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Class, Social Mobility, and Voting in Democratizing and Industrializing England

Aboa Centre for Economics

Discussion paper No. 179 (replaces previous version dated January 2021 and titled: "Class, Social Mobility, and Voting: Evidence from Historical Voting Records")

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ABSTRACT

To what extent did class shape political behavior during early democratization and industrialization, and did class voting reflect economic interests or durable political identities? We use newly collected individual-level panel data from open-ballot elections in the nineteenth-century England—around 130,000 recorded vote choices linked to voters' occupations across elections—to provide evidence on the class-basis of voting. Voting was strongly structured by occupation: skilled workers and the petite bourgeoisie disproportionately supported Liberals and their free-trade agenda, while the gentry, farm workers, and unskilled workers leaned Conservative. Exploiting within-voter mobility, we show that these alignments reflected durable political identities rather than contemporaneous economic interests: Although socially mobile voters resemble their destination class in cross-sectional comparisons, within-voter estimates show that individuals did not systematically change their vote choice when their class changed. Class-based political alignments were thus behaviorally durable at the individual level, even though the Industrial Revolution profoundly transformed society.

JEL Classification: D72, N33, N93, P00

Keywords: Class-based voting, economic voting, poll books, socialization, social mobility, voting behavior

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Class is the basis of British party politics; all else is embellishment and detail.

– Pulzer (1967)

1 Introduction

Do political preferences respond to changes in economic position? The assumption that they do is foundational to political economy. Classic models of redistributive politics treat voters' policy preferences as determined by their current economic circumstances (Downs 1957; Meltzer and Richard 1981). Theories of political realignment posit that structural transformation reshapes voting by altering the material interests of broad social groups (Lipset 1960; Lipset and Rokkan 1967b; Przeworski and Sprague 1986). And a large literature on economic and class-based voting documents that vote choices are strongly patterned by income, occupation, and social class (Campbell et al. 1960; Evans 2000; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2007; Piketty 2020; Gethin, Martínez-Toledano, and Piketty 2021; Gethin, Martínez-Toledano, and Piketty 2021). Yet the central empirical claim—that individuals adjust their political behavior when their economic position changes—has proven remarkably difficult to test.[1]

The difficulty is one of identification. Cross-sectional correlations between class and vote choice are ubiquitous but cannot distinguish between two prominent traditions. One emphasizes material interests and class-based economic conflict: voters form political alliances based on shared economic positions and expected policy consequences (Lipset 1960; Lipset and Rokkan 1967b). The other emphasizes socialization: individuals acquire durable political attitudes early in life through family background, social environment, and class-specific experiences, which then persist even as economic circumstances change (Butler and Stokes 1969; Bisin and Verdier 2000, 2001).[2]

All of these mechanisms can generate strong class gradients in the cross section without requiring that preferences respond to contemporaneous changes in economic

[1] In their survey, Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier (2007) identify approximately four hundred books and articles on economic voting. While this literature establishes economic voting as a pervasive empirical pattern, much of the evidence remains correlational. For recent studies providing causal evidence, see Autor et al. (2020), Bagues and Esteve-Volart (2016), and Elinder, Jordahl, and Poutvaara (2015).

[2] More broadly, individual choices are shaped both by economic incentives and by social identities (Akerlof and Kranton 2000; Shayo 2009, 2020), and a large theoretical literature emphasizes that preferences for redistribution depend on factors beyond current income, including group loyalty, beliefs about fairness and effort, and expectations about future economic position (Corneo and Grüner 2000, 2002; Luttmer 2001; Gallice and Grillo 2020). Research in social psychology highlights how exposure to different class contexts generates persistent differences in norms and behavior (Stephens, Markus, and Phillips 2014; Manstead 2018), while Piketty (1995) emphasizes that perceptions shaped by past economic trajectories—not only current income—can exert long-lasting influence on political preferences. A large literature in economics also documents the persistence of cultural traits and beliefs, which in turn shape economic and political outcomes over long horizons (Alesina, Giuliano, and Nunn 2013; Fernández and Fogli 2009; Nunn 2009; Guiso, Sapienza, and Zingales 2006).

position. Distinguishing them requires observing how the same individuals vote as their economic circumstances change—data that contemporary democracies, with secret ballots and anonymous surveys, generally cannot provide.[3]

We address this identification problem using newly collected individual-level panel data from nineteenth-century England. Our individual-level panel evidence indicates that the strong class gradients in voting observed during this period were behaviorally durable: voters who changed occupations did not systematically adjust their political behavior.

Britain's open-ballot system, in place until the Secret Ballot Act of 1872, generated a unique empirical record: so-called poll books listed voters' names, occupations, and vote choices, enabling us to observe individual political behavior directly and track the same voters across elections. Our data comprise roughly 130,000 recorded votes across 102 elections in 33 constituencies between 1832 and 1868.[4] The panel structure enables us to observe individual voters before and after occupational transitions, providing a rare opportunity to separate cross-sectional convergence from within-individual political updating at a formative stage of democratic development. Moreover, while economic voting is a core feature of modern democracies, we know comparatively little about its historical origins. The period we study saw an era of industrialization that reshaped occupational structures and the distribution of economic power across social groups (Checkland 1987; Crafts and Wolf 2014)—developments widely viewed as laying the foundations for the class-based political conflicts that later characterized mass democracies (Lipset and Rokkan 1967b; Przeworski and Sprague 1986).

We begin by examining the relationship between socioeconomic class and vote choice. While differences between the working and middle classes are present, they do not capture the full structure of class voting in this period. Instead, substantial heterogeneity exists within these broad categories. A coalition of the gentry, farm workers, non-skilled workers, and white-collar workers was, on average, more likely to vote Conservative, whereas skilled workers and the petite bourgeoisie were more likely to support Liberal candidates.[5]

[3]Inferences from aggregate data are subject to the ecological fallacy (Robinson 1950). For example, Gelman et al. (2008) show that claims about declining income-based voting in the United States arise from aggregation: while richer states vote Democratic, income remains strongly predictive of vote choice within states. Survey data also raise concerns about measurement error correlated with unobserved individual characteristics (Atkenson 1999).

[4]Poll books have previously been used primarily in historical research; see, for example, Drake (1971), Phillips (1992), and Phillips and Wetherell (1995). Dewan, Meriläinen, and Tukiainen (2020) use a smaller subset of these data to study the origins of party orientation and class alignment, and Dewan et al. (2025) exploit voter responses to candidate exit to test Hirschman's exit-voice-loyalty framework.

[5]We also explore heterogeneity in the cross-sectional relationship between economic position and vote choice. We find that class-based voting is not uniform across constituencies: in some places occupational class and bloc affiliation strongly predict vote choice, while in others the gradients are weak or even reversed. This heterogeneity is systematic and aligns with differences in local electoral conditions. Class-vote correlations are strongest in constituencies characterized by intense contestation and weaker personal dependence on local elites, and weakest in constituencies historically described as "controlled" through patron influence, treating, or intimidation.

This micro-level evidence complements earlier historical accounts. For example, Cornford (1998) describes the Conservative Party as a "country party," premised on the alignment of interests among laborers, tenant farmers, and landlords. He further argues that white-collar workers often had limited contact with the working classes but frequent interaction with their social superiors, potentially fostering Conservative sympathies. By contrast, the Liberals' support for free trade made them an attractive alternative for skilled workers and members of the petite bourgeoisie who viewed protectionism, high spending, and taxation as serving landed interests (Irwin 1994; Howe 1997). Our data provide direct individual-level evidence consistent with these interpretations. This cleavage structure, rooted in the political economy of trade rather than a simple manual versus non-manual divide, anticipates patterns that have re-emerged as central axes of political conflict in contemporary democracies.

We then exploit the panel structure to study voters whose occupational class or bloc affiliation changes between elections. In our data, slightly over one-tenth of voters change their socioeconomic class between two consecutive elections, in line with the observation that social mobility was limited during this era despite the Industrial Revolution (Clark and Cummins 2014). Our central finding is that the preference-updating channel is empirically weak. While socially mobile voters often resemble their destination class, within-voter estimates reveal limited change in vote choice around the time of mobility itself. Observed convergence largely reflects pre-existing differences across mobile and non-mobile individuals and long-run trajectories rather than contemporaneous adjustment to changing material interests. This distinction between convergence and updating has implications beyond our historical setting. A large literature—from the Lipset-Bendix tradition to more recent work on mobility and preferences for redistribution (Lipset and Bendix 1959; Clifford and Heath 1993; Clark and D'Angelo 2013; Alesina, Stantcheva, and Teso 2018)—interprets the fact that socially mobile individuals come to resemble their destination group as evidence that preferences track material interests. Our decomposition provides a structured framework for assessing this inference, and our empirical results demonstrate that convergence can arise without within-individual updating.

Where updating does occur, it is asymmetric. Downward mobility from the middle class to the working class generates more political adjustment than upward mobility. This asymmetry is theoretically discriminating. Pure material-interest models predict symmetric responses. The observed pattern is instead consistent with theories emphasizing loss aversion, status threat, and disruption of prior attachments (Stephens, Markus, and Phillips 2014; Manstead 2018), and connects to recent evidence that negative economic shocks are more politically consequential than positive ones (Autor et al. 2020; Elinder, Jordahl, and Poutvaara 2015).

Our analysis contributes to long-standing debates in British political history that have been conducted largely on the basis of qualitative sources and aggregate election returns.[6] A central dispute concerns whether Victorian electoral behavior reflected autonomous class-based preferences or deference to local elites. Vincent (1966) emphasized the independent political agency of urban voters, while Moore (1976) argued that even post-reform elections were structured by patron influence, and Joyce (1980) stressed employer-mediated factory politics as a distinct channel. Our individual-level data allow a more direct assessment. The finding that class-vote gradients are strong in competitive constituencies but weak or absent in controlled ones provides systematic evidence that both traditions captured real features of different electoral environments, while clarifying where and when class-based preferences were freely expressed.[7] More broadly, studying postwar Britain, Butler and Stokes (1969) documented a high degree of stability in individual vote choice and argued that class-based voting reflected durable political alignments formed early in life, speculating that these alignments had deep historical roots tracing back to earlier stages of political development. Our analysis provides direct individual-level evidence consistent with this interpretation in the nineteenth-century setting they had in mind.

The mobility results speak to a large literature linking social mobility to political change. Classic theories of modernization emphasized occupational mobility as a central mechanism through which economic development produced political realignment (Lipset 1960; Lipset and Bendix 1959), and subsequent work using survey data has documented that mobile individuals come to resemble their destination group (Clifford and Heath 1993; Clark and D'Angelo 2013). A related literature links mobility expectations and experiences to redistribution preferences (Bénabou and Ok 2001; Alesina and La Ferrara 2005; Alesina, Stantcheva, and Teso 2018). However, empirical support for preference updating has relied largely on aggregate correlations or repeated cross-sections, making it difficult to distinguish individual-level updating from compositional change. By observing the same voters before and after occupational transitions, we show that convergence toward destination group voting need not reflect contemporaneous updating—even realized mobility generates limited within-individual adjustment.

Our findings thus illuminate a foundational question in political sociology: how did industrialization produce class-based alignments that proved so durable? Lipset and Rokkan (1967b) argued that the party systems of the 1960s still reflected conflicts crystallized decades earlier, with cleavages "frozen" into place by the time of the first

[6]See also Wald (1977, 1978) for analyses of class-based voting in the late nineteenth century using aggregate data.

[7]Our paper also relates to work on clientelism and electoral control (Hicken 2011; Bardhan and Mookherjee 2016; Stokes et al. 2013), and on the transition from clientelistic to programmatic politics (Fujiwara and Wantchekon 2013). Britain's pre-secret-ballot electoral environment shares key features with contemporary settings in which patronage and coercion constrain voter autonomy (Baland and Robinson 2008; Mares and Zhu 2015).

mass elections. The standard account attributes this durability to organizational lock-in by parties that had successfully mobilized social groups. Our results point to a complementary mechanism: the cleavages were frozen behaviorally at the individual level from the outset, at least within the time span we typically observe them. Political identities formed through early-life socialization proved stable even as individuals moved through the occupational structure, suggesting that durability did not depend solely on institutional reinforcement.

This observation connects to contemporary debates on class realignment (Piketty 2020; Gethin, Martínez-Toledano, and Piketty 2021): if cross-sectional realignment can arise from selection and long-run sorting rather than widespread within-individual conversion, then observed shifts in the political alignment of social groups need not imply that large numbers of voters are changing their minds. The underlying cleavage we identify—between groups differentially exposed to market competition and trade openness, a division already central to Ricardo's analysis of the Corn Laws (Ricardo 1817; O'Rourke 2000)—has re-emerged as a central axis of political conflict in recent years (Autor et al. 2020; Colantone and Stanig 2018). That similar cleavage structures can arise in very different institutional environments suggests that such alignments emerge from economic structure itself rather than from the specific features of modern party systems or welfare states.

2 Institutional Context and Data

In this section, we discuss the institutional context of our study as well as our individual-level voting data in more detail. The period we study (1832—1868) coincides with the gradual democratization of the British political system and the emergence of cohesive parties with close links to the electorate, with voting becoming more party-oriented rather than candidate-oriented (Cox 1984, 1986, 1987; Dewan, Meriläinen, and Tukiainen 2020; Dewan et al. 2025). Nineteenth-century Britain did not experience an abrupt democratic transition but rather a sequence of reforms that incrementally expanded political rights. By the late nineteenth century, successive reforms had substantially broadened the electorate and laid the institutional foundations of modern parliamentary democracy in Britain. This trajectory is often described as a process of elite-led democratization, in which incumbent political elites expanded suffrage and reformed institutions in response to pressures generated by industrialization, urbanization, and organized political movements while attempting to preserve political stability and their own influence (Acemoglu and Robinson 2000; Lizzeri and Persico 2004; Aidt and Franck 2015, 2025).

The period also corresponds to the mature phase of the Industrial Revolution in Britain, when earlier technological advances had already transformed production but

some technological change, and economic and social adjustment was still ongoing. Economic historians emphasize substantial restructuring of local labor markets and rising geographic mobility during this period, though social mobility appears to have remained relatively limited despite industrial growth (Clark and Cummins 2014). The railway boom of the 1840s and 1850s further integrated regional markets and reduced transport costs, accelerating spatial economic integration and labor mobility. By the late 1850s, railway stations were present in almost all constituencies in our data—while in the beginning of our sample period (1832), none of them had railway access.

2.1 Elections in Victorian England

Elections in Victorian Britain were held under the first-past-the-post system that remains in place today.[8] Most constituencies elected two members of Parliament, though a few returned three or four. In multi-member districts, each voter could cast one vote per seat, making it possible to cast a split vote—supporting candidates from different parties. In our data, all constituencies elect two candidates, thus allowing two votes for each voter. It was also common for voters to cast plumpers, i.e., use only one of their votes to express support for a single candidate.

Parliamentary contests mainly pitted candidates identified with the two dominant camps, Conservatives and Liberals. Before the late 1850s, however, party labels—especially on the Liberal side—were loose descriptors rather than markers of a unified organization. The political grouping that later became the Liberal Party was an alliance of distinct factions, including Whigs and Radicals and, by the early 1850s, Peelites.[9]

Two major institutional reforms transformed the electoral landscape during the historical period that we study. The First Reform Act of 1832 addressed severe malapportionment by reallocating seats from depopulated boroughs to growing industrial cities and modestly expanded the franchise in England and Wales from 461,788 to 642,740 men (Aidt and Franck 2025). The Second Reform Act of 1867 (formally the Representation of the People Act) further extended voting rights, roughly doubling the electorate. Nevertheless, suffrage remained limited to men who met certain age and property requirements, and women continued to be excluded from the franchise (Saunders 2007).

[8]For further information on the electoral context, see for example Mitchell (2008).

[9]Whigs were associated with constitutional reform and elite governance, Radicals advocated more extensive political reform, and Peelites were former Conservatives who supported free trade following the repeal of the Corn Laws.

2.2 Poll Books

Crucially, until the Secret Ballot Act of 1872, British elections were held using public voting. Britain's open-ballot system generated a unique empirical record. Poll books listed voters' names, occupations, and vote choices, enabling us to track individual behavior across multiple elections. Figure 1 provides an example of a poll book from the 1832 general election in Ipswich.

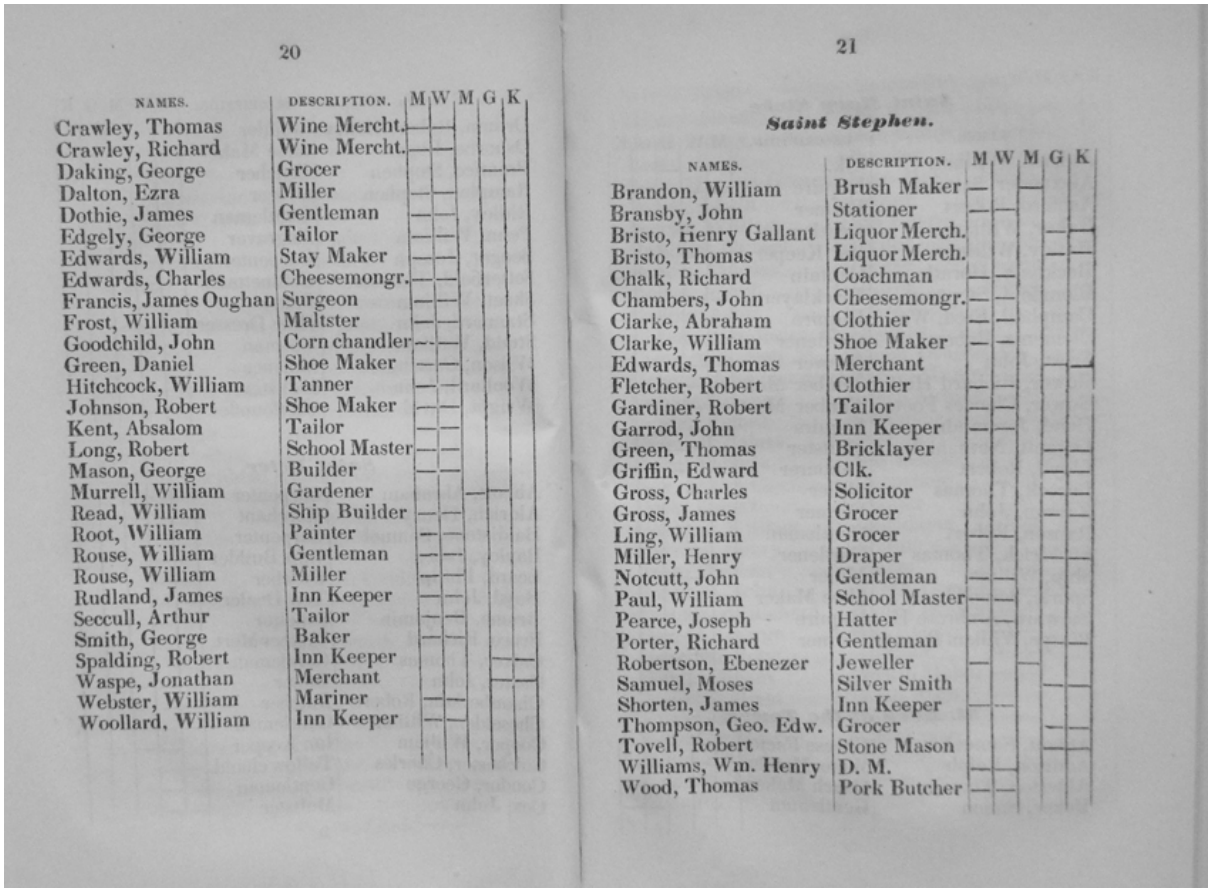
These records allow us to observe not only cross-sectional relationships between class and vote choice, but also how individuals adjust their political behavior when their economic circumstances change—evidence that is generally unobservable in contemporary democracies with secret ballots and anonymous surveys. Besides the vote information, also the occupation information is historically novel given that the first census data is available only in 1851.

We draw individual-level voting data from 102 elections in 33 British constituencies. In total, we have about $130,000$ voter-election observations. Importantly, we have more than one poll book from most of these constituencies, which enables us to construct a panel of voters exploiting voter names. Almost half of the voters in our data are observed at least twice. For further information on the data, we refer to Online Appendix A.

Inferring voters' socioeconomic group We focus on a set of poll books in which occupation is recorded and use this information to classify the voters in middle and working classes as closely as possible. The former include lawyers, priests, innkeepers, publicans and traders, while common occupations among the latter are carpenter, shoe maker, baker, tailor, butcher and laborer. The division follows a divide between manual versus non-manual occupations, albeit a rough one. This classification captures (average) income differences of different occupational groups but also inherently reflects other factors, like differences in economic autonomy or exposure to market competition.

We further follow a sociological approach and divide the working class voters further into skilled and non-skilled workers, and farm workers, and the middle class into petite bourgeoisie and white-collar workers (Eriksson and Goldthorpe 1992). Moreover, we include an additional class of gentry, many of whom are landowners who could live entirely from rental income.

Vote choices Vote choice is coded to reflect the institutional features of nineteenth-century British parliamentary elections. Our data include both general and by-elections. In the general elections covered by our data, constituencies elected two Members of Parliament, and voters were entitled to cast up to two votes. This electoral rule allowed voters to express support in different ways. A voter could cast only a single vote given to a single candidate (plumper), or cast both votes for two different candidates affiliated



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NAMES.	DESCRIPTION.	M	W	M	G	K
Crawley, Thomas	Wine Mercht.	—	—			
Crawley, Richard	Wine Mercht.	—	—			
Daking, George	Grocer				—	—
Dalton, Ezra	Miller	—	—			
Dothie, James	Gentleman	—	—			
Edgely, George	Tailor	—	—			
Edwards, William	Stay Maker	—	—			
Edwards, Charles	Cheesemongr.	—	—			
Francis, James Oughan	Surgeon	—	—			
Frost, William	Maltster	—	—			
Goodchild, John	Corn chandler	—	—			
Green, Daniel	Shoe Maker	—	—			
Hitchcock, William	Tanner	—	—			
Johnson, Robert	Shoe Maker	—	—			
Kent, Absalom	Tailor	—	—			
Long, Robert	School Master	—	—			
Mason, George	Builder	—	—			
Murrell, William	Gardener				—	—
Read, William	Ship Builder	—	—			
Root, William	Painter	—	—			
Rouse, William	Gentleman	—	—			
Rouse, William	Miller	—	—			
Rudland, James	Inn Keeper	—	—			
Seccull, Arthur	Tailor	—	—			
Smith, George	Baker	—	—			
Spalding, Robert	Inn Keeper				—	—
Waspe, Jonathan	Merchant				—	—
Webster, William	Mariner	—	—			
Woollard, William	Inn Keeper	—	—			

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Saint Stephen.

NAMES.	DESCRIPTION.	M	W	M	G	K
Brandon, William	Brush Maker	—		—		
Bransby, John	Stationer	—	—			
Bristo, Henry Gallant	Liquor Merch.				—	—
Bristo, Thomas	Liquor Merch.				—	—
Chalk, Richard	Coachman	—	—			
Chambers, John	Cheesemongr.	—	—			
Clarke, Abraham	Clothier	—	—			
Clarke, William	Shoe Maker	—	—			
Edwards, Thomas	Merchant				—	—
Fletcher, Robert	Clothier	—	—			
Gardiner, Robert	Tailor	—	—			
Garrod, John	Inn Keeper	—	—			
Green, Thomas	Bricklayer				—	—
Griffin, Edward	Clk.				—	—
Gross, Charles	Solicitor				—	—
Gross, James	Grocer				—	—
Ling, William	Grocer	—	—			
Miller, Henry	Draper				—	—
Notcutt, John	Gentleman	—	—			
Paul, William	School Master	—	—			
Pearce, Joseph	Hatter	—	—			
Porter, Richard	Gentleman				—	—
Robertson, Ebenezer	Jeweller	—		—		
Samuel, Moses	Silver Smith				—	—
Shorten, James	Inn Keeper	—	—			
Thompson, Geo. Edw.	Grocer				—	—
Tovell, Robert	Stone Mason				—	—
Williams, Wm. Henry	D. M.	—	—			
Wood, Thomas	Pork Butcher	—	—			

Figure 1. Pages from the 1832 poll book from Ipswich.

Notes: The candidates in the 1832 election in Ipswich were James Morrison (the first M; Liberal), Rigby Wason (W; Liberal), Charles Mackinnon (the second M; Conservative), Edward Goulburn (G; Conservative), and Fitzroy Kelly (K; Conservative). A dash indicates that a voter cast their vote to a particular candidate. The "description" column includes voter occupations.

with the same party (partisan split vote), or split their votes across parties by casting one vote for a Conservative candidate and one vote for a Liberal candidate (split vote).

In the main analysis, we code both partisan split votes and plumper votes as indicators of party support, reflecting the fact that both forms of voting involve engagement with between-party competition, and thus, reveal either partisan preferences or preferences for the candidates from one party. This coding choice allows us to exploit the full set of observed votes while maintaining a consistent definition of party support across elections.

By-elections in our data involved the election of a single Member of Parliament to replace a previously elected candidate who was no longer able to serve the constituency, and voters were therefore entitled to cast only one vote. In these elections, split voting is mechanically impossible, and vote choice is coded directly as a single-party vote. Our coding framework treats votes in by-elections and general elections consistently, while

accounting for the institutional constraints governing how voters could express their preferences.

Descriptive statistics The dataset comprises 129,221 individual-level observations with occupation information. The class structure is dominated by manual and semi-manual occupations. Skilled workers constitute by far the largest group, accounting for 49 percent of the sample. Together with non-skilled workers (8.2 percent) and farm workers (6.7 percent), this implies that almost two-thirds of all observations belong to the working class.

The remainder of the sample consists of middle-class occupations. The petite bourgeoisie (e.g., small proprietors, shopkeepers, and self-employed artisans) forms the largest middle-class group at 19.3 percent. White-collar workers account for 10.2 percent, while the gentry represent 6.7 percent of observations.

Figure 2 plots the share of voters in each class casting a Conservative, Liberal, or split vote. Echoing Dewan, Meriläinen, and Tukiainen (2020), we see in Panel A that the working class becomes more likely to vote Liberals around the 1860s while split voting becomes less prevalent. In the middle class, voting behavior is rather stable from around the 1840s.

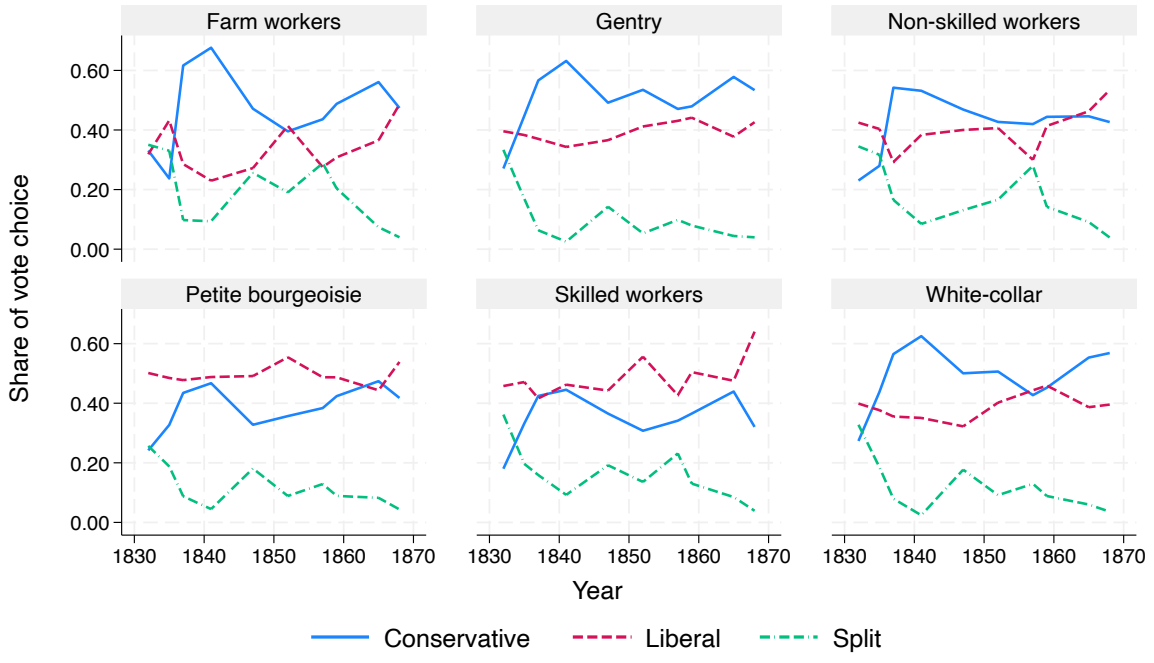
However, these two classes include a very heterogeneous group of voters. In Panel B, we illustrate voting behavior by Eriksson and Goldthorpe (1992) class. We observe that two voting blocs emerge: skilled workers and the petite bourgeoisie leaned to the Liberals. A union of the gentry, farm workers, non-skilled workers and white-collar workers voted, on average, more for the Conservatives.

Sample representativeness We describe the coverage and representativeness of our sample in further detail in Online Appendix A. We stress that our sample is not a random one: poll books are not available for all constituencies, and even when they are, they might not contain the occupation information crucial to our analysis.[10] Our data cover slightly less than one-tenth of the general and by-elections held between 1832-1867 and around one-tenth of the electors that voted in these elections, and we have observations from slightly more than one-tenth of the constituencies that existed during that time interval.

Despite the limited coverage, we note that our data are fairly representative in terms of the number of candidates and elected representatives, and they are geographically distributed across England. The elections in our data tend to have a larger number of electors, suggesting that our sample is more representative of larger constituencies, and there is less voting for the Conservatives than in other constituencies.

[10]In a recent working paper (Dewan et al. 2025), we use also other poll books that do not include the occupation information to study how voters react to candidate exit, and how these reactions evolve over time.

(A.) Working and middle class.



(B.) Eriksson-Goldhorpe class scheme.

Figure 2. Vote choices by socioeconomic group.

2.3 Class Interests and Electoral Choice in Pre-Reform England

We interpret the relationship between occupational class and voting through three mechanisms: (i) material economic interests, (ii) identity-based attachments shaped by social position and expectations of mobility, and (iii) institutional constraints that condition whether voters can express these preferences. Because we observe individuals' occupations and votes repeatedly across elections, we can move beyond static class–vote correlations and study how vote choices respond to occupational mobility over time. These responses are especially informative for distinguishing among the mechanisms discussed below.

Economic interests In distributive models (Downs 1957; Meltzer and Richard 1981), individuals support the party whose policies best align with their current economic circumstances. Nineteenth-century British politics featured intense conflict over free trade, taxation, church establishment, and the protection of landed interests (Mill 1844; Howe 1997; Cornford 1998), generating potential alignments between occupational groups and party support.

Our descriptive evidence is consistent with these patterns (see Figure 2): members of the working class were more likely to vote Liberal, while members of the middle class were more likely to vote Conservative. At the same time, neither the "working class" nor the "middle class" constituted a homogeneous political bloc. Skilled workers and the petite bourgeoisie tended to support Liberal candidates, whereas non-skilled workers, farm workers, white-collar employees, and the gentry leaned Conservative. This coalition structure is not a simple manual-nonmanual divide but maps onto differential exposure to the central distributional conflict of the period: trade policy. The Liberals championed free trade and open markets, which benefited skilled artisans and small proprietors competing in product markets, while the Conservatives defended the Corn Laws and agricultural protection, aligning the interests of landlords, tenant farmers, and those employed in the rural economy or dependent on established institutions (Howe 1997; Cornford 1998). Ricardo's analysis of the Corn Laws had already framed trade policy as precisely this kind of conflict between groups differentially exposed to market competition (Ricardo 1817; O'Rourke 2000).

These cross-sectional patterns are consistent with economic interests but could also reflect stable class identities formed through early-life socialization. Occupational mobility provides a way to distinguish these explanations. If voting primarily reflects current material interests, then changes in occupation should lead to systematic adjustments in vote choice, as the same individual experiences different economic circumstances across elections. Downward mobility into more precarious or low-status occupations should shift support toward parties favoring reform or redistribution, while

upward mobility into more secure or property-linked positions should shift votes in the opposite direction. Under this mechanism, vote switching should closely track realized changes in occupational status, with effects of similar magnitude for upward and downward mobility that roughly correspond to the cross-sectional class-vote gradient. However, if political preferences are fixed through socialization, occupational mobility should produce little or no change in individual voting behavior.

Identity, expectations, and asymmetric adjustment One explanation suggests that individuals are socialized into a set of stable attitudes and opinions (e.g., Butler and Stokes 1969; see also Bisin and Verdier 2000, 2001 for an economic approach to socialization). In this view, partisan attachments are shaped not only by current economic position but also by long-run experiences and group-based identities formed in the family, for example. If such identities are sufficiently durable, they could sustain class-based voting patterns even in the absence of ongoing preference updating—providing a behavioral micro-foundation for the "frozen cleavages" described by Lipset and Rokkan (1967a).[11]

Individuals who move between classes may retain political attachments formed in their class of origin or only partially adopt the outlook of their destination class (Clifford and Heath 1993; Clark and D'Angelo 2013). If voting is strongly mediated by class identity, occupational changes need not produce vote switching proportional to the cross-sectional class-vote gradient. Instead, the effects may be muted, delayed, or asymmetric depending on the direction of mobility.

Even within an identity-based framework, however, different theories generate competing predictions about asymmetry. One perspective emphasizes psychological adaptation to mobility. Downward mobility is often experienced as a loss of status and security and may be accompanied by feelings of deprivation or unfairness (Stephens, Markus, and Phillips 2014; Manstead 2018). Individuals who fall from more autonomous or secure positions into more precarious occupations may therefore reassess their political loyalties sharply, particularly when economic setbacks coincide with limited prospects for future advancement. By contrast, upward mobility is frequently gradual and contingent. Individuals who move higher in the class hierarchy may retain strong ties to their origin-class communities and norms (Butler and Stokes 1969; Clifford and Heath 1993; Clark and D'Angelo 2013). Under this account, downwardly mobile voters might exhibit stronger vote switching than upwardly mobile voters.

[11] A related body of work in political economy formalizes these ideas by allowing redistribution preferences and voting behavior to depend on social identity, group loyalty, social recognition, and beliefs about fairness and effort, rather than on income alone (Corneo and Grüner 2000, 2002; Luttmer 2001; Shayo 2009; Gallice and Grillo 2020). While these models differ in their primitives, they share a key implication for dynamics: political alignment should be persistent and need not respond mechanically to short-run changes in economic position, even when strong class gradients are observed in the cross section.

Another perspective is that if voting reflects current economic circumstances, upwardly mobile voters should rapidly adopt destination-class preferences as their material conditions improve and their stake in existing property relations strengthens. Downwardly mobile voters, may adjust more slowly instead, possibly viewing their situation as temporary. This mechanism predicts stronger vote switching among the upwardly mobile—a pattern documented by Lipset and Bendix (1959) using aggregate data from five industrial countries. The direction of asymmetry thus provides additional leverage for distinguishing between identity-based and material interest explanations.

A further complication concerns expectations of mobility. Forward-looking voters may incorporate anticipated upward or downward movement into their political preferences (Bénabou and Ok 2001; Alesina and La Ferrara 2005). Individuals who expect to rise may adopt middle-class political attitudes before doing so, while those who fear decline may align politically with more vulnerable groups in advance. Under such anticipatory behavior, strong static class–vote gradients can coexist with muted vote switching following realized occupational mobility. Distinguishing realized from anticipated mobility is challenging with our data. However, several features of the Victorian labor market suggest many occupational transitions were difficult to foresee: business failures occurred suddenly, inheritance was uncertain, and craft employment was subject to cyclical shocks. To the extent mobility was unanticipated, observed vote switching following occupational changes provides a cleaner test of how voters respond to shifts in economic circumstances.

Institutional constraints and the activation of preferences A third consideration is about the institutional environment in which voters operated. We study a country in the early stages of democratic development. In such contexts, vote buying and other forms of electoral manipulation are salient (Nichter 2008; Finan and Schechter 2012; Kam 2017; Aidt and Jensen 2017). If parties systematically bought or coerced votes from particular social classes, observed class–vote correlations may partly reflect these practices rather than freely expressed preferences. Even in the absence of outright vote buying, electoral intimidation and landlord influence could constrain voters' ability to act on either material interests or class identities (Baland and Robinson 2008; Mares and Zhu 2015).

Such constraints affect both our cross-sectional and panel analyses. In the cross-section, coercion may generate class-vote correlations even if voters' underlying preferences differ from their observed choices. In the panel analysis, institutional constraints may prevent occupational mobility from translating into vote switching: a farm laborer who becomes a shopkeeper may retain the same voting pattern if he continues to face employer pressure or clientelistic ties in his new occupation. The magnitude of mobility-induced vote switching we observe may therefore understate the

responsiveness of political preferences to economic position that would emerge in less constrained environments.

Institutional constraints varied across constituencies in our setting. Competitive constituencies—typically larger, more urban, and characterized by closer electoral margins—made monitoring and enforcement more costly and less effective. Rural constituencies with concentrated landownership and non-competitive elections were more susceptible to landlord influence. This variation connects to a long-standing debate in British historiography about the nature of urban voting. Moore (1976) and Joyce (1980) argued that even in industrial towns, employer influence structured electoral behavior through what contemporaries called "deference communities," while others have emphasized the autonomous expression of class-based preferences in competitive settings (Vincent 1966).

We exploit this variation to assess the heterogeneity of our findings. Specifically, we examine whether occupational mobility predicts vote switching more strongly in constituencies with closer electoral margins and in urban areas where direct coercion was weaker. Finding stronger mobility effects in competitive settings would suggest that voters adjust their political behavior to changing economic circumstances when institutional constraints permit, and that our main estimates may represent lower bounds on the true responsiveness of vote choice to economic position.

3 Class and Vote Choices

In this section, we assess the correlation between social class and vote choices. To study how social class is associated with voting behavior, we regress the vote choice $Vote_{it}$—Liberal, Conservative or split vote (a vote split between Liberal and Conservative candidates), depending on the specification—on a dummy for belonging to a certain class. More formally, our baseline regression equation takes the form

$$Vote_{it} = \sum_j \beta_j Class_{j,it} + \lambda_t \times \lambda_c + \varepsilon_{it}, \tag{1}$$

where $Vote_{it}$ is the vote choice of voter i at election t. $Class_{j,it}$ are different social classes depending on the specification. The estimates of interest are $\hat{\beta}_j$ which will tell us how a voter belonging to a certain class j voted, on average, relative to the reference group. We include year-constituency fixed effects ($\lambda_t \times \lambda_c$) to control for time and location specific effects; in some subsequent analyses we will also use a panel of repeatedly observed voters and control for voter fixed effects.[12]

[12]Poll books only contain information on individuals who turned out to vote. Thus, our estimations are conditional on voting. Although researchers have documented that social class is an important

We estimate two specifications. The first specification examines the average difference in voting between working class and middle class. However, because average differences may mask substantial within-class variation in how voters behave, the second specification splits the middle class into petite bourgeoisie, white-collar workers, and the gentry, and the working class to skilled workers, non-skilled workers and farm workers.

3.1 Baseline Class-Vote Correlations

Table 1 reports baseline estimates of the association between social class and vote choice, conditional on election–constituency fixed effects. Coefficients should be interpreted as differences relative to the reference category, which is the middle class (columns 1, 4, and 7), skilled workers (columns 2, 5, and 8), or the Conservative bloc (columns 3, 6, and 9).

We establish two facts. First, there is a clear class gradient in voting behavior even after conditioning on election-constituency fixed effects: social class is strongly associated with partisan choice in pre-reform England. Second, and more importantly, this gradient is highly heterogeneous within broad class categories.

Columns (1), (4), and (7) compare working-class voters to the middle class as a whole. Working-class voters are 5.2 percentage points less likely to vote Conservative and 3.3 percentage points more likely to vote Liberal than middle-class voters, relative to a Conservative vote share of 46% and a Liberal vote share of 49% in the reference group. They are also more likely to cast split votes, indicating weaker or less exclusive partisan alignment. These patterns are consistent with accounts of nineteenth-century British politics in which working-class voters tended to support Liberal reform agendas, while middle-class voters were more inclined toward Conservative positions Cornford (1998); Irwin (1994); Howe (1997).

However, groups often treated as politically homogeneous—such as the working class or the middle class—display sharply different voting patterns depending on skill level, occupational autonomy, and ties to land or employers. Our data suggest that the petite bourgeoisie and skilled workers form a Liberal voting bloc, and gentry, white-collar workers, farm workers, and non-skilled workers form a Conservative bloc. Columns (2), (5), and (8) disaggregate both the middle class and the working class, using skilled workers as the reference group. This richer classification reveals pronounced within-class variation that is obscured by the aggregate comparison.

Among middle-class groups, both the gentry and white-collar workers exhibit substantially stronger Conservative alignment than skilled workers. Gentry voters are 13.8 percentage points more likely to vote Conservative and 11.0 percentage points less

determinant of voter turnout in contemporary settings (e.g., Leighley and Nagler 1992), we believe that this is a negligible concern in our context given the high turnout rates (O'Gorman 1989).

likely to vote Liberal, while white-collar workers show a similarly strong tilt toward the Conservative party. These differences are large relative to the reference group means and point to clear political distinctions within the middle class. The petite bourgeoisie appear much closer to skilled workers in their voting behavior, with only small differences in Conservative voting and a slightly lower propensity to split votes.

Within the working class, farm workers and non-skilled workers are significantly more Conservative-leaning than skilled workers and markedly less likely to vote Liberal. For example, farm workers are 13.2 percentage points less likely to vote Liberal than skilled workers, while non-skilled workers are 8.8 percentage points less likely to do so. These groups also display little propensity to cast split votes, suggesting more polarized partisan behavior. In contrast, skilled workers—who serve as the reference group—appear closer to the Liberal coalition and exhibit higher rates of split voting.

In columns (3), (6), and (9), we combine skilled workers and the petite bourgeoisie into the Liberal bloc and the remaining class groups into the Conservative bloc. We see that the Liberal bloc is significantly less likely to cast a Conservative vote and significantly more likely to cast a Liberal vote. There is no major difference in terms of casting a split vote.

Online Appendix Table OA4 decomposes vote choice into partisan split votes (casting one vote each to two candidates from the same party) and plumpers (casting just one vote to a candidate from a certain party), allowing us to distinguish between partial and exclusive expressions of party support. Class differences are most pronounced for plumper voting, particularly on the Conservative side. Working-class voters are significantly less likely to cast Conservative plumpers and substantially more likely to cast Liberal split votes, but they do not exhibit a corresponding increase in Liberal plumper voting.

Gentry, white-collar workers, farm workers, and non-skilled workers are markedly more likely to cast Conservative plumpers and significantly less likely to cast Liberal split or plumper votes. These results indicate that class-based differences in voting reflect differences in the strength and exclusivity of partisan alignment, rather than differences in candidate coordination alone.

Alternative measurement of socioeconomic status As a robustness check, we code occupations using the Historical International Standard Classification of Occupations (HISCO; van Leeuwen, Maas, and Miles 2002), which provides a harmonized occupational coding scheme designed for historical sources. We then map these HISCO codes to the HISCAM scale (Lambert et al. 2013), a continuous measure of occupational status constructed from observed patterns of social interaction—such as marriage and household formation—in historical populations. This procedure allows us to classify occupations in a consistent manner while capturing systematic differences in relative social standing. Because HISCAM is constructed independently of income data and reflects social rank

Table 1. Socioeconomic class and voting behavior.

	Conservative			Liberal			Split		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Working class	-0.053***			0.033***			0.020***		
	[0.010]			[0.011]			[0.004]		
Gentry		0.138***			-0.109***			-0.029***	
		[0.014]			[0.014]			[0.007]	
White-collar workers		0.141***			-0.117***			-0.023***	
		[0.015]			[0.016]			[0.007]	
Farm workers		0.128***			-0.132***			0.005	
		[0.013]			[0.013]			[0.008]	
Non-skilled workers		0.084***			-0.088***			0.004	
		[0.010]			[0.010]			[0.006]	
Petite bourgeoisie		0.017**			-0.004			-0.013***	
		[0.007]			[0.008]			[0.004]	
Liberal bloc			-0.118***			0.110***			0.008*
			[0.008]			[0.008]			[0.005]
N	129221	129221	129221	129221	129221	129221	129221	129221	129221
R^2	0.09	0.10	0.10	0.08	0.09	0.09	0.22	0.22	0.22
Reference group mean	0.46	0.37	0.49	0.46	0.49	0.39	0.08	0.13	0.11

Notes: The dependent variable is a Conservative vote in columns (1)–(3), a Liberal vote in columns (4)–(6), and a split vote in columns (7)–(9). The unit of observation is a voter. All specifications control for constituency × election fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the constituency × election level are shown in brackets. ***, **, and * indicate statistical significance at 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

rather than formal skill or sectoral affiliation, it provides a useful proxy for relative economic position in settings where direct measures of earnings are unavailable.[13]

The non-monotonic relationships between HISCAM and vote choice shown in Online Appendix Figure OA6 closely mirror the class patterns documented using the (Eriksson and Goldthorpe 1992) classification. In this class scheme, groups with intermediate occupational status—skilled workers and the petite bourgeoisie—form the core of the Liberal bloc, while both lower-status groups (farm workers and non-skilled laborers) and higher-status groups (white-collar workers and the gentry) lean Conservative. When these discrete coalitions are pooled and plotted against a continuous measure of occupational status, the result is a U-shaped relationship for Conservative voting and an inverted-U for Liberal voting. Split voting declines monotonically with HISCAM, consistent with higher-status voters exhibiting stronger partisan commitment regardless of bloc affiliation.

3.2 Heterogeneity

Heterogeneity across constituencies Figure 3 documents substantial heterogeneity in the relationship between class and vote choice across constituencies. Rather than exhibiting a uniform class-vote gradient, constituencies differ markedly in both the magnitude and precision of class-based voting patterns.

The top row of Figure 3 plots constituency-specific coefficients for the working-class indicator. In the bottom row, we report analogous estimates for the union of petite bourgeoisie and skilled workers that we label as the "Liberal bloc" based on the class-vote correlations in Table 1. We observe that the coefficients vary widely across constituencies. In some settings, working-class status and Liberal-bloc affiliation are strongly associated with vote choice, with large and precisely estimated differences between Liberal and Conservative voting. In other constituencies, the corresponding coefficients are small and often statistically indistinguishable from zero.

Two features of this heterogeneity are particularly noteworthy. First, constituencies with large class coefficients are not isolated outliers but form a sizable subset of the sample. Second, the dispersion is asymmetric: while some constituencies exhibit very strong class gradients, many display little or no systematic relationship between class and voting behavior—or even an opposite relationship to what we might have expected. This pattern suggests that class-based preferences are not always translated into votes, even among voters belonging to the same occupational groups.

The constituencies exhibiting the largest class coefficients tend to be those characterized by intense electoral contestation and relatively weak personal dependence

[13]Note that we do not have a HISCAM score for voters who belong to the gentry. We thus omit such voters from these additional analyses.

between voters and local elites. In these settings, working-class voters are substantially less likely to vote Conservative and more likely to vote Liberal, and Liberal-bloc voters display strong and symmetric partisan alignment.

Constituencies with near-zero coefficients are disproportionately those where electoral outcomes were historically shaped by patron influence, treating, or voter intimidation. In these settings, voters belonging to the same social classes observed elsewhere show little systematic differentiation in voting behavior. The weak class gradients in such constituencies are consistent with environments in which voters' ability to act on either economic interests or class identities was constrained.

Between these two extremes lies a group of constituencies in which class-based voting is present but attenuated. In these settings, coefficients tend to have the same sign as in strongly class-voting constituencies but are smaller in magnitude and less precisely estimated.

The heterogeneity observed in Figure 3 points to a central role for local electoral conditions in shaping the expression of class-based voting. While these figures are purely descriptive, the systematic clustering of large and small coefficients suggests that institutional constraints may condition whether class-based preferences are politically expressed.

To examine this possibility more formally, we group constituencies into competitive, mixed, and controlled categories based on qualitative historical descriptions of electoral competition, vote buying, patron influence, and voter intimidation (O'Gorman 1989; Hanham 1959); see Online Appendix Table OA3 for more information on this grouping. Figure 4 reports class-vote coefficients separately for these categories. Consistent with the patterns in Figures 3, class-based voting is strongest in competitive constituencies, attenuated in mixed constituencies, and weakest in controlled constituencies.

Heterogeneity within the classes We have already noted that the working and middle classes were heterogeneous groups. It is fair to say the same applies to the Eriksson and Goldthorpe (1992) grouping. We illustrate this in Online Appendix Figure OA7 where we compute the probability of casting a Liberal vote, a Conservative vote, or a split vote within HISCO-coded occupations and then plot the cumulative distributions within Eriksson and Goldthorpe (1992) classes.

To better understand the heterogeneity within classes, Online Appendix Figures OA8 and OA9 examine whether finer variation in occupational status, measured by the continuous HISCAM score, predicts voting behavior differently across social groups. We estimate linear probability models relating vote choice to an indicator for class or voting bloc, the HISCAM score, and their interaction, while absorbing constituency-by-election year fixed effects. This specification allows the association between occupational status and voting to vary across groups rather than imposing a common status gradient.

The figures show that occupational status is related to voting behavior within both classes and blocs, but in distinctly group-specific ways. Among middle-class voters, higher HISCAM scores are associated with a higher probability of voting Conservative and a lower probability of voting Liberal, whereas among working-class voters the gradient runs in the opposite direction. When conditioning on bloc affiliation, higher occupational status is associated with greater cross-bloc voting, with higher-status voters in each bloc more likely to support the opposing party. Across all groups, higher occupational status is associated with lower rates of split voting. Thus, occupational status does not map monotonically into political behavior. While higher-status individuals tend to express more decisive partisan choices, the direction of that alignment depends on class position and underlying political coalitions.

Heterogeneity over time We have also examined how the connection between socioeconomic class and voting behavior changes over time. We visualize these results in Online Appendix Figures OA10-OA14. The pattern in Online Appendix Figure OA10 is in line with the earlier findings of Dewan, Meriläinen, and Tukiainen (2020) based on a smaller set of constituencies; working class voters become more likely to vote for Liberal candidates around the 1860s.[14] However, Online Appendix Figure OA11 does not exhibit a similar pattern for the comparison between the Liberal and the Conservative bloc—here, we see no systematic trend in the estimates.

[14] As the class composition of our data remains fairly stable across elections (see Online Appendix Figure OA3), we speculate that the aggregate trends in parties' vote shares are driven by changing partisan alignments of the socioeconomic classes and replacement of old voters with new ones rather than changes in the class composition.

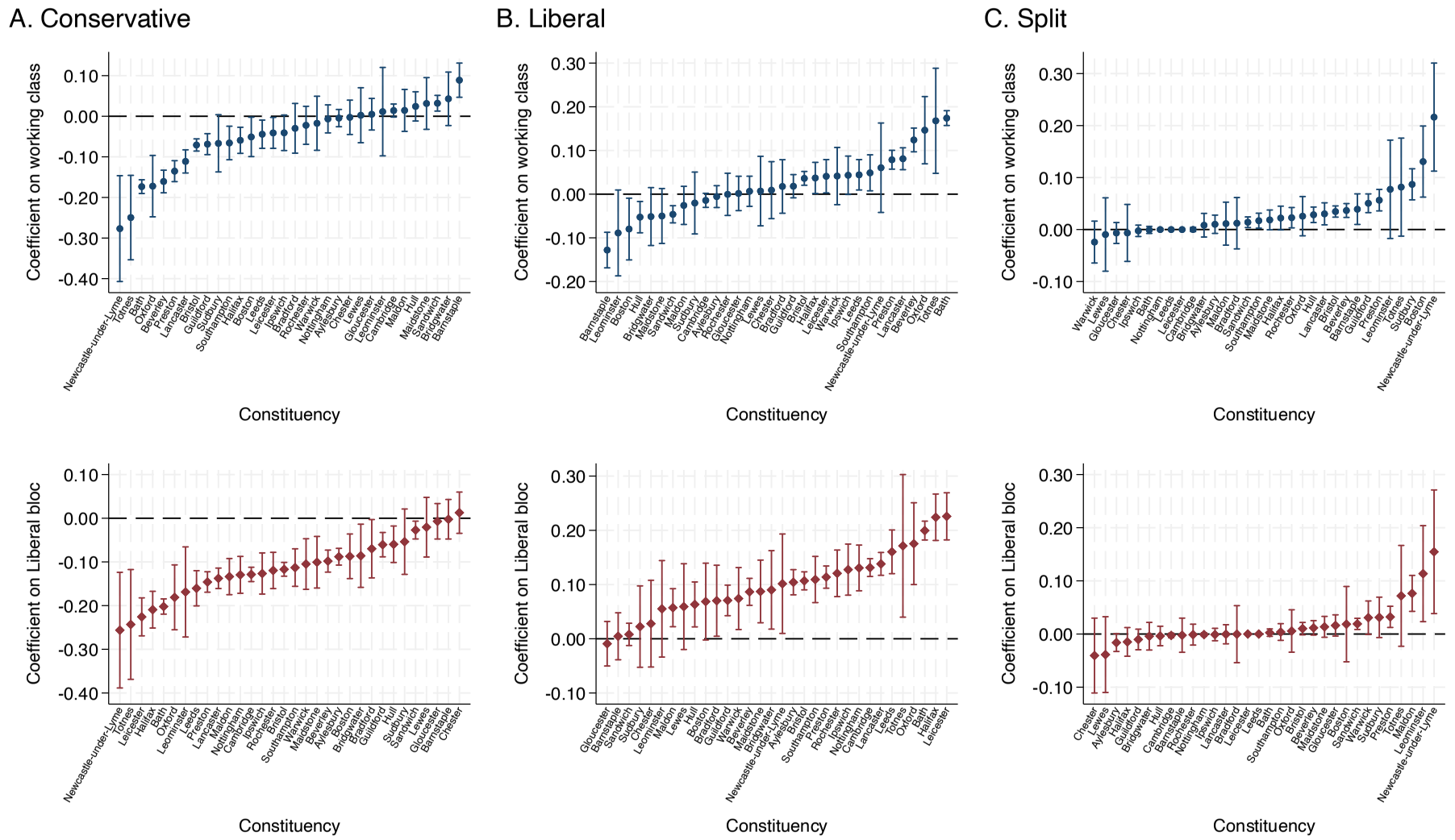


Figure 3. Voting behavior of the working class relative to the middle class across constituencies.

Notes: The figure shows point estimates obtained separately for each constituency. The point estimates are ordered by magnitude. The dependent variable is an indicator for a Conservative vote in Panel A (working class versus middle class in the top figure; Liberal bloc versus Conservative bloc in the bottom figure), a Liberal vote in Panel B, and a split vote in Panel C. We also show 95% confidence intervals constructed using robust standard errors.

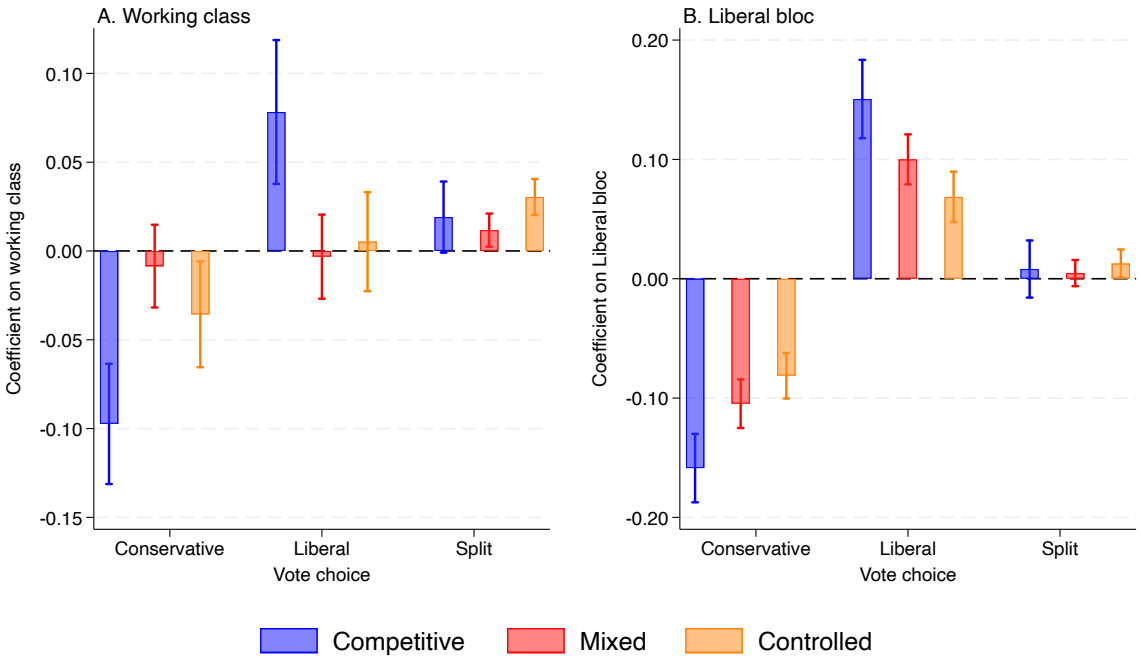


Figure 4. Heterogeneous relationship between class or voting bloc and vote choices.

Notes: The figure shows point estimates obtained using specification (1) and data from three subsamples. For more information on the classification into the subgroups, see Table OA3. We also show 95% confidence intervals constructed using standard errors clustered at the constituency × election year level.

4 Social Mobility and Changes in Voting Behavior

These baseline correlations provide a necessary starting point for the analysis but are not sufficient to distinguish among competing mechanisms. In this section, we therefore turn to individual-level occupational mobility and constituency characteristics to examine how voting behavior responds to changes in class position and to assess which mechanisms are most consistent with the observed dynamics.

The mobility analysis sharpens identification by exploiting within-voter changes in social position. By comparing voters who change class between elections to voters who remain in the same class, we aim to isolate how voting behavior responds to changes in class position rather than to persistent differences across social groups or local political environments. Under a model in which voting responds symmetrically to contemporaneous economic interests, upward and downward mobility should generate mirror-image adjustments. Deviations from such symmetry therefore provide direct evidence on the role of other factors such as identity in shaping political behavior.

4.1 Measuring Social Mobility

Given that we are able to track individual voters over time, we are able to examine social mobility using the poll book data. Table 2 shows class-by-class changes in our data. Here, we construct voter identifiers based on full names and restrict our attention to voters with unique names (no duplicate observations within a poll book).[15]

The transition matrix is based on adjacent election observations and reveals both substantial persistence and structured mobility.[16] Most observations lie on the main diagonal, indicating that the majority of voters remain in the same occupational class across elections: 29,773 out of 34,144 adjacent-election observations (about 87%) involve no class change. When mobility occurs, it is predominantly between neighboring classes rather than across distant positions in the class hierarchy. This observation leads us to believe that we are identifying individual voters reasonably well. If we were matching individuals across elections randomly, we would expect the transition matrix to look more uniform. The main limitation is instead that the information content of the poll books is relatively sparse.

Movements between skilled work and the petite bourgeoisie are particularly common, as are transitions between non-skilled and skilled occupations, patterns that are consistent with gradual mobility through skill acquisition or entry into small-scale self-employment. Downward mobility is also clearly present, especially transitions from the petite bourgeoisie into skilled or non-skilled work, reflecting the economic vulnerability of small proprietors. In contrast, direct transitions between farm work and white-collar or gentry positions are rare, underscoring the segmented nature of rural, professional, and elite labor markets.

In total, our data contain 4,371 adjacent-election observations in which a voter's Eriksson and Goldthorpe (1992) class differs from the previous election in which we observe them (i.e., about 13% of the observations). The rate of social mobility observed in the poll books is broadly in line with existing evidence on (inter-generational) social mobility in nineteenth-century Britain (Clark and Cummins 2014; Long 2013).

While our empirical design measures occupational mobility within individuals over time, it is important to note that in this historical context such mobility is likely closely related to inter-generational mobility. Most voters enter the electorate in early adulthood, and their initial observed occupation typically reflects their class of origin, which in many cases corresponds to their father's class. Subsequent class transitions

[15]This is a rather conservative approach, but we believe it helps us more credibly link voters across elections and limit erroneous inferences arising from bad links and false conclusions about vote switching and social mobility.

[16]Note that the distance between the adjacent observations varies across voters. The median time between two consecutive observations is $3 - -4$ years while the average is around 5 years. This roughly corresponds to the usual interval at which elections were held in our data (see Online Appendix Table OA1).

therefore often represent movement away from the parental class position, either upward or downward. As a result, although we do not directly observe parental occupations, the within-individual mobility we study plausibly captures inter-generational class transitions as they unfold over the life course.

Table 2. Transitions between socioeconomic classes.

Current class	Lagged class						Total
	Farm workers	Gentry	Non-skilled workers	Petite bourgeoisie	Skilled workers	White-collar workers	
Farm workers	2,158	52	90	75	126	10	2,511
Gentry	100	2,175	27	212	253	165	2,932
Non-skilled workers	69	17	1,834	121	304	26	2,371
Petite bourgeoisie	89	83	123	5,477	731	109	6,612
Skilled workers	129	84	216	496	15,110	103	16,138
White-collar workers	21	157	42	143	198	3,019	3,580
Total	2,566	2,568	2,332	6,524	16,722	3,432	34,144

4.2 Social Mobility and Convergence in Voting Behavior

We now study voting behavior of mobile voters. A central empirical pattern in the literature is that socially mobile voters often resemble members of their destination group more closely than those who remain in their group of origin. However, such convergence can arise through different mechanisms. Below, we first illustrate how convergence can be decomposed into pre-existing differences across individuals who are mobile and who are not mobile, and short-run behavioral responses to mobility. We then present empirical evidence on convergence and interpret it through this lens.

A simple decomposition of convergence We begin by putting structure around the relationship between observed convergence in voting behavior among socially mobile voters and the mechanisms that may generate it. Our objective is not to identify causal mechanisms, but to distinguish convergence that reflects pre-existing differences across individuals from convergence that coincides with behavioral change around observed occupational transitions.

Consider a transition from an origin group g to a destination group h (e.g., from the working class to the middle class, or from the Liberal to the Conservative bloc). Focus on two consecutive *observed* elections for a given voter, indexed by $t-1$ and t. These elections correspond to adjacent observations in the voter-level panel—that is, the two elections at which a voter is observed immediately before and after a transition is recorded. They need not be consecutive in calendar time. Let Y_{ict} denote an indicator

for a given vote choice (e.g., Conservative, Liberal, or split) for voter i in constituency c at election t.[17]

For the purposes of the decomposition exercise, we define three mutually exclusive groups of voters. *Origin stayers* (O) belong to group g in both observed elections, $G_{i,t-1} = G_{it} = g$. *Destination stayers* (D) belong to group h in both observed elections, $G_{i,t-1} = G_{it} = h$. *Movers* (M) transition from g to h between the two observations, $G_{i,t-1} = g$ and $G_{it} = h$.[18]

Let $\mu_\tau^X = \mathbb{E}[Y_{i\tau} \mid i \in X]$ denote the mean voting outcome for group $X \in \{O, M, D\}$ at observation $\tau \in \{t-1, t\}$. The post-transition difference in voting behavior between movers and origin stayers can then be written as

$$\mu_t^M - \mu_t^O = \left(\mu_{t-1}^M - \mu_{t-1}^O\right) + \left[\left(\mu_t^M - \mu_{t-1}^M\right) - \left(\mu_t^O - \mu_{t-1}^O\right)\right]. \tag{2}$$

Equation (2) is an accounting identity. It decomposes the post-transition mover–origin difference into two components that differ in their timing. The first term,

$$\sigma \equiv \mu_{t-1}^M - \mu_{t-1}^O,$$

captures a *pre-transition gap*. It measures the extent to which voters who later become mobile already differ from origin stayers in their voting behavior in the election prior to the observed transition. A non-zero value of σ indicates that movers are not a random subset of their origin group, but instead differ systematically in ways correlated with voting behavior. This component reflects persistent differences across individuals and long-run trajectories, broadly defined, rather than changes that occur within the narrow transition window.

The second term,

$$\upsilon \equiv \left(\mu_t^M - \mu_{t-1}^M\right) - \left(\mu_t^O - \mu_{t-1}^O\right),$$

captures a "within-window" relative change. It measures whether movers change their voting behavior more than comparable origin stayers between the two observed elections that bracket the transition. This difference-in-differences term isolates changes that coincide with the transition window, net of election-specific shocks common to all voters in the same constituency.

By construction,

$$\mu_t^M - \mu_t^O = \sigma + \upsilon.$$

This identity clarifies that post-transition convergence of movers toward destination group voting does not, by itself, imply contemporaneous behavioral updating. Even if $\upsilon = 0$,

[17] In the regression analysis below, we control for differences in the electoral environment by absorbing constituency-by-election fixed effects.

[18] Note that there are also voters who transition from h to g.

movers may resemble destination stayers after the transition if the pre-transition gap σ is sufficiently large.

To relate the decomposition to convergence toward destination stayers, consider the post-transition destination gap,

$$\mu_t^D - \mu_t^M.$$

A useful benchmark is the counterfactual outcome for movers under sorting alone, defined as $\mu_t^O + \sigma$. The difference between this counterfactual and the observed outcome for movers equals υ and therefore quantifies the contribution of within-window change to convergence relative to destination stayers.

Our empirical objective is twofold. First, we ask whether movers resemble destination stayers in the election observed after mobility is recorded. Second, we ask whether voting behavior changes differentially for movers during the two-election window that brackets the transition. These two objects need not coincide. Movers may resemble destination stayers at t even if voting behavior changes little between $t-1$ and t; for example, if the movers were already on destination-leaning trajectories or if political adjustment occurs gradually outside the observed window. We therefore interpret the decomposition as descriptive evidence on *when* the mover–origin gap arises—before versus during the transition window—rather than as causal identification of sorting versus updating mechanisms.

Convergence Guided by the above decomposition, we next document whether socially mobile voters more closely resemble the voting behavior of their destination group or that of voters who remain in their group of origin. We do so by comparing movers to both origin stayers and destination stayers within the same constituency–election environment. Importantly, these estimates describe voting behavior observed *after* a transition in group membership has been recorded and do not, by themselves, distinguish whether any resemblance reflects pre-existing differences across individuals or behavioral change associated with mobility.

To assess post-transition resemblance, we estimate cross-sectional regressions comparing movers, origin stayers, and destination stayers within the same constituency-election environment. For each origin-destination transition, the estimation sample is restricted to voters who can be classified into one of these three mutually exclusive groups using information from the current election and the voter's immediately preceding observed election. Movers are voters whose group membership differs between the two observations; origin stayers belong to the origin group in both elections; and destination stayers belong to the destination group in both elections. The regressions absorb constituency-by-election fixed effects, so identification comes entirely from within-election differences in voting behavior across the three groups.

For each outcome, we estimate the following specification:

$$Vote_{ict} = \beta_1 \mathbf{1}\{i \text{ is a destination stayer}\} + \beta_2 \mathbf{1}\{i \text{ is a mover}\} + \lambda_t \times \lambda_c + \varepsilon_{ict}, \quad (3)$$

where $Vote_{ict}$ is an indicator for voting Conservative, Liberal, or split in election t, and $\lambda_t \times \lambda_c$ denote constituency–election fixed effects. The omitted category consists of origin stayers, i.e., voters who remain in the origin class or bloc across consecutive observed elections.

The coefficient β_1 measures the difference in vote choice between destination stayers and origin stayers in the current election, $\beta_1 = \mu_t^D - \mu_t^O$. The coefficient β_2 measures the corresponding difference between movers and origin stayers, $\beta_2 = \mu_t^M - \mu_t^O$. Testing the null hypothesis $\beta_1 = \beta_2$ is therefore equivalent to testing whether movers are statistically indistinguishable from destination stayers in the post-transition election, i.e. whether $\mu_t^M = \mu_t^D$.

Panel A of Table 3 considers upward mobility from the working class to the middle class. Destination stayers differ sharply from origin stayers: they are significantly more likely to vote Conservative and less likely to vote Liberal or split, reflecting a pronounced class gradient in voting behavior. Movers, by contrast, remain close to working-class stayers. Across outcomes, the estimated coefficients on movers are small and statistically insignificant, and equality tests reject $\beta_1 = \beta_2$ for Conservative, Liberal, and split voting. Thus, upwardly mobile voters do not resemble middle-class stayers in the election following mobility.

Panel B examines downward mobility from the middle class to the working class. In this case, movers differ substantially from middle-class stayers and move closer to the voting behavior of working-class stayers. For all three outcomes, we fail to reject the null hypothesis $\beta_1 = \beta_2$, indicating that downwardly mobile voters are statistically indistinguishable from destination stayers in the post-transition election.

Panels C and D repeat the analysis for transitions between the Liberal and Conservative blocs. Panel C shows that Conservative-bloc stayers differ markedly from Liberal-bloc stayers, with much higher Conservative voting and lower Liberal voting. Movers from the Liberal to the Conservative bloc shift in the expected direction but remain distinct from Conservative-bloc stayers; equality tests strongly reject $\beta_1 = \beta_2$ for Conservative and Liberal voting, indicating incomplete convergence. Panel D presents the reverse transition, from the Conservative to the Liberal bloc. Movers in this case differ sharply from origin stayers and are statistically indistinguishable from Liberal-bloc stayers across all outcomes, consistent with post-transition resemblance to the destination bloc.

These estimates reveal an asymmetry in post-transition resemblance. Transitions involving downward movement in the occupational hierarchy, as well as movements into

the Liberal bloc, are associated with close similarity between movers and destination stayers in the election following mobility. Upward mobility and transitions into the Conservative bloc, by contrast, are characterized by weaker and incomplete resemblance, even when the gap between origin and destination stayers is large.

Crucially, these patterns describe where movers end up relative to origin and destination groups, not how or when they get there. As shown in the decomposition above, post-transition resemblance to destination stayers can arise even in the absence of differential voting change around the transition window.[19] In the next subsection, we therefore examine whether these convergence patterns coincide with changes in voting behavior during the elections that bracket observed mobility.

Restricting attention to competitive constituencies yields clear evidence of convergence: movers differ significantly from origin stayers in the direction of destination group voting, and in several cases cannot be statistically distinguished from destination stayers (Online Appendix Table OA5). In mixed constituencies, convergence is more selective—largely absent for occupational mobility but pronounced for transitions across political blocs, where movers' post-transition behavior closely resembles that of destination stayers (Online Appendix Table OA6). In controlled constituencies, convergence is generally weaker and incomplete, with movers often being distinct from destination stayers even when destination group differences are sizable (Online Appendix Table OA7).

When does the mover-origin gap emerge? To examine when the differences between movers and origin stayers arise, we operationalize the decomposition in equation (2) using a two-election panel constructed around each observed mobility event. The objective is not to identify causal mechanisms, but to assess whether post-transition gaps documented above coincide with differential changes in voting behavior within the narrow window that brackets observed mobility.

For a given origin-destination pair (g, h), we restrict the sample to voters who either (i) experience exactly one transition from g to h between two consecutive observed elections or (ii) remain in the origin group g throughout all observed elections. For movers, we retain the election in which the transition is recorded and the immediately preceding observed election. For origin stayers, we retain observations from the same pair of consecutive elections that bracket a mobility event for movers in the same constituency-election environment. This restriction ensures that changes in voting behavior are measured over identical election pairs for movers and stayers.

[19] Importantly, the convergence estimates describe post-transition cross-sectional resemblance. They are not mechanically linked to the decomposition estimates below, which focus exclusively on the mover–origin gap and exclude destination stayers by construction.

Table 3. Convergence.

	Conservative	Liberal	Split
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Panel A. Working → Middle			
Destination stayers vs. origin stayers	0.047***	-0.026*	-0.021***
	[0.015]	[0.015]	[0.005]
Movers vs. origin stayers	-0.004	0.010	-0.006
	[0.012]	[0.012]	[0.008]
N	32622	32622	32622
R^2	0.09	0.10	0.20
Destination-stayer mean	0.47	0.47	0.06
Origin-stayer mean	0.42	0.47	0.11
p-value	0.00	0.02	0.05
Panel B. Middle → Working			
Destination stayers vs. origin stayers	-0.047***	0.026*	0.021***
	[0.015]	[0.015]	[0.005]
Movers vs. origin stayers	-0.076***	0.047**	0.029***
	[0.020]	[0.022]	[0.010]
N	32046	32046	32046
R^2	0.09	0.10	0.20
Destination-stayer mean	0.42	0.47	0.11
Origin-stayer mean	0.47	0.47	0.06
p-value	0.07	0.26	0.46
Panel C. Liberal bloc → Conservative bloc			
Destination stayers vs. origin stayers	0.108***	-0.094***	-0.014***
	[0.012]	[0.013]	[0.005]
Movers vs. origin stayers	0.032**	-0.014	-0.018***
	[0.013]	[0.014]	[0.007]
N	32687	32687	32687
R^2	0.09	0.10	0.20
Destination-stayer mean	0.52	0.40	0.08
Origin-stayer mean	0.40	0.50	0.10
p-value	0.00	0.00	0.44
Panel D. Conservative bloc → Liberal bloc			
Destination stayers vs. origin stayers	-0.107***	0.094***	0.014***
	[0.012]	[0.013]	[0.005]
Movers vs. origin stayers	-0.091***	0.069***	0.023**
	[0.024]	[0.023]	[0.011]
N	32199	32199	32199
R^2	0.09	0.10	0.20
Destination-stayer mean	0.40	0.50	0.10
Origin-stayer mean	0.52	0.40	0.08
p-value	0.47	0.21	0.37

Notes: The dependent variable is a Conservative vote in column (1), a Liberal vote in column (2), and a split vote in columns (3). The unit of observation is a voter. Each panel reports estimates from regressions comparing movers between classes or political blocs to non-moving voters ("stayers") in the same constituency–election. The sample in each panel is restricted to three groups: (i) movers from the origin group to the destination group, (ii) destination stayers (voters who belong to the destination group in two consecutive elections), and (iii) origin stayers (voters who belong to the origin group in two consecutive elections). The coefficient labeled *Destination stayers vs. origin stayers* measures the difference in voting behavior between destination stayers and origin stayers within the same constituency–election. The coefficient labeled *Movers vs. origin stayers* measures the difference between movers and origin stayers. Thus, the difference of the two coefficients gives the difference between movers and destination stayers. Reported means show the average vote choice among destination stayers and origin stayers in each panel. The reported p-value corresponds to a test of the null hypothesis $\beta_1 = \beta_2$, where β_1 is the difference between destination stayers and origin stayers and β_2 is the difference between movers and origin stayers; failure to reject indicates that movers are statistically indistinguishable from destination stayers. All specifications control for constituency × election fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the constituency × election level are shown in brackets. ***, **, and * indicate statistical significance at 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

Each voter in the estimation sample therefore contributes exactly two observations: a pre period (t–1) and a post period (t), corresponding to consecutive observed elections for that voter. We estimate, separately by transition and outcome, the following difference-in-differences specification with constituency-by-election fixed effects:

$$Y_{ict} = \lambda_c \times \lambda_t + \sigma \, \text{Mover}_i + \gamma \, \text{Post}_{it} + \upsilon \, (\text{Mover}_i \times \text{Post}_{it}) + \varepsilon_{ict},$$

where Mover_i equals one for movers and zero for origin stayers, and Post_{it} equals one for the post-transition observation. In this specification, σ measures the pre-transition difference in vote choice between movers and origin stayers, $\mu^M_{t-1} - \mu^O_{t-1}$. The interaction coefficient υ captures the differential change in voting behavior between $t-1$ and t for movers relative to origin stayers,

$$\upsilon = (\mu^M_t - \mu^M_{t-1}) - (\mu^O_t - \mu^O_{t-1}).$$

By construction, υ measures whether voting behavior diverges between movers and origin stayers within the two-election window surrounding observed mobility. It does not capture gradual adjustment occurring outside this window, nor does it distinguish between behavioral updating, anticipatory adjustment occurring after $t-1$, or other time-varying shocks that differentially affect movers and stayers.

Table 4 reports the resulting decomposition of the post-transition mover–origin gap into a pre-transition gap (σ) and a differential change between the pre- and post-transition observations (υ). Each panel corresponds to a specific transition between an origin group g and a destination group h.

Panel A examines upward mobility from the working class to the middle class. Movers differ only modestly from working-class stayers prior to the transition, with small and statistically insignificant pre-transition gaps across outcomes. The differential change component is likewise close to zero and imprecisely estimated. Consequently, differences between movers and origin stayers observed after the transition remain limited, providing little evidence of sharp divergence within the two-election window surrounding mobility.

Panel B considers downward mobility from the middle class to the working class. Pre-transition differences between movers and origin stayers are again modest. Point estimates for the differential change component are larger than in Panel A—particularly for Conservative and Liberal voting—and move in the direction of increased similarity to the working-class origin group. However, these estimates are imprecisely estimated and do not permit a sharp attribution of post-transition differences to discrete voting changes occurring within the observed transition window.

Panels C and D examine transitions across political blocs. For movements from the Liberal to the Conservative bloc (Panel C), both the pre-transition gap and the differential

change estimates are small and statistically insignificant, and differences between movers and origin stayers remain close to zero both before and after the transition. In contrast, for movements from the Conservative to the Liberal bloc (Panel D), pre-transition differences are larger, and point estimates for differential change—particularly for split voting—are more pronounced, though again estimated with substantial uncertainty. In both cases, the decomposition indicates that post-transition differences observed at the first election after mobility need not reflect discrete behavioral adjustment occurring within the two-election window itself.

Restricting the sample to competitive constituencies yields qualitatively similar patterns, albeit with larger standard errors due to reduced sample size (Online Appendix Table OA8). Post-transition gaps between movers and origin stayers are often larger in magnitude in competitive contests—especially for downward mobility and transitions into the Liberal bloc—but the decomposition continues to provide limited evidence of sharp within-window updating. In mixed and controlled constituencies, post-transition gaps are generally smaller, and both sorting and updating components are typically statistically indistinguishable from zero (Online Appendix Tables OA9 and OA10).

Finally, we emphasize that pre-transition differences between movers and origin stayers may reflect either selection on stable individual traits or anticipatory political adjustment in response to expected future mobility (Bénabou and Ok 2001; Alesina and La Ferrara 2005). Our data do not permit a sharp distinction between these mechanisms. What the decomposition does show is that observed post-transition resemblance to destination groups often does not coincide with differential voting changes within the elections that bracket recorded mobility. This finding reinforces the interpretation that convergence documented in the cross section need not reflect contemporaneous political updating at the time of occupational transition.

4.3 Within-Voter Estimates

The convergence and decomposition exercises show that cross-sectional resemblance to destination groups does not, by itself, imply contemporaneous political adjustment at the time of mobility. Movers may resemble destination stayers after a transition even if voting behavior does not change sharply within the mobility window. This motivates a final step in the analysis that focuses directly on within-voter variation in voting behavior. By conditioning on voter fixed effects, this approach isolates changes in voting behavior that coincide with changes in observed socioeconomic position, net of all time-invariant individual characteristics.[20]

[20]In Online Appendix Table OA11, we show that changes between the working and middle classes are associated with meaningful changes in the HISCAM scores but changes between the Liberal and Conservative blocs are not.

Table 4. Difference-in-differences estimates.

	Conservative	Liberal	Split
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Panel A. Working class → Middle class			
Pre-transition gap	0.018	-0.012	-0.006
	[0.024]	[0.026]	[0.012]
Post-transition change relative to stayers	-0.003	-0.018	0.020
	[0.027]	[0.032]	[0.020]
N	8790	8790	8790
R^2	0.10	0.10	0.20
Origin mean (pre)	0.40	0.50	0.09
Mover mean (pre)	0.46	0.47	0.08
Origin mean (post)	0.42	0.46	0.12
Mover mean (post)	0.44	0.46	0.10
Post gap (mover - origin)	0.016	-0.030	0.014
Panel B. Middle class → Working class			
Pre-transition gap	-0.025	0.031	-0.007
	[0.060]	[0.059]	[0.016]
Post-transition change relative to stayers	-0.111	0.078	0.032
	[0.068]	[0.072]	[0.020]
N	5129	5129	5129
R^2	0.09	0.09	0.18
Origin mean (pre)	0.48	0.47	0.05
Mover mean (pre)	0.46	0.49	0.05
Origin mean (post)	0.50	0.45	0.05
Mover mean (post)	0.39	0.53	0.09
Post gap (mover - origin)	-0.135	0.110	0.025
Panel C. Liberal bloc → Conservative bloc			
Pre-transition gap	0.011	-0.009	-0.002
	[0.025]	[0.025]	[0.009]
Post-transition change relative to stayers	-0.023	0.024	-0.000
	[0.039]	[0.041]	[0.013]
N	9536	9536	9536
R^2	0.08	0.07	0.20
Origin mean (pre)	0.41	0.50	0.09
Mover mean (pre)	0.42	0.50	0.08
Origin mean (post)	0.41	0.49	0.10
Mover mean (post)	0.40	0.51	0.09
Post gap (mover - origin)	-0.012	0.015	-0.003
Panel D. Conservative bloc → Liberal bloc			
Pre-transition gap	-0.044	0.065	-0.021
	[0.041]	[0.042]	[0.021]
Post-transition change relative to stayers	-0.065	0.008	0.057*
	[0.061]	[0.066]	[0.034]
N	4148	4148	4148
R^2	0.09	0.10	0.20
Origin mean (pre)	0.51	0.42	0.07
Mover mean (pre)	0.45	0.47	0.08
Origin mean (post)	0.54	0.38	0.08
Mover mean (post)	0.44	0.43	0.13
Post gap (mover - origin)	-0.109	0.073	0.037

Notes: The dependent variable is a Conservative vote in column (1), a Liberal vote in column (2), and a split vote in columns (3). The unit of observation is a voter. Each panel reports a decomposition of the difference in vote choice between socially mobile voters and origin stayers. The sample in each panel is restricted to voters observed in two consecutive elections who either (i) move between the indicated classes or blocs (movers), or (ii) remain in the class or bloc of origin (origin stayers). Destination stayers are not included in these regressions. The row labeled *Pre-transition gap* reports the difference in vote choice between movers and origin stayers *prior* to the transition. This coefficient captures pre-existing differences between individuals who eventually move and those who remain in their class or bloc of origin. The row labeled *Post-transition change relative to stayers* reports a difference-in-differences estimate comparing changes in vote choice for movers relative to origin stayers between the pre- and post-transition elections. The rows labeled *Origin mean (pre)*, *Mover mean (pre)*, *Origin mean (post)*, and *Mover mean (post)* report average vote shares for each group before and after the transition. The *Post gap (mover – origin)* equals the sum of the σ and v components. All specifications include constituency × election fixed effects. Standard errors, reported in brackets, are clustered at the constituency × election level. ***, **, and * denote statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

Estimation strategy Our within-voter analysis exploits variation over time within individuals to examine how changes in socioeconomic class are associated with changes in voting behavior. We restrict attention to voters who experience a change in occupational class or class bloc during the period of observation and compare their voting behavior before versus after the transition.

Formally, we estimate voter fixed-effects regressions of the form:

$$Vote_{ict} = \beta\, Class_{it} + \lambda_i + \lambda_t \times \lambda_c + \varepsilon_{it}, \tag{4}$$

where $Vote_{ict}$ denotes voter i's party choice in constituency c and election t, $Class_{it}$ captures the voter's contemporaneous occupational class or class bloc, λ_i are voter fixed effects, and $\lambda_t \times \lambda_c$ denote constituency-by-election fixed effects.

The estimation sample now consists of (one-time) socially mobile voters and voters who never change their socioeconomic class in our data, and identification comes from within-voter changes in class position across elections. By including voter fixed effects, the specification absorbs all time-invariant individual characteristics, including factors like stable political predispositions, early-life socialization, persistent class identities, and other fixed traits that may jointly influence occupational trajectories and voting behavior. As a result, the coefficient β captures the average association between changes in observed class position and changes in vote choice within individuals.

Interpreting β as a causal effect requires the assumption that changes in occupational class are uncorrelated with unobserved, time-varying shocks that directly affect voting behavior. This assumption may be violated if occupational transitions coincide with other individual-level changes that also influence political behavior. To mitigate concerns related to common local shocks, we include constituency-by-election fixed effects, which absorb election-specific political and economic conditions shared by all voters in a constituency.

Even under a weaker, descriptive interpretation, the voter fixed-effects specification provides a stringent test of whether the patterns documented in the cross-sectional and decomposition analyses reflect contemporaneous political adjustment. Any association identified in (4) must arise from changes in voting behavior within individuals over time rather than from persistent differences across voters.

Estimation results for mobility between working and middle classes Panel A of Table 5 reports within-voter estimates for transitions between the working and middle classes. Once voter fixed effects are introduced, estimated responses to upward mobility are small and statistically indistinguishable from zero across all three outcomes. Individuals who move from the working class into the middle class exhibit no

systematic change in Conservative, Liberal, or split voting relative to their own pre-transition behavior.

Downward mobility from the middle class into the working class is associated with a modest decline in Conservative voting ($p < 0.05$) and increases in Liberal (non-significant) and split ($p < 0.10$) voting. Overall, the within-voter estimates thus indicate limited political adjustment following class mobility, with some evidence of responsiveness to downward mobility but little indication of symmetric updating across directions of movement.

Estimation results for mobility across Liberal and Conservative blocs Panel B extends the analysis to mobility between the Liberal and Conservative blocs. In contrast to the pronounced post-transition differences documented in the cross-sectional convergence analysis, the within-voter estimates reveal no statistically meaningful changes in voting behavior following bloc transitions. Movements into either bloc are associated with small and imprecisely estimated coefficients across all outcomes, and only one of the estimates is statistically distinguishable from zero.

The within-voter estimates reinforce the central message of the preceding analyses. While movers may resemble destination groups after transitions, most of this resemblance reflects persistent differences across individuals rather than discrete changes in voting behavior that coincide with changes in observed socioeconomic position. Where within-voter adjustment is detected, it is modest and asymmetric, concentrated in downward mobility, and does not account for the full extent of post-transition convergence documented in the cross section. This lack of support for the economic voting hypothesis is somewhat surprising given the major economic changes taking place in this period of the English Industrial Revolution heyday.

Alternative measurement In Online Appendix OA12, we instead measure occupational status using the HISCAM score (Lambert et al. 2013). When we include the HISCAM score linearly, we do not find any meaningful relationship with vote choices. If we also add a squared term, we recover a pattern that is similar to what we report in the cross section (Online Appendix Figure OA6), but the estimates are statistically insignificant.

Event-study analysis The within-voter estimates in Table 5 capture the average association between changes in class position and changes in vote choice across all elections in which a voter is observed. A natural concern is whether the limited effects documented above mask a dynamic pattern in which voting behavior adjusts gradually or, alternatively, whether movers already differed from stayers prior to the transition.

Table 5. Within-voter estimates.

	Conservative		Liberal		Split	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A. Working class ⇆ Middle class						
Working class → Middle class	0.002		-0.004		0.002	
	[0.009]		[0.010]		[0.009]	
Middle class → Working class		-0.029**		0.010		0.018*
		[0.011]		[0.013]		[0.011]
N	49515	47266	49515	47266	49515	47266
R^2	0.76	0.76	0.77	0.77	0.53	0.53
Panel B. Conservative bloc ⇆ Liberal bloc						
Liberal bloc → Conservative bloc	-0.018		0.001		0.017*	
	[0.013]		[0.014]		[0.009]	
Conservative bloc → Liberal bloc		-0.010		0.009		0.002
		[0.017]		[0.016]		[0.015]
N	49516	47428	49516	47428	49516	47428
R^2	0.76	0.76	0.77	0.77	0.53	0.53

Notes: The dependent variable is an indicator for a Conservative vote in columns (1) and (2), a Liberal vote in columns (3) and (4), and a split vote in columns (5) and (6). The unit of observation is a voter. The estimation sample includes voters who are observed at least twice and who are either mobile (treatment group) or remain in the class of origin between two elections (reference group). All specifications control for constituency × election fixed effects and voter fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the constituency × election level are shown in brackets. ***, **, and * indicate statistical significance at 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

To examine the timing of any changes in voting behavior around occupational transitions, we adopt an event-study design.

We restrict the sample to constituencies with at least four poll books and voters observed in at least four elections who experience exactly one class or bloc transition during the sample period, together with never-movers from the same origin group who serve as controls. For each mover, we define event time relative to the transition: $t = 0$ denotes the election at which the transition is first recorded, $t = -1$ the immediately preceding observed election, $t = -2$ the election before that, and $t \geq +1$ any elections observed after the transition. Never-movers contribute to the estimation of voter and constituency-by-election fixed effects but have all event-time indicators set to zero, so that the event-time coefficients are identified from the within-voter trajectories of movers relative to the control group of stayers.

For each transition type and outcome, we estimate:

$$Vote_{ict} = \delta_{-2}\,\mathbf{1}\{t = -2\} + \delta_0\,\mathbf{1}\{t = 0\} + \delta_{+1}\,\mathbf{1}\{t \geq +1\} + \lambda_i + \lambda_c \times \lambda_t + \varepsilon_{ict}, \quad (5)$$

where λ_i are voter fixed effects and $\lambda_c \times \lambda_t$ are constituency-by-election fixed effects. The omitted reference period is $t = -1$, the last election before the transition. The coefficient δ_{-2} provides a test for pre-trends: a value close to zero and statistically insignificant indicates that movers' voting behavior was not already diverging from stayers before the

transition was recorded. The coefficient δ_0 captures changes in voting behavior at the time of the transition, and δ_{+1} captures any persistence or further adjustment in subsequent elections. Standard errors are clustered at the constituency-by-election level.

Figure 5 presents the results for all four transition types. The pre-trend coefficients at $t = -2$ are generally small and statistically insignificant, providing no clear evidence that movers' voting behavior was trending differentially prior to the observed transition. This supports the interpretation that the within-voter estimates are not confounded by pre-existing divergence in political trajectories between movers and stayers, at least within the limited time horizon observable in our data.

The transition and post-transition coefficients are also generally close to zero for most outcomes and transition types, reinforcing the finding from the static within-voter specification that occupational mobility is not associated with large or systematic changes in vote choice. Where point estimates are larger—most notably for downward mobility (Panel B) and for movements into the Liberal bloc (Panel D)—they are consistent with the asymmetric pattern documented above, but remain imprecisely estimated.

The absence of sharp pre-trends combined with modest transition effects is consistent with the decomposition results: post-transition resemblance between movers and destination groups arises primarily from pre-existing differences that are already present by $t = -1$, rather than from discrete behavioral changes within the event window. The event-study specification thus corroborates the view that convergence reflects long-run sorting rather than contemporaneous updating at the time of mobility.[21]

4.4 Interpretation

The evidence in this section clarifies how convergence between socially mobile voters and destination groups should be interpreted. While cross-sectional comparisons show that movers often resemble destination stayers in elections following a recorded transition, the decomposition, within-voter, and event-study analyses indicate that this resemblance need not arise from discrete vote switching at the time occupational mobility is observed.[22] Instead, post-transition differences between movers and origin

[21]Because voters transition at different elections, the standard TWFE event-study specification could in principle be biased by heterogeneous treatment effects across cohorts. In Online Appendix Figure OA16 we re-estimate the event study using the imputation estimator of Borusyak, Jaravel, and Spiess (2024), which avoids "forbidden comparisons" between differentially treated cohorts by imputing untreated potential outcomes from not-yet-treated and never-treated units. The resulting estimates are very similar to those in Figure 5: pre-trend coefficients remain close to zero, and transition and post-transition effects are small and generally insignificant, confirming that our conclusions do not depend on the standard TWFE assumptions.

[22]We assess the informativeness of the within-voter null results by computing minimum detectable effects against the cross-sectional gradients in Table 1 as benchmarks. For bloc transitions, the design has essentially complete power to detect effects equal to the full cross-sectional gradient, and the 95% confidence intervals rule out effects larger than around one-thirds of those benchmarks. For upward

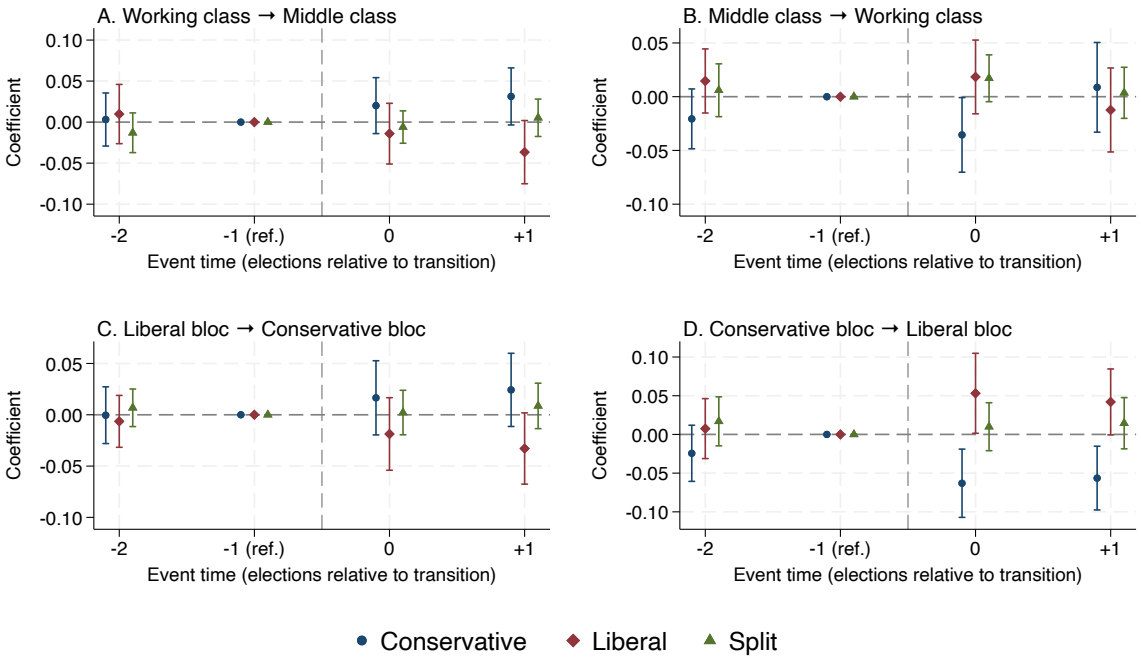


Figure 5. Event-study estimates around occupational transitions.

Notes: Each panel plots estimated coefficients on event-time indicators from voter fixed-effects regressions. The estimation sample includes single-transition movers observed in at least four elections and never-movers from the origin class. Event time is measured in elections relative to the transition: $t = -1$ (reference, omitted) is the last election before the transition, $t = -2$ is one election earlier, $t = 0$ is the transition election, and $t \geq +1$ denotes post-transition elections. All specifications include voter fixed effects and constituency × election fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the constituency × election level. Vertical bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.

stayers often become observable only at the first election following mobility, without clear evidence of sharp within-window adjustment. The event-study analysis reinforces this conclusion: voting behavior does not exhibit differential pre-trends prior to the transition, nor does it show sharp discontinuous changes at the time of the transition itself.

These timing patterns place constraints on the mechanisms that can plausibly generate the strong cross-sectional association between social class and voting behavior documented in this and earlier work. In particular, they are difficult to reconcile with models in which class-based voting responds rapidly and contemporaneously to changes in material interests at the time of occupational transition. A simple version of

mobility, the Conservative vote null is similarly well-powered, with the CI ruling out effects larger than 38% of the benchmark. The Liberal vote estimates are less conclusive: the MDE at 80% power (2.8–3.6 percentage points) approaches the cross-sectional gradient of 3.3 points, so we interpret those estimates with more caution.

economic voting, in which mobility induces immediate political realignment, appears insufficient to account for the observed patterns.

The results are instead consistent with mechanisms that operate over longer horizons. These include political socialization, habit formation, and identity-based voting, as well as economic mechanisms that affect political behavior indirectly or with delay—for example through anticipatory responses, gradual updating of expectations, or evolving exposure to new social networks and local political environments. Under such accounts, individuals who eventually become mobile may already be on destination-leaning political trajectories prior to the recorded transition, and observed mobility reflects a point along that trajectory rather than its origin.

The asymmetric responses documented across directions of mobility further support this interpretation. Downward transitions in the occupational hierarchy, as well as movements into the Liberal bloc, are more often associated with post-transition divergence from origin stayers than are upward transitions or movements into the Conservative bloc. This asymmetry is difficult to reconcile with a pure material-interest model, which predicts symmetric or even stronger effects of upward mobility—since advancement should increase voters' stake in property protection and strengthen alignment with Conservative positions (Lipset and Bendix 1959). The observed pattern is instead consistent with theories in which political behavior is more responsive to transitions involving loss or instability than to those associated with advancement, emphasizing disruption of prior attachments rather than immediate recalculation of material interests.

The aggregate strengthening of working-class Liberal alignment visible in the 1860s is consistent with historical accounts that attribute the Liberal party's consolidation in this period to the cheap press, militant Dissent, and organized labor (Vincent 1966). However, our within-voter evidence suggests this trend was driven rather by other factors (for example, the mobilization of new voters and generational replacement) than by the conversion of socially mobile voters, reinforcing the distinction between aggregate change and individual-level updating. It is further worth noting that the class composition of eligible voters remained fairly stable across the elections in our data (Online Appendix Figure OA3).

5 Concluding Remarks

This paper studies the foundations of class-based voting during early democratization and the Industrial Revolution using newly collected individual-level panel data from nineteenth-century England. Three findings emerge. First, voting was strongly structured by occupational class, but along bloc lines—skilled workers and the petite bourgeoisie supporting Liberals, the gentry, white-collar workers, farm workers, and

non-skilled laborers leaning Conservative—that mapped onto the central distributional conflict over trade policy rather than a simple working-versus-middle-class divide. Second, socially mobile voters often resemble their destination group after transitions, but this convergence is asymmetric, most pronounced for downward mobility and movements toward the Liberal bloc. Third, within-voter estimates reveal limited systematic change in vote choice around the time of occupational transitions, indicating that post-transition resemblance reflects pre-existing differences across individuals rather than contemporaneous political updating.

These findings contribute to political economy by demonstrating that convergence toward destination group voting—widely interpreted since Lipset and Bendix (1959) as evidence that preferences track material interests—can arise without within-individual updating. Our decomposition of post-transition resemblance into pre-existing differences and within-window change provides a framework for assessing this inference, and our results suggest that the preference-updating channel assumed in models linking mobility to political realignment is weaker than commonly supposed. The asymmetry we document—with downward mobility generating more adjustment than upward mobility—further constrains the class of models consistent with the evidence, favoring accounts that emphasize loss aversion and disruption of prior attachments over symmetric material-interest calculations.

The results also speak to long-standing questions in British political history. Our individual-level evidence provides the first systematic micro-level assessment of the debate between Vincent (1966), who emphasized autonomous class-based voting, and Moore (1976), who stressed deference and patron control. The finding that class-vote gradients are strong in competitive constituencies but weak in controlled ones suggests both traditions captured real features of different electoral environments. More broadly, the within-voter stability we document confirms Butler and Stokes's (1969) conjecture that the durable class alignments they observed in postwar Britain had deep historical roots. Our data also suggest that "the middle class" was never politically homogeneous: the gentry and white-collar workers were consistently Conservative throughout our period, while the petite bourgeoisie remained aligned with skilled workers. To the extent that the middle class appeared to shift rightward over time, this may partly reflect compositional change as white-collar occupations grew relative to the petite bourgeoisie, rather than individual-level political conversion.

Finally, these findings illuminate the micro-foundation of durable political cleavages. Lipset and Rokkan (1967a) attributed the persistence of European party systems to organizational lock-in by parties that had successfully mobilized social groups. Our evidence points to a complementary mechanism: the cleavages were behaviorally frozen at the individual level from the outset, with political identities formed through socialization proving stable even as individuals moved through the occupational

structure. The underlying cleavage we identify—coalitions formed around differential exposure to trade openness and market competition, a division already central to Ricardo's analysis of the Corn Laws—has re-emerged as a central axis of contemporary political conflict (Autor et al. 2020; Colantone and Stanig 2018). That similar cleavage structures arise in very different institutional environments suggests that such alignments can emerge directly from economic structure, and that observed cross-sectional realignment today may likewise reflect long-run sorting and asymmetric responses to economic shocks rather than widespread voter conversion.

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Online Appendix to "Class, Social Mobility, and Voting in Democratizing and Industrializing England" (Not for Publication)

A Data

Our sample covers 33 constituencies observed in 22 election years, comprising 10 general elections and 12 by-election years, for a total of 102 constituency–election observations. Most of the constituencies are observed in more than one election. Table OA1 shows the constituencies and elections included in our dataset. We have collected most of the poll book data ourselves. There are two exceptions: the data for Guildford (six elections in 1835-1857; Sykes 1977) and Sandwich (five in 1835-1859; Andrews 2001) are available in the UK Data Archive.

Figure OA1 shows the constituencies in our data on the English map. Different parts of England are represented in our data. We also provide other illustrations of sample coverage and representativeness using aggregate election return data from Eggers and Spirling (2014). Our data cover slightly less than one-tenth of the (contested) general and by-elections held between 1832-1867 and around one-tenth of the electors that voted in these elections, and we have observations from slightly more than one-tenth of the constituencies that existed during that time interval (Figure OA2).

Note that poll books not exploited in our study do exist, but not all of them include information on occupations. These are important for classifying the voters to socioeconomic classes. The class composition of the electorate is fairly stable in our constituencies over time (Figure OA3).

Despite the limited coverage, we note that our data are fairly representative in terms of the number of candidates and elected representatives (Table OA2 and Figure OA4). The elections in our data tend to have a larger number of electors than the constituencies overall, suggesting that our sample is more representative of larger constituencies, and there is less voting for the Conservatives than in other constituencies. In the earlier periods, up until the early 1850s, party vote shares in our constituencies reflect those in England more broadly (Figure OA5); however, the trends differ visibly over the years 1857–1868.

Finally, Table OA3 explains how the constituencies are classified into three categories based on the competitiveness of elections. "Competitive" constituencies are characterized by intense electoral contestation and relatively weak personal dependence between voters and local elites. "Controlled" constituencies are those where electoral outcomes were historically shaped by patron influence, treating, or voter intimidation. Between these

two extremes lies a group of constituencies in which class-based voting is present but attenuated; we call these "mixed" constituencies.

Figure OA1. Map of constituencies in our data.

Table OA1. Constituency coverage by election year

Constituency	1832	1834	1835	1837	1839	1841	1843	1847	1848	1850	1851	1852	1853	1854	1855	1857	1858	1859	1863	1865	1866	1868
Aylesbury	✓		✓		*			✓	*	*	*	✓										
Barnstaple								✓				✓		*		✓						
Bath								✓			*	✓			*							✓
Beverley								✓				✓				*		✓		✓		
Boston												✓										
Bradford			✓																			
Bridgwater			✓																			
Bristol	✓			✓								✓										
Cambridge				✓		✓	*	✓				✓		*		✓			*			✓
Chester				✓																		
Gloucester																✓		✓				
Guildford	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓				✓				✓	*			✓	*	✓
Halifax			✓	✓				✓				✓	*			✓						
Hull				✓																		
Ipswich	✓		✓																			
Lancaster				✓		✓		✓	*			✓			✓			✓		✓		
Leeds		*																				
Leicester				✓																		
Leominster												✓										
Lewes			✓																			
Maidstone						✓																
Maldon								✓				✓										
North Lincolnshire			✓			✓						✓										
Newcastle-under-Lyme						✓																
Nottingham								*														
Oxford																						✓
Preston				✓		✓						✓							✓	✓		
Rochester																						✓
Sandwich	✓		✓	✓				✓							✓		✓			✓	*	✓
Southampton				✓		✓																
Sudbury	✓		✓																			
Totnes				✓																		
Warwick	✓																					

✓ indicates that we observe the constituency in a *general* election in that year, and ∗ indicates that we observe the constituency in a *by-election* in that year.

Table OA2. Descriptive statistics of elections in our data and other elections.

	Elections in our data	Other elections	Difference	p-value
Number of candidates	3.01	3.23	0.22	0.01
Number of elected representatives	1.84	1.99	0.15	0.00
ln(Number of electors)	7.45	7.30	-0.14	0.26
Conservative vote share	42.89	46.56	3.67	0.11

Notes: The data come from the Eggers-Spirling database (Eggers and Spirling 2014).

Table OA3. Classification of constituencies by electoral environment.

Constituency	Type	Rationale
Aylesbury	Mixed	Competitive but episodic treating
Barnstaple	Controlled	Venal borough; chronic bribery
Bath	Competitive	Large electorate; strong party competition
Beverley	Controlled	Severe corruption; later disfranchised
Boston	Mixed	Competitive with some bribery
Bradford	Competitive	Industrial and politically mobilized
Bridgwater	Controlled	Highly corrupt; disfranchised in 1870
Bristol	Competitive	Very large, politically active electorate
Cambridge	Mixed	University and corporation influence but competitive
Chester	Mixed	Oligarchic past; more competitive after 1832
Gloucester	Mixed	Bribery scandals but contested elections
Guildford	Controlled	Venal borough with a small electorate
Halifax	Competitive	Industrial constituency; strong partisan organization
Hull	Mixed	Some corruption; competitive port economy
Ipswich	Mixed	Treating and bribery; competitive contests
Lancaster	Controlled	Corrupt practices; disfranchised in 1867
Leeds	Competitive	Major industrial center
Leicester	Competitive	Large electorate; vigorous party competition
Leominster	Controlled	Pocket borough under aristocratic control
Lewes	Mixed	Moderate electorate; some patron influence
Maidstone	Mixed	Periodic bribery but contested elections
Maldon	Controlled	Rotten borough tendencies; elite control
North Lincolnshire	Mixed	County seat; landlord influence but competitive
Newcastle-under-Lyme	Mixed	Variable competition; episodic corruption
Nottingham	Competitive	Industrial constituency; highly contested elections
Oxford	Mixed	University influence but competitive elections
Preston	Competitive	Large commercial electorate
Rochester	Controlled	Strong ecclesiastical patronage
Sandwich	Controlled	Rotten borough; repeated investigations
Southampton	Mixed	Competitive port; some venality
Sudbury	Controlled	Extreme corruption; disfranchised in 1844
Totnes	Controlled	Pocket borough under patron control
Warwick	Mixed	County seat; some landlord influence

Notes: Constituencies are classified based on historical evidence on electoral competition, patron control, bribery, and intimidation. "Competitive" constituencies feature sustained party competition and limited elite control. "Controlled" constituencies exhibit strong patron dominance or chronic corruption. "Mixed" constituencies combine competitive elections with episodic venality or elite influence.

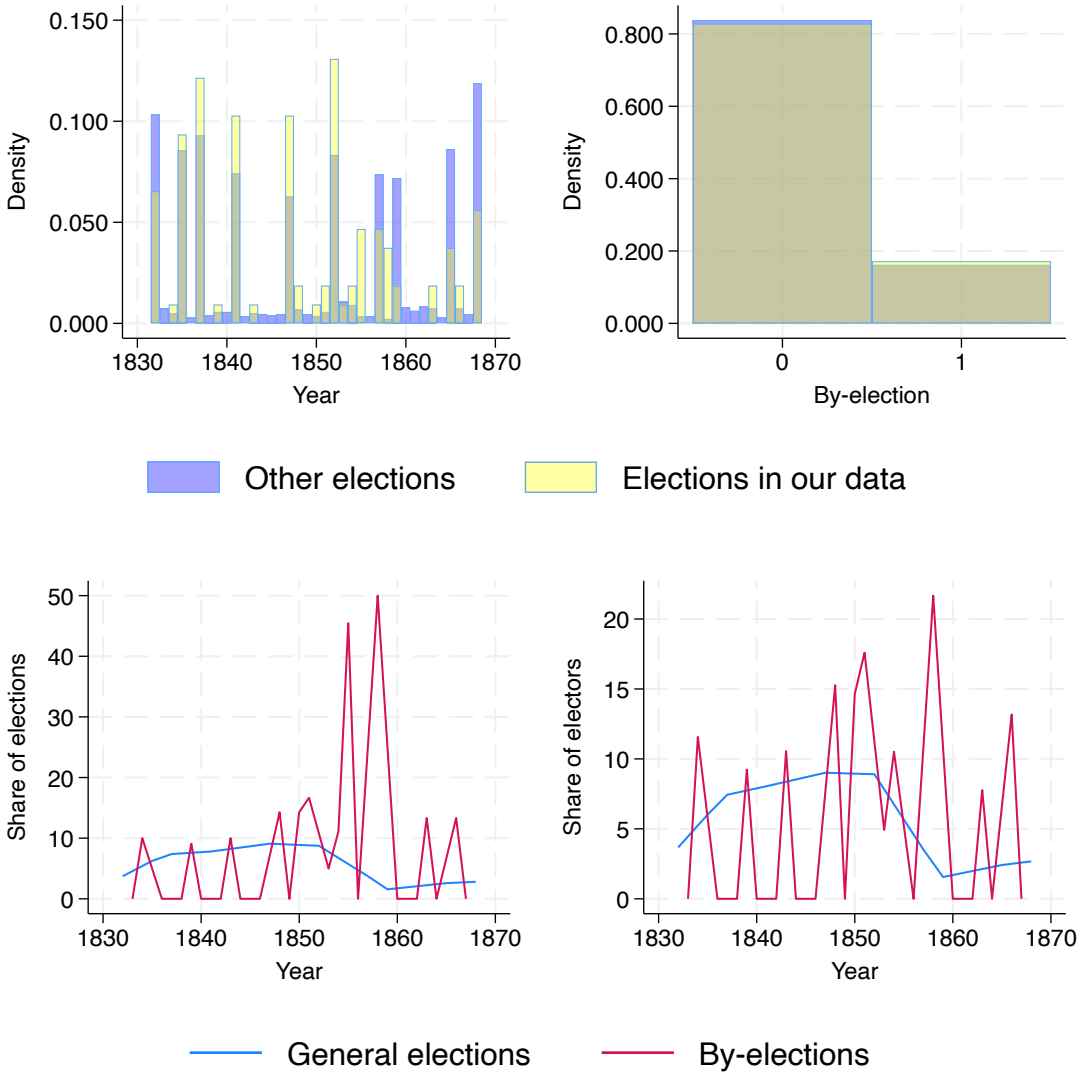


Figure OA2. Coverage of elections and electors over time.

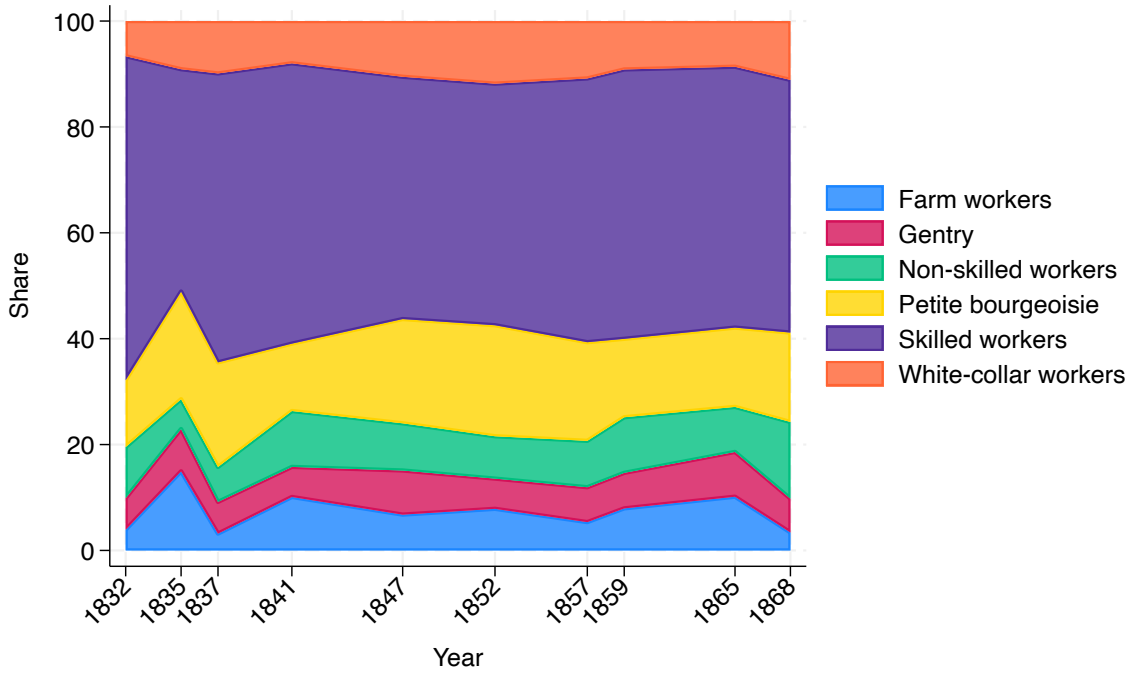


Figure OA3. Class composition over time.

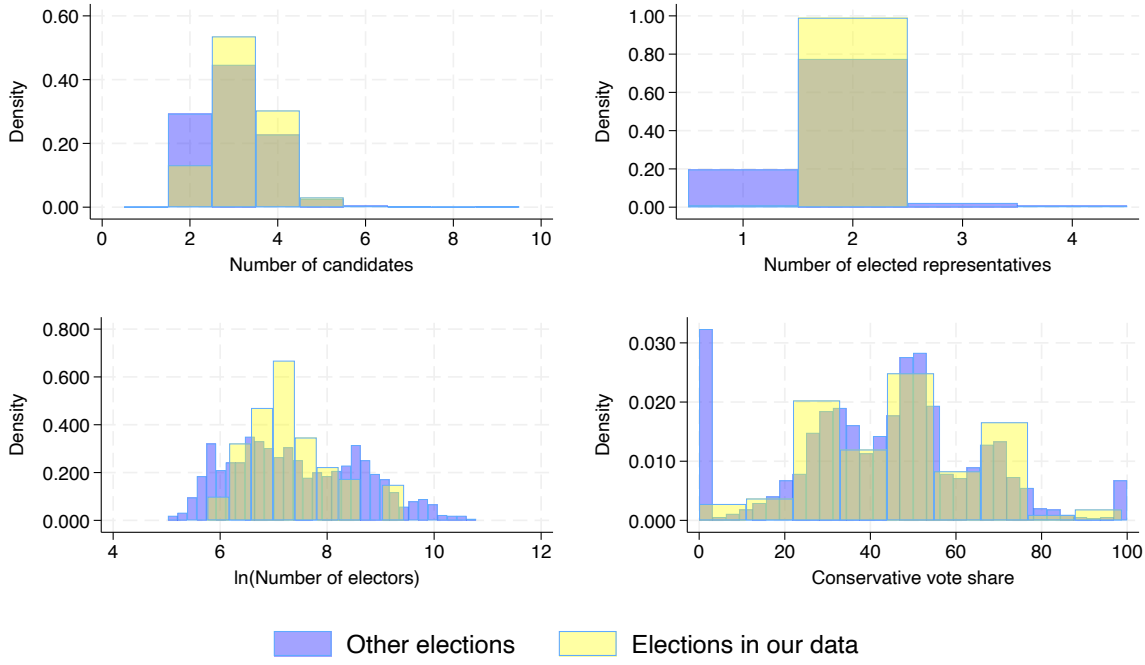


Figure OA4. Elections in our data versus other elections.

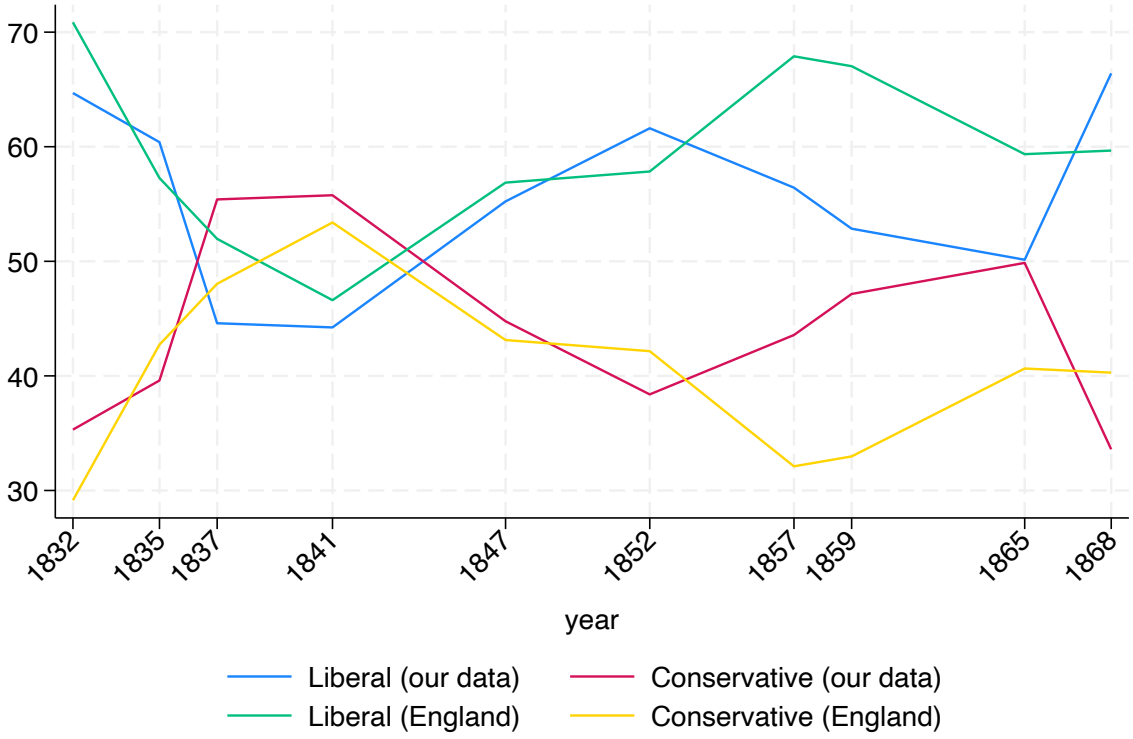


Figure OA5. Vote shares of Liberals and Conservatives in our data and other elections in England.

B Additional Results

B.1 Partisan Split and Plumper Votes

During the period we study, most constituencies elected two Members of Parliament, and voters were entitled to cast up to two votes. This electoral rule allowed for several distinct voting behaviors. A *plumper* vote refers to the case in which a voter casts both of their votes for candidates affiliated with the same party. Plumper voting therefore represents a clear and unambiguous expression of partisan support and is often interpreted as a stronger form of party alignment.

A *partisan split* vote occurs when a voter casts one vote for a candidate from each of the two major parties, typically one Conservative and one Liberal. Such split voting may reflect weaker partisan attachments, strategic considerations, or candidate-specific preferences, and was common in constituencies where party coordination was imperfect or where local candidates commanded personal followings.

In the main analysis, we code both plumper votes and partisan splits as party support, reflecting the fact that both indicate engagement with party competition. In Table OA4, we separate plumpers and splits to examine whether class-based voting patterns differ between strong, unambiguous partisan choices and more moderate or strategic expressions of party support. We further extend this analysis by including bloc indicators, allowing us to distinguish class effects from broader ideological alignment.

Two patterns stand out. First, class gradients are substantially stronger for plumper voting than for split voting, particularly for Conservative support. Relative to the reference group, working-class voters are significantly less likely to cast a Conservative plumper, while gentry, white-collar workers, farm workers, and non-skilled workers are substantially more likely to do so. Class differences in Conservative split voting are smaller in magnitude, though they remain statistically significant for several groups. This pattern suggests that plumper voting captures a more polarized and committed form of partisan alignment along class lines.

Second, the asymmetry between Conservative and Liberal voting differs by vote type and is sharpened by the bloc controls. For Liberal support, class effects are more pronounced for split votes than for plumpers. Working-class voters are significantly more likely to cast Liberal split votes, while higher-status groups—most notably the gentry, white-collar workers, and farm workers—are substantially less likely to do so. In contrast, class differences in Liberal plumper voting are smaller and in some cases statistically indistinguishable from zero. This pattern is consistent with the interpretation that Liberal support among lower-status voters often manifested through partial or strategic voting rather than straight-ticket voting.

The bloc coefficients further clarify these patterns. Liberal-bloc affiliation is strongly negatively associated with Conservative plumper and split voting, and strongly positively associated with Liberal split and plumper voting. Importantly, including bloc indicators leaves the qualitative pattern of class coefficients intact, indicating that class-based voting differences are not merely proxies for broader ideological alignment. Instead, class continues to shape *how* partisan support is expressed—through plumpers versus splits—even conditional on bloc affiliation.

These results show that while aggregating plumpers and splits in the main text provides a coherent summary of party support, the underlying class structure of voting differs across modes of electoral expression. Plumper voting reflects sharper class-based partisan alignment, whereas split voting captures more moderate or strategic behavior, particularly among working-class Liberal voters. The consistency of coefficient signs across vote types and specifications supports the interpretation of the main results, while the appendix analysis clarifies the mechanisms through which class-based voting was expressed.

Table OA4. Socioeconomic class and voting behavior—partisan split and plumper votes.

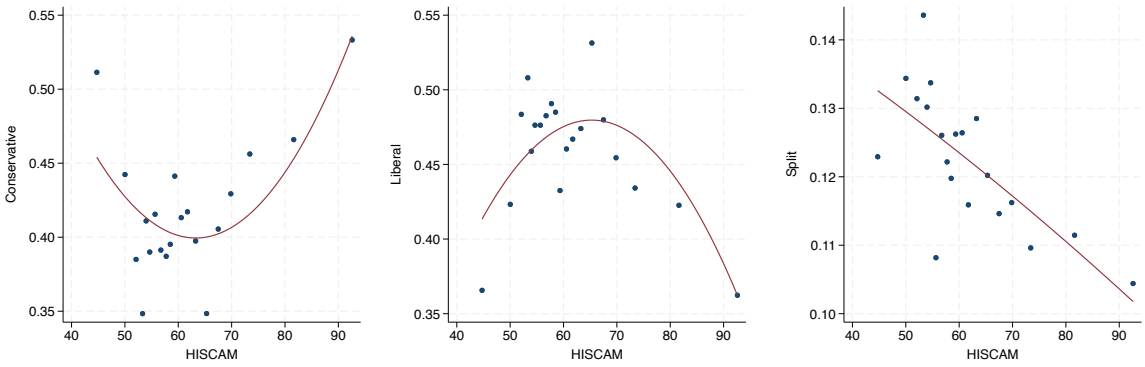
	Conservative split			Conservative plumper			Liberal split			Liberal plumper		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Working class	-0.015**			-0.038***			0.027***			0.005		
	[0.006]			[0.010]			[0.010]			[0.006]		
Gentry		0.054***			0.085***			-0.077***			-0.033***	
		[0.012]			[0.017]			[0.015]			[0.012]	
White-collar workers		0.048***			0.092***			-0.091***			-0.026**	
		[0.011]			[0.018]			[0.018]			[0.012]	
Farm workers		0.064***			0.064***			-0.083***			-0.049***	
		[0.012]			[0.012]			[0.012]			[0.014]	
Non-skilled workers		0.042***			0.042***			-0.067***			-0.021***	
		[0.010]			[0.008]			[0.011]			[0.007]	
Petite bourgeoisie		0.004			0.013**			-0.006			0.002	
		[0.005]			[0.006]			[0.007]			[0.005]	
Liberal bloc			-0.049***			-0.068***			0.078***			0.031***
			[0.009]			[0.011]			[0.011]			[0.008]
N	129221	129221	129221	129221	129221	129221	129221	129221	129221	129221	129221	129221
R^2	0.32	0.32	0.32	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29
Reference group mean	0.19	0.19	0.23	0.27	0.18	0.26	0.28	0.32	0.23	0.18	0.18	0.16

Notes: The dependent variable is a Conservative split vote in column (1), a Conservative plumper vote in column (2), a Liberal split vote in column (3), and a Liberal plumper vote in column (4). The unit of observation is a voter. All specifications control for constituency × election fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the constituency × election level are shown in brackets. ***, **, and * indicate statistical significance at 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

B.2 Alternative Coding

As an additional robustness exercise, we code occupations using the Historical International Standard Classification of Occupations (HISCO; van Leeuwen, Maas, and Miles 2002), a harmonized coding framework developed for historical sources. We then map HISCO codes to the HISCAM scale (Lambert et al. 2013), which provides a continuous measure of occupational status based on patterns of social interaction—such as marriage and household formation—observed in historical populations. This approach ensures consistent occupational classification across sources while capturing systematic differences in relative social standing. Because HISCAM is constructed independently of income data and reflects social rank rather than wages or formal skill levels, it offers a useful summary measure of relative economic position in contexts where direct earnings information is unavailable.

The relationship between occupational status and vote choice shown in Figure OA6 closely parallels the patterns obtained using the Erikson–Goldthorpe class scheme. Under that classification, occupations located in the middle of the status distribution—most notably skilled workers and the petite bourgeoisie—tend to align with the Liberal bloc, whereas both lower-status groups (farm workers and non-skilled laborers) and higher-status groups (white-collar workers and the gentry) are more likely to support Conservative candidates. When these discrete groupings are combined and plotted against a continuous measure of occupational status, the resulting patterns generate a U-shaped relationship between HISCAM and Conservative voting and a corresponding inverted-U shape for Liberal voting. In contrast, split voting declines steadily with occupational status, indicating that higher-status voters are less likely to hedge across parties and more likely to express exclusive partisan support.



(A.) Conservative. **(B.)** Liberal. **(C.)** Split.

Figure OA6. HISCAM score and vote choice.

Notes: The figures show binned scatterplots with twenty bins and quadratic fits. We net out constituency × election year fixed effects.

B.3 Heterogeneity in Voting Behavior within Classes

There is heterogeneity in voting behavior within the Eriksson and Goldthorpe (1992) classes. We illustrate this in Figure OA7. To better understand this heterogeneity, we have coded the occupations in our data using the HISCO classification and then linked the occupations to their HISCAM scores. With these data, we estimate the following specification that interacts socioeconomic group with the HISCAM score associated with the voter's occupation:

$$Vote_{ict} = \beta_1 Class_{it} + \beta_2 HISCAM_{it} + \beta_3 Class_{it} \times HISCAM_{it} + \lambda_t \times \lambda_c + \varepsilon_{ict}, \quad (6)$$

where $Vote_{it}$ is an indicator for whether individual i casts a Conservative, Liberal, or split vote in constituency c and election t. $Class_{it}$ denotes an indicator for social class—either working versus middle class, or Liberal versus Conservative bloc—and $HISCAM_{it}$ is the individual's occupational status score. The interaction term allows the association between occupational status and vote choice to vary across classes or blocs.

The coefficient β_2 captures the relationship between occupational status and voting behavior in the reference group, while β_3 measures how this relationship differs for the comparison group. All regressions include constituency–election fixed effects $\lambda_c \times \lambda_t$, ensuring that identification comes from within-constituency, within-election variation across individuals. Standard errors are clustered at the constituency–election level.

Figures OA8 and OA9 illustrate how the association between occupational status, measured by the HISCAM score, and vote choice varies across social groups. We report predicted probabilities evaluated across the HISCAM distribution for each group implied by specification (6). Occupational status is indeed related to partisan alignment, but the direction of this relationship depends on class position and bloc affiliation.

In Figure OA8, occupational status is associated with opposite partisan gradients across classes: among the middle class, higher HISCAM strongly increases Conservative voting and reduces Liberal voting, whereas among the working class higher HISCAM reduces Conservative voting and increases Liberal voting. Figure OA9 shows a different but related pattern: higher HISCAM is associated with greater cross-bloc voting—within the Conservative bloc the probability of voting Liberal rises with HISCAM (while Conservative voting is largely flat), and within the Liberal bloc the probability of voting Conservative rises with HISCAM (while Liberal voting falls). Split voting declines modestly with HISCAM across groups.

These crossing and asymmetric gradients are difficult to reconcile with a simple "income proxy" interpretation, which would predict a broadly monotonic relationship between status and support for one side. Instead, the results indicate that occupational

status interacts with social position and political alignment, shaping not only levels of party support but also the extent of bloc-consistent voting.

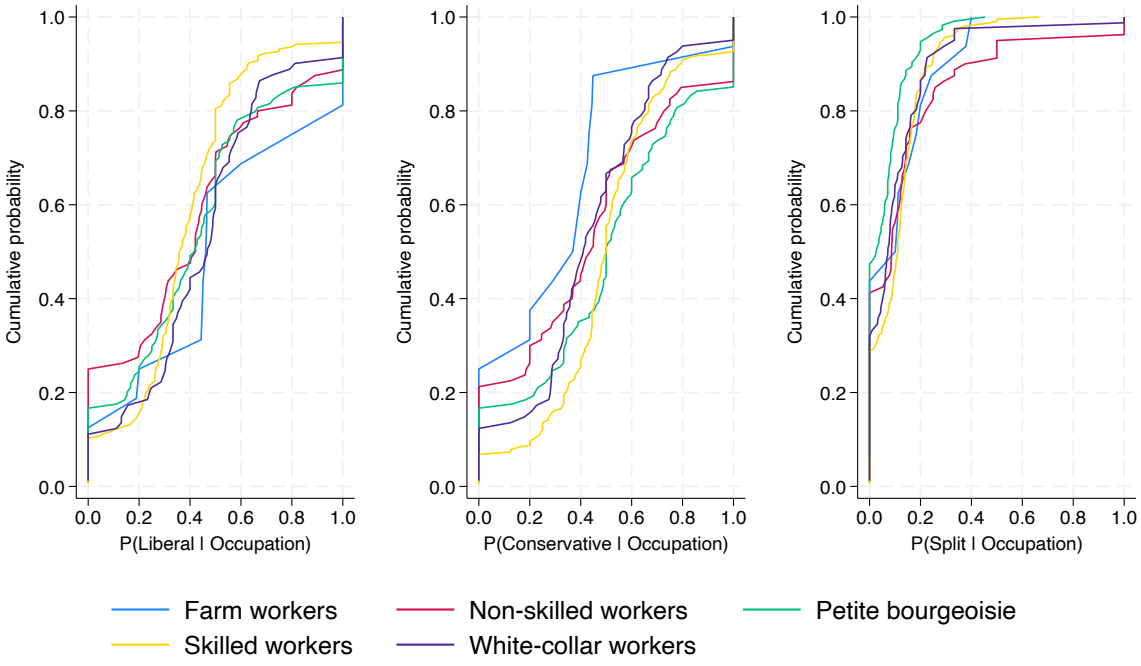


Figure OA7. Cumulative vote choice probabilities by occupation.

Notes: We compute the probability of each vote choice within each HISCO code and plot the cumulative distributions.

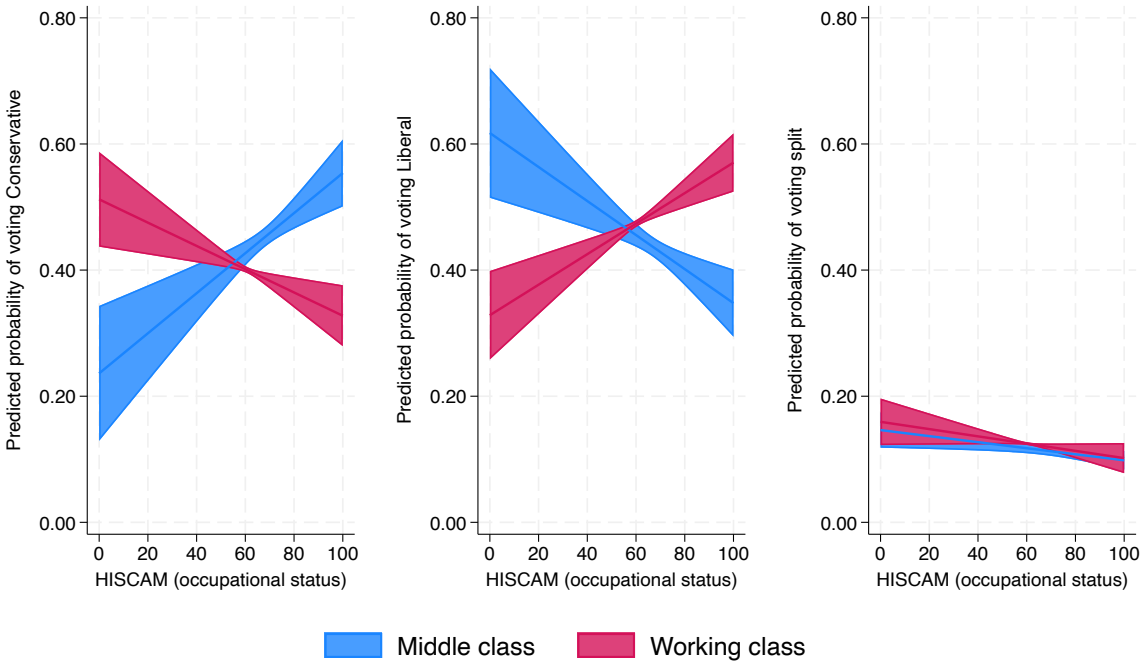


Figure OA8. Marginal effect of HISCAM score by class.

Notes: The figure shows predicted probabilities from linear probability models of the Conservative, Liberal, or split vote on an indicator for having a working-class occupation, the HISCAM occupational status score, and their interaction, as in specification (6). All regressions include constituency-election year fixed effects. Shaded areas indicate 95% confidence intervals constructed using standard errors clustered at the constituency-election year level.

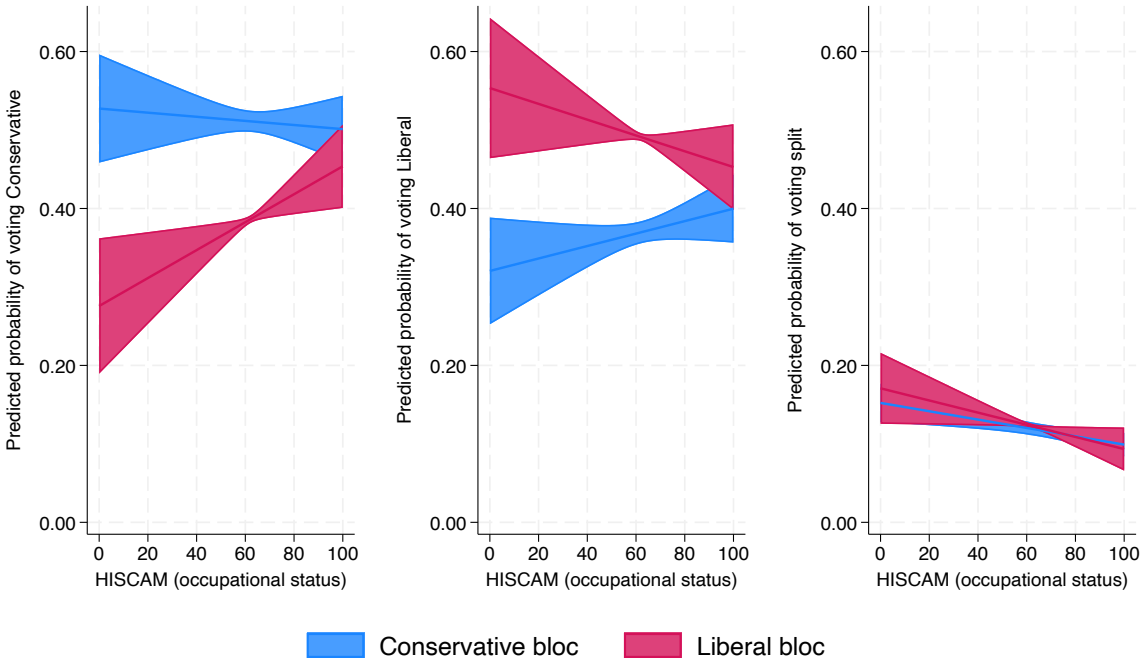


Figure OA9. Marginal effect of HISCAM score by voting bloc.

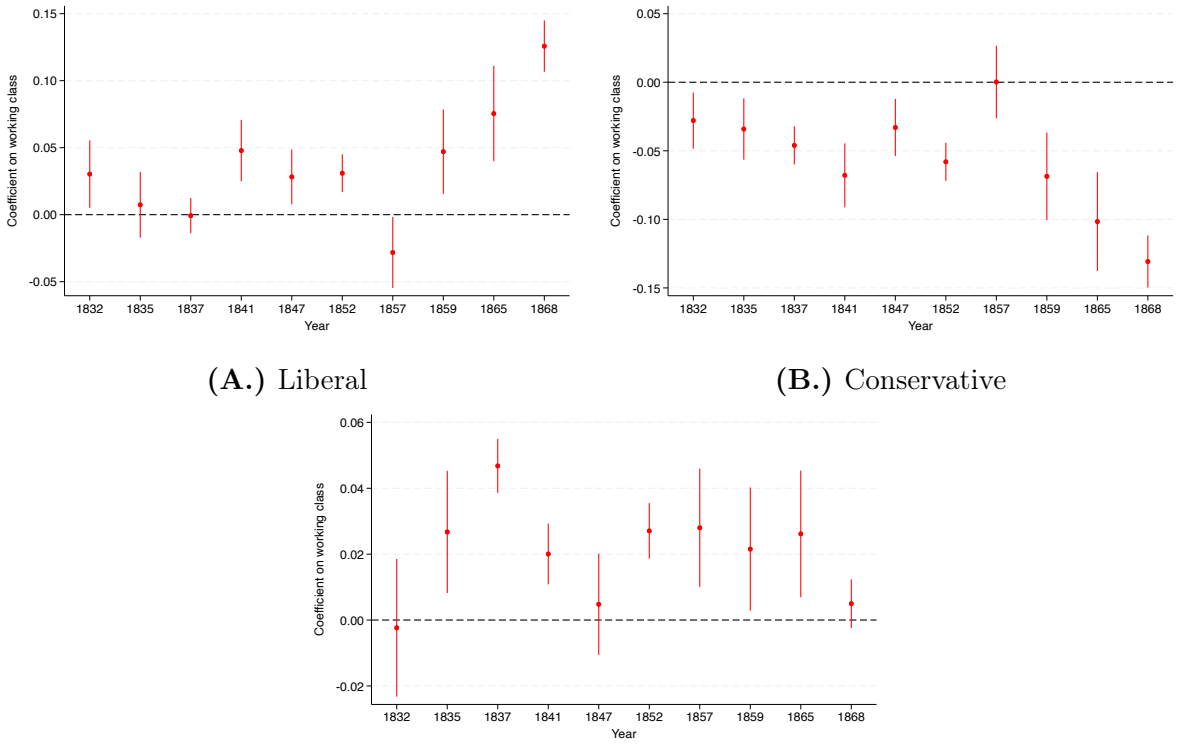
Notes: The figure shows predicted probabilities from linear probability models of the Conservative, Liberal, or split vote on an indicator for being in the Liberal bloc, the HISCAM occupational status score, and their interaction, as in specification (6). All regressions include constituency-election year fixed effects. Shaded areas indicate 95% confidence intervals constructed using standard errors clustered at the constituency-election year level.

B.4 Heterogeneity over Time

We additionally investigate whether the relationship between socioeconomic class and voting behavior evolves over time. Figures OA10 and OA11 plot the corresponding estimates for comparisons between working-class and middle-class voters and between the Liberal and Conservative blocs, respectively.

Consistent with earlier evidence in Dewan, Meriläinen, and Tukiainen (2020), based on a more limited set of constituencies, Figure OA10 shows that working-class voters increasingly supported Liberal candidates from the 1860s onward. Given that the class composition of our data remain fairly stable over time (Figure OA3), the aggregate trends observed in Figure OA5 are likely more affected by the changing partisan alignment of different socioeconomic classes than changes in the class distribution per se. However, Figure OA11 reveals no comparable time pattern when class-based bloc affiliation is used as the comparison group, with the estimates displaying no clear or systematic trend over time.

We complement these analyses with Figures OA12, OA13, and OA14, which plot the year-specific coefficients for each Eriksson and Goldthorpe (1992) class, relative to the group of skilled workers. The patterns we see here explain why there is an upward trend in the coefficients of working class after around 1860 and none in the coefficients for Liberal bloc.



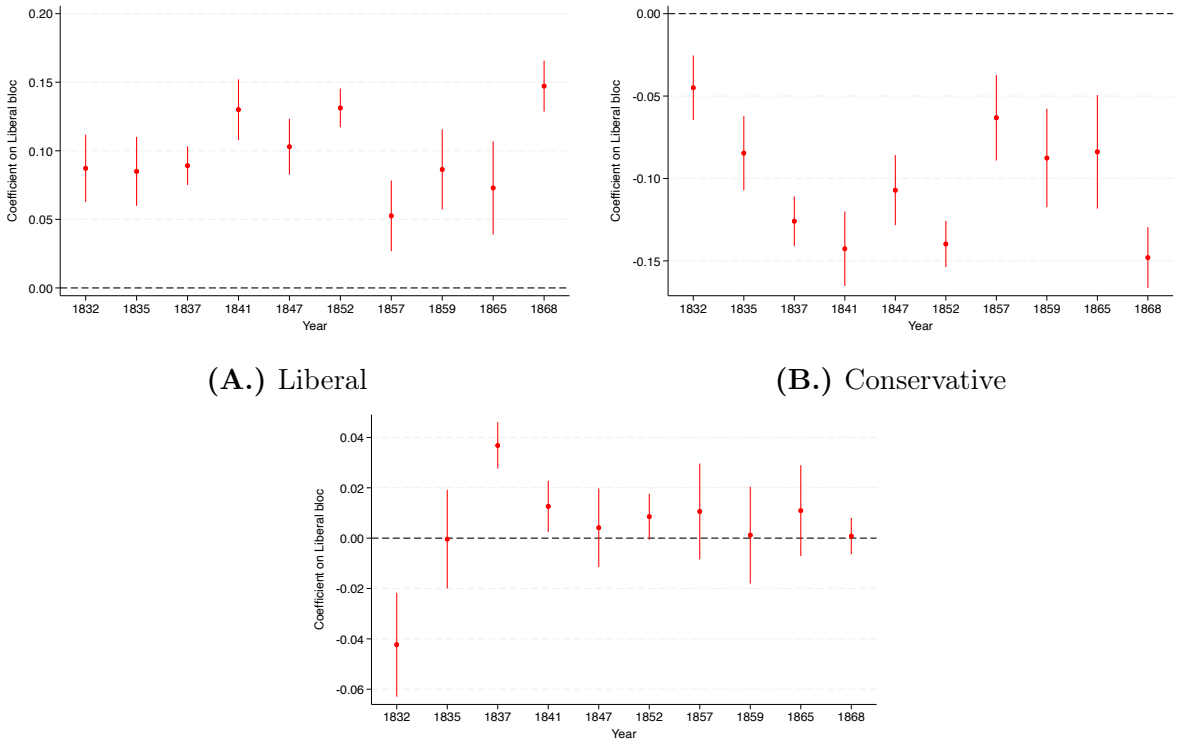
(A.) Liberal

(B.) Conservative

(C.) Split

Figure OA10. Voting behavior of the working class relative to the middle class over time.

Notes: The figure shows year-specific estimates (only general elections), controlling for constituency fixed effects. We also show 95% confidence intervals constructed using robust standard errors.



(A.) Liberal

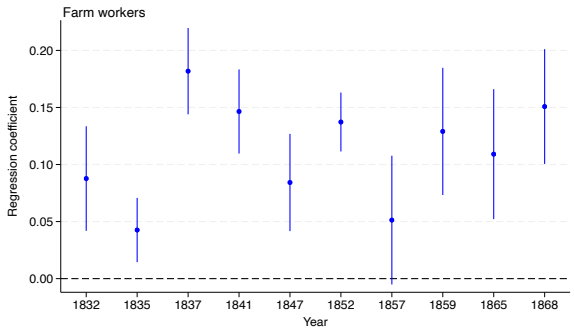
(B.) Conservative

(C.) Split

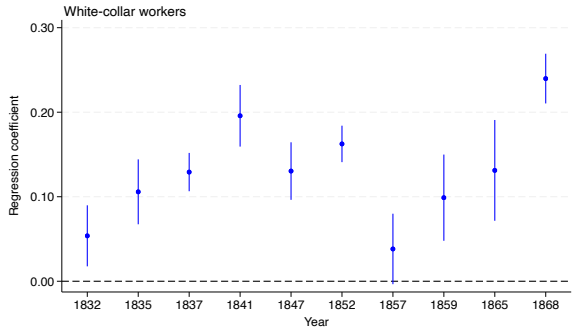
Figure OA11. Voting behavior of the Liberal bloc relative to the Conservative bloc over time.

Notes: The figure shows year-specific estimates (only general elections), controlling for constituency fixed effects. We also show 95% confidence intervals constructed using robust standard errors.

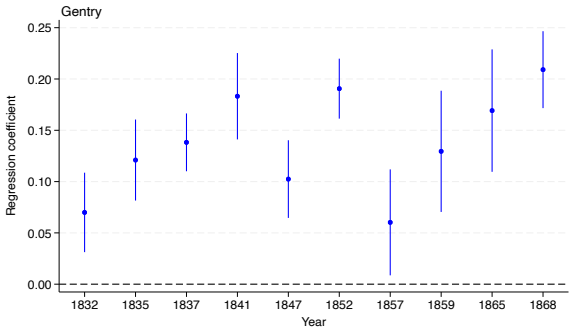
(A.) Non-skilled workers.



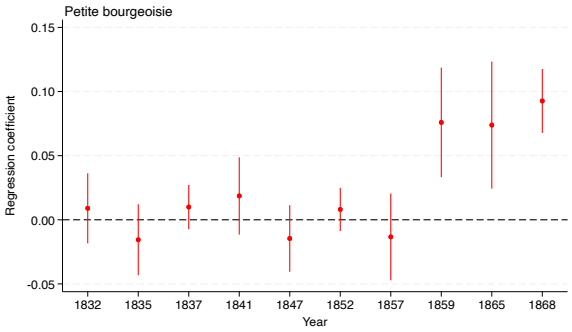
(B.) Farm workers.



(C.) White-collar workers.



(D.) Gentry.

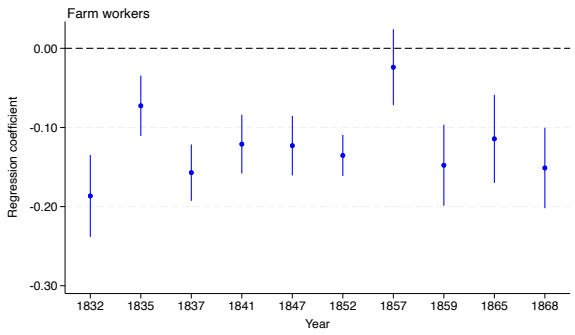


(E.) Petite bourgeoisie.

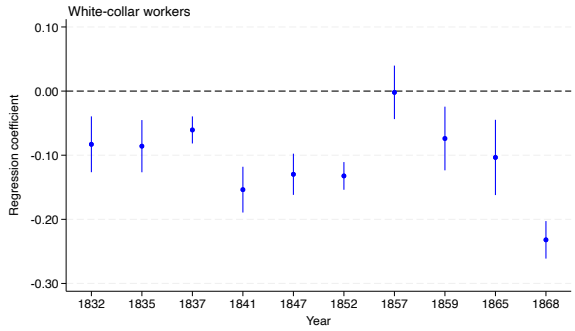
Figure OA12. Conservative voting over time by Eriksson and Goldthorpe (1992) class.

Notes: The figure shows year-specific estimates relative to skilled workers (only general elections), controlling for constituency fixed effects. We also show 95% confidence intervals constructed using robust standard errors.

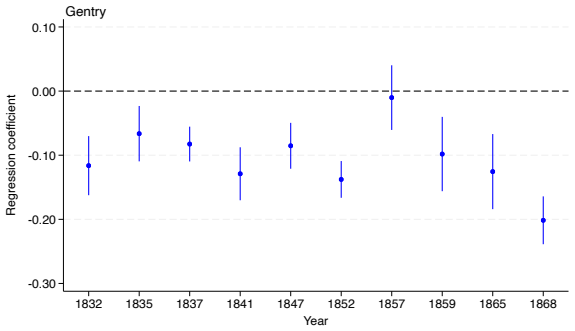
(A.) Non-skilled workers.



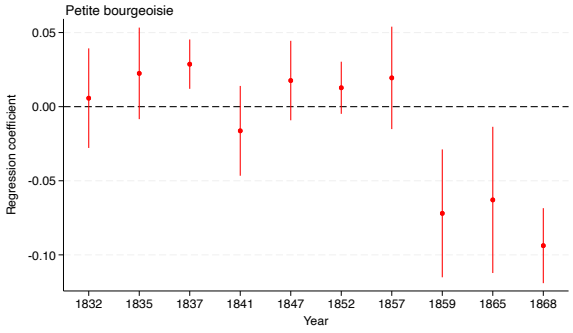
(B.) Farm workers.



(C.) White-collar workers.



(D.) Gentry.

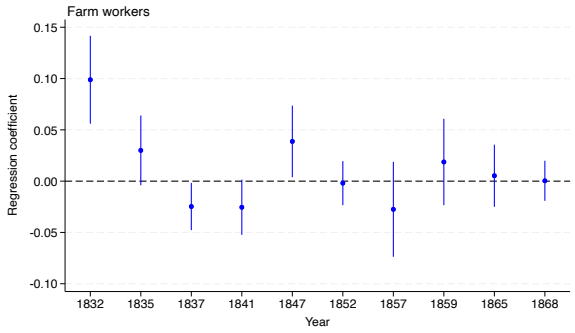


(E.) Petite bourgeoisie.

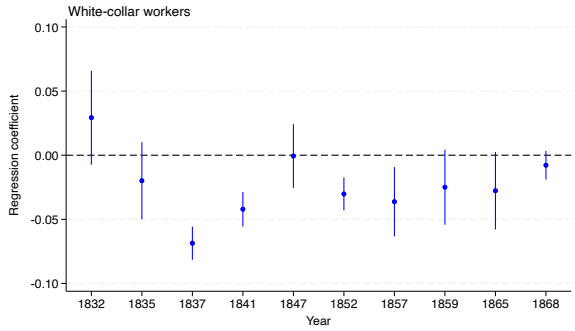
Figure OA13. Liberal voting over time by Eriksson and Goldthorpe (1992) class.

Notes: The figure shows year-specific estimates relative to skilled workers (only general elections), controlling for constituency fixed effects. We also show 95% confidence intervals constructed using robust standard errors.

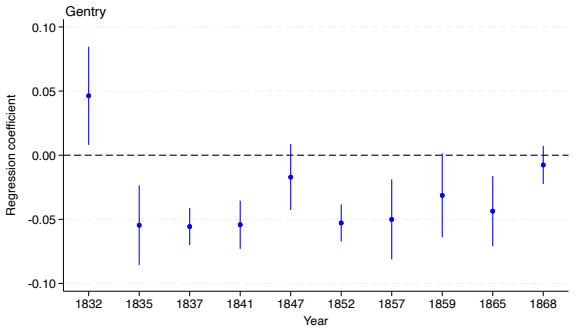
(A.) Non-skilled workers.



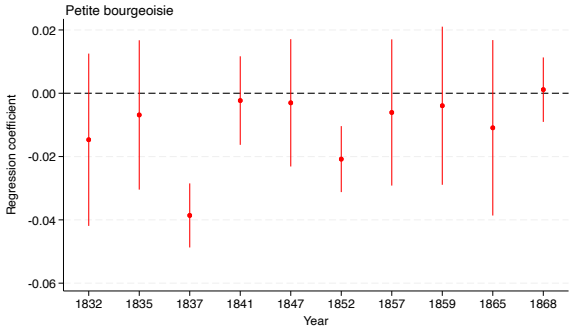
(B.) Farm workers.



(C.) White-collar workers.



(D.) Gentry.



(E.) Petite bourgeoisie.

Figure OA14. Split voting over time by Eriksson and Goldthorpe (1992) class.

Notes: The figure shows year-specific estimates relative to skilled workers (only general elections), controlling for constituency fixed effects. We also show 95% confidence intervals constructed using robust standard errors.

B.5 Heterogeneity of Convergence Results

Table OA5 reports convergence estimates after restricting the sample to competitive constituencies. Focusing on close contests isolates electoral environments in which voters' choices are most consequential and institutional constraints on political expression are weakest. The table reports two components for each transition: the voting gap between destination stayers and origin stayers, and the deviation of movers from origin stayers in the post-transition election.

Panel A considers upward mobility from the working class to the middle class. Destination stayers vote significantly more Conservative and less Liberal than origin stayers, confirming strong class-based voting differences in competitive constituencies. Movers' voting behavior lies much closer to that of destination stayers than origin stayers: the mover deviation from origin stayers is small and statistically insignificant across outcomes, and equality between the mover and destination coefficients can be rejected. These results indicate near-complete convergence following upward mobility in competitive contests.

Panel B examines downward mobility from the middle class to the working class. Destination-stayer gaps again reveal pronounced class-based voting differences. Movers differ significantly from origin stayers in the direction of working-class voting, particularly through reduced Conservative support and increased Liberal and split voting. In contrast to Panel A, equality between mover and destination-stayer coefficients generally cannot be rejected, indicating partial rather than full convergence following downward mobility.

Panels C and D examine transitions across political blocs. For movements from the Liberal to the Conservative bloc (Panel C), movers shift significantly toward Conservative voting relative to origin stayers, though they remain statistically distinct from destination stayers for Conservative voting. This suggests meaningful but incomplete convergence. For movements from the Conservative to the Liberal bloc (Panel D), movers again differ sharply from origin stayers in the direction of Liberal voting, but do not fully converge to destination-stayer behavior. Across both bloc transitions, convergence is substantial but incomplete.

Table OA6 reports convergence estimates for mixed constituencies. In contrast to competitive settings, convergence patterns are generally weaker and less systematic. For transitions across occupational classes (Panels A and B), destination-stayer gaps are small and statistically insignificant, and movers do not differ significantly from origin stayers, indicating little evidence of convergence following either upward or downward mobility. For transitions across political blocs (Panels C and D), destination-stayer gaps are sizable and precisely estimated, reflecting strong differences between blocs in mixed constituencies. Movers, however, tend to remain statistically indistinguishable from

destination stayers, particularly for Conservative and Liberal voting, suggesting substantial convergence for bloc transitions but not for class-based transitions.

Table OA7 reports convergence estimates for controlled constituencies. Across occupational transitions (Panels A and B), destination-stayer gaps are generally small for Conservative and Liberal voting, with statistically significant differences appearing mainly for split voting. Movers do not differ significantly from origin stayers in the post-transition election, indicating little evidence of convergence following either upward or downward occupational mobility in controlled settings. For transitions across political blocs (Panels C and D), destination-stayer gaps are sizable and precisely estimated, reflecting strong differences in voting behavior across blocs even in controlled constituencies. Movers shift in the direction of destination group voting, particularly for split voting and, in some cases, for Conservative voting, but they typically remain statistically distinct from destination stayers.

Table OA5. Convergence in competitive constituencies.

	Δ Conservative	Δ Liberal	Δ Split
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Panel A. Working → Middle			
Destination stayers vs. origin stayers	0.139***	-0.121***	-0.018
	[0.014]	[0.017]	[0.011]
Movers vs. origin stayers	0.012	-0.003	-0.009
	[0.014]	[0.019]	[0.014]
N	9972	9972	9972
R^2	0.08	0.04	0.17
Destination-stayer mean	0.52	0.44	0.04
Origin-stayer mean	0.37	0.51	0.12
p-value	0.00	0.00	0.47
Panel B. Middle → Working			
Destination stayers vs. origin stayers	-0.140***	0.122***	0.018
	[0.014]	[0.018]	[0.011]
Movers vs. origin stayers	-0.145***	0.111***	0.034*
	[0.018]	[0.029]	[0.017]
N	9715	9715	9715
R^2	0.08	0.04	0.17
Destination-stayer mean	0.37	0.51	0.12
Origin-stayer mean	0.52	0.44	0.04
p-value	0.74	0.69	0.50
Panel C. Liberal bloc → Conservative bloc			
Destination stayers vs. origin stayers	0.188***	-0.188***	-0.000
	[0.014]	[0.015]	[0.009]
Movers vs. origin stayers	0.042**	-0.038**	-0.004
	[0.016]	[0.018]	[0.009]
N	10022	10022	10022
R^2	0.08	0.05	0.16
Destination-stayer mean	0.58	0.35	0.07
Origin-stayer mean	0.38	0.53	0.10
p-value	0.00	0.00	0.74
Panel D. Conservative bloc → Liberal bloc			
Destination stayers vs. origin stayers	-0.188***	0.188***	0.000
	[0.014]	[0.015]	[0.009]
Movers vs. origin stayers	-0.160***	0.168***	-0.008
	[0.045]	[0.037]	[0.017]
N	9817	9817	9817
R^2	0.09	0.05	0.16
Destination-stayer mean	0.38	0.53	0.10
Origin-stayer mean	0.58	0.35	0.07
p-value	0.51	0.56	0.61

Notes: The dependent variable is a Conservative vote in column (1), a Liberal vote in column (2), and a split vote in columns (3). The unit of observation is a voter. Each panel reports estimates from regressions comparing movers between classes or political blocs to non-moving voters ("stayers") in the same constituency–election. The sample in each panel is restricted to three groups: (i) movers from the origin group to the destination group, (ii) destination stayers (voters who belong to the destination group in two consecutive elections), and (iii) origin stayers (voters who belong to the origin group in two consecutive elections). The coefficient labeled *Destination-stayer gap* measures the difference in voting behavior between destination stayers and origin stayers within the same constituency–election. The coefficient labeled *Mover deviation from origin stayers* measures the difference between movers and origin stayers. Thus, the difference of the two coefficients gives the difference between movers and destination stayers. Reported means show the average vote choice among destination stayers and origin stayers in each panel. The reported p-value corresponds to a test of the null hypothesis $\beta_1 = \beta_2$, where β_1 is the destination-stayer gap and β_2 is the mover deviation from origin stayers; failure to reject indicates that movers are statistically indistinguishable from destination stayers. All specifications control for constituency × election fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the constituency × election level are shown in brackets. ***, **, and * indicate statistical significance at 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

Table OA6. Convergence in mixed constituencies.

	Δ Conservative	Δ Liberal	Δ Split
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Panel A. Working → Middle			
Destination stayers vs. origin stayers	-0.019	0.022	-0.003
	[0.016]	[0.016]	[0.006]
Movers vs. origin stayers	0.008	-0.037	0.029
	[0.029]	[0.027]	[0.018]
N	6254	6254	6254
R^2	0.14	0.11	0.23
Destination-stayer mean	0.44	0.52	0.04
Origin-stayer mean	0.46	0.50	0.05
p-value	0.41	0.08	0.11
Panel B. Middle → Working			
Destination stayers vs. origin stayers	0.018	-0.021	0.003
	[0.016]	[0.016]	[0.006]
Movers vs. origin stayers	-0.027	0.003	0.024
	[0.044]	[0.049]	[0.016]
N	6204	6204	6204
R^2	0.14	0.11	0.22
Destination-stayer mean	0.46	0.50	0.05
Origin-stayer mean	0.44	0.52	0.04
p-value	0.28	0.61	0.13
Panel C. Liberal bloc → Conservative bloc			
Destination stayers vs. origin stayers	0.094***	-0.093***	-0.001
	[0.024]	[0.023]	[0.004]
Movers vs. origin stayers	0.098**	-0.090**	-0.007
	[0.040]	[0.039]	[0.007]
N	6284	6284	6284
R^2	0.14	0.12	0.23
Destination-stayer mean	0.50	0.45	0.05
Origin-stayer mean	0.42	0.54	0.04
p-value	0.95	0.96	0.54
Panel D. Conservative bloc → Liberal bloc			
Destination stayers vs. origin stayers	-0.094***	0.093***	0.001
	[0.024]	[0.023]	[0.004]
Movers vs. origin stayers	-0.054	0.038	0.016
	[0.040]	[0.039]	[0.012]
N	6233	6233	6233
R^2	0.14	0.11	0.23
Destination-stayer mean	0.42	0.54	0.04
Origin-stayer mean	0.50	0.45	0.05
p-value	0.33	0.16	0.27

Notes: The dependent variable is a Conservative vote in column (1), a Liberal vote in column (2), and a split vote in columns (3). The unit of observation is a voter. Each panel reports estimates from regressions comparing movers between classes or political blocs to non-moving voters ("stayers") in the same constituency–election. The sample in each panel is restricted to three groups: (i) movers from the origin group to the destination group, (ii) destination stayers (voters who belong to the destination group in two consecutive elections), and (iii) origin stayers (voters who belong to the origin group in two consecutive elections). The coefficient labeled *Destination-stayer gap* measures the difference in voting behavior between destination stayers and origin stayers within the same constituency–election. The coefficient labeled *Mover deviation from origin stayers* measures the difference between movers and origin stayers. Thus, the difference of the two coefficients gives the difference between movers and destination stayers. Reported means show the average vote choice among destination stayers and origin stayers in each panel. The reported p-value corresponds to a test of the null hypothesis $\beta_1 = \beta_2$, where β_1 is the destination-stayer gap and β_2 is the mover deviation from origin stayers; failure to reject indicates that movers are statistically indistinguishable from destination stayers. All specifications control for constituency × election fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the constituency × election level are shown in brackets. ***, **, and * indicate statistical significance at 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

Table OA7. Convergence in controlled constituencies.

	Δ Conservative	Δ Liberal	Δ Split
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Panel A. Working → Middle			
Destination stayers vs. origin stayers	0.021	0.010	-0.030***
	[0.018]	[0.015]	[0.007]
Movers vs. origin stayers	-0.004	0.024	-0.020
	[0.025]	[0.023]	[0.014]
N	16399	16399	16399
R^2	0.08	0.13	0.21
Destination-stayer mean	0.45	0.47	0.08
Origin-stayer mean	0.44	0.43	0.13
p-value	0.27	0.46	0.41
Panel B. Middle → Working			
Destination stayers vs. origin stayers	-0.020	-0.010	0.030***
	[0.017]	[0.015]	[0.007]
Movers vs. origin stayers	-0.040	0.019	0.021
	[0.032]	[0.031]	[0.016]
N	16130	16130	16130
R^2	0.08	0.13	0.21
Destination-stayer mean	0.44	0.43	0.13
Origin-stayer mean	0.45	0.47	0.08
p-value	0.53	0.32	0.49
Panel C. Liberal bloc → Conservative bloc			
Destination stayers vs. origin stayers	0.072***	-0.047***	-0.025***
	[0.011]	[0.012]	[0.008]
Movers vs. origin stayers	-0.003	0.040*	-0.037***
	[0.022]	[0.022]	[0.012]
N	16384	16384	16384
R^2	0.08	0.13	0.21
Destination-stayer mean	0.50	0.40	0.10
Origin-stayer mean	0.42	0.46	0.12
p-value	0.00	0.00	0.26
Panel D. Conservative bloc → Liberal bloc			
Destination stayers vs. origin stayers	-0.072***	0.047***	0.025***
	[0.011]	[0.012]	[0.008]
Movers vs. origin stayers	-0.076**	0.022	0.054**
	[0.030]	[0.027]	[0.021]
N	16152	16152	16152
R^2	0.08	0.13	0.21
Destination-stayer mean	0.42	0.46	0.12
Origin-stayer mean	0.50	0.40	0.10
p-value	0.88	0.36	0.14

Notes: The dependent variable is a Conservative vote in column (1), a Liberal vote in column (2), and a split vote in columns (3). The unit of observation is a voter. Each panel reports estimates from regressions comparing movers between classes or political blocs to non-moving voters ("stayers") in the same constituency–election. The sample in each panel is restricted to three groups: (i) movers from the origin group to the destination group, (ii) destination stayers (voters who belong to the destination group in two consecutive elections), and (iii) origin stayers (voters who belong to the origin group in two consecutive elections). The coefficient labeled *Destination-stayer gap* measures the difference in voting behavior between destination stayers and origin stayers within the same constituency–election. The coefficient labeled *Mover deviation from origin stayers* measures the difference between movers and origin stayers. Thus, the difference of the two coefficients gives the difference between movers and destination stayers. Reported means show the average vote choice among destination stayers and origin stayers in each panel. The reported p-value corresponds to a test of the null hypothesis $\beta_1 = \beta_2$, where β_1 is the destination-stayer gap and β_2 is the mover deviation from origin stayers; failure to reject indicates that movers are statistically indistinguishable from destination stayers. All specifications control for constituency × election fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the constituency × election level are shown in brackets. ***, **, and * indicate statistical significance at 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

B.6 Heterogeneity of Decomposition Results

Table OA8 shows the sorting–updating decomposition after restricting the sample to competitive constituencies. This restriction focuses attention on electoral environments in which voters' choices are most consequential and where institutional constraints on political expression are weakest. The sample size is substantially reduced relative to the baseline analysis, leading to larger standard errors throughout.

Panel A considers upward mobility from the working class to the middle class. As in the full sample, pre-transition differences between movers and origin stayers are modest, and estimates of the updating component are small and imprecisely estimated. Post-transition gaps remain limited. These results provide little evidence that upward mobility is associated with sharp short-run changes in voting behavior, even in competitive electoral settings.

Panel B examines downward mobility from the middle class to the working class. In competitive constituencies, both the magnitude of the post-transition gaps and the point estimates for sorting and updating are larger than in the full sample. Movers exhibit substantially lower Conservative support and higher Liberal support relative to origin stayers after the transition. While the decomposition components remain imprecisely estimated—reflecting limited power—the direction and magnitude of the post-transition gaps suggest that differences between movers and stayers are particularly pronounced in competitive environments.

Panels C and D report transitions across political blocs. For movements from the Liberal to the Conservative bloc (Panel C), sorting and updating estimates remain small and statistically insignificant, and post-transition gaps are limited. Movements from the Conservative to the Liberal bloc (Panel D) are characterized by sizable pre-transition differences, indicating strong sorting among movers even before the transition. Updating estimates are close to zero and imprecise, while post-transition gaps remain large in magnitude.

Table OA9 reports the sorting–updating decomposition for mixed constituencies. Across occupational transitions (Panels A and B), both sorting and updating estimates are imprecisely estimated and often small relative to their standard errors, reflecting limited power in this subsample. While post-transition gaps are sometimes sizable in magnitude—particularly for Liberal voting following downward mobility—the decomposition does not allow a precise attribution of these gaps to pre-existing differences or short-run updating. For transitions across political blocs (Panels C and D), pre-transition sorting is more pronounced: movers already differ significantly from origin stayers prior to the transition, especially for Conservative and Liberal voting. Updating estimates are generally smaller and statistically insignificant, with the exception of split voting in Panel D.

Table OA10 reports the sorting–updating decomposition for controlled constituencies. Across occupational transitions (Panels A and B), both sorting and updating estimates are small and imprecisely estimated, and post-transition gaps are modest in magnitude. This indicates little evidence of either systematic pre-transition differences or sharp behavioral updating following occupational mobility in controlled electoral environments. For transitions across political blocs (Panels C and D), sorting and updating estimates remain imprecise, and while post-transition gaps are somewhat larger in magnitude—particularly for Conservative and Liberal voting—the decomposition does not allow a precise attribution of these gaps to either pre-existing differences or short-run updating.

Table OA8. Decomposing post-mobility differences in voting behavior—competitive constituencies.

	Conservative	Liberal	Split
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Panel A. Working class → Middle class			
Pre-transition gap	0.016	-0.015	-0.001
	[0.043]	[0.048]	[0.018]
Post-transition change relative to stayers	0.036	-0.045	0.009
	[0.035]	[0.058]	[0.035]
N	2876	2876	2876
R^2	0.09	0.03	0.19
Origin mean (pre)	0.36	0.53	0.11
Mover mean (pre)	0.43	0.49	0.08
Origin mean (post)	0.31	0.53	0.16
Mover mean (post)	0.43	0.48	0.09
Post gap (mover - origin)	0.052	-0.060	0.008
Panel B. Middle class → Working class			
Pre-transition gap	-0.111	0.138*	-0.027
	[0.079]	[0.066]	[0.018]
Post-transition change relative to stayers	-0.108	0.050	0.058**
	[0.083]	[0.090]	[0.023]
N	1874	1874	1874
R^2	0.08	0.05	0.21
Origin mean (pre)	0.52	0.44	0.03
Mover mean (pre)	0.45	0.54	0.01
Origin mean (post)	0.53	0.41	0.06
Mover mean (post)	0.32	0.57	0.11
Post gap (mover - origin)	-0.220	0.188	0.031
Panel C. Liberal bloc → Conservative bloc			
Pre-transition gap	-0.026	0.018	0.008
	[0.037]	[0.034]	[0.007]
Post-transition change relative to stayers	0.050	-0.060	0.010
	[0.051]	[0.046]	[0.025]
N	3436	3436	3436
R^2	0.07	0.02	0.18
Origin mean (pre)	0.38	0.54	0.08
Mover mean (pre)	0.38	0.55	0.06
Origin mean (post)	0.34	0.53	0.13
Mover mean (post)	0.39	0.48	0.12
Post gap (mover - origin)	0.024	-0.042	0.018
Panel D. Conservative bloc → Liberal bloc			
Pre-transition gap	-0.163**	0.193**	-0.031
	[0.062]	[0.072]	[0.019]
Post-transition change relative to stayers	-0.030	0.024	0.006
	[0.100]	[0.119]	[0.036]
N	1082	1082	1082
R^2	0.06	0.04	0.22
Origin mean (pre)	0.62	0.35	0.03
Mover mean (pre)	0.48	0.50	0.02
Origin mean (post)	0.58	0.36	0.07
Mover mean (post)	0.38	0.55	0.07
Post gap (mover - origin)	-0.192	0.217	-0.025

Notes: The dependent variable is a Conservative vote in column (1), a Liberal vote in column (2), and a split vote in columns (3). The unit of observation is a voter. Each panel reports a decomposition of the difference in vote choice between socially mobile voters and origin stayers. The sample in each panel is restricted to voters observed in two consecutive elections who either (i) move between the indicated classes or blocs (movers), or (ii) remain in the class or bloc of origin (origin stayers). Destination stayers are not included in these regressions. The row labeled *Sorting: mover – origin gap (pre)* reports the difference in vote choice between movers and origin stayers *prior* to the transition. This coefficient captures pre-existing differences between individuals who eventually move and those who remain in their class or bloc of origin. The row labeled *Updating: post – pre differential* reports a difference-in-differences estimate comparing changes in vote choice for movers relative to origin stayers between the pre- and post-transition elections. This coefficient captures within-voter political updating associated with the transition itself. The rows labeled *Origin mean (pre)*, *Mover mean (pre)*, *Origin mean (post)*, and *Mover mean (post)* report average vote shares for each group before and after the transition. The *Post gap (mover – origin)* equals the sum of the σ and υ components. All specifications include constituency × election fixed effects. Standard errors, reported in brackets, are clustered at the constituency × election level. ***, **, and * denote statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

Table OA9. Decomposing post-mobility differences in voting behavior—mixed constituencies.

	Conservative	Liberal	Split
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Panel A. Working class → Middle class			
Pre-transition gap	0.063	-0.047	-0.016
	[0.054]	[0.075]	[0.039]
Post-transition change relative to stayers	-0.025	-0.057	0.082
	[0.070]	[0.078]	[0.071]
N	1490	1490	1490
R^2	0.20	0.18	0.23
Origin mean (pre)	0.37	0.57	0.06
Mover mean (pre)	0.59	0.35	0.06
Origin mean (post)	0.46	0.51	0.03
Mover mean (post)	0.48	0.43	0.08
Post gap (mover - origin)	0.039	-0.105	0.066
Panel B. Middle class → Working class			
Pre-transition gap	0.002	-0.017	0.014
	[0.150]	[0.145]	[0.036]
Post-transition change relative to stayers	-0.105	0.121	-0.016
	[0.218]	[0.214]	[0.030]
N	732	732	732
R^2	0.11	0.09	0.24
Origin mean (pre)	0.40	0.55	0.06
Mover mean (pre)	0.40	0.51	0.09
Origin mean (post)	0.46	0.52	0.02
Mover mean (post)	0.35	0.63	0.02
Post gap (mover - origin)	-0.103	0.104	-0.002
Panel C. Liberal bloc → Conservative bloc			
Pre-transition gap	0.127***	-0.093*	-0.034*
	[0.040]	[0.046]	[0.017]
Post-transition change relative to stayers	-0.091	0.051	0.040
	[0.085]	[0.092]	[0.023]
N	1254	1254	1254
R^2	0.16	0.13	0.30
Origin mean (pre)	0.47	0.47	0.06
Mover mean (pre)	0.60	0.36	0.04
Origin mean (post)	0.41	0.57	0.03
Mover mean (post)	0.43	0.53	0.04
Post gap (mover - origin)	0.036	-0.042	0.006
Panel D. Conservative bloc → Liberal bloc			
Pre-transition gap	0.044	0.054	-0.098**
	[0.056]	[0.071]	[0.040]
Post-transition change relative to stayers	-0.082	-0.087	0.168*
	[0.123]	[0.139]	[0.080]
N	1000	1000	1000
R^2	0.15	0.11	0.21
Origin mean (pre)	0.44	0.50	0.06
Mover mean (pre)	0.47	0.51	0.02
Origin mean (post)	0.48	0.47	0.05
Mover mean (post)	0.49	0.42	0.09
Post gap (mover - origin)	-0.037	-0.033	0.070

Notes: The dependent variable is a Conservative vote in column (1), a Liberal vote in column (2), and a split vote in columns (3). The unit of observation is a voter. Each panel reports a decomposition of the difference in vote choice between socially mobile voters and origin stayers. The sample in each panel is restricted to voters observed in two consecutive elections who either (i) move between the indicated classes or blocs (movers), or (ii) remain in the class or bloc of origin (origin stayers). Destination stayers are not included in these regressions. The row labeled *Sorting: mover – origin gap (pre)* reports the difference in vote choice between movers and origin stayers *prior* to the transition. This coefficient captures pre-existing differences between individuals who eventually move and those who remain in their class or bloc of origin. The row labeled *Updating: post – pre differential* reports a difference-in-differences estimate comparing changes in vote choice for movers relative to origin stayers between the pre- and post-transition elections. This coefficient captures within-voter political updating associated with the transition itself. The rows labeled *Origin mean (pre)*, *Mover mean (pre)*, *Origin mean (post)*, and *Mover mean (post)* report average vote shares for each group before and after the transition. The *Post gap (mover – origin)* equals the sum of the σ and υ components. All specifications include constituency × election fixed effects. Standard errors, reported in brackets, are clustered at the constituency × election level. ***, **, and * denote statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

Table OA10. Decomposing post-mobility differences in voting behavior—controlled constituencies.

	Conservative	Liberal	Split
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Panel A. Working class → Middle class			
Pre-transition gap	0.004	0.004	-0.008
	[0.034]	[0.035]	[0.018]
Post-transition change relative to stayers	-0.021	0.009	0.012
	[0.046]	[0.043]	[0.025]
N	4424	4424	4424
R^2	0.06	0.10	0.19
Origin mean (pre)	0.44	0.47	0.09
Mover mean (pre)	0.43	0.49	0.08
Origin mean (post)	0.48	0.40	0.12
Mover mean (post)	0.43	0.46	0.11
Post gap (mover - origin)	-0.017	0.013	0.004
Panel B. Middle class → Working class			
Pre-transition gap	0.067	-0.073	0.006
	[0.058]	[0.063]	[0.034]
Post-transition change relative to stayers	-0.124	0.099	0.024
	[0.087]	[0.088]	[0.041]
N	2523	2523	2523
R^2	0.09	0.11	0.16
Origin mean (pre)	0.47	0.47	0.06
Mover mean (pre)	0.49	0.42	0.09
Origin mean (post)	0.49	0.46	0.05
Mover mean (post)	0.47	0.43	0.10
Post gap (mover - origin)	-0.056	0.026	0.030
Panel C. Liberal bloc → Conservative bloc			
Pre-transition gap	0.006	-0.004	-0.002
	[0.035]	[0.038]	[0.015]
Post-transition change relative to stayers	-0.059	0.075	-0.016
	[0.063]	[0.067]	[0.020]
N	4846	4846	4846
R^2	0.05	0.09	0.20
Origin mean (pre)	0.42	0.48	0.10
Mover mean (pre)	0.40	0.51	0.09
Origin mean (post)	0.45	0.45	0.10
Mover mean (post)	0.40	0.52	0.08
Post gap (mover - origin)	-0.053	0.071	-0.018
Panel D. Conservative bloc → Liberal bloc			
Pre-transition gap	-0.004	-0.021	0.025
	[0.063]	[0.050]	[0.035]
Post-transition change relative to stayers	-0.103	0.068	0.035
	[0.090]	[0.079]	[0.051]
N	2066	2066	2066
R^2	0.07	0.13	0.19
Origin mean (pre)	0.50	0.41	0.09
Mover mean (pre)	0.42	0.42	0.15
Origin mean (post)	0.55	0.34	0.11
Mover mean (post)	0.44	0.37	0.18
Post gap (mover - origin)	-0.107	0.047	0.060

Notes: The dependent variable is a Conservative vote in column (1), a Liberal vote in column (2), and a split vote in columns (3). The unit of observation is a voter. Each panel reports a decomposition of the difference in vote choice between socially mobile voters and origin stayers. The sample in each panel is restricted to voters observed in two consecutive elections who either (i) move between the indicated classes or blocs (movers), or (ii) remain in the class or bloc of origin (origin stayers). Destination stayers are not included in these regressions. The row labeled *Sorting: mover – origin gap (pre)* reports the difference in vote choice between movers and origin stayers *prior* to the transition. This coefficient captures pre-existing differences between individuals who eventually move and those who remain in their class or bloc of origin. The row labeled *Updating: post – pre differential* reports a difference-in-differences estimate comparing changes in vote choice for movers relative to origin stayers between the pre- and post-transition elections. This coefficient captures within-voter political updating associated with the transition itself. The rows labeled *Origin mean (pre)*, *Mover mean (pre)*, *Origin mean (post)*, and *Mover mean (post)* report average vote shares for each group before and after the transition. The *Post gap (mover – origin)* equals the sum of the σ and υ components. All specifications include constituency × election fixed effects. Standard errors, reported in brackets, are clustered at the constituency × election level. ***, **, and * denote statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

B.7 Class Transitions, Occupational Status, and Voting

In Table OA11, we show that movements between the middle and working classes are associated with meaningful changes in occupational status captured by the HISCAM score (Lambert et al. 2013). Moving from the working class to the middle class is associated with an increase in the HISCAM score, while moving from the middle class to the working class is associated with a decrease. Thus, it is unlikely that the lack of differences in the corresponding within-voter analyses for voting behavior would reflect experiencing no change in occupational status following social mobility. However, the point estimates for movement between the Conservative and Liberal blocs are notably smaller and statistically insignificant.

We also produce within-voter estimates using the HISCAM score as the main dependent variable. In some specifications, we further add the squared HISCAM score. These estimation results are shown in Table OA12. The even columns reveal that we still see the same pattern as in the cross-sectional analysis; a U-shape for Conservative voting, and an inverse-U-shape for Liberal and split voting. However, these estimates are all statistically insignificant.

Table OA11. Within-voter estimates for the change in occupational status.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Middle class	0.051***			
	[0.006]			
Working class		-0.061***		
		[0.007]		
Conservative bloc			0.012	
			[0.012]	
Liberal bloc				0.004
				[0.011]
N	4134	3030	3630	2707
R^2	0.71	0.69	0.71	0.68
Dependent variable mean	0.62	0.62	0.61	0.60

Notes: The dependent variable is the HISCAM score (Lambert et al. 2013). The unit of observation is a voter. The estimation sample includes voters who are observed at least twice and who are either mobile (treatment group) or remain in the class of origin between two elections (reference group). All specifications control for constituency × election fixed effects and voter fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the constituency × election level are shown in brackets. ***, **, and * indicate statistical significance at 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

Table OA12. Within-voter estimates using HISCAM scores as the main dependent variable.

	Conservative		Liberal		Split	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
HISCAM	0.056	-0.491	0.017	0.138	-0.074	0.354
	[0.065]	[0.405]	[0.061]	[0.392]	[0.046]	[0.293]
HISCAM^2		0.406		-0.089		-0.317
		[0.286]		[0.279]		[0.218]
N	31100	31100	31100	31100	31100	31100
R^2	0.75	0.75	0.76	0.76	0.53	0.53
Dependent variable mean	0.43	0.43	0.45	0.45	0.12	0.12

Notes: The dependent variable is a Conservative vote in columns (1) and (2), a Liberal vote in columns (3) and (4), and a split vote in columns (5) and (6). The unit of observation is a voter. The estimation sample includes voters who are observed at least twice. All specifications control for constituency × election fixed effects and voter fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the constituency × election level are shown in brackets. ***, **, and * indicate statistical significance at 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

B.8 Heterogeneity in Within-Voter Estimates

Figure OA15 decomposes the mobility effects shown in Table 5 by institutional environment, distinguishing competitive, mixed, and controlled constituencies. In line with the estimates obtained using the full sample, we do not see that socially mobile voters would be changing their voting behavior to a great degree relative to how they voted before, regardless of the subsample we are analyzing.

B.9 Robustness to Staggered Treatment Timing

The event-study estimates in Figure 5 are obtained from a standard two-way fixed-effects (TWFE) specification. Because voters experience occupational transitions at different elections, the TWFE estimator may assign negative weights to some cohort-specific treatment effects, potentially biasing the event-study coefficients when effects vary across cohorts.

To assess whether this concern is empirically relevant in our setting, we re-estimate the event study using the imputation estimator proposed by Borusyak, Jaravel, and Spiess (2024). This approach imputes the untreated potential outcome for each treated observation using data from not-yet-treated and never-treated voters, thereby avoiding comparisons between units treated at different times. Pre-trend coefficients are estimated as deviations of pre-treatment outcomes from the imputed counterfactual rather than from a reference period, providing a direct test of the parallel trends assumption.

Figure OA16 presents the results. The estimates closely track those obtained from the standard TWFE specification. Pre-trend coefficients at $t = -2$ and $t = -1$ are

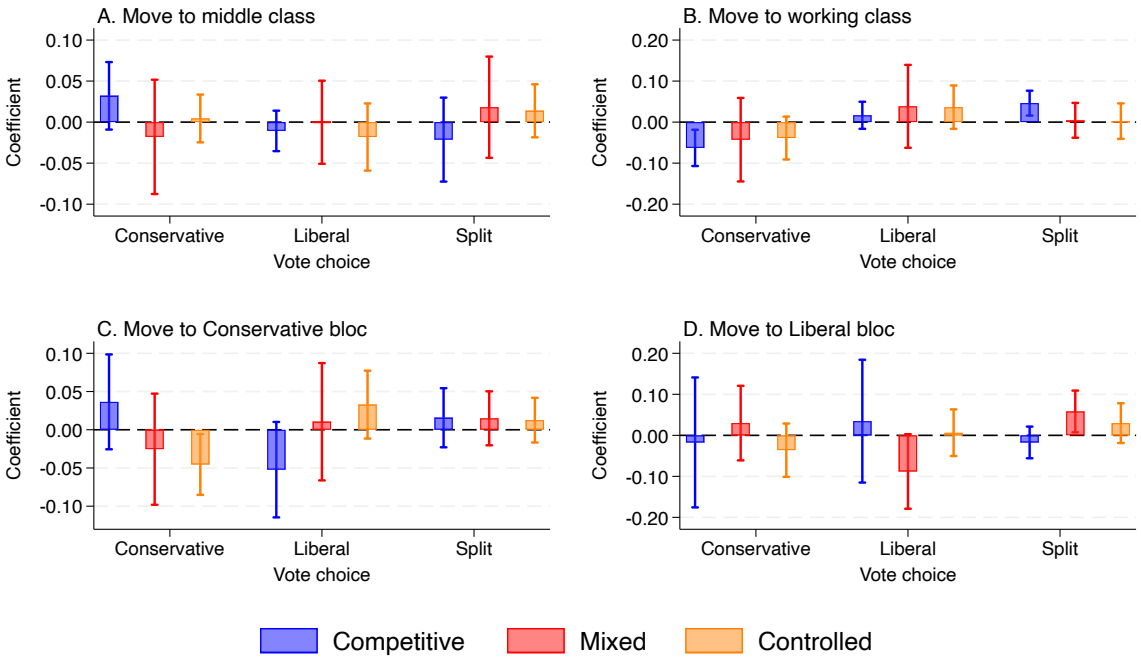


Figure OA15. Heterogeneity in within-voter estimates

Notes: The figure shows point estimates obtained using specification (4) and data from three subsamples. For more information on the classification into the subgroups, see Table OA3. We also show 95% confidence intervals constructed using standard errors clustered at the constituency × election year level.

small and statistically insignificant across all transition types and outcomes, providing no evidence against parallel trends. Transition ($t = 0$) and post-transition ($t \geq +1$) coefficients remain modest, with the same asymmetric pattern noted in the main text: somewhat larger (though still imprecisely estimated) effects for downward mobility and for transitions into the Liberal bloc. The similarity between the TWFE and imputation estimates suggests that heterogeneous treatment effects across transition cohorts do not materially affect our conclusions.

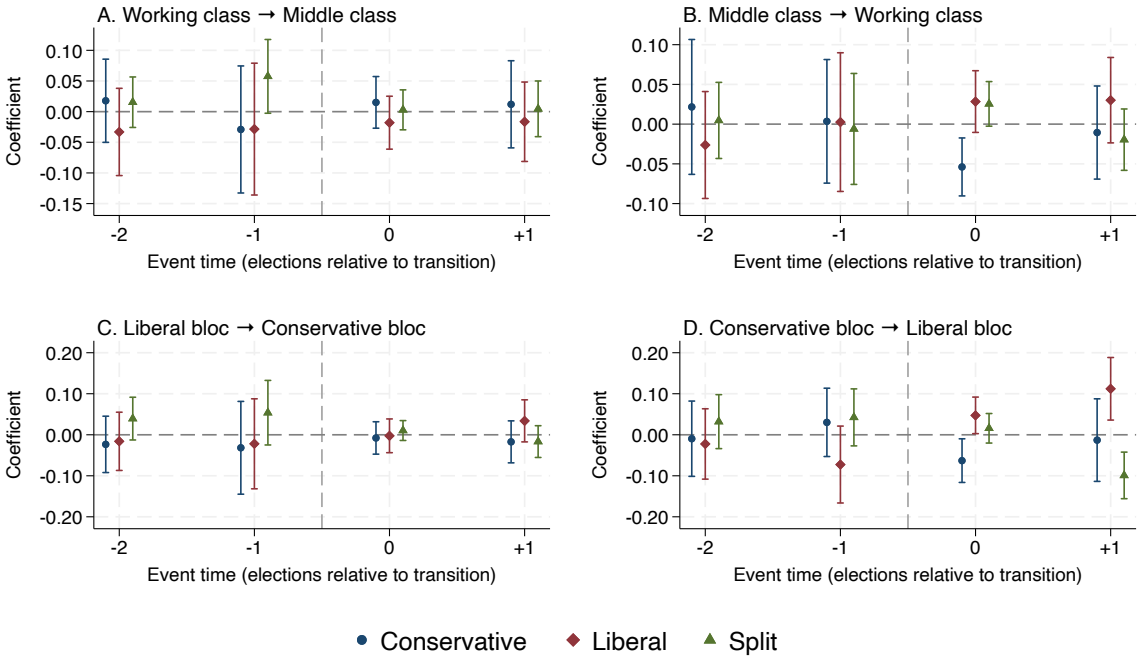


Figure OA16. Event-study estimates using the Borusyak, Jaravel, and Spiess (2024) imputation estimator.

Notes: Each panel plots estimated coefficients from the imputation estimator of Borusyak, Jaravel, and Spiess (2024). Unlike the TWFE specification in Figure 5, this approach does not impose a reference period; instead, all event-time coefficients—including pre-treatment periods—are estimated as deviations from the imputed untreated counterfactual. The estimation sample includes single-transition movers observed in at least four elections and never-movers from the origin class. Standard errors are clustered at the constituency × election level. Vertical bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.

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