

Blinded by Out-group Hatred. Why do Radical Right Party Entry Reduce its Voters' Satisfaction with Democracy?

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Abstract

Elections tend to boost satisfaction with democracy (SWD). However, voters of radical and populist parties appear more dissatisfied after elections. These two findings are hardly compatible with the prevailing logic that takes changes in SWD only as a function of the own party results. Instead, this paper adds an out-group logic to understand changes in SWD among affectively polarized voters such as those of radical parties. We argue that changes in SWD would be heterogeneously affected by the radical party (in-group) and the mainstream party (out-group) results. When facing a defeat, a negative affective response to the out-group win will prevail over the positive impact of the relative in-group success. To test this argument, we rely of an novel mixed-method, three-study design conducted over the 2022 French presidential elections, when the radical candidate Éric Zemmour competed for the first time. Using a representative survey, we first establish that Zemmour voters become less satisfied with democracy after the elections. We then recruit Zemmour supporters through Facebook ads to manipulate their perceptions of in-group and out-group success with a survey experiment. Consistently with our expectations, priming Zemmour's voters with the out-group (Macron) potential victory is associated with a negative change in SWD. Instead, none of the pro-in-group conditions has any significant effect. Finally, a qualitative analysis of an open-ended question following the intervention serves to triangulate the affective mechanism and the causal path between negative out-group affects and dissatisfaction with democracy. These findings suggest that, contrary to theories of representation, the institutional inclusion of marginalized political groups may only exacerbate dissatisfaction in highly polarized electoral contexts.

Keywords: Winner-loser Gap; Partisan Identity; French Politics; Mixed-methods; Facebook Ads

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Introduction

Might the institutional inclusion of radical and populist parties serve to reconcile their voters with democracy? This old question is ever more pressing as radical and populist parties have institutionalized through many Western democracies in recent years. To cite but a few, in 2017, the *Alternative für Deutschland* (Afd) was the first radical right party since post-war Germany to enter the *Bundestag*. Two years later, Vox, a new radical right party created in 2013, entered the Spanish Congress of Deputies and became the third political force. In some cases, such as the Netherlands, even more than one radical party (*PVV* and *FvD*) now hold representation in parliament. However, while these parties' platform rely in a great extent on extreme and anti-establishment rhetoric (Polk et al., 2017), it is still unclear how their voters' democratic support evolves when democracy successfully integrates them electorally.

Overall, elections tend to boost satisfaction with democracy (SWD). Extensive evidence confirms that winners become more satisfied than losers (Anderson et al., 2005; Anderson & Tverdova, 2001; Blais & Gélinau, 2007; Daoust & Nadeau, 2023; Singh et al., 2012) and losers more satisfied the better their results (Blais et al., 2017). The most accepted explanation follows an utilitarian mechanism: voters mirror higher satisfaction the higher the utility of their party outcome. However, studies of non-mainstream party voters have called this argument into question. For example, populist radical party voters in Belgium and the Netherlands display lower levels of SWD after elections (M. Hooghe & Dassonneville, 2018; Rooduijn et al., 2016). Even more shockingly, obtaining representation in parliament is associated with a SWD *decrease* among radical party voters (Canalejo-Molero, 2022). These findings are at odds with the prevailing utilitarian explanation. Thus, why do radical party voters become more dissatisfied with democracy despite their parties' electoral success?

A recent research strand suggests that affective polarization moderates the impact of elections on SWD (Janssen, 2023; Ridge, 2020). This paper takes a step further and develop the argument that strong negative affects towards the election winner has a direct negative impact on democratic satisfaction. From a single in-group perspective, new radical party voters should experience a boost in SWD even after modest electoral success, because the institutionalization of their party carries certain objective electoral benefits that should boost the utility of the election (Blais et al., 2017). However, radical party voters are an affectively polarized group Wagner (2021), characterized by increasing negative affects towards the out-group (Hetherington & Rudolph, 2015; Iyengar et al., 2012, 2019; Lelkes, 2016). Bearing this in mind, we argue that if a radical party wins, its voters will experience an SWD increase (Cohen et al., 2022; Fahey et al., 2022; Haugsgjerd, 2019; Juen, 2023; Kołczyńska, 2022;

Rooduijn & Slageren, 2022), as the utilitarian in-group logic predicts. However, when facing a defeat, an negative affective response to the out-group party’s win will prevail over any in-group party success.

We test this argument building on a real-world setting with the emergence of the radical right-wing candidate Éric Zemmour during the 2022 French presidential election. While competing for the first time, Zemmour and its platform *Reconquête* obtained an impressive 7.07% of the vote share, becoming the fourth most voted candidate and surpassing the two mainstream party candidates. Despite losing the first round against the incumbent Emmanuel Macron and the traditional radical right-wing candidate Marine Le Pen, such scenario rendered Zemmour a crucial actor, even in the French majoritarian system. First, he supported the candidacy of Marine Le Pen and could eventually become part of her government if she won. Second, he could gain representation and become an important opposition leader in the first national parliament without a clear majority of the presidential winner. Despite these potential benefits, the election’s winner was still likely to be Emmanuel Macron, the candidate most clearly aligned with the establishment, and the most hated by Zemmour voters. Thus, this setting provides a unique opportunity to test whether changes in attitudes towards democracy after elections among radical party voters are driven by the out-group rather than the in-group results.

Our analysis combines three studies in a novel mixed-methods design which relies both on observational panel data and a social media recruitment strategy for hard-to-reach populations (Schneider & Harknett, 2019). In our first study using representative panel data during the French presidential elections, we establish that Zemmour voters become the least satisfied with democracy following elections, even compared to abstainers, which contradicts the utilitarian expectations. In addition, we show that these voters display the highest out-group negative affects toward Macron’s party following the presidential elections.

In study 2, we conduct an original panel survey experiment *during* the natural setting of the French presidential elections. We identified and successfully recruited a convenience sample of Zemmour’s supporters from the pool of French Facebook users using Facebook targeted ads (Neundorff & Öztürk, 2021a, 2021b). Our experiment, fielded just after the first round of elections, manipulates the saliency of the winning potential of the in-group or the out-group party, Zemmour’s *Reconquête* and Macron’s *La République en Marche*, respectively. We analyse the effect of each treatment on change in satisfaction with democracy and out-group affects. The results consistently support the argument that changes in SWD among radical party voters are driven by negative affects towards the winning out-group. Emphasizing the likeliness of Macron’s win is associated with a negative effect on SWD of almost 1.5

points over a 10-point scale across a wide range of specifications. This is a substantive effect, comparable in size to the winner-loser gap in SWD in low-quality democracies (Nadeau et al., 2021). By contrast, none of the treatments focusing on the in-group’s (Zemmour) political potential had any significant effect, ultimately contradicting the utilitarian expectations.

Finally, study 3 triangulates our experimental findings qualitatively using an open-ended question asking about their overall feelings about the election results. This third study further confirm our experimental results and bring in-depth qualitative knowledge on the causal link between out-group negative affects and growing dissatisfaction with democracy among Zemmour supporters. Zemmour’s voters are more likely to state that elections are rigged and blame the mainstream out-group party for his control over democratic institutions. In contrast, any positive evaluation of Zemmour’s performance is absent. Overall, these findings suggest that polarized radical voters will become less satisfied with democracy despite successfully entering the political system, as they will be blinded by their hatred for the out-group party winning elections. As this represents the most likely scenario when a new radical challenger party enters a democratic system, this poses a serious threat to long term satisfaction with democracy in increasingly polarized contexts (Reiljan, 2020).

These findings contribute to our understanding of the political dynamics triggered by the irruption of radical parties and bridge the gap between three commonly alleged symptoms of the liberal democracy crisis, namely, democratic dissatisfaction, affective polarization and the rise of anti-establishment parties. First, introducing an out-group logic to explain post-electoral changes in SWD provides a parsimonious solution to the puzzling negative effect of elections among populist and radical party voters. Second, the findings suggest a self-reinforcing mechanism leading polarized voters to further division and growing dissatisfaction when losing elections, regardless of their party performance. This may have important consequences for long-term satisfaction and democratic stability overall, as political alternation and the consent to the opponents’ victory are key conditions for a working democracy (Anderson et al., 2005). Whereas it has been largely theorized that the political inclusion of marginalized political groups may have a corrective function for representative democracy (Kaltwasser, 2012; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012), these arguments had neglected the disruptive role of growing affective polarization among voters and the crucial role of out-group negative feelings.

Elections, radical parties and SWD

Since as early as 1978, scholars have theorized about the role of elections on democratic legitimacy (Ginsberg & Weissberg, 1978). Over the years, the accumulated evidence has confirmed two major findings. First, winners of elections express a higher degree of satisfaction with the political system than losers (e.g., Anderson & Tverdova, 2001; Dahlberg & Linde, 2017; Singh et al., 2012; Van der Meer & Steenvoorden, 2018). Second, those who participate in the election display a higher level of satisfaction than abstainers (e.g., Esaiasson, 2011; Kostelka & Blais, 2018; Nadeau & Blais, 1993). Overall, the main implication is that elections play a legitimizing role, boosting satisfaction among participants differently across levels of party success and renewing system legitimacy for the subsequent electoral cycle.

These findings are often interpreted through a utilitarian lens (see Anderson et al., 2005, pp. 23–25). According to this interpretation, winners become more satisfied than losers because of the larger benefits associated with their electoral outcomes. In line with this logic, voters of major coalition partners become more satisfied than those of minor coalition partners, and voters of parties in parliament become more satisfied than those of parties that fail to obtain representation (Blais et al., 2017). Finally, even the latter group experiences a larger increase in satisfaction than those that miss the opportunity to vote, even if only because of the expressive benefits of voting (Kostelka & Blais, 2018).

Patterns of cross-country variation also support this explanation. For example, the winner-loser gap in SWD tends to be larger in majoritarian than in proportional systems, arguably due to the sharper distinction between winners and losers in their access to the executive power (Anderson & Guillory, 1997; Martini & Quaranta, 2019). In the same vein, the gap tends to blur in elections where the winner is not immediately clear, such as in conditions of uncertainty or high fragmentation (Halliez & Thornton, 2022; Kostelka & Blais, 2018). There are also remarkable individual-level differences that lend support to this logic. For example, there is evidence that within-winners variation on changes in SWD depends on the degree of affinity with the party, so that party identifiers become more satisfied than strategic voters after elections (Singh et al., 2012; Singh, 2014).

Despite its empirical consistency, the utilitarian explanation falls short of explanatory power for studies on populist and radical voters. For example, Hooghe and Dassoneville (2018) demonstrate that populist party voters in Belgium display even lower levels of SWD after elections. Rooduijn (2016) finds a similar pattern among populist party voters in the Netherlands. Most recently, Canalejo-Molero (2022) uses post-electoral survey data from more than

70 democratic elections worldwide to show that obtaining parliamentary representation has a negative effect on SWD among radical party voters. Although none of these studies provides definitive evidence on the mechanisms, they challenge the generalizability of the utilitarian argument altogether. Since institutionalization is associated to a series of political benefits, from increased visibility to the capacity of conditioning coalition or policy agreements (Dunn, 2012; Martin & Vanberg, 2020), the reason why radical and anti-establishment party voters become more dissatisfied after elections remains unclear.

The in-group/out-group framework of changes in SWD after elections

Several theoretical mechanisms have been suggested by the literature to explain the puzzling decrease in SWD for populist and radical voters. Hooghe and Dassoneville (2018) propose a cognitive-based mechanism in which populist party voters would become more dissatisfied to maintain consistency with the anti-elite platform of their party. Similarly, Rooduijn (2016) proposes that the parliamentary entry of populist parties would provide them with a channel to amplify their anti-elitist rhetoric and eventually increase dissatisfaction among their voters. However, none of these explanations is supported by accompanying empirical evidence. In contrast, Canalejo-Molero (2022) provides evidence that only those radical party voters who already held strong anti-establishment attitudes *before* the election become more dissatisfied after it. Based on this evidence, it is suggested that parliamentary entry would increase not only the salience of their own party success but also the salience of the mainstream party win, which may trigger a negative affective response. The main novelty of this argument is that it introduces an out-group logic according to which changes in SWD would not only be a function of the own party results but also of the results of the opponent.

We extend and test this argument by incorporating the role of party identity and growing affective polarization in established democracies (Iyengar et al., 2012; Reiljan, 2020; Wagner, 2021) with the utilitarian in-group logic. Our main argument departs from the assumption that populist and radical party voters are, to a certain extent, among the most affectively polarized between their party (in-group) and the mainstream and radical parties on the opposite side of the ideological spectrum (out-group) (Harteveld et al., 2021; Meléndez & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2019; Reiljan, 2020; Wagner, 2021). Given this assumption, changes in SWD after elections would be a function of two factors. The first is the utility of the in-group party outcomes, which is assumed to be positively correlated with vote share. According to this factor, changes in SWD will always be positive and larger the greater the political

benefits associated with the own party results. In line with the accumulated evidence, this utilitarian factor would explain the classic winner-loser gap, which becomes more evident the sharper the differential access to power. The second would be an affective-based out-group factor that varies by the degree of negative affect toward the winners.

For clarity, let us assume a simple scenario with two differentiated blocks and a dichotomous winner-loser status so that if group A is the winner, group B would be the loser and *vice versa*. In this scenario, if the degree of affective polarization between the blocks is low, the out-group factor would be close to zero and changes in SWD would depend exclusively on the utility of the outcomes. Thus, winners would become more satisfied than losers after elections, and losers would still become more satisfied than abstainers. However, if the degree of affective polarization is high, changes in SWD among losers would be negatively affected by the salience of the out-group block win. Henceforth, the net effect of electoral participation by vote choice would be jointly determined by the utility of the outcome for the in-group and the intensity of negative feelings towards the out-group winner.

This argument is consistent with evidence that voters of radical and populist parties become more satisfied with democracy when entering government (Cohen et al., 2022; Fahey et al., 2022; Haugsgjerd, 2019) since the utility of the election would be larger than the out-group penalization. It is also consistent with the available evidence that in-group/out-group identity plays a role in explaining individual differences in SWD. Specifically, Ridge (2020) uses cross-sectional data from the CSES to show that election losers with stronger negative feelings towards the winner display lower levels of SWD. Our argument goes one step forward and suggests that given a clear winner-loser distinction and a high level of affective polarization, losers may display a negative change in SWD after elections.

The main empirical implication of this argument is that, given an affectively polarized in-group and keeping the out-group results constant, better in-group results should increase SWD. Inversely, better out-group results should decrease SWD, *ceteris paribus*. We cannot directly manipulate the results of an election to test these expectations. However, we can leverage a period of electoral uncertainty to subtly increase the saliency of similarly likely electoral outcomes. In this way, we can introduce variation in the perceived success of the in-group while minimizing the variation in the perceived success of the out-group and *vice versa*.

We draw on these implications to derive two sets of testable hypotheses specifically tailored to our setting. The first set of hypotheses tests the utilitarian in-group logic. In our setting, the in-group candidate could benefit from becoming a government coalition partner or playing a minor but potentially crucial role in parliament. Both potential outcomes should increase

the utility of the elections' results. Therefore, we can test whether raising their saliency boosts SWD. The following pre-registered hypotheses¹ capture these expectations:

Hypothesis 1a: Increasing the saliency of the in-group party's representation potential will be associated with a positive change in SWD.

Hypothesis 1b: Increasing the saliency of the in-group party's coalition-making potential will be associated with a positive change in SWD.

In addition, we can provide evidence of the utilitarian mechanism by comparing the relative effect of each outcome. The utilitarian mechanism predicts that positive changes in SWD should be larger the higher the utility of the in-group electoral results. Entering government, even as a minor coalition partner, should permit the in-group to exert a larger influence on policy decisions than playing a key role in parliament. Therefore, the SWD increase associated with the coalition-making potential should be higher than with the parliamentary representation potential:

Hypothesis 2: Increasing the saliency of the in-group party's coalition-making potential will be associated with a larger positive change in SWD than increasing the saliency of the in-group party's representation potential.

The second set of hypotheses focuses on the affective out-group logic. In our setting, the out-group candidate is the other potential election winner. Given that the in-group candidate supporters are highly affectively polarized, increasing the saliency of the potential out-group win should decrease SWD. The following pre-registered hypothesis captures this expectation:

Hypothesis 3: Increasing the saliency of the out-group party's winning potential will be associated with a negative change in SWD.

Furthermore, we can provide evidence of the underlying mechanism. According to our theory, the out-group candidate's win should decrease SWD by provoking a negative affective response among the in-group losing candidate's supporters. Although we cannot test this mechanism directly, we can provide indirect evidence by testing some of its implications. Specifically, we can test whether increasing the saliency of the out-group party win elicits more explicit negative feelings towards it:

Hypothesis 4: Increasing the saliency of the out-group party’s winning potential will be associated with stronger negative feelings towards the out-group party.

Finding support for all the hypotheses would provide strong evidence of an in-group/out-group logic of changes in SWD among affectively polarized voters. Instead, finding support only for hypotheses 1 and 2 (hypotheses 3 and 4) would suggest that electoral changes in SWD follow a single in-group (out-group) logic. We expect to find support for all the hypotheses. However, we depart from the assumption that the in-group party supporters are highly polarized. Given this assumption, the effect associated with the potential out-group win is expected to be particularly strong.

We build on the uncertainty of the 2022 French presidential election to test to these hypotheses. In particular, we focus on the supporters of the new radical right candidate Éric Zemmour.

The case of 2022 French presidential elections and Eric Zemmour’s *Reconquête*

We test our expectations in three studies using a mixed methods approach that builds on the unique contextual setting of the 2022 French presidential elections. In particular, we focus on supporters of the emerging radical right party *Reconquête*, led by Éric Zemmour. This specific case and this group of voters are particularly suited to test our expectations regarding the importance of out-group affects in explaining decreasing satisfaction with democracy. First because this is a natural setting that saw the sudden emerge a new and credible radical right contender. Second, because Éric Zemmour successfully entered the French electoral system, while losing the presidential elections. Third, because the French semi-presidential system and electoral calendar allow us to exploit its sharp winner-loser gap together with the uncertainty linked with future outcomes of the legislative elections. Finally, because Zemmour supporters are among the most affectively polarized voters in the French system, with strong negative out-group affects directed to the mainstream party *La République en Marche* and its leader Emmanuel Macron.

Only four months after announcing his candidacy in November 2021, Éric Zemmour successfully entered the French electoral system by obtaining about 7% of the vote share in the first round of the French presidential elections. Despite this short campaign and the absence of the backing of a long-standing organization, this candidate outperformed both the

established Socialist Party and *Les Républicains*. Eventhough Zemmour lost the first round of presidential elections, its initial electoral success made him and his party a potentially crucial political player thanks to the characteristics of the French majoritarian system and its electoral calendar.

The French system is semi-presidential and majoritarian. Presidential and parliamentary elections are held sequentially and close to each other every five years following a two-round, first-past-the-post system. The President is directly appointed according to the majority rule, while the “second” head of the executive, the Prime Minister, as well as the government, are appointed by the President, subjected to the Assembly’s confidence vote. In other words, in the case of an opposition majority in the Assembly, a “cohabitation” executive emerges where most governing powers are held in the hands of the opposition Prime Minister. With Emmanuel Macron (27.85%) and Marine Le Pen’s (23.15%) first-round victory, together with the increasing fragmentation of the French political space, Zemmour’s party therefore had the potential to become a key partner in government or the Assembly despite his electoral loss. Hence, while the majoritarian semi-presidential system sharpens the winner-loser distinction in France, the doors to becoming a coalition partner within the government or in the Assembly were still open for Zemmour’s *Reconquête* after the first round of the presidential elections.

In addition to these contextual factors, Éric Zemmour’s party and its supporters make a particularly well-suited case to explore the affective out-group hypotheses. By focusing on polarized, radical right voters, we can test the expectation that out-group negative affects play a key role in explaining decreasing satisfaction with democracy. As figure 1 shows, Zemmour supporters in our sample display strong “[...] *positive in-group affect and negative out-group affect towards parties*” (Wagner, 2021, p. 1), corresponding to the textbook definition of affective polarization. Following patterns of affective polarization in multi-party systems, these strong negative affects are directed not only toward the other side of the political spectrum (Mélenchon’s party: *La France Insoumise (LFI)*), but mainly towards the out-group mainstream party, *La République en Marche (LREM)*, led by Emmanuel Macron. According to our expectations, these polarized voters should be particularly sensitive to the increased salience of the out-group mainstream party victory rather than their own electoral success and utility gains. Focusing on these polarized voters enables us to test whether the salience of out-group victory explains radical voters growing dissatisfaction with democracy following elections.

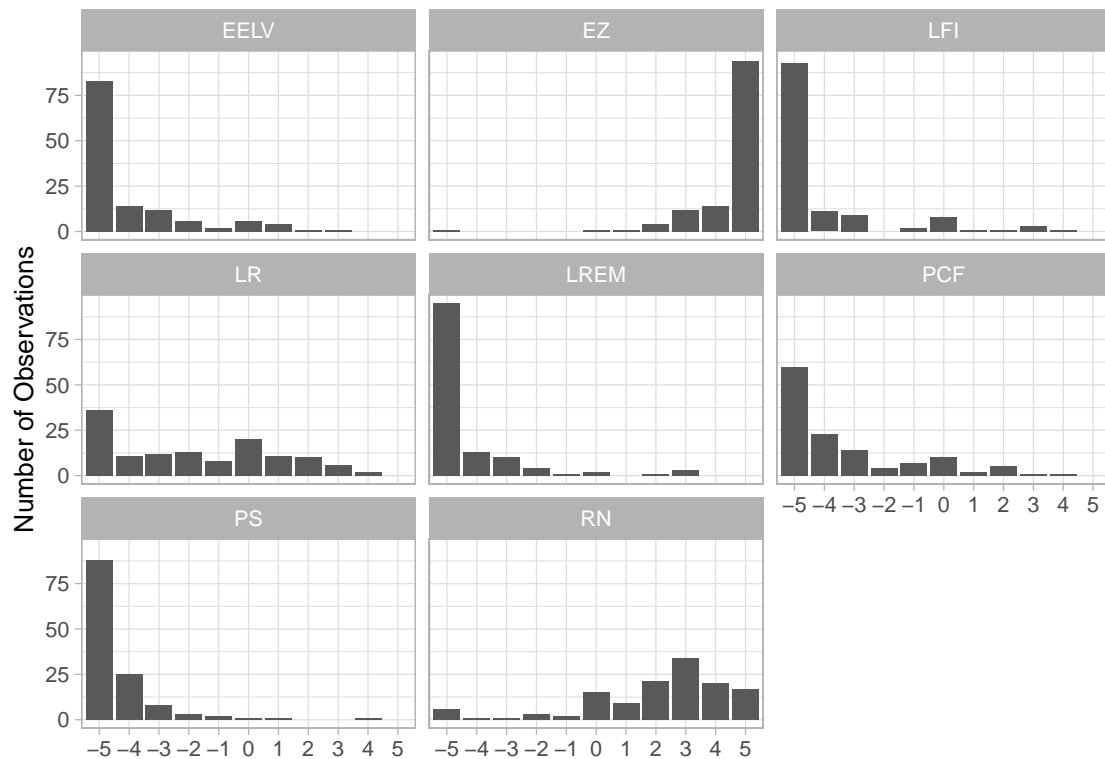


Figure 1: Zemmour Voters Like-Dislike Scales for Each Party

We combine three mixed-methods studies to test our hypotheses and triangulate the findings, building on this unique natural setting of the French 2022 presidential elections and the emergence of Zemmour’s *Reconquête*. Study 1 builds on a representative panel analysis conducted during the French presidential elections. We first establish how different groups of voters react to winning and losing the French presidential elections, where we expect the affectively polarized group of Zemmour voters to be particularly dissatisfied with democracy and to display the most negative feelings toward Macron’s party. To disentangle the utilitarian and out-group affects mechanisms and formally test our hypotheses, study 2 relies on an experimental design. This study exploits the uncertainty following the elections first round’s results to manipulate the salience of utilitarian in-group benefits against the out-group victory. Study 3 explore qualitatively the causal path between out-group affect and lower SWD, and triangulates our quantitative findings through the analysis of open-ended questions on respondents’ feelings towards the elections.

Out-group hatred in SWD change: a mixed-methods approach

Study 1 - The elections effect on SWD

Radical and populist voters were found to become less satisfied when entering parliament (Canalejo-Molero, 2022; M. Hooghe & Dassonneville, 2018; Rooduijn et al., 2016). In this study, we first establish that the French case is no exception to this rule. Our argument posits that affectively polarized voters who support these parties tend to not only focus on utilitarian benefits due to their electoral success, but also that elections will highlight the victory of the most disliked out-group. Consequently, we expect voters of these losing parties to become less satisfied with democracy, especially Zemmour voters, despite their successful entry in the system. In addition, we expect these voters to dislike more the winning party, *La République en Marche*, following the presidential elections.

We test these expectations using the 2022 French election study of the ELIPSS panel. This panel data provides a representative sample of French citizens, interviewed online in five waves from November 2021, when Eric Zemmour was already officially a candidate for the elections, to June 2022 following the legislative elections. In this analysis, we focus on the two closest waves before and after the two rounds of the presidential election, in February 2023 and May 2023, and assess the change of SWD across different groups of voters.

We use two indicators to measure our first dependent variable of SWD change. The question “*According to you, the French democracy works. . . [Very well-Not well at all]*” was used as the pre-election indicator, and “*In general, are you satisfied or dissatisfied of the working of the French democracy? [Very-Not at all]*” as the post-election indicator. Although the wording of the two questions differ slightly, they tap in the same concept of satisfaction with the *working* of democracy, they correlate highly, and both provide an ordered four-category scale, alleviating potential concerns regarding the comparability of these two indicators. We compute the change in this pre-post indicator as our dependent variable. To test our expectations regarding the existence of an out-group affective mechanism, our second dependent variable is the feeling toward the winning party, measured by a feeling thermometer toward this party ranging from 0 to 10 in the post presidential elections wave.

Our main independent variable is vote choice, with each of the four first parties in the first round, as well as abstainers and blank/null voters as a separate category, while we group voters of other parties as a reference category. We model alternatively the change of SWD or feelings toward Emmanuel Macron’s party against vote choice, controlling for socio-

demographic variables of gender, age, education, income and employment status, and the political controls of left right position and political interest. We also control for pre-election levels of SWD to cancel out potential floor and ceiling effects.²

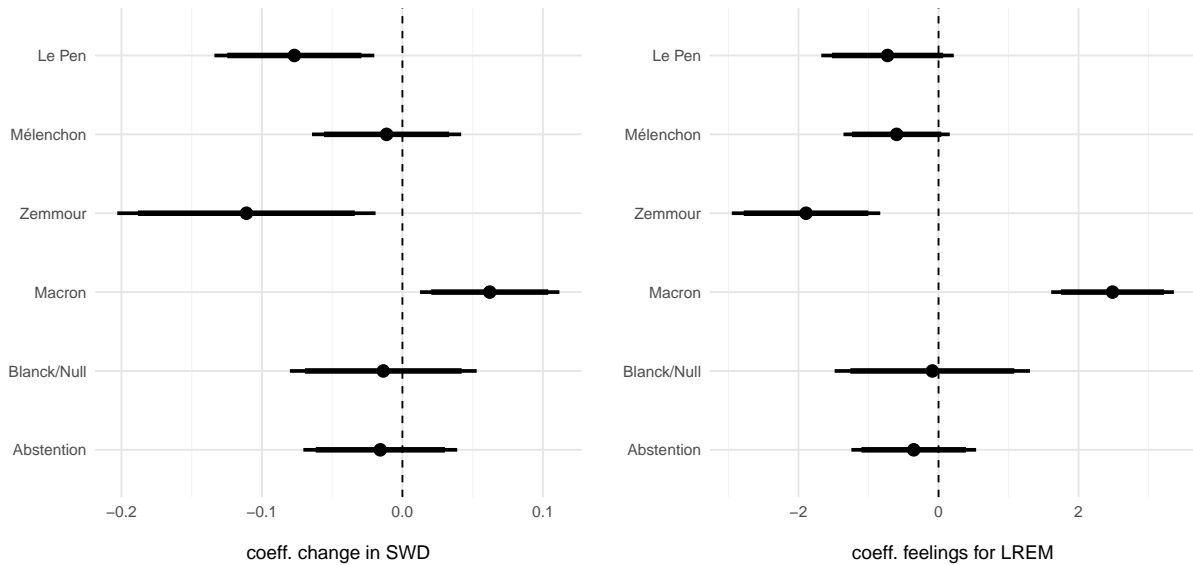


Figure 2: Vote choice effect on SWD (left) and feelings toward LREM (right) coefficient plot

Figure 2 displays the main results of this analysis. In accordance with our expectations, we find that Zemmour voters become the least satisfied with democracy following the presidential elections, despite the fact that their preferred party and leader won 7% of the presidential election vote and that the prospects of entering the National Assembly remained open. Compared to those who voted for candidates other than the first four contenders in the first round, satisfaction with democracy decreased by 0.11 points on the SWD change scale that we normalized to run from -1 to 1. Interestingly, and in line with prior research, those who did not vote for Emmanuel Macron, the elections' winner, are less satisfied with democracy. This is particularly true for Marine Le Pen voters, who faced a sharp defeat in the second round of elections. Finally, Emmanuel Macron's voters became the most satisfied with democracy, as the winner/loser gap literature would expect.

Our expectations are equally confirmed regarding high negative affects toward the most-hated and winning out-group among Zemmour voters. As the right-hand side of the figure displays, Zemmour voters are those who dislike the most the LREM party by about 2 points on a 10-point scale compared to other voters after the presidential elections. It is worth noting that other losers of elections do not significantly differ from abstainers, or other

voters in that regard. Finally, and intuitively, Macron voters like their candidate the most following his win of the election.

These findings support our expectations that Zemmour voters become less satisfied with democracy following a defeat despite entering the political system. In addition, we show that that these radical right voters differ significantly from other groups of voters regarding the intensity of their negative out-group affects against the winner following the presidential election. While the representative nature of the panel data analysis strengthens the generalizability of our findings, they do not allow for the test of our argument relative to the election *activation* of out-group negative affects explaining growing dissatisfaction with democracy. Moreover, the interpretation of the election as a successful entry in the system, following the second round of the election and the new defeat of Marine Le Pen, may be less credible to Zemmour voters given the presidential nature of the system. To test our hypothesis and manipulate the salience of the electoral success and utilitarian prospects of Zemmour voters more credibly, we rely on an experimental design in study 2, taking advantage of the uncertainty between the first round and second round of presidential elections.

Study 2 - Experimental evidence

Manipulating the in-group / out-group success: the experimental design

To test our hypotheses, we pre-registered ([Canalejo-Molero & Le Corre Juratic, 2022](#)) a vignette experiment that manipulates the frame presenting the first round of the election outcomes³. This frame aims to vary the salience of the in-group (new radical right party candidate: Éric Zemmour) or the out-group (mainstream party candidate: Emmanuel Macron) party success following the first round of the elections. As a reminder of our hypotheses, we expect that increasing the salience of the in-group party success should enhance satisfaction with democracy (H1), especially when focusing on the power potential of the executive compared to the legislative power (H2). However, in the case of polarized voters, we also expect that they become less satisfied with democracy when increasing the saliency of the out-group party potential win (H3) by increasing negative feelings towards it (H4).

Our vignettes presented a text describing the electoral ranking of the first four candidates and stating the two winners of the first round of the elections: Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen. While the control condition only displayed this descriptive information, our four treatments complemented it with an additional statement.

The first two treatment conditions (T1a, T1b) included a statement emphasizing the

prospecting success of the in-group candidate (Zemmour) putting emphasis to utilitarian benefits of his entry. While both vignettes emphasized his result positively, the first one put emphasis on the coalition potential in the government (T1a). In contrast, the other emphasized the representation potential in the assembly following the upcoming legislative elections (T1b). As the French electoral system is majoritarian and semi-presidential, we test twice the in-group hypothesis to strengthen the efficiency of our experiment by making more explicit the type of representation and power control accessible to losers of the presidential elections. Differentiating between these two types further allows disentangling whether voters are sensitive to the variation in the utility associated with each outcome.

The third treatment condition (T2) tests our out-group hypotheses underlining the likelihood of the mainstream out-group (Macron) victory in the second round of the elections. Finally, our fourth treatment (T3) serves as a placebo test to rule out alternative explanations for the negative effect of elections on SWD. The goal of the placebo is twofold : to rule out the possibility that any negative frame could lead to negative changes in SWD and to rule out a “normative” alternative hypothesis. Drawing upon the literature on social norms and the radical right (Bursztyn et al., 2020; Valentim, 2021), the placebo condition emphasizes the mainstream censorship of the new radical right candidate. The underlying expectation is that elections might decrease SWD among radical right voters because they increase the saliency of the social norm against them. We therefore include this placebo as an explicit test of this alternative mechanism and an additional hard check for our hypotheses. As an example, table 1 displays the vignettes of the control and the first treatment conditions⁴.

Table 1: Vignettes’ example

Condition	Text
Control	The results of the first round of the presidential elections were known already the 10th of April. Among the competing candidates, Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen passed to the second round. The candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon and the candidate <i>Éric Zemmour</i> were the third and fourth most voted candidates, respectively.
Treatment 1a	+ Some people highlight that the candidate Éric Zemmour obtained particularly good results, especially because the winner of the second round may include him in the new government .

The experiment was conducted within the second wave of a panel study. The first wave of the panel enabled us to collect data on the respondents’ socio-demographic characteristics, their baseline level of attitudes towards democracy and institutions, partisan identification and affective polarization, and vote intention in the two weeks prior to the first round of the

elections. Voluntary participants were then contacted by email to participate in the second survey wave⁵. Using the vote intention indicator, we blocked the randomization into three groups of party supporters: Zemmour, Le Pen, and other party supporters. Blocking on the voting preferences maximizes the number of respondents per treatment condition to secure sufficient power of analysis for our population of interest: Zemmour supporters. We use the two other blocks as placebos, where we do not expect a similar effect of our treatments on satisfaction with democracy and out-group negative affects. In the first placebo group, Le Pen’s block, voters differ because their party won the first round of the elections. By contrast, the “others” supporters group is heterogeneous and not as polarized as the group of Zemmour voters⁶.

Within each block, respondents were exposed either to the control or one of the four treatment conditions. The block of “others” was presented with the same vignettes as the “Zemmour” block. Instead, we modified the vignettes for the “Le Pen” block. For this block, the government potential condition (T1a) emphasizes Marine Le Pen’s potential to win the second round of the election (instead of becoming a coalition partner), while in the assembly condition (T1b), we replace any reference to Zemmour with Le Pen. This modification aims to replicate the experiment on a group of radical right potential winners. This group, as opposed to Zemmour’s supporters, should not be as affected by the out-group win due to the larger utility derived from their outcome. A diagram of the experimental design is displayed in figure 3.

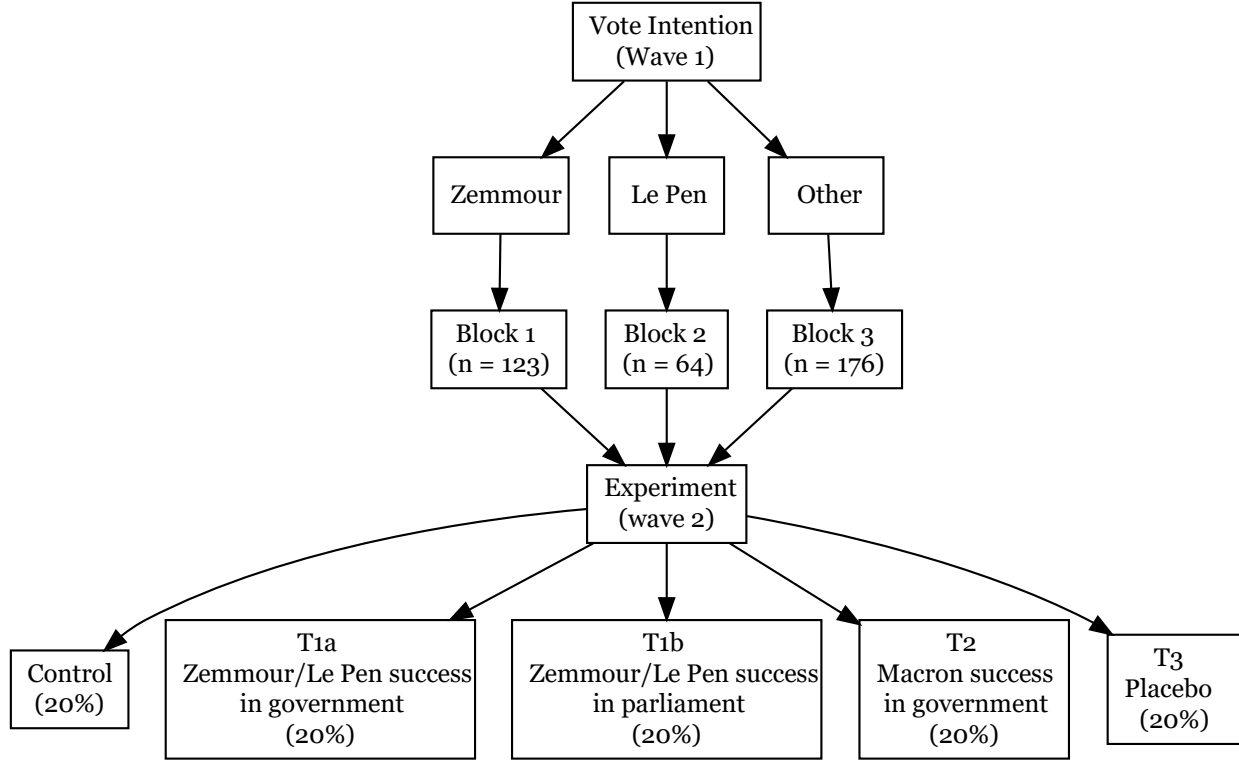


Figure 3: Experimental design diagram

The vignette was followed by the measure of our two dependent variables: satisfaction with democracy and party affects⁷. Satisfaction with democracy is measured with the answer to the question ‘on the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in France?’, whose answer ranges from 0 to 10, 0 means ‘not satisfied at all’ and 10 means ‘completely satisfied’. Change in SWD measures the difference between the post-treatment score and the first wave response (*range = -10 to 10*). Our second dependent variable measures changes in out-group affects. Given that our expectation regarding the effect of electoral outcomes on party affects concerns the in-group-loser and out-group-winner division and not the overall changes in party affects within a multi-party system (Reiljan, 2020; Wagner, 2021), our dependent variable is the change on a 10-point (-5 to 5) like-dislike feeling thermometer for the mainstream out-group party (Emmanuel Macron’s *LREM*). Again, change in affects measures the difference between the second and first wave score (*range = -10 to 10*).

Recruiting Éric Zemmour’s supporters through the Facebook Advertisement System (FAM)

The implementation of the study required that we recruit a convenience sample of potential radical right (Zemmour) voters. However, this group falls within the term of a hard-to-reach population for at least two reasons. First, individual ideological preferences are not typically observable in any official census or public administrative registry in France. Second, radical ideological views are more likely to be hidden in survey responses because of social norms (Bursztyn et al., 2020; Valentim, 2021). Henceforth, we adopted a recruitment strategy to infer radical right preferences from publicly available observable characteristics.

Following previous recruiting strategies from sociological and medical research (Guillory et al., 2018; Pötzschke & Weiß, 2021), we rely on the Facebook Advertisement Management (FAM) system to gather our sample. This service offered by the Meta company enabled us to display an ad linking to our survey on Meta networks (Facebook and Instagram). This service’s advantage is getting access to the wide range of Meta networks users while micro-targeting users on their self-selected publicly observable characteristics.

Our strategy followed two steps. First, we designed the ad to appeal to radical right voters, and Zemmour voters in particular, using keywords and images appealing to the nationalist values corresponding to the political platform of these parties and their supporters⁸ (L. Hooghe et al., 2002; Kriesi et al., 2008; Mudde, 2007). More specifically, all our ads mentioned the French “Nation” or strong feelings toward the “Country” ’s future. In addition, all our chosen pictures accompanying the ad displayed citizens holding French flags. Figure 4 displays an example of one of our sample ads. The exact content of the message and picture varied to target different groups and increase the variability of our sample in terms of gender and age.

Second, we used the Meta targeting tool to select groups of users based on Meta users’ information. We leveraged interest in specific media outlets publicly available on Facebook to refine our target audience. We, therefore, designed our targeting objectives toward Meta users who liked and seemed to consume right-leaning media outlets and TV shows. In particular, we selected users who liked the RTL radio, where Éric Zemmour worked as a columnist prior to his candidacy, or the TV show “*Touche pas à mon poste*”, which was shown to over-represent radical right candidates in terms of broadcasting time (Sécail, 2022).

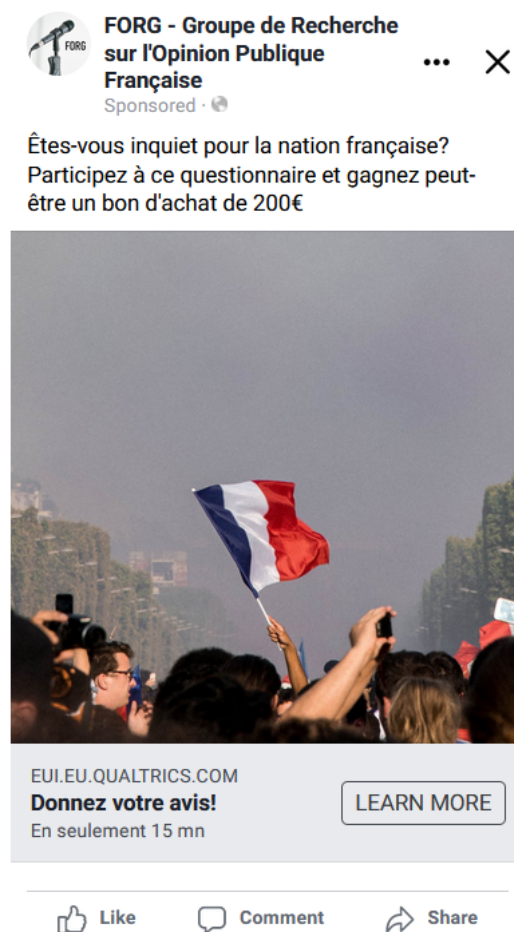


Figure 4: Facebook ad Example

One limitation of this strategy is that it focuses on self-selected social media users who may differ from the average population on a series of underlying characteristics. One specific threat of our sample is that the FB users who decide to participate in a study on social issues might be more politically interested and actively engaged than the average radical right voter. The interpretation of the results should bear this limitation in mind. Despite it, the strategy was largely successful, and our sample of Zemmour voters mirrors those of a representative sample on observable characteristics on gender and age, while slightly over-representing more educated and extreme voters.⁹

Our recruitment strategy succeeded at over-representing radical right and Zemmour’s potential voters compared to the French population. In the experiment sample, 52% of the respondents hold a radical right stance, including 34% of respondents who planned to vote for Zemmour prior to the first round of the elections. Contrary to our expectations, however, a sizeable share (16%) of our sample also positioned itself on the extreme left and planned to

vote for Jean Luc Mélenchon in the first round. Table 2 describes the sample in more detail and the descriptive characteristics of the three blocks of voters that we distinguish¹⁰. As they show, our convenience sample is dominated by right-leaning male respondents, typically older and more educated than the average French citizen.

Table 2: Summary of descriptive statistics

block	Zemmour’s voters			Le Pen’s voters			Others		
Variable	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Gender	123			64			174		
... male	94	76%		44	69%		98	56%	
... female	29	24%		20	31%		76	44%	
... other	0	0%		0	0%		0	0%	
Age	123	47	19	64	55	16	176	48	17
Education	123			64			175		
... Primary school or none	1	1%		9	14%		4	2%	
... Middle School	7	6%		2	3%		3	2%	
... Professional certificate	17	14%		12	19%		22	13%	
... High School	31	25%		12	19%		26	15%	
... University first-cycle	25	20%		17	27%		31	18%	
... University second-cycle	42	34%		12	19%		89	51%	
Left-right	122	9.4	1.8	60	9.3	1.8	164	4.9	3.1

Results and discussion

We estimate two different models to test the hypotheses. The first model tests hypotheses 1, 2, 3 by regressing change in SWD on a categorical treatment variable. The second model tests hypothesis 4 by regressing change in feelings towards Macron’s party *LREM* on the treatment. The main specifications use OLS regression to estimate the average treatment effect (ATE). The baseline is the control group’s average change. Figure 5 plots the coefficient and confidence intervals associated with each treatment condition. The left-hand side figure plots the ATE on change in SWD while the right-hand side figure plots the ATE on change in feelings towards *LREM*.

Figure 5 shows that, in line with the out-group hypothesis (H3), increasing the saliency of the potential mainstream party’s win consistently and negatively affects SWD. Respondents primed with the high chances that Macron - the out-group - would win the election display an average change in SWD close to -1.5 across specifications. This is a substantive effect,

comparable in size to the winner-loser gap in SWD in low-quality democracies (Nadeau et al., 2021). Furthermore, this effect is consistent and systematically statistically significant at a 90% confidence level regardless of the model specification¹¹. The effect also holds after controlling for electoral expectations so that priming about the out-group win decreases SWD regardless of whether the respondents believed that Éric Zemmour would pass the first round¹². The estimates are noisy due to the small sample size ($n=123$). However, finding a statistically significant effect despite this limitation reinforces our confidence that the true effect is substantially large. We also replicates the Finally, an out-of-the-sample replication using the pilot study draws similar conclusions¹³. Bearing these considerations in mind, we can confidently conclude that priming Zemmour’s voters with Macron’s potential victory reduces SWD.

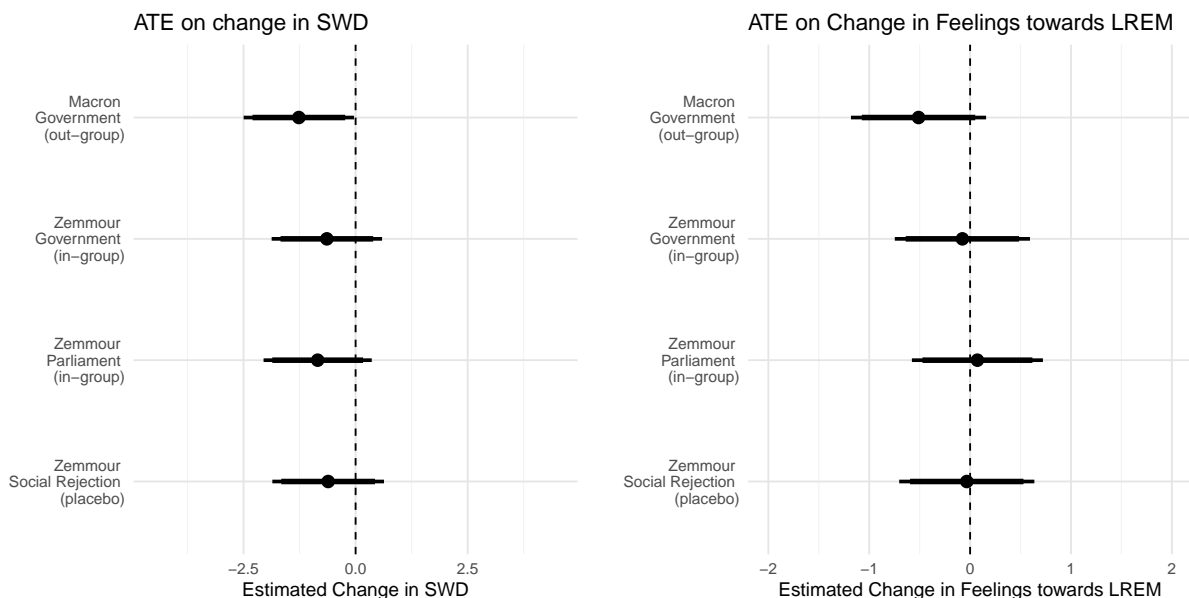


Figure 5: ATE on change in SWD (left) and in feelings towards LREM (right)

Turning to out-group negative affect mechanism, we find that priming Zemmour’s voters with Macron’s potential win also has an effect of almost -0.5 points on feelings towards Macron’s party (H4). While not significant at conventional levels in this model specification, the estimates remain consistent across models, and is statistically significant at a 90% confidence when controlling for socio-demographic variables¹⁴ and robust standard errors. Again, the results must be interpreted with caution due to the low precision of the estimates, but the consistent and sizeable effect increase our confidence in the robustness of this finding. This is particularly striking when considering that the pre-treatment average affect towards Macron’s party is -3.24 on a scale from -5 to 5. Overall, these two pieces of evidence together

lend support to an affective driven out-group mechanism explaining the decrease of SWD among radical party voters when facing a defeat. The victory of a party towards which they hold strong negative feelings seems to reduce their satisfaction levels despite their own party’s electoral breakthrough and further reinforce their negative feelings towards it.

Conversely, none of the utilitarian hypotheses (H1a and H1b) receives any empirical support. Respondents primed with either the potential of Zemmour to be part of the government or to play a decisive role in parliament do not report statistically significant differences in SWD change. Furthermore, the estimated coefficients are always negative, meaning in the opposite direction of our expectations, which speaks against the possibility that the lack of statistical significance is due to underpowering. To sum up, we can conclude that priming in-group success does enhance satisfaction with democracy for Zemmour voters, contrary to the utilitarian hypothesis.

Three more pieces of evidence reinforce our confidence in our interpretation of the findings and help to set out the scope conditions of the argument. First, the placebo condition has no significant effect on change in SWD or feelings towards *LREM*. Although the coefficients associated with this condition are always negative, the potential negative effect of displaying a normative reaction censoring the *Reconquête* platform is not strong enough to significantly reduce SWD. Altogether, this evidence suggests that the cause of the seemingly negative effect of elections on democratic satisfaction is the mainstream win itself.

Second, the replication of the experiment on Le Pen’s voters suggests that the negative effect of the potential out-group win is not strong enough to reduce SWD among potential radical party *winners*. Le Pen’s voters in our sample are equally polarized towards the mainstream and the radical left. However, they differ from the group of Zemmour voters because their party is not new and has a real chance of winning. It must be acknowledged that this sample is significantly smaller ($n=64$), and some of the pre-treatment socio-demographic characteristics are not wholly balanced¹⁵. Therefore, only the specifications that include the control variables arguably identify the ATE and is presented here¹⁶. Despite these limitations, the replication provides suggestive evidence about the scope conditions of the argument. As displayed in the left-hand side plot in figure 6, neither the in-group nor the out-group success treatments significantly affect change in SWD among Le Pen’s voters. On the one hand, these results suggest that affectively polarized voters do not experience any significant change in SWD because of utilitarian reasons unless they clearly win. On the other hand, the out-group win neither significantly affects change in SWD, if not when facing a defeat.

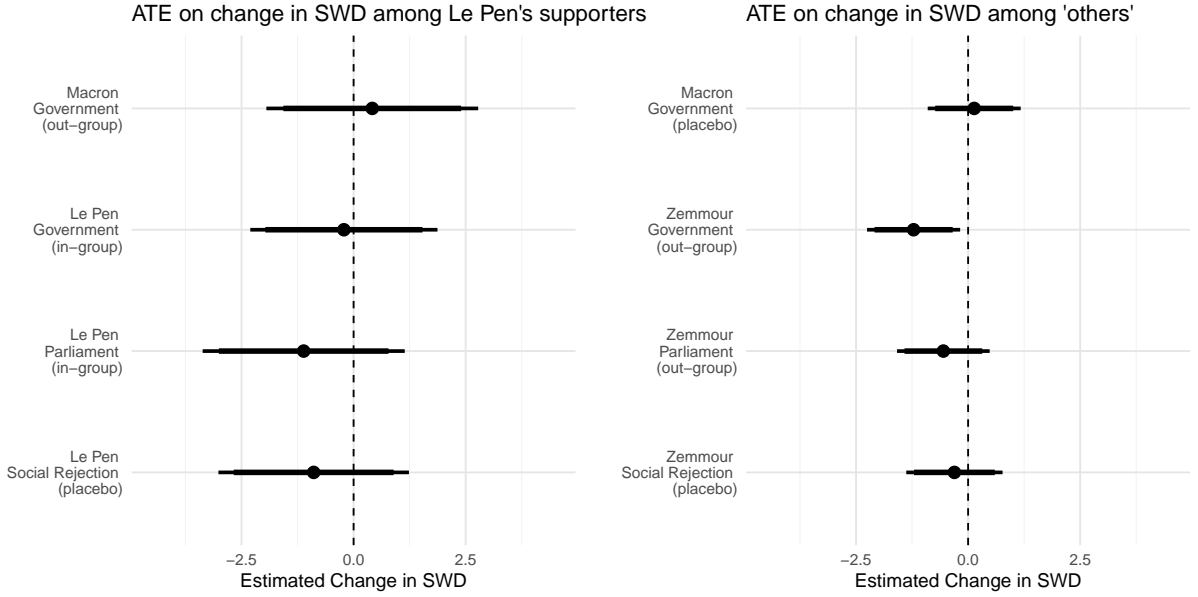


Figure 6: ATE on change in SWD among Le Pen's supporters (left) and 'others' (right)

Finally, the replication of the experiment on the “others” group provides an even stronger case for the prevalence of the affective out-group logic among polarized voters, even beyond radical parties. This group is mainly composed of Melenchon (35.79%) and Macron supporters (18.18%) that share one feature in common: strong negative feelings against the out-group Éric Zemmour¹⁷. The right-hand side plot in figure 6 displays the coefficients associated with each treatment condition for this block. In this group, the respondents primed with the potential win of Macron's party did not experience any significant difference in change in SWD. Neither priming them with the controversial takes of Zemmour nor with the possibility that he plays a crucial role in parliament have any significant effect either. However, those respondents primed with the possibility that Zemmour becomes part of a future coalition government display a consistently significant negative effect on change in SWD.

In view of the accumulated evidence, this finding has at least two crucial implications. The first one is that out-group identities plays a substantially bigger role than utility on changes in SWD under electoral uncertainty and high affective polarization. The second one is that its role is not necessarily restricted to radical parties, but it may affect any group with a strong negative identity against the winner. Unfortunately, our sample of other radical voters beyond Zemmour supporters is not large enough to run the analyses separately for different sub-groups. However, the heterogeneity of the sample argues strongly in favour of this conclusion.

Overall, the quantitative analysis of the experiment points to three main conclusions. First, the utilitarian in-group logic fails to predict changes in SWD in a context of electoral uncertainty, at least in majoritarian systems. Second, an affective out-group logic is better fitted to predict changes in SWD among affectively polarized groups. Finally, and more specifically, the win of an out-group party is a robust predictor of negative changes in SWD among voters with a negative identity against the winner when facing a defeat. In order to triangulate our experimental findings, in particular regarding the prevalence of the out-group affect mechanism, we rely on the qualitative analysis of an open-ended question that follows the intervention. The following section details our approach in further detail.

Study 3 - Qualitative evidence

Disentangling utility and affect qualitatively: the methodological approach

To further explore the mechanisms at play between radical right party entry and its voters' SWD and to triangulate our expectations regarding the role of out-group affects in explaining growing dissatisfaction, we conducted a qualitative analysis using respondents' answers to an open-ended question. At the end of the survey, respondents were asked: *“Finally, in one or two sentences and using your own words, could you describe your feelings regarding the results of these elections?”*.

Triangulating our findings qualitatively using such type of questions is particularly well-suited for identifying mechanisms. Using an open-ended question with a broad scope on respondents' “feelings” enables to strengthen the internal validity of the results. Through their answer, respondents can freely express anything they consider most salient and relevant to them, including elements not related to our expectations. In other words, if the out-group affective mechanism is prevalent in these answers, this would support our out-group hypothesis as opposed to alternative mechanisms. Finally, as both party-affects and satisfaction with democracy are treated as dependent variables and located after the treatment vignette, the experiment can only provide evidence of the co-occurrence of changes in these two variables, while our theory suggests a mediating relationship. A qualitative analysis has the potential to uncover the full causal path that links both phenomena. Hence, by exploring whether and how the different concepts are related in our respondents' answers, a supplementary qualitative analysis enables us to overcome the limitations implicit in the experimental design.

Our analytical strategy to triangulate our experimental findings builds upon the following expectations. First, if an affective out-group logic holds, we would expect to find more an-

swers mentioning negatively the out-group party and its leader (Macron and *La République en Marche*) charged with negative affects, rather than positive evaluations of the in-group party (Zemmour’s *Reconquête*) and references to his performance as expected by an utilitarian logic. Second, if Zemmour voters become more dissatisfied with democracy because of this affective mechanism, we would expect that some of these expressions of out-group negative affects should be related to negative evaluations of the democratic system. To explore whether these open answers are in line with these two expectations, we adopted a systematic coding approach of all 423 open survey answers using three coding categories. A “feeling” code (1), describing the main feeling(s) expressed by respondents in their answer. This code included pre-defined subcategories of feelings and emotions associated with out-group negative affects according to the literature, such as “anger”, “disgust-loathing”, and “fear-anxiety” (Iyengar et al., 2012; Mason, 2018; Reiljan, 2020). A “group” code (2), within which any party mentions and the tone of evaluation or affects (positive or negative), were included. Finally, a “democracy evaluation” code (3), gathering all answers mentioning the working of democracy. This initial and deductive codebook was complemented during the qualitative coding process using an inductive approach to allow alternative mechanisms to emerge from the qualitative data. Practically speaking, other feelings (such as “fatalism” or “hope”) and non-party groups (in particular “the media”, “French people”, or “the extremes”) mentioned by respondents were integrated into the codebook as subcategories. The resulting final version of the codebook and the corresponding number of answers to each of these codes can be found in the supplementary materials¹⁸.

To triangulate our experimental findings and analyze these coded segments, we qualitatively compare the answers of the Zemmour supporters block to the two placebo groups. We expect Zemmour voters to focus their answers and feelings towards the mainstream out-group and express more clearly negative evaluations, feelings and affects towards them compared to the two placebo blocks. The following section describes our findings.

Qualitative analysis of the open-ended question: triangulation of the affective polarization mechanism

Our experimental findings showed that regardless of the relative electoral success of Éric Zemmour’s party, especially considering his late entry into the presidential elections, neither his coalition nor representation potential increases SWD among his supporters, contrary to the utilitarian in-group logic. However, the emphasis on the out-group party victory leads to more dissatisfaction with democracy. This phenomenon, we show, goes hand in hand with stronger negative feelings towards the mainstream party leader. Overall, the qualitative

evidence we present below supports our experimental findings.

The most striking evidence speaking against a utilitarian mechanism among Zemmour voters is the overwhelmingly negative feelings they express and the absence of any satisfaction regarding these elections. The most commonly expressed feelings (present in about 30% of Zemmour supporters' answers) are a form of disappointment, as well as a form of fatalism, given that the upcoming second round of these elections reproduced the outcome of the 2017 presidential elections. When looking at the sources of these feelings, the most often cited cause of these feelings among Zemmour supporters is Macron's victory, as this series of answers illustrate¹⁹:

Q1: *"A great frustration to find a duel Macron Le Pen in the second round. The absence of a sanction vote against Macron."*

Q2: *"Disappointed not to see Reconquête in the 2nd round and to see Macron qualified"*

Q3: *"Deeply disappointed that more than 25% of the voters voted for Macron after 5 terrible years for France"*

By contrast, over the 127 open answers, none mention Zemmour's results as an electoral success and none but one answer mentions the 1st round victory of Marine Le Pen and her party as a promising result for *Reconquête's* weight in the political system. While some may mention Zemmour and his party in a positive light when mentioning his ideas or his campaign, the lack of utility derived from his electoral performance is particularly visible through the absence of "hope" or "satisfaction" regarding the results. This is especially striking when compared to Le Pen supporters' answers, which also display very negative feelings but comprise more hopeful and satisfied comments compared to Zemmour voters.

Beyond being almost exclusively negative, some specific feelings and evaluations of these elections tap more directly into the concept of out-group negative affects as identified by the literature (Iyengar et al., 2012; Mason, 2018). For instance, many respondents also express feelings of disgust, anger, or anxiety regarding the out-group party leader and his victory, as the following excerpts show:

Q4: *"I am disgusted that Macron is in the second round of the presidential election after all the dirty deals he has done."*

Q5: *“Disappointing, Macron is in the second round, 9 million French people vote for this sinister character. They should be made to pay for it, and make them pay dearly.”*

Q6: *“Scary, after 5 years of violence and lies to a level like never known so many people vote for Macron”*

To be sure, the mainstream party out-group and their leader, Macron, are not the only source of these negative feelings and targets of negative affects. Another out-group is occasionally mentioned by Zemmour supporters, and his electoral success is associated with worry or disgust: the radical left out-group represented by Jean-Luc Mélenchon and his party, as the following answer illustrates.

Q7: *“Disappointed by the score of Éric Zemmour, and very worried to see that LFI + LREM cumulate 50% of the votes of the voters while they want to destroy France.”*

However, as the coding table in appendix C1 shows, these references to Mélenchon and *La France Insoumise* are less frequent in Zemmour supporters’ answers compared to the overwhelming mentions of Macron and his party. Respondents, therefore, focus on the out-group party who won the elections.

In addition to parties and leaders, other groups were mentioned in respondents’ comments on elections. The most important alternative source of negative feelings and evaluations comes from blaming “the media” and their “polls”. While this might not seem to immediately relate to our expectations, the more fine-grained qualitative analysis of these answers reveals that these references often connect negative evaluations of the winning mainstream party and general criticism of the democratic system.

Indeed, the qualitative analysis of these open answers supports our expectation that Zemmour voters tie together dissatisfaction with democracy and the out-group party victory. About 30% of Zemmour supporters make some criticism of the democratic process²⁰. Among those, many criticize the result, the electoral process, and the existence of - at least- a bias advantaging the mainstream party winner with media help. At worst, respondents suggest that the democratic electoral process is “rigged” and illegitimate, which is the main criticism of democracy made by Zemmour supporters.

Q8: *“Rigged non-democratic election confiscated by the media subjected to the billionaire friends of Macron”*

Q9: *“A media lockdown orchestrated by the outgoing president”*

Q10: *“Given the fervor of the meetings of Éric Zemmour I thought he would be in the second round and I wonder if the results are not manipulated to make Macron elected.”*

Q11: *“Considering the media pressure and the pro ”Macron” polls I am very bitter because everything is truncated and not at all unbiased”*

Overall, this qualitative analysis supports the experimental findings and show how an affective response against the out-group win overcomes any utility gain from the electoral results. Respondents tie an out-group negative feeling to dissatisfaction with democracy, notably through perceived control of the system through the media.

Comparing these answers to the other two blocks of respondents shows different patterns. As mentioned earlier, the answers from Marine Le Pen supporters display many similarities with Zemmour voters with regard to the strong negative feelings toward Macron and his party, even though their candidate won the first round of the elections. Two main differences are yet observable in this block. First, Le Pen supporters express more hopeful and enthusiastic statements about her candidate and the elections, in accordance with her greater winning potential in the upcoming second round. Second, they do not link the ideas of the out-group party, his control of the media, and expressions of dissatisfaction with democracy or the belief that elections were “rigged” as much as Zemmour voters do. Regarding the other parties’ supporters block, composed in great part by *LREM* and *LFI* party supporters, some polarized feelings toward the radical right out-group were expressed, especially in terms of feelings of fear and anxiety given their electoral success. Focusing on Mélenchon’s supporters, another polarized loser group, show that they also express negative feelings about the electoral process and the working of democracy, but this criticism rarely spills over to claims that the overall system is rigged, unlike the Zemmour block. A lot more focus is put on more specific constitutional and electoral rules in accordance with the *LFI*’s proposal to create a Constitutive assembly and a new Constitution.

To summarize, the qualitative evidence shows further support for an out-group, affective mechanism. The Zemmour block spontaneously expresses negative out-group feelings toward Macron and his party in an open-ended question about the election results. More importantly, many respondents link this negative partisanship with the idea that elections and the system are rigged. Our qualitative data enables us to be more precise about how

these two ideas are linked together in the eyes of these voters. Many of Zemmour’s supporters share the idea that Macron had full control of the system and the outcome of elections by controlling and manipulating the media. Other groups of party supporters do not link these ideas together, including other radical and polarized voters who lost elections, such as Mélenchon’s supporters. However, our qualitative findings also suggest that Marine Le Pen voters may be subject to similar mechanisms in the case of defeat. Her block of supporters displays almost as much negative affect towards Macron as Zemmour’s block, and surprisingly little positive evaluation of her or the system’s performance, even after winning the first round of presidential elections. Overall, both the experimental and qualitative evidence point toward the importance of the out-group negative affects in shaping satisfaction with democracy for polarized radical right voters.

Conclusion

Our findings are rather sobering for the utilitarian in-group model of changes in democratic satisfaction. Using a mixed-method approach, we show in three studies using representative, experimental and qualitative data that new radical right party voters do not become more satisfied with democracy even when their preferred party gains relatively high electoral support in its first election. Instead, we show systematically that negative affects towards the winning out-group party overcome any positive prospects of gaining power through coalition-making or representation, which explains growing dissatisfaction with democracy among polarized voters.

This study, while providing for consistent evidence of the importance of an affective mechanism shaping the effect of electoral outcomes on SWD, suffers from some limitations. First, the French political context is a specific majoritarian and semi-presidential system, which may have affected the credibility of our treatment manipulation. In particular, the prospect of coalition-making or significant weight within the national assembly may seem too optimistic or far in time for voters of a loser party. However, this context still provides a clearer test of the winner-loser gap between party supporters, which we take advantage of in our voters’ blocks comparison.

In addition, the specificity of the qualitative data we rely on for our complementary analysis does not enable us to take a full-fledged interpretative or comparative approach. The open answers were constrained in terms of length, limiting the possible linkages and mechanisms more elaborate answers from our respondents would have allowed. This drawback, combined with the small sample size of our different groups of voters, does not enable us to make a

more systematic qualitative comparison of the three blocks of voters in our study or across treatment conditions. However, the short length of the answers invited the respondents to focus on their more salient feelings. Thus the qualitative and quantitative evidence combined offers robust and comprehensive evidence of the out-group affective mechanism.

Overall, this paper contributes to the literature on democratic support by emphasizing the role of out-group identities in mediating more utilitarian considerations about the corrective role of representation for disengaged voters ([Kaltwasser, 2012](#); [Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012](#)). This paper suggests that dissatisfaction with democracy and affective polarization might be two reinforcing phenomena. Much in line with ([Cohen et al., 2022](#)), we find that emerging radical parties seem to be no cure to this vicious circle, which may threaten the legitimacy of democratic systems in the long run. Ignoring entirely the benefits of entering the system democratically on your first elections and questioning its legitimacy because of hatred toward your political opponent could weaken democratic stability, as accepting electoral (mis)fortunes is an unconditional element of the democratic game ([Anderson et al., 2005](#)).

Acknowledgements

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Notes

¹Table 1 in appendix A1 summarises the pre-registered and exploratory hypotheses.

²All models can be found in Appendix F

³The pre-analysis plan of the experiment is registered in EGAP through OSF and available at <https://osf.io/a4fby>. As mentioned in the endnote 1, the study deviates slightly from the pre-analysis plan by incorporating three exploratory hypotheses.

⁴All the vignettes are displayed in table 3 in appendix A4.

⁵This novel approach led to a large attrition of participants in the second wave. We asked respondents to share their email to complete a second questionnaire. We informed them that only those respondents that completed both questionnaires would participate in the lottery of a 200€ Amazon voucher both to encourage active engagement and minimize attrition. Despite this strategy, only 370 out of the 1199 first wave participants completed the second wave and participated in the experiment.

⁶See the like-dislike distribution of the other two blocks in appendix B2.

⁷Following the treatment vignettes, we also included a question to ensure that differences in our dependent variables were not due to text-comprehension differences. After the dependent variables, we also included a question measuring the perceived success of each party as a manipulation check. The text comprehension check shows that most respondents found it easy to understand the vignettes, and there are no significant differences in their difficulty. However, the question aimed to capture the perceived success of each party fails to show any significant changes across treatment conditions. The manipulation check failure is likely due to the wrong formulation of the question, which asks what parties are considered to be part of the winners and the losers instead of straightforwardly asking about the perceived success of each party. As a result, the formulation captures relative success, which is hard to assess given the uncertainty about the respondents'

benchmark when answering the question. See appendix A4 for the exact wording of these questions and appendix D3 for their analysis.

⁸Table 2 in appendix A2 displays the details on our micro-targeting strategy.

⁹See the descriptives of the representative sample of the FES 2022 of Zemmour voters in Appendix B1.4

¹⁰These groups correspond to the three experiment blocks: self-reported Zemmour supporters, self-reported Le Pen supporters, and self-reported supporters of any other party or abstainers.

¹¹The whole range of specifications are plotted in appendix D5.

¹²One potential concern is that priming about the out-group win reminds Zemmour’s supporters about their disconfirmed expectations of passing to the second round. Indeed, figure 7 in Appendix B3 shows that Zemmour supporters are more likely to believe that Zemmour could be one of the winners of the first round compared to the rest of the respondents. Although more than 60% of the respondents in our sample of Zemmour supporters still hold correct beliefs about the possibilities of Zemmour winning, we replicated all the specifications controlling for this variable to mitigate concerns about the possibility of an indirect effect of our treatment through disconfirming expectations. The results in Table 10 of the appendix, plotted in Figure 24, reassure us that the ATE of priming Zemmour’s supporters with the potential of Macron winning is independent of pre-electoral expectations and holds in either way.

¹³Appendix E displays a description of the pilot study and a plot of the estimated ATE on the pilot study sample. The main result is that priming about Macron’s win, even if hypothetical, reduces Zemmour’s SWD.

¹⁴We include age, gender, latest level of education achieved, and income.

¹⁵Appendix D2 plots the covariate balance between blocks and treatment groups.

¹⁶See Appendix D5.3 plotting all models’ specifications.

¹⁷See the like-dislike distribution of the other two blocks in appendix B2.

¹⁸For more information on the qualitative codebook schema, see appendix C1.

¹⁹Selected quotes always show the full answer. The authors’ translation from French was assisted by the DeepL software.

²⁰See figure 7 in appendix C1.

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Blinded by Out-group Hatred. Why do Radical Right Party Entry Reduce its Voters' Satisfaction with Democracy?

Supplementary Materials

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Appendix A. Experimental design

A1. Summary of the hypotheses

Table 1: Summary of the hypotheses

Hypothesis	Treatment	Expectation
Pre-registered		
Hypothesis 1a	T1a	+SWD
Hypothesis 1b	T1b	+SWD
Hypothesis 3	T2	-SWD
Exploratory		
Hypothesis 2	T1a < T1b	ΔSWD
Hypothesis 4	T2	-OutgroupAffects
Hypothesis 5	T1a T1b < T2	ΔSWD

A2. Summary of the micro-targetting strategy

Table 2: Summary of the micro-targetting strategy

Age	Gender	Ads	Interests
18-39	Female	Ad 1/Ad 2	M6 TV channel/RTL TV/Touche Pas à Mon Poste
40-65	Female	Ad 2/Ad 3	M6 TV channel/TF1/Touche Pas à Mon Poste
+65	Female	Ad 3	M6 TV channel/TF1/Touche Pas à Mon Poste
18-39	Male	Ad 4/Ad 5	M6 TV channel/RTL TV/Touche Pas à Mon Poste
40-65	Male	Ad 5/Ad 6	M6 TV channel/TF1/Touche Pas à Mon Poste
+65	Male	Ad 6	M6 TV channel/TF1/Touche Pas à Mon Poste

A3. Images of Facebook targeted ads

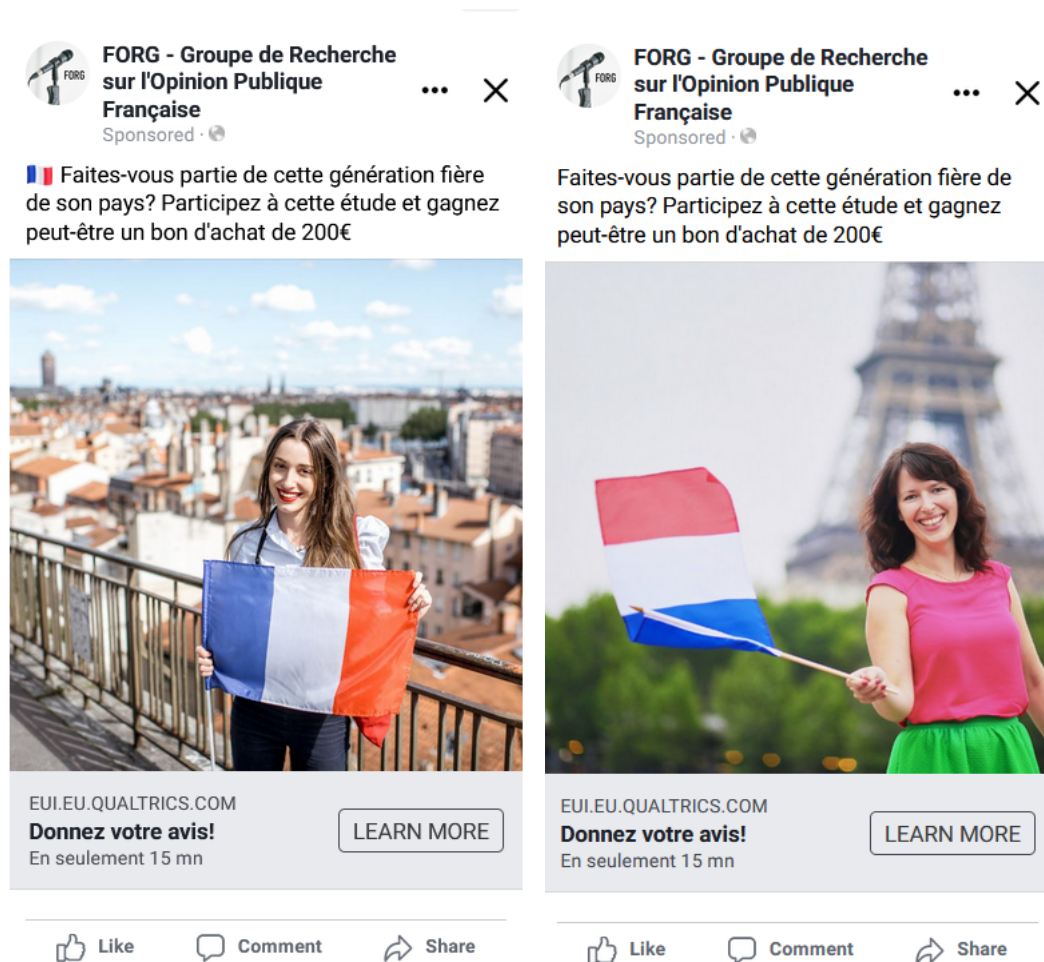


Figure 1: Facebook ads 1 and 2

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Figure 2: Facebook ads 3 and 4

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Figure 3: Facebook ads 5 and 6

A4. Description of the vignettes

Table 3: Description of the vignettes by treatment condition

Condition	Text
Control	The results of the first round of the presidential elections were known already the 10th of April. Among the competing candidates, Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen passed to the second round. The candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon and the candidate <i>Éric Zemmour</i> were the third and fourth most voted candidates, respectively.
Treatment 1a (Zemmour version)	+ Some people highlight that the candidate <i>Éric Zemmour</i> obtained particularly good results, especially because the winner of the second round may include him in the new government.
Treatment 1a (Le Pen version)	+ Some people highlight that the candidate Marine Le Pen obtained particularly good results, especially because he has a great chance of becoming the winner of the second round.
Treatment 1b (Zemmour version)	+ Some people highlight that the candidate <i>Éric Zemmour</i> obtained particularly good results, especially because with the confirmation of these results in the legislative elections, he could play a central role in the National Assembly.
Treatment 1b (Le Pen version)	+ Some people highlight that the candidate <i>Marine Le Pen</i> obtained particularly good results, especially because with the confirmation of these results in the legislative elections, he could play a central role in the National Assembly.
Treatment 2	+ Some people highlight that the candidate <i>Emmanuel Macron</i> obtained particularly good results, especially because he has a great chance of becoming the winner of the second round.
Treatment 3	+ Some people highlight that the candidate <i>Éric Zemmour</i> obtained particularly worrying results, especially because of his controversial opinions during the campaign.

A5. Manipulation checks

A5.1. Perceptions of electoral success

“If you think about the outcome of the election, which candidates do belong to the winners and which to the losers?”

[For all the parties nominated to the first round of the elections]

1. Clearly to the losers
2. Rather to the losers
3. Neither to the losers nor to the winners
4. Rather to the winner
5. Clearly to the winners

A5.2. Text comprehension check

“To what extent do you think this text was difficult or easy to understand?”

1. To a very large extent
2. To a large extent
3. To a moderate extent
4. To a small extent
5. To a very small extent

Appendix B. Data description

B1. Summary of descriptive statistics

B1.1. Zemmour’s supporters block

Table 4: Summary of descriptive statistics - Zemmour supporters

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
munic_size	122	2.3	1.2	1	5
gender	123	1.8	0.4	1	2
educ	123	4.6	1.3	1	6
occup_current	123	5.3	2.2	1	8
income	123	2.6	1.5	1	5
swd_ch	123	0.6	2.2	−4	10
ext_eff_index_ch	111	−0.2	1.5	−4.0	4.0
int_eff_index_ch	112	−0.3	2.0	−6.5	5.0

B1.2. Le Pen’s supporters block

Table 5: Summary of descriptive statistics - Le Pen supporters

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
munic_size	64	1.8	1.0	1	5
gender	64	1.7	0.5	1	2
educ	64	4.0	1.6	1	6
occup_current	64	6.3	1.7	2	8
income	64	2.4	1.5	1	5
swd_ch	64	1.0	2.5	−6	8
ext_eff_index_ch	58	0.3	2.5	−9.0	8.5
int_eff_index_ch	60	−0.1	2.1	−5.5	6.0

B1.3. “Others” block

Table 6: Summary of descriptive statistics - Others

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
munic_size	173	2.2	1.2	1	5
gender	176	1.6	0.5	1	3
educ	175	5.0	1.3	1	6
occup_current	175	5.4	2.2	1	8
income	174	2.6	1.5	1	5
swd_ch	176	0.7	2.1	−7	9
ext_eff_index_ch	154	0.1	1.7	−10.0	6.0
int_eff_index_ch	157	−0.1	1.7	−5.0	4.5

B1.4. Descriptive statistics of Zemmour voters in a representative sample (FES 2002)

Table 7: Summary of descriptive statistics : Representative FES 2022 Sample

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Pctl. 25	Pctl. 75	Max
Gender	53						
... Female	17	32%					
... Male	36	68%					
Age	46	57	12	29	49	69	74
Education	53						
... Primary, middle school, or none	12	23%					
... Professional Certificate	8	15%					
... High School	8	15%					
... University first-cycle	16	30%					
... University second-cycle	9	17%					
Left-right	52	7.5	1.8	2	7	9	10

B2. Like-dislike distribution across blocks of respondents

B2.1. Zemmour’s supporters block

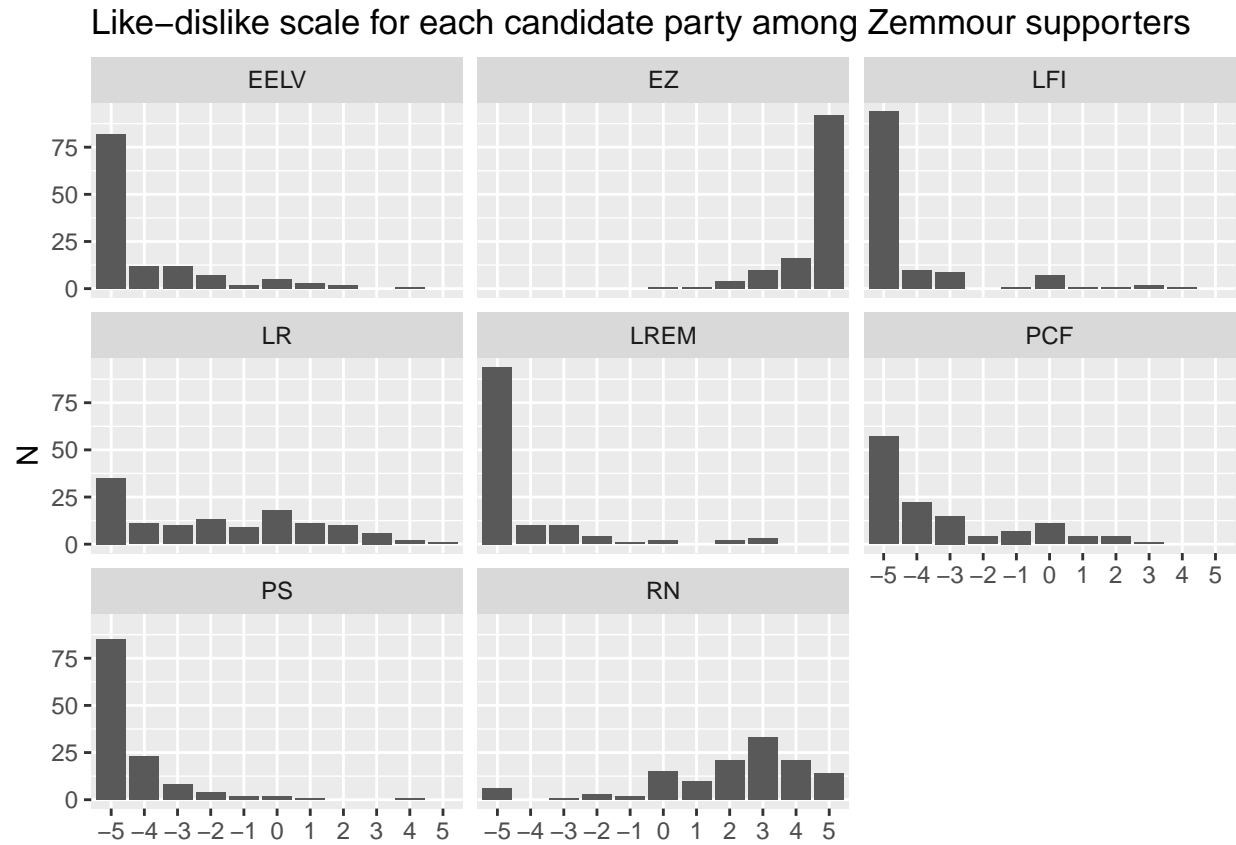


Figure 4: Zemmour supporters like-dislike scales

B2.2. Le Pen's supporters block

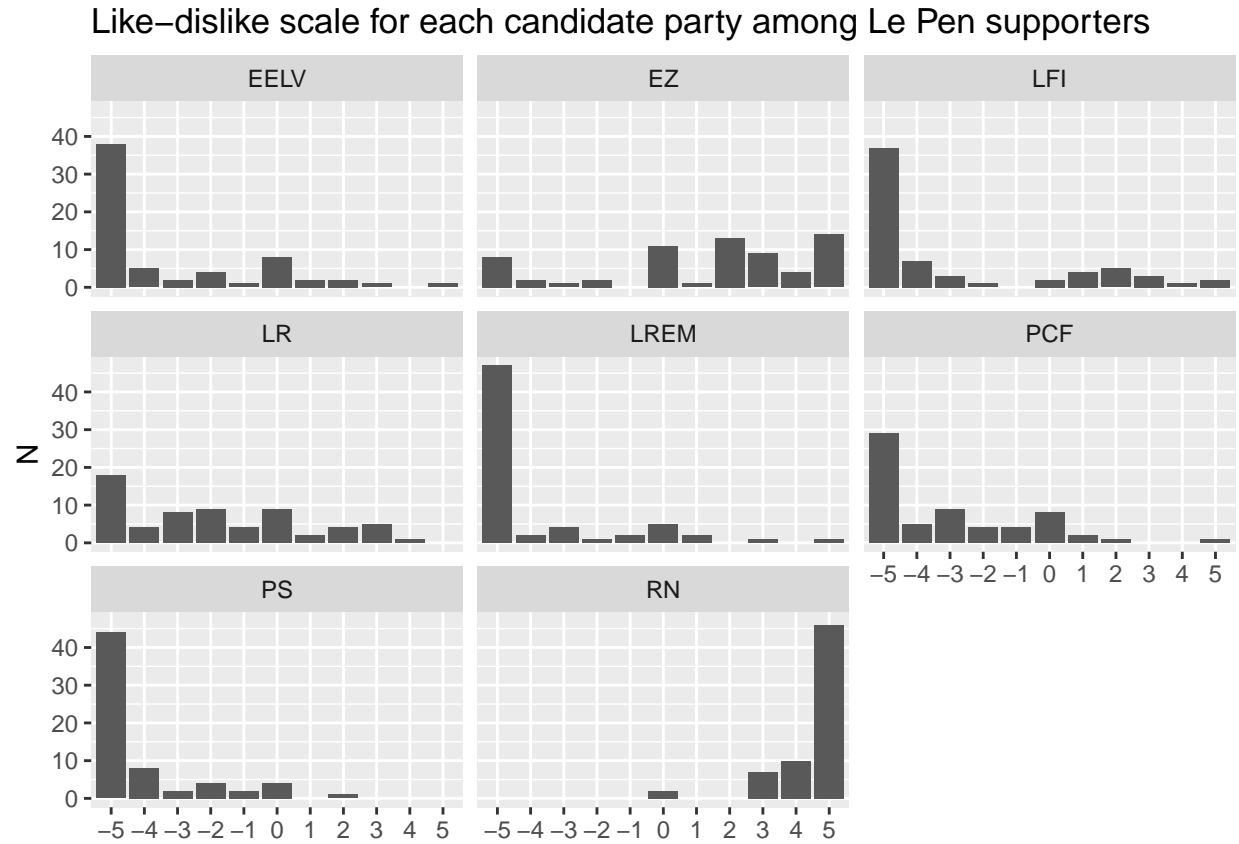


Figure 5: Le Pen supporters like-dislike scales

B2.3. “Others” block

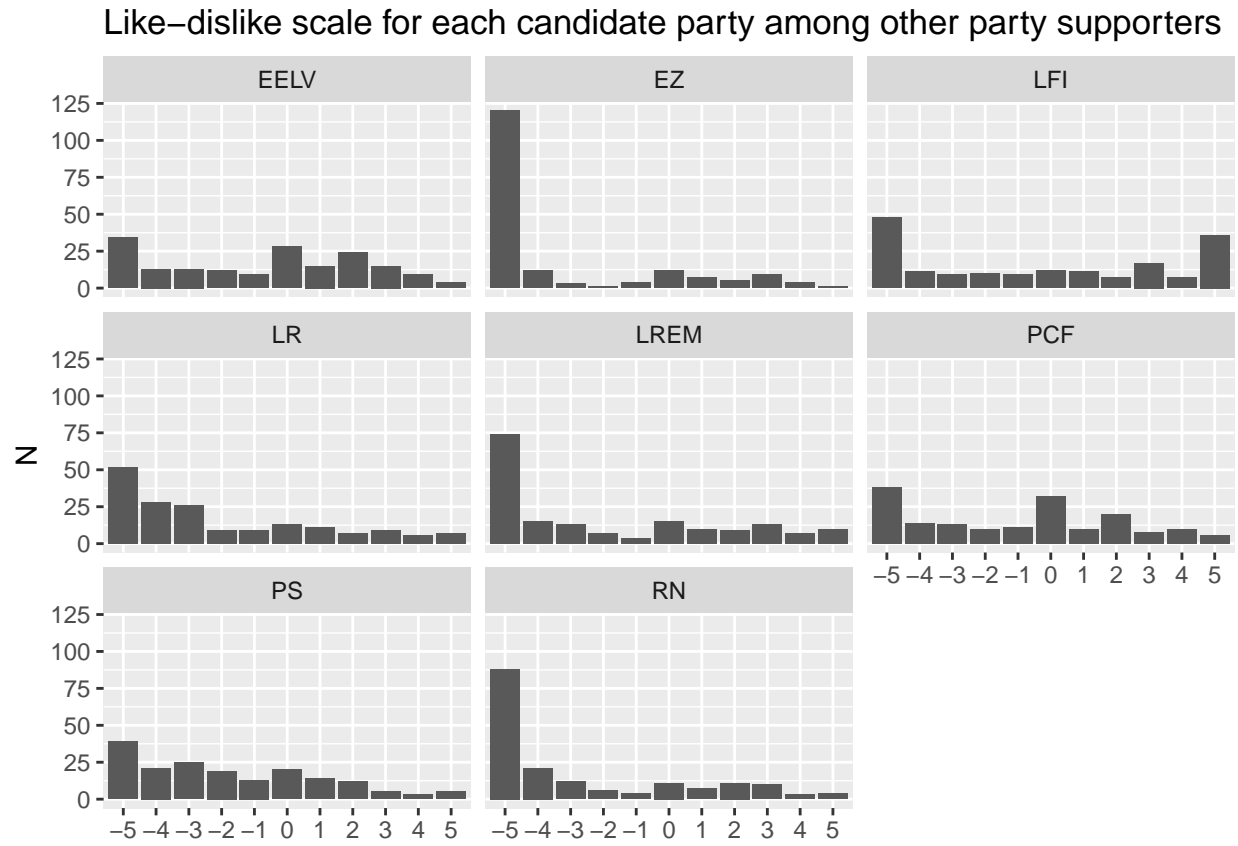


Figure 6: Others like-dislike scales

B3. Distribution of electoral expectations

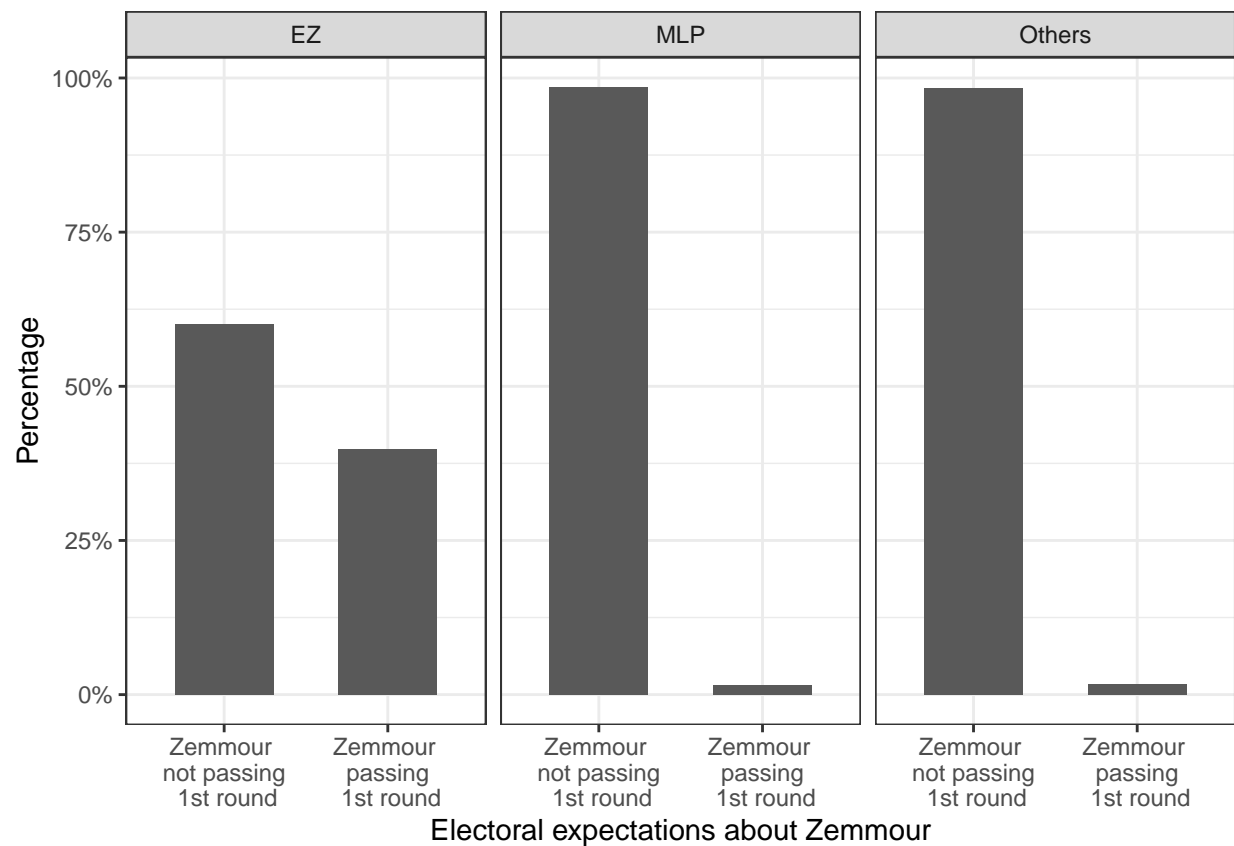


Figure 7: Distribution of electoral expectations

Appendix C. Qualitative data analysis

C1. Qualitative codebook schema and results

Table 8: Qualitative codebook schema and results

Code	Zemmour Block	Prop. Code Z	Other Block	Prop. Code O	Le Pen Block	Prop. Code LP
FEELING	76	59.84	100	55.25	36	55.38
Disgust_ Loathing	5	3.94	10	5.52	2	3.08
Unsurprised	6	4.72	8	4.42	4	6.15
Disbelief	4	3.15	1	0.55	4	6.15
Disapointment	28	22.05	33	18.23	5	7.69
Fatalism	17	13.39	23	12.71	9	13.85
Negative	10	7.87	17	9.39	3	4.62
Fear_Anxiety	8	6.3	15	8.29	3	4.62
Surprised	5	3.94	3	1.66	1	1.54
Satisfaction	2	1.57	5	2.76	5	7.69
Hope	2	1.57	2	1.1	4	6.15
Pride_Enthusiasm	5	3.94	5	2.76	0	0
GROUP	79	62.2	71	39.23	33	50.77
I. POSITIVE	16	12.6	13	7.18	7	10.77
R_Zemmour	8	6.3	0	0	0	0
Radical_Right	3	2.36	0	0	1	1.54
RN_LePen	5	3.94	1	0.55	6	9.23
LREM_Macron	0	0	4	2.21	0	0
LFI_Melenchon	0	0	8	4.42	0	0
Left	0	0	2	1.1	0	0
LR_Pecresse	1	0.79	0	0	0	0
II. NEGATIVE	74	58.27	67	37.02	27	41.54
LREM_Macron	38	29.92	18	9.94	19	29.23
PS_Hidalgo	1	0.79	2	1.1	1	1.54
LR_Pecresse	1	0.79	1	0.55	3	4.62
Radical_Left	2	1.57	1	0.55	0	0
EELV_Jadot	0	0	0	0	1	1.54
Media	21	16.54	11	6.08	3	4.62
French_people	19	14.96	10	5.52	7	10.77
LFI_Melenchon	8	6.3	6	3.31	3	4.62
Elites	4	3.15	6	3.31	3	4.62
Left	4	3.15	7	3.87	1	1.54
RN_LePen	6	4.72	18	9.94	2	3.08
Extremism	1	0.79	3	1.66	0	0
Radical_Right	0	0	5	2.76	0	0
Populist	0	0	3	1.66	0	0
R_Zemmour	9	7.09	2	1.1	0	0
III. DESCRIPTIVE	0	0	0	0	0	0
PS_Hidalgo	2	1.57	3	1.66	0	0
LR_Pecresse	2	1.57	3	1.66	0	0
Left	0	0	1	0.55	0	0
LREM_Macron	2	1.57	3	1.66	0	0
RN_LePen	5	3.94	2	1.1	0	0
LFI_Melenchon	1	0.79	1	0.55	0	0
Extremism	0	0	1	0.55	0	0
DEMOCRATIC EVALUATIONS	40	31.5	49	27.07	17	26.15
Rigged_Elections	20	15.75	16	8.84	12	18.46
Other_Eval_Negative	11	8.66	20	11.05	1	1.54
Electoral_System	5	3.94	11	6.08	2	3.08
Bias	14	11.02	10	5.52	2	3.08

Appendix D. Quantitative analysis of the experiment

D1. Distribution of the treatment among respondents

D1.1. Zemmour's supporters block

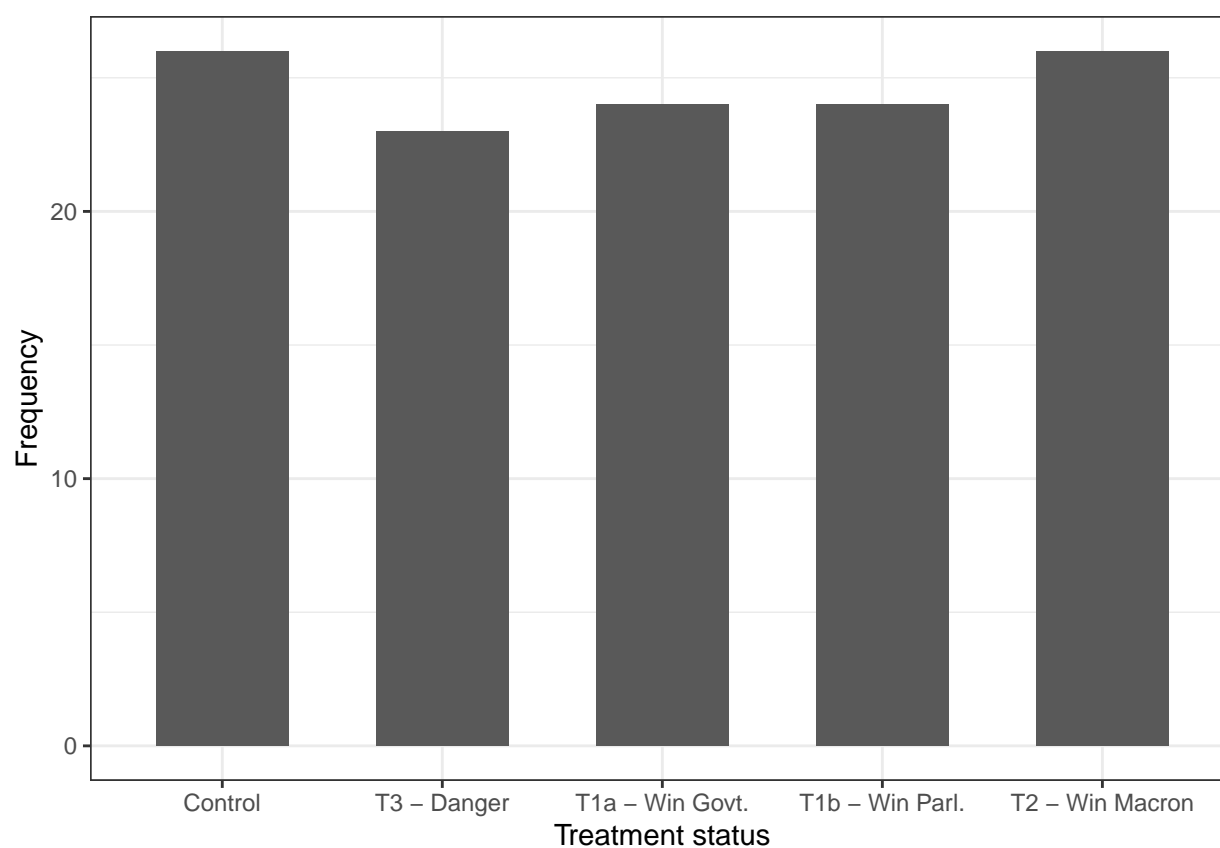


Figure 8: Distribution of the treatment - Zemmour supporters

D1.2. Le Pen's supporters block

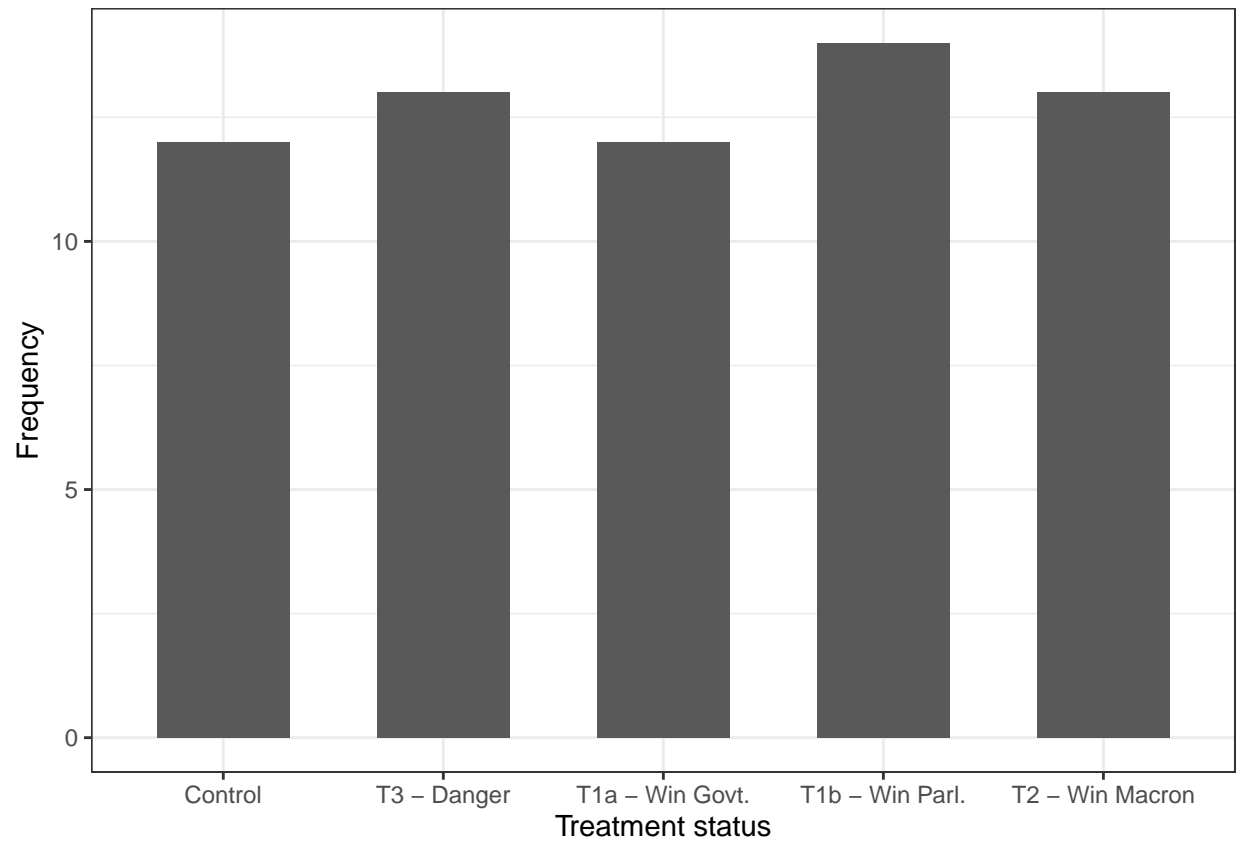


Figure 9: Distribution of the treatment - Le Pen supporters

D1.3. “Others” block

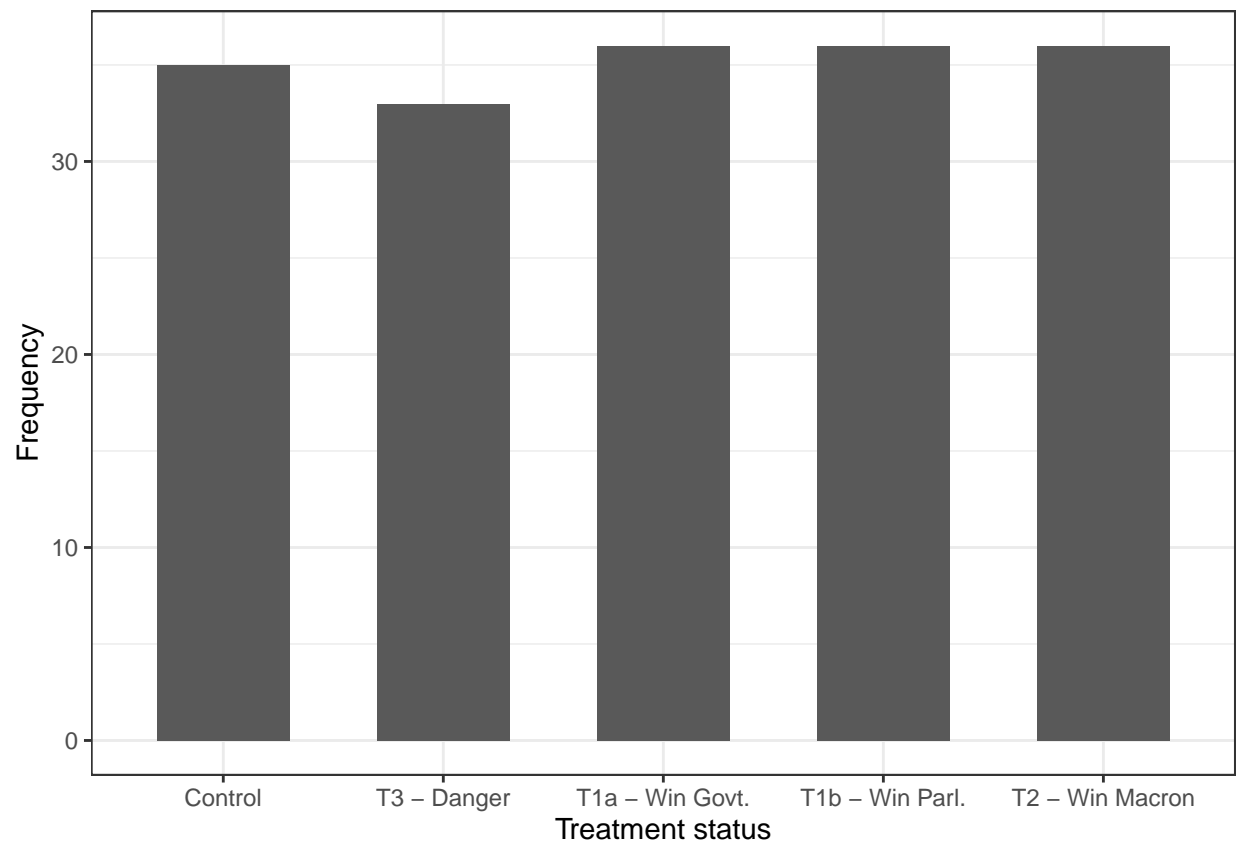


Figure 10: Distribution of the treatment - Others

D2. Covariate balance

D2.1. Zemmour's supporters (block I)

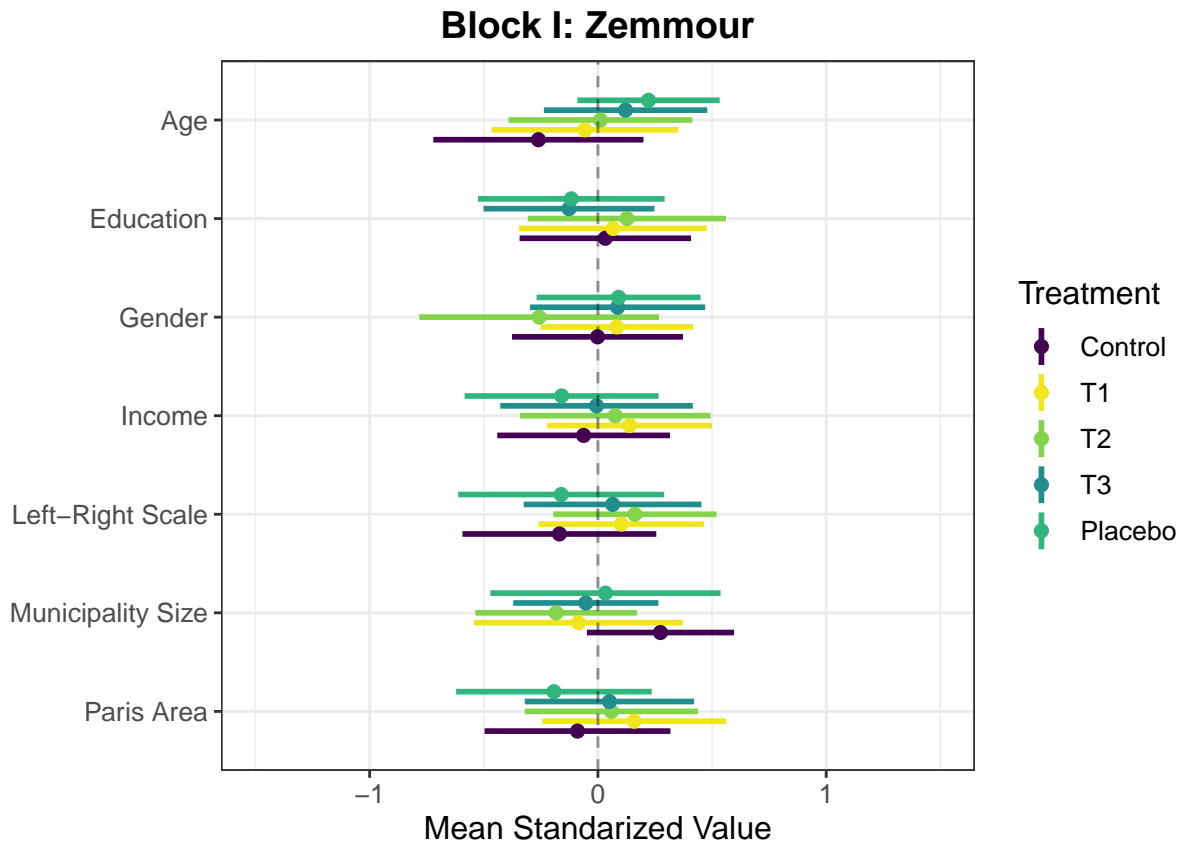


Figure 11: Covariate balance plot block I

D2.2. Le Pen’s supporters (block II)

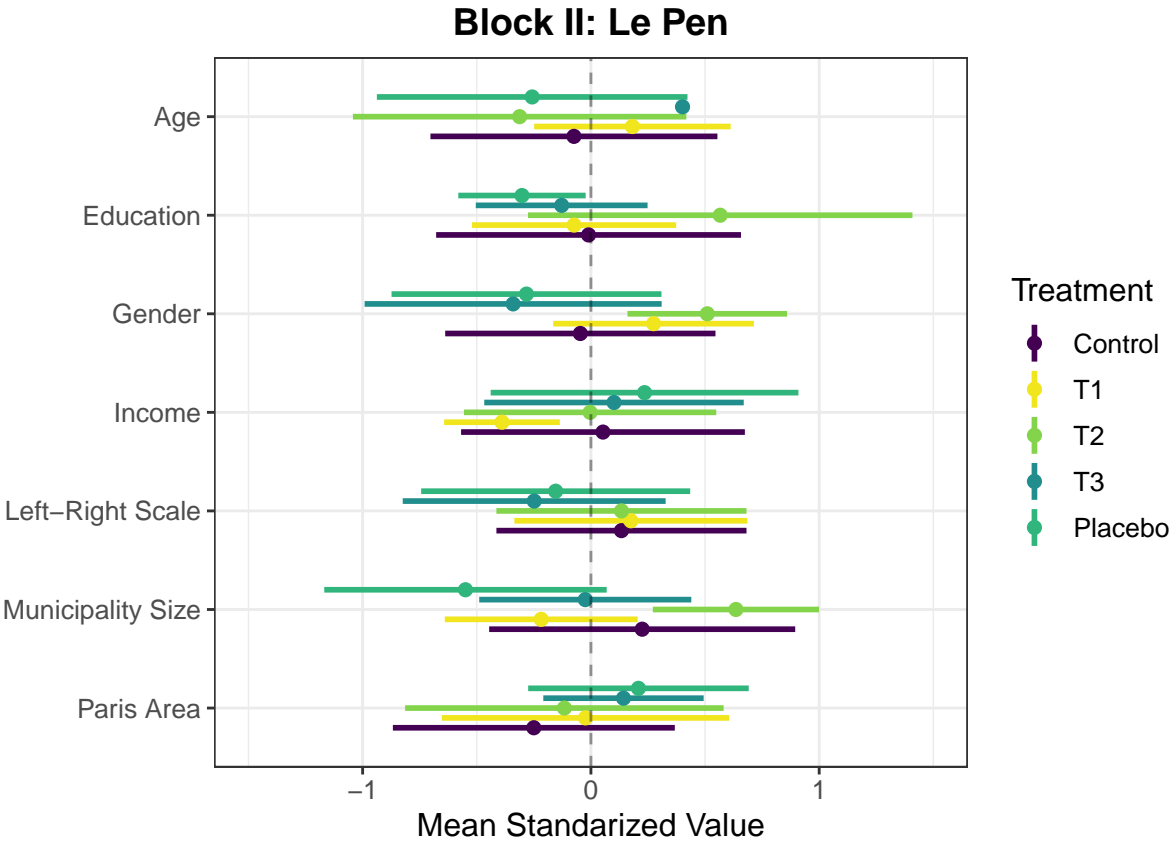


Figure 12: Covariate balance plot block II

D2.3. Others (block III)

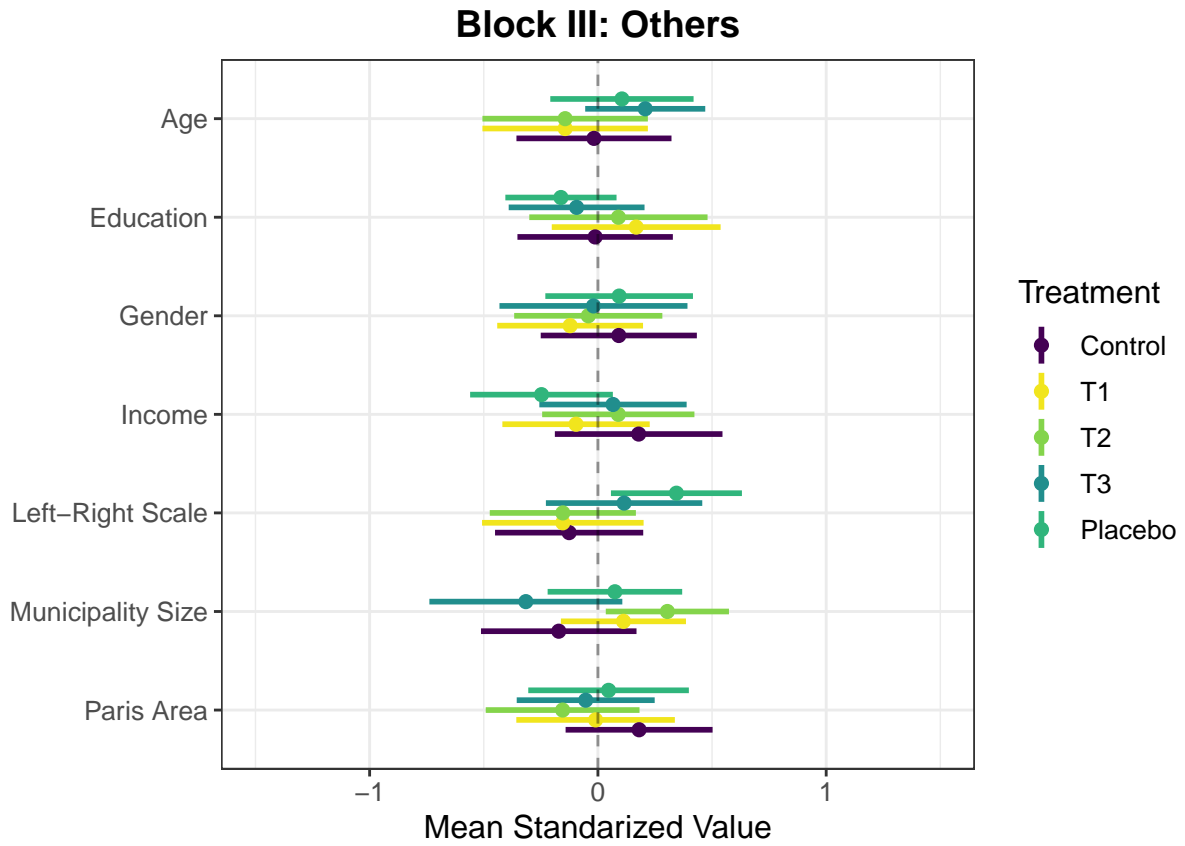


Figure 13: Covariate balance plot block III

D3. Analysis of the manipulation checks

D3.1. Perceptions of electoral success

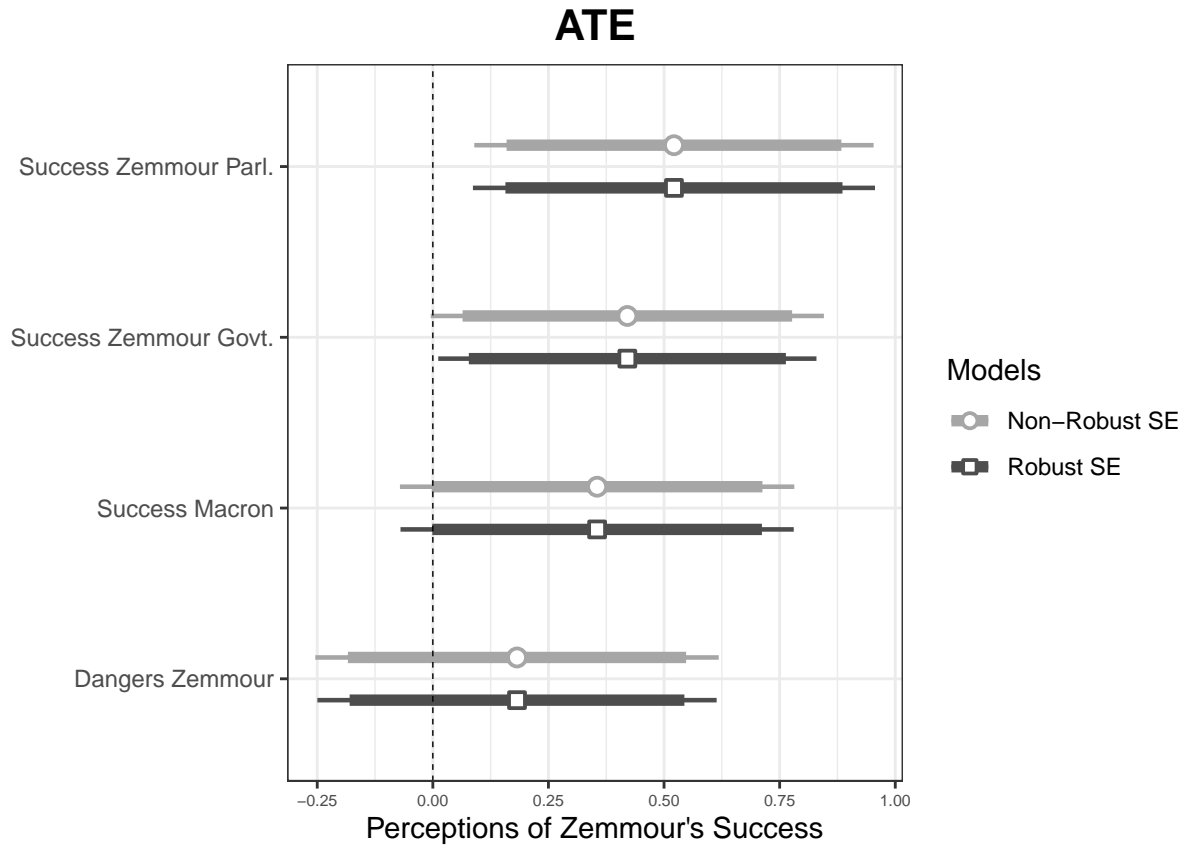


Figure 14: ATE on perceptions of Zemmour as a winner (blocks I & III)

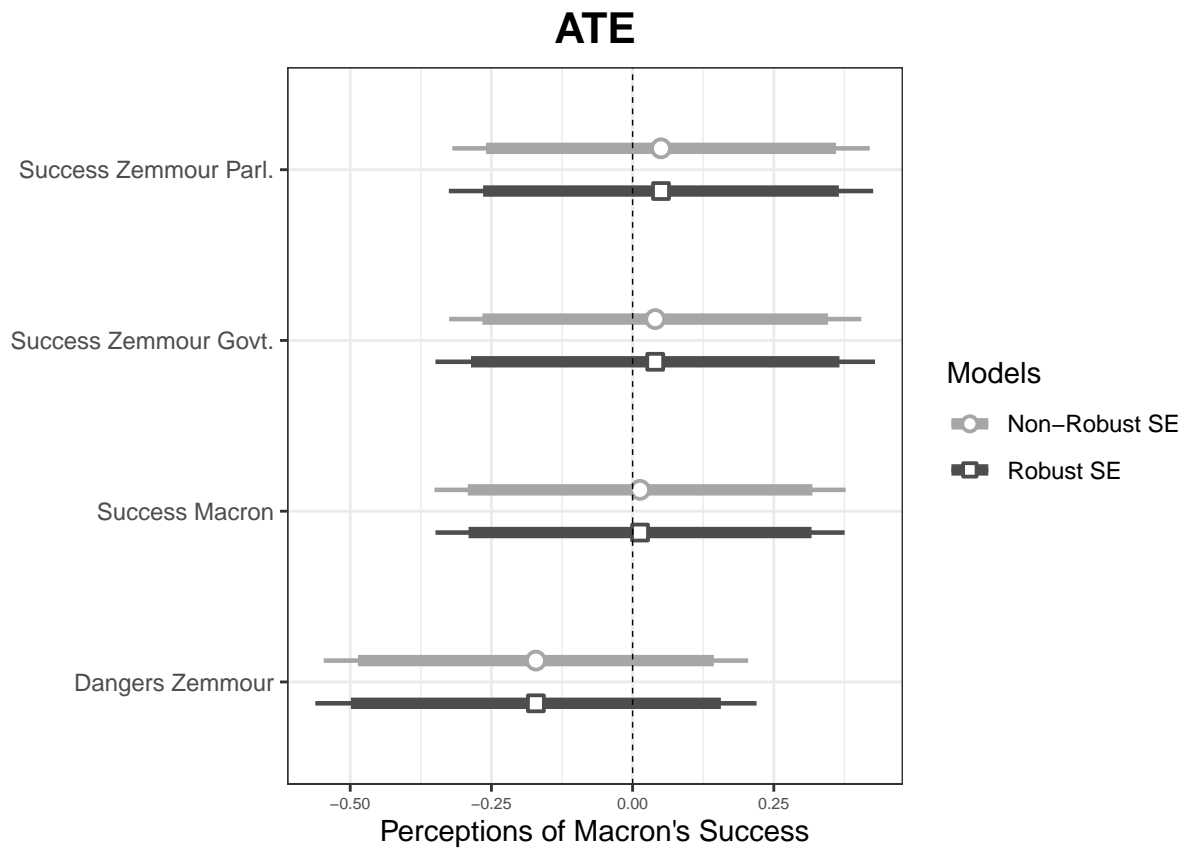


Figure 15: ATE on perceptions of Macron as a winner (blocks I & III)

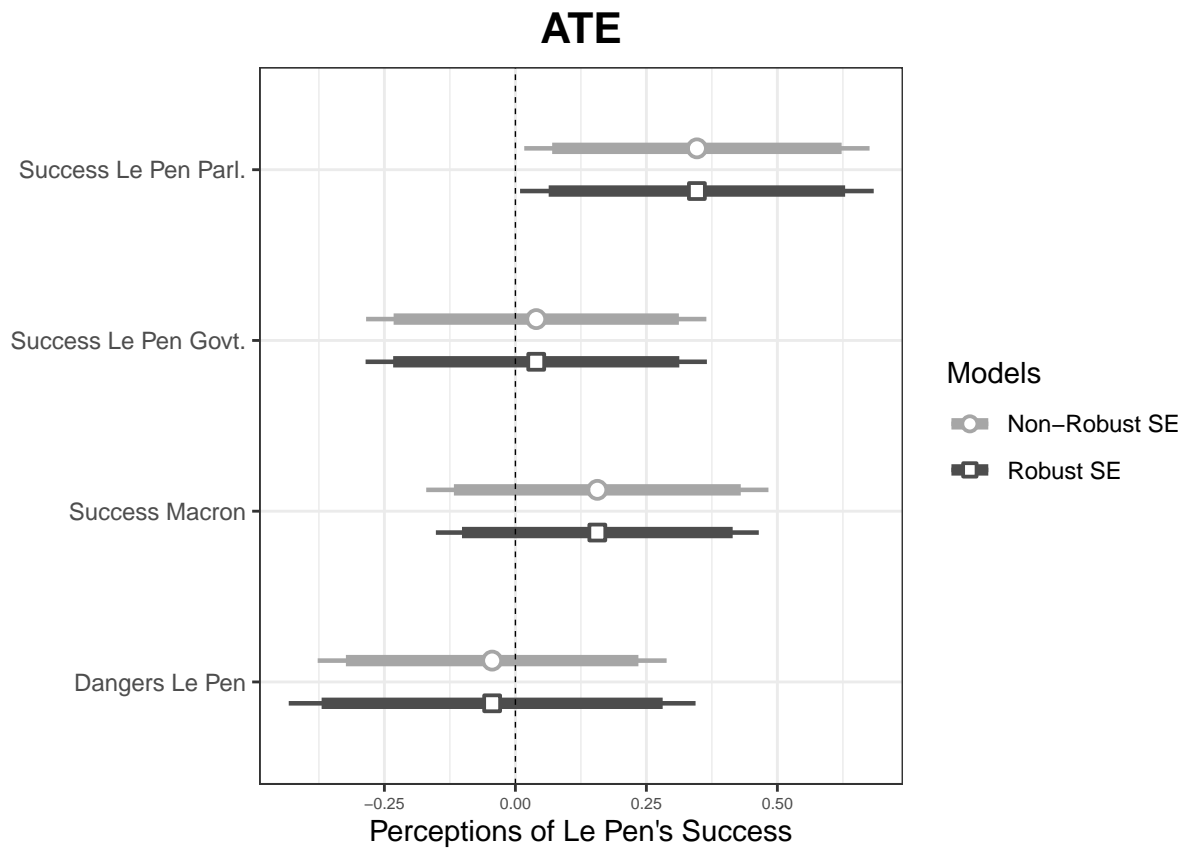


Figure 16: ATE on perceptions of Le Pen as a winner (block II)

D3.2. Comprehension check

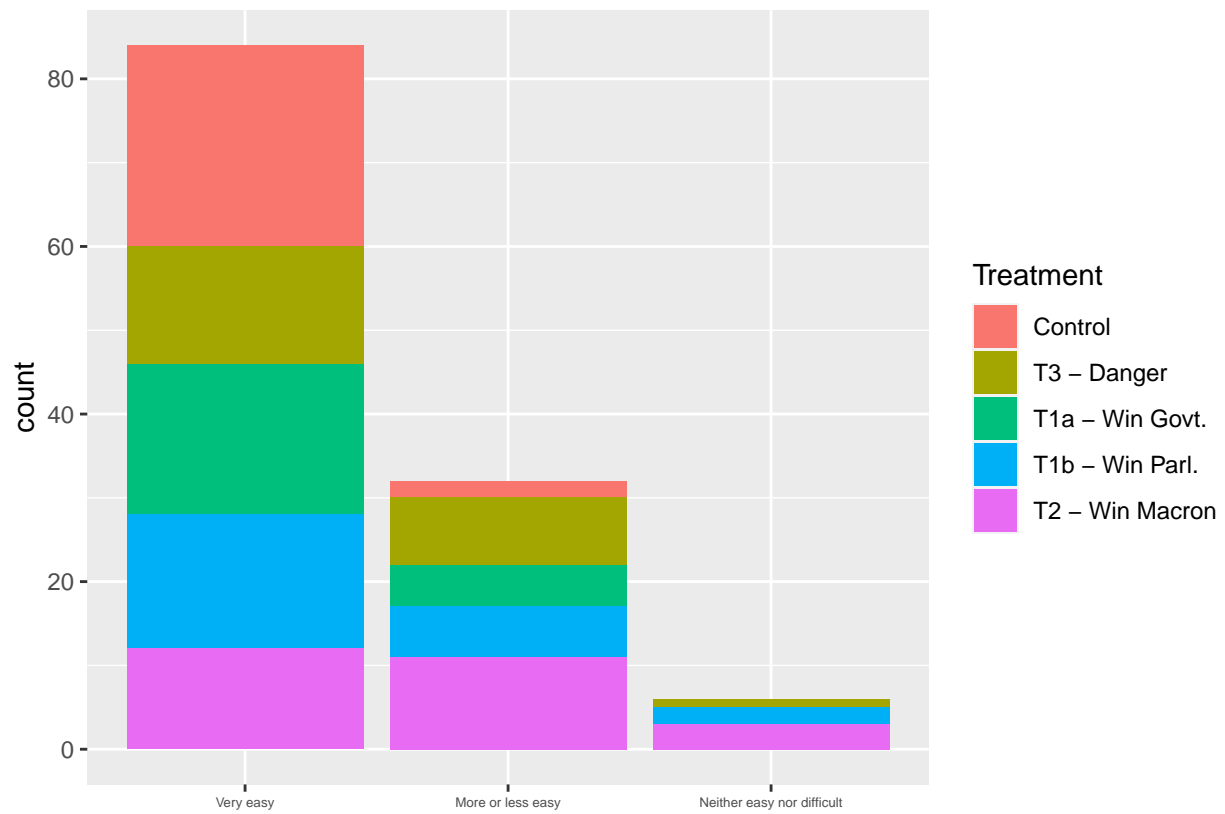


Figure 17: Stacked barplot for the difficulty of each treatment category (block I)

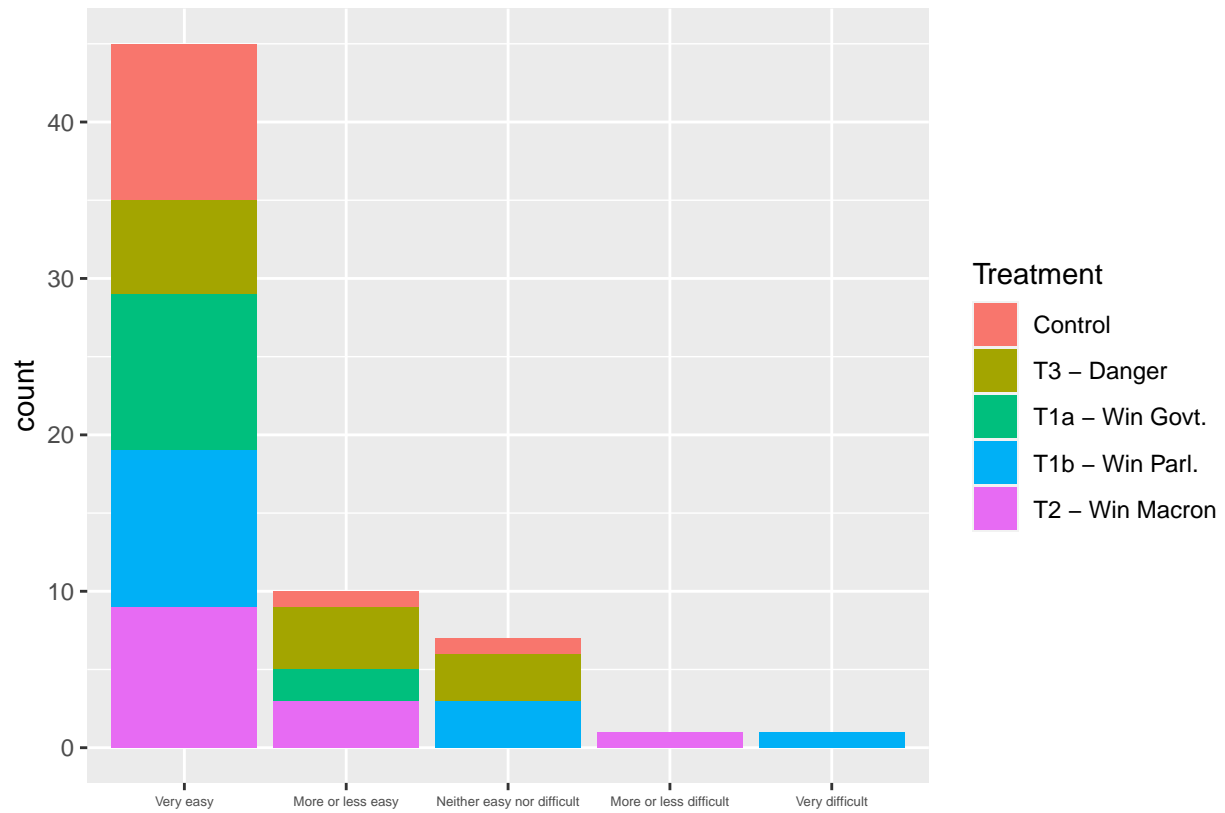


Figure 18: Stacked barplot for the difficulty of each treatment category (block II)

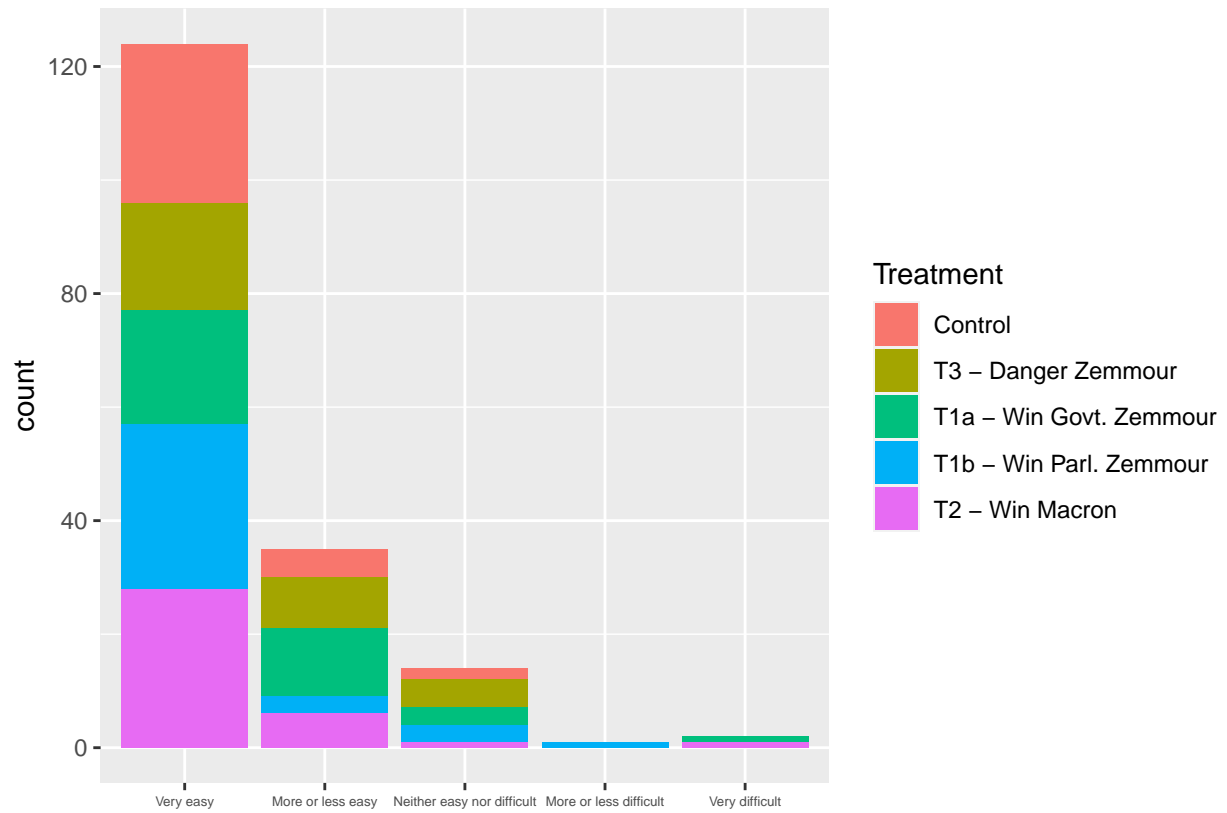


Figure 19: Stacked barplot for the difficulty of each treatment category (block III)

D4. Regression tables

D4.1. Zemmour's supporters (block I) - DV: SWD change

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
(Intercept)	1.31** (0.44)	1.31* (0.65)	1.72 (2.51)	1.72 (1.39)
treatmentdanger_contr	-0.61 (0.64)	-0.61 (0.69)	-0.96 (0.63)	-0.96 (0.69)
treatmentwin_govt	-0.64 (0.63)	-0.64 (0.79)	-0.35 (0.62)	-0.35 (0.66)
treatmentwin_mainstream	-1.27* (0.63)	-1.27 (0.76)	-1.32* (0.62)	-1.32 (0.68)
treatmentwin_parl	-0.85 (0.62)	-0.85 (0.73)	-0.77 (0.61)	-0.77 (0.65)
age			0.02 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)
gender2			-0.34 (0.50)	-0.34 (0.51)
educ2			0.95 (2.38)	0.95 (1.12)
educ3			-0.52 (2.28)	-0.52 (0.76)
educ4			-0.79 (2.28)	-0.79 (0.76)
educ5			0.39 (2.25)	0.39 (0.74)
educ7			-0.04 (2.25)	-0.04 (0.72)
income2			-0.54 (0.59)	-0.54 (0.50)
income3			-1.91*** (0.55)	-1.91*** (0.55)
income4			-2.14* (0.88)	-2.14* (0.93)
income5			-0.66 (0.57)	-0.66 (0.57)
Robust Std. Errors	No	Yes	No	Yes
R ²	0.04	0.04	0.21	0.21
Adj. R ²	0.00	0.00	0.10	0.10
Num. obs.	123	123	123	123
RMSE		2.22		2.11

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; $p < 0.1$

Table 9: OLS Specifications. DV: Change in SWD

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
(Intercept)	1.34** (0.46)	1.34` (0.70)	1.24 (0.82)	1.24 (0.84)
treatmentdanger_contr	-0.60 (0.64)	-0.60 (0.68)	-0.59 (0.64)	-0.59 (0.66)
treatmentwin_govt	-0.63 (0.63)	-0.63 (0.79)	-0.61 (0.64)	-0.61 (0.77)
treatmentwin_mainstream	-1.25* (0.63)	-1.25` (0.75)	-1.25` (0.64)	-1.25` (0.73)
treatmentwin_parl	-0.83 (0.62)	-0.83 (0.71)	-0.83 (0.63)	-0.83 (0.70)
zemmour_winner1str	-0.11 (0.41)	-0.11 (0.35)	-0.11 (0.42)	-0.11 (0.35)
age			0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
gender2			-0.26 (0.50)	-0.26 (0.53)
Robust Std. Errors	No	Yes	No	Yes
R ²	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04
Adj. R ²	-0.01	-0.01	-0.02	-0.02
Num. obs.	123	123	123	123
RMSE		2.23		2.24

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; ` $p < 0.1$

Table 10: OLS Specifications controlling for electoral expectations. DV: Change in SWD

D4.2. Zemmour's supporters (block I) - DV: feelings toward LREM change

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
(Intercept)	0.12 (0.24)	0.12 (0.15)	0.42 (1.39)	0.42 (0.72)
treatmentdanger__contr	-0.03 (0.34)	-0.03 (0.23)	-0.20 (0.35)	-0.20 (0.27)
treatmentwin__govt	-0.08 (0.34)	-0.08 (0.38)	0.09 (0.35)	0.09 (0.36)
treatmentwin__mainstream	-0.51 (0.34)	-0.51 (0.27)	-0.44 (0.35)	-0.44 (0.27)
treatmentwin__parl	0.07 (0.33)	0.07 (0.30)	0.06 (0.34)	0.06 (0.31)
age			0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)
gender2			-0.31 (0.27)	-0.31 (0.23)
educ2			0.49 (1.30)	0.49 (0.54)
educ3			-0.33 (1.26)	-0.33 (0.30)
educ4			-0.47 (1.26)	-0.47 (0.53)
educ5			0.19 (1.25)	0.19 (0.35)
educ7			-0.10 (1.25)	-0.10 (0.37)
Robust Std. Errors	No	Yes	No	Yes
R ²	0.03	0.03	0.09	0.09
Adj. R ²	-0.00	-0.00	0.00	0.00
Num. obs.	120	120	120	120
RMSE		1.18		1.18

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; \cdot $p < 0.1$

Table 11: OLS Specifications. DV: Change in SWD

D4.3. Le Pen's supporters (block II) - DV: SWD change

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
(Intercept)	0.92 (0.71)	0.92 (0.48)	2.00 (1.80)	2.00 (1.60)
treatmentdanger_contr	-0.76 (0.99)	-0.76 (0.75)	-0.89 (1.08)	-0.89 (0.97)
treatmenttwin_govt	0.17 (1.01)	0.17 (1.07)	-0.22 (1.06)	-0.22 (1.01)
treatmenttwin_mainstream	1.15 (0.97)	1.15 (0.86)	0.42 (1.21)	0.42 (0.97)
treatmenttwin_parl	-0.07 (0.99)	-0.07 (0.81)	-1.11 (1.15)	-1.11 (1.11)
age			-0.03 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.03)
gender2			0.26 (0.84)	0.26 (0.78)
educ2			1.25 (2.18)	1.25 (2.45)
educ3			-0.16 (1.20)	-0.16 (1.01)
educ4			1.60 (1.26)	1.60 (1.06)
educ5			0.83 (1.16)	0.83 (1.03)
educ7			-1.23 (1.32)	-1.23 (1.13)
income2			1.31 (1.08)	1.31 (1.13)
income3			1.07 (1.22)	1.07 (1.13)
income4			0.88 (1.29)	0.88 (1.31)
income5			1.21 (1.03)	1.21 (1.01)
Robust Std. Errors	No	Yes	No	Yes
R ²	0.07	0.07	0.24	0.24
Adj. R ²	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.01
Num. obs.	64	64	64	64
RMSE		2.47		2.47

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; \cdot $p < 0.1$

Table 12: OLS Specifications. DV: Change in SWD

D4.4. “Others” (block III) - DV: SWD change

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
(Intercept)	1.11** (0.35)	1.11** (0.37)	1.08 (1.34)	1.08 (1.17)
treatmentdanger_contr	-0.48 (0.51)	-0.48 (0.49)	-0.31 (0.55)	-0.31 (0.52)
treatmentwin_govt	-1.20* (0.50)	-1.20* (0.58)	-1.22* (0.53)	-1.22* (0.63)
treatmentwin_mainstream	-0.00 (0.50)	-0.00 (0.49)	0.14 (0.53)	0.14 (0.52)
treatmentwin_parl	-0.59 (0.50)	-0.59 (0.46)	-0.55 (0.53)	-0.55 (0.47)
age			-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
gender2			-0.56 (0.35)	-0.56 (0.35)
gender3			-0.67 (1.61)	-0.67 (0.53)
educ2			1.43 (1.70)	1.43 (1.09)
educ3			1.14 (1.21)	1.14 (1.12)
educ4			0.92 (1.24)	0.92 (1.03)
educ5			0.70 (1.20)	0.70 (1.05)
educ7			0.86 (1.19)	0.86 (1.03)
income2			0.04 (0.47)	0.04 (0.57)
income3			-0.15 (0.51)	-0.15 (0.49)
income4			0.21 (0.66)	0.21 (0.55)
income5			0.05 (0.52)	0.05 (0.43)
Robust Std. Errors	No	Yes	No	Yes
R ²	0.04	0.04	0.08	0.08
Adj. R ²	0.02	0.02	-0.01	-0.01
Num. obs.	176	176	173	173
RMSE		2.09		2.14

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; $p < 0.1$

Table 13: OLS Specifications. DV: Change in SWD

D5. Coefficient plots

D5.1. Zemmour's supporters (block I) - DV: SWD change

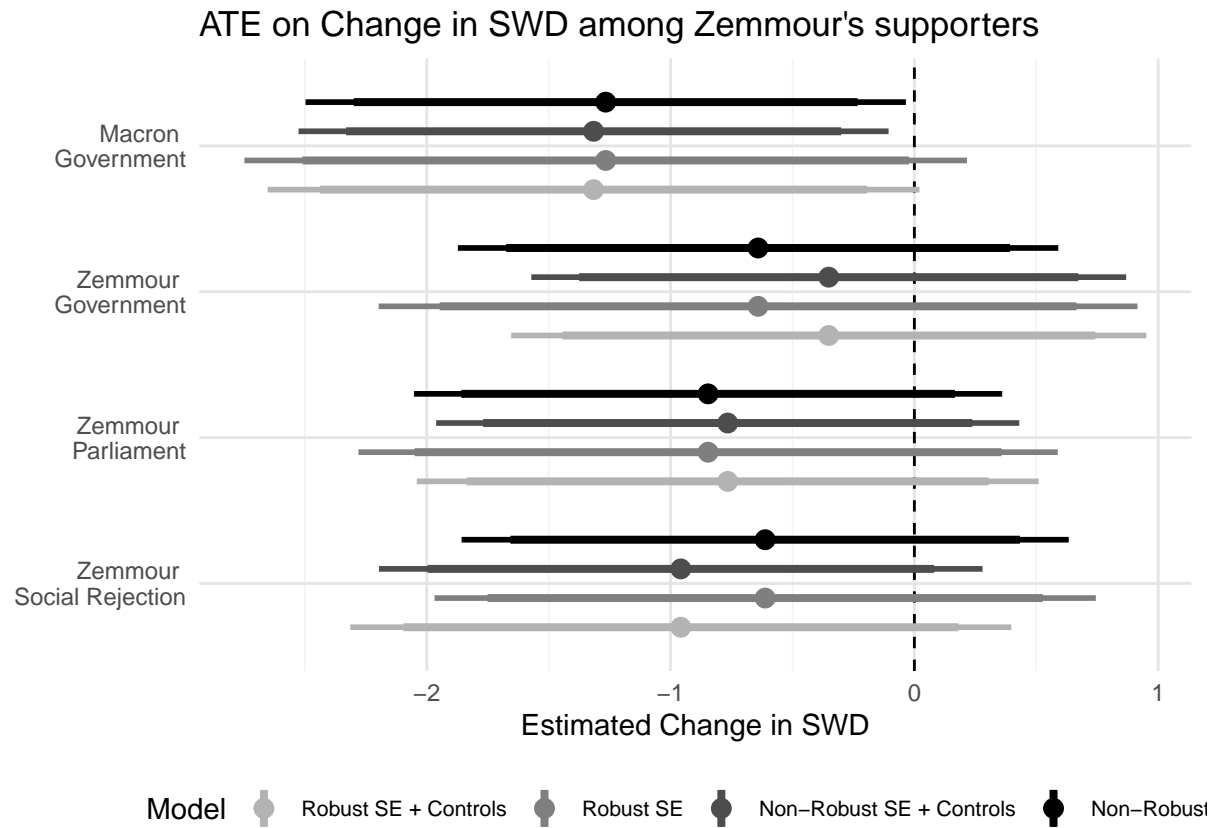


Figure 20: ATE on change in SWD - Zemmour supporters

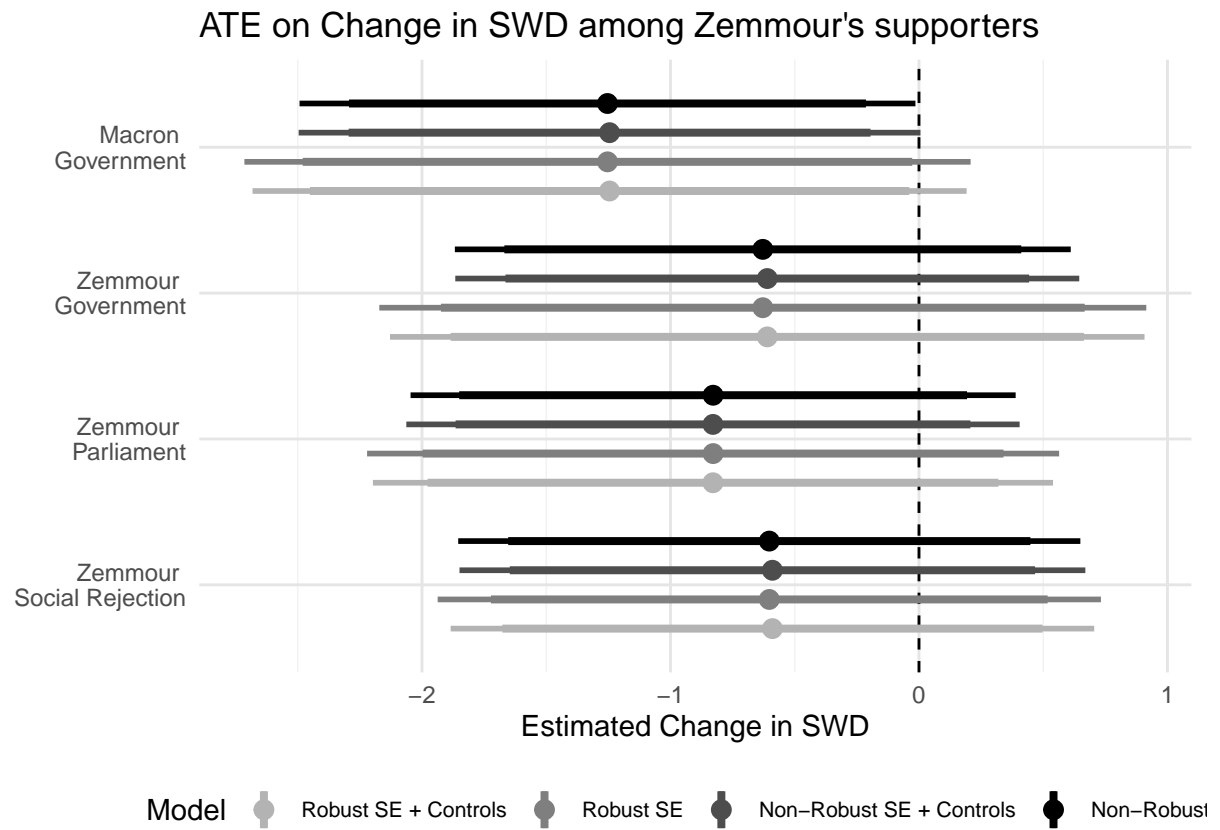


Figure 21: ATE on change in SWD controlling for electoral expectations - Zemmour supporters

D5.2. Zemmour’s supporters (block I) - DV: feelings toward LREM change

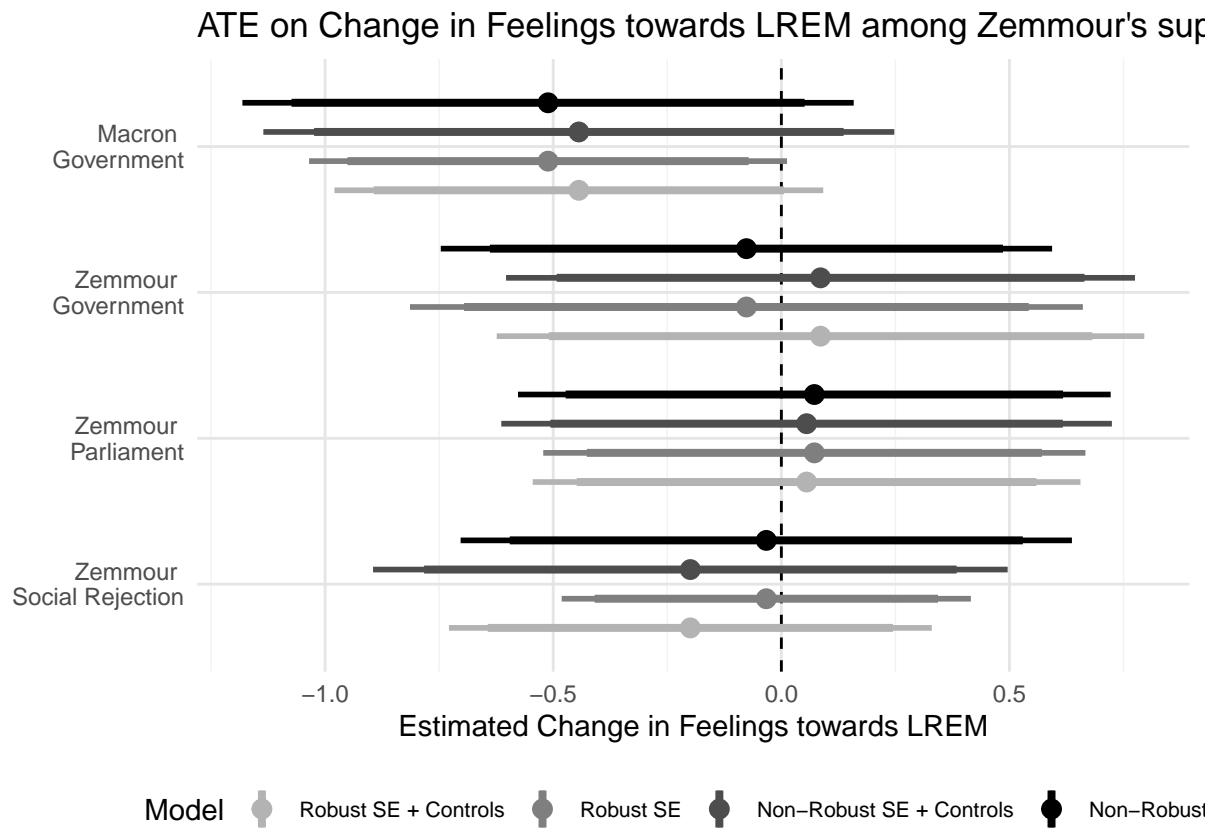


Figure 22: ATE on change in feelings toward LREM - Zemmour supporters

D5.3. Le Pen's supporters (block II) - DV: SWD change

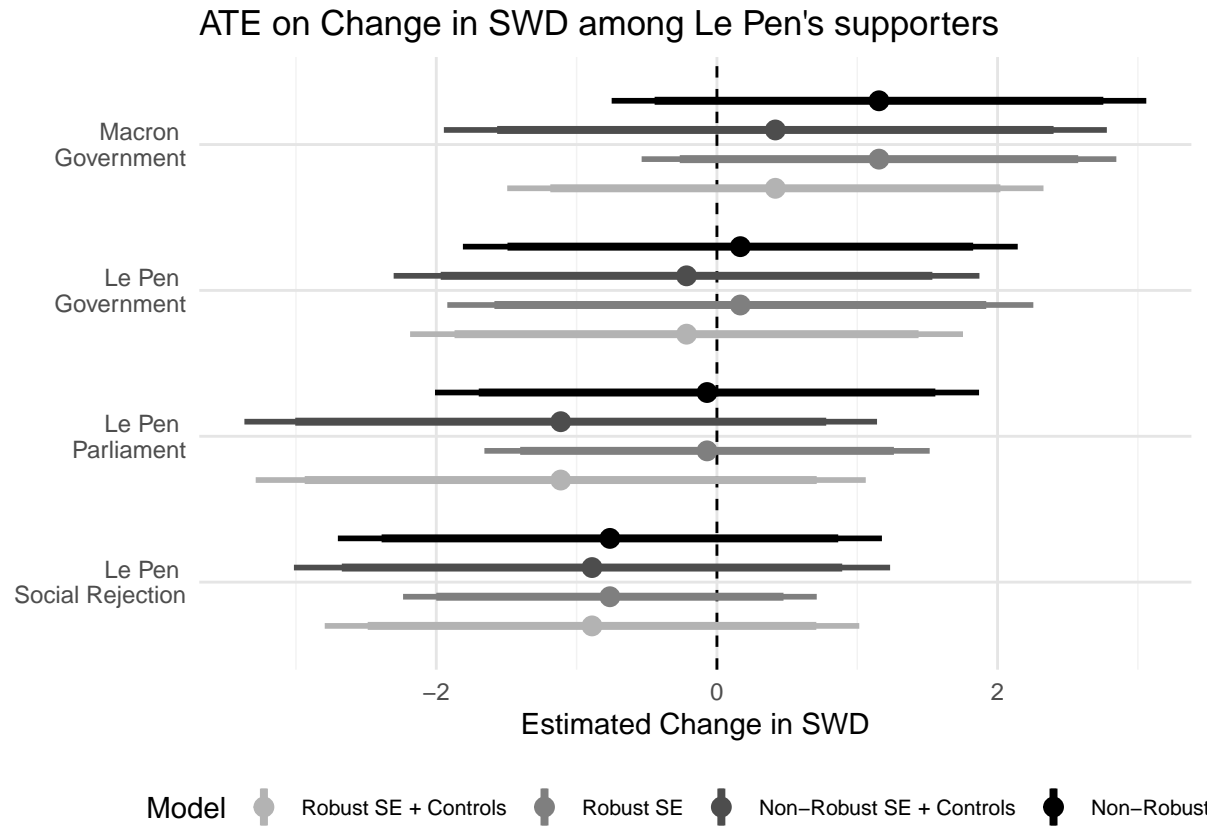


Figure 23: ATE on change in SWD - Le Pen supporters

D5.4. “Others” (block III) - DV: SWD change

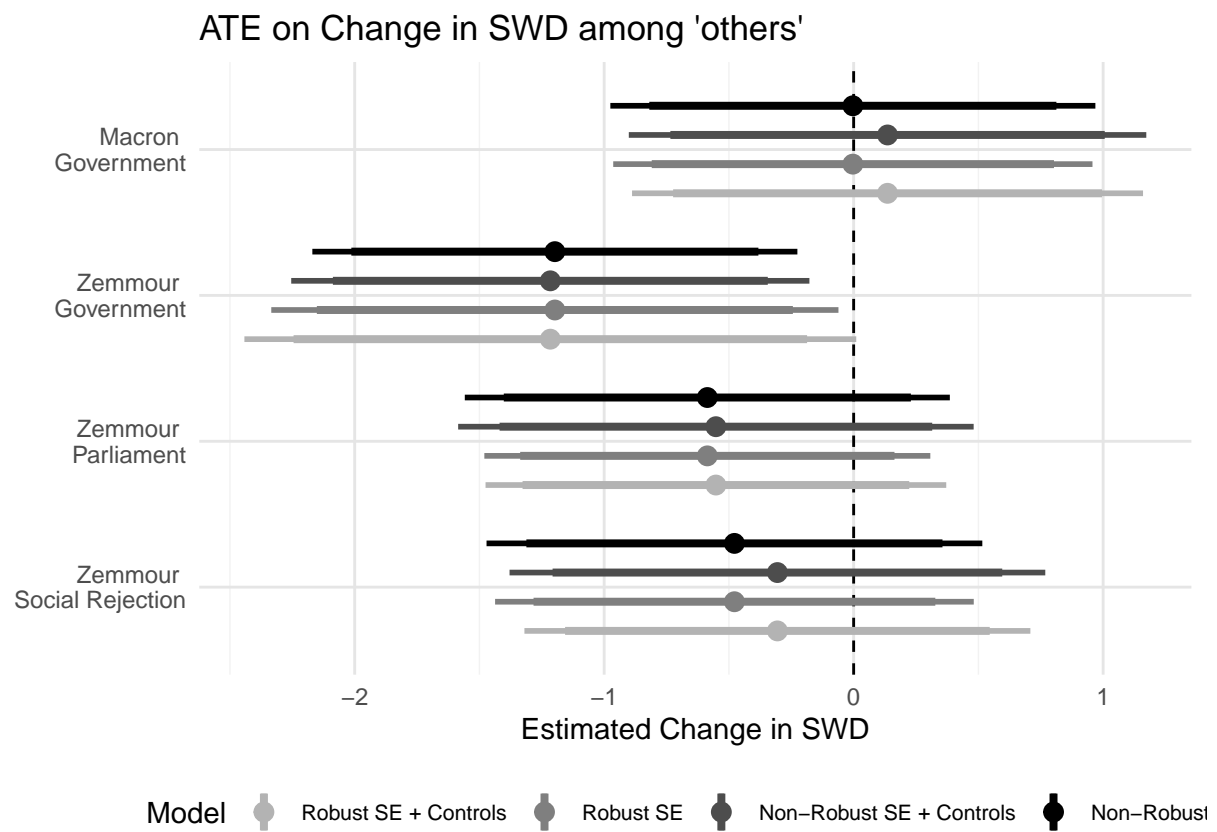


Figure 24: ATE on change in SWD - Others

D6. Multiple hypotheses testing results

D6.1. ATE on change in SWD (hypotheses 1, 2,3 and 4)

Table 14: Comparison of p.values before/after multiple hypotheses testing correction - ATE on change in SWD

Coefficient	Original p.values	Bonferroni correction	Holm correction
Intercept	0.00	0.02	0.02
Treatment 1a	0.34	1.00	0.62
Treatment 1b	0.31	1.00	0.62
Treatment 2	0.05	0.23	0.18
Treatment 3	0.17	0.86	0.52

D6.2. ATE on Feelings toward LREM (hypothesis 5)

Table 15: Comparison of p.values before/after multiple hypotheses testing correction - ATE on change in feelings towards LREM

Coefficient	Original p.values	Bonferroni correction	Holm correction
Intercept	0.61	1.00	1.00
Treatment 1a	0.92	1.00	1.00
Treatment 1b	0.82	1.00	1.00
Treatment 2	0.14	0.69	0.69
Treatment 3	0.83	1.00	1.00

D7. Post-experimental power simulation

Given attrition in the second wave of the survey, our experiment resulted in a total of 123 participants, with an average of 24 participants per treatment group. This may raise concerns about statistical power. For this reason, we conducted a retrospective power analysis using the results from the experiment data to assess the extent to which our main treatment, priming Zemmour supporters with the potential out-group win, lacks statistical power.

We utilized a simulation-based approach that closely mirrored the structure and conditions of our original experiment. In each simulation, we generated data for a given group size, distributed evenly across the five groups, including the control and four treatment groups, with particular emphasis on the treatment priming the potential out-group win (T). The dependent variable, change in SWD (Y), was simulated following a normal distribution, incorporating the observed effect size for T (-1.2660) and the residual standard deviation (2.219) in our main model (see Model 1 in Table 9). The effect size of the other three treatments was set to 0 for simplicity.

We repeated these simulations 500 times for varying group sizes, ranging from 20 to 250 participants per group ($n =$ from 100 to 1250) in increments of 10. The key metric of interest is the proportion of simulations in which the effect of T achieved statistical significance ($p < 0.05$), providing an estimate of the statistical power at each group size. The results of our power analysis reveal that a minimum group size of 50 respondents per group ($n=250$) would have been necessary to attain a power level of 80%, a standard benchmark for adequate power, assuming that our estimated effect size approximates the true effect. Therefore, while we can conclude that our experiment is underpowered, only doubling the number of observations would have been enough to drastically reduce uncertainty around our main estimates. Figure 28 plots the statistical power associated with each simulated group size. Figure 29 plots the coefficients of our estimated ATE on change in SWD in the real and simulated data ($n=60$).

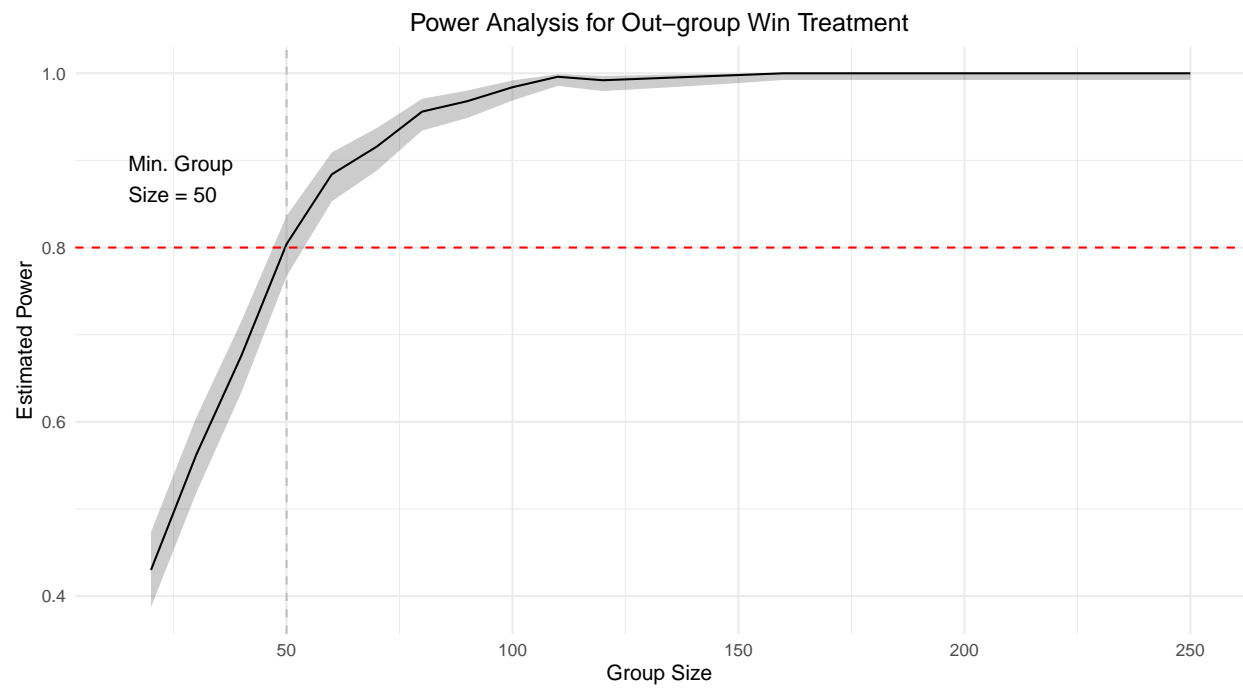


Figure 25: Post-experimental power simulation

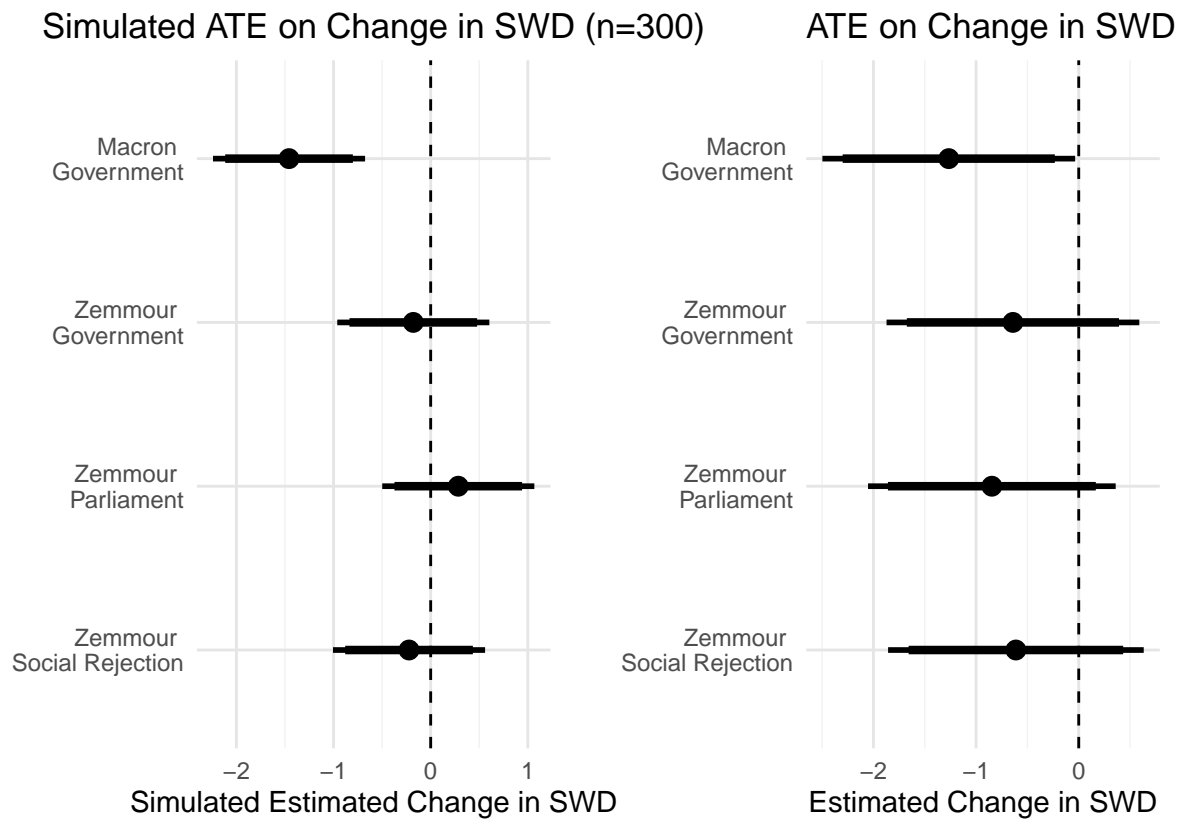


Figure 26: Simulated vs. real-data ATE estimation

Appendix E. Pilot study analysis

E1. Pilot study description

To decide on the targeting parameters of our FAM campaign, we first launched a pre-test campaign linked to a pilot survey in Qualtrics. The pre-test campaign was divided into two ad-sets. The first ad set targeted only FB users between 18 and 39 years old, while the second ad set targeted only FB users between 40 and more than 65 years old. In both cases, we included interest in media channels strongly biased towards right and radical right ideology as our main targeting parameters. The sample of the pilot survey confirmed that our strategy was successful. The mean ideology of the sample is 7.4, and the median 8.5 ($SD = 3.43$). The preference for radical right-wing candidates is over-represented, with 30.45% of the respondents declaring vote intention for Zemmour and 16.25% declaring vote intention for Le Pen. In comparison, vote intention for Macron is only 7.25%. The total number of respondents who completed the whole questionnaire of the pilot study is 578.

The pilot study also included a replication of the experiment. Since the pilot study was fielded before the first round of the presidential elections, we asked respondents to imagine that the elections had been celebrated the day before and that the results emulated those of the average poll predictions. For the rest, the pilot experiment proceeded the same way as the definitive one. There includes only one additional change. It has an additional placebo condition highlighting the lousy state of the economy due to the government management of the COVID-19 crisis instead of the treatment priming respondents with the Zemmour potential to enter the government coalition. The additional placebo condition was too strong due to the high salience of the economy after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which happened just between designing and launching the pilot study. As a result, we decided to remove it from the final experiment to maximize power while including the potential for government treatment condition.

E2. Estimated ATE on SWD (pilot study)

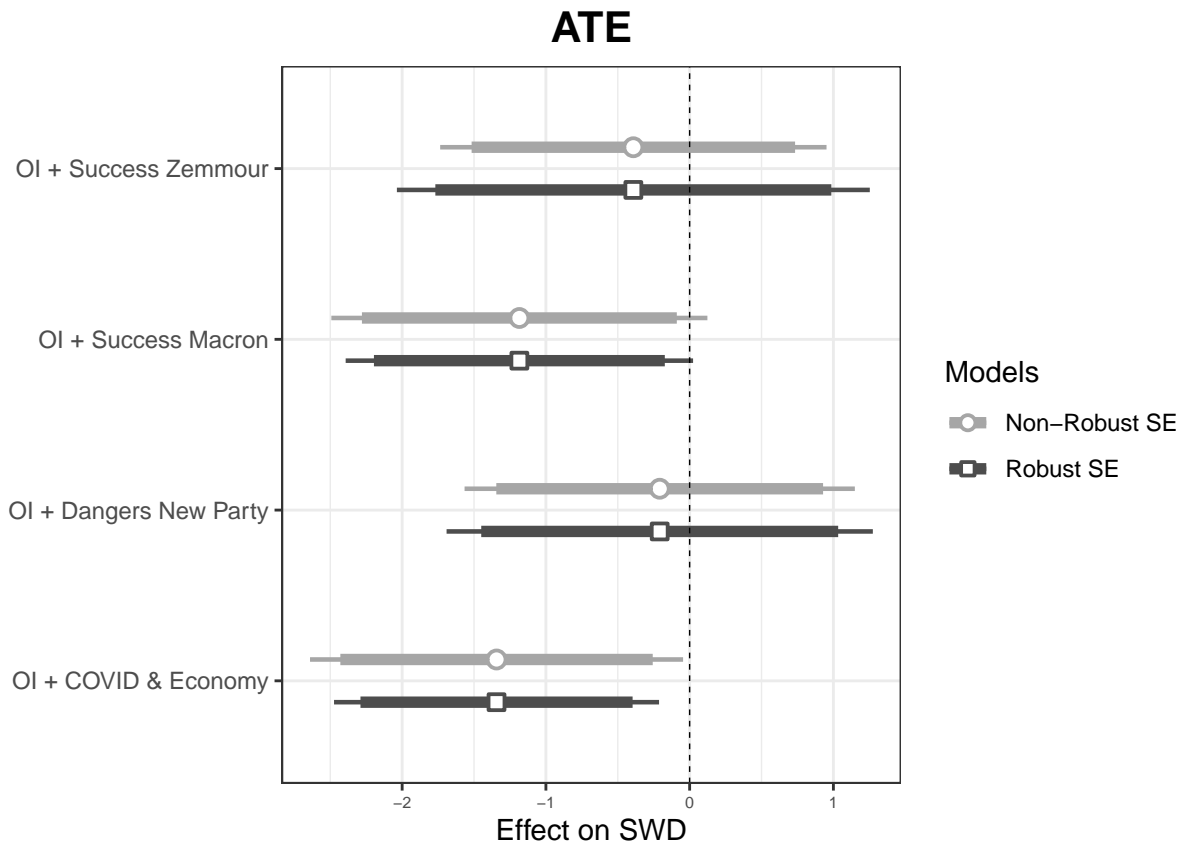


Figure 27: ATE on change in SWD (pilot study)

Appendix F. Panel study analysis FES 2022

F1. Regression tables: SWD change on vote choice

	Baseline	soc. controls	full spec.
(Intercept)	0.24*** (0.03)	0.30** (0.11)	0.29* (0.12)
treatment_pres_1stAbstention	-0.06* (0.03)	-0.01 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.03)
treatment_pres_1stBlank/Null	-0.11* (0.05)	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.03)
treatment_pres_1stÉric Zemmour (new/loser)	-0.08* (0.05)	-0.12** (0.05)	-0.11* (0.05)
treatment_pres_1stMarine Le Pen (old/winner)	-0.13*** (0.03)	-0.08** (0.03)	-0.08** (0.03)
treatment_pres_1stJean-Luc Mélenchon (old/loser)	-0.06* (0.03)	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.03)
treatment_pres_1stEmmanuel Macron (old/winner)	0.04 (0.03)	0.06* (0.03)	0.06* (0.03)
Sociodem. Controls	NO	YES	YES
Pol. controls	NO	NO	YES
Robust S.E.	YES	YES	YES
R ²	0.28	0.35	0.36
Adj. R ²	0.28	0.33	0.33
Num. obs.	1375	892	892
RMSE	0.17	0.14	0.14

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; $p < 0.1$

Table 16: OLS Specifications. DV: Change in SWD

Note: Reference group : Other voters (than first four contenders, blank/null, or abstainers) category. Socio-demographic controls include gender, age, employment status, income and education level. Political controls include left-right position, political interest and pre-election satisfaction with democracy.

F2. Regression tables: Affects toward LREM on vote choice

	Baseline	Soc. controls	Full spec.
(Intercept)	3.99*** (0.22)	3.53*** (0.80)	1.83 (1.17)
treatment_pres_1stAbstention	-0.92* (0.37)	-0.23 (0.51)	-0.35 (0.45)
treatment_pres_1stBlank/Null	-1.24* (0.53)	-0.77 (0.81)	-0.09 (0.71)
treatment_pres_1stÉric Zemmour (new/loser)	-1.21 (0.79)	-2.10*** (0.52)	-1.89*** (0.54)
treatment_pres_1stMarine Le Pen (old/winner)	-1.49*** (0.44)	-0.89 (0.53)	-0.73 (0.48)
treatment_pres_1stJean-Luc Mélenchon (old/loser)	-1.55*** (0.32)	-1.18** (0.41)	-0.60 (0.39)
treatment_pres_1stEmmanuel Macron (old/winner)	3.18*** (0.32)	3.21*** (0.47)	2.49*** (0.45)
Sociodem. Controls	NO	YES	YES
Pol. controls	NO	NO	YES
Robust S.E.	YES	YES	YES
R ²	0.38	0.41	0.53
Adj. R ²	0.37	0.38	0.51
Num. obs.	1417	894	880
RMSE	2.38	2.22	1.98

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; $p < 0.1$

Table 17: OLS Specifications. DV: Change in Feelings toward LREM party

Note: Reference group : Other voters (than first four contenders, blank/null, or abstainers) category. Socio-demographic controls include gender, age, employment status, income and education level. Political controls include left-right position, political interest and pre-election satisfaction with democracy.