

Constituent Interests and Legislative Representation

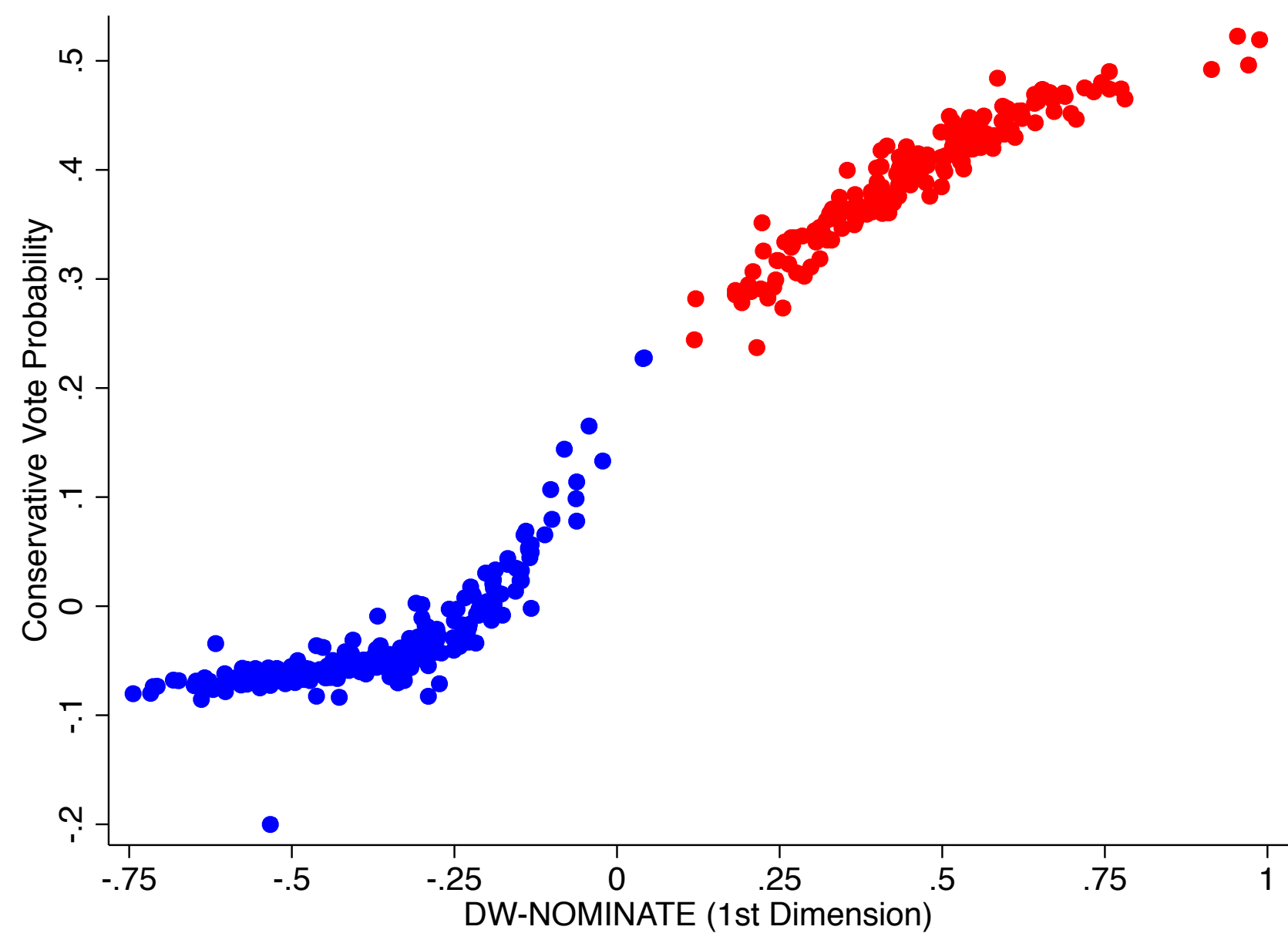
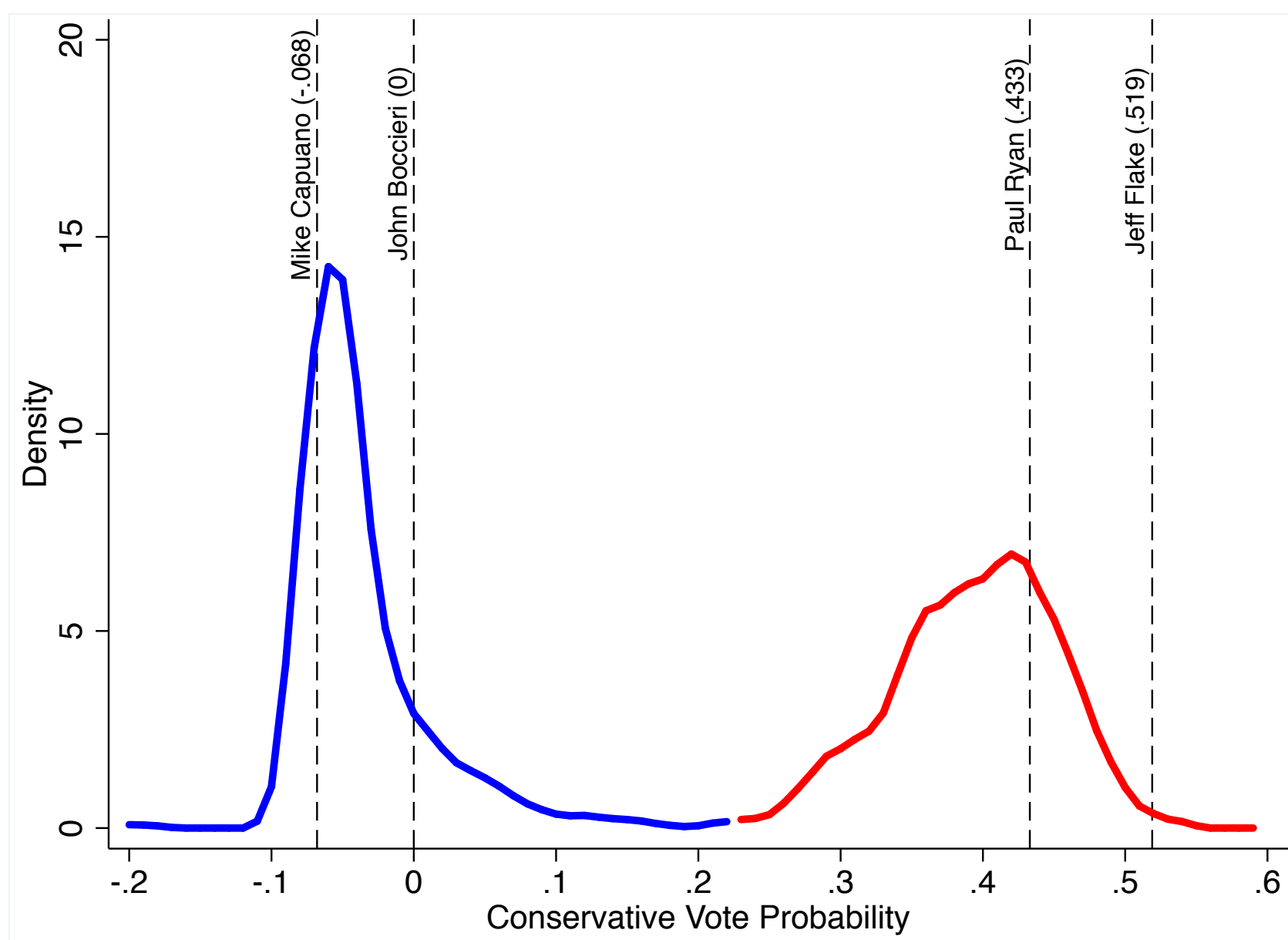
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Measuring the Gap Between the Parties

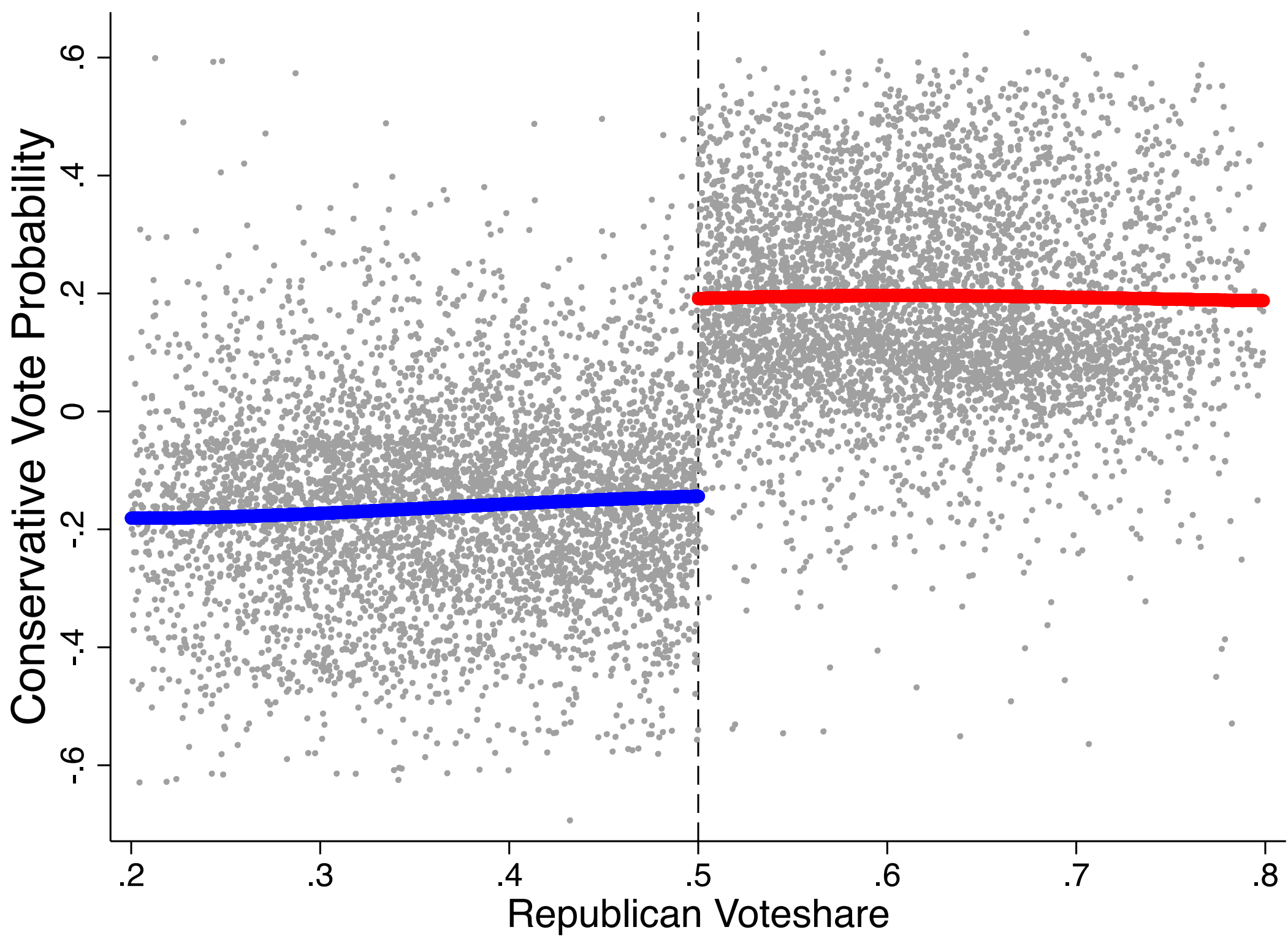
Republicans and Democrats behave very differently in the legislature. While much of this difference could result from the two parties representing different districts, members of the two parties behave very differently *even when representing the same exact district*. How much differently do Democrats and Republicans vote when representing the same hypothetical district? Does this partisan representation gap shrink when votes are on bills that the district cares more about?

To answer these questions, we need an interpretable measure of roll-call behavior. We have developed a method called “**Conservative Vote Probability**” (CVP) which achieves this goal. A legislator’s CVP measures her average probability of voting conservatively, relative to the median legislator.

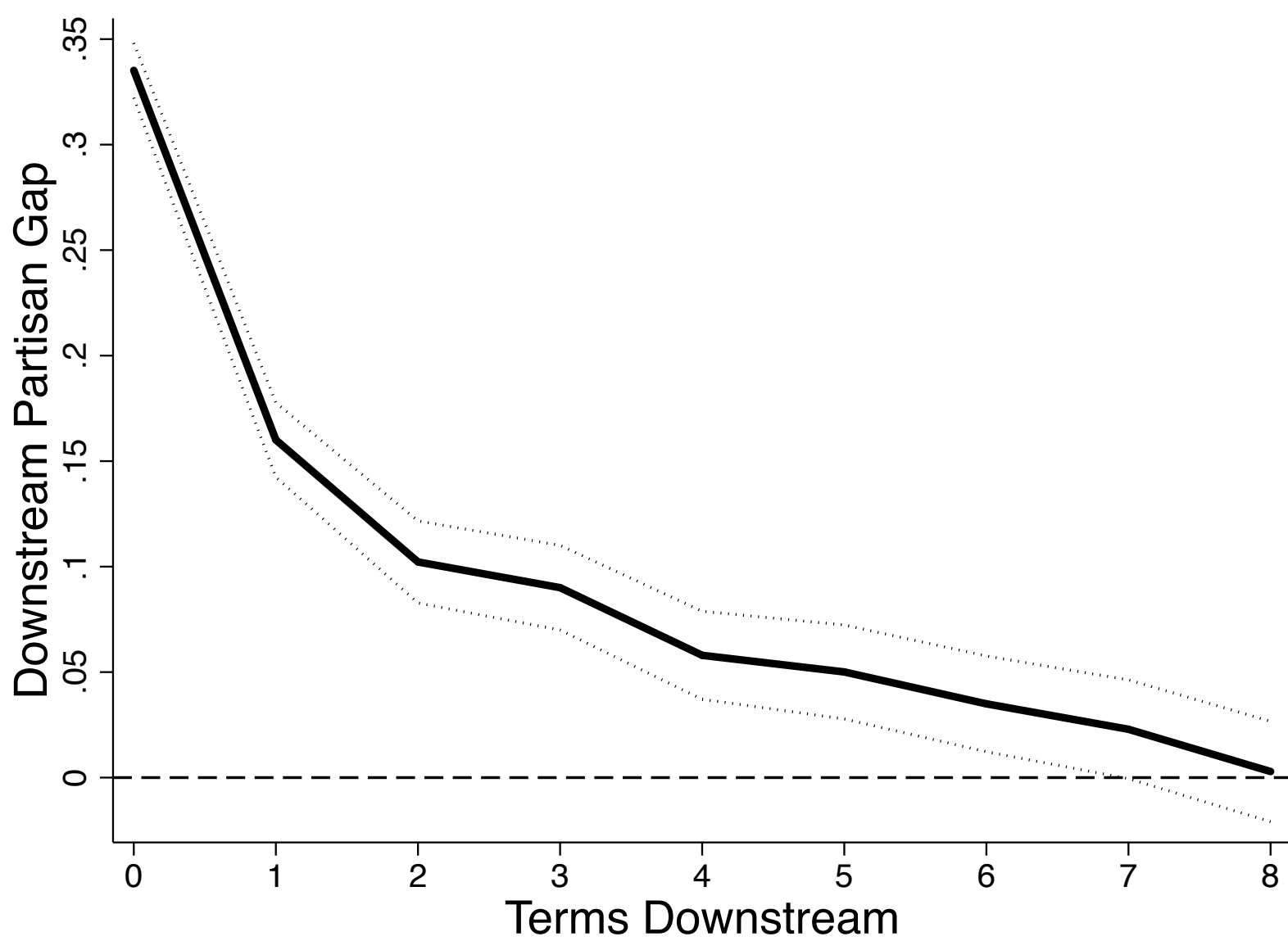


The Partisan Representation Gap

A Republican representing the same district as a hypothetical Democrat has a CVP score that is 0.34 points larger. That is to say, if a district is randomly assigned a Republican instead of a Democrat, its new representative will vote differently on *one out of every three bills*.



In the US House, a coin flip that determines the partisan representation in a district in one election will have downstream effects on roll-call behavior for 8 terms – 16 full years.



Perhaps the partisan representation gap is only large for votes districts don’t particularly care about. Even when a district’s demographics dictate its high interest level in a certain issue, we continue to find the same large partisan representation gap as before. The parties do not appear to converge at all.

The Partisan Representation Gap Across Issue Areas

