

The collapse of the New Deal coalition

Lane Kenworthy

Spring 2010

Outline

Democratic dominance and decline

Who defected?

Why?

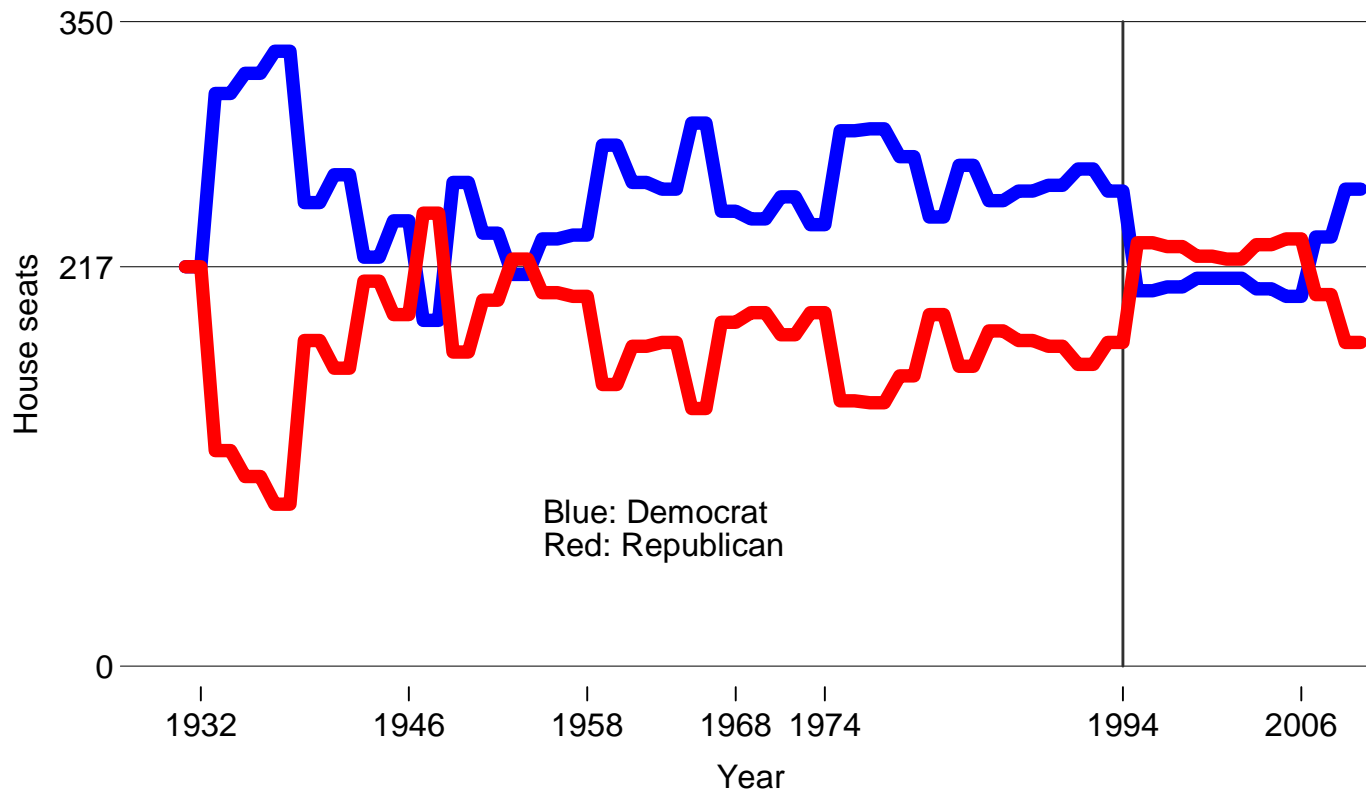
Democratic dominance and decline

Democratic dominance and decline

Beginning in 1932, the Democrats dominated national politics

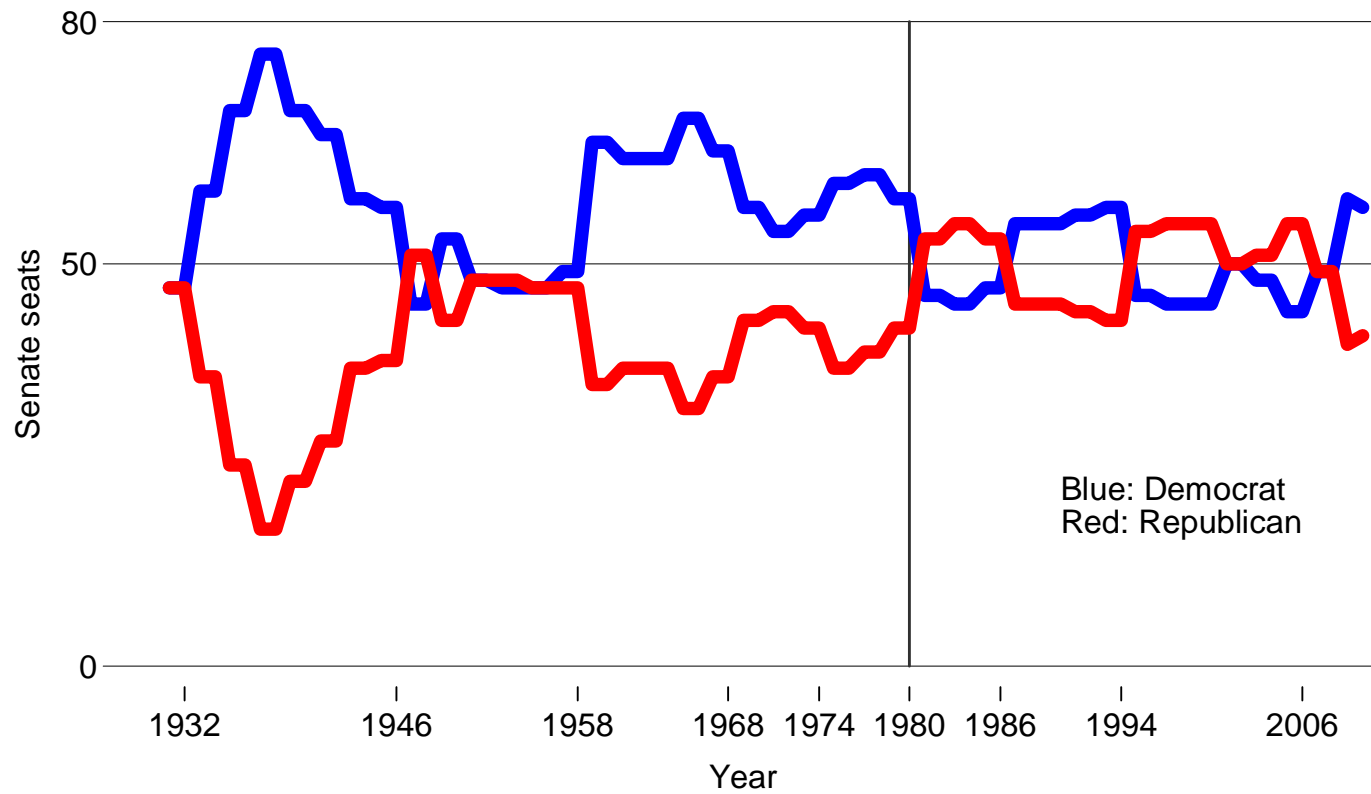
By the 1980s that had ended

House of Representatives



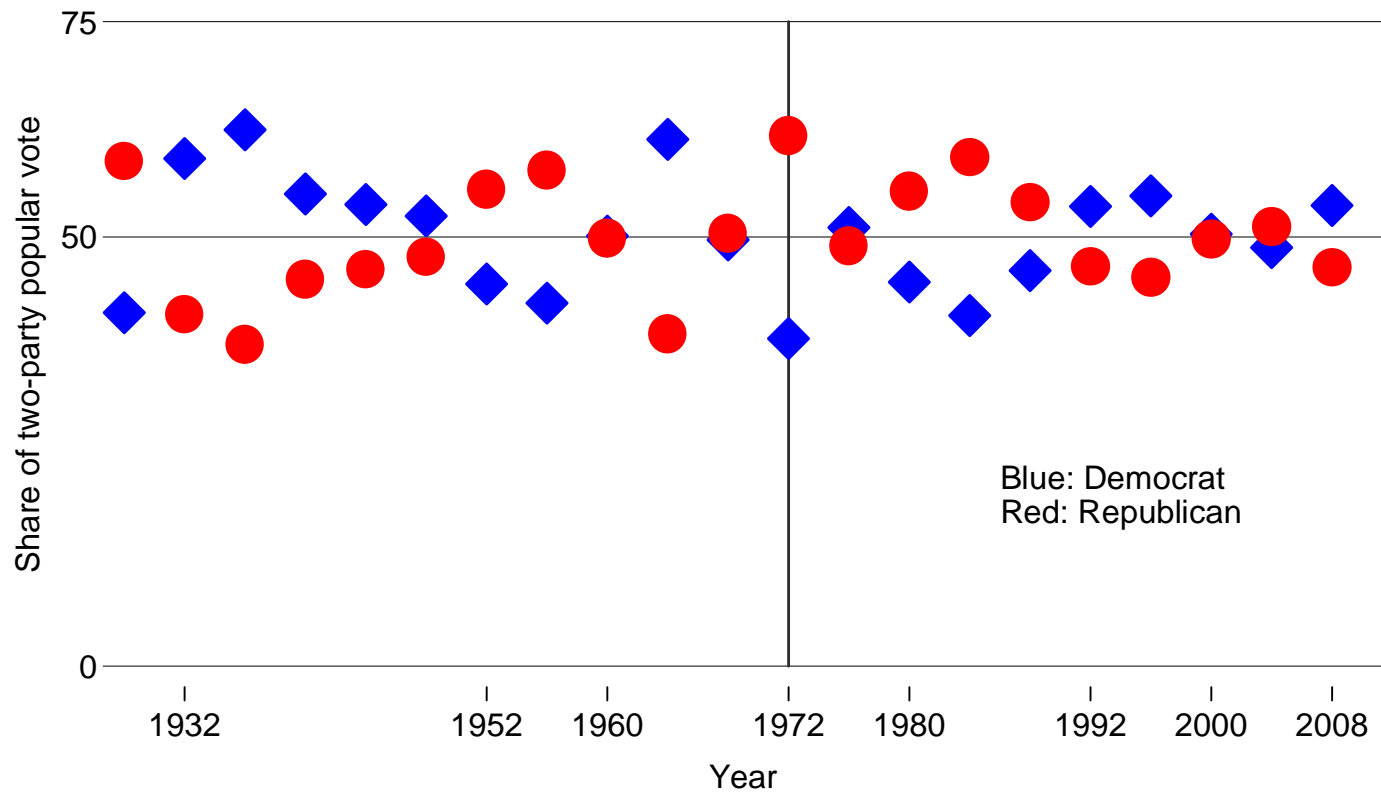
Source: en.wikipedia.com.

Senate



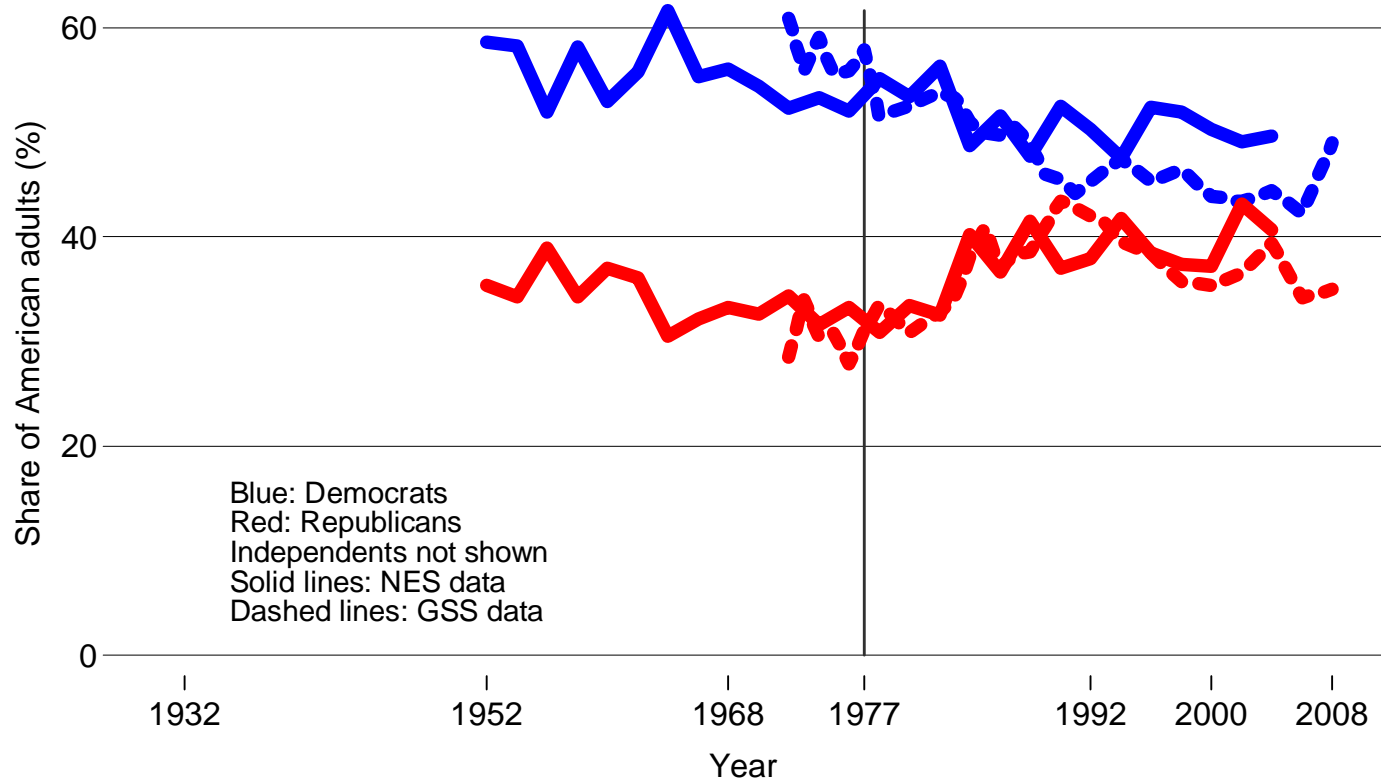
Source: en.wikipedia.com.

Presidency



Source: uspresidentialelections.webs.com.

Party identification



Note: Among the seven response options, I include three for Democrats and three for Republicans; the middle category, "independent," is not shown here.

Source: My calculations from National Election Studies (NES) and General Social Survey (GSS) data, sda.berkeley.edu/archive.htm.

Who defected?

The New Deal coalition

The working class (broadly defined) and poor

Southerners

Who defected?

Affluent and middle-class southern whites

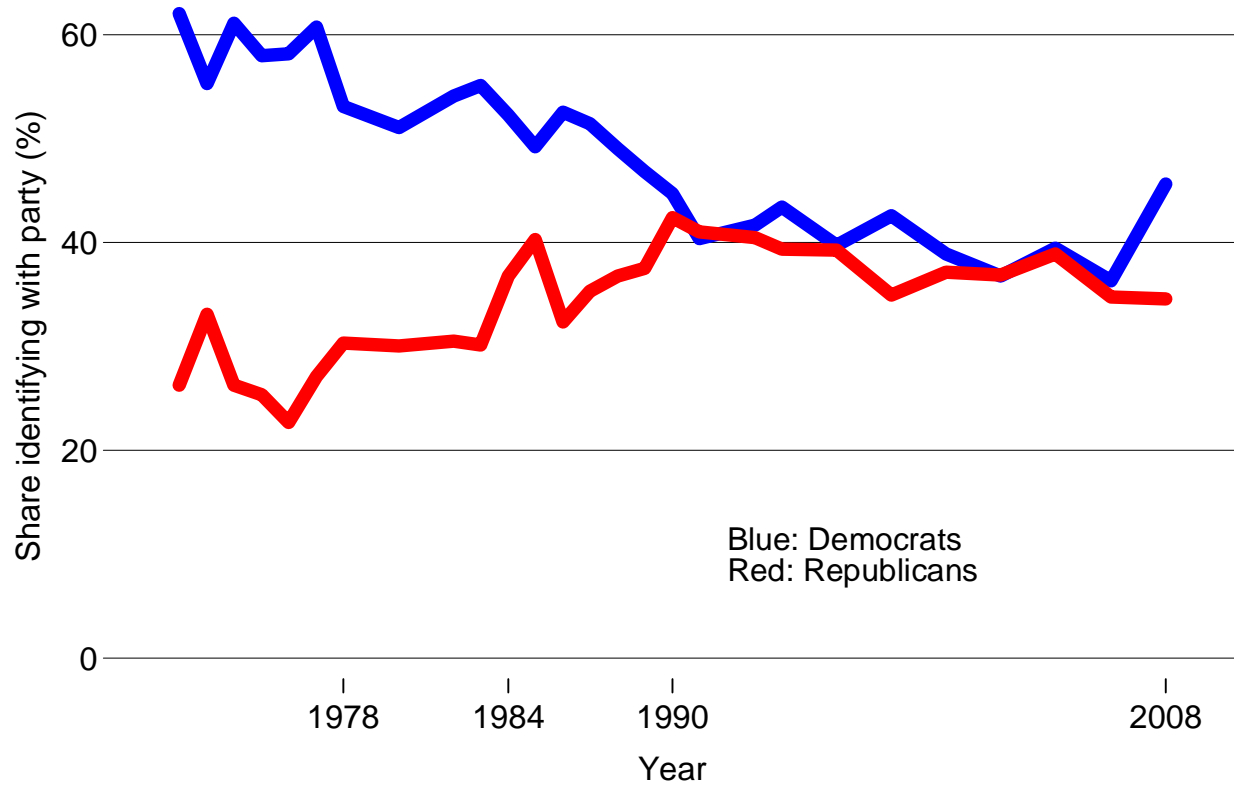
They began to leave the Democrats after passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964

This isn't surprising; it was bound to happen eventually

Working-class whites throughout the country

This is more puzzling

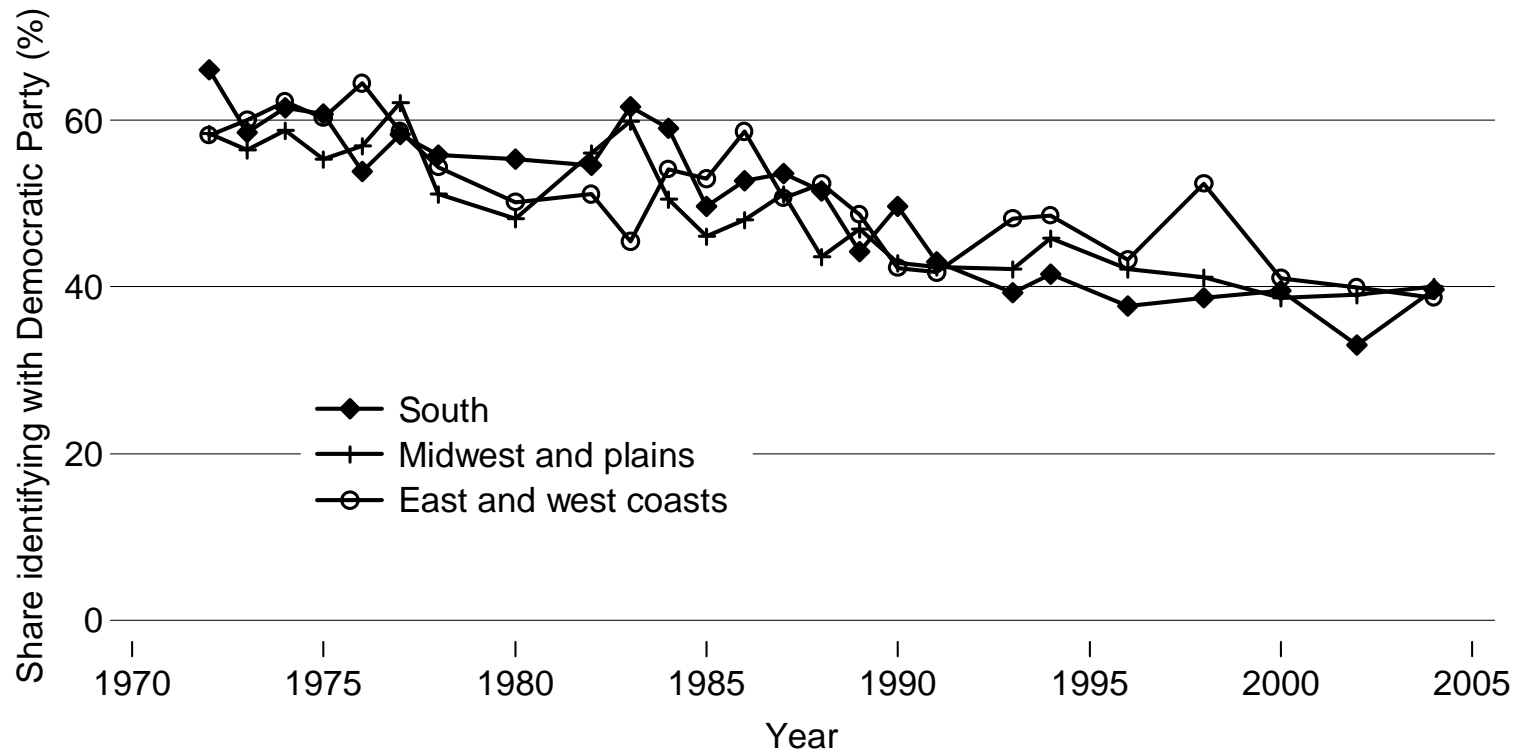
Working-class whites



Note: Whites who self-identify as working class or lower class.

Source: Lane Kenworthy, Sondra Barringer, Daniel Duerr, and Garrett Schneider, "The Democrats and Working-Class Whites," using GSS data.

Working-class whites: not only in the south



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Working-class whites

Why focus on party identification rather than voting?

Party identification is a better indicator of over-time trends; it's less subject to the idiosyncratic features of particular elections

Party identification is a strong predictor of actual voting; in every presidential election since 1952, 70-85% of those identifying with one of the two parties have voted for that party's candidate

Why?

Hypotheses

1. Working-class whites veered right
2. The Democratic party lurched left
3. Social and cultural issues came to the fore
4. The 1973-1983 economic crisis

1. Working-class whites veered right

This can happen in two ways

A shift in the composition of working-class whites in favor of more conservative segments

A shift to the right in the views of working-class whites

The Changing American Mind

How and Why American Public Opinion
Changed between 1960 and 1988

William G. Mayer

Ann Arbor

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN PRESS

1. Working-class whites veered right

The hypothesis: working-class white subgroups less likely to identify Democratic grew in size relative to pro-Democratic subgroups

Religious

Southern

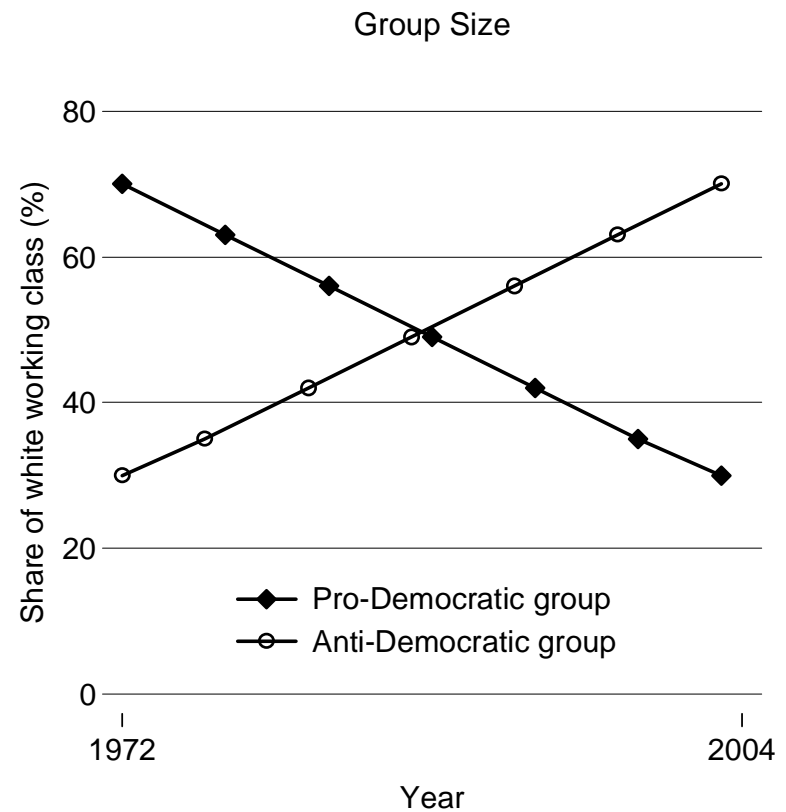
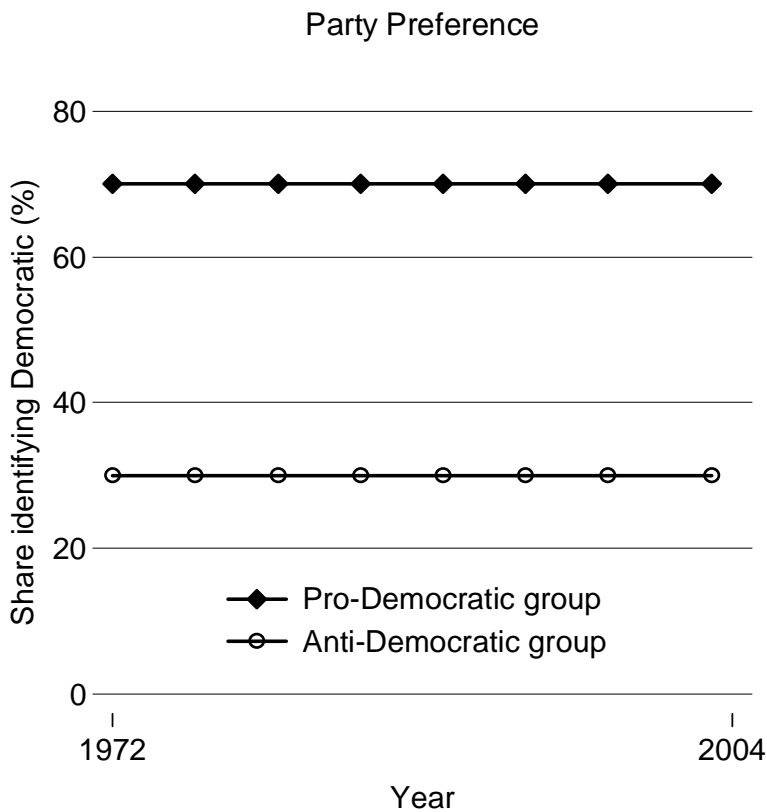
Non-unionized

Affluent

Rural

Male

1. Working-class whites veered right?

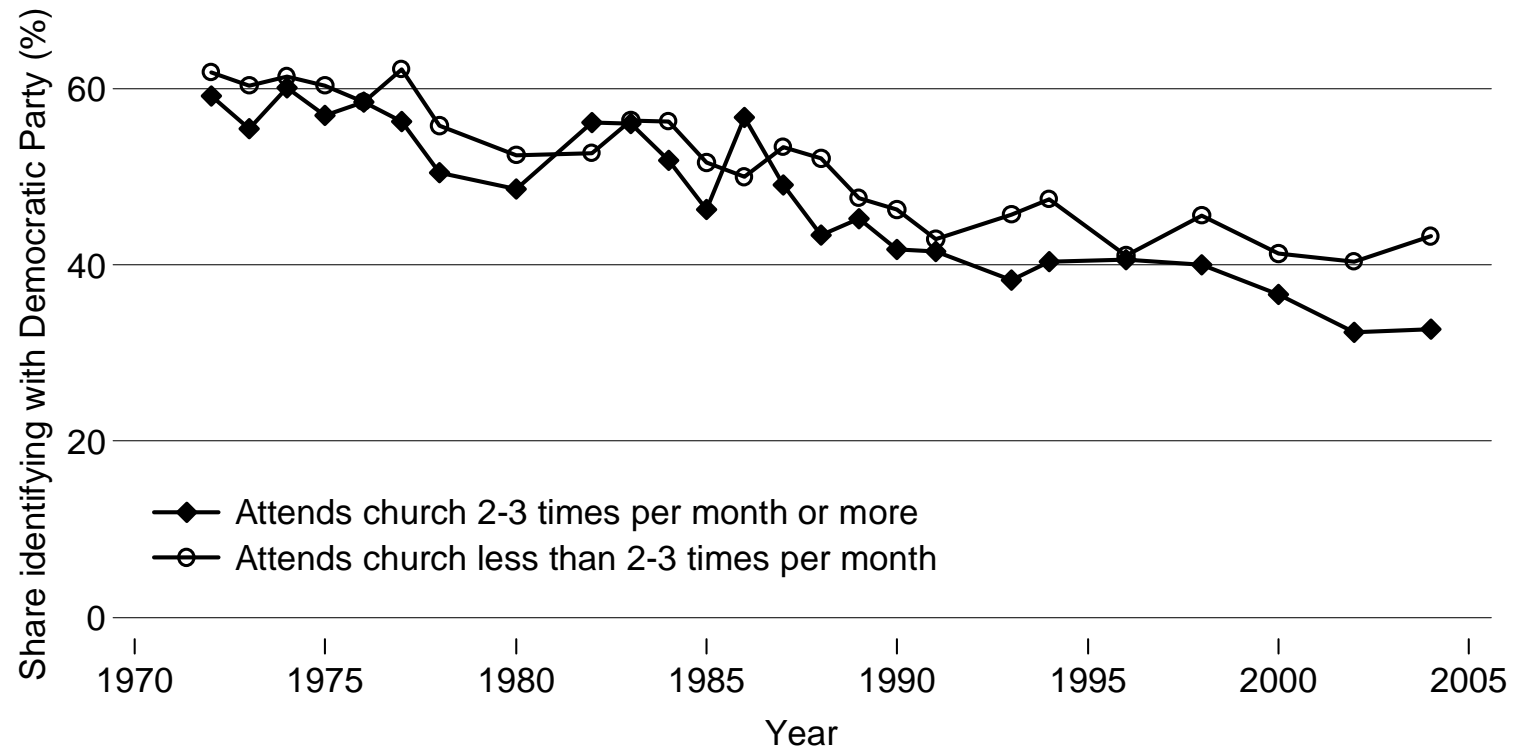


Source: Lane Kenworthy, Sondra Barringer, Daniel Duerr, and Garrett Schneider, "The Democrats and Working-Class Whites."

1. Working-class whites veered right?

The data don't support this hypothesis

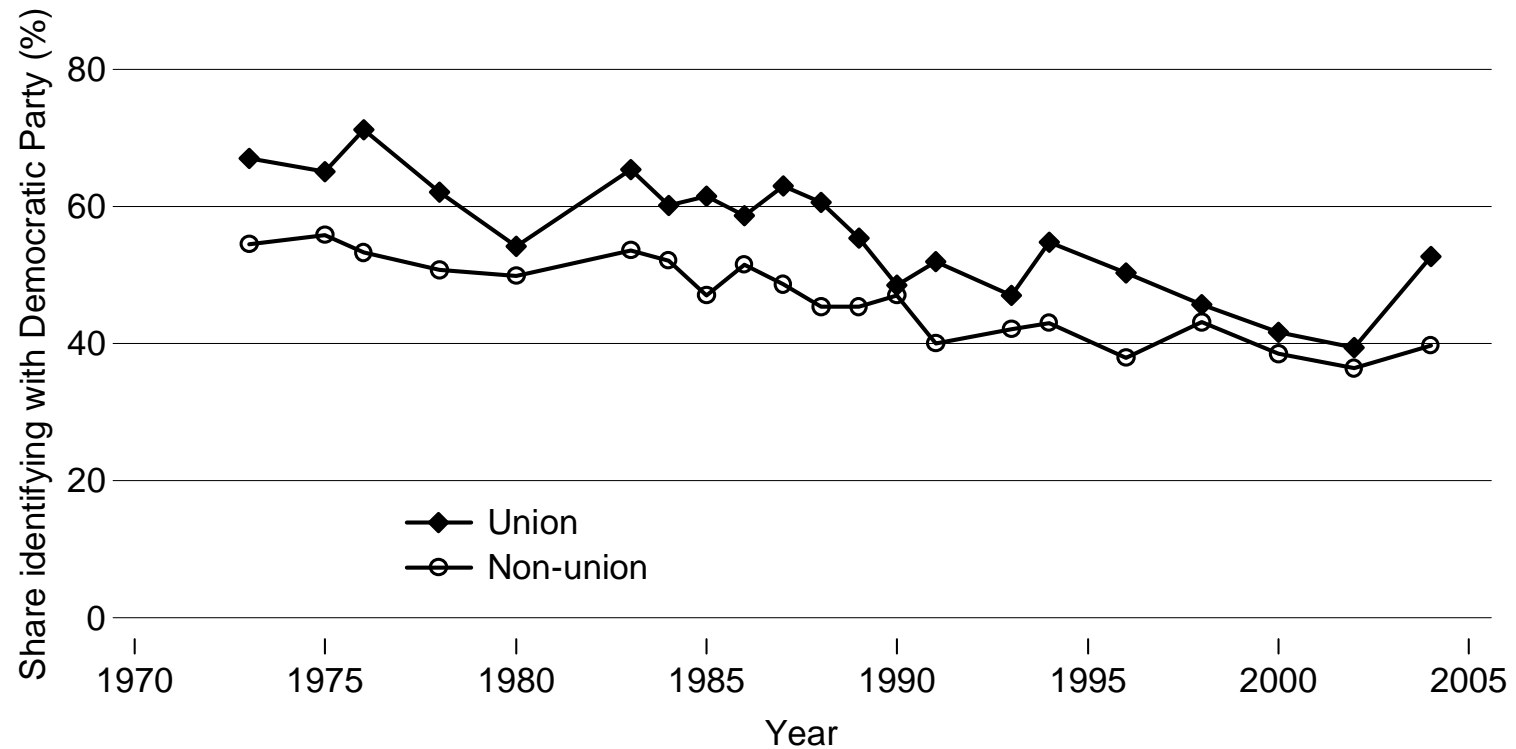
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1. Working-class whites veered right

The hypothesis: a shift in dominant ideas pulled working-class whites to the right

1950s: Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek offered forceful statements in favor of a free-market, limited-government orientation

1960s: prominent Republicans such as Goldwater and Reagan broke with the New Deal

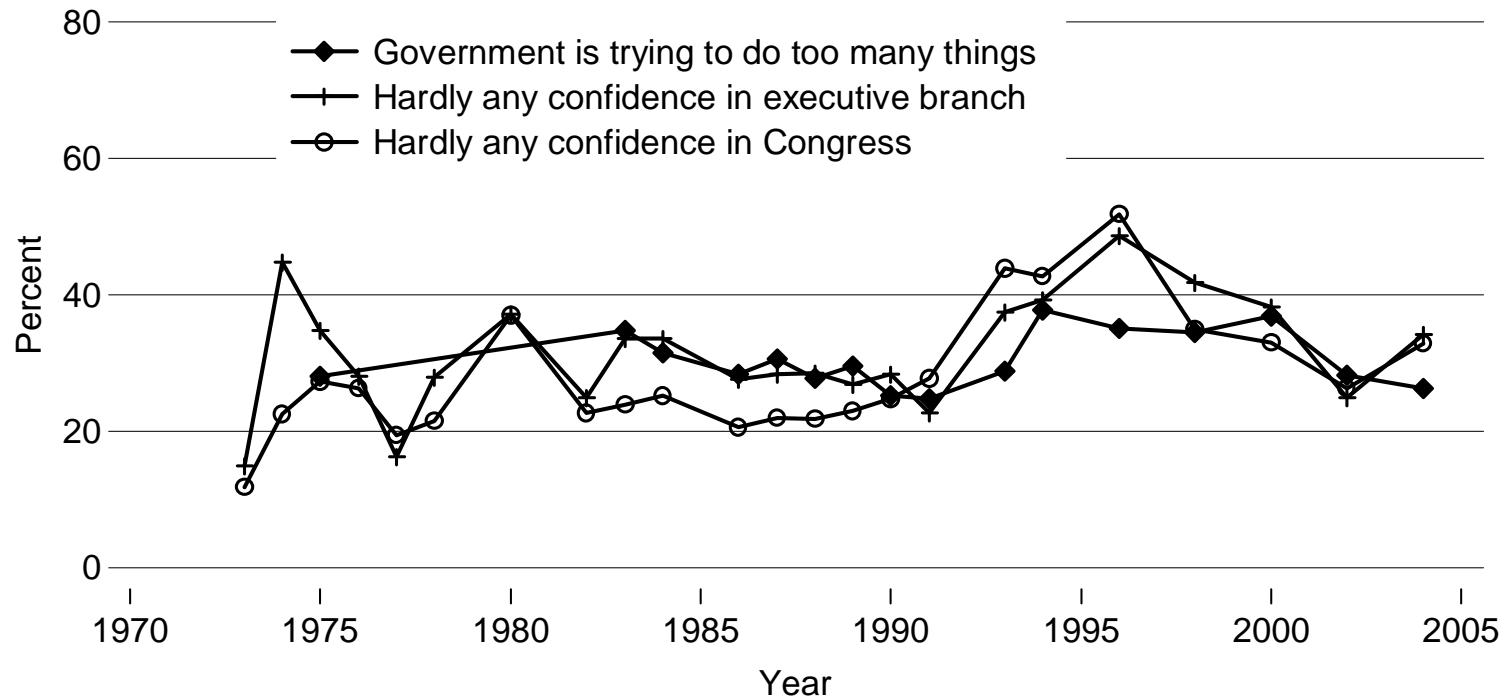
1970s: big business turned against the New Deal and mainstream economics turned away from Keynes

1980s: Thatcher and Reagan's neoliberalism in power

1. Working-class whites veered right?

Little evidence to support this hypothesis either

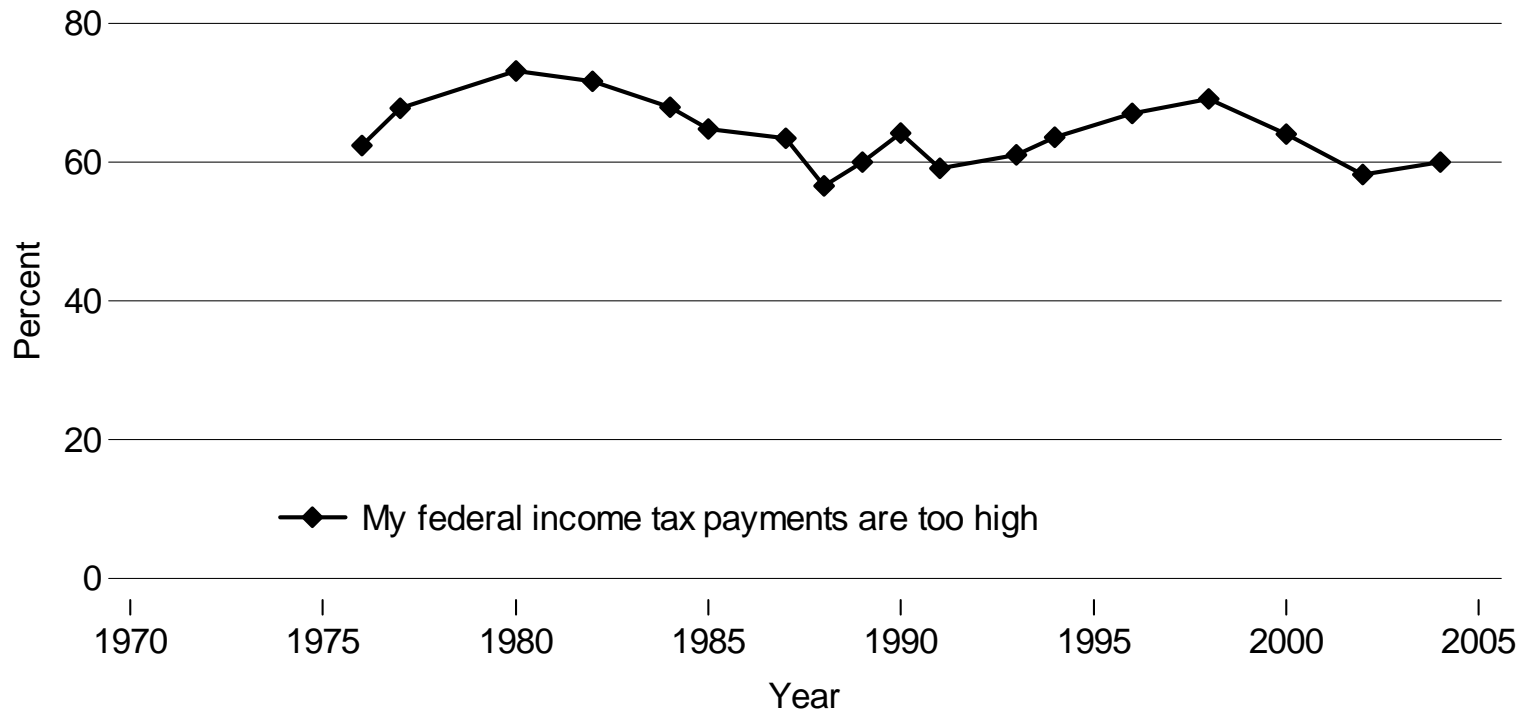
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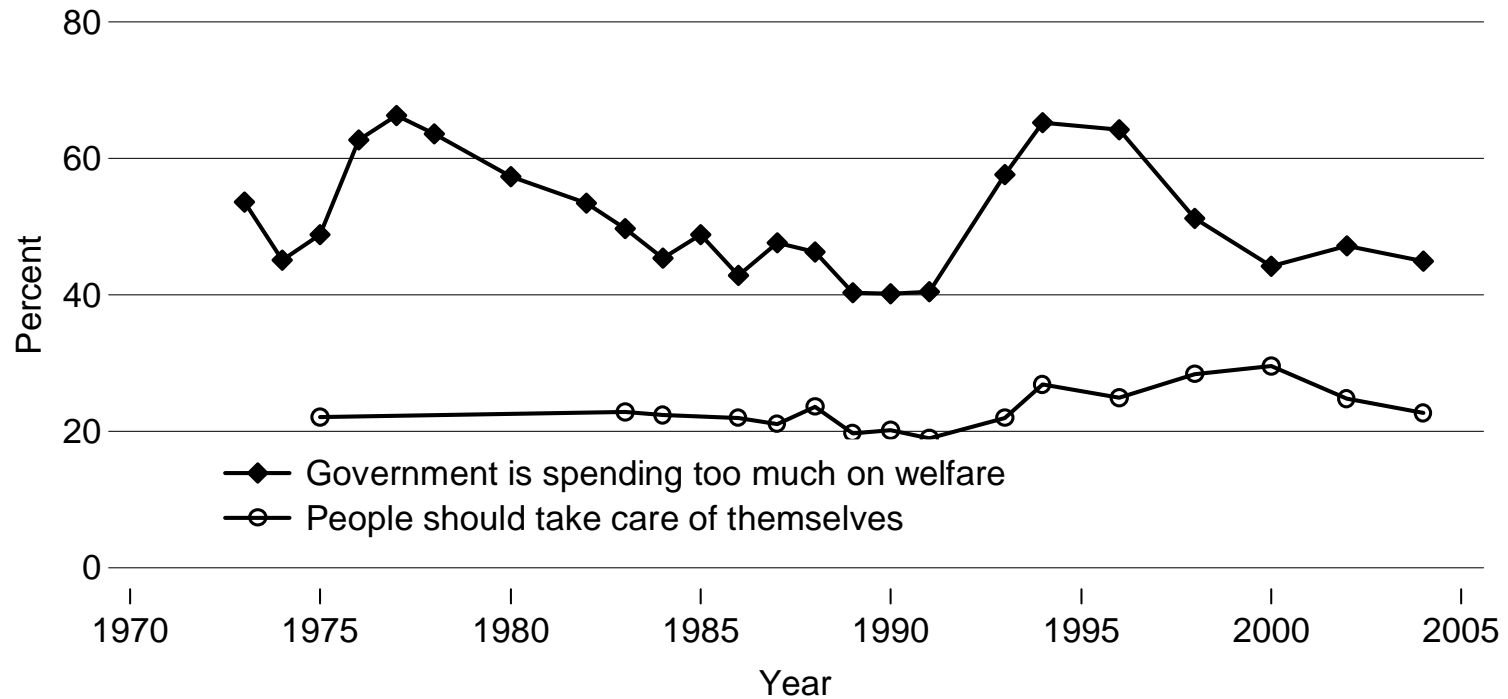
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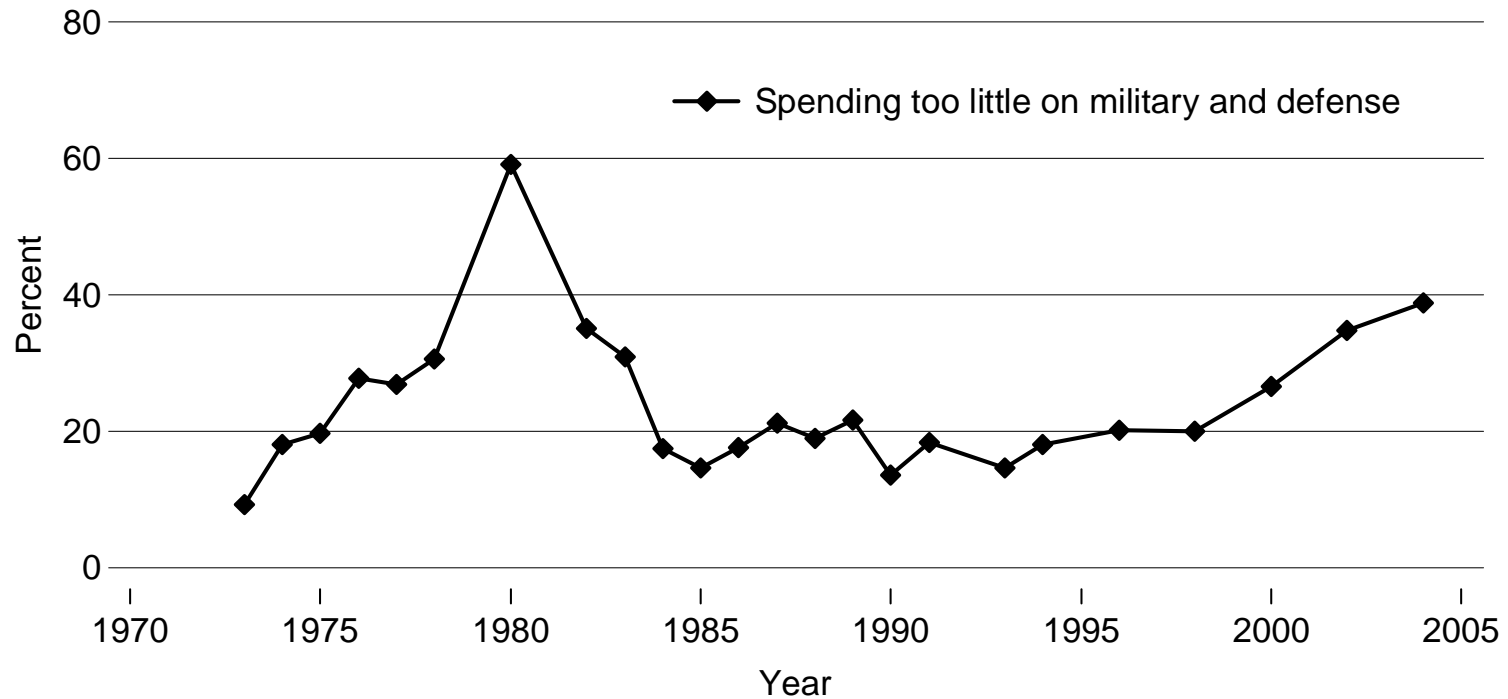
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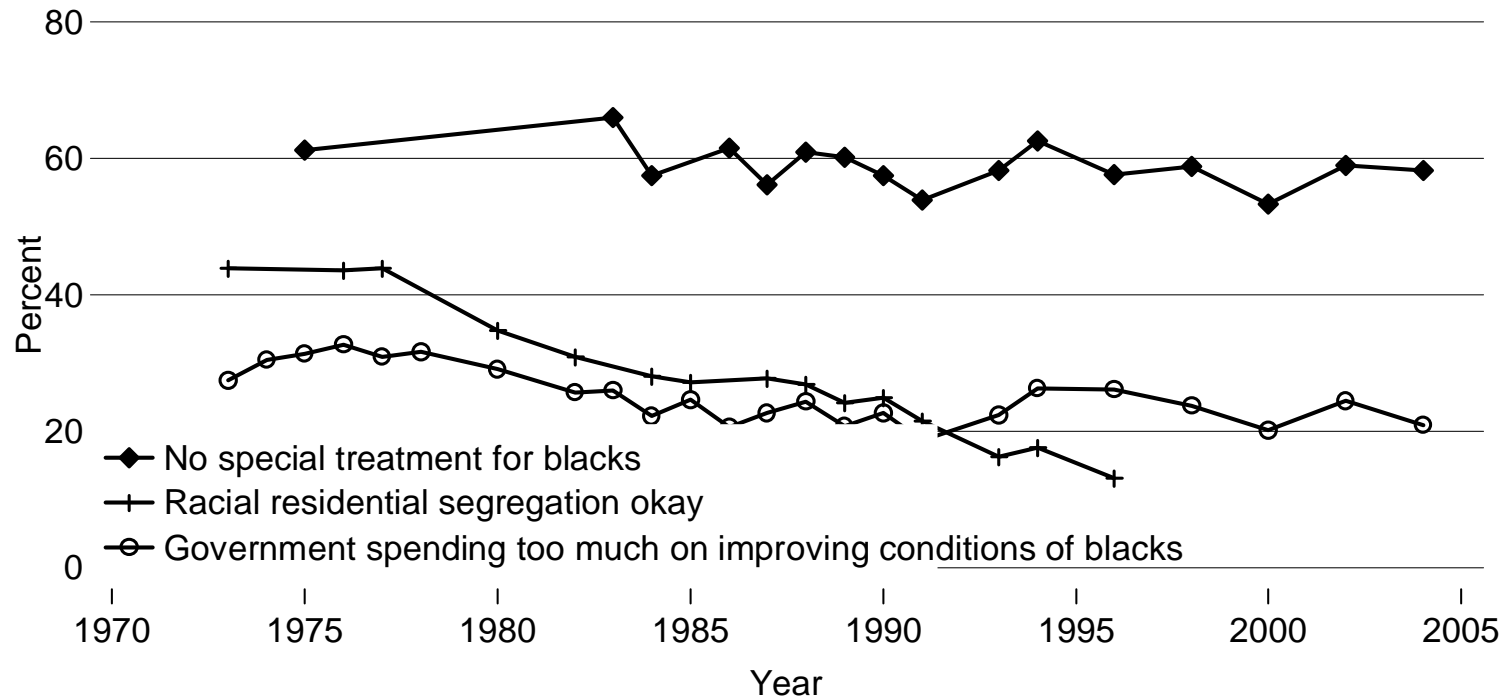
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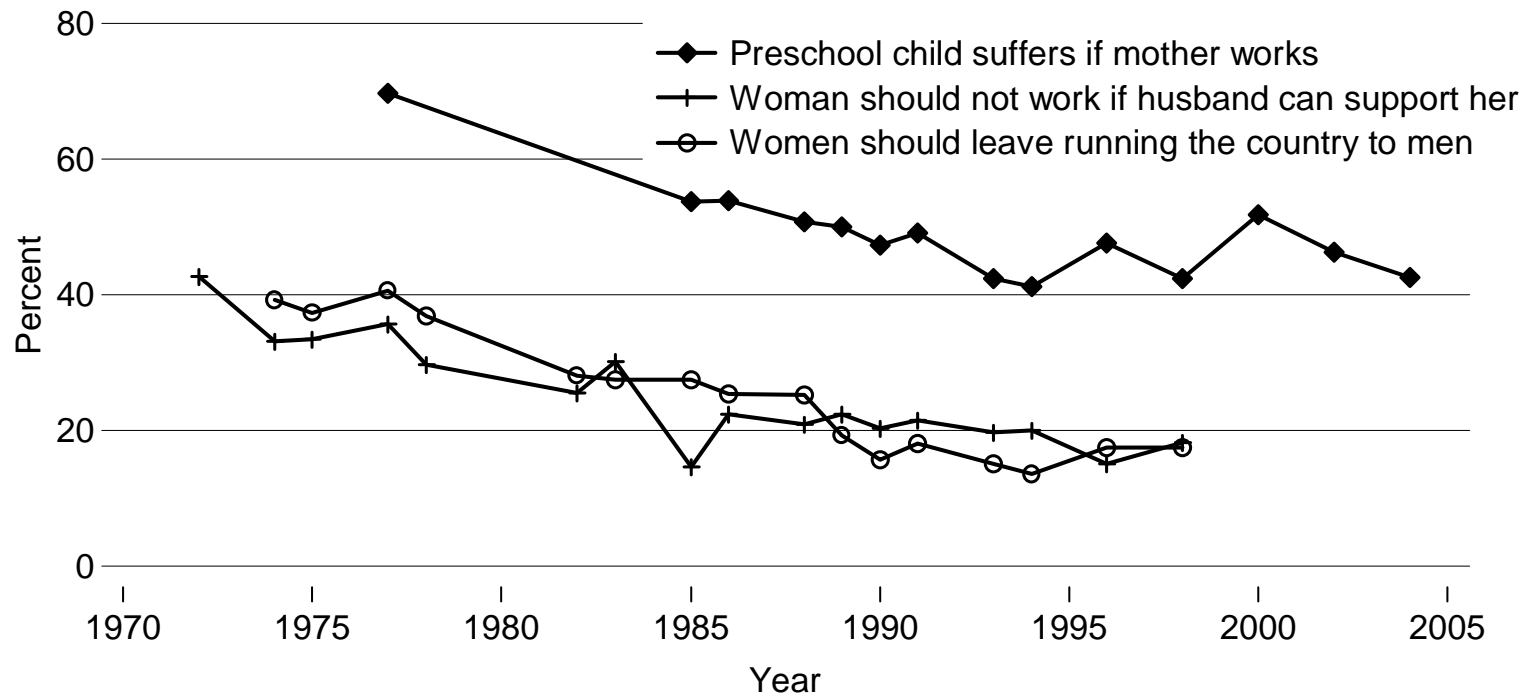
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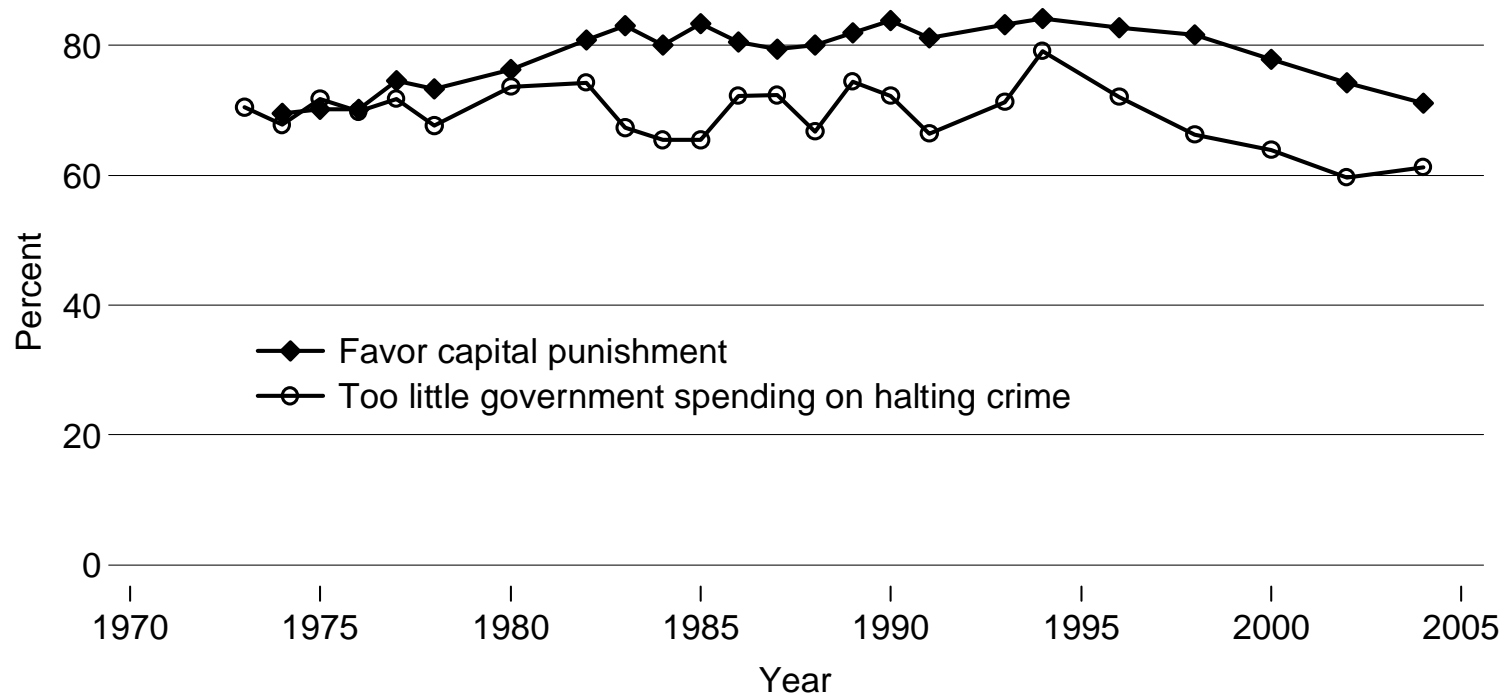
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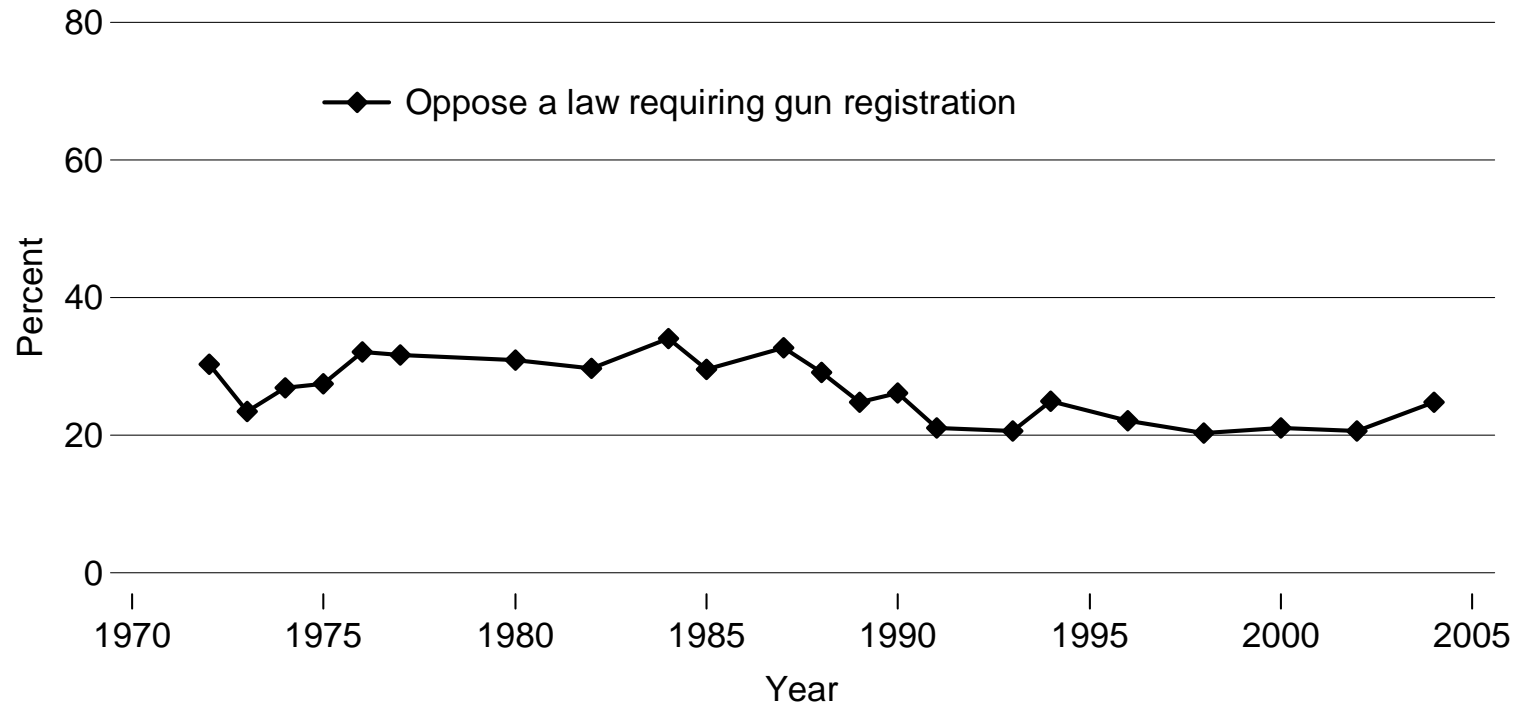
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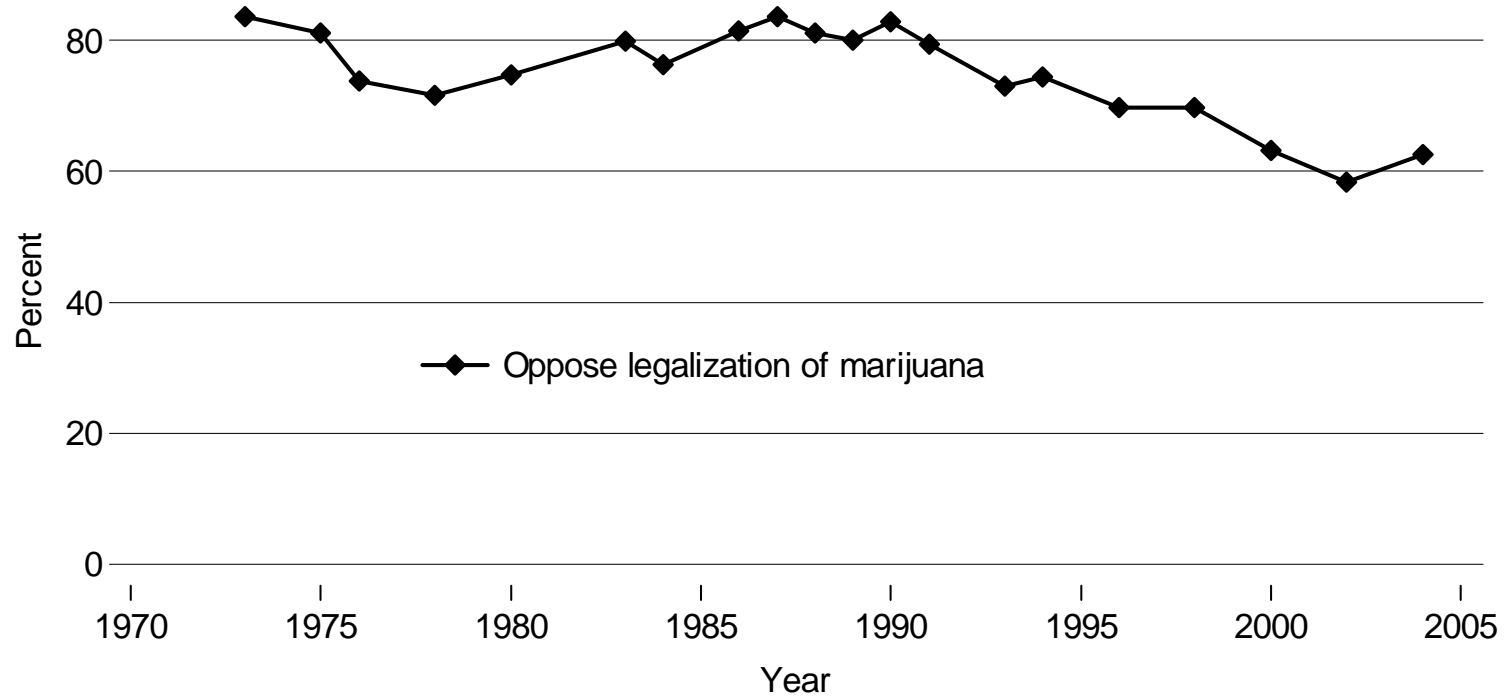
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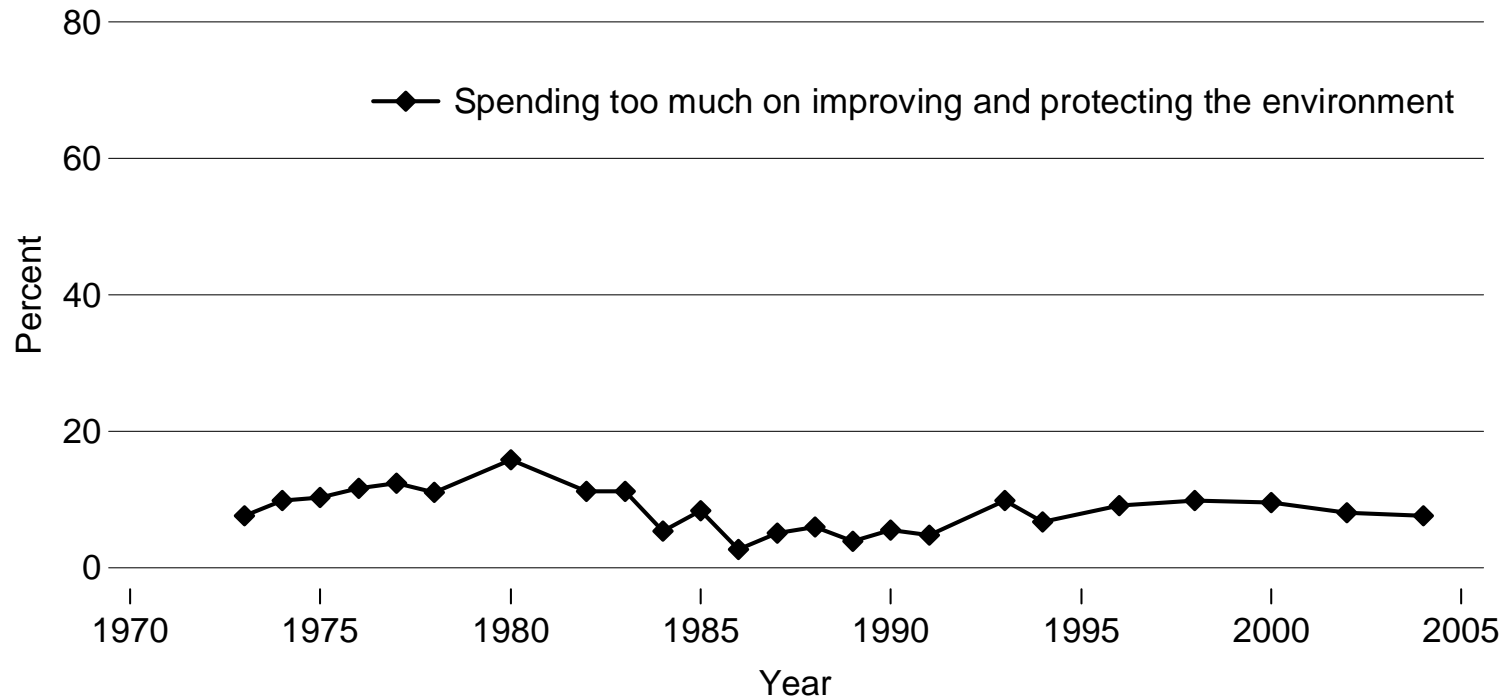
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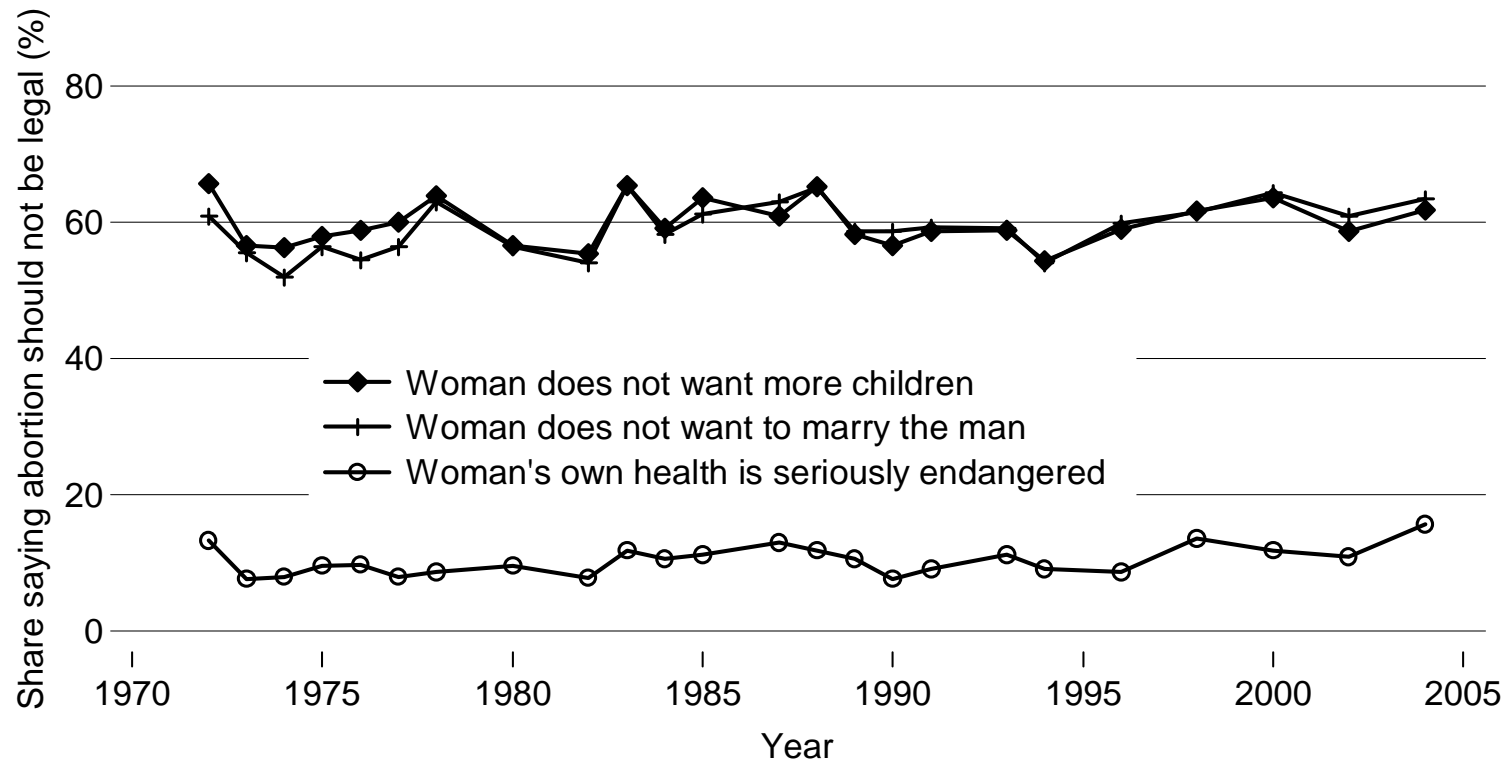
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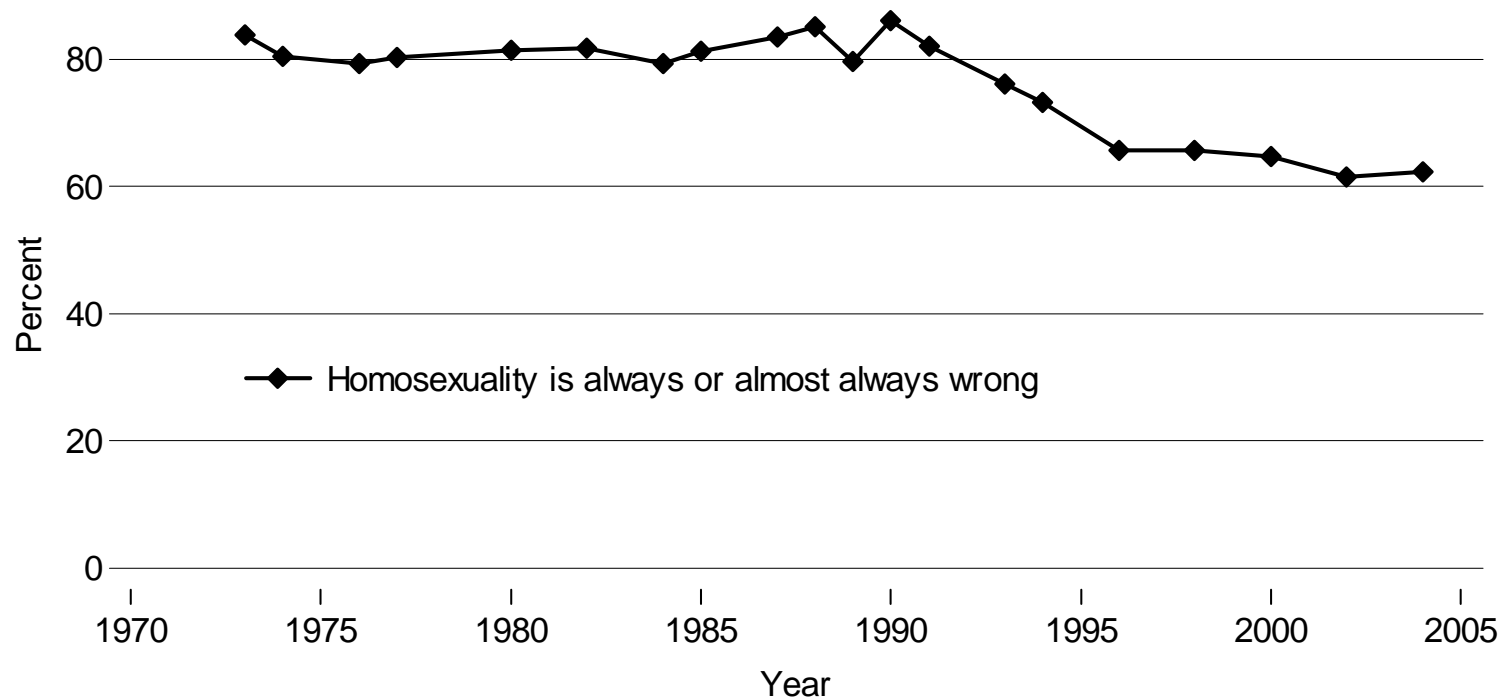
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2. The Democratic party lurched left

Economic and social policy: Johnson's "Great Society" and "War on Poverty," taxes, spending, welfare, regulation

Foreign policy: Vietnam (McGovern), nuclear freeze movement, human rights (Carter)

Race: Civil Rights Act, affirmative action, busing

Crime: rehabilitation, Miranda, capital punishment

Other social and cultural issues: women's liberation, environment, abortion, homosexuality, guns



September 1989

The Politics of Evasion:
Democrats and the Presidency

By

William Galston
University of Maryland

Elaine Ciulla Kamarck
Progressive Policy Institute

ELECTION SPECIAL

TIME

The President-elect
November 3, 1992

MANDATE FOR CHANGE

EXCLUSIVE

What Clinton
Will Do



NATIONAL BESTSELLER

"Easily the best book on the politics of race in recent years."
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The Impact
of Race,
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Taxes on
American
Politics

Chain Reaction

THOMAS BYRNE EDSALL
with MARY D. EDSALL
With a New Afterword



NIXONLAND

THE RISE OF A PRESIDENT
AND THE FRACTURING OF AMERICA

RICK PERLSTEIN

2. The Democratic party lurched left?

Did the party turn left or was it mainly activists in and around the various movements?

Indicators

Presidential candidates

Party platforms

Congressional voting

2. The Democratic party lurched left?

Presidential candidates

Johnson: yes on race and social policy

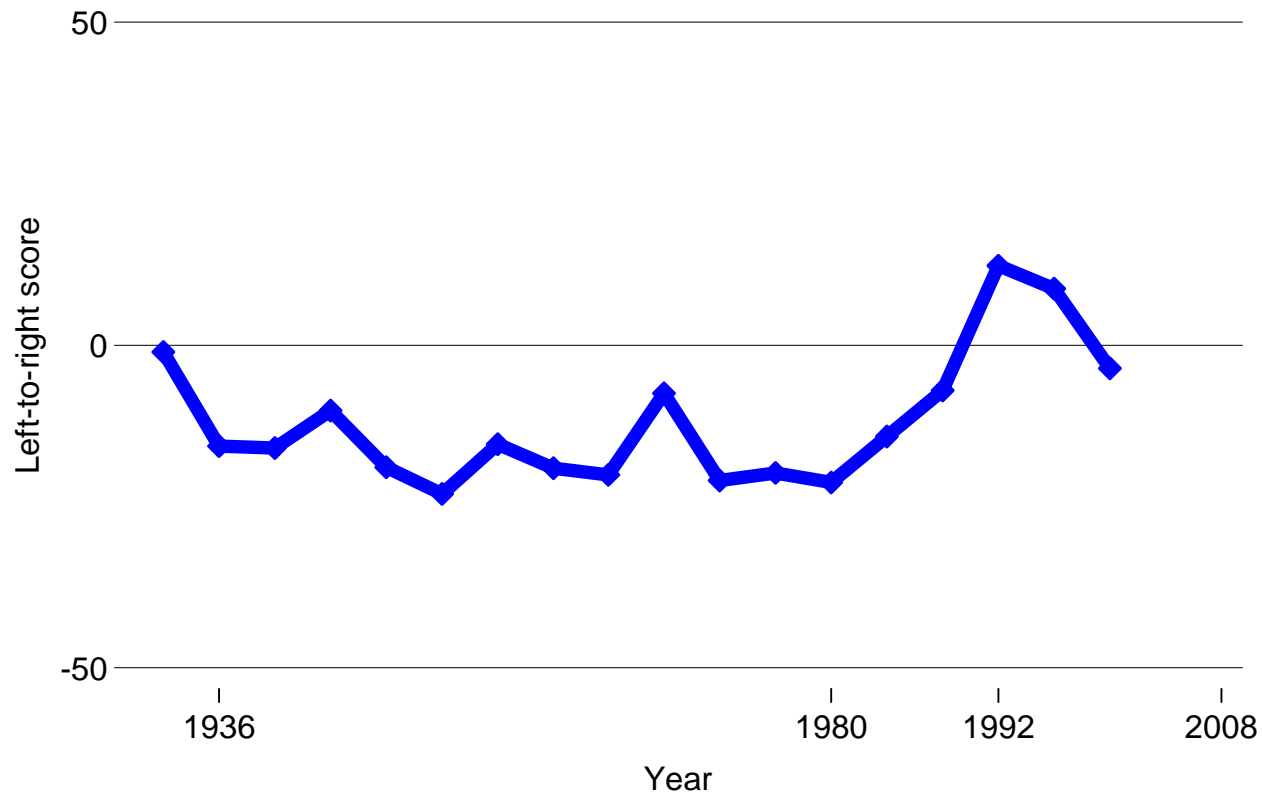
McGovern: yes on foreign policy

Humphrey, Carter, Mondale, Dukakis, Clinton: no

2. The Democratic party lurched left?

The party platforms suggest no left turn in the 1960s and 1970s

2. The Democratic party lurched left?



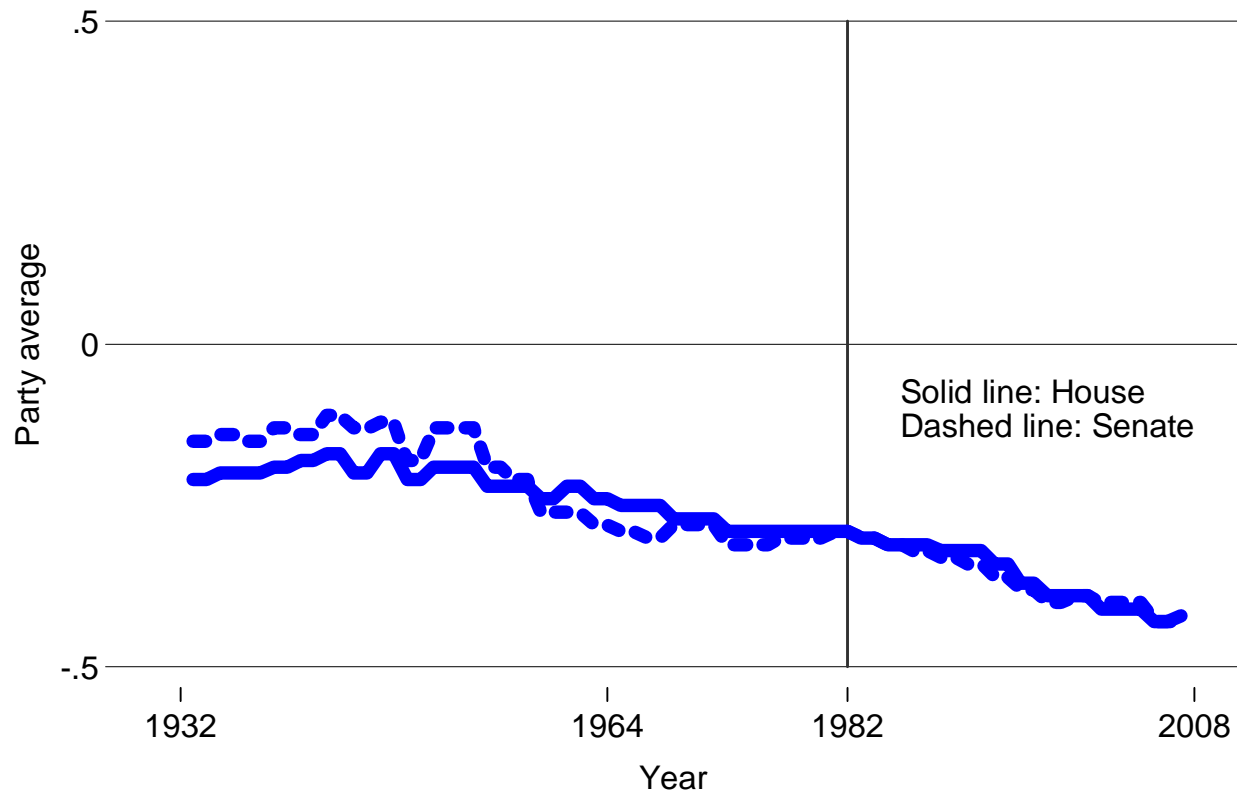
Note: Scores are based on party platform documents. Lower scores are more liberal; higher scores are more conservative.

Source: Comparative Party Manifestos data set.

2. The Democratic party lurched left?

Congressional voting data suggest little movement to the left from 1964 through the early 1980s

2. The Democratic party lurched left?



Note: Scores are based on votes cast. Lower scores are more liberal; higher scores are more conservative.

Source: My calculations from Keith Poole and Howard Rosenthal's DW-nominate data, voteview.com/dwnomin.htm.

3. Social and cultural issues came to the fore

Issues

Racial equality

Women's liberation

Crime and punishment

Guns

Drugs

Environmental protection

Abortion

Homosexuality

3. Social and cultural issues came to the fore

The hypothesis

Working-class whites were always relatively conservative on these issues, but formerly considered them less important than economic issues

Perhaps because of a "postmaterialist" process or maybe because Republicans began emphasizing these issues, beginning in the 1970s working-class whites weighted them more heavily in party identification and vote choices

RONALD INGLEHART

**MODERNIZATION and
POSTMODERNIZATION**

CULTURAL, ECONOMIC,
AND POLITICAL CHANGE
IN 43 SOCIETIES

BEN J. WATTENBERG

VALUES
MATTER
MOST

*How Republicans or Democrats or
a Third Party Can Win and Renew
the American Way of Life*



THE FREE PRESS

New York London Toronto Sydney Tokyo Singapore

ONE NATION, SLIGHTLY DIVISIBLE

The electoral map of the 2000 presidential race became famous: big blocks of red (denoting states that went for Bush) stretched across the heartland, with brackets of blue (denoting states for Gore) along the coasts. Our Blue America correspondent has ventured repeatedly into Red territory. He asks the question—after September 11, a pressing one—Do our differences effectively split us into two nations, or are they just cracks in a still-united whole?

BY DAVID BROOKS

Illustrations by Guy Billout

.....

Sixty-five miles from where I am writing this sentence is a place with no Starbucks, no Pottery Barn, no Borders or Barnes & Noble. No blue *New York Times* delivery bags dot the driveways on Sunday mornings. In this place people don't complain that Woody Allen isn't as funny as he used to be, because they never thought he was funny. In this place you can go to a year's worth of dinner parties without hearing anyone quote an aperçu he first heard on *Charlie Rose*. The people here don't buy those little rear-window stickers when they go to a summer-vacation spot so that they can drive around with "MV" decals the rest of the year; for the most part they don't even go to Martha's Vineyard.

America the stores are small but the markups are big. You'll rarely see a Christmas store in Blue America, but in Red America, even in July, you'll come upon stores selling fake Christmas trees, wreath-decorated napkins, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer collectible thimbles and spoons, and little snow-covered villages.

We in the coastal metro Blue areas read more books and attend more plays than the people in the Red heartland. We're more sophisticated and cosmopolitan—just ask us about our alumni trips to China or Provence, or our interest in Buddhism. But don't ask us, please, what life in Red America is like. We don't know. We don't know who Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins are, even though the novels

**WHAT'S THE
MATTER WITH
KANSAS?**



**HOW CONSERVATIVES WON
THE HEART OF AMERICA**

THOMAS FRANK

STANLEY B. GREENBERG

THE TWO AMERICAS



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SINCE THE
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Our CURRENT
POLITICAL DEADLOCK
and HOW to BREAK IT

"This is hands down the most important book on American politics in my memory...
maybe since 1962, *The Making of the President*." —JAMES CARVILLE

GRAND NEW PARTY



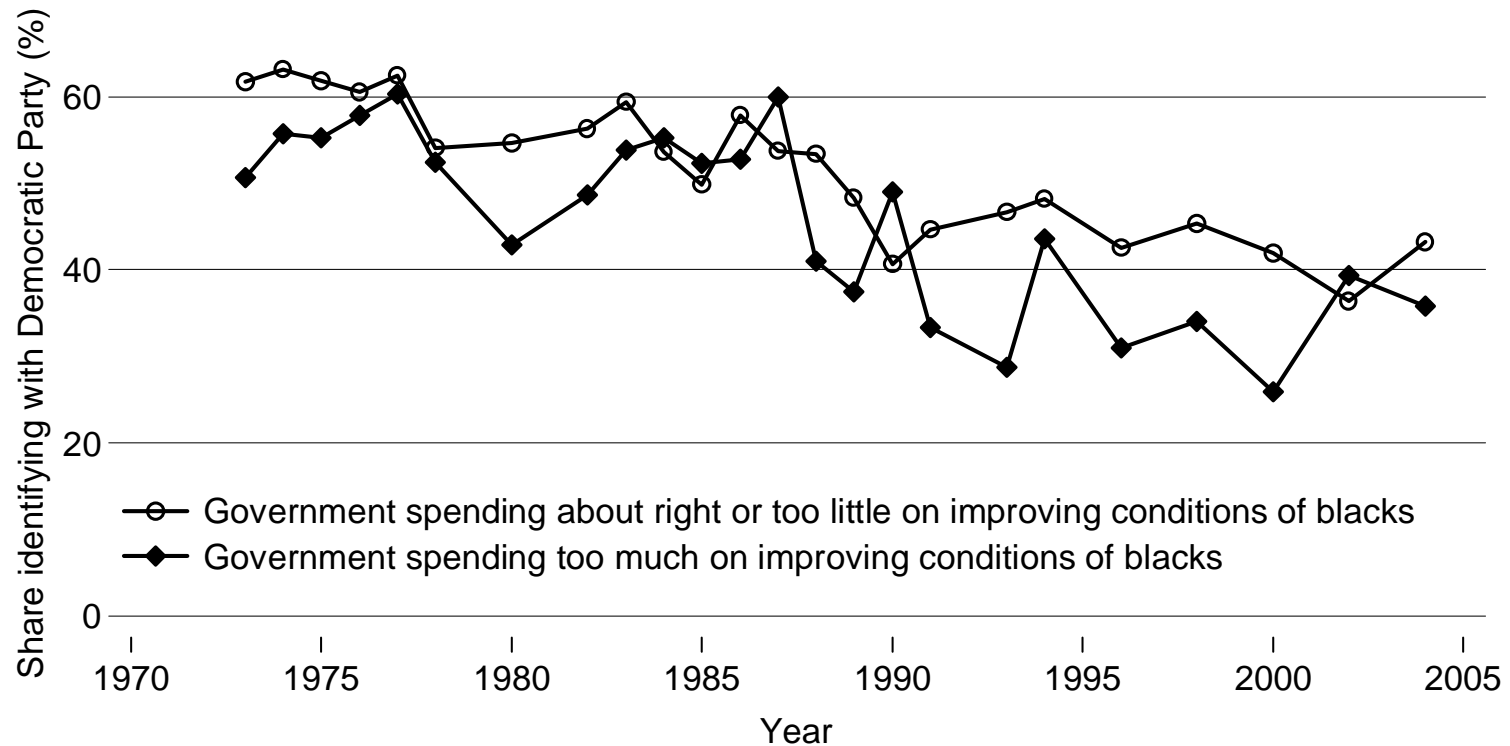
HOW REPUBLICANS CAN WIN
THE WORKING CLASS
AND SAVE THE AMERICAN DREAM

ROSS DOUTHAT & REIHAN SALAM

3. Social and cultural issues came to the fore?

Little indication that this mattered in the 1970s and 1980s

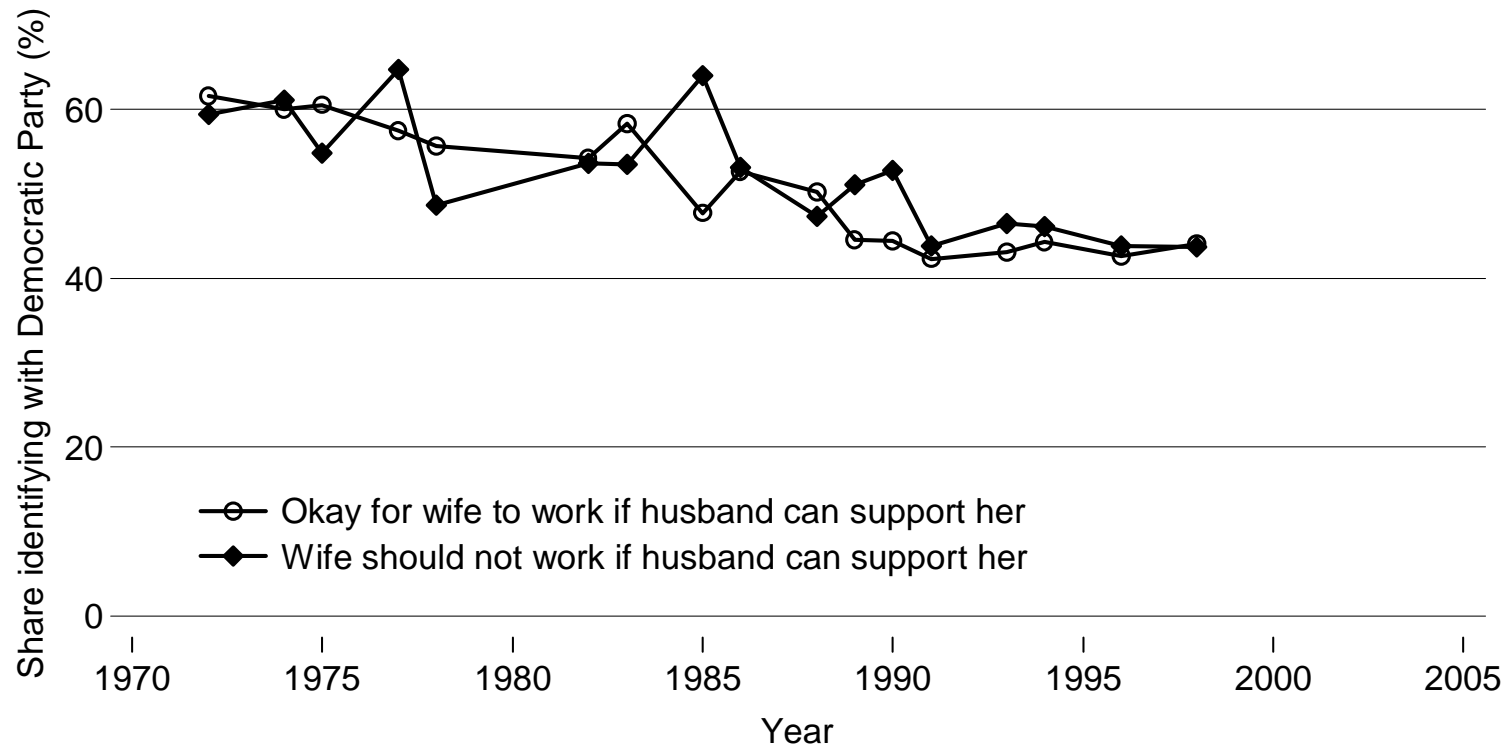
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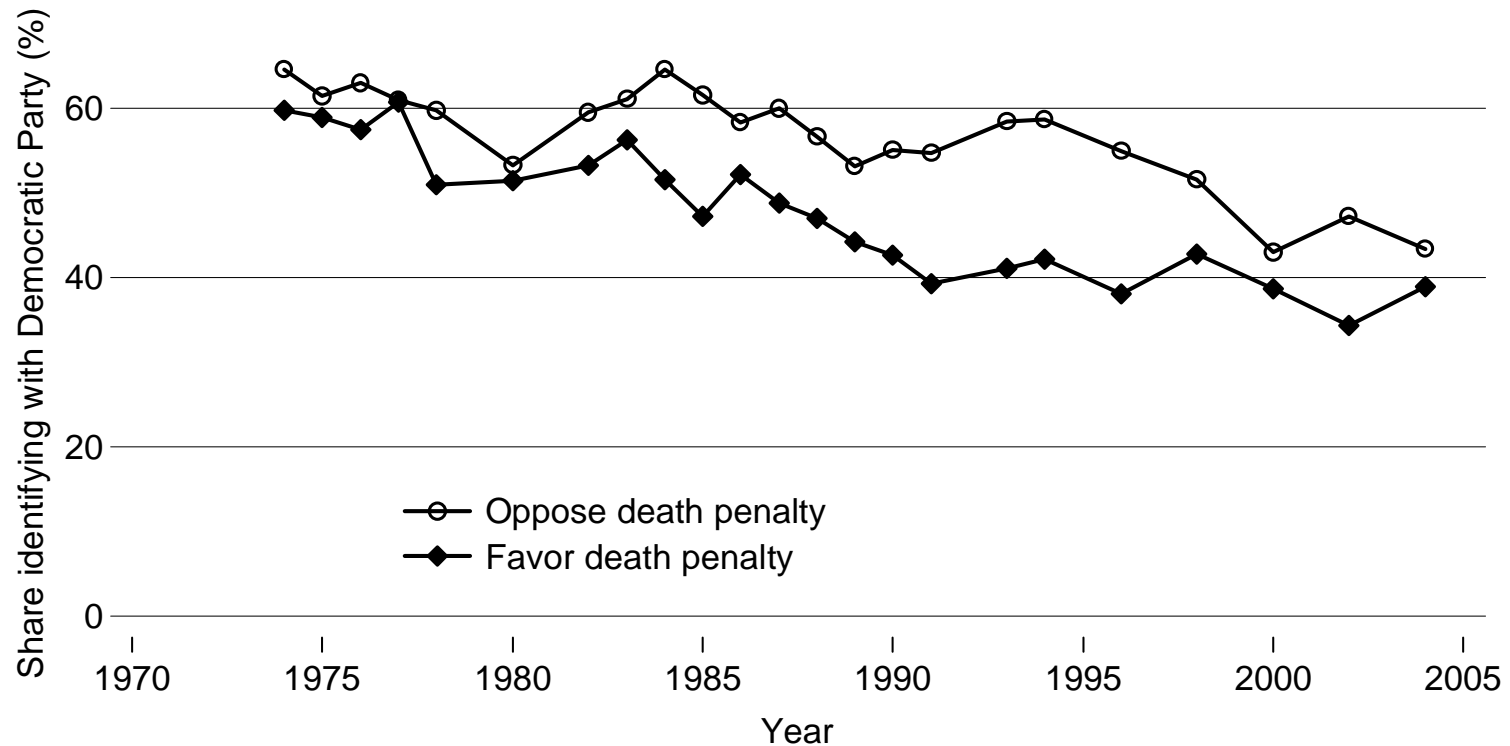
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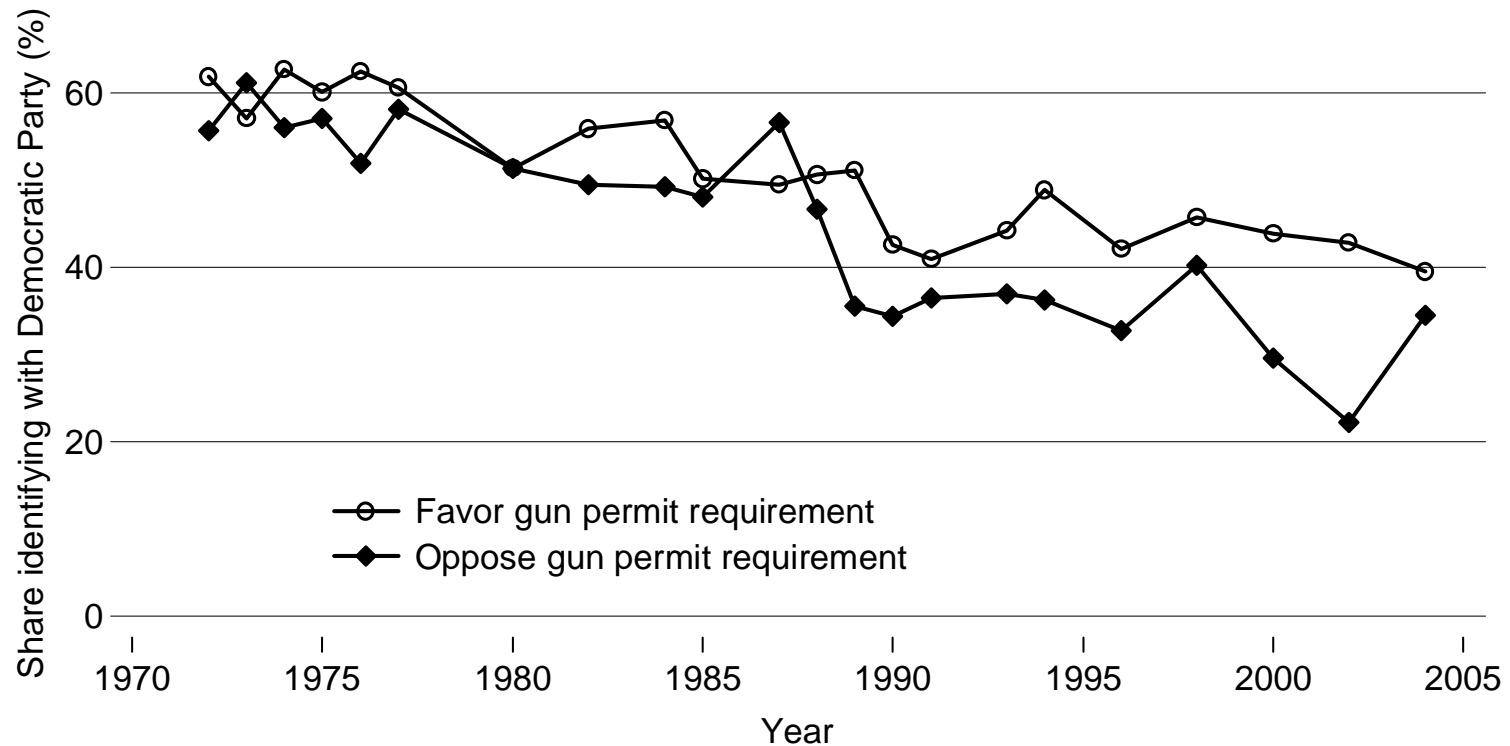
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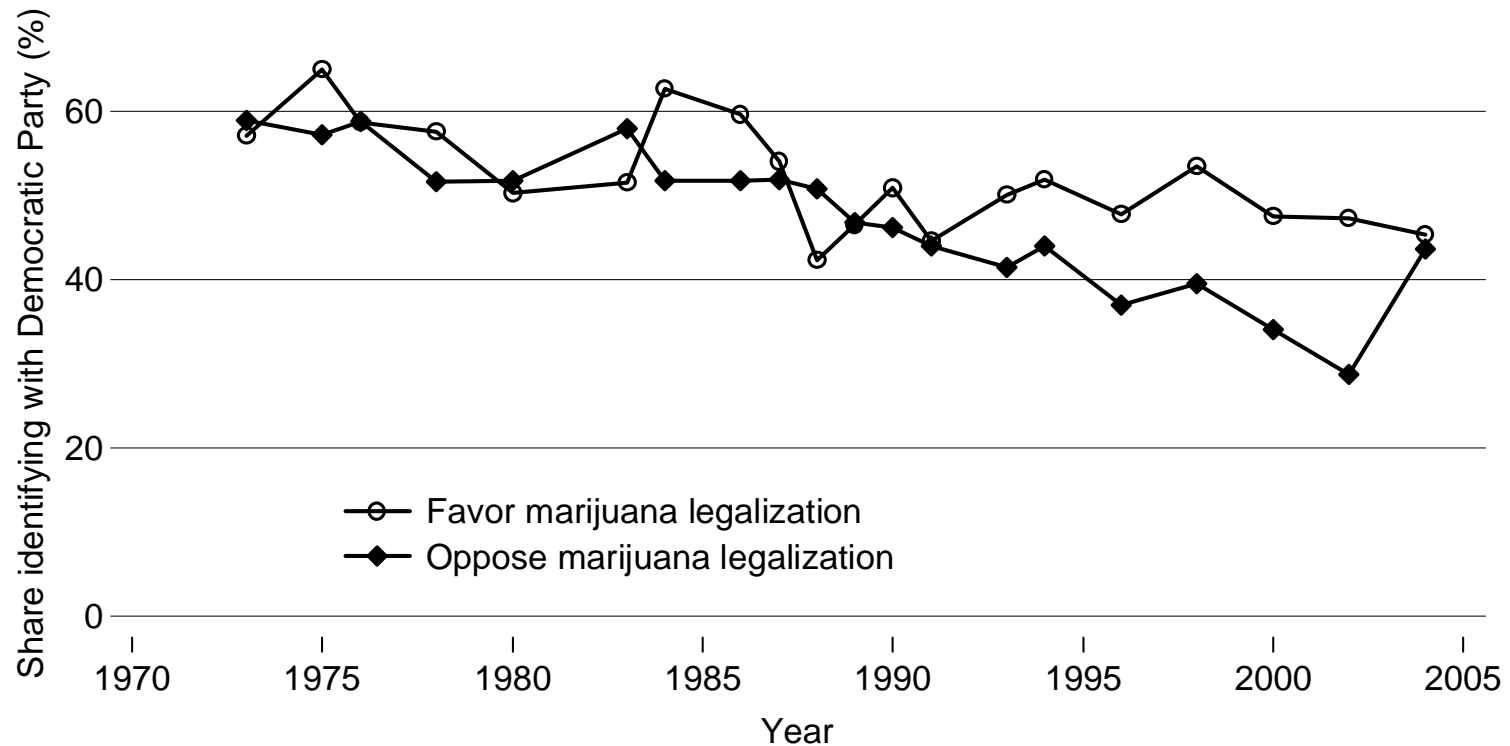
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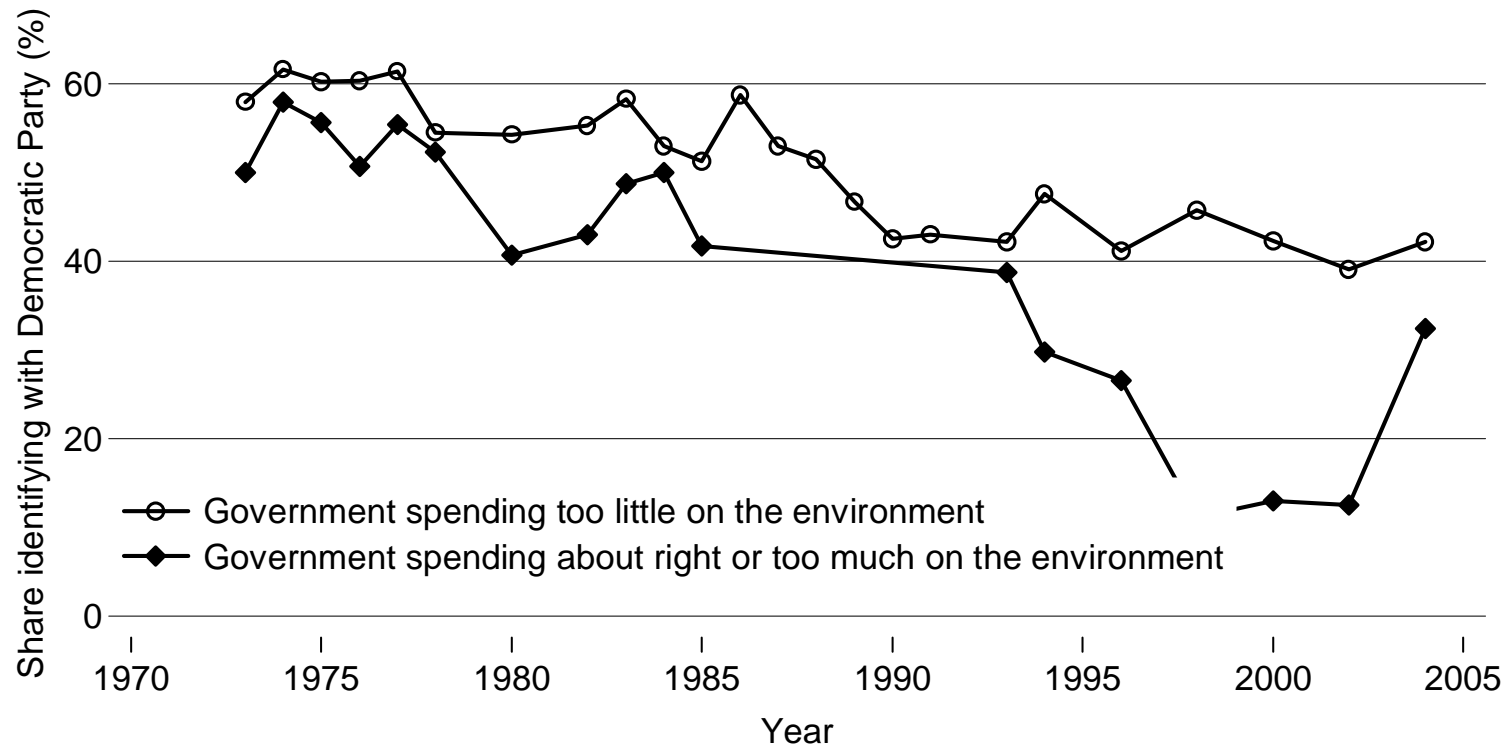
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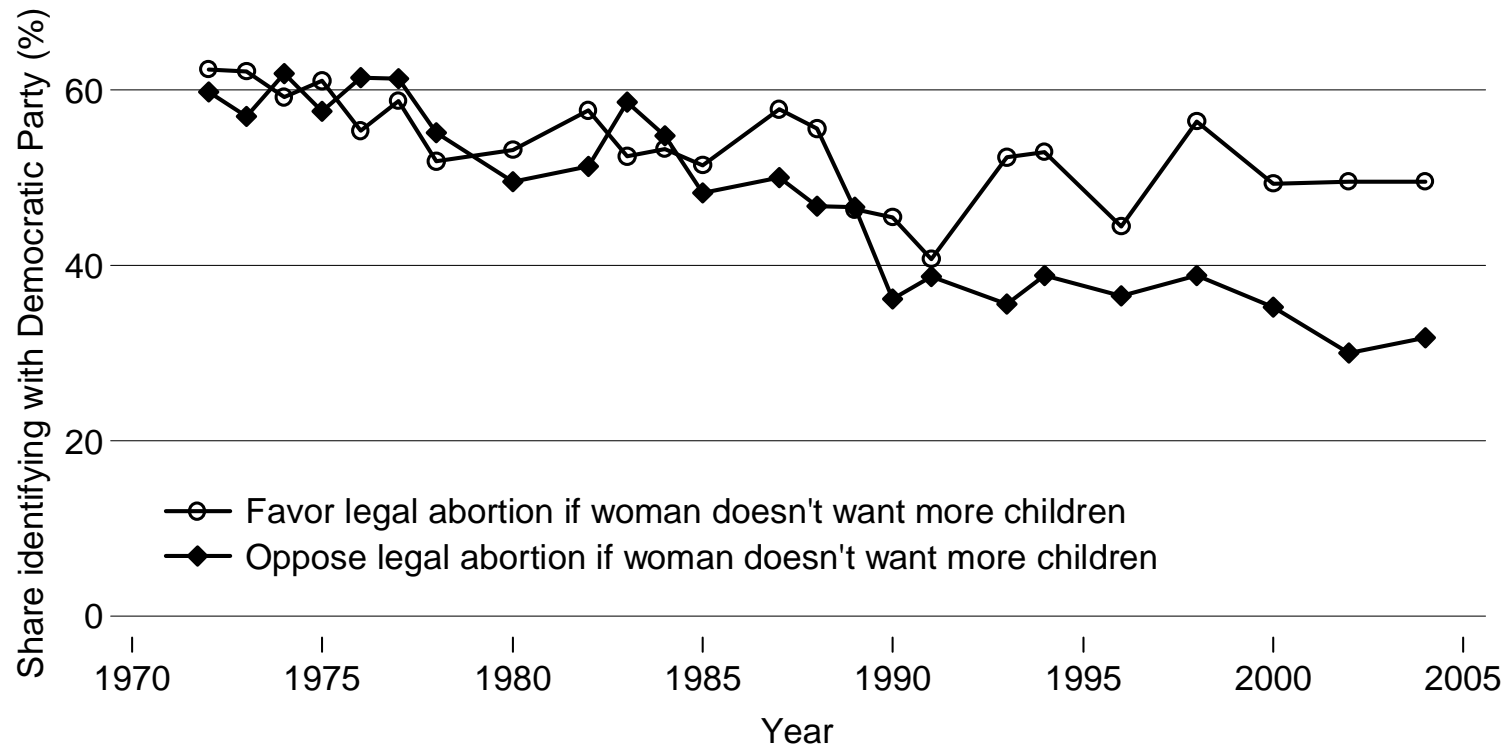
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4. The 1973-83 economic crisis

It was the 1930s revisited, with the parties reversed

The Democrats were in charge during an economic meltdown

Beginning around 1978, Ronald Reagan and other Republicans offered a simple and seemingly plausible story that blamed Democratic policies and suggested a clear alternative: smaller government

The Republicans won the presidency and the Senate in 1980, and within three years the crisis ended

4. The 1973-83 economic crisis

Elements of the crisis

1973-75 recession

Sharp slowdown in growth of earnings and household incomes

High unemployment

High inflation (epitomized by rising gas prices)

High interest rates

1981-83 recession

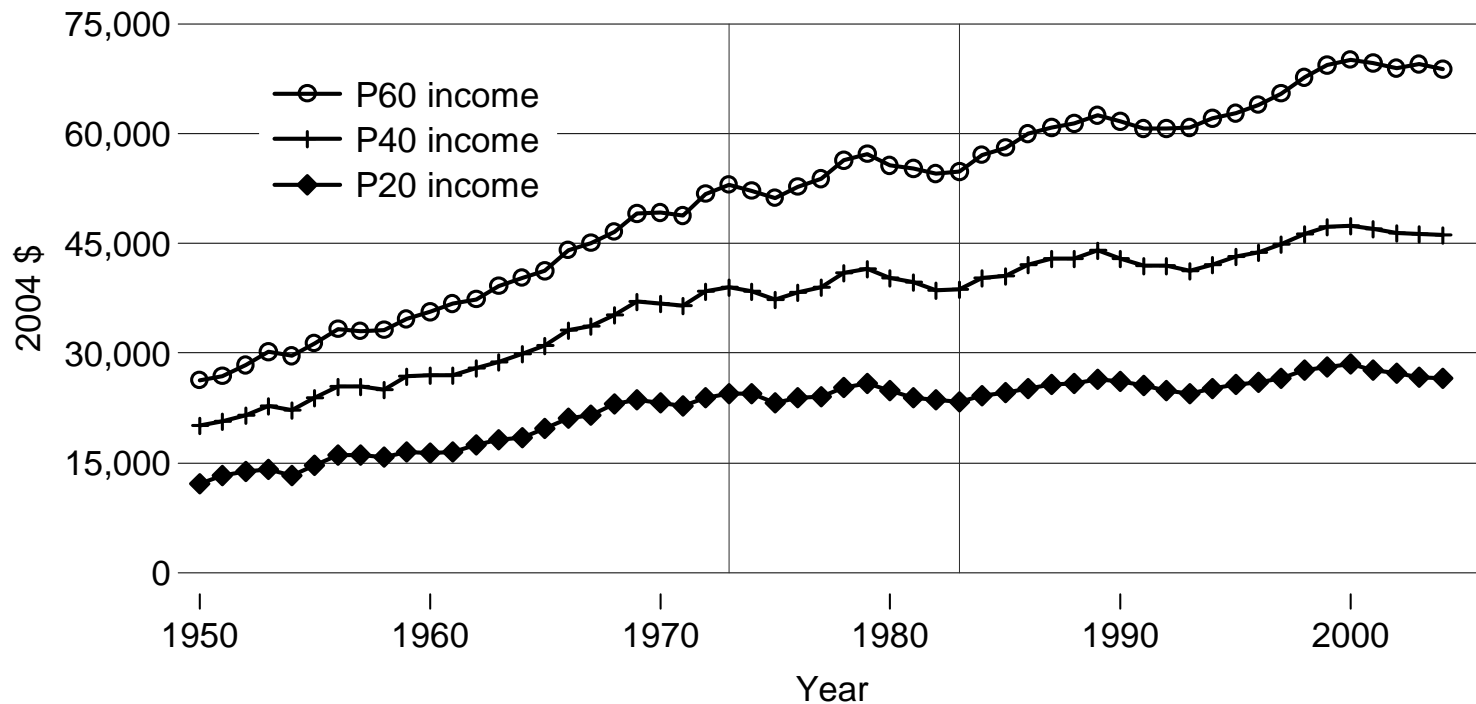
Ruy Teixeira and Joel Rogers

Why the White Working Class Still Matters



AMERICA'S
FORGOTTEN
MAJORITY

4. The 1973-83 economic crisis



Note: Inflation-adjusted family income at the 20th, 40th, and 60th percentile of the income distribution. Posttransfer-pretax income.

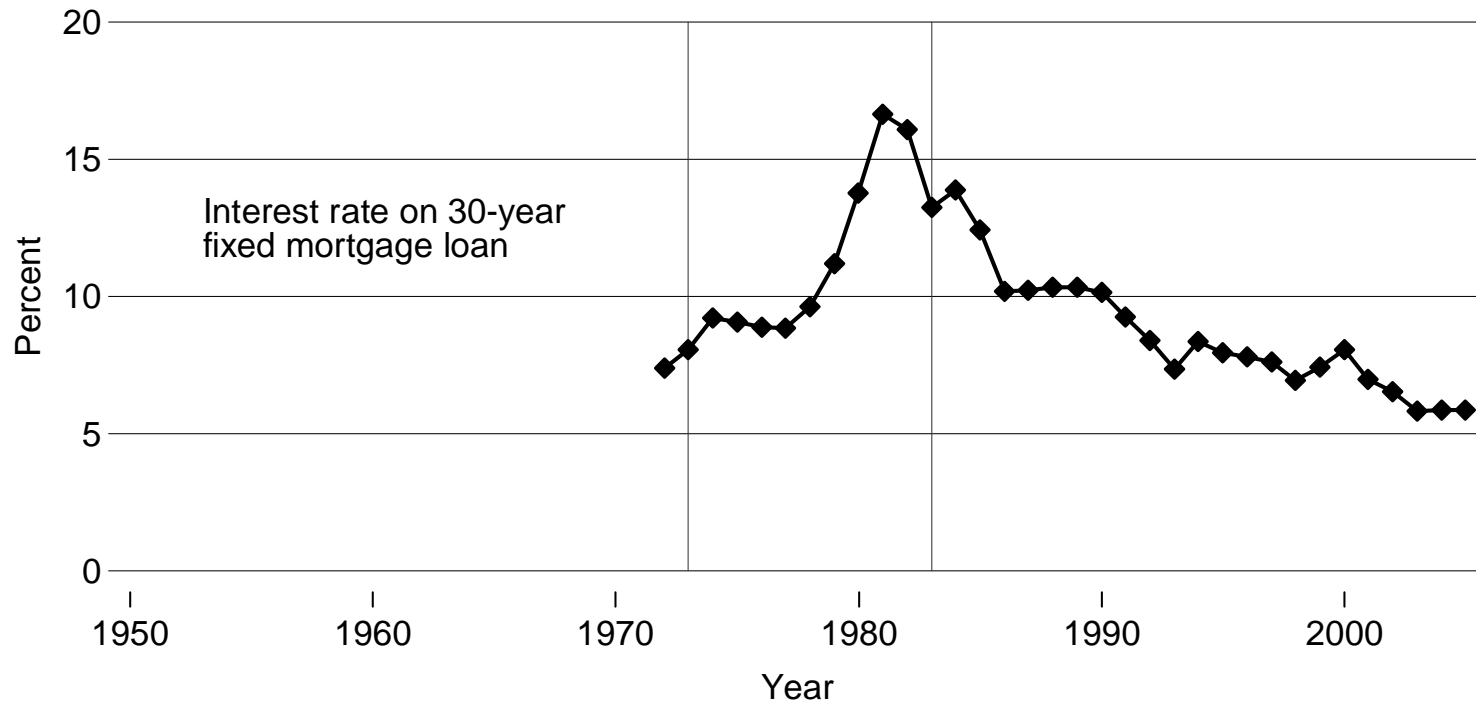
Source: Lane Kenworthy, Sondra Barringer, Daniel Duerr, and Garrett Schneider, "The Democrats and Working-Class Whites," using Census Bureau data.

4. The 1973-83 economic crisis



Source: Lane Kenworthy, Sondra Barringer, Daniel Duerr, and Garrett Schneider, "The Democrats and Working-Class Whites," using Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

4. The 1973-83 economic crisis



Source: Lane Kenworthy, Sondra Barringer, Daniel Duerr, and Garrett Schneider, "The Democrats and Working-Class Whites," using Federal Reserve data.

4. The 1973-83 economic crisis

It wasn't just the economy; there was a broader context of dissatisfaction

Rising crime

Growing disorder and decay in public spaces (parks, schools, city streets)

Concern about national security (Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iran)

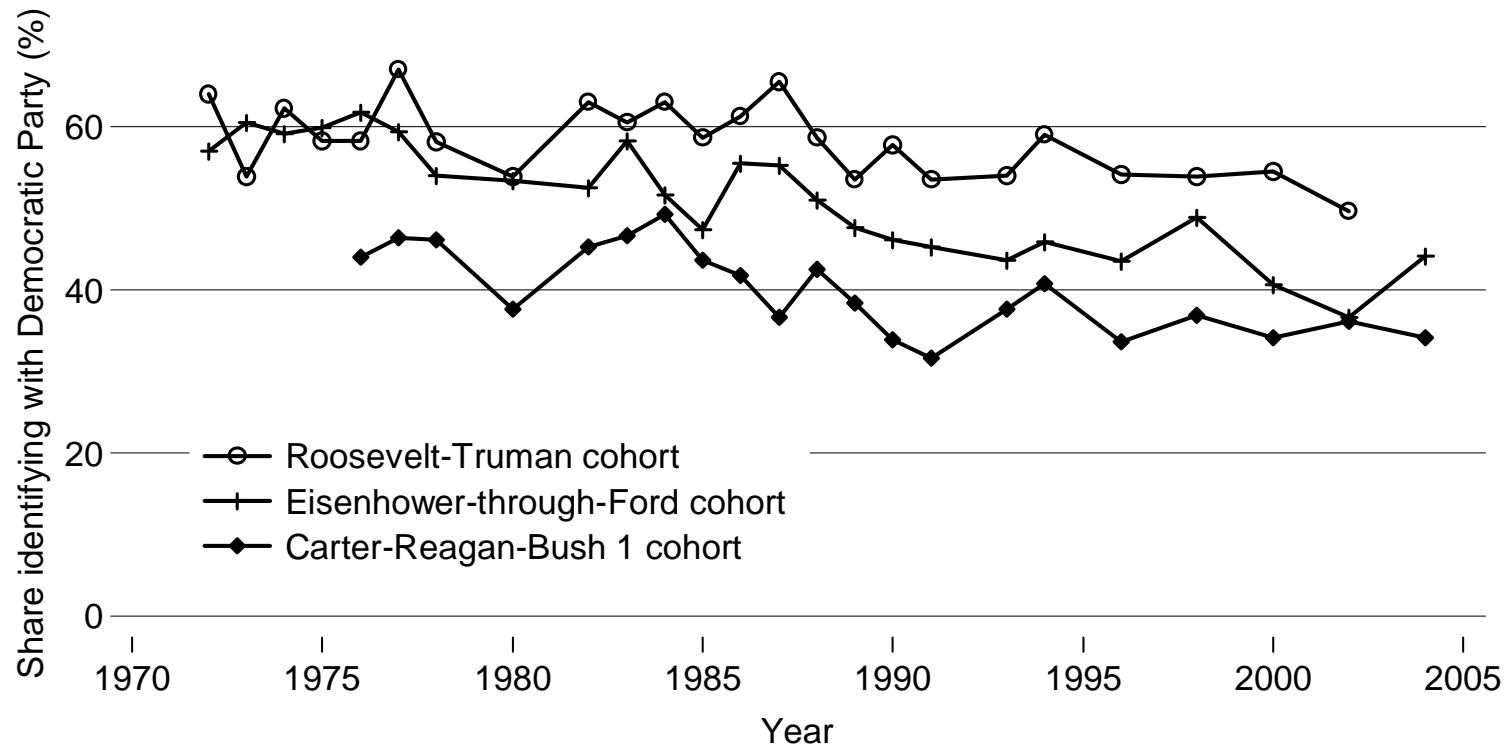
Opposition to busing and affirmative action

4. *The 1973-83 economic crisis*

But the party identification data suggest that the late 1970s was when working-class whites began to defect, and the economic crisis was the defining feature of this period

The *cohort* trend in party identification is revealing

4. The 1973-83 economic crisis



Note: Whites who self-identify as working class or lower class. Cohort membership is defined by the year in which a person turned 20 years old.

Source: Lane Kenworthy, Sondra Barringer, Daniel Duerr, and Garrett Schneider, "The Democrats and Working-Class Whites," using GSS data.

4. The 1973-83 economic crisis

Why, then, didn't working-class whites go back to the Democrats when the economy was sour under Bush I, strong under Clinton, and sour under Bush II?

The cohort shift

Growing importance of social and cultural issues beginning in the 1990s

4. The 1973-83 economic crisis

This view predicts a significant return to the Democrats among working-class whites only if there's a crisis presided over by Republicans

The Iraq war and the 2008 economic crisis should do the trick

But is crisis alone enough? Or is a compelling Democratic narrative and response also required?

We'll have to wait a while to see

Summary

Summary

The Democratic Party dominated national politics for a generation beginning with the New Deal

By the 1980s that dominance had ended, in large part due to defection of working-class whites

The chief cause of that defection appears to have been the 1973-1983 economic crisis