders' ability to effect change (Singh & Thornton, 2016). Vowles (2016) argues that it is partially linked to the perception of accountability. Both representation and accountability are not distinct from the perception of system responsiveness. Being able to distinguish unique attributes (that make a difference) from one governing group to another implies a connection between the government (those in power) and citizens' demands. Conversely, indifference towards

[22] In module 2 of the CSES, the scale was inversed, and the wording was slightly different, although the idea was quite the same: "1. It makes a difference who is in power – 5. It doesn't make a difference who is in power". Previous study using the same question survey controlled for this difference, but it was not a big issue. I put some controls here too, and the differences in the results were not significant.

the incumbent government is associated with the belief that it does not matter who is in power and that governments are not responsive to people's interests. Additionally, a perception that whoever is in power makes a difference can be linked to a personal understanding of the importance of who is in power, and the idea that citizens can exert control over whoever is in power, for example by voting out candidates (in a democracy) and indicating new representatives. Therefore, I consider this question a measure of external efficacy, or a perception of system responsiveness. The distribution of the variable can be checked in Figure 2A.

*Figure 2 – Distribution of Dependent Variable*




Source: CSES (2020, 2022)

Figure 2 presents the percentage distribution of the dependent variable. It includes the distribution for the entire dataset (shown in light blue) and specifically for elections resulting in coalition governments (shown in dark blue), which constitute the majority of cases (further information about coalitions can be found in Table 2). The distribution depicted in Figure 2A indicates that a linear model would not be suitable for the statistical analysis due to the ordinal nature of the variable and the skewed distribution towards the highest level. Given that approximately 40% of respondents selected level 5, for certain models involving interactions with contextual variables (see section 3.2.2.4), I will employ simpler logistic models based on the distribution presented in Figure 2B (following Karp & Banducci, 2008 and Kittilson & Anderson, 2011).

#### 3.2.2.2 Winners, Losers, and Junior Cabinet Parties' Voters

The CSES dataset provides important data on which party participants claim to have voted for in the last election. In most cases listed in Table 1, citizens vote for a party list candidate for their district or state, while in some countries, they must vote for a party candidate who is a member of a party or an independent. I favored party lists to build variables of who people vote for when both options were available (as in Germany) because it is the list that best reflects citizens' link with parties in each country. For each country, the CSES dataset provides detailed information on nine parties. The six parties with the highest electoral performance are ordered first, and three additional parties are added if they had significant importance in the election but did not perform well. For these parties, the CSES dataset provides detailed information on the election, such as electoral performance in the lower house[23], the party of the prime minister, and if the party has received any portfolio in the cabinet. I use this data to rank parties from the most to the least successful in the election, identify the formateur party, and determine which parties are in the government or opposition.

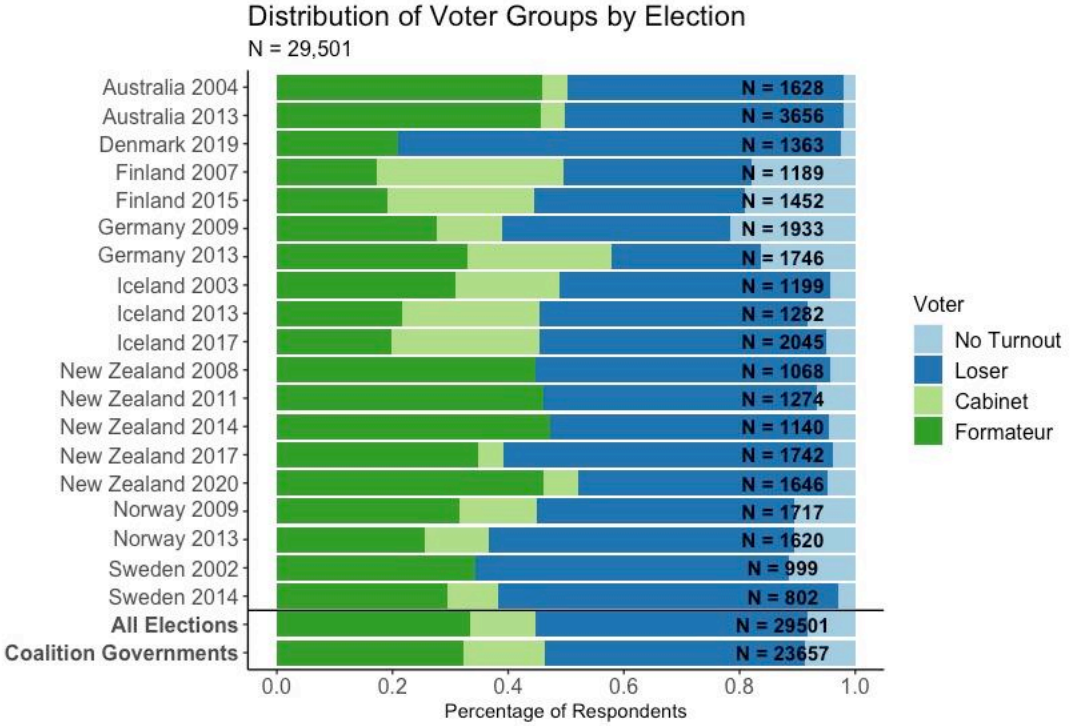
I created four categories of voters: 1) formateur party voters; 2) junior cabinet parties' voters – citizens who voted for a party that is not the formateur party; 3) losers; and 4) non-voters. To better understand the variations of external efficacy WLG, I merged formateur party voters and junior cabinet parties' voters into a single category of winners when analyzing single-party cabinets in the sample. Additionally, I used the party ranking to divide junior cabinet parties' voters and losers into two subcategories each for the analysis of coalitions: 1) voters of the largest cabinet party; 2) voters of smaller parties in the cabinet; 3) voters of the largest opposition party; and 4) voters of smaller opposition parties.

Figure 3 displays the distribution of voters and the total number of participants in each study[24], while Table 2 presents the contextual elements used to construct the categories described earlier. Elections that did not result in coalition governments have no junior cabinet parties' voters. Formateur and losing voters constitute the largest groups, with some exceptions: both elections in Finland and the two most recent ones in Iceland exhibit a larger distribution of junior cabinet parties' voters compared to losing voters. The case of Iceland in 2013 is intriguing: the Progressive Party secured second place in the parliamentary elections and yet designated the Prime Minister

[23] For the upper house and for presidential votes as well when it is the case.
[24] Check Table 11 in Appendix 3.5.2 for detailed numbers by election.

(Sigmundur Davíð Gunnlaugsson)[25]. Furthermore, the 2013 election in Germany demonstrates a more balanced distribution between the groups.

*Figure 3 – Bar-plot – Distribution of Voter Groups by Election and Overall Distribution*




Source: CSES (2020, 2022)

All cabinets in the dataset are either minority governments or minimum winning coalitions. This is evident from the fact that the combined percentage of cabinet and formateur voters does not exceed 50%, except for the 2013 Germany election. However, it is noteworthy that the aggregate model shows a low number of junior cabinet parties' voters: they account for 11.25% of the participants in the dataset encompassing all elections, and 14.03% in the study restricted to coalition governments. Nevertheless, it is somewhat expected to have a higher number of voters from larger parties.

[25] Both the Progressive Party (F) and the Independence Party (Sj) secured 19 seats after the redistribution of votes.

*Table 2 – Names and Number of Parties in Government and in Opposition and Disproportionality*

| Country | Election Year | Formateur Party[26] | Other Parties in Cabinet | Opposition Parties | Disproportionality[27] | Parties in Cabinet |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Australia** | 2004 | LP | NP | ALP, | 8.6 | 2 |
| | 2013 | LP | NP | ALP, AG, PUP | 9.54 | 2 |
| **Denmark** | 2019 | SD | | V, DF, RV, SF, EL, KF, A, NB | 2.39 | 1 |
| **Finland** | 2007 | KESK | KOK, PS, VIHR, RKP | SDP, RKP, KD | 3.2 | 4 |
| | 2015 | KESK | KOK, PS | SDP, VIHR, VAS, RKP, KD | 3.03 | 3 |
| **Germany** | 2009 | CDU-CSU | FPD | Linke, Gruene, FDP, NPD | 3.4 | 3 |
| | 2013 | CDU-CSU | SPD | Linke, Gruene, FDP, AfD, Piraten, NPD | 7.83 | 3 |
| **Iceland** | 2003 | Sj | F | Sam, VG, FF | 1.85 | 2 |
| | 2013 | F | Sj | Sam, VG, BF, Pi | 6.23 | 2 |
| | 2017 | Sj | VG, F | Sam, M, Pi, FIF, Vioreisn, BF | 1.91 | 3 |
| **New Zealand** | 2008 | NP | | NZLP, GP, NZF, ACT, UFNZ, MP, PP | 3.84 | 1 |
| | 2011 | NP | | NZLP, GP, NZF, ACT, UFNZ, MP, CP, MANA | 2.38 | 1 |
| | 2014 | NP | | NZLP, GP, NZF, ACT, UFNZ, MP, CP, MANA | 3.72 | 1 |
| | 2017 | NZLP/Lab | GP | NP, NZFP, TOP, MP, ACT, MANA | 2.73 | 2 |
| | 2020 | NZLP/Lab | GP | NP, NZFP, TOP, NC, MP, ACT | 4.15 | 2 |
| **Norway** | 2009 | AP | SP, SV | H, FRP, KRF, V, RV | 3.01 | 3 |
| | 2013 | H | FRP | AP, KRF,SP, V, SV, MDG, R | 2.56 | 2 |
| **Sweden** | 2002 | SAP | | V, SAP, C, FP, M, KD | 1.52 | 1 |
| | 2014 | SAP | MP | V, C, FP, M, KD, MP, SD, FI | 2.64 | 2 |

Source: Own work, 2023

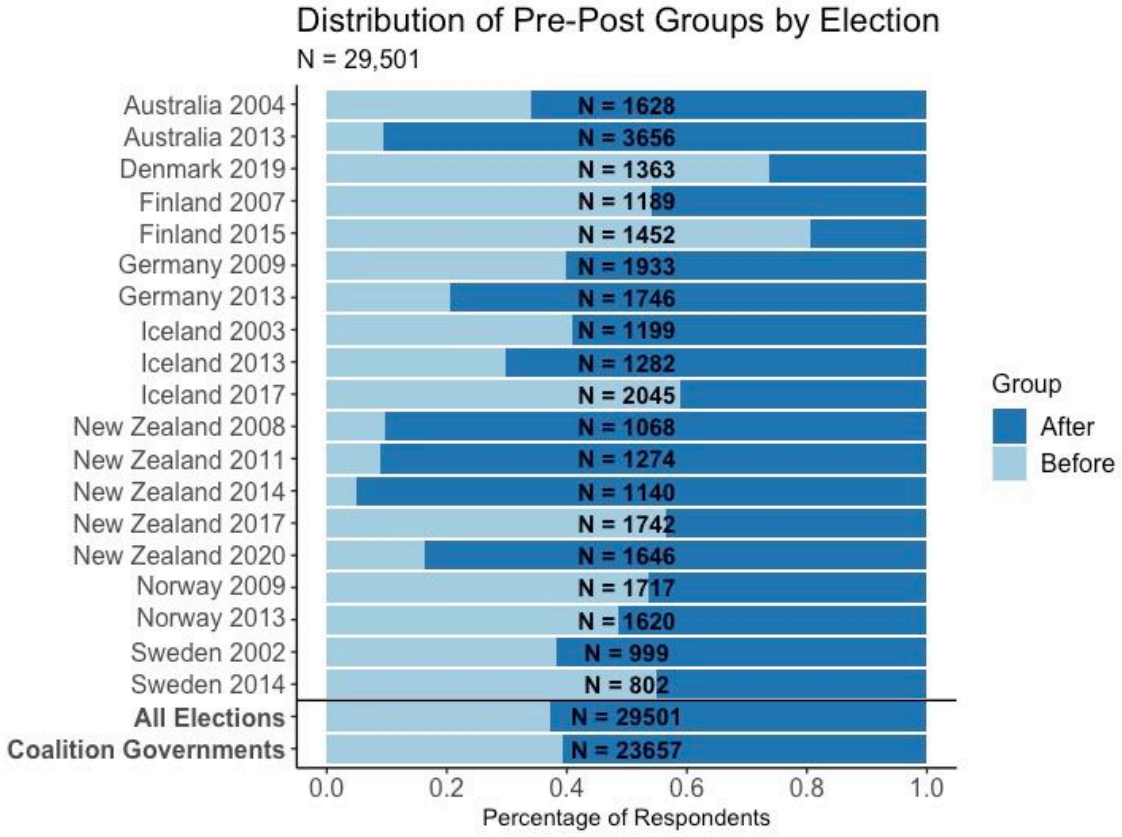
#### 3.2.2.3 Cabinet Announcement and Balance Checks

To construct variable of cabinet announcements, I utilized the government announcement dates provided in Table 1 along with the interview dates of each participant provided by the dataset in order to establish a threshold for distinguishing between citizens interviewed before and after

[26] The extended name of each party can be found in Appendix 3.5.4.
[27] Both disproportionality index and effective number of electoral parties were retrieved from Gallagher's website (Gallagher, 2023).

the announcement. The interview date is obtained from the field team in each study, and there is a minimal amount of missing data for this variable[28]. By applying the threshold, I created a time-related variable that divides the sample into two groups for comparison. Thus, the *pre-post* variable is a binary variable that indicates whether individuals were interviewed before or after the government announcement. Figure 4 displays the distribution of participants interviewed in each group.

*Figure 4 – Bar-plot – Distribution of Pre-Post Groups by Election and Overall Distribution*




Source: CSES (2020, 2022)

The majority of participants are interviewed after the moment of announcement, which corresponds to approximately 60%. This can be attributed to the fact that parties initiate talks rapidly after the release of electoral outcomes and aim to progress the likely coalition structures. As depicted in Table 3, the initial interviews (B) take place a few days after the election day. What varies is the announcement, evident from the number of days elapsed between elections and the announcement date. The swiftest coalition revelation occurs just 8 days after the elections, which

[28] There were 17 missing in the whole sample (before data treatment).

inevitably reduces the number of participants interviewed before the announcement. It is crucial for coalition announcements to take more days to increase the number of participants in the first group. However, the announcement cannot be significantly delayed as the field team may complete their required sample quotas before the announcement, which would not align with the proposed research design. This is one of the primary reasons why there are relatively few studies included in this research, especially when compared to the number of elections available in the CSES dataset. The announcement day must occur after the field team has started conducting interviews and before they have finished interviewing participants.

*Table 3 – Main Dates of Elections and Duration of Bargaining*

| Country | Election Year | Days between (A) & (C) | Election Day (A) | First Interview (B) | Announcement (C) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Australia | 2004 | 13 | 2004-10-09 | 2004-10-12 | 2004-10-22 |
| | 2013 | 9 | 2013-09-07 | 2013-09-09 | 2013-09-16 |
| Denmark | 2019 | 20 | 2019-06-05 | 2019-06-06 | 2019-06-25 |
| Finland | 2007 | 17 | 2007-03-18 | 2007-03-20 | 2007-04-18 |
| | 2015 | 39 | 2015-04-19 | 2015-04-24 | 2015-05-28 |
| Germany | 2009 | 27 | 2009-09-27 | 2009-09-28 | 2009-10-24 |
| | 2013 | 28 | 2013-09-22 | 2013-09-28 | 2013-10-20 |
| Iceland | 2003 | 13 | 2003-05-10 | 2003-05-14 | 2003-05-23 |
| | 2013 | 18 | 2013-04-27 | 2013-05-04 | 2013-05-17 |
| | 2017 | 31 | 2017-10-28 | 2017-10-30 | 2017-11-30 |
| New Zealand | 2008 | 8 | 2008-11-08 | 2008-11-14 | 2008-11-16 |
| | 2011 | 9 | 2011-11-26 | 2011-12-01 | 2011-12-05 |
| | 2014 | 9 | 2014-09-20 | 2014-09-24 | 2014-09-29 |
| | 2017 | 26 | 2017-09-23 | 2017-09-27 | 2017-10-19 |
| | 2020 | 14 | 2020-10-17 | 2020-10-21 | 2020-10-31 |
| Norway | 2009 | 37 | 2009-09-13 | 2009-09-15 | 2009-10-20 |
| | 2013 | 38 | 2013-09-08 | 2013-09-12 | 2013-10-16 |
| Sweden | 2002 | 17 | 2002-09-15 | 2002-09-17 | 2002-10-02 |
| | 2014 | 18 | 2014-09-14 | 2014-09-16 | 2014-10-02 |

Source: Own work, 2023

It is important to assess the similarity between the two groups for the purpose of comparison. Therefore, I conduct a series of balance checks with each voting group presented in section 3.2.2.2 to examine whether the *pre*-group is relatively similar to the *post*-group. The same procedure is applied to other control parameters, including gender, age group, education level, and income quintile.

I propose regressing each voting group and control variables on the *pre-post* variable while keeping fixed effects at the level of the election, given the cross-national design. The aim is to avoid identifying effects that may result from an imbalanced sample between the *pre* and *post*

groups. In this design, an imbalanced sample would mean that one voter group has significantly more members interviewed before the government announcement, while other voter groups are interviewed later, potentially introducing bias. For example, imbalanced voter groups could imply that more losers are interviewed before the cabinet is revealed, or that winners are more likely to be approached after. Moreover, an imbalanced sample could suggest that the government announcement may prompt participants to falsify their voting behavior. Anderson et al. (2005) suggest that cognitive dissonance may influence citizens' democratic attitudes, indicating that voters may adjust their attitudes based on their voting choices. Considering that individuals weigh losses differently from gains (Thaler, 1994), losers or junior cabinet parties' voters may be more inclined to lie about who they voted for.

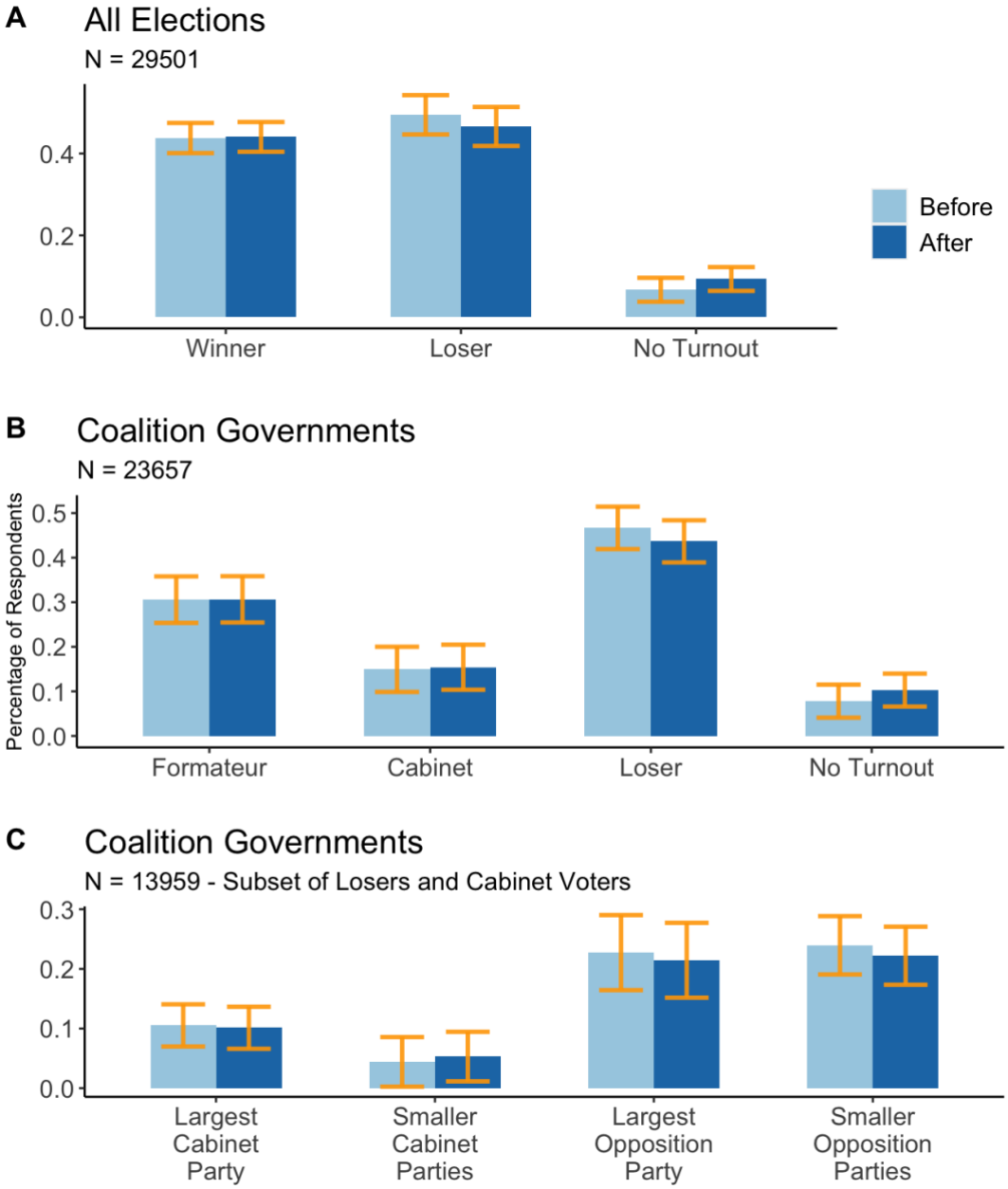
Conducting balance checks helps identify potential biases arising from sampling issues or reverse causality (citizens lying about their voting behavior due to the government announcement). It is expected that some degree of imbalance exists, particularly considering the diversity of elections' outcomes in the sample, as pure randomization is nearly impossible. However, the differences should not be statistically significant to affirm that the *pre-post* groups are similar.

According to Figure 5, all voter groups appear to be balanced, especially when considering the imbalances observed at the election levels as shown in Figure 3 and Figure 4. In the group of winners (Figure 5A), cabinet announcements do not appear to influence citizens to lie about their behavior. The same holds true when the group of winners is further divided into cabinet and formateur voters (Figure 5B). Furthermore, when combined with the findings from Figure 3, the sample demonstrates coherence: formateur voters represent approximately 30% of voters in both the *pre* and *post* groups, while junior cabinet parties' voters comprise around 15%. Government voters make up approximately 46% of the sample in the case of coalitions.

It is somewhat concerning that the number of losers varies before and after the government announcement, which could suggest that some losers may be lying about their voting behavior after the announcement. According to the analysis, the group of losers is approximately 3% smaller after as compared to before, and this difference remains consistent even when excluding participants from elections resulting in single-party cabinets (Figure 5B). This indicates that the difference is not solely attributed to junior cabinet parties' voters, as their numbers remain stable before and after the government. However, the group of citizens claiming to not have voted is approximately 2.6% larger after the coalition is revealed. This could imply that some losers may have lied after

the announcement date, stating that they did not vote in the last election, possibly to avoid admitting that they voted for losing parties. Therefore, it is justifiable to include the group of non-voters in the sample to examine any disparities in their external efficacy before and after the government announcement.

*Figure 5 – Balance Check - Voter Groups*



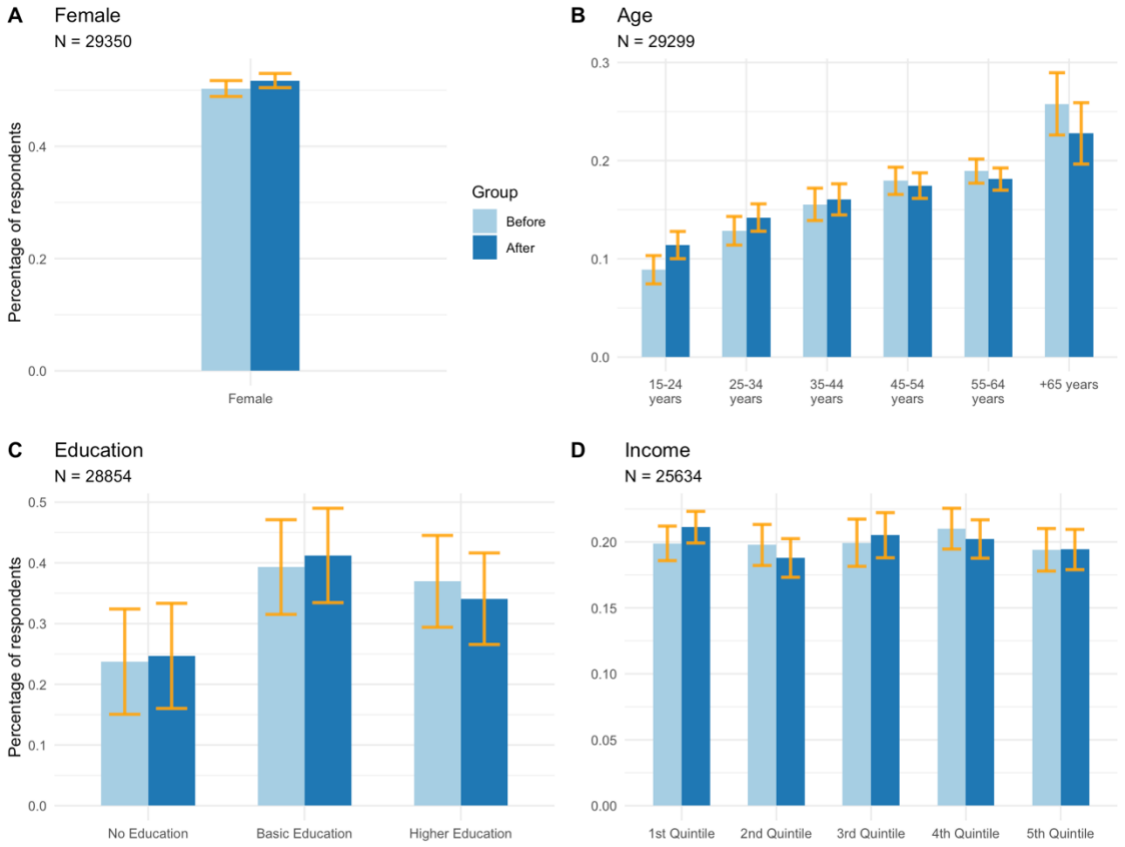

Source: CSES (2020, 2022)

What is reassuring about including the loser group in the regression analysis without needing additional statistical measures is that the confidence intervals of the loser group overlap in the graphical presentation. In fact, the difference between the pre and post groups for losers accounts for approximately 6% of the entire group. Therefore, the graphical analysis does not show a statistically significant difference between them. Furthermore, the loser group constitutes the largest category of voters in the sample, and it is important to be mindful of this difference when conducting the regression analysis.

One last point worth mentioning is the small difference between the groups of junior cabinet parties' voters in Figure 5C, although not statistically significant. There are fewer voters of small cabinet parties before the announcement compared to after. The variation is so minimal that it is barely noticeable in the graphical analysis. However, it suggests that some voters of smaller parties may have been disappointed by the election outcomes before the announcement, but feel proud to see their party in government, leading them to be more confident in revealing their vote after the cabinet is revealed. In this case, they may have been untruthful before. The same logic does not apply to voters of larger parties in the cabinet, as there are proportionally more members before than after. These minor imbalances need to be taken into account, but should not pose a significant risk to the analysis given that they are not statistically significant. The sample remains representative both before and after cabinet announcements.

As mentioned previously, balance checks were conducted with control variables, and the regression results with controls can be found in Appendix 0. Additionally, since there were missing data for these variables, a multiple imputation analysis was performed before running the regressions. Each graph in Figure 6 illustrates the proportions of respondent before and after announcements according to their features. Once again, the sample appears to be balanced across all groups, as the trends in both groups show similar patterns with some notable discrepancies. The most significant difference can be observed in the age graph, indicating that older individuals were interviewed more frequently before the government was revealed, with a 3% difference for this group. In contrast, younger age groups, particularly those under 45 years of age, were more frequently interviewed after the announcement. This may be attributed to the availability of citizens to participate in the survey. While the difference is noteworthy, it does not introduce a major imbalance to the sample that would significantly alter the average age of the groups before and after the announcement.

*Figure 6 – Balance Checks - Control Variables*




Source: CSES (2020, 2022)

### 3.2.2.4 Institutional Variables

Previous studies have shown that contextual factors such as electoral system disproportionality and the number of parties in the cabinet have an impact on external efficacy (Karp & Banducci, 2008) and exhibit heterogeneous effects when interacting with electoral behavior (Davis, 2014). Electoral system disproportionality refers to the "disparity between vote and seat shares" of parties (Davis, 2014, p.132). Davis (2014) finds that the losers and winners' difference in perception of system responsiveness increases in systems with higher disproportionality (less consensual systems) and decreases in systems with lower disproportionality. However, Davis does not explore the interaction with the number of parties in the cabinet, which, according to the findings of Karp & Banducci (2008), has an overall negative effect on external efficacy.

Although the number of parties in the cabinet and electoral system disproportionality are interrelated (Lijphart, 1999), they are associated with different aspects of elections. The number of parties in the cabinet is related to the composition of the cabinet, while electoral system disproportionality is linked to the electoral system and parties' electoral performance. Given the focus on cabinet composition, I will examine the effect of cabinet size when interacting with who people vote for before and after the government announcement. This argument is based on the works of Jackman (1987) and Karp & Banducci (2008), suggesting that citizens' political efficacy is influenced by the fact that multiparty governments are formed by political elites rather than solely by electoral outcomes. To analyze external efficacy, I will follow the same approach as Davis (2014). Details on these variables can be found in Table 2.

### 3.2.3 Regression Model

The data structure suggests the utilization of hierarchical models for the statistical analysis. Participants are nested within each election, implying that they share similar characteristics compared to individuals in other elections, which violates the independence assumption for statistical purposes. To address this issue, I incorporate fixed effects at the election level to account for these differences. Additionally, I employ a within-country sample weight.

Considering the ordered nature of the dependent variable, I will primarily utilize multilevel ordered logit regressions for most of the models. As previously mentioned, when interacting with contextual variables, I will employ multilevel logistic regressions to facilitate both the statistical and graphical analyses, taking advantage of the distribution of the dependent variable.

The analysis will be divided into two parts. In the first part, I will use the entire dataset to test three different aspects: 1) the existence of the winner-loser gap in external efficacy; 2) the reduction of this gap in the presence of a multiparty coalition government; and 3) the impact of the government announcement on citizens' external efficacy. To examine the hypotheses raised in the previous chapter, it is important to analyze whether the winner-loser gap holds with the data in this sample. I will conduct two regressions: 1) the *Pre-Post* variable interacting with *vote* (*Loser* and *No Turnout*, with *Winner* as the reference group); and 2) the *Pre-Post* variable interacting with vote and with the government ending in coalition governments (*Coalition*).

In the second part, I will examine the external efficacy of junior cabinet parties' voters. Since they cannot be directly compared to winners in elections resulting in single-party cabinets, I

will exclude elections with no coalition from the dataset. My hypothesis is that the level of external efficacy among junior cabinet parties' voters falls between that of formateur voters and losing voters. However, before cabinet announcements, the only information available about their party is its electoral performance. Therefore, their external efficacy before the announcement should be similar to that of losers, especially considering that formateur voters may already anticipate their party's inclusion in the government and their appointment of the prime minister[29]. I will employ three different regression designs. First, I will run a regression with *vote* (*Cabinet*, *Loser*, and *No Turnout*, with *Formateur* as the reference group) interacting with the *Pre-Post* variable to determine the position of junior cabinet parties' voters. In the second regression I will interact *Pre-Post* with the subcategories of cabinet and losing voters (*Largest Cabinet Party*, *Smaller Cabinet Parties*, *Largest Opposition Party*, *Smaller Opposition Parties*, with *Formateur* remaining as the reference group). Finally, in the last design, I use the same design as the first regression, interacting *vote* and *Pre-Post* with the two main contextual controls, *Disproportionality* and *Parties in Cabinet*. In the next section, I will present the results and discuss the findings.

## 3.3 RESULTS

### 3.3.1 The Winner-Loser Gap of External Efficacy

In Table 4, the two models presented show the estimators for perceived system responsiveness for the entire sample, with participants nested within elections resulting in single-party and multiparty cabinets (refer to Table 2 for details). The reference group in this analysis is winning voters (without differentiating between formateur and junior cabinet parties' voters). Therefore, the thresholds in the lower part of the table represent the coefficients for each level of external efficacy for winning voters before cabinet announcements.

The coefficients in Model 1 indicate how each variable influences the dependent variable relative to the levels. Before the announcement, losing voters display a negative coefficient, suggesting that this group is more likely to report lower levels (indicated by the negative coefficients) and less likely to report the highest level of external efficacy compared to winners. However, the changes are minimal, particularly when compared to no turnout citizens, whose levels of external efficacy are significantly lower than winning voters.

[29] With the exception of the election of 2013 in Iceland.

One notable finding from this initial analysis is the effect of the *Pre-Post* variable. The coefficient indicates a positive impact of cabinet announcements on winning voters in the sample, suggesting that they have greater confidence in the responsiveness of the system to their demands after the cabinet has be revealed. In contrast, the interaction between *Loser* and *Pre-Post* demonstrates a negative effect of cabinets being announced on losing voters. This finding aligns with expectations. Furthermore, the interaction between *No Turnout* and *Pre-Post* shows a positive effect, although it is not statistically significant.

*Table 4 – Regression Results: External Efficacy and Government Announcement*

**Multilevel Ordered Logistic Regression**
**Dependent Variable: Who Is in Power Can Make a Difference**
**Levels = c(1, 2, 3, 4, 5)**

| | **Model 1** | | **Model 2** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Variables*** | ***Coef.*** | ***SE*** | ***Coef.*** | ***SE*** |
| Pre-Post | 0.114 ** | 0.035 | 0.034 | 0.074 |
| Loser | -0.129 *** | 0.037 | -0.253 *** | 0.063 |
| No Turnout | -1.316 *** | 0.069 | -1.058 *** | 0.134 |
| Coalition | | | -0.351 | 0.194 |
| ***Interactions*** | | | | |
| Loser × Pre-Post | -0.243 *** | 0.046 | -0.226 *** | 0.047 |
| No Turnout × Pre-Post | -0.02 | 0.086 | -0.056 | 0.088 |
| Coalition × Pre-Post | | | 0.086 | 0.073 |
| Coalition × Loser | | | 0.141 * | 0.059 |
| Coalition × No Turnout | | | -0.272 * | 0.124 |
| ***Thresholds*** | | | | |
| 1\|2 | -3.165 *** | 0.089 | -3.445 *** | 0.173 |
| 2\|3 | -2.204 *** | 0.087 | -2.483 *** | 0.172 |
| 3\|4 | -1.099 *** | 0.086 | -1.378 *** | 0.171 |
| 4\|5 | 0.249 ** | 0.086 | -0.03 | 0.171 |
| ***Random Effects*** | | | | |
| $\sigma^2$ | 3.29 | | 3.29 | |
| Elections | 19 | | 19 | |
| Observations | 29501 | | 29501 | |
| Marginal $R^2$ / Conditional $R^2$ | 0.036 / 0.071 | | 0.039 / 0.072 | |

** p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001*

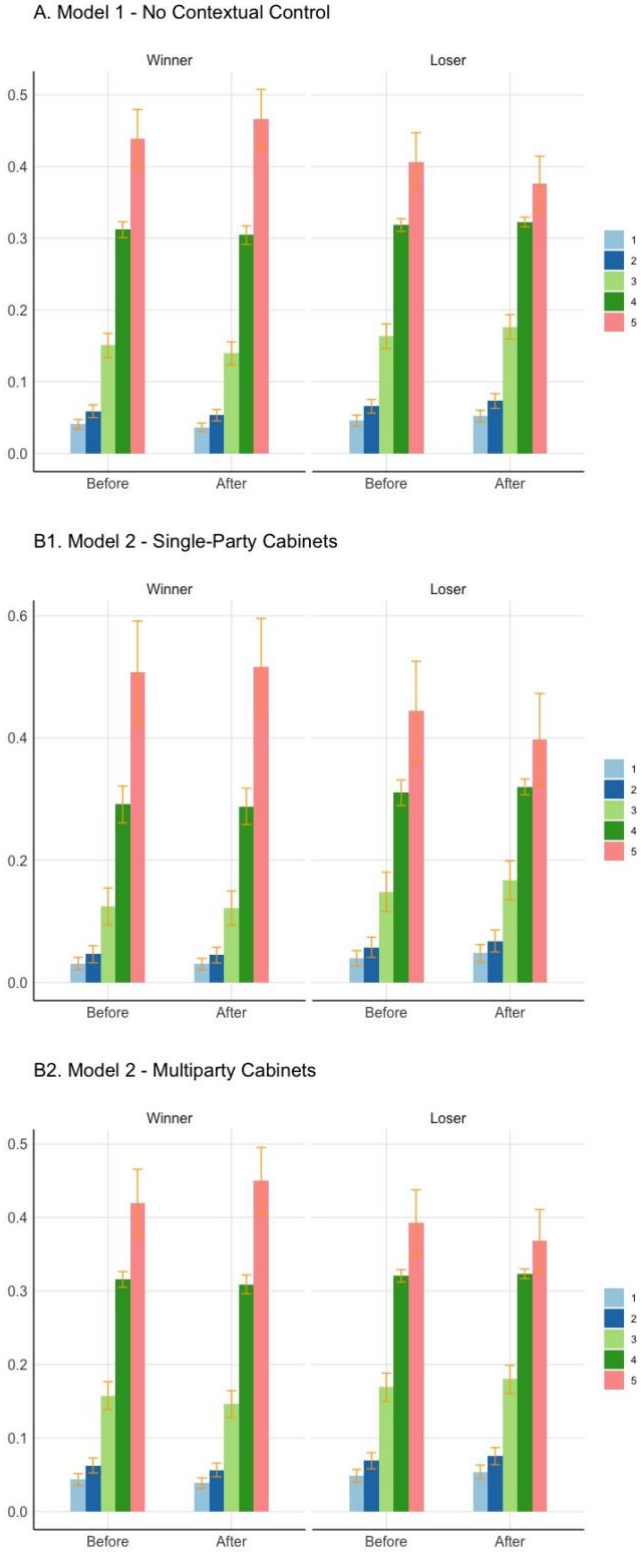
Source: Own work, 2023

In Model 2 in Table 4, I examine the impact of controlling for having a coalition government. In this analysis, the reference group is winning voters before the announcement in single-party cabinets. Notably, the *Pre-Post* variable no longer exhibits statistically significant effects, suggesting that the revelation of a single-party government does not significantly affect the external efficacy of winners. On the other hand, losing voters initially demonstrate a lower level of external efficacy, and the interaction between *Loser* and *Pre-Post* indicates that the effect is amplified by the government announcement.

However, it is intriguing that neither the *Coalition* coefficient nor the interaction of *Coalition* and *Pre-Post* exhibit statistically significant effects. This implies that winning voters display similar levels of external efficacy before and after the government announcement, regardless of cabinet's structure. The expectation was that cabinet announcements would have a more pronounced impact on winners in elections resulting in coalition governments (indicated by the interaction of *Coalition* and *Pre-Post*), while having no significant effect in single-party cabinets (*Pre-Post*). There could be various reasons for this, such as the limited number of winning respondents from elections with single-party cabinets.

Furthermore, the interactions with *Loser* reveal a contrasting effect that supports the theory of the winner-loser gap. Cabinet announcements (interaction of *Loser* with *Pre-Post*) have a negative effect, further diminishing the already low level of external efficacy for losing voters in elections leading to single-party cabinets. However, this effect is mitigated when the announcement results in a multiparty cabinet, as evidenced by the positive and statistically significant interaction of *Loser* and *Coalition*. These elements support the findings of Davis (2014) about a reduction in the distance between winners and losers in elections leading to more consensual results.

*Figure 7 – Predicted Probabilities for Model 1 and Model 2*
*Multilevel Ordered Logistic Regression; DV: Who Is in Power Can Make a Difference, 95% CI*




Source: CSES (2020, 2022)

Figure 7 illustrates the predicted probabilities of winners and losers before and after cabinet announcements in Model 1 and Model 2. For clarity and to focus on relevant comparisons, *No Turnout* citizens were excluded from the visual analysis as they are not influenced by *Pre-Post*. Additionally, all covariates are set to 0 to provide a more accurate representation of the levels of winners. Each bar represents the probability of selecting a specific level, conditioned on participants' voting choices.

The graphs in Figure 7 confirm the earlier findings. Firstly, they confirm the existence of the winner-loser gap (WLG) in external efficacy: losers, on average, are 6 percentage points (p.p.) less likely to choose the highest level compared to winners, as evident in all the graphs. Secondly, the distance between losers and winners diminishes when elections lead to coalition governments, as indicated by the difference between losers and winners in Figure 7B1 and B2. In single-party cabinets, losers are approximately 9 p.p. less likely to choose the highest level than winners, whereas in multiparty cabinets, this difference decreases to around 5 p.p. Finally, cabinet announcements play a significant role as they double the distance between winners and losers in both scenarios. The revealing of the winning group expands the gap from 6 p.p. to nearly 12 p.p. in single-party cabinets, and from 3 p.p. to 8 p.p. in multiparty cabinets.

In the next section, I will focus on coalition cabinets to explore these differences among different types of winners and losers in more detail.

### 3.3.2 Junior Cabinet Parties' Voters

Table 5 and Table 6 present the results of four regression models using the subset of data with coalition governments. In Table 5, I examine the effects of different voting behavior on external efficacy, conditioned on whether participants were interviewed before or after the coalition was revealed. *Formateur* voters before cabinet announcements are now used as the reference group. The *Pre-Post* variable demonstrates a positive and significant effect in both models 3 and 4, indicating that cabinet announcements increase the perception of system responsiveness for formateur voters, similar to the reference group of winners in Model 1 (Table 4). *No Turnout* exhibits a negative effect before the announcement and is not significantly influenced by cabinet announcements in both models.

*Table 5 – Regression Results: External Efficacy, Government Announcement, and Voting Behavior*

**Multilevel Ordered Logistic Regression**
**Dependent Variable: Who Is in Power Can Make a Difference**
**Levels = c(1, 2, 3, 4, 5)**

| | **Model 3 – Voters in Coalition Government** | | **Model 4 – Subcategories of Voters in Coalition Government** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Variables*** | ***Coef.*** | ***SE*** | ***Coef.*** | ***SE*** |
| Pre-Post | 0.110 * | 0.046 | 0.109 * | 0.046 |
| Loser | -0.153 *** | 0.045 | | |
| Cabinet | -0.149 * | 0.06 | | |
| No Turnout | -1.361 *** | 0.075 | -1.363 *** | 0.076 |
| Largest Opposition Party | | | -0.094 | 0.054 |
| Smaller Opposition Parties | | | -0.204 *** | 0.053 |
| Largest Cabinet Party | | | -0.091 | 0.068 |
| Smaller Cabinet Parties | | | -0.277 ** | 0.093 |
| ***Interactions*** | | | | |
| Loser × Pre-Post | -0.218 *** | 0.057 | | |
| Cabinet × Pre-Post | 0.058 | 0.078 | | |
| No Turnout × Pre-Post | -0.084 | 0.095 | -0.081 | 0.096 |
| Largest Opposition Party × Pre-Post | | | -0.307 *** | 0.068 |
| Smaller Opposition Parties × Pre-Post | | | -0.128 | 0.068 |
| Largest Cabinet Party × Pre-Post | | | -0.024 | 0.089 |
| Smaller Cabinet Parties × Pre-Post | | | 0.259 * | 0.128 |
| ***Thresholds*** | | | | |
| 1\|2 | -3.170 *** | 0.113 | -3.171 *** | 0.115 |
| 2\|3 | -2.182 *** | 0.111 | -2.182 *** | 0.113 |
| 3\|4 | -1.065 *** | 0.11 | -1.065 *** | 0.112 |
| 4\|5 | 0.277 * | 0.11 | 0.277 * | 0.112 |
| ***Random Effects*** | | | | |
| $\sigma^2$ | 3.29 | | 3.29 | |
| N | 14 | | 14 | |
| Observations | 23657 | | 23657 | |
| Marginal $R^2$ / Conditional $R^2$ | 0.040 / 0.083 | | 0.041 / 0.084 | |

** p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001*

Source: Own work, 2023

Now focusing exclusively on Model 3, voting for a junior cabinet party or an opposition party has a similar negative effect on external efficacy. The only difference appears to be the significance of the coefficients, and several reason may be associated with this, like the sample size of each group – there are more losers than voters of junior cabinet parties. Both groups seem to have similar perceptions of external efficacy after elections. The interaction with *Pre-Post* reveals

divergent directions in both groups. While *Loser* voters feel less efficacious after cabinet announcements, *Cabinet* voters seem to perceive that the system is more responsive after the party they voted for confirms they will be involved in the coalition talks, although the effect is not statistically different from the effect of cabinet announcements for *Formateur* voters. This does not change the fact that they show a positive effect on external efficacy afterwards. The results already reveal interesting findings about the external efficacy of voters of junior cabinet parties. The negative effect of elections on such voters is similar to the effect on *Loser*. It is rather the inclusion in the winning coalition that enhances the level of these "second-class" winning voters, but the extent of this effect can only be determined through graphical analysis. Conversely, for *Loser* voters, cabinet announcements have stronger negative effects than the effect of election outcomes for these voters, which reinforces the influence of the government and the party people vote for on the perception of system responsiveness.

Based on the coefficients for the different levels of external efficacy, we can estimate the average effect on each group using fitted values. Approximately 43.1% of *Formateur* voters are likely to answer that it makes a difference who is in power ($X == 5$), and this percentage increases to 45.8% after the announcement, reflecting a 2.7 p.p. increase in the likelihood of answering the highest level. Considering the negative effects of elections on *Cabinet* voters, 39.4% of voters of junior cabinet parties are likely to provide the same response, but the coalition revelation raises this percentage to 43.6%, representing a 4.1 p.p. increase, nearly doubling the effect observed for *Formateur* voters. In contrast, *Loser* voters experience a decrease in the likelihood of answering that it makes a difference, dropping from 39.4% before the announcement to 36.8% after the announcement, a decrease of almost 3 p.p. Thus, the expectations of H1, which suggest that *Cabinet* voters express lower levels of external efficacy compared to *Formateur* voters, are partly confirmed, as the substantial difference exists before but narrows after the announcement. The interesting aspect about *Cabinet* voters is that their external efficacy is initially close to that of *Loser* voters but moves closer to *Formateur* voters after the revelation, indicating a swing movement among *Cabinet* voters. However, the difference between *Formateur* and *Cabinet* voters after cabinet announcements is very small to assert that voters of junior cabinet parties exhibit lower levels of external efficacy once they know their party will be involved in coalition talks. Figure 8A shows evidence for the three main findings: 1) a very small increase in *Formateur* voters; 2) a similar level of *Cabinet* and *Loser* voters before cabinet announcements; 3) a decrease of

external efficacy of *Loser* voters (no statistical differences between levels 4 and 5 after) and an increase for *Cabinet* voters.

In Model 4, I divided losers and voters of junior cabinet parties into subcategories to examine whether voters of larger parties are influenced differently by cabinet announcements, building on the findings of Plescia (2019) and Stiers et al. (2018). The first interesting finding is that election outcomes appear to have a negative effect on voters of smaller parties in the cabinet or in the opposition, with a stronger effect observed for voters of junior cabinet parties. Voters of larger parties in the cabinet or in the opposition show smaller negative effects, but these are statistically similar to the levels of *Formateur* voters. Cabinet announcements reveal interesting effects on each group of voters, as indicated by the interactions with the *Pre-Post* variable. Firstly, there is a slight decrease for voters of the *Largest Cabinet Party*, indicating a minimal change for these voters after the announcement. Secondly, this finding contrasts with the positive and statistically significant effect for voters of *Smaller Cabinet Parties*, suggesting that these voters feel significantly more efficacious after the cabinet is revealed. Thirdly, both interactions with losing voters show negative values, but they are statistically significant for voters of the *Largest Opposition Party*, whereas they are not significant for voters of *Smaller Opposition Parties*. This suggests that cabinet announcements have greater influence on voters of larger opposition parties.

This finding, along with the previous one concerning junior cabinet parties' voters, aligns with previous research findings (Stiers et al., 2018; Plescia, 2019): the subjective experience of winning produces heterogeneous effects on voters, but entering the government is relatively more important for the external efficacy of voters from smaller parties. According to previous findings, voters of smaller parties who successfully enter the Legislature[30] tend to perceive that their party has won the election. However, the voters in this study feel less efficacious than voters of larger parties in the opposition and in government before the announcement of the coalition, indicating that electoral outcomes alone are insufficient to improve the perception that the system is responsive to their demands. It is the inclusion in the coalition that is associated with relatively higher levels of external efficacy. The electoral outcome does matter if parties achieve good electoral results, as evidenced by the low effect of the estimators for voters of large parties. For supporters of smaller parties, it is important that their party is in the cabinet, which brings support to the expectations of H2, which expected a major increase for the subgroup of *Smaller Cabinet*

[30] The parties used in the CSES are those that succeed in the Legislature.

*Parties*. Using fitted values, the increase is of 8.8 p.p. in the likelihood of answering the highest level for these respondents.

Moreover, the slight increase observed in voters of the *Largest Cabinet Party* may be attributed to how voters perceive their party's compromise within the coalition. These parties are medium in size and have previously had opportunities to lead governments in other elections, or under different contextual circumstances. While one might expect a negative effect of cabinet announcements on these voters, the small increase (2 p.p. for the highest level of "Who Is in Power Can Make a Difference") already indicates a somewhat subdued perception of system responsiveness after the cabinet is revealed, confirming the participation of their party in the cabinet. This is especially noteworthy when comparing it to the magnitude of the effect on voters of *Smaller Cabinet Parties*.

For voters of larger parties, electoral outcomes do matter, but joining the government does not bring significant changes to their perception of external efficacy. The effect of the interaction with *Pre-Post* is negative, but when compared to the increase of *Pre-Post* for *Formateur* voters, the growth is relatively small – an increase of 2.1 p.p.. In contrast, not being in the government has strong negative effects for voters of the *Largest Opposition Parties* – a decrease of 4.8 p.p.. These voters typically support the main challenging party against the formateur party that failed to lead a successful coalition government. Witnessing an alternative coalition emerging victorious diminishes their confidence that the system will be responsive to their demands.

The evidence shown in Figure 8B confirms the aforementioned findings[31]. The most notable increase in the likelihood of answering the highest level of "Who Is in Power Can Make a Difference" is observed for voters of *Smaller Cabinet Parties*, as depicted in the top right bar plot. This increase is the most significant as compared to other categories. In the top-left bar plot, for voters of the *Largest Cabinet Party*, the effect is relatively moderate, indicating no substantial difference between the distances of each level. Prior to cabinet announcements, these respondents exhibited a similar level of external efficacy as voters of the *Largest Opposition Party*, as shown in the bottom-left bar plot. Cabinet announcements have the most profound effect on this group, leading to a significant decrease, with respondents becoming indifferent about answering levels 4

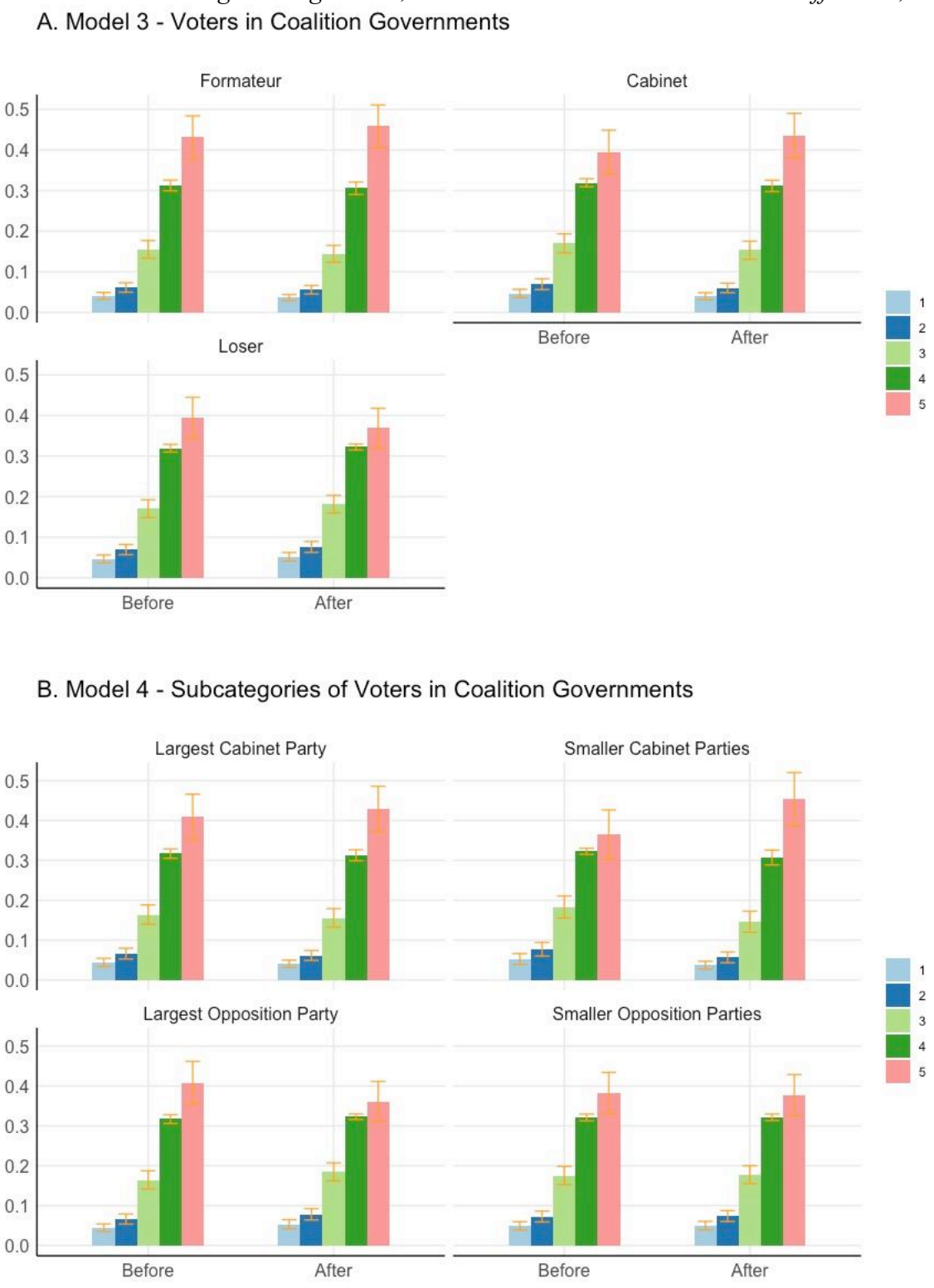
[31] Given that Formateur voters are the same in both groups and the coefficients are the same in both Model 3 and Model 4, I chose to expose them only in the first regression for better visualization of the results.

and 5 of "Who Is in Power Can Make a Difference." Lastly, no significant change is visually apparent for voters of *Smaller Opposition Parties*.

Finally, Table 6 presents the results of the interactions with *Disproportionality* and the number of *Parties in Cabinet*, which are the two main contextual controls associated with citizens' external efficacy. Model 5 indicates that disproportionality has some interactive effects with *Loser* voters and *No Turnout*, as expected based on previous findings (Davis, 2014). However, neither *Pre-Post* nor any of its interactions show statistically significant effects on citizens' external efficacy. This indicates that cabinet announcements have no effect on citizens when the level of disproportionality varies. The distortions established by electoral systems in the distribution of seats in the Legislature may influence people's perception of system responsiveness, but the results here suggest that this relation is separate from the government announcement and who people vote for.

The number of parties in the cabinet reveals interesting findings, as indicated in Model 6. The reference group is *Formateur* voters before the announcement in elections leading to two-party coalitions. Both the *intercept* and *Parties in Cabinet* are statistically insignificant, suggesting that the external efficacy of *Formateur* voters is not affected by the number of parties before the announcement. *Pre-Post* has a strong negative effect, indicating that cabinet announcements reduce the external efficacy of *Formateur* supporters in smaller coalitions. The positive and significant effect of the interaction between *Pre-Post* and *Parties in Cabinet* indicates that the perception of system responsiveness for *Formateur* voters improves as coalitions become larger. A similar pattern is expected for *Loser* voters, given the interactions with *Pre-Post* (negative and significant) and with *Parties in Cabinet* (positive and insignificant). Both patterns can be observed in Figure 9.

*Figure 8 – Predicted Probabilities for Model 3 and Model 4*
*Multilevel Ordered Logistic Regression; DV: Who Is in Power Can Make a Difference, 95% CI*




Source: CSES (2020, 2022)

A different trend is observed for *Cabinet* voters. *Cabinet* is positive and significant, indicating that voters of junior cabinet parties are more efficacious before. However, the interaction with *Parties in Cabinet* is negative, suggesting a decrease in the perception of system responsiveness for larger cabinets before the announcement of the coalition. The negative effect of larger coalitions on these voters before the announcement may be attributed to the uncertainty regarding the coalition status of the party they voted for. Larger coalitions are typically associated with more fragmented electoral results, and apart from *Formateur* voters, voters of other parties are unsure if their party will be in government. Only the announcement brings certainty about which party/parties will be in power. After the coalition has been made public, *Cabinet* voters already know that the party they voted for is in government, so there is no significant change based on the size of the cabinet, with a slight negative inclination. This can be associated with the fact that these voters are more sensitive to their party's compromise within the coalition, and more parties in the coalition mean more compromise from other parties. Moreover, this finding supports H3, and the graphical representation can be observed in the two top graphs in Figure 9.

However, what explains the increase for Losing voters after the announcement? Partly, it can be associated with the fact that the majority in power becomes more divided, which aligns with the rational perspective of the winner-loser gap (Riker, 1983; Anderson et al, 2005). Opposition supporters typically desire a more divided majority. However, I would favor a slightly different explanation: the higher perception of system responsiveness among losers may be attributed to the notion that more diverse coalitions are more representative and tend to adopt more centrist positions "as a function of [parties'] compromising to form governments" (Davis, 2014, p. 135).

*Table 6 – Regression Results: External Efficacy, Government Announcement, Voting Behavior, and Contextual Controls*

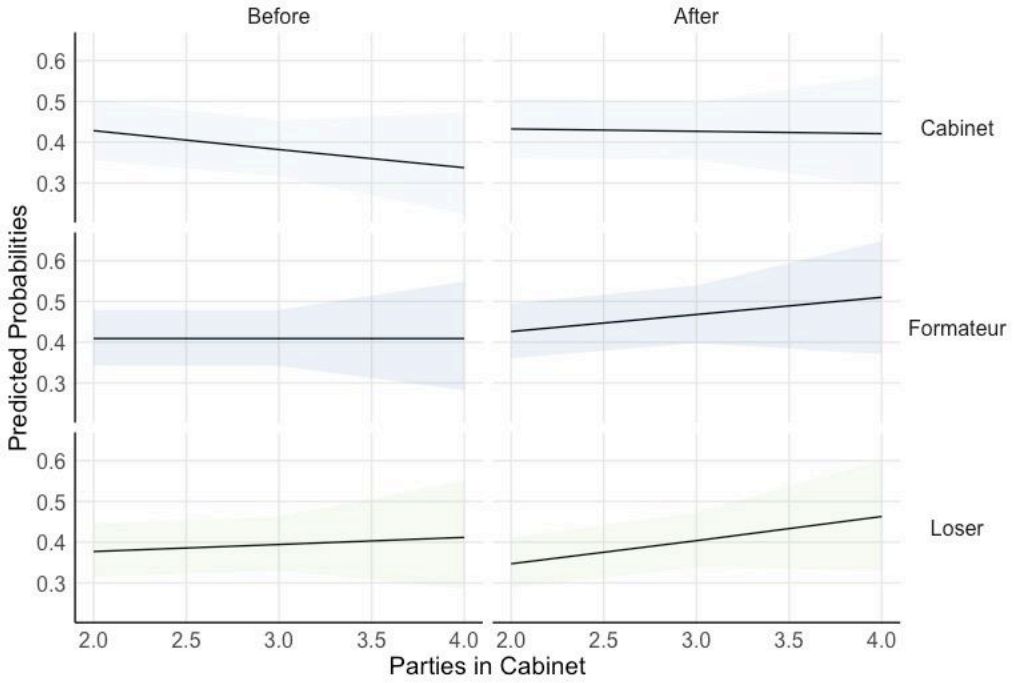
**Multilevel Logistic Regression**
**Dependent Variable: Who Is in Power Can Make a Difference**
**Levels = c(0, 1)**

| | **Model 5 – Disproportionality** | | **Model 6 – Parties in Cabinet** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Variables*** | ***Coef.*** | ***SE*** | ***Coef.*** | ***SE*** |
| Intercept | -0.234 | 0.212 | -0.368 | 0.453 |
| Pre-Post | 0.084 | 0.079 | -0.268 * | 0.136 |
| Loser | 0.086 | 0.068 | -0.28 | 0.157 |
| Cabinet | -0.023 | 0.095 | 0.466 * | 0.215 |
| No Turnout | -0.421 ** | 0.141 | -0.422 | 0.295 |
| Disproportionality | -0.029 | 0.042 | | |
| Parties in Cabinet | | | 0.000 | 0.176 |
| ***Interactions*** | | | | |
| Loser × Pre-Post | -0.119 | 0.069 | -0.201 ** | 0.067 |
| Cabinet × Pre-Post | 0.075 | 0.093 | -0.054 | 0.091 |
| No Turnout × Pre-Post | 0.106 | 0.125 | -0.126 | 0.124 |
| Pre-Post × Disproportionality | 0.000 | 0.013 | | |
| Loser × Disproportionality | -0.047 *** | 0.012 | | |
| Cabinet × Disproportionality | -0.019 | 0.019 | | |
| No Turnout × Disproportionality | -0.117 *** | 0.032 | | |
| Pre-Post × Parties in Cabinet | | | 0.169 *** | 0.051 |
| Loser × Parties in Cabinet | | | 0.073 | 0.059 |
| Cabinet × Parties in Cabinet | | | -0.193 ** | 0.075 |
| No Turnout × Parties in Cabinet | | | -0.128 | 0.098 |
| ***Random Effects*** | | | | |
| $\sigma^2$ | 3.29 | | 3.29 | |
| N | 14 | | 14 | |
| Observations | 23657 | | 23657 | |
| Marginal $R^2$ / Conditional $R^2$ | 0.024 / 0.064 | | 0.017 / 0.063 | |

** p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001*

Source: Own work, 2023

*Figure 9 – Predicted Probabilities for Model 6*
*Multilevel Logistic Regression; DV: Who Is in Power Can Make a Difference, 95% CI*




Source: CSES (2020, 2022)

## 3.4 DISCUSSION

If elections serve as a perceptual screen through which citizens form attitudes (Anderson et al., 2005), the announcement of coalition membership can introduce new elements and update voters' belief systems. These two events receive extensive coverage in the news, and given the involvement and visibility of political elites, citizens are expected to provide "top of the head" impressions (Zaller, 1992) when responding to electoral surveys and expressing their opinions. The heterogeneity observed among different groups of voters in this study indicates that both events can influence citizens' perception of system responsiveness. Announcements of cabinets, by indicating which parties will be in power, serve as confirmation for the winning majority and the opposition, providing cues for voters to identify themselves as winners or losers.

Several authors have used the cognitive dissonance mechanism to explain the winner-loser gap in political attitudes following elections, suggesting that voters adjust their attitudes based on their electoral behavior (Festinger, 1957; Anderson et al., 2005; Singh, 2014). While satisfaction

with the functioning of democracy increases for winners, losers tend to be less optimistic about the democratic process. The intriguing aspect here is that the democratic system remains the same, so the adjustment in democratic sentiment must be related to the choice of candidates. The cognitive dissonance mechanism reverses the causal logic by establishing that electoral behavior explains attitudinal changes.

The findings presented here expand on previous research by incorporating cabinet announcements into this mechanism. The distribution of seats after an election is important for voters' sense of winning the election (Stiers et al., 2018; Plescia, 2019), but it does not appear to be sufficient. The announcement of the cabinet also influences voters' attitudes, and in this study, the focus has been on political external efficacy as it relates to the political process. The effects vary significantly among different groups of voters, with a stronger impact observed for voters of smaller parties within the cabinet compared to voters of medium-sized and large parties in the government. This is a critical finding that suggests embracing the government enhances the perception of system responsiveness for some but not for others. In other words, the perception of coalition compromise is not uniform among all winners, and supporters of the winning majority weigh the cabinet members differently in their perception of external efficacy. While junior cabinet parties' voters generally feel similar to losing voters before the announcement, their external efficacy reaches the level of formateur voters after, driven mostly by voters of smaller parties within the cabinet. The impact of the announcement is predominantly negative for voters of larger parties in the government, and this may be attributed to the fact that these parties could well be formateur parties under different circumstances.

Another critical finding is associated with the ability to challenge formateur parties but failing to do so. This is also observed among opposition supporters. In general, voters of losing parties harbor more negative feelings about system responsiveness after cabinet announcements, but this dynamic is primarily driven by voters of large opposition parties, experiencing the strongest negative effect of cabinet announcements. Voters of smaller opposition parties are hardly influenced by cabinet announcements, indicating that knowledge of the cabinet members does not significantly alter their perception of system responsiveness.

Hence, the negative impact of the coalition announcement on the sense of external efficacy is mostly associated with the ability to challenge formateur parties and falling short in doing so, as evidenced by the effects of cabinet announcements on voters of large parties, both inside and out

of the government. Conversely, the positive effect is mainly linked to the opportunity for smaller parties' voters to join the government.

The objective of this study was to provide evidence from comparative politics on the effects of coalition compromise through the use of cabinet announcements, which confirm the winners and losers within the cabinet. However, several limitations need to be considered. Firstly, due to the timeline of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) local teams, the study focuses on elections with moderately conflictual electoral outcomes that result in lengthy coalition negotiations before cabinet announcements. It does not capture highly conflictual elections that involve numerous parties in negotiations. Consequently, the level of conflict in the study is somewhat moderate. The downside of this choice in the research design is that there are only a few cases available (only 19 elections, with 14 involving coalitions), and all of them are from parliamentary systems. No elections in presidential systems with coalition government structures fit the research design, primarily because the negotiations tend to be highly contentious when the presidential party, despite its weak electoral performance, must be included in the cabinet[32].

Secondly, there is the possibility of respondents providing inaccurate information about their voting behavior, and this is difficult to control. To address this concern, a balance check was conducted regarding the *Pre-Post* variable, which revealed an increase in non-turnout citizens and a decrease in losers. The null effect of cabinet announcements on "No Turnout" reassures us that these respondents truly represent citizens who did not vote. Additionally, there is a slight increase in missing data on electoral behavior after cabinet announcements (see Appendix 3.5.1.1), but the number is too small to significantly affect the results.

Thirdly, the number of junior cabinet parties' voters is relatively small compared to other voter groups[33], and they have been further divided into subcategories. This may jeopardize the findings and introduce power issues when running the regression analysis. As a result, while some results may show the correct direction trend of effects, the statistical significance for these groups may be compromised. This issue does not affect the losing voters significantly since they are the largest group in the analysis, and dividing them into two subcategories does not create major imbalances.

[32] And this has a particular cost given that coalitional governments are increasingly recurrent in modern democracies (Chaisty et al, 2018).
[33] Not as small as No Turnout participants, but these are expected.

The third issue is critical. Given the distinct responses of junior cabinet parties' voters upon entering the government, I decided to expand the analysis through a case study, employing more sophisticated statistical methods, to examine whether these findings could be replicated and supported with stronger statistical power. In the following chapter, utilizing the atypical 2017 Federal Elections in Germany, I analyze the perception of system responsiveness among voters of various junior cabinet parties during two cabinet announcements. In the first coalition, a formateur party (CDU-CSU Alliance) and two smaller cabinet parties (FDP and the Greens) were involved. The negotiations ultimately failed after two months. The second coalition included the same formateur party and a larger cabinet party, the SPD, which posed a potential challenge to the Alliance. The findings confirm the following: 1) cabinet announcements had minimal impact on smaller cabinet parties; 2) the failure of the coalition did not significantly affect their perception of system responsiveness; 3) the inclusion of large cabinet parties substantially decreased the external efficacy of SPD voters.

## 3.5 APPENDIX

### 3.5.1 Missing Data

There are two important missingness analyses that need to be addressed. Firstly, it is crucial to examine the issue of missing voting data in relation to imbalances in the pre-post design and whether it leads to different levels of external efficacy before and after cabinet announcements. Secondly, it is necessary to include individual-level controls, such as the variable of age, which exhibited some imbalances across the sample.

The variable of voters plays a significant role in the selection of the sample. In cases where respondents refused to answer or the data was missing for unknown reasons, a listwise deletion of observations was applied. I will conduct this analysis to assess any potential implications for the regression results.

#### 3.5.1.1 Missing Voters

A total of 1,604 observations were missing data regarding which party people voted for, with 1,428 of these observations occurring in elections with coalition governments. Although this group is relatively small compared to the other voting groups in the sample, its size may still have an impact on the results. Therefore, I first conducted a balance check to examine whether the number of missing voters varied before and after cabinet announcements. The results are presented

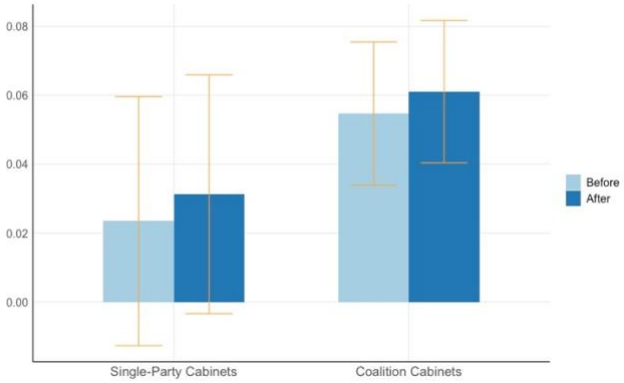
in Table 7. Additionally, considering that the majority of the studies were conducted in elections leading to coalition governments, I also assessed whether the numbers varied specifically in these studies.

*Table 7 – Missing Vote Balance Check*

| ***Variables*** | ***Coef.*** | ***SE*** |
|---|---|---|
| (Intercept) | 0.023 | 0.018 |
| Pre-Post | 0.008 | 0.008 |
| Coalition Cabinets | 0.031 | 0.021 |
| Pre-Post × Coalition Cabinets | -0.001 | 0.008 |
| **Random Effects** | | |
| $\sigma^2$ | 0.05 | |
| Studies | 19 | |
| Observations | 31624 | |

Source: Own work, 2023

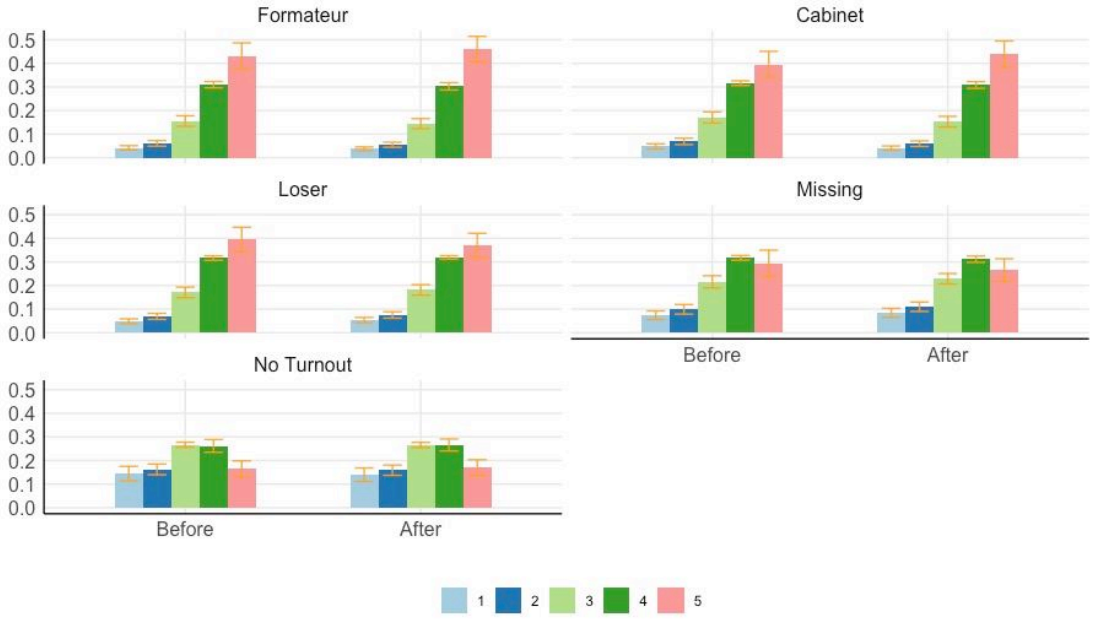
*Figure 10 – Voting Missingness Balance Check*




Source: CSES (2020, 2022)

The results indicate that cabinet announcements do not significantly increase the likelihood of missing data regarding which party participants voted for. Although there is a small increase, the differences are statistically insignificant.

*Figure 11 – External Efficacy and Missing Voting Data*




Source: CSES (2020, 2022)

Next, it is important to examine how missing voters express their levels of external efficacy. One hypothesis is that they may be comparable to participants who did not turn out to vote (*No Turnout* group), as they may not consider the act of voting as important and choose not to answer the question. Using the same data as Model 3A (Table 5), Table 8 shows that incorporating missing vote data does not significantly affect the levels of external efficacy among other groups. However, it appears that cabinet announcements do influence how this group perceives system responsiveness. The differences, as shown in Figure 11, are subtle, but it seems that knowing which parties are in the cabinet reduces the likelihood of providing higher levels of agreement with the statement "Who is in power can make a difference" among the group with missing voting data. Surprisingly, this group tends to feel more efficacious than the *No Turnout* group. Moreover, since no significant differences are observed in the other groups of interest in the regression, the listwise deletion of participants with missing voting data does not impact the analysis.

*Table 8 – Regression Results: External Efficacy, Government Announcement, and Voting Behavior with Missing Vote Group*

**Multilevel Ordered Logistic Regression**
**Dependent Variable: Who Is in Power Can Make a Difference**
**Levels = c(1, 2, 3, 4, 5)**

| ***Variables*** | ***Coef.*** | ***SE*** |
|---|---|---|
| Pre-Post | 0.114 * | 0.046 |
| Loser | -0.152 *** | 0.045 |
| Cabinet | -0.150 * | 0.06 |
| No Turnout | -1.352 *** | 0.075 |
| Missing | -0.603 *** | 0.092 |
| ***Interactions*** | | |
| Loser × Pre-Post | -0.217 *** | 0.057 |
| Cabinet × Pre-Post | 0.063 | 0.078 |
| No Turnout × Pre-Post | -0.076 | 0.095 |
| Missing × Pre-Post | -0.256 * | 0.114 |
| ***Thresholds*** | | |
| 1\|2 | -3.131 *** | 0.116 |
| 2\|3 | -2.167 *** | 0.114 |
| 3\|4 | -1.055 *** | 0.113 |
| 4\|5 | 0.273 * | 0.113 |
| **Random Effects** | | |
| $\sigma^2$ | 3.29 | |
| N | 14 | |
| Observations | 24986 | |
| Marginal $R^2$ / Conditional $R^2$ | 0.003 / 0.034 | |

** p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001*

Source: Own work, 2023

3.5.1.2 Regressions with Controls

One of the reasons for excluding controls in the regressions was the high proportion of missing socioeconomic data, particularly income. Including these controls would have significantly reduced the number of observations available for analysis. However, due to the pre-

post design of the study, the lack of controls did not have a substantial impact on the analysis. Additionally, the balance checks conducted suggest that the pre-group and post-group are relatively similar, further supporting the decision to proceed without including controls in the analysis.

*Table 9 – Controls: Gender, Education, Income*

| ***Variables*** | ***Coef.*** | ***SE*** | ***Coef.*** | ***SE*** | ***Coef.*** | ***SE*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pre-Post | -0.007 | 0.036 | -0.033 | 0.052 | -0.068 | 0.06 |
| Female | 0.100 ** | 0.038 | | | | |
| Pre-Post × Female | -0.018 | 0.049 | | | | |
| Basic Education | | | 0.027 | 0.052 | | |
| Higher Education | | | 0.216 *** | 0.052 | | |
| Basic Education × Pre-Post | | | 0.05 | 0.065 | | |
| Higher Education × Pre-Post | | | 0.011 | 0.065 | | |
| 2nd Quintile | | | | | -0.108 | 0.062 |
| 3rd Quintile | | | | | 0.022 | 0.06 |
| 4th Quintile | | | | | 0.101 | 0.061 |
| 5th Quintile | | | | | 0.130 * | 0.065 |
| 2nd Quintile × Pre-Post | | | | | 0.104 | 0.079 |
| 3rd Quintile × Pre-Post | | | | | 0.018 | 0.077 |
| 4th Quintile × Pre-Post | | | | | 0.036 | 0.079 |
| 5th Quintile × Pre-Post | | | | | 0.115 | 0.083 |
| 1\|2 | -2.853 *** | 0.109 | -2.815 *** | 0.112 | -2.879 *** | 0.118 |
| 2\|3 | -1.896 *** | 0.107 | -1.856 *** | 0.111 | -1.921 *** | 0.117 |
| 3\|4 | -0.816 *** | 0.106 | -0.774 *** | 0.11 | -0.839 *** | 0.116 |
| 4\|5 | 0.497 *** | 0.106 | 0.540 *** | 0.11 | 0.475 *** | 0.116 |
| **Observations** | | | **23641** | | | |

Source: Own work, 2023

The balance checks revealed imbalances in age, with younger groups predominantly interviewed after the cabinet announcement and older groups interviewed before. These imbalances could have potential implications for the analysis. To address the issue of missing control data, particularly concerning income data where citizens may be unsure or hesitant to disclose their earnings, a multiple imputation analysis was conducted. This approach helps to fill in missing values based on observed patterns in the data. Additionally, each control variable was regressed on the dependent variable of external efficacy to verify the adequacy of the balance check. This analysis utilized a multilevel ordered logistic regression model with fixed effects at the level of the election, ensuring that any observed imbalances were appropriately accounted for in the analysis.

*Table 10 – Control: Age*

| ***Variables*** | ***Coef.*** | ***SE*** |
|---|---|---|
| Pre-Post | 0.193 * | 0.076 |
| 25-34 years | 0.149 | 0.078 |
| 35-44 years | 0.178 * | 0.076 |
| 45-54 years | 0.200 ** | 0.075 |
| 55-64 years | 0.273 *** | 0.075 |
| 65 years+ | 0.376 *** | 0.071 |
| 25-34 years × Pre-Post | -0.207 * | 0.1 |
| 35-44 years × Pre-Post | -0.219 * | 0.097 |
| 45-54 years × Pre-Post | -0.247 ** | 0.095 |
| 55-64 years × Pre-Post | -0.187 * | 0.095 |
| 65 years+ × Pre-Post | -0.241 ** | 0.091 |
| 1\|2 | -2.678 *** | 0.123 |
| 2\|3 | -1.721 *** | 0.121 |
| 3\|4 | -0.641 *** | 0.12 |
| 4\|5 | 0.674 *** | 0.12 |
| Observations | 23641 | |

Source: Own work, 2023

Table 9 and Table 10 confirm the results of the balance check, even after the multiple imputation process. The imbalance in the age variable, resulting from the randomization process,

is evident, with younger individuals being interviewed more frequently after cabinet announcements. Consequently, this age group is the only one showing a higher level of external efficacy after the announcements, as indicated by the positive effect of the Pre-Post variable in Table 10. While this imbalance may raise concerns, it should be noted that the group of younger people (aged 15 to 24 years) constitutes the smallest age group in the sample, accounting for only 10% of the participants. Therefore, the potential influence of this imbalance on the findings is minimal, particularly when considering the effects observed across all age groups. Hence, it is unlikely to significantly impact the overall conclusions of the analysis.

### 3.5.2 Voter Groups by Election

*Table 11 – Descriptive of Participants and Voters by Study*

| Country | Election Year | Formateur Voters | Cabinet Voters | Loser Voters | No Turnout | Total Participants |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Australia** | 2004 | 746 | 73 | 775 | 34 | 1628 |
| | 2013 | 1668 | 149 | 1769 | 70 | 3656 |
| **Denmark** | 2019 | 287 | 0 | 1043 | 33 | 1363 |
| **Finland** | 2007 | 205 | 384 | 388 | 212 | 1189 |
| | 2015 | 278 | 369 | 529 | 276 | 1452 |
| **Germany** | 2009 | 534 | 217 | 764 | 418 | 1933 |
| | 2013 | 576 | 433 | 453 | 284 | 1746 |
| **Iceland** | 2003 | 369 | 218 | 560 | 52 | 1199 |
| | 2013 | 279 | 304 | 594 | 105 | 1282 |
| | 2017 | 407 | 520 | 1016 | 102 | 2045 |
| **New Zealand** | 2008 | 477 | 0 | 545 | 46 | 1068 |
| | 2011 | 587 | 0 | 604 | 83 | 1274 |
| | 2014 | 538 | 0 | 551 | 51 | 1140 |
| | 2017 | 608 | 75 | 991 | 69 | 1742 |
| | 2020 | 759 | 99 | 711 | 77 | 1646 |
| **Norway** | 2009 | 541 | 230 | 763 | 183 | 1717 |
| | 2013 | 415 | 178 | 855 | 172 | 1620 |
| **Sweden** | 2002 | 344 | 0 | 540 | 115 | 999 |
| | 2014 | 236 | 70 | 472 | 24 | 802 |
| **Total** | **19** | **9854** | **3319** | **13923** | **2406** | **29501** |
| **Coalition Governments** | **14** | **7621** | **3319** | **10640** | **2078** | **23657** |

Source: CSES (2020, 2022)

### 3.5.3 Pre-Post Groups by Election

*Table 12 – Description of Pre-Post Groups by Election*

| Country | Year | N after (C) | % after (C) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Australia | 2004 | 1075 | 66.03% |
| | 2013 | 3312 | 90.59% |
| Denmark | 2019 | 360 | 26.41% |
| Finland | 2007 | 545 | 45.84% |
| | 2015 | 280 | 19.28% |
| Germany | 2009 | 1165 | 60.27% |
| | 2013 | 1386 | 79.38% |
| Iceland | 2003 | 709 | 59.13% |
| | 2013 | 901 | 70.28% |
| | 2017 | 843 | 41.22% |
| New Zealand | 2008 | 963 | 90.17% |
| | 2011 | 1159 | 90.97% |
| | 2014 | 1083 | 95% |
| | 2017 | 758 | 43.51% |
| | 2020 | 1378 | 83.72% |
| Norway | 2009 | 797 | 46.42% |
| | 2013 | 833 | 51.42% |
| Sweden | 2002 | 617 | 61.76% |
| | 2014 | 362 | 45.14% |
| **Total** | 19 | 18441 | 62.51% |
| **Coalition Governments** | 14 | 14259 | 60.27% |

Source: CSES (2020, 2022)

### 3.5.4 Party Names by Study

*Table 13 – Extended Names of Parties by Country*

| Country | Year | Abbreviation | Party Name |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Australia** | 2013 | LP | Liberal Party of Australia |
| | 2013 | NP | National Party of Australia |
| | 2013 | ALP | Australian Labor Party |
| | 2013 | AG | Australian Greens |
| | 2013 | PUP | Palmer United Party |
| **Denmark** | 2019 | SD | Social Democrats |
| | 2019 | V | Venstre, Denmark's Liberal Party |
| | 2019 | DF | Danish People's Party |
| | 2019 | RV | Danish Social Liberal Party |
| | 2019 | SF | Socialist People's Party |
| | 2019 | EL | Unity List - Red-Green Alliance |
| | 2019 | KF | Conservative People's Party |
| | 2019 | A | The Alternative |
| | 2019 | NB | The New Right |
| **Finland** | 2007, 2015 | KESK | Center Party |
| | 2007, 2015 | KOK | National Coalition Party |
| | 2007, 2015 | PS | True Finns |
| | 2007, 2015 | SDP | Social Democratic Party of Finland |
| | 2007, 2015 | VIHR | Green League |
| | 2007, 2015 | VAS | Left Alliance |
| | 2007, 2015 | RKP | Swedish People's Party in Finland |
| | 2007, 2015 | KD | Christian Democrats |
| **Germany** | 2009, 2013, 2017 | CDU | Christian Democratic Party |
| | 2009, 2013, 2017 | CSU | Christian Social Union in Bavaria |
| | 2009, 2013, 2017 | SPD | Social Democratic Party |
| | 2009, 2013, 2017 | Linke | Left Party |
| | 2009, 2013, 2017 | Gruene/Greens | Alliance 90/Greens |
| | 2009, 2013, 2017 | FDP | Free Democratic Party |
| | 2013, 2017 | AfD | Alternative for Germany |
| | 2013 | Piraten | Pirates Party |
| | 2009, 2013 | NPD | National Democratic Party Of Germany |
| **Iceland** | 2003, 2013, 2017 | F | Progressive Party |
| | 2003, 2013, 2017 | Sj | Independence Party |
| | 2003, 2013, 2017 | Sam | Social Democratic Alliance |
| | 2003, 2013, 2017 | VG | Left-Green Movement |
| | 2013, 2017 | BF | Bright Future |
| | 2013, 2017 | Pi | Pirata |
| | 2003 | FF | Liberal Party |
| | 2017 | M | Centre Party |
| | 2017 | FIF | People's Party |
| | 2017 | Vioreisn | Reform Party |
| **New Zealand** | 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2020 | NZLP/Lab | Labor Party |
| | 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2020 | NP | National Party |
| | 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2020 | GP | Green Party |
| | 2008, 2011, 2014 | NZF | New Zealand First |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2020 | ACT | ACT New Zealand |
| | 2008, 2011, 2014 | UFNZ | United Future New Zealand |
| | 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2020 | MP | Maori Party |
| | 2011, 2014 | CP | Conservative Party |
| | 2011, 2014, 2017 | MANA | MANA Movement |
| | 2008 | PP | Jim Anderton's Progressive Party |
| | 2017, 2020 | NZFP | New Zealand First Party |
| | 2017, 2020 | TOP | The Opportunities Party |
| | 2020 | NC | The New Conservative |
| **Norway** | 2009, 2013 | AP | Labor Party |
| | 2009, 2013 | H | Conservative Party |
| | 2009, 2013 | FRP | Progress Party |
| | 2009, 2013 | KRF | Christian People's Party |
| | 2009, 2013 | SP | Center Party |
| | 2009, 2013 | V | Liberal Party |
| | 2009, 2013 | SV | Socialist Left Party |
| | 2013 | MDG | The Greens |
| | 2009, 2013 | R/RV | Red Party/Red Electoral Alliance |
| **Sweden** | 2002, 2014 | V | Left Party |
| | 2002, 2014 | SAP | Sweden's Social Democratic Worker's Party |
| | 2002, 2014 | C | Centre Party |
| | 2002, 2014 | FP | Liberal People's Party |
| | 2002, 2014 | M | Moderate Party |
| | 2002, 2014 | KD | Christian Democrats |
| | 2014 | MP | Green Party |
| | 2014 | SD | Sweden Democrats |
| | 2014 | FI | Feminist Party |

Source: CSES (2020, 2022), PPEG (2023)

# 4 THE GERMANY 2017 FEDERAL ELECTION: A TALE OF TWO COALITIONS

Natural accidents sometimes produce random phenomena that allow social scientists to test hypotheses about theories. The objective is to have different groups within a given society, by mere chance, exposed to a treatment (which is what we want to study), while a comparable counterfactual group is not. Given the low predictability of electoral outcomes, some designs compare citizens before and after election results are revealed to the population (Eggers et al., 2015). In the previous chapter, the findings indicated that the perception of system responsiveness can change when voters know whether they have voted for a party within the cabinet or not. Since citizens were not interviewed before the elections, there is uncertainty as to whether the electoral outcomes brought any change to their external efficacy. Additionally, we do not know if all else being equal, the attitudes of voters evolve over time. Lastly, voters from different parties within the cabinet exhibited varying levels of external efficacy, but statistical power was low.

If the previous findings hold true, it is necessary to verify the results in an election resulting in a coalition government. To expand on the findings from the previous chapter, I explored survey panels that regularly interviewed citizens. The GESIS panel, from the Leibniz Institute for Social Sciences in Germany, has been surveying citizens since 2013, with a regular frequency of six waves per year. In the annual wave of April-June, respondents answer four questions relating to political efficacy. Two [questions] address feelings associated with internal efficacy, which relates to the sense that citizens can understand the political process and form political opinions easily. The other two questions assess how citizens perceive the system's responsiveness to the demands of ordinary people. Specifically, the questions inquire as to the respondents' level of agreement with statements such as, "Politicians care about what ordinary people think," and "Politicians are only interested in votes."

However, considering the importance of time and timely surveys, annual waves are not suitable for our needs. Fortunately, in 2016 the German General Social Survey (ALLBUS[34]) collaborated with the GESIS team to address panel attrition. As part of this collaboration, political efficacy questions were included in the GESIS wave of October 2017, and a post-electoral survey was conducted in December 2017. The items related to external efficacy differ slightly from the regular annual wave of GESIS. One particular question used in both ALLBUS and the GESIS post-

[34] ALLBUS is for Allgemeine Bevölkerungsumfrage der Sozialwissenschaften.

electoral survey asks citizens to indicate whether they agree or disagree with the statement, "Politicians care about what ordinary people think," or, "Politicians don't care much about what people like me think." This question captures the connection between the opinions of ordinary citizens and their perceived impact on the actions of authorities, thus linking to external efficacy.

In the upcoming section (0), I will explain what occurred in the aftermath of the Bundestag Election of 2017. Notably, two different coalitions were announced, with the first one failing and almost leading to new elections. Eventually, the political party leaders started negotiating new terms for a new coalition (with an old junior partner), three months after the Federal Elections. Given these two distinct coalition designs, it presents an interesting opportunity to examine the external efficacy of voters from different coalitions at different moments.

In section 4.2, I will introduce the GESIS panel and explain how I utilized the data for the statistical analysis. I will conduct three separate studies: 1) a single regression with eligible participants for each period; 2) a panel analysis covering the entire period (a. pre-election, b. post-elections and first coalition talks, c. first coalition failure, d. second coalition inauguration); 3) an event history analysis with differences-in-differences regression using formateur voters as the control group and voters from the two coalition attempts as the treatment groups. To ensure group balance and the parallel trend assumption, I will employ the framework proposed by Callaway & Sant'Anna (2021), utilizing all waves of the GESIS dataset from 2013 to 2021. The results will be presented in section 0, and the findings will be discussed in relation to the theoretical approach in section 0. For the research design, in the first two studies 3,125 participants were interviewed repeatedly across four different time points, with a total of 12,500 observations. In the latter, given that only winning voters or "possible winners" were used, there were 2,089 individual participants, with a total of 22,105 observations.

## 4.1 THE FEDERAL ELECTION OF 2017 IN GERMANY AND COALITION TALKS

### 4.1.1 The German Mixed-Member Proportional System

In this introductory section, I will briefly explain the Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) German System, and discuss its consequences on the government structure, specifically how parties behave regarding the division of the cabinet. The German MMP system is known for its stability, which arises from the voting procedure established by the Basic Law[35]. Each voter has the right to

[35] The Bundestag webpage has an explication on the recent reform https://www.bundestag.de/en/parliament/elections/arithmetic (accessed June 23, 2023).

two votes: one for a representative of the district/constituency (single-member district – SMD) and the other for a closed party-list at the state level (Länder) where they vote (Saalfeld, 2005). The party-list order is determined by party delegates at the level of the Länder. Half of the Bundestag seats are selected through the SMD vote using a simple first-past-the-post method, and the other half through the party-list vote share. There are 299 constituencies and 16 Länder, resulting in a minimum of 598 regular seats in the Bundestag. Parties must reach a rigid performance threshold of at least 5% of the national vote share or win at least 3 constituency seats among the 299 electoral constituencies in Germany[36].

With the remaining parties, the seat share for each party list is determined based on their vote share, which defines the strength of each party within the Bundestag. How the seat share is distributed for each party is a complex mechanism involving the distribution of seats in each Länder. In the 2013 reform, the seat distribution process was modified. First, the number of seats is allocated to parties based on the proportion of their party list votes in each Länder proportionally to the number of seats in each state[37]. In each Länder, parties receive a number of constituency seats through the first vote and a number of party list seats through the second vote. The higher of these two figures determines the party's seat count in the Länder. The sum of these party quotas across the Länder determines the party's national seat count.

In the previous version of the law, parties could receive overhang seats (*Überhangmandate*) when they won more constituencies through the first vote than they were entitled to, based on their party list vote share in the Länder. This was the main source of disproportionality in seat distribution in Germany (Saalfeld, 2005). Parties would receive additional seats through the first-past-the-post method in addition to their proportional vote share in each Länder. According to Saalfeld (2005), this became an issue after reunification.

With the 2013 reform of the German electoral law, "any overhang generated in the two-stage process of seat allocation was balanced completely by extra mandates so that there were no overhang mandates anymore at the end of the distribution process"[38]. This explains the existence of surplus seats and overhang seats: parties can be entitled to more seats through the second vote

[36] Saalfeld (2005) stresses that local representatives are elected (SMD vote) to represent the district in spite of their party's national performance.
[37] Proportional to the German population living in the Länder.
[38] Topic on Overhang Mandates from the Federal Returning Officer, available here: https://www.bundeswahlleiterin.de/en/service/glossar/u/ueberhangmandate.html#2017 (accessed June 25, 2023).

to ensure proportional representation, leading to an increase in the total number of seats in the Bundestag. In 2021, there were a total of 736 seats, which means 138 extra seats were created, including 104 extra mandates and 34 overhang seats. In the 2017 election (the focus of this chapter), there were a total of 709 seats in the Bundestag, including 46 overhang seats and 65 extra mandates[39].

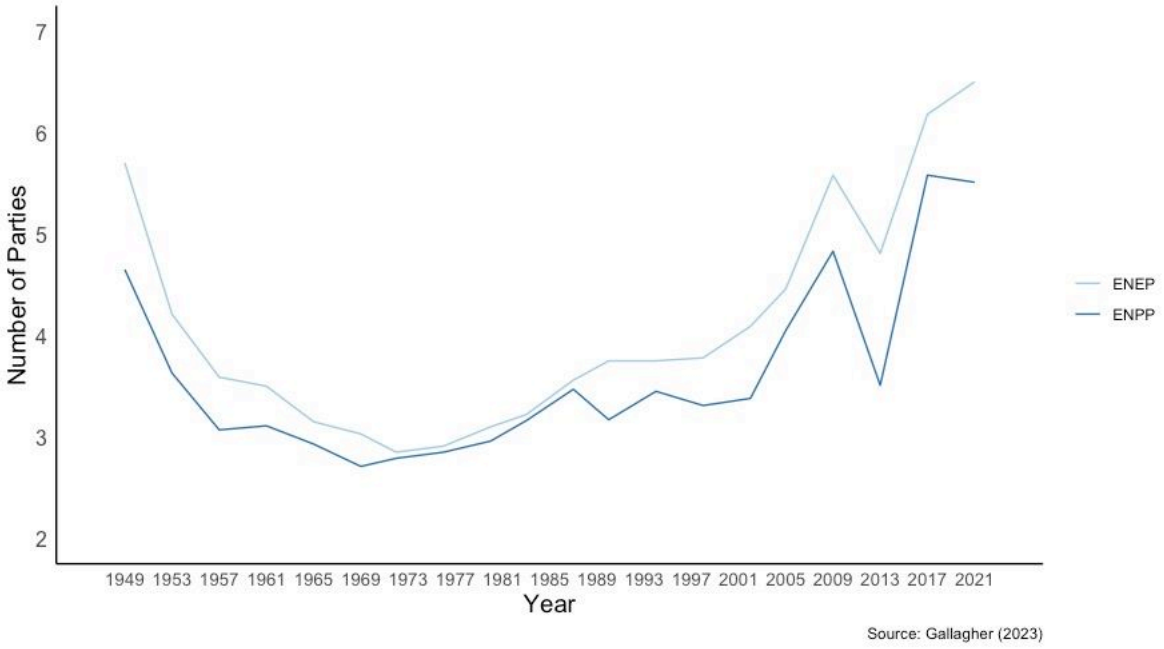
The main implications of the party system for our purposes are a strong cabinet stability and low party fragmentation. The performance threshold eliminates regional parties from the national race. The closed-list system and the indication of the constituency candidates[40] strengthen party delegates, and create a strong hierarchical structure within parties that have a national projection, thereby reducing the frequency of party members' defections (Saalfeld, 2005. Figure 12 shows the effective number of electoral parties and the effective number of parliamentary parties in Germany since 1949 (Gallagher, 2023). Both indexes are strongly correlated, but a split can be seen after the unification, when the overhang mandates started to impact the party system and increase disproportionality. The figure also illustrates the effect of the 2013 Bundestag Election reform, but the numbers returned to the 2009 trend after the 2017 election with the success of AfD (Alternative for Germany), and the FDP's comeback to the Bundestag.

Regarding regime stability, what is interesting for our purposes is that there are not many coalition options. From 1949 to 1969, the CDU-CSU was in a coalition government with the FDP and the Deutsche Party (under Chancellors Konrad Adenauer and Ludwig Erhard), and a Grand Coalition with the SPD from 1966 to 1969 (under Chancellor Kurt Georg Kiesinger). After 1969, the SPD and CDU-CSU alternated the chancellery with highly stable and durable coalitions: the SPD with FDP from 1969 to 1982 (under Chancellors Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt), the CDU-CSU with FDP from 1982 to 1998 (under Chancellor Helmut Kohl), and the SPD with Greens from 1998 to 2005 (under Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder). From 2005 to 2021, the CDU-CSU led three cabinets with the SPD and one cabinet with the FDP (more details in section 0). In 2021, for the first time in Germany, a three-party coalition was formed (assuming CDU and CSU as a single party) under Chancellor Olaf Scholz. There are limited coalition possibilities, and only two parties have acted as formateur parties in combination with either the FDP or Greens or in a

[39] For further details https://www.bundeswahlleiterin.de/en/service/glossar/u/ueberhangmandate.html#2017 accessed June 15, 2023.
[40] Candidates can run in the party list and for the constituency at the same time.

Grand Coalition. Saalfeld (2005) refers to this as a "bipolar two-and-a-half-party system" (p. 221). The timeline in Figure 13 shows the different composition of coalition since 1949.

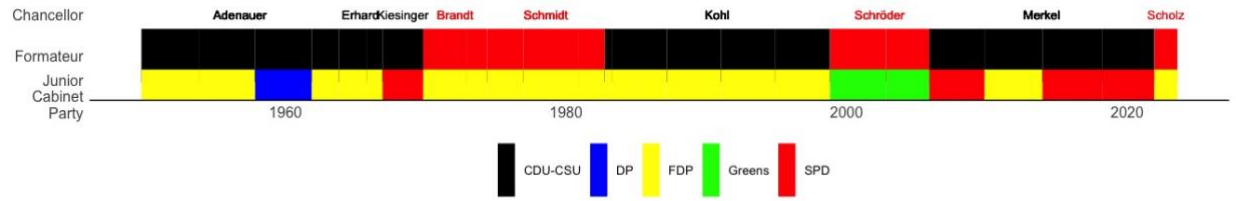
*Figure 12 – Effective Number of Parties, 1949-2021*




Despite the strong majoritarian component in the electoral system, it has never resulted in a single-party cabinet. Coalition governments have prevailed in all elections, benefiting from a strong party hierarchy. In light of this, some authors have researched the likelihood of strategic voting to promote specific coalition designs (Saalfeld, 2005; Gschwend et al., 2016; Gschwend et al., 2017). Saalfeld (2005) mentions strategic vote-splitting, where citizens cast their votes for different parties (SMD and party-list) based on pre-electoral alliances. The signals must be clear so that voters know which party to vote for and in which ballot. However, Saalfeld (2005) emphasizes that this is not a common practice due to the complexity associated with it and voters' identification with the two largest parties. Some authors have explored rental votes (Gschwend et al., 2016), where supporters of large parties vote for a smaller party to ensure they have enough votes to pass the performance threshold, allowing both parties to form a coalition government after the election. Examples include the Green-SPD campaign in 1998 (Gschwend et al., 2017) and the CDU-FDP in 2013, which is the subject of Gschwend et al's (2016) paper. Surprisingly, the FDP did not reach the threshold in 2013 and was excluded from the Bundestag for the first time since

1949[41], demonstrating the difficulty of successfully executing rental votes. The authors emphasize the need for clear coalition signals and a strong strategic message from party delegates. Furthermore, Gschwend et al. (2017) indicate that the challenge with coalition signals is that they must align with voters' partisan preferences, which are the main drivers of their decisions. In other words, priming coalition considerations implies that coalition considerations outweigh voters' party considerations (Gschwend et al., 2017, p. 647).

*Figure 13 – Coalition Timeline, Germany (1949-2023)*




Source: PPEG (2023)[42]

Stating that strategic coalition voting is very difficult does not mean that it never occurs (Hobolt & Karp, 2010). According to Gschwend et al. (2016), it is more commonly observed at the state level (Länder). Furthermore, in the context of the 2017 Bundestag Elections, due to parties' fear of the electoral impact of compromise, there were no clear coalition signals before the announcement of the first coalition (Linhart and Switek, 2019; Wüst, 2019), with the exception of the SDP withdrawal on the election day.

### 4.1.2 Electoral Performance of Incumbent Parties

Chancellor Angela Merkel was appointed head of the German cabinet in November 2005 and remained in power until December 2021. From 2005 to 2017, the CDU-CSU[43] union consistently achieved electoral victories in all federal elections, which led to its participation in the government coalition after four consecutive federal elections (2005, 2009, 2013, and 2017). With the exception of Chancellor Angela Merkel's second cabinet (2009-2013)[44], all other cabinets formed were Grand Coalitions, where the CDU-CSU governed in coalition with the SPD. The last Grand Coalition was in 1966-1969, under Chancellor Kurt Georg Kiesinger.

[41] The reasons for FDP's poor electoral performance in 2013 are various and cannot be attributed to rental votes.
[42] Two coalition governments are composed of the three parties: the first and second cabinet of Chancellor Konrad Adenauer (with DP) and the current Traffic Light Coalition (with Greens).
[43] The CDU-CSU union (or just the Union) refers to the alliance between the Christian Democratic Union and the Christian Social Union of Bavaria.
[44] The CDU-CSU was in cabinet with the Liberals (FDP) between 2009 and 2013.

The most recent Grand Coalition (2018-2021) was established in March 2018 after a prolonged period of coalition negotiations and unsuccessful bargaining attempts following the federal elections on September 24, 2017. However, the Social Democrats were not involved in the initial government portfolio negotiations. The talks commenced in October 2017, led by the CDU-CSU and involving the Greens[45] and the FDP[46]. One hour after the first exit poll[47], the then leader of the Social Democrats (SPD) Martin Schulz, announced that the party would withdraw from coalition discussions and join the opposition. The SPD's decision to step aside from coalition talks was attributed to the Social Democrats' poor electoral performance in the ballots[48].

In the week leading up to the 2017 Bundestag Elections, opinion polls[49] indicated an advantage for the CDU-CSU and the possibility of a reiteration of the Grand Coalition with the SPD[50], although numerous coalition possibilities were available. Despite low expectations of a victory for the Social Democrats, analysts indicated that a coalition with the CDU-CSU was very likely[51]. There was a pre-electoral mood that the elections would favor the coalitional status quo, which may have influenced voting for minor parties such as the Greens, the FDP, or even the AfD

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[45] The Green Party in Germany is also often referred as the Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, which is the union of Alliance 90 (Bündnis 90), the green party of East Germany before the unification, and the the Greens (Die Grünen) from West Germany.

[46] "The SPD's decision to become the official parliamentary opposition leaves the only feasible coalition for Merkel a three-party tie up between the CDU/CSU, the pro-business FDP party who scored 10%, and the Greens, who won 9%: the so-called black-yellow-green Jamaica coalition, which has worked at state level but has never been tried in federal government. This could prove tricky to negotiate." https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2017/sep/24/german-elections-2017-angela-merkel-cdu-spd-afd-live-updates, accessed on June 6, 2023.

[47] "(Merkel's) main rivals (and outgoing coalition partners), Martin Schulz's Social Democrat SPD, crashed to just over 20% and a projected 138 seats. Within an hour of the first exit poll, Schulz confirmed statements by other senior party figures that the SPD would not renew its "grand coalition" with the CDU, but head into the opposition." https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2017/sep/24/german-elections-2017-angela-merkel-cdu-spd-afd-live-updates, accessed on June 6, 2023.

[48] "Germany's Social Democratic Party (SPD) suffered its worst election result since World War II, scraping only 20.5 percent of the national vote. It's no surprise that the center-left party has opted to go into opposition"; https://www.dw.com/en/german-spd-licks-wounds-following-election-mauling/a-40676945, accessed on June 6, 2023.

[49] For pollsters and results of the 2017 federal elections: https://www.wahlrecht.de/umfragen/archiv/2017.htm (accessed on June 6, 2023); other federal elections can be consulted.

[50] https://www.dw.com/en/german-election-angela-merkel-extends-her-lead-in-the-polls/a-40408627, accessed on June 6, 2023.

[51] "If the poll results were real election results, then the combination of the CDU/CSU and SPD would be the only option for a two-party majority coalition. When asked which of the parties should lead the future government, one in two respondents (52 percent) said the CDU/CSU. Only 30 percent are in favour of political change by an SPD-led cabinet. Two weeks ahead of the election, there seems to be little desire for change in the country." https://www.dw.com/en/german-election-angela-merkel-extends-her-lead-in-the-polls/a-40408627, accessed on June 6, 2023.

(Alternative for Germany), the right-wing nationalist party who garnered attention from the media and experts alike, and who had a significant electoral performance in 2017.

Overall, the governing parties performed poorly, leading the leaders of the SPD and the CDU-CSU to recognize the need for a change in the coalition. According to Figure 14, both parties experienced their worst electoral results since 1949[52] (PPEG, 2023). In comparison to the 2013 Bundestag Elections, the CDU-CSU lost 8.6 percentage points, and the SPD lost 5.22 percentage points. As shown in Table 14, this decline in their electoral support may have benefited small- and medium-sized parties. The FDP and AfD, which had failed to reach the minimum threshold of national votes to gain representation in the Bundestag in 2013, saw a significant increase of 6 and 8 percentage points respectively in their vote share in 2017, with the AfD achieving a strong third-best performance. The Left (Linke) and the Greens followed suit in terms of vote share increase.

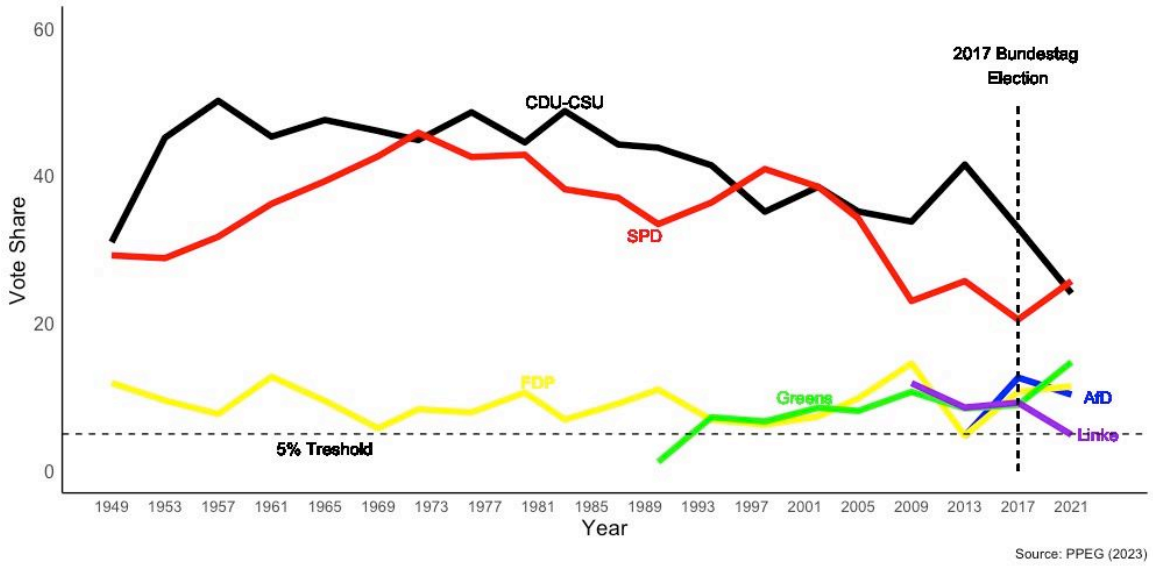
*Table 14 – Vote Share of Main Parties in 2013 and 2017 Elections*

| **Party** | **Vote Share** | | Δ |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **2013** | **2017** | |
| CDU-CSU | 41.54 | 32.93 | -8.61 |
| SPD | 25.73 | 20.51 | -5.22 |
| AfD | 4.7 | 12.64 | 7.94 |
| FDP | 4.76 | 10.75 | 5.99 |
| Linke | 8.59 | 9.24 | 0.65 |
| Greens | 8.45 | 8.94 | 0.49 |

Source: PPEG (2023)

[52] The CDU-CSU would have a worse electoral outcome in 2021.

*Figure 14 – Electoral Performance of Main Parties (1949-2021)*




### 4.1.3 The Jamaica Coalition

What is interesting about the coalition talks after the 2017 Federal Elections is the fact that voters faced two coalition announcements in the 171 days between the elections on September 24 2017, and the government inauguration on March 14 2018. The first coalition announcement took place on October 9[53], and efforts were directed towards the formation of a "Jamaica Coalition" named after the combination of each party's color: black for the CDU-CSU, yellow for the FDP, and green for the Greens. According to German media, three main topics dominated the "exploratory talks": 1) immigration policy and the refugee crisis; 2) climate change, and coal power plant emissions; and 3) Germany's position in the Eurozone[54].

The FDP had previously been a partner of Chancellor Angela Merkel's cabinet from 2009 to 2013 and has historically been a junior partner in previous cabinets with both the CDU-CSU alliance and the SPD since 1949 (Heidbreder, 2017). The Greens have also been integrated into the major parties in the Bundestag since the 1980s and were a junior partner with the SPD from 1998 to 2006 under Chancellor Gerhard Schröder. Therefore, both parties have been junior partners in

[53] "Chancellor Merkel says a compromise on migration reached with the Bavarian CSU is a good basis for exploratory talks on forming a ruling coalition with the Greens and the FDP", https://www.dw.com/en/angela-merkel-way-clear-for-coalition-negotiations-after-migration-compromise/a-40873289, accessed on June 12, 2023.
[54] "Germany's conservatives, FDP and Greens spent nearly a month in failed exploratory talks to form a coalition. DW breaks down the thorniest issues", https://www.dw.com/en/germanys-coalition-talks-what-are-the-sticking-points/a-41401096, accessed on June 12, 2023.

the past, along with the two largest parties in Germany. The FDP is a pro-business party leaning to the right and, during the 2017 election campaign, advocated changes to Chancellor Angela Merkel's immigration and refugee policies (Dostal, 2017). The Greens are more focused on environmental issues and primarily emphasized climate change and the need for a new fossil fuel policy during the campaign. The party also opposed any limitations on the number of refugees[55] entering Germany.

Initially, the talks of the new coalition design enjoyed support from a majority of voters[56], but over time, enthusiasm waned[57]. On November 19 with the departure of the FDP, the four parties announced the failure of the coalition talks,[58]. Several reasons contributed to this outcome: 1) the parties' divergent positions on key issues, particularly immigration, which openly divided the three parties and caused societal divisions – combined with the refugee crisis, immigration emerged as the most critical problem according to the population (Wüst, 2019); 2) energy policy also sparked opposition among the members, with the Greens advocating for a more radical reduction in coal-generated power; 3) the FDP's fear of compromising on its principles led party leaders to propose inflexible agreement clauses (Heidbreder, 2017)[59].

Given the reasons for the failure of the Jamaica Coalition, one may question the viability of a governing alliance comprising the CDU-CSU, FDP, and Greens. The significant policy differences and divergent objectives among these three parties could indicate an impractical coalition in the eyes of voters, leading them to anticipate the failure of the coalition talks. Consequently, voters of the FDP and the Greens might not have considered themselves as winners

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[55] "Even so, the issue is likely to cause difficulties with the Greens, who oppose any form of limitation on refugee numbers", https://www.dw.com/en/angela-merkel-way-clear-for-coalition-negotiations-after-migration-compromise/a-40873289, accessed on June 12, 2023.

[56] "A majority of German voters believe a coalition government comprising the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU), the liberal Free Democrats (FDP) and the Greens – known as the Jamaica coalition – won't be good for the country, according to a poll published late Thursday (November 10, 2017)", https://www.politico.eu/article/jamaica-coalition-greens-support-drops-for-germanys-poll/, accessed on June 12, 2023.

[57] "Die bundesweite Begeisterung für ein Bündnis von Union, FDP und Grünen bricht ein" - (Translation: "The nationwide enthusiasm for an alliance of Union, FDP and Greens collapses"), https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/deutschlandtrend-999.html, accessed on June 12, 2023.

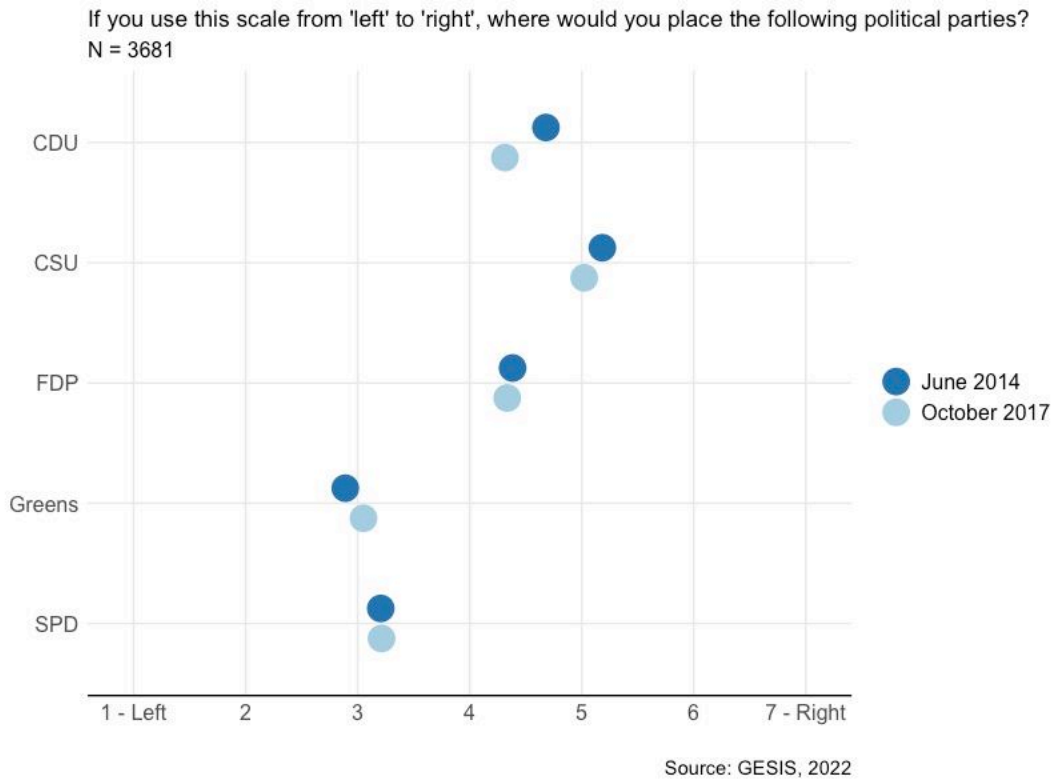
[58] "An hour before Merkel told reporters that the talks had collapsed, FDP head Christian Lindner announced that his party had walked out of the negotiations after 'reached compromises were questioned again.'", https://www.dw.com/en/german-election-preliminary-coalition-talks-collapse-after-fdp-walks-out/a-41445987, accessed on June 13, 2023.

[59] "Migration emerged as a contentious political issue in Germany following the refugee crisis. […] The parties have struggled to find a common ground on climate change, with the Greens calling for a reduction in coal-generated power of 8-10 gigawatts while its potential coalition partners have expressed concerns about job losses in the energy and manufacturing sectors", https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/19/german-coalition-talks-close-to-collapse-angela-merkel, accessed on June 12, 2023.

following the announcement on October 9, as they could foresee the collapse of the coalition talks in the coming days or weeks. Zohlnhöfer and Engler (2022) raise this point in their analysis of the coalition talks, and Figure 15 provides supporting evidence. Using GESIS (2022) data, the figure illustrates the average perception for each of the four parties in the Jamaica Coalition, as well as the SPD, in June 2014 and in October 2017, therefore after the Bundestag Elections and during the coalition talks.

The graph reveals a relatively low variation in the perception of party positions over the three-year period, which aligns with expectations. There are two notable movements: a convergence towards the center from the right for both the CDU and the CSU, with the CDU exhibiting a more pronounced shift, and a symmetrical movement from the Greens, although not as significant as the CDU's shift. The perceived policy positions of the SPD and FDP remained relatively stable between 2014 and 2017. Additionally, the perceived left-right positions indicate two distinct groups, as highlighted by Linhart and Switek (2019): a center-left group comprising the Greens and SPD, and a center-right group consisting of the CDU-CSU and the FDP. The CSU is perceived as the most right-leaning, while the Greens are positioned on the left, although their position in October 2017 appears to be very close to that of the SPD.

*Figure 15 – Average Left-Right Perception of Jamaica Coalition Parties and SPD*



Following the argument put forth by Zohlnhöfer and Engler (2022) that a Jamaica Coalition would never have been possible based on the relative policy positions of the main parties, it could be inferred that no coalition would ever be feasible in Germany. In a similar vein, Linhart and Switek (2019) conducted an extensive theoretical analysis of coalition dynamics during that period, focusing on the motivations of each party. They underscored two crucial points: 1) no party expressed a willingness to collaborate with the Left or AfD; 2) other coalition signals prior to the announcement were quite ambiguous[60]. Consequently, only a few possible coalition designs remained. A combination of SPD, FDP, and the Greens (the Traffic Light coalition) would not have enough representatives to form a majority in the Bundestag (Table 14). Following the SPD's statement, the Jamaica Coalition emerged as the sole viable solution and garnered broad support from voters of the three participating parties and a solid endorsement nationally[61].

Both the FDP in the 2013 Bundestag Election and the SPD in 2017 experienced significant electoral setbacks after serving as junior coalition partners of the CDU-CSU. Thus, entering into a coalition was perceived as highly costly for both parties, albeit with a notable difference: the SPD had just been punished in September 2017, while the FDP had managed to regain representation in the Bundestag after falling below the 5% national threshold in 2013. This threshold is a necessary condition for parliamentary representation in Germany. Consequently, the FDP was eager to engage in coalition talks and received support from voters. However, both Linhart and Switek (2019) and Heidbreder (2017) noted that the FDP's leaders were less inclined to compromise. Looking at the perceived policy positions in Figure 15, the FDP appears to be relatively close to most members of the Jamaica Coalition, with the Greens standing out as contrasting. One might assume that the coalition cost would be greater for the Greens than for the FDP based on this policy positioning. However, it appears that it was the FDP's prior experience as a junior coalition partner with the CDU-CSU from 2009 to 2013 that led Christian Lindner, the FDP's leader, to adopt a

[60] "In der Konsequenz vermieden nahezu alle Wahlkämpfer deutliche Festlegungen auf angestrebte Koalitionsmodelle und beschränkten sich auf den Ausschluss ohnehin programmatisch weit auseinanderliegender Optionen (z. B. Union und FDP gegenüber der Linken). Die Koalitionssignale fielen damit vage wie selten aus. Das einzig aussagekräftige Signal kam damit seitens der SPD-Führung, die eine erneute große Koalition unter Kanzlerin Merkel ausschloss." (Linhart and Switek, 2019, p.489-490).

[61] "Fifty-seven percent of Germans support the idea of Chancellor Angela Merkel's ruling CDU/CSU forming a coalition with the liberal Free Democrats (FDP) and the Greens – known as the Jamaica coalition because of the parties' colors – according a poll published Wednesday. […] Jamaica is the preferred coalition by majority of party members of the Greens (84 percent), the FDP (81 percent) and the CDU/CSU (58 percent), despite substantial policy differences on issues like immigration and the economy." Available in https://www.politico.eu/article/majority-of-germans-support-jamaica-coalition-poll/, accessed on June 19, 2023.

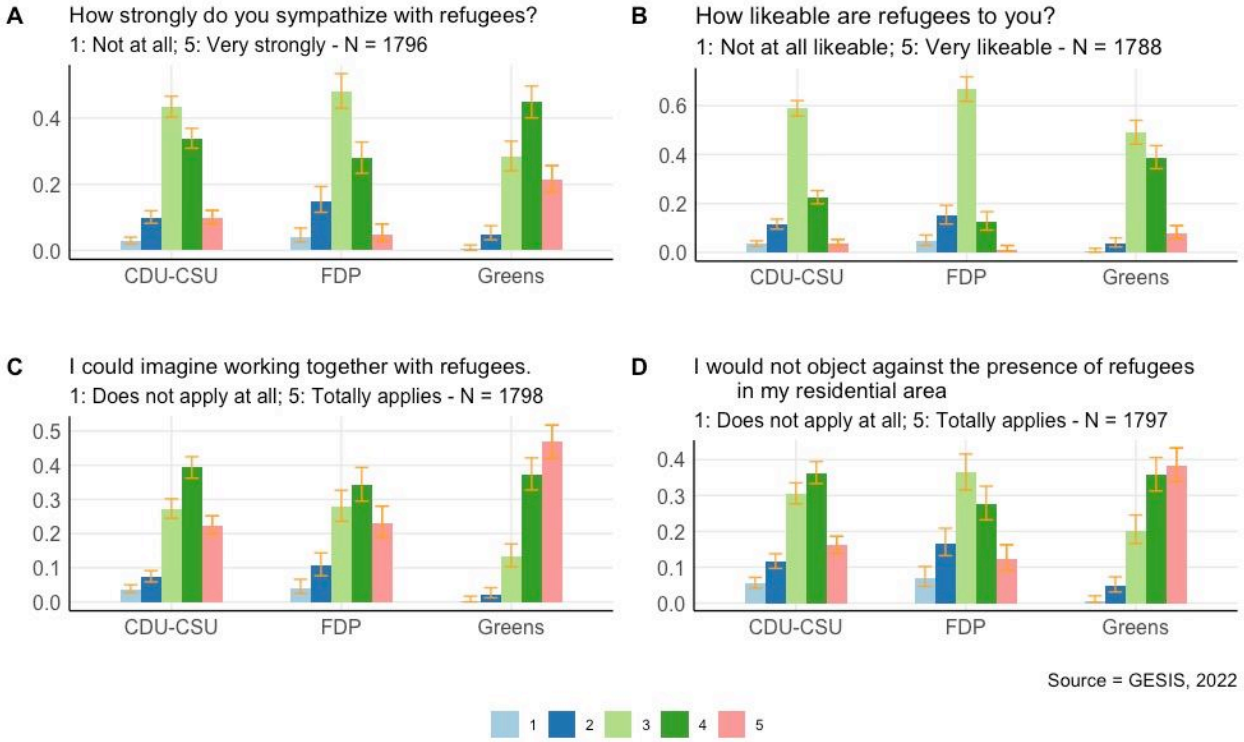
more uncompromising stance during the negotiations. It is worth noting that this discussion seems to be primarily limited to the party elites, especially considering the initial public support the Jamaica Coalition enjoyed among voters from the three parties. Therefore, FDP's initial move to join coalition talks was seen as credible.

One critical point of the coalition talks was the refugee policy of the previous government, and how the new cabinet would deal with the issue in the coalition agreement. Some analysts referred to the 2017 Bundestag Election as a "Plebiscite on refugee policy" (Korte, 2019). The discussions centered around a few key points: the upper limit on the total number of asylum seekers, the rights of family reunions, and the deportations of rejected asylum seekers (Dostal, 2017; Korte, 2019; Heidbreder, 2017). Even between the CDU and the CSU, there were differing views on the matter, with the CSU advocating for a "Refugee cap" in contrast to Chancellor Angela Merkel and the CDU, whose stance leaned towards a no-limit clause (Dostal, 2017). However, the parties involved in the talks interpreted the electoral outcome as a mandate to change the existing immigration policy. Before the failure of the talks, even the Greens were in favor of a compromise that would limit the number of refugee seekers to 200,000 annually[62].

If we examine the attitudes of Jamaica Coalition's voters towards refugees, we can observe some notable differences in their positions, but not a strong polarization on the issue. In the June 2017 wave of GESIS (2022), conducted two months before the elections, participants were asked how they see refugees. Figure 16 illustrates the distribution of the answers among voters of the September 2017 Bundestag Elections. Overall, voters of the Green Party displayed more positive attitudes compared to voters of other parties. However, the distribution does not indicate a highly polarized issue among voters, reflecting the positions of the party elites at that time. Thus, it can be concluded that there was room for a compromise regarding the topic of refugees and the broader immigration policy.

[62] "According to reports in German media, the Green party suggested a compromise over the weekend whereby they would agree to limit Germany's annual intake of migrants to a benchmark figure of 200,000 – as long as other parties did not rule out allowing migrants with "subsidiary protection" status to be reunited with their families." https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/19/german-coalition-talks-close-to-collapse-angela-merkel, accessed on June 12, 2023.

*Figure 16 – Attitudes towards Refugees by Voters of the Jamaica Coalition – June-August 2017*



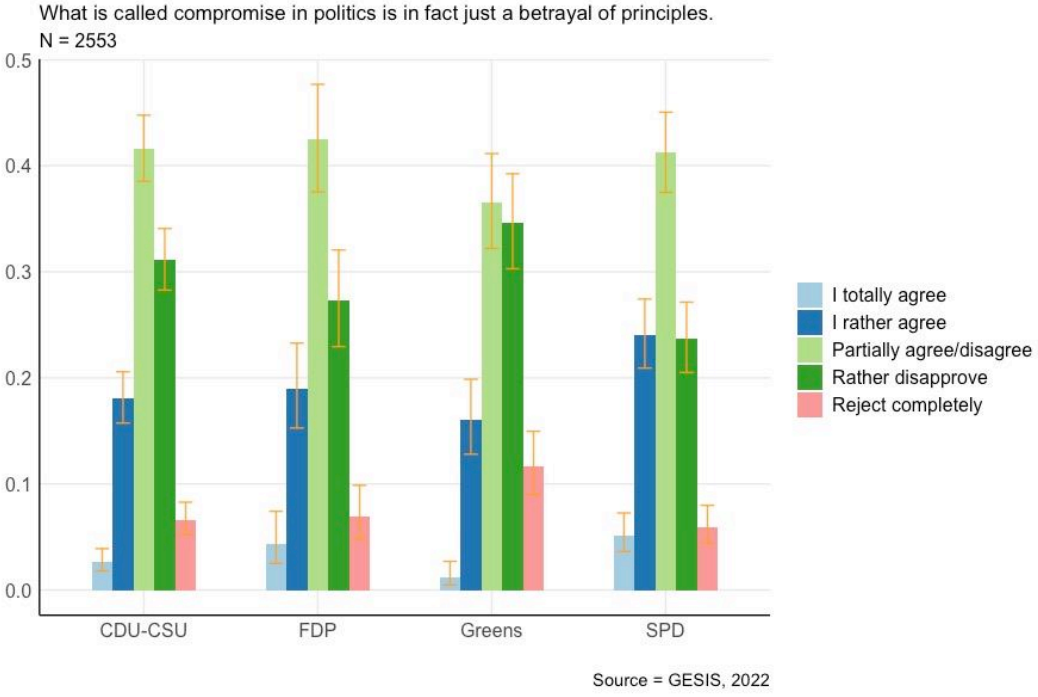

As a matter of fact, according to German media and analysts of the period, the Greens were more willing to compromise on difficult issues (Korte, 2019). The policy distribution in Figure 15 suggests that the party was perceived as having a minority position within the Jamaica Coalition. This perception may explain why the party was seen as leaning towards the center, which could be attributed to coalition heuristic (Fortunato & Stevenson, 2013). Participants in the GESIS survey may have inferred that the party had shifted towards the right after joining coalition talks with the CDU-CSU and FDP, both of which are located on the right side of the political spectrum. It could also be associated with how citizens perceived the Greens' handling of the issues discussed during the talks.

Figure 17 presents the average perceptions of a statement associating compromise with a betrayal of principles by voters, after the start of the Jamaica Coalition talks. In comparison to SPD voters – whose main leader had clearly stated that the party would not be involved in coalition talks – the majority of Jamaica Coalition's voters do not appear to hold a negative view of compromise

(assuming that "Partially agree/disagree" is a neutral position) [63]. More than half of Greens' voters rejected the view that compromise is a betrayal of principles, which may reflect the position of the party in the coalition talks.

The argument put forth by Linhart and Switek (2019) for the failure of the Jamaica Coalition was indeed the parties' low willingness to compromise, particularly the FDP, and this perspective is supported by other analysts (Heidbreder, 2017; Göpffarth, 2017). Despite the prolonged negotiations, the parties' public statements during the talks continued to mention progress until the final week, even as the bargaining process became increasingly protracted. In Germany, coalition governments are the norm (Gschwend et al., 2017), and parties involved in coalition talks inevitably have to make compromises on certain issues. Therefore, considering the factors presented here, it is plausible that voters during the period of the Jamaica Coalition talks perceived the coalition as a viable possibility.

*Figure 17 – Mean Perception of Compromise by Voter – October 2017*




### 4.1.4 The New Grand Coalition

The decision of the SPD to withdraw may be more complex than just their poor electoral performance. The SPD had already been a coalition partner with the CDU-CSU since the Federal

[63] In the GESIS Panel Codebook, the version in English of the intermediary position was "I partially agree", whereas that the version that was asked to participants in German was "Teils/teils", more associated with "Partially agree/partially disagree".

Elections of 2013. During the campaign, SPD voters were initially enthusiastic about the announcement of Martin Schulz as the main candidate, but the SPD campaign turned out to be rather uninspiring, lacking a clear positioning on the main issues discussed (Dostal, 2017). Among SPD supporters, Schulz conveyed signals that the party would continue to support the CDU-CSU, which was reinforced by a weak opposition to the favored candidate, incumbent Chancellor Angela Merkel. Prior to the election, SPD party leaders faced significant dissatisfaction from party members regarding their role as a junior partner to the CDU-CSU, creating a disconnect between the party's elite and its base (Zohlnhöfer & Engler, 2022). Furthermore, the ability of Chancellor Angela Merkel to extract compromises from coalition partners was also concerning to SPD supporters (Heidbreder, 2017).

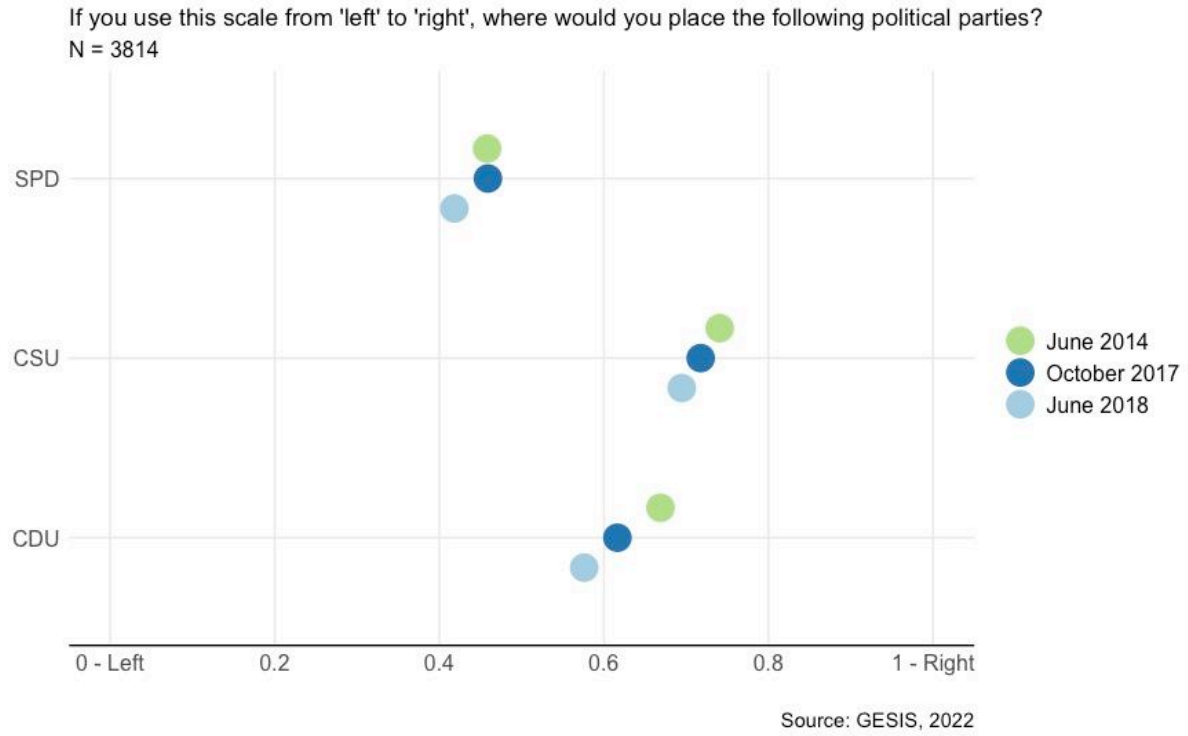
Therefore, Schulz's announcement to withdraw from cabinet talks was well received by SPD party members (Wüst, 2019) after the ballot boxes were opened, despite the fact that the SPD remained in the caretaker government throughout the entire period of coalition talks. Additionally, the relative success of the AfD also raised concerns that it could become the main opposition in the Bundestag, and a strong and organized SPD opposition could diminish their exposure in the legislature. This created an opportunity for a Jamaica Coalition agreement.

With the SPD out and the failure of a Jamaica Coalition agreement, three possible solutions emerged: 1) the CDU-CSU could attempt to form a minority government either on its own or with one of the two parties from the failed coalition (Heidbreder, 2017), a solution that had never been tried before; 2) President Frank-Walter Steinmeier could call for new elections if a vote of no confidence against the Chancellor had passed (Wüst, 2019); 3) the president could nominate a new candidate, an unprecedented and especially intricate situation as no viable substitute for Chancellor Angela Merkel had emerged. According to Wüst (2019), a few days after the fateful November 19, the president invoked "the responsibility of parties and *raison d'état*" (p. 90) of parties' leaderships. The path to the confirmatory election on March 14 was not easy. Every step taken by the SPD had to be approved by party members in conventions, from the authorization to begin exploratory talks on December 7[64], to the permission for actual coalition talks on January 21, 2018, being the actual

[64] "The leader of Germany's Social Democrats (SPD) on Thursday (December 7, 2017) asked party members to give the green light for talks with Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives to find a way out of the political impasse and leave all government options on the table", https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-germany-politics-coalition-idAFKBN1E11LV, accessed on June 12, 2023.

announcement itself and, concluding with the approval of the coalition agreement on March 2 (Wüst, 2019).

*Figure 18 – Average Left-Right Perception of Grand Coalition Parties*

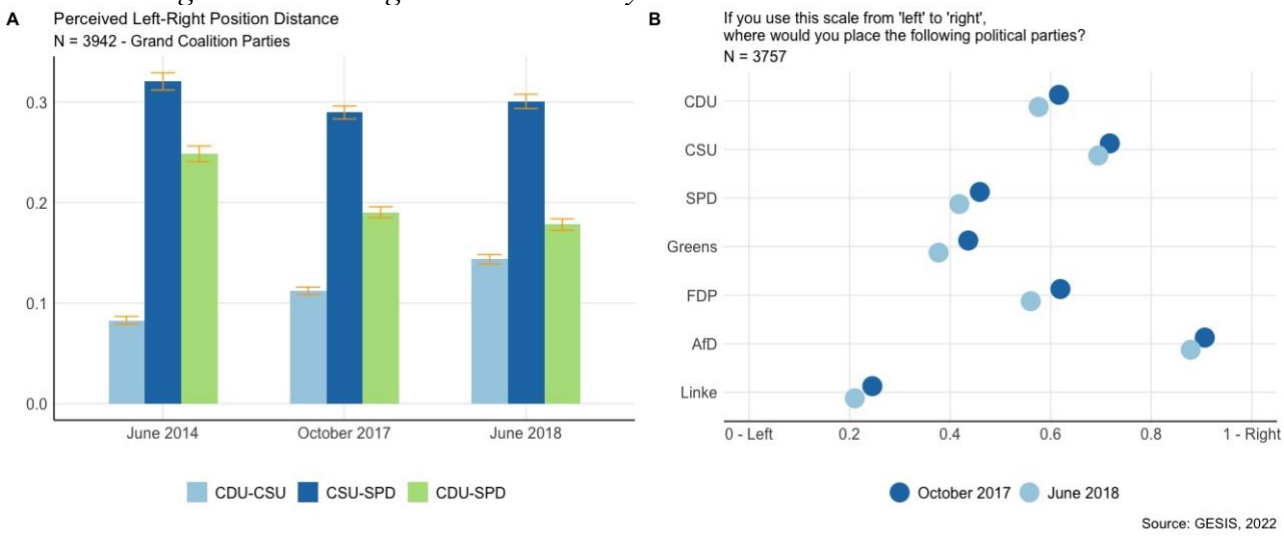



The duration and exceptional nature of the situation may have provided an opportunity for SPD leaders to buy time and reevaluate their bargaining strategy in order to secure a better deal for the Social Democrats[65] (Wüst, 2019), particularly considering that the party was unprepared for negotiations in November (Heidbreder, 2017). In terms of the actual government, the general overview is that it was beneficial to the SPD (Zohlnhöfer & Engler, 2022; Saalfeld et al., 2019). Zohlnhöfer & Engler (2022) mention that public opinion perceived the Social Democrats as the "Winners" of the coalition negotiations, and this perception may have implications for this study. Although there is no direct measure asking which party citizens perceived as the winner, we can use data from GESIS (2022) to examine how citizens perceived each of the parties after the inauguration. To analyze the policy positions within the Grand Coalition (considering CDU and CSU as two different parties), Figure 18 shows the standardized scale indicating citizens'

[65] "Merkel Makes Painful Concessions to Form New Government", available in https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/breakthrough-merkel-makes-concessions-to-form-government-a-1192319.html, accessed on June 16, 2023.

perception of each party. The scale was standardized because the number of left-right levels increased in the last wave (11 points in June 2018 and 7 in June 2014 and October 2017). It appears that on average, citizens perceive all parties as leaning more towards the left, suggesting that the alliance with the SPD shifted the government's position to the left, even pushing the Social Democratic Party further leftward.

*Figure 19 – Average Perceived Policy Distance - Grand Coalition Parties*



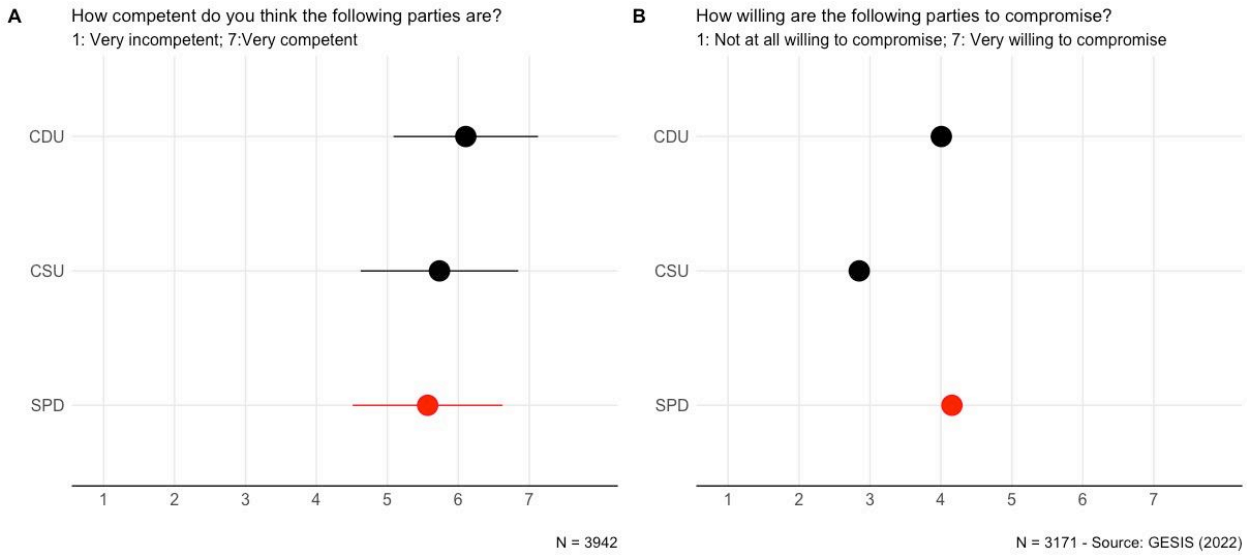

Given the difference in scale, it is safer to consider the average perceived distance between parties in government in different periods, based on the logic of Fortunato & Stevenson (2013), and look at all parties that got into the Bundestag. Figure 19A demonstrates that the distance shrunk between 2014 and 2018. However, there is no indication that this variation has favored the SPD or that the government has leaned towards the left. The perceived distance between the SPD and the CSU or between the SPD and the CDU fluctuated marginally from October 2017 to June 2018, suggesting that the alliance with the SPD had minimal influence on the average perceived distance between the SPD and the CDU-CSU after the March 2018 inauguration. If any variation in the perceived distance exists, it appears to have had a greater impact on the Union (CDU and CSU) than on the distance perceived from the SPD.

Furthermore, Figure 19B illustrates that all parties that entered the Bundestag in 2017 were perceived as more left-leaning in June 2018 as compared to October 2017, immediately after the election. Even the AfD, a right-wing nationalist party, was perceived more leftish. This observation suggests that the variation in the number of levels used to measure party positions can influence how people perceive parties on the left-right spectrum, with higher levels pushing parties towards

the center. As all parties appear to have shifted towards the left, this movement does not confirm a widespread perception among the German population that the SPD had "won" the coalition talks.

The perception of the SPD's victory may not be reflected solely by its left-wing positioning, but could be observed in other aspects such as the Social Democrats' conduct during the negotiations after January 2018, as suggested by Zohlnhöfer & Engler (2022) and Saalfeld et al. (2019). An initial analysis revealed that the coalition agreement in February 2018 reflected a greater alignment with the SPD's party manifesto (approximately 24% of the pledges), compared to the CDU-CSU's manifesto (approximately 11%), indicating a stronger influence of the Social Democrats (Zohlnhöfer & Engler, 2022, p.6). It is possible that the overall perception was not that the entire government had shifted to the left, but rather that the SPD was perceived as more efficient and capable of incorporating their preferences into the coalition agreement. Figure 20 illustrates how each party in the 2018 Grand Coalition was perceived in terms of their ability and willingness to compromise. In both graphs, the SPD (represented in red) is perceived, on average, as less competent and more willing to compromise as compared to the other coalition partners. These two graphs do not suggest that citizens perceived the SPD as having a greater influence in the management of the Grand Coalition following the government's inauguration.

*Figure 20 – Perceived Competence and Compromise by Party of the Grand Coalition – June 2018*




Neither the policy position nor the overall perception of the SPD in government suggests that the party had "won" the coalition talks. While several factors may be associated with this outcome, it is not the focus of this research. Instead, the focus is on whether the party's entry into

the cabinet increased the efficiency of SPD voters, considering the definition of winning that is most commonly used (Anderson et al., 2005; Stiers et al., 2018; Plescia, 2019).

One final point before delving into methodological details pertains to Germany's Grand Coalition aspects. Due to the limited number of coalition options, all federal government coalitions in Germany, both possible and existing, are associated with nicknames based on the colors of the parties involved. When the two major parties of Germany – CDU and SPD, the only two parties to have delivered chancellors – form a government alliance, it is referred to as a Grand Coalition. Based on coalition formation theory, such designs are very rare. In Germany, from 1949 to 2005, the Grand Coalition had only emerged once, under Chancellor Kurt Kiesinger, spanning from 1966 to 1969 (check Figure 13). Figure 14 indicates that his Grand Coalition held over 90% of the seats in the Bundestag.

Hence, one may perceive the four governments led by Chancellor Angela Merkel as outliers, considering that three of them were Grand Coalition governments. A higher level of party and parliamentary fragmentation may help explain why Grand Coalitions are becoming more common in Germany, but some authors associate the reoccurrence of these arrangements with their economic performance (Wüst, 2019; Zohlnhöfer & Engler, 2022). What are the implications for voters? Stiers et al. (2018) first indicate that the size of a party within the coalition influences how citizens perceive whether they have "Won," the election, with delivering the chancellorship being critical in Germany (p.26). Furthermore, as Grand Coalitions, by definition, bring together ideologically opposed parties, Plescia et al. (2022b) suggest that these arrangements are challenging to hold accountable electorally. Assigning responsibility becomes difficult because both parties are equally strong, even if one is slightly more represented than the other. Figure 14 indicates that the electoral performance of both parties is not the same but highly correlated, with both capturing an average of 60% of the German electorate.

What is interesting about their findings is that partisan bias tends to influence the retrospective accountability of Grand Coalitions. Partisans of the government "consistently point the finger towards the other coalition party" (Plescia et al., 2022b, p.661), while opposition partisans assign responsibility by attributing poor performance to the ideologically opposed member within the coalition. Non-partisans, on the other hand, tend to blame the junior cabinet partner. Hence, given the influence of partisan bias in responsibility attribution, it does not seem to be significantly different from what happens under regular coalition designs (Fortunato &

Stevenson, 2013; Fortunato & Adams, 2015), where the junior cabinet partner is held responsible for bad government performance by a majority of voters.

The prolonged duration of the coalition talks, the possibility of new elections, and the continuation of the Grand Coalition could have generated negative sentiments regarding citizens' perceptions of the democratic process and the responsiveness of the system. This is especially true given that many voters had cast their ballots against the prevailing government structure. In short, the period from the announcement of the Jamaica Coalition on October 9 to the second announcement on January 21 spans a total of 104 days. The first coalition remained as a viable solution for 41 days, until November 19. Media reports from that time indicate that the parties involved in the Jamaica Coalition negotiations remained engaged until the very end, despite the negative public sentiment[66]. Thus, the coalition design prevailed during this period. In the next section, I will explain how I utilize these dates as time frames to examine the levels of external efficacy among voters in different periods, using the survey waves of GESIS.

## 4.2 METHODOLOGY

### 4.2.1 Waves of Analysis and Time Manipulation

With two different coalition designs, the situation presents a valuable opportunity to test the findings discussed in the previous chapter. In the first coalition design, the *formateur* party is the CDU-CSU, which was led by Chancellor Angela Merkel and had held the position since 2005. Consequently, voters supporting the CDU-CSU remain committed to the *formateur* party, with no change in their party ranking. Variations in government composition based on voters' choices can be observed among supporters of the junior partners in the two different coalitions: FDP and Greens for the first coalition (Jamaica), and SPD for the second coalition (Grand Coalition). The Bundestag Election took place on September 25, 2017.

The GESIS Longitudinal Panel consists of six survey waves per year, with some repeated content. The political efficacy questions are typically asked during the "b" waves, which occur

[66] "Horst Seehofer, the head of the CSU, said that an agreement between the four negotiating parties "had been in reach" before the FDP walked out. That sentiment was echoed by Green party co-chair Cem Özdemir, who said that he and his team had always shown a readiness to compromise on key issues. 'However, the only possible democratic constellation was unfortunately shot down by the FDP,' he said." https://www.dw.com/en/german-election-preliminary-coalition-talks-collapse-after-fdp-walks-out/a-41445987, accessed on June 13, 2023.

from April to June. While this provides several annual observations with regular content, two statistical considerations need to be acknowledged: 1) sample attrition necessitated the inclusion of a second cohort in the panel (followed by a third and fourth cohort after 2018); and 2) the questions are asked only once a year, which is not ideal for a robust pre-post design.

To address these limitations, I take advantage of the combined sample of the first and second cohort, which was harmonized with the ALLBUS survey, and an additional wave was conducted specifically for the 2017 Bundestag Elections. One wave collected pre-electoral attitudes from mid-April to mid-June 2017, another wave was conducted from October 18 to early December, a third panel occurred from mid-December to early February 2018, and finally, the fourth panel corresponds to the regular GESIS survey conducted from April to June.

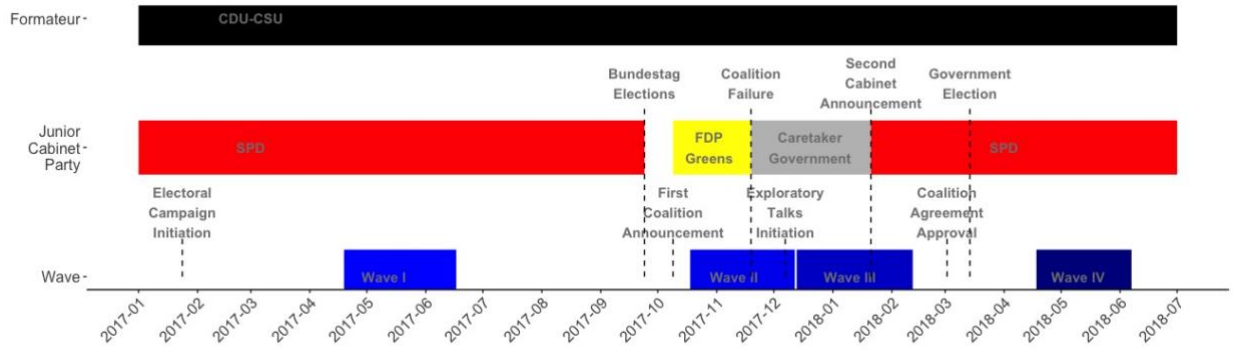
*Table 15 – Timeline of Events and Studies*

| **Survey Timeline** | | | **Electoral Timeline** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Number** | **Wave** | **Field Dates** | **Main Events** | **Event Date** |
| **I** | **Pre-Election** | 2017-04-19 to 2017-06-17 | Electoral Campaign | |
| **II** | **Post-Election** | 2017-10-18 to 2017-12-12 | Bundestag Election | 2017-09-24 |
| | | | First Coalition Announcement | 2017-10-09 |
| **III** | **Post-Coalition Failure** | 2017-12-13 to 2018-02-12 | Coalition Failure | 2017-11-19 |
| | | | Exploratory Talks Initiation | 2017-12-07 |
| **IV** | **Post-Coalition Approval** | 2018-04-18 to 2018-06-07 | Convention Talks Approval – Second Cabinet Announcement | 2018-01-21 |
| | | | Coalition Agreement Approval | 2018-03-02 |
| | | | Government Election | 2018-03-14 |

Source: Own work, 2023

Table 15 presents the alignment between four studies conducted by GESIS/ALLBUS during the relevant period and the key events that followed the 2017 Bundestag Elections. It is evident that the main events listed do not precisely coincide with the corresponding survey wave, but I assume that the waves capture the effects of these events. The field teams do not have daily quotas to fulfill as in the CSES study. Instead, they have a predetermined group of participants to reach during the study period. Consequently, the majority of interviews take place at the beginning of the study. This is why I assume that some events occurring during the field study are not measured in the corresponding wave but rather in the subsequent one. For example, the announcement of the coalition failure on November 19 happens while Wave II is still ongoing, but less than 2% of the participants are interviewed after this date. Similarly, the approval of the SPD Convention Talks, which takes place during Wave III, is more accurately captured in Wave IV. For a visual understanding of the period, check Figure 21.

*Figure 21 – Timeline of the 2017 Bundestag Election and Coalition Formation Process*




Source: Own work, 2023

Considering Table 15, Figure 21, and combining it with the findings from the previous chapter, we can anticipate potential outcomes from the empirical analysis. There is no expectation of variation in the levels of support for the formateur party, since its position remains unchanged throughout the analysis period. Most of the significant findings are expected among voters of the junior coalition partners. The FDP and the Greens were briefly engaged in coalition talks with the CDU-CSU after October 9, with negotiations lasting until November 19. The SPD was already in government prior to the September Federal Election, and its party members continued to serve in the caretaker government[67] throughout the entire period. Officially, coalition talks with the SPD commenced on January 21, 2018, following the party convention's approval. The announcement made on December 7 was a permission to consider the possibility of a new Grand Coalition, serving as an internal message for party members and the party bureaucracy in power, rather than a formal coalition announcement (Wüst, 2019). Additionally, in December 2017, experts did not rule out the possibility of a CDU-CSU minority government (Heidbreder, 2017). Hence, I consider the second cabinet announcement to be on January 21.

Therefore, the effects of cabinet membership for Green party and FDP voters should manifest in the Post-Election study (Wave II), while the impact of the coalition collapse would be evident in the Post-Coalition Failure study (Wave III). Wave IV should indicate the sentiments of

[67] In particular, Vice Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel, who was the leader of the SPD and also Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, remained in office until March 14, 2018. He was succeeded by Olaf Scholz, who served as Vice Chancellor in the fourth cabinet of Chancellor Angela Merkel and currently holds the position of Chancellor of Germany.

being in opposition for both parties. As for SPD voters, the Post-Election survey (Wave II) is likely to demonstrate the effect of the decision to join the opposition, along with the Post-Coalition Failure study (Wave III), even considering the party's role in the caretaker government. The impact of the coalition formation should be more apparent in Wave IV, although this study encompasses multiple events simultaneously: the coalition announcement, the approval of the deal, and the re-election of Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Furthermore, Wave I is expected to establish the baseline mood before the election, particularly regarding the electoral campaign. Given that the FDP and the Greens are relatively small to medium-sized parties in the German context – currently lacking the ability to challenge the CDU-CSU or the SPD as formateur parties – their participation in the government could foster positive perceptions of system responsiveness among their voters, indicating a positive effect compared to opposition parties. Predicting their views in their party in opposition is more complex. Both parties performed well in the 2017 Bundestag Elections, especially when compared to the 2013[68] Bundestag Elections, and the relatively positive balance is important for voters to perceive their party as having won the election (Stiers et al, 2018; Plescia, 2019). Winning influences their sense of external efficacy (Davis, 2014). Building upon the findings of Plescia (2019) and the previous chapter, which indicate a positive influence of being in government on the external efficacy of voters supporting small parties and a slight negative effect of being in opposition, I hypothesize that their views will be positively influenced in wave II.

**H4: For voters of small parties in the Jamaica Coalition, being in government increases their perception of system responsiveness.**

The same logic cannot be applied to SPD voters. Stiers et al. (2018) indicate that these voters did not perceive their party as having won the 2013 election, despite the fact that the SPD was in power. According to the authors, this is because the party did not secure the Chancellorship. Therefore, the decision to withdraw from coalition talks after the elections may have been viewed positively by voters of the German Social Democracy. The impact of the first coalition failure is less clear. Voters may assume that the party will actively engage in new negotiations for a better deal. However, since the announcement of the failure only occurred in January, the negative effect should not become immediately apparent after the coalition failure but rather after the formation

[68] FDP received 4.8% and Greens 8.4% of votes in 2013; in 2017, they respectively received 10.7% and 8.9% of the votes, https://www.wahlrecht.de/umfragen/archiv/2013.htm.

of the coalition, specifically in Wave IV. For SPD voters, being a junior party is expected to have a negative influence on their perception of system responsiveness, as this party has historically been capable of challenging the CDU-CSU union as the formateur party. The negative sentiments associated with coalition compromises and the sense of continuity (the same Grand Coalition) may lead to a decline in voters' belief in system responsiveness.

**H5: Being a junior cabinet party in the Grand Coalition decreases the external efficacy of SPD voters.**

In the next section, I will provide a detailed explanation of how I treated the data from the GESIS panel to construct the main variables to check on these two additional hypotheses.

### 4.2.2 Data Description

#### 4.2.2.1 The Dependent Variable

Table 16 and Table 17 provide detailed descriptions of the questions used to measure citizens' external efficacy in the panel, the dependent variable. Every year in April, participants in the GESIS panel are asked about their feelings towards politics, including questions on political efficacy, both internal and external. Two questions specifically address citizens' perception of responsiveness: "Politicians are only interested in votes" and "Politicians do not care about what people like me think." I selected the second question because similar questions were asked to the same participants during different periods of the coalition negotiation in 2017. These questions link citizens' preferences ("People like me think") to what politicians can do about it ("Politicians care"). The questions do not specify which politicians or government entities they refer to, allowing participants to interpret them broadly. Therefore, they capture both citizens' demands and how authorities respond to them.

Using similar questions on the same topic is valuable but requires careful consideration as it influences coding decisions and data manipulation. There are three main caveats to note. The first is the difference in the number of response options. The ALLBUS question (Wave III) has an even number of levels (4), while all others have odd numbers (7 in Waves I and IV, and 5 in Wave II). The main implication is that in Waves I, II, and IV, participants can choose a middle level, which can be significant for expressing a neutral position (where citizens partially agree and partially disagree with the topic). Even-numbered response options force participants to choose a side (agree or disagree) and eliminate the neutral option. Considering that GESIS topics typically

have odd-numbered response options, I tried to include waves with a neutral option whenever possible. Additionally, a different number of response options may also influence the average perception of individuals in a specific direction.

*Table 16 – External Political Efficacy Questions – Waves I and II*

| **Wave** | **Wave I – Pre-Election** | | **Wave II – Post Election** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Language** | **English** | **German** | **English** | **German** |
| **Topic** | Political effectiveness: Politicians do not care about what people like me think. | *Politische Wirksamkeit: Politiker kümmern sich nicht was Leute denken* | Political effectiveness: politicians care what ordinary people think. | *Politische Wirksamkeit: Politiker kümmert, was einfache Leute denken.* |
| **Question Text** | In the following you will find several statements concerning politics. Please say to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. | *Im Folgenden finden Sie einige Aussagen zur Politik. Bitte geben Sie jeweils an, inwieweit Sie diese Aussagen ablehnen oder ihnen zustimmen.* | Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements. | *Bitte geben Sie an, inwiefern Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder diese ablehnen.* |
| **Item Text** | Politicians do not care about what people like me think. | *Politiker kümmern sich nicht darum, was Leute wie ich denken.* | Politicians care what ordinary people think. | *Die Politiker kümmern sich darum, was einfache Leute denken.* |
| **Answers and Levels** | 1 Totally disagree<br>2<br>3<br>4<br>5<br>6<br>7 Totally agree | *1 Lehne komplett ab*<br>*2*<br>*3*<br>*4*<br>*5*<br>*6*<br>*7 Stimme voll zu* | 1 I totally agree<br>2 I rather agree<br>3 I partially agree<br>4 Rather disapprove<br>5 Reject completely | *1 Stimme voll und ganz zu*<br>*2 Stimme eher zu*<br>*3 Teils/teils*<br>*4 Lehne eher ab*<br>*5 Lehne voll und ganz ab* |

Source: GESIS Codebook (2022)

*Table 17 – External Political Efficacy Questions – Waves III and IV*

| **Wave** | **Wave III – Post-Coalition Failure** | | **Post-Coalition Approval** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Language** | **English** | **German** | **English** | **German** |
| **Topic** | ALLBUS: Politicians don't care what people think. | *ALLBUS: Politiker kümmern sich nicht darum, was Leute denken.* | Political effectiveness: Politicians do not care about what people like me think. | *Politische Wirksamkeit: Politiker kümmern sich nicht was Leute denken.* |
| **Question Text** | Now some statements follow, which are occasionally stated. Please tell me for each opinion, whether you completely agree, tend to agree, tend to disagree or completely disagree. | *Es folgen einige Meinungen, die man gelegentlich hört. Geben Sie bitte zu jeder Meinung an, ob Sie ihr voll und ganz zustimmen, eher zustimmen, eher nicht zustimmen oder überhaupt nicht zustimmen.* | In the following you will find several statements concerning politics. Please say to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. | *Im Folgenden finden Sie einige Aussagen zur Politik. Bitte geben Sie jeweils an, inwieweit Sie diese Aussagen ablehnen oder ihnen zustimmen.* |
| **Item Text** | Politicians don't care much about what people like me think. | *Die Politiker kümmern sich nicht viel darum, was Leute wie ich denken.* | Politicians do not care about what people like me think | *Politiker kümmern sich nicht darum, was Leute wie ich denken.* |
| **Answers and Levels** | 1 I totally agree<br>2 I rather agree<br>3 Rather disagree<br>4 Fully disagree | *1 Stimme voll und ganz zu*<br>*2 Stimme eher zu*<br>*3 Stimme eher nicht zu*<br>*4 Stimme überhaupt nicht zu* | 1 Totally disagree<br>2<br>3<br>4<br>5<br>6<br>7 Totally agree | *1 Lehne komplett ab*<br>*2*<br>*3*<br>*4*<br>*5*<br>*6*<br>*7 Stimme voll zu* |

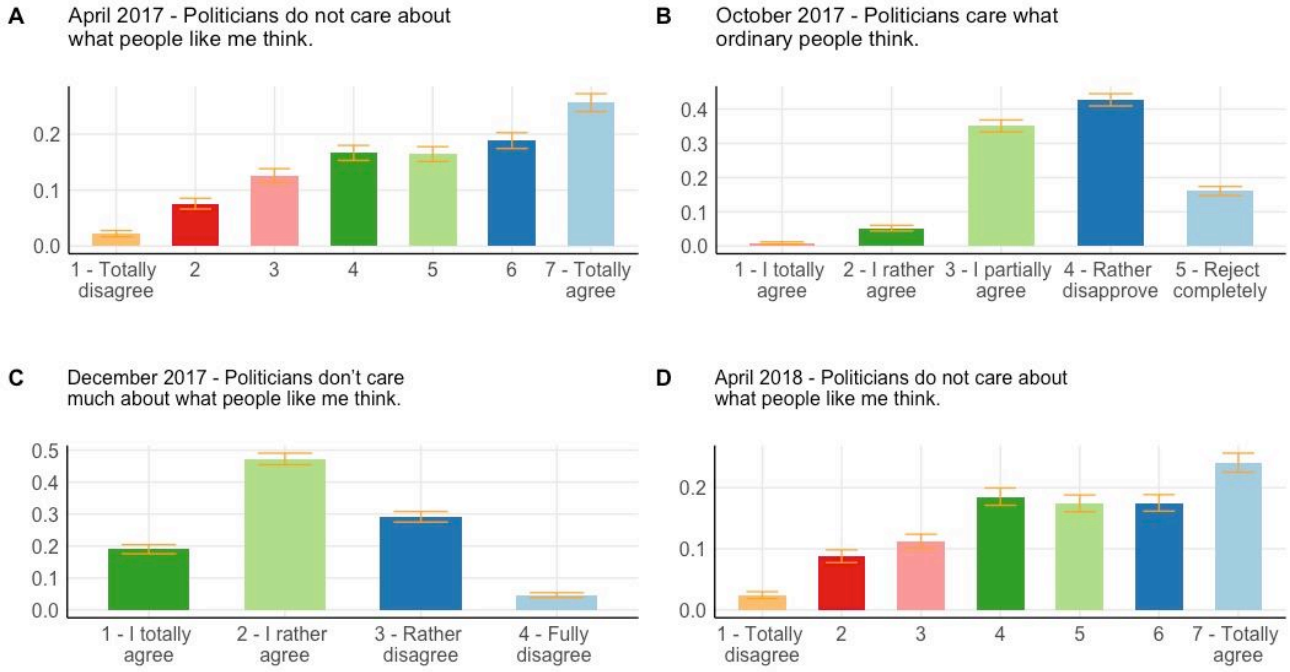
Source: GESIS Codebook (2022)

The second caveat pertains to how the topic is presented to participants. Wave II poses a positive responsiveness question ("politicians care about"), while waves I, III, and IV are presented negatively ("politicians do not/don't care"). This presents a critical issue in interpreting the results. Changing the perspective from a positive to a negative does not necessarily imply that participants

will interpret the equal opposite topic when answering the questions. This matter is particularly concerning because the positive version of the question also indicates citizens' attitudes towards the elites (in the bulk of questions), but it attempts to assess a link with participants' preferences.

Finally, the third caveat concerns the definition of each response option. In the regular GESIS political efficacy question (waves I and IV), only the extreme options are defined, while in the additional waves, all response options are precisely defined. If we assume that people understand each intermediate response option accordingly, then the questions can be used for time-series analysis. But this assumption is very context dependent in the sense that it is influenced by who the participants are and the context in which they are inserted.

*Figure 22 – Percentage Distribution of Answers by Wave (N = 3125)*[69]




Source: GESIS (2022)

Given all the caveats mentioned, it is necessary to analyze the distribution of answers in each wave to determine how the data will be treated, and to create a harmonized measure of external efficacy that is comparable over time. It is important to understand the distribution of each response option considering the content of the question and the number of response options. As expected,

[69] At this moment, I am using the definitive number of observations, which is levelled to get the same participants in different moments. More details in the next session.

Figure 22[70] indicates that fewer options and/or explicit definitions of each option increase the likelihood of participants selecting intermediary levels such as "Rather agree" or "Rather disapprove"[71]. Since the focus is on examining the responses at each specific moment, and comparing them across different voter groups, one possible approach is to analyze each wave individually and compare the responses of each group of voters. For comparative purposes, following the solutions suggested by Heffington et al. (2019), Duch et al. (2018), and Wolf et al. (2016) for ex-post harmonization, I have chosen to harmonize the answers into a dichotomous "Agree" and "Disagree" format. This decision may result in a reduction in variation, but it is a justified choice for comparative analysis. The correspondence table (Table 18) provides an explanation of the procedure used in this harmonization process.

*Table 18 – Correspondence Table*

| **Target Variable: External Efficacy** | **Wave I** | **Wave II** | **Wave III** | **Wave IV** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Item | Politicians do not care about what people like me think. | Politicians care what ordinary people think. | Politicians don't care much about what people like me think. | Politicians do not care about what people like me think. |
| Level 1 – **Disagree** | 1 Totally disagree<br>2<br>3<br>4 | 4 Rather disapprove<br>5 Reject completely | 3 Rather disagree<br>4 Fully disagree | 1 Totally disagree<br>2<br>3<br>4 |
| Level 2 – **Agree** | 5<br>6<br>7 Totally agree | 1 I totally agree<br>2 I rather agree<br>3 I partially agree | 1 I totally agree<br>2 I rather agree | 5<br>6<br>7 Totally agree |
| **External Efficacy Order** | **Negative** | **Positive** | **Negative** | **Negative** |

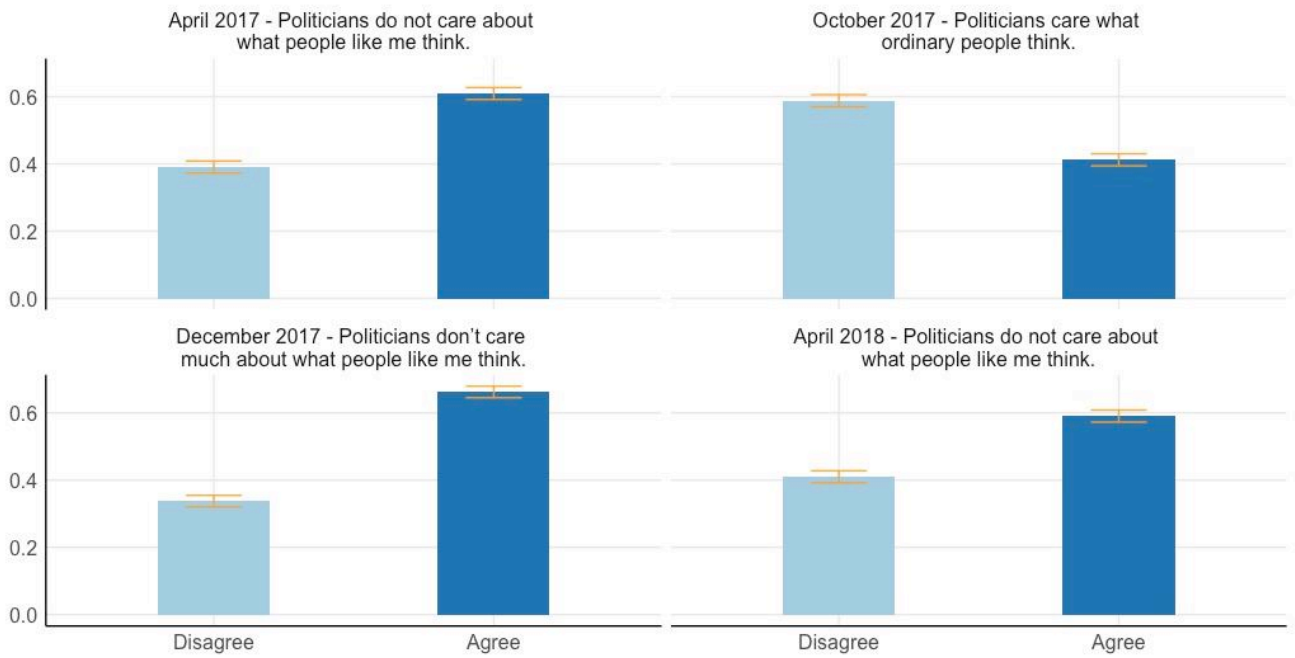
Source: Own work, 2023

Table 18 presents the grouping of each answer option to indicate whether participants agree or disagree with the item. The reduction to two options allows for improved comparability, although some information is lost in the process. In cases where the middle option does not explicitly indicate agreement or disagreement with the sentence (waves I and IV), it was considered as "Disagree". However, in Wave II, where the middle option is explicitly defined (Wave III), it was assigned to the corresponding level. Figure 23 illustrates the percentage of individuals indicating their agreement or disagreement with the item.

[70] Given that we are interested in who people vote for, I have applied one filter, which is to exclude citizens with no voting information in the election of 2017. More detailed information will be used in the next session and in the Appendix.

[71] Note that the y axis top limit varies in each graph for a better visualization of the distribution.

*Figure 23 – Dichotomic Percentage Distribution of Answers by Wave (N = 3125)*




Source: GESIS (2022)

For the panel study and event study analysis, it is necessary to reverse the direction of the response in Wave II in order to obtain a negative dimension of external efficacy. In the panel study, I will use the dichotomous variable. As for the event study, since the regression will automatically consider the values for each wave, there is no need for prior harmonization.

#### 4.2.2.2 Winners, Losers, and Cabinet Voters

In Wave II, which took place just after the September 24 elections, participants were asked to indicate which party they voted for. Wave II plays a critical role in the design and sample selection of the study as it filters participants from other waves who were not invited to participate in this specific wave. GESIS (2022) employs an invitation procedure to include or exclude participants in each wave. Therefore, the participants invited to this wave are going to settle the observations in other waves of the study. The survey item asking participants about their voting behavior is:

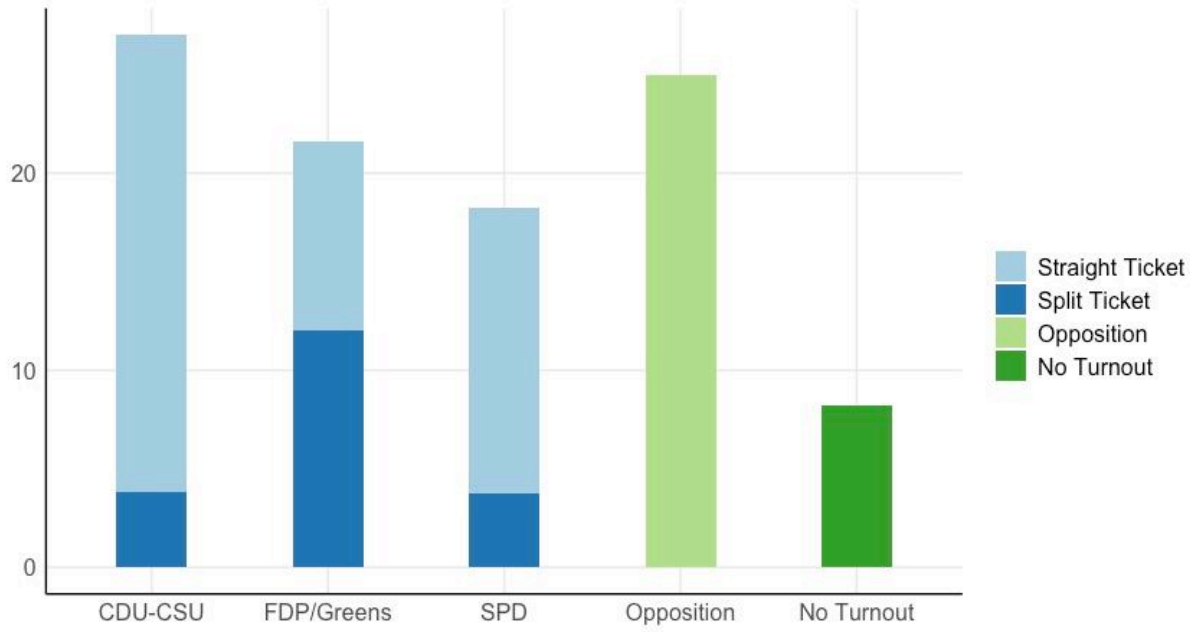
"In the last parliamentary elections on 24 September 2017 you were able to cast two votes – the first vote for a candidate from your constituency, the second vote for a party. What did you mark on your ballot?
1. First Vote
2. Second Vote"[72]

For the purposes of this study, the second vote determines in which group participants are, for it is the ballot that defines party vote share and influences in coalition formation, as described in section 4.1.1,. Parties derive their influence within the Bundestag from their electoral performance on the party list. Additionally, due to the depersonalization of the vote, the second vote is more likely to reflect a partisan vote, establishing an affective relationship between voters and their chosen party. However, it is worth noting that the first vote may also have an impact. As Stiers et al. (2018) suggest, electing the district candidate can reduce the sense of losing at the national level. Unfortunately, there is no available information regarding which party won in the constituency where participants voted. Nevertheless, splitting-ticket strategies may provide insights into coalition expectations. Saalfeld (2005) notes that smaller parties with a chance of governing, such as the Greens and FDP, are more likely to be affected by splitting-tickets (Saalfeld, 2005; Gschwend et al., 2003). Furthermore, some studies link splitting-tickets to party performance at the district level (Gschwend et al., 2003; Gschwend, 2006).

Figure 24 displays the distribution of split and straight votes, using the terminology employed by Gschwend (2006), categorized by second vote groups. The voters of opposition parties were intentionally grouped together for various reasons, primarily for statistical power considerations. As proposed by Saalfeld (2005) and Gschwend (2006), voters of the Greens and FDP are more inclined to split their vote compared to voters of the SPD and CDU-CSU. The distribution of groups indicates that voters of larger parties are more likely to cast a partisan straight vote than voters of smaller parties. However, since there is no available information regarding the outcome of the constituency, the extent to which partisan voting is widespread remains less precise.

[72] In German: "Bei der letzten Bundestagswahl am 24. September 2017 konnten Sie zwei Stimmen vergeben – die Erststimme für einen Kandidaten aus Ihrem Wahlkreis, die Zweitstimme für eine Partei. Was haben Sie auf Ihrem Stimmzettel angekreuzt? 1) Erststimme; 2) Zweitstimme"

*Figure 24 – Distribution of Voters Group (N = 3125)*




Source: GESIS (2022)

For the purpose of this study, the regression analyses will include all voter groups. However, the focus lies on the groups of winners and "potential winners", specifically the parties that were part of coalition talks or in the government at some point. Building on the terminology introduced in the previous chapter, supporters of the CDU-CSU are considered voters of the formateur party in all waves. Voters of the junior cabinet parties from the first coalition include supporters of the FDP and Greens. In this study, both parties will be treated as a single group since the interest here in them is mostly on their participation in the coalition talks. Furthermore, the SPD served as a junior cabinet party in both the pre-electoral Wave I and Wave IV, during the second coalition. Unfortunately, no study was conducted in closer proximity to the cabinet announcement on January 21, 2018. Thus, it is assumed that the influence of the SPD's decision to participate in the government on voters' external efficacy will become apparent in Wave IV. Table 19 provides a summary of each party's situation in relation to the cabinet. Moreover, to closely examine the effects of parties transitioning from government to the opposition and vice versa, voters of the SPD in Waves II and III, as well as FDP/Greens in Waves I, III, and IV, will be analyzed separately as

a distinct category from the opposition voters[73]. It is important therefore to highlight that the opposition group cannot be interpreted as the group of loser parties, which is a broad group composed of parties that may be involved in coalition talks in one wave.

*Table 19 – Names and Party Status by Wave*

| Wave | Election Period | Formateur Party | Junior Cabinet Parties (announced/in cabinet) | Loser Parties (involved in talks) | Opposition Parties (not involved in talks) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **I** | April-June 2017 | CDU-CSU | SPD | Greens | Linke |
| **II** | October 2017 | CDU-CSU | FDP, Greens | SPD | AfD, Linke |
| **III** | December 2017 | CDU-CSU | *Caretaker Government* | SPD, FDP, Greens | AfD, Linke |
| **IV** | April 2018 | CDU-CSU | SPD | FDP, Greens | AfD, Linke |

Source: PPEG (2023), GESIS Codebook (2022)

### 4.2.3 Regression Models

Each regression model serves a different purpose. Firstly, it is important to analyze each wave separately to assess the differences in reactions over time for each group in each specific moment. To achieve this, I will employ weighted logistic regression models for each distinct period. This approach allows for a comparison of the proportions of respondents within each voter group who agree or disagree with the statement.

In order to identify the groups most affected by the overall electoral process, I will conduct a panel analysis using logistic regression and longitudinal data. The results of this analysis will indicate that SPD voters, both those who voted for the party exclusively and those who split their vote, will be more influenced than voters of the first coalition. However, it does not enable us to confirm whether the influence on voters' perception of responsiveness was primarily due to the SPD entering the cabinet or the fact that the party had a poor electoral performance in 2017.

To gain a better understanding of the effect of entering the coalition, an event history analysis will be conducted using a difference-in-differences model. The treatment groups consist of voters of parties entering the coalition at each point, while the control group consists of CDU-

[73] The main implication of this decision is that the majority of the opposition voters are composed of voters of Linke and AfD. The former is a left-wing party associated with democratic socialism, while the latter is a right-wing nationalist party. As it is not the focus here, the nature of both parties is not discussed in the chapter. However, Figure 19B indicates that Linke is perceived as the most left-wing party and AfD is most right-wing in the left-right spectrum among parties that succeeded in getting into the Bundestag.

CSU voters who do not need to "Enter" the coalition. This approach, based on the framework proposed by Callaway and Sant'anna (2021), allows for the estimation of a "Group-time average treatment effect […] where a "Group" is defined by the time period when units are first treated," (p.225).

There can be various reasons for variations in citizens' external efficacy. One such reason is voting for a losing party, but this aspect has already been accounted for in previous findings. While a test will be conducted to examine the differences associated with voters of losing parties, it is not the primary focus of this research. Another potential reason for variation is the time spent on coalition negotiations, which is likely to have a homogeneous effect on all citizens, not just on SPD voters. The event history analysis allows for an examination of this factor and enables the extraction of the effect associated specifically with a party entering the coalition. Moreover, it provides insight into whether the effect remains significant over time or of it fades out. Since there are two distinct groups that "Entered" the government at different times, FDP/Greens in October and SPD in January, this analysis will be conducted by comparing the average variations in voters from both groups at the moment they decide to join the coalition with the sole group that remained in government throughout the entire period, namely CDU-CSU voters.

Before conducting the event history regression, it is important to establish some premises. Firstly, it should be noted that after the CDU-CSU, FDP and Greens publicly announced they were starting coalition talks, participants were aware that the most likely coalition design would be the Jamaica Coalition. This assumption is supported by the public support received by the Jamaica Coalition and the interest shown by the parties' delegates involved in the negotiations. It is crucial to mention this assumption because although the coalition ultimately failed, at that time, citizens assumed it would be successful in forming the cabinet (1).

Secondly, following the failure of the initial coalition talks, both the FDP and Greens joined the opposition. For modeling purposes, voters of both parties are considered treated, even after FDP and Greens are no longer part of the coalition discussions. This is important because in the framework proposed by Callaway and Sant'Anna (2021) for event study regression, once units are treated they remain treated after the event. Furthermore, for the visualization of the group-time average treatment effect this assumption has no implication, as the expectation is that these voters will exhibit different levels compared to SPD voters after the Social Democrats joined the coalition (2).

Thirdly, on election day the authorities of the SPD explicitly stated that the party would join the opposition. Therefore, during this initial period citizens assumed that the Social Democrats were not involved in coalition negotiations. Only when the party announced its decision to start coalition talks with the CDU-CSU, in January 2018, could citizens assume that the SPD had entered the government (3).

Lastly, parties clearly stated during the campaign that they would not form a government with Linke or AfD. Moreover, despite evidence that voters' coalition preferences can influence strategic coalition voting, there is no indication that parties explicitly encouraged rental voting or split-ticket strategies based on coalition preferences. Therefore, there is no evidence of treated groups anticipating the treatment (4).

One final point to consider before presenting the results pertains to the time frame. It may be tempting to utilize all available observations of the "Politicians do not care about what people like me think" question in the GESIS (2022) dataset, as the question has been asked every year since 2013. However, the groups were formed without considering whom citizens voted for in the previous election (September 2013). Therefore, we lack information about their voting behavior in the previous election, specifically whether they voted for one of the parties in the previous coalition. Furthermore, it is likely that for most voters, their past electoral behavior influences their present vote choice. Nonetheless, the focus of analysis is primarily on the aftermath of the 2017 Bundestag Elections. If there are any significant differences between the groups prior to the treatment, they should emerge in the event history analysis. I conduct the analysis both by expanding and reducing the time span, and the results exhibit minimal changes.

## 4.3 RESULTS

### 4.3.1 Single Regressions

In Table 20, I present the four regression groups, one for each wave. For each wave, two models are used: Model A, which categorizes groups based on respondents' second vote (party list), and Model B, which indicates whether each group voted for a different party in the first vote (split ticket) or not (straight ticket). By examining these models separately, we can gain insight into both partisan voting (straight tickets) and strategic voting (split tickets). This approach is facilitated by the large group sizes and reliable weights. In Model A regressions, the reference group consists

of voters of the CDU-CSU (formateur voters), while in Model B, the reference group consists of straight voters of the CDU-CSU.

Before proceeding with the analysis, it is important to remember that in Waves I, III, and IV, the responsiveness question is negative (respondents agree that politicians do not care about what ordinary people think), while in Wave II, it is positive (respondents agree that politicians care about what ordinary people think). Additionally, despite some differences in levels of external efficacy among citizens who voted for different parties at the district level, these differences do not appear to have a major impact across all voter groups. Figure 26 illustrates that although there are some variations, they generally align with the overall trend for each group of voters. Therefore, the analysis will primarily focus on the second vote, or party list vote, which is crucial for seat share distributions and party coalition strength.

Wave I serves as the baseline reference, indicating the average perception levels of responsiveness among voter groups prior to the election. The coefficients suggest that there were slight differences between voter groups, but nothing significant among the three groups of interest (Wave I A). In the upper left quadrant of Figure 25, we can observe that the three groups are quite similar, with Social Democrats' voters (58%) slightly more inclined to agree with the statement compared to voters of the CDU-CSU (53%). In all groups, more than 50% of respondents agree with the statement, indicating a moderate level perception of external efficacy overall.

As expected, opposition voters and non-turnout participants tended to agree more with the statement "Politicians don't care about what ordinary people think," indicating lower levels of external efficacy prior to the election. This pattern persists across all waves (disagree in Wave II). Therefore, further discussion of these two groups is not necessary.

*Table 20 – Weighted Logistic Regressions by Wave (N = 3125 by Wave)*

| | I.April 2017 - Politicians do not care about what people like me think (Agree == 1) | | | | II. October 2017 - Politicians care what ordinary people think (Agree == 1) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **A. Party-List Vote** | | **B. Split & Straight Tickets** | | **A. Party-List Vote** | | **B. Split & Straight Tickets** | |
| ***Variables*** | ***Coef.*** | ***SE*** | ***Coef.*** | ***SE*** | ***Coef.*** | ***SE*** | ***Coef.*** | ***SE*** |
| Ìntercept | 0.115 | 0.071 | 0.118 | 0.077 | 0.058 | 0.071 | 0.067 | 0.076 |
| SPD | 0.205 | 0.113 | | | -0.271 * | 0.112 | | |
| FDP/Greens | -0.113 | 0.106 | | | -0.202 | 0.106 | | |
| CDU - Split Ticket | | | -0.016 | 0.204 | | | -0.063 | 0.203 |
| SPD - Straight Ticket | | | 0.21 | 0.124 | | | -0.236 | 0.124 |
| SPD - Split Ticket | | | 0.176 | 0.208 | | | -0.456 * | 0.209 |
| FDP/Greens - Straight Ticket | | | 0.1 | 0.142 | | | -0.371 ** | 0.143 |
| FDP/Greens – Split Ticket | | | -0.290 * | 0.131 | | | -0.083 | 0.131 |
| Oppostion | 1.170 *** | 0.115 | 1.168 *** | 0.118 | -1.148 *** | 0.113 | -1.156 *** | 0.117 |
| No Turnout | 0.901 *** | 0.162 | 0.898 *** | 0.165 | -0.830 *** | 0.157 | -0.839 *** | 0.16 |
| $R^2$ / $R^2$ adjusted | 0.043 / 0.042 | | 0.044 / 0.042 | | 0.033 / 0.032 | | 0.034 / 0.032 | |

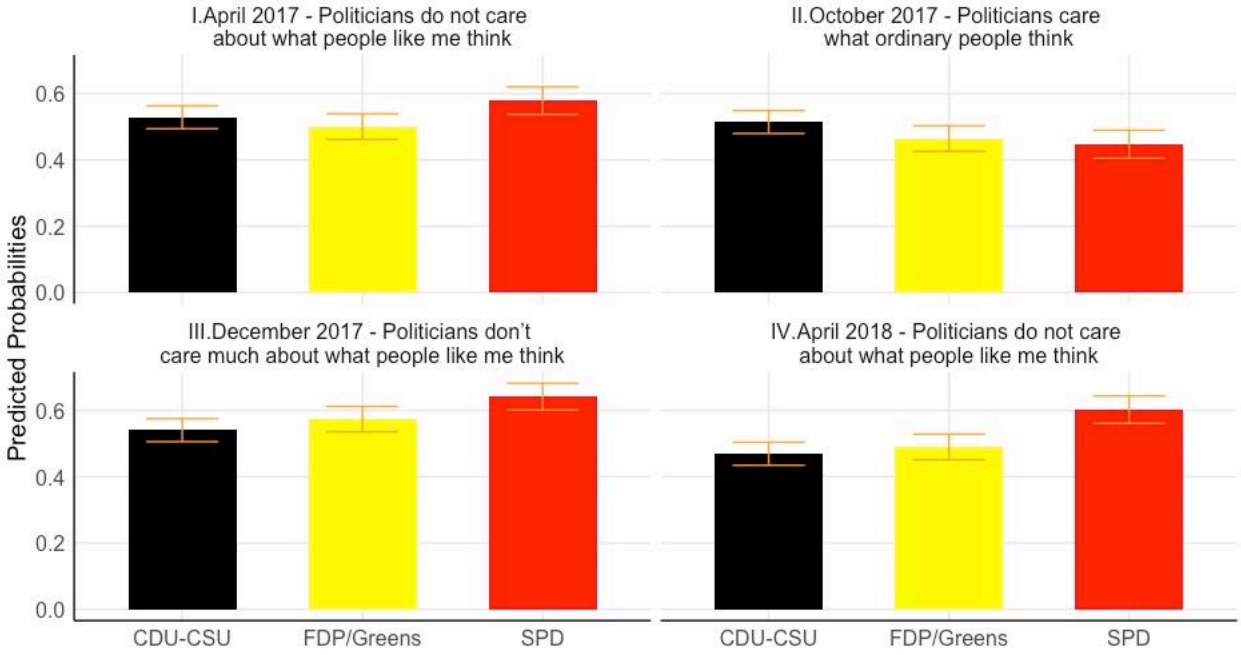
| | III. December 2017 - Politicians don't care much about what people like me think (Agree == 1) | | | | IV. April 2018 - Politicians do not care about what people like me think (Agree == 1) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **A. Party-List Vote** | | **B. Split & Straight Tickets** | | **A. Party-List Vote** | | **B. Split & Straight Tickets** | |
| ***Variables*** | ***Coef.*** | ***SE*** | ***Coef.*** | ***SE*** | ***Coef.*** | ***SE*** | ***Coef.*** | ***SE*** |
| Ìntercept | 0.163 * | 0.071 | 0.161 * | 0.077 | -0.124 | 0.071 | -0.11 | 0.077 |
| SPD | 0.425 *** | 0.115 | | | 0.543 *** | 0.113 | | |
| FDP/Greens | 0.137 | 0.107 | | | 0.083 | 0.106 | | |
| CDU - Split Ticket | | | 0.015 | 0.204 | | | -0.093 | 0.203 |
| SPD - Straight Ticket | | | 0.482 *** | 0.128 | | | 0.459 *** | 0.125 |
| SPD - Split Ticket | | | 0.216 | 0.209 | | | 0.818 *** | 0.218 |
| FDP/Greens - Straight Ticket | | | 0.171 | 0.143 | | | 0.131 | 0.141 |
| FDP/Greens – Split Ticket | | | 0.113 | 0.131 | | | 0.02 | 0.131 |
| Oppostion | 1.696 *** | 0.131 | 1.698 *** | 0.134 | 1.327 *** | 0.114 | 1.314 *** | 0.118 |
| No Turnout | 0.985 *** | 0.167 | 0.987 *** | 0.169 | 1.044 *** | 0.161 | 1.031 *** | 0.164 |
| $R^2$ / $R^2$ adjusted | 0.062 / 0.061 | | 0.063 / 0.061 | | 0.048 / 0.047 | | 0.049 / 0.046 | |

** p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001*

Source: Own work, 2023

Wave II was conducted just after the election, during the prominence of the Jamaica Coalition and after the SPD's decision to join the opposition after experiencing a significant electoral defeat. It is difficult to determine whether the lower average level of external efficacy among SPD voters in Wave II was influenced by the defeat or the decision to join the opposition, which would classify them as losing voters. Wave II Model A indeed shows lower levels of external efficacy among SPD voters, approximately 6 p.p. lower than CDU-CSU voters and 2 p.p. lower than FDP/Greens' voters, which is very close (45% of SPD voters). Moreover, in comparison to Wave I, after the election, more SPD voters think that politicians care about what people think than before (42% before and 45% after). Therefore, after the election, SPD voters do not display average levels of external efficacy comparable to losing voters; they are closer to voters of parties involved in coalition talks, even showing an increase in external efficacy if compared to what they thought before the election. The average proportions of CDU-CSU voters that agree with statements in Wave I and Wave II are quite similar, which may initially seem surprising considering the reversal of external efficacy. However, both groups hover at around 50% agreement (51.5% in Wave II), which explains the similarity in figures. What initially challenges expectations is the finding that FDP/Greens' voters exhibit relatively high levels of external efficacy. Approximately 46.4% of voters from the first coalition agree with the statement "Politicians care what ordinary people think," indicating a slight decrease (3.6 p.p.) in those who disagree with the statement from Wave I. The impact of the election and the commencement of coalition talks do not appear to have had a major negative effect on the perception of external efficacy. The results can be checked in the upper right graph in Figure 25.

*Figure 25 – Logistic Regressions (Agree == 1; N = 3125)*

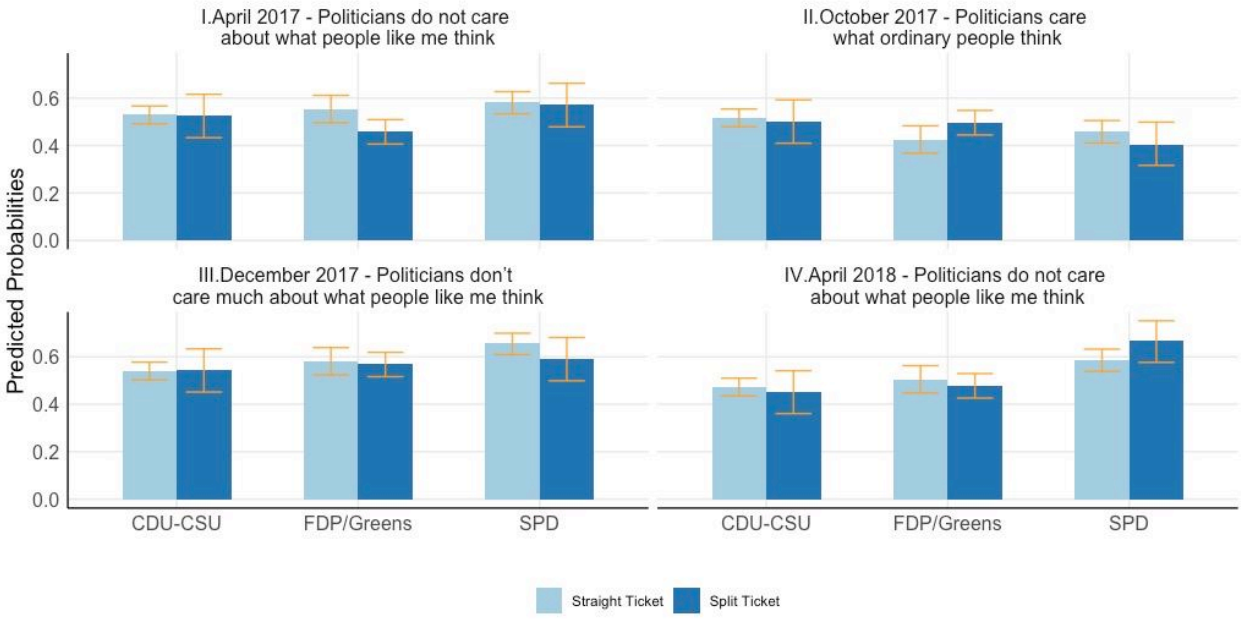



Source: GESIS (2022)

Wave III presents more interesting findings. Following the failure of the Jamaica Coalition, there was a period of uncertainty regarding the next steps for government formation and the parties that would be involved. SPD leaders were given authorization to initiate exploratory talks with CDU-CSU delegates but were not yet authorized for coalition talks. This combination of prolonged coalition negotiations and unpredictability about the future government may have contributed to a decrease in the average levels of external efficacy among all groups. Table 20 illustrates that over 50% of CDU-CSU voters (54%) agree with the statement "Politicians don't care much about what people like me think," marking the lowest result for formateur party voters in the analysis thus far. The same trend applies to voters of the first coalition parties (57.4%) and SPD voters (64.3%). The lower left quadrant in Figure 25 clearly shows that Social Democrats' voters display higher levels of agreement with the statement compared to other voter groups. In terms of variations among those who disagree with the statement from the previous wave, FDP/Greens voters experience an increase of 3.8 p.p., CDU-CSU voters an increase of 5.5 p.p., and SPD voters an increase of 8.9 p.p.. Therefore, the failure of the Jamaica Coalition appears to have had relatively minor effects on voters of FDP/Greens as compared to other groups. Voters of the two largest parties seem to be

more influenced, exhibiting a substantial increase in the number of voters who agree that "politicians do not care about what ordinary people think." Given the multitude of factors at play, it is challenging to isolate the specific drivers behind these results.

*Figure 26 – Logistic Regressions Split and Straight Tickets*
*External Efficacy (Agree == 1) – N = 3125*




Source: GESIS (2022)

The decrease in the perception of responsiveness among SPD voters is indeed intriguing. Despite not being directly involved in coalition talks at that point, it seems that supporters of the Social Democrats may have already sensed the need for their party's involvement to break the deadlock. The discontent with this involvement becomes more evident in Wave IV. In the lower right quadrant of Figure 25, the dissatisfaction of SPD voters can be seen by its contrasting levels in comparison to other voters' groups. After the conclusion of coalition talks and the confirmation of the new cabinet, 47% of CDU-CSU voters and 49% of first coalition voters (who had spent about 5 months in opposition), agree with the statement, indicating a higher perception of system responsiveness. This means that a majority of both CDU-CSU and first coalition's voters disagree with that "Politicians do not care about what people like me think," indicating a higher level of perceived responsiveness from these groups. Specifically, there was a reduction of 3.9 p.p. in the number of SPD voters who disagree with the statement, compared to reductions of 7.1 p.p. for

CDU-CSU voters and 8.5 p.p. for FDP/Greens' voters. Even opposition voters were more positively influenced than SPD voters in comparison to Wave III (from 87% to 77%).

These initial results support the argument and partially confirm the hypotheses. In the case of the first coalition, there was a small decrease in the perception of responsiveness among FDP/Green's voters in Wave II (3.6 percentage points) compared to pre-election levels, and a smaller decrease after the failure of the Jamaica Coalition (3.8 percentage points). However, these decreases were not statistically significant in comparison to the decreases observed in other groups. The perceived variations in external efficacy among FDP/Greens' voters appear to be minor fluctuations rather than significant changes associated with their role as potential coalition partners to the CDU-CSU. These findings do not indicate a significant increase in perceptions of responsiveness among voters of smaller junior cabinet partners as expected in H4, but they do not suggest a major decrease either. These fluctuations in external efficacy may be more influenced by the lengthy duration of coalition talks rather than the specific party composition of the coalition.

The decrease in perception of responsiveness among SPD voters is more easily associated with the party's entry into the cabinet. Despite the electoral defeat, the average external efficacy of SPD voters appears to have improved when the party was in opposition. The failure of the Jamaica Coalition had a negative effect on the voters of all groups, not only on Social Democrats'. However, it is the negative trend observed in the last wave that stands out as markedly different from the movements observed among other voter groups. While there were some smaller and isolated differences in previous waves, they were not statistically significant, but did follow the fluctuations seen in other voter groups. The increase to around 60% of SPD voters agreeing with the statement in the last wave brings the party closer to the levels of opposition parties. This drop in external efficacy among SPD voters after the party joined the government as a junior cabinet partner suggests that these initial findings confirm H5. The subsequent panel analysis will further reinforce these conclusions.

### 4.3.2 Panel Analysis

Table 21 provides a comprehensive analysis of the previous findings and confirms the main results. The coefficients in column A demonstrate the inverse effect on external efficacy. Among the groups of interest, SPD voters present the lowest levels of external efficacy throughout the analysis, approximately 9 p.p. lower than CDU-CSU voters. Voters of the first coalition also exhibit

lower efficacy, but the difference is not statistically significant. Opposition voters and non-turnout citizens consistently show higher levels of external efficacy compared to the three main groups.

In column B, the reference group is CDU-CSU voters before the election (Wave I). As shown, only the inauguration of the cabinet appears to increase the average levels of external efficacy among formateur party's voters (negative effect in Wave IV). In the last wave, less than 50% of CDU-CSU voters agree with the statement "Politicians do not care about people like me think." Voters of the first coalition follow a similar trend, except for the interaction with Wave II. Interestingly, electoral results and the cabinet announcement have a negative impact on the average external efficacy of FDP/Greens' voters, albeit not significantly, in comparison to formateur party's voters.

SPD voters exhibited lower levels of external efficacy before the election, as indicated in column B. The effects of the elections, the first cabinet announcement, and the failure of the Jamaica coalition do not appear to significantly influence the levels of external efficacy among this group. Consistent with the previous analysis, the strongest negative impact is observed in the interaction with Wave IV, showing an increase of 8.3 p.p. on top of an already negative perception. This analysis confirms that it is indeed the coalition announcement and cabinet inauguration that lower the levels of external efficacy among SPD voters.

With the exception of Wave III, opposition voters show similar fluctuations to CDU-CSU voters. It is surprising that in December 2017, frustrations at the failure of the Jamaica Coalition and the delay in cabinet inauguration decreased the perception of responsiveness among these voters. It is important to note that the opposition voter group is mainly composed of voters from Linke and AfD, the two parties perceived as the most extremist that managed to enter the Bundestag (check Figure 19). While the aim of this chapter does not focus on this aspect, it is worth mentioning that many former SPD voters shifted to the AfD in the 2017 election[74]. Linke also attracted disappointed SPD supporters[75]. The attitudes of these voters may be influenced by how mainstream parties lead coalition talks. One possible explanation could be anticipation of a Grand Coalition comeback, but two factors contradict this explanation: 1) SPD voters are not significantly affected in Wave III; 2) there is limited variation in their external efficacy in Wave IV compared to other groups.

[74] "SPD voters turned out to be the third largest group among new AfD voters in 2017", Dostal, 2017, p. 598.
[75] "…the left-wing [of SPD] has either dissolved or entered the Left Party [Linke]", Dostal, 2017, p. 598.

*Table 21 – Linear Panel Regression*[76]
*N = 3125; Observations = 12500*
Dependent Variable: Agree == 1; Disagree == 0
Politicians do not care about what people like me think (reversed in Wave II).

| | **A. All Groups – No Wave Control** | | **B. All Groups – Wave Control** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Variables*** | ***Coef.*** | ***SE*** | ***Coef.*** | ***SE*** |
| (Intercept) | 0.506 *** | 0.008 | 0.529 *** | 0.016 |
| SPD | 0.089 *** | 0.013 | 0.051 * | 0.025 |
| FDP/Greens | 0.019 | 0.012 | -0.028 | 0.024 |
| Opposition | 0.285 *** | 0.012 | 0.255 *** | 0.024 |
| No vote | 0.217 *** | 0.017 | 0.205 *** | 0.034 |
| Wave II | | | -0.043 | 0.023 |
| Wave III | | | 0.012 | 0.023 |
| Wave IV | | | -0.060 ** | 0.023 |
| SPD × Wave II | | | 0.017 | 0.036 |
| SPD × Wave III | | | 0.051 | 0.036 |
| SPD × Wave IV | | | 0.083 * | 0.036 |
| FDP/Greens × Wave II | | | 0.079 * | 0.034 |
| FDP/Greens × Wave III | | | 0.062 | 0.034 |
| FDP/Greens × Wave IV | | | 0.049 | 0.034 |
| Opposition × Wave II | | | 0.008 | 0.034 |
| Opposition × Wave III | | | 0.070 * | 0.034 |
| Opposition × Wave IV | | | 0.045 | 0.034 |
| No Turnout × Wave II | | | -0.007 | 0.048 |
| No Turnout × Wave III | | | 0.013 | 0.048 |
| No Turnout × Wave IV | | | 0.041 | 0.048 |
| $R^2$ / $R^2$ adjusted | 0.059 / 0.058 | | 0.063 / 0.062 | |

** p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001*

Source: Own work, 2023

[76] I use linear regression instead of logistic regressions to get the distributions of voters by wave instead of log-odds.

Lastly, it is important to note the minimal variation in the perception of responsiveness among CDU-CSU voters. The most significant variation from the baseline group occurs in Wave IV, with a negative effect indicating an increase in external efficacy levels after the cabinet inauguration. CDU-CSU voters are barely influenced by electoral results or the failure of the Jamaica Coalition. This limited influence is particularly important for the next step of the analysis. As CDU-CSU voters will serve as the reference group in the next session, which focuses on parties entering the cabinet, it is crucial to highlight the low variation during the process and the limited influence of each wave on the other groups, with the exceptions mentioned here that will be explored further in the next session.

### 4.3.3 Differences-in-Differences

In this section, I will utilize the framework proposed by Callaway & Sant'Anna (2021) to conduct an event history analysis. This framework is designed for difference-in-differences analysis with a pre-post design, where one group is treated at a specific time and another group at a different time. As difference-in-differences models require a control group that is not treated, voters of CDU-CSU will serve as the control group. Although they exhibit high levels of external efficacy compared to other groups, these levels do not vary significantly during the main period of analysis.

Since this is a time-based analysis, the model requires an indication of the treatment moment for each group. As mentioned earlier, voters of the first coalition (FDP and Greens) were treated in October 2017 when the coalition was announced, and voters of the second coalition (SPD) were treated in January 2018 (measured in April 2018). The main objective is to measure the effect of entering the coalition for each group of voters, considering the differences among the groups. The analysis produces group-time average treatment effects, which represent the average impact on each group by wave, using doubly robust estimation methods and considering all waves of the GESIS (2022) survey conducted since 2013.

Regarding the period of analysis, using the entire available data enhances the accuracy of the analysis. However, it is important to note that the treatment is valid only for the period after the 2017 elections. There is limited information about the past voting behavior of these groups. Nonetheless, one advantage of using data from Germany is that, given the strength of the party system, voters of CDU-CSU and SPD in 2017 are highly likely to have voted for their respective parties in previous elections.

The analysis can also produce an isolated event study, which is essential for checking the parallel trend assumption. However, there is a critical issue here: once treated, the groups cannot be untreated. Since the first coalition failed, this assumption is violated, making it challenging to conduct a proper event study analysis. Nevertheless, the analysis can still capture the overall effect of participating in the treatment for each group, which aligns with one of the main objectives of this research.

To facilitate interpretation, respondents' answers have been organized in a way that higher values indicate higher levels of external efficacy. Additionally, since each regression is conducted within each period using fixed effects at each level, there is no need for data harmonization. This is important because the model can capture variations within levels. However, it's worth noting that the model is not specifically designed for ordered data, and linear models are used to obtain the results.

Lastly, it is important to mention that comparisons with other groups, such as the opposition and non-turnout voters, are not relevant in this analysis. There is no significant event that distinguishes untreated opposition voters from winners, and the treatment is specifically related to participation in the coalition government. Therefore, the analysis will focus on the three groups of interest in this study.

In Table 22, I present the results of the analysis, including all available observations of the 2,089 voters of CDU-CSU, FDP, Greens, and SPD in the 2017 Bundestag Elections. This results in a total of 22,105 individual observations. The analysis covers 12 waves, with the first wave conducted in 2014 and serving as the baseline reference. For each group, I have framed the specific moment when they were either announced or confirmed in the cabinet. This moment is considered as the treatment in the parametrization of the model. The results in Table 22 provide insight into the effects of these treatments on the perceived levels of external efficacy for each group.

The estimator used in the analysis is the Average Treatment on the Treated (ATT), which provides an assessment of the average treatment effect for each group and by wave. The results obtained align with the main expectations. However, there is some disappointment as the first group analyzed, voters of FDP and Greens, does not exhibit a significant increase in their levels of external efficacy following the announcement of their participation in the coalition. This finding contradicts the expectations of Hypothesis 4, which predicted a positive effect. For voters of the first coalition, regardless of the specific moment studied, there are no substantial differences

observed in their average levels of external efficacy during the period analyzed. These voters do not experience major variations in their perception of responsiveness.

*Table 22 – Group-Time Average Treatment Effects*
*N = 2,089, Observations = 22,105*

**Dependent Variable:** Politicians do not care about what people like me think (inverted)

| Group | Main Events | Wave | ATT | SE | 95% Confidence | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| FDP/Greens | Wave I Pre-Election (ALLBUS) | 2015 | 0.097 | 0.103 | -0.210 | 0.404 |
| | | 2016 | 0.059 | 0.101 | -0.242 | 0.360 |
| | | 2016.1 | -0.120 | 0.094 | -0.400 | 0.160 |
| | | 2017.1 | 0.096 | 0.076 | -0.131 | 0.323 |
| | | 2017.2 | -0.136 | 0.078 | -0.369 | 0.097 |
| | II 1st Coalition | 2017.3 | -0.054 | 0.043 | -0.182 | 0.074 |
| | Wave III IV 2nd Coalition | 2017.4 | -0.015 | 0.036 | -0.122 | 0.092 |
| | | 2018 | -0.024 | 0.079 | -0.260 | 0.212 |
| | | 2019 | 0.050 | 0.080 | -0.189 | 0.289 |
| | | 2020 | 0.056 | 0.080 | -0.183 | 0.295 |
| | | 2021 | 0.104 | 0.074 | -0.117 | 0.325 |
| SPD | Wave I Pre-Election (ALLBUS) | 2015 | -0.043 | 0.107 | -0.362 | 0.276 |
| | | 2016 | -0.001 | 0.107 | -0.320 | 0.318 |
| | | 2016.1 | 0.244 | 0.105 | -0.069 | 0.557 |
| | | 2017.1 | -0.046 | 0.083 | -0.294 | 0.202 |
| | | 2017.2 | -0.026 | 0.084 | -0.277 | 0.225 |
| | II 1st Coalition | 2017.3 | 0.079 | 0.047 | -0.061 | 0.219 |
| | Wave III | 2017.4 | -0.041 | 0.051 | -0.193 | 0.111 |
| | **IV 2nd Coalition** | **2018 *** | **-0.336** | **0.081** | **-0.578** | **-0.094** |
| | | **2019 *** | **-0.255** | **0.082** | **-0.500** | **-0.010** |
| | | 2020 | -0.196 | 0.085 | -0.450 | 0.058 |
| | | 2021 | -0.066 | 0.075 | -0.290 | 0.158 |

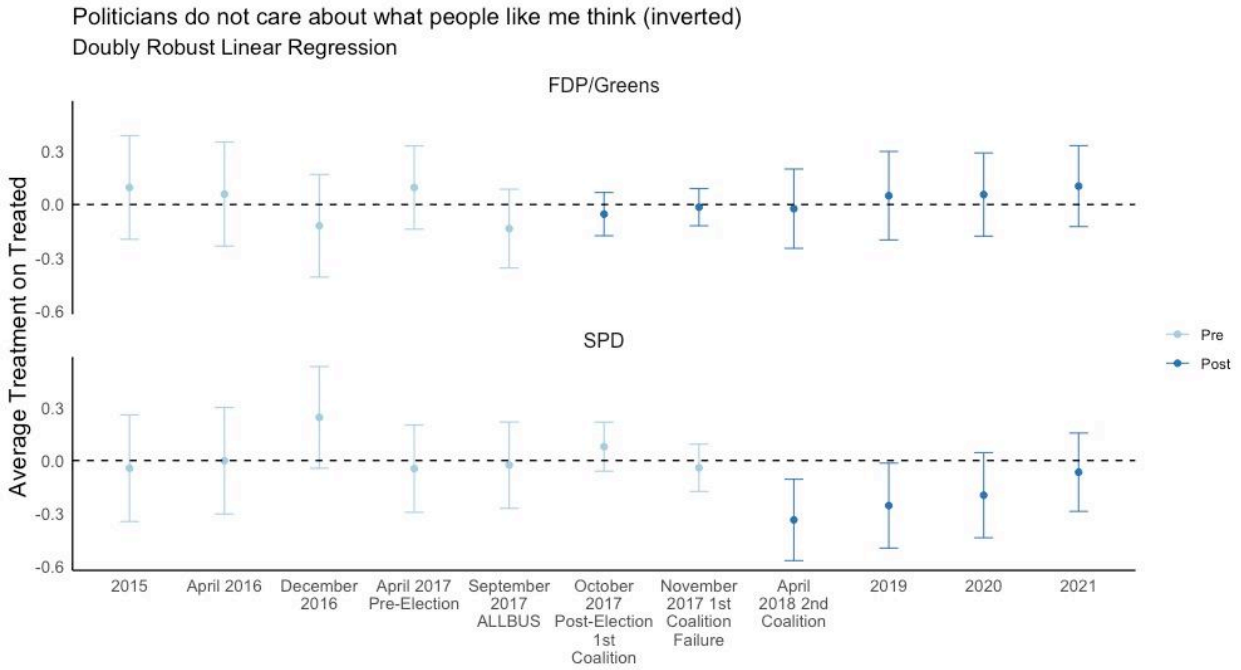
Signif. codes: `*' confidence band does not cover 0
P-value for pre-test of parallel trends assumption: 0.04479
Control Group: Never Treated, Anticipation Periods: 0
Estimation Method: Doubly Robust

Source: Own work (2023), Callaway and Sant'Anna (2021)

In contrast, voters of SPD, who became the junior cabinet partner in the elected government in 2018, display negative levels of external efficacy after the confirmation of their party's participation in the cabinet. These negative levels persist for at least the following year, as observed in the subsequent wave of data collection. In April 2018, the average level of external efficacy among SPD voters is approximately 33% lower than that of CDU-CSU voters, and this difference decreases to about 25% lower in 2019. However, the negative effect seems to gradually diminish in the subsequent waves, potentially influenced by the government's performance or the increased likelihood of SPD's success in the 2021 Bundestag Elections. These trends are visually represented

in Figure 27, which also highlights the main events corresponding to each wave for better visual interpretation.

*Figure 27 – Group Time Average Effects*




Source: GESIS (2022), Callaway & Sant'Anna (2021), own work (2023)

When considering the entire period of analysis and examining the overall average treatment effect on the treated (ATT), it is observed that there is a decrease of approximately 8% in the average levels of external efficacy across all groups combined for having been in the government. This estimate differs from the specific findings for SPD voters, as it encompasses the average levels of voters from the first coalition, which were not significantly different from CDU-CSU voters. In fact, the overall ATT for voters of the first coalition is approximately 1.9% higher than that of formateur party's voters, although this difference is not statistically significant. In contrast, for SPD voters, the overall drop in external efficacy is estimated to be around 23% when considering the entire period of analysis.

## 4.4 DISCUSSION

In the context of the 2017 Bundestag Elections, it is notable that while the election marked a significant change in the German party system with the entry of AfD, it also reinforced the existing governing structure. The main parties, CDU-CSU and SPD remained in power and the coalition agreement reflected some of the key policy pledges of the SPD. Despite this, voters of

the Social Democratic Party (SPD) did not demonstrate levels of responsiveness comparable to winning voters. The quantitative analyses conducted in this study show that SPD voters exhibited higher levels of perceived responsiveness when the party was in opposition and distanced itself from CDU-CSU. And it was not without support that SPD party leaders were involved in coalition talks. Every step had to be approved and discussed in party conventions. The approval of the coalition agreement involved 450,000 party members and had a majority of 66% in favor of the agreement[77]. The whole process was carefully conducted by party leaders in an effort to produce a legitimate document. Yet, it was not enough for the average party voter to perceive that politicians care about what they think.

The effect of compromise perception appears to be compelling. With many German voters having a predefined notion of the center-left based on the SPD's position, and the center-right based on the CDU-CSU union, the merger of these two parties may diminish the comparative leverage that voters once had. Additionally, as the formateur party, regardless of the clauses within the coalition agreement, the perception of which party holds more influence in the cabinet is influenced. According to Bowler et al. (2020), voters tend to have a distorted perception of party influence in the cabinet, particularly when parties are of similar size (Plescia et al, 2022b), leading to a less clear understanding of who influences whom based on party size alone, and the chancellor's party becoming more influential in the perceptions of citizens (Stier et al, 2018).

However, the findings presented in this analysis suggest that over time, the initial differences in perception of responsiveness between voters of the SPD and CDU-CSU seem to fade. This aligns with the notion put forth by Davis (2017) that the winner-loser gap tends to fade with time after the election. In this case, voters of the SPD have become closer to voters of the CDU-CSU two years after the election [78]. It is worth noting that the current political landscape has also evolved, with the SPD now holding the chancellorship in Germany under Chancellor Olaf Scholz, in a coalition with the Greens and FDP, forming what is commonly referred to as the Traffic Light Coalition.

One intriguing finding was the low variation in external efficacy among voters of the first coalition. Previous expectations suggested that these voters would experience an increase in their average level of external efficacy after the cabinet announcement. However, it appears that the

[77] https://www.dw.com/en/germanys-spd-members-approve-coalition-with-angela-merkels-conservatives/a-42803601, accessed in July 8, 2023.
[78] It is worth mentioning that it was the year of the COVID 19 pandemic.

context played a significant role in shaping the perceptions of these voters. There was not a decrease in the average external efficacy of voters from the Greens and FDP. Instead, we observed a lower level of external efficacy compared to CDU-CSU voters, who were the formateur party and had the highest level of external efficacy throughout the entire process, as indicated by the panel analysis. Neither the coalition announcement nor the failure of the Jamaica Coalition seemed to have a major influence on the external efficacy of these voters. This stands in contrast to the significant drop in external efficacy identified among voters of the SPD following the cabinet inauguration.

The findings presented in this chapter provide valuable and detailed insight into the factors that shape perceptions of responsiveness and add to the findings in the previous chapter. It is clear that electoral results alone are not enough to determine individuals' levels of external efficacy, particularly for voters of the winning majority. The composition of the cabinet and the parties in power have a significant impact on these perceptions, as demonstrated through the panel analysis. Therefore, future studies examining the attitudes associated with the winner-loser gap should consider the dynamics of coalition talks and agreements. By incorporating these additional factors, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of how perceptions of responsiveness are influenced in political contexts.

It is essential to acknowledge the limitations of the study. One significant limitation is the lack of information regarding voters' choices at the constituency level. Without this knowledge, we must interpret the findings with caution, as voting strategies such as rental voting and splitting tickets could potentially impact individuals' perceptions of responsiveness. These strategies are complex and challenging to incorporate accurately into studies (Saalfeld, 2005; Gschwend et al., 2016), but they likely play a role in shaping voters' perceptions. Future research should aim to explore these voting strategies in more detail to gain a deeper understanding of their influence on perceptions of responsiveness.

Another important limitation to consider is the difference in wording in the survey questions used. This introduces some degree of uncertainty and caution is required when interpreting the findings. In the first two studies, an "Agree-disagree" dichotomous perspective was employed as a solution, despite potential confusion in the analysis, as it was deemed the most careful approach. In the last study the use of fixed effects helped to partially address this issue.

In the next chapter, I will thoroughly discuss all the findings, and propose a mechanism that appears to be driving the perceptions of voters of junior cabinet parties.

## 4.5 APPENDIX

### 4.5.1 Missingness Analysis

In this chapter, similar to Chapter 3, I have employed participants' voting behavior as a filter for sample selection. Conducting the analysis with individual controls is unnecessary, as all waves share the same sample, making the controls constant across waves. Out of the 4,691 participants enrolled in the wave that queried about voting behavior (Wave II), 1,566 were excluded from the analysis for two main reasons. Firstly, around 867 participants informed about their voting behavior in the 2017 Bundestag Election but did not answer one or more of the 4 waves used in the panel analysis. Due to balance concerns, they were excluded from the main analysis. Secondly, 597 participants either refused to disclose their vote or had missing voting data for unknown reasons[79].

To address this issue, I conducted the panel analysis relaxing the voting behavior condition and added a *Missing* group, consisting of participants with no information about their voting behavior. The premise here is that they have a similar behavior to the *No Turnout* group. In Table 23, I combined the results of the panel analysis (Table 21) with the imbalanced sample and the *Missing* group (also imbalanced). For the baseline (main variables with no interactions), most coefficients are quite similar. The most significant difference is observed in the *No Turnout* group, which is most likely associated with the fact that citizens who do not vote tend to be less participative in general. The effect of Wave II is statistically significant and negative, indicating that less voters of the CDU-CSU agree with the statement that "politicians do not care about what people like me think". This increase may be associated with an increase of participation of formateur party's voters after the electoral results.

[79] 102 were excluded because there was no data about who they voted for in the first vote.

*Table 23 – Panel Analysis with Missing Voting Behavior*

Dependent Variable: Agree == 1; Disagree == 0

Politicians do not care about what people like me think (reversed in Wave II).

| | ***Balanced Panel Analysis*** | | ***Imbalanced Panel/Missing*** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Variables*** | ***Coef.*** | ***SE*** | ***Coef.*** | ***SE*** |
| (Intercept) | 0.529 *** | 0.016 | 0.524 *** | 0.015 |
| SPD | 0.051 * | 0.025 | 0.054 * | 0.024 |
| FDP/Greens | -0.028 | 0.024 | -0.034 | 0.023 |
| Opposition | 0.255 *** | 0.024 | 0.242 *** | 0.022 |
| No Turnout | 0.205 *** | 0.034 | 0.157 *** | 0.028 |
| Missing | | | 0.071 ** | 0.026 |
| Wave II | -0.043 | 0.023 | -0.051 * | 0.021 |
| Wave III | 0.012 | 0.023 | 0.018 | 0.022 |
| Wave IV | -0.060 ** | 0.023 | -0.058 ** | 0.022 |
| SPD × Wave II | 0.017 | 0.036 | 0.036 | 0.033 |
| SPD × Wave III | 0.051 | 0.036 | 0.05 | 0.034 |
| SPD × Wave IV | 0.083 * | 0.036 | 0.075 * | 0.034 |
| FDP/Greens × Wave II | 0.079 * | 0.034 | 0.097 ** | 0.032 |
| FDP/Greens × Wave III | 0.062 | 0.034 | 0.06 | 0.032 |
| FDP/Greens × Wave IV | 0.049 | 0.034 | 0.06 | 0.032 |
| Opposition × Wave II | 0.008 | 0.034 | 0.015 | 0.031 |
| Opposition × Wave III | 0.070 * | 0.034 | 0.077 * | 0.032 |
| Opposition × Wave IV | 0.045 | 0.034 | 0.046 | 0.032 |
| No Turnout × Wave II | -0.007 | 0.048 | -0.012 | 0.04 |
| No Turnout × Wave III | 0.013 | 0.048 | 0.035 | 0.041 |
| No Turnout × Wave IV | 0.041 | 0.048 | 0.055 | 0.042 |
| Missing × Wave II | | | 0.099 * | 0.041 |
| Missing × Wave III | | | 0.101 ** | 0.038 |
| Missing × Wave IV | | | 0.086 * | 0.04 |
| Observations | 12500 | | 16230 | |
| $R^2$ / $R^2$ adjusted | 0.064 / 0.062 | | 0.053 / 0.052 | |

Source: Own work, 2023

The results for the *Missing* voting behavior group are the most concerning. Across all waves, participants with no voting information exhibit lower levels of external efficacy compared to the average fluctuation during the period (variations in all waves are relative to CDU-CSU voters). What is even more concerning is that this group shows a more intense increase in the last wave and a stronger increase than SPD voters. Unlike other groups, which follow the decrease of CDU-CSU voters in Wave IV, this group seems to detach from the average, situating itself between the group of winners and possible winners (voters of CDU-CSU, FDP, Greens, and FDP) and losers (opposition voters). This suggests that the Missing group experiences unique dynamics of external efficacy perception.

Although the results are statistically significant, the observed increase from the average fluctuation in Wave II and IV is relatively low, around 4 p.p. in each wave. The most concerning aspect is the significant increase of 10 p.p. in Wave III. This increase might be associated with the observed increase in the *Opposition* group of voters, which is the only group showing an increase in Wave III compared to the others. One possible explanation could be that this group is composed mainly of former voters of the SPD who are showing their disappointment with mainstream parties, particularly after the failure of the Jamaica Coalition.

Given this context, it is plausible that the *Missing* group also includes frustrated former voters of the Social Democrats who are expressing their discontent with the overall political situation after the unsuccessful coalition attempt. While this remains speculative, it highlights the importance of further investigating the dynamics and characteristics of the Missing group to gain a better understanding of their unique external efficacy perception and its underlying reasons.

# 5 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSIONS

In the previous chapters, I have examined the impact of coalition politics on the perception of responsiveness among voters of junior cabinet parties in parliamentary systems. Through the cross-national analysis conducted in Chapter 3, I have observed consistent patterns wherein voters of junior cabinet parties tend to exhibit lower average levels of external efficacy compared to voters of formateur parties, yet higher levels than voters supporting losing parties. Furthermore, the size of the party within the cabinet has significant influence, with a more pronounced increase in external efficacy for smaller parties and a relatively smaller increase for medium-sized parties. Notably, one of the key findings is the role of cabinet announcements in shaping these perceptions, as most citizens are uncertain about which party will join the cabinet until the announcement is made.

Chapter 4 further supported these findings through a case study of the 2017 Bundestag Elections in Germany. It reaffirmed the significance of party size, but interestingly, there was no observed increase in external efficacy among voters of the junior cabinet parties in the first coalition attempt, the Jamaica Coalition, following the cabinet announcement. Instead, voters of the FDP and Greens exhibited similar fluctuations to those of the formateur party, CDU-CSU. However, the three studies conducted in this thesis consistently demonstrated a significant decrease in external efficacy among voters of the SPD after the second cabinet inauguration, specifically the Grand Coalition. These findings contribute to the previous findings by highlighting the importance of citizens perceiving party strength within the cabinet as a determining factor.

Smaller parties often represent specific policy agendas, and their inclusion in the cabinet allows their party label to be associated with the government's actions. This is crucial for voters of smaller parties who want to see their policy priorities implemented or defended by the executive branch. In the context of the German election, even though the Jamaica Coalition failed to materialize, the participation of the Greens in the government would have given the party a platform to influence policy decisions. Similarly, the FDP's strong stance on immigration and refugee policies during the campaign could have been advanced through their participation in the cabinet. The challenge arose from the fact that both the Greens and FDP had taken positions on the refugee crisis, which ultimately contributed to the failure of the Jamaica Coalition.

Larger and medium-sized parties often have to adopt a more moderate and inclusive approach to appeal to a broader range of voters. When these parties enter a coalition as a junior

cabinet party, they often find it challenging to fully advocate for all the policy positions they are known for, especially when the formateur party holds a dominant position. As a result, they may be perceived as compromising on their core principles. The case of the SPD in Germany exemplifies this dynamic. Despite the party's diligent efforts to negotiate a coalition agreement and involve party members in the decision-making process, it was unable to prevent a decrease in the perception of system responsiveness among SPD voters.

One of the main conclusions drawn is that larger parties face greater challenges than smaller parties in avoiding the perception of compromising on their policy agenda. Large parties typically have a diverse range of policy areas that encompass various aspects of daily life, such as pensions, employment, financial rates, and foreign policy. These policies are often complex and require significant cognitive effort from citizens to understand the influence of each party in shaping them. Additionally, the impact of these policies may not be immediately apparent in coalition agreements, which are typically formed shortly after elections when most of the studies discussed here were conducted. Consequently, larger junior cabinet parties must make considerable efforts to distill their complex agenda into a few key policies that can serve as an identifiable label for their activities in government.

Governments that include a formateur party along with niche parties are more likely to be associated with the policy agenda of the smaller parties in the cabinet, for these parties are closely aligned with a specific policy area. This alignment makes it easier for citizens to identify the party label of niche parties within the government and leads them to assume that the large mainstream parties in the cabinet have compromised their positions on that specific agenda. Therefore, in such cases, the perception of compromise is more likely to be attributed to the established parties in the cabinet rather than the other way around.

The mechanism described above suggests that the process operates through the use of coalition heuristics. Citizens react to the movements and positions of parties following the election, and their responses in surveys reflect their spontaneous opinions "|Top of the head" combined with their political predispositions. The status of each party, whether they are in government or in opposition, as well as their position within the cabinet, has a greater influence on voters' attitudes than the statements or manifestos of the parties themselves. Despite parties' efforts to justify their positions, it is more likely that citizens form their opinions based on the composition of the coalition.

Considering the perception of system responsiveness, opposition voters tend to react negatively, anticipating that authorities will not adequately represent their interests. Among voters of the winning majority, there is an overall perception of the system being more responsive, but notable differences exist within this group based on their party affiliation and their perception of parties within the cabinet. Voters of the formateur party, being the party responsible for leading the government formation, do not have to make significant efforts to anticipate that the government will be responsive to their demands. Consequently, they tend to exhibit higher levels of external efficacy compared to voters of other parties within the cabinet. Conversely, voters of small junior cabinet parties, often associated with a specific policy agenda, anticipate that the government will prioritize the policy area their party is attached to. The challenge lies with voters of large and medium-sized junior cabinet parties, as they face difficulties in establishing a strong perception of responsiveness across the broader spectrum of policy areas covered by the government. These parties lack the prominence of the formateur party and do not have a single policy agenda to firmly associate themselves with.

Moreover, one of the key findings is that coalition announcements carry significant weight in shaping citizens' perceptions of responsiveness, comparable to the impact of election outcomes. Through the exploration of variations in perceptions of responsiveness before and after government announcements, it became evident that knowing which party is part of the cabinet and whether voters' choices influenced the formation of coalition governments holds substantial importance for voters. In the case of Germany, it was not only the final coalition inauguration that had a decisive impact on the levels of external efficacy among all voters but also the failure of the first coalition attempt, which caused a decline in the levels of external efficacy of all voters, including among opposition party supporters.

I would like to dedicate the final paragraphs to discussing the limitations of the research conducted and potential avenues for future research based on the findings and the mechanism proposed earlier. Firstly, it is important to acknowledge that all the findings presented here are based on observational data, with efforts made to enhance the inferential framework. The assumption that cabinet announcements are random events has been made in both studies, assuming that most citizens do not have prior knowledge of when they will occur and what will happen afterwards. However, this approach does have limitations. It is possible that some participants may have anticipated the composition of the coalition based on their interest in politics or their

membership to a party involved in the exploratory talks leading up to the announcement. However, coalition talks typically involve only a few party elites and are often shielded from media scrutiny to prevent spillovers and party defections in the event of a failed coalition attempt. It is true that experimental designs could potentially mitigate this concern, but achieving external validity becomes challenging when attempting to combine institutional variations in cabinet compositions.

Secondly, the issue of inaccurate answers poses a significant challenge for studies utilizing survey data. The possibility of citizens providing misleading or untruthful responses due to their party's electoral loss or their party's role as a junior cabinet party can undermine the validity of the results. While efforts have been made to address this issue in each study, it remains a potential concern that could influence the findings. To mitigate this problem, robustness checks have been conducted and documented in the appendices of both chapters to minimize the potential impact of inaccurate responses.

Thirdly, it is important to acknowledge that all observed effects appear to be relatively modest. Further investigation is warranted to explore alternative ways of measuring the variable of interest, namely, perceptions of system responsiveness. It would be valuable to examine how these levels evolve over time in relation to electoral behavior and other contextual factors. By expanding upon these findings and exploring different methodological approaches, a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics and significance of system responsiveness can be achieved.

Considering further applications of these findings, it is important to acknowledge the research design focused primarily on parliamentary systems. As previously mentioned, various studies identify a rise in coalitional presidentialism alongside the increasing fragmentation of party systems (Chaisty et al., 2018). The main difference in the mechanism would be the importance of parties. Presidential systems are characterized by a reduced emphasis on party organization and a greater concentration of power in influential personalities (Samuels & Shugart, 2010, 2014). In such systems, the use of coalition heuristics based on party agendas may not be as applicable. However, it is plausible that a similar mechanism could operate in presidential systems, using coalitional presidentialism heuristics based on the political personalities in power. Activists associated with specific agendas or policy positions within the government cabinet may provide a recognizable label for the government and enhance perceptions of responsiveness among supporters of those agendas. Alternatively, political personalities who are not strongly associated with a particular program or policy and instead focus on dialogue with party leaders within the

legislature or the cabinet, such as party technocrats with strong political astuteness, may struggle to establish a distinct and identifiable presence within the government that resonates with their supporters, if indeed they have any. Exploring these dynamics in presidential systems could provide valuable insight into the mechanisms driving perceptions of responsiveness in different political contexts.

Considering presidentialism in Brazil, there are notable examples of political figures with distinct agendas who have lent their reputation to the government, while others have struggled to do so despite their active involvement behind the scenes of presidential politics. Two recent examples are Marina Silva, an environmental activist and politician who serves as Minister of Environment and Climate Change[80] in President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's cabinet, and Sergio Moro, a former federal judge who gained prominence for his anti-corruption efforts and joined President Jair Messias Bolsonaro's cabinet from 2019 to 2020. In both cases, these individuals worked towards incorporating their agendas into the government, enabling voters aligned with their causes to establish a perceived link of responsiveness with the presidential cabinet. However, figures like Alexandre Padilha, who serves as President Lula's Minister of Institutional Relations, or Ciro Nogueira, who held the position of Chief of Staff of the Presidency under President Bolsonaro, have had limited influence in shaping a specific agenda within their respective presidential cabinets, thus having a limited impact on voters' levels of external efficacy.

There is a significant research agenda to be pursued regarding the role of personalities and parties in shaping the government and influencing the perception of responsiveness. Specifically, it is crucial to delve into the mechanism that establishes the link between voters and their levels of external efficacy. Investigating this mechanism further would be an important next step in advancing our understanding of these dynamics.

[80] She was also Minister of Environment from 2003 to 2008 during the first two terms of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2010).

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