

# **PROTEST OUTCOMES LITERATURE REVIEW**

March 2022

Co-authors: Sam Glover & James Ozden



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>01</b>	Summary	3
<b>02</b>	Voter Behaviour	5
<b>03</b>	Public Opinion	7
<b>04</b>	Public Discourse and Media Coverage	16
<b>05</b>	Legislator Influence and Policy	19
<b>06</b>	Corporate Behaviour	22
<b>07</b>	Broad Outcomes	23
<b>08</b>	Conclusion	24
<b>09</b>	References	26



# SUMMARY

- Whilst positive effects of protest on public opinion, public discourse and voting behaviour have **moderate evidence supporting each outcome**, effects of protest on policymaking and policymakers are more mixed. Specifically, **impacts of protest on policy seems highly context dependent**, on factors such as existing political structures and current public opinion.
- There is some debate whether protest influences political attitudes, or it simply amplifies existing public preferences, with various studies lending support to both arguments.
- The effect sizes of protest on public opinion and voting behaviour are somewhat small, yet quite significant in the realm of politics, with shifts of approximately 2-5% found via natural experiments. In the studies we examined, there were **noticeable impacts on electoral outcomes as a result of protest activity**. In experimental conditions, effect sizes have been found to be both null and larger than 5%, depending on the study.
- There is **strong evidence** that protest can be effective in North America and Western Europe, specifically within issues of civil rights, climate change, and social welfare. For countries in the Global South, there is very little research into protest outcomes, so **generalising these findings to other regions is quite tenuous**.
- We think that the evidence for short-term and medium-term change is much stronger than the evidence for long-term change. This is largely because research designs that are able to make causal inferences are almost necessarily short-term - research using experiments or quasi-experimental designs largely examine short-term or medium-term effects. **There is currently very little literature on the long-term impacts of protest on public opinion or public discourse.**



# SUMMARY TABLE

Finding	Confidence
Protest can have significant short-term impacts	Strong
Protest can be effective in North America and Western Europe	Strong
Protest can have significant impacts on voting behaviour and electoral outcomes	Medium
Protest can influence public opinion	Medium
Protest can influence public discourse and media narratives	Medium
Protest can influence policy	Low (mixed evidence)
Protest can influence policymaker beliefs	Low (little evidence)
Protest can be effective in the Global South	Low (little evidence)
Protest can have significant long-term impacts (on public opinion and public discourse)	Low (little evidence)

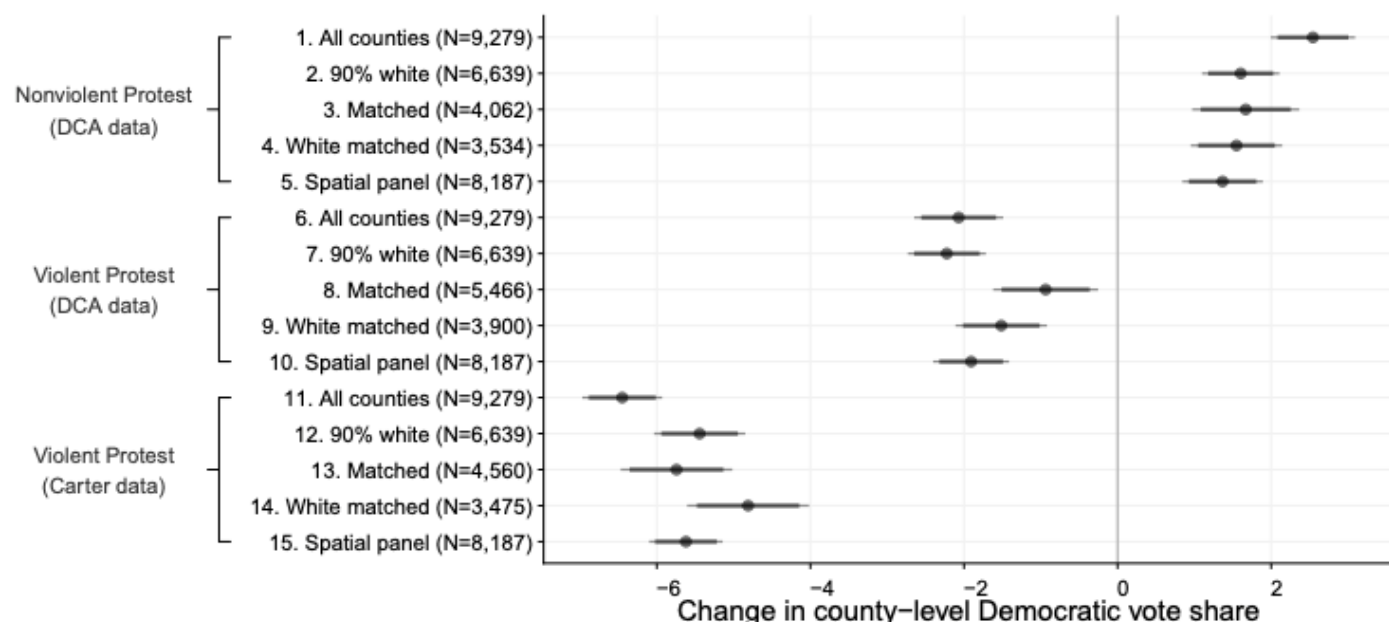
*Note: Confidence ratings are based on the number of available studies supporting the claim. Low = 0-2 studies supporting, or mixed evidence; Medium = 3-6 studies supporting; High = 7+ studies supporting.*

# VOTER BEHAVIOUR

Wasow (2020) examines the effect of non-violent and violent protest during the American Civil Rights movement in the 1960s. By looking at US counties that are similar on a number of dimensions (black population, foreign-born population, whether the county is urban/rural, etc.), Wasow is able to mimic an experiment by testing how the Democratic vote share changes in counties with protests and matching counties without protests. The results are informative for thinking about the effect of protest on voting behaviour: a 90% white county that was exposed to a non-violent protest had a 1.6 percentage point higher Democratic vote share relative to a 'control' county that was not exposed to a non-violent protest. Conversely, a 90% white county that was exposed to a violent protest had a 2.2 - 5.4 percentage point decrease in Democratic vote share - the change in county-level Democratic vote share can be seen in Figure 1.

Madestam et al. (2013) look at the effect of the 2009 Tea Party protests (a right-wing movement within the Republican party) in the US, and their effect on Republican vote share in subsequent elections. Their study used rainfall as an exogenous variable that would alter the attendance of the protests: more people are likely to attend a Tea Party protest on a day with no rainfall, and fewer people are likely to attend on a day with more rainfall. This means that the rainfall acts as a randomisation process and we can compare Republican vote share in counties where there was a rainy protest (with less people) to the counties where there was a protest in good weather (with many more people). The effect here is that the Republican vote share is 1.04 percentage points higher in counties that had protests with no rain compared to counties that had protests with rain, suggesting that greater turnout at Tea Party protests did lead to an increased Republican vote share. The mechanism suggested for this is that greater attendance at the initial launch protest led to a stronger movement overall, with a higher number of organisers in areas that had low rainfall, as well as greater donations towards the Tea Party. Additional measures that changed in areas of low rainfall were greater likelihood of expressing support for the Tea Party, by 6 percentage points, as well as higher appearances of media coverage.

**FIGURE 3. Panel Models of Effect of Protest on Change in Presidential Vote Share, 1964-1972**



*Note:* Each point represents a coefficient (along with the 90 and 95% confidence intervals) for the estimated effect of protests on change in county-level Democratic vote share in the presidential elections of 1964, 1968 and 1972 with county fixed effects. Models using DCA data measure protest activity using participants  $\geq 10$  and, with Carter data, arrests  $\geq 10$ . Other specifications can be seen in the Appendix.

*Figure 1 - The findings from Wasow (2020) on the effect of violent/non-violent protest on voting behaviour during the Civil Rights Movement.*

Methods involving rainfall as an exogenous source of protest variation are fairly common - Teeselink and Melios (2021) use the same technique to analyse the effects of Black Lives Matter protests in the aftermath of the death of George Floyd in 2020, finding that a one percentage point increase in the fraction of the population going out to protest increased the Democratic vote share in that county by 5.6 percentage points. The authors also find that protests didn't lead to a significant rise in turnout, rather it's more likely that protests lead to a progressive shift amongst undecided voters. This finding therefore also adds some weight to the claim that protest can be a significant factor in shifting public attitudes.

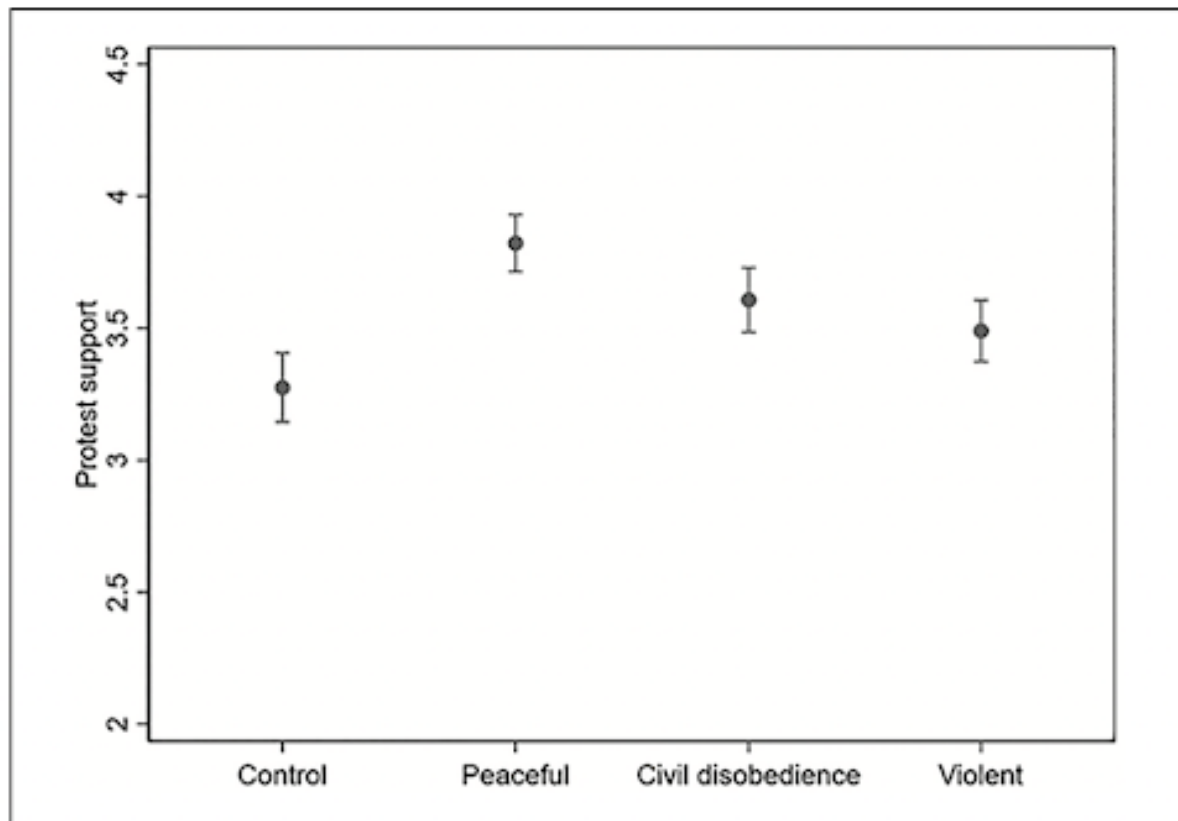
In one of the few papers examining the long-term impacts of social movements, Veigh, Cunningham & Farrell (2014) examine the long-term impact of the Klu Klux Klan (KKK) on voting behaviour in the Southern US from 1960 to 2000. They find that four decades later, after controlling for various potential confounding variables, that counties with high levels of Klan activism had a 3.4% higher Republican vote in 2000 compared to non-Klan counties. It's important to note that the authors caveat that they do not believe the KKK was exerting influence on voting in 2000 even after its collapse in the 1960s.

Rather, they claim a more likely mechanism for this result is that KKK activism in the 1960s “dislodged voters from preexisting party loyalties, and contributed to restructuring of network ties that would reinforce the link between segregationist preferences and Republican voting over time.” Broadly, they believe this impact was mediated by voter behaviour, rather than being a direct impact of the KKK’s actions.

## PUBLIC OPINION

Whether protest can have an impact on public opinion is an important question for figuring out the impact of protest more broadly, as the impact of protests on legislators and its ability to influence policy is likely to be at least partially mediated by the impact of protest on public opinion. A meta-analysis by Burstein (2003) examines the relationship between public opinion and policy change. He finds that in 75% cases of policy change, public opinion plays a statistically significant role. Furthermore, he identifies almost 50% of these as of substantial policy importance, indicating this is also true for policies with larger effects. Whilst this was done across a variety of policy areas, from social welfare to rights to business, this analysis was focused on US public opinion and policy from the 1950s to 2000s, so its generalisability is limited. In particular, the generalisability is probably the strongest for similar Western democracies, rather than countries with radically different cultural or political norms.

Now knowing that legislators are responsive to changes in public opinion, if it is the case that protests are able to significantly impact public opinion, they are also likely to be able to impact legislators and policy making. The impact of protest on public opinion may also be important in and of itself - even if a protest isn't immediately successful in affecting legislator behaviour, a shift in public opinion may lead individuals to make changes that have other positive outcomes, such as influencing industries and corporations to make changes that will appeal to consumers, and leading to more people becoming involved with whatever issue it is that people are protesting about.



*Figure 2 - The results of Bugden (2020) - respondents who were shown a news report about a peaceful protest were most likely to support the protest*

Bugden (2020) conducted an experiment in which members of an online panel from the United States were placed either into a treatment group or a control group, with the treatment group being assigned to read a series of mock news reports about a climate protest. There were three different types of protests shown to respondents - the protest was either a violent protest, a protest involving civil disobedience, or a completely peaceful protest. The results can be seen in Figure 2: respondents who were surveyed after the intervention were most likely to say that they were supportive of the protest if they had been assigned to the 'peaceful protest' group. There is not a significant difference in means between the group who were shown violent protest and the control group. Bugden also broke down the effect of the intervention by political party affiliation - while Democrats and Independents were responsive to the intervention, Republican respondents' opinions on the protest did not change after reading the mock news reports, indicating that there is an interaction effect between party Identification and responsiveness to protest. In addition, Bugden finds that civil disobedience and violence don't result in decreases of support for the protest, indicating that there is no "backfire" effect, as some other studies suggest when more extreme tactics, such as violence, are used.



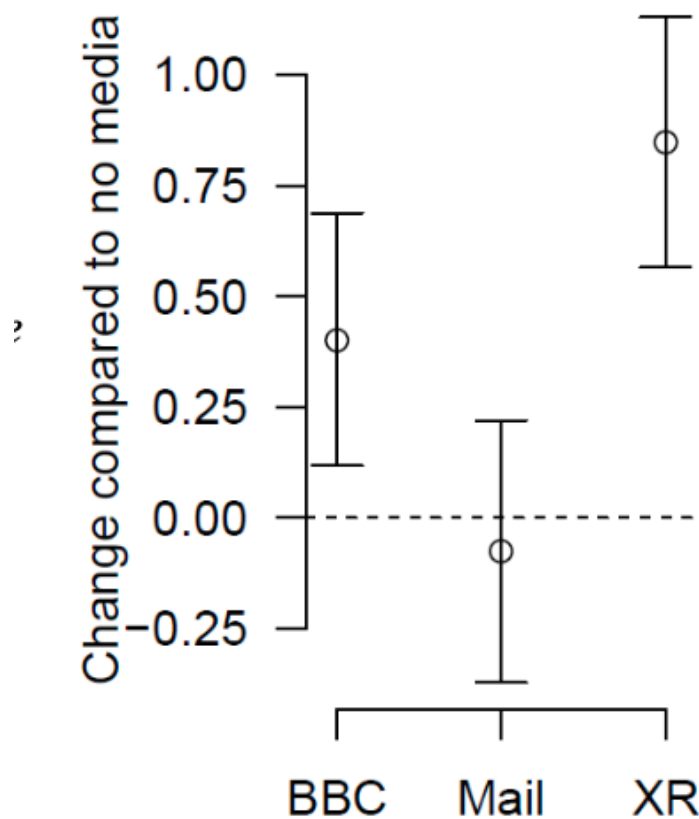
Mazumder (2018) looks at the impact of the 1960s US Civil Rights movement on public opinion among white people in the US in 2006-2011, over 40 years after the Civil Rights movement actually took place. The data on public opinion is taken from the Cooperative Congressional Election Study and measures racial resentment, asking whether respondents agree with 2 statements: 'The Irish, Italians, Jews and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors' and 'Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for Blacks to work their way out of the lower class', and finds an association between US Civil Rights protests and lower levels of racial resentment. The finding is that counties that had Civil Rights protests have significantly lower levels of racial resentment - the equivalent of moving from the South to the Midwest. Controls such as the county's urban population, the vote share of the Democrats in the mid 20th Century, and socioeconomic and demographic covariates are already included in the regression.

However, a re-analysis of Mazumder's work by Biggs et al. (2020) shows that when controlling for level of college education, the effect that Mazumder finds is cut in half, with 8 out of 9 of the combinations of outcome variables and protest measures being no longer statistically significant. As Mazumder's work was one of the main pieces of evidence for long-term impacts of protest on public opinion, understanding the long-term impacts of social movements remains as a key open question in the field.

Feinberg et al. (2020) carry out several experiments to test the reactions of citizens to extreme protests. In one experiment, participants read about a fictional animal rights organisation, and the movement's protest behaviour was manipulated so as to represent three levels of extremity - the actions were presented either as a moderate protest (e.g. peaceful marching), an extreme protest (e.g. breaking into an animal testing facility), or a highly extreme protest (e.g. breaking into an animal testing facility and drugging a security guard). There was no control group in the experiment, which means we can't compare the results to that of Bugden (2020) above, but respondents were significantly more likely to say they would support protesters in the moderate protest group than protesters in either the extreme or highly extreme protest groups. The average support (on a five point scale) given by respondents in the moderate group to protesters was 3.28, compared to 2.64 for extreme protesters and 2.57 for highly extreme protesters ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Overall, Feinberg et. al finds that in 5 out of 6 studies, extreme protest tactics led to study participants supporting the movement's central issue less, which raises some concerns about the use of extreme protest tactics. However, Feinberg et al. notes that prior research has shown the effectiveness of extreme protest in applying pressure to institutions (Biggs & Andrews, 2015) and gaining media coverage for an issue (Sobieraj, 2010; Myers & Caniglia, 2014), which presents, as he calls, an activist's dilemma: Whilst extreme protest actions can be effective in applying pressure to institutions and raising awareness of an issue, it can also lead to reduced public support for the issue. The authors also touch on several limitations and open questions raised by this paper, with a key one being: When do protest actions become "extreme"? This is a crucial question to understand how a certain protest might impact public support, and the authors note this is likely to be different in various contexts due to historical protests in that country. For example, the Civil Rights Movement in the US was predominantly peaceful, which might have created a strong norm in the US for peaceful protest. Similarly, as the authors find immorality judgements are the drivers of survey respondent's beliefs, there may exist highly disruptive actions that are perceived as moral by the wider public. Another question to explore further is the existence of the "radical flank" effect, in which actions by a more extreme organisation can increase support for more moderate organisations working on the same issue (Chenoweth & Schock, 2015).

Kenward and Brick (2019a), whilst still unpublished, used an experimental design to analyse how people respond to protests covered by different media sources. During Extinction Rebellion protests in London in 2019, participants were either presented with a BBC News report about the protests, a Daily Mail report about the protests, a report from Extinction Rebellion about the protests, or no report about the protests at all. Both the BBC Report and the Extinction Rebellion report caused increases in respondents' beliefs that 'disruptive civil disobedience is necessary to force government action on climate change and ecological breakdown', and the Daily Mail report had no effect on respondents' beliefs about the necessity of disruptive civil disobedience (see Figure 3 above). On the question of whether respondents would be willing to engage in civil disobedience themselves, the Extinction Rebellion report had a statistically significant (although small) effect, whereas there was no significant effect from either the BBC report or the Daily Mail report. However, this study finds no evidence for increased environmental concern after exposure to the media articles, for all of the various media outlets.



*Figure 3: Impact of media reports on respondents' views about whether disruptive civil disobedience is necessary to force government action on climate change. Source: Kenward and Brick (2019a)*

This work highlights the medium by which protests can have impacts on public opinion, by garnering neutral or positive media coverage. Specifically, the Daily Mail articles had a more negative representation of Extinction Rebellion protests, the BBC being fairly neutral, and Extinction Rebellion's own media being the most favourable. As the reach of protestor's own media will be limited relative to mainstream media, this highlights the importance of garnering positive articles in mainstream media outlets about the issue of the protest. In addition, there was no statistically significant "backfire" effect observed in this experiment, despite the perceived disruptive tactics of Extinction Rebellion, namely blocking roads. Whilst not explicitly tested in this study, this adds some evidence that disruptive or extreme tactics don't always lead to a reduction in support for the cause, although the mechanism in this case is not obvious.

One limitation of Feinberg et al. (2020) and Budgen (2020) is that they both make use of an experimental vignette design, where study participants are presented once with a hypothetical situation and asked to record note various sentiments. Kenward and Brick (2019a) use a very similar design, exposing participants to one case of media about protests, however in this case they use real media articles rather than hypothetical situations. Using these methods, there is a question of ecological validity, as the ways in which a member of the public might encounter a protest event could be drastically different to these study designs, as often highlighted by the authors. As noted in Feinberg et al. (2020), “Using controlled settings in this way also removed much of the real-world context that might shape activists’ choice of protest behaviours and observers’ responses to those behaviours.”

Specifically, it’s very plausible that in reality, the public would be exposed to protest events repeatedly, potentially over a period of several days or weeks, or via different mediums, from social media to mainstream media. Exposure to content might only have a small effect in the short-term, but this might accumulate and increase in size over time if the exposure is repeated (Funder & Ozer, 2019). In addition, as found by Kenward and Brick (2019a), the effect on members of the public is dependent on the news outlet covering the protest, which adds additional complications. Finally, it’s possible that exposure to a disruptive or extreme protest (and questions about their level of disruptiveness) will cause participants to answer more negatively towards questions of their support for the protest, whilst they might subconsciously have increased concern for the issue, or support the policy demands of the protestors to a greater deal. Therefore, it would be useful for further experimental or observational studies to test this in greater detail, by focusing on the aims of the protestors rather than support for the protest itself, as this is ultimately what most protestors care about.

In the only study that conducts nationally representative surveys immediately before, during and after a protest, Kenward and Brick (2019b) used survey data from DeltaPoll to analyse the changes in public attitudes due to 10 days of Extinction Rebellion protests in London in April 2019. This study uses a longitudinal design, where the same panel of nationally representative participants are surveyed before, during and after the protests have occurred.



Before the protests, 5% of respondents said that they strongly supported civil disobedience by environmental campaigners, and this increased by 4 percentage points in the aftermath of protests, a statistically significant result. In addition, concern about climate change increased significantly after the protests took place, shown in Figure 4 below. This is interesting to note as Kenward and Brick (2019a) finds that although there was no increase in environmental concern after a single exposure to a protest event via a media article, a sustained protest campaign over 10 days did lead to a statistically significant increase in public concern around climate change. This lends some evidence to the importance of repeated exposure in changing beliefs, as well as questioning the validity of experiments with single exposures.

However, this study also suffered from high levels of attrition, which may be a cause for concern. There were 863 participants who took part in the Before survey, 540 in the During phase, and 442 completed the survey after the protest, for an overall attrition rate of 47%. It's not clear if this attrition was differential i.e. the participants that dropped out were the least likely to positively update their beliefs based on exposure to climate protest, however, this factor still limits the conclusions we can draw from this specific study.

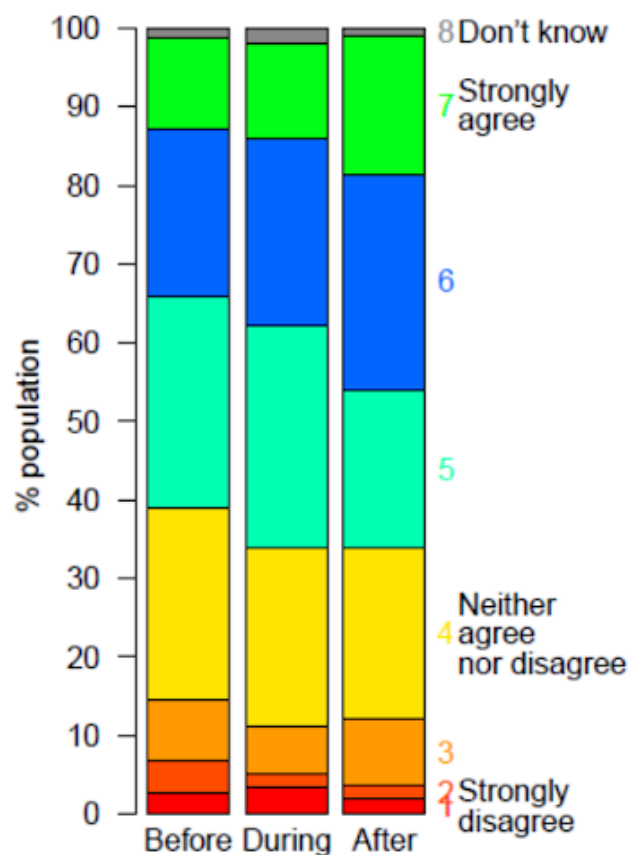


Figure 4: A sustained period of climate protest is found to increase public concern for the climate crisis (Kenward and Brick, 2019b). The question shows results from an average of three items, with the overall construct being 'Concern about the climate crisis'.

Motta (2018) found that mobilisation can polarise public opinion, although the study only covers one set of rallies by scientists called the 'March for Science'. Motta sent out surveys to 428 respondents before and after the March for Science, and tested whether their views on statements like 'Scientists care less about solving important problems than their own personal gain' changed after the rallies occurred. Using a difference-in-differences design, Motta found that people who identified as liberals became more trusting of scientists after the rallies, whereas people who identified as conservatives became less trusting of scientists after the rallies. It should be mentioned that the external validity of this study is likely to be low - the United States may have a specific tendency towards polarisation, and views about scientists in the US may be different to other countries. However, polarisation is a potentially real consequence of protest which can have positive and negative characteristics (Kleiner, 2018; Piven, 2018; Ravndal, 2017). The topic of polarisation and other potentially negative consequences of protest will be explored in greater detail in further research.

A study by Carey et al. (2014) analysed the views of Latinos living in the United States on immigration before and after a series of protests in 2006 drawing attention to the hardships suffered by undocumented immigrants in the United States, in response to proposed sanctions on undocumented immigrants and people who assisted or employed undocumented immigrants. The study, conducted in a natural experiment fashion using the Latino National Survey which took place just before the protests, concludes that the protests were highly effective in increasing the salience of immigration among Latino voters. The authors noted that respondents surveyed after the protests took place were significantly more likely to regard immigration as the most important issue, and respondents who lived in an area where a protest took place were significantly more likely to prioritise immigration as an issue in comparison to respondents who did not live in an area where a protest took place. This study shows that protests, in this case, were successful in shifting public opinion and raising salience of an issue in a specific constituency, which is often an intended goal of protest movements. Branton et al. (2015) studies the same event and finds similar results: that protests increase the salience of an issue in the public, leading to shifts in public opinion towards the position of the protestors.

A similar study by Wallace et al. (2014), also looking at effect of the 2006 immigration protests on the views of Latinos in the United States, with a focus on how much the protests influenced Latinos' views about their capacity to have an impact on government - interestingly, the causal impact of small protests on opinions seemed to be very different to the impact of large protests - the number of small protests near a respondent was associated with feeling that they were able to impact government, but the number of large protests near a respondent was associated with the feeling that they weren't able to impact government. It may be that Latinos who attended or were near to mass protests were more exposed to counternarratives and thus resulted in Latinos becoming more sceptical of their capacity to effect change.

Winkelmann et al. (2021) propose a complexity-based framework for understanding how social movements can trigger social tipping points in political systems. They claim that Fridays For Future, the youth climate movement which was especially popular in Europe, has been pushing the European political system towards a tipping point, at which point the system "will be propelled into a qualitatively different state". The authors note that "The specific upward shift in Germans viewing the environment as an important problem appears to coincide with the large-scale protests organised by FridaysForFuture in March, May and September of 2019.", although, present no causal evidence for this claim. They discuss the fact that it is rarely one actor that is responsible for the entirety of a tipping process, but rather a network of various actors and mechanisms, where a fuller account is required to understand the specific contributions of various actors. The authors remark that in this case, Fridays For Future (and the other actors) weren't sufficient to push the German political system to the point of criticality in this case, and that "a series of additional social movements and protests, or other shifts within the system or the environment, may be required."

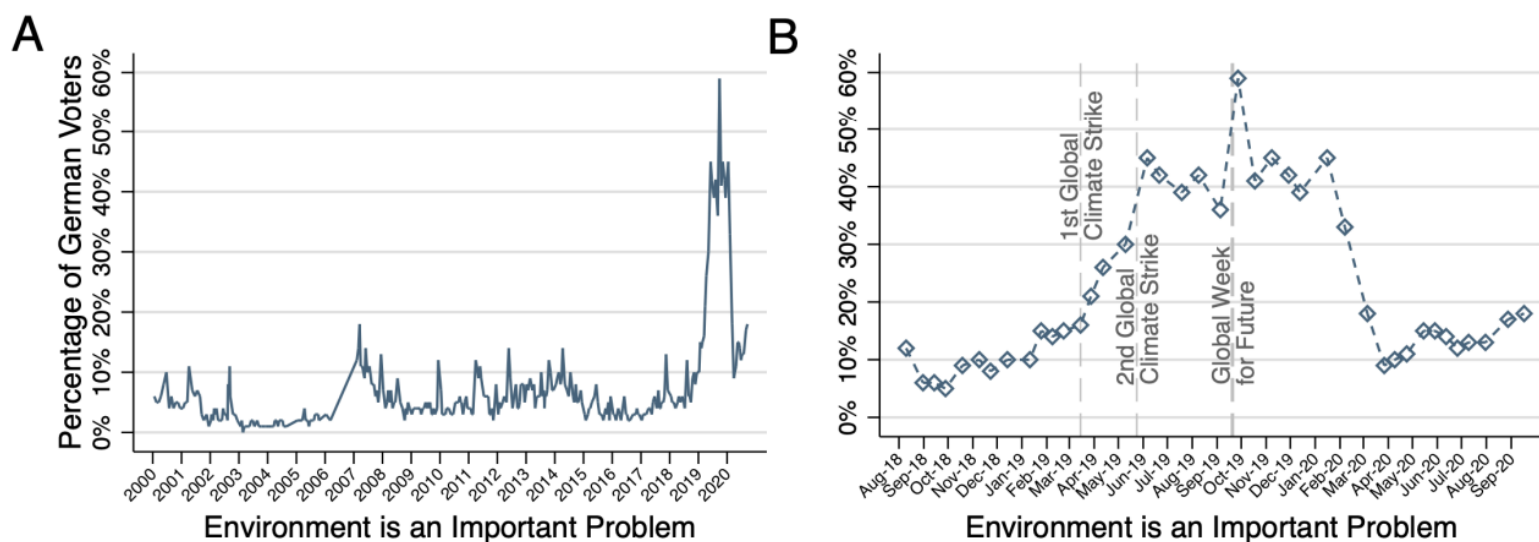


Figure 5: Percentages of potential German voters that list the environment as an important issue for the country and willingness to vote for the Green Party (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) if the election were to be held "today". Panel (A) presents monthly survey data from 2000 to September 2020. Panel (B) displays monthly surveys from August 2018 – September 2020, showing the change since the beginning of Greta Thunberg's protest actions. Dotted grey vertical lines display days of global strikes organised by FridaysForFuture in March, May and September 2019. Data is collected by Forschungsgruppe Wahlen: Politbarometer. Source: Winkelmann et al. 2021)

## PUBLIC DISCOURSE AND MEDIA COVERAGE

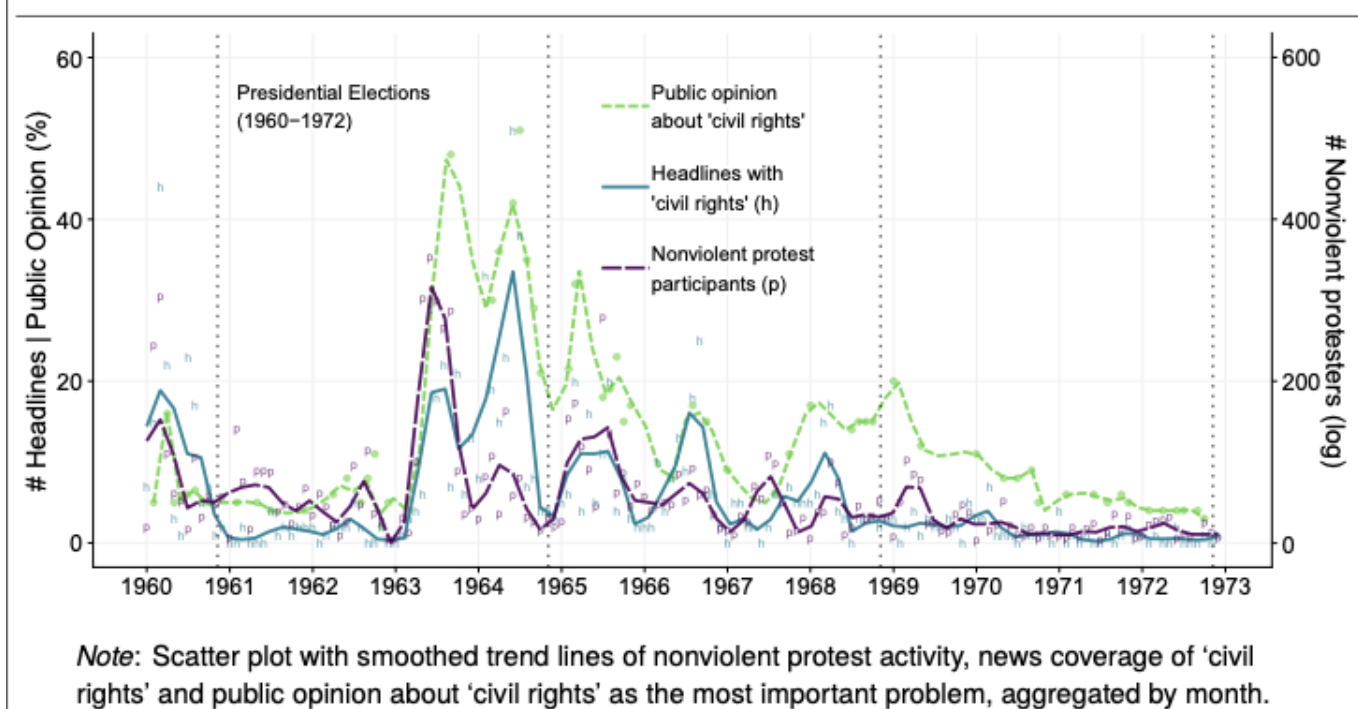
In the book 'World protests: A study of key protest issues in the 21st century', Ortiz et al. (2022) claims that protest movements have had a significant impact on public debate, pointing to the Occupy Wall Street protests in the United States against economic inequality in 2011, which popularised the phrase 'We are the 99%', the UK Uncut Protests against corporations' tax practises, which led to renewed public debate about tax avoidance, and the #MeToo movement in 2017, which encouraged women around the world to raise the issue of gender justice and fight for women's rights (Ortiz et al. 2022, p. 71). Whilst this book doesn't present particularly strong evidence that protests can influence public debate, there are papers that lend support to this hypothesis.

Wasow (2020) examines the relationship between nonviolent protest activity and front page headlines and Congressional Speech during the 1960s Civil Rights movement, seen below in Figure 6.



By examining 274,950 frontpage headlines between 1960 and 1972 across major US newspapers, Wasow estimates the ‘agenda seeding’ power of protest. Not only does he find that moments of heightened protest activity are correlated with increases in civil rights related headlines, but that nonviolent protests are highly predictive of front-page headlines and Congressional speech in following days. He uses bivariate Granger causality tests to identify a causal relationship between nonviolent protest and increased media coverage of civil rights. He also finds that elite opinions drive media coverage, consistent with previous models of elite influence.

**FIGURE 6. Nonviolent Protest Activity, Headlines & Public Opinion on ‘Civil Rights,’ by Month**



Beyeler and Kriesi (2005) examine the empirical evidence from protests targeting the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and World Economic Forum (WEF), finding that the time and location of the protest is a key factor in its success in garnering attention from national media - the strategic staging of protests *during* an international summit is likely to draw extra attention to the actions and positions of the protesters. Another factor in the success of protests at getting attention from media organisations is the proximity of the summit to the country of the media organisation - for instance, protests in India received more attention from media when happening during a WTO Conference in New Delhi (Beyeler and Kriesi 2005, p. 102).

Smith et al. (2001) finds that media coverage of a protest is more likely to advance protestor’s aims if the media covered the protest as ‘thematic’ (relating to a certain theme that persists over time, such as inequality or racial injustice) rather than ‘episodic’ (relating to a specific event, such a particular instance of racism).

If a protest received thematic coverage, it was more than three times more likely to receive coverage that was friendly to the protesters (as opposed to pro-authority or neutral) in comparison to episodic media coverage. Interestingly, Smith et al. found that stories that mainly relied on neutral or authority sources rather than protesters as sources were four times more likely to be thematic, meaning that stories relying on movement sources exhibited characteristics that worked against the interests of the protesters (Smith et al. 2001, p. 1414).

Media coverage is important to protest success in affecting policy, but the causal pathway from media coverage to legislator action may not be as straightforward as the media covering protests and that coverage inducing legislative action.

Vliegthart et al. (2016) look at how the effect of protest on legislation is mediated by the media in six Western European countries. They find that there doesn't seem to be a direct, unmediated effect of protest media coverage on legislator agenda. Instead, the media serves a dual mediating role: the mechanism by which protest affects policy-making is that the media covers protests, and then the coverage of the protest leads to further coverage of the underlying issue in their output that is not directly related to the protest. They find that there is a correlation between protest activity and questions asked in parliament. They also find that when general media coverage of the issue is added to the model, the effect of coverage of the protest entirely disappears. However, the coverage of protest itself leads to more coverage of the issue - a one percent increase in the news coverage of protests relating to a particular issue, the wider coverage of that issue will increase 0.014 percent.

A key question is whether protests can have sustained effects on public discourse, rather than moments of heightened attention on an issue. Dunivin et al. (2022) finds that Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests from 2014 onwards generated attention to BLM and related concepts even after the protests had ceased. Specifically, by analysing information across Google Search volumes, news items, Wikipedia page visits, and other sources, the authors find that BLM increased discourse in a way to “engender lasting changes” around novel ideas pushed by the movement, such as systemic racism. Whilst the amplification of antiracist discourse might lead to political change further down the line, this isn't guaranteed, and neither is the impact that BLM specifically had on changes in public attention.

# LEGISLATOR BEHAVIOUR AND POLICY

Wouters and Walgrave (2017) perform an experiment in which they showed vignettes to 269 elected representatives in Belgium, vignettes containing a news story about protests on the rights of asylum seekers. After exposure, representatives were asked about how salient they perceived the issue in the news story to be, their position on the issue, and their intended actions on the issue. Their experiment showed that there was an effect of being shown the vignette - legislators who had seen the vignette were more likely to say the issue was high salience, more likely to take a position closer to that of the protesters, and more likely to say they intended to take action on the issue.

There is a puzzle about why SMOs would ever affect legislator behaviour - if electoral representatives are incentivised to respond to public opinion, why would they care about the actions of SMOs instead of the opinion of the general public? Lohmann (1993) asks the same question, stating 'it is puzzling that rational policy leaders with majoritarian incentives would ever respond to political action'. Burstein and Lipton (2003) try to address this question - they analyse 53 articles in the top sociology and political science journals, finding a slightly counterintuitive result: SMOs seem to have more impact on policy when public opinion is controlled for - this is slightly surprising because it might be expected that controlling for public opinion may make correlation between SMO activity and legislative behaviour weaker, with public opinion being a confounder. It should be noted that while they analysed 213 coefficients, only 21 of those coefficients were in equations which included public opinion, so we should remain sceptical of how much we can learn from this analysis, and the authors of the study note that because so few political scientists and sociologists have controlled for public opinion, a more in-depth analysis is needed to really understand this relationship (p. 396, Burstein and Lipton 2003).

One model for explaining the causal pathway is the Amplification Model, proposed by Agnone (2007) - the impact of public opinion is amplified by protest by raising an issue's salience for legislators.

Looking at environmental laws in the US, Agnone finds that the correlation between the number of environmental protests and the number of laws passed relating to the environment is highly significant even when controlling for public opinion, media attention, a lagged dependent variable, and the extent to which other environmental advocacy is taking place. Agnone also finds an interaction effect between the number of protests and public opinion - public opinion is more likely to be correlated with the number of laws passed if there are also protests taking place, suggesting that protests may amplify public opinion to affect legislator behaviour.

Bernardi et al. (2020) analyse the effect of protest on legislative agendas, finding that protest generally does not have any direct effect on legislation, and also argue against the Amplification model in most circumstances. Although short-term and long-term interaction effects between public opinion and protest exist, the authors conclude that they are not significant. That being said, they do find a direct effect of protest on legislation when the issue is social welfare (Figure 6), where protest seems to be an important source of information to legislators. They also find an interaction effect between protest and public opinion on the issues of educational, housing, and unemployment issues (Figure 7), so the Amplification model may apply to a specific set of issues. The effect size is significant, making legislation more likely by 11 per cent. It's also worth noting here that the effect of public opinion as expressed through surveys on legislator behaviour appears to be much stronger than the effect of public opinion as expressed through protest on legislator behaviour.

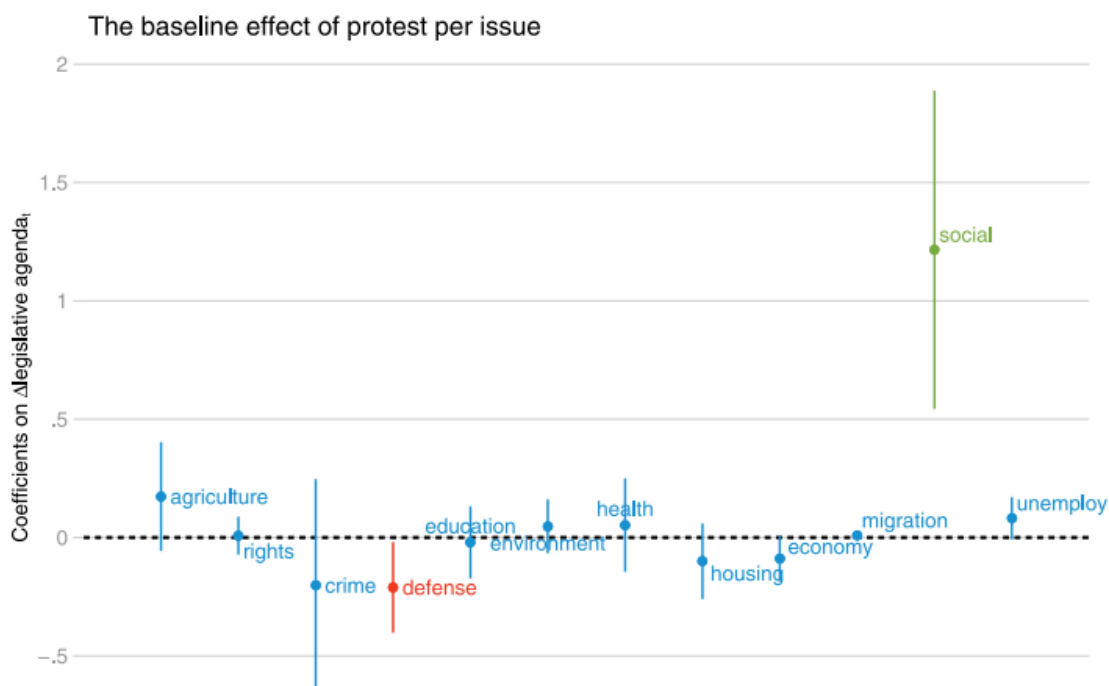


Figure 7: The direct effects of protest on legislative agendas across a range of issues, using data from the 1970s to 2011 across Spain, Germany, the UK and the US. Source: Bernardi (2020)



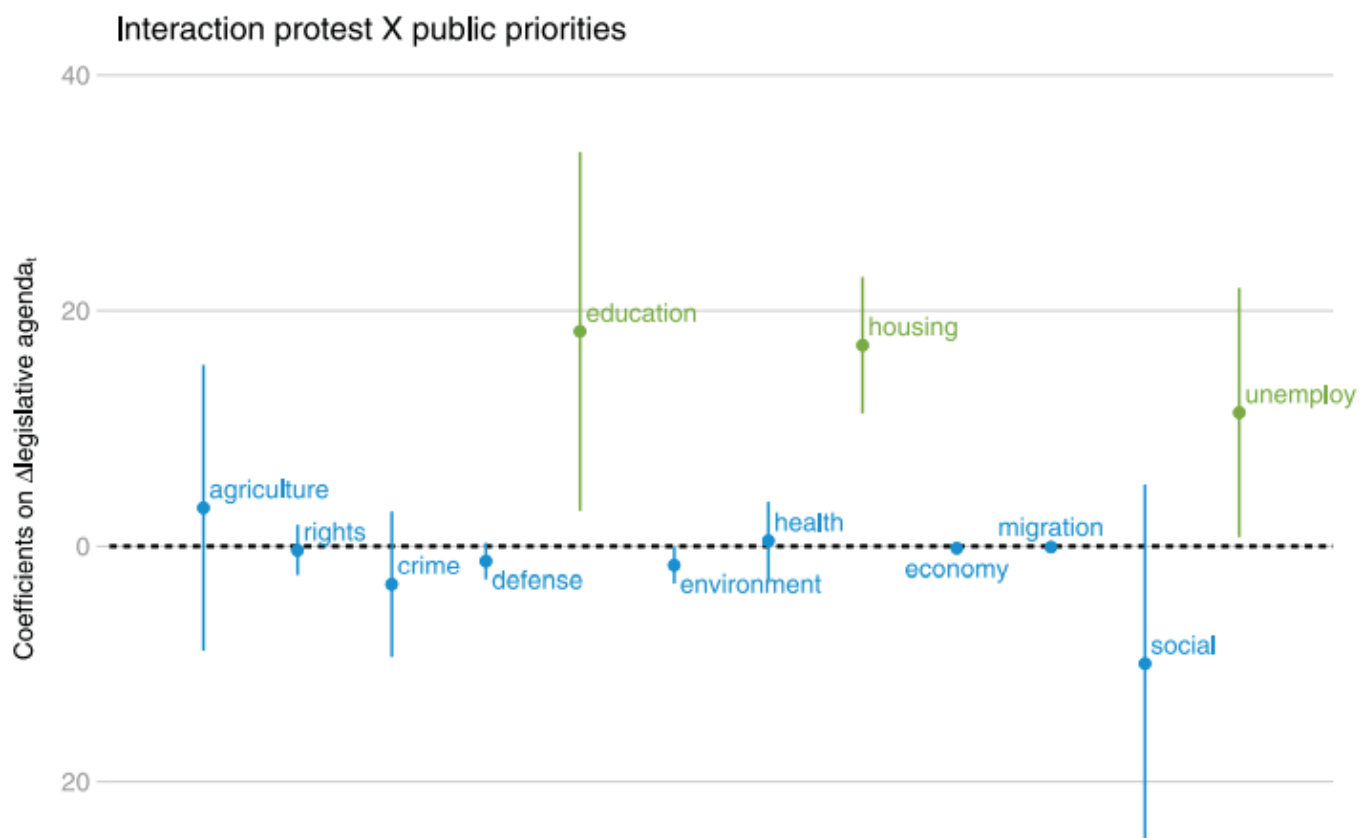


Figure 8: The amplification effect of protest on legislative agendas across a range of issues, using data from the 1970s to 2011 across Spain, Germany, the UK and the US. This refers to the effect of protest in amplifying public opinion, by making existing public opinion more salient to policymakers.

Source: Bernardi (2020)

Hutter and Vliegenthart (2016) examine four Western European countries and find that political parties respond to protests that are well covered by the media - but parties in opposition are more likely to be responsive to protest than parties in government, and parties are more likely to respond to protest if other parties have already responded to the relevant issue.

McAdam and Su (2002) look at the impact of protest on voting in the United States Congress during the Vietnam War - finding that highly disruptive protests against the Vietnam War resulted in members of Congress being more likely to vote for pro-peace measures, but that the pace of voting decreased (in other words, the disruptive protests depressed the rate of which both the House of Representatives and the Senate considered pro-peace measures). The opposite was true of large non-disruptive protests (over 10,000 protesters), which increased the pace of voting but decreased the number of pro-peace votes.

# CORPORATE BEHAVIOUR

Gulliver, Fielding & Louis (2021) analyse the impact of the Stop Adani campaign in Australia, a civil resistance campaign targeted at stopping the construction of a coal mine. Although the campaign ultimately failed in influencing the national government to stop the coal mine project, they later conducted partially successful targeting of business to withdraw their support for the Adani mine. This tactic, referred to as secondary targeting, constitutes social movements targeting the pillars of the support of the primary target, in this case the Adani corporation. For example, the Stop Adani campaign targeted banks lending money to the project, engineering firms supporting the construction, insurers doing the underwriting, and so on. The results of this secondary targeting can be seen in Table 2 below. Whilst this secondary targeting was reasonably successful, by pressuring 63 (out of 145 targeted) companies to commit to not working with the Adani corporation, ultimately the Adani corporation was able to find the necessary partners for each stage of their project.

COMPANY SECTOR	NUMBER OF COMPANIES		NUMBER OF CIVIL RESISTANCE ACTIONS
	TARGETED	WON (%)	
Finance	60 (41%)	46 (77%)	62
Construction and engineering	48 (33%)	12 (25%)	96
Insurance	34 (23%)	4 (12%)	
Coal haulage	3 (2%)	1 (33%)	4
Total	145	63 (43%)	160

Table 1: Success rate for secondary targeting of supporting industry for the Adani Corporation, by the Stop Adani campaign in Australia.

In the same monograph by Gulliver, Fielding & Louis (2021), they study the impact of the Australian Divestment movement, from 2015 to 2019, on garnering commitments by companies to divest their investments from fossil fuels. Interestingly, despite that the Divestment movement only targeted 36 specific organisations, they garnered over 235 divestment commitments. In addition, the majority of these divestment announcements were made by superannuation funds, which is the equivalent to pension funds, which control significant amounts of money.

The authors note that the number of divestment commitments drastically outpacing the number of specific activist campaigns suggests there are other factors influencing institutions to divest, again indicating it's challenging to draw a cause-and-effect relationship between protest and desired outcomes. A table of the outcomes, split by organisation type can be seen in the Appendix. Analysis from both case studies in this monograph leads the authors to conclude that civil resistance campaigns have higher rates of success against corporate targets, relative to government or government entities.

McDonnell et al. (2015) use longitudinal data to analyse the extent to which activism against harmful corporate practices results in corporations adopting 'social management devices', strategies developed by corporations to assist a firm in managing its social strategy and showing a commitment to socially responsible values. The results suggest that the total number of activist challenges faced by corporations is significantly linked to the likelihood that corporations will disseminate a (Corporate Social Responsibility) CSR report and institute a CSR Board Committee.

## BROAD OUTCOMES

Gulliver, Fielding & Louis (2021) analysed information about 193 climate change campaigns in Australia from 2017-2020 who engaged in civil resistance. After gathering data about their initial stated aims, they evaluated the level of success these groups had in achieving their aims, categorising them as unsuccessful, partially successful, successful, or unknown. They found that 24% of the 193 analysed achieved successful outcomes, with 18% achieving partial success, and 25% being unsuccessful. The results are shown in Table 1 below.

After categorising the intended targets of the campaigns, they found that groups that had the most measurable success were campaigns that target industry, with success rates of 31% (9 out of 29). Overall, they found that most campaigns targeted political change (100 out of 183), with 28% (28 out of 100) of these campaigns achieving success. It's important to note that the authors don't evaluate the extent to which the campaign actually influenced the outcome, meaning it's not possible to draw a causal link between civil resistance and campaign outcomes in this case.

CAMPAIGN OUTCOME	TOTAL CAMPAIGNS N (%)	TARGET					
		Political N (%)	Individual N (%)	Business N (%)	Unknown N (%)	Community Group N (%)	Health/Education N (%)
Successful	46 (24%)	28 (28%)	7 (17%)	9 (31%)	2 (11%)	-	-
Partially Successful	34 (18%)	19 (19%)	4 (10%)	9 (31%)	1 (6%)	-	1 (50%)
Unsuccessful	49 (25%)	35 (35%)	3 (7%)	2 (7%)	8 (44%)	1 (50%)	-
Unknown	64 (33%)	18 (18%)	28 (67%)	9 (31%)	7 (39%)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)
Total	193	100	42	29	18	2	2

Table 2: Gulliver, Fielding and Louis (2021) evaluate the outcomes of civil resistance campaigns against climate change in Australia, from 2017–2020.

## CONCLUSION

- There is moderately strong evidence of successful protest impacts on certain contexts. Especially, the case for protest effectiveness on civil rights in the US seems strong, with statistically significant results from both the 1960s Civil Rights Movement and the Black Lives Matter movement from 2014 onwards. There is some evidence, both experimental and observational, that climate protest has been effective in Western Europe and to some degree, the US, from 2018 onwards.
- The evidence seems the strongest for positive impacts on public opinion, media discourse and voting behaviour. Whilst there is some evidence on protests positively influencing policymakers and policy, this is more debated within the field. Effects on policy, like most effects of protest, seem highly context dependent on external political structures and existing public opinion.
- The experimental studies we have included suffer from concerns around ecological validity, in that it's unclear whether exposure to media articles in a controlled setting is a sufficiently close proxy to public exposure to protest in the real world. Therefore, whilst experimental studies show strong causal links, it's unclear whether these results will be replicable outside of controlled settings.
- On the other hand, observational studies suffer from difficulty in proving causation. Whilst they seek to use natural protest events to measure outcomes in the real world, confounding factors add a level of uncertainty when determining causality. However, most of the observational studies we've found rigorously test many confounders and assumptions, so the studies seem sufficiently strong evidence in our opinion.

### **Limitations of the existing research include:**

- The long-term effects of protest on public opinion, agenda setting and policy are rarely studied. Most studies focus on short-term outcomes, due to ease of measurement, although the long-run considerations might be far more important.
- There is little research on protest outcomes in countries outside the US. Around 50% of the literature we reviewed was from the US, which possesses an atypical political context, so it would be useful to have greater research from both European countries and especially countries in Latin America, Asia, and Africa.
- There is little research on issues outside of civil rights, racism, immigration and climate change is very scarce. These issues make up the vast majority (80%+) of the protest research we have examined to date.
- It's unclear how different levels of extremity of nonviolent protest affect outcomes. Whilst there is a good amount of research on the outcomes of nonviolent vs violent protest, there is little on the differing impacts of different levels of disruption. This seems pertinent due to recent protest movements, such as Extinction Rebellion or Insulate Britain, employing highly disruptive yet nonviolent tactics, which raises concerns around the loss of public opinion.



# REFERENCES

- Agnone, J. (2007). Amplifying public opinion: The policy impact of the U.S. environmental movement. *Social Forces*, 85(4), 1593–1620.
- Amenta, E., Caren, N., Chiarello, E., & Su, Y. (2010). The Political Consequences of Social Movements. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 36(1), 287–307.  
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-070308-120029>
- Andrews, K. T., & Gaby, S. (2015). Local Protest and Federal Policy: The Impact of the Civil Rights Movement on the 1964 Civil Rights Act. *Sociological Forum*, 30, 509–527.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.12175>
- Banaszak, L. A. (1996). *Why movements succeed or fail: Opportunity, culture, and the struggle for woman suffrage*. Princeton University Press.
- Barrie, C. (2021). Political sociology in a time of protest. *Current Sociology*, 69(6), 919–942. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00113921211024692>
- Bashir, N. Y., Lockwood, P., Chasteen, A. L., Nadolny, D., & Noyes, I. (2013). The ironic impact of activists: Negative stereotypes reduce social change influence: The ironic impact of activists. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 43(7), 614–626.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.1983>
- Bernardi, L., Bischof, D., & Wouters, R. (2021). The public, the protester, and the bill: Do legislative agendas respond to public opinion signals? *Journal of European Public Policy*, 28(2), 289–310. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2020.1729226>
- Beyeler, M., & Kriesi, H. (2005). Transnational Protest and The Public Sphere. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, 10(1), 95–109.  
<https://doi.org/10.17813/mai.10.1.dq013h7nh027u126>
- Biggs, M., & Andrews, K. T. (2015). Protest Campaigns and Movement Success: Desegregating the U.S. South in the Early 1960s. *American Sociological Review*, 80(2), 416–443. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122415574328>
- Biggs, M., Barrie, C., & Andrews, K. T. (2020). Did local civil rights protest liberalize whites' racial attitudes? *Research & Politics*, 7(3), 205316802091475.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2053168020914757>
- Branton, R., Martinez-Ebers, V., Carey, T. E., & Matsubayashi, T. (2015). Social Protest and Policy Attitudes: The Case of the 2006 Immigrant Rallies. *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(2), 390–402.
- Bromley-Trujillo, R., & Poe, J. (2020). The importance of salience: Public opinion and state policy action on climate change. *Journal of Public Policy*, 40(2), 280–304.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0143814X18000375>
- Bugden, D. (2020). Does Climate Protest Work? Partisanship, Protest, and Sentiment Pools. *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World*, 6, 237802312092594.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2378023120925949>

Burstein, P. (2003). The Impact of Public Opinion on Public Policy: A Review and an Agenda. *Political Research Quarterly*, 56(1), 29–40.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/106591290305600103>

Burstein, P. (2020). Why Do Lobbying, Protest, and Other Forms of Advocacy Often Fail to Affect Policy? Some Possible Explanations [Preprint]. *Politics and International Relations*. <https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2020-k78wc>

Carey, T. E., Branton, R. P., & Martinez-Ebers, V. (2014). The Influence of Social Protests on Issue Salience among Latinos. *Political Research Quarterly*, 67(3), 615–627.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912914534074>

Chenoweth, E., & Schock, K. (2015). Do Contemporaneous Armed Challenges Affect the Outcomes of Mass Nonviolent Campaigns?\*. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, 20(4), 427–451. <https://doi.org/10.17813/1086-671X-20-4-427>

Chenoweth, E., & Stephan, M. J. (2011). *Why civil resistance works: The strategic logic of nonviolent conflict*. Columbia University Press.

Cristancho, C., & Wouters, R. (2021). Protesters at the news gates: An experimental study of journalists' news judgment of protest events. *Communications*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1515/commun-2020-0023>

Dunivin, Z. O., Yan, H. Y., Ince, J., & Rojas, F. (2022). Black Lives Matter protests shift public discourse. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 119(10), e2117320119. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2117320119>

Fassiotto, M., & Soule, S. A. (2017). LOUD AND CLEAR: THE EFFECT OF PROTEST SIGNALS ON CONGRESSIONAL ATTENTION\*. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, 22(1), 17–38. <https://doi.org/10.17813/1086-671X-22-1-17>

Feinberg, M., Willer, R., & Kovacheff, C. (2020). The activist's dilemma: Extreme protest actions reduce popular support for social movements. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 119(5), 1086–1111. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000230>

Funder, D. C., & Ozer, D. J. (2019). Evaluating Effect Size in Psychological Research: Sense and Nonsense. *Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science*, 2(2), 156–168. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2515245919847202>

Gamson, W. A. (1990). *The strategy of social protest* (2nd ed). Wadsworth Pub.

Giugni, M. (2007). Useless Protest? A Time-Series Analysis of the Policy Outcomes of Ecology, Antinuclear, and Peace Movements in the United States, 1977-1995. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, 12(1), 53–77.  
<https://doi.org/10.17813/mai.12.1.b05j1087v7pxg382>

Goldstone, J. A. (1980). The Weakness of Organization: A New Look at Gamson's The Strategy of Social Protest. *American Journal of Sociology*, 85(5), 1017–1042.  
<https://doi.org/10.1086/227123>

GULLIVER, ROBYN. F., & KELLY. LOUIS, W. R. (2021). CIVIL RESISTANCE AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE. *INTERNATIONAL CENTER ON N.*

Hutter, S., & Vliegenthart, R. (2018). Who responds to protest? Protest politics and party responsiveness in Western Europe. *Party Politics*, 24(4), 358–369.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068816657375>

Johnson, E. W., Agnone, J., & McCarthy, J. D. (2010). Movement Organizations, Synergistic Tactics and Environmental Public Policy. *Social Forces*, 88(5), 2267–2292.  
<https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.2010.0038>

Klein Teeselink, B., & Melios, G. (2021). Weather to Protest: The Effect of Black Lives Matter Protests on the 2020 Presidential Election. *SSRN Electronic Journal*.  
<https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3809877>

Kleiner, T.-M. (2018). Public opinion polarisation and protest behaviour. *European Journal of Political Research*, 57(4), 941–962. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12260>  
Madestam, A., Shoag, D., Veuger, S., & Yanagizawa-Drott, D. (2013). Do Political Protests Matter? Evidence from the Tea Party Movement\*. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 128(4), 1633–1685. <https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjt021>

Mazumder, S. (2018). The Persistent Effect of U.S. Civil Rights Protests on Political Attitudes: EFFECT OF CIVIL RIGHTS PROTESTS ON POLITICAL ATTITUDES. *American Journal of Political Science*, 62(4), 922–935. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12384>

McAdam, D., & Su, Y. (2002). The War at Home: Antiwar Protests and Congressional Voting, 1965 to 1973. *American Sociological Review*, 67(5), 696.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/3088914>

McDonnell, M.-H., King, B. G., & Soule, S. A. (2015). A Dynamic Process Model of Private Politics: Activist Targeting and Corporate Receptivity to Social Challenges. *American Sociological Review*, 80(3), 654–678. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122415581335>

McVeigh, R., Cunningham, D., & Farrell, J. (2014). Political Polarization as a Social Movement Outcome: 1960s Klan Activism and Its Enduring Impact on Political Realignment in Southern Counties, 1960 to 2000. *American Sociological Review*, 79, 1144–1171. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122414555885>

Meyer, D. S., & Minkoff, D. C. (2004). Conceptualizing Political Opportunity. *Social Forces*, 82(4), 1457–1492.

Motta, M. (2018). The Polarizing Effect of the March for Science on Attitudes toward Scientists. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 51(4), 782–788.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096518000938>

Myers, D. J., & Caniglia, B. S. (2004). All the Rioting That's Fit to Print: Selection Effects in National Newspaper Coverage of Civil Disorders, 1968-1969. *American Sociological Review*, 69(4), 519-543. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240406900403>

Opp, K.-D. (2009). *Theories of political protest and social movements: A multidisciplinary introduction, critique, and synthesis*. Routledge.

Ortiz, I., Burke, S., Berrada, M., Cortés, H. S., Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, & Palgrave Macmillan (Firm). (2022). *World protests: A study of key protest issues in the 21st century*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-88513-7>

Piven, F. F. (2008). *Challenging Authority: How Ordinary People Change America*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Ravndal, J. A. (2018). Explaining right-wing terrorism and violence in Western Europe: Grievances, opportunities and polarisation. *European Journal of Political Research*, 57(4), 845-866. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12254>

Rojas, F. (2006). Social Movement Tactics, Organizational Change and the Spread of African-American Studies. *Social Forces*, 84(4), 2147-2166. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.2006.0107>

Simpson, B., Willer, R., & Feinberg, M. (2018). Does Violent Protest Backfire? Testing a Theory of Public Reactions to Activist Violence. *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World*, 4, 237802311880318. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2378023118803189>

Smith, J., McCarthy, J. D., McPhail, C., & Augustyn, B. (2001). From Protest to Agenda Building: Description Bias in Media Coverage of Protest Events in Washington, D.C. *Social Forces*, 79(4), 1397-1423.

Sobieraj, S. (2010). Reporting Conventions: Journalists, Activists, and the Thorny Struggle for Political Visibility. *Social Problems*, 57, 505-528. <https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.2010.57.4.505>

Soule, S. A., & King, B. G. (2006). The Stages of the Policy Process and the Equal Rights Amendment, 1972-1982. *American Journal of Sociology*, 111(6), 1871-1909. <https://doi.org/10.1086/499908>

Tausch, N., & Becker, J. C. (2013). Emotional reactions to success and failure of collective action as predictors of future action intentions: A longitudinal investigation in the context of student protests in Germany: *Emotional reactions to success and failure of collective action*. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 52(3), 525-542. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8309.2012.02109.x>

Uba, K. (2009). The Contextual Dependence of Movement Outcomes: A Simplified Meta-Analysis. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, 14(4), 433–448.  
<https://doi.org/10.17813/maiq.14.4.m8477j873p47p546>

Vliegenthart, R., Walgrave, S., Wouters, R., Hutter, S., Jennings, W., Gava, R., Tresch, A., Varone, F., Grossman, E., Breunig, C., Brouard, S., & Chaques-Bonafont, L. (2016). The Media as a Dual Mediator of the Political Agenda-Setting Effect of Protest. A Longitudinal Study in Six Western European Countries. *Social Forces*, 95(2), 837–859.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/sow075>

Walgrave, S., & Vliegenthart, R. (2012). The Complex Agenda-Setting Power of Protest: Demonstrations, Media, Parliament, Government, and Legislation in Belgium, 1993-2000. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, 17(2), 129–156.  
<https://doi.org/10.17813/maiq.17.2.pw053m281356572h>

Wasow, O. (2020). Agenda Seeding: How 1960s Black Protests Moved Elites, Public Opinion and Voting. *American Political Science Review*, 114(3), 638–659.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S000305542000009X>

Wouters, R. (2019). The Persuasive Power of Protest. How Protest wins Public Support. *Social Forces*, 98(1), 403–426. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soy110>

Wouters, R., & Walgrave, S. (2017). Demonstrating Power: How Protest Persuades Political Representatives. *American Sociological Review*, 82(2), 361–383.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122417690325>