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**SNES Campaign Panel Study 2018:  
Methodological Report**

**Per Oleskog Tryggvason**

Swedish National Election Studies

Department of Political Science  
University of Gothenburg

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[www.snes.gu.se](http://www.snes.gu.se)



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# SNES Campaign Panel Study 2018: Methodological Report

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**PER OLESKOG TRYGGVASON**

Department of Journalism, Media and Communication  
University of Gothenburg  
SWEDEN

## Sammanfattning

Valforskningsprogrammets kampanjpanel 2018 är en sannolikhetsrekryterad webbpanel genomförd i fem steg. Genom att under fem månader före valet ställa frågor till samma respondenter om bland annat deras nyhetskonsumention, sakfrågeattityder och röstningsintention bidrar kampanjpanelen med ett unikt datamaterial för forskare som är intresserade av att beskriva och förklara väljarbeteende och opinionsbildning i en valrörelsekontext. I den här metodrapporten beskrivs studiens design tillsammans med nödvändig metodologisk information kring exempelvis svarsfrekvenser, representativitet och paneldödlighet.

## Abstract

The 2018 Swedish Election Campaign Panel is a five-wave probability web panel, surveying the same respondents on their news consumption, policy preferences, vote intention and much more. As such, the campaign panel constitutes a unique data material for scholars interested in explaining citizens' electoral behavior and opinion formation in the intense context of electoral campaigns. This report provides a detailed account of the design of the study, together with necessary methodological information on e.g. response rates, representativeness, and panel attrition.

## Introduction

This is a methodological report describing study design and methodological information of the 2018 Swedish Election Campaign Panel. Per Oleskog Tryggvason (JMG) were the primary investigator of the study, who together with Henrik Ekengren Oscarsson (Swedish National Election Studies Program), Adam Shehata (JMG) and Jesper Strömbäck (JMG) was responsible for study design and questionnaires. The fieldwork was conducted within the Laboratory of Opinion Research (LORE) by Johannes Johansson, Elina Lindgren and Elias Markstedt.

The SNES campaign panel 2018 one of several election studies conducted under the umbrella of the Swedish National Election Study Program (SNES) at the University of Gothenburg in conjunction to the 2018 Swedish general election. While other election studies conducted by or in collaboration with SNES focus on either large cross-section samples, two stage panels across four years, or two stage panels just before and after the election, this study investigates voters news consumption and opinion formation over a period of five months. By surveying the same respondents at five separate occasions, it is possible to address research questions of short-term change and stability in voters' political attitudes, knowledge, and media habits. As such, the study constitutes a unique material for scholars interested in explaining both voting behavior and opinion formation in the intense context of electoral campaigns.

## Sample, response and participation rate

The fieldwork for the campaign panel was conducted by researchers within the Laboratory Opinion Research (LORE) at the University of Gothenburg. LORE is a research infrastructure at the University of Gothenburg that has extensive experience of recruiting and administer web panels.

Previous experiences with probability recruitments to web based panels have shown that it is important to have a very large sample size (Boije, Oscarsson, & Oskarson, 2016; Martinsson & Riedel, 2015). Prior recruitments to probability samples have shown a gross response rate between 6 and 15 percent. Considering that Sweden is a multiparty system with several small parties, we decided to aim a sample size yielding between 1 750 and 2 250 respondents in the final stage of analysis. To achieve this we randomly sampled 33 000 Swedish eligible voters, ages ranging between 18 and 80 from the Swedish population register. Recruitments to the panel were done by sending out postcard invitations to the home address of everyone in the sample. Postcards were sent out April 12<sup>th</sup>. The postcard contained a short description of study and information how the respondents could join it. Each postcard had a unique username and password to be used to access the online survey. When participants logged in to the survey for the first time, they were asked to provide their e-mail address. This e-mail address was subsequently used to contact respondents for waves 2 through 5. In an attempt to maximize the number of respondents signing up for the study, two reminders were sent out on May 3<sup>rd</sup> and May 23<sup>rd</sup>. Based on previous experiences it was decided to have relatively long initial field period. Hence, the total field period of wave 1 was 55 days.

In total, 248 postcards were returned as the postal service where unable to deliver to a valid address. This gives us a net sample size of 32 752. Out of these, 2 872 respondents signed up and participated in wave 1, providing us with a response rate of 8.7 percent (AAPOR participation rate RR5).

In the subsequent four waves, respondents were contacted via the e-mail they had provided us with when answering wave 1. Wave 2 was sent out on June 6<sup>th</sup>, wave 3 was sent out on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, wave 4 was sent out on August 23<sup>rd</sup> and wave 5 was sent out the day after the election, on September 10<sup>th</sup>. Each wave had a field period of 14

days<sup>1</sup>. In order to maximize participation, two reminders were sent out, usually 7 and 12 days after the initial survey. An illustration of the entire field period and the daily inflow of responses for each wave is illustrated in Figure 1 below. The figure shows that while there were two major spikes in the inflow for wave 1, an overwhelming proportion of responses for each subsequent wave are collected in the first few days. In waves 2 to 5, more than 59 percent of responses were collected in the first three field days. After eight days, approximately 90 percent of responses had been collected.

As with all panel surveys, one important factor to keep tabs on is panel attrition. It is well known that there is a gradual determination in participation rate. Looking at attrition across panel waves, we find the largest drop between the first and second wave. 73,5 percent of everyone who provided their e-mail participated in wave 2, 71,4 percent participated in wave 3, 70,3 percent participated in wave 4, and 68,7 participated in the fifth and final wave. This is very similar to the response patterns in the subsequent campaign panel study conducted in conjunction to the 2014 European Parliamentary and National Election (Boije et al., 2016).

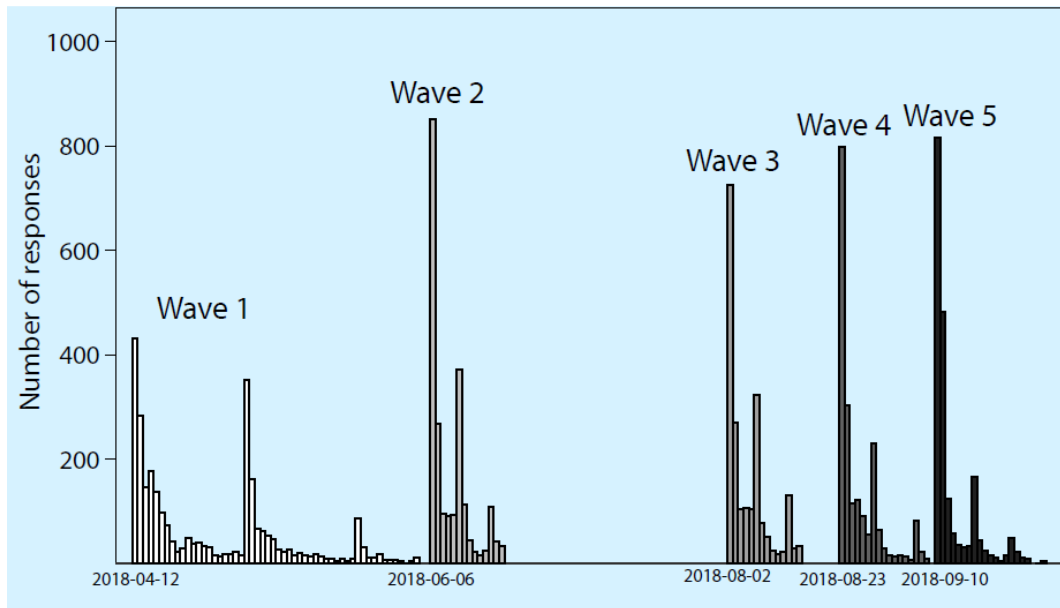
Table 1 Summary information on the 2018 Swedish Election Campaign Panel

|  | Wave 1     | Wave 2     | Wave 3     | Wave 4     | Wave 5     |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Field period start                     | 2018-04-12 | 2018-06-06 | 2018-08-02 | 2018-08-23 | 2018-09-10 |
| Field work end                         | 2018-06-06 | 2018-06-21 | 2018-08-16 | 2018-09-09 | 2018-10-01 |
| Number of days                         | 55         | 14         | 14         | 14(18)     | 14(22)     |
| Reminder 1                             | 2018-05-03 | 2018-06-12 | 2018-08-07 | 2018-08-29 | 2018-09-17 |
| Reminder 2                             | 2018-05-23 | 2018-06-18 | 2018-08-16 | 2018-09-06 | 2018-09-24 |
| Gross sample size                      | 33 000     | 2 872      | 2 801      | 2 799      | 2 799      |
| Net sample size                        | 32 752     | 2 826      | 2 752      | 2 749      | 2 749      |
| E-mail bounce backs                    | n/a        | 46         | 49         | 50         | 50         |
| Responses                              | 2 891      | 2 076      | 1 964      | 1 932      | 1 889      |
| Partial responses                      | 20         | 8          | 5          | 6          | 12         |
| Breakoffs                              | 122        | 100        | 50         | 49         | 66         |
| AAPOR participation rate (RR5)         | 8,7        | 72         | 69,9       | 68,8       | 67,1       |
| Gross participation rate (GRP)         | 8,8        | 72,3       | 70,1       | 69,0       | 67,5       |
| Net participation rate                 | 8,8        | 73,5       | 71,4       | 70,3       | 68,7       |
| Mean response time, excl. outliers     | 16,4 min   | 14,7 min   | 17,2 min   | 14,7 min   | 16,0 min   |
| Median response time excl. outliers    | 14,1 min   | 13,2 min   | 15,7 min   | 13,7 min   | 14,4 min   |
| Number of variable in full dataset     | 279        | 258        | 330        | 309        | 359        |
| Number of variables excluding paradata | 76         | 98         | 124        | 115        | 145        |

Source: 2018 Swedish Election Campaign Panel.

<sup>1</sup> In addition to the original sample, we have three complementary samples. The first complementary sample, the *MP youth sample*, is a random sample of young voters (below 45 years). The recruitment to this sample was done parallel to the original sample, receiving the same questionnaire with a few minor exceptions. The net sample size was 10000 and 630 participated in wave 1. We also have two small opt-in samples recruited via Dagens Nyheter (one of Sweden's leading quality newspapers) and via Facebook. For more information on recruitment, response rate and participation rates for the complementary samples, see Table A1 in appendix.

Figure 1 Histogram over date of responses for each for the five waves (frequencies and waves)



**Note:** The figure illustrates the number of respondents per day for each of the five waves. Each spike in the distribution is the result of reminders. The exact field period for each wave was (wave 1; wave 2; wave 3; wave 4; wave 5).

**Source:** 2018 Swedish Election Campaign Panel.

### Representativeness

Another key factor is to what extent the panel is representative in terms of demographic and attitudinal factors. It is well established that response and participation rates to social science surveys are not equally distributed across demographic and attitudinal characteristics. Likelihood to participate is linked to individual level resources such as education and income and that it is affected by individual traits such as interest in the survey subject. With respect to web panels, there is also a question of technological affordance such as internet access and the regular use of e-mail.

Previous election campaign panels have found differences in participation related to age, education, political interest and party choice (Boije et al., 2016), while other recent election studies have found large participation gaps related to income, immigration background and electoral turnout (Oleskog Tryggvason & Hedberg, 2015).

Table 3 displays the panel distribution for a number of key characteristics and compares them to the distribution in the SOM-survey, a study often considered as the gold standard within Swedish survey research on public opinion.

Tabell 2 Table display the distribution of demographic and attitudinal characteristic in the campaign panel, SOM-survey.

| Group                                 |   | SNES 2018 | SOM 2018 |
|---------------------------------------|---|-----------|----------|
| Sex                                   | Female                                    | 50.3      | 51.0     |
|                                       | Male                                      | 49.4      | 48.9     |
| Age                                   | Under 30                                  | 14.2      | 13.9     |
|                                       | 30-39 years                               | 13.4      | 14.8     |
|                                       | 40-49 years                               | 16.9      | 15.4     |
|                                       | 50-59 years                               | 18.6      | 17.4     |
|                                       | 60-69 years                               | 22.9      | 19.4     |
|                                       | 70+ years                                 | 13.9      | 19.2     |
| Education                             | Not completed primary school              | 0.1       | 1.0      |
|                                       | Primary school                            | 5.4       | 13.9     |
|                                       | Studies at secondary school or equivalent | 6.1       | 11.7     |
|                                       | Graduated from secondary school           | 17.8      | 18.9     |
|                                       | Post secondary school, not at university  | 10.7      | 12.7     |
|                                       | Studies at university level               | 13.0      | 10.5     |
|                                       | Graduation from university                | 43.5      | 29.2     |
|                                       | Studies or degree from postgraduate level | 3.4       | 2.1      |
| Area where the respondent grew up     | Countryside in Sweden                     | 16.0      | 21.4     |
|                                       | Minor city or suburban area in Sweden     | 28.2      | 28.4     |
|                                       | Medium city in Sweden                     | 29.3      | 24.5     |
|                                       | Stockholm, Gothenburg or Malmö            | 22.4      | 17.5     |
|                                       | Other country in the Nordic countries     | 1.2       | 2.0      |
|                                       | Other country in Europe                   | 1.7       | 3.0      |
|                                       | Country outside of Europe                 | 1.2       | 3.3      |
| Area where respondents mother grew up | Countryside in Sweden                     | 28.0      | 30.6     |
|                                       | Minor city or suburban area in Sweden     | 26.1      | 24.0     |
|                                       | Medium city in Sweden                     | 21.1      | 18.7     |
|                                       | Stockholm, Gothenburg or Malmö            | 15.3      | 11.9     |
|                                       | Other country in the Nordic countries     | 4.1       | 4.9      |
|                                       | Other country in Europe                   | 3.7       | 5.0      |
|                                       | Country outside of Europe                 | 1.8       | 4.9      |
| Area where respondents father grew up | Countryside in Sweden                     | 27.7      | 31.7     |
|                                       | Minor city or suburban area in Sweden     | 25.2      | 23.4     |
|                                       | Medium city in Sweden                     | 20.7      | 18.2     |
|                                       | Stockholm, Gothenburg or Malmö            | 16.3      | 12.0     |
|                                       | Other country in the Nordic countries     | 3.8       | 4.2      |
|                                       | Other country in Europe                   | 3.7       | 5.2      |
|                                       | Country outside of Europe                 | 2.5       | 5.3      |
| Political interest                    | Not interested at all                     | 1.3       | 5.8      |
|                                       | Not very interested                       | 19.0      | 29.8     |
|                                       | Rather interested                         | 55.8      | 46.4     |
|                                       | Very interested                           | 23.9      | 18.0     |

**Source:** The Swedish 2018 Election Campaign Panel, wave 1; the National SOM-survey 2018.

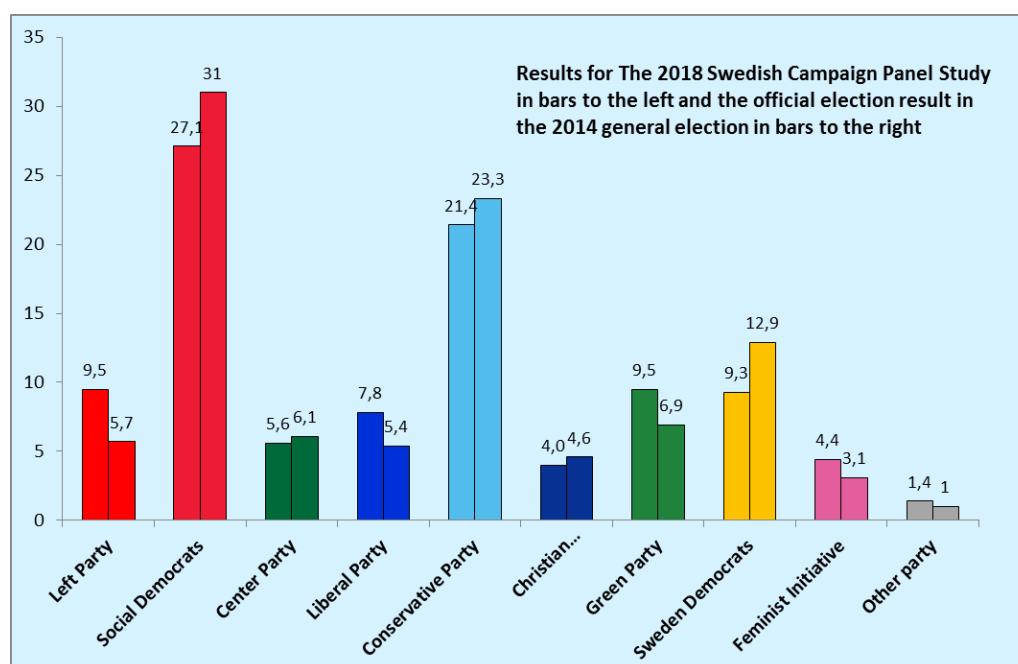
**Comment:**

The information in Table 2 reveals that the SOM-survey and the Campaign Panel differs in several important ways. The Campaign Panel is somewhat younger, or at least less old. Respondents are more educated and have higher political interest. The panel is also less rural and more urban while also having a lower share of respondents who has a background (self or one parent) outside of Sweden.

Several of the findings show that known response biases in self-administered mail back surveys (Oleskog Tryggvason and Hedberg 2015) are accentuated in the campaign panel. The findings that the panel is somewhat younger and more urban is probably caused by the fact that internet use and technological practices varies across generations.

Another important factor to consider is to what extent the panel is representative based on party choice in recent elections. Figure 2 display how the campaign panel voted in the previous election (2014) and compares this to the official elections result. The graph reveille a familiar pattern also found in previous campaign panels. Larger parties, the Social Democrats, the conservative party and the Sweden Democrats are underrepresented. The Left Party, the Green Party and the Liberal Party on the other hand are somewhat overrepresented.

**Figure 2** Official election result in the 2014 general election (bars to the right) and vote recall for respondents in the 2018 Swedish Election Campaign Study (bars to the left) (percent)



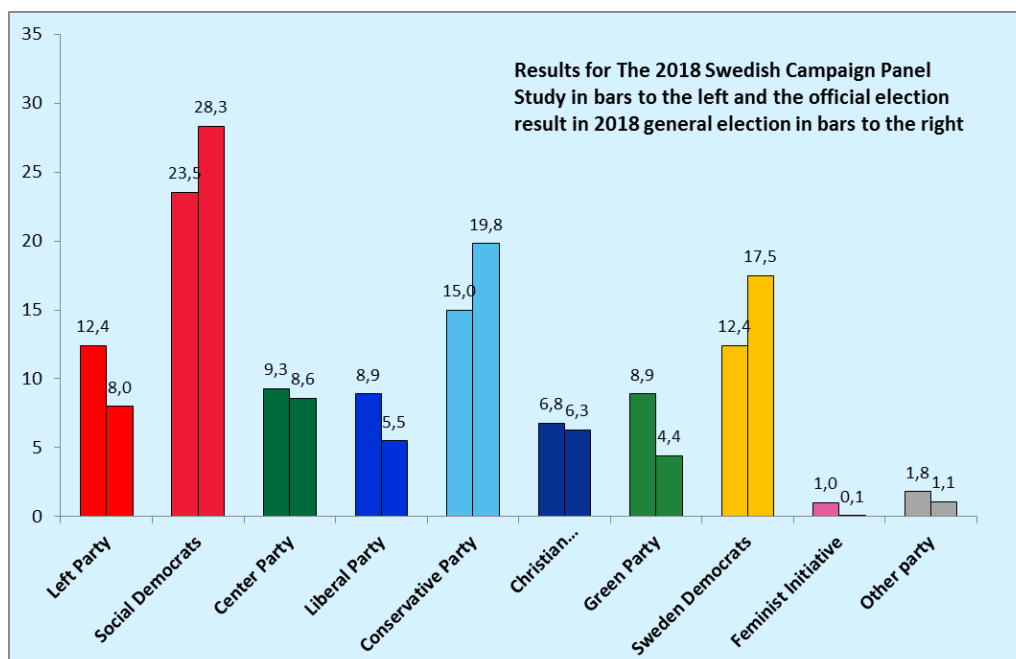
**Note:** The figure illustrates the official election result in the 2014 general election and vote recall for participations in the 2018 Swedish Election Campaign Panel (n=2373).

**Source:** Swedish Election Campaign Panel 2018, wave 1

Figure 3 display vote choice for respondents in the Campaign Panel in the 2018 general election compared to the official election result. The pattern here is very similar to Figure 2, where the three largest parties are underrepresented and the Left, Green and Liberal Party's are all overrepresented. The pattern of over and underrepresentation is very similar to deviations in the commercial pollsters final pre-election polls. These polls showed large and systematic underestimations of the Social Democrats and the Conservative Party while underestimating the Left Party (Oleskog Tryggvason, 2018).



**Figure 3** Official election result in the 2018 general election (bars to the right) and vote choice for respondents in the 2018 Swedish Election Campaign Study (bars to the left) (percent)



**Note:** The figure illustrates the official election result in the 2018 general election and vote choice for participations in the 2018 Swedish Election Campaign Panel (n=1 821).

**Source:** Swedish Election Campaign Panel 2018, wave 5

### Attrition in subgroups

While attrition for the whole sample was acceptable, there are considerable variations along several key demographic and attitudinal variables. Figure 4a-4e illustrates the net participation rate for sex, age, vote choice 2014, political interest, and political knowledge.

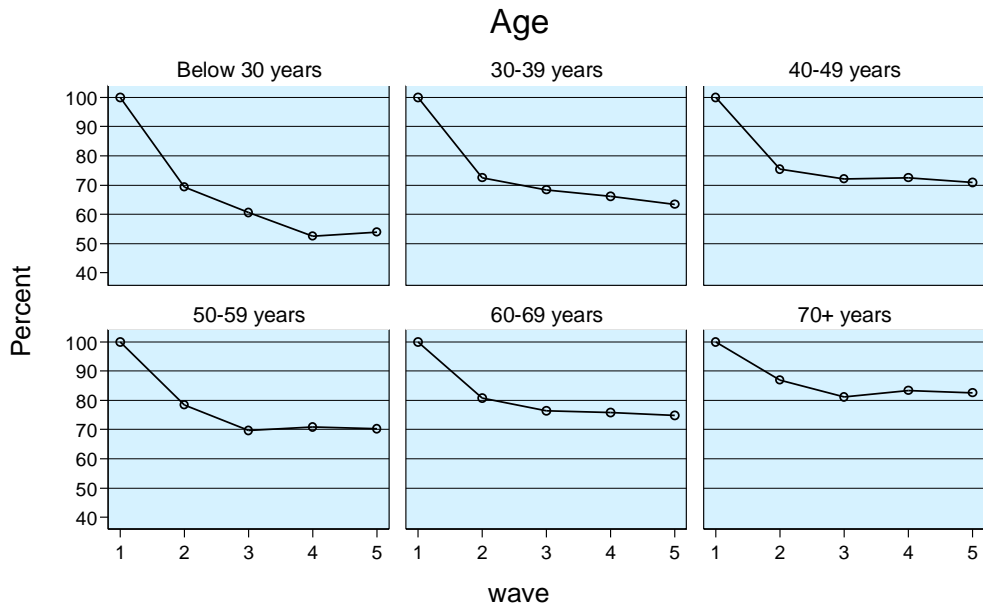
We can note that there is considerable variation in attrition between different age groups. While the oldest cohort has a participation rate above 80 percent in all waves, people under the age of 30 drops down below 60 percent in wave 4 and 50.

Vote choice in 2014 is also a strong determinant for if a respondent participates in all five waves. While there are minor differences between the different parties, the big difference is for respondents who did not vote, voted blank or those who do not want to provide an answer to the question.

There are also considerable differences for individuals with varying degree of political interest. Perhaps not surprising, individual who are not politically interested at all participates to a much lower extent. Only just above 40 percent participates in wave 2, which can be compared to 80 percent among the most interested.

Lastly, we also find considerable gap in participation between different levels of political knowledge. Those with the highest level of general political knowledge have participation rate above 70 percent in the last wave compared to just above 40 percent for those with least knowledge.

**Figure 4a** Participation rate by age (Per cent).

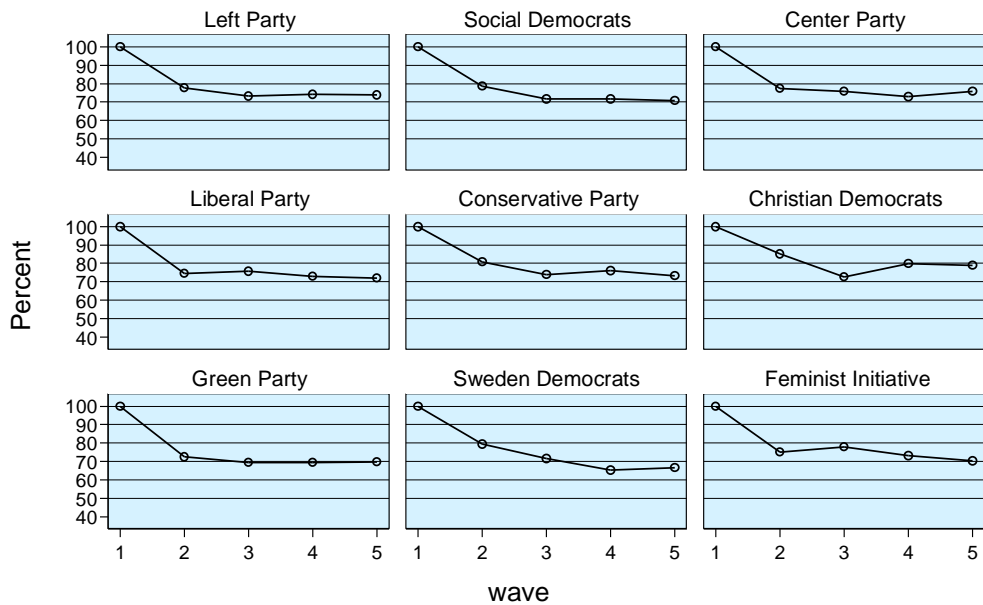


Graphs by Age

**Note:** The graph illustrates participation rate across the five waves for six age groups.

**Source:** Swedish Election Campaign Panel 2018, wave 1-5.

**Figure 4b** Participation rate by party choice 2014 (per cent).

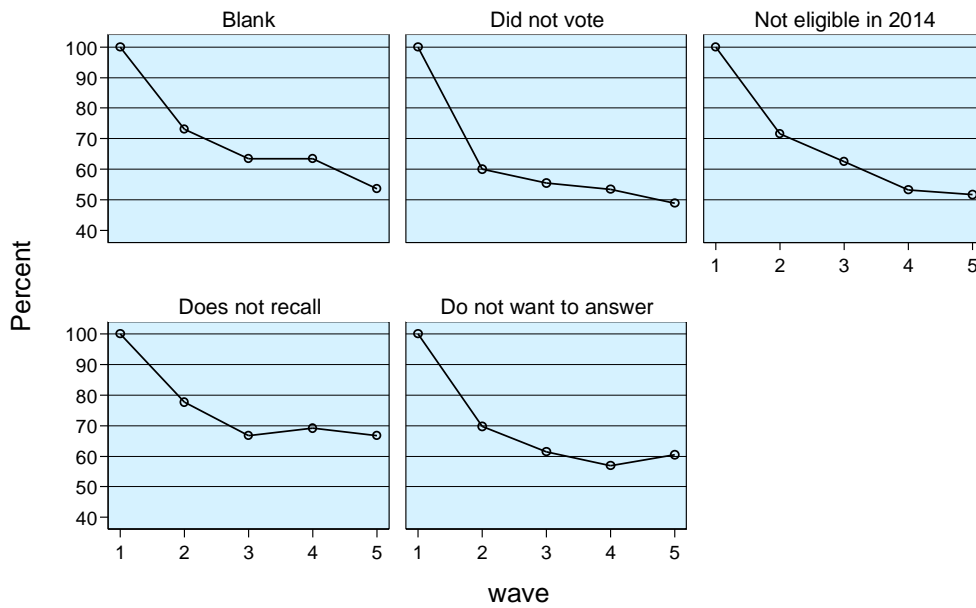


Graphs by Vote choice in 2014

**Note:** The graph illustrates participation rate across the five waves by vote choice (vote recall) in 2014.

**Source:** Swedish Election Campaign Panel 2018, wave 1-5.

**Figure 4c** Participation rate by (no) party choice 2014 (per cent).

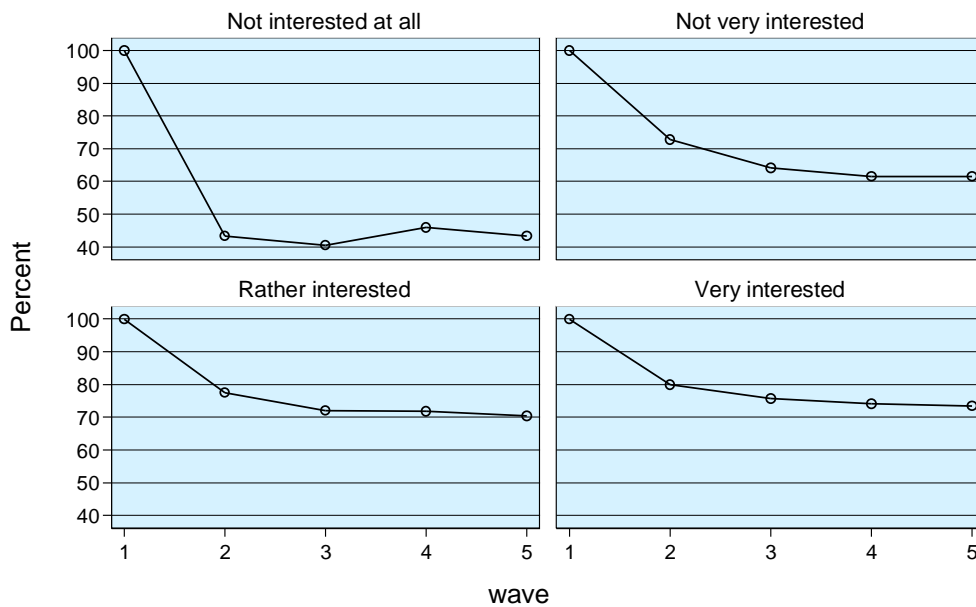


Graphs by Vote choice in 2014

**Note:** The graph illustrates participation rate across the five waves by vote choice (vote recall) in 2014.

**Source:** Swedish Election Campaign Panel 2018, wave 1-5.

**Figure 4d** Participation rate by political interest (per cent).

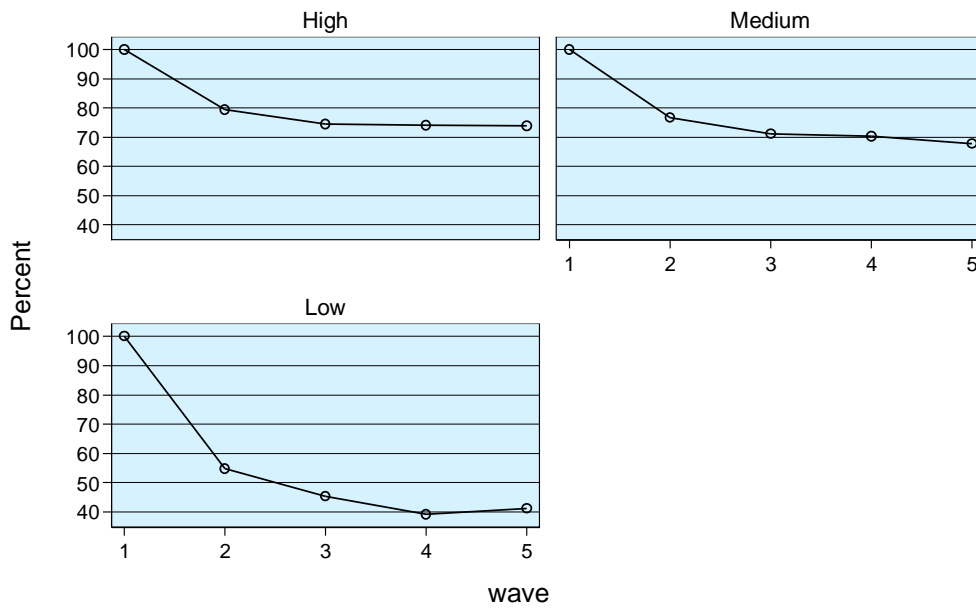


Graphs by Hur intresserad är du i allmänhet av politik?

**Note:** The graph illustrates participation rate across the five waves by political interest.

**Source:** Swedish Election Campaign Panel 2018, wave 1-5.

**Figure 4e** Participation rate by political knowledge (per cent).



Graphs by RECODE of kunskap

**Note:** The graph illustrates participation rate across the five waves by political knowledge in wave 1. Respondents are divided into three groups according to the number of correct answers. Low=0, 1 or 2 correct answers; Medium=3, 4 or 5 correct answers; High=6, 7 or 8 correct answers.

**Source:** Swedish Election Campaign Panel 2018, wave 1-5.

## Appendix

**Table A.1** Number of respondents in wave 1 and participation rate in wave 2 – wave 5 (frequencies and percent).

|                         | Wave 1<br>(n) | Wave 2<br>(%) | Wave 3 (%) | Wave 4 (%) | Wave 5 (%) |
|-------------------------|---------------|---------------|------------|------------|------------|
| SNES (full sample)      | 2872          | 75,8%         | 70,1%      | 69,0%      | 68,1%      |
| MP (youth sample)       | 630           | 72,1%         | 65,6%      | 61,4%      | 60,8%      |
| Facebook (opt-in)       | 141           | 76,6%         | 71,6%      | 68,8%      | 70,2%      |
| Dagens Nyheter (opt-in) | 959           | 83,5%         | 80,2%      | 70,5%      | 75,8%      |
| Total                   | 4602          | 76,9%         | 71,6%      | 68,3%      | 68,8%      |

**Note:** The table display number of respondents in wave 1 across sources of requirement and participation rate in subsequent waves. The numbers include respondents who straight-line and is therefore marginally different from figures in Table 1.

**Source:** Swedish Election Study Campaign Panel 2018, MP youth sample, Dagens Nyheter opt-in and Facebook opt-in.

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**Det svenska Valforskningsprogrammet finns vid Statsvetenskapliga institutionen i Göteborg. Sedan tidigt 1950-tal ägnar vi oss hängivet åt empiriska studier av opinionsbildning, val och väljarbeteende och av tillståndet och utvecklingen av den svenska representativa demokratin.**

**Syftet med forskningen är bland annat att förklara varför väljare röstar som de gör och varför val slutar som de gör. Vi spårar och följer trender i svensk valdemokrati och gör jämförelser med utvecklingen i andra länder.**

**Professor Henrik Ekengren Oscarsson leder det svenska Valforskningsprogrammet.**

