

# **“Bad for me, but I give in so easily”: governmental participation, the crisis, and electoral support for left parties**

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# SUMMARY

1. Research question
2. Analysis
3. Main findings
4. Implications for left-wing parties

# 1 RESEARCH QUESTION

**QUESTION:** What are the effects of governmental participation on the electoral results of political parties in Western Europe?

## State of the art

- general **cost of ruling** (Nannestad & Paldam, 2002): incumbent governments lose. In average 2.3 percentage points, almost constant over time and space, increase in the 1980s-1990s (19 countries, 1948-1998);
- variable **retrospective economic voting** (Lewis-Beck & Stegmaier, 2000): incumbents probably punished for poor performance. But studies divided, effects highly contextual, effects clearer and stronger when “clarity of responsibility”
- impact of the **great recession**: continuous increase of economic voting, punishment extends to all “mainstream” parties (Hobolt & Tilley 2016: 17 countries, 2004-2015; Hernandez & Kriesi 2016: 30c, 2008-15)

I re-assess the evidence for **individual parties** in terms of **relative losses** (15 countries, 1990-2017)



French *Parti socialiste*  
centre-left  
Party of European Socialists (PES)

29.3% (2012) -> 7.4% (2017)

Absolute loss: - 21.9 points

Relative loss: - 74.7%



Italian *Popolo della Libertà*  
centre-right  
European People's Party (PPE)

37.2% (2008) -> 21.3% (2013)

Absolute loss: - 15.8 points

Relative loss: - 42.6%

# 2 ANALYSIS

Relative change in the vote share of governmental parties (direct cabinet participation)

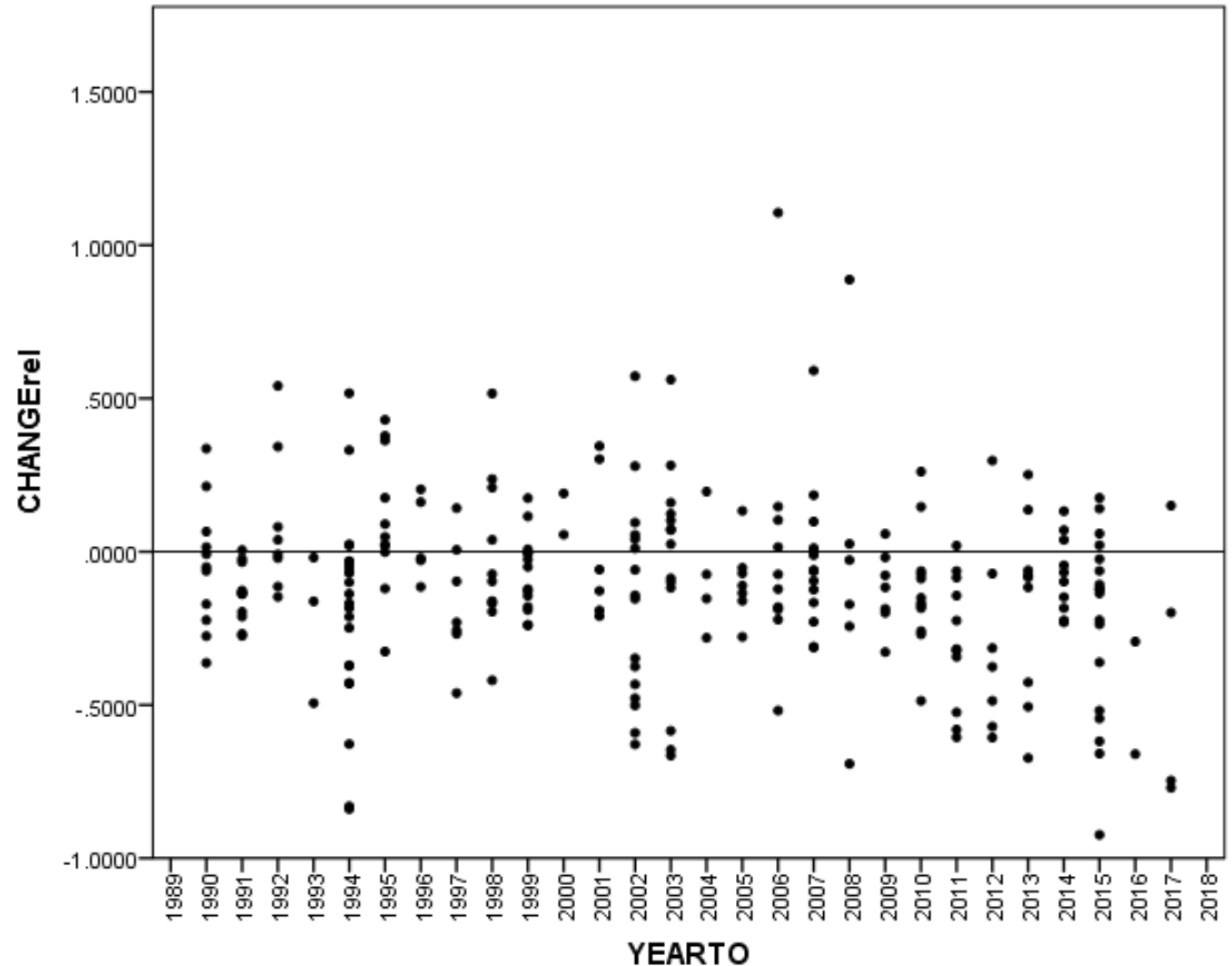
Countries: EU15

Years: 1990 – 1997

Legislative terms: 122

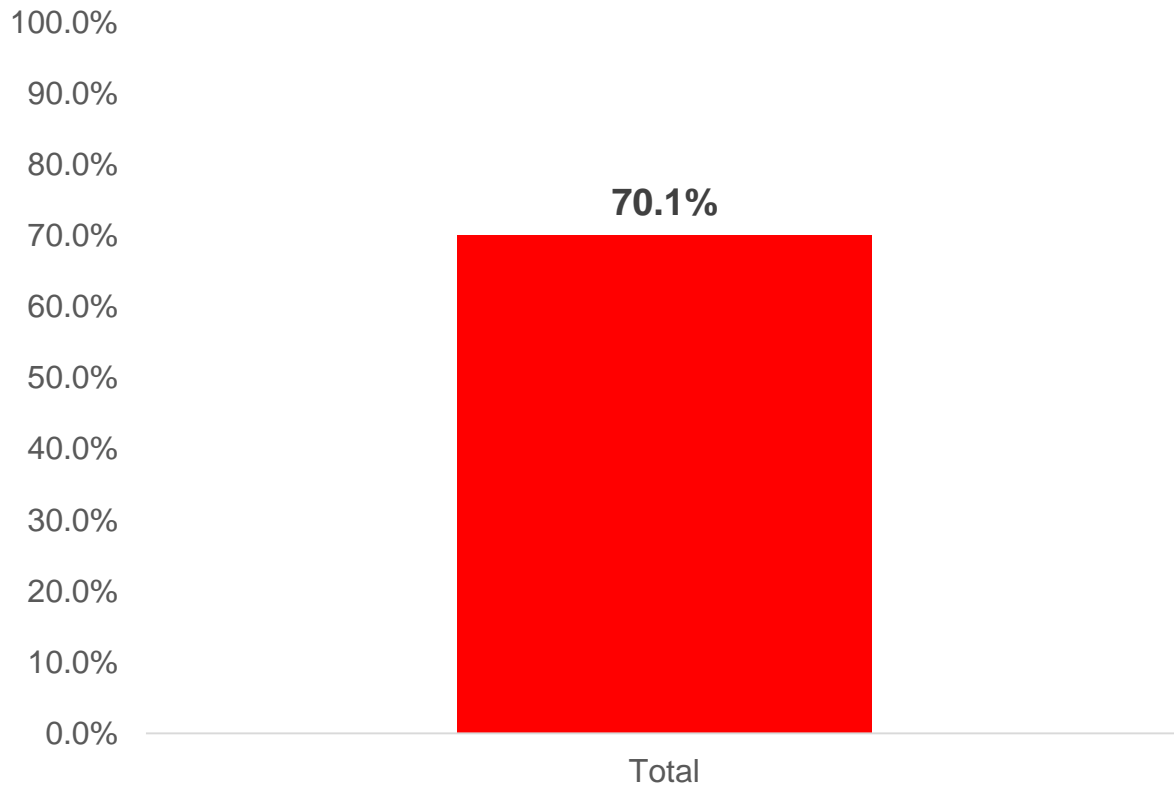
Total observations: 316

Valid observations: 261

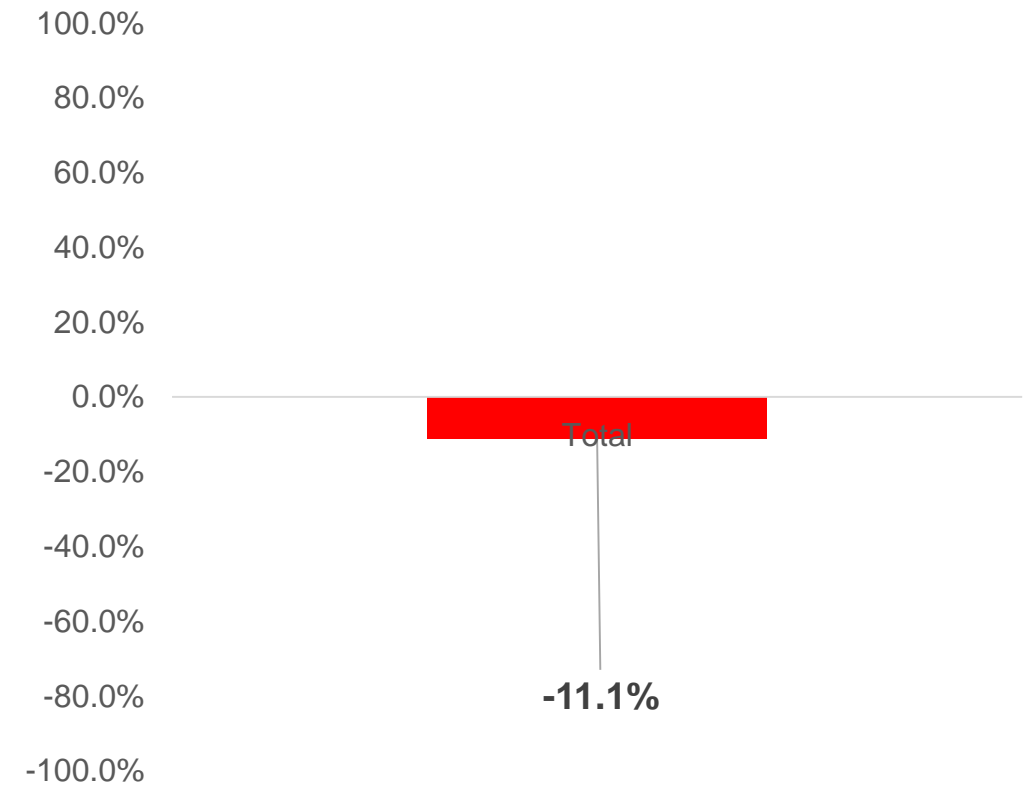


# All cases

### Frequency losses

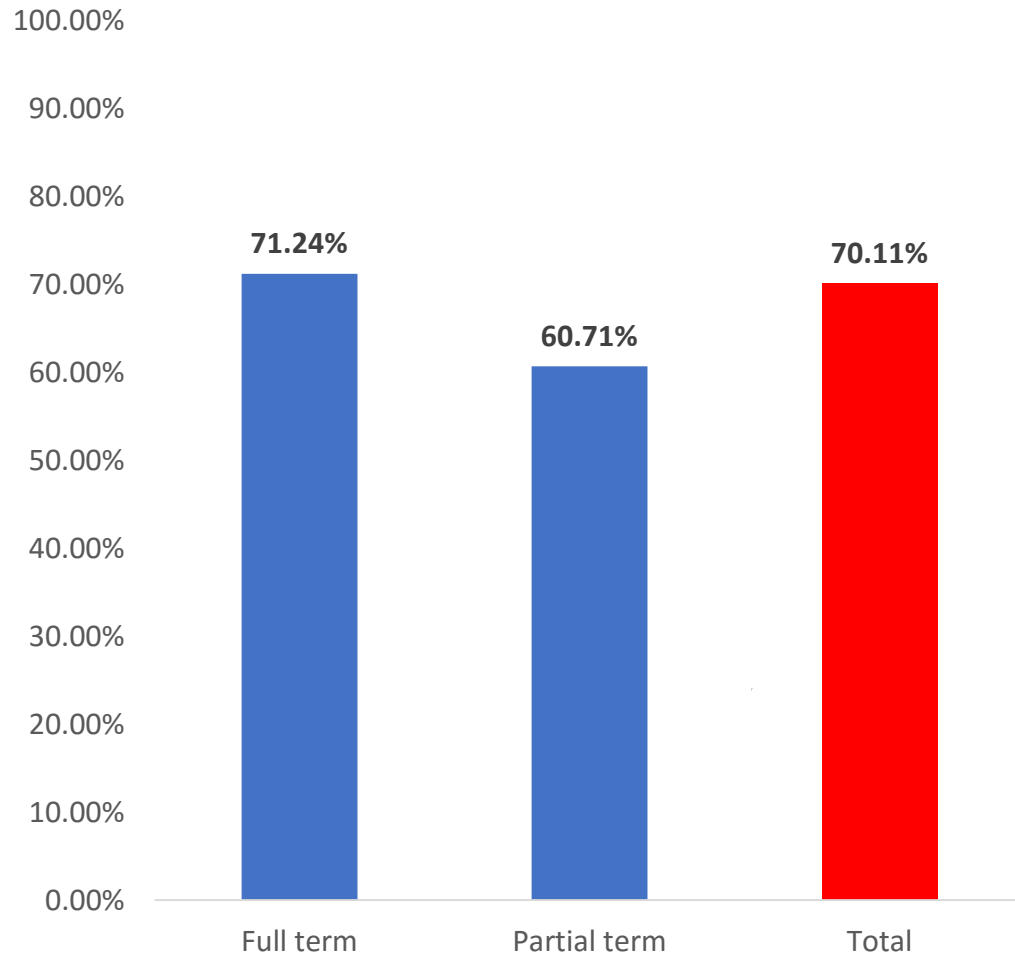


### Mean change

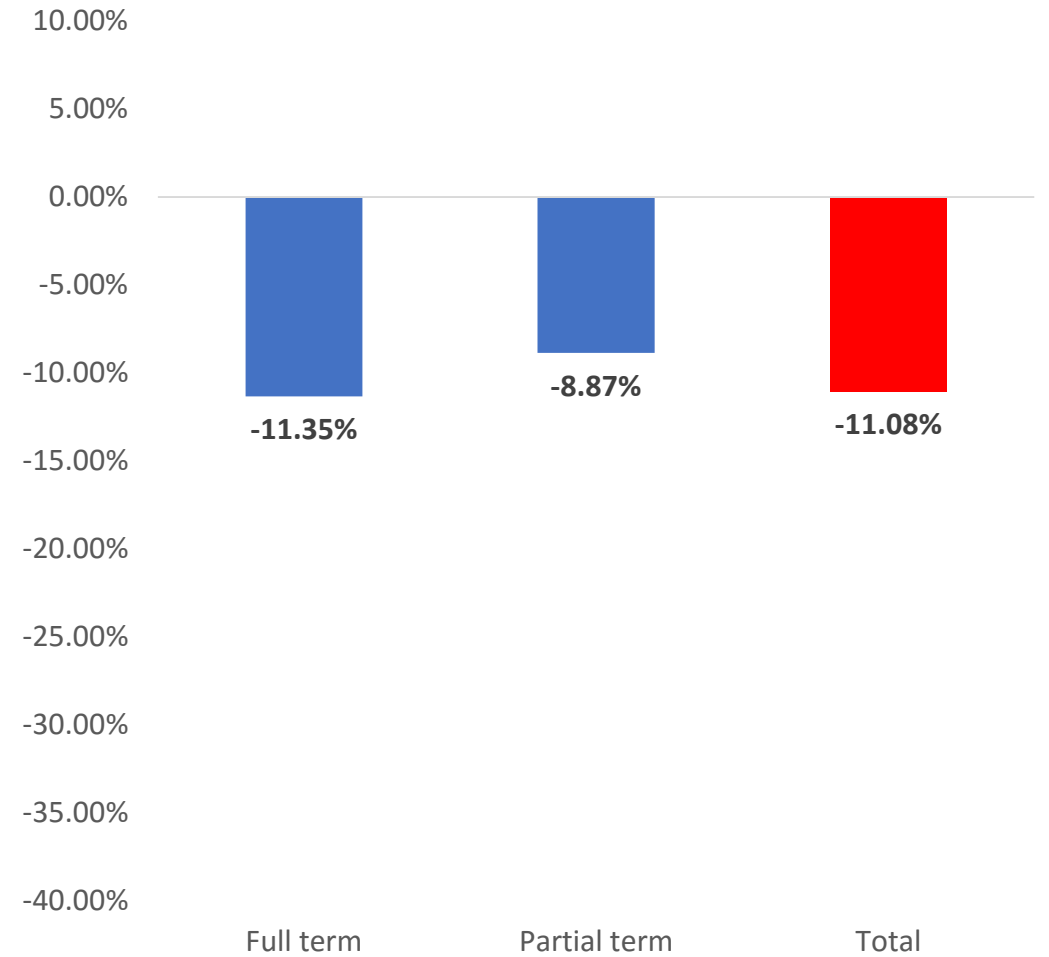


# By duration

### Frequency losses

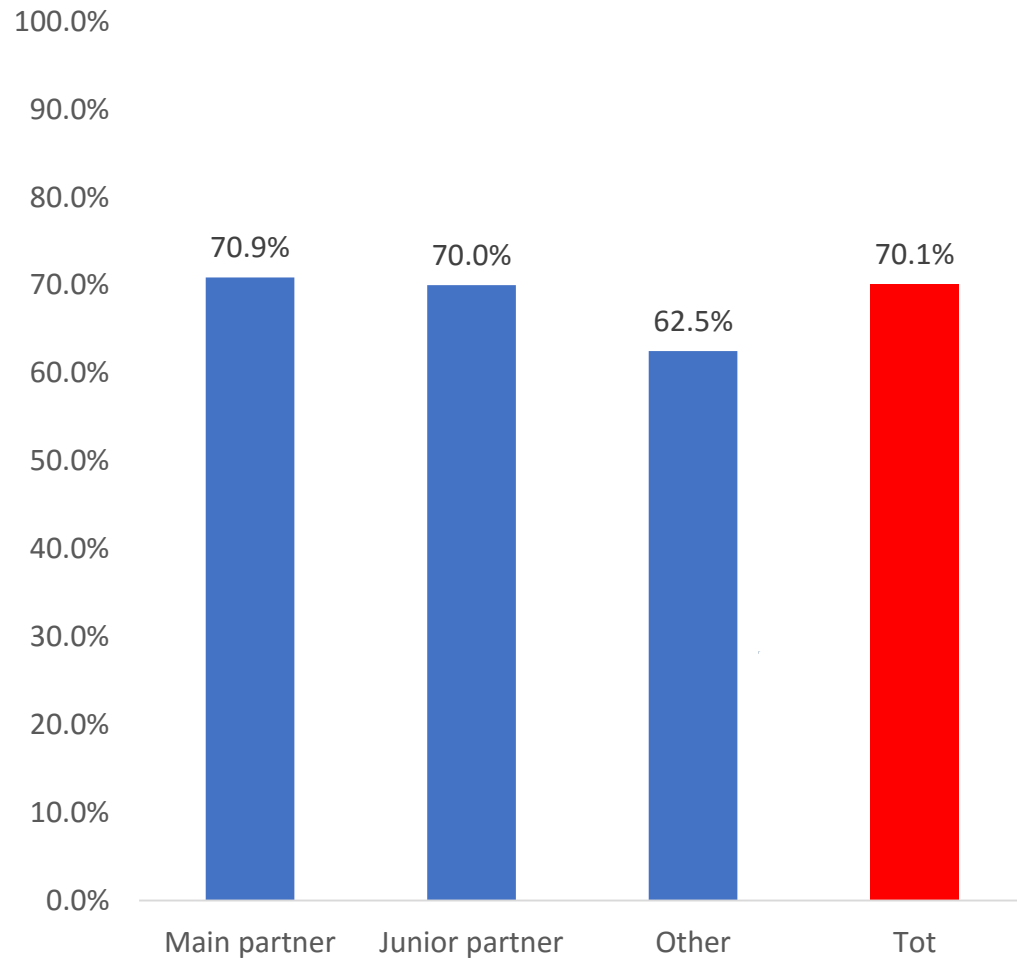


### Mean change

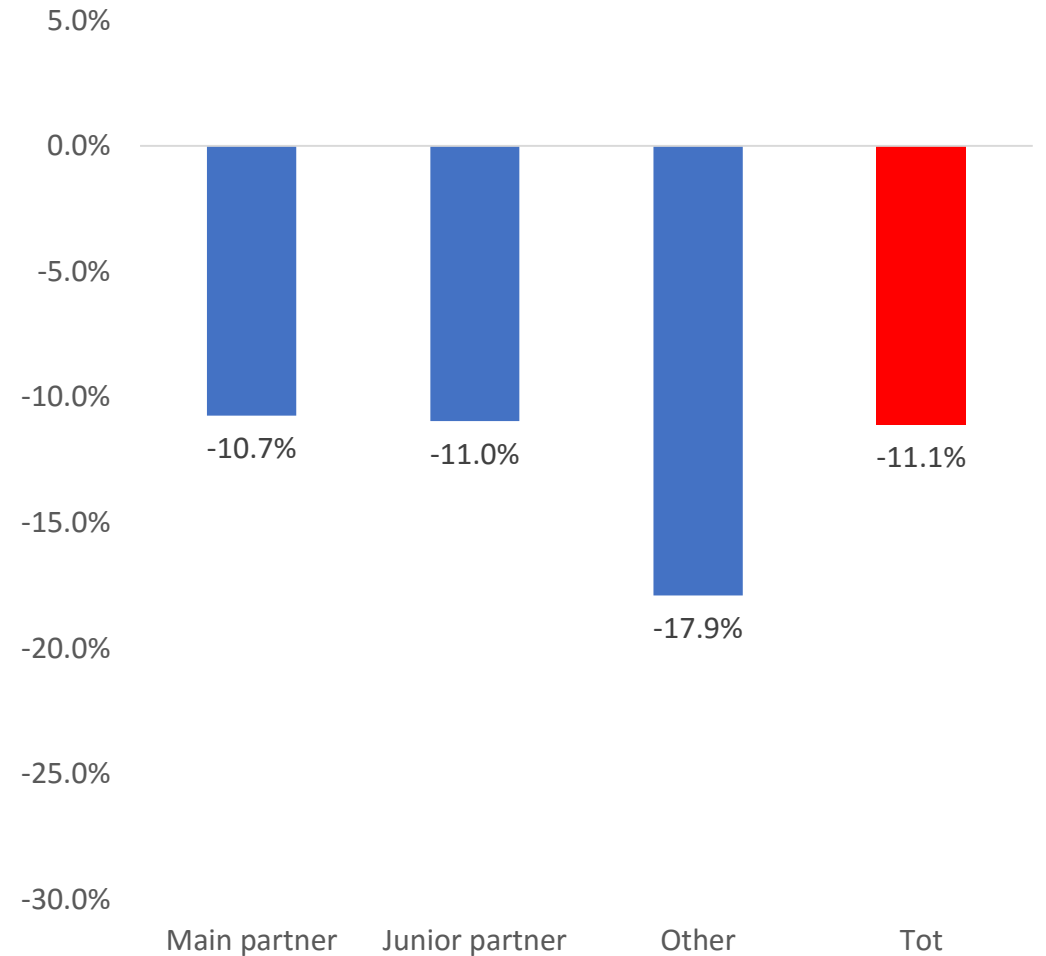


# By status

### Frequency losses



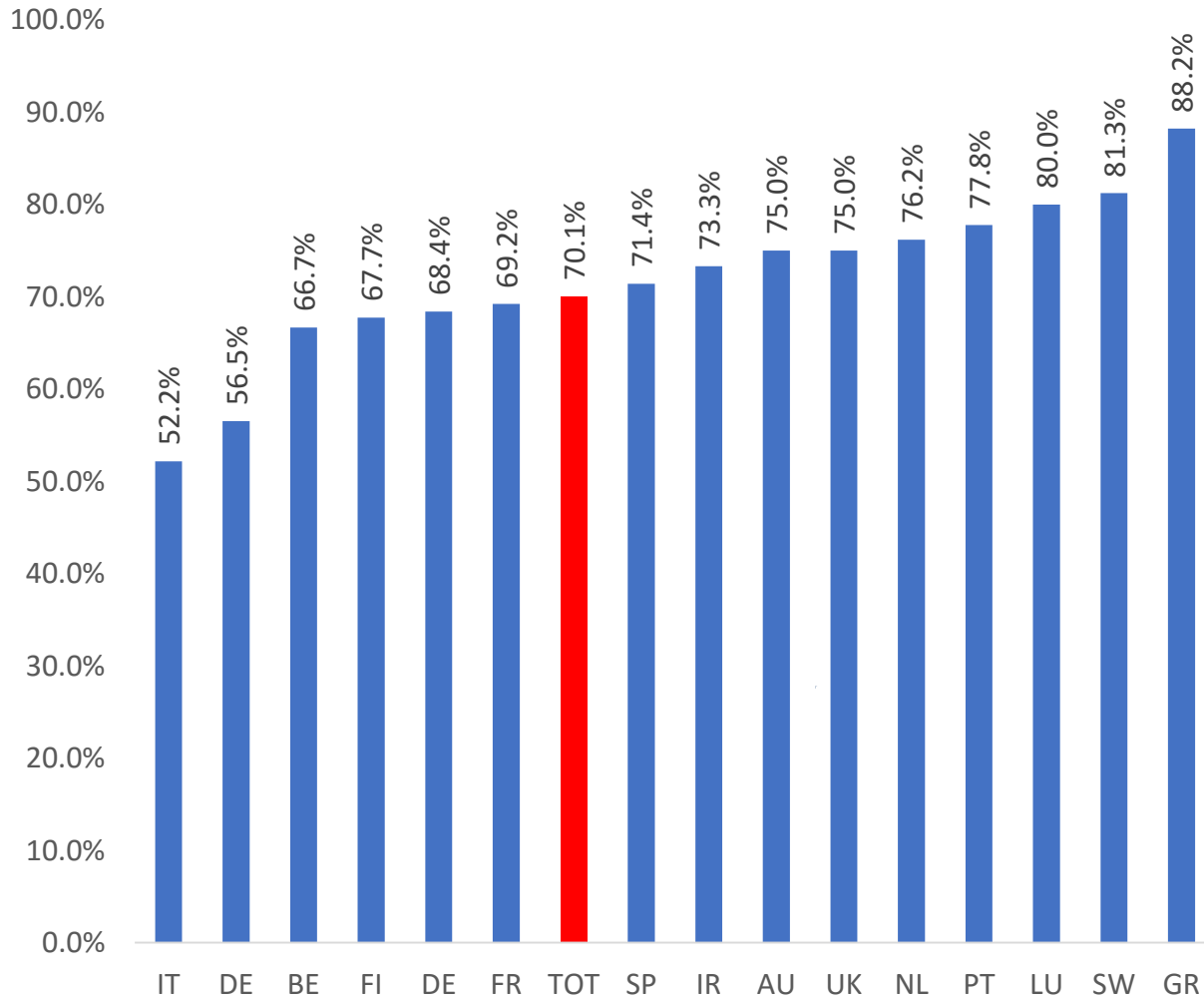
### Mean change



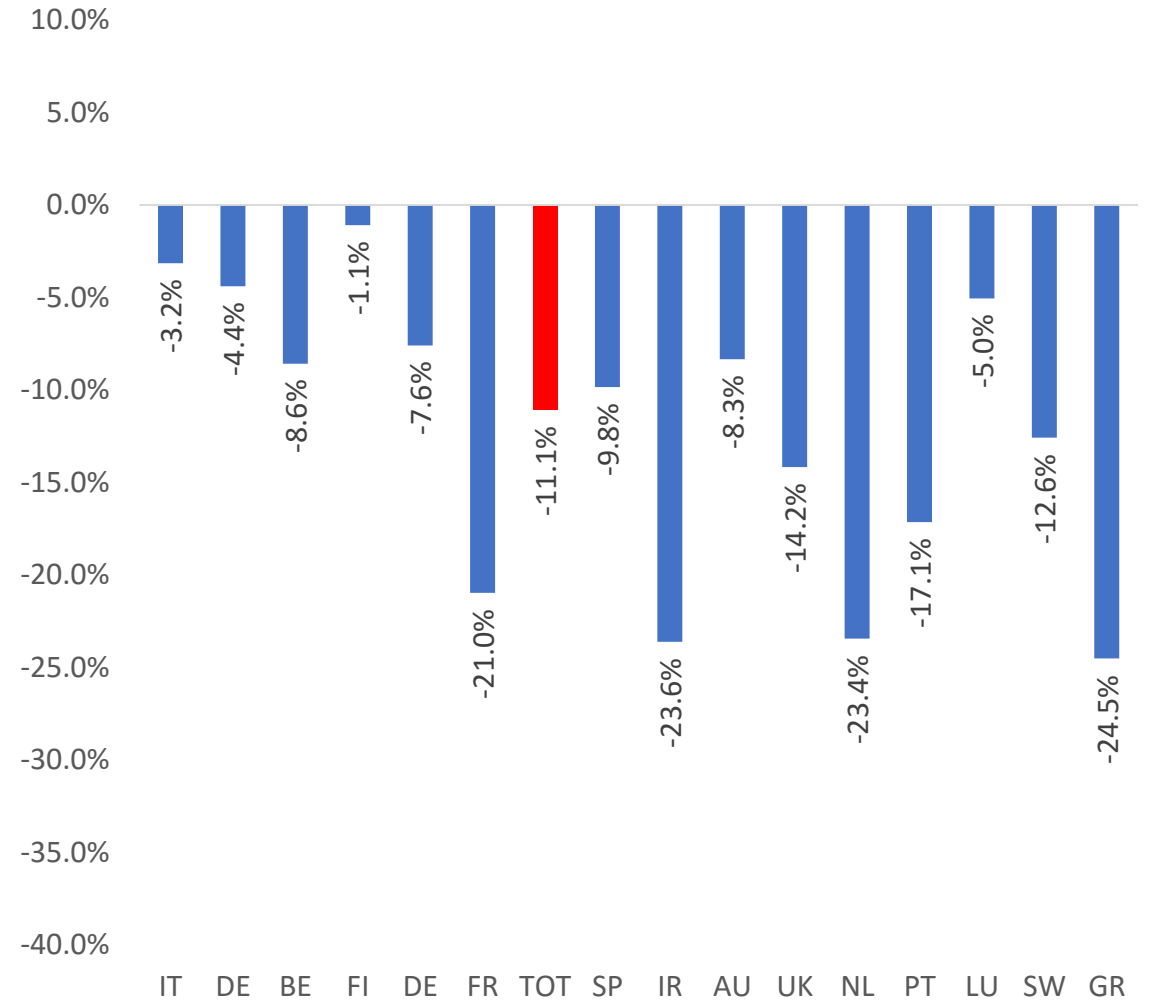


# By country

### Frequency losses

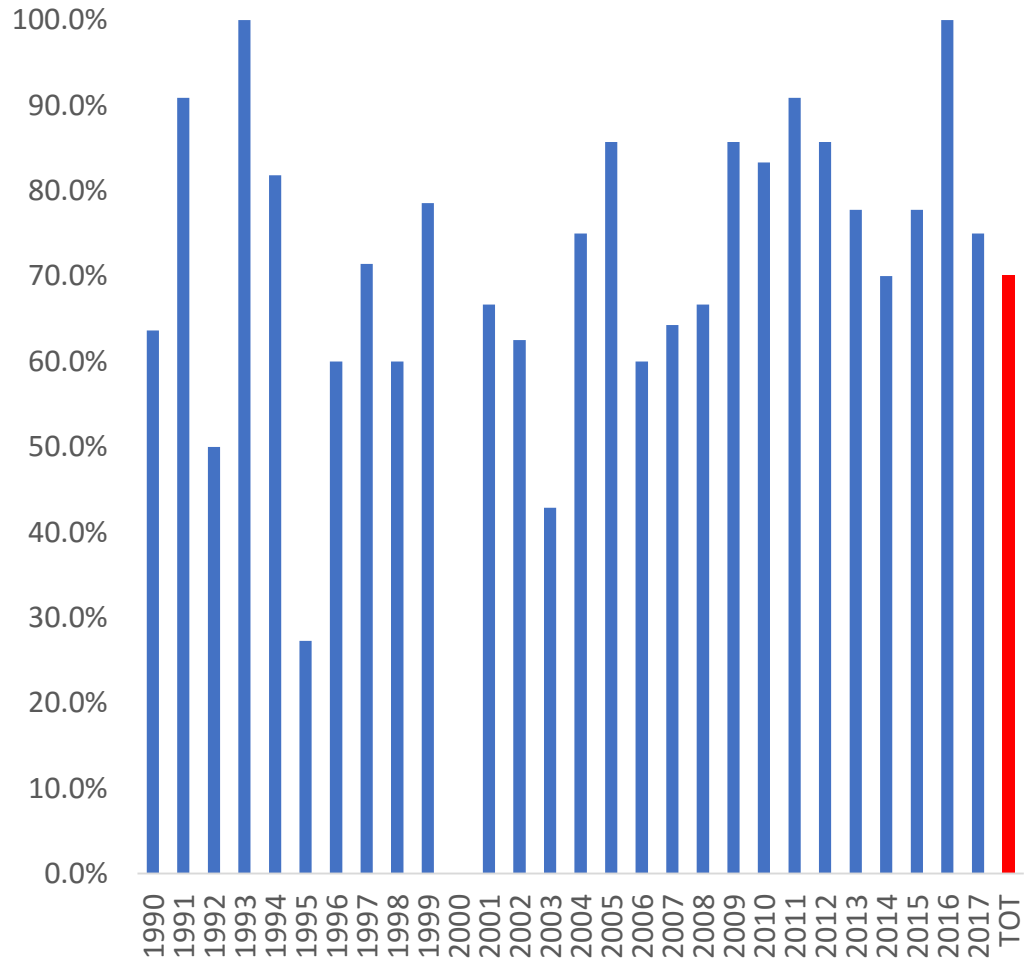


### Mean change

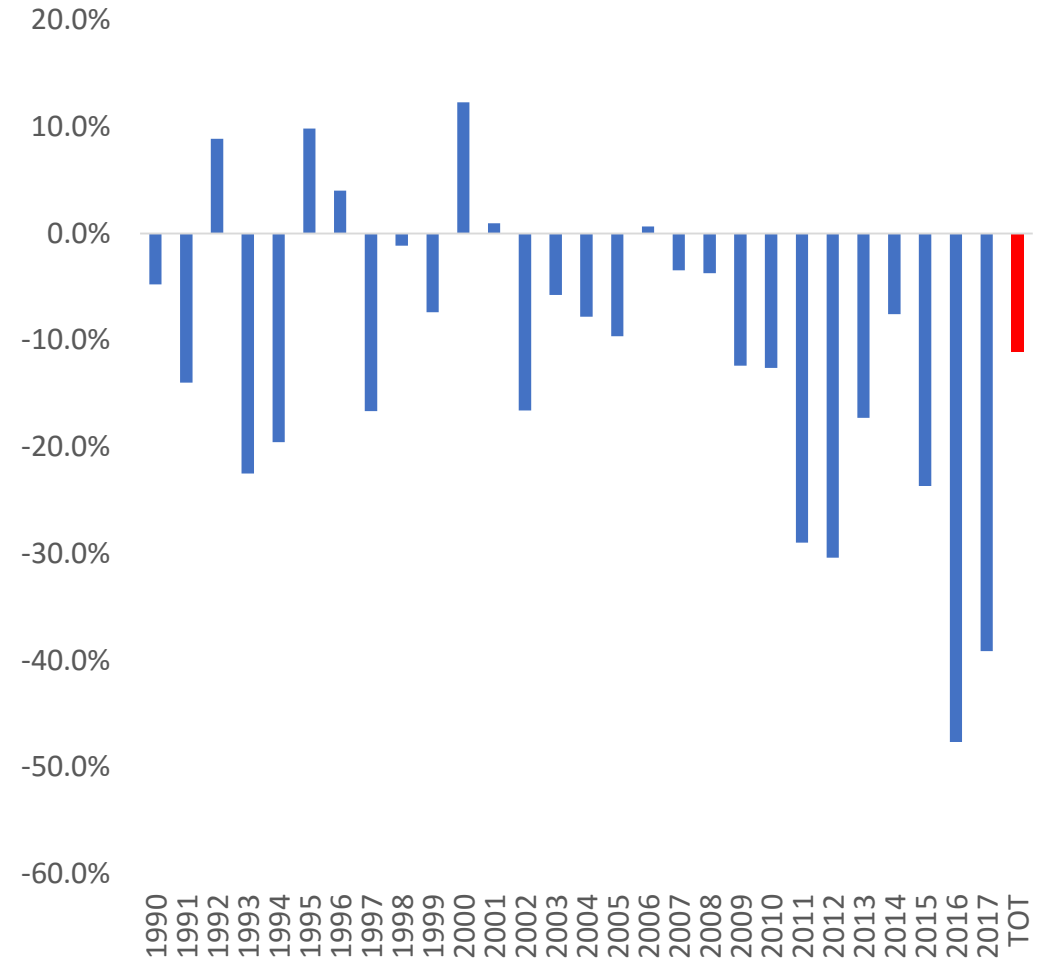


# By year

### Frequency losses

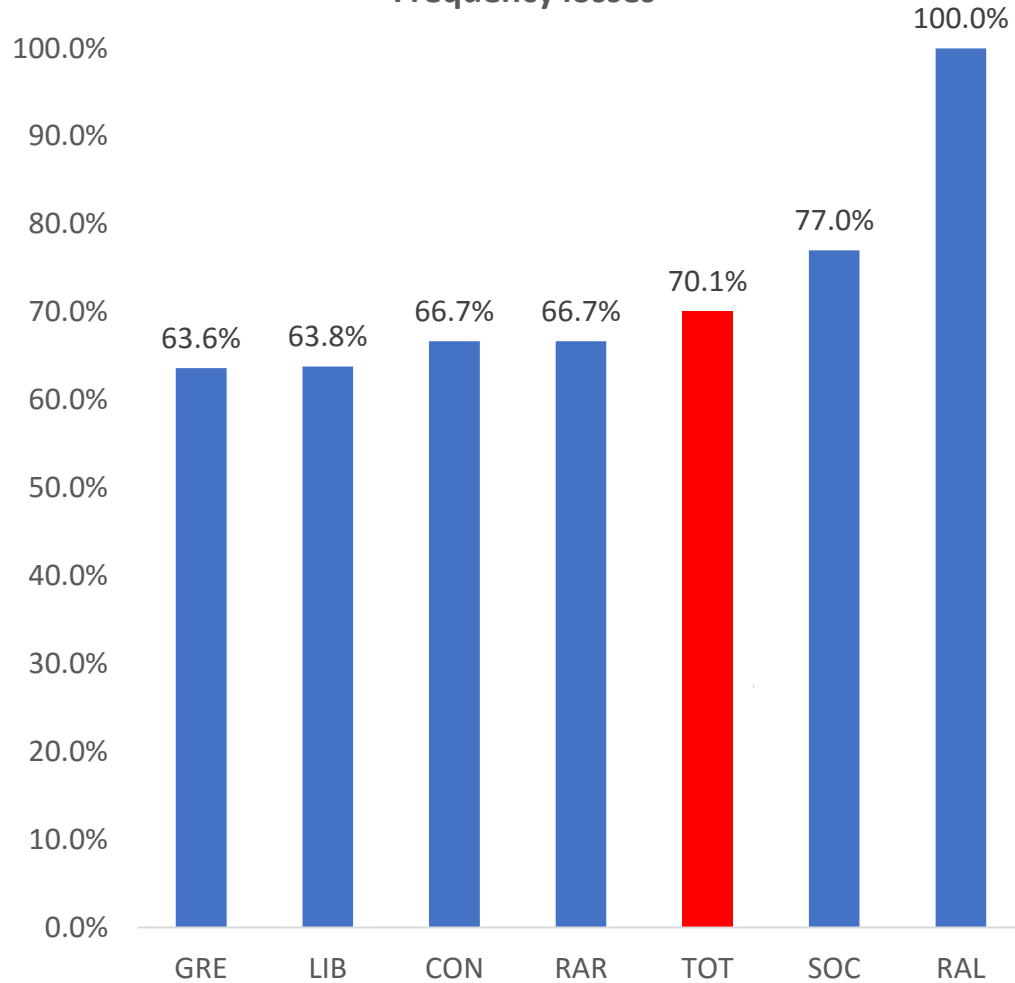


### Mean change

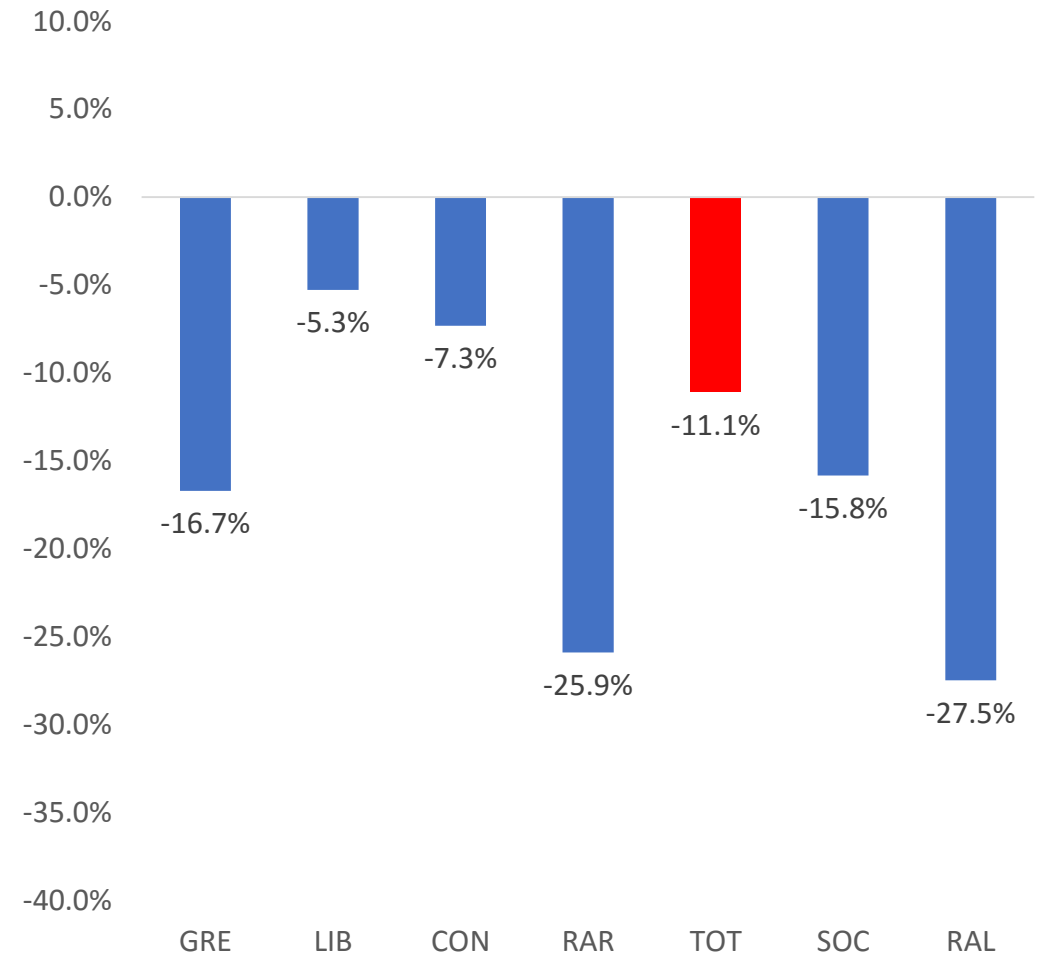


# By party family

### Frequency losses



### Mean change



# 3 MAIN FINDINGS

## Consistent with the literature

- 1) governmental parties punished (70.1% of the time, mean relative loss -11.1%)
- 2) full term (and longer) participation more damaging
- 3) losses heavier since the Great Recession
- 4) clear connection with economic performance, although not linear

## New findings

- 1) “cost of ruling” since 1990 stronger than the post-war average and growing
- 2) large country variations
- 3) large temporal variations (remarkable levels since 2008: 82.9% of the time, MRL -21.0%)
- 4) large variations by party family (governmental participation particularly damaging for radical left, radical right, social democrats, greens)

# 4 IMPLICATIONS FOR LEFT PARTIES

For left-wing parties (RAL, SOC, GRE), **office-seeking strategies** are extremely and increasingly dangerous

- strong electoral losses very likely (RAL: 10 cases out of 10)
- for social democratic parties, it may facilitate the emergence of more intransigent competitors (DIE LINKE in Germany, SYRIZA in Greece, PODEMOS in Spain, FI in France) and complete collapse (“Pasokification”)
- for radical left parties, it may spell electoral disaster (France 2002, Italy 2008)

Why?

- a) declining economic and social performance of European economies since the 1970s
- b) gap between welfarist expectations of left-wing voters and neoliberal policies of left-wing governments

Challenges for radical left parties

- a) to reinvent an effective “welfarist developmental state” in the current neoliberal world
- b) to devise an effective strategy to replace social democratic parties or change their orientation

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## Recent publications:

Allemand, Frédéric and Chiocchetti, Paolo (eds) (in progress). *Competitiveness and solidarity in the European Union. An interdisciplinary enquiry*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Chiocchetti, Paolo (2017). *The radical left party family in Western Europe, 1989–2015*. Abingdon: Routledge.

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