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Inequality, Identity, and the Long-Run Evolution of Political Cleavages in Israel 1949-2019

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World Inequality Lab

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Abstract

This paper draws on pre- and post-election surveys to address the long run evolution of voting patterns in Israel from 1949 to 2019. The heterogeneous ethnic, cultural, educational, and religious backgrounds of Israelis created a range of political cleavages that evolved throughout its history and continue to shape its political climate and its society today. Despite Israel's exceptional characteristics, we find similar patterns to those found for France, the UK and the US. Notably, we find that in the 1960s–1970s, the vote for left-wing parties was associated with lower social class voters. It has gradually become associated with high social class voters during the late 1970s and later. We also find a weak inter-relationship between inequality and political outcomes, suggesting that despite the social class cleavage, identity-based or "tribal" voting is still dominant in Israeli politics.

Keywords: Political cleavages, Political economy, Income inequality, Israel

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1 Introduction

This paper draws on pre- and post-election surveys to address the long run evolution of voting patterns in Israel from 1949 to 2019. The heterogeneous ethnic, cultural, educational, and religious backgrounds of Israelis created a range of political cleavages that evolved throughout its history and continue to shape its political climate and its society today. Studying these cleavages, their historical origins and their evolution through the lens of the socio-economic context is the goal of this paper.

Within a broader, international context, studying Israel is motivated specifically by its uniqueness in several key issues, compared to other high-income economies:

- The influence of the Arab-Israeli conflict on Israeli politics, and the importance of a large minority of Palestinian citizens in Israel, both ethnically and religiously
- The governance of a strong socialist party in the 30 years that followed the creation of Israel
- The high levels of income inequality and their exceptional evolution
- Its geographical isolation and its unique immigration pattern (essentially accepting all Jewish immigrants and rejecting the rest)
- The role of religion and Jewish heritage in Israeli politics (as well as no separation of religion and state)

These unique issues seemingly make the political cleavages in Israel less likely to be driven by the factors observed in other high-income countries. Yet, as this paper shows, the most dramatic change in the structure of political cleavages in Israel is similar to that observed in other high-income democracies such as France or the US: in the 1960s and 1970s, the vote for left-wing parties was associated with lower education and lower social class voters. It has gradually become associated with high social class voters. This paper also highlights the weak political response to inequality in Israel.

Despite geographical, ethnic and religious peculiarities, the case of Israel can be compared to other high-income countries that tend to be more ethnically and religiously homogeneous (Piketty, 2018). The long run trajectory of the interaction between political cleavages and socio-economic aspects is therefore rather similar. It reinforces the claim that in the long run, global effects are more important to political outcomes than country-specific circumstances (Garrett, 1998; Merom, 1999).

2 A Short Political History of Israel

Israel is a parliamentary republic with proportional representation, in which the parliament (the Knesset) is elected every 4 years or less. The prime minister is usually the leader of the biggest party. So far, there have been 23 parliamentary elections, the first in 1949 and the last in 2020.

Understanding the political cleavages in Israel requires contextualizing them in the history that precedes independence. The Land of Israel was under Ottoman rule for 400 years until conquered by the British Empire during World War I. It was a British colony until 1948, when Israel declared its independence, following the 1947 United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine. During the first half of the 20th century, much of the Jewish population in Mandatory Palestine was of Eastern European origin,[1] with its Zionist leadership deeply influenced by socialist ideas. The Holocaust, and later, the Palestinian exodus and the exodus of Jews from Muslim countries in North Africa and Asia, substantially changed the demographic composition of Israel. Despite government efforts to impose a "melting pot" approach, many of the large differences between the various groups persist to this day – religiously, economically, and educationally, among others, contributing to the political cleavages described below.

From 1948 to 1977, a single party – Mapai (Workers' Party of the Land of Israel, which would later merge to become the Israeli Labor Party) – was in power, and after 1977, the liberal-right party Likud also regularly imposed itself. Yet, until 2009 the political parties on either side of the political map found difficulties forming stable coalitions, forcing a grand coalition of the two largest parties – the Likud and the Labor – between 1984 and 1990 and again, for shorter periods, in the early 2000s. Figure 1 presents the evolution of the parliament seat share of different political blocs.[2]

This evolution also reflects the transformation over time of a multiple elites system, somewhat similar to that described by Maman (1997) and Piketty (2018). Politically, the dominance of the socialist left was gradually replaced by the dominance of the right: the Israeli Labor Party (Ha'avoda) has not won a parliamentary election since 1999, and at the time of writing, following the election in March 2020, it has only 3 out of 120 seats in the Knesset. This paper also shows the gradual rapprochement of the economic and financial elite to the Labor Party and other parties on the left. In the 1949 election, the share of left votes in Tel Aviv, the economic center of Israel, was lower than the share of left votes in other regions by 10 percentage points. In 2019 it was higher by 23 percentage points.

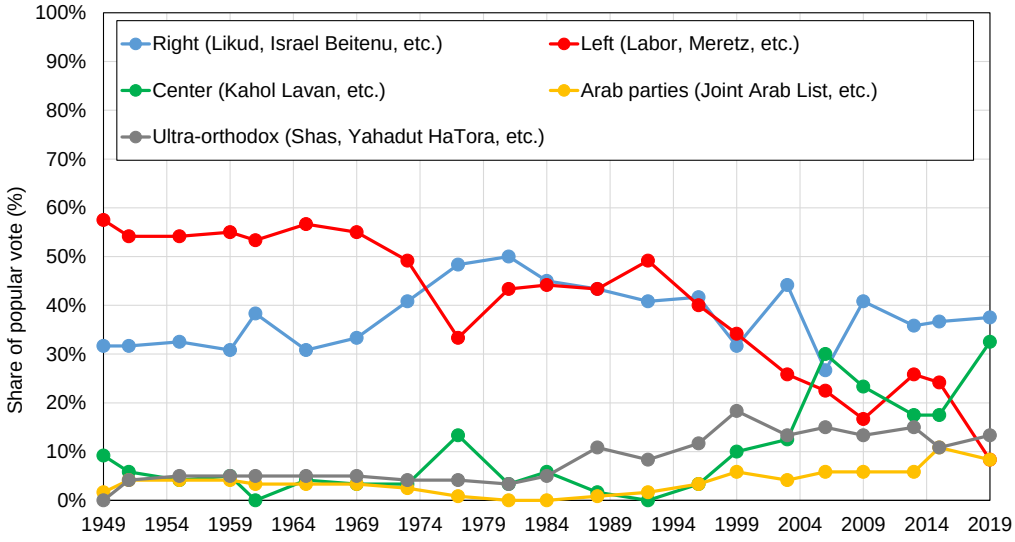
The decay of the Labor Party went hand-in-hand with the rise of major center parties, appealing to many disappointed Labor voters. Center parties were always part of the political landscape in Israel. Yet, they became particularly influential during the past two decades, with Kadima being the biggest party after the 2006 and 2009 elections, and Blue and White in the September 2019 election (Hazan, 2007; Shamir et al., 2017; Knoller, 2017).

This is also an indicator for an evolution in the ideological differences between left, center and right-wing parties in Israel, which were initially rather large. They became narrower over time. This is true from an economic perspective as well as from other perspectives, such as the Arab-Israeli conflict. For example, Mapam, the second largest party in the first Israeli parliament, was a socialist party that identified with the Soviet Union during the late 1940s and early 1950s.

[1] Based on data from "A Survey of Palestine" published in 1946 for the Palestine and Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Jewish Problems in Palestine (1946).

[2] The definition of each party by bloc is given in the appendix. In Israel the difference between the share of seats and the popular vote is small compared to other countries. This is due to proportional representation and a historically low electoral threshold.

Figure 1 - General election results in Israel, 1949-2019



Source: author's computations using official election results.
Note: the figure shows the share of votes received by different political blocs. The definition of each party by bloc, and a historical breakdown of left and right blocs by party are given in Table A1.

Over the years Mapam has evolved into Meretz, a party that sees itself as a Western-European-influenced social-democratic party, with an ideology that focuses on human rights and liberal values, and on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In addition, the peace agreement between Israel and Egypt, the first between Israel and an Arab country, was achieved during the first right-wing led government, in 1979, despite a common view of the right as being hawkish. Similarly, the major liberalization of the Israeli economy, started in the late 1970s, was continued under the Labor prime minister Shimon Peres in the mid-1980s, and under the Labor-led coalition of 1992–1996. These examples share similarities with processes visible in other countries, in similar periods, for instance, the Thatcher era and the Blair era in the UK, or the Reagan era and the Clinton era in the US (Knoller, 2017).

This paper focuses on the division between left and right. This is the dominant political rivalry in Israel. Yet, a large share of the population in Israel does not take a direct part in this rivalry. The ultra-orthodox community, about 10 percent of the population, traditionally votes for its own parties and is characterized by relatively high turnout rates. The Arab population, about 20 percent of Israel's population, primarily votes for Arab sectorial parties and is characterized by relatively low turnout rates.

A division into political blocs (see Figure 1) generally includes the Arab parties in the same bloc with the left-wing and center parties, and the ultra-orthodox parties with the right-wing parties (see also appendix Figure A1). Yet, up until the 2010s, political alliances between left-wing parties and ultra-orthodox parties were common, whereas some center parties were closer

to the right. The division into blocs helps in the analysis of long-run trends and is useful for understanding specific cleavages, as it allows dividing the political map into two blocs that are almost equal since 1977. I therefore choose to focus on these two blocks to study the evolution of political cleavages. The main results remain largely unchanged without performing this strict division (see appendix Figure A2).

This paper focuses on Israeli politics from the late 1960s onward. Yet, it is worth pointing out that political cleavages within the Zionist movement had already existed since the late 19th century, both in Europe and in Palestine. During the British Mandate for Palestine, the Assembly of Representatives was a parliamentary institution for the Jewish population in Palestine, with little authority and power, but it was still elected through democratic elections. In all elections from 1920 to 1944, the left-wing parties won by large margins. In parallel, the World Zionist Organization, holding congresses attended by representatives of various Zionist movements, reflected, more than 100 years ago, some of the cleavages characterizing Israel today: clashes between secular and religious movements, socialists and liberals, and moderates and extremists (Cohen, 1951).

3 Inequality and Structural Reforms

The second half of the twentieth century saw Israel gradually becoming a rich country, with income per capita comparable to Western European countries. This development has also been accompanied by a sharp rise in income inequality. Like other Western countries, inequality started rising in the 1970s. It reached its highest levels in the mid-2000s and has been decreasing since then (see appendix Figure A3). The long-run evolution of inequality is however rather smooth, making it difficult to identify the impact of various political outcomes on it. Specifically, between 1977 and 2003, years characterized by increasing inequality, almost every election led to a change in power between the left and the right.

The major political change of 1977 led to reforms aimed at liberalizing the economy, which was heavily regulated and centralized before. A major set of such reforms was implemented in 1985 by a grand coalition led by Labor prime minister Shimon Peres (Fischer, 1987). This is a standard explanation for the increasing income inequality during the 1980s and 1990s (Kristal and Cohen, 2007; Dahan, 2017). Yet, the transition process into a market economy and the privatization of numerous government-owned corporations lasted through the 2000s under multiple governments from both sides of the political map.

During 2001–2002, following the dot-com crash and amid the Second Intifada, a period of intense violent clashes between Israelis and Palestinians, the Israeli economy faced a severe recession. This led to a series of reforms which included tax cuts, wage cuts in the public sector, and reductions in transfers. These, in turn, led to a decrease in unemployment and a sharp increase in labor force participation. This is perceived as the main explanation for the decrease in pre-tax income inequality (Dahan, 2017). Thus, while major fiscal and structural reforms may have dominated the evolution of income inequality in Israel, their origin does not seem to stem from particularly identifiable political changes, but rather from economic crises independent of the

ruling party's identity.

The opposite direction of causality can be tested. The reforms, announced during 2002 and early 2003 by the Likud-led government to help the Israeli economy recover from a deep recession, were criticized for their impact on economically disadvantaged groups, and sparked social protests during the summer of 2003. One of the major reforms, in particular, was child benefit cuts.[3] This reform had no direct effect on adults with no children, or on adults whose children were above the age of 18, but substantially affected families with many young children due to the non-linear child benefit scheme. Many families that depended on welfare benefits were substantially hurt, mainly through changes that made the criteria for receiving welfare benefits stricter. Thus, lower classes were seemingly hurt the most by the reforms. I use this to test whether self-identified lower-class voters were more likely to move away from the right in general, and specifically towards the left, given that in the 2006 election the Labor Party was led by Amir Peretz, perceived at the time as "the leader of the redistributors" (Lochery, 2007).

Strikingly, according to available data, there is no evidence that people who were hurt relatively more by the economic reforms were more likely to move away from the right than the rest. In fact, self-identified lower-class voters were significantly more likely to move from the left to the right between 2003 and 2006 and less likely to move from the right to the left. In addition, despite the dramatic effect of the reforms on families with many children, such families did not seem to "retaliate" the right: the probability of changing a vote from right to non-right did not increase with household size.[4] These results provide clear evidence for the lack of democratic response to inequality.[5]

There could be many reasons for the weak electoral impact of the reforms. First, they were implemented almost immediately after the formation of the government following the 2003 election. By 2006 their negative impact had diminished substantially. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, the reforms proved to be successful for the recovery of the Israeli economy. By 2006, the unemployment rate was down to pre-recession levels and wage growth in 2004 and 2005 was high. Furthermore, Israel withdrew from Gaza strip in the summer of 2005. This significant landmark in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was (and still is) controversial within the Israeli public and may have reduced the importance of socio-economic topics in the 2006 election. In addition to these, identity politics, or "tribal voting", plays major role in Israel (Mizrachi, 2011).

[3]The 2003 child benefit reforms consisted of three main changes:

- A nominal reduction of all child benefits
- The cancellation of the increasing benefits by child number (prior to the reform the more children a family had, the higher the benefit per child was)
- The cancellation of the birth stipend from the second birth onward (this is a one-time benefit for a mother giving birth, given after each birth prior to the reform)

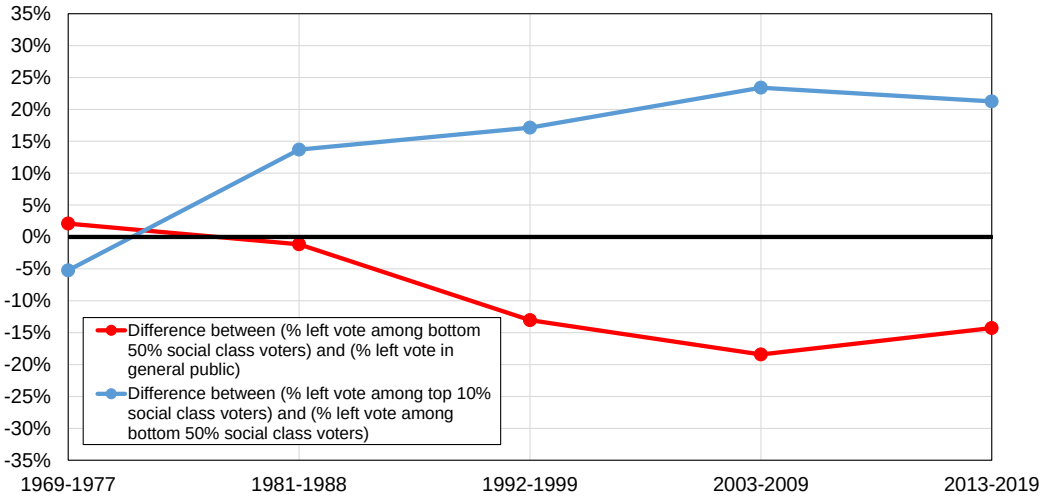
[4]The results of this analysis are presented in Figure A4 and Table A2 of the appendix. They show that the probability of a right-voter in 2003 to switch to non-right or left in 2006 is independent from either household size or belonging to the lower class, after controlling for other socio-demographic variables.

[5]This is thoroughly discussed in the Israeli context with a focus on the ethnicity cleavage in Mizrachi (2011).

4 From the People's Party to Elitism

The weak political response to changes in inequality suggests that the evolution of socio-economic cleavages occurs on long time scales. Figure 2 plots the difference between left and right votes by social class.[6] It depicts a transition. The bottom 50% used to be slightly more left-leaning than the general public before the 1980s. This has changed gradually during the past 40 years, and voters who self-identify as lower-class are much more likely to vote right than the general public in recent years. At the same time, the top 10% became more left-leaning. Self-identified middle class respondents were almost as likely to vote left as the entire population.

Figure 2 - Vote for left by social class, 1969-2019



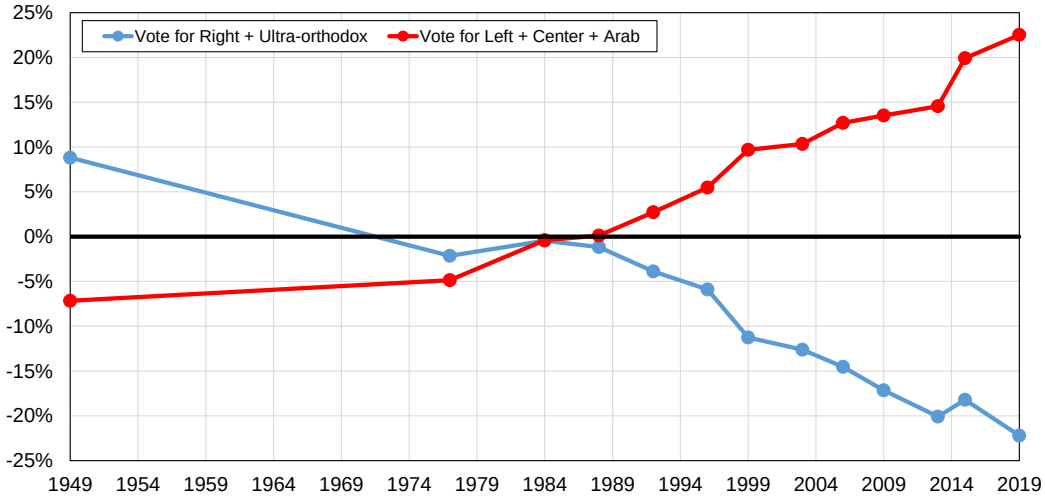
Source: author's computations using INES election surveys.
Note: the figure shows how left vote depends on self-reported social class, controlling for age, gender, education and household size. Until the late 1990s lower classes were as likely to vote left (including center and Arab parties) as the general public. They became much less likely to vote left during the last three decades. The opposite occured, to a lower extent, among the top 10% upper class.

Figure 2 shows that the transition mainly occurred during the 1980s and 1990s. Politically, the initial dominance of the left was gradually replaced by the dominance of the right. The economic elite took an opposite route. It was initially estranged from the Labor Party leadership (Goldstein, 2018), but that changed gradually over time. In the 2019 parliamentary election, the most educated and those of high social class were significantly more likely to vote left and significantly less likely to vote right than the rest of the population.

[6] This uses data from the Israel National Election Studies (INES, see more below). The class definitions vary in the INES surveys used in the analysis in different years. Lower class included respondents answering "lower class" or "working class". Higher-middle class and high class are grouped into a single class defined as high class. Also, the share of respondents in each class changed over time and an adjustment is necessary for standardization (see also Piketty (2018)). I assume that within each class left and right voting fractions are fixed, which leads to an underestimation of the steepness observed. This adjustment also reduces substantially the uncertainty of the results.

Our data do not go back to the 1940s and 1950s, however, this transition becomes even more striking when comparing Tel Aviv, as representing more of the socio-economic elite, to the general public in Israel. The motivation for such a comparison is that Tel Aviv is perceived as representing the rich and well-educated in Israel, and its metropolitan area is responsible for about 50% of the economic output of Israel (Berube et al., 2015). Using the electoral results in Tel Aviv[7] it is possible to observe the evolution of left and right vote share in Tel Aviv and to compare it to that in Israel as a whole. Assuming Tel Aviv indeed represents the rich and well-educated, the data show a transition among this elite from right to left, with respect to the entire country (see Figure 3). These data suggest that the transition illustrated in Figure 2 potentially started right after the creation of Israel (see appendix Figure A5 for a similar comparison of New York City and the United States).

Figure 3 - Vote for right and left in Tel Aviv, 1949-2019



Source: author's computations using historical election results (multiple sources).
Note: the figure shows the difference between right (including ultra-orthodox parties) and left (including center and Arab parties) vote in Tel Aviv and the general public in Israel. Tel Aviv used to be more right-leaning and less left-leaning than the general public in the first election. It gradually became more left-leaning.

Figure 3 is only a basic comparison, of course. It ignores the changes in the socio-demographic composition of Tel Aviv. Yet, it strengthens a previous observation: Israel, despite its inherent differences with other high-income countries, shows somewhat similar long-run political patterns to those detected in the UK, the US and France.

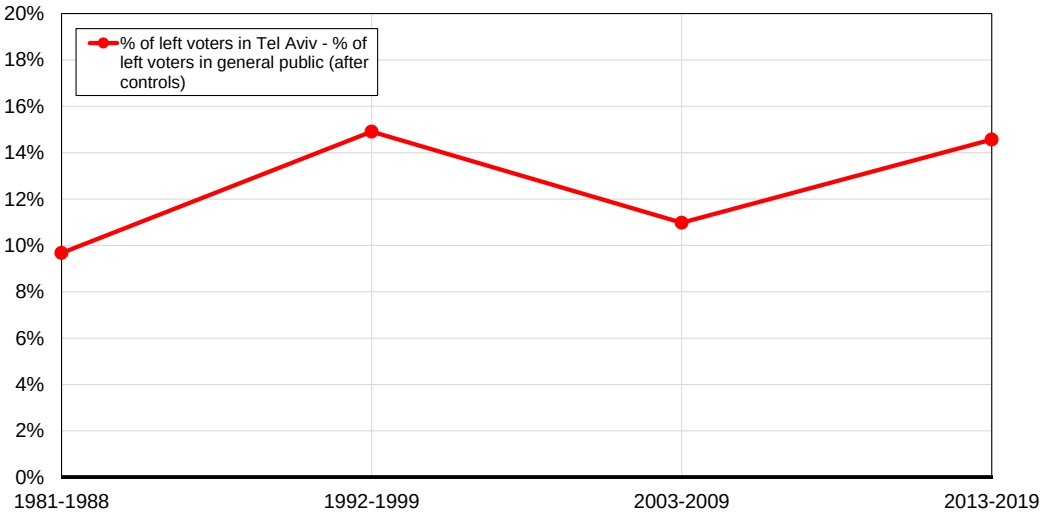
I also use the Israel National Election Studies database to test this pattern.[8] Figure 4 shows

[7]Data for the 1949 election was taken from Ha'aretz newspaper archive. Data for the 1977 election was obtained from Israel Social Science Data Center (http://isdc.huji.ac.il). Through the Tel Aviv municipality it was possible to obtain the results from 1984 onward.

[8]The database can be accessed at: https://www.tau.ac.il/~ines/. In all the figures that are based on the surveys some elections are missing. Unless mentioned otherwise, this is because not all questions needed for the analyses were asked in all surveys.

that even after controlling for age, gender, household size, social class, education, religiosity and ethnic origin, residents of Tel Aviv are generally more left-leaning. I consider this as a residual identity dimension of Tel Aviv. These results do not pick up the trend observed in Figure 3. It is possible that the residual dimension is fairly stable over time, with much of the trend observed in Figure 3 being due to changes in the composition of the population of Tel Aviv, becoming gradually richer and more secular with respect to Israel in general.

Figure 4 - Residual identity component in Tel Aviv, 1981-2015



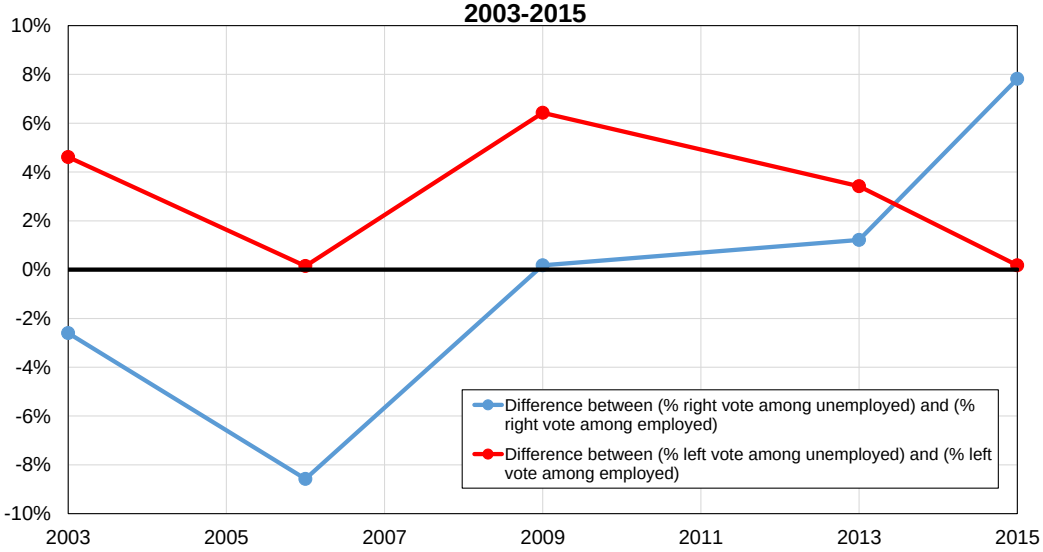
Source: author's computations using INES election surveys.
Note: the figure shows the difference between left vote in Tel Aviv and the general public (excluding Tel Aviv) after controling for self-reported social class, ethnicity, religiosity, gender, education, household size and age. It illustrates a stable residual left-leaning identity component in Tel Aviv.

A recent literature on the rise of radical right parties in high-income countries has identified a relationship between unemployment and right-wing voting. This is particularly true for the UK in explaining the success of the UKIP prior to the EU referendum (Becker, Fetzer and Novy, 2017), for Germany and the rise of the AfD (Franz, Fratzscher and Kritikos, 2018), and for Sweden and the rise of the Swedish Democrats (Dal Bó et al., 2018). In these countries there is an additional impact of immigration and exposure to globalization which affects voting. In Israel, these aspects do not play a large role in politics. Immigration to Israel is essentially limited to Jews, and many of them already have families in Israel. Therefore, it does not create the same type of social impact as in many Western countries.

Figure 5 shows an increasing trend in the difference in right voting between unemployed or inactive voters and employed voters. In 2003, unemployed or inactive voters were as likely to vote for the right as other voters. They then became slightly more right-leaning than employed voters. This, again, resonates with current trends in other high-income countries. Yet, the unemployment rate in Israel is low in recent years and has been almost monotonically decreasing from about 10 percent to 3.5 percent between 2003 and 2019. Thus, despite the noticeable trend,

the practical influence of employment or unemployment on Israeli politics is small.[9]

Figure 5 - Vote for right and left among unemployed or inactive, 2003-2015



Source: author's computations using INES election surveys.
Note: the figure shows the difference between right and left voting among unemployed and among employed. There is a mild trend of increasing vote for right among unemployed in recent years.

5 From Class to Education and Ethnicity, and Back

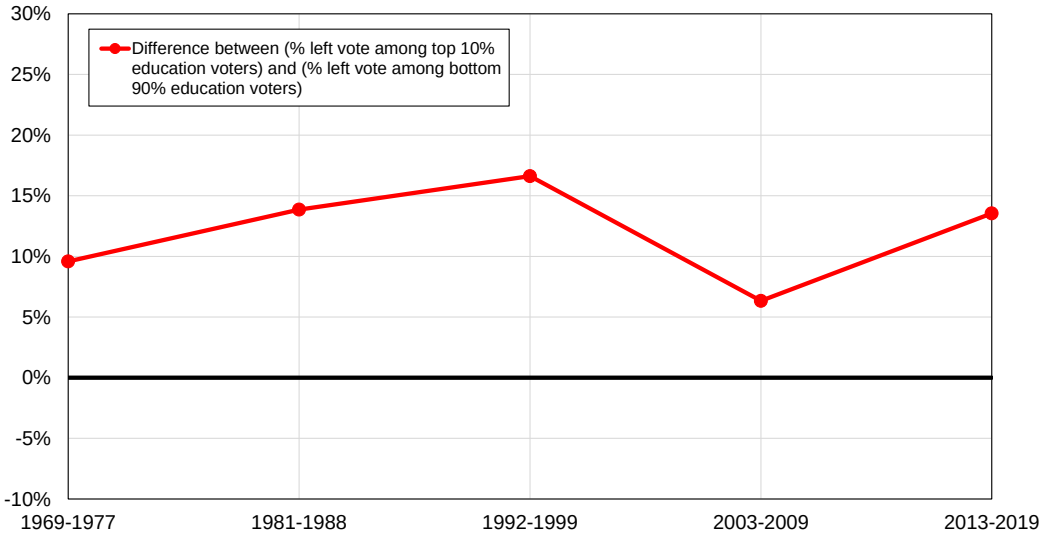
Class is traditionally linked to education. The growing tendency of the upper classes to vote for the left, observed previously, is therefore also visible when looking at education. Figure 6 shows the support for left parties in Israel among higher-educated voters.[10] During the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, education seemed to have a significant association with left voting that may not have existed earlier on. Despite a noticeable reduction in the importance of education in the 2000s, there has been a clear upward trend in its importance during the 2010s, so that the most educated voters seem to have gradually become more left-leaning than the least educated.

The evolution of the link between education and the vote resembles the evolution of voting by ethnic origin. The ethnic cleavage has played a major role in Israeli politics (Mizrachi, 2011). Figure 7 presents the relative support for right-wing parties among Sepharadic voters. Since the

[9] An unemployed or inactive respondent was defined as any respondent that is not working. This definition is much more inclusive than the real definition of unemployment. The real effect is thus probably even larger and more significant than what is found, *i.e.* that there is a sharper increasing trend in the likelihood of unemployed to vote right. Also, I note that this analysis precedes the coronavirus pandemic and its dramatic impact on unemployment in Israel.

[10] I assume that for each year left and right voting fractions are fixed within respondents with a college degree (a college degree or 15+ years of schooling – in some of the years, respondents were only asked for their number of years of schooling) and for those who are without. This is used to adjust for the growing share of people with college degrees.

Figure 6 - Vote for left by education, 1969-2019



Source: author's computations using INES election surveys.
Note: the figure shows how left vote depends on education, controlling for age, social class, religiosity, ethnic origin, household size and gender.

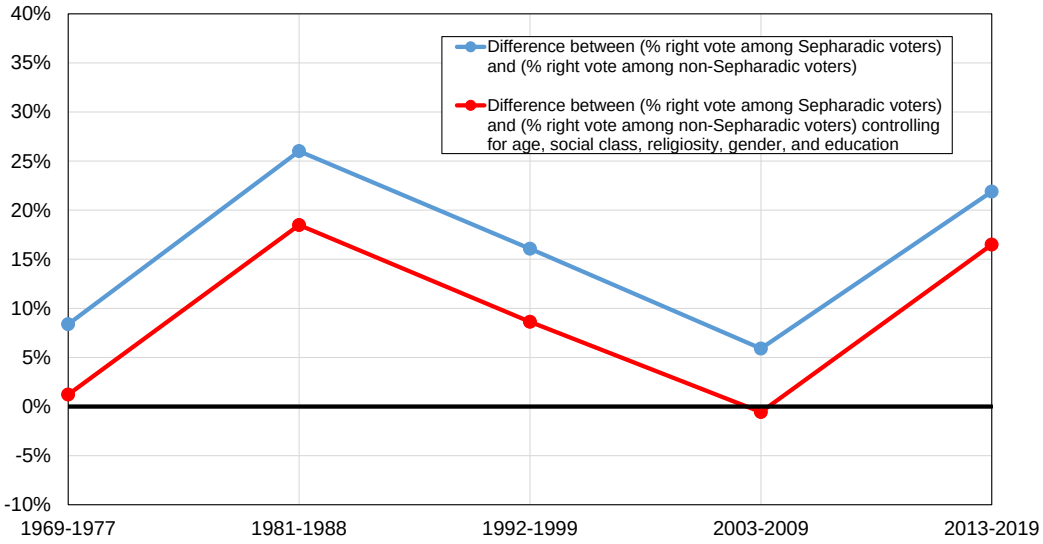
1970s, Sepharadic Jews (or Mizrachim – Jews who immigrated from Muslim countries in North Africa and Asia and their ancestors; the term Sepharadic may also refer to Jews whose origin is from Southern Europe – Greece, Bulgaria, Italy, Spain, and Portugal)[11] have been more likely to vote right, while Ashkenazi Jews (or Ashkenazim – Jews whose origin is in Central or Eastern Europe) have been more likely to vote left. This is a well-known and well-studied cleavage that is very present in the public discourse and in the media, partially due to long-lasting socio-economics gaps between Ashkenazim and Mizrachim. Despite those gaps, the differences in voting patterns between Mizrachim and non-Mizrachim exist and are statistically significant even after taking into account the gaps in education, social class and level of religiosity.

In the cases of the education and ethnicity cleavages there is an increasing polarization in recent years after a period of possible convergence. Yet, the results on the ethnic cleavage should be treated with caution. The data do not allow making a clear identification between Ashkenazim, Mizrachim and other Jewish ethnic groups until the last decade, origin was only inferred from the ethnic origin of respondents. In earlier years, Ashkenazim are defined as those who were born in Europe and North America, or whose father was born there. Mizrachim are defined similarly for Asia and Africa. The large immigration wave from the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and through the 1990s therefore increased the share of Ashkenazim in the surveys.[12]

[11] I do not make a distinction between Sepharadic and Mizrachi in this analysis, as the available data do not allow a clear distinction.

[12] See appendix Figure A6. The share of either Ashkenazim or Mizrachim decreases over time in our data. A large and growing share of the population is that of people born in Israel, and whose parents were also born in Israel. Such people, not defined as either Ashkenazim or Mizrachim according to our definition, would likely

Figure 7 - Vote for right among Sepharadic voters, 1969-2019



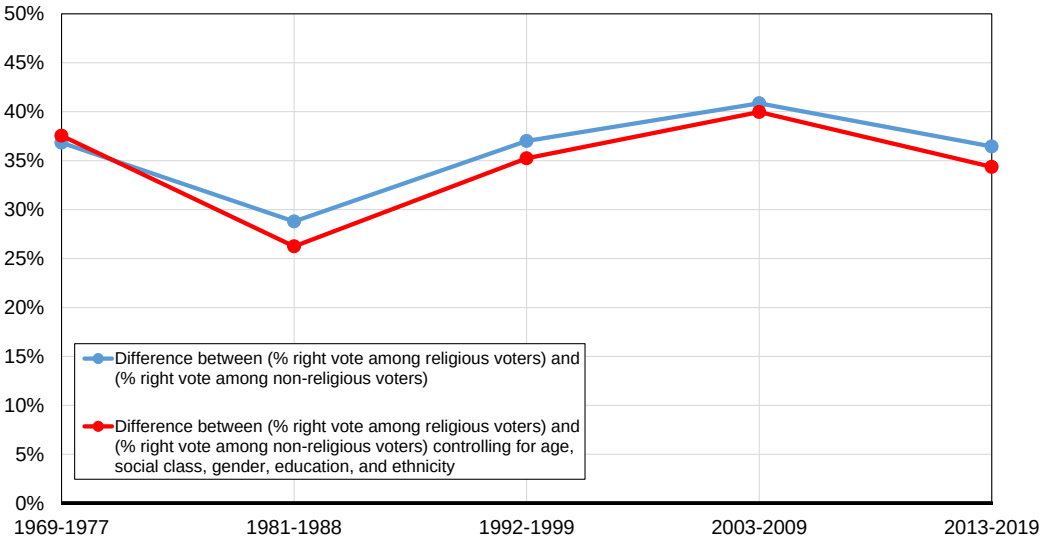
Source: author's computations using INES election surveys.
Note: the figure shows the difference between right vote among subjects identified as Sepharadic (or Mizrachi) and non-sepharadic.

Religiosity has a large impact on voting that is almost unaffected by controls, as seen in Figure 8.[13] Secular voters are more likely to vote left and less likely to vote right than religious voters. This also did not change substantially in the long run.

still consider themselves as belonging to one of these groups, nevertheless. The current data do not allow a more accurate definition. In addition, including immigrants from the Soviet Union as Ashkenazim may potentially lead to an underestimation of ethnic cleavages. Many immigrants vote for immigrant parties or other parties whose base is Russian-speaking Israelis, and are generally associated with the right, while the general Ashkenazi population is relatively more left-leaning.

[13]The definition of level of religiosity was based on the survey question: "To what extent do you observe religious tradition?" The survey respondents were given 4 options: "not at all", "a little", "a lot", "I observe all of it". Subjects that answered either "not at all" or "a little" were considered as secular.

Figure 8 - Vote for right among religious voters, 1969-2019



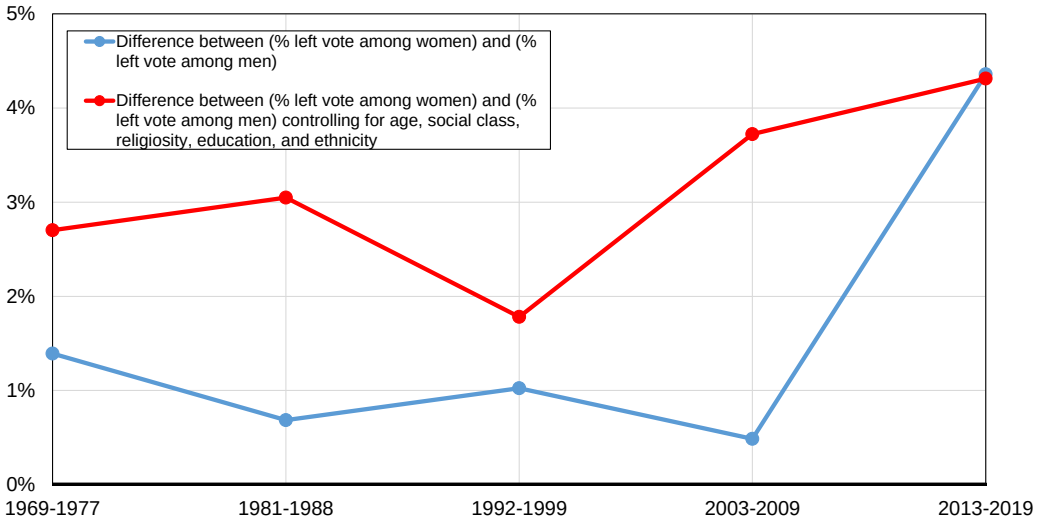
Source: author's computations using INES election surveys.
Note: the figure shows the difference between right vote among subjects identified as religious and non-religious. The results are similar to left vote among non-religious voters.

6 Gender Differences in Voting

An additional important cleavage is gender. In many countries, including Europe and North America, it was found that women have become more left-wing over time (Piketty, 2018). Figure 9 shows that in the case of Israel, men tend to be more right-leaning than women after controlling for age, religiosity, social class, education and ethnicity. Yet, the differences are small compared to the cleavages described above. They also do not have a noticeable long-run trend.

In general, the effect of gender on the vote is smaller in Israel than what was found in other countries. Yet, since 2006, center parties in Israel have received particularly large support from women – initially Kadima in 2006 and especially in 2009, HaTnua'a in 2013, and Yesh Atid in 2013 and 2015. Shamir and Gedalya-Lavy (2015) discuss in detail the "gender gap in voting" of the 2009 and 2013 elections in Israel. They find that "in the 2009 Knesset elections, a gender gap was evident among Jews in voting for Kadima and among Arabs in voting for Balad: Jewish women voted more than Jewish men for Kadima, which was led by a woman, Tzipi Livni; and Arab women voted more than Arab men for Balad, which assigned a realistic slot to a woman, Haneen Zoabi – the first time an Arab party has done so."

Figure 9 - Vote for left by gender, 1969-2019



Source: author's computations using INES election surveys.
Note: the figure shows the difference between left vote among women and men in Israel. Women are consistently more left-leaning than men, but only to a rather small degree, and only when controlling for other effects.

7 Conclusion

The long-run evolution of political cleavages in Israel resembles some of the long-run trends identified in other high-income countries, in particular the gradual shift over time of elites, in terms of self-reported social class and education, towards the left. This is despite Israel's political, social, and geo-political uniqueness. The dominance of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the public discourse in Israel, and the way it influences voters may have a strong short-run impact. Yet, the long-run dynamics may obey a rather universal trajectory that has deeper socio-economic drivers.

Tel Aviv serves as another example as Israel's economic and cultural center. Voters in Tel Aviv used to be more right-leaning than the general public but are now more left-leaning. A comparison of these trends between Tel Aviv and New York City serves as another evidence for the similarity in voting patterns between Israel and other high-income economies (see appendix Figure A5).

The cleavage between religious and secular voters in Israel is also similar to that observed in other Western countries. Indeed, practicing Jews are substantially more right-leaning than secular Jews. This is similar, for example, to the results found in France for practicing Catholics and voters with no religion (Piketty, 2018), even if the importance of this cleavage in determining actual political outcomes is stronger in Israel than in other Western countries, due to the large share of practicing Jews in the population.

A subtler observation, which is unique to Israel, is related to the ethnic cleavage between Ashkenazim and Mizrachim. Since the 1970s, Mizrachim have been generally more likely to vote right, while Ashkenazim have been generally more likely to vote left. I find an increasing polarization in voting between Ashkenazim and Mizrachim over the past decade that followed a decade of convergence.

Finally, there is no evidence of a strong political response to inequality in Israel. For example, the direct electoral impact of the major economic reforms of 2002-2003 is weak. While the reforms led to a short-run increase in income inequality (in the long run they are thought to have led to the reduction of after-tax inequality), they did not seem to have mattered for the election results.

These results have implications for the interpretation of similar processes in other countries. Israel, due to its uniqueness discussed above, did not experience globalization in a similar way as other high-income countries, and also did not see a strong rise in anti-establishment parties in the last decade. Thus, the similarities in the evolution of political cleavages related to education and class in different countries reflect mechanisms that need further exploration, and are likely to reflect deeper long-run processes.

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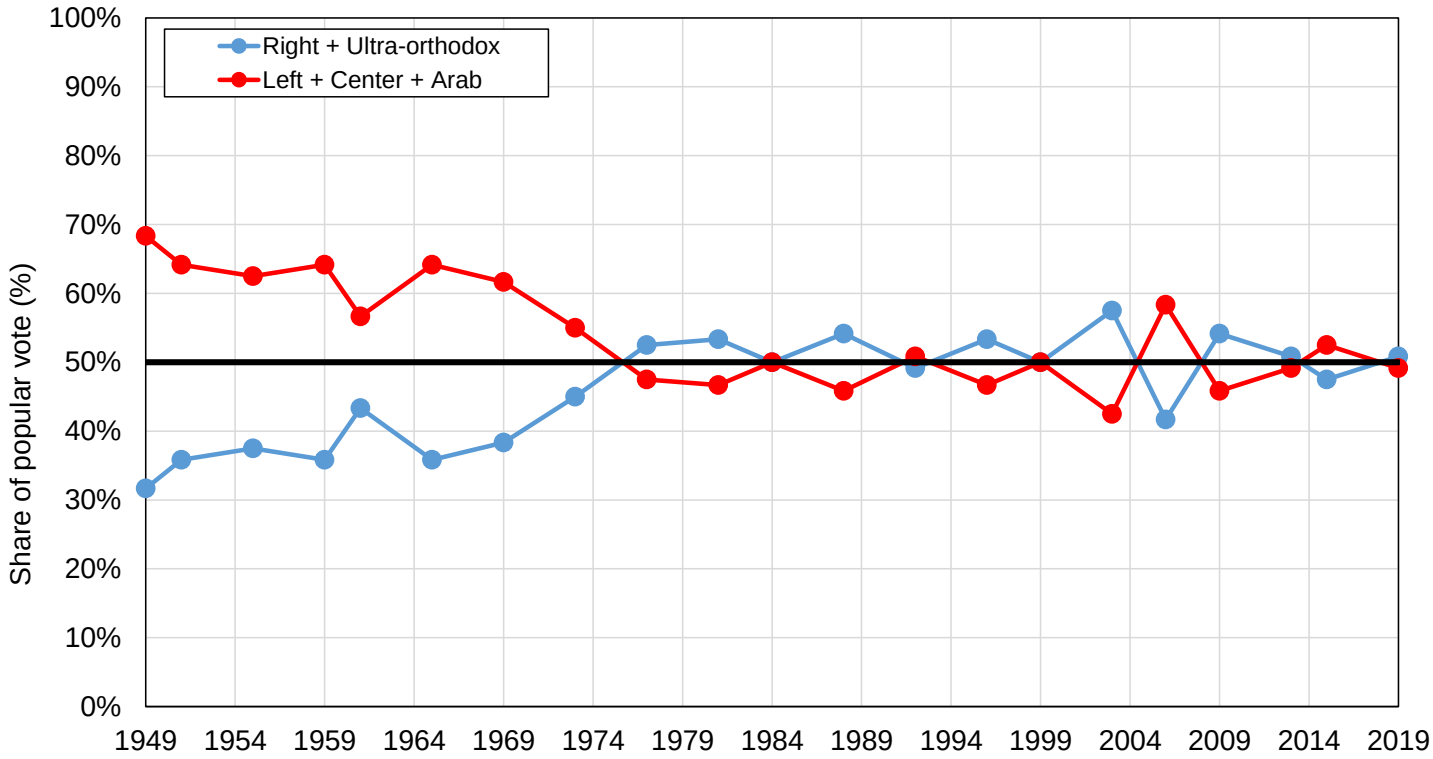
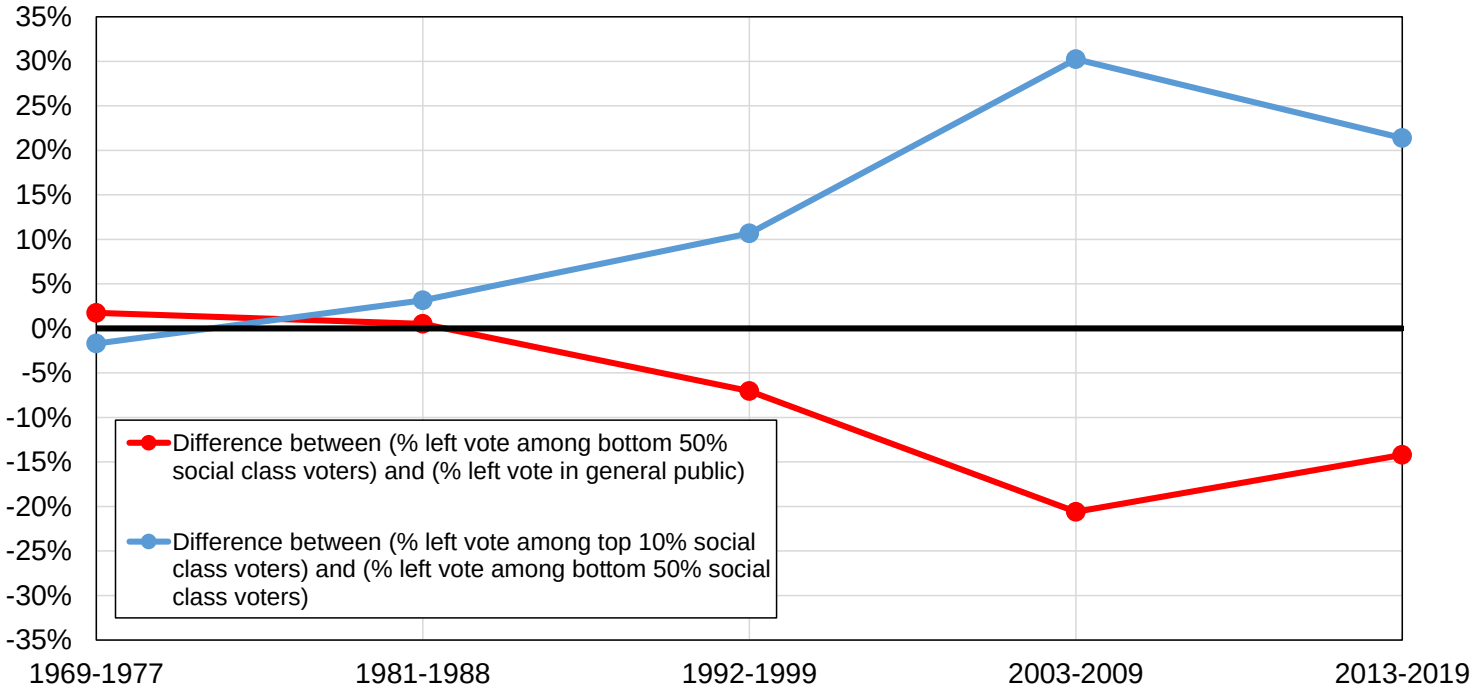
Figure A1 - General election results in Israel by bloc, 1949-2019



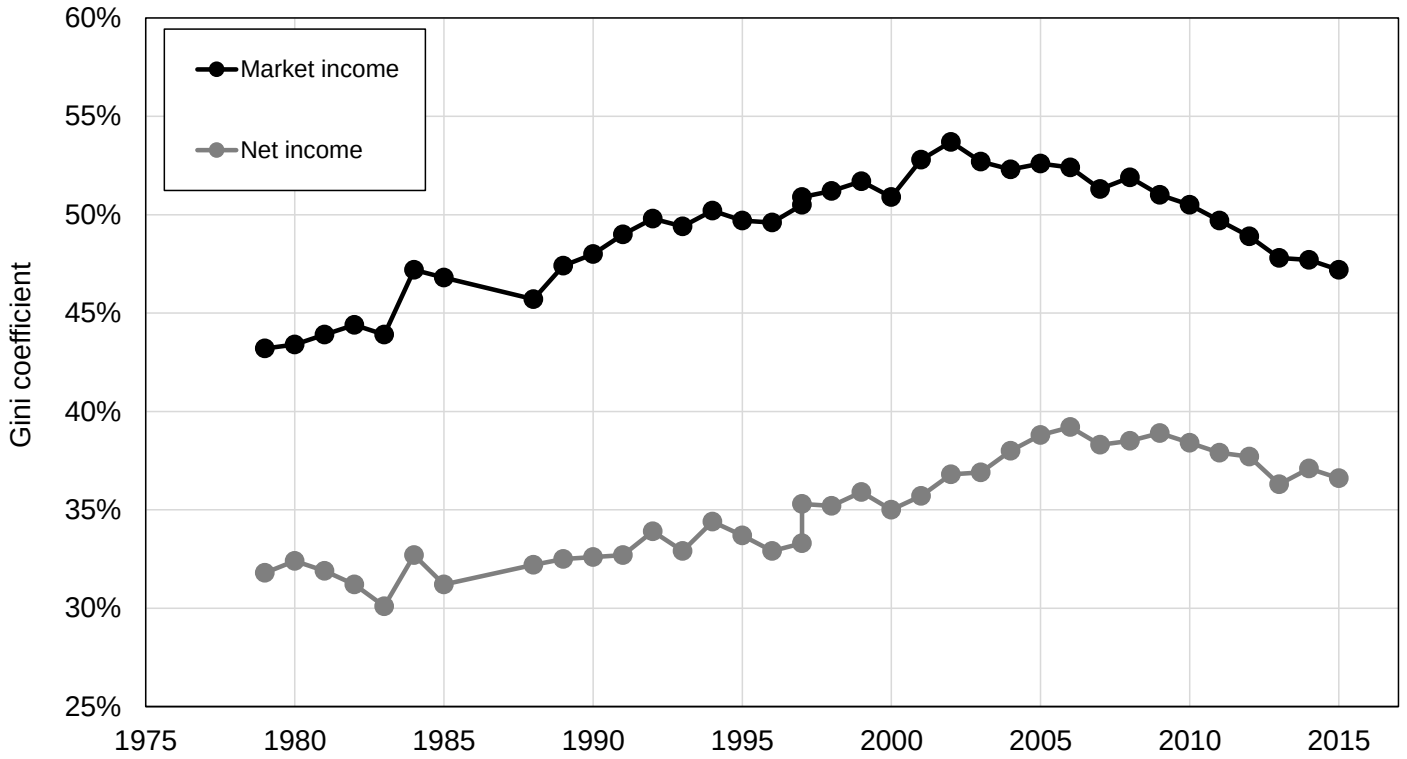
Source: author's computations using official election results.
Note: the figure shows the share of votes received by different political blocs. The definition of each party by bloc, and a historical breakdown of left and right blocs by party are given in Table A1.

Figure A2 - Vote for left by social class (excluding center and Arab parties), 1969-2019



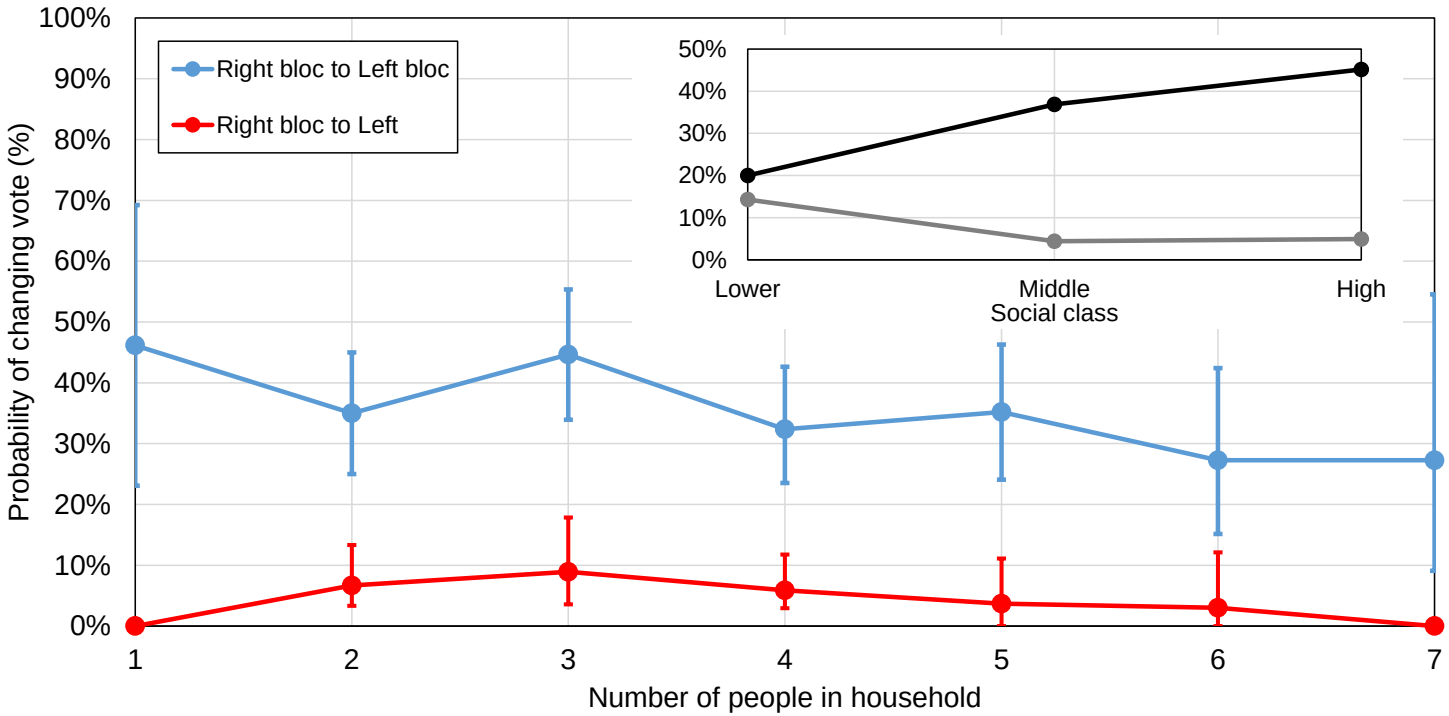
Source: author's computations using INES election surveys.
Note: the figure shows how left vote depends on self-reported social class, controlling for age, gender, education and household size. Here center parties and Arab parties were excluded from the definition of left. Compare with Figure 2.

Figure A3 - Income inequality in Israel, 1979-2015



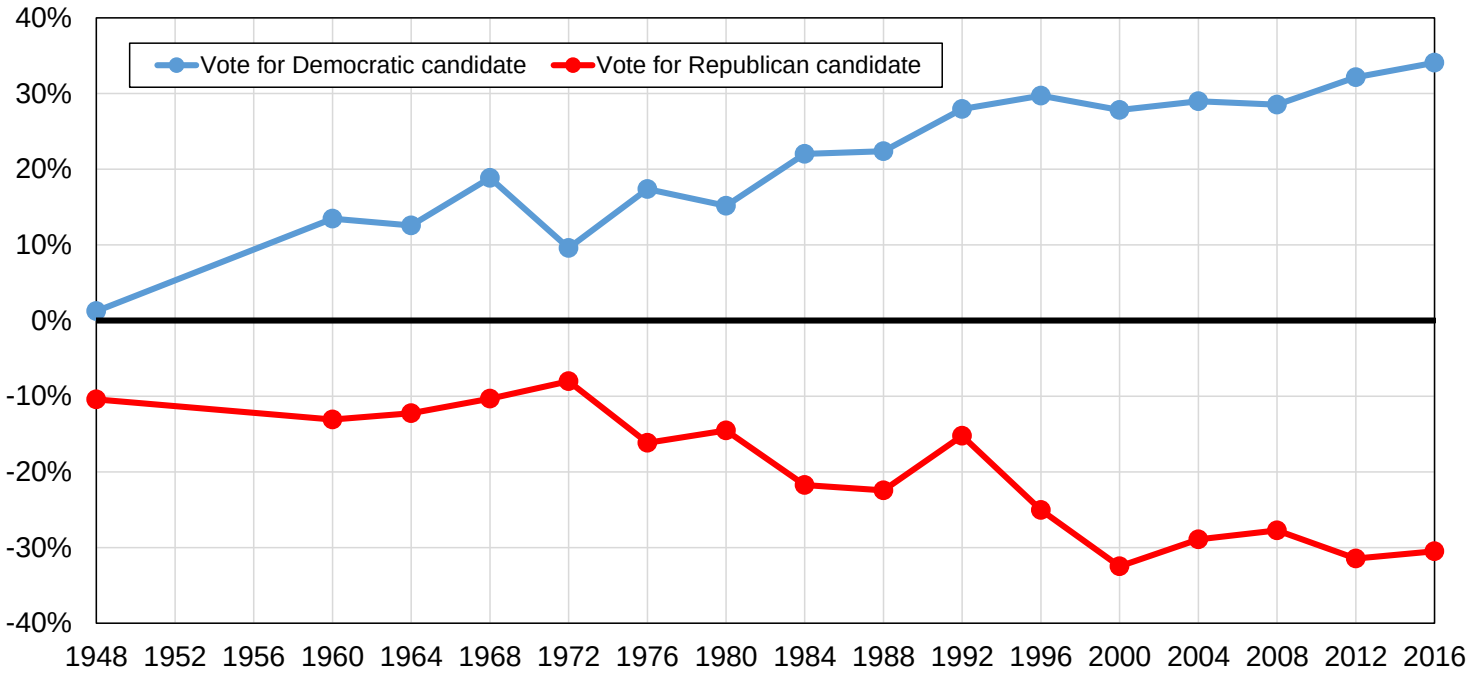
Source: Dahan (2017)
Note: the figure shows the evolution of income inequality in Israel quantified using the Gini coefficient. It is estimated for market income, i.e. without including taxes and transfers, and for net income.

Figure A4 - The effect of the 2003 reforms on left and right vote



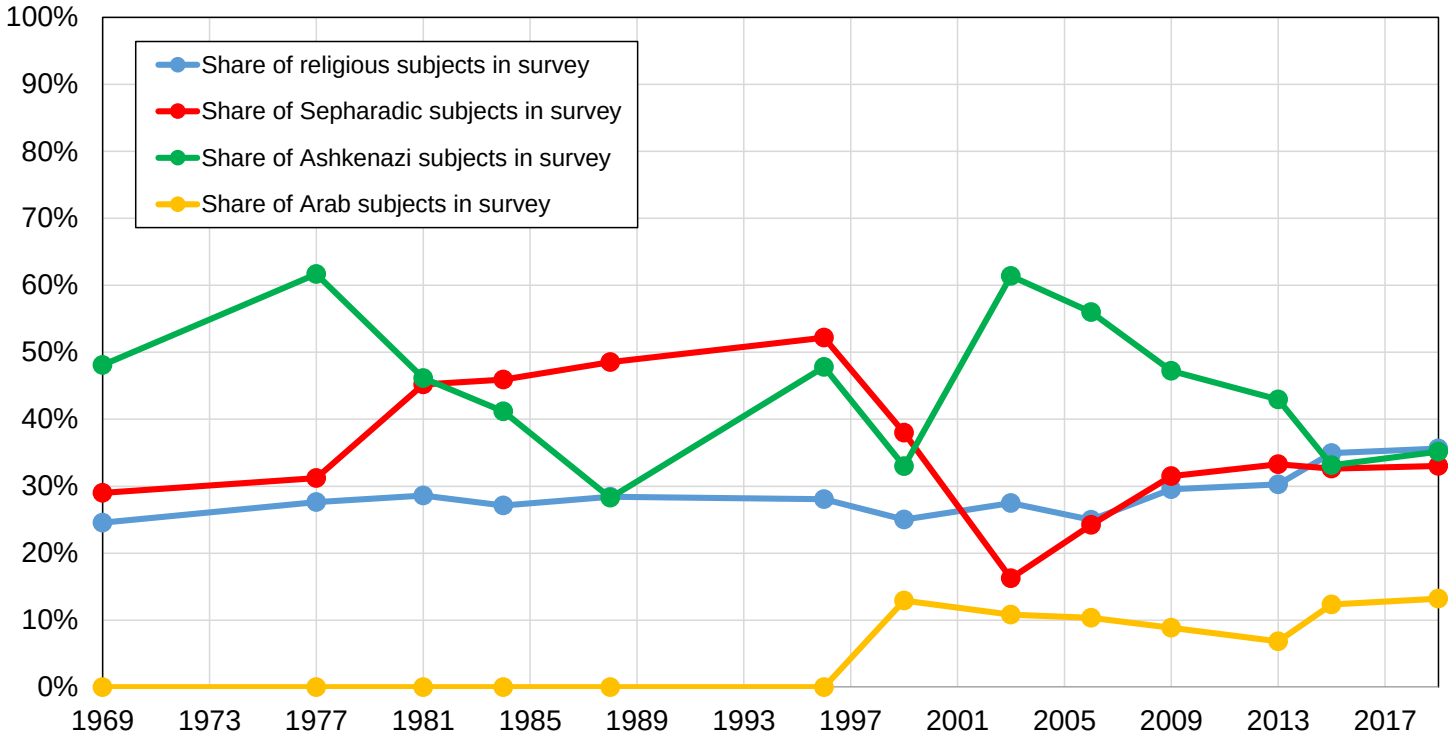
Source: author's computations using INES election surveys.
Note: the figure shows the probability for right bloc voters in the 2003 election to change their vote to the left bloc (blue) or to left (red) in the 2006 election by household size.
The inlet shows the probability to change from right to left (black) and from left to right (grey) between 2003 and 2006 by self-reported social class.

Figure A5 - Vote for the Republican and Democratic candidates in New York City, 1948-2016



Source: author's computations using the Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections.
Note: the figure shows the difference (in percentage points) between the share of votes to the Republican and Democratic candidates in New York City and the general public in the United States (compare with Figure 4).

Figure A6 - Share of voters by ethnicity and religiosity, 1969-2019



Source: author's computations using INES election surveys.
Note: this figure shows the share of religious voters in the INES election surveys, as well as voters of different ethnic origin. See endnotes for the definitions of religious subjects and subjects of different ethnic origin. All shares are computed from the number of subjects intending to vote in the upcoming election.

Table A1 - Division of parties to blocs

Election year	Right (actual)	Right (survey)	Left (actual)	Left (survey)	Center (actual)	Center (survey)	Arab (actual)	Arab (survey)	Ultra-orthodox (actual)	Ultra-orthodox (survey)
1949	Herut; General Zionists; Fighters' list; United Religious Front		Mapai; Mapam; Maki		Wizo; Progressive Party; Yemenite Association; Sepharadim and Oriental Communities		Democratic List of Nazareth			
1951	Herut; General Zionists; Hapoel HaMizrachi; Mizrachi		Mapai; Mapam; Maki		Progressive Party; Yemenite Association; Sepharadim and Oriental Communities		Progress and Work; Agriculture and Development; Democratic List for Israeli Arabs		Poalei Agudat Israel; Agudat Israel	
1955	Herut; General Zionists; National Religious Front		Mapai; Mapam; Maki; Ahdut HaAvoda		Progressive Party		Progress and Work; Agriculture and Development; Democratic List for Israeli Arabs		Religious Torah Front	
1959	Herut; General Zionists; Mafdal		Mapai; Mapam; Maki; Ahdut HaAvoda		Progressive Party		Progress and Work; Agriculture and Development; Democratic List for Israeli Arabs; Cooperation and Brotherhood		Religious Torah Front	
1961	Herut; Liberal Party; Mafdal		Mapai; Mapam; Maki; Ahdut HaAvoda		-		Cooperation and Brotherhood; Progress and Development		Poalei Agudat Israel; Agudat Israel	
1965	Gahal; Mafdal; Independent Liberals		Alignment (Labor); Rakah; Maki; HaOlam Haze; Mapam; Rafi		-		Cooperation and Brotherhood; Progress and Development		Poalei Agudat Israel; Agudat Israel	
1969	Gahal; Mafdal; Free Center	Gahal; Mafdal; Free Center	Alignment (Labor); National List; Rakah; Maki; HaOlam Haze	Alignment (Labor); National List; Rakah; Maki; Haolam Haze	Independent Liberals	Independent Liberals	Cooperation and Brotherhood; Progress and Development	Cooperation and Brotherhood; Progress and Development	Poalei Agudat Israel; Agudat Israel	Poalei Agudat Israel; Agudat Israel
1973	Likud; Mafdal	Likud; Mafdal; Free Center; Reshima Ezrachit	Alignment (Labor); Moked; Rakah; Ratz	Alignment (Labor); Rakah; Maki; Haolam Haze	Independent Liberals	Independent Liberals	Progress and Development; Arab List for Bedouin and Villagers	Progress and Development; Arab List for Bedouin and Villagers	Religious Torah Front	Poalei Agudat Israel; Agudat Israel
1977	Likud; Mafdal; Shlomzion	Likud; Mafdal; Shlomzion	Alignment (Labor); Hadash; Sheli; Ratz	Alignment (Labor); Rakah; Ratz; Meri; Women's party; Moked	Independent Liberals; Dash; Peace and Development	Independent Liberals; Dash	United Arab List	-	Poalei Agudat Israel; Agudat Israel	Religious Torah Front
1981	Likud; Mafdal; Tami; Hatehia	Likud; Mafdal; Hatehia	Alignment (Labor); Hadash; Ratz	Alignment (Labor); Rakah; Sheli; Ratz	Telem; Shinui	Telem; Shinui	-	-	Agudat Israel	Poalei Agudat Israel; Agudat Israel
1984	Likud; Mafdal; Morasha; Tami; Kach; Hatehia	Likud; Mafdal; Morasha; Tami; Hatehia; Flatto-Sharon	Alignment (Labor); Hadash; Ratz; Progressive list for peace	Alignment (Labor); Hadash; Ratz; Sheli; Yahad; Lova Eliav	Shinui; Yahad; Ometz	Shinui; Yahad; Ometz	-	-	Agudat Israel; Shas	Agudat Israel; Shas
1988	Likud; Mafdal; Tzomet; Moledet; Hatehia	Likud; Mafdal; Tzomet; Moledet; Hatehia; Kach	Labor; Mapam; Ratz; Progressive list for peace; Hadash	Labor; Mapam; Ratz; Progressive list for peace	Shinui	Shinui; Meimad	Mada	-	Agudat Israel; Shas; Degel Hatora	Agudat Israel; Shas; Pagi
1992	Likud; Mafdal; Tzomet; Moledet	Likud; Mafdal; Tzomet; Moledet; Hatehia; Modai (new liberal party)	Labor; Meretz	Labor; Meretz	-	Shinui; Meimad; Russian immigrant party	Hadash	Progressive list for peace	Yehadut Hatora; Shas	Yehadut Hatora; Shas
1996	Likud-Gesher-Tzomet; Mafdal; Moledet; Israel Bealia	Likud-Gesher-Tzomet; Mafdal; Moledet; Israel Bealia	Labor; Meretz	Labor; Meretz	Third way party	Third way party	Hadash-Balad; Mada-Raam	Hadash-Balad; Mada-Raam	Yehadut Hatora; Shas	Yehadut Hatora; Shas
1999	Likud; Israel Beitenu; Mafdal; Moledet; National Union; Israel Bealia	Likud; Israel Beitenu; Mafdal; Moledet; National Union; Israel Bealia; Tzomet	Israeli Ahat (Labor); Meretz; One nation	Israeli Ahat (Labor); Meretz; One nation; Women's party	Center party; Shinui	Center party; Shinui; Third way party; Green party; Green leaf; Pnina Rosenblum	Hadash; Balad; Raam	Hadash; Balad; Raam; Mada	Yehadut Hatora; Shas	Yehadut Hatora; Shas
2003	Likud; Mafdal; National Union	Likud; Mafdal; National Union; Tzomet; Israel Beitenu; Herut	Labor; One nation; Meretz	Labor; Bronfman; One nation; Meretz; Women's party	Shinui; Israel Bealia	Shinui; Israel Acheret; Green party; Green leaf; Israel Bealia	Hadash; Balad; Raam	Hadash; Balad; Raam; Mada; Ahmad Tibi	Yehadut Hatora; Shas	Yehadut Hatora; Shas; Ahavat Israel
2006	Likud; Israel Beitenu; National Union - Mafdal	Likud; National Union - Mafdal; Tzomet; Israel Beitenu; Herut; Hazit Leumit Yehudit	Labor; Meretz	Labor; Meretz; Lehem	Kadima; Pensioners	Kadima; Hetz; Shinui; Green party; Green leaf; Tafnit; War on banks; Pensioners	Hadash; Balad; Raam-Taal	Hadash; Balad; Raam-Taal	Yehadut Hatora; Shas	Yehadut Hatora; Shas
2009	Likud; Jewish home; Israel Beitenu; National Union	Likud; Jewish home; Israel Beitenu; National Union	Labor; Meretz	Labor; Meretz	Kadima	Kadima; Green movement - Meimad; Green party; Pensioners	Hadash; Balad; Raam-Taal	Hadash; Balad; Raam-Taal	Yehadut Hatora; Shas	Yehadut Hatora; Shas
2013	Likud-Israel Beitenu; Jewish home	Likud; Jewish home; Israel Beitenu; National Union; Otzma L'Israel	Labor; Meretz	Labor; Meretz; Daam; Eretz Hadasha; Koah Lehashpia	Yesh Atid; Kadima; Hatnua	Yesh Atid; Kadima; Hatnua	Hadash; Balad; Raam-Taal	Hadash; Balad; Raam-Taal	Yehadut Hatora; Shas	Yehadut Hatora; Shas
2015	Likud; Jewish home; Israel Beitenu	Yahad; Likud; Jewish home; Israel Beitenu	Zionist bloc (labor); Meretz	Zionist bloc (labor); Meretz	Kulanu; Yesh Atid	Kulanu; Yesh Atid; Green party; Green leaf	Joint list	Joint list	Yehadut Hatora; Shas	Yehadut Hatora; Shas; Bizchutan
2019	Likud; Israel Beitenu; Right Parties Union	Likud; Israel Beitenu; Right Parties Union; The New Right; Otzma Yehudit; Zehut	Labor; Meretz	Labor; Meretz	Kahol Lavan; Kulanu	Kahol Lavan; Kulanu; Gesher	Hadash-Taal; Balad-Raam	Hadash-Taal; Balad-Raam	Yehadut Hatora; Shas	Yehadut Hatora; Shas

Note: this tables details how political blocs are defined in each election. The definitions in the surveys slightly differ from the actual one bloc definitions - some surveys were conducted before the elections, so that "last-minute" changes in the structure of different blocs occured between the survey and election. Also, as the

Table A2 - The effect of the 2003 reforms on right vote

	Household size effect		Lower class effect	
	Right to non-right	Right to left	Right to non-right	Right to left
Household size	-0.044	-0.020		
SE	0.067	0.032		
Lower class dummy			-0.178	-0.044
SE			0.097	0.046
Observations	294	294	294	294

Source: author's computations using INES election surveys.
Note: the table shows the results of a linear probability regression used to test whether changing vote from right to non-right or from right to left between 2003 and 2006 depended on the number of people in the household or on belonging to the lower social class. We control for religiosity, gender, ethnic origin, income and education. The table shows that the dependence of the probability of a right voter in 2003 to switch to non-right or left in 2006 cannot be explained by either household size or belonging to the lower class, after controlling for other socio-demographic variables. The only statistically significant result is that being of lower class reduced the probability of changing vote from right to non-right.