

Democratic Representation in an Internationalized and Globalized World

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Who decides? The Parliament, the Government or the People?

„In our system parliaments decide, no one else. Our freely elected representatives have done that dozens of times: at the national, subnational, city and regional level. Always with huge majorities.“

Head of Deutsche Bahn D. Grube after violent protests by citizens concerning the infrastructure project „Stuttgart 21“.



Structure

What are the challenges for democratic representatives in an internationalized and globalized world?

Crisis of Parliamentarianism?

- Consequences for the **professionalization** of parliaments and parliamentarians
- Consequences for voting behaviour, e.g. **free votes**

Crisis of Parliaments? Post-Parliamentarianism?

Common claims: today's parliaments

- are no longer able to make the complex decisions of a complex society
- are no longer able to represent the differentiated interests
- lack specialization and expertise
- get pushed aside by neo-corporatist networks in which private and half-private actors find competent solutions to policy problems (Schüttemeyer 2000)

Defense of Parliaments and Parliamentarians

- Parliaments adapt well over time to differing demands of society
- Their continuity proves their stable role in political life
- Parliaments are democratically legitimated → good democratic reputation → call for more parliamentarianism → call for more democracy (e.g. European Union and other international organisations)

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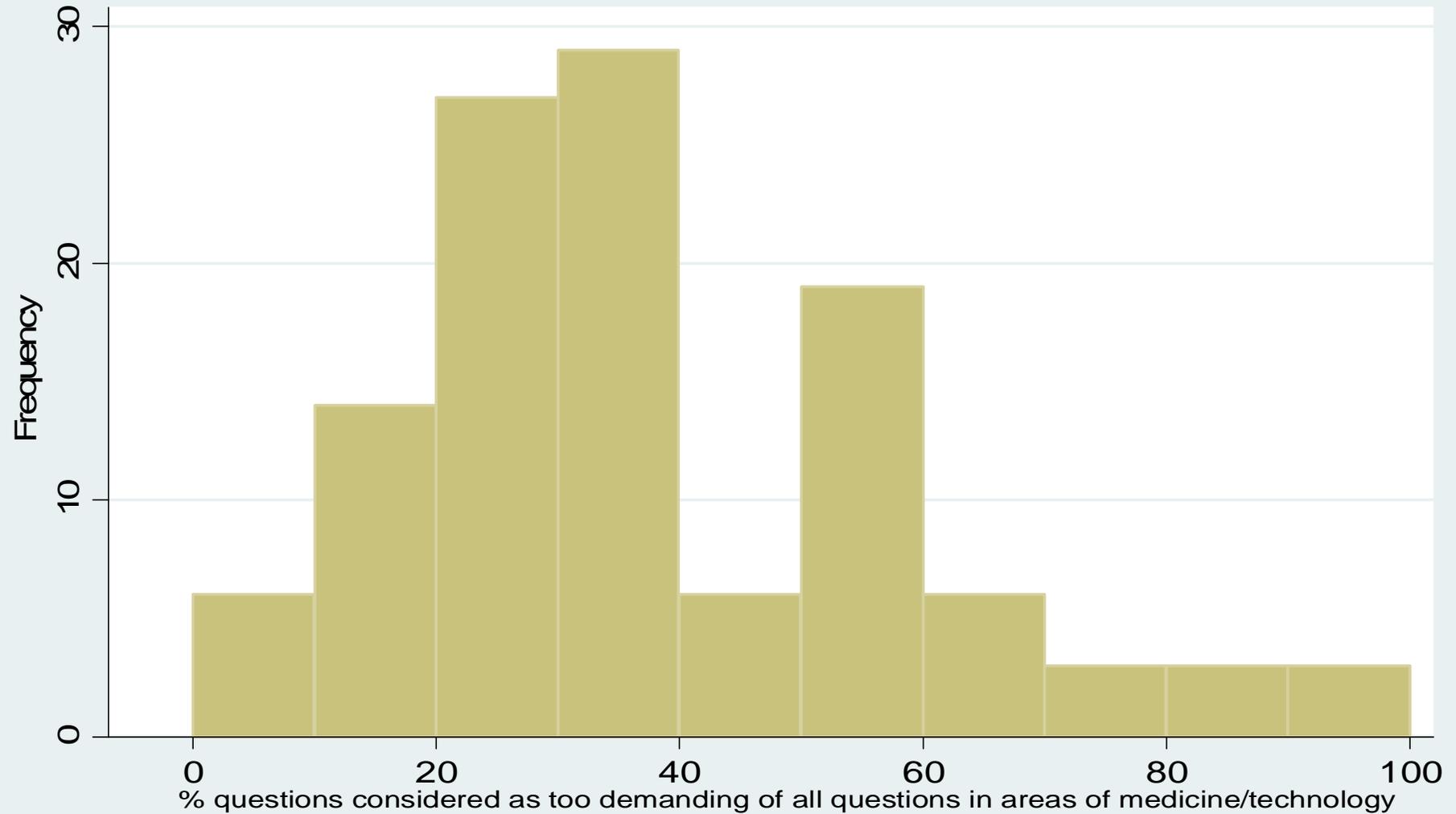
What are today's challenges of Parliamentarians and Parliaments?

1) Complexity of issues due to globalization – new issues due to technological progress and interconnectedness of countries

Outcome of a survey of Swiss parliamentarians, 2007:

„How often do you have the impression that you and your colleagues are dealing with too demanding questions when it comes to issues of technology, medicine, natural sciences or intellectual property?“

Swiss Parliamentarians Admit Being Challenged by Too Demanding Questions



Further Examples:

- „We are not well equipped to discuss and develop complex laws.“ (Bruno Frick, Swiss Parliamentarian since 1991)
- Increase of personal assistants (often paid by private lawyers' offices or interest groups)
- Petition of European Parliamentarians against the influence of the powerful banking sector

How professional are parliamentarians and parliaments?



Index of Professionalization of Parliaments (Squire 1988, Z'Graggen/Linder 2004)

- US Congress, most professionalized parliament measured in terms of
 - Salary of parliamentarians per year
 - Time devoted to parliamentary sessions and committees
 - Costs of parliament per parliamentarian (without salary)

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Degree of Professionalization of Parliaments (Z'Graggen/Linder 2004)

Country	Professionalization Index	Rank
USA	1	1/20
United Kingdom	0.49	5/20
Germany	0.47	7/20
Austria	0.37	8/20
Luxemburg	0.26	18/20
Switzerland	0.2	19/20
Spain	0.18	20/20

Effects of a Less Professionalized Parliament

- Greater influence of lobby groups which provide information, services and infrastructure
- Selection effects: better earning candidates and candidates from certain professions who can afford a career break are favoured
- Lower standing and lower level of expertise in discussions with the executive and administration → dominance of non-elected civil servants?

Effects of Increasing Professionalization

- „Loss of connection to the voters“ (C. Egerszegi, former president of the Swiss Parliament, 1/10/2007, Tagesanzeiger)
- Greater professionalization at an individual level
- Lower turnover rate after elections and thus smaller loss of expertise

Structure

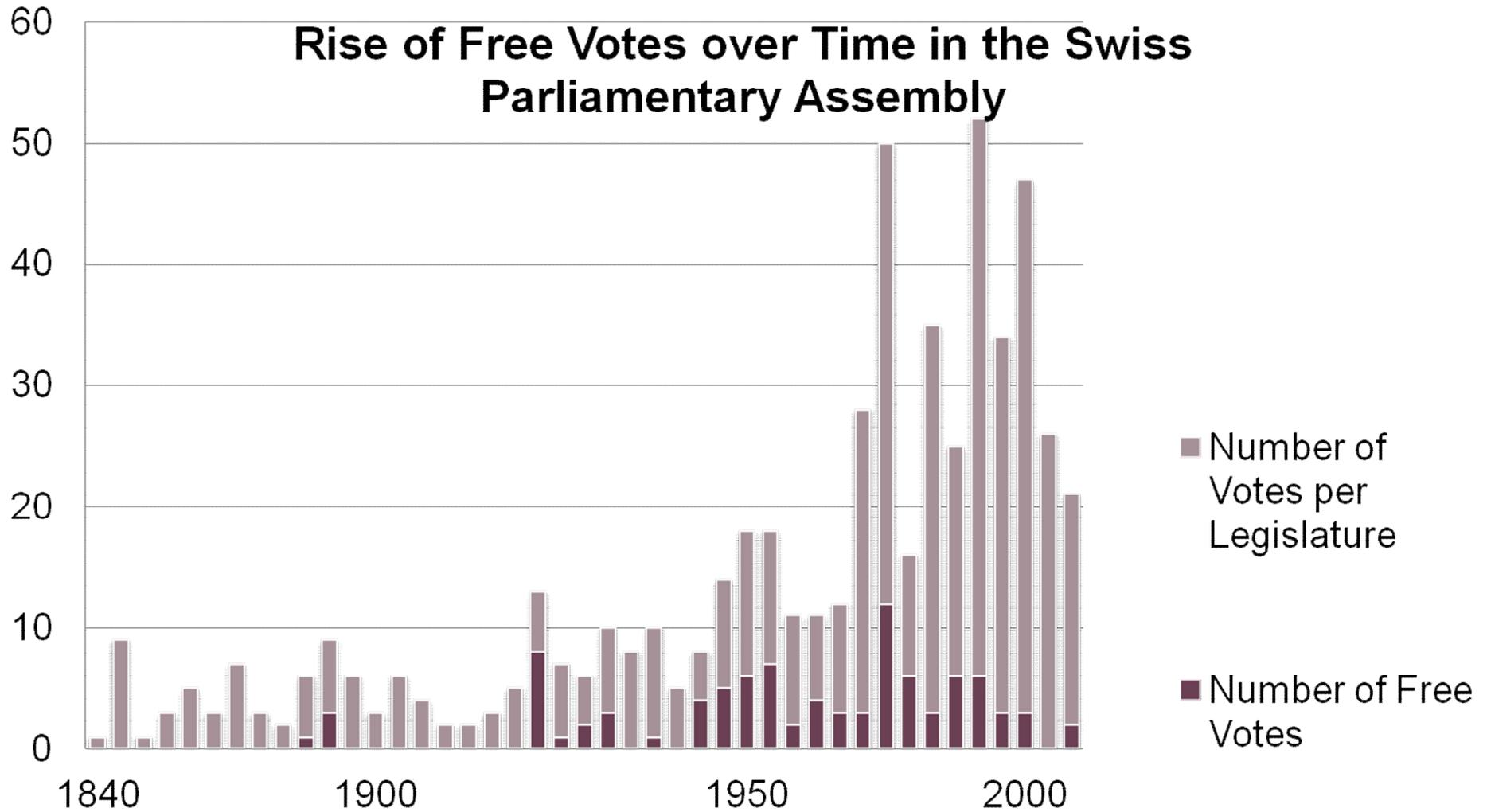
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Crisis of Parliamentarianism?

- Consequences for the **professionalization** of parliaments and parliamentarians
- **Consequences for voting behaviour: the example of free votes**

Free Votes = Votes Without Recommendation by Party Group

- Although most constitutions have some indication of free parliamentarians, party group leaders advise parliamentarians how to vote in the majority of cases (discipline → voting unity)
- Thus party group leaders ensure the credibility of the party label and keep the election promise given to the voters (Cox/McCubbins 1994, Müller 2000)
- Deputies might defect due to the representation of other interests than the party group or due to ethical considerations (Carey 2007)

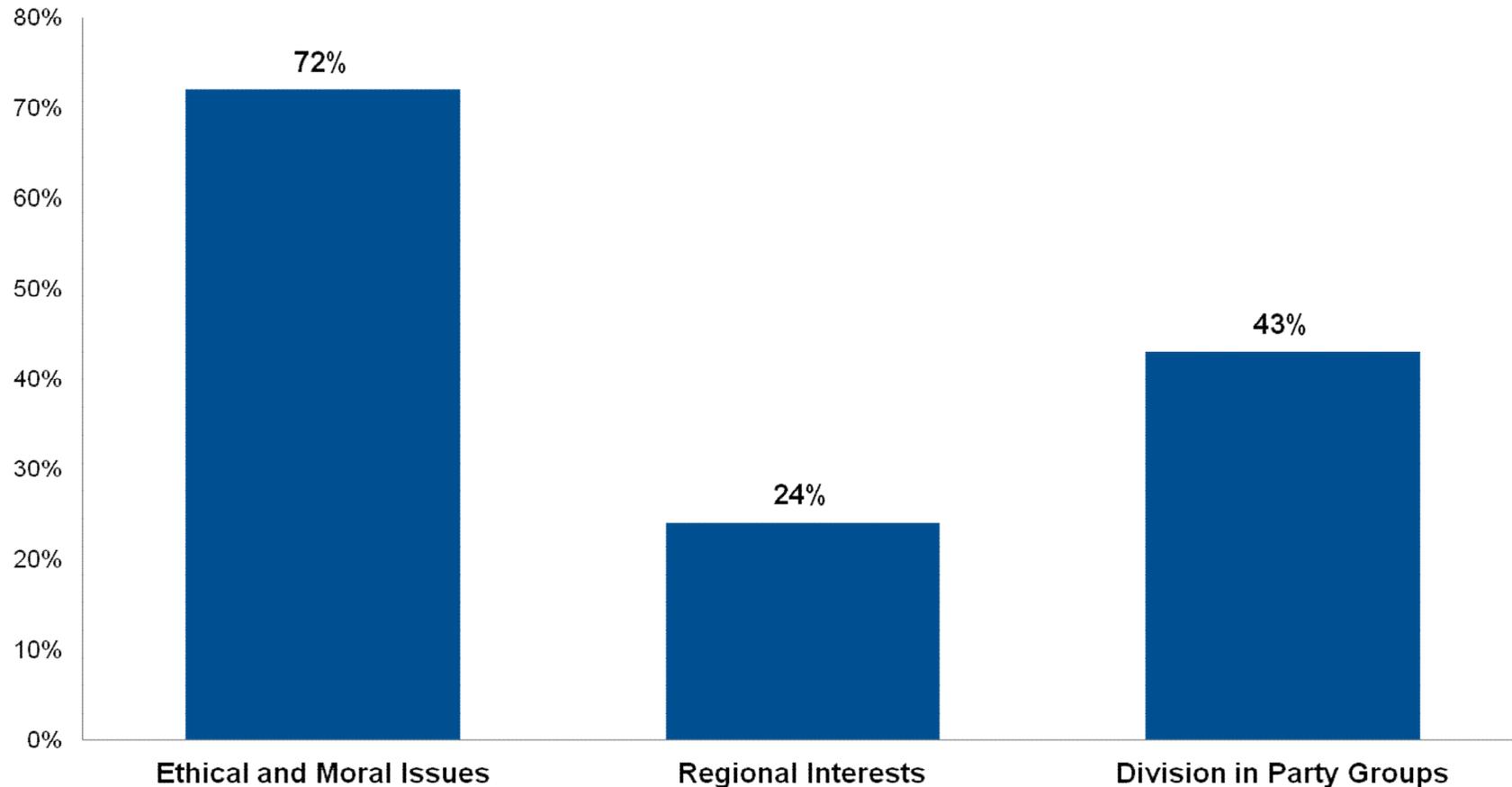


Free Votes on the Rise

- Due to
 - Complexity of political questions
 - Inability of party groups delivers to ensure voting unity



Reasons for Free Votes (approx. 3% of all votes):



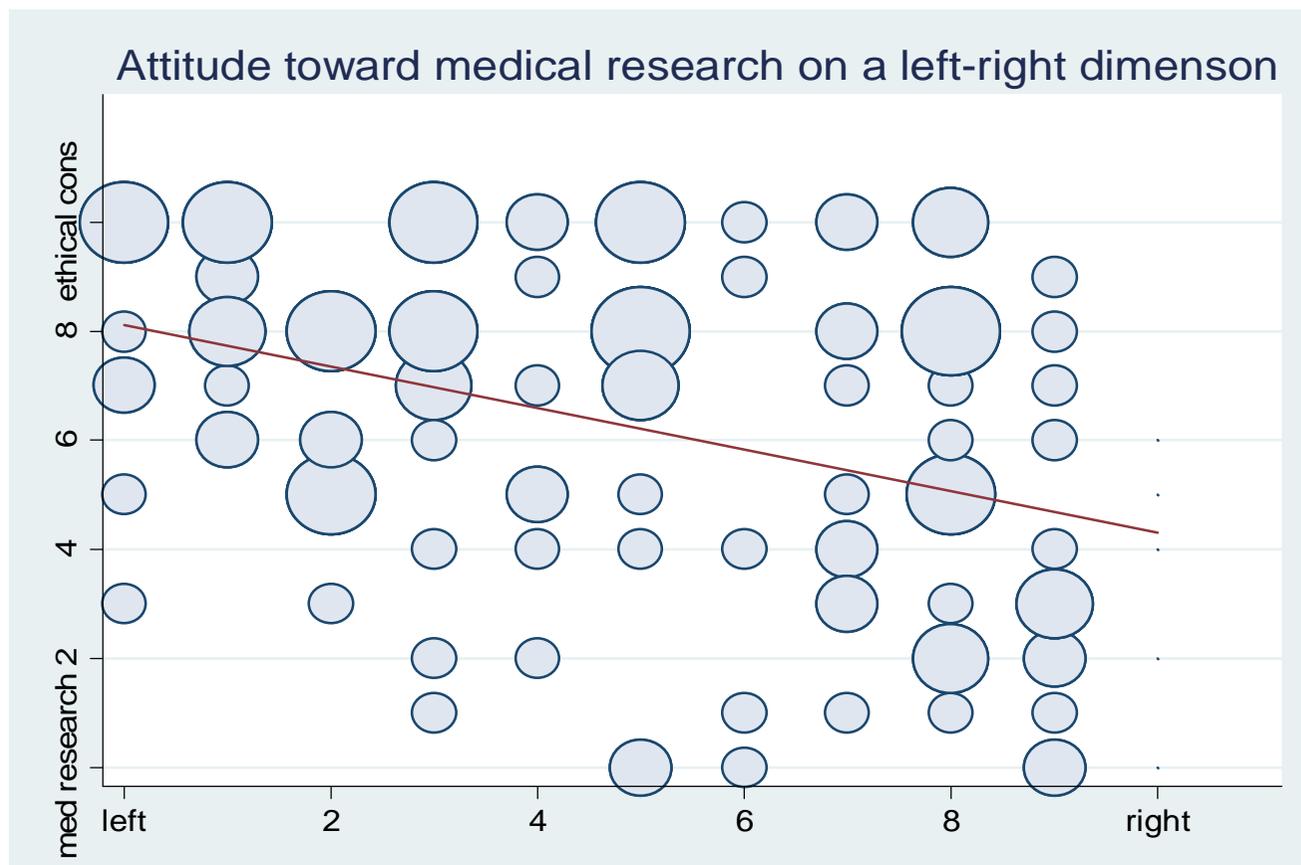
Data derived from 80 interviews with party group leaders and parliaments' experts in CH, D, NL, FP, UK (Bailer 2008)

Legitimation?



- Do some questions lead to „conscience votes more so than others? Moral issues?
- E.g. UK: Free vote on research on embryos, not on euthanasia
- E.g. Free vote on foxhunting, nonsmoking, sending of troops abroad
- ➔ Need to develop clear party positions on new political cleavages, e.g. progress vs development (genetically modified organism, stem cell research...?)

Survey data of Swiss parliamentarians (2007): Can their Left-Right position explain their position on technology/medical research?



Possible new political dimension? Medical research/Technological advances versus ethical considerations/fear of progress?

- No correlation between this new dimension and classical left-right dimension in Switzerland and the Netherlands
- Relatively higher correlation in UK (0.4) and Germany (0.5), however medical/progress dimension worst predictor of Left-Right position than other variables such as taxation, pro-anti European integration

Necessary Reaction

- Party groups justify their inability to unite their parties by declaring votes as free or conscience votes
- Do party group leaders have the duty to indicate the position of the party on each vote ?
- → increase in transparency for voters

Conclusion

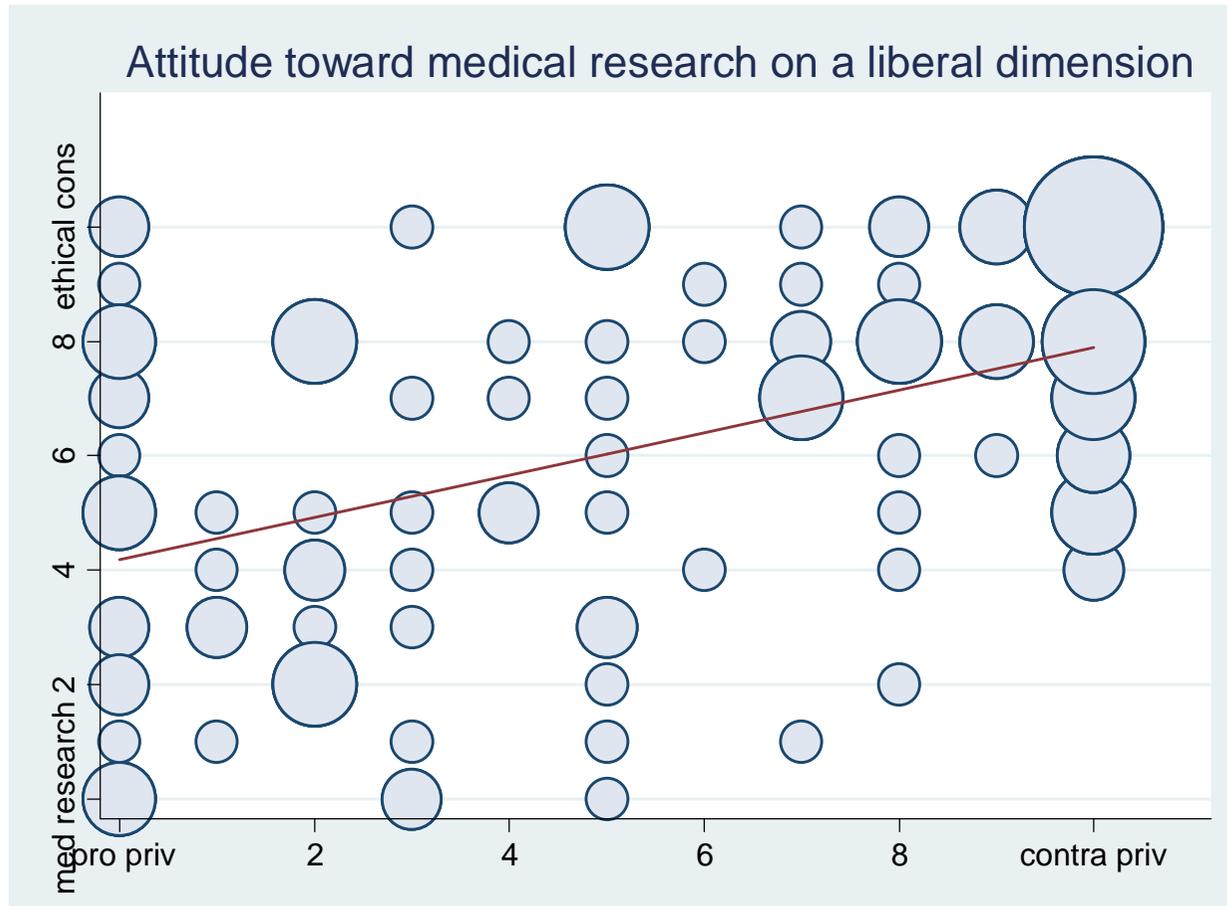
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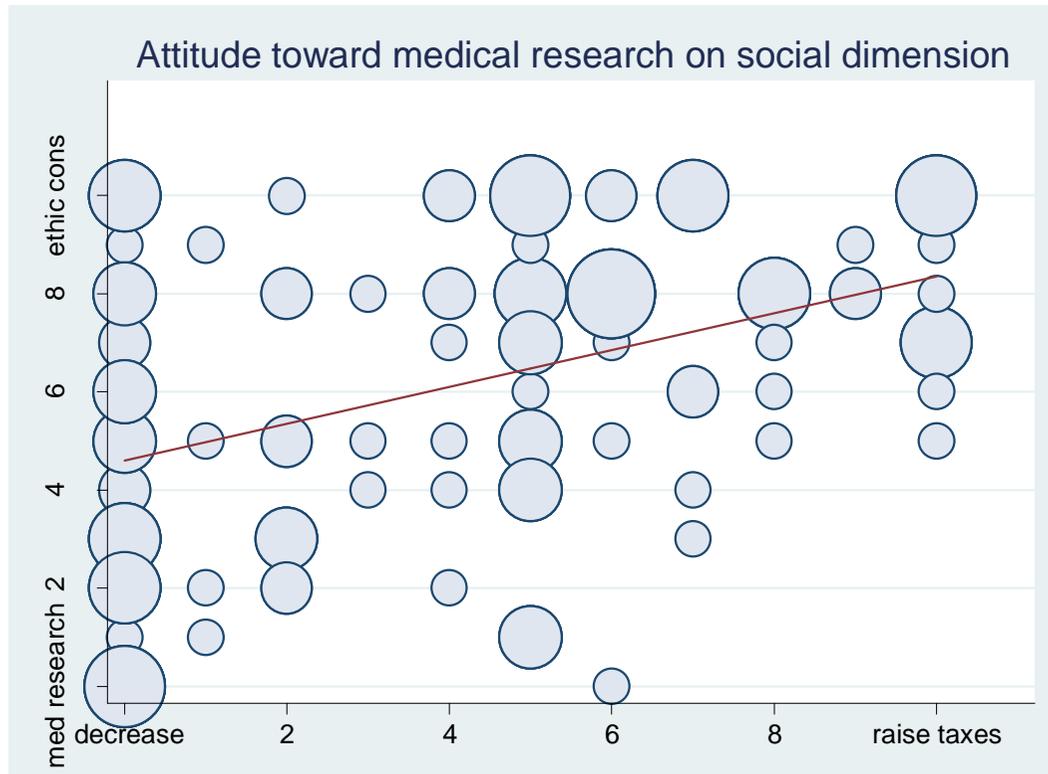
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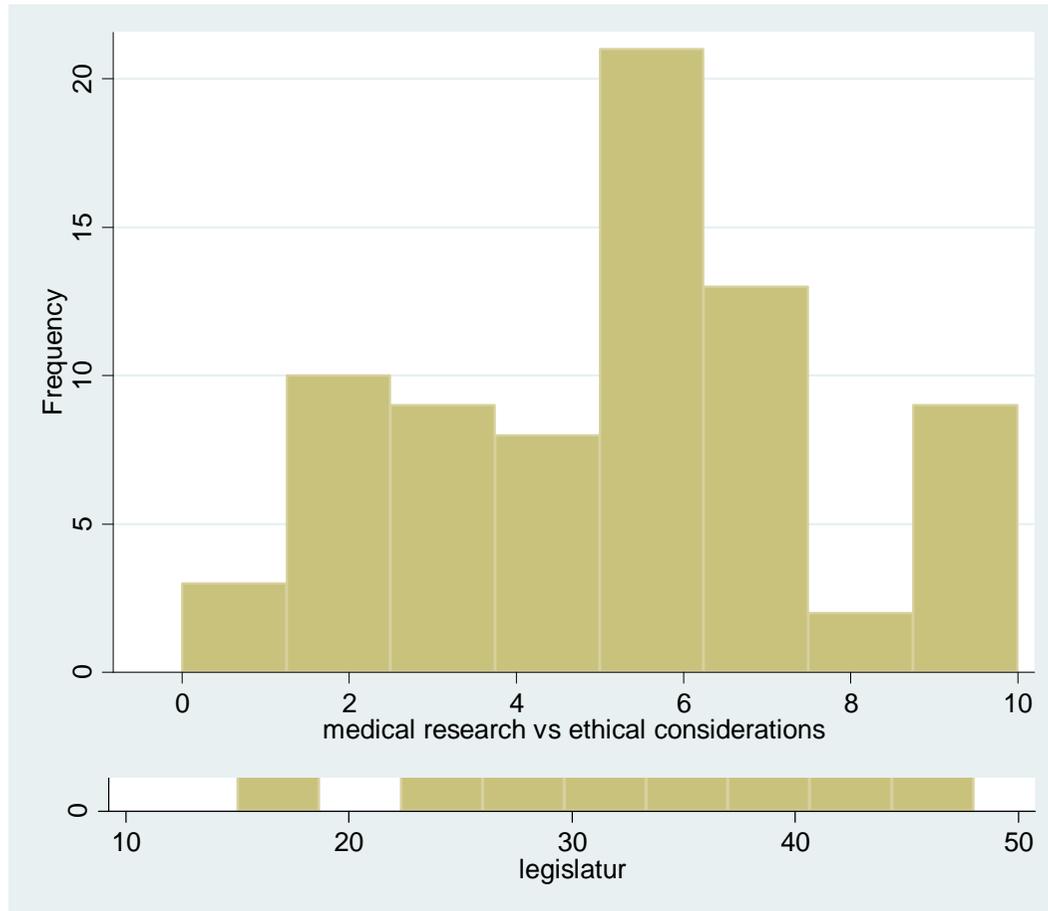
Necessary reactions: more professionalism in parliaments, clearer opinion lead by parties in new political questions

Literature

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United Kingdom

