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Political homogeneity in Sweden

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Party abbreviations

-  Left Party (V)
-  Social Democratic Party (S)
-  Green Party (MP)
-  Center Party (C)
-  The Liberals (L)
-  Conservative Party (M)
-  Christian Democratic Party (KD)
-  Sweden Democrats (SD)

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Political homogeneity in Sweden

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Sammanfattning

En del väljare befinner sig i ideologiskt homogena sociala sammanhang medan andra rör sig i miljöer där de hela tiden möter en stor variation av ideologiska uppfattningar. Graden av ideologisk homogenitet i olika väljargrupper i Sverige är emellertid dåligt kartlagt och vi vet litet om dess konsekvenser för väljarnas politiska intresse, kunskaper och deltagande. I den här rapporten kartläggs för första gången de svenska väljarnas ideologiska vänster-högeromgivning med utgångspunkt från deras egna bedömningar av i vilken mån vänster- respektive högeruppfattningar är dominerande i den egna familjen, bland grannar och vänner. Vi utvecklar nya mått på graden av social homogenitet och prövar hypoteser hämtade från teorier om "homophily"¹. Resultaten visar för det första att politisk homogenitet är som vanligast hos respondenter som placerar sig långt till vänster/höger på vänster-höger skalan samt hos konservativa respondenter med stark partiidentifikation. För det andra visar det sig att väljare som befinner sig i ideologiskt homogena miljöer diskuterar politik mer har ett större politiskt intresse.

Summary

Some voters find themselves in ideologically homogeneous social contexts, while others constantly encounter a wide variety of ideological views. The degree of ideological homogeneity in different voter groups in Sweden is poorly investigated and we know little about its consequences for voters' political interest, knowledge and political participation. The aim of this report is thus to, for the first time, investigate the left-right ideological environment of Swedish voters, based on their own assessments of the extent to which left- and right-wing views are dominant in their own family, among neighbors and friends. We develop new measures of political homogeneity and test hypotheses derived from theories of homophily. First, the results show that political homogeneity is most common among respondents who place themselves far left/right on the left-right scale and among conservative respondents with strong party identification. Second, voters in ideologically homogeneous environments are found to discuss politics more and have a greater political interest.

¹ There is no appropriate Swedish translation for homophily.

Introduction

Humans are social beings meaning that we both seek the company of others and are significantly affected by the company of others (Rogers & Bhowmik 1970). Accordingly, scholars often look at the organizational level to explain variations in individual behavior as these are intertwined. The analysis of the interplay between individuals and their social circumstances has its roots within social psychology, however the results have had implications for various fields of research. For example, as famously expressed by sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld, “social circumstances determine political preferences” (Lazarsfeld et.al. 1944). The social circumstances of an individual and which groups she belongs to are believed to influence how she thinks and behaves politically.

On that note, there are several different theories within social psychology that all explain various aspects of the interplay between individuals and groups. The theory of homophily is perhaps one of the most famous and well accepted theories among scholars which describes how these relationships are formed. According to the theory of homophily, people are drawn to others with whom they perceive to have much in common with, resulting in groups of people that are homogenic (McPhersen, Smith-Lovin & Cook 2001). There are two types of homophily – homophily of own choice and induced homophily. The first one, homophily of own choice, represents those cases where individuals actively choose similar people to interact with, and the latter refers to a more subtle process in which homophily emerges because of other factors (Huber & Malhotra 2017). The theory thus assumes people seek out their similar others while also adopting the behavior of their surroundings further enhancing similarities (ibid). To exemplify, if you surround yourself with people who all enjoy watching football, you will most probably also start enjoying football. Furthermore, homophilous surroundings are believed to foster communication, trust, and solidarity (Kossinets, Watts 2009), and in line with this, it is reasonable to assume most people worldwide find themselves within homogenous surroundings.

People evaluate their similarities based on several different factors, for example, ethnicity, age, and gender (McPhersen, Smith-Lovin & Cook 2001). More recently though, scholars have also started to investigate *political* homophily – defined as *the tendency to engage more with politically similar people* (Huber & Malhotra 2017). Such papers have thus aimed towards revealing whether political similarities constitute a major point of evaluation for individuals when deciding whom to communicate and socialize with, in addition to earlier mentioned characteristics. According to Gregory A. Huber and Neil Malhotra (2017), there are three types of political homophily: (1) *identity homophily*, where individuals sort their surroundings based on political identities such as party identification or ideological identification, (2) *issue homophily*, where individuals base their evaluation of people on political issue positions and finally (3) *engagement homophily*, where individuals sort according to the level of political engagement. Out of these three types, identity homophily seem to be the strongest one which the authors explain by referring to the early development of such identities and their persistence throughout life (ibid).

Studies on political homophily, or identity homophily, have for the most part been conducted in the U.S and the results should thus be considered as somewhat biased towards that context. Additionally, many scholars, such as Michael Chan (2018) and Gregory A. Huber & Neil Malhotra (2017), have focused on explaining political homophily online, for example on twitter and on online-dating apps.

In this report the Swedish electorate will instead become the unit of analysis broadening the current field of research. For the latest election survey conducted in 2022, new questions were added about the political identity of respondents' surroundings, facilitating the study of homogeneity within the Swedish electorate. Sweden is an interesting case to look at when it comes to political homophily as scholars have shown the electorate to be relatively volatile (Oscarsson 2018). A volatile

electorate could be an indication of heterogeneity because if individuals regularly change political opinions, groups of people should be more heterogenic politically. Political homophily might therefore be less prevalent in Sweden. Also, Sweden is an interesting case as it differs a lot from the U.S with regards to the political system.

All in all, the aim of this paper is to analyze the level of homogeneity in a Swedish context, in light of previous research on political homophily. Given the theory of political homophily one would expect that most individuals live within surroundings that are politically homogenous, however, with regards to the volatile aspect of the Swedish electorate there is also reason to believe heterogeneity to be more widespread. Two research questions will become the point of focus forward, namely:

- 1) among whom in Sweden is political homogeneity most common and
- 2) what are the consequences of being part of politically homogenous surroundings, for the individual?

In light of the two research questions, the purpose of this paper is of both a descriptive and exploratory nature. The results will contribute to a better understanding of political homophily and hopefully shed more light onto differences between levels of homogeneity. Additionally, the contribution will also be of methodological nature as a new measurement will be constructed and simultaneously tested, based on the new questions from the Swedish National Election Study. In the first part of this paper, definitions and measurements will be discussed, which lay the foundation forward. Secondly, previous research on homophily is presented from which it is possible to derive hypotheses regarding the first research question. In the final part, individual consequences of political homogeneity is presented followed by a concluding discussion about implications and future research.

Political homogeneity – definitions and measurements

In order to analyze homogeneity across different groups of voters in Sweden and its consequences, it is first necessary to discuss definitions and measurements. A proper operationalization of political homogeneity is vital to ensure high validity. Political homogeneity will in this paper be understood as a direct result of political homophily which could be explained as the process through which homogeneity is established. If indeed political homophily explain how social groups are formed, then these groups should also be homogenous. Conversely, where political homogeneity is strong it is reasonable to assume political homophily has played a major role.

Referring to a group of people as homogenous is equivalent to saying that everyone included in the group is similar to the other – there is no difference between people with regards to certain characteristics/factors, and the opposite would be true in a heterogenous group. In light of this, referring to political homogeneity, there would be no distance between individuals in a group on certain political factors. Finding a proper measurement for homogeneity, operationalized as the degree of similarity-/difference, is both dependent upon what data is being used and how the variables are coded.

At our disposal from the 2022 election survey in Sweden we have questions about where respondents would place their family, friends, and neighbors on a left-right scale, as illustrated by table one. Organizing one's family, friends, and neighbors on a left-right scale captures what Huber and Malhotra referred to as identity homophily (2017). For respondents whose surroundings are characterized by high political homogeneity (identity homogeneity) there should be virtually no distance of political identities between people inside the groups whereas for respondents whose surroundings are characterized by political heterogeneity the distance should be large.

In this report, respondents' surroundings will thus be understood as their family, friends, and neighbors and political homogeneity will, based on table one, be operationalized as having almost no distance of political identities within ones surrounding.

Table 1 Distribution of political identities within respondents' surroundings.

	(1) Almost everyone to the left	(2) Somewhat more to the left	(3) As many at both sides	(4) Somewhat more to the right	(5) Almost everyone to the right	(6) Do not know	n
Family	253 (12%)	352 (17%)	461 (22%)	359 (17%)	429 (20%)	260 (12%)	2 114 (100%)
Friends	127 (6%)	322 (15%)	540 (26%)	470 (22%)	250 (12%)	386 (19%)	2 095 (100%)
Neighbors	29 (1%)	139 (7%)	343 (17%)	321 (15%)	134 (6%)	1 127 (54%)	2 093 (100%)
Family	277 (13%)	390 (19%)	598 (28%)	406 (19%)	443 (21%)	-	2 114 (100%)
Friends	165 (8%)	388 (18%)	728 (35%)	538 (26%)	276 (13%)	-	2 095 (100%)
Neighbors	145 (7%)	363 (17%)	781 (37%)	576 (28%)	228 (11%)	-	2 093 (100%)

Source: Gothenburg University: Swedish National Election Study. Election study 2022

Comment: The data is collected using the survey question "When you think of people in your environment, approximately how many are on the left or right side of politics?". The option "almost everyone to the left" is coded as 1; the option "somewhat more to the left" is coded as 2; the option "as many at both sides" is coded as 3, the option "somewhat more to the right" is coded as 4 and finally, the option "almost everyone to the right" is coded as 5. The parentheses show the percentage of respondents within each category. The "Family" variable is called "q15a" in the dataset; the "Friends" variable is called "q15b" in the dataset and the "Neighbors" variable is called "q15c" in the dataset. All results have been weighted against the official 2022 election result. The sixth category contains respondents who have answered that they don't know where to place their family, friends and/or neighbors, and respondents who have checked two options instead of one and finally also respondents who have skipped the whole question.

In the table above, all three variables are summarized. Respondents have had the opportunity to place their family, friends, and neighbors according to the alternatives shown by the first row. The first alternative "almost everyone to the left" is equivalent to a value of one whereas the second last alternative "almost everyone to the right" is equivalent to a value of five. For both these alternatives there is almost no distance of political identities whereas alternative three, "as many at both sides", imply a larger distance of opinions. Earlier in the survey, respondents were asked where they would place all parties, and themselves, on a left-right scale from zero to ten. Having this question before asking about respondent's surroundings enables them to think about the meaning of left and right, and what parties they themselves would place on either side. Statistics concerning this question can be found in the appendix where it is made clear that most respondents have a similar perception of how political parties are placed along the left-right scale. This is relevant to keep in mind even though the focus of this paper is on political identities rather than political parties, because this goes to show that even in a more volatile electorate political parties and political identities are very much intertwined. Identifying as either left or right oftentimes also means identifying with a particular set of political parties.

Furthermore, worth mentioning is that all answers are based upon respondents' perceptions of their own surroundings which is important to remember throughout the paper as there is a significant difference between actual political views and the perception of someone else's views. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this paper it is rather appropriate that all answers are based upon individual perceptions because

actual political views are more difficult to measure and because we are interested in how individuals adapt their behavior based on how they view their surroundings.

As shown in the sixth column, there is a substantial amount of people who do not know or have a clear perception of where their family, friends or neighbors place themselves on the left-right scale. Even though this seems to be true across all three variables, it is especially apparent for the last group, neighbors. Over half of the respondents answered that they did not know how their neighbors would place themselves politically. In comparison to the other two groups this is perhaps not such a surprising result as most people feel closer to their family and friends compared to their neighbors. Nevertheless, if excluding the “do not know” alternative from the analysis the number of respondents will drop resulting in less useful and generalizable results. Consequently, going forward with the variables, the “do not know” alternative for family, friends and, neighbors will be equated to a respondents own left-right placement, as we would expect there to be no effect if respondents do not know where to place their surroundings. These changes are illustrated by the fourth, fifth and sixth row in table one.

There are a number of ways in which these variables can be used to measure the phenomena of interest. Mentioned earlier, the measurement is important to ensure high validity and it is thus essential that the measurement follow the definition of homogeneity as having no distance of political identities. Additionally, for simplicity and reliability, the chosen measurement should also be applicable to both parts of the paper. In other words, the chosen measurement should be useful in analyzing both homogeneity across different groups of voters and its consequences.

One way to go about measuring homogeneity would be to use the standard deviation of all variables combined. Higher values would then imply a greater distance of political identities and thus more heterogeneity. This measurement was dismissed because of several reasons. First, as higher values indicate more distance of political identities this measurement rather capture the level of heterogeneity than the level of homogeneity and even though these could be seen as each other’s opposites, using such a measurement risk harming the validity and reliability of the paper. Additionally, using the standard deviation of all variables combined is misleading because such a measurement treats all options for the three variables equally. In any other given case this is desired, however as option number three: “as many at both sides” implies heterogeneity is should not be treated like the other options. To exemplify, when using the standard deviation measurement respondents who placed both their family, friends, and neighbors at both sides politically (option number three) would receive the lowest value indicating full homogeneity when that in fact is not the case. The same problem appeared when trying similar measurements based on the difference between variables. For example, we tried subtracting the value for family with that of friends and so on for family, friends, and neighbors. The absolute values of the calculated differences were then added together resulting in a value between zero and eight. Zero implied no distance of political identities within respondents’ surroundings. Yet again, this measurement did not take into account the meaning of the third variable category.

Consequently, using the differences between all variables as a way of measuring level of homogeneity has not proven to be useful in this case. Instead, the most proper measurement to use illustrates homogeneity in the form of a scale ranging from zero to one based on the mean value of all variables combined. The measurement is constructed by first recoding all five categories into the following three: “a majority to the left”, “as many at both sides” and “a majority to the right” (see appendix). These categories are then given individual values where “a majority to the left” is equivalent to a value of minus one, “as many at both sides” is equivalent to a value of 0 and “a majority to the right” is equivalent to a value of one. Secondly, these three variables are combined to form a measurement by calculating the absolute mean value of all variables. Receiving a value of zero implies a maximum spread of political identities

and these respondents are thus part of heterogeneous surroundings. There are two possible combinations of political identities that result in full heterogeneity, namely if respondents place both their family, friends, and neighbors at both sides of the left-right scale $((0+0+0)/3)$ or if there is a combination of one, zero and minus one. Theoretically, this would be the same as saying 50 percent of ones surrounding has a left-wing political identity whereas the other 50 percent place themselves somewhere to the right. The highest value, one, represents full homogeneity and this is achieved for respondents who place their entire surrounding (family, friends, and neighbors) either to the left or to the right $((1+1+1)/3)$. In between zero and one there are two additional categories, one somewhat more homogeneous and the other somewhat more heterogeneous. The formula used to produce this measure is shown below together with examples of combinations. Figure one illustrates how the Swedish electorate is distributed along the measurement.

$$\text{Gen measurement} = \text{abs}(\text{family} + \text{friends} + \text{neighbors})/3$$

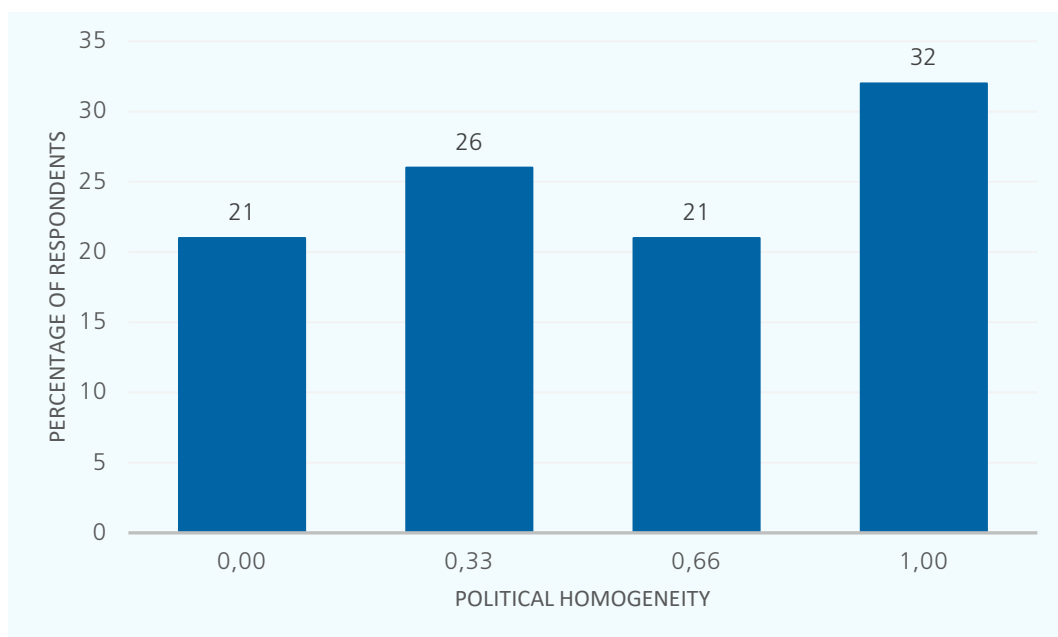
$$\text{abs}(-1 + -1 + -1)/3 = 1$$

$$\text{abs}(0 + 1 + -1)/3 = 0$$

$$\text{abs}(0 + 1 + 1)/3 = 0,66$$

$$\text{abs}(0 + 0 + 1)/3 = 0,33$$

Figure 1 Level of homogeneity within the Swedish electorate 2022 (percent)



Source: Gothenburg University: Swedish National Election Study. Election study 2022

Comment: The figure presents an index for political homogeneity ranging from 0 to 1 where 1 equals full political homogeneity. From the figure it is possible to find out how many percentages of Swedish respondents, who simultaneously answered the questions presented in table one, find themselves within politically homogeneous or heterogeneous surroundings.

Figure one shows that Swedish respondents are part of both homogenous and heterogeneous surroundings, even though homogeneity seem to be more common. The fourth bar shows that 32 percent of all respondents are within fully homogenous

surroundings where a majority of both family, friends, and neighbors are placed at the same side of the left-right scale. Heterogeneity is less common, accounting for 21 percent of the Swedish respondents, however perhaps more common than what would have been expected if assuming political homophily is widespread.

Given that there are many different potential measurements for political homogeneity, the chosen one is not without its limitations. First, what should be mentioned is that the measurement does not differentiate between degrees of left-wing/right-wing identity. Consequently, respondents who find themselves within fully homogenous environments might be surrounded by some very far right voters, and some more towards the middle. This would have been interesting to capture as well, however since the questions are formulated in a way that excludes degrees of left-wing/right-wing political identities, it is not possible to do so. On a similar note, one might also argue that some information is lost when merging the two categories to the left and the two categories to the right, going from five categories to three. In so doing, no differentiation is made between surroundings where almost everyone is placed on one side and surroundings where somewhat more is placed on one side. The correct term to be used instead is that a majority of respondents surroundings are placed at either side. The main reason for recoding all variables accordingly is because of simplicity. In doing so, the measurement is both easier to use and easier to understand which is favorable when constructing an entirely new measurement. In future research it will be possible to develop the measurement by including more interesting elements.

Moreover, one might also react to the fact that respondents own left-right placement is not included in the measurement. On the one hand, some might argue that by ignoring respondents own left-right placements the analysis will not be able to contribute to the field of political homophily, as this theory assumes people choosing company based on their own views. On the other hand though, there are also many valid reasons for excluding respondents own left-right placement from the measurement. First, as the aim of this paper is to explain individual outcomes by looking at group (organizational level) factors such as homogeneity, it makes sense to exclude individual factors from the organizational side of the analysis. Including respondents own left-right placement would go beyond the specified research question of this paper. Secondly, considering previous research on political homophily, we would expect that respondents who find themselves within homogenous surroundings also agree politically with the dominating political identity. This is also confirmed statistically when comparing respondents own left-right placement with that of their surroundings - there are very few respondents who find themselves within surroundings where they themselves deviate much from the dominating political identity (see appendix)². Lastly, since the variable for respondents own ideological placement is coded differently from the variables measuring surrounding ideological placement, combining these would be difficult.

Finally, there is also reason to question whether all variables included in the measurement - family, friends, and neighbors, should be treated equally. Family and friends should probably have a greater impact on the individual in comparison to neighbors, however this is not taken into account in the measurement. Also, family is different from friends and neighbors in the sense that individuals in most cases do not choose who is part of their family. Hence, part of the political homophily theory focusing on how individuals choose their surroundings, is not as relevant in the case of family. Nevertheless, as it is also proposed in the theory that individuals adopt the behavior and thoughts of the people they surround themselves with, family is still a

² Based on the results from appendix it is reasonable to exclude own left-right placement. If there would have been a significant amount of people deviating much from the rest of their surrounding such an occasion would have been interesting and necessary to analyze deeper. However, since that is not the case own left-right position is excluded.

relevant group to analyze. These final limitations will be discussed further in the concluding part of the paper.

Political homogeneity – among whom?

In political science scholars frequently analyze whether a phenomenon is particularly common for a specific group of voters and accordingly, that will be the aim of the following section of the paper. More so to the point, in light of the results from figure one showing the distribution of respondents along the measurement, who would we expect to find within surroundings characterized by high political homogeneity? In order to answer this question and formulate appropriate hypotheses, previous research relating to political homophily, and other sociological theories will be used. The aim is to describe whether and which innate/immutable factors, socio-economic factors and political factors have an impact on political homogeneity.

According to political scientists Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris (2017) attitudes and behavior differ between people in society depending on their relative feeling of security. The feeling of security makes people more tolerant towards outgroups and more open towards new ideas whereas insecurity has the reversed effect (ibid). Inglehart and Norris also hypothesize among whom the sense of insecurity is strongest, namely among the less educated, the older generation, the ethnic majority and among men (ibid). There are several explanations as to why these groups in particular experience more insecurity, however, to summarize one could refer to the global revolution. Globalization has led to a more multicultural, progressive society with higher economic growth which seem to have benefited some more than others, the so-called winners of globalization (Harteveld 2016). Besides the importance of generational, educational, ethnical and gender-based divides, residential divides are also important here. Bigger cities generally attract more people from various parts of the world due to better job opportunities and salaries, among many things, which in turn result in a more diverse environment (Ford & Jennings 2020). For the same reason, one might also expect the winner of globalization to be found within larger cities where there are greater opportunities (ibid). Individuals living in larger cities should thus also be more open towards dissimilarities because they are constantly surrounded by them. On the contrary, individuals living in smaller, rural cities, with less multiculturalism, should be more skeptical towards outgroups and feel more insecure in the face of cultural diversity. Hence, for those who feel more insecure with regards to the cultural diversity, economic competition, supranational political integration, and modernization, political homophily and in turn homogeneity, should be stronger because these people are generally less tolerant towards outgroups and less open towards new ideas. From this section, both innate/immutable and socioeconomic factors have been highlighted and we thus arrive at the following hypotheses:

H1: Factors of immutable character explain the variation in level of political homogeneity between respondents' surroundings.

H1a: The level of political homogeneity is higher among older than among younger voters.

H1b: The level of political homogeneity is higher among ethnic majority voters than among ethnic minority voters.

H1c: The level of political homogeneity is higher among men than among women.

H1d: The level of political homogeneity is higher among rural residential voters than among urban residential voters.

H2: Factors of socioeconomic character explain the variation in level of political homogeneity between respondents' surroundings.

H2a: The level of political homogeneity is higher among less educated voters than among highly educated voters.

H2b: The level of political homogeneity is higher among working class voters than among upper class voters.

H2c: The level of political homogeneity is higher among low-income voters than among high-income voters.

Furthermore, a similar argument about security is put forth by Andrei Boutyline and Robb Willer (2016). They conclude that political homophily is strongest among two types of voters, namely conservative voters, and ideologically extreme voters (2016). Conservative voters are found on the right side of the left-right scale whereas ideologically extreme voters are found at both ends of the scale. Boutyline and Willer base part of their argumentation on the so-called *uncertainty-threat hypothesis* which conclude that an unknown situation is perceived differently by people depending on their preferences for certainty (ibid). In line with this, previous research has shown that conservative voters have a stronger preference for certainty with regards to their traditional view and unwelcome attitude towards change (ibid). On the other hand, for more liberal voters who rather see change as something good, the level of threat is not perceived to be as high when faced with something new/unknown (ibid). Consequently, conservative voters are expected to associate more with their similar others, optimizing certainty and minimizing potential threats and disagreements. Furthermore, Boutyline and Willer also refer to the *uncertainty-identity theory* in explaining why ideologically extreme voters seek political homophily (ibid). Yet again, the feeling of certainty is an important factor where group identification is believed to reduce the level of uncertainty. The identity of a group specifies something similar to a guidebook of how the individual should act and who is welcome within the group. For people with a stronger preference for certainty, a distinct group identification should be more important which is more common at the ideological extremes (ibid). Not only are ideologically extreme voters automatically further away from their dissimilar others, but the level of uncertainty would also increase if socializing with people outside the group as one would not have the safety of a behavioral guidebook anymore.

With reference to group identification, partisanship and political polarization are also important theories/phenomena to mention in this context. Partisanship, as used and explained in the Swedish election survey, describes the individual tendency to strongly identify with a political party. The identification is thus usually with a political party rather than with a political identity. However, as explained in the earlier section about measurements and definitions, respondents often have a clear view of where political parties are to be placed on a left-right scale and most have a similar view regarding this matter. Accordingly, a strong identification with a specific party most likely also entail identification with a political identity as either left or right. Definitions aside, we can look to the field of political polarization to understand how the level of partisanship affect the level of homogeneity.

According to Emma A. Renström, Hanna Bäck och Yvonne Schmeisser (2020), stronger individual identification with a political party, a group or an ideology result in individuals being more protective of their own affiliation and more skeptical towards outgroups. A strongly politically polarized society describes a society with increasing political disagreements (ibid). To some extent, political polarization is welcome and even necessary for a well-functioning democracy, however political polarization also risk hurting democracy when disagreements lead to hostile feelings towards outgroups

rather than healthy debates (Oscarsson, Bergman, Bergström & Hellström 2021). Political polarization thus risk creating a stronger sense of “us-vs-them”, or ingroups vs outgroups, a feeling more common among partisan voters (Renström, Bäck & Schmeisser 2020). Therefore, it should be expected that political homogeneity is stronger among partisan voters as they are more skeptical towards outgroups. In this section a variety of political factors have been highlighted all of which are expected to explain the development of politically homogenous environments. Additionally, as the focus of this paper is on political homogeneity it is also reasonable to assume these factors to be of particular importance in comparison to the earlier mentioned factors. From this section the following hypotheses are formulated:

H3: Factors of political character are especially important for understanding the variation in level of political homogeneity between respondents’ surroundings.

H3a: The level of political homogeneity is higher among conservative voters than among liberal voters.

H3b: The level of political homogeneity is higher among ideologically extreme voters than among voters in the middle.

H3c: The level of political homogeneity is higher among partisan voters than among non-partisan voters.

To summarize, in this section both innate/immutable factors, socio-economic factors and political factors have been discussed. Common innate/immutable factors brought up in previous research are the following: age, ethnicity, gender, and residential area. Socioeconomic factors refer to education, social class and income. And finally, political factors discussed in previous research relate to ideological left-right position and partisanship. There seem to be two mechanisms in common driving the development of homogeneity, that is preferences for certainty and skepticism towards outgroups. A table is constructed illustrating how various groups of voters are distributed along the measurement. This will help clarify differences between groups of voters, however from such table it is not possible to confirm/reject the hypotheses and thus a regression analysis will also be performed and found in appendix.

Table 3 Level of homogeneity across various groups of voters (percent)

	Low 0,00	0,33	0,66	High 1,00	Total	n
Total	21	26	21	32	100	1 845
<i>Age</i>						
18–22	21	26	26	27	100	64
23–30	18	33	21	28	100	159
31–40	19	29	20	32	100	268
41–50	17	30	20	33	100	323
51–60	19	27	22	32	100	358
61–70	25	21	21	33	100	395
71+	23	21	21	35	100	477
<i>National background</i>						
Swedish	19	26	22	33	100	1 619
Foreign	27	24	22	27	100	192
<i>Gender</i>						
Women	18	27	22	33	100	1 029
Men	23	24	21	32	100	1 015
<i>Urban-rural</i>						
Countryside	19	25	20	36	100	265
Small town	23	26	22	29	100	340
City/larger urban area	18	26	23	33	100	861
Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö	18	29	21	32	100	336
<i>Education</i>						
Primary school	32	23	18	27	100	219
Secondary school	20	26	21	33	100	677
Post secondary education	17	28	22	33	100	953
<i>Class</i>						
Working class	23	28	18	31	100	661
Middle class	19	26	24	31	100	830
Upper class	13	22	28	37	100	320
<i>Income</i>						
< 187 000 kr	26	20	19	36	100	132
187 000 – 310 000kr	21	31	20	28	100	245
310 000 – 556 000kr	22	25	20	33	100	607
556 000 – 778 000kr	18	24	27	31	100	423
> 778 000kr	13	28	24	36	100	401
<i>Own ideological placement³</i>						
Far left	9	24	20	47	100	195
Somewhat left	13	27	23	37	100	403
Neither	41	33	19	7	100	732
Somewhat right	9	19	26	46	100	519
Far right	6	15	19	60	100	195
<i>Partisanship</i>						
Partisan voter	16	23	22	39	100	506
Non-partisan voter	22	26	22	30	100	1 301

Source: Gothenburg University: Swedish National Election Study. Election study 2022

Comment: Table 3 shows how political homogeneity vary between different voter groups in Sweden 2022. All results have been weighted against the official 2022 election result and all results are presented as percentages. Voter groups with less than 30 respondents have been excluded from the table or combined with other categories.

³ See appendix for information on how level of homogeneity vary between respondents depending on party vote.

Table 3 show the level of political homogeneity within specific voter groups in Sweden. Each voter group will be discussed in the following section from which it will be possible to either reject or confirm the earlier presented hypotheses.

The first voter groups to be presented are different age groups, from first-time voters to voters over 71 years. As shown in the second column, there is a slight increase of homogeneity between first-time voters and the older age groups indicating that the level of homogeneity is stronger for older voters as stated in H1a. For 27 percent of first-time voters there is political homogeneity, however as we move up an age category the percentage increase until we reach the final category of 71+ respondents where political homogeneity is a fact for 35 percent. This initial overview thus points to age being indicative of political homogeneity, however, the regression results presented in the appendix tell a contradicting story; the effect of age on homogeneity is not significant and it is thus not possible to confirm H1a.

Moreover, the results for national background give slight support to hypothesis 1b. Respondents who belong to the ethnic majority, Swedish, seem on average to be more homogenous in comparison to ethnic minority respondents with a difference of six percent. Also, the second column shows that heterogeneity is more common among ethnic minority respondents further substantiating the claim. Thereto, the effect is also confirmed in the regression results where national background has a significant effect on level of political homogeneity confirming H1b. Gender, on the other hand, does not seem to be a strong indicator of homogeneity as the difference between men and women is neglectable which is also confirmed by the insignificant regression results. Consequently, H1c must be rejected.

The results for residential area are similar to those of gender. The difference in homogeneity between areas of residence is not substantial, however homogeneity does seem to be most common among respondents living on the countryside and weaker for respondents living in bigger cities. What does contradict the hypothesis is that the lowest level of homogeneity is found for small town respondents (see column five) and the lowest level of heterogeneity is found for respondents living in Stockholm, Gothenburg, or Malmö (see column two). As thus expected, the regression results also show the relationship between residential area and homogeneity to be insignificant rejecting H1d. Altogether, the results from table three only confirm H1b leading one to believe innate/immutable factors might not be as important for the development of political homogeneity as earlier expected.

Moving on to the second hypothesis highlighting socioeconomic factors. Overall, both educational background, income and class appear to be somewhat meaningless factors for the development of homogeneity and the results rather point in the opposite direction of the hypothesis. For each of the variables, homogeneity is less common for the groups highlighted in the hypothesis. Further analytical depth is provided in the regression analysis where educational level is the only socioeconomic factor with a significant relationship to level of homogeneity. Nevertheless, as indicated by table three, higher educational background rather seems to be related to higher level of political homogeneity. Consequently, the socioeconomic factors presented in H2 all have to be rejected because the relationships are either insignificant or as in the case of education, the relationship is positive rather than negative.

Finally, there are two factors left in table three relating to H3. First, for ideological placement it is possible to distinguish a homogeneity u-curve. What is meant by this is that the level of homogeneity is strongest at the ends and weakest in the middle which graphically would be illustrated in the form of the letter “u”. Far-right voters exhibit the highest level of homogeneity (60 percent) across all groups of voters, followed by far-left voters (47 percent) and voters who place themselves in the middle of the left-right scale exhibit the lowest level of homogeneity (7 percent) across all voter groups. Moreover, heterogeneity is strongest for voters in the middle (41 percent) which should be expected from previous research on homophily, as there is greater certainty in

surrounding oneself with heterogenous people if oneself identifies somewhat with both sides. These are all interesting results as they go in line with H3. Since right-wing voters are generally more conservative these results do indicate that homogeneity is more common among conservatives and the u-shaped curve of homogeneity indicate that homogeneity is strongest for ideologically extreme voters. Table three together with the regression results show that there is a significant relationship between ideological placement and political homogeneity confirming both H3a and H3b.

Lastly, partisan voters are also more homogenous (39 percent) in comparison to non-partisan voters (30 percent) which also is confirmed by the regression table in the appendix. Yet again, these results go in line with the claims that was presented in the third hypothesis, namely H3c.

To conclude this first section, we expect to find far-right voters, ideologically extreme voters, partisan voters, highly educated voters and ethnic majority voters within homogenous surroundings. This points to the fact that political factors, as suggested in the third hypothesis, are of greater importance for the development of politically homogenous surroundings as opposed to immutable and socioeconomic factors.

Political homogeneity – consequences

In the previous section, political homogeneity was analyzed as a dependent variable where several different individual characteristics were included as independent variables. The hypotheses were derived from previous research on political homophily and other strains of research in relation to preference for certainty. Moreover, in the following section the focus will shift from explaining the development of homogeneity, to explain its consequences. Focusing on the consequences of political homogeneity means that the consequences also should be of a political nature. Yet again, previous research on political homophily will constitute a base for hypothesis formulation, together with previous research on the spiral of silence theory.

In the article “What does homophily do? A review of the consequences of homophily” (2022), researchers Gokhan Ertug, Julia Brennecke, Balázs and Tengjian Zou aim towards identifying various consequences of homophily. There seem to be two directions in the literature regarding the effects, one highlighting the more positive effects and one focusing on the more negative ones. First, homophily is believed to promote communication, trust, and coordination which, going back to the introduction, also is one of the main reasons for the development of homophily (Ertug, et.al. 2022). These factors have also been brought up by many other scholars who particularly emphasize the degree of effectiveness in communication between individuals within homophilous surroundings (Rogers & Bhowmik 1970). Effective communication, trust and coordination are all intertwined, for example, if assuming individuals trust their similar others more, communication and coordination should both be easier and more effective. Furthermore, this has proven to be especially relevant for political communication because people tend to avoid discussing politics when they foresee disagreements (Gerber, Huber, Doherty & Dowling 2012), and as there should be more disagreement in heterogenous surroundings it is reasonable to assume people within such environments avoid political discussions.

Nonetheless, homophily is also believed by many to reduce diversity in knowledge, perspective, and resources, highlighting the more negative effects (Ertug, Brennecke, Kovács & Zou 2022). Scholars have for example investigated the level of homogeneity vs heterogeneity within groups and how each affect group performance. According to Sujin K. Horwitz and Irwin B. Horwitz (2007), diversity within groups result in a more versatile pool of knowledge for the individual which in turn help foster creativity and problem solving. So far, most highlighted results are collected from previous research on homophily without the political specification which is applied in this paper. To assess the possible consequences on a political, level one might have to look beyond

previous literature on homophily and see to other theories within both sociology and political science.

The spiral of silence is a classical theory within political science concentrating on individual perceptions of the political opinion. According to the theory, majority opinion direct individuals in their own opinion formation, and where the individual risk diverging from the majority they tend to agree or simply stay quite (Noelle-Neumann 1974). This theory is mostly used to describe opinion formation on a larger scale, for example amongst an entire population and would thus explain why minority opinions stay unpopular. Still, the theory should also be applicable in cases where the group being analyzed in smaller, such as individual surroundings. Applying the spiral of silence to the case presented in this paper could mean that if individuals are part of very homogenous surroundings (there is a clear majority opinion), they might agree more in general or refrain from voicing opinions in fear of being in minority. Presumably, this could be the case even if individuals are part of surroundings that match their own ideological left-right position because the fear of becoming a minority will still be present. And, even if the individual political identity match that of ones surrounding (which has proven to be the case for most) there is still a possibility that an individual diverges from her surrounding on certain issues.

Even though many scholars highlight the silencing effect of homogeneity in research on the spiral of silence theory, many more find contrasting evidence. For example, as it might be harder to assess what the majority opinion is in a heterogenic environment (there might not be a majority opinion), individuals may sensor themselves as a precaution (Chan 2018). To quote journalism - and communication scholar Michael Chan [...] there is greater certainty in homophilous networks, which better facilitates the scanning of the opinion climate” (ibid). The spiral of silence thus also highlights the positive effect of homophily on communication, or rather the negative effect of heterogeneity.

Conversely, previous research highlight both positive and negative effect of homophily on individual behavior and, to some extent even contradictory. Yet, for the purpose of this report, two hypotheses will be formulated each of which relate to one of the commonly mentioned effects in previous research, namely: communication and knowledge.

H4: Political homogeneity positively affect individual participation in political discussions.

H5: Political homogeneity negatively affect the level of individual political knowledge.

In addition to these hypotheses, another one will also be tested regarding political interest. Political interest is added on the same grounds as political communication, even though it is not explicitly mentioned in previous research. If assuming political homophily is true, and that people choose homogenous environments to facilitate communication, coordination, and trust, it would also be reasonable to assume such environments foster political interest more than environments where individuals feel less tempted to talk about politics.

H6: Political homogeneity positively affect individual political interest.

In total, three dependent variables will be tested. Individual participation in political discussions is measured on a scale from one to four where higher values indicate more participation. The measurement is based on respondents own perception of their participation. Political knowledge is measured using a scale from zero to four where, again, higher values imply greater political knowledge. This variable is constructed by combining a variety of different variables relating to political knowledge. Respondents

were asked questions with a clear right and wrong answer, and these were then combined to form a measurement of political knowledge. Finally, political interest is measured in the same way as political discussions where individual perception also lay the foundation.

Table 4 Bivariate and multivariate regression results for the relationships between homogeneity and participation in political discussions, political knowledge, and political interest.

	Political communication		Political knowledge		Political interest	
	Bivariate (1)	Multiple (2)	Bivariate (3)	Multiple (4)	Bivariate (5)	Multiple (6)
Homogeneity	0,229*** (0,048)	0,169*** (0,052)	0,340*** (0,081)	0,158 (0,087)	0,183*** (0,042)	0,129** (0,044)
Ideological placement		-0,011 (0,018)		0,102*** (0,029)		0,016 (0,016)
Age		-0,005*** (0,001)		0,019*** (0,002)		0,004*** (0,001)
Partisanship		-0,226*** (0,044)		-0,168* (0,055)		-0,405*** (0,039)
National background		-0,017 (0,062)		-0,291** (0,102)		0,027 (0,054)
Educational background		0,252*** (0,029)		-0,539*** (0,049)		0,205*** (0,026)
Intercept	3,083*** (0,032)	3,198*** (0,154)	2,084*** (0,054)	0,160 (0,272)	2,787*** (0,028)	2,749*** (0,145)
Adjusted r ²	0,011	0,082	0,008	0,121	0,009	0,106
Observations	2 031	1 630	2 044	1 640	2 070	1 654

Source: Gothenburg University: Swedish National Election Study. Election study 2022

Comment: Table 4 illustrates the relationship between the independent variable (political homogeneity) and three different dependent variables that have been collected based on previous research. These are: (1) respondents' participation in political discussions (variable q13), (2) respondents' level of political knowledge (variable v7712) and (3) respondents' level of political interest (variable q4). For each dependent variable both a bivariate and a multiple regression has been conducted. Five controls are included in the multiple regression, namely ideological placement (from left to right), age, partisanship (dummy variable where nonpartisanship is being tested and partisanship is the reference category), national background (dummy variable where ethnic minority is being tested and ethnic majority is the reference category) and level of education (three level scale). The standard deviation for each result is shown in parentheses.

The results are summarized in table four. Column one and two illustrates the relationship between level of homogeneity and individual participation in political discussions. Both the bivariate and multiple results indicate that there is a positive relationship between homogeneity and political communication. The significant beta coefficient for the multiple model reveals that when the level of homogeneity increases with one step (according to the constructed measurement), individual participation in political discussions increase with 0,169 scale steps. There is thus a significant effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable even when including control variables. Also apparent is that the intercept value is high relative to the scale on which the dependent variable is measured. This means most respondents in the sample participate somewhat in political discussions even when there is full heterogeneity

within their surroundings, however homogeneity increases such behavior in accordance with the hypothesis. The adjusted r^2 value implies that the proposed model explains 8,2 percent of the variation in the dependent variable.

Furthermore, the relationship between homogeneity and political knowledge is presented in column three and four. The beta coefficient for the bivariate model is positively significant however not for the multiple model indicating that there is no effect of political homogeneity on individual political knowledge when including control variables. It is thus not possible to draw any relevant conclusions regarding the relationship between political homogeneity and political knowledge based on this regression analysis and thus not either possible to confirm the fifth hypothesis. This could either be an indication of political homogeneity having no effect on political knowledge, or an indication that the measurement is not appropriate for this analysis. This will be further discussed in the conclusion.

Finally, column five and six presents the relationship between homogeneity and individual political interest. The multiple beta coefficient for homogeneity is significant and the relationship is positive suggesting that when the level of homogeneity increase so does individual political interest with 0,129 scale steps. As with political communication, the value of the intercept is relatively high meaning that most respondents are fairly interested in politics even when surrounded by heterogeneity. This model explains 10,6 percent of the variation in the dependent variable and given the direction of the relationship the final hypothesis is supported.

All in all, two of the three hypotheses regarding consequences are supported through the results presented in table four. To answer the second research question of this paper, the individual consequences of political homogeneity are: increasing participation in political discussions and increasing political interest. These two are most probably also relational as previous research often point to the fact that political interest leads to more communication which in turn leads to even more interest. In previous research both positive and negative effects of political homophily were highlighted however no negative consequences appeared in this investigation. Instead, the results gave indication of a positive relationship between homogeneity and political knowledge which was not the expected conclusion. However, as these results turned out insignificant when including control variables, we cannot draw any relevant conclusions about the relationship.

Moreover, it should also be mentioned that all these variables and the relationship between them could be reciprocal. In this part of the paper, we have analyzed homogeneity as an independent variable affecting participation in political discussions, political knowledge, and political interest. Nevertheless, it could also be that, for example, more political discussions lead to more political homogeneity. Going back to previous research on political homophily, it was suggested that individuals both seek to surround themselves with their similar others but also that individuals are affected by the people around them and adopt their behavior/thoughts. If so, more individual participation in political discussions would inevitably lead to more political homogeneity. The relationship between these two should then rather resemble a spiral where more of one lead to more of the other and so it continues.

Concluding remarks

To summarize, the aim of this paper has been to investigate political homogeneity in light of previous research on political homophily. Homogeneity is suggested to be a direct result of homophily so even if not explicitly analyzing the occurrence of homophily as a phenomenon, the presence of homogeneity do say something about its applicability in the chosen case. The Swedish electorate constitute the case of analysis and the results thus speak to the relevance of political homophily in that setting. Since the Swedish electorate is somewhat more volatile in comparison to other electorates

that are often analyzed in relation to political homophily, it presents an interesting and important context for investigation.

Two research questions have been the point of departure for this paper, namely: 1) among whom in Sweden is political homogeneity most common, and 2) what are the individual political consequences of being part of politically homogenous surroundings? Political homogeneity has been measured using a scale from zero to one, where one indicates full homogeneity. An initial overview of the measurement shows that homogeneity on average is more common within the Swedish electorate, however there is still a fairly even distribution of respondents along the measurement. For further insights one would have to look to table three showing the level of homogeneity across various groups of voters. Results from table three together with the regression analysis in the appendix, show that homogeneity is most common among ethnic majority voters, highly educated voters, ideologically extreme voters, conservative voters, and partisan voters. Out of these five indicators, own ideological position appear to be most indicative of homogeneity which would be expected seeing as the aim is to explain development of *political* homogeneity. From this it is only possible to confirm the third hypothesis highlighting political factors.

Furthermore, the regression analysis in the second part of the paper showed that political homogeneity positively affects both individual participation in political discussions and political interest. From previous research it was hypothesized that political homogeneity would positively affect political communication and interest as was also confirmed by the results, however the relationship between political homogeneity and knowledge did not go in line with the fifth hypothesis.

All things considered, there are some important conclusions to be drawn from this relatively thorough investigation of political homogeneity in Sweden. First it is relevant to discuss the implications of this paper for the understanding of homophily. Mentioned earlier, political homogeneity could be considered as a direct effect of political homophily and the results from this paper are thus useful in broadening the understanding of the theory. In Sweden politically homogenous surroundings seem to be more common than politically heterogenous surroundings however there is also a significant amount of people who find themselves within heterogenous surroundings. Common for these people is to vote neither left nor right, as shown in table three. More so to the point, these results suggest that political homophily might not be as prevalent in Sweden as in other countries where the electorate is less volatile. When analyzing political homophily, or homophily in general, it is thus important to consider the context in which individuals live. Going back to the introduction, three types of homophily was mentioned, namely identity homophily, issue homophily and engagement homophily. Perhaps the result from this paper is an indication that identity homophily is not as widespread in Sweden as in other countries where homophily has been analyzed. Instead, considering the volatile character of the Swedish electorate, issue homophily might be of greater importance and could thus be a possible point of departure for future research.

Moreover, the implications have also been of methodological nature as a new measurement has been tested. As of now there are no other measurements using the same data which complicates a proper evaluation of the measurement. Given the limitations there is room for developments which would be a recommendation for future research. Additionally, it would also be interesting to analyze further the difference between family, friends, and neighbors in how each affect the individual and include more groups of people from individuals' surroundings, for example co-workers.

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Appendix

Table 1 Ideological left-right placement of Swedish political parties according to Swedish respondents (percent)

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
V	58	24	11	2	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	100
S	7	7	19	27	20	14	4	1	1	0	1	100
C	3	2	5	8	15	35	17	8	3	1	1	100
L	1	0	1	2	2	20	24	28	15	4	3	100
M	0	0	0	0	0	4	3	9	26	29	27	100
KD	1	0	1	1	1	7	6	12	22	26	23	100
MP	15	15	18	17	13	15	2	1	0	0	0	100
SD	1	0	0	1	1	9	4	7	11	16	49	100

Source: Gothenburg University: Swedish National Election Study. Election study 2022

Comment: The table presents an overview of how respondents place Swedish political parties on an ideological left-right scale. The scale ranges from 0 (= far left) to 10 (=far right). The data is collected using the survey question "In politics people sometimes refer to left and right. Where do you place the parties on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means far to left and 10 means far to the right?". To remember from this table is that most respondents have a similar perception of how political parties should be distributed along the left-right scale. All results have been weighted against the official 2022 election result. All results are presented as percentages.

Table 2 Recoded surrounding variables (percent)

	-1	0	1	Total	n
Family	32	28	40	100	2 114
Friends	26	35	39	100	2 095
Neighbors	24	37	38	100	2 093

Source: Gothenburg University: Swedish National Election Study. Election study 2022

Comment: The data is collected using the survey question "When you think of people in your environment, approximately how many are on the left or right side of politics?". Option 1 "far left" and option 2 "somewhat left" have been recoded to "-1". Option 2 "as many at both sides" has been recoded to "0". Option 4 "somewhat right" and option 5 "far right" has been recoded to "1". All results are presented as percentages.

Table 3 Own ideological placement in comparison to that of one's family (cell percent).

	Almost everyone to the left	Somewhat more to the left	As many at both sides	Somewhat more to the right	Almost everyone to the right	Total
Far left (0-1)	5	2	1	1	0	9
Somewhat left (2-3)	5	7	3	1	1	17
Neither (4-6)	2	5	18	7	4	35
Somewhat right (7-8)	1	2	5	9	11	27
Far right (9-10)	0	1	1	2	8	12

Source: Gothenburg University: Swedish National Election Study. Election study 2022

Comment: The table illustrates the cell percentage for individual left-right position and the individual perception of family political identities. In the seventh column (showing the total) the total amount of respondent for each category of individual left-right position is displayed. Consequently, when adding the percentages for the seventh column we account for 100 percent of the sample. Data is collected using the survey question "When you think of people in your environment, approximately how many are on the left or right side of politics?" and using the survey question "In politics we sometimes talk about left and right. [...] on a scale between 0 and 10 where 0 is far left and 10 is far right [...] where would you place yourself? 0 and 1 has been coded as "Far left". 2 and 3 has been coded as "Somewhat left". 4, 5 and 6 has been coded as "Neither". 7 and 8 has been coded as "Somewhat right and finally 9 and 10 has been coded as "Far right". From the cell percentages it is possible to deduce the similarity between individual left-right placement the identity of ones surrounding. For example, 11 percent of respondent who identify as somewhat right also find themselves within families where almost everyone identifies as right-wing voters. On the contrary, 0 percentage of far-left voters find themselves within families where almost everyone identifies as right-wing voters. All results are presented as percentages and all results have been weighted against the official 2022 election result.

Table 4 Own ideological placement in comparison to that of one's friends (cell percent).

	Almost everyone to the left	Somewhat more to the left	As many at both sides	Somewhat more to the right	Almost everyone to the right	Total
Far left (0-1)	4	3	2	0	0	9
Somewhat left (2-3)	2	9	5	2	1	17
Neither (4-6)	1	4	20	8	2	35
Somewhat right (7-8)	0	2	7	13	6	27
Far right (9-10)	0	0	2	4	6	12

Source: Gothenburg University: Swedish National Election Study. Election study 2022

Comment: The table illustrates the cell percentage for individual left-right position and the individual perception of friends' political identities. In the seventh column (showing the total) the total amount of respondent for each category of individual left-right position is displayed. Consequently, when adding the percentages for the seventh column we account for 100 percent of the sample. Data is collected using the survey question "When you think of people in your environment, approximately how many are on the left or right side of politics?" and using the survey question "In politics we sometimes talk about left and right. [...] on a scale between 0 and 10 where 0 is far left and 10 is far right [...] where would you place yourself? 0 and 1 has been coded as "Far left". 2 and 3 has been coded as "Somewhat left". 4, 5 and 6 has been coded as "Neither". 7 and 8 has been coded as "Somewhat right and finally 9 and 10 has been coded as "Far right". From the cell percentages it is possible to deduce the similarity between individual left-right placement the identity of ones surrounding. For example, 11 percent of respondent who identify as somewhat right also find themselves within friend groups where almost everyone identifies as right-wing voters. On the contrary, 0 percentage of far-left voters find themselves within friend groups where almost everyone identifies as right-wing voters. All results are presented as percentages and all results have been weighted against the official 2022 election result.

Table 5 Own ideological placement in comparison to that of one's neighbors (cell percent).

	Almost everyone to the left	Somewhat more to the left	As many at both sides	Somewhat more to the right	Almost everyone to the right	Total
Far left (0-1)	5	1	1	1	0	9
Somewhat left (2-3)	0	11	3	3	1	17
Neither (4-6)	0	2	27	5	1	35
Somewhat right (7-8)	0	2	5	18	3	27
Far right (9-10)	0	1	2	2	7	12

Source: Gothenburg University: Swedish National Election Study. Election study 2022

Comment: The table illustrates the cell percentage for individual left-right position and the individual perception of neighbors' political identities. In the seventh column (showing the total) the total amount of respondent for each category of individual left-right position is displayed. Consequently, when adding the percentages for the seventh column we account for 100 percent of the sample. Data is collected using the survey question "When you think of people in your environment, approximately how many are on the left or right side of politics?" and using the survey question "In politics we sometimes talk about left and right. [...] on a scale between 0 and 10 where 0 is far left and 10 is far right [...] where would you place yourself? 0 and 1 has been coded as "Far left". 2 and 3 has been coded as "Somewhat left". 4, 5 and 6 has been coded as "Neither". 7 and 8 has been coded as "Somewhat right and finally 9 and 10 has been coded as "Far right". From the cell percentages it is possible to deduce the similarity between individual left-right placement the identity of ones surrounding. For example, 11 percent of respondent who identify as somewhat right also find themselves among neighbors where almost everyone identifies as right-wing voters. On the contrary, 0 percentage of far-left voters find themselves among neighbors where almost everyone identifies as right-wing voters. All results are presented as percentages and all results have been weighted against the official 2022 election result.

Table 6 Level of homogeneity based on respondents' party choice (percent).

	0,00	0,33	0,66	1,00	Total	n
V	11	32	25	32	100	119
S	27	25	20	24	100	483
C	21	36	26	17	100	105
L	15	24	33	28	100	75
M	11	20	27	42	100	325
KD	14	25	24	37	100	94
MP	19	29	24	28	100	90
SD	19	23	20	39	100	314
Other	0	50	7	43	100	26

Source: Gothenburg University: Swedish National Election Study. Election study 2022

Comment: The data is collected using the survey question "Which party did you vote for?". All results are weighted against the official national election results in Sweden 2022. All result are presented as percentages.

Table 7 Bivariate regression results illustrating the relationship between several factors and level of political homogeneity.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Age	0,872 (0,005)								
National background		-0,064* (0,026)							
Gender			-0,022 (0,017)						
Urban-rural				0,004 (0,009)					
Educational background					0,039** (0,125)				
Class						0,051*** (0,012)			
Income							0,023** (0,007)		
Ideological placement								0,036*** (0,008)	
Partisanship									-0,055*** (0,147)
Intercept	0,541*** (0,025)	0,617*** (0,030)	0,578*** (0,026)	0,536*** (0,026)	0,456*** (0,031)	0,461*** (0,024)	0,491*** (0,019)	0,434*** (0,024)	0,645*** (0,028)
Adjusted r ²	-0,000	0,002	0,000	0,125	0,005	0,086	0,005	0,011	0,007
Observations	2 084	2 084	2 084	1 812	1 875	1 826	2 079	2 084	2 030

Source: Gothenburg University: Swedish National Election Study. Election study 2022

Comment: Table seven illustrates the bivariate regression results between nine different independent variables and the dependent variable political homogeneity. Age is measured as the age of the respondents from 18 and onwards. National background is a dummy variable where ethnic minority is the category being tested and ethnic majority is the reference category. Gender is also a dummy variable where women is the category being tested and men is the reference category. The urban-rural variable has four categories: countryside, small town, larger city, Stockholm/Gothenburg/Malmö. Educational background has three categories: primary school, secondary school, and post-secondary school. Class also has three categories: lower class, middle class, and upper class. Income is measured using the disposable family income which has been recoded into five categories starting at 187 000kr. Ideological placement is based on respondents' placements on the left-right scale ranging from 0 (=far left) to 10 (=far right), however the variable has been recoded into five categories. Finally, partisanship is a dummy variable where nonpartisanship is the category being tested and partisanship is the reference category.

Table 8 Multiple regression results illustrating the relationship between several independent variables and level of political homogeneity.

	Political homogeneity
National background	-0.062* (0,029)
Educational background	0,037** (0,139)
Class	0,026 (0,014)
Income	0,005 (0,008)
Ideological placement	0,037*** (0,008)
Partisanship	-0,052*** (0,160)
Intercept	0,456*** (0,061)
Adjusted r ²	0,029
Observations	1 640

Source: Gothenburg University: Swedish National Election Study. Election study 2022

Comment: Table eight illustrates the multiple regression results between six different independent variables and the dependent variable political homogeneity. National background is a dichotomous variable where one is equivalent to being part of the ethnic majority and two ethnic minority. Educational background has three categories: primary school, secondary school, and post-secondary school. Class also has three categories: lower class, middle class, and upper class. Income is measured using the disposable family income which has been recoded into five categories starting at 187 000kr. Ideological placement is based on respondents' placements on the left-right scale ranging from 0 (=far left) to 10 (=far right), however the variable has been recoded into five categories. Finally, partisanship is a dichotomous variable where one is equivalent to partisanship and two no partisanship. The numbers in bold for each column show which variable was the main independent variable for that model. The rest are control variables.

The Swedish National Election Studies Program was established in 1954 by Jörgen Westerståhl and Bo Särilvik and is today a high profile network of researchers at the Department of Political Science in Gothenburg. The Program serve as a collaborative platform for Swedish and international scholars interested in studies of electoral democracy, representative democracy, opinion formation, and voting behavior.

The aim of our research is among others to explain why people vote as they do and why an election ends in a particular way. We track and follow trends in the Swedish electoral democracy and make comparisons with other countries.

Professor Henrik Ekengren Oscarsson is the director of the Swedish Election Studies Program.

