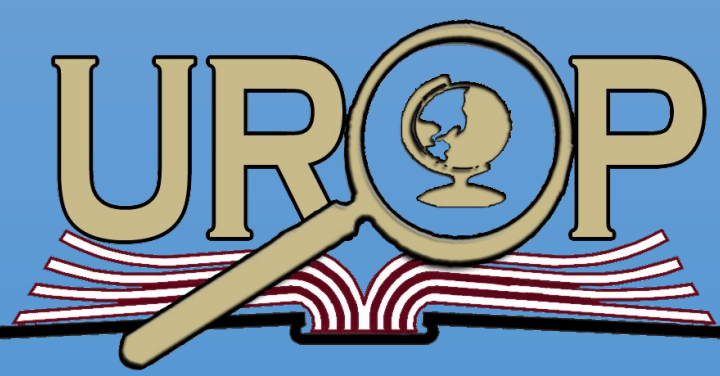




Bipartisan Negotiations in Congress



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Florida State University & Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program

Abstract

- Bipartisan negotiations in Congress, known for their mixed validation due to underlying motives and inconsistent resolutions, were studied in collaboration with Professor Andy Ballard and various students and professors. Researchers obtained a comprehensive list of bipartisan negotiations since the 1980s and analyzed each negotiation's objectives, reasons for reforms, and overall outcomes. This data analysis enables the identification of trends over time, including the tendency for the majority party to secure more of its desired outcomes, especially evident in less divided governments. Beyond mere cataloging, this analysis offers a lens to scrutinize evolving trends in political bargaining, providing insights into bipartisan cooperation within legislative processes. Utilizing scholarly web sources, the FSU library, and relevant websites, researchers ensured consistency and accuracy across cases. All participants observed the same cases, with the goals of ruling out any discrepancies between our research, discovering trends over time depending on the state of government divide, and to what extent these differences are recognized in the real world. All in all, providing a safety net of peer-reviewed information allows our data to be transferred and considered more seriously

Background

Information:

- Historically, the majority party tends to have more leverage and control over negotiations in Congress due to their numerical superiority.
- Majority party leaders often hold key positions such as committee chairs and party leadership roles, giving them significant influence over the legislative agenda and negotiation process.
- The majority party typically sets the agenda for debates and determines which bills come to the floor for consideration, giving them more opportunities to advance their priorities.
- However, the minority party can still exert influence through tactics such as filibustering, coalition-building, and leveraging public opinion to sway negotiations in their favor.
- In certain situations, bipartisan cooperation may lead to compromises where both the majority and minority parties achieve some of their objectives.
- The policymaking system, with its separation of power and veto points, makes it hard for majority parties to unilaterally exert their will
- Small majorities in recent years have exacerbated this issue
- Therefore, the majority party often needs the minority party to pass policy

Purpose:

- Determine how decisions are conducted in congressional debates from the 1980s to the present
- Analyze congressional debates to identify which party achieved its objectives
- Consider the party's majority or minority status and reasons for the negotiation outcomes
- Compare findings from dissected cases to identify agreements or discrepancies

Shortcomings:

- Difficulty in quantifying and measuring "getting more of what they want" in Congress negotiations due to the complexity and subjectivity of legislative outcomes.
- Limited generalizability of findings across different legislative contexts, as negotiation dynamics can vary based on factors such as party polarization, institutional norms, and individual personalities.
- Challenges in isolating the impact of majority/minority status on negotiation outcomes, as other factors such as political strategy, public opinion, and external events also play significant roles.
- Potential biases in data collection and analysis, particularly in studies relying on self-reported information or retrospective accounts from lawmakers.
- Lack of consensus on the definition of success in negotiations, with differing perspectives on whether achieving policy goals, preserving party unity, or securing electoral advantages constitutes success.
- Discover trends, patterns, or anomalies in bipartisan negotiations in Congress.
- Difficulty in determining a clear "winner" in bipartisan negotiations

Methodology

- Utilized a combination of scholarly sources, Florida State University Library, news articles, and congressional transcripts to identify congressional results.
- Recorded political negotiations presence, each party's objectives, and negotiation outcomes in a Google Sheet for each case.
- Four researchers analyzed the 91 same cases independently.
- Plan to analyze multiple factors after completion of individual case analyses.
- Select a set of cases for in-depth analysis to test theories and identify trends over time.
- Summarize qualitative data and translate it into quantitative data for easier visualization.
- Predict likelihood of political party success based on different aspects of the political climate.
- Translate predictions into visually understandable data for the audience.

Conclusions

Results:

- Both parties play a significant role in negotiating and shaping policymaking outcomes, even under unified control.
- Minority parties can significantly shape policy outcomes, contrary to popular belief.
- Negotiations in Congress are nuanced, with outcomes not predetermined by majority or minority power.
- Dynamics of party negotiations are crucial in an era of deeply divided congressional parties.
- Major parties negotiate and reach agreements on significant policy issues across the political spectrum.
- Majority parties win more often, but there's large variation in negotiated outcomes.
- Party cohesion is a prominent factor affecting negotiation success.
- Majority parties operate better under a more unified government, while minority parties have more success under divided government.
- The President's influence may lean towards the majority party during divided government periods.
- Ongoing data analysis with potential for additional findings to contribute to research.

Strengths:

- Understanding how political parties negotiate in Congress gives us a better picture of how laws are made.
- Both major and minor parties play important roles in making laws, even if it's not always obvious.
- Looking at negotiations closely helps us see that things are more complicated than they seem.
- By studying these negotiations, we can see how different political forces work together.
- Even though major parties have more power, minor parties can still make a big difference by being smart about how they work with others.
- Realizing how complicated negotiations are helps us understand Congress better.
- Learning from these studies can help us figure out better ways to make laws in a changing political world.

Results

- Cohesion** refers to the minority party's ability to stay united, consolidate its votes, and effectively influence policy outcomes and negotiations with the majority, safeguarding against fragmentation and ensuring meaningful impact within the political landscape.

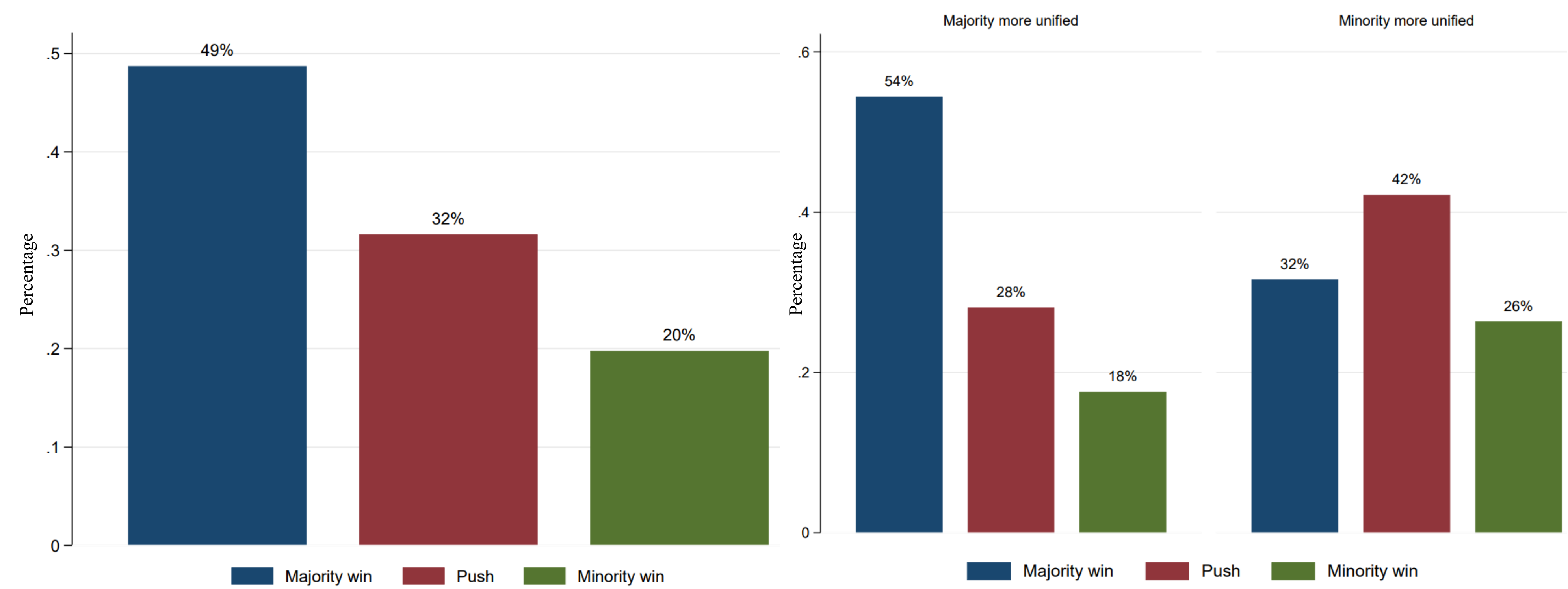


Figure 1. Negotiations Outcomes, 2001-2020

Figure 2. Party Cohesion and Negotiations Outcomes, 2001-2020

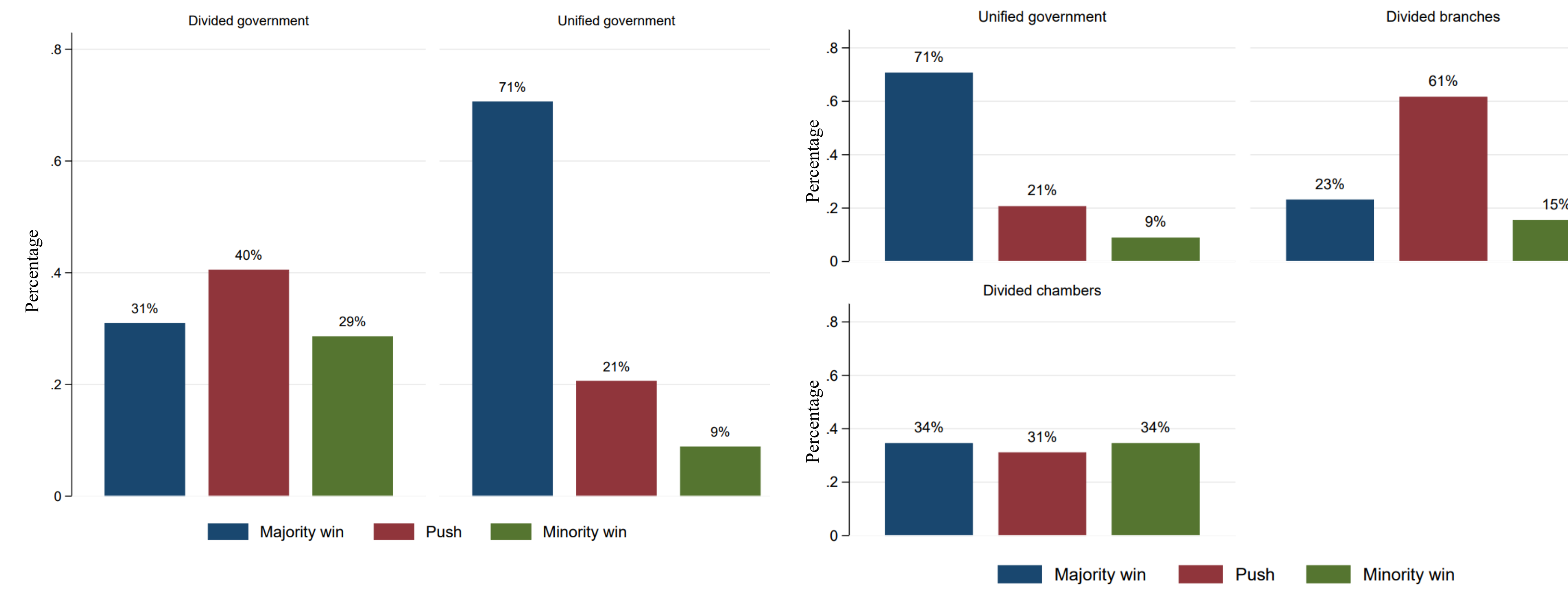


Figure 3. Party Control and Negotiations Outcomes, 2001-2020

Figure 4. Party Control and Negotiations Outcomes, 2001-2020

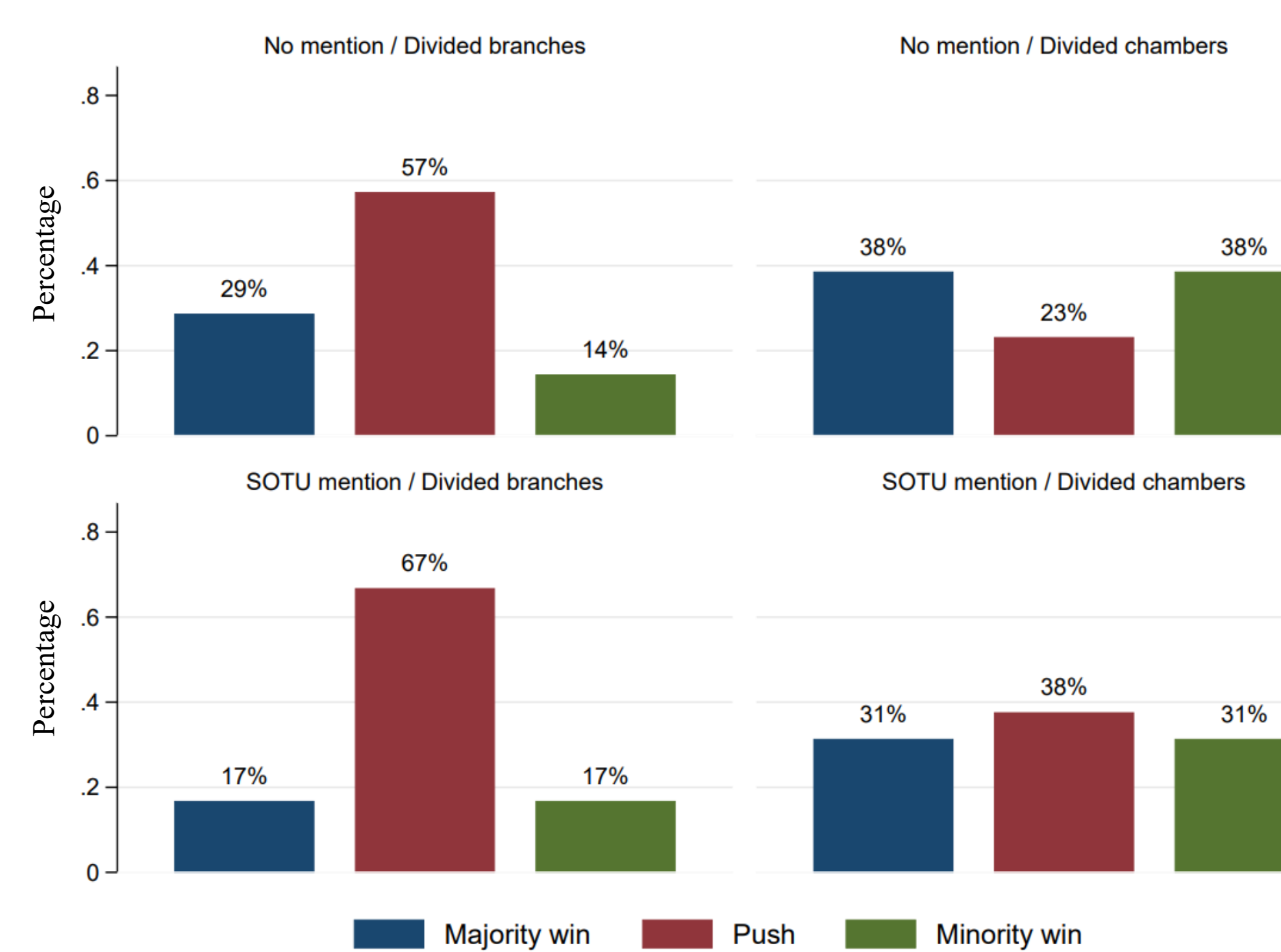


Figure 5. Party Control and Negotiations Outcomes, 2001-2020

References

