Decision Processes Colloquia

Monday, February 28, 2022

Where: 360 JMHH

When: 12:00 – 1:00 pm

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Election polling is not dead: A Bayesian bootstrap method yields accurate forecasts

ABSTRACT:

I will describe a new "Bayesian bootstrap" method for election forecasts that combines traditional polling questions with expectations about their social contacts will vote as well as their predictions of the election outcome. The bootstrap forecast treats each survey respondent's election winner prediction as itself an optimal Bayesian forecast given all evidence available to that respondent. It then infers the amount of independent and shared evidence and aggregates it optimally across respondents. In large national samples before the 2018 and 2020 U.S. elections, we find that the (preregistered) bootstrap forecast outperforms forecasts based on own intentions questions. The forecast tends to put about 65% weight on social circle predictions, 25% on election winner predictions, and only 10% on own declared voting intentions. Beyond election polling, the new method is expected to improve the validity of other social science surveys. Based on joint work with Henrik Olsson and Mirta Galesic (Santa Fe Institute), and Wandi Bruine de Bruin (University of Southern California).

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