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Citizens' resilience in times of crises
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When Bad News is Good: Political Knowledge in Times of Crisis

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- Are citizens more/less knowledgeable in times of economic hardship?
 - Political relevance: Political information is more important in times of economic recession.
 - Unclear expectations: Adversity puts a strain on peoples' resources to pay attention to politics, but it can also motivate people to acquire information in order to improve the status quo.
 - Little previous research (But see Chen 2009, Martin 2008).

Research Question

- Economic hardship and political engagement
 - Mobilization (grievances, some support at the aggregate level of analysis).
 - Withdrawal (resources, wide support at the individual level of analysis).

- Political knowledge literature
 - Extensive attention to individual and contextual explanations of knowledge but
 - Little attention to the role of economic context.

Existing
Research

- How do people relate to the economy?
 - Ansolabehere, Meredith & Snowberg (2008)

- *My personal experience of economic hardship*, expected to reduce knowledge
 - Joblessness, inflation, deteriorating living and working conditions.

- *Economic hardship around me*, expected to increase knowledge
 - Growth, unemployment.

Expectations

■ CSES cross-national time-series data

- 76 elections, 43 countries, 1996-2011.
- Individual: unemployment status, household income quintile.
- Aggregate (over the past year): GDP growth rate, change in percent unemployed, inflation rate.
- $Knowledge_{i,t} = \gamma' X_{i,t} + \varepsilon_{i,t}$.

■ Panel data

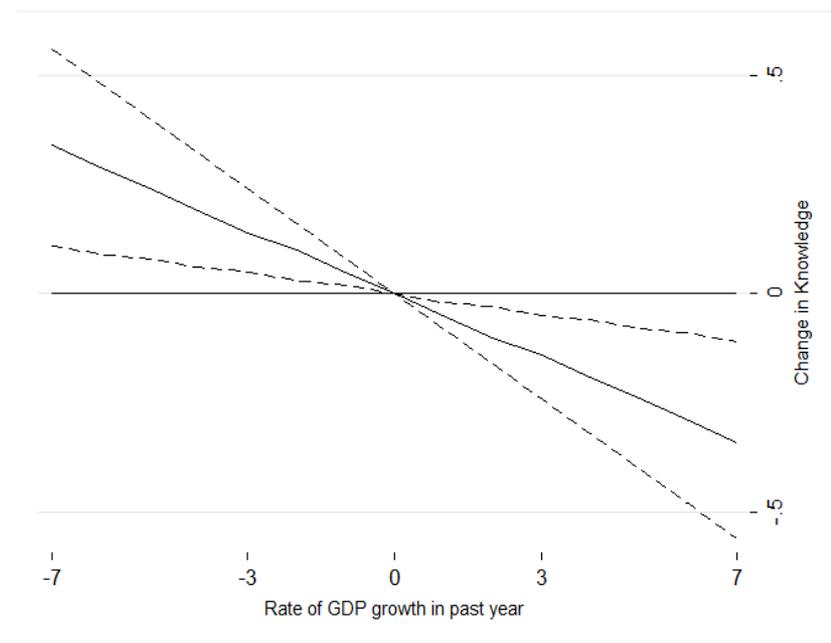
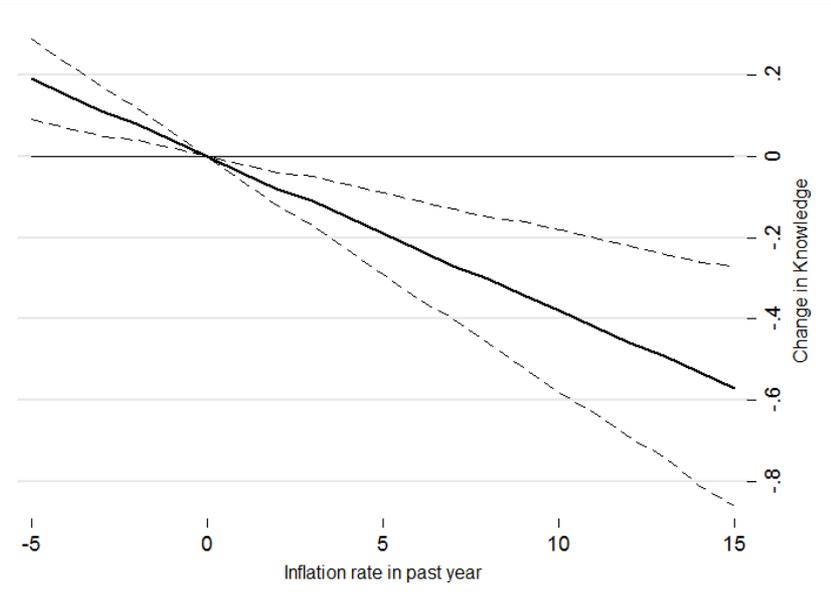
- Five-wave online panel survey, Spain 2010-2013.
- 2,700 individuals (16 to 45) and 9,986 observations.
- All waves: occupational status, income.
- Only in wave 5: worsening working conditions, reduction of expenses, anger, anxiety.
- $Knowledge_{i,t} = \alpha + \beta_i knowledge_{i,t-1} + \gamma(Change\ in\ hardship)_{i,t-(t-1)} + \varphi Controls_i + \varphi Wave_i + \varepsilon_i$

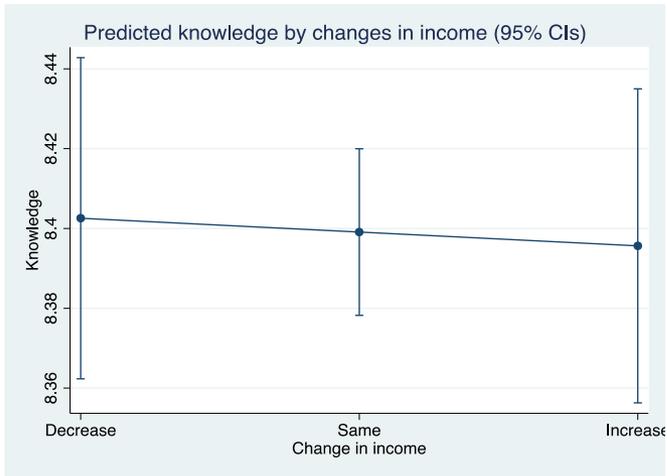
Research
Design

- Knowledge of parties' left-right ideological leanings.
 - relevant, comparable;
 - averaged across all parties;
 - higher values on the scale reveal accuracy.

Measuring Knowledge

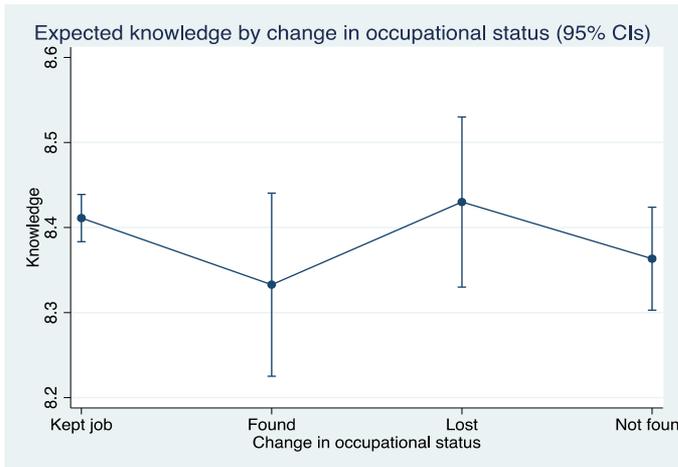
Findings CSES

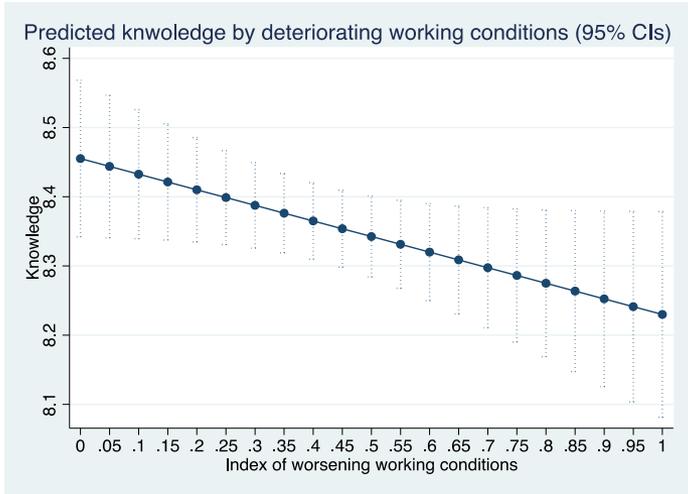




Findings Panel (1)

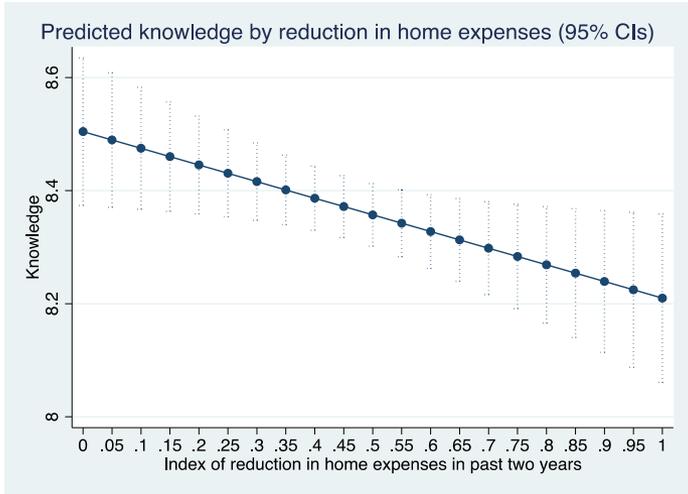
Predicted knowledge by change in income, joblessness.

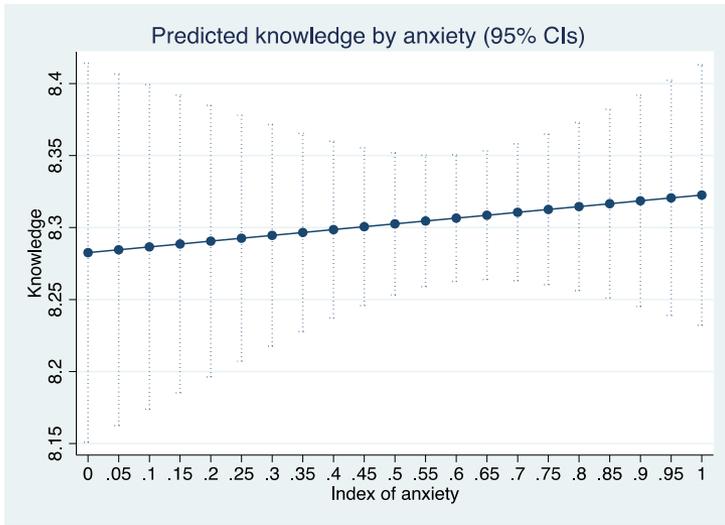




Findings Panel (2)

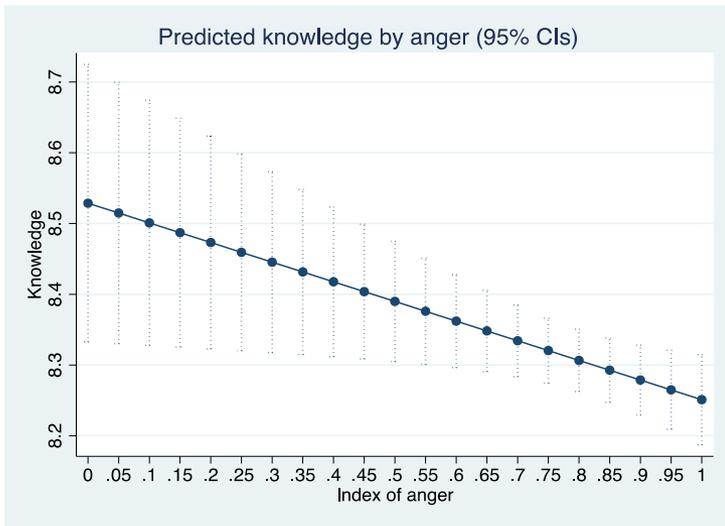
Predicted knowledge by change in perceptions of working conditions and reduction in household expenses.





Findings Panel (3)

Predicted knowledge by
anger and anxiety.



- How people relate to the economy conditions the impact of economic crises on political engagement.
- Bad macroeconomic performance can be “good news” for political knowledge, if not suffered personally.

To Conclude