Voting Advice Applications (VAAs) for Second-Order Elections - Data Report

Christian Stecker Thilo Ignaz Dieing Julius Oblong Simon Strobel
Daniela Braun Elisa Deiss-Helbig Theresa Gessler Michael Hein
Benjamin Höhne Anne Kueppers Eric Linhart Jochen Müller
Stephanie Pravemann Marion Reiser Nils D. Steiner Jan Philipp Thomeczek
Kerstin Völkl Manès Weisskircher Georg Wenzelburger Pierre Zissel

23. June 2025

Inhaltsverzeichnis

Overview **4**

Description of the three layer data bundle **5**
All_partyposthesen . . . 5
All_voterpos . . . 5
All_surveys . . . 5
Local VAAs . . . 6
Statement Categories . . . 7

Partypositions **10**
Description: . . . 10
Variables: . . . 10
N= 7586 . . . 10

Userypositions **11**
Description: . . . 11
Variables: . . . 11
N= 6495684 . . . 11

Additional Survey **12**
Description: . . . 12
Variables: . . . 12
N= 27763 . . . 12

Gender **13**
Variable Name . . . 13
Questiontext (og) . . . 13
Questiontext (en) . . . 13
Scale . . . 13
Distribution . . . 13

Age **14**
Variable Name . . . 14
Questiontext (og) . . . 14

Questiontext (en) . . . 14
Scale . . . 14
Distribution . . . 14

Education **15**
Variable Name . . . 15
Questiontext (og) . . . 15
Questiontext (en) . . . 15
Scale . . . 15
Distribution . . . 15

Vote intention for Federal election **16**
Variable Name . . . 16
Questiontext (og) . . . 16
Questiontext (en) . . . 16
Scale . . . 16
Distribution . . . 16

Satisfaction with Government **17**
Variable Name . . . 17
Questiontext (og) . . . 17
Questiontext (en) . . . 17
Scale . . . 17
Distribution . . . 17

Vote intention for European Parliament election **18**
Variable Name . . . 18
Questiontext (og) . . . 18
Questiontext (en) . . . 18
Scale . . . 18
Distribution . . . 18

Political interest **19**
Variable Name . . . 19
Questiontext (og) . . . 19
Questiontext (en) . . . 19
Scale . . . 19
Distribution . . . 19

Vote intention for municipal election **20**
Variable Name . . . 20
Questiontext (og) . . . 20
Questiontext (en) . . . 20
Scale . . . 20
Distribution . . . 20

Left-right self placement **21**
Variable Name . . . 21
Questiontext (og) . . . 21
Questiontext (en) . . . 21
Scale . . . 21
Distribution . . . 21

Agreement with VAA vote advice **22**
Variable Name . . . 22

Questiontext (og) . . . 22
Questiontext (en) . . . 22
Scale . . . 22
Distribution . . . 22

Usefulness of the VAA **23**
Variable Name . . . 23
Questiontext (og) . . . 23
Questiontext (en) . . . 23
Scale . . . 23
Distribution . . . 23

Overview

Voting Advice Applications (VAAs) are not only a valuable tool for political education but also a useful instrument for studying party competition, voting behavior and VAA-related effects. However, VAAs and the accompanying data have predominantly been available for national-level elections, leaving the local level largely unexplored. Our project addresses this gap. We designed VAAs, using the Voto Software, for local elections across 19 cities and collected data from 180,000 users and more than 50 parties on hundreds of policy statements. These data enable numerous valuable insights into the characteristics of VAA users, their policy preferences, and the positions of political parties.

Description of the three layer data bundle

The collected VAA data consists of 3 different dataset. As such the data includes Party- and Userpositions on the VAA answers (all measured on a 5-point scale; strong disagreement - strong agreement) as well as data from a supplementary online survey in which users could answer additional items (This data is also matchable to the user positions via the variable voteID). All files are included as RDS, DTA and CSV files.

All_partyposthesen

In the dataset "all_partyposthesen" scholars may find the party answers to the VAA statements in addition to the parties' justifications for their positions.

All_voterpos

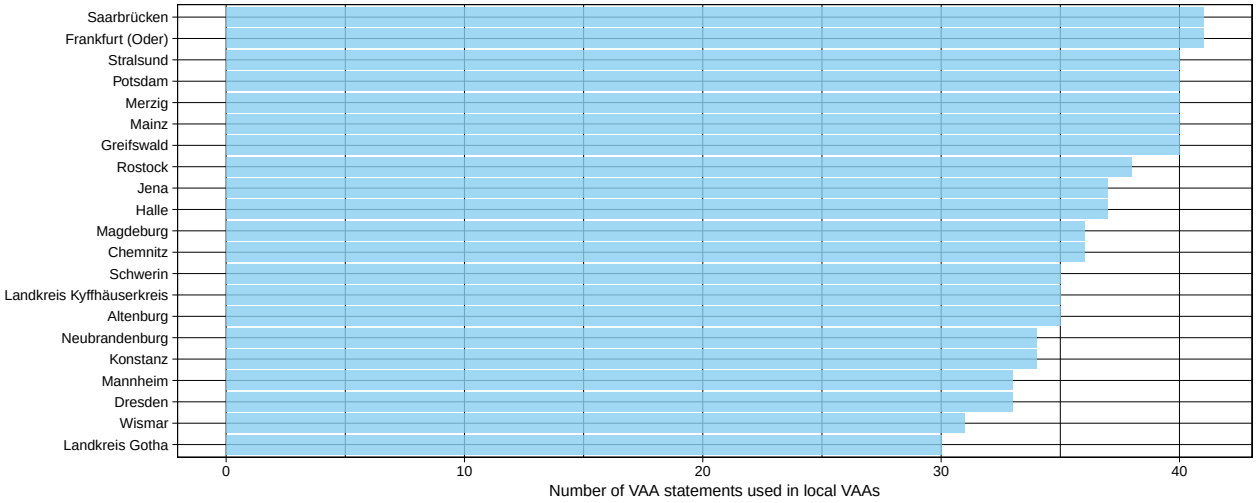
In the dataset "all_voterpos" scholars may find the user answers to the VAA statements. The data also includes weights the users could assign to statements that were particularly important to them. Furthermore the variable voteID can be used to match users to their answers in the supplementary online survey.

All_surveys

In the dataset "all_surveys" scholars may find the user answers to the supplementary online survey including demographic items as well as political items and VAA usefulness items.

Local VAAs

In the project a total of 21 VAAs were build and deployed. Among 19 VAAs were used in municipal elections and 2 VAAs where used for county elections. Blew one can see the elections listed and the number of VAA statements each VAA included.



Statement Categories

In the VAAs, we use two different types of statements. "Bridge statements" address topics that are relevant across all municipalities and are of a fundamental nature. For example, the statement "The minimum voting age for local elections should be lowered to 16 years" was asked in Rhineland-Palatinate, Saarland, and Saxony. Other bridge statements incorporated an explicit reference to the respective city, such as "In {city name}, more housing should be designated for people with low incomes." The 23 bridge statements, apart from any mention of the city, were formulated identically to create a baseline of comparable topics, party positions, and user preferences, thereby enriching the final dataset. We also made sure to discard bridge statements if they were not relevant locally.

Statement ID: bridge_01

Statement (og): Das Wahlsystem zur Kommunalwahl mit (Kumulieren)[mehrere Stimmen einer einzelnen Person zu geben] und (Panaschieren)[Stimmen über Kandidierende verschiedener Parteien zu verteilen] ist zu kompliziert.

Statement (en): The electoral system for local elections with (Cumulative Voting) [giving multiple votes to one person] and (Panachage) [distributing votes among candidates from different parties] is too complicated.

Statement ID: bridge_2a

Statement (og): Das Mindestalter bei Kommunalwahlen sollte wieder auf 18 Jahre heraufgesetzt werden.

Statement (en): The minimum age for local elections should be raised back to 18 years.

Statement ID: bridge_2b

Statement (og): Das Mindestalter bei Kommunalwahlen sollte auf 16 Jahre gesenkt werden.

Statement (en): The minimum age for local elections should be lowered to 16 years.

Statement ID: bridge_03

Statement (og): In {location} sollten mehr Entscheidungen direkt durch die Bürger getroffen werden.

Statement (en): In {location}, more decisions should be made directly by the citizens.

Statement ID: bridge_04

Statement (og): {location} sollte verstärkt Projekte gegen Linksextremismus fördern.

Statement (en): {location} should promote projects against left-wing extremism more.

Statement ID: bridge_05

Statement (og): {location} sollte verstärkt Projekte gegen Rechtsextremismus fördern.

Statement (en): {location} should promote projects against right-wing extremism more.

Statement ID: bridge_06

Statement (og): Hier lebende Nicht-EU-Ausländer sollten das Wahlrecht zur Kommunalwahl erhalten.

Statement (en): Non-EU foreigners living here should have the right to vote in local elections.

Statement ID: bridge_07

Statement (og): Es ist wichtig, dass in allen offiziellen Dokumenten in {location} gendergerechte Sprache genutzt wird.

Statement (en): It is important that gender-neutral language is used in all official documents in {location}.

Statement ID: bridge_08

Statement (og): Bei Führungspositionen in der öffentlichen Verwaltung und den kommunalen Unternehmen von {location} sollte es eine (paritätische Besetzung der Geschlechter)[gleiche Anzahl von Frauen und Männern] geben.

Statement (en): In leadership positions in public administration and municipal companies in {location}, there should be a (gender-balanced representation) [equal number of women and men].

Statement ID: bridge_09

Statement (og): {location} sollte (zusätzliche Geflüchtete)[Auf die Zuteilung von Geflüchteten haben Kommunen keinen direkten Einfluss. Sie können aber z. B. über die Initiative Sichere Häfen zusätzlich Menschen aufnehmen.] aufnehmen.

Statement (en): {location} should (accept additional refugees) [Municipalities have no direct influence on the allocation of refugees. However, they can, for example, take in additional people through the initiative Safe Harbors.].

Statement ID: bridge_10

Statement (og): Muslimische Gebetsräume bzw. Moscheen sollten keine prominenten Plätze im Stadtbild einnehmen.

Statement (en): Muslim prayer rooms or mosques should not occupy prominent places in the cityscape.

Statement ID: bridge_11

Statement (og): Die EU schränkt den Handlungsspielraum der Kommunen zu sehr ein.

Statement (en): The EU restricts the autonomy of the municipalities too much.

Statement ID: bridge_12

Statement (og): Der Klimaschutz sollte bei kommunalpolitischen Entscheidungen eine gröSSere Bedeutung haben als wirtschaftliche Erwägungen.

Statement (en): Climate protection should be more significant in local political decisions than economic considerations.

Statement ID: bridge_13

Statement (og): {location} sollte mehr Flächen für Windkraftanlagen ausweisen.

Statement (en): {location} should designate more areas for wind turbines.

Statement ID: bridge_14

Statement (og): Kulturangebote sollen durch die Stadt {location} stärker gefördert werden.

Statement (en): Cultural offerings should be promoted more strongly by the city of {location}.

Statement ID: bridge_15

Statement (og): Wichtige Plätze und StraSSen in {location} sollten videoüberwacht sein.

Statement (en): Important places and streets in {location} should be monitored by video surveillance.

Statement ID: bridge_16

Statement (og): Die Präsenz der Polizei im öffentlichen Raum in {location} sollte erhöht werden.

Statement (en): The presence of the police in public spaces in {location} should be increased.

Statement ID: bridge_17

Statement (og): {location} sollte mehr sparen.

Statement (en): {location} should save more.

Statement ID: bridge_18

Statement (og): Die Gewerbesteuer für Unternehmen in {location} sollte gesenkt werden.

Statement (en): The trade tax for businesses in {location} should be lowered.

Statement ID: bridge_19

Statement (og): In {location} sollte es mehr autofreie Zonen geben.

Statement (en): There should be more car-free zones in {location}.

Statement ID: bridge_20

Statement (og): In {location} gibt es bereits genug Tempo-30-Zonen.

Statement (en): {location} already has enough 30 km/h zones.

Statement ID: bridge_21

Statement (og): Der Ausbau von Radwegen in {location} sollte nicht zu Lasten des Autoverkehrs gehen.

Statement (en): The expansion of bike paths in {location} should not come at the expense of car traffic.

Statement ID: bridge_22

Statement (og): In {location} sollten mehr Wohnungen für Menschen mit geringem Einkommen ausgewiesen werden.

Statement (en): {location} should have more housing options for people with low income.

Partypositions

Description:

In the dataset “all_partyposthesen” scholars may find the party answers to the VAA statements in addition to the parties’ justifications for their positions.

Variables:

- gmd_name: Name of the city where the election was held.
- gmd_key: City key.
- bundesland: State of the election.
- electiondate: Election Date.
- electiontype: Election type (Kommunalwahl, Kommunal- und Oberbürgermeisterwahl, Landratswahl).
- these_id: ID to identify local statements within a VAA and bridge statements among all VAAs.
- these_title: Title of the statement.
- these_poltikfeld: Category of the statement.
- these: VAA statement.
- these_localised: VAA statement with specific city name.
- party: Party name.
- partypos: Party position (int).
- partypos_str: Party position (chr).
- partyexplain: Party justification
- party_clean: Party Name cleaned, to compare lager parties.

N= 7586

Userypositions

Description:

In the dataset “all_voterpos” scholars may find the user answers to the VAA statements. The data also includes weights the users could assign to statements that were particularly important to them. Furthermore the variable voteID can be used to match users to their answers in the supplementary online survey.

Variables:

- gmd_name: Name of the city where the election was held.
- gmd_key: City key.
- bundesland: State of the election.
- electiondate: Election Date.
- electiontype: Election type (Kommunalwahl, Kommunal- und Oberbürgermeisterwahl, Landratswahl).
- voteID: User specific ID, matchable with voteID in supplementary survey.
- vote_created_at: Time of VAA usage.
- vote_statementID: VOTO ID of VAA statement (not the same as these_id).
- these_title: Title of the statement.
- these: VAA statement.
- these_localised: VAA statement with specific city name.
- voterpos: User position (int).
- voterpos_str: Party position (chr).
- vote_weight: Weight if the statement was particularly important to a user (1 not more important; 2 important).

N= 6495684

Additional Survey

Description:

In the dataset “all_surveys” scholars may find the user answers to the supplementary online survey including demographic items as well as political items and VAA usefulness items.

Variables:

- gmd_name: Name of the city where the election was held.
- gmd_key: City key.
- id: Survey ID for each election.
- submitdate: Date.
- lastpage: completed.
- startlanguage: Language.
- seed: Survey seed.
- startdate: Start date.
- datestamp:
- refurl: Refurllink.
- voteID: User specific ID, matchable with voteID in all_voterpos.
- stadtteile: City district.
- gender: Gender.
- Age: Age.
- educ: Education.
- bundestag: Vote intention for Federal election.
- satgov_1: Satisfaction with Government.
- eu: Vote intention for European Parliament election.
- polint: Political interest.
- issue: Biggest Problem in city (open text item).
- komvote: Vote intention for municipal election.
- lire_1: Left-right self placement.
- match: Agreement with VAA vote advice.
- wahlomat: Usefulness of the VAA.

N= 27763

Gender

Variable Name

gender

Questiontext (og)

Bitte geben Sie Ihr Geschlecht an.

Questiontext (en)

Bitte geben Sie Ihr Geschlecht an.

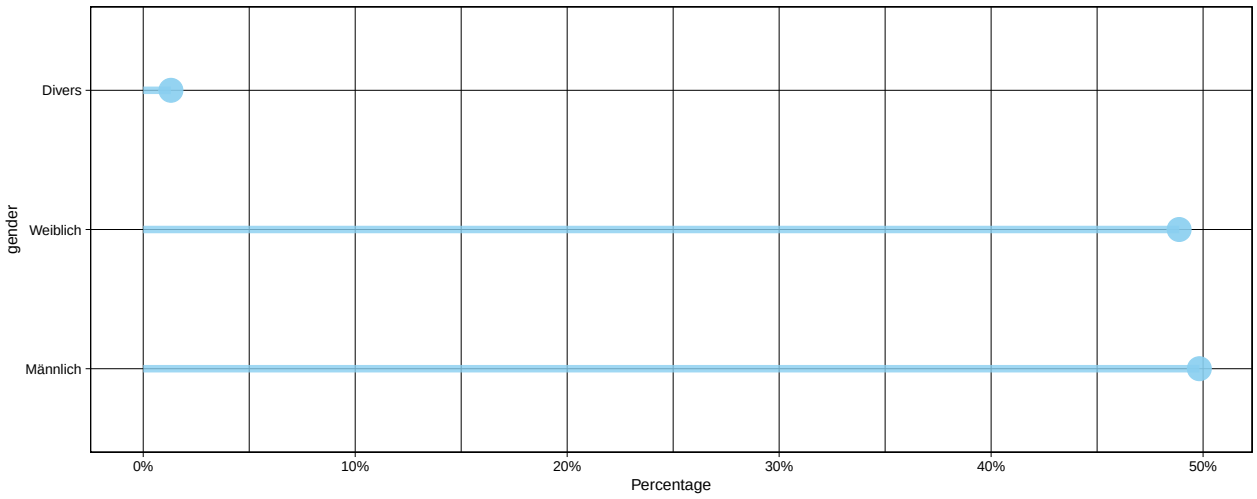
Scale

1= Männlich

2= Weiblich

3= Divers

Distribution



Age

Variable Name

age

Questiontext (og)

Wie alt sind Sie?

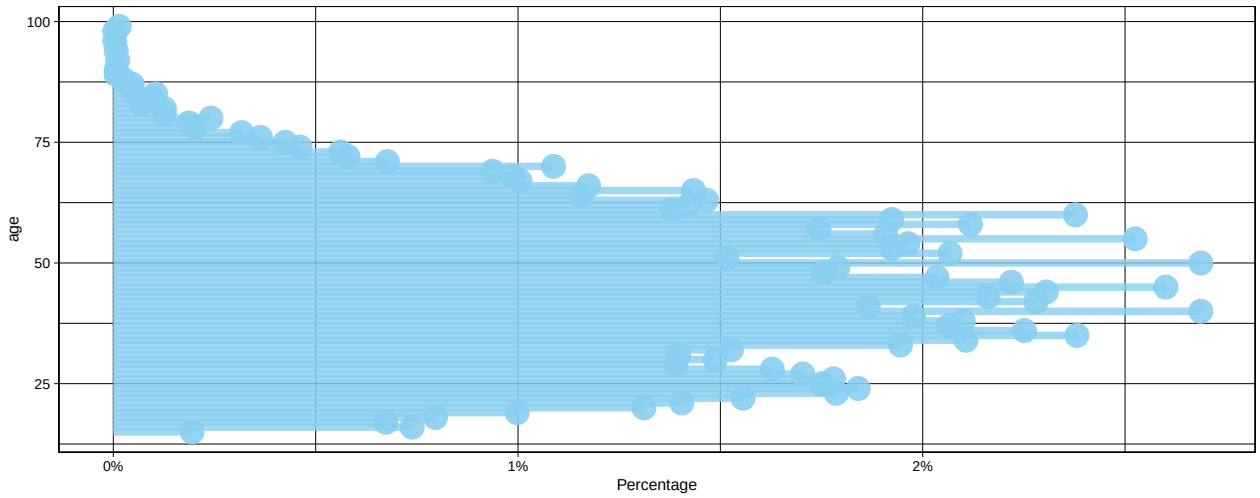
Questiontext (en)

How old are you?

Scale

Continious from15 to 99. (open answer item)

Distribution



Education

Variable Name

educ

Questiontext (og)

Was ist Ihr höchster Bildungsabschluss?

Questiontext (en)

What is your highest level of education?

Scale

1= Schule beendet ohne Abschluss

2= Hauptschulabschluss, Volksschulabschluss, Abschluss der polytechnischen Oberschule 8. oder 9. Klasse

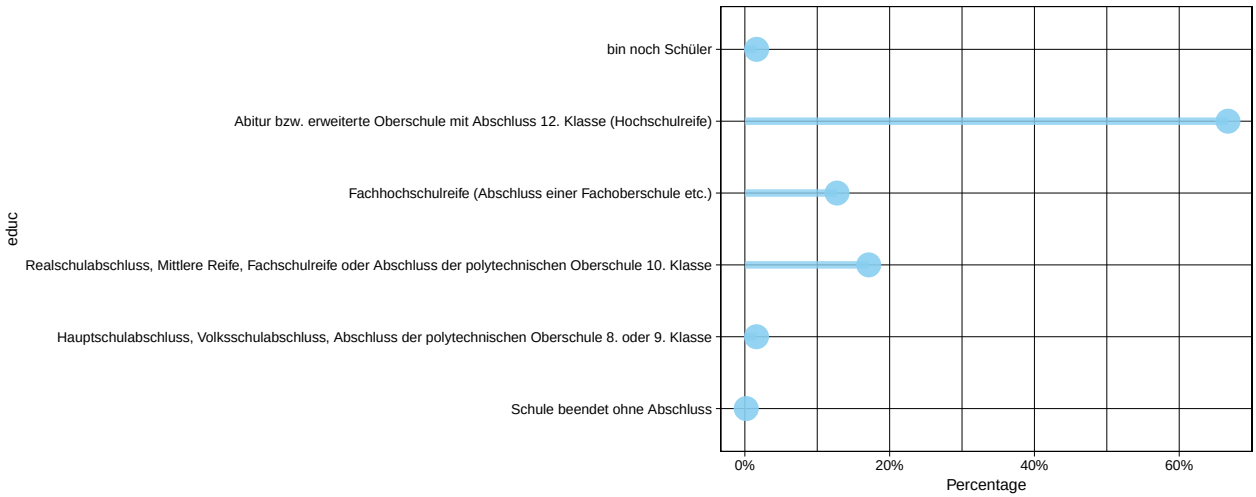
3= Realschulabschluss, Mittlere Reife, Fachschulreife oder Abschluss der polytechnischen Oberschule 10. Klasse

4= Fachhochschulreife (Abschluss einer Fachoberschule etc.)

5= Abitur bzw. erweiterte Oberschule mit Abschluss 12. Klasse (Hochschulreife)

6= bin noch Schüler

Distribution



Vote intention for Federal election

Variable Name

bundestag

Questiontext (og)

Welche Partei würden Sie wählen, wenn am nächsten Sonntag Bundestagswahl wäre?

Questiontext (en)

Which party would you vote for if there were a federal election next Sunday?

Scale

1= CDU

2= SPD

3= FDP

4= Bündnis 90/Die Grünen

5= Die Linke

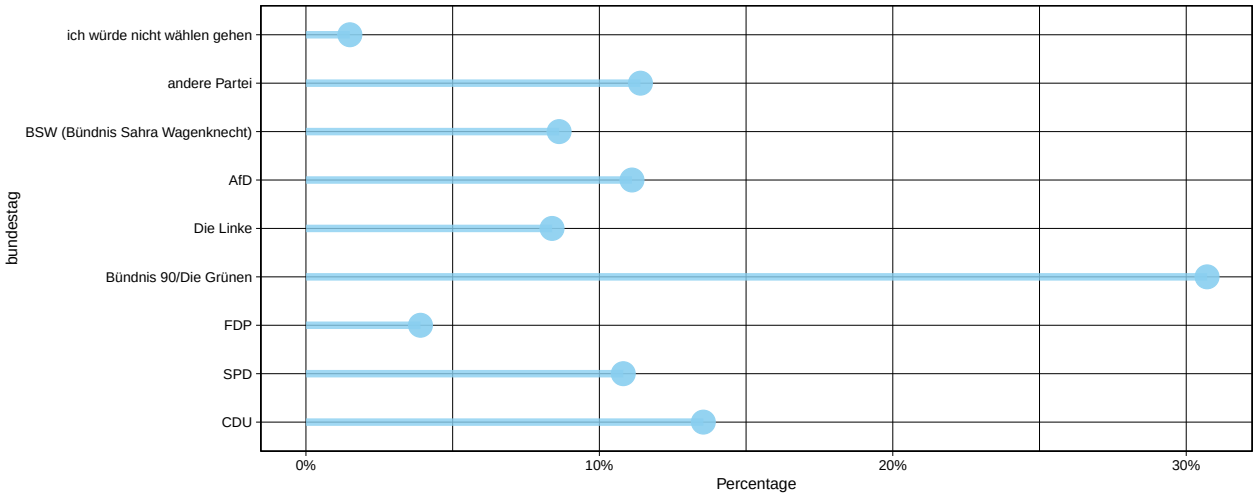
6= AfD

9= BSW (Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht)

7= andere Partei

8= ich würde nicht wählen gehen

Distribution



Satisfaction with Government

Variable Name

satgov_1

Questiontext (og)

Sind Sie mit den Leistungen der Bundesregierung aus SPD, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen und FDP in den letzten 3 Jahren eher zufrieden oder eher unzufrieden?

Questiontext (en)

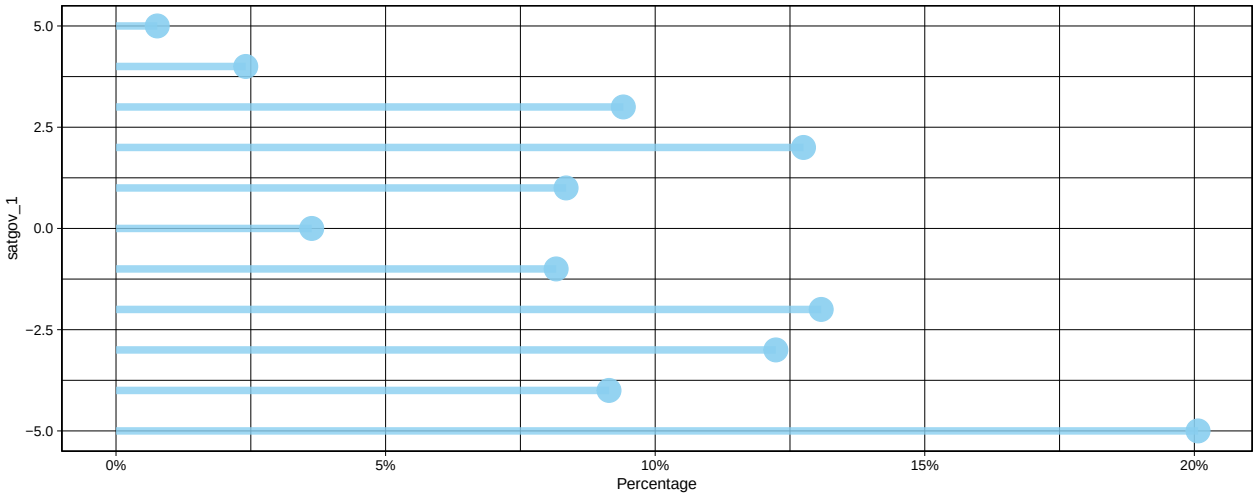
Are you more satisfied or dissatisfied with the performance of the federal government made up of the SPD, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, and FDP over the past 3 years?

Scale

-5= völlig unzufrieden mit den Leistungen der Bundesregierung

5= völlig zufrieden mit den Leistungen der Bundesregierung

Distribution



Vote intention for European Parliament election

Variable Name

eu

Questiontext (og)

Welche Partei planen Sie bei der Wahl zum Europaparlament am 09. Juni 2024 zu wählen?

Questiontext (en)

Which party do you plan to vote for in the European Parliament election on June 9, 2024?

Scale

1= CDU

2= SPD

3= FDP

4= Bündnis 90/Die Grünen

5= Die Linke

6= AfD

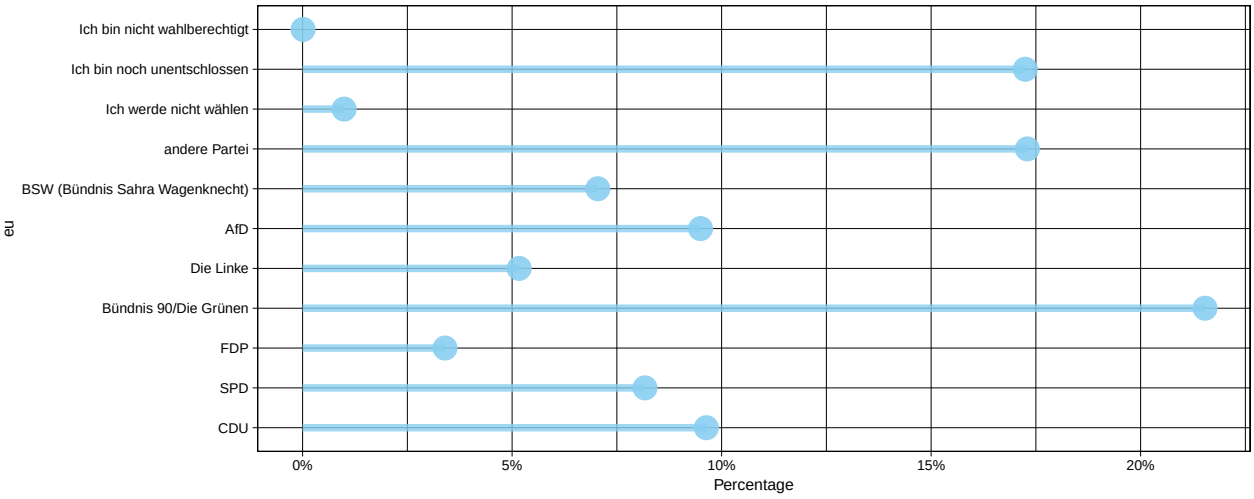
9= BSW (Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht)

7= andere Partei

98= Ich bin noch unentschlossen

99= Ich werde nicht wählen

Distribution



Political interest

Variable Name

polint

Questiontext (og)

Einmal ganz allgemein gesprochen, wie sehr interessieren Sie sich für Politik?

Questiontext (en)

Generally speaking, how interested are you in politics?

Scale

1= sehr stark

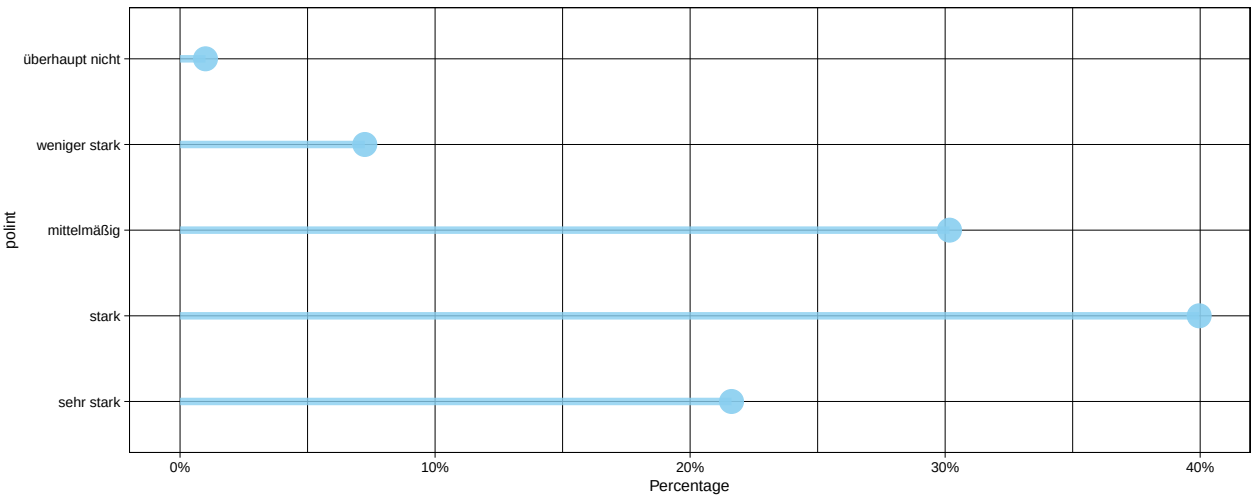
2= stark

3= mittelmäSSig

4= weniger stark

5= überhaupt nicht

Distribution



Vote intention for municipal election

Variable Name

komvote

Questiontext (og)

Welche Partei werden Sie mehrheitlich wählen bei der Kommunalwahl am 09. Juni 2024?

Questiontext (en)

Which party will you mostly vote for in the local election on June 9, 2024?

Scale

1= CDU

2= SPD

3= FDP

4= Bündnis 90/Die Grünen

5= Die Linke

6= AfD

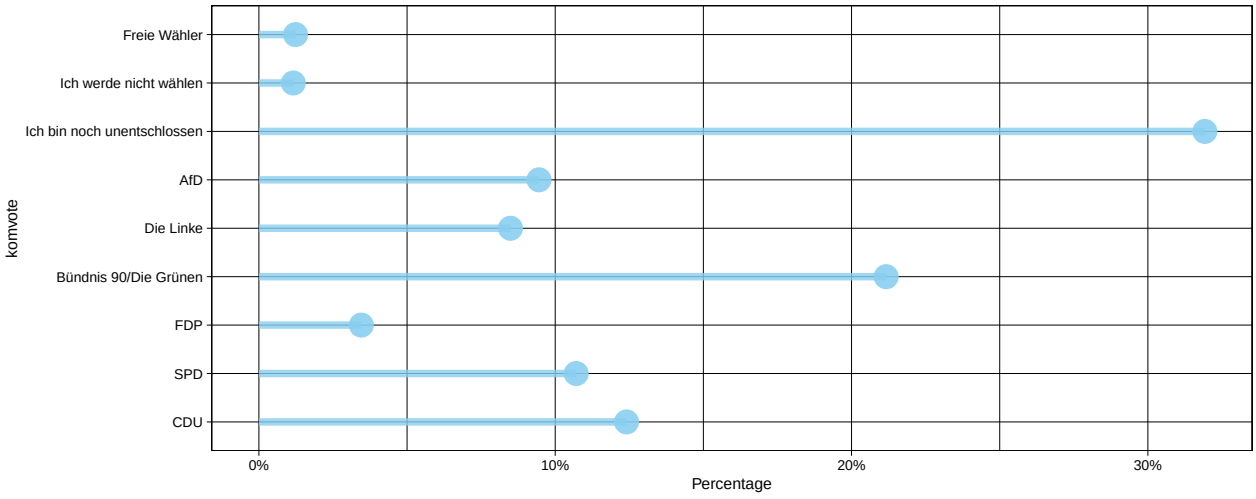
8= Freie Wähler

98= Ich bin noch unentschlossen

99= Ich werde nicht wählen

Additional parties included for each election.

Distribution



Left-right self placement

Variable Name

lire_1

Questiontext (og)

Wo würden Sie sich selbst politisch einordnen? Wählen Sie auf einer Skala von 1 bis 11, wobei 1 bedeutet politisch ganz links und 11 politisch ganz rechts.

Questiontext (en)

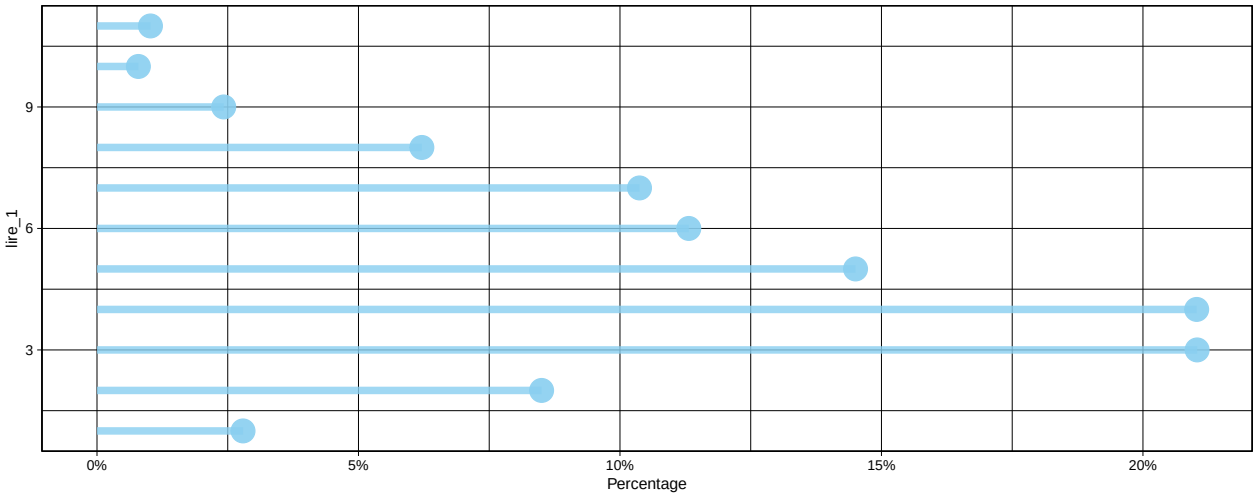
Where would you place yourself politically? Choose on a scale from 1 to 11, where 1 means politically far left and 11 means politically far right.

Scale

1= very left

11= very right

Distribution



Agreement with VAA vote advice

Variable Name

match

Questiontext (og)

Für wie zutreffend halten Sie Ihr Voto-Ergebnis (die berechnete Nähe zu den einzelnen Listen und Parteien)?

Questiontext (en)

How accurate do you consider your Voto result (the calculated proximity to the individual lists and parties)?

Scale

1= sehr zutreffend

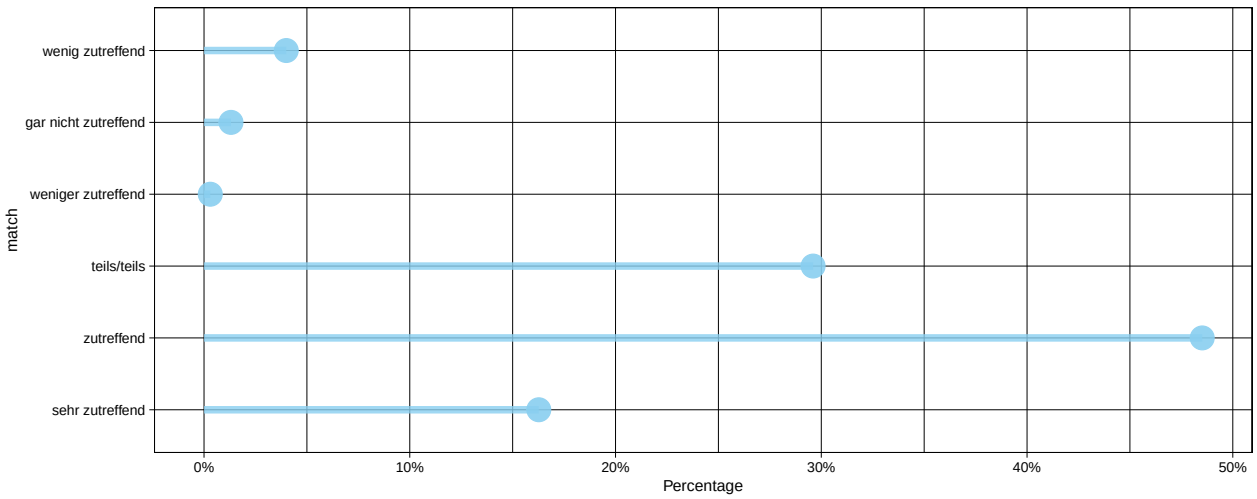
2= zutreffend

3= teils/teils

4= wenig zutreffend

5= gar nicht zutreffend

Distribution



Usefulness of the VAA

Variable Name

wahlomat

Questiontext (og)

Wie hilfreich fanden Sie Voto bei der Findung Ihrer Wahlentscheidung?

Questiontext (en)

How helpful did you find Voto in making your voting decision?

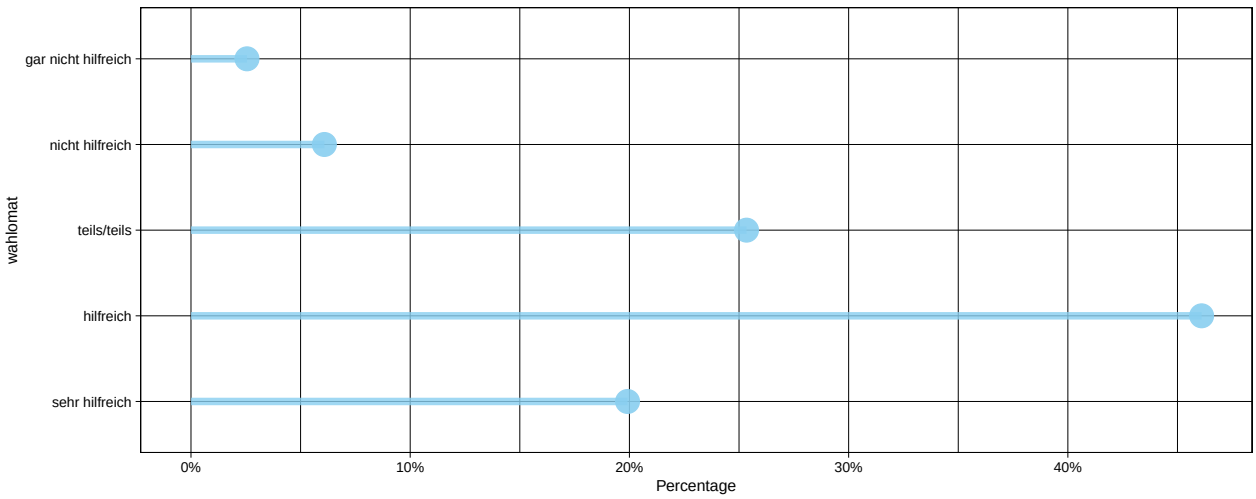
Scale

1= sehr hilfreich

2= hilfreich

3= teils/teils

4= nicht hilfreich

5= gar nicht hilfreich

Distribution