Unsuccessful Success? Failed No-Confidence Motions, Competence Signals, and Electoral Support

Additional Materials

Overview

This document provides analyses briefly discussed—but not presented—in "Unsuccessful Success? Failed No-Confidence Motions, Competence Signals, and Electoral Support".

Sample

The sample of 20 countries is provided in the first column of Table 1. Also given in Table 1 are the number of parties, elections, and the number of election cycles in which a no-confidence motion occurs, per state in the sample.

Election Proximity

Table 2 replicates the results of Table 2 in the manuscript after including two variables that control for the months from the last NCM until the election (against that government and by that party). Figures 1-3 replicate Figures 2-4 in the manuscript. Model 1 estimates the model on only government parties and it shows that introducing a NCM—controlling for the proximity of the last NCM to the election—reduces government parties' vote share by 0.075%. All the rest of the control variables are similar to those in the manuscript. Model 2 adds two variables—*election proximity* and *election proximity (party)*. Once we control for proximity, the magnitude of the coefficients for the NCM variables increase, showing that NCMs are more damaging for government parties and more helpful for the opposition parties that propose them. Models 3 and 4 provide the interactions that test

the implications of the model's credibility penalty. The results are all similar in magnitude and correctly signed. This indicates that we can be especially confident of the robustness of the results, even once we control for the time until the next election.

Another possibility is that the signal of the NCM decreases in strength the further it is from an election. In other words, the proximity to an election conditions the relationship between NCMs and electoral support. To rule out this possibility, I interact *election proximity* and *election proximity (party)* with the NCM variables in the first two models. Table 3 shows these models. Figure 4 shows the marginal effect of a NCM against that government across the time until the next election. The marginal effect is not statistically different from zero (at the 90% confidence level) until four months or less until the next election, at which point it is negative and significant. This indicates that NCMs are dangerous for government parties if they occur close to the election. Model 2 incorporates the two interaction variables (*election proximity*×*government NCMs* and *election proximity party*×*party NCMs*). Figure 5 shows the interactive relationship between NCMs by that party across the *election proximity (party)* variable. At all levels of *election proximity (party)*, the marginal effect is positive and significant indicating that it always benefits opposition parties to propose NCMs, regardless of how close they occur to the election. Also, *election proximity (party)* does not condition the relationship between NCMs and electoral support for opposition parties.

Model 3 tests whether *election proximity* and *election proximity (party)* condition the relationship between NCMs, availability of alternative governing possibilities (i.e., *effective number of parties*), and electoral support. The three-way interactions involving *government NCMs* and *party NCMs*, respectively, are not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.010$, s.e. $= 0.015$; $\beta = 0.001$, s.e. $= 0.009$). Figure 6 shows the marginal effect of a NCM by that party across the range of *effective number of parties* for three scenarios of *election proximity (party)*: 1 month, 18 months, and 36 months until the election. Asterisks indicate whether the marginal effect for that scenario is statistically different from 0 (at the 90% confidence level). The figure shows that the interactive relationship theorized in the manuscript—that the effects of NCMs by that party are statistically significant and positive when there are few parliamentary parties (i.e., less than or equal to 4)—is robust to the inclusion of *election proximity (party)*. In fact, similar slopes between the three scenarios indicate that *election proximity (party)* does not condition the relationship. The two interactions capturing whether proximity to the election modifies the relationship in Model 4 for *government NCMs* and *party NCMs*, respectively, are also not significant ($\beta = 0.00004$, s.e. $= 0.001$; $\beta = -0.0005$, s.e. $= 0.0009$). This indicates that the relationship between NCMs, ideological extremism, and electoral support does not depend on the proximity to the next election.

Figure 7 confirms these findings as *party NCMs* is statistically significant and positive for ideologically moderate opposition parties (when *extremism* < 20 for the "1 month" scenario, when *extremism* < 10 for the "18 months" scenario, and when *extremism* < 5 for the "36 months" scenario). Moreover, since the slopes are essentially the same for the values of *extremism* that I am theoretically interested in (i.e., when *extremism* ≤ 20), we can

conclude that these results are robust to the inclusion of the proximity of the last NCM to the election.

Excluding *Successful* NCMs

Table 4 presents the same four models estimated on a smaller sample that excludes those observations where a NCM passed and triggered early elections. The adjusted R^2 shows that the fit of the models is reduced slightly (Model 1: 0.074 to 0.069, Model 2: 0.020 to 0.016, Model 3: 0.018 to 0.013, Model 4: 0.022 to 0.020), but it is important to note that the general conclusions still hold. The exception is Model 3, where all the coefficients are similarly signed, but the standard errors are slightly larger.

Data Collection

This section contains additional information about the data collection.

These data are collected primarily through the use of *Keesing's World Archives*, parliamentary archives, and secondary sources. *Keesing's* uses a wide variety of international newspapers to gleam its information and then produces articles that accurately summarize political events. A primary editorial principle is internationalism, which means that it is "committed to providing comprehensive information on all regions of the world, covering all major developments in all countries". Thus, the index contains information for all countries in the world, regardless of size. This reduces the possibility of coverage bias in favor of the English-speaking states or economically strong nations. Another avenue of potential bias—under-coverage of unsuccessful no-confidence motions—may be a result of *Keesing's* emphasis on major political developments. No-confidence motions that either fail or are likely to fail may be under-reported in the index because they are deemed to be politically unimportant. This is unlikely to be problematic for two reasons. First, comparing the official parliamentary archives data to the data from *Keesing's* suggests that coverage of no-confidence motions—successful and unsuccessful—is highly correlated. Second, the data from official parliamentary records and *Keesing's* is supplemented by a wide variety of international as well as local newspapers and wire reports from individual states. This information is available through Lexis-Nexis and contains more in-depth coverage of the day-to-day political developments of that state. This reduces the chance that a minor no-confidence motion that is likely to fail would be left out of the data set. Thus we can be confident that *Keesing's*—combined with newspaper articles and wire reports—is an effective source for information on no-confidence motions when parliamentary archive data are unavailable.

For each no-confidence motion, I collect the date, the proposing party(ies), proximate catalyst, and the outcome. This is a broader and more comprehensive data collection than the primary alternative of Strom, Muller and Bergman (2006). For the most part,

the two collections are quite similar. Aside from featuring varying time frames, slight differences in the number of NCMs reported in Strom, Muller and Bergman (2006) are the result of a few variations in coding procedures and idiosyncracies at the state level. For example, discrepancies in Italy arise from the fact that NCMs that were proposed, but not voted on, were included in the SMB data while they were not in my data. The case of the Netherlands is rather peculiar, as NCMs do not formally exist; rather, they only exist when both the opposition and the government consider a piece of legislation to be a motion of confidence. The problems arise in coding due to the fact that there are situations when the two sides do not agree on whether a bill is a "question of confidence" (personal communications with Rudy B. Andeweg). My partial reliance on secondary sources like *Keesing's* is more appropriate for this project since the theory relies on NCMs being publicized events where there is little doubt that the public is aware of the event and that it qualifies as a NCM.
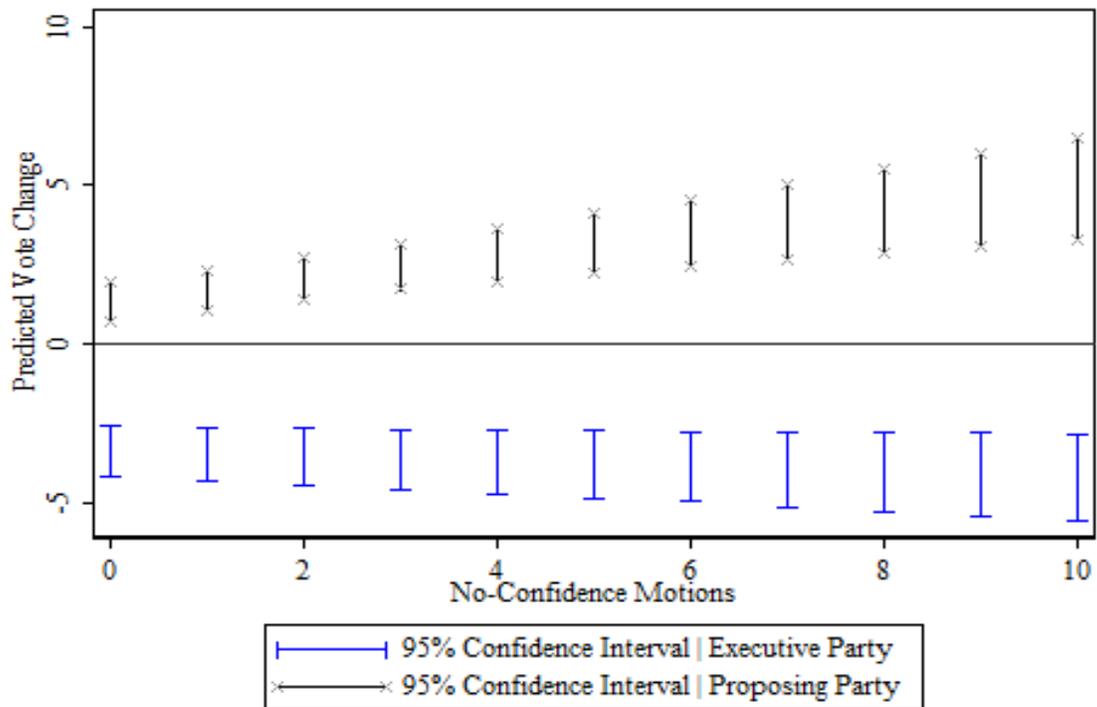
Figure 1: The Effects of No-Confidence Motions on the Vote Change of the Prime Minister's Party and the Proposing Opposition Party: Controlling for Election Proximity (Models 1-2, Table 2)
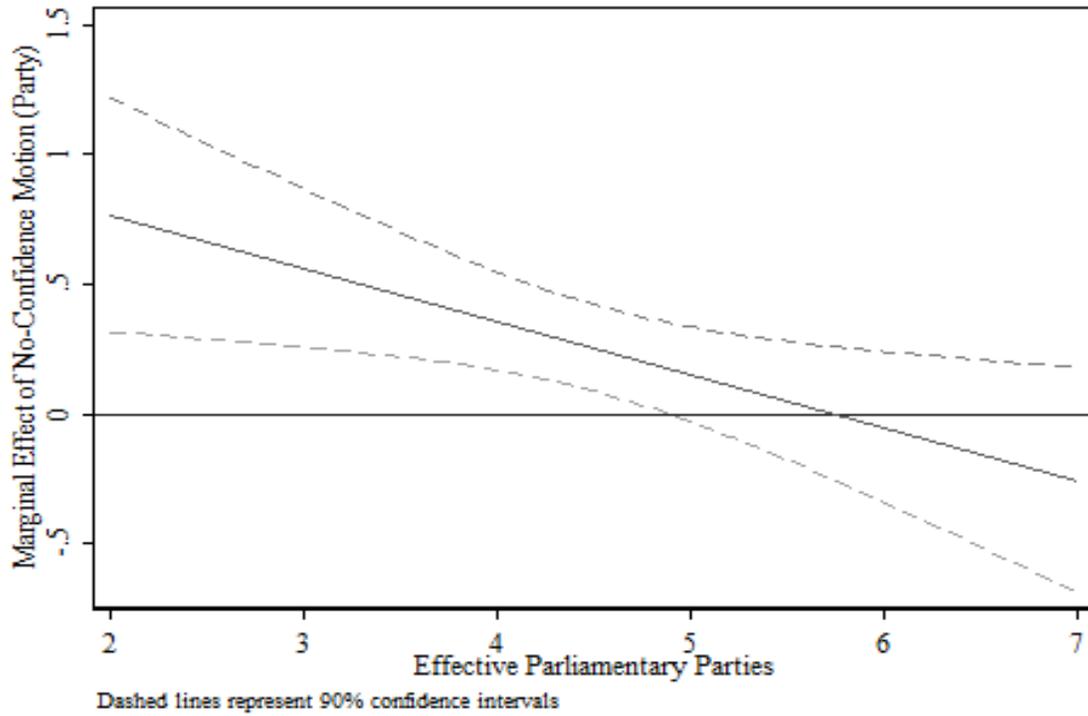
Figure 2: Marginal Effect of a NCM by that Party on Vote Change across Effective Number of Parliamentary Parties: Controlling for Election Proximity (Model 3, Table 2)
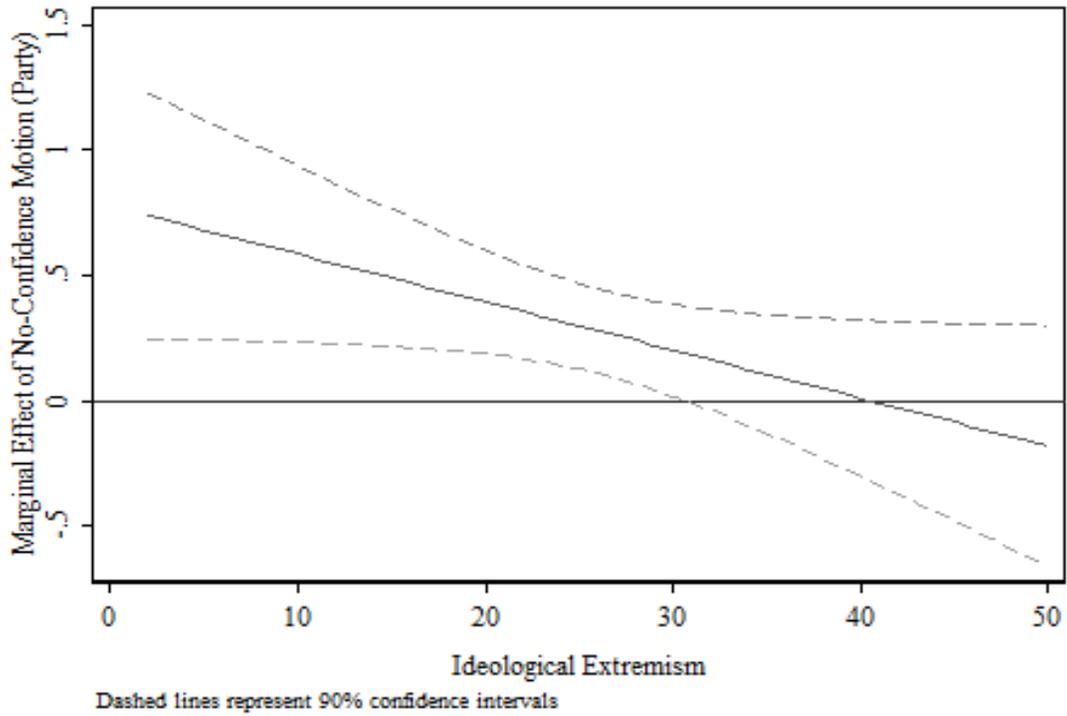
Figure 3: Marginal Effect of a NCM by that Party on Vote Change across Ideological Extremism: Controlling for Election Proximity (Model 4, Table 2)

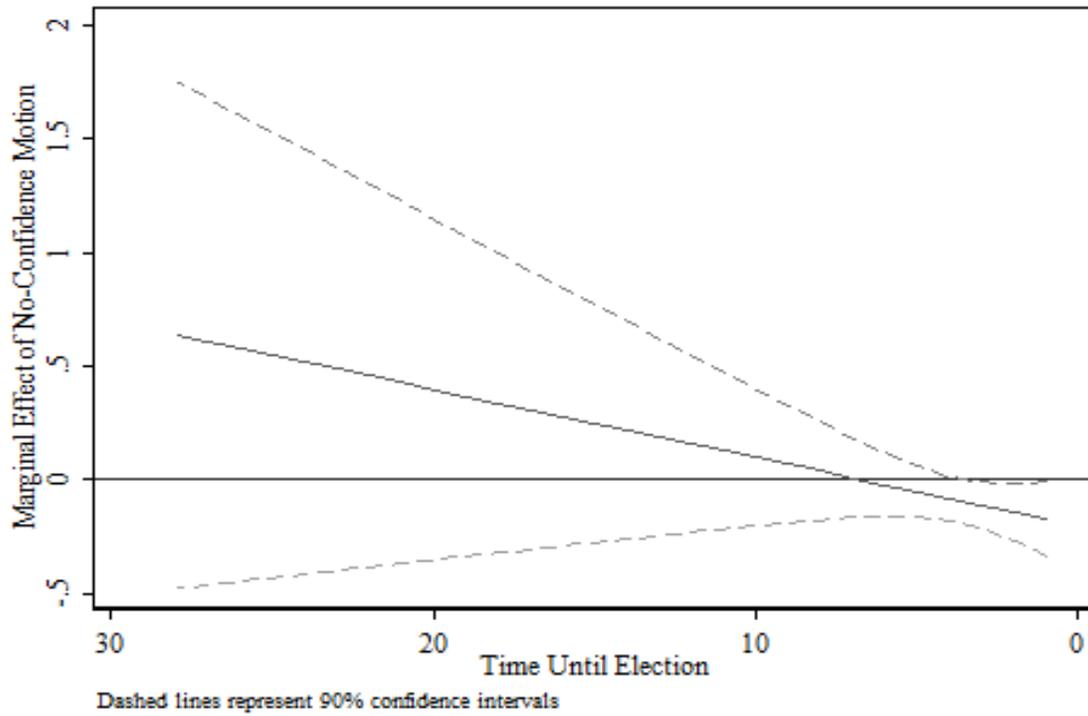Figure 4: Marginal Effect of a NCM against that Government across the Range of Election Proximity: Government Parties (Model 1, Table 3)

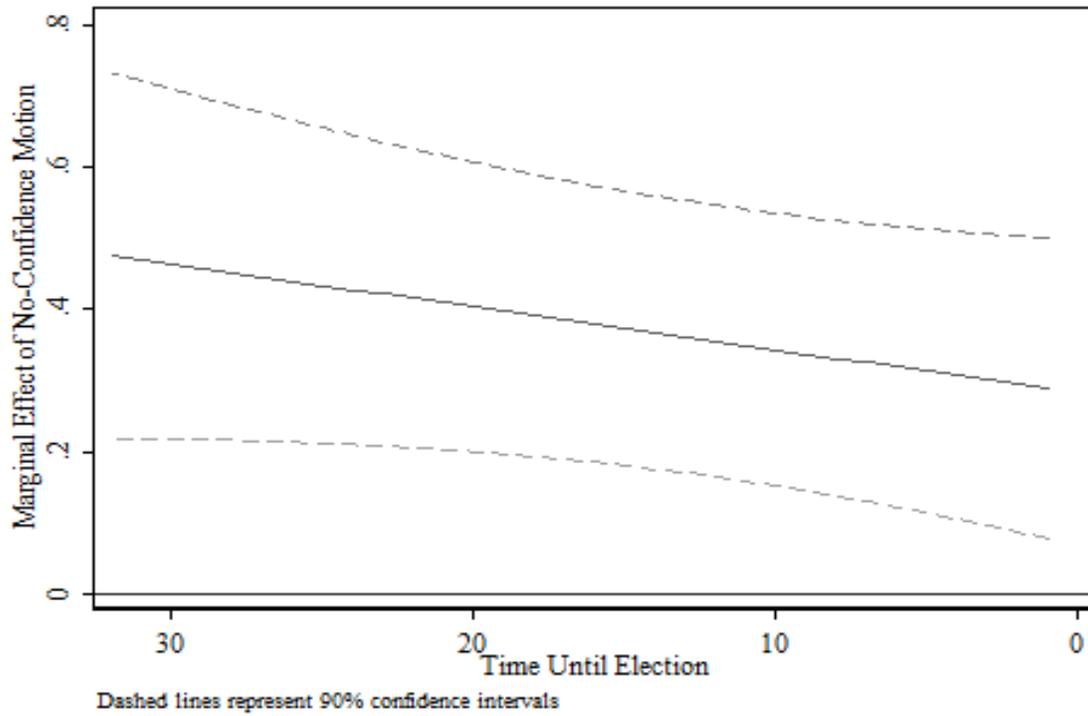Figure 5: Marginal Effect of a NCM by that Party across the Range of Election Proximity: Opposition Parties (Model 2, Table 3)
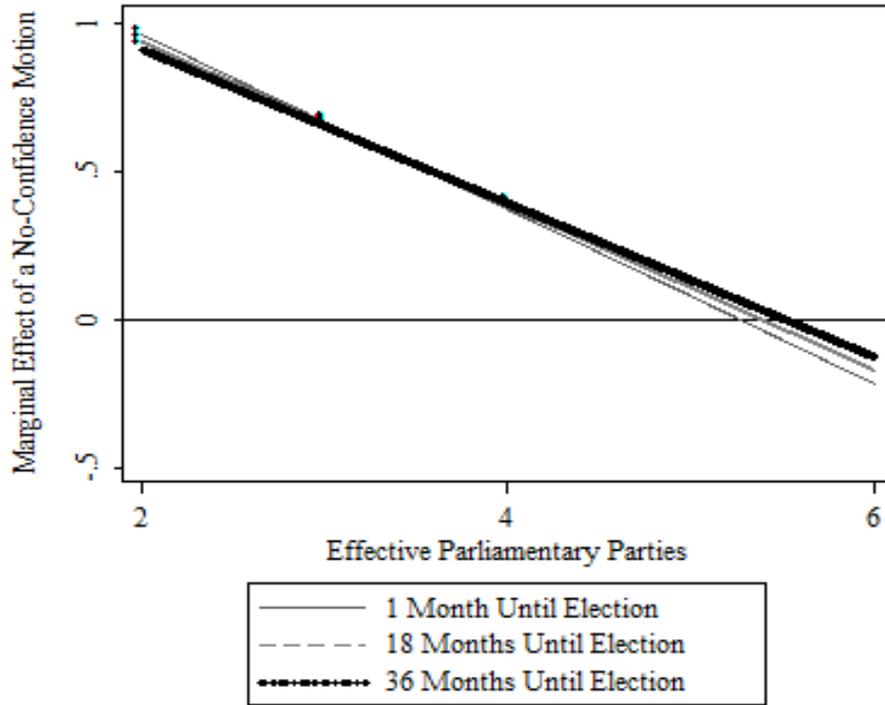
Figure 6: Marginal Effect of a NCM by that Party as a Function of Effective Number of Parliamentary Parties and Election Proximity (Model 3, Table 3)
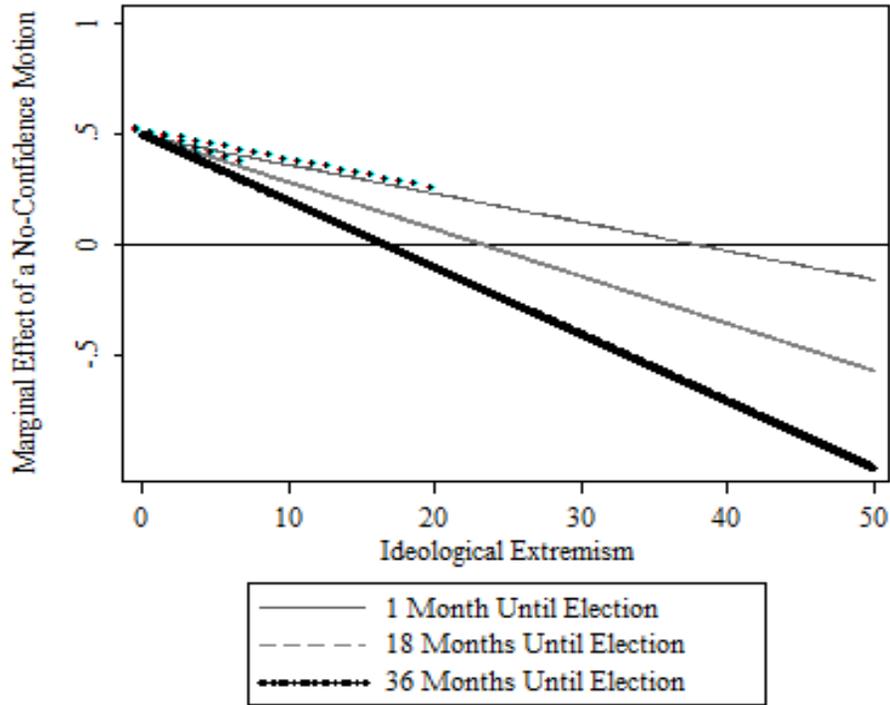
Figure 7: Marginal Effect of a NCM by that Party as a Function of Ideological Extremism and Election Proximity (Model 4, Table 3)

Table 1: Distribution of No-Confidence Motions within Sample Countries

Country	No. of Parties	No. of Elections	Elections with NCMs
Australia	71	20	7
Austria	49	15	5
Canada	52	14	7
Denmark	23	3	1
Finland	69	11	5
France	36	7	5
Germany	33	9	6
Great Britain	41	13	6
Greece	20	7	5
Iceland	58	14	1
Ireland	51	14	10
Israel	96	13	10
Italy	70	9	3
Japan	59	14	7
Netherlands	77	14	1
New Zealand	41	15	2
Norway	81	13	5
Portugal	35	8	5
Spain	49	7	2
Sweden	88	16	4
Total	1099	236	97

Table 2: Regression Results of the Effects of No-Confidence Motions on Parties' Change in Vote Share ($Vote_t - Vote_{t-1}$): Controlling for Election Proximity Additively

	Model 1 Govt. Parties	Model 2 Opp. Parties	Model 3 Opp. Parties	Model 4 Opp. Parties
No. of NCMs against that Gov't	-0.075* (0.054)	-0.125** (0.062)	-0.643*** (0.227)	-0.239** (0.098)
No. of NCMs by that Party		0.357*** (0.110)	1.174** (0.464)	0.776** (0.319)
Election Proximity	-0.038** (0.021)	0.028** (0.012)	0.031** (0.013)	0.027** (0.013)
Election Proximity (Party)		-0.016 (0.012)	-0.020* (0.013)	-0.014 (0.013)
Real GDP Per Capita Growth	0.130** (0.065)	-0.131** (0.054)	-0.137** (0.053)	-0.128** (0.054)
Majority Government	-1.392** (0.792)	0.644*** (0.233)	0.692*** (0.256)	0.631** (0.244)
No. of Government Parties	0.105 (0.185)	-0.024 (0.093)	-0.058 (0.107)	-0.003 (0.093)
Prime Minister's Party	1.448** (0.684)			
Vote Share$_{t-1}$	-0.096*** (0.024)	0.017** (0.009)	0.016** (0.008)	0.015** (0.009)
Effective No. of Parties			0.011 (0.107)	
Eff. Parties×Government NCMs			0.127** (0.051)	
Eff. Parties×Party NCMs			-0.204** (0.100)	
Ideological Extremism				-0.006 (0.009)
Extremism×Government NCMs				0.004** (0.002)
Extremism×Party NCMs				-0.019* (0.012)
Constant	1.163 (1.092)	0.266 (0.218)	0.317 (0.471)	0.387 (0.302)
N	406	693	693	693
$Adjusted R^2$	0.077	0.024	0.023	0.026

Standard errors in parentheses: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 3: Regression Results of the Effects of No-Confidence Motions on Parties' Change in Vote Share ($Vote_t - Vote_{t-1}$): Controlling for Election Proximity Interactively

	Model 1 Govt. Parties	Model 2 Opp. Parties	Model 3 Opp. Parties	Model 4 Opp. Parties
No. of NCMs against that Gov't	-0.201*	-0.034	-0.503*	-0.135
	(0.121)	(0.078)	(0.317)	(0.128)
No. of NCMs by that Party		0.283**	1.546**	0.489**
		(0.130)	(0.772)	(0.179)
Election Proximity	-0.072*	0.053**	0.203**	0.092**
	(0.048)	(0.019)	(0.081)	(0.044)
Election Proximity (Party)		-0.025**	-0.074	-0.040
		(0.014)	(0.079)	(0.045)
Proximity×Gov't NCMs	0.030	-0.020*	-0.055	-0.024
	(0.028)	(0.013)	(0.056)	(0.024)
Proximity (Party)×Party NCMs		0.006	-0.003	0.024
		(0.005)	(0.042)	(0.028)
Real GDP Per Capita Growth	0.137**	-0.136**	-0.146***	-0.132**
	(0.064)	(0.051)	(0.048)	(0.052)
Majority Government	-1.403**	0.668***	0.601**	0.654**
	(0.782)	(0.229)	(0.247)	(0.244)
No. of Government Parties	0.098	-0.035	-0.079	-0.022
	(0.176)	(0.091)	(0.102)	(0.095)
Prime Minister's Party	1.444**			
	(0.691)			
Vote Share$_{t-1}$	-0.096***	0.017**	0.016**	0.017**
	(0.024)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Effective No. of Parties			0.148	
			(0.115)	
Eff. Parties×Gov't NCMs			0.102	
			(0.078)	
Eff. Parties×Party NCMs			-0.294**	
			(0.165)	
Eff. Parties×Proximity			-0.044**	
			(0.022)	
Eff. Parties×Proximity (Party)			0.014	
			(0.021)	
Eff. Parties×Gov't NCMs×Prox.			0.010	
			(0.015)	
Eff. Parties×Party NCMs×Prox. (Party)			0.001	
			(0.009)	
Ideological Extremism				0.002
				(0.010)
Extremism×Gov't NCMs				0.005
				(0.005)
Extremism×Party NCMs				-0.012*
				(0.008)
Extremism×Prox.				-0.002
				(0.001)
Extremism×Prox. (Party)				0.0003
				(0.002)
Extremism×Gov't NCMs×Prox.				0.00004
				(0.001)
Extremism×Party NCMs×Prox. (Party)				-0.0005
				(0.0009)
Constant	1.217	0.252	-0.051	0.210
	(1.091)	(0.217)	(0.442)	(0.306)
N	406	693	693	693
$AdjustedR^2$	0.078	0.024	0.027	0.027

Standard errors in parentheses: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 4: Regression Results of the Effects of No-Confidence Motions on Parties' Change in Vote Share ($Vote_t - Vote_{t-1}$): Excluding *Successful* Motions

	Model 1 Govt. Parties	Model 2 Opp. Parties	Model 3 Opp. Parties	Model 4 Opp. Parties
No. of NCMs against that Gov't	-0.091** (0.043)	-0.110** (0.054)	-0.412** (0.226)	-0.197** (0.077)
No. of NCMs by that Party		0.296** (0.122)	0.772* (0.575)	0.761** (0.311)
Real GDP Per Capita Growth	0.121** (0.054)	-0.126** (0.051)	-0.129** (0.050)	-0.119** (0.050)
Majority Government	-1.201* (0.809)	0.583** (0.246)	0.618** (0.257)	0.536** (0.260)
No. of Government Parties	0.203 (0.202)	-0.076 (0.094)	-0.101 (0.101)	-0.045 (0.097)
Prime Minister's Party	1.296** (0.682)			
Vote Share$_{t-1}$	-0.090*** (0.024)	0.015* (0.009)	0.014** (0.008)	0.013* (0.009)
Effective No. of Parties			0.009 (0.105)	
Eff. Parties×Government NCMs			0.076* (0.050)	
Eff. Parties×Party NCMs			-0.122 (0.119)	
Ideological Extremism				-0.009 (0.009)
Extremism×Government NCMs				0.004** (0.002)
Extremism×Party NCMs				-0.021** (0.011)
Constant	0.466 (1.028)	0.564** (0.200)	0.594* (0.447)	0.724** (0.305)
N	387	652	652	652
$Adjusted R^2$	0.069	0.016	0.013	0.020

Standard errors in parentheses: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$