

Data: World Value Survey, round 7, and V-Dem.

"For democracy to endure, their leaders and *citizens* must internalize the spirit of democracy" (Diamond 2008: 294; also Claassen 2020)

To love democracy is....

- ▶ to understand it
- ▶ to value it
- ▶ to fight for it







- ▶ We leverage the German reunification and the strict cut-off birth date used to determine school start dates for individuals born in the GDR to isolate the causal effect of exposure to *socialist* versus *democratic* education on democratic support.
- ▶ We use a difference-in-difference-in-difference (DiDiD) research design that leverages the school enrolment cut-off date (1 June) to ensure the causal identification of our regression (following Fuchs-Schündeln and Masella 2016).

$$Y_{ics} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Age} + \beta_2 \text{East} + \beta_3 \text{Cohort} + \beta_4 \text{BeforeJune} + \beta_5 \text{East} \times \text{Cohort} + \beta_6 \text{East} \times \text{BeforeJune} + \beta_7 \text{Cohort} \times \text{BeforeJune} + \beta_8 \text{East} \times \text{Cohort} \times \text{BeforeJune} + \gamma_s + \epsilon$$

The impact of a socialist education on support for democracy

	Democratic Satisfaction		Democratic support	
	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>s.e.</i>	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>s.e.</i>
Age	0.108**	[0.020]	0.091**	[0.028]
Born before June	0.328	[0.308]	-0.659	[0.538]
Cohort (1973-1983)	0.860	[0.797]	-1.926	[1.077]
Before June*Cohort	2.576*	[1.088]	1.700	[1.290]
East Germany	-14.048**	[0.499]	-6.031**	[0.775]
Before June*East	-0.861	[0.869]	0.464	[1.118]
Cohort*East	4.383**	[1.216]	4.101*	[1.742]
Before June*Cohort*East	-4.286*	[1.918]	-5.818*	[2.711]
Constant	66.914**	[0.761]	86.534**	[1.481]
Survey-Year Fixed Effects	Yes		Yes	
Survey Weights	Yes		Yes	
Observations	18,391		4,509	
R ²	0.099		0.040	

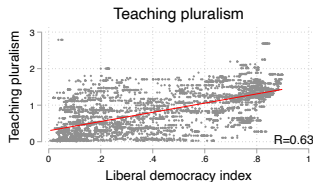
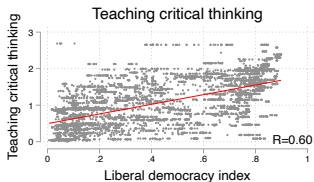
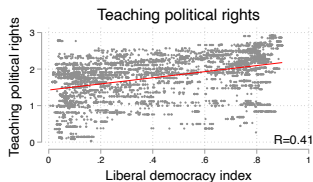
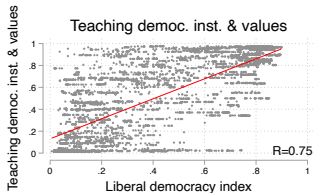
Results: The extra year of socialist education in East Germany for those born before the 1st of June between 1973 and 1982 causes a decrease of 4.3 percentage points in democratic satisfaction and 5.8 percentage points in democratic support, compared to their contemporaries born in the same year.

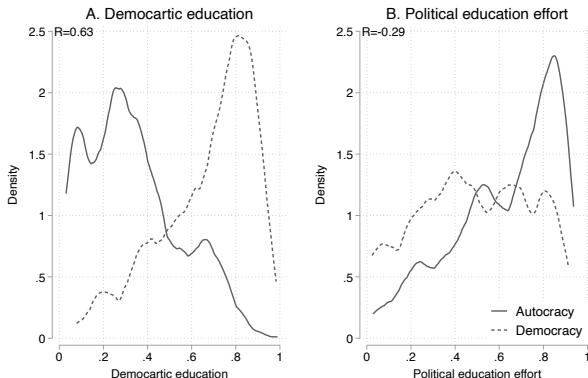
Data: ALLBUS, 1988-2018.

- ▶ We need comparative data on education content to distinguish pro- and anti-democratic school socialization.
- ▶ We need to match the education exposure to individuals and measure their democratic support today.

Learn more and access the data: <https://www.gla.ac.uk/research/az/democracyresearch/dataandmethods/v-indocdataset/>

Education content across different levels of liberal democracy





Combining V-Indoc and individual-level data and findings

- ▶ **Data** (1995-2022): World Value Survey, Latinobarometer, Afrobarometer, Americas Barometer, Asian Barometer, European Values Study, Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES)
- ▶ **Sample**: 106 countries (89% of the world population); $N = 760,000$
- ▶ **Outcomes**: 0="not at all" and 100="completely" agree
 - ① Agreement that "democracy is the best form of government"
 - ② Agreement that "having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections"
- ▶ **Education experience of individuals**: Matching the average education curriculum that respondents were exposed to between 5 and 15 years of age. Capture core education for most generations.
- ▶ **Model specification**: Linear OLS with clustered standard errors by country-birth cohort and year and study FEs.

Impact of education content on long-term democ. attitudes

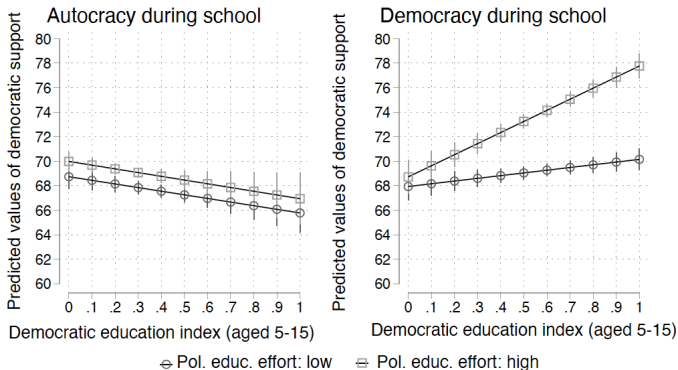
	OUTCOME: SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY (M1)						
	M1.0	M1.1	M1.2	M1.3	M1.4	M1.5	M1.6
	<i>coef/se</i>	<i>coef/se</i>	<i>coef/se</i>	<i>coef/se</i>	<i>coef/se</i>	<i>coef/se</i>	<i>coef/se</i>
Autocratic regime (aged 5-15)	-1.157** [0.446]	-0.676 [0.481]	0.443 [0.477]	-0.874 [0.455]	-0.884 [0.467]	-1.312** [0.462]	2.304** [0.651]
<u>Education environment (aged 5-15):</u>							
Democratic education index		2.098** [0.616]					5.413** [0.764]
Teaching democ. inst. & values			4.327** [0.387]				
Teaching political rights				2.077** [0.586]			
Teaching pluralism					3.162** [0.906]		
Teaching critical thinking						-1.009 [0.703]	
Autocratic x democratic education							-7.304** [1.153]
Constant	54.879** [1.122]	54.091** [1.134]	54.498** [1.102]	53.450** [1.222]	54.645** [1.110]	55.278** [1.154]	52.871** [1.126]
Observations	518,054	518,054	518,054	524,157	518,054	518,054	518,054
R ²	0.054	0.054	0.055	0.054	0.054	0.054	0.055

Individual controls: age, gender, education and working. *Macro controls – impressionable years:* (log) GDP per Capita, modernization index, political corruption, public goods provision. *Macro controls – survey year:* (log) GDP per Capita, political corruption, level of electoral democracy.

Impact of education content on long-term democ. attitudes

	OUTCOME: SUPPORT FOR STRONG LEADER (M2)						
	M2.0	M2.1	M2.2	M2.3	M2.4	M2.5	M2.6
	coef/se	coef/se	coef/se	coef/se	coef/se	coef/se	coef/se
Autocratic regime (aged 5-15)	4.977** [0.536]	3.380** [0.555]	3.570** [0.583]	4.207** [0.542]	4.053** [0.536]	4.472** [0.548]	3.288** [0.794]
<u>Education environment (aged 5-15):</u>							
Democratic education index		-7.435** [0.762]					-7.554** [1.055]
Teaching democ. inst. & values			-3.259** [0.586]				
Teaching political rights				-5.557** [0.838]			
Teaching pluralism					-10.445** [1.002]		
Teaching critical thinking						-5.065** [0.892]	
Autocratic x democratic education							0.228 [1.619]
Constant	59.887** [1.788]	63.631** [1.764]	60.974** [1.754]	63.451** [1.917]	61.970** [1.755]	61.791** [1.803]	63.674** [1.765]
Observations	497,529	497,529	497,529	499,074	497,529	497,529	497,529
R ²	0.158	0.159	0.158	0.162	0.160	0.158	0.159

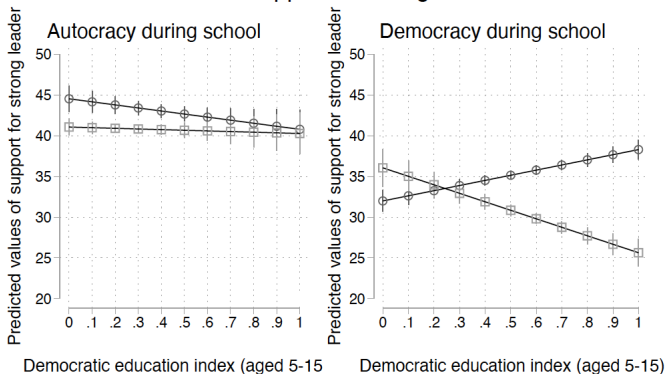
Individual controls: age, gender, education and working. *Macro controls – impressionable years:* (log) GDP per Capita, modernization index, political corruption, public goods provision. *Macro controls – survey year:* (log) GDP per Capita, political corruption, level of electoral democracy.



Democratic school content and efforts of political education

⊕ Pol. educ. effort: low ⊖ Pol. educ. effort: high

Outcome: Support for strong leader



How can we strengthen democracies beyond school?

Project DEMED addresses these challenges by using social media to conduct civic education campaigns, offering a cost-effective and wide-reaching method.



Social media: The end or the savior of democracy?

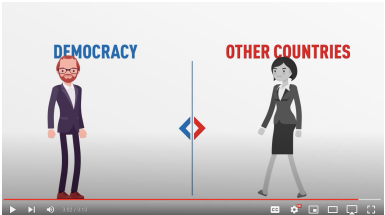
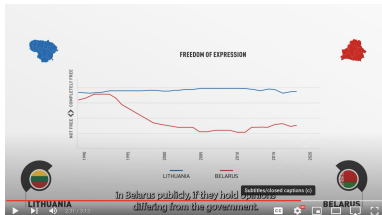


Turning the potential of social media on its head.

- ▶ **Massive reach:** Billions of people worldwide, coming from nearly all social backgrounds and countries, use social media websites daily.
- ▶ **Circumventing state control:** Especially in autocracies, social media platforms' relatively decentralized structure allows more space for pro-democratic voices compared to traditional media structures, which are often controlled by the regime.

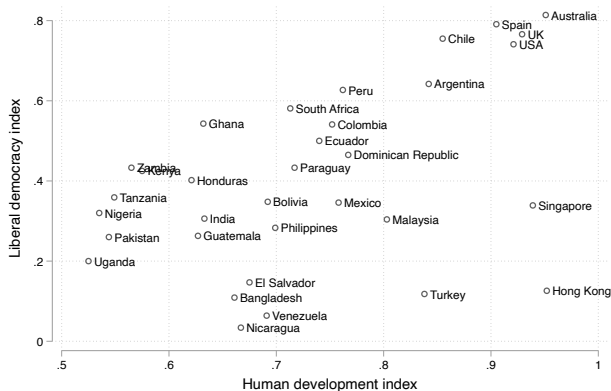
Can Online Civic Education Promote Democratic Citizenship?

Video example: Civil rights framing



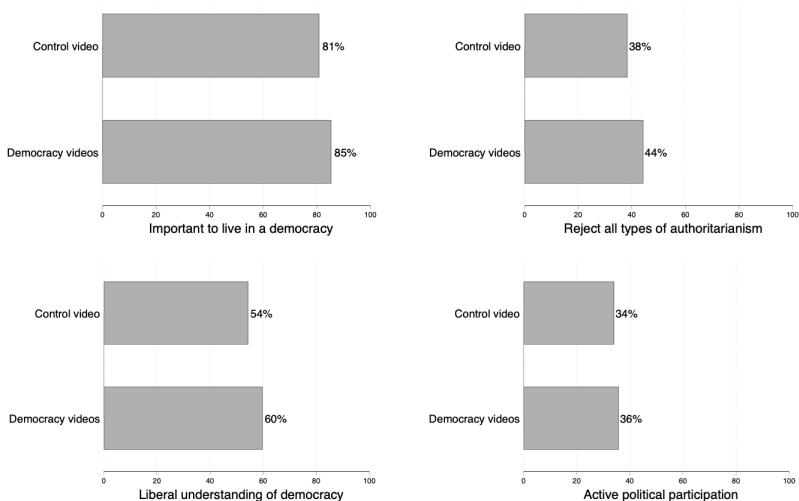
<https://youtu.be/YBePPaG0Bg8>

Over 90,000 people in 33 countries were included in our study



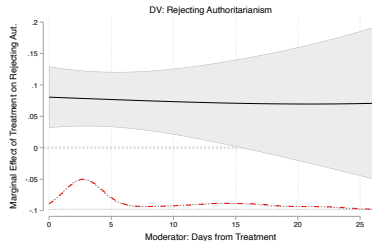
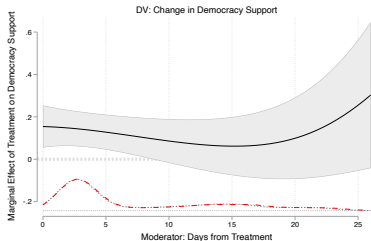
Research participants were recruited online using Facebook and Instagram ads.

Modelling: Linear regression with country-level clustered standard errors



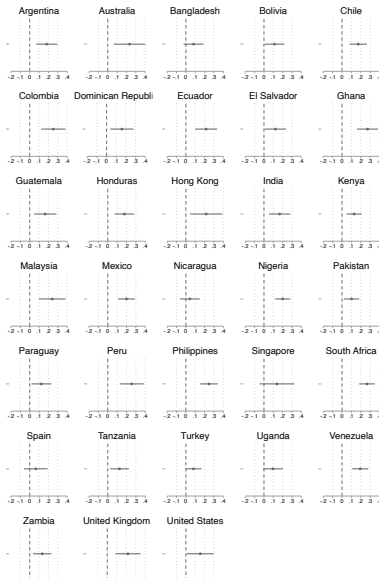
Significance levels: ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$. Results are based on linear regression with country-clustered standard errors.

How long do the effects of online civic education last?



- The positive effect of the democracy videos is still statistically significant after 10 days.

Main effects
by country:
Democ. pref.



Which pro-democratic arguments have the strongest impact?



Institutional constraints on executive power and promotion of the rule of law



Protection of individual rights and liberties



*Performance in providing
positive economic, health, and
environmental outcomes*


- We found emphasizing democracy's liberal aspects, particularly its rights and institutions, to be more effective than arguments emphasizing democracy's economic benefits.

Education – both in schools and online –
is key to strengthening democracies!


Conclusion: Online civic education can be a powerful tool to counteract democratic backsliding


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Facebook/Instagram Ad to recruit research participants




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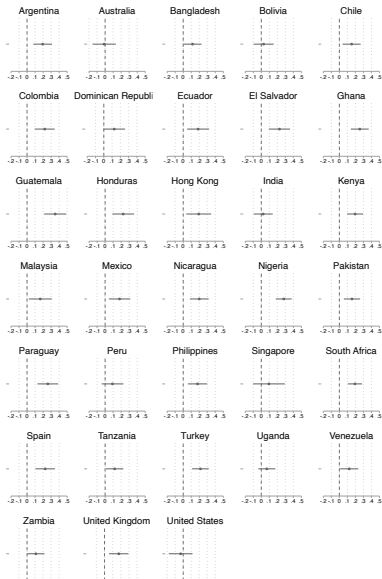
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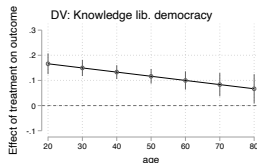
Figure: Percentage of the population using Facebook/Instagram (2024)

	Output	Treatment group Institutions	Rights
Age	0.001 [0.001]	0.002 [0.001]	0.001 [0.001]
Female	-0.017 [0.029]	-0.001 [0.029]	-0.042 [0.029]
Secondary educ.	-0.024 [0.060]	0.068 [0.061]	0.034 [0.060]
Degree	0.034 [0.063]	0.148* [0.064]	0.084 [0.063]
Urban	-0.033 [0.029]	-0.034 [0.029]	-0.023 [0.029]
Proficient language	0.065 [0.036]	0.009 [0.035]	0.022 [0.036]
Pre-treat democ pref.	-0.004 [0.007]	0.004 [0.007]	0.008 [0.007]
No very interested	0.074 [0.047]	0.061 [0.047]	0.028 [0.047]
Somewhat interested	0.052 [0.045]	0.055 [0.045]	-0.008 [0.045]
Very interested	0.075 [0.050]	0.083 [0.050]	0.02 [0.050]
Turnout	0.009 [0.034]	-0.024 [0.033]	-0.038 [0.033]
Country FE	✓	✓	✓
Constant	0.008 [0.123]	-0.126 [0.124]	0.039 [0.123]
Observations	41,395	41,395	41,395

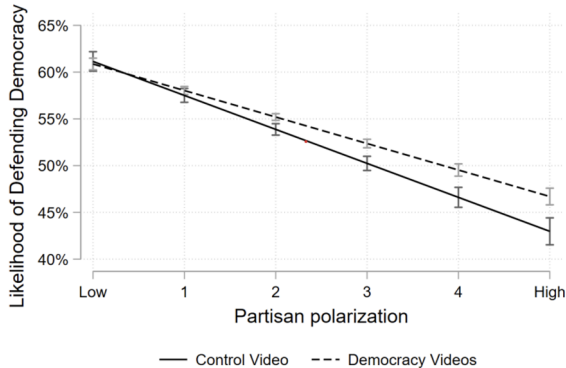
Main effects
by country:
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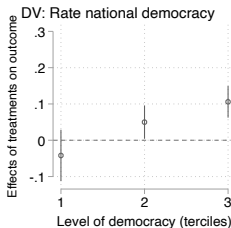


Do these interventions work better among some individuals?

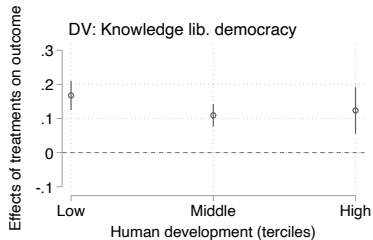
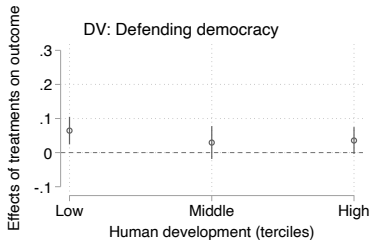
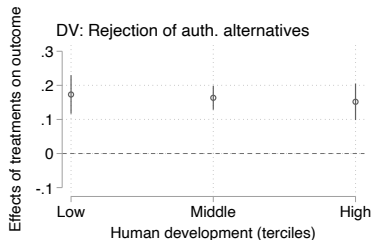
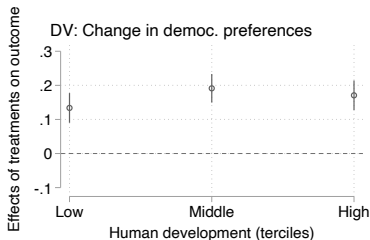


- The effects of the videos were greatest among those who have a greater need for political education, e.g. younger and less politically interested voters.

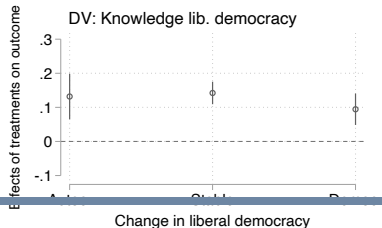
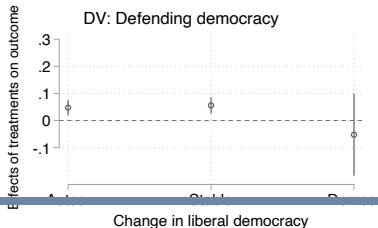
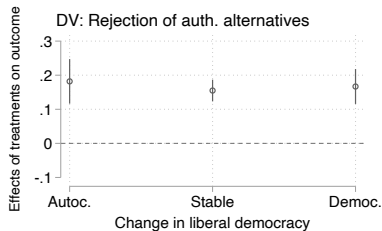
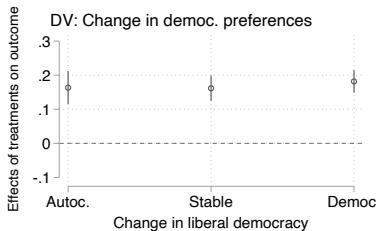




Marginal effects (and 95% c.i.) of treatments by econ. development



Marginal effects (and 95% c.i.) of treatments by democ. trajectory



Summary and discussion

- ▶ DEMOCRATIC school education plays a crucial role in shaping enduring democratic attitudes. People need to learn to value democracy and their role as citizens.
- ▶ Online, adult civic education works generally across a wide range of contexts and individual traits. Treatment effects are still significant after up to 2 weeks.
- ▶ Online, adult civic education can reduce the negative impact of partisan polarization on democratic erosion.
- ▶ Abstract online civic education can reduce support for autocratic incumbents by inducing more realistic evaluations of the autocratic nature of the regime, affecting the autocrats legitimacy claims.
- ▶ Social media ads are helpful for pro-democratic capacity building in an authoritarian context, especially in the least developed regions.

Motivation
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Study 1: School ed
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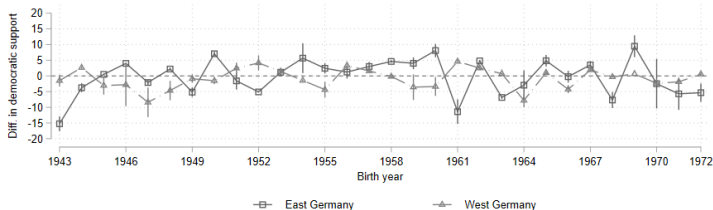
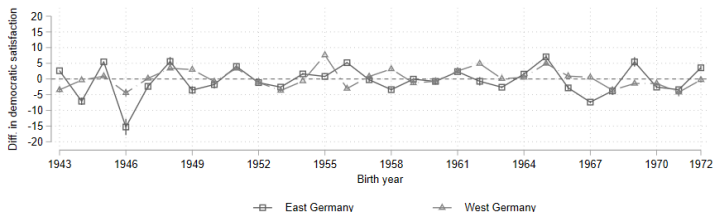
Study 2: Adult civic ed
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Sum & extra
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THANK YOU!



Parallel trends in East and West Germany



Definition V-Indoc indicators

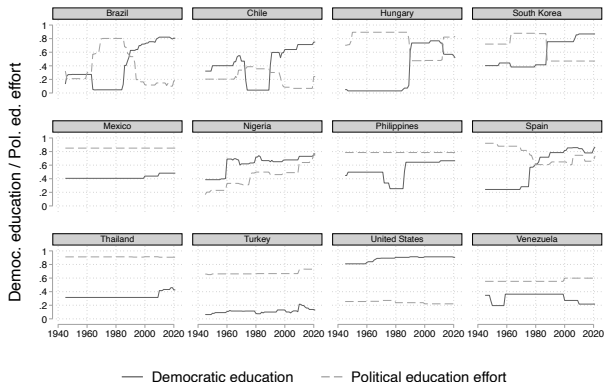
- ▶ **Teaching democ. inst. & values:** How would you characterize the dominant societal model(s) or ideology(ies) promoted through the history curriculum?
Option: Democratic norms, e.g. liberalism or pluralism, and democratic institutions, e.g. elections.
- ▶ **Teaching political rights:** To what extent does the curriculum of subjects that include the teaching of political values cover topics related to individuals' political rights and duties?
- ▶ **Teaching pluralism:** When historical events are taught, to what extent are students exposed to diverse views and/or interpretations of these events?
- ▶ **Teaching critical thinking:** To what extent do students have opportunities to discuss what they are taught in history classes?

▶ Go back

Definition V-Indoc indices

- ▶ **Democratic education content index:** Indoctrination content in education can range from being democratic (participatory, critical, pluralist) to autocratic (loyal/obedient, uncritical, single view/ideology). This index measures the democratic/autocratic character of the regime's doctrine based on the core teaching principles and the level of contestation promoted in education.
- ▶ **Political education effort index:** This index measures the extent to which the regime attempts to teach its core political values and ideologies through education based on political education in primary and secondary schools, and the teaching of a dominant ideology in the history curriculum.

Democratic education content and levels of liberal democracy over time (selected countries)



Attention check

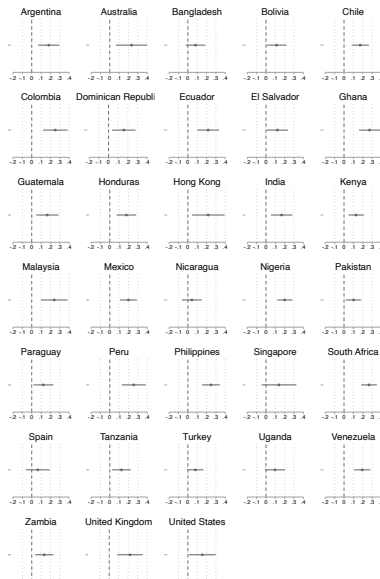
Treatment	Passed attention check	
	No	✓
Placebo	11.3	88.7
Output	7.2	92.8
Institutions	20.3	79.7
Rights	24.1	75.9
Total	15.7	84.3

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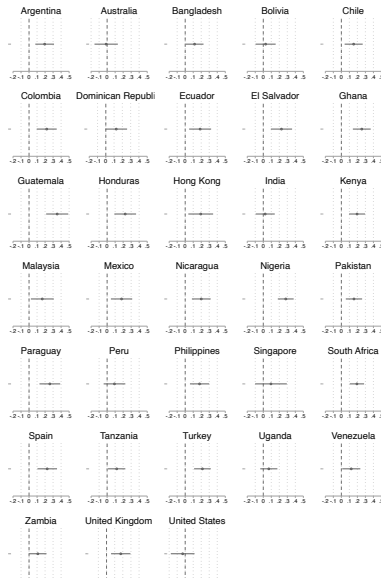
Balance test

	Output	Treatment group Institutions	Rights
Age	0.001 [0.001]	0.002 [0.001]	0.001 [0.001]
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Pre-treat democ pref.	-0.004 [0.007]	0.004 [0.007]	0.008 [0.007]
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Turnout	0.009 [0.034]	-0.024 [0.033]	-0.038 [0.033]
Country FE	✓	✓	✓
Constant	0.008 [0.123]	-0.126 [0.124]	0.039 [0.123]
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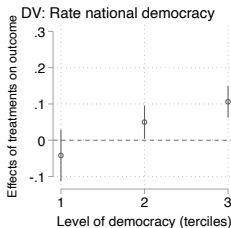
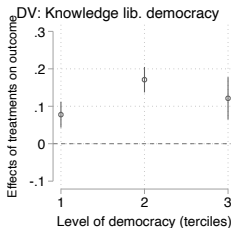
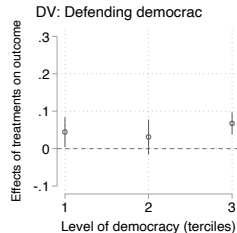
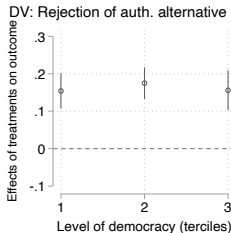
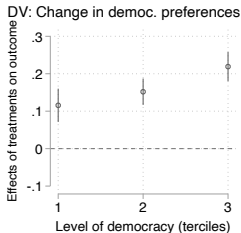
Main effects by country: Change dem. pre

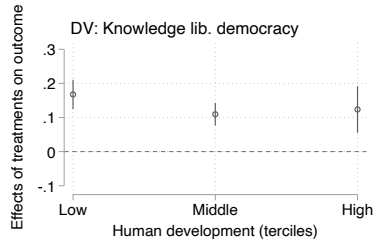


Main effects
by country:
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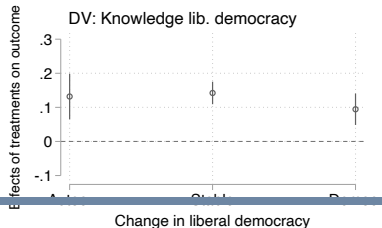
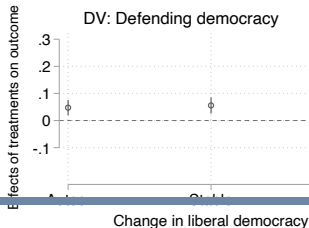
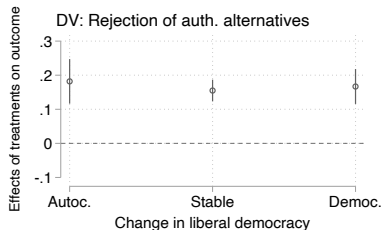
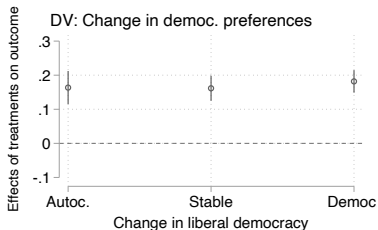


Marginal effects (and 95% c.i.) of treatments by liberal democracy





Marginal effects (and 95% c.i.) of treatments by democ. trajectory



No systematic conditional effects for gender, education, residence, or pre-existing democratic preferences.