



Red, Blue, or Purple: Investigating the Competitiveness of State Senate Districts in Connecticut and Minnesota

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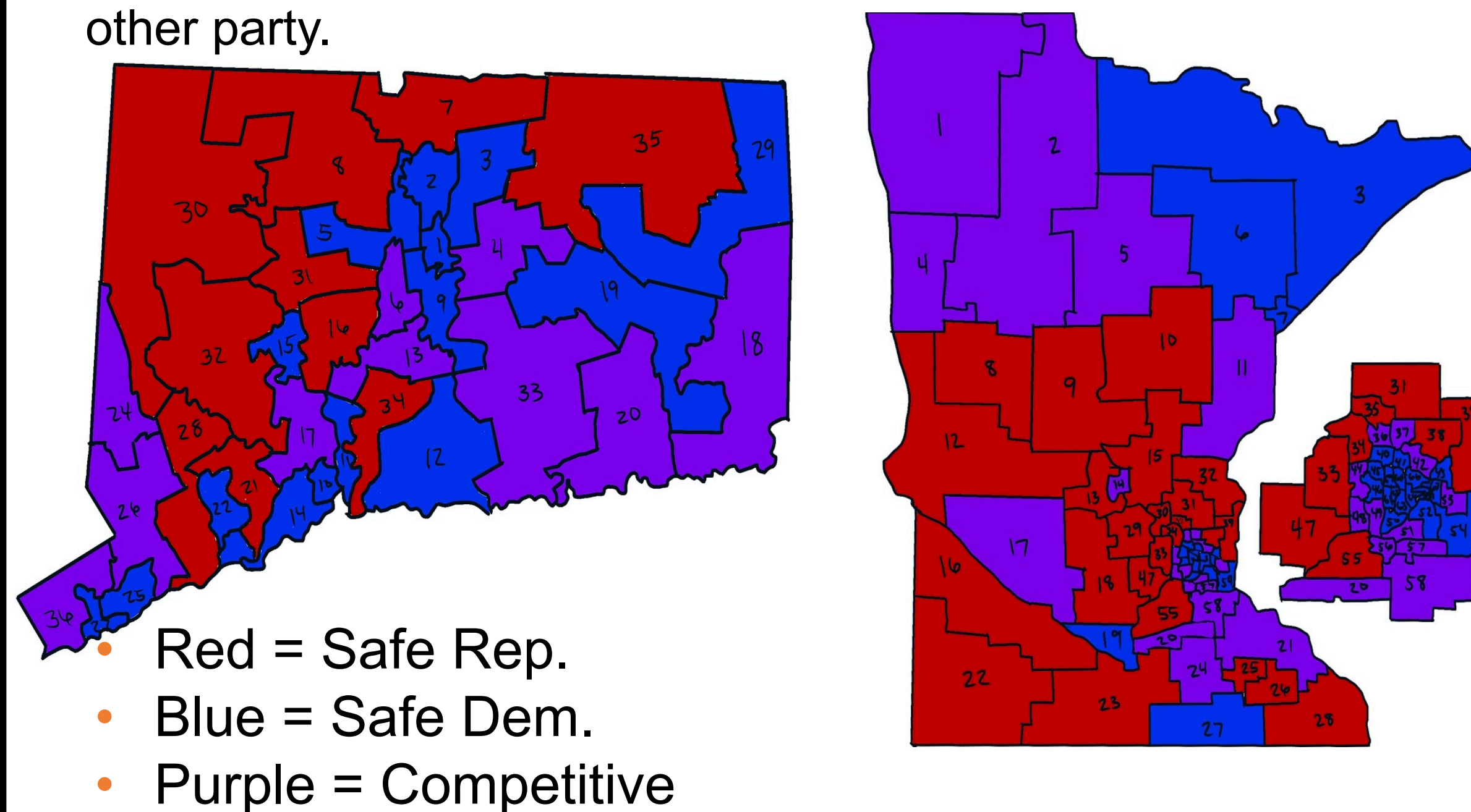
Introduction

State legislators have the power to shape the policies, economies, and trajectories of their state for years to come. Following the 2020 election, many state legislatures will also be drawing the district lines for congressional and state legislative seats for the next decade. With this in mind, we sought to gain a deeper understanding of how competitive these races are, whether demographics vary depending on level of competitiveness of a district, and if there is a statistically significant relationship between demographics and competitiveness of state senate races.

We created a comprehensive data set of election patterns and demographic data for both Connecticut and Minnesota. In this poster, we examine the relationship between certain demographic characteristics of state senate districts (e.g., racial composition, median household income, education levels) and their voting history in recent elections. Our goal is to better understand the demographic characteristics of the districts that are most likely to decide party control of the state senate in these two states.

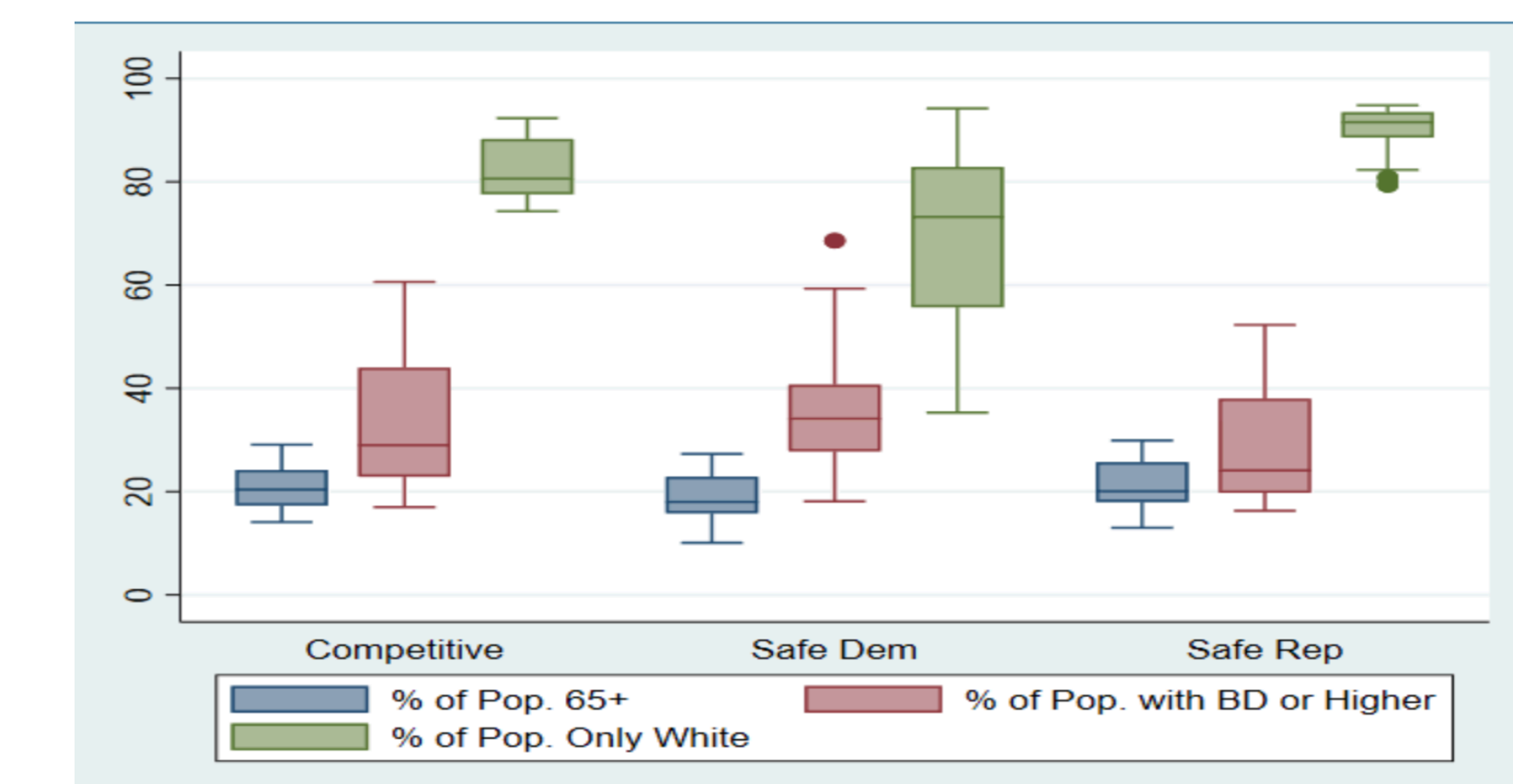
Classifying Districts

- Districts were classified as Safe Democratic, Safe Republican or Competitive according to each district's average Democratic share of the two-party vote in state senate races from 2012-2018 (for CT) and 2012 & 2016 (for MN).
- Safe Dem:** >55% average Democratic vote share and Dem. incumbent
- Safe Rep:** <45% average Democratic vote share and Rep. incumbent
- Competitive:** Vote share between 45% and 55% for Democratic candidate or an incumbent representing a district "safe" for the other party.



MN District Demographics

Distribution of Demographics Variables in Competitive, Safe Dem., and Safe Rep. Districts in MN



OLS Regression Model
 DV is % for Democratic State Senate Candidate in 2018

Dem % 2016	Coef.	Std. Err.	P > t
% Pop 65+	-0.009	0.003	0.002
% Pop BD+	0.010	0.001	0.000
Med Inc / 1000	-0.008	0.001	0.000
% Pop White Only	-0.003	0.001	0.013
Constant	1.126	0.082	0.000
N	67		
R ²	0.77		

Research Questions

- How many competitive state senate districts are there in Connecticut and Minnesota? How many safe Democrat and Safe Republican districts are there in Connecticut and Minnesota?
- Is there a relationship between competitiveness of a district and its demographic makeup?

Data Sources

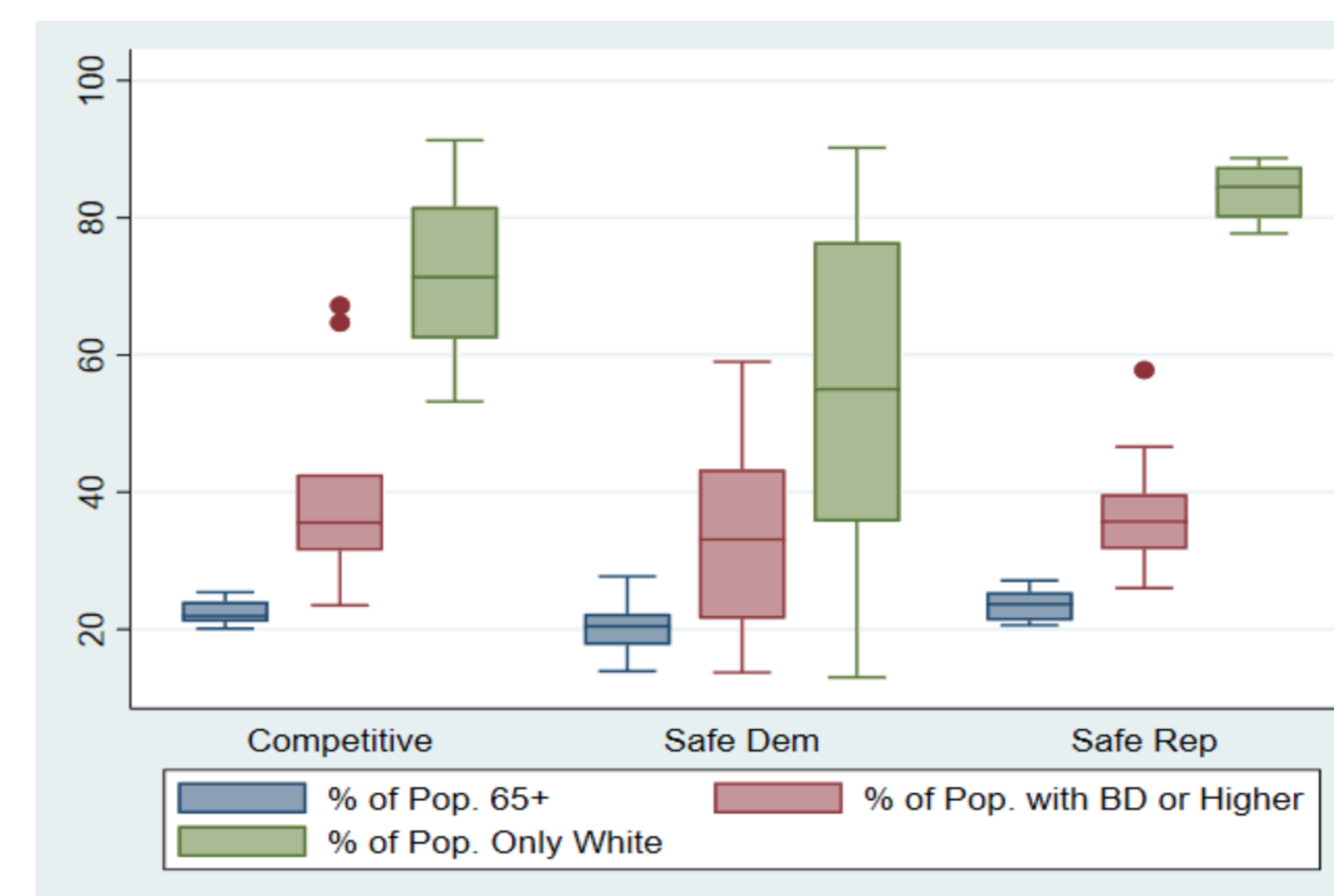
- Data on election results and incumbent state legislators comes from the following:
 - Daily Kos. 2018. "Presidential & Statewide Election Results By Legislative District." DailyKos.com.
 - Klarner, Carl, 2018, *State Legislative Election Returns 1967-2016*, <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/3WZFK9>, Harvard Dataverse, V3.
 - CT Secretary of State Website
- Data on district demographics comes from the 2018 American Community Survey 5-year estimates accessed through census.gov.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Logan Dancey, Robert Kabacoff, and Manolis Kaparakis for their assistance and guidance in completing this project.

CT District Demographics

Distribution of Demographics Variables in Competitive, Safe Dem., and Safe Rep. Districts in CT



OLS Regression
 DV is % for Democratic State Senate Candidate in 2018

Dem % 2018	Coef.	Std. Error	P > t
% Pop 65+	-0.005	0.006	0.447
% Pop w/ BD+	0.006	0.002	0.018
Med Inc / 1000	-0.003	0.001	0.045
% Pop White Only	-0.006	0.001	0.000
Constant	1.043	0.087	0.000
N	36		
R ²	0.82		

Conclusions

- Of CT's 36 state senate districts, 16 of them are Safe Dem., 10 are Safe Rep., and 10 are Competitive.
- Of MN's 67 state senate districts, 22 are Safe Dem., 24 are Safe Rep., and 21 are Competitive.
- In our regression models, the % of the population with a Bachelor's degree or higher is a positive predictor of Democratic vote share in a district while % of the population that is non-Hispanic, white and median household income are negative predictors of Democratic vote share. The percentage of the population 65 and older is a negative predictor, although it is not statistically significant in the CT model.
- Competitive districts in both states are more racially and ethnically diverse than safe Republican districts but less racially and ethnically diverse than safe Democratic districts.
- Competitive districts in both states also have a higher average median household income than the safer districts (results not shown).
- There are not consistent differences between competitive and safe districts in the % college educated or % 65 and older across the two states.