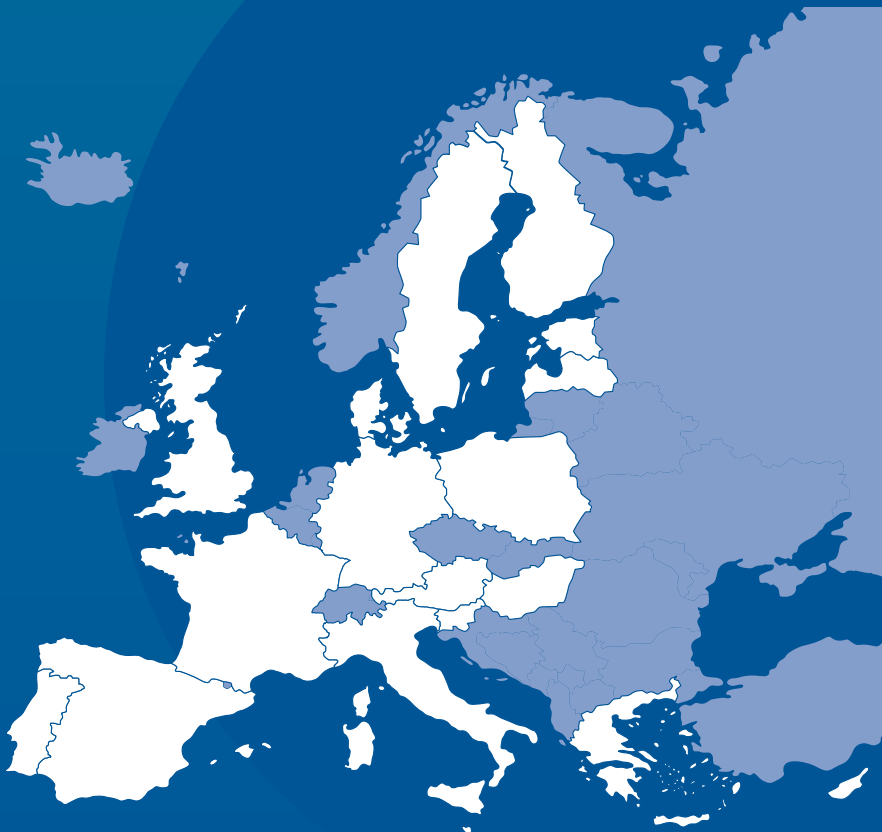


UNDERSTANDING RIGHT-WING POPULISM AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT



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PREFACE

Europe is in upheaval. The appalling Russian aggression against Ukraine has fundamentally changed European politics. The seeming obviousness of perpetual peace in Europe safeguarded by European integration has been shattered. In light of these terrible developments, the European Union has thus far demonstrated a degree of unity rarely seen, agreeing on implementing extensive economic sanctions which target the Russian economy and political leadership.

In recent years, this sense of unity has not always guided the European community. The response to the financial and sovereign debt crisis, the quarrel over the distribution of refugees and the undermining of the rule of law and judicial independence in some member states all revealed deep divisions between members of the European project. This is why the recent sense of unity should not distract us from the danger that right-wing populist forces still present to liberal European democracies. Right-wing populists across Europe have been at the helm of changing the institutional structures of European democracies and will continue to try to do so. The continuing rise of right-wing populism may be stalled in some countries but the overall level of support is still strong, indicating that the challenge to liberal democracies is not over. As progressives, we should remain vigilant in this debate and promote evidence-based political strategies addressing current and future right-wing populist challenges.

The report at hand is full of quantitative and qualitative evidence helping to formulate those strategies. The authors encourage readers to look beyond the populism dimension and focus their attention on the economic insecurities underlying supposedly cultural issues such as immigration and how RWPPs become successful in appealing to these insecurities. The results suggest, for example, that much more people are concerned with the economic effects immigration has on labour market competition rather than cultural identity. It is those economic concerns that progressives should target in response to the right-wing populist challenge and beware of trying to copy cultural RWPP strategies.

Instead, this report shows the centre-left winning strategy in response to the right-wing populist challenge must keep their values such as equality and non-discrimination at heart. In fact, we find evidence that social and welfare policies such as strong employment protection polices, high minimum wages and unemployment benefits do prevent an increase in support for RWPPs. This shows: The best response to the right-wing populist challenge is an embrace of the centre-left's core values of fighting for equality and not compromising on protecting people from economic insecurities.

Michael Jennewein

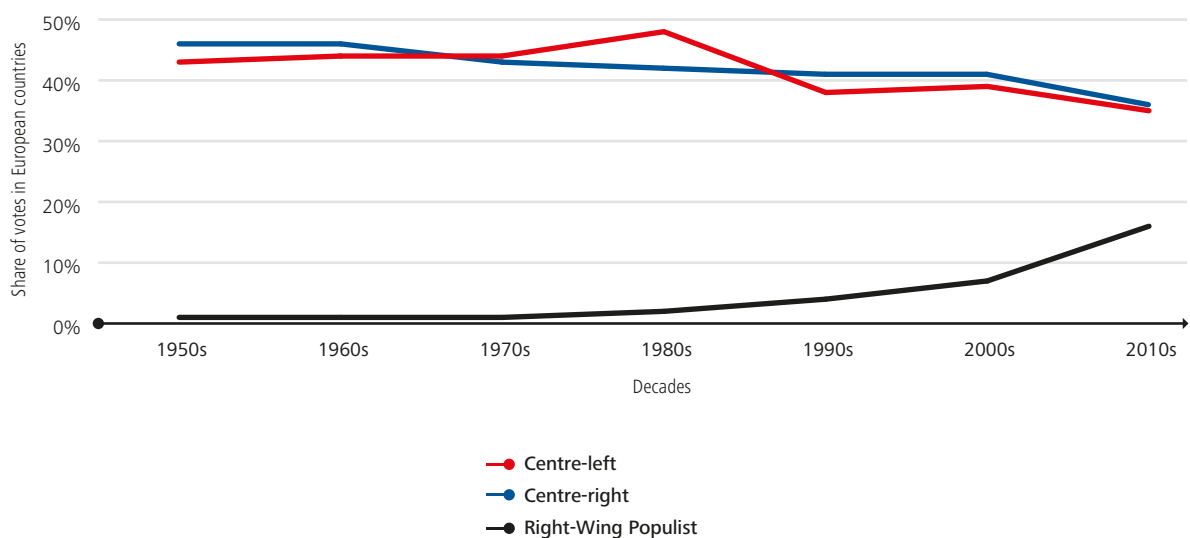
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INTRODUCTION

THE PROBLEM

The right-wing populist momentum sweeping Europe since the early 2010s has three features. First, the successful electoral performance of parties pledging to restore national sovereignty and implement policies that consistently prioritise natives over immigrants; second the increasing entrenchment of these parties in their respective political systems through access to office; and third the increasing ability to influence the policy agenda of other parties. Following a varied and more subdued performance in the 1990s and early 2000s, the 2008 financial crisis and the 2015 refugee crisis spurred an increase in right-wing populist party (RWPP) support across Europe. This development has taken place at the expense of the mainstream: while the average electoral score of RWPPs has been steadily increasing over time, support for both the mainstream left and right has declined.

Figure 1: The rise of RWPPs has come at the expense of both mainstream left and right



Source: *Comparative Manifestos Project*

THREE WAYS OF UNDERSTANDING RWPPS' SUCCESS

(1) Electoral performance: Many RWPPs have improved their electoral performance over time. The French Rassemblement National (RN) (formerly Front National - FN), the Austrian Party for Freedom (FPÖ), the Greek Golden Dawn (GD) and the German Alternative for Germany (AfD) have all increasingly managed to mobilise voters beyond their support core groups into more peripheral voter groups. This has allowed them to significantly increase their support in their domestic electoral arenas. At the same time, countries previously identified as 'outliers' because of the absence of an electorally successful RWPP are no longer exceptional in this respect – for example, Portugal with the rise of Chega and Spain with the rise of Vox.

(2) Access to government: A substantial number of RWPPs have either governed recently or served as formal cooperation partners in right-wing minority governments. These include the Lega (Italy), the FPÖ, the Polish Law and Justice (PiS), the Hungarian Fidesz, the Greek Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS) and Independent Greeks (ANEL), the Finns Party (PS), the Danish People's Party (DF), the National Alliance (NA) (Latvia) and the Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE). In contrast to the past, more RWPPs now have access to government and are treated as legitimate actors both by their voters and their political competitors. The so-called *cordon sanitaire* – the policy of marginalising extreme parties – has been breaking down even in countries where it has been traditionally effective, such as Estonia and Sweden. Few RWPPs remain politically marginalised by competitor parties, including the AfD and the Greek Golden Dawn during the years the latter party was active.

(3) Ability to influence the policy agenda: RWPPs such as the RN, the SD and UKIP have successfully competed in their domestic systems, permeating mainstream ground and influencing the agendas of other parties. As a result, mainstream parties on the right and, in some instances, on the left have often adopted accommodative strategies – mainly regarding immigration.

PATTERNS OF RWPP SUCCESS ACROSS EUROPE

While the overall picture is one of success, a closer look at the parties' support trajectories suggests that RWPP electoral performance has varied significantly over time across European countries. Specific regional dynamics reveal patterns that are interesting in terms of the different types of RWPP success.

WESTERN EUROPE

In much of Western Europe, RWPP success takes the form of systemic entrenchment – i.e. the gradual ability of niche parties to permeate mainstream ground. Most Western European RWPPs commenced as niche actors operating on the fringes of the political system. They increased their support beyond their secure voter base by becoming progressively embedded in the system either as coalition partners or as credible opposition parties. Indeed, Western European RWPPs are among those with the most prolonged standing success. In Austria and France, the FPÖ and RN have performed well in a series of elections since the late 1990s and early 2000s, respectively. Austria is among the European countries that have had RWPPs in government alongside Norway, Italy and Switzerland in Western Europe and Poland and Hungary in Eastern Europe. Although the RN never has made it into office in France, it functions as a long-standing contender in its national political arena and is one of the most successful opposition RWPPs. In Germany, the AfD is a relative newcomer in the system. While the party remains marginalised by its competitors, its robust electoral performance, especially during the 2015 refugee crisis, is an essential measure of its success.

SOUTHERN EUROPE

RWPP success has varied significantly across Southern European countries. Greece has had RWPPs both in government (LAOS, ANEL) and opposition (GD). In contrast, RWPPs in Cyprus, Spain and Portugal for a long time failed to make substantial electoral gains despite economic grievances and immigration. Indeed, following the eruption of the financial crisis, Greece was the only Southern European country to develop solid RWPP support with the election of the GD, a previously marginalised neo-Nazi party, in the Greek parliament. While equivalent parties did exist in the rest of South Europe – the National Popular Front (ELAM) in Cyprus, Democracia Nacional (DN) and España 2000 in Spain and the Partido Nacional Renovador (PNR) in Portugal – these only received low support. But this trend is changing. These countries are no longer 'exceptional' cases. ELAM has gradually increased its support in Cyprus, reaching 6.78% in 2021. Spain and Portugal have been experiencing the rise of RWPPs with increasing support for Vox and less so Chega, both radical RWPP variants parties which, unlike the GD, have shed the stigma of fascism.

THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

The Nordic countries have experienced considerable variations in RWPP success within and across countries. The Danish DF has exerted substantial policy influence as a recognised cooperation partner of the centre-right parties since the early 2000s. The Finns Party (PS) reported its first good result in 2007, making its electoral breakthrough in 2011, and in 2015 even joining a centre-right coalition government. Sweden, in contrast, was considered a 'deviant' case until recently because it lacked an RWPP in parliament. The Sweden Democrats' (SD) electoral breakthrough in 2010 was met with a *cordon sanitaire* strategy that has kept them out of government. This consensus may be changing as they have recently become more influential in local coalitions. Despite earlier differences in their success patterns, Scandinavian RWPPs displayed upward trajectories during the mid to late 2010s. The long-term picture shows an overall increase in RWPP success both in terms of electoral support and mainstream entrenchment.

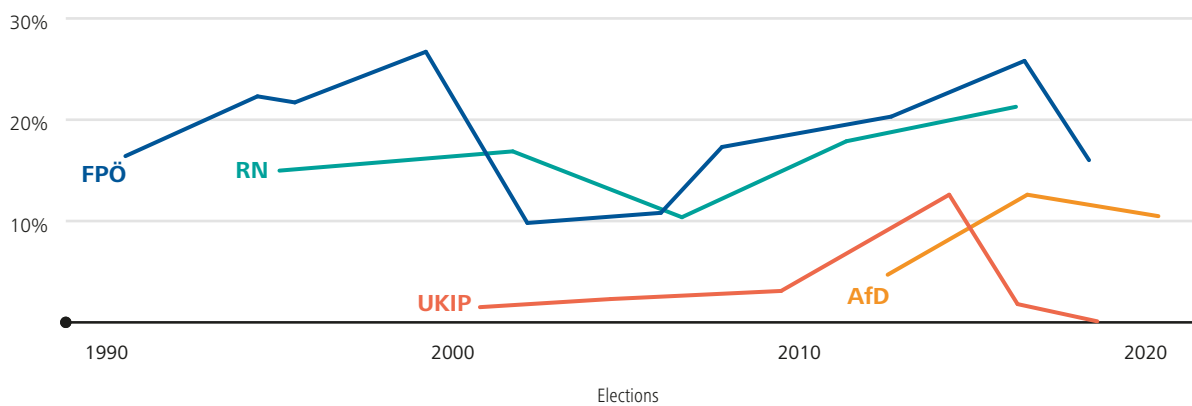
EASTERN EUROPE

Eastern Europe has some of the most electorally successful RWPPs (see Figure 2), including Fidesz in Hungary, PiS in Poland, the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) and the NA in Latvia. The dominant pattern is radicalisation of the mainstream. Formerly mainstream parties have radicalised in government, increasingly adopting populist, illiberal and authoritarian policy positions. Given the low levels of immigration in the region, Eastern European RWPPs tend to target domestic minorities. There are notable variations within the region. In the more ethnically homogenous countries such as Poland, Hungary and Slovenia, mobilisation occurs along socially conservative lines. These countries are prominent examples of radicalised mainstream parties in power with Fidesz, PiS and the SDS, respectively. Smaller RWPPs, on the other hand, have been in a state of flux. Jobbik is a good example. The party initially experienced an increase in its support, but then declined largely as a result of the radicalisation of the mainstream.

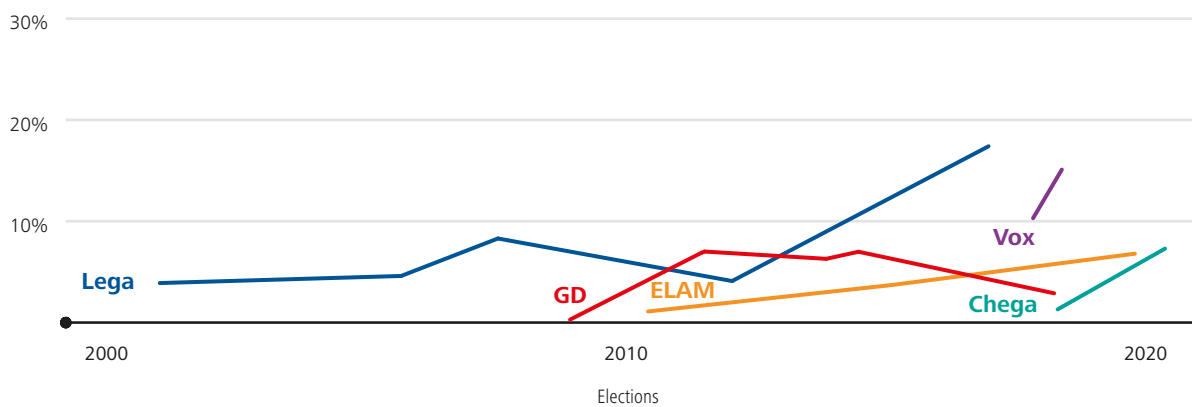
In the more ethnically pluralistic societies such as Estonia and Latvia, RWPPs have mobilised against larger politicised ethnic groups, most notably the Russian minorities that reside in these countries. RWPP trajectories until the late 2010s, however, were diverging. While on the one hand the Latvian party system has been more consistent in allowing the inclusion of the NA in government as a coalition partner, in Estonia EKRE has been the subject of a *cordon sanitaire* policy. This changed in 2019, when EKRE joined a centre-right government.

Figure 2: Electoral results of selected RWPPs over time

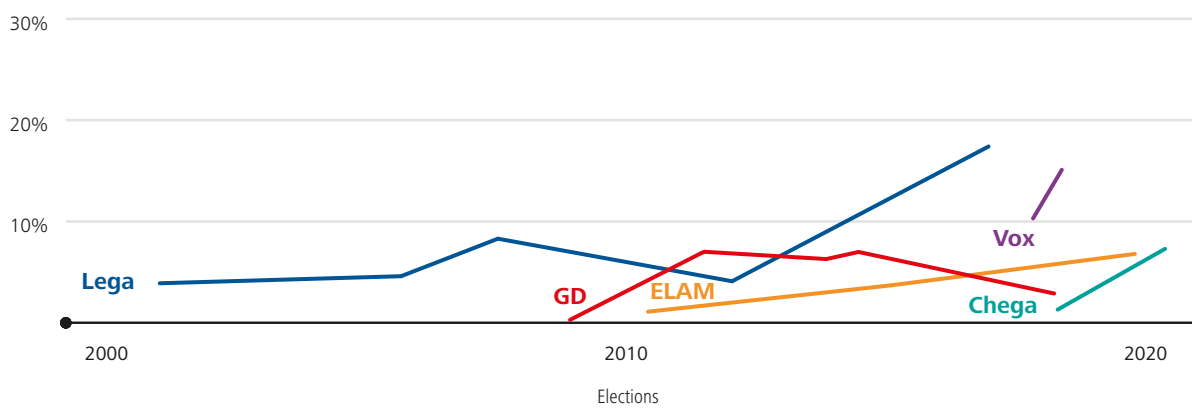
RWPP ELECTORAL RESULTS IN WESTERN EUROPE



RWPP ELECTORAL RESULTS IN SOUTHERN EUROPE



RWPP ELECTORAL RESULTS IN SOUTHERN EUROPE



RWPP ELECTORAL RESULTS IN EASTERN EUROPE

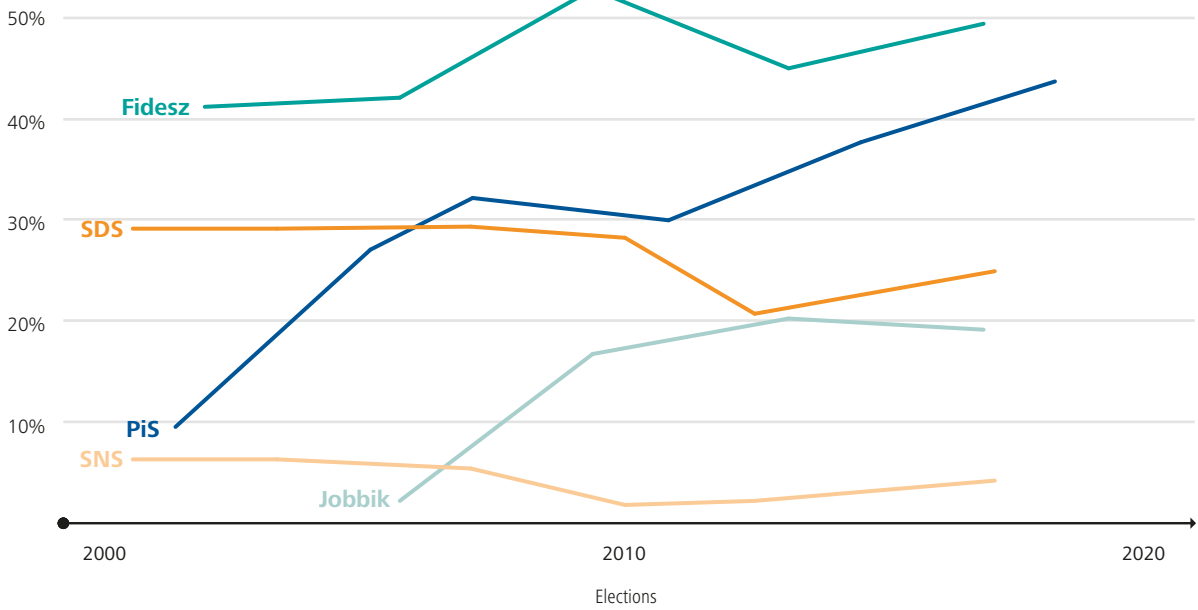
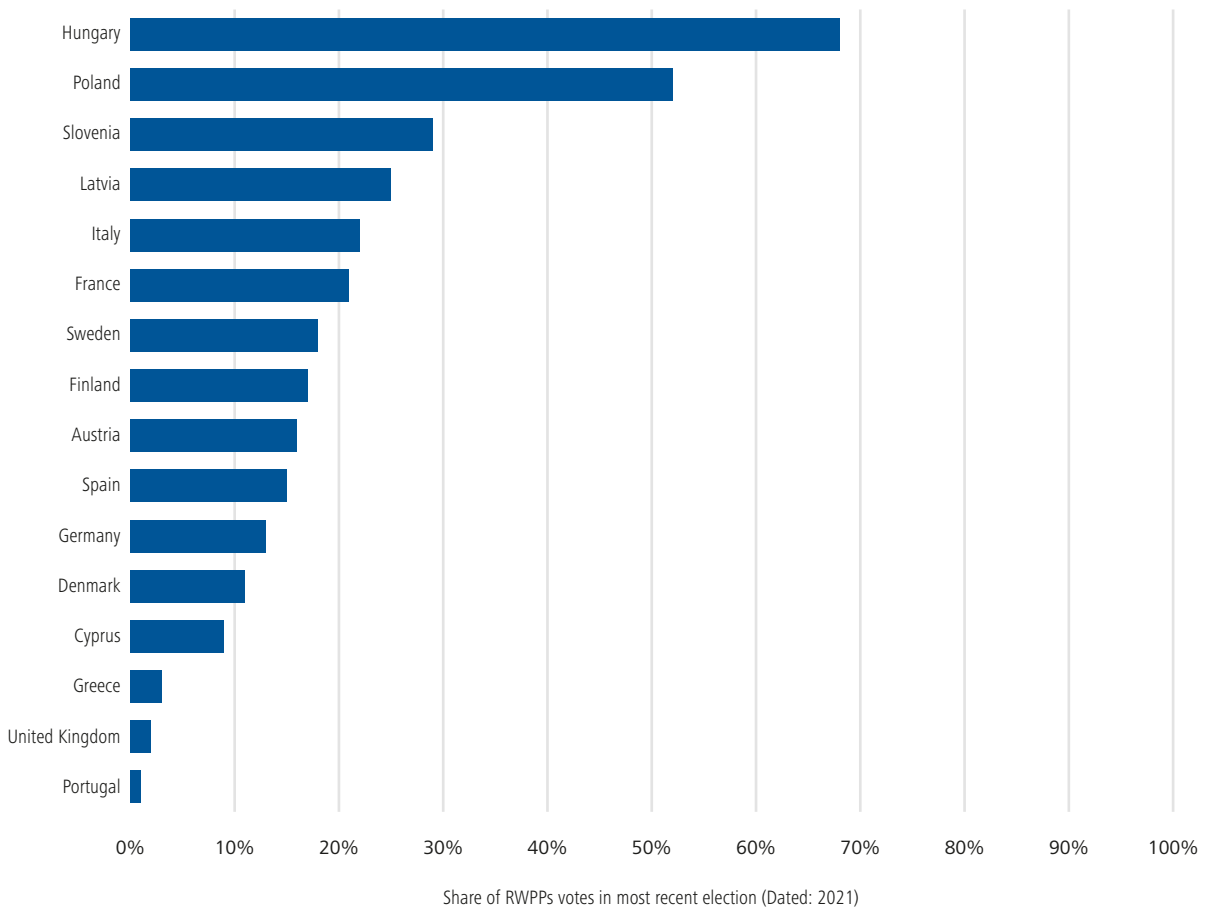


Figure 3: Cumulative share of RWPP votes received in most recent election



WHY IS RIGHT-WING POPULISM SUCCESSFUL?

This begs the question why? What factors are influencing support for RWPPs across Europe? Conventional wisdom emphasises the political climate of RWPP normalisation and systemic entrenchment, where issues ‘owned’ by these parties are salient: immigration, nationalism and cultural grievances. The importance of cultural values in shaping voting behaviour and the strong empirical association of cultural concerns over immigration and RWPP support at the individual level have led to an emerging consensus that the increasing success of RWPPs may be best understood as a ‘cultural backlash’ (Norris and Inglehart 2019; Halikiopoulou and Vlandas 2020).

This report contests the view that the rise of right-wing populism should be predominantly understood as a ‘cultural backlash’. A sole focus on culture overlooks **(1)** the predictive power of economic concerns over immigration and the critical distinction between galvanising a core constituency on the one hand and mobilising more broadly beyond this core constituency on the other (Halikiopoulou and Vlandas 2020); **(2)** the strategies RWPPs themselves are pursuing to capitalise on multiple insecurities, including both cultural and economic; and **(3)** the role of social policies in mitigating those insecurities that drive RWPP support.

To address these issues, the report looks at three levels – what we call the Three Ps: People, Parties and Policies:

1. People: How do cultural and economic grievances affect individuals’ probability of voting for an RWPP? How are these grievances distributed among the RWPP electorate? And how does this distribution compare to the distribution of the same types of grievances among the centre-left and the entire country’s electorates?



2. Parties: What strategies do RWPPs adopt to capitalise on their core and peripheral electorates? How do they employ nationalism, populism and welfarism in their narratives and programmatic agendas?



3. Policies: Do policies matter, and if so, what type of policies can mitigate the economic risks driving different social groups within the electorate to support RWPPs?



We address these questions using empirical evidence from both quantitative and qualitative analyses. First, we perform statistical analyses using nine waves of the European Social Survey (ESS) to analyse the objective and subjective individual characteristics associated with RWPPs’ support and thus identify the conditions that drive the RWPP vote at the individual level (demand). Second, we analyse RWPP manifestos using the Comparative Manifestos Project (MARPOR) dataset to map RWPP positions and identify the supply-side conditions that facilitate their success (supply).¹ Third, we draw on our research matching ESS data with social policy datasets to determine the extent to which social policies mediate the risks that drive individuals to vote RWPP (policy). The report is divided into two sections. The first section looks at Europe as a whole. The second presents a series of in-depth cases studies and country comparisons, which allow us to zoom in on differences between specific country contexts and identify patterns.

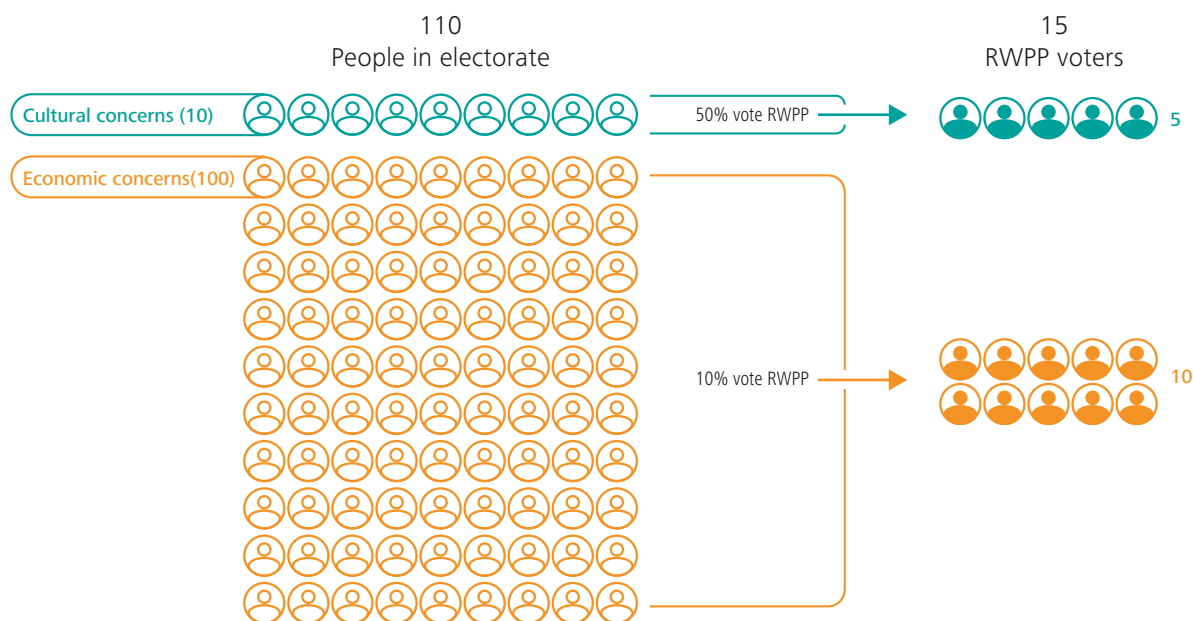
¹ We thank our research assistant Tim Slickers for his invaluable help coding the data for the empirical analyses in the report.

In sum, our analysis shows the following:



1. At the **people** level, the assumption that immigration is by default a cultural issue is at best problematic. Indeed, both cultural and economic concerns over immigration increase the likelihood of voting for an RWPP. While cultural concerns are often a stronger predictor of RWPP voting behaviour, this does not automatically mean that they matter more for RWPP success in substantive terms because people with economic concerns are often a numerically larger group. The main issue to pay attention to here is size: both the size of the effect, and also the size of the voter groups that are subject to this effect. It is possible that a factor is both statistically significant *and* has a large magnitude hence predictive power, but only concerns a small share of the electorate and therefore does not play a large role in explaining a party's electoral success. The distinction between core and peripheral voter groups underscores this point. Voters primarily concerned with the cultural impact of immigration are core RWPP voters. Although they might be highly likely to vote RWPP, they also tend to be a numerically small group. By contrast, voters that are primarily concerned with the economic impact of immigration are peripheral voters. They are also highly likely to vote for RWPP, but in addition they are a numerically larger group. Since the interests and preferences of these two groups can differ, successful RWPPs tend to be those that are able to attract both groups. What determines RWPP success is therefore the ability to mobilise a coalition of interests between core and peripheral voters (Halikiopoulou and Vlandas 2020). Figure 4 below illustrates this point with a hypothetical RWPP and electorate of 110 people. In this electorate, 10 have cultural concerns about immigration and 100 have economic concerns about immigration. 5 out of the 10 people with cultural concerns vote for the RWPP, while 10 out of 100 people with economic concerns vote for these parties. Thus, on average 50% of the culturalists vote for RWPP, while 10% of materialists vote for RWPP. Yet, it is clear that numerically the 10 RWPP materialist voters matter more to RWPP success than 5 RWPP culturalist voters.

Figure 4: Hypothetical representation of difference between predictive power and substantive importance



2. At the **party** level, our starting point is that left- and right-wing populism are analytically distinct. They represent different types of challenges facing democratic institutions, hence calling for a differentiated analysis. Thus, while this report examines the success of parties that fall within the right-wing populist category, it does not seek to explain populism as a general phenomenon. Further, it posits that while populism is one of the descriptors of the RWPP family, it does not follow that it is an explanatory factor for its success. Instead, we emphasise the importance of nationalism, as opposed to populism, as a mobilisation tool that has facilitated RWPP success. We argue that RWPPs in Western Europe employ a civic nationalist normalisation strategy that allows them to offer nationalist solutions to all types of insecurities that drive voting behaviour (Halikiopoulou et al. 2013). This strategy has two features. First, it presents culture as a value issue and justifies exclusion on ideological grounds; and second a focus on social welfare and emphasis on welfare chauvinism. Eastern European RWPPs, on the other hand, remain largely ethnic nationalist, focusing on ascriptive criteria of national belonging and mobilising voters on socially conservative positions and a rejection of minority rights.



3. At the **policy** level, this report documents the previously overlooked importance of welfare state institutions (Rathgeb and Busemeyer 2021; Vlandas 2021 and Halikiopoulou 2021). Our analysis illustrates that welfare state policies moderate a range of economic risks individuals face. This reduces the likelihood of supporting RWPPs among insecure individuals – for example, the unemployed, pensioners, low-income workers and employees on temporary contracts. Our key point here is that political actors have agency and can shape political outcomes: to understand why some individuals vote for RWPPs, we should not only focus on their risk-driven grievances, but also on policies that may moderate these risks.



HOW SHOULD PROGRESSIVES RESPOND? POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Our analysis concludes with a set of recommendations on how progressive parties should respond to the RWPP challenge. Specifically, our analysis suggests that co-opting right-wing populist policy agendas is, by and large, not a winning strategy for the centre-left.

The current hype about ‘new’ issues such as immigration and cultural grievances often overlooks significant economic voter concerns. Indeed, a large share of the electorate is concerned about inequality, which has been rising across many European countries (Vlandas 2018). These concerns are not niche, nor are they confined to a shrinking voter group that is becoming irrelevant. Even within the context of emerging cleavages, inequalities are embedded in – and shape the salience of – ‘new’ issues. People are widely concerned about job security, working conditions, unemployment risks, equal opportunities, housing and health access. Women want equal pay and access to the labour market. Large families need support to balance work obligations and childcare. Young people entering the labour market after university need reassuring employment prospects. Pensioners who have paid into the system expect some security into their retirement. New middle-class individuals support welfare states that offer them a sense of security. Not only the ‘left-behind’, but also the new middle classes and those on more comfortable incomes may feel insecure (Kurer 2020).

A more beneficial strategy for the centre-left is to try to (re)capture these voters by reclaiming ownership of (in)equality. Articulating a vision of an equitable society will allow progressive parties to re-build their broad voter coalitions and pioneer a strategy that mobilises voters on an issue the left already ‘owns’. Employing **accommodative** RWPP ‘copycat’ strategies will likely alienate the core centre-left electorate further.

THE CONTEXT

As noted above, there are three ways to measure the success of RWPPs: electoral performance, access to government and ability to influence the policy agenda of other parties. RWPPs have been successful in all three dimensions and have become emboldened since the 2010s with often detrimental consequences for democratic politics. What distinguishes the current from previous waves is a shift from the *cordon sanitaire* strategy to RWPP mainstreaming (Halikiopoulou 2017; Mudde 2019; Wondreys and Mudde 2020). RWPPs have effectively capitalised on the challenges posed by immigration-related issues to mainstream parties, which have tried to compete by tightening their own positions, often leading to the emergence of dormant ideological tensions. Indeed, the ability to shape the behaviour of other parties suggests a fundamental restructuring of the dynamics of party competition (Abou-Chadi and Krause 2018) centred on emphasising stricter positions on immigration with significant consequences for the future stability of democratic systems. RWPP normalisation challenges democracy because it allows these parties to permeate mainstream ground by appearing legitimate to a broad electorate.

Given the historically destructive record of right-wing extremism and the multifaceted threats contemporary RWPPs pose to our democracies, the upsurge of RWPPs in Europe is surprising. The context within which this upsurge is taking place is not necessarily favourable: by and large, standards of living of the vast majority of the population have been increasing (Bolt and van Zanden 2020), the welfare state is more developed now than it was fifty years ago (Castles 2010), educational attainment has been steadily rising (Figure 5), and the experience of fascism was long thought to protect electorates from the RWPP temptation. Many argue that immigration and refugee inflows are part of the story. However, net EU migration peaked in the early 2000s (Figure 6), and absolute refugee numbers were as high in the 1990s as the mid-2010s (Figure 7). Others focus on economic (e.g. unemployment) or personal (e.g. terrorist attacks) forms of insecurity. These explanations, however, face similar problems. Unemployment was particularly high in the 1990s (Figure 8). Terrorist attacks peaked first in 1980s and then to a lesser extent in the 1990s (Figure 9).

Figure 5: The steady increase of educational attainment in the past 5 decades

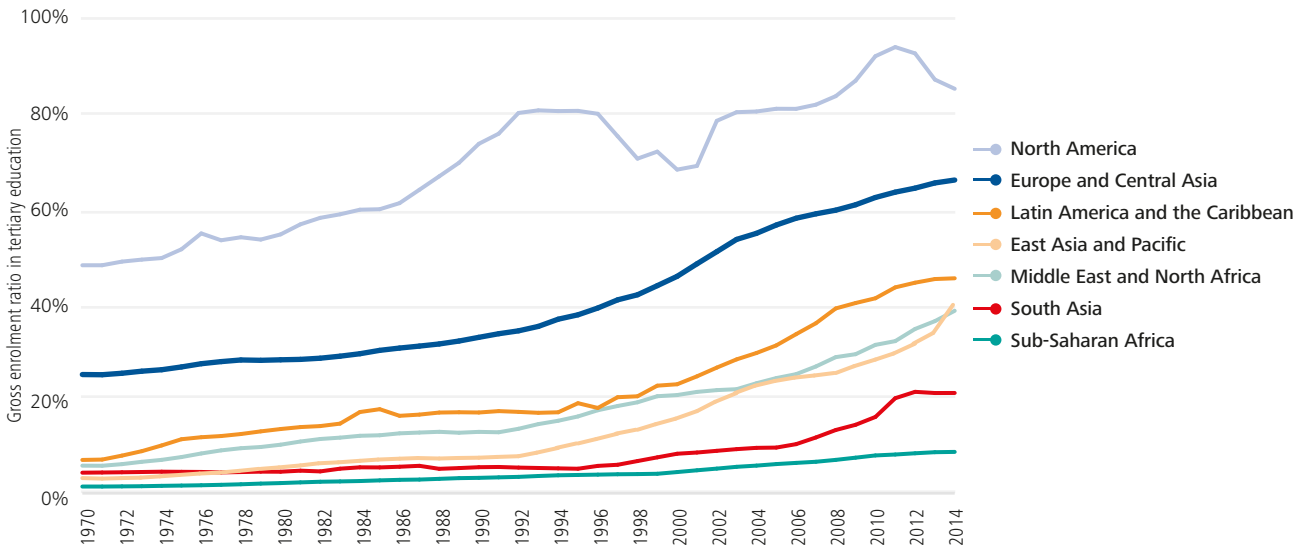


Figure 6: Net migration in EU across time

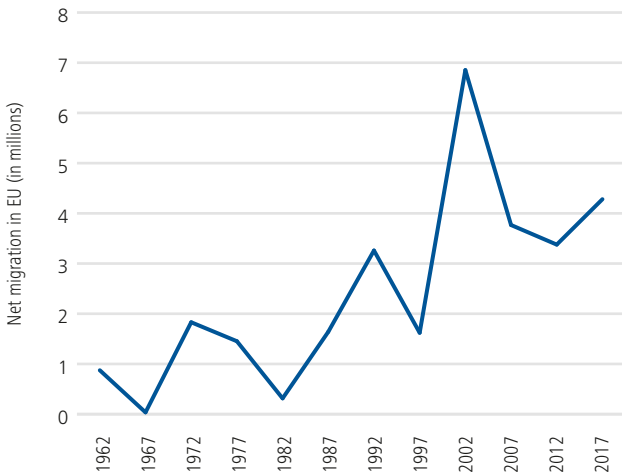


Figure 7: Refugee population in EU across time

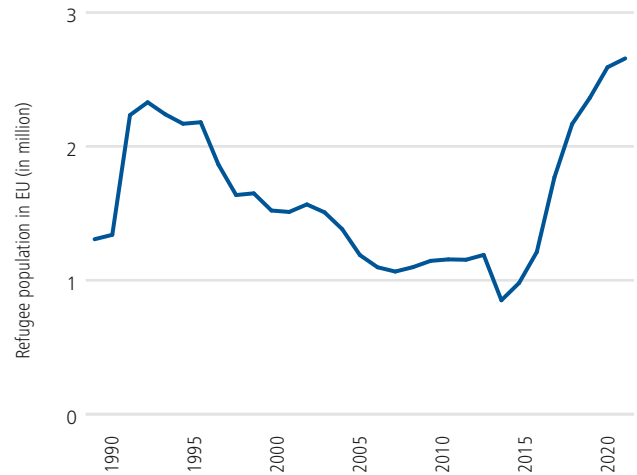


Figure 8: Unemployment rate in Euro Area in EU across time

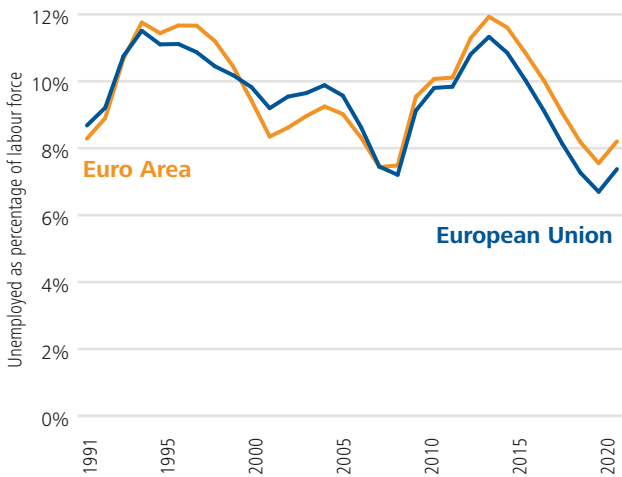
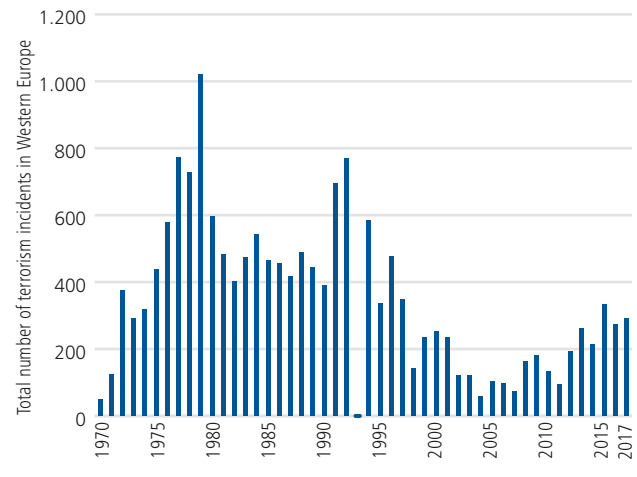


Figure 9: Number of terrorist incidents across time



Source for Figures 5-9: Our World in Data

DEMAND AND SUPPLY

This suggests that to understand why and under what circumstances RWPPs are more likely to be successful, we need a more nuanced analytical framework. Such a framework needs to extend beyond contextual conditions and take into account (1) the motivations and grievances that trigger RWPP support and (2) what these parties themselves do to maximise their support within their respective political arenas.

To capture these dynamics we systematise our analysis within a **demand and supply** explanatory framework (Golder 2016). The demand side refers to bottom-up explanations that focus on the underlying social conditions that trigger RWPP support at the individual level. The supply side refers to top-down approaches that focus on the parties' characteristics and the broader political context in which they operate.² According to this framework, RWPPs are more likely to succeed when favourable demand- and supply-side conditions are simultaneously present.

DEMAND

Demand-side explanations focus on individual grievances. Their key premise is that rapid societal changes related to mass migration waves, globalisation and technological advancement augment feelings of insecurity, deprivation and community decline, thus driving people to vote for RWPPs (Golder 2016; Kriesi et al. 2006; Hooghe and Marks 2018). Grievances may be value-based, economic and/or societal. For example, some theories emphasise the cultural dimension of the immigration issue purported to divide voters with cosmopolitan values from those who are primarily concerned with preserving their national culture and identity.

The argument here is that people may develop value-based concerns, fearing the erosion of their national culture within the context of an emerging transnational cleavage (Lucassen and Lubbers 2012; Golder 2016; Hooghe and Marks 2018; Norris and Inglehart 2019). Others focus on material grievances. The mechanism is discontent related to both actual and relative economic performance (e.g. Halikiopoulou and Vlandas 2020), wealth inequality (Adler and Ansell 2020) and labour market competition with immigrants (Dancygier and Donnelly 2013).

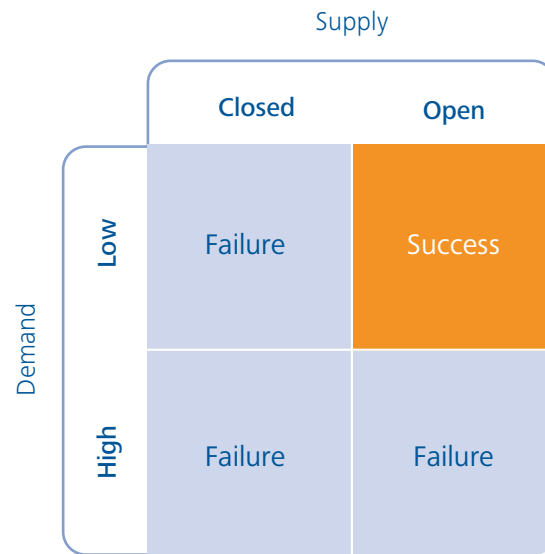
SUPPLY

Supply-side explanations start from the premise that individual grievances are insufficient in explaining the electoral success of RWPPs because they do not explain variation both between and within countries. For example, if demand was enough to drive RWPP support, why did Spain and Portugal not develop a successful RWPP in the immediate aftermath of the economic crisis? Why was Pim Fortuyn successful in the Netherlands when there were no major developments in terms of unemployment or immigration?

Supply-side arguments answer these questions by positing that demand must be met by open supply. This can be done in two ways. Either the political system must be conducive to RWPP success by offering an open or permissive political space. Or RWPPs themselves must create this space by adopting strategies that will allow them to appeal to broad sectors of the population and appear as legitimate actors in the system.

² For a systematic account of the demand and supply framework see Mudde (2007).

Figure 10: **The demand-supply framework of RWPP electoral success**



Note: Adapted from Golder (2016).

The demand and supply framework offers valuable insights into why societal risks create favourable conditions for RWPPs, and when parties are likely to translate risks into political advantage. However, demand- and supply-side approaches do not explain what conditions may contain or exacerbate the societal insecurities that trigger RWPP support. Therefore, this report looks at a third intermediate level of analysis beyond demand and supply: the policy level. We will show why and how social policies may potentially mediate the risks faced by certain social groups, thereby reducing their likelihood of voting for RWPPs (Figure 11).

Figure 11: **Policies as an intermediate level between demand and supply**



TRACKING RIGHT-WING POPULISM: WHICH PARTIES AND WHY?

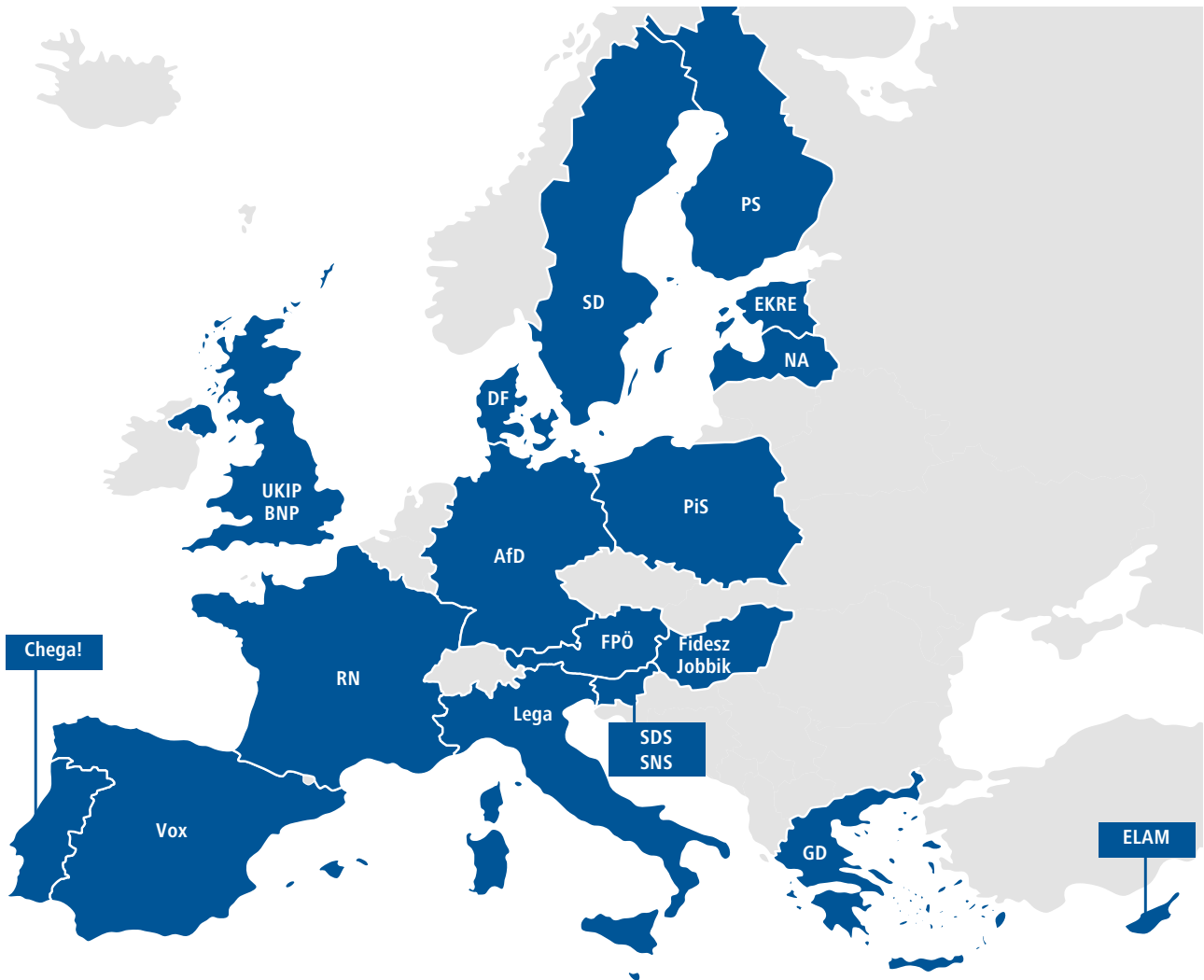
Our first task is to classify the phenomenon we wish to understand. Terminology used to describe this party family ranges from the ‘extreme right’, the ‘anti-immigrant right’, the ‘far right’, the ‘populist radical right’ or ‘right-wing populism’ (Halikiopoulou and Vlandas 2016). The difficulty in establishing a commonly accepted definition results from significant differences between these parties in terms of their ideology and relationship to democracy. While any umbrella term inevitably subsumes a broad range of parties and groups that may differ in many ways, it is essential to identify a common definition for classification and operationalisation purposes. This task is made easier when examining these parties from an empirical perspective. While ideologically diverse, their policy prescriptions tend to converge and clearly distinguish these parties from other party families (Ennsner 2012).

Our starting point is to highlight the similarities between these parties: for example, they all compete by emphasising extreme positions on immigration (Van Spanje 2010; Wagner and Meyer 2016) and share a common focus on sovereignty, nationalism and placing ‘natives’ first in the provision of welfare and social services. Specifically, these parties share three common features (see Mudde 2007).

- **(1) Nationalism³:** the prioritisation of the in-group over the out-group in pursuit of the attainment and maintenance of the unity, autonomy and identity of the nation (Breuille 2005). The critical point here is not simply that RWPPs are all somewhat nationalist, but rather that they use nationalism to justify *all* their positions on socioeconomic issues (Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou 2015). While these parties all adopt nationalism, they draw on different configurations of various criteria of national belonging, including ethnic and civic (see Halikiopoulou et al. 2013), as this report will show.
- **(2) Populism:** these parties combine the in-group/out-group axis with a people vs ‘the elite’ axis, claiming to represent the popular will. While scholars agree that populism is an essential feature of these parties, there is disagreement about whether populism is an ideology or communication style (see Bonikowski and Gidron 2013). This report will later argue that while populism is indeed an ideological feature of these parties, it is not necessarily an explanation for their success.
- **(3) Authoritarianism:** These parties tend to be authoritarian, although the degree of their authoritarianism varies (Golder 2016). The more extreme variants are openly racist, have clear ties to fascism and employ violent tactics. They tend to oppose procedural democracy. A good example is the Greek Golden Dawn, an openly fascist party that glorifies violence (Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou 2015). Radical variants, on the other hand, have distanced themselves from fascism and accept procedural democracy. They tend to be the most electorally successful in Western Europe, for example, the German AfD and the French RN. Their emphasis on the people and pseudo-liberal democratic façade often conceals their authoritarian and exclusionary nature.

3 or nativism in its narrower form

Figure 12: Map of main RWPPs included in the report



Then in a second step we pay attention to the crucial sub-dimensions in which these parties might differ: the different ways in which they utilise nationalism and populism in their rhetoric, and the extent to which they accept or reject democracy. To capture both the above-mentioned overarching similarities that make these parties comparable, and their critical differences, this report adopts the label ‘right-wing populist parties’ (RWPPs). Our classification is in line with a large body of research in the field which may adopt different terminology – for example, ‘radical right’ or ‘far right’– but examines a similar set of parties (e.g. Immerzeel et al. 2016; Rooduijn and Burgoon 2018; Lucassen and Lubbers 2012; Halikiopoulou and Vlandas 2020; Vlandas and Halikiopoulou 2021). Specifically, we include all parties classified as ‘far right’ in the PopuList (Rooduijn 2019)⁴. The regional patterns identified in the qualitative section of this report allow us to offer a more nuanced picture and present a more detailed account of these parties. Figure 12 shows our sample of main RWPPs covered in the party profile analyses of this report.

4 To which we add the following parties: MNR (France), NPD (Germany), ANEL (Greece), PNR (Portugal), DN (Spain), España 2000 (Spain), Brexit Party (UK), BNP (UK).

RESEARCH DESIGN

This report examines the demand (people), supply (party) and policy levels empirically. To capture demand-side dynamics, we perform statistical analyses using nine waves of the European Social Survey (ESS), a high-quality, cross-national survey covering European countries every two years, from 2002 till 2018. The ESS is the basis for much empirical analysis in the existing literature on RWPPs (e.g. Ivarsflaten 2008, Lucassen and Lubbers 2012, Norris and Inglehart 2019, Rydgren and Tyrberg 2020).

This survey includes questions about *both* the socio-demographic characteristics of individual respondents and their attitudes towards a wide range of topics, which allows us to profile the RWPP voter and identify the factors that drive RWPP success. We study three types of evidence. The first is statistical significance, which identifies whether or not we can conclude from our survey that the wider population is influenced by a particular characteristic in their choice for a RWPP. The second is predictive power of the different factors, i.e. the effect of having a particular characteristic or view on the probability of voting for RWPP versus centre-left, including cultural and economic concerns over immigration. The third is the distribution of these concerns among the RWPP and centre-left electorates, to identify how widespread they are among these voter pools.

To capture supply-side dynamics and identify the conditions that facilitate RWPP success, we analyse party manifestos using the Comparative Manifestos Project (MARPOR) dataset. This dataset provides metrics about parties' election manifestos with the specific aim of studying parties' policy preferences (Volkens et al. 2020). We map changes in RWPP positions across time on a range of issue positions. To capture their economic stances, we focus on welfare state expansion and the free market economy, since the so-called winning formula of RWPP in the 1980s had been argued to be a combination of pro-market liberalism and authoritarianism (Kitschelt and McGann 1997; Enggist and Pinger 2021). We also map RWPP positions on Europe, political corruption, multi-culturalism, the national way of life and law and order to capture the populism, nationalism and authoritarianism dimensions. In all cases, we contrast the evolution of party manifestos in Western and Eastern European countries. In the case study section of this report, we complement this analysis with a detailed examination of RWPP manifestos and a qualitative analysis of the parties' value profiles.

To capture the policy dimension, we draw on our empirical work, which merges ESS individual-level voting data with national-level social policy data (Vlandas and Halikiopoulou 2021) to identify the extent to which social policies mediate the risks that drive individuals to vote for RWPPs. We consider not only unemployment and labour market policies, but also several other social risks and a number of relevant social policies that might shape their prevalence.

The report consists of two sections. The first section draws broad conclusions across Europe covering the Three Ps people, parties and policies. The second presents a series of in-depth cases studies and comparisons, which allow us to zoom in on differences between specific country contexts and identify patterns. We conclude with a set of recommendations on how progressive parties should respond to the RWPP challenge based on our analysis.

LOOKING AT EUROPE AS A WHOLE



THE FIRST P: PEOPLE

What characteristics, attitudes and grievances prompt voters to support RWPPs? Based on the consistent empirical result that concerns over immigration and refugee inflows constitute the most important explanatory factor in predicting individual support for RWPP, recent research suggests that the rise of RWPPs can be explained in terms of a ‘cultural backlash’⁵. Typically, these studies rely on various measures of immigration flows and stocks of immigrants in a particular place and time.

While immigration and refugee inflows appear to be one of the crucial pieces of the RWPP puzzle (e.g. Evans and Ivaldi 2021; Kenny and Miller 2020; Hangartner et al. 2019), it does not follow that cultural or value-based concerns primarily or exclusively drive RWPP support. Why is that?

First, cultural concerns might not be the main concern that citizens have about immigration. It is, for instance, equally plausible that people may have economic or security concerns about immigration (Stockemer et al. 2021), or indeed worries about the fiscal implications of large inflows into their host countries. Note that this is analytically distinct from the question of whether these worries are legitimate; all that matters for our purpose is whether a relationship between specific concerns and support for RWPP exists, not whether those views are correct. Thus, it is not evident that variables capturing immigration attitudes should automatically be interpreted as representing some underlying cultural drivers of RWPP support. While indeed concerns over immigration have strong predictive power in explaining the RWPP vote, these concerns are multi-faceted and entail a combination of economic and cultural worries (Sniderman et al. 2004; Rydgren 2008; Lucassen and Lubbers 2012).

Second, it might be economic dynamics that drive anti-immigration attitudes themselves. For instance, skills shape immigration attitudes (Pardos-Prado and Xena 2019) and immigration flows are unlikely to lead to anti-immigration attitudes if economic conditions are good (Dancygier and Donnelly 2013). In other words, it may be that immigration attitudes are actually a mechanism linking economic insecurity to RWPP support, rather than an indication of a cultural backlash of a purely non-economic kind.

Even affording a prominent role to the emergence of a new transnational cleavage dividing the electorate, there are reasonable theoretical and empirical grounds to allow for a crucial effect of material or ‘objective’ factors. Notably, labour market status and economic insecurity are highly correlated with policy preferences and party choice (Beramendi and Rueda 2007; Rehm 2009; Schwander and Häusermann 2013; Vlandas 2013; Marx 2016; Vlandas 2018). Similarly, material factors affect perceptions of labour market competition with immigrants (Mayda 2006). Also, the role of occupational decline (Kurer 2020), inequality (Engler and Weisstanner 2021) as well as economically insecure family context (Abou-Chadi and Kurer 2021) foster support for RWPPs.

⁵ See Norris and Inglehart (2019) for a prominent example of this line of argumentation; and Schafer (2021) for a critical empirical re-assessment.

Moreover, beyond the debate about the ‘cultural meaning’ of immigration concerns, the broader culture versus economy divide may be a false dichotomy (Burns and Gimpel 2000, Gidron and Hall 2020). Indeed, even within the context of a transnational cleavage both material and value-based concerns affect individuals, and often overlap. In other words, voting patterns in the context of new cleavages are still strongly shaped by traditional cleavages (Kriesi 1998; Halikiopoulou and Vlandas 2020).

Drawing on this theoretical framework, which suggests that both material and value-based factors may drive RWPP support, we carry out a systematic analysis⁶ of ESS data. We explore the objective and subjective characteristics that lead individuals to vote for RWPPs as well as the distribution of immigration concerns among the RWPPs electorate.

WHAT OBJECTIVE CHARACTERISTICS ARE MORE LIKELY TO DRIVE RWPP SUPPORT?

Figures 13 and 14 show the objective and subjective factors associated with voting for an RWPP. Our empirical analysis shows six important features that drive RWPP support across Europe.

1. **First**, male and older respondents are more likely to have voted for an RWPP and this effect holds even when controlling for differences in other objective characteristics of respondents and their attitudes. The effect of age appears to peak in the 55-64 age group and then to fall again, consistent with the notion that much older generations with a memory of fascism are less likely to vote RWPP. Female respondents have a predictive probability of voting for RWPP of slightly above 2% compared to 2.8% for males. This echoes other findings concerning the important predictive power of gender and the anti-feminist rhetoric of many RWPPs (Bernardez-Roda et al. 2020; Kantola and Lombardo 2020; Allen and Goodman 2021; Ben-Shitrit et al. 2021).
2. **Second**, being in the bottom of the income distribution has a negative, statistically significant effect regardless of whether one controls for differences in subjective attitudes.
3. **Third**, although receiving unemployment benefits has a positive significant effect when only objective factors are included (not shown in the figure), it does not appear to have a significant association when controlling for other confounding attitudinal factors, which echoes a point we will make later about the importance of including welfare state policies in the analysis (Vlandas and Halikiopoulou 2021).
4. **Fourth**, it is noteworthy that managers (the reference occupation category, hence not shown) are the least likely occupation to support RWPP, while those working in agriculture, craft occupations, as well as low-skill operators and elementary occupations exhibit the highest likelihood of having voted for RWPP. For instance, the probability of managers voting for RWPPs is under 2%, while for technicians it is 2.8%, controlling for everything else and across all our sample. A wide range of more recent literature has also analysed how occupational decline, for example in the form of shrinking employment opportunities for certain occupations, or lower status of children relative to their parents, may lead people to support RWPP (Cavallaro and Zanetti 2020; Kurer 2020; Engler and Weisstanner 2021).

⁶ We carry out logistic regression analyses with country and wave-fixed effects and standard errors clustered at the country-wave level.

5. **Fifth**, respondents living in an urban area are less likely to support RWPP than those in rural areas, but the effect is attenuated mildly by the inclusion of attitudinal differences in the regression. Harteveld et al. (2021) argue that RWPP support entails different dynamics in rural and urban areas, for instance in terms of effect of immigration (Vasilopoulos et al. 2021). Rickardsson (2021) similarly finds evidence of an urban-rural divide.

6. **Last but not least**, education has a complex non-linear effect which is conditional on whether one controls for the attitudes through which different levels of education might be related to RWPP. Thus, when no controls for subjective attitudes are included, then respondents with the highest education have the lowest likelihood of supporting RWPP, consistent with the state of the art in the literature. However, when including controls for attitudes, the only statistically significant effect comes from those with medium education (with between 10 and 14 years of education), who are more likely to support RWPPs. This complex effect echoes recent studies that find that the relevance of status holds even when controlling for education (Carella and Ford 2020).

Figure 13: Predicted probabilities of objective factors to vote RWPPs

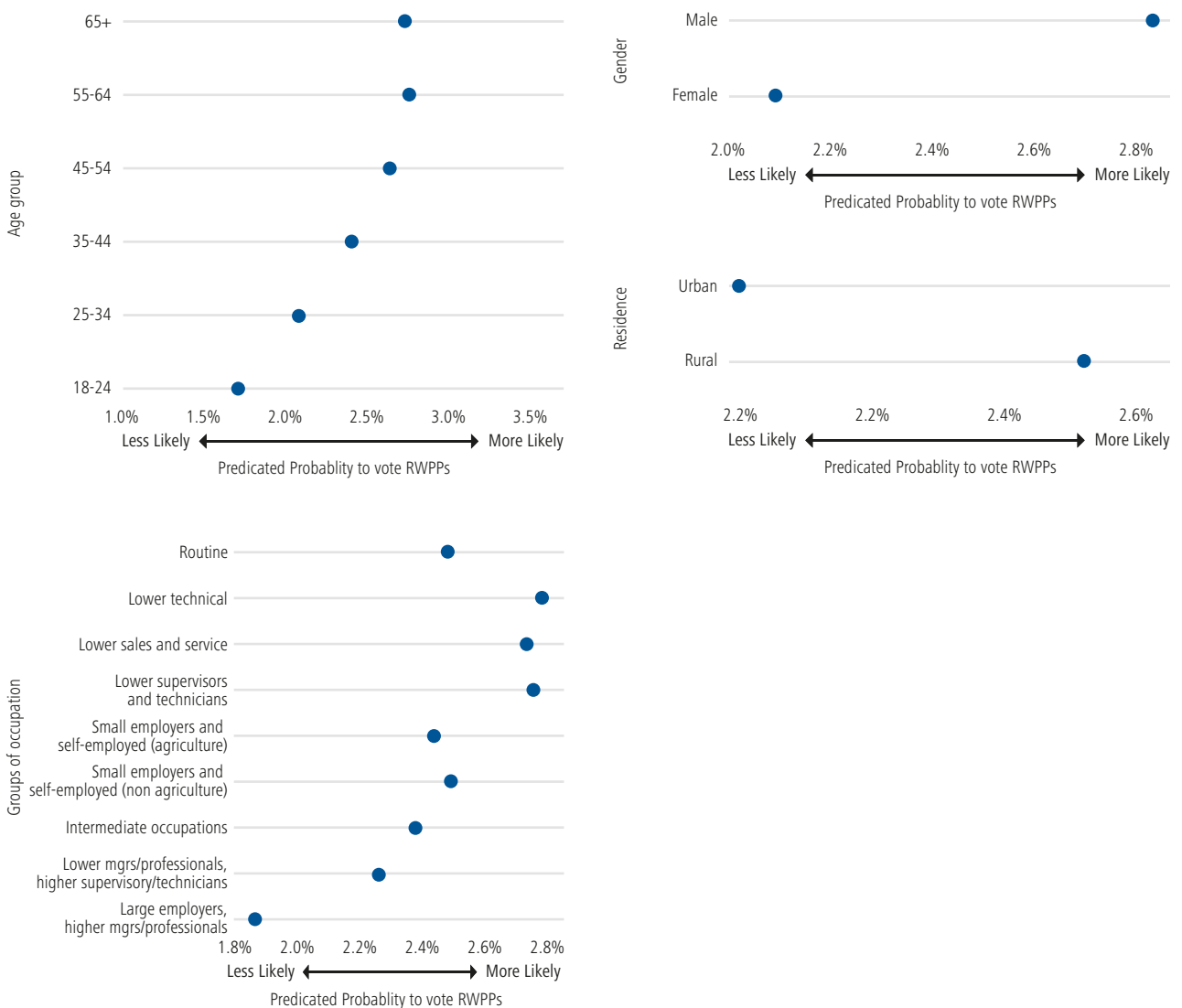
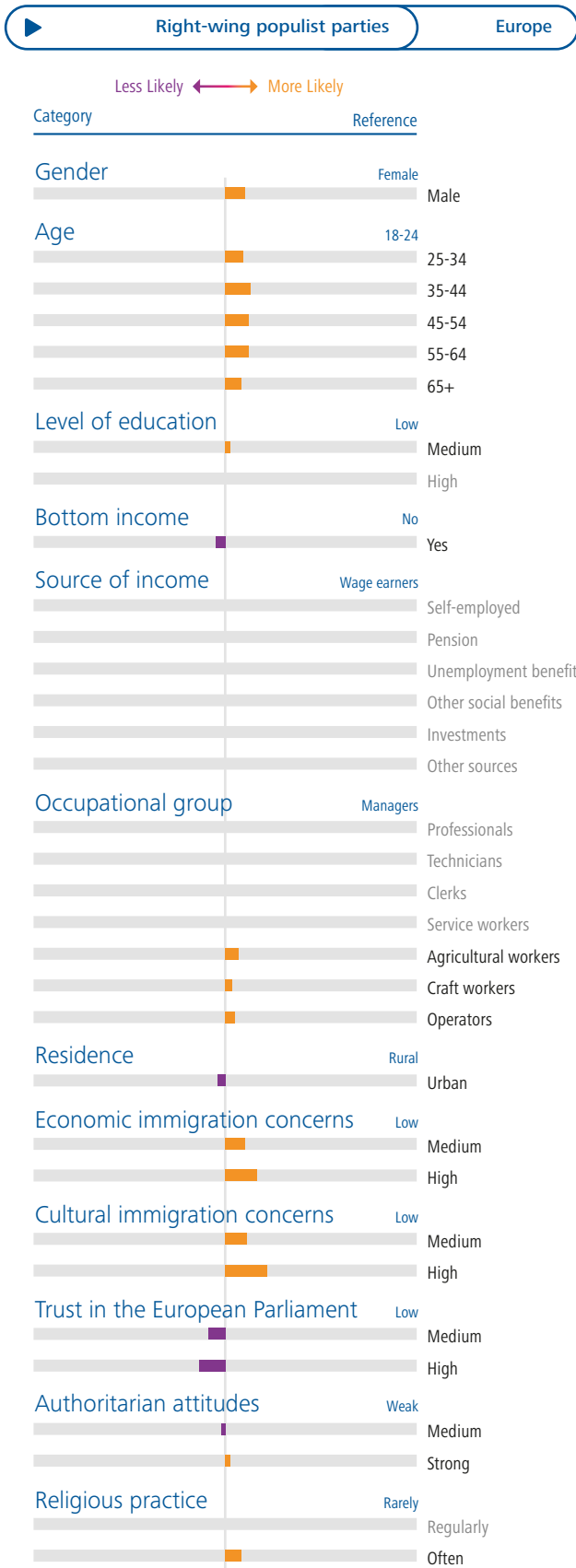


Figure 14: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



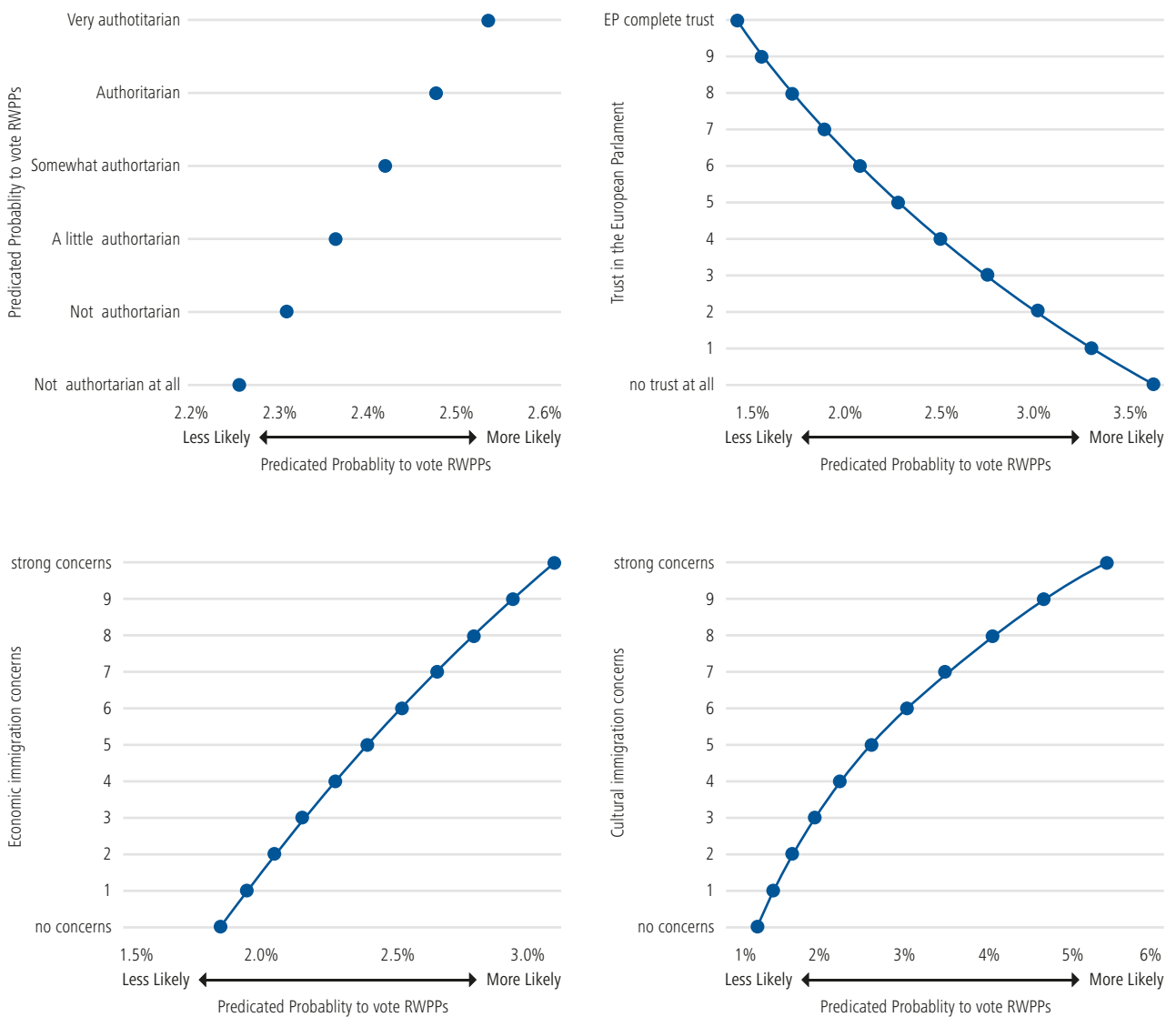
Only statistically significant results are shown.

WHAT ATTITUDINAL CHARACTERISTICS ARE MORE LIKELY TO DRIVE RWPP SUPPORT?

Next, we turn our attention to the association between attitudes and support for RWPP. Apart from immigration attitudes, which we will discuss further down, two types of views have a significant association with RWPP support.

1. **First**, trust in the European Parliament, capturing Euroscepticism, is strongly negatively correlated with support for RWPP. This effect holds when controlling for all objective characteristics of individuals. Using an alternative question, with fewer respondents, but more targeted on pro-EU unification positions, confirms this statistically significant association, consistent with previous literature suggesting that RWPP capitalise on Eurosceptic attitudes (Leruth 2020; van Kessel et al. 2020; Carrieri and Vittori 2021; Lorimer 2021).
2. **Second**, only the most religious and most authoritarian individuals appear more likely to vote for RWPP than the least religious and authoritarian individuals (cf. Marcinkiewicz and Dassonneville 2021; Xia 2021).
3. **Third**, Note that self-placement on a left-right scale is highly correlated with other objective and subjective individual characteristics, so we do not include it in our baseline analysis. However, results shown in the appendix reveal that respondents seeing themselves as more right-wing are significantly more likely to support RWPP. The effect of left-right positioning on the predicted probability of voting for RWPP is shown in Figure 16.
4. **Moreover**, concerns about cultural, and to a lesser extent economic, effects of immigration on a recipient's country have very strong association with support for RWPP. The probability of an individual with lowest cultural concerns voting for RWPP is close to 1%, whereas it is above 5% when an individual has highest concerns. Similarly, individuals with high economic concerns have a probability of voting for RWPP above 3%, but this falls to under 2% for those with low concerns.

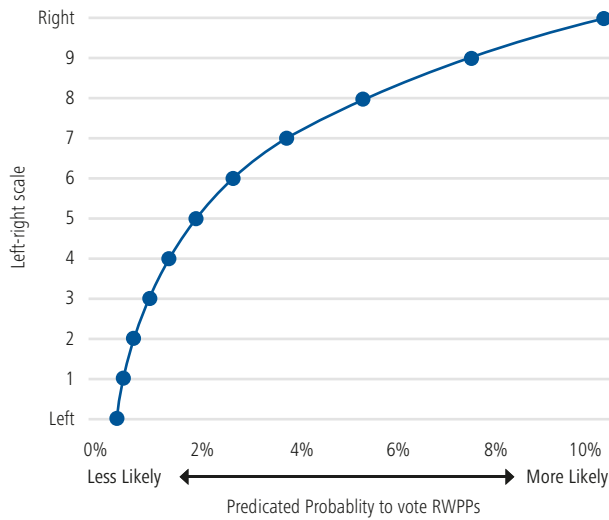
Figure 15: Predicted probabilities of subjective factors to vote RWPPs



Note: These plots are calculated based on logistic regression with original continuous or categorical versions of attitudinal variables country-fixed effects and then predicting the probability of voting for RWPP while holding all other variables at their average values.

Overall, the probability of an individual of voting for RWPP depends strongly on the characteristics we have identified. To illustrate this, we can calculate predicted probabilities for two hypothetical individuals. The first is a 65-year-old male who lives in the countryside, works in a low-skill occupation, is a hard-minded Eurosceptic and has very high cultural and economic concerns over immigration. This individual has a 19.2% predicted probability of supporting an RWPP. By contrast, a young female in a higher-skill occupation living in urban centre, who has high levels of trust in the EU and low immigration concerns, has only a 1.35% probability of voting for RWPP.

Figure 16: Predicted probability of voting for RWPP for different levels of left-right self-placement



Note: These plots are calculated based on logistic regression with country-fixed effects and then predicting the probability of voting for RWPP while holding all other variables at their average values.

There are important differences between Eastern and Western European countries, which we can identify by rerunning the same analysis on these two regions separately. The effect of gender appears stronger in Western Europe, where the effect of age peaks younger (at 45-54 instead of 55-64 in the East). The effect of being in a low-skill occupation also appears stronger in the West, while being in the bottom income group and living in an urban area is only negatively associated with RWPP in the East. Education appears to have no association with RWPP in the West once we control for attitudinal differences. Euroscepticism as well as economic and cultural concerns over immigration appear more important in the West, while authoritarian attitudes only lead to higher support in the East. Finally, high levels of religious affiliation increase support for RWPP in the East, but have the opposite effect in the West.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF IMMIGRATION CONCERNS AMONG DIFFERENT ELECTORATES

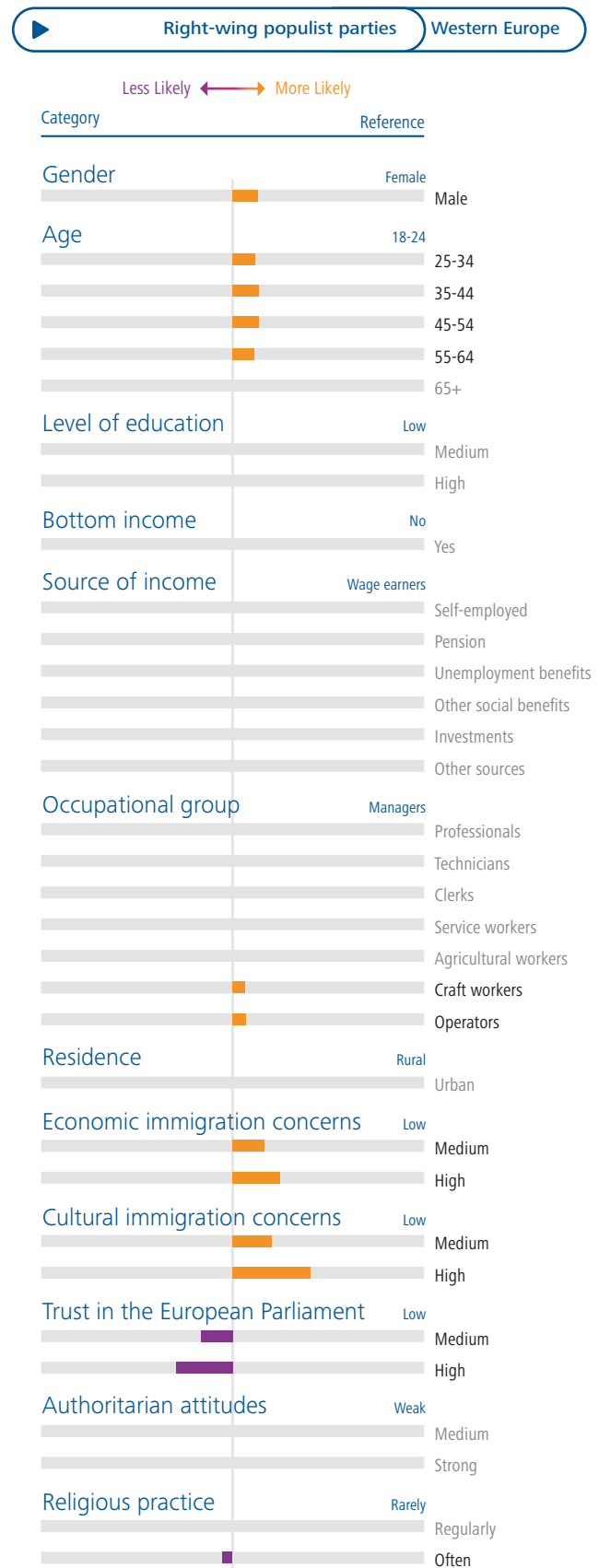
When examining the extent to which cultural and economic concerns over immigration affect the probability of voting RWPP, as we have shown elsewhere (Halikiopoulou and Vlandas 2020), two caveats should be considered. First, there are complex interactions between the two types of concerns (Figure 19) since economic concerns may actually matter a lot among respondents with high cultural concerns. Second, while it is useful to examine the statistical significance and magnitude of different variables, it is also important to pay particular attention to the distribution of individual characteristics that have strong predictive power. This is because it is possible for a characteristic to be highly predictive of voting for RWPP, but at the same time for this characteristic to concern only a small share of an electorate. Conversely, a variable with relatively lower predictive power can be shared by many people, which in turn means it is still a large part of the success of certain RWPP.

Figure 17: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.

Figure 18: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.

Indeed, in many countries respondents with economic concerns represent a non-trivial part of an RWPP electorate. Although cultural concerns may have more predictive power on whether an individual votes for RWPP, there are more individuals with economic than cultural concerns in most countries (Halikiopoulou and Vlandas 2020). Thus, for instance, staying with the example of the predictive power of cultural concerns over immigration relative to economic concerns (Figure 20), shows that in many countries the RWPP electorate benefits from a large support from those with economic concerns over immigration.

Figure 19: RWPP predicted vote for different levels of cultural and economic concerns over immigration

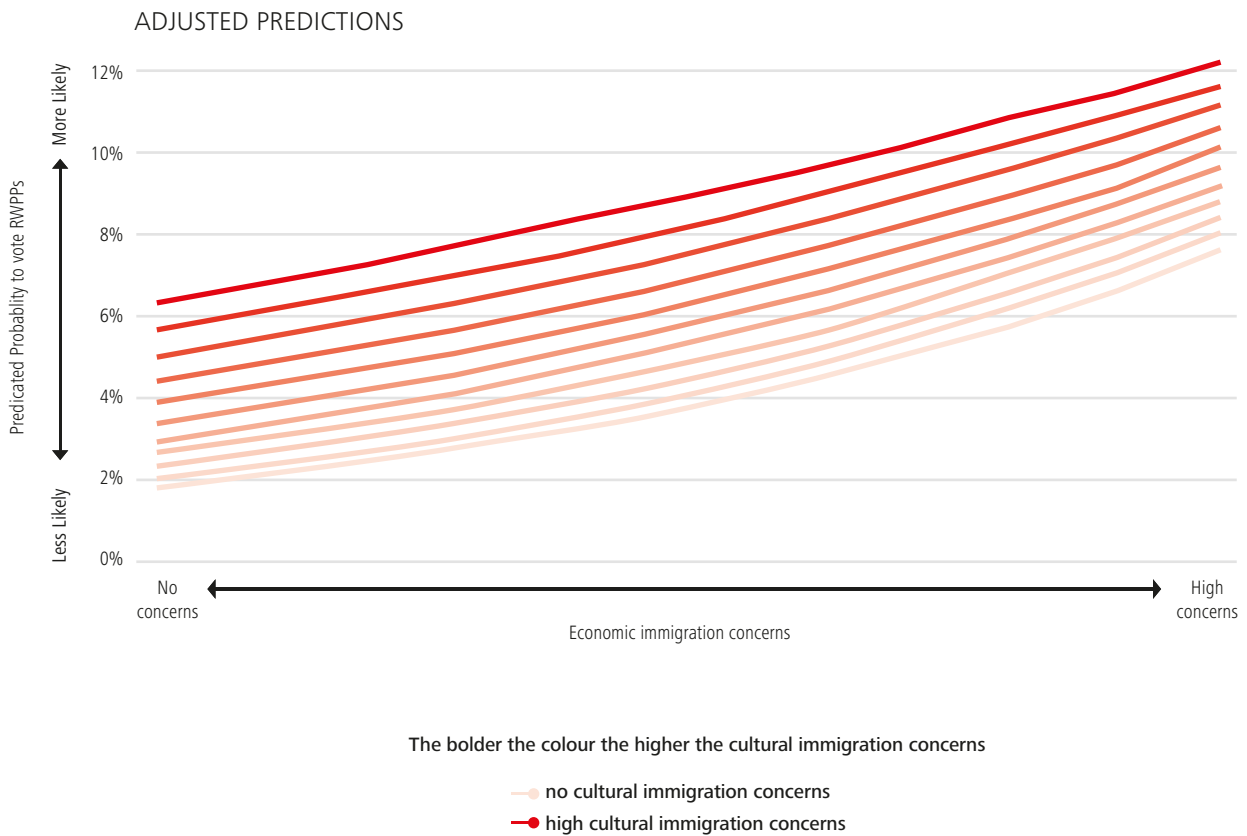
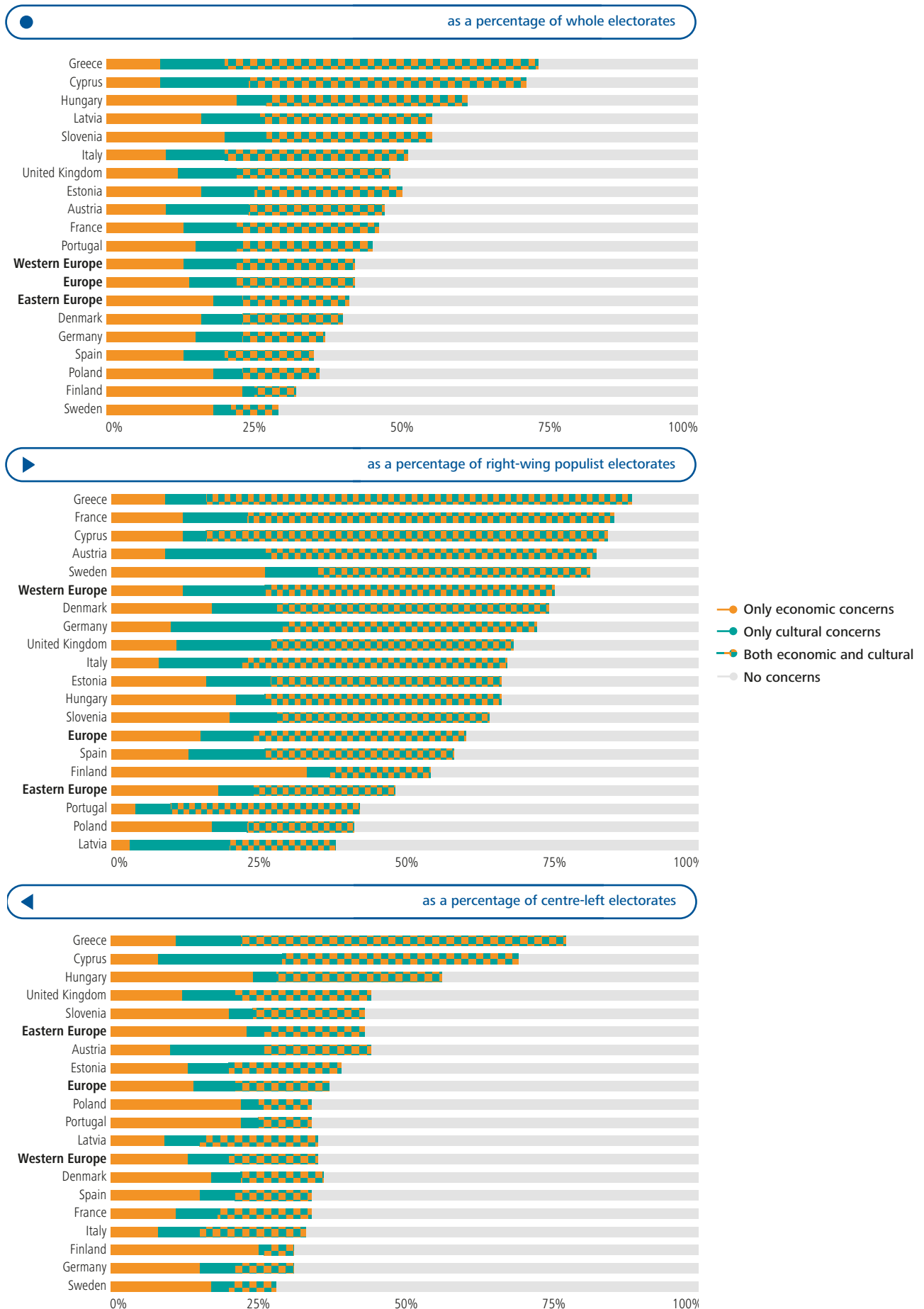


Figure 20: Distribution of immigration concerns





THE SECOND P: PARTIES

So far, we have argued that the individual grievances that generate far-right party support are pluri-dimensional and multi-faceted, rather than purely ‘cultural’ or only about immigration. While cultural concerns over immigration are indeed important, economic grievances also matter within the context of the new transnational cleavage. Population aging (Vlandas 2018; Vlandas et al. 2021) also plays a role, and individuals in occupations that face greater economic deprivation are more likely to support RWPPs.

However, demand is often a constant. All societies have their discontent, yet the discontent do not always vote for RWPPs. Even in cases where demand is rising, it still needs to be captured and mobilised by political parties (Bonikowski 2017; Halikiopoulou 2018). This is why many studies have found that national level variables capturing immigration flows or stocks (Stockemer 2016) and unemployment (Halikiopoulou and Vlandas 2016) may not fully relate to recent patterns of RWPP success, despite the more robust long-term historical associations between unemployment and RWPP success (Panagiotidis and Roumanias 2021).

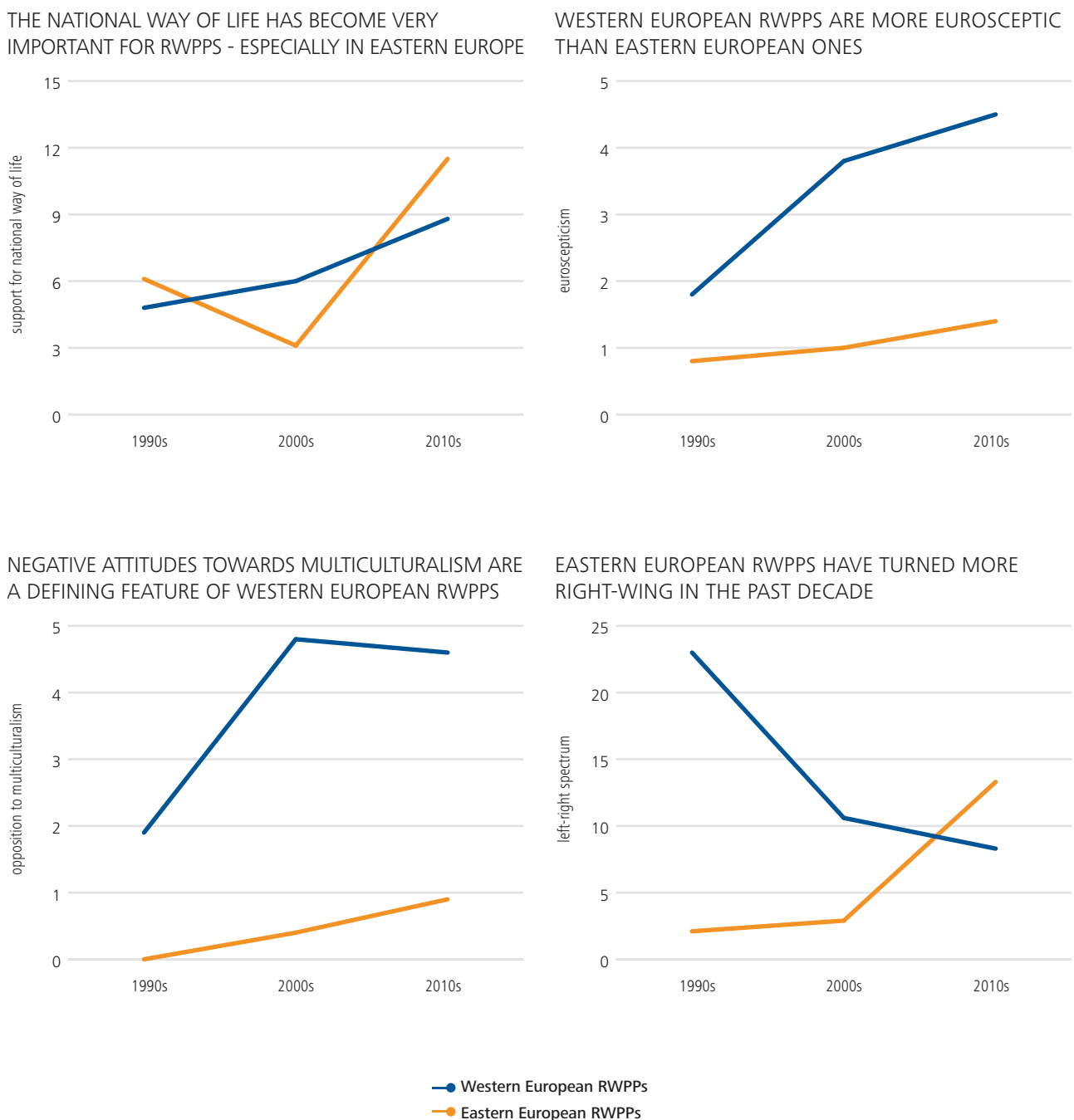
Research therefore complements demand-side accounts with careful consideration of how the supply side may matter. Crucial aspects of the supply side include the role of leadership (Donovan 2020; Michel et al. 2020), public campaign financing (Bichay 2020), party and policy positioning (Barquero et al. 2021; Chou et al. 2021) and dynamics of party competition (Carter 2002; Mudde 2007). Others have instead focused on how RWPPs have varying willingness and ability to capitalise on the grievances of certain parts of their electorate (Koopmans and Statham 1999; Mudde 2010; Halikiopoulou et al. 2013; Vasilopoulou et al. 2014). There has also been recent debate about whether RWPPs are more or less successful when their political competitors accommodate and/or internalise some of their positions (Spoon and Kluver 2020; Pytlas 2021). RWPP success in turn can affect the policy or rhetorical positions of other more established political parties (Abou-Chadi and Krause 2020; Bergmann et al. 2021; Puleo 2021; Valentim and Widmann 2021).

In this section, we analyse how the party level might also matter, in particular parties’ programmatic and rhetorical positioning in the electoral arena. We also consider how their location in a wider set of political institutions also shapes their success. We are interested in which ‘political supply’ may be shaping RWPP’s rising success, and in particular whether the ‘populist content’ of their programme and rhetoric plays an important part in their success. To anticipate: we find that it is unlikely to be populism that explains their recent success, but instead a combination of positions on other economic, social and political matters.

Our analytical starting point is that political parties need to mobilise different parts of the electorate to be successful and this in turn necessitates mobilising voters with both economic and cultural insecurities (cf. Halikiopoulou and Vlandas 2020). While voters’ dissatisfaction with various societal, political and economic challenges may make them more interested in RWPPs, the latter then need to offer a political or policy message that is appealing to these voters. Indeed, cultural and economic concerns about socio-economic developments have long been linked with the growth of both left and right-wing extremism in previous decades (Arendt 1958; Lipset 1960).

Here we wish to emphasise the importance of nationalism in the effectiveness of some RWPPs on the supply side. As argued by Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou (2015), we contend that RWPPs are successful when they are effective in offering nationalist solutions to the various dimensions of grievances that are correlated with individual voting for RWPP. As Figure 21 illustrates, average positive mentions on ‘national way of life’ have been increasing since the 1990s in both Eastern and Western European countries. RWPPs in Western Europe have also become increasingly critical of multiculturalism and the EU. This is not the case for Eastern European RWPPs, which have become strikingly more right-wing and nationalist, but have not particularly increased their negative mentions regarding multiculturalism and the EU.

Figure 21: Value policy priorities of RWPPs in Western and Eastern Europe



Following Halikiopoulou et al. (2013), we argue that it is specifically a civic nationalist rhetoric that is key, or in other words one that separates insiders and outsiders not based on biological belonging to the nation-state, but instead on the basis of ideological grounds which are less offensive to wide parts of the electorate. This palatable and more politically acceptable civic nationalist rhetoric makes it possible for them to capitalise on multiple grievances. They can thereby frame their policy solutions as legitimate to voters, who face overlapping insecurities, and in turn appeal to larger parts of the electorate, including voters who are attracted to the RWPP message, but would not turn to an explicitly racist RWPP. The apparent growing appeal of RWPPs to different segments of the middle classes is consistent with our argument: RWPP are able to widen their electoral support beyond the classic RWPP constituency. It seeks to attract individuals who suffer from relative deprivation, sometimes even within a more economically favourable context at the national level (Rooduijn 2016). It is also becoming more successful among women (Mayer 2015) and younger voters (Stockemer and Amengay 2015).

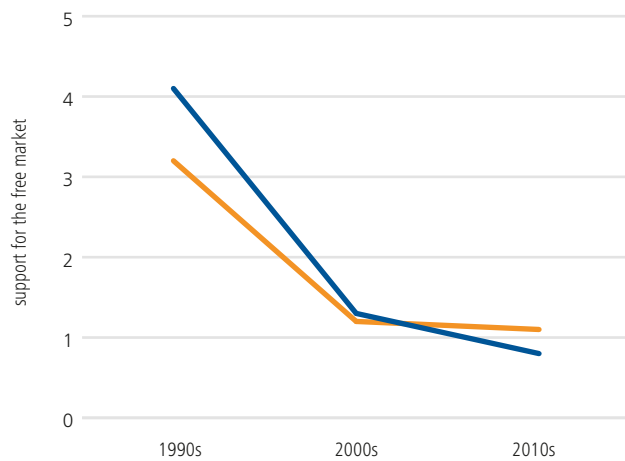
In many cases, mostly in Western Europe, the more successful RWPPs, for instance the RN and AfD, all tend to advocate 'civic' forms of nationalism to normalise themselves and their message. On the other hand, the picture in Southern and Eastern Europe is more mixed. Certain RWPPs have been able to draw voter support despite (or because of) their ethnic nationalism (Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou 2015; Pirro 2014). These RWPPs are distinguishable from Western European parties because of differences in the types of nationalism that pre-exist in these countries, as well as distinct historical legacies and political cultures. For example, given that many Eastern European countries are ethnically homogeneous and have low levels of immigration, RWPPs tend to mostly target domestic minorities along socially conservative lines – as such negative mentions of multiculturalism tend to be lower than in Western Europe (Figure 21).

What we term 'civic nationalist normalisation' strategy entails two core elements. First, successful RWPPs tend to frame culture as a value issue. Western European RWPPs increasingly justify their exclusion of certain outsider groups on the grounds that they threaten a certain conception of 'liberal' or 'secular' democratic values. This explains why RWPPs are more and more targeting Muslims as 'hostile outsiders', for instance through so-called 'anti-Muslim gender nationalism' (Bernardez-Rodal et al. 2020) or by framing it as so-called counter-Jihad to motivate anti-Muslim sentiment (Pertwee 2020). To avoid using ascriptive criteria to exclude outsiders, RWPPs frame the Muslim threat as dangerous to European and Western liberal democracies. They invoke a type of revised 'clash of civilisation' thesis, by positing that the ideology of Islam automatically renders Muslims intolerant of liberal democratic values. The AfD is a case in point: its 2017 poster and communication strategy during the election depicted Islam as dangerous to so-called German values. They for instance showed a picture of a small pig under the caption 'Islam does not fit our kitchen'. Another example included an image of two white German girls in bikinis under the caption 'Burkas? We prefer bikinis' (AfD 2017).

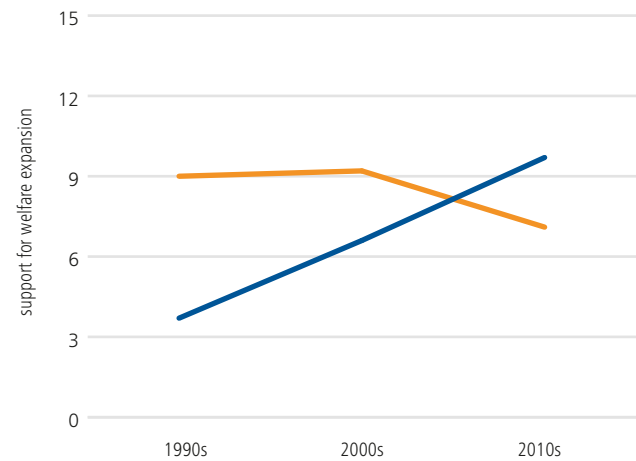
The second noteworthy feature of RWPPs is a combined move away from the free market economy with an increased emphasis on the welfare state (Figure 22), whereas their average historical position was not more generous (MARPOR 2021). This move has been discussed widely in recent literature on the role of social welfare in RWPPs more recent platforms (Afonso and Papadopoulos 2015; Afonso and Rennwald 2017; Röth et al. 2018; Jessoula et al. 2021). In lieu of welfare state retrenchment, low taxes and free market

Figure 22: Economic policy priorities of RWPPs in Western and Eastern Europe

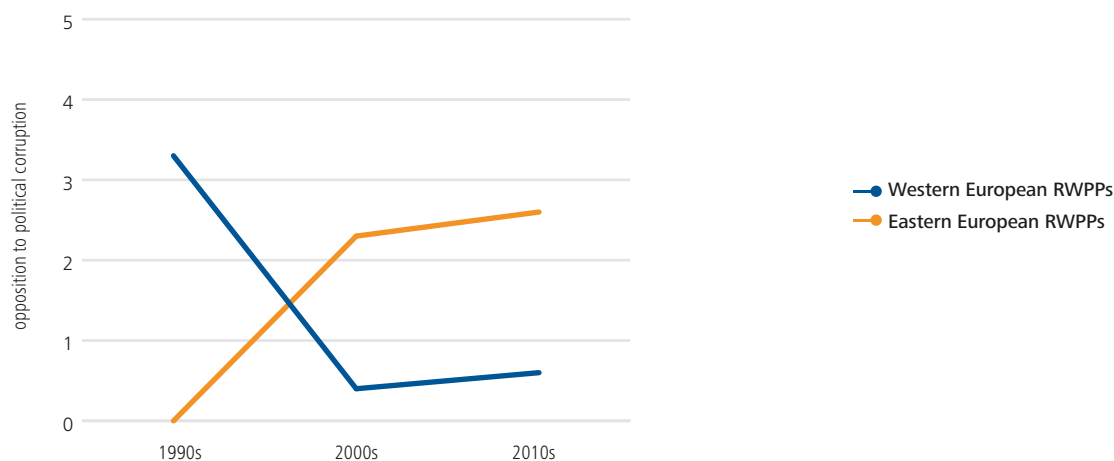
THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EASTERN AND WESTERN RWPPS REGARDING FREE MARKETS



WESTERN EUROPEAN RWPPS HAVE EMBRACED WELFARE EXPANSION MORE THAN EASTERN EUROPEAN ONES



EASTERN EUROPEAN RWPPS ARE MORE CONCERNED ABOUT POLITICAL CORRUPTION THAN WESTERN ONES



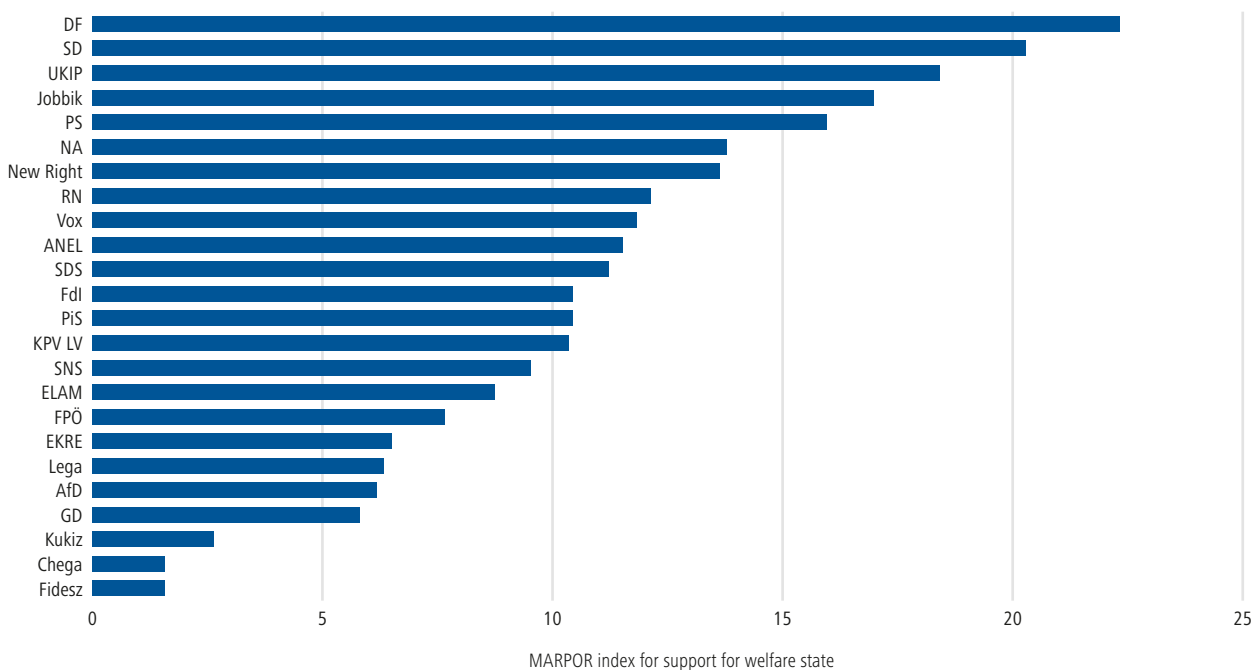
liberalism that had been argued to explain their success in the 1980s (the neoliberal economic 'winning formula' – see Kitschelt and McGann 1995), they instead combine welfare chauvinism as part of a wider economic nationalist narrative of a social contract between state and citizens (Halikiopoulou and Vasilopoulou 2018). The adoption of more economically centrist positions of RWPPs in the West (De Lange 2007; Ivaldi 2015) is also reflected in these parties' positions on the left-right-left scale (Figure 22), but they remain more right-wing on average across the whole period (MARPOR 2021).

This focus on welfare state policies as a new dimension of RWPPs' success has been the subject of a burgeoning literature (Rathgeb and Busemeyer 2021). Abts et al. (2021) argue that RWPPs promote 'social closure' not just based on a deservingness dimension that is most often related to welfare chauvinism, but also on what they term 'welfare producerism', which is defined as an attempt to control and enforce reciprocity and welfare populism.

Others contest the view that RWPPs are always and consistently pro-welfare. For instance, Busemeyer et al. (2021) find that RWPP voters actually prefer a so-called particularistic-authoritarian welfare state which combines medium levels of support for recipients that are deemed ‘deserving’, most notably the elderly, but also at the same time have strong preferences for a workfare approach imposing stricter conditionality and sanctions on other less deserving recipients of benefits, and almost no favourable preferences for social investment. This preference ordering of RWPP voters can also be found when considering party positions: these clearly favour consumption policies such as pensions benefiting the elderly, while opposing reforms that would increase social investments (Enggist and Pinggera 2021).

Finally, there are interesting variations between RWPPs in terms of their economic policy profiles and positions on welfare state policies both within and across countries. Figure 23 reveals a complex pattern whereby Scandinavian RWPP appear to mention the welfare state very often, followed by certain RWPPs in Eastern Europe, while variation is more complex in continental and Southern European countries. Differences between East and West are particularly salient. Positive mentions on welfare expansion have increased on average in the West, but declined in the East. Eastern European RWPPs have become increasingly more right-wing. Finally, mentions of political corruption have become less salient for RWPPs in the West, whereas the reverse seems to have happened in the East (Figure 22).

Figure 23: Most recent party manifesto position of RWPPs on welfare state





THE THIRD P: POLICIES

In this section, we consider the policies that are in place which may affect how exogenous shocks translate into specific kinds of grievances. Partly, policies create an additional set of contextual factors shaping how political parties choose to alter their policy proposals. More specifically, we focus on the role of social policies in mitigating the risk and insecurities that sometimes lead to higher RWPPs' success. While older party politics studies have often neglected the role of the welfare state, a parallel literature in comparative political economy and economic voting has demonstrated the importance of the economy for policy preferences (e.g. Vlandas 2013; 2021) and of the policy environment in shaping the voting choices of different individuals (e.g. Bojar and Vlandas 2021). Notwithstanding one or two exceptions in the early 2000s (Swank and Betz 2003) that focused on the welfare state in general, it is only in the last few years that research has started to unpack exactly how and why different social policies might matter, for instance: unemployment policies, pension policies, family policies, minimum wage policies, employee protection (EPL), sick and disabled policies. Our guiding questions for this section are as follows:

- What is the potential role of the welfare state in shaping RWPP support?
- What social groups are especially at risk of supporting RWPPs?
- Which social policies (compensational and protective), and through what mechanisms, can mitigate RWPP support?

Democracies in Europe have operated in a context of falling economic growth rates over the past decades, with recurrent economic crises in the 1970s, early 1990s and from 2008 onwards. Many advanced economies have in time recovered, but growth has often not returned to the previous decade's level of average economic growth. In addition, debt has been accumulated as a result of increased spending and falling tax revenues, thereby leading to a climate of permanent austerity (Pierson 2001) while constraining the necessary physical and social investments that could underpin future growth. While economic developments obviously affect the life chances and insecurities as well as risks that individuals face, their prevalence as well as social and political consequences are crucially shaped by the degree of redistribution and the social insurance provided by developed welfare states (Ruggie 1982; Barr 2004).

Yet, not only has economic growth slowed down (Figure 24), and average wages often stagnated for vast swaths of the middle class (Hacker and Pierson 2010; Piketty 2013), but welfare states have undergone substantial market liberalisation (Simoni and Vlandas 2021) and dualization (Vlandas 2020) as shown in employment protection legislation in Figure 26 which has led to workers facing increased risks of being laid off. In addition, many welfare state benefits have been retrenched (Allan and Scruggs 2004) (Figure 25) and workfare has been introduced, through greater sanctions and increased conditionality (Knotz 2019; Knotz 2020). If one takes a simplified view of the gap between economic needs captured by aging and rising unemployment on the one hand, and capacity to address this need through social transfers on the other hand, Figure 27 shows that this gap has been growing over time.

As a result, the extent to which different risks and costs that individuals face are preempted and compensated by social policies becomes crucially important in understanding their subsequent propensity to translate these grievances into support for RWPPs. Thus we posit that economic insecurity has a central role to play in understanding RWPP, even in the wider context of a deepening transnational cleavage, but this role can only be properly contextualised if one accounts for its interplay with social policies. A deteriorating economy with stagnating wages, higher unemployment and greater economic risks will have a negative effect on the expectations, satisfaction and/or socio-economic status of different groups in society. One prominent division in the labour market is between so-called labour market outsiders that are either unemployed or often work under precarious part-time and temporary contracts, and insiders that instead have more secure permanent employment. This suggests that social policies are not just crucial to protect the working class, but also for wider parts of the middle classes. That insecurity and risks may cut across class and labour market divisions is a finding in some recent studies showing that voting for RWPPs can be motivated by relative deprivation considerations (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2018; Rooduijn and Burgoon 2018).

Figure 24: Economic growth continues to slow down

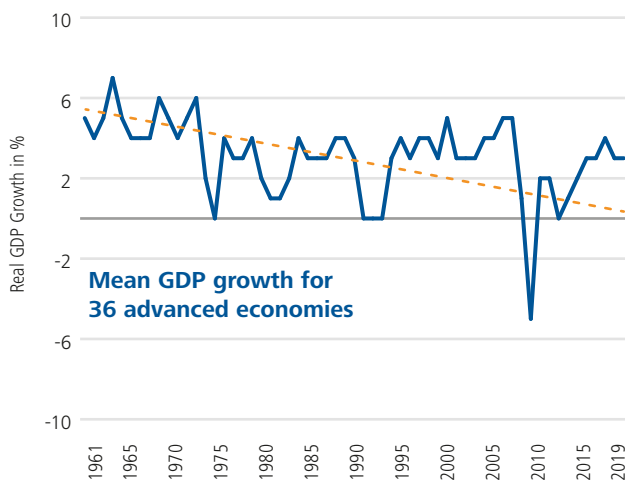


Figure 25: Social expenditure decreased between 1992-2007

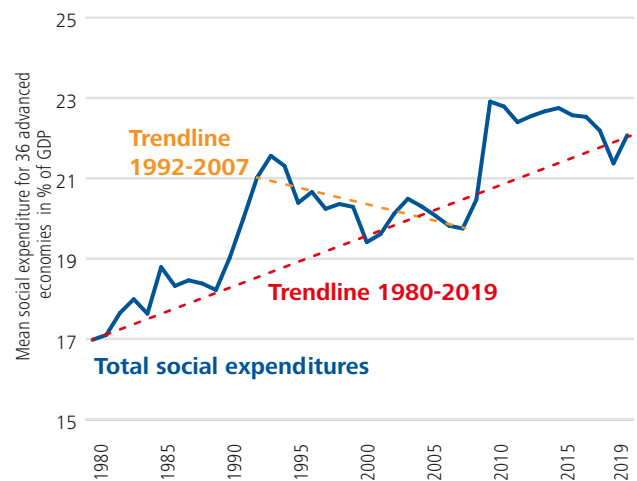


Figure 26: Employment protection is being watered down

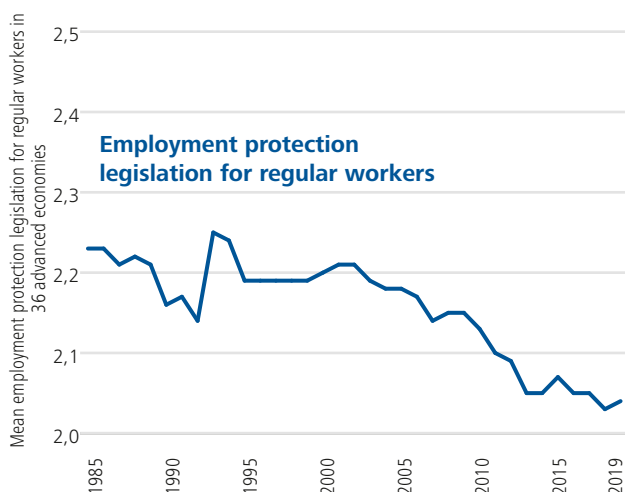
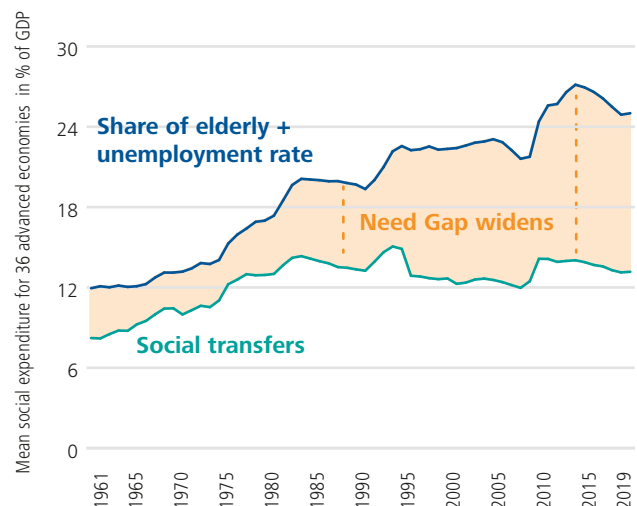


Figure 27: The social transfer need gap widens



Source for Figures 24-27: CPDS

In our recent research (Halikiopoulou and Vlandas 2016), we have conceptualised more fully why and how a particular economic risk such as unemployment can be linked to higher RWPP support, depending on the extent to which relevant labour market policies contain this particular risk. Our theoretical framework distinguishes between two separate mechanisms through which unemployment can lead to greater insecurity. First, unemployment generates economic costs for those who lose their job, but the extent of these costs depend at least partly on the degree of benefit generosity which compensates for some of the lost salary of the worker. Second, higher unemployment may also raise the risks faced by workers who are still employed, for instance because they might become more likely to lose their job in the future or might be affected by family members becoming unemployed (cf. Abou-Chadi and Kurer 2021). However, these risks also depend on labour market institutions, in this case the level of employment protection legislation (EPL), which captures how easy it is for employers to dismiss their employees.

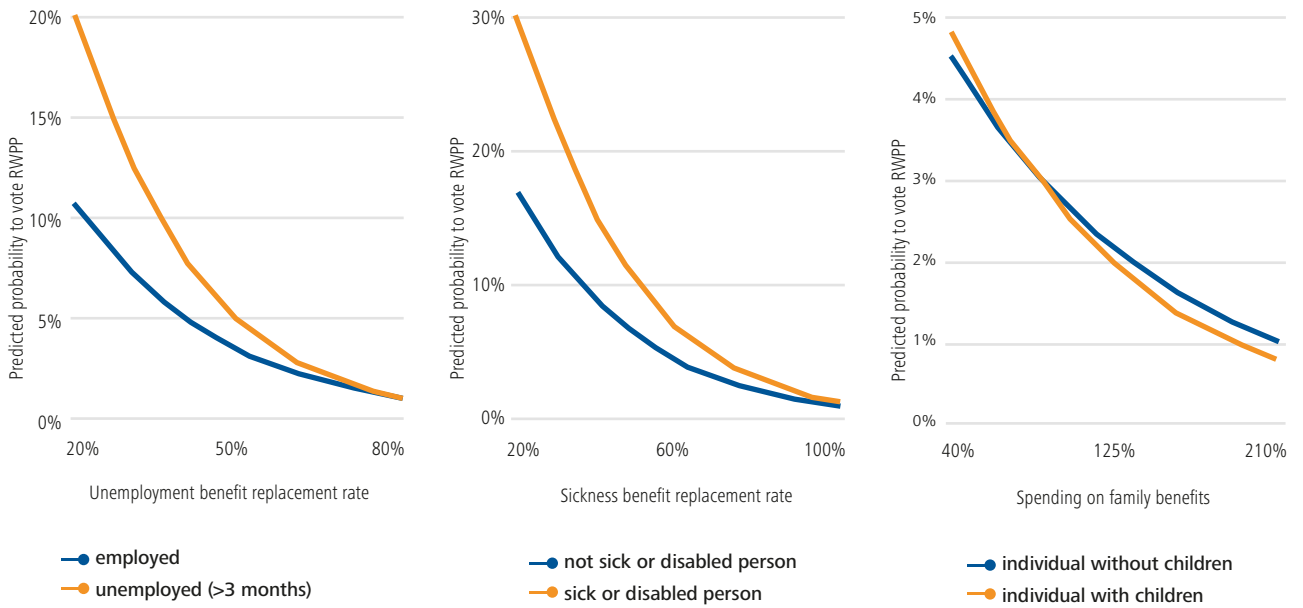
Our empirical findings provide some evidence for the relevance of labour market institutions at the national level. First, we show that more generous unemployment benefits are negatively associated with overall support of RWPPs. Second, our results show that unemployment has no overall correlation with the cross-national variation in RWPP electoral results in three elections for the European Parliament. Instead, unemployment is only positively correlated with RWPP votes in the European Parliament in countries where labour market policies are not sufficiently protective (Halikiopoulou and Vlandas 2016). To quote at more length, 'unemployment does have a positive association with far-right party support in countries where unemployment benefits replace strictly less than 50 per cent of previous income while working; beyond this level, unemployment is no longer significantly different from 0' (ibid: 649). Third, we find that 'unemployment does have a positive association with [RWPP] support in countries where the OECD EPL index is lower than slightly above 2; beyond this level, unemployment is no longer significantly different from 0' (ibid: 650). We also illustrate how these results can be replicated when focusing on national elections in both Western and Eastern European countries in the period between 1991 and 2013 (Vlandas and Halikiopoulou 2018). Our analysis shows that unemployment is only positively correlated with higher support for RWPP when unemployment benefits are not sufficiently generous.

Our theoretical framework can be extended to encompass a wider array of social risks and social policies. Matching individual level voting behaviour to social policies, we examine how this interplay might shape RWPP voting (Vlandas and Halikiopoulou 2021). We start by distinguishing conceptually between what we call compensatory social policies, which compensate for the occurrence of a social risk, and what we term protective policies, which by contrast prevent the realisation of the risk in the first place. Thus for instance, unemployment and pension benefits compensate an individual for a risk, i.e. being unemployed and/or being too old to work. Instead, minimum wages and EPL protect a worker against the risk of having a wage that is too low and losing their job, respectively. Empirically, we then match data from the European Social Survey (ESS) to relevant social policy datasets. We show that social policies are negatively associated with the probability of voting for an RWPP. Figure 28 plots the effect of facing three types of risks (being unemployed, disabled/sick, and having children) on RWPP voting, conditional on three relevant social policies. In each case, the probability of voting for an RWPP falls as the generosity of the social policy targeting the risk becomes higher.

Note that this does not imply that all RWPP voters favour expansion of all types of welfare state policies (see the previous discussion of RWPP welfare positions) or that all RWPPs would necessarily address these risks. Indeed, RWPP voters are in fact fairly selective when it comes to the type of social policies that they favour (Goubin and Hooghe 2021). In addition, Ennser-Jedenastik (2021) shows that RWPPs are negatively associated with spending on childcare and have little association with family allowances.

In sum, these findings point to the importance of not only considering the risks and grievances that lead individuals to support RWPP, but also how these might be moderated by social policies. Obviously, the extent to which the welfare state might matter for different individuals and the degree to which RWPP would benefit electorally depends both on the country context and on the characteristics of RWPPs in question. Equally, the importance of political supply and of distinct demand-side factors also depends on the specific country context. Thus, in the next section of this report, we turn our attention to an extensive set of country case studies and more focused comparisons to investigate this heterogeneity and explore the specific mechanisms underpinning these broad associations.

Figure 28: The links between economic insecurities and voting for RWPPs



Note: Probability is shown as predicted mean, fixed portion only.



WESTERN EUROPE

GERMANY, AUSTRIA AND FRANCE



GERMANY

Alternative for Germany (AfD)

AUSTRIA

Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ)

FRANCE

Rassemblement National (RN)

WESTERN EUROPE: GERMANY, AUSTRIA AND FRANCE

GERMANY



Alternative for
Germany (AfD)

AUSTRIA



Austrian Freedom
Party (FPÖ)

FRANCE



Rassemblement
National (RN)

PATTERNS OF SUCCESS

In much of Western Europe, RWPP success takes the form of systemic entrenchment – i.e. the gradual ability of niche parties to permeate mainstream ground. Most Western European RWPPs commenced as niche actors operating on the fringes of the political system. Later they increased their support beyond their secure voter base by becoming progressively embedded in the system either as coalition partners or credible opposition parties. Indeed, Western European RWPPs are among those with the longest standing success. In Austria and France, the FPÖ and RN have performed well in a series of elections since the late 1990s and early 2000s, respectively. Austria is among the European countries with RWPPs in government alongside Norway, Italy and Switzerland in Western Europe and Poland and Hungary in Eastern Europe. Although the French RN has never accessed office, it functions as a long-standing contender in its domestic political arena and is one of the most successful opposition RWPPs. In Germany, the AfD is a relative newcomer in the system. Until the 2017 federal election, Germany constituted an exception to the success of RWPP in Western Europe, distinct because of its fascist past. While the AfD remains politically marginalised by its competitors, its strong electoral performance, especially during the 2015 refugee crisis, is an essential measure of its success.

DEMAND: WHO VOTES FOR RWPPS IN WESTERN EUROPE?

Both value-based and materialist considerations shape RWPP voting behaviour in all three countries. On the one hand, the increase in support for the AfD, FPÖ and RN has coincided with the 2015 migration crisis. On the other hand, relative deprivation and economic inequalities among certain voter groups continue to shape voters' propensity to support RWPPs, even though all three cases are core economies with strong international financial positions and lower levels of unemployment.

In Germany, male, bottom income individuals or service workers who are less likely to be on pensions, have cultural concerns over immigration and distrust the EU have a greater probability of voting for RWPPs.

In Austria, male, bottom income, craft workers or unemployed individuals are more likely to vote for RWPPs. These individuals are less likely to be strongly religious. They have both economic and cultural concerns over immigration and tend to distrust the EU.

In France, middle-aged, male individuals who reside in the countryside, distrust the EU and share both economic and cultural concerns over immigration are more likely to vote for RWPPs.

Figure 29: RWPP national election history in Germany 1990-2021

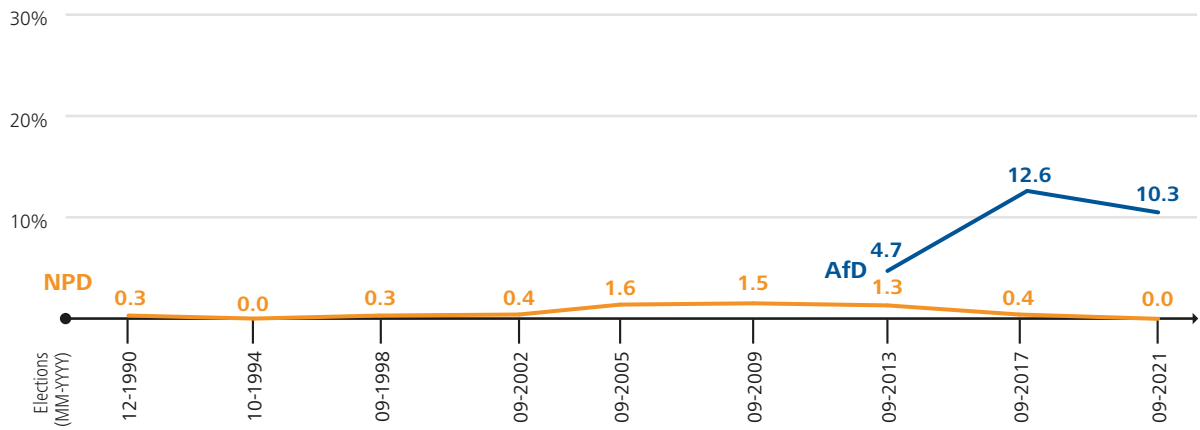


Figure 30: RWPP national election history in Austria 1990-2021

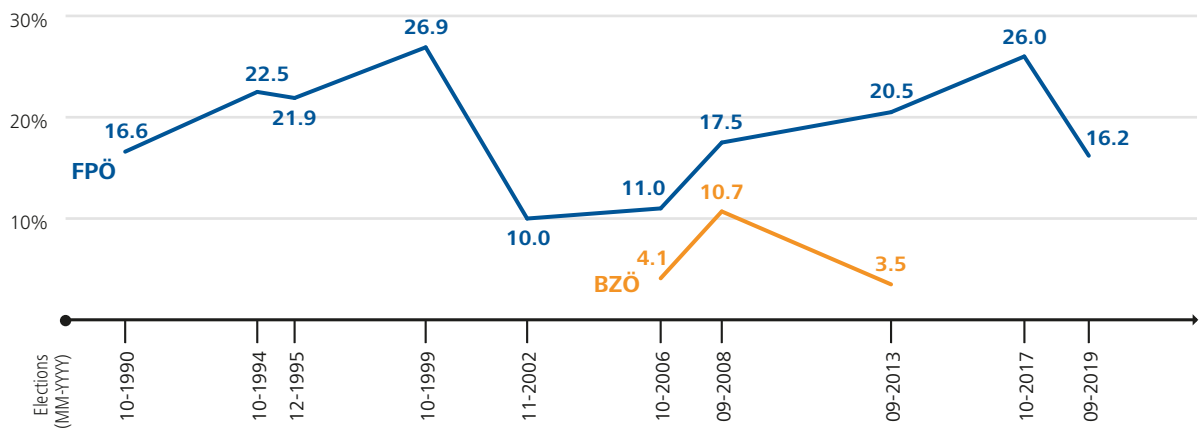


Figure 31: RWPP national election history in France 1990-2021

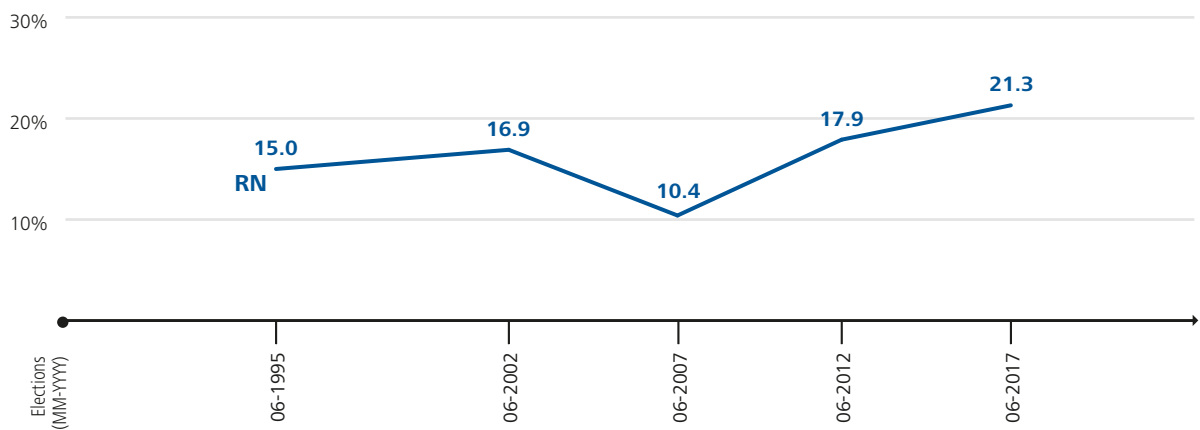
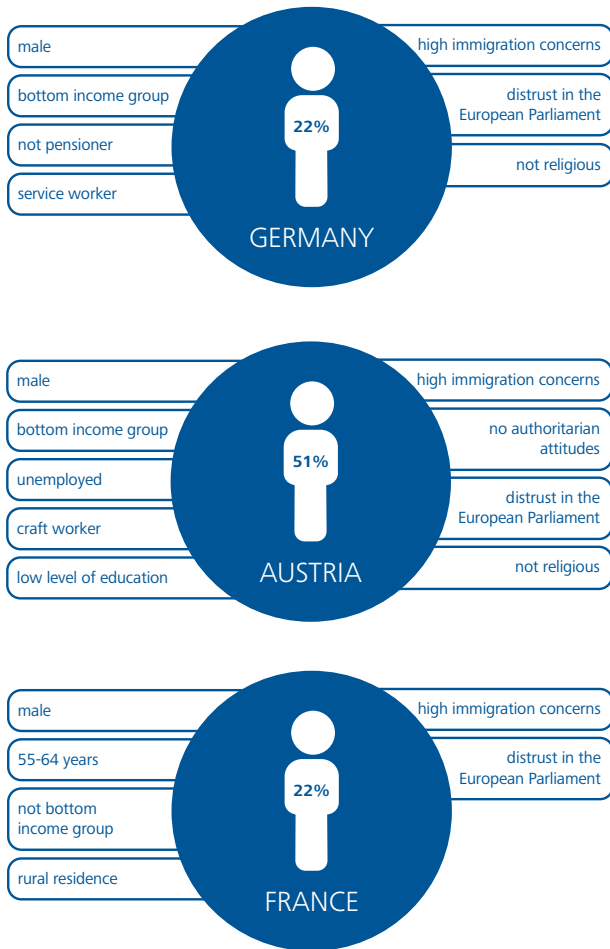
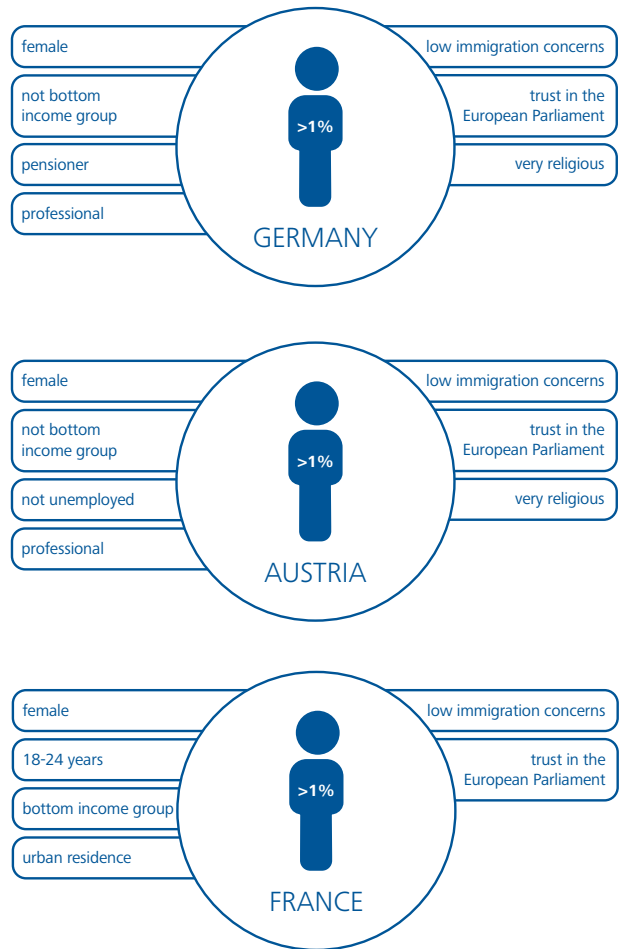


Figure 32: Who is the most likely right-wing populist party voter?



Probability to vote for a Right Wing Populist Party (%)

Figure 33: Who is the least likely right-wing populist party voter?



Probability to vote for a Right Wing Populist Party (%)

SUPPLY: WHAT MAKES THESE PARTIES' NARRATIVES [UN]SUCCESSFUL?

On the supply side, the electoral success of all three RWPPs involves adopting civic nationalist narratives, blurring their economic positions, and emphasising welfare chauvinism. The AfD, FPÖ and RN all evoke cultural backlash narratives in their programmatic agendas. Their nationalism is predominantly civic, excluding those who do not share 'Western' liberal values such as democracy, multiculturalism and the rule of law (Halikiopoulou et al. 2013). Their anti-immigrant platforms target Islam along these lines: they present Muslims as intolerant, threatening outsiders who do not share liberal democratic values. In terms of their social policy platforms, all three parties have toned down their neoliberal economic policies over time becoming increasingly pro-welfare although with some variations. They also emphasise welfare chauvinism and condemn out-group entitlement to the collective goods of the state. The RN is the most pro-welfare of the three parties.

PARTY PROFILES

ALTERNATIVE FOR GERMANY (AfD)

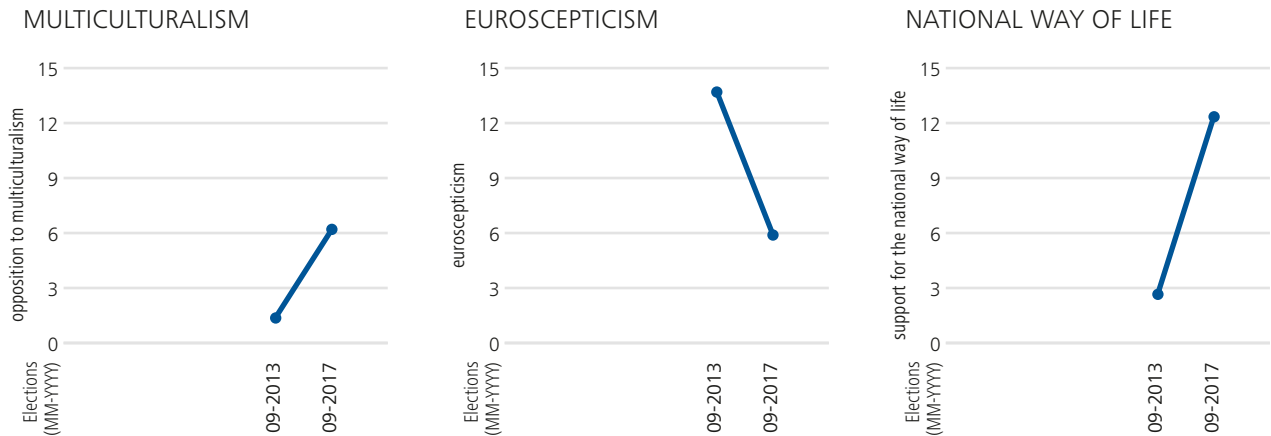
The AfD was established in 2013 as a single-issue party against EU bailouts to southern Europe. Though initially a party of academic elites directed against the EU and the monetary union, after the national-conservative branch took over in 2015, the party changed direction, emphasising identity, immigration and the refugee crisis through a nationalist-populist narrative (Betz and Habersack 2019). The AfD entered parliament for the first time in 2017 after receiving 12.6 per cent of the votes cast, thus ending German exceptionalism. The party consistently derives its most robust support in the eastern part of the country.

THE AfD'S VALUE PROFILE: AN ANTI-ISLAM RWPP PLAYING THE CULTURE CARD

The AfD is a typical RWPP that follows the Western European pattern, i.e. it increased its support by adopting populist-nationalist narratives that target immigrants using value-based arguments (Betz and Habersack 2019). Figure 34 illustrates changing positions on various value issues: an increasing emphasis on the national way of life and critiquing multi-culturalism, and a declining focus on the EU. The party places an extensive emphasis on German identity defined by two criteria: language and German lead culture (Heinisch and Werner 2019). The party's populist rhetoric is similar to other Western European RWPPs. It seeks to promote itself as the advocate of the pure people, which corrupt mainstream elites have betrayed. It equates the 'people' with a culturally defined in-group and justifies the exclusion of the out-group on the basis of ideology (Halikiopoulou 2018).

Refraining from overt references to racism (Arzheimer 2015), the party centres its nationalism on cultural threats posed by those whose values are antithetical to 'ours'. The AfD's nationalist narratives focus specifically on Islam, suggesting that Muslims threaten Western European societies because they do not share their liberal democratic values. The party blames immigrants, particularly Muslims, for various social societal problems, thus appealing to voters' multiple insecurities. The AfD's 2017 electoral campaign centred on portraying Islam as a value threat to the German way of life built on a series of fabricated divisions at the core of which is culture: freedom vs restriction; progressive vs reactionary values; and tolerance vs intolerance (Halikiopoulou 2018).

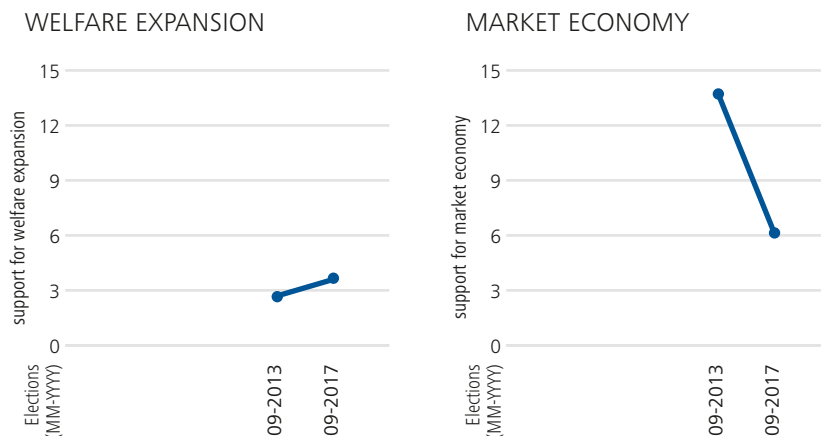
Figure 34: AfD’s stance on multiculturalism, euroscepticism and the national way of life



THE AfD’S ECONOMIC AND WELFARE POLICY PROFILE: INCONSISTENT AND ‘BLURRY’

The AfD’s welfare and economic policy profile is inconsistent and ambivalent in accordance with the RWPP ‘blurring’ strategy (Enngist and Pinggera 2021). Overall the party combines neoliberal economic positions with welfare chauvinism, but devotes little attention to social policy in its manifesto (Enngist and Pinggera 2021). The AfD started up as a party advocating Euroscepticism, socially conservative policies and market-liberal positions (Arzheimer and Berning 2019). While it has retained its economically liberal positions to some extent, opposing redistribution and remaining critical of benefits, it has also strengthened its welfare-chauvinist position, which centres mostly on excluding the out-group from welfare provisions, for example, by limiting benefits to long-term residents (Arzheimer 2015). In its 2017 electoral campaign, the party adopted a new focus on social policy and welfare (Figure 35) that appears inconsistent with its overall neoliberal economic programme, for example, advocating privileges for Germans in benefits distribution. The AfD frequently invokes pensioners and large families with children as social groups in need of protection (Heinisch and Werner 2019).

Figure 35: AfD’s stance on welfare expansion and market economy



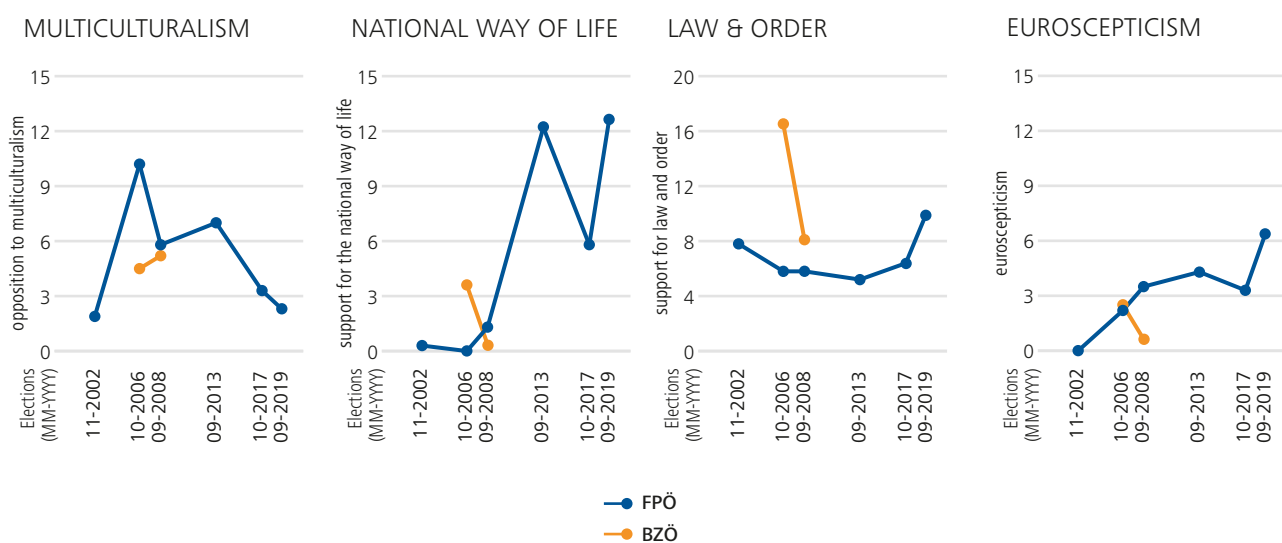
AUSTRIAN FREEDOM PARTY (FPÖ)

The FPÖ has been a long-standing contender in Austrian politics and one of the most successful European RWPPs. The party was founded in 1956 by individuals with links to Nazism. When the party's more extreme elements splintered off to form the neo-Nazi Nationaldemokratische Partei (NDP) in the late 1960s, the FPÖ ended up in more mainstream right-wing political space. The brief liberal era in the 1980s was put to an end when Jörg Haider took over the party in 1986. Haider steered the party in a far-right direction, re-integrating neo-Nazis and extreme right militants and adopting a strongly anti-immigrant platform, which made the party increasingly successful (Stockemer and Lamontagne 2014). Its popularity peaked in 1999 with 27% of the vote. The initial slump after Haider's departure and founding of BZÖ in 2005 was quickly reversed. In 2017 the party received 26% of the popular vote – its best performance since 1999. Overall the FPÖ has accessed office during two different periods, first taking part in the governing coalition 2000 to 2006, and then re-entering government in 2017-2019 after more than a decade in opposition.

THE FPÖ'S VALUE PROFILE: ANTI-IMMIGRANT AND ANTI-ISLAM

The FPÖ is a classic RWPP party. Its exclusionary platform has oscillated between extreme and radical positions while consistently – at least since the 1990s – centring on anti-immigration narratives that seek to put 'Austria First'. Similarly to the AfD and the RN, the party specifically targets Islam, presenting Muslims as threatening 'others' who do not share the same values. Its positions have changed over time, with the party focusing less on multi-culturalism, more on the EU and more on strict law-and-order policies (Figure 36). We can also observe an overall increase in its focus on the national way of life.

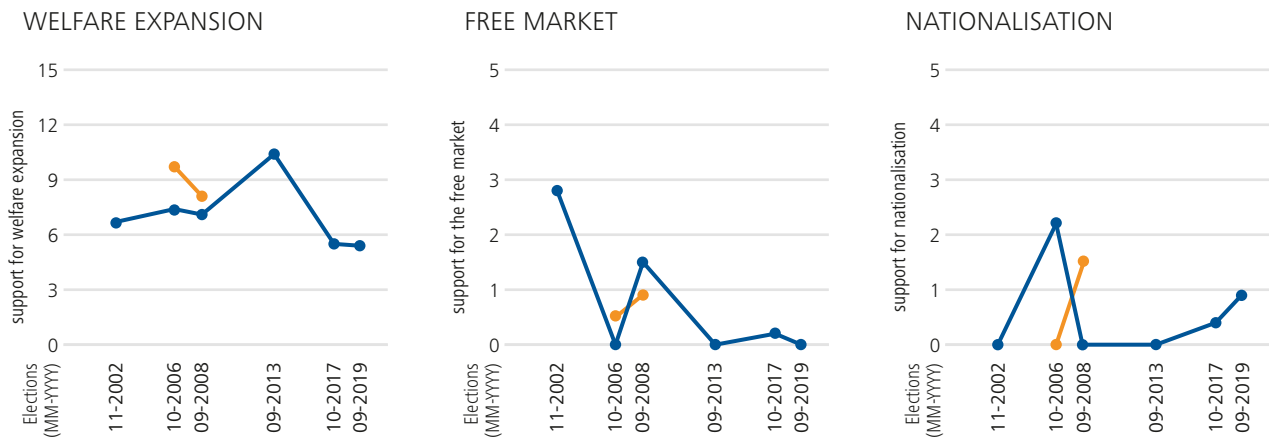
Figure 36: FPÖ's and BZÖ's stance on multiculturalism, the national way of life, law & order and euroscepticism



THE FPÖ'S ECONOMIC AND WELFARE POLICY PROFILE: INCONSISTENT AND 'BLURRY'

The FPÖ also fits the 'blurry' and inconsistent economic and welfare policy profile. The party's positions are at the same time both 'left-wing' (pro welfare benefits) and 'right-wing' (pro tax cuts and union disempowerment) (Rathgeb 2021). An analysis of the party's manifesto illustrates this inconsistency, and shows some important variations across time (Figure 37). There was a clear break in 2006 when FPÖ became more explicitly pro-welfare, though this emphasis was toned down in the mid-2010s. In line with its welfare chauvinist narratives, the party juxtaposes 'prosperity' to 'migration' (Stockemer and Lamontagne 2014) and focuses its campaigns on specific at-risk groups, including welfare recipients, pensioners, large (German/Austrian) families, those residing in rural areas as well as farmers (Heinisch and Werner 2019) that are in need of protection.

Figure 37: FPÖ's and BZÖ's stance on welfare expansion, the free market and nationalisation



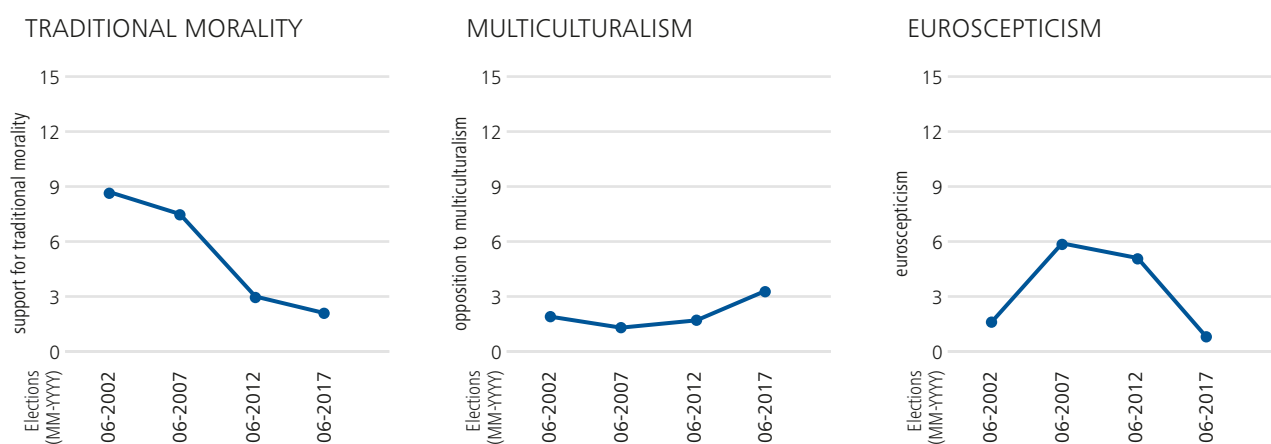
RASSEMBLEMENT NATIONAL (RN)

The Rassemblement National (RN), previously Front National (FN), is a long-standing contender in French politics, and one of the most successful European RWPPs, albeit as an opposition party. The party has a long history, and while its performance over time has been characterised by ebbs and flows, it has strengthened its presence since Marine Le Pen took over from her father in 2011 (Halikiopoulou 2018). The RN (then FN) has progressed to the second round of the French presidential elections twice – in 2002 and in 2017 – turning in an all-time high of 33.9% during the second round of the latter election. This has coincided with a broadening of its electoral base in recent years to include more diverse voter groups such as women and younger voters (Halikiopoulou 2019).

THE RN'S VALUE PROFILE: CIVIC NATIONALIST NORMALISATION

The RN's value profile is consistent with the Western European RWPP pattern. The party focuses heavily on immigration, which it places it within a framework of a broader value conflict and rejects, primarily on ideological grounds,. Under Marine Le Pen's leadership (2012-), the party has adopted a de-demonisation or civic normalisation strategy characterised by a toning down of language and a defence of French values on secular grounds. The party's name change from FN to RN is part of this conscious endeavour to distance the party from its former reputation for exclusionist discrimination. At the core of this strategy, which is marked by an overall turn towards support for French Republicanism, sovereignty and support of laïcité, lies a rejection of Islam along secular lines. For example, Marine Le Pen has criticised Islamic values as contradictory to French liberal democratic values and centred her hostility on the Shariah doctrine on the grounds that it constitutes an intrusion by the religious into the secular realm (Betz 2013). Consistent with this, our analysis of the party's manifestos reveals an increasing focus on opposition to multiculturalism, and a decreasing focus on traditional morality and the EU (Figure 38).

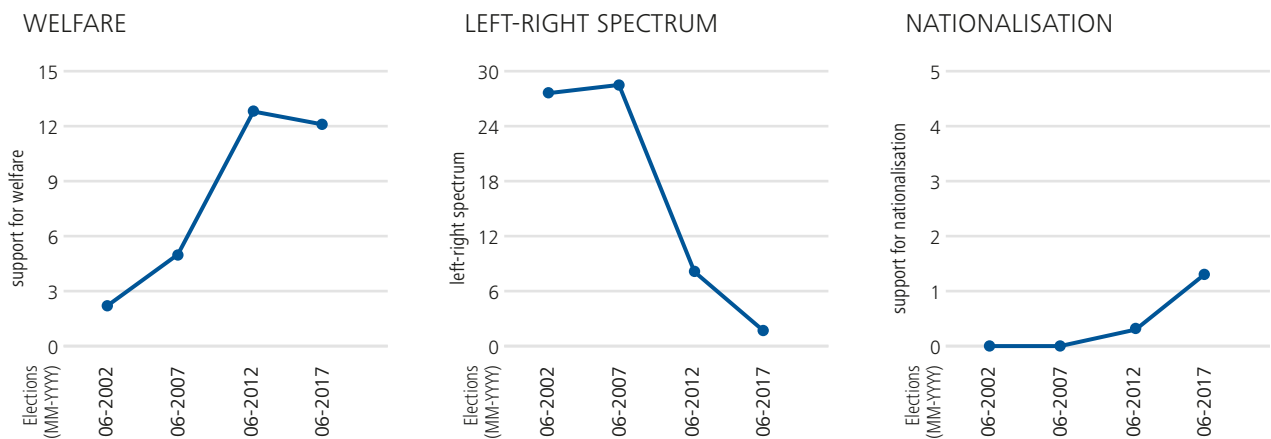
Figure 38: RN's stance on traditional morality, multiculturalism and euroscepticism



THE RN'S ECONOMIC AND WELFARE POLICY PROFILE: FROM FREE-MARKET TO PRO-WELFARE POLICIES

The RN differs from the AfD and the FPÖ in that it more openly and explicitly endorses pro-welfare policies. This is part of a broader change in its welfare/economic policy positions across time. From loosely corporatist ideas in the 1970s, the FN adopted free market policies in the mid-late 1980s, supporting tax cuts and privatisation. The party significantly shifted its economic platform from a predominantly right-wing to a left-wing stance with a strong emphasis on social issues when Marine Le Pen took over (Ivaldi 2015; Bastow 2018). It also dedicated more time in its manifestos to economic and social policy issues, advocating nationalisation policies, increased taxation and the introduction of various pro-welfare policies and measures in support of working-class groups (Figure 39). Research on the RN has attributed these shifts to a conscious attempt to appeal to voters from lower socio-economic backgrounds and to appear credible and competent to address deteriorating economic conditions (Betz 2013; Bastow 2018).

Figure 39: RN's stance on welfare, the left-right spectrum and nationalisation



ANALYSIS

UNDERSTANDING THE SUCCESS OF RWPPS IN WESTERN EUROPE

The AfD, FPÖ and RN are amongst the most successful RWPPs in Europe: the AfD ended post-WWII German exceptionalism, the FPÖ has joined governing coalitions, and the RN has become a leading opposition party in the French political system. Their performance peaked during the mid to late 2010s, but has been varied since: while support for the RN remains strong in the polls, suggesting a good result for the party in the upcoming 2022 French presidential elections, the FPÖ and AfD have suffered because of internal divisions, competition dynamics and – in the case of the FPÖ – corruption scandals. During the 2021 federal elections, the AfD lost ground as major parties competed on issues such as economic security and climate change.

Nonetheless the AfD, FPÖ and RN are all parties that have competed successfully within their respective systems. Despite fluctuations in their electoral performance, their success should be understood within the context of the challenges they pose due to their ability to permeate mainstream ground. This has resulted in a contagion effect on other parties' immigration policy positions and an overall shift to the right (Halikiopoulou 2018).

In all three cases, the adoption of a predominantly civic nationalist rhetoric has contributed to their success. This rhetoric is characterised by the portrayal of cultural issues as value-driven and ideological. This underpins the parties' anti-immigration narrative: those who are not members of the in-group should be excluded from the national polity and be denied access to the collective goods of the state. The criteria that determine membership of the polity, however, a civic, premised on value-based arguments that emphasise democratic principles. The parties claim to restore national sovereignty in the name of the people; doing so requires the exclusion of foreigners from the national pact. This links into the second dimension that underpins their narrative, i.e. welfare chauvinism. All three parties have shifted their welfare/economic policy trajectories over time. While the RN has more clearly steered towards pro-welfare spending positions and the other two emphasise neo-liberal economic policies, all three parties make welfare chauvinist claims. This civic nationalist message + welfare chauvinism has allowed these parties to appear more palatable and legitimate to a broad range of social groups with different backgrounds and preferences, thereby increasing their ability to attract diverse electorates and attracting more support among working class / individuals with a lower socio-economic status.

With respect to the German case, this can be demonstrated by juxtaposing the electoral performances of the AfD with that of the National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD). While both parties are located on the far-right end of the political spectrum, the NPD is an extreme right variant which continues to be perceived as an extremist fringe. As such, it has remained marginalised in the German political system, never receiving more than 1.6 per cent (in 2005). The AfD, on the other hand, has managed to attract a broader electorate.

In its initial period, the party attracted a particularly affluent and highly educated electorate (Diermeier 2020). Following the radicalisation of the party and shift to a more explicit RWPP agenda in 2015, the AfD's electorate diversified. An interesting dimension in terms of RWPP support in Germany is the east-west divide. While the AfD appears to attract affluent voters who are not concerned over their economic status, this tends to be more the case for western Germany. In the east, voting dynamics are somewhat different. According to recent research, the disproportionate success of the AfD in eastern Germany can be explained by societal marginalisation – feelings of resentment triggered by status anxiety, social alienation, and institutional distrust (Betz and Habersack 2019; Weisskircher 2020).

Our empirical analysis confirms that male, bottom-income individuals or service workers who have cultural concerns over immigration and distrust the EU are more likely to vote for RWPPs in Germany (Figure 41). These individuals are less likely to be on pensions and be strongly religious. Overall, while much recent research suggests that anxiety about voters' economic situation does not appear to be a direct driver of AfD support (e.g. Hansen and Olsen 2019), support from groups with lower socio-economic status, especially in eastern Germany and within the working class, did increase in 2017, with the party doing particularly well among workers (Diermeier 2020). Our analysis of the composition of the RWPP electorate (Figure 40) confirms that it is indeed diverse: 28% of RWPP voters have no immigration concerns at all, while 43% have both cultural and economic concerns combined.

In Austria, the FPÖ has also expanded and diversified its electorate, but unlike the AfD it has a longer-standing reputation as a workers' party. The party already received 47% of the blue-collar vote in 1999, and this share has increased over time: in 2017 the FPÖ attracted 59% of the blue-collar vote (Heinisch and Werner 2019). Our empirical analysis confirms that male, bottom-income craft workers or unemployed individuals are more likely to vote for RWPPs in Austria. These individuals are less likely to be strongly religious. They have both economic and cultural concerns over immigration and tend to distrust the EU (Figure 42). Among the RWPP electorate, 19% of voters have no immigration concerns at all, while the majority (56%) have a combination of both cultural and economic concerns (Figure 40).

Within-country variations are less telling here, as the contrast with the BZÖ is more about internal divisions. Both parties fall within the radical RWPP category and work through the democratic political process. The BZÖ was established in 2005 by Jörg Haider following his decision to leave the FPÖ because of internal personal rivalries. Both the FPÖ and the BZÖ gained substantial support during the 2008 parliamentary elections, producing a combined result of 28.24% of the vote. However, Haider's death in 2008 was detrimental to the party, which experienced internal splits thereafter (Stockemer and Lamontagne 2014).

In France, the electoral success of the RN and the breadth of the party's electoral appeal have coincided with its programmatic shift from predominantly ethnic to predominantly civic nationalism. The French case allows us to make this observation across time by comparing the party's agenda during Jean Marie Le Pen's and Marine Le Pen's leaderships. The rhetorical shift that combines civic nationalism and pro-welfare policies has helped the party increase its popularity, reaching a broader electoral base that also captures

younger and female voters (Bastow 2018). Labour market competition has also played a role particularly at the local level, where native workers are directly affected by immigrants with similar skillsets (Bolet 2020). Our empirical analysis confirms middle-aged, male individuals who reside in the countryside, distrust the EU and share both economic and cultural concerns over immigration are more likely to vote for RWPPs in France (Figure 43). Among the RWPP electorate 15% have no immigration concerns at all, while a sizeable 62% have a combination of both cultural and economic concerns (Figure 40). This RWPP voter profile and composition of the RWPP electorate in France suggests multiple routes to RWPP voting, including a direct economic mechanism and an indirect mechanism through the perception of labour market competition with immigrants.

Overall, these cases illustrate that civic nationalism does not shield from extremism. Ironically, ideals such as liberal democracy, universal human rights and multiculturalism can become tools that RWPPs are able to use to increase their electoral success. By shifting the boundaries of toleration and presenting the in-group/out-group distinction in voluntaristic terms, these parties not only become more palatable to a broader electorate but can also drive party competition in their turf and compel other parties to adopt accommodative strategies to compete with them. This makes them better able to permeate mainstream ground and inform policy – either by joining governing coalitions or driving party competition as credible opposition parties.

Figure 40: **Distribution of immigration concerns**

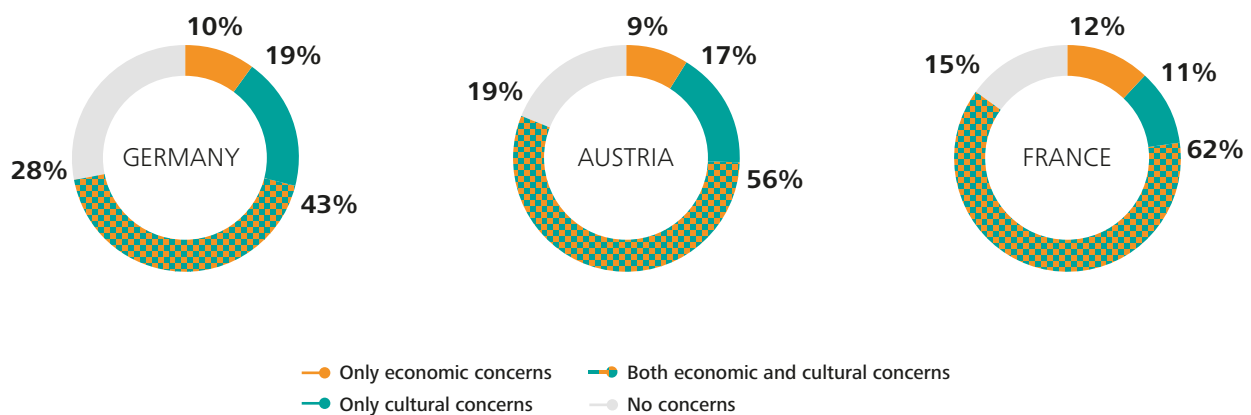
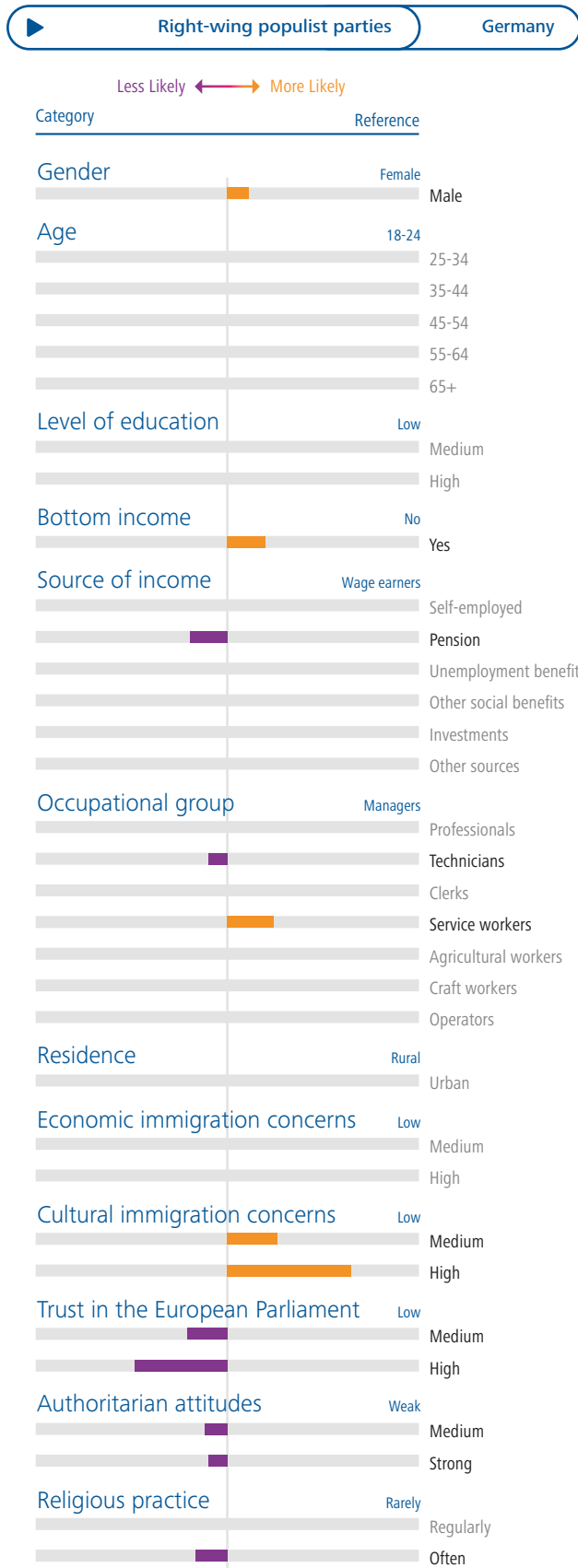
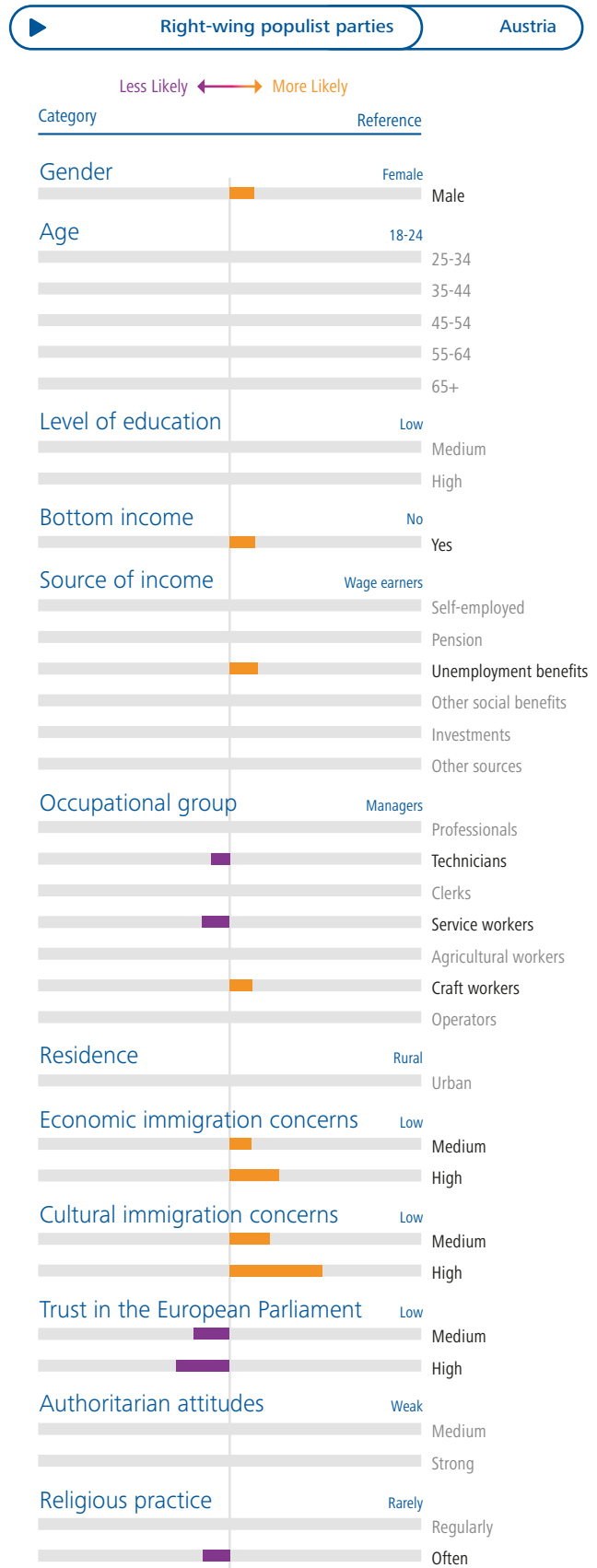


Figure 41: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



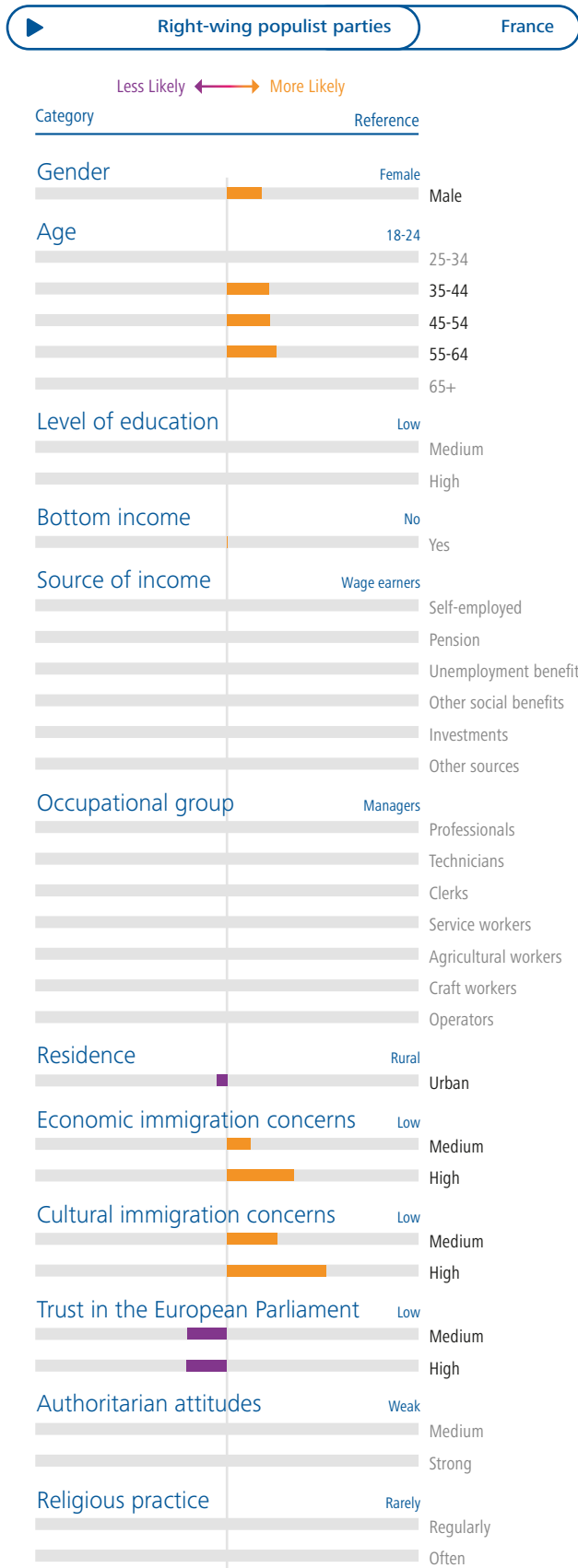
Only statistically significant results are shown.

Figure 42: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.

Figure 43: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.

RECOMMENDATIONS

HOW SHOULD PROGRESSIVES RESPOND?

How should progressive parties in these countries respond? Our comparison of the RWPP and centre-left electorates in the three countries suggests that co-opting RWPP positions will likely be costly for progressive parties. This finding is consistent with recent literature suggesting that the centre-left and RWPP electorates differ considerably (Abou Chadi et al. 2021) and that centre-left repositioning towards RWPP restrictive immigration policies may attract a small number of RWPP voters, but alienate a much larger proportion of their own voters (Chou et al. 2021). A more beneficial strategy for the progressive left is to instead compete on issues the left owns, such as equality.

First, RWPP core voters, i.e. those voters who oppose immigration on principle and have strong cultural concerns over immigration, are a minority among the whole electorate in all three countries. These voters are a larger group in Austria, accounting for 14% of the electorate. In Germany and France they make up 8% and 9% of the electorate, respectively (Figure 44). These voters are principled RWPP voters and are unlikely to switch to the centre-left even if it adopts ‘copycat’ strategies. They identify more staunchly with a right-wing platform and are more likely to switch from ‘far’ to centre-right. They are the least likely centre-left constituency and do not constitute a centre-left target voter group.

Second, a comparison between the RWPP and centre-left voter profiles (Figures 45-47) in Germany, Austria and France shows considerable differences. Older female individuals who are not self-employed, not on benefits, not service workers, but are likely to be professional urban dwellers who trust the EU and have favourable attitudes towards immigrants are more likely to vote for the centre-left in the three countries. These individuals are unlikely to have cultural concerns over immigration and are therefore unlikely to be attracted to culturalist anti-immigration narratives. Indeed, among the centre-left electorate, the RWPP signature theme (i.e. exclusively cultural concerns over immigration) has very little prevalence. As described above, this percentage is higher in Austria (16%), while in Germany and France it is a very low at 6% and 7%, respectively (Figure 44).

Third, even among the RWPP electorates, individuals with exclusively cultural concerns over immigration (i.e. core voters) are a minority. The RWPP electorates in all three countries are composed of a significant percentage of people with either no immigration concerns (28% in Germany, 19% in Austria and 15% in France) or combined economic and cultural concerns (43% in Germany, 56% in Austria and 62% in France – Figure 40). This suggests the majority of voters of these parties are protest or peripheral voters, i.e. voters whose opposition to immigration is contingent. These voters are primarily concerned with the economic impact of immigration and tend to support the populist right as a way of expressing their discontent and punishing the establishment. They likely feel economically insecure and may have lost trust in institutions and the political system both at the domestic and EU levels. Because they have salient inequality concerns – broadly defined – and have no principled opposition to immigration these

voters can 'switch' to parties that emphasise issues related to equality and offer effective policy solutions to them. This voter group is a more likely centre-left target constituency through a broader 'equality' narrative.

Fourth, the percentage of voters with immigration concerns among the centre-left electorate is rather low. By contrast, the vast majority of people among the centre-left electorates in Germany, Austria and France have no immigration concerns – 69%, 57% and 66%, respectively (Figure 44). Those that do – 15% in Germany, 10% in Austria and 11% in France – are driven primarily by economic considerations. As such, their underlying frustrations could be understood as being driven by inequality / material considerations and would likely switch if their economic concerns are met.

This picture reveals a non-beneficial trade-off: the adoption of nationalist anti-immigration positions by the mainstream left will likely result in substantial losses of the left's own cosmopolitan, urban pro-immigrant voters in exchange for very small – if any – gains from the RWPP electorate, whose cultural core voter is a principled right-wing voter who is highly unlikely to vote for the centre-left even if it adopts 'copycat' policies. By contrast, downplaying the RWPP 'signatures' issues – for example, immigration and multiculturalism, and focusing instead on issues such as economic security and equality, can be a beneficial strategy for progressives. The 2021 German Federal election illustrates this point well: the SPD's victorious campaign centred on economic issues which were particularly salient among voters (Dancygier 2021).

Figure 44: Distribution of immigration concerns

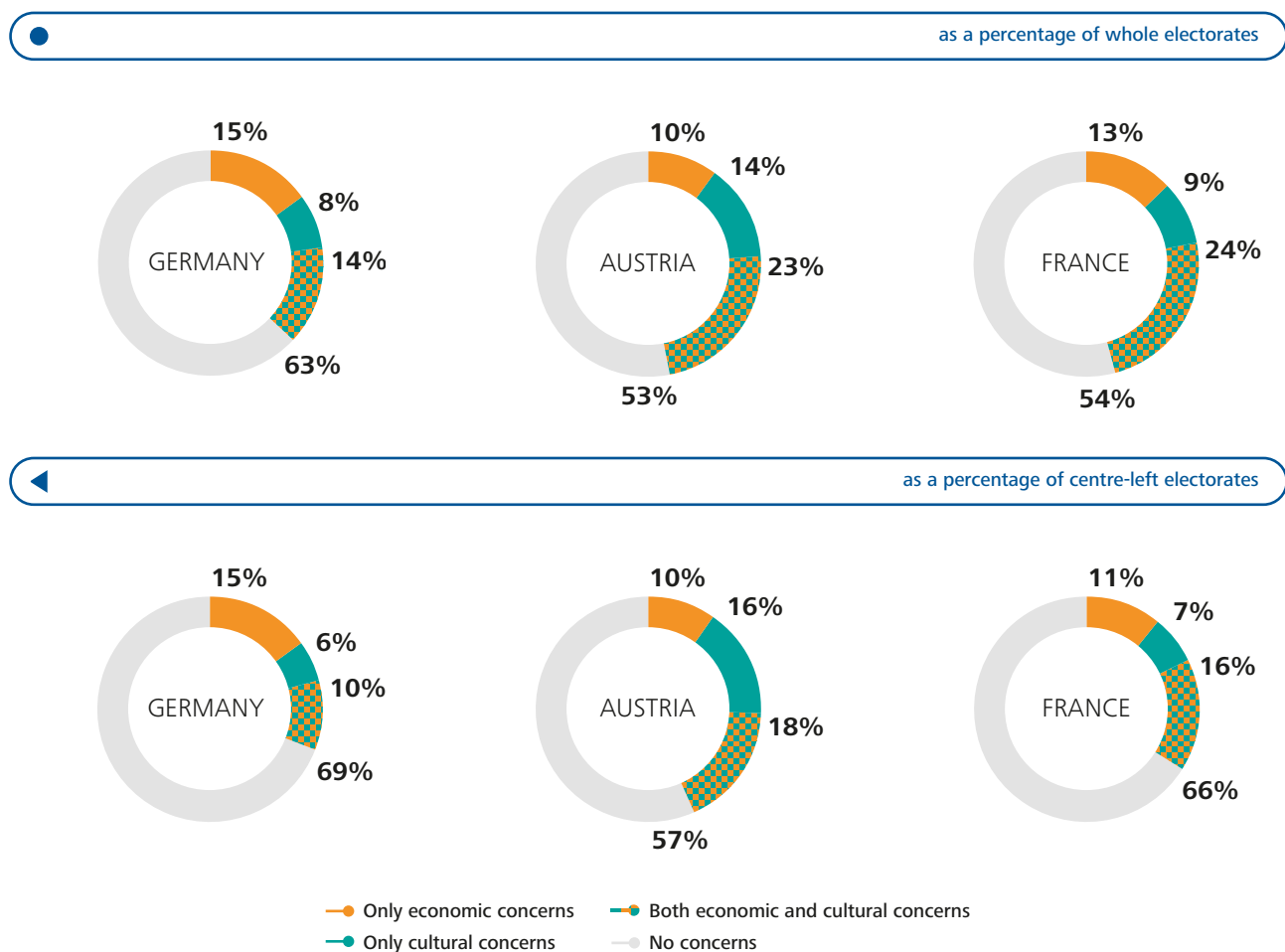
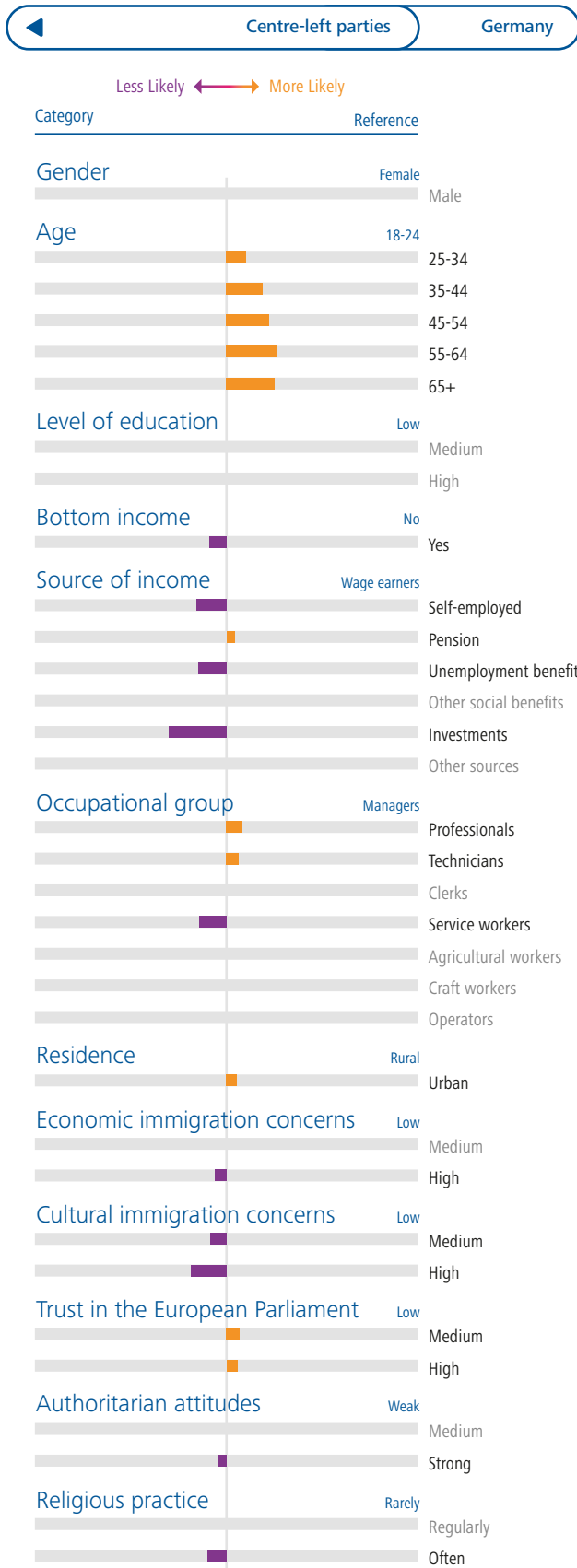
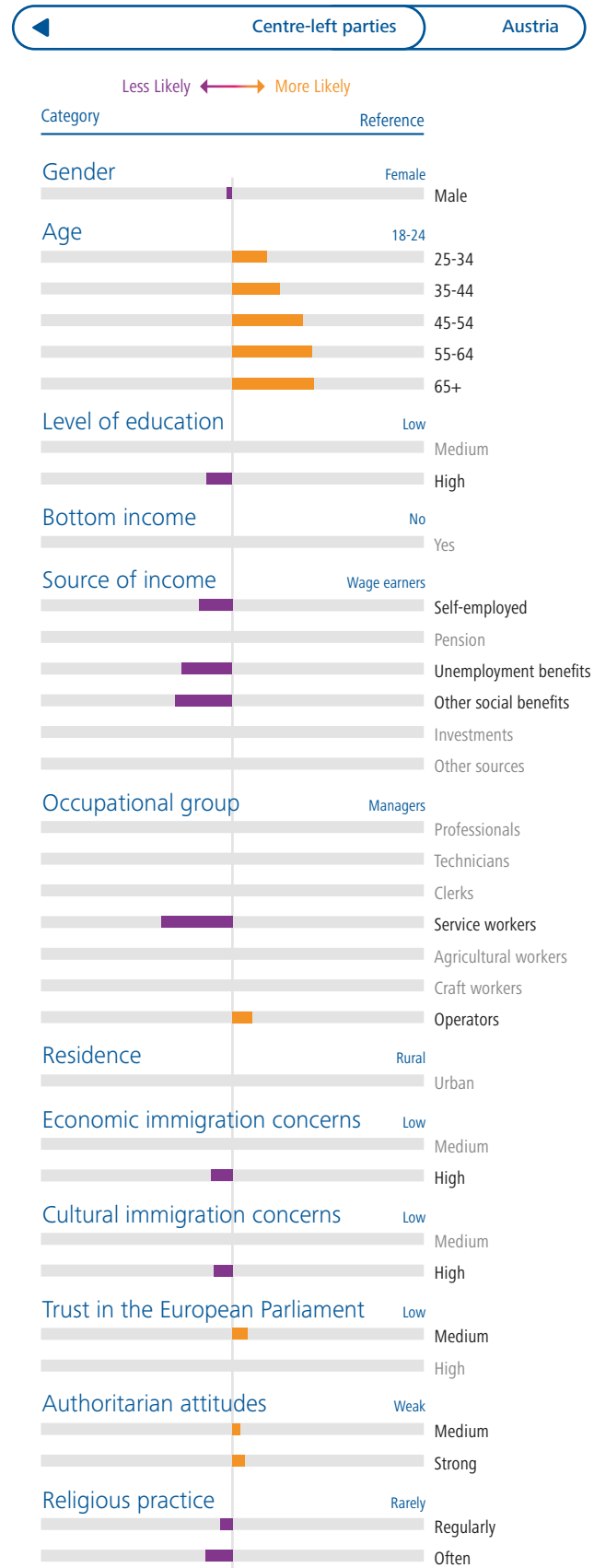


Figure 45: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



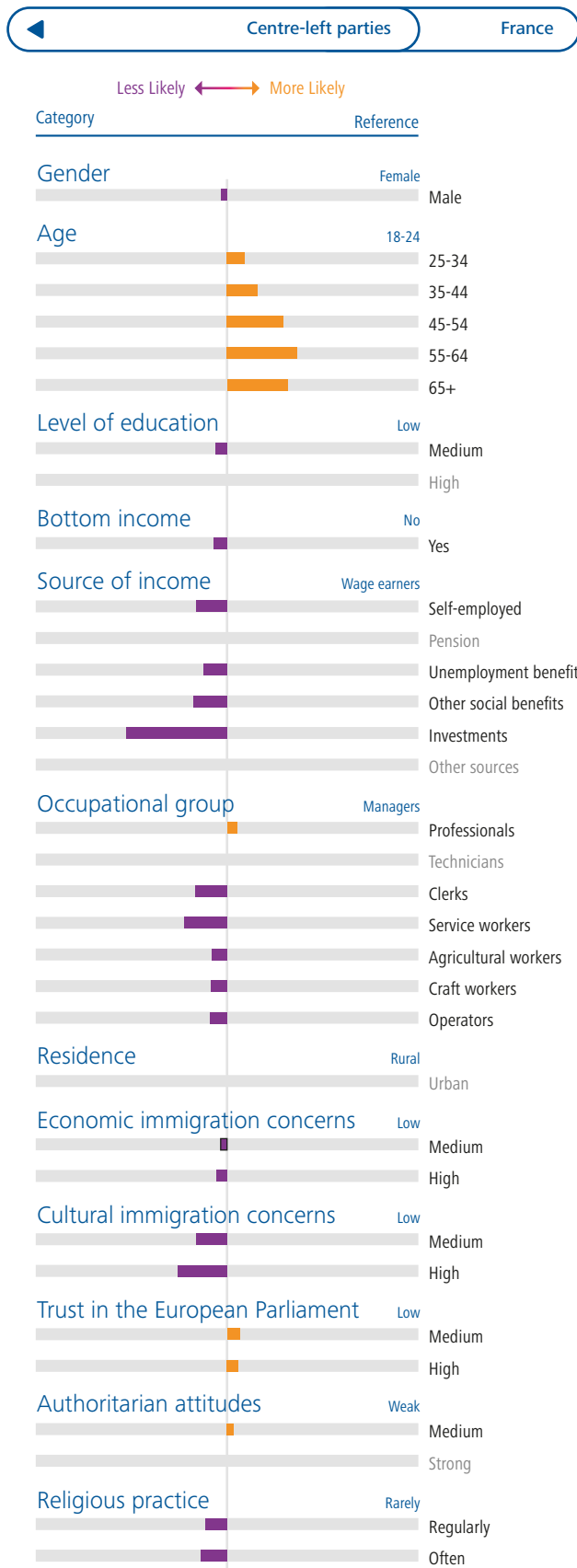
Only statistically significant results are shown.

Figure 46: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.

Figure 47: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.



UNITED KINGDOM





UNITED KINGDOM

British National Party (BNP)

United Kingdom Independence
Party (UKIP)

UNITED KINGDOM

PATTERNS OF SUCCESS



British National Party (BNP)



United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP)

The UK’s majoritarian electoral system and subsequent two-party system have long prevented RWPPs from gaining substantial parliamentary representation or entering governing coalitions. For this reason, paradoxically, RWPPs in the UK have relied heavily on European Parliament election performance and support at the local level. Despite some, but limited, electoral success in national elections, the adoption of RWPP positions – notably Brexit and immigration scepticism – by mainstream parties has resulted in the systemic entrenchment of some RWPP ideas.

Figure 48: RWPP national election history in UK 1999-2021

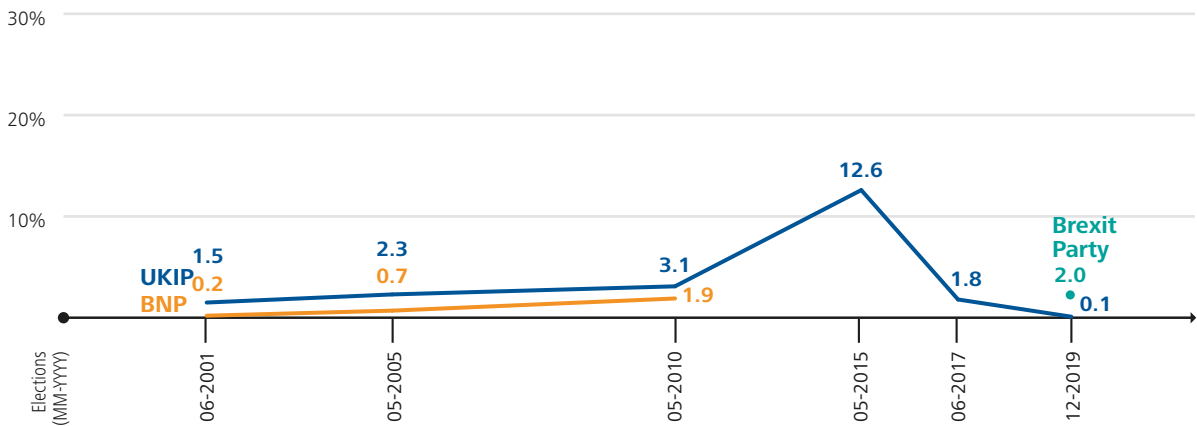
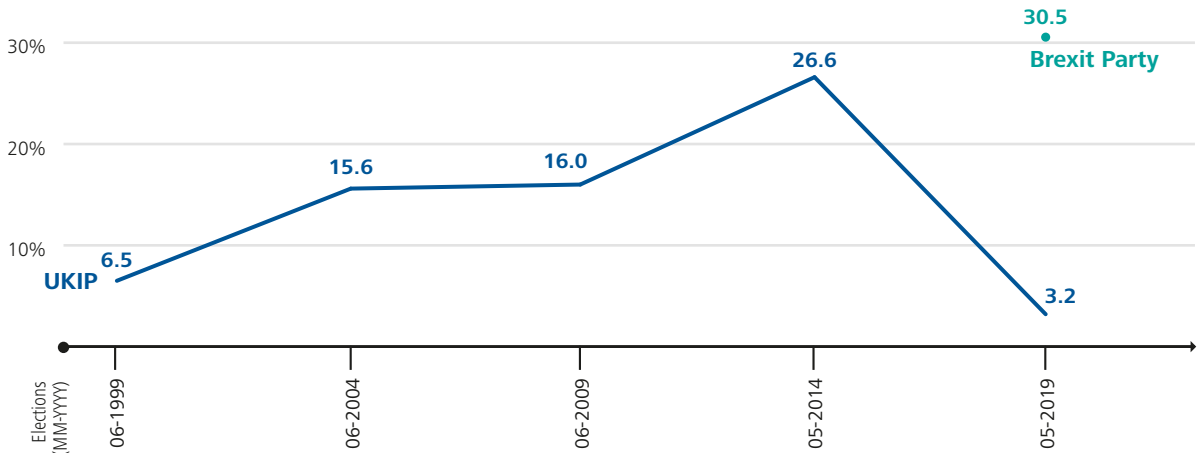


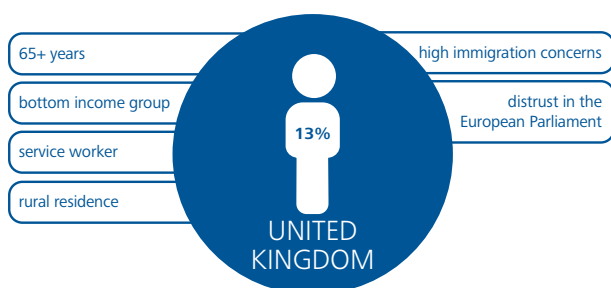
Figure 49: RWPP EP election history in UK 1999-2021



DEMAND: WHO VOTES FOR RWPPS IN THE UK?

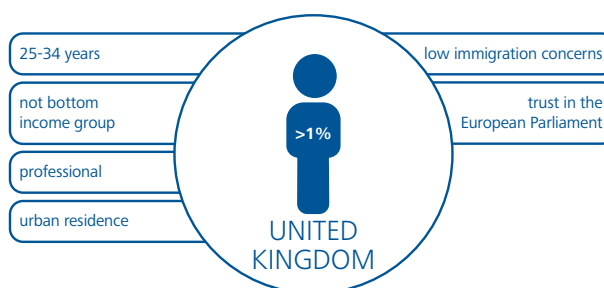
The UK is similar to other cases in Western Europe in that voting takes place at the intersection of a value cleavage and a materialist cleavage. The British case is unique, however, in that RWPP success has been driven primarily by a single issue: EU exit. UKIP was able to mobilise a coalition of diverse constituencies through the adoption of a successful civic nationalist narrative scapegoating the EU. The highest probability of voting for UKIP comes from older and economically left-behind voters who reside in rural areas, distrust the EU and dislike immigrants for predominantly cultural reasons. While cultural concerns over immigration are the strongest predictors of UKIP support, a significant proportion of UKIP’s voters have both cultural and economic concerns over immigration, as well as no concerns at all. This finding indicates both a direct economic insecurity mechanism and an indirect one via immigration and opposition to the EU.

Figure 50: Who is the most likely right-wing populist party voter?



Probability to vote for a Right Wing Populist Party (%)

Figure 51: Who is the least likely right-wing populist party voter?



Probability to vote for a Right Wing Populist Party (%)

SUPPLY: WHAT MAKES THESE PARTIES NARRATIVES [UN]SUCCESSFUL?

The signature theme of RWPP in the UK is the explicit emphasis on hard Euroscepticism. UKIP’s opposition to the EU has been underpinned by a civic nationalist rhetoric that emphasises the British nation’s right to sovereignty and political independence. The party’s streamlined rhetoric proved more palatable than that of the BNP, appealing to a broader range of voter constituencies and driving party competition in its favour.

PARTY PROFILES

BRITISH NATIONAL PARTY (BNP)

The British National Party (BNP) falls within the extreme right category, or the ‘old’ far right. The party made some efforts to modernise during Nick Griffin’s leadership (1999-2014), but unsuccessfully. While it gained some support in local and European elections between 2003-2010, the party did not manage a nationwide electoral breakthrough, primarily because it remained extreme-ethnic nationalist. The BNP ultimately lost its support to UKIP. It remains marginalised in British politics.

THE BNP’S VALUE PROFILE: ETHNIC NATIONALISM

During the period 1982-1999, the BNP was explicitly ethnic nationalist and racist. All its positions derived from a racial understanding of the nation. The party perceived immigration as a racial problem, a threat to the racial homogeneity and character of the British population. The BNP opposed all immigration and called for ‘a massive programme of repatriation or resettlement of coloured immigrants and their offsprings’ (Halikiopoulou and Vasilopoulou 2010). The commencement of Griffin’s leadership in 1999 is a critical juncture of the BNP’s transformation or ‘modernisation’. During this period, the BNP made some attempts to shift the emphasis from ethnic to civic elements of British national identity in an (ultimately unsuccessful) move to resemble the discourse of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). Although race still figured prominently in the party’s materials, these also featured an increasing number of references to civic values such as liberal sovereignty and the rule of law, individual freedom, equality before the law and private property. The party had previously explicitly rejected such values as ‘liberal sickness’.

THE BNPS ECONOMIC AND WELFARE POLICY PROFILE: ECONOMIC NATIONALISM

The BNP identified economic nationalism as a key pillar of its ideology. This economic nationalism was based on a set of protectionist policies, including the nationalisation of British industry, aiming to preserve the British economy from foreign competition and intervention. Post-1999, the party’s economic nationalism became increasingly governed by civic principles. This included the rejection of immigration, increasingly justified on the basis of its potential economic and social impact, such as unemployment, welfare dependency and educational failure (Halikiopoulou and Vasilopoulou 2010). The party is explicitly welfare chauvinist, famous for its slogan ‘British jobs for British workers’.

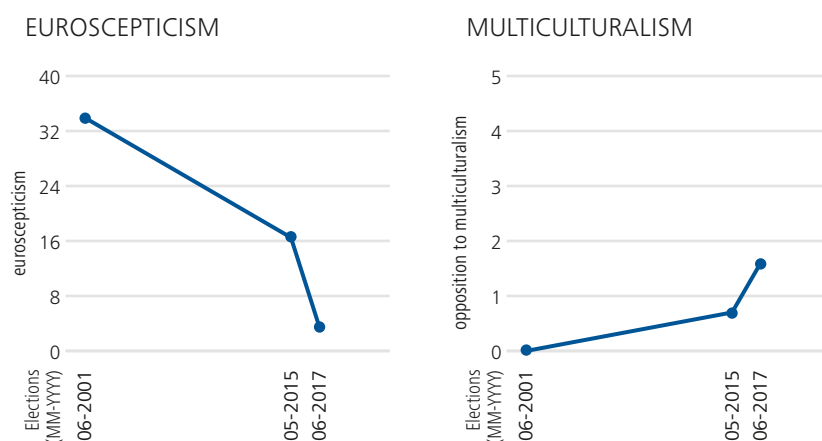
UNITED KINGDOM INDEPENDENCE PARTY (UKIP)

The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) was established in 1993. Initially a single-issue party advocating EU exit, it gradually evolved to a fully-fledged RWPP (Klein and Pirro 2021). Its performance peaked under the leadership of Nigel Farage (2006-2009 and 2010-2016) under the single-issue banner of EU withdrawal. Farage resigned from the party's leadership in 2016 in the aftermath of Brexit, finally departing from the party in 2018. This resulted in a programmatic shift to the far right grassroots sector, and a change on almost all the party's positions. Under Gerard Batten's leadership (2018-2019), far-right activists infiltrated the party, resulting in the establishment of War Plan Purple (WPP) as the culturalist branch of UKIP in July 2018 (Klein and Pirro 2021).

UKIP'S VALUE PROFILE: EUROSCEPTICISM AND CIVIC NATIONALISM

UKIP's opposition to the EU has been underpinned by a civic nationalist rhetoric that emphasises the British nation's right to sovereignty and political independence. UKIP supported a purportedly inclusive concept of British nationality with common citizenship and shared values. In accordance to its civic nationalism, one can be British if one accepts liberal values. The unity of the British nation is primarily based on political institutions, including British common law, parliamentary sovereignty and individual freedom over state control. Following the Brexit referendum the party shifted its agenda. Under Batten's leadership, the party focused less on the EU and increasingly positioned itself against multiculturalism (Figure 52). At the same time, it moved closer to grassroots politics establishing formal links with far-right activists, for example former English Defence League (EDL) leader Tomy Robinson (Klein and Pirro 2021).

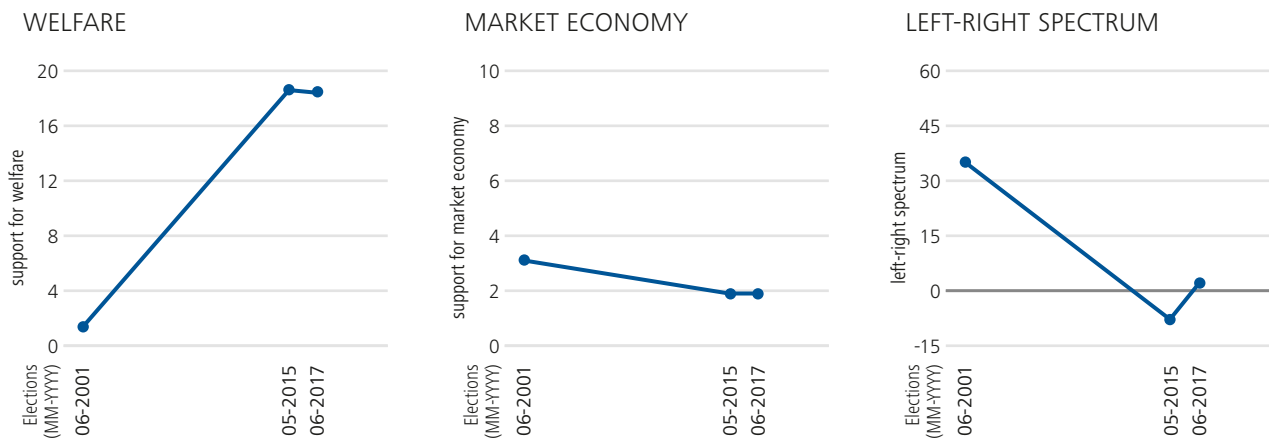
Figure 52: UKIP's stance on euroscepticism and multiculturalism



UKIP’S ECONOMIC AND WELFARE POLICY PROFILE: ECONOMIC LIBERALISM AND WELFARE CHAUVINISM

UKIP’s economic and welfare policy may be described as ‘blurry’ or inconsistent, in line with other RWPPs that draw on economically liberal narratives, but also emphasise welfare chauvinism in their attempts to appeal to a range of diverse constituencies. Overall, the party has devoted a small share of its electoral manifestos to social policy (Enggist and Pingera 2021). It has still, however, emphasised welfare chauvinism in its programme (Figure 53) and made explicit links between the economy and immigration in its campaigns. During Farage’s leadership, UKIP stressed the negative implications of EU red tape for British companies, and at the same time presented immigrants as labour market competitors to British people. In accordance with this narrative, the party suggested that large waves of immigration hinder the performance of the British economy. Its electoral campaigns claimed that British workers were ‘being hit by unlimited cheap labour’ originating from the EU, thus resembling the BNP’s narrative. Under Batten’s ‘culture wars’ narrative, the party emphasised economic freedom and self-reliance.

Figure 53: UKIP’ stance on welfare, market economy, and the left-right spectrum



ANALYSIS

UNDERSTANDING THE RISE AND FALL OF RWPPS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Britain's 'immunity' from RWPPs was shaken in 2002 when Burnley, a manufacturing town in Lancashire, Northern England, became the first place to elect BNP councillors. This trend continued initially in areas that suffered more from de-industrialisation and accompanying public-sector cuts, such as a range of northern coal-mining English towns. In the 2008 local elections, the party gained representation in a number of councils around the country and secured a seat in the London Assembly. In the 2009 EP elections, the BNP increased its support, receiving for the first time since its establishment 6.2 per cent of the vote and two seats in the EP. The party's performance was strong in left-behind areas where rapid shifts away from manufacturing lead to redundancies and declining job prospects. The BNP capitalised on economic discontent and social alienation by linking these concerns to the immigration issue and cultivating a racist opposition to multiculturalism. Because of its association with racism and extremism, however, and its inability to moderate its image successfully, it was unable to increase its electoral support.

UKIP, instead, left aside the issue of race, utilising a civic nationalist narrative that focused on the EU and the negative impact of labour mobility on the UK's economy. It overtook the BNP as its streamlined rhetoric was more palatable to a broader range of voter constituencies. The party's performance peaked in the 2014 EP elections, when the party received 27.5% of the vote and 24 seats in the European Parliament. In the subsequent 2015 national elections the party received 12.6%, its highest percentage. Although in 2017 its electoral support decreased to 1.8 per cent, this should be understood within the context of systemic entrenchment: both mainstream political parties co-opted its main campaign issue, i.e. Brexit. The rise and decline of the Brexit Party can be understood within the same context. Led by Farage, it was established in 2019 with a clear plan to deliver Brexit during a time of turmoil, when the mainstream had problems sealing a deal with EU. The Brexit Party gained the largest share of votes in the 2019 EP election (30.5%), in contrast to UKIP's 3.2%, by occupying the 'Brexit niche' (Dennison 2020). However, following a change in Tory leadership and Johnson's subsequent promise to deliver a deal, the 2019 UK General election produced a strong result for the Tories at the expense of the Brexit Party.

Overall RWPP support in the UK may be understood within the context of a successful civic nationalist narrative (Halikiopoulou and Vasilopoulou 2010) scapegoating the EU and mobilising a coalition of diverse constituencies. ESS data confirms that the strongest probability of voting for UKIP comes from older, economically left-behind voters (especially bottom income groups), and/or service workers and operators who reside in the countryside, distrust the EU and dislike immigrants for cultural reasons (Figure 55). While cultural concerns over immigration are the strongest predictors of UKIP support, a significant proportion of voters among UKIP's electorate have both cultural and economic concerns over immigration, as well as no concerns at all (Figure 54). This suggests the presence of both a direct economic insecurity mechanism and an indirect one via immigration and opposition to the EU.

The economically insecure are more likely to see themselves as the ‘losers’ of European integration – and modernisation more broadly. This actual or perceived deprivation is likely to drive anti-EU positions either as a form of protest vote, as a punishment of the establishment, or opposition to free movement of labour and immigrant access to welfare and jobs. While, therefore, the salience of the immigration issue has played a key role in both support for UKIP and Brexit, immigration should not be understood simply as a cultural issue, as many voters with anti-immigrant attitudes, especially labour market outsiders, see themselves as competing with immigrants for jobs, welfare, and more broadly, for access to the collective goods of the state (Halikiopoulou and Vlandas 2017).

Research confirms a significant association between the exposure of an individual or area to austerity-induced welfare reforms and the rise in support for UKIP, as well as support for the Leave in the 2016 referendum (Fetzer 2019). Indeed, UKIP performed particularly well in areas with large shares of residents in routine jobs and low-educated residents, with higher employment shares in retail and manufacturing as well as areas with significant exposure to benefit cuts (Fetzer 2019). Studies using British Election Study (BES) data confirm the correlation between UKIP and Leave voters, suggesting that older, white respondents, as well as those at higher risk of poverty, below the median income, with no formal education as well as workers in routine or low-skill occupations more exposed to immigration were more likely to vote for Brexit (Halikiopoulou and Vlandas 2017).

Research has also pointed to the importance of social alienation as a trigger for UKIP support (Bolet 2021). This explanation focuses on local support for RWPPs, suggesting that left-behind and economically insecure individuals share feelings of community loss and status decline, becoming more receptive to messages emphasising socio-cultural degradation and the costs of immigration. It also sheds light on the local dimension of support, explaining why, for example, increases in asylum-seekers in a local authority has been linked to higher support for RWPPs in the UK (Kenny and Miller 2020). Other analyses also confirm that status is a strong predictor of UKIP support (Carella and Ford 2020).

Figure 54: **Distribution of immigration concerns**

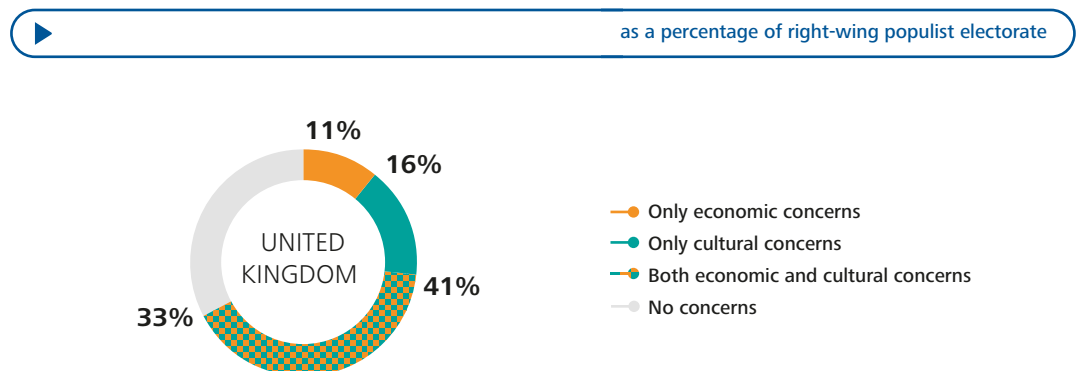
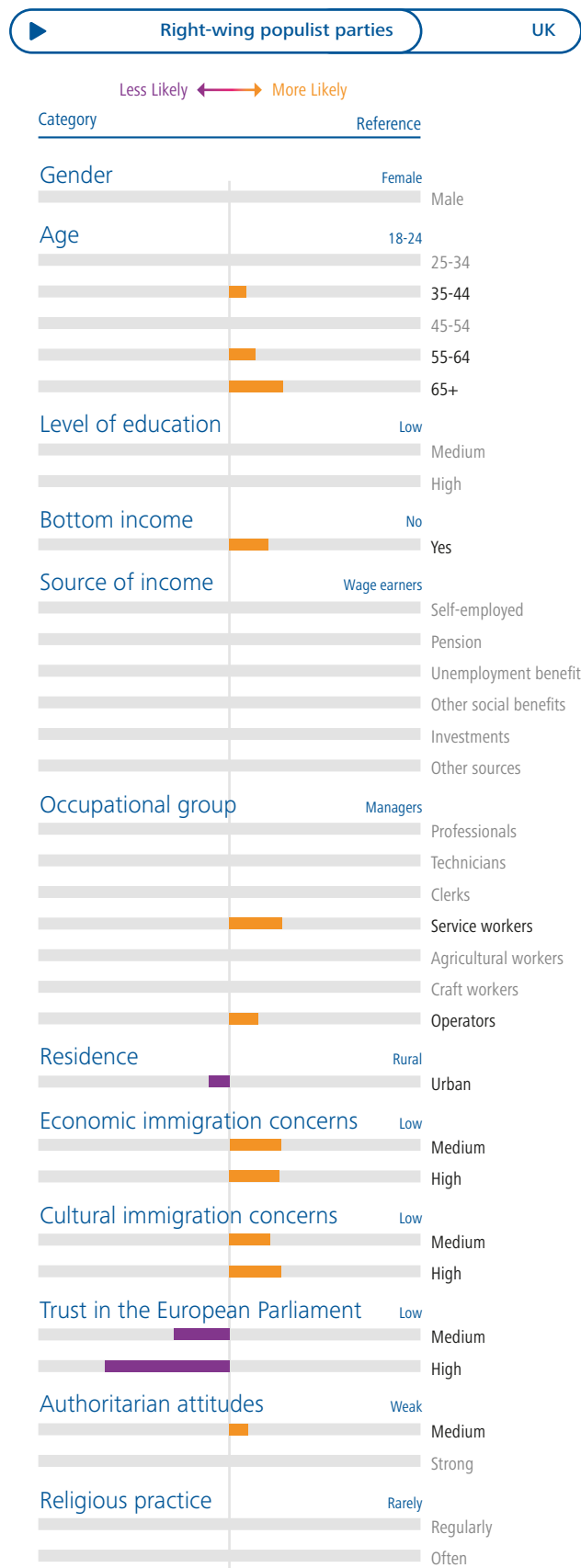


Figure 55: **Characteristics affecting the probability to vote**



Only statistically significant results are shown.

RECOMMENDATIONS

HOW SHOULD PROGRESSIVES RESPOND?

How should progressive parties in the UK respond? Our comparison of the RWPP and centre-left electorates in the UK suggests that co-opting RWPP positions will likely be costly for the progressive left. This finding is consistent with recent literature, which suggests that the centre-left and RWPP electorates are considerably different (Abou Chadi et al. 2021) and that centre-left repositioning towards RWPP restrictive immigration policies may attract a small number of RWPP voters, but alienate a much larger proportion of their own voters (Chou et al. 2021). A more beneficial strategy for the progressive left is to instead compete on issues the left owns, such as equality.

First, RWPP core voters, i.e. those voters who oppose immigration on principle and have strong cultural concerns over immigration, are a minority in the UK, accounting for 10% of the whole electorate (Figure 56). These voters are principled RWPP voters and are unlikely to switch to the centre-left even if it adopts 'copycat' strategies. They identify more staunchly with a right-wing platform and are more likely to switch from 'far' to centre-right. They are the least likely centre-left constituency and do not constitute a centre-left target voter group.

Second, a comparison between the RWPP and centre-left voter profiles (Figures 55+57) shows considerable differences. Middle-aged, wage-earning urban dwellers who trust the EU are more likely to vote for the centre-left. These individuals are unlikely to have cultural concerns over immigration and are therefore unlikely to be attracted to cultural nationalist anti-immigrant narratives. Indeed, the RWPP signature theme has very little prevalence among the centre-left electorate (Figure 56) as only 9% of centre-left voters have cultural concerns over immigration.

Third, even among the RWPP electorate, individuals with exclusively cultural concerns over immigration (i.e. core voters) are a minority (16%). The RWPP electorate in the UK is composed of a significant percentage of people with either no immigration concerns (33%) or combined economic and cultural concerns (41%) (Figure 54). This suggests the majority of RWPP voters are protest or peripheral voters, i.e. voters whose opposition to immigration is contingent. These voters are primarily concerned with the economic impact of immigration and tend to support the populist right as a way of expressing their discontent and punishing the establishment. They likely feel economically insecure and may have lost trust in institutions and the political system both at the domestic and EU levels. Because they have salient inequality concerns – broadly defined – and have no principled opposition to immigration, these voters can 'switch' to parties that emphasise issues related to equality and offer effective policy solutions to them. This voter group is a more likely centre-left target constituency through a broader 'equality' narrative.

Fourth, immigration concerns are not salient among the centre-left electorate, as indeed 56% of centre-left voters have no immigration concerns at all (Figure 56). This suggests that the centre-left voter constituency is not sympathetic to the RWPP agenda and will likely abandon the party if it shifts further to the nationalist right. This picture reveals a non-

beneficial trade-off: the adoption of nationalist anti-immigration positions by the mainstream left will likely result in substantial losses of the left’s own cosmopolitan, urban pro-immigrant voters in exchange for very small – if any – gains from the RWPP electorate, whose cultural core voter is a principled right-wing voter who is highly unlikely to vote for the centre-left even if it adopts ‘copycat’ policies.

Labour can regain these voters by reclaiming ownership of the issue it knows best: equality. This will allow the party to rebuild its own broad voter coalitions and pioneer a strategy that mobilises voters on an issue it can credibly claim as its ‘signature theme’ that it is competent in handling, rather than copy an issue that other parties ‘own’.

Figure 56: Distribution of immigration concerns

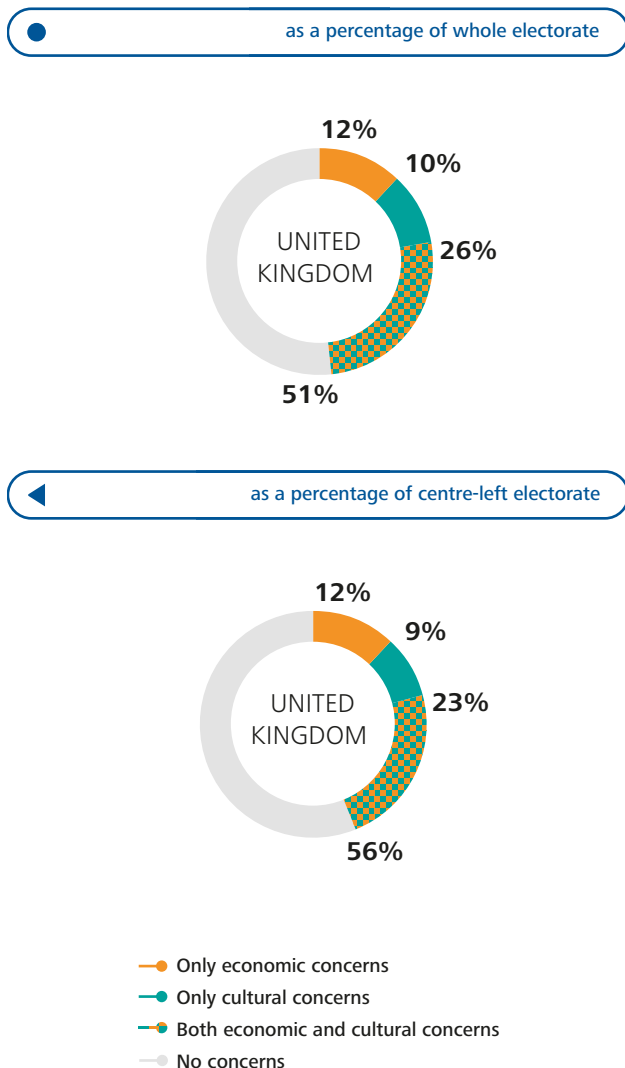
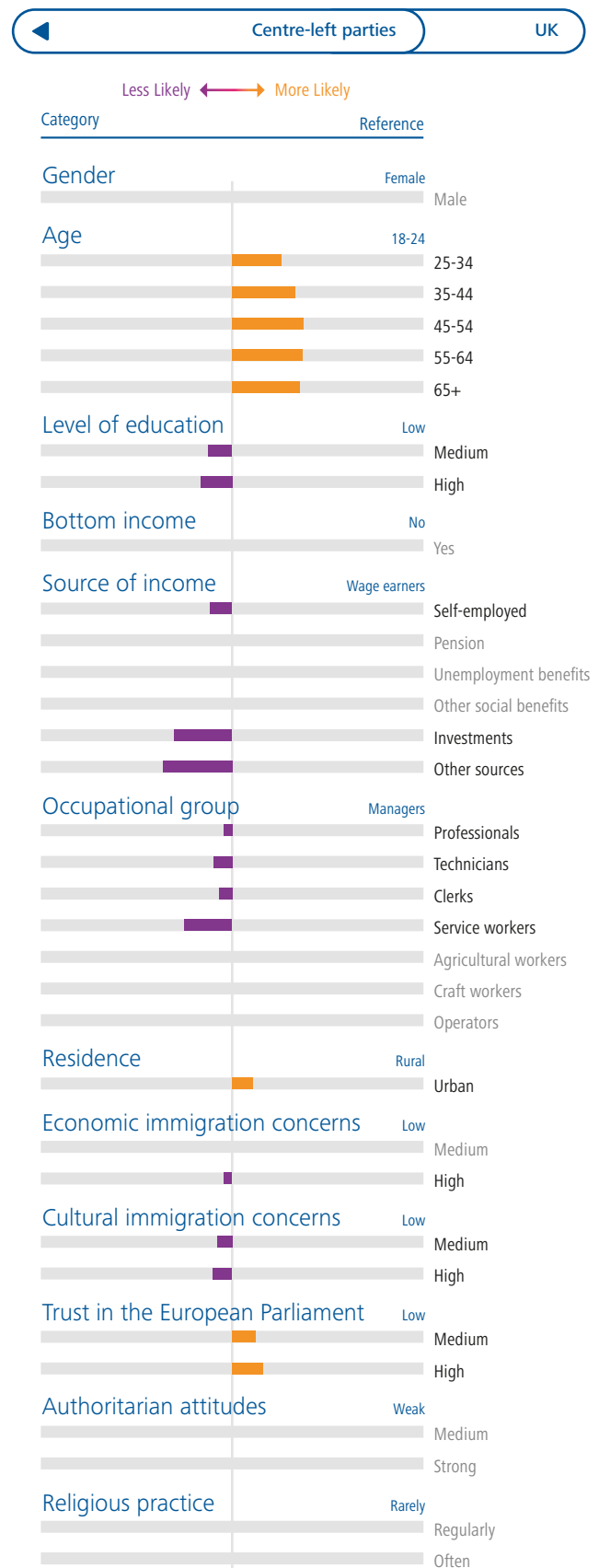


Figure 57: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.



SOUTHERN EUROPE

GREECE, CYPRUS, SPAIN AND PORTUGAL



GREECE

Golden Dawn (GD)
Independent Greeks (ANEL)
Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS)

CYPRUS

National Popular Front (ELAM)

SPAIN

Vox (Voice)

PORTUGAL

Chega! (Enough!)

SOUTHERN EUROPE: GREECE, CYPRUS, SPAIN AND PORTUGAL

GREECE

PATTERNS OF SUCCESS



Golden Dawn (GD)

RWPP success has varied significantly across Southern European countries. Greece has had RWPPs both in government (LAOS, ANEL) and opposition (GD). In contrast, RWPPs in Cyprus, Spain and Portugal for a long time failed to make substantial electoral gains despite economic grievances and immigration. Following the eruption of the financial crisis, Greece was the only country among the four to develop significant RWPP support with the election of the Golden Dawn, a previously marginalised neo-Nazi party, in the Greek parliament. The GD managed to retain approximately 7 per cent of the vote for almost seven years, during some of which time it was already undergoing trial. It failed to enter parliament in 2019 and in late 2020, the party's 5-year trial concluded with the Golden Dawn being declared a criminal organisation and its leading cadres indicted and imprisoned.

CYPRUS



National Popular Front (ELAM)

SPAIN



Vox (Voice)

PORTUGAL



Chegal (Enough!)

While equivalent parties did exist in the other countries – Golden Dawn's sister party National Popular Front (ELAM) in Cyprus, Democracia Nacional (DN) and España 2000 in Spain and the Partido Nacional Renovador (PNR) in Portugal – these only received low support. These countries have been referred to as 'negative' or 'exceptional' cases because, despite favourable conditions (economic grievances, immigration), those RWPPs were not successful. This trend is changing. ELAM has gradually increased its support in Cyprus, reaching 6.8% in 2021. Spain and Portugal have been experiencing the rise of RWPPs with increasing support for VOX and less so Chega, both radical RWPP variants parties which, unlike the GD, have largely shed the stigma of fascism.

Figure 58: RWPP national election history in Greece 2004-2021

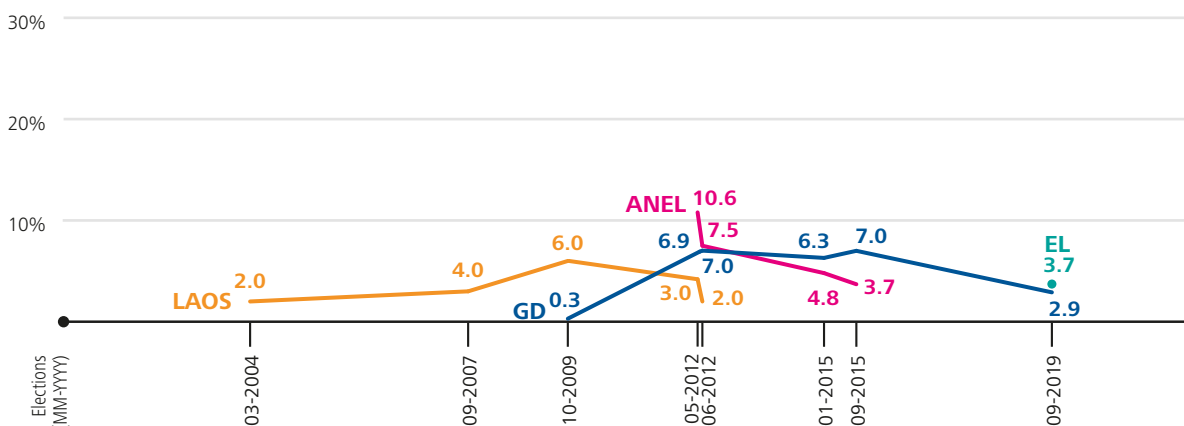


Figure 59 : RWPP national election history in Cyprus 2004-2021

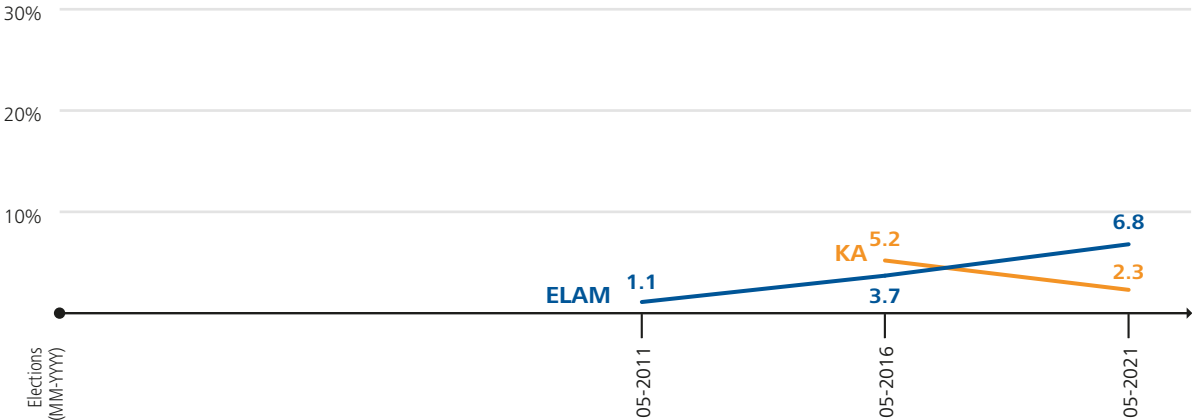


Figure 60: RWPP national election history in Spain 2004-2021



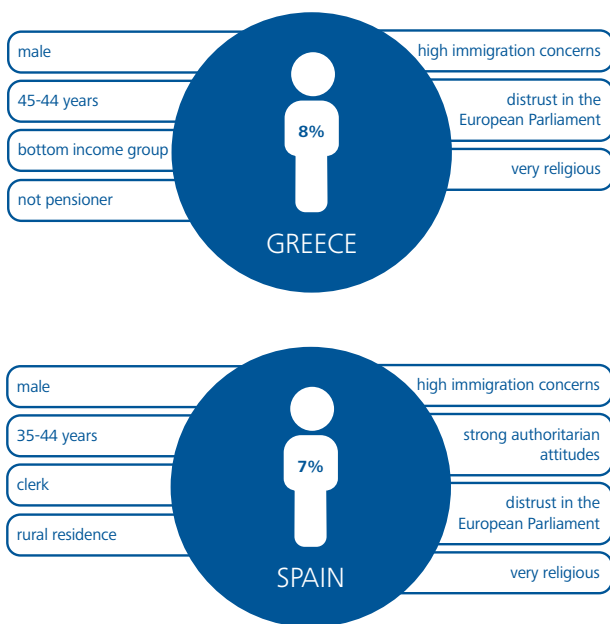
Figure 61: RWPP national election history in Portugal 2004-2022



DEMAND: WHO VOTES FOR RWPPS IN SOUTHERN EUROPE?

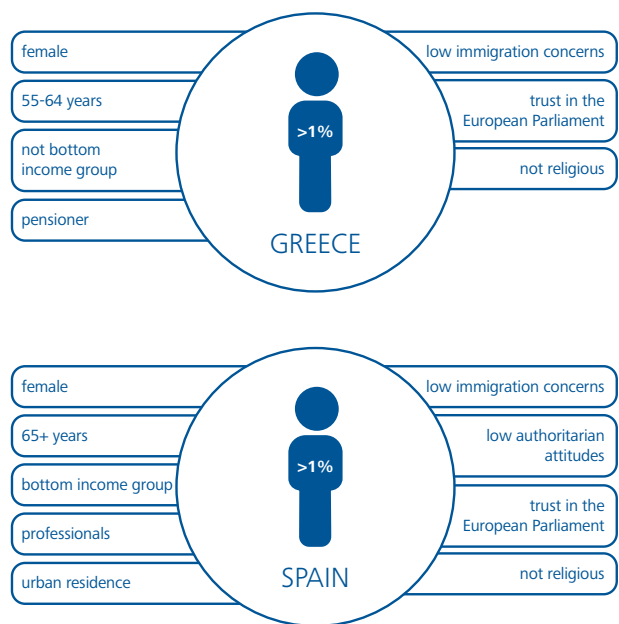
In terms of demand, voting trends in Southern Europe were largely shaped by the severe economic crisis that erupted in 2008, which entailed the prevalence of societal divisions over austerity and welfare. There is strong left-right polarisation and the materialist cleavage remains salient. We may also observe the increased salience of immigration consistent with developments in Western Europe. Greece, Spain and Portugal share a history of authoritarianism, a strong involvement of religion in politics and a left-right party system bipolarity. In Spain, the issue of regional autonomy, and in Cyprus, the ‘national’ issue cross-cut the left–right cleavage.

Figure 62: Who is the most likely right-wing populist party voter?



Probability to vote for a Right Wing Populist Party (%)

Figure 63: Who is the least likely right-wing populist party voter?



Probability to vote for a Right Wing Populist Party (%)

SUPPLY: WHAT MAKES THESE PARTIES' NARRATIVES [UN]SUCCESSFUL?

There are two RWPP variants in South Europe: The extreme-right variants in Greece and Cyprus (GD and ELAM) and the radical-right variants in Spain and Portugal (Vox and Chega). The former two are nationalist-welfarist, while the latter two emphasise – with some variations – liberal economic policies and are closer to the new radical-right parties successful in Western Europe. There have also been successful variants in Greece, including the Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS) and Independent Greeks, both of whom have had access to office.

PARTY PROFILES

GOLDEN DAWN (GD)

The Golden Dawn was first established in December 1980 as a bulletin published by a group of former members of the neo-fascist 'Party of August 4th', associated with the dictatorial regime of Ioannis Metaxas (1936–1941). The Golden Dawn has consistently and openly emphasised its Nationalist Socialist principles, thus differentiating itself ideologically from other Greek far-right-wing factions. Since the party's establishment, Golden Dawn members often roamed the streets attacking, beating and stabbing their victims: refugees, immigrants and left-wing activists. Since getting voted into parliament in 2012, party members often became embroiled in acts of violence, attacking small street vendors of non-Greek origin and terrorising anyone who did not fulfil their criteria of belonging to the 'superior Greek race'. In January 2013, they murdered Pakistani immigrant Shezhad Luqman. In September of the same year, the murder of Pavlos Fyssas – a left-wing activist known as 'Killah P' – became the catalyst for indictment after a trial that lasted over five years. The party failed to obtain parliamentary representation during the 2019 national elections, and in late 2020 its leading cadres were indicted and imprisoned for maintaining a criminal organisation.

GOLDEN DAWN'S VALUE PROFILE: EXTREME POPULIST ULTRA-NATIONALISM

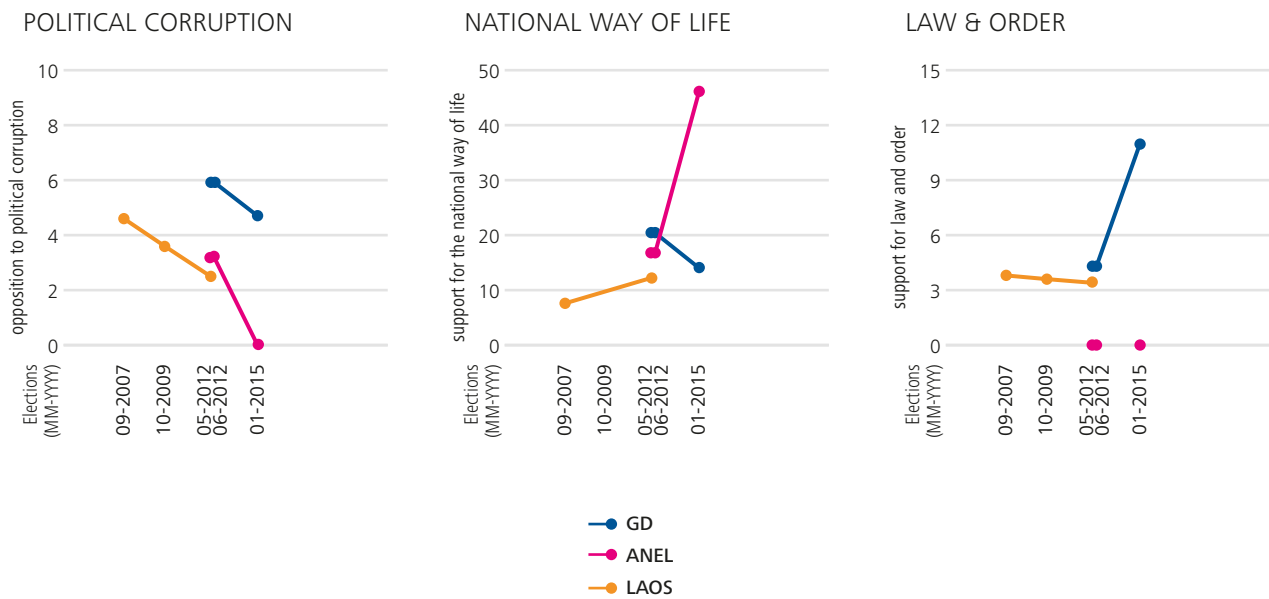
The Golden Dawn can be categorised as an extreme, ultra-nationalist, and racist party. The party's leadership itself rejected the Neo-Nazi label, preferring instead the term 'Greek nationalists'. However, the party falls clearly within the fascist, and more specifically neo-Nazi category, in its outright espousal of National Socialism: it opposes democracy, rejects liberalism and socialism, employs violence and concentrates all power in the hands of the leader. Specifically, the party fulfils the defining criteria of a fascist group, including nationalism, statism, para-militarism, transcendence and cleansing (Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou 2015). Its goal is the establishment of a state that is subservient to the nation. The extensive collection of Nazi paraphernalia found in possession of the party's leading cadres since the beginning of the trial also attests to the party's association with the Nazi regime. Its logo is the Greek meander, which is reminiscent of the Nazi swastika.

The defining characteristics of the Golden Dawn's ideology include an emphasis on law and order, the national way of life and political corruption (Figure 64). The party centres on an ethnic understanding of the Greek nation – an entity which it defines based on ascriptive signifiers such as bloodline, language, religion, and community of birth. The party equates the state with ethnicity and emphasises white supremacy, understood as the supremacy of the Greek race. Accordingly, their anti-immigrant narrative is expressed in organic terms: Greek status is something one is born into, and therefore non-Greeks, i.e. those who do not fulfil the bloodline criteria of national membership, should not be granted Greek citizenship because they will 'spoil' the continuity of the Greek nation. Like fascist movements of the past, the Golden Dawn puts forward its own myth of national rebirth. It highlights the significance of social decay and regeneration and sees itself as having the unique mission to lead the nation into a phoenix-like national rebirth, rising

from the ashes of the old degenerate social order. The party’s value profile differentiates it from other successful European RWPPs which have progressively adopted a civic nationalist narrative, emphasising the ideological rather than biological criteria of national belonging.

Populist ultra-nationalism is a recurrent theme in the party’s ideology. While the extent to which extreme right variants can be populist is debated in the literature, scholars agree that the Golden Dawn is populist given the emphasis on the popular basis of its authoritarianism. (Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou 2015; Charalambous and Christoforou 2018). The Golden Dawn is populist in the way fascists are the quintessential populists: claiming that their legitimacy derives from their embodiment of the singular unified popular will into an all-encompassing state subservient to the nation. The Golden Dawn presented itself not in elitist terms, but rather as a movement from below that did not only speak on behalf of the ‘pure’ Greek people, but also embodied their collective will. Through this narrative, the party justified its quest for ultimate state power. According to the party’s leader Nikolaos Michaloliakos, the ‘Nationalist Socialist leader [...] incarnates the secret calling of the blood and his ultimate goal is full control of state power in the name of the nation’ (Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou 2015).

Figure 64: GD’s, ANEL’s and LAOS’ stance on political corruption, the national way of life, and law & order

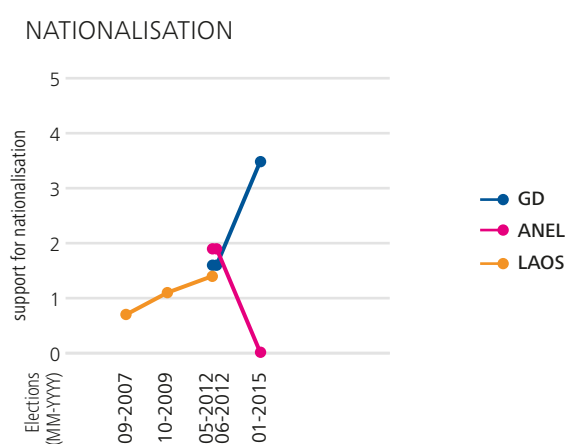


GOLDEN DAWN'S ECONOMIC AND WELFARE POLICY PROFILE: NATION-STATISM AND WELFARE CHAUVINISM

The Golden Dawn's economic programme is underpinned by the party's rampant nation-statism. In line with its National Socialist ideology, the party proposed maximum state intervention in the economy, linking its nationalist narratives to the importance of sovereignty over economic decision-making. The Golden Dawn advocated the expansion of the welfare state, supported welfare chauvinism and idealised nationalist-welfarist regimes. For example, the party cadres glorify Ioannis Metaxas, the leader of Greece's interwar fascist regime famous for refusing to co-operate with Nazi Germany, thus paradoxically becoming a symbol of resistance in Greece. The party has systematically emphasised Metaxas's welfare contributions, including the establishment of the welfare state itself, the introduction of national insurance, a six-day working week, the minimum wage and a range of collective labour agreements (Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou 2015).

In terms of its broader economic programme, the Golden Dawn emphasised autonomy and self-sufficiency regarding food, medicine, fuel and weapons. Furthermore, the party proposed nationalising all wealth resources and industries such as energy and allocating funds to Greeks through subsidising domestic production (Figure 65). In terms of immigration, the party emphasised the question of entitlement, making clear that the collective goods of the state should only be available to Greeks, as defined by the ascriptive criteria discussed above. Its rampant nation-statism and emphasis on welfare became evident in the party's activities on the ground. The Golden Dawn set up a social solidarity programme, presenting itself as an alternative provider of state services. It organised a range of welfare provision activities such as health and job centres, blood donations and 'soup kitchens', which would be available only to Greeks upon the presentation of a Greek identity card.

Figure 65: GD's, ANEL's and LAOS' stance on nationalisation



NATIONAL POPULAR FRONT (ELAM)

The National Popular Front (ELAM) is the sister party of the Greek Golden Dawn. It was first established as a Golden Dawn branch in Cyprus. While initially it received few votes despite the ripe crisis conditions in the country, ELAM has increasingly improved its electoral performance. It received 3.7% of the popular vote in the 2016 parliamentary elections with 13,041 votes, while in 2021 it almost doubled its support to 6.8%.

ELAM'S VALUE PROFILE: EXTREME POPULIST ULTRA-NATIONALISM

Like the Golden Dawn, ELAM is an extreme ultra-nationalist party whose ideology centres on an ethnic understanding of the nation which only includes Greek Cypriots. They oppose representative democracy and are openly racist. ELAM's populism is similar to that of the Golden Dawn's, as the party claims to be a popular movement from below, deriving from the Greek Cypriot people. The party also shares the Golden Dawn's anti-system narrative, blaming corrupt and incompetent elites who it deems responsible for the economic crisis in Cyprus. Despite their similarities, research suggests that the Golden Dawn's profile is overall more extreme in terms of violence, paramilitarism and the espousal of Nazism employed in its practices. ELAM has progressively moderated and 'normalised' its populist rhetoric (Katsourides and Pachita 2021).

ELAM'S ECONOMIC AND WELFARE POLICY PROFILE: WELFARE CHAUVINISM AND ECONOMIC STATISM:

The party espouses welfare chauvinism and supports economic statism. It puts forward a similar nationalist-welfare narrative, proposing a large and generous welfare state, but only to Greek Cypriots. The party copied Golden Dawn initiatives during the financial crisis to provide alternative state provisions organising blood donations and soup kitchens. ELAM describes itself as a party for the economically destitute, deriving most of its support from the lower social strata and seeking to protect and promote the interests of the working class and unemployed individuals (Katsourides and Pachita 2021).

VOX

Vox was established in 2013 by individuals with previous links to the centre-right Partido Popular (PP). The party been electorally unsuccessful until 2018, when it obtained political representation in the Andalusian regional elections. During the November 2019 national elections, Vox received 15% of the popular vote, becoming the third-largest party with 52 seats. It is the first RWPP in Spain to gain considerable popular support in the past decades, ending the period of 'Spanish exceptionalism' (Alonso and Rovira Kaltwasser 2015).

VOX'S VALUE PROFILE: DEFENDING SPANISH UNITY

Vox is an RWPP that fulfils the criteria of nationalism, authoritarianism and populism. The party presents itself as a right-wing conservative party with no links to fascism. The fact that it seeks to operate within Spain's representative democratic institutions makes it a radical, as opposed to extreme-right, RWP variant (Turnbull-Dugarte et al. 2020). Vox, therefore, differs from the Geek Golden Dawn in that it has managed to gain support by shedding the stigma of fascism. The party's nationalism centres on the homogeneity of Spanish culture at the expense of the sub-cultures present in the country. Vox's signature theme is the defence of Spanish unity. It advocates the dissolution of Spain's devolved communities and the establishment of a single centralised state government. It is the first party in parliament to defend a complete re-centralisation of the state (Mendes and Dennison 2021).

Vox's nationalism focuses heavily on the maintenance of the national way of life. The party positions itself as pro-family and opposes abortion and same-sex marriage. It supports traditional family values and opposes feminism and gender equality on traditional gender nationalist grounds (Bernardez-Rodal 2020). Its anti-immigrant narrative is based on values: the party is explicitly Islamophobic, similarly to many 'civic nationalist' Western European RWPPs. However, the justification of this position derives largely from the need to defend Spain's Christian democratic heritage rather than secularism, suggesting this narrative is distinct from that of parties such as the French Rassemblement National (RN) that adopt a value-based discourse based on laïcité. Vox supports the deportation of all undocumented immigrants. In the literature, there is an absence of consensus with regards to the party's populism. While the PopuList dataset (Rooduijn et al. 2020) categorises Vox as a radical right-wing populist party, some researchers suggest that the party's populist rhetoric is not a central aspect of its agenda (Turnbull-Dugarte et al. 2020).

VOX'S ECONOMIC AND WELFARE POLICY PROFILE: TAX REDUCTIONS AND WELFARE CHAUVINISM

Vox's welfare and economic policy appears inconsistent, with both elements of a liberal economic policy centring on tax reductions, and, at the same time, calls for maintaining the welfare state for Spanish consumption only. Vox policy choices match the 'blurring' hypothesis, which suggests that to cater for their diverse constituencies, RWPPs downplay the importance of the economy and dedicate comparatively little time to this issue, sometimes adopting inconsistent or unclear policies (Enggist and Pingera 2021).

Similarly to other RWPPs in Western Europe, such as UKIP, the party seeks to fill an ideological space closer to the economic right wing, which advocates for a smaller state. Founded by three former members of PP, Vox commenced as an economically liberal party. Accordingly, the party promotes a right-wing conservative agenda with a focus on market liberalism and reduced state intervention (Olivas-Osuna and Rama 2021). In its 2018 manifesto, VOX proposed a series of tax reductions – for example income and corporate tax – as well as the elimination of fees and taxes and the simplification of regulations and procedures for setting up a company. In line with its positions on Spanish unification, the party also called for a drastic reduction in public spending on regional bodies, proposing centralisation and the merger of municipalities.

On the other hand, in line with its nationalist positions, Vox also puts forward welfare chauvinist ideas. The party supports the welfare state only for natives (Rama et al. 2021) and speaks a language of protection for native Spanish families, workers, pensioners and other at-risk groups. For example, they propose an 'extensive system of tax benefits for families, especially large ones', advocate 'support for the unemployed over 50 and the long-term unemployed by reducing the company's contributions', and pledge to exempt contributory pensions from personal income tax 'for justice to those who have paid taxes throughout their working life' (Vox 2018). The party has also called for reforming the welfare system because it allegedly incentivises immigrants to come to Spain (2018). Since 2019 the party made some changes in their agenda and communication style, increasingly adopting anti-globalist arguments.

CHEGA

Chega was established in 2019 by football TV commentator Andre Ventura. Chega's support has been more modest in comparison to the Golden Dawn and Vox, with the election of one representative in the 2019 national elections. The party performed well during the 2021 Presidential elections, when Ventura managed to capture 11.9% of the vote. Overall this is a fairly new party, in many ways still undefined its terms of ideological identity, often lacking consistency and consensus among its leading cadres. Chega has been described as a 'one-man show' given Ventura's personal visibility.

CHEGA'S VALUE PROFILE: 'LIBERAL CONSERVATISM'

Chega describes itself as 'liberal conservative'. It is a party of the new radical right with a liberal-conservative agenda willing to engage in the democratic process. Like Vox, it has its origins in the mainstream political space rather than the traditional or 'old' extreme right. Overall, the party's rhetoric is similar to that of Vox, bar the absence of the regional/centralisation dynamic. Chega, however, places more emphasis on the populism narrative. Ventura presents himself as the voice of the people betrayed by the established political elites. As such, in comparison to Vox, Chega relies more emphatically on its anti-establishment rhetoric focusing on crime, security and corruption (Marchi 2019). This suggests the party is oriented more towards protest than identity.

Chega's nationalism may be characterised as civic: the party emphasises equal treatment of citizens before the law, without distinctions based on ethnicity, race and religion. The justification is closer to secularism than that of Vox, but there is lack of consensus among party cadres. At the same time, the party is opposed to multi-culturalism, suggesting societal inequalities ought to be addressed by assimilating minorities into the homogeneous social body. Chega's position towards minorities is less consistent: those Chega cadres linked to the Catholic Church oppose the normalisation of the practices of LGBT communities, while the more secular members advocate freedom of the individual in the private sphere. There is agreement, however, in the rejection of "cultural Marxism", as the party opposes initiatives that may be seen as an 'attack on the traditional family', for example the introduction of gender theories in public education (Marchi 2019).

CHEGA'S ECONOMIC AND WELFARE POLICY PROFILE: ECONOMIC NEOLIBERALISM AND WELFARE CHAUVINISM

Chega positions itself as economically liberal. Consistent with the 'blurring hypothesis' (Enggist and Pingera 2021), the party dedicates only a short paragraph to the economy in its 2021 online manifesto. This is in contrast to Vox's much longer section in its 2018 manifesto, although Chega presents a somewhat more consistent narrative. In this short paragraph, the party claims that 'it is not up to the State to be the "owner" of the Economy, as the communists understand it; nor an engine of the economy, as the socialists understand it; or even a dynamizer of the Economy, as the social democrats and democrats – Christians understand it ... It is incumbent upon the State, as the liberal conservatives that we are, to function as an arbitration, regulatory and, at the limit, supplementary entity' (Chega 2021). Despite this, the party still claims primacy of natives over foreigners in its national socioeconomic policies. Its welfare chauvinism, less clear, may be observed in its calls for more restrictive immigration policies according to the country's economic needs, but never to the detriment of the national workforce (Marchi 2019).

ANALYSIS

UNDERSTANDING THE END OF SOUTHERN EUROPEAN EXCEPTIONALISM

Southern European countries share a common experience of economic crisis, but vary in terms of their support for RWPPs. During the crisis, levels of unemployment, youth unemployment, the government deficit, and negative GDP growth were among the highest in Greece, Portugal, Cyprus and Spain, which all introduced harsh austerity measures. Greece, Portugal and Spain share a number of additional demand- and supply-side conditions, including electoral systems that produce bipolarity, a salient left-right cleavage, highly conservative right-wing competitors, a history of right-wing authoritarianism and a fragmentation of the right. Greece experienced a much more protracted crisis, being the last to exit from the bailout agreements with its lenders in summer 2018. It was also the first to experience the rise of an RWPP and the only one to experience the rise of an extreme RWPP variant not only across Southern, but also across Western Europe. While indeed most of Western European Neo-Nazi parties have been in progressive decline precisely because of their nostalgia for fascist ideals, the Golden Dawn was voted into the Greek parliament in 2012 *because of* rather than *despite* its extremism.

A comparison between these countries suggests that support for the Golden Dawn should be understood not just as the product of economic discontent, but more broadly as a response to a perceived breach of the social contract as the Greek economic crisis turned into a political, and subsequently ideological, crisis where the legitimacy of the state and its capacity to provide basic services was at stake (Halikiopoulou and Vasilopoulou 2018; see also Figure 72). The Golden Dawn captured a broad range of discontented voters who saw it as able to propound plausible solutions to the three sets of crises – economic, political, and ideological – that befell Greece and culminated in an overall crisis of democracy. The party's welfarist position was part of these solutions – for example offering goods and services exclusively to Greeks not only helped the party to become identified as an organisation that protects national insiders, but also as an alternative provider of the collective goods of the state, which the latter was seen as unable to deliver. In other words, the Golden Dawn presented itself as a substitute for the state and saviour of the nation when the nation-state was in crisis. As such it should be understood to a great extent as a product of that crisis.

Figure 67 shows the profile of the Golden Dawn voter: a male individual with low or intermediary education who is distrustful of the parliament, disillusioned with the establishment and most likely right-wing. Our analysis of ESS data confirms that bottom income, religious, male individuals with cultural concerns over immigration are more likely to vote for RWPP. Indeed, research confirms that immigration is positively associated with RWPP support in Greece, with stronger effects during the Greek economic crisis (Roupakias and Chletsos 2020). Although cultural concerns over immigration are the strongest predictors of RWPP support, as Figure 66 illustrates, the majority of people with immigration concerns

among the RWPP electorate have both cultural and economic concerns (72%). This suggests a strong economic story linking anti-immigration attitudes to RWPP in the country.

While the indictment of Golden Dawn cadres has eliminated – for now – the prospect of extreme right representation and the 2019 national elections marked a ‘normalisation’ of Greek politics with the return of the mainstream ND to power and the decline of populist parties, it is worth noting that another RWPP, the Greek Solution (EL), entered parliament at that time with 3.7% of the popular vote. This is a radical right variant with a nationalist-populist narrative. After all, the Golden Dawn was not the only RWPP to enjoy parliamentary representation during the metapolitefsi era – although it was the only extreme right variant to do so. Other RWPPs in parliament have included the Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS) and the Independent Greeks (ANEL), both splinter parties from the mainstream New Democracy established in 2000 in 2012, respectively. While these parties are also nationalist, unlike the Golden Dawn they do not premise their ideology on Nationalist Socialism and do not adopt violent practices and can be therefore categorised as radical variants (Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou 2015). Both parties joined government coalitions. LAOS joined the government of national unity between PASOK, ND and LAOS formed in 2011 within the context of the crisis under the leadership of Lucas Papademos, a former head of the Bank of Greece. Given its association with ‘systemic’ politics, the party lost its support and became marginalised after this. ANEL formed a surprise coalition with the radical left SYRIZA in 2015. While seemingly unlikely bedfellows, the two parties were united by their anti-bailout stance, converging on their opposition to austerity and external interference in domestic economic affairs. All this suggests that there is latent support for RWPPs as well as strong left-right polarisation in Greece.

Neither Cyprus, Spain nor Portugal experienced the rise of an RWPP in the immediate aftermath of the crisis despite the presence of ripe conditions. Although ELAM put forward a similar anti-system narrative blaming corrupt elites for the economic crisis, the latter did not benefit the rise of RWPPs in Cyprus. Arguably, the situation was somewhat different in Cyprus, as political conflict did not threaten austerity legislation, protest was more limited and there was no party system collapse (Charalambous and Christoforou 2018). The party’s progressive rise from 2016 onwards may be understood in terms of its attempts to normalise its rhetoric (Katsourides and Pachita 2021). ELAM, however, remains closer to the extreme rather than the radical right category, and its nationalism remains predominantly ethnic. The party continues to place an extensive focus on the economy and at-risk social groups, proposing clear nationalist-welfarist positions. These include, for example, heavily taxing multi-national companies, introducing a EUR 1,200 minimum wage and an EUR 800 minimum pension, offering generous benefits to vulnerable groups and at the same time cutting benefits for immigrants and Turkish-Cypriots (ELAM 2021).

In Spain and Portugal, extreme right RWPP variants, including Democracia Nacional and Espana 2000 in the former and Partido Nacional Renovador in the latter, remained marginalised. This could be because, in sharp contrast to Greece, where the Golden Dawn was openly extreme, and voted for because of its extremism, these parties failed to distance themselves from fascism and portray a more moderate image (Mendes and Dennison 2021). Democracia Nacional (DN), a neo-Francoist party founded in 1995 by individuals who had previously held positions in neo-fascist organisations, unsuccessfully attempted to put forward a more moderate image in a bid to attract mostly conservative right-wing voters. The party continued to be seen as fascist, with its model of political

organisation opposed parliamentary democracy and its connections to extremist groups contributing to its stigmatisation. Similarly, the Portuguese PNR was created in 2000 from the merger of several minor parties and extreme right movements, which included neo-fascists and individuals nostalgic of Salazar. While like the Spanish DN the party tried to modernise its profile, the party has remained a part of the ‘old’ extreme right, not seen as a credible contender in the Portuguese political system.

Spain, and less so Portugal, experienced the rise of RWPP more recently with Vox and Chega, respectively. Both parties are splinter parties from the mainstream right and have benefited electorally from a significantly less stigmatised image (Mendes and Dennison 2021). This is in line with Western European RWPPs which have increased their electoral support through a ‘normalisation’ strategy and the adoption of civic nationalist narratives that emphasise values as opposed to the biological criteria of national belonging. There are also case-specific dynamics at play, however. In Spain, Vox has profited significantly from nationalist concerns over regional separatism, as the constitutional crisis in Catalonia has revealed the preference of a substantial number of Spanish for a centralised state with little or no autonomy for the regions (Turnbull-Dugarte et al. 2020). Our empirical analysis confirms that middle-aged, male individuals in low and middle-skill occupations or on social benefits, and have authoritarian attitudes are more likely to support RWPPs in Spain. These individuals have both cultural and economic concerns over immigration, are religious and distrust the EU Parliament (Figure 68). In terms of composition, the RWPP electorate is quite divided, with 42% having no immigration concerns, 32% having both types of concerns, and 13% having only cultural or only economic concerns, respectively (Figure 66).

In Portugal, Chega has attracted a lot of support through its populist anti-system and anti-corruption discourse (Marchi 2019). While sample size does not allow meaningful conclusions to be drawn about Chega voters from ESS data, recent research using local election results sheds light on RWPP voter trends (see e.g. Afonso 2021). According to this research, factors such as unemployment, average income levels as well as the share of immigrants and their change over time do not appear to explain variation in shares of the RWPP vote. Instead, there are positive associations between RWPP vote share and the share of social assistance benefit recipients, as well as with the size of the local Roma minority (Afonso 2021).

Figure 66: Distribution of immigration concerns

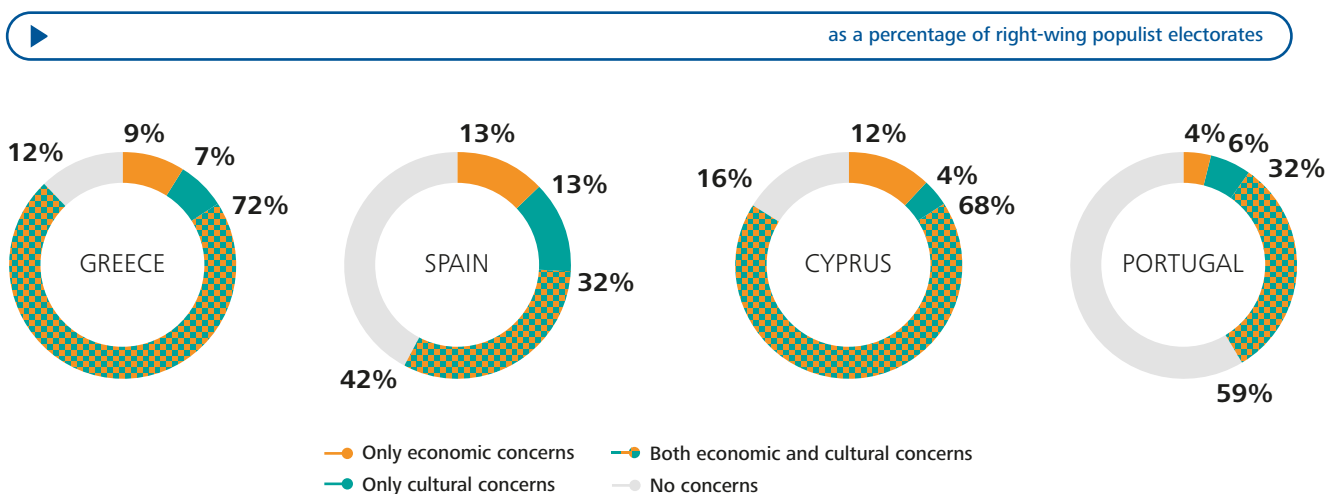
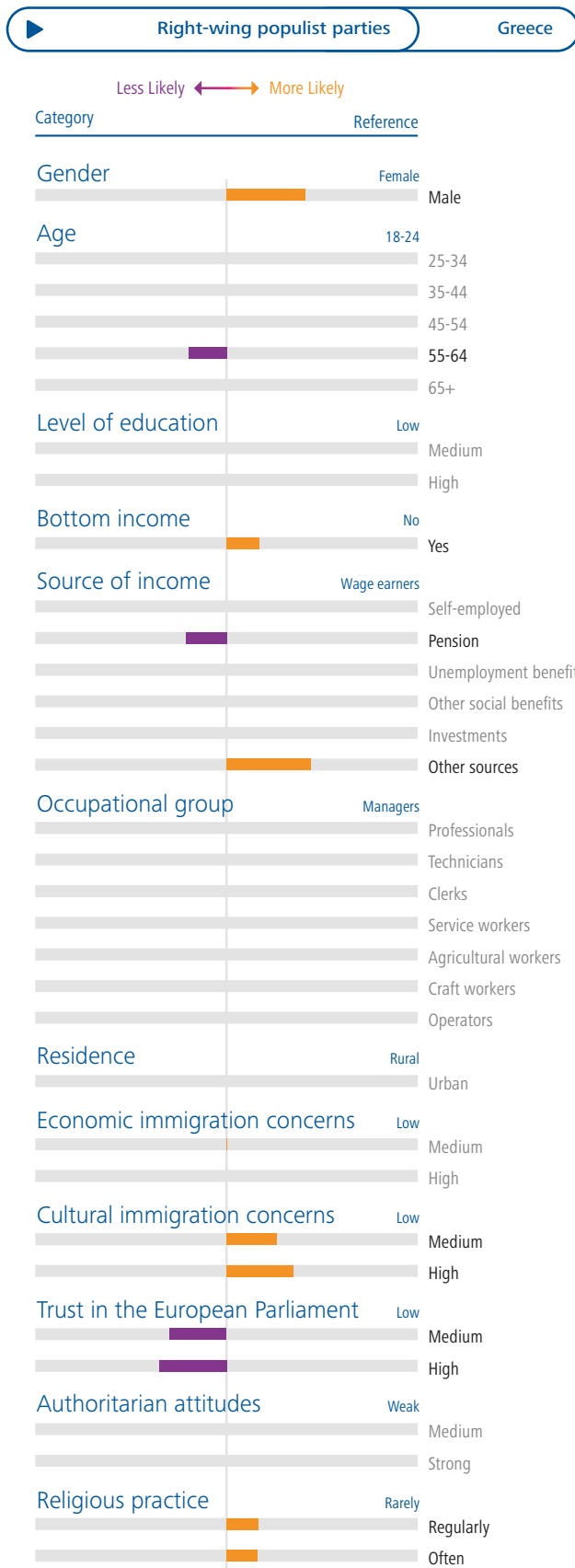
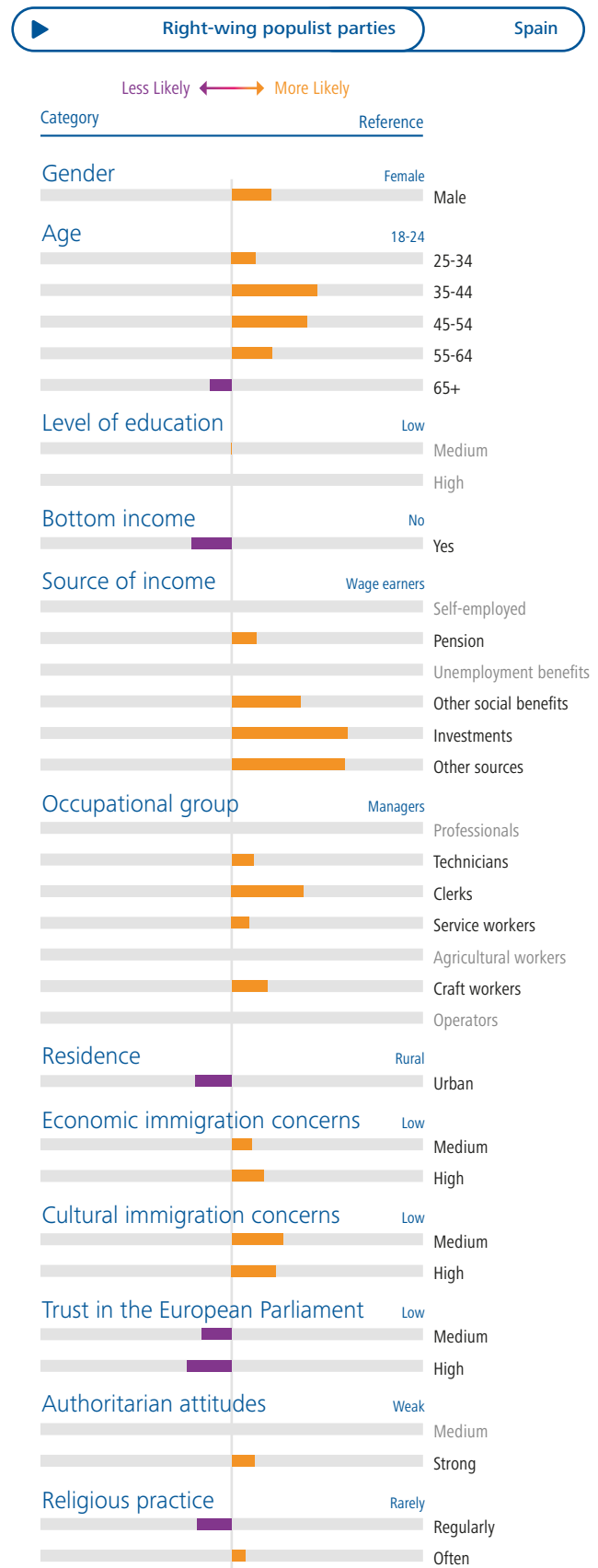


Figure 67: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.

Figure 68: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.

RECOMMENDATIONS

HOW SHOULD PROGRESSIVES RESPOND?

How should progressive parties in these countries respond? Our comparison of the RWPP and centre-left electorates in the four countries suggests that co-opting RWPP positions will likely be costly for progressive parties. This finding is consistent with recent literature, which suggests that the centre-left and RWPP electorates are considerably different (Abou Chadi et al. 2021) and that centre-left repositioning towards RWPP restrictive immigration policies may attract a small number of RWPP voters, but alienate a much larger proportion of their own voters (Chou et al. 2021). A more beneficial strategy for the progressive left is to instead compete on issues the left owns, such as equality.

First, RWPP core voters, i.e. those voters who oppose immigration on principle and have strong cultural concerns over immigration, are a minority among the entire electorate in all four countries. These voters are a larger group in Greece and Cyprus, accounting for 11% and 15% of the electorate, respectively, than in Spain and Portugal, where they account for only 7% of the entire electorate in each country (Figure 69). These voters are principled RWPP voters and are unlikely to switch to the centre-left even if it adopts ‘copycat’ strategies. They identify more staunchly with a right-wing platform and are more likely to switch from ‘far’ to centre-right. They are the least likely centre-left constituency and do not constitute a centre-left target voter group.

Second, a comparison between the RWPP and centre-left voter profiles in Greece and Spain (Figures 70+71) shows considerable differences. In Greece, older individuals who are service or craft workers and have economic concerns over immigration are more likely to vote for the centre-left. In Spain, female, middle-aged or older secular individuals who trust the EU are more likely to vote for the centre-left. These individuals are likely not self-employed or have income from investments. They are also unlikely to have cultural concerns over immigration and are therefore likely to not be attracted to culturalist anti-immigration narratives. Indeed, among the centre-left electorate, the RWPP signature theme (i.e. exclusively cultural concerns over immigration) has very little prevalence. As above, in Greece and Cyprus this percentage is higher with 11% and 21%, respectively, while in Spain and Portugal it is tiny with 6% and 3%, respectively (Figure 69).

Third, even among the RWPP electorates, individuals with exclusively cultural concerns over immigration (i.e. core voters) are a minority. The RWPP electorates in all four countries are composed of a significant percentage of people with either no immigration concerns or combined economic and cultural concerns (Figure 66). This suggests the majority of voters of these parties are protest or peripheral voters, i.e. voters whose opposition to immigration is contingent. These voters are primarily concerned with the economic impact of immigration and tend to support the populist right as a way of expressing their discontent and punishing the establishment. They are likely to feel economically insecure and may have lost trust in institutions and the political system both at the domestic and EU levels. Because they have salient inequality concerns – broadly defined – and have no principled opposition to immigration, these voters can ‘switch’ to parties that emphasise

issues related to equality and offer effective policy solutions to them. This voter group is a more likely centre-left target constituency through a broader 'equality' narrative.

Fourth, the percentage of voters with immigration concerns among the centre-left electorate is unusually high in Greece and Cyprus compared to Spain and Portugal (Figure 69) and indeed most other European countries. Still, these voters have either predominantly economic or combined economic and cultural concerns, which is consistent with arguments that native attitudes toward immigration are largely shaped by labour market concerns (Roupakias and Chletsos 2020). By contrast, the vast majority of people among the centre-left electorates in Spain and Portugal – 66% and 65%, respectively – have no immigration concerns. The ones that do – 15% in Spain and 22% in Portugal – are driven by economic considerations. As such, their underlying frustrations could be understood as driven by inequality / material considerations and would likely switch if their economic concerns are accommodated.

Figure 69: Distribution of immigration concerns

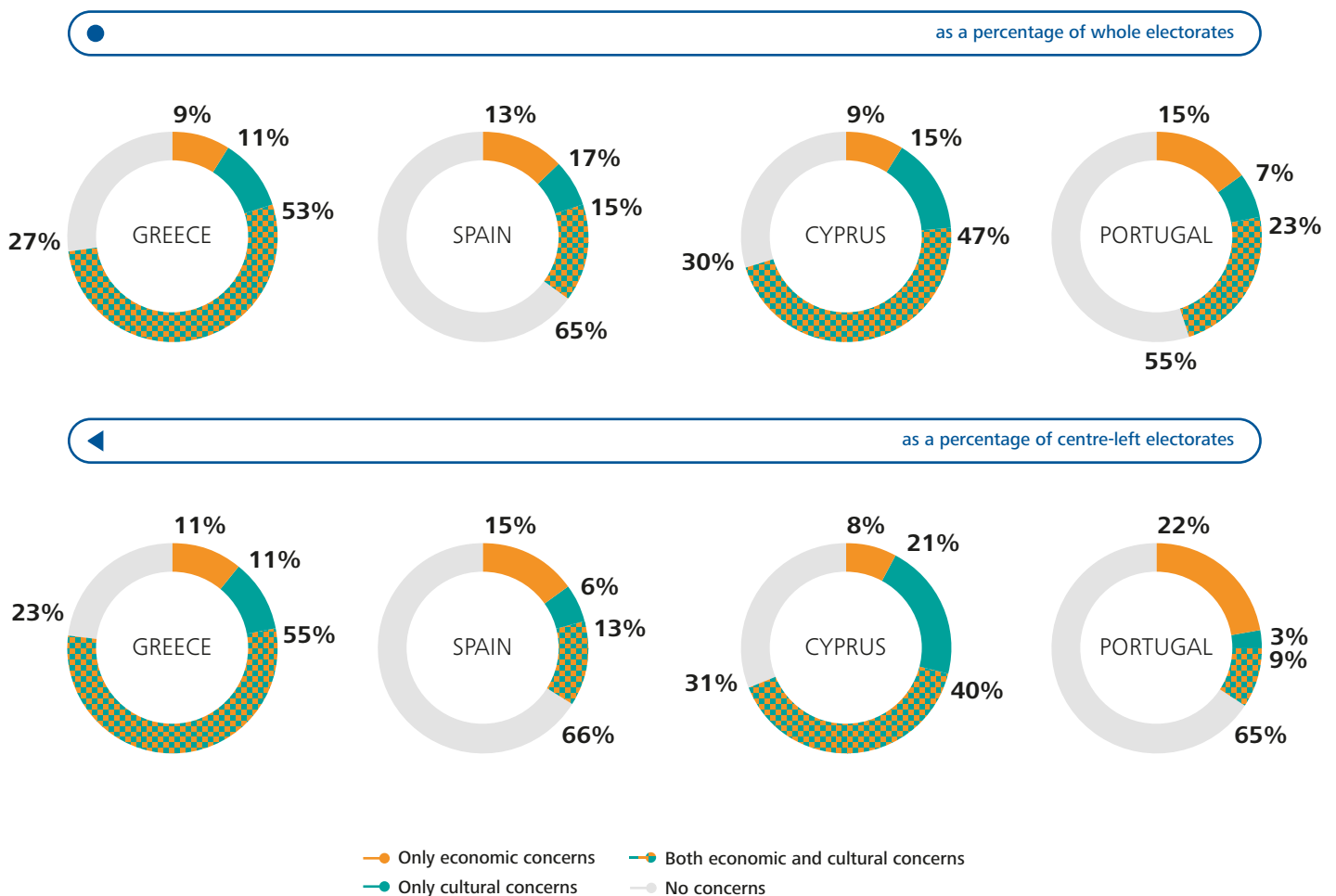
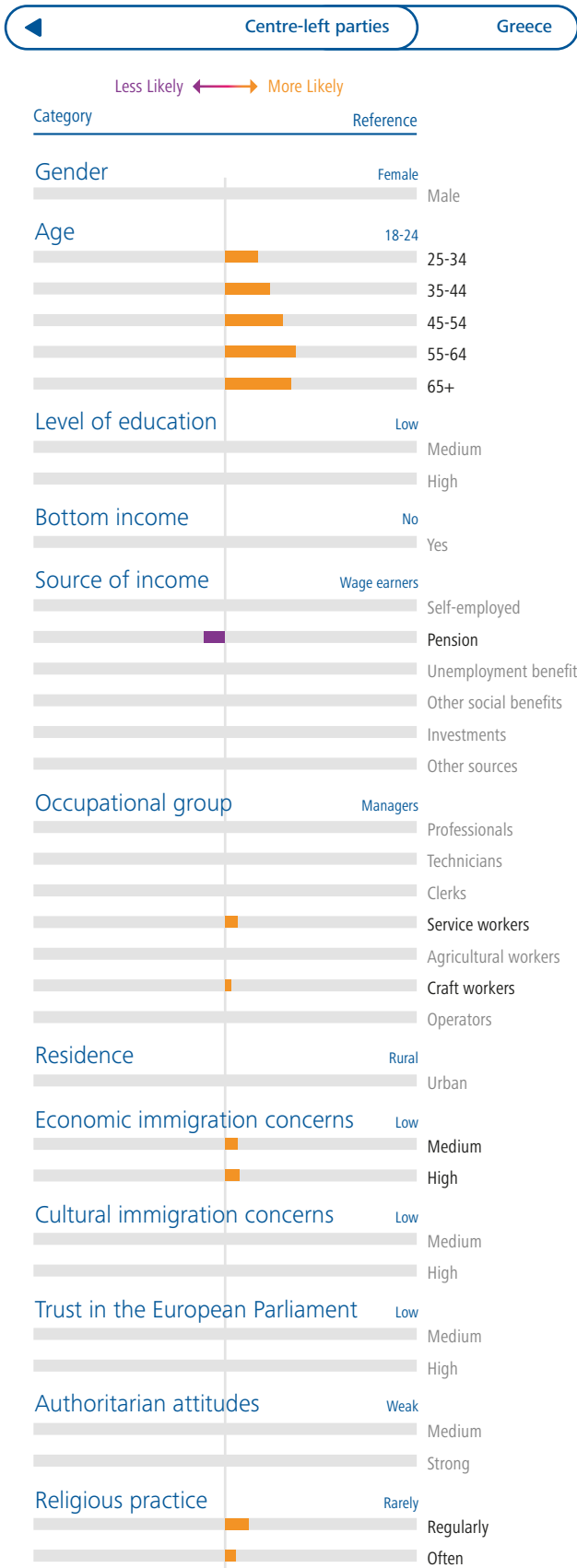
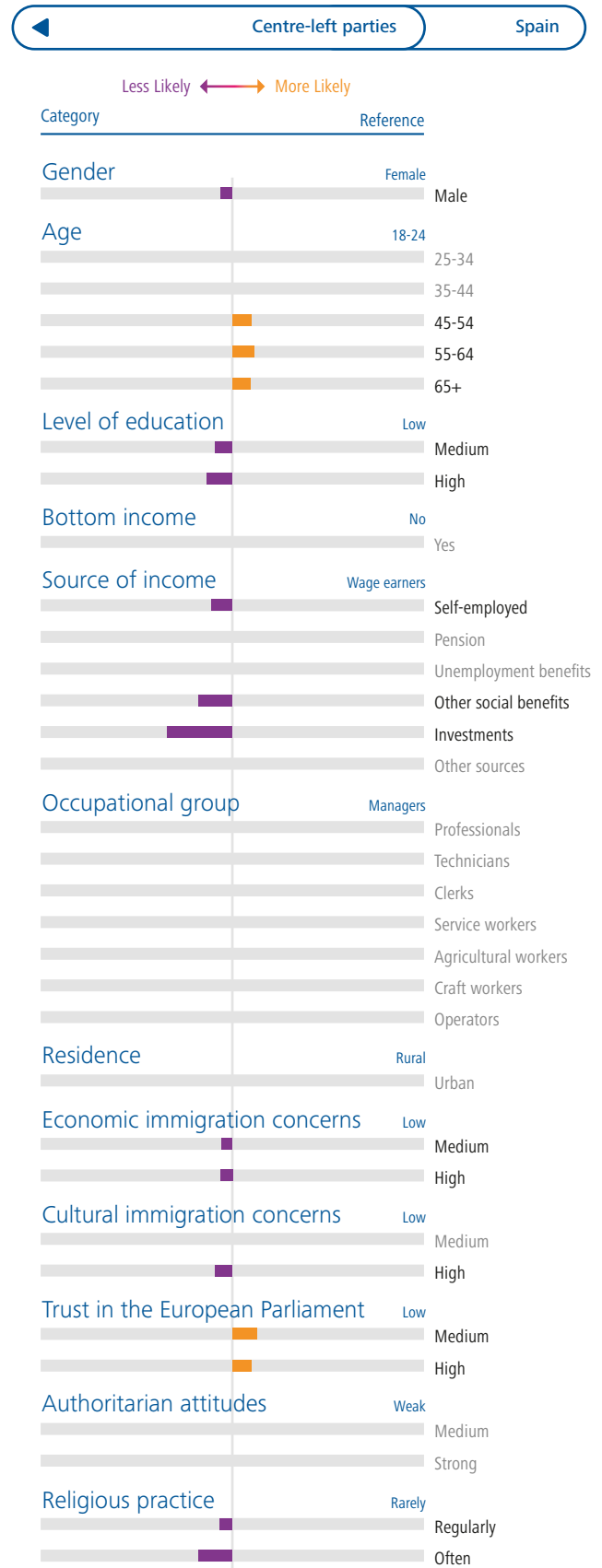


Figure 70: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



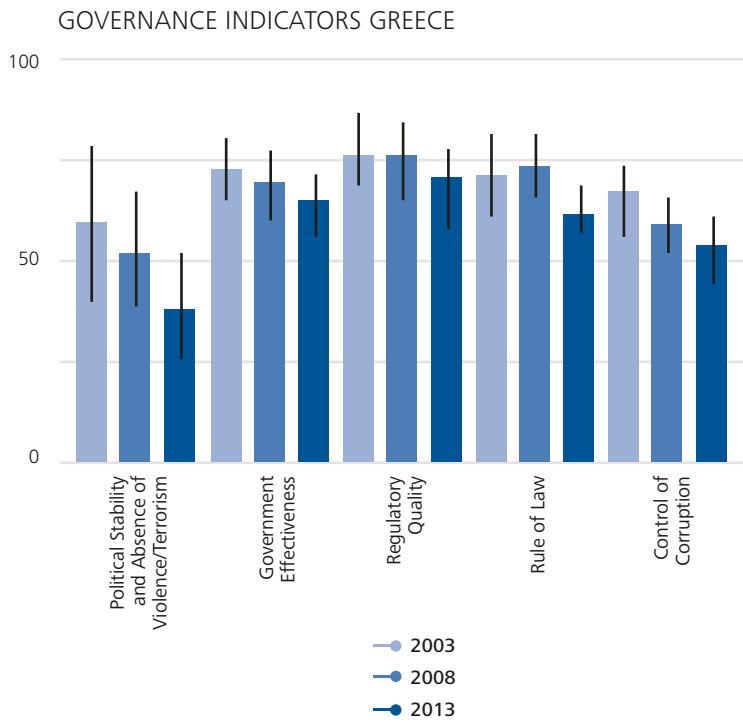
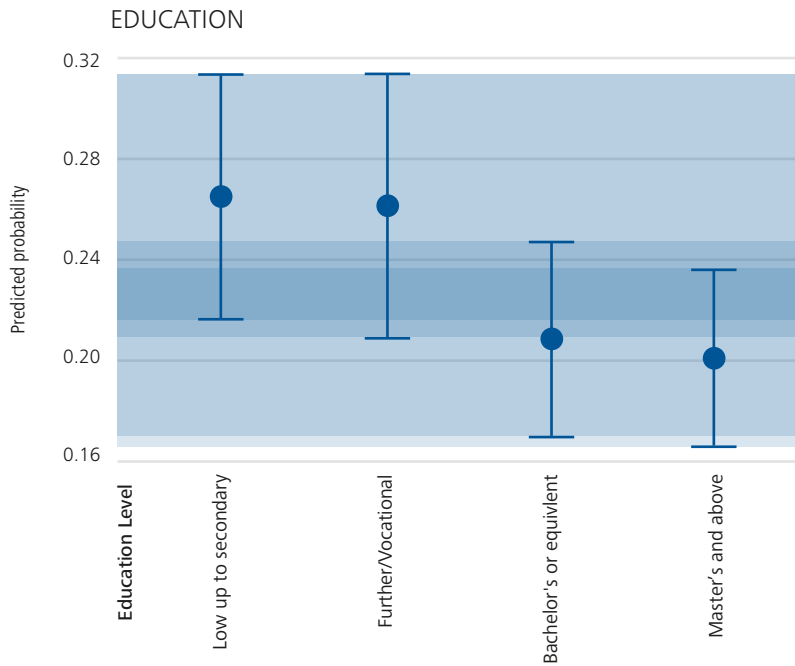
Only statistically significant results are shown.

Figure 71: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.

Figure 72: The predictive power of education and governance deficits in the Greek case





ITALY





ITALY
Lega



ITALY



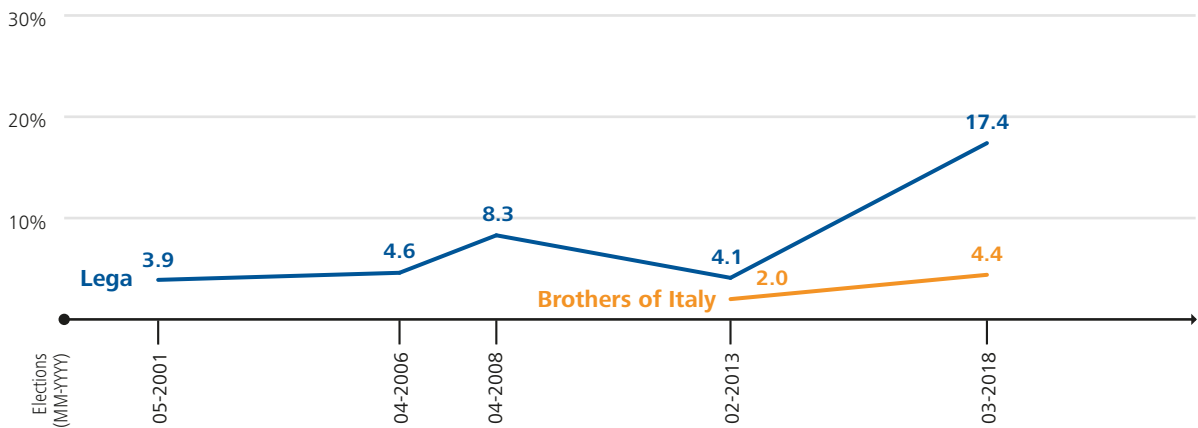
Lega

PATTERNS OF SUCCESS

RWPPs in Italy have received consistently high levels of support since the 1970s and have participated in government coalitions on numerous occasions. The Italian case resembles other Western European countries such as Austria, Switzerland and Denmark, where RWPPs have a long-standing tradition of being accepted as legitimate political actors by voters and mainstream political parties alike.

RWPP participation in government in Italy is not new. What set the 2018 elections apart from past years was that two anti-establishment parties – RWPP Lega Nord and the populist Five Star Movement – made significant electoral gains and formed a ‘populist’ coalition government. This development took place at the expense of mainstream political actors, who were the biggest losers of the election.

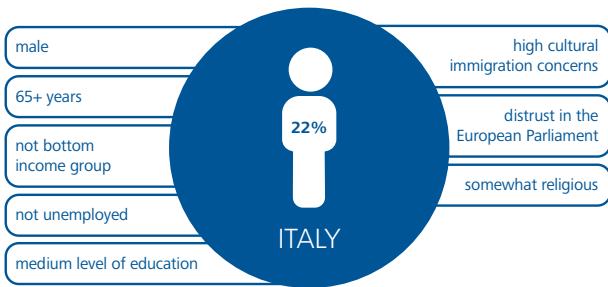
Figure 73: RWPP national election history in Italy 2000-2021



DEMAND: WHO VOTES FOR RWPPS IN ITALY?

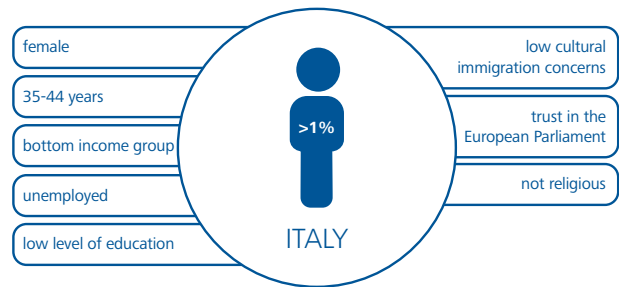
RWPP voting behaviour in Italy during the 2010s has been driven by multiple and overlapping crises: rising unemployment, low levels of trust in institutions and parties, and the perception of immigrants and refugees as a threat. Support for Salvini’s Lega reflected a successful campaign mobilising on EU discontent with strong anti-immigration and anti-establishment messages, calling for restrictive border policies and changes in the EU’s economic governance programme. Our empirical analysis confirms that older male individuals with cultural concerns over immigration are more likely to vote for RWPPs.

Figure 74: Who is the most likely right-wing populist party voter?



Probability to vote for a Right Wing Populist Party (%)

Figure 75: Who is the least likely right-wing populist party voter?



Probability to vote for a Right Wing Populist Party (%)

SUPPLY: WHAT MAKES LEGA’S NARRATIVE SUCCESSFUL?

Italy’s Lega is a distinct case of a ‘regional going national’ party (Albertazzi et al. 2018). Lega can no longer be classified as a regional party, as under Salvini it has managed to establish its presence across Italy, infiltrating new areas, including the South (Albertazzi et al. 2018). This programmatic and rhetorical shift from regionalism to immigration scepticism and anti-EU nationalism has allowed the party to broaden and diversify its electoral base, appealing to voters of other parties, including the left.

PARTY PROFILES

LEGA (NORD)

Founded in 1991, the Lega Nord has served in coalition governments on numerous occasions, including 1994-1996, 2001-2005, 2008-2011 and 2018-2019. The party’s electoral performance in 2018 was its best ever, with over 17 per cent of the national vote, which is seven percentage points more than its previous best result in 1996 (10.1%).

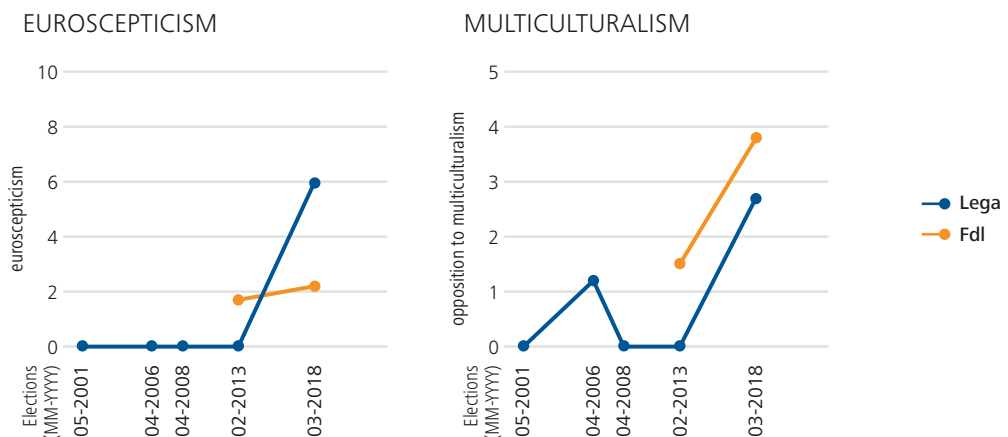
CHANGING VALUES: FROM REGIONALISM TO ANTI-IMMIGRANT NATIONALISM

The Lega Nord is unique in Western Europe in that it has transitioned from regionalism to anti-immigrant nationalism. This transition is marked by the following programmatic features: (1) the dismissal (or de-prioritisation) of the territorial elements of the party’s ideology; (2) a type of nationalism that focuses on immigration, but does not address social and economic issues related to the North-South divide; and (3), the substitution of Rome by the EU as the ‘enemy of the people’ (Albertazzi et al. 2018).

Under Umberto Bossi’s leadership (1991-2012), the Lega Nord was a regionalist-populist party focusing on two issues: (1) the economic and social gap between Italy’s wealthy North and less affluent South; and (2) the growing sense of discontent with political elites. As a regional party, the Lega Nord primarily demanded regional power rather than claiming to represent the whole country’s interests. Its nationalism focused on calls for autonomy, advocating a territorial cause and defending the interests of its regions as opposed to those of the entire country.

Lega has undergone significant transformations under the leadership of Matteo Salvini (since 2013). The party has significantly de-prioritised calls for the autonomy of northern Italian regions and, instead, focused on Italy as a whole, positioning itself staunchly against multiculturalism and the EU (Figure 76). Reflecting this change, Salvini dropped ‘Nord’ from the party’s symbol and fielded candidates all across Italy in 2018. In order to broaden its electorate, Lega has also explicitly embraced traditional Catholic messages and iconography against Islam and LGBT and in defence of the traditional family (Meardi and Guadiancich 2021).

Figure 76: Lega’s and Fdl’s stance on euroscepticism and multiculturalism



FROM FREE MARKET TO STATE INTERVENTION: LEGA'S SOCIAL POLICY U-TURNS

Overall, Lega's economic and welfare policy positions have been inconsistent over time, characterised by continuous U-turns (Figure 77). The party does not clearly outline its social policy stances, often oscillating between free market and pro-welfare policy positions. On the one hand, it has traditionally positioned itself in favour of neoliberal policies supporting low and flat taxes. Before its shift from regional to anti-immigrant nationalism, this was mainly in line with supporting the interests of its main target group: small and medium-sized businesses in the Northern regions of Italy. On the other hand, the party's programmatic shift has generated the need to also appeal more broadly to include voters in the poorer regions of the Italian south. As such, under Salvini's leadership Lega has flirted with certain protectionist and pro-welfare policies. This is especially true during the party's time in office. Consistent with the expectation that RWPPs in power place substantial focus on social policy, Lega was instrumental in passing the pro-welfare Citizens' Income – a Basic Minimum Income policy – and introducing 'quota 100' – an early retirement scheme for those aged at least 62 as part of the League-M5S government of 2018-2019 (Meardi and Guardiancich 2021). Following the party's transition from government to opposition post-2019, however, Lega has criticised Citizens' Income measures on the grounds that they are harmful for the economy.

Figure 77: Lega's and Fdl's stance on the left-right spectrum, welfare expansion, planned economy, market regulation, and the free market



ANALYSIS

UNDERSTANDING THE SUCCESS OF RWPPS IN ITALY

In many Western European countries such as Germany, Spain and Portugal, their fascist past has served as a deterrent for RWPPs. Italy, again, does not fit into this pattern. Despite the country's fascist past, Italian RWPPs have received consistently high levels of electoral support since the 1970s and have played substantial roles in governments. Their success may be understood both in terms of receiving votes and influencing policy as legitimate political actors. Italy shares these features with Western European countries such as Austria and Switzerland, which have long-standing traditions of RWPP participation in governments (Caramani and Manucci 2019).

The Italian right-wing political space is, like Greece and Spain, highly fragmented. The line between the moderate right and the RWPP is often blurred. Many RWPPs and groups ranging from the more extreme to radical variants and borderline cases participate in Italian politics. For instance, the Casa Pound is a neo-fascist, nationalist, Eurosceptic, anti-immigration and anti-capitalism movement that operates predominantly outside the context of parliamentary politics. The group originated in the 2003 squatting of a building in the centre of Rome by a group of young neo-fascists and takes its name from the American poet Ezra Pound. It defines itself as 'fascist', deriving from the fascist tradition and transcending traditional left/right categories (Castelli Gattinara and Froio 2014). While it emphasises the labour element of its fascist ideology, it downplays the stigmatised aspects such as anti-Semitism and racism (Castelli Gattinara and Froio 2014). Although not electorally successful, the Casa Pound is present in all Italian regions and has a visible presence as a grass-roots movement in Italy.

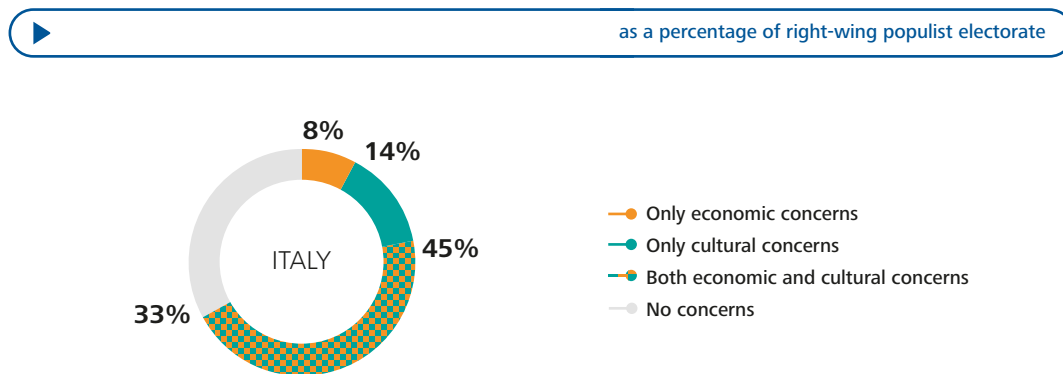
Within the parliamentary framework, a broad range of RWPPs have competed in elections with varying levels of success. The Lega participated in numerous centre-right governments (1994-1996, 2001-2005 and 2008-2011) before forming an anti-establishment coalition with the Five Star Movement in 2018. The National Alliance (Alleanza Nazionale), the successor of the post-fascist Italian Social Movement (MSI), also participated in Berlusconi's coalitions several times. On the more extreme end of the political spectrum, the neo-fascist Tricolour Flame (Fiamma Tricolore) and Forza Nuova have both competed on a far-right agenda.

More recently, the RWPP Fratelli d'Italia (FdI) has placed additional pressures on Silvio Berlusconi's centre-right Go Italy/Forza Italia (FI), contributing to the rise of the anti-establishment right and the decline of the mainstream. The party ran its 2019 European Parliament (EP) electoral campaign on tax reduction and strengthening military controls on external European borders, abandoning austerity and enforcing EU-wide protection of Italian products. This campaign gained the party 5 EP seats (Castelli Gattinara and Froio 2020).

Despite the long-standing tradition of RWPP in attracting popular support and playing a part in mainstream politics, the 2018 elections may still be characterised as ‘breakthrough’ elections given their implications for Italian politics and, more specifically, the rise of anti-establishment politics at the expense of the mainstream. Our empirical analysis of RWPP voting patterns in Italy across time (2002-2018) confirms that older, male individuals who are not in the bottom income group or on unemployment benefits, but instead have income from investments, are more likely to vote for RWPPs. These individuals have intermediate education levels, only moderate trust in EU institutions¹ and cultural concerns over immigration (Figure 79). The increased politicisation of the immigration issue since the 2015 migration crisis changed the salience of the issue among the public, significantly advantaging Lega, which had by that point transformed from a regional into a fully-fledged anti-immigration RWPP party (Dennison and Geddes 2021). Among Lega’s electorate, a substantial proportion of voters have both cultural and economic concerns over immigration, while some have no concerns at all, suggesting the presence of multiple routes to the Lega vote (Figure 78).

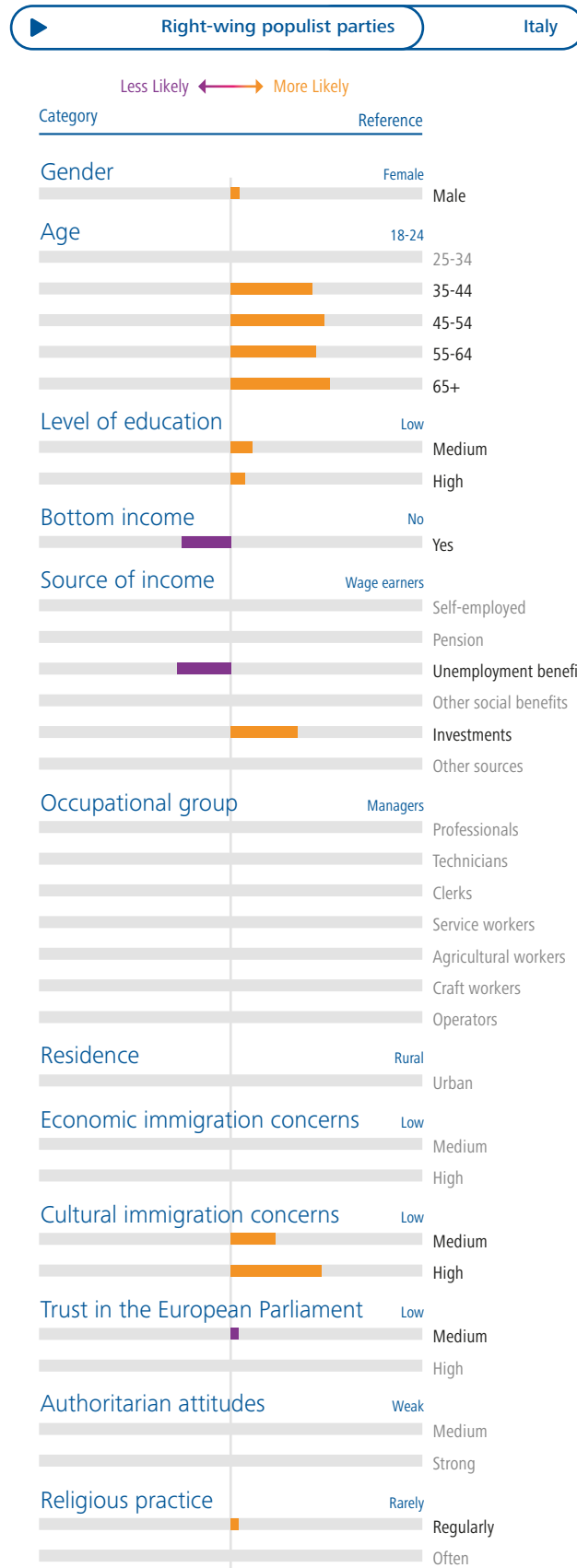
Negative perceptions towards immigration reflect a long-term difficulty in developing a migration policy consistent with the presence of significant immigrant populations in Italy (Dennison and Geddes 2021). In other words, the political economy of contemporary Italian politics does not reflect the realities of the country’s immigrant population. While migrant workers are key to several areas of economic activity, there are no equivalent routes for regular non-EU migration (Dennison and Geddes 2021). The politicisation and increased salience of this issue has led to the simultaneous decline of the centre-right political space and rise of RWPPs.

Figure 78: **Distribution of immigration concerns**



¹ Although the medium level of trust in the EU is associated with higher support for RWPP, when running a continuous version of European Parliament trust the association is negative and significant consistent with notion that overall Euroscepticism is positively associated with support for RWPP in Italy

Figure 79: **Characteristics affecting the probability to vote**



Only statistically significant results are shown.

RECOMMENDATIONS

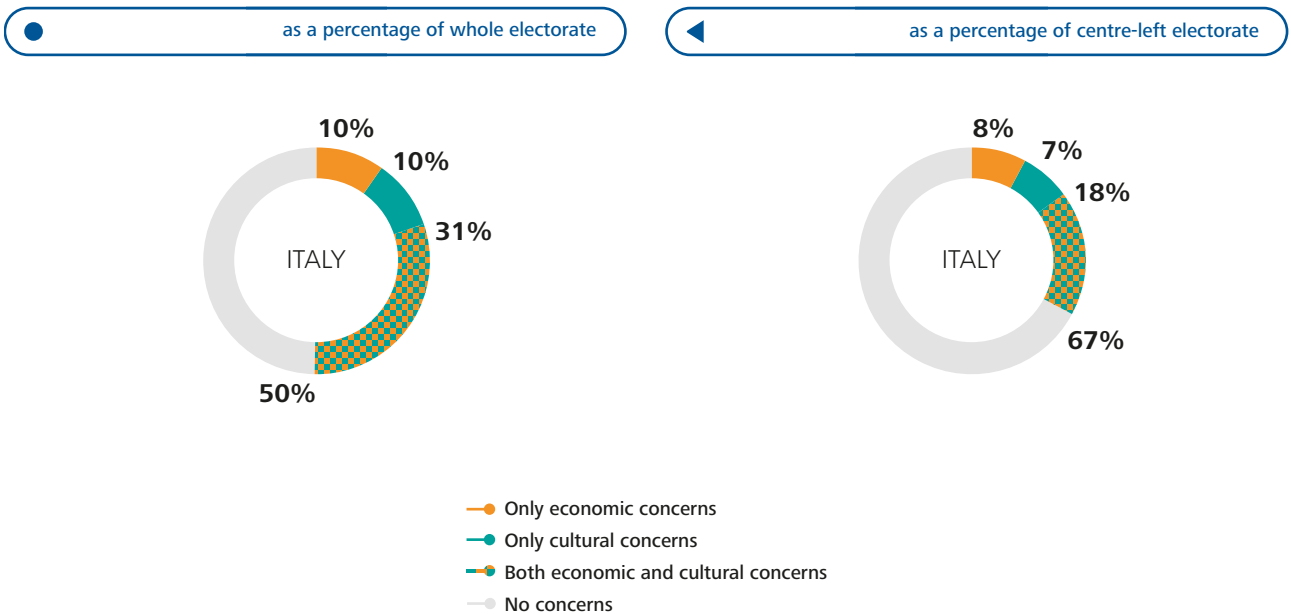
HOW SHOULD PROGRESSIVES RESPOND?

How should progressive parties in Italy respond? Our comparison of the RWPP and centre-left electorates in Italy suggests that co-opting RWPP positions will likely be costly for the progressive left. This finding is consistent with recent literature, which suggests that the centre-left and RWPP electorates are considerably different (Abou Chadi et al. 2021) and that centre-left repositioning towards RWPP restrictive immigration policies may attract a small number of RWPP voters, but alienate a much larger proportion of their own voters (Chou et al. 2021).

First, RWPP core voters, i.e. those voters who oppose immigration on principle and have strong cultural concerns over immigration, are a minority in Italy, taking up 10% of the whole electorate (Figure 80). These voters are principled RWPP voters and are unlikely to switch to the centre-left even if it adopts 'copycat' strategies. They identify more staunchly with a right-wing platform and are more likely to switch from 'far' to centre-right. They are the least likely centre-left constituency and do not constitute a centre-left target voter group.

Second, a comparison between the RWPP and centre-left voter profiles (Figure 81) shows considerable differences. Older, wage-earning individuals who are professionals or craft or agricultural workers, more educated, trust the EU and have favourable attitudes towards immigration are more likely to vote for the centre-left. These individuals are unlikely to be attracted to culturalist anti-immigrant narratives. Indeed, the RWPP signature theme has very little prevalence among the centre-left electorate (Figure 80), as only 7% of centre-left voters have cultural concerns over immigration.

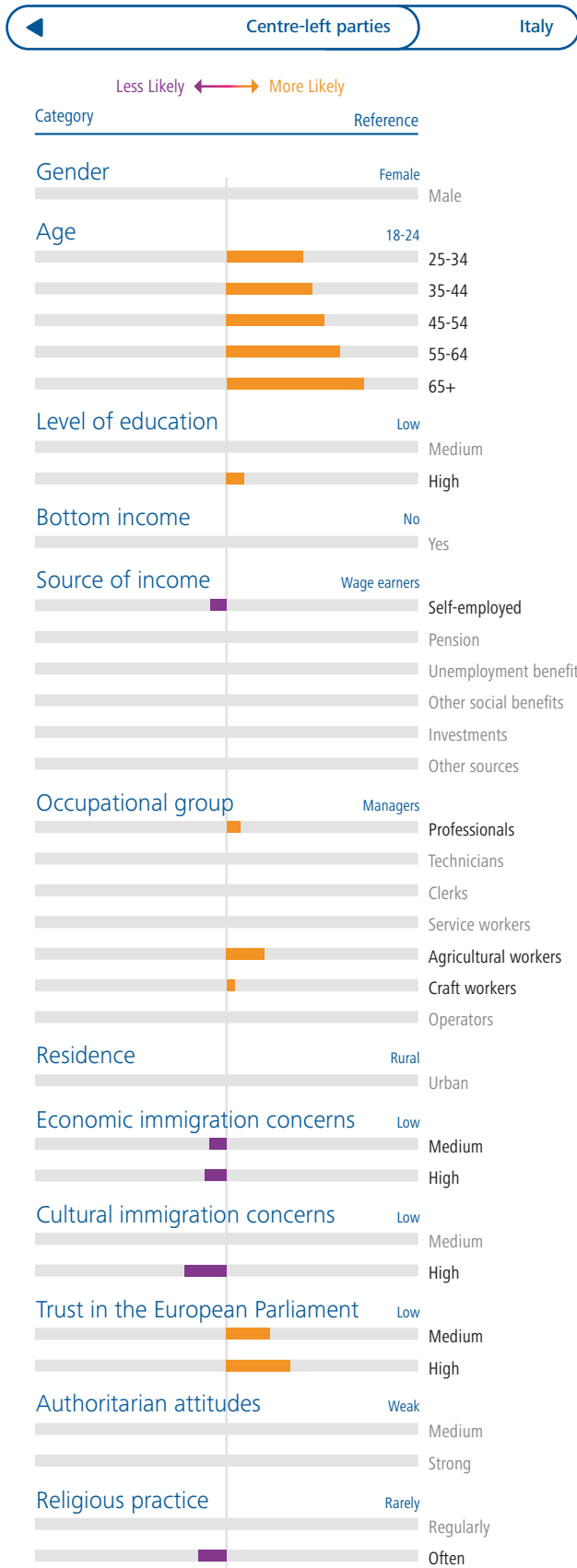
Figure 80: Distribution of immigration concerns



Third, even among the RWPP electorate, individuals with exclusively cultural concerns over immigration (i.e. core voters) are a minority (14%). The RWPP electorate in Italy is composed of a significant percentage of people with either no immigration concerns (33%) or combined economic and cultural concerns (45%) (Figure 78). This suggests the majority of RWPP voters are protest or peripheral voters, i.e. voters whose opposition to immigration is contingent. These voters are primarily concerned with the economic impact of immigration and tend to support the populist right as a way of expressing their discontent. They likely feel economically insecure and may have lost trust in institutions and the political system both at the domestic and EU levels. Because they have salient inequality concerns – broadly defined – and have no principled opposition to immigration, these voters can ‘switch’ to parties that emphasise issues related to equality and offer effective policy solutions to them. This voter group is a more likely centre-left target constituency through a broader ‘equality’ narrative.

Fourth, immigration concerns are not salient among the centre-left electorate, as indeed 67% of centre-left voters have no immigration concerns at all (Figure 80). This suggests that the centre-left voter constituency is not sympathetic to the RWPP agenda and will likely abandon the party if it shifts further to the nationalist right. This picture reveals a non-beneficial trade-off: the adoption of nationalist anti-immigration positions by the mainstream left will likely result in substantial losses of the left’s own cosmopolitan, urban pro-immigrant voters in exchange for very small – if any – gains from the RWPP electorate, whose cultural core voter is a principled right-wing voter who is highly unlikely to vote for the centre-left even if it adopts ‘copycat’ policies.

Figure 81: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.



THE NORDICS



DENMARK, FINLAND AND SWEDEN



DENMARK

Danish People's Party (DF)

FINLAND

True Finns/Finns Party (PS)

SWEDEN

Sweden Democrats (SD)

THE NORDICS: DENMARK, FINLAND AND SWEDEN

Denmark



Danish People's
Party (DF)

Finland



True Finns/Finns
Party (PS)

Sweden



Sweden
Democrats (SD)

PATTERNS OF SUCCESS

Denmark, Finland and Sweden share similar political, social and economic contexts. Historical developments have led to common trajectories, including a culture of consensus and social inclusion, corporatist traditions and support for the welfare state across the party system (Heinze 2018; McDonnell et al. 2021). Despite these similarities, RWPP success patterns were initially diverging. The Danish People's Party (DF) has exerted considerable policy influence as a recognised centre-right party cooperation partner since the early 2000s (Widfeldt 2018). In Finland, the Finns Party (PS) reported its first good result in 2007, and made its electoral breakthrough in 2011 until it joined a centre-right coalition government in 2015. Sweden, on the other hand, was long considered a 'deviant' case because it lacked an RWPP in parliament (Rydgren and van der Meiden 2019). The Sweden Democrats (SD) marked their electoral breakthrough in 2010 but have kept them out due to a *cordon sanitaire* strategy adopted by the rest of the political system. This marginalisation may be changing in the 2020s, as the party has become more influential in local coalitions.

DEMAND: WHO VOTES FOR RWPPS IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES?

Voting behaviour in the Nordic countries is shaped both by economic and immigration-related considerations. The salience of the latter has increased in recent years, particularly in Denmark. Economic nationalism is particularly pertinent in the Nordic context, and the immigration issue is seen as a catalyst for welfare chauvinism (Kuisma 2013). While there have been considerable variations in electoral performance both within and across countries, the long-term support of RWPPs in the Nordic countries has increased over time.

In Denmark, either young or old individuals in low or middle skill occupations or the agricultural sector, not highly educated, who have both cultural and economic concerns over immigration and distrust the EU are more likely to vote for RWPPs.

In Finland, male, middle-aged or older, bottom-income group individuals in low or middle skill occupations, but not lowly educated, are more likely to vote for RWPPs.

In Sweden, male benefit recipients in agriculture or operator occupations with medium levels of education are more likely to support RWPPs. These individuals have both cultural and economic concerns over immigration and distrust the EU.

Figure 82: RWPP national election history in Denmark 2000-2021

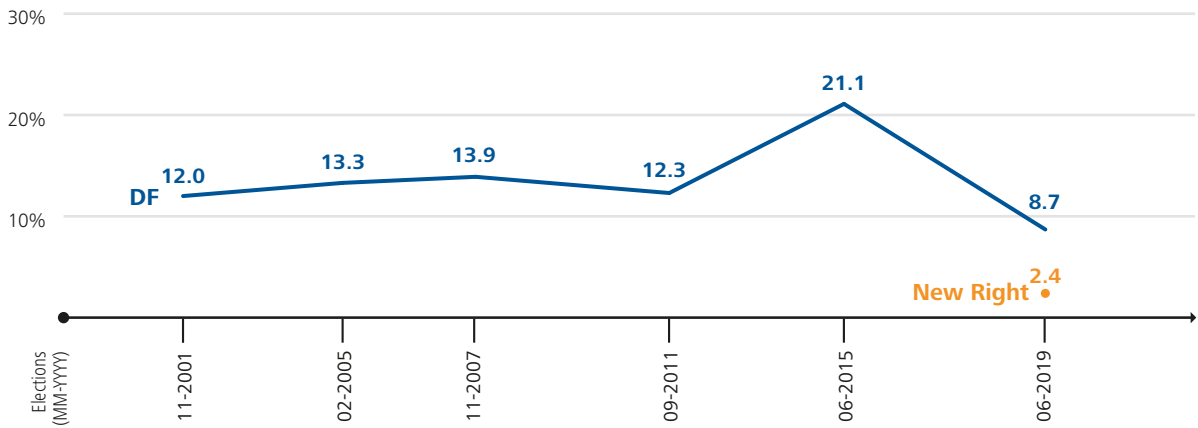


Figure 83: RWPP national election history in Finland 2000-2021

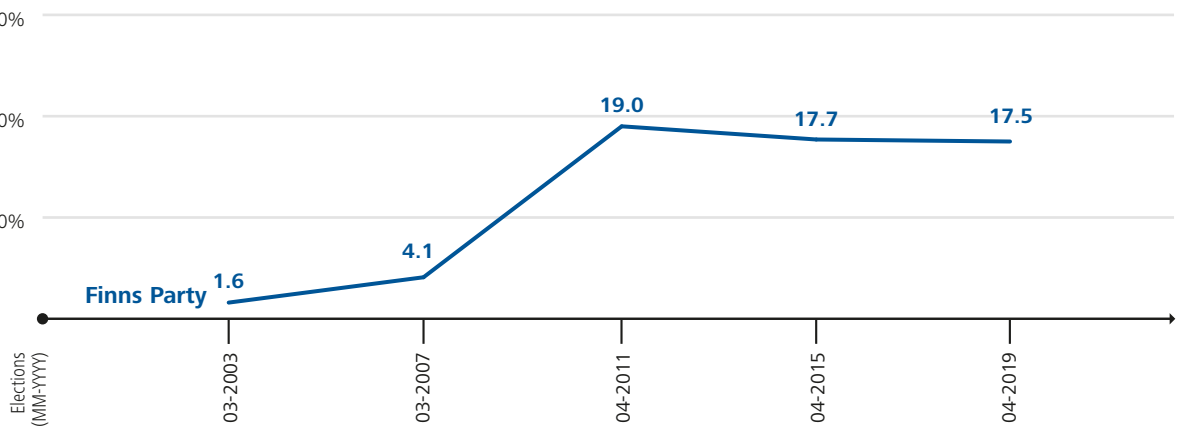


Figure 84: RWPP national election history in Sweden 2000-2021

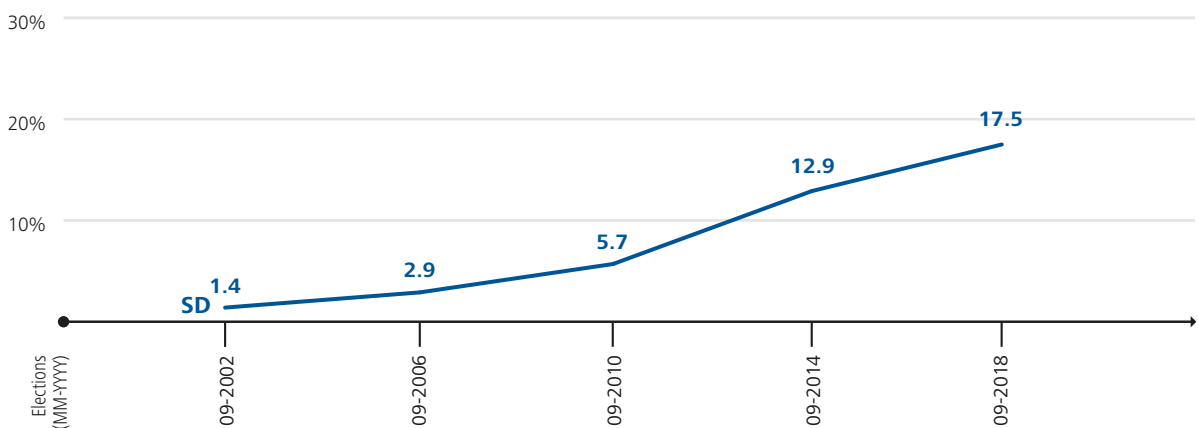
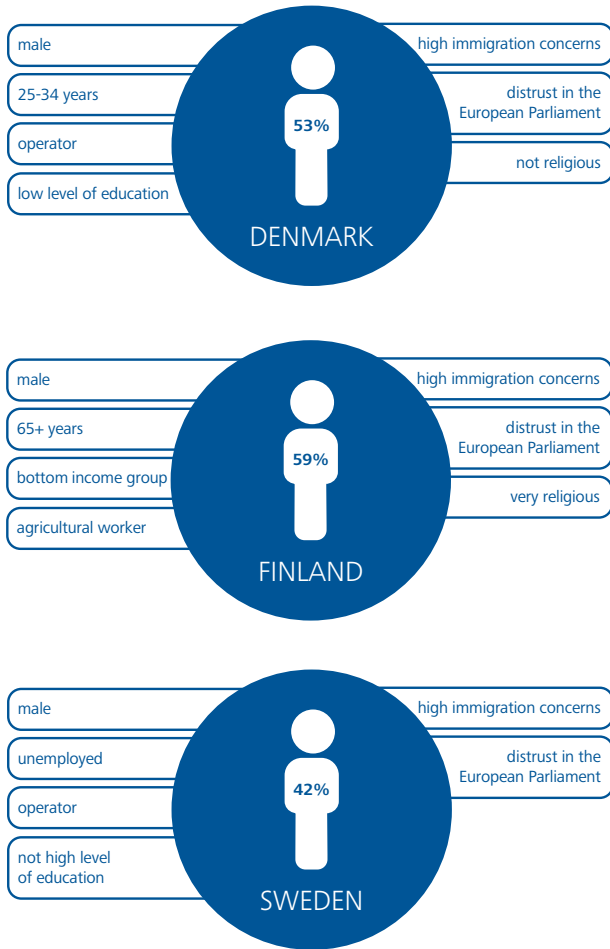
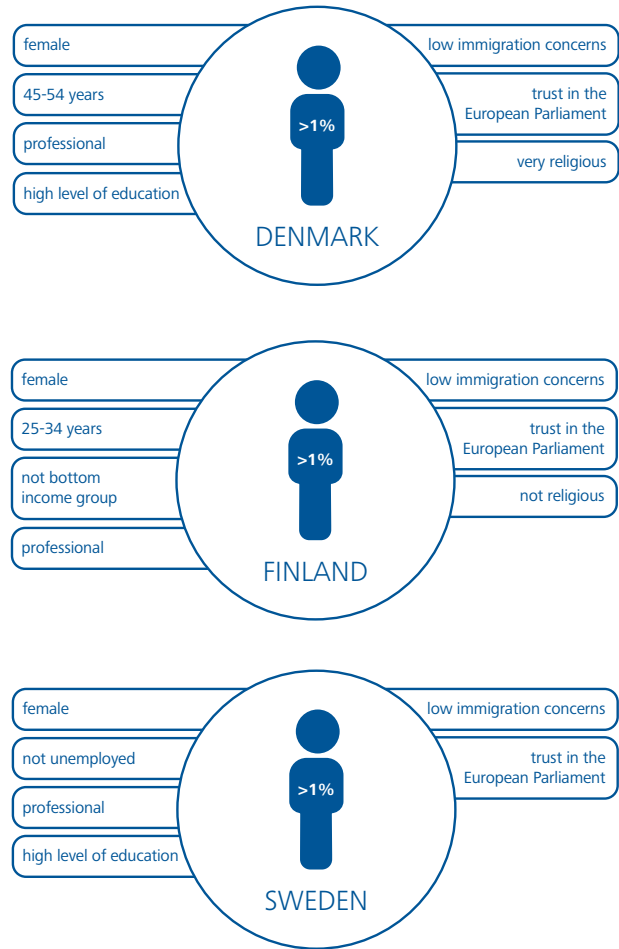


Figure 85: Who is the most likely right-wing populist party voter?



Probability to vote for a Right Wing Populist Party (%)

Figure 86: Who is the least likely right-wing populist party voter?



Probability to vote for a Right Wing Populist Party (%)

SUPPLY: WHAT MAKES THESE PARTIES' NARRATIVES [UN]SUCCESSFUL?

The DF, PS and SD have different origins and historical legacies, but have converged ideologically. The DF started as a populist party with an anti-tax platform, while the PS began as a party promoting the interests of small-scale farmers. The SD is the only party of the three to start off with an explicit anti-immigration platform (Widfeldt 2018). Their ideological convergence has taken place on the anti-immigration axis, as all three parties centre their narratives on immigrant exclusion. By the late 2010s, all three parties had adopted populist positions by employing anti-establishment narratives and authoritarian positions advocating strict law and order policies and harsher punishments for crime. Economically they are all centrist and welfare chauvinist, with the PS being the most pro-welfare and the staunchest economic nationalist narrative of the three (Jungar and Jupskås 2014; Widfeldt 2018).

PARTY PROFILES

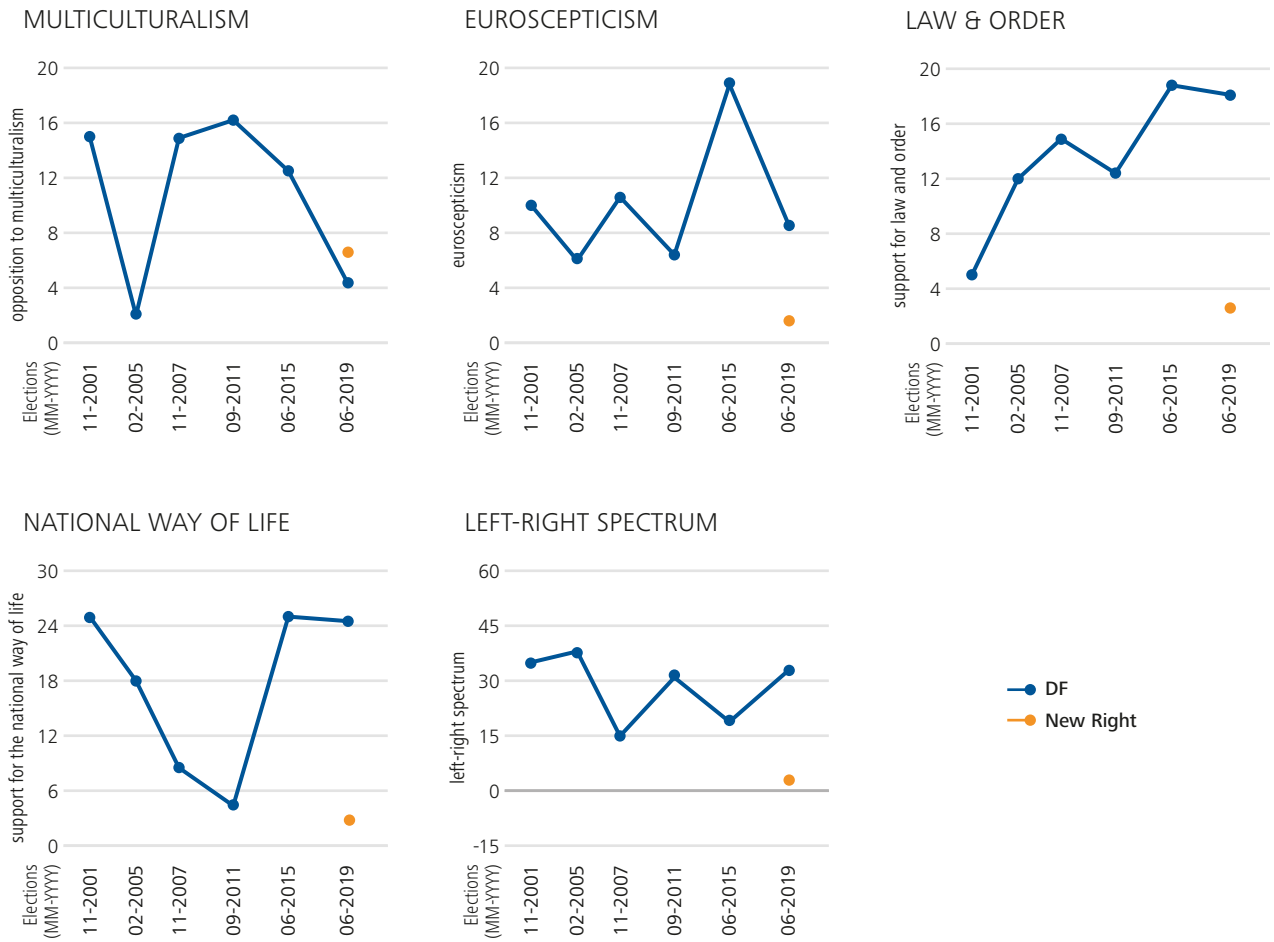
DANISH PEOPLE'S PARTY (DF)

The DF was established in 1995 by a group of politicians originally active in the Progress Party, including charismatic Pia Kjaersgaard, who became the leader of the DF until 2012. Overall, the party has fared very well in elections since 2001, but with some fluctuations. Danish mainstream parties have accepted the DF as a 'normal' party and, as a result, it has enjoyed an influential position in the conservative bloc. The DF is among the European RWPPs with the most substantial impact on party competition, driving other parties' immigration policy platforms. The party was invited to support the government in 2001 after receiving 12% of the votes, making it the third-largest party in parliament, and again in 2015 when it became the second-largest party with 21.1% of the vote. Although it did not formally join these governments and did not hold any ministries, the party offered its support as a cooperation partner, ensuring these minority centre-right governments had a stable parliamentary majority with DF support. During the 2019 national elections, the DF lost a large share of its supporters, obtaining only 8.7% of the vote. This can be explained by a combination of factors including mainstream accommodative strategies and competition with new radical competitors. Indeed, the New Right – a more nativist and economically right-wing RWPP newcomer in Danish politics – captured 9% of those voters who in 2015 had voted for the DF, thus diffusing the RWPP vote (Jupskås 2019).

DF'S VALUE PROFILE: CULTURE AND DEMOCRACY

The DF deliberately distances itself from fascism, actively showing its willingness to participate in the democratic system. In its programmatic agenda, it consciously conveys this normalised image, 'speaking' a language of democracy and rights. For example, its manifesto states the party wishes to see 'our country and its democracy evolve freely', and for this reason, it will 'oppose any attempt to curtail the free rights of our government and citizens' (DF 2021). At the same time, the party emphasises law and order issues and clearly veers to the right, albeit with some fluctuations across time. The DF is also overall Eurosceptic and nationalist (Figure 87). The party presents immigrants as a multi-dimensional threat. However, its emphasis is less on multiculturalism in broad terms, and more on specific groups. In particular, it targets Muslims, who it portrays as a danger to society in cultural, economic and security terms. Indeed, the DF stepped up its anti-Islam rhetoric in the early 2000s. However, compared to other Western European RWPPs, its 'civic nationalism' positions are less explicit. In contrast to Marine Le Pen's secularism, the DF offers religious justifications for its anti-Islamic positions, claiming that 'the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church is the church of the Danish people' (DF 2021). But at the same time, it links this to Western liberal democratic ideas, arguing that Christianity is intertwined with 'freedom, openness and democracy' (DF 2021).

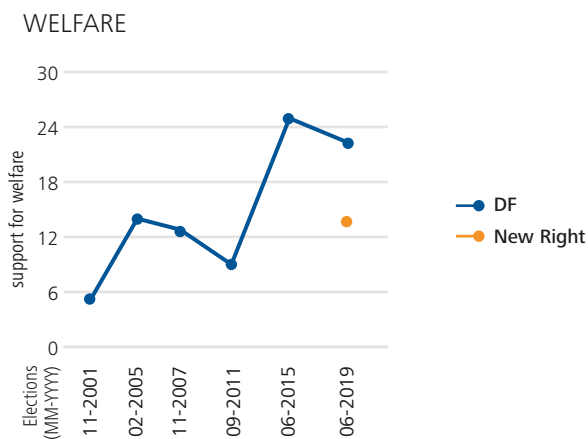
Figure 87: DF's and New Right's stance on multiculturalism, euroscepticism, law & order, the national way of life and the left-right spectrum



DF'S ECONOMIC AND WELFARE POLICY PROFILE: WELFARE CHAUVINISM

The DF follows the Nordic pattern in that it combines anti-immigrant with pro-welfare positions. While it commenced as a party with tax-cut proposals, these have been significantly toned down in its rhetoric, emphasising instead increasing priority being assigned to a Danes-only welfare system. Overall support for welfare policies has increased over time (Figure 88). The party blames the elites for cutting welfare provisions for deserving 'natives', and the non-natives for depleting the welfare state (Schumacher and Van Kersbergen 2016). They do blur some economic liberal positions in their manifesto, such as 'empowering free Danish citizens to fend for themselves' (DF 2021). But at the same time, the party emphasises that the state should take overall responsibility for those in need (Widfeldt 2018): 'the state is bound to render support to those Danes who are in need and bring them security and peace of mind' (DF 2021). This support 'should be available through an efficient social and healthcare system' and 'should, in principle, be publicly financed through taxation' (DF 2021).

Figure 88: DF's and New Right's stance on welfare



TRUE FINNS/FINNS PARTY (PS)

The PS (formerly True Finns) is the successor of the Finnish Rural Party – a party which centred its programmatic agenda on representing the interests of deprived small-scale farmers – which was originally formed in 1959 under a different name (Widfeldt 2018). The PS itself was established in 1995 and was initially a small party. It improved its image under the leadership of Timo Soini, gradually increasing representation from 4.1% in 2007 to electoral breakthrough with 19.0% of the vote in 2011. It joined a centre-right coalition government in 2015. In 2019 the party received 17.5%.

PS' VALUE PROFILE: ECONOMIC NATIONALISM

The literature has debated the extent to which the PS belongs to the RWPP party family because it combines right-wing and left-wing positions (Kuisma 2013; Jungar and Jupskås 2014; Widfeldt 2018), and has increasingly become more left-wing (Figure 89). The party is openly populist and nationalist (Kuisma 2013). It faces similar internal tensions, as do some Western European RWPPs between moderate conservative and radical nationalist anti-immigration elements. Its rhetoric is explicitly nationalist, advocating a 'Finland First' strategy. Its 2019 manifesto commences with the statement that 'the very reason for the existence of a country defined as Finland is to defend and promote the interests of Finland and Finnish citizens' (Finns Party 2019). The party's signature theme is anti-immigration, but its civic nationalist justification is predominantly economically oriented. According to the PS, non-EU immigration to Finland should be permitted only in cases that bring an economic advantage. It discriminates against certain ethnic groups such as the Roma, but on the grounds that they constitute a crime threat.

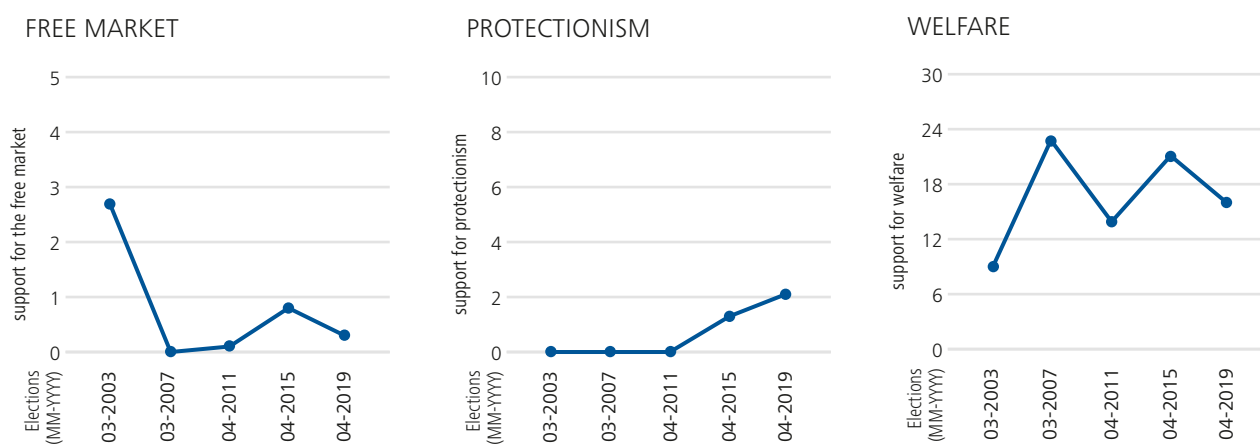
Figure 89: PS' stance on euroscepticism and the left-right spectrum



PS' ECONOMIC AND WELFARE POLICY PROFILE: ECONOMIC NATIONALISM AND WELFARE CHAUVINISM

The PS adopts left-wing economic policies. It is a strongly economic nationalist party (Kuisma 2013), welfarist, protectionist and against a free market economy (Figure 90). This economic nationalism goes beyond support for protectionist economic policies to inform the party's overall ideology. The party justifies its anti-immigration positions on predominantly economic grounds. The question of welfare is the first one to be addressed in the party's 2019 manifesto under the heading 'one can share only what one has with the needy' (Finns Party 2019). In accordance to the welfare chauvinist agenda that it shares with the other Nordic RWPPs, the PS advocates that social and health care should be offered primarily to natives.

Figure 90: PS' stance on the free market, protectionism and welfare



THE SWEDEN DEMOCRATS (SD)

The SD is a successful newcomer which ended Swedish exceptionalism in 2010 when it received 5.7% amount of the popular vote. While the centre-right has maintained a strong *cordon sanitaire* against the SD, the party has managed to increase its influence in local politics since 2018 onwards. It has enjoyed increasing electoral support in its domestic political arena, receiving 12.9% of the vote in 2014 and 17.5% of the vote in 2018.

The SD was founded in 1988 as a successor to the Sweden party (Sverigepartiet), which in turn had been established in 1986 through the merger of the Progress party and the racist and far-right group Keep Sweden Swedish (Bevara Sverige Svenskt) (Rydgren and Van der Meiden 2019). Hence, in contrast to the DF and PS, the SD originated from the extreme right-wing milieu and was linked to Swedish neo-Nazi groups. As a result, the party was initially marginalised in the Swedish political system, being viewed as extreme and illegitimate both by the electorate and the mainstream parties.

In 1995 the party began to present itself as a progressive-nationalist, Eurosceptic movement, comparable to the DF, the Austrian FPÖ and the French RN (Heinze 2018). Under Jimmie Åkesson's leadership, the SD embarked on a systematic 'normalisation' reform programme, which has gone hand in hand with the party's increasing electoral support.

SD'S VALUE PROFILE: NATIONALIST NORMALISATION

Although the SD party has its roots in Swedish fascism and white nationalism, the normalisation of its discourse suggests it may be categorised as a radical RWPP variant with a nationalist, populist and anti-EU narrative (Figure 91) that centres on immigration scepticism. Although the party articulates an anti-establishment message, it works within the country's democratic framework. Its conscious efforts to normalise its image have included a series of initiatives, ranging from changing the party's designation from nationalist to social conservative in 2011 and introducing a 'zero tolerance for racism' policy in 2012, which resulted in numerous expulsions of party members (Widfeldt 2018). In its manifesto, the party itself emphasises that 'we have been in the wrong sometimes, not least in the early years. But we have matured, and we have learned from our experience' (SD 2021).

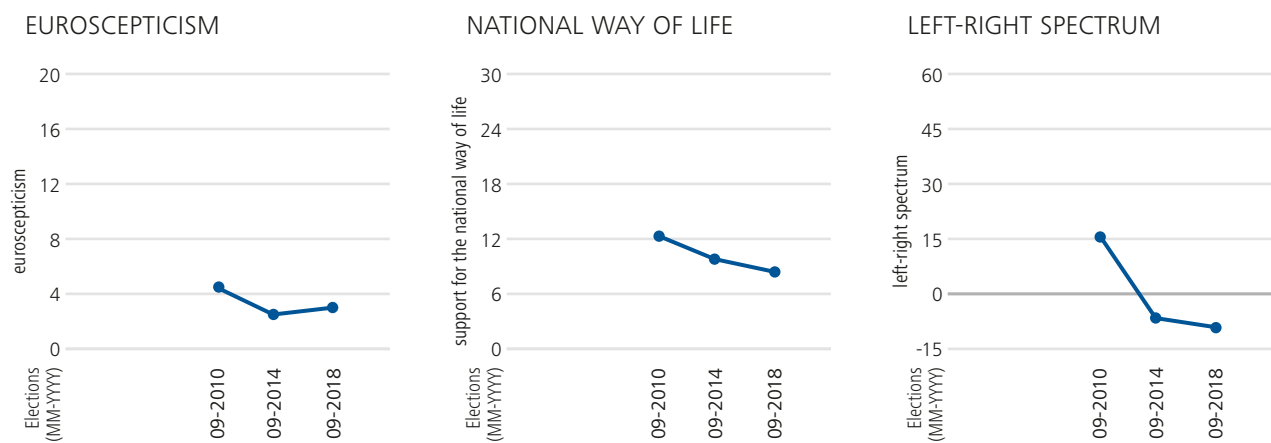
Part of this move is the adoption of a civic nationalist rhetoric that emphasises value-based and institutional criteria of national belonging: 'We welcome those who contribute to our society, who abide by our laws and who respect our practices. In contrast, those who come here to take advantage of our systems, commit crimes or put our citizens in harm's way are not welcome' (SD 2021).

The SD claims to represent all Swedish people, drawing on both the working class and other societal groups: 'We are men and women, young and old. We work in traditional labour industries in the countryside and we are academics in the city. Many of us are parents, some of us run businesses, others are students and some are retired' (SD 2021). In line with their civic nationalist narrative, they emphasise 'the foreign background' (SD 2021) of some of their members and elected representatives, suggesting that it is not all outsiders they oppose, but only those who threaten Sweden's value consensus and stability. The party has also become progressively more left-wing (Figure 91).

There is some ambivalence, however, in the articulation of the party's civic nationalist rhetoric, as their definition of the Swedish people also draw on some ascriptive criteria – for example in all their visual materials Swedish people are always portrayed as white. But at the same time they do emphasise 'culture' and 'values' as opposed to race in their attempt to distance themselves from the party's fascist ties.

The SD shares other Western European RWPPs' as well the DF's focus on Islam, and draws in particular on Europe's refugee crisis. The party presents Islam as a value, ideological and security threat, linking it not only to the erosion of the country's cultural values, but also crime and terrorism. Like the DF, the justification of its anti-Islam rhetoric takes place both in cultural terms, i.e. Islam is presented as antithetical to European values, and religious terms, i.e. Sweden is a Christian society.

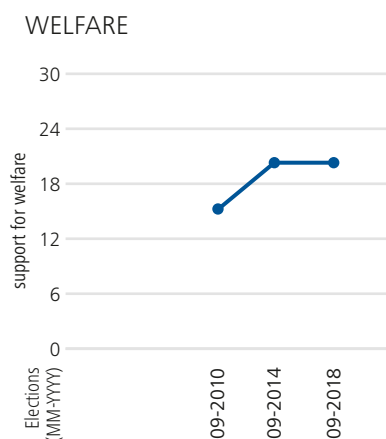
Figure 91: SD's stance on euroscepticism, the national way of life and the left-right-spectrum



SD'S ECONOMIC AND WELFARE POLICY PROFILE: WELFARE CHAUVINISM

Similarly to the other Nordic RWPPs, the SD is pro-welfare and welfare chauvinist (Figure 101). The party favours redistribution to support those in need. It advocates universal health care, generous pensions and accessible schooling, but only for Swedes, as they feel that 'Swedish welfare should be for Swedish citizens' (SD 2021).

Figure 92: SD's stance on welfare



ANALYSIS

UNDERSTANDING THE RISE OF RWPPS IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

Denmark, Finland and Sweden share a number of contextual similarities. They are all wealthy countries with strong economic performances and well-established democratic systems. These are all characteristics they share with many Western European states that experienced an increase in RWPP support during the 2010s. An additional factor that mainly characterises the Nordics is a strong welfare state and a long history of corporatist traditions (McDonnell et al. 2021). This setting makes the rise of RWPPs surprising from an economic perspective, as these states are wealthy and have generous welfare states, suggesting that an economic explanation alone is insufficient in facilitating RWPP support.

Indeed, research on the Nordics indicates that, as in Western Europe, the economic cleavage is intersected by a value cleavage which also drives voting behaviour (Rydgren and van Der Meiden 2019). However, the increasing salience of the immigration issue and strong correlation between immigration scepticism and RWPP support have a strong economic dimension in the Nordics. First, these parties' supporters have a largely working-class background, and second, the parties themselves have increased their standing through a strong pro-welfare agenda. Overall success has been facilitated by RWPP acceptance of the mainstream, something that has so far been mostly the case for the DF and PS. The electoral persistence of the DS and its increasing influence on local politics suggest a possible weakening of the **cordon sanitaire** in Sweden.

Although the three parties differ significantly in their origins, they have all embarked on conscious ideological transformations as part of a broader modernisation-normalisation strategy that emphasises immigration. All three parties are nationalist, populist and propose strict law-and-order policies and support shared public commitments to welfare which deliberately exclude immigrants. The adoption of this rhetoric has coincided both with more votes and their normalisation in their respective political arenas. The RWPP voter profile in the Nordic countries corresponds to party profiles: it consists of mainly young, working-class or lower-middle-class male individuals with lower levels of education. These individuals tend to dislike both immigration and the political establishment (Widfeldt 2018).

In Denmark, the rise of DF has coincided with the increased salience and politicisation of the immigration issue – and low unemployment numbers. This correlation suggests – as research also shows – that DF’s success is related to the increasing importance of socio-cultural issues (see e.g. Arndt 2018). However, there is also an economic story behind the DF vote. DF support consists of considerable numbers of blue-collar workers. Indeed, the party became the most clearly defined working-class party between 2001 and 2007 (Heinze 2018). Our empirical analysis confirms that male, either young or old individuals in low or middle-skill occupations or the agricultural sector, and not highly educated who have both cultural and economic concerns over immigration and distrust the EU are more likely to vote for RWPPs in Denmark (Figure 94). The distribution of voters with different immigration concerns among the RWPP electorate also tells an economic story: 46% of RWPP voters have both cultural and economic concerns, while 17% have economic concerns alone (Figure 93).

In Finland, the PS took advantage of the euro crisis between 2007 and 2013. During this time, the party combined anti-immigrant and anti-EU rhetoric with a left-populist defence of the welfare state and a nationalist defence of the sovereignty of the Finnish people. This rhetoric was specifically directed against market-led policies (Ylä-Anttila and Ylä Anttila 2015). The party’s main targeted voter base included lower and lower-middle-class individuals with conservative attitudes that resided in rural areas (Ylä-Anttila and Ylä Anttila 2015). This strategy won the party 4.1% of the votes in 2007. While Finland itself did not suffer from the crisis comparable to Southern Europe, the PS exploited the crisis from a creditor country perspective, positioning itself against the idea that Finnish taxpayers should bail out countries like Greece. This position enjoyed broad support from the Finnish electorate, as the Euro crisis was a particularly salient issue among voters, especially PS voters (Ylä-Anttila and Ylä Anttila 2015). Our empirical analysis confirms the lower and lower-middle-class voter base of the PS. Male, middle-aged or older, bottom-income-group individuals in low or middle-skill occupations, but not with low education levels, are more likely to vote for RWPPs in Finland. These people distrust the EU and have strong cultural and economic concerns over immigration (Figure 95) A substantial proportion (33%) of RWPP voters in Finland have exclusively economic concerns over immigration, while 47% have no immigration concerns at all (Figure 93).

In Sweden, the SD also receives strong support from the working class (Kenes 2020). Research suggests that the decline of class politics and the resulting weakening ties between the working class and the Social Democratic Party in Sweden, as well as the decline in trade union membership, have facilitated this process (Rydgren and Van Der Meiden 2019; Oskarson and Demker 2015). The growing salience of socio-cultural politics has accompanied this, particularly the politicisation of the immigration issue (Rydgren and Van Der Meiden 2019), which is framed largely along the lines of native competition with immigrants in the labour market (Oskarson and Demker, 2015). The majority of SD supporters take a harsh stance against immigrants and refugees (Rydgren and Van Der Meiden 2019). Our empirical analysis confirms that male benefit recipients in agriculture or operator occupations with medium levels of education are more likely to support RWPPs in Sweden. These individuals have both cultural and economic concerns over immigration and distrust the EU (Figure 96). Among them, a sizeable 26% have exclusively economic concerns over immigration, 46% have a combination of both cultural and economic concerns and 20% have no concerns at all (Figure 93).

Figure 93: **Distribution of immigration concerns**

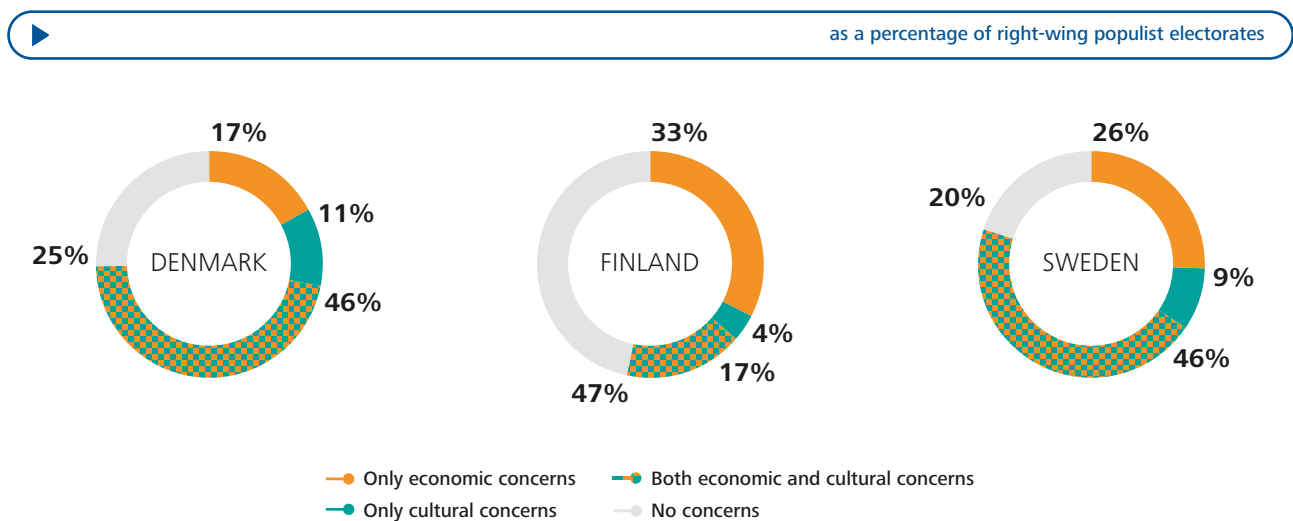
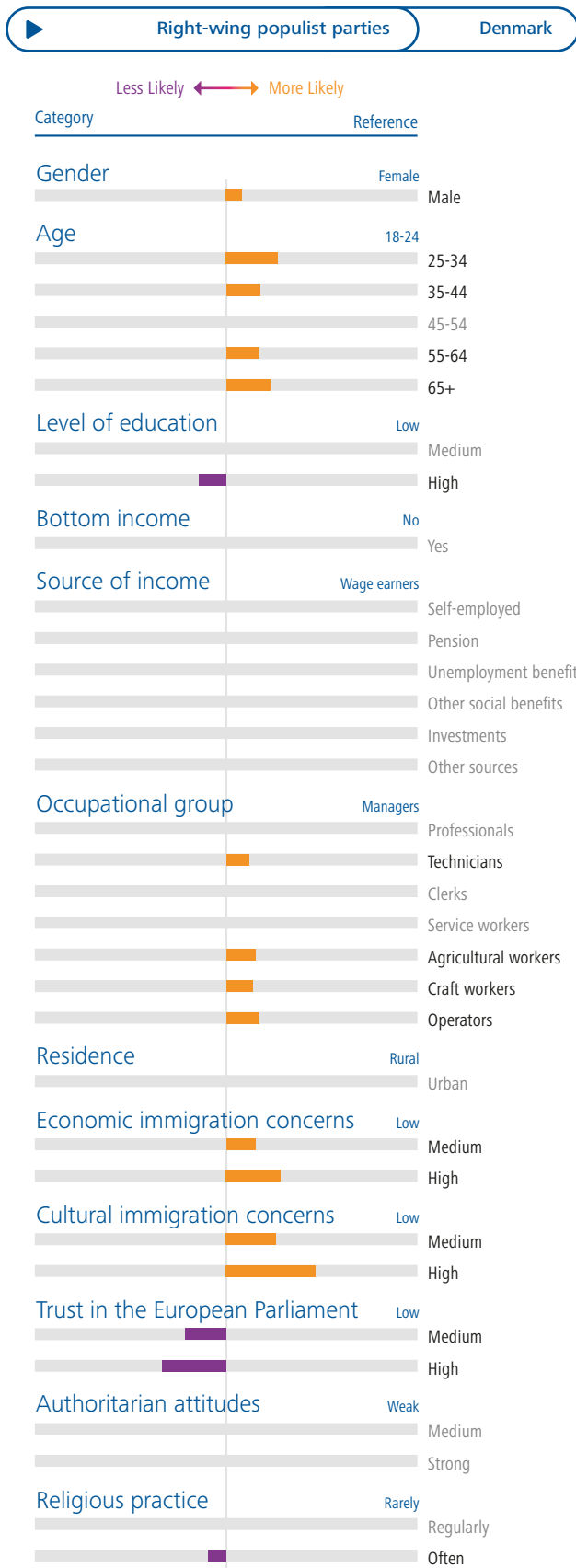
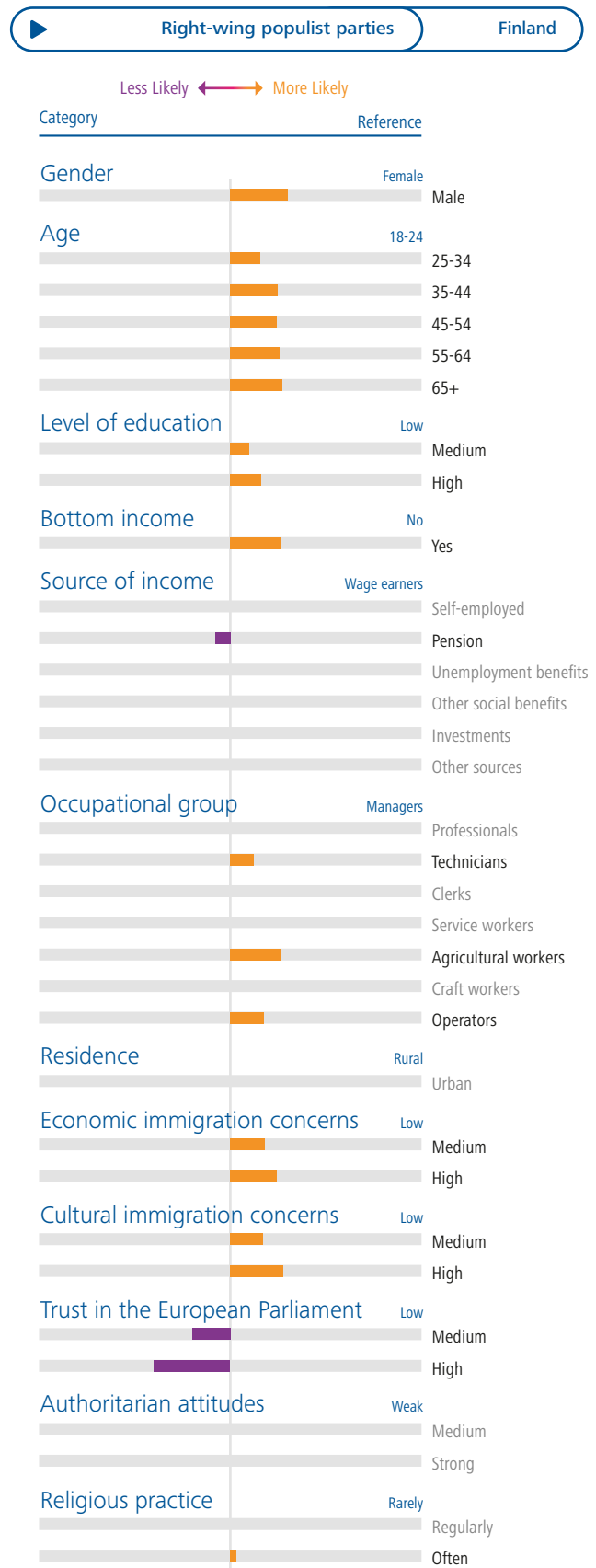


Figure 94: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



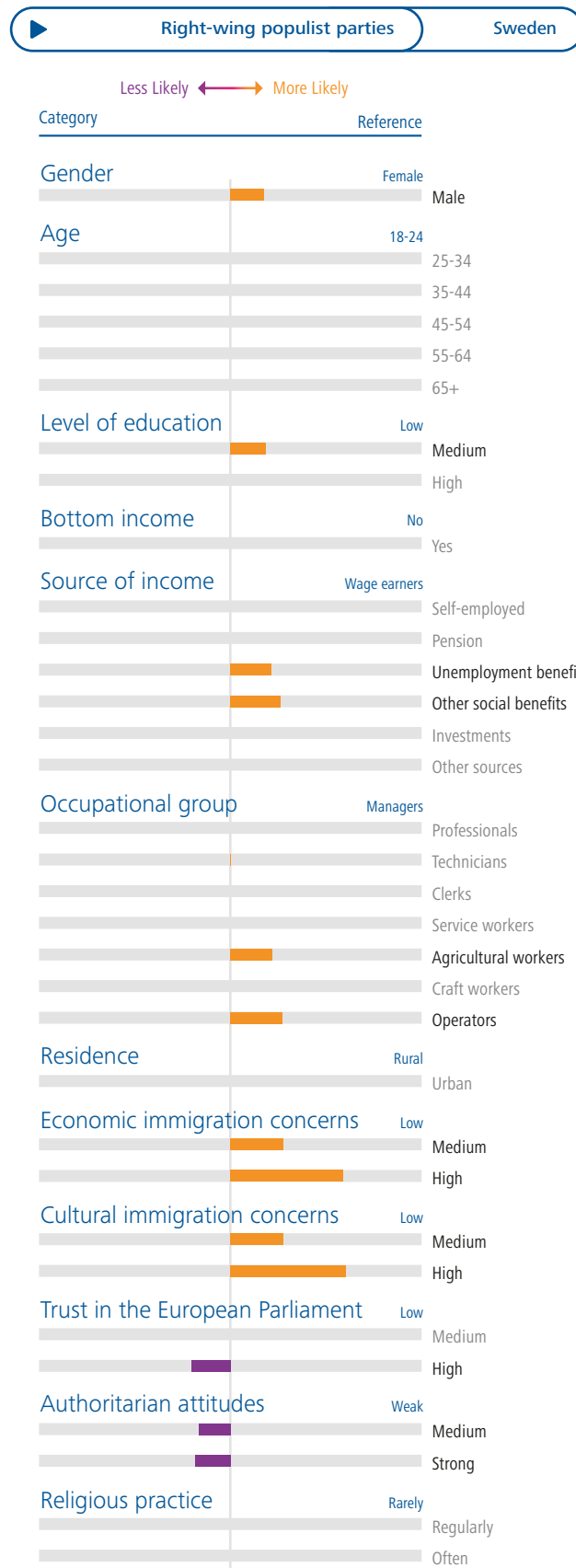
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Figure 95: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.

Figure 96: **Characteristics affecting the probability to vote**



Only statistically significant results are shown.

RECOMMENDATIONS

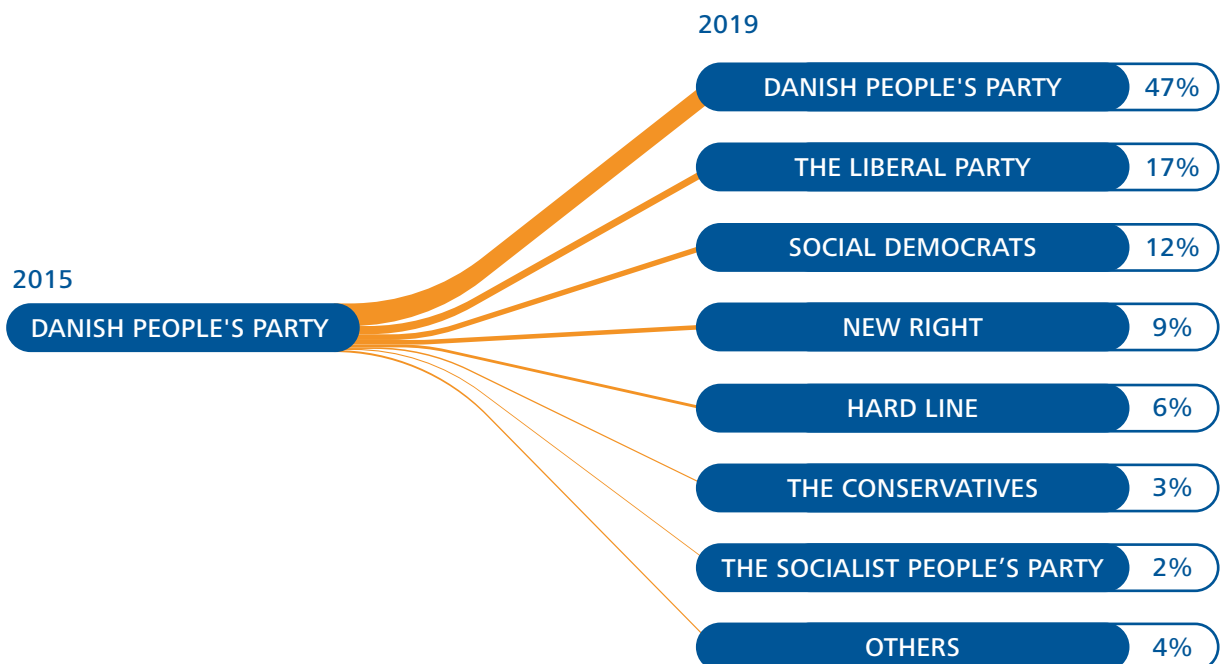
HOW SHOULD PROGRESSIVES RESPOND?

How should progressive parties in these countries respond? Research on the 2019 Danish elections has suggested that this is an instance where centre-left accommodation of RWPP stances – and in particular the adoption of stricter immigration positions – may have paid off (see Jupskås 2019; Kosiara-Pedersen 2020; Hjorth and Larsen 2020 for detailed election results). A closer look, however, reveals a more complex picture:

First, from the 47% of those who leaked from the party in 2019, 35% moved to other right-wing parties, including the Liberal Party (17%), the New Right (9%), Hard Line (6%) and the Conservatives (3%) (Figure 97). This supports the idea that vote-switching is more likely to take place between the centre-right and RWPP electorates rather than between the centre-left and the RWPP electorates.

Second, the 12% that did go to the SD is more likely to have done so because of economic rather than cultural concerns related to immigration. Indeed our analysis has shown that the mechanism through which anti-immigration narratives mobilise voters in the Nordic countries is primarily economic.

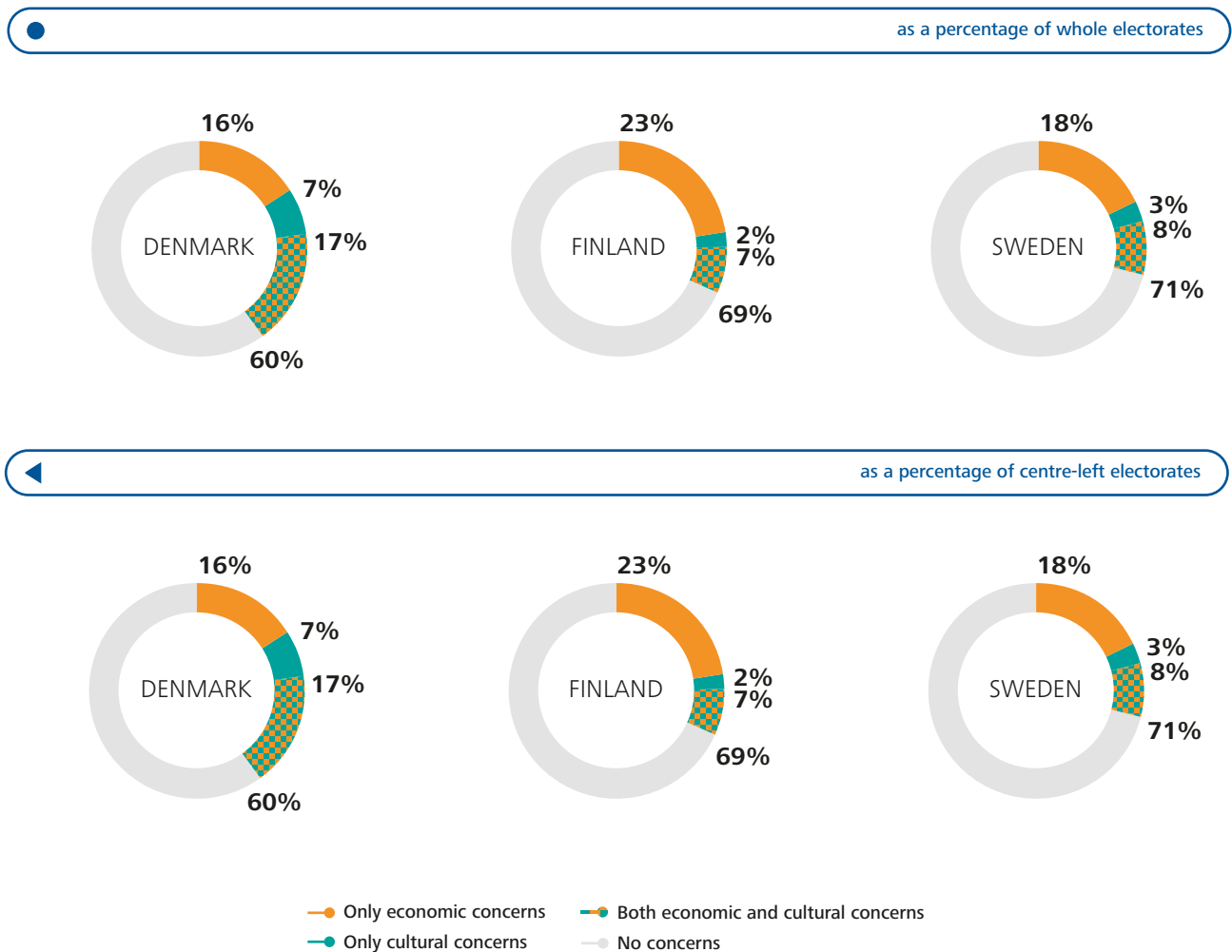
Figure 97: Voter shift Danish People's Party (Jupskås 2019)



More specifically, our comparison of the RWPP and centre-left electorates in three Nordic countries highlights the following:

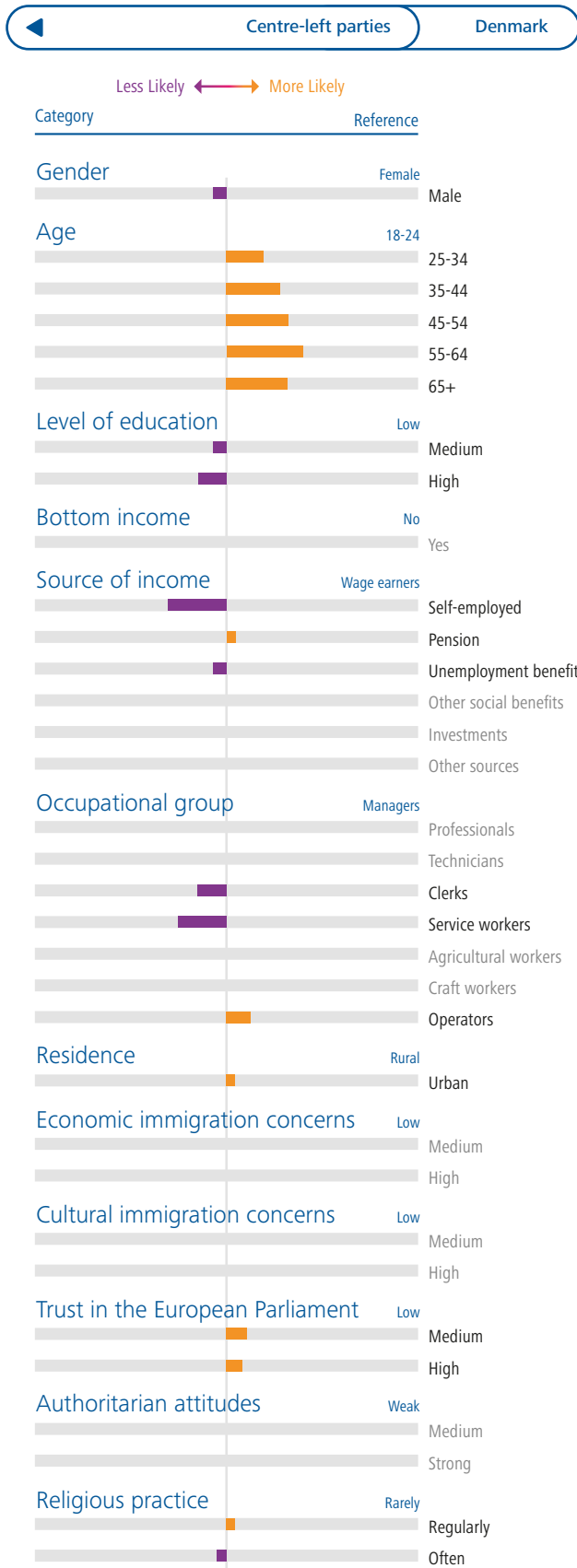
- The Nordic countries are unique compared to Western Europe in terms of their strong welfare states and long history of corporatist traditions. These suggest that the three countries’ electorates are strongly motivated by economic considerations.
- RWPP core voters, i.e. those voters who oppose immigration on principle and have strong cultural concerns over immigration, are a minority among the whole electorate in all three countries. These voters are a larger group in Denmark, accounting for 7% of the electorate. In Finland and Sweden, the proportion of these voters is extremely small, respectively accounting for 2% and 3% of the electorate as a whole (Figure 98). These are principled RWPP voters and are unlikely to switch to the centre-left even if it adopts ‘copycat’ strategies. They identify more staunchly with a right-wing platform and are more likely to switch from ‘far’ to centre-right. They are the least likely centre-left constituency and do not constitute a centre-left target voter group. The fact that this voter group is so small in the three countries underpins the argument that the mechanism through which immigration scepticism becomes a salient vote issue in the Nordic countries is economic rather than cultural.

Figure 98: **Distribution of immigration concerns**



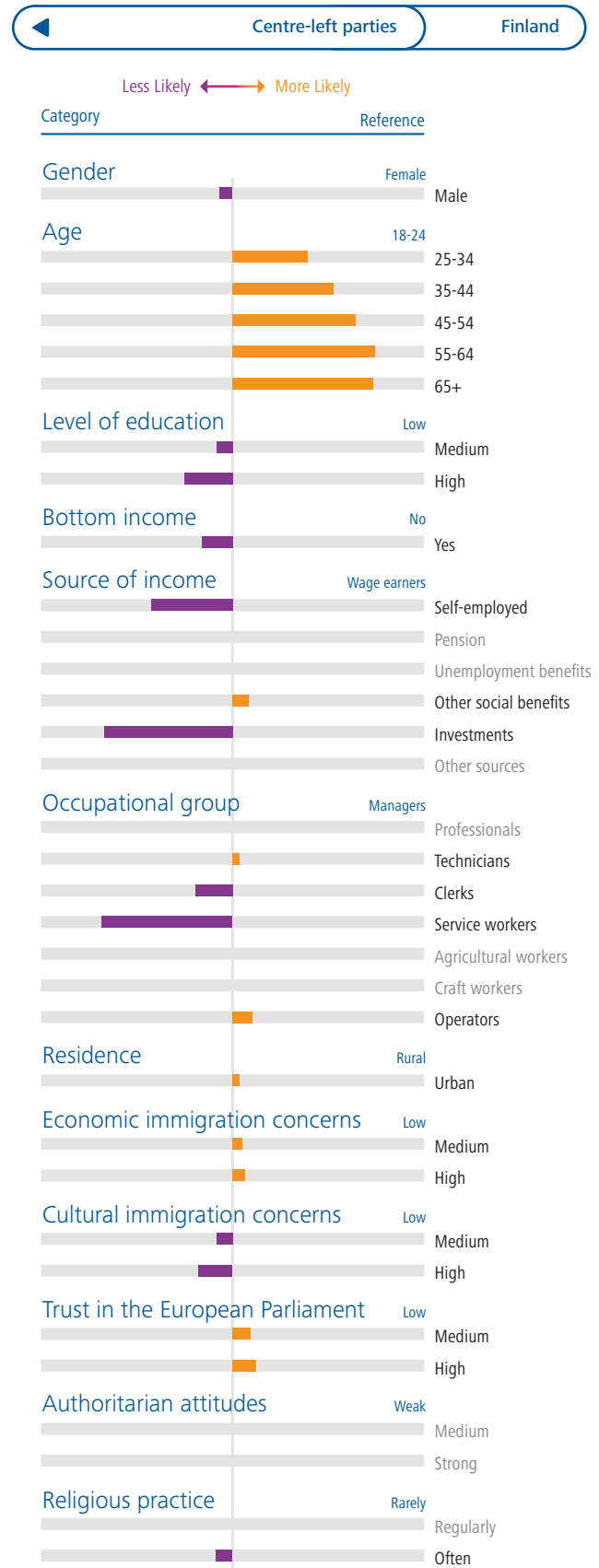
- Comparing the RWPP and centre-left voter profiles reveals some interesting similarities and differences. The centre-left voter in Denmark is a middle-aged, female, secular urban dweller, unlikely to have cultural concerns over immigration (Figure 99). In Finland, this voter is also a secular female urban dweller and is unlikely to have cultural concerns over immigration, but is likely to have economic concerns over immigration (Figure 100). In Sweden, centre-left voters are also secular and share a working-class base (bottom income group) (Figure 101). These individuals are unlikely to be attracted by cultural anti-immigration narratives, but could be mobilised through economic anti-immigration narratives. Indeed, among the centre-left electorates in three countries, the RWPP signature theme (i.e. exclusively cultural concerns over immigration) has very little prevalence: 5% in Denmark, 1% in Finland and 3% in Sweden (Figure 98).
- Even among the RWPP electorates, individuals with exclusively cultural concerns over immigration (i.e. core voters) are a minority. The RWPP electorates in all three countries are composed of a significant percentage of people with either combined economic and cultural concerns (46% in Denmark and Sweden, and 17% in Finland) or only economic concerns (17% in Denmark, 33% in Finland and 26% in Sweden – Figure 93). Interestingly, just under half of the Finnish RWPP electorate (47%) have no immigration concerns at all. This suggests the majority of voters of these parties are protest or peripheral voters, i.e. voters whose opposition to immigration is contingent. These voters are primarily concerned with the economic impact of immigration and tend to support the populist right as a way of expressing their discontent. They likely feel economically insecure and have salient inequality concerns. These voters may be mobilised through anti-immigrant narratives that emphasise labour market competition, but they may also be mobilised by centre-left issues that centre on economic security. This voter group is a more likely centre-left target constituency through a broader 'equality' narrative.
- The proportion of voters with no immigration concerns among the centre-left electorates in the three countries is fairly high: 65% in Denmark, 68% in Finland and 73% in Sweden (Figure 98). As noted above, those centre-left voters that are motivated by immigration concerns tend to be driven primarily by economic considerations.

Figure 99: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



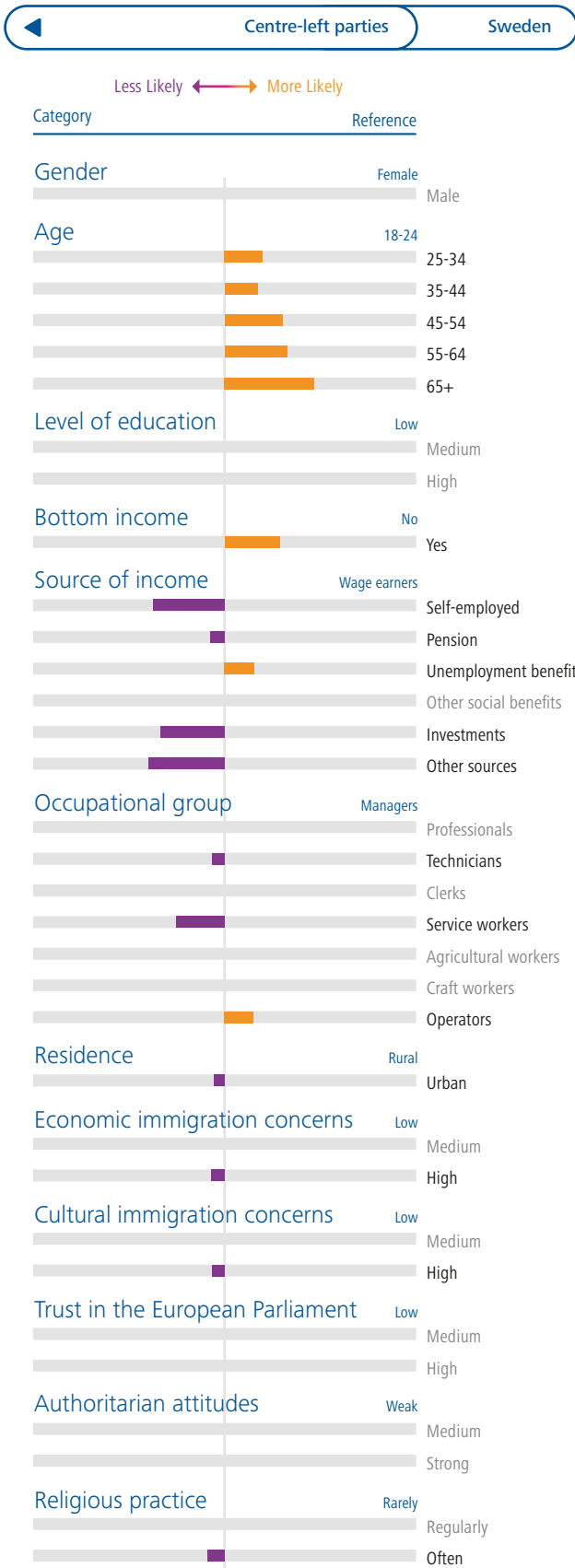
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Figure 100: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.

Figure 101: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.



EASTERN EUROPE

POLAND, HUNGARY AND SLOVENIA



POLAND

Law and Justice (PiS)

HUNGARY

Fidesz

Jobbik

SLOVENIA

Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS)

Slovenian National Party (SNS)



EASTERN EUROPE: POLAND, HUNGARY AND SLOVENIA

PATTERNS OF SUCCESS

POLAND



Law and Justice
(PiS)

HUNGARY



Fidesz



Jobbik

SLOVENIA



Slovenian
Democratic Party
(SDS)



Slovenian
National Party
(SNS)

Eastern European RWPP trajectories are the product of historical conjectures that include the communist experience. The dominant pattern is of radicalised mainstream parties that increasingly adopt populist, illiberal and authoritarian policy positions based on ethnic nationalism. This differs from Western Europe, where most RWPPs commenced as niche actors operating on the fringes of the political system. Western European RWPPs progressively increased their support beyond their secure voter base by adopting civic nationalist narratives and progressively permeated mainstream ground either as coalition partners or as credible opposition parties.

There are notable variations within Eastern Europe itself. One important distinction is between the more ethnically pluralistic societies such as Latvia and Estonia, where RWPPs mobilise against larger politicised ethnic groups, and the more ethnically homogenous countries such as Poland, Hungary and Slovenia, where mobilisation takes place along socially conservative lines (Bustikova 2018). These cases are characterised by radicalised mainstream RWPPs in government, resulting in democratic backsliding in power (Pirro and Stanley 2021). Given the low levels of immigration in the region, Eastern European RWPPs tend to target domestic minorities. As such, there is a strong association of minority policies with democratisation in Eastern Europe (Bustikova 2018).

Hungary, Poland and Slovenia are prominent examples of radicalised mainstream parties in power with Fidesz, PiS and the SDS, respectively. Smaller RWPPs, on the other hand, have been in a state of flux: initially some, for example Jobbik, experienced an increase in their support, but then declined, largely as a result of the radicalisation of the mainstream, indicating a weakness of liberal democratic consolidation (Bustikova 2018).

DEMAND: WHO VOTES FOR RWPPS IN EASTERN EUROPE?

Eastern European voters differ from their Western European counterparts in many respects. They tend to be more religious and have stronger authoritarian attitudes. They vary in terms of their immigration scepticism. Overall, the link between anti-immigrant attitudes and RWPP support tends to be stronger in Western Europe than in the East (Allen 2017).

In Poland, older male, educated rural dwellers who are either professionals or employed in the agricultural sectors are more likely to support RWPPs. These individuals are more likely to be religious, distrust the EU, have authoritarian attitudes and cultural but not economic concerns over immigration.

In Hungary, middle-aged, educated rural dwellers who are religious but have no immigration concerns tend to vote for RWPPs.

In Slovenia, middle-aged, male, religious individuals with cultural immigration concerns are more likely to vote for RWPPs.

Figure 102: RWPP national election history in Poland 2000-2021

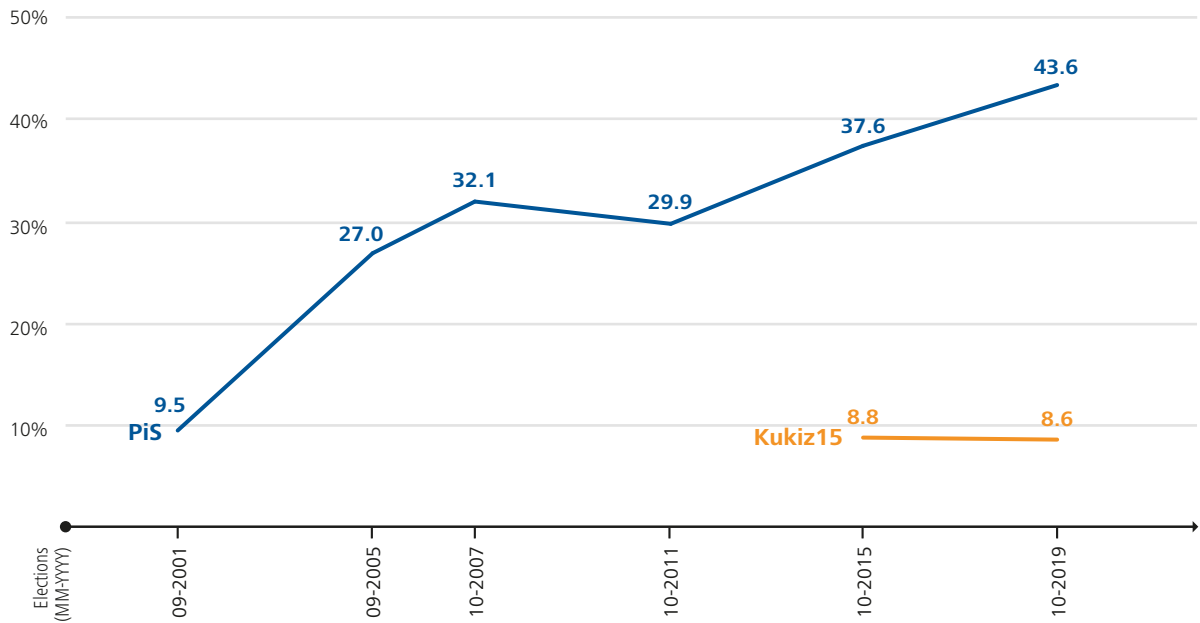


Figure 103: RWPP national election history in Hungary 2000-2021

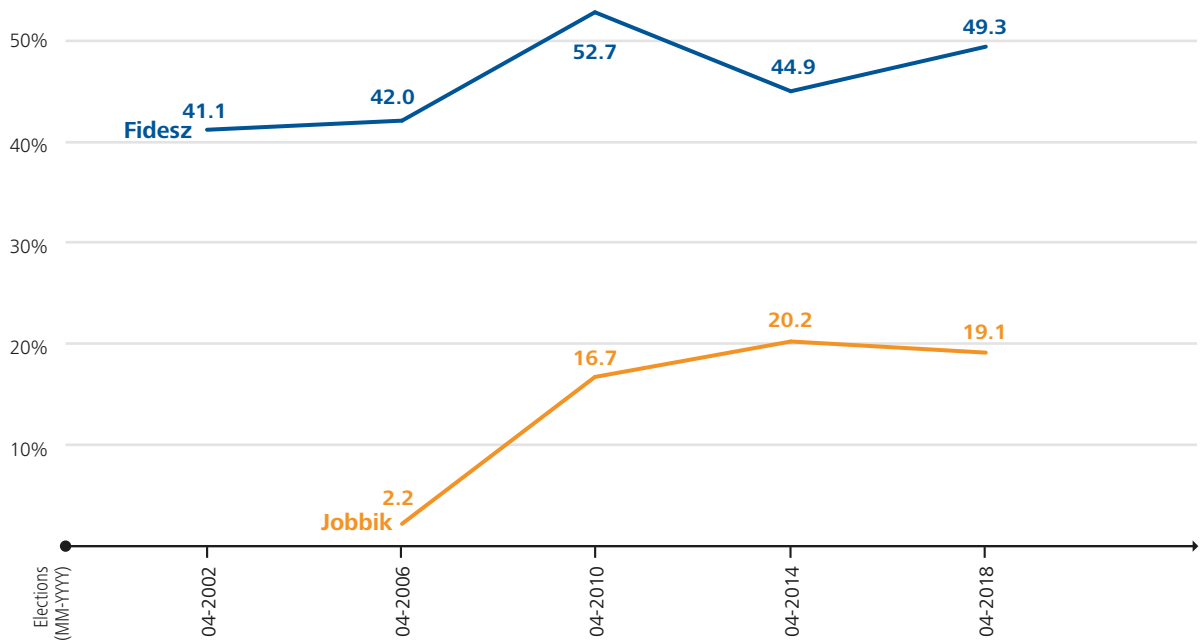


Figure 104: RWPP national election history in Slovenia 2000-2021

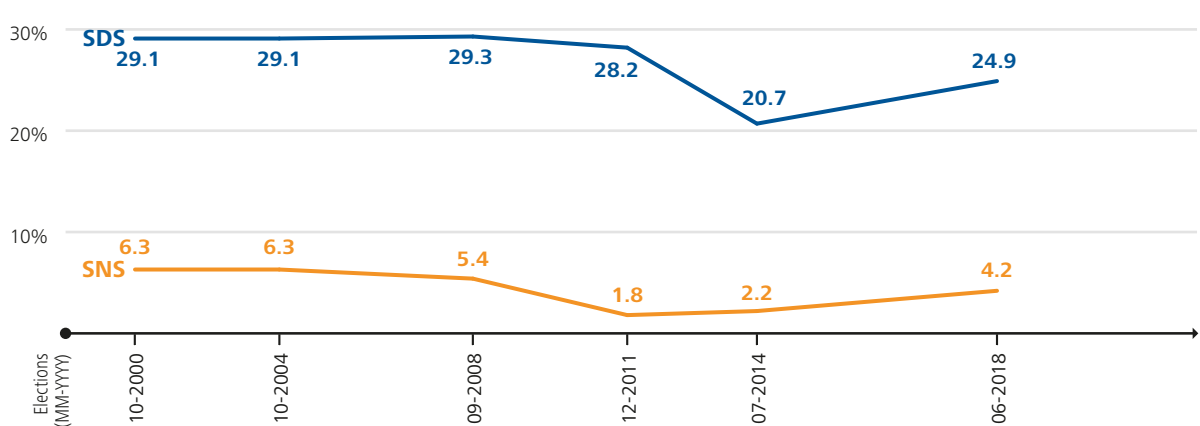
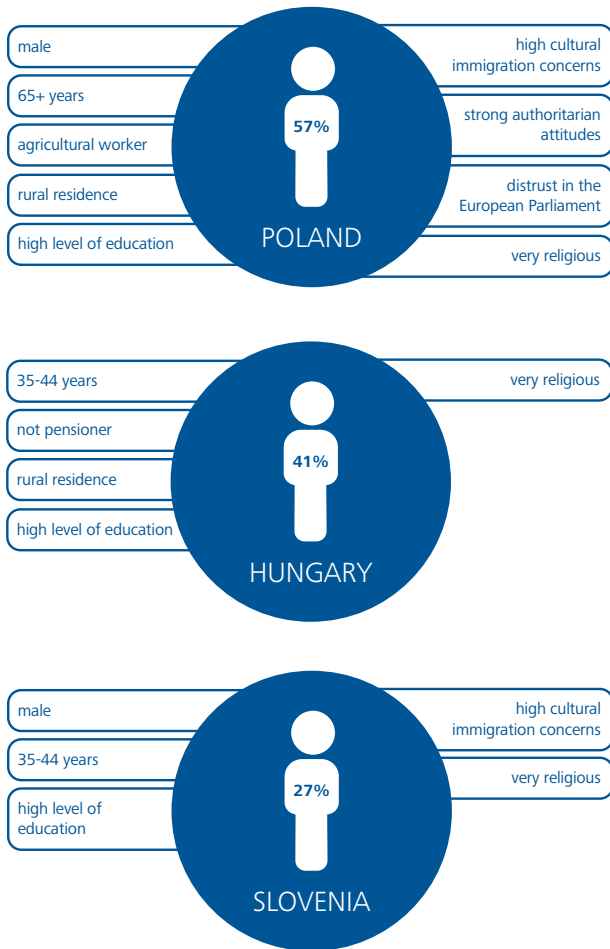
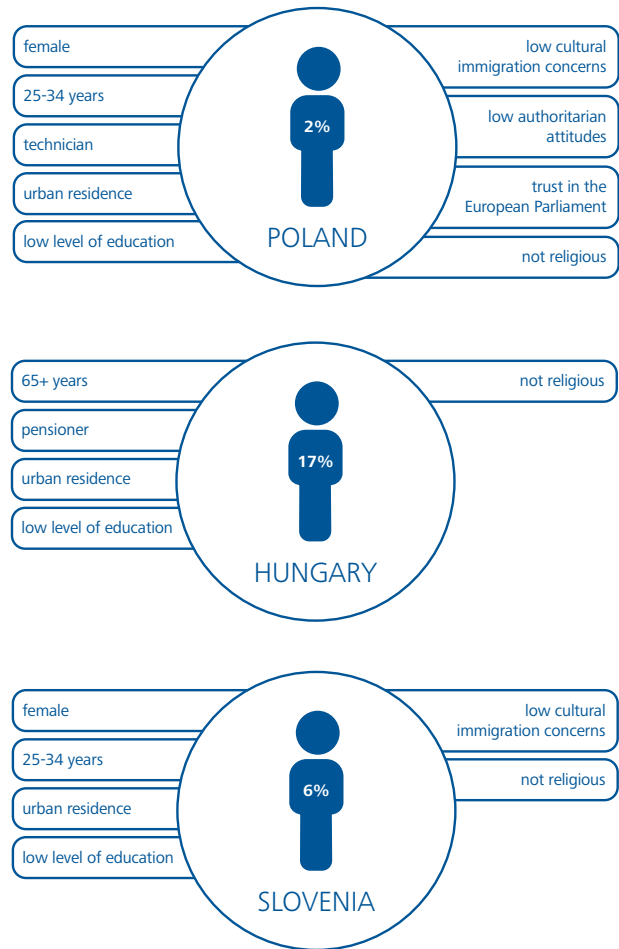


Figure 105: Who is the most likely right-wing populist party voter?



Probability to vote for a Right Wing Populist Party (%)

Figure 106: Who is the least likely right-wing populist party voter?



Probability to vote for a Right Wing Populist Party (%)

SUPPLY: WHAT MAKES THESE PARTIES' NARRATIVES [UN]SUCCESSFUL?

Fidesz, PiS and the SDS commenced as mainstream parties and gradually radicalised, becoming more right-wing. They all tend to draw on predominantly ethnic forms of nationalism (Vachudova 2020). While the influx of Syrian refugees had a significant impact on their agendas, incentivising them to focus more on Islam, their justification for these exclusionary agendas remains predominantly grounded on ethnic criteria of national belonging. This also sets them apart from their Western European counterparts, which, in their majority, justify their anti-Muslim positions on civic nationalist grounds. Their economic positions tend to be 'blurry'. They employ anti-Western narratives that focus on Western 'exploitation' of the region and emphasise the importance of empowering domestic companies. They are welfare chauvinist and have implemented a range of social policies to protect native families.

PARTY PROFILES

LAW AND JUSTICE (PiS)

Law and Justice (PiS) was founded by brothers Jarosław and Lech Kaczyński in 2001. While initially focused on anti-corruption and anti-establishment politics, PiS has progressively turned towards illiberalism, engaging in democratic backsliding and attempts to undermine the constitutional rights and freedoms of individuals and social groups (Pirro and Stanley 2021). The party has been in power in Poland since 2015.

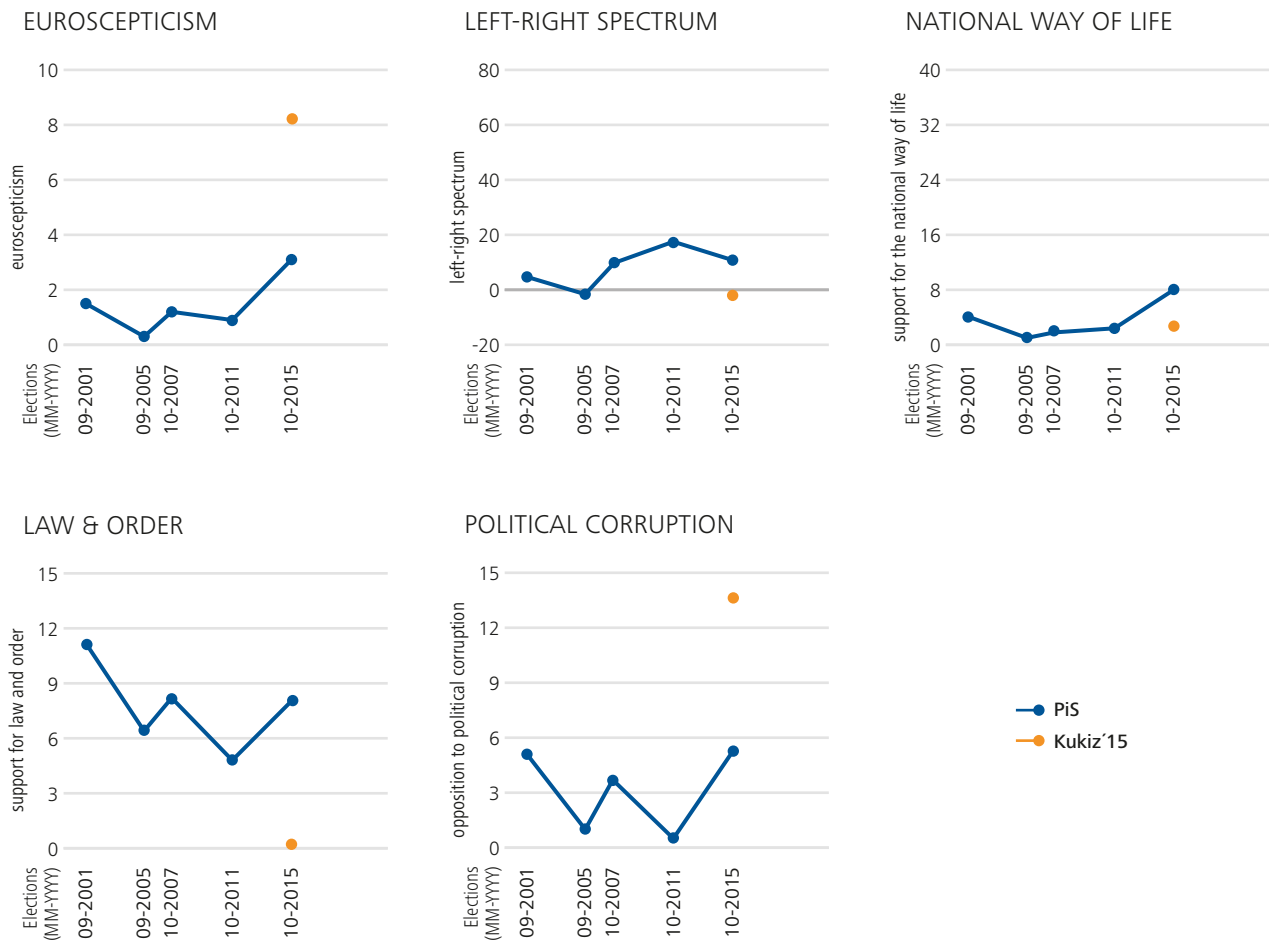
PiS' VALUE PROFILE: 'ETHNOPOPULISM'

PiS falls under the category of 'Ethnopolitism', which includes parties that merge populist with ethnic nationalist narratives, i.e. narratives that define the nation in ethnic/cultural terms (Vachudova 2020). Overall, the party has become progressively more right-wing, Eurosceptic and nationalist. It places extensive emphasis on the Polish nation's unity and homogeneity, which it defines through ascriptive criteria. Its ethno-populist discourse focuses on the 'betrayal' of ordinary Poles by exploitative domestic elites who represent foreign interests (Bill and Stanley 2019). PiS adopts a harsh stance on immigration, refugees and minorities, including LGBT communities. Some members of the party are openly anti-Semitic.

Initially, PiS was an anti-establishment party focusing on corruption. Its positions on corruption have fluctuated over time. Its nationalist, Eurosceptic and left-right positions have also fluctuated, with the party becoming overall more Eurosceptic and nationalist. In addition, its progressive, illiberal turn has been accompanied by staunch positions on law and order (Figure 107), strengthening ties with the Catholic Church and support for the traditional family, which it describes as 'the basic unit of society with unquestionable rights' (Folvarčny and Kopeček 2020). PiS rejects abortion and supports measures that protect the unborn child's life on these grounds.

Although, similarly to Western European RWPPs, PiS has progressively targeted Islam to cultivate and capitalise on resentment against Muslim refugees, its overall narrative remains more closely aligned to ethnic nationalism. The party criticises Western values and stresses the alleged dangers of multiculturalism, liberalism and 'gender' ideologies. Instead, it seeks to defend Polish culture on the basis of traditional Christian family values and ascriptive criteria of national belonging. Party members often resort to racist hate speech in the public sphere to create resentment and fear.

Figure 107: PiS' and Kukiz' stance on euroscepticism, the left-right spectrum, the national way of life, law & order, and political corruption



PiS' ECONOMIC AND WELFARE POLICY PROFILE: NATIONALISM AND WELFARE CHAUVINISM

In terms of its economic / welfare policy profile, PiS conforms to the 'blurry' pattern. On the one hand, it favours economic growth and has supported private ownership and tax decreases. On the other hand, it also supports nationalisation policies that prioritise domestic entrepreneurs and favours maintaining state ownership in major companies and regulating banks and the stock market (Folvarčny and Kopeček 2020; Figure 108).

Overall the party supports welfare policies, although this has declined over time (Figure 108). Its economic and welfare policies are largely informed by nationalism. PiS focused on a range of purported 'injustices' perpetrated by the West on Poland and argues that the dominance of cosmopolitan values, the failure of elites to distribute the benefits of economic growth in an equitable manner, and the 'colonisation' of political institutions have left Poland in ruins (Stanley and Stanley 2019). Accordingly, the party adopts a welfare chauvinist agenda that prioritises native Poles, and has introduced a range of public welfare policies oriented towards supporting various social groups. These include, for example, free medication for the over-75s and pregnant women, increasing the minimum wage, lowering of the pension age and an extensive pro-family programme, which included large contributions per child.

Figure 108: PiS' and Kukiz' stance on nationalisation, welfare, protectionism, and market economy



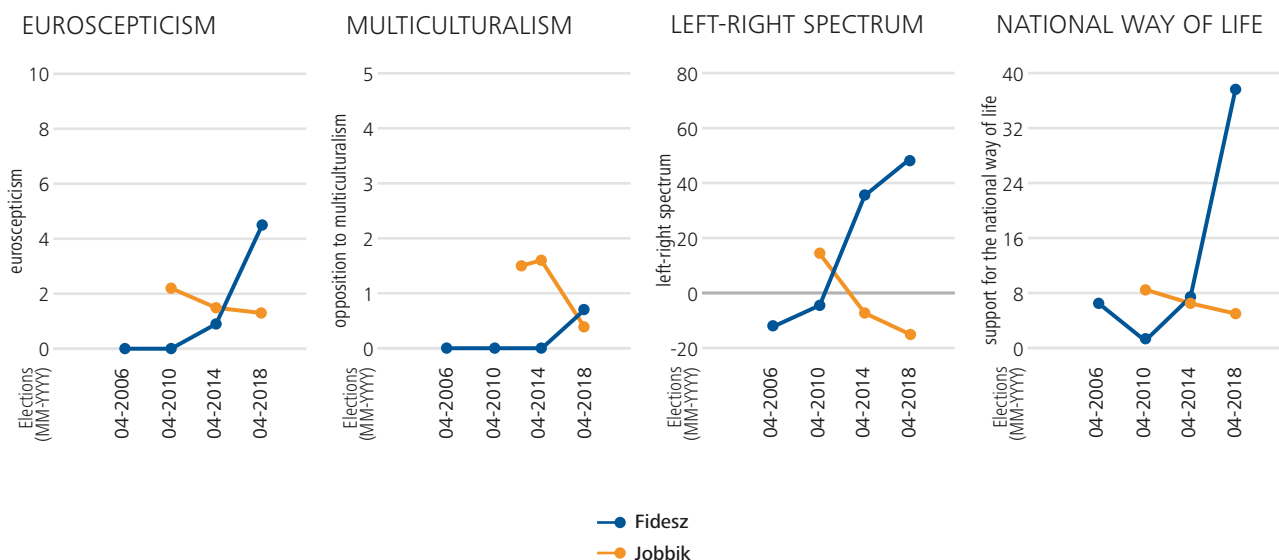
FIDESZ

Fidesz was founded as a youth organisation in 1988 by Viktor Orban. Initially, the party followed a liberal and anti-communist agenda. Its first shift to the right took place after 1994, with the increasing adoption of religious-national conservative ideas. Around the turn of the millennium, the party adopted a populist rhetoric and began to focus on the principles of Catholic social teaching (Pytlas 2013). In 1998, Fidesz formed a coalition government with two other parties, and Orbán became prime minister. The party lost the election in 2002 and remained in opposition until 2010 when, with 52.7% of the vote, Orban became prime minister for the second time. Subsequently, Fidesz secured supermajorities in 2014 and 2018 following electoral processes deemed free but not entirely fair (Pirro and Stanley 2021). Overall the party is characterised by a turn towards illiberalism and democratic backsliding. In 2011, Fidesz introduced a Fundamental Law that makes government decisions very difficult to alter or repeal (Pirro and Stanley 2021), ensuring its policies survive the party.

FIDESZ’S VALUE PROFILE: RIGHT-WING NATIONALISM

Fidesz has become progressively more right-wing, conservative and illiberal. As Figure 109 illustrates, the party’s move to the right of the political spectrum on national and cultural issues is striking. The party espouses an ethnic form of nationalism and portrays itself as a defender of traditional values. It promotes Christian white nationalist ideals and opposes Islam, employing ethnic nationalist justifications. The party has successfully mobilised support by capitalising on the Syrian refugee question on these grounds – for example, the party organised its 2018 election campaign around the slogan “Stop Soros,” suggesting that the philanthropist George Soros was planning to bring millions of Muslims into Europe in order to destroy European culture (Vachudova 2020). Fidesz has also become increasingly Eurosceptic. Gradually, the party has displaced the extreme right party Jobbik (Pirro et al. 2021).

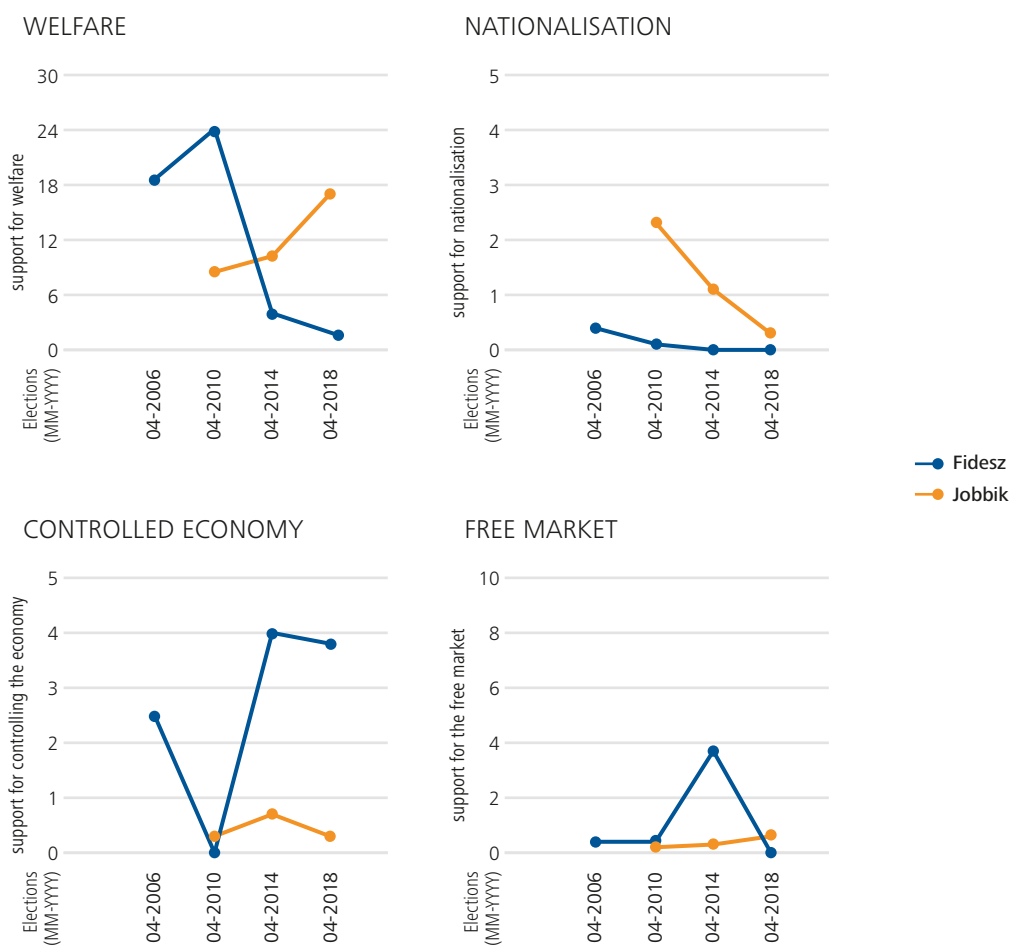
Figure 109: Fidesz’ and Jobbik’s stance on euroscepticism, multiculturalism, the left-right spectrum and the national way of life



FIDESZ'S ECONOMIC AND WELFARE POLICY PROFILE: INCONSISTENT ECONOMIC POSITIONS AND WELFARE CHAUVINISM

Fidesz instrumentalises opposition to neo-liberal economic policies, which it suggests the West is imposing on Hungary. Taking advantage of the aftermath of the financial crisis, it puts forward a narrative that attacks liberal democracy more broadly on these grounds. On the one hand, the party supports economic protectionism and openly attacks foreign-owned companies, the IMF and the EU in the name of ending economic subordination. At the same time, however, party officials lower taxes, eliminate environmental safeguards and change regulations in order to promote their own economic interests (Vachudova 2020). Our analysis of MARPOR data supports this inconsistent picture: overall, the party's pro-welfare positions have declined, as has its support for nationalisation. At the same time, the party has increased its support for a controlled economy and has changed its positions on the free market (Figure 110). Overall, Fidesz supports welfare chauvinist policies. During its time in power, it has implemented a range of such policies aimed at supporting traditional families by offering, for example, generous child payments that are popular among their voters.

Figure 110: Fidesz' and Jobbik's stance on welfare, nationalisation, controlling the economy and the free market



JOBBIK

Jobbik was founded in 2003 by members of a radical right-wing student club, (Pytlas 2013). The party marked its first electoral breakthrough in the 2009 European Parliament elections. Subsequently it achieved a landslide result in the 2010 national elections, capturing 16.7 per cent of the vote and becoming the third largest party in parliament. Its success, however, has been constrained by the radicalised Fidesz, which has increasingly occupied Jobbik's ground.

JOBBIK'S VALUE PROFILE: FROM EXTREMISM TO MODERATION

Jobbik can be described as an extreme right RWPP variant, comparable to the Greek Golden Dawn. The party endorses ethnic nationalism and economic nativism. It is openly anti-Roma, anti-Semitic, anti-Communist and anti-globalisation (Pytlas 2013). In its founding charter, Jobbik describes itself as a value-centred, conservative, patriotic Christian party with radical methodology (Jobbik 2021). The party's extremism is reflected in its organisational structures: in 2007 Jobbik established the Hungarian Guard, which was essentially its militia wing and made several attempts to increase its membership by expanding its local branches and activities (Pytlas 2013).

Since 2013, however, the party has embarked on a moderation path (Pirro et al. 2021). This is related to the radicalisation of Fidesz and its attempt to capture Jobbik voters by co-opting Jobbik's positions. Pirro et al.'s (2021) analysis of Jobbik's rhetoric across time reports a retrenchment from the protest arena, a progressive distancing from the fringe and a toning down of the anti-Roma narrative. While these changes have not necessarily altered Jobbik's substantive policies, they have aimed at 'repackaging' the way the party portrays itself. Part of this repackaging includes the use of civic language – for example 'we want Hungary to become a free, democratic and competitive country, just as we wished for at the time when Communism collapsed' (Jobbik 2021). Our analysis of MARPOR data confirms that the party has toned down its opposition to multiculturalism, has become less right-wing, less Eurosceptic and even less nationalist (Figure 109).

The party's rhetoric remains mixed, however. On the one hand, Jobbik describes themselves as 'a patriotic force' that seeks 'real cultural diversity', toning down their racist narrative. On the other hand, they continue to use ethnic nationalist language – for example, they refer to Roma communities as 'Gypsies', linking them to crime and recommending the establishment of 'a state-operated boarding-school system for Gypsy children with special education needs and adaptability problems' (Jobbik 2021).

JOBBIK'S ECONOMIC AND WELFARE POLICY PROFILE: THE 'PROTECTION OF THE NATIONAL INTEREST'

Jobbik identifies the protection of the national interest as its economic priority and frames its economic policy as 'mutual benefits instead of modern colonisation' (Jobbik 2021). It supports domestic enterprises and proposes to cease all economic initiatives undermining Hungarian sovereignty. The party has become increasingly pro-welfare (Figure 110). While it is welfare chauvinist, the small section of its online manifesto that is dedicated to this issue focuses specifically on the Roma. Jobbik proposes ending 'ethnically based affirmative action' and 'financing development funds by hundreds of billions, most of which disappears in the pockets of various foundations, Gypsy organisations and civil rights activists' and implementing instead a "jobs instead of benefits" policy (Jobbik 2021). They also support the agricultural sector and promote a new legal framework of 'family farm-based land ownership structure'.

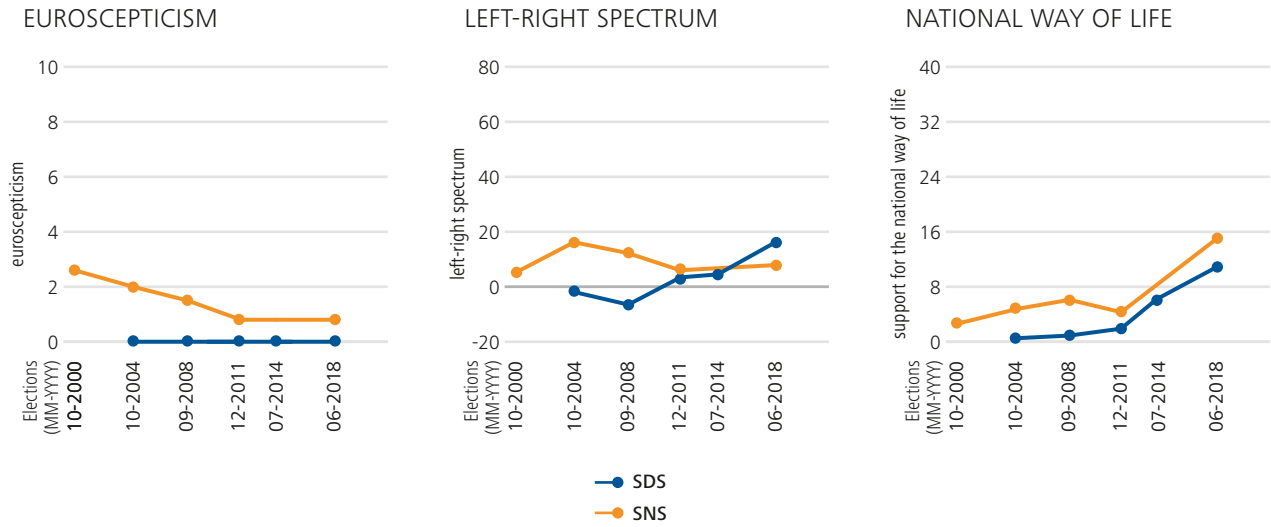
SLOVENIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (SDS)

The Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) started up as a moderate liberal party. Led by Janez Janša since 1993, the party now qualifies as an RWPP, with a conservative nationalist agenda and a commitment to the free market. The party describes itself as ‘a democratic political organisation’ (SDS 2021). It is the product of the merger of the former Social-Democratic Union of Slovenia and the Slovenian Democratic Union which, according to the SDS, ‘carried out the democratisation of Slovenia and led the quest for the gaining of Slovenian independence and international recognition of Slovenia’ (SDS 2021). The party came in first in the 2018 general election, with 25% of the popular vote, but was not able to form a coalition government. The party accessed office in early 2020 as the leading partner of a right-wing coalition government after the collapse of the centre-left coalition.

SDS’ VALUE PROFILE: BETWEEN ETHNIC AND CIVIC NATIONALISM

The SDS has become more right-wing and nationalist over time (Figure 111). It opposes ‘left-sponsored’ immigration, ‘false solidarity’, and multi-culturalism (Taggart and Pirro 2021). The party, however, is not hard Eurosceptic. Overall, its nationalist positions are ambivalent, making references to both civic and ethnic nationalism. In some respects, the party is closer to civic nationalism than some of the other Eastern European RWPPs. It uses a language that links Europe, Christian values and ethics: ‘Slovenia shares its values with the society of one and the same cultural and civilization circle of Europe and Western countries. Slovenian democrats therefore enshrine these values: freedom, human dignity, justice, solidarity, patriotism and environmental awareness’ (SDS). This type of language also sets the party apart from some other Eastern European RWPPs with respect to attitudes toward Europe and other supranational organisations such as NATO: ‘our entry into Euro-Atlantic institutions, particularly NATO and the EU, is additionally ensuring the modernisation and preservation of Slovenia’ (SDS 2021). At the same time, however, the SDS emphasises the preservation of Slovenian identity in the long durée, with clear ethnic nationalist connotations: ‘Slovenian identity in its scope of civilization, along with its cultural and ethnic framework, has been formed over the centuries’ (SDS 2021).

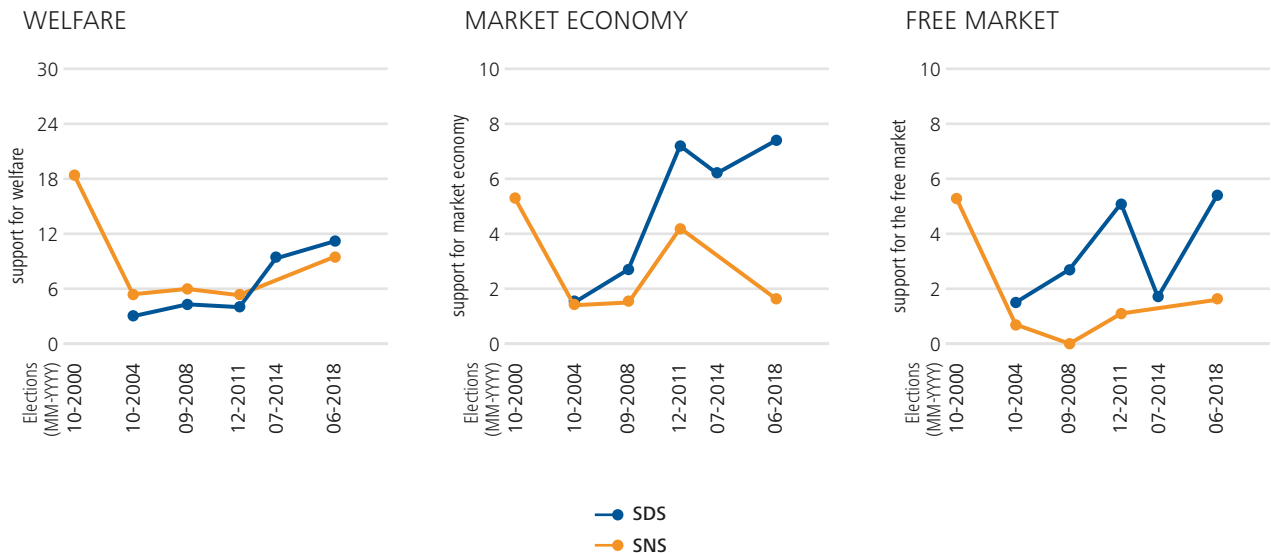
Figure 111: SDS’ and SNS’ stance on euroscepticism, the left-right spectrum and the national way of life



SDS’ ECONOMIC AND WELFARE POLICY PROFILE: FREE MARKET AND WELFARE CHAUVINISM

Overall, the SDS supports the free market economy (Figure 112) and believes ‘there should be as little indirect state ownership as possible in the economy’ (SDS 2021). It supports the development of small and middle-size companies on the grounds that ‘ownership plurality and eliminating power centres ... are a must in order to develop and consolidate democratic relations in the society and make the individual feel truly free and happy (SDS 2021). At the same time, the party supports certain welfare provisions, and indeed its positions on welfare have become increasingly favourable over time. According to the party’s online programme, ‘despite following the principle of equal starting opportunities, in the conditions of social market economy certain individuals and groups are still being pushed aside to the margins. In order to prevent social isolation and poverty, we need a comprehensive national system of social security’ (SDS 2021).

Figure 112: SDS’ and SNS’ stance on welfare, market economy and the free market



SLOVENIAN NATIONAL PARTY (SNS)

The Slovenian National party (SNS) was founded in 1991 by Zmago Jelinčič Plemeniti (Taggart and Pirro 2021). It is a small party with support ranging between 2-6% during the period 2000-2020.

SNS'S VALUE PROFILE: NATIONALISM AND HARD EUROSCEPTICISM

The SNS is a nationalist party which advocates withdrawal from the EU and NATO, thus qualifying as hard Eurosceptic (Taggart and Pirro 2021). The party has significantly strengthened its nationalist positions over time (Figure 111), advocating an ethnic form of nationalism which supports the 'national-awakening aspirations of the Slovenian nation in history' (SNS 2021). Drawing attention to 'the dangers of losing national identity', the SNS strictly opposes immigration, especially from Asia and Africa, and accuses the Slovenian government of opening 'the country to all possible suspicious individuals under EU dictates' (SNS 2021). In its official programme, the party claims that it 'respects the religious feelings of citizens insofar as they are not in conflict with Slovenian tradition and the environment'(SNS 2021).

SNS'S ECONOMIC AND WELFARE POLICY PROFILE: ECONOMIC NATIONALISM AND WELFARE CHAUVINISM

One of the SNS's basic pledges is an 'economically strong Slovenia' (SNS 2021). The party is economic nationalist, 'demanding' rational and economical management of natural resources, as well as their protection' (SNS 2021). It promises the return of 'economic entities to Slovenian hands' and opposes the 'tycoon's rogue sales of national wealth at any cost' as well as 'any trade or similar agreements between the EU and the USA that lead to the takeover of the entire Republic of Slovenia and the ownership of foreign corporations' (SNS 2021).

The party's welfare positions have fluctuated during different time periods (Figure 112). Its positions on welfare chauvinism have been more consistent, however. The SNS declares in its programme that 'by no means do we agree to selective employment, which preferences foreigners and neglects our citizens. In the case of employment of foreign labour, we demand strict compliance with law governing employment of foreigners and the use of the lowest restrictive quotas for foreign labour, with domestic applicants having absolute priority' (SNS 2021). The party firmly opposes 'marginalised groups and communities, let alone migrant groups', having 'an advantage in the provision of basic health care' (SNS 2021).

Finally the SNS takes a firmly pro-Russia stance, suggesting they 'will do everything we can to reunite the Republic of Slovenia, both economically and politically, with the Russian Federation, which we see as a driving force and a guarantee of new economic development (SNS 2021).

ANALYSIS

UNDERSTANDING THE RADICALISATION OF THE MAINSTREAM RIGHT IN EASTERN EUROPE

Hungary, Poland and Slovenia are among the most prosperous Eastern European states and the most ethnically homogenous. Although they exhibited promising democratic trajectories after 1989, these trajectories have been stalled by Fidesz, PiS and the SDS, which have progressively embarked on a democratic backsliding route in the three countries. The fact that this democratic backsliding takes place alongside economic progress is puzzling. Particularly in Hungary and Poland, much of RWPP success can be attributed to these parties' economic narratives, which highlight economic disparities between East and West and inequalities resulting from the EU's 'neoliberal' economic programme. This is accompanied by domestic welfare chauvinism and a series of policies providing benefits for a broad range of vulnerable or at-risk social groups that have been very popular with voters.

While Fidesz and PiS both won power as mainstream conservative parties, they have radicalised in government and implemented a series of measures to undermine democratic institutions (Vachudova 2020). As such, they have become associated with a decline in the overall quality of democracy in Hungary and Poland, respectively (Pirro and Stanley 2021). Although both parties originate in the mainstream, they tend to be more anti-democratic than their Western European RWPP counterparts. Similarly the SDS has become increasingly more nationalistic and right-wing across time.

Fidesz and PiS are 'ethnopolitist': they merge an ethnic nationalist with a populist rhetoric. Christianity occupies a prominent role in this rhetoric. Hungary and Poland are homogenous states and the ethnic cleavage is less pronounced, suggesting that Fidesz and PiS lack a sizeable immigrant population against which they can mobilise. This has prompted them to focus their attention on the small, non-politicised internal minorities in each country, for example the Roma, sexual minorities and other small groups with little capacity to organise politically (Bustikova 2018). They have still tried to mobilise against the alleged threat of Muslim immigration despite the very small numbers of Muslim immigrants and refugees in the region (Vachudova 2020) through the employment of ethnic nationalist rhetoric that focuses on Christian values and the erosion of cultural identity. The SDS makes more references to civic nationalism compared to the other parties, but is still strongly nationalistic and also targets minorities.

These narratives have made these parties appealing to a broad range of social groups. In Poland, older male, educated rural dwellers who are either professionals or employed in the agricultural sectors are more likely to support RWPPs. These individuals are more likely to be religious, distrust the EU, have authoritarian attitudes and cultural but not economic concerns over immigration (Figure 114). Among the RWPP electorate in Poland, just under

60% have no immigration concerns at all. The majority of those that do have either a combination of cultural and economic concerns (18%) or only economic concerns (17%) (Figure 113).

In Hungary, Fidesz and Jobbik together capture a large portion of the electorate. Our analysis of ESS data confirms that middle-aged, educated rural dwellers who are religious, but have no immigration concerns tend to vote for RWPPs (Figure 115). Jobbik itself has consistently drawn support from a broad range of voters with different backgrounds, including the young, affluent, and educated as well as from voters in economically left-behind regions (Bustikova 2018). The marginalisation of Jobbik should be understood as the result of the consolidation of Fidesz as an RWPP and its attempt to capture Jobbik voters by turning into a full-fledged RWPP, co-opting Jobbik's positions (Pirro et al. 2021). Among the RWPP electorate, just over one-third has no concerns about immigration at all. Those that do have either a combination of both cultural and economic concerns (40%) or only economic concerns (21%) (Figure 113).

In Slovenia, middle-aged, male, religious individuals with cultural immigration concerns are more likely to vote for RWPPs (Figure 116). Among the RWPP electorate, just over one-third (36%) have no immigration concerns at all. Those that do have either a combination of cultural and economic concerns (36%) or only economic concerns (20%) (Figure 113).

Overall, the attitudes and characteristics of RWPP voters in Eastern Europe differ from those in Western Europe (Allen 2017; Santana et al. 2020). Anti-immigration sentiments are not consistently related to RWPP voting (especially cultural concerns over immigration). However, socially conservative attitudes and lower levels of support for liberal democracy and minority rights are important drivers of support (Santana et al. 2020; Vachudova 2020). Euroscepticism is also an important driver in Hungary and Poland.

Figure 113: **Distribution of immigration concerns**

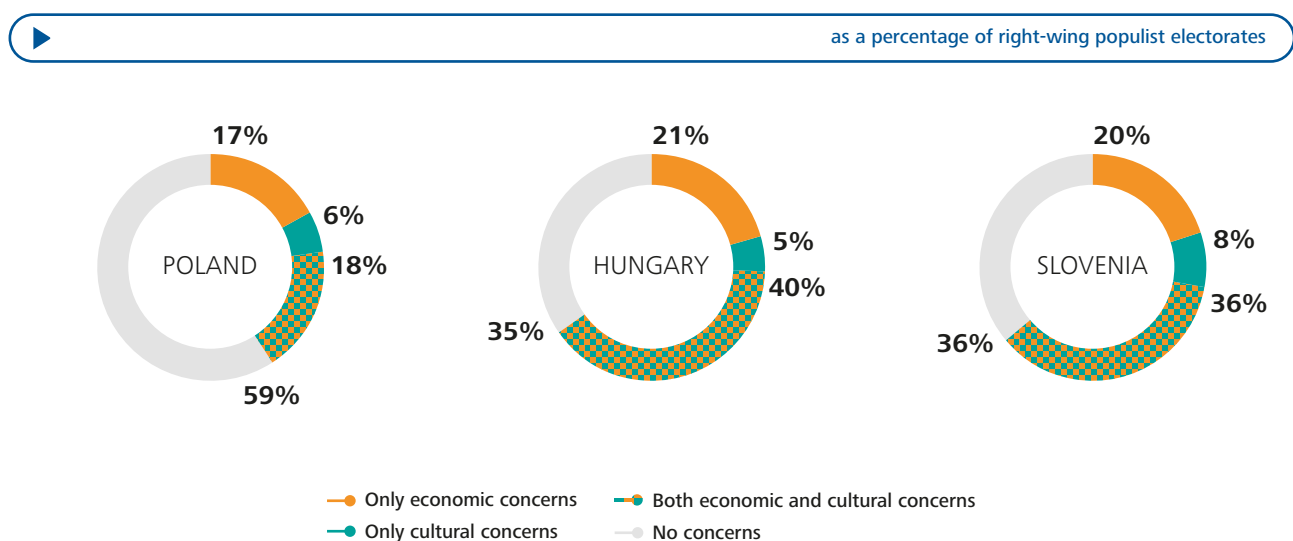
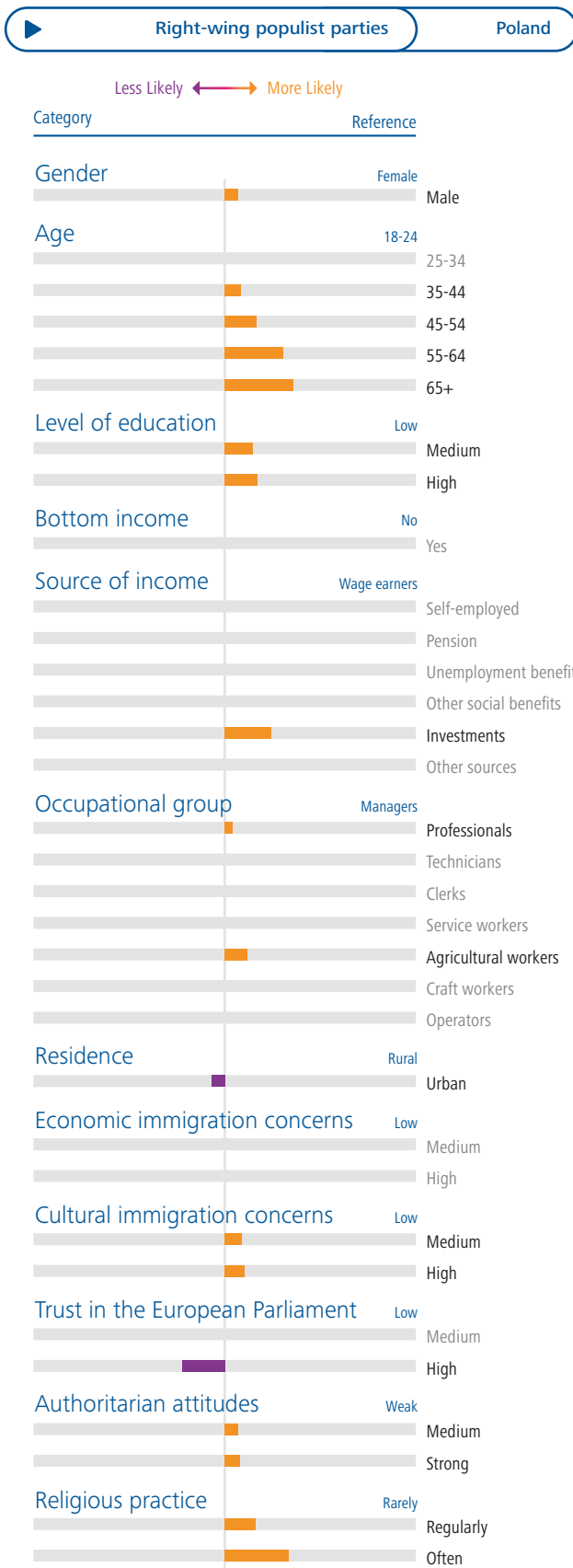
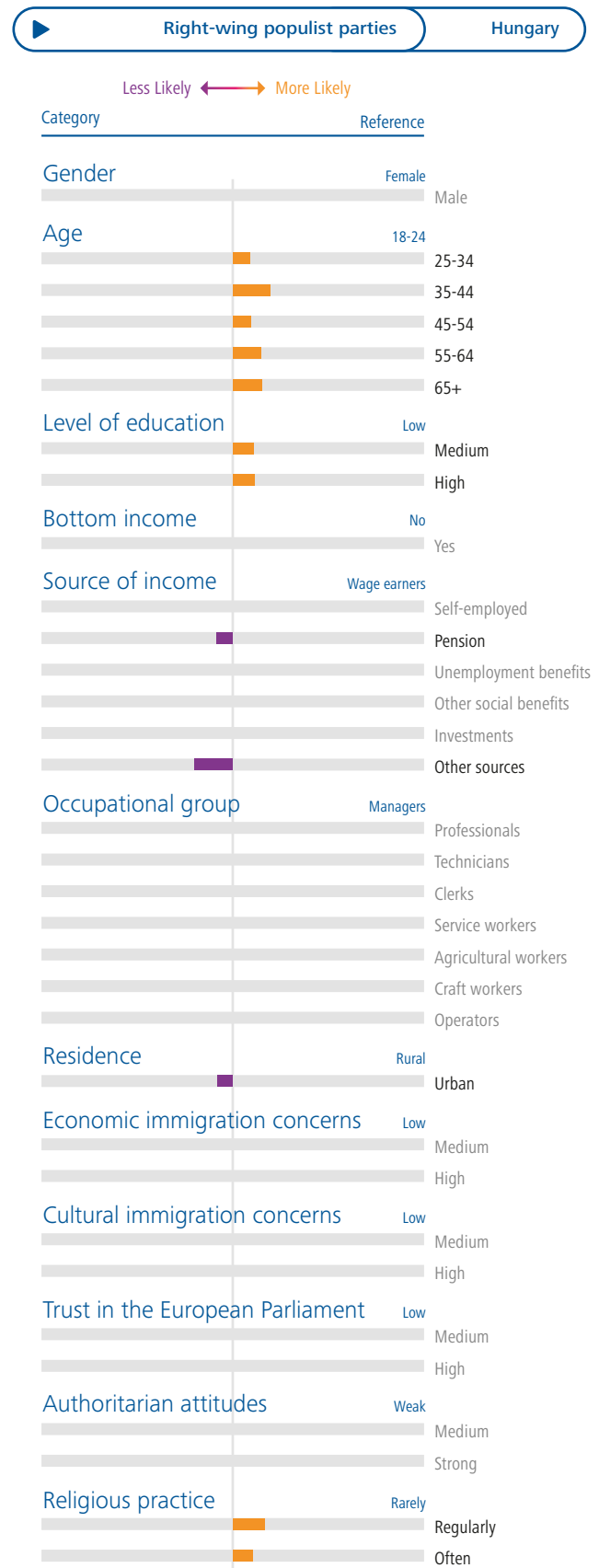


Figure 114: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



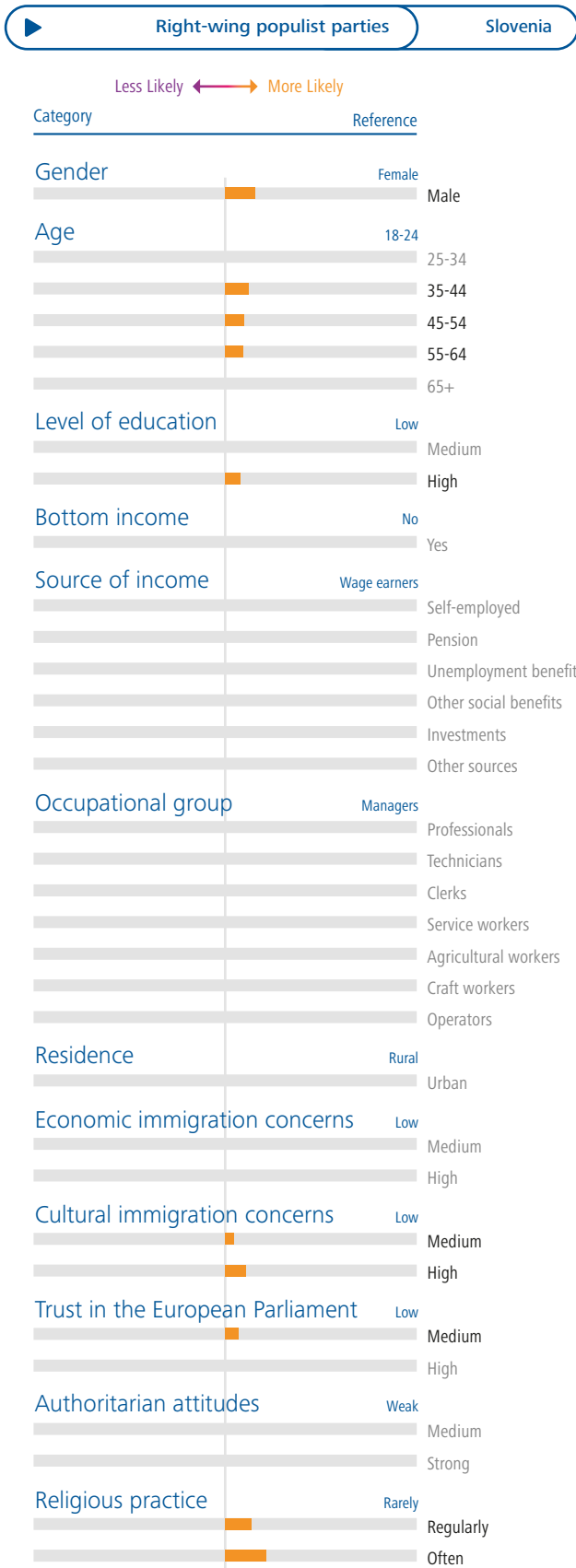
Only statistically significant results are shown.

Figure 115: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.

Figure 116: **Characteristics affecting the probability to vote**



Only statistically significant results are shown.

CONCLUSION

COMPARING RIGHT-WING POPULIST AND CENTRE-LEFT ELECTORATES IN EASTERN EUROPE

Our analysis of the RWPP electorates in the three countries, and a brief comparison between the RWPP and centre-left electorates, highlights the following:

- Poland, Hungary and Slovenia are distinct from Western Europe and other parts of Eastern Europe in that all three countries are highly ethnically homogenous. Given the absence of sizeable immigrant populations in these countries, RWPPs mobilise voters on socially conservative issues that target various minorities. This suggests that the electorates in these two countries are motivated by these considerations.
- There are some important similarities and differences between Hungarian, Polish and Slovenian RWPP voters. Notably, RWPP voters tend to be religious in all three countries. They are older males in Poland and middle-aged males in Slovenia. These voters are also middle-aged in Hungary, but gender has no significant effect. In Poland and Hungary educated rural dwellers have a greater probability of voting RWPP. In terms of attitudes, interestingly, individuals with no immigration concerns tend to vote for RWPPs in Hungary. By contrast, individuals who have cultural but not economic concerns over immigration tend to vote RWPPs in Poland and Slovenia (Figures 114-116).
- In terms of the composition of the RWPP electorates, individuals with exclusively cultural concerns over immigration (i.e. core voters) account for a very small portion of the RWPP electorates in all three countries (6% in Poland, 5% in Hungary and 8% in Slovenia). Just over one-third of the RWPP electorates in Hungary and Slovenia have no immigration concerns at all, while in Poland these voters constitute a substantial 59% (Figure 113).
- In terms of the composition of the entire electorate in the three countries, RWPP core voters, i.e. those voters who oppose immigration on principle and have strong cultural concerns over immigration, are a minority. In Poland and Hungary these voters account for 5% of the countries' entire electorates respectively. In Slovenia this figure is 7% (Figure 117).
- A comparison between the RWPP and centre-left voter profiles shows some interesting similarities and differences. In Poland, educated, middle-aged, male individuals who are not in the bottom income group, but likely to be technicians or pensioners, have a greater probability of voting for the centre-left. These individuals are likely to be secular and trust the EU. While they are unlikely to have cultural concerns over immigration, they are likely to be motivated by authoritarian attitudes and economic concerns over immigration (Figure 118). In Hungary older females who are not in the bottom income group, but may be on pensions, have a greater probability of voting for the centre-left. These individuals are likely to be secular and trust the EU. Neither cultural nor economic concerns over immigration have an effect on voting centre-left

in Hungary (Figure 119). Finally, in Slovenia older, educated wage-earning individuals in craft occupations are more likely to vote for the centre-left. These individuals are likely to trust the EU and are secular. Both cultural and economic concerns over immigration are negatively associated with voting for the centre-left in Slovenia (Figure 120). Among the centre-left electorates in the three countries, the RWPP signature theme (i.e. exclusively cultural concerns over immigration) has little prevalence: 3% in Poland, and 4% in Hungary and Slovenia, respectively (Figure 117).

- The proportion of voters with no immigration concerns among the centre-left electorates in the two countries is fairly high: 65% in Poland, 43% in Hungary and 57% in Slovenia (Figure 117). Those centre-left voters that do have concerns over immigration have predominantly economic concerns in Poland (22%) and Slovenia (20%). In Hungary, a large share of these voters have a combination of cultural and economic concerns (28%), as well as exclusively economic concerns (24%).

Figure 117: **Distribution of immigration concerns**

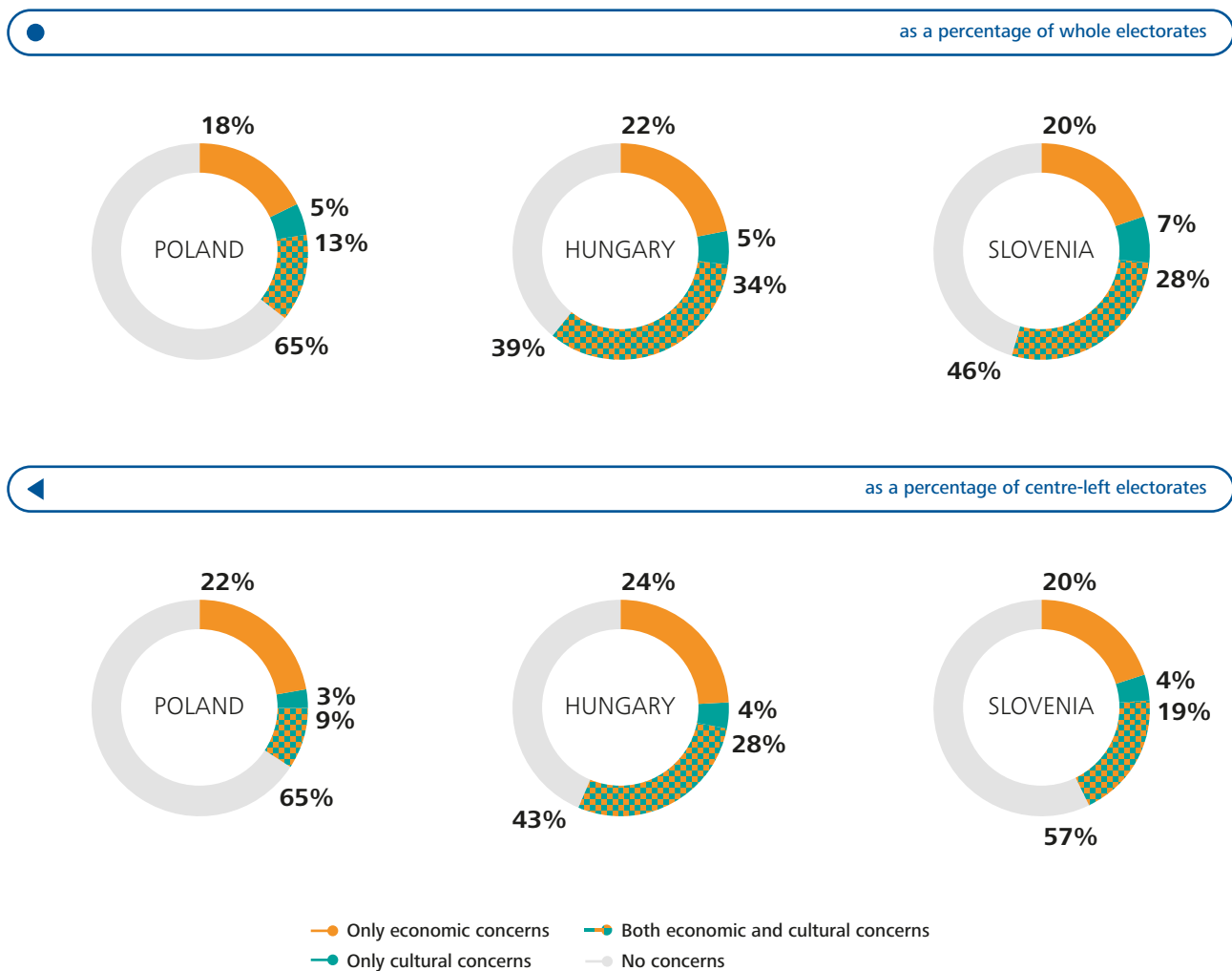
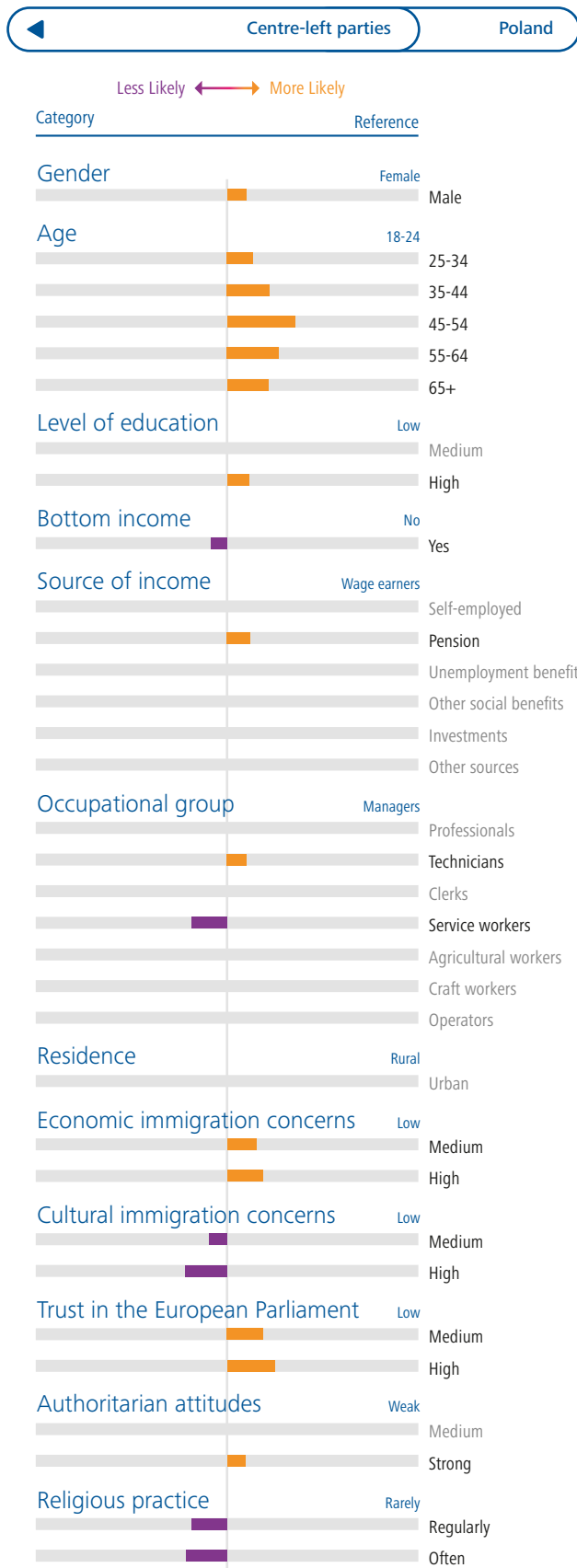
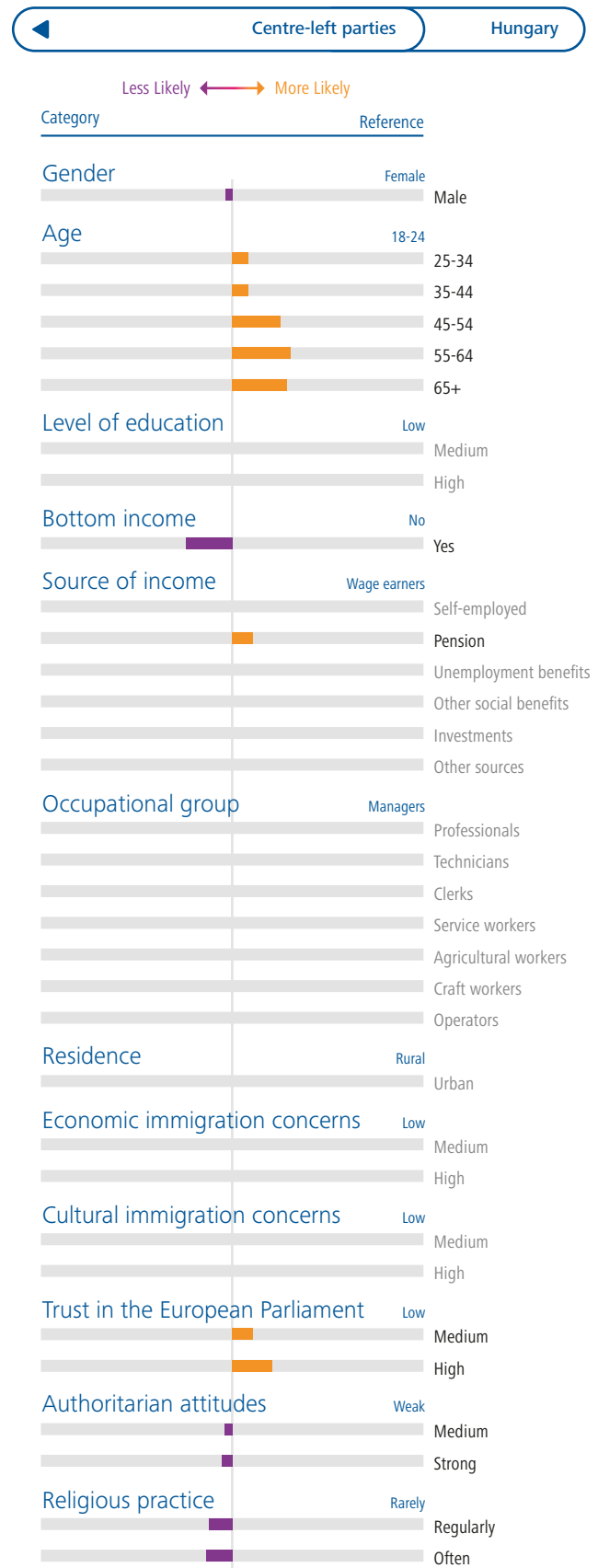


Figure 118: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



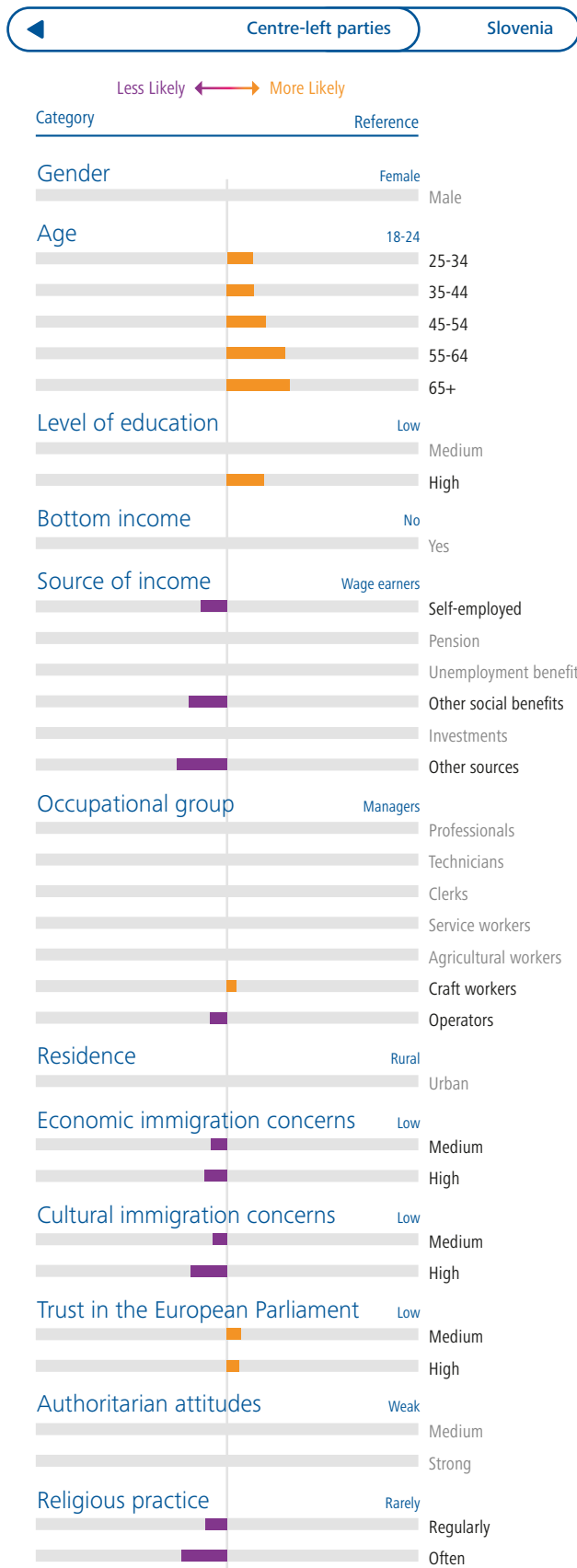
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Figure 119: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



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Figure 120: **Characteristics affecting the probability to vote**



Only statistically significant results are shown.



THE BALTIC COUNTRIES

ESTONIA AND LATVIA

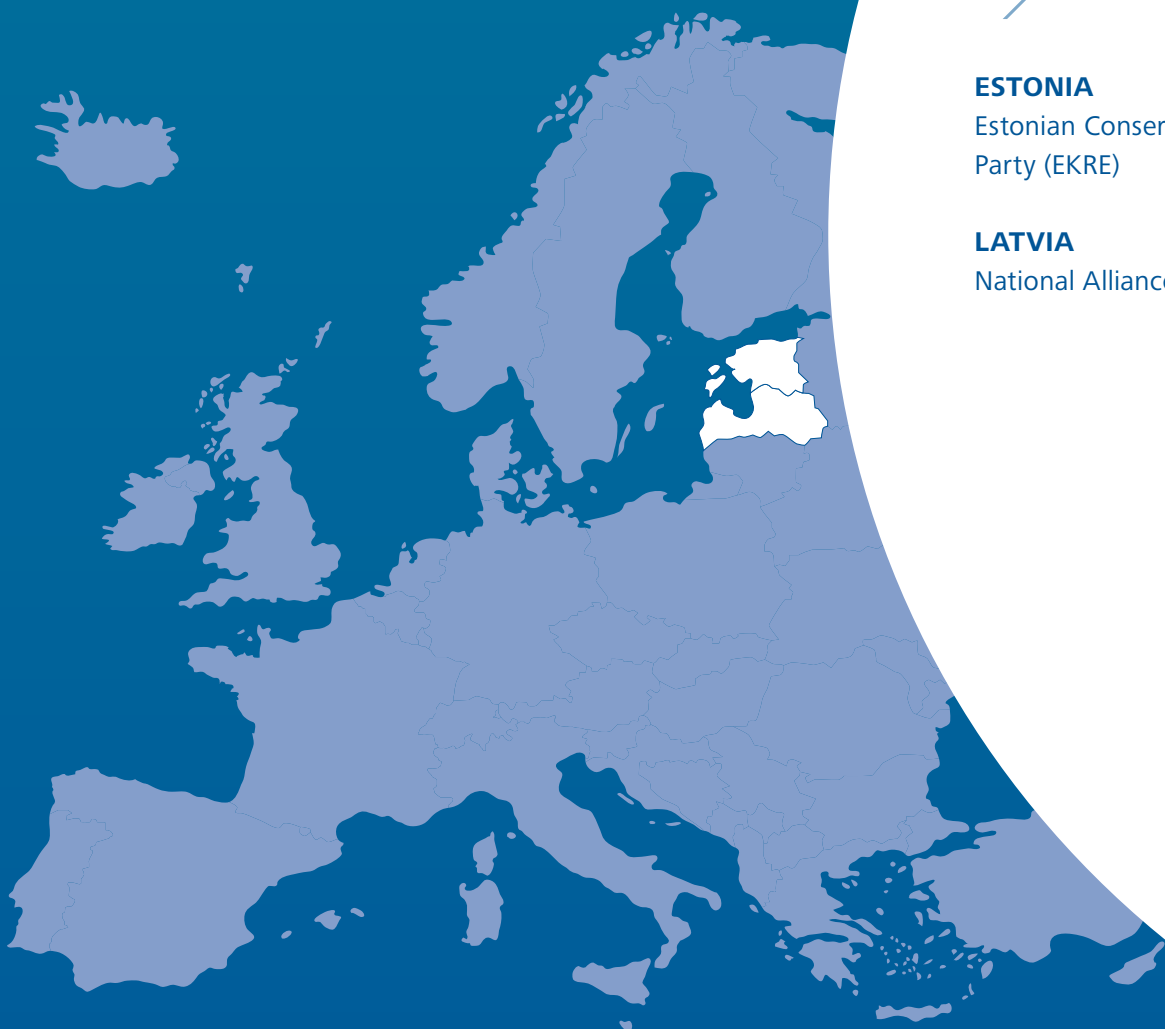


ESTONIA

Estonian Conservative People's
Party (EKRE)

LATVIA

National Alliance (NA)



THE BALTIC COUNTRIES: ESTONIA AND LATVIA

ESTONIA



Estonian
Conservative People's Party (EKRE)

LATVIA



National Alliance
All for Latvia! –
For Fatherland
and Freedom/
LNNK (NA)

PATTERNS OF SUCCESS

Eastern European RWPP trajectories are the product of historical conjectures that include, in particular, the communist experience. The dominant pattern in Eastern Europe overall is that of radicalised mainstream parties that increasingly adopt populist, illiberal and authoritarian policy positions based on ethnic nationalism. This differs from Western Europe, where most RWPPs commenced as niche actors operating on the fringes of the political system and progressively increased their support beyond their secure voter base by adopting civic nationalist narratives and progressively permeated mainstream ground either as coalition partners or as credible opposition parties.

There are notable variations among post-communist countries. One important distinction is between, on the one hand, the more ethnically homogenous countries such as Poland, Hungary and Slovenia, where mobilisation takes place along socially conservative lines, and, on the other hand, the more ethnically pluralistic societies such as Estonia and Latvia, where RWPPs mobilise against larger politicised ethnic groups. The Baltic states, therefore, display a pattern different from the homogeneous states of Eastern Europe. RWPPs in Latvia and Estonia draw on ethnic and language-based cleavages and attempt to mobilise against larger, highly politicised ethnic groups (Bustikova 2018). The refugee crisis has also played a significant role in the development of RWPP politics since 2015.

Figure 121: RWPP national election history in Estonia 2000-2021

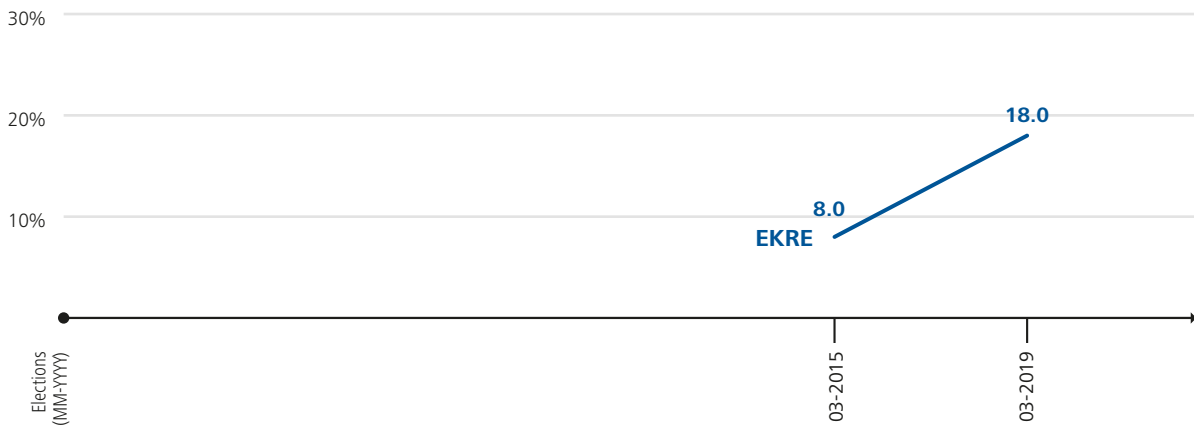
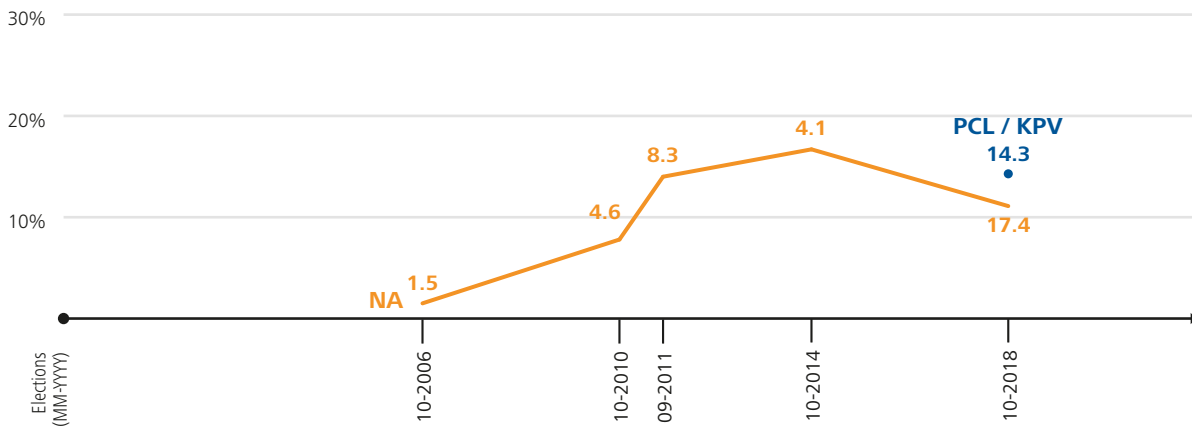


Figure 122: RWPP national election history in Latvia 2000-2021

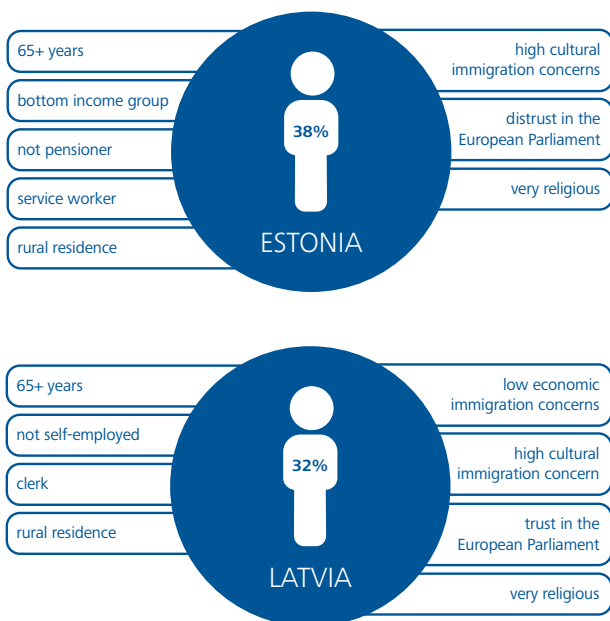


DEMAND: WHO VOTES RWPPS IN THE BALTICS?

In Estonia, older, educated, religious individuals who reside in the countryside and belong to the bottom income group or are employed in the service sector are more likely to vote for RWPPs. These individuals distrust the EU and have cultural, but not economic, immigration concerns.

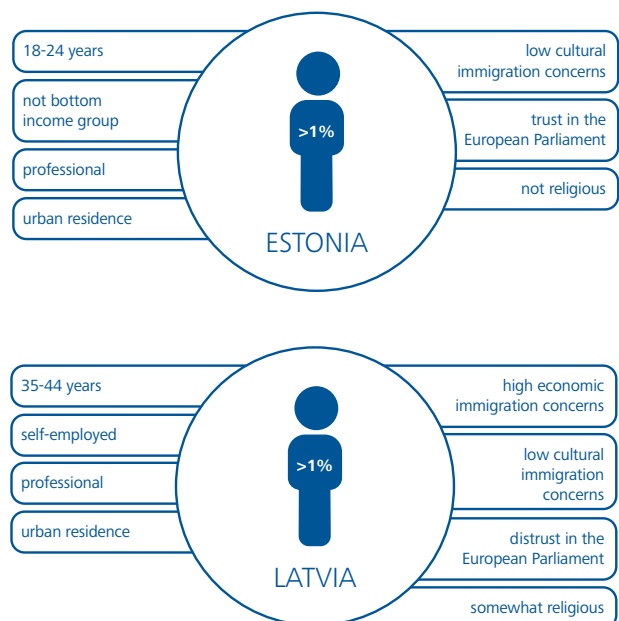
In Latvia, older, educated individuals who live in the countryside and are in low-skill occupations such as clerks and operators, but not in the service sector, are more likely to vote for RWPPs. These individuals have cultural concerns over immigration.

Figure 123: Who is the most likely right-wing populist party voter?



Probability to vote for a Right Wing Populist Party (%)

Figure 124: Who is the least likely right-wing populist party voter?



Probability to vote for a Right Wing Populist Party (%)

SUPPLY: WHAT MAKES THESE PARTIES' NARRATIVES [UN]SUCCESSFUL?

RWPPs in both Latvia and Estonia have been increasingly successful in attracting voter support by linking campaigns over immigration and the refugee crisis to narratives of 'colonisation' under the Soviets and collective anxieties of becoming 'colonised' again (Braghiroli and Petsinis 2019). They pin their anti-immigrant narratives on the alleged threats posed to the cultural homogeneity of their respective countries by Russian migrants. Their nationalism is ethnic-based and directed against (mainly Russian) ethno-linguistic minorities, although EKRE's discourse is overall more populist with some civic references, while NA's discourse is more explicitly nativist. However, there are also important variations between the two cases: The Latvian party system has been more consistent in allowing the inclusion of the NA in government as a coalition partner. In Estonia, EKRE has been the subject of a *cordon sanitaire* policy, which excluded it from office until it joined a centre-right government in 2019.

PARTY PROFILES

ESTONIAN CONSERVATIVE PEOPLE'S PARTY (EKRE)

The Estonian Conservative People's Party (EKRE) was established in 2012 as a coalition of formerly centre-right and more nationalistic/Eurosceptic groups. The party has been steadily consolidating its support, increasing from 8.1 percent of the popular vote in 2015 to 18.4 percent in January 2018. Although EKRE was treated as a pariah in Estonian politics, in 2019 it was invited to join a right-wing government with the Centre Party and Fatherland after coming third in the 2019 general election. Although the government collapsed in January 2021, the party's popularity has been increasing.

EKRE'S VALUE PROFILE: PRESERVING ESTONIAN TRADITIONS

EKRE promotes nativist identity politics, emphasises out-group threats to national survival and adopts economic nationalism. The party rejects liberalism and communism and sees its mission as preserving Estonian traditions and national interest. It adopts a more openly populist discourse than its Latvian counterpart. Its party programme commences with the line 'People first! If one has to choose between politics and the people, one has to choose the people' and links populism to nationalism by arguing that domestic elites and their EU collaborators have 'caused immeasurable damage to the Estonian state, economy, Estonian people and Estonianness' (EKRE 2021).

EKRE's nationalism is predominantly ethnic, although the party itself rejects the 'racist' label and makes some efforts to include civic statements in its discourse to avoid the racist branding. Their online party programme includes a '2030 vision' in which they envisage an 'Estonian-cultural, Estonian-speaking and pro-Estonian population' (EKRE 2021). According to this vision, national minorities 'are loyal to the Republic of Estonia and have a positive relationship with the Estonian people, language, culture and history' (EKRE 2021). During recent electoral campaigns, leader Martin Helme has emphasised that EKRE's anti-immigration platform is based on economic, cultural and security concerns. As part of the security narrative, EKRE targets Muslims and emphasises the crime dimension of immigration concerns, for example using the series of sexual assaults that took place in Cologne in 2016 to argue that immigration is a crime problem (Braghiroli and Petsinis 2019). Euroscepticism is also key to EKRE's agenda – a narrative common to RWPP platforms across post-communist states. The party criticises the EU for its policies, for example, its guidelines on LGBT rights and for underestimating Russia's security threat for the Baltic States (Braghiroli and Petsinis 2019).

EKRE'S ECONOMIC AND WELFARE POLICY PROFILE: ECONOMIC NATIONALISM AND WELFARE CHAUVINISM

Compared to other RWPPs, EKRE devotes a relatively substantial proportion (2.5 pages) to the economy. Its economic policy is nation-centric and focuses on 'increasing the well-being and living standards of the Estonian people' (EKRE 2021). This policy follows the RWPP line of tax-cuts plus welfare chauvinism. The party supports the creation of 'a favourable economic environment for the development of domestic business, banking, trade and agriculture' and pledges the reduction of taxes and state fees as well as the elimination of red tape in order to encourage small, family and medium-sized domestic enterprises (EKRE 2021). At the same time, they propose 'flexible employment opportunities for the elderly, a pension commensurate with the general prosperity of society and the effective implementation of national support mechanisms for people with disabilities' (EKRE 2021). Their welfare chauvinist policies are also explicitly directed towards supporting large families with children, which aligns with their conservative social programme and its anti-immigrant agenda. In its vision, the party highlights that by 2030, 'due to the natural increase of the population and high productivity, Estonia will not need foreign workers from abroad (EKRE 2021). Finally, EKRE portrays refugees as scroungers of social welfare and pledges to deport them.

The party's economic policy is centred around economic grievances and anti-EU narrative. In its programme, EKRE suggests that Estonia has been transformed from a sovereign nation-state into 'a vassal state representing the interests of the European Union, foreign capital and stagnant career officials', where all social strata, including workers, entrepreneurs, rural dwellers, young people and the elderly, suffer equally (EKRE 2021).

NATIONAL ALLIANCE (NA)

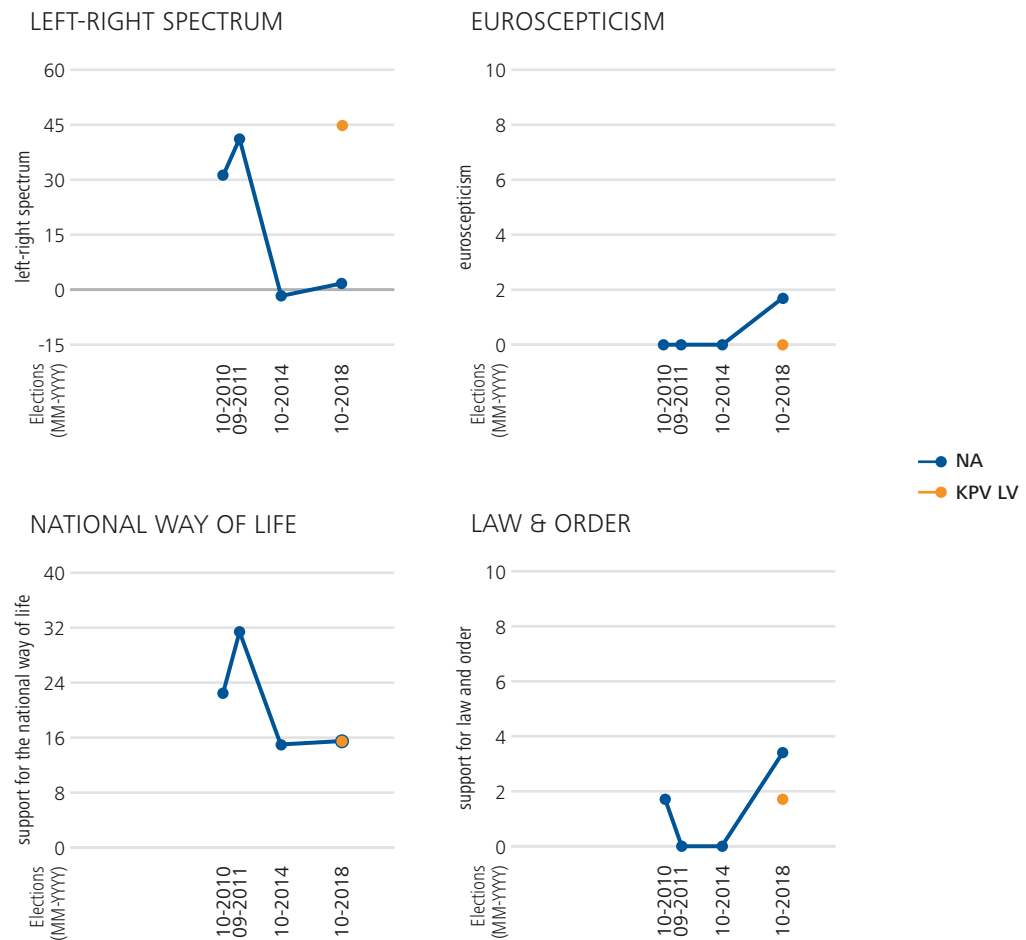
The National Alliance All for Latvia! – For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK (NA) was established in 2011 from the merger of two parties: the right-wing ‘For Fatherland and Freedom’, which itself was founded in 1993 and describes itself as centre-right, supporting the free market and national conservatism; and the more nationalistic ‘All for Latvia!’, which originated as a nationalist youth group and was registered as a political party in 2006. NA has enjoyed consistent support since its inception within the 14-16 per cent range, although in the 2018 elections this support declined to 11.1 per cent. Unlike its Estonian counterpart, it has long been treated as an acceptable political force in Latvian politics and participates in government coalitions. NA belongs to the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) group in the European Parliament together with other RWPPs, including the Sweden Democrats (SD), the Greek solution, the Spanish Vox and the Polish Law and Justice (PiS).

NA’S VALUE PROFILE: ETHNIC NATIONALISM FOR A ‘LATVIAN LATVIA’

The NA has a long tradition of activism and shows a more explicit preference for radical forms of political engagement compared to the Estonian EKRE (Braghirolli and Petsinis 2018). The party’s main goal is a ‘Latvian Latvia’ (NA 2021). It espouses an ethnic form of nationalism which links identity, ethnicity and religion and seeks the promotion of the Latvian language and traditional Latvian ‘Christian’ values (Figure 125). In its party programme, NA describes its values as the need to preserve the Latvian nation, language and culture; honour and commemorate national heroes; pursue Latvia’s independence, growth, prosperity and justice; preserve the family and marriage; and cherish nature and God (NA 2021). The party explicitly positions itself against the decline of moral values, a narrative which it links to ethnic nationalism, claiming, for example, that homosexual values are intrinsically alien to Latvia. This suggests that the ethnic nationalism component of the party’s discourse is more explicit than EKRE’s. At the same time, this discourse is less populist, making fewer references to the people and anti-establishment politics (Braghirolli and Petsinis 2018).

The NA is explicitly anti-immigrant, supporting ‘the increase in the proportion of Latvians in Latvia and preventing an irresponsible immigration policy’ (NA 2021). However, the party is less Eurosceptic than its Western European counterparts (Figure 125). Its immigration scepticism is directly focused on the ‘Russian question’, i.e. ‘the consequences of migration imposed by the USSR’ (NA 2021). The party stresses the alleged threats posed by the large politicised Russian population in Latvia, suggesting that Soviet-era Russian migration made Latvians ‘a minority’ with devastating consequences for Latvian unity and the preservation of the Latvian language (NA 2021). As a result, the NA’s key aim is to ensure Latvian national survival. This can be achieved by preventing pro-Russian forces from entering the government, rejecting the EU’s migrant and refugee redistribution plans and opposing EU refugee quotas, and ensuring that Latvians do not leave Latvia and those who have left will return (NA 2021).

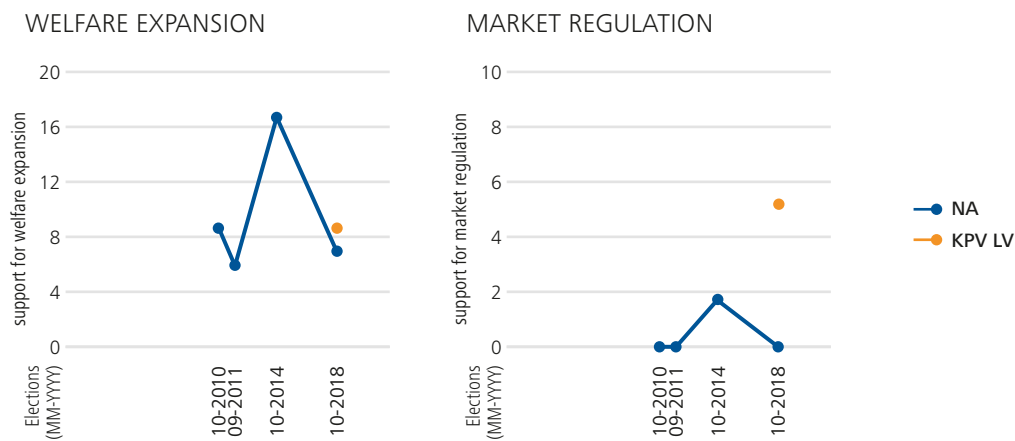
Figure 125: NA’ and KPV’s stance on the left-right spectrum, euroscepticism, the national way of life, and law & order



NA'S ECONOMIC AND WELFARE POLICY PROFILE: FREE MARKET AND WELFARE CHAUVINISM

The NA follows the inconsistent 'free market and tax-cuts plus welfare chauvinism' pattern: it supports liberal economic policies and at the same time it makes references to economic nationalism which, similarly to EKRE, are all aimed at supporting the national economy and the family (Figure 126). The main premise of their economic policy is to reduce emigration and support Latvians who desire to 'return to live in the Homeland' (NA 2021). They also focus, like EKRE, on economic grievances, blaming the EU for a range of economic problems. While the 'economy' section in their party programme is shorter than that of EKRE, they still dedicate a page that proposes a number of specific welfare policies, including support mechanisms for families aimed at making 'Latvia the most family-friendly country in Europe' (NA 2021); a significant expansion of the housing program for young families; and ensuring that social contributions to the pension capital for the period of childcare are made in full from the child benefit.

Figure 126: NA's and KPV's stance on welfare expansion and market regulation



ANALYSIS

UNDERSTANDING THE SUCCESS OF RWPPS IN THE BALTICS

The Baltic States are the among the most successfully consolidated democracies in post-communist Europe. Estonia and Latvia, in particular, are highly comparable cases: both countries have sizable Russian minorities with great politicisation potential, which sets them apart from the more ethnically homogenous countries of eastern and central Europe. They also engaged in successful reforms that made them frontrunners in the path towards European integration (Braghiroli and Petsinis 2019).

At the party level, the presence of a substantial number of ethnic Russian minorities has resulted in an association between the immigration and refugee distribution debate to the alleged threat these minorities pose to cultural homogeneity and national survival. There are therefore significant similarities between EKRE and NA, which also formalised, together with their Lithuanian partners Nationalists Union-Tautininkų Sąjunga, their cooperation in 2013 on the basis of their joint commitment to address ‘the detrimental impact of the looming ideas of cultural Marxism, post-modern multiculturalism and destructive liberalism’ across Europe (Braghiroli and Petsinis 2019).

In terms of electoral support, both parties have been able to mobilise a substantial body of voters. A key difference between the two is the NA’s more long-standing participation in government coalitions, suggesting that the party is seen as a legitimate actor in its domestic political arena. While EKRE was treated as a pariah in Estonian politics, it was invited to join a right-wing coalition government in 2019, putting an end to Estonian exceptionalism. The party’s popularity has further increased since its participation in government.

RWPP support in the Baltics should be understood both within the context of the wider conditions that facilitate the rise of right-wing populism across Europe – immigration, economic hardship and the refugee crisis – as well as the specificities of the case studies in question. In both countries, RWPPs have been able to mobilise voters on ethnic nationalist appeals that hinge on national survival narratives. The immigration question is explicitly linked to the ‘Russian question’ as well as a Eurosceptic narrative that portrays the EU as indifferent – or even hostile – to domestic national interests.

The 2015 refugee crisis was used successfully by EKRE, which managed to dominate the debate over the EU refugee quotas for Estonia. Sentiments against Muslim refugees were echoed in the ballot box for both cultural and economic reasons. Our empirical analysis confirms that cultural concerns over immigration increase the probability of voting for RWPPs. Religion and age are also predictive factors. Finally, Estonian RWPP voters are more likely to reside in the countryside, come from lower socio-economic backgrounds (bottom income group, service sector workers) and distrust the EU (Figure 128). Among the RWPP electorate, over one-third (34%) have no concerns over immigration. Most of those that do have a combination of economic and cultural concerns, while a substantial proportion has economic concerns alone (16%) (Figure 127).

In the Latvian case, the context is favourable to RWPP because of two specific conditions, one cultural and one economic: first, Latvians constitute numeric minorities in several cities; and second the country was hit hard by the 2008 economic crisis, forcing the government to implement harsh austerity measures (Bloom 2013). Some research reports that at the subnational level neither deteriorating economic conditions nor the presence of minorities appear to augment RWPP support. In fact, as minority populations increase, the vote for the extreme right decreases (Bloom 2013). This, however, could be because of 'contact' with minorities. Analyses at the individual level suggest that voters who feel they have little or nothing in common with Russians are twice as likely to vote for the far right than for the centre-left (Stefanovic and Evans 2019).

Our empirical analysis also reveals interesting patterns among Latvian RWPP voters and some important differences with their Estonian counterparts. The probability of voting RWPP increases with age. Latvian RWPP voters tend to be well-educated and live in the countryside. They have cultural, but not economic, concerns about immigration. They tend to be employed in low-skill occupations as clerks and operators, but not in the service sector and are not professionals (Figure 129). These results complement research that finds that Latvian RWPP supporters are opposed to state ownership of the economy and to wage controls, and that they are strongly supportive of free enterprise, although they are most concerned with the future standard of living in Latvia (Stefanovic and Evans 2019). Although Latvian far-right voters are well educated, they tend to hold more traditional values, opposing the expansion of ethnic minority rights, inclusive citizenship, and use of minority languages (Stefanovic and Evans 2019). Among the RWPP electorate, the majority (a significant 63%) do not have immigration concerns. Those that do, however, have either exclusively cultural concerns (17%) or a combination of economic and cultural concerns (18%) (Figure 127).

Figure 127: **Distribution of immigration concerns**

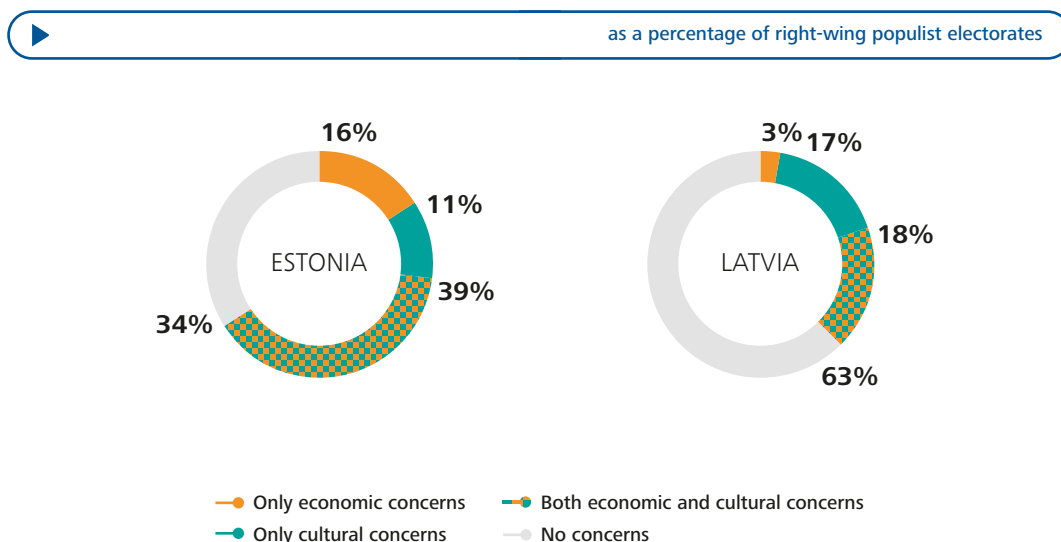
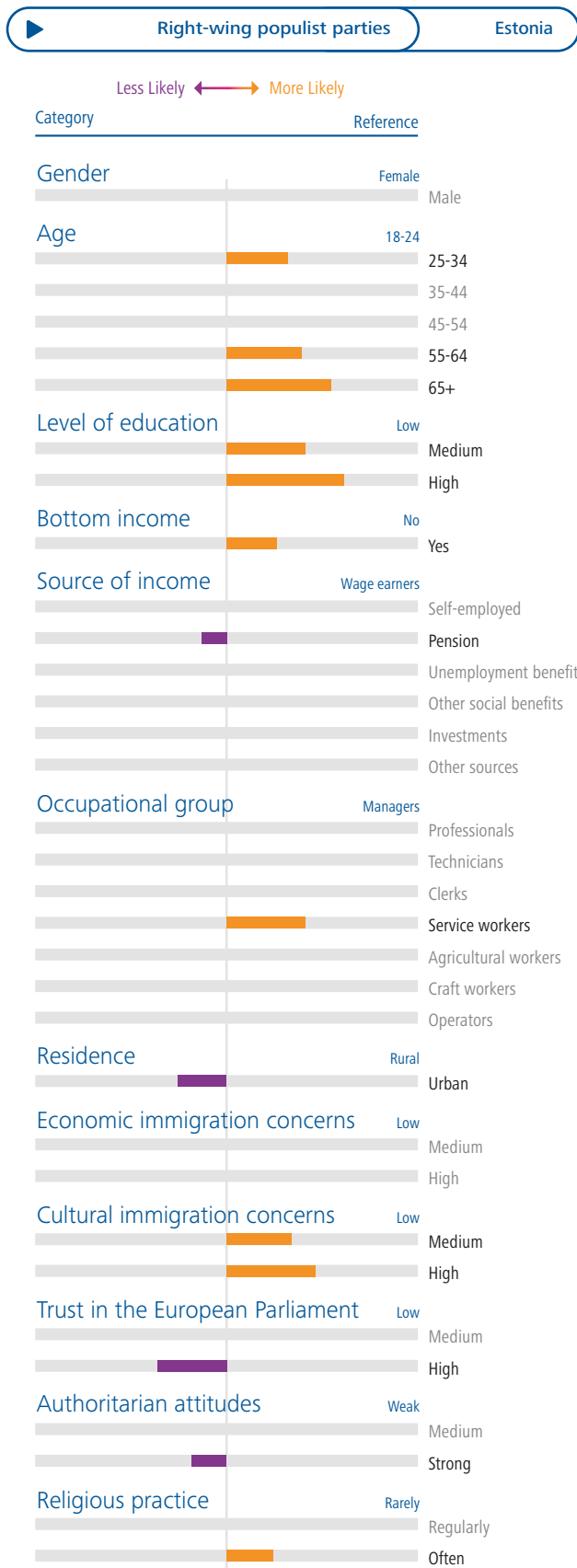
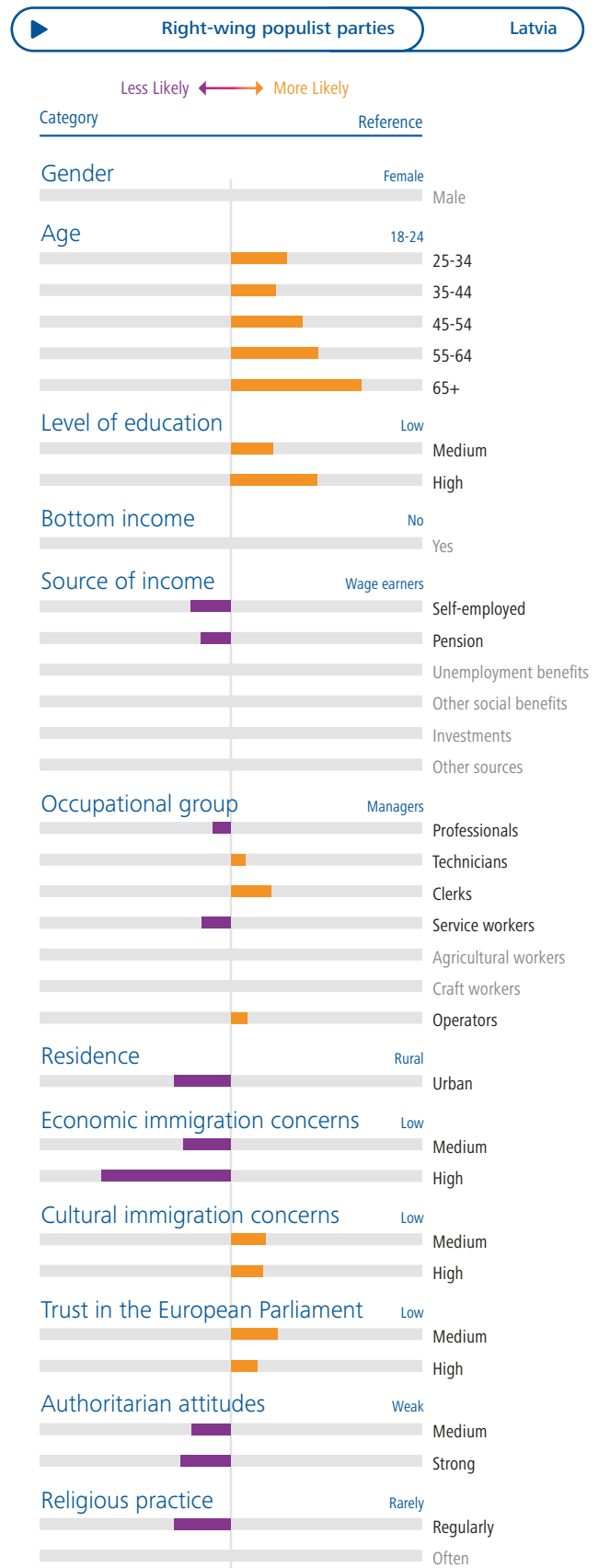


Figure 128: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.

Figure 129: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.

CONCLUSION

COMPARING BALTIC RIGHT-WING POPULIST AND CENTRE-LEFT ELECTORATES

Our analysis of the RWPP electorates in the two countries, and a brief comparison between the RWPP and the centre-left electorates highlight the following:

- Latvia and Estonia are unique when compared to Western Europe and other parts of Eastern Europe in that both countries have sizable Russian minorities with great politicisation potential. This suggests that the electorates in these two countries are motivated by these considerations.
- There are some important similarities and differences between Estonian and Latvian RWPP voters (Figures 128+129). Older, educated individuals who live in the countryside are more likely to support RWPPs in both countries. In Estonia, these individuals are more likely to belong to the bottom income group or are employed in the service sector. In Latvia they are in low-skill occupations such as clerks and operators, but not in the service sector. In Estonia, it is particularly religious individuals who distrust the EU and have cultural, but not economic immigration concerns that have the highest probability of voting for RWPPs. In Latvia, RWPP voters are less religious and actually trust the EU. In both cases the probability of voting RWPPs increases with higher cultural concerns over immigration. In terms of the composition of the RWPP electorates, in Estonia, individuals with exclusively cultural concerns over immigration (i.e. core voters) account for 11% of the RWPP electorate. In addition, 39% have combined cultural and economic concerns and 34% have no immigration concerns. In Latvia voters with exclusively cultural immigration concerns account for 17% of the RWPP. Just over two-thirds (63%) have surprisingly no immigration concerns at all, while only 18% have a combination of cultural and economic concerns (Figure 127).
- RWPP core voters, i.e. those voters who oppose immigration on principle and have strong cultural concerns over immigration, are a minority among the whole electorate in the two countries, making up 9% of the Estonian electorate and 10% of the Latvian one (Figure 130). These voters are principled RWPP voters and are unlikely to switch to the centre-left even if it adopts 'copycat' strategies. They identify more staunchly with a right-wing platform and are more likely to switch from 'far' to centre-right. They are the least likely centre-left constituency and do not constitute a centre-left target voter group.

- A comparison between the RWPP and centre-left voter profiles shows some interesting similarities and differences. The centre-left voter in Estonia is more likely to be an older, secular, educated female individual in a high-skill occupation. This individual is unlikely to have either cultural or economic concerns over immigration (Figure 131). As such, this individual is unlikely to be attracted to RWPP cultural narratives. In Latvia, the centre-left voter is also an older, educated female, most likely secular and employed in a higher-skill occupation and who distrusts the EU (Figure 132). Self-employed individuals and those on pensions are unlikely to vote for the centre-left in Latvia. Among the centre-left electorates in the two countries, the RWPP signature theme (i.e. exclusively cultural concerns over immigration) has little salience: 7% in Estonia and 7% in Latvia (Figure 130).
- The proportion of voters with no immigration concerns among the centre-left electorates in the two countries is fairly high: 61% in Estonia and 65% in Latvia (Figure 130).

Figure 130: **Distribution of immigration concerns**

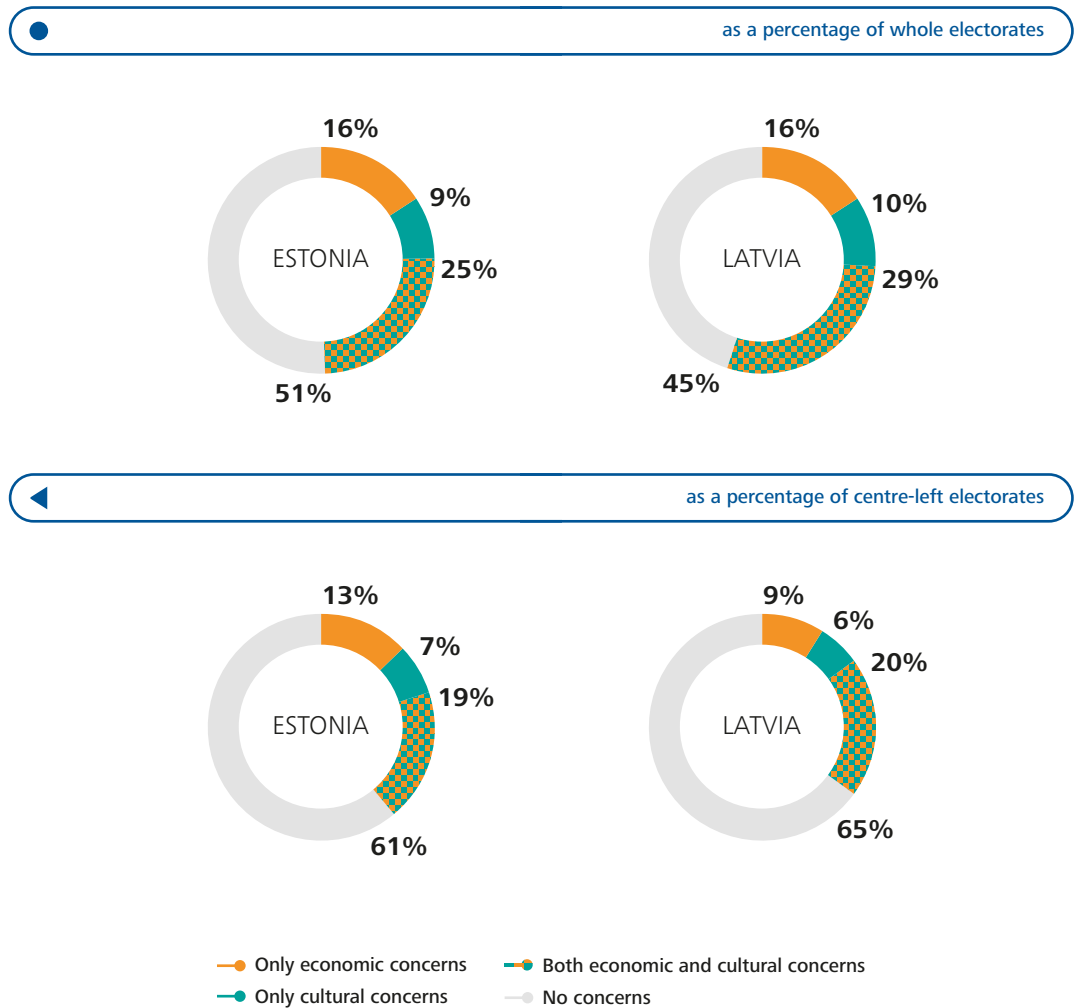
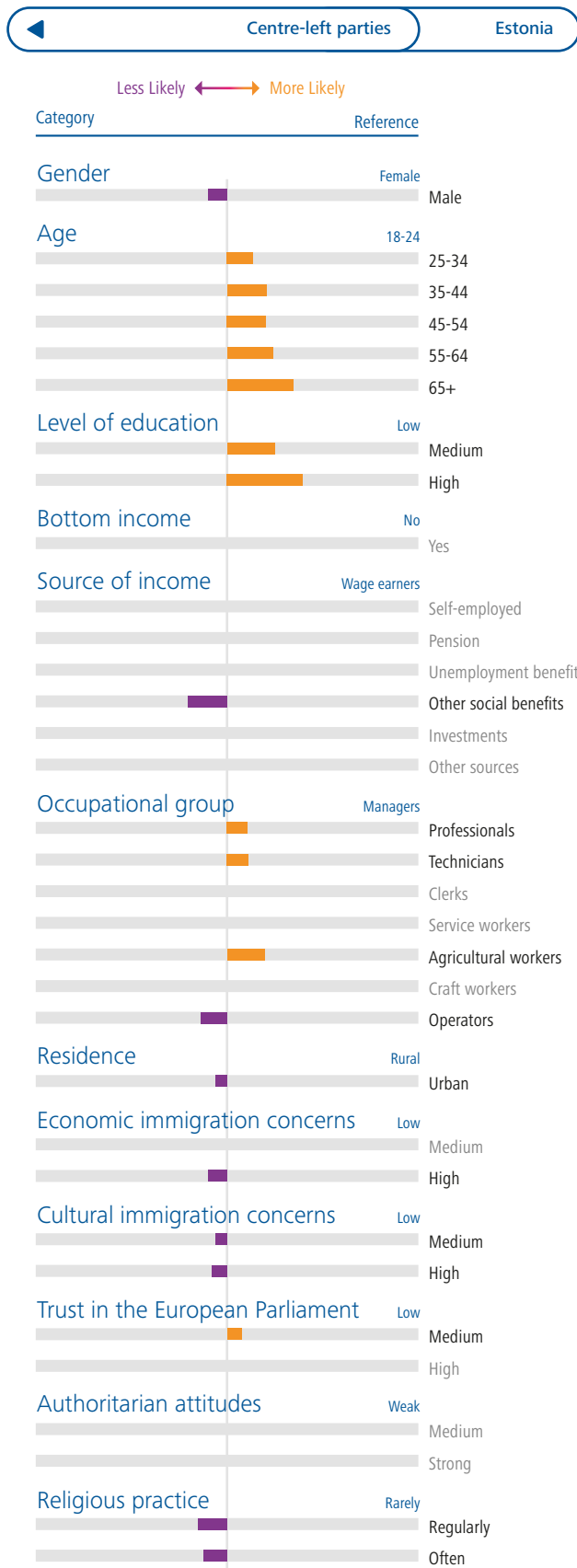
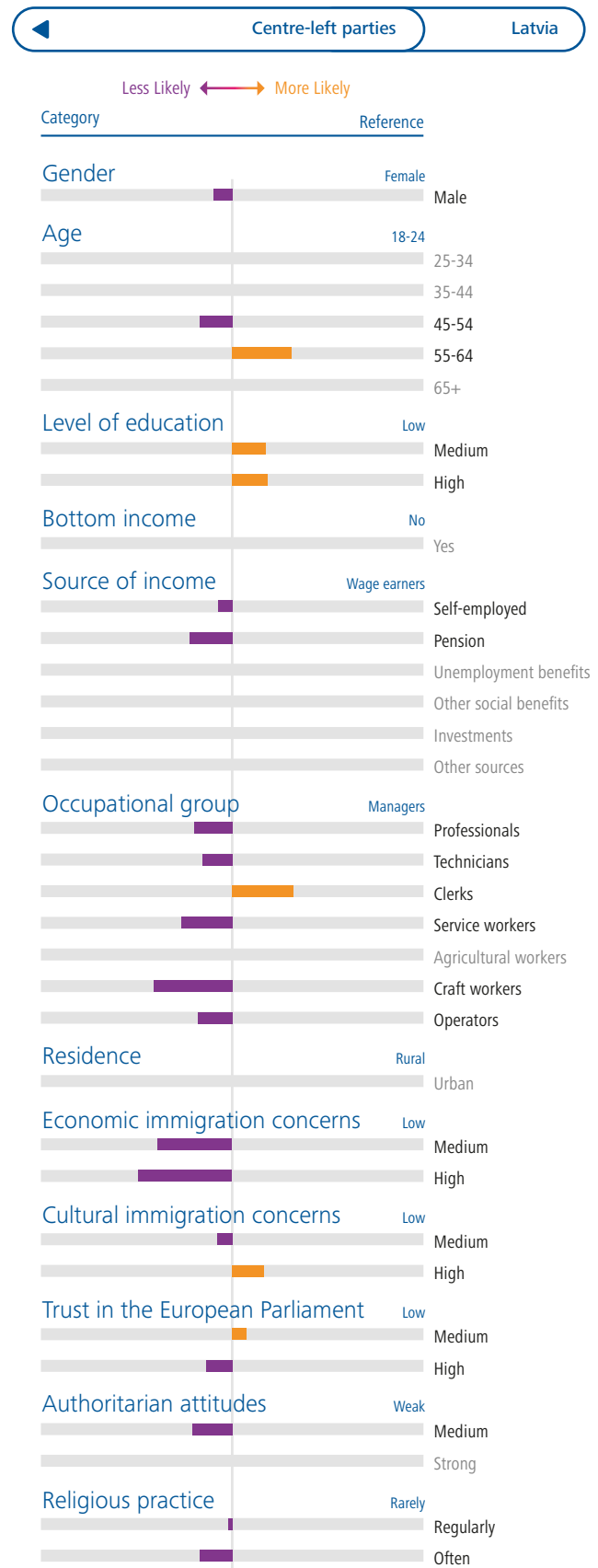


Figure 131: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



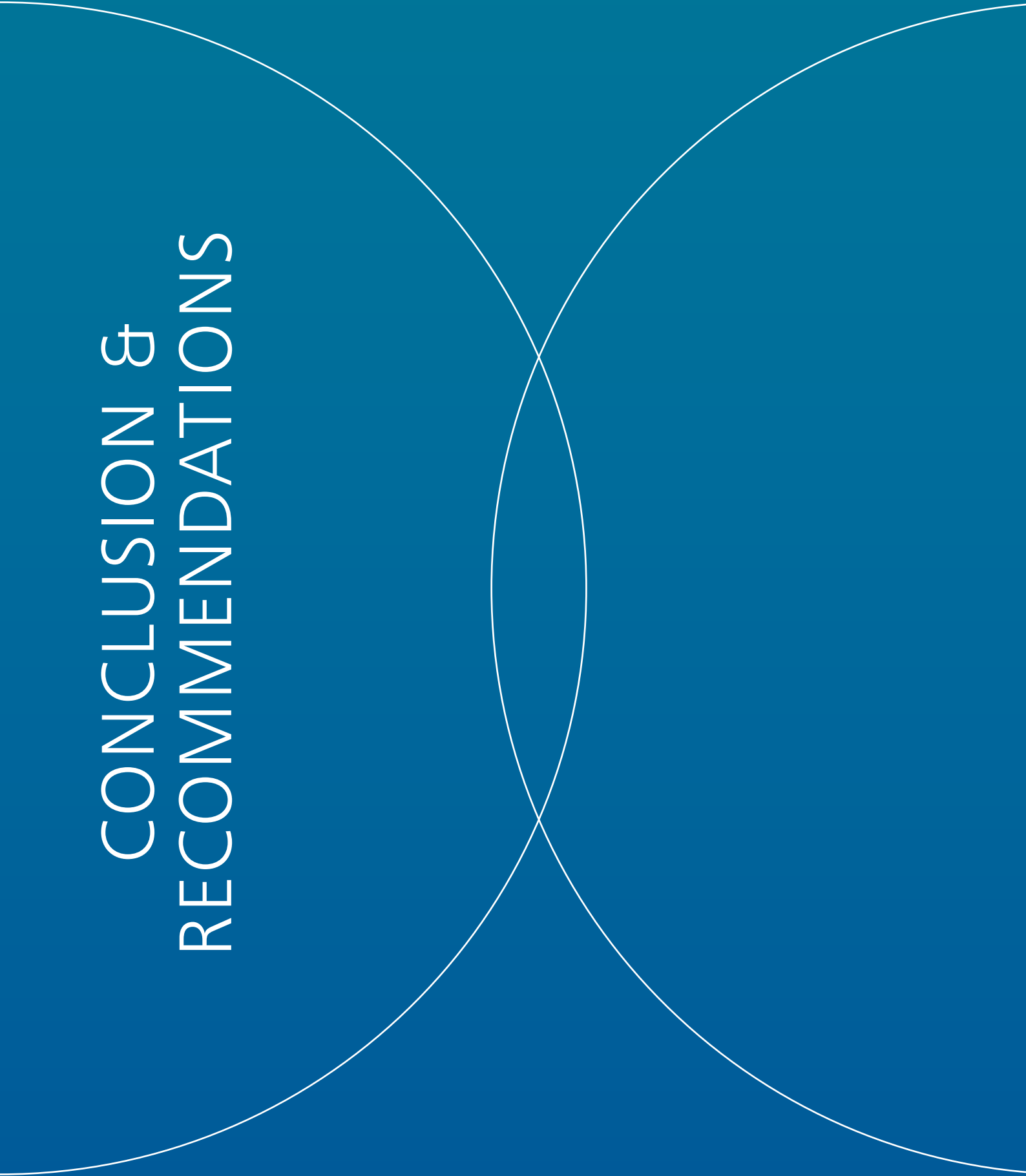
Only statistically significant results are shown.

Figure 132: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS





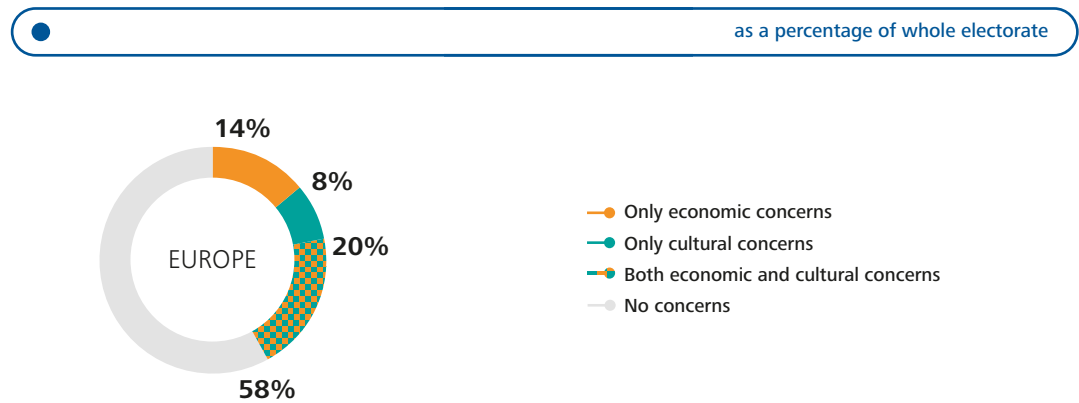
CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

HOW SHOULD PROGRESSIVE PARTIES RESPOND TO THE RWPP CHALLENGE?

Overall, our analysis suggests that co-opting right-wing populist policy agendas is not a winning strategy for the centre-left. Co-opting RWPP positions will likely be electorally costly for progressive parties in most cases. This finding is consistent with recent literature which suggests that the centre-left and RWPP electorates are considerably different (Abou Chadi et al. 2021) and that centre-left repositioning towards RWPP restrictive immigration policies may attract a small number of RWPP voters, but alienate a much larger proportion of their own voters (Chou et al. 2021).

- 1. First**, RWPP core voters, i.e. those voters who oppose immigration on principle and have strong and exclusive cultural concerns over immigration, are a minority in most European countries. These voters are principled RWPP voters and are unlikely to switch to the centre-left even if it adopts ‘copycat’ strategies. They identify more staunchly with a right-wing platform and are more likely to switch from ‘far’ to centre-right. They are the least likely centre-left constituency and do not constitute a centre-left target voter group (Figure 133).

Figure 133: Distribution of immigration concerns



- 2. Second**, a comparison between the RWPP and centre-left voter profiles reveals considerable differences, especially in terms of the attitudinal profiles of centre-left voters. Male respondents are less likely to vote for the centre-left, but this effect is only statistically significant overall and in Western Europe. Older individuals are more likely to vote for centre-left parties in both Western and Eastern Europe. There is no statistically significant effect of being in the bottom income group or a pensioner. Self-employed individuals are less likely to vote for centre-left parties, especially in Western Europe, but surprisingly this is also the case for unemployed individuals, perhaps because of growing divisions between insiders in employment and outsiders in unemployment (Cf. Rueda 2007). The occupational bases of centre-left parties are polarised with high-skilled professionals, low-skilled operators and agricultural workers most likely to vote centre-left parties, while the opposite is true for clerks and service workers in Western Europe. In Eastern Europe, occupations have a similar

tendency of voting centre-left, except for service workers (less likely) and professionals (more likely). More highly educated individuals are less likely to vote centre-left in Western Europe (in contrast to recent findings by Picketty and colleagues), but high levels of education play no role in Eastern Europe. Turning our attention to subjective attitudinal factors reveals that cultural concerns over immigration make it less likely to vote centre-left parties in both East and West, but economic concerns only play a role in the West. Trust in the EU similarly increases support for the left in both regions, while authoritarian attitudes play no role in either region, and religious practices are associated with lower support for the centre-left. In other words, existing centre-left voters are highly unlikely to be attracted to RWPP culturalist arguments and may abandon centre-left parties if they adopt such positions (Figures 135+136).

3. Third, even among the RWPP electorate, individuals with exclusively cultural concerns over immigration (i.e. core voters) are often a minority. The RWPP electorate is composed of a significant percentage of people with either no immigration concerns (40%) or a combination of economic and cultural concerns (36%) (Figure 134). This suggests a large proportion of voters of these parties are protest or peripheral voters, i.e. voters whose opposition to immigration is contingent. These voters are primarily concerned with the economic impact of immigration and tend to support the populist right as a way of expressing their discontent and punishing the establishment. They likely feel economically insecure and may have lost trust in institutions and the political system both at the domestic and EU levels. Because they have salient inequality concerns – broadly defined to include declining social status or social mobility – and have no principled opposition to immigration, these voters can ‘switch’ to parties that emphasise issues related to equality and offer effective policy solutions to them. This voter group is a more likely centre-left target constituency through a broader ‘equality’ narrative.

Figure 134: **Distribution of immigration concerns**

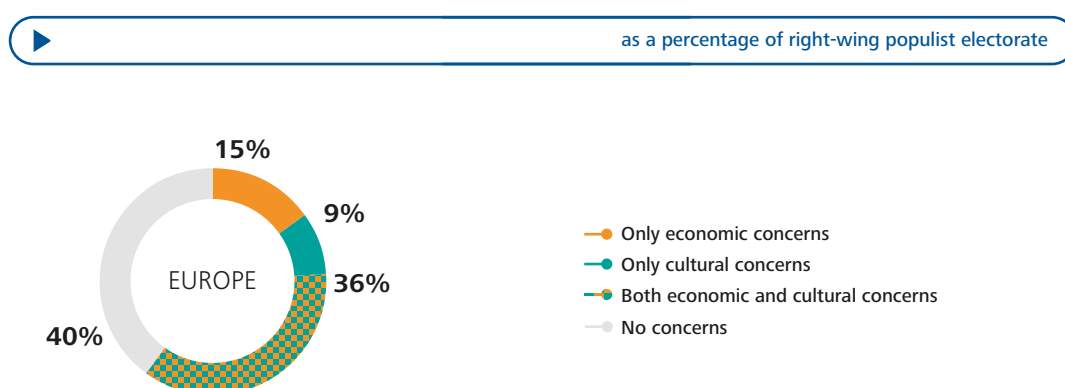
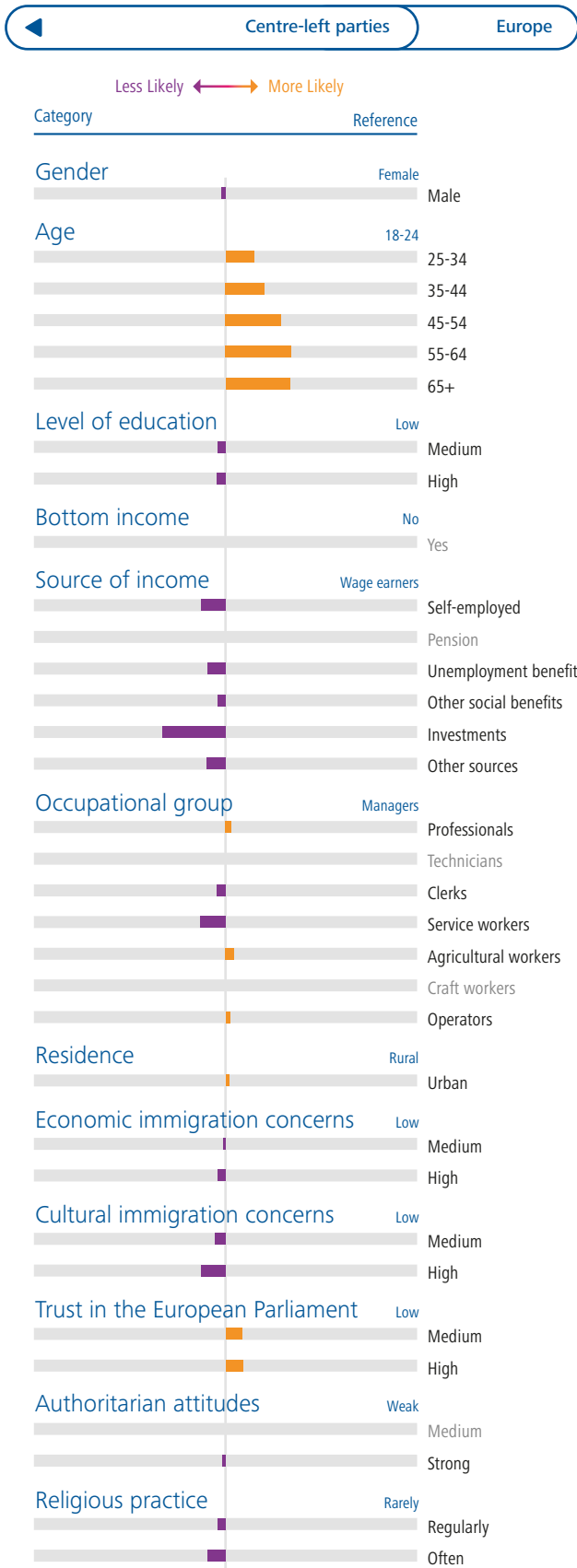
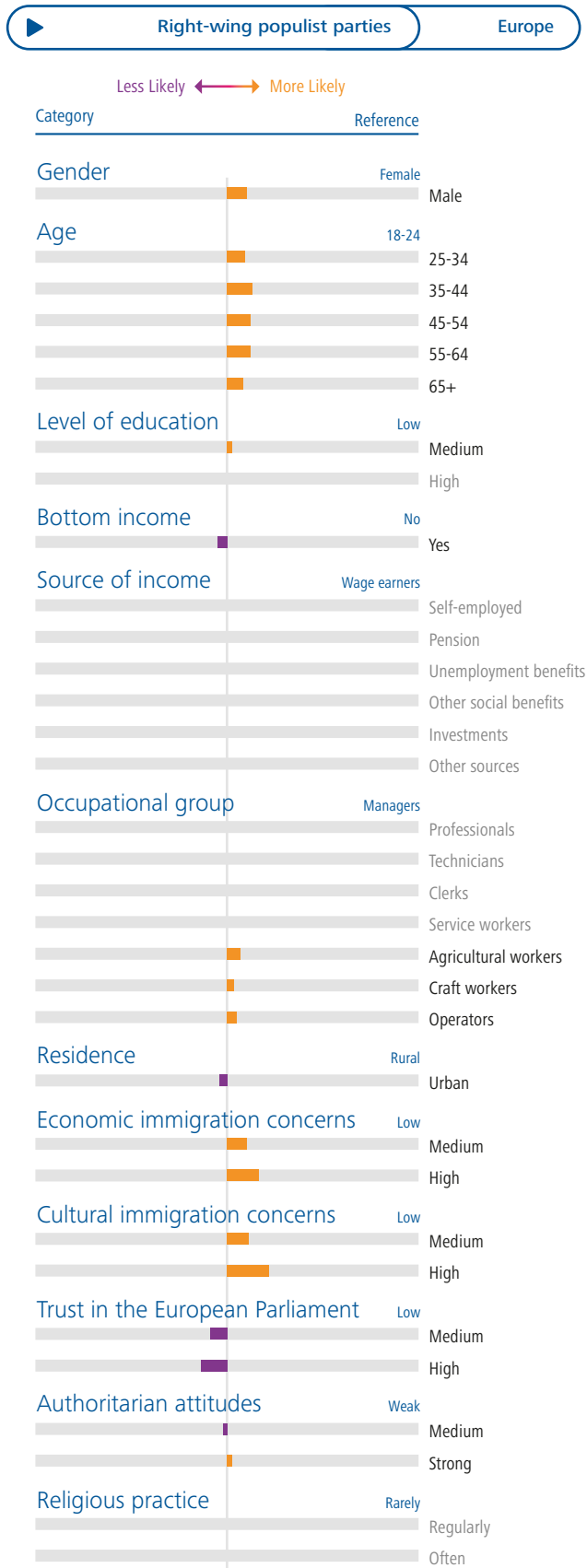


Figure 135: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.

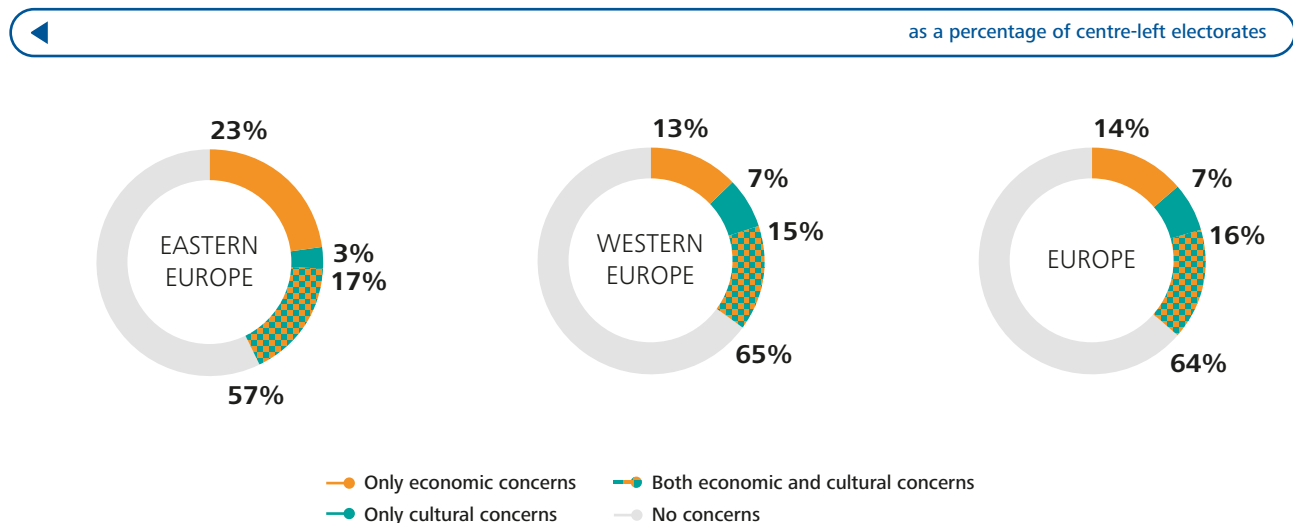
Figure 136: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.

4. **Fourth**, the percentage of voters with immigration concerns among the centre-left electorate is rather low. By contrast, the vast majority of people among the centre-left electorate have no immigration concerns (64%). Those that do are driven primarily by economic considerations (14%) (Figure 137). As such, their underlying frustrations could be understood as driven by inequality and material considerations and would likely switch if their economic concerns are met.

Figure 137: **Distribution of immigration concerns**



This picture reveals a non-beneficial trade-off: the adoption of nationalist anti-immigration positions by the mainstream left will likely result in substantial losses of the left's own cosmopolitan, urban, pro-immigrant voters in exchange for very small – if any – gains from the RWPP electorate, whose cultural core voter is a principled right-wing voter who is highly unlikely to vote for the centre-left even if it adopts 'copycat' policies. By contrast, downplaying the far right's 'signature' issues – for example immigration and multiculturalism, and focusing instead on issues such as economic security and equality, can be a beneficial strategy for progressives. The 2021 German Federal election illustrates this point well: the SPD's victorious campaign centred on economic issues which were particularly salient among voters (Dancygier 2021).

CONCLUSION

The current hype about 'new' issues such as immigration and cultural grievances often overlooks significant economic voter concerns. Indeed, a large share of the electorate is concerned about inequality. These concerns are not niche, nor are they confined to a shrinking voter group that is becoming irrelevant. Even within the context of emerging cleavages, inequalities are embedded in – and shape the salience of – 'new' issues. People are widely concerned about job security, working conditions, unemployment risks, equal opportunities, housing and health access. Women want equal pay and access to the labour market. Large families need support to balance work obligations and childcare. Young people entering the labour market after university need reassuring employment prospects. Pensioners who have paid into the system expect some security in their retirement period. New middle-class individuals support welfare states that offer them a sense of security. Not only the 'left-behind', but also the new middle classes and those on more comfortable incomes may feel insecure (Kurer 2020).

A more beneficial strategy for the centre-left is to try to (re)capture these voters by reclaiming ownership of (in)equality. Articulating a vision of an equitable society will allow progressive parties to re-build their broad voter coalitions and pioneer a strategy that mobilises voters on an issue the left already 'owns'. Employing **accommodative** RWPP 'copycat' strategies will likely alienate the core centre-left electorate further.



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