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## Abstract

In many electoral contexts, voters are increasingly cross-pressured between long-standing identity attachments and evaluations of economic performance. While cross-pressured voters have been shown to behave differently in advanced democracies, far less is known about how they navigate electoral choice in African contexts. We employ a multinomial logistic regression and data from Round 9 of the Afrobarometer survey to analyse the voting patterns of this segment. Consistent with previous studies, our results show that voting patterns in Africa reflect both identity orientations and economic-based calculus. The central finding of this study is that prospective or expected national economic evaluations, rather than retrospective and personal economic evaluations, structure the behavioural resolution of cross-pressured voters in African dominant-party contexts. Specifically, the study finds that ruling-party partisans who are cross-pressured in terms of their prospective evaluations of national economic conditions are more likely to disengage than to realign or switch, a pattern that, in principle, structurally advantages ruling parties. In contrast, ruling partisans cross-pressured on personal or household economic conditions neither switch nor exit the electorate; instead, they maintain loyalty to the ruling party, which we attribute to Aldrich's (1995) pork-barrel politics encompassing distributive benefits within narrower geographic constituencies. For robustness, besides presenting findings from Africa's five geographical regions, we also model opposition-party partisans who are cross-pressured by optimistic economic evaluations. The symmetric robustness checks indicate that forward-looking national economic optimism among cross-pressured opposition partisans is associated with realignment toward the incumbent. This study contributes to debates in comparative politics on the psychological underpinnings of electoral choice, shedding light on electoral alignment, realignment, and dealignment in African dominant-party systems.

**Keywords:** cross-pressured voters, partisanship, economic voting, Afrobarometer, Africa

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## Introduction

Economic performance and partisan loyalty are among the most powerful correlates of voting behaviour (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960; Campbell & Stokes, 1959; Foster & Warren, 2025; Lewis-Beck & Nadeau, 2011; Lockwood & Krönke, 2021). However, the alignment between the two is not predetermined, as some partisans struggle to decide between party loyalty and other considerations (Endres & Panagopoulos, 2019). In many electoral contexts, ruling-party partisans face the dilemma when their party loyalty misaligns with negative evaluations of economic conditions. This study examines the electoral behaviour of such voters, often described as cross-pressured, ambivalent, swing, or persuadable voters (Endres & Panagopoulos, 2019; Groenendyk, 2013; Hillygus & Shields, 2009; Lavine, Johnston, & Steenbergen, 2012).

Cross-pressured voters are those who experience misalignment between partisan allegiance and evaluative judgments (Gidron, 2022). Cross-pressure arises when voters have a preferred party yet evaluate economic performance in a way that conflicts with that preferred party, i.e. seeing good economic performance when they identify with the opposition, or bad economic performance when they identify with the incumbent (de Geus, 2017; Tilley & Hobolt, 2011). In this study, cross-pressured voters are defined as individuals who identify with the ruling party but hold negative evaluations of economic performance. These economic evaluations include retrospective and prospective assessments of national economic conditions (sociotropic evaluations) as well as assessments of current personal or household economic conditions (egocentric evaluations). In dominant-party systems, accountability or attribution pressures are most directly mediated through ruling-party partisans, who must reconcile partisan loyalty with observable economic outcomes. By contrast, opposition partisans who evaluate economic conditions negatively likely do not face comparable attitudinal tension, as dissatisfaction is consistent with their partisan orientation. Of course, opposition partisans may be cross-pressured if they evaluate economic conditions positively. However, in these cases, the attributional conflict might not be comparable, since those individuals can simply withhold credit for those conditions from the ruling party (Kunda, 1990). Examining economic cross-pressures is therefore conceptually most meaningful among incumbent-party partisans, for whom negative economic assessments generate genuine dissonance between partisan identity and performance. Our focus on negative economic evaluations and ruling-party partisans aligns with Bisgaard (2015), who used the unexpected collapse of the British national economy between 2004 and 2010 to examine how incumbent supporters attribute such a phenomenon to their leader or party.

Evidence from highly competitive party systems shows that misalignment between political dispositions affects political behaviour. Lavine et al. (2012) demonstrate that ambivalence between party identity and performance reduces reliance on partisan cues, resulting in openness to campaign information. Similarly, Hillygus & Shields (2009) show that when partisanship clashes with salient issue positions, voters tend to be persuadable by campaigns that point out key issues. These studies, therefore, demonstrate that cross-pressured voters are individuals experiencing a state of internal attitudinal inconsistency whose response depends on the political system. On the other hand, Bisgaard (2015) shows that ruling-party supporters in Britain readily acknowledged the economic collapse between 2004 and 2010, yet diverged in attributing responsibility to the incumbent government. While the study focuses on patterns of blame attribution, its findings imply that some incumbent supporters may reconcile negative economic evaluations with continued partisan loyalty by selectively assigning responsibility to exogenous factors beyond the government's control. In this way, economic decline does not necessarily translate into incumbent sanctioning.

However, knowledge about the electoral behaviour of cross-pressured voters derives from advanced democracies, where opposition parties can readily take advantage of any weaknesses of the incumbent's government. In such contexts, studies show that cross-pressured voters make late electoral decisions, often defect, and are open to political campaigns for evidence-based voting choices (Bélanger & Eagles, 2007; Endres & Panagopoulos, 2019). These dynamics are hard or even impossible to generalise to political

contexts characterised by features that orchestrate the existence of dominant parties, such as weak opposition and constrained programmatic choice. Where few viable parties exist, there is little competition, and as a result, the dominant party tends to become less responsive to the needs of citizens (Brooks, 2004; Schulz-Herzenberg & Mattes, 2023). Where extended spells of one-party dominance prevail, complacency, arrogance, corruption, and confusion of party and state business become a norm, as seen in South Africa (Schulz-Herzenberg, 2009; Neethling, 2024), Zimbabwe (Friesen, 2022), Uganda (Cohen & Hopkinson, 2023), and Cameroon (Mbuh, 2022), where ruling parties have persisted in power for more than three decades. Consequently, citizens lose interest in politics, as they become tired, cynical, and lose their desire to participate (Schulz-Herzenberg & Mattes, 2023). Research suggests that dissatisfaction may instead be expressed through electoral abstention or reluctant loyalty, thereby reinforcing dominant-party rule despite economic underperformance (Bratton, Bhavnani, & Chen, 2012; Schulz-Herzenberg & Mattes, 2023)

In these dominant-party systems, opposition parties face significant electoral disadvantages that undermine competitive alternatives. This raises the social and material costs of defection for ruling-party partisans, who risk losing access to patronage networks, distributive benefits, and social ties attached to clientelist structures if they shift support (Kim, Bernhard, & Hicken, 2024). That is, voters identified with the ruling party are often embedded in clientelist networks and might feel pressured to remain loyal even amid poor economic conditions. According to Zovighian (2026), ruling-party partisans who benefit from clientelist behaviour face higher social and strategic risks of switching parties. As a result, in most African countries, voter dissatisfaction arising from economic downturns often leads to withdrawal rather than punitive voting, especially when alternative political parties are weak (Schulz-Herzenberg & Mattes, 2023; Lynge & Coma, 2022), providing a structural advantage for the ruling party to maintain dominance.

Despite this, cross-pressured voters remain largely unexamined in African politics. Prior work has focused on ethnicity, party identity, economic voting, and demographic determinants of electoral behaviour (Banda, 2025; Bratton et al., 2012; Kuenzi & Lambright, 2010; Stoecker, 2023; Söderberg, 2024), without explicitly theorising cross-pressures as a condition of misalignment between partisan loyalty and economic evaluations. This study contends that the persuasive potential of cross-pressured voters presents an opportunity to enhance democratic accountability in African dominant-party system. It addresses this gap by examining how cross-pressured voters behave in African democracies. Using Afrobarometer data, it identifies ruling-party partisans who express negative economic evaluations and analyses whether such voters report an intention to vote for an opposition party, or abstain, or whether their vote choice will remain consistent with partisan orientation. Since the study uses a single wave of the Afrobarometer survey, switching is not measured longitudinally but instead reflects a phenomenon in which the reported vote choice contradicts the respondent's self-reported party identification. Importantly, by treating cross-pressures as a descriptive condition rather than a causal mechanism, the analysis clarifies how attitudinal misalignment is associated with participation and vote choice in dominant-party systems, which helps explain the persistence of incumbent advantage under widespread economic dissatisfaction.

We employed a multinomial logistic regression to analyse data from Round 9 of the Afrobarometer survey. Consistent with previous studies, the results show that voting patterns in Africa reflect not only traditional identity orientations but also economic-based calculations. Notably, the study finds that retrospective and prospective sociotropic cross-pressured ruling-party partisans tend to disengage rather than realign or switch their vote choice to an opposition party. In contrast, egocentrically cross-pressured ruling-party partisans neither switch nor exit the electorate; instead, they tend to maintain loyalty to the ruling party. To assess whether the findings are limited to ruling-party partisans, we estimated an additional model incorporating a symmetric measure of cross-pressured voters among opposition-party partisans who express positive economic evaluations. The symmetric robustness checks indicate that forward-looking national economic optimism among opposition partisans is associated with realignment toward the incumbent, rather than

abstention (as observed among prospectively cross-pressured ruling-party partisans) or continued loyalty (as observed among ruling-party partisans cross-pressured on personal economic conditions).

Our study makes several important contributions to comparative research on political behaviour and dominant-party politics in Africa. First, it introduces cross-pressure as a theoretically meaningful condition of attributional tension among voters who identify with the ruling party – where responsibility for performance is politically “owned,” yet their evaluation of economic conditions fails to reinforce party orientation – thereby clarifying why dissatisfaction does not automatically translate into supporting alternative parties. Second, it differentiates retrospective, prospective, and egocentric cross-pressured voters and shows that their distinct evaluative horizons map onto different behavioural resolutions, with abstention emerging as a key response under the consequential prospective evaluations among ruling-party partisans. Third, using Afrobarometer Round 9 across 34 countries (with regional robustness), the analysis is among the first to extend cross-pressure theory beyond advanced democracies and helps explain how ruling-party advantage can persist even amid widespread economic discontent. The remainder of the paper is structured such that the next section presents the theoretical background, followed by the data and methods, results, and discussion and conclusion.

### Theorising and measuring cross-pressured voters

Existing research offers competing expectations regarding the political behaviour of cross-pressured voters. In this study, cross-pressures refer to situations in which voters experience misalignment between their political or cultural ideologies and their evaluations of economic performance. This definition captures voters described as “ambivalent” in Lavine et al. (2012), where partisan or ideological attachments point in one direction while assessments of material conditions or economic outcomes point in another. The literature diverges on how such voters resolve this tension (Endres & Panagopoulos, 2019). Some scholars argue that cross-pressures lead voters to prioritise economic considerations, others suggest that cultural values dominate, while still others contend that cross-pressured voters converge toward more moderate or centrist positions (Gidron, 2022; de Geus, 2017).

Historically, economic considerations have featured prominently in explanations of political behaviour, particularly in European democracies, where voting has often been structured around class interests, redistribution, and material welfare (Chrysanthou & Guilló, 2024; Lipset, 1960; Kitschelt, 1994; Lewis-Beck & Nadeau, 2011; Linn, Nagler, & Morales, 2010; Stegmaier, Lewis-Beck, & Park, 2017). In the American context, a large body of empirical work likewise demonstrates the enduring importance of economic evaluations in shaping vote choice, even during periods characterised by heightened cultural conflict. Although the so-called “culture wars” of the 1980s and 1990s marked a shift toward polarisation around moral and cultural issues, such as abortion, religion in public life, and gender norms, economic attitudes have continued to exert substantial influence on political behaviour (Bartels, 2006; Fiorina, Abrams & Pope, 2006; Priest, 2025).

At the same time, political behaviour is strongly conditioned by partisan attachments. The classic Michigan model conceptualises party identification as a durable psychological attachment that structures voters' perceptions and guides electoral behaviour (Campbell et al., 1960). All else equal, voters who strongly identify with a political party are more likely to support that party's candidates, even in the face of competing information (Green, Palmquist, & Schickler, 2002). Scholars note that even though individuals may defect from political parties, they eventually return to them due to a strong sense of historical attachment (Schmitt-Beck, Weick, & Christoph, 2006; Richardson, 1991; Mahsud & Amin, 2020). Experimental and observational evidence further shows that partisan cues shape how voters interpret economic conditions, policy outcomes, and campaign information (Bartels, 2002; Endres & Panagopoulos, 2019).

The relative prominence of cultural issues in political decision making is often attributed to long-term processes of socialisation. Cultural and moral values tend to be embedded early in

life and tied to identity-based considerations in the same way people feel about national identity (Sharlamnov & Jovanoski, 2014), making them less amenable to compromise than economic preferences or issues such as taxation or social protection (de la O & Rodden, 2008; Goren & Chapp, 2017). Economic evaluations, by contrast, are more contingent and may be reassessed when rival candidates or parties demonstrate competence in delivering material outcomes (Lewis-Beck & Stegmaier, 2000; Duch & Stevenson, 2008).

Despite the stabilising force of partisanship, not all voters experience alignment between their partisan identities and their policy or performance evaluations of parties. Some partisans struggle to reconcile party loyalty with competing predispositions, particularly when economic assessments diverge sharply from partisan expectations (Hillygus & Shields, 2009; Lavine et al., 2012). When partisan and evaluative orientations fail to reinforce one another, voters may experience psychological tension, resulting in cross-pressure or ambivalence. One response to this tension, suggested in parts of the literature, is that cross-pressured or ambivalent voters “average” their conflicting considerations, producing more centrist or moderate political positions. From this perspective, ideological moderation represents a meeting point for voters caught between cultural commitments and economic concerns (Gidron, 2022).

Descriptions of these voters as ambivalent, cross-pressured, or persuadable reflect their openness to competing political appeals. Hillygus and Shields (2009), for example, reconceptualise persuadable voters not as uninformed or apathetic, but as issue-aware partisans whose policy preferences conflict with their party's positions. Similarly, Lavine et al. (2012) introduce the concept of the ambivalent partisan to describe voters who experience cognitive dissonance between party identification and issue evaluations. According to their framework, this inconsistency weakens reliance on party cues as heuristics, such that “if a cue fails to heighten decision confidence, it will be disregarded as a reason to favour one course of action over another” (Lavine et al., 2012, 18). Ambivalent partisans are therefore theorised to engage more carefully with political information and to evaluate parties more critically than univalent partisans whose identities and evaluations are fully aligned (Groenendyk, 2013).

Importantly, empirical evidence from advanced democracies suggests that cross-pressures do not necessarily result in political disengagement. Studies of American elections show that ambivalent or cross-pressured partisans are often just as likely to participate in politics as their univalent counterparts, though they are more likely to decide late, reconsider their choices, or conditionally defect when campaigns make relevant issues salient (Bélanger & Eagles, 2007; Hillygus & Shields, 2009; Endres & Panagopoulos, 2019). These findings challenge the assumption that psychological conflict leads inevitably to apathy, instead highlighting the role of contextual activation, such as campaign intensity and information environments, in shaping behavioural outcomes.

Because cross-pressured partisans' perceptions of economic conditions are less strongly filtered through partisan bias than those of univalent partisans (Lavine et al., 2012), they are often treated as a subset of swing voters. In this sense, swing voters are not simply weak partisans, but individuals whose partisan commitments are conditional and therefore open to persuasion (Campbell, 2008). As Mayer (2007) argues, swing voters are those whose attachment to any single party is insufficiently strong to render persuasion futile, making them attractive targets for political mobilisation.

### *Cross-pressures and the African context*

Despite the extensive literature on cross-pressured and ambivalent voters in Europe and the United States, research on cross-pressured voters in Africa remains extremely limited. Studies outside Africa have focused primarily on vote choice (Hillygus & Shields, 2009), voter turnout (Bélanger & Eagles, 2007), campaign-induced defection (Endres & Panagopoulos, 2019), or partisan updating over time (Lavine et al., 2012). These studies are largely situated in highly competitive party systems where viable electoral alternatives exist and partisan competition is programmatically structured.

In Africa, by contrast, electoral competition often occurs under conditions of dominant-party rule, weak opposition parties, and constrained programmatic differentiation. While Bratton et al. (2012) and Banda (2025) examine the interaction between partisanship, ethnicity, and economic performance, they do not explicitly theorise cross-pressured voters. Their identification of “strict partisans” – voters who evaluate incumbents negatively yet continue to identify with the ruling party – nonetheless points to the presence of attitudinal misalignment. More recently, Schulz-Herzenberg and Mattes (2023) show that in contexts of opposition weakness in South Africa, dissatisfied partisans frequently exit the electorate rather than defect, thereby reinforcing dominant-party rule despite poor economic performance.

Together, these findings suggest that cross-pressures may manifest differently in African democracies than in advanced democratic contexts. Rather than producing electoral volatility through party switching, cross-pressures may instead contribute to abstention, reluctant loyalty, or muted accountability. Yet to date, no study has systematically examined the political behaviour of cross-pressured voters in Africa using a framework that explicitly recognises the interdependence of partisanship and economic evaluations.

This study addresses this gap by theorising cross-pressured voters in Africa as partisans experiencing misalignment between partisan allegiance and economic performance evaluations and by examining how such misalignment shapes political behaviour under conditions of dominant-party competition. Rather than treating partisanship and economic perceptions as analytically independent causal forces, the study conceptualises cross-pressures as a descriptive condition of attitudinal tension, which allows for an assessment of how voters behave when political orientations fail to align. In doing so, the study contributes to the comparative literature on cross-pressured voters by extending it to African democracies and by clarifying the implications of attitudinal misalignment for participation, loyalty, and electoral accountability in contexts of limited political choice.

## Data and measures

The study utilises data from the ninth wave of the Afrobarometer surveys, collected between 2021 and 2023 across 39 countries in Africa. This study excludes five countries – Eswatini, Guinea, Mali, Sudan, and Tunisia – because they had no identifiable ruling party at the time of data collection. Eswatini is a monarchy; Tunisia had an independent presidential candidate; and the other three countries were affected by recent military takeovers. In these scenarios, it was not possible to code the dependent variable into electoral choices – abstainers, opposition, and ruling-party voters. The exclusion ensures alignment in our conceptual and measurement specifications. Table 1 below outlines the operationalisation of all study variables, followed by a description of the key variables.

While the sample size for 34 countries is 47,444 respondents, all reported statistics, including descriptive results, are based on a weighted sample of 40,800 respondents. Afrobarometer provides a weight index for comparative studies, which we used to rescale our cross-sections to an equal sample size of 1,200 respondents. Weighting is important because it helps to avoid estimates that reflect cross-sections with a disproportionate number of respondents. Descriptive statistics in Appendix Table A.1 indicate that 49% of the respondents were aged 18-34 years. Age groups 18-24 and 25-34 had the highest proportion of abstentions, at 22% and 21%, respectively, compared to 17% for age group 45-54 and 16% for those aged 55 and above. Table A.1 further shows equivalence in the ratio of men to women (51:49) and urban-rural populations (48:52), while people with primary and lower levels of education account for 45%, compared to 38% with some secondary education and 17% with some tertiary education. West Africa had the largest sample size (35%), followed by Southern Africa (26%), East Africa (21%), Central Africa (12%), and North Africa (6%), corresponding to 12, nine, seven, four, and two cross-sections in each region. Appendix Table A.2 shows the factor analysis of our Lived Poverty Index (LPI), with a strong scale reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of 0.8. Additionally, non-demographic variables are explained below.

**Table 1: Operationalisation of the study variables**

Variable	Nature of variable
Vote choice	0=abstain, 1=opposition, 2=ruling party
Party ID	1=opposition, 2=nonpartisan, 3=ruling party
Retrospective sociotropic evaluation (RSE)	1=worse, 2=same, 3=better
Prospective sociotropic evaluation (PSE)	1=worse, 2=same, 3=better
Egocentric evaluation (EGE)	1=bad, 2=neither, 3= good
RSE cross-pressured Rul	1=if a respondent who identifies with the ruling party (Party ID=3) evaluates past economic conditions as worse (RSE=1) 0=otherwise
PSE cross-pressured Rul	1=if a respondent who identifies with the ruling party (Party ID=3) evaluates future economic conditions as worse (PSE=1) 0=otherwise
EGE cross-pressured Rul	1=if a respondent who identifies with the ruling party (Party ID=3) evaluates own economic conditions as bad (PSE=1) 0=otherwise
RSE cross-pressured OP	1=if a respondent who identifies with an opposition party (Party ID=1) evaluates past economic conditions as good (RSE=3) 0=otherwise
PSE cross-pressured OP	1=if a respondent who identifies with an opposition party (Party ID=1) evaluates future economic conditions as good (PSE=3) 0=otherwise
EGE cross-pressured OP	1=if a respondent who identifies with an opposition party (Party ID=1) evaluates own economic conditions as good (PSE=3) 0=otherwise
Age	Continuous variable (18 years+)
Gender	1=female, 2=male
Location	1=urban, 2=other (combination of rural and peri-urban)
Education	1=primary completion or below, 2=post-primary to secondary, and 3=some tertiary education
Lived poverty	Continuous: a factor analysis of five questions on respondents' deprivation of food, water, health care, cooking oil, and cash income (see Appendix Table A.2).
<b>Note:</b> <i>Cross-pressured Rul=cross-pressured ruling-party voters; cross-pressured OP=cross-pressured opposition-party voters</i>	

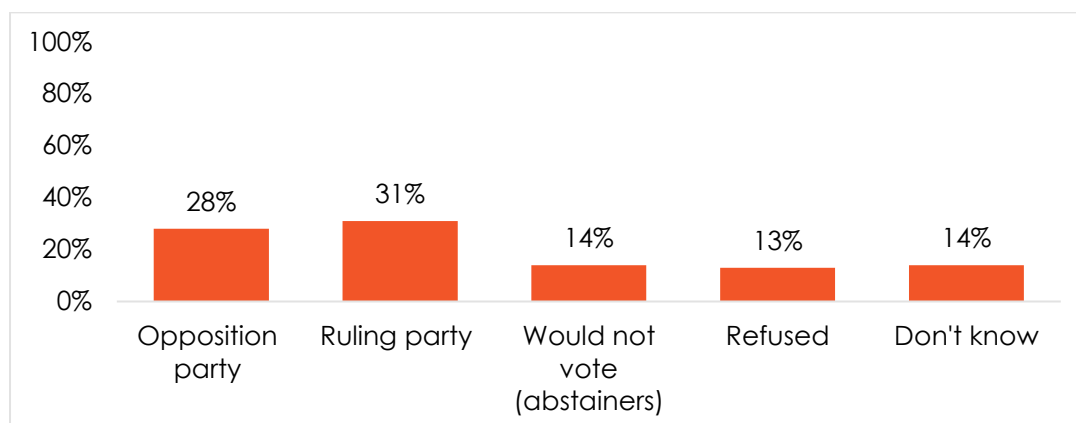
### Intended vote choice

The study's dependent variable is trichotomous, aiming to explain voters' choices of abstention, voting for the opposition, or voting for the ruling party. For this variable, the Afrobarometer survey asks, "If presidential elections were held tomorrow, which party would you vote for?" While this is a politically sensitive question, the survey results are reassuring, as out of a weighted sample of 40,800 respondents, only 13% refused to reveal their choice of vote, 14% said they would not vote (abstainers), and 14% said they did not know how they would vote. Notably, 31% of respondents indicated an intention to vote for the ruling party, and 28% indicated an intention to vote for an opposition party (see Figure 1).

The current study focuses on these respondents who indicated an intention to abstain from voting or to vote for either the ruling or an opposition party. Therefore, we coded these respondents as 0 if they indicated an intention to abstain, 1 for those intending to vote for an

opposition party, and 2 if they indicated an intention to vote for the incumbent's party. Appendix Figure A.2 shows that only 10 countries had more than 50% of respondents who indicated an intention to vote for the ruling party – Tanzania (88%), Togo (73%), Mauritania and Zambia (71%), Mozambique (68%), São Tomé and Príncipe (64%), Niger (63%), Uganda (62%), Ethiopia (54%), and Sierra Leone (51%). On the other hand, The Gambia (94%), Kenya (77%), Malawi (61%), Botswana (58%), Liberia (43%), and Cabo Verde (37%) had the highest percentages of their national populations expressing an intention to vote for an opposition party. Since these surveys were conducted, opposition parties have won elections in Kenya, Liberia, Cabo Verde, Botswana, and Malawi.

**Figure 1: Citizens' intended vote choice** | 34 countries | 2021/2023



**Respondents were asked:** *If presidential elections were held tomorrow, which party would you vote for?*

### Economic interests

The Afrobarometer data comprise several questions that capture respondents' perceptions of personal or household economic conditions (egocentric) and national economic performance (sociotropic). Regarding perceptions of past national economic performance (retrospective sociotropic evaluations), the survey asked, "Looking back, how do you rate economic conditions in this country compared to 12 months ago?" For future national economic performance (prospective sociotropic evaluations), the question was, "Looking ahead, do you expect economic conditions in this country to be better or worse in 12 months' time?" For popular perceptions of personal or household living conditions (egocentric or pocketbook evaluations), the question wording is neither prospective nor retrospective, as it asks, "In general, how would you describe your own present living conditions?" In all cases, responses are scored on a five-point scale from "much worse/very bad" to "much better/very good." For conceptual and measurement purposes, all economic indicators were coded 1 for worse/bad (combining "much worse/very bad" and "worse/fairly bad" responses), 2 for the same (no change), and 3 for better (combining "much better/very good" and "better/fairly good" responses).

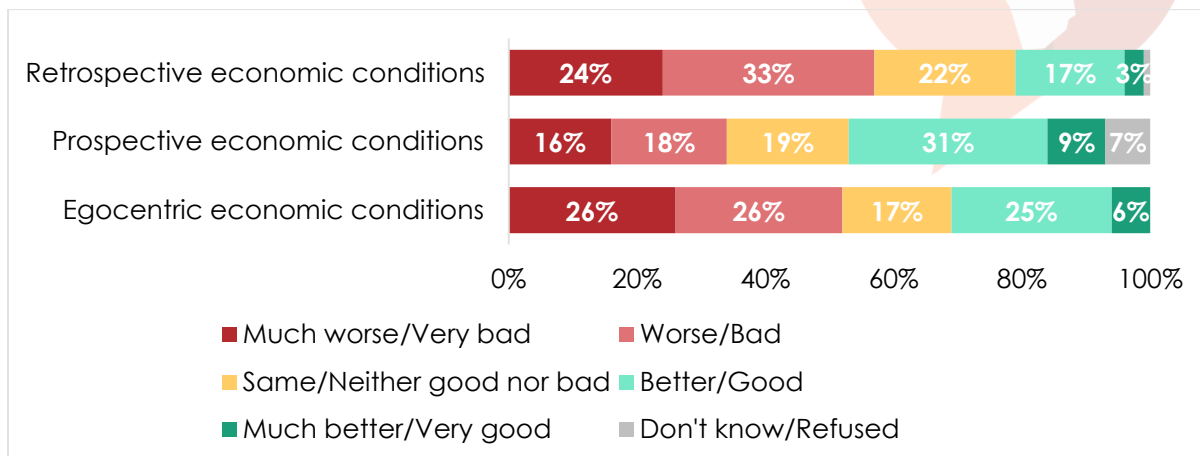
Whether looking backward or ahead, and irrespective of whether sociotropic or egocentric, positive evaluations of economic conditions are associated with a higher probability of voting for the ruling party.

Regarding retrospective sociotropic economic evaluations, Figure 2 shows that 57% of study respondents said economic conditions were "worse" or "much worse" than 12 months earlier, and 20% said economic conditions were "better" or "much better," while 22% indicated that they were unchanged. Prospectively, 40% of respondents expected economic conditions to improve in the near future, compared to 34% who expected them to deteriorate and 19% expected no change.

As for egocentric evaluations, 52% of respondents reported that their living conditions were "fairly bad" or "very bad," compared to 31% who said they were good and 17% who said they were "neither good nor bad." Compared to questions about partisanship and voting

decisions, which are politically sensitive, perceptions of economic conditions had a lower percentage of people who refused to answer or said they “don't know” about national or personal economic conditions (1% or less in each category).

**Figure 2: Perceptions of economic conditions | 34 countries | 2021/2023**



**Respondents were asked:**

*Retrospective: Looking back, how do you rate economic conditions in this country compared to 12 months ago?*

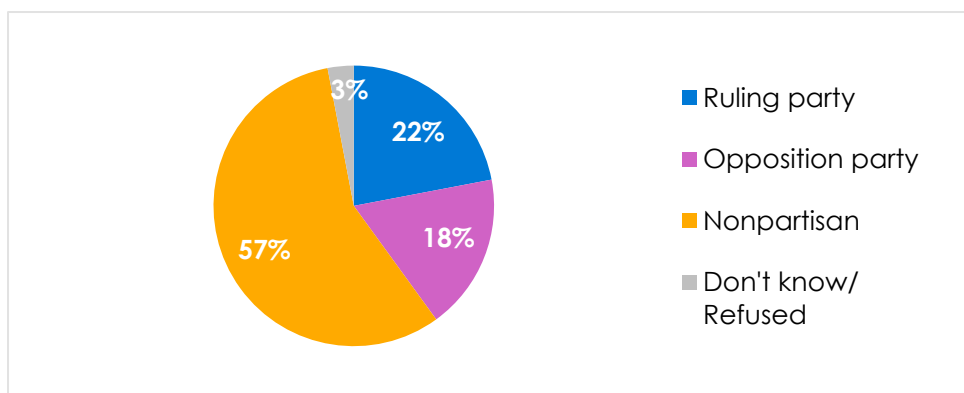
*Prospective: Looking ahead, do you expect economic conditions in this country to be better or worse in 12 months' time?*

*Egocentric: In general, how would you describe your own present living conditions?*

**Political considerations**

Party identification was coded as 1 for opposition identifiers or partisans, 2 for nonpartisans, and 3 for incumbent-party partisans. Descriptive statistics in Figure 3 indicate that 57% of our sample identified as nonpartisan, compared to 22% who felt close to the ruling party and 18% who felt close to an opposition party. Importantly, only 177 individuals (less than 0.5% of the weighted sample) responded with "Don't know," as Bratton et al. (2012) argue that higher responsiveness for politically sensitive questions generates more reliable survey responses.

**Figure 3: Party identification | 34 countries | 2021/2023**



**Respondents were asked:** Do you feel close to any particular political party? [If yes:] Which party is that?

**Cross-pressured voters**

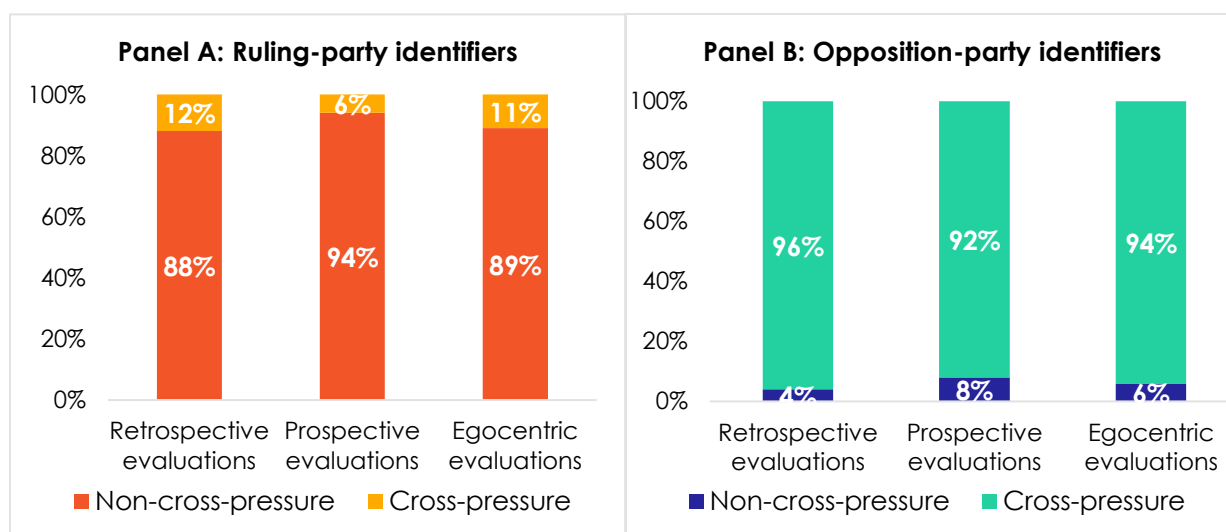
Borrowing insights from Lavine et al. (2012), we identify cross-pressured voters by observing respondents who report both identification with the ruling party and negative evaluations of economic conditions. Symmetrically, we also identify opposition-party cross-pressured voters, who report good economic evaluations. This operationalisation does not assume that

economic perceptions are exogenous to partisanship. Rather, it captures instances in which partisan identity and economic evaluations are misaligned despite the well-documented tendency for voters to update perceptions in line with partisan loyalties. As such, cross-pressured voters represent a subset of the electorate for whom attitudinal tension is not fully resolved through motivated reasoning.

Descriptive statistics presented in Figure 4, Panel A indicate that 12% of ruling-party partisans were cross-pressured on retrospective economic evaluations, compared to 6% on prospective economic evaluations. This disparity likely reflects expectations among ruling-party partisans that economic conditions will improve in the near future under continued incumbent governance. By contrast, 11% of ruling-party partisans were cross-pressured based on egocentric economic evaluations, suggesting that personal economic hardship generates misalignment with partisan loyalty for a non-trivial share of voters.

In Panel B, 4% of opposition-party partisans evaluated economic conditions (and thus to some extent the ruling party's economic performance) positively, while 8% expressed optimistic expectations about future national economic conditions. Additionally, 6% reported that their personal economic circumstances were good. It is therefore essential to examine how such voters behave electorally, particularly whether they resolve this tension through party switching, continued partisan support, or withdrawal from electoral participation.

**Figure 4: Cross-pressured voters** | 34 countries | 2021/2023



**Source:** Author's creation of a dummy from economic and partisan factors

## Analysis and results

Table 2 reports the results of the multinomial logistic regression from the estimation of Equation 1 (Appendix Note 1), with ruling party (Model 1a), opposition party (Model 2a), and abstention (Model 3a) as the base categories. Model 3a is best suited for directly explaining an individual's choice for the opposition or ruling party compared to abstention. That is, by holding abstention (coded 0) as a base outcome, our multinomial logistic regression, reported with relative risk ratios (RRR), shows how a one-unit increase in predictor or determinant  $x_j$  results in a relative risk of an individual voter's (i) decision to vote for an opposition party (coded 1) or ruling party (coded 2), relative to abstention (0). Said differently, the model shows by how many times a voter is more or less likely to vote for an opposition or ruling party over abstention.

Models 1a and 2a, which hold the ruling and opposition parties as base outcomes, are used to simplify the interpretation. While Model 1a shows by how many times a voter is more or less likely to abstain or vote for an opposition party over the ruling party, Model 2a shows the relative risk of abstaining or voting for the ruling party compared to voting for an opposition party. Presenting three estimation outputs from a single model, with all outcome categories

as the base, allows us to see more clearly the strength of alignment (party loyalty), realignment (switching), and dealignment (exit) in relation to each other as the core objective of the study.

**Table 2: Multinomial logistic regression of voting choice (without opposition-party cross-pressured voters)**

	Model 1a (Ruling base)		Model 2a (Opposition base)		Model 3a (Abstention base)	
	Abs vs. Rul RRR	Opp vs. Rul RRR	Abs vs. Opp RRR	Rul vs. Opp RRR	Opp vs. Abs RRR	Rul vs. Abs RRR
Age	1.001 (.004)	0.998 (0.003)	1.004 (0.003)	1.002 (0.003)	0.997 (0.003)	0.999 (0.004)
Female	<b>1.141***</b> (0.044)	<b>0.943**</b> (0.028)	<b>1.209***</b> (0.038)	<b>1.060**</b> (0.031)	<b>0.827***</b> (0.028)	<b>0.876***</b> (0.034)
Urban	<b>1.814***</b> (0.206)	1.043 (0.109)	<b>1.739***</b> (0.206)	0.959 (0.099)	<b>0.574***</b> (0.072)	<b>0.551***</b> (0.063)
Secondary education	<b>1.426**</b> (0.254)	<b>1.392**</b> (0.193)	1.024 (0.123)	<b>0.719**</b> (0.099)	0.889 (0.113)	<b>0.701**</b> (0.125)
Tertiary education	<b>2.102***</b> (0.382)	<b>1.909***</b> (0.341)	1.101 (0.158)	<b>0.524***</b> (0.093)	0.849 (0.114)	<b>0.476***</b> (0.087)
Poverty	0.979 (0.033)	0.993 (0.021)	0.987 (0.025)	1.007 (0.021)	1.013 (.023)	1.021 (0.034)
RSE (Ref.: worse)						
Same	0.939 (0.090)	<b>0.778***</b> (0.075)	<b>1.207**</b> (0.115)	<b>1.286***</b> (0.124)	<b>0.828**</b> (0.067)	1.065 (0.103)
Better	<b>0.709***</b> (0.074)	<b>0.691***</b> (0.081)	1.026 (0.103)	<b>1.448***</b> (0.169)	0.974 (0.097)	<b>1.410***</b> (0.147)
PSE (Ref.: worse)						
Same	<b>0.774**</b> (0.086)	<b>0.716***</b> (.078)	1.081 (0.078)	<b>1.397***</b> (0.152)	0.925 (0.067)	<b>1.292**</b> (0.144)
Better	<b>0.529***</b> (0.070)	<b>0.639***</b> (0.078)	0.826* (0.081)	<b>1.563***</b> (0.190)	1.121* (0.119)	<b>1.892***</b> (0.252)
EGE (Ref.: bad)						
Neutral	0.954 (0.127)	<b>0.755***</b> (.069)	<b>1.264**</b> (0.130)	<b>1.325***</b> (0.121)	<b>0.791**</b> (0.081)	1.049 (0.139)
Good	<b>0.656***</b> (0.085)	<b>0.605***</b> (0.064)	1.084 (0.116)	<b>1.654***</b> (0.176)	0.922 (0.099)	<b>1.525***</b> (0.199)
Party ID (Ref.: opp)						
Nonpartisan	<b>1.576***</b> (0.241)	<b>0.045***</b> (0.005)	<b>34.98***</b> (4.91)	<b>22.19***</b> (2.444)	0.029 (0.005)	<b>0.635***</b> (0.097)
Ruling	<b>0.022***</b> (0.005)	<b>0.002***</b> (0.001)	<b>10.28***</b> (1.897)	<b>457.85***</b> (85.35)	0.097 (0.017)	<b>44.53***</b> (9.914)
RSE_cross- pressured_Rul	1.299 (0.289)	1.048 (0.154)	1.239 (0.322)	0.955 (0.141)	0.807 (0.209)	0.770 (0.171)
PSE_cross- pressured_Rul	<b>1.837***</b> (0.254)	0.874 (0.153)	<b>2.101***</b> (0.408)	1.144 (0.199)	<b>0.476***</b> (0.092)	<b>0.544***</b> (0.075)
EGE_cross- pressured_Rul	0.989 (0.222)	0.898 (0.116)	1.102 (0.267)	1.113 (0.143)	0.907 (0.221)	1.010 (0.226)
Intercept	0.703 (0.327)	<b>36.65***</b> (13.27)	<b>0.019***</b> (0.006)	<b>0.027***</b> (0.009)	<b>52.16***</b> (17.02)	1.423 (0.663)
Obs.		32,206		32,206		32,206
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>		0.3774		0.3774		0.3774
Chi <sup>2</sup>		<b>5167.67***</b>		<b>5167.67***</b>		<b>5367.44***</b>
Log-pseudolikelihood		-20996.09		-20996.09		-23576.75

Standard errors in parentheses; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ ; RRR=relative risk ratios, Abs=abstention, Rul=ruling party, Opp=opposition party, RSE=retrospective sociotropic evaluations, PSE=prospective sociotropic evaluations, EGE=egocentric evaluations

### Cross-pressured voters

While the analysis distinguishes among three types of cross-pressured voters – retrospective, prospective, and egocentric ones – it is only prospective cross-pressured voters who display statistically significant associations with voting behaviour across all outcomes. Estimation results from models 1a and 2a show that, relative to non-cross-pressured voters, ruling-party partisans with negative expectations about future economic conditions are substantially more likely to abstain than to vote for the ruling party (RRR=1.837,  $p<0.001$ ) or an opposition party (RRR=2.101,  $p<0.001$ ).

When abstention is used as a reference category (Model 3a), these voters are significantly less likely to cast a ballot, whether for the ruling party (RRR=0.476,  $p<0.001$ ) or for an opposition party (RRR=0.544,  $p<0.001$ ). Taken together, these results indicate that voters who identify with the ruling party but hold pessimistic expectations about future economic conditions disproportionately resolve this attitudinal misalignment through electoral withdrawal rather than conversion to an opposition party.

This finding is crucial to the paper's theoretical contribution. Prior studies on cross-pressured voters from advanced democracies show that cognitive dissonance between party loyalty and the direction of evaluative judgments of the party promulgates late decision making or conditional switching only when satisfactory opposition parties are available (Hillygus & Shields, 2009; Lavine et al., 2012). Extending existing research, the results of this study demonstrate that in African dominant-party contexts, prospective cross-pressured voters are more likely to tilt toward withdrawal from the electorate than converting their dissatisfaction into opposition support.

This finding aligns with theories emphasising constrained programmatic choice and opposition weakness (Lynge & Coma, 2022; Schulz-Herzenberg & Mattes, 2023), which constrain disaffected voters' propensity to switch parties. Prospective evaluations are particularly consequential because they shape expectations about future returns to participation. When voters foresee a continuation of worsening economic conditions and find no viable alternative parties, abstention becomes a rational response for dealing with unresolved attitudinal misalignment. In doing so, prospective cross-pressured voters' withdrawal does not undermine or threaten the existence of dominant parties: It structurally advantages them to remain in power, since there is little or no electoral gain for alternative parties. This finding, therefore, helps to account for the perpetuation of dominant-party system in Africa, irrespective of widespread economic downturns.

### Demographic factors

As indicated in the data and measures section (Table 1 above), the model controlled for a number of demographic variables. Estimation output shows that gender, location, and education are important demographic factors that exert a statistically significant influence on voting behaviour across all outcomes. In Model 1a (with voting for the ruling party as the reference category), women are 14.1% more likely than men to abstain (RRR=1.141,  $p<0.001$ ) and 5.7% less likely to vote for the opposition (RRR=0.943,  $p<0.001$ ). In Model 2a (with voting for the opposition as the reference), women are more likely than men to abstain (RRR=1.209,  $p<0.001$ ) and slightly more likely to support the ruling party (RRR=1.060,  $p<0.001$ ). Model 3a supports these results by showing that, compared to men, women are less likely to vote for either the ruling party (RRR=0.827,  $p<0.001$ ) or an opposition party (RRR=0.876,  $p<0.001$ ). Thus, while women tilt more toward abstention, they are marginally more likely to vote for the incumbent than for the opposition party.

Regarding the rural-urban divide, estimation results in Model 1a (with voting for the ruling party as the reference category) show that urban residents are more likely than those in rural and semi-urban areas to abstain (RRR=1.814,  $p<0.001$ ). Model 2a (with voting for the opposition party as the reference category) shows that urban voters are equally likely as those in rural and semi-urban areas to abstain from the electorate (RRR=1.739,  $p<0.001$ ). Model 3a (with abstention as the reference category) reaffirms this finding by showing that

urban dwellers are less likely than those in rural and semi-urban areas to vote for an opposition (RRR=0.574,  $p<0.001$ ) or a ruling party (RRR=0.551,  $p<0.001$ ). These results show that urban dwellers are substantially less likely to vote for either party relative to abstaining, compared to non-urban residents.

In addition, Model 1a (with voting for the ruling party as the reference category) shows that respondents with some level of secondary education are more likely than those with less schooling to abstain from voting (RRR=1.426,  $p<0.01$ ). Instead, they are more likely than those with primary or less education to vote for an opposition party (RRR=1.392,  $p<0.01$ ). These results are further supported in models 2a and 3a, which show that respondents with some level of secondary education are indeed less likely than those with primary or no schooling to vote for the ruling party (RRR=0.719,  $p<0.01$ ) or to abstain (RRR=0.701,  $p<0.01$ ).

### *Economic factors*

Economic factors are categorised into three groups: retrospective, prospective, and egocentric evaluations. Regarding retrospective economic evaluations, results in Model 1a (with voting for the ruling party as the reference category) show that respondents who say current economic conditions are the same as past ones are less likely than those who say current economic conditions are worse to vote for an opposition party (RRR=0.778,  $p<0.001$ ). Instead, Model 2a (with voting for an opposition party as the reference category) shows that those who evaluate current economic conditions as unchanged are more likely than those who evaluate them as worse to abstain from the electorate (RRR=1.207,  $p<0.01$ ) and vote for the ruling party (RRR=1.286,  $p<0.01$ ). Model 3a (with abstention as the reference category) confirms this finding by showing that they are not just less likely to vote for an opposition party than the ruling party, but also less likely to vote for an opposition party than abstain (RRR=0.828,  $p<0.01$ ). Taken together, respondents who perceive current economic conditions as similar to the past ones are more likely to mobilise in support of the incumbent party or at least abstain than vote for an opposition party.

As for respondents who evaluate current economic conditions as better, Model 1a (with voting for the ruling party as the reference category) shows that they are less likely than those who evaluate conditions as worse to abstain (RRR=0.709,  $p<0.001$ ) and less likely to vote for an opposition party (RRR=0.691,  $p<0.001$ ). Models 2a and 3a reaffirm that indeed those who report better current conditions are more likely than those who report worse conditions to vote for the ruling party (RRR=1.448,  $p<0.001$ ) or abstain (RRR=1.410,  $p<0.001$ ).

Regarding prospective sociotropic evaluations, estimated results from Model 1a (with voting for the ruling party as the reference category) show that respondents who expect future economic conditions to remain the same are less likely than those who expect them to worsen to abstain from the electorate (RRR=0.774,  $p<0.01$ ) and to vote for an opposition party (RRR=0.716,  $p<0.001$ ). Models 2a and 3a reaffirm that respondents who expect future economic conditions to be the same as current ones are indeed more likely than those who expect worse economic conditions to vote for the ruling party (RRR=1.397,  $p<0.001$ ) or abstain (RRR=1.292,  $p < 0.01$ ).

On the other hand, Model 1a (with voting for the ruling party as the reference category) shows that respondents who anticipate better economic conditions in the future are less likely than those who anticipate worse conditions to abstain (RRR=0.529,  $p<0.001$ ) and to vote for an opposition party (RRR=0.639,  $p<0.001$ ). Said differently, Models 2a and 3a reaffirm that those who anticipate better economic conditions are more likely than those who anticipate worse conditions to mobilise toward the status quo (RRR=1.563,  $p<0.001$ ) or withdraw from the electorate (RRR=1.892,  $p<0.001$ ).

Lastly, results for egocentric economic evaluations from Model 1a show that those who perceive personal or household economic conditions as neither good nor bad are less likely than those who perceive them as bad to vote for the opposition (RRR=0.755,  $p<0.001$ ). Regarding this category, Model 2a (with voting for an opposition party as the reference category) shows that those who evaluate personal economic conditions as neither good nor

bad are more likely than those who evaluate them as bad to abstain (RRR=1.264,  $p<0.01$ ) and to vote for the ruling party (RRR=1.325,  $p<0.001$ ). Model 3a (with abstention as the reference category) reaffirms the results, showing that they are indeed less likely to vote for an opposition party (RRR=0.791,  $p<0.01$ ).

On the other hand, Model 1a (with voting for the ruling party as the reference category) shows that egocentric voters who evaluate economic conditions as good are less likely than those who see economic conditions as bad to abstain (RRR=0.656,  $p<0.001$ ). Similarly, they are less likely than their counterparts to vote for an opposition party (RRR=0.605). Articulated differently by Model 2a, those who evaluate personal economic conditions as good are more likely than those who evaluate them as bad to vote for the ruling party over the opposition party (RRR=1.654,  $p<0.001$ ), while Model 3a shows that they are more likely to vote for the ruling party over abstention (RRR=1.525,  $p<0.001$ ).

### *Political factors*

Lastly, we included partisanship in our regression to assess how individuals' self-reported alignment and non-alignment with political parties influence their electoral behaviour. The results in Model 2a (with voting for an opposition party as the reference category) show that ruling-party partisans are 457.9 times more likely than opposition-party partisans to vote for the incumbent party. The same model shows that ruling-party partisans are more likely than opposition partisans to abstain (RRR=10.28,  $p<0.001$ ), while Model 3a shows that they are 44.53 times more likely than opposition partisans to vote for the ruling party (RRR=44.53,  $p<0.001$ ). Model 1a shows that ruling-party partisans are less likely than opposition partisans to abstain (RRR=0.022,  $p<0.001$ ) or vote for an opposition party (RRR=0.002,  $p<0.001$ ).

However, Model 1a shows that nonpartisans are more likely than opposition partisans to abstain (RRR=1.576,  $p<0.001$ ) and less likely to vote for an opposition party (RRR=0.045,  $p<0.001$ ). Model 3a shows that nonpartisans are less likely than opposition partisans to vote for the ruling party (RRR=0.635,  $p<0.001$ ). In contrast, Model 2a shows that relative to opposition partisans, nonpartisans are 34.98 times more likely to abstain and 22.19 times more likely to vote for the ruling party. These results, therefore, imply that nonpartisans tilt more toward abstaining and are somewhat less inclined to vote for an opposition party than opposition-party partisans. Among those nonpartisans who do participate electorally, however, the ruling party emerges as the modal voting choice, even though overall levels of electoral engagement among nonpartisans remain lower than among both opposition- and ruling-party partisans.

### *Marginal effects*

This section presents the results of marginal effects for key variables to provide substantive implications of our multinomial logistic regression. This is important because it adds the magnitude of change in predicted probabilities to the directions and significance of associations provided by the relative risk ratios (RRR) of the regression. Since models 1a to 3a result from changing the base outcome of a single equation, the marginal probabilities are the same. Table 3 below shows the marginal probabilities for various categories of cross-pressured voters. The marginal probabilities for control variables are presented using margin plots in Appendix Figure A.3. Computing marginal probabilities permits a clear articulation of how shifts in specific cross-pressured orientations – retrospective, prospective, or egocentric – are related to the probability of each voting outcome, holding other factors at their observed values. Marginal effects, therefore, elucidate how competing or reinforcing pressures within individuals' belief systems influence the likelihood of a voting outcome beyond what can be inferred from raw coefficients.

Regarding retrospective sociotropic evaluations, the probability of cross-pressured voters abstaining from the electorate is higher (21.9%) compared to non-pressured voters (18.9%), a difference of 3.0 percentage points. The findings suggest that retrospectively cross-pressured voters are more likely than non-cross-pressured voters to withdraw from the electoral process, reflecting ambivalence or frustration arising from the misalignment between their party

loyalty and negative assessments of current relative to past economic conditions. However, cross-pressured voters are only 1.1 percentage points less likely than nonpartisans (37.4% vs. 38.5%) to vote for an opposition party, which translates into a reduced likelihood of party switching even under dissatisfaction with economic conditions. Similarly, the decline of 1.8 points (40.7% vs. 42.5%) in the probability of voting for the ruling party is very small, indicating that they are unlikely to defect to opposition parties. These results indicate that dissatisfaction with current relative to past economic performance among respondents who identify with the incumbent party predominantly leads to withdrawal from the electorate, with some maintaining loyalty and less support for alternative parties.

**Table 3: Predicted probabilities of voter choice conditional on cross-pressure status**

	Outcome	Not cross-pressured (0) margins	Cross-pressured (1) margins	Difference (1-0)
RSE	Abstention	0.189*** (0.016)	0.219*** (0.035)	+0.029↑
	Opposition	0.385*** (0.015)	0.374*** (0.027)	-0.011↓
	Ruling party	0.425*** (0.018)	0.407*** (0.024)	-0.018↓
PSE	Abstention	0.189*** (0.016)	0.275*** (0.026)	+0.086↑
	Opposition	0.386*** (0.015)	0.330*** (0.019)	-0.056 ↓
	Ruling party	0.425*** (0.018)	0.394*** (0.022)	-0.031 ↓
EGE	Abstention	0.191*** (0.017)	0.196*** (0.034)	+0.005↑
	Opposition	0.386*** (0.015)	0.373*** (0.023)	-0.013 ↓
	Ruling party	0.423*** (0.018)	0.431*** (0.027)	+0.008↑

*Standard errors in parentheses; \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1, RSE=retrospective sociotropic evaluations, PSE=prospective sociotropic evaluations, EGE=egocentric evaluations*

Regarding prospective cross-pressures, the patterns of electoral behaviour mirror those observed among retrospectively cross-pressured voters, although the magnitude of differences is slightly greater. For instance, the difference in the probability of abstaining is 8.6 points between cross-pressured and non-cross-pressured ruling-party partisans (27.5% vs. 18.9%). Similarly, the difference between cross-pressured and non-cross-pressured ruling-party partisans in the probability of defection to an opposition party is 5.6 points. By contrast, the difference in the probability of remaining loyal or voting for the ruling party declines by 3.1 points (39.4% vs. 42.5%) when prospective voters are cross-pressured relative to when they are non-cross-pressured.

Lastly, the patterns of electoral behaviour of egocentric cross-pressured voters differ from those of retrospective and prospective cross-pressured voters. First, the difference in probability of egocentric cross-pressured voters abstaining from the electorate (19.6%) compared to non-cross-pressured voters abstaining (19.1%) is only 0.5 points. So where do they go? Results further show that egocentric cross-pressured voters are less likely to switch parties due to economic disillusionment, as the probability of voting for an opposition party is only 1.3 points lower than for non-cross-pressured voters (37.3% vs. 38.6%). Instead, egocentric cross-pressured ruling-party partisans show the least likelihood of defecting from the ruling party (0.08%). Thus, unlike retrospective and prospective cross-pressures, egocentric cross-pressures are associated with alignment with the ruling party, rather than electoral disengagement or partisan realignment.

### *Cross-pressured opposition partisans*

To assess whether the findings are limited to ruling-party partisans, we estimated the same model with additional dummy variables incorporating a symmetric measure of cross-pressured voters – retrospectively, prospectively, and egocentrically – among opposition partisans who report positive economic evaluations. As shown in Table 4 below, the symmetric opposition-based robustness checks reveal a distinct pattern.

**Table 4: Multinomial logistic regression of voting choice – with opposition-party cross-pressured voters**

	Model 1b (Ruling base)		Model 2b (Opposition base)		Model 3b (Abstention base)	
	Abs vs. Rul RRR	Opp vs. Rul RRR.	Abs vs. Opp RRR	Rul vs. Opp RRR	Opp vs. Abs RRR	Rul vs. Abs RRR
Age	1.001 (0.004)	0.998 (0.003)	1.003 (0.003)	1.002 (0.003)	0.997 (0.003)	0.999 (0.004)
Female	<b>1.141***</b> (0.043)	<b>0.943**</b> (0.028)	<b>1.211**</b> (0.038)	<b>1.061**</b> (0.031)	<b>0.826***</b> (0.026)	<b>0.877***</b> (0.034)
Urban	<b>1.815***</b> (0.205)	1.043 (0.108)	<b>1.739***</b> (0.206)	0.958 (0.099)	<b>0.575***</b> (0.068)	<b>0.551***</b> (0.062)
Secondary education	<b>1.425**</b> (0.254)	<b>1.391**</b> (0.192)	1.024 (0.122)	<b>0.719</b> (0.099)	0.976 (0.117)	<b>0.702**</b> (0.125)
Tertiary education	<b>2.102***</b> (0.382)	<b>1.911***</b> (0.341)	1.101 (0.158)	<b>0.523***</b> (0.093)	0.909 (0.130)	<b>0.476***</b> (0.086)
Poverty	0.979 (0.033)	0.993 (0.021)	0.987 (0.025)	1.007 (0.021)	1.013 (0.025)	1.021 (.034)
RSE (Ref.: worse)						
Same	0.940 (0.090)	<b>0.779**</b> (0.075)	<b>1.207***</b> ( <b>0.114</b> )	<b>1.283**</b> (0.124)	<b>0.829**</b> (0.079)	1.063 (0.102)
Better	<b>0.711***</b> (0.073)	<b>0.699***</b> (0.072)	1.016 (0.101)	<b>1.429***</b> (0.149)	0.984 (0.097)	<b>1.407***</b> (0.145)
PSE (Ref.: worse)						
Same	<b>0.777**</b> (0.086)	<b>0.718***</b> (0.079)	1.082 (0.078)	<b>1.393***</b> (0.152)	0.923 (0.066)	<b>1.287**</b> (0.143)
Better	<b>0.543***</b> (0.073)	<b>0.664***</b> (0.079)	0.817 (0.085)	<b>1.506***</b> (0.179)	<b>1.223***</b> (0.127)	<b>1.841***</b> (0.248)
EGE (Ref.: bad)						
Neutral	0.955 (0.127)	<b>0.756***</b> (0.068)	<b>1.264***</b> (0.131)	<b>1.323***</b> (0.121)	<b>0.791</b> (0.081)	1.047 (0.139)
Good	<b>0.657***</b> (0.086)	<b>0.613***</b> (0.066)	1.072 (0.115)	<b>1.632***</b> (0.177)	0.932 (0.099)	<b>1.522***</b> (0.199)
Party_ID (Ref: opp)						
Nonpartisan	1.223 (0.245)	<b>0.035***</b> (0.004)	<b>8.078***</b> (6.167)	<b>5.692***</b> (3.838)	<b>0.029***</b> (0.005)	0.818 (0.164)
Ruling	<b>0.017***</b> (0.005)	<b>0.002***</b> (0.001)	<b>10.28***</b> (1.897)	<b>16.441***</b> (133.96)	<b>0.096***</b> (0.021)	<b>57.844***</b> (15.11)
RSE_cross-pressured_RL	1.301 (0.292)	1.057 (0.156)	1.231 (0.325)	0.946 (0.141)	0.812 (0.214)	0.768 (0.172)
PSE_cross-pressured_RL	<b>1.871***</b> (0.256)	0.897 (0.156)	<b>2.085***</b> (0.408)	1.114 (0.194)	<b>0.479***</b> (0.094)	<b>0.534***</b> ( <b>0.073</b> )
EGE_cross-pressured_RL	0.993 (0.224)	0.908 (0.121)	1.093 (0.269)	1.101 (0.147)	0.915 (0.226)	1.007 (0.227)
RSE_cross-pressured_OP	0.967 (0.235)	0.9139 (0.137)	1.059 (0.247)	1.094 (0.165)	0.945 (0.220)	1.034 (0.252)
PSE_cross-pressured_OP	<b>0.621**</b> (0.117)	<b>0.683***</b> (0.089)	0.909 (0.157)	<b>1.465***</b> (0.192)	1.101 (0.191)	<b>1.612**</b> (0.305)
EGE_cross-pressured_OP	0.986 (0.215)	0.909 (0.136)	1.084 (0.181)	1.099 (0.165)	0.922 (0.153)	1.014 (0.221)
Intercept	0.891 (0.452)	<b>46.103***</b> (17.46)	<b>0.0193***</b> (0.007)	<b>0.022***</b> (0.008)	<b>51.782***</b> (18.59)	1.123 (0.569)
Obs.		32,206		32,206		32,206
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>		0.3776		0.3776		0.3776
Chi <sup>2</sup>		<b>5144.61***</b>		<b>5144.61***</b>		<b>5344.61***</b>
Log-pseudolikelihood		-20989.38		-20989.38		-20989.38

*Standard errors in parentheses; \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1; RRR=relative risk ratios, Abs=abstention, Rul=ruling party, Opp=opposition party, RSE=retrospective sociotropic evaluations, PSE=prospective sociotropic evaluations, EGE=egocentric evaluations*

In Model 3b (with abstention as the reference category), prospective sociotropic cross-pressured opposition-party partisans are significantly more likely to vote for the ruling party than they are to abstain ( $RRR=1.612$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). However, they are no more likely to vote for the opposition than they are to abstain. Similarly, in Model 2b (with opposition as the reference category), cross-pressured opposition partisans are significantly more likely than their non-cross-pressured counterparts to vote for the ruling party ( $RRR=1.465$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). In Model 1b (with voting for the ruling party as the reference category), prospective sociotropic cross-pressured opposition party partisans are significantly less likely than their non-cross-pressured counterparts to vote for the opposition ( $RRR=0.683$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Overall, these results indicate that forward-looking national economic optimism among opposition partisans is associated with realignment toward the incumbent rather than disengagement or continued opposition-party loyalty.

## Discussion and conclusion

This study explores the determinants of voter behaviour in 34 African countries with a special interest in cross-pressured voters. The empirical results of the study enhance the scholarly understanding of ruling-party partisans' rationality under the constraints of economic hardship and opposition-party partisans' rationality under the constraints of good economic conditions. The study finds that partisanship remains a key determinant of vote choice in Africa. However, evidence shows that the durability of partisanship under economic crises and economic prosperity complicates the expectations of classical economic-voting theory. The central finding of this study is that prospective sociotropic evaluations, rather than retrospective or personal economic assessments, structure the behavioural resolution of cross-pressured voters in Africa's dominant-party systems. The results reveal that cognitive dissonance or cross-pressure between ruling-party loyalty and economic assessment does not predominantly translate into party switching or maintained loyalty. Instead, it is associated with an increased likelihood of electoral abstention relative to defection as a means to resolve the psychological tension. By contrast, opposition partisans who are cross-pressured by expressing optimism about future national economic conditions are more likely to support the ruling party. Taken together, the results suggest that forward-looking national economic assessments operate as a performance-based accountability mechanism, despite being contingent on party identity.

This pattern differs from findings in advanced democracies, where cross-pressured voters among ruling-party partisans may conditionally defect when viable opposition alternatives exist (Hillygus & Shields, 2009; Lavine et al., 2012). In African dominant-party contexts, where opposition parties are often weak or lack credibility, withdrawal appears to be a more common behavioural resolution of attitudinal misalignment. In this respect, our findings in the broader African context complement Schulz-Herzenberg and Mattes (2023), who show that ruling-party partisans in South Africa with ambiguous evaluations of economic conditions are more likely to withdraw from the electorate than to switch to opposition parties, owing to limited trust in opposition alternatives and opposition parties' weak incentives to attract disaffected voters as they remain concentrated on appeasing their existing support base.

Regarding situations when economic conditions are bad, the study findings align more closely with Greene's (2007) resource theory explanation of disaffected loyalty, where identity orientation sustains partisanship more than rational computations. Greene attributes the phenomenon to the closed structure and ideological rigidity of opposition parties, as they tend to focus on pleasing their existing supporters with little effort to incorporate new ones, especially cross-pressured ruling-party partisans or otherwise disaffected voters. Economic downturns do erode citizens' trust in the incumbent government, but they barely restore confidence in alternative parties. While prospective evaluations generate performance-based movement across partisan lines, the withdrawal of disaffected ruling-party partisans may bolster the structural advantage of the ruling party. The phenomenon is also partly attributable to the incumbent party's strategy, which is often aimed at marginalising and discrediting the opposition party, feeding voters the notion that "rather the devil you know than the devil you don't" (Greene, 2007, 61). Whether due to the weakness of

opposition parties or the strategy of the ruling party, our findings show that ruling-party partisans with negative perceptions of economic performance do not universally maintain ruling-party support. Rather, the results show that they are also less likely than those who see economic conditions as good to trust opposition parties, thereby leading to abstention. The analysis strengthens earlier insights from Bratton et al. (2012) that voting patterns in Africa reflect both identity orientations and performance-based calculus, even though we find that cross-pressured voters among ruling-party partisans promulgate disengagement rather than realignment or switching.

Our differentiation between retrospective- and prospective-based cross-pressured voters adds to Greene's (2007) resource theory and the rational-voting theories. These theories of voting contend that voters are rational beings who carefully assess the performance of their party representatives to make their voting decisions (Key, 1966; Söderlund, 2008). Our study finds that prospective cross-pressured voters among ruling-party partisans exit the electorate instead of defecting, in what Schulz-Herzenberg and Mattes (2023) attribute to lack of interest in politics as disaffected ruling-party partisans become tired, cynical, and lose the desire to participate. Our finding that retrospective and prospective cross-pressures tilt more toward exiting the electorate than supporting alternative parties implies, in principle, a structural advantage for the incumbent's party. Comparatively, however, we find that retrospective cross-pressures have a modest impact on electoral participation relative to prospective cross-pressures, which exhibit stronger predictive power for voter disengagement. This finding aligns with existing studies that demonstrate that future economic performance outweighs current economic evaluations in influencing electoral behaviour in young and developing democracies (Lewis-Beck & Nadeau, 2011). Voters in Africa's political systems find themselves caught between hope and discontent, and hence experience electoral fatigue, as incumbent parties are better positioned to influence expectations about future economic performance because they control state resources, messaging, policy agendas, and public narratives (Greene, 2007).

On the other hand, contrary to abstention found among retrospectively and prospectively cross-pressured ruling-party partisans, egocentrically cross-pressured voters neither switch nor abstain. Instead, they tend to maintain their loyalty to the ruling party, at least as long as it remains in power. This contradicts the finding by Bratton et al. (2012) that voters in Africa, like anywhere else, engage in economic calculus but place more importance on sociotropic evaluations than egocentric ones. Their finding is not far-fetched, as it aligns with existing literature that supports the economic-voting theory using aggregate economic data such as gross national product (GDP) measures. However, micro-level evidence involving voters' own reported perceptions of economic conditions remains inconclusive on how they influence voters' behaviour (Lewis-Beck & Stegmaier, 2000, 2013; Chrysanthou & Guilló, 2024). Wondering why egocentrically cross-pressured ruling-party partisans only exhibit patterns of loyalty propels thinking in line with theories of distributive clientelism. Specifically, our findings align with Aldrich's (1995) concept of pork-barrel politics, which distinguishes between distributive mechanisms or programmes that generate public goods and those that target individuals. While public goods may benefit all citizens, distributive and clientelistic programmes may target amenity incentives to narrower geographic constituencies (Stokes, Dunning, Nazareno, & Brusco, 2013), and in Africa they are linked to party elites or dominant ethnic blocs rather than the entire electorate (Beiser-McGrath, Müller-Crepon, & Pengl, 2021; Isaksson & Bigsten, 2017; Lee, 2025). From this perspective, we suggest that egocentrically cross-pressured voters among incumbent partisans maintain loyalty because they perceive access to material things as dependent on the continuity of the incumbent party. The tendency of egocentrically cross-pressured voters to maintain support for the incumbent party is likely to be more pronounced when the material benefits they receive are relatively irreversible, such as housing, food, and land acquisition, as opposed to reversible benefits such as loans and public employment (Robinson & Tervik, 2005).

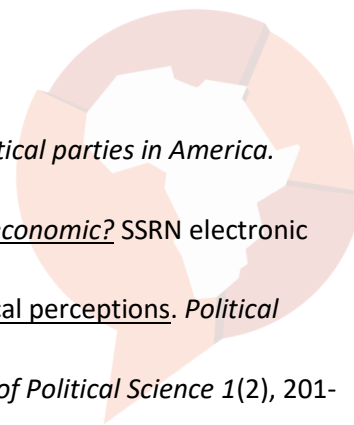
In summary, this research provides empirical evidence that contributes to comparative research on electoral participation by demonstrating that abstention can function as a meaningful expression of dissatisfaction in African dominant-party democracies. By moving

beyond the binary categorisation of voter choice between party loyalty to the incumbent and switching to a promising opposition party, the findings show that cross-pressured ruling-party partisans who hold pessimistic expectations about future economic conditions are more likely to withdraw from the electoral process than to defect. Simultaneously, opposition partisans cross-pressured by optimistic expectations are more likely to realign toward the ruling party, indicating that forward-looking national economic evaluations structure democratic accountability dynamics across partisan groups. Consistent with Schulz-Herzenberg and Mattes (2023) in South Africa and Friesen (2022) in Zimbabwe, this research provides evidence that, under the constraints of limited viable alternative political parties, cross-pressured ruling-party partisans use disengagement as an active rational adaptation for resolving cognitive dissonance. By situating abstention within the broader theoretical debates on cross-pressured partisanship, the research enhances our understanding of how democratic accountability is diminished not only as a result of overt repression or mass exit, but also through the gradual and cumulative disengagement from the electoral process by ruling-party partisans, which supports the continuation of dominant-party systems in Africa.

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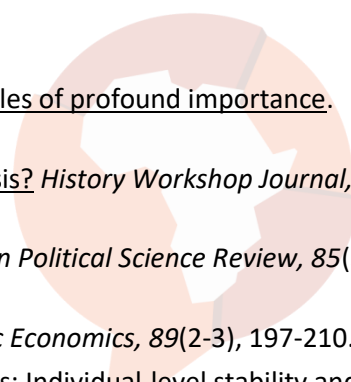
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## Appendix

### Model specification

Since our dependent variable, “voter choice,” is a trichotomous variable (0=abstention, 1=opposition party, and 2=ruling party), it follows that the outcome for an individual voter  $i$  is represented as:

$$Y_i \in \{0, 1, 2\}$$

Taking abstention (0) as a reference outcome category allows us to compare the probability of voting for either an opposition or ruling party relative to abstention. That is:

$$m \in \{1, 2\}$$

$$\log \frac{\Pr(Y_i = m)}{\Pr(Y_i = 0)} = \varphi_m + x_i \beta_m \quad (1)$$

Let  $\delta_{im}$  denote linear predictors (determinants of voter behaviour). That is:

$$\delta_{im} = \varphi_m + x_i \beta_m \quad (2)$$

Therefore, the probability that an individual voter (with distinct age, gender, education, location, poverty level, party identity, and economic assessments) abstains from the electorate (reference outcome) is denoted as:

$$\Pr(Y_i = 0) = \frac{1}{1 + \sum_{n=1}^2 e^{\delta_{in}}} \quad (3)$$

Since probabilities are equal to 1, the softmax function above must sum to 1, which is made possible through the inclusion of all possible exponentiated utilities for other outcomes in the denominator.

Thus, to obtain the probability that an individual voter  $i$  votes for an opposition party ( $m=1$ ) or the incumbent party ( $m=2$ ), the softmax function is presented as:

$$\Pr(Y_i = m) = \frac{e^{\delta_{im}}}{1 + \sum_{n=1}^2 e^{\delta_{in}}} \quad (m = 1, 2) \quad (4)$$

where coefficients are exponentiated and interpreted as relative risk ratios (RRR) computed as follows:

$$RRR_{mj} = e^{\delta_{mj}} \quad (5)$$

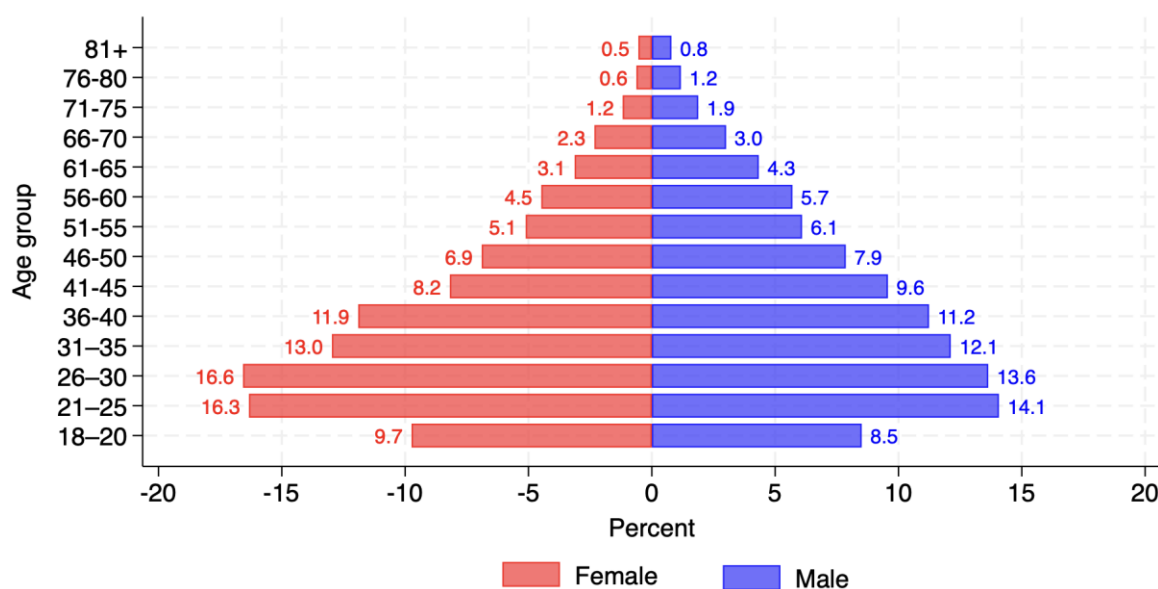
Thus, in our multinomial logistic model, the RRR shows how a one-unit increase in predictor  $x_j$  results in a relative risk of an individual voter's ( $i$ ) decision to vote for an opposition (1) or ruling party (2), relative to abstention (0).

**Table A.1: Demographic characteristics of the sample (34 countries)**

Variable	Category	Frequency N (%)	Voter choice			
			Abstain N (%)	Opposition N (%)	Ruling N (%)	Total votes N (100%)
Age	18-24	8,805 (22)	1,447 (22)	2,523 (38)	2,617 (40)	6,588
	25-34	11,138 (27)	1,797 (22)	3,243 (39)	3,314 (40)	8,355
	35-44	8,507 (21)	1,127 (18)	2,399 (39)	2,600 (42)	6,127
	45-54	5,930 (14)	715 (17)	1,592 (38)	1,878 (45)	4,186
	>55	6,420 (16)	722 (16)	1,688 (38)	2,068 (46)	4,479
Gender	Male	20,550 (51)	2,595 (17)	6,249 (41)	6,400 (42)	15,244
	Female	20,250 (49)	3,214 (22)	5,198 (36)	6,080 (42)	14,493
Location	Urban	19,672 (48)	3,659 (26)	5,357 (38)	4,905 (35)	13,922
	Rural	21,128 (52)	2,150 (14)	6,089 (39)	7,575 (48)	15,815
Education	Primary	18,173(45)	2,008 (15)	4,755 (36)	6,540 (49)	13,303
	Secondary	15,439 (38)	2,382 (21)	4,577 (40)	4,424 (39)	11,384
	Tertiary	7,071 (17)	1,398 (28)	2,093 (42)	1,490 (30)	4,983
Region	West	14,400 (35)	1,811 (17)	4,618 (45)	3,942 (38)	10,372
	East	8,400 (21)	622 (11)	2,011 (37)	2,792 (51)	5,427
	Southern	10,800 (26)	1,430 (17)	3,328 (40)	3,533 (43)	8,292
	North	2,400 (6)	558 (34)	453 (28)	629 (38)	1,642
	Central	4,800 (12)	1,385 (35)	1,034 (26)	1,582 (40)	4,003

Source: Author's analysis

**Figure A.1: Population pyramid (% of total sample)**

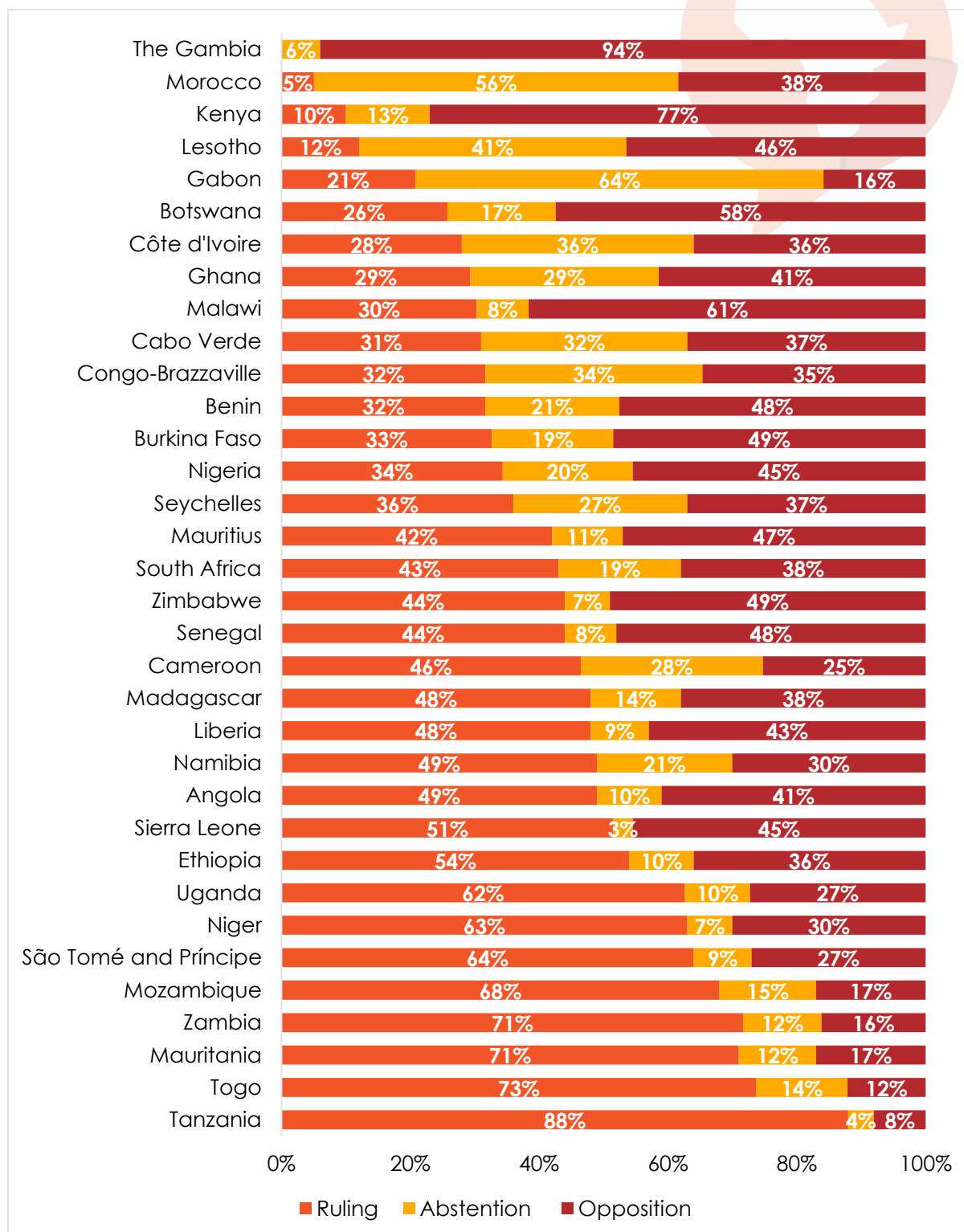


**Table A.2: Correlations and factor analysis for lived poverty**

	Food	Water	Medical	Fuel	Cash	
<b>Food</b>	1.0000					
<b>Water</b>	0.3946	1.0000				
<b>Medical care</b>	0.4323	0.3916	1.0000			
<b>Fuel</b>	0.4621	0.4249	0.4177	1.0000		
<b>Cash income</b>	0.4839	0.3482	0.3674	0.4475	1.0000	
<b>Factor loadings&gt;</b>	0.7006	0.5887	0.6126	0.6852	0.6435	
<b>Eigenvalue</b>						2.09632
<b>Scale reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha)</b>						0.7797
<b>Survey question wording:</b> <i>Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family gone without: Enough food to eat? Enough clean water for home use? Medicines or medical treatment? Enough fuel to cook your food? A cash income?</i>						
Response scale: 0=Never, 1=Just once or twice, 2=Several times, 3=Many times, 4=Always						

**Source:** Author's analysis

**Figure A.2: Voter choice by country | 34 countries | 2021/2023**



**Respondents were asked:** *If presidential elections were held tomorrow, which party would you vote for?"*

**Note:** *Sample is weighted with each country scaled to 1,200 respondents.*

**Table A.3: Multinomial logistic regression of voting choice – North Africa**

	Model 1a (Abstention base)	
	Opposition vs. abstention RRR	Ruling vs. abstention RRR
Age	1.004 (0.007)	<b>0.980***</b> (0.001)
Female	0.813* (0.091)	<b>0.876***</b> (0.006)
Urban	1.059 (0.584)	1.272 (0.402)
Secondary education	0.973 (0.107)	<b>1.662***</b> (0.228)
Tertiary education	1.139 (0.366)	1.065 (0.119)
Poverty	<b>1.198***</b> (0.004)	<b>1.505**</b> (0.274)
RSE (Ref.: worse)		
Same	<b>1.083***</b> (0.006)	<b>2.445****</b> (0.058)
Better	<b>1.848***</b> (0.017)	<b>3.449****</b> (0.423)
PSE (Ref.: worse)		
Same	<b>2.505***</b> (0.214)	<b>5.324***</b> (1.001)
Better	<b>2.086***</b> (0.342)	<b>4.043***</b> (0.286)
EGE (Ref.: bad)		
Neutral	<b>1.121**</b> (0.057)	1.115 (0.509)
Good	1.688 (0.589)	1.994 (1.518)
Party_ID (Ref.: opp)		
Nonpartisan	<b>0.025***</b> (0.008)	1.081 (0.496)
Ruling	0.153 (0.276)	<b>339.9***</b> (32.79)
RSE_cross-pressured	<b>0.262***</b> (0.049)	<b>1.173***</b> (0.005)
PSE_cross-pressured	0.098* (0.129)	<b>0.082***</b> (0.056)
EGE_cross-pressured	4.493 (5.694)	1.996 (3.338)
Intercept	<b>2.799***</b> (0.173)	<b>0.019**</b> (0.037)
Obs.		1,594
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>		0.4799
Chi <sup>2</sup>		<b>1416.8***</b>
Log-pseudolikelihood		-904.0131
<i>Standard errors in parentheses</i>		
<i>*** p&lt;0.01, ** p&lt;0.05, * p&lt;0.1; RRR=relative risk ratios, Abs=abstention, Rul=ruling party, Opp=opposition party, RSE=retrospective sociotropic evaluations, PSE=prospective sociotropic evaluations, EGE=egocentric evaluations</i>		

**Table A.4: Multinomial logistic regression of voting choice – Southern Africa**

	<b>Model 2a (Abstention base)</b>	
	<b>Opposition vs. abstention RRR</b>	<b>Ruling vs. abstention RRR</b>
Age	0.995 (0.005)	1.002 (0.006)
Female	0.868* (0.068)	0.924 (0.062)
Urban	<b>0.622***</b> (0.075)	<b>0.681**</b> (0.104)
Secondary education	1.313 (0.315)	1.059 (0.256)
Tertiary education	1.266 (0.391)	0.7019 (0.253)
Poverty	0.983 (0.025)	0.982 (0.022)
RSE (Ref.: worse)		
Same	0.804 (0.107)	1.237 (0.235)
Better	0.853 (0.149)	<b>2.129***</b> (0.476)
PSE (Ref.: worse)		
Same	1.067 (0.159)	1.040 (0.105)
Better	1.207 (0.231)	<b>1.684**</b> (0.436)
EGE (Ref.: bad)		
Neutral	0.858 (0.154)	1.145 (0.241)
Good	0.837 (0.201)	<b>1.623***</b> (0.242)
Party_ID (Ref.: opp)		
Nonpartisan	<b>0.021***</b> (0.005)	<b>0.372***</b> (0.081)
Ruling	<b>0.061***</b> (0.023)	<b>15.26***</b> 7.318)
RSE_cross-pressured	1.488 (0.437)	<b>1.877***</b> (0.375)
PSE_cross-pressured	0.771 (0.174)	0.747 (0.154)
EGE_cross-pressured	0.785 (0.401)	1.004 (0.475)
Intercept	<b>64.26***</b> (37.98)	<b>1.542***</b> (0.255)
Obs.		7,683
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>		0.3938
Chi <sup>2</sup>		<b>2266.71***</b>
Log-pseudolikelihood		-4825.4105
<i>Standard errors in parentheses</i>		
<i>*** p&lt;0.01, ** p&lt;0.05, * p&lt;0.1; RRR=relative risk ratios, Abs=abstention, Rul=ruling party, Opp=opposition party, RSE=retrospective sociotropic evaluations, PSE=prospective sociotropic evaluations, EGE=egocentric evaluations</i>		

**Table A.5: Multinomial logistic regression of voting choice – West Africa**

	Model 3a (Abstention base)	
	Opposition vs. abstention RRR	Ruling vs abstention RRR
Age	0.997 (0.004)	1.002 (0.005)
Female	<b>0.838***</b> (0.042)	<b>0.827***</b> (0.058)
Urban	<b>0.722**</b> (0.091)	<b>0.528***</b> (0.079)
Secondary education	0.955 (0.082)	<b>0.741**</b> (0.104)
Tertiary education	0.955 (0.095)	<b>0.549***</b> (0.106)
Poverty	1.051* (0.031)	1.058* (0.032)
RSE (Ref.: worse)		
Same	0.887 (0.230)	1.036 (0.162)
Better	0.866 (0.157)	1.136 (0.114)
PSE (Ref.: worse)		
Same	<b>0.765**</b> (0.101)	1.069 (0.177)
Better	0.959 (0.123)	<b>1.565**</b> (0.282)
EGE (Ref.: bad)		
Neutral	0.801 (0.123)	1.152 (0.291)
Good	1.194 (0.221)	<b>1.768**</b> (0.431)
Party_ID (Ref.: opp)		
Nonpartisan	<b>0.038***</b> (0.006)	<b>0.702**</b> (0.115)
Ruling	<b>0.126***</b> (0.039)	<b>56.85***</b> (14.64)
RSE_cross-pressured	0.566 (0.208)	<b>0.469**</b> (0.116)
PSE_cross-pressured	<b>0.416***</b> (0.137)	<b>0.441***</b> (0.086)
EGE_cross-pressured	0.766 (0.178)	0.856 (0.187)
Intercept	<b>36.72***</b> (17.05)	<b>0.871***</b> (0.529)
Obs.		10,886
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>		0.3642
Chi <sup>2</sup>		<b>2267.22***</b>
Log-pseudolikelihood		-7216.6687
<i>Standard errors in parentheses</i>		
<i>*** p&lt;0.01, ** p&lt;0.05, * p&lt;0.1; RRR=relative risk ratios, Abs=abstention, Rul=ruling party, Opp=opposition party, RSE=retrospective sociotropic evaluations, PSE=prospective sociotropic evaluations, EGE=egocentric evaluations</i>		

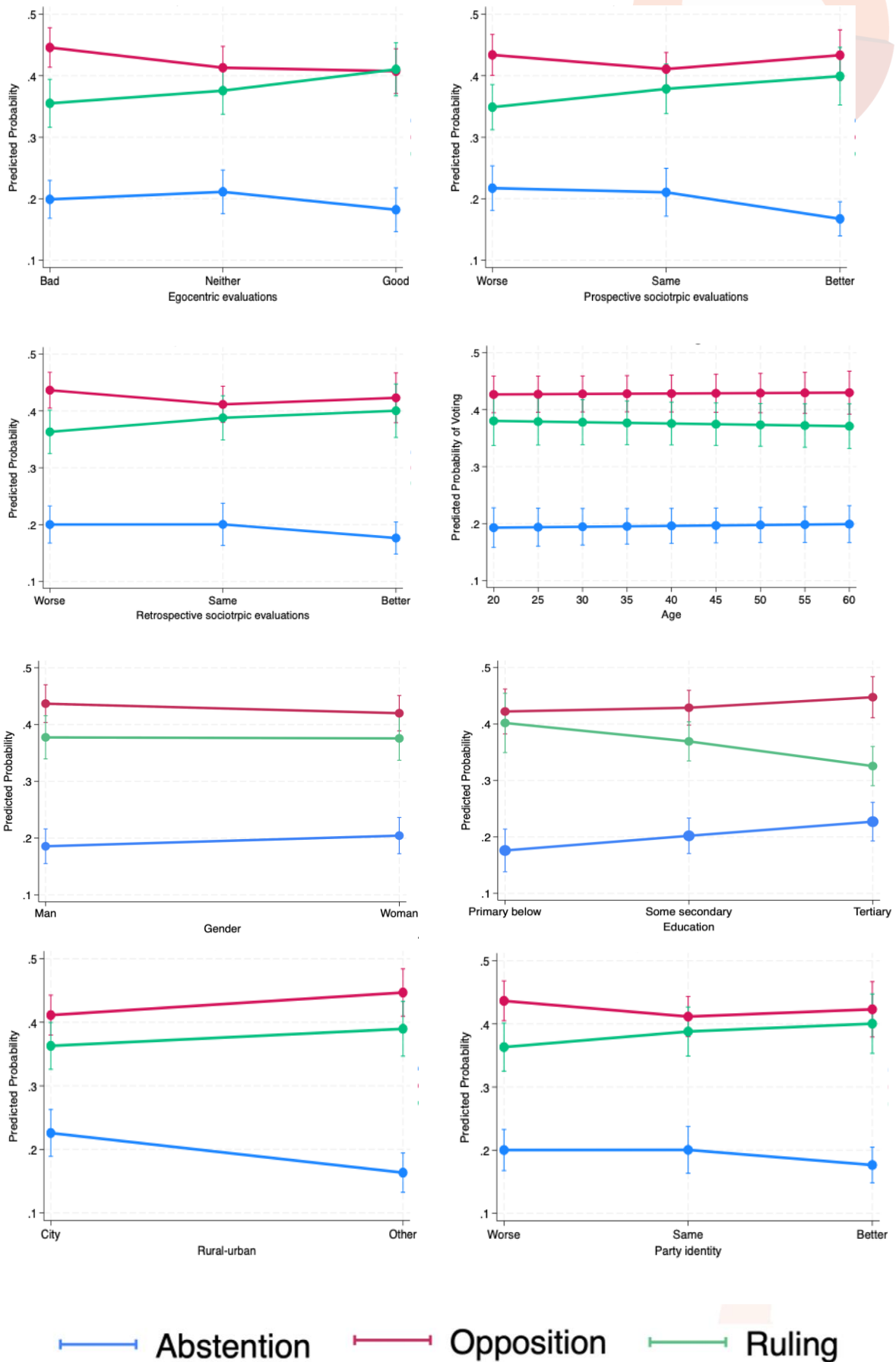
**Table A.6: Multinomial logistic regression of voting choice – East Africa**

	Model 4a (Abstention base)	
	Opposition vs. abstention RRR	Ruling vs. abstention RRR
Age	1.001 (0.005)	0.997 (0.008)
Female	<b>0.759**</b> (0.105)	0.879 (0.138)
Urban	<b>0.457***</b> (0.085)	<b>0.534***</b> (0.104)
Secondary education	0.954 (0.229)	<b>0.399***</b> (0.089)
Tertiary education	1.032 (0.239)	<b>0.338***</b> (0.121)
Poverty	1.021 (0.038)	0.992 (0.037)
RSE (Ref.: worse)		
Same	0.866 (0.149)	1.114 (0.164)
Better	0.941 (0.127)	1.130 (0.124)
PSE (Ref.: worse)		
Same	1.011 (0.112)	1.545 (0.286)
Better	<b>1.239*</b> (0.156)	<b>1.815***</b> (0.179)
EGE (Ref.: bad)		
Neutral	1.037 (0.200)	1.076 (0.163)
Good	0.900 (0.135)	1.509 (0.387)
Party_ID (Ref.: opp)		
Nonpartisan	<b>0.031***</b> (0.010)	0.992 (0.349)
Ruling	<b>0.154***</b> (0.055)	<b>116.29***</b> (43.42)
RSE_cross-pressured	1.901 (1.139)	1.807 (1.047)
PSE_cross-pressured	<b>0.303***</b> (0.103)	<b>0.448**</b> (0.142)
EGE_cross-pressured	0.546 (0.237)	0.578 (0.258)
Intercept	<b>67.09***</b> (24.59)	2.785 (2.147)
Obs.		8,161
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>		0.4237
Chi2		<b>2011.24***</b>
Log-pseudolikelihood		-4461.6983
Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1; RRR=relative risk ratios, Abs=abstention, Rul=ruling party, Opp=opposition party, RSE=retrospective sociotropic evaluations, PSE=prospective sociotropic evaluations, EGE=egocentric evaluations		

**Table A.7: Multinomial logistic regression of voting choice – Central Africa**

	Model 5a (Abstention base)	
	Opposition vs. abstention RRR	Ruling vs. abstention RRR
Age	0.999 (0.003)	<b>1.002**</b> (0.001)
Female	<b>0.846***</b> (0.045)	<b>0.915**</b> (0.039)
Urban	0.713 (0.209)	0.635 (0.199)
Secondary education	1.001 (0.144)	0.768 (0.116)
Tertiary education	0.928 (0.205)	0.459 (0.103)
Poverty	1.059 (0.045)	0.989 (0.020)
RSE (Ref.: worse)		
Same	1.078 (0.122)	0.938* (0.137)
Better	0.978 (0.264)	<b>1.322**</b> (0.146)
PSE (Ref.: worse)		
Same	<b>1.076***</b> (0.026)	<b>1.539***</b> (0.149)
Better	1.523 (0.572)	<b>3.612***</b> (1.309)
EGE (Ref.: bad)		
Neutral	0.653* (0.155)	0.931 (0.109)
Good	0.666* (0.146)	1.111 (0.226)
Party_ID (Ref.: opp)		
Nonpartisan	<b>0.027***</b> (0.012)	0.509 (0.293)
Ruling	<b>0.091***</b> (0.065)	<b>53.13***</b> (17.99)
RSE_cross-pressured	0.488 (0.094)	<b>0.365***</b> (0.086)
PSE_cross-pressured	0.469 (.270)	<b>0.394**</b> (0.184)
EGE_cross-pressured	2.335 (0.2191)	<b>2.776**</b> (1.338)
Intercept	<b>18.92***</b> (10.07)	1.277 (0.843)
Obs.		3,882
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>		0.322
Chi <sup>2</sup>		<b>2713.9***</b>
Log-pseudolikelihood		-2854.49
<i>Standard errors in parentheses</i>		
<i>*** p&lt;0.01, ** p&lt;0.05, * p&lt;0.1; RRR=relative risk ratios, Abs=abstention, Rul=ruling party, Opp=opposition party, RSE=retrospective sociotropic evaluations, PSE=prospective sociotropic evaluations, EGE=egocentric evaluations</i>		

Figure A.3: Margin plots – predictive margins with 95% CIs



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