

## **(Dis)loyal party members as voters**

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### **Abstract**

Party membership is one of the strongest behavioural and attitudinal outlets of political participation in democracies. Members make a conscious decision to support a specific political party and its ideological programme with their money, time and effort. Cost-benefit analyses of party membership therefore often assume that party members will also be safe voters, which increases the benefit of members to parties (Scarrow 1994, 2015). This paper assesses the empirical base for this assumption and finds that between 3 and 16 per cent of European party members cast a defecting vote in the last election. We argue that internal disagreement and external pressure can each bring about disloyal voting. Programmatic and personnel disagreement with members' own party loosens up existing loyalty patterns while cross-party pressures on specific and contentious issues create the opportunity structure for a short-term defection to another party. We support our argument with empirical results derived from the 2015 Swedish Party Membership Survey that overcomes common data limitations on party members as units of observation. The results show that both internal push and external pull-factors are associated with higher probabilities of defection, yet dissatisfaction with the leadership stands out as the strongest predictor of defection. These findings emphasize the potential importance of party leadership contests. They also mean that the expectation of party members as 'safe' voters needs some qualification. Finally, our analysis sheds additional light on voter volatility, and reasons for vote switching within the broader population of party identifiers.

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<sup>1</sup> The order of author names reflects the principle of rotation. Both authors have contributed equally to all work.

## Introduction

Political parties and their members are often seen as the political linkage between those in power and ordinary citizens (for example Dalton et al. 2011, Müller and Katz 1997). Party membership is also the strongest outlet of political participation. In light of the documented widespread decline of party members (e.g. van Biezen et al, 2012), one of the most-often cited benefits of party members to parties is that they are the most loyal voters (e.g. Scarrow 1994, 2015). However, we do not know yet to what extent this is a valid assumption. Do members vote loyally? And what might deter them from doing so? Answers to these questions are not only important for party strategists but also to the literatures on voter volatility and party and issue competition. If members are in fact the least likely to defect in elections, establishing a deeper understanding of their reasons for disloyal behaviour could shed additional light on this decision for less committed groups, such as party sympathizers or party voters. This is especially important considering increasing levels of dealignment and voter volatility.

This paper takes stock of the empirical base for the assumption of loyal members and finds that between 3 and 16 per cent of European party members cast a disloyal vote in the last election. In multi-party systems with small electoral margins, this can have non-trivial consequences for party competition (Somer-Topcu, 2015). We therefore explain patterns of vote defection by focusing on two potentially interrelated sources that are important to contemporary politics and party politics dynamics. Leaning on Hirschman (1970) we argue that intra-party disagreement with the party's programme and its leader is a push factor for defection, as it is symptomatic of a looser bond between a member and its party. Additionally, cross-party pressures through specific and contentious issues commonly associated with a second "cultural" dimension are pull factors that create the opportunity structures for a disloyal vote.

Given sample size constraints of general surveys with members as units of observation, we support our argument with empirical results based on a high-quality survey of more than 10,000 party members conducted with the support of seven Swedish political parties in Spring 2015. The paper offers important insights into what drives vote defection within Swedish parties and thereby provides information

on this political topic from a multi-party, proportional electoral system that only recently experienced heightened salience for second dimension politics.

The results show that above all internal factors such as ideological incongruence on the general left-right scale as well as dissatisfaction with the party leader are associated with a higher probability to vote for another party. Dissatisfaction with the party leadership was the single most important factor for members to defect. This suggests that party leaders are best advised to maintain intra-party agreement since party members are not only voters but can also be a ‘multiplier of votes’ (Scarrow 1994, 47) through their communication. In particular, parties with a leadership-dominated organizational structure should note the significance of satisfaction with leadership for predicting member defection.

We also find that certain political issues contribute to break the powerful bond between members and their parties. Cultural attitudes about immigrants are a significant predictor of defection for party members, but this effect is substantially weaker and concentrated in a small party of the centre-right. This suggests that even in Sweden, a party system dominated by the economic dimension, the politics of immigration shape vote choice among some party members.

The paper is organized as follows. The next section reviews the arguments about why party members are assumed to be the most loyal voters. From there, we build on existing studies and their findings to illustrate that party members may also disagree with the party, and explain the intra-party and cross-pressure circumstances under which they are most likely to defect. We then introduce the Swedish party membership survey as our primary source of data and describe the methods used. After presenting the initial results of modelling defection, a final section provides a short summary and conclusion.

### **Party members as voters**

In light of a general decline of party membership, scholars of political parties and party membership in particular regularly discuss the advantages and disadvantages of party members for parties (e.g. Scarrow 1994, 2015; see also Tavits 2012) as well as demand- or supply-side explanations for membership decline (e.g. Scarrow 2015).

According to those descriptions, one party-benefit of membership usually requires little explanation or elaboration: ‘Members are loyal voters.’ (Scarrow 1994, 47) It seems straightforward that card-carrying party members that pay their membership fees would also vote for their ‘own team’ on Election Day.

According to previous studies, membership size indeed appears to matter for electoral outcomes. Scarrow (1994, 47), for example, cites the German Social Democratic party chairman who claimed in 1988 that a difference between one per cent and four per cent of members in the electorate could be important for electoral outcomes. In an aggregate-level analysis of electoral results in post communist European countries, Tavits (2012, 92) was also able to show that a larger membership size significantly improved a party’s electoral result. Her analysis revealed that ‘the expected vote share of parties with no members is about 11% and increases to 13% for an average-sized party’. Employing a vote-forecasting model, Hooghe and Dassonneville (2014) used party membership size as an alternative operationalization of the standard popularity term. Adding membership size to their forecasting model increased the explained variance in electoral results from  $r^2 = 0.55$  to  $r^2 = 0.81$ . This indicates that a party’s membership size explains a substantial size of Flemish parties’ electoral result between 1981 and 2010. These individual studies establish a link between a party’s membership base and its electoral result. Membership size in the electorate positively affects electoral outcomes.

The micro-foundations for this relationship can be found in members’ own vote choice and in their influence on other people’s voting behaviour (e.g. Scarrow 1994, 2015; Tavits 2012). Simply put, membership size is related to electoral outcomes because members vote loyally and because they persuade other voters. The literature treats members’ own vote choice as the less controversial mechanism – and for good reason. The difference between members and non-members usually lies in the level of programmatic commitment. While there may be different reasons for people to initially join a party (e.g. Bruter and Harrison 2009; Laux 2012), members of the same party are usually united by the ideological profile. Other things equal, members – similar to identifiers – are more committed to and persuaded by a specific party and what it stands for than non-members. They have deeper identification with the party and a higher tolerance or threshold for disagreement due to their positive inclination (Tavits 2012). Therefore, it only seems consistent that members would also cast a

vote for their own party, if not because of ideological proximity then at least out of a sense of duty and commitment to their own party.

The assumption of party members as loyal voters is further empirically corroborated in the literature on vote choice models, albeit in an indirect way. Vote choice models standardly include party identification as a predictor of vote choice in the US and in Europe (e.g. Miller 1991), yet the more formal party membership is to our knowledge not used as a standard predictor of vote choice. With this the party politics and electoral choice literature seems to agree on the assumption that ‘members are loyal voters’ (Scarrow 1994, 47) and that members provide ‘a stable voting base’ (Scarrow 2000, 84) for their party.

However, an evaluation of European data suggests that this assumption needs to be qualified. The European Social Survey (ESS) included a question on party-specific membership in its first five survey rounds. It standardly also includes re-call questions on past national election voting behaviour. While re-call questions are often subject to false reporting we have no reason to believe that non-members would falsely claim membership. If anything, members are more likely to falsely claim non-membership and a loyal vote. It means that an analysis of defection rates in the ESS presents a very conservative picture biased in favour of the null hypothesis of no defection. Still, results of an analysis per country averaged across all five waves (2002-2010) to control for election-specific events suggest that disloyal members are not a rare event. Figure 1 illustrates that while country-level variation exists (between 2.8 per cent in Finland and 16 per cent in Israel), all countries in which individual membership parties could be unequivocally matched with parties standing for elections show some level of membership defection at the ballot booth. This means that the assumption of loyal votes from party members is true for most members, yet not for a non-trivial share. On average, across all countries and all rounds, almost 9 per cent of party members said they cast a defecting vote.<sup>2</sup> This figure seems at first small given an average membership rate of around 4.5 per cent. However, in multi-party systems with small electoral margins a few more votes can be crucial. For instance, in the

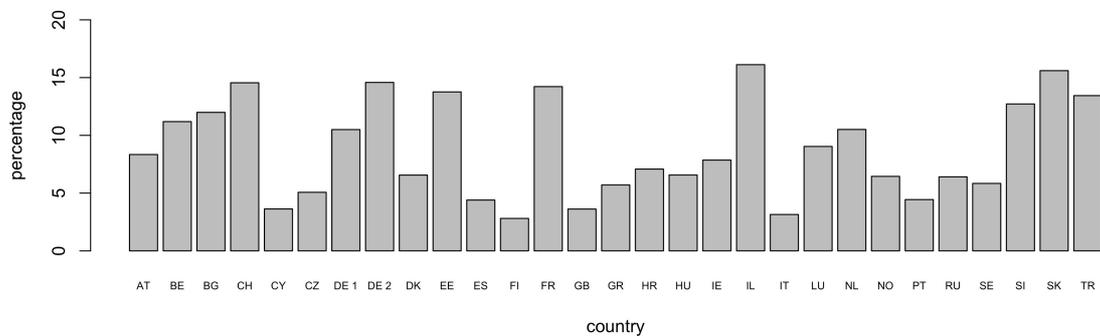
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<sup>2</sup> As expected, defection amongst party identifiers is higher with an average of above 11 per cent. However, substantial country-level variation exists, as documented in Figure 1 in the appendix.

2013 German federal election, the FDP was only 0.3 per cent short of crossing the parliamentary threshold (Somer-Topcu 2015).

Figure 1. Percentage of disloyal members per country, averaged across five rounds of ESS data.

Note: Germany appears twice in the figure due to their two-votes electoral system, where strategic voting is generally more common for the second vote (here labelled: DE 2).



### Breaking the threshold: when and why do party members defect

Despite members' inbuilt inclination to vote for their own party, there may be good reasons for members to not always vote loyally. According to Tavits (2012, 85), 'the accumulation of disagreeable developments' can make a member more likely to abandon his/her party. Building on this, we posit that a combination of intra-party disagreement and cross-party pressures makes disloyal behaviour through defection a viable option.

Parties may be (or may strive to present themselves as) unitary actors to the electorate, yet the internal discourse over the party's plan of action is an important constitutive element (Katz 2002). This perspective holding that parties are composed of diverse views and preferences has been empirically validated in several settings, focusing on various units of observation and using different methods (e.g. Bowler et al. 1999; Greene and Haber 2015; Panebianco 1988; van Haute and Carty 2012). Only some

studies so far used party members as their units of observation (see Narud and Skare 1999; Scarrow and Gezgor 2010; van Haute and Carty 2012; Widfeldt 1999). For example, according to analyses of the ideological profile of party members and their perception of their parties in Belgium and Canada, only between 24 and 52 per cent of members report identical positions for themselves and their party on the left-right scale (van Haute and Carty 2012). The results of these studies indicate that some degree of internal party disagreement is normal rather than an exception. Similar results can also be found amongst Swedish parties (Kölln and Polk forthcoming)

Hirschman (1970) famously hypothesized that disagreement can lead to exit and voice behaviour. While several studies already support this hypothesis from a variety of angles (see, e.g., Weber 2011; Karreth et al. 2013; Bakker et al. 2015b), there has been surprisingly little consideration of party members from this perspective (van Haute 2015). We maintain that ideological disagreement is a symptom for a loser tie to the party and presents a potential push factor. Members opting for exit signal one of the strongest disagreements. Casting a defecting vote can potentially yield powerful consequences, especially in multi-party proportional systems. Therefore, we expect that members' intra-party disagreement based on the ideological left-right dimension will be connected to casting a defecting vote.

*H1 Higher levels of left-right incongruence amongst party members are associated with a higher probability to defect.*

Disagreement with one's own party, however, is not necessarily restricted to the left-right dimension, but could have many different sources. It can also occur on the personnel level when members' disagree with the party leader or his/her decision, a party's coalition agreements following a national election or specific policy proposals (see Aarts et al 2011 for a review of leadership effects on vote choice).

Real-world examples of such intra-party controversies can be easily found. Party congress elections for party leaders and their results provide numeric evidence of disagreement over a specific person. For instance, in the most recent party leadership election of the German social democratic party, the ruling party leader Sigmar Gabriel only received 74.3 per cent of the vote, marking the second worst result of a social

democratic party leader since 1945.<sup>3</sup> More generally, Quinn's (2012) longitudinal database on leadership elections in many British parties shows that members regularly exhibit substantial disapproval with the (prospective) leadership. This shows that intra-party disagreement – and with the party leader in particular – can also be expressed through an internal vote choice. Yet, it also opens up the possibility that members could be even stronger in their reaction to their party leader and cast a defecting vote. Therefore, we also expect that leadership disagreement is a push factor for a disloyal vote:

*H2 Higher levels of dissatisfaction with the party leader are connected to a defecting vote amongst party members.*

Beyond the party leadership, specific policy issues are also known to create intra-party tensions, especially whenever they are salient and incur cross-party disagreement. Across Europe, the cultural dimension and in particular the issue of immigration has created a number of tensions amongst and between political parties (see, e.g., Kitschelt 1994; Kriesi et al. 2006). Despite the historical importance of left-right party competition based on the economic cleavage (Oskarson 2005; Knudsen 2008) changes in the party system dynamics of Europe suggest that the specific issues such as immigration or European integration (Hobolt and De Vries 2015; Pardos-Prado 2015) could explain the short-term exit behaviour of a defecting vote.

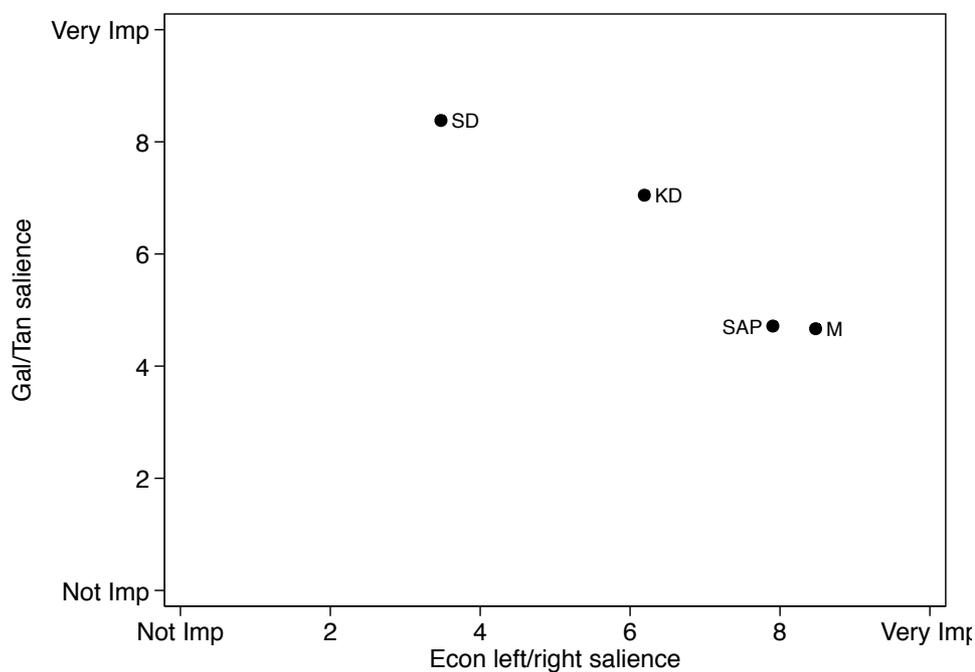
The issue ownership literature argues that political parties tend to emphasize issues on which they have a comparative advantage and that are salient for party supporters (Budge and Farlie 1983; Green-Pedersen 2007; Stubager and Slothus 2013). In Sweden, the anti-immigration stance of the Sweden Democrats distinguishes the party from the rest of the party system (Dahlström and Sundell 2012; Dahlström and Esaiasson 2013; Loxbo 2014), which is consistent with radical right party strategies across Western Europe (see, e.g., Meguid 2005, 347-348). Figure 1 below illustrates this with salience scores from the 2014 round of the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) on party positioning in Europe (Bakker et al. 2015b). The salience parties place on the economic dimension is shown on the x-axis and the salience of the cultural dimension – Gal/Tan in CHES terminology – is displayed on the y-axis. As

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<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/spd-parteitag-121.html> (accessed 14/12/2015).

the figure makes clear, the Social Democrats and the Moderates place substantially more emphasis on the economic left/right dimension than on the cultural dimension, while the relationship is precisely the opposite for the Sweden Democrats, the primary challenger party of this system. The placement of another, yet less conservative party, such as the Christian Democrats (KD) puts this into context. Here, the contrast is less stark, even though this party still places more emphasis on the cultural dimension than the two major left and right parties, according to the 2014 data.

Figure 1. Salience some parties place on the economic and the cultural dimension, respectively.



If anti-immigration positions are ‘owned’ by the radical right, there are reasons to believe that this could cause problems for parties of the mainstream right (Bale 2003, 2008; Pardos-Prado 2015). Conservative party members in Britain with culturally conservative attitudes on topics like immigration and the European Union are willing to consider voting for UKIP in future elections (Webb and Bale 2014). Right-wing parties are often already associated with the types of law and order policies and tough stances on immigration stressed by anti-immigrant parties (Bale 2008, 320), and Dahlström and Esaiasson (2013) provide evidence that right-leaning Swedish parties are more likely to pursue anti-immigrant policies than those on the left. Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup (2008, 626) argue that coalition dynamics constrain the

ability of the Moderates – Sweden’s largest centre-right party – to move in the direction of the anti-immigrant party. Therefore the potential absorption of the Sweden Democrats into the right-wing bloc – similar to what took place earlier in Denmark and Norway – is seen as less likely than the dismantling of the contemporary bloc structure to Swedish politics (Aylott and Bolin 2015, 738; Berg and Oscarsson 2014).

Exit polls from the 2014 election indicate that almost a third of the Sweden Democrats’ voters reported having voted for the Moderates in 2010 (Holmberg 2014), which points to the possibility that the *cordon sanitaire* set up by the other parties against the Sweden Democrats on questions of immigration creates strong tensions within the mainstream right-wing parties of Sweden. Therefore, right-leaning party members could have been tempted by this cross-cutting cleavage and we propose the following hypotheses on potential pull factors:

*H3 Higher anti-migrant attitudes increase the probability to defect amongst party members leaning towards the political right.*

Summarizing, intra-party disagreement on the general left-right dimension or with the party leader opens some members up to cross-party pressures and generates policy incentives to cast a disloyal vote. Cross-party pressures on specific issues provide the opportunity structures and pull factors to cast a disloyal vote.

## **Data**

Previous research on party members has been constrained by data availability because general surveys, such as the ESS, lack a sufficient amount of party members and fine-grained questions about party membership. For example, in the 2010 ESS round, only 106 respondents indicated being a member of any Swedish political party. This limits the scope of testable hypotheses. Party membership surveys pose an alternative approach (see van Haute and Gauja 2015) that we are also using with the 2015 Swedish Party Membership (Kölln and Polk forthcoming). The survey includes more than 10,000 responses from party members belonging to seven different parties. Absent comparable cross-national party membership surveys this provides us with a

large sample size spread across a relatively large and diverse set of smaller and larger parties.

Table 1. Overview of survey populations and completed interviews per party.

	<b>Fp</b>	<b>Mp</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>V</b>	<b>KD</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>Fi</b>
total membership	15,283	20,660	100,000	19,151	21,054	52,260 <sup>4</sup>	
with email addresses	11,807	18,772	---	16,009	9,797	20,007	
sample size	---	---	7,000	---	---	---	
completed questionnaires	1,173	2,198	1,231	2,239	933	2,451	167
response rate	9.93	11.70	17.59	13.99	9.52	12.25	

Note: ‘Fp’ Folkpartiet (Liberal Party); ‘Mp’ Miljöpartiet (Green Party); ‘S’ Socialdemokraterna (Social Democrats); ‘V’ Vänsterpartiet (Left Party); ‘KD’ Kristdemokraterna (Christian Democrats); ‘M’ Moderaterna (Moderate Party); ‘Fi’ Feministiskt Initiativ (Feminist Initiative).

A total of eight parties are currently represented in the Swedish Riksdag. In the early part of 2015, the party secretaries of six of them (plus the Feminist Initiative as the only other Swedish party represented in the European Parliament) agreed to take part in an online survey of their entire memberships, administered and conducted by the University of Gothenburg’s Laboratory of Opinion Research<sup>5</sup>. In May, these party secretaries received individualized links to an otherwise identical web-survey, which they then distributed to their members via email. The parties approached members with a letter written by us in which members were informed about the research project and guaranteed anonymity. All parties, except for the Social Democrats, sent out the survey to the entire membership list; the full population of members with email addresses was invited to participate in the survey. The Social Democrats sent the survey to a large randomly drawn sample from their membership list. The Swedish membership survey is therefore based on an official sample of registered members as opposed to self-proclaimed party members in a general survey. When it was closed on July 3, a total of 10,392 Swedish party members had completed the survey. The data

<sup>4</sup> Includes the youth organization.

<sup>5</sup> For more information, see <http://lore.gu.se>

were weighted for gender.<sup>6</sup> Table 1 provides an overview of the parties' total membership sizes at the time of data collection and the number of completed interviews.

Despite membership decline in Swedish parties during the last decades, according to general surveys, remaining members in 2013 were in fact more representative of the general population in terms of their demographics and left-right self-placement than in 1986 (Kölln 2015). Members who participated in the 2015 Swedish survey were, on average, in their 50s (mean year of birth = 1960; median = 1957) and joined their respective parties in the last 20 years (mean year of first membership = 1999; median = 2006). The majority of members are relatively little involved in party activities (mean = 6-10 hours; median = 1-5 hours) and around 25 percent of all surveyed members belong now or once did to the midlevel elite with a local or regional, paid or unpaid office. When asked to rank various reasons to initially join the party, most members first choice were political/ideological reasons, followed by social; only 14.3 percent of members said that political career benefits were (very) important considerations to join in the first place. It means that participants in this survey correspond quite well to what we know about party members and their characteristics generally.

## **Measures**

We measured defecting vote choice by asking respondents whether they voted in the last general election in September 2014 (Q79). Individuals that chose the response option 'Yes, and I voted for another party' are coded as 1, everyone else as 0. A total of 7.8 percent (n = 803) of sampled party members reported having voted for another party than their own in the last general election. This figure is somewhat lower than the European average of almost 9 per cent as found in the ESS. Any measure of recalled behaviour introduces potential errors. However, and as mentioned before, party members are more likely to correctly remember their defecting vote given their initial inclination. To the extent that they remember incorrectly, defection is probably

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<sup>6</sup> We have no information on the extent of non-response bias and thus cannot easily generalize to the wider population of party members.

underreported and biased towards lower levels. It is a conservative measure biased towards finding no or small effects.

We measure satisfaction with the party leader with a question that asked members to indicate their level of satisfaction ‘with the leadership’ (Q91\_2), which was measured on a five-point scale, where 1 refers to ‘not at all satisfied’ and 5 to ‘very satisfied’. For the purpose of this analysis we reversed the coding so that the variable now measures degrees of dissatisfaction with the leadership. Mean levels of dissatisfaction are at 2.33 (sd = 1.11) and indicate that members are in general quite happy with their leaders.

To measure general ideological incongruence we take the absolute distance between a party member’s self-placement on a 0-10 general left-right scale (Q34) and that member’s placement of the party on the same 0-10 general left-right scale (Q35).<sup>7</sup> Higher values mean that respondents place themselves further away from their party while lower numbers indicate that members see themselves as more towards their party. We interact this measure with a binary variable that indicates whether respondents placed themselves further to the right (= 1) of their party or not (= 0). We do this in an attempt to ascertain the specific cross-party pressure brought to bear on right-leaning party members by the rapidly growing, extreme right Sweden Democrats. The combination of these measures provides information on the strength and direction of ideological incongruence.

This measure depends entirely on party members’ perceptions of parties’ positions, which do not necessarily reflect the ‘true’ position of the party. However, the use of mass-based survey placements of parties in congruence scholarship is not without precedent (cf. Blais and Bodet 2006; Powell 2009; Golder and Stramski 2010)<sup>8</sup>, and for now we are more interested in what makes individual members *believe* they are

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<sup>7</sup> Specific wording of these and other questions are included in the questionnaire for the survey, which is available at the Gothenburg Party Research Group website: <http://pol.gu.se/partiforskningsprogrammet/Forskning+om+partier/partimedlemsundersokning>

<sup>8</sup> Mean left-right placements by experts and mass survey respondents also correlate rather highly with one another (Dalton and McAllister 2015, Bakker et al 2015a).

close or far from a party – and the consequences of this – rather than if they actually are as close or far from the position of the party as they think they are. Our operationalization therefore captures the difference respondents see between their own ideological position and the party's. This is also emphasized in the questionnaire through the ordering of the questions. They were asked in direct succession and thus prompted respondents to make a comparative assessment. Our measure of incongruence shows that a substantial number of party members are not perfectly congruent with their party. Across parties, on average, only around 32 per cent of members reported the exact same ideological position for themselves as for their party. On average, sampled members report a level of incongruence of 1.35 (sd = 1.40).

Party members' attitudes towards immigrants are measured through responses to the statement "Immigrants should be required to adapt to the customs of Sweden" (Q37\_1). Responses range from "strongly agree" (1) to "strongly disagree" (5). This item was chosen because of its emphasis on questions of culture rather than the economic aspects of immigration. Because of the Swedish party system's legacy in terms of 'left' and 'right', the cultural aspects of immigration highlight the differences to established party positions. Additionally, it captures one of the most salient policy positions of the Sweden Democrats. We reversed the coding to generate a measure of stricter immigration attitudes. Across parties, members have on average a value of 3.13 (sd = 1.26) and thus indicate a fairly neutral position on the issue.

## Results

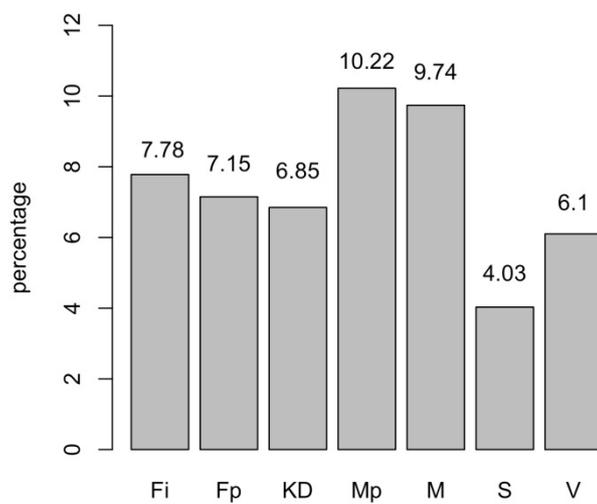
Figure 2 displays the percentage of defecting votes by party. Not surprisingly, the vast majority of party members cast loyal votes in the previous election, but a non-trivial number defected and there is considerable variation across parties.<sup>9</sup> For example, at just over 10 per cent, Green Party voters reported the highest rate of defection in the

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<sup>9</sup> Local-election defection rates for the same day were considerably lower (Kölln and Polk forthcoming), which highlights the potential relevance of national factors, such as dissatisfaction with the national leader and cross-party policy pressures.

September 2014 election. At nearly 10 per cent reported defection, the centre-right Moderates made up the second largest member group that voted for a different party in 2014. These numbers stand in stark contrast to the Social Democrats; just over 4 per cent of Social Democrat party members voted for a different party in September 2014, a considerably lower percentage than any other party.

Figure 2. Shares of reported defecting votes in the Sept. 2014 elections, by party.



We expect ideological incongruence to be positively associated with casting a defecting vote at the 2014 Parliamentary Election, as well as dissatisfaction with the party leader. Yet, we also hypothesized that issue salience of immigration in Sweden and the coupled cross-party pressure of the Sweden Democrats could explain why members of the political centre cast a defecting vote. We expect that members holding less immigrant tolerant attitudes are more likely to cast a defecting vote than those with pro-immigrant attitudes. In addition, this relationship could be stronger for the main centre-right parties, the Moderates (economic) and the Christian Democrats (cultural).

To test this expectation we estimate the odds of casting a defecting vote with a random intercept logit model, where a defecting vote is coded as '1' and all other

voting behaviour as '0'. All independent variables, except for binary measures, were standardized to facilitate comparisons (Gelman 2008). The results are shown in Table 2; entries are odds ratios and confidence intervals.

In the first model, we begin by estimating the effects of absolute ideological incongruence as well as members' age and gender as basic control variables. We also control for members' level of activity within the party (originally measured as an ordinal variable of hours spent on party activity within a month) with the expectation that those who are more engaged in the party will be less likely to defect. In the second model we then interact absolute incongruence with right-leaning incongruence to test whether those to the right of their party are more likely to defect. We then add leadership dissatisfaction (model 3), followed by model 4 that estimates the effects of intolerant immigrant attitudes interacted with party-level dummies for the two largest mainstream right parties. The results show throughout that women are less likely to defect and that age is not a significant predictor of defection.

According to the substantive results of model 1, higher values of absolute ideological incongruence increase the odds of casting a defecting vote substantially and significantly: with a one-unit increase in incongruence we expect to see about 168 per cent increase in the odds of defecting. This is a relatively large effect but it is also plausible because a party's programme is what triggers most members to join a party in the first place. Model 2 then shows that this effect is not moderated by the directional measure of incongruence, meaning that incongruent members to the right of their party are not more likely to defect than everyone else. In the third model the direct effect of absolute incongruence weakens and right-leaning incongruence is no longer statistically significant when the other internal push factor of leadership dissatisfaction is taken into account. In turn, leadership dissatisfaction is a strong predictor of defection. A one-unit increase in dissatisfaction increase the odds of casting a disloyal vote increase by around 132 per cent.

Table 2. Results of modelling defecting vote: Random intercept logit models with odds ratios and confidence intervals.

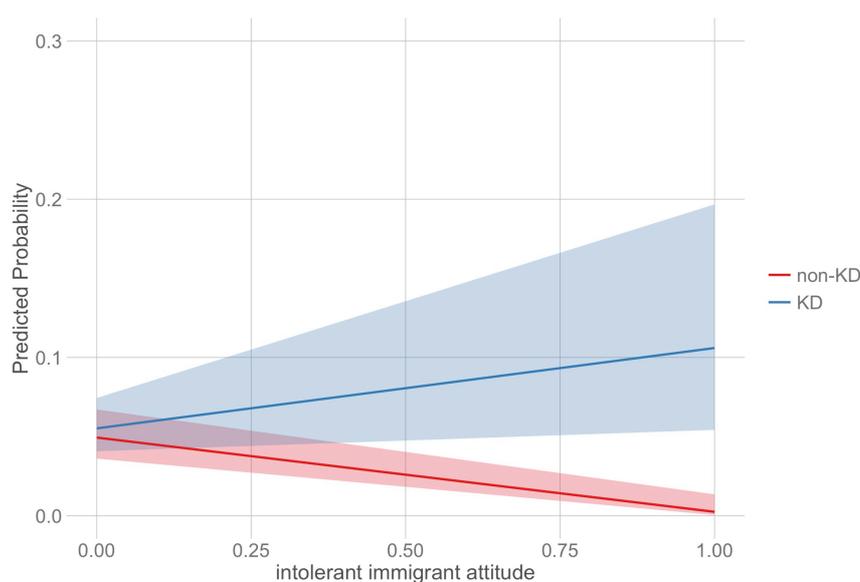
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	<i>OR</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>CI</i>
<b>Fixed Parts</b>								
age	0.93	0.78 – 1.11	0.95	0.80 – 1.13	0.98	0.82 – 1.16	0.97	0.81 – 1.16
female	0.73 ***	0.61 – 0.87	0.74 **	0.62 – 0.88	0.79 *	0.66 – 0.95	0.80 *	0.67 – 0.95
activity	0.26 ***	0.19 – 0.36	0.26 ***	0.19 – 0.36	0.26 ***	0.19 – 0.37	0.27 ***	0.19 – 0.37
incongruence (abs)	2.68 ***	2.34 – 3.07	2.44 ***	2.03 – 2.94	1.97 ***	1.63 – 2.38	1.99 ***	1.65 – 2.41
incongruence (right)			1.26 *	1.03 – 1.54	1.18	0.96 – 1.45	1.12	0.91 – 1.38
abs x right			1.12	0.83 – 1.51	1.06	0.79 – 1.43	1.01	0.75 – 1.37
leadership dissatisfaction					2.32 ***	1.96 – 2.75	2.29 ***	1.93 – 2.72
anti-immigration							0.99	0.78 – 1.25
KD							0.35 *	0.14 – 0.89
M							1.04	0.52 – 2.09
immigration x KD							10.73 ***	3.33 – 34.55
immigration x M							1.42	0.87 – 2.32
<b>Random Parts</b>								
variance intercept party	0.1384		0.1085		0.08849		0.08563	
Observations	8738		8738		8738		8738	
-2 Log-Likelihood	4354.716		4347.483		4254.037		4230.031	
AIC	4366.716		4363.483		4272.037		4258.031	
BIC	4409.2		4420.1		4335.7		4357.1	
% correctly predicted	87%		87%		87%		87%	

Notes

\*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

The effects of the internal factors essentially remain when immigration attitudes are included in model 4. The main effect of intolerant immigration attitudes is not statistically significant. According to the above hypothesis, however, immigration should have varying effects for members of different parties, specifically for members of the Christian Democrats (KD) and the Moderates (M). We expect the effects of immigration attitudes to be amplified for members of both parties. Therefore, the model includes interaction terms between both party-dummies and immigration attitudes. The results show a statistically significant interaction effect for the Christian Democrats, yet not for the Moderates. This only partially supports hypothesis 3. It suggests that intolerant migration attitudes only matter more for members of the Christian Democrats in their decision to defect than for members of other parties. However, even in this specification of the model, dissatisfaction with the leader still exerts strong effects on defection. Figure 3 graphically displays the results for ease of interpretation. The blue line compares the predicted probabilities for KD members across different values of intolerant immigration attitudes to non-KD members (red).

Figure 3. Predicted probabilities for defection across different values of intolerant immigration attitudes, dependent on KD-membership.



As can be seen, at lower levels of intolerant immigration attitudes KD-members do not significantly differ from non-KD members. However, the predicted probabilities

of casting a defecting vote increase the more intolerant Christian Democrats' members are towards immigrants (higher values on the X-axis). This is in line with hypothesis 3 and suggests that the issue of immigration matters for some party members' vote choices more than for others. However, the graph also shows that the effect size is not large. KD-members expressing the strongest intolerant immigrant attitude still only have an estimated predicted probability of 10 per cent to cast a defecting vote.

### **Summary and conclusion**

This paper set out to study the choice of party members to vote for a different party in national parliamentary elections, which data from the ESS suggests occurs across European democracies. Drawing on a high-quality survey of more than 10,000 party members in Sweden we focused on intra-party disagreement and cross-party policy pressures as the primary explanatory variables. Dissatisfaction with the party leader and ideological incongruence are significantly and strongly associated with a higher probability to defect.

Across Swedish parties between 4 and 10 per cent of members defected in the last general election in 2014. This share of members can potentially be pivotal for electoral victories in Swedish elections of 'bloc politics' (Hagevi 2015) but also in other multi-party systems with small electoral margins. Our findings suggest that the emerging and salient issue of immigration provides cross-cutting policy pressure on the cultural dimension and reasons to defect, but that this is not particularly concentrated among right-leaning members. Our findings provide hints that the Sweden Democrats might have even gained electoral support from allegedly loyal party members of established parties. Contested and salient issues not taken up by established parties might be reason enough to defect to new parties – even for party members. But it must be stressed that these cross-party pressures are smaller than those related to internal satisfaction with the member's party. Beyond these system-dynamics, this analysis also leads us to suggest revising the often-cited benefit of members as loyal voters (Scarrow 1994, 2015). The above findings qualify this expectation and indicate that even members, perhaps akin to party identifiers, can go through phases of (temporary) dealignment and realignment.

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## Appendix

Table 1. Summary of individual-level variables.

	min	max	mean	sd	N
left-right self	0	10	4.53	3.18	10,185
left-right party	0	10	4.88	2.58	10,164
incongruence (absolute distance)	0	10	1.33	1.51	10,125
immigration	1	5	2.88	1.26	10,217
satisfaction ideology	1	5	3.97	1.06	10,285
satisfaction leadership	1	5	3.69	1.20	10,179
vote for other party	0	1	0.08	0.26	10,297

Figure 1. Percentage of disloyal identifiers per country, averaged across five rounds of ESS data.

